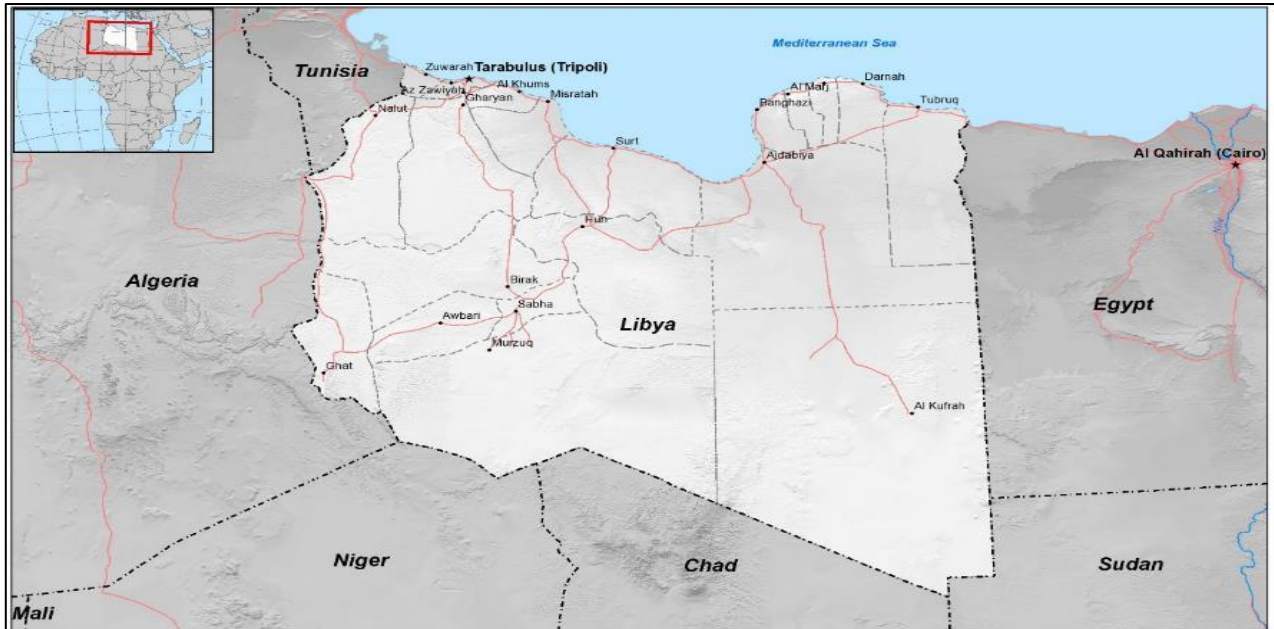


EU LIAISON AND PLANNING CELL LIBYA
Monthly Security Roll up - MARCH 2023

Authors: MAJ RAMIREZ (*Analyst*) - Coordinated by LTC REITSMA



SUMMARY

The security situation in and around Tripoli is evolving. While in August and September 2022 the security configuration of the Capital underwent significant changes, new fault lines have re-appeared as militia leaders continue to consolidate their positions. These include the broadening of influence through state agencies and ministries.

Low-intensity rule-of-law operations continue to be implemented, together with “clear house” activities in the Eastern part of the country. At the same time, the rise of Jihadist Salafism, which is already having an impact in Tajoura, remains a possible source of instability.

As a second ‘summit’ of the 5+5 JMC, in a row within the same month, it has represented the first time that in Tripoli broader delegations of Western and Eastern security stakeholders complemented. The venue has not only represented a convergence of interest for the implementation of the CFA but mostly the expression of the primary role the security actors are willing to play in progressing towards the elections and consolidating national aspirations out from external interferences.

This could lead to a nationwide upheaval and an evolution of security and political alliances, even calling for a unified government, as a sign of dissatisfaction towards any initiatives outside Libya and with respect to any intervention in the domestic affairs.

At the same time, we have assisted at numerous international engagements, some of them focusing on the Wagner presence in Libya, others on the possible establishment of a joint military force focusing on borders activities, some others on the reinforcing of bilateral military relationships.

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

Security conditions in the GTA appear relatively calm, with efforts to expand control, implement the Tripoli Security Plan (TSP) and the Tunisian-Libyan Border Security Project. Despite this, limited tensions between the armed groups have persisted around the Capital and along the Western coastal road. Additionally, GNU-affiliated armed groups' redeployment continued in the GTA with the aim of showing military power and consolidating or expanding key terrain. Of interest, on:

- 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;
- on 05 MAR, Joint Operations Force (JOF) and Customs seized weapons at Misrata Port;
- on 07 MAR, Attorney General, GASO LEF and the 444th Bde confirmed a joint security response, along with the Criminal Investigation Agency, in Qaryat, located South of Bani Waled, allegedly aimed at combating criminal activities;
- on 09 – 12 MAR, the General Security Agency and the GNU-Mol Border Security Agency (BSA) carried out static and mobile security operations along the Mizdah to Qaryat route;
- on 12 MAR, clashes erupted between armed groups belonging to the 51st Bde in Tajoura;
on the same day, the JOF – Misrata carried out further raids in the Misrata area, targeting dens used to manufacture and sell large scale narcotics and alcohol;
- on 13 MAR, tensions emerged in Tripoli between the BSA, linked to GNU-Mol Al-Trabelsi, and the Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM), led by Mohammed Al-Khoja. The Stabilization Support Agency (SSA) leader intervened and instructed DCIM to withdraw;
- on 14 MAR, the JOF seized over two million narcotic tablets hidden inside vehicles on board of freighter at Misrata port;
- on 15 MAR, GNU – Mol stated that the “security plan to secure the capital had begun to show its impact on the ground”;
- on 18 MAR, the Director of Security in Tripoli announced a state of alert to secure streets and squares during the month of Ramadan;
on the same day, GNU – PM held a meeting with notables of Zintan and Misrata. GNU – Mol and GNU – Chiefs of Staff also attended the meeting;
- on 19 MAR, pro – Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) cleric Sadiq Al-Ghiryani met with the GNU – PM at the Dar Al-Ifta HQ;
- on 20 MAR, the GNU – Mol announced a new plan to prevent smuggling to Tunisia from the Ras Ajdir border which carries out the Tunisian-Libyan Border Security Project;
on the same day, in Tajoura, Salah Badi held an anti-GNU speech along with revolutionaries and supporters of the LIFG;
- on 23 MAR, units of the BSA deployed in areas between the Ras Ajdir and Issa border crossings with Tunisia;
- on 24 MAR, reports indicated that Brigadier General Ahmed Basouda has been released by the 444th Bde in Bani Walid;
- on 25 MAR, the Special Tasks Department raided a residence for illegal immigrant workers in the Karzaz area in Misrata;

- on 26 MAR, the General Department of Security Operations stated that four individuals were arrested in cooperation with the Qarabuli Security Directorate, for attempting to transport 100 illegal immigrants;
on the same day, new clashes broke out the Al-Rawased camp in Tajoura following a dispute between two factions belonging to the 51st Bde;
- on 26 – 27 MAR, the Joint Military Committee 5+5 (JMC) gathered in Tripoli for a meeting at the presence of the UN SRSG. LNA and Western security delegations included prominent security figures. The outcome of the meeting in Tripoli emphasized the:
 - dialogue that should be Libyan–Libyan and inside Libya;
 - rejection of foreign interference in Libyan affairs;
 - full commitment to the outcomes of the dialogues between the military and security Cdrs;
 - continuation of work towards unifying the military institutions through the CoS;
 - unification of security institutions and the rest of the state institutions;
 - forming of a unified government for all Libyan state institutions.
- on 27 MAR, reports indicate a territorial agreement was struck between 444th Bde and SSA acknowledging respective areas of control;
on the same day, open sources reported the delay in the completion of the third phase of the Tunisian-Libyan Border Security Project due to increasingly poor relations between the US administration and the Tunisian President;
- on 28 MAR, the 444th Bde conducted a raid against premises being used in narcotic relates activity in Bani Walid. The 444th Bde increased their presence following the operation and were reported to be on a high state of alert in the area;
- on 29 MAR, pro – LIFG cleric Sadiq Al-Ghiryani appeared in a video statement rejecting the 5+5 JMC led event in Tripoli on 26 March and argued that the current military leaders have “*not repented to God and therefore reconciliation with them is not permissible*”. Al-Ghiryani called on the meeting’s participants to retract the agreements made and return to “*Jihad*”;
- on 30 MAR, an undated statement entitled “Free Libya” called for a demonstration to be held outside Misrata’s Martyrs’ Hall on 31 March, refusing for Misrata to be involved in what was described as an “international proxy war”. The statement accused a western nation of granting the leaders of Misrata armed formations a billion Libyan dinars to seize Al-Jufra Airbase and target Russia’s Wagner Group private military contractors.

2. SECURITY EVENTS OUTSIDE OF THE GTA

The LNA is continuing its efforts to secure the regions, restructuring the security organization and enforcing the rule of law. Moreover, the LNA is carrying on security and military coordination ahead of plans to hold elections this year. Regarding the missing uranium barrels on 14 MAR in Libya, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported that most of the natural uranium that was previously reported missing was found at the same site. The following events are of interest:

- on 04 MAR, the Benghazi Security Directorate announced the seizure of RPG’s and anti-aircraft ammunition in a garbage dump in the al-Dabai area;
- on 08 MAR, the LNA – 128th Bde conducted desert military patrols from Gate 45 to Anai border crossing, through the entire strip between Libya and Algeria;
- on 10 MAR, the 166th Bn and the LNA–affiliated Subul al-Salam Bde conducted joint mobile security operations along the Sudanese and Egyptian border, near Uweinat;

- on 12 MAR, the Sabha Security Directorate recovered a weapons cache in Sabha. The seized weapons included 62 British RKT 57mm MK4 missiles, 440 missile fuses, and a machine gun;
- on 14 MAR, the LNA announced the arrest of a suspected member of a terrorist group in Ubari, allegedly to draw attention to LNA's continued anti-terrorism operations;
- on 18 MAR, the Benghazi's Law Enforcement Force launched a security campaign targeting undocumented migrants in Benghazi's Shabneh area;
on the same day, unconfirmed reports revealed details of meeting between Saif Al-Islam Gaddafi and Russia's Wagner leaders;
- on 19 MAR, the 604th Bde and Tariq Bin Ziyad Bde commenced joint operations in the Ubari area to crack down on smuggling and criminality;
on the same day, media indicated that the LNA Cdr and the GNU – PM agreed to a security and military coordination ahead of plans to hold elections;
- on 20 MAR, the GNS MoI Undersecretary stressed the need to tighten security in Benghazi to crack down on criminality in the city;
- on 24 MAR, the IAEA reported that most of the natural uranium ore concentrate that was previously reported missing was found at the same site. The IAEA added that although a small amount of uranium is still missing, it is less than the quantity needed to enrich in order to make a nuclear bomb;
- on 26 MAR, LNA Cdr Haftar issued a decision to convert the 166th Infantry Bn into the 166th Infantry Bde. LNA Cdr also named Lieutenant Colonel Ahmed Al-Tabouli as Bde Cdr.

3. OTHER INTERNATIONAL AND SECURITY RELATED EVENTS

Different bilateral activities occurred with the intent to strengthen cooperation and safeguard specific interests. Furthermore, the UN SRSG moved forward with his roadmap for presidential and legislative elections as well as engaging within the framework of the JMC's activities for unifying the military institutions and the withdrawal of mercenaries. It seems that progress is made within the security framework while politically progress stagnates. Of interest:

- on 01 MAR, GNU MoI met with his counterparts at the Arab Council of Ministers of Interior in Tunis with the aim to activate Arab security cooperation;
- on 03 MAR, AFRICOM Cdr met Libya's CoS in Rome, stating about moving forward to unify the Libyan military institution, forming a joint force as a first step to protect borders;
- on 08 MAR, GNU MoD Central Military Region confirmed the completion of artillery, mortar, and missile training carried out in cooperation with the Turkish training mission in Libya;
- on 09 MAR, the GNU CoS, met with the Head of the Algerian People's National Army;
- on 10 MAR, representatives of Sudanese mercenaries deployed in Libya travelled to Niamey to agree on being reintegrated into the Sudanese armed forces;
- on 11 MAR, UN SRSG expressed that increased insecurity concerns undermine territorial integrity/unity and that Libya has remained a regional and international playground;
- on 13 MAR, GNU CoS met with the General Director of Turkish Havelsan - Aerospace and Electronic Industries, owned by the Turkish MoD;

- on 15 MAR, UNSMIL hosted the 5+5 JMC in Tunis, in the presence of several military/security Cdrs. Agreements were about continuing to convene in Libya including Tripoli and Benghazi, abstaining from using force, violence, arrest, or threats, and the rejection of foreign interference;
- on 16 MAR, the Security Working Group, with the UK as co-chair, met with the 5+5 JMC in Tunis, focusing on the Joint Military Force (JMF). One of the talking points was the proposal to form a joint force between the Eastern, Western and Southern regions and to be deployed in the South. The joint force will report to the GNU and LNA Chiefs of Staff. It was mentioned that those who made the proposal are calling on the international community to arm the joint force;
- on 17 MAR, Italian MoFA announced that support for the Libyan Coast Guard will continue to prevent immigration flows from Northern Africa;

on the same day, EU Libyan cease fire observers held a meeting in Tunis instead of Sirte due to 'logistical' implications;
- on 19 MAR, the Council of the European Union has extended EUNAVFOR MED IRINI until 31 MAR 2025;

on the same day, a senior US delegation headed by Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Barbara Leaf arrived in Benghazi; on the following day, she met LNA Cdr in Benghazi and discussed the:
 - importance of supporting the UN SRSG's roadmap aimed at holding elections by the end of 2023;
 - need to protect Libya's sovereignty and remove foreign mercenaries and forces, in particular Wagner Group.
- on 20 MAR, Western Region Chief of the General Staff met Italian Chief of the Defence Staff, in Rome, Italy, signing a technical agreement for the training of Libyan Special Forces;
- on 21 MAR, TUR MoFA stated that TUR presence in Libya is the most legitimate and does not pose a threat to Egypt; on 18 MAR 18, Turkey and Egypt's top diplomats met in Cairo for the first time in a decade;
- on 24 MAR, the IAEA has reported that the natural uranium that it recently reported missing in Libya was being transferred to the storage site, noting that a "relatively small" amount of uranium ore concentrate (UOC) remained missing;
- on 30 MAR, Türkiye denied the flag state consent to inspect MV KOSOVIK requested by IRINI in accordance with UNSCR 2292 on the Arms Embargo on Libya;

on the same day, UN SRSG stated that the presence of foreign fighters, foreign forces & mercenaries in Libya poses a critical risk to peace and stability and about the need to work with partners to address this challenge without negatively impacting Libya's neighbouring countries.

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.