SECURITY AND DUTY OF CARE DEPARTMENT
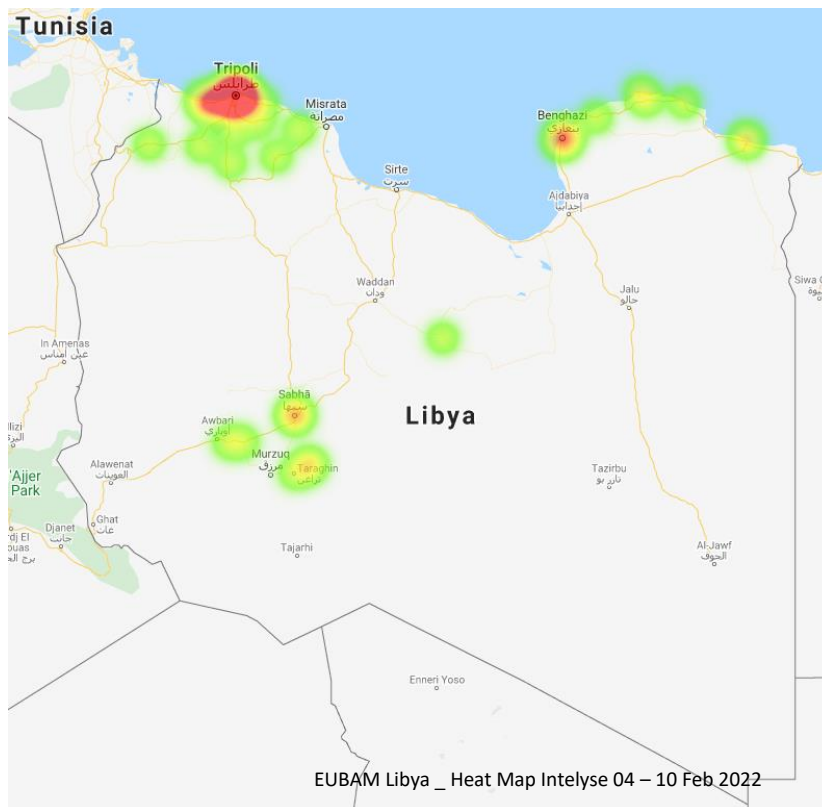
Security & Covid-19: WEEKLY SECURITY REPORT
Country: Libya & Tunisia
Period: 04/02/2022 – 10/02/2022

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SECURITY SITUATION OVERVIEW

EUBAM Libya _ Heat Map Intelyse 04 – 10 Feb 2022

1. Key developments

- **Security atmospherics in Tripoli**
- **Other security developments**
    - ☐ **Counter-terrorism operations and arrests continue**
    - ☐ **Open sources report 300 Syrian mercenaries stationed in Al Jufra (Southern Region) left Libya**
- **Tunisia security update. Protests continue; The Tunisian President decision to dissolve Supreme Judicial Council**

2. Findings

2.1. Security atmospherics in Tripoli

The week was primarily focused on political activity, as Libya's House of Representatives (HoR) pushed its intentions for a new Prime Minister nomination deepening the uncertainty and division between those who want to see a new government take shape and those who want to see the IGNU remain in power.

On 07 Feb, HoR adopted a new roadmap for elections, according to which elections will take place no more than 14 months from the date of the adoption of a proposed constitutional amendment. In addition, HoR also approved the

candidacies of Fathi Bashagha and a businessman, Khaled al-Bibas, as the two candidates eligible for the post of the new interim PM, who will be selected on 10 Feb.

Meanwhile, Western Libya's armed groups and their affiliations remain fragmented within their fluid loyalties following the political scene developments. A statement titled "Statement of the Military and Security Forces" released by a coalition of forces[1] on 05 Feb, including key units from Zawiya, Misrata and Tripoli, announced their rejection of the House of Representatives (HoR) plans to replace the current government[2]. Of note, local sources claimed that Fathi Bashagha was spotted at Tobruk International Airport (TOB) on 06 Feb accompanied by members of parliament including Ali Abu Zreiba, the influential political figure from Al-Zawiya and brother of Hassan Abu Zreiba, deputy head of the Stabilisation Support Agency (SSA). Meanwhile, IGNU PM Abdul Hamid Dadaiba and several Turkish Defence Ministry officials attended the graduation ceremony of a batch of Misrata's 166th Battalion at the Omar Al-Mukhtar Camp on 08 Feb.

The armed groups' tensions in the capital persist with military build-up and heavy weapons allegedly deployed, especially in Tripoli, resulting in localised inter-militia clashes and sporadic armed presence in a show of territorial dominance. On 04 Feb, two armed groups, the 777th Tajouri-led Brigade and the Judicial Police (Special Deterrence Force (SDF)/ Deterrence Apparatus for Combating Organized Crime and Terrorism (DACOT))[3] briefly escalated into clashes over the control of Al-Madar roundabout "Sidi Al-Mari Roundabout" near Tripoli Al-Furnaj Roundabout at approx. 22:30hrs. One 777th unit member was killed while armed deployments in the affected area temporarily blocked the proximate access to the roads including near the University of Tripoli. Although subsequent mediation prevented added kinetic escalation, growing tensions in the lines of contact of the armed groups' territorial space are a catalyst for sporadic clashes.
On 07 Feb, a security presence affiliated with the MoD's 88th Infantry Battalion was sighted in Tripoli's Al-Furnaj vicinity although no violent incidents were registered.

Moreover, the Western Al Zawiya area retains its instability with repeated clashes between local armed groups on criminal networks of fuel smuggling, drugs and other lucrative illegal activities. As such, three unrelated incidents of brief armed escalations were reported in Al Zawiya environs on 08 Feb between local militias, with limited information on casualties resulting. However, these armed escalations have extended consequences on the civilians' livelihood and national infrastructure.

In a clear example of the current climate of heightened political tensions in Libya, local media released widespread claims of an assassination attempt against IGNU Prime Minister Abdel Hamid Dadaiba by the unidentified assailant(s) in the early hours of 10 Feb. According to a source cited in Reuters, the assailants fled the scene after shooting PM's vehicle. The PM was reported unharmed. Images circulated across social media outlets[4] showing the damage to Dadaiba's vehicle with a gunshot directly aimed at the passenger's seat. The alleged assassination attempt was preceded by Dadaiba participating in an anti-House of Representatives/High Council of State protest held at Martyrs' Square earlier that evening.

Criminal incidents continue to be reported countrywide at high levels, including Tripoli and the wider Western Region, from vehicle thefts, homicides, kidnapping, electrical cable thefts/damage of electrical sub stations[5], carjacking, followed by arrests prosecuted by MoI units. For instance, a dignitary (sheikh) from Surman was kidnapped after attending a

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[1] Of note, the statement was signed by Misrata and Al-Zawiya commanders, including Al-Sel'a militia "Al-Lahab militia" commander Othman Al-Lahab (Al-Zawiya) and Al-Zawiya's Criminal Investigation Department (CID) "Al-Far militia" commander Mohamed Bahroun (aka "Al-Far").

[2] Local media reference https://www.libyaobserver.ly/inbrief/military-forces-western-libya-refuse-changing-government

[3] The Judicial Police and RADA/SDF, share a close affinity with the former drawing their personnel from the latter. While 777th Brigade. although has no affiliation to any state ministry, is largely believed to be SSA aligned due to its lineage through Haithem Tajouri and the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB).

[4] Social media footage https://twitter.com/Oded121351/status/1491660654998134784

[5] In a public advisory published on 06 Feb, the General Electricity Company of Libya (GECOL) reported an increase in load shedding hours despite improved weather conditions across the western region due to physical damage at Al-Zawiya Power Plant during recent clashes in the city. GECOL reported the disconnection of the 230MW fourth gas unit and the transmission line connecting Al-Zawiya/West Tripoli. GECOL expected maintenance to be completed on 07 Feb.

meeting at the Surman Security Directorate in the presence of Al-Zawiya's Criminal Investigation Department (CID) "Al-Far militia", reportedly kidnapped by Al-Far militiamen on his refusal to comply with unknown security arrangements.

Protests were reported at the HoR HQ in Tripoli, calling for the 'downfall' of the HoR and High Council of State (HCS). However, these were relatively poorly attended. Further protests can be expected in the coming 48hrs, both in support of Dadaiba and the IGNU but also simply in opposition to the strategy of the HoR.

SDCD COMMENT
Libya is in a new political contest between the IGNU seeking to remain in place and other status quo politicians pushing through HoR to grab power, highlighting the shifting political alliances within Libya and the polarization of the country's political elite into two major blocs – pro- HoR Speaker Saleh and pro- IGNU Interim IPM Dadaiba. The political developments reported on 07 Feb. with the HoR and the HCS reportedly agreeing upon an election's roadmap, while selecting two candidacies for the nomination of a new PM, have been interpreted as the first time in the last years that the HoR and the HCS have agreed upon a roadmap for political stability in Libya.

However, the HoR determined to select a new PM during its session planned for 10 Feb. with Fathi Bashagha, perceived as the main contender. Addressing the public, PM Dadaiba's on 08 Feb., reiterated that the IGNU would resist any attempts by the HoR to replace them and reject the HoR's efforts to enter "a new transitional phase", posing further significant political instability in Libya.

Additionally, Western Libya's armed groups are as fragmented as ever, displaying a fluid shift of alliances, competitors and animosity that any future government will need to navigate to take up office. Their political aligning could further lead to divisions and clashes, with an increased likelihood for the tensions to influence political negotiations and create further tensions between Tripoli and Misrata in the prospect of a new PM taking office in Tripoli.

There remains the concern about Western armed groups reaction in the immediate aftermath of an announcement of a new government/PM, given the recent statement (05 Feb.) by western armed formations rejecting the HoR's plans to name a new PM and the persistence of military build-up and heavy weapons being deployed in and around Tripoli since mid-December 2021. The inclusion of influential militias from Misrata and Al-Zawiya increases the prospects of militia tensions in the capital.

Whilst the prospects of an assassination in the current context of heightened political tensions are high, the timing of the incident, less than 24hrs before the HoR scheduled session to announce a new head of Government, reinforces the assessment of the lack of credibility of the assassination attempt. In addition, observers argue the lack of evidence and the fact that Dadaiba's detail failed to pursue the assailants undermine the assassination claims and lack of tactical preparation for this attack if attributed to any opposition supporter.

At the reporting time, following the HoR session conducted today 10 Feb, Fathi Bashagha was "'unanimously" appointed as new Prime Minister. HoR spokesman Abdullah Belheig later posted on his Facebook page that "the House of Representatives has unanimously given a vote of confidence to Mr Fathi Bashagha as prime minister". His statement was also reported on the HoR's official website[6].

2.2. Other security developments

Counter-terrorism operations and arrests continue

In 2022, two documents connected to the Minister of Interior (MoI) (released on 02 and 19 Jan) stated the presence of Islamic State (IS) elements, reportedly planning attacks using Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) on key installations. An

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[6] Libyan House of Representatives (HoR) official website statement: https://parliament.ly/%d8%b9%d8%a7%d8%ac%d9%84-16/

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IS-claimed IED attack on a Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF) HQ in the southern village of Umm al-Aranib, Murzuq District, on 16 Jan triggered a series of counter-terrorist operations between 20 – 27 Jan in Qatrun and Umm al Aranib areas.

Another IS attack on 24 Jan on the Umm Al-Aranib - Qatrun road on two LAAF vehicles with two casualties, was followed by the LAAF counter-operations confirming the elimination of up to 19 IS militants and the destruction of their vehicles, weapons, and supplies, after finding their hideout in the Asida Mountain area, 80km south of Qatrun.

More recently, a significant arrest in the Western Region, on 02 Feb, of an IS (Islamic State) militant (Tunisian national), identified as "Bilal bin Abdulwahab bin Trad" at an undisclosed location in Tripoli, resulted as part of an intensive security follow-up to potential terrorist cells[7] in the Nafusa mountain and Sabratha regions.

During the assessed week, related events:

- On 05 Feb, sources reported a clash between Libyan National Army (LNA) 110th Battalion and alleged IS elements south of Zillah (Al Jufra district). Previous reporting (02 Feb) indicated that LNA (110th, 127th and 174th Battalions) was conducting counter-terrorist operations in the Harouj mountains and Bahr al-Rimal areas, aiming to eliminate IS cells and prevent attacks on oil fields in the wider Oil Crescent Region.

- On 07 Feb, local reports indicated a large-scale security patrol operation conducted by Misrata's Counter-Terrorism Force (CTF) across desert areas on suspected Islamic State (IS) activity reportedly ordered by the Supreme Commander of the Libyan Army (Mohamed Menfi) and CTF Commander Mohamed Al-Zain.

SDCD COMMENT
IS continued to attract the focus of local security forces after its re-emergence and reactivation in June 2021. The attacks mounted in 2021 exclusively targeted the LAAF staff and took place mainly in the South and Centre Libya. While IS group showed again its ability to conduct surprise attacks in 2022 on military targets in the southern region, given the porous borders and desert areas, which are difficult to monitor and fully control, the LAAF counterterrorism operation is expected to continue. Overall, border regions seem to play a crucial role in the two-way movement of terrorist elements and equipment, notably in the South, and West, including in the direction of the Sahel, Algeria, and Tunisia.

Meanwhile, when considering the presence of Daesh in the South and the reported presence in the Nafusa Mountains and Western Coastal Regions, there is potential for an attempted establishment of connectivity between these Regions. However, the level of terror threat that could materialise into attacks is likely to be influenced by several factors as the development of the military/ security and intelligence sectors and actions, including the unification and optimisation of resources.

Open sources report 300 Syrian mercenaries stationed in Al Jufra (Southern Region) left Libya

According to a Syrian news outlet[8] (As-Suwayda 24 News), a withdrawal of hundreds of Syrian fighters (approx. 300) "who were recruited by Wagner in Libya" returned on Thursday 03 Feb. 2022, after more than seven (7) months of their presence in Libya. It added that the Syrian elements, members of the 42nd Brigade, spent their period of service in the Libyan desert, as guards for facilities controlled by an external actor, stationed in the Al-Jufra area (Southern Region) left through Benghazi airport (Eastern Libya) to the Hmeimim base in Syria.

Added to this, the outlet states that no replacement happened, while the number of Syrian elements present in Libya under the external actor Russia distributed in the Jufra and Sirte regions number "more than 1,200".

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[7] Reportedly, the operation came after information received indicating the presence of a Tunisian Islamic State (IS) leader, Ashraf Bin Fathi Al-Qizani, and other IS affiliated militants known as Hamza bin Salem Al-Aib and Al-Hadi bin Daou Al-Ghweil in Libya's western region in Takout city of Nalut province. The suspects are allegedly wanted by the Tunisian authorities.

[8] Media source As-Suwayda 24 News https://suwayda24.com/?p=18630

Due to the limited nature of event reporting and accurate corroboration of activities in Libya's areas (particularly eastern and southern regions) there are little details, at the time of reporting, on recorded events and information that can further add corroboration to the current media reports/claims.

Meanwhile, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reports in its article[9] that "the Turkish forces have agreed to resume the transfer of fighters to spend their delayed vacation" claiming that a batch of 250 Syrian mercenaries belonging to different military formations of Ankara-backed "National Army" arrived in Turkey from Libya, while "another batch of 250 mercenaries have arrived in Libya after their flight from Turkey had been suspended in January 30".

Related to this information, reports alleged that on 02 Feb, several buses transported Syrian mercenaries on Surman's Coastal Road, heading westward. While unconfirmed reports claimed the buses were en route to Al-Wattiyah Airbase. Separately, open-source tracking platforms monitored the landing of a Turkish aircraft at Al-Wattiyah Airbase[10] on 02 Feb.

2.3. Tunisia security update. Protests continue; Tunisian President decision to dissolve Supreme Judicial Council

Despite the recent pandemic preventive measures banning public gatherings and demonstrations, the Tunisian security landscape continues to be dominated by calls for social demonstrations. The Ennahda movement and the Citizens Against the Coup (CAC) called for anti-government protests at Habib Bourguiba Avenue in Tunis on Sunday, 06 Feb. However, after this call raised controversy related to its simultaneity with a demonstration planned on the same date by a group of parties and organizations in commemoration of the assassination of the martyr Chokri Belaid[11], the protest was postponed to 13 Feb.

On 06 Feb, protests commemorating the anniversary of the assassination of Chokri Belaid were held in Maydan Heqouq al-Ensan (Human Rights Square) and Avenue Mohamed V while a separate demonstration in front of the headquarters of the Supreme Judicial Council (CSM) supported president Saied's decision to abolish the council. Although the Ministry of Interior reiterated the ban on protests as a precaution against the spread of COVID-19, President Saied's televised speech incited supporters to demonstrate in support of the abolishment of the CSM. As such, the demonstrations passed off peacefully despite the ban on gatherings, in contrast to the 14 Jan anti-government protests when protesters were violently dispersed in Tunis, resulting in the death of one protester.

In a significant development, on 06 Feb, President Kais Saied dissolved the Supreme Judicial Council (CSM), a constitutional institution that generally ensures the independence of the judiciary. Saied accused the CSM of bias and corruption. The move, which the head of the CSM rejected and dubbed unconstitutionally, highlights an increasing autocratic tendency of Saied's administration since his consolidation of powers in 25 July 2021. The decision comes about three months after Saied first expressed intentions to dissolve or reform the CSM due to slow judicial procedures, which the institution dismissed, pledging to carry out its duties.

SDCD COMMENT
The peaceful outcome of the 6 Feb. protests highlights the biased approach of the government to demonstrations. Planned opposition protests on 13 Feb are expected to be met with police intervention, justified by the ban on gatherings under COVID-19 measures and the state of emergency. As previously witnessed, counter-protests are possible. With this trend, opposition groups will likely resort to holding rallies outside of Tunis, where demonstrations are less likely to be prevented by security forces but have less impact on social realms.

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[9] Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) https://www.syriahr.com/en/237924/
[10] ItaMilradar https://www.itamilradar.com/2022/02/02/new-turkish-flight-to-libya-3/
[11] Chokri Belaid was the opposition leader of the Popular Front coalition, and a vocal critic of Ennahda, which was the ruling party at the time. His killing in 2013 sparked outrage and was attributed to Ennahda.

Tunisian media also highlighted a statement on 8 Feb. by G7 ambassadors to Tunisia, in which the signatories said they "are deeply concerned about the announcement of the [president's] intention to unilaterally dissolve the Supreme Judicial Council whose mission is to ensure the sound functioning of the justice system and respect for its independence".

As Tunisia attempts to secure a loan from the International Monetary Fund, the President's decision to dismantle CSM is expected to impact Tunisia's promise of political stability negatively and could affect the willingness of ally states to support Tunisia's pledge for financial assistance.

3. Situational Awareness for EUBAM-Libya

3.1.   Armed conflict

Libya-Tripoli
- **The armed conflict *remains HIGH, concern to the political developments focused on expected 24 December elections*.**
- **Inter-militias' clashes:** Competition amongst armed groups in Western Region is increasing as the IGNU's official mandate rapidly approaches its end, resulting in high levels of instability manifesting in targeted murders and kidnappings of armed group members/ affiliates, kidnappings/ detainment of mid-level political actors, and armed clashes. In a scenario of heavy clashes in Tripoli and on the western coastal areas, obstructions of movement are likely to affect traffic towards the Mitiga Int. Airport and the western coastal highway, including an expansion closer to Tripoli western neighbourhoods including Janzour (location of the EUBAM Libya HQ offices) with potential impact Mission's operational freedom of movement and relocation/evacuation capabilities.

Tunisia-Tunis
• The main threat categories for the capital are **terrorism, criminality, and hazards** (especially road traffic accidents). Threats related to armed conflict are assessed as ***non-existent.***

3.2.   Terrorism

Libya-Tripoli
• Ahead of elections, the terrorism threat can be perceived as high across all major urban centres, despite the fact both Daesh and AQIM have been degraded in Libya. The latest IGNU-LNA Joint Force engagement in several counterterrorism raids is likely to trigger tit-for-tat drive-by shootings and medium-impact explosive attacks against IGNU and LNA positions. The active semi-structured and small terrorist-cells could be operating in Southern Libya (Fezzan Region) and some active elements in the western coastal area near Sabratha (Tripolitania Region).

Tunisia-Tunis
• The Security Services in Tunisia continue with the counter-terrorist operations to tackle the terrorist threat.
• Radicalized individuals and informal cells could pose a threat with limited capabilities for low-medium lethality incidents in the Tunisian capital.
• ***Special attention in displacement towards/throughout:***
o **Southern area:** Southern desert area formed by Bir Rijm Maatoug - Borj Bourguiba -Ben Guardane, due to terrorist threat at Libyan border with terrorist infiltrations.
o **Saharan area bordering with Libya and Algeria:** terrorist skirmishes against security forces. Military exclusion area created since 2013.
o **Western Central and Northern West region of Tunisia:** relevant and continuous counter-terrorist activities against jihadist elements in the mountain areas of Kasserine, Siliana, Kairouan et du Kef.

3.3. Criminality

Libya-Tripoli
• The security environment was marked by continued acts of violent crimes (murders, targeted killings, kidnapping, carjacking, thefts), random/unaccounted and celebratory shooting incidents resulting in collateral victims through stray bullets incidents. Meanwhile law enforcement efforts conducting arrests and security operations against organised crime gangs continued.

Tunisia-Tunis
The Tunisian security forces maintain their ***operations to tackle organised criminality*** (burglary, car break-in, petty theft, financial scams, blackmail, homicides). Most dangerous scenario, the violent assault targeting EUBAM assets and personnel.

3.4. Civil unrest

Libya-Tripoli
•   Civil unrest, caused by the deteriorated political context, increases the risk of destabilization actions at the institutional and security levels, notably through demonstrations of force affiliated to political parties or personalities. Social and financial grievances continue to trigger protests demanding better conditions.
•   Ad-hoc demonstrations and potential violent encounters with security forces have the potential to create temporary movement restrictions, thus impacting a mission operational moves in the city.

Tunisia-Tunis
4. In light of the recent extension of the presidential executive powers, the opposition calls for protests in the near to medium future cannot be ruled out. A continuation of the Parliament suspension could prompt further political divisions and translate into further social unrest, potentially with small-scale violence between protesters.

5. COVID-19 Update[12]

Country	Cases in the last 7 days	Cases in the preceding 7 days	Weekly Case % Change	Cases in the last 7 days/1M pop	Deaths in the last 7 days	Deaths in the preceding 7 day	Weekly Deaths % Change	Overall Covid cases
Libya	**21,245**	25,237	- 16%	3,026	61	68	- 10 %	463,321
Tunisia	**30,351**	40,130	- 37%	2,526	460	333	+ 38%	954,726

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[12] Data from WorldOMeter. Source: https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/ [online]. Last updated: 10/02/2022 16:00GMT

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LIST OF ACRONYMS / ABBREVIATIONS

AQ - Al-Qaeda

AQIM - Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb

BCP – Border Crossing Point

BDB – Benghazi Defense Brigade / Saraya Defend Benghazi (SDB) (Al Qaeda-aligned – AAS and RSCB associated/umbrella group)

CBL – Central Bank of Libya

CNI – Critical National Infrastructure

DACOCT - Deterrence Apparatus for Combating Organized Crime and Terrorism

DDR - Disarmament, demobilising and reintegration

DPF – Derna Protection Force (an amalgamation of all militias in Derna, including the MSCD)

GECOL – General Electricity Company of Libya

GNA – Government of National Accord (UN-backed)

GNC – General National Congress

IGNU – Interim Government of National Unity (2021)

GTUC - Greater Tripoli Union Council (Tripoli militias and others, established in June 2020)

HCS - High Council of State

HNEC – High National Elections Commission

HoR – House of Representatives (Tobruk-based)

IDF – Indirect Fire (mortars/rockets)

IDP - Internally Displaced Persons

IED - Improvised Explosive Device

IOC - International Oil Company

5+5 JMC – 5+5 Joint Military Commission

IS/DAESH - Islamic State

LNA – Libyan National Army

LNG – Libyan National Guard

LPA – Libyan Political Agreement (2015)

LPDF - Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (2020)

LROR - Libyan Revolutionary Operations Room

MoD - Ministry of Defense

MoF - Ministry of Finance

MoFA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MoHE - Ministry of Higher Education

MoI - Ministry of Interior

MoJ - Ministry of Justice

MoO - Ministry of Oil

MoT - Ministry of Transportation

MSCD – Mujahideen Shura Council of Derna (AQ aligned)

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation (aid/charity)

NOC – National Oil Company

NSG – National Salvation Government (GNC)

PC – Presidency Council (IGNU)

PFG- Petroleum Facilities Guard

RPG - Rocket Propelled Grenade

RSCB - Revolutionary Shura Council of Benghazi

RTA - Road Traffic Accident

SAF - Small Arms Fire

SDF – Rada Deterrence Force/ Special Deterrence Force/ Rada

SSA - Stability Support Agency

Technical - An improvised weapon-mounted pick-up truck

TPF – Tripoli Protection Force (TRB, Nawasi 8 Force, Bab Tajoura Brigade and Ghneiwa umbrella group, established in December 2018)

UNSMIL – United Nations Support Mission in Libya

UXO - Unexploded Ordnance