

1. The Big Picture

Proxy-war risk increases as GNA receives arms shipment

The week in Libya was marked by an Islamic State (IS) attack, a documented foreign arms shipment received by the Government of National Accord (GNA), the release of foreign nationals kidnapped in 2018 facilitated by the UAE and Libyan National Army (LNA), and continuing threats of disruption to the country's oil and gas sector. Both LNA/GNA positions continue to harden with little to no evidence that a settlement will be negotiated in the short term.

On the ground, no significant position/control changes have been recorded over the past week. GNA forces attempted an offensive on the LNA-controlled Tripoli International Airport (TIP), while LNA forces regained ground on the Ain Zara and Khallat Forjan axes amid continuing airstrikes and shelling. As stated in a press briefing, the LNA's manoeuvres are consistent with its objective to create a cordon around militias in Tripoli; entering Tripoli's central areas may not be sought.

Meanwhile, a documented GNA-bound weapons shipment, allegedly from Turkey and Qatar, has renewed allegations of foreign support in the current GNA/LNA standoff, threatening to escalate the conflict into a full-blown proxy war. The GNA is reported to have received Turkish-made BMC Kirpi MRAP vehicles, Bulgarian MG-M1 machine guns, and other anti-aircraft weaponry and ammunition. The latest shipment, unloaded via Tripoli port on 18 May, represented a more overt form of military assistance. The GNA is yet to officially confirm the shipment, though GNA-affiliated forces boasted about the new military hardware on social media, confirming the shipment in a semi-official capacity.

While the arms shipment would technically contribute to the GNA's military posture, its political posture continues to gradually erode. As clashes introduce a new sense of normality in Tripoli, there is a risk tensions that prevailed before the clashes will now begin to resurface. First, there are emerging signs of widening rifts within the GNA bloc in the capital. In fact, the above arms shipment is said to have resulted in a dispute between the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB) and Misrata militias in competition for access to military hardware.

Further, militia disputes continue to threaten the GNA's cohesiveness. WB sources reported a local dispute between the Fursan Janzour Battalion, supported by the Mobile Force, and a Zawiyah militia on 16 May. Another dispute was also reported between a Zawiyah militia and an Amazigh group. In addition, the environment in which militias operate in the capital is also changing as locals' receptiveness to militia activity decreases in light of the clashes. This was highlighted by local protests sparked by the indiscriminate killing of a civilian on 16 May by a militiaman driving a GNA-branded vehicle. Separately, reports indicate growing backlash against the GNA from Qasr Bin Ghashir locals after a series of indiscriminate shells targeted the neighbourhood.

While thus far, tensions have remained localized, there is a risk broader political tensions will threaten the GNA's posture in the medium term. More specifically, the Sarraj cabinet's relationship with Misrata will be put to the test. Tensions between Deputy PM Ahmed Maiteeg (from Misrata) and Sarraj had been brewing even before the clashes, when the former accused Sarraj of unilateral decision-making. GNA Interior Minister's relationship with the TRB's Haithem Tajouri was also strained prior to the clashes. By contrast, the LNA was able to project its capabilities as a security actor with its reported role in facilitating the release of four kidnapped foreign nationals in cooperation with the UAE.

On the oil and gas front, analysts are of the view that only a US statement clarifying oil sales policy would prevent an attempt to market oil via the East as the threat of disruption continues to grow. A previously-undocumented pro-LNA group under the name of "Uprising of the Youth of 15 October" threatened to shut production, organize sit-ins within oil fields and terminals, and prevent oil tankers from transporting crude, to denounce what it described as the GNA's subservience to militias and use of oil revenues to fund terrorist/armed groups.

KEY POINTS

- GNA receives Turkish MRAP vehicles
- Internal tensions undermine GNA bloc
- Pro-LNA group threatens O&G disruptions



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2. National Security Map

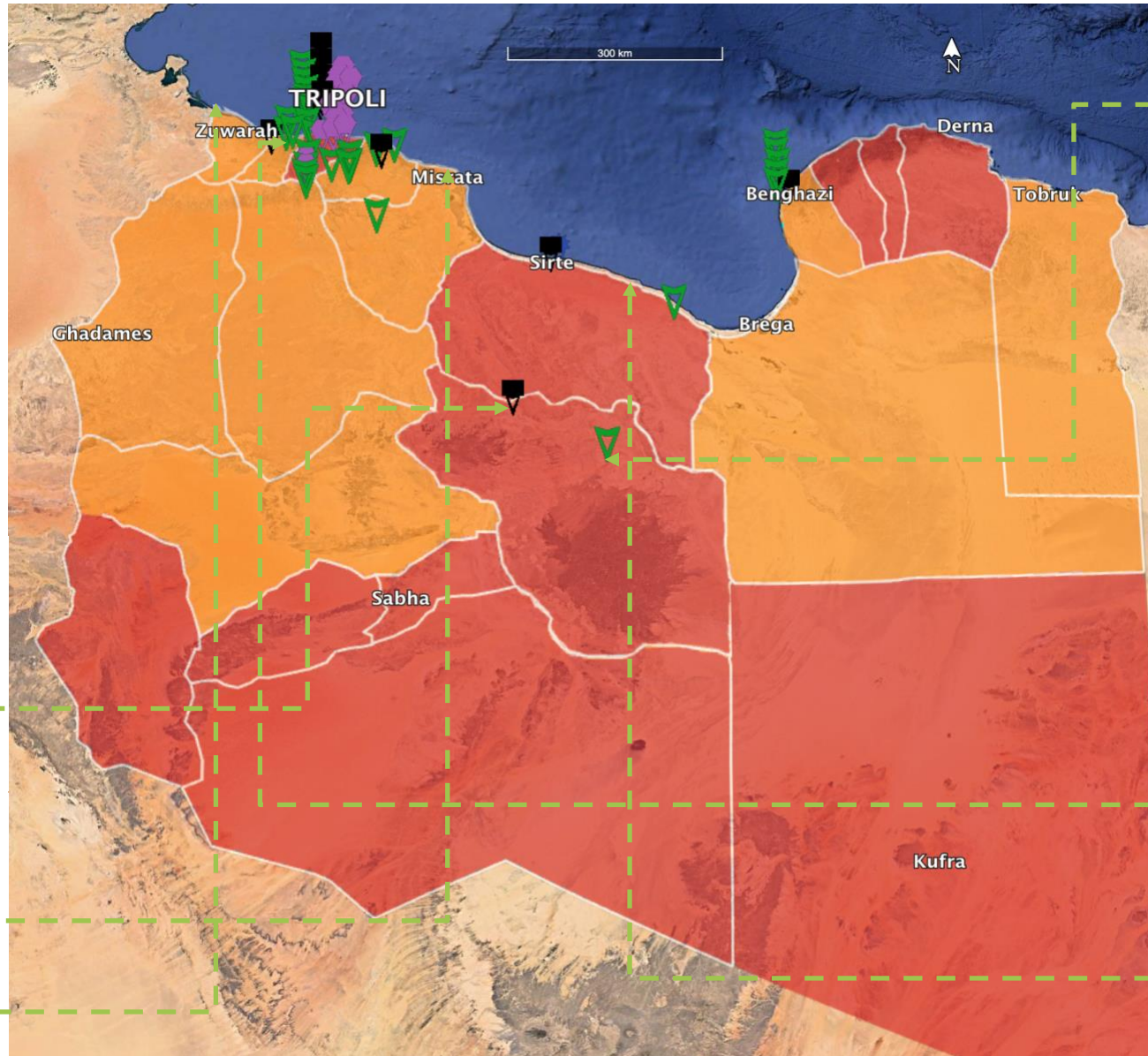
IS claims attack against LNA CP in Zillah; UAE/LNA joint operation to release kidnapped expats

Key

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Thr

EVENT INDICATORS

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



The Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility via its Amaq publication for an attack on a Libyan National Army (LNA)-manned checkpoint near the Zuetina Oil Company (ZOC)-operated Zillah Oil Field, claiming 3 fatalities and the capture of four others at approximately 0330hrs on 18 May. The NOC noted that following a security assessment, the militants stormed the main gate located between Zillah and the Zillah Oil Field resulting in three casualties, including one Libyan citizen, though there was no impact on production.

On 17 May, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation issued a statement announcing that four previous detainees, including three Filipinos and a South Korean, held by "armed groups in Libya", were released thanks to the UAE's "intensive efforts" in cooperation with the LNA. The statement noted that the detainees, working as civil engineers, were held captive whilst working at a desalination plant in the Al-Hasawna plant site near Ash Shwayrif on 06 Jul.

Sources reported brief clashes near Al-Zawiya Hospital at approximately 1800hrs on 18 May. Initial unconfirmed reports suggest the clashes erupted due to a dispute between two local militias.

Sources reported a police helicopter from the Eastern-based Ministry of Interior operated surveillance flights from Ajdabiya to Ben Jawad, East of Sirte on 15 May.

The Libyan National Army's (LNA) Media Information Division reported the downing of a GNA unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), allegedly launched from the Misrata Air College, as it entered the airspace of Al-Jufra Airbase after midnight on 14 May. On 12 May, in a press briefing, the LNA spokesperson, Ahmed Al-Mesmari, claimed that the Turkish Government offered technical support to GNA forces, including the supply of drones.

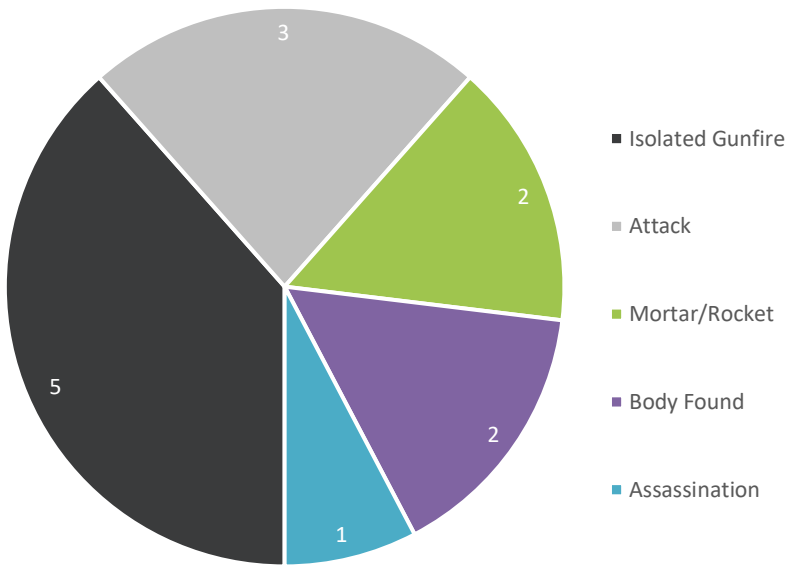
Reports across social media outlets suggest an unidentified vessel docked at the Misrata Seaport at night on 14 May. Initial reports suggest the vessel was previously docked in Bulgaria and then headed to Iran before it arrived in Misrata.

WB sources reported the Libya-Tunisia Ras Ajdir border crossing was closed at approximately 1800hrs on 16 May due to an electronic passport system glitch on the Libyan side.

3. Nationwide Security Analysis

Sharp drop in Tripoli fatalities from clashes due to absence of updated data

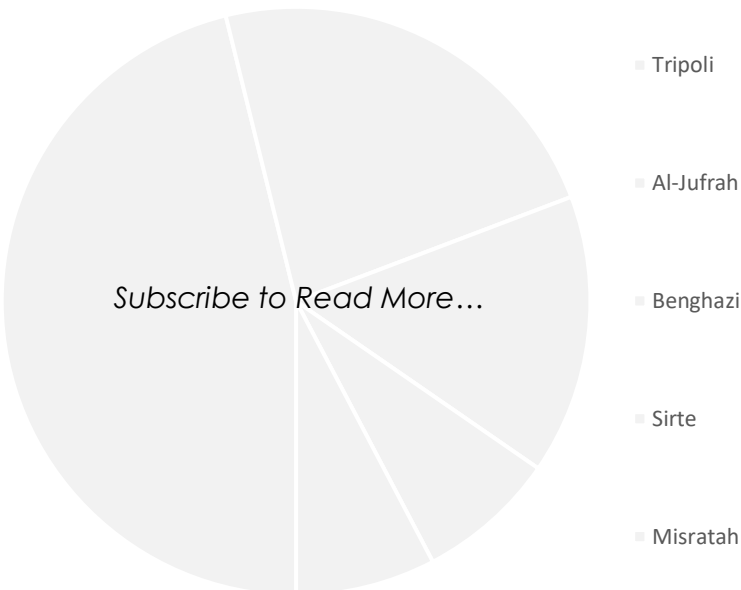
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



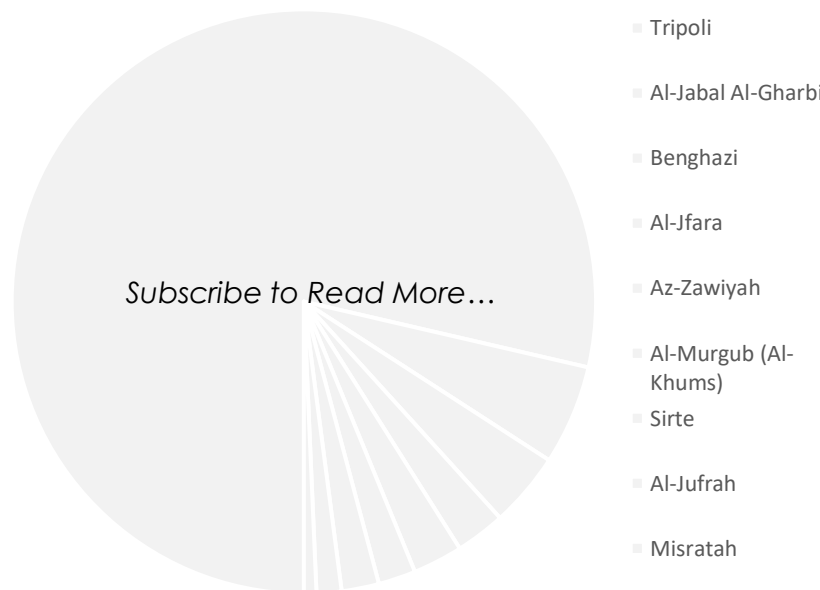
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



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

WB recorded this week a total of 13 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 77 deaths reported last week and 56 the week before. Whilst the number of this week's nationwide fatalities would indicate a sharp decrease in contrast to previous weeks, it is important to note that it fails to provide a realistic representation of the fatalities recorded in the ongoing Tripoli clashes, which if included, would indicate a greater number of fatalities. No updated Tripoli casualty toll was available at the time of publication. Over the course of the reporting period, WB recorded a slight decrease in airstrikes and isolated gunfire incidents. Meanwhile, there was an increase in the number of violent clashes and mortar/rocket incidents due to ongoing clashes on Tripoli's Southern frontlines. Whilst the majority of incidents were recorded in Tripoli, followed by the wider Western region, WB recorded six sporadic security incidents in the Eastern city of Benghazi for the second consecutive week. Several security incidents were reported throughout the country including, 35 airstrikes, 30 violent clashes, 25 mortar rocket shelling incidents, 11 cases of isolated gunfire, 9 arrests, 6 fires, 5 robberies, 3 protests 1 attack and 1 assassination

In Western Libya, WB recorded a total of 136 incidents, including 114 incidents in the capital city, Tripoli, marking an increase in Tripoli-related incidents in contrast to last week. Whilst clashes South of Tripoli continue to dominate the overall security environment in the Tripoli district, WB recorded sporadic incidents beyond the military escalation. Sources reported the Coastal Road of Tripoli's Janzur area was temporarily closed due to a local dispute between the Fursan Janzour Battalion along with the Mobile Force, and a Zawiya militia, at approximately 2200hrs on 16 May. Initial reports indicate the Fursan Janzour Battalion and Mobile Force looted a Toyota pick-up vehicle on one of the fronts, after which a Zawiya militiaman stole the vehicle and fled towards Al-Zawiya. The Fursan Janzour Battalion and the Mobile Force were stationed under the 17 Bridge near West Tripoli Power Plant, whilst the Zawiya militia were stationed under Bridge 27. No casualties were recorded. Separately, sources reported an employee of the Government of National Accord (GNA) General Directorate of Military Accounts was kidnapped from his residence in Tripoli in the morning on 12 May. The motive behind the kidnapping remains unknown.

In the wider Western region, local reports suggest bakeries in Bani Walid closed down in solidarity with an Egyptian national identified as Abdullah Morshedi, who was killed while working in a bakery in the city on 14 May. A man from an unidentified Libyan tribe was reportedly behind the killing, whilst the perpetrator's family announced that it would cover all burial costs in compliance with Sharia law. The motive behind the killing remains unknown.

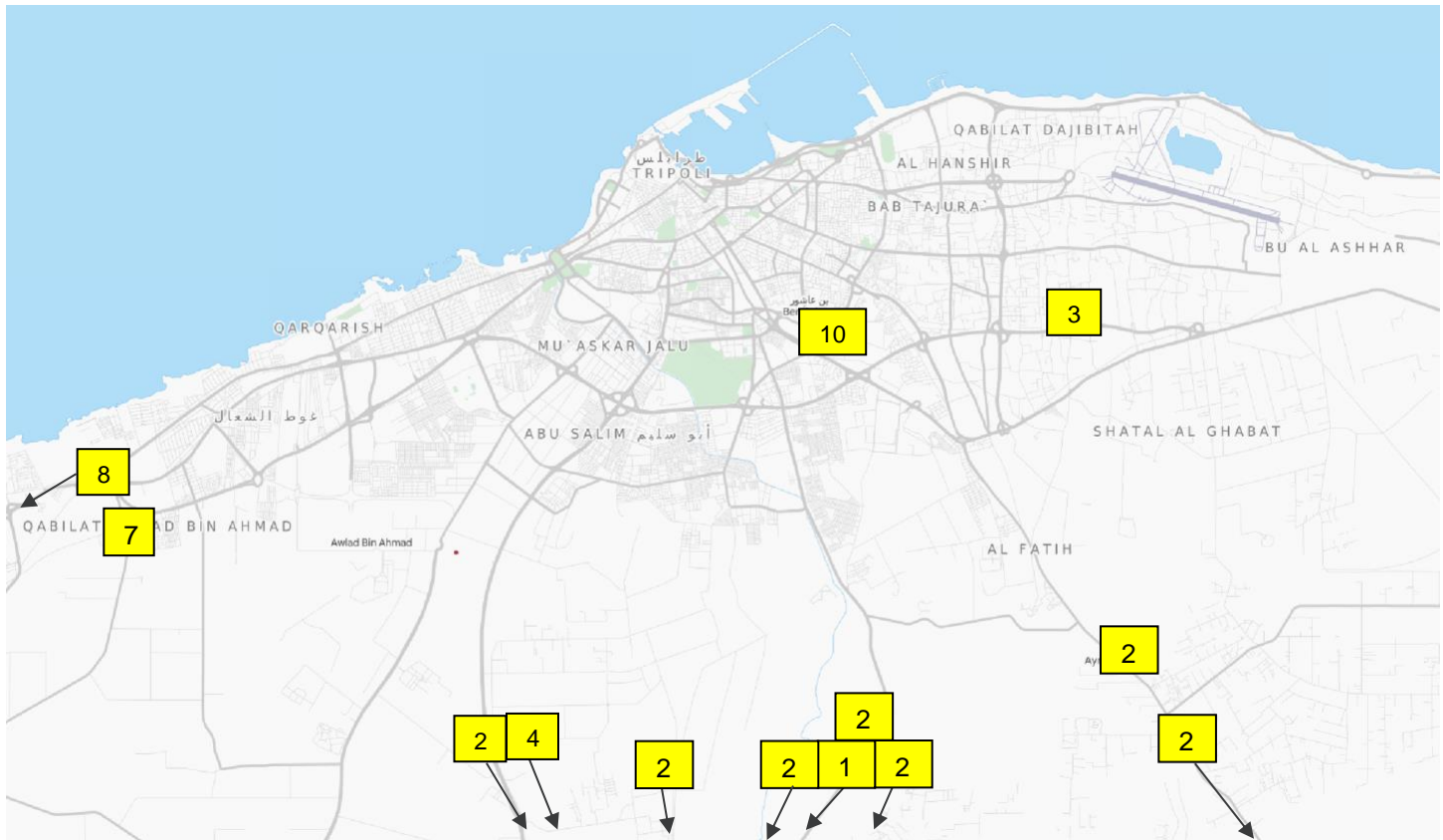
This week in Central Libya, local reports suggest security forces arrested two individuals accused of killing a Libyan woman identified as Aya Al-Gaddafi, next to a bakery in Sirte's African Union area at night on 15 May. The victim, who was reportedly pregnant with twins, was killed by a stray bullet that targeted her spouse's vehicle. The two suspects arrested were reportedly the victim's neighbours.

Turning to Southern Libya, WB did not record any security incidents in the region during the reporting period, though reports of suspicious Islamic State (IS) movements and convoys continue to emerge.

In Eastern Libya, WB recorded a total of 6 security incidents in Benghazi, including 4 arrests, 1 protest, and 1 isolated gunfire-related incident.

4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

Sporadic security incidents increase as clashes in South enter sixth week



Clashes continue particularly in TIP vicinity

On the ground, clashes resumed South of the Airport Road, near the Qaser Bin Ghashir Bridge, at approximately 0615hrs on 18 May. At approximately 0600hrs, clashes resumed on the Khallat Furjan front. Earlier, clashes resumed on the Al-Zarna front at approximately 0000hrs. At approximately 1700hrs on 17 May, clashes erupted in the Espiaa area, in addition to clashes resuming South of Ain Zara at approximately 1200hrs. At approximately 0200hrs on 17 May, clashes resumed in the Wadi Al-Rabei area, whilst clashes also resumed near the Qaser Bin Ghashir Bridge at approximately 0000hrs. The 17 May clashes resulted in the injuries of three high-ranked Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB) members on the Ain Zara-Wadi Alrabei front. Initial unconfirmed reports indicate that one of the militiamen died. WB recorded GNA/LNA airstrikes between 17 and 17 May, in addition to indiscriminate shelling on the frontlines. Beyond, sources reported locals held an anti-LNA protest in Martyrs' Square at approximately 2300hrs on 17 May, whilst a counter pro-LNA protest was held by locals in the Qaser Bin Ghashir area at night on 17 May.

Civilian killed by GNA-affiliated militiaman

WB sources reported the closure of Al Serraj's main road, in addition to the Serraj Roundabout, by locals who set fire to tires in protest of the killing of a civilian

man, by a militia near Alzad Alnafea Shopping at approximately 1830hrs on 16 May. The victim, driving a Toyota Camry vehicle with his children aboard, was harassed on a congested road by a militiaman driving a Samsung branded with the Government of National Accord's (GNA) Volcano of Rage Operation. The militiaman closed the road on the victim, after which a skirmish erupted. The civilian was shot dead by an AK-47 rifle. Initial reports indicate the killer was later captured by the Fursan Jazour Battalion.

Drive-by shooting targets police patrol

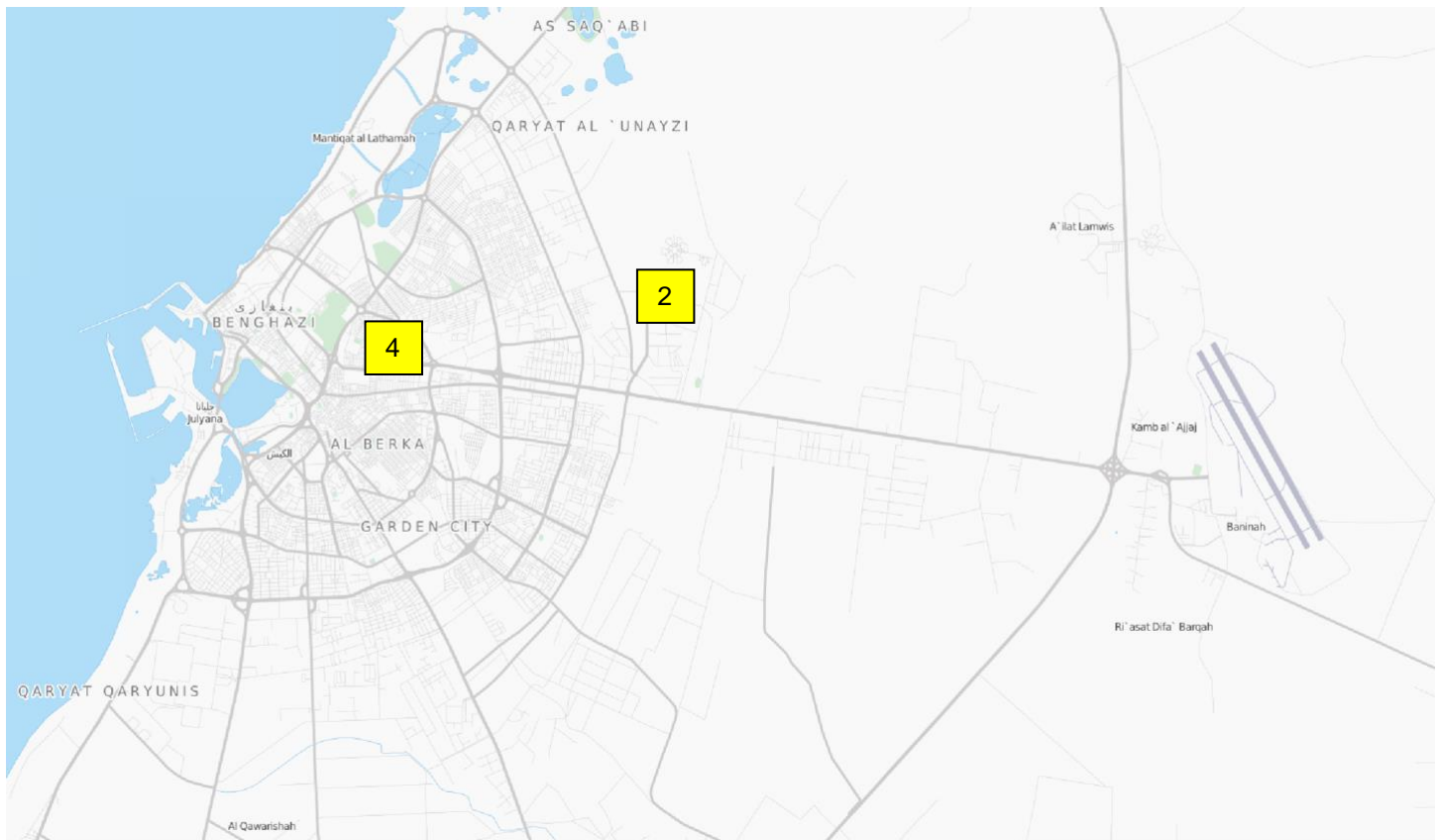
WB sources reported a group of gunmen riding a white Hyundai Avante with tinted windows conducted a drive-by shooting targeting a Police Station patrol in the Sidi Al-Masrey area, resulting in skirmishes between the gunmen and police members and the subsequent killing of a civilian due to indiscriminate gunfire near the Route 66 Caffé, at approximately 0000hrs on 17 May. The gunmen fled from the scene, whilst unconfirmed reports indicate that the killer handed himself over to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of Al-Furnaj area. Conflicting reports suggest the CID captured the perpetrator. Locals of the Bab Ben Ghashir area, where the victim resided, closed the roads in the area and set fire to tires in front of Al Nebras Restaurant, in addition to closing off the Sidi Al-Masrey Roundabout at approximately 0100hrs on 17 May.

KEY INCIDENTS

1. (13 May) Clashes in South; airstrikes and shelling
2. (14 May) Clashes cont on frontlines as NATO & EU call for ceasefire
3. (14 May) Gunfire heard due to dispute between two families in Ghararat
4. (15 May) Intensified military activity overnight
5. (16 May) LNA claims "almost" confirmed negotiations with Juwaili to retreat to Zintan
6. (16 May) Suspect involved in armed robberies/vehicle thefts arrested
7. (16 May) Civilian shot dead by GNA-affiliated militiaman in Al-Serraj
8. (16 May) Janzour Coastal Rd. closes; dispute b/w Janzour-Zawiya militias
9. (17/18 May) Clashes cont particularly in TIP area; Haftar to meet Macron
10. (17 May) Drive-by shooting targets police patrol in Sidi Masrey; casualty

5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

Libyan Airlines staff protest against GNA interference in company affairs



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (12 May) CID arrests gang involved in vehicle thefts
2. (14 May) CID arrests two drug traffickers in Masakin
3. (15 May) Libyan Airlines staff protest GNA interference
4. (15 May) Local dispute results in the death of two brothers
5. (15 May) UNICEF/EKRA to provide learning opportunities
6. (15 May) NOC expresses delight on progress of development projects

Libyan Airlines staff protest

Reports suggest Libyan Airlines staff protested what they described as the Government of National Accord's (GNA) interference in the Eastern-based company's affairs in the afternoon on 15 May. The protestors also denounced the abduction of the Libyan Airlines pilot, Capt. Nawras Al-Atrash from his hotel in Tripoli's Al-Safi Hotel on 05 May and demanded his release. Further, the protestors demanded the Interim Government to probe against the new GNA-assigned Libyan Airlines chairman who they claim is involved in the pilot's abduction. The staff threatened to halt operations should their demands go unheard.

Drug traffickers arrested

Local reports from 14 May suggest Benghazi's Criminal Investigation Department (CID) arrested two drug traffickers in Benghazi's Masakin area. The CID received intelligence on the presence of a man exploiting his position as a security officer to trade narcotics. Following investigations, the CID captured the criminal along with another man, and were found in possession of a pistol, a knife, a Hyundai vehicle and 40 narcotic pills

ready for sale. The defendants admitted to long-term drug use and the trafficking of narcotics,

Local dispute

Sources reported a local dispute between families resulted in the death of two brothers in Benghazi's Abu Zaghiba area at night on 15 May. The family of those killed set fire to the other family's house.

Educational & health development projects

On 15 May, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), in partnership with the domestic organisation Ekraa, announced that it will provide learning opportunities for 9,000 children and adolescents in Benghazi. The statement noted that the one-year agreement aims at providing children/adolescents impacted by the country's conflict with uninterrupted learning opportunities, as well as providing remedial classes for children who have missed out on education. Meanwhile, in a separate development, the National Oil Corporation (NOC) expressed its "delight" on the progress of one of its key community projects, in cooperation with its partner OMV, which includes supplying Benghazi's Children Hospital with over 3 million US dollars (USD) of medical equipment, laboratory tools and other necessary supplies. The NOC noted that the project will address critical healthcare needs for children in Benghazi.

6. What's next

Military activity to increase in Eid period; rifts to widen within GNA

POLITICAL FORECAST

Domestically, divisions within the Tripoli/Tobruk House of Representatives (HoR) continued to grow. At least 44 Tobruk-based HoR members issued a decree nullifying the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) and calling into question the legitimacy of all institutions derived from it. On the international front, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) head, Ghassan Salame, concluded a three-day visit to Washington, US, where he held in-depth discussions with senior US administration and congress officials. On the UNSMIL official Twitter page, the mission stated that Salame's visit comes as part of his extended efforts to restore a unified international position on Libya to end the current conflict. Separately, Italian Prime Minister, Giuseppe Conte, held talks with Khalifa Haftar during a visit to Rome on 16 May, in which Conte reiterated calls for a ceasefire and a return to the political process. Haftar is also set to meet French President Emmanuel Macron. On the GNA's recent lobbying efforts, US Justice Department records noted that the lobby firm Mercury's managing director pitched and op-ed by Faye Sarraj to an unidentified news outlet. This confirms that the recently-published Wall Street Journal op-ed by Sarraj came as a result of the GNA's lobbying campaign. On the oil and gas front, disruption by an eastern-based civilian movement, especially a peaceful protest, could be used as a bargaining chip to achieve the long coveted eastern-Central Bank of Libya (CBL) objective of controlling oil revenues. This would enable the LNA to claim plausible deniability and would help project the image that the army is merely responding to public demands. The LNA can then secure further gains by enabling production to resume under certain conditions.

WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

In their latest report, the *International Crisis Group (ICG)* analyses the potential ramifications of a protracted conflict on the Libya's banking sectors in the East and West. In the comprehensive piece, ICG warns that GNA economic measures to halt funding to eastern-based financial institutions would be a "catastrophic scenario". The authors argue "Such a strategy could make military sense, but it would also compound Libya's lingering economic crisis by orders of magnitude, with grave social, economic and political repercussions for the entire country. The commercial banks' growing troubles could cause mass panic, aggravate an existing liquidity crisis and impede service delivery as key state companies and private firms, which hold accounts with these banks, may no longer be able to process payments or issue letters of credit to import the essential goods on which Libya is highly dependent. A financial squeeze in the east could also reignite fighting over Libya's sole source of revenue: its oil. In the short term, Haftar could ask his wealthy regional backers – mainly the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia – to bankroll his war effort, but as the battle wears on, the east-based government could decide to shut down the country's oil fields and export terminals, most of which are under LNA control. This would deepen the de facto split between east and west, including the rift in the banking sector, and possibly become a prelude to partition. All these developments would vastly complicate efforts to reach a political settlement to the Libyan conflict overall. To prevent such a catastrophic scenario, Libya's competing military coalitions in the east and west should urgently agree to a ceasefire and then promptly launch negotiations between the Central Bank's rival governors to settle the dispute over how to account for financial transactions in the east. Outside actors should press the parties to embark on this course of action and offer expert advice. The U.S. in particular should use its historical leverage over Libya's financial and oil sectors and its newly declared sympathy for Haftar to usher the parties toward a financial settlement."

SECURITY FORECAST

There is mounting evidence to indicate the GNA bloc's cohesiveness will be put to the test in upcoming weeks, especially in the Zawiya area and Tripoli's Western flank. The security environment in central Tripoli remains operational, though the prevailing security vacuum could result in sporadic security incidents and/or complex attacks. South of Tripoli, military activity is expected to remain unchanged during Ramadan, with hostilities set to escalate during the Eid period. In terms of tribal dynamics, the balance could shift in favour of the LNA. In a videoed statement, Zintani Social Council Tribal elders reaffirmed their support for the GNA, though uncertainty will continue to grow over the strength of the Zintani-Misrata-GNA relationships. In Bani Walid, the local municipal council officially resumed its activity under the eastern-based interim government on 19 May. Meanwhile, the recent and alarming increase in terrorism activity, especially the Islamic State (IS) in Libya, continues to threaten the country's oil and gas facilities. Pro-LNA outlets reported suspicious IS movements South of Al-Uqayla. IS activity has brought the Sirte Protection Force (SPF) back under the spotlight. The force attempted to justify its counter-terrorism role in a joint conference, claiming the LNA's presence in Jufra facilitated the IS attack in Zillah. As IS activity increases, both LNA/GNA groups are expected to increase attempts to demonstrate counter-terrorism capabilities. In the South, there have been no new incidents reported after LNA forces mobilized again in cities such as Sabha. However, the threat remains and militants have been reported to plan attacks in the short to medium term. Unconfirmed reports emerged over a suspicious military convoy consisting of approximately eight vehicles travelling on the road between Tamahint and Samnu, North of Sabha.

LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

In an op-ed for *The National*, originally published in French in *Le Journal Du Dimanche*, the UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Anwar Gargash, presents a solution to the Libyan crisis. He writes "The solution to the present crisis is clear enough: immediate de-escalation, and a return to the United Nations-led process, leading to credible and peaceful elections. Whoever wins those elections must be capable of unifying the country, resolutely combatting terrorist groups, and redeveloping the shattered economy. In the Middle East, there are no easy decisions. Often, we are faced with the "least worst" of difficult choices, choices that are not always exactly as Western commentators would wish." Dr. Anwar Gargash also notes "High on our agenda at present is Libya where Europe, the UAE and like-minded regional states have a common interest. Neither Europe nor North Africa, even less so Egypt, the most populated Arab country, can afford a failed state on their doorsteps. Chaos in Libya has already led to the re-emergence of Al-Qaeda and ISIS in the capital, Tripoli. If that chaos continues, it could be contagious in ways that are hard to predict. In a situation where there is no effective central government, and where local armed groups cannot always be trusted, the fight against terrorism must continue; the best partners must be found for it, and tested through experience. Yet all this must be subordinate to the most important objective of all, which is to achieve a durable and peaceful political settlement. We therefore are strong supporters of the work of Ghassan Salame, the United Nations envoy to Libya, in seeking a political solution to the country's eight-year-long crisis. In February we brokered an agreement between Libya's warring parties, hosting both the Tripoli-based political leader Faye Sarraj and Libya's army chief Khalifa Haftar in Abu Dhabi. Regrettably extremist militias in Tripoli subsequently derailed this agreement in a bid to take control of Libya's future, Islamist and jihadi groups uniting in support of Al Sarraj."

About Whispering Bell



Contact Whispering Bell at: +971-4-448-6690 or at ras@whisperingbell.com

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