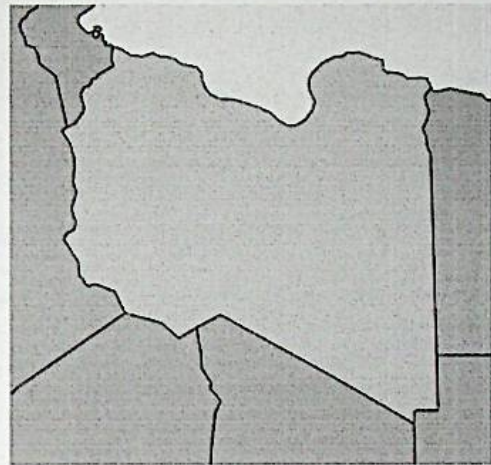

Libya

Jan 23-28

Summary

There was an attack this week near the Italian Embassy in Tripoli. Khalifa Haftar announced his troops have gained control of Ganfouda in Benghazi.



Diplomacy

Tunisia will hold a trilateral ministerial meeting with Egypt and Algeria at the beginning of February as a result of talks between Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry and Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi. Shoukry travelled to Tunisia where he also met with Tunisian Foreign Minister Khemaies Jhinaoui. Shoukry and Essebsi also discussed the situation in Libya. Shoukry expressed his country's appreciation for Tunisia's role and efforts to resolve the Libyan crisis and said he is ready to take part in the ministerial meeting in February. He also delivered a message from Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al Sisi to Essebsi. According to an Egyptian Foreign Ministry statement, the bilateral relations focused on a series of regional issues. Essebsi said "Egypt is in good hands", referring to the current government, said the statement. "Egypt's long history, the great people and patriotic army have always played a key role in protecting the country from various challenges", added Essebsi. Shoukry and Essebsi also discussed the political and social instability in Libya with Essebsi stressing the need for Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria to cooperate to resolve the situation. Finally, Essebsi launched an initiative to hold the trilateral meeting to coordinate efforts and find a solution to the Libyan crisis, said Abdelkader Messahel, Minister of Maghreb Affairs, African Union and Aran League, during a conference in Algiers on the impact of the Libyan crisis on Algerian border security. Messahel stressed the need for Libya to avail itself of strong institutions to fight terrorism and organized crime. The political solution to the Libyan crisis must be reached through dialogue between the sides without interference from foreign countries, he added. Messahel also stressed the need to respect Libya's sovereignty. Regarding efforts from the African Union (AU) to resolve the Libyan crisis, he reiterated the creation of a committee made up of five African states to manage the crisis.

Politics

The RADA Special Deterrence Forces loyal to the Tripoli Government of National Accord (GNA) have released new details on the Jan. 21 attack in front of the Planning Ministry in the Libyan capital, 600 metres from the Italian Embassy. In a statement, the anti-crime forces said they have new evidence –identifying two men on board a car that blew up in Tripoli. In the statement on Facebook, RADA said it would reveal "who is behind this attack that is a result of political conflict and aims to create confusion in the capital". "There were no victims in this political conflict, apart from the citizens; as a deterrence force, we have no part in this conflict but we will strike anyone attempting to undermine stability in the capital, we will discover who is behind plots and we will give you the details at the end of investigations", said the

statement. The burnt bodies of two soldiers were found inside the car that exploded in front of the Planning Ministry, said the head of the investigations during a press conference in Tripoli, stressing that all the information pertaining to the investigations has been collected. The official said the bodies have been taken to the legal medical institution to be examined and that explosive experts are analysing the detonation. He added that the attack is linked to terrorist organizations and that further details have not been revealed to avoid influencing the investigation. The names of the two soldiers have not been released.

GNA Prime Minister Fayeze al Sarraj has signed six decrees nominating "minister delegates" for the ministries of: Health (Mohammed Abu Sanina); Communications (Hisham Abdullah Abu Shakuit); Justice (Abdel Rahman Abu Bariq); Foreign Affairs (Lotfi al Amin al Maghrebi); Treasury (Mohammed Gheith); Social Affairs (Mohammed Abu Sanina).

Libyan Speaker Aguila Saleh has congratulated Khalifa Haftar's forces on the conquest of the Ganfouda district, the last Islamist militia stronghold in Benghazi. Saleh released a statement confirming that "our young brave fighters can celebrate the liberation of Ganfouda that was controlled by terrorists who restricted the freedom of the people". He then praised the efforts of Haftar's forces and Benghazi security and guaranteed his support of the self-proclaimed Libyan National Army (LNA).

Security

US warplanes struck Islamic State hideouts roughly 50 kilometres south of Misrata on Sunday Jan. 22 night, said the GNA Defence Ministry Spokesman Mohammed al Ghasri in a statement. These are the first US raids in Libya since Donald Trump's inauguration as President on Jan. 20. The number of terrorists killed during the strike is still unknown. Al Ghasri confirmed that several terrorists have fled from Sirte and Benghazi after the LNA advance on Ganfouda.

Forces from the Tripoli government operation "al Bunyan al Marsoos" have identified four Islamic State hideouts close to Sirte. Last Wednesday Jan. 18, a US airstrike conducted by strategic B-2 bombers and drones targeted an Islamic State hideout 45 kilometers south-west of Sirte. According to former US Secretary of Defence Ashton Carter, the roughly 80 terrorists killed in the strike intended to carry out attacks in Europe.

Haftar's planes have bombed Derna Mujahedeen Council positions in the Hujaj al Fatih area of western Cyrenaica. A Benghazi air force source told "Agenzia Nova" that the strikes targeted Derna Islamist militia positions, adding that no civilians were killed in the raid. The LNA Omar al Mokhtar brigade announced this week that an artillery of surface-to-air missile launchers belonging to the Derna Mujahedeen Council was destroyed in the city's outskirts. Haftar's forces are maintaining the naval embargo on the city to prevent the Islamist militia receiving weapons. Local sources have said the embargo has triggered a humanitarian crisis among the civilian population as Haftar's checkpoints positioned along the five external entrances have closed the city.

A car bomb went off this week in Gamal Abdel Nasser Road, central Benghazi, while a LNA convoy was passing. According to sources from the al Jala hospital in Cyrenaica, four civilians and two soldiers were injured.

Based on news from the following Libyan newspaper and websites: Ean Libia, al Wasat, Libya al Mustakbal, Libya Herald, Libyan News Agency Lana, al Hayat, al Quds al Arabi, al Arabiya, Sky Arabia, al Youm.