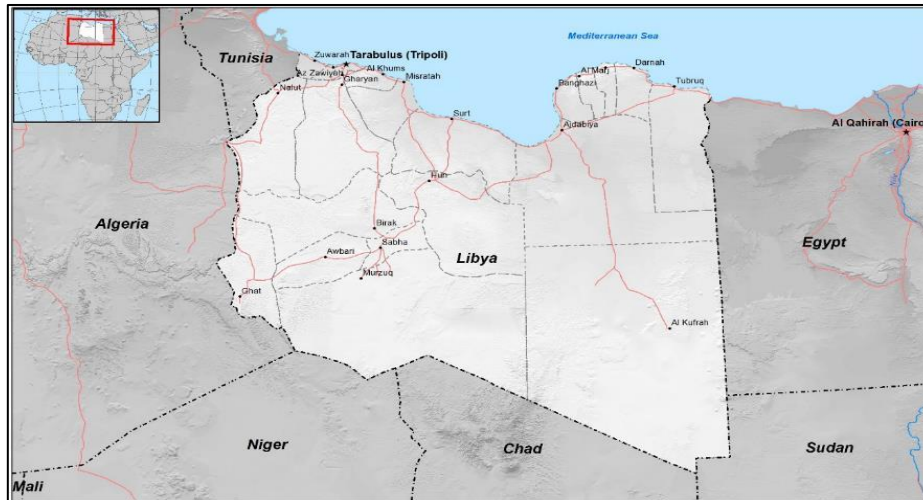


## EU LIAISON AND PLANNING CELL LIBYA Monthly Security Roll Up - MAY 2023

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### **SUMMARY**

Following the symbolic results achieved during the Security Working Group in Tripoli, and the expected critical development of the electoral 6+6 Commission, both the apparatus of the GNU PM in the West and the Eastern LNA have demonstrated their will to capitalize increasing activities against human trafficking and fuel and weapons smuggling.

As a result, GNU took the political initiative to sustain a series of attacks in Zawiya, with a focus on the infrastructures used by these criminal activities. LNA CoS and Western Region Cdr committed themselves to assure the local population of the need for operational actions to regain control from local criminal groups. Unlike the GNU PM high-visibility political messaging in commenting and supporting the drones' incursions, the military elites were standing behind the political initiative. The campaign on the West Coast was followed by a virtuous dynamic on the LNA too. Several high-scale operations were conducted in order to identify and dismantle illegal migrants' networks along the border with Egypt and the Coastal Road to Benghazi, with some high-visibility actions executed to hit criminals in the main urban areas, and against competing tribes/networks.

Tensions amongst local security actors are still present, because of the political positioning in the context of the evolution of electoral process, and the lucrative control of the borders. However, security sector initiatives appeared mostly directed at reinforcing specific interests, sometimes inspired by radicalism, instead of a genuine ambition to associate military and security apparatus that necessitates a political national commitment.

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

GNU operations against local criminal networks on the West Coast, with alleged Turkish UAV support, may have determined a change in the local balance of power. The effects amongst Muhammed Bahroun, aka al-Far, Head of the Zawiyyan Criminal Investigations Directorate, the Abuzriba Clan, the Awwal Saqr Cdr, Othman al-Leheb, and the Cdr of the 55<sup>th</sup> Bn and local Warshefana Leader, Muammar al Dhawi, are possibly reverberating on their connections with the GNU Internal Security Apparatus (ISA), and the GNU and GNS Mol. In Tripoli, the long-lasting competition among the historically most powerful militias was again offering new opportunities for a temporary increase in tensions, such as the clashes between SDF and 444<sup>th</sup> Bde elements.

Of interest:

- 01 MAY, the Department for Combating Illegal Immigration (DCIM) issued instructions to intensify security patrols on the border with Sudan;
- 02 MAY:
  - GNU CoS met with representatives from US DoD, represented by the Defense Attaché to Libya, then engaged with the 444<sup>th</sup> Bde and 51<sup>st</sup> Bde-AI Bugra Cdrs;
  - ISA issued a new decision mandating Libyan women without a male guardian to obtain a security permit prior to travelling;
- 03 MAY, PC-Stabilization Support Agency (SSA) launched a security campaign in Zuwara while Cleric Al Ghiryani demanded an end to armed formations in Zawiya hiring Sub-Saharan Africans to carry out criminal activities;
- 04 MAY:
  - Zuwara Ras Ajdir Office, affiliated with the PC-SSA, conducted several arrests on irregular migrant hideouts in Zuwara, as well as the DCIM-Tripoli Branch and the SSA;
  - LNA CoS headed a LNA delegation that met with the French Military Attaché in Tripoli;
- 07 MAY, the DCIM deported 170 Chadian nationals through Mitiga International Airport (MIA);
- 08 MAY:
  - GNU-Mol reported the beginning of desert patrols by the Mol-Border Security Agency (BSA) and the activation of work across all security checkpoints along the Libyan-Tunisian border;
  - Zintan military Cdr, Osama Juwaili, attended live ammunition drills conducted by a new unit named the **Zintan Revolutionaries Union Bde**, approximately 50 km South of Zawiya;
- 10 MAY, the 5+5 Joint Military Committee meeting, which was scheduled to be held on May 16 in Sabha, was postponed to an unspecified date;
- 11 MAY, a member of the LPDF, claimed that negotiations between GNU-PM and LNA Cdr's families were conducted under UAE sponsorship;
- 13 MAY, clashes broke out in the Dai Al Hilal area in Zawiya;
- 15 MAY, PC Deputy Head met with GNU-CoS to review the security measures in place to resolve issues related to irregular armed formations in Zawiya;
- 16 MAY, reports indicated that SDF dispatched dozens of technicals to secure MIA;
- 17 MAY:
  - GNU-PM received a high-level delegation from the Egyptian General Intelligence Service to follow up on the work of the **Egyptian-Libyan Joint Committee**;
  - GNU-PM formed a body to organise the work of religious institutions and foster their unity (Dar Al Ifta, led by the Mufti), while DF-Rada rejected the idea that the Dar Al Ifta would manage Islamic affairs, religious education, and Zakat funds;
  - Movements of the 111<sup>th</sup>, 444<sup>th</sup> Bde, and SDF-Rada were reported towards MIA;
  - Forces of the Western Military Zone Joint Operations Room, affiliated with Juwaili, entered the towns of Al Asabba and Mizda;
- 22 MAY, A new armed group has been reported as established in Sabratah under the GNU Mol. named the **Security Threat Control Agency**, under the control of Mahmoud Bahroun (al-Far);
- 23 MAY, GNU-PM ordered the creation of a database of local and foreign NGOs and the formation of a committee under his supervision to follow up on their work;
- 24 MAY, SWG met in Tripoli for its first plenary session held in Libya;
- 25 MAY:
  - Additional security measures, including blast walls and blocked roads, were established around the Turkish Embassy;
  - Drone strikes targeted sites in Libya's Western city of Zawiya;
  - Abu Surra Martyrs Bn stated that their HQs was hit by an airstrike, causing injuries. They stated the attack was carried out by a Turkish drone and considered it an act of aggression;

- Mol-Coast Guard officially condemned the drone strikes targeting Maya Port;
  - Ali Abu Zariba, MP for Zawiya, accused GNU-PM of attacking rival armed groups under the pretext of combating organized crime;
  - HoR called on the UN SRSG to “*intervene urgently to protect civilians*” in Zawiya and called on the Attorney General to “initiate legal procedures to hold accountable those who endangered the lives of citizens,” in Zawiya;
  - GNU-spokesman, M. Hamouda, said that GNU-forces ongoing operations in Zawiya were “part of a security plan to combat fuel-smuggling and trafficking in the Western Coast region.”
  - The GNU-MoD claimed responsibility for the aerial bombing in the West Coast region. The ministry stated the strikes were carried out under the direct supervision of GNU-PM;
  - The Security Committee recently formed by GNU-CoS to address the demands of Zawiya’s protesters stated that the strikes were not coordinated with them;
  - Residents of Zawiya’s Abu Surrah issued a statement holding the GNU fully responsible for the strike, attributing the attack to Turkish drones commissioned by the GNU-PM;
- 26 MAY:
- An airstrike against an oil smuggling site at the Zuwara port; another targeted a Al Sifaw headquarters, South of the bridge in Bir Al Ghanam, Zawiya, and surface-to-air small arms fire were reported in association;
  - An airstrike targeted a suspected Tripoli Revolutionaries Bde (TRB) position in Surman and an armed group location in Harsha, affiliated with Ottoman Al Lahab;
  - The General Awqaf Authority in Tripoli, allegedly controlled by the former Grand Mufti, has established the “**Guardians of Virtue Apparatus**”;
- 27 MAY:
- Further airstrikes were reported on alleged Abu Surra Martyrs Bn as well as Nasr Bn locations;
  - Fuel trucks, allegedly belonging to Riad Belhaj, were targeted, resulting in several injured;
  - An airstrike targeted Hatem Al Fahri's guesthouse and a Kabuu Militia location in Al Keeb Mosque, Nuqat Al Khams Province;
- 28 MAY:
- Drones targeted sites in the Harsha area, East of Zawiya. Two drones attacked Maya Port; Drone strikes killed two residents and injured a HoR MP’s nephew in Zawiya;
  - SDF and the 444th Bde clashed in Ras Hassan, Ain Zara and Salah Al Din, Tripoli;
  - The 603<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Bn conducted patrols South of Bani Walid;
- 29 MAY:
- HoR gathered in Benghazi to discuss the recent developments in Zawiya and use of the Bayraktar-TB2 led many to accuse Türkiye of involvement in the campaign;
  - Armed individuals loyal to Ali Abu Zariba halted gas and fuel supplies feeding Tripoli power stations by closing valves at Zawiya Refinery, in demand of the GNU-PM’s dismissal over the recent drone strikes in the city;
  - Locals from Zawiya closed off the Coastal Road West of Zawiya between Mutrud and Surman in protest of the GNU drone strikes targeting the Western Coast;
  - GNU-MoD commended its Air Force for successfully completing the first phase of its operation;
  - 55<sup>th</sup> Bde Cdr condemned GNU drone strikes that killed one of his members on May 28;
  - GNU-MoD announced the start of the second phase of security operations;
  - US Embassy stated that it is monitoring with concern the situation in Zawiya amid reports of weapons being used in civilian areas and the potential for further violence, calling on Libyan leaders to de-escalate and take precautionary measures to protect civilians. It was followed by UK Embassy stating that “the use of weapons that endangers civilian lives is unacceptable”;

- 30 MAY:

- Council of Elders and Notables of Zawiya announced the reopening of the Zawiya Refinery and the resumption of operations;
- PC chaired an emergency meeting to discuss the military developments in the Western region;
- Reports indicated GNU renewed drone strikes targeted warehouses in Al Maya (East of Zawiya), near Awlad Saqr Street (South of Zawiya), and in Al Ajailat (West of Zawiya);
- Zintan military Cdr, Osama Juwalli, received the UN SRSG at the Zintan Municipality HQs;

- 31 MAY:

- Renewed GNU drone strikes targeted warehouses in the Maya Port, near Awlad Saqr Street (the Southern Zawiya), and in Al Ajailat;
- A clash was reported between units of the Western Region Support Force and armed groups in Al Ajaylat;
- A video circulated of participants in a meeting in Zawiya interrupting a speech by HCS Chairman and expelling him from the venue;

- 01 JUN:

- Locals from Warshefana condemned GNU drone strikes targeting Maya Port and called on the UN and the Attorney General to launch an investigation into the incident in a mass protest;
- The Security Directorate in Zuwara warned civilians to stay away from fuel smuggling locations in the area due to ongoing airstrikes;
- West Coast Military Region Cdr stated that the Zawiya Youth Movement requested support to secure their city, after which the Zawiya Refinery and the roads were reopened;

- 02 JUN, a guesthouse belonging to HoR MP Ali Abu Zariba in the Abu Surra area was targeted in a GNU airstrike;

- 04 JUN, GNU-Mol discussed with GNU MoFA ways to support border security and confront smuggling, irregular migration and organized crime;

- 05 JUN:

- The Public Prosecutor met with the Western Coastal Region Military Cdr, 52<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade Cdr and Mol officials. Al Sour decided to form a security unit - **Western Coast Security Unit** to investigate violations of the rights of citizens;
- The **Libyan Revolutionary Leaders Gathering** (LRLG) rejected the reported 6+6 Committee decision to facilitate a presidential bid by Marshal Haftar, threatening armed violence. LRLG was established as a political party with a military arm by “leaders of the 17 February Revolution”;

- 06 JUN:

- GNU PM established a **National Apparatus/Agency for the Supporting Forces**, including formations from the February 17 revolution;
- Unconfirmed reports alleged prominent Western military Cdrs (444<sup>th</sup>, 52<sup>nd</sup>, 111<sup>th</sup> and GSA) rejecting a new transitional phase in Libya through the establishment of a new government while armed formations from Misrata issued a statement in rejection of the GNU remaining in power.

## 2. **SECURITY EVENTS OUTSIDE OF THE GTA**

The trend in the East offers multiple facets of the LNA, relevant for any electoral race:

- a public and official one, with the Khalifa Haftar symbol evolving in order to sustain an international political, diplomatic, and military role;
- a functional and disciplined military organization with an efficient but rigidly controlled information structure;
- a locally adaptive business organization with a substantial nepotistic or "clan-istic" structure, exploiting the Haftar brand to increase control, sponsoring investments in the critical infrastructure and local economy.

Events of interest:

- 01 MAY, LNA conducted military desert patrols to secure and monitor the borders with Sudan;
- 02 MAY, a delegation of the LNA General Command, led by TBZ Cdr, visited the Marada oilfield;
- 04 MAY:
  - Law Enforcement Department, together with Sabha's CID and the 11<sup>th</sup> Bn, conducted arrests on hideouts selling weapons and ammunition in Sabha;
  - LNA Cdr issued a decision to integrate the 115<sup>th</sup> Bn, led by LNA CoS's son, into the 106<sup>th</sup> Bde, led by Khaled Haftar;
- 06 MAY:
  - The Municipal Council and Emergency Room of Al Kufra condemned national and international media allegations of the city's involvement in the conflict in Sudan;
  - 110<sup>th</sup> Bn clashed with fuel and weapons smugglers on route to Sudan, near the border;
- 07 MAY:
  - GNU-Naval Forces CoS met with his LNA counterpart at Benghazi Naval headquarters;
  - Reported fuel smuggling by 77<sup>th</sup> Bn from Zillah area to Umm Aranib, South of Sabha, and Sudan;
- 08 MAY:
  - LNA delegation, led by the TBZ Cdr, inspected Sharara and El-Feel Oil Fields as part of ongoing visits to oil installations across the Oil Crescent region;
  - Libyan Intelligence Service (LIS) - Eastern branch threatened to take legal action and tighten security measures against all local and NGOs/GOs that receive financial or other means of support from foreign organisations and are suspected of serving foreign agendas;
- 09 MAY, TBZ arrested a political activist and supporter of Saif Al Islam Gaddafi in Sirte;
- 12 MAY, ISA reported the arrest of at least two Libyan nationals employed by an Italian NGO accused of developing a project in Sabha with the objective of settling migrants in the area;
- 16 MAY:
  - TBZ mobilized in Qasr Abu Hadi against pro-Gaddafi activists;
  - HoR suspended GNS-PM and named Osama Hammad, allegedly close to LNA Cdr;
  - 19 MAY, sources reported that the Sudanese air forces conducted airstrikes near Sarra Airbase on a convoy carrying military supplies to the Sudanese Rapid Support Forces (RSF) from Libya;
- 17 MAY, unconfirmed reports allege LNA TBZ Cdr and a relative of GNU PM struck a deal to overthrow HoR Speaker;
- 21 MAY, LNA Cdr received the French Ambassador followed on 22 MAY by the Swedish Ambassador at the LNA headquarters;
- 29 MAY:
  - A delegation led by LNA TZB Cdr and GNS-PM, alongside deputy, visited Sabha;
  - LNA Cdr received the UK Ambassador to Libya at the LNA headquarters;
- 30 MAY:
  - LNA Cdr received the Permanent Secretary of the Maltese MoFA;
  - Military and security units were deployed in the Eastern of Libya in response to the appeals of residents for heightened security and to combat human smuggling in Tobruk;
  - Border Guards at the Musaid Border Crossing Point fired on a civilian vehicle, killing a minor;
  - LNA Cdr issues a decision to reconstitute the 155<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion in the 155<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade;
- 31 MAY, a relative of MG Abdullah al Senussi was stabbed to death;
- 02 JUN, the TBZ clashed with a group affiliated with Qaim at Qaws al-Bardi;
- 03 JUN, armed forces from the Obeida and Hassa tribes expelled 106<sup>th</sup> Bde from Labraq Airport;
- 05 JUN, reports that LNA has deported 4,000 migrants found in recent operations along the Egyptian border area and Tobruk.

**3. OTHER INTERNATIONAL AND SECURITY RELATED EVENTS**

Sudanese Air Forces alleged airstrikes on 19 May, near Sarra Airbase, on a convoy carrying military supplies to the Sudanese RSF from Libya and the looting of the Libyan Embassy in Khartoum on 30 May, are evidence of a possible spill-over of the Sudanese conflict into Libya. The Sudanese crisis' file remained in the focus of the last bilateral military-technical initiatives however, with different agendas by different external actors influencing Libya development.

Of interest:

- 04 MAY, LNA Cdr met with the Italian PM and authorities in Rome allegedly to discuss migration;
- 11 MAY, sources reported a meeting between AFRICOM and the 51<sup>st</sup> Bde-AI Bugra Cdr to discuss training for the 51<sup>st</sup> Bde-AI Bugra as well as the 444<sup>th</sup> Bde;
- 15 MAY, US Special Envoy to Libya discussed in a phone call with GNU-PM the shared interest between Libya and the US in securing a ceasefire in Sudan;
- 16 MAY, unconfirmed reports alleged that LNA TBZ and other senior LNA Cdrs met in Cairo with prominent Western Region Military representatives to discuss a GNU cabinet reshuffle;
- 17 MAY, in view of the negotiations for the renewal of the UNSC on Operation Irini, Members argued about the effectiveness of the mission, questioning the cooperation with the GNU, and expressing that arms embargoes are a tool, not an end;
- 18 MAY:
  - Italian Defence Minister declared that Italy is *“ready to play the role of facilitator and mediator in the reunification of the Libyan armed forces, where the conditions are created”*;
  - Egyptian President stated at the Arab Summit that *“the crisis in Libya and Yemen requires Arab action to resolve”*;
- 23 MAY, GNU-CoS held talks in Rome on military training and joint cooperation;
- 25 MAY, sources reported a meeting between US AFRICOM and Turkish officers at MIA;
- 02 JUN, UNSC voted to extend Operation IRINI, authorized to inspect vessels suspected of violating the arms embargo on Libya for one more year, with the abstention of Russia;
- 04 JUN, Egyptian President called for the withdrawal of all foreign forces, mercenaries and militias from Libya, without exception. He also stated: *“Relying on integration between us (Arab countries) is a duty and responsibility, and we should apply the concept of joint Arab action to be extended to global issues”*;
- 04 JUN, Deputy PC, Al-Koni discussed with the French Ambassador his country's support for the initiative of the Chiefs of Staff and the 5+5 JMC to establish a joint military force as the beginning of a unifying effort;
- 05 JUN:
  - The Chadian Minister of Defence, strongly criticized rebel groups, accusing them of recruiting minors to carry out attacks from Libya;
  - The US Ambassador stated in an interview: *“The current situation in Libya is inherently unstable, and obtaining legitimacy in Libya will only be through elections”*;
- 06 JUN, Minister of Economy and Trade issued a resolution concerning the ban on the importation, circulation, and sale of goods in markets that violate public order, contradict public decency and conflict with Islamic beliefs.

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

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*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.*