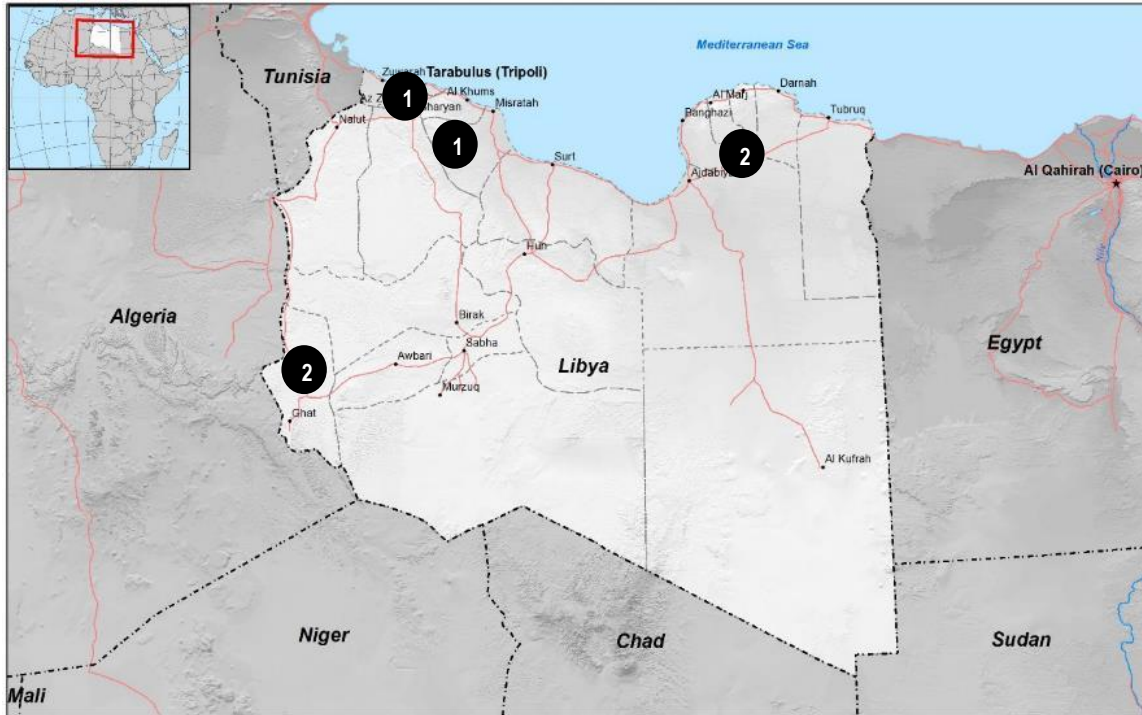


EU LIAISON AND PLANNING CELL LIBYA Weekly Report 13-21 OCT 2021

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1	14OCT	Potential increase of terrorist activities
2	14-19OCT	LNA manoeuvres

SUMMARY:

LNA has conducted major combined land, sea and air manoeuvres by the 106 (elite) Brigade in the vicinity of Benghazi, a very well timed Stratcom by the LNA, just days before the Stabilization Conference held on 21st October. That, to secure attention and confirm the Eastern commitment to preserve operational capabilities.

At the same time, Islamic State (IS) is confirming an active posture. Despite ongoing attrition and the loss of some fighters, the group maintains the capability to mount attacks. So far, their operations have been restricted to the Southern and central Libyan regions (exclusively targeting the LNA).

Despite recent instability (especially in the greater Tripoli area), there are encouraging political indicators suggesting further progress towards implementation of the October 2020 ceasefire agreement, as a follow-up of the mentioned Stabilization Conference in Tripoli.

1 CURRENT SITUATION

1.1 Potential increase of terrorist activities

On 14 October, Libya's Internal Security Service disclosed that Omar Bashir Omar Izadeen, alleged Islamic State (IS) member, was arrested in a counterterrorism operation in Tripoli.

He was accused of facilitating the 2015 IS attack against the Corinthia Hotel and being responsible for promoting IS movements between Tunisia and Libya, including logistic support.



On the same day, in another operation, one alleged IS member, was arrested in Bani Walid.

On 18 October, Islamic State (IS) published a report of a small group (8 to 10) of its fighters in Libya conducting training activities.



IS Military training



IS Military batch

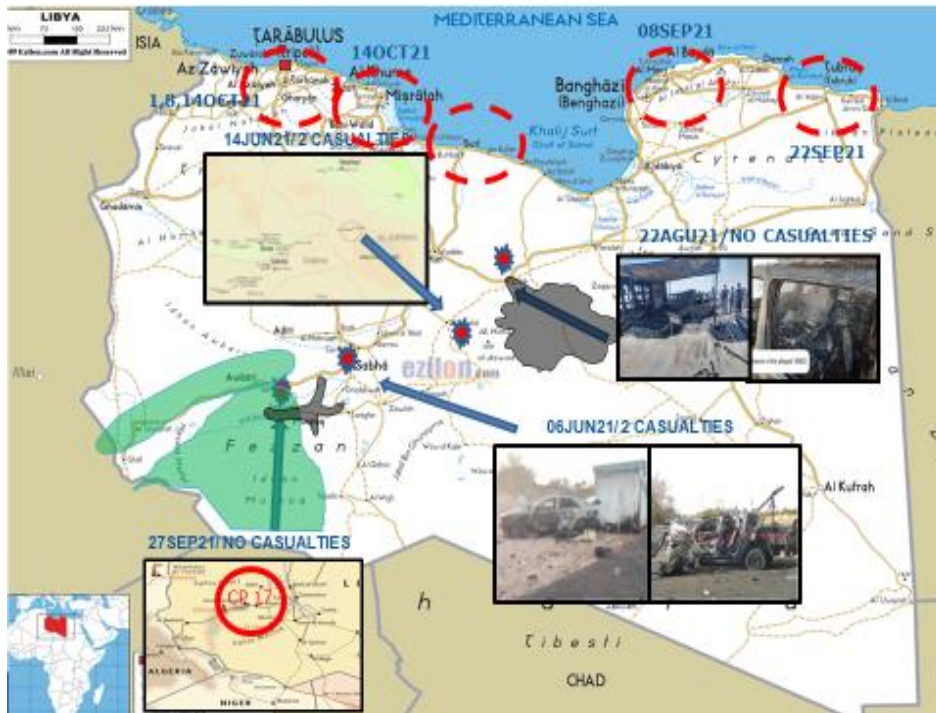
COMMENT: Since JUN21 IS has surged its activity, not only acting in an operational posture, where Improvised Explosive Device (IED) and Vehicle Bourne IED attacks were taking place, but also releasing several public reports (JUL and OCT21) trying to promote its profile on media.

IS` area of influence is mainly in the Southern and Eastern Libya, carrying out attacks against security forces, particularly when the LNA has increased its presence. However, the increase of IS alleged presence in Western and Northern Libya shows a complementary tendency. IS, possibly has activated isolated cells to acquire new capabilities in the different areas.

It is important to highlight that with these claims, IS is trying to show its capability to control key terrain, or at least to maintain its relative freedom of movement, spreading furthermore its influence to main cities and connexions between them.

On the other side, AQMI remains more static and focus on logistical activities such as transfer of weapons, ammunition and money to other organizations in the Sahelian strip, likely stationed in Mali or Niger.

LATEST TERRORIST EVENTS/DETENTIONS



 Latest terrorist `s detention places.

AQIM: Libya used as a safe haven and logistic platform.

IS: Haruj Mountains. Recruitment and operations.

In the regional context, mainly in the porous borders, terrorist activity and security operations have increased, as demonstrated by the operation carried out on 16 October in Tataouine by the Tunisian National Guard.

An IS cell consisting of eight to ten people was dismantled while being in the process of manufacturing IEDs to be used in qualitative attacks, close to the border with Libya.

ASSESSMENT: Although an increase of activity was evident in Western areas, it is highly likely that IS` s main focus will be against security actors within the Southern and Central regions, targeting the Libyan National Army (LNA).

IS activity in the North Western region remains limited to logistical issues and isolated cells. However, it is likely that it may exploit the current context of planned elections to infiltrate urban centres and expand its operations into coastal areas to conduct single attacks, which could deeply affect the security and political environment.

1.2 LNA manoeuvres

On 17 October, according to the Military Information Division of the General Command, the 106th Brigade has conducted military manoeuvres as a conclusion to a series of tactical exercises in the vicinity of Benghazi.

The exercise named “Maneuver Raad 2021” is a joint live-exercise at infantry brigade level aimed to improve command skills and raise the Brigade` s combat readiness and

efficiency. The main goals of the exercise were to increase border`s protection and anti-terrorist capabilities.

A large array of material was deployed, such as battle tanks (T-72), combat helicopters artillery assets and air combat (MIG-29) and support assets.

The drills were attended by a range of high rank officers, led by the designated Commander-in-Chief, Lieutenant General Abdel Razek Al-Nadori, the commander of the 106th Brigade, Colonel Khaled Khalifa Haftar and the commander of Tariq bin Ziyad Brigade.



Col Khaled Khalifa Haftar, Cdr. 106th Brigade



106th Brigade Deployment



COMMENT: The 106th Brigade is the largest single unit within LNA forces, in terms of manpower, equipment and territorial control. It originated in 2014 when it was in charge of Haftar`s personal protection. It was constituted as a battalion in 2016, before being substantially expanded in 2018 to Brigade level, made up of at least 10 battalions from Benghazi and Adjabiya.

Currently, the 106th Brigade is considered an elite force that has been steadily supplied with graduates from the military college since 2016 and is very well equipped with arms and materiel, fitting the image of a modern army that Haftar seeks to project.

It`s noted that these manoeuvres happened together with other LNA operations, such as:

- on 14 October, in which the 128th Brigade deployed and carried out search patrols close to the Algerian border.
- on 19 October, when Lieutenant-General Abdel Razek Al-Nadhori, ordered LNA`s 12th Brigade units to deploy in Murzuq.

ASSESSMENT: It is highly likely that, in conjunction with the previous 5+5 JMC meetings, the LNA aim is to project a strong image of control and security, mainly at the borders,

an issue of particular relevance to the international community. Furthermore, it is very likely that the LNA wants to reinforce control of the South and its critical infrastructure.

It is likely that LNA will continue with these kind of operations before the elections.

2 OTHER SECURITY RELATED FACTS/EVENTS

- a. On 14 October, the 10th meeting of the Air Forces Chief of Staff of the 5+5 Defence Initiative was held in Tripoli with the aim to exchange know-how, coordinate and develop multilateral cooperation amongst Air Forces in the Western Mediterranean. Attendees included 5+5 JMC members, and representatives from Algeria, France, Italy, Malta, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia.



- b. On 15 October, the President Council (PC), Mohamad al-Menfi, met with interim Libyan National Army (LNA) Commander-in-Chief, General Abdel Razek Al-Nadori in Tobruk. They talked about 5+5 JMC efforts, military unification, and national elections, in a symbolic very important rapprochement.



- c. On 18 October, 5 International Observers arrived in Tunisia to monitor Libya's Cease Fire Agreement and the withdrawal of mercenaries. They will work from UN HQ in Tripoli (OAE camp) and eventually from Sirte. In the same context, African Union (AU) dispatched a mission of 13 people to Libya, to assess the situation on the ground prior to the elections.

3 CONCLUSIONS

During the current period, persisting the contrast between different Libyan institutions on the implementation of the elections road-map, the main security-related event has been the Libyan Stability Initiative on the 21st October, as already anticipated in previous weekly report. The Conference, which gathered the international audience to support the stabilization and the unification of Libyan institutions, has been the international venue where the Action Plan for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from the Libyan territory (drafted by the JMC in Genève from 6 to 8 October) has been endorsed.

However - although the high expectations - the plan looks more like a political statement to feed the international community before the controversial forecasted elections. In fact, it is considered very unlikely that this event could represent the precondition for success for the elections to be held as scheduled. This because, as the plan is drafted, the phased, gradual, transparent, coordinated, balanced and synchronized withdrawal of Foreign Forces cannot be shortly achieved. It cannot even represent a confidence building measure with the missing participation of Eastern security authorities and the parallel initiatives to held Gen. Haftar accountable for war crimes. Furthermore, the absence of the highest representatives of the main concerned external countries (RUS-TUR), is a negative indicator of a gradual, balanced and transparent withdrawal.

Despite the above, it seems that the final Stability Initiative reports formally hail the reaching of a shared agreement on the actual holding of elections on December 24.

A part from this, LNA continues to “show its muscles”, portraying itself the role of guarantor security in Libya, from threats of terrorism and criminality. In this perspective are to be seen the robust joint exercise conducted by the 106th Brigade (led by Haftar’s son Khalid), including the use of MiG-29 fighter jets, as well as the order issued by the acting LNA Commander, General Al Nadhori to deploy the 12th Brigade in Murzuq.

In such a context, the terrorist menace is gradually increasing in the South and along the Western borders, with the IS bolstering its strategic communications, showing off its capability to use Libya as a safe place where to conduct training activities in an undeterred manner. If a terrorist attack might be the event, which can definitely compromise the elections process and trigger the resurgence of hostilities between the West and East sides, that is always a risk to be considered.

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