



1. The Big Picture

LNA intensifies Tripoli shelling as Turkey warns of escalation

The week was marked by rapid military developments across Libya's west, consistent with the trend unfolding over the past few weeks. Government of National Accord (GNA) forces renewed their offensive on Al-Wattiyah, the strategic airbase serving as the Libyan National Army's (LNA) remaining forward operating base in the west, on 05 May. LNA forces stationed at the airbase repelled the offensive, prompting a GNA retreat northward, despite preemptive unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) strikes and the mobilization of a relatively larger force than in previous attacks.

Taking hold of the airbase will remain a GNA priority, though further ground offensives will likely be put on hold in the short term. The airbase's location makes it difficult for GNA forces to mount a ground offensive from the western coastal road without first being detected miles away by LNA forces. As a result, the GNA's short-term intent will be to continue targeting the airbase with UAV strikes to weaken local forces and cut possible supplies from Zintan and the southern region.

Meanwhile, a day later, the LNA retaliated by intensifying its shelling of Tripoli. While LNA forces initially targeted a pro-GNA Ghneiwa militia camp, subsequent shells landed indiscriminately across Tripoli between 06-09 May, resulting in a number of reported civilian fatalities. The development marks the heaviest LNA shelling campaign to date. Shells even landed in the central neighbourhood of Zawiyat Al-Dahmani, near Turkey and Italy's diplomatic missions, killing at least two civilians and prompting widespread condemnation. The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs attributed the attack to LNA forces, though the LNA general command denied any involvement and blamed GNA forces instead. Meanwhile, Tripoli's Mitiga International Airport (MJI) sustained significant structural damage with at least 80 shells hitting its infrastructure.

The LNA's targeting comes as part of a recently-announced "Ababil Birds" counteroffensive, in a religious reference to miraculous birds that dropped stones on an attacking army. Of note, LNA spokesperson Ahmed Al-Mismary directly threatened Turkish President Recep Erdogan, claiming the latest targeting is only part of the LNA's initial response. The war of words closely followed explosions at Misrata's Aviation College on 06 May. While Al-Mismary did not mention any targets, LNA accounts claimed the explosions were the result of LNA airstrikes, though local reports confirmed secondary explosions were caused by faulty ammunition storage.

The Misrata incident remains shrouded in uncertainty. It is unclear if the LNA has indeed acquired new aerial capabilities to bypass GNA defence systems supplied by Turkey. The LNA claimed four new combat jets have entered the theatre after local refurbishment. Meanwhile, if allegations that foreign combat aircraft carried out the airstrikes on behalf of the LNA are true, the incident would signal a new escalation and could prompt retaliation by Ankara.

However, regardless of recent developments, it remains too early to ascertain whether the LNA has fully shifted to an offensive posture. The LNA's intensified shelling campaign could either point to a renewed escalation or a last-ditch attempt to achieve military gains at all costs. Critics are of the view the latter holds true as the LNA engages in "desperate" attempts to compensate for losses across Libya's west using Tripoli as a relatively easier target within artillery range, with intent to raise the stakes and force the GNA to capitulate.

For its part, Turkey's foreign ministry threatened it will deem Haftar's forces as legitimate targets if Ankara's missions and interests were to be targeted. The ministry condemned the UN for what it described as silence and inaction in light of war crimes.

Regardless of the possible impact on the LNA's public image in the medium term, Haftar's forces will likely continue to shell Tripoli behind a veil of plausible deniability. However, in the long term the LNA could face pressure to suspend military operations and resume negotiations if similar indiscriminate shelling becomes more frequent with no changes to the status quo or concrete gains on the ground by LNA forces.

Recent LNA setbacks across the west have called into question its ability to seize Tripoli among some, not all, foreign backers. In general, foreign backers remain aligned to the LNA and the eastern bloc by default to oppose Turkey. Even if the LNA and its foreign backers were ready to enter negotiations, the LNA would attempt to do so from a position of power. If the LNA's confidence in seizing Tripoli decreases, the LNA would continue to shell Tripoli so as to provoke a military escalation from Ankara that would contribute to the LNA's objective of isolating Turkey as a "foreign aggressor" and justify retaliation by foreign backers before eventually moving to negotiations.

KEY POINTS

- 64 coronavirus cases; GNA extends curfew
- LNA significant shelling campaign against Tripoli
- GNA attack on Al-Wattiyah airbase repelled



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2. National Security Map

LNA repels 2nd large-scale attack on Al-Wattiyah airbase & announces “Ababil Birds” counteroffensive

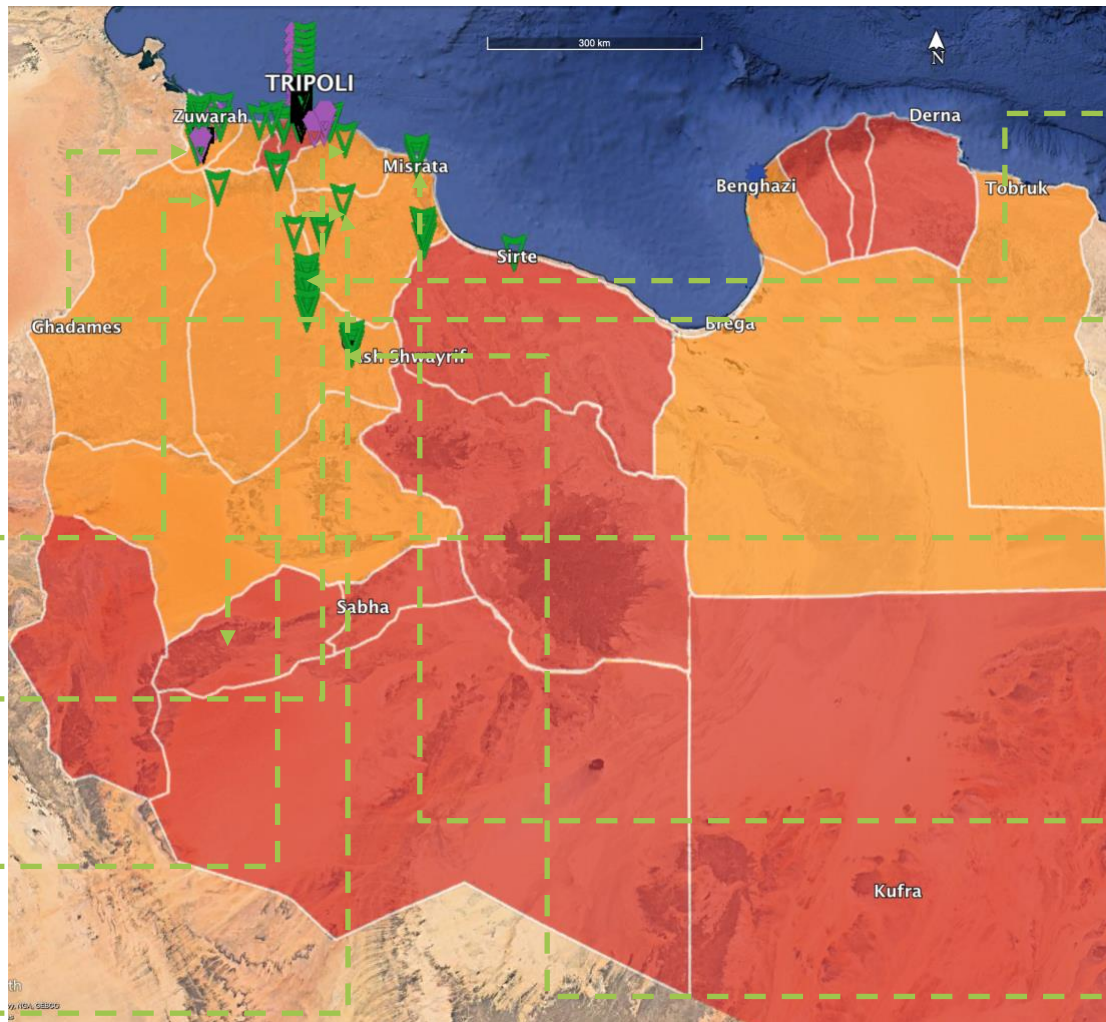
Key

THREAT INDICATORS

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

EVENT INDICATORS

- ✦ IED | VBIED
- ✦ Violent Clash
- ✦ Isolated Gunfire
- ✦ Other



LNA officials contradicted GNA claims that LNA fuel trucks were targeted west of Qaryat en route to Tarhunah on 04 May. The LNA officials claim the trucks targeted along the Darj-Qaryat road belonged to GNA-aligned “fuel smugglers” controlling Al-Zawiya refinery instead. The conflicting claims remain unverified.

The LNA’s 134 Battalion commander, Osama Ismaik, controlling Al-Wattiyah Airbase, was killed during a failed GNA attempt to seize the airbase on 05 May. The GNA military spokesman Mohammed Gnounoi reported a total of 24 airstrikes targeted the airbase and its vicinity during the attack. GNA forces retreated to the town of Aljmail after LNA units repelled the attack with heavy air cover.

Pro-LNA local battalions in the South engaged in a show of force with a large convoy patrolling the area from Murzuq Basin to Awbari on 04 May. Meanwhile, Local LNA Southern Military Region commander, Belqasim Al-Abaj, arrived in Ghat on 07 May and met with prominent social figures and elders from the city to discuss the security environment in the

Pro-LNA accounts reported an airstrike targeted a GNA ammunition warehouse in Misrata’s Aviation College resulting in heavy blasts caused by secondary explosions and the death of two Turkish officers. Misrata’s Aviation College refuted the claims and clarified ordnance exploded internally as a result of high temperatures and poor storage.

On 09 May, the Great Man-Made River Administration reported a group of saboteurs raided the power plant near Ash Shwayrif, which feeds Jabal Al-Hasawna-Sahl Jafara water system, and forced on-site technicians to switch off power supply cutting water supply to Tripoli and the western region.

A GNA-operated Turkish unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) airstrike targeted an LNA-manned checkpoint at the northern entrance gate of Al-Rajban, killing nine LNA forces at approximately 1530hrs on 08 May.

Reports indicate masked men driving a white Samsung vehicle kidnapped the Imam (preacher) of Al-Sahaba Mosque in Msallata from his house in Msallata’s Mraad area in the early hours of 06 May. The Imam had reportedly recently received threats from Muslim Brotherhood (MB) affiliates.

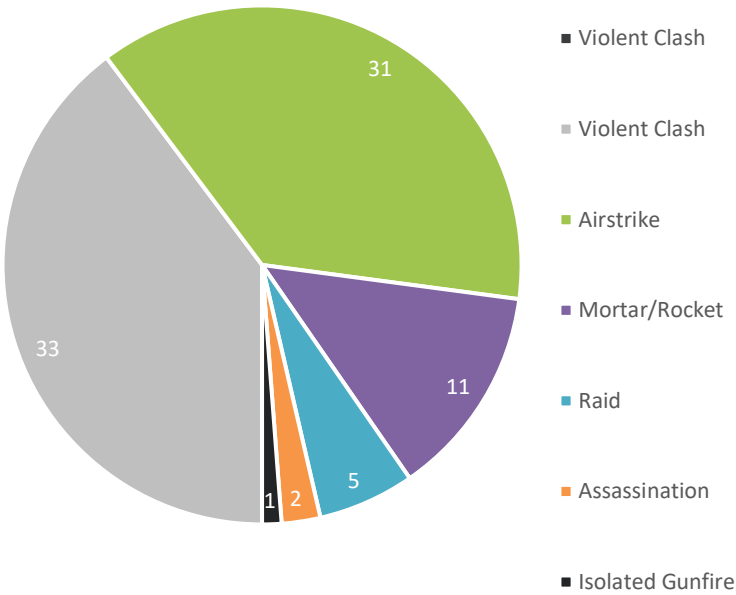
LNA-affiliated 166 Brigade led by Idris Al-Tubuly, raided the house of a Bani Walid activist, Yousef Shaftar, in an attempted arrest prompting his brothers to intervene. Skirmishes ensued resulting in the death of at least five assailants, including Al-Tubuly himself, in Bani Walid on 05 May.

LNA-affiliated forces dressed in military uniform and plain clothes appeared alongside the LNA commander, Mahmoud Al-Werfalli, in Bani Waled, announcing the opening of the road linking Bani Walid with Tarhunah on 01 May.

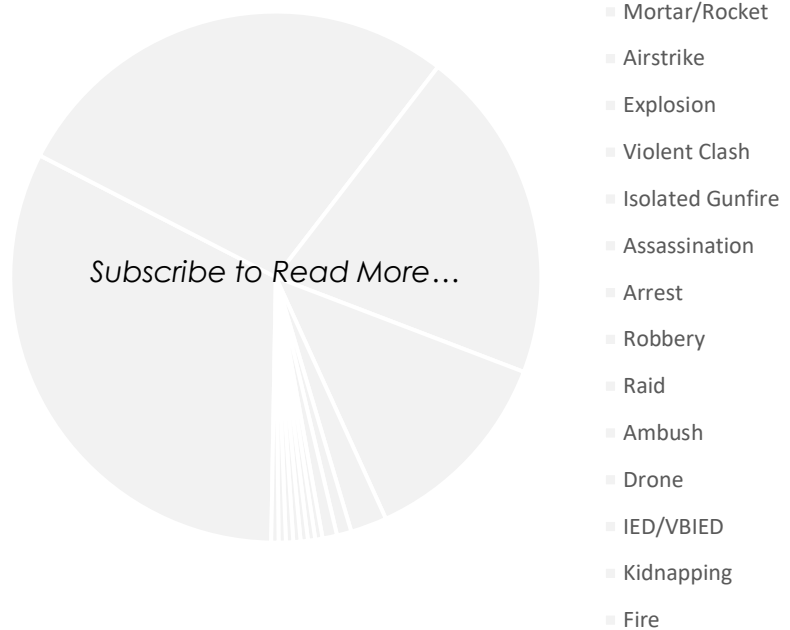
3. Nationwide Security Analysis

Highest no. of fatalities ivo Al-Wattiyah Airbase due to failed GNA attack

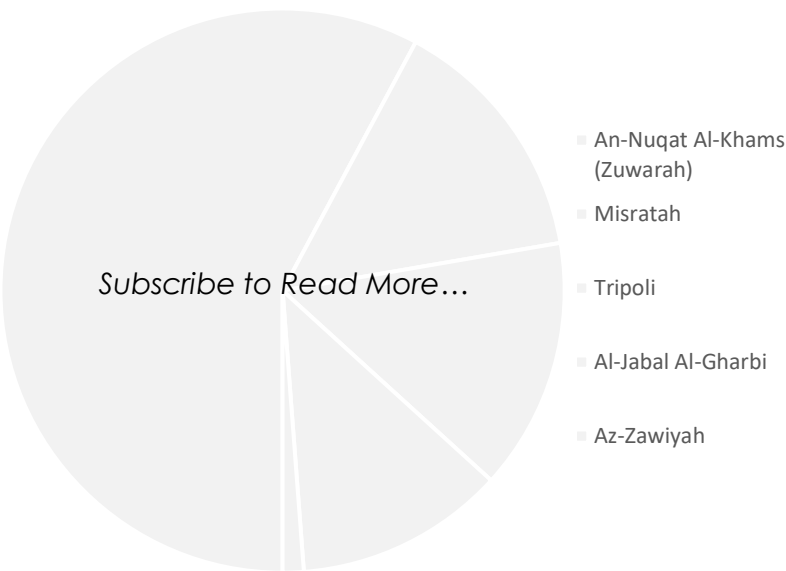
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



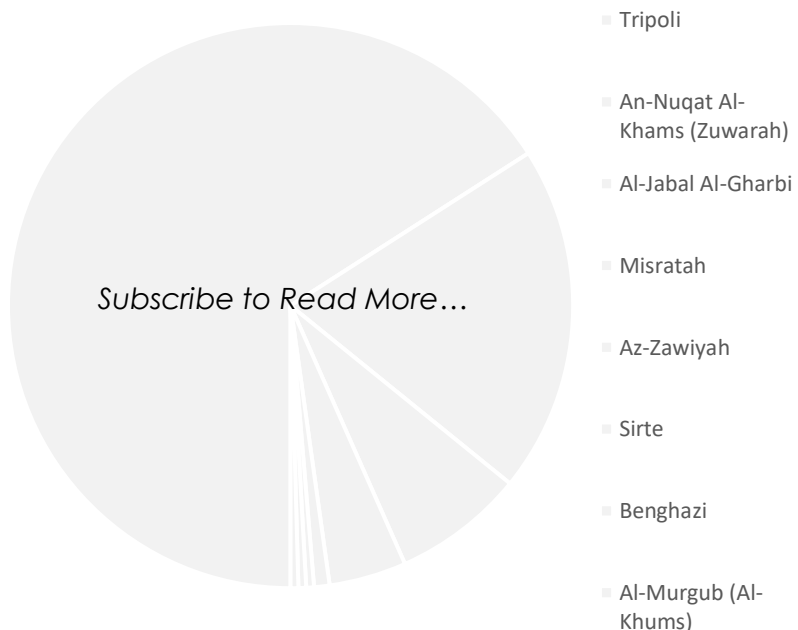
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



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 83 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 23 deaths reported last week and 69 the week before, marking a surge in fatalities in contrast to the previous week, largely due to the large-scale Government of National Accord (GNA) attack on Al-Wattiyah Airbase to the west. Similar to the patterns witnessed since the Libyan National Army (LNA) launched its offensive on Tripoli in early April 2019, the majority of fatalities remain related to combat operations and are commonly a result of mortar/rocket shelling incidents, airstrikes, violent clashes, and civilians caught in crossfire. Meanwhile, this week an additional seven fatalities were recorded as a result of a raid and assassinations in the west, including five killed in an arrest attempt in Bani Walid and two assassinations recorded in Gharyan and Zawiya. Of particular note, this week the number of airstrikes conducted more than doubled in number in contrast to last week, with an evident surge in GNA airstrikes across the west. This week also witnessed an uptick in mortar/rocket shelling incidents marked by an intensified shelling campaign expanding to central areas across the capital. Several incidents were recorded throughout the country including 73 mortar/rocket shelling incidents and 45 audible explosions as a result, 63 airstrikes, 28 violent clashes, 5 isolated gunfire cases, 2 assassinations, 2 arrests, 1 robbery, 1 raid, a drone flying over Tripoli's skies, 1 ambush, 1 failed VBIED incident, and a fire.

In western Libya, WB recorded a total of 224 incidents, including 149 in Tripoli marking a significant increase in security incidents recorded in the west in contrast to the previous week. In Tripoli alone, WB recorded 73 mortar/rocket shelling incidents and 45 subsequent explosions as a result. In addition, 26 violent clashes were reported across Tripoli's frontlines. Further, four gunfire-related incidents were reported, in addition to a fire and drone activity in engagement areas. In relation to criminal activity, reports indicate two criminals driving a grey Hyundai Tucson stole a grey Chevrolet Camaro parked in front of a house in Tripoli's Gharghour area in the morning on 03 May.

In the wider western region, the security environment was dominated by an uptick in airstrikes, which coincided with a failed large-scale GNA attack on Al-Wattiyah Airbase during which 24 GNA airstrikes were conducted on the airbase, according to GNA military spokesman Mohammed Gnounou. A total of 34 airstrikes, including those conducted by the LNA, targeted Al-Wattiyah Airbase throughout the reporting period. Beyond An-Nuqat Al-Khams district, WB recorded GNA and LNA airstrikes in Al-Jabal Al-Gharbi district, including in the Qaryat, Rajban, Ash Shwayrif and Gharyan areas. Following the repelled attack, GNA renewed airstrikes on Al-Wattiyah Airbase between 07-08 May targeting military vehicles and LNA forces. Gnounou, reported nine airstrikes on the airbase on 07 May, resulting in the death of 15 LNA forces and the destruction of seven armed vehicles. Separately, local reports indicate a GNA-operated Turkish unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) airstrike targeted a truck carrying poultry near Skreej gate on the Mizdah-Nasmah road in the evening on 04 May. The truck was destroyed, though the driver survived. The driver was reportedly transporting poultry from the south to a dealer in the area. Meanwhile, the GNA military spokesman, Mohammed Gnounou, stated that the airstrike targeted a bus carrying LNA forces, in addition to a truck carrying military equipment. Beyond military operations, WB sources reported members of a security patrol assassinated a man in his twenties at a checkpoint following a dispute over the curfew on Al-Thawra Street "Revolution Street" in Gharyan's Sagaief area at approximately 1900hrs on 03 May. Later that night at approximately 2100hrs, the victim's relatives and neighbours set fire to piles of rubbish and closed off Al-Thawra Street. Separately, reports indicate two gunmen shot dead a man that they had previously stolen cash from near Az Zawiya Oil Refining Company in Al Harsha area in the evening on 02 May. The gunmen were reportedly released in the GNA prison break following their control over Surman on 13 April. The gunmen were imprisoned in Surman's Criminal Investigation Department (CID) on robbery charges in 2018.

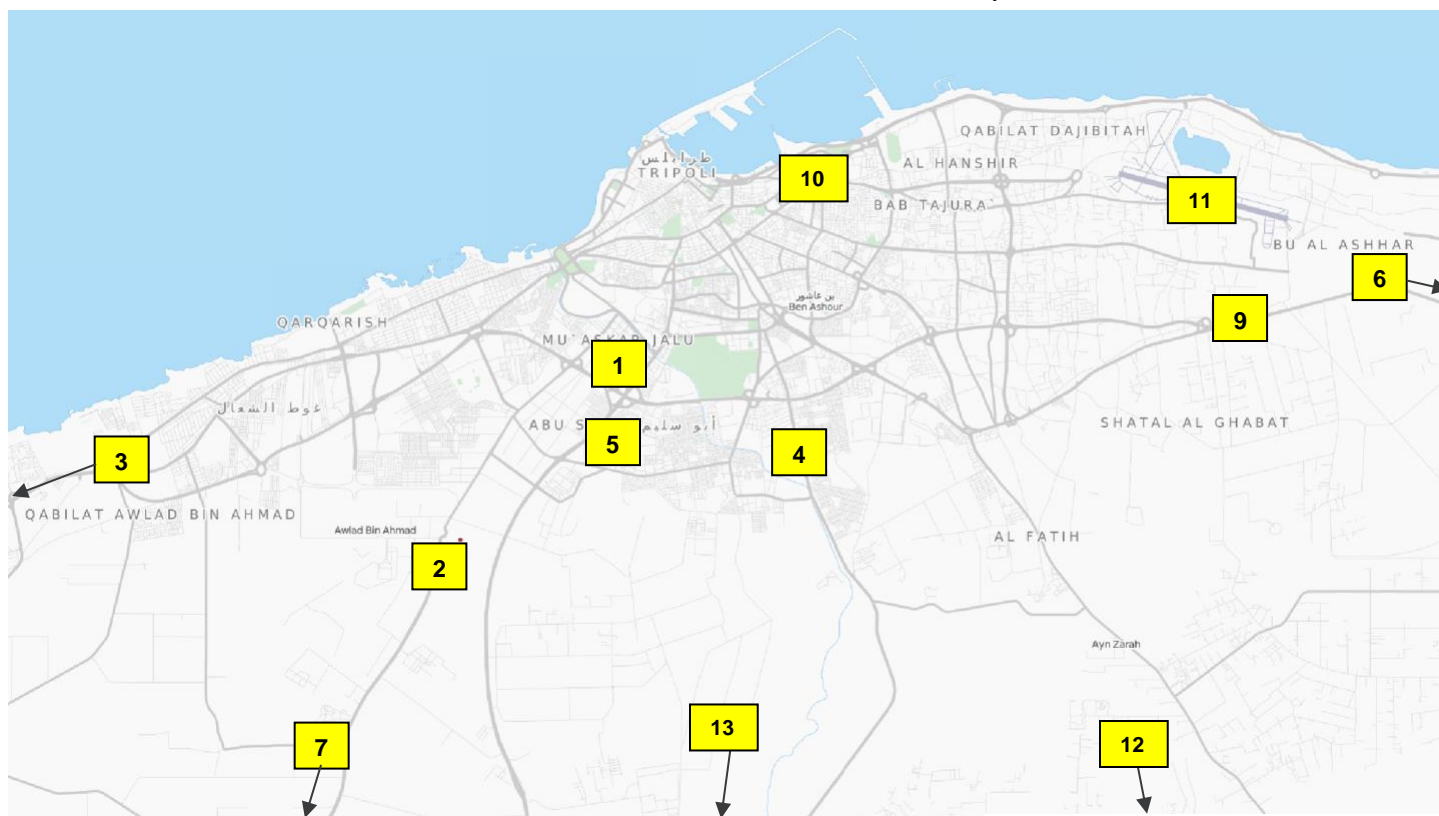
Meanwhile in the central region, military operations remain frequent in areas lying on the Misrata-Sirte border. Reports indicate heavy explosions were audible in Sirte's western areas between the evening and night of 06 May. Separately, in a possibly related incident, pro-LNA accounts reported artillery targeting GNA positions in Abugrein in the evening on 06 May.

Turning to the south, pro-LNA local battalions in the South engaged in a display of force with a large convoy patrolling the area from Murzuq Basin to Awbari on 04 May. The mobilization comes as part of LNA efforts to project law enforcement capabilities in the area. LNA forces are on high alert in the south over concerns the GNA will look to upend the status quo in the region and shift alliances. Separately, locals, notables and sheikhs of Sawknah issued a statement in support of Haftar's LNA assuming power in Libya on 03 May.

In the eastern region, this week was marked by reports of a failed assassination attempt targeting the head of Al-Nasr Football Club, Ezzedden Al-Wekwak, after a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) was placed beneath his armoured Nissan Patrol in front of Al-Nasr Football Club in Al-Berka area in the afternoon on 05 May. No further incidents were recorded in the eastern region throughout the reporting period.

4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

Indiscriminate shells land on central areas near diplomatic missions/residences



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (03 May) Vehicle theft in Gharghour
2. (03 May) Stray bullet hits house killing man in Bawabet Al-Jebs due to proximate clashes
3. (04 May) Mol-affiliated gunmen arrest Audit Bureau administrative director from his house
4. (05 May) Shells lands on Al-Hadba Tool Road killing family of three, including child
5. (06 May) LNA shells ammunition in Ghneiwa militia camp in Abu Slim; 1 death & 27 injuries
6. (06 May) Shelling on Tajoura's Coastal Road results in 3 deaths & 19 injuries
7. (06 May) Shell lands on Al-Kreymiya killing mother, father & injuring their children
8. (07 May) GNA extends curfew from 1800-0600hrs for ten days until 18 May
9. (07 May) Shop owner fires shots into air to denounce shop closure by Municipality Guards
10. (07 May) LNA shelling targets Zawiyat Al-Dahmani near diplomatic mission/residences
11. (07 May) LNA shelling targets MJI; aircraft & facilities damaged; casualties
12. (09 May) LNA downs GNA-affiliated Turkish TB2 Bayraktar UAV in Ain Zara' Al-Qabailiya
13. (09 May) Shelling in Qasr Bin Ghashir kills 6
14. (09 May) LIS Dep. head dies of heart attack

Death of LIS Deputy Head linked to Nawasi

The GNA's Libyan Intelligence Service (LIS) deputy head, Abdelqader Al-Tohami, died after suffering a heart attack on 09 May, according to a relative who stated that Al-Tohami suffered from high blood sugar levels. The GNA appointed Al-Tohami as LIS deputy head in 2017 and was a prominent officer in the Gaddafi regime's external security apparatus. The incident would follow reports the Special Deterrence Force (SDF) arrested/kidnapped Al-Tohami from his house in an unknown location in Tripoli on charges of cooperating with the LNA on 07 May. The arrest came at the request of the GNA Interior Minister, Fathi Bashagha. Meanwhile, Al-Tohami's relatives accused the Nawasi Brigade of being behind his arrest, torture and subsequent death after handing over his body to his family two days later.

MJI suffers heavy damage due to shelling

LNA units targeted Mitiga International Airport (MJI) and the Souq Al-Jumaa vicinity with approximately 80 shells causing subsequent damage to an A320 aircraft, fuel storage facilities, firefighting trucks, and the passenger lounge, as well as resulting in at least two civilian casualties. In addition, sources reported a brand-new Learjet 60 and Bombardier CRJ 900, owned by United Air, were fully destroyed. Meanwhile, the GNA's Transport Ministry added that the aircraft that sustained damage was preparing to fly to Spain to operate a repatriation flight, attributing the attack to LNA forces. Unconfirmed reports allege a number of unidentified foreigners stuck in Libya were aboard the flight. Further, the Brega Petroleum Marketing Company (BPMC) stated that its jet fuel tanks were set ablaze and firefighters were working to contain the fire, with reports of 10 jet fuel tanks damaged.

Shells land near diplomatic missions/residences

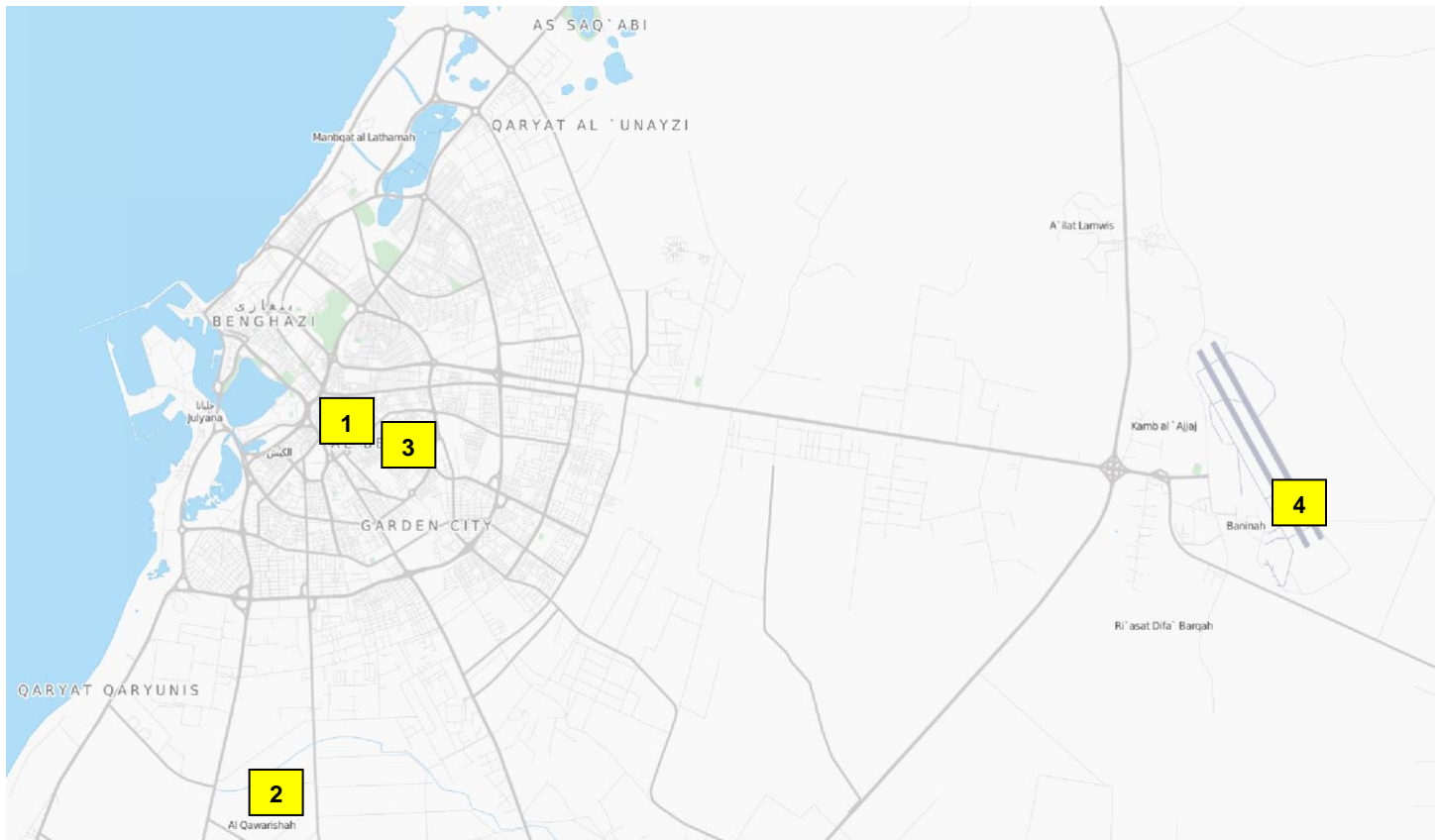
Between 07-09 May, Tripoli witnessed an intensified shelling campaign as it expanded to central areas, notably the Zawiyat Al-Dahmani at approximately 2230hrs on 07 May. Reports indicate LNA units shelled Zawiyat Al-Dahmani, with shells landing on Al-Shat Park located near the Ministry of Foreign Affairs HQ, the Turkish Embassy, and the Italian Ambassador's residence. The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs attributed the attack to LNA forces and confirmed that shells landed near the Italian Ambassador's residence causing at least two deaths. In addition, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) strongly condemned the "appalling shelling on Zawiyat Al-Dahmani neighborhood" near the Turkish Embassy and the Italian Ambassador's residence, which reportedly killed at least two civilians and injured three others. In response, the LNA's General Command issued a statement denying the targeting of diplomatic headquarters in Tripoli, noting that such actions constitute a violation of international law on 08 May. The LNA spokesperson, Ahmed Al-Mesmari, held GNA "terrorist gangs" responsible for the shelling incident and stated that the act was aimed at inciting international opinion against the LNA.

Mol-affiliated gunmen detain Audit Bureau official

At the request of the GNA's Interior Minister, Fathi Bashagha, Mol-affiliated gunmen detained the Audit Bureau administrative director, Rida Qirqab, near his house in Janzur on corruption charges in the morning on 04 April. The motive behind the arrest was allegedly due to Rida's refusal to sign off a tender purchase to establish a field hospital at an inflated price. The Mol referred to the incident as a regular interrogation procedure on suspicions of corruption and blackmailing. In response, the Bureau condemned Qirqab's "forced disappearance" in effort to prevent him from revealing financial irregularities and blocking the Ministry's suspicious transactions.

5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

Al-Nasr Football Club head survives VBIED assassination attempt



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (04 May) Armed group raids BMPC HQ & expels director
2. (05 May) LNA's Tariq Bin Ziyad convoy departs Al-Qawarsha for west
3. (05 May) Al-Nasr Football Club head survives VBIED assassination attempt
4. (06-07 May) Two planes carrying stranded nationals from Jordan arrive at BEN

VBIED targets Al-Nasr Football Club head

Reports indicate unidentified assailant(s) carried out a failed assassination attempt targeting the head of Al-Nasr Football Club, Ezzeddien Al-Wekwak, after a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) was placed beneath his armoured Nissan Patrol in front of Al-Nasr Football Club in Benghazi's Al-Berka area in the afternoon on 05 May. Neither the identity of the assailant(s) nor the motive behind the incident are known, though Al-Wekwak is alleged to have ties to Haftar's sons and has been accused of carrying out several assassinations prior to the LNA's control over Benghazi due to his affiliation with the Benghazi Revolutionaries Shura Council (BRSC). In addition, reports indicate that Al-Wekwak plays a prominent role in Benina International Airport's (BEN) operations. Of note, Al-Wekwak belongs to the influential eastern tribe of Al-Awaqir. Overall, it remains unclear if the incident is the result of an isolated personal dispute or broader internal tensions in Benghazi with possible long-term implications.

LNA reinforcements arrive in west

Pro-Libyan National Army (LNA) accounts reported a 300-strong Tariq Ibn Ziyad convoy was spotted leaving Al-Qawarsha area in the early hours of 05 May to reinforce LNA frontlines in the west.

Armed group raids BMPC & expels director

An armed group reportedly affiliated with one of Khalifa Haftar's sons stormed the Brega Petroleum Marketing Company (BPMC) HQ in Benghazi and expelled the company's director, Khairallah Al-Obaidi, on 04 May. Reports indicate Al-Obaidi supported a

political settlement in Libya in lieu of Haftar's LNA leading the country. WB is yet to independently verify the local reports.

6. What's next

Possible LNA offensive east of Misrata; GNA focus on Tripoli & Bani Walid

POLITICAL FORECAST

GNA PM Fayez Al-Serraj welcomed all peaceful political resolutions, whether amending the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) or a constitutional path and general elections at the earliest. Al-Serraj's statement comes two weeks after LNA commander Khalifa Haftar terminated the LPA. Al-Serraj's response and failure to propose an alternative political track was described by critics as a sign of his limited reach. Further, Al-Serraj highlighted divisions within the GNA bloc with a tacit reference to his long-standing dispute with Central Bank of Libya (CBL) governor Sadik Al-Kabir. The GNA PM stated divisions are deepening among state institutions, with some taking unilateral decisions and "overstepping the boundaries of their roles and authority". Regionally, Tunisia continues to be embroiled in the Libyan conflict with allegations, echoed by pro-LNA accounts, that Turkey and Qatar are attempting to establish a foothold in Tunisia's southern borders to supply GNA forces. The allegations are based on a confirmed delivery of Turkish medical aid to Libya via Tunisia's Djerba island. Tunisia's presidency confirmed it had authorized the landing of a Turkish cargo aircraft transporting medical aid to Libya on 06 May, but emphasized the cargo was inspected and the assistance will be delivered by Tunisian authorities via Ras Ajdair crossing, not directly by Turkey. Local media reports allege authorities had not been alerted to the Turkish shipment beforehand. Meanwhile, Tunisian critics condemned what they described as diplomatic attempts by Turkey to forcefully involve their country in the Libyan conflict. The opposition figures and parliamentarians continue to voice their concerns over the links between Tunisia's Islamist Ennahda Party and Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP).

WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

International Crisis Group (ICG) takes a closer look at Haftar's decision to abolish the LPA, or Skhirat Agreement, and what may come next. The article explores the widely-held assumption that Haftar's recent move will be followed by a constitutional document that will lead to the formation of a military-dominated council tasked with appointing a new government in the east. ICG points to the many uncertainties that have emerged in the aftermath of the political move in the east, which was likely motivated by multiple factors, including a likely attempt to sideline Aguilah Saleh and prevent negotiations with the Tripoli camp. In addition, the piece explores how Haftar's move received mixed responses from the international community and LNA foreign backers. The article argues that it is too early to ascertain how Haftar's move will play out, adding that the LNA commander's "ability to carry out what he proposes and to sustain the war in Tripoli will depend in large part on whether his local and foreign supporters continue to stand behind him". The ICG piece argues that "At this point it is unclear whether Haftar still hopes to turn to the House of Representatives to supply a legal basis for his own proposal, for example by persuading its members to impose martial law or by demanding that they formally adopt the new constitutional declaration when it is unveiled. Finally, Haftar may also be trying to deflect public attention from the Tripoli battlefield, where his forces have suffered setbacks in recent weeks. Pro-Tripoli forces have managed to regain ground since early April, in large part owing to Turkish military support. Haftar's move has left his allies divided. The House of Representatives, which represents about one third of parliamentarians elected in 2014 and most of whom are Haftar supporters, has not officially responded to Haftar's announcement, and consultations between Saleh and the military appear to be ongoing. But several House members have confirmed their support of Haftar's proposal, while others have privately expressed dismay at this apparent authoritarian drift. Eastern Libya has seen demonstrations backing Haftar's proposal in recent days, but it is unclear whether these are choreographed or genuine expressions of support. Other groups in the east are on the fence, largely because they fear a new form of governance that could shunt aside the House of Representatives and lead to military rule, which they oppose. Nor is it clear whether Haftar's initiative has the support of all the ALAF commanders. The likelihood that his rank and file will stray from his preferred course is slight, but if popular mobilisation against it grows, cracks within the ALAF could emerge."

SECURITY FORECAST

In the medium term, Turkey could look to double down on its support for the GNA to deter LNA forces from shelling Tripoli. Ankara understands that it cannot expand its presence across the west before first repelling LNA forces from Tripoli's artillery range. Turkey's support has so far rebalanced military forces on the ground, though a renewed escalation by Ankara could work in the LNA's favour by enabling foreign backers to double down on their support and justify retaliation. Seen from this angle, LNA forces are unlikely to refrain from shelling Tripoli in the medium term. While all Tripoli positions remain exposed, LNA forces could scale down in an attempt to preserve their public image this week. Meanwhile, sources reported a gradual increase in crime rates across the capital as a direct result of the GNA's relaxed curfew measures. GNA UAV strikes will continue to target Al-Wattiyah airbase and LNA supply lines. Bani Walid and other critical towns along the LNA's supply routes into Tripoli will continue to take centre stage in the broader conflict across the western region. The GNA has been recently attempting to expand its influence in Bani Walid where local tensions are high due to the killing of a local activist. The LNA's deployment of Al-Werfalli and the latest Bani Walid-Tarhunah road reopening highlights the vital role played by the town in the LNA's supply lines, especially after the recent GNA military momentum. East of Misrata, an LNA-sanctioned offensive towards Abugrein remains possible as it is within targeting range and directly linked to LNA supply lines from the east. Turning to the south, Al-Abaj's visit to Ghat highlights LNA concerns over possible GNA-led attempts to sow divisions across the south. While LNA forces have so far secured the loyalty of local factions, alliances will remain fluid in the area.

LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

Karim Mezran and Dario Cristiani explore for the *Atlantic Council* the recent political episode in the East between Haftar and HoR speaker Aguilah Saleh. In the piece, the authors argue that recent events have highlighted internal cracks within the eastern bloc. According to Mezran and Cristiani, Haftar's decision to abolish the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) and recent losses in Libya's West could go as far as changing positions among the LNA's foreign backers. The piece then further analyses the LNA's foreign support, including Russia's nuanced position vis-à-vis the LNA. The piece reads "For days, it was rumored that some of the most influential tribes and powerhouses of eastern Libya were growing increasingly at odds with Haftar. For instance, Saleh is not only the speaker but a crucial political and tribal figure from Tobruk belonging to the al-Ubaidat tribe. This powerful tribe has been running security institutions in Tobruk since the times of the Ottomans and has never been side-lined—not even at the time of Italian colonization. It is significant, then, that the tribe is becoming less and less keen on Haftar, as are several other critical constituencies in the east who played an essential role in Haftar's emergence in the Libyan theatre. The perceived failure of the rogue general's military gamble in western Libya is, now, bringing this discontent to the surface. The same can be said for the bloc of external actors supporting him. The reality of this foreign support is more diversified and complex than many thought. The role of Russia, for instance, has often been misunderstood. Moscow always had a more nuanced approach to the Libyan reality than that of other players, as theirs is not only linked to Haftar."

About Whispering Bell



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