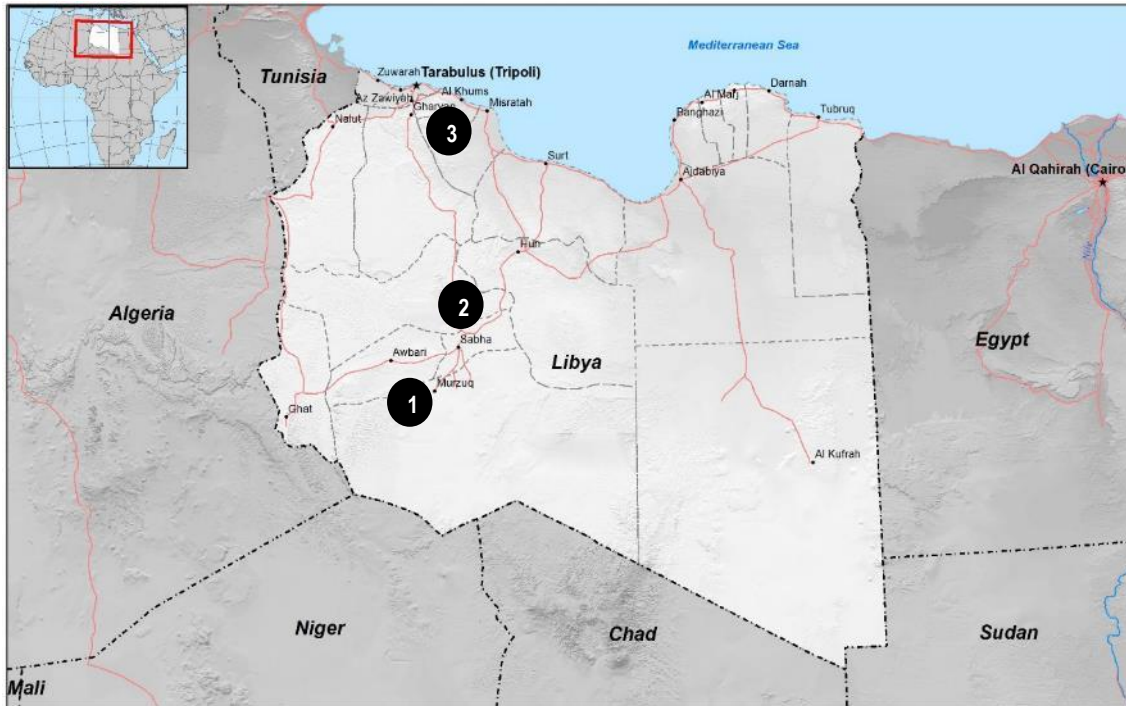


# EU LIAISON AND PLANNING CELL LIBYA

## Weekly Report 14 – 21JUL21

Author: MAJ VALERO, LTC TAFZI, CPT VAN HOECKE

Revised: LTC VAN DER WERFF



1	15JUL	The GNU Interior Ministry has established an Operations Room for the south
2	18JUL	The Great Man-Made River (GMMR) system suffers from another attack
3	18JUL	Turkey has allegedly deployed military equipment in western Bani Walid

**SUMMARY:** Despite the lack of any direct confrontation between LNA and western-GNU affiliated armed groups; both rival camps continue to operate independently with the aim to consolidate their role and presence. There are no clear signs of progress on the military side of the Libyan conflict. Haftar’s threatening rhetoric could derive in a military escalation either along the Sirte-Jufra frontline or in Southern Libya, where both rival camps are trying to get the main local actors support. In this military build-up, Turkey continues to exert a leading role as the main guarantee for the Tripoli interim authorities. Key infrastructure, such as the Great Man-Made River system, remains subjected to continuous sabotage attacks, increasing the risk of water disruptions in the north during the summer period.

## 1 CURRENT SITUATION

### 1.1 The Tripoli Ministry of Interior has established a new Operations Room in the south.

On 15 July, Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dabaiba has appointed the Deputy Minister of Interior (Mol) for Public Affairs, Mahmoud Saaed, as the head of the new joint security operations room in Southern Libya, which focuses on border security.

According to the Government of National Unity (GNU), all the security bodies in the south, including the Security Directorates and the Custom Authority, will support this new security structure. (**See Annex**)

Since 17 July, security forces affiliated with the joint security operations room have been patrolling and arresting suspected people around Sebha area.



*Mahmoud Saaed*

**COMMENT:** Inconsistent approaches in the past from both the Government of National Accord (GNA) and the LNA — to boost their influence in Southern Libya —, have exacerbated the tensions among the different local communities.

The GNU Ministry of Interior (Mol), Khaled Mazen, and other ministerial authorities met on 11 July with different security actors from Sebha, Ubari, Qatrun and Taraghin in Tripoli, to intensify the security deployment.

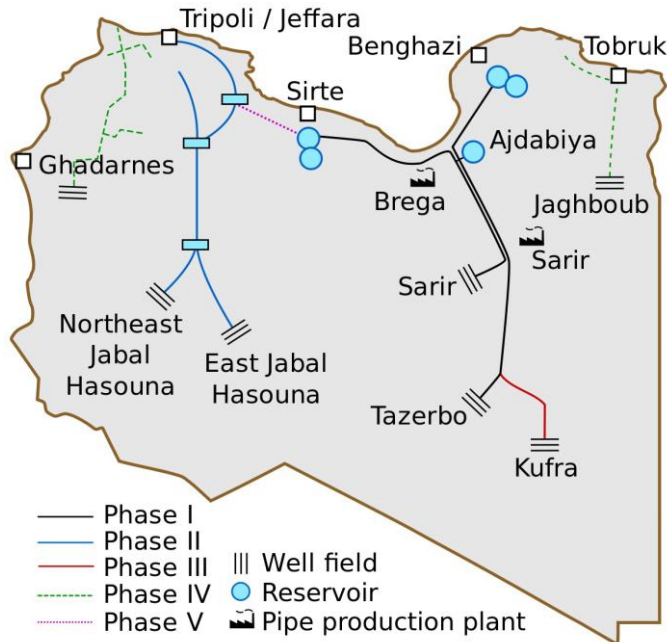
The LNA presence in different cities and towns in the south is part of the security plan to restore order and its influence. On 13 July, the LNA Tariq ben Ziyad Brigade was seen around Murzuq and Ubari, and elements from the 128th Brigade deployed in the vicinity of Ghat to secure the Algerian border.

This competition is against the backdrop of the defection of the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion in mid-June, and the GNU growing interests in having a say in this region.

**ASSESSMENT:** The increasing competition between the LNA and the GNU has likely the potential to reactivate parallel command structures and ignite further confrontations in this region.

## 1.2 The Great Man-Made River (GMMR) system suffers from another attack.

On 18 July, the GMMR authority reported another attack on well 079, located in Jabal Hasouna well field, Southern Libya.



*GMMR distribution map*



*Damages at the station*

**COMMENT:** The GMMR provides Libyan cities and diverse agricultural projects with 61% of the water supply. The other sources are groundwater (28%) and desalination (11%). The attacks on the wells have a direct impact on the al Hasouna water conveyance system that brings water through two pipelines, to Tarhuna and to Tripoli, via Misrata and al Khums.

These attacks could lead to the collapsing of the GMMR system and cutting off water for most of the northern areas. GMMR pipelines and its technicians are vulnerable and often become a target for certain groups; Jabal al Hasouna is the most affected area. In April 2021, the GMMR Authority announced that approximately 170 wells were out of service. In the last attack, on 14 July, unknown assailants sabotaged well 241's control room, resulting with the well field being permanently out of service.

In May 2021, the LNA-affiliated 117 Battalion was assigned to patrol around the GMMR facilities at Jabal al Hasouna.

**ASSESSMENT:** attacks on well fields and critical infrastructures are likely linked to groups angered by Tripoli government decisions, continuing to use the water infrastructure to push through its demands.

### 1.3 Turkey has allegedly deployed military equipment in western Bani Walid.

On 18 July, unconfirmed information pointed out that Turkey has deployed air defence, electronic jamming systems, armoured vehicles and mercenaries in a military compound, south to Bani Walid. In addition, the Tripoli's interim authorities would not have been aware of this move.

**COMMENT:** Access to the military compound should have been facilitated by the GNU Ministry of Defence-affiliated 444 Fighting Unit, which has a significant presence in the area.

Turkey's military footprint has significantly increased since January 2019. Turkey's air defence systems were crucial to mitigate the air threat posed by the LNA-affiliated forces over the capital and Misrata. These systems are:

- The medium-range (up to 50 km) '**I-Hawk**' system at the Watiya airbase; previously, these systems were at Misrata and Mitiga airports.
- The Turkish-made '**ACV-30 Korkut**', a low altitude and very short-range self-propelled anti-aircraft gun, very effective against drones and low-flying helicopters at Watiya.
- The Turkish-made short-range '**HISAR-A**', likely deployed also at Watiya airbase.

In addition, in June 2020, Sentinel-1 satellite imageries captured jamming emissions in Libya, emanating from a Turkish '**Koral**' Electronic Warfare (EW) system. This system was likely deployed both in Tripoli and Misrata to jam anti-aircraft systems, such as the Russian Pantsir.

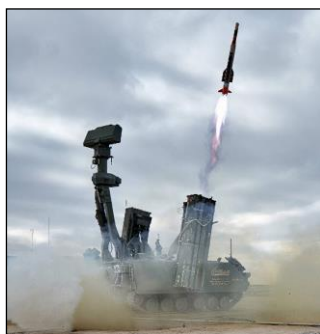
If confirmed, on one hand, the deployment of Turkish air defence and jamming systems entails a potential increase of the tension along the Sirte-Jufra frontline. On the other hand, the absence of awareness from Tripoli's authorities means a high level of autonomy for Turkey (or other western-affiliated forces).



*Air defence system Hawk*



*Air defence system Korkut*



*Air defence system HISAR-A*



*Koral Electronic Warfare system*

Currently, the main air threat to the western-affiliated forces may come from the Russian combat aircraft (MiG-29 or Su-24), based in Jufra airbase — 240 km south of Sirte — and al Khadim airbase — 106 km east of Benghazi —, both under the LNA control.

**ASSESSMENT:** Such a defensive military build-up is likely aimed at monitoring, and reacting if needed, any possible move by LNA-affiliated forces nearby Bani Walid area.

This deployment is also likely a strong Turkish response to Haftar's recurring threats of returning to the military track.

## 2 OTHER SECURITY RELATED FACTS/EVENTS

- a. On 15 July, conflicting reports indicated a massive mobilization of the 444 Unit armed elements from Tripoli and Bani Walid to Tarhuna, where the 444 Unit had some issues with local groups. It is likely that the 444 Unit convoy departed from Tripoli, passing by Tarhuna to get Bani Walid area. This move is highly likely related to the anti-smuggling operations that the 444 Unit is normally conducting in this area.
- b. On 21 July, an LNA delegation headed by Lieutenant General Khairi al Tamimi, Haftar's cabinet director and member of the Joint Military Commission, travelled to Russia.



*LtGen Khairi al Tamimi*

- c. On 20 and 21 July, elements from the LNA 128<sup>th</sup> Brigade were patrolling areas south of the Oil Crescent. Some of these elements were already present in Sirte area.
- d. On 21 July, the LNA Subul al Salam Brigade handed 27 Eritrean and Somali nationals over the Kufra migration center, after fleeing from human traffickers.



*Eastern Africa migrants in Kufra*

- e. On 21 July, the United States, in close coordination with the United Nations, reiterated the withdrawal of Turkish and Russian mercenaries from Libya. Both forces should be removed simultaneously.

### **3 CONCLUSIONS**

Despite the lack of any direct confrontation, LNA and western-GNU security forces continue to operate independently with the aim to consolidate their role and presence within the conditions offered by the Ceasefire Agreement.

Polarization of fronts is reinforced at both international and national level, following the Berlin II Conference and 15 July UNSC Ministerial meeting on Libya. It results that the full implementation of the CFA cannot only Libyan led and some initiatives remain in the capability of the international community / regional actors-organizations.

There are no signs of progress on the unification of the military establishment while current armed militias' competition and tensions can result in violence and confrontations in Tripoli area and the Western Coastal Region, where militia-related instability will remain the first matter of concern for the interim authorities.

Mutual distrust, together with the increasingly military build-up and armed confrontational posture on both LNA and IGNU side could lead to a deterioration of the security situation along the Sirte-Jufra front line and in the Southern Libya, posing at risk the role of the JMC.

The security of critical infrastructures for the provision of essential services (water, electricity, etc.) are detracting from confidence building measures.

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

## ANNEX. EVOLUTION OF THE SECURITY SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LIBYA

