

Libya daily security analysis report

March 14, 2023

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Latest Developments

Political Developments

- Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar met with the SRSG Abdoulaye Bathily on March 13 in Benghazi. The SRSG briefed Haftar on his plan for the “next phase which will lead to the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections.” They both stressed the importance of supporting the efforts of the HoR and HCS to complete the legal basis for elections.
- On March 13, Prime Minister (GNS) Fathi Bashagha also met with SRSG Bathily in Benghazi. The prime minister “affirmed the legitimacy of his government and his full readiness to support UNSMIL in achieving the aspirations of the Libyan people for change and democratic transition and to make 2023 the year of the elections.”
- SRSG Bathily met with the Ambassador of Qatar to Libya, Khalid Mohamed bin Zabin Al-Dosari. The ambassador affirmed Qatar’s support for the SRSG and praised his efforts to settle differences.
- Speaker of the HoR, Aquila Saleh, arrived in Amman, Jordan on March 13. Saleh was received by the Speaker of the Jordanian Parliament, Ahmed Al-Safadi, his First Deputy, Ahmed Al-Khalayleh, and the Assistant Speaker of the Jordanian Parliament, Dhiab Al-Masaeed.
- Prime Minister (GNU) Abdulhamid Dbeibah met with a delegation from the Warfalla tribe in Tripoli on March 14. The tribe is one of the biggest, if not the biggest, tribe in Libya and is centered on Bani Walid. It held significant influence under the Gadhafi regime but has struggled to regain its status since the revolution.

Security Developments

- Tensions erupted in western Tripoli during the afternoon of March 14 after the Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM) mobilised from its Tripoli HQ on Tariq al-Sekka towards the Ministry of Interior (MoI) Compound in western Tripoli. This came amidst tensions with Minister of Interior (GNU) Emad Trabelsi. DCIM officially comes under the MoI.

Financial Developments

- The head of the Libyan Audit Bureau, Khaled Shakshak, met with a delegation of World Bank experts headed by Winston Percy.

Infrastructure Developments

- Prime Minister (GNU) Dbeibah met with the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Turkish Holding Company, Ahmed Çalik, to discuss launching the South Tripoli Power Plant project. The project includes four production units with a capacity of 330 megawatts per unit.

Assessment

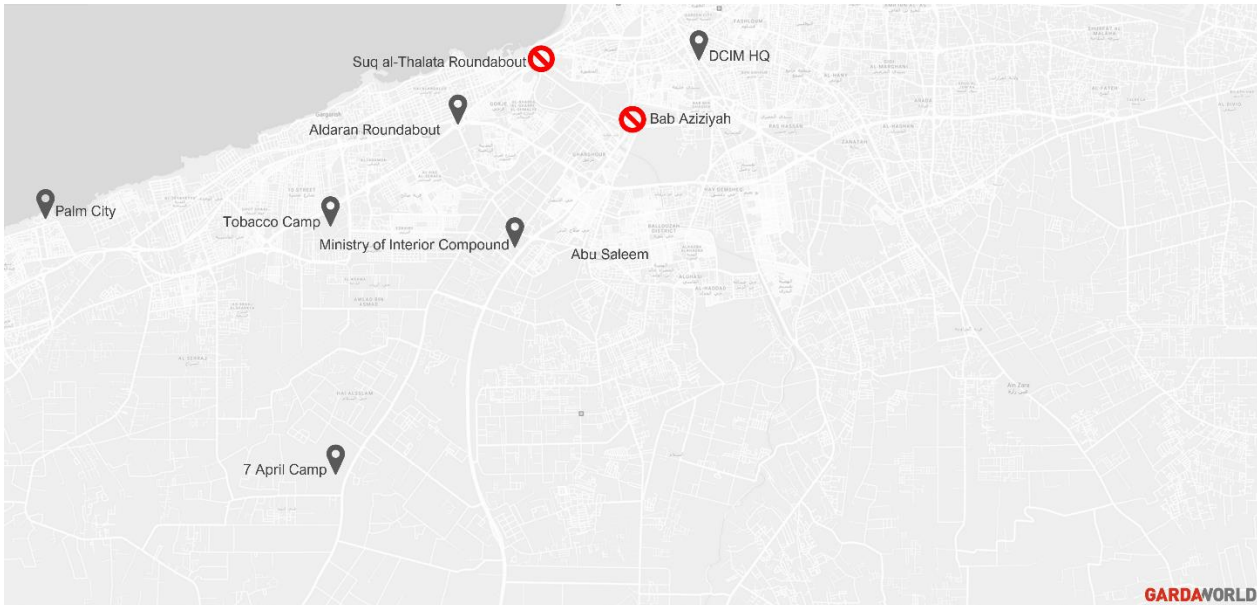
Security Developments

Tripoli: Tensions result in rapid militarisation of western Tripoli

Tensions erupted in western Tripoli during the afternoon of March 14 after the DCIM mobilised around 50 technicals armed with light and medium weaponry from its Tripoli HQ on Tariq al-Sekka. The mobilisation was highly publicised and came amidst tensions with the Minister of Interior (GNU), Emad Trabelsi. Trabelsi

also began mobilising forces in his areas of control around western Tripoli in response as the area quickly became militarized and roads began to be shut.

The situation devolved into a standoff for a number of hours with DCIM's show of force focused on the Mol Compound off Airport Road where Trabelsi was located. Reports indicated that Abdulghani Kikli (Ghneiwa), commander of the SSA, intervened and instructed DCIM to withdraw. Trabelsi later left his office suggesting tensions had reduced.



Graphic: Showing key locations connected to increased tensions on March 13

COMMENT: 'Tensions in Tripolitania have been building for a while over Trabelsi's appointment as Minister of Interior. He has wasted no time making his mark and has been looking to extend his (and Zintan's) influence outside of his traditional areas of control, using the ministry's structure, which has inevitably spilt over into other armed commanders' territory (figuratively and literally).

Trabelsi, an armed group commander from Zintan, had been aligned with the LNA until 2018 when he followed fellow Zintani commander, Lt Gen Osama Jweli, to the GNA. During the Kani/Badi offensive of that year, Zintani forces under Trabelsi and Jweli were invited back into Tripoli to bolster the capital's defences. They retook areas which had been under Zintani control prior to the civil war of 2014 which saw Zintani forces dislodged from Tripoli. Trabelsi settled into the Gargaresh, Ghut Alshaal and Hay Andalous areas, taking over from Haythem Tajouri's TRB which had begun to fragment under the pressure of the offensive. In August 2022, Trabelsi remained loyal to the GNU while Jweli aligned with the GNS and was dislodged from Tripoli. As part of his negotiations, Jweli insisted that Trabelsi took his areas of Tripoli (including 7 April Camp), assuring they remained under Zintani influence and securing Zintan access from the mountains to the coastal areas of western Tripoli. Trabelsi was also rewarded with the position of minister of interior, likely part of his deal to remain loyal to the GNU. The split also ensured that regardless of the outcome, Zintan would retain an armed influence in Tripoli and with both political factions, a lesson learned from 2014.

The Tripoli DCIM is under the command of Mohamed Khoja and emerged from the Ben Ashour Martyrs Battalion a number of years ago as various militias began to find ways of legitimizing themselves. Khoja was appointed as the head of DCIM on December 23, 2021, taking responsibility for the country's 15 official detention centres from General Al-Mabrouk Abdel-Hafiz, a Zintani commander. This came despite numerous reports of human rights abuses at the Tariq al-Sekka detention centre which Khoja has run for years. Migrants detained there have also allegedly been used to support Khoja's armed force, cleaning and storing their weapons and used to complete construction projects. Khoja's DCIM is clearly financially viable with a notable military force for an Mol unit which is supposed to police illegal migration. Its home base, which sits along Tariq al-Sekka near the prime minister's office, has also been redeveloped over the last year or so with money clearly being spent.' **COMMENT ENDS.**

Reports indicate that the tensions erupted after Trabelsi made several decisions which aimed to weaken Khoja and strengthen Muhammad al-Marhani, commander of the Border Guards Service. This includes a decision to move catering contracts for the migrant detention centres from Khoja to Marhani. These contracts are reportedly very financially valuable with accusations Khoja is only spending a fraction of what he is given to feed the thousands of migrants detained in these centres on actually feeding them. **COMMENT:** 'In 2019, reports claimed that Khoja was behind a "multi-million-dollar scheme to divert money meant to feed migrants at a UN facility in Tripoli to his militia," indicating this practice preceded him taking control of the DCIM in Tripolitania. After taking control in 2021, Khoja would presumably have been in a position to extend this practice across all 15 detention centres, significantly boosting his returns and reducing the influence of Zintan over the contracts and the wider DCIM after replacing General Al-Mabrouk.' **COMMENT ENDS.** In addition, Trabelsi has also ordered 120 officers to move from the DCIM to the Border Guards Service.

COMMENT: 'Marhani, a fellow Zintani, was the Undersecretary of the Mol for Migration Affairs under the GNA. At the end of June 2022, Trabelsi was given a significant amount of money by the GNU to establish a new unit: Desert Patrols and Border Guards Service, a clear challenge to the remit of DCIM which is also equipped to intercept migrants transiting the desert. Trabelsi appointed a deputy, Marhani, as the unit's commander. This came as the GNU worked to split Zintan forces after Jweli swayed towards the GNS in 2022.' **COMMENT ENDS.**

On March 12, Trabelsi met with the Chief of the General Staff (Western Forces), Lt Gen Mohamed Haddad. The men presided over an expanded security meeting which included Marhani and Ghneiwa's close associate, Lofti Harari, head of the Internal Security Agency, to discuss security cooperation and coordination. This resulted in agreements to strengthen cooperation between the Mol and other security and military agencies. **COMMENT:** 'It's unclear if this had any impact on Khoja's decision to mobilise on March 13 as the details of the meeting are unknown however, the timing and attendees are notable given Khoja's mobilisation.' **COMMENT ENDS.** On March 09, General Security Services (Trabelsi's militia) and the Border Guards Service deployed from Tripoli through to Gharyan and Mizdah, establishing checkpoints and security locations. **COMMENT:** 'This was initially assessed as being part of/ reaction to a possible move by 444 Combat Unit to contain Lt Gen Osama Jweli, however, it's also possible it highlights Trabelsi's expansionist plans in the region.' **COMMENT ENDS.**

Assessment

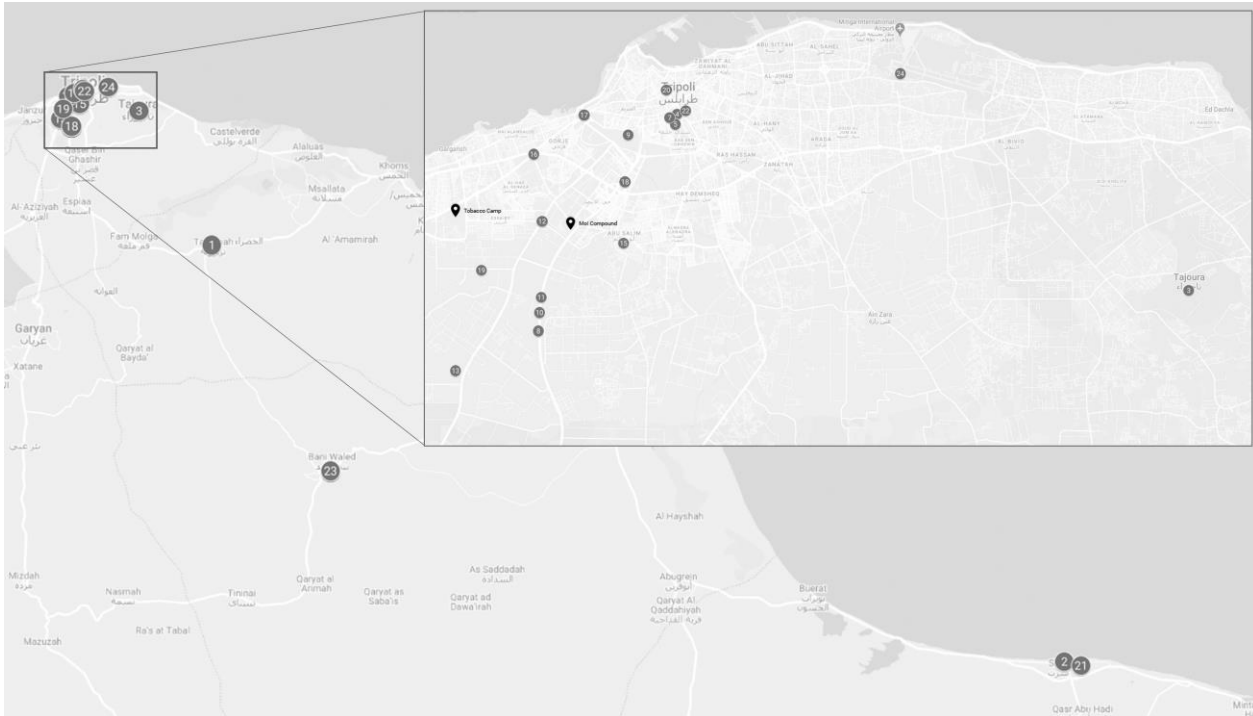
The tensions come within a previously identified emerging threat in Tripolitania around the exploitation of state apparatus by militia commanders to expand their influence, infringing on other commanders' spheres of influence.

The situation transpired after clashes in Tajura on March 12. While the two are not connected, they do increase the risk that other militia groups will resort to intimidation and armed confrontation to resolve ongoing issues and tensions in the capital.

While Ghneiwa appeared to take decisive action to reduce the tensions on March 13, instructing DCIM to withdraw in a move which benefitted Trabelsi, it is assessed Ghneiwa could be moving against his one-time ally. Reports over the past few months have suggested that Ghneiwa is coveting the minister of interior position. It's possible that the show of force by Khoja is part of a wider strategy by several commanders to undermine Trabelsi and possibly pave the way for his replacement. However, the situation will be complicated with Trabelsi holding significant influence in the capital and Zintan and while the GNU is perhaps not as reliant on his support as they were in mid-2022, they are unlikely to want to risk pushing him back towards Jweli at the current time.

Significant Incidents

Tripolitania Region



1 Mass Grave - Mar 13, Al-Murqub Province, Tarhunah: Three more bodies have been discovered in two mass graves on Salem Bin Ali Road and Al-Saqia Road. A total of 333 bodies have now been recovered from mass graves near the town, dating from prior to mid-2020 when Kani Brigade was dominant in the area.

2 Arrest - Mar 13, Sirte Province, Sirte: A number of school principals were arrested after the Sirte Education Inspector "submitted complaints against them." This comes after teachers staged sit-ins a few days previously over their rights and wages. This included a suspension of studies.

3 Kidnap - Mar 13, Tripoli Province, Tajura: A Chadian group kidnapped two men from Tajura. The victims were allegedly tortured and violently assaulted and filmed. The perpetrators were arrested and have been referred to the Public Prosecutor.

4 Troop Movements - Mar 13 15:40, Tripoli Province, DCIM HQ: DCIM began gathering its forces inside its HQ.

5 SAF - Mar 13 16:02, Tripoli Province, DCIM HQ: Weapons testing began inside the DCIM HQ.

6 Troop Movements - Mar 13 16:21, Tripoli Province, Draiby Roundabout: GSS forces mobilised towards Draiby Roundabout.

7 Troop Movements - Mar 13 17:08, Tripoli Province, DCIM HQ: DCIM mobilised around 50 vehicles with light and medium weaponry from their HQ.

8 Troop Movements - Mar 13 17:41, Tripoli Province, Airport Road: Military vehicles were sighted along Airport Road.

9 CP/ Roadblock - Mar 13 17:46, Tripoli Province, Bab Aziziyah: GSS closed the Bab Aziziyah Roundabout.

10 Threat Warning - Mar 13 17:57, Tripoli Province, Airport Road: A security alert was issued for Security Directorates to support GSS on Airport Road.

11 Troop Movements - Mar 13 18:33, Tripoli Province, Airport Road: Armed vehicles gathered in support of GSS on Airport Road.

12 Troop Movements - Mar 13 18:37, Tripoli Province, Draiby Roundabout: GSS vehicles gathered in the area.

13 Troop Movements - Mar 13 18:48, Tripoli Province, 7 April Camp: A GSS convoy was mobilised from 7 April north towards Gypsum gate.

14 Troop Movements - Mar 13 18:53, Misrata Province, Bani Walid: 444 Combat Unit returned to Bani Walid.

15 Security Announcement - Mar 13 19:00, Tripoli Province, Abu Saleem: An unconfirmed report claimed that Abdulghani Al-Kikli warned DCIM to withdraw from the area.

16 Troop Movements - Mar 13 19:02, Tripoli Province, Aldaran Roundabout: A GSS convoy passed Aldaran Bridge.

17 CP/ Roadblock - Mar 13 19:07, Tripoli Province, Suq al-Thalatha: GSS closed the roundabout.

18 Troop Movements - Mar 13 19:20, Tripoli Province, Airport Road: A GSS convoy was mobile along Airport Road.

19 Troop Movements - Mar 13 19:37, Tripoli Province, Islamic Call Centre: Military vehicles passed the Islamic Call Centre.

20 Security Announcement - Mar 13 20:00, Tripoli Province, Ministry of Interior: Minister of Interior (GNU) Emad Trabelsi left his office at the Ministry of Interior compound on Airport Road and allegedly headed to Mitiga Airport.

21 Security Operation - Mar 14, Sirte Province, Sirte: Police cars cordoned off several schools after their principals were arrested. Security forces allegedly entered the campuses where studies have been suspended.

22 Demonstration - Mar 14 09:00, Tripoli Province, Prime Minister's Office: Around 15 people, mostly children, protested in support of patients with muscular dystrophy.

23 Demonstration - Mar 14 12:54, Misrata Province, Bani Walid: Medical and administrative staff at the Dahra Rural Hospital protested demanding a settlement of their financial situations and the release of suspended wages.

24 Surveillance - Mar 14 14:08, Tripoli Province, Mitiga Airport: A drone took off from Mitiga Airport.

Cyrenaica Region

NSTR

Fezzan Region

NSTR

Offshore

NSTR

Outlook

Short Term Outlook

- Libyan remains locked in a political impasse with two governments, both of which are slowly weakening. The House of Representatives (HoR) and the High Council of State (HCS) continue to dominate the current political scene, with their efforts to resolve key issues like the constitution taking centre stage. After years of backtracking however, SRSG Bathily has made clear that without real progress, the two risk entities risk being sidelined. Various factions are beginning to position themselves for expected change in 2023 as the UN continues to push towards elections, while regional and global issues, not least the Ukraine offensive, continue to shape the international communities' agendas in Libya.

- Although more settled at present, the security situation in and around Tripoli remains fundamentally unstable. After significant changes to the capital's security makeup in August and September 2022, new faultlines are emerging as militia commanders continue to consolidate their positions. This includes expanding their influence through ministries and other state apparatus. In addition, plans to reconstruct Tripoli International Airport threaten to destabilise the delicate balance of power in the city with Misratan entities looking to claim significant influence over the location. The resurgence of Jihadist Salafism in Tripolitania is also a potential source of destabilisation, one which is currently being felt in Tajura and along the north-west coastline including Zawiyah. Armed groups in Tripoli continue to be empowered via financial, military, and political means, ensuring they will continue to exert significant influence over the political situation.

Medium to Long Term Outlook

- The solution to Libya's political impasse remains elections for many stakeholders with UNSMIL attempting to develop a new pathway. Realistically, elections are unlikely to occur in 2023 however, there is a real chance that much-needed groundwork could be achieved. While UNSMIL heads efforts towards elections, other international stakeholders are prioritising more short-term objectives as they look to shape not just Libya, but regional and global issues.
- Terrorist groups remain active but contained in Libya. Islamic State (IS) will continue to present a threat to security forces, primarily in the south, and may re-establish the capability to mount sporadic attacks along the coastline in the future. The group continues to suffer from years of attrition and is more likely focused on providing support for more active IS theatres in sub-Saharan Africa. Al-Qaeda-aligned groups remain active in the country with their integration into societies in the south and some armed groups in the Tripoli area potentially posing a longer-term issue for Libya.

Key Dates

Date	Occasion	Comment
March 22, 2023	Start of Ramadan (+/-)	
April 22 - 24, 2023	Eid Al-Fitr (+/-)	Public Holiday
May 01, 2023	May Day	Public Holiday
June 27, 2023	Arafat Day	
June 28 – 30, 2023	Eid Al-Adha	Public Holiday
July 19, 2023	Islamic New Year	Public Holiday
September 16, 2023	Martyrs' Day	Public Holiday
September 27, 2023	The Prophet's Birthday	Public Holiday
October 23, 2023	Liberation Day	Public Holiday
December 24, 2023	Independence Day	Public Holiday

Acronym List

AQ - Al-Qaeda
BDB – Benghazi Defense Brigade (Al Qaeda-aligned – AAS and RSCB associated/umbrella group)
CBL – Central Bank of Libya
CESF - Constitution and Election Support Force
CNI – Critical National Infrastructure
DACOCT - Deterrence Apparatus for Combating Organized Crime and Terrorism (SDF)
DDR - Disarmament, demobilising and reintegration
GASO – General Administration of Security Operations
GACS – General Administration of Central Support
GECOL – General Electricity Company of Libya
GMMR – Great Man-made River
GNA – Government of National Accord (2016)
GNC – General National Congress (2012)
GNS – Government of National Stability (2021)
GNU – Government of National Unity (2021)
GTUC - Greater Tripoli Union Council (Tripoli militias and others, established in June 2020)
HCS – High Council of State (Tripoli-based)
HNEC – High National Elections Commission
HoR – House of Representatives (Tobruk-based)
IDF – Indirect Fire (mortars/rockets)
IDP - Internally Displaced Persons
IED - Improvised Explosive Device
IOC - International Oil Company
IS - Islamic State
JMC – Joint Military Commission
LIFG – Libyan Islamic Fighting Group
LNA – Libyan National Army
LPA – Libyan Political Agreement (2015)
LPDF - Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (2020)
LROR - Libyan Revolutionary Operations Room
MoD - Ministry of Defense
MoF - Ministry of Finance
MoFA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoI - Ministry of Interior
MoJ - Ministry of Justice
MoO - Ministry of Oil
MoT - Ministry of Transportation
NFDK - No Further Details Known
NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation (aid/charity)
NOC – National Oil Company
NSG – National Salvation Government (GNC)
NSTR - Nothing Significant To Report
P3+2 – France, Germany, Italy – UK, US
PC – Presidency Council
PG – Presidential Guard
PFG - Petroleum Facilities Guard
RPG - Rocket Propelled Grenade
RTA - Road Traffic Accident
TIP – Tripoli International Airport
SSA – Stability Support Authority
SAF - Small Arms Fire
SDF – Rada Deterrence Force/ Special Deterrence Force/ Rada
UXO - Unexploded Ordnance

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