

# 1. The Big Picture

## Spate of militia assassinations undermine Tripoli security

The week was marked by multiple tit-for-tat assassinations across the capital city, in a clear sign of the prevailing intra-militia tensions. While a spate of attacks targeting members of the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB), the Special Deterrence Force (SDF), and/or Ghneiwa, could disrupt the state of minimal security in Tripoli and undermine confidence in the new security arrangements, such incidents are unlikely to escalate into heavy clashes in the medium term.

There appears to be deep distrust between militia members in Tripoli highlighted by a TRB/SDF alliance and the defection of a TRB subgroup with allegations it joined Ghneiwa. On 26 Nov at night, reports emerged over the assassination of three TRB militiamen following their detention at Tripoli's Mitiga International Airport. The latest reports suggest the TRB head, Haithem Tajouri, supported by the SDF, detained up to five TRB commanders as they returned to Mitiga International Airport from Tunis. Following their arrest, reports suggest the TRB members were taken to the Diplomatic Club in Tripoli's Ain Zara area, though the location of the assassinations remains unclear. According to reports, the names of the detained were Osama Tytesh, Mohamed Naemi, Abdelhadi Awainat (Tajouri's right-hand), Jalal Al-Wershefani (former TRB spokesman) and Marwan Khojah. Tytesh, Naemi and Awainat were assassinated in the alleged presence of Tajouri. Meanwhile, Wershefani reportedly escaped along with Khojah. Unconfirmed reports suggest Wershefani fled to Zintan and threatened Tajouri.

Rumours emerged suggesting the TRB group had defected and joined the Ghneiwa militia. Other reports suggest the motive behind the wave of assassinations was due to the TRB members' cooperation with Mohammed Al-Bekbak, who was in conflict with Tajouri. It

remains unclear whether Tajouri deliberately provided assurances and tricked the TRB commanders into returning to Tripoli before targeting them. Regardless, the development highlights an ongoing purge of TRB commanders in a possible Tajouri/SDF campaign to eliminate internal threats. Moreover, unconfirmed reports of TRB members defecting and joining Ghneiwa militia could exacerbate tensions between Tajouri and the Ghneiwa militia, with the strong potential for retaliation. Tajouri's targeting of mid-level TRB commanders could result in the militia's gradual disintegration, whilst putting Tripoli's main militias into direct conflict. Following the incident, there was a targeted campaign against the SDF across Tripoli, possibly in retaliation.

Overall, tensions are high among militias in the capital city with a likelihood of skirmishes and/or sporadic security incidents in the short term. The intra-militia developments highlight the fact that militias continue to wield power. Despite new security arrangements and recent attempts to disband, a resumption of fighting would undermine confidence in Tripoli's security environment after a gradual improvement and a United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL)-brokered ceasefire. Alternatively, this could be the sign of the TRB's gradual disintegration, which would force remaining subgroups to join regular forces as part of the new security arrangements. In the meantime, "defectors", such as the newly-formed TRB offshoot, will likely seek to disrupt Tripoli's security in the short term and form alliances with factions outside Tripoli.

### KEY POINTS

- TRB/SDF purge of militiamen
- Tensions could undermine security
- TRB offshoot to form alliances



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## 2. National Security Map

### AFRICOM precision strike targets 11 AQIM militants near Alawenat

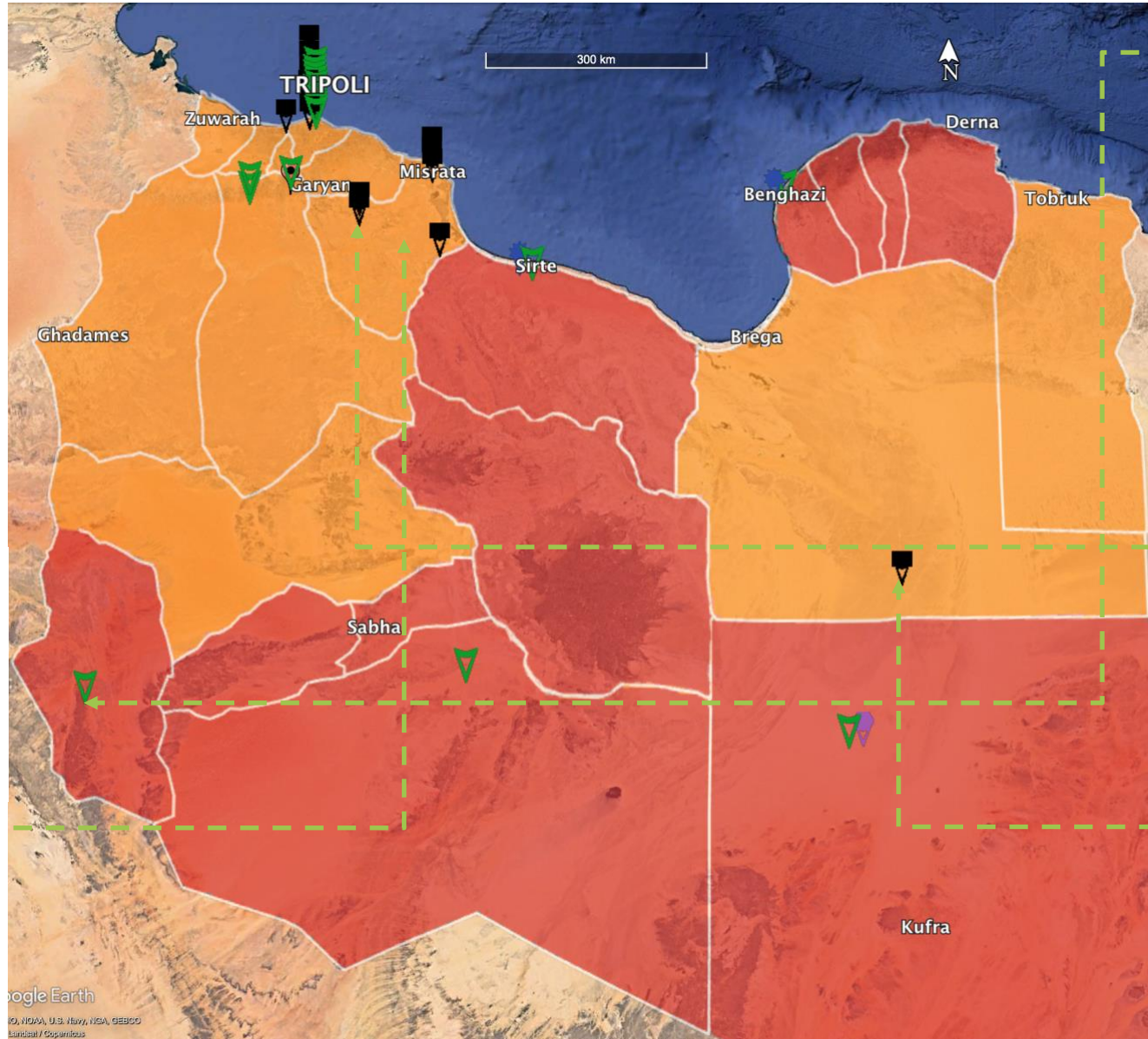
Key

THREAT INDICATORS

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

EVENT INDICATORS

-  IED | VBIED
-  Violent Clash
-  Isolated Gunfire
-  Other



On 29 Nov, the US Africa Command (AFRICOM), in coordination with the Government of National Accord (GNA), conducted a precision airstrike targeting 11 Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) militants and destroying three vehicles near Alawenat, a town in Libya's southwest and 120 kms North of Ghat. Pictures circulated across social media appeared to document physical damage resulting from the strike, which is the third by AFRICOM to target AQIM in Libya. AFRICOM expressed its willingness to continue pressuring the AQIM network in Libya.

Local reports suggest an Islamic State (IS) fugitive from Sirte, identified as Adel Al-Werfali, was arrested in a house on Bani Walid's Airport Road on 27 Nov. According to reports, Al-Werfali was a resident of Sirte and fled the city during the battle against IS in 2016.

Tazirbu Municipality announced via its Facebook page that a security convoy transporting the Libyan National Army's (LNA) spokesperson, Ahmed Al-Mismary, and a high-profile delegation came under fire near Shu'ala, while en route to Tazirbu on 28 Nov. Initial reports suggest local Tebu security forces shot at the convoy due to a misunderstanding.

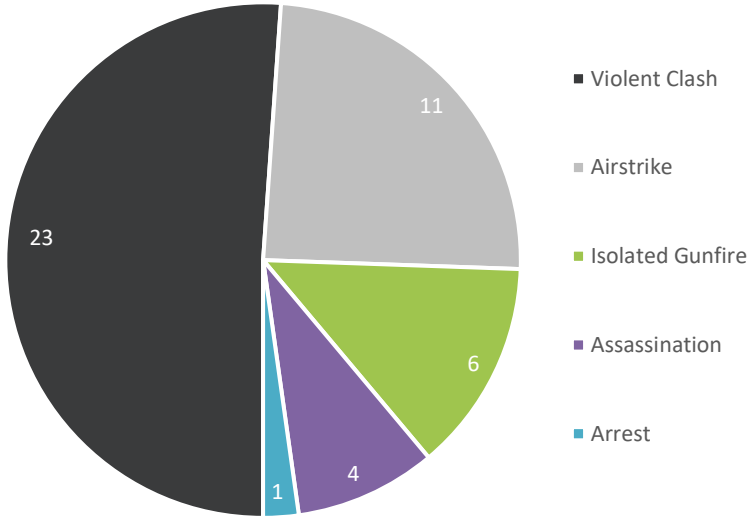
The National Oil Corporation (NOC) announced the temporary closure of Ras Lanuf, Zueitina, Zawiyah, and Es Sider export terminals due to bad weather conditions on 30 Nov, decreasing production by approximately 150 k barrels per day (bpd). On 02 Dec, the NOC reopened the ports, with the exception of Mellitah.

Unconfirmed reports of a Benghazi Defence Brigades (BDB) convoy of approximately 40 armed vehicle moving near As Saddadah area towards Misrata on the night of 01 Dec. Whispering Bell sources reported a normal situation in Misrata on 02 Dec, with no signs of tension or increased security.

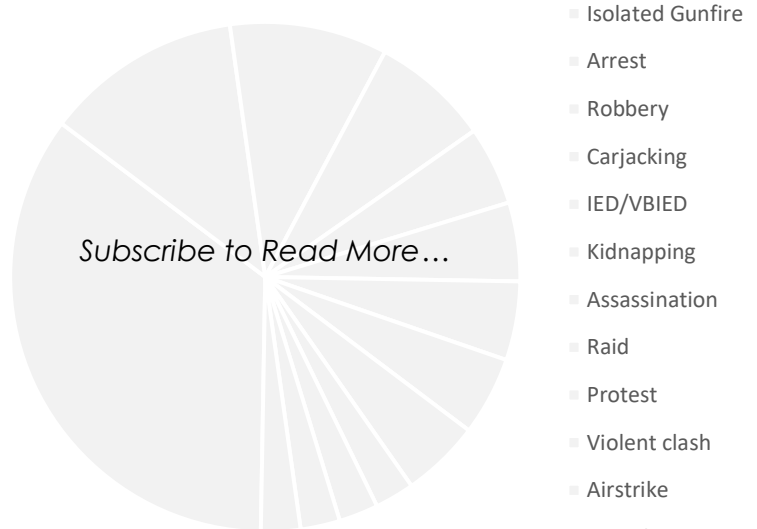
### 3. Nationwide Security Analysis

Surge in nationwide fatalities; 82% of recorded incidents were in the West

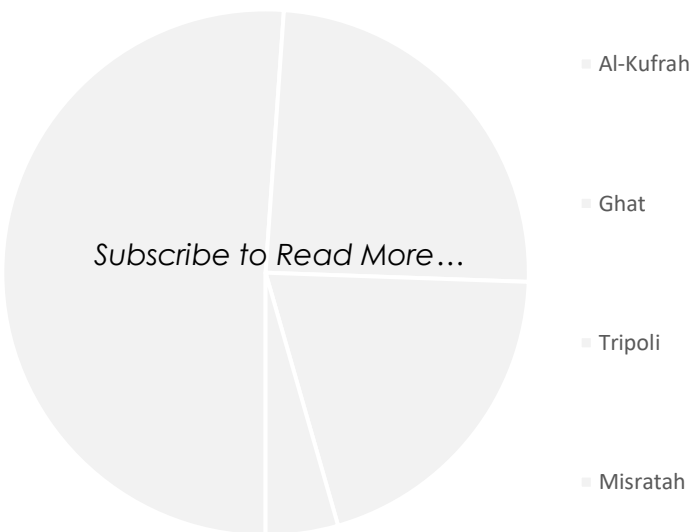
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



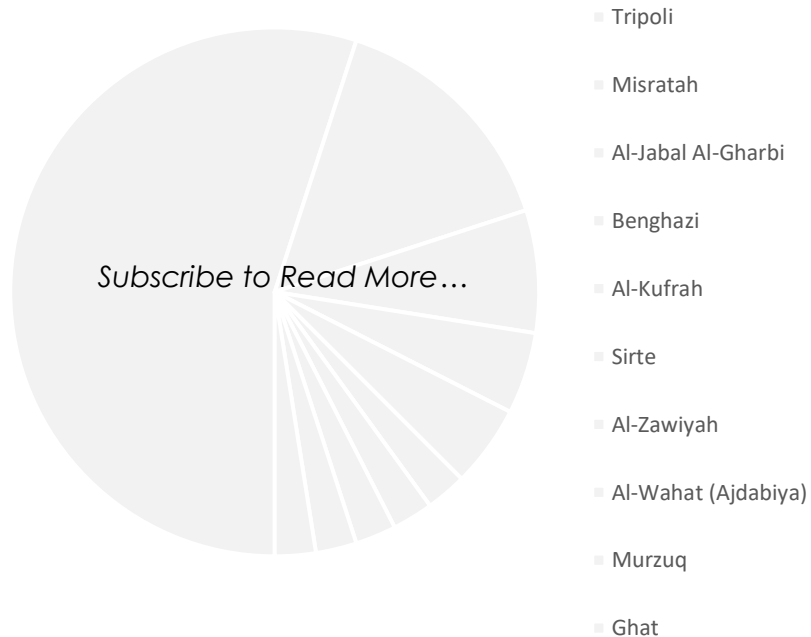
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



Nationwide fatalities by national district (Past week)

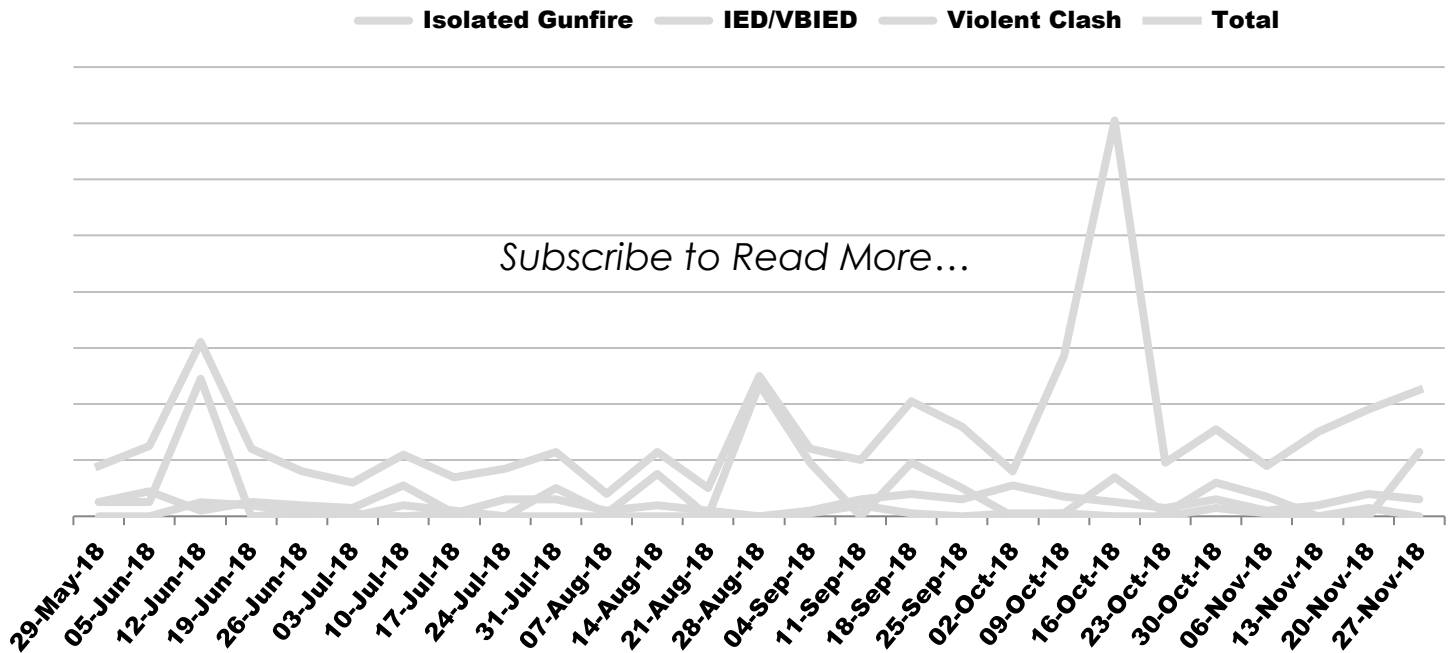


Nationwide incidents by national district (Past week)





## Nationwide Fatalities by Type of Attack (Past 27 Weeks)



### Data Analysis

Whispering Bell recorded this week a total of 45 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 17 deaths reported last week and 30 the week before. This week saw a surge in nationwide fatalities and the number of isolated gunfire and Tripoli-based security incidents. Local security forces' hunt for IS militants in Tazirbu in the aftermath of the terrorist attack resulted in approx. half of the nationwide fatalities. A total of 23 militants were reportedly killed, a figure WB could not independently verify. Several security incidents were reported throughout the country, including 14 cases of isolated gunfire, 3 carjackings, 4 robberies, 2 IED/VBIED incidents, and a violent clash.

In Western Libya, Whispering Bell recorded a total of 33 incidents, including 22 incidents in the capital city, Tripoli. Whispering Bell recorded in Tripoli a surge in carjacking incidents and vehicle thefts. Reports suggest unidentified assailant(s) stole a parked white KIA Cerato vehicle opposite the Al-Kabeer Hotel on Tripoli's Al-Shat Road at approximately 1300hrs on 27 Nov. Meanwhile, in a separate incident, armed unidentified assailant(s) riding a white Hyundai Accent vehicle with tinted windows and no license plates carjacked a grey KIA Cerato vehicle on Al Sadra Road in the morning on 27 Nov. Beyond this, at approximately 0100hrs on 30 Nov, a 4x4 Toyota Land Cruiser vehicle failed to stop at a checkpoint at Bab Al-Azizia Roundabout in Tripoli's Bab Al-Azizia area, prompting militiamen who were manning the checkpoint to open fire on the vehicle. Reports suggest the vehicle was later found parked near Alqods Mosque Roundabout, resulting in a militia gathering in the area.

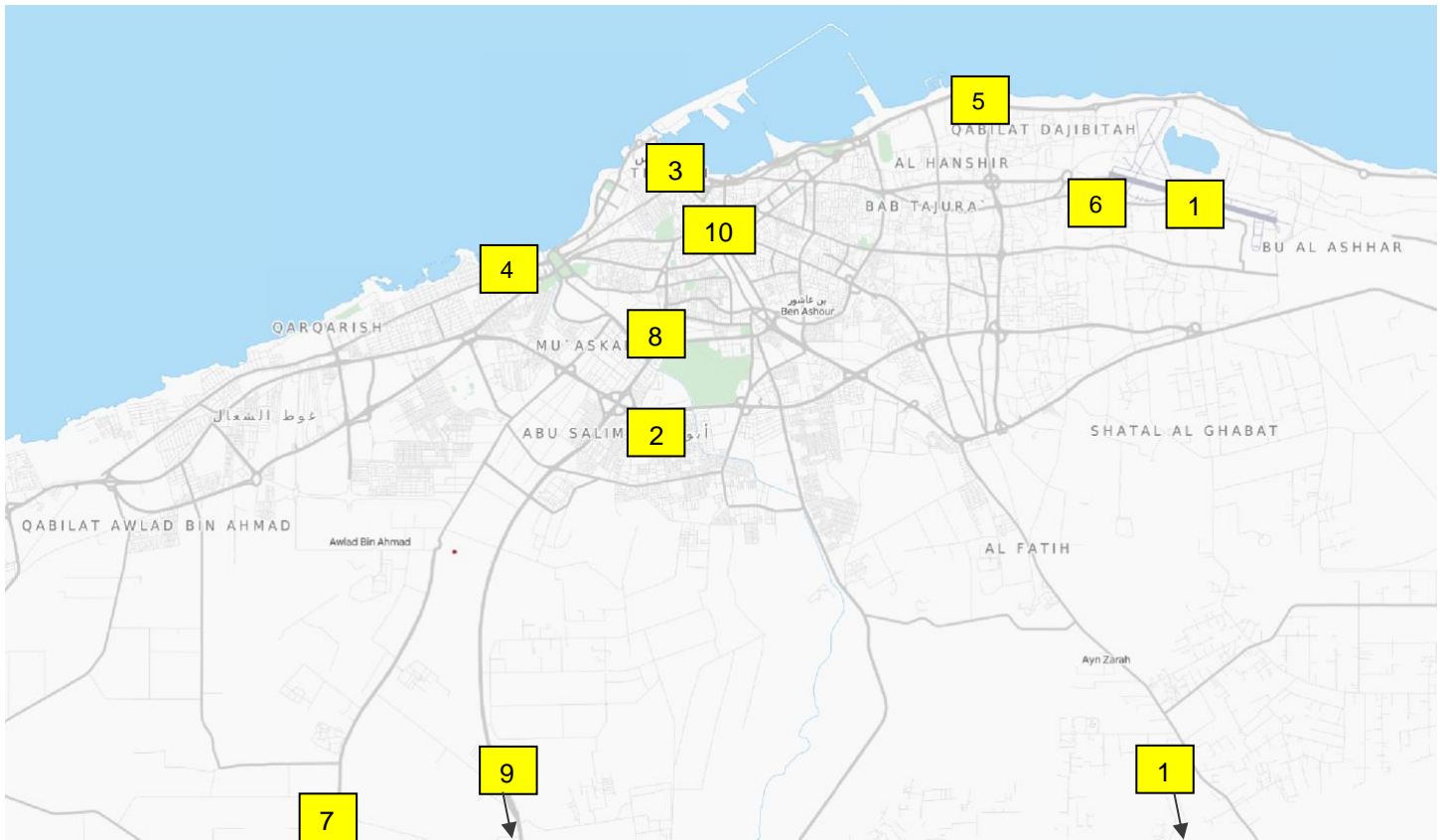
The week in Central Libya Whispering Bell recorded an IED/VBIED incident. Authorities in Sirte dismantled an IED ready for detonation in Sirte's Abu Hadi area on 24 Nov, after receiving intelligence from a local in the area. The IED reportedly weighed over three kilograms.

Turning to southern Libya, local reports suggest an armed Chadian group kidnapped three elders belonging to the Tribe of Zaideen, along with another individual from Al-Badir, on the road between Tmassah and Zawilah, southwest Libya on 26 Nov. Outlawed Chadian groups continue to engage in criminal activity, including frequent financially-motivated kidnappings, in the Southern region. Meanwhile, reports suggest a suspected Islamic State (IS) militant was captured as a result of an ongoing search operation West of Tazirbu, in the aftermath of the 23 Nov terrorist attack.

In Libya's East, medical staff at Benghazi's Al-Jalaa Surgical and Accident Hospital announced the suspension of operations due to recurrent attacks and security breaches. On its Facebook page, the hospital noted that the latest attack occurred on 24 Nov when a patient's armed relative attacked a doctor in the intensive care unit.

## 4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

### Intra-militia tensions escalate into sporadic security incidents



#### KEY INCIDENTS

1. (26 Nov) TRB members detained at Mitiga; killed in Diplomatic Club
2. (26 Nov) Vehicle stolen while parked
3. (27 Nov) Vehicle stolen while parked in front of Al Kabeer hotel
4. (28 Nov) Unidentified gunmen kill man, injure two others, in café
5. (28 Nov) Drive-by shooting targets SDF member & Sub-Saharan African
6. (28 Nov) Drive-by shooting targets SDF member
7. (30 Nov) Failed carjacking; threat of carjacking due to gang operating
8. (30 Nov) Shots fired as vehicle fails to stop at CP
9. (30 Nov) Ghneiwa militiaman tortured and killed
10. (02 Dec) Protestors force entry into PM office

#### Unidentified gunmen kill man in cafe

Reports that unidentified gunmen stepped down from an unmarked vehicle in front of Nest café in Tripoli's Hai Al-Andalus area, opening fire and killing a man sitting at the cafe, while injuring his friend and a waiter at approximately 1800hrs on 28 Nov. Initial reports indicate the targeted individual had ties to gangs in the Wershiffanah area and lived in An-Najila area, while his friend was originally from Zintan. Following the incident, Zintan's General Security Forces responsible of securing the incident area, deployed forces and blocked the main road in front of the coffee shop. Local sources in Hai Al-Andalus reported a normal situation as of 2000hrs on 28 Nov, with roads reopened and no signs of unusual military presence.

#### Suspects arrested over assassination

On 28 Nov, the Special Deterrence Force (SDF) arrested two males over an assassination attempt against former Tripoli Security Directorate head, Salah Al-Din Al-Sumu'i, in Tripoli's Salah Al-Din and Khallat Al-Forjan on 25 Nov. The motive behind the targeted assassination was criminal, according to initial SDF investigations. Meanwhile, reports suggest Al-Sumu'i, who was recently transferred

to Italy to receive medical care, succumbed to his wounds.

#### Targeted campaign against SDF members

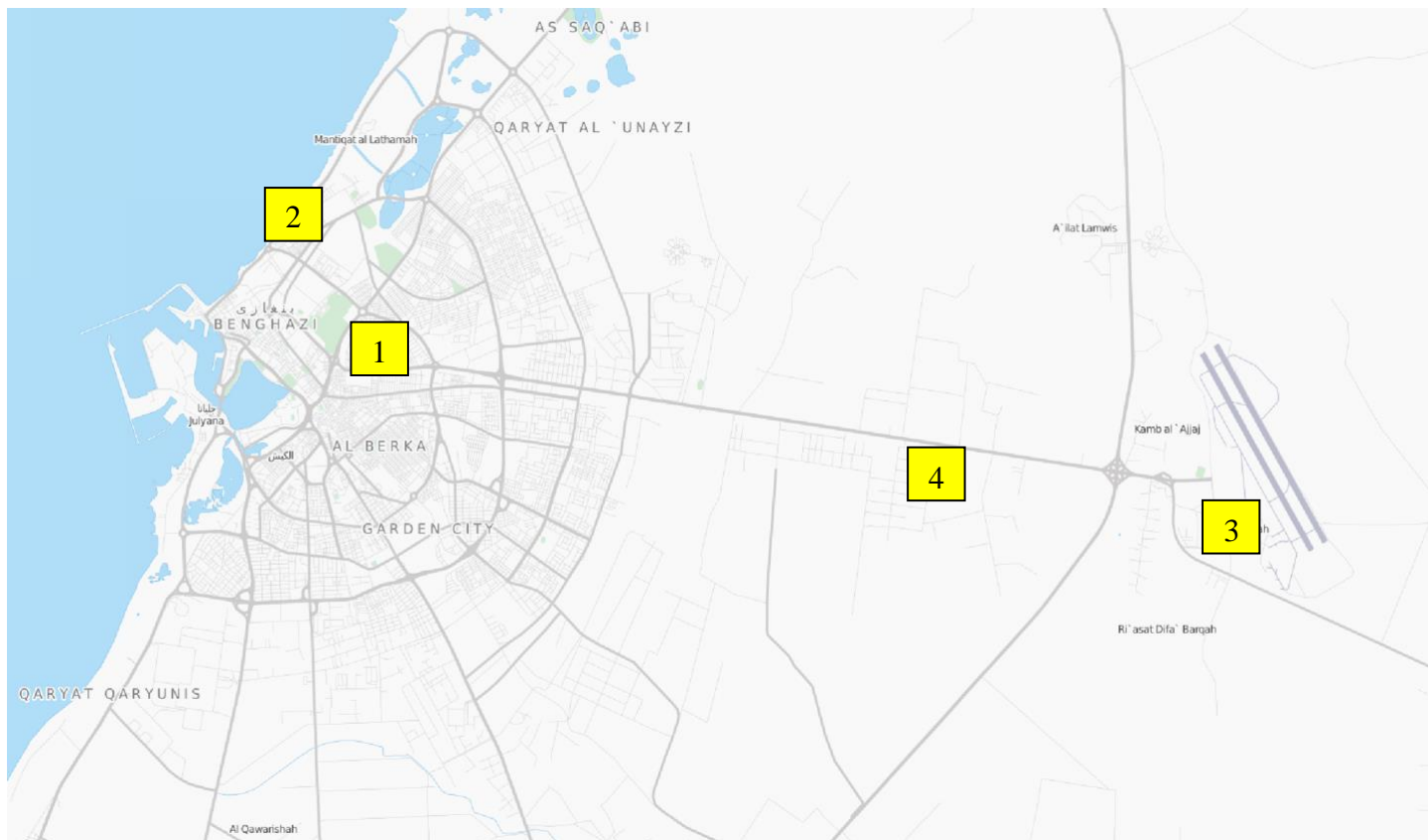
Reports of a drive-by shooting incident on Tripoli's Al-Shat road near Alrobyan Restaurant resulting in the death of a Sub-Saharan African male and injuring a member of the Special Deterrence Force (SDF) at approximately 2230hrs on 28 Nov. Initial reports suggest the incident was an attempt to assassinate the SDF member, who reportedly succumbed to his wounds on 29 Nov. Reports suggest the unidentified gunmen were riding KIA Rio and Hyundai Avante vehicles, and later fled the scene to kill another SDF member on Al-Kanar Street in Tripoli's Souq Al Jum'aa area, in another drive-by shooting incident on 28 Nov. While thus far the incident would appear isolated, there is mounting evidence to indicate a potential targeted campaign against the SDF across Tripoli,

#### Possible flight disruptions at Mitiga Airport

Sources inside Tripoli's Mitiga International Airport reported possible flight disruptions in the coming days due to an expected strike by employees at the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) over salary grievances. It is worth mentioning there have been similar threats of strikes in the past month, though employees had pledged to maintain operations as per schedule and only some delays affected chartered flights.

## 5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

### Armed group attacks Bneina Police Station to free prisoner



#### KEY INCIDENTS

1. (24 Nov) Al-Jalaa Hospital operations suspended
2. (25 Nov) IED injures LNA soldiers in Al-Sabri
3. (01 Dec) Armed men attack Bneina police station
4. (02 Dec) Saiqa Special Forces member killed in carjacking

#### IED injures LNA soldiers in Al-Sabri

An improvised explosive device (IED) detonated resulting in the injury of two Libyan National Army (LNA) soldiers from the Explosives Disposal Team in Benghazi's Al-Sabri area on 25 Nov. The soldiers were reportedly on duty across schools in the area.

#### Armed men attack Bneina Police station

An unidentified armed group attacked Bneina Police station in Benghazi at night on 01 Dec, in a reported attempt to free an affiliated member arrested for drug trafficking. The incident resulted in an exchange of gunfire with members of the police station. The gunmen failed to free the prisoner and reportedly fled with no reports of casualties. A vehicle belonging to the attackers reportedly caught fire as a result of the gunfire exchange. In a separate incident, unidentified assailants killed a member of Benghazi's Special Forces "Saiqa" and carjacked his vehicle in Benghazi's Al-Silini area on 02 Dec. The victim's weapon and uniform were reportedly stolen during the incident.

#### Al-Jalaa Hospital operations suspended

Medical staff at Benghazi's Al-Jalaa Surgical and Accident Hospital announced the suspension of operations due to recurrent attacks and security breaches on the hospital. On its Facebook page, the hospital noted that the latest attack occurred on 24 Nov when a patient's armed relative attacked a doctor in the intensive care unit. At the time of writing, it was unclear whether medical staff resumed operations at the hospital.

## 6. What's next

### GNA faces a dilemma between ensuring survival and guaranteeing security

#### POLITICAL FORECAST

The week was marked by the House of Representative's (HoR) handover of the Constitution Referendum Law to the High National Election Commission (HNEC) on 29 Nov. The HoR's long overdue amendment of the Constitution Referendum Law will take Libya steps closer towards holding a public referendum on a permanent constitution and elections. While the HoR noted that it had fulfilled its duty with the latest development, multiple analysts suggest political uncertainty remains. According to the analysts, the HoR is attempting to delay elections by passing a Referendum Law that is unlikely to be accepted, which could extend its mandate and maintain the status quo. The HoR's move is likely in response to recent statements by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) head, Ghassan Salame, accusing the HoR of deliberately failing to uphold its constitutional duties. The upcoming political deadlock in Libya will be defined by challenges related to the restructuring of the Presidential Council (PC). On the economy, while the liquidity crunch shows signs of easing, the Government of National Accord (GNA) should tread carefully in the next phase of the reforms as lifting fuel subsidies would further impact its public image and potentially fuel public unrest.

#### WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

Writing for *Foreign Affairs*, Frederic Wehrey and Jalel Harchaoui discuss the outcome(s) of the Palermo Conference and prospect for success in Libya. "What Palermo did produce was a somewhat abstract roadmap to guide Libya toward free and fair elections. Yet even if elections are successful, they won't suffice to produce unity or lasting stability—it remains an open question, for instance, how the outcome can be peacefully enforced across a country split between rival governments. The UN seems to be counting on an ambitious National Conference in January, which will include representatives from Libya's opposing factions as well as mayors, tribal leaders, civil society, and ordinary citizens, to resolve all these issues. But although the conference may indeed help, it could also engender further controversies and delay elections once again. And the unification of Libya's economic and security institutions, currently divided between east and west, will require painstaking and difficult work. Despite these obstacles, however, there have been encouraging developments in Libya over the past few months. These include progress reining in Tripoli's militias, economic reforms by the GNA, and a weakening of Haftar's national position. Taken together, these developments offer, for the first time in years, reason for guarded optimism about Libya's future. The international community must capitalize on this momentum while mitigating a number of looming risks."

#### SECURITY FORECAST

In Tripoli, tensions are high among militias with a likelihood of skirmishes and/or sporadic security incidents in the short term, though it remains unclear whether such tensions will escalate into full-scale confrontation/ heavy clashes. In Misrata, tensions are likely after a surge in security-related incidents in the city. As the GNA continues attempts at isolating pro-Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) elements, many analysts suggest Madkhali Salafis will seek to fill the vacuum in the West, which could result in tensions in Zawiya, Sabratha, and Misrata. In central Libya, locals remain alert after suspicious movements of alleged Benghazi Defence Brigades (BDB) militants near As Saddadah. In the South, Sabha's authorities will continue to be on high alert after multiple suspected IS militants were reportedly arrested while hiding in the city. Meanwhile, the 29 Nov meeting held in Khartoum, Sudan, fell short of achieving breakthroughs in cross-border security due to a general lack of commitment and resources to combat lawlessness in Libya's South. Beyond this, AFRICOM's latest strike has provoked outrage locally in cities such as Ubari, with multiple voices claiming innocent individuals were targeted. The incident could spark further unrest and potentially materialize into attacks.

#### LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

In *The Guardian*, Francesca Mannocchi reports from Tripoli: "Driving through this city means navigating a political fog as you try to work out who among the rag-tag gunmen in assorted uniforms and battered pickup trucks are gangsters, and who constitute the official security forces of the United Nations-backed government. After a while you realise they are the same. One unit is freshly kitted out in smart blue uniforms of the interior ministry, but it remains a militia, as violent and threatening as before. Tensions are high after the body of one warlord was dumped by rivals outside a city hospital in the latest tit-for-tat killing." She adds "Meanwhile, the citizens suffer: there are shortages of petrol, electricity, water and banknotes. Libya is rich, with £50bn of foreign reserves and booming oil production. But only a handful of banks – those controlled by militias – are permitted to dispense cash. Citizens form kilometre-long queues to collect it." "My excursion to meet Mahdi is a rare breath of fresh air in a city where information is tightly controlled. In the Gaddafi era visiting journalists needed a permit just to step out of their hotel. Now I need two – one from the government, the other from the militia controlling whatever district I plan to visit. Nobody elected this government, which was appointed by a UN-chaired commission, and it has two faces for the world. One is for visiting western diplomats, who make occasional visits to the city to be photographed smiling with the prime minister. The other face is for Libyans themselves, and it is not pretty"



# About Whispering Bell



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