

Libya Weekly Operational Preview

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Outlook

Short Term Outlook

- The power contest continues and may become more elongated, prompting the east to start showing their frustration. The Government of National Stability (GNS) is continuing to focus on expanding its international and domestic support base and while indications suggest this is having some success, it has not yet manifested on the ground. The Government of National Unity (GNU) meanwhile continues to ensconce itself in Tripoli and risks polarizing the situation by moving closer to hardliners in Tripolitania.
- Recent events within the O&G sphere have shown that this key economic sector is likely to be increasingly utilized in order to gain leverage against the GNU. The calling of a Force Majeure on sites throughout the south and east, could potentially cut off funding for the GNU with the aim of undermining its financially dependent populist policies, thereby resulting in its removal and replacement by the GNS. Although this is claimed under the name of local groups, such activity would not be possible without the explicit support of the LNA within areas under its control.
- The current political instability has further empowered armed groups in Tripolitania with many securing additional revenue and positions in return for their support. This is in turn driving local competition between the groups. With the GNU relying more on armed groups for its survival, it is becoming less able to exert any level of control over them. These combining issues are helping to destabilise the security situation in the capital and surrounding areas.

Medium to Long Term Outlook

- Libya has once again entered a likely extended period of political uncertainty with the establishment of a second government. At present, neither appears to have the overwhelming advantage and both suffer from significant legitimacy issues. It remains unclear who will prevail at this point, or whether the country will settle back into a two-government system. Either way, the situation will lead to increased tensions and invites armed conflict as a way for either side to force their position on the other.
- The International Community has largely remained neutral so far. There remains the potential for some meaningful shifts with respect to Libya over 2022 as various states react to the evolving situation inside the country and in Europe as well as navigating rapprochements in the Middle East and Europe between previously hostile nations. UNSMIL's ability to mediate has reduced following the collapse of the LPDF process which has given way to a fractured environment where any rules or norms are significantly challenged or ignored entirely as domestic various actors pursue their own agendas.
- Terrorist groups remain active but contained in Libya. Islamic State (IS) will continue to present a threat to security forces, primarily in the south and may remain capable of mounting sporadic attacks along the coastline in the future. The group continues to suffer from years of attrition and is more likely focused on providing support for more active IS theatres in sub-Saharan Africa. Al-Qaeda aligned groups remain active in the country with some enjoying notable legitimacy in Tripoli.

Threat Matrix

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

Threat Scale

Minimal

Low

Moderate

High

Extreme

Key Dates

Date	Occasion	Comment
July 08, 2022	Arafat Day	Public Holiday
July 09 - 11, 2022	Eid al-Adha	Public Holiday
July 30, 2022	Islamic New Year	Public Holiday
September 16, 2022	Martyr's Day	Public Holiday

Executive Summary

Political Developments

- In a speech, marking the occasion of Eid al-Fitr, PM (GNS) Bashagha, announced the launch of his new initiative called 'national dialogue.' Bashagha outlined that he envisages the initiative as bringing together all parties to reach a national consensus that consolidates the government with broad participation. Bashagha also reiterated once again that the GNS is representative of all Libyans and continues to reject violence for any reason. **COMMENT:** The speech was in line with the current narrative from the GNS of the rejection of
- In an open letter to the British newspaper, The Times, PM (GNS) Bashagha asked for British help in expelling Wagner Group, at proclaimed 'that Libya, too, is a frontline in this fight with Russia.' The letter was later branded as fake by Bashagha, however, the Times then reconfirmed that the letter had been confirmed through his (Bashagha's) office prior to publication.
- The spokesman for the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Stephane Dujarric, confirmed that the finding of a Special Representative for Libya remains a very high priority for the UN.
- The spokesman of the HoR, Abdullah Bleihig, has announced a sitting of the HoR on May 09 in Tobruk. During the session, the GNS budget will be presented for discussion and a subsequent vote taken.
- Following speculation, PM (GNS) Bashagha announced that the GNS would be establishing itself in Sirte as it was not possible to enter Tripoli peacefully. Bashagha described Sirte as a suitable location as it was 'relatively neutral and is hostility free.'

Security Developments

- On May 02 a prison break was reported at Mellitah prison, located midway between Sabratah and Zuwara. The escape followed an outbreak of unrest at the facility when one guard was killed. Reports initially varied on the number of escapees but were later confirmed as 151. To date, it is believed that 72 have been recaptured, primarily in the Zawiyah and Sabratah areas. Despite initial reporting indicating the escape of IS prisoners, this was later dispelled as sensationalist media reporting and social media hype with those that escaped having been held on criminal, civil and illegal immigration charges.
- Unconfirmed sources report clashes between the LNA's 110th Battalion and suspected IS in the Maradah area. As a result of the clashes, 110th Battalion reportedly increased its presence in the Sirte Oil Basin area.
- A recent report from Amnesty International has highlighted the role of the SSA, and specifically Abdel Ghani al-Kikli (Gheinwa) and Lofti al-Harari, in 'unlawful killings, arbitrary detentions, interception and subsequent arbitrary detention of migrants and refugees, torture, forced labour, and other shocking human rights violations and crimes under international law.' The report heavily criticizes the legitimising of armed group leaders by their inclusion on the state payroll, resulting in their empowerment and entrenched immunity. The SSA later released a statement refuting the findings of the report and threatening legal action against Amnesty International.
- Clashes were reported overnight on 04/05 Apr in the Zawiyah area. The clashes were between SSA (Hassan Abuzriba) and 1st Support Division (al Far). Unconfirmed reporting also indicates that personnel under Mohamed al-Kashlaf (Al Qasab) were involved in the fighting on the side of the SSA. The clash resulted in the burning of two vehicles belonging to Al-Far in the area of Omar al-Mukhtar roundabout, with damage to the electricity infrastructure.

Assessment

Overview

This week has seen a partial and temporary easing of the oil blockade, with Repsol reporting the resumption of limited production on Sharara oilfield (70,000 bpd of a 300,000 bpd capacity). Zueitina port also saw the loading of at least two tankers, however, this was following a request from the NOC which called on limited export to be undertaken to prevent the structural failure of oil storage tanks and an environmental disaster. The port was declared as closed following the departure of the two tankers. Despite these seemingly positive developments, the deadlock is set to continue as the primary demand of the 'social groups' that present the public face of the blockade, is the installment of the GNS in Tripoli. Given that this is not likely to occur in the short to medium term the oil blockade is set to continue unless some form of negotiated settlement can be reached that would appease the LNA, who are clearly the true instigators.

Political activity was limited during the week and generally consisted of speeches from PM(GNU) Dbeibah and PM(GNS) Bashagha marking the occasion of Eid. The speeches were mainly a restating of current positions, with Dbeibah continuing his narrative of elections in June, and Bashagha calling for the GNU to stand aside and promoting the GNS as a government of all Libyan people. Expectation has increased of some type of political development upon the conclusion of the Eid holidays. Statements from Bashagha initially indicated a change of position with regard to the physical location of the GNS. To date Bashagha has resisted the temptation to establish the GNS in a location outside Tripoli, preferring to portray the GNS as a government in waiting, denied its rightful position by the intransigence of the GNU. However, this policy had a shelf life, and following two months in locational limbo, Bashagha announced that the GNS would establish itself in Sirte which has the benefit of a geographically central location and remains under the protection of the LNA.

Clashes resumed in the northwestern coastal region, with fighting between 1st Support Division and elements of the SSA under Hassan Abuzriba. Unconfirmed reporting also indicates that personnel under Mohamed al-Kashlaf (Al Qasab) were involved in the fighting on the side of the SSA. The clash

resulted in the burning of two vehicles belonging to Al-Far in the area of Omar al-Mukhtar roundabout, with damage to the electricity infrastructure.

Political Developments

Bashagha Appeals for British Help to Remove Foreign Fighters

In an open letter to the British newspaper, The Times, PM (GNS) Bashagha asked for British help at expelling Wagner Group, at proclaimed 'that Libya, too, is a frontline in this fight with Russia.' On several occasions Bashagha compared current and past events over the last decade to ongoing events in Ukraine, likening the presence of Wagner group, and the destruction they have caused to a foreign incursion. He reiterated that upon taking the position of PM (GNS) he had pledged to rid the country of all foreign mercenaries and looked to the UK as a key partner in this venture. He added that this should be a strategic partnership, based on 'business, security and shared intelligence.' Bashagha also played on the potential of Libya to be an alternative supplier of oil and gas to the European market vowing that 'we will help to ween the world off Russian oil.' He ended the letter by claiming that 'my government (GNS) is ready to work with you – it is your only viable partner.'

The situation then took a turn of the bizarre, with Bashagha claiming that he did not write the article and labelled the report as 'fake news.' **COMMENT:** The comment from Bashagha denying involvement in the letter was released on Twitter, with the Bashagha labelling the report with the now routine 'fake news.' The details of the matter are not, and are unlikely to be clarified, however, the likelihood of the Times publishing a letter from Bashagha, or the office of Bashagha, without verifying its authenticity seems remote. The vilification of Russian actions in Ukraine by Bashagha in the piece may have prompted a backlash from the LNA elite, due to their closeness to the Russian government, and the relationship between Haftar and Putin, although this has at times been tested. While speculative, it is considered unlikely that Bashagha did not at least have knowledge of the piece prior to its publication. Therefore, he may have simply miscalculated the response that the letter was likely to generate from the LNA and has adopted the 'fake news' default defence. **COMMENT ENDS.**

Finally, this issue was then once again addressed by the Times, who stated that they had confirmed the veracity of the letter with the office of Bashagha before its publication, with no response being forthcoming from Bashagha.

Bashagha Speech in Sirte

At an event in Sirte on May 04, PM(GNS) Bashagha gave a speech to mark the special Eid al-Fitr greeting. Bashagha reiterated that the GNS was the government of 'all Libyans' and that it aimed to improve services, lift the injustice and reunite Libyans from the three regions.

GNS Presents its Proposed Budget to the HCS

The GNS has referred its budget bill to the HCS for their study before its presentation to the HoR on May 09. Despite pledges to keep the budget 'small' the total is similar to that of the initial GNU budget (111 billion LYD, later amended to 81 billion LYD) with a total proposal of 94 billion LYD. The amount has once again brought criticism, given that the GNS is a transitional government. Of the 94 billion, approximately 41 billion LYD is for state salaries and would include the unified salary scale bringing the average ninth-grade government employee to a monthly salary of 1,159 LYD. Notably, the budget also included a pledge 'to support young people socially by providing marriage and housing grants.' The grants, implemented by Dbeibah had been labelled as populist and unaffordable by the HoR, however, the GNS will have realised to now withdraw the grants would be extremely unpopular with the under 30's age demographic.

Regional Assessment

Tripolitania Region

Significant Incidents

Tripoli Province

- Security Operation - May 01 23:00, Tripoli Province, Tripoli: The GACS were reported as conducting static security operations throughout the greater Tripoli area.
- Other - May 02, Tripoli Province, Edraiby: The evacuation of the al-Falah camp housing Tawergha was reported. The evacuation was conducted due to threats against the occupants of the camp with a threat of an armed attack against the location if it had not been vacated by the second day of Eid.
- Troop Movements - May 02 10:00, Tripoli Province, Tripoli Port: Multiple sources report the delivery and subsequent movement of a large number of armoured vehicles by RADA. The vehicles had been intercepted in early March by LNA naval forces but were reportedly released under an agreement between Abdel Raouf Kara and Saddam Haftar.
- Murder/ Execution - May 03, Tripoli Province, Ghut al-Shaal: A body of a member of the GSS was recovered from his burnt-out patrol vehicle.
- SAF - May 03 06:55, Tripoli Province, Janzour: SAF was reported at the Dawadi intersection.
- CP/ Roadblock - May 03 19:00, Tripoli Province, Ghut al-Shaal: The GSS reportedly blocked routes at the Ghiran Traffic Island Bridge in a possible response to the earlier killing of a GSS member.
- Security Operation - May 04 1072464:00, Tripoli Province, Kremiya: The GACS Tripoli Branch was reported as conducting mobile and static security operations.
- Kidnap - May 06, Tripoli Province, CP 17: Unconfirmed sources report the abduction of a local Janzour Knights commander named as Tariq Baza close to Bridge 17.
- Murder/ Execution - May 06 12:00, Tripoli Province, Ain Zara: The body of a police officer was located in the Ain Zara bridge area.

Az Zawiyah Province

- Arrest - May 01, Az Zawiyah Province, Sabratah: Sabratah Security Directorate arrested an individual accused of facilitating the movements of 20 Egyptian nationals.
- Arrest - May 01, Az Zawiyah Province, Surman: The Security Directorate Support Force (Western Branch) reported the arrest of 86 migrants who were preparing to depart Libya by sea.
- SAF - May 01 20:00, Az Zawiyah Province, Sabratah: Suspected IS reportedly fired at two individuals at the Andalusia intersection in Sabratah.
- Arrest - May 03 15:30, Az Zawiyah Province, Sabratah: Nine escapees from the Mellitah Prison break were recaptured in the Sabratah area.
- Arrest - May 04, Az Zawiyah Province, Sabratah: Sabratah Security Directorate intercepted a migrant smuggling operation and arrested a number of migrants. One boat, five vehicles, fuel and a generator were also seized.
- Armed Clash - May 05 02:30, Az Zawiyah Province, Zawiyah: An armed clash was reported between 1st Support Division (al Far) and SSA western branch. The clashes did see negotiations involving local elders and resulted in the destruction of electricity related infrastructure.
- Murder/ Execution - May 06 18:00, Az Zawiyah Province, Zawiyah: A body was recovered in the Bir Ezz el Din area.

Misrata Province

- CP/ Roadblock - May 03 09:50, Misrata Province, Misrata: Unconfirmed reporting indicated that an armed actor closed the Abutra traffic island, south-westwards towards the Qazaz area, with SAF also reported. Reportedly this caused the Joint Operations Force to withdraw from the area.

Sirte Province

- Arrest - May 04 12:30, Sirte Province, Sirte: Masked security forces allegedly arrested/detained several members of the Qadhadfa tribe following protests in Sirte. The arrests were reportedly conducted with the approval of the local security directorate.
Demonstration - May 05, Sirte Province, As Sidra: Workers at As Sidra port conducted a demonstration calling for the dismissal of the port director, Mahmoud al-Shawsh, accusing him of abusing employees and exceeding his authority.

Nuqat al-Khams Province

- Security Operation - May 02, Nuqat Al-Khams Province, Ras Ajdir: The GACS Ras Ajdir office was reported as conducting static security operations and conducting several arrests.
- Arrest - May 02, Nuqat Al-Khams Province, Zuwara: The Western Desert Security Directorate reported 15 arrests of escapees from Mellitah Prison. Operations to locate and arrest the remainder remain ongoing.
- Prisoner Escape - May 02 10:25, Nuqat Al-Khams Province, Tawela: A prison break was reported following a riot in Mellitah prison with reports that one guard was killed and an armoured vehicle stolen.
- Armed Clash - May 05 01:30, Nuqat Al-Khams Province, Shabika: Armed clashes were reported in the Shabika area west of Ajaylat.

Cyrenaica Region

Significant Incidents

Benghazi Province

- Murder/ Execution - May 01 20:00, Al-Marj Province, Marj: The body of a local national was recovered from the shoreline. The individual was one of two who went missing from al-Marj on Apr 30.
- Other - May 02, Al-Wahat Province, Zueitina: The Force Majeure was temporarily lifted on Zueitina port to allow the export of oil currently held in storage and reduce the risk of an environmental incident.
- Armed Clash - May 03, Al-Wahat Province, Maradah: A clash between 110th Battalion elements and alleged IS was reported in the Maradah area. Unconfirmed sources report the use of IDF.
- Security Operation - May 03, Al-Wahat Province, Maradah: A deployment of 110th Battalion to oil field areas was reported following the earlier clashes with suspected IS elements.
- Arrest - May 04 21:30, Benghazi Province, Benghazi: Benghazi CID reportedly arrested the manager of the Benghazi mal on charges of disturbing the public order after he hosted a mixed gender party that was deemed to have contradicted Libyan traditions and the teachings of Islam,

Fezzan Region

Sabha Province

- Troop Movements - May 01 21:30, Sabha Province, Tamanhint: LNA TBZ were reported as reinforcing their numbers in Tamanhint airbase with approximately 150 armed vehicles. The force is reported to be used in combatting illegal immigration, drug trafficking and counterterrorism.
- Murder/ Execution - May 03, Sabha Province, Bardi: A member of the Hassawna tribe was shot and killed in a targeted attack.
- SAF - May 04 03:30, Sabha Province, Mansheya: SAF was reported in the area of Ramla Mosque.
- Armed Robbery - May 06, Sabha Province, Sabha: An attempted armed robbery was reported against three African nationals. The crime was thwarted when the would-be victims opened fire on their attackers.

Wadi Al-Hayaa Province

- Security Operation - May 01 03:00, Wadi Al-Hayaa Province, Obari: 3 Bn of 128 Bde were reported as conducting static security operations.
- Security Operation - May 03, Wadi Al-Hayaa Province, Sharara Oilfield: 218th Battalion of 128 Brigade was reported as conducting operations in the wider Sharara area.

Ghat Province

- Arrest - May 06 05:00, Ghat Province, Libya - Algeria Border: A group of Libyans was arrested in the border area by Algerian forces. The individuals are believed to have been in Algerian territory.

Wadi Al-Shatii Province

- Armed Robbery - May 06, Wadi Al-Shatii Province, Mahruqah: A suspected fatal armed robbery targeted the wife of a senior member of the Internal Security Service.

Offshore

Significant Incidents

- Rescue - May 04, Offshore, Offshore: Twenty Migrants were rescued by the Libyan Coastguard northwest of Zuwara.
- Rescue - May 06, Offshore, Offshore: A group of 17 migrants were rescued by Turkish Naval Forces and disembarked at Khoms Naval base.
- Rescue - May 07, Offshore, Offshore: The Libyan Coastguard rescued 20 migrants off the shore from Zuwara.



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Acronym List

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
CESF - Constitution and Election Support Force
CNI – Critical National Infrastructure
DACOCT - Deterrence Apparatus for Combating Organized Crime and Terrorism (SDF)
DDR - Disarmament, demobilising and reintegration
DF – Direct Fire
GASO – General Administration of Security Operations
GACS – General Administration of Central Support
GECOL – General Electricity Company of Libya
GMMR – Great Man-made River
GNA – Government of National Accord (2016)
GNC – General National Congress (2012)
GNS – Government of National Stability
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
JMC – Joint Military Commission
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
MoI - Ministry of Interior
MoJ - Ministry of Justice
MoO - Ministry of Oil
MoT - Ministry of Transportation
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
P3+2 – France, Germany, Italy – UK, US
PC – Presidency Council (GNA)
PG – Presidential Guard
PFG - Petroleum Facilities Guard
RPG - Rocket Propelled Grenade
RTA - Road Traffic Accident
SSA – Stability Support Authority
SAF - Small Arms Fire
SDB – Saraya Defend Benghazi / 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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