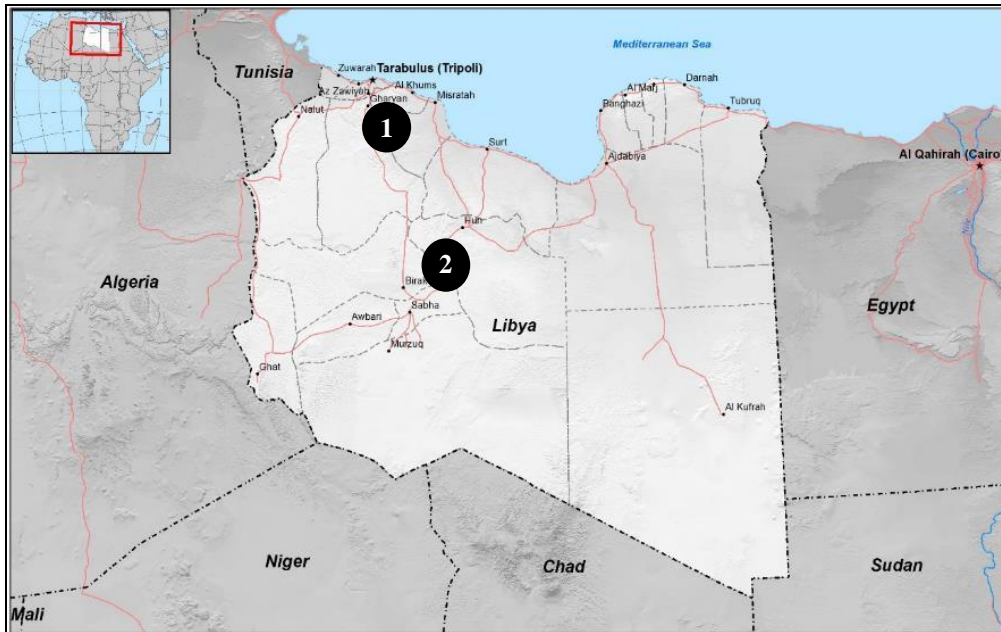


EU LIAISON AND PLANNING CELL LIBYA

Weekly Report 01 – 09 MAR 2023

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SUMMARY

The complexity of the political context and the legitimacy crisis of the Libyan institutions are set against an apparent simplistic dynamic among the security actors, with ongoing efforts to better position themselves in their Area of Interest, while executing law enforcement activities and conducting propaganda.

Parallel security initiatives were executed in the West and the Southeast against the smuggling of fuel, to confiscate weapons, secure the borders, a long from training and live ammo exercises conducted by GNU forces.

With the security situation relatively stable in the GTA and the GNU willing to posture its monolithic readiness to progress for the election, some security actors ousted from Tripoli during Aug 2022 events, are allegedly searching opportunities to exploit a new balance of power.

This, in the framework of the UN SRSG efforts for Libya to have elections by the end of 2023 and a premature formal commitment by GNU and LNA Chiefs of Staff to possibly progress on the security domain for the unification of military institutions.

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

The implementation of the Tripoli Security Plan (TSP) is ongoing and in this framework, forces under the umbrella of the Tripoli Security Directorate (TSD) and the Libyan Customs Authority carried out few laws enforcement activities. Of interest:

- on 28 FEB - 01 MAR, Libyan authorities seized a ship smuggling fuel near the al-Zawiya refinery. The ship was sailing under Japanese flag, off the coast of Abu Kamash. A joint force between the Al Zawiya Refinery Guard, the Coast Guard, the Port Security and the Zawiya Oil Facilities Guard, entities heavily influenced by the Abu Hmeria tribe, carried out the seizure;

Comment: on 27 FEB, IGNU Mol held a meeting at the Arab and International Criminal Police Office HQ in Tripoli. The meeting was attended by representatives from the General Administration of Criminal Investigation, General Administration for Ports Security, and General Administration for Coastal Security, discussing unification of efforts to combat fuel smuggling abroad, limiting smuggling carriers and dismantling international criminal networks.

- on the same day, the Facilities Security Authority (FSA), led by Osama Talish and affiliated with the GNU Ministry of Interior (MoI), discussed security and armed groups influence in Tripoli with the Korean company Daewoo;

Comment: the FSA was established by the GNA on 14 OCT 2020 (Resolution 696-2020) with the aim to provide security to the National Critical Infrastructures. Since mid-2022, they have become an independent agency dealing directly with the Prime Minister. Its main mission is to secure banks, enterprises, electric facilities, also with responsibilities on the control of private security companies. Ten branches were reported in the whole Libya with about 7K members.

- on 04 MAR, the 444th Brigade raided and shut down an alcohol and drugs den in the Azzohour Salah Adden area;
- on 05 Mar, JOF and Customs Authority seized a container carrying 12,000 'weapons', allegedly hidden inside boxes with household items, at Misrata Port. It seemed that part of these firearms were toys that could possibly be converted to usable weaponry;

With regard to the constant protests affecting the oil sector:

- on 02 MAR, members of the Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG) held demonstrations in several parts of Western Libya. They threatened to shut down operations in oil fields and ports if the government would not meet their demands;
- on 07 MAR, several members of the PFG – Nalut Protection Force issued a video statement on the same day demanding that their salaries were settled according to those of NOC employees and that the PFG was unified on a nationwide level to be provided with a sufficient budget. The statement called on the PFG, NOC, and GNU PM to respond to their demands.

Armed groups repositioning continued in the side-lines of the GTA having the aim of preventing any possible **anti-GNU** military operation. Specifically:

- on 02 MAR, reports were made of armed groups convoy affiliated with the 444th Brigade, the Special Deterrence Force (SDF) and the Stabilisation Support Agency (SSA) moving along the Janzour's Coastal Road;

Comment: These movements took place in the Area of Responsibility (AoR) of the General Security Agency (GSA), which were linked to a rumoured anti-GNU mobilisation led by the former Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB) near al-Zawiya in an alleged attempt to re-enter the capital.

- on 05 MAR, it was reported 444th Combat Brigade movements towards Ash Shwayrif, with subsequent counter-mobilisation effort by presumably LNA-affiliated forces;
- on 06 MAR, an unconfirmed report claimed that 777th Brigade Cdr Haithem Tajouri and Nawasi Brigade Commander Mustafa Gaddour travelled to Benghazi meeting allegedly with LNA commander Khalifa Haftar and GNS Prime Minister;

Comment: On 02 March 2023, Major General Osama Juweili was rumoured to arrive to Benghazi to possibly meet with field Marshal Khalifa Haftar;

- on 07 MAR, Attorney General, GASO LEF and the 444th Combat Brigade confirmed a joint security response, along with the Criminal Investigation Agency, in Qaryat, located South of Bani Waled, allegedly aimed at combatting criminal activities.

2. SECURITY EVENTS OUTSIDE OF THE GTA

The LNA is continuing on its effort to secure the regions, restructuring the security organization and enforcing rules of law. Of interest:

- on 3 MAR, Brig. Gen. Al-Mabrouk Sahban, Cdr of the Southern Operations Force of the General Command of the LNA, prevented a meeting of notables from different regions of Libya from taking place in Tamanhint;
- on 4 MAR, the Benghazi Security Directorate announced the seizure of RPG's and anti-aircraft ammunition in a garbage dump in the al-Dabai area of Sidi Khalifa police station;

Assessment: It is highly likely that the LNA-Mol joint security campaign in Benghazi is also planning to target armed groups outside of the LNA command structure.

A shift of posture of Khalifa Haftar was also noticed since the beginning of this month. In particular:

- on 1 MAR, LNA Cdr inaugurated the 15 October Military Hospital in Benghazi, wearing his uniform after a period during which he was posturing in civilian;
- on 4 MAR, while inaugurating a new infrastructure during a visit to the 106th Brigade's camp, Field Marshal Haftar stated: "We cannot abandon the capital, Tripoli, and we have trust in our army". Furthermore, he stated: "Our forces are all strong and distinguished, but we must look ahead, and Tripoli cannot be left alone, whatever the circumstances";

Comment: In the recent past Haftar emphasized the more political side of his posture. Most meetings or events he attended were focussing on political messages, for example when he recently met with GNS PM and with the UN envoy to Libya.

A round of Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG) demonstrations was also reported on Eastern Libya. In particular, on 7 MAR, several PFG members of the Tobruk branch issued a video statement from the Marsa Al-Hariga Terminal parking lot, threatening to restrict oil operations if their demands to be transferred under the administration of the NOC were not met.

Comment: The PFG was established in October 2012. In June 2022, former NOC Chairman Mustafa Sanalla ordered that the PFG should resort under the MoD, while the NOC would supervise administrative and financial affairs which include salaries.

LNA repositioning continued in the South. Specifically:

- on 07 MAR, Haftar's forces mobilized in the Shuwerf area, allegedly close to the force belonging to the 444th Battalion that moved to Qurayyat;

- on 08 MAR, the 128th Brigade of the LNA, conducted desert military patrols from Gate 45 to the Tlemcen point, to Anai border crossing, through the entire strip between Libya and Algeria.

3. OTHER INTERNATIONAL AND SECURITY RELATED EVENTS

- On 01 MAR, GNU-MoI Emad al-Trabelsi met with his counterparts at the Arab Council of Ministers of Interior in Tunis with the aim to activate Arab security cooperation;
- on 3 MAR, AFRICOM Cdr, met Libya's Chiefs of Staff in Rome. They stated about moving forward to unify the Libyan military institution, forming a joint force as a first step to protect borders, adopting a national project to absorb and integrate young people part of armed groups.

Comment: US already announced its support to the framework of the decision of the UN Security Working Group meeting for establishing a joint unit. In particular:

- on 9 NOV 2022, US Special Envoy and Ambassador to Libya, met with GNU CHOD discussing the possibility of forming a joint unit as a first step toward the reunification of the Libyan military forces, whose mission could be to secure borders;
 - on 18 JAN, US Charge d'Affairs and Deputy Cdr of USAF in Africa and Europe travelled to Benghazi to discuss security coordination, and reunification of the Libyan military institutions.
 - on 03 MAR, Emad al-Trabelsi was temporally detained for questioning by the French customs officials at the Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris due to a not reported amount of cash exceeding the authorized thresholds. Not clear how the event might be an indicator of a possible weakness of Trabelsi position within the MoI and the risk for the GNU to lose credibility. Not to disregard the rumours during the past weeks about a possible Trabelsi dismissal;
 - on 4 MAR, OPERATION IRINI released its monthly report announcing that it had monitored 25 suspicious flights during last FEB, boarded 9 ships, and inspected only one;
 - on 6 MAR, Chad announced the return of a rebel group from Libya. The Chadian authorities stated that 30 mercenary fighters gave up their weapons and returned from the Libyan territories. A reception was held for a crowd of former rebels of the Front for Change and Concord in Chad in the presence of the governor of the desert town of Kanem;
- Comment:** On 24 JAN, after fighting alongside the LNA for years, the Chadian rebels, known as the Union of Forces for Democracy and Development (UFDD), announced the readiness to return to Chad with respect to the provisions of the Doha peace agreement.
- on 08 MAR, IGNU MOD Central Military Region confirmed the completion of artillery, mortar, and missile training that was carried out in cooperation with the Turkish training mission in Libya.

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.