

1. The Big Picture

GNA offensive on Tarhunah amid mounting pressure on LNA to retaliate

Combat escalated in Libya's west this week after Government of National Accord (GNA) forces launched an offensive from multiple axes on Tarhunah, the Libyan National Army's (LNA) forward operating base southeast of Tripoli. GNA forces capitalized on the military momentum from the attacks on Sabratah and Surman on 13 April. LNA forces led by Khalifa Haftar are yet to retaliate, despite a limited counteroffensive across Tripoli's frontlines, where positions remain relatively unchanged.

While Tarhunah remains under LNA control, GNA forces briefly reached northern areas within the town's administrative boundaries. Capturing Tarhunah is a strenuous task given the mountainous terrain in the area and strong tribal component hostile to the GNA. However, if GNA forces maintain their offensive momentum with Turkish air cover in the medium term, LNA forces could be forced into a defensive posture.

Overall, recent developments in the Libyan combat theatre confirm Ankara's engagement has propped up the GNA, but it remains too early to speak of a "complete reversal" of the military balance on the ground. The recent losses have undoubtedly raised the pressure on LNA forces. A documented lack of unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) strikes to repel the GNA's offensive on Tarhunah, specifically in areas between Tripoli and Tarhunah, has led to speculation Turkey's electronic jamming capabilities are acting as a deterrent.

The LNA is facing pressure not only to respond to the GNA-Turkey manoeuvres but to do so rapidly. With Ramadan approaching and the spread of the coronavirus, fighters' morale will likely take a hit. A purported audio recording by Khalifa Haftar was transmitted via UHF radio directly to LNA fighters across frontlines. In the recording, Haftar can be heard raising morale and calling for steadfastness.

Meanwhile, the LNA is placing greater emphasis on efforts to defuse internal tensions between tribes and armed factions. Absent a significant counteroffensive from the LNA, there is a possibility tensions will grow within the eastern federalist/separatist movement calling for Libyan men from Barqa to withdraw from the western region and return home. The LNA's efforts to defuse internal tensions were evident in the high-profile funeral of the three helicopter pilots and crew members killed in Abugrein by GNA forces on 12 April. The funeral was attended by senior LNA figures, including Air Force Chief of Staff (CoS) Saqr Al-Geroushi, in Al-Marj on 18 April.

In a separate development, reports indicate the LNA is attempting to maintain Werfalla's tribal support in Bani Walid after recent losses. A tribal delegation from Bani Walid reportedly visited Misrata over the past few days. While details related to the meeting are limited, pro-LNA accounts claim an agreement was struck between

municipal councils to facilitate the entry of GNA forces via Dufan checkpoint, south of Misrata. The tensions would help explain why Mahmoud Al-Werfalli, a controversial pro-LNA commander under international sanctions, was spotted across Bani Walid frontlines with the LNA's 128 Infantry Battalion. Al-Werfalli only recently arrived in Bani Walid, according to local reports. Al-Werfalli has been a central figure in the LNA's push to obtain the buy-in of the Werfalla tribe.

For their part, Turkey and the GNA face challenges that could undermine recent gains. The Islamist-led offensive on Surman and Sabratah on 13 April has long-term implications on the GNA's public image and credibility. Regaining positions West of Tripoli is a double-edged sword for the GNA. The documented involvement of prominent Benghazi Revolutionaries Shura Council (BRSC) members and notorious Islamist militia commanders in the offensive is a liability. The challenge for the GNA, and specifically Interior Minister Fathi Bashagha, is ensuring the recent Surman and Sabratah episodes have not empowered hardliners to the point of no return.

Meanwhile, as most fighting is conducted in the air, Turkey will likely seek to deploy more advanced air defence systems to push into the Western region. Turkish defence experts speculate Ankara will likely deploy the HISAR-O surface to air (SAM) system to expand its targeting range in line with the long-term objective to establish a presence across Libya's entire western region.

But it is far from an easy task. Ankara is facing pressure at home to justify the rising cost of the campaign in Libya, especially after reported deaths among the Turkish servicemen deployed in-country and heavy losses among Syrian fighters. These cost considerations are important because if Turkish losses were to increase as a result of retaliation/escalation by the LNA's backers, Ankara would be forced to revisit its cost to benefit calculations in Libya to avoid mission creep.

The operation is proving more expensive for Ankara than the LNA's foreign backers due to the simple fact that Egypt has a land corridor with the LNA, making it easier to supply Haftar's forces. The second factor driving up costs for Turkey is related to its official involvement under an agreement with the GNA as opposed to the covert support by LNA backers. Ankara's operations in Libya are therefore under the spotlight and face additional scrutiny from the international community. But on the other side of the coin, the fact that Ankara is engaged in a conventional way means it can double down on its support for the GNA while knowing that LNA backers are unlikely to acknowledge their involvement and will continue to utilize proxies.

KEY POINTS

- Coronavirus cases reach 51; GNA full curfew
- LNA under pressure to retaliate & defuse tensions
- GNA recent gains tarnished by Islamist elements



CONTENTS

- 1 **THE BIG PICTURE**
GNA offensive on Tarhunah amid mounting pressure on LNA to retaliate
- 2 **NATIONWIDE SECURITY**
Events, Analysis and Data
- 3 **SECURITY BY NUMBERS**
Charts, Statistics and Analysis
- 4 **TRIPOLI REPORT**
News & Neighborhoods
- 5 **BENGHAZI REPORT**
News & Neighborhoods
- 6 **WHAT'S NEXT**
Forward Looking Expert Opinions

2. National Security Map

GNA regains control over key western coastline cities; LNA retaliates with airstrikes & shelling

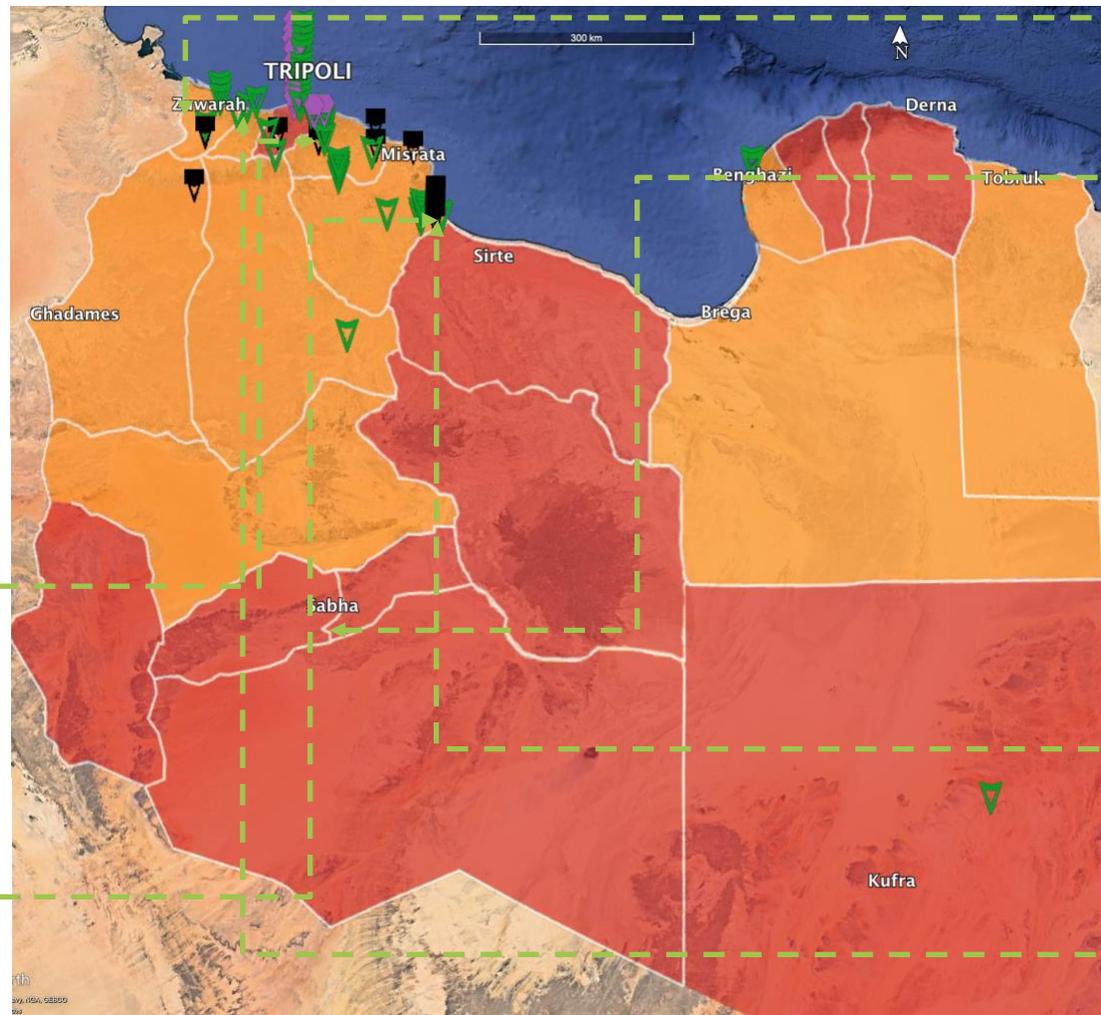
Key

THREAT INDICATORS

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

EVENT INDICATORS

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



Tarhunah remains under LNA control as of 20 April, though GNA forces temporarily reached Al-Ghommat Fork in the afternoon before later retreating on 18 April. GNA forces managed to reach Al-Masabha in Souq Al Jum'aa area north of Tarhunah in the afternoon on 18 April. The offensive led to the arrest of a number of pro-LNA forces, including Abdullah Al-Henshiry, the head of the Qaser Bin Ghashir Ops Room and official in the Gaddafi regime. Meanwhile, the GNA reportedly lost a field commander from Al-Zatama frontline in clashes within the administrative boundaries of Tarhuna.

LNA airstrikes targeted GNA forces in Abugrein, South of Misrata, at approximately 0500hrs on 19 April. A number of AVs and technical were destroyed as a result, according to pro-LNA accounts. In response, GNA forces reported air defence systems shot down an LNA-operated UAV over Abugrein at approximately 0930hrs on 19 April. In addition, GNA heavy artillery targeted LNA positions in Al-Weshka's Coastal Road.

LNA airstrikes targeted a GNA convoy of approximately 30 military vehicles in Al-Assah at night after heading toward Al-Wattiyah Airbase earlier that afternoon.

An LNA "precision" strike targeted a suspicious gathering in Ghadduwa, South of Sabha, on 17 April. The LNA confirmed the target was a convoy of fighters affiliated with the GNA, including Syrian and Chadian mercenaries. Sources reported the convoy comprised approx. 40 vehicles. Reports allege the convoy included members loyal to former Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG) commander Ibrahim Jathran. Conflicting reports suggest the targeted convoy was en route to attack O&G infrastructure in the south.

The LNA reported air defence systems downed a total of three GNA-operated unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) across multiple combat zones on 17 April. A GNA UAV was downed over Tarhunah at approximately 2030hrs. Meanwhile, another GNA UAV was downed over Bani Walid at approximately 1500hrs. The third GNA UAV was downed over Wadi Dinar, in the vicinity of Bani Walid. Further, sources reported LNA air defence systems downed a fourth GNA UAV over Nessma.

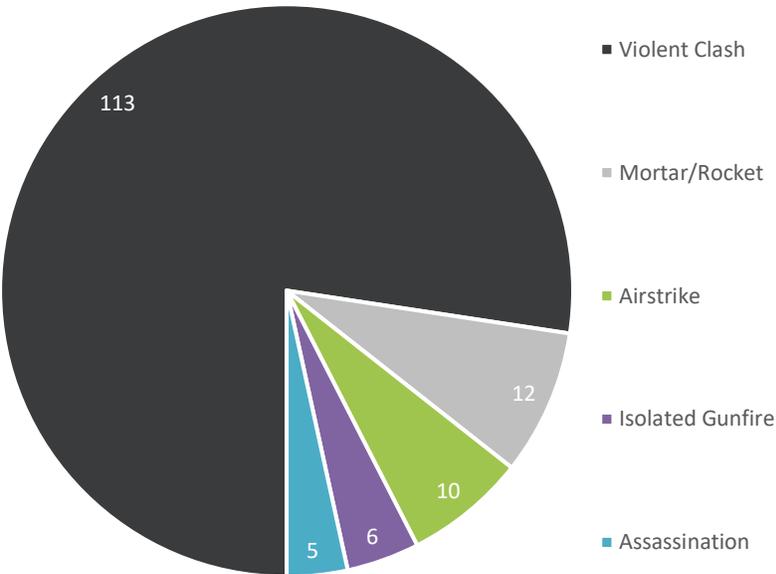
GNA reported forces shot down an LNA-operated Mi-35 attack helicopter killing three-pilot crew in Aubgrein on 12 April. The development was confirmed by the LNA.

The GNA military spokesman, Mohammed Gnounou, confirmed the GNA's control over the pro-LNA cities of Surman followed by Sabratha after a surprise GNA attack, largely backed by GNA-aligned Zawiya armed factions and air cover on 13 April. Later that evening, reports indicate GNA forces entered the town of Al Ajaylat. The GNA Prime Minister, Fayez Al-Serraj, and GNA commanders officially announced the liberation of Surman, Sabrataha, Al Ajaylat, in addition to Riqdalin, Al-Assah and Zelten in a joint presser.

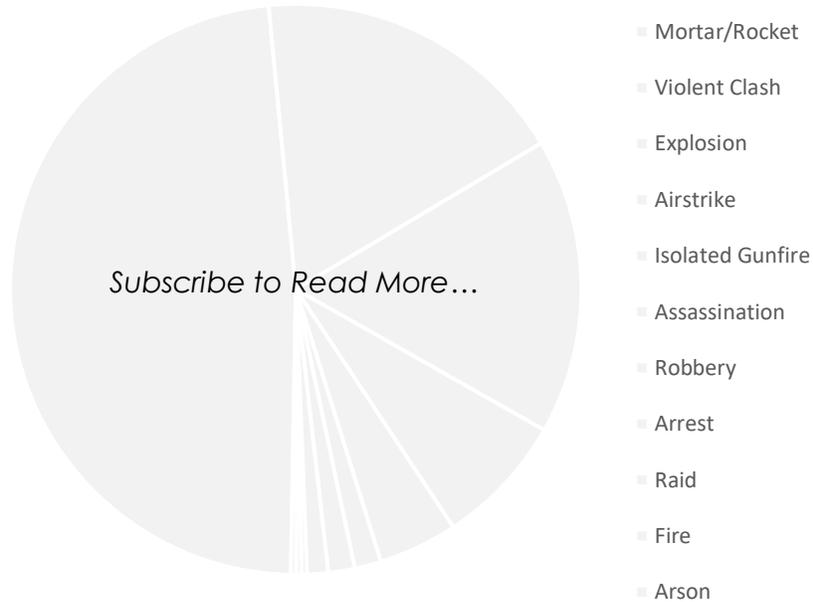
3. Nationwide Security Analysis

Surge in fatalities due to clashes ivo Abugrein; Tripoli shelling on rise

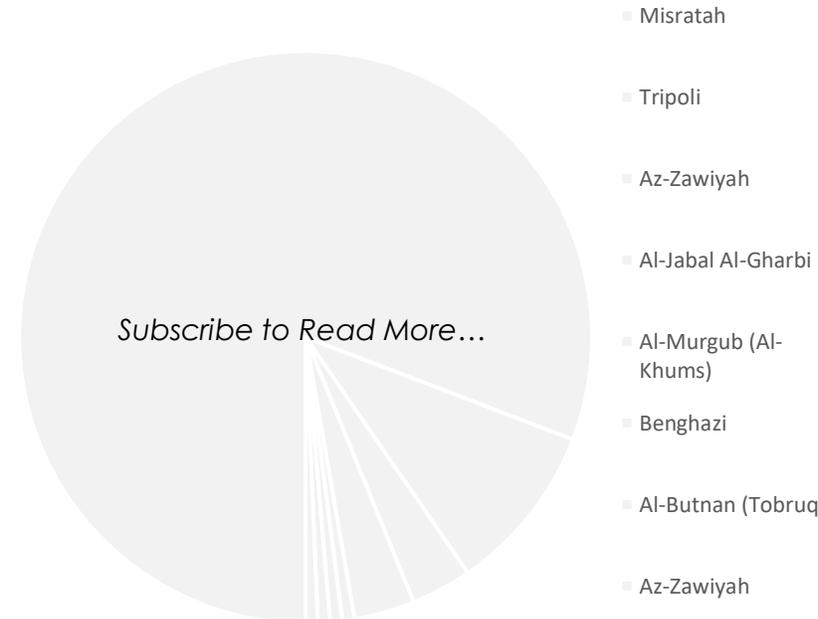
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



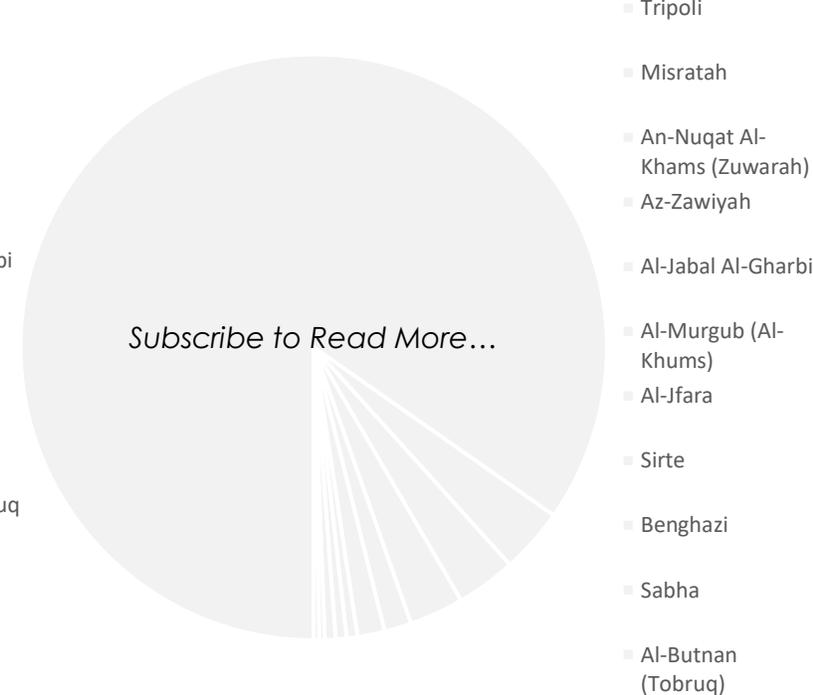
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



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 146 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 50 deaths reported last week and 32 the week before, marking a significant increase largely due to heavy clashes in the vicinity of Abugrein after GNA forces foiled an LNA attempt to advance in the area. At least 113 fatalities were recorded in LNA and GNA ranks. Meanwhile, the overall fatality toll would likely stand higher if reliable figures were publicly available. Beyond violent clashes, WB recorded twelve civilian fatalities as a result of the ongoing shelling campaign across the capital. In addition, ten fatalities came as a result of airstrikes, while six fatalities were recorded as a result of isolated gunfire cases. Beyond, five fatalities were recorded as a result of assassinations carried out across the western region and one in Benghazi. Meanwhile, this week saw a significant increase in the number of mortar/rocket shelling incidents, largely due to the LNA's shelling of Mitiga International Airport (MJI) in retaliation for GNA gains across the western flank. Over 100 shells were reported to have landed on the Mitiga vicinity between 13-14 April. In addition, this week saw an uptick in violent clashes reported across the western region coinciding with the GNA's control over eight western coastal towns and counteroffensive in Abugrein after a temporary LNA advance. This week also saw a nationwide surge in sporadic criminal activity highlighted by an increase in assassinations, robberies, and gunfire-related incidents. Meanwhile, the number of airstrikes remained relatively in line with last week's numbers, with six airstrikes conducted by the GNA out of a total of 25. All airstrikes were conducted across the west, with the exception of an LNA airstrike targeting a suspicious gathering in the southern region. Similar to last week, an uptick in isolated gunfire cases was largely due to heavy artillery gunfire used to down unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) across engagement areas, including eight incidents of LNA forces downing GNA-operated Turkish UAVs throughout the reporting period. Several incidents were recorded throughout the country including 161 mortar/rocket shelling incidents, 60 violent clashes, 56 audible explosions as a result of intensified shelling; 25 airstrikes; 15 isolated gunfire cases; 5 assassinations; 5 robberies; 4 arrests; 1 raid, 1 fire and 1 act of arson.

In western Libya, WB recorded a total of 328 incidents, including 283 in Tripoli, highlighting intensified military operations across the region largely due to GNA advances in the area and LNA retaliation strikes. In Tripoli, WB recorded 159 mortar/rocket shelling incidents resulting in 56 audible explosions; 58 violent clashes; 5 isolated gunfire cases, 2 robberies and 1 assassination. The Tripoli security environment was largely dominated by an intensified shelling campaign, particularly in the Mitiga vicinity, marked by ongoing reports of civilian casualties. In addition, three out of the five isolated gunfire cases were due to the downing of UAVs, with the LNA claiming the downing of two UAVs in the Ghut Abu Sag area and an unverified location south of Tripoli, while the GNA claimed the downing of an LNA-operated UAV over Ain Zara. Beyond military activity, two robberies and one assassination were reported in an indication of ongoing criminal activity. In the wider western region, this week was dominated by violent clashes and airstrikes as the GNA claimed control over eight western coastal towns, including the previously LNA western strongholds of Sabratah, Surman and Al-Ajaylat. The GNA's advance came with the help of reinforcements and heavy air cover highlighted by an increase in GNA airstrikes conducted in the Zawiya district. Following the GNA's entry into the aforementioned areas, reports emerged over sporadic criminal acts including arson, robberies, assassinations, and prison releases. Meanwhile, on an additional front, the GNA offensive on Tarhuna stalled, with the LNA remaining in control of the city as of 20 April. The LNA retaliated with airstrikes across the Murgub, Nuqat Al-Khams, Al-Jabal Al-Gharbi, Misratah, Zawiya and Sirte districts. Beyond military operations, unidentified gunmen driving a military vehicle shot and injured a male individual in Zliten in the evening on 11 Apr. The gunmen were reportedly affiliated with Misrata armed factions while the gunfire was due to the victim accidentally blocking their passage along Zliten's coastal road. Conflicting reports suggest the gunfire was related to violations of the coronavirus curfew restrictions. Separately, reports indicate a man was found assassinated in the Qasr al Hajj area of Al-Rujban town in the morning on 12 April. The victim is originally from Nalut. Unconfirmed reports allege pro-LNA factions positioned in Al-Rujban were behind the incident.

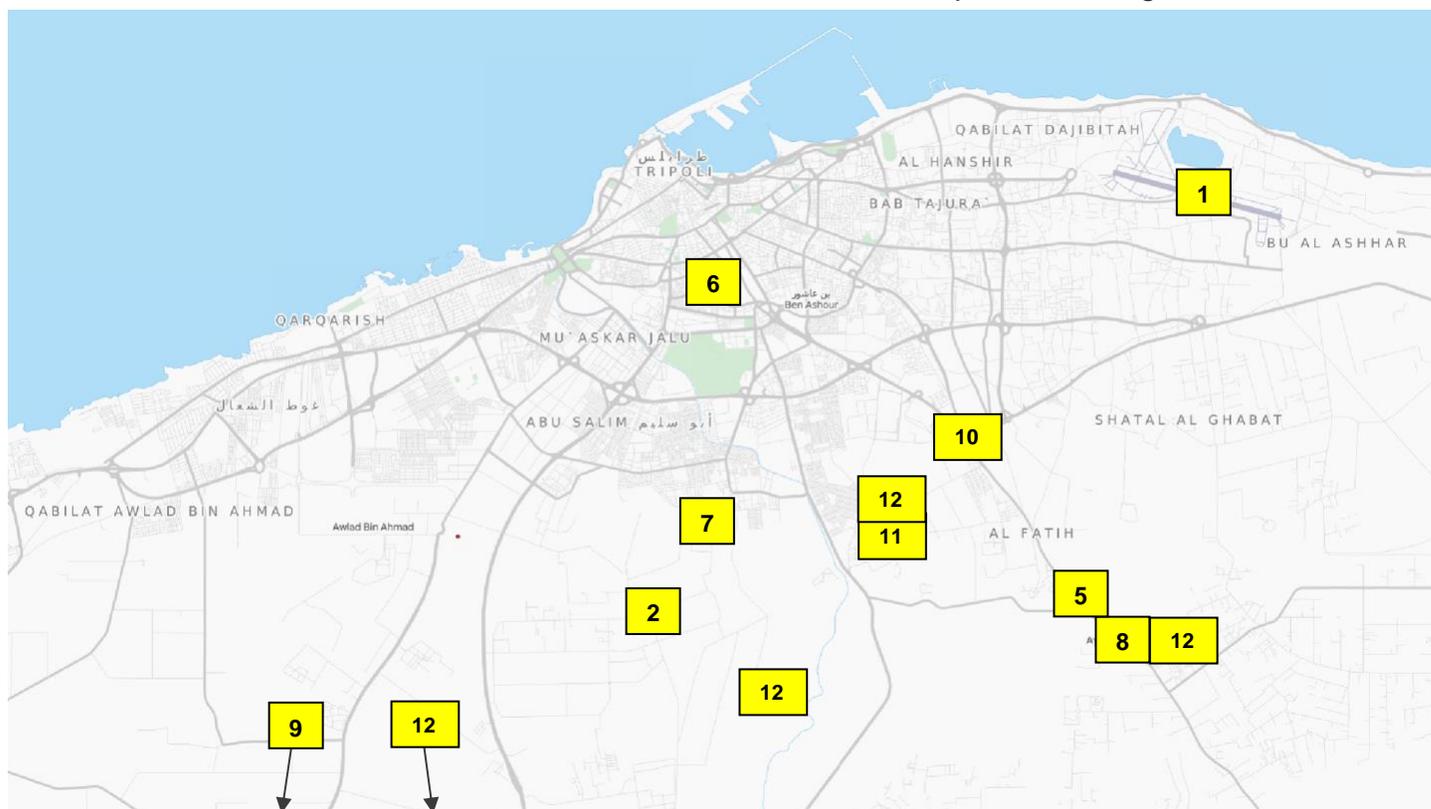
Meanwhile in the central region, WB recorded ongoing military activity on Al-Weshka frontline with the LNA downing of a GNA-operated Turkish UAV over the area, in addition to reports of shelling. Confrontation between the warring sides in the Abugrein village situated between Misrata and Sirte continued to dominate the overall security environment in the central region. The latest reports indicate the GNA remains in control of Abugrein following a failed LNA attempt to advance on the area.

Turning to the south, this week was marked by the LNA reporting a "precision" strike targeting a suspicious gathering in Ghadduwa, South of Sabha, at approximately 1145hrs on 17 April. The LNA confirmed the target was a convoy of fighters affiliated with the GNA, including Syrian and Chadian mercenaries. Sources reported the convoy comprised approximately 40 vehicles. The recent security environment in the West raises the possibility of a spillover into Libya's southern regions. LNA forces have accused the GNA of attempting to destabilise the environment in Fezzan.

In the East, while the security environment remains relatively stable in contrast to other regions, WB recorded a market fire and assassination in Benghazi. The assassination was due to an Egyptian man setting his Libyan spouse on fire inside their house. Separately, a security force was shot dead while confronting a curfew violator in Tobruk.

4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

LNA counteroffensive across 3 axes after GNA push; shelling intensifies



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (13-14 Apr) LNA retaliates against GNA gains in west with heavy shelling ivo Mitiga
2. (13 Apr) LNA claims tactical attack in Rabish crossroads results in losses among GNA ranks
3. (14 Apr) LNA claims downing of GNA-operated Turkish UAV over south after departing MJI
4. (14 Apr) GNA PM meets with Tripoli, western & central commanders to discuss next phase of military operations
5. (14 Apr) Traffic officer founded killed in front of house near Memorial Ain Zara
6. (15 Apr) Shells lands on house killing boy & wounding 3 other siblings on Al-Soor Road
7. (15 Apr) Shells target Al-Hay Al-Diplomase killing a woman & wounding a girl
8. (16 Apr) GNA claims downing of LNA-operated UAV ivo Ain Zara
9. (17 Apr) GNA claims LNA shells hit food warehouse in Al-Kreymiya, 1 killed & 11 injured
10. (17 Apr) GNA claim son of former CoS killed by LNA shells landing near IDPs in Al-Furnaj
11. (17 Apr) LNA shells land on Royal Clinic killing one child & injuring three others
12. (18-19 Apr) LNA claims GNA attacks repelled; advances in Salah Eddien, Ain Zara & Twaisha

LNA claims advances in counter-offensive

Combat activity continues to be dominated by escalation across all principal engagement axes in Tripoli. Libyan National Army (LNA) forces led by Khalifa Haftar claim Government of National Accord (GNA) attacks have been repelled across Tripoli frontlines. LNA forces claim a counteroffensive resulted in a concerted push in Salah Eddien, Ain Zara, and Al-Twaisha. Reports suggest LNA forces temporarily retreated from Al-Twaisha on 18 April before the 166 Infantry Battalion mounted a counteroffensive and gained ground. Meanwhile, indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas continues unabated across the capital. LNA shelling in Tripoli's Aarada area resulted in at least 10 civilian injuries on 18 April.

Heavy shelling ivo MJI

LNA forces retaliated against GNA gains on the western flank by intensifying the shelling campaign across several areas of Tripoli, particularly Mitiga International Airport (MJI) with over 100 rockets/shells landing on the airport and its vicinity between 13-14 April. The incident would mark the heaviest shelling of MJI and its vicinity since the LNA launched its offensive on Tripoli on 04 April 2019. Meanwhile, pro-LNA accounts reported a GNA-operated Turkish UAV was downed in an unverified location south of Tripoli after it took off from MJI in the early hours of 14 April.

Traffic officer found killed ivo Ain Zara

Reports indicate a traffic officer was found killed in front of his house near Memorial Ain Zara in Tripoli's Ain Zara area in the morning on 14 April. There are conflicting reports surrounding the motive behind the incident. Some reports suggest the officer was killed by a stray bullet, while others

suggest he was assassinated. Of note, the victim became a prominent figure across social media outlets after pictures circulated of him distributing medical face masks to by-passers.

Gunfire exchange during local dispute

WB sources reported a local dispute between two men escalated into an exchange of gunfire resulting in the death of one in Souq Al Jum'aa's Ghararat area in the evening on 12 April.

Vehicle theft ivo Airport Road

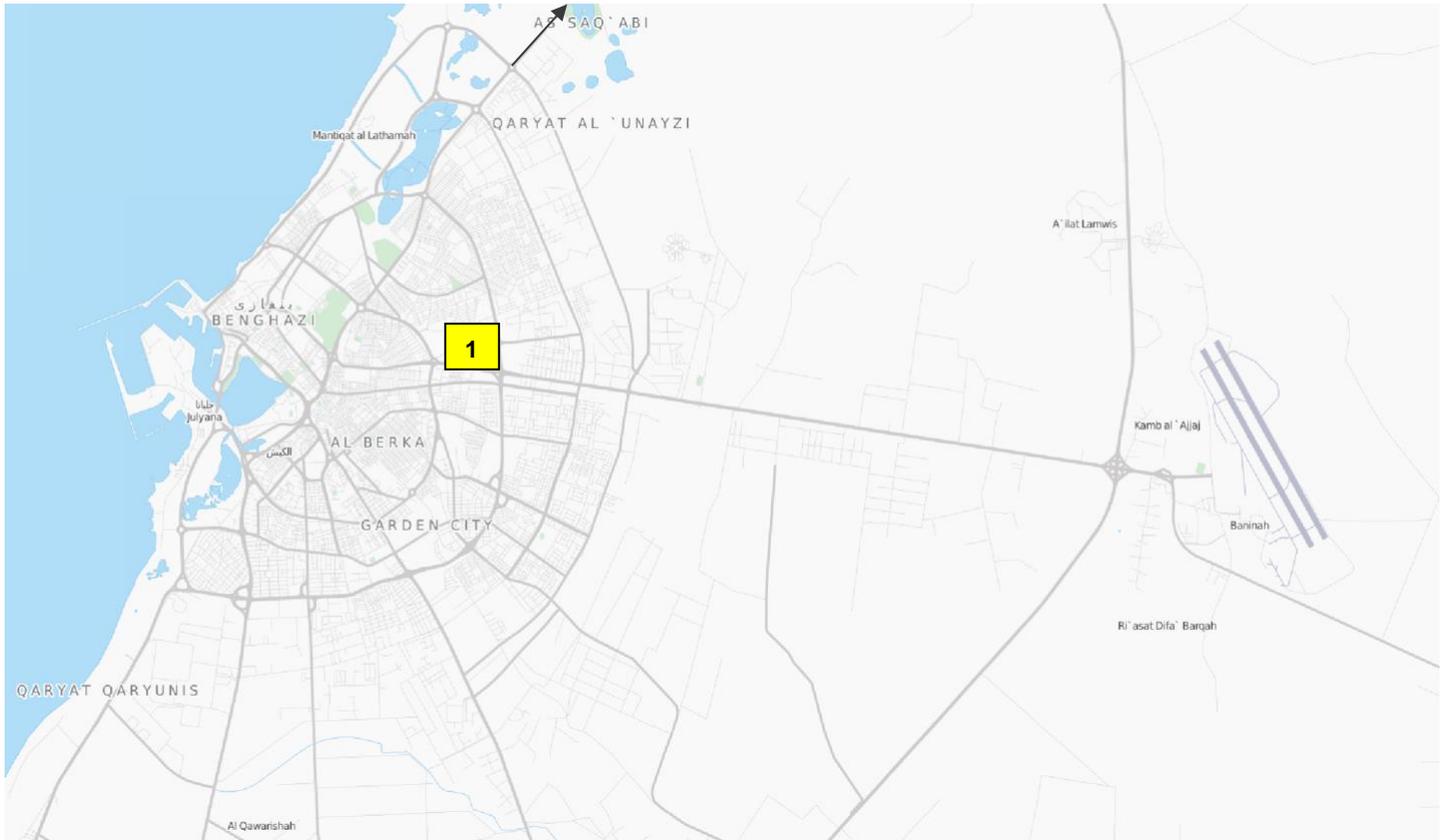
Sources reported a Kia Optima vehicle was stolen while parked in front of a residential unit on the Airport Road. While the curfew and other coronavirus restrictions have led to a relative decrease in crime rates across the capital, sporadic activity continues to be reported in areas within the immediate vicinity of combat zones.

GNA imposes full curfew as COVID-19 cases rise

The GNA imposed a ten-day full curfew (24hr) across areas under its control from 17-27 April, endorsing recent measures proposed by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) with slight alterations to timings. The GNA stated that pedestrians are permitted to purchase essential goods between 0700-1200hrs, while small shops and bakeries are permitted to operate between 0700-1200hrs. In addition, the GNA stated that essential administrative jobs, healthcare, electrical, environmental, telecommunications, and pharmaceutical sectors are exempt from the curfew. Exempted workers are required to carry authorization letters.

5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

Fire breaks out at Al-Badriya Market injuring five; curfew timings relaxed



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (12 Apr) Fire breaks out at Al-Badriya Market injuring five
2. (17 Apr) Egyptian man sets Libyan spouse on fire inside house

Fire breaks out at prominent market

Reports indicate a fire broke out at a prominent market, Al-Badriya Market, locally known as Souq Al-Masriya, in Benghazi's As Sulmani area at night on 12 April. The fire resulted in five injuries according to Benghazi's Al-Jalaa Hospital. Firefighters and local security forces mobilised for a few hours before the fire was brought under control. The cause of the fire remains unknown.

Libyan woman killed in arson case

On 17 April, Benghazi's Security Directorate revealed details surrounding a police investigation into a house fire that resulted in the death of a Libyan woman. Following investigations with the house owner, an Egyptian national, the latter confessed to physically assaulting his spouse and setting the house on fire. The case was referred to public prosecution.

Interim Government relaxes curfew timings

The eastern-based Interim Government relaxed the curfew imposed across areas under its control from 1900-0700hrs effective 15 April until 22 April. The previous curfew timings were imposed between 1500-0700hrs. Meanwhile, LNA commander Khalifa Haftar called on the east-based Supreme Committee for Combating Coronavirus to take immediate action to facilitate the return of stranded Libyans overseas, while taking all precautionary measures to ensure the two-week self-isolation process is followed.

6. What's next

LNA to prioritize Tripoli & Abugrein frontlines; GNA Tarhunah offensive stalls

POLITICAL FORECAST

Developments on the political front remain limited as military manoeuvres take precedence. On the diplomatic front, the search for a new UN envoy continues after confirmation this week that former Algerian FM Ramtane Lamamra withdrew his candidacy. Meanwhile, Turkey's deepening engagement in Libya was highlighted by fighter aircraft entering Libyan airspace this week. Open source publications reported a large-scale Turkish aerial mission in Libyan airspace. Meanwhile, Turkey's defence ministry reported a training exercise was conducted and successfully completed in coordination with Turkish Navy forces in the Mediterranean. It remains to be seen whether Turkey's recent blatant violations of the arms embargo will prompt the EU's Operation Irini to act. Looking ahead, reports indicate Turkey's combat objective is to consolidate its presence across Libya's entire western region. In the long-term, this would entail controlling oil and gas infrastructure in the South (Al-Feel, Sharara ...etc) to exert influence in Libya. Given the covert nature of the military support the LNA enjoys from its foreign backers, retaliation for Turkey's escalation may come via Operation Irini. If so, Mediterranean waters may witness close encounters and other aggressive military tactics. While the latest losses are guaranteed to pose a challenge to Haftar's credibility among his backers, Turkish intervention will continue to drive foreign support for the LNA commander by default. Opposition to Turkish influence is now the main driver behind the newly-formed pro-LNA coalition that includes Greece, Cyprus, Egypt, France, and others. This coalition will continue to support Haftar mainly due to a lack of alternatives. Meanwhile, domestically, the Benghazi-based House of Representatives (HoR) speaker, Aguila Saleh, addressed letters to the UN Secretary General and UN Security Council Ambassadors. Saleh condemned Turkey's blatant violations of the Berlin Conference arrangements and accused Ankara of interfering in internal affairs and arming militias.

WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

In a piece published on *The Arab Weekly*, Libya expert Michel Cousins analyses the GNA's operation to capture Surman and Sabratha and what the involvement of Islamists means for the GNA's prospects. The return of hardliners and islamists across Tripoli's western coastal road underlines the GNA's dependency on these factions for its survival. The latest developments raise concerns over the ability of international actors to pressure the GNA to break away from militias. Cousins writes "Once they had been captured, fighters mainly from Zuwara, the Amazigh town close to the Tunisian border, arrived at the other pro-LNA towns close to the Tunisian border – Al-Jmail, Rigdaleen, Zultan and Al-Assah – and forced out the pro-LNA forces there. In Sorman, some 400 prisoners managed to escape during the fight. Initially, it was said that they included a large number of Islamists who had been freed by the arriving forces. It is now reported that the escaped prisoners included many convicted criminals, including murderers and those who were on remand, and that they managed to escape following a riot. Whatever the exact circumstances of their escape, locals in Sorman and the neighbouring towns are reportedly more worried about the potential presence of murderers and criminals than anything else – other than coronavirus and the lockdown. Sabratha is now again in the hands of Islamists, some of whom are alleged to have links to ISIS. Back in February 2016, an ISIS training camp just outside the town was bombed by a US warplane despite earlier vigorous denials by authorities of any ISIS presence there. The return of Islamist militants is the subject of wariness in the town. Foreign diplomats likewise express deep concern. That concern, however, does not appear to extend to Sarraj, even though these are the same people whose expulsion from Sabratha in October 2017 he applauded. The predominant view, not just among diplomats but also Libyan observers across the country, is that because of the turnaround, Sarraj is now completely in the hands of the Islamist militants and any pressure on him to break with them or with the militias will be futile – at least for the moment. Sarraj and his interior minister, Fathi Bashagha, had already been under growing international pressure to do so.

SECURITY FORECAST

The latest GNA gains have impacted the LNA's posture, but it remains to be seen how Haftar's forces will retaliate and if Turkey will be able to uphold the GNA's territorial gains in the long-term. LNA forces will likely prioritize Tripoli while attempting to maintain key positions such as Tarhunah and Sirte. The LNA realizes the latest GNA victory will undermine Haftar's efforts to exert influence across Libya's territory. But the main solution to repair any damages to the LNA's credibility will be to continue advancing towards the capital. This will also enable Haftar to justify more funding from his foreign backers. There are other ways the LNA could retaliate, including assassination attempts against prominent figures. Meanwhile, in spite of the GNA's temporary failure to enter Tarhunah, recent developments have confined the pro-LNA town to a defensive posture. With many formations withdrawing to defend the town, the LNA's posture across frontlines in Tripoli's south may be impacted. LNA forces remain on high alert in anticipation of additional offensives by pro-GNA forces. The GNA's gains north of Tarhunah's administrative boundaries will enable pro-GNA forces to expand the range of UAVs and aerial cover. Skirmishes and intermittent bouts of violence are likely in the area. Of note, Tarhunah locals claim the GNA is laying siege to the town and preventing the entry of essential supplies. Tarhunah's Tribal Council accused the GNA of violating Geneva Conventions by deliberately restricting electricity, communications, and other vital supplies. Meanwhile, in the central region, the LNA will seek to maintain its positions in Sirte and Al-Weshka. The GNA's failure to regain Sirte will continue to play in Haftar's favour. GNA attempts to cripple LNA supply lines are set to continue, with a specific focus on Bani Walid and Tarhunah. In Bani Walid, pro-LNA forces remain on high alert for any potential offensive by pro-GNA Misrata forces. In the southern region, intent is high among GNA armed factions to undermine the LNA's control claims in the region.

LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

On 15 April, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) voiced alarm over an escalation of violence in Libya in recent days, including reports of attacks on civilians and the Surman Prison break resulting in the release of 401 prisoners, desecration of bodies, retribution, including looting, robberies, and arson targeting public and private properties across western coastal towns recently seized by the GNA. Meanwhile, UNSMIL condemned the LNA's indiscriminate shelling of Tripoli, including civilian neighborhoods resulting in casualties. The Mission concluded by warning that acts of revenge will further escalate the conflict and reiterated calls for a humanitarian truce. The full statement read "The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) is alarmed by the continuing escalation of violence in Libya, particularly by the intensification of fighting in the past few days, resulting in civilian casualties and risking new waves of displacement. UNSMIL notes with grave concern reports of attacks on civilians, the Surman Prison break and release of 401 prisoners without adequate legal proceedings or vetting, desecration of corpses, retribution, including looting, robberies and torching of public and private properties, in western coastal towns recently seized by the Government of National Accord (GNA) forces. UNSMIL is following up the above allegations, which if verified, would constitute grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. The Mission also condemns the Libyan National Army (LNA) forces indiscriminate bombardment of Tripoli with rockets, many of which have landed on civilian neighborhoods, resulting in casualties. UNSMIL warns that acts of revenge will further escalate the conflict, and lead to a cycle of revenge that threatens the social fabric in Libya. The Mission call on parties to the conflict to deescalate, curb incitement, and immediately respect the repeated calls by the Secretary-General and international partners for a humanitarian pause."

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