

1. The Big Picture

GNA emboldened amid mounting anti-Russia rhetoric from Washington

This week, the United States' (US) role in the Libyan conflict was under the spotlight after Washington escalated its rhetoric against Russia's growing influence in-country. Both the US Department of State and Defense singled out Moscow on the economic and military fronts in multiple strong statements.

Meanwhile, on the ground, Government of National Accord (GNA) forces backed by Turkey continued to gain ground towards Tripoli International Airport (TIP) as the Libyan National Army (LNA) under Khalifa Haftar's command gradually retreated. LNA forces are now on the defensive and effectively squeezed around TIP. However, after recent military advances and offensive trajectory across the north-west, GNA forces are losing momentum due to the presence of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and anti-personnel landmines reportedly placed by LNA forces across Tripoli's southern frontlines.

While LNA mortar/rocket shelling saw a month-on-month decrease as LNA forces gradually retreated southward, rocket attacks targeted Tripoli's densely-populated area of Tuesday Mall killing at least five civilians on 31 May. In spite of the documented civilian fatalities, sources reported the presence of Nawasi Brigade camps and assets in the vicinity, which could have possibly been the intended targets.

The incident, attributed to the LNA, would indicate Haftar's forces remain capable of reaching the northernmost areas of the capital. The situation presents a challenge for the GNA and Turkey's objectives, which include repelling Haftar's forces from Tripoli's artillery range.

Beyond Tripoli, the LNA continues to retaliate with airstrikes across Gharyan and east of Misrata. LNA intent to retaliate is gradually becoming clearer; a renewed focus on Gharyan enables the LNA to consolidate supply lines from Al-Jufra airbase via Ash Shwayrif and Mizdah. After capturing Gharyan and consolidating supplies from Al-Jufra, there is a possibility the LNA will favour another northward push towards Tripoli.

More importantly, the diplomatic landscape was marked by strong statements laying the groundwork for a round of negotiations in the long term. First, US Africa Command (AFRICOM) publicly assessed on 26 May that Moscow deployed fighter aircraft in support of the LNA "to tip the scales in its favour". Further, AFRICOM confirmed at least 14 Russian MiG-29s and SU-24 fighters departed Russia with Russian Air Force markings throughout May and were later repainted upon landing at Khmeimin Airbase in Syria. The aircraft were then flown by Russian military members and escorted by Russian fighters based in Syria to Libya, landing in eastern Libya near Tobruk to refuel, before later flying to Al-Jufra Airbase, according to AFRICOM. Both Russia and the LNA officially denied AFRICOM's report.

In a separate statement on 29 May, the US Department of State reiterated its recognition of the Tripoli-based Central Bank of Libya (CBL) and praised the Maltese government's seizure of "counterfeit" Libyan currency printed by Russian state-owned Joint Stock Company Goznak and ordered by an "illegitimate parallel entity", in reference to the eastern Interim Government. According to the parallel CBL in Bayda, the shipment in question was seized in November 2019 with no new developments since.

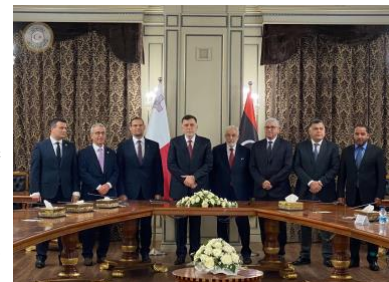
Regardless, the statements were viewed as a sign of renewed diplomatic activity from Washington after months of relative disengagement on the Libyan file. Pro-GNA observers described the move as strengthening the GNA's political posture, especially after a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on migration signed with Malta on 28 May helped reinforce the Tripoli government's legitimacy.

However, there is evidence to suggest the US statements are an early attempt at de-escalation. The US is publicly articulating its policy position to define the levels of engagement it would tolerate from parties to the conflict in Libya. The AFRICOM statement is calibrated to bring Moscow to the negotiating table and pierce its veil of plausible deniability in Libya. Meanwhile, the timing of the CBL-related statement marks an attempt to halt parallel efforts aimed at establishing a new transitional government in the east, especially after recent political moves by Haftar and mounting evidence of a possible attempt to market crude independently. With this context in mind, the US statements establish the architecture of future negotiation rounds.

Backchannel negotiations are reportedly underway, but it remains to be seen how official talks will resume in the long term. While Turkey and Russia seem at odds by supporting opposing sides, both have effectively cemented their role as the main players in Libya. A Turkey-Russia deal over Libya is more likely than an EU-led negotiation round. Given the fact LNA foreign backers in the emerging East Med alliance are attempting to politically prop up Haftar's forces by focusing on Turkey's actions in the region, Ankara will look to negotiate with Russia to offset the impact of its tarnished public image and compensate for its lack of legitimacy on the ground. Meanwhile, Moscow is more entrenched in eastern Libya. Despite recent losses by the LNA across the western region, reports indicate Moscow is actively expanding its influence in the east by using its military support as a bargaining chip against eastern political figures. It remains to be seen how Ankara and Moscow will determine the boundaries of their respective spheres of influence across the north-west. However, Russia and Turkey will likely look to utilize terrorism and migration as key policy levers over the EU.

KEY POINTS

- COVID-19 cases surge after cluster in Sabha
- US calls out Russian interference in Libya
- Emerging signs of new negotiation rounds



CONTENTS

- 1 **THE BIG PICTURE**
GNA emboldened amid mounting anti-Russia rhetoric from Washington
- 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

Russian PMCs evacuate Bani Walid amid tensions; LNA downs four UAVs in area

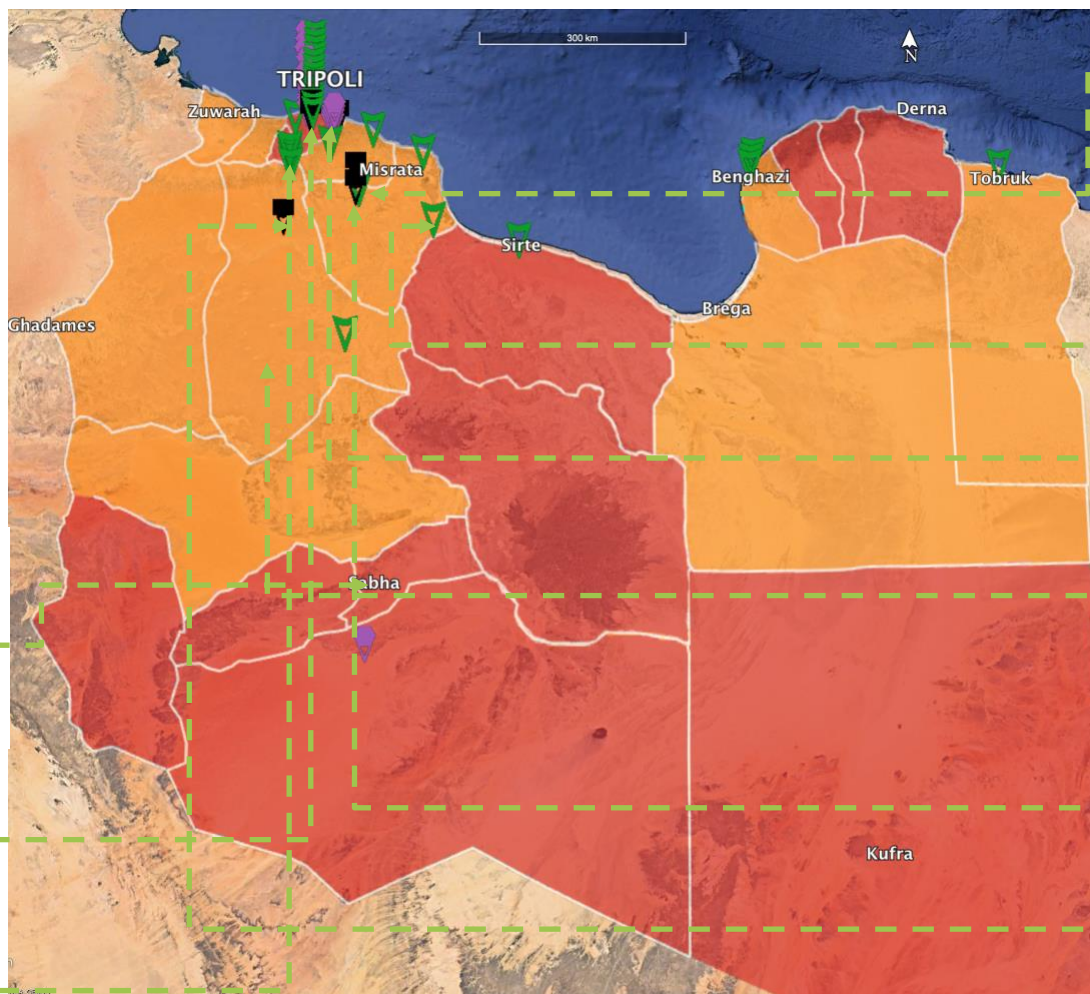
Key

THREAT INDICATORS

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

EVENT INDICATORS

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



Reports indicate a local dispute between relatives resulted in one fatality in Bani Walid in the morning on 26 May. Conflicting reports indicate an altercation with Russian Wagner Group private military contractors (PMCs) during cargo loading resulted in the man's death at Bani Walid Airport. The male victim was allegedly a security guard at the airport, while conflicting reports indicate he was affiliated with a local faction in Bani Walid and belongs to the pro-LNA tribe of Al-Dioul. Bani Walid's Mayor, Salem Nouyr, confirmed an incident at the airport and local pressure prompted Russian PMCs to evacuate and travel southwards, likely towards Al-Jufra airbase.

Pro-LNA accounts reported several airstrikes targeted GNA positions in Abugrein, Wadi Zamzam, Al-Qaddahiyah throughout the day on 30 May, in addition to Gharyan later that night.

Reports indicate an armed group opened fire on four young men resulting in one fatality and three injuries in Garabolli in the evening on 28 May. No further details.

On 30 May, the National Oil Corporation (NOC) reported Hamada Oilfield security guards, consisting of local militiamen from Al-Zintan, prevented a technical team sent by Akakus Oil Operation Company (AOO) to open a valve pumping chemicals that protect the crude transmission line from corrosion.

The LNA's Media Office reported three GNA-operated Turkish UAVs were downed over Bani Walid on 30 May. The first UAV was downed in the morning and the other two later that evening.

The family of a prominent Libyan human smuggler carried out a revenge killing resulting in the death of 30 migrants in Mizdah on 27 May. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reported the migrants were shot dead in a warehouse. The GNA reported the victims included 26 Bangladeshi and four African migrants, and 11 others injured. The GNA confirmed the smuggler's family sought revenge after migrants killed their son in Mizdah.

The National Center for Disease Control (NCDC) reported 26 new cases of coronavirus in Libya, bringing the total number of cases in-country to 156 as of 31 May. Reports indicate 14 cases were recorded in Sabha due to contact with an infected patient, in addition to three new cases in the city. Meanwhile, one case was diagnosed in a repatriated national from Turkey on 08 May.

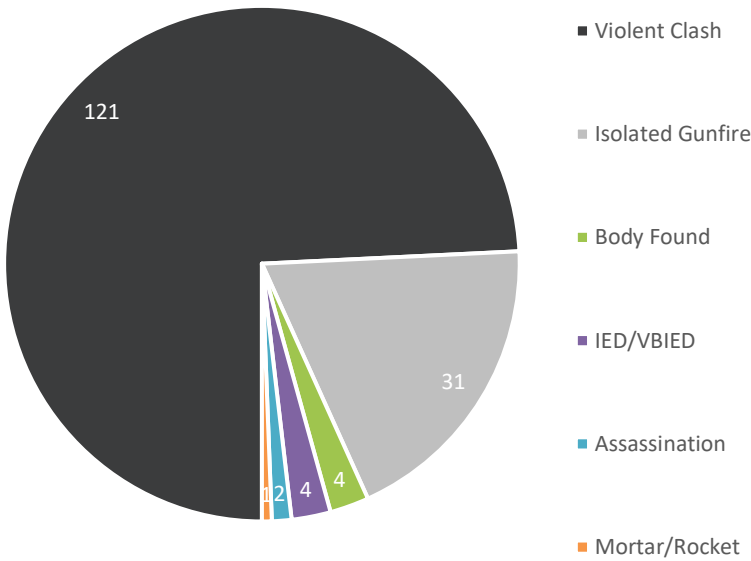
Local reports indicate a grave containing the remains of four bodies was found in the Al-Saadeeya area, south of Tripoli, on 30 May. The bodies belonged to Mohammed Rikhri, and his wife and two daughters who had been reported missing since October 2019.

Reports of heavy clashes between LNA and GNA forces in Al-Hira, north of Gharyan, with LNA forces advancing in the area at approximately 1400hrs on 25 May. On 27 May, LNA airstrikes targeted GNA positions in Gharyan at night after a 72hr halt.

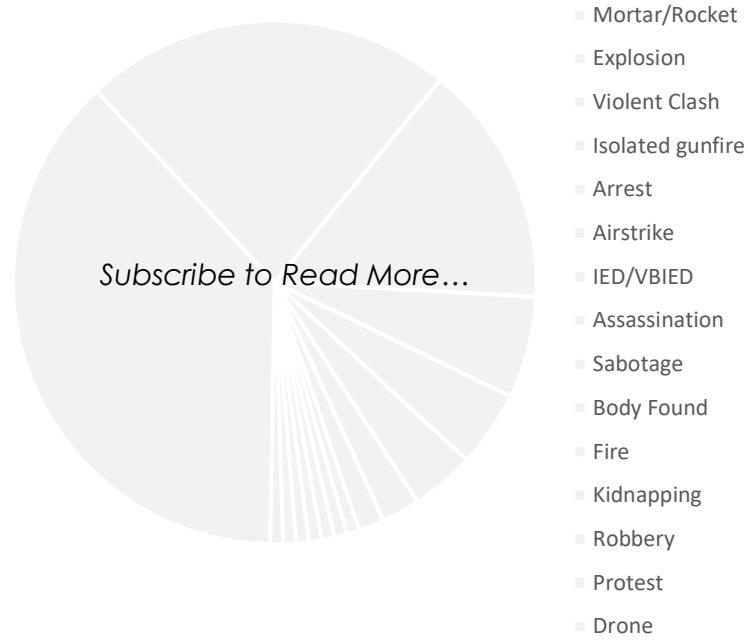
3. Nationwide Security Analysis

Tripoli clashes account for majority of fatalities; decrease in airstrikes

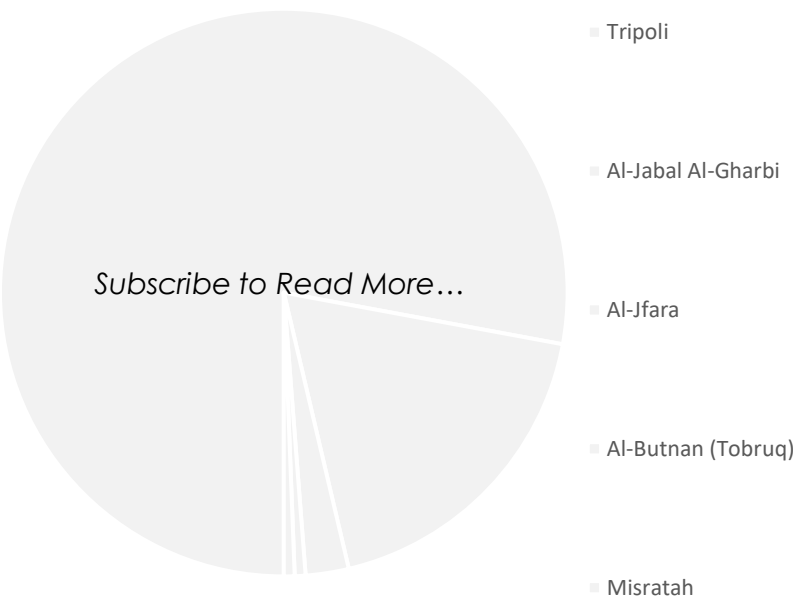
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



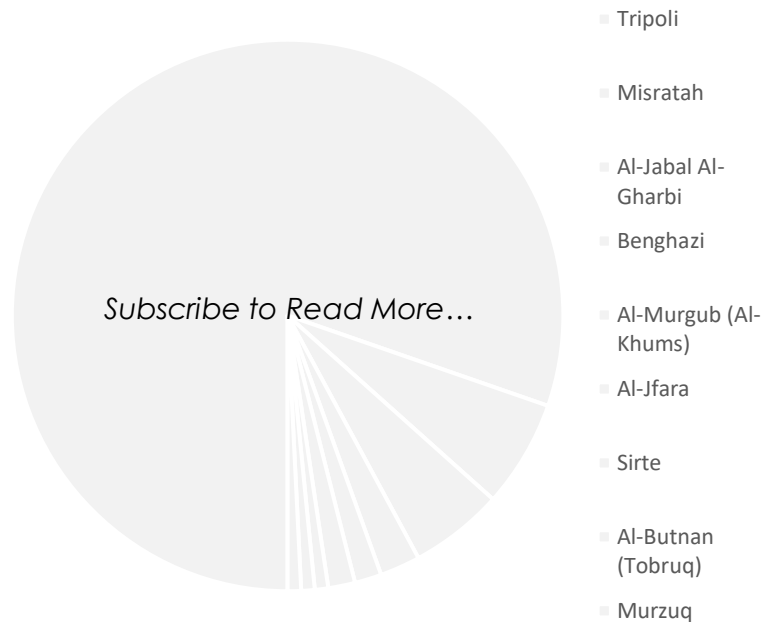
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



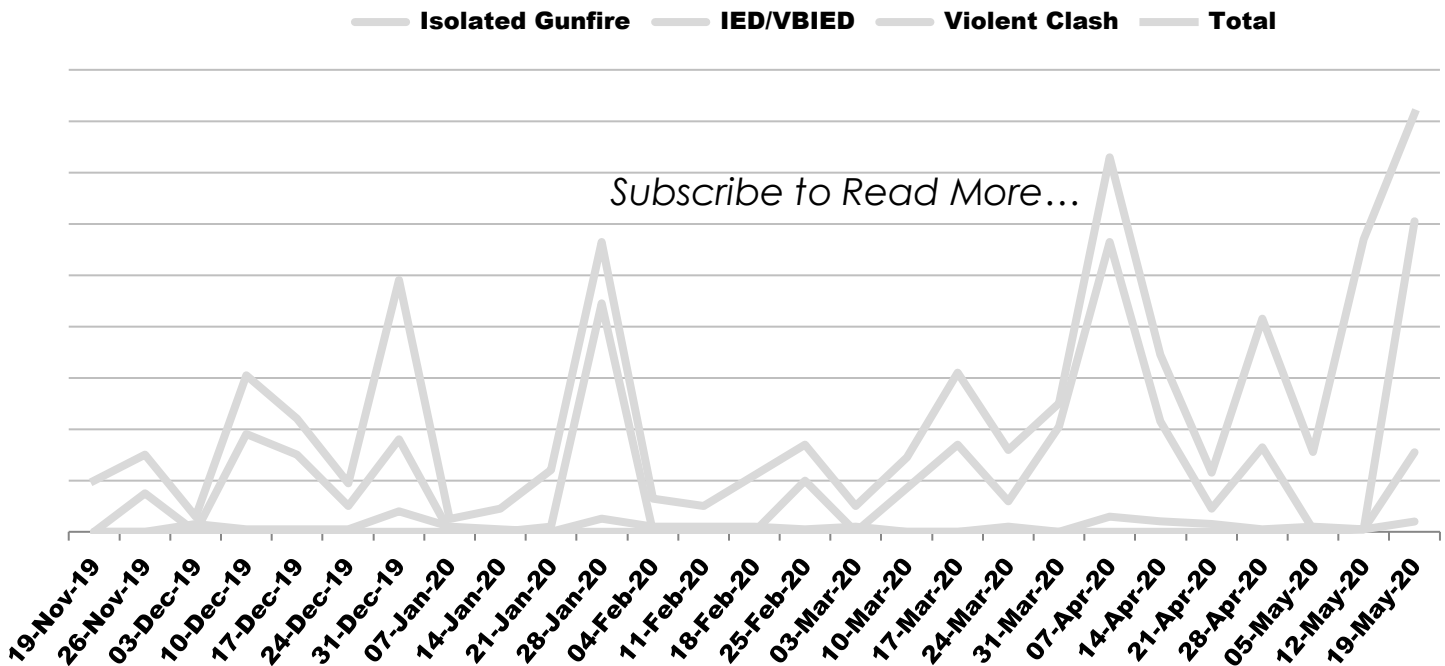
Nationwide fatalities by national district (Past week)



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 163 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 114 deaths reported last week and 31 the week before. WB recorded 121 fatalities as a result of heavy clashes on Tripoli's Al-Kazerna and Al-Yarmouk axes, with the Libyan National Army (LNA) claiming a total of 121 deaths within Government of National Accord (GNA) ranks as a result. The number of fatalities would likely be higher if a verified casualty toll from the ongoing clashes was available. Meanwhile, isolated gunfire cases resulted in the death of 31 individuals, including 30 migrants in a retaliation attack in Mizdah. In addition, the remains of four bodies were found in a mass grave located in Al-Saadeeya the south of Tripoli. Meanwhile, two separate improvised explosive devices (IED) reportedly planted by LNA forces in an effort to obstruct GNA advances exploded, resulting in four fatalities on the Hadba Al-Mashro' front south of Tripoli. In addition, two assassinations recorded in Bani Walid to the west and Tobruk to the east accounted for two fatalities. Meanwhile, one civilian was killed due to indiscriminate shelling in Tripoli. 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.

In western Libya, WB recorded a total of 121 incidents, including 102 in Tripoli marking a decrease in security incidents recorded in the west in contrast to the previous week. In Tripoli, WB recorded 47 mortar/rocket shelling incidents and 28 explosions as a result, 19 violent clashes, 3 isolated gunfire cases, 2 IED explosions, 1 arrest and 1 protest.

In the wider western region, the security environment remains dominated by military activity. This week, however, saw an evident decrease in airstrikes conducted by the warring sides. WB recorded five airstrikes throughout the reporting period, including four LNA airstrikes conducted in the Al-Jabal Al-Gharbi and Misrata districts, in addition to a GNA airstrike targeting LNA supply lines in Sirte. In the Bani Walid vicinity, LNA forces reported the downing of four GNA-operated unmanned aerial vehicle (UAVS) over the area. Meanwhile, tensions were high after conflicting reports emerged over the death of a man following altercations with Russian private military contractors (PMCs) at the Bani Walid Airport. Of note, the GNA military spokesman, Mohammed Gnounou, stated that he monitored 15 military cargo aircraft, including an Ilyushin and Antonov An-32 aircraft, landing at Bani Walid Airport to transport Wagner mercenaries on 24 May. Gnounou stated the mercenaries withdrew from Tripoli and Tarhuna frontlines with cover from Pantsir air defence systems, though he did not disclose their intended destination point. Beyond military activity, this week witnessed sporadic security incidents across the region. The Great Man-Made River Administration reported unidentified assailants sabotaged 16 water wells in the eastern field of Al-Hasawna-Sahl Jfara System in the evening on 27 May. Equipment inside the power control room (PCU) was sabotaged and electrical wires were cut. The Administration noted it does not possess the required capability as a provider to protect wells. Separately, an act of retaliation carried out by the family of a prominent human smuggler in Mizdah for the killing of their son by migrants held captive resulted in the death of at least 30 migrants. Further, an official at the Libyan-Tunisian Ras Ajdir border crossing, Mokhtar Al-Mansouri, stated that 1,965 stranded Libyan nationals crossed into Libya between 18-25 May. Al-Mansouri stated that 616 nationals crossed the border on the first day of Eid Al-Fitr on 24 May, while an additional 183 nationals entered the country on the following day.

Separately, the GNA's Western Joint Operations Room declared it will refrain from targeting LNA units and military equipment retreating from Tarhuna, Bani Walid, and Nessma southward, starting 2200hrs LT on 25 May until 2200hrs LT on 26 May. The Room reported ongoing aerial monitoring and warned that any units heading northward will be targeted.

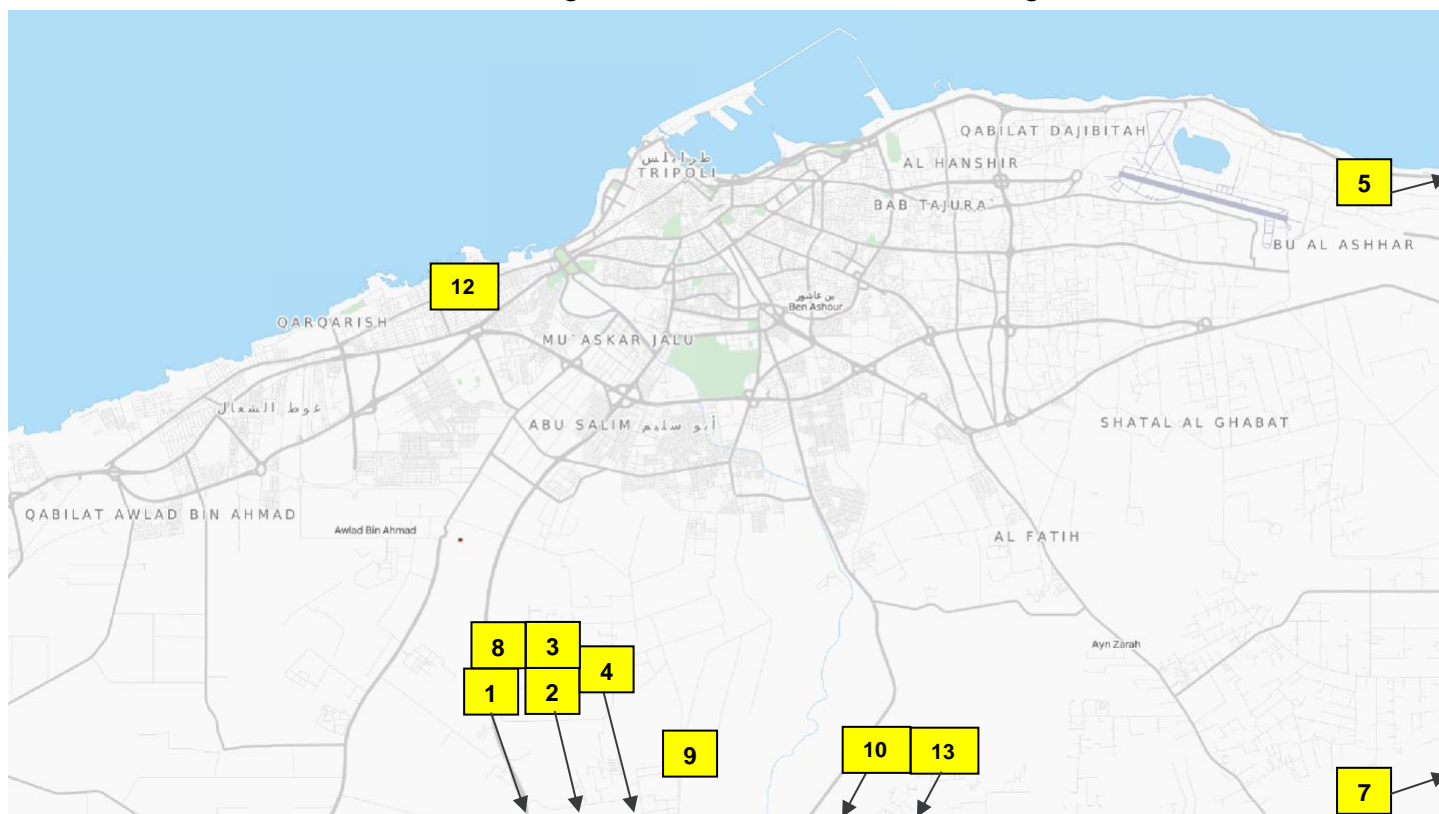
Meanwhile in the central region, GNA forces continue to focus on targeting LNA supply lines. The GNA military spokesman, Mohammed Gnounou, reported an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) strike targeted two LNA fuel trucks south of Sirte on 25 May. Gnounou reported the trucks were en route to Tripoli to supply LNA positioned on southern frontlines. No additional security incidents were recorded in the central region throughout the reporting period, though military activity continued on the Misrata-Sirte border areas, including in the Abugrein, Al-Qaddahiya and Wadizamzam areas. LNA airstrikes & an exchange of artillery shelling remain frequent in the aforementioned areas.

Turning to the south, WB recorded no further security incidents across the south throughout the reporting period, following the Islamic State's (IS) claim of responsibility via its Amaq outlet for an improvised explosive device (IED) attack targeting an LNA 628 Infantry battalion vehicle at the entrance of Taraghin on 23 May, which marked a resurgence of IS activity in the region. Nevertheless, the week was dominated by a surge in coronavirus cases in the city of Sabha after the first two initial cases in the city were recorded by the National Center for Disease (NCDC) on 26 May. A total of 42 cases have been recorded in Sabha to date.

In the eastern region, Benghazi's security environment remained dominated by arrest campaigns across the city with three arrests recorded throughout the reporting period. In addition, a man was arrested on murder charges on the first day of Eid-Al-Fitr in Tobruk on 24 May. Details surrounding the incident remain unknown, though the perpetrator confessed to the charges against him.

4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

GNA seizes TIP bridge; civilian casualties as shelling extends to central areas



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (29-31 May) GNA forces seize TIP bridge
2. (28-30 May) LNA: GNA attack ivo Al-Kazerma repelled; prominent Syrian commander killed
3. (27 May) GNA extends 1800-0600hrs curfew for additional 10 days effective 28 May
4. (27 May) GNA advances south of Airport Rd, The Wildlife Garden & Al-Kazerma; LNA denies
5. (27 May) Car-bound protest led by Tajoura Municipality Mayor against GECOL power cuts
6. (26 May) LNA report downing of explosive-laden unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV)
7. (26 May) GNA forces attack LNA positions in Garaballi's Al-Rawajeh area
8. (26 May) LNA plant IEDs to obstruct GNA advances; LNA claims control over TIP Bridge & Al-Kazerma following heavy clashes
9. (26 May) Two separate IED explosions kill 2 civilians visiting evacuate house and two demining team members ivo Hadba Al-Mashro
10. (23-25 May) Clashes ivo Al-Yarmook Camp; 54 deaths & 22 captured within GNA ranks
11. (25 May) Gunmen open fire on Hay Al-Andalus Police Station after being stopped at CP
12. (24 May) Shelling ivo Khallat Al-Furjan kills one

Latest developments on frontlines

GNA forces advanced across several frontlines and seized the Qaser Ben Ghashir Bridge on the Airport Road axis, also referred to as the Tripoli International Airport (TIP) bridge between 29-31 May, in an attempt to gain control over TIP, which has remained under Libyan National Army (LNA) control throughout the offensive. Between 31 May-01 June, heavy clashes between LNA) and Government of National Accord (GN) forces remained concentrated on the Al-Ramla axis in direction of the Airport Road and the Al-Kazerma area on 31 May. The LNA's Ajdabiya Operations Force reported GNA attacks on the Ain Zara, Al-Ramla and TIP bridge axes were repelled for the eighth consecutive day.

Civilians injured due to shelling ivo Sog Al-Tlat

At approximately 1600hrs on 31 May, reports indicate indiscriminate shelling targeted the Tuesday Mall area and nearby vicinities resulting in five fatalities and seven injuries after several shells landed on the plot of grass used as a park at the Tuesday Mall Roundabout, the Hammangi Italian Cemetery, a house in Gorje's Al-Sharea Al-Gharbi area, and near a school in the Al-Madina Al-Riadia area. It remains unclear whether the shelling was indiscriminate in nature with the aim of inflicting civilian casualties, or if the intended target was a military asset. While the targeted area includes at least four Nawasi Brigade military camps/buildings suggesting the shells were fired by LNA forces, unverified reports suggest the impact of the explosions indicated that they were fired by GNA forces from a nearby location and not by LNA forces positioned in the south. The LNA attributed the attack to GNA forces, noting that the incident stood in retaliation for repelled attacks across several fronts. The LNA called on Tripoli's residents to exercise

Family receive body of abducted son

Reports indicate a family received their son's body, a taxi driver from Kikla, in Al-Hadba Al-Keza area in the morning on 30 May. The man was kidnapped by the LNA's Ninth Brigade (Al-Kaniat of Tarhunah) after dropping off a customer in Tarhunah in April 2019. The man's body showed signs of torture.

Man found killed inside vehicle

A man was found killed inside his vehicle in the An-Najila area, near Joudy Factory, in the morning on 30 May. Details surrounding the killing remain unknown.

Gunmen open fire on Police Station

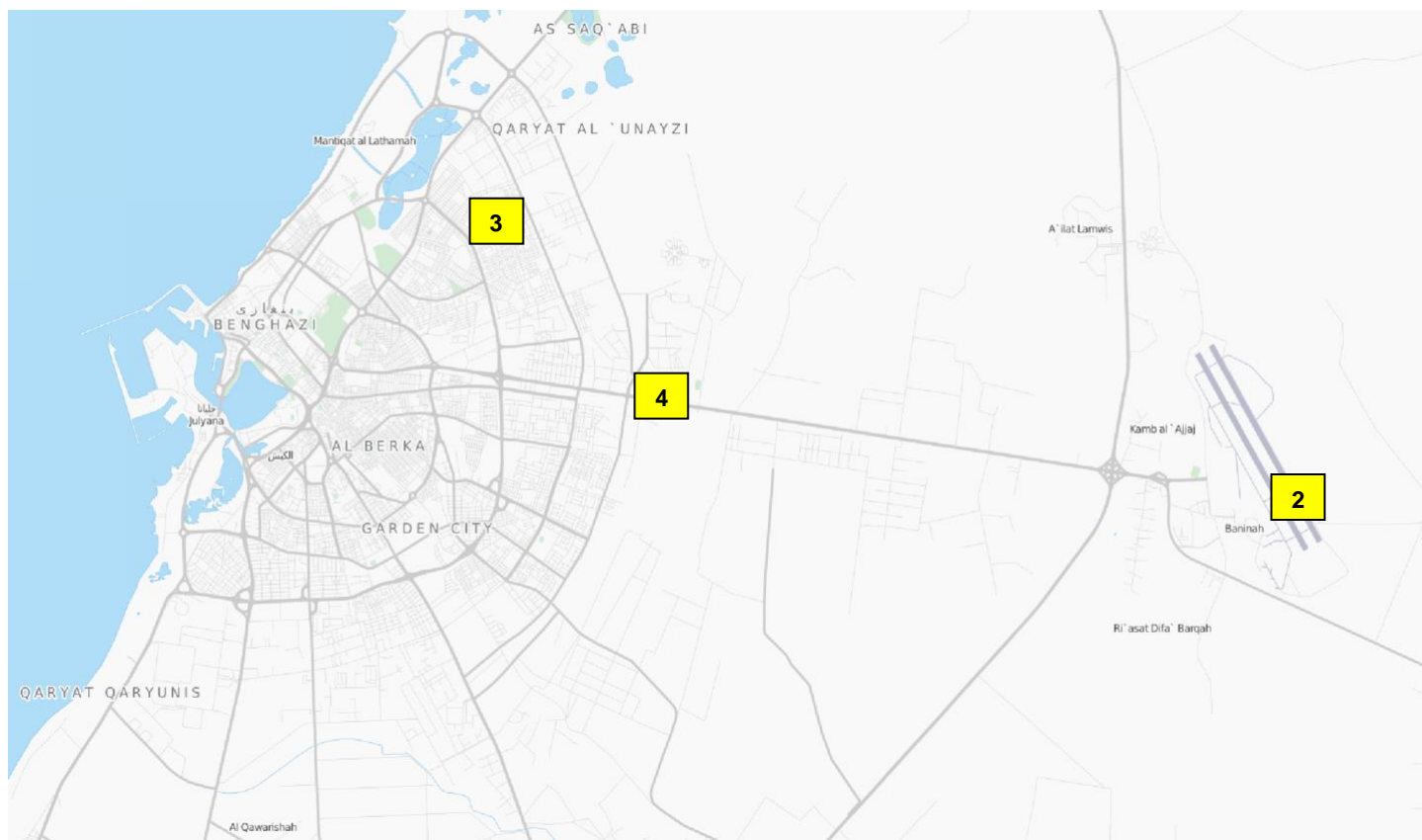
Two gunmen driving a civilian vehicle were stopped at a police-manned checkpoint in front of Hay Al Andalus Police Station during curfew hours at approximately 1830hrs on 25 May. One of the gunmen opened fire on the police station building and subsequently fled the scene. At approximately 2030hrs, two Special Deterrence Force (SDF) vehicles scoured the area in an attempt to arrest the gunmen. The SDF arrested one of the gunmen who lives in the area. The latest reports indicate the gunmen are affiliated with Zintan armed factions led by Emad Trabelsi.

Car-bound protest against GECOL power cuts

WB sources reported a local car-bound protest denouncing power cuts was led by the Tajoura Municipality Mayor, where the protestors gathered at Al-Andalusi Roundabout in Tajoura and drove their vehicles on Shat Road towards Mitiga International Airport (MJI) and back between 1730-1630hrs on 27 May. The protestors demanded a reshuffle at the General Electricity Company of Libya (GECOL) against corruption and unsolved power shortage issues. The Mayor stated that he had received reports GECOL will cut off power for three hours daily starting next week.

5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

Security environment dominated by crackdown on drug dealers & criminal groups



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (28 May) Curfew extended until further notice as COVID-19 cases rise
2. (28 May) Al-Thinni enforces travel ban after meeting with Interior Minister
3. (28 May) Stranded nationals arrive at BEN on repatriation flight from Tunisia
4. (25 May) Drug dealer arrested in Al-Wheishi area
5. (24 May) Three drug dealers arrested in the Bouatni area
6. (24 May) Armed gang specialized in house burglaries arrested

Al-Thinni enforces travel ban

The Interim Government Prime Minister, Abdallah Al-Thinni, enforced a travel ban between cities under areas under its control during a meeting with Interior Minister Ibrahim Bushnaaf in Benghazi on 28 May. The two sides also discussed the need to re-evaluate curfew timings in light of a recent surge in coronavirus cases in Libya.

Curfew extended until further notice

Benghazi's Security Directorate announced extended curfew timings from 1800-0600hrs effective 28 May until further notice. The Directorate stated all shops selling food supplies are exempt, while sports clubs, popular markets, beauty parlours, barber shops, youth centres, restaurants, and cafes will immediately close. In addition, the Directorate's head demanded that stranded nationals repatriated from Turkey proceed to the nearest health centre to undergo a two-week isolation. The extended curfew across the west and eastern regions follows the highest number of coronavirus cases recorded in a single day, after 20 suspected cases tested positive on 27 May.

Crackdown on drug dealers

Benghazi's Rescue Police Department arrested a drug dealer in the Al-Wheishi area on 25 May. According to the Department, the suspect was caught in possession of drugs and later confessed to the charges against him. Separately, Benghazi's Security Directorate arrested three drug dealers in the Bouatni area on 24 May. The Directorate stated that one of the suspects was a member of a dangerous criminal gang specialised in armed robbery

and was involved in the theft of a million Libyan dinars (LYD) in a house robbery in Al-Oun area. Following interrogations, one of the suspects confessed that illicit drug trading generates approximately 40,000 LYD per day. Security forces in Benghazi recently announced a crackdown on drug dealers across the city.

Armed gang specialised in robberies arrested

On 24 May, Benghazi Security Directorate reported the arrest of an armed gang specialized in house burglaries across the city, particularly in the areas of Bodhira, Lathamah, Sidi Khalifa and the Vehicle Street. The arrest came after locals complained of house robberies in the aforementioned areas, with an exchange of gunfire reported during the arrest resulting in the injury of several security members. The suspects confessed to the charges against them and reported that one of the targeted houses belonged to a suspected Islamic State (IS) militant.

6. What's next

LNA offensive on Gharyan; GNA to intensify UAV strikes

POLITICAL FORECAST

SECURITY FORECAST

The diplomatic front continues to be marked by backchannel negotiations. Official talks are unlikely to resume in the short term until all parties to the conflict have maximized their bargaining leverage. The LNA's foreign backers have an interest in resuming negotiations to limit Turkey's military expansion across the west. French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian stated that the Libyan crisis was deepening and warned of a "Syrianisation of Libya", at a French Senate hearing on 27 May. Le Drian warned that in the absence of negotiations between the conflict parties, the situation will worsen. Of note, Le Drian spoke to GNA PM Fayeze Sarraj about the resumption of 5+5 military talks in a phone call on 31 May. However, Ankara is unlikely to enter negotiations before consolidating its presence in Al-Wattiyah airbase and repelling Haftar's forces from Tripoli's south. In addition, Turkey will likely seek to demonstrate how serious it is about drilling in the East Med before entering broader negotiations over the region. Close encounters could ensure off Libya's coast. Domestically, the House of Representatives (HoR) speaker, Aguila Saleh, discussed the latest developments in Libya and reviewed possible solutions to bring an end to the conflict with Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, in a phone call on 26 May. The talks lend credence to reports Moscow has placed its bets on Saleh's political initiative to project influence across the eastern region. Of note, local reports indicate Saleh arrived in Cairo on 29 May. Details surrounding the nature of the visit remain unclear, though it would come amid rumours of a political deal in the works. Regionally, the Libyan conflict is having a knock-on effect on Tunisian politics amid allegations Islamist-leaning elements are facilitating Turkey's expansion. Opposition parties continue to accuse Rached Ghannouchi, the Parliament Speaker and head of Islamist Ennahda Party, of executing Turkey's agenda and undermining Tunisia's sovereignty. At least seven opposition parties have called for a parliamentary session and a motion of no confidence to unseat Ghannouchi.

WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

In an interview with *Carnegie Middle East Center*, Alison Pargeter, a senior research fellow at the School of Security Studies King's College London focusing on Libya, discusses the fundamental relationship between Libyan tribes and Haftar in his campaign to take over the country. When asked about Haftar's particular relationship with tribes in the east, Pargeter notes how Haftar realised the importance of garnering tribal support to ensure his military aspirations became a reality on the ground early on, including from key eastern tribes such as the "Awaqir, Obediat, Barassa, and Hassa". In turn, Pargeter states that by supporting Haftar, the tribes ensured their own interests were safeguarded, including access to jobs and resources, which stood at risk following the arrival of "outside forces", including Islamist currents, in Benghazi post the 2011 Revolution. In a key observation, Pargeter notes that tribes "do not act as uniform bodies", and therefore, have units within them that remain at odds with Haftar. However, Pargeter argues that while there have been defections and disagreements, in addition to ongoing speculation that Haftar is gradually losing his eastern tribal support base, the latter will continue to view Haftar as the "best protector of their interests" as he remains the "only real strongman in the east." Meanwhile, Pargeter stated that in the absence of deals/alliances with tribes in the Oil Crescent and the south, Haftar would have been unable to seize the aforementioned areas, similar to his alliances with Tarhuna tribes that paved the way for his offensive on Tripoli. In contrast, Pargeter argues that Haftar's rivals have struggled to monopolise tribal support in a similar context due to the "predominantly urbanized outlook of the main powers in Tripoli and Misrata, as well as their association with the Islamist camp in its varying hues." Pargeter referred to the GNA as a "head without a body", "too weak" to cultivate meaningful policy toward tribes. When asked about the future of the Haftar-tribal alliance, Pargeter argues that while consecutive defeats in the Tripoli offensive will likely strain relations, eastern tribal support will continue in the absence of an alternative figure. Further, Pargeter noted that while the HoR speaker Aguila Saleh is attracting attention as a potential rival power hub in the east, he stands as "no substitute to Haftar and never will be" due to tribal competition and rivalry among other eastern tribes that will object such a scenario.

GNA forces are expected to continue their ground offensive towards Tripoli International Airport (TIP) while LNA forces prioritise Gharyan and areas between the town and Ash Shwayrif. In Tripoli, if GNA forces manage to repel the LNA further south, a sense of normality can return, although explosive remnants of war (ERW) and sporadic shelling will continue to pose a threat to civilians and business operations. At the time of writing, emerging reports indicate LNA force regained control of Al-Asabaa. GNA UAV strikes are subsequently expected to resume across the area in the short term. Beyond Tripoli, engagement continues between LNA and GNA forces in the vicinity of Al-Rawajeh, south Garabolli. Despite recent losses across the west, an LNA incursion into Garabolli remains possible in the medium term and would redirect GNA military assets. Meanwhile, across the west, local grievances have historically increased during summer as the General Electricity Company of Libya (GECOL) begins its load shedding programme to ease demand off the power grid. Protests over shortages and general living conditions are expected to increase in the medium term. While so far curfew restrictions have prevented locals from gathering, acts of civil disobedience are likely regardless of whether the GNA eases the current curfew. Of note, WB sources reported a local car-bound protest denouncing power cuts was led by the Tajoura Municipality Mayor, where the protestors gathered at Al-Andalusi Roundabout in Tajoura and drove their vehicles on Shat Road towards Mitiga International Airport (MJI) and back between 1730-1630hrs on 27 May. Whispering Bell assesses carjacking, robberies, kidnapping of locals, and other crime activity will gradually resurface in the medium term. Of note, Whispering Bell has recorded a steady increase in crime over the past two weeks, relatively compared with the initial curfew period. Criminal activity continues to be more acute in areas closer to combat zones, though opportunistic crime was recorded in western Tripoli areas such as An-Najila, Al-Kreymiya, Gorje, Hay Al-Andalus and Ghut Shaal.

LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

Reuters citing Energy Minister Fatih Donmez reported that Turkey may begin oil exploration in the eastern Mediterranean within three to four months through a maritime deal signed with the GNA in late 2019 that was largely condemned by regional actors. Ankara rejects accusations that the accord stands as illegal, noting that it creates an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) from its southern coast to Libya's northeast coast, thus projecting rights to resources. Donmez, speaking at a ceremony marking the launch of Turkey's Faith oil-and-gas drilling ship to the Black Sea, stated that Turkish Petroleum (TPAO), which had applied for an exploration permit in the eastern Mediterranean would commence operations in areas under its license after the process was completed. Donmez added that Turkey's new Kanuni drill ship will go to the Mediterranean later this year. The development is expected to further increase regional tensions over the competition of natural resources in the eastern Mediterranean as well as domestic tensions over Turkey's agenda in the country. Of note, Turkey continues to engage in power projection displays across the Mediterranean. Greek media reported at least six Turkish navy frigates and an oil tanker were spotted in international waters between the Greek island of Crete and Libya on 29 May. Turkey reportedly secured the area for naval exercises. The moves come against the backdrop of challenges faced by the EU's EUNAVFOR Operation Irini. Greek media reported Turkey is undermining the exchange of information between NATO and the EU, allegedly limiting Irini's scope.

About Whispering Bell



Contact Whispering Bell at: +971-4-448-6690 or at ras@whisperingbell.com

[Twitter](#)



[Website](#)



[LinkedIn](#)



Copyright © 2020 Whispering Bell, All rights reserved.