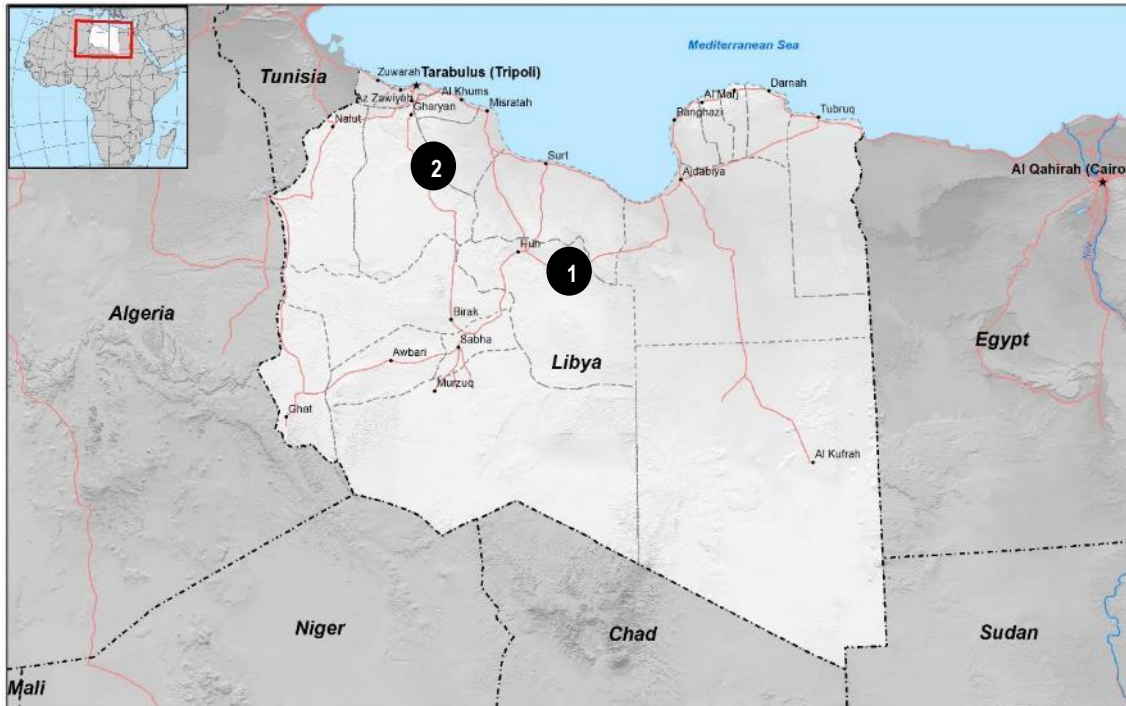


# EU LIAISON AND PLANNING CELL LIBYA

## Weekly Report 18-25 AUG21

Author: MAJ VALERO, LTC TAFZI

Revised: LTC VAN DER WERFF



1	22AUG	Terrorist attack targets a LNA checkpoint in Zillah
2	24AUG	The LNA Tarik ben Ziyad Brigade and the Misratan 166 Battalion plans to conduct joint patrols

**SUMMARY:** The latest terrorist attack on Zillah’s checkpoint is a new reminder about the potential threat that Daesh (ISIS) in Libya may pose in the incoming period. With regard to the consolidation of the Cease Fire Agreement (CFA), the 5+5 JMC is taking positive steps on the security track towards the electoral period. Apart from a new release of prisoners, the establishment of joint patrols between the LNA Tarik ben Ziyad Brigade and the Misratan 166<sup>th</sup> Battalion is a significant improvement. Despite these new positive events, these developments could create additional fault lines within each camp, if other hardline groups perceive these changes as a threat to their interests. In addition, these vis-à-vis arrangements should be supported by a countrywide strategy.

# 1 CURRENT SITUATION

## 1.1 Terrorist attack targets a LNA checkpoint in Zillah.

On 22 August, a suicide vehicle-borne IED (SVBIED) has purportedly targeted an LNA 128<sup>th</sup> Brigade checkpoint that gives access to Zillah, 385 km South East of Sirte. According to the witnesses, the SVBIED went on fire, instead of detonating the explosive device. A Sudanese person was shot and arrested while he tried to escape from the vehicle. He died on his way to the hospital. That day, Daesh (ISIS) claimed responsibility for this attack.



*Location of the attack, in Jufra province*



Interior of the alleged VBIED

*Artillery shells spotted inside the SVBIED*



*Aftermath of the reportedly SVBIED deflagration*



**COMMENT:** The presence of artillery shells confirms that the perpetrator wanted to execute a terrorist attack. It is remarkable that the suspected terrorist did not try to kill the security personnel using other means, as an alternative procedure to the failed attack.

Unlike the June attacks (6 and 14 June 2021), this event has taken place up more on the North, in central Libya. The last attack on this area took place on 18 May 2019, when Daesh militants attacked a LNA checkpoint protecting an oilfield nearby Zillah, killing two guards and a soldier, and kidnapping four others. Daesh (ISIS) claimed responsibility via Amaq their news agency later the same day.

On 11 August, Ahmed Mesmari –the LNA spokesman– informed that elements from the 128<sup>th</sup> Brigade clashed with Daesh (ISIS) militants near al Wigh –165 km North of the Niger border–, and arrested a suspected Sudanese Daesh member.

This failed attack suggests that Daesh (ISIS)-Libya has not reached yet full capability to perform this kind of attacks. Nevertheless, Daesh (ISIS) possibly has the human resources to do so, namely facilitators to acquire the materials, IED makers and emplacers, including potential suicide bombers.

**ASSESSMENT:** It is almost certain that the real intention was to carry out a suicide attack, using a SVBIED. However, whenever the driver realized that the explosive device failed to detonate, he likely tried to run away.

Daesh (ISIS) will likely continue to carry out further attacks in central Libya over the coming period, mainly against security forces, particularly as the LNA increases its presence in that area.

## 1.2 The LNA Tarik ben Ziyad Brigade and the Misratan 166<sup>th</sup> Battalion plans to conduct joint patrols.

On 24 August, the commanders of the Tarik ben Ziyad Brigade, Omar Meghrahi, and the Misratan 166<sup>th</sup> Battalion, led by Mohammed al Hassan, met together to coordinate joint patrols along the road between Mizdah and Ash Shwayrif.

On 22 August, Abdulhamid Dabaiba commissioned Mohammed al Hassan's 166<sup>th</sup> Battalion to secure and protect the water supply<sup>1</sup> (pipelines, reservoirs and pumping stations from the Great Man-Made River system) in order to prevent any hostile actions.



*Coordination meeting to establish joint patrols along the Mizdah- Ash Shwayrif road*



<sup>1</sup> For further details about the latest Great Man-Made River incident, see EULPC Weekly Report issued on 19AUG21.

**COMMENT:** This meeting confirms rumors about the possible set up of a joint structure between both contending organizations. On 19 August, Ahmed Mesmari denied the information leaked from a document dated in May, in which Omar Meghrahi requested the LNA General Command to approach the 166<sup>th</sup> Battalion to secure the area.

Between 17 and 21 August, there was a significant LNA military mobilization around Ash Shwayrif. The trigger could have been the security operation carried out by the 444 Unit north of Ash Shwayrif on 16 August, to restore the water supply to Tripoli, after the Magarha tribe demolished part of the GMMR system.

According to the LNA MGen Emraja'a al Ammami, member of the Eastern 5+5 JMC, this agreement is part of the new security arrangements. He also added that fighting terrorism is part of the tasks assigned to both military units.

**ASSESSMENT:** The presence in this meeting of just the tactical commanders suggest that a higher-level coordination was likely held previously.

## 2 OTHER SECURITY RELATED FACTS/EVENTS

- a. On 18 August 2021, the security forces in Eastern Libya allegedly detained two suspected people of being affiliated to Daesh (ISIS) in Libya, one in Benghazi and another one in Ajdabiya.
- b. On 21 August, the LNA General Command released 17 prisoners, which were taken during the Tripoli offensive in 2019, as part of the October 2020 Cease Fire Agreements (CFA). This exchange took place in Sirte and was supervised by the 5+5 JMC. UNSMIL has welcomed this development.



*Prisoners exchange in Sirte*

- c. On 21 August, the GMMR Authority restored the water supply thanks to the 5+5 JMC mediation, after tensions created by some Magarha tribe members demanding the release of Abdulla al Senussi.

- d. Salaheddin Namroush, as Commander of the Western Coastal Military Region, met with the mayors of the main villages located along the Western Coast, to discuss their support to the military institution.



- e. On 23 August, MGen Masoud Rahouma took the legal oath before the Prime Minister of the GNU and Defense Minister Abdelhamid Dabaiba, appointed him as Military Prosecutor.



*Masoud Rahouma*

- f. On 23 August, unconfirmed reporting said the LNA 128<sup>th</sup> Brigade seized a number of small arms 100 km South of Ubari. According to the LNA officials, these weapons were ready to be sent to Mali. There was at least one person arrested.



*Weapons cache and the detainee*

- g. On 25 August, unconfirmed information stated that Abdulghani al Kikli's SSA militiamen stormed the Interior Ministry in Tripoli and reportedly kidnapped Colonel Bashir al Senussi, director of the ministry's secret affairs department. Supposedly, the dispute was due to an unpaid invoice to a company whose owner is Osama al Kikli, Abdulghani's son. This is not

the first time that the SSA storms an official building. On 22 July, the Interior Ministry experienced a similar event.



*Col Bashir al Senussi*

- h. On 25 August, during a visit of Presidential Council Deputy Musa al Koni to Chad, Mahama Idriss Déby has proposed reviving the quadripartite agreement between Libya, Sudan, Niger and Chad by forming a joint military force on the border with Libya.

### **3 CONCLUSIONS**

LNA and Western-GNU security forces continue to operate with the aim to consolidate their role and create the most possible favorable conditions with the apparent shared commitment to support next 24 December elections, having experienced the political limit of the CFA technical implementation.

As part of the starting of a joint patrolling further progression along the CFA road map appears to be highly unlikely in the short-term, while current armed militias' competition and tensions continue lingering along the Western Coastal Region and the Capital area.

In fact, no unification of security institutions and FF/mercenaries withdrawal could be foreseen before the elections, as part of an international/regional effort.

The newly created Western Coastal Military Region, of strategic relevance for the interest of international actors supporting the GNU, appears to have ignited discussions on the possible activation of a new LNA Southern Region Military Regions Command.

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