



Weekly Libya .Xplored report

16 September, 2016

Prepared by Risk Analysis Team, Libya

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ACTIVITY MAP



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OUTLOOK

Short term outlook

Tensions have eased somewhat following Operation Sudden Lightning which saw four oil terminals fall under the control of the Libyan National Army (LNA) and the House of Representatives (HoR) over Eid. With oil exports resuming, the force majeure lifted and continuing indicators that the NOC is heading for unification and working under 'instruction from the HoR and the Presidential Council (PC)', there is a cautious sense of optimism from some factions. Misrata has also publically indicated it will not support Ibrahim Jodhran, the previous leader of the Petroleum Facilities Guards (PFG) and 'intervene in the affairs of the oil crescent' however there is still assessed to be an intent at grassroots level within Misrata forces and Jodhran is looking to aligned himself with other militia groups which could still result in violence.

Islamic State (IS) is showing further signs of collapse as their forces in Sirte remain under pressure from Al Bunyan Al Marsous (BAM) forces. Attacks to the south and west of the city indicate that the group is trying to project away from its deteriorating power base in a bid to stretch BAM resources, create freedom of movement and also possibly to probe for permissible areas they can take over in a bid to establish another power base in the area. This could result in an increase in attacks around the Sirte Basin and Misrata provinces, away from the current focus of fighting in the next week or two as well as high profile attacks against symbolic targets as the group struggles to remain relevant in the changing environment.

The LNA will also remain engaged in Benghazi and to a lesser extent, Derna as it battles Islamic extremist groups. There are indications these groups are looking to exploit the recent LNA operation in the oil crescent to take ground in Benghazi however this is unlikely to be decisive and skirmishes and airstrikes will continue.

Medium to long term outlook

The balance of power has shifted and a new phase of Libya's conflict has begun in the aftermath of Operation Sudden Lightning. Various factions will be assessing their positions and looking to consolidate them whilst possibly looking to undermine their rivals. The focus is on negotiations and there is potential significant steps could be taken towards reunification and stability however many hurdles remain and there is a real risk that the situation could once again escalate into armed conflict between various factions.

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

- Operation Sudden Lightning
- The Battle for Sirte
- Italy to establish field hospital in Misrata
- Libya's chemical weapons destroyed
- IS claim Tripoli VBIEDs

KEY DATES

Date	Occasion	Comment
16 September 2016	Martyrs Day	Public holiday to honour the memory of Libyans killed or exiled under Italian rule as well as those who died on the day of Revolt - 17 February, 2011 and during the Libyan civil war
23 October 2016	Liberation Day	Public holiday to commemorate the countries liberation from Gaddafi's rule in 2011.
26 October 2016	Mourning Day	Official holiday to commemorate the people who died during the Italian occupation of Libya.
24 December 2016	Independence Day	Public holiday which marks the anniversary of Libyan independence from British and French oversight in 1951.

THREAT MATRIX

Region	Political	Terrorism	Militancy	Crime	K&R
Tripolitania	High	High -Extreme	High	High	High
Cyrenaica	High	High-Extreme	High	High	High
Fezzan	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	High

Threat Scale: Minimal Low Moderate High Extreme

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Operation Sudden Lightning

As the country wound down for the Eid celebrations, General Haftar and the Libyan National Army (LNA) were quietly preparing to take over four oil terminals located in the area known as the oil crescent. On the morning of 11 September, Haftar made his move. His troops swept down over the oil crescent and with hardly a shot fired, they took control of As Sidra, Ras Lanuf, Brega and Zueitina along with Ajdabiya, capital of Al Wahat District.

Although the operation came as a surprise to many, the LNA claimed it was months in the planning and this is borne out by a number of, now apparent, indicators as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of the operation which saw oil production and exports resume within four days of the start of the operation. Although it started as a military operation, it soon became apparent that other key elements had also been put in place and were ready to be triggered which allowed Haftar and the House of Representatives (HoR) to capitalise on the military success, keep the momentum going and dominate the narrative.

The leadership of the PFG fought a losing battle throughout the operation as LNA and tribal elders indicated many PFG members had joined the LNA soon after the operation commenced and that they had offered little to no resistance. After initially claiming they had taken 'many casualties' the PFG leadership then claimed to have retaken As Sidr and Ras Lanuf during a counter-attack late on 12 September but later reports indicated they had taken a reconnaissance camp near Ras Lanuf, not the terminal, with LNA sources acknowledging the attack but essentially dismissing it and claiming they had 'blocked' it.

Building tensions in the oil crescent

Tensions had been building in the oil crescent since July when, Ibrahim Jodhran, then leader of the PFG, had signed a deal to allow oil to be exported from two terminals which he had been blockading for a number of years. Reports suggest Jodhran received 45 million LYD (approximately 25 million GBP) as 'back pay' for his troops as part of the deal. On 05 August, minor clashes were reported in Zueitina between the LNA and the PFG.

Haftar used the clashes as a pretext to move several battalions into Zueitina town. The move was dismissed by some commentators who assessed Haftar did not have the military resources to take on the well trained 35,000 strong PFG. It's likely he didn't, but it appears that he wasn't intent on taking the terminals solely by force.

As Haftar moved his battalions into Zueitina in mid-August, tribal elders called out to the PFG to join the LNA. Haftar had secured the support of the tribal elders, undermining Jodhran's tribal ties. He then indicated he had the support of Mustafa Sanalla, the Chairman of the National Oil Company (NOC) who publically stated that Jodhran had defrauded the NOC by claiming for substantially more guards than he was deploying daily and pocketing the difference. With the support of key stakeholders who were preparing the ground ahead, the stage was set for Haftar to make his move.

As the Eid holiday approached, the LNA publically stated that it was cancelling leave for its recruits and called on all key personnel to remain at their posts over the holiday season citing the 'security situation'. Whilst the LNA remained operationally ready, the majority of the country began the national holiday ensuring any response to the operation was delayed and allowing Haftar and the HoR to dominate the initial narrative, something they have largely been able to continuing doing throughout.

Reporting indicated that Jodhran had been losing support amongst the PFG after he moved his allegiance from the HoR to the GNA. That, along with calls from tribal elders to join the LNA ensured there was minimal resistance. This in turn helped ensure minimal casualties and no further damage to the installations. As well as allowing the operation to move swiftly, it also resulted in positive headlines for Haftar and made it more difficult to justify a military response from the GNA.

The reaction

With Fayez Serraj on holiday, Musa Koni was in control of the Presidential Council (PC) when the operation commenced. His initial response was to issue a command to the GNA MoD to respond. After some of the other PC members highlighted that this did not have the consensus of the PC and was essentially Koni using the name of the PC, a less confrontational statement was released which fell short of calling for a military response.

Western powers condemned the operation and underlined their position that the resources of Libya were to remain under the control of the GNA. The west's position resulted in protests in Benghazi, Derna and Zintan, all areas loyal to Haftar, whilst calls went out on social media to 'go out for our sovereignty' and protest against the western position and in support of Haftar on Friday, 16 September.

Egypt, another supporter of Haftar, stated that they supported the move to 'maintain security and stability' and that the west's response was hasty and 'did not account for the internal situation'.

Tensions peak

As Haftar consolidated his control over the terminals, concerns of an armed clash between the LNA and groups loyal to the GNA peaked. Misrata forces went on an operational pause in Sirte, less than a 100 miles from the LNA frontline, as they considered how to proceed against IS and how to respond to Haftar. As tensions increased however, so did the calls for unity, peace and dialogue and as various actors took stock of their positions and options, it appeared the calls to avoid more fighting, which many feared could escalate significantly, were heeded, at least for now.

The aftermath

As various voices called for peace, the newly promoted Haftar's plan continued to unfold in the oil crescent. The HoR and Haftar stuck to their narrative that they had 'freed' the terminals from a militia group who had 'brought suffering on the Libyan people' through its blockade and that the LNA had no intention of remaining as it was not their role. Four days after the start of the operation, the LNA was reported to have pulled back, leaving the PFG in place to secure the installations, under a new leadership. For their part, the PFG stated that they were there only to provide security for the terminals and pipelines and would not be involving themselves in the administration of the NOC.

The NOC took back control of all the installations and lifted the force majeure. The same day, two oil tankers docked at Ras Lanuf and Brega to collect 1.2 million barrels of crude. Perhaps crucially, Sanalla stated that he was carrying out his orders as per the HoR and the PC, indicating that Sanalla was still trying to remain out of Libyan politics and that a meeting had been scheduled for next week for the NOC to complete the merger of the Tripoli and Tobruk administrations.

The resumption of oil exports (and production) from the financially stressed country, the voluntary withdrawal of the LNA and the handover to the NOC along with the calls for peace and unity appear to have moved the country back from the brink although fears remain that some factions could still resort to the use of force. Whilst the Misrata leadership has publically stated they will not respond to Haftar, Garda sources indicate that at grassroots level, many Misrata fighters wanted to exploit the opportunity to take on the LNA. They remain

however, engaged in the Battle for Sirte and whilst they expect to win the city within the next week or so, IS appear to be escalating their activities to the rear of Misrata positions, complicating the operation.

With Misrata so far refusing to engage, Jodhran has reportedly turned to the Benghazi Defence Brigade (BDB) led by Mustafa Sharkasi and Zeyad Balaam. The BDB is currently advancing towards Harawa, Nawfaliyah and Wadi Hamar. During a meeting on 14 September with tribal elders, Jodhran refused to agree to a deal which would see him and his supporters travel to Ajdabiya to handover their weapons in return for not being prosecuted. Jodhran confirmed he intended to fight the LNA. He is reported to be stationed in Nawfaliyah with some family members and a small number of fighters who have remained loyal. The day prior to the meeting, LNA jets had conducted an airstrike against a possible PFG column in the area of Nawfaliyah.

What next?

Operation Sudden Lightning has given Haftar leverage and improved his negotiating position with the GNA and he is expected to capitalise on this by pushing for political concessions. He is widely believed to be focused on gaining the position of Minister of Defence for either himself or an ally. The positions current incumbent, Mohammed al-Bargathi, is one of Haftar's main rivals and an ex-commander in Benghazi. A meeting is scheduled for next week in Cairo where key players are expected to attend. It is possible the discussions around the creation of a military council which would command all forces in the country, could be picked up again and Haftar's recent promotion to Field Marshall by the HoR, may work to his advantage as the highest ranking military official on the potential new council.

Whilst Haftar maintains military control over the area, he has given no indication as yet that he intends to involve himself in the oil business. He appears to be far more concerned with changing the image of the LNA from being one of many militia groups in the country under the whim of various commanders, to a national army fighting to protect its nation as a whole. Should negotiations not go well however, Haftar may choose to fall back on the use of force and he still faces possible counter-attacks from various factions.

The next few weeks are likely to be critical in what is the next phase of the Libyan conflict. Various stakeholders will look to consolidate their positions and possibly to undermine rivals whilst negotiations take place. There is still a real risk that the situation could escalate into armed conflict once more, however there is also potential that should negotiations prove successful, Libya could take some significant steps towards unification and stability.

The Battle for Sirte

The Battle for Sirte was ousted from the headlines this week as Haftar grabbed the limelight with Operation Sudden Lightning. Last week, Misrata-led BAM forces fighting in the city reported that 'fierce' resistance and the presence of civilians had slowed the operation, which they had hope to of completed by Eid. This week it was further complicated after evidence mounted of IS fighters fleeing the city disguised as normal citizens. With the remnants of IS pinned down to a kilometre square location in the area of Neighbourhood 3, BAM forces decided to take an operational pause to reassess the situation. The operational pause also coincided with the start of Operational Sudden Lightning which was also likely a factor.

IS responded to the pause by launching attacks against BAM positions including their HQ in the city. In an established sign of collapse, and backing up BAM fears of evolving IS tactics facilitated by the exodus of fighters from the city, IS fighters attacked checkpoints outside towns to the south of Sirte with reports they also attacked as far south west as Bani Zamzam on 14 September. The attacks are likely an attempt to project power away from Sirte which is close to collapse and could be a probe to see which areas are permissive to a future takeover in the establishment of a new power base. They may also be designed to draw resources from the battle in Sirte and create freedom of movement for IS.

Garda sources suggest BAM forces hope to finish the battle in a week or so. Although they may have lost their powerbase, IS are still a presence within the country and the recent attacks on 14 September indicate they will continue to mount attacks against BAM supply lines, rear support elements and towns/villages as they look for a permissive area to establish a new power base.

Italy to establish field hospital in Misrata

The news that Italy, a former colonial power in Libya, is to establish a field hospital at Misrata Air Base along with 200-300 paratroopers for protection has caused a stir this week. Whilst some have welcomed the move as a sign of support from Italy, others have framed it as a step towards re-colonisation with the National Salvation Government releasing a strongly worded statement suggesting that it would be seen as 'an announcement of the status of war' and called on militias to resist.

Libya's chemical weapons destroyed

A German company began the destruction of 500 metric tonnes of chemicals left over from the Gadhafi regime this week. The chemicals were shipped out of Misrata port for destruction near Munster in Germany. Libya had signed up to a UN convention banning chemical weapons in 2004 as Gadhafi sought to improve ties with the west. Although the Gadhafi regime had begun to destroy its stockpiles, the program was disrupted during the 2011 revolution. As fears mounted that extremist groups could exploit what remained, Libya requested international support to deal with the issue. The Germany shipment marks the end of the program to destroy what remained of Gaddafi's chemical weapons.

IS claim Tripoli VBIEDs

On 13 September, IS claimed responsibility for a coordinated VBIED attack in Tripoli on 08 September. The claim was made via Amaq News Agency. IS was assessed by many as unlikely culprits for the coordinated attack which targeted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the GNA Naval Base. This was mainly based on indications that the lack of casualties appeared intentional and they were not suicide attacks, both of which are normally hallmarks of IS. It is unclear if this claim is genuine or whether the lack of any other claimants in the days after the attacks lead to a decision by someone within IS to exploit the situation. The group is currently under significant pressure in Sirte and is close to losing their support base. There are indications that they are projecting into areas around Sirte and Misrata provinces and launching high profile attacks can be expected however these are more likely to be aimed at causing mass casualties or gaining a military advantage.

WEEKLY OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT

Tripolitania

Incident levels have remained relatively stable in the Tripolitania Region. The majority of incidents continue to be reported from Sirte where BAM forces are fighting IS. Tripoli itself has also seen a number of incidents including an armed clash between two militia groups.

The clash occurred after the Misrata dominated Presidential Guard (PG) allegedly confiscated two vehicles from Bashir Sadawi Brigade (BSB) in the Sidi Al Masri area of Tripoli. BSB responded by establishing a checkpoint and began arresting people from Misrata. A firefight ensued in which heavy weaponry was used however no casualties were reported. The incident underlines the potential for disputes to quickly escalate into armed confrontations in the city.

Also of note, two kidnappings were also reported during the reporting period, both of which targeted local nationals. Kidnap for ransom remains a threat in the city towards both locals and foreigners.

As temperatures hit 39 degrees on 16 September, unconfirmed reporting suggested that after 11 hours of power cuts, some locals began burning tyres in the streets in Tripoli in protest.

Threat warnings

Possible VBIED/IED attack against NOC HQ, Tripoli

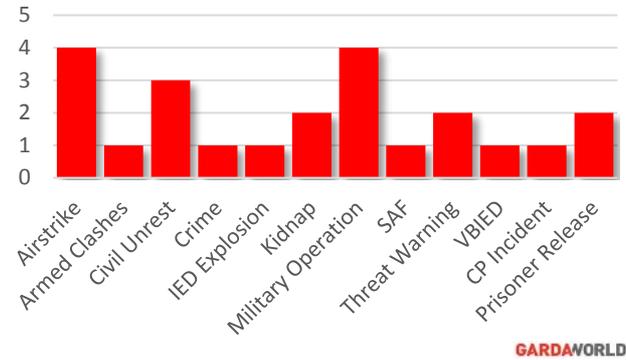
The Tripoli NOC HQ posted a threat warning on social media warning of a possible VBIED or IED attack inside the building. It stated that a 'stringent work plan would be applied on Sunday 18 September, the first working day after Eid. The post stated the threat warning was based on intelligence information.

'Mass rallies' to be held on 16 September

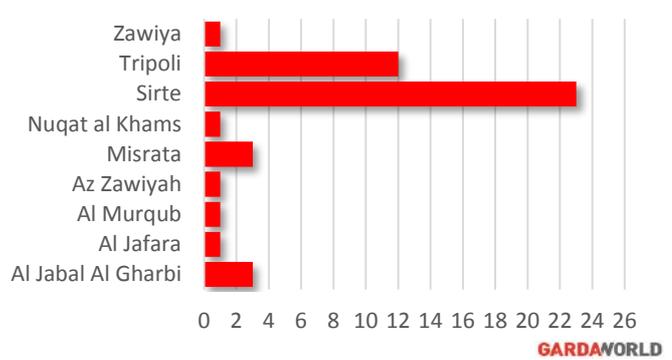
A hashtag calling for Libyans to 'go out for their sovereignty' has begun trending on Twitter as people called for 'mass rallies' to be held on Friday, 16 September – the day marking the martyrdom of Omar Mukhtar. The protests are against western condemnation of Operation Sudden Lightning.

Incidents

Incidents by type, 09-16 September



Incidents by district, 09-16 September



Cyrenaica Region

Despite a major military operation in the region (which also effected Tripolitania Region), the lack of resistance avoided a spike in incident levels. A threat warning was issued after a young male in military uniform approached security forces with the intent to shoot the commander of Central Military Region in Ajdabiya on 12 September. The man was talked down and released.

LNA airstrikes continued to be used against Islamic extremist targets in Benghazi and Derna. In return Islamic extremist elements mounted IED and VBIED attacks against LNA positions with reports they had succeeded in taking some ground, possibly taking advantage of the LNA focus on Operation Sudden Lightning.

The gains are unlikely to be decisive and further skirmishes are expected to continue this week.

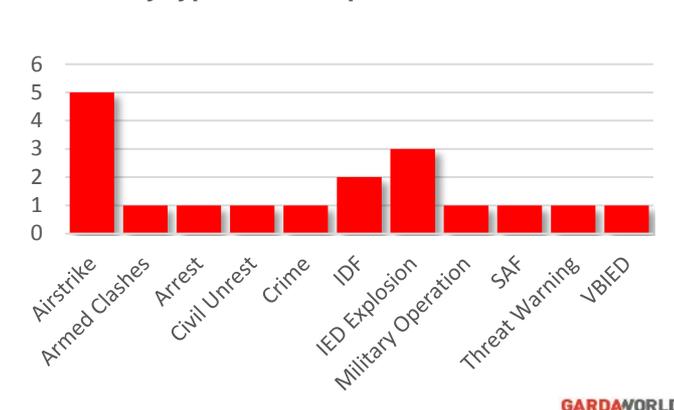
Threat Warnings

Threat to Central Military Region Commander, Ajdabiya

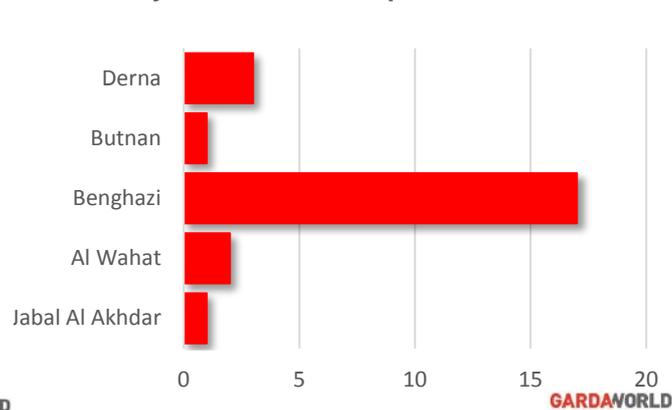
A young man dressed in a military uniform approached security forces in the town of Ajdabiya stating he wanted to shoot the commander of the Central Military Region. The man was apparently 'talked down' and then released. **COMMENT:** 'Ajdabiya was recently taken by the LNA during Operation Sudden Lightning after they encountered some resistance in the area.' **COMMENT ENDS.**

Incidents

Incidents by type, 09-16 September



Incidents by district, 09-16 September

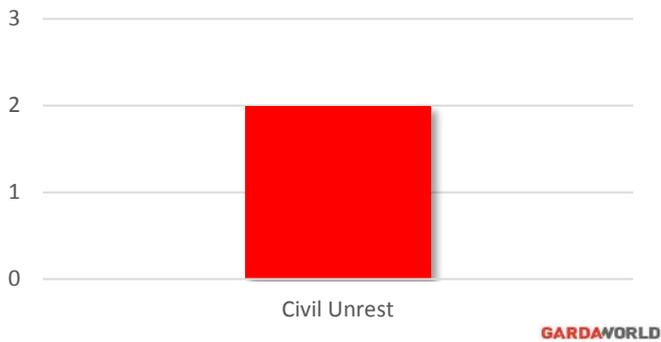


Fezzan Region

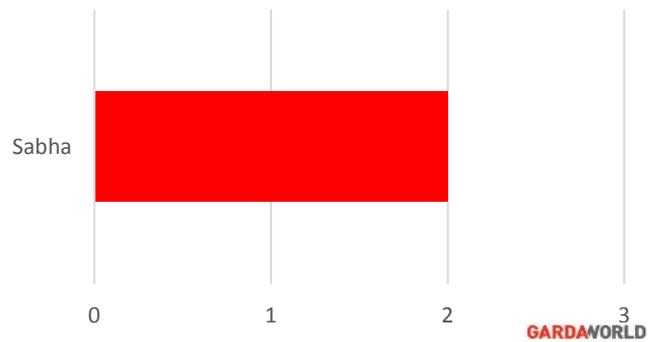
The Fezzan region saw few incidents reported. On 09 September a small protest was reported outside the Central Bank highlighting the lack of liquidity that continues to plague Libya's banks. On 14 September, another protest was reported in support of Operation Sudden Lightning. Support for Gaddafi remains evident in the area and this appears to have been transferred, at least to some extent, to Haftar.

Incidents

Incidents by type, 09-16 September



Incidents by district, 09-16 September



ACRONYM LIST

AAS – Ansar al-Sharia (AQ affiliate)	MoFA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs
All - Area of Intelligence Interest	MoHE - Ministry of Higher Education
AKA - Also Known As	MoI - Ministry of Interior
AO - Area of Operations	MoJ - Ministry of Justice
APC - Armored Personnel Carrier	MoO - Ministry of Oil
APIED - Anti-Personnel IED	MoT - Ministry of Transportation
AQ - Al-Qaeda	MSCD – Mujahideen Shura Council of Derna (AQ aligned)
AT - Anti-Tank	MSR - Main Supply Route
ATGW - Anti Tank Guided Weapon	NFDK - No Further Details Known
AVIED - Anti-Vehicle IED	NGO - Non-Governmental Organization (aid/charity)
BAM – Al Bunyan Al Marsous (Mistrata aligned)	NOC – National Oil Company
BBIED - Body Borne IED	NSTR - Nothing Significant To Report
Bde - Brigade	OCG - Organized Crime Group
Bn - Battalion	PAX - Person, Persons or Passenger
BXP - Border Crossing Point	PBIED - Person-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (UN Term)
CET - Convoy Escort Team	PC – Presidency Council (part of GNA)
CLC - Concerned Local Citizens	PFG- Petroleum Facilities Guard
CoP - Chief of Police	PoI - Point of Impact (for IDF)
CP - Check Point	PoO - Point of Origin (for IDF)
C-PERS - Captured Personnel	PSAF - Precision Small Arms Fire
CPX - Complex Attack (an attack using multiple weapon systems)	PSC - Private Security Company
CQA - Close Quarter Assassination/Attack	PSD - Private Security Detail
DBS - Drive by Shooting	RCIED - Remote-Controlled IED
Div - Division	RPG - Rocket Propelled Grenade
DoD - Department of Defense	RSCB - Revolutionary Shura Council of Benghazi
DoS - Department of State	RTA - Road Traffic Accident
DoS - US Department of State	SAF - Small Arms Fire
ECP - Entry Control Point	SAFIRE - Surface to Air FIRE
EFP - Explosively Formed Projectile	SF - Special Forces
EOD - Explosive Ordnance Disposal (Bomb Squad)	SVBIED - Suicide Vehicle Borne IED
ERW - Explosive Remnants of War	SVEST - Suicide Explosive Worn Vest
FoM - Freedom of Movement	TCN - Third Country National
GNA – Government of National Accord (UN backed)	TCP - Traffic Control Point
GNC – General National Congress (Tripoli based)	Technical - An improvised weapon-mounted pick-up truck
HCN - Host Country National	TTP - Tactics, Techniques and Practices
HG - Hand Grenade	UVIED - Under Vehicle IED
HME - Home Made Explosive	UXO - Unexploded Ordnance
HMG - Heavy Machine Gun	VBIED - Vehicle Borne IED
HoR – House of Representatives (Trobuk based)	VCP - Vehicle Checkpoint
HVT - High Value Target	WIA - Wounded in Action
IC - International Community	
IDF - Indirect Fire (i.e.: rockets, mortars)	
IDP - Internally Displaced Persons	
IEC - Independent Electoral Commission	
IED - Improvised Explosive Device	
IM - International Military	
IOC - International Oil Company	
IRAM - Improvised Rocket Assisted Mortar	
IRL - Improvised Rocket Launcher	
IS - Islamic State	
IVCP - Illegal Vehicle Check Point	
IVO - In Vicinity Of	
KIA - Killed in Action	
LN - Local National/Iraqi Civilian	
LNA – Libyan National Army	
MAIED - Magnetically attached IED (aka UVIED)	
MIA - Missing in Action	
MoD - Ministry of Defense	
MoF - Ministry of Finance	

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