

# 1. The Big Picture

## Likely post-Eid escalation amid nationwide terrorism threat

Clashes between the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA) and Libyan National Army (LNA) forces continued. On the ground positions remain unchanged, though allegations of foreign military assistance in both ranks continue to drag the conflict into a full-blown proxy war. Meanwhile, focus on the counterterrorism (CT) narrative is gradually expanding. While thus far the LNA has championed the narrative, GNA-aligned authorities are now also beginning to engage in efforts to project CT capabilities to distance themselves from LNA accusations of complicity in harbouring Islamist extremists.

On the tactical front, forces continue to alternate between advances and retreats. Clashes intensified between 01-02 Jun, as GNA forces attempted to repel LNA units southward, temporarily gaining ground in Al-Yarmouk, Al-Ramla, Wadi Al-Rabei, Ain Zara, Ahya Al-Baria and Al-Swani areas. GNA forces stated the use of a new combat tactic in the vicinity of Tripoli International Airport (TIP) forced LNA units to retreat. However, a day later (between 02-03 Jun), LNA snipers on rooftops undermined the GNA's advances as LNA units regained ground in Al-Swani.

While military advances remain limited, activity on the political front is increasing, in line with the unfolding trend over the past month. The LNA continues to reinvigorate and refine its narrative. In a clear indication of the conflict's growing complexity, the LNA Karama Ops Room Media Centre published a relatively longer and more detailed briefing, placing great emphasis on tribal relations. The Ops Room further accused the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) of attempting to create divisions between tribes. The Ops Room emphasized the importance of the Wershiffanah tribe and declared that MB elements tried to portray the area as a "hotbed" of criminals. The Ops Room praised the Wershiffanah tribe and stated it is an important component in deciding the future of the country. Similar comments were made in relation to Tarhunah tribe and the recent killing of Mohammad Al-Dawi. The Ops Room noted that such attempts by the MB to break social cohesion can only end with the military solution, citing the Egyptian and Sudanese cases as political references.

A focus on Turkish involvement in support of the GNA continues to reinforce the LNA's posture, whilst strengthening the LNA/Egypt alliance as a result. The LNA's Military Information Division announced it downed a Turkish unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) over Gharyan at night on 01 Jun. The LNA is yet to

release pictures to corroborate the claims. Similarly, GNA forces claimed a foreign UAV was downed over Al-Aziziya, claims that were later discredited by the LNA spox, Ahmed Mismary.

On the CT front, the week was marked by LNA consolidating wins with the extradition of the Egyptian militant and former Egyptian Army Special Forces officer Hisham Al-Ashmawy. The extradition followed a brief meeting between Khalifa Haftar and the Egyptian General Intelligence Chief, Abbas Kamel, in Ar-Rajmah on 28 May. Egyptian state television announced that the prominent terrorist was transferred to Egypt in a military aircraft after being held in LNA custody in Benghazi following his arrest in Derna on 08 Oct. Meanwhile, the LNA spox stated investigations with Ashmawi reveal that terrorism in Libya is linked with external countries. Mismary noted the LNA's arrests of several Arabs and foreigners, including Abdelfattah Zoghbiya, who was recruited by Turkish intelligence, according to the LNA spox. Following Ashmawy's extradition, at least two arrests of terrorists, including an Al-Qaeda (AQ) militant, were reported on the GNA side. The timing of these arrests would suggest they are politically charged amid a mutual GNA/LNA understanding that a focus on security and CT wins the hearts and minds of EU capitals and Washington.

Looking ahead, the upcoming Eid holiday period will be a double-edged sword for LNA units mobilized on the frontlines. Military activity will either remain unchanged or escalate post-Eid. Combat operations could see little to no change should the LNA assess that political escalation is more cost-effective in the short term.

Should activity escalate, LNA forces could attempt a surprise attack from Tripoli's Western flank. But while a major escalation is seen as necessary to break from the current standoff, Eid presents a dilemma for the LNA as the necessity to gain ground in Tripoli's South will need to be carefully balanced with the risk of a weakened posture in the East, including the Oil Crescent area, and South. A recent twin vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) attack targeting an LNA camp is a case in point. In addition, there is a risk of combat fatigue for LNA units mobilized from the East and unable to celebrate Eid with their families.

### KEY POINTS

- Positions remain unchanged on the ground
- Nationwide Islamic State (IS) threat of attack
- Dilemma ahead of Eid holiday period



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# 2. National Security Map

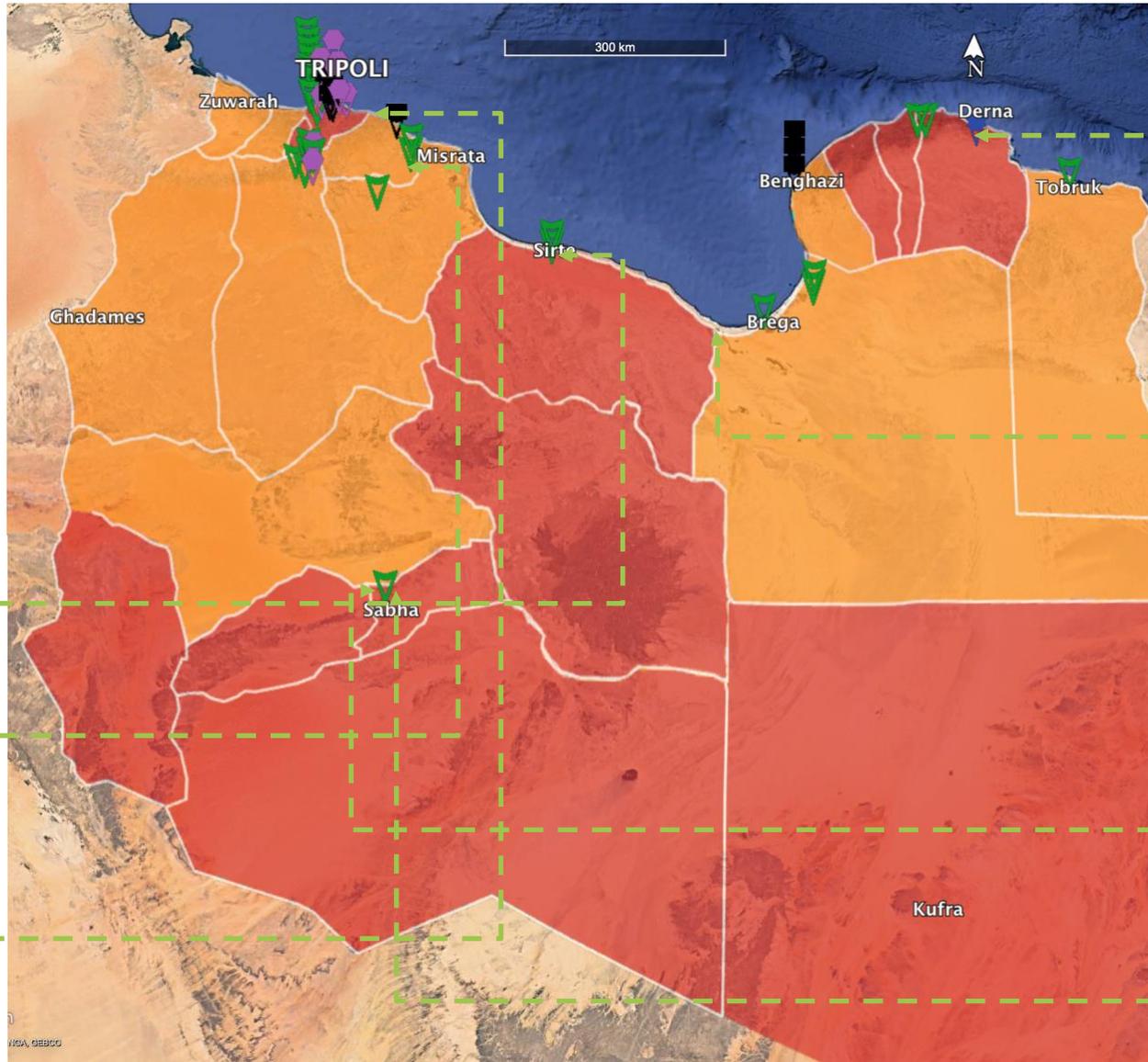
## Twin VBIED attack targets LNA in Derna; Suspicious Jathran movements in Oil Crescent

### Key

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Thr

### EVENT INDICATORS

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



A twin vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) attack targeted an LNA “Bulahati” military camp in Derna, near Darnes Football Club, resulting in at least 18 injuries at approximately 0130hrs on 02 Jun, according to Reuters citing a medical source and residents. Ten out of the 18 casualties are said to be in critical condition. Details surrounding the incident remain unknown, though unconfirmed reports suggest potential Islamic State (IS) involvement.

Unconfirmed reports allege a military gathering of forces affiliated to the Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG) former head, Ibrahim Jathran, spotted near Sirte. The unconfirmed reports indicate Jathran-affiliated forces could attack the Oil Crescent region in the coming days. No further information.

The GNA Navy Chief of Staff, Rida Essa, denied reports that coastal areas from Sirte to Ras Ajdir had been declared a military zone. Essa added that GNA naval forces are ready to thwart any potential LNA naval offensive.

Local reports suggest two bank coordinators and members of the Aljadid Local Council, who were carrying cash to be distributed as salary payments to locals, were killed in an armed robbery in Sabha’s Jadid area on 01 Jun.

Libyan Airlines flights have resumed from Tripoli’s Mitiga International Airport (MJI) to Ghat Airport starting from next week. The flight is scheduled twice per week and came after several meetings with Government of National Accord (GNA) officials.

Local reports from 27 May suggest outlawed groups vandalised a water station’s operating units in Sirte. The group stole wires, copper/electric cables, a generator and batteries, and damaged the station’s main door.

Reports suggest sporadic gunfire was heard in Zliten’s Majir Prison after several prisoners seized weapons from the guards at approximately 2000hrs on 28 May. However, the prison guards thwarted the escape attempt and the gunfire reportedly continued until the prisoners’ ammunition ran out. No casualties were recorded.

The GNA Mol commissioned the Special Support Force Central Region of Central Support to secure the coastal Road, extending from the Ghot Al-Romman gate East of Tripoli, up to the Western gate of Misrata, on 31 May. The force, operating 24hrs daily, is tasked with regulating traffic and conducting patrols across several areas along the Coastal Road.

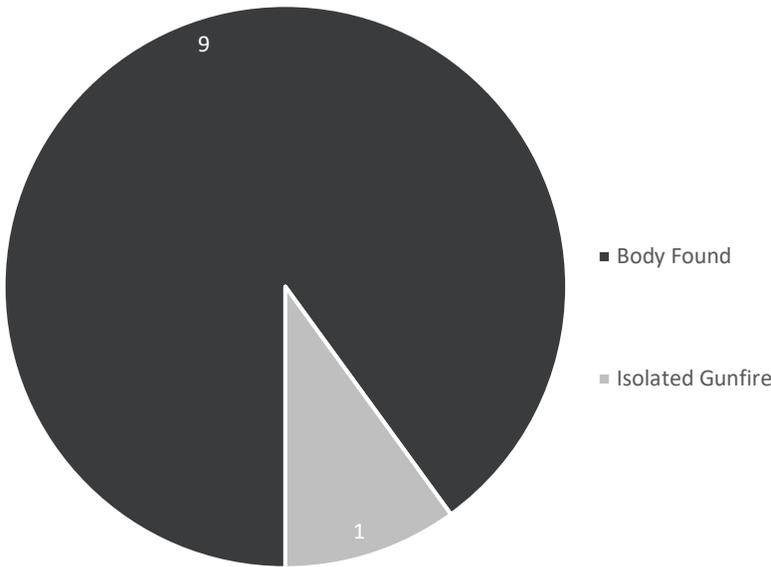
### Libya Weekly Political and Security Update

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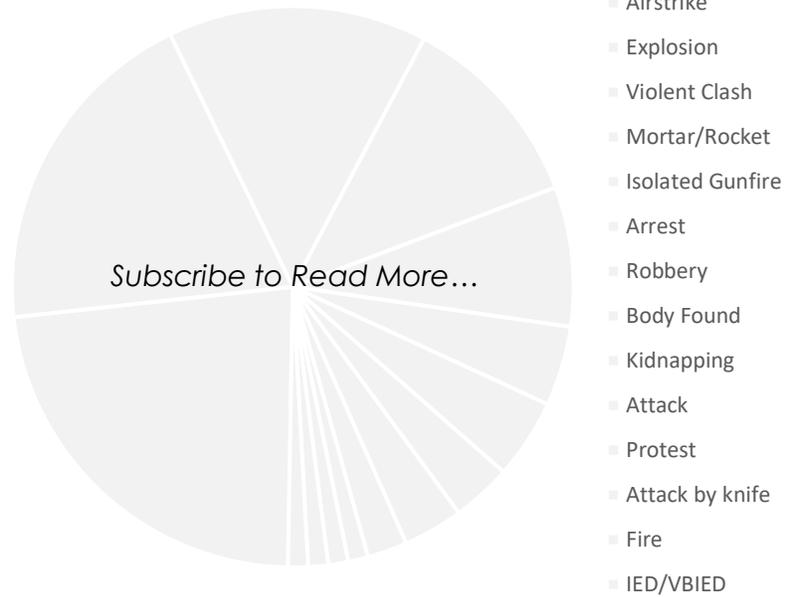
### 3. Nationwide Security Analysis

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

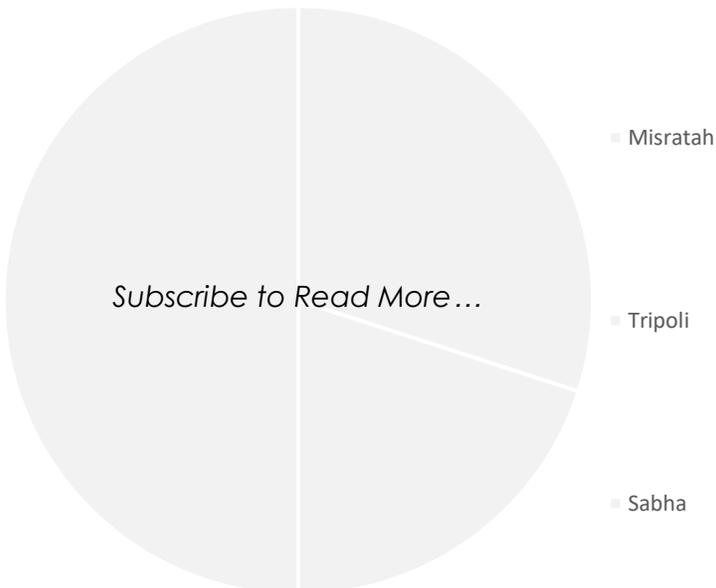
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



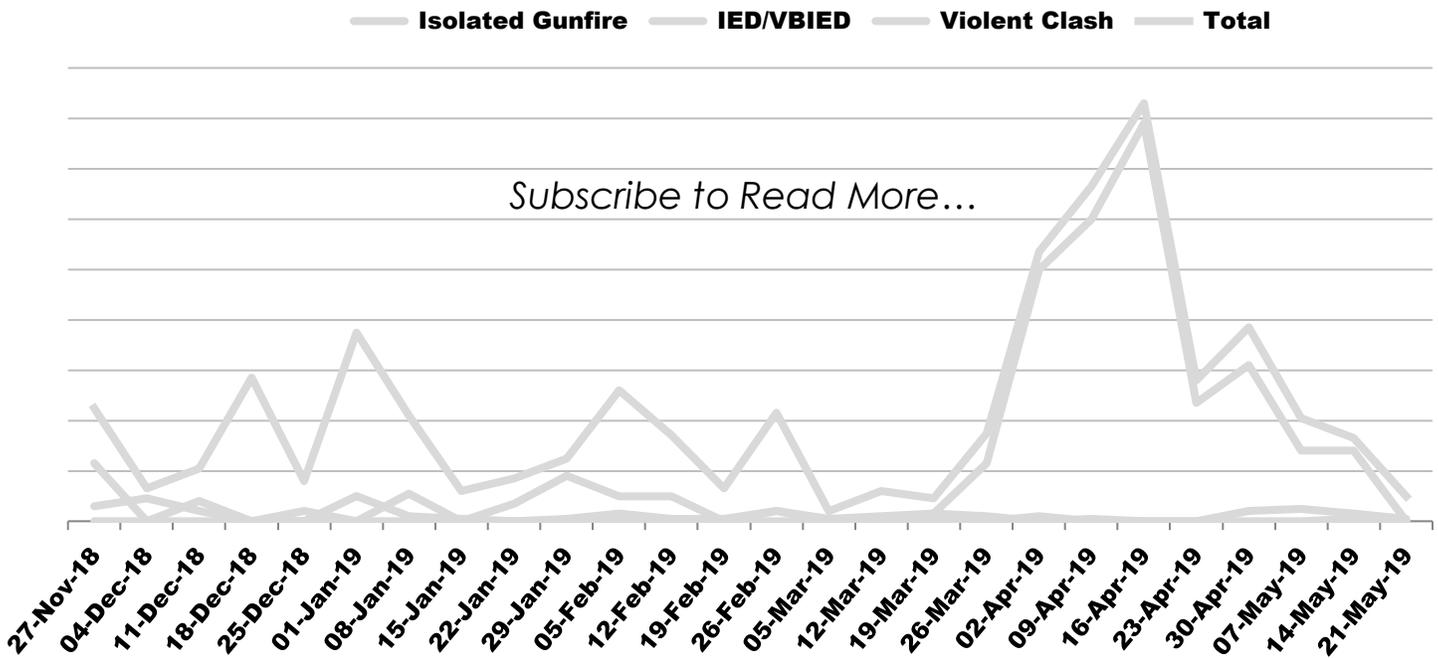
Nationwide fatalities by national district (Past week)



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 10 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 33 deaths reported last week and 13 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 writing. The latest reports at the time of writing indicate the total number of fatalities since the beginning of the clashes reached 607. This figure will be reflected in next week's report. This week, nine out of the ten fatalities were due to separate cases of bodies found across the country, whilst one fatality was as a result of a gunfire-related incident. This week, WB recorded a decrease in mortar/rocket shelling incidents and violent clashes, whilst the number of airstrikes and isolated gunfire remain the same as last week. Whilst the majority of security incidents remain dominantly in Tripoli, followed by the wider Western region, WB recorded a slight increase in security incidents in the Eastern region, beyond the city of Benghazi. Several security incidents were reported throughout the country including, 20 airstrikes, 17 explosions, 13 violent clashes, 10 mortar/rocket shelling incidents, 7 cases of isolated gunfire, 4 robberies, 4 arrests, 4 robberies, 3 separate cases of bodies found, 3 kidnappings and 2 attacks.

In Western Libya, WB recorded a total of 74 incidents, including 61 incidents in the capital city, Tripoli, marking a decrease in incidents recorded in the region in contrast to last week. In relation to the ongoing clashes in Tripoli's South, An Ansar Al-Sharia (ASL) militant wanted for his involvement in the killing of the US Ambassador to Libya, Chris Stevens, in a 2012 attack on the US consulate in Benghazi, was killed fighting alongside the Government of National Accord (GNA) against the Libyan National Army (LNA) on Tripoli's Airport Road on 25 May. The ASL affiliate, Mohammed Dardaf aka "Babour", is a member of Salah Badi's Al-Sumood Brigade. Several pro-ASL Facebook accounts mourned Dardaf's death and reported that he was killed by a missile that hit his vehicle. Separately, pro-Government of National Accord (GNA) media outlets suggest Libyan National Army (LNA)-affiliated gunmen kidnapped a High Council of State (HCS) member, Mohammed Abu Gamja, from his residence in Tripoli on 23 May. Gamja's whereabouts remain unknown. In the wider Western region, the Great Man-made River (GMMR) Authority confirmed that station No.586 of the water system was exposed to acts of sabotage in Zliten on 23 May. According to the GMMR authority, a local sabotaged the No.586 station resulting in a disruption in the supply lines feeding the coastal cities, including Misrata, Zliten, Khoms, and Garabouli, as well as neighbouring areas. The Al-Hasawna Water System Control Room stated that it was forced to empty one million cubic meters of water in order for the maintenance teams to repair the damage and resume operations.

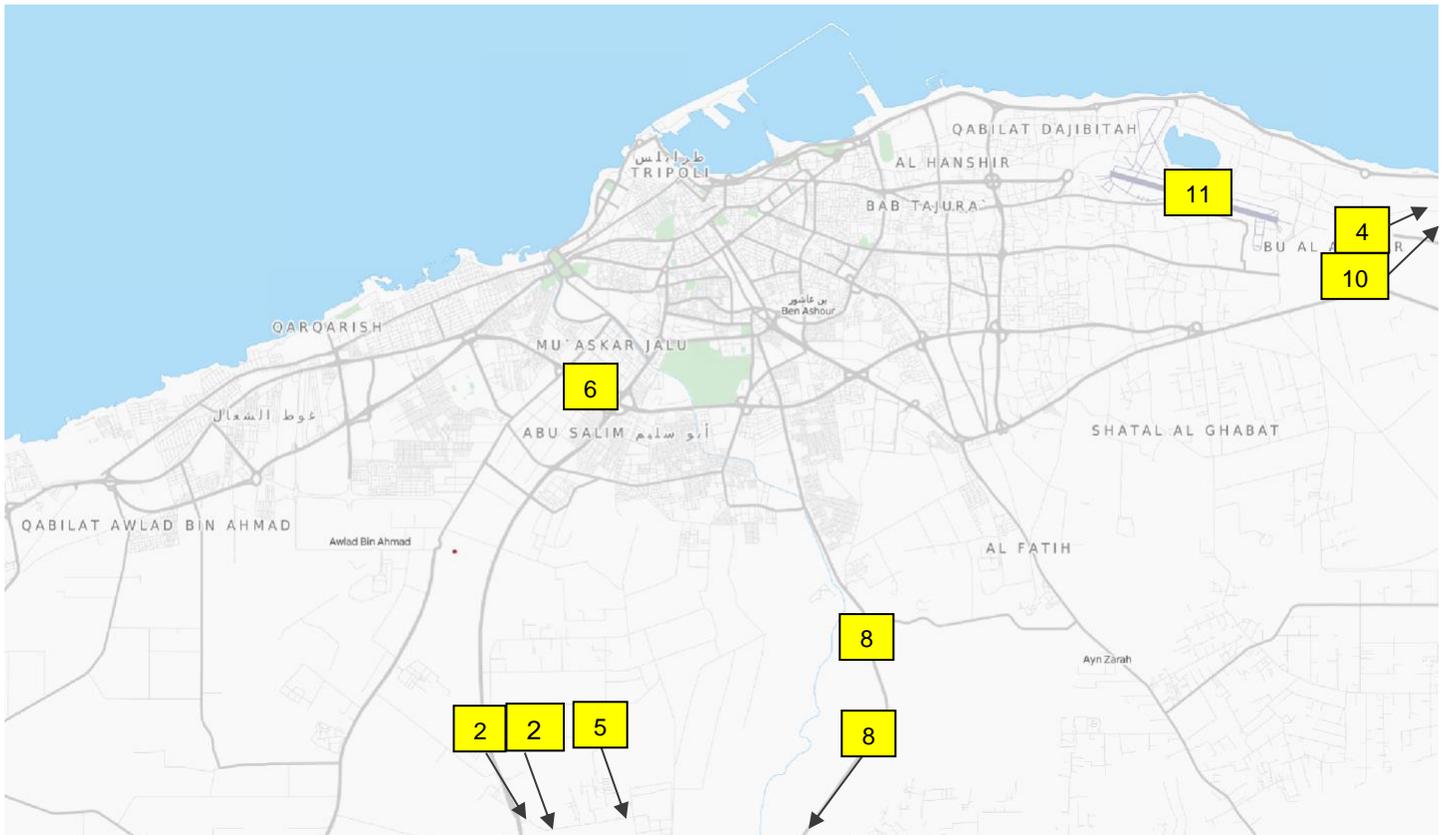
In the central region, local reports from 27 May suggest outlawed groups vandalised a water station's operating units in Sirte. The group stole wires, copper/electric cables, a generator and batteries, in addition to damaging the station's main door.

Turning to Southern Libya, Sabha's Joint Security Room reportedly located two unidentified bodies in the city's desert area in the early hours of 27 May. The bodies were found shot dead and tied. There is no further information available.

In Eastern Libya, the Sufi Supreme Council reported that a fellow coordinator of the Council's Tobruk Branch, Sheikh Hussein Al-Saghir, was subject to a failed assassination attempt on 25 May. A criminal group stabbed Al-Saghir in his abdomen as he was on his way back from prayer. The criminals were later arrested and confessed that the incident was a hate crime.

# 4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

## GNA claim advance on multiple fronts; LNA airstrike targets Tajura Seaport



### LNA strikes Tajoura Seaport as clashes continue

On the frontlines, sources reported clashes resumed between the Libyan National Army (LNA) and Government of National Accord (GNA) forces on the Ain Zara - Wadi Al-Rabei front at approximately 0715hrs on 01 Jun. At approximately 0730hrs, sources reported heavy explosions heard in the Al-Swani area due to tanks firing missiles from the South of the Airport Road. Simultaneously, sources reported heavy explosions heard in the Sabaa area due to tanks firing missiles. The latest reports as of 1150hrs on 01 Jun suggest GNA forces launched an attack on LNA positions in the Al-Yarmook Camp vicinity and Al-Naqliya Camp on the Airport Road. The GNA's Volcano of Rage Ops. Room reported that its forces advanced on several fronts and subsequently gained control over new areas at dawn on 01 Jun. Meanwhile, 29-30 May clashes were marked by an LNA airstrike was conducted in the Tajoura area. Initial reports indicate the airstrike targeted Tajoura Seaport with no further information available on the intended target. In line with WB's assessment that military activity is due to escalate immediately after the end of Ramadan, reports suggest additional battalions from Misrata will mobilise towards Tripoli to fight alongside the GNA on the frontlines post-Ramadan.

In a separate development, Director General of the Central Support Department, Brigadier Mohamed Fathalla, met with Tripoli's General Directorate of Central Support officials to establish a security plan

to secure the capital city during the Eid Al-Fitr period. Fathalla stressed the need to raise the level of readiness to maximum to prevent any potential security breaches.

### Planned sit-in across airports & seaports

WB sources reported several GNA Customs Department employees will protest in front of the Ministry of Finance on 03 Jun and will carry out a strike across airports and seaports due to suspended employee promotions since 2018. The strike, if carried out, could impact operations at Mitiga International Airport (MJI). Protests/strikes related to employee grievances, particularly unmet financial demands, remain common across Libyan cities.

### Mol announces arrest of prominent AQ leader

On 30 May, the GNA's Ministry of Interior (MoI) announced the arrest of a prominent Al-Qaeda (AQ) leader identified as Ali Al-Taher Al-Badrim, also known as "Abu Jandal". The MoI reported that Abu Jandal was arrested in 1989 on charges of AQ affiliation AQ was sentenced to life imprisonment, however, he was released in 2011. The MoI formed a committee to follow up on Abu Jandal's case resulting in his arrest on 21 May. Abu Jandal confessed handing over an Opel vehicle carrying mortars with the caliber of 120mm to a man identified as "Haj Yousef" between Zliten and Khoms, intended for carrying out terror attacks.

### KEY INCIDENTS

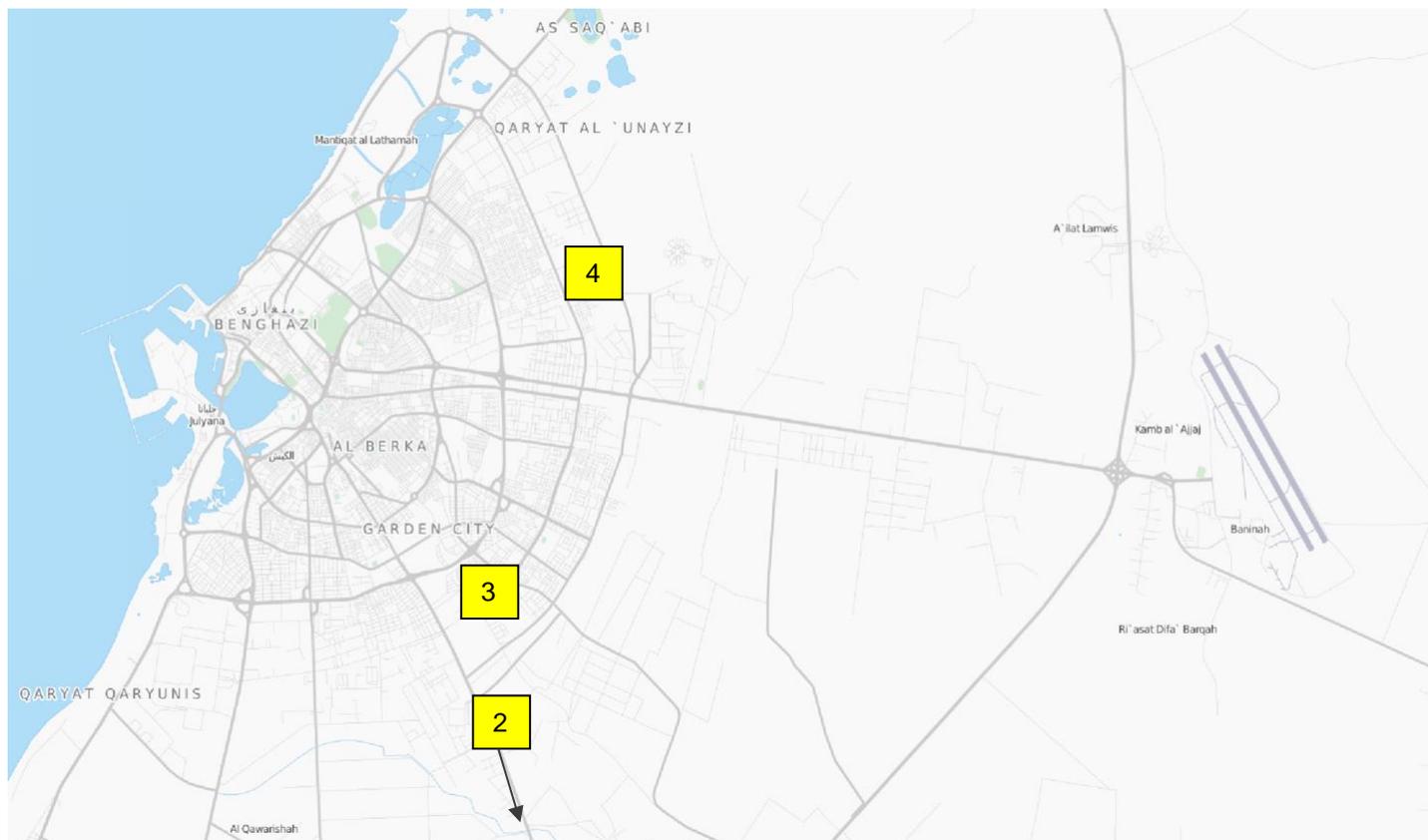
1. (23 May) LNA-affiliated gunmen allegedly kidnap HCS member
2. (25 May) LNA retreat following advance on Airport Rd
3. (25 May) ASL affiliate involved in former US Ambassador murder, killed
4. (25 May) Man shot dead at Al-Bugra manned CP in Ghot Al-Romman
5. (25-27 May) LNA gains control over Wildlife Garden area
6. (26 May) NOC establishes direct shelling as cause for fire at oil clinic
7. (26 May) MoI statement on several arrests targeting IS/AQ militants
8. (27 May) Shelling in Salah Al-Din expands engagement area on Khallat Al-Forjan front
9. (28-29 May) No changes on the ground
10. (29 May) LNA airstrike targets Tajoura Seaport
11. (03 Jun) GNA Customs Dept staff plan protest/sit-in; potential impact on MJI

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## 5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

### Oil Workers' Labor Union head released following one-month detention



#### KEY INCIDENTS

1. (28 May) Gunman attacks Benghazi Rescue Dept member
2. (29 May) Detained Oil Workers' Labor Union head released
3. (29 May) Indiscriminate gunfire injures man in Buhdima area
4. (29 May) Indiscriminate gunfire injures man in Shabneh area

#### Oil Workers Labor Union head released

The National Oil Corporation (NOC) Chairman, Mustafa Sanalla, welcomed the release of the head of the Oil Workers' Labor Union and NOC employee, Saad Dinar, on 30 May after being held by an unidentified armed group the Suluq area near Benghazi for almost a month, on 29 Apr. In an official statement, Sanalla extended his thanks to all those who supported the NOC's campaign to secure Saad's release, and noted that it would continue to investigate into the details of Dinar's detention. On his official Facebook page, Dinar announced that he was released following "routine interrogations". Meanwhile, Dinar's relative stated that the NOC official was held by "Eastern security authorities". The motive behind Dinar's arrest and/or release remains unknown. Last week, the NOC reiterated calls for Dinar's release.

#### Rescue Dept. member attacked

Reports suggest an unidentified gunman carried out an armed attack on a member of Benghazi's Rescue Department resulting in his subsequent injury at approximately 0300hrs on 28 May. According to reports, the gunman used an Avtomat Kalashnikova (AK-

47) rifle. The motive behind the incident remains unknown.

#### Civilian casualties due to Indiscriminate gunfire

According to the Information Office of Al-Jalaa Hospital for Surgery and Accidents, two civilians were wounded in separate indiscriminate gunfire-related incidents in Benghazi on 29 May. The two civilians included 55-year-old Ismail Ali who was wounded by an indiscriminate bullet in front of house in Benghazi's Buhdima area, in addition to 23-year-old Ayman Salem, who was wounded by indiscriminate gunfire while driving his vehicle in the Shabneh area.

#### Enhanced security ahead of Eid Al-Fitr

Benghazi's Security Directorate reported continued intensive security deployment in all areas across the city centres. The Directorate noted that increased security comes within the frame work of an activated security plan, including various security departments, to secure the city during the holy month of Ramadan and ahead of Eid Al-Fitr. Similar security plans have been put into place across Libyan cities ahead of Eid Al-Fitr

## 6. What's next

### LNA could attempt surprise attack; attack in East could stretch coverage

#### POLITICAL FORECAST

GNA PM Fayez Sarraj's attempts to shore up alliances bore fruit in a visit to Malta after Maltese PM Joseph Muscat reaffirmed his support for the GNA and voiced his rejection of the Tripoli offensive, whilst calling for a return to the United Nations (UN)-led political process. The LNA spokesperson, Ahmed Al-Mesmari, stated that the GNA PM, Fayez Al-Serraj, "is no longer a partner in peace, he is a terrorist", via his official Twitter account. In an additional statement, Al-Mesmari accused the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) head, Ghassan Salame, of bias in Libya's peace process. "I am not biased, I am absolutely impartial", said Ghassan Salame in a France 24 Televised interview in response to Haftar's comments in France's *Le Journal Du Dimanche*. Separately, on 28 May, a parallel House of Representatives (HoR) session attended by 30 members was held in Tripoli after its 26-27 May sessions were postponed due to the previous shelling of its Rixos hotel HQ. According to MP Mohammed Al-Raid, the session discussed cooperation with foreign states regarding the situation in Libya. In response to a circulated list of alleged House of Representatives (HoR)-listed terrorist entities across media outlets, the HoR's Chairman of the National Defense and Security Committee, Talal Al-Mahyoub, stated that the circulated list issued in the name of the committee is forged and accused Muslim Brotherhood (MB) members/affiliates of fabricating these lists in an attempt to polarize HoR members and segments of Libyan society. Al-Mahyoub noted that the names include fellow colleagues and other national figures that could not be classified as terrorists regardless of the political disagreements between them.

#### WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

Writing for *Middle East Institute (MEI)*, Giorgio Cafiero, argues "As the crisis in Libya worsens and the prospects for diplomatic resolution dim while violence intensifies, the odds are good that ISIS will continue to carry out attacks from the shadows. The fighting in and near Tripoli will likely create new power vacuums that the group will try to fill and grievances it can exploit. Much like in 2014-16, with both the Tripoli and Tobruk governments channeling their resources toward the fight between GNA and LNA forces, ISIS will have freer rein to operate. If Tripoli-based militias are focused on fighting Hifter's forces, they will likely have less success tracking down ISIS sleeper cells. Having said that, on May 26 the Ministry of Interior in Tripoli said that GNA forces had arrested an ISIS commander, Amir al-Hisbah, the previous month." The author adds that "The resurgence of ISIS presents a grave danger for many parties with stakes in Libya's civil war. Doubtless, Libyans themselves have the most to lose from the re-emergence of a violent group that has repeatedly committed atrocities and grave human rights violations. When ISIS first established itself in Libya, it caused international alarm by carrying out public executions, beheadings, floggings, and amputations, including the barbaric killing of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians in a propaganda video. The group's re-emergence would also have wider repercussions for the region, unsettling neighboring Tunisia, where the group's Libyan branch had operational reach in 2015-16. For Europe, too, the stakes are high. Not only would an ISIS presence in Libya pose a direct security threat to EU member states, but it could also trigger a rise in migration across the Mediterranean and disrupt the flow of oil, while further complicating international efforts to make peace in the war-torn country."

#### SECURITY FORECAST

In Tripoli, military activity will either remain unchanged or escalate post-Eid. Combat operations could see little to no change should the LNA assess that political escalation is more cost-effective in the short term. While Tripoli's Central Support Department has established a plan to secure the capital city during the Eid Al-Fitr period, security breaches are likely. On 02 Jun, WB sources confirmed a heightened threat of attack by the Islamic State (IS) across the country as the holy month of Ramadan concludes and Eid Al-Fitr approaches. The sources also confirmed that the heightened threat of attack is shared by some diplomatic missions. An increased security threat related a potential IS attack comes within the pattern of past documented IS attacks carried out during national holiday periods. To corroborate the latter, the Libyan National Army's (LNA) spokesperson, Ahmed Al-Mesmari, stated that the LNA monitored IS movements in the capital city over the past days during his press briefing on 02 Jun. Al-Mesmari provided no further details. WB advises travellers to exercise extreme caution during the Eid Al-Fitr period, avoid public gatherings, and other high-profile public venues, including government buildings. In the West, there is a possibility the LNA will launch a renewed offensive from Tripoli's western flank, via Sabratha, Surman, and into Zawiyah. Meanwhile, LNA units will likely remain on high alert in the Oil Crescent region in fear of a potential attack on key O&G infrastructure fuelled by anti-LNA sentiment and especially after unconfirmed and suspicious movements. Militants could exploit LNA mobilization on the Tripoli front to carry out attacks and exploit the security vacuum. In the Southern and central areas, IS attacks are likely, as highlighted by a recent likely IS attack on Al-Fuqaha, in the Jufra district.

#### LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

In an *Arab Weekly* article, Cairo-based journalist Amr Emam, writes that Ashmawy's extradition to Egypt will help provide valuable intelligence on terrorist networks and arms smuggling between Libya and the Western Desert all the way into the Sinai Peninsula. The author writes: "Ashmawy, one of the most wanted Egyptian militants, threatened the security of both Egypt and Libya and planned to form a terror network across North Africa and the Sahel and Sahara region, authorities said. Ashmawy's arrival in Cairo interrupted most Egyptian TV channels with footage shown of him handcuffed and blindfolded. By showing Ashmawy's arrival in Cairo, Egyptian officials likely wanted to demonstrate that it is holding those suspected of committing crimes accountable, regardless of where they are. Egypt described Ashmawy's handover as a major security victory. Security analysts in Cairo said he could be a treasure trove of information about terrorist groups in Libya and Egypt. "This is the one terrorist who has valuable information about terrorist organisations active in the two countries," said political analyst Abdel Monem Halawa. "He can provide the authorities with information about everything in relation to these organisations, from financing to recruitment methods, hideouts and sponsors." Ashmawy, 41, was fired from the military in 2009 because of his radical ideas. In 2012, he headed to Sinai where he allegedly formed a terrorist group that swore allegiance to Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. A year later, he travelled to Turkey and Syria. Ashmawy was accused of masterminding an attempt on the life of former Egyptian Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim. In July 2014, Egyptian authorities accused him of attacking an army post in the Western Desert near the border with Libya. Twenty-eight officers and conscripts were killed in the attack."

# About Whispering Bell



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