

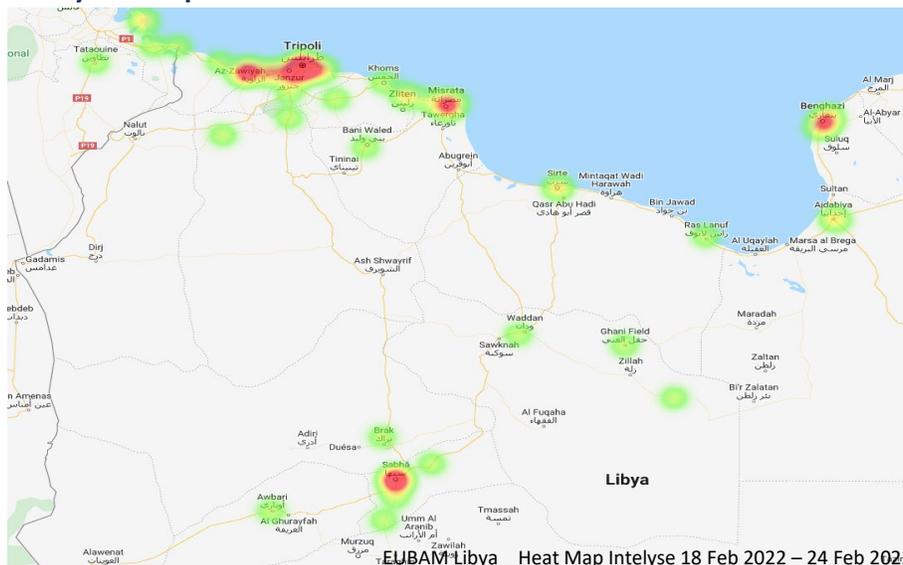
Security & Covid-19: WEEKLY SECURITY REPORT

Country: Libya & Tunisia

Period: 18/02/2022 – 24/02/2022

SECURITY SITUATION OVERVIEW

1. Key developments



- **Armed group's tensions, isolated skirmishes and deployments in Tripolitania**
- **Alleged military build-up in south Tripolitania & LNA / WARNER PSC movements in Fezzan**
- **Growing terrorist threat warnings in north-western region.**
- **Increased political polarisation and division of the security/military factions in Western Region**
- **Tunisia security update**

2. Findings

2.1. Armed group's isolated skirmishes and deployments in Tripolitania

The likelihood of armed clashes/skirmishes threat remains high across the western region with the tensions rising around the expected governance changes and interconnected with the politics shifting military/security alliances.

In sequence of events:

- On 24/02/2022, military convoy affiliated with the Nawasi Brigade entered the Abu Sittah Equestrian Club, downtown Tripoli.
- On 23/02/2022, sporadic gunfire in Tripoli's Edraiby and Al-Jebs areas allegedly linked to reports of a gunfire exchange outside the World Islamic Call Society in Tripoli's Al-Jebs area as High Council of State (HCS).
- On 23/02/2022, alleged deployment of a military convoy affiliated with Al-Zawiya militias to Tripoli from Al-Zawiya.
- On 21/02/2022, alleged deployment of an Al-Salmoud Brigade armed vehicle convoy in the Tajoura area, South-East Tripoli, having previously mobilised from Misrata.
- On 21/02/2022, Counter-Terrorism Force (CTF) military convoy of more than 50 pick-ups coming from Misrata arrived in Tripoli's Tajoura area positioned its personnel in Tarhunah, Garabolli, and Tripoli.



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- On 20/02/2022, alleged threats to armed actors currently controlling the Al-Saadawi Camp (Ain Zara area) by unidentified Tajoura-based military/ security actor, demanding the handover of the Camp and threatening the use of force/ arrest.
- On 20/02/2022, small arms fire incident reported in Ras Yousef Aream, between armed personnel affiliated with factions from Sabratah.
- On 19/02/2022, Western Coastal Road along the Zawiyah-Janzour route was closed, allegedly due to the arrest of "Rabee Halila", who went missing while in Tripoli following the alleged detention of an unidentified Brigadier General in the Libyan Intelligence Service and three of his relatives by Zawiyah Criminal Investigation Department (CID)/ 1st Support Division, under Captain Muhammad Al-Bahron (aka Al-Far). The road was reopened on 21/02/2022 Rabee Halila was released.

SDCD COMM:

Reports of militia posturing/deployments across Tripoli are frequent in recent weeks in response to an ongoing power struggle between PM Abdel Hamid Dbeibah and PM-designate Fathi Bashagha and subsequent divided loyalties among western military factions.

Unceasing tensions between rivalling armed groups and militias, likely triggered their main interests of protecting influence over areas of control and financial resources¹, as sides are enforcing their control in the Tripoli and western Coastal Road cities.

2.2. Alleged military build-up in south Tripolitania & LNA / Warner PMC movements in Sirte and Fezzan

Increased inflammatory rhetoric in social media by Libyan National Army (LNA) Greater Sirte Operations Room Commander, Lieutenant-General Muftah Shaqlouf posts, indicates potential developments towards offensive movements and actions in the Western Region. In response to the late, Burkan Alghadab Support Force Commander, Nasser Ammar released posts, calling on Libyan Army General Staff to take immediate measures in response of alleged preparations of LNA forces to enter the Gharyan area.

Observations and sittings between 18/02/2022 and 20/02/2022 indicate armed personnel, allegedly affiliated to the Russian-backed Wagner Group private military contractors (PMCs) have regrouped in Al-Jufrah Airbase and Brak Airbase. The claims are unsubstantiated but come amid rumours of an LNA build-up in Ash Shwayrif (south of Garyan).² Meanwhile, reports allege pro-GNU Volcano of Rage convoys deployed across Gharyan in response.

The recorded military activity on the ground, in the past week have indicate an increase in military movements in the Central, Southern, and Western Regions, including in and around strategic routes and areas:

- Zintani Joint Operations Room in the Western Region forces, under command of Lieutenant General Usama al-Juweili, are said to have mobilised in areas south and south-west of Gharyan - a connection hub between Nafusa Mountain and Aziziyah – entry route into Tripoli.
- LNA Tariq Bin Ziyad (TBZ), Reinforced 128th Brigade, and Zintani-based Al-Adiyat Battalion reportedly mobilised in Shwayrif – a connection hub between Central and Western Regions.
- Reports of alleged Wagner Group PMC movements with advanced military equipment to Brak Airbase (Fezzan Region), has coincided with LNA unit deployments across various oil fields in the Central Region, specifically in the southern buffer areas of the Oil Crescent. On 22/02/2022, Wagner Group has withdrawn its forces based in Sokna city southwest of Libya towards the Jufra Base.

¹ including incomes from smuggling contraband goods and fuel, trafficking of migrants and other organised crime activities.

² LNA vehicles have reportedly flocked to Ash Shwayrif over the past days, supported by pro-LNA Zintan battalions such as the "Al-Adiyat" battalion. Reports allege the military activity comes ahead of Bashagha's announcement of a new cabinet.



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Although there is currently no confirmed connection between these various military and security actions, the support for the governance reform project by the Zintani Joint Operations Room in the Western Region, and the LNA, could indicate that movements in and around strategic areas, and routes may be linked, even coordinated in light of ongoing political developments. The recorded rhetoric can be interpreted as underlining such possible development.

On 23/02/2022 multiple sources reported that allegedly the LNA is planning to conduct ground and air military manoeuvres in Fezzan. It is currently unclear when the exercise will occur but will likely be conducted in the vicinity of the Al Jufrah or Brak Al Shatti airbases. The late can also explain the LNA movements in Fezzan and south of Garyan. Parallely to that conditions in Sirte have significantly deteriorated due to ongoing security tensions, fuel shortages and rising criminality, causing citizens (families) to leave Sirte, including in the western direction towards Misrata.

SDCDC COMM:

Commander Ammar's posts calling for "maximum levels of caution and readiness" alleging "strange and big preparations" of LNA movements to enter the Gharyan area, appears to support the reports of increased likelihood of kinetic engagements in the Western Region, and demanding that the Chief of General Staff take immediate measures, including issuing instructions and communications to prohibit the LNA's movements", are clearly conflict rhetoric and can be largely dismissed.

The military movements (alleged external force Wagner Group) appear to be part of the transfer of personnel and equipment from strongholds in the Central Region, including from the wider Jufra area³. Additionally, localised sources report the "departure" of Wagner Group personnel from residencies in the Sawknah area, including i.a. from houses near the Sawknah-Sabha route and the High Institute of Cooling and Air Conditioning. The reports follow previous reports regarding the movements of Wagner Group personnel from residencies in the wider Sirte area and Ghardabiyah Airbase.

LNA's military trainings/manoeuvres are not uncommon, however, the timing and the location of this assumed training comes amidst the political tension over expected governance changeover. If confirmed, the military exercise is expected to see the mobilization of various LNA units from Cyrenaica to Fezzan. This will be reminiscent of the weeks leading to the LNA Tripoli offensive in 2019.

Situation in Sirte and security condition indicators follow from last week's string of allegedly criminal-linked targeted killings, and increased infrastructure-related thefts (copper wire thefts). Additional factor is the alleged withdrawal/ possible re-deployment of Wagner Group PMC forces in the wider Sirte area, followed by looting of newly unoccupied homes in Wadi Jarf, west/ south-west of Sirte, allegedly carried out by Janjaweed (Sudanese) mercenaries.

2.3. Growing terrorist threat warnings in north-western region.

³ Media reference: <https://twitter.com/MouradTeyeb/status/1495309932417191937>;
https://twitter.com/HA_REPORTER2/status/1495540427491094530



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Continuation of counterterrorism operations by GNU MoI/MoD and LNA affiliated units supports the credibility of reports of developing and growing terrorist threat in Libya, reestablishment and strengthening of networks across regional/ neighbouring countries, and restoration of offensive abilities. Continued divisions amongst state institutions obstructs the efficiency of the work of military and security and intelligence structures.

- The Misrata-based Joint Operation Force arrest of four alleged Daesh members in Tripoli on 19/02/2022, was follow up of recent counterterrorism operations which coincide with the alleged return of “large numbers of suspected terrorists and group leaders” to Tripoli who had been residing in neighbouring countries or receiving medical treatment in Turkey. Available information indicates a network between Libya’s Southern Region, Tripoli, and Turkey, supported by smugglers, which coordinates and supports movement, planning, operations, and medical treatment for terrorist elements.
- In separate developments the LNA’s 106 Brigade affiliated desert battalion arrested Islamic State (IS) militants in a raid on an IS hideout in Awbari in the morning on 21/02/2022.

SDCD COMM:

Counterterrorism operations conducted over the past years have had rather limited success in Libya, especially in Tripoli and the Western Region, with the exception of US AFRICOM airstrikes in Fezzan in 2019, and subsequent LNA operations in the Central and Southern Regions. This could lead to the assumption that the networks/ part of the networks, have been unaffected, and/ or developed, and supports the opinions of a developing and increasing terror threat in Libya, based on Daesh cross-border movements and reported activity on the ground.

2.4. Increased political polarisation and division of the security/military factions in Western Region

Overall, the week was overwhelmed with local media reports of statements from community leaders/elders, municipalities and armed fractions divided in their support towards either Dadaiba or Bashagha. The lists of allegiance and messages of support follow the fluid environment of the current meetings and backstage negotiations conducted by both camps to ensure their leverage over who controls the government administrative seat in Tripoli. On 24/02/2022 , the HSC took decision to decides to form a joint committee to lay down the constitutional rule, no later than next March 31, and to put in place the election law at the end of April.

Summary of the political developments during this week:

- On 23/02/2022, Small arms fire occurred near the Islamic Call Society building, south of Tripoli, where a session of the High Council of State to vote on the constitutional amendment and the forming of the new government was interrupted by a power outage. Incident was an alleged attack by unidentified assailants against the patrols of the Zintan General Security Apparatus that was guarding the session. The session was adjourned against the backdrop of altercations among HCS members and a power outage and reconvened on 24 Feb.
- On 23/02/2022, The notables of the western region (Tripoli. Misurata) made statement calling to end the mandate of the current House of Representatives (HoR) and High Council of State (HCS) and spare the country the war and division that will happen if the new government forms are voted⁴.
- Related to the announced on 21/02/2022 by IGNU PM 4 phase road map to the elections, on 23/02/2022 was announced a formation of a military force called “Constitution and Elections Support Force” (CESF) affiliated with the Ministry of Defence, whose mission is to support the constitutional process and holding elections⁵. It is unclear which armed factions make up the new formation. Considering the The issued statement by the CESF positions it on the side of support to the GNU.
- On 22/02/2022, speaking in front of Misrata tribal forum, Bashagha announced his future government’s determination for inclusiveness and intent to integrate all armed factions, which differs from his previous

⁴ Media reference: <https://www.libyaobserver.ly/inbrief/misrata-and-tripoli-elders-say-parliamentary-elections-only-way-libya%E2%80%99s-unity>

⁵ Media reference: <https://www.libyaobserver.ly/inbrief/constitution-and-elections-support-force-warns-against-imposing-new-government;>



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policies as MoI to categorise armed groups. Reports in media and social networks indicate ongoing meetings and possible negotiations between Misratan factions over support for the Bashaga governance reform project, including from local military/ security and armed factions, including the Counter-Terrorism Force (CTF), and the Salmoud Brigade under the command of Salah Badi⁶.

- On 21 Feb, the Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) Prime Minister, Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, announced a political roadmap, aiming at parliamentary elections to be held first as per House of Representatives (HoR) Election Law No. 02 (2021), followed by presidential elections as per permanent constitution, with process foreseen to start before June 24 in coordination between the IGNU and Interim Presidency Council (IPC)

SDCD COMMENT

The political landscape will likely continue to shift in the coming weeks as political talks and negotiations proceed, especially when the new PM-designated Bashagha proposed cabinet will be put to vote in the HoR in the beginning of March. The HCS Chairman statements that Bashagha's government must not include LNA members involved in the Tripoli campaign (2019-20) and declared approval by the HCS mandatory condition for to come to power in Tripoli. The situation is further stagnated by the IGNU PM Dbeiba statements that he would only hand power to an elected authority.

The lack of consensus between HCS and HoR is likely to deepen after the HSCs vote opposing the constitutionality of the designation of Fahti Bashagha to form new government and the decision to take actions which are seemingly in line with the announced by Dbeiba 4 phase road map to the elections from one side and the expected course of approving the new Bashaga cabinet on the announced HoR session on 28/02/2022.

The opposing multiple statements from communities and armed formations supporting the two camps fuel the tensions, particularly in Tripoli are likely to intensify; however, an attempt to oust the GNU by force, while not entirely discounted, appears unfeasible unless there is a drastic change of alliances within the military and armed groups.

Some of the major Tripoli based armed factions i.e. 301 Battalion, 444 Fighting Brigade, Special Deterrence Force (RADA), Nawasi Brigade, Janzour Knights and other, are yet to publicly announce their positions which is anticipated to happen when the proposed by Bashaga government is vetted by the HoR.

Political protests are expected to increase and gain nationwide momentum in the period before and after announcement of vetting the result from the government proposed by Bashagha and the voting in HoR.

2.5. Tunisia security update

18 February the government of Tunisia extended the current security-related state of emergency from 19 February until 31 December 2022. Tunisia has been in a nationwide state of emergency since November 2015, after a terrorist attack in

Tunis when 13 persons were killed and 16 wounded.

The appointment of interim Supreme Judicial Council (CSM), nine of which members are appointed by Kais Saied and the new decree allowing the president to dismiss judges failing to fulfil their duties, and bans judges from holding strikes thus extending his powers is expected to remain unpopular with the international community. This could negatively impact the outcome of the ongoing negotiations between the IMF and Tunisia (04-22/02/2022), as western donors doubt the credibility of political stability in the country.

Since the interim CSM took over, three members of the suspended parliament (MP) have been prosecuted. The arrests come after the Ennahda movement's leader, Rached Ghannouchi, announced a meeting with a European Union Delegation on 20 February.

[https://pbs.twimg.com/media/FMR7R5UWQAvhBN?format=jpg&name=medium;](https://pbs.twimg.com/media/FMR7R5UWQAvhBN?format=jpg&name=medium)
<https://pbs.twimg.com/media/FMR7R5SWYAEWfTB?format=jpg&name=medium>

⁶ The sanctioned Al-Sumood Brigade commander from Misrata Salah Badi rejected attempts by the HoR and HCS to empower Bashagha. Badi called for a GNU ministerial reshuffle and the formation of a National Guard based in Tripoli.



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The Association of Tunisian Magistrates (AMT) announced a series of protest movements including a sit in, on 24/02/2022, in front of the seat of the Court of Cassation. Magistrates, will shift all the sessions by one hour, and to wear the red armband, as a sign of protest, until their demands, aimed to prevent the legislative power from getting subordinating the judiciary are satisfied.

Counter-terrorism operations have continued in the past week:

19 February - Ten suspected terrorists were arrested in Jendouba for allegedly planning an attack against security officers.

SDCD COMMENT

Following the replacement of CSM with a pro-executive body, the prosecution of critics to the President is expected to continue. Arbitrary arrests and investigations are likely to be focused on members of the Ennahda movement and pro-CSM judicial agents.

The past week seen decrease in public protests since Ennahda has been cautious amid high public criticism and reports of death threats against the head of the party Ghannouchi. It is likely, Ennahda initiated protests to be less frequent, with high media coverage. Political violence cannot be ruled out due to Tunisia's strained political climate.

The arrest on 19/02/2022 is a second thwarted attack since the beginning of 2022, after a woman coming from Syria was arrested upon arrival in Tunis-Carthage airport on 28/01/2022, for planning an attack with an explosive belt.

3. Situational Awareness for EUBAM-Libya

3.1. Armed conflict

Libya-Tripoli

- **The armed conflict remains HIGH, concern to the political developments focused on expected governance reform.**
- **Inter-militias' clashes:** Competition amongst armed groups in Western Region is increasing as the IGNU's official mandate rapidly approaches its end, resulting in high levels of instability manifesting in targeted murders and kidnappings of armed group members/ affiliates, kidnappings/ detainment of mid-level political actors, and armed clashes. In a scenario of heavy clashes in Tripoli and on the western coastal areas, obstructions of movement are likely to affect traffic towards the Mitiga Int. Airport and the western coastal highway, including an expansion closer to Tripoli western neighbourhoods including Janzour (location of the EUBAM Libya HQ offices) with potential impact Mission's operational freedom of movement and relocation/evacuation capabilities.

Tunisia-Tunis

- The main threat categories for the capital are **terrorism, criminality, and hazards** (especially road traffic accidents). Threats related to armed conflict are assessed as **non-existent**.

3.2. Terrorism

Libya-Tripoli

- Ahead of elections, the terrorism threat can be perceived as high across all major urban centres, despite the fact both Daesh and AQIM have been degraded in Libya. The latest IGNU-LNA Joint Force engagement in several counterterrorism raids is likely to trigger tit-for-tat drive-by shootings and medium-impact explosive attacks against IGNU and LNA positions. The active semi-structured and small terrorist-cells could be operating in Southern Libya (Fezzan Region) and some active elements in the western coastal area near Sabratha (Tripolitania Region).



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Tunisia-Tunis

- It is expected The Security Services in Tunisia to intensify the counter-terrorist operations to tackle the high terrorist threat.
- Radicalized individuals and informal cells could pose a threat with limited capabilities for low-medium lethality incidents in the Tunisian capital.
- **Special attention in displacement towards/throughout:**
 - **Southern area:** Southern desert area formed by Bir Rijm Maatoug - Borj Bourguiba -Ben Guardane, due to terrorist threat at Libyan border with terrorist infiltrations.
 - **Saharan area bordering with Libya and Algeria:** terrorist skirmishes against security forces. Military exclusion area created since 2013.
 - **Western Central and Northern West region of Tunisia:** relevant and continuous counter-terrorist activities against jihadist elements in the mountain areas of Kasserine, Siliana, Kairouan et du Kef.

3.3. Criminality

Libya-Tripoli

- The security environment was marked by continued acts of violent crimes (murders, targeted killings, kidnapping, carjacking, thefts), random/unaccounted and celebratory shooting incidents resulting in collateral victims through stray bullets incidents. Meanwhile law enforcement efforts conducting arrests and security operations against organised crime gangs continued.

Tunisia-Tunis

The Tunisian security forces maintain their **operations to tackle organised criminality** (burglary, car break-in, petty theft, financial scams, blackmail, homicides). Most dangerous scenario, the violent assault targeting EUBAM assets and personnel.

3.4. Civil unrest

Libya-Tripoli

- Civil unrest, caused by the deteriorated political context, increases the risk of destabilization actions at the institutional and security levels, notably through demonstrations of force affiliated to political parties or personalities. Social and financial grievances continue to trigger protests demanding better conditions.
- Ad-hoc demonstrations and potential violent encounters with security forces have the potential to create temporary movement restrictions, thus impacting a mission operational moves in the city.

Tunisia-Tunis

4. In light of the recent extension of the presidential executive powers, the opposition calls for protests in the near to medium future cannot be ruled out. A continuation of the Parliament suspension could prompt further political divisions and translate into further social unrest, potentially with small-scale violence between protesters.

5. COVID-19 Update⁷

Country	Cases in the last 7 days	Cases in the preceding 7 days	Weekly Case % Change	Cases in the last 7 days/1M pop	Deaths in the last 7 days	Deaths in the preceding 7 day	Weekly Deaths % Change	Overall Covid cases
Libya	11,452	18,940	- 40%	1,630	66	60	+ 10%	491,216
Tunisia	16,269	19,488	- 17%	1,353	297	406	- 27%	990,483

⁷ Data from WorldOMeter. Source: <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/> [online]. Last updated: 18/02/2022 16:00GMT



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LIST OF ACRONYMS / ABBREVIATIONS

AQ - Al-Qaeda
AQIM - Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
BCP – Border Crossing Point
BDB – Benghazi Defense Brigade / Saraya Defend Benghazi (SDB) (Al Qaeda-aligned – AAS and RSCB associated/umbrella group)
CBL – Central Bank of Libya
CNI – Critical National Infrastructure
DACOCT - Deterrence Apparatus for Combating Organized Crime and Terrorism
DDR - Disarmament, demobilising and reintegration
DPF – Derna Protection Force (an amalgamation of all militias in Derna, including the MSCD)
GECOL – General Electricity Company of Libya
GNA – Government of National Accord (UN-backed)
GNC – General National Congress
IGNU – Interim Government of National Unity (2021)
GTUC - Greater Tripoli Union Council (Tripoli militias and others, established in June 2020)
HCS - High Council of State
HNEC – High National Elections Commission
HoR – House of Representatives (Tobruk-based)
IDF – Indirect Fire (mortars/rockets)
IDP - Internally Displaced Persons
IED - Improvised Explosive Device
IOC - International Oil Company
5+5 JMC – 5+5 Joint Military Commission
IS/DAESH - Islamic State
LNA – Libyan National Army
LNG – Libyan National Guard
LPA – Libyan Political Agreement (2015)
LPDF - Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (2020)
LROR - Libyan Revolutionary Operations Room
MoD - Ministry of Defense
MoF - Ministry of Finance
MoFA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoHE - Ministry of Higher Education
MoI - Ministry of Interior



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MoJ - Ministry of Justice
MoO - Ministry of Oil
MoT - Ministry of Transportation
MSCD – Mujahideen Shura Council of Derna (AQ aligned)
NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation (aid/charity)
NOC – National Oil Company
NSG – National Salvation Government (GNC)
PC – Presidency Council (IGNU)
PFG- Petroleum Facilities Guard
RPG - Rocket Propelled Grenade
RSCB - Revolutionary Shura Council of Benghazi
RTA - Road Traffic Accident
SAF - Small Arms Fire
SDF – Rada Deterrence Force/ Special Deterrence Force/ Rada
SSA - Stability Support Agency
Technical - An improvised weapon-mounted pick-up truck
TPF – Tripoli Protection Force (TRB, Nawasi 8 Force, Bab Tajoura Brigade and Ghneiwa umbrella group, established in December 2018)
UNSMIL – United Nations Support Mission in Libya
UXO - Unexploded Ordnance

Disclaimer: *This report is based in security incidents reports from multiple sources, including international partners and open sources, whose accuracy may not always be fully verified. It cannot be assumed that all security incidents in Libya and Tunisia were reported to and/or tracked by EUBAM Libya. The Security and Duty of Care Department (SDCD) emails a daily security update (DSR) which includes a full description of the incidents that serve as the basis for this report. These documents may not be copied, forwarded or reproduced, manual, electronic, photographic to any other person or organization outside EU Institutions and EU Members States without further approval from the originator.*