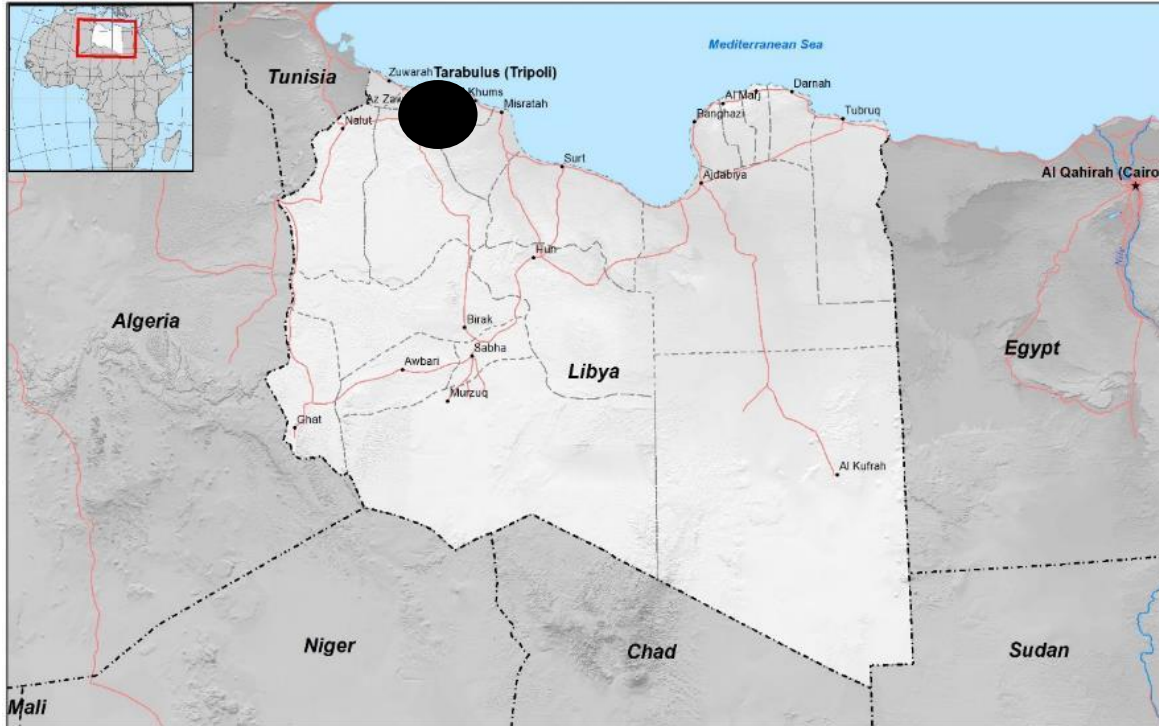


EU LIAISON AND PLANNING CELL LIBYA
Weekly Report 10 – 17 FEB 2022

Authors: LTC DEMANGE, MAJ HUERTA SANTOS, CPT VAN HOECKE

Revised by LTC ASCIONE - LTC VAN DEN HEUVEL



●	10 – 17 FEB22	Tense security situation in Tripoli and Greater Tripoli Area
ANNEXES: 1. Key actors' chart 2. Greater Tripoli Area Map		

SUMMARY

On 10 February, the House of Representatives (HoR) elected Fathi Bashagha as Prime Minister of the Government of National Stability (GNS) and voted in favour of a constitutional amendment.

Due to the fact that GNU PM Abdel Amid Dbeiba remains seated, Libya is facing a resurgent situation of a PM and a second one designated, increasing the risk of parallel institutions and the complete disruption of the LPDF process.

Because of their threats to security forces, militias and external regional actors, this results in a sensitive situation, with the possibility to trigger clashes and civil unrest, although the situation has remained quite stable so far.

In the annexes, it has been depicted the current connection of the different key players and entities, as well as the regional presence of forces around the Greater Tripoli Area.

1 CURRENT SITUATION

1.1 Tense security situation in Tripoli and Greater Tripoli Area

On 10 February, the House of Representatives (HoR) elected Fathi Bashagha as Prime Minister of the Government of National Stability (GNS) and voted in favour of a constitutional amendment. Several statements, demonstrations and showing of forces (armed groups/militias) have been expressed since then. The most noteworthy are:

- on 10 February, Fathi Bashagha arrived at Mitiga Airport, where several security/armed groups leaders were present, i.a. the most significant were:
 - Muammar al-Dawi 55th Inf Coy Cdr;
 - Hassan Abu Zariba, SSA Deputy Cdr;
 - Khaled Abu Jazia Misratan 166th Bn Spokesperson;
 - Captain, Abd al-Rahman Milad (“Bidja”), Zawiya Coastguard Cdr;
- on 11 and 12 February, armed groups` mobilized in Tripoli in support of Dabaiba (Martyrs Square), such as Misratan Al Samoud Bde (Salah Badi) and allegedly Western Military Region forces. On the opposite side, 55th Coy and Warshafana militias deployed close to Check Point 27 (CP along the Western coastal road) reportedly supporting Bashaga;
- on 16 February, minor armed clashes between 55th Inf Coy and the 3rd Inf Coy (Warshefana based) were reported.

Furthermore, several statements and actions of interest were observed, allegedly supporting Dabaiba or Bashaga. Among them:

- on 10 February, LNA`s General Command delivered its support for the new executive, and HoR Roadmap;
- on 11 February, GNU PM Dabaiba announced that a new roadmap would be released on the 17th of February. This roadmap is allegedly aiming at organising parliamentary elections in June 2022;
- on 11 February, Misratan notables/political leaders and Misratan Military Cdrs issued a statement denouncing HoR`s plan to create a parallel government. That, although pro-Bashaga reactions were also observed from the Misratan side;
- on 11 February, Counter Terrorist Force (CTF) Support Force Cdr Mukhtar Al-Jahawi issued a strong statement supporting the GNU;
- on 12 February, High Council of State (HCS) reported that the House of Representatives` (HoR) approval of the constitutional amendment and the election of the new PM are not to be considered final decisions;
- on 13 February, GNS Prime Minister designated, Fathi Bashagha, reported his commitment to hold elections according to the specified timeframe (14 months), with the commitment not to run in these presidential elections;
- on the same day, unconfirmed sources reported that allegedly 118 Misratan military/security/militias pledged their support for the appointment of Fathi Bashagha. Conversely, other 68 Misratan ones showed their support in favour of Dabaiba.

COMMENT

- The fact that both Bashaga and Dabaiba are originated from Misrata adds new fault lines within both existing political and armed factions.
- The statement of the HCS on 12 February is a good example of the current ambiguous political situation that trickles-down on the security domain and the shifting of alliances.

ASSESSMENT

The nomination of Fathi Bashaga is likely to lead to fragmentation within the existing Western political elite creating **new fault lines and divide** between Misratan existing armed groups/militias. The more traditional prism through which alliances were categorised might have to be reconsidered, as Misrata was often a bloc that could mobilise as a monolithic entity. However, it is unlikely that Misrata will remain divided in the coming weeks considering most likely a transactional approach with the necessary safeguards for the relevant parties involved.

From a security perspective, the likelihood of clashes has most likely decreased. The current fragile situation will probably favour armed groups in a wait and see posture, not to attract too much attention and reduce relevant risks.

The presence of several militia leaders at Mitiga airport during 10th of February Bashaga's visit is hard to assess. Special Deterrence Force (RADA) controls the airport and several other commanders were present. Whether it is possible to deduce an allegiance uniquely because of their presence is unclear. Most of these commanders are presumably hedging their bets in order to anticipate any possible outcome of the political process.

Whenever Bashaga should consolidate his appointment as PM and pursue the moving of the government to Sirte, this could have dire consequences for the security situation in Tripoli. Throughout the past decade, armed groups in Tripoli have constantly used coercion to influence policy to their advantage. At the same time, several armed groups from Zawiya, Zintan and Misrata have mobilised to Tripoli in anticipation of evolving political decisions. Moving the government away from Tripoli might impede these armed groups from effectively coercing the government. That said, especially the armed groups, which are less influential in the central region will most likely take this as an extra reason not to support a new designation.

The coming two weeks negotiations will take place as a new government probably attempts to reshuffle several lucrative and influential positions. At **Annex 1** a chart with the most relevant actors and armed groups. As any of them will be marginalised, they might resort to violence. However, some rogue elements such as Bahroun and Salah Badi, could continue acting with more freedom of movement.

2 OTHER SECURITY RELATED EVENTS

- a. On 10 February, Mohamad Al-Menfi (PC) in his role as Supreme Commander of the Libyan Army, participated at a new batch of intelligence officers' parade, with the presence of MG Hussein Muhammad Khalifa al-'Aib, Head of the General Intelligence Service (GIS).

b. Terrorist threat persists

On 13 February, unconfirmed sources reported IS threats to Tripoli/ Western Region, possibly claiming the possibility to target celebrations, and public facilities (MOI).

On the same day, unconfirmed sources reported that GNS PM Bashagha and AFRICOM Cdr, General Stephen Townsend, talked about possible actions (allegedly airstrikes)

targeting “outlaw and terrorist elements”. Noteworthy, that the latest terrorist attacks have taken place in Southern Libya (LNA`s area of influence, which openly supports Bashaga).

Furthermore, on 14 February, Tunisian security forces arrested a terrorist allegedly related with the terrorist network in Ben Gardane.

On 16 February, LNA`s Moral Guidance, Khaled Al-Mahjoub, stated that the current IS` area of influence remains in the Southern region across desert areas.

"Ibrahim Saleh Akim" and "Al-Kilani Younis Akim" were allegedly released, as reported from Special Deterrence Force (RADA). These are presumably relatives of “Ali Akim”, who was appointed as Emir of Al-Nawfaliyah following Daesh`s capture of the town.

COMMENT: Libya continues being perceived as a “safe heaven” for the terrorist cells operating in the region. It is also noteworthy, that this is the third official warning reported in 2022. Nevertheless, terrorist threat could also be used to exploit different interest

c. Turkey consolidates its supporting role

On 12 February, Turkish Ministry of Defense ‘Public Information Officer’ declared that 8500 members of the Libyan Armed Forces have been trained by Turkey, while 1500 are currently in the process. The PIO also pointed out that:

- 3500 unexploded mines were defused by Turkish experts;
- Turkey`s has provided health services in favor of 20000 Libyans.

On 15 February, Turkish Minister of Defense, Hulusi Akar and Naval forces Cdr, Adnan Özbal, received Libyan Naval forces Cdr, Nouredin Al-Buni in Ankara. On the same day, sources reported the arrival of a Turkish frigate at Al-Khoms Naval Base.

On 16 February, two flights were spotted and unconfirmed sources reported about the arrival of 250 foreign forces (alleged Syrian), expected to be transferred to Misrata.



COMMENT: Turkey is deeply involved in cooperating and training Western Libyan Armed Forces, maintaining the interest to continue consolidating its footprint in Libya with the aim to corroborate previous security and maritime Memorandums of Understanding.

d. Foreign support

On 11 February, Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson, Ahmed Hafez, welcomed the new GNS appointment by the HoR; this represented the first displayed international support. Nevertheless, he added that Egypt will continue to collaborate with all Libyan parties in order to protect security and stability of the country.

Furthermore, Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, Maria Zakharova, stated that Russia expected that “Libya’s new cabinet of ministers led by Fathi Bashagha will be able to unify the Libyan society” and GNS should be respected.

On 16 February, Turkish President has reaffirmed his country’s continued support for the interim government led by PM Dbeibah.

On 17 February, IGNU PM Spokepersons criticizes UN Special Advisor attitude towards the appointment by the HoR.

e. **JMC 5+5**

- On 14 February, localised sources informed of an alleged meeting between “Libyan Army” Chief of the General Staff Lieutenant General Muhammad Al-Haddad, Lieutenant General Usama al-Juweili, and 5+5 Joint Military Commission (JMC) Western Region delegation, with speculation of discussion on governance reform;
- on the same day, localised sources reported 5+5 JMC member, Military Prosecutor General Faraj Al-Sawa (Easter side) expressing his concern regarding IGNU Prime Minister Dbeibah’s attempts to “incite” military/ security and armed group actors;
- on 15 February, it was reported that Western representatives of the JMC called for speeding up the process of holding elections and urged parties to secure Libya’s best interest, far from personal gains.

COMMENT: the political stalemate generated by the current presence of two PMs has also affected the image of unity of the only Libyan unified body. Preserving the JMC role is pivotal in the light of the stabilization process as well as the SSR implementation.

CONCLUSIONS

After an early significant welcoming of the last week HOR’s appointment of Fathi Bashaga as a new Prime Minister, disapproval was noticed from different (key) players and even from representatives of Bashaga town of origin. This development resulted in a less unified military block of Misrata towards the new born Government of National Stability (GNS) leader.

This political development will consequently have its impact on the security domain, especially in the Greater Tripoli Area, where unrest has never appeased and tension will remain, no matter the leading PM.

The public statements released by several armed groups, lays bare the fluidity which could affect the security sector, pending the new designated PM ability to establish fruitful relations with key power brokers at both tribal, religious and international level. The next turning point will probably be the submission to the HoR of the list of ministers, currently planned for next 21 February, which could spark a frenzy among the Western hardliners who heavily oppose Haftar and his presence.

On the other side, allegedly having regained the full sustain by Turkish President, Dbeiba is maintaining his stronghold, defending his position to put an end to the transitional period, and promising elections in a short time, contrary to his policy and narrative expressed during the last period of his mandate. In this respect, the populist statements proclaimed by GNU Prime Minister, the support requested by proxies’ forces, as well as the signature of international agreements with Palestinian counterparts, could be assessed as an aim to discount its

persisting and uncontested role, and gather further national and international support, questioning the legitimacy and limits of its interim authority.

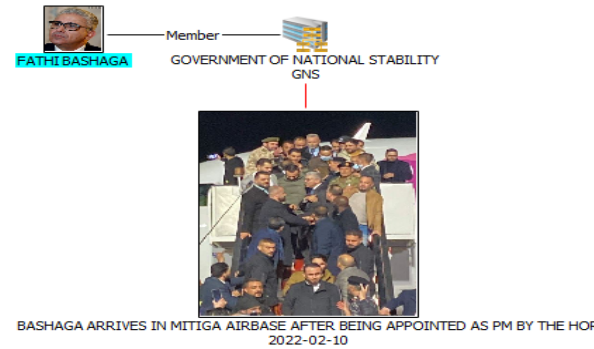
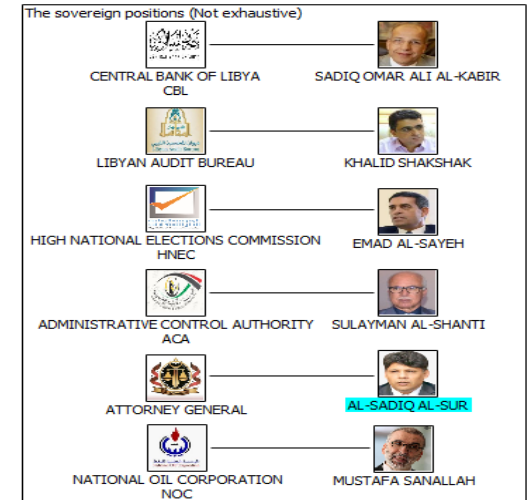
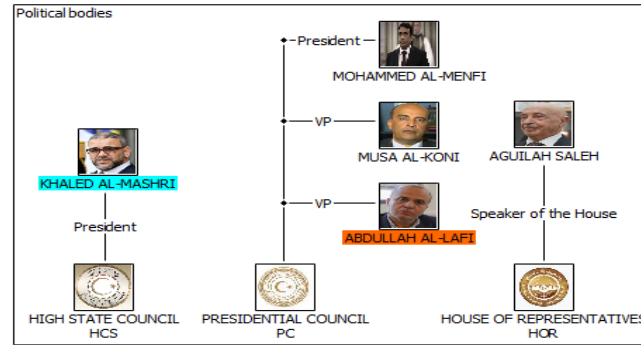
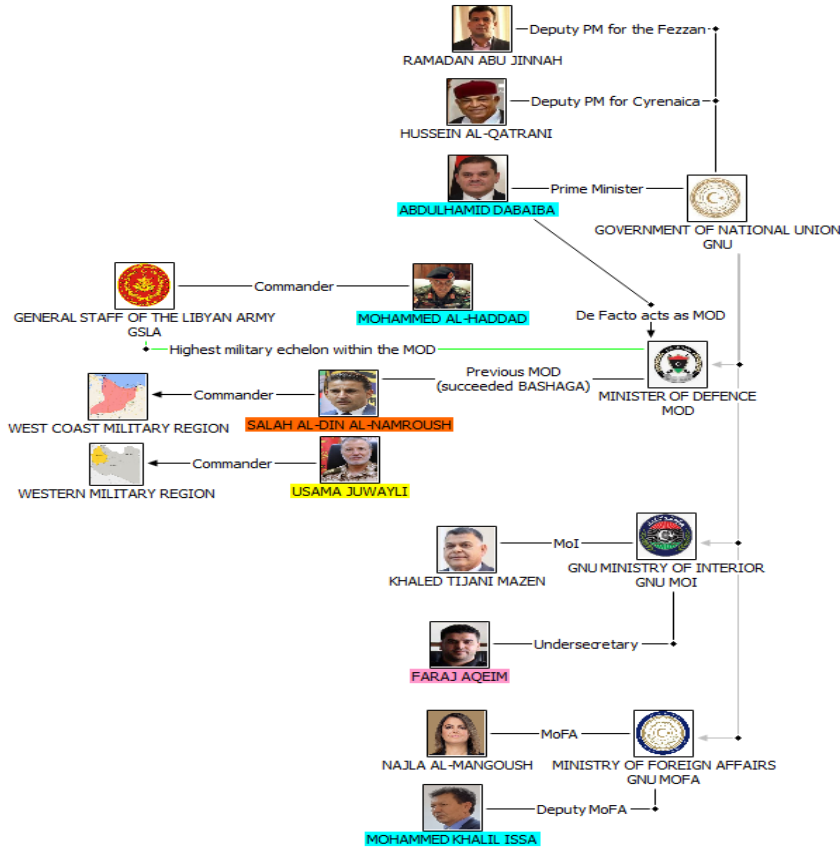
The harsh contest seems to have affected the integrity of the JMC 5+5 as well, which, despite the public statement of being out of the political disputes, let allegedly transpire different contrasting opinions regarding the current political initiative. As the Action Plan for the withdrawal of FF/mercenaries remains frozen pending international agreement with the recipients' countries and a sovereign unique position within Libya, the JMC efforts now focus its attention on the possibility to implement Security Reforms, still only a wish at this uncertain stage.

Nevertheless, the International Community is considering the possibility to regain its leading role in the de facto frozen Libyan led and Libyan owned political and security process between never genuinely reconciled parties. While others are cautiously assessing which side to support without discounting and/or opposing the counterpart, their lingering decision is still about the necessity not to formalize any specific determination at this time.

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

Disclaimer: This report is based on security events and reports from multiple open sources, whose accuracy may not always be verified. Therefore, the information and conclusions expressed are subject to change without notice.

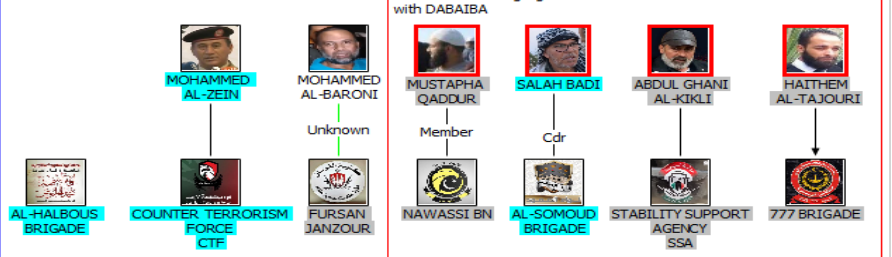
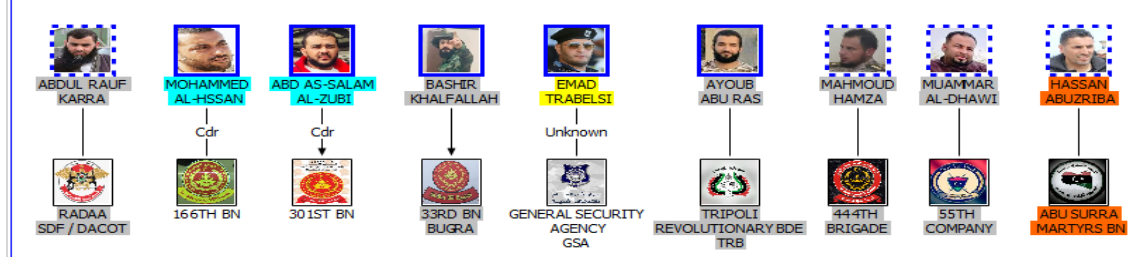
ANNEX 1: Key actors' chart (as of 17 Feb 2022)



- Main centres of power in LBY that will influence political events. Actors and organisations from these cities are highlighted in the respective colour.
- ZAWIYA:** ZAWIYA is most likely divided as well. Hassan ABUZRIBA surprisingly welcomed BASHAGA when he returned.
 - ZINTAN:** Our initial assessment is that Zintani forces will support BASHAGA. JUWAILY is one the main power brokers who originates from ZINTAN.
 - TRIPOLI:** TRIPOLI forces are divided. If BASHAGA will not be able to obtain the support of a critical proportion of the armed groups in TRIPOLI, the only option will be the install his government in SIRTE.
 - MISRATA:** Misrati forces are divided between DABAIBA and BASHAGA. This lead to added fragmentation, even amongst groups not directly linked to Misrata
 - BENGAZI:** Eastern actors are almost certainly in favour of BASHAGA his GNS. The guarantees or positions they have obtained remain unclear.

Armed groups with a significant footprint in TRIPOLI

The commander highlighted in BLUE are assessed to be inclined to side with BASHAGA. Dotted lines mean their support is uncertain.



ANNEX 2: Greater Tripoli Area Map (as of 17 Feb 2022)

