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Libya: Transition and U.S. Policy

Christopher M. Blanchard
Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs

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Summary

Libya's political transition has been disrupted by armed non-state groups and threatened by the indecision and infighting of interim leaders. After an armed uprising ended the 40-plus year rule of Muammar al Qadhafi in late 2011, interim authorities proved unable to form a stable government, address pressing security issues, reshape the country's public finances, or create a viable framework for post-conflict justice and reconciliation.

Elections for legislative bodies and a constitutional drafting assembly were held and transparently administered from 2012 through 2014, but were marred by declining rates of participation, threats to candidates and voters, and zero-sum political competition. Insecurity was prevalent in Libya in the immediate wake of the 2011 conflict and deepened in 2014, driven by overlapping ideological, personal, financial, and transnational rivalries. Resulting conflicts involving Libyans in different parts of the country drove the political transition off course. At present, armed militia groups and locally organized political leaders remain the most powerful arbiters of public affairs. Criminals and violent Islamist extremist organizations have exploited these conditions, and the latter have strengthened their military capabilities and advanced their ideological agendas inside Libya and beyond its borders.

U.S. officials and other international actors have worked since August 2014 to convince Libyan factions and their regional supporters that inclusive, representative government and negotiation are preferable to competing groups' attempts to achieve dominance through force of arms. In August 2015, the United Nations (U.N.) Security Council adopted Resolution 2174, authorizing the placement of financial and travel sanctions on individuals and entities in Libya and internationally who are found to be "engaging in or providing support for other acts that threaten the peace, stability or security of Libya, or obstruct or undermine the successful completion of its political transition."

In December 2015, some Libyan leaders endorsed a U.N.-facilitated agreement that would create a Government of National Accord (GNA) to oversee the completion of the transition. Steps to finalize and implement the agreement are underway, although some Libyans have rejected the agreement and have vowed to defend their interests by force if necessary. The U.N. Security Council has reiterated its threat to sanction spoilers and has called on member states to support any emergent GNA.

The U.S. State Department describes Libya as a terrorist safe haven, and the U.S. government suspended operations at the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli and relocated U.S. personnel out of the country in July 2014. As of early 2016, the Islamic State's rise in parts of Libya had become a matter of deep concern among Libyans and the international community, as had the continuing weakness of Libyan state institutions and flows of migrants, refugees, and contraband across Libya's unpoliced borders. In February 2016, senior U.S. intelligence officials identified the IS presence in Libya as the group's most developed branch outside of Syria and Iraq and suggested that presence could grow more dangerous if left unchecked.

Congress has conditionally appropriated funding for limited U.S. transition assistance and security assistance programs for Libya since 2011. Congressional consideration of the September 2012 attacks on U.S. facilities and personnel in Benghazi is ongoing. In 2015, conflict mitigation appeared to be the Obama Administration's top policy priority in Libya, but statements made by U.S. officials in 2016 suggest that U.S. counterterrorism concerns have grown and that military action against the Islamic State, Al Qaeda, and other extremists in Libya may continue and/or expand in as yet unspecified ways, even if political consensus among Libyans remains elusive.

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Overview

More than four years after a U.S.-led NATO military intervention helped Libyan rebels topple long-time dictator Muammar al Qadhafi, Libya remains politically fragmented and its security is threatened by terrorist organizations and infighting among interim leaders and locally organized armed groups. As of early 2016, a United Nations-facilitated agreement to form a Government of National Accord (GNA) remains under consideration by Libyan factions.

Meanwhile, the United States and other third parties continue to assess the security situation and intermittently strike terrorist targets in different parts of the country. Members of Congress and U.S. officials are considering options for future engagement in Libya with two parallel goals: supporting the emergence of unified, capable national governance and reducing transnational threats posed by Libya's instability and Libya-based terrorists.

Pursuing these goals simultaneously presents U.S. policymakers with choices regarding relative priorities, including the types and timing of possible aid and/or interventions, the nature and extent of U.S. partnership with various Libyan groups, the potential use of sanctions or other coercive measures, and relations with other countries seeking to influence developments in line with their own interests. In February 2016, senior U.S. officials acknowledged the interrelated nature of U.S. objectives, with Director of National Intelligence James Clapper referring to a "dilemma ... in terms of a more robust military intervention in Libya, and the potential jeopardy that imposes to a very fragile evolving political process."[1]

Political and Security Dynamics

The collapse of Libya's post-Qadhafi transition to a constitutionally-established government in 2014 compounded the complexity of the country's already diverse and atomized politics and security environment. Competing factions and alliances, organized along local, regional, ideological, and personal lines, have jockeyed for influence and power in post-Qadhafi Libya, at times with the backing of rival foreign governments. For Libyans, key issues have included

- the relative powers and responsibilities of local, regional, and national government;
- the weakness of national government institutions and security forces;
- the role of Islam in political and social life;
- the involvement in politics and security of former regime officials; and
- the proper management of the country's large energy reserves and associated revenues.

For outside powers, key issues have included

- transnational criminal and terrorist threats emanating from Libya;
- the continued export of Libyan oil and natural gas;
- Libya's role as a transit country for Europe-bound refugees and economic migrants;

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[1] Testimony of DNI Clapper and Central Intelligence Agency Director John Brennan before the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, February 25, 2016.

- the security of Libyan weapons stockpiles; and
- the country's orientation in region-wide competition relative to political Islamists and secular authoritarians.

Libya's Political Landscape

For a description of Libya's political evolution over time, see **Appendix A**. Some observers have described developments in Libya since mid-2014 in oversimplified terms as a binary struggle between two opposing pol—ical-militia coalitions—1) the Tobruk-based House of Representatives (HOR, elected in June 2014) and "Operation Dignity"/Libyan National Army (LNA) forces and, 2) the Tripoli-based remnants of the General National Congress (GNC, elected in July 2012) and "Libya Dawn" forces. Nevertheless, parallel ceasefire agreements among individual members of these two groupings, and their members' differing participation in U.N.-sponsored peace talks, illustrate the deeper complexity of Libyan politics.

In the words of one expert observer, in today's Libya, "the two alliances have disintegrated" and "the emergence of a centrist coalition in support of the deal has isolated hardliners on both sides, who are now potential spoilers. …the struggle is not between two camps but between dozens of rival political interests."[2] In March 2016, expert witnesses before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee similarly emphasized the fractured, highly localized, and fluid nature of Libya's current politics.[3] Libyan parties' relative support or opposition to the proposed GNA agreement is a key factor reshaping the country's political landscape, but other factors such as ideology, personal rivalries, foreign patron relationships, financial incentives, and local and regional identities continue to be relevant.

To the extent that the United States and others have sought to build consensus among Libyans on national political, economic, or security matters, this complexity and diversity has created significant challenges. Nevertheless, many observers attribute the apparent recent shift by some Libyan actors toward reconciliation (or at a minimum, a return to mutual accommodation) to several factors. These factors include: the inability of numerous small factions to muster sufficient force or legitimacy to assert dominance over each other; the inability of rival claimants to gain access to government funds controlled by the Central Bank or sovereign assets held overseas; the U.N. arms embargo and the potential widening of the reach of U.N. sanctions; and the growing threat posed to Libyans by extremist groups, especially by supporters of the Islamic State.

Perhaps most controversial issues at present are questions that relate to the future of national security decision-making in the country under a proposed GNA. Some LNA figures have called military command issues a "red line" and warned against the incorporation of what they consider to be militia or extremist forces into the military.[4] Other LNA figures have embraced a more inclusive approach and questioned those holding more exclusionist views. On the other side of the conflict, some Western Libya-based supporters of the U.N. proposals call for the ouster of LNA leader General Haftar and his exclusion from a future government. Even if an interim government of national accord can be formed in this context, many observers expect Libyan authorities to face continuing resistance from a range of Islamist insurgent groups, especially the Islamic State's Libyan branch, which has threatened all parties in the country that reject its vision and plans.

Conflict and Negotiations

Libyans have been immersed in chaotic conflict since May 2014, when a group of current and former military officers led by retired General Khalifa Haftar launched a military campaign against Islamist groups; the campaign had not been authorized by the national government that was then in power. National elections to replace the then-interim legislature (the Tripoli-based General National Congress, GNC) were held successfully in June 2014, but some Libyans challenged the legitimacy of the resulting body (the Tobruk-based House of Representatives,

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[2] Wolfram Lacher, "Supporting Stabilization in Libya: The Challenges of Finalizing and Implementing the Skhirat Agreement," Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik German Institute for International and Security Affairs, July 2015.

[3] See testimony of Fred Wehry and Claudia Gazzini before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, March 3, 2016.

[4] U.S. Government Open Source Center (OSC) Report IML2015071554712324, "Libyan army is 'red line', not part of political negotiations, says chief," Libya WAL News Agency (Tobruk), July 15, 2015.

HOR). The HOR's critics questioned its mandate and its leaders' embrace of Haftar's anti-Islamist military campaign.

Some Libyans (including non-Islamist groups) saw the Haftar-led campaign as an attempt to illegitimately reassert control of the country by former regime officials aligned with foreign countries, including Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. The military campaign's supporters have argued that the inability of state institutions to ensure security and the aggressive actions of armed Islamist groups demand a forceful response. Some HOR/Haftar supporters accuse Qatar, Turkey, and Sudan of backing their Islamist and western Libya-based adversaries. The resulting dispute led to the emergence of two rival governments affiliated with the GNC and HOR respectively. The United States, the United Nations, and other international parties recognized the authority of the HOR government, but in practice remained engaged with all parties in the pursuit of reconciliation.

After a year of bitter conflict and in the face of rising threats from Islamic State supporters and other extremists, some Libyan leaders considered and ultimately signed onto a United Nations-facilitated reconciliation proposal in December 2015 that seeks to establish a new interim Government of National Accord (GNA). The GNA would be tasked with managing the completion of the country's disrupted transition from interim post-Qadhafi leadership to a constitutionally-established elected government. Since late 2014, the United States has backed the U.N.-led negotiation process that produced the proposal in consultation with representatives of Libya's two rival governments, local leaders, militia members, and other groups. The United Nations Security Council endorsed the agreement in December 2015 by adopting Resolution 2259, which called on member states to support the implementation of the agreement, reiterated the threat of possible sanctions to spoilers, and called for member states to provide security support to the GNA government upon request.

As of March 2016, steps to finalize and implement the agreement are underway. The HOR accepted the GNA agreement in principle in late January but refused to endorse the first cabinet slate proposed by Prime Minister-designate Fayez al Sarraj. HOR members aligned with Haftar have sought an amendment to an article of the agreement that calls for command of the military (which the HOR granted to General Haftar) to shift to the GNA's Presidency Council once the agreement is ratified. The Council is made up of representatives from Libya's key factions and regions. One hundred HOR members issued a statement signaling their support for the agreement in late February 2016 while discussions between PM-designate Sarraj and HOR leaders about the way forward continued. Negotiations are ongoing with regard to these issues, but some Libyans have rejected the agreement outright, and some militia forces have vowed to defend their interests by force if necessary. United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) head Martin Kobler remains engaged with Libyan and international figures in pursuit of a workable outcome.

Alternative Proposals

The GNA agreement and process are the result of an externally-facilitated and largely top-down, consultative effort to bring peace and political stability to the country. Some observers have proposed an alternative approach that would prioritize Libyan-led, "bottom-up" efforts to forge compromise and address key issues. Other observers praise the role of the United Nations and other third parties who promote national reconciliation, but suggest that more efforts are needed to engage local and regional Libyan actors with influence over security, natural resources, infrastructure, and sources of revenue.

Proponents of the "Libyan-led" approach argue that solutions reached by Libyans will be more durable than any outcomes perceived to be imposed by foreign powers, and they highlight steps

taken by some Libyans to outline an alternative national agreement through meetings outside the U.N. process held in Tunisia in late 2015. Critics of this alternative approach argue that without support from a neutral third-party such as UNSMIL to play a coordinating and potentially coercive role, Libyan parties might not resolve their differences quickly enough to avert fiscal collapse or meet growing threats from the Islamic State. Relative perceptions of risk, relative interests, and relative priorities appear to shape different parties views on these questions.

Figure 1. Map and Basic Country Data

LIBYA AT A GLANCE

Land Area: 1.76 million sq. km. (slightly larger than Alaska)

Land Boundaries: 4,348 km (~40% more than U.S.-Mexico border)

Coastline: 1,770 km (more than 30% longer than California coast)

Population: 6,411,776 (July 2015 est., 2013 U.N. estimated 12% were immigrants)

GDP (PPP; annual real % change): $103.3 billion; -19.8% (2014 est.)

GDP per capita (PPP): $16,600 (2014 est.)

Budget (spending; balance): $25.22 billion, deficit 14.1% of GDP (2014 est.)

Literacy: 89.5%

Oil and natural gas reserves: 48.01 billion barrels (2013 est.); 1.547 trillion cubic meters (2013 est.)

External Debt: $3.9 billion

Sources: Graphic created by CRS. Map borders and cities generated by Hannah Fischer using data from Department of State, 2013; Esri, 2013; and Google Maps, 2013. At-a-glance information from CIA World Factbook.

Conflict, Spending, and Low Oil Prices Raise Prospect of Fiscal Collapse

Conflict and instability in Libya have taken a severe toll on the country's economy and weakened its fiscal and reserve positions since 2011. Oil and natural gas sales supply 97% of the government's fiscal revenue, but as of late February 2016, conflict had caused oil production to plummet to just over 360,000 barrels per day out of an overall capacity of 1.6 million barrels per day.[5] At the same time, low oil prices have reduced the revenue earned from each barrel sold, putting significant pressure on government finances. State spending on salaries, imports, and subsidies has expanded in the post-Qadhafi period and state payments to civilians and militia members have continued since the outbreak of conflict in 2014. Central Bank authorities have paid salaries for military and militia forces aligned with opposing sides in the internal conflicts—even as national reserves have eroded. Bank officials are reported to have recently advised political leaders that the drawdown rate on Libya's remaining liquid foreign reserves of $50 billion to $60 billion will be slowed to maintain the ability to pay basic salaries as long as possible, but some observers warn of a complete budgetary collapse by mid-2016. The Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook estimates that Libya's 2015 budget deficit was 49% of GDP (equivalent to $45 billion).

The payment of militia forces may prove particularly important in the context of ongoing efforts to secure support for a United Nations-backed political agreement aimed at forming a Government of National Accord. Determining whether and how militia forces are paid may affect their willingness to abide by terms of any agreement reached. The overall security of national energy infrastructure is also an issue of concern, as important oil infrastructure locations remain under the control of locally-organized armed groups. Islamic State forces have targeted oil infrastructure in central and eastern Libya since 2015, raising fears that major and more lasting national economic disruptions could occur if major sites are seized or damaged in ongoing fighting.

In March 2014, the U.N. Security Council approved third party military operations to interdict ships named by the U.N. Libya Sanctions Committee as being suspected of carrying unauthorized oil exports.[6] Authorities in eastern Libya have made preparations to sell oil produced in areas under their control, drawing criticism from their rivals in Tripoli and other areas of the country. With budget pressure growing, rival Libyan political actors also have struggled for control of assets held overseas by Libya's sovereign wealth fund, the Libya Investment Authority (LIA), with assets exceeding $60 billion. Its assets remain frozen pursuant to U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973 (2011), as modified by Resolution 2009 (2011).

In December 2015, the International Crisis Group observed that "a key conflict driver in Libya is the fight over control of its oil and oil wealth," and argued that "no solution to current divisions is possible without a preliminary deal on the management of its economic and financial resources, and the armed groups that control them." They further argued that "the financial situation – and with it citizen welfare – faces collapse in the context of a deep political crisis, militia battles and the spread of radical groups, including the Islamic State (IS). If living conditions plunge and

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[5] International Monetary Fund, "Arab Countries in Transition: Economic Outlook and Key Challenges" October 9, 2014; and, on Aidan Lewis, "Libya's NOC warns of more Islamic State attacks on oil facilities," Reuters, February 22, 2016.

[6] Security Council Resolution 2146.

militia members' government salaries are not paid, the two governments competing for legitimacy will both lose support, and mutiny, mob rule and chaos will take over."[7]

The Islamic State Threat

The presence and strengthening of Islamic State supporters in Libya have become matters of deep concern among Libyans and the international community. By some estimates, the conflict in Syria has drawn thousands of young Libyan men since 2012, and some observers link the rise of IS-affiliated groups in Libya to the return of some of those Libyan fighters from Syria in 2014.[8] U.S. military officials estimated the group's strength at approximately 3,500 fighters in late 2015, but in early 2016, senior U.S. officials estimated that figure had grown to as many as 6,000, among a much larger community of Libyan Salafi-jihadist activists and militia members. On February 9, CIA Director John Brennan told the Select Senate Committee on Intelligence that,

> We see Libya as the most important theatre for ISIL outside of the Syria-Iraq theatre, they have several thousand members there, they have absorbed some of the groups inside of Libya, including Ansar al Sharia that was very active prior to ISIL's rise. Libya has been a place where this form of extremism and terrorism has grown up over the years. As the borders of the Syria-Iraq area were being tightened down, we know that some of those foreign fighters started to divert into Libya. And so Libya has become a magnet for individuals not only inside of Libya but from the African continent as well as from outside. So it is a real issue, a real problem, but we see ISIL in Libya as a very, very important hub for ISIL activities.

IS supporters have announced three affiliated *wilayah* (provinces) corresponding to Libya's three historic regions—*Wilayat Tripolitania* in the west, *Wilayat Barqa* in the east, and *Wilayat Fezzan* in the southwest. Since late 2014, IS supporters have taken control of Muammar al Qadhafi's hometown—the central coastal city of Sirte—and they have grappled with western and eastern Libyan forces in attempts to expand their territory. Clashes with groups to the east have damaged vital national oil infrastructure, and as of February 2016, IS fighters continue to press for control over national oil assets in the area.

As in other countries, IS supporters in Libya have clashed with armed Islamist groups that do not share their beliefs or recognize the authority of IS leader and self-styled caliph, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi. Other IS backers sought to impose their control on the city of Darnah in far eastern Libya, but were forced from the town by a coalition of other Islamists. IS supporters continue to face a backlash from hostile tribal groups, local militia, and other Islamists, suggesting that the group, like its secular rivals, may struggle to achieve nation-wide dominance in Libya's fractured political scene. The Islamic State's vehement and violent opposition to representative governance further suggests that it may be durably at odds with the majority of Libyans' preferred outcome for the transition and with the U.N. Security Council's preferences for the country's long-term stability.

Armed Islamist groups in Libya occupy a spectrum that reflects differences in ideology as well as their members' underlying personal, familial, tribal, and regional loyalties. Since the 1990s, the epicenters of Islamist militant activity in Libya have largely been in the eastern part of the country, with communities like the coastal town of Darnah and some areas of Benghazi, the east's

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[7] International Crisis Group, "The Prize: Fighting for Libya's Energy Wealth," Middle East and North Africa Report N°165, December 3, 2015.

[8] Frederic Wehrey and Ala' Alrababa'h, "Rising Out of Chaos: The Islamic State in Libya," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 5, 2015.

largest city, coming under the de facto control of armed Salafi-jihadist groups in different periods since 2011. Some Islamists whose armed activism predates the 2011 revolution, such as members of the Darnah-based Abu Salim Martyrs Brigade, have formed new coalitions to pursue their interests in the wake of the revolution.

The emergence of the Ansar al Sharia organization in 2012 demonstrated the appeal of transnationally-minded Salafist-jihadist ideology in Libya, and the group persisted alongside other Islamist and secular militia groups in the Benghazi Revolutionaries' Shura Council (BRSC) in battling LNA-forces for control of Benghazi through late 2015. In 2014, the U.S. State Department announced the designation of Ansar al Sharia in Benghazi and Ansar al Sharia in Darnah as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) under Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act and as Specially Designated Global Terrorist entities under Executive Order 13224.[9] Ansar al Sharia has vigorously condemned the military operations against it by Haftar-aligned forces as a "war against the religion and Islam backed by the West and their Arab allies."[10]

The relationship between supporters of the Islamic State organization and members of Ansar al Sharia and other Salafist-jihadist groups once seen as aligned with Al Qaeda is unclear, with some observers suggesting that the Islamic State could seek to recruit from Islamist militias that are defeated by other rivals or excluded from national security arrangements under a GNA deal.

In southwestern Libya, Islamist extremist operatives reportedly are active, and may be using remote areas to serve as safe havens or transit areas for operations in neighboring Niger and Algeria. This includes Al Murabitoun, a group that State Department described in April 2015 as "one of the greatest near-term threats to U.S. and international interests in the Sahel, because of its publicly stated intent to attack Westerners and proven ability to organize complex attacks."[11] The June 2015 airstrike in eastern Libya targeted Al Murabitoun leader Mokhtar Belmokhtar, who also led the group responsible for the January 2013 attack on the natural gas facility at In Amenas, Algeria, in which three Americans were killed. His death in the June 2015 strike has not yet been confirmed, and local allies have denied he was killed.

Section 1278 of the FY2015 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 113-291) required the Secretary of Defense to submit to congressional committees "a strategy to counter the growing threat posed by radical Islamist terrorist groups in North Africa, West Africa, and the Sahel."

Migration and Trafficking in Persons

Conflict and weak governance have transformed Libya into a major staging area for the transit of migrants seeking to reach Europe and have encouraged increasing outflows of migrants since mid-2014. Libya is a haven for criminal groups and trafficking networks that seek to exploit such migrants. Data collected by migration observers and immigration officials suggests that many migrants from sub-Saharan Africa transit remote areas of southwestern and southeastern Libya to

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[9] Terrorist Designations of Three Ansar al-Shari'a Organizations and Leaders, January 10, 2014. The State Department said that the groups: "have been involved in terrorist attacks against civilian targets, frequent assassinations, and attempted assassinations of security officials and political actors in eastern Libya, and the September 11, 2012 attacks against the U.S. Special Mission and Annex in Benghazi, Libya. Members of both organizations continue to pose a threat to U.S. interests in Libya."

[10] OSC Report TRN2014052021537855, "Libya: Ansar al-Sharia Vows To Defend Benghazi Against Attacks…" May 19, 2014.

[11] State Department Bureau of Counterterrorism, Country Reports on Terrorism 2014, Chapter 6, April 2015.

reach coastal urban areas where onward transit to Europe is organized. Others, including Syrians, enter Libya from neighboring Arab states seeking onward transit to refuge in Europe.

A patchwork of Libyan local and national authorities and nongovernmental entities assume responsibility for responding to various elements of the migrant crisis, including the provision of humanitarian assistance and medical care, the patrol of coastal and maritime areas, and law enforcement efforts targeting migrant transport networks. Violence and insecurity in Libya complicates international attempts to assist Libyan partners in these efforts and to improve coordination among Libyan stakeholders. Reports suggest that many migrants transiting Libya are subject to difficult living conditions, their human rights are frequently violated, and they remain vulnerable to violence at the hands of armed groups, smugglers, and interim authorities. UNHCR is also concerned about those displaced inside the country due to fighting and its inability to register and assist refugees and asylum seekers.

Figure 2. Migration and Refugee Routes to Libya, 2014-2015
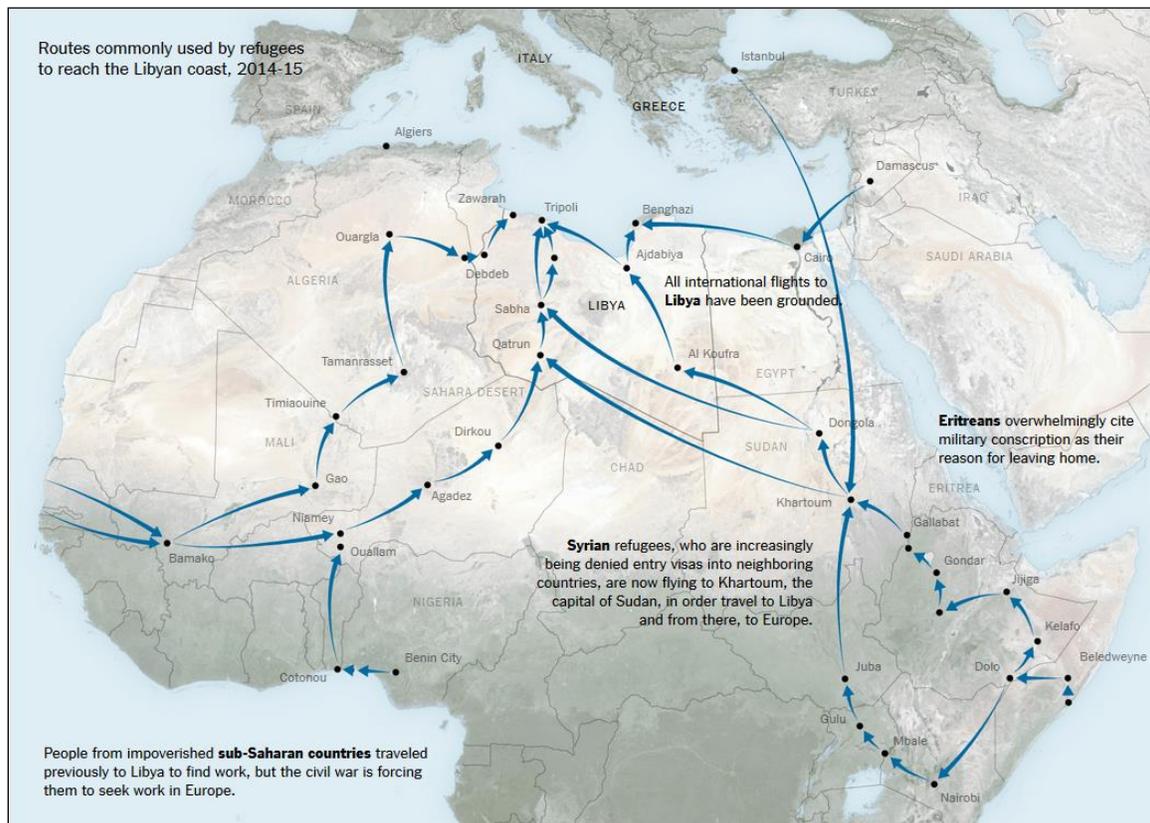
Source: Frontex, New York Times. Published in, "What's Behind the Surge in Refugees Crossing the Mediterranean Sea?" *New York Times*, May 21, 2015.

The State Department's 2015 Trafficking in Persons report placed Libya on the Tier 3 list, saying that the Libyan government "does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so." It further states that the government "lacked the institutional capacity and resources to prevent human trafficking, and it did not display the political will to prioritize such efforts." According to the report, "Libya is a destination and transit country for men and women from sub-Saharan Africa and Asia subjected to forced labor and forced prostitution. Migrants seeking employment in Libya as laborers or domestic workers or who transit Libya *en route* to Europe are vulnerable to trafficking." The

report notes that "large-scale violence driven by militias, civil unrest, and increased lawlessness" limits the availability of accurate information on human trafficking in the country.

In May 2015, the European Union decided to create a naval force (EUNAVFOR Med) "to break the business model of smugglers and traffickers… in the Southern Central Mediterranean and in partnership with Libyan authorities."[12] The force was inaugurated in June 2015 and is now operational. In October 2015, the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 2240, conditionally authorizing member states to inspect and seize vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya suspected of involvement in migrant smuggling or human trafficking. As of February 2016, 24 EU member states supported the Rome-based EU mission, which had completed at least 55 rescue operations and saved an estimated 9,600 lives at sea.[13]

U.S. Policy, Assistance, and Military Action

Terrorist organizations in Libya and the weakness and fractious nature of Libya's national security institutions pose a dual risk to U.S. and international security. U.S. policy initiatives to address both these challenges are under development as of early 2016, with some implementation efforts underway. On February 2, the United States and other members of the Small Group of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL released a statement saying, "We follow with concern the growing influence of ISIL/*Da'esh* in Libya, will continue to monitor closely developments there, and stand ready to support the Government of National Accord in its efforts to establish peace and security for the Libyan people."[14] U.S. officials have arguably placed increased emphasis on the urgency of forming a GNA so that the new government can formally request U.S. and other assistance and lend some political legitimacy to foreign military intervention, which many Libyans either oppose or about which they harbor reservations.

U.N. Security Council Resolution 2259 endorses U.N.-facilitated plans for a Government of National Accord to complete the country's transition to a permanent representative government and reaffirms the Council's prior recognition of "the need to combat by all means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law, including applicable international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, including those committed by groups proclaiming allegiance to ISIL in Libya." Resolution 2259 further "urges Member States to swiftly assist the Government of National Accord in responding to threats to Libyan security and to actively support the new government in defeating ISIL, groups that have pledged allegiance to ISIL, Ansar al Sharia, and all other individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with Al-Qaida operating in Libya, upon its request."

According to U.S. Special Operations Command-Africa (SOCAF) commander Brig. Gen. Donald Bolduc, a "Coalition Coordination Center" has been established in Rome to plan and coordinate joint security efforts in Libya.[15]

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[12] Council of the European Union, Decision (CFSP) 2015/778, May 18, 2015. The force was inaugurated in June.

[13] EUNAVFOR, More than 450 migrants rescued during the weekend by EUNAVFOR MED operation Sophia, February 22, 2016.

[14] Statement by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Small Group of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, February 2, 2016.

[15] Trofimov, "Libya Will Need American Help to Defeat Islamic State, General Says," *Wall Street Journal*, February 29, 2016.

Counterterrorism Policy and Security Sector Assistance

Statements made by U.S. officials in 2016 suggest that U.S. security concerns about the Islamic State Libya presence have intensified, and U.S. military action against IS targets might proceed even if political consensus among Libyans remains elusive in the weeks and months ahead. U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) has geographic responsibility for Libya, its North African neighbors, and adjoining Sahel countries. U.S. defense officials have said that containing instability in Libya is one of five broad lines of effort identified in AFRICOM's five-year plans. They also referenced more specific short and medium term plans to contain and degrade the Islamic State.

In January 2016, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Dunford said "it's fair to say that we're looking to take decisive military action against ISIL in conjunction with the political process" in Libya, and, "The president has made clear that we have the authority to use military force." President Obama has stated his view that the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force is applicable to the Islamic State organization. A U.S. air strike reportedly killed a top IS commander in eastern Libya in November 2015, and a U.S. air strike on IS forces in the western Libya town of Sabratha reportedly killed dozens of suspected fighters in February 2016. Many of those killed in the latter strike reportedly were Tunisians. In early 2016, U.S. Defense Department officials stated that "there have been some U.S. forces in Libya trying to establish contact with forces on the ground so that we get a clear picture of what's happening there."[16]

A senior U.S. military officer testified in July 2015 that "Should diplomatic efforts to form a unity government succeed, I believe the U.S. should be prepared to revisit security assistance programs for legitimate Libyan security services."[17] AFRICOM has signaled its readiness to provide such assistance if conditions allow and has stated its intention to "work with partners to improve our overall effectiveness in containing the spillover effects of Libyan insecurity; preventing the movement of terrorist fighters, facilitators, and weapons into Libya; and simultaneously disrupting the violent extremist networks within."[18] U.S. Brigadier General Bolduc said in February 2016 that U.S. partners in Libya,

> need our advice and assistance. They need our training and a certain amount of equipping in order to be successful.... The capability and the willingness is not the issue. It's a collective decision by the Libyans on what they want. That is hugely important. You've got to go in there to achieve their objectives and their goals.[19]

State Department and Defense Department plans to develop a Libyan General Purpose Force to serve as the nucleus of new national security forces were shelved as conflict broke out in 2014. Nascent U.S. and European efforts to provide organizational assistance and training to Libyan security ministry personnel prior to the U.S. withdrawal reportedly were hindered by security conditions in Libya and complicated by requirements to address Libyans' concerns about proportional local and regional representation in training efforts. Some Libyan recruits sent to the United Kingdom and Jordan for training were involved in security incidents in those countries

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[16] Department of Defense Press Briefing by Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook, January 27, 2016.

[17] Testimony of U.S. Air Force General Paul Selva before the Senate Armed Services Committee, July 14, 2015.

[18] Gen. David Rodriguez, United States Africa Command 2015 Posture Statement, March 2015. Gen. Rodriguez's posture statement further says that "As conditions improve in Libya, we will be ready to support the development of Libyan defense institutions and forces."

[19] Yaroslav Trofimov, "Libya Will Need American Help to Defeat Islamic State, General Says," *Wall Street Journal*, February 29, 2016.

that have raised questions about the viability of external security training programs for Libyan personnel.

The U.S. Defense Department has requested $125 million in FY2017 Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund (CTPF) monies for programs in the Sahel/Maghreb region that may benefit Libyan entities or address threats emanating from Libya through partnership with governments in neighboring countries. Tunisia has received significant amounts of security assistance from the United States in recent years, in part to meet threats posed by Libya-based groups.

Foreign Assistance Programs

From 2011 through 2014, U.S. engagement in Libya shifted from immediate conflict-related humanitarian assistance to focus on transition assistance and security sector support. More than $25 million in USAID-administered programs funded through the Office of Transition Initiatives, regional accounts, and reprogrammed funds were identified between 2011 and 2014 to support the activities of Libyan civil society groups and provide technical assistance to Libya's nascent electoral administration bodies.

The security-related withdrawal of some U.S. personnel from Libya in the wake of the 2012 Benghazi attacks temporarily affected the implementation and oversight of U.S.-funded transition assistance programs. U.S. security assistance programs also were disrupted, but some assistance programs had been reinstated by late 2013. The 2014 withdrawal of U.S. personnel from the country closed the initial chapter of direct post-Qadhafi engagement, but U.S. personnel have remained engaged through liaison programs administered from outside the country. As of early 2016, the State Department has withdrawn U.S. diplomatic personnel from Libya, and the Obama Administration has not publicly described a timetable for their return.[20] Limited U.S. assistance programs are implemented by personnel based in neighboring countries, and at the USAID Middle East Regional Platform office in Frankfurt, Germany.

In spite of these challenges, Obama Administration officials have remained committed to providing transition support to Libyans as possible, and the Administration requested $20 million in foreign operations funding for Libya programming in FY2016 (see **Table 1**). Of the funds requested for FY2016, $10 million in Economic Support Fund monies would support governance and civil society programs, and $10 million split among security assistance accounts would support assessment of and engagement with Libyan security forces. The FY2016 Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 114-113, Division K, Section 7041[f]) states that "not less than $20,000,000 shall be made available for assistance for Libya for programs to strengthen governing institutions and civil society, improve border security, and promote democracy and stability in Libya, and for activities to address the humanitarian needs of the people of Libya."

For FY2017, the Administration is seeking $20.5 million in State Department administered bilateral assistance (see **Table 1** below). According to the request,

> U.S. programs are designed, in coordination with the international community, to support Libyan government and civil society efforts to establish a democratic, representative political system; strengthen the capacity of critical Libyan institutions to deliver services; secure Libya's territory; and build an effective and civilian-led national security system.

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[20] Administration officials have referred to the withdrawal of U.S. Embassy personnel from Libya as temporary. The implications of armed groups' reported infiltration of an evacuated U.S. facility in Tripoli for any future return of diplomatic personnel remain to be seen.

In recent years, Congress has enacted appropriations language requiring the Administration to certify Libyan cooperation with efforts to investigate the 2012 Benghazi attacks and to submit detailed spending and vetting plans in order to obligate appropriated funds.[21] As of March 2016, required certifications had been submitted for FY2015 funding. Congress also has prohibited the provision of U.S. assistance to Libya for infrastructure projects "except on a loan basis with terms favorable to the United States."

In February 2016, the Administration notified Congress of its intent to obligate $5 million in FY2015 funding to support the continuation of USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives programs for Libya in conjunction with the ongoing consideration of the GNA agreement.

Table 1. U.S. Foreign Assistance and Libya-Related Program Funding

(millions of dollars)

Account	FY2015 Actual	FY2016 Allocations	FY2017 Request
Economic Support Fund (ESF)	5[a]	10	15
International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE)	1	2	1
Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining and Related Programs (NADR)	3.5	6.5	4.5
International Military Education and Training (IMET)	-	1.5	-
Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund–Sahel/Maghreb (CTPF-DOD)[b]	113	105	125

Source: State Department and Defense Department budget request and notification documents FY2015-FY2017; and, Explanatory Statement for Division K of P.L. 114-113, the FY2016 Consolidated Appropriations Act.

Notes: Amounts are subject to change.

Funds from centrally managed programs, including the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) Office of Global Programming, and USAID Office of Transition Initiatives may also benefit Libya. State and USAID may also program resources from the Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) and International Disaster Assistance (IDA) humanitarian accounts in Libya. Middle East Regional programs using ESF monies are not included.

a. Notified to Congress in February 2016 to support Libyan Transition Initiative program.

b. Programs funded under this initiative may not be designed to address Libya-specific concerns.

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[21] In the FY2014, FY2015, and FY2016 Consolidated Appropriations Acts (P.L. 113-76, Division K, Section 7041[f]; P.L. 113-235, Division J, Section 7041[f]; and P.L. 114-113, Division K, Section 7041[f]), Congress placed conditions on the provision of funds appropriated by those acts to the central government of Libya. Congress required the State Department to certify that the Libyan government is cooperating with U.S. government efforts to investigate and bring to justice those responsible for the September 2012 Benghazi attacks. The FY2015 act and accompanying explanatory report further require detailed notification to the appropriations committees of planned obligations of funds for security assistance programs for Libya, to include vetting procedures for recipients.

Investigations into 2012 Attacks on U.S. Facilities and Personnel in Benghazi

U.S. Ambassador to Libya Christopher Stevens and three other U.S. personnel were killed on September 11, 2012, during an assault by armed terrorists on two U.S facilities in Benghazi, Libya's second-largest city. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) remains the lead U.S. agency tasked with pursuing the individuals responsible for the attacks. Other government agencies, including the State Department, the Department of Defense (DOD), and elements of the intelligence community (IC), support the FBI's efforts to bring the attackers to justice. Section 1278 of the FY2015 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 113-291) required the Secretary of Defense to submit to congressional defense committees—within 30 days of enactment—

"a report that contains an assessment of the actions taken by the Department of Defense and other Federal agencies to identify, locate, and bring to justice those persons and organizations that planned, authorized, or committed the attacks against the United States facilities in Benghazi, Libya that occurred on September 11 and 12, 2012, and the legal authorities available for such purposes."

On September 28, 2012, the U.S. intelligence community concluded publicly that the incident was a "deliberate and organized terrorist attack carried out by extremists," and said that at the time it remained "unclear if any group or person exercised overall command and control of the attack and if extremist group leaders directed their members to participate. However, we do assess that some of those involved were linked to groups affiliated with, or sympathetic to Al Qaeda."[22] In January 2014, a Senate Select Committee on Intelligence report on the attacks stated that, "Individuals affiliated with terrorist groups, including Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar al Sharia, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula [AQAP], and the Mohammad Jamal Network, participated in the September 11, 2012, attacks."[23] In June 2014, U.S. forces apprehended Ahmed Abu Khattala, a Libyan suspect in the attack, in a military operation in Libya. Abu Khattala has been transferred to the United States, and, as of November 2015, preparations for his trial were ongoing. The U.S. government has offered up to $10 million through the State Department's Rewards for Justice program for information that helps to apprehend and prosecute those responsible for the attack.

Prior to Abu Khattala's capture, U.S. military officials referred to continuing intelligence gaps in Libya in unclassified testimony before Congress, with U.S. AFRICOM Commander General David Rodriguez saying on April 8, 2014, that continuing U.S. efforts against the network responsible for the Benghazi attacks are "made more difficult, obviously, by the security situation."[24] Rodriguez added that at the time U.S. investigators did not "have everybody identified and located," and said that the feasibility of operations to apprehend or otherwise target suspects in Libya "depends ... on the situation and the risk that people want to take." Security conditions in the country have deteriorated further since that time, and U.S. Embassy personnel have departed, with unknown implications for support of similar operations.

Administration officials have repeatedly described Libya as a high risk operational environment, even with regard to routine diplomatic operations in Tripoli, which were suspended in July 2014. Operational risks presumably are higher in areas of Libya that are controlled by anti-U.S. forces. The September 2015 U.S. State Department travel warning for Libya "warns U.S. citizens against all travel to Libya and recommends that U.S. citizens currently in Libya depart immediately." Across Libya, attacks on foreign diplomatic facilities and personnel and on foreign nationals have continued, and reports suggest the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli and related facilities were damaged by fighting in 2014.

Outlook and Issues for Congress

Libyans' divisive political competition, growing terrorist threats, and, since mid-2014, outright conflict between rival groups have prevented U.S. officials from developing robust partnerships and assistance programs in Libya. The shared desire of the U.S. government and other international actors to empower Libyan state security forces has been confounded by the strength of armed non-state groups, weak institutions, and a fundamental lack of political consensus among Libya's interim leaders, especially regarding security issues.

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[22] Statement, Director of Public Affairs for the Director of National Intelligence Shawn Turner, September 28, 2012.

[23] Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Review of the Terrorist Attacks on U.S. Facilities in Benghazi, Libya, September 11-12, 2012*, January 15, 2014.

[24] Deputy Assistant Secretary Amanda Dory and General David Rodriguez, Press Briefing, April 8, 2014.

The 2012 attacks in Benghazi, the deaths of U.S. personnel, the emergence of terrorist threats on Libyan soil, and the internecine conflict between Libyan militias have reshaped debates in Washington about U.S. policy toward Libya. Following intense congressional debate over the merits of U.S. and NATO military intervention in Libya in 2011, many Members of Congress welcomed the announcement of Libya's liberation, the formation of the interim Transitional National Council government, and the July 2012 national General National Congress election, while expressing concern about security in the country, the proliferation of weapons, and the prospects for a smooth political transition. The breakdown of the transition process in 2014 and the outbreak of conflict amplified these concerns, with the subsequent emergence and strengthening of Islamic State supporters in Libya compounding congressional fears about the implications of continued instability in the country.

Prior to the escalation of conflict in May 2014, some Libyans had questioned the then-interim government's decision to seek foreign support for security reform and transition guidance, while some U.S. observers had questioned Libya's need for U.S. foreign assistance given its oil resources and relative wealth. During subsequent fighting, some Libyans have vigorously rejected others' calls for international support and assistance and traded accusations of disloyalty and treason in response to reports of partnership with foreign forces. These dynamics raise questions about the potential viability of the partnership approach favored by the Obama Administration and some in Congress, which seeks to build Libyan capacity, coordinate international action, and leverage Libyan financial resources to meet shared objectives and minimize the need for direct U.S. involvement.

In some cases where the United States government has desired Libyan government action on priority issues, especially in the counterterrorism sector, U.S. officials continue to weigh choices over whether U.S. assistance can build sufficient Libyan capacity quickly and cheaply enough, whether interim leaders are appropriate or reliable partners for the United States, and whether threats to U.S. interests require immediate, direct U.S. action.

The legacies of the 2014-2015 conflict and political intrigue within any reconstituted national security institutions that may emerge from current political negotiations might amplify these questions and complicate U.S. partnership with Libyans further. As noted above, the U.S. military has conducted operations against terrorist targets in Libya, with reported notification of Libyan authorities but limited apparent involvement by them.

Prior to mid-2014, the Obama Administration and Congress reached a degree of consensus regarding limited security and transition support programs in Libya, some of which responded to specific U.S. security concerns about unsecured weapons, terrorist safe havens, and border security. Given that U.S. military involvement in Libya may deepen in 2016 to combat the Islamic State and potentially to provide support to the national security forces of an emergent Government of National Accord, Congress may choose to reexamine the basic terms of any proposed U.S.-Libyan cooperation. In the meantime, Congress also may choose to conduct oversight of ongoing U.S. diplomacy and assistance programs or examine criteria for the potential resumption of U.S. diplomatic operations in Libya.

The failure of U.N.-led Libyan reconciliation efforts would present U.S. decision-makers with hard choices about how best to mitigate threats emanating from the country in the continuing absence of a viable, legitimate national government. Immediate questions before the United States and other members of the U.N. Security Council include whether and how to use existing sanctions resolutions against parties seen as obstructing progress toward a GNA agreement and whether or how to intervene militarily against the Islamic State.

If conflict among Libyans persists, congressional debate over transition and security assistance programs in Libya may intensify, with advocates possibly arguing for new investment on behalf of some Libyans to prevent a broader state collapse and critics possibly arguing that a lack of political consensus among Libyans might make U.S. assistance unlikely to achieve intended objectives. In the interim, Members of Congress may engage Administration officials to determine the possible scope and content of U.S. programs that might be proposed to support any Libyan Government of National Accord, and any U.S. contingency planning for the possibility that negotiations among Libyans could fail to bring conflict to a prompt close.

Appendix A. Libyan History, Civil War, and Political Change

The North African territory that now composes Libya has a long history as a center of Phoenician, Carthaginian, Greek, Roman, Berber, and Arab civilizations. Modern Libya is a union of three historically distinct regions—northwestern Tripolitania, northeastern Cyrenaica or Barqa, and the more remote southwestern desert region of Fezzan. In the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire struggled to assert control over Libya's coastal cities and interior. Italy invaded Libya in 1911 on the pretext of liberating the region from Ottoman control. The Italians subsequently became mired in decades of colonial abuses against the Libyan people and faced a persistent anti-colonial insurgency. Libya was an important battleground in the North Africa campaign of the Second World War and emerged from the fighting as a ward of the Allied powers and the United Nations.

On December 24, 1951, the United Kingdom of Libya became one of Africa's first independent states. With U.N. supervision and assistance, a Libyan National Constituent Assembly drafted and agreed to a constitution establishing a federal system of government with central authority vested in King Idris Al Sanussi. Legislative authority was vested in a Prime Minister, a Council of Ministers, and a bicameral legislature. The first parliamentary election was held in February 1952, one month after independence. The king banned political parties shortly after independence, and Libya's first decade was characterized by continuous infighting over taxation, development, and constitutional powers.

In 1963, King Idris replaced the federal system of government with a unitary monarchy that further centralized royal authority, in part to streamline the development of the country's newly discovered oil resources. Prior to the discovery of marketable oil in 1959, the Libyan government was largely dependent on economic aid and technical assistance it received from international institutions and through military basing agreements with the United States and United Kingdom. The U.S.-operated air base at Wheelus field outside of Tripoli served as an important Strategic Air Command base and center for military intelligence operations throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Oil wealth brought rapid economic growth and greater financial independence to Libya in the 1960s, but the weakness of national institutions and Libyan elites' growing identification with the pan-Arab socialist ideology of Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser contributed to the gradual marginalization of the monarchy. Popular criticism of U.S. and British basing agreements grew, becoming amplified in the wake of Israel's defeat of Arab forces in the 1967 Six Day War. King Idris left the country in mid-1969 for medical reasons, setting the stage for a military coup in September, led by a young, devoted Nasserite army captain named Muammar al Qadhafi.

The United States did not actively oppose the coup, as Qadhafi and his co-conspirators initially presented an anti-Soviet and reformist platform. Qadhafi focused intensely on securing the immediate and full withdrawal of British and U.S. forces from military bases in Libya, which was complete by mid-1970. The new government also pressured U.S. and other foreign oil companies to renegotiate oil production contracts, and some British and U.S. oil operations eventually were nationalized. In the early 1970s, Qadhafi and his allies gradually reversed their stance on their initially icy relationship with the Soviet Union and extended Libyan support to revolutionary, anti-Western, and anti-Israeli movements across Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. These policies contributed to a rapid souring of U.S.-Libyan political relations that persisted for decades and was marked by multiple military confrontations, state-sponsored acts of Libyan terrorism against U.S. nationals, covert U.S. support for Libyan opposition groups, Qadhafi's pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and U.S. and international sanctions.

Qadhafi's policy reversals on WMD and terrorism led to the lifting of international sanctions in 2003 and 2004, followed by economic liberalization, oil sales, and foreign investment that brought new wealth to some Libyans. After U.S. sanctions were lifted, the U.S. business community gradually reengaged amid continuing U.S.-Libyan tension over terrorism concerns that were finally resolved in 2008. During this period of international reengagement, political change in Libya remained elusive. Government reconciliation with imprisoned Islamist militants and the return of some exiled opposition figures were welcomed by some observers as signs that suppression of political opposition had softened. The Qadhafi government released dozens of former members of the Al Qaeda-affiliated Libyan Islamist Fighting Group (LIFG) and the Muslim Brotherhood from prison in the years prior to the revolution as part of its political reconciliation program. The Bush Administration praised Qadhafi's cooperation with U.S. counterterrorism efforts against Al Qaeda and the LIFG.

Qadhafi's international rehabilitation coincided with new steps by some pragmatic government officials to maneuver within so-called "red lines" and propose minor reforms. However, the shifting course of those red lines increasingly entangled would-be reformers in the run-up to the outbreak of unrest in February 2011. Ultimately, inaction on the part of the government in response to calls for guarantees of basic political rights and for the drafting of a constitution suggested a lack of consensus, if not outright opposition to meaningful change among hardliners. This inaction set the political stage for the revolution that overturned Qadhafi's four decades of rule and led to his grisly demise in October 2011.

Political change in neighboring Tunisia and Egypt helped bring long-simmering Libyan reform debates to the boiling point in January and early February 2011. The 2011 revolution was triggered in mid-February by a chain of events in Benghazi and other eastern cities that quickly spiraled out of Qadhafi's control. The government's loss of control in these cities became apparent, and broader unrest emerged in other regions. A number of military officers, their units, and civilian officials abandoned Qadhafi. Qadhafi and his supporters denounced their opponents as drug-fueled traitors, foreign agents, and Al Qaeda supporters. Until August 2011, Qadhafi and his forces maintained control over the capital, Tripoli, and other western cities. The cumulative effects of attrition by NATO airstrikes against military targets and a coordinated offensive by rebels in Tripoli and from across western Libya then turned the tide, sending Qadhafi and his supporters into retreat and exile. September and early October 2011 were marked by sporadic and often intense fighting in and around Qadhafi's birthplace, Sirte, and the town of Bani Walid and neighboring military districts. NATO air operations continued as rebel fighters engaged in battles of attrition with Qadhafi supporters.

Qadhafi's death at the hands of rebel fighters in Sirte on October 20, 2011, brought the revolt to an abrupt close, with some observers expressing concern that a dark chapter in Libyan history ended violently, leaving an uncertain path ahead. The self-appointed interim Transitional National Council (TNC) and its cabinet took initial steps toward improving security and reforming national institutions. Voters elected an interim General National Congress (GNC) in July 2012. The GNC assumed power on August 8, 2012, but failed to demobilize militia groups, reconstitute national bureaucracies, or launch ambitious economic or political reforms.

The unravelling of Libya's post-Qadhafi transition intensified in late 2013, as a campaign of unsolved assassinations targeting security officers swept the country's second-largest city, Benghazi; a militia force briefly kidnapped then-Prime Minister Ali Zeidan; militias killed protesting civilians in Tripoli and Benghazi; and rival coalitions within the General National Congress (GNC, elected July 2012) clashed over the future of Zeidan's government and the GNC's mandate and term of office. Zeidan survived numerous attempted no confidence votes during his tenure (November 2012 to March 2014), which was marked by a series of crises

stemming from militia demands for the political isolation of Qadhafi-era officials, militias' seizure of oil infrastructure, and the strengthening of armed Islamists in the east and south.

Long-expected elections for a Constitutional Drafting Assembly were delayed until February 2014, and were ultimately marred by relatively low turnout and violence that prevented voters in some areas from selecting delegates. In late March 2014, a coalition of Islamist and independent forces in the GNC garnered enough votes to oust Zeidan amid a growing boycott by other GNC members that made it difficult for the body to operate with a politically viable quorum. Under increasing pressure to leave office, GNC members voted to replace the GNC with a new 200-member House of Representatives (HOR), to which legislative authority would be transferred.

Public and intra-General National Congress tensions were driven in part by differences of opinion over the future roles and responsibilities of armed militias, the relative influence of powerful local communities over national affairs, and the terms governing the political exclusion of individuals who had formerly served in official positions during the Qadhafi era. Disagreements between Islamist politicians and relatively secular figures also contributed to the gradual collapse of consensus over the transition's direction. These groups differed over some domestic legal and social developments as well as Libya's security relationships with foreign governments.

Gradually, an unspoken code under which Libyans sought to refrain from shedding other Libyans' blood in the wake of Qadhafi's ouster deteriorated under pressure from a series of violent confrontations between civilians and militias, clashes between rival ethnic groups, and the blatant targeting of security officers by an unidentified, but ruthless network in Benghazi. That code was rooted in shared respect for the sacrifices of anti-Qadhafi revolutionaries and in shared fears that the 2011 predictions of Muammar al Qadhafi and his supporters would come true: that Qadhafi's downfall would be followed by uncontainable civil strife and chaos.[25]

In May 2014, forces loyal to Qadhafi-era retired general Khalifah Haftar launched an armed campaign unauthorized by interim authorities dubbed "Operation Dignity" to evict Islamist militia groups from eastern Libya. Haftar capitalized on widely shared presumptions that certain armed Islamist groups were responsible for the assassination of security officers and were cooperating with foreign jihadists, including Al Qaeda, its regional affiliates, and Syria-based armed groups. More controversially, Haftar broadened his rhetoric and objectives to include pledges to cleanse Libya of Islamists, including supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood.

In the months that followed, Libya was drawn deeper into a region-wide struggle between pro- and anti-Islamist forces, with the governments of Egypt and the United Arab Emirates offering Haftar support. Haftar's actions and those of his opponents have helped to push many of the country's latent tensions to the surface and contributed to Libya's polarization on ideological and community lines. This polarization was visible during a summer 2014 political struggle between supporters of Prime Minister Abdullah Al Thinni and the leading coalition of Islamists and

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[25] For example, Sayf al Islam al Qadhafi, who remains in detention in Libya and is sought for arrest by the International Criminal Court, said in a February 2011 television statement: "Libya, unlike Tunisia and Egypt, is about tribes, clans, and alliances. Libya does not have a civil society or political parties. Libya is made up of tribes that know their areas, allies, and people. …If secession or a civil war or a sedition occurs …do you think the Libyans will be able to reach an agreement on how to share oil within a week, a month, or even two or three years? If your answer is yes, then you are mistaken. … My brothers, we are tribes, and we will resort to arms to settle the matter since arms are available to everyone now. Instead of mourning the death of 84 people, we will mourn the death of hundreds of thousands of people. Rivers of blood will run through Libya and you will flee. There will be no oil supplies, the foreign companies, foreigners, and oil companies will leave tomorrow, and the distribution of oil will come to an end…" U.S. Government Open Source Center (OSC) Report FEA20110221014695, "Libya: Al-Qadhafi's Son Addresses Citizens; Warns of Civil War, 'Colonization,'" *Al Jamahiriya* Television (Tripoli), February 20, 2011.

independents within the GNC, which sought to replace Al Thinni prior to the June 2014 elections for the new HOR.

Haftar's armed extremist military opponents and his relatively more moderate political adversaries responded vigorously to his challenges. Through late 2014, the Operation Dignity military campaign had suffered several setbacks on the battlefield at the hands of the U.S. designated Foreign Terrorist Organization Ansar al Sharia (AAS) and that group's allies in an emergent coalition known as the Benghazi Revolutionaries' Shura Council. Haftar's forces counterattacked, attempting to force their way back into Benghazi but failing to overcome determined resistance until making progress in early 2016. Large areas of the city have been damaged in the fighting and UNSMIL has reported mass displacement among the population of the city. Residents who have remained have reported shortages of supplies and critical service interruptions.

In western Libya, fighting also erupted in mid-2014 along political, ideological, and community lines with two coalitions of forces battling for control of Tripoli's international airport, government facilities, other strategic infrastructure, and areas around the capital. Tensions between locally organized militia groups in the west predated the launch of Haftar's operations in the east. Over time, however, fighting and rhetoric in the two theaters became more interrelated and overlaid local rivalries, with some western-based forces endorsing and offering material support to Haftar's campaign and the HOR and others mobilizing to isolate Haftar's erstwhile allies and/or the HOR.

Specifically, some armed groups from the city of Misrata and smaller Islamist militias formed a coalition known as *Fajr Libya* (Libya Dawn) and launched a multi-pronged offensive in July 2014 to take control of Tripoli's main international airport. Participants have included Libya's Central Shield Force, members of the Tripoli-based Libya Revolutionaries Operations Room (LROR), the Knights of Janzour Brigade, militias from Zawiya, and several Misrata-based militias, including the *Marsa* and *Hatin* Brigades. The international airport had long been held by a rival coalition of militias largely from Zintan—the *Sawa'iq* and *Qaaqaa* Brigades, and the Martyr Mohammed Madani Brigade—who opposed the GNC-leading Islamist-independent coalition during its final months in office. Libya Dawn operations after the fall of the airport included clashes with militias in Tripoli's Suq al Jumah neighborhood and militias affiliated with the Warshafanah tribe south and west of the city. Control over lucrative national infrastructure remained a subtext of fighting in the region, which declined during 2015 as localized ceasefire agreements were reached.

Appendix B. U.S. Assistance to Libya FY2010-FY2015

Table B-1. U.S. Assistance to Libya FY2010-FY2015

(thousands of dollars, by account/program and fiscal year of appropriation unless noted)

Account/Program	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014 Actual	FY2015 Request
Complex Crises Fund (CCF-OCO)				15,000	-	-
Foreign Military Financing (FMF)	150	-	150	949	-	-
International Military Education and Training (IMET)	319	-	296	142	1,461	1,500
USAID Transition Initiatives (TI/TI-OCO)	-	4,000	1,500	4,825	-	-
Department of Defense (DOD) Nonlethal Support	25,000	-	-	-	-	-
DOD Counterterrorism Fellowship Program	-	-	-	30	-	-
Section 1206 Train and Equip				8,420		
Global Security Contingency Fund	-	-	22,650	-	-	-
International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement	-	-	-	-	1,500	1,000
Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)	3,530	3,145	NA	NA	TBD	TBD
Middle East Response Fund (MERF)	-	25,615	-	-	-	-
Democracy Fund	-	600	-	-	-	-
Development Assistance	-	470	-	-	-	-
Economic Support Fund (ESF)	-	-	-	-	-	-
ESF-Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO)	-	-	3,000	5,000	-	-
ESF-USAID Middle East Regional Programs	-	175	-	2,850	TBD	9,500
Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining and Related Programs (NADR)			2,100	1,437	2,940	3,500
Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Export Control and Related Border Security Assistance (EXBS)	-	500	-	-	-	-
Counterterrorism Engagement (CTE)	95	-	-	-	-	-
Conventional Weapons Reduction (CWD)	-	5,750	-	-	-	-
Global Threat Reduction (CTR)	500	-	-	-	-	-
Nonproliferation Disarmament Fund (NDF)	-	34,300	-	-	-	-
Regional Strategic Initiative (RSI)	-	9	-	-	-	-
Humanitarian Funding						
Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA)	-	25,000	-	-	-	-
International Disaster Assistance (OFDA)	-	13,300	-	-	-	-
International Disaster Assistance (FFP)	-	15,700	-	-	-	-
Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA)	-	35,000	8,800	-	-	-
Estimated Total (subject to change)	**29,594**	**163,564**	**38,496**	**38,653**	**5,901**	**15,500**

Sources: U.S. Department of State communication to CRS, June 2012; State Department congressional budget justification and notification documents. Amounts subject to change. Estimated totals may not reflect all funds.

Note: NA = Not Available, TBD = To Be Determined. NDF funds reprogrammed from multiple fiscal years—FY2003, FY2004, FY2009, and FY2010.

Author Contact Information

Christopher M. Blanchard
Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs
cblanchard@crs.loc.gov, 7-0428