

1. The Big Picture

Libya at a crossroads as Egypt threatens action & Turkey mulls contracts

This week's developments underline the deepening fragmentation between western Libya under growing Turkish influence, and the east where Egypt raised the stakes by threatening military action. With this context in mind, the Government of National Accord (GNA) and Libyan National Army (LNA) are left with limited room for manoeuvre.

On 20 June, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi called for his army to be prepared to carry out any mission inside or outside the country to protect its national security, adding that the Sirte-Jufra frontline is a red line for Egypt. Al-Sisi's televised speech was delivered from Sidi Barrani airbase near Egypt's western border with Libya. The Egyptian President stated that his country has the right to defend itself after receiving "direct threats from terrorist militias and mercenaries" in a clear reference to GNA forces. Speaking to an audience that included Libyan tribal leaders, Al-Sisi declared Egypt could provide Libyan tribes with training and arms to fight the "terrorist militias". Al-Sisi's remarks were widely welcomed by Arab states and pro-LNA audiences in the east, enabling Cairo to grow its influence among tribes in Barqa.

While the GNA categorically rejected the statement as a "declaration of war", Turkey stood by its position that a ceasefire hinges on a withdrawal of LNA forces from Sirte and Jufra in line with positions in 2015.

Egypt's move is a clear message that Turkey's expansion will not be left unchecked in Libya, but both Turkey and Egypt are unlikely to engage in a full-blown military escalation as the risks and costs would be too high. Beyond legitimate security concerns to protect its borders, Egypt's objective is to deter Turkey from pursuing further advances and sit at the negotiating table instead. Egypt's land corridor with Libya enables it to deploy a larger number of forces and Ankara is well aware of this advantage. But the question is not whether Egypt is capable of intervening, but if intent to do so is high.

When contextualized, Cairo's threat of military action follows the publication of video footage documenting the torture of Egyptian workers in Tarhunah factions nominally aligned to the GNA. The Cairo statement testifies to the LNA's weakened posture in the eastern region; Egypt is unlikely to accept that Haftar attempts another bold military move in the western region. Thus, Egypt has an interest in securing a permanent ceasefire now that LNA forces are weakened. An Egyptian intervention can take many forms, including a peacekeeping operation vetted by the eastern House of Representatives (HoR).

In all cases, boots on the ground will be seen as a last resort by Cairo. Observers assess that even if a full-blown intervention materializes, Egypt's forces are unlikely to deploy deep into Sirte and Jufra and will instead remain along the border area on the Libyan side as a deterrent.

Regardless of the prospects of military action and what such an intervention might entail, Egypt has now put its cards on the table. This position will likely compel Turkey to reconsider plans to push ahead with the Sirte-Jufra offensives. As a result, Turkey will revive backchannel negotiations with Washington and Moscow to reach a settlement. Moscow and Washington's roles as mediators will grow in the medium term because Ankara will look to offset its lack of political clout in the region, especially after Cairo's proposal obtained the buy-in of a majority of Arab states.

For Ankara, the week was business as usual in Libya. On 17 June, a high-level Turkish delegation headed by Ankara's top diplomat Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu met with GNA PM Fayez Al-Serraj in Tripoli on 17 June. The visit signals Ankara's resolve and urgency to expand its cooperation with the GNA, deepen its military footprint in Libya, and accelerate contracts and other commercial interests. The development sends a clear message Ankara is willing to resume contracts while simultaneously pursuing combat operations, laying bare the assumption that Turkey will reap the benefits of its pursuits when combat ends.

Turkey is reportedly looking to rapidly launch reconstruction efforts and resume commercial activity in Libya. According to an unidentified senior Turkish official quoted by local media, payments owed to Turkish companies were discussed during the high-level Turkish delegation meeting with the GNA in Tripoli. It is estimated Turkish contractors were owed 16 billion USD as of January 2020 in backlog work, including 400-500 million USD for projects yet to be started. While Turkey's intent to explore commercial opportunities is a natural consequence of its military intervention to shore up the GNA, the development bodes ill for the GNA's posture.

As Turkey's commercial interests become more explicit, the transactional nature of Ankara's relationship with the GNA is now more likely to be viewed negatively by the average Libyan citizen in the western region. With the threat of the LNA's presence on Tripoli's outskirts now gone, public grievances and other political demands are expected to increase, placing GNA state coffers and resources under additional scrutiny, especially given the reported size of unpaid dues to Turkey.

Meanwhile in Tripoli, unverified reports suggest tensions are growing between Misrata and Tripoli armed factions due to the alleged refusal to support Misrata forces west of Sirte after considering the battle of Tripoli over. The Tripoli factions opposed to the Sirte war effort allegedly include the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB), Ghneiwa militia, and Fursan Janzour Battalion.



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KEY POINTS

- Egypt threatens military action in Libya
- Turkey sends high-level delegation to Tripoli
- Escalation remains likely in Sirte

2. National Security Map

LNA reinforcements towards Sirte; Wadi Jarif to Al-Weshka declared MEZ

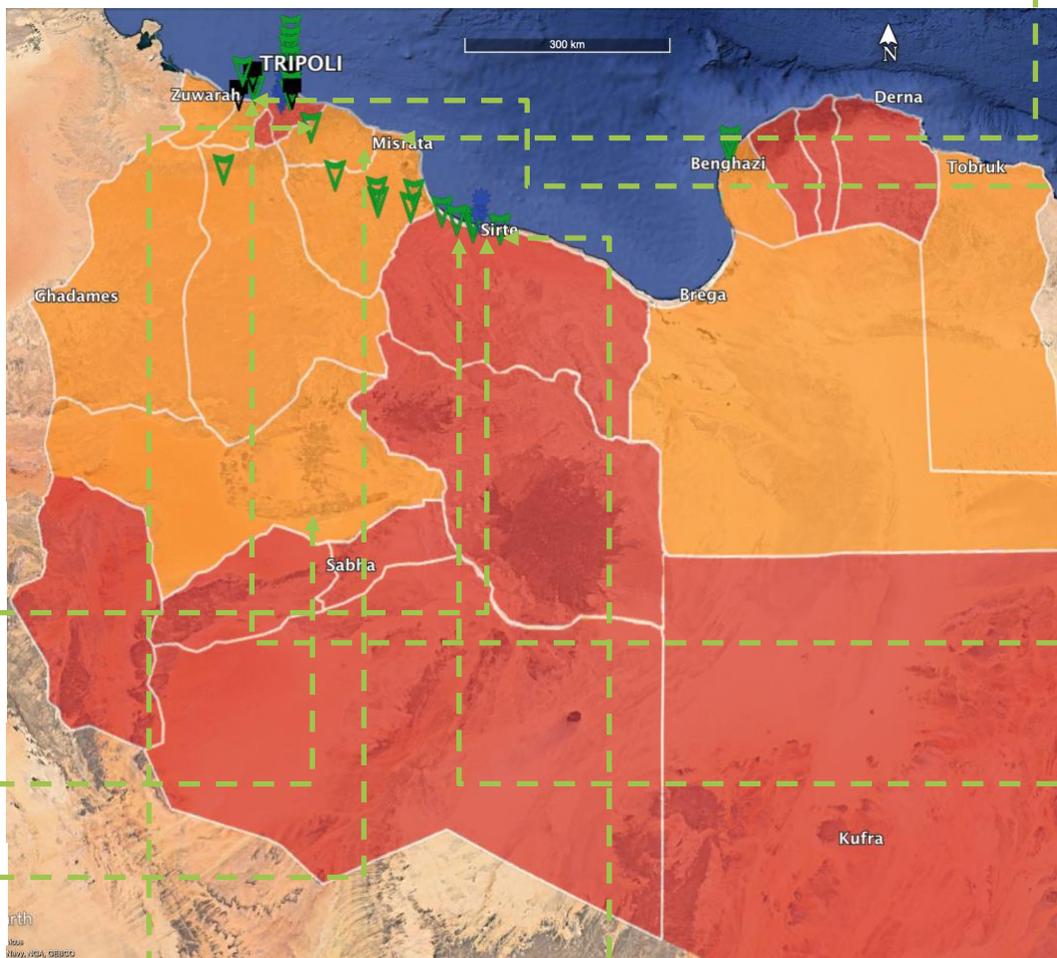
Key

THREAT INDICATORS

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

EVENT INDICATORS

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



Large convoys affiliated with the LNA's Saiqa Special Forces units were spotted travelling towards Sirte frontlines and the Oil Crescent regions on 19 June. The Saiqa SF units included the 75th Brigade and new recruits that initially paraded at the SF's training camp in Benghazi. The Saiqa SF commander, Wanis Bukhmada, delivered a speech at the camp before deployment.

Reports indicate two brothers were shot dead in a verbal altercation with locals in the Gardah village in the Wadi al Shatii District in the evening on 17 June. The motive behind the dispute remains unclear.

Reports indicate skirmishes erupted between two families over diesel in Zliten's Abu Jarida area in the morning on 20 June. No casualties were recorded.

Reports indicate the Gharabolli - Qaser Al-Akhyar Security Room arrested two men affiliated with the LNA's Ninth Brigade (Al-Kaniat Brigade of Tarhuna), dressed in civilian clothing, on 20 June. The suspects revealed a hideout containing weapons on the Administrative boundaries between Tarhunah and Garabolli.

Pro-LNA accounts reported Misrata armed factions kidnapped a pro-LNA female lawyer identified as Yasmeen Saleh in Misrata in the morning on 21 June. Additional reports indicate Saleh's sister was also kidnapped later that morning.

Units under the GNA-affiliated joint western region ops room raided and destroyed multiple petrol stations used for fuel smuggling activity between Beir Gham and Zawiya on 18 June. In addition, the ops room destroyed fuel smuggling vehicles using heavy artillery.

On 18 June, US Africa Command (AFRICOM) published new evidence of Russian military aircraft operating in Libyan airspace. AFRICOM published photos of a Russian Su-24 landing in Jufra airbase, a MiG-29 aircraft, and a Spoon Rest mobile radar system deployed in the airbase.

On 16 June, the GNA Ministry of Interior reported a General Electricity Company of Libya (GECOL) security guard from Misrata, Abdel Athim Abu Bakr Amer, surrendered to the Public Prosecution after attacking the GECOL Chairman and threatening to kill him.

The Sabratabh Security Directorate reported an Anti-Narcotics Office patrol shot dead a police member in front of Sabratabh Police Station on 15 June. The Directorate reported a probe into the incident is underway.

The LNA's Dignity Operations Room commander, Saqr Al-Jaroushi, declared the area extending from Wadi Jarif to Al-Weshka as a military exclusion zone (MEZ).

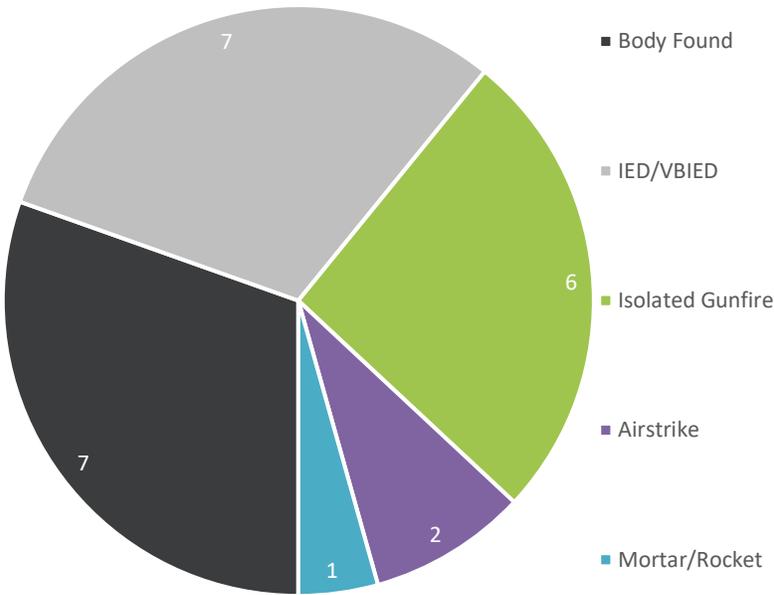
The GNA implemented a new curfew from 2000hrs-0600hrs as of 17 June for 10 days. A full curfew of 24hrs and intercity travel ban will be implemented on Friday and Saturday.

Reports indicate the LNA's Military Police arrested a former regime Major, Mohammed Al-Jroushi Al-Gaddafi, in an unidentified location in Sirte on 16 June and released him later that night. Al-Gaddafi was reportedly arrested for not participating in the LNA's offensive across the western region.

3. Nationwide Security Analysis

Bodies found & IED explosions on rise in Tripoli; Sirte fatalities due to shelling

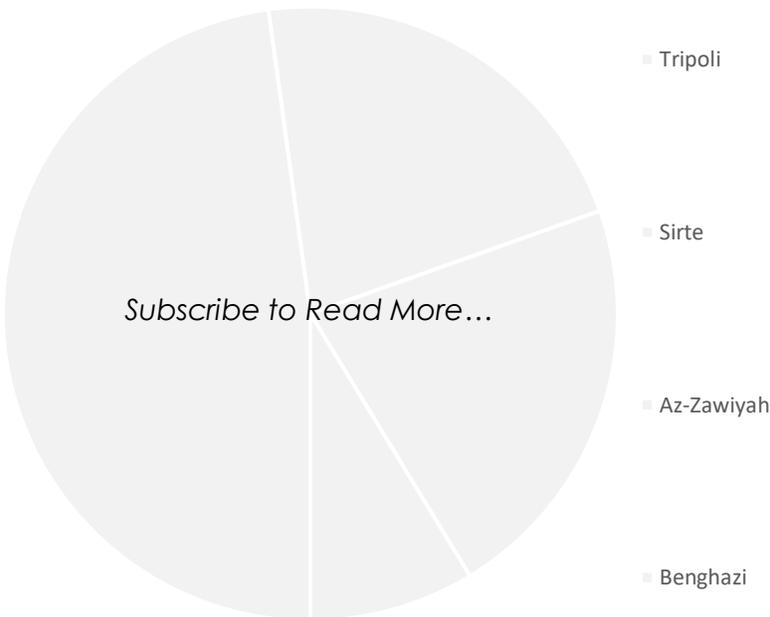
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



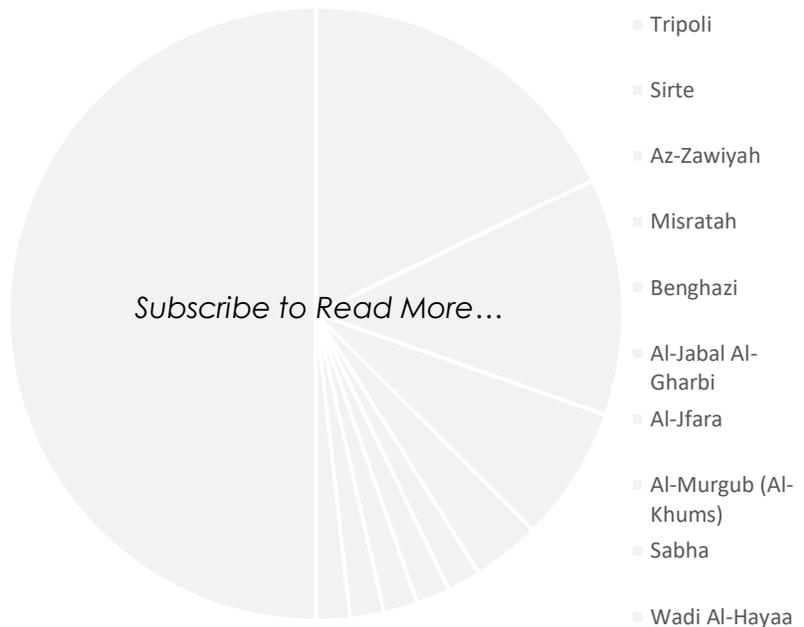
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



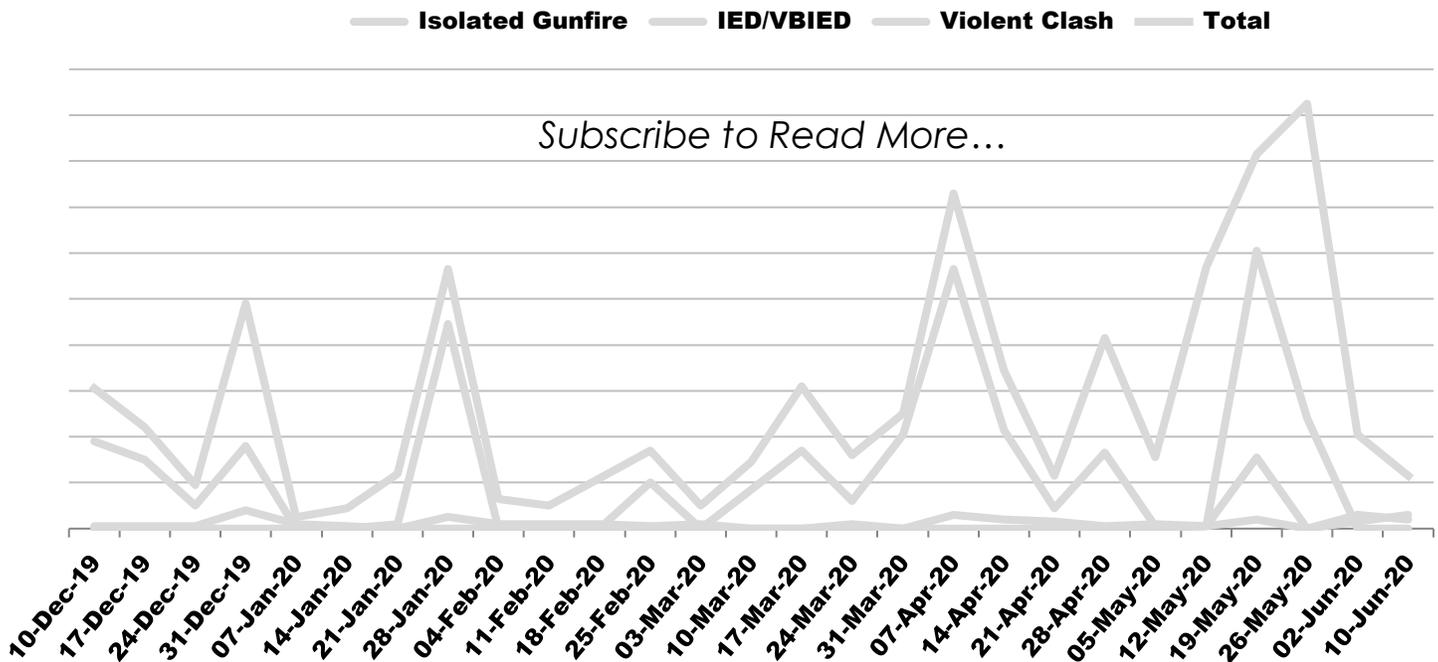
Nationwide fatalities by national district (Past week)



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 41 deaths reported last week and 185 the week before. WB recorded seven separate cases of bodies found, seven fatalities as a result of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), six fatalities as a result of gunfire-related cases, two killed in an airstrike and one killed in a mortar/rocket shelling incident. WB recorded nine IED explosions, 5 arrests, 5 cases of bodies found, 3 isolated gunfire cases, 2 robberies, 2 carjackings, 1 fire and 1 grenade explosion. In western Libya, WB recorded a total of 42 incidents, including 28 in Tripoli, marking a sharp decrease in the number of security incidents reported across the capital due to the end of the LNA's offensive on Tripoli which dominated the environment over the past 14 months.

In the wider western region, WB recorded ongoing sporadic opportunistic crime across Al-Jfara, Al-Murgub, Az-Zawiyah, Al-Jabal Al-Gharbi and Misrata districts. There were reports of sporadic gunfire in Zawiya coinciding with skirmishes between local militias near Al-Daman Roundabout in the early hours of 16 June. The motive was unknown. Separately, sources reported unidentified gunmen conducted a failed carjacking attempt on an unidentified civilian vehicle in Wershiffanah 's Ghut Abu Saag area, south-west of Al-Swani, over the past 48hrs. Meanwhile, Pro-LNA accounts reported Osama Juwaili-led forces set fire to the cemetery in which the LNA's 134 Battalion commander, Osama Ismaik, was buried in Al-Zintan on 14 June. Of note, Ismaik previously controlled Al-Wattiyah Airbase and was killed during a GNA attempt to seize the airbase on 05 May. Beyond, the Libyan Red Crescent Society located two bodies belonging to illegal migrants in Sabratha on 19 June.

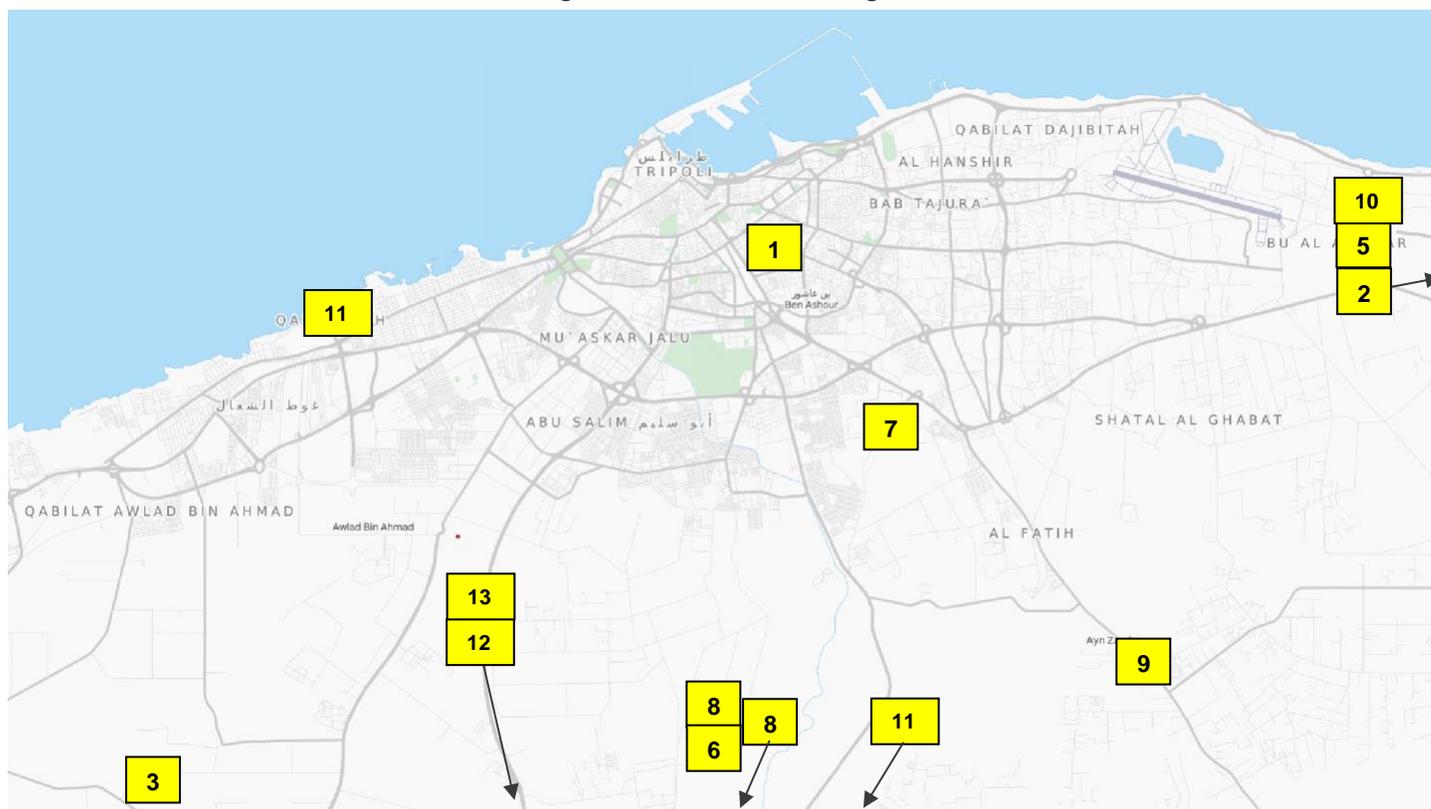
Meanwhile in the central region, the security environment remains fluid in Sirte and nearby vicinities with reports of LNA military reinforcements travelling towards Sirte. The LNA's Dignity Operations Room commander, Saqr Al-Jaroushi, declared the area extending from Wadi Jarif to Al-Weshka as a military exclusion zone (MEZ). Reports indicate military reinforcements of the LNA's 73 Battalion moved towards Sirte to join the east of Misrata frontline in the afternoon on 20 June. Beyond, reports indicate Sirte's locals held a pro-LNA demonstration in the city's Martyrs' Square in the evening on 20 June. The locals chanted pro-LNA and Khalifa Haftar LNA slogans. Separately, the interim government Interior Minister, Ibrahim Bushnaf, ordered security forces to enforce a security plan in Sirte to protect the LNA's rearguard amid a heightened state of alert in anticipation of a GNA-led offensive. Bushnaf ordered coordination between the LNA, Benghazi-based Criminal Investigations Department (CID), Sirte Security Directorate, and Sirte Central Support force, to prevent security breaches in Sirte. Further, WB recorded ongoing reports of civilian casualties due to indiscriminate shelling. Local reports indicate explosive remnants of war (ERW) detonated injuring five children in the Zaafaran area on the outskirts of Sirte on 17 June. In addition, reports indicate a landmine exploded killing three civilians in the Wadi Jarif area, west of Sirte, in the afternoon on 15 June. GNA forces reportedly planted the landmine during their temporary advance on the area before retreating to the Buerat area. Beyond, pro-LNA accounts reported the LNA-affiliated Internal Security Apparatus arrested a pro-GNA sleeper cell in Sirte on 15 June. It remains unclear if the suspects were attempting to launch a pro-GNA attack from within the city amid GNA intent to recapture Sirte.

Turning to the south, pro-LNA battalions from the south conducted joint mobile patrols in the vicinity of Sharara and El-Feel oil fields, and Awbari on 14 June. The pro-LNA formations comprised the Khalid Ibn Walid Brigade from the east, members of the Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG) from Sharara and Al-Feel, and Murzuq joint operations room. In a video statement, the battalions declared that all areas in the south remain under LNA control. In a separate development, members of the Abawri Security Directorate called on the GNA Interior Minister, Fathi Bashagha, to assign a new security director to replace Abdel Hakim Khalil Hammada Abu Bakr for his "weakness" and for ridding the Directorate of GNA supporters. Meanwhile, various southern factions have voiced dissatisfaction over the "marginalization" of the southern region in regard to the government response to COVID-19 amid rising cases in the region, particularly in Sabha. Local reports suggest locals from the south have faced discrimination from other Libyan regions due to a surge in COVID-19 cases in their areas.

In the eastern region, two unidentified male bodies were found in Benghazi on 19 June. No further incidents were recorded in the east, though the region remains on high alert due to a recent surge in COVID-19 cases, including in the cities of Benghazi and Tobruk.

4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

GNA PM receives high-level Turkish delegation; crime on the rise



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (21 June) Locals hold anti-GECOL protest against lengthy power cuts in front of PM Office
2. (20 June) Body found ivo Tajoura
3. (19 June) Carjacking on Al-Aslak Street
4. (17 June) Al-Serraj receives high-level Turkish delegation headed by Mevlut Cavusoglu
5. (17 June) Man found shot dead in vehicle in Tajoura's suburbs
6. (17 June) Pro-LNA accounts report shelling targeting Hamza Camp, sources deny
7. (17 June) Tripoli University Hospital receives unidentified male body
8. (17 June) Bodies found in Khallatat & Al-Hadba Al-Mashro' areas
9. (17 June) Two separate landmine explosions in Ain Zara; three injured
10. (16 June) Al-Bugra affiliated militiaman shot dead in Tajoura
11. (15 June) Trabelsi-led forces raid house of Sub-Saharan African workers & assault them
12. (15 June) Carjacking on Airport Road
13. (15 June) Landmine explosion kills 1 & injures another in Airport Road area
14. (15 June) Thieves arrested in possession of stolen home appliances in Khallat Al-Furjan

Bodies found across Tripoli

WB sources reported an unidentified male body was found dumped in Tajoura's Al-Dawahy area at night on 20 June. There is no further information available. Separately, reports indicate Tripoli University Hospital received an unidentified male body in the evening on 17 June. Beyond, pro-GNA accounts reported unidentified bodies were found in the Khallatat and Al-Hadba Al-Mashro' areas on 17 June.

Carjackings on Al-Aslak St. & Airport Road

WB sources reported two gunmen driving a white Hyundai Azera with tinted windows and no license plates carjacked an unidentified civilian vehicle on Al-Aslak Street, linking Al-Kreymiya with Al-Serraj and Janzour areas, at approximately 2100hrs on 19 June. Separately, reports indicate two gunmen aboard a grey Hyundai Azera with tinted windows carjacked a white Hyundai i30 on Tripoli's Airport Road in the morning on 15 June.

Anti-GECOL protest in front of PM Office

Locals and activists launched a media campaign against the General Electricity Company of Libya (GECOL) amid lengthy power cuts and called for a protest to be held in front of the Prime Minister's Office at 1100hrs on 21 June. The protest went ahead at approximately 1200hrs. Of note, Sources reported power cuts lasted up to 13 hours in Tripoli with knock-on effects on broadband internet connection.

Al-Serraj receives high-level Turkish delegation

A high-level Turkish delegation headed by Ankara's top diplomat Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu met with Government of National Accord (GNA) PM Fayez Al-Serraj in Tripoli on 17 June. The unscheduled meeting corroborates

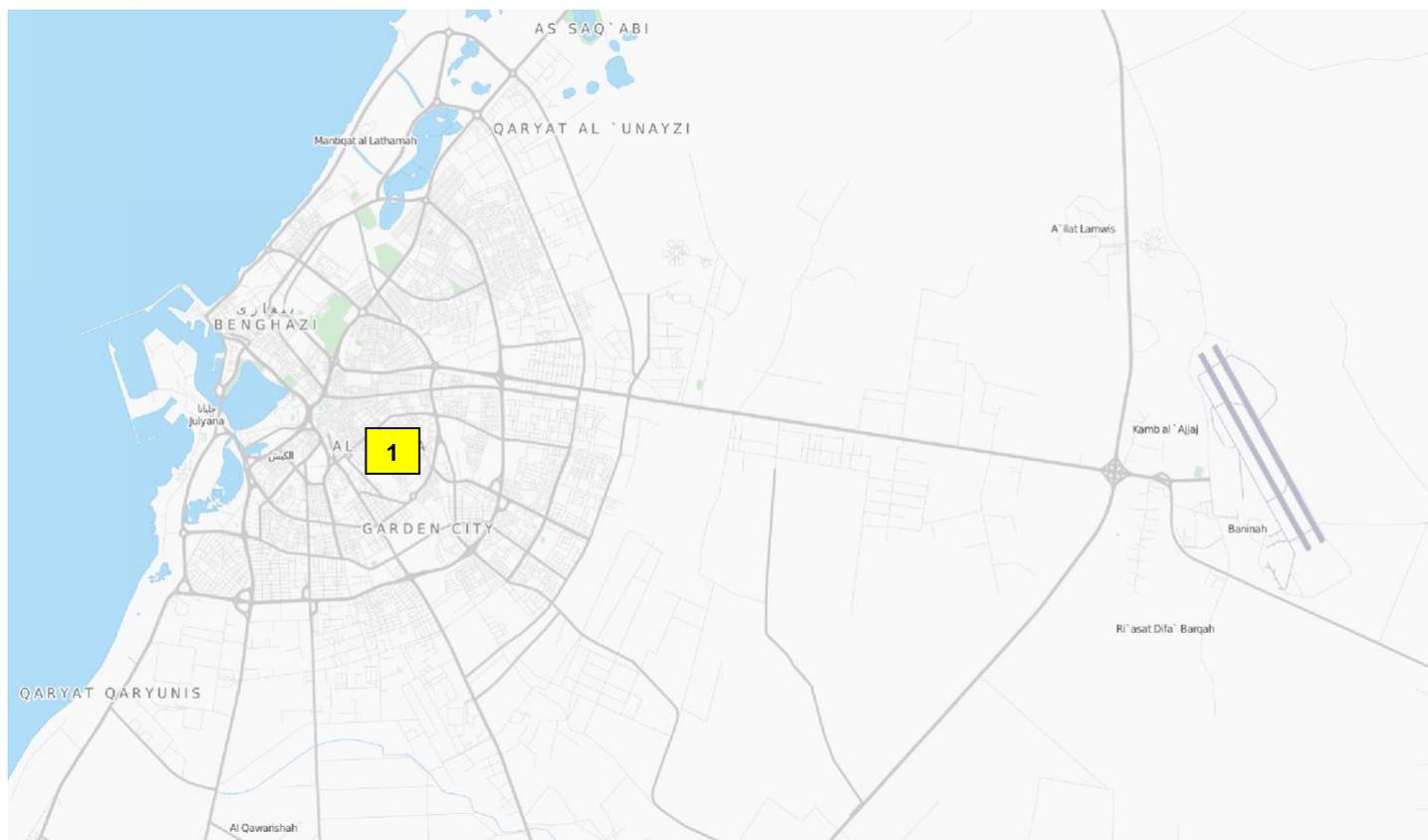
WB's reports of the arrival of a high-level Turkish delegation to Tripoli on 17 June. On the Turkish side, the attendees included Treasury and Finance Minister Berat Albayrak, presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin, and head of the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT) Hakan Fidan. In addition, the delegation included Alparslan Bayraktar, Deputy Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, whose family is behind the development of the "TB-2 Bayraktar" unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) currently deployed in Libya. Both the Bayraktar and Albayrak families reportedly have family ties to Turkish President Recep Erdogan. Separately, sources reported police vehicles closed the Shat Road from the Sea Port Roundabout towards Mitiga International Airport (MJI) at Ispan Roundabout at approximately 2200hrs on 20 June. Reports indicate the road closure was due to a convoy carrying a Turkish delegation passing through the area. The road was reopened in the morning on 21 June. The delegation was likely the same delegation that met with Al-Serraj on 17 June.

Two separate killings ivo Tajoura

Reports indicate unidentified assailants shot dead a Al-Bugra affiliated militiaman in a drive-by shooting in Tajoura at night on 16 June. The assailants were aboard a black Toyota pick-up vehicle. Unconfirmed reports suggest Tajoura's Al-Daman militia killed the Al-Bugra militiaman due to a dispute over spoils of war. Additional unconfirmed reports suggest an act of retaliation by Al-Bugra militia in which two Al-Daman militiamen were killed later that day. Separately, reports indicate a man was found shot dead in his vehicle in Tajoura's suburbs in the morning on 17 June. Unconfirmed reports suggest the involvement of the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB) or Al-Daman militia. The man was originally from the east and refused to fight alongside GNA forces.

5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

Calls to release detained civil activist; officials warn over possible COVID-19 outbreak



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (19 June) Two male bodies found in Sidi Fredj and Bohdema areas
2. (18 June) Activists call on LNA-affiliated Military Intelligence to release Al-Sakran
3. (17 June) COVID-19 officials warn over potential outbreak amid surge in cases
4. (17 June) LNA SF commander receives CoS at HQ

Two bodies found in separate areas

Two unidentified male bodies were found in Benghazi on 19 June. The first body was found decomposed on the outskirts of Benghazi, Sidi Fredj area. The second body was found with two gunshot wounds near Qasr Sindibad, in Bohdema.

Call to release detained civil activist

A group of Benghazi-based activists and intellectuals demanded the release of civil activist Khaled Al-Sakran in a signed statement on 18 June. The activists described Al-Sakran's detention as unlawful and called on the LNA-affiliated Military Intelligence to facilitate his release. The statement condemned arbitrary arrests of activists based on their political beliefs and opinions with no legal charges to justify the arrest. Similarly, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) expressed dismay over the ongoing detention of Al-Sakran. Of note, Al-Sakran was reportedly summoned by Benghazi-based security agencies in the morning on 09 June. This is the second time Al-Sakran is arrested by local authorities. In January 2020, Benghazi's Internal Security arrested the activist but released him 24hrs later. Al-Sakran previously called for an end to the LNA's offensive on Tripoli.

Increase in COVID-19 cases

Spokesman of the eastern Supreme Committee for Combating the Coronavirus, Ahmed Al-Hassi, warned over the potential for Benghazi to become a coronavirus hotspot after 15 new cases were recorded across the east in less than 72hrs. Al-Hassi pointed to the lack of commitment to preventive measures resulting in a sudden rise in cases. In a press

conference on 17 June, Al-Hassi stated that six cases were recorded in Al-Bayda while several families came to Benghazi from the southwest without adhering to the mandatory two-week quarantine. In regard to the government's response, Al-Hassi warned that a partial or total curfew along with the closure of the city's entrances may be implemented for 48hrs if cases continue to rise at an exponential rate within the next 24hrs. Meanwhile, Al-Hassi called on citizens to adhere to the preventive measures. Of note, Al-Hassi noted that 100 individuals who came in contact with an infected family who travelled to Sabha, followed by Sirte and back to Benghazi, were tested. Separately, reports indicate Benghazi's eastern Salmani area was cordoned off after a resident tested positive.

SF commander receives LNA CoS

Reports indicate the LNA's Chief of Staff (Cos), Abdulrazzak Nadori, was received by the LNA's Saiqa Special Forces commander, Wanis boukhmada, at his HQ in Benghazi in the morning on 17 June. Details surrounding the meeting remain limited.

6. What's next

Escalation in Sirte ahead of negotiations; skirmishes in Al-Zawiya

POLITICAL FORECAST

Diplomatic efforts will intensify over the next few weeks to deescalate and contain tensions in Libya. The United States and Russia's respective roles as mediators will come to the fore after Egypt's threat of military action and Turkey's resolve to pursue the offensive eastwards. Meanwhile, Turkey continues to grow its involvement in Libya, shortly after flexing its military muscle off Libya's coast, escalating a diplomatic war of words with France, and sending a high-level delegation to Tripoli headed by its top diplomat Mevlut Cavusoglu and intelligence chief Hakan Fidan. Cavusoglu stated Turkey will cooperate with Italy to achieve a settlement in Libya and durable resolution of the conflict, speaking at a joint conference in Ankara alongside Italian FM Luigi Di Maio. In addition, Cavusoglu declared his country's interest in cooperating with Italy to help meet Libya's power demand and electricity needs. Meanwhile, Cavusoglu condemned the EU's Operation IRINI as "not balanced" and ignoring France's alleged arms transfers to LNA commander Khalifa Haftar. Ankara is sending strong signals that it is willing to work with the United States and Italy, an EU country, against France and Greece's interests in Libya. Domestically, there is a possibility the east-based House of Representatives (HoR) will legislate for an Egypt-led security cooperation agreement with the eastern region or a pact enabling Egypt's armed forces to conventionally supply LNA forces. Further, the east-based director of the General Department of External Media, Malik Al-Sharif, reported that the HoR deputy speaker, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and LNA representatives will visit Moscow to hold talks with the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Mikhail Bogdanov. Details surrounding the visit remain unknown, though it would closely follow the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Russian Defence Minister Sergey Shogyu postponing a scheduled visit to Istanbul for consultations on Libya, with observers pointing to deepening differences over the Libyan file.

WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

In a *Carnegie* interview published on 22 June, Yezid Sayigh provides granular commentary on the prospects for an Egyptian military intervention in Libya. Sayigh points out to the fact that Egypt sees a military intervention as a last resort and will likely prioritise a diplomatic solution. Sayigh argues "If it does intervene, this does not have to be a full intervention in order to be effective in dissuading forces loyal to the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord and its Turkish backers from advancing to or past the Sirte-Jufra line. Nor does the Egyptian military need to advance to that line itself or confront Turkish-backed forces directly. I expect that Egypt's first step would be to cross the border in force, in other words through a sizeable deployment, and then pause. In that way it would signal its seriousness and persuade the other side to stop its advance. But if worse comes to worst, Egypt has the ability to move a significant number of forces into Libya since it is right next door to the country. In this regard, its capacities are greater than Turkey's. But even then Egyptian forces are likely to remain in the eastern border region of Libya". When asked if Egypt will turn the military balance in favour of the LNA, Sayigh argues "Direct intervention would help them considerably by securing their rear, freeing up troops to redeploy to central Libya, and strengthening morale. It would also dampen rising discontent with Haftar in the east as well as within the Libyan National Army, unless the Egyptians also decide to nurture a successor to him. In all cases it is very likely that Egypt will seek to rein Haftar in and prevent him from making a second attempt to seize western Libya and Tripoli, a move it opposed last year. I believe that Egypt will make it clear to Haftar that any future support, including intervention, is aimed at preventing his collapse but no more, and that he must accept a new political process to resolve the conflict. Egyptian intervention will not represent a blank check for Haftar."

SECURITY FORECAST

Skirmishes are likely across the Sirte frontlines, though it remains to be seen whether GNA forces backed by Turkey will pursue the offensive. The LNA's declaration of a no-fly zone (NFZ) over Sirte is unlikely to deter Turkey from manoeuvring in the area, especially given the documented presence of Turkish Navy frigates off Libya's coast actively engaged in electronic warfare. In the western region, WB recorded an uptick in sporadic security incidents, a consistent trend during the summer period in Libya. Power outages are expected to increase in frequency in the next few weeks due to soaring temperatures, exacerbating local grievances across the western region. Of note, lengthy power cuts throughout 19 June came amid a strict 24hr curfew implemented by the GNA on Friday and Saturday against the backdrop of rising COVID-19 cases in-country. Locally, the GNA's focus on fuel smuggling activity across the western region raises the prospect of skirmishes and infighting between armed factions nominally under the Tripoli government. Multiple observers indicate the GNA may utilize hardliner elements in Al-Zawiya as a scapegoat to implement security-sector reforms led by Interior Minister Fathi Bashagha. Reports suggest the Special Deterrence Force (SDF), Fursan Janzour Battalion, and Misrata's 301 Brigade, are planning a joint operation to arrest local commanders from Al-Zawiya, namely "Al-Qasab", "Al-Beidja" and notorious Sabratah-based commander "Al-Ammu". Additional reports indicate that Al-Esnad Force "Al-Far militias" led by Mohammed Bahroun, (also known as "Al-Far") will participate in the operation to eliminate the local militias and gain control of Al-Zawiya Oil Refinery. In the eastern region, an uptick in COVID-19 cases prompted Ajdabiya and Tobruk to fully close their administrative borders. Benghazi could follow suit if cases continue to rise, as highlighted during comments by east-based crisis committee officials.

LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

Brian Katz and Joseph Bermudez present new imagery analysis corroborating Russian military presence in Libya. In commentary published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). In line with US AFRICOM's recent assessments, the CSIS piece lends further credence to the build-up of Russian military assets at Al-Jufra airbase. The piece reads, "Analysis of additional imagery beginning in mid-May suggests a buildup of Russian forces at Al Jufra and readying for an influx of aircraft. Russian Pantsir-S1 surface-to-air missile (SAM) and anti-aircraft artillery systems are deployed on the northern side of the base, most likely to deter and defend against Turkish airstrikes. New ground weapons, equipment, vehicles, and tents were observed across the facility, including at a MiG-29 hangar, probably in preparation for the aircrafts' arrival." Further, the article presents satellite imagery documenting the arrival of a large contingent of forces to Al-Jufra on 28 May, likely "the retreating Russian elements from Bani Walid". The authors conclude that "While Moscow weighs the importance of LNA setbacks and heavy Wagner Group losses, including dozens of fighters killed and key weapons systems such as UAVs and Pantsir-S1s seized or destroyed, PMC forces and key assets such as combat aircraft are likely to remain deployed at Jufra and key sites in eastern Libya. While Russia's PMC-led intervention met its limit on the frontlines of Tripoli, it has ensured for Moscow a new strategic foothold in North Africa and on the Mediterranean."

About Whispering Bell



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

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