

1. The Big Picture

Widening rift between Tripoli militias as LNA eyes Gharyan

Combat operations between the Libyan National Army (LNA) and Government of National Accord (GNA) forces gained momentum this week following a recent slowdown in military activity. The LNA advanced in Espiaa, East of Aziziya, after a back and forth with GNA forces on 21 Aug. A day earlier, LNA forces attempted to enter Gharyan from the South via Ghout Al-Reeh. While GNA factions led by Western Region Commander Osama Juwaili thwarted the first attempt, aerial cover enabled LNA forces to seize Ghout Al-Reeh days later on 25 Aug. Overall, military activity will likely intensify in the short term as the LNA looks set to regain the strategic town of Gharyan, while GNA reinforcements have been reported in preparation for an offensive on LNA-controlled towns, possibly in Jufra or Tarhunah. Politically, allegations of backchannel negotiations between warring factions continue to make the headlines, prompting multiple GNA officials to officially deny the rumours and reiterate that fighting goes on. While there are likely backchannel negotiations between the LNA and GNA/Misrata, prospects remain bleak.

More importantly, this week's threat environment in Tripoli was dominated by a dispute between two influential and nominally pro-GNA militias; the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB) and Special Deterrence Force (SDF). Tensions between the two are related to the SDF's arrest of Abdulrahman Mohammed nicknamed "Al-Zegraa", a prominent TRB militiaman, as he was departing from Tripoli's Mitiga International Airport (MJ) to Tunis - and later Germany - on 23 Aug. The arrest was allegedly carried out on murder charges, though some observers speculated Al-Zegraa was suspected of deserting combat operations and subsequently detained.

Regardless of the precise motive behind the arrest, it sparked controversy and has highlighted divisions that could be exploited by the LNA in the medium term. Pro-TRB social media accounts criticised the arrest and issued defensive statements. Meanwhile, Mahmoud Hamza, the right-hand of SDF commander Abdulraouf Kara, threatened the TRB on social media and accused the militia of fuelling recent wars, warning the militia not to target any SDF members in Tripoli. Separately, unconfirmed reports suggest multiple militias, including Salah Badi's Somoud Brigade, urged the SDF to release "Al-Zegraa".

However, while pro-LNA accounts have attempted to overemphasize the impact on militia relations, the arrest represents "business as usual" and falls within past

SDF efforts to reinforce its position as a neutral law enforcement actor. This is not the first time Al-Zegraa has been arrested and the SDF has carried out multiple similar arrests of prominent militiamen, without any further repercussions. In addition, it remains unclear whether there was an arrest warrant against "Al-Zegraa" by the Ministry of Justice or the Public Prosecutor, which if confirmed, would indicate the SDF was merely acting in a law enforcement capacity. In a similar development, the SDF intervened this week to solve a dispute between Nawasi and Misrata militiamen in Tripoli, and reportedly proceeded with some arrests later.

Nevertheless, the possibility of broader ramifications on Tripoli's militia structure cannot be ruled out. The SDF is now operating in a different context prone to conflicts of interest between militias across the capital. Should these arrests and other operations become more frequent in the medium term, a rift could emerge between the SDF, relatively considered among the most organized armed factions in the capital, and some "lower tier" Tripoli militias with loose command structures and other pro-Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) elements currently engaged on frontlines against the LNA.

Separately, in the oil and gas sector, the union of O&G workers gave the GNA PM Fayeze Sarraj, the Ministry of Finance, and Audit Bureau a week from 24 Aug to implement Decree 642 of 2013 to raise their salaries by 67%, threatening to take action. The issue has been ongoing for at least six years and would closely follow the National Oil Corporation's (NOC) submission of the operating budget to the GNA Ministry of Finance. In Dec 2018, the Union stated it had scheduled protests at nine unidentified fields over failure to implement the pay rise. The issue will likely continue to unfold, posing a long-term threat of disruption to Libya's oil and gas sector and undermining the NOC's plans to reach pre-2011 production levels. Separately, the UN Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General for Political Affairs (DSRSG), Stephanie Williams, reaffirmed that the Tripoli-based NOC is the only internationally-recognized entity with the capability to market crude oil.

KEY POINTS

- LNA gains in Espiaa & Ghout Al-Reeh
- Possible GNA offensive on Jufra or Tarhunah
- SDF arrest of TRB militiaman sparks tensions



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2. National Security Map

LNA state of alert in Oil Crescent due to pro-GNA movements; LNA reinforcements reported in Sharara

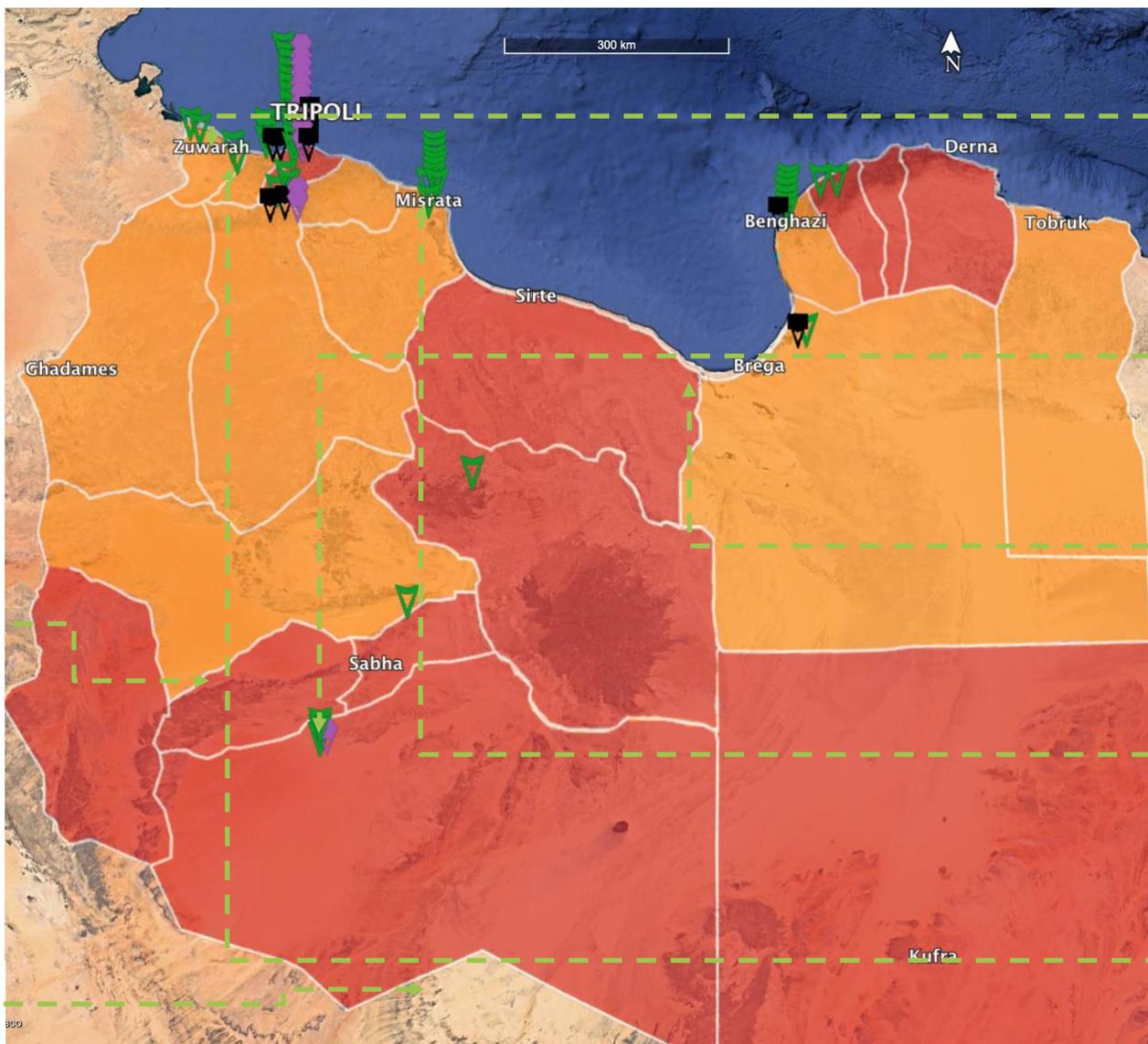
Key

THREAT INDICATORS

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

EVENT INDICATORS

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



Local reports suggest an armed group attacked the Jadidah Police Station and a security outpost in Ajaylat resulting in the death of one attacker and the injury of a police officer in the evening on 19 Aug. Clashes reportedly erupted between the attackers and security forces. The situation later stabilized.

Reports indicate series of LNA airstrikes targeted the GNA-affiliated Southern Protection Force (SPF) in Murzuq after its residents were reported fleeing the area due to Chadian-affiliated Tebu control over the city and subsequent increased criminal activity on 19 Aug.

Multiple pro-LNA accounts reported the state of alert has been raised to critical in the Oil Crescent region after monitoring suspicious movements of Misrata militias and other pro-GNA formations from areas West of Sirte to the East, in Hneiwa. No further information.

A man was found killed in Misrata's Tamina area in the morning on 24 Aug. Initial reports indicate the man was a livestock trader. There is no further information available. Separately, reports indicate LNA airstrikes targeted Misrata's Sakt area on 23 Aug.

Reports suggest Mellitah Complex Oil and Gas staff held a sit-in protest on the Coastal Road of Sabratah - Zuwara on 21 Aug. Initial reports indicate the protestors demanded the GNA to activate resolution no. 642 of 2013 mandating a 67% salary raise for oil sector employees.

Local media reported a convoy of 75 LNA military vehicles arrived at t Sharara Oil Field in anticipation of an anti-LNA attack on the field by the GNA-affiliated South Protection Force (SPF) on 19 Aug. According to the reports, the LNA's increased military presence is due to the fear of rival forces expelling units from the LNA-controlled field.

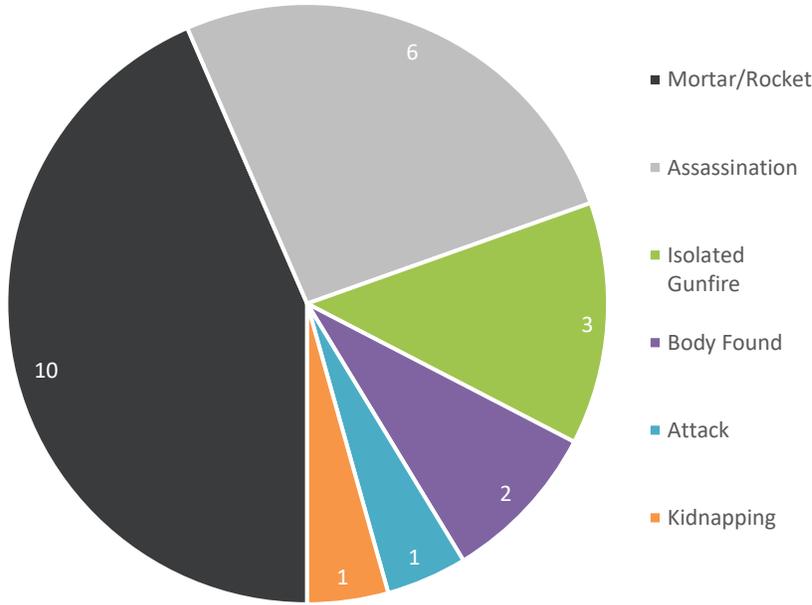
A Chadian gang demanded a ransom of 200,000 Libyan dinars (LYD) to release a Libyan citizen from Umm Al-Aranib kidnapped on the highway between Sokna and Samnu on 15 Aug. The victim was reportedly found killed near Mount Kalinga in the desert border area between Libya and Chad, despite the kidnappers receiving a ransom of 150,000 LYD.

On 21 Aug, Chad's Defense Minister, Mahamat Abali Sala, announced the closure of Chad's land borders with Libya, Sudan and the Central African Republic (CAR), citing security reasons.

3. Nationwide Security Analysis

Highest number of fatalities recorded in Tripoli followed by Benghazi

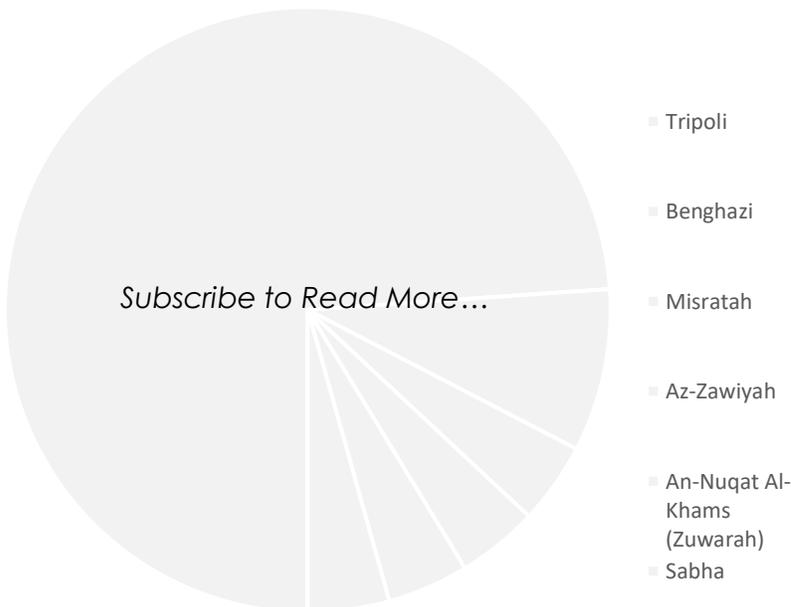
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



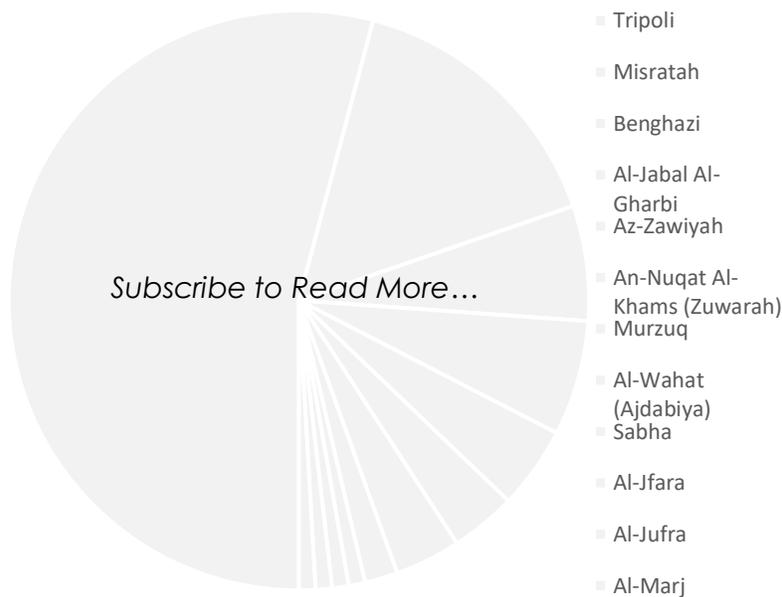
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



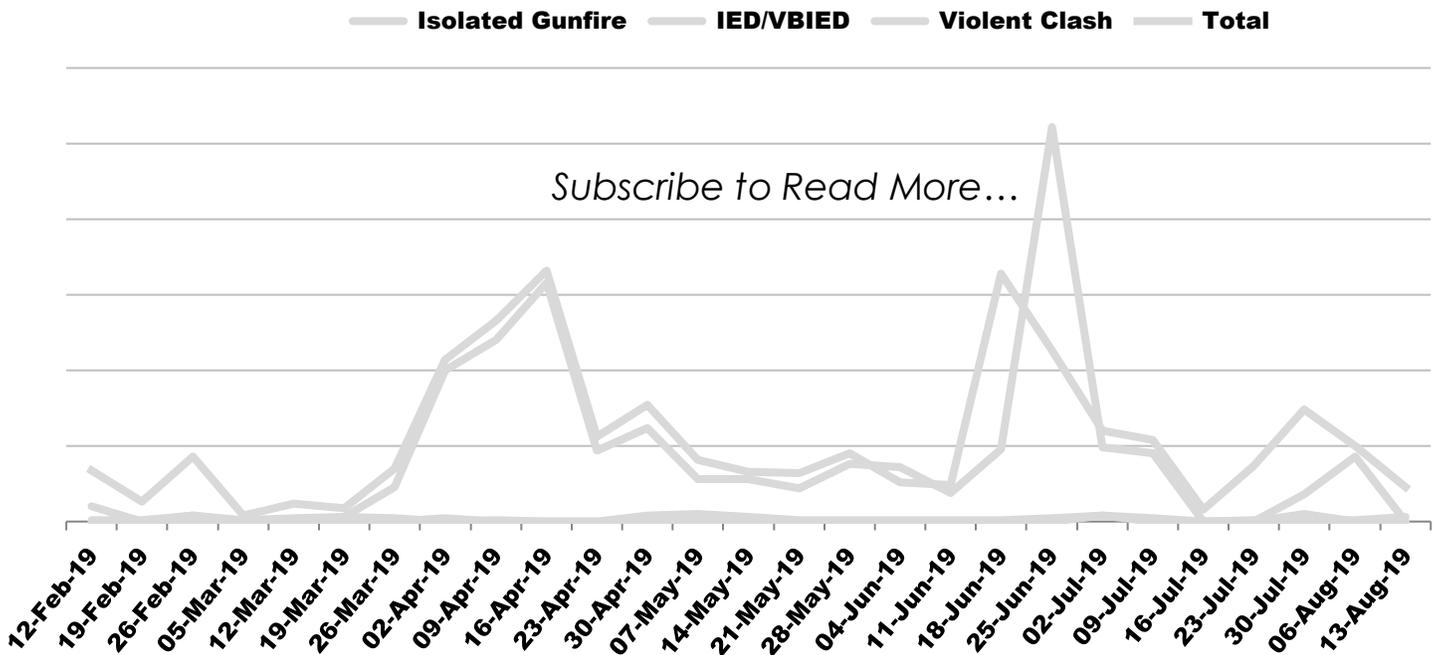
Nationwide fatalities by national district (Past week)



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 23 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 50 deaths reported last week and 74 the week before, marking a decrease in the number of fatalities recorded throughout the week, largely due to the absence of an updated casualty toll from the ongoing Tripoli clashes. This week, shells targeting the GNA-affiliated Ghneiwa militia HQ in the Tripoli Zoo resulted in the death of ten Ghneiwa militiamen. In contrast to the past two weeks, WB recorded an uptick in violent clashes and airstrikes conducted as combat operations intensified. Similar to the patterns witnessed since the outbreak of clashes between LNA and GNA forces, the highest number of security incidents were recorded in Tripoli, followed by Benghazi. Several security incidents were reported throughout the country including 28 airstrikes, 22 violent clashes, 12 explosions heard, 11 arrests, 9 cases of isolated gunfire, 6 mortar/rocket shelling incidents, 5 protests, 3 kidnapping, 2 separate cases of bodies found, 2 robberies, 2 assassinations, 1 carjacking, 1 attack and 1 raid.

In Western Libya, WB recorded a total of 94 incidents, including 59 in Tripoli, marking a sharp increase in contrast to the previous week. In Tripoli, reports indicate five pro-Gaddafi/LNA men from Wershiffanah were assassinated at night on 20 Aug. Initial reports suggest the men were assassinated in the LNA-controlled Sog Al-Khmies Emsihel area and were leaders of the tribal force affiliated with the Gaddafi loyalist political party, Popular Front for the Liberation of Libya. Separately, WB sources reported a group of gunmen carjacked a white Hyundai Sonata in front of Tripoli Mall in Al Bivio area in the evening on 24 Aug. Initial reports indicate the gunmen attempted to kidnap the driver's child aboard the vehicle. Beyond, sources reported the Special Deterrence Force (SDF) arrested a senior Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB) member at MJI, who was on his way to travel to Germany via Tunisia on 23 Aug. Initial reports indicate the TRB member, identified as Abdulrahman Mohammed Abdou, also known as "Zegraa", was arrested on charges of killing two SDF members in Oct 2018. In the wider Western region, at approximately 0100hrs on 19 Aug, sources reported a series of explosions in Al-Zawiya targeted the Crystal Water Factory owned by Saad Bin Rjab and two houses belonging to Saad's brothers. No casualties were reported and the motive behind the incident remains unknown. Further, reports indicate Al-Suwaihli militia members closed the Al-Dafniya gate with burning tyres and fired sporadic shots in response to the kidnapping of their leader, Faraj Anbays Al-Suwaihli, at approximately 0100hrs on 19 Aug,

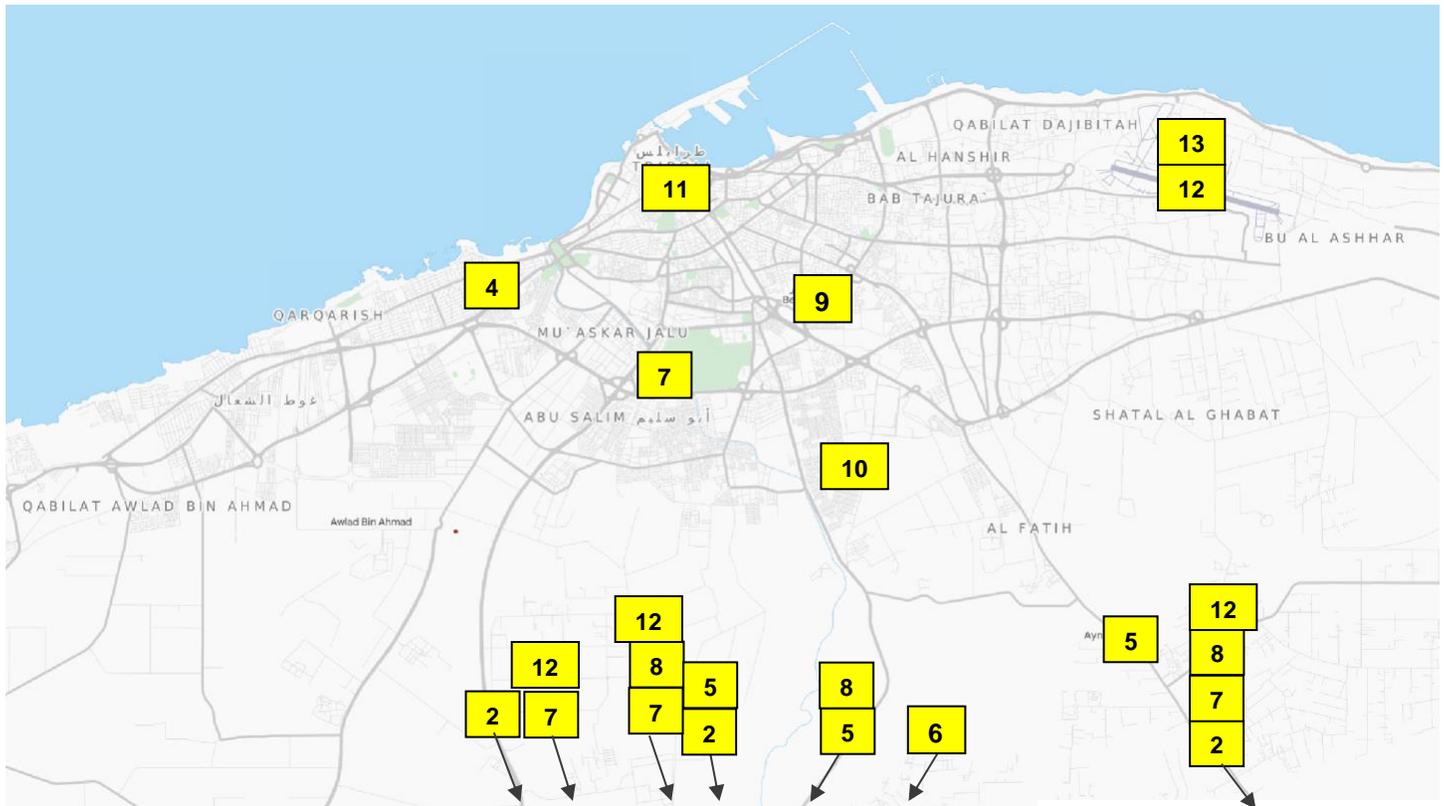
In the central region, suspicious movements of Misrata militias and other pro-GNA formations from areas West of Sirte to the East, in Hneiwa, have prompted the LNA to raise the state of alert in the Oil Crescent. Meanwhile, local reports indicate fleeing Murzuq residents protested their forced displacement in Jufra on 22 Aug.

Turning to the Southern region, local reports indicate a Chadian gang demanded a ransom of 200,000 Libyan dinars (LYD) to release a Libyan citizen from Umm Al-Aranib identified as Abdulhadi Hamza Moaz, after being kidnapped on the highway between Sokna and Samnu on 15 Aug. Moaz was in his twenties and worked as a truck driver. The victim was reportedly found killed near Mount Kaling in the desert border area between Libya and Chad, despite the kidnappers receiving a ransom of 150,000 LYD.

In Eastern Libya, sporadic security incidents continue in Benghazi, with ongoing reports of arrest campaigns following a crackdown on criminal groups/acts across the city.

4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

LNA controls Espiaa after heavy clashes; MJI shelling results in temp. halt



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (18 Aug) Masked gunmen kidnap HOO general manager in unknown area
2. (18-19 Aug) Clashes resume between LNA & GNA; no significant advances
3. (19 Aug) GNA-affiliated Nawasi militia detain five locals, inc. 4 family members
4. (19 Aug) Armed group storms GECOL Hai Al-Andalus Distribution HQ
5. (19-20 Aug) Clashes continue; LNA's 166th Infantry Brigade joins frontlines
6. (20 Aug) Five pro-Gaddafi/LNA men from Wershiffanah assassinated
7. (20-21 Aug) Clashes cont; shelling targets Ghneiwa militia HQ killing 10
8. (21 Aug) LNA controls Espiaa following heavy clashes
9. (21 Aug) Gunmen open fire on three currency traders; 1 killed & 2 injured
10. (21 Aug) Shells lands on rear gate of Tripoli University; no casualties
11. (22 Aug) Militia skirmishes
12. (23-34 Aug) Clashes cont; shelling targets MJI temporary halting ops.
13. (24 Aug) SDF arrests senior TRB member for killing 2 SDF members

MJI temporary halts air traffic due to shelling

WB sources reported indiscriminate shelling targeted Al-Ghararat and Tripoli's Mitiga International Airport (MJI) resulting in the temporary suspension of air traffic at approximately 0800hrs on 24 Aug. MJI resumed air traffic operations at approximately 1230hrs. Separately, sources reported traffic congestion on Tripoli's Shat Road, increasing towards MJI, due to the arrival of Muslim pilgrims from Saudi Arabia over the past days.

Militia skirmishes

WB sources reported sporadic gunfire heard in Tripoli's downtown area at approximately 2330hrs on 22 Aug, where skirmishes erupted between Nawasi and Misrata militia members in Martyrs' Square. Sources reported approximately six Toyota Land Cruisers and two Toyota Hilux were stationed in the square, including three Toyota Land Cruisers affiliated with the Misrata militias. The Special Deterrence Force (SDF) intervened and solved the dispute. Unconfirmed reports indicate the SDF arrested two gunmen, including the Nawasi militiaman behind the skirmishes, as well as a Misrata militia member.

Gunmen kidnap Harouge Oil Operations manager

Local reports from 18 Aug indicate masked gunmen kidnapped the Harouge Oil Operations (HOO) general manager, Ramadan Al-Naami, in an unidentified area in Tripoli. Local outlets citing a HOO official stated that GNA Minister of Interior (MoI)-affiliated vehicles took Al-Naami to an unknown location due to his refusal to militarily cooperate with the GNA and cut off the company's various services to the Eastern region.

Gunmen open fire on currency traders

Sources reported unidentified gunmen opened fire on three individuals resulting in the death of one, and the injury of two others, on Al Jraba Street in Ben Ashour at approximately 2030hrs on 21 Aug. Initial reports indicate the three victims, who work at a currency exchange shop in Al Dahra, closed the shop and drove in their vehicle with an amount of cash aboard. Two gunmen driving an unidentified vehicle blocked the road, stepped out of their vehicle and opened fire on the three men. The gunmen then stole the cash aboard the victim's vehicle. Following the incident, the SDF established three checkpoints on Al Jraba street later that night.

Key developments on frontlines

Shells targeted Tripoli Zoo, the Ghneiwa militia HQ, in Abu Salim, overnight between 19-20 Aug. The shelling resulted in the death of approximately ten Ghneiwa militiamen. Separately, in this week's main advance on the frontlines, heavy clashes erupted between the LNA and GNA forces in Espiaa on 21 Aug. GNA forces advanced towards central Espiaa, where they were stationed and controlled the College of Civil Aviation Authority and Meteorology. Later, GNA forces gained control over the Espiaa roundabout, forcing the LNA to retreat towards Abu Argoub. Following the arrival LNA reinforcements, the LNA regained control of the roundabout, resulting in GNA forces retreating towards Bier Allagh. LNA regained full control over Espiaa in the evening.

6. What's next

GNA and LNA seek to maximise territorial gains; LNA Gharyan offensive

POLITICAL FORECAST

In the aftermath of the GNA-led anti-Salame campaign, UN DSRSG Stephanie Williams took on a more proactive role this week, with a visit to Misrata and a meeting with the NOC's Sanallah. Williams met Misrata's Municipal Council on 20 Aug, and according to the municipality, reiterated that the UNSMIL will continue its work from inside Libya, whilst noting that Libyan consensus represents the only way out of the country's crisis. The Council reportedly agreed to a political solution provided that the military solution is ruled out and LNA's head Khalifa Haftar is prohibited from any future dialogue. Meanwhile, little has changed on the international front though some players are now gradually making their positions vis-à-vis Libyan armed factions and foreign policies clearer. Ahead of the 18 September UN General Assembly, international players will be expected to carve a clearer stabilization path. Egypt, for instance, has already made it support for the LNA more explicit this week. On the sidelines of the G7 Summit, Egyptian President Abdulfattah Sissi reiterated his country's support for the LNA in its mission to combat terrorism in discussions with his Italian counterpart, Giuseppe Conte. Further, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo held a telephone call with his Egyptian counterpart Sameh Shoukry on 19 Aug, where he expressed his country's concerns over the prolonged conflict in Libya. The two sides agreed on the need to reach a political solution and cooperation in the counter-terrorism field, according to the State Department. Separately, in a statement issued on 19 Aug, the US Embassy in Libya warned over the "catastrophic consequences" of recurrent attacks targeting civilian aviation facilities in Libya, without any further attribution.

WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

In an article published in the *Atlantic Council's MENASource*, Keith Jones explores Tunisia's potential to act as a mediator to de-escalate the situation in Libya. Tunisian FM, Khamis Jhinaoui, recently reaffirmed his country's support to the United Nations (UN) and Libyan efforts to end Libya's conflict, whilst noting that there can be no military solution in a meeting with Libyan counterpart, Mohammed Sayala, in Tunis. With this context in mind, Keith Jones writes "In 2020, when Tunisia begins its two-year term as non-permanent member of the Security Council, the country will have the biggest opportunity to influence international affairs since becoming a democracy in 2011. In response to the appointment, Tunisian Foreign Minister Khemaies Jhinaoui declared "Tunisia will be the voice of Africa and the Arab world... Trying to expedite finding peaceful settlement for some of the pending issues witnessed by our region." Tunisia could use that voice to help de-escalate the pending issue next door: a civil war in Libya. More specifically, Tunisia could take the initiative to leverage its window of increased influence to try to convince regional powers interfering in Libya to withdraw and respect the UN arms embargo. If successful, Tunisia would significantly de-escalate the conflict, while also bolstering its own economy and security." Jones further emphasizes Tunisia's role in ensuring compliance with the arms embargo against Libya. "Tunisia instead could operationalize its good relations with Egypt and Turkey, as well as the platform the Security Council provides, to play a more active role to convince both states to respect the UN arms embargo. Doing so is not without challenges and risks. Tunisia, technically, is already working with Egypt to find a solution to the crisis in Libya, by way of the tripartite presidential initiative between Tunisia, Egypt, and Algeria."

SECURITY FORECAST

Militia tensions could dominate central Tripoli's security environment after the recent arrest of TRB commander "Al-Zigraa" and ensuing distrust between militias. There is a possibility of retaliation against SDF members across Tripoli, though the broader militia structure is unlikely to shift in the short term. Separately, pro-GNA forces are reportedly planning an offensive on either Tarhunah or Jufra. On 25 Aug, the GNA's Volcano of Rage spokesperson, Mustafa AIMujie, was quoted in local media stating GNA forces are preparing for the "great battle" which will begin with an attack on Tarhouna. Meanwhile, LNA claims that terrorists and mercenaries landed in Misrata International Airport (HLMS) from Turkey could expose the airport and airlines, especially Libyan Wings, to further targeting. The possibility of a new front opening in the Sirte and central Jufra districts remains extant, especially after multiple reported pro-GNA movements eastward, which prompted LNA forces to raise the state of alert to critical in the Oil Crescent. Meanwhile, the IS threat remains extant, especially given combat operations in Tripoli and the ensuing nationwide security vacuum. On 19 Aug, reports by Algerian online newspaper L'Expression suggested confidential exchanges between multiple European intelligence services indicate plans for a Libya-based Islamic State (IS) cell to carry out attacks in the Mediterranean Sea and suicide bombings targeting Italian, French, and Spanish coasts. Turning to the southern region, Tebu-backed militants and armed groups in Murzuq could consolidate capabilities to target nearby towns and/or oil & gas infrastructure, including Sharara oil field; a plausible scenario given recent reports of LNA reinforcements sent to secure Sharara. Meanwhile, the LNA will likely continue to carry out airstrikes targeting militants in the area.

LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

In an article for Al-Monitor, Ahmed Youness, revisits the recent case of 11 individuals, including four Libyans, who were referred to court in Egypt and accused of spying for members of the Islamic State (IS) in Libya. The case recently made the headlines and offers valuable insights into cross-border operations of terrorists and the ambiguous relationship between criminals and militants on both sides of the border. The author writes "Egyptian public prosecutor Nabil Sadek ordered Aug. 5 the urgent referral of 11 defendants, including four Libyans, to the National Security Court (NSC). They were accused of spying for members of the Islamic State (IS) in Libya with the aim of committing terrorist crimes against Egyptians in Libya. Sadek said in a statement on Aug. 5 that the investigations conducted by the public prosecutor's office confirmed the defendants abducted and tortured Egyptian expats to obtain a ransom from their relatives for their release. They also committed the crimes of spying and supplying IS with money and information, and human trafficking and migrant smuggling. The same statement pointed out that the prosecution office with the NSC has launched its investigation into the findings of the National Security Agency. According to these findings released Aug. 5, defendant Mohamed Ragab Abdel Wahed Hassan, of Egyptian nationality, was found to have worked with Bedouin groups to smuggle Egyptians through the country's western border into Libya. Hassan was also accused of collaborating with members of IS in Libya, namely Libyan defendants Imad Ahmed Abdul Salam al-Warfali, Muftah Ahmed Abdul Salam al-Warfali, Ayad Ahmed Abdul Salam al-Warfali and Marwan al-Ghareeb. He allegedly provided them with information from within the country about Egyptians travelers and expats in Libya."

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