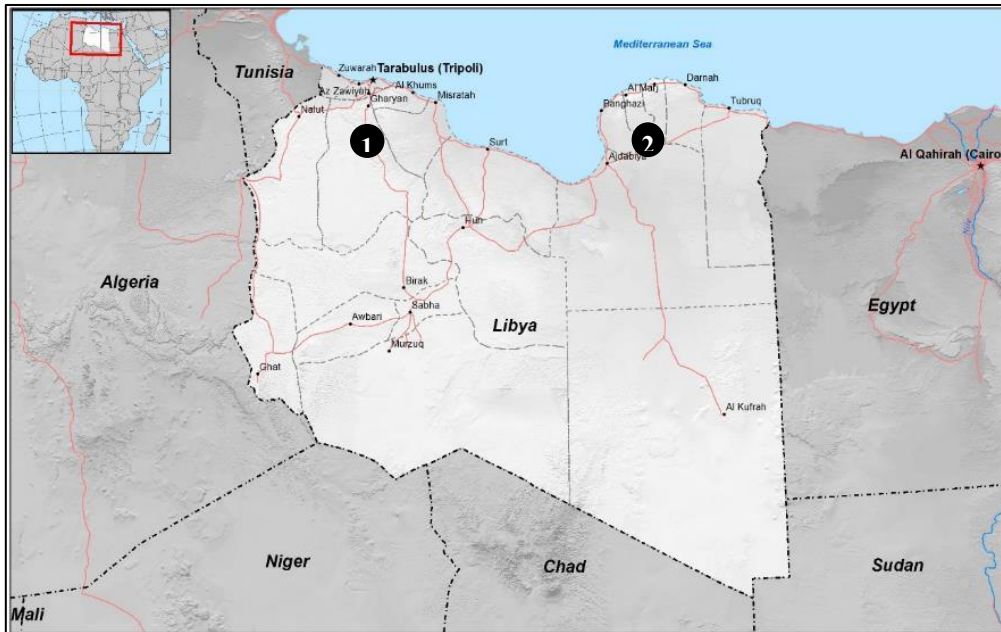


EU LIAISON AND PLANNING CELL LIBYA

Weekly Report 16 – 22 FEB 2023

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SUMMARY

In the Zawiya district, local militia, tribal stakeholders and security forces are affecting and involving the efforts of the GNU authorities to maintain stability. Nonetheless, that area and the Western coastal region of Tripoli as a whole remain a peculiar hotspot where illegal trafficking and linked interests drive the evolving relations and criminal-security dynamics. That prompts the possibility of further clashes, no matter whether a new political settlement is established.

In this realm, it is significant the (re-)appearance of Islamist hardliners who could have an impact on the security domain, as well as at political level.

Restructuring the security posture in the Eastern/Central regions, it appears that Haftar’s LNA in close cooperation with the GNS MoI, are enhancing the rule of law by actively establishing, reinforcing and repositioning Joint Operations Rooms and implementing a disarmament campaign.

In an apparent reconciliation posture between internal parties, it has been noticed that relevant security efforts remain based on bilateral agreements with international actors, especially on illegal migration, law enforcement and military cooperation.

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

The area of Zawiyah has become once again the main focal point for intra-militia clashes and tensions, together with the area of Gharyan:

- on 15 FEB, GNU MoI Zawiyah Security Directorate deployed a new security body, under the name of the Joint Security/Operations Room (JOR). The JOR mobilised patrols in the central areas of Zawiyah, and it also led convoys of armed vehicles.

Comment: The security entities operating within this JOR included the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), the Central Support Force and the Security Directorates Support Force in the Region. The representative of the Presidential Council, Abdallah Al-Lafi, the GNU CHoD, LTG Al-Haddad, the Western Coast Military Region Cdr, MG Salah Al-Din Al-Namroush and the Attorney General, Al-Siddiq Al-Sour held several meetings to discuss the formation of this entity. The GNU MoD had previously established an Operations Room in the area of Zawiyah in JAN 2023;

- on 16 FEB, clashes broke out in Gharyan after an attack at Hira Checkpoint. These clashes affected also the Abu Rashadat Checkpoint in the North-West of Gharyan involving the Gharyan Brigade and the Central Support Force. The incidents resulted in the death of at least three individuals. **Comment:** Gharyan was under the influence of Zawiyah during the 2019 offensive.
- on 19 FEB, Al-Qasab militia mobilised in the vicinity of Zawiyah Oil Refining Company after receiving reports on the abduction of one of its members by the Zawiyah-based Al-Kabbu militia. At night, sporadic heavy gunfire was heard in Zawiyah's Ispan area. Reports allege that the abducted militiaman was killed;

Comment: Tensions are mostly considered to be tribal related, due to the fact that the Commander of Al-Qasab militia, Mohamed Keshlaf, hails from the Abu Hamaira tribe and the Al-Kabbu militia Commander, Abu Hamaira, hails from the Awlad Saqr tribe. The Awlad Saqr tribe and Abu Hamaira tribe are the main tribes in Zawiyah. Acts of retaliation are likely to be expected.

- on 20 FEB, skirmishes erupted between a brigade affiliated with the GNU's MoD and the MoI's Security Directorates Support Force (Zawiyah) in Al-Ajalayt's Janan Attiyah area at night and continued until the early hours of 21 FEB. The skirmishes involved the use of small arms and light weapons. They were sparked by the Support Force's raids in the area in an attempt to arrest several wanted militiamen;

Assessment: Despite the efforts to establish and preserve a secured and stable environment, Zawiyah's security dynamics are still affected by local actors' interests. The Abu Hamaira and the Awlad Saqr tribes have cooperated in the past, as during the 26-27 SEP 2022 clashes between the al-Selaa militia (Awlad Saqr tribe) and the al-Sefaw militia (supported by GNU MoI CID Zawiyah Cdr, Mohammed Bahroun, al-Far). The evolving dynamics respond to the need of the tribes and militias to protect and exploit their evolving interests and aspirations, thus the complex system of alliances and loyalties that still will fluctuate. In this realm, Zawiyah will highly likely experience new clashes in the short medium term.

Conversely, Islamic actors continue growing in relevance with potential security implications:

- on 17 FEB, after finally arriving successfully to Libya, Shaaban Khalifa Hadiya Al-Zawy (aka Abu Obeida) gave a speech at the event celebrating the start of the 2011 revolution in his hometown of Zawiyah. On 19 FEB, following his arrival, it was reported the formation of the Western Region Coalition for National Reconciliation (WRCNR);

Comment: 04-06 FEB, clashes in Zawiyah erupted when Al-Zawy tried to land in Zuwara and Mellitah's airports. Reports allege Al-Zawy's return may be related to larger arrangements to reorganise militia dynamics in the Western region. Al-Zawy, former Libyan Islamic Fighting Group

(LIFG) operative, would maintain good relations with several armed formations in the Zawiyah's Al-Harsha area. Former LIFG leader Abdul Hakim Belhaj returned to the Libyan scene in APR 22 and has reportedly been active since then in holding meetings with influential Commanders of militias in Tripoli to enable coordination.

- on 18 FEB, Mustapha Qaddour, Commander of the Nawasi Brigade, visited his home area of Suq al-Juma. Qaddour spent the months after his fall from power since last August 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;
- Comment:** Qaddour and Tajouri were ousted from Tripoli after aligning themselves with GNS PM Basahga in his last attempt to enter into Tripoli that triggered the late 22 AUG clashes. In the immediate aftermath of these clashes, al-Dhawi hosted both Qaddour and Tajouri in Warshefana. Sources allege that al-Dhawi and Tajouri attended the 17 FEB Revolution celebration in Zawiyah alongside GNS Mol Issam Abu Zreiba.
- Zintan military Commander LTG Osama Juwaili received members of Parliament at the 4th Bde Camp in Al-Aziziyah to discuss the current political and military stalemates;
- on 20 FEB, supporters of the radical pro-LIFG cleric Sadiq Al-Ghiryani protested outside Tripoli's Radisson Blu Al Mahary Hotel denouncing the proposed conditions to run for presidency in the constitutional basis (13th amendment of the constitutional declaration) that was due to be discussed by the High Council of State (HCS). The HCS session was postponed.

2. SECURITY EVENTS OUTSIDE OF THE GTA

GNS Mol and the LNA have continued with their joint Law Enforcement efforts and activities in the East:

- on 16 FEB, Faraj Qaim, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior allegedly received instructions from Field Marshal Haftar to carry out an extensive campaign to collect weapons, which would include even the search of homes;
- on 18 FEB, the Tobruk Security Directorate seized a large arms cache in the vicinity of Al-Jaghbug intended to be smuggled to terrorist organisations 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;
- on 19 FEB, GNS PM, Fathi Bashagha and GNS Mol, MG Issam Abu Zariba discussed a proposal to establish the General Administration of Cybercrime to carryout tasks and work in accordance with HoR Law No.5 (2022);

Comment: on 16 FEB, GNS Mol announced the enforcement of Cybercrime Law No.5 (2022). It would be important to understand if the aim and measures that will be implemented in this domain could affect the freedom of communication and expression. On the same day, the Heads of the ISA and the Intelligence Service met with Directors of Telecommunications and Holdings companies, discussing cooperation and implementation of the Law;

- on 20 FEB, Benghazi's Joint Security Room reported the arrest of several local drug dealers amid its ongoing security campaign across the city;
- on the same day, the Derna Security Directorate held a meeting to review the outcomes of the 3rd Forum of Security Directorates and Departments held in Ajdabiyah on 15 FEB 2023, and to develop a security plan to implement the outcomes.

Meanwhile, the LNA continues with its restructuring efforts:

- on 18 FEB, it established a new Joint Security/Operations Room in Al-Bayda;
- on 19 FEB, the Jalu Security Directorate held a meeting, discussing the formation of a JOR;
- on the same day, LNA Commander-in-Chief decided to dismantle the Ras Lanuf Operations Room, and annexed it to the Sirte Operations Room.

3. OTHER INTERNATIONAL AND SECURITY RELATED EVENTS

- On 17 FEB, US President Biden 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;
- on 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 cooperation between the AIIA and the Embassies. 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 security cooperation between the GNU and Italy;
- on 20 FEB, GNU CHoD, LTG Al-Haddad, met with a delegation from the British Embassy in Libya to discuss joint cooperation including support for the military establishment and training;
- on 21 FEB, the Libyan-Italian Joint Technical Committee held its first meeting in Rome which was attended by GNU Mol, Emad Trabelsi and his Italian counterpart, Matteo Piantedosi. 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.

Comment: on 20 FEB, the Stability Support Apparatus (SSA) decided to close the Al-Maya Detention Center, West of Tripoli, allegedly after a letter was sent to the Head of the Libyan Presidential Council and the Attorney General from rights groups, demanding its closure.

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.