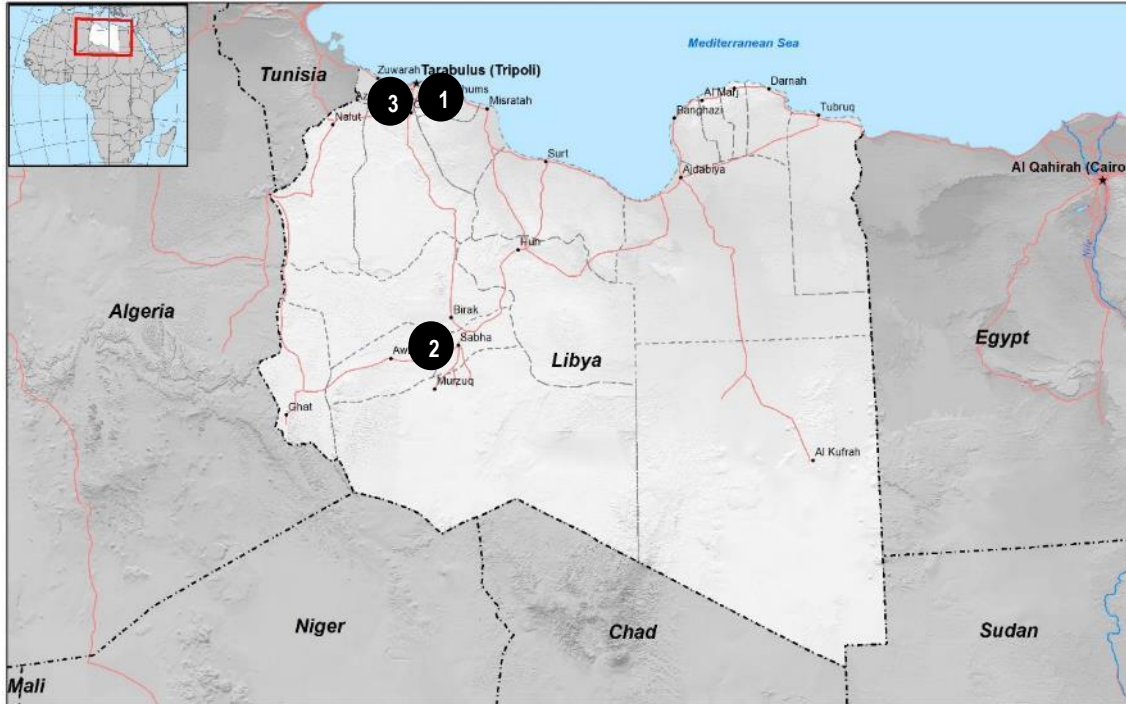


EU LIAISON AND PLANNING CELL LIBYA

Weekly Report 21–28JUL21

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1	22JUL	Clashes between Special Deterrence Force and Stability and Support Apparatus in Tripoli downtown
2	24-25JUL	GNU and LNA authorities remain deeply engaged in the South
3	26JUL	A Western-Libya military delegation has planned a visit to Moscow

SUMMARY: Militia competition among armed groups affiliated with the main political institutions in Tripoli remain one of the main security concerns for the stability within and around the capital. Southern Libya is becoming a key terrain, where both the GNU and the LNA are trying to exert their influence through security and military activities, respectively. At the international level, Russia keeps on consolidating its influence in Libya by engaging with western Libyan actors. Despite its preference for Khalifa Haftar as a partner of choice, the Kremlin has maintained steady links with the western-affiliated military authorities as well.

1 CURRENT SITUATION

1.1 Violent clashes between Special Deterrence Force (SDF) and Stability and Support Apparatus (SSA) elements in Tripoli downtown.

On 22 July, Bin Ghashir district in Tripoli was the scene of violent clashes between the Special Deterrence Force (SDF), led by Abdelraouf Kara, and elements from the Stability Support apparatus (SSA), headed by Abdul Ghani al Kikli (**See Annex**).

COMMENT: This is the latest episode in the confrontation line between the two main security institutions attached to the Presidential Council. The tension between these two militias has increased considerably during the last months.

Shooting started after an SSA patrol opened fire on the SDF positioned near the Bin Ghashir Police Station. Unconfirmed reporting indicated that the motivation behind this skirmish was an ongoing dispute over the control of the Tripoli International Hospital.

ASSESSMENT: Militia-related instability will highly likely remain the first matter of concern for the Libyan transitional government.

1.2 GNU and LNA authorities remain deeply engaged in the south.

On 24 July, an LNA delegation headed by its Chief of the General Staff, Colonel General Abdel Razek al Nazouri, inspected military compounds in Southern Libya. During the visit, Saddam Haftar and Mabrouk Sabhan, the commander of the LNA military operations in the South, were also present.



Arrival of the LNA delegation to Southern Libya

On 25 July, a Government of National Unity (GNU) delegation, headed by its Interior Minister, Khaled Mazen, visited Sabha. Mazen met BGen Mohammed Bashir, the Sebha Security Directorate head, to discuss the possible ways to support security in the Southern Region.



BGen Mohammed Bashir



Mazen during the meeting with local security officials

COMMENT: Meanwhile the GNU is exerting its influence in the South through the Ministry of Interior, the LNA is consolidating its role as the main military institution in the region.

The presence of Saddam Haftar along with the LNA delegation indicates his increasingly important role within the LNA structure, as a mediator and/or coordinator of the LNA General Command's decisions.

The interim government seems to be more involved in the security situation in Southern Libya than its predecessor, the GNA.

ASSESSMENT: Southern Libya remains the most likely region where to increase competition between both main Libyan actors.

1.3 A Western-Libya military delegation visits Moscow.

On 26 July, a Western-affiliated military delegation travelled to Moscow following an invitation from Valeri Gerasimov, the Russian Chief of Defence.

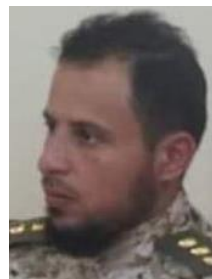
This delegation includes the Chief of Defence, Colonel General Mohammed al Haddad; Tripoli Military Region Commander, Major General Abdelbasset Marwan; 444th Brigade Commander, Mahmoud Hamza; and Land Forces Commander, Major General Fituri Grebel.



Mohammed al Haddad



Abdelbasset Marwan



Mahmoud Hamza



Fituri Grebel

COMMENT: Russia remains very opportunistic and will try to accommodate its interests in Libya through the use of military and diplomatic efforts¹.

¹ EULPC Weekly Report 15 July 2021.

ASSESSMENT: Russia is highly likely trying to consolidate its influence in the Libyan conflict by engaging all Libyan actors.

Even the main topics on the agenda remain unknown, it is likely that Russia will try to refine an agreement with the western-affiliated military staff in order to officialise and consolidate its presence and role in Libya.

2 OTHER SECURITY RELATED FACTS/EVENTS

- a. On 21 July, unknown armed men, likely affiliated with Mohamed Bahroun's militia, reportedly opened fire against a checkpoint manned by Stability and Support Apparatus (SSA) personnel in Sabratha.
- b. On 24 and 26 July, there was an uptick in the Turkish military activity at Watiya airbase. Unconfirmed information stated the arrival of military equipment, including UAV.
- c. On 25 July, Khalifa Haftar welcomed Tunisian President Kais Saied's decision to remove the prime minister and suspend the parliament activities. This situation and the presence of Ennahda party –linked to the Muslim Brotherhood–, in the Tunisian government coalition is already having an impact on Libya. On the other hand, Khaled al Mishri –the chairman of the Libyan High State Council and aligned with the Muslim Brotherhood–, criticized Saied's resolution.
- d. On 27 July, Mohammed Khalifa al Kani was reportedly killed in Benghazi, during a security operation aimed to his arrest. Mohammed al Kani was the head of Kaniyat militia, which exercised control of Tarhuna between 2015 and June 2020, and supported LNA's offensive on Tripoli. It is believed that he was hiding in the eastern city of Ajdabiya. He was responsible for serious human rights violations in Tarhuna. Al Kani's presence in Eastern Libya was likely a burden for the LNA. The security forces engaged in this action are believed to be part of the Tariq Bin Ziyad Brigade.



Mohammed Khalifa al Kani

- e. On 27 July, shooting was reported in Tripoli's Gurji district between General Security Agency (GSA) forces, led by Emad Trabelsi, and Special Deterrence Force elements. The incident was initiated by an SDF arrest attempt in the GSA area of control. Shortly afterwards, the situation was defused and no casualties were reported.

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.

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.

As corroborated by the Berlin II Conference and 15 July UNSC Ministerial declarations on Libya, the full implementation of the CFA remain in the capability of the international community / regional actors-organizations to more directly influence the Libyan led process.

The current sensitive evolution of the political situation in Tunisia provides all actors of the Libyan crisis a more comprehensive regional perspective to be considered in terms of volatility of extant political institutions and with respect to the one already offered by the recent critical conditions in Chad and Mali, and the Sahel region as a complex.

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

ANNEX. THE STABILITY AND SUPPORT APPARATUS LINKS

