



Intelyse



LIBYA

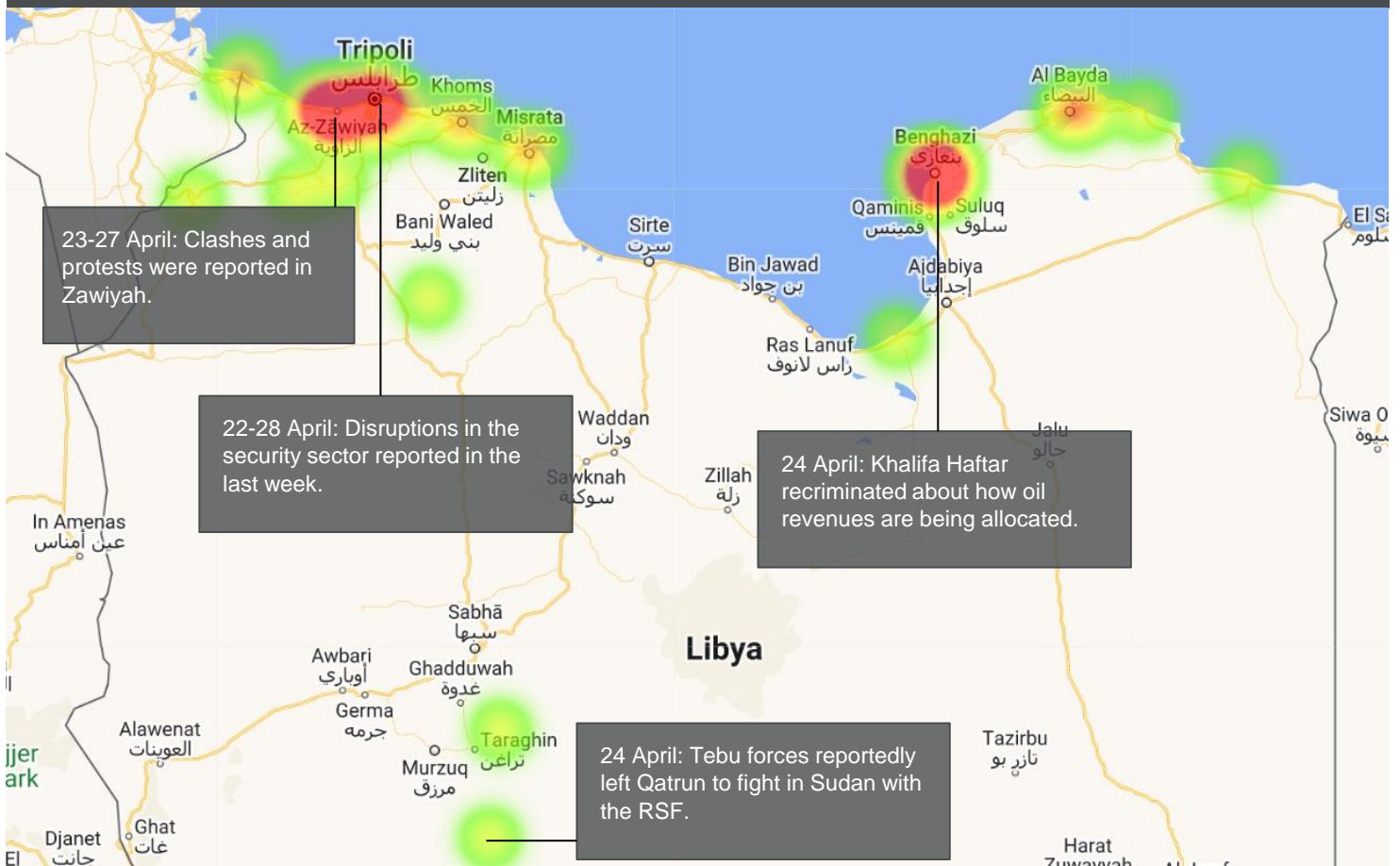
Weekly Political Stability,
Economic And Security
Threat Assessment

22-28 APRIL 2023



COUNTRYWIDE OVERVIEW

FIGURE 1: INCIDENT ACTIVITY IN LIBYA, 22-28 APRIL 2023



KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- Reports of additional disruptions in the private security sector emerged in the past week. The crackdown on security providers has impacted the operations of their clients. Moreover, access for B6 vehicles into Mitiga is now prohibited, apart from diplomatic-plated vehicles.
- In the last week, there were further comments on the alleged involvement of the LNA in the Sudan civil conflict. The Sudanese conflict offers an opportunity for Haftar to rebalance its relationship between the US and Russia.
- Civil unrest and clashes were reported in Zawiyah in the last week.
- Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar restarted engaging with different actors of the eastern socio-political fabric and military establishment to rouse local sentiments for his benefit.

OUTLOOK

- More disruptions are expected amidst the high regulatory uncertainty. Libyan authorities are reportedly encouraging foreign businesses to contract FSA-certified security providers only. This might drive up security costs and give a competitive advantage to security providers with government ties.
- If confirmed, LNA indirect support to the RSF is not going to impact the LNA's ties to Egypt and the US substantially, because the latter two need the LNA to protect their interests in Libya.
- The city will remain unstable. However, the instability will not be allowed to significantly impact the Tripoli area. Given the uncertainty affecting the private security sector, Libyan stakeholders need to mitigate the concerns of international businesses operating in Tripoli.
- Khalifa Haftar currently remains committed to the status quo in Libya.

COUNTRYWIDE OVERVIEW

COUNTRYWIDE UPDATES

DISRUPTIONS IN THE SECURITY SECTOR IN TRIPOLITANIA

Reports of additional disruptions in the private security sector emerged in the past week, with more private security providers engaged in legal problems with Libyan authorities because of being unable to back their commercial operations with full paperwork. Necessary paperwork includes a registration certificate issued by the FSA, a Libyan government agency. Libyan authorities are reportedly encouraging foreign businesses to contract FSA-certified security providers only. This might drive up security costs in the coming months and years and give a competitive advantage to security providers with government ties.

The crackdown on security providers has impacted the operations of their clients, some of which ended up without any security services. Moreover, access for B6 vehicles into Mitiga is now prohibited, apart from diplomatic-plated vehicles. More disruptions are expected amidst the high regulatory uncertainty, for both providers and their clients. It is likely that Libyan authorities are trying to better enforce regulations in the private security sector in anticipation of an increase of foreign investments and business presence in the country.

UPDATES ON ALLEGED LNA INVOLVEMENT IN SUDAN

In the last week, there were further comments on the alleged involvement of the LNA in the Sudan conflict. The LNA was rumored to have provided indirect support to the Sudanese Rapid Support Forces (for initial analysis on LNA involvement in Sudan, see the 21 April 2023 Weekly Threat Assessment). Below are the recent updates:

- On 26 April, LNA-linked sources claimed that the GNU is spreading disinformation about the LNA support to Mohammed Dagalo's Rapid Support Forces (RSF) to discredit the LNA in front of the international community.
- On 24 April, Tebu forces reportedly departed Qatrun to fight for the RSF in Sudan (see page 4).
- On 22 April, General Abdel Fattah Al Burhan, leader of the Sudanese Transitional Council and currently at war with the RSF, claimed that he was contacted by Khalifa Haftar. According to Al Burhan, Haftar denied supporting any side in the Sudanese civilian conflict.
- Reports stated that Siddiq Haftar, one of the sons of Khalifa Haftar, visited Sudan on an unspecified date and met with Dagalo (a.k.a. Hemedti). The two reportedly discussed matters related to the Mars Football Club, linked to Dagalo. Siddiq Haftar has reportedly been nominated honorary President of the Club after a donation of two million dollars. It is unclear whether the money was routed through the Club and diverted elsewhere to fund the RSF. However, this is a further indication of the close ties between the Haftar family and Dagalo (for more details, see the 21 April 2023 Weekly Threat Assessment).

The reports about the possible LNA support to the RSF put Haftar in an awkward position internationally:

- Egypt, the LNA's closest foreign backer, sides with the Sudanese Transitional Council against the RSF.
- The US, which has been engaging closely with Haftar since the beginning of 2023, opposes the RSF due to its ties with Russian-backed Wagner.
- Russia and the UAE, also close to Haftar, support the RSF (21 April 2023 Weekly Threat Assessment).

The civil conflict in Sudan is occurring in an increasingly polarized international context, which gives Libyan powerhouses the chance to hedge between Western actors and their geopolitical rivals to extract concessions from both sides (see 14 April 2023 Weekly Threat Assessment). In this sense, the Sudanese conflict offers an opportunity for Haftar to rebalance his relationship between the US and Russia. After Haftar discussed the possible removal of or measures to restrain Russian-backed Wagner operatives in Libya with the US, he now has the chance to facilitate Wagner's efforts in Sudan by providing support to Wagner-linked RSF in Sudan.

This makes the reports about a possible LNA support to the RSF plausible. If confirmed, this support is not going to impact the LNA's international ties substantially, because Egypt and the US need to maintain good relationships with it to further their Libya agendas.

UPDATE ON UN EFFORTS TO HOLD ELECTIONS IN LIBYA

On 25 April, UNSMIL confirmed that it will provide technical and logistical support to the HoR-HCS 6+6 Committee to pass an electoral law under the 13th Constitutional Amendment. The electoral law must be approved by early July for elections to occur this year.

UPDATES ON ZAWIYAH AND THE WESTERN COSTAL ROAD

DEMONSTRATIONS IN ZAWIYAH

In the early hours of 27 April, youth groups demonstrated in Zawiyah. The trigger for the demonstrations was a video circulated online in which a group of sub-Saharan looking men tortured a Libyan citizen. Roadblocks were established on the coastal road east of Zawiyah (Al Samoud gate). Access to the Zawiyah municipality headquarters, the Zawiyah Security Directorate and the road leading to Zawiyah Refinery was blocked with dirt berms.

The youth of Zawiyah advanced a series of requests to stop protesting. The main ones are:

- Suspending the Zawiyah Municipal Council and holding municipal elections in the city.
- Suspending the Security Director of Zawiyah.
- Limiting the access of armored and armed cars into the city, and transfer militia HQ outside of the city.
- Cancelling the illegitimate decisions of the MoI and the MoD (it is unclear to what they are referring).
- Reforming security bodies in the city.
- Arresting criminal gangs affiliated to local militias and involved in fuel and human smuggling.
- Forming a new security committee made of individuals known for their efficiency and integrity.
- Lifting the social cover provided by the tribes of Zawiyah to specific criminals.

Authorities will need to appease Zawiyah residents at least partially to sedate tensions. This might include satisfying some of their demands, and/or starting a mediation with their representatives and other authoritative people in Zawiyah. However, authorities have limited room of maneuver, because accepting some of these requests might have cascade effects on the security environment in Zawiyah, and increase the likelihood of armed clashes and tensions. Demonstrations and traffic disruptions might continue.

MILITIA CLASHES IN ZAWIYAH

On the evening of 23 April, militia clashes broke out in eastern Zawiyah, close to Gamal Abdel Nasser street, Al Harsha and near the eastern gate of Zawiyah. The clashes lasted throughout the night and involved the forces of Hassan Abuzreiba (deputy commander of the SSA) against those of Muhammad Bahroun, a.k.a. Al Far. The use of RPGs was reported. One RPG reportedly hit a house and killed four civilians. A ceasefire was reached in the morning of 24 April, with the mediation of the Red Crescent and the deployment of the 103rd Brigade to stabilize the situation. Further clashes cannot be excluded.

The clashes erupted because Al Far killed a militia commander close to Abuzreiba. Abuzreiba then decided to retaliate by attacking the HQ of Al Far. Both militias are aligned with the GNU. The above confirms that militia clashes remain possible in Tripolitania, but also that efforts are made by all parties to avoid that they escalate to the point of significantly destabilizing the GNU or the wider Tripoli area. This is due to NATO and the EU's need for stability in Libya (see 10 February Weekly Threat Assessment). In addition, the GNU needs to mitigate the effects that the crackdown on security providers is having on international business presence (see page 2), to avoid losing international presence in Tripoli.

MORE TENSIONS BETWEEN GNU MoI AND ZUWARA OVER RAS AJDIR CONTROL

Renewed reports stated that the GNU MoI Emad Trabelsi is preparing to deploy his forces to take control of the Ras Ajdir border crossing. Previous reports indicated that this would occur after Eid Al Fitr (see 21 April 2023 Weekly Threat Assessment). On 23 April, the GNU conducted border security operations in areas between the Ras Ajdir and Issa border crossings, which contributed to raising the tension.

Amazigh forces in Zuwara have reiterated that they will oppose any attempt to take control of the border crossing with force. If the attempt takes place, Zuwara forces might try to stop MoI forces not only in proximity of Ras Ajdir and Zuwara, but also further east down the coastal highway. The GNU will try to mediate between the MoI and Zuwara. Keeping Ras Ajdir clear and the area stable is a priority for foreign business presence, which is also suffering from the high uncertainty in the private security sector.

NO SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING FEZZAN

TEBU FORCES REPORTEDLY LEAVE FOR SUDAN

On 24 April, fairly reliable sources circulated a video purportedly showing an armed convoy of Tebu forces in the town of Qatrun. The convoy was reportedly leaving for Sudan to participate in the ongoing clashes alongside the RSF, and against the Transitional Council of General Burhan.

While Intelyse could not independently verify the destination of the convoy and the location in which the video was shot, there are elements which strongly suggest that the convoy was actually made of Tebu forces. These elements include the physiognomy of the people appearing in the video, the way in which they wear their headscarves, the dialect they speak and the logos appearing on their vehicles.

Based on historical trends, it can also be assumed that, if the forces appearing in the video really moved from Libya to Sudan, they did so to fight alongside the RSF. It should be noted that the RSF was deployed in support to LNA forces in Fezzan in 2019, and stationed in remote towns like Murzuq and Qatrun, among others.

NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT IN FEZZAN

The security environment in Fezzan has remained unchanged over the past week. The region remains affected by a deep security vacuum.

FIGURE 2: IMAGES FROM VIDEO PRURPORTEDLY SHOWING TEBU FORCES LEAVING QATRUN FOR SUDAN



FIGURE 3: KHALIFA HAFTAR WITH LNA OFFICERS IN AL RAJMA, 24 APRIL 2023



KHALIFA HAFTAR RESUMES PUBLIC APPEARANCES AND MILDLY INFLAMMATORY RHETORIC

Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar restarted engaging with different actors of the eastern socio-political fabric and military establishment to rouse local sentiments for his benefit.

- 21 April: Khalifa Haftar attended a gathering of youth groups at Al Kish Square in Benghazi. This was part of celebrations for the Eid Al Fitr.
- 24 April: Khalifa Haftar met with military leaders and officers at the LNA headquarters in Al Rajma, Benghazi. During the meeting Haftar reiterated the need for the fair distribution of oil wealth to all Libyans. He also added that people can no longer tolerate the selective allocation of oil revenues.

The allocation of oil revenues is one of the main drivers of instability and conflict in Libya. Haftar's statement is relevant in the context that Intelyse has been explaining, characterized by Western needs for stability in the country, and concerns related to possible disruptions of oil exports to Europe.

While Haftar's new mention of how oil revenues are allocated attracted attention, his tone was mild. This suggests that Haftar only aimed at showing to his closest officers that his priorities remain the same. It is very unlikely that Haftar will enforce a blockade of the oil sector or disrupt the current east-west balance in the foreseeable future.

This will need to be reassessed into Q3-2023, when it will become clearer if any chances to progress towards an election before the end of 2023 remain. Such chances are currently very slim, and if no election is foreseen, it is likely that Haftar will preserve the status quo, although he might start advancing new requests in exchange for it.

THE LNA CLOSED THE BORDER WITH SUDAN

On 25 April, the LNA announced its decision to close the Libyan border with Sudan and the deployment of military reinforcements to Al Kufra. The LNA said that the decision is a precautionary step in the context of the ongoing instability in Sudan. The decision was likely made to assure local concerns over the possible spillovers of migrants from Sudan. Intelyse assesses that human smuggling routes from Sudan into south-eastern Libya will not be significantly impacted. It remains possible that RSF forces will liaise with LNA forces in the area to use it as a safe haven.

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