



Whispering Bell

Libya Daily Report



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KEY DEVELOPMENTS



19 July 2023

Tripoli

- Central Tripoli: Gunfire & firework explosions
- Airport Rd: Mol absent from military graduation
- PM Office: Dbeibah supports PC fiscal transparency efforts
- PC Office: PC Head receives UN SRSG
- Al-Jebs: Increase of Security Presence

Nationwide / General

- GNU forms Intervention & Control Force
- Western Mountains: Anti-Mol road closures
- Paris: 5+5 JMC meeting
- Municipal elections transferred to HNEC
- Coast Guard targets Italian fishing vessel in Libyan waters

Oil & Gas Update

- Al-Kabir & Deputy appointed O&G trustees
- Tripoli: UN SRSG meets NOC Chairman

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SUMMARY

Key Points

- East: Seizure of O&G revenues edges closer
- Limited oil blockade lifted
- HoR session to hold session on 24 July

Political

Whispering Bell continues to assess presidential elections are unlikely in 2023, despite momentum towards the polls. In the current context, Libya stands at the political crossroads of new government announcements. Multiple proposals and roadmaps are now making the rounds after the 6+6 committee's failure to break the political deadlock and produce electoral laws that are unanimously approved. High Council of State (HCS) Head Khaled Al-Meshri announced that the HCS and House of Representatives (HoR) will issue a political roadmap aimed at holding elections, which will include the formation of a new government and electoral laws. Al-Meshri provided a new election timeline, stating that elections will be held no later than mid-March 2024. The HoR is due to hold an official session in Benghazi on Monday 24 July to discuss the political roadmap and electoral laws. Of note, the HoR roadmap stipulates a new unified government must be formed ahead of elections.

Security

Against the backdrop of heightened political uncertainty and shifting political sands involving multistakeholder backchannel negotiations, the risk of a politically-motivated high-impact/lowlikelihood incident is high across cities such as Tripoli and Al-Zawiyah. The threat is particularly tied to mounting anti-GNU sentiment across pockets of the western region such as Al-Zawiyah and the Western Mountain. Of note, security forces discovered an improvised explosive device (IED) attached to a telecommunications tower in Al-Zawiya's Beir Terfas area in the morning on 11 July. The IED was allegedly placed with the intent to target infrastructure used to relay signals for GNU-operated unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV). Meanwhile, in Al-Zawiyah, locals gave the GNU until 25 July to cede power, threatening to use civil disobedience and direct action against the government. In addition, multiple road closures have been reported in the Western Mountain area, including the road linking Al-Aziziyah and Nalut on 18 July, which would restrict road moves from Tripoli towards the south and southwest. At a tactical level, competition over key positions such as the Administrative Control Authority (ACA) and other high-profile government entities will continue to result in security incidents including arrests, raids, mobilisations of armed groups, and other similar incidents potentially resulting in sporadic operational disruptions for clients on the ground. Meanwhile, allegations that Tunisian security forces are rerouting irregular migrants towards the Libyan border will likely temporarily impact Libyan-Tunisian bilateral relations, subsequently undermining the situation at the Ras Ajdir border crossing

Oil & Gas

The threat of an LNA-induced oil blockade has significantly increased across all scenarios and is now assessed a likely in the next three months. Against the backdrop of mounting political tension, backchannel negotiations to form a new government, and diplomatic pressure, the LNA may be compelled to utilize the "oil card" to raise its bargaining leverage in the medium term (3-6 months). The LNA is unlikely to directly sanction a blockade but may instead do so by exploiting local grievances to restrict oil exports and exert pressure on the GNU

TRIPOLI

- **Report n°6528:** Central Tripoli: Gunfire & firework explosions

WB sources reported sporadic gunfire and heavy explosions due to fireworks in Tripoli's Abu Salim, Hay Demsheq, Bab Ben Ghashir, and Al-Mansoura areas between 0130hrs-0230hrs on 19 July in celebration of the return of Stabilisation Support Agency (SSA) commander Abdelghani Al-Kikli "Ghneiwa" to Libya after receiving medical treatment in Jordan.

Analysis/Comment: No further information.

Location: Abu Salim; Hay Demsheq, Bab Ben Ghashir; Al-Mansoura
Incident Date: 19 July
Timestamp: 0130hrs-0230hrs
Source: WB
Veracity: A
Actors: Unknown
Impact: Low

Recommendations:
 Identify the motives behind gunfire & explosions heard across the capital.

- **Report n°6529:** Airport Rd: Mol absent from military graduation

GNU Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah accompanied by several ministers and military commanders including 111 Brigade commander, 301 Battalion commander Abdulsalam Al-Zoubi, and 444 Fighting Brigade commander Mahmoud Hamza, as well as Internal Security Agency (ISA) head Lutfi Al-Harari, attended the graduation ceremony of a new batch of the Support Apparatus of the Security Directorates in the Region held at the latter's camp's in Tripoli's Airport Road in the evening on 18 July. Of note, GNU Interior Minister Emad Trabelsi was absent.

In a related development, sources monitored an increased presence of military convoys affiliated with the Support Apparatus and the 111 Brigade between Brega Bridge and Al-Fourousya Bridge on the Airport Road at approximately 1630hrs on 18 July.

Analysis/Comment: Trabelsi's absence in the graduation ceremony could be due to tensions between Dbeibah and Trabelsi over the latter's recent decision to restructure the security directorates in the western mountain region, which caused the region's mayors to rupture ties with the GNU. Despite Dbeibah ordering a freeze on the decision, Trabelsi has since spoken publicly in defense of the decision.

Location: Airport Road
Incident Date: 18 July
Timestamp: 1630hrs
Source: Social Media; WB
Veracity: B; A
Actors: GNU; Armed formations
Impact: Low-Moderate

Recommendations:
 Assess the possibility of tensions increasing between Dbeibah & Trabelsi & translating into security incidents on the ground.

▪ **Report n°6530:** PM Office: Dbeibah supports PC fiscal transparency efforts

GNU Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah affirmed his full support for the Presidential Council (PC)-formed Supreme Financial Committee to regulate public spending and enhance transparency during a meeting with PC Head Mohamed Menfi on 18 July. The GNU stated that the two officials discussed ways to unify efforts to hold elections in the best possible climate, including continued support for the UN SRSG. Meanwhile, the PC's Media Office stated that the officials stressed positive cooperation between all state institutions for the success of the work of the Supreme Financial Committee.

Analysis/Comment: It will be recalled that the PC issued a decision on 06 July to form an 18-member Supreme Financial Committee under the chairmanship of PC Head Mohamed Menfi and Vice President National Oil Corporation (NOC) Chairman Farhat Ben Guedara, tasked with monitoring government spending and ensuring the fair distribution of the state's wealth to create a fair economic environment paving the way for elections.

Location: PM Office
Incident Date: 18 July
Timestamp: Unknown
Source: Local Media
Veracity: B
Actors: GNU; PC
Impact: Low

Recommendations:
 Continue to monitor the GNU's cooperation on the latest PC measures to increase fiscal transparency, including over GNU spending.

▪ **Report n°6531:** PC Office: PC Head receives UN SRSG

Presidential Council (PC) Head Mohamed Menfi received UN SRSG Abdoulaye Bathily and discussed the urgency of achieving inclusive elections in Libya on 18 July.

Analysis/Comment: No further information.

Location: PC Office
Incident Date: 18 July
Timestamp: Afternoon
Source: Local Media
Veracity: B
Actors: PC; UN
Impact: Low

Recommendations:
 Continue to monitor relations between the PC & the UNSMIL.

▪ **Report n°6532:** Al-Jebs: Increase of Security Presence

Reports of increase of security presence of General Security Apparatus (Zintan) and 111 Brigade (Misrata) on the main road of Tripoli's Al-Jebs area near GECOL's HQ in the afternoon on 19 July. Initial unconfirmed reports alleged on tension between both parties. Local sources couldn't confirm the situation.

Analysis/Comment: No further information.

Location: Al-Jebs
Incident Date: 19 July
Timestamp: Afternoon
Source: Social Media
Veracity: B
Actors: General Security Apparatus; 111
Impact: Low

Recommendations:
 Continue to monitor the increase of security presence across the capital.

NATIONWIDE / GENERAL

▪ GNU forms Intervention & Control Force

The GNU issued a decision on 18 July to form the “Intervention and Control Force” tasked with securing land, sea, and air ports as well as the entrances and exits of the country, among other duties including securing elections. The decree in its entirety is dated 09 April but was only published on 18 July. Sources claim that the GNU seeks to form a force that is fully under its control in response to the constant pressure it faces by Tripoli-based armed formations.

Comment: The commander of this new group is unknown. The armed formation will be controversial given the overlap with existing groups in the western region. Tensions are likely if this force was to be created.

▪ Western Mountains: Anti-Mol road closures

Reports indicate locals closed the bottom western mountain road linking Al-Aziziya with Nalut, specifically at Shakshouk Checkpoint, by burning tyres in protest of the GNU Interior Ministry’s decision to restructure the security directorates in the western mountain region. Protesters also closed the Mezda and Al-Mashashya checkpoints.

Comment: It will be recalled that GNU Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah ordered a freeze on the decision and called for its revision after listening to the observations of a visiting delegation from the western mountain region. Following Dbeibah’s orders, GNU Interior Minister Emad Trabelsi defended the decision in a ceremony in which his ministry handed over hundreds of vehicles to security directorates in the western mountain region. Of note, locals commonly resort to the closure of strategic roads as a form of protest across Libya.

▪ Paris: 5+5 JMC meetings

The 5+5 Joint Military Commission (JMC) including the LNA and GNU Chief of Staff’s met in Paris between 17-18 July to continue deliberations on efforts to unify the military establishment. The French Foreign Ministry stated that the talks are part of France’s support for promoting dialogue between Libyan security actors and work within the UN-led Security Working Group (SWG).

▪ Municipal elections transferred to HNEC

The House of Representatives (HoR) transferred the authority to conduct municipal elections from the Central Committee for Local Elections (CCLE) to the High National Election Commission (HNEC) in a decision issued on 18 July.

▪ Coast Guard target Italian fishing vessel in Libyan waters

Reports indicate the Libyan Coast Guard opened fire on an Italian fishing vessel for allegedly fishing inside Libya’s territorial waters, forcing the targeted vessel to return towards Italy in the morning on 18 July. An Italian naval asset assisted the targeted vessel with a helicopter, according to Italian Foreign Ministry sources. The Italian crew were reportedly unharmed. The Italian

Embassy in Libya contacted the GNU and the Libyan Coast Guard command in response to the incident.

OIL & GAS UPDATE

Terminal Status

Es-Sider	Operational
Ras Lanuf	Operational
Mellitah	Operational
Zawiya	Operational
Zueitina	Operational
Marsa	Operational
Brega	
Marsa	Operational
Hariga	
Bouri	Operational
Jurf	Operational

Es-Sider: Stable terminal operations and security atmospherics reported as of 1700hrs LT.

▪ **Report n°6533:** Al-Kabir & deputy appointed O&G trustees

The Supreme Court issued a decision on 18 July to appoint Central Bank of Libya (CBL) Governor Sadik Al-Kabir (Tripoli) and his Deputy Maraee Al-Barasi (east) as trustees of Libya's oil and gas funds and revenues based on the order issued by Ajdabiya's Court of First Instance. The court ruling stipulates that Al-Kabir takes the legal oath before the Tripoli Court of First Instance, while Al-Barasi must take the legal oath before the Ajdabiya Court of First Instance.

Analysis/Comment: It remains to be seen if Al-Kabeer, who is technically under the authority of the GNU in Tripoli and not the GNS, will accept the trustee position. The stakes are high for Al-Kabeer because he needs to maintain visibility of Al-Barassi's moves within this new structure and control its outcomes. Regardless of Al-Kabeer's choice, the development sets a significant precedent by creating a new vehicle that essentially provides local constituencies with direct access to oil and gas revenue.

Of note, Al-Barassi is from the east and replaced Ali Al-Hibri as the deputy CBL Governor in Nov 2022. Reports allege Haftar's sons, Saddam and Belqacem, vetted Al-Barassi's appointment as he proved his loyalty by allocating funds to the LNA during his tenure as chairman of Waha Bank. Al-Barassi holds the position of head of the Derna and Benghazi reconstruction committees, which would now give him direct access to oil revenues to fund development projects in the east and/or the LNA.

Location: N/A
Incident Date: 18 July
Timestamp: N/A
Source: Local Media
Veracity: B
Actors: Judiciary

Impact: Moderate-High

Recommendations:
 Closely monitor the local and international response to the appointment of CBL figures as trustees of O&G funds/revenues.

▪ **Report n°6533:** UN SRSG meets NOC Chairman

NOC Chairman Farhat Ben Guedara met with UN SRSG Abdoulaye Bathily in Tripoli on 18 July. According to the NOC, the meeting discussed the need to maintain oil production and ensure continuity in output.

However, a UN statement gave a conflicting overview of the meeting agenda. As per the UN, Bathily stressed to Ben Guedara the need to preserve the “unity, impartiality, and integrity” of the NOC as an institution.

Analysis/Comment: The UN statement would lend credence to the assessment the NOC is deeply embroiled in backchannel political negotiations involving key stakeholders, namely Haftar and Dbeibah. The UN statement added that it is crucial the oil and gas industry in Libya is not “weaponized and remains detached from any political or social disputes”.

Location: Tripoli
Incident Date: 18 July
Timestamp: Unknown
Source: Local Media
Veracity: B
Actors: NOC; UN

Impact: Low

Recommendations:
Monitor the UN's role in ensuring the NOC remains apolitical amid heightened political tensions.

VERACITY SCALE

A – Reliable:

This information is almost certainly true. A is Reliable, "No doubt of authenticity, trustworthiness, or competency; has a history of complete reliability". It is reported by one or more credible publications, and if an author is listed we have no reason to suspect them to be biased. The reporting is sourced based on widely available or verifiable information. The information is consistent with everything our team knows about this subject.

B – Fairly Reliable:

This information is probably true. This information is possibly true. B is "Fairly Reliable" for "minor doubt". It is reported one or more mostly credible publications, and if an author is listed we have no reason to suspect them to be biased on this subject. The reporting is primarily based on verifiable information. The information is mostly consistent with everything our team knows about this subject, but may contain new or surprising information given credibility on the strength of the publication or author.

C – Unreliable:

This information is probably false. This information is almost certainly false. "not usually reliable" for "significant doubt," and "unreliable" for "Lacking in authenticity, trustworthiness, and competency; history of invalid information". It appears in social media or an unreliable publication, and may be written by an author that is not known to us or is known to be less reliable. The reporting is thin, largely dependent on anonymous sources or unverifiable accounts from social media or limited access areas. The information is consistent enough with our knowledge of the subject to be possible, but contains sufficient discrepancies to make it seem unlikely. The information is mostly or entirely inconsistent with our knowledge of the subject.

ACRONYM LIST

AQ	Al-Qaeda
BAM	Al-Bunyan Al-Marsous
BCP	Border Crossing Point
BEN	Benghazi International Airport
BDB	Benghazi Defence Brigade
BPMC	Brega Petroleum Marketing Company
BRSC	Benghazi Revolutionary Shura Council
CBL	Central Bank of Libya
CESF	Constitution and Elections Support Force
CNI	Critical National Infrastructure
CDA	Constitutional Drafting Assembly
DACOCT	Deterrence Apparatus for Combating Organized Crime and Terrorism
DDR	Disarmament, demobilising and reintegration
DF	Direct Fire
DMSC	Derna Mujahideen Shura Security Council
GACS	General Administration of Central Support
GASO	General Administration of Security Operations
GECOL	General Electricity Company of Libya
GMMR	Great Man-Made River
GNA	Government of National Accord
GNC	General National Congress
GNS	Government of National Stability
GNU	Government of National Unity
GTUC	Greater Trpoli Union Council
HCS	High Council of State
HNEC	High National Election Commission (HNEC)
HoR	House of Representatives
IDF	Indirect Fire
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IOC	International Oil Company
IS	Islamic State
JMC	Joint Military Commission
LAB	Libyan Audit Bureau
LIFG	Libyan Islamic Fighting Group
LNA	Libyan National Army
LPA	Libyan Political Agreement
LPDF	Libyan Political Dialogue Forum
LROR	Libyan Revolutionary Operations Room
MJI	Mitiga International Airport
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOGC	Mellitah Oil and Gas Complex
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoO	Ministry of Oil

MoT	Ministry of Transportation
MRA	Misrata International Airport
NEE	No Expected Exposure
NIEE	No Immediate Expected Exposure
NFDK	No Further Details Known
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NOC	National Oil Company
NSTR	Nothing Significant To Report
P3+2	France, Germany, Italy, UK, US
PC	Presidential Council
PFG	Petroleum Facilities Guard
RASCO	Ras Lanuf Oil and Gas Processing Company
RPG	Rocket-Propelled Grenade
RTA	Road Traffic Accident
SAF	Small Arms Fire
SSA	Stabilisation Support Agency
SDF	Special Deterrence Force
TPF	Tripoli Protection Force
UNSRSG	United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary General
UNSMIL	United Nations Support Mission in Libya
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
WOC	Waha Oil Company