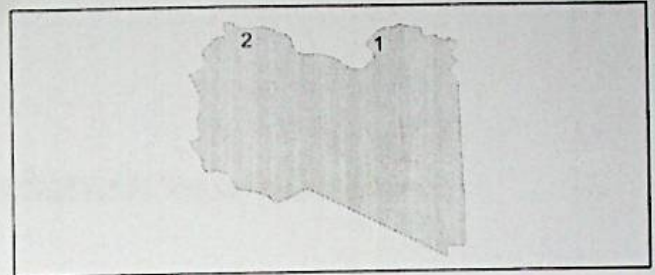


20 May 2014

Media Analysis - Libya

Summary: Khalid Hiftar gains support of most important military units in eastern Libya; Acting Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thini's cabinet proposes roadmap to end political crisis; Italian government expresses concern over deteriorating political and security situation in Libya; Security concerns force closure of Saudi and Emirati embassies in Tripoli



Khalid Hiftar Gains Support of Most Important Military Units in Eastern Libya

Khalid Hiftar, the retired military officer who launched a surprise offensive against Islamist militias in Benghazi(1) on 16 May, gained the support of eastern Libya's most important military units. Special Forces commander Wanis Bukhamada announced his full approval of Hiftar's offensive and stated that terrorism in Benghazi must be defeated. The Special Forces, which has lost dozens of members to Ansar al-Sharia attacks since mid-2012, is now expected to drop its neutrality and fight alongside Hiftar's so-called "Libyan National Army" in Benghazi. The commander of the Tobruk Air Base also declared his approval of the offensive, although it remains to be seen if forces under his command will contribute. By supporting Hiftar, the two units are defying the leadership of the Libyan government, a group that recently condemned the retired military officer for launching the offensive without gaining their authorization beforehand.

Based on media reports in: al-Wasat, Libya al-Mustakbal, Libya for the Free, Libya Herald, Quryna al-Jadeeda

Acting Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thini's Cabinet Proposes Roadmap to End Political Crisis

Acting Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thini's cabinet proposed a roadmap aimed at ending the current political crisis in Libya. The roadmap calls for the General National Congress (GNC) to immediately approve the 2014 budget and hold another election for the Premiership, as many contest the legitimacy of the 4 May vote that Ahmed Maetig won. According to the roadmap, the GNC should then go into recess until it is dissolved following the House of Representatives election later this year. It remains to be seen, however, if the roadmap will receive support from the relevant actors involved in the political crisis. Reports indicate that all sides are fully mobilizing in preparation for a new round of clashes, suggesting that compromise will be difficult to forge in the immediate future.

Based on media reports in: al-Wasat, Libya al-Mustakbal, Libya Herald, Quryna al-Jadeeda

Italian Government Expresses Concern Over Deteriorating Political and Security Situation in Libya

The Italian government released a statement expressing concern over the deteriorating political and security situation in Libya. The statement noted that there is a need for serious international involvement to ensure that Libya's transition, which is at a major crossroads, takes the right path forward. The statement also called on all political parties in Libya to eschew violence and forge consensus on important national matters through dialogue. According to a European Union (EU) diplomatic source, the release of the statement comes at a time when the Italian government is pushing other EU member states to play a bigger role in promoting stability in Libya.

Based on media reports in: al-Wasat, Libya al-Mustakbal