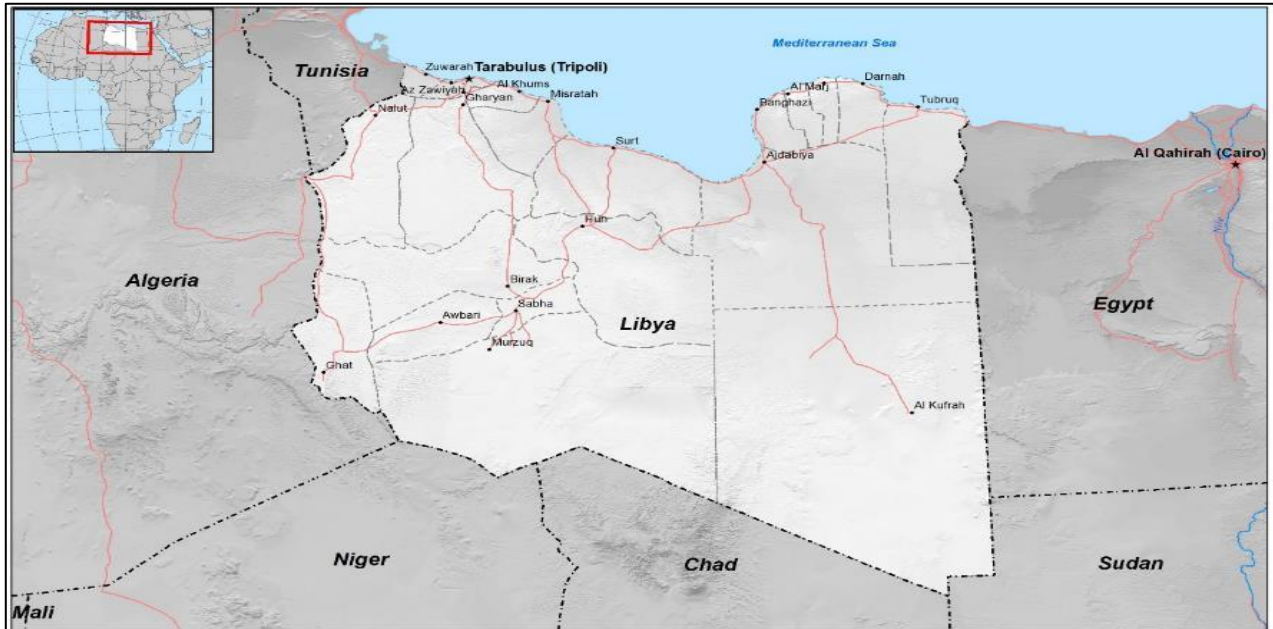


EU LIAISON AND PLANNING CELL LIBYA
Monthly Security Roll up - FEBRUARY 2023

Authors: LTC OLABARRIETA (*Analyst*) - LTC LOTTI (*Planner*) – MAJ WEERSINK (*EGF Advisor*)
Coordinated by LTC REITSMA



SUMMARY

During February, pending the anticipated proposal on the way forward as briefed by the UN SRSG / UNSMIL Head of Mission to the UN Security Council at the end of the same month, quite few tensions have re-emerged between security actors, especially in Tripolitania. Aside such necessity to readjust and consolidate, also noting the arrival of a contested former Islamist operative from abroad, institutions have been continuing promoting security initiatives willing to enlighten their relevance. Such fragile environment entitles to question on how to be able to progress toward sustainable stability and an effective military-security cooperation in preparation of the electoral process and even after that possible commitment.

Warshefana, the Coastal road, Gharjan and Zawiya were the areas where the situation resulted to be more tensed, while parallel security initiatives have been portrayed both in the West and in the East, coordinating between MoI, MoD and any relevant security regional representatives. Apart the progressing of a Joint Operation Room in Zawiya, the Sirte Operation Room has been reinforced in the Central Region, as well as in Kufra, together with a campaign to collect unlicensed weapons in the East, as part of a “reinforced” law enforcement mission.

With respect to the current political crisis and UN SRSG proposal to hold elections in 2023, his briefing to the UNSC has proven the role played by the 5+5 JMC in supporting DDR and the dialogue with the Armed Groups. That, while the ceasefire continues to hold in the context of a reconciliation effort that appears more challenging at this stage. Such a relevance assigned to the JMC needs to be interpreted considering the new balance of power currently existing in the country.

1. MAIN EVENTS IN THE GREAT TRIPOLI AREA (GTA)

Security conditions into the GTA appear relatively calm with efforts to expand control and implement the Tripoli Security Plan (TSP). However, tensions between the armed actors have persisted in Warshefana, Tajoura, the surrounding of the Capital and along the Western coastal road. Of interest, on:

- 03 Feb, media claimed that arrangements were on the way for the return to Libya of Abu Obeida Al Zawy, former Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIGF) operative, coming from Türkiye after years of absence;

on the same day, GNU MoI Trabelsi met with UN SRSG Bathily, allegedly discussing the MoI's role in the work of the 5+5 JMC, as well as illegal immigration, border protection, and combatting transnational organised crime files. Additionally, the two sides reviewed the IGNU MoI's security plan, ready to be launched in its second phase and to secure elections at both municipal and national level;

- 05 Feb, military convoys coming from Al-Zawiya and Sabratah arrived at the Mellitah Oil and Gas Complex (MOGC) to welcome Al-Zawy, due to disembark at MOGC's runway. A break out of skirmishes occurred between an armed formation from Al-Zawiya, affiliated with Al-Zawy, and an affirmed formation from Zuwara affiliated with the 52nd Bde, led by Mahmoud Bin Rajab (Al-Zawiya). These skirmishes broke out after the armed formation affiliated with the 52nd Brigade attempt to prevent Al-Zawy from disembarking. Al Zawy reportedly did not manage to land and his flight was redirected to Malta;
- 06 Feb, clashes erupted in central **Zawiyah** between Silfaw (Al-Sefaw) militia and a group aligned with Al-Zawy. Such latest skirmishes in Zawiyah were reportedly due to a dispute between a local tribe and Zawiyah's Counter Terrorism Force (CTF);
- 09 Feb, armed clashes between Al Bugra's 51st Bde/Rahba al-Duru and the Sabriya Martyrs Bde broke out in the area of **Tajoura**. The Lions of Tajoura Bn supported the Sabriya Martyrs Bde. As a result of the skirmishes, operations at Mitiga Airport were temporarily suspended;
- 11 Feb, elements of the Samoud Brigade, commanded by Saleh Badi from Misrata, closed Dafiniyah Checkpoint on the Coastal road (East). The closure was said to be over non-payment of salaries. This, after the Transport Union backed a walkout by ground handling staff at Misrata and Sabha airports earlier that week. Road closures extended up to 14 Feb;
- 12 Feb, the Counter Terrorism Force (CTF) led by Mokhtar Al Jahawi announced the killing of two of its members in armed clashes in **Zawiyah**;
- 16 Feb, Clashes broke out in **Gharyan** after an attack at Hira Checkpoint. The clashes affected also the Abu Rashadat Checkpoint in the North-West of Gharyan involving the Gharyan Brigade and the Central Support Force. The incident resulted in the death of at least three individuals;
- 17 Feb, after successfully arriving to Libya, Hadiya Al Zawy (aka Abu Obeida) gave a speech at an event celebrating the start of the 2011 revolution in his hometown of Zawiyah;
- 18 Feb, Mustapha Qaddour, Commander of the Nawasi Brigade, visited his home area of Suq al-Juma. Qaddour spent the last months, after his fall from power, in Türkiye;
on the same day, Qaddour's ally and Commander of the 777th Bn, Haythem Tajouri, visited Muammar al-Dhawi, Head of the 55th Bn in Warshefana;
- 19 Feb, the formation of the Western Region Coalition for National Reconciliation (WRCNR) was reported, following the arrival of former LIGF operative Al Zawy;

- 20 Feb, at night skirmishes erupted between a brigade affiliated with the GNU's MoD and the MoI's Security Directorate Support Force (Zawiyah) in Al-Ajalayt's Janan Attiyah area which continued until the early hours of 21 Feb;
- 24 Feb, local reports indicated supporters of the radical pro-Libyan Islamic Fighting Group cleric Sadiq Al-Ghiryani stormed the High Council of State (HCS) session scheduled to be held at Tripoli's Radisson Blu Al-Mahary Hotel in protest of the HoR 13th Constitutional Declaration amendment. Because of a lack of quorum due to the protest held outside the hotel and the reported storming, the session was postponed until 26 Feb;
on the same day, land forces under the command of GNU Chief of Staff (CoS) Mohamed Al-Haddad commenced its live ammunition military exercise dubbed "Desert Lion 2023" in Al-Qibla valley, located between Tarhunah and Bani Walid;
- 27 Feb, skirmishes broke out in the Abu Surra area between Zawiyah and Warshefana during the early hours. The skirmishes involved Stabilisation Support Agency (SSA) and the 55th Battalion with reports suggesting the SSA were in a territory claimed by the 55th;
on the same day, IGNU MoI held a meeting at the Arab and International Criminal Police Office HQ in Tripoli, attended by representatives from the General Administration of Criminal Investigation, for Ports Security, and for Coastal Security, discussing unification of efforts to combat fuel smuggling abroad;
- 28 Feb, Armed convoys, affiliated with the 444 Fighting Brigade, the Special Deterrence Force (SDF), and the SSA were monitored near Janzour's traffic lights and along the Coastal Road.

2. SECURITY EVENTS OUTSIDE OF THE GTA

The LNA is continuing on its effort to secure the regions under control enforcing rules of law and restructuring the security organization. That, while Haftar is apparently distancing himself from the military posture seeking for a more political role. Specifically, on:

- 6 Feb, PM GNS Fathi Bashagha met with Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar in Rajma allegedly to discuss the current political situation, foreign and armed military presence in Libya, combatting terrorism, illegal immigration and border protection;
on the same day, Khalifa Haftar received UN envoy Bathily at General Command in Benghazi;
- 11 Feb, GNS MoI and LNA TBZ Special Task Force carried out joint security operations in the Bohdema and Wahishi areas of Benghazi, raiding alleged illegal alcohol smuggling and drug trafficking locations, resulting in armed clashes with the suspected criminals;
- 12 Feb, GNS MoI and LNA TBZ-led forces conducted renewed raids and arrests in Wahishi, including temporarily shutting down communications, demolishing property and structures, and engaging in gunfire. The General Authority of Endowments and Islamic Affairs as well as various political and civil society organisations have welcomed the continued security responses;
- 13 Feb, media reported the kidnapping of Muammar al-Werfalli (brother of the late Saiqa Special Forces Commander, Mahmoud al-Werfalli) in Bohdema by alleged LNA TBZ forces. These latest movements are seen as an internal "house cleaning" for the LNA, as part of LNA efforts to carry out military-security reforms for the transition to a post-LNA Field Marshal Haftar era;
on the same day, after seven years of imprisonment, former MoD Undersecretary, Al-Siddiq Al-Mabrouk Al-Ghaithi Labadi was released from Qurnada Prison. Due to the fact that Qurnada Prison is under LNA control, Labadi's release likely counts with the acquiescence of the LNA leadership;

- 18 Feb, Tobruk Security Directorate seized a large arms cache in the vicinity of Al-Jaghubub intended to be smuggled to terrorist organizations in Egypt. The weapons included several mortar shells, several types of launchers including man-portable air-defence systems (MANPADs), heavy artillery ammunition and advanced military binoculars with thermal imaging;
- 19 Feb, LNA Commander-in-Chief Haftar decided to dismantle the Ras Lanuf Operations Room and annex it to the Sirte Operations Room;
- 24 Feb, the LNA General Command announced the expansion of current joint security operations, which include plans to confiscate weapons, arrests of wanted police officers, and the activation of Cybercrime Law No. 05 (2022), to all cities in the East, including towards Al-Jebel Akhdar, the Egyptian border and the Oil Crescent;
- 27 Feb, a Joint Security Room has been formed in Kufra, headed by ISA-Kufra Branch Head, with membership of Kufra Security Directorate, GACS-Kufra, GACI-Kufra, Libyan Intelligence Office, Military Police Company, and AIIA-Kufra, as part of GNS Mol-LNA security campaign.

3. OTHER INTERNATIONAL AND SECURITY RELATED EVENTS

The UN SRSG Bathily engaged within the framework of the JMC's activities for the withdrawal of mercenaries and the implementation of the SSR and DDR programs. Furthermore, binational activities occurred with the intent to strengthen cooperation with the Libyan authorities in protecting specific interests. Specifically, on:

- 02 Feb, Italy and Libya have renewed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on illegal migration, human trafficking and border security signed in 2017;
- 05 Feb, reports allege the SSA Cdr, Ghneiwa al-Kikli the 301st Bde Cdr, Abdulsalam Al-Zoubi, and the GSS Cdr, Abdullah Trabelsi travelled to the UAE to meet with Saddam Haftar, LNA Tariq Bin Ziyad (TBZ) Bde Cdr and son of the Field Marshal. This is the third meeting hosted by the UAE among GNU PM Dbeiba's representatives and LNA Head representatives, intended for reaching a political agreement between the two parties. The first one took place at the end of Nov 2022, and the second one at the beginning of 2023;
- 6 Feb, a EU funded patrol boat was donated to Libya MoFA with the presence of the EU Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, with warnings by human rights organizations that the move makes the EU complicit in crimes against humanity;
- 07 Feb, the 5+5 JMC met during two days in Cairo with the aim of preparing for the coordination and removal of foreign fighters and mercenaries. The UN SRSG was present at the meeting. He noted that the last meeting of the JMC in Sirte, held on Jan 15th and 16th made progress, including the nomination of members of the Libyan Liaison Committee, to enable them to work with their counterparts from Sudan, Chad and Niger. During the reporting period (02 Feb), sources alleged that Qatar would hold a meeting between Darfur fighters in Libya and the Sudanese army in Doha in early March to allow the mercenaries stationed in Libya, to return to Sudan and integrate them into the army;
- 10 Feb, the Head of the LNA delegation at the 5+5 JMC, LTG Emrajaa Al-Amami, in relation to the removing of all foreign forces and mercenaries from Libya, said that 'it requires a unified government'. In the same contest, he added that:
 - the Committee lined up behind the easiest option, which is to start removing African mercenaries;
 - it is not easy to determine the period or even to estimate the number of these African mercenaries;

- dilemma remains in distinguishing accurately between those who are on our lands due to illegal immigration, and between mercenaries and opposition movements;
 - 17 Feb, the US President ordered the continuation of the state of national emergency with respect to Libya. In effect since Feb 2011, it will now continue until 25 Feb 2024;
 - 19 Feb, the Anti-Illegal Immigration Authority (AIIA) Head, Colonel Muhammad Al-Khawja met with the Consul Generals of the Chadian and Sudanese Embassies to Libya, discussing about any possible cooperation. Meanwhile, the AIIA-Kufra Branch announced the deportation, in coordination with the Chadian Embassy, of 203-suspected Chadian migrants to Chad, who had been detained in Tripoli and Benghazi;
- on the same day, GNU General Administration of Coastal Security received technical supplies, including two patrol boats, as part of the security cooperation between the IGNU and Italy;
- 20 Feb, GNU CHoD LTG Al-Haddad met with a delegation from the British Embassy in Libya and discussed joint cooperation including support for the military establishment and training;
 - 21 Feb, the Libyan-Italian Joint Technical Committee held its first meeting in Rome attended by GNU Mol, Emad Trabelsi, and the Italian Counterpart. Trabelsi highlighted the relevance of the bilateral security cooperation announcing the implementation of a “four-pronged action plan” that includes protection of borders and areas in the desert, combatting illegal immigration and cross-border criminal activities, and counterterrorism;
 - 23 Feb, the US hosted the planned P+3+2+2 meeting which included SRSG Abdoulaye Bathily along with senior officials from Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Qatar, Türkiye, the UAE, and the UK, to “discuss the Libyan people’s demand for presidential and parliamentary elections”;
 - 25 Feb, the Front pour l’Alternance et la Concorde au Tchad (FACT) Leader, Mahamat Mahdi Ali, released a statement, denying links to the Russian PMC Wagner Group;
 - 27 Feb, the UN SRSG, launched a proposal aimed at enabling legislative and presidential elections within the current year (2023) and establishing a High-Level Steering Panel. Bathily expressed the needed support of all the security actors, mentioning the ongoing initiative by the 5+5 JMC on DDR (Joint Technical Sub-committee), the regional engagement to facilitate the withdrawal of foreign fighters and mercenaries and the reconciliation effort.

Sign-off for release: Brig. Gen. STELLA, V.

Disclaimer: This report is based on security events and reports from multiple open sources, whose accuracy may not always be verified. Therefore, the information and conclusions expressed are subject to change without notice.