



Intelyse



LIBYA

Weekly Political Stability,
Economic And Security
Threat Assessment

29 APRIL - 5 MAY 2023



COUNTRYWIDE OVERVIEW

FIGURE 1: INCIDENT ACTIVITY IN LIBYA, 28 APRIL – 5 MAY 2023



KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- Libyan authorities forced several private security providers to cease and/or significantly downsize business, reportedly due to incomplete paperwork and other legal violations and/or bureaucratic irregularities. Their clients remained without a provider to secure their assets and personnel.
- Khalifa Haftar visited Rome on 3-4 May. Haftar discussed migration from Libya towards Italy in high-level meetings with Italian authorities.
- On 30 April, Zintani commander Osama Juwaili hosted a delegation of Misratan military commanders in Aziziyah, south of Tripoli. Among those who attended the meeting was Salem Juha, a commander loyal to GNU PM Fathi Bashagha.
- On 30 April, sources claimed that gunmen traveling on four vehicles attacked a checkpoint manned by the LNA 110th Battalion in the Jufra area (see figure 3). The source said that the attackers were later identified as individuals from Sabha affiliated to pro-GNU forces.

OUTLOOK

- More disruptions are expected amidst the continuing regulatory uncertainty, for both providers and clients.
- Many observers believe that Haftar will demand political benefits in exchange for his help with managing migration. However, they overlook the fact that a photo-op in Rome is already a significant political win for Haftar, given that Italy supports the GNU.
- It is likely that Juwaili will ask the GNU for concessions in exchange for not enabling eastern actors to develop deeper ties in Tripolitania, in the context of the internationally-backed efforts to bridge east-west gaps.
- Further LNA accusations against the GNU might indicate that Haftar is preparing for a future negotiation with the GNU on how to redistribute resources between the eastern and the western bloc. The discussion is unlikely to start before the end of Q3 2023, and it is very unlikely to result in an unforeseen countrywide destabilization.

COUNTRYWIDE OVERVIEW

COMMERCIAL AND POLITICAL UPDATES

DISRUPTIONS IN THE PRIVATE SECURITY SECTOR

Libyan authorities forced several private security providers to cease and/or significantly downsize business, reportedly due to incomplete paperwork and other legal violations and/or bureaucratic irregularities. Their clients remained without a provider to secure their assets and personnel, and contracts were placed under force majeure. Severe uncertainty spread within the business community, with businesses already evaluating whether to extract most or all of their employees from the country.

More disruptions are expected amidst the continuing regulatory uncertainty, for both providers and clients. Below is a summary of recent events:

- Eight employees of a large international private security company were detained on 12 April by the Libyan Intelligence Service and Rada SDF because their paperwork and permits were reportedly incomplete. The company was required to leave Libya and relocate to Tunis, according to open sources. The company and the high-profile international project it was working on were likely chosen to send a message to all other private security providers and their client-base.
- During the last week of April, two more security companies reportedly faced scrutiny and pressure from Libyan authorities. Unconfirmed reports stated that two employees of one of the two companies were detained. No additional information is currently available.
- Across the private security sector, significant uncertainty has spread also among those providers which have not been impacted by the tighter controls enforced by Libyan authorities. Providers with years of experience in Libya are reported to feel “vulnerable.” It is key to specify that they do not feel vulnerable to physical threats, but rather to possible irregularities found in their paperwork and licenses.

Observers have been wondering why Libyan authorities implemented the crackdown on private security providers only now. It is likely that Libyan authorities are trying to better enforce regulations in the private security sector and control it more tightly because they expect significant foreign investments and international business in the country (see paragraph above).

Necessary paperwork required by Libyan authorities includes (but is not limited to) a registration certificate issued by the FSA, a Libyan government agency. Stricter enforcement of this and other requirements might drive up security costs in the coming months and years, and give a competitive advantage to security providers with government ties, which might be better positioned to seize future business opportunities. It remains to be seen if this will also cause the quality of private security services to decrease, due to weaker competition and/or possible price wars.

In the coming weeks, an increase in disinformation and misinformation is likely in the Tripoli area, given the uncertainty and possible grievances caused by the trends mentioned above. Intelyse will monitor the situation.

HoR-HCS JOINT COMMITTEE MET IN TRIPOLI

On 2 May, the 6+6 HoR-HCS Joint Committee met in Tripoli. The participants agreed on the working mechanism of the Committee and to communicate with the concerned authorities and institutions involved in the electoral process. No political breakthroughs leading to elections in 2023 are likely to result from the meetings of the Committee.

FIGURE 2: INCIDENT ACTIVITY IN TRIPOLI, 28 APRIL – 5 MAY 2023



TIGHTER SECURITY MEASURES PLANNED IN TRIPOLI

On 30 April Major General Khalil Wahiba, head of the Tripoli Security Directorate, ordered to tighten security in the city and deploy more security personnel on the streets. Wahiba's order is a way to mitigate the concerns of those businesses operating in Tripoli after the recent crackdown on private security providers.

Libyan authorities need to mitigate such concerns to avoid that international businesses withdraw personnel from Libya and cease operations due to security providers not being able to provide their services and enable business. These concerns have been exacerbated by recent unconfirmed claims between Rada SDF and the SSA, these however are likely part of a disinformation campaign to spread uncertainty in Tripoli.

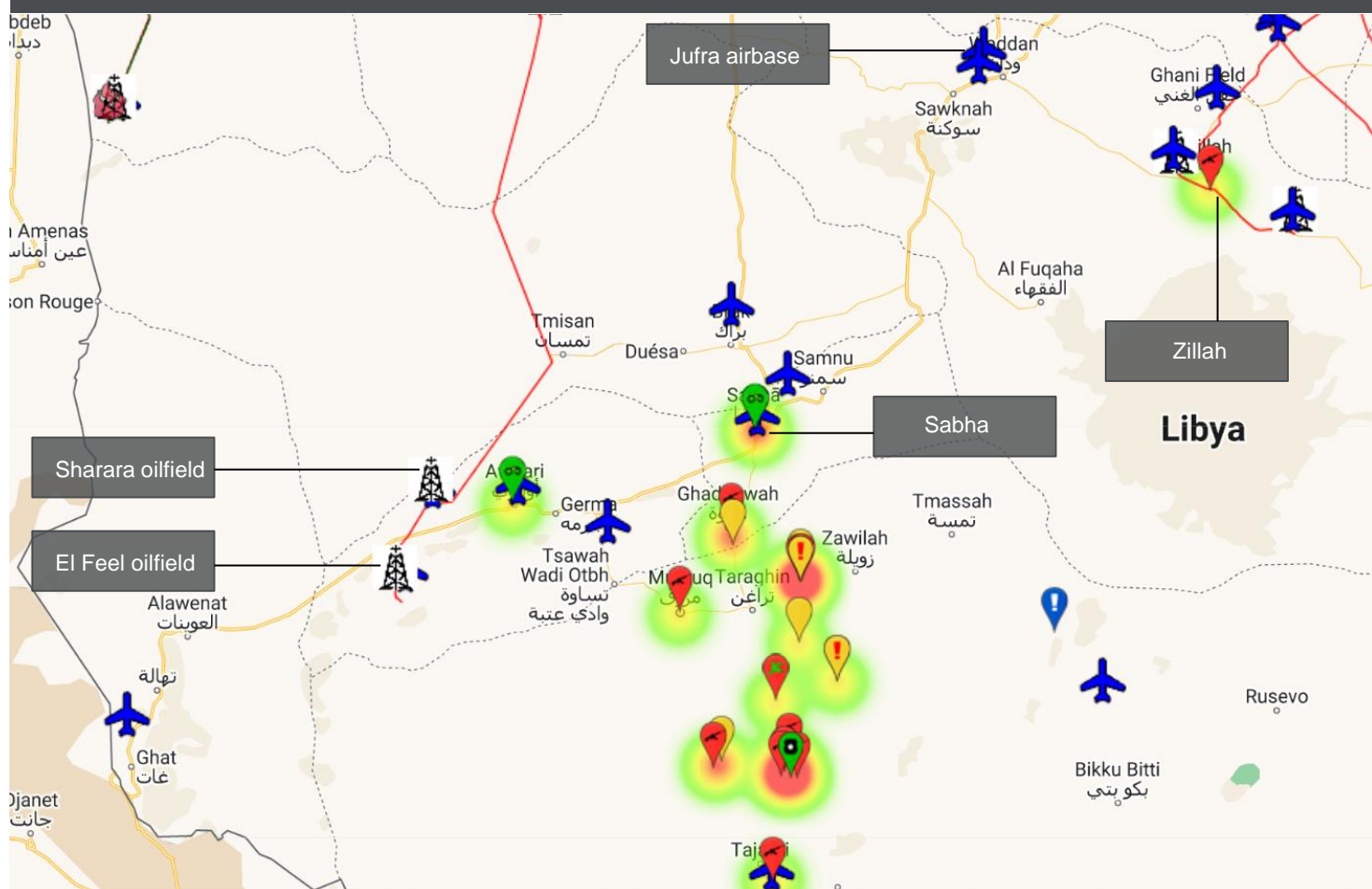
Increased security personnel on the streets will not have a strong impact on the decision-making processes of those companies assessing security risks and business continuity solutions in Tripoli. Uncertainty in the private security sector will remain in the coming days and weeks, and more companies might decide to temporarily withdraw personnel or halt operations while private security providers achieve regulatory compliance. After these initial disruptions and the time needed to lift force majeure on old contracts or find new security providers, businesses will come back.

MEETING BETWEEN ZINTANI AND MISRATAN MILITARY LEADERS

On 30 April, Zintani commander Osama Juwaili hosted a delegation of Misratan military commanders in Aziziyah, south of Tripoli. Among those who attended the meeting was Salem Juha, a commander loyal to GNS PM Fathi Bashagha. Juwaili is known to have a good relationship with the LNA, and it is not surprising that GNS-linked Salem Juha was part of the delegation, since the GNS is based in LNA-controlled Sirte.

Juwaili and the Misratan delegation allegedly discussed the formation of a joint military force. This triggered a statement by the Misrata Revolutionaries Council warning against any security cooperation with parties which are too close to the LNA. The comment is also likely due to previous reports claiming a plan for the LNA to conduct joint military maneuvers with forces under Al Juweili in western Libya. Juwaili will keep leveraging his relationship with the LNA and the GNU to benefit politically. It is likely that Juwaili will ask the GNU for concessions in exchange for not enabling eastern actors to develop deeper ties in Tripolitania, in the context of the internationally-backed efforts to bridge east-west gaps.

FIGURE 3: ISIS-RELATED ACTIVITIES IN FEZZAN, 1 JANUARY 2022 – 5 MAY 2023



ATTACK ON LNA CHECKPOINT

On 30 April, sources claimed that gunmen traveling on four vehicles attacked a checkpoint manned by the LNA 110th Battalion in the Jufra area (see figure 3). The source said that the attackers were later identified as individuals from Sabha affiliated to pro-GNU forces. The claim could not be independently verified.

However, it is relevant that the LNA blamed a pro-GNU group. After Haftar's recent remarks on the allocation of oil revenues (see 28 April Weekly Threat Assessment) this is another sign of the LNA resorting back to a provocative communications strategy, although in a very mild way. Further similar signs might indicate that Haftar is preparing for a future negotiation with the GNU on how to redistribute resources between the eastern and the western bloc. The discussion is unlikely to start before the end of Q3 2023, and it is very unlikely to result in an unforeseen countrywide destabilization.

There are several possible explanations for the incident:

- The attack might have been carried out by a local criminal group which suffered economic damages due to the LNA's presence in the area. If this is the case, the LNA is unlikely to take significant countermeasures, but might strengthen its presence via static security deployments or launch low-impact counter-crime operations. This is assessed to be the most likely explanation.
- Based on the modus operandi and the area in which the attack occurred, there is a remote chance that the attack might have been carried out by an ISIS cell. It should be noted that on 5 February 2022, the LNA 110th Battalion clashed with an ISIS cell in Zillah, about 140km from Jufra (see figure 3). However, the LNA capitalizes on ISIS-related incidents to justify its importance as a bulwark against terrorism, even in cases when the actual involvement of ISIS militants in the incident announced by the LNA is dubious. The fact that the LNA did not attribute the 30 April attack to ISIS via its official or semi-official channels means that ISIS is unlikely to have been involved.

KHALIFA HAFTAR VISITS ROME

Khalifa Haftar visited Rome on 3-4 May. Haftar discussed migration from Libya towards Italy in high-level meetings with Italian authorities. Italy sought cooperation from Haftar in terms of the management of possible migration waves from Sudan towards Italy via Cyrenaica. Since the beginning of 2023, most migrants leaving from Libya towards Italy have departed from Cyrenaica.

Italy is already facing growing concern for increasing migration flows from Tunisia. Since the beginning of 2023, migrant departures from Tunisia towards Italy have increased by ten times compared to the same period in 2022. Italy wants to avoid that a new migration wave from Sudan adds to the one underway from Tunisia. Italy's migration management systems are already under extreme pressure.

The discussions between Haftar and Italian authorities underscore the continued Italian engagement with both the eastern and the western bloc in Libya, and give Haftar significant international exposure.

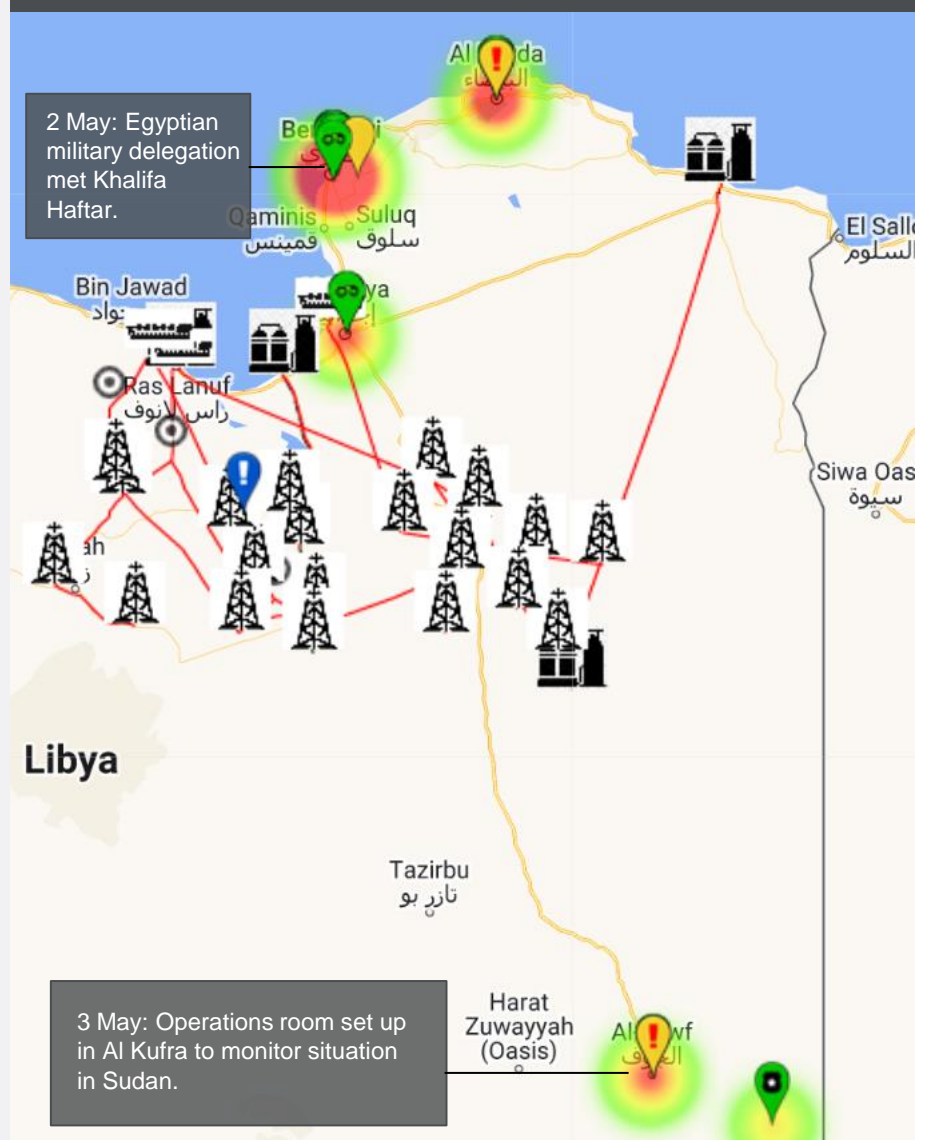
This is a further factor contributing to the efforts to bridge east-west divisions and balance between the two blocs, to avoid a destabilization of the country. Many observers believe that Haftar will demand political benefits in exchange for his help with managing migration. However, they overlook the fact that a photo-op in Rome is already a significant political win for Haftar.

AL KUFRA MUNICIPALITY SETS UP OPERATIONS ROOM

On 3 May, the Al Kufra Municipality set up an operations room to follow and respond to the situation in Sudan, to avoid disruptive spillovers across the Libyan border which might affect the town. The most likely spillovers would be:

- Sudanese armed groups crossing the Libyan border. Sudanese armed groups might want to cross into Libya to avoid armed confrontations and/or exploit their local networks to resupply with fuel and possibly weapons and ammunition.
- Migration flows towards Kufra, which might impact the local tribal fabric and economy. The Head of the Anti-Illegal Migration Agency in Cyrenaica warned that hundreds of displaced Sudanese citizens are currently in the border area. Sudanese refugees trying to reach Europe would likely pass through Kufra before heading to western Fezzan and then the coasts of Tripolitania. It is possible that a part of them would also end up in more remote areas on the north-eastern coast of Cyrenaica.

FIGURE 4: INCIDENT ACTIVITY IN CYRENAICA , 28 APRIL – 5 MAY

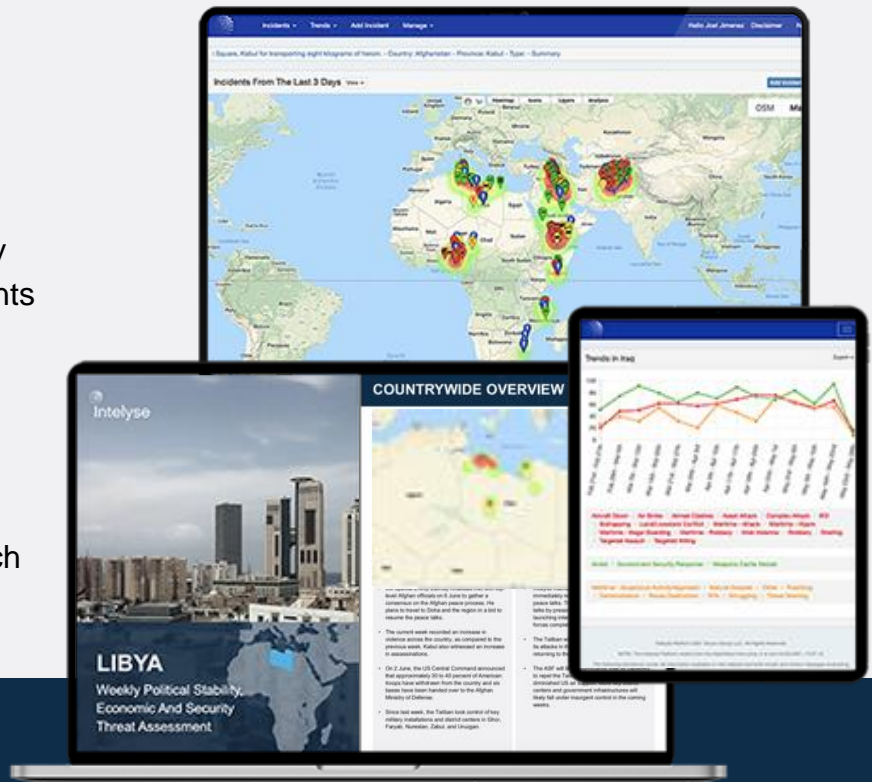


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