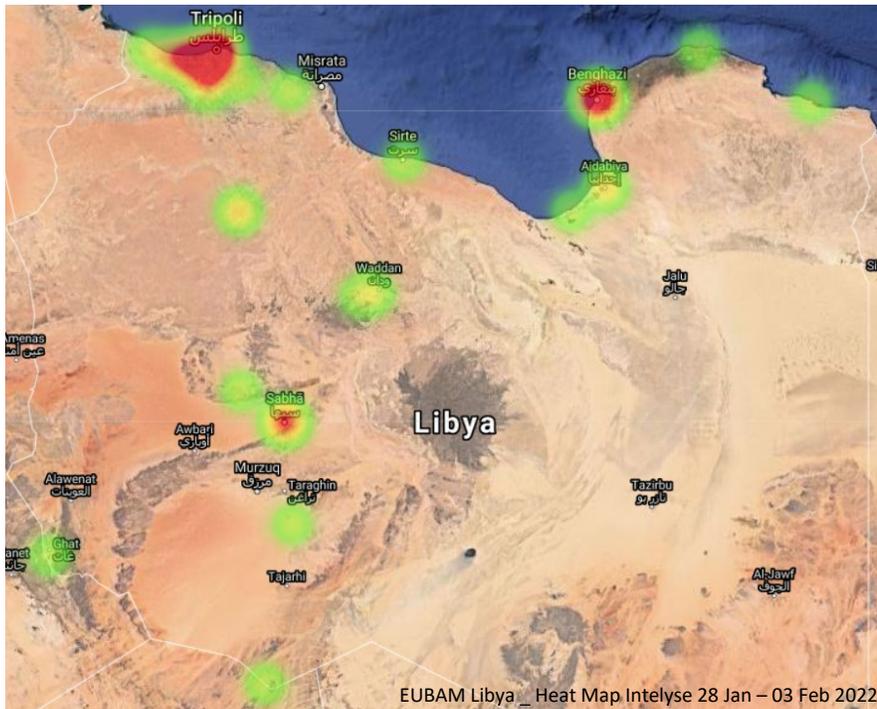


## Security & Covid-19: WEEKLY SECURITY REPORT

Country: Libya & Tunisia

Period: 28/01/2022 – 03/02/2022

### SECURITY SITUATION OVERVIEW



#### 1. Key developments

- Armed group's isolated skirmishes and deployments in Tripolitania.
- Other security developments
  - Increased law enforcement operations.
  - Political tensions negative impact over security situation
- Tunisia security update.

#### 2. Findings

##### 2.1. Armed group's isolated skirmishes and deployments in Tripolitania.

The week was characterised with armed groups deployments, stationary and mobile patrols into Tripoli areas and deployment of ad hoc vehicle check points. The Security Directorate Support Force, and Misrata 166th Battalion encroaching deployments onto SSA/ Abu Salim Central Security/ 777th Combat Brigade areas of control in Airport Road area, South Tripoli on 26/01/2022 and the following days, have not triggered counter actions for the moment. Inter-armed groups tensions remained, however kinetic engagements were limited:

- On 02/02/2022 Observations indicated movement of unidentified armed group convoy from Sabratha eastwards towards Zawiyah, and buses moving from Sabratha westwards, with alleged destination Al-Watyah Airbase area.



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- On 01/02/2022, GNU West Coast Military Region Commander, Salaheddin Al-Namroush (Misrata), ordered the inspection of towns and villages across the west coast military region as an initial step ahead of the deployment of an organised military force.
- On 01/02/2022, in the afternoon, a military convoy of approximately 50 technicals<sup>1</sup> including armoured vehicles (AVs) arrived in Sabratah.
- On 31/01/2022, armed clashes in the Fassi and Ramha areas, South Zawiyah continued into the night, resulting in numerous casualties, including civilians. Reportedly the cause for the skirmish was a seizure of trucks suspected in fuel smuggling, by Awlad Kardamin (Badr Mustafa Kardamin) forces from Awlad Shwash forces (reportedly Zawiyah 1st Support Division/ Zawiyah Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Captain, Muhammad Al-Bahron aligned).
- On 30/01/2022, Security Stabilisation Agency (SSA) reportedly withdraw from the Salah Al-Deen – Alhadba Road. Special Deterrence Force (RADA) establishes VCP at the Madar Traffic Island, near Ras Hassan, South-Central Tripoli.

**SDCD COMMENT:** *Animosity levels and volatility of security situation have increased due to the competition between security/military actor (MoI/MoD) and armed group, which may further increase due to disturbed balance of power. For example, it can be assumed that the latest armed clash in Zawiyah may be related to armed group power dynamics in wider Western Coastal Region. The late is supported by follow-up reports of personnel and vehicle mobilisation including Zawiyah based 103rd Battalion, operating under Western Coast Military Region Commander and alleged inspection of the Western Coast Military Region. Likely, the intent behind mobilisation of 103rd Battalion is to deploy, and secure various towns in the Western Coastal Region, and areas near Al-Watyah Airbase. 103rd Battalion mobilisation also indicates possible “streamlining” of security/military control, through the reduction of number of armed groups operating in the area.*

*Movement of buses towards Al-Watyah Airbase, which is under the control of the Turkish Armed Forces contingent I Libya, could indicate external force changeovers/staff rotations of either Turkish armed personnel or Syrian mercenaries. The given examples, indicate deteriorating security conditions in parts of the Western Coastal Region, where armed groups are in power struggle. From an operational perspective, the armed group confrontation in the Region, impacts travel in and round main towns, including Zawiyah, Sorman, Sabratha, and Ajaylat. From a strategic point of view, developments amongst Western Coastal Region actors are often interlinked with power dynamics in Tripoli, particularly when considering the SSA’s influence in both Tripoli and the Western Coast. As such, a change in power dynamics in the Western Coastal Region could impact those in Tripoli and vice-versa. Although available data is inconclusive assess future developments, the likelihood of renewed armed clashes and traffic interruptions along the Coastal Road remains.*

## 2.2. Other security developments

### Increased law enforcement/security operations.

Last week saw notable increase in IGNU Ministry of Interior (MoI) activity concerning not only Tripolitania, but the Southern Region and Cyrenaica. The General Administration of Central Support (GACS), Security Directorate Support Force and Anti-Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Control Agency deployed static vehicle checkpoints and mobile patrols, initiating operations against organised crime in Tripolitania. In Sabha, MoI Deputy for Public Affairs, met with Assistant Director of the Southern Branch/ Joint Security Room member, Brigadier "Khaled Abdo", and discussed GACS operations in the Southern Region, including the return of Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs) to Murzuq in cooperation with the “commander of the military region”, and other local mil/ sec and tribal actors.

- On 02/02/2022 MoI affiliated Security units carried out a security campaign against illegal connections on the pipelines of the Great Man-Made River System in the Al Shamikah area in Bani Walid.
- On 02/02/2022 the Anti -Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Control Agency seized 15 kg of hashish in Ajdabiya.
- On 30/01/2022 the Anti -Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Control Agency deployed fixed and mobile security patrols.

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<sup>1</sup> Vehicles converted for military use by mounting heavy machineguns or automatic anti-aircraft cannons.



## SECURITY AND DUTY OF CARE DEPARTMENT

- On 30/01/2022 GACS started static and mobile security operations intended to secure the Qawasim area of Tripoli as per security arrangements.
- On 30/01/2022 GASC branch in Derna conducted security operations deploying mobile and static patrols and vehicle checkpoints.
- On 30/01/2022 Security Directorate Support Force and "Special Task Force" begin security operations in the Asfah area, including setting of vehicle checkpoints (VCPs).
- On 30/01/2022 the Special Deterrence Force (SDF) established a checkpoint at Sidi Al-Masri roundabout
- On 29/01/2022 Anti-Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Control Agency manned several checkpoints at Tuesday Mall Roundabout, Omar Al-Moukhtar Street and Tripoli Seaport Roundabout.

### **SDCD COMMENT**

*The increased Mol activities, likely indicates a renewed Mol efforts on consolidation of law enforcement and security units country wide. It appears that through his campaign, Mol and GNU are aiming at increasing their popularity and improving the public image. Although for now there haven't been a reaction from LNA in Cirenaica and Fezzan regarding Mol operations, the likelihood of resumption of clashes similar to the one in December 2021 remains.*

### **Political tensions negative impact over security situation**

Although continuation of armed clashes remains a possibility short and medium terms, forceful removal of GNU PM Abdul Hamid Dbeibah by force is unlikely considering that a possible takeover led by former GNA Interior Minister Fathi Bashagha will trigger divisions within the Misrata armed groups. Reportedly, Bashagha has on his side the military support from Misrata's 166 Battalion and some pro-LNA factions and builds up his positions engaging in posturing on the outskirts of Tripoli namely the recent 166 Battalion deployments in Airport Road area and the alleged takeover of SSA and 777 Fighting Brigade positions in Abu Salim. Lack of armed reaction to 166 encroachment into SSA/777 area of control increase the credibility of the reports that negotiations are ongoing, reducing the likelihood of all out kinetic engagements.

Considering the long-standing tensions and animosity over implementation of security sector reforms during his term as GNA interior minister, it is unlikely Bashagha to get the SSA's support.

The formation of a new interim executive will increase tensions within the political realm, as GNU stated that it plans to extend its mandate and hold office until parliamentary elections and new government is elected. It appears that the GNU has the support of GNU/ PC officials and the High Council of State (HCS), also sovereign position officials (including Tripoli-based Central Bank of Libya (CBL) Governor Siddiq Al-Kabeer) and allegedly amongst various international actors.

The visit of the Turkish Ambassador to Libya Kenan Yilmaz in Benghazi on 29 Jan received a harsh response from the Al-Saiqa Special Forces commander Sharif Marghani threatened to target the Turkish Ambassador if his country was to establish a presence in the city., On 31 Jan LNA injured veterans stormed the Benghazi Municipality and physically assaulted a number of employees in protest of the Turkish Ambassador visit.

### **SDCD COMMENT**

*Available information gives divergent indicators related to support/ opposition to IGNU Prime Minister, Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, making it hard to predict how the situation will develop in case the HoR will announce a new executive after the parliament sessions next week, which would again divide the country politically. Likelihood of escalation of armed tensions in Tripoli as a result of HoR efforts in replacing the current GNU depends on the changes of inter-militia alliances. The alleged intent to implement security arrangements, already causes changes to the armed group control structures in the capital, most notably the positions of Abu Salim Central Security (Ghaniwa)/SSA, Nawasi Brigade, and the 777th Combat Brigade. However, such movements currently coincide with mobilisation of the 103rd Battalion that may entail wider ranging objectives concerning security in the Western Coastal Region, possibly linked to armed groups activity and control in the Region, as well as developments in Tripoli related to governance reform efforts. There is significant concern that the push to oust Dbeibah's government will weaken Turkey's influence in the western region if the new PM revokes the MoUs signed with GNA and supported by GNU, making it more likely, Turkey to maintain its support for the GNU and the 444 Fighting Brigade and other factions, allegedly loyal to Dbeibah, as needed.*



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## 2.3. Tunisia security update. Security operations against suspected members of terrorist organisations.

In Tunisia, the anti-government protests have been cancelled and postponed due to the wake of a new wave of COVID 19 pandemic and the restrictive medical protection measures banning public gatherings. The tensions between the President Kais rand opposition remain to be the dominant underlying factor for the unpredictability of the security situation in the capital.

### **SDCD COMMENT**

*The protests of opposition parties and political activist groups are expected to resume intensify during the planned reforms in the coming months. The security forces are likely use force to dissolve demonstrations and is expected to continue to arrest campaign on activists.*

*The persistent underlying likelihood of cross border attacks in mountain areas between Tunis and Algeria and between Tunisia and Libya remains. Latest reports, indicating the arrest of Tunisian national suspected to be Daesh/IS militant in Tripoli, highlights possible activation of the terrorist group in the North African Region.*

## 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

- In period of uncertainty around the future of elections, the activities of known terrorist organisations are on the raise and terrorism threat can be perceived as high across all major urban centres, despite the fact both Daesh/IS and AQIM have been degraded in Libya. The latest GNU-LNA Joint Force engagement in several counterterrorism raids is likely to trigger tit-for-tat drive-by shootings and medium-impact explosive attacks against GNU 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:**
  - **Southern area:** Southern desert area formed by Bir Rijm Maatoug - Borj Bourguiba -Ben Guardane, due to terrorist threat at Libyan border with terrorist infiltrations.



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- **Saharan area bordering with Libya and Algeria:** terrorist skirmishes against security forces. Military exclusion area created since 2013.
- **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<sup>2</sup>

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	<b>25,237</b>	12,953	<b>+95%</b>	3,595	68	93	<b>+ 27%</b>	438,303
Tunisia	<b>41,569</b>	59,194	<b>- 30%</b>	3,460	266	213	<b>+ 25%</b>	917,814

<sup>2</sup> Data from WorldOMeter. Source: <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/> [online]. Last updated: 03/02/2022 13:00GMT



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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/IS - 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

**Disclaimer:** *This report is based in security incidents reports from multiple sources, including international partners and open sources, whose accuracy may not always be fully verified. It cannot be assumed that all security incidents in Libya and Tunisia were reported to and/or tracked by EUBAM Libya. The Security and Duty of Care Department (SDCD) emails a daily security update (DSR) which includes a full description of the incidents that serve as the basis for this report. These documents may not be copied, forwarded or reproduced, manual, electronic, photographic to any other person or organization outside EU Institutions and EU Members States without further approval from the originator.*