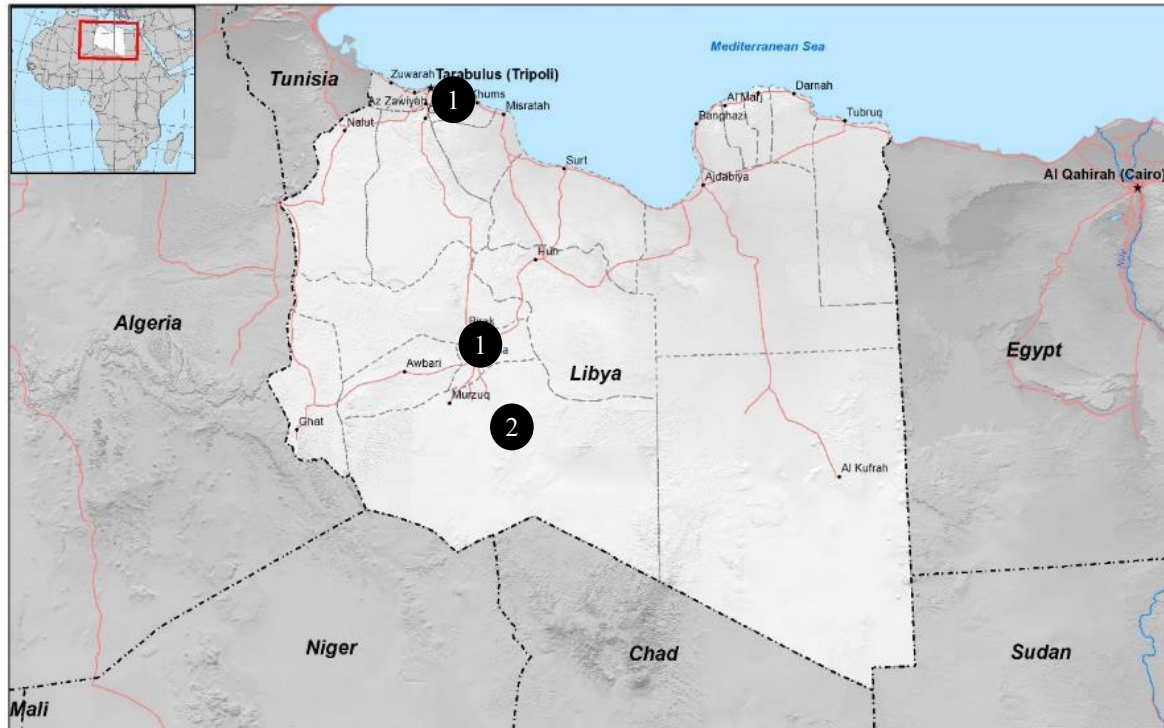


EU LIAISON AND PLANNING CELL LIBYA

Weekly Report 17 – 23 MAR 2022

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SUMMARY

The security situation in the Greater Tripoli Area remains stable but fluid while the GNS has failed to enter Tripoli despite the given statements to take over. The relatively balanced security situation has been slightly in contrast with the political dynamics. In fact, GNS PM Bashagha has been trying hard to engage with relevant political interlocutors in Libya and abroad.

Oil, as Libya's main revenue, remains crucial for the sustainment of the status quo. Hampering its production appears a threat for the GNU executive. As a consequence, the security situation mirrors such dynamic. Nowadays, the associated risks are not only limited to internal disputes, but could also be exploited as an important factor in the European energy quarrel.

While the threat of a parallel government is a real scenario, this is not influencing the security situation directly, although the 5+5 JMC is negatively impacted by the harsh political debate.

1 CURRENT SITUATION

1.1 GNU and GNS consolidate their positions

After the failed attempt to enter Tripoli last week, Prime Minister of National Stability (GNS), Fathi Bashaga, is trying to enlarge its activity in both the domestic and the international arena.

The GNS aim to set foot in Tripoli has triggered the GNU reaction to deploy loyal units within and around the Greater Tripoli Area (GTA), in order to prevent any access by force and further GNS attempts to get into the capital.

So far, no clashes have occurred in the GTA, but security remains precarious because of the potential for conflict and escalation. Following are the events of interest on that regard:

- On 17 March, GNS PM Fathi Bashaga, in a statement addressed to the Security Council session on Libya, declared that *“elections cannot take place when there is division and conflict”*, adding that initiatives aimed at holding parliamentary elections only in some areas rather than others could create fragmentation and partition;
- on the same day, GNS First Deputy PM Ali Al-Qatrani formally assumed duties and took office at the former GNU HQ in Benghazi. Unconfirmed sources reported that GNS Ministry of Interior is planning to establish a temporary headquarters (HQ) in the Aziziyah area, South of Tripoli;
- on the same day, GNS Interior Minister Essam Abu Zreiba (Al-Zawiya) instructed Mol not to comply with GNU Mol Mazen’s order. In a related decree dated on 15 March, Abu Zreiba instructed the CBL to halt all funding and salaries of the GNU Mol;
- on 19 March GNU Interior Minister Khaled Mazen met with the heads of Ministry of Interior (Mol) security components, urging the components to stay away from political disputes and continue carrying out their respective duties;
- on 20 March, Western Region Libyan Army Chief of the General Staff, LTG, Muhammad Al-Haddad conducted an inspection of the Western Military Region in the Nafusa Mountain in the presence of LTG Usama al-Juweili, the Western Military Region Joint Operations Room Commander to review the progression of work in the territorial command;
- on the same day, GNS Defence Minister Ahmeid Houma stated, between the others, that his government will integrate “revolutionaries” prioritizing veterans and injured servicemen. The GNS Defence Minister underscored that his government will support the 5+5 JMC in “all its decisions and work” and the objective to ensure “stability of the country and combat regional and international threats such as terrorism, organised crime, human trafficking and illegal immigration”. In reply, the LNA Spokesperson, Ahmed Al Mismary declared that the integration into the armed forces comes within the framework of a comprehensive plan to address the militia file via the LNA military recruitment committee across the regions. Moreover, he condemned GNS Defence Ministry for failing to address the presence of foreign forces in the western region, namely the Turkish armed forces;
- on 21 March, GNS Interior Minister, Issam Abu Zariba suspended pro-GNU Sabha Security Directorate Director, Muhammad Bishr, and replaced him with Sabha Security Directorate Assistant for Security Affairs, Colonel Muhammad Ibrahim Al-Asfar;
- on 22 March, GNS PM Fathi Bashaga issued the Decree 02/2022 instructing public and private entities, including institutions, and administrative and regulatory bodies not to

engage or communicate with the IGNU, warning that *“the transgressors will be subject to criminal and disciplinary measures”*;

- on the same day, GNS Deputy PM in the South, Salem Al-Zadma accompanied by the GNS Deputy Prime Minister, Ali Al-Qatrani, landed at Sabha International Airport (SEB), ahead of a formal handover ceremony to take office at the Cabinet Office for the Southern region.

Background

Libya had two separate governments from 2015 to 2020. In western Libya it was the U.N.-recognized, Tripoli-based Government of National Accord led by Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj. In Eastern Libya, the Tobruk-based House of Representatives, led by Parliamentary Speaker Aguila Saleh, supported the Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thani (sustained by Khalifa Haftar).

Comment

All actions carried out so far by the GNS have resulted in an opposing response from the GNU. Although the current situation is not very dynamic, the parties are trying to control and protect their areas of interest and gain a consolidated legitimacy.

Assessment

There is not a clear foreseen scenario due to multiple regional and international factors, strong interests from all parties and a real disconnection between Western, Eastern and Southern Libya. However, if neither party is able to implement an effective unified government, there is a plausible possibility of two governments operating separately in their areas of influence. It is very likely that such a situation will make any kind of negotiation or security roadmap difficult to be implemented, including SSR and DDR.

In this scenario with two parallel government formation it is also highly unlikely that the 5+5 JMC could survive, however being a unique unifying body to sustain.

Despite the fact that the struggle for power is becoming increasingly complex, it is unlikely that an open confrontation between the parties will take place in a short term, a part from occasional escalations of violence. The medium term would inject new variables linked with the possible renewal of UNSMIL mandate and the expiration in June of the LPDF roadmap.

1.2 Weaponization of the energy sector

At international level, the current security situation highlights the strong dependence of European Western countries from fossil energies. The Libyan oil resources represent an alternative to the Russian one, but the production is also closely impacted by the political and the security situation in the country. The IC is urging all possible political initiatives to secure and increase such a production in a very volatile environment, and not to degenerate.

The main related events are as follows:

- on 17 March, increasing local reports of Libyan National Army (LNA) salaries, unpaid since December 2021, and renewed delays or even non-payment of LNA salaries add to the already tense conditions in the Oil sector;
- on 18 March, the Tuareg Movement releases statement N. 04, informing of the expansion of protest at Sharara Oil Field, completely closing the entry to the Field;

- on 19 March, Benghazi NOC employees demand overdue salaries and have been protesting the four-month overdue salaries, threatening escalatory measures if their demands remain unheard;
- on 19 March, export ops were suspended at five ports because of bad weather conditions;
- on 21 March, the Tuareg Tribal Council declared its support for the GNS and called on the IC to "stop" Prime Minister (GNU) Dbeibah threatening to stop oil production whenever Dbeibah would not step down;
- on 22 March, members of the 5+5 Joint Military Commission (JMC) representing the Eastern region (LNA), published a politically-charged statement accusing the GNU of clinging to power. The statement further accused the GNU of stopping payment of salaries of LNA military personnel for the last three months. The last meeting of the 5+5 combined took place in Feb 2022 (see the **Annex**).

A main concern for Libyan authorities and the IC:

- on 16 March, GNU PM Abdel Hamid Dbeibah stated that his government has developed a rapid plan to provide the necessary capabilities for the National Oil Corporation (NOC) to complete development and maintenance projects in order to increase production and raise storage and export capacities in the short-medium term;
- on 17 March, US Ambassador to Libya, Richard Norland, told Reuters that a mechanism to monitor Libya's oil revenues is required and added that the mechanism should ensure that oil proceeds are not diverted for political or inappropriate uses;
- on 20 March, Sanalla met with EU Ambassador to Libya, Jose Sabadell, discussing the lack of funding and budgets facing the NOC, and the way to possibly increase confidence and reconcile;
- on 20 March, Sanalla met with UK Deputy Head of Mission at the British Embassy Tripoli, Kate English, discussing the strengthening of cooperation between the NOC and British companies, and the "*opening of new horizons*" for investment;
- on 21 March, IGNU PM, Abdul Hamid Dbeibah met NOC Chairman, Mustafa Sanalla in Tripoli alongside IGNU Minister of Finance, Khaled Al-Mabrouk, and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, Adel Juma. The meeting focused on the NOC's "financial conditions", support procedures, and developing solutions towards "*problems facing productivity and human resource development*".

Comment

Over recent weeks, Libya's oil sector has suffered repeated disruptions as a result of closures fuelled by financial grievances amongst oil sector workers. (Weekly Report 10- 17 Mar 2022 and Weekly Report 04-09 Mar 2022). The threat on the oil production remains a major concern for both Libyan authorities and the IC.

Assessment

On both hands, Libya and western countries are trying to secure and increase the oil export from Libya as it represents a relevant alternative to the Russian production.

Both GNS and GNU actors could adopt a win/win approach in order to increase a steady flow of production and export. In this context, the LNA represents a key actor as most of the resources are located in its controlled area. Therefore, it is likely that LNA will try to increase its span of control over the oil fields through the allegiance with Petrol Facilities Guards (PFGs)

members.

It isolated, limited and indirect actions could also be directed to disrupt the oil production whenever that could be further exploited in relation to the interest of external actors.

2 OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

- a. On 16 March, the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo stated in the UNSC meeting for Libya that the “country is facing a crisis that could spark instability and lead to the formation of parallel Governments if left unresolved”.
- b. On 17 March, sporadic gunfire was reported in Al-Zawiya’s Jadda'im and Abu Sourah areas, as well as in Wershiffanah’s Qarquouza and Almamoura, at night on 16 Mar. Reports alleged that a UAV which was spotted while performing a reconnaissance mission, was unsuccessfully shot by pro-GNS armed units.
- c. On the same day, media outlets purposely reported evidence that FRONTEX was aware of and covered a “violent” campaign by some EU countries to push back migrants.
COMMENT: based on the wider security environment, destabilizing factors could leverage on migration, along with energy sources availability, to weaken the image of Western countries/Institutions, as a common narrative.
- d. On 20 March, the Ukrainian Defence Ministry stated that Khalifa Haftar had visited Moscow and promised to send Libyan volunteers to fight alongside Russia in Ukraine. The Ukrainian Defence Ministry underlined it is expected that the Wagner group would organize the flights of the Libyan fighters by Russian air force.
- e. On 21 March, it was allegedly reported that Russia has redeployed Syrian Fighters from Libya to Ukraine. Unconfirmed sources mentioned that a Syrian security company related with the Wagner Group had transferred Syrian fighters from Benghazi to Syria indicating that the batch of mercenaries would join the Russian troops fighting in Ukraine.
- f. On the same day, the Internal Security Agency released a confession of an individual, arrested in the Port of Sabratha, accused of being an owner of a factory (established 2013), producing boats for the purpose of illegal immigration. The suspected outlined his involvement with actors involved in illegal immigration, and human trafficking, allegedly linked to the Security Directorate Support Force Western Region Branch.
COMMENT: that represents further evidence that illegal immigration is not only a criminal organisation’s businesses, but it is also linked to Libyan Institutions. Therefore it could be leveraged by Institutions to obtain their political/ financial goals.
- g. On the same day, LNA denies the Kiev allegation of sending mercenaries to Ukraine.
- h. On that same day, it was reported that GNU PM Dbeibah had talks with Chechen leader, Ramzan Kadyrov. The two have discussed ways of boosting security cooperation, including the creation of a Praetorian Guard for the PM.
- i. On 22 March, the MoD 444th Bde deployed units across South Tripoli. The Bde had previously conducted mobile and fixed patrols in the area. According to the sources, it is possible that the deployment was meant to prevent Bashagha’s forces from entering the capital via its Southern flank.

- j. On the same day, Western Coast Military Region Cdr, MG Salah Al-Namroush met Al-Jafara Security Directorate Director, BG Abdul Nasser Al-Taif discussing the organisation and unification of security operations, including Mobile Checkpoints (VCPs) along the Western Coast Military Region.
- k. On the same day, the Western Region Libyan Army Chief of the General Staff, Mohamed Al-Haddad, chaired a meeting of the Joint Libyan-Tunisian Committee to redraw land borders between the two countries and to set up mechanisms to fight cross-border smuggling and criminal activity.
- l. On the same day, the Turkey's National Security Council (MGK) presided by President Tayip Erdogan advised all Libyan parties to avoid any step that can lead to further confrontation. The MGK also urged political leaders to follow a democratic process on a base of legitimacy to get peace and stability.
- m. On the same day, in front of the 48th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry put the emphasis on "*holding Libyan presidential and parliamentary elections in parallel with the exit of all foreign forces and mercenaries, without any exception, within a specific timeframe*".
- n. On the same day, the Qadhadhfa Tribe Social Council, issued a statement against the campaign of abduction/arrest occurred in Sirte between 19 and 20 March, declaring that the abducted were activist claiming for immediate elections as well as declared their solidarity for the martyrs victim of the NATO Campaign in Libya in 2011 and against the Russian intervention in Ukraine.

3 CONCLUSIONS

The two Governments seem to progress consolidating their area of influence, with the GNS Prime Minister Bashaga establishing his Headquarters in Benghazi and setting his footprint in the South, through his deputy Minister. On the other hand, GNU seals its position in Tripoli and the Greater Tripoli Area, posturing Western security assets as well as Dbeiba loyal militias in a way to prevent any GNS and Eastern security forces expansion.

The International Community (IC), attempting to defuse the tensions between the two positions, at a critical time when the crisis in UKR is impacting the international and regional order, shifts the focus from the very unlikely possibility to celebrate the election in the short-medium term to the economic domain, in a way to build confidence and avoid escalation.

At the same time, the complain voiced by the 5+5 JMC (Eastern side) regarding the stop of payment of Eastern security forces, together with the political division, distances the premises for the beginning of any SSR and DDR process.

The oil and gas production remains endangered by the constant turmoil around the oil critical infrastructures. That, adjoined with migration and foreign fighters' presence, will constitute the destabilizing elements to influence and put at risk the regional critical balance.

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: JMC 5+5 last events

WESTERN DELEGATION TO THE 5+5



MUSTAFA ALI YAHYA



AL-FITOURI GRIBEL



ALI AL NUWEISRI



MUKHTAR AL-NAGASA



AHMED ABU SHAHMA



52ND INFANTRY BDE



STAFF OF THE
LIBYAN
LAND FORCES



GASO DIRECTOR



GSLA



LATEST 5+5 JMC

- On 24 Nov. 2021, the Security Working Group (SWG) was held in Tunis - for its first time - with the presence of the complete East-West 5+5 JMC
- On 11 Dec. 2021 and on 08 Jan. 2022, Libyan Army" Chief of the General Staff, LTG Al-Haddad and LNA interim Cdr-in-Chief, Gen. Nadori, **under the auspices of the 5+5 JMC**, met in Sirte, i.a. unification of the military establishment, exchange of prisoners, and external force withdrawal
- 4-7 Feb. 2022, 5+5 JMC (Eastern and Western delegations) met in Sirte with UNSMIL presence focussing, i.a., on SSR and DDR efforts and international ceasefire monitors. On 09 Feb 2022 5+5 JMC met again in Sirte with the UN SASG Stephany Williams
- 08 Mar. 2022, IPC President Menfi and Deputy Lafi, met with "Libyan Army" Chief of the General Staff LTG Al-Haddad and the **JMC Western Region delegation**, discussing the military/security situation in the Western Region. On the same day, **JMC Western delegation** met also with SASG Williams discussing "technical work", including ceasefire monitors

INITIAL

Origin: Geneva on 19 October 2020

Objective:

- Withdrawal of all foreign mercenaries and other forces within 90 days
- Suspension of military training
- Creation of a Joint Operations Room for joint police and military forces
- Identification and categorisation of all militias
- Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of the militias

Confidence-building measures including:

- Travel between the west and east parts of Libya
- Prisoner exchange
- Ending hate speech
- Reorganisation of the Petroleum Facilities Guard
- Monitoring the ceasefire



EASTERN DELEGATION TO THE 5+5



LAAF MILITARY COLLEGE



AMRAJ AL-AMAMI



LAAF STAFF OF THE
AIR DEFENCE FORCE



HADI AL-FALAH



LAAF MILITARY JUDICIAL
AUTHORITY



AL-MABROUK AL-SAWSAA



LIBYAN ARAB ARMED FORCES
LAAF



KHAIRI AL-TAMIMI



GENERAL DIRECTION OF
MILITARY ACCOUNTS



ATIYA AL-SHARIF