



# 1. The Big Picture

## Contentious control of Sharara as LNA flexes military muscle

The week was marked by conflicting reports over the Libyan National Army's (LNA) control of Sharara, Libya's largest oil field. Despite rapid military advances and superior airpower over its Government of National Accord (GNA) rival, the LNA's control of oil infrastructure in the South will likely remain subject to negotiations.

Tensions were brewing this week between the GNA and LNA. The GNA's appointment of Ali Kanna as commander of the Sabha Military Zone, stood as the first sign of opposition to the LNA's campaign and represented an active measure to undermine the LNA's advance, a prelude to wide-ranging East-West tensions and potential confrontation in the short to medium term. Kanna is strongly opposed to Haftar though recent reports suggest the tribesman from the South has lost much of his influence among key tribes.

The extent of LNA vs GNA support in the South remains difficult to ascertain. Reports suggest at least 10 tribal brigades have rejected any GNA-sanctioned deployment while pledging allegiance to the LNA on 09 Feb. The following infantry brigades, a majority of Tuaregs, have reportedly pledged allegiance to the LNA: 134 (positioned in Ubari), 42 (Sharara), 191 (Sharara), 175 (Ubari), 146 (Ubari), 173 (Ubari), 193 (Ubari), 163 (Ubari), 159 (Ubari), 30 (Sharara). If confirmed, the brigades' allegiance to the LNA would limit Kanna's prospect for engaging the LNA in the South.

Meanwhile, the Libyan National Army Air Force (LAF) carried out four warning airstrikes near a CRJ aircraft at the Al-Feel oil field airbase on 09 Feb, in the first military action since it imposed a no-fly zone in the South. A day later, a MiG-23 LAF aircraft intercepted the same Libyan Airlines Bombardier CRJ aircraft, which took off from Al-Feel airfield, forcing it to land in the Tamanhint airbase on 10 Feb.

These developments further corroborate the assumption that the no-fly zone directly targets the National Oil Corporation (NOC) and GNA, who would now require special permissions to fly from/into the South. The LNA could be following the standard "escalate to de-escalate" military strategy, hoping it would be able to secure its interests, including pressure to hold elections and the NOC's approval to lift force majeure at Sharara oil field.

In potential evidence the offensive will protract, on 08 Feb Tebu elders issued a statement condemning Haftar and the LNA's offensive in the South while accusing the ethnically-Arab tribe of Awlad Suleyman, and the Zway, of exploiting the offensive in their favour to fuel tribal conflict. In the statement, the Tebu elders also warned Haftar's offensive could recreate a scenario similar to the French occupation of Fezzan in 1943.

Ultimately, it remains unclear whether the LNA will be rapid in its advance into Murzuq and whether the GNA will step up its counter-efforts. Sharara and Al-Feel will likely continue to take center stage, as control over these would enable the LNA and/or the GNA to quantify their control over the entire Fezzan region. Striking an alliance between Tebu and the Tuareg against the LNA, would be one of the GNA's strongest "cards". While East-West divisions are at their highest levels since 2016, emerging on-the-ground evidence suggests the LNA's southern offensive is gradually restoring security in the area.

**KEY POINTS**

- Conflicting reports over Sharara
- LAF intercepts CRJ aircraft
- GNA appoints Kanna to slow LNA



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# 2. National Security Map

## LNA imposes no-fly zone in South; end of combat operations in Derna

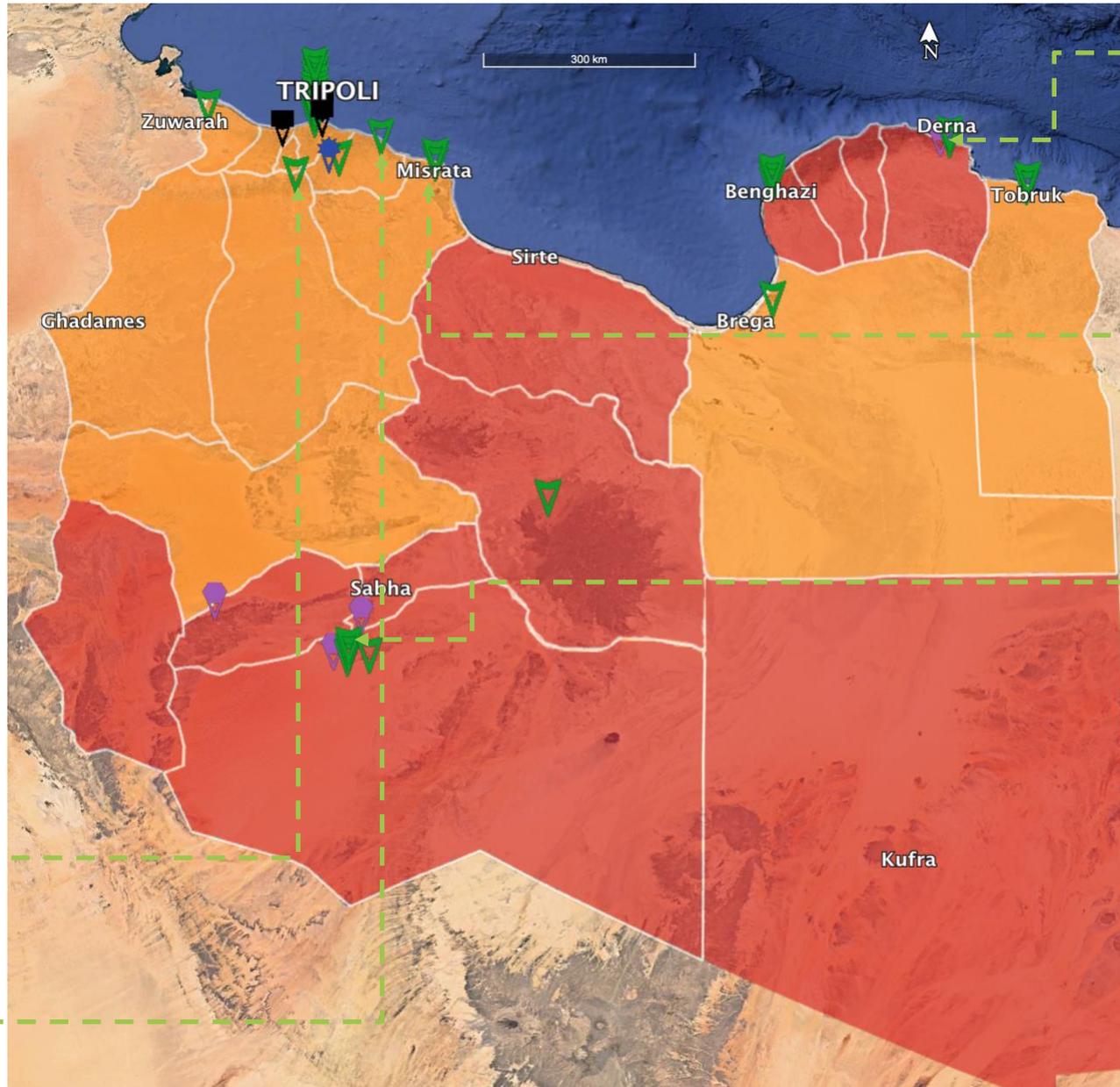
Key

THREAT INDICATORS

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

EVENT INDICATORS

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



The LNA's Derna Security Directorate announced the city has been fully liberated and all combat operations in Derna's Old City have ceased on 09 Feb. The LNA announced the liberation of Derna on 28 June 2018, though it continued to engage Derna Protection Force (DPF) remnants in the Old City, in urban guerilla warfare operations.

Misrata's Counter-terrorism (CT) Apparatus arrested Abdel Qader Azzuz, a prominent Derna militant and suspected Al-Qaeda (AQ) leader, in the city on 07 Feb. Azzuz was later transferred to Tripoli, where he was reportedly held by the Special Deterrence Force (SDF).

The Libyan National Army's (LNA) Air Force Operations Room declared that any aircraft, foreign or local, taking off or landing in any airport in the South will require a special approval from the LNA, effective 07 Feb at 0000hrs local time. Meanwhile, local reports suggest the LNA continued to make significant progress on the ground. The 128th Infantry Battalion announced full control over Umm Al-Aranib after defeating Chadian rebels on 10 Feb. However, there are other conflicting reports over the LNA's territorial gains.

The US Africa Command (AFRICOM), in its 2019 posture statement to Congress, laid out the approach guiding its activity in Libya, which revolves around "containing instability". AFRICOM's Libya policy is driven by three main objectives: degrading violent extremist organizations (VEOs), preventing widespread civil conflict, and supporting the political reconciliation process.

French Mirage 2000 aircraft carried out airstrikes in Chad targeting a Chadian rebel convoy from Libya, resulting in the destruction of 20 vehicles on 06 Jan. The development would represent the third-day of strikes – similar strikes were carried out on 03 Jan and 05 Jan.

In a statement, Gharyan locals refused the entry of the Libyan National Army (LNA) into the city following a meeting held in the city in the evening on 04 Feb. The statement comes in response to reports suggesting a protest calling for the LNA to enter Gharyan peacefully would be held on 04 Feb.

Khoms locals issued a statement pledging allegiance to the Libyan National Army (LNA) on 08 Feb. In addition, Al-Seiaan Tribe issued a similar statement to support the LNA and its offensive in the South.

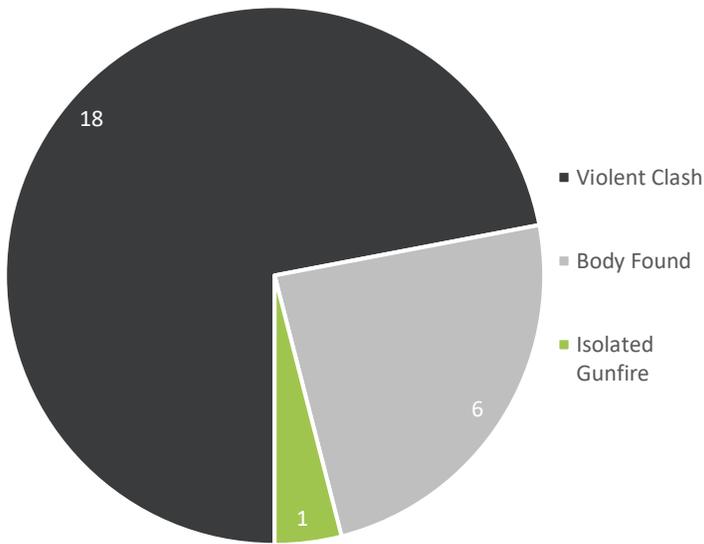
Libya Weekly Political and Security Update

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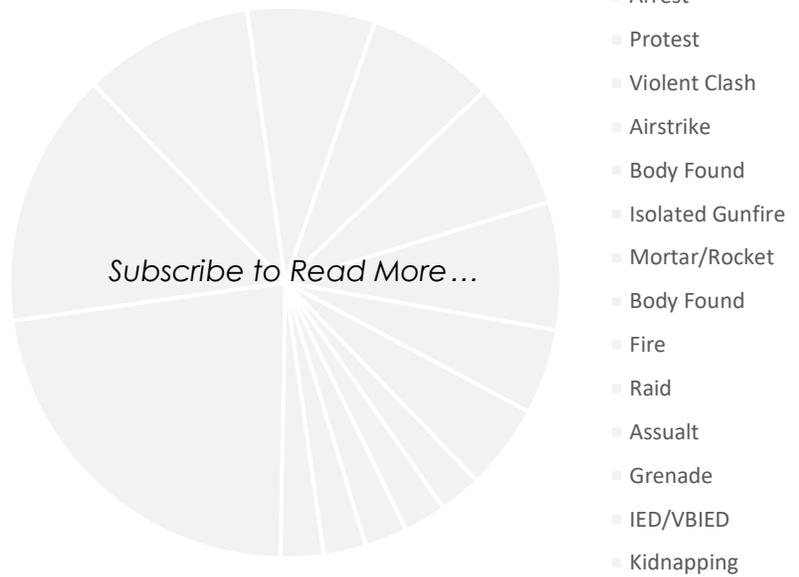
### 3. Nationwide Security Analysis

Violent clashes in South & Derna account for over 3/4 of nationwide fatalities

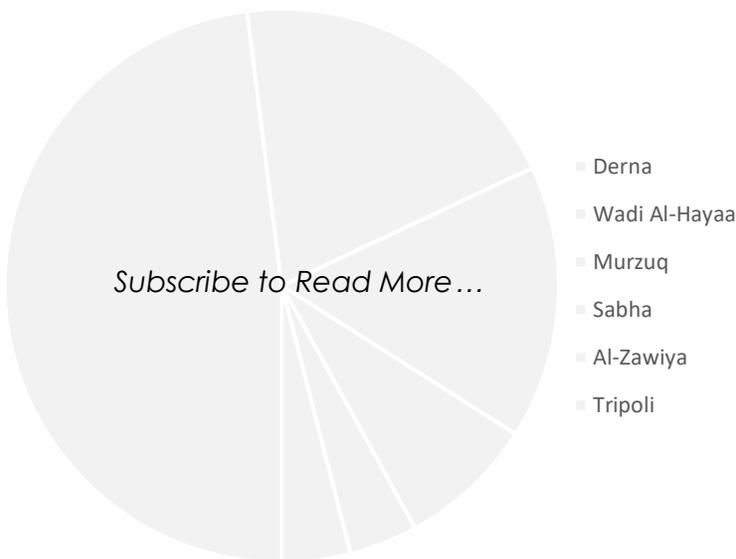
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



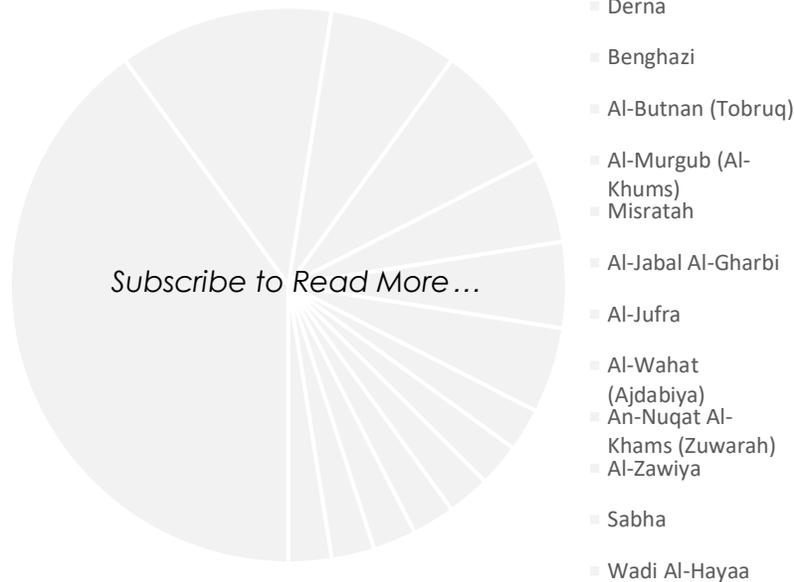
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



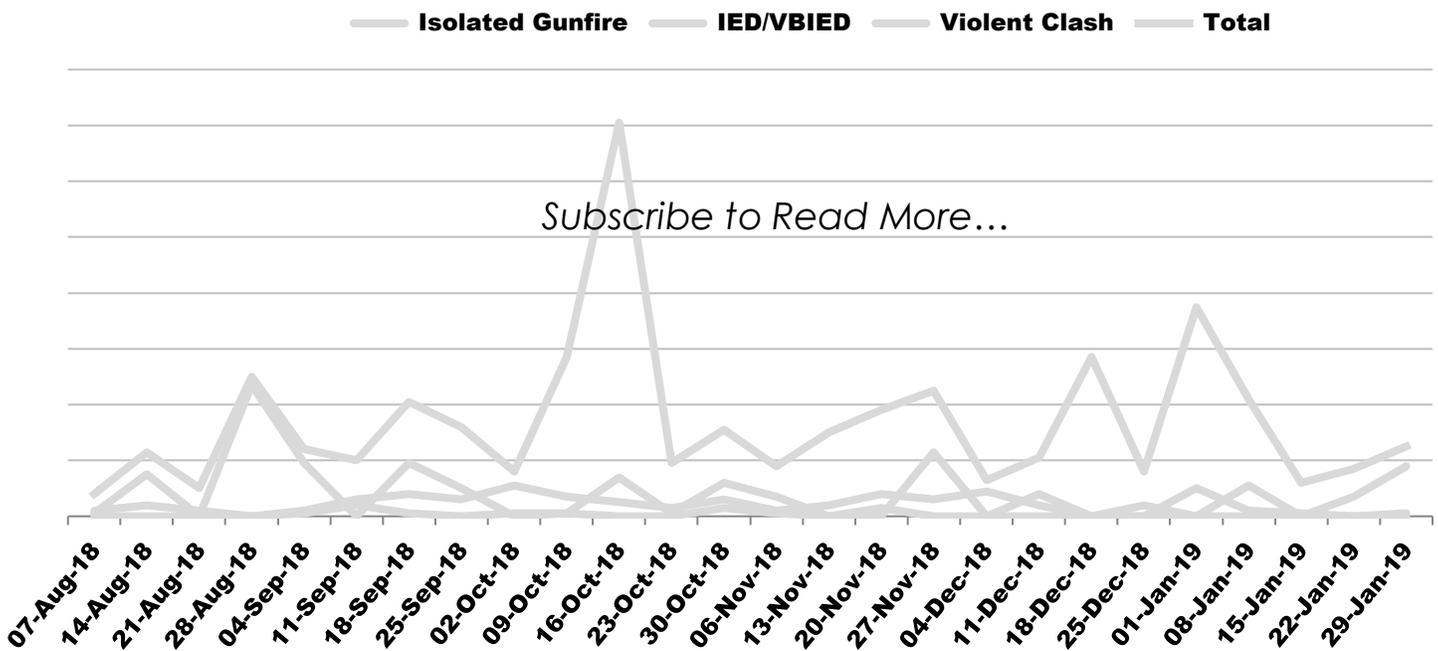
Nationwide fatalities by national district (Past week)



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 25 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 17 deaths reported last week and 12 the week before. This week violent clashes between the Libyan National Army (LNA) and rival armed groups in the Southern region, and militants in Derna, accounted for over half of the nationwide fatalities. The highest number of incidents were recorded in the capital city, followed by cities across the Southern region. Several security incidents were reported throughout the country, including 6 protests, 4 violent clashes, 3 airstrikes, 3 cases of isolated gunfire, 3 mortar/rockets, 1 raid, 1 assault, and 1 kidnapping.

In Western Libya, Whispering Bell recorded a total of 23 incidents, including 16 incidents in the capital city, Tripoli. In Tripoli, two masked gunmen shot a man in Tripoli's Al-Jumhourya Bank in the Tajoura area at approximately 1300hrs on 04 Feb. Neither the identity of the assailants nor the motive behind the incident are known. Meanwhile, in a separate incident, reports suggest unidentified assailant(s) kidnapped a ten-year-old boy in Tripoli's Al Serraj area in the morning on 04 Feb. Later that evening, the boy was reportedly rescued by the Anti-Crime Apparatus. Beyond this, there were reports of sporadic gunfire in Tripoli's Gorje area as a Zintani militia raided an office near Tripoli International Stadium in Al-Hae Al-Senaea area, late at night on 07 Feb. Initial reports suggest a male individual was wounded. In the wider Western region, WB recorded two protests against the Libyan National Army (LNA). Reports suggest locals protested against the entry of the LNA as part of its military campaign in the Southwest of Libya in Misrata in the afternoon on 02 Feb. Meanwhile, in a separate incident, locals protested against the entry of the LNA into the city in front of Gharyan's Municipality Council at approximately 1800hrs on 04 Feb. A group of militiamen reportedly fired sporadic shots into the air in an effort to disperse the crowd.

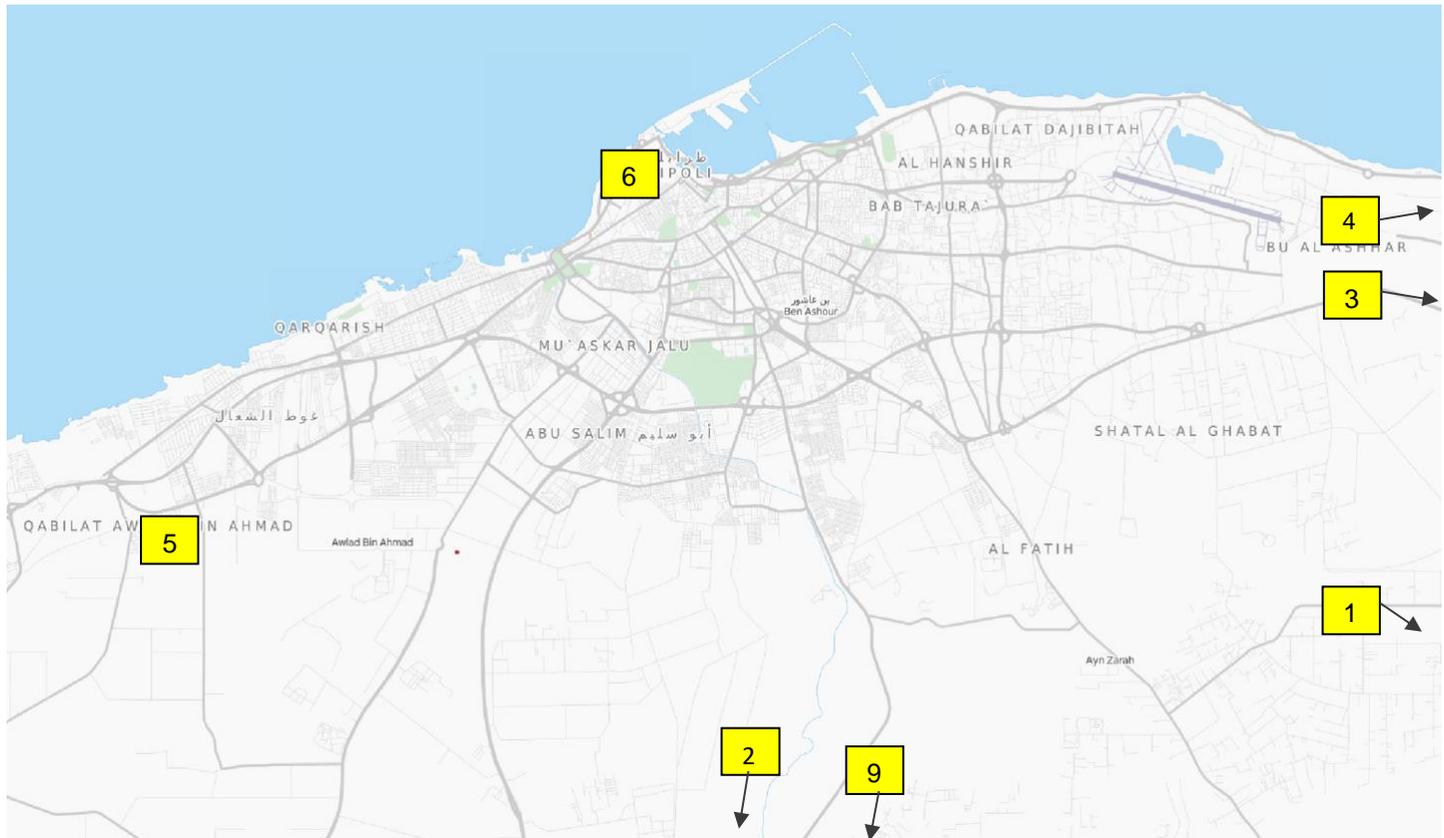
The week in Central Libya, Al-Jufra's Security Directorate reportedly arrested three Chadian gang members following an exchange of gunfire between the security forces and the armed gang members in Al-Jufra on 04 Feb. According to security forces, another gang of thieves operating on the road between the cities of Waddan and Zillah managed to escape. The gang members carried out frequent robberies targeting farmers, locals of the area, and families travelling between Waddan and Zillah.

Turning to southern Libya, WB recorded ongoing violent clashes between the LNA and rival armed groups, in addition to LNA airstrikes, as the army intensifies its military campaign in the South following its launch on 16 Jan.

In Eastern Libya, violent clashes between the LNA & DPF militants in Derna's old city resulted in casualties, though the LNA announced the full liberation of Derna and the end of combat operations in Derna's old city on 09 Feb.

## 4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

### TPF to integrate into new larger coalition; Western Region Protection Force



#### KEY INCIDENTS

1. (02 Feb) Woman's body found with signs of torture in Tajoura's Ztarna
2. (03 Feb) SDF captures two criminals involved in carjackings & robberies
3. (03 Feb) Military aircraft flying over Tajoura
4. (04 Feb) Two masked gunmen shot man in Al-Jumhourya Bank
5. (04 Feb) 10-year-old boy kidnapped & later rescued by anti-crime apparatus
6. (05 Feb) High-level UN delegation meeting in Corinthia Hotel
7. (05 Feb) 301 BDE announce GNA-sanctioned reassignment to South
8. (06 Feb) GNA spokesman denies orders to reassign 301 BDE to South
9. (06 Feb) 301 BDE & CT takeover Al-Yarmouk Camp
10. (06 Feb) SDF detains LIA head on corruption & exploitation charges
11. (10-17 Feb) WB advises travellers to operate with caution ahead of Feb17

#### TPF to integrate into WRPF

On 08 Feb, the newly-formed Tripoli Protection Force (TPF) announced it will integrate into a larger coalition under the name "Western Region Protection Force" (WRPF). According to the statement, the WRPF would operate under a single unified command, though no further details were provided. Although difficult to ascertain with a high degree of confidence, the WRPF would come in response to the LNA's offensive in the South. It could stand as an attempt to establish a larger force that would acquire the military capacity to thwart any potential attack from an outside force on the Western region. Some observers suggest the establishment of the WRPF could also be perceived as a means to counter the Serraj-led Government of National Accord (GNA), the GNA's Minister of Interior, Fathi Bashagha, and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya's (UNSMIL) new security arrangements. The latter would prove likely following reports of growing tensions between the TPF and Bashagha. Moreover, the development would come amid the LNA's ongoing offensive in the the South and mounting rumors of a potential LNA push Westwards, to finally reach Tripoli. There are likely ulterior and more opportunistic motives behind the WRPF's formation. Rebranding as a force capable of protecting the western

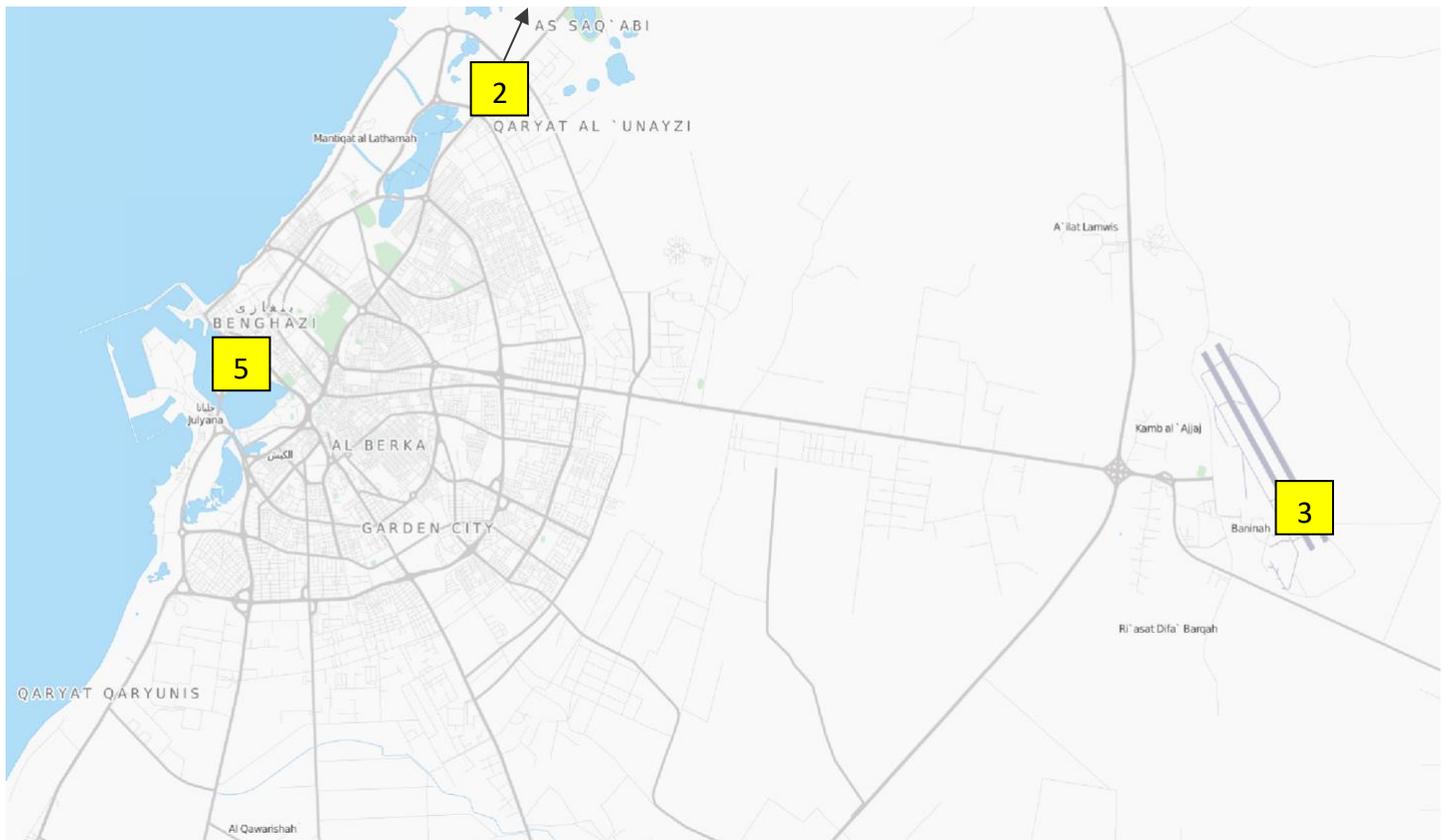
region from a common threat would contribute significantly to the militias' image, despite uncertainty over their capabilities to engage the LNA. Regardless, the WRPF's formation attests to the growing sophistication of militias who are now "playing politics" and fully engaged in PR campaigns. The WRPF could also be justified on the basis of thwarting any potential attack by Al-Kaniat militia of Tarhuna. By justifying the WRPF's formation on the basis of an external threat, the force will divert attention away from a general lack of legitimacy and political accountability. It remains unclear whether the force will transform into a permanent structure as alliances in Tripoli are expected to continue shifting in the short to medium term.

#### 301 Infantry Brigade takeover Al-Yarmouk Camp

Reports suggest the Misratan 301 "Al-Halbous" Infantry Brigade along with the Counter-Terrorism Force entered Al-Yarmouk Camp in Tripoli's Khella Al-Furjan area on 06 Feb. Additional reports suggest Misrata's tribal elders visited the Al-Yarmouk Camp to show their support for the takeover on 06 Feb. On 05 Feb, the 301 Brigade announced the redeployment of their forces South of Tripoli as per orders of GNA. The statement pledged to take all necessary measures deal with any security breaches. Meanwhile, the GNA spokesperson denied their reassignment. Tensions could escalate in Tripoli's South.

## 5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

### 2<sup>nd</sup> protest in support of LNA & calling for Salame's departure



#### KEY INCIDENTS

1. (02 Feb) CID arrest criminal network
2. (04 Feb) Hand grenade detonates injuring 3 children
3. (05 Feb) Large sum of hard currency seized at Benina
4. (08 Feb) Protest in support of LNA; calls for Salame's exit
5. (08 Feb) Two armed men arrested for attempted robbery

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> protest calling for Salame's exit

Local reports from 08 Feb suggest dozens of civil society activists protested in support of the Libyan National Army (LNA) and demanded the departure of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) head, Ghassan Salame. The protestors held pictures with red "X" symbols of Ghassan Salame, the Presidential Council (PC) head, Fayez Al-Serraj, the Western Military Region commander, Osama Juwaili, and the newly-appointed Sabha Military Region commander, Al-Kanna. Whispering Bell recorded a similar protest in which locals called for the replacement of Salame in front of Benghazi's Municipality headquarters on 30 Jan.

#### Criminals arrested

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of Benghazi's Security Directorate arrested a criminal network specialized in robbing mobile phone shops across Benghazi. Meanwhile, in a separate incident, the Investigation and Surveillance Unit under Benghazi's Rescue Department arrested two armed men for attempting to rob a civilian after intercepting their vehicle near Benghazi's Sports City on 08 Feb. Benghazi's authorities recently increased

the deployment of security forces across the city following a surge in criminal activity, particularly armed robberies.

#### Hard currency seized at Benina Airport

Customs at Benina International Airport seized over one million and 40,000 euros, in addition to 65,000 US dollars, in an aircraft bound for the Turkish capital, Istanbul. According to Benghazi's Customs Directorate, the necessary legal measures were taken to investigate the smuggling operation. On 30 Dec, a video circulated across social and local media outlets of an unidentified militia leader purportedly breaking the window of a police vehicle and stealing a bag allegedly containing 1 million euros in Benghazi's Benina International Airport on 30 Dec.

#### Hand grenade detonates; injuries

Local reports suggest a hand grenade detonated injuring three children behind Benghazi's Sadriyah Hospital on 04 Feb. The children reportedly found the hand grenade and tampered with it, resulting in the incident. Explosive remnants of war (ERW) continue to pose a threat to civilian lives on a daily basis across Libyan cities.

## 6. What's next

### Divisions widen in Tripoli as situation protracts in South

#### POLITICAL FORECAST

Politically, developments in the South could undermine the prospect of a peaceful reconciliation, as territorial control and the ability to secure southern oilfields would gradually replace the centrality of political dialogue, holding elections and/or a bottom-up National Conference. In further evidence that the road to elections is murky, the head of the Central Committee for Municipal Elections, Salem Bentahia, reported at least 69 out of 120 Libyan municipal councils may not hold scheduled elections in Mar 2019 due to a lack of funding by the Government of National Accord (GNA). According to Bentahia, holding municipal elections requires at least 50 million Libyan dinars (LYD), noting that the committee has thus far only received of the required budget, which limits the ability to launch awareness programs. Analysts suggest AFRICOM's "contain instability" approach, laid out in its recent statement to Congress, would underline low confidence levels in achieving stability in Libya this year. In the statement, AFRICOM's view on Russia's activity in Libya is worthy of mention. AFRICOM describes Russia as having a more active role in the country and exploiting "Qaddafi-era relationships and debts to obtain economic and military contracts." On the international front, analysts suggest Egyptian President Abdulfatah Sisi's chairmanship of the African Union (AU) will likely bring the Libyan file under the spotlight.

#### WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

In an article for *Al Monitor*, freelance journalist Alessandra Bocchi, argues locals in the South support the LNA in its campaign. "The three main tribes in Libya's southern Fezzan region largely support Gen. Khalifa Hifter's military takeover. Despite little media coverage, his Libyan National Army (LNA) has come to an agreement with most of the main tribal authorities in Libya's southern capital city, Sabha, and other areas in the southeast. The military operation has restored some security in a part of the country where human, fuel and drug trafficking has run rampant since the fall of Moammar Gadhafi's regime in 2011." "Libya's three main southern tribes are Awlad Suleiman, Tebu and Tuareg. They have all released official statements declaring support for Hifter's army, though some members have raised concerns for the LNA's reputation of brutal military force over the territories it controls. Awlad Suleiman released a statement through its municipal council, rather than directly through its tribal spokespersons, to avoid disputes with the rival Tripoli government it receives support from." "The spokesperson for the Fezzan Libya Organization said civilians are "definitely" on the side of the LNA. "While interacting with people here, they're quite excited about the LNA coming into Sabha, and some people are wary some militias or tribes might try to counteract their influence," he said."

#### SECURITY FORECAST

In Tripoli, travellers are advised to exercise caution due to planned celebrations of the 17 February Revolution. While there is little evidence to substantiate recent claims GNA PM Fayez Sarraj could replace Minister of Interior Fathi Bashagha due to tensions between the TRB and the latter, if confirmed, such a development would have widespread ramifications on Tripoli's security situation. Political rhetoric is expected to continue to grow across Tripoli with the potential for reshuffles and/or skirmishes. In Gharyan, pro-LIFG forces, including the Misrata Military Council (MMC) are consolidating and held a meeting under the "February 17 Revolution Forum" banner. There is a possibility tensions could erupt in Gharyan over the LNA's operation in the South, especially after controversial Mufti Sadiq Gharyani called on the "revolutionaries" to oppose Haftar's offensive in the South. There continues to be a possibility of skirmishes and/or a build-up of tensions between pro-LIFG elements and the GNA or LNA. Meanwhile, the Islamic State (IS) group issued a statement criticizing Libyan forces that ousted it from Sirte while noting they are now losing territory to Haftar. In the South, the LNA could face some resistance as it moves towards Murzuq and Umm Al-Aranib, where Tebus are reportedly divided over support for the LNA. Full-scale clashes over Sharara and Al-Feel oilfields are possible in the short to medium term, though negotiations are more likely.

#### LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

Writing in *The Arab Weekly*, Michel Cousins argues the GNA has significantly slowed down the LNA's advance, at least until now. He writes "It seemed the LNA was going to be triumphant across the south but the UN-supported Presidential Council in Tripoli and headed by Fayez Sarraj looked to sabotage Haftar's advance. It was announced that a pro-Presidential Council Zintani force was being sent to secure Sharara and then, the same day Ubari was taken by the LNA, Sarraj appointed former Qaddafi-era General Ali Kana to be military commander of the Sabha region. The consensus among political analysts and activists across Libya was that it was too little, too late. A Tuareg and still considered a Qaddafi supporter, Kana was said to have no more than 1,000 fighters under him. "Not even those [Tuareg fighters] at Sharara will follow him," said one political analyst from Fezzan. The analysts were wrong. On February 7, just hours after Kana was appointed, his forces moved into Ubari and attacked the LNA. The local hospital manager reported eight dead and seven wounded from both sides. Clashes were reported near the Sharara oilfield, which local sources said the LNA had not yet captured, despite its earlier claims. However, it appeared that, while the LNA had achieved much of what it wanted in the south and it imposed a no-fly order over the region, this was not going to be the walk-over that earlier seemed likely. Kana and his Tuareg forces appear to be stronger than expected and, in the deep south, the Tebus, incensed at the raid on Murzuk, are likely to rally their forces for a counter-attack. It looks as though Sarraj's move to undermine Haftar's southern advance has succeeded, at least for the moment."

# About Whispering Bell



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