



Unity Resources Group

LIBYA MONITOR NOVEMBER

Key Developments and Local Insights into the Security and Political Climate



INCIDENT REPORTING



Tripoli

Misratah

Warshefana saw heavy clashes this month. For more details see Flashpoint Areas.

Four foreigners working for Siemens were kidnapped on 3 November from Ubari. They were seized while travelling from the airport to the power plant. After the men failed to be released, Turkish firm ENKA evacuated 93 of its staff from the power plant. It is highly likely that insider knowledge assisted the attack. The ability of kidnapers to continue to hold the victims also suggests it was a strategic, pre-planned attack.

Awbari

Sabha

Marzuq

The US operating under Africom carried out airstrikes on Islamic State militants on 17 and 19 November in Fuqaha. Although Africom stated the strike was in co-operation with the GNA, Fuqaha is currently under the control of the LNA.

Benghazi

Tubruq

Gulf of Sidra

The LNA retook Sidi Akribesh from militants who had been hiding in buildings in the district for the past four months. The LNA's most recent approach was to starve out the militants, who in turn assaulted LNA soldiers with sniper fire. This month the LNA appeared to have finally lost patience. Commander of the Saiqa Force, Wanis Bukhamada, brought in heavy weaponry and tanks, and used airstrikes to target the district.

LIBYAN DES

At Taj

FLASHPOINT AREAS

Assault on Warshefana

In early November, the Zintan-based Special Operations Force, which is aligned with the LNA and led by Imad Trabulsi, and the GNA-appointed head of the western region, Osama Juwaili, launched a surprise attack on the Fourth Brigade in Azziziya, capital of the Warshefana district. Fighting lasted for approximately a week and ended with Trabulsi and Juwaili in control of the area.

The attack occurred despite Serraj stating he had not authorised Juwaili to carry out the operation, suggesting that the GNA's formation of zones and appointment of military leaders has failed to fall under any strategic leadership or control. The LNA similarly stated that it had not authorised the attack. With Juwaili originating from Zintan, the coalition with the Zintan Military Council is not surprising, as he is reportedly good friends with its commander. There are speculations that the attack was unilaterally launched to clamp down on criminality originating from Warshefana.

The TRB subsequently joined the fighting in Warshefana, likely to buffer against any attempts by the militias to make territorial gains so close to Tripoli. Warshefana is a district on the outskirts of south western Tripoli. The area is sparsely populated, which has encouraged criminals to use it as a hideout and base for operations.

Kidnappings throughout Tripoli have been widely attributed to criminals based in Warshefana.

Since the fighting ended, the area has remained calm, with criminals having either handed themselves over to the TRB or temporarily retreated underground. 28 bodies, reportedly those of men caught in Warshefana, were later found close to Tripoli bearing signs of torture. There are unlikely to be any repercussions, particularly as the incident occurred within a conflict.

Western Elements Report Tensions in Zawia

Reports of instability continue to originate from western sources in Zawia, a port town 30 kilometres west of Tripoli. Tensions were initially reported several weeks ago. Although there have been no accounts of direct conflict, some western security companies have evacuated their staff. In mid-October, Haftar declared that Zawia would soon be under the LNA's control and the instability could be linked to Haftar's attempts to move towards Tripoli.

The TRB and Presidential Guard are now guarding the coastal highway route through to Sabratha. As Tripoli-based militias, their control of the area and projection outwards from Tripoli is notable. Their

move demonstrates the significance of the threat presented by the LNA as Haftar seeks to gain a foothold in the Tripoli surrounds.

At the same time, Tripolitanian militias have sought to project their power to the east of Tripoli, likely as a protective buffer for the city. This month the TRB and Central Security Department within the Ministry of the Interior established a new checkpoint in Garabulli, which previously saw an attempted advance by the GNC in July.

Assassination Attempt on GNA Figure in Benghazi

The GNA's Deputy Interior Minister Faraj al-Gaem escaped two assassination attempts in Benghazi this month. In the first attack, a car bomb exploded as his vehicle passed. The second attack saw four mortar rounds fired at the Ministry of the Interior building, killing at least three people. Al-Gaem subsequently approached an affiliate of Haftar's who is known to him personally in an attempt to calm the situation. Haftar has been accused multitude times of attempting to assassinate political opponents, although it has not been conclusively proven.

FIELD NOTES

In this edition of Field Notes, we speak to our team in Libya about the bureaucratic processes associated with travelling to and from Libya, and within Libya itself.

How is the arrivals and departure process at Mitiga Airport?

“It depends on the militia in control of the airport, so at the moment with RADA controlling Mitiga Airport, it is really a difficult process. Leaving the airport is worse than arriving. Even if you have all the letters they’ve asked for, still they will detain and interrogate you. It’s purely because you’re a westerner and they think everyone is a spy. I would rather spend three hours on the road to Misrata running eight checkpoints because the Misratans are very professional and very polite. They still check you and your passport to make sure it’s you, and they will check your visa. Then they will say thank you for visiting and have a nice trip.”

So it’s different at Misrata Airport?

“Yes, it’s not an interrogation. Their main concern is how much money you are taking out. They give the locals a harder time than the westerners actually; they’re looking for smugglers and people taking hard currency out. Whereas at Mitiga they’re completely preoccupied with potential spies.”

Is it common that people pay bribes at Mitiga Airport?

“There’s a story about someone paying a facilitation fee to leave, because they didn’t believe he was working for his company. They don’t really understand what a consultant is. It doesn’t seem to be common practice to pay bribes. But I’ve heard of people being arrested and detained who were working either for the UN or in collaboration with the UN – usually third country nationals. They had been detained for a number of weeks – I’m not sure if that’s still the case or not.”

What about internal travel - what documents do you need?

“So even if you have a Libyan visa, if you want to visit the east you also need to have a security clearance from Haftar’s offices. You need to be sponsored by someone over there who will go to their internal security people, and it takes a lot of time. Even if you were flying directly into Benina, it seems it would still be a problem. They will ask for that paperwork at checkpoints throughout the east. It can take weeks or even months to come through.”

Where can you travel internally?

“Misrata is completely fine. You could probably get as far as Ras Lanuf by car. In order to fly on Petro Air you need a desert pass – they’re the airline that flies south, and it is pretty inadvisable to be driving south because you have to go through a lot of dodgy areas. There is a lot of banditry in the south – just this month in Ubari four foreigners were kidnapped

shortly after they arrived at the airport.”

How do you get a desert pass?

“So you would need a contract with an oil related company. They’re hard to get, even if you provide security to an oil company. The desert pass comes from the NOC. There are a lot of these oil companies set up to operate purely within Libya. They go to the NOC and get the desert passes, which then allows you to book a flight and get down there. You will be asked to produce it at checkpoints and random traffic stops. It’s like having that security clearance for the east. I wouldn’t want to go down there without it.”

It sounds like internal travel is extremely difficult?

“You basically need fixers in every location, people who are connected to local powerbrokers. Otherwise you are severely limited in where you can go.”

SPECIAL FOCUS REPORT

Insight: RADA Special Deterrence Forces

As Salafist militia RADA's strength has grown in Tripoli, it has increasingly moved towards religious policing. The militia has been legitimised under the GNA's Ministry of the Interior, and works in co-operation with the TRB and a number of other smaller militias to secure Tripoli. Led by Abdelraouf Kara, RADA has gained a reputation as a de facto police unit, cracking down on drugs and crime and conducting counter-terrorism operations. These moves have proven beneficial for the city and had a positive impact on day-to-day life for Tripolitans by providing a degree of security. However, the militia's move towards moral policing raises concerns about its plans for governance, as it reaches beyond fighting crime to slowly pushing its ideological goals.

On 3 November, RADA raided and shut down ComicCon in Tripoli, a three day event which brought together hundreds of fans of comic books and comic culture. The organisers of the event had previously attained permission to hold it by the Nawasi Brigade, which controls the complex. It was the second time the event was held, with the previous ComicCon operating without problems. The Nawasi Brigade and RADA are strongly connected, with RADA having developed out of the Nawasi Brigade.

RADA's raid saw 20 people arrested, some for almost three weeks. According to one of the organisers,

some of those detained 'had received a beating, had had their head shaved bald and were given a religious lecture. They were told that Libya was a Muslim country, not a free/liberal country.' RADA later released a statement, suggesting that its actions at the conference were simply a response to widespread public outrage over the event. It also argued that such events were 'derived from abroad and exploit weakness of religious faith and fascination with foreign cultures.'

As a Salafist militia, RADA draws influence from Saudi sheikhs, even as Saudi Arabia is seeking to open itself to the world. In February, Jeddah successfully hosted ComicCon with Saudi government funding. The event featured females in leading roles, and was open to both men and women who simply entered via different entrances. However, clerics condemned the event, and took to Twitter to voice their disapproval. While the Saudi Government may be making moves to liberalise its society, the words of the religious establishment continue to permeate across borders through the help of the internet.

In addition to its austere social governance, RADA has demonstrated a marked aversion to foreigners visiting Libya. This dislike has been no more apparent than through its approach to controlling Mitiga Airport in Tripoli. Foreigners arriving and leaving via the airport are viewed with extreme suspicion, even when they are in possession of valid visas and work details. An Indonesian diplomat was recently detained and questioned for several hours after

arriving at Mitiga Airport. Reports indicate that he was carrying a diplomatic passport. Although he was eventually permitted to enter, his treatment highlights RADA's paranoia that even a diplomatic passport cannot prevent.

At the same time, RADA's authorisation by the GNA raises questions about the UN's mandate for Libya. Although the UN seeks stability inside the country, the necessity to rely upon local militias for short term stabilisation can have potentially harmful long term repercussions. The GNA's lack of security forces has ensured that it relies upon extant militia groups to provide security on the ground. Although the UN has legitimised a political institution to lead Libya, the failure to co-create security forces has created a quagmire that sees other militias, which are otherwise performing abuses within the state, ultimately benefitting from a relationship with the UN.

Indeed, the Salafi-Madkhali influence that inspires RADA and a number of militias in Libya is perhaps not in line with the UN's development goals. In the east of the country, Madkhalis have banned earth day, while this month saw Salafists set on fire the well-known Sufi mosque, Sheikha Radiya, in Tripoli. Attacks on Sufi mosques and shrines are a hallmark of Salafist extremism. Such violent intolerance does not bode well for Libya's future.

GLOSSARY

BDB	Benghazi Defence Brigade
CDA	Constitutional Drafting Assembly
CSA	Civil Status Authority
DMSC	Derna Mujahideen Shura Council
GNA	Government of National Accord
HoR	House of Representatives
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LNA	Libyan National Army
LPA	Libyan Political Agreement
PFG	Petroleum Facilities Guard
PC	Presidency Council
RADA	Special Deterrence Forces (Interior Ministry Special Forces)
SCBR	Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries
TRB	Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade
UNSMIL	United Nations Support Mission in Libya