

## 1. The Big Picture

### Ceasefire talks focus on Sirte-Jufra demilitarised zone

The week starting 03 August was marked by a war of words between Government of National Accord (GNA) officials, particularly GNA PM Fayez Al-Serraj and Deputy PM Ahmed Maiteeq. Against the backdrop of a power crisis across the western region and service delivery protests, Maiteeq called on civilians to take to the streets against what he described as lack of transparency and mismanagement of funds. In response, GNA Tripoli Military Region commander Abdel Basset Marwan described Maiteeq and Presidential Council (PC) member Abdessalam Kajman a “disruptive and frustrating group”. Marwan voiced his support for the PC and accused the two PC members of serving foreign interests to overthrow PM Al-Serraj. Further, Maiteeq retaliated by calling on the Military Prosecutor to investigate Marwan’s statement.

A range of responses from military formations in the western region ensued. The newly-formed Joint Force under Brigadier General Al-Fitouri Ghribil stated it is surprised that certain parties are attempting to pressure the GNA to serve narrow political agendas at the expense of the “martyrs’ blood”. In a statement issued on 08 August, the Joint Force warned it will strike with “an iron fist” those who attempt to sow divisions and incite protests. Meanwhile, Joint Ops Room Commander Major General Osama Juwaili threw his support behind the GNA PM and praised the Joint Force against what he described as attempts to restore dictatorship in Libya under the guise of freedom of expression.

While the Tripoli government is no stranger to internal disputes, the latest spat comes in a post-offensive context amid new power dynamics as Turkey’s military presence grows in the western region. It is important to note these tensions are long-standing and were expected to resurface after the end of the Tripoli offensive. The dispute may subside with no knock-on effects on the GNA’s cohesion. Still, there is a possibility the latest rift will be framed as a renewed push by Muslim Brotherhood (MB) elements to oust Al-Serraj and/or a Misrata-led attempt to consolidate political clout. In broad strokes, these divisions highlight two competing GNA camps; one that is advocating reforms, or is perhaps under pressure to enact reforms, and another group in favour of the status quo.

In a more positive development, Tripoli’s Mitiga International Airport (MJ) operated its first outbound commercial flight this week. The flight was operated by Libyan Airlines to Istanbul at 0945hrs local time. The reopening comes against the backdrop of a fire outbreak at Misrata International Airport (MRA) on 03 August, which diverted all flights to MJ indefinitely. Of note, the Misrata district’s security environment continues to be marked by sporadic security incidents for the second week in a row, an unusual trend given the merchant city’s relative stability.

Turning to the combat theatre, frontlines remained relatively stable across Sirte, though the military build-up continues. On 05 August, open source imagery purported to show components of an S-300 system in the vicinity of Ras Lanuf. If confirmed, defence analysts agree the deployment would be a “game-changer” as it would effectively render the Turkish-supplied TB-2 Bayraktar unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) ineffective, prompting Ankara to deploy additional military resources in-country. Of note, over the past few days, Russian Air Force cargo aircraft have been reportedly landing at Jufra airbase with supplies.

There is mounting evidence to indicate the LNA is gradually gaining confidence, as highlighted by reconnaissance sorties reportedly conducted in the vicinity of Qaryat, west of Ash Shwayrif. If confirmed, the development would corroborate the absence of GNA forces from Ash Shwayrif, the strategic node linking the central and southern regions to the west. It remains difficult to ascertain

whether these are small-scale and routine manoeuvres to uphold the LNA’s defensive lines or part of LNA intent to move to an offensive posture in the medium term. LNA forces are unlikely to attempt another offensive on Tripoli, but preemptive operations across the central region and Fezzan are possible.

On the ground, the makeup of GNA forces across Sirte frontlines attests to the lack of appetite for combat engagement. Sources report GNA forces east of Sirte are largely made up of Misrata factions, GNA Volcano of Rage formations from Zliten, and Syrian fighters. Sources corroborated the absence of Tripoli factions from the majority of Sirte frontlines. It is difficult to ascertain whether this absence is deliberate or resulting from Tripoli armed groups’ refusal to join combat eastwards.

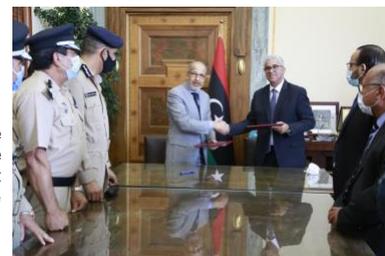
More importantly, sources indicate the idea of a demilitarized zone in Sirte-Jufra is gradually gaining traction at the negotiating table. While disagreements over a ceasefire roadmap persist between pro-LNA and pro-GNA camps, a buffer zone will be a first step towards a ceasefire while broader negotiations continue.

On the diplomatic front, the week was marked by increased engagement from Washington on the Libyan file. The US Embassy in Libya reported a US delegation led by National Security Council Senior Director for the Middle East and North Africa Major General Miguel Correa and US Ambassador to Libya Richard Norland, held virtual discussions with Libyan officials on 07 August to “advance concrete urgent steps to find a demilitarized solution for Sirte and Al-Jufra”, and reopen Libya’s oil sector with full transparency. On 07 August, Ambassador Norland held a telephone conversation with Al-Serraj to review efforts to finalise a solution that would result in a lasting ceasefire, promote economic transparency, and advance the UN-led political process. Norland praised Al-Serraj’s leadership as “responsible Libyan parties come together in defense of Libya’s sovereignty to implement a demilitarized solution in central Libya and enable the National Oil Corporation (NOC) to resume its vital work.” Separately, Ambassador Norland held a telephone conversation with GNA Interior Minister Fathi Bashagha on 08 August and discussed efforts leading to a comprehensive Libyan solution in Sirte and Jufra. The Ambassador reiterated that the Embassy will remain actively involved with all Libyan parties, including the GNA and House of Representatives (HoR), that “reject foreign interference and seek to come together in peaceful dialogue”. Of note, Norland’s remarks come amid increased US rhetoric centered around the demilitarisation of the Sirte and Jufra regions.

But Washington’s diplomatic action to pressure forces to backdown comes amid a spillover of the Libyan conflict into the Mediterranean. On 06 August, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Souhry announced Egypt and his Greek counterpart Niko Dendias inked an agreement delineating an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in the eastern Mediterranean. The announcement was made at a joint press conference in Cairo, Egypt. Shoukry stated that the agreement allows both countries to maximize the utilization of the resources available in the EEZ, particularly “promising oil and gas reserves”. The agreement, formally rejected by Turkey, was widely described as a response to Ankara’s own maritime demarcation deal with the GNA. The Egypt-Greece EEZ could prompt the eastern-based interim government to negotiate new maritime demarcation lines with Greece, which would add another layer of complexity to the conflict and widen Libya’s east-west divide.

#### KEY POINTS

- War of words between GNA PM & Deputy PM
- Alleged S-300 system spotted near Ras Lanuf
- Egypt-Greece ink EEZ agreement



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## 2. National Security Map

MRA halts ops. after fire in departure hall; Italian forces reportedly transferred from Misrata

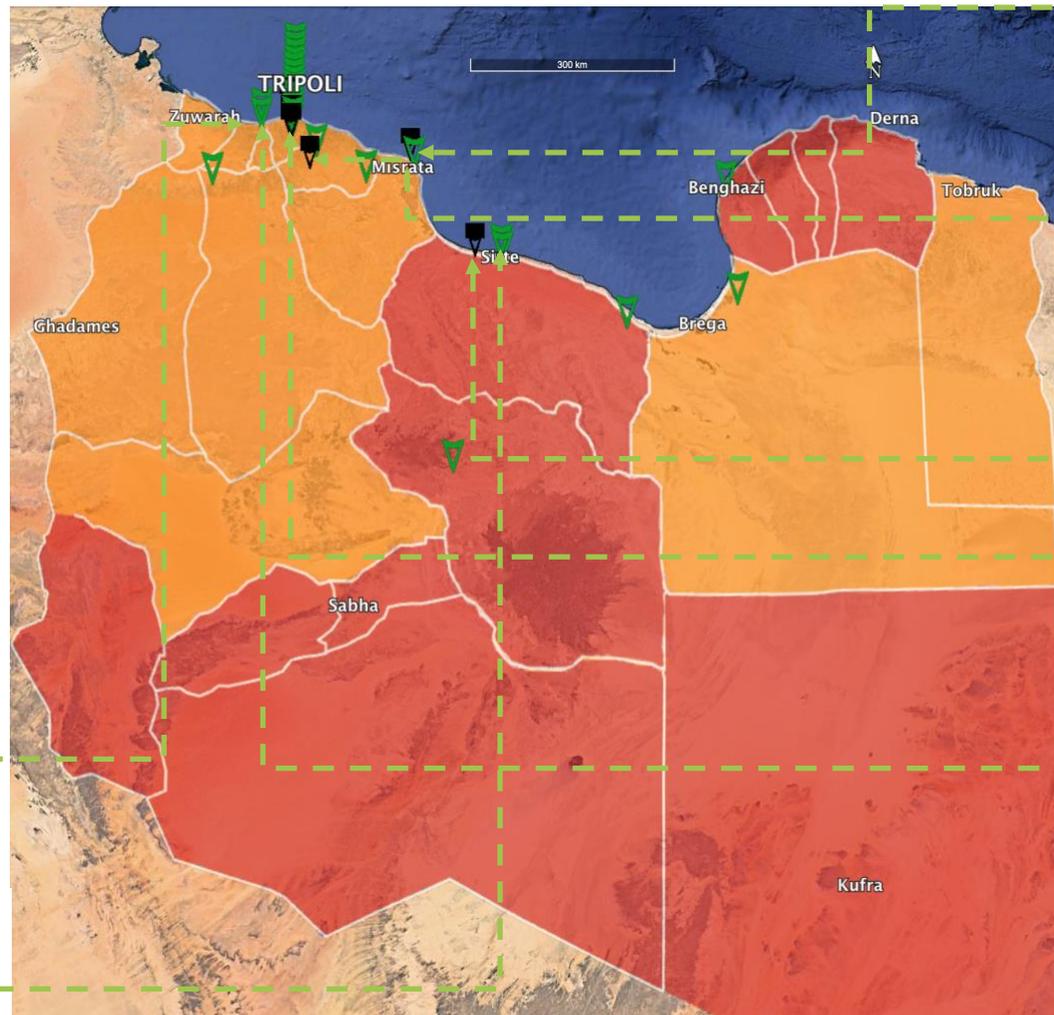
### Key

#### THREAT INDICATORS

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

#### EVENT INDICATORS

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



A fire broke out at Misrata International Airport's (MRA) departure hall at approximately 224hrs on 03 August, hours after the airport received 230 stranded Libyan nationals returning from Turkey. Flights were diverted to Mitiga International Airport (MJ).

WB sources reported a military convoy of approximately 20 vehicles affiliated with the Nawasi Brigade was spotted on Al-Hadba Tool Road heading southwards at approximately 2030hrs on 05 August. Unconfirmed reports suggest the convoy was heading towards Tarhunah. Of note, earlier that day reports indicate an unidentified unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) conducted an airstrike on Tarhuna's Al-Naaja area. The airstrike reportedly targeted Syrian mercenaries.

Pro-LNA accounts alleged a GNA-affiliated Turkish unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) was downed in the Wadi Jarif area at night on 04 August.

Open source satellite imagery published on 07 August shows a Turkish-built improvised airstrip inside Tripoli's Banana Plantation Project (Mashroo' Al-Mouz) utilised in support of GNA forces during the LNA's offensive on Tripoli. Separately, reports indicate four Turkish UAVs were recently delivered to the GNA.

Locals burned tyres and cordoned off several roads in Al-Zawiya to denounce deteriorated living conditions at approximately 1830hrs on 07 August.

Following a recent visit to Tripoli to meet with the GNA Prime Minister Fayez-Serraj, the Italian Defence Minister Lorenzo Guerrini announced the transfer of Italy's Misrata field hospital to a "more functional area." While Guerrini did not disclose any further details, Italian news agency Agenzia Nova pointed to the possible deployment of approximately 300 Italian soldiers to Tripoli.

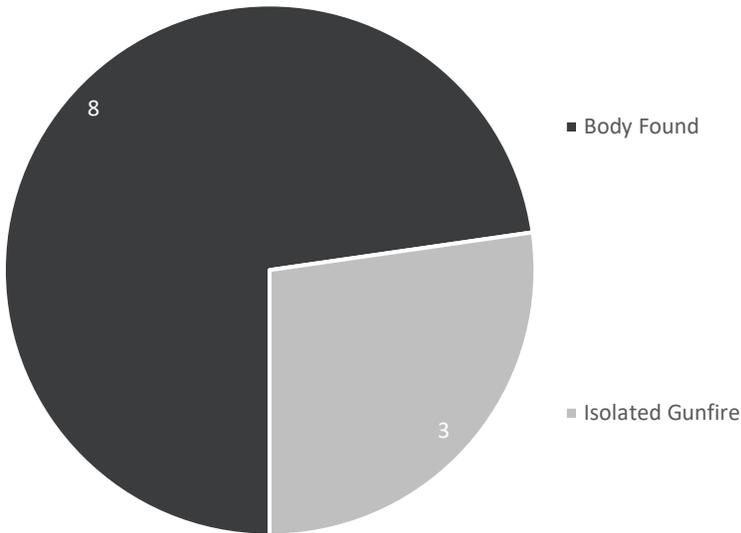
In a video message published on 08 August, National Oil Corporation (NOC) chairman Mustafa Sanalla warned over the risk of a "massive disaster" at Libya's oil ports due to a growing military presence and the potential exposure of over-stocked storage tanks to an attack, fire, or high temperature.

Pro-LNA accounts and anonymous sources quoted by Radio France internationale (RFI) reported the presence of suspected Islamic State (IS) militants in Sabratah. RFI reported the suspected IS militants include Libyan, Tunisian, Syrian, and Egyptian nationals transferred by Turkey and maintaining a presence in two camps on the outskirts of Sabratah; Al-Telil and Al-Baraem.

Pro-LNA accounts alleged forces raised their preparedness for combat engagement in Sirte and Misrata. Meanwhile, the head of the LNA's Moral Guidance, Brigadier Khaled Mahjoub, stated the LNA is in possession of "sufficient" military hardware to secure its airspace but will not disclose further details. The statement was described by local observers as an implicit acknowledgement the LNA is now in possession of the S-300 missile system, an assessment held by multiple defence analysts based on open source imagery in the vicinity of Ras Lanuf.

### 3. Nationwide Security Analysis Incidents concentrated in west; fatalities on downward trend

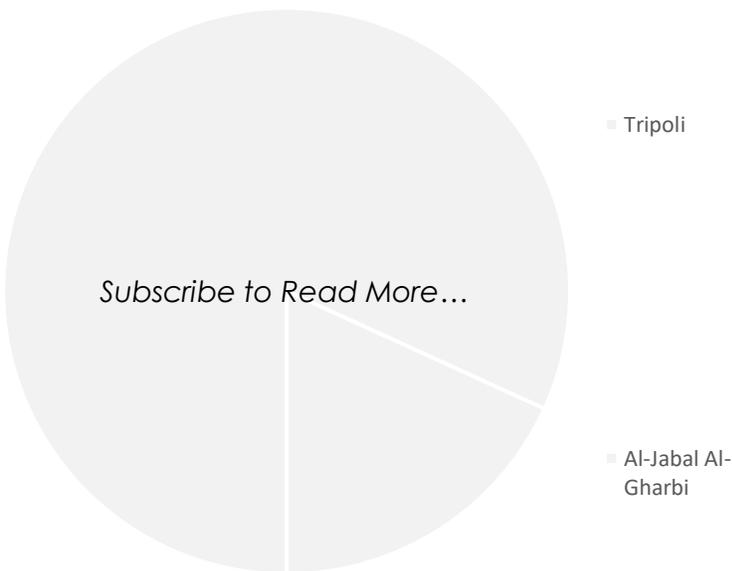
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



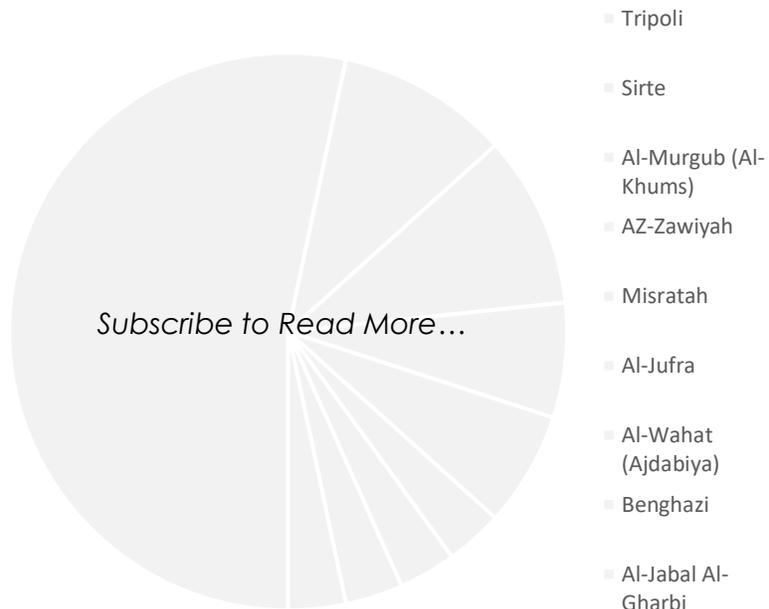
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



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 12 confirmed deaths in Libya compared with 15 deaths reported last week and 17 the week before. The fatalities recorded came as a result of eight bodies found in the wider Tripoli district, as well as three fatalities as a result of gunfire-related cases in Tripoli & Al-Jabal Al-Gharbi's Jadu area.

In the wider west, while sporadic security incidents were spread across the region, the majority of security incidents and fatalities were recorded in the capital city this week. In line with a recent trend of a surge in gunfire-related cases, this week saw a young boy succumbed to his wounds after being hit by a stray bullet in an unidentified area of the capital. Meanwhile, a total of eight bodies belonging to illegal migrants were found in the Tajoura and Ghot Al-Romman area, accounting for eight of the total 13 fatalities recorded across the country this week. A total of four arrests, three isolated gunfire cases, three fires, two cases of bodies found, two carjackings, one protest and one robbery were recorded in Tripoli.

Beyond Tripoli, this week saw an unattributed airstrike conducted in the vicinity of Tarhuna. WB sources reported a military convoy of approximately 20 vehicles affiliated with the Nawasi Brigade was spotted on Al-Hadba Tool Road heading southwards at approximately 2030hrs on 05 August. Unconfirmed reports suggest the convoy was heading towards Tarhunah. Of note, earlier that day reports indicate an unidentified unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) conducted an airstrike on Tarhuna's Al-Naaja area. The airstrike reportedly targeted Syrian mercenaries. In response, GNA forces attempted to down the UAV causing heavy gunfire & explosions to be heard in Tarhuna in the early hours of 05 August. In addition, sporadic security incidents were recorded across Jadu, Tarhuna, Zliten, Zawiyah and Misrata.

Meanwhile, in the central region, a military build-up in the Sirte-Jufra area continues to dominate the overall security environment as witnessed in recent weeks. Reports of military reinforcements from both sides, reconnaissance missions, and artillery testing continue to circulate. WB recorded three security incidents in the Sirte area throughout the reporting period, including a fire at a family park, an isolated gunfire incident as a result of LNA forces claiming the downing of a GNA-affiliated Turkish unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) in the Wadi Jarif area, as well as an arrest targeting a pro-GNA militiaman on charges of allegedly providing GNA forces with LNA coordinates.

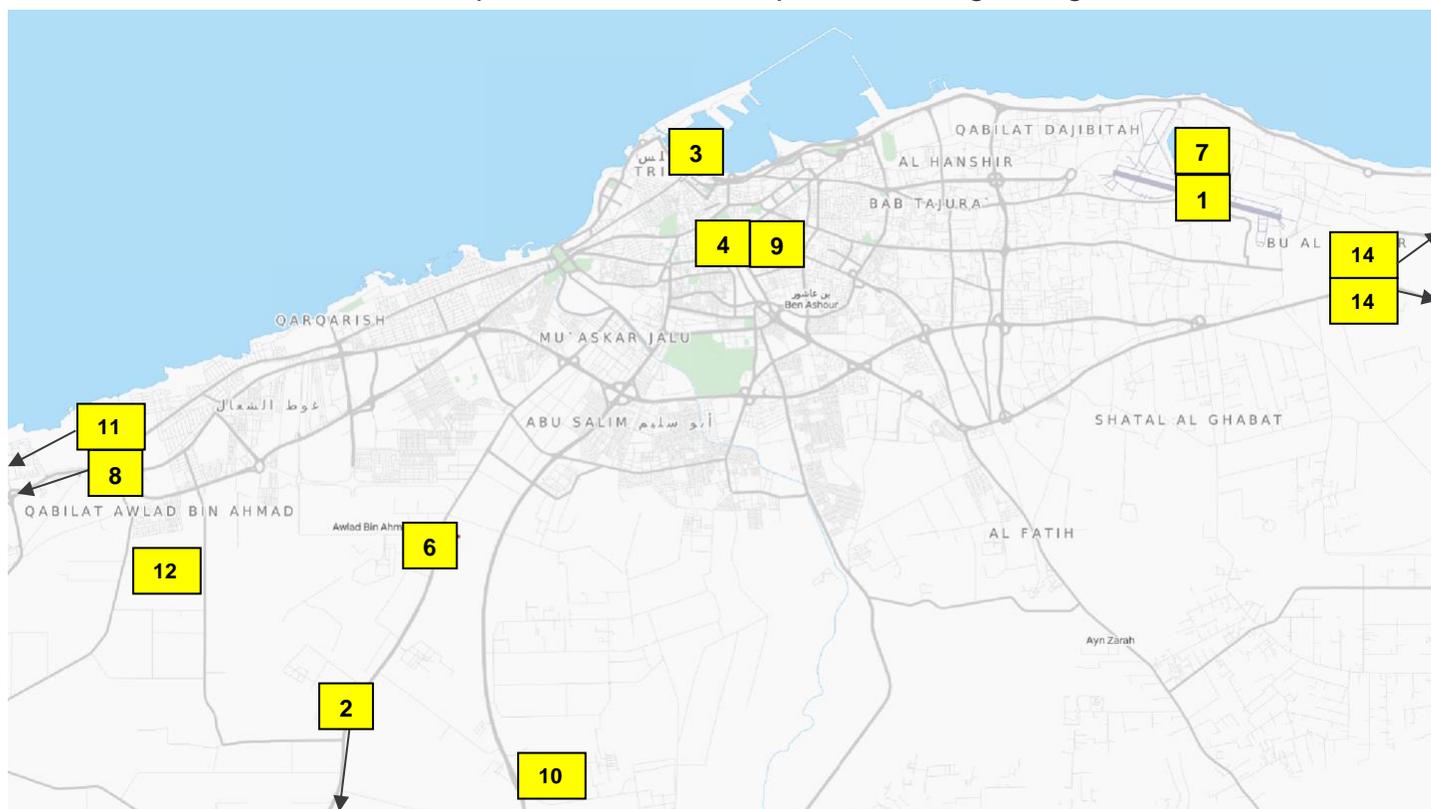
Separately, pro-LNA accounts are alleging forces have raised their preparedness for combat engagement in Sirte and Misrata. Meanwhile, the head of the LNA's Moral Guidance, Brigadier Khaled Mahjoub, stated the LNA is in possession of "sufficient" military hardware to secure its airspace but will not disclose further details. The statement was described by local observers as an implicit acknowledgement the LNA is now in possession of the S-300 missile system, an assessment held by multiple defence analysts based on open source imagery in the vicinity of Ras Lanuf.

Turning to the south, WB recorded no significant security incidents across the region throughout the reporting period. However, similar to last week, the region witnessed a political announcement. Several southern municipalities mayors announced the establishment of the Municipal Council of Fezzan and the election of the Bint Bayah Municipality head Ashraf Maslah as the Council's president for the period of three months. The announcement came during the second meeting held by the southern municipalities in the Brak Al-Shati area on 04 August. The southern municipal figures noted that all the municipalities in the Fezzan region are unified, highlighted by an unanimous agreement to establish the Municipal Council of Fezzan to represent the region as a whole. The meeting called on competent authorities to solely deal with the newly-formed body in relation to the delivery of services and other matters.

In the eastern region, this week saw a drop in the number of arrests carried out in the Benghazi and Al-Wahat districts in contrast to recent weeks. A total of two arrests were recorded in the aforementioned regions. The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in Ajdabiya arrested an individual on charges of harassment, extortion, and death threats targeting women from the same family on 08 August. The threats were made via text messages. The suspect is a resident of Ajdabiya and confessed to the charges against him. Separately, the Benghazi Security Directorate reported the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) arrested three individuals on charges of stealing 88,585 Libyan dinars (LYD) and four mobile phones from the headquarters of a shipping company on 05 August. The arrest came after a local filed a police complaint against the act of robbery, which was corroborated by surveillance footage. The stolen money was found in one of the suspect's houses.

## 4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

### MJI resumes operations; anti-GNA protest amid growing discord within coalition



#### KEY INCIDENTS

1. (09 Aug) MJI resumes operations with Libyan Airlines flight from Tripoli to Istanbul
2. (08 Aug) Saboteurs attempt to steal overhead power lines ivo Al-Kreymiya
3. (08 Aug) Intoxicated man opens fire on fish market injuring woman
4. (07 Aug) Anti-GNA protest in Algeria Square
5. (06 Aug) PC extends curfew (2100hrs-0600hrs) for 10 days effective 07 August
6. (06 Aug) Gunmen carjack vehicle in Al-Jebs
7. (05 Aug) LAA chairs meeting at MJI to discuss measures related airport resuming operations
8. (05 Aug) Janzour residents protest against GECOL in Tripoli W, Power Supplier Station
9. (05 Aug) PM receives Italian Defence Minister
10. (05 Aug) Gunmen carjack vehicle near BPMC
11. (04 Aug) Suleyman Shah group release video of pro-Erdogan parade in Sidi Bilal Camp
12. (04 Aug) Vehicle stolen ivo Al-Serraj
13. (04 Aug) Stray bullet kills young boy
14. (03 Aug) Five bodies of illegal migrants found in Tajoura; three bodies of illegal migrants found in Ghot Al-Romman

#### MJI resumes flight operations

Reports indicate flight operations have resumed at Tripoli's Mitiga International Airport (MJI) as per schedule in the morning on 09 August. The first scheduled flight will be operated by Libyan Airlines to Istanbul, Turkey, at 0945hrs. Of note, following a recent fire outbreak at Misrata International Airport's (MRA) departure hall, flights were diverted to MJI. Subsequently, the maintenance of MJI was accelerated in order for the airport to resume operations as per schedule. MJI was indefinitely closed on 03 March and flights were diverted to MRA following consecutive shelling attacks targeting the airport.

#### TPF issue anti-MB statement

On 07 August, the Tripoli Protection Force (TPF) issued a politically charged statement against the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya, accusing the group of infiltrating state institutions and mass corruption. The statement entitled "Brotherhood, the tumour that eats away the country's body" accused the group of exacerbating crises, suffocating the homeland and citizens, defaming "leaders and honorables", as well as those who sacrificed their blood defending their country. The Force noted that it is closely monitoring the MB's moves and warned against destabilising Tripoli's security environment. Of note, the TPF comprises four of Tripoli's main militias; the Nawasi Brigade, Ghneiwa militia, Bab Tajoura Brigade, and Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB). The statement would come amid tensions between GNA PM Fayez Al-Serraj and Deputy PM Ahmed Maiteeg, involving other senior GNA officials.

#### Man arrested for opening fire in fish market

In the evening of 08 August, the Central Support Administration, affiliated to the MoI, arrested an

individual in the Old City area on charges of opening fire inside the Bab Al Bahr Fish Market while under the influence of alcohol, resulting in the injury of a woman.

#### Robbery attempt ivo Al-Kreymiya

Reports indicate two saboteurs were spotted attempting to steal overhead power lines in Al-Kreymiya near Ali Ibn Abi Talib Mosque at approximately 0830hrs on 08 August.

#### Anti-GNA & anti-GECOL protests

Local reports indicate an anti-Government of National Accord (GNA) protest was held in Algeria Square to denounce deteriorated living conditions in the capital city at approximately 1900hrs on 07 August.

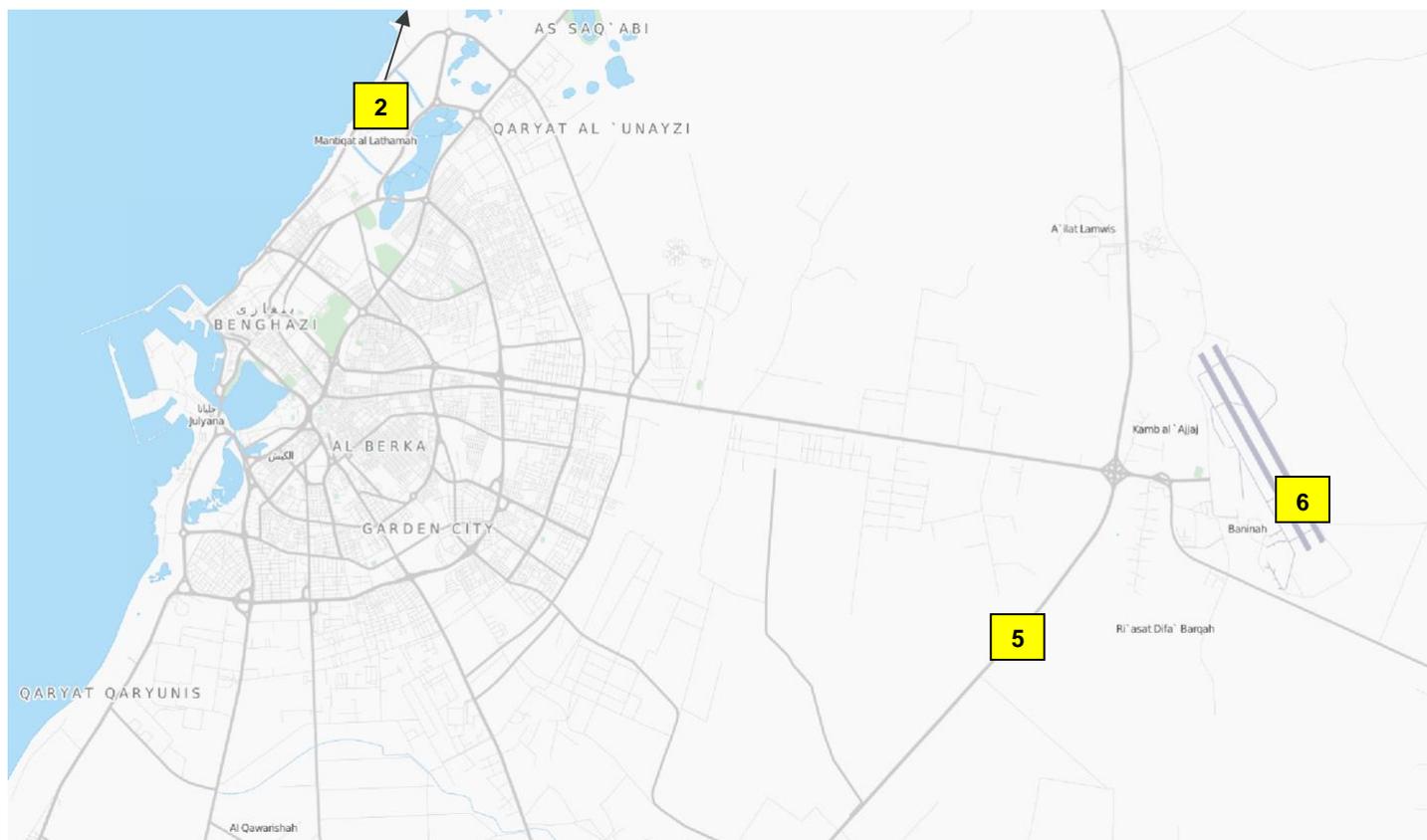
Separately, reports indicate residents of Janzour held an anti-General Electricity Company of Libya (GECOL) protest in the Tripoli West Power Supplier Station at approximately 1300hrs on 05 August. Protesters denounced the unequal distribution of power via the load shedding programme, with some areas experiencing longer power cuts than others.

#### Al-Serraj receives Italian Defence Minister

On 05 August, the GNA Prime Minister Fayez Al-Serraj received the Italian Minister of Defence Lorenzo Guerrini in Tripoli to discuss the latest developments in Libya. The two sides stressed the need to return to the political process and reach a lasting ceasefire, with Al-Serraj reiterating that any ceasefire agreement must rule out any threat of aggression by the LNA. In addition, the meeting discussed cooperation in the field of demining, including training programmes for Libyan military students in Italian military colleges. Further, the meeting discussed the return of Italian companies in-country. The two sides also stressed the need to resume Libya's oil production.

## 5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

### Internal Security arrests sleeper cell allegedly planning to disrupt Benghazi's security



#### KEY INCIDENTS

1. (08 August) IS arrests sleeper cell allegedly planning operations
2. (08 August) Electricity officials reports reactivation of Benghazi North Power Plant
3. (06 August) Haftar discusses military developments with commanders
4. (05 August) CID arrests 3 suspects on charges of robbing shipping company
5. (04 August) Video footage purportedly shows tribesmen in Tariq Ibn Ziyad BN ahead of trip to Egypt
6. (02-04 August) GNA Sirte-Jufra Military Ops. Room spox. reports monitoring of Russian military cargo aircraft

#### IS report arrest of sleeper cell

Reports indicate the eastern-based Internal Security (IS) arrested a sleeper cell allegedly planning to disrupt Benghazi's security environment on 08 August.

#### Electricity official confirms power issue solved

The eastern head of the General Authority for Electricity and Renewable Energy, Fakhri Al-Mesmari, stated that the "coming hours" would see positive developments in the electricity grid on 08 August after workers reactivated the third unit of Al-Sarir Power Plant and resumed operations at the Benghazi North Power Plant with a capacity of 120 mW. Al-Mesmari added that gas continues to flow from the Al-Tahadi Field to supply various gas stations at a rate of 190 million cubic feet per day; slightly less than the required rate estimated at 240 mW. Al-Mesmari stated that the reactivation of the aforementioned units will bring an end to power shortages linked to heavy loads, and was ordered by Prime Minister Abdallah Al-Thinni.

#### Haftar discusses latest military developments

Local reports indicate the LNA's commander Khalifa Haftar held a meeting with commanders of operation rooms and military regions in Benghazi on 06 August. According to the LNA's Media Office, the meeting discussed the latest military developments and assessed forces' combat readiness.

#### CID arrests three thieves

The Benghazi Security Directorate reported the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) arrested three individuals on charges of stealing 88,585 Libyan dinars (LYD) and four mobile phones from the headquarters of a shipping company on 05 August. The arrest came after a local filed a police complaint against the act of robbery, which was corroborated by surveillance footage. The stolen money was found in one of the suspect's houses.

#### Tribesmen allegedly visit Tariq Ibn Ziyad Battalion

Video footage by pro-LNA accounts purported to show Libyan tribal elements in a Benghazi camp controlled by the LNA's Tarik Ibn Ziyad Battalion on 04 August. Local reports allege the tribal elements were filmed before flying to Egypt as part of the Egyptian initiative to train and arm tribal elements from the eastern region, as highlighted by Egyptian president AbdelFattah Sisi in recent remarks. The video footage has not been independently verified by WB.

#### GNA commander: Russian aircraft departs BEN

The GNA's Sirte-Jufra Military Operations Room spokesman, Abdel Hadi Drah, reported the monitoring of five Russian military cargo aircraft taking off from Benghazi's Benina International Airport (BEN) and landing in Al-Ghardhabiya and Jufra airbases between 02-04 August. In addition, Drah stated that two air cargo aircraft departed from Syria and landed at BEN, whilst two other flights arrived at Labrag Airport in Al-Baida. Drah claimed that all the aircraft monitored belonged to Russia and the flights are a sign of Russian-Syrian state support for Haftar's forces.

## 6. What's next

### Sirte-Jufra talks continue; Interim gov. maritime agreement with Greece

#### POLITICAL FORECAST

The House of Representatives (HoR) Speaker Aguila Saleh arrived in Cairo to hold a series of consultations aimed at finding a solution to the Libyan conflict on 09 August. According to reports, Saleh is due to meet with the US Ambassador to Egypt Jonathan Cohen, as well as senior Egyptian officials. Saleh has conducted similar regional and internal visits over recent weeks in an effort to garner support for his eight-point political initiative. Reports suggest Saleh and the pro-LNA camp are focusing on reforming the Presidential Council (PC) as part of political-track negotiations. The reports allege Saleh proposed a transitional period of 12-24 months and a military council to be led by LNA commander Khalifa Haftar. Of note, similar proposals were presented in the past by the pro-LNA camp without any follow-through. Regionally, a Turkey-Malta-GNA rapprochement is gradually being carved on the diplomatic front. The Foreign Ministers of Libya, Malta, and Turkey held a meeting in Tripoli on 06 August to discuss the latest developments in Libya and joint cooperation between the three states. Malta and Turkey voiced their support for the GNA and reiterated that there is no military solution in Libya, while noting that Libya's stability and security are of great significance. Meanwhile, the three delegations voiced their reservation towards the IRINI Operation aimed at implementing the United Nations (UN) arms embargo in Libya. Meanwhile, reports speculate Germany, France, and Italy are pursuing plans to impose sanctions on entities and individuals suspected of violating the UN arms embargo imposed since 2011. The reports indicate three companies from Turkey, Jordan, and Kazakhstan could be sanctioned, as well as two Libyan nationals. Of note, on the sidelines of the Brussels Summit on 18 July, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte threatened sanctions should breaches of the embargo at sea, land, or air continue.

#### WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

*Reuters* reported a map sent to its agency by the Egyptian Foreign Ministry showed a demarcation line of Greek and Egyptian maritime boundaries that appeared to leave no possibility of a link between Turkey and Libya. Greek FM Niko Dendias stated the agreement with Egypt is within the framework of international law and the opposite of the "illegal, void, and legally unfounded memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between the GNA and Turkey. Dendias went on to state that with the new agreement with Egypt, the Turkey-GNA MoU has "ended up where it belonged from the beginning: in the trash can." Of note, Dendias' remarks came hours after Greece noted its readiness to start exploratory talks on the demarcation of maritime zones with Turkey as soon as August. Turkey's Foreign Minister stated that the Egypt-Greece agreement is null and void as the EEZ falls in the area of Turkey's continental shelf and also violates Libya's maritime rights. In response, Egypt's Foreign Ministry spokesman Ahmed Hafez referred to Turkey's reaction as "surprising" given it has not seen the agreement or its details. The development comes amid heightened tensions between Greece and Turkey over hydrocarbon resources in the eastern Mediterranean, fuelling long-standing tensions over an array of issues. Of note, Greece and Italy signed an agreement on maritime boundaries establishing an EEZ between the two countries in June. Meanwhile, Egypt previously stated that part of a seismic survey planned by Turkey in the eastern Mediterranean potentially encroached on waters where Cairo claims exclusive rights. Of note, Egypt formed the "Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum" aimed at developing the region's gas market, of which Turkey is not a member.

#### SECURITY FORECAST

The Sirte theatre will continue to be marked by reinforcements on both sides. Escalation risk remains, despite mounting evidence of a lack of appetite for engagement. Meanwhile, LNA and GNA reconnaissance sorties in the vicinity of Ash Shwayrif and south Misrata district may result in skirmishes. No major conclusions can be drawn from the absence of Tripoli formations from Sirte, especially because the roadmap for Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) is unknown. In Tripoli, service delivery protests and incidents linked to grievances are likely, though it remains to be seen whether the spat between GNA officials will have an impact on the ground. Across Tripoli's western flank, video footage of Turkey-backed Syrian fighters affiliated to the Suleyman Shah brigade in Janzour's Sidi Bilal camp likely raised fears of an anti-smuggling offensive among Zawiyah-based elements. It remains to be seen if Turkey-sanctioned reforms across the western region will be accepted, especially in towns like Zawiyah and Tripoli's western flank in general. Observers argue if Turkey wants to consolidate across Al-Wattiyah airbase, it is required to secure the ground route from Tripoli to the airbase. Doing so means going against these elements along the coastal road, including influential fuel smugglers. In Sabratah, while recent media reports over the presence of IS militants raise a number of security concerns, there is no evidence to suggest the group is making a comeback, although this is possible if the Islamist extremist presence is left unchecked. Elsewhere in the west, crime continues to be on the rise between Zliten and Garabolli. In Tarhunah, the environment is relatively stabilizing, although skirmishes between GNA forces with competing interests remain likely. In the eastern region, video footage by pro-LNA accounts purported to show Libyan tribal elements in a Benghazi camp controlled by the LNA's Tarik Ibn Ziyad Battalion on 04 August. Local reports allege the tribal elements were filmed before flying to Egypt as part of Cairo's initiative to train and arm tribal elements.

#### LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

In a statement by US National Security Adviser Robert C. O'Brien on behalf of the White House, the Adviser voiced deep concern over the escalating conflict in Libya and reiterated his country's strong opposition towards foreign military involvement, including the use of "mercenaries and private military contractors" by all sides. The White House pointed to foreign powers exploiting the conflict via establishing a military presence or exerting control over Libyan resources, which poses a threat to regional stability and global commerce. The statement reads: "The United States is deeply troubled by the escalating conflict in Libya. We strongly oppose foreign military involvement, including the use of mercenaries and private military contractors, by all sides. The ongoing efforts of foreign powers to exploit the conflict – for example, by establishing an enduring military presence or exerting control over resources that belong to the Libyan people – pose grave threats to regional stability and global commerce. Furthermore, these efforts undermine the collective security interests of the United States and our allies and partners in the Mediterranean region. Escalation will only deepen and prolong the conflict. Over the past weeks, President Trump has spoken with several world leaders about Libya, and it is clear there is no "winning" side. Libyans can win only if they come together to reclaim their sovereignty and rebuild a unified country. As an active, but neutral, actor, the United States is pursuing a 360 degree diplomatic engagement with Libyan and external stakeholders across the conflict to find a solution that supports Libyan sovereignty and protects the shared interests of the United States, our allies, and partners. To that end, we call on all parties – both those responsible for the current escalation and those working to end it – to enable the National Oil Corporation to resume its vital work, with full transparency, and to implement a demilitarized solution for Sirte and al-Jufra, respect the UN arms embargo, and finalize a ceasefire under the UN-led 5+5 military talks."

# About Whispering Bell



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