



FACT SHEET LIBYA

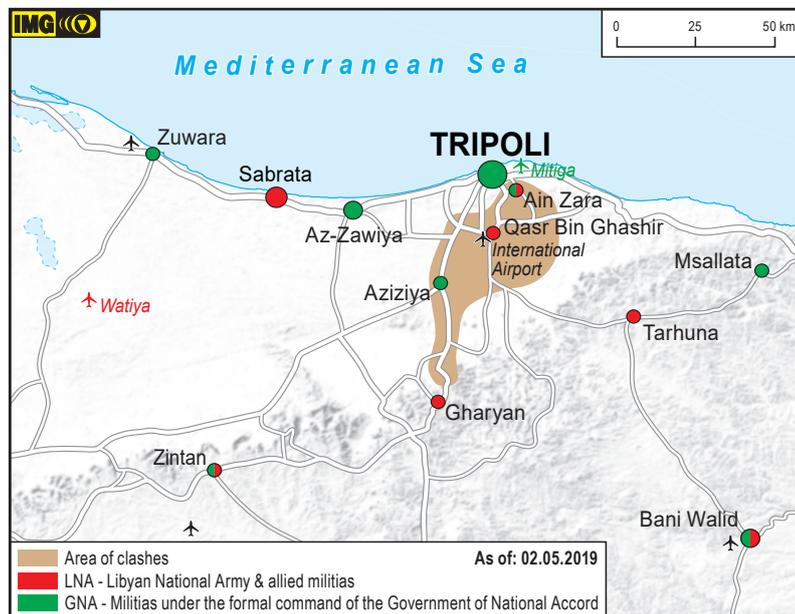
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The quick withdrawal of Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) from some areas in southern Libya led to an increase of violence in the region. While most of the LNA's militias were deployed to join the fighting in Tripoli, only a small contingent remained in their southern bases near Sebha. The temporary loss of one of its bases due to an attack by other militias shows to which extent the capacity of the LNA is overstretched at the moment. Actors like the Islamic State (IS) will take advantage of the situation, as a recent IS-attack in Sebha shows.

The lack of professionalism of some militias of the LNA, plus the targeting of civilian neighbourhoods have caused growing antipathy toward the LNA in the capital. The attack on Tripoli clearly illustrates that

Haftar is not interested in negotiations under the current circumstances. According to the WHO, 376 people, including 23 civilians, were killed and almost 2.000 injured after four weeks of fighting. Around 50.000 people have fled their homes.

Simultaneously, the rift within the House of Representatives (HoR), the internationally recognised parliament, is deepening. While its speaker, Aguila Saleh, organised the first HoR session in Benghazi and lauded the LNA's efforts in Tripoli, a number of MPs held several sessions in the capital and elected an interim speaker on their own. The low number of MPs attending the latest sessions further contributes to the loss of legitimacy of the only elected national institution in Libya.



Note: No claim to completeness of the map is put forward.

MAP ANALYSIS

There are several fronts in the battle for Tripoli. The main clashes take place in Ain Zara and around Qasr bin Ghashir, where the defunct International Airport is located. Recently, Government of National Accord (GNA) militias advanced from Aziziya south- and eastwards. Central Tripoli is not yet affected by combat operations.

While militias in Tarhuna and some forces from Zintan and the surrounding towns joined the LNA on the battlefield, its local units in Sabrata did not take military action yet. The LNA uses Watiya as its main base for aerial operations. Aircraft of the GNA Air Force are based at Mitiga airport and in Misrata.

FORECAST

Fatih Bashagha, the Interior Minister in Tripoli, strengthened his position during the recent clashes and is pushing Fayez Serraj, prime minister of the GNA, more and more out of the spotlight. Due to his connections to several militias, Bashagha will play, besides Haftar, a major role in future negotiations which become increasingly likely, considering the back and forth on the battlefield.

While his backers shield international pressure from Haftar, the LNA continues the offensive on Tripoli unhampered, enjoying extensive military support from the United Arab Emirates. The first publicly known conversation between Haftar and U.S. President Trump and an apparent new Libya policy of the White House may have far-reaching consequences as they provide additional international legitimacy for the LNA's offensive.

The ongoing clashes in and around Tripoli once more deepen the inner-Libyan as well as the international rift regarding the question of how to deal with Haftar's ambition to eliminate his opponents with violence. While EU member states still don't pursue one common goal in Libya, several regional actors use and fuel the conflict to pursue their own interests.

The periodically published Fact Sheet compiles and analyzes significant developments pertaining to the Syrian conflict while providing maps and an outlook of possible future events.

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SOURCES: MEDIA ANALYSIS; LAYOUT: REF III/Medien, IMG



INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

20.03.: Ghassan Salame, head of the UN Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), briefed the UN Security Council and stated that the offensive of the LNA in southern Libya was perceived positively by locals. He further raised concerns about human rights violations by LNA units in the recently overtaken city of Derna.

26.03.: Over a dozen EU ambassadors, who visited Tripoli and Benghazi and met with several politicians as well as Haftar, published a strong statement calling for the National Conference and local elections to be held. They also demanded to unify the Libyan military and called against foreign interference in Libya as well as human rights violations.

30.03.: Maltese special forces seized a trade ship after it had entered Maltese territorial waters. The ship had been taken over by migrants who were to be taken back to Libya.

01.04.: Although the EU's Operation SOPHIA was extended for another six months, it temporarily stopped all maritime activities and will therefore put the focus on airborne surveillance. The reason for this was a veto by Italy, which determined the distribution of rescued migrants as precondition for the continuation of sea rescue operations. The mission's training tasks for the Libyan Coast Guard are being continued.

03.04.: UN Secretary General Guterres arrived in Tripoli to undertake final preparations for the National Dialogue Conference, which is organised by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). Due to the LNA's offensive in Tripoli, UNSMIL head Salamé later postponed the conference, which was originally scheduled for 15-16 April.

11.04.: The EU published a statement calling for both sides to retreat and stop fighting in Tripoli. France had allegedly blocked the previous draft naming Haftar as aggressor in the ongoing offensive. The following week, both, the US and Russia, refused to support a UN Resolution criticising the LNA for attacking Tripoli, according to diplomats.

15.04.: The White House informed that President Trump and Khalifa Haftar had discussed their positions on counter-terrorism in Libya by phone. This step is a significant policy change by the US president, as Secretary of State Pompeo called on the LNA to withdraw from the area around Tripoli the week before.

DOMESTIC POLITICS

04.03.: The Libyan National Oil Corporation (NOC) resumed work at the country's largest oilfield, Sharara. The oilfield in southern Libya had been closed since December 18, 2018, when an armed local group took over the field.

10.03.: The Interior Ministry in Tripoli established a body to organize and conduct elections. It is not clear to which extent this new body in Tripoli is in contact with the authorities in eastern Libya. Nationwide elections are planned for the end of 2019.

19.03.: The GNAI announced the total budget for 2019 amounting 46,8 bn Libyan Dinars, which is an increase of 10% compared to 2018.

30.03.: Despite ongoing fighting in Tripolitania, elections took place in nine Libyan municipalities in southern and western Libya. Since then municipal elections took place in other towns. Municipality councils were created as measure of decentralisation in 2013.

12.04.: The military attorney general of eastern Libya issued arrest warrants for 23 leading military and civilian personalities, including Libyan Prime Minister Fayez Serraj, for committing crimes and supporting terrorism. Six days later arrest warrants for Haftar and six other high ranking LNA officers were issued for shelling civilian neighbourhoods during the offensive in Tripoli.

13.04.: The HoR held its first, but rarely attended session in the LNA stronghold Benghazi, which is the designated seat of the HoR. Some MPs, including the HoR speaker Aguila Saleh, are deepening the rift within the body by endorsing the LNA's offensive in Tripoli. As a consequence the HoR is about to break apart. During a session in the capital on May 2, held by a few dozen MPs, the LNA's offensive was denounced and a new speaker was elected.

MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

04.03.: Head of the GNA, Fayez Serraj, degraded the former chief of staff of the Libyan armed forces, Abulrahman Tawil, who had welcomed the LNA offensive in southern Libya. Although Serraj appointed a new chief of staff, Tawil refused to step down, arguing that major decisions cannot be taken by Serraj alone. The new chief of staff, Mohammad al-Sharif, however, finally took office by mid-March.

05.03.: In the course of its offensive in southern Libya, the LNA announced to have taken over Wadi Utba after arrangements with local actors. Days before, the LNA formally took control of Qatron and Umm al-Aranib. However, no units of the LNA remained in the area for a long time and instead retreated to Tamenhint airbase, just north of Sebha. The LNA's withdrawal led to an unstable security situation and the outbreak of clashes.

03.04.: The LNA deployed large parts of its troops to the south of Tripoli, passing through several cities, including Mizda and Gharian, without major clashes. The following day fighting started in the plain of Tripoli, in Aziziya, Siwani and Ain Zara. As a response, several militias from Misrata joined the anti-Haftar front in the capital.

04.04.: While the LNA arranged with a fraction in Zawiya to take over the city peacefully, other fractions in the city expelled the LNA, exchanged fire and imprisoned around 120 LNA members.

07.04.: The Libyan Army, under the formal command of the GNA, announced the start of the counteroffensive in Tripoli, which is named "vulcano of rage".

08.04.: As response to airstrikes by GNA forces, the air force of the LNA struck the military part of Mitiga Airport, the only operational airport in Tripoli. No civilians or civilian infrastructure were harmed. Since then the air war escalated by usage of rockets and drones to target areas in and around Tripoli, including civilian areas.

09.04.: A convoy of Islamic State fighters entered the southern Libyan town of Fuqaha and killed two people. It was the second deadly attack by IS on the remote town.

14.04.: A LNA aircraft was shot down over Tripoli. The LNA later claimed to have also shot down an aircraft of the Libyan Air Force in central Libya. This, however, was not confirmed by the GNA. Airstrikes do not only take place in the combat zone, but also further inland towards the east.

18.04.: Taking advantage of the concentration of LNA forces in Tripolitania, militias loyal to the GNA took over Tamenhint airbase, the LNA's main base in southern Libya. Shortly afterwards, the LNA seized the base again in a counterattack.

22.04.: GNA militias recaptured the town of Aziziya and Hira, pushing LNA forces back to Gharyan. The LNA therefore intensified its efforts to cut the road leading from Tripoli to Misrata, which is the only supply line for Misrati militias.

22.04.: Idriss Madi, a long-time LNA affiliate from Zintan, joined the fighting on the side of the LNA with forces from various towns in the Nafusa Mountains.

28.04.: The NOC criticised the LNA for using oil facilities in central Libya for military purposes. In the face of the ongoing fighting around Tripoli, the ports and air strips in central Libya became tactically important to the LNA. According to the Tripoli based commander of the Libyan Coastguard, a ship of the French Navy arrived at the port of Ras Lanuf two days before.

04.05.: IS fighters attacked a camp of the LNA in the southern city of Sebha and killed 9 soldiers. The GNA blamed the LNA for the deteriorating security situation in southern Libya.



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