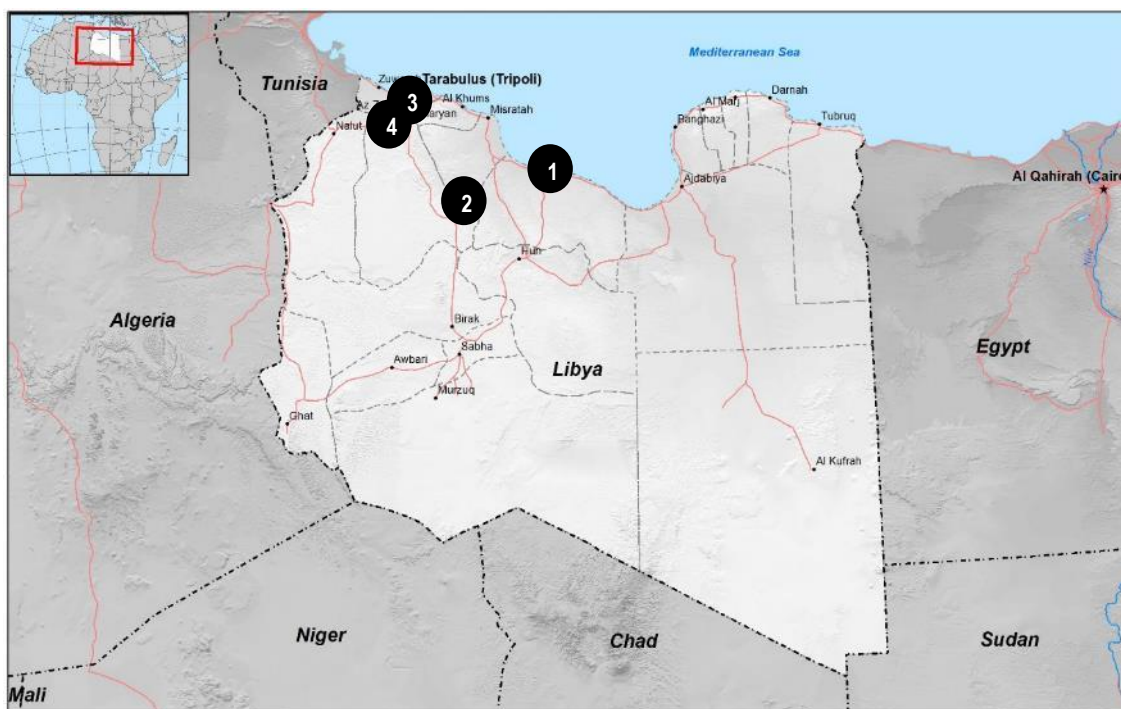


# EU LIAISON AND PLANNING CELL LIBYA

## Weekly Report 11-18 AUG21

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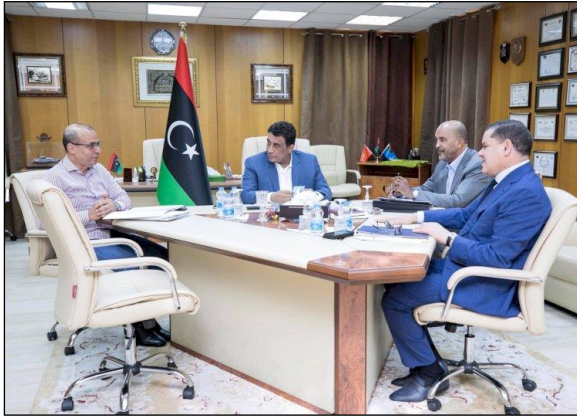
1	12AUG	Presidential Council appoints a new commander for the Central Military Region
2	12AUG	Armed group forces to cut off the water supply after sabotage threats
3	15AUG	Presidential Council establishes new military zone along the Western coastal region and appoints Namroush as its commander
4	14-17AUG	Mobilisation of forces across the Western Coastal Region increases the risk of a military escalation

**SUMMARY:** The Western Coastal Region continues to witness a worrisome and significant increase of instability. Both rival cartels, the Buzriba clan and Mohamed Bahroun's Al Far militia are determined to continue fighting for the control of the illegal businesses. The newly created West Coast Military Zone encompasses strategic infrastructures, such as the Ras Jedir Border Crossing point and the main land evacuation route from Tripoli. The militia tensions have the potential to spread the violence to the neighbouring areas, namely Zuwara, Sabratha, al Ajaylat, Warshefana and even West of the capital, where Palm City Residence (PCR) is located. On the reconciliation track, the 5+5 Joint Military Commission has expressed the lack of political support to continue with the process, chiefly with regard to foreign interference and need of a Security Sector Reform.

## 1 CURRENT SITUATION

### 1.1 Presidential Council has appointed a new commander for the Central Military Region.

On 12 August, the Presidential Council (PC) together with Abdulhamid Dabaiba, acting as Minister of Defence, has nominated Mohammed Ibrahim Salem Moussa as the new commander of the Central Military Region.



*The Presidential Council and Abdelhamid Dabaiba*



*Mohammed Ibrahim Salem Moussa*

**COMMENT:** Mohammed Ibrahim Salem Moussa hails from Misrata, and in 2014, he participated in the Libya Dawn coalition (Fajr Libia). This coalition aimed at countering Khalifa Haftar's Operation Dignity and Zintani influence in the capital.

Traditionally, this military region is commanded by a Misratan high-ranking officer. Mohammed al Haddad took over this position between June 2017 and August 2020, before being selected as Chief of Defence.

According to the PC decision, the Central Military Region comprises the area from al Khums in the West, to Bin Jawad in the East and South of Suknah as its Southern limit.

**ASSESSMENT:** The Misrata Military Council will highly likely influence the newly nominated regional commander's decisions.

### 1.2 Armed group forces to cut off the water supply after sabotage threats.

On 12 August, the Man-Made River Authority (MMRA) was forced to close the water supply after an armed group stormed the Ash Shuwayrif water control station and the Hasawna water pumping station. The gunmen –from to the Magarha tribe– demanded the release of Abdullah al Senussi, the former intelligence head during Gaddafi regime and currently suffering from cancer.

On 17 August, the water cut-off remained due to the failure of the negotiations. The closure of the MMR is affecting the capital and other coastal cities.

On 18 August, Abdulbasit Marwan –the Tripoli Military Region commander– commissioned the 444 Unit to carry out a security operation north of Ash Shuwayrif against the responsible for these threats. Two suspected people were arrested.



Abdullah al Senussi



18 August security operation in Ash Shuwayrif



**COMMENT:** Abdullah Senussi is known for directing the 1996 Abu Salim prison massacre in which more than 100 prisoners were executed. On 28 July 2015, he was sentenced to death, along with Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, on 18 counts ranging from undermining state unity and incitement to murder. Currently is at Mitiga prison.

These attacks are becoming an easy and effective way of hampering Tripoli’s government and showing its inability to protect these vital infrastructures, especially during the summer period.

**ASSESSMENT:** Unless security authorities cut off these threats, armed groups will likely continue to use attacks on vital infrastructures to push through their demands.

### 1.3 Presidential Council establishes new military zone along the Western Coastal Region.

On 15 August, the PC has established the West Coast Military Zone and has appointed Salaheddin al Namroush as its new commander. During that meeting, the PC has also promoted Namroush to the rank of Brigadier General.



Salaheddin al Namroush



West Coast Military Zone

**COMMENT:** Namroush was appointed Deputy Minister of Defence on 31 October 2019, replacing Awhida Najim, being appointed Minister of Defence in late August 2020. At the time, Osama Juweili, the Western Military Region commander, reportedly considered that Namroush was not suitable for that position.

During his tenure in the Ministry of Defence, Namroush was considered as Turkey's man in Libya. With regard to the current reconciliation process, Namroush did not show any support for the 5+5 Joint Military Commission talks. Namroush hails from Zawiya, which surely will bring the upper hand to Zawiya in the current crisis at the expense of other power centres, such as Zuwara or Sabratha. In addition, Namroush is associated with the Awlad Hmeira network, linked to the Stability and Support Apparatus (SSA) and the Buzriba clan.

Ras Jedir border crossing point, Zawiya Oil and Gas complex, Palm City Residence (PCR) and Watiya airbase are some of the key locations within this new military zone. This decision reduces Osama Juweli's area of influence in the Western Region that from now on, will be called Western Mountains Region.

The Nalut Mayor –west of Baten al Jabal– rejected this military zone demarcation.

**ASSESSMENT:** Namroush nomination will highly likely exacerbate the tensions across this unstable area, since certain groups are likely to be excluded from the lucrative smuggling business along the Western coast.

#### **1.4 Mobilisation of forces across the Western Coastal Region increases the risk of a military escalation.**

Unconfirmed information reported the movement of armed convoys coming from different areas and converging close to the Western Coastal Region.

On 14 August, on one side, the presence of 200 vehicles affiliated to Emad al Trabelsi's General Security Agency (GSA) in the Tobacco Factory, west of Tripoli, in support of the SSA. On the other side, on 14 August around 50 vehicles linked to Haroun Sassi group were reported in Zintan area, in support for Mohamed Bahroun's Al Far militia.

Additionally, on 16 August, unverified reports indicated that some hundreds of military vehicles were on their way to Western Tripoli from Misrata.



*Emad Trabelsi's GSA alleged mobilisation*



According to that information, these rival groups are trying to control the Bridge 27 checkpoint in West Tripoli.

In addition, the Special Deterrence Force (SDF) would have set up several checkpoints in Western Tripoli due to the increasing military presence.

**COMMENT:** The last confrontation between the SSA and Mohamed Bahroun's Al Far militia took place on 10 August, when the SSA attacked the home of an al Far affiliate, South of Zawiya. At the time, there were some rumours about possible military reinforcements on both sides.

Both rival factions are trying to project their influence along the Western coastal region to dominate the profitable smuggling activities.

Bridge 27 is a key point under control of the 55 Infantry Company, affiliated with the SSA. It gives access to the Western coastal road from Tripoli and from the Warshefana area.

The tensions between the SSA and Al Far militia is also affecting the fragmentation within the Zintan camp.

**ASSESSMENT:** This military mobilisation is highly likely part of a deterrence strategy related to the militia competition across the Western Coastal Region.

## 2 OTHER SECURITY RELATED FACTS/EVENTS

- a. On 14 August, the 5+5 Joint Military Commission (JMC) insisted that the nomination of a Defence Minister and the withdrawal of foreign forces and mercenaries from Libya, without exception, are crucial to go forward in the CFA implementation process. The JMC also requested to cancel all the agreements with foreign countries and to start a militia DDR process. This statement faced the opposition of the High State Council, arguing that the JMC must not meddle in political affairs, as well as Osama Juweili and Abdulghani al Kikli, the SSA commander. UNSMIL expressed its fully support to the JMC.
- b. On 14 August, the LNA 128<sup>th</sup> Brigade and 628 Battalion have carried out joint patrols in Southwestern Libya, covering an area comprising Taraghin (south of Qatrun), the Chadian border and the El Salvador Pass.
- c. On 15 August, the Jufra Security Directorate BGen Ali al Triki met with the Interior Minister Khalid Mazen in Tripoli to discuss the security situation in Jufra. This meeting confirms once again that almost every security directorate reports directly to the Interior Minister regardless of their location.



*BGen Ali al Triki*

- d. On 15 August, an LNA delegation, headed by Abdel Razek al Nazouri, met with LNA military commanders, members of the municipal council and tribal elders of Sirte. Together with the 11 August visit to Ubari and 13 August visit to Ghat, Nazouri is highly likely consolidating the LNA support in some strategic areas beyond the LNA home base.
- e. On 17 August, the Turkish Minister of Defence Hulusi Akar met with Mohammed al Haddad, the General Staff of the Libyan Army Chief of Defence, on the sidelines of the 15<sup>th</sup> International Defense Industry Fair (IDEF'21), in Istanbul. Haddad expressed that Turkey is not a foreign power in Libya, in a clear reference to the JMC's statements.
- f. On 18 August, unconfirmed reporting mentioned that elements from the LNA Tariq ben Ziyad Brigade deployed nearby Ash Shuwayrif. This presence is coincidental with the 444 Unit security operation in the north of that location. Nevertheless, the risk of confrontation is unlikely.

### **3 CONCLUSIONS**

LNA and Western-GNU security forces continue endlessly to operate independently with the aim to consolidate their role within the conditions offered by the Cease Fire Agreement (CFA) and with the apparent shared commitment to support next 24 December elections.

A part the opening of the coastal road, further significative progression along the CFA road map appears to be highly unlikely in the short-term, while current armed militias' competition and tensions continue along the Western Coastal Region.

In fact, no unification of security institutions and FF/mercenaries withdrawal could be foreseen before the elections. That is proved by the nomination of the former MoD in the role of Commander the newly created Western Coastal Military Region, of strategic relevance for the interest of international actors supporting the GNU,

Aware of such a condition, the JMC has been prompt to highlight the political limit of the CFA technical implementation.

Therefore, the progress on the implementation of the CFA remains in the exclusive capability of the international / regional actors to more directly influence the Libyan peace process, keeping into consideration the critical short-term objective of the next December election.

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