



Unity Resources Group

# LIBYA MONITOR MAY

Key Developments And Local Insights On The Security And Political Climate



# INCIDENT REPORTING



A second professor from the University of Tripoli was kidnapped this month, and students have led protests against the poor security afforded to them. Although kidnappings are difficult to quantify, in recent months the situation appears to have calmed overall. Kidnappings in Tripoli and Libya at large have primarily targeted locals, and are motivated by both political and monetary reasons. Foreigners practicing good situational awareness do not currently face a greater kidnap risk.

Ramadan Abedi and Hashim Abedi, the father and brother of Manchester bomber Salman Abedi, were arrested on 24 May by RADA. RADA spokesman, Ahmed bin Salem, stated that Hashim had links to IS, had prior knowledge of the Manchester attack and was planning an attack in Tripoli.

On 20 May, the LNA launched air strikes against several locations in Jufra in retaliation against the attack on Brak al-Shati air base. The BDB reported two casualties. Further air strikes were carried out on 23 May by the LNA in Jufra, Hun, and Sokna, causing moderate infrastructural damages. Fighters with the al-Bonyan al-Marsous Operation were targeted.

An ambush by IS killed two fighters from the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion on 6 May. IS set up a fake checkpoint and ambushed a bus that was carrying the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion to Misrata, before they retreated into the desert. The attack demonstrates an uptake of guerrilla style warfare by IS, as the group returns to insurgency mode and adapts to their loss of a stronghold.

A major attack was launched by GNA-affiliated militias on Brak al-Shati air base, held by the LNA. See page 3 for more details.

# FLASHPOINT AREAS

## Brak al-Shati Air Base Attack

On 18 May GNA-affiliated militias, including the Misratan-led 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion and the BDB, launched an assault against Brak al-Shati air base held by the LNA-linked 12<sup>th</sup> Brigade. At least 60 were killed, with the LNA reporting 141 casualties. The attack was described as 'barbaric' by the Arab League, with fighters reportedly summarily executed alongside civilians working at the base.

The spokesman for the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Mohamed Gliwan, stated that the attack was a response to the LNA's ongoing siege of the nearby Tamenhint air base. Merely days before the attack the LNA celebrated the third anniversary of Operation Dignity in Tocra, 70 km east of Benghazi. Much of the 12<sup>th</sup> Brigade had only recently returned to the base at the time of the attack.

The LNA responded to the attack by launching air strikes against militias in Jufra on 20 May. A rare meeting between Fayez Sarraj and Khalifa Haftar a few weeks prior in Abu Dhabi had sought to negotiate a settlement between the two parties. The meeting had ended on a positive note, with a truce formed that the LNA has since accused the GNA of breaking, although it is likely that militias were acting independently. Nevertheless, the GNA has

admitted some responsibility for the assault by suspending defence minister Mahda al-Barghathi, and 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion commander Jamal al-Traiki.

## Migrant Slave Markets

IOM has reported that migrants from sub-Saharan Africa are being sold at slave markets for between \$200-500 USD. The condition of migrant routes in Libya is notoriously poor, with migrants previously reporting being detained and held for ransom by traffickers. These most recent reports of a going rate for migrants represents another step up in their exploitation.

Although human traffickers associated with the southern tribes are primarily responsible for the trade, militias are also involved and legitimise the abuse. For instance, the Zintani militia has overseen the trade and taxed smugglers along the route from Tamanrasset. Militias have further been accused of considerable abuses against migrants in detention centres under their control and there are reports of militia leaders 'owning' migrants. There are an estimated 26-29 active detention centres, most of which are located along the coast near Tripoli and Benghazi. Inevitably, this dire situation will continue as it

is emblematic of the lack of any centralised and accountable authority and the poor security environment, while the monetary benefits of exploiting migrants serves to strengthen individual militias.

## Libya Pride Operation in Tripoli

Khalifa Ghweil's forces under the leadership of hardline Salafist Salah Badi launched an offensive in Tripoli on 26 May. Badi's forces were primarily seeking to regain a foothold in the city after they were ejected a few months prior. Fighting was primarily in the southern neighbourhoods of Abu Salim, Salahdeen, and Qasr bin Ghashir. According to estimates from the Ministry of Health, 47 people were killed and 183 injured.

Al Kikli's Abu Salim Brigade and Tajouri's TRB thwarted the attack, which has given the GNA a greater hold over the city. They gained control of strategic sites including al-Hadba prison which houses former regime officials, Camp 77 (a military base in the south of the city) and Tripoli International Airport. Most of the GNC-backed forces have withdrawn and the situation has since stabilised.

# FIELD NOTES

In this edition of Field Notes, we speak to our Deputy Country Manager, Omran Abusahmin, about the provision of services in Libya.

## **Who is responsible for the provision of services throughout Libya?**

*“Most services are controlled by national companies created during the Gaddafi era, which continue to operate. For example, electricity is controlled by the General Electricity Company of Libya. Since the revolution we have seen more private companies entering the market, such as internet providers.”*

## **Is the quality of services the same throughout Libya?**

*“It depends. The north is better serviced than the south, which is not as strong politically and is more difficult logistically. For instance, gas cylinders are delivered in the south far more*

*infrequently than in the cities, which is a problem because people rely upon them for cooking. Misrata usually has better electricity than other cities, because they have more money and political influence. But within each city the conditions can be different; some areas of Tripoli will have longer black outs than other areas for instance.”*

## **How is the quality of services?**

*“Generally the services in Libya are quite good, unless you’re in an area where there is fighting and then the services might not reach you, such as in Derna. Electricity during the peak times is really bad, but during spring and autumn it’s much better. But the real problem is with the collection of rubbish and the health services. The internet, gas, and water – these are all ok.”*

## **Tell me more about the problems with the collection of rubbish and how Libyans have**

## **responded.**

*“Well the problem with rubbish is that often it isn’t collected when the government doesn’t have the money to pay the collection companies. It’s very chaotic. Some days Tripoli will be clean, and other days there will be piles of rubbish on the streets. Some communities have formed groups to collect rubbish, maybe each household will pay a member of the community 5 dinars a week to take care of it. Some garbage companies will collect when they aren’t being paid, because they are motivated by national concern, but other companies will refuse and will take a hardline stance.”*

## **What about health services?**

*“Health services are a much bigger problem. The public health system is theoretically serviced by the Libyan Ministry of Health, but it is seriously underfunded and really only supported through*

*international aid. Private health providers are better, but they are expensive. Many richer Libyans will travel to Tunisia, Egypt or Jordan for treatment. The poor are forced to rely on the public health system. The UN and NGOs tend to fill the void in really devastated areas and are really vital too, such as the Red Crescent.”*

## **Have you seen any groups using services to garner public support?**

*“It’s not really possible, because Libya already has adequate systems. They’re not always amazing, but they’re ok. It’s only really through providing security that groups seek to increase support, such as Tajouri’s forces in Tripoli which target criminals. When they do a good job people do appreciate it.”*

# GLOSSARY

BDB	Benghazi Defence Brigade
CSA	Civil Status Authority
DMSC	Derna Mujahidin Shura Council
GNA	Government of National Accord
HoR	House of Representatives
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LNA	Libyan National Army
LPA	Libya Political Agreement
PFG	Petroleum Facilities Guard
RADA	Special Deterrence Forces (Interior Ministry Special Forces)
SCBR	Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries
TRB	Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade