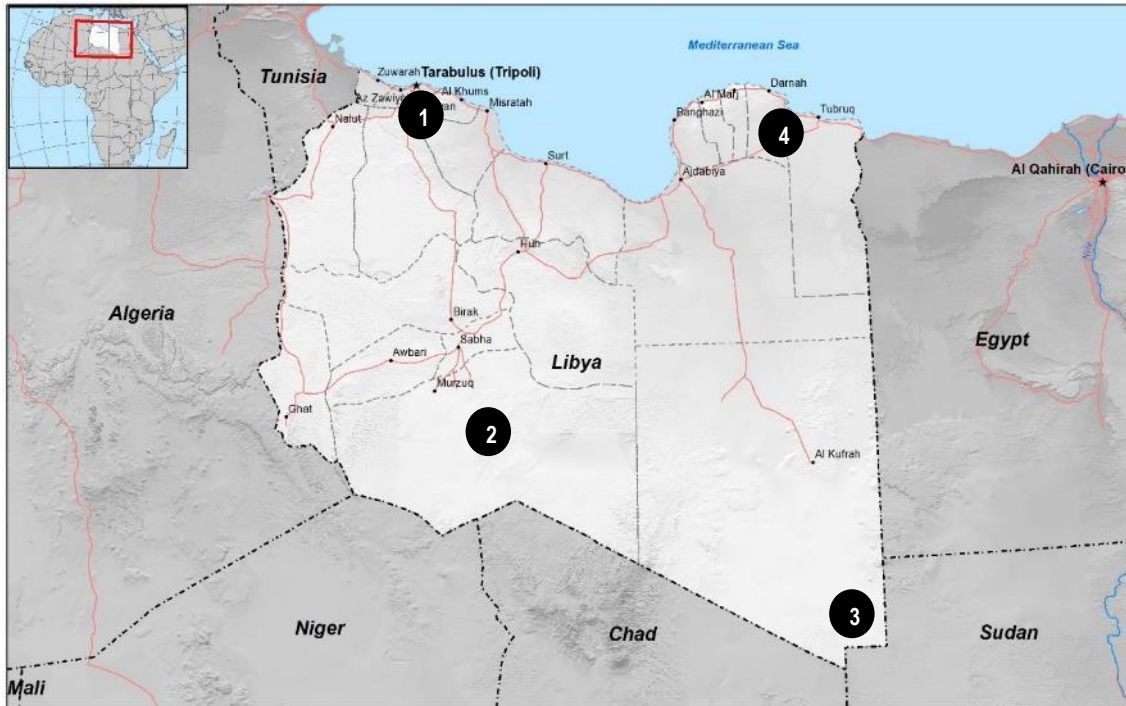


EU LIAISON AND PLANNING CELL LIBYA

Weekly Report 15-22 SEP 2021

Author: MAJ HUERTA SANTOS, LTC ASCIONE

Revised: LTC VAN DER WERFF



1	15-20SEP	Increased Turkish military support to GNU
2	16SEP	Renewed clashes in Southern Libya
3	18SEP	Intercepted shipment of weapons, ammunition and explosives from Libya
4	22SEP	Haftar steps down temporarily from his military role of Commander in Chief of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF)

SUMMARY: Turkish military presence has been consolidating in Western Libya, with the aim to maximize its influence over Western-affiliated forces and preserving its interests, based on the legitimacy provided by prior agreements with former GNA. The arrival of new external mercenaries could trigger further escalation with regard to instability between Tripoli militias. LNA, instead, playing the role of security guarantor, focuses on its operations in the South, especially against Chadian rebels, trying to sustain expectations to Haftar's possible electoral ambitions.

1 CURRENT SITUATION

1.1 Increased Turkish military support to GNU

Turkish activities have increased during last week:

- on 15 September two military aircraft landed at Al-Wattiya Airbase;
- on 17 September, two Turkish Air Force A400 aircraft (registration numbers were 17-0080 and 18-0094) landed at Misrata airport. Both left on 18 September.

These aircrafts likely have transported Western-affiliated forces which had received military training in Turkey, including Hand Over-Take Over (HOTO) of already deployed external fighters. Turkish flights came from Egirdir, where the Training Center Isparta Mountain Commando School is located;

- on 20 September, two Turkish Air Force A400 aircraft (with same registration numbers as above), landed in Al-Wattiya air base.



COMMENTS: On 7 August, the Turkish Minister of Defence, Hulusi Akar, reiterated Turkish intentions of remaining in Libya, based on the agreements signed with the Government of National Accord (GNA), which legitimize their presence in the country.

On 10 August, Turkey provided training to Western-affiliated Libyan military personnel (among them Special Operations Forces) in their same military facilities.

ASSESSMENT: It is highly likely that Turkey will continue increasing its primary military training/advisory support role in order to accomplish and enforce its footprint in Libya. In this respect, Turkey stresses its collaboration with current Libyan proxies and close institutions. Tensions among Western militias and the alert state in Tripoli are likely to rise.

1.2 Renewed clashes in Southern Libya

On 16 September, as a continuation of the clashes started on 14 September, armed confrontations between LNA forces and Chadian mercenaries were reported South of Tmassah, nearby the Chadian border.

Unconfirmed reporting indicated a possible deployment of Western region forces in the area (allegedly Misrata 166th Battalion or the 444 Brigade) in order to tackle Chadian rebel forces.

On 18 September, the GNU-affiliated Sirte–Jufra operations room spokesperson Abdul Hadi Drah stated Western forces are ready to fight Chadian mercenaries. In addition, he pointed out Haftar is currently responsible for the instability in the South, since he recruited, armed and supported them in the past, within the LNA forces.



Abdul Hadi Drah



444 Brigade



166th Battalion

In the regional context, Chad's army is sending reinforcements from the capital N'Djamena towards the Kanem region to consolidate its Western and Northern borders facing persistent threat of rebel attacks and to prevent groups from regrouping at the borders.

COMMENT: In August 2021, the Tarik ben Ziyad Brigade and the Misratan 166th Battalion started to coordinate joint patrols along the road between Mizdah and Ash Shwayrif. Nonetheless, there is no evidence of the presence of the 444 Brigade or the 166th Battalion in Southern Libya.

On 25 August, Chadian president, Mahamat Idriss Déby and Musa Koni, Fezzan representative of the Libyan Presidential Council held a meeting to strengthen the cooperation with regards to the surveillance and the control of borders.

ASSESSMENT: The presence of Chadian mercenaries in Southern Libya is likely a spoiler for Haftar's future role in Libya. It is highly likely these confrontations will continue in the areas of Southern Libya where these foreign forces enjoy a certain level of freedom of movement.

It is highly likely that Haftar is trying to portray its image as a reliable actor in the Southern region and shows LNA as a guarantor of security and a unique entity able to fulfil the mandate to expel foreign mercenaries from Libya.

Although GNU units have increased its readiness level, it is very unlikely that agreements between LNA and GNU in this timeframe (electoral period) will be met. However, an increased collaboration between LNA forces and the Chadian army could be expected.

1.3 Intercepted shipment of weapons, ammunition and explosives from Libya

On September 18, Sudanese Rapid Support Forces (RSF) carried out an operation on the border strip between Sudan, Egypt and Libya.

Different material was seized and four people were arrested, among them at least two Libyans.

COMMENTS: Libya's Southern border with Sudan, Chad, and Niger is one of the main smuggling routes used by armed and trafficking groups.



Approximate location of the weapon caché



ASSESSMENT: It is likely that clashes taking place in Southern Libya will cause a dispersal of Chadian mercenaries, and that similar operations will continue to take place.

1.4 Haftar steps down temporarily from his military role of Commander in Chief of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF).

On 22 September, the Information Office of the General Command of the LAAF reported that Haftar stepped down temporarily as Commander-in-Chief, from 23 September to 24 December 2021.

Haftar met with the Chiefs of the Land and Naval General Staff, Air Defense and Border Guards and appointed Abdulrazzak al –Nazuri¹ as acting commander, delegating his military duties during this period.

¹Abdul Razzaq al-Nadhouri was born Al-Marj in 1960. Major military achievements: In 1993 took part in the so called "Warfalla Plot" in which Libyan army officers attempted to topple Muammar Gaddafi. Being released from prison in 2004, in 2011 joined with anti-Gaddafi 17 February rebel forces and formed the Brigade of Faithful Men (Katiba al-Awifiya) involved in Battles around Misrata, Tarhouna and Weni Wallid. In October 2011, became Commander of the 115th Brigade and in August 2014 he was appointed Chief of staff of the 'Libyan National Army' by the House of Representatives.



Khalifa HAFTAR LAAF
Commander



Abdul Razzaq al-Nadhouri, Chief
of Staff

COMMENT: During the period covered by this report, different political events have taken place affecting the security environment:

- on 8 September, the Libyan House of Representatives (HoR) approved a presidential election draft-law in which must be noticed that officials require stepping down 90 days before elections;
- on 20 September, the High Council announced its own presidential election law, considering the HOR's one being illegal;
- on 21 September, the House of Representatives (HoR) approved a questionable no-confidence vote on Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah (89 out of 113 votes), which produced numerous samples of protest and demonstrations in Western affiliated surroundings.

ASSESSMENT: Even if Haftar has delegated his position on an interim basis to Abdul Razzaq al-Nadhouri, it is almost certain he will continue influencing the command of the LNA.

With the decision to step down, Haftar maintains the possibility of running for the next elections and/or regain his military position while not recognizing the elections as valid.

2 OTHER SECURITY RELATED FACTS/EVENTS

- On 19 September, two LNA helicopters crashed while conducting manoeuvres in Masus area, 100km SE of Benghazi. Two crew members perished in the crash, the pilot Brigadier General Bouzid al-Barasi and the Corporal Milad al-Asaiba.
- On 19 September, the Head of the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) Natalina Cea and Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Mohammed Eissa held a meeting concerning security issues and procedures. The Deputy MoFA urged EUBAM to abide by its mission (from Libya Observers). Essa said Libya has qualified cadres in border protection and is not in need of training, but needs logistical support².

² On 27 June, that same authority (Deputy MoFA) stated that no change has been provided by Berlin II Conference commitments and that he strongly supports the right of Turkish Foreign Forces to remain in Libya. He underlined that no interference from any external country would be accepted. (from EULPC 20210701 Weekly Report).



- c. On 21 September, the Minister of Interior Khaled Mazen discussed with his Egyptian counterpart Mahmoud Tawfiq in order to provide training in favor of Libyan cadres in the framework of developing security partnership between the two countries (from Marsad Libya).
- d. On 21 September, Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) hosted a workshop entitled “Threats of Illegal Immigration to Libyan National Security”, including the participation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). The Deputy of Political Affairs, Mohamed Issa delivered a speech, in which he rejected the European Union’s (EU) current approach to illegal immigration in Libya, stating that the EU focuses on Libya’s Northern border, turning Libya into a “goalkeeper” to the shores of Europe.
- e. On 21 September a meeting between SSA (Ghaniwa al-Kikli) and 444 Brigade (Mahmoud Hamza), likely mediated by Nawasi Brigade (Mustafa Kadour), took place. It is likely this meeting aimed to reduce tensions between the two armed groups after last weeks clashes and release of detainees as well. Nevertheless, it is likely tensions could rise again.
- f. On 22 September, Senior Libyan officials met to discuss ways to implement the 2018 Quartet Agreement on Border Security, between Libya, Chad, Niger, and Sudan. The Chief of Staff of the Border Guard, the Director of the Military Intelligence Department, and the Commander of the Operations Authority of the Libyan Army attended the meeting. Representatives from the Ministries of Interior, Justice, and General Intelligence also participated in the session. The meeting concluded with the formation of a technical committee, which will develop a national action plan that will be presented to the Presidential Council (PC). The PC will present the plan to the participating countries in the Quartet Agreement for discussions, the statement noted.
- g. On 22 September, at UNGA76 side event on Libya, Turkey highlighted that the modalities of the elections and the degree of consensus reached are as important as holding them in time. At the Ministerial meeting, the participants urged further efforts regarding Security Sector Reform (SSR) and a process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), resulting in united security forces under civilian control. The meeting was permeated by broad agreement that violations of the United Nations arms embargo had to stop immediately.

3 CONCLUSIONS

While Western forces keep acting in order to manage their influence over competing militias in the large Tripoli area, with Turkish Forces consolidating both militarily and politically, LNA is involved in security operations mainly performed in the South, aimed at countering criminal activities and terrorist/rebel operations along the borders. Those operations have also the ambition to inspire a sense of indispensability, to gain support for the elections.

The complicated political situation is affecting negatively any possible security lowering of the tension in the light of the preparation and management of the election, so that even if the election would be celebrated, security conditions might degenerate with less restriction.

In such a climax, the anticipated Stabilization Conference expected to be convened in October and concerning the implementation of the other provisions included into the Cease Fire Agreement, appears not to be consistent with the still to be appeased internal political confrontation.

The recurrent message by Libyan authorities to EU officials not being in need for training, but only of logistical support contrasts with the aimed integrated approach of any possible EU security initiative and the search/use by those same Libyan authorities of other privileged counterparts. The challenge for EU to be considered a reliable supporter in favour of common security concerns and interests is always pending, not as a partner of convenience.

Sign-off for release: Brig. Gen. STELLA, V.