

# Libya Weekly Operational Preview

July 18, 2021

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# Outlook

## Short Term Outlook

- Political progress is slowing as enduring divisions surface within the Libyan political scene. The proposed December elections are looking increasingly at risk after the LPDF failed to come to a consensus at the start of July. The UN-backed process is beginning to show some signs of fracturing as the pressure builds. With tensions flaring, efforts to find a consensus are likely to become more difficult with allegations talks are increasingly being held outside of official meetings resulting in a lack of transparency.
- Cases of COVID-19 have begun increasing significantly in Libya, likely driven by the introduction of the Delta variant. As a result, the border with Tunisia has been closed and a new joint department is being established between the ministries of interior and health to better coordinate the response. Further responses are likely in the coming days and weeks with little to no notice.
- Crime (including carjackings, armed robberies, murders, and kidnappings) remains common in many areas of the country with perpetrators exploiting local gaps in security to carry out attacks. Crime reporting remains high across all regions.

## Medium to Long Term Outlook

- Enduring divisions are resurfacing, threatening the progress seen in the first half of 2021 when a new united government was installed. The UN process and Berlin outcomes are beginning to unravel which could leave space for other external actors to increase their influence, furthering their own individual agendas. The UN is likely to come under increasing pressure to get the political process back on track in a bid to keep the December elections a realistic prospect however, various compromises will be needed.
- Islamic State continues to suffer attrition in Libya and remains mostly dormant from an operational perspective. However, political fragility will continue to present conditions in which the group could begin to reconstitute some of its capability, and it retains a presence in the country. Increasing political unity could prove a motivating factor for the group to try and destabilise Libya as it moves towards scheduled elections in December. Other terrorist factions also remain active with some representing a kidnap threat, especially in more remote areas, while some have exploited the last conflict with the LNA to embed themselves within security forces in Tripoli.

# Executive Summary

## Political Developments

- This week has seen a flurry of political activity as various factions look to shape the current political process while UNSMIL tries to pull the process back on track. Despite this, no breakthroughs have yet to be made and with Eid al-Adha this coming week, political activity is likely to reduce in the short-term.
- The HoR has again failed to pass the national budget and will not sit again on the issue until after Eid al-Adha. This is the sixth time the HoR has sat on the issue and despite public pressure, the issue remains at an impasse.
- UNSMIL convened a virtual meeting of the LPDF Proposal's Bridging Committee on July 16 and 17. The committee was put together at the end of the last LPDF meeting at the beginning of July which was marred by anger and personal threats. The committee is tasked with defining a number of workable proposals to put to the wider LPDF in an effort to progress the issue of the constitution.
- Speaker of the HoR, Aquila Saleh, met with Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar at Haftar's home base of Rajma, Benghazi on July 15. The meeting comes as unconfirmed reports suggest the LNA is now under severe financial pressure, and the CBL unification is stalling after Tripoli refused to open lines of credit for the east.

- The UN Security Council (UNSC) held a ministerial-level meeting on Libya on July 15 with both pro and anti-election factions pushing their agendas. A statement released at the end listed a number of points including the UNSC support for elections and the October 2020 ceasefire.
- Morocco is reportedly looking to organize a new conference on Libya and has met with key Libyan actors over the issue. The move comes as the UN process is in danger of unravelling, which would give Morocco the opening it needs. Several conferences have already been held in Morocco and its foreign minister, Nasser Bourita, remains focused on retaining the lead on Libya over rivals Algeria which is looking to reassert itself in North Africa.
- The High Council of State (HCS) has called for a session immediately after the Eid al-Adha holiday to elect a new president. A change in leadership could be significant given the delicate balance of the political process. Current president, Khalid Mishri, has held the position since 2018 and faces two opponents. The presidency runs for a term of 12 months.
- UNSMIL renewed its calls for an investigation into the disappearance of MP Seham Sergiwa who was forcibly taken from her home two years ago in Benghazi. Her abduction and subsequent disappearance came after she had criticized the LNA and her home was daubed with graffiti suggesting this may have been the motivation for the attack.

## Military Developments

- Prime Minister (GNU) Abdulhamid Dbeibah stated on July 16 that he was unaware of any deal between Moscow and Ankara to remove their fighters from Libya, however, he stated such a move would be welcomed.
- The GNU stated that 53 areas suspected to be contaminated by mines and explosive remnants of war are to be surveyed by the Libyan Mine Action Centre in partnership with national and international agencies. The director of the Libyan Mine Action Centre, Khaled Al-Turgman stated that “the Misrata-Sirte coastal road was free of mines and remnants of war” however the “coastal area near the water still needed further survey work.”
- Preliminary hearings are due for three civil war crimes trials against Khalifa Haftar in Virginia, US. A preliminary hearing will take place on July 21 for two of the complaints. One has been brought by Muna al-Suyid whose father and three brothers were killed in Benghazi and the second has been brought by Ali Abdalla Hamza, a Canadian-Libyan national. A pretrial hearing will take place on August 04 for the third trial, brought by relatives of Msaddek Tunalli, who was killed in an IDF attack in Tripoli in 2019 during the conflict.

## Security

- The Ministry of Interior (GNU) has continued to advance its security plans in the south and has established a new Operations Room. The move risks renewed tensions with the LNA which has launched its own security plan in Fezzan. This has seen various LNA deployments over the last week to different cities and towns in the south as the LNA seeks to re-establish its influence.
- Clashes took place in Zawiyah between rival groups during the afternoon of July 11. The groups are part of wider local and regional networks as well as aligned with the two biggest tribes in the city which often compete with each other.
- A further two mass graves have been found in Tarhunah. These are the latest in a string of finds near the town since Kani Brigade was ousted in mid-2020.
- 28 Egyptian workers were kidnapped for ransom at Ash Shwayrif. The area has become a hotspot for kidnappings over the last year, including several kidnappings of groups of foreign workers.
- 444 Combat Unit deployed assets to Tarhunah and Bani Walid. Some reports have suggested that the deployment might indicate an intent to move on Ash Shwayrif, however, reports have indicated that there may be tensions with the Counter-Terrorism Unit (CTU - Misratan). If so, the deployments might be a show of strength designed to reduce the CTU's influence.

## Coronavirus

- The upward trajectory of COVID-19 cases has continued this week following a notable spike last week. The GNU issued new control measures which included reducing work hours and closing cafes as they try to respond to the situation however pictures of the prime minister at a new café opening in Tripoli the following day have undermined the messaging.
- This week saw the repatriation of Libyans stranded in Tunisia through the Ras Ajdir border crossing as well as via airbridges following the border closure on July 08. The border remains closed with no indications as of yet as to when it may reopen.
- The Ministry of Health (GNU) Ali Al-Zanati stated this week that although the pandemic has become “more widespread” it was also “less dangerous.” He stated that Libya is “still an epidemiological safe zone, and the situation is very reassuring.”
- The WHO has confirmed that the Alpha and Beta variants are in circulation in Libya. While not confirmed, the WHO states that the spread of the Delta variant must be suspected due to its presence in neighbouring countries.
- Libya was expecting to receive 500,000 doses of Sputnik Light by the end of the week according to the GNU’s spokesman, Mohamed Hamuda. 450,000 people have so far received a vaccination in Libya with around 800,000 people registered with the Ministry of Health waiting for their turn. This suggests a small take-up so far given the country has a population of around 7 million.
- The medical infrastructure in Misrata appears to be coming under significant pressure from COVID-19. The Misrata Medical Centre announced the infection of its entire epidemiological survey team while oxygen supplies collapsed leading to unconfirmed reports of three deaths. The Public Prosecutor ordered the arrest of Nouri Belhaj, the head of the Isolation Centre in Misrata after the deaths of six people with COVID-19.

## Migrant Crisis

- Libya has launched the “Dismantling Human Trafficking and Migrant Criminal Networks in North Africa” regional program in partnership with the EU and UN.
- On July 12, Zuwara Municipality Council issued a deadline for illegal migrants to officially regularise their situation, or risk being expelled from the city. The council has given people ten days to resolve their legal status.

## Threat Matrix

Region	Political	Terrorism	Militancy	Crime	Kidnap
Tripolitania	High	High	High	High	High
Tripoli	High	High	High-Extreme	High	High
Cyrenaica	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-High
Benghazi	High	Moderate-High	Moderate	High	High
Fezzan	High	High	High-Extreme	High	High
Sabha	High	High	High	High-Extreme	High-Extreme

  

Threat Scale	Minimal	Low	Moderate	High	Extreme
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# Key Dates

Date	Occasion	Comment
July 19, 2021	Day of Arafah	Public Holiday
July 20 – 22, 2021	Eid al-Adha	Public Holiday
August 10, 2021	Hijri New Year	
September 16, 2021	Martyr's Day	
December 24, 2021	Libyan elections / Independence Day	

## Assessment

### Political Developments

#### No budget, no constitution and stalling of CBL unification

This week has seen a flurry of political activity as the country heads towards the Eid al-Adha holiday which will dominate next week. Despite increased levels of activity, there have been no breakthroughs and the process still remains at risk of unravelling. The constitution remains elusive, the budget remains stalled, and the reunification of the CBL has already hit a major hurdle.

### Military Developments

#### LNA: Haftar facing court proceedings in the US

Preliminary hearings are due for three civil war crimes trials against Khalifa Haftar in Virginia, US. According to the plaintiffs' lawyers, Haftar's connections and properties in Virginia give the federal court jurisdiction to prosecute. The families are seeking up to \$85 million in damages from Haftar and his two sons, Khalid and Saddam. A preliminary hearing will take place on July 21 for two of the complaints. A pretrial hearing will take place on August 04 for the third trial, brought by relatives of Msaddek Tunalli, who was killed in a bombing in Tripoli in 2019.

### Coronavirus

Cases have continued to spike in Libya with 17,405 cases this week compared to 9,767 last week. Associated deaths still remain low, in single figures daily, with the Minister of Health stating that while numbers of cases have shot up, the virus is not as dangerous. The border with Tunisia remains closed with no indications as to when it might reopen. Misrata's health infrastructure is coming under pressure with infections amongst medical staff as well as a collapse in the oxygen supply. Although some additional measures have been implemented by the GNU to try and slow the increase, these are not widely adhered to at present and vaccine uptake remains low in the country.

# Regional Assessment

## Tripolitania Region

### Significant Incidents

- SAF - Jul 11 17:00, Az Zawiyah Province, Zawiyah Oil Refinery Road: The Caboat militia opened fire on Omar Shagan militia (SSA).
- Armed Clash - Jul 11 17:30, Az Zawiyah Province, Zawiyah Oil Refinery Road: Clashes erupted between the Caboat / Al Far militias and Omar Shagan / Qasab militias.
- Mass Grave - Jul 12, Al-Murqub Province, Tarhunah: Two new mass graves have been found in the Agricultural Project area of Tarhunah. These are the latest mass graves found near the city since Kani Brigade was ousted in mid-2020.
- Prisoner Escape - Jul 12 15:00, Sirte Province, Sirte: Two prisoners escaped from prison in the Al-Sabha area of Sirte. Local reports suggest they may have bribed the guards.
- Crime - Jul 13 20:00, Nalut Province, Dirj: The Department of Desert Patrols intercepted a truck at a checkpoint being driven by a Libyan national transporting illegal immigrants along the Dirj to Qaryat road across the Algerian border. All the migrants were transferred to the Jabal Akhdar Coastal Security Directorate "for legal proceedings."
- Kidnap - Jul 14 00:30, Tripoli Province, Tripoli: Ahmed Bakr Milad, who works for the Ministry of Youth, was beaten and kidnapped from outside his home. He was released on July 16.
- Security Operation - Jul 14 14:30, Al-Jafara Province, Nasiriyah: 155 Battalion (LNA) launched an operation against alleged drug, prostitution, and human trafficking locations. A number of arrests and seizures were made and 20 victims of human trafficking of various African nationalities were rescued.
- Kidnap - Jul 14 15:30, Tripoli Province, Asaba'a: Reports indicate that an individual was targeted in a suspected kidnapping by an armed group from a café with reports of SAF involved.
- Kidnap - Jul 14 17:30, Al-Jabal Al-Gharbi Province, Ash Shwayrif: 28 Egyptian workers were kidnapped for ransom.
- Troop Movements - Jul 15, Al-Jabal Al-Gharbi Province, Ash Shwayrif: Unconfirmed reports suggest 128 Battalion (LNA) may have deployed some assets to Ash Shwayrif.
- Kidnap - Jul 15 13:30, Tripoli Province, Wadi Alrabea: An armed gang forced entry to a farm and kidnapped the wife of an African farm worker. They also stole a number of sheep.
- Troop Movements - Jul 15 15:00, Al-Murqub Province, Tarhunah: 444 Combat Unit mobilised with heavy military equipment to Tarhunah and Bani Walid. The deployment saw 3000 combat soldiers mobilized from Tripoli to Tarhunah and Bani Walid as part of a "rapid intervention exercise."
- Kidnap - Jul 16 12:50, Al-Jafara Province, Warshefana: A criminal gang kidnapped a man along Dairy Factory Road.
- Armed Clash - Jul 16 13:00, Tripoli Province, Najila: 55 Battalion clashed with an armed gang who had kidnapped a man on Dairy Factory Road. The victim was freed and the perpetrator's vehicle seized.
- Kidnap - Jul 16 16:30, Tripoli Province, Tripoli: An unidentified female driving was chased and then kidnapped from the side of the road by armed men in an unmarked Toyota. The incident was filmed by passers-by which showed the victim screaming as she was forced into the car.
- Arrest - Jul 17, Tripoli Province, Ghut al-Shaal: The Ghut al-Shaal Police Station arrested a gang and charged them with defrauding citizens in financial transactions. The arrests came after dozens of citizens filed complaints. The gang had allegedly hired commercial premises in Seyaheyya for a "dummy company." After advertising on social media, they stole credit card information then closed the company.
- SAF - Jul 17, Az Zawiyah Province, Surman: Unidentified perpetrators shot indiscriminately near the Al Keep Mosque.
- Arrest - Jul 17 15:50, Tripoli Province, Alakwakh: A Libyan national was arrested/ kidnapped by an armed group.
- Other - Jul 17 17:00, Misrata Province, Misrata: The body of a foreign soldier was found in a hotel room with unconfirmed reports he was Turkish. NFDK.

- Armed Robbery - Jul 17 17:00, Al-Jabal Al-Gharbi Province, Ash Shwayrif: A Libyan national was targeted in an armed robbery resulting in the shooting of one of the perpetrators.
- Assault - Jul 17 18:30, Al-Jabal Al-Gharbi Province, Ash Shwayrif: A resident of Qatrun was physically assaulted.
- SAF - Jul 17 22:00, Nuqat Al-Khams Province, Ajaylat: A group from the Ben Zaied family opened fire on Moma Belghait, a member of Ammar Belkhour militia. Belghait survived.
- Armed Clash - Jul 17 23:00, Az Zawiyah Province, Surman: An armed clash between tribal groups took place.
- Armed Clash - Jul 17 23:00, Nuqat Al-Khams Province, Ruwais al-Tifla: Ammar Belkour and Al Meshergi mobilized forces and attacked Ruwais al-Tifla following the earlier SAF attack against Moma Belghait, a member of Ammar Belkour militia. Three members of Ammar Belkour were wounded as was one from the Ben Zaied family.

## Cyrenaica Region

### Significant Incidents

- Demonstration - Jul 11 13:30, Benghazi Province, Buhadi: The demolition of illegal shops by the Agricultural Police led to protests and route closures.
- Demonstration - Jul 11 14:00, Al-Butnan Province, Hariga Port: Locals protested in front of the Hariga Oil Port to demand employment.
- SAF - Jul 13 14:00, Al-Butnan Province, Tobruk: SAF was reported near the HoR building as budget talks resumed.
- Assault - Jul 13 17:00, Benghazi Province, Benina Airport: LNA forces assaulted Colonel Walid Al-Abbar as he waited at Benina Airport for the arrival of Osama Bouhlaq and Salah Bulgheb.
- Murder/ Execution - Jul 13 17:00, Benghazi Province, Al-Berka: Chief Sergeant Idriss Tawergi Mandela of 166 Brigade was assassinated by unknown perpetrators.
- Troop Movements - Jul 14, Kufra Province, Tazirbu: An armed convoy was seen in the area with reports it had evacuated the Umm Al-Aranib, Murzuq and Qatrun area due to the recent LNA deployments into the area.
- Troop Movements - Jul 14, Al-Wahat Province, Jalu: An armed convoy was seen in the area with reports it had evacuated the Umm Al-Aranib, Murzuq and Qatrun area due to the recent LNA deployments into the area.

## Fezzan Region

### Significant Incidents

- Armed Attack - Jul 11, Sabha Province, Nasriya: The home of a Libyan national was attacked in retaliation for the murder the previous day of a man in the Secondary Neighbourhood.
- Accident - Jul 11 03:00, Sabha Province, Sabha Station 18KM: A fire was reported at Sabha Station 18KM.
- Kidnap - Jul 11 13:00, Al-Jufra Province, Hun: A Libyan national was kidnapped. Their body was later found in a well with gunshot wounds.
- SAF - Jul 11 13:30, Sabha Province, Secondary Neighbourhood: A drive-by shooting took place carried out by a perpetrator mobile in a dark-coloured Verna. The perpetrator then fled to the Mahdia area. The perpetrator was the cousin of someone later involved in armed clashes in the Bardi and Secondary Neighbourhood areas.
- Armed Clash - Jul 11 14:00, Sabha Province, Bardi: An argument led to clashes near the al-Madar Company building.
- Armed Clash - Jul 11 14:30, Sabha Province, Secondary Neighbourhood: Earlier clashes around the al-Madar building led to further clashes amongst the same groups.
- Troop Movements - Jul 11 21:00, Wadi Al-Hayaa Province, Obari: The LNA General Command has deployed forces to Obari as part of the Southern Region Security Plan.
- Carjacking - Jul 11 21:00, Sabha Province, Abdul Kafi: An armed carjacking took place on agricultural road.

- Kidnap - Jul 12 17:00, Wadi Al-Hayaa Province, Obari: Six children are believed to have been kidnapped by unidentified perpetrators.
- Sabotage - Jul 13, Wadi Al-Shatii Province, Hasawna: The GMMR announced that well no.241 in the western field had been "permanently and totally put out of service" after unknown assailants "attacked and destroyed it."
- Armed Robbery - Jul 13 11:00, Wadi Al-Hayaa Province, Kfhfakhah: An attempted armed robbery on a bank in the Kfhfakhah area resulted in the shooting of an individual. The attack occurred shortly after the bank had had a delivery of cash.
- Troop Movements - Jul 13 11:30, Al-Jufra Province, Hun: Troops from 99 Brigade of Martyrs of the South, 110 Battalion (LNA) deployed to Hun.
- Troop Movements - Jul 13 15:30, Murzuq Province, Murzuq: Troops from the Tareq Bin Ziyad Battalion deployed to Murzuq in "coordination with the town's residents."
- Troop Movements - Jul 13 19:00, Ghat Province, Ghat: Troops from 128 Brigade (LNA) deployed to Ghat to secure the Algerian border as part of the LNA Southern Region Security Plan.
- Murder/ Execution - Jul 13 23:30, Wadi Al-Hayaa Province, Obari: An unknown person was shot near the traffic and licensing department building by an unknown perpetrator.
- Troop Movements - Jul 14, Sabha Province, Sabha: Reports indicate that 116 Battalion has been expelled from the Maison de la Culture in Sabha. The location has been handed over to the Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development.
- Troop Movements - Jul 15, Wadi Al-Shatii Province, Brak al-Shati Airbase: Unconfirmed reports suggest 110 Battalion (LNA) declared a state of emergency and full mobilisation at Brak Shati Airbase (LNA).
- Murder/ Execution - Jul 16 21:30, Murzuq Province, Umm Al-Aranib: A member of the Tebu was reportedly murdered.
- Arson - Jul 16 22:00, Murzuq Province, Umm Al-Aranib: The homes of those connected to the murder of a member of the Tebu earlier in the evening were set ablaze.
- Armed Attack - Jul 17 00:30, Wadi Al-Hayaa Province, Obari: An armed gang mobile in two vehicles attacked the Commercial Bank. Two guards were injured, one critically. It is unclear if the attack was an attempted armed robbery.
- Murder/ Execution - Jul 17 17:00, Sabha Province, Bardi: A Libyan national was shot and killed.
- Armed Attack - Jul 17 17:30, Sabha Province, Bardi: A tribal group mobile in a Hyundai Verna mounted an armed attack on the alleged perpetrators of an earlier murder in the same area.

## Offshore

- Rescue - Jul 16 15:45, Libyan Territorial Waters, Undetermined Territorial West: The FEZZAN coastguard vessel rescued 51 migrants after receiving a distress call from a rubber boat trying to cross to Europe. The migrants were taken to Tripoli Naval Base and handed over to the Anti-Illegal Migration Agency.



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# Acronym List

AQ - Al-Qaeda  
BAM – Al Bunyan Al Marsous (Misratan-led)  
BDB – Benghazi Defense Brigade / Saraya Defend Benghazi (SDB) (Al Qaeda-aligned – AAS and RSCB associated/umbrella group)  
CBL – Central Bank of Libya  
CNI – Critical National Infrastructure  
DACOCT - Deterrence Apparatus for Combating Organized Crime and Terrorism  
DDR - Disarmament, demobilising and reintegration  
DF – Direct Fire  
DPF – Derna Protection Force (an amalgamation of all militias in Derna, including the MSCD)  
GECOL – General Electricity Company of Libya  
GMMR – Great Man-made River  
GNA – Government of National Accord (2016)  
GNC – General National Congress (2012)  
GNU – Government of National Unity (2021)  
GTUC - Greater Tripoli Union Council (Tripoli militias and others, established in June 2020)  
HNEC – High National Elections Commission  
HoR – House of Representatives (Tobruk-based)  
IDF – Indirect Fire (mortars/rockets)  
IDP - Internally Displaced Persons  
IED - Improvised Explosive Device  
IOC - International Oil Company  
IS - Islamic State  
LIFG – Libyan Islamic Fighting Group  
LNA – Libyan National Army  
LNG – Libyan National Guard  
LPA – Libyan Political Agreement (2015)  
LPDF - Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (2020)  
LROR - Libyan Revolutionary Operations Room  
MoD - Ministry of Defense  
MoF - Ministry of Finance  
MoFA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
MoHE - Ministry of Higher Education  
MoI - Ministry of Interior  
MoJ - Ministry of Justice  
MoO - Ministry of Oil  
MoT - Ministry of Transportation  
MSCD – Mujahideen Shura Council of Derna (AQ aligned)  
NFDK - No Further Details Known  
NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation (aid/charity)  
NOC – National Oil Company  
NSG – National Salvation Government (GNC)  
NSTR - Nothing Significant To Report  
PC – Presidency Council (GNA)  
PG – Presidential Guard  
PFG- Petroleum Facilities Guard  
RPG - Rocket Propelled Grenade  
RSCB - Revolutionary Shura Council of Benghazi  
RTA - Road Traffic Accident  
SAF - Small Arms Fire  
SDB – Saraya Defend Benghazi / Benghazi Defense Brigade (BDB) (Al Qaeda-aligned – AAS and RSCB associated/umbrella group)  
SDF – Rada Deterrence Force/ Special Deterrence Force/ Rada  
Technical - An improvised weapon-mounted pick-up truck  
TPF – Tripoli Protection Force (TRB, Nawasi 8 Force, Bab Tajoura Brigade and Ghneiwa umbrella group, established in December 2018)  
UXO - Unexploded Ordnance

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