

MEMO

DATE: February 27, 2020

SUBJECT: Libya Weekly Update

Below is a summary of the latest top headlines of the week surrounding the news in Libya. Key highlights include:

- Members of the GNA are calling for increased military cooperation in Libya. With Russian influence growing in the region, an American military presence would help fight terrorism, prevention of destruction of oil facilities, and prevent foreign powers from further destabilizing the country.
- A [New York Times](#) piece highlights the current situation on the ground in Haftar-occupied regions of Libya. In Benghazi, for example, corruption, religious extremism, and death squads in charge of kidnapping and killing Haftar's political opponents are prevalent.
- The EU has deployed warships to the Mediterranean to prevent the current flow of weapons to Libya. The goal is to help end the conflict, and prevent the growth of the proxy war that has led to 2,000 deaths. However, [experts have questioned](#) whether it will be effective, as [tweeted](#) by Jalel Harchaoui, Libya security expert at the Clingendael Institute.
- The GNA left ceasefire negotiations after Haftar's forces conducted rocket attacks on a seaport in Tripoli, which followed a series of attacks on civilian targets. The seaport is a hub for food, fuel, and wheat. PM Serraj stated that talks for peace cannot be conducted under bombing attacks.
- Unexploded bombs are becoming a threat to civilians in Libya. The growing problem stems from the rise in Haftar's forces use of banned cluster munitions on Tripoli.

Bloomberg (2/22): [Libya Asks U.S. to Set Up Military Base to Counter Russia](#)

- The interior minister for the GNA is calling on the US to increase military support for the GNA to counterbalance Russia's influence in Africa.
- Russia, who is actively supporting Haftar with weapons and mercenaries, is seeking to build a foothold in Libya with America showing less and less interest.
- U.S. engagement would help fight terrorism, organized crime, and prevent the flow of foreign countries from intervening in Libya. The goal would be to create stability.
- The foreign minister [tweeted](#): "Since the ceasefire was signed on January 12, Foreign cargo flights have illegally sent more than 6,200 tons of weapons to the war criminal, Haftar. The Libyan Government must take responsible action to end the reckless escalation of this conflict & the ongoing targeting of civilians & civilian infrastructure. We will explore all options for enhanced military cooperation with allies. During this wartime period of national self-defense, our formal military partners may need to utilize temporary operational posts to facilitate their support to us. The GNA is committed to conducting military engagements transparently & in compliance with international law & ensuring full respect for Libyan sovereignty."

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New York Times (2/20): [A Police State With an Islamist Twist: Inside Haftar's Libya](#)

- The New York Times published a rare on the ground piece showing what life is like in portions of Libya controlled by Haftar and the LNA forces. This piece recounts security agents listening in on conversations, mosques overrun by extremism, and tribal death squads who are responsible for numerous disappearances and killings of Haftar's political rivals.
- Corruption and self-enrichment are running amuck in cities like Benghazi, instilling fear of arbitrary arrests to citizens and journalists.
- Bombings, abductions, and detentions without trial have become a norm in Haftar-led regions of Libya.

Reuters (2/21): [U.N. says Libya ceasefire talks back on track in Geneva](#)

- The United Nations stated that ceasefire talks would continue late last week.
- Haftar indicated that a ceasefire would only be possible if Turkish and Syrian fighters stopped defending the GNA. Haftar would remain heavily armed by the Russian, UAE, and Egypt.

Bloomberg (2/17): [EU States to Deploy Ships Off Libya in Sign of Military Muscle](#)

- EU warships will begin to enforce an arms embargo on Libya to help defuse the ongoing conflict on the ground.
- The goal is to end the conflict that General Haftar has waged. For 10 months, Haftar's force have marched on Tripoli, resulting in 2,000 deaths and a growing proxy war.

The Guardian (2/17): [EU agrees to deploy warships to enforce Libya arms embargo](#)

- The EU has agreed to deploy warships to prevent the flow of weapons in Libya, after weapons and foreign mercenaries continue to pour into the country.
- The ships will serve to patrol the main route for weapons in a 60 mile area of the Mediterranean.

BBC (2/19): [Libya conflict: Tripoli rocket attacks halt peace talks](#)

- The GNA has backed away from peace talks after Tripoli was struck with a rocket attack.
- Talks in Geneva cannot take place under bombing, GNA officials stated. They are also concerned that the international community has not yet taken a firm stance against Haftar.

Reuters (2/19): [Libya government dims hopes of salvaging U.N. ceasefire talks](#)

- After ongoing attacks by General Haftar's forces, the GNA has decided to end ceasefire negotiations.
- Haftar's forces struck Tripoli's sea port for the first time, which is a major entry gate for wheat, fuel and food imports.
- According to PM Serraj, there must be a strong signal sent to all international players who are attempting to negotiate a ceasefire.

The Guardian (2/17): [Unexploded bombs pose rising threat to civilians in Libya](#)

- Unexploded bombs are a growing threat to civilians in Libya, with the growing use of banned cluster weapons currently in use.
- There is an estimate of 150,000 to 200,000 tons of uncontrolled munitions across Libya.

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- Human Rights Watch stated that Haftar's forces are responsible for using banned cluster munitions to attack Tripoli, happening as late as December.

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