

1. The Big Picture

Evident cracks within GNA camp highlighted by attacks on Finance Ministry

Whilst the political front remained dominated by high-level meetings in the aftermath of the Turkey-GNA memoranda of understanding (Mou) to delineate new maritime boundaries, ratified by the Turkish Parliament, security incidents in Libya took precedence over heightened international tensions over the Turkish-GNA agreement. This week was dominated by two raids targeting the GNA's Ministry of Finance in Tripoli's Al-Dahra and Ben Ashour areas, with a third unconfirmed raid reported in the morning of 09 Dec. Separately, countering recent Libyan National Army (LNA) gains on the ground, the Government of National Accord (GNA) claimed the downing of an LNA MiG-23 fighter jet and the capture of its pilot south-east of Al-Zawiya. Despite the development marking an initial advantage over the LNA, it is likely to result in further pressure on the GNA's Interior Minister, Fathi Bashagha, to ensure the safety of the LNA pilot who has endured mistreatment by GNA-aligned forces.

In Tripoli, this week's security environment was dominated by conflicting reports over two raids targeting the GNA's Ministry of Finance, with some reports suggesting the second raid was in fact targeting the Prime Minister's Office. WB sources reported an unidentified armed group raided the budget management department at the GNA's Ministry of Finance in Tripoli's Al-Dahra area at approximately 1330hrs on 04 Dec. Reports suggest the motive behind the raid was an attempt to capture the GNA's Finance Minister, Faraj Boumtari, who was not present. Simultaneously, in what appears to be a linked incident, WB sources reported an unidentified armed group raided a second Ministry of Finance building in front of the Prime Minister's Office in Tripoli's Ben Ashour area. Initial reports allege the involvement of forces affiliated with Misrata's Counter-Terrorism (CT) force. WB sources confirmed the use of rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and heavy weapons, where an exchange of gunfire occurred between security guards and the armed group in the Ben Ashour area at approximately 1600hrs. Unconfirmed reports emerged suggesting Boumtari was killed in the attack, though WB sources denied the latter. Additional reports suggest that the PM's staff evacuated the PM Office in front of the Finance Ministry Office, during the attack.

Meanwhile, Italian news agency Nova published an article under the title "financial crisis behind the militia attack" in reference to two raids. The report indicates that the attack, carried out by GNA-aligned Misrata militias, highlights growing division within the GNA, as Misrata's Counter-Terrorism (CT) Force commander, Ahmed Al-Fetouri, called for the dismissal of the Finance minister, Faraj Boumtari, on allegations of corruption. According to reports, Boumtari allegedly owes 330 million Libyan dinars (LYD) to Misrata's CT Force in delayed salary payments allocated for Nov. The amount reportedly included an allocated budget for vehicles, weapons, and uniform for the CT Force. Al-Fetouri stated that Boumtari

fled to Tunisia following the raid on the Finance Ministry as he was unable to confront the force who had evidence of corruption against him. Following the incident, the report citing a PM Office source, stated that a delegation of tribal and military leaders representing the GNA PM, Fayeze Al-Serraj, and Boumatri, visited Misrata to mediate between the Finance Ministry and Misrata's CT Force, who clashed with the Presidential Guard (PG) following the raid on the ministry building near the PM Office. The report added that Al-Serraj was present in his office at the time of the raid and allegedly received militia representatives to negotiate financial demands, after which the attacking force withdrew after an agreement was reached. Boumtari has previously been subject to attacks and alleged death threats over delayed salary payments of militia forces earlier this year. Following the incident, Bashagha ordered a probe into details surrounding the twin raids, likely in an attempt to distance himself from affiliation to the alleged Misratan attacking forces.

Separately, the GNA's Volcano of Rage Operation reported downing an LNA MiG-23 fighter jet in Al-Bernawy area, south-east of Zawiya, and capturing the pilot, Aamer Al-Jagam, at approximately 1700hrs on 07 Dec. Pictures circulated of Al-Zawiya militiamen mistreating Al-Jagam. The incident was corroborated by the LNA's spokesman, Ahmed Al-Mesmari, who reported that the aircraft crashed due to a technical malfunction, forcing the pilot to eject and make a parachute landing in "hostile territory". Al-Mesmari reported that "terrorists" from Al-Zawiya captured Al-Jagam and mistreated him. Al-Mesmari warned that the general command holds Al-Zawiya's elders, tribal, and religious leaders, responsible for any harm endured. To conclude, Al-Mesmari threatened harsh retaliation against Al-Zawiya militias. Meanwhile the GNA's FM, Mohammed Sayala, referred to the incident as an indication of Haftar's incapability to seize Tripoli. Bashagha, meanwhile, called on the Zawiya Security Directorate to launch an immediate investigation into the "mistreatment" of Al-Jagam by GNA-aligned First Division (Al-Isnad Force), led by the wanted Mohammed Bahroun also known as "the mouse" for links to the Islamic State (IS). Bashagha also ordered the reshuffling of Al-Isnad Force. The incident would corroborate evident cracks within the GNA camp, as well as increased pressure on Bashagha to counter any claims that could prove unfavourable to his ministry's reputation. The development, and initial events that followed, indicate likely further tensions between pro/anti LNA/GNA groups in Al-Zawiya and beyond.

KEY POINTS

- Increased tensions over Turkey-GNA agreement
- Two attacks on GNA's Ministry of Finance
- LNA MiG-23 fighter jet downed in Al-Zawiya



CONTENTS

- 1 **THE BIG PICTURE**
Evident cracks within GNA camp highlighted by attacks on Finance Ministry
- 2 **NATIONWIDE SECURITY**
Events, Analysis and Data
- 3 **SECURITY BY NUMBERS**
Charts, Statistics and Analysis
- 4 **TRIPOLI REPORT**
News & Neighborhoods
- 5 **BENGAZI REPORT**
News & Neighborhoods
- 6 **WHAT'S NEXT**
Forward Looking Expert Opinions

2. National Security Map

LNA MiG-23 fighter jet downed south-east of Zawiya; production halted at Al-Feel Oilfield

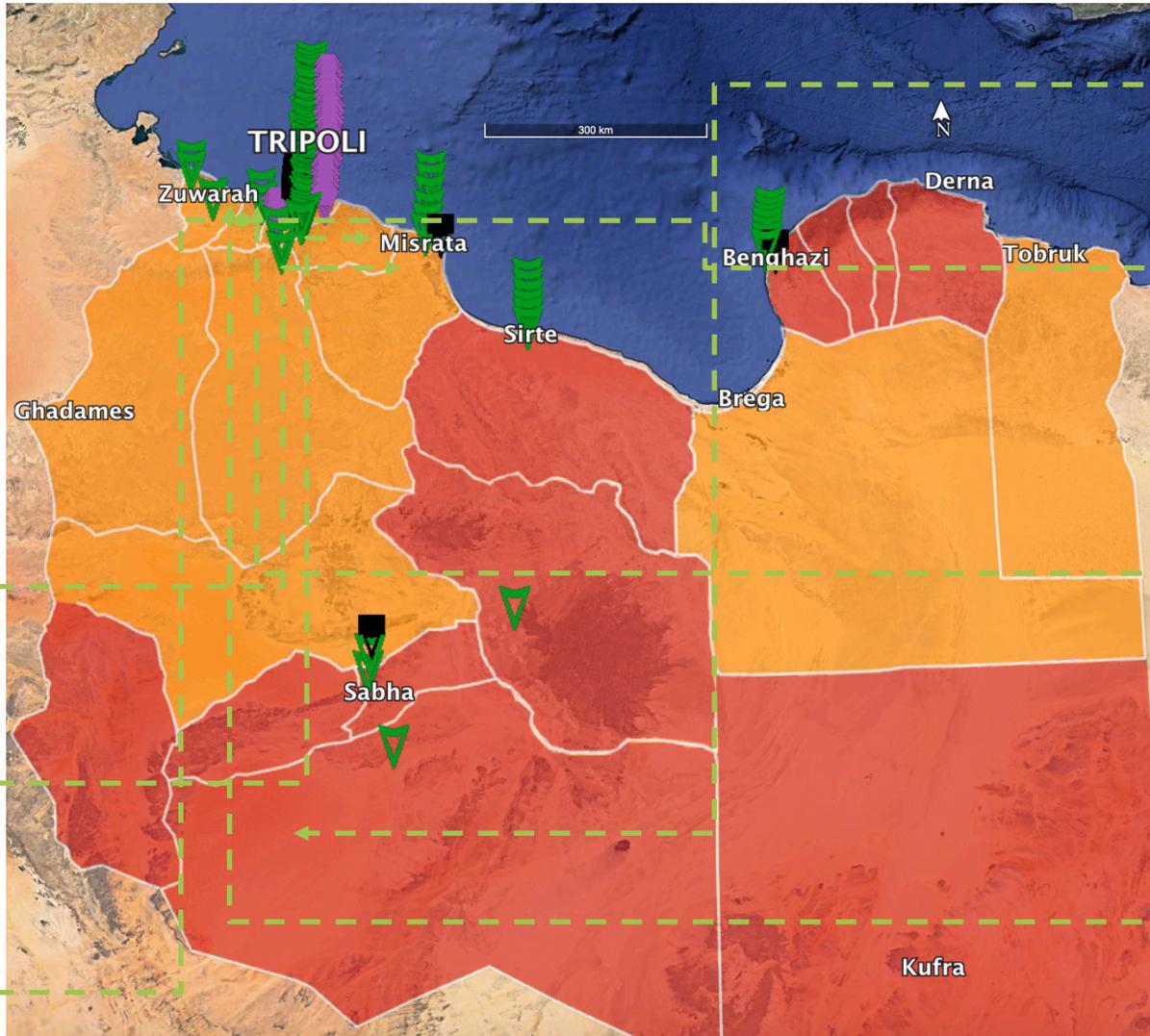
Key

THREAT INDICATORS

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

EVENT INDICATORS

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



On 05 Dec, the National Oil Corporation (NOC) confirmed halting production at Al-Feel Oilfield due to an illicit valve closure on the export pipeline from Al-Feel Oilfield to Melittah. The NOC chairman, Mustafa Sanalla, referred to the incident as a criminal attempt to disrupt the NOC's work and harm the Libyan economy, whilst calling on competent authorities in the area to identify the perpetrators.

The Chief of Staff of the LNA's Air Force (LAAF), Sagr Al-Jaroushi, confirmed that all LNA aircraft and its ammunition will be transferred to Al-Watiyah Airbase on 08 Dec.

The GNA's Volcano of Rage Operation reported downing an LNA MiG-23 fighter jet in Al-Bernawy area, south-east of Zawiya, and capturing the pilot, Amer Al-Jagam, at approximately 1700hrs on 07 Dec. Pro-GNA media outlets reported the co-pilot was killed as he failed to eject his parachute, whilst the pro-LNA accounts refuted such claims. Pictures circulated across social media outlets of Al-Zawiya militiamen mistreating Al-Jagam. The incident was corroborated in a statement by the LNA's spokesman, Ahmed Al-Mesmari, who reported that the aircraft crashed due to technical difficulties, forcing the pilot to eject and making a parachute landing in "hostile territory". Al-Mesmari reported that "terrorists" from Al-Zawiya captured Al-Jagam and mistreated him.

Reports indicate a gas pipeline explosion resulted in two fatalities, including a Sudanese national, in Wershiffanah between Al-Tina and Al-Heshan areas at approximately 1245hrs on 03 Dec. The gas pipeline links Al-Zawiya Oil Refinery with the Brega Petroleum Marketing Company's (BPMC) storage facility on Tripoli's Airport Road. Prior to the incident, locals reportedly complained of a gas leak at the pipeline over the past week.

WB sources reported a prisoner exchange between GNA-aligned Misrata militias and LNA units in As-Sdadah in the morning on 04 Dec. Sources reported following the prisoner exchange, Misrata militias left the area and headed towards Misrata, whilst LNA units left the area and headed towards Bani Walid.

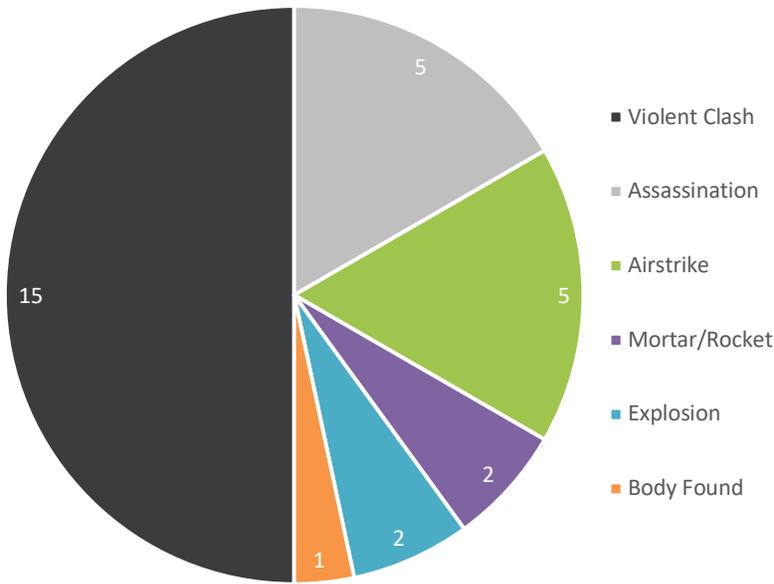
Local reports suggest a Libyan Arabian Gulf Oil Company (AGOCO) engineer, identified as Saleh Ben Skined, was kidnapped at a security checkpoint in Misrata as he was on his way back from Al-Zawiya with his nephew. Skined not known to have any political affiliation to either side of the conflict.

Reports indicate Al-Esnad Force led by Mohammed Bahroun, arrested the two military men from their residences in Al-Zawiya's Al-Harsha and city centre areas as per the orders of the GNA's Interior Minister, Fathi Bashagha. Unconfirmed reports indicate the two military men are affiliated with the LNA.

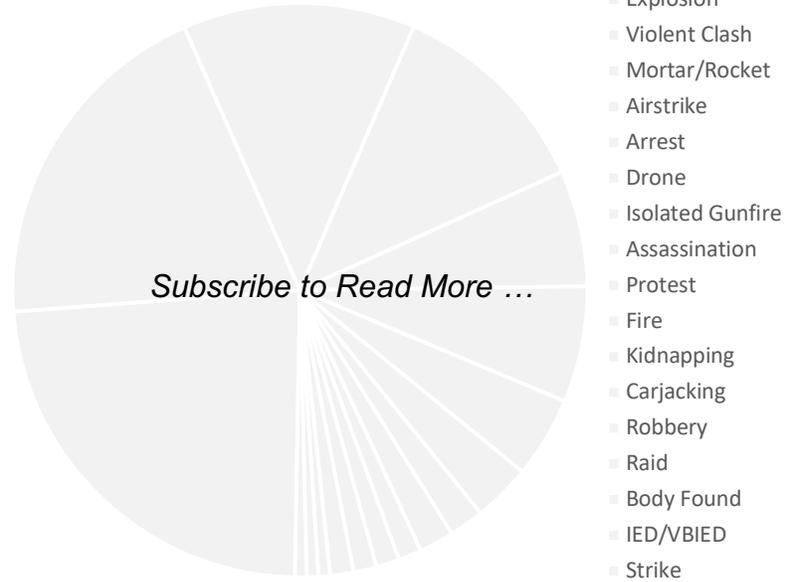
3. Nationwide Security Analysis

Over ¾ of security incidents recorded in West as clashes protract

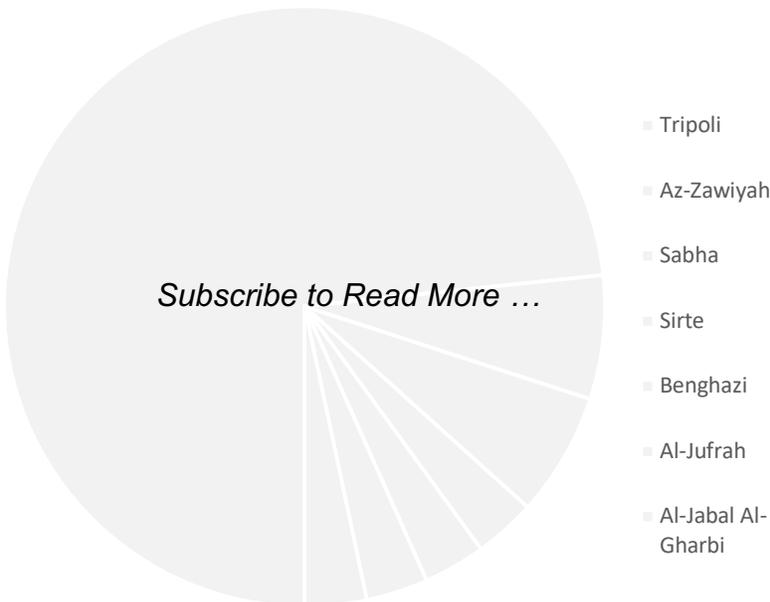
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



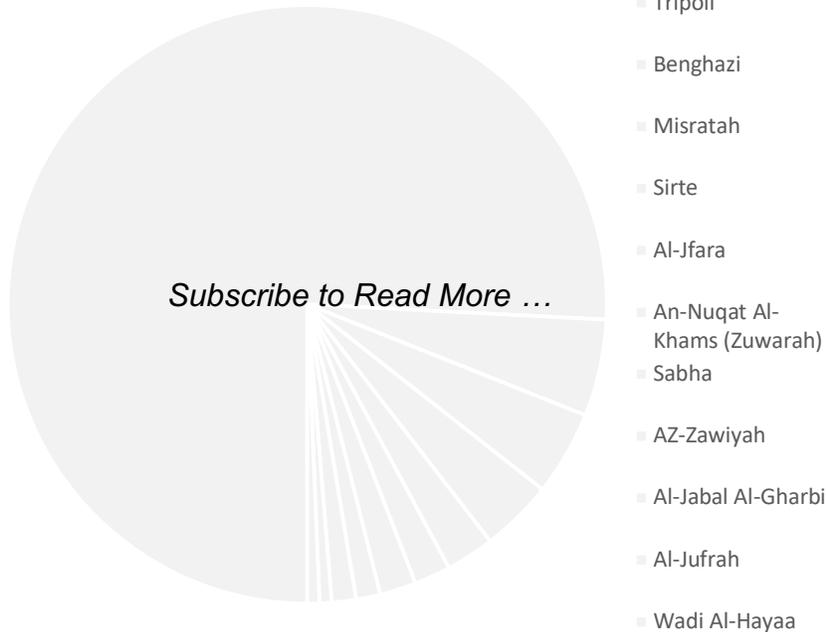
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



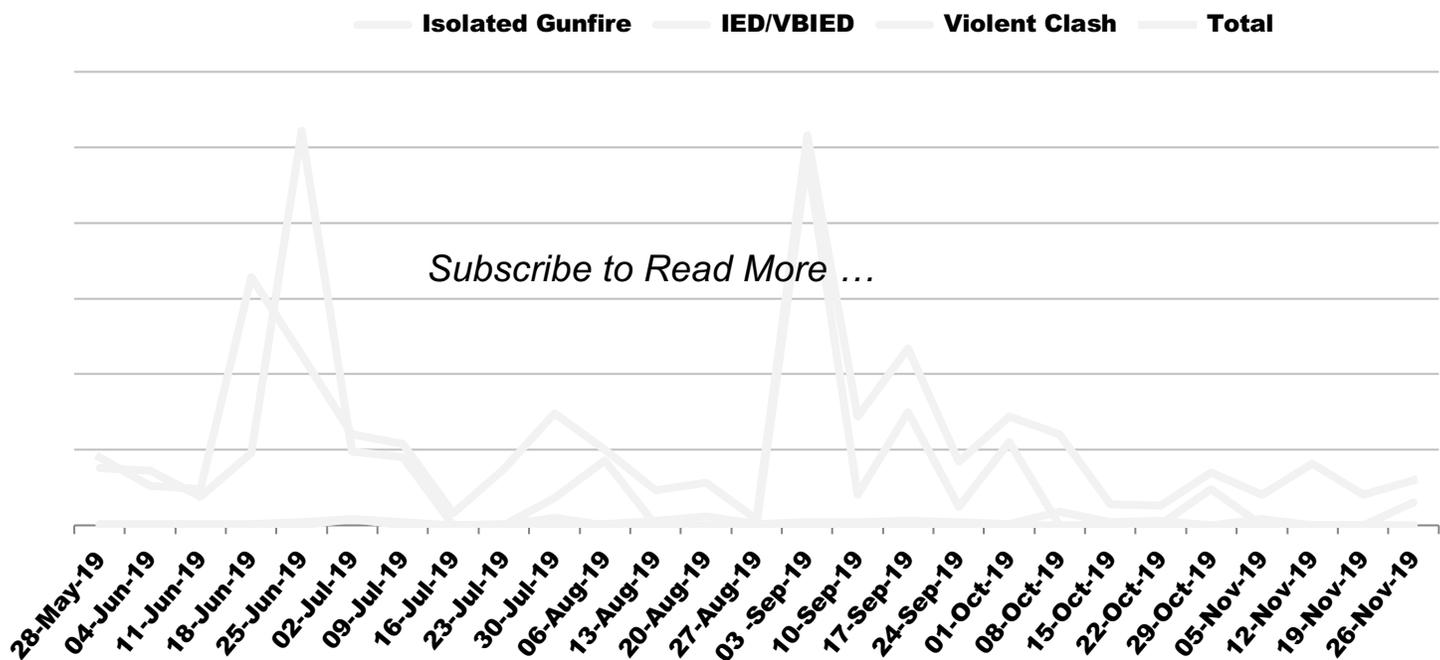
Nationwide fatalities by national district (Past week)



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 30 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 20 deaths reported last week and 41 the week before. The total number of nationwide fatalities would likely be significantly higher if a reliable casualty toll of the ongoing clashes in the Western region was available. This week, the GNA's Volcano of Rage Field Operations Room commander, Ahmed Abu-Shahma, claimed that GNA forces attacked LNA units attempting to advance on Al-Khallatat area, resulting in the destruction of 10 armed vehicles and the death of over 15 LNA units, including Sudanese mercenaries. In addition, an LNA Air Force (LAAF) airstrike targeting Al-Swani resulted in five fatalities and at least 10 other injuries on 01 Dec. An addition two fatalities were recorded as a result of mortar/rocket shelling incidents. Beyond military operations in Western Libya, WB recorded five fatalities as a result of assassinations recorded across Libya's various regions. Meanwhile, WB recorded an increase in airstrikes and assassinations this week, whilst the highest number of security incidents remained in Tripoli, followed by Benghazi and Misratah. In Misratah, WB recorded drones heard flying above the city, as well as an LAAF airstrike, kidnapping, and isolated gunfire case. Unlike last week with no security incidents recorded in Sirte, this week WB recorded six security incidents in the city, including 2 drones heard, 2 airstrikes, 1 mortar/rocket shelling incident and an assassination. In Libya's South, parallel to last week, WB recorded three incidents in Sabha as sporadic criminal activity continues despite an overall recent improvement in the security environment. Several security incidents were recorded throughout the country including 36 explosions heard due ongoing clashes, 30 violent clashes, 20 mortar/rocket shelling incidents, 10 airstrikes, 10 arrests, 10 drones heard, 7 isolated gunfire cases, 5 assassinations, 3 protests, 3 fires, 2 kidnappings, 2 carjackings, 2 robberies, 2 raids, 1 body found, 1 strike and 1 IED/VBIED removed.

In Western Libya, WB recorded a total of 134 incidents, including 116 in Tripoli, marking an overall increase in security incidents recorded across the region, particularly in Tripoli, in an indication of intensified military operations across frontlines. In Tripoli, beyond ongoing clashes, reports indicate a parked gray Hyundai Elantra was stolen in front of a house in the Souq Al Jum'aa area in the morning on 30 Nov. Separately, Jumhuriya Bank employees protested to denounce the abduction of their colleague, Mohammed Deeknah, in front of the bank's Tuesday Mall branch in the Gorje area at approximately 1200hrs on 01 Dec. According to reports, unidentified assailant(s) reportedly kidnapped Deeknah in front of the bank on 28 Nov. The motive behind the incident remains unclear. Beyond, unidentified gunmen conducted a failed kidnapping attempt targeting a man driving a white KIA Cerato on Tripoli's Shat Road of Tajoura near the Fish Market at approximately 2100hrs on 04 Dec. Initial reports indicate the gunmen carjacked the victim's vehicle, though the driver managed to escape. In the wider Western region, reports indicate an LAAF airstrike targeted Misrata's Al Ghiran area in the afternoon on 06 Dec. Separately, reports indicate a dispute erupted between two policemen at the Gharyan Radio HQ resulting in the death of an Abu Zayyan police member. Unconfirmed reports suggest the victim was pro-LNA.

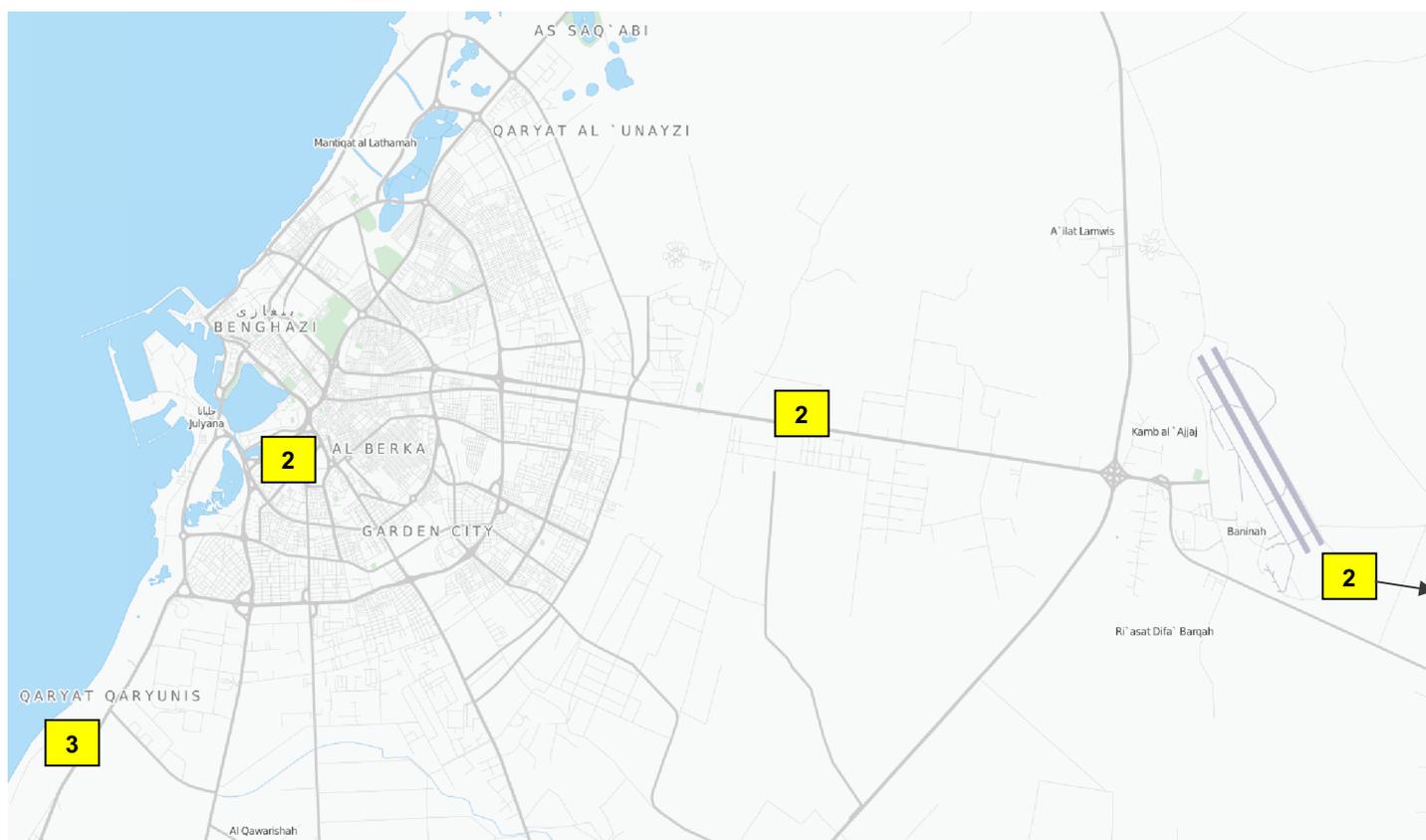
In the central region, reports indicate a young man was killed in an unidentified location in Sirte on 05 Dec. Initial reports indicate a dispute between the victim and another unidentified group resulting in the latter stabbing the young man to death. There is no further information available. Separately, local reports indicate members of the Danish Demining Group (DDG) recovered a large-sized shell intended for detonation next to a main road near Sirte's Central School on 05 Dec. DDG members reported to the site after receiving local reports on the presence of an unidentified object on the Coastal Road.

Turning to the South, reports indicate an unidentified body was found with signs of a headshot in Sabha on 06 Dec. Separately, reports indicate a man was found killed in Al-Fuqaha in the afternoon on 05 Dec. Initial reports indicate Islamic State (IS) militants kidnapped the victim during an IS attack targeting the village in early Apr 2019.

In the East, there were no security incidents reported outside the city of Benghazi, where WB recorded 5 arrests, 1 assassination, 1 fire and 1 isolated gunfire case.

5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

Haftar receives Amazigh delegation; WM Infantry Military Brigade announced



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (30 Nov) Unconfirmed reports of raid on anti-LNA female activist
2. (01 Dec) Indiscriminate gunfire injures doctor in Al-Kish
3. (02 Dec) CID arrest three drug traffickers in Al-Nayrouz Resort
4. (02 Dec) Criminal wanted in nine cases arrested
5. (03 Dec) Haftar receives Amazigh tribal delegation in LNA HQ
6. (04 Dec) CID free 10 detained Bangladeshi's smuggled into country

Anti-LNA activist house allegedly raided

Unconfirmed reports allege a pro-LNA battalion, led by Idris Al-Farsi, raided the residence of a pro-GNA female human rights activist and opponent of Haftar, identified as Nadine Al-Farsi, in Benghazi on 30 Nov. The LNA-affiliated battalion allegedly raided Al-Farsi's residence, currently occupied by women and children, as Nadine and her father fled the city after Haftar attempted to pursue them. According to the unconfirmed reports, Al-Farsi's residence was previously raided in Jan 2018 by Idris Al-Farsi's battalion, who is allegedly her uncle. There is no further information available. Of note, a female MP and opponent of the LNA's offensive on Tripoli, Siham Sergiwa, was abducted by unidentified gunmen from her Benghazi residence in Jul 2019. Her whereabouts remain unknown to date despite domestic and international calls on Eastern authorities to reveal her fate.

Sporadic security incidents

Local reports indiscriminate gunfire resulted in the injury of a doctor in Al-Kish area on 01 Dec. The victim suffered a minor head injury. There is no further information available. Separately, Reports indicate a Palestinian national was found killed in front of his residence in the Kuwayfiah area in the morning on 06 Dec. Neither the identity of the assailant(s) nor the motive behind the incident are known.

Ten detained Bangladeshi nationals freed

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of Benghazi's Security Directorate freed 10 Bangladeshi nationals detained under dire living conditions in the Boatni area on 04 Dec. The CID members reported the presence of insects and overflowing sewage. The CID arrested the man behind the detention of the Bangladeshi nationals, where he confessed to the charges against him and noted his involvement in recruiting migrant workers who are only released after paying their financial debt for being smuggled into the country.

Haftar receives Amazigh tribal delegation in HQ

On the domestic front, the LNA's head, Khalifa Haftar, received dignitaries from the Amazigh (Berber) tribe in the LNA's HQ in Ar-Rajmah on 03 Dec. According to the LNA's Military Information Division (MID), the dignitaries voiced their support for the LNA and its offensive on Tripoli and stressed the importance of the general command's role in national reconciliation between the cities and tribes of the Western region. On the LNA's side, Haftar reportedly highlighted the key role of Libyan tribes on the "war on terrorism" and called on all components of Libyan society to unite to achieve national unity. Meanwhile, the LNA's spokesman, Ahmed Al-Mesmari, stated that Haftar informed the Amazigh delegation of the formation of a military infantry brigade in the Nafusa Mountain area, which will be made up of forces from Amazigh and Arab tribes of the region and include all military personnel in the Nafusa Mountain.

6. What's next

Turkey-GNA maritime agreement to raise questions over GNA legitimacy

POLITICAL FORECAST

Similar to last week, this week was dominated by growing international tensions over the recent Turkey-GNA agreement to delineate new maritime boundaries, in what has been perceived as a regional competition for undersea resources in the Mediterranean. According to reports, European Union (EU) foreign ministers are due to meet on 09 Dec to discuss the Turkey-GNA maritime deal that went into effect after it was ratified by the Turkish parliament on 06 Dec. Open-source reports leaked a copy of the MoU subsequently prompting the EU meeting, where the officials will revise its contents. According to the leaked map, the new maritime boundary bisects an area claimed by Greece and Cyprus and is within proximity to the Greek island of Crete, thus potentially compromising the establishment of a gas pipeline to deliver gas from the Eastern Mediterranean to Europe. In addition, the agreement has also prompted a visit by the House of Representatives (HoR) Head, Aguila Saleh, to Egypt and Greece, to meet with parliament officials to discuss the Turkey-GNA MoU and endorse Saleh's call to withdraw recognition of the GNA. The development also saw the dismissal of the Libyan Ambassador to Greece after failing to provide Greece with the MoU's contents. Meanwhile, Greek officials have been cited stating that Ankara blackmailed the GNA into signing the MoU to secure ongoing military support, of which the GNA heavily relies on particularly amid recent LNA gains on the ground. Beyond, this week saw the Interior Minister, Fathi Bashagha, meet with Qatar's Emir, Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, in Doha Qatar, where Al-Thani reaffirmed his support for the GNA as the "legitimate and internationally recognised government in Libya". Bashagha stated that Al-Thani expressed his will to assist the GNA with the establishment of a Libyan army. Meanwhile, focusing on the conflict's domestic dimension, the LNA's general command called on fighters to surrender and granted 100,000 (LYD) to "martyr" families.

WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

In an article for *"Foreign Policy"*, the author, Frederic Wehrey, argues that an LNA push into the centre of Tripoli would not signify imminent victory, but rather be followed by "bloody block-by-block" fighting. "An undercurrent of distrust runs deep among the disparate armed groups in and around the capital, which are unified mostly by a shared enmity toward Haftar. Meanwhile, the damage that Haftar's war is inflicting on Libya's political unity and social fabric is becoming more severe as each day passes. It is probably irreparable. Driving through Tripoli after a visit with al-Darrat's forces, the evidence is everywhere. More than 140,000 people have been displaced in and around the capital because of the fighting. The beleaguered Tripoli government, the GNA—never a paragon of service delivery—is failing in even basic functions of governance and incurring the wrath of citizens. Some of the corrupt militias that nominally ally themselves to this government are growing more brazen because of the war. Civilian deaths are mounting, the result of reckless airstrikes by Haftar-aligned jets and drones that have drawn little distinction between military and nonmilitary targets. The horrific results were apparent one cloudless afternoon. Contrary to the propaganda of Haftar's backers, the collapse of the GNA cordon in southern Tripoli and a push into downtown areas, abetted by a brutal Russian ground campaign and Emirati air power, will not produce a quick victory. Instead, bloody block-by-block street fighting is likely to ensue, especially in neighborhoods and enclaves long opposed to the general's project: Militiamen from some of them recently told me that they would fight to the death. If he takes power, the militia firmament in Tripolitania will not disappear but will continue, albeit reconfigured, rebranded, and under Haftar's loose authority—a co-option strategy he's employed toward armed groups elsewhere in Libya. And Haftar's style of governance—currently marked by the stoking of communal tensions in the south and economic predation and repression in the east—will not foster much-needed unity but will force his opponents into an protracted insurgency. That conflict could indirectly give new life to weakened radical groups like the Islamic State or inspire some new jihadi mutation opposed to the tyrant in Tripoli—an ironic twist given the counterterrorism narrative that Haftar has long sold to the world".

SECURITY FORECAST

This week military activity was marked by a brief LNA advance on a desert area of As-Sdadah, South of Misrata, by the LNA's recently deployed 166 Battalion. Video footage circulated of the battalion in As-Sadadah Castle, though the GNA refuted an LNA advance on the area and referred to the footage as propaganda. As a result, GNA forces deployed and carried out patrols South of Misratah, near As-Sadadah and Abugrein. Meanwhile, in Tripoli, this week saw no significant developments on the frontlines, though intense clashes prompted additional families to evacuate their houses located on Hadba Al-Mashro frontline. The coming days could see GNA forces attempting to launch attacks on LNA positions amid alleged reports of military supplies delivered from abroad. Reports continue to emerge over the potential resumption of operations at Mitiga International Airport (MJI), with attacks on the airport ahead of its planned opening date probable. Reports of up to three raids targeting the GNA's Ministry of Finance prompting an evacuation of the PM Office, corroborate growing divisions within the GNA camp, as the raids were allegedly carried out by Misrata's Counter-Terrorism (CT) Force. In Al-Zawiya, tensions remain high after the GNA claimed to have downed an LNA MiG-23 fighter jet, and captured its pilot, south-east of Al-Zawiya. The development has resulted in the Interior Minister calling on the Zawiya Security Directorate to probe into the mistreatment of the pilot by Al-Isnad Force. Following the incident, reports suggest the Al-Isnad Force leader, bulldozed several warehouses belonging to LNA-affiliates in Al-Zawiya. Acts of retaliation between pro-GNA/LNA groups in Al-Zawiya remain probable in the short term. In the central region, this week saw renewed LNA airstrikes targeting GNA-aligned positions in Sirte, with additional LNA airstrikes likely to continue in Misrata and Sirte. In the Southern region, sporadic security incidents continued, including in Sabha. Al-Feel Oilfield halted production after an illegal valve closure. Meanwhile, the East remains relatively calm in contrast.

LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

Writing for the *"Financial Times"*, the authors outline how the recent Turkish-GNA accord over maritime boundaries marks the first time Greece faces a challenge to its sovereignty in the Cretan sea, "Analysts say the move is another potential flashpoint in Turkish-Greek relations as Turkey seeks to muscle in on efforts to exploit gasfields in the Mediterranean, where it is already in bitter dispute with Cyprus over exploration rights. The Libya deal "is presented in a hostile way to Greece and Cyprus", said Marc Pierini, a former EU ambassador to Turkey and a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Europe think-tank. Athens and Ankara have been at odds for decades over control of the Aegean Sea as a whole but the Turkish-Libyan accord marks the first time that Greece faces a challenge to its sovereignty in the Cretan Sea. Greek officials fear that Turkey wants to extend a dispute with Cyprus over undersea gas and oil exploration by challenging Greek mineral rights in waters south of Crete. Speaking before a parliamentary committee on Thursday, Turkey's deputy foreign minister, Yavuz Selim Kiran, said the deal sent an "important message" to the international community on Turkey's determination to stand its ground. Kyriakos Mitsotakis, the Greek prime minister, claimed on Friday that the Turkey-Libya accord was illegal under international law and reflected its neighbour's "aggressive stance" towards Greece. "Nobody is going to recognise this meaningless document not just because it's invalid but because there's no equivalent legal authority on the Libyan side that can do so," the premier said, briefing Greek lawmakers after his meeting with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey at last week's Nato summit near London. Greece also announced on Friday that it was expelling Libya's ambassador to Athens because he had allegedly failed to meet a deadline for handing over a copy of the agreement to the foreign ministry in Athens. Turkish officials claim that Greece and Cyprus, which remains divided into Greek- and Turkish-speaking enclaves after decades of failed negotiations, have long refused to engage in negotiations on how to divide the Mediterranean region's natural resources. Cyprus has angered Turkey by allowing international energy companies to conduct exploratory work in seas it claims as its exclusive economic zone. Ankara has sent Turkish vessels to explore the same waters in response, triggering an EU threat to impose sanctions".

About Whispering Bell



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

[Twitter](#)



[Website](#)



[LinkedIn](#)



Copyright © 2016 Whispering Bell, All rights reserved.