

## 1. The Big Picture

### GNA forces seize Al-Wattiyah amid broader east Med tensions

This week, Libyan National Army (LNA) forces under Khalifa Haftar's command intensified shelling against Tripoli but denied its involvement in the targeting of Tripoli's Central Hospital and adjacent buildings. Meanwhile, Government of National Accord (GNA) forces continued to focus on LNA supply lines across the western region.

While Tripoli frontlines remained relatively unchanged, GNA forces launched a third offensive on Al-Wattiyah airbase further west between 17-18 May. The GNA forces successfully entered the airbase between 0800-0900hrs local time on 18 May. The development has been described as the most significant LNA defeat after the loss of Gharyan in June 2019. However, the LNA's head of moral guidance, Brigadier Khaled Mahjoub, downplayed the loss as "symbolic", adding that LNA forces did not rely on the base to fly combat sorties across the West.

Reports allege the operation was supported by an offshore Turkish military frigate that fired missiles to target LNA assets overnight. Meanwhile, the ground offensive - led by factions from Zawiyah, Misrata, and Zuwara - was preceded by a series of UAV strikes carried out by the GNA and prompting a retreat of local LNA forces from the airbase at approximately 0430hrs on 18 May. Reports confirm no engagement was recorded when GNA forces entered the airbase later in the morning.

Overall, the loss of Al-Wattiyah will reverberate in LNA ranks and could even undermine the LNA's overall posture in Tripoli's southern frontlines. The impact on the morale of local LNA forces will be acute ahead of the Eid holiday period. GNA forces will now focus on maintaining their position at the airbase before eventually enabling Turkey to consolidate its capabilities and deploy more resources. Ankara views Al-Wattiyah, one of the largest bases in Libya, as a platform to establish a foothold across Libya's western region and protect its interests in the east Mediterranean and the Maghreb.

Locally, the loss of Al-Wattiyah raises the prospect of tensions west of Tripoli between the GNA coalition and remaining LNA-aligned forces in Zintan and Al-Rujban. Of note, local Zintan battalions controlled the airbase with other LNA forces from the East. Some Zintan battalions, including Battalion 78, withdrew from the airbase in late April as a result of intensified GNA/Turkish UAV strikes. Zintanis remain divided in their support for the LNA, although GNA forces will likely tread carefully to avoid igniting tribal tensions across the west. Regardless of the victory, the GNA

continues to face pressure to reinvent itself to obtain the buy-in of tribes in Zintan and Bani Walid.

Meanwhile, after its military intervention to ensure a level playing field in the Libyan combat theatre, there is evidence to indicate Turkey is now looking at next steps, including the broader battle for hydrocarbon resources in the east Mediterranean. Ankara shifted its attention this week to the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) off Libya's shores, the second part of its agreement with the GNA.

In fact, Turkish Petroleum (TPAO) applied for an exploration permit in the eastern Mediterranean from the GNA. The move would further exacerbate tensions in the region between Turkey and the Greece-Cyprus-France-Egypt bloc. Turkey's interest is in delaying any regional offshore drilling and exploration activity, specifically the completion of the East Med pipeline, by this rival bloc in the medium term. The move closely follows, and is in direct response to, the joint statement by Egypt, Greece, Cyprus, France, and the UAE, which described Turkey as a threat to regional stability.

However, Turkey's plans to expand its presence in Libya could be put to the test when the EU's EUNAVFOR Med Operation IRINI officially begins to enforce and monitor the arms embargo. The latest reports indicate internal disagreements are delaying the operation. Greece has reportedly deployed its Hydra frigate to join patrols by the end of May, while France has agreed to deploy two frigates. For its part, Malta froze contributions due to migration issues. As the EU member state leading the operation, Italy's own contribution to IRINI is awaiting parliamentary approval, as per Italian FM Luigi Di Maio.

In sum, Turkey is gradually demonstrating that it is willing to go to greater lengths in Libya than other foreign players, including some LNA foreign backers operating under a veil of plausible deniability across Libya. However, the political dimension of the conflict will continue to represent Turkey's Achilles' heel in Libya. With little domestic support for any foreign intervention in Libya, Ankara's entire architecture in the country is contingent on the GNA's survival. Any domestic move to create a new government threatens to upend the status quo, and by extension Turkey's security and maritime deals with the GNA.

#### KEY POINTS

- GNA implements full 24hr curfew over Eid period
- GNA forces seize Al-Wattiyah after LNA retreat
- Turkey mulls exploration rights in east med



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## 2. National Security Map

### GNA claims three LNA-operated Pantsir air defence systems destroyed

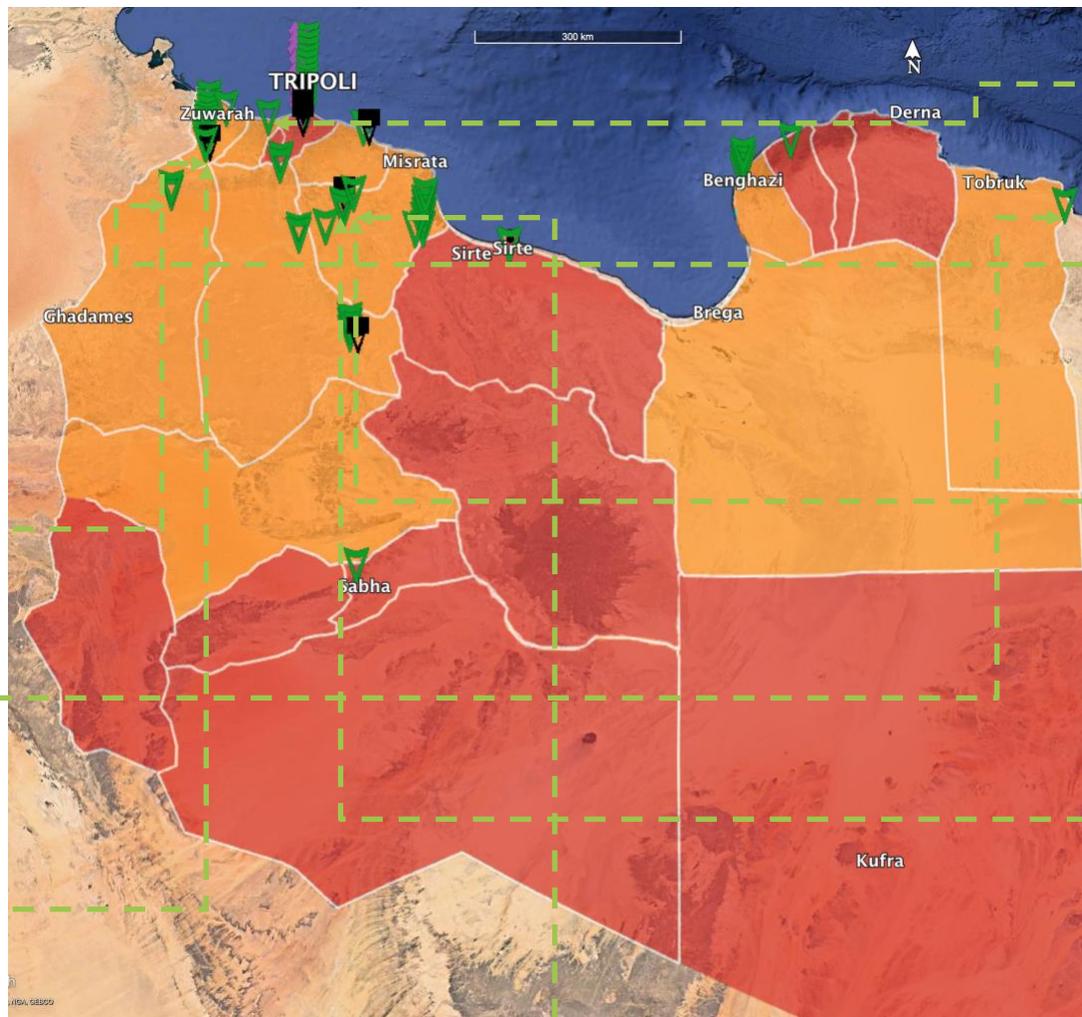
Key

THREAT INDICATORS

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

EVENT INDICATORS

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



GNA forces reported three airstrikes targeted LNA positions in Al-Wattiyah Airbase over on 12 May. WB recorded a total of 12 GNA airstrikes against the airbase between 10-12 May.

Thirteen House of Representatives (HoR) members denounced the “unlawful” arrest of the Interim Government Finance Minister, Kamel Al-Hassi, denying allegations he attempted to escape via the Libyan-Egyptian Emsaed border crossing carrying approx. 400,000 US dollars (USD) on 13 May.

GNA forces reported the destruction of an LNA-operated Pantsir S-1 air defence system two hours after its deployment at Al-Wattiyah airbase on 16 May. GNA official accounts published video footage of the UAV strike targeting the air defence system, though reports failed to confirm the authenticity of the footage. In addition, the GNA forces reported a second LNA-operated Pantsir S-1 system was targeted at approximately 0530hrs on 17 May. Further, GNA reported the targeting of an LNA convoy transporting a Pantsir and electronic warfare system (allegedly a Krasukha mobile system) on the Al-Ruwagha road linking Waddan to Sirte at approximately 0358hrs on 18 May.

Assailants assassinated a pro-GNA Zawiyah-based militiaman identified as Tarek Al-Soussi in front of his house in Zawiyah on 16 May. Reports allege Misrata-based factions carried out the assassination.

The tribal head of the municipality of Kabaw, Sheikh Abdullah Makhlof, was found assassinated in the Kabaw region in the evening of 15 May. Reports allege local pro-GNA armed factions assassinated Makhlof over his rapprochement with LNA commander Khalifa Haftar and previous meetings with east-based authorities.

A GNA UAV was downed by LNA forces over Bani Walid at approximately 1830hrs on 14 May. In a separate incident, GNA UAV strikes were reported in Ashmeikh, south of Bani Walid, at approximately 2030hrs on 15 May. Meanwhile, GNA UAV strikes targeted a vehicle in the Wadi Marseet area, south Mizdah, at approximately 1700hrs on 15 May, reportedly killing at least two civilians. Meanwhile, the GNA military spokesman, Mohamed Gonounou, reported an LNA convoy was targeted between Tininai and Bani Walid on 15 May.

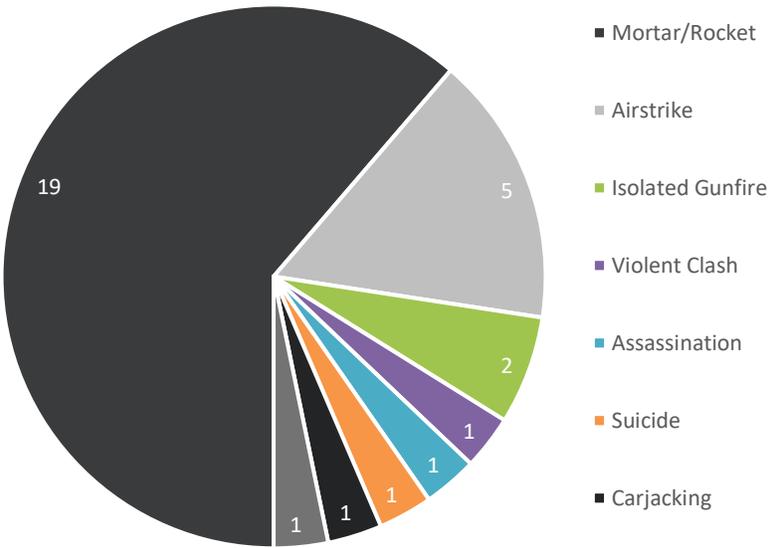
Reports of a fire outbreak in the GNA-affiliated Bani Waled Municipal Council at approximately 1800hrs on 13 May. Unconfirmed reports indicate arson in retaliation for the killing of two men as a result of a GNA-operated Turkish UAV strike targeting a civilian vehicle in the Eshmikh area, south of Bani Waled, earlier that afternoon.

Reports indicate a prisoner exchange took place in Bani Waled, including a GNA 301 Battalion member from Souq Al Jum'aa and a member of the LNA's 128 Battalion from Sawknah.

### 3. Nationwide Security Analysis

#### Shelling accounts for highest no. of fatalities amid significant uptick

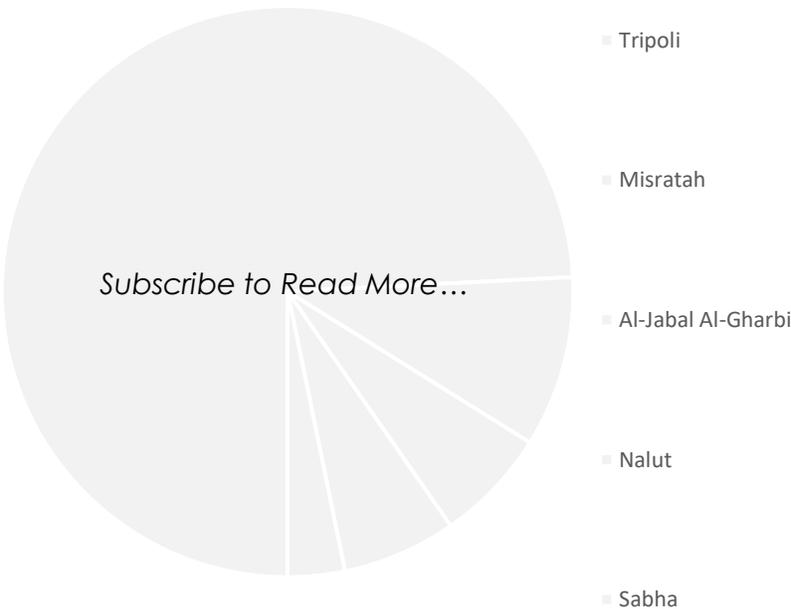
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



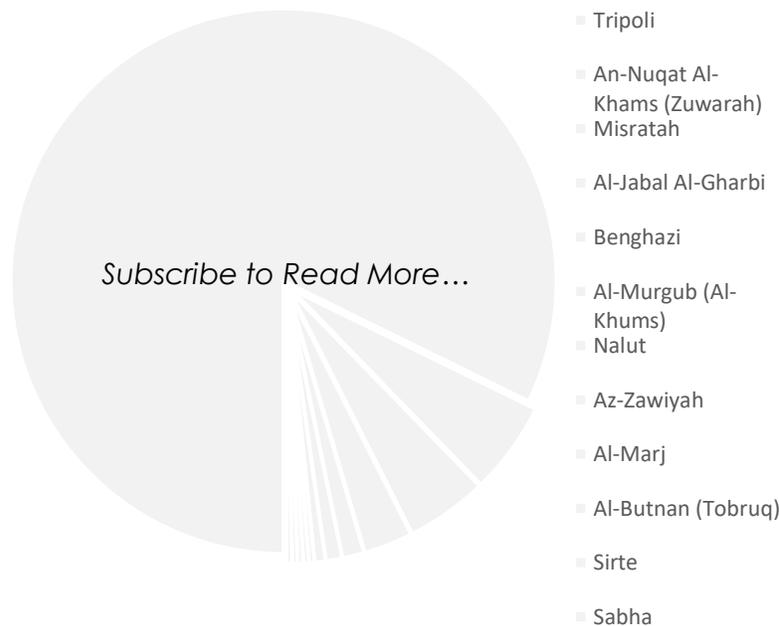
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



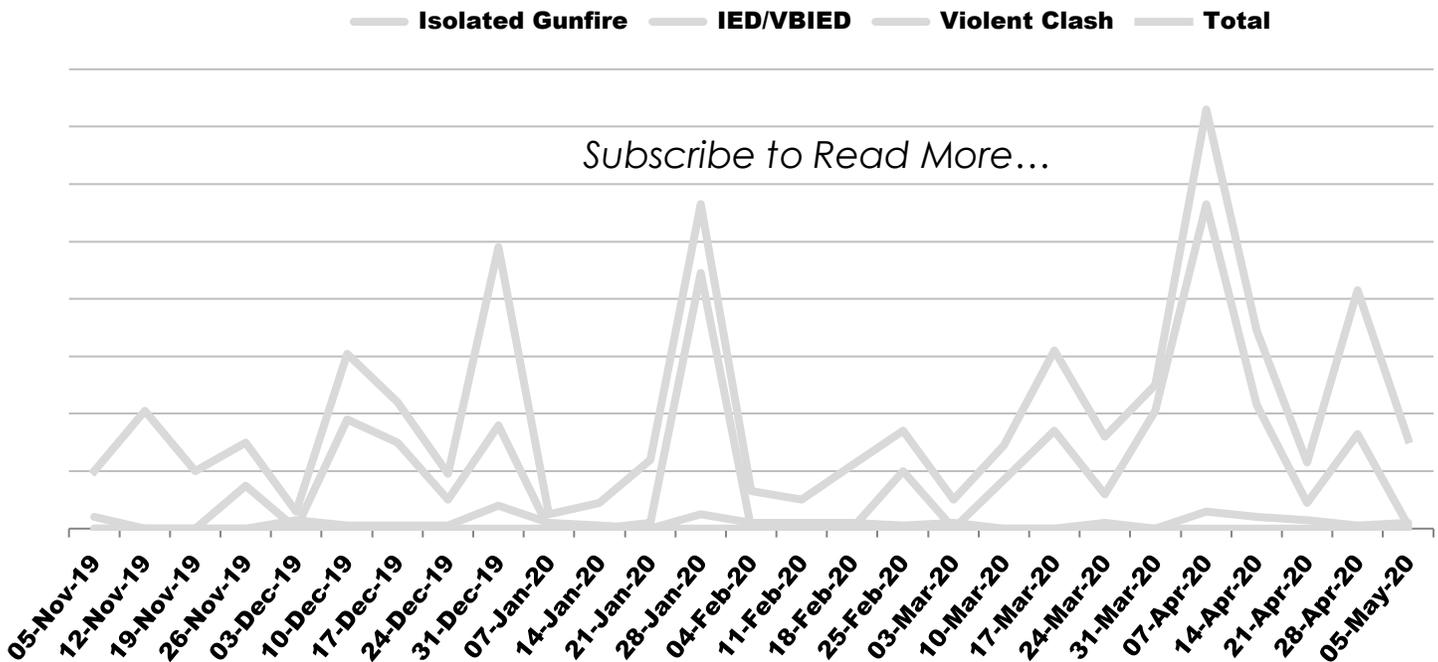
Nationwide fatalities by national district (Past week)



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 31 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 83 deaths reported last week and 23 the week before, marking a drop in fatalities in contrast to the previous week, likely due to an absence of a verified casualty toll from the ongoing clashes across Tripoli and the wider western region. Similar to the patterns witnessed since the Libyan National Army (LNA) launched its offensive on Tripoli in early April 2019, the majority of fatalities remain related to combat operations and are commonly a result of mortar/rocket shelling incidents, airstrikes, violent clashes, and civilians caught in crossfire. WB recorded 19 fatalities as a result of mortar/rocket shelling incidents, including nine civilians in Tripoli. In addition, five fatalities were recorded as a result of airstrikes, four of which were conducted by the Government of National Accord (GNA) targeting Libyan National Army (LNA) forces/supply lines. Beyond, two fatalities were recorded as a result of gunfire-related incidents in Tripoli, in addition to one fatality recorded in a carjacking incident in Sabha, one suicide case in Tripoli, one fatality of a high-ranking pro-GNA Syrian mercenary on the frontlines, and an assassination of Kabaw's Municipal Council tribal head.

In western Libya, WB recorded a total of 302 incidents, including 255 in Tripoli marking a significant increase in security incidents recorded in the west in contrast to the previous week, largely due to an intensified shelling campaign in the capital city. In Tripoli, WB recorded 151 mortar/rocket shelling incidents, with at least 80 shells landing on the Mitiga International Airport (MJI) and wider Souq Al-Jumaa vicinity throughout the reporting period. As a result of the intensified shelling, 61 explosions were reported across the capital city. In addition, 30 violent clashes, 5 isolated gunfire cases, 5 fires due to a recent heatwave, 1 suicide case and a protest were recorded.

In the wider western region, the security environment was dominated by military operations, including airstrikes and mortar/rocket shelling incidents. WB recorded a total of 26 airstrikes conducted across the western region, including 22 airstrikes carried out by GNA forces, largely focused on targeting key LNA supply lines across the Misrata, Al-Murgub and Al-Jabal Al-Gharbi districts. Sixteen airstrikes out of the 22 targeted Al-Wattiyah Airbase throughout the reporting period. Following a failed attempt to seize the airbase, the GNA conducted 16 airstrikes on Al-Wattiyah Airbase and its vicinity. Meanwhile, GNA airstrikes targeted LNA supply lines in the Ash Shwayrif, Wadi Maraseet and Eshmikh areas. This week saw renewed LNA airstrikes in Gharyan. Reports indicate LNA airstrikes targeted Gharyan in the morning on 14 May. Meanwhile, pro-LNA accounts reported airstrikes targeted GNA forces in Al-Jmail at night on 11 May. Beyond military activity, sporadic security incidents were reported across the region. Reports indicate a drive-by shooting targeted the Head of the Inspection Department at the Khoms Seaport Customs as he was on his way to work in Khoms in the morning on 10 April. The targeted individual survived the assassination attempt. Neither the identity of the assailant(s) nor the motive behind the incident are known. Separately, reports indicate skirmishes erupted after gunmen led by Kabaw Security Directorate head, Saied Belorouq, raided the house of a man who recently voiced his support for the LNA, resulting in the injury of Belorouq at night on 11 May. The skirmishes lasted until the early hours of 12 May. The security situation was stabilised after two GNA-affiliated forces from Nalut and Jadu entered the town and settled the issue.

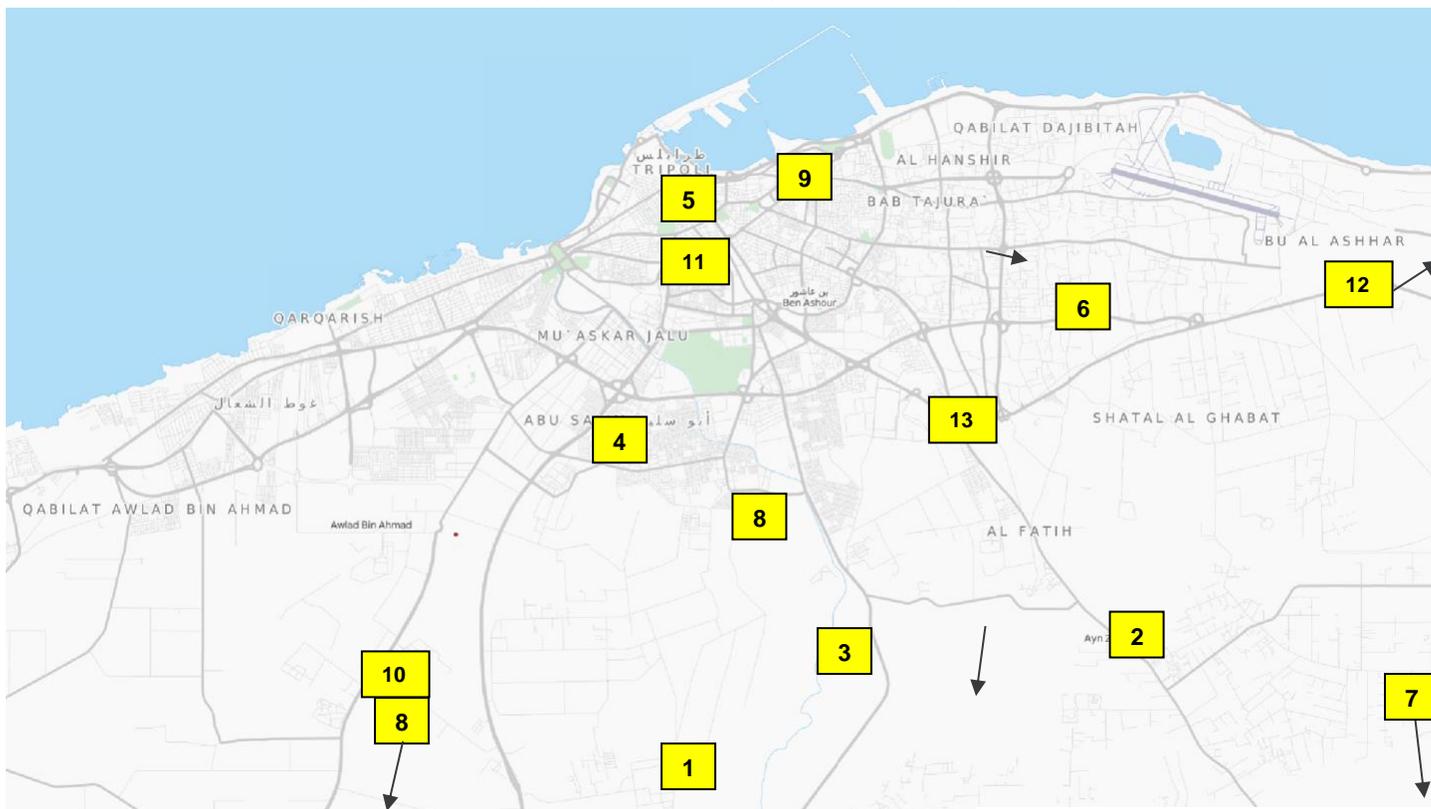
Meanwhile in the central region, military operations remain frequent in areas lying on the Misrata-Sirte border. Reports indicate a heavy explosion was audible in Sirte at night on 11 May. The motive remains unclear. Separately, pro-LNA accounts claimed GNA forces blew up the main road between Abu Njaim and the Jufra District on 11 May.

Turning to the south, reports indicate unidentified assailant(s) carried out a failed carjacking attempt resulting in the death of a young man and the injury of his mother in Sabha on 10 May. The incident would come amid reports of increased criminal activity in the Sabha region during the holy month of Ramadan.

In the eastern region, WB recorded a total of four arrests, including three in Benghazi. In addition, an armed raid targeting Benghazi's Al-Jala Hospital was recorded. Of particular importance with regards to the arrests, thirteen House of Representatives (HoR) members denounced the "unlawful" arrest of the Interim Government Finance Minister, Kamel Al-Hassi, denying reports of his attempted escape via the Libyan-Egyptian Emsaed border crossing, carrying approx. 400,000 US dollars (USD), on 13 May. The MPs called for his immediate release, noting that his travel documents were all correct and did not stand in violation of the law.

## 4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

### Shelling targets Tripoli Central Hospital & nearby areas



#### KEY INCIDENTS

1. (10 May) GNA: four observation posts targeted killing 10 LNA forces on Hadba Al-Mashro axis
2. (10 May) LNA: high-ranking pro-GNA Syrian mercenary killed in Ain Zara
3. (10 May) GNA: shelling ivo Salah Eddien kills parents & wounds their two children
4. (10 May) Ghneiwa militia meeting in Abu Slim'; patrols in area & transfer of weapons
5. (10 May) Shop owners protest in demand of operating during curfew hours in Algeria Sq.
6. (10 May) Bani Walid factions facilitate LNA-GNA prisoner exchange; celebratory gunfire
7. (11 May) Uncle and nephew shot dead by neighbor, a local IDP, in Wadi Al-Rabei
8. (12 May) Clashes resume in Al-Ramla; elderly woman & 9 others injured in shelling on Al-Hadba Al-Haddad
9. (12 May) Security guard fires shots into air to prevent filling of liquid containers at gas station
10. (13 May) LNA: GNA attack on Al-Ramla axis in attempt to advance towards TIP repelled
11. (14 May) LNA forces shell Tripoli Central Hospital vicinity; ten civilians injured
12. (15 May) Blackout & water cut amid shelling
13. (16 May) Clashes resume in Garabolli; shelling in Al-Furnaj vicinity kills two civilians

#### Shelling ivo. Tripoli Central Hospital

On 14 May, indiscriminate shelling was concentrated in central residential areas, including Al-Soor Road and Zawiya Street, resulting in over 10 civilian injuries at approximately 0130hrs. The Government of National Accord's (GNA) Health Ministry Undersecretary, Mohammed Haitham, reported that indiscriminate shelling targeted Tripoli Central Hospital along with a number of clinics adjacent to it. Haitham reported a state of panic among medical teams as a result. Meanwhile, the Libyan National Army's (LNA) spokesman, Ahmed Al-Mesmari, denied carrying out any military operations in the Tripoli Central Hospital, Zawiya Street, Al-Jamhooriya Street, and the surrounding areas. Al-Mesmari attributed the attack to GNA militias and "Turkish intelligence". Sources reported an indiscriminate shell landed on Tripoli Central Hospital parking lot, and shrapnel hit the Dermatology Department building. An additional shell landed on Zawiya Street, while two other shells landed on Al-Soor Road near Ibn Sina School causing trees to catch fire. Of note, Al-Soor Road is a target for LNA shelling due to the presence of the 77 military camp south of the area near Bab Al-Aziziya Roundabout, where GNA forces frequently fire mortar rockets towards LNA positions southwards.

#### Security guards fires shots into air at gas station

A security guard fired warning shots to prevent locals from filling liquid containers while refueling vehicles at Zaweit Eddahmany Gas Station at approximately 1630hrs on 12 May. The act attempted to avoid overcrowding, with no casualties recorded. Various petrol stations are allowing those refueling vehicles to also fill their liquid containers to supply generators amid power cuts across Tripoli.

#### IDP kills neighbours ivo Wadi Al-Rabei

Reports indicate a local internally displaced person (IDP) shot dead two of his neighbours, an uncle and his nephew, in the Wadi Alrabei area in the morning/afternoon on 11 May.

#### Ghneiwa meeting, patrol & transfer of artillery/tanks

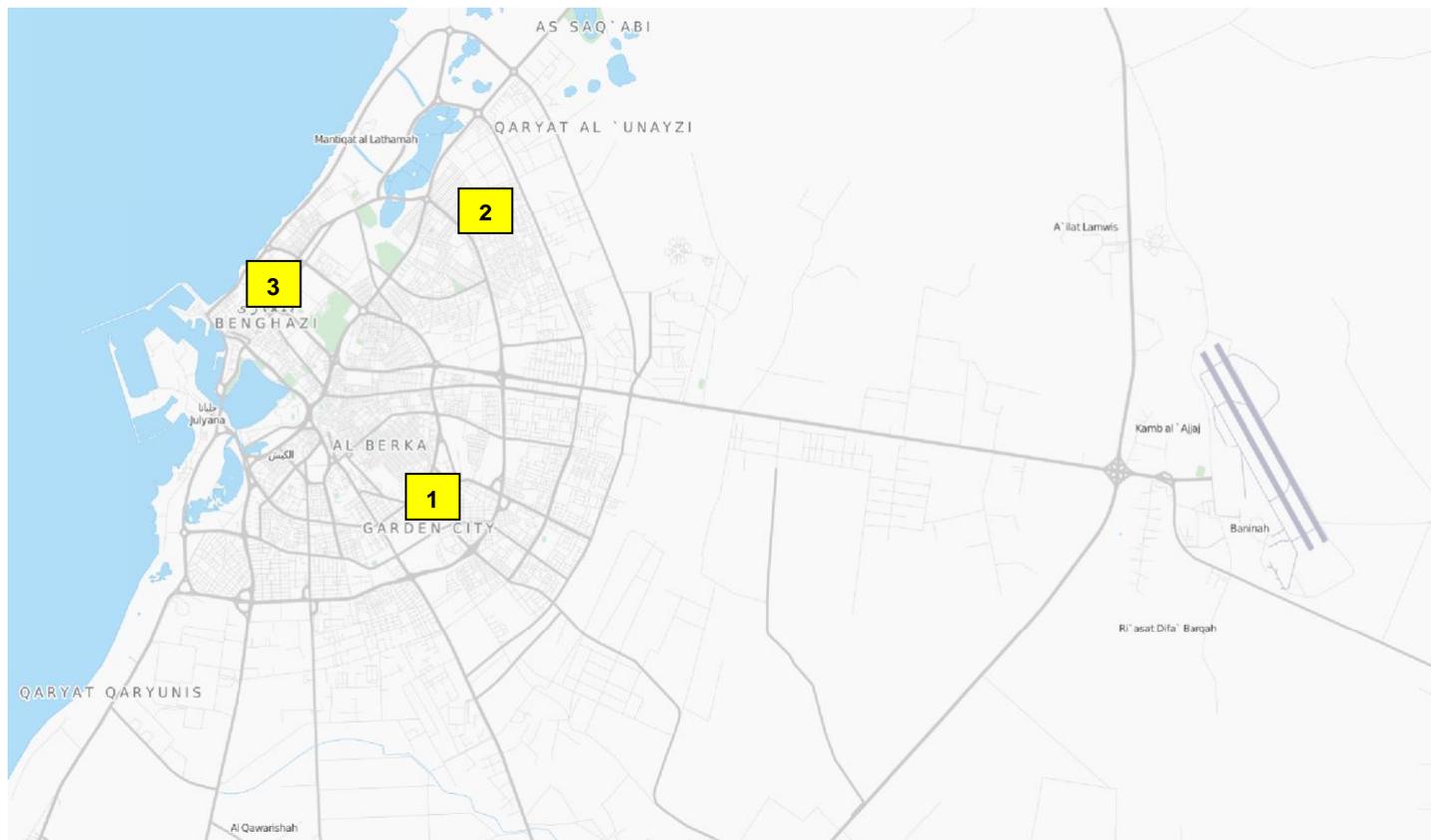
Sources reported a meeting was held between a number of high-ranking Ghneiwa militiamen, excluding its leader Abdulghani Al-Kikli, and other prominent militia commanders in the Abu Salim area at approximately 1800hrs on 10 May. Unconfirmed reports suggest the attendees agreed to launch an attack on the pro-LNA town of Tarhunah. Following the meeting, several Ghneiwa-affiliated military convoys were stationed at the Bab Al-Aziziya Roundabout. The development closely followed unverified reports of Ghneiwa militiamen arresting two pro-LNA sleeper cells planning attacks on GNA forces on the Salah Eddien and Al-Hadba Al-Mashro' axes. Meanwhile, sources reported the Ghneiwa militia transferred the majority of its artillery and tanks from its camps located in Abu Salim, including Al Nasr Forest, to Qusur Al-Deiafa, following an intensified LNA shelling campaign in Abu Salim and Bab Ben Ghashir areas.

#### Unconfirmed: LIFG member appointed LIS head

Pro-LNA accounts reported a high-ranking Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) member, Khalid Al-Sharif, has been assigned as the de facto head of the GNA's Libyan Intelligence Service (LIS), replacing the deceased Abdelqader Al-Tohami. The reports are yet to be verified across official GNA/LIS accounts. Of note, Al-Sharif headed a militia based at the Al-Hadba's Military Academy, where prominent Gaddafi regime officials were imprisoned in 2017, including Al-Saadi Al-Gaddafi and Abdallah Senussi. Following clashes in the area, the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB) commander, Haithem Al-Tajouri, expelled Al-Sharif's militia and transferred the high-profile inmates to a TRB-controlled prison in Zawayat Al Dahmani.

## 5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

Gunmen raid Al-Jala Hospital after friend dies; alleged involvement of Morality Police



### KEY INCIDENTS

1. (10 May) Gunmen raid Al-Jala Hospital & open fire on facilities after friend dies due to medical mistake
2. (11 May) Three drug dealers arrested in police ambush
3. (12 May) Rescue Police Dept. arrests criminal gang specialized in vehicle thefts
4. (14 May) CID arrests seven Sudanese smugglers in ambush

#### CID arrests seven Sudanese smugglers

On 14 May, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of Benghazi's Security Directorate arrested seven Sudanese nationals on charges of entering Libyan territory illegally and smuggling vehicles from Libya to Sudan. The CID reported that initial investigations began with two Sudanese nationals who identified five others operating alongside them. The CID reported that the smugglers were arrested in ambush.

#### Gang specialised in vehicle thefts arrested

Benghazi's Rescue Police Department arrested a criminal gang specialised in vehicle thefts in the Sidi Akhribish area following local complaints on the widespread theft of vehicles in the vicinity on 12 May. The suspects were ambushed and caught in the act, after which they confessed to the charges against them and were subsequently transferred to the Public Prosecution.

#### Three drug dealers arrested in police ambush

On 11 May, Benghazi's Security Directorate reported its Investigation and Arrest Unit tightened measures to crackdown on drug dealers in Al-Wheishi after receiving local complaints of suspicious activity in the area. Following the complaints, the Unit carried out a security campaign in the area resulting in the arrest of three drug dealers caught trading during the ambush. Of note, Benghazi's Al-Wheishi vicinity represents one of the city's most prominent areas for drug-related crime.

#### Gunmen raid ICU of Al-Jala Hospital

Reports indicate a group of gunmen raided the Intensive Care Unit of Al-Jala Hospital in Benghazi's As Sulmani area and opened fire on medical equipment after receiving news of their friend's death due to a medical mistake during surgery in the morning/afternoon on 10 May. Reports indicate the doctor at fault handed himself over to police. Meanwhile, conflicting reports suggest Benghazi's Morality Police led by Faraj Egaim was behind the attack, after a fellow member died in the hospital. The targeting of medical facilities in retaliation for the death of relatives/affiliates remains common across Libyan cities.

## 6. What's next

### Possible LNA counteroffensive east of Misrata; GNA to focus on Tarhunah

POLITICAL FORECAST

SECURITY FORECAST

The diplomatic front saw renewed activity relatively compared with the past few weeks. Rhetoric points to an upcoming round of negotiations, though it remains to be seen whether this will be preceded by yet another escalation. Multiple gaps remain before negotiations can resume, especially amid the absence of a new UN Envoy to lead the political settlement. Reports indicate Hanna Tetteh, the UN Secretary General's special representative to the African Union (AU), is being considered to succeed Ghassan Salame. Tetteh's appointment is reportedly gradually gaining unanimous approval among UN Security Council members. If negotiations do resume, they will likely be limited to a ceasefire line agreed between LNA and GNA forces. For its part, Turkey would be opposed to any form of political negotiation that would pave the way for a new UN-approved unity government, undermining the GNA's posture across the West. Turkey's interest is in maintaining the political status quo to uphold its maritime and security agreements with the GNA as the broader battle for the East Med unfolds. Meanwhile, LNA foreign backers are placing their bets on a new transitional government in the East. If the LNA and eastern bloc are successful in forming a government, Ankara's maritime demarcation deal with the GNA would be threatened as Libya's eastern shores would no longer be considered under the Tripoli government. Regionally, EUNAVFOR Med Operation Irini will take centre stage in upcoming weeks. Irini will test Turkey's leverage in Libya but it remains to be seen how aggressive the EU-led operation will be in enforcing and monitoring the arms embargo. France and Greece have proven to be the most active members of Irini so far. If the operation does limit Turkey's plans in Libya and the region, Ankara could look to Moscow to negotiate a settlement in Libya that would bypass any EU-led initiative. Moscow and Rome are well-positioned as mediators between the EU and Turkey in Libya. Of note, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin discussed the Libyan crisis and IRINI on 16 May with Ambassadors of Germany, France, and Italy.

#### WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

In an *Al-Monitor* piece, Semih Idiz argues Turkey's intervention in Libya has helped tip the balance in favour of the GNA, though it remains to be seen whether Ankara can translate these gains into political credit in the medium term. The author first explores the ideological foundations, namely the alignment between Turkey's AKP and the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), with which Turkey operates across the region. The piece contends that recent GNA military gains have helped Ankara score points against the anti-MB and pro-LNA bloc in the broader ideological battle in the region, while also enabling Erdogan to compensate for losses in Syria in the aftermath of the unfavourable deal struck with Moscow. Further, the author explores the importance of the maritime demarcation deal for Turkey and writes "the demarcation agreement with the Government of National Accord also strengthens Erdogan's hand against domestic critics who have criticized Turkey's military engagement in Libya." More importantly, Idiz looks at the important caveats to consider when assessing Turkey's recent gains in Libya. "If and when international efforts for a political settlement kick in, Ankara could find itself losing the advantages it gained on the battlefield, given that its hand in Libya is unlikely to be as politically strong as its military hand appears to be today. Ankara's advantages in Libya are contingent on the fact that no other country is prepared to engage in that country militarily in the overt manner that Turkey has. "Another difficulty for Hifter is his awareness that it is hard for the countries supporting him, namely Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, Russia and France, to engage directly in the military conflict," Ozcan wrote. However, these countries, as well as others in the West and the region, are not enamored of the idea of seeing oil-rich Libya fall into the hands of Islamists. There is the distinct risk for Ankara, therefore, that a secular government of national reconciliation negotiated for Libya under UN auspices could easily annul Turkey's shaky memorandum of understanding with the Sarraj government. Turkey can still try to manipulate such negotiations through its strong influence over Sarraj and his supporters, but in doing so it will become a "spoiler" rather than a proactive player that contributes to regional stability. Such a position could undermine Turkey's long-term interests, whatever gains it may appear to be securing in Libya today unilaterally."

LNA forces are projected to intensify shelling across Tripoli over the next few days in response to the loss of Al-Wattiyah. Militarily, the LNA's retaliation options are limited. A large-scale attempt to regain Al-Wattiyah is assessed as unlikely given the challenges related to mobilising a force either from the southern region or the east, especially amid a consistent GNA campaign targeting LNA supply lines. However, intermittent skirmishes are possible in the vicinity of the airbase. GNA forces will likely attempt to lay siege to routes leading to Zintan and Al-Rujban to cripple LNA supplies into Tripoli frontlines. Negotiations are more likely between Zintan and the GNA. Meanwhile, LNA forces will continue attempts to supply forces in the West, increasing the risk of GNA airstrikes across critical supply nodes from the west near Kabaw to areas south of Bani Walid such as Mizdah and Tininai. LNA forces are unlikely to attempt a risky military manoeuvre in the west, though an offensive or tactical incursion in Abugrein remains a feasible option for Haftar's forces. Meanwhile, sporadic security incidents are likely across the west amid soaring temperatures and lengthy power cuts. The coming summer months will raise the stakes for the GNA by exacerbating local grievances. Sources reported long queues in petrol stations around Tripoli this week, mainly due long power cuts resulting in many stations being closed and increasing demand on fuel for generators. In the southern region, the GNA's gains could prompt local factions to reconsider their alliances to the LNA. Overall, while the capture of Al-Wattiyah should theoretically enable GNA forces to consolidate forces from the west to repel the LNA from Tripoli frontlines, internal tensions between GNA factions could undermine this effort. In the GNA alliance, there are emerging signs of internal competition over key posts amid rumours of an upcoming cabinet reshuffle. The claims of a reshuffle are unsubstantiated but pro-LNA accounts are now placing greater emphasis on the growing influence of Misrata to exacerbate divisions with other key towns across the West.

#### LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

Alison Pargeter provides a granular commentary on Haftar's decision to assume leadership in the east and its ramifications on relations between tribes across Libya. Published on *War on the Rocks*, the piece argues that Haftar's recent gesture to abolish the LPA and take control is a simple attempt to rally support "in the face of what is turning out to be an increasingly unpalatable and unwinnable conflict in the west of the country." Pargeter takes a close look at the relations between Haftar and prominent tribes across the east such as Al-Obeidat. The author argues that tribes have become a critical component of Haftar's survival and the LNA commander has instrumentally utilized this support to his advantage, in what is described as a "marriage of convenience". During Operation Dignity in 2014, the piece argues that "for many of these tribes, therefore, Haftar provided a vehicle through which their interests were met, while they de facto enabled him to become the strongman of the east". The author then concludes "While the GNA, with Turkish support, may have struck a series of military victories in April 2020, seizing several small towns in western Libya, actually imposing its authority over these areas could be challenging. Areas like Ragdaleen, Surman, and Jamil are unlikely to open themselves easily to GNA forces. Similarly, if the GNA manages to defeat Tarhouna, which is in itself questionable, it is going to face an uphill struggle to maintain control and subjugate Tarhouna's tribes. As far as these tribes are concerned, the GNA is a foreign body, controlled by militias backed by Turkey. Indeed, these tribal areas will always have more commonality with a figure like Haftar than with a colorless body like the GNA. Hence, the GNA is unlikely to ever to impose itself over all of the west of Libya, let alone the rest of the country."

# About Whispering Bell



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