



Intelyse



LIBYA

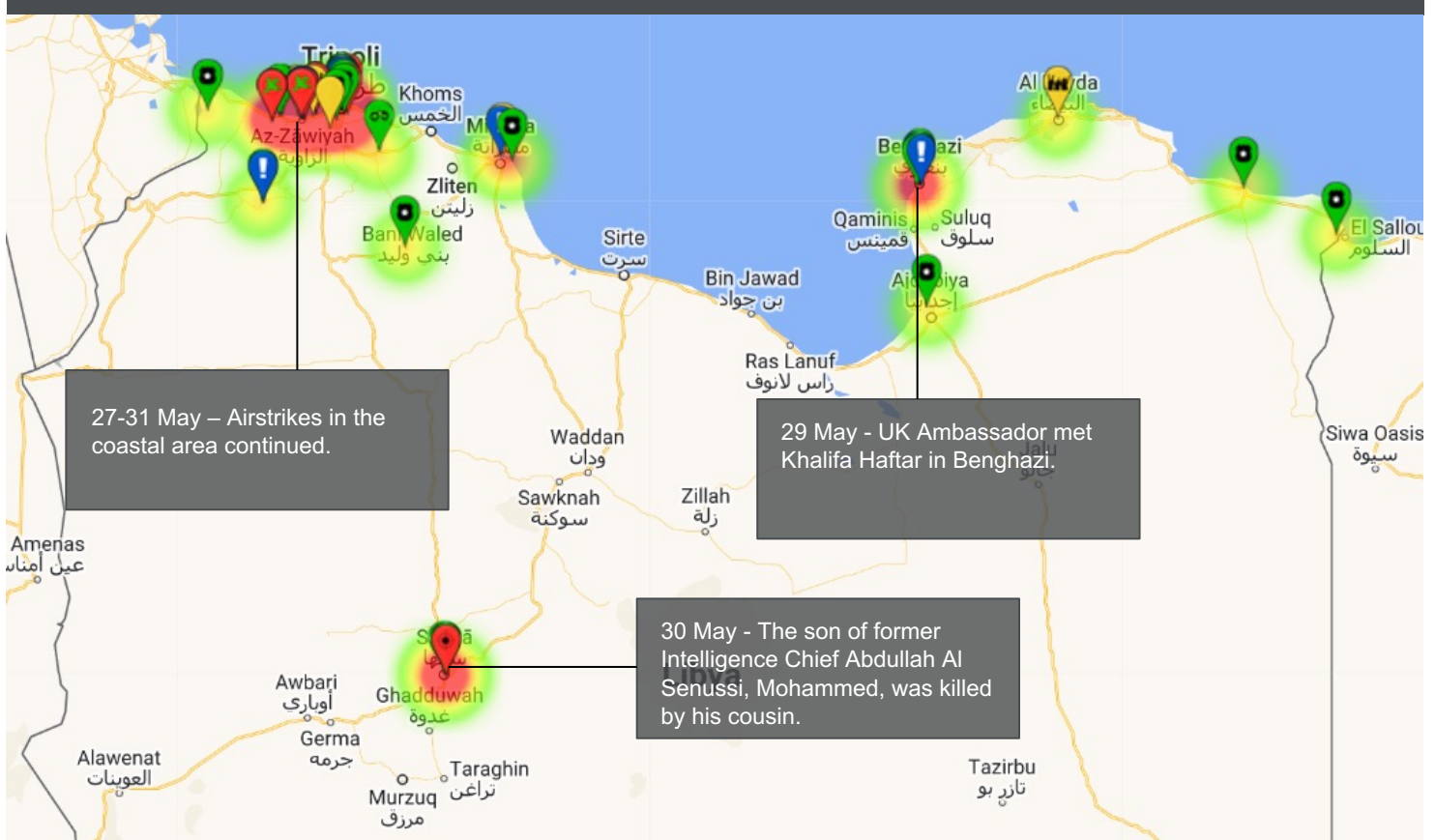
Weekly Political Stability,
Economic And Security
Threat Assessment

27 MAY – 2 JUNE 2023



COUNTRYWIDE OVERVIEW

FIGURE 1: INCIDENT ACTIVITY IN LIBYA, 27 MAY – 2 JUNE



KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- On 27 June, GNU PM Dbeiba held a speech at the Libyan Academy for Information Technology. Dbeiba is trying to offset the popular outrage caused by the drone strike campaign with the promise of better living conditions, to protect his support base.
- The Rada SDF and the 444th Brigade clashed in Ras Hassan, Ain Zara and Salah Al Din, Tripoli, early on 29 May.
- Airstrikes on militia sites in western Tripolitania continued. On 29 May, the MoD announced the second phase of the operation. No further airstrikes were recorded after 31 May.
- The HoR gathered in Benghazi on 29 May to discuss the recent developments in Zawiyah. HoR member Ali Abuzreiba's property has been targeted in the strikes, which prompted his criticism of the GNU for the operation.

OUTLOOK

- Dbeiba hopes that the drone strike campaign will serve as a long-term deterrent to the Zawiyah-based militias, and that in the short term he will manage to rebuild his popularity, despite the airstrikes, by issuing concessions and assistance to the population of Tripolitania. His plan might be successful.
- Although the clashes were fierce, they originated from a relatively low-level episode. Militia violence remains possible in Tripoli, but there are no preconditions or appetite for violence to last beyond the 48-72 hour mark or directly jeopardize the stability of the GNU.
- Airstrikes in the area could resume in the coming hours and days as the operation has not been declared as complete.
- The HoR is unlikely to take any significant measures other than publicly condemning Dbeiba for the strikes in order to undermine him politically, although the GNU operation in Zawiyah gives the eastern bloc more opportunity to capitalize on anti-GNU sentiment.

COUNTRYWIDE OVERVIEW

POLITICAL UPDATES

GNU PM DBEIBA PROMISES INVESTMENTS AND BETTER LIVING CONDITIONS

On 27 June, GNU PM Dbeiba held a speech at the Libyan Academy for Information Technology. The main points of the speech are summarized below:

- He stated: “there will be no more wars in Libya from today and there will only be improvement of life and development for all the people in the country.”
- He stressed the GNU pays great attention to the younger generation, demonstrated through marriage and education grants as well as the housing loans it has been issuing.
- He called for the establishment of a “club of developers and inventors” for the government to invest in the young generations of Libya.

The speech was made 72 hours after the beginning of the drone strike campaign on militia sites in the Zawiyah area, which then expanded to other locations on the western coastal road. As expected, Dbeiba is trying to protect his support base and offset the popular outrage caused by the drone strike campaign with promises of better living conditions.

Dbeiba hopes that the drone strike campaign will serve as a long-term deterrent to the Zawiyah-based militias, and that in the short term he will manage to rebuild his popularity, despite the airstrikes, by issuing concessions and assistance to the population of Tripolitania. The strikes might also aim to weaken those militias which are not aligned to the GNU in relation to GNU-aligned militias in the area. Dbeiba’s strategy has a realistic chance of success.

While eastern actors are trying to capitalize on the drone strikes to undermine Dbeiba politically, this is unlikely to have any immediate or significant impact on Dbeiba’s position of power. However, the militias which have been targeted by the GNU will grow increasingly hostile to it in the coming 3-12 months. This will undermine the GNU’s ability to manage them, but it is still too early to state whether the strikes have been counterproductive.

The idea that the drone strike campaign is unlikely to undermine Dbeiba’s position is further reinforced by the statements that the US and UK Embassies in Libya released after the airstrike campaign commenced. The US and UK Embassies expressed their concern about the campaign in Zawiyah, but neither Embassy mentioned the GNU or PM Dbeiba explicitly (see page 3). This indicates that Dbeiba is unlikely to suffer any consequences from the US and the UK, and indicates that the two support Dbeiba’s continuation as GNU PM.

UNCONFIRMED SOURCES CLAIM THE HOR-HCS COMMITTEE HAS FOUND A DEAL FOR ELECTIONS

On 30 June, the press cited anonymous sources who reported that the 6+6 HoR-HCS Committee has found a deal to hold parliamentary elections in December 2023 and presidential elections in January 2024. This confirms previous analysis that assessed elections before the end 2023 was very unlikely. The Committee allegedly agreed that:

- Military officers must surrender their ranks to run in the elections and will have them returned if they do not win.
- Dual nationals must give up their second nationalities if elected or before second electoral rounds.
- An interim government shall be formed, to lead the country to elections.

Neither the HoR nor the HCS have confirmed any of the above. Historically, the two institutions have frequently claimed progress to gain credit and remain relevant to the Libyan and international political scene, without delivering any tangible headway. Observers remain deeply skeptical that the situation will be any different now. The HoR and HCS are more to be promoting their desire for the creation of a new government into an election-related framework, to obtain more international support for it by taking advantage of international calls for elections.

CLASHES IN TRIPOLI, THE REFINERY AND AN UPDATE ON AIRSTRIKES

CLASHES BETWEEN THE RADA SDF AND THE 444TH BRIGADE IN TRIPOLI

The Rada SDF and the 444th Brigade clashed in Ras Hassan, Ain Zara and Salah Al Din, Tripoli, early on 29 May. The clashes occurred because Rada SDF arrested a 444th Brigade commander named Musab Raziq on 28 May. The arrest of militia commanders by other militias frequently leads to violence.

Raziq was reportedly released by Rada SDF after heavy clashes on the morning of 29 May. The Gathering of Tajoura Revolutionaries then announced that the tension was settled through a mediation.

Although the clashes were fierce, they originated from a relatively low-level episode. The cause of the clashes and the fact that Raziq was set free hours later confirm previous analysis. Militia violence remains possible in Tripoli, but there the appetite for violence to last beyond 48-72 hours or jeopardize the stability of the GNU is weak. It is worth noting that the clashes, although fierce, did not originate from a strategic disagreement or rivalry between the two militias.

PROTESTERS THREATEN TO CLOSE THE ZAWIYAH REFINERY

On 29 May, an armed group reportedly shut down the pipeline transporting fuel and gas from the Zawiyah refinery to the power plants in Tripoli. On 21 May, during protests in Zawiyah, locals threatened to shut down the refinery unless the GNU improved the security situation in the city. After recent developments in Zawiyah, it is possible that locals will implement the threat.

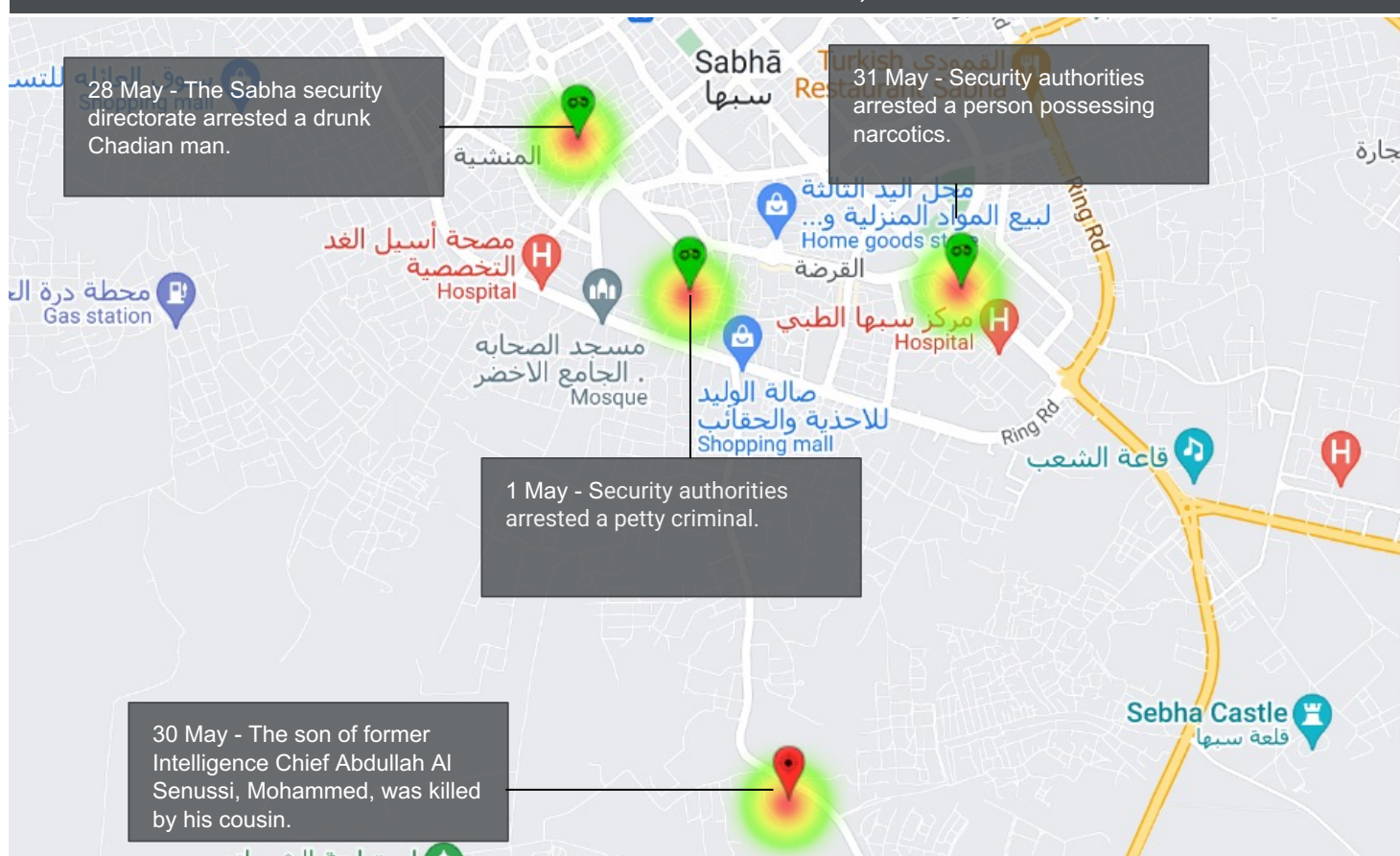
Ali Abuzreiba threatened that the Zawiyah refinery will remain closed until GNU PM Dbeiba leaves power. Abuzreiba is capitalizing on the situation to undermine Dbeiba's support base. It is unlikely but possible that Abuzreiba has significant influence on the group that threatened the refinery. Consequently, the threat of the closure of the refinery should not be seen as directly mandated by Abuzreiba and is unlikely to be political. The GNU will try to mediate with the group to diffuse the threat as soon as possible and avoid the associated disruption and subsequent unrest such a closure would cause in the area.

TIMELINE AND UPDATE ON THE AIRSTRIKES

- **27 May:** A fourth round of GNU drone strikes targeted several locations, including behind Nesma Hospital in Zawiyah, a fuel smuggling site in the Awlad Saqr Tribal area of El Fassi, two fuel trucks near Rakina Roundabout in Zawiyah and another Kaboat militia site in Bir al Qalali. Casualties were reported.
- **28 May:** A drone strike targeted the Al Maya port, east of Zawiyah.
- **28 May:** Protesters closed the coastal highway as a sign of protest, after drone strikes hit Mayah port, east of Zawiyah. Sources say that the road was closed by a group of locals protesting the airstrike. They set tires on fire to obstruct the route.
- **29 May:** The GNU MoD announced the start of a second phase of security operations against criminal/militia groups in Zawiyah. Drone strikes and more traffic disruptions on the Coastal highway remain likely. The MoD also declared that during the first phase of drone strikes it destroyed seven boats used for human smuggling, six storage sites for drugs, nine fuel trucks used to smuggle fuel, and weapons and ammunition used by the criminal gangs. The MoD also said it will publish a video documenting the first phase of airstrikes when appropriate.
- **29 May:** The UK and US Embassies in Libya expressed their concern for the recent events in Zawiyah. The US Embassy also expressed concern for the potential for further violence. The UK Embassy stated that "the use of weapons which endanger civilian lives is unacceptable." However, neither of the two statements explicitly named Dbeiba. It is unlikely that Dbeiba will suffer any direct consequences from the UK and the US for the operations.
- **30 May:** Renewed drone strikes by the GNU targeted warehouses in the Al-Maya area and Al-Ajailat. In Al Ajaylat, the strike reportedly targeted an alcohol storage facility belonging to the Ammar Balkour. This occurred after the Libyan Presidential Council affirmed its support for security operations launched to target smuggling, drug, and human trafficking on the western coast.
- **31 May:** Drone strikes were reported near Awlad Saqr Street, in southern Zawiyah City.

No further airstrikes were reported after 31 May but no official announcement as to the conclusion of the operation has been made. It is unclear the operation has concluded so airstrikes in the area could resume in the near future.

FIGURE 2: INCIDENT ACTIVITY IN FEZZAN, 27 MAY – 2 JUNE



LNA INTENDS TO DISRUPT GADDAFIST NETWORKS IN FEZZAN

Sources reported that, on 27 May, under the instructions of Khalifa Haftar, LNA Major General Jama Masoud Jamaat Al Ghanai, the commander of the Ubari and Ghat military region, prohibited all civil society meetings in the area. The measure reportedly followed a gathering of supporters of Saif Al Islam Al Gaddafi, who discussed Gaddafi's possible candidacy in the presidential elections.

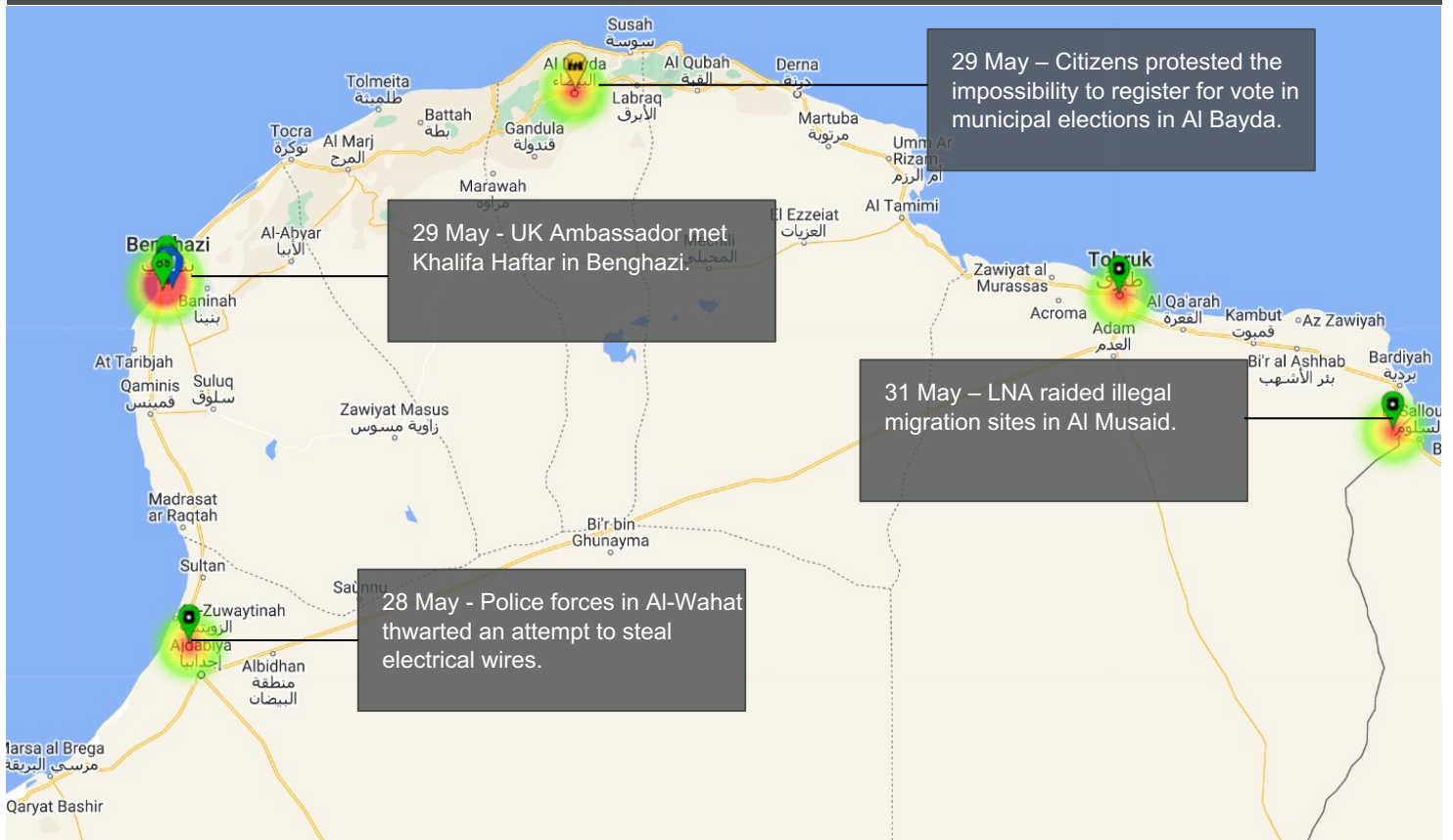
Based on the unconfirmed agreement reached by the 6+6 HoR-HCS Committee, Saif Gaddafi would not be allowed to participate in the elections due to a pending International Criminal Court sentence.

However, Gaddafi has represented a political threat to Haftar since 2021, when elections were originally scheduled. Over time, the LNA has taken measures to limit Gaddafi's political influence and suppress his supporters, most notably through multiple waves of arrests in Sirte and Qasr Abu Hadi. Similar episodes are likely in future.

In western Fezzan, and especially the Sabha area, Gaddafi maintains a level of support, mainly nurtured via his links to the Gaddafa tribe. The Gaddafa is unlikely to respond to the LNA's ban on civil society meetings, but the situation is currently unlikely to escalate, because no deal has been agreed on when and how the elections will be implemented.

However, if a clear path to internationally supported elections is devised in the coming months, Gaddafi's supporters will want to ensure that Gaddafi is not excluded. If he is, he will be able to mobilize support in cities like Sabha, Bani Walid, Sirte, and Warshefana, southwest of Tripoli. Such mobilizations would be suppressed, particularly by the LNA.

FIGURE 3: INCIDENT ACTIVITY IN CYRENAICA, 27 MAY – 2 JUNE



HoR MEETING TO DISCUSS THE EVENTS IN ZAWIYAH

The HoR gathered in Benghazi on 29 May to discuss the recent developments in Zawiyah. HoR member Ali Abuzreiba's became the main critic of the GNU because his property was hit during the strikes.

The HoR is unlikely to take any significant measures other than publicly condemning GNU PM's Dbeiba for the strikes in order to undermine him politically, although the GNU operation in Zawiyah gives the eastern bloc more opportunity to capitalize on anti-GNU sentiment. The LNA may nurture this sentiment for a long-term objectives or as a contingency. However, in the short term, the LNA is unlikely to engage in any destabilizing operations on the west because of the threat of GNU airstrikes and, as previously explained, the countrywide context currently does not favor such option.

KHALIFA HAFTAR MEETS UK AMBASSADOR

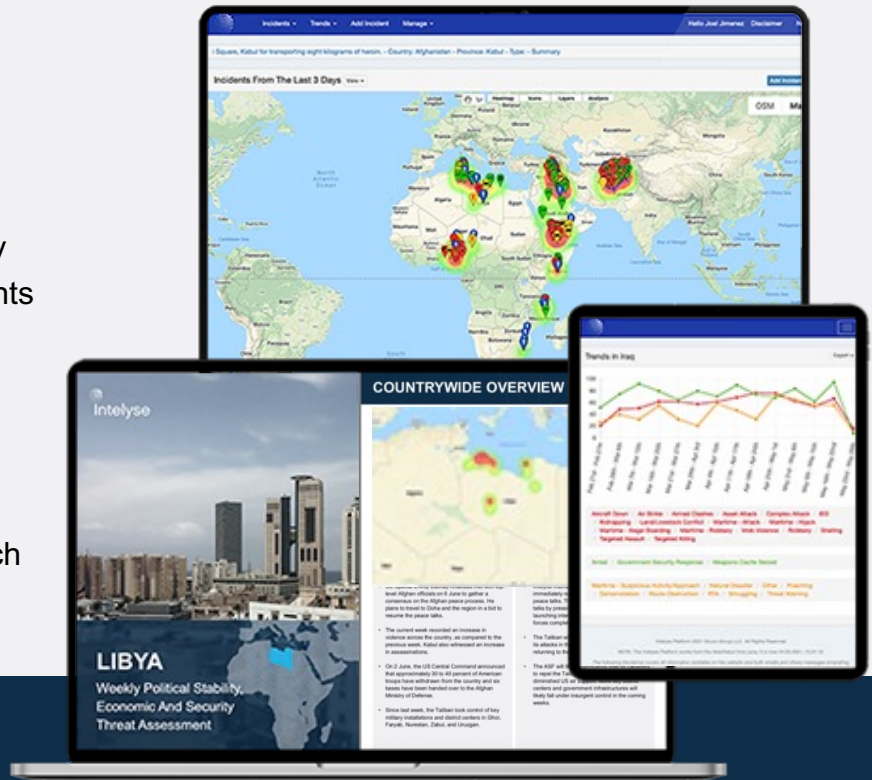
On 29 May, Khalifa Haftar met UK Ambassador Caroline Hurd in Benghazi. The two reportedly discussed how to create a conducive environment for elections. No further details were released about the meeting, but it indicates continued UK engagement with eastern and western actors to bridge gaps and ensure good relations with both Libyan blocs.

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