

# 1. The Big Picture

## Renewed escalation as LNA directly engages Misrata

The week saw an expansion of the frontlines as forces aligned to the Government of National Accord (GNA) and Libyan National Army (LNA) used airpower to target positions in Jufra and Misrata, respectively. On the ground, however, the LNA's recently-declared "zero-hour" to enter Tripoli is yet to materialize, despite an attempt to cut off the vital supply line linking Misrata to Tripoli in Garabolli, and some brief advances in Salah Eddien and temporary control of Naqliya Camp, which GNA forces claim were later repelled.

While the LNA's targeting of Misrata would nominally mark a shift in combat operations - the risk of a full-blown Misrata vs LNA engagement now being more likely - there is mounting evidence to suggest the escalation is part of the LNA's strategy to push back Misrata forces in order to cripple the GNA's defensive posture in Tripoli and potentially facilitate an entry into the capital city at a later stage.

The air escalation was initially prompted by GNA airstrikes targeting the LNA's Jufra Airbase in central Libya. The GNA claims the strikes destroyed an LNA Ilyushin Il-76 transport aircraft and an air defense system in the early hours of 26 Jul. Multiple reports claim the GNA's strikes were conducted by newly-received Turkish Bayraktar unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), enabling the Tripoli-based government to have nighttime targeting capabilities. In retaliation, the LNA targeted Misrata International Airport (MRA) at approximately 0330hrs on 27 Jul. The LNA declared the precision airstrikes targeted Misrata's Faculty of Civil Aviation, from which the majority of GNA combat missions have been taking off. A day later, the LNA stated it conducted additional airstrikes targeting positions across Misrata. The LNA airstrikes prompted the Italian military to issue an official statement declaring one of its facilities on the ground, in reference to a field hospital in Misrata, was not impacted.

The LNA's targeting of Misrata is more of an attempt to force Misratan forces to withdraw from Tripoli frontlines and into a defensive posture in their hometown. From a tactical standpoint, the LNA will continue to alternate withdrawals and advances, as smoke and mirrors, opening up as many fronts as possible to draw Misrata forces away from Tripoli frontlines. Some reports suggest the LNA airstrikes have already prompted some Misratan units to head

back to Misrata. A convoy of approximately seven white Toyota Land Cruisers travelling on the Coastal Road of Misrata was spotted heading towards Misrata International Airport (MRA), at approximately 1900hrs on 27 Jul.

Misrata's withdrawal would work in the LNA's favour in the short to medium term as it would exacerbate tensions between pro-GNA factions and provoke a shift in alliances. Rifts within the GNA camp have widened, especially between pro-Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) elements and other Tripoli-based militias. Additional LNA airstrikes targeting Misrata could also create divisions among Misratans themselves over an appropriate response and retaliation measures.

On the LNA side, in a speech delivered on 24 Jul, the LNA head, Khalifa Haftar, attempted to boost morale on the ground ahead of a renewed attempt to push northward. Haftar declared that "victory" is near, referring to his units as the "fortified fortress, the protective shield and the flames of hot fire that shall burn all those who violate the dignity of our people and undermine its humanity." Haftar added that his units are the force able to protect the people and eradicate its "enemies" to bring back sovereignty and dignity to the homeland and its people.

Looking ahead, airpower will continue to be the main determinant in combat operations. More specifically, UAVs with nighttime targeting capabilities have so far acted as a deterrent, preventing forces from regrouping in large numbers in fear of being targeted, and therefore limiting options for ground movement. Some reports suggest this explains the LNA's strategic retreat from Garabolli. GNA and LNA forces will therefore continue to use airpower to target staging grounds, military assets, and airbases. To compensate for the limited ground movement options, the LNA could seek to expand areas of engagement, conducting airstrikes in areas previously isolated from combat across the West.

### KEY POINTS

- GNA targets Jufra airbase
- LNA retaliates with airstrikes targeting MRA
- LNA intent on Misrata withdrawal from Tripoli



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## 2. National Security Map

LNA targets Misrata in retaliation for GNA Jufra airstrikes; Sharara returns to full capacity

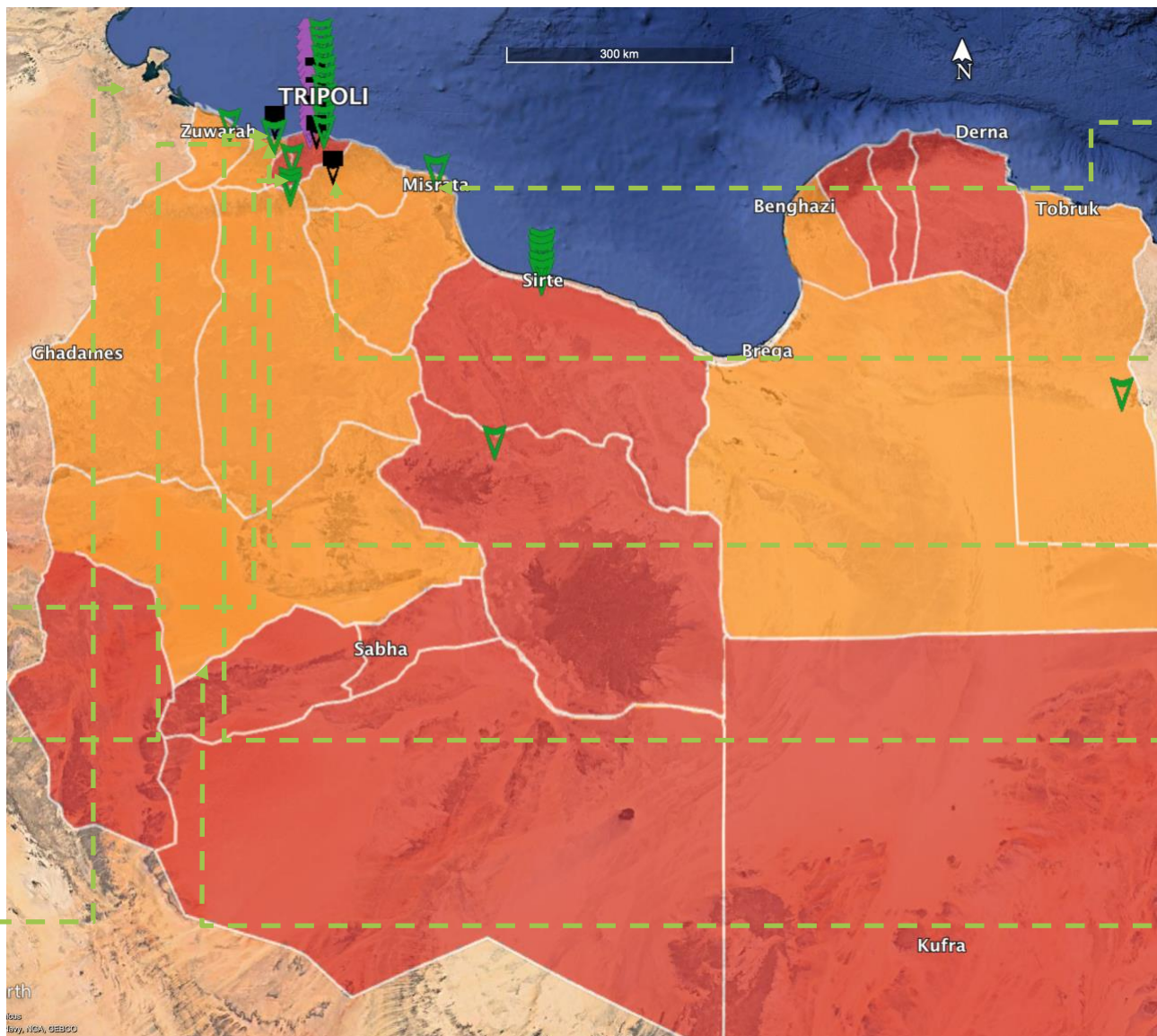
### Key

#### THREAT INDICATORS

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

#### EVENT INDICATORS

- ★ IED | VBIED
- ▼ Violent Clash
- Isolated Gunfire
- ▽ Other



LNA airstrikes targeted Misrata International Airport (MRA) at approximately 0330hrs on 27 Jul. Initial reports indicate an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) conducted the airstrike. The LNA declared the precision airstrikes targeted Misrata's Faculty of Civil Aviation, resulting in the destruction of an air defense system.

Reports indicate heavy sporadic gunfire was heard in Tarhunah at approximately 0500hrs on 27 Jul. Initial reports indicate anti-aircraft weapons fired sporadic shots into the air in an attempt to down an unidentified military aircraft. No further information.

WB sources reported skirmishes erupted between two families due to a dispute over the theft of an AV in Al-Zawiya at approximately 1600hrs on 25 Jul. The skirmishes resulted in the temporary closure of the Coastal Road between 1630hrs-1730hrs.

In the morning on 23 Jul, sources reported Az Zawiya Oil Refining Company (ARC) fuel truck drivers went on strike to protest the lack of security suffered by fuel truck drivers along Libya's roads.

The National Oil Corporation (NOC) confirmed that production at the Sharara Oil Field returned to its full capacity on 23 Jun, whilst noting crude oil loadings at the Zawiya Port were underway.

Reports indicate LNA airstrikes targeted GNA positions in Gharyan between 2000hrs-2100hrs on 24 Jul. Separately, reports indicate GNA units erected dirt barricades and closed off the main road linking Gharyan to Alasaba in the evening on 24 Jul.

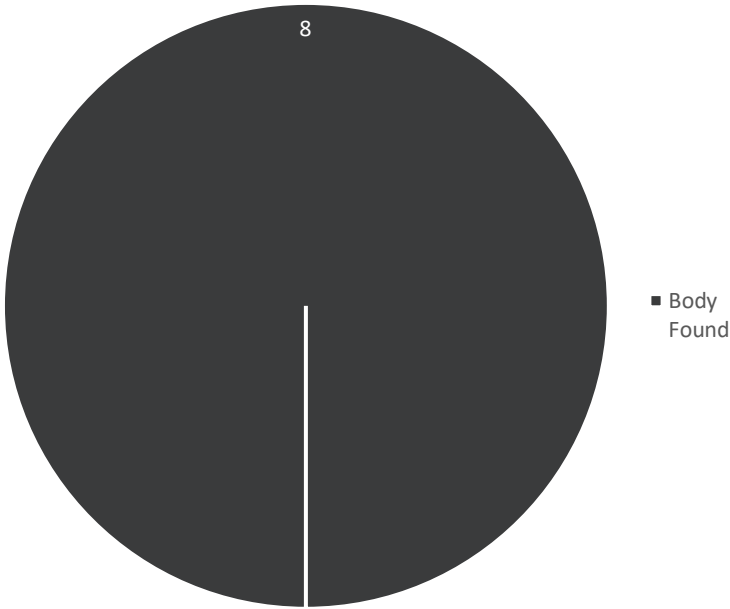
WB sources reported heavy gunfire heard in Al-Zawiya's Al Harsha area in the early hours of 28 Jul. Initial reports indicate a local dispute between two families resulted in the death of a man. No further information.

An LNA L-39 Albatros aircraft made an emergency landing in Tunisia's Medenine area due to a technical malfunction on 22 Jul. Tunisian forces arrested the pilot after cordoning off the area. GNA PM Fayez Al-Serraj later travelled to Tunisia to hold talks over the aircraft. The latest reports indicate the pilot arrived in Benghazi on 23 Jul.

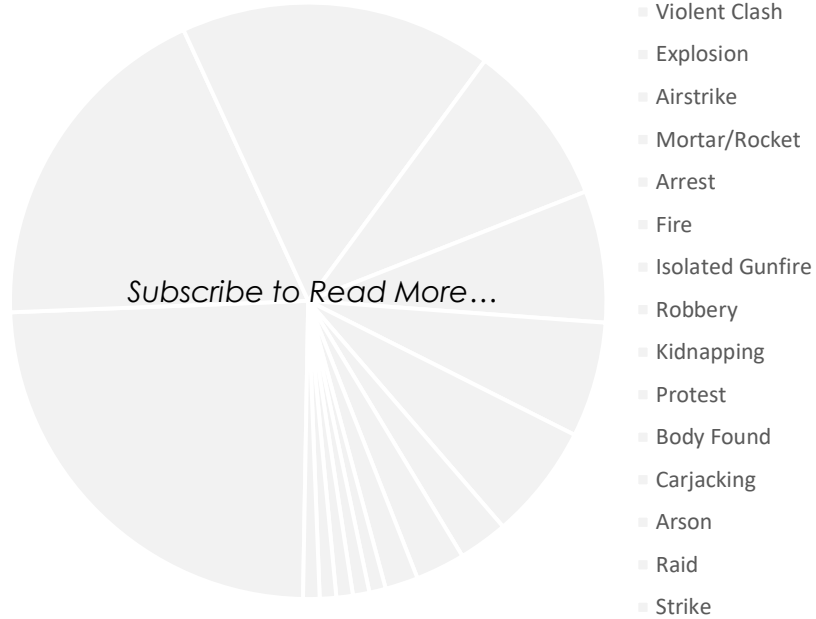
# 3. Nationwide Security Analysis

## Decrease in fatalities due to absence of updated casualty toll in Tripoli

Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



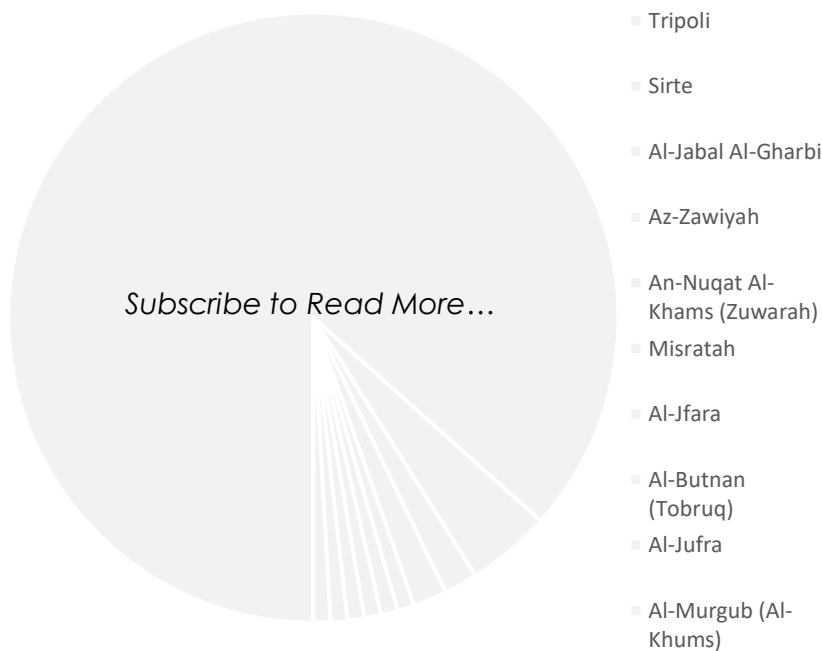
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



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 8 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 54 deaths reported last week and 60 the week before, marking a sharp decrease in nationwide fatalities due to the absence of an updated casualty toll from the Tripoli clashes. Meanwhile, airstrikes, violent clashes, explosions, and mortar/rocket shelling incidents were on an upward spiral in contrast to last week as a result of increased military activity and two separate attempts by the Libyan National Army (LNA) to gain ground in Tripoli. Whilst the clashes continue to dominate the overall security environment, WB continued to record sporadic criminal activity across Tripoli and beyond. WB recorded security incidents in the Western, central, and Eastern regions over the course of the reporting period. Several security incidents were reported throughout the country including 27 violent clashes, 21 explosions heard, 19 airstrikes, 10 mortar/rocket shelling incidents, 8 arrests, 7 fires, 7 isolated gunfire cases, 3 robberies, 3 kidnappings, 2 protests, 1 body found, 1 carjacking, 1 arson, 1 raid and 1 strike.

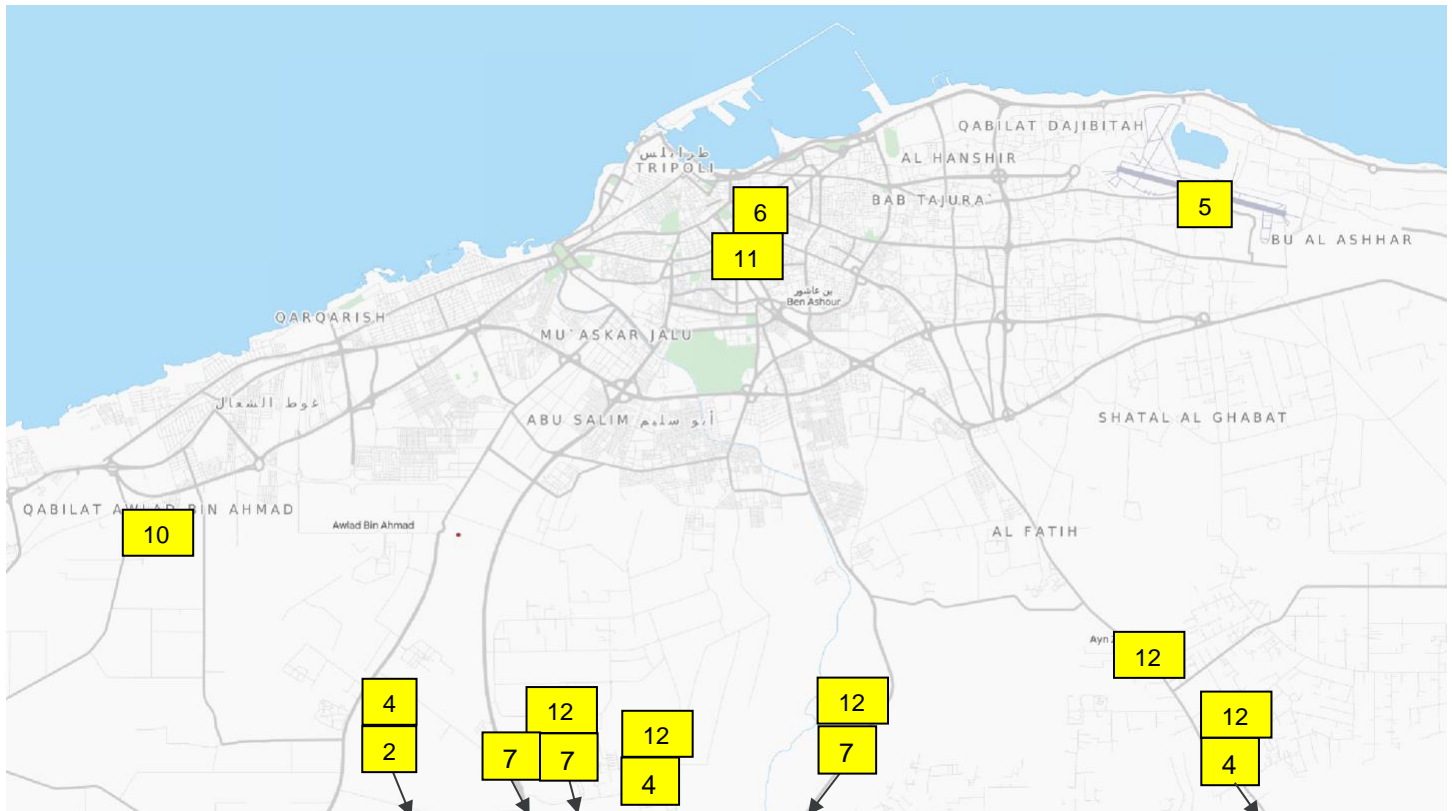
In Western Libya, WB recorded a total of 105 incidents, including 97 incidents in the capital city, Tripoli, marking a sharp increase in security incidents reported in Tripoli. Beyond the ongoing clashes, WB sources reported indiscriminate shelling targeted Mitiga International Airport (MJI) at approximately 2130hrs on 22 Jul. Air traffic was temporarily suspended at MJI in the evening until the early hours of 23 Jul, where several flights were diverted to Misrata International Airport (MRA). Separately, WB sources reported a white Hyundai Sonata was stolen while parked in front of a house in the Al Serraj area on 23 Jul. Similarly, sources reported an unidentified vehicle was stolen while parked in the Bab Ben Ghashir area, near the Bab Ben Ghashir Traffic Lights. Beyond this, Sources reported a few locals protested in front of Tripoli's Prime Minister's Office on Al-Sekka Road in the Ben Ashour area denouncing the GNA's Ministry of Justice decision to release the PM of the former Gaddafi regime, Al-Baghdadi Al-Mahmoudy, at approximately 1130hrs on 24 Jul. Sources indicate the protestors carried "Amazigh" Berber flags. The Ministry stated that Al-Mahmoudy was released due to his deteriorating medical condition, which requires treatment abroad.

In the wider Western region, reports indicate LNA airstrikes targeted Government of National Accord (GNA) positions in Gharyan between 2000hrs-2100hrs on 24 Jul. Separately, reports indicate GNA erected barricades and closed off the main road, which links [Gharyan](#) with Alasaba in the evening on 24 Jul. Additionally, the bridge located above the main road, leading Southwards towards [Mizda](#), was also closed. Initial reports indicated the LNA will invade [Gharyan](#) in the next 48hrs, which failed to materialise on the ground. Separately, in the morning on 23 Jul, sources reported Az Zawiya Oil Refining Company (ARC) fuel truck drivers went on strike in protest against the lack of security provided for fuel truck drivers travelling along Libya's roads. In the evening, the workers ended the strike as a meeting took place between Al-Zawiya's Security Directorate and the representatives of fuel transport and marketing companies.

In the central region, local reports indicate eight bodies belonging to illegal migrants were found on Sirte's coastline on 23 Jul. The bodies were found decomposed and accounted for all of this week's nationwide fatalities.

## 4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

### GNA repel LNA advances; surge in politically-motivated kidnappings



#### KEY INCIDENTS

1. (19 Jul) Libyan National Assembly Secretary-General kidnapped
2. (20 Jul) PC expresses concern over LNA preparing military escalation
3. (21 Jul) Attorney General releases arrested/kidnapped FDCC director gen.
4. (21-22 Jul) LNA spox states push into Tripoli includes protection of diplomatic & government missions
5. (22 Jul) Shelling targeting MJI temporarily suspends air traffic
6. (22 Jul) Skirmishes b/w gunmen & security guards after female driver harassed
7. (23-24 Jul) LNA reaches Salah Eddien before retreating back to Khallat Furjan
8. (24 Jul) Haftar boots LNA morale in latest speech
9. (24 Jul) Misrata's Joint Ops. Room arrests three AQ militants
10. (24 Jul) Former Libyan oil Minister kidnapped from residence
11. (24 Jul) Locals protest release of former PM in front of PM Office
12. (26 Jul) LNA temp, seized Al-Naqliya Camp; unconfirmed reports of new PC

#### GNA repels LNA advances in Tripoli & Garaboli

WB sources reported the Libyan National Army (LNA) temporarily advanced on the Airport Road, Al-Hadba Al-Mashro', and Khallat Al-Forjan-Ain Zara fronts, though Government of National Accord (GNA) forces later repelled the LNA's advance. On an additional front, the LNA-affiliated Al-Kaniat militia of Tarhuna launched an attack and temporarily advanced on the Coastal Road of Garabouli at approximately 1630hrs on 27 Jul, though GNA forces later repelled the LNA advance and both sides returned to their former positions. Sources reported during Al-Kaniat militia's temporary advance, the forces established a checkpoint under the Gharaboli Bridge, though they later retreated following the arrival of Misrata militia reinforcements to the area where they gathered under the Gharaboli Bridge. On the domestic front, unconfirmed reports indicate a new Presidential Council (PC) will be formed in the coming days, replacing the current Al-Serraj led PC. Initial reports allege that the new body will be made up of boycotting and resigned members of the current PC, including the resigned PC Deputy Chief, Ali Al-Qatrani.

#### Shelling suspends air traffic at MJI

WB sources reported indiscriminate shelling targeted Mitiga International Airport (MJI) and Shurfat Al Malaha in the Souq Al-Juma'aa area at approximately 2130hrs on 22 Jul. The shelling wounded three children and damaged several houses and vehicles. Additionally, air traffic was temporarily suspended at MJI in the evening until the early hours of 23 Jul, where several flights were diverted to Misrata International Airport (MRA).

#### Three AQ militants arrested

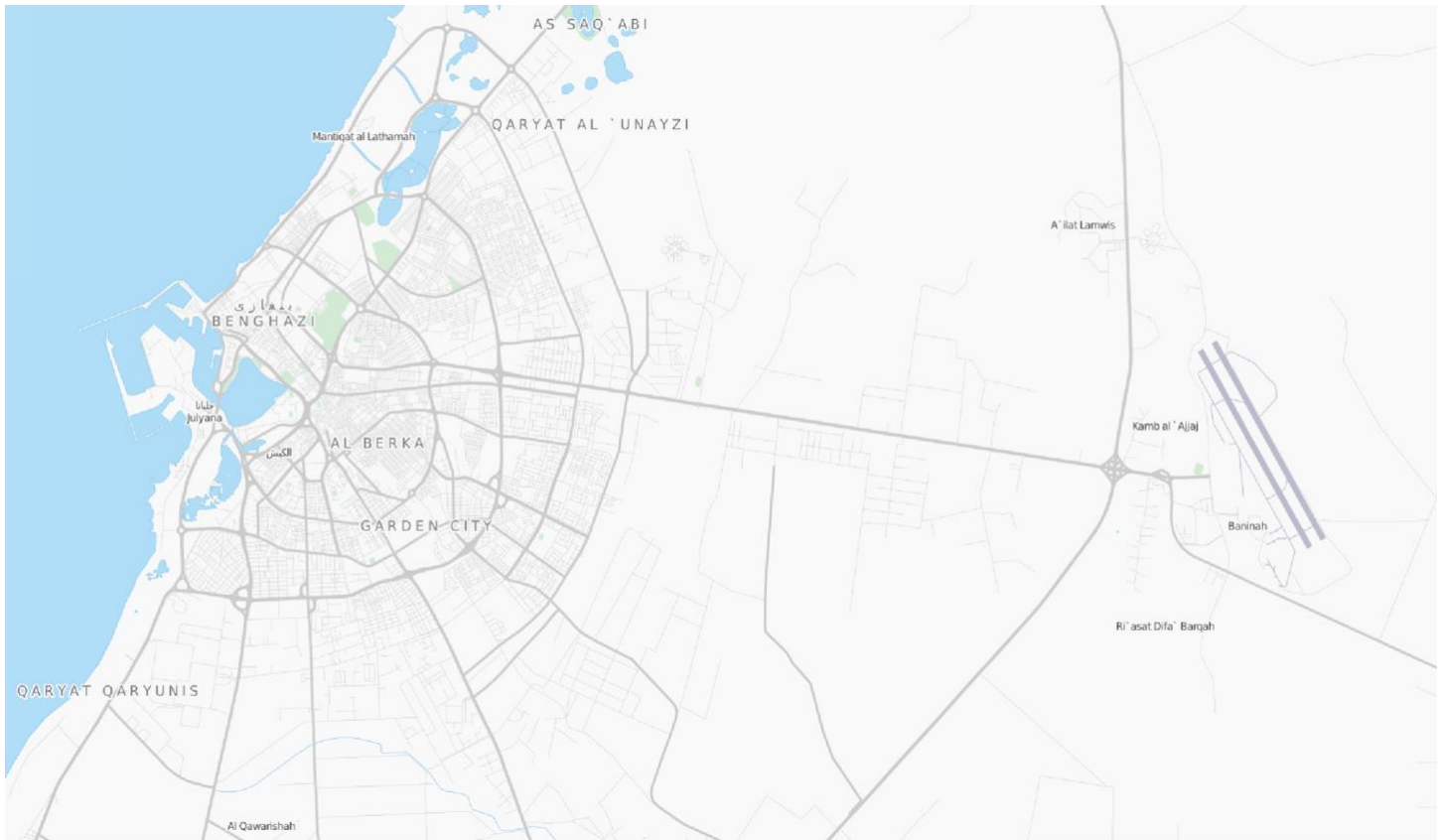
Misrata's Joint Operations Room arrested three Al-Qaeda (AQ)-affiliated militants, including an Algerian national, and seized their weapons in a raid in an unidentified area in Tripoli on 24 Jul. The raid came after the Ops. Room was granted permission from the Public Prosecutor's Office to carry out the arrest. The Algerian national was the main wanted militant. The Ops. Room stated that the militants arrested were linked to several terror attacks in Tripoli. During the raid on the Algerian national's residence, weapons, ammunition, grenades and documents were seized. The AQ militants entered Tripoli after taking advantage of the widened security vacuum caused by the LNA's offensive on Tripoli, according to the Ops. Room.

#### Two separate kidnappings

Reports indicate the Libyan National Assembly Secretary-General, Ali Mansour, was kidnapped/arrested in an unidentified area in Tripoli on 19 Jul. Initial reports indicate the arrest/kidnapping was based on allegations of support for the LNA. Mansour is also an employee of the Food and Drug Control Centre (FDCC). Separately, reports suggest the former Libyan Oil Minister under the Ali Zidan-led Interim Government (2012-14), Abdul Bari Al-Arousi, was kidnapped from his residence in Tripoli's Al Serraj area in the morning on 24 Jul. There is no further information.

## 5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

### Extensive security meeting & establishment of joint security plan



#### KEY INCIDENTS

1. (24 Jul) Joint security plan aimed at gathering intelligence on sleeper cells
2. (27 Jul) Eight points agreed upon at extended security meeting

#### Extensive security meeting

Local reports indicate the LNA's Chief of Staff, Brig Gen Abdulrazaq Al-Nadouri and the Interim Government's Minister of Interior, Ibrahim Bushnaaf, held a meeting with all officials of Benghazi's security and military services at Benghazi's Security Directorate HQ on 27 Jul. The meeting focused on eight points. The first point included implementing programmes and establishing plans to reduce security breaches which will be supervised and followed-up by Bushnaaf and Al-Nadouri. The second point called on Al-Nadouri to take all necessary measures to protect civilian rights. The third point called to strongly implement orders received by the Public Prosecution, whilst the fourth point noted that security operations are not limited to specific areas/streets but must extend to cover the whole city. The fifth point emphasized the importance of coordination, cooperation, and security integration between all affiliated bodies, whilst the sixth point stressed the need to shift operations from a stage of stagnation to innovation and developing contemporary solutions. In the seventh point, Al-Nadouri called for traffic campaigns targeting unregistered vehicles and the necessity of organising the work of electronic gates through the Joint Security Centre. In the final point, Al-Nadouri stressed the need to document violations committed by any military and/or security body.

#### Joint security plan established

Local reports indicate Benghazi's Joint Security Room and Security Directorate head, Brig Gen Adel Abdulaziz, established a joint security plan aimed at gathering security intelligence on sleeper cells and to monitor suspicious movements across the city. The plan came during a meeting between Abdulaziz and the heads of security and military services across the city. The meeting also resulted in the formation of a Joint Arrest Committee targeting wanted criminals.

## 6. What's next

### LNA & GNA to intensify air operations across the West

#### POLITICAL FORECAST

The political landscape continues to be dominated by back-channel meetings on the sidelines of the funeral of former Tunisian president Beji Caid Sebssi. The week was marked by rumours that a new PC will be formed. These rumours will likely take center stage in the upcoming weeks as rifts within the GNA widen. On the domestic front, the Presidential Council (PC) Vice President, Ahmed Maiteg, and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) head, Ghassan Salame, met in Tripoli on 23 Jul to discuss the ongoing military escalation in Tripoli and the current political situation in the country. Salame briefed Maiteg on his latest efforts to cease hostilities in Tripoli and return to the political process. Regionally, Al-Serraj met with the US Charge d'affaires, Joshua Harris, in Tunisia. The two discussed the latest developments in Libya. Al-Serraj stressed the GNA's position in the face of "aggression" and its role in protecting the civil state and ensuring the protection of civilians. Harris expressed his country's keenness to cease hostilities and return to the political process. The GNA PM, Fayez Al-Serraj, also met with France's President, Emmanuel Macron, and discussed the ramifications of the LNA's offensive on Tripoli, in Tunisia on 27 Jul. Meanwhile, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) head, Ghassan Salame, received the Turkish Ambassador to Libya, Serhat Aksen, and discussed the latest political developments in Libya on 24 Jul. On the international front, a delegation of four Tobruk-based House of Representatives (HoR) members, led by MP Hamid Houmah, visited the United States (US) Congress on 24 Jul. The HoR delegation met with several of their US counterparts, including Republican Senator John Cornyn.

#### WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

In an article for "*The Washington Times*", Guy Taylor, highlights how a recent US signature of a joint ceasefire statement raises confusion over the Trump administration's position towards backing the Libyan National Head (LNA) head, Khalifa Haftar. "But with Mr. Haftar's Libyan National Army now mired in its months-old push to capture Tripoli, there are signs that the White House is shifting posture, backing a cease-fire and reviving a U.N. peace process aimed at reaching a deal between Mr. Haftar's forces and those upholding the government in Tripoli. "The situation is presenting a complex challenge for the Trump administration," said a source close to American intelligence on Libya, who pointed to a little-reported joint statement that U.S. officials signed in mid-July with France, Britain, Egypt, Italy and the United Arab Emirates backing an immediate cease-fire. The statement, which said "there can be no military solution in Libya" and warned of "terror groups" exploiting the political void, was issued just months after President Trump unexpectedly reached out to Mr. Haftar in a phone call from the Oval Office to praise the military leader and his forces. The White House and the State Department declined to comment on the confused state of play in Libya. But one U.S. official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, asserted that "this is not a policy shift — we weren't supportive of the cease-fire statement several months ago because we just didn't think it was the right time. "Our position on Haftar has remained constant," the official added. "Certainly he has to be part of a solution. The goal here is to get to elections in Libya." Adding to the murkiness is the fact that the different factions in Libya have all signed on with powerful U.S. lobbyists. It remains to be seen how the lobbying activity might affect the Trump administration's policy or the situation on the ground in Libya.

#### SECURITY FORECAST

Frontlines and engagement areas are set to sporadically expand in the short term as LNA forces alternate advances and withdrawals to draw GNA forces away from the main frontlines in Tripoli's South. Areas that had been previously isolated from clashes could now see sporadic clashes and skirmishes. Reports indicate areas such as Zuwara and Zintan could take center stage in air operations between the GNA and LNA forces. Meanwhile, the reported delivery of a new batch of Turkish-manufactured Bayraktar drones to the GNA could result in retaliatory airstrikes by the LNA, including at Mitiga International Airport (MJI). Indiscriminate shelling at MJI is also set to continue as tensions continue to grow within the GNA camp. Should the LNA conduct additional precision strikes within Misrata and Sirte, positions could harden among Misratans and retaliation will be more likely. In Garaboulli, the situation will remain fluid with the potential for further clashes between GNA and LNA forces, with possible road closures and resulting disruptions to travellers along the Coastal Road. Criminal activity in the form of robberies and carjackings continues to dominate the security environment in central and downtown areas of Tripoli. Politically-motivated kidnappings and arbitrary detentions of individuals, particularly Libyan officials, suspected of supporting the LNA or GNA remain likely in Tripoli and Benghazi. In the South, no further security incidents have been recorded, though local tensions could erupt with little to no warning.

#### LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

In an article for "*Alwasat Libya*", the author(s) provide a summary of remarks made by the Tripoli-based Central Bank of Libya (CBL) governor, Al-Sadiq Al-Kabir, drawing direct parallels between the offensive on Tripoli and a subsequent increased liquidity crisis. Since 2014, Libya has been split between competing governments and military alliances based in Tripoli and the east, a division that has been reflected in key institutions including the central bank and the National Oil Corporation. However, receipts from oil sales, Libya's main source of revenue, have continued to be processed by the central bank (CBL) in Tripoli, home to the internationally-recognised government. As oil output fluctuated over the past five years, a large black market for foreign exchange developed, banks ran short of cash, and living standards dropped sharply. Most spending is absorbed by an inflated state salary bill and subsidies, though Kabir said five billion dinars (\$3.58 billion) had been allocated earlier this year for development spending frozen since 2010, including on schools, universities and roads. Those spending plans were disrupted when forces led by Khalifa Haftar and aligned with the eastern-based government advanced on the capital in early April just as the United Nations was preparing to hold a national dialogue in a push to reunify the country. "There was a ray of hope in April, the end of March," Kabir told Reuters in an interview on a visit to London. "Frankly, we were surprised. We did not expect Mr Haftar's military attack on Tripoli." The fighting has impeded cash deliveries to some banks beyond the capital, Kabir said, increasing a strain on liquidity that had eased after the introduction last year of a surcharge on foreign currency transactions made at the official rate - though queues at banks did not go away. "Last Eid, we were unable to deliver liquidity 60 km (37 miles) from Tripoli," he added, referring to the Muslim holiday that fell in early June. "Liquidity is transported by helicopter and naturally, we are afraid of the aircraft being downed."

# About Whispering Bell



Contact Whispering Bell at: +971-4-448-6690 or at [ras@whisperingbell.com](mailto:ras@whisperingbell.com)

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