

MEMO

DATE: May 5, 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:

- Haftar is attempting to stage a coup, as he has claimed to have a “popular mandate” to govern Libya. He has not defined where this mandate is coming from or what institution has granted this mandate, but it is yet another sign that Haftar is growing desperate. After a series of military losses in Tripoli, Haftar is attempting to eradicate any eastern Libya actors willing to open a dialogue to support diplomacy. His latest move was disapproved by Russia, who has been providing Haftar with mercenaries and weapons on the ground. France has also stated that the only way to end the conflict is through UN-backed political and diplomatic negotiations.
- Haftar has called for a ceasefire, which has been rejected after he has repeatedly broken ceasefire agreements in the past. This latest ceasefire call comes after a series of battlefield reversals and defeats for his militias. Haftar is also recognizing his plummeting diplomatic ground and is attempting to rebuild a crumbling reputation.
- The International Rescue Committee (IRC) is warning of the escalation of violence in Libya and its impacts on the country’s COVID-19 response. With pandemic response in Libya already fragile, attacks on health care and civilian infrastructure by Haftar’s forces is adding to both the death toll and increasing stress on the health care system.
- US defense officials are warning that Russia’s insertion into the conflict in Libya is in direct opposition to US strategic interests in North Africa. Russia, operating in Libya in support of Haftar’s forces, is supplying paramilitary groups to Haftar. This effort is at a low cost to Russia and allows the Kremlin to deny any involvement.

AFP (4/28): [Libya's Haftar claims mandate to rule as rivals denounce 'coup' attempt](#)

- In his latest attempts at grabbing power by force, Haftar is seeking to stage a coup after claiming to have a “popular mandate” to govern Libya.
- This move is an attempt to consolidate power after a series of military losses in Tripoli. Haftar, not specifically outlining how he has received this mandate or which institution the mandate came from, is getting more and more desperate as his forces both abandon him and lose strategic military outposts he once held.
- Haftar’s latest calls are also an attempt to establish himself as the only power in eastern Libya, and out any actors who are in favor of dialogue.

Economist (5/1): [Khalifa Haftar is losing ground and lashing out in Libya](#)

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- Haftar is calling for a ceasefire for the rest of Ramadan, although people close to Haftar believe he is doubling down his war efforts. This latest move to attempt for ceasefire, which has been rejected, indicates that Haftar is on his back foot.
- This is one of the first calls for a ceasefire Haftar has made, a sign that Haftar is losing ground in the war after a series of battlefield reverse and defeats.
- Having lost diplomatic ground after declaring a “popular mandate” to take control of Libya, Haftar’s attempts for a ceasefire indicate that he is trying to recover lost diplomatic ground, and that his forces are suffering and weakening.

The Telegraph (4/30): [Khalifa Haftar's forces declare Ramadan ceasefire following setbacks in Libya's civil war](#)

- The LNA has called for a ceasefire for the rest of Ramadan. Previous calls for a ceasefire by Haftar have almost immediately been broken by his forces.
- The LNA has twice indicated that they would agree to stop the fighting last year, only to quickly turn around and escalate the conflict.
- The latest call for a ceasefire from the LNA without international pressure indicates that Haftar is losing confidence and ground in the conflict. A series of defeats on the ground have pushed more pressure on to Haftar.

Reuters (4/28): [Russia disapproves of Haftar's power grab in Libya -lfax cites foreign minister](#)

- Russia, who has been providing mercenaries and weaponry to Haftar, has come out and disapproved of Haftar’s move to seize control of Libya.
- The Kremlin claims to seek a resolution through diplomacy. Much of their actions in Libya have suggested otherwise, but this could be indicative of Haftar’s decreasing military power.

Reuters (4/28): [Without Naming Libya's Haftar, France Says Unilateral Action Won't Solve Conflict](#)

- In a major step, France has stated that the Libya conflict will not be solved through unilateral decisions, only under UN-backed dialogues.
- France stated there is no alternative to an inclusive political solution, which was concluded at the Berlin conferences.
- This comes as Haftar stated he was accepting “popular mandate” to rule over the country as he brushed civilian authorities aside in east Libya.

Rescue.org (4/24): [Escalating violence in Libya jeopardises COVID-19 response, warns IRC](#)

- The International Rescue Committee (IRC) is warning of the escalation of violence in Libya and its impacts on the country’s COVID-19 response.
- With pandemic response in Libya already fragile, attacks on health care and civilian infrastructure by Haftar’s forces is adding to both the death toll and increasing stress on the health care system.

Washington Examiner (4/29): [Russian presence in Libya more dangerous than ISIS, says US Africa Command](#)

- US defense officials are warning that Russia’s insertion into the conflict in Libya is in direct opposition to US strategic interests in North Africa.

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- Russia, operating in Libya in support of Haftar's forces, is supplying paramilitary groups to Haftar. This effort is at a low cost to Russia and allows the Kremlin to deny any involvement.
- Banking on victory, Russia hopes that Libya will become an economic asset to them through lucrative port and mineral extraction deals, as well as influence over the Libyan government.

Al-Jazeera (4/29): [Libya's GNA protests French warplane's unauthorised overflight](#)

- Unauthorized French-built warplanes were spotted over GNA territories. The Rafale warplane, along with a refueling aircraft, were spotted flying over Misrata, near the capital Tripoli, and in combat zones further east of Tripoli.

Libya Observer (4/29): [US ambassador: Libyan Political Agreement is only recognized framework of governance in Libya](#)

- US Ambassador to Libya Richard Norland, in a conversation with GNA PM Al-Sarraj, reiterated that a political agreement is the only internationally recognized framework for Libya's governance and political transition.
- Ambassador Norland also reiterated the United State's rejection of Haftar's offensive and called on him to halt military operations.

Al-Jazeera (4/24): [Haftar supporters rally as his forces lose ground in battle](#)

- Facing a number of military defeats at the hands of the GNA, Haftar is attempting to step up measures in order to "pave the way for building a civil state" at a recent rally.
- Haftar has called on Libyan people to drop the political agreement and to help him lead the next stage in managing the affairs of Libya.
- As his attempts to take Tripoli continue to fail, Haftar is becoming a more desperate figure. His chances at victory by force continue to dwindle.

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