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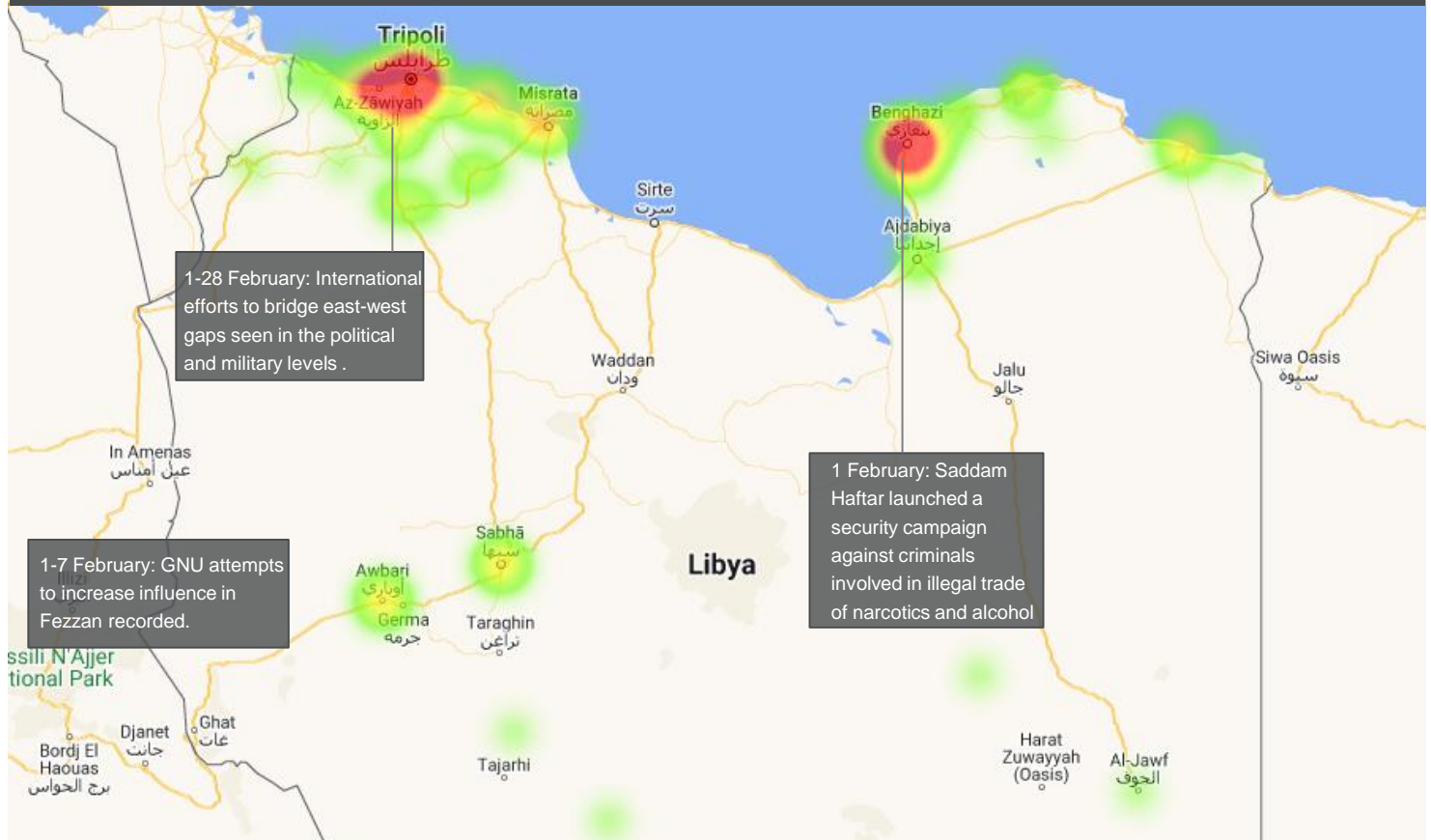
LIBYA

Monthly Political Stability,
Economic And Security
Threat Assessment
February 2023



COUNTRYWIDE OVERVIEW

FIGURE 1: INCIDENT ACTIVITY IN LIBYA, FEBRUARY 2023



KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- International efforts by the US and UK to bridge east-west gaps were seen in the Libyan political and military institutions. The goal of this strategy is to minimize the chances of a destabilization of Libya or an increased risk of disruptions in the oil output.
- The countrywide situation reduced militia appetite for major escalations of violence in Tripoli, especially with increased international involvement in Libya.
- The NOC announced the establishment of the Office of Strategic Programs, based in Benghazi, and tasked with implementing plans and initiatives to develop the oil and gas sectors.

OUTLOOK

- What is happening now is a risk management strategy to avoid potential fallouts of the Libyan situation and its potential affect on the EU's oil supply and its support to ongoing military efforts in Ukraine. However, the same initiative could gather enough momentum to put in place the conditions to organize elections.
- It is likely that the militias will adopt a wait-and-see behavior until the situation becomes clearer and avoid being subjected to international condemnation.
- The development will see an increase in the stake of the eastern bloc in the oil and gas sector. This would lessen the risk of an LNA-backed oil blockade and increase east-west cooperation.

THE POLITICAL PROCESS

EFFORTS TO BRIDGE THE EAST-WEST DIVIDE IN LIBYA

BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT

Developments recorded during the month showed signs of international efforts led by the US and UK to bridge the east-west gaps seen at the political and military levels. The goal of this strategy is to minimize the chances of a destabilization of Libya or of increased risk of disruptions in the oil output.

The perceived risk might originate from Libyan drivers or be actively instigated by Russia via its links to Saif Gaddafi and the Wagner Group. Russia's goal is to tilt key EU and NATO members against continuing to support Ukraine or raise the costs of doing so. This must be seen in the context of the expected escalation and continuation of the conflict in Ukraine.

The UK and US strategy seems to rely on different components, engaging stakeholders at different levels:

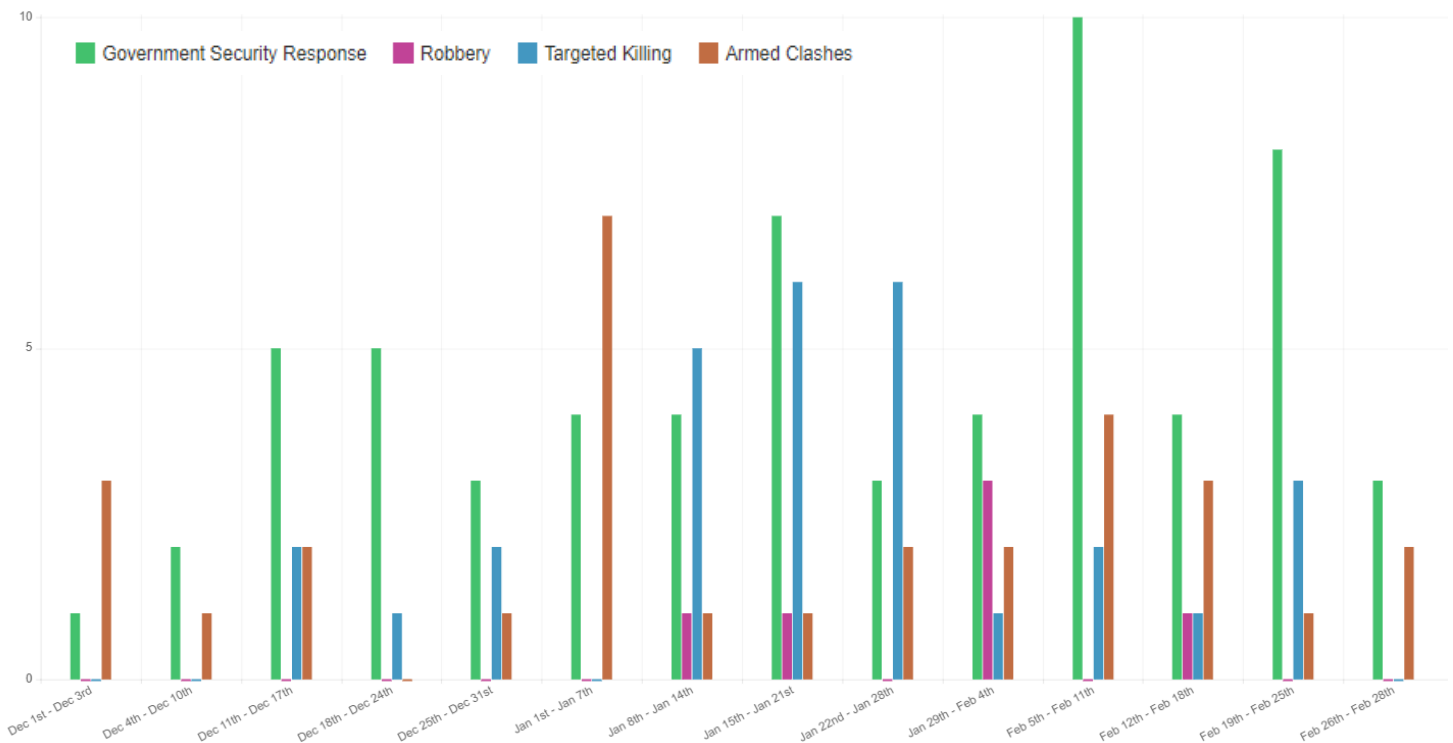
- UNSMIL head Abdoulaye Bathily met with members of the International Contact Group on Libya in Washington on 23 February where the US reiterated that it wants elections in 2023. Bathily also proposed the creation of a high-level committee to work on a roadmap for an election in 2023 during his UN Brief on 27 February.
- Promoting engagement at the top level between eastern and western political and military leaders. This translated into the unannounced visit of CIA Director William Burns to meet with Haftar and Dbeiba on 12 January. Similarly, British Joint Forces Commander General Jim Morris and UK Ambassador to Libya Caroline Hurndall also conducted high-level visits on 8 February.
- Consolidating components of the socio-political environment of Tripolitania based on a narrative which highlights the common revolutionary roots of different groups. This saw the UK Embassy officials promoting the Extraordinary Forum of Libyan Revolutionaries and calls to marginalize Saif Gaddafi. US Deputy Ambassador to Libya Leslie Ordeman also met with Muammar Al Dawi to discuss plans to unify militias in western Libya. Islamist-leaning characters like Abu Obaida Al Zawy and Abdul Hakim Belhaj, who have long standing relationship with the US since the 2011 civil war, have also been tapped due to their affiliations and links which gives them the capacity to act as medium between different groups.

Short-term implications for the above developments:

- **Decreased risk of east-west escalations**
- **Unchanged risk of Wagner sabotage** to Libyan oil and gas infrastructure, mainly driven by dynamics linked to the Ukraine war. The PMC currently does not have the capability to enforce a full blockade, however, sabotage actions targeting the energy infrastructure need very little resources
- **Reduced appetite for Tripoli-based militias to cause significant violent escalations in Tripoli.** Provided that the ongoing countrywide dynamics do not threaten the militias' business and security interests. The business environment in Tripoli might remain favorable throughout Q1 2023 despite low-level tensions and skirmishes between local groups.
- **Making the GNU, HoR and HCS less influential in countrywide politics.** The GNU has not commented on the initiatives mentioned above, taking place in its own territory. This might suggest that the GNU has received reassurances by the US. After all, if the goal is to stabilize the country and hold elections, excluding the GNU from the plan would be counterproductive. On the other hand, HoR and HCS might feel uncomfortable and at risk of irrelevance; due to this fear, political dialogue may increase in the short term in order to retain relevance.

What is happening now is a risk management strategy to avoid potential fallouts of the Libyan situation and its potential affect on the EU's oil supply and its support to ongoing military efforts in Ukraine. But in a best case scenario, the same initiative could gather enough momentum to put in place the conditions to organize elections.

FIGURE 2 : INCIDENT TRENDS IN TRIPOLITANIA, 1 DECEMBER 2022 – 28 FEBRUARY 2023



SECURITY ENVIRONMENT IN TRIPOLI

The countrywide situation which we described reduces the militias' appetite for major escalations of violence in Tripoli, especially at this time of increased international involvement in Libya. It stands to reason that the militias will adopt a wait-and-see behavior until the situation becomes clearer and avoid being subjected to international condemnation.

Until the end of Q1 2023, major escalations will remain unlikely provided that the militias don't perceive their vital interests as under threat. This will likely put some concerning dynamics on hold and favor continued business presence in the city:

- Militia competition over security and or influence in planned efforts for the reconstruction of the Tripoli International Airport (TIA)
- SSA-Mol divisions and tension caused by the implementation of the Mol's security plan against armed groups operating in Tripoli.

Three main groups emerging from increased international involvement in Libya are below:

- The Union of Libyan Revolutionaries (Zintan), founded on the back of the 11 February Extraordinary Forum of Libyan Revolutionaries.
- The Western Region Coalition for National Reconciliation (Zawiyah), founded on 19 February in the presence of Abu Obaida Al Zawy.
- The 17 February Union of Revolutionaries (Misrata), which on 20 February condemned Saif Gaddafi and claimed to be the legitimate body representing the city's revolutionaries.

It is too early to say if these initiatives will gain traction and if these groups will coordinate with each other. Intelyse considers this possible, given the similar ideological background of the groups. However, it remains to be seen how the groups will organize and split political and economic resources, which will be the greatest source of divisions. Without shared goals and strategic guidance, single groups are more likely to disband or enter in competition between themselves and with other better-established Tripolitanian groups. Continued US and UK involvement will prove key in this regard.

GENERAL UPDATES IN FEZZAN

MARGINALIZATION OF GADDAFI IN THE COUNTRYWIDE DEVELOPMENT

The efforts to bridge the east-west divide, which seems to intentionally exclude Saif Gaddafi from the political process or preventing him from running, might be a trigger for action of the Gaddafi. Such action might include sieging government buildings and blocking roads. The level of disruption is assessed to be limited to their strongholds, in Fezzan. If this happens, the LNA would likely result to cracking down on the tribe.

SECURITY ENVIRONMENT IN FEZZAN REMAINS UNCHANGED

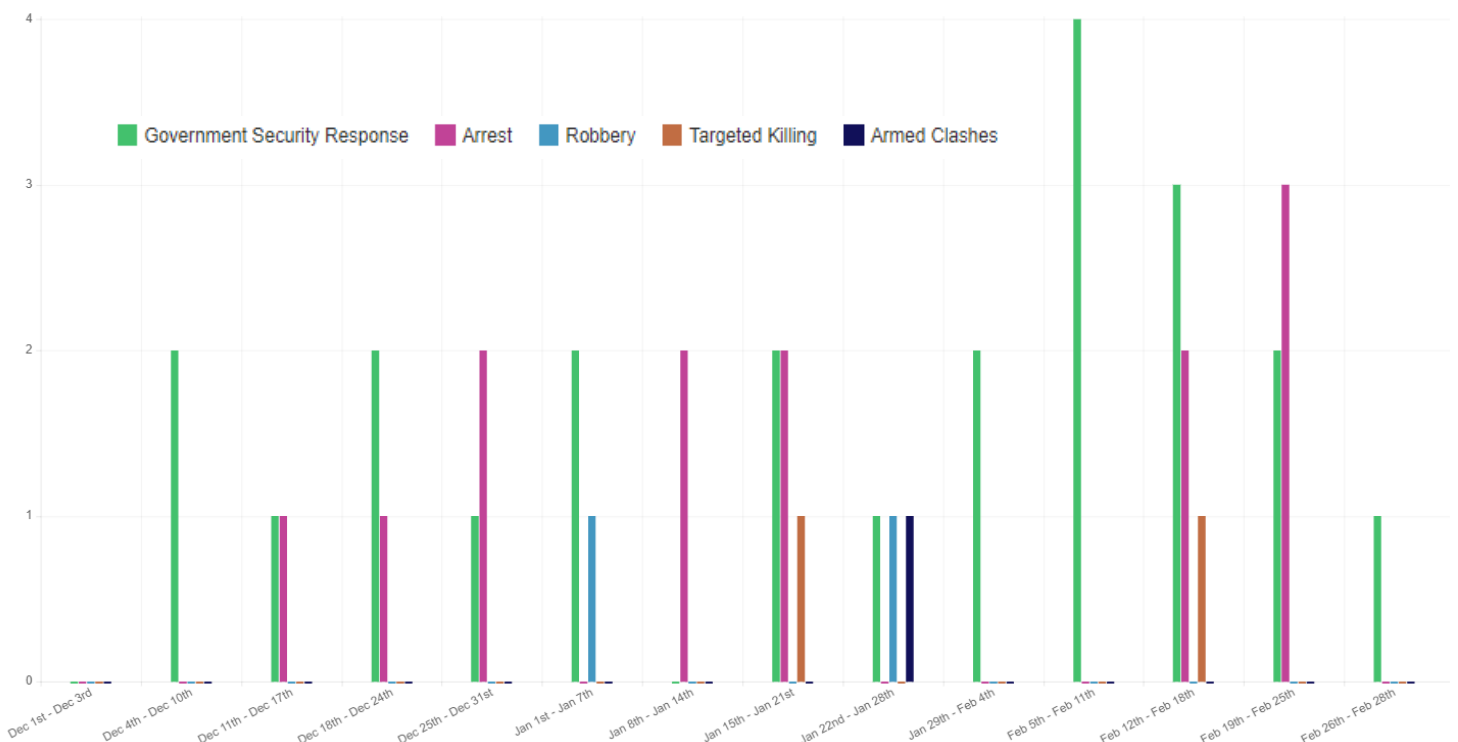
The security environment in Fezzan remains unchanged. Government security and police operations continue to target individuals and groups involved in low impact crimes. This comes in the context of the LNA's efforts to maintain and expand its influence in the region. Low-impact criminal activities including, theft, robbery, smuggling and narcotics trade remain common in the region, but often go unreported. These trends are expected to continue in the foreseeable future (see figure 3).

GNU ATTEMPT TO EXPAND INFLUENCE IN FEZZAN RECORDED

During the first week of February, there was multiple developments indicating an effort from the GNU to expand its influence in the region. These included a series of meetings between GNU officials discussing the payment of salaries of the Southern Military Region and plans for cooperation between the GNU-aligned Border Guards and the Ghat Security Council.

For the GNU, being able to project military power in Fezzan is of the utmost importance. Controlling Sharara and El Feel oilfields directly would deprive other actors of the leverage that they can exert on the GNU if they decide to stop the flow of oil toward the coast. To achieve this, the GNU has to start building up its presence in the region, starting from areas which are more easily penetrated like Ghat and Ubari.

FIGURE 3: SELECTED INCIDENTS IN FEZZAN, 1 DECEMBER 2022 – 28 FEBRUARY 2023



DEVELOPMENTS FOLLOWING IN CYRENAICA

FOLLOW UP ON REPORTS OF HAFTAR'S ABDICATION

LNA Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar will likely wait for the dust to settle and see if there is the chance to run in an election. This comes in the context of the increasing involvement of the UK and the US in Libyan affairs and UNSMIL efforts to hold the elections in 2023.

Haftar is probably already calculating what steps he can take should the attempts by the international community result in an election or not. Either way, Saddam, one of Haftar's sons has been in the spotlight with the launch of a security campaign in Benghazi on 1 February. The campaign, which targeted criminal groups involved in the illegal trade of narcotics and liquor, is meant to show Saddam's capability and prepare the public for a hand over of power.

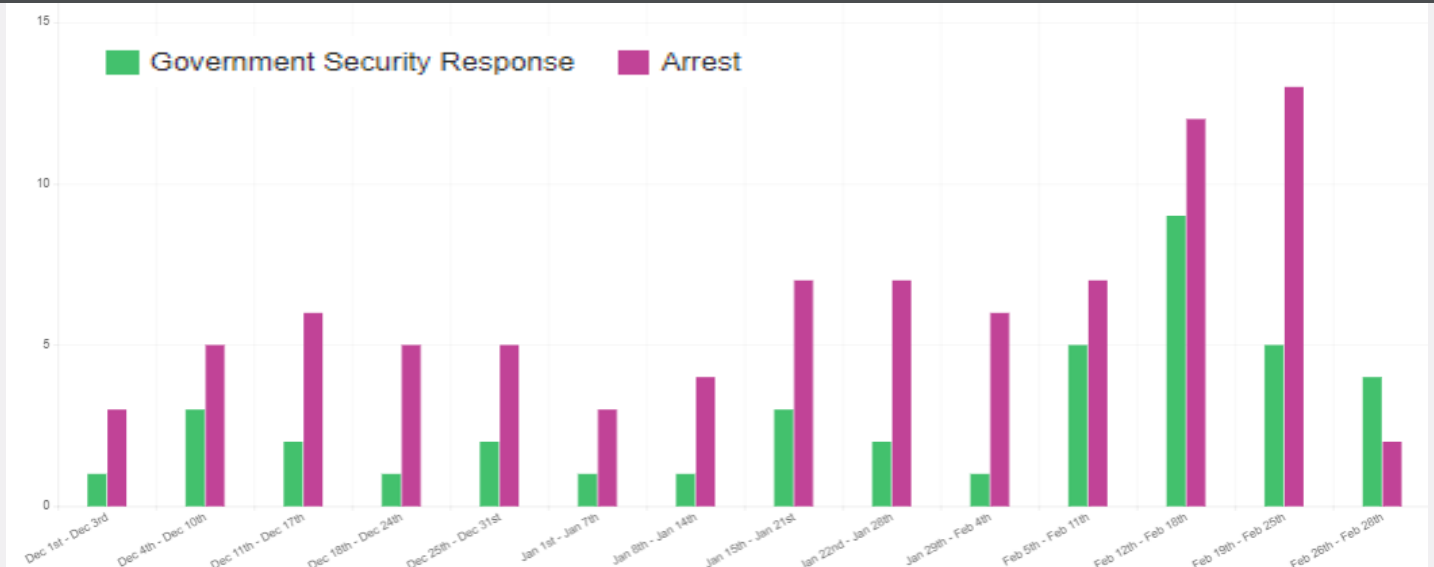
In the meantime, the security operations in Benghazi and cities in eastern Libya are expected to continue in the short to medium term. These operations increase the risk of armed clashes between security authorities and armed criminal groups. It remains unlikely that these criminal groups have the capacity to engage the LNA in an extended period.

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR OIL AND GAS SECTORS ANNOUNCED BY NOC IN BENGHAZI

On 15 February, during meeting with heads and representatives of Libyan oil stakeholders, National Oil Corporation (NOC) chairman Farhat Bengdara announced that the NOC is working on a strategic plan to increase oil production in the country to 2 million barrels per day. Part of the plan is the establishment of the Office of Strategic Programs, based in Benghazi, and tasked with the implementation of plans and initiatives to develop the oil and gas sector in the country.

The choice of the place and of the timing of the development is not random. This was strategically made to increase the stakes of the eastern bloc in the oil and gas sector, thereby, lessening the risk of an LNA-backed oil blockade and increasing east-west cooperation. The Libyan conflict is resource-driven, and every step towards sharing O&G assets is a big sign that there is appetite for cooperation and stability.

FIGURE 4: SELECTED INCIDENTS IN CYRENAICA, 1 DECEMBER 2022 – 28 FEBRUARY 2023

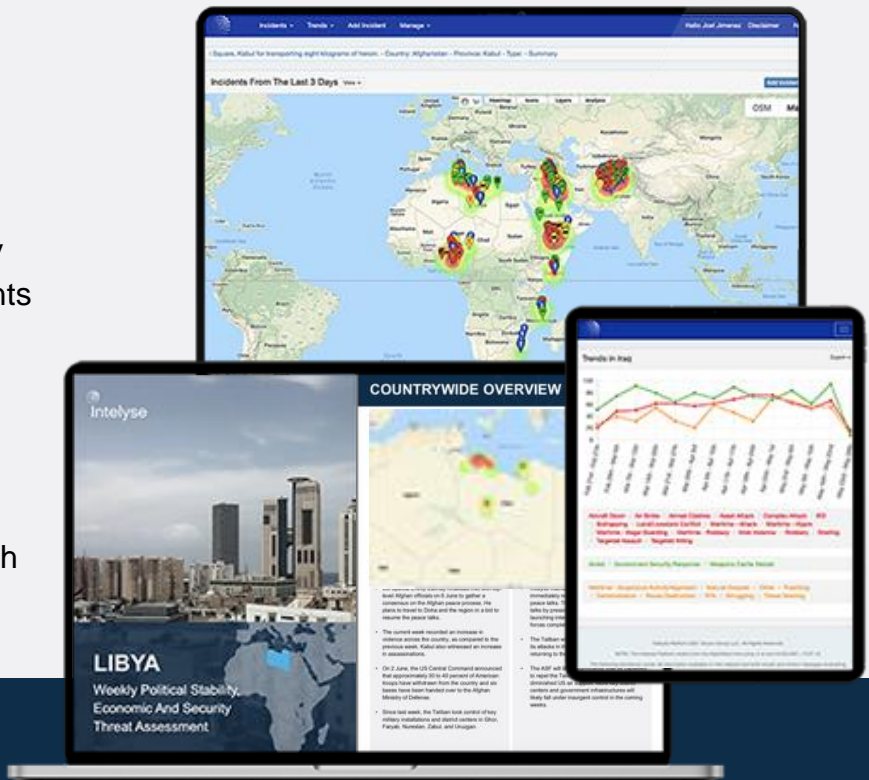


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