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1. (SBU) **Summary:** This is Benghazi's weekly round-up of political, economic, and social issues not included in previous reporting.
2. (SBU) **Benghazi Local Council Welcomes the Ambassador:** Members of Benghazi's Local Council told the Ambassador about their frustrations with the slow pace of reforms instituted by the Transitional National Council (TNC) and its successor, the General National Congress (GNC). Members said they welcomed USG assistance across a broad range of political and economic issues, including specific programs and training from USAID and MEPI to improve the effectiveness of the Council, its communications with constituents, and its administrative processes. They pleaded for a regional balance to other USG programs to ensure participants from the east and west were equally represented in programming, noting the long-standing feeling in the east that the TNC and GNC had focused development efforts on Tripoli to the detriment of the rest of the country. Despite the challenges, members asserted that the security situation was improving and told the Ambassador that the USG should "pressure" American companies to invest in Benghazi. Twenty of the 41 council members, including President Jumaa al-Sahli, participated. The Benghazi Local Council oversees the work of approximately 600 employees.
3. (SBU) **Benghazi SSC Commander discusses security situation, dissolution of the SSC, extra-judicial killings of former regime security officers, political aspirations of militia leaders, reintegration of revolutionaries, and welfare of Iranian Red Crescent detainees:** In a September 2 meeting with Acting Principal Officer Benghazi, Supreme Security Council (SSC) commander Fawzi Younis told us that senior Interior Ministry authorities had unceremoniously ended the "state of maximum alert" announced in Benghazi on August 29. The alert came amid fears of potential strikes by ex-regime supporters to mark the September 1, 1969, revolution and Qadhafi's rise to power, Younis said. He continued that reintegrating revolutionaries remained a priority (much hope but no serious plans to help his 18,000 SSC personnel), and he expects that the SSC and militias would gradually dissolve (but not until a legitimate alternative for maintaining security emerged). Younis expressed growing frustration with police and security forces (who were too weak to keep the country secure) and commented that the Iranian Red Crescent detainees are still held by "unknown" kidnappers but in good accommodations). He speculated about possible motivations for the ongoing extra-judicial killings of interior ministry officials (personal vendettas, criminality, tribal conflicts, purge of pro-Qadhafi officials), and he noted indications that a

few key brigade commanders, who have been seeking government positions in security ministries, may be developing higher political and economic aspirations. (More details septel.)

4. (SBU) **Militia commanders discuss the Muslim Brotherhood, Jibril, their political aspirations, the economy, and security:** In a September 9 meeting, local area militia commanders Wissam bin Ahmed (Commander, Libya Shield 1) and Muhammad al-Gharabi (Commander, Rafa' al-Sahti Brigade and Libya Shield 2) discussed the very fluid relationships and blurry lines they say define membership in Benghazi-based brigades under the February 17, Libya Shield, and SSC umbrellas. They themselves were members of multiple brigades, they said. They debated – hotly and without resolution – about which brigades supported or opposed specific causes. They claimed to exercise “control” over Libyan Armed Forces Chief of Staff Yousef Mangoush, who “depends” on them to secure eastern Libya. In times of crisis, Mangoush has no other choice than to turn to their brigades for help, they said, as he did recently with unrest in Kufra. As part of this arrangement, Mangoush often provides the brigades direct stocks of weapons and ammunition, they said. Al-Gharabi and bin-Ahmed support the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood’s Justice and Construction Party backed candidate Minister of Electricity Awad Al Barasi for Prime Minister and said that, if elected, al-Barasi would appoint Fawzi Bukatif, Commander of the February 17 Brigade, as Minister of Defense. Bukatif’s appointment would open the MOD and other security ministries and offices to plum-appointments for his most favored brigade commanders – giving February 17 and Libya Shield tacit control of the armed forces. They criticized the USG for “supporting” National Forces Alliance (NFA) leader and Prime Minister candidate Mahmoud Jibril. If Jibril won, they said, they would not continue to guarantee security in Benghazi, a critical function they asserted they were currently providing. Growing problems with security would discourage foreign investment and led to persistent economic stagnation in eastern Libya, but the USG could play a role by “pressuring” American businesses to invest in Benghazi.

5. (SBU) **Salafists reported killed in clashes with locals defending Sufi shrines:** The Ministry of Interior confirmed press reports that a September 8 gun battle about 35 kilometers outside Benghazi resulted in three killed and seven injured during an attempt to destroy a Sufi shrine in Rajma. Press reports credit local residents and the late-responding Libya Shield brigade with defending the Sidi Al-Lafi mausoleum. Some contacts here, however, assert that Salafists within the Libya Shield were actually fighting against the local residents in support of efforts to destroy the shrine.

6. (SBU) **Expanding Islamist influence in Derna:** A growing number of anecdotal reports from residents, NGOs, and USG contractors link the Abu Salim Brigade with a troubling increase in violence and Islamist influence in Derna. Complaints against the Abu Salim Brigade range from their efforts to close radio and other media outlets, enforce strict rules against co-mingling of men and women at the local university, and increased criminality, including carjacking, thefts, and murders. One e-mail to the Ambassador asserts Abu Salim Brigade members have undercut police presence by accusing the police of being loyal to the former regime. The e-mail ends by pleading to the U.S. Embassy to “Please send someone to see the truth for yourselves.”

7. (SBU) **Car Bomb Kills One, Injures Another:** A September 1 car bomb on Benghazi’s largest and busiest street, Gamal-Abdel-Nasser, killed Abdul Baset Hufaitha and injured Col. Jumaa Kadeki, both former Interior Ministry security officers under the Qadhafi regime. The bombing occurred during the “state of maximum alert” announced by Interior Ministry officials on August 29, and fueled rampant speculation in the press and among our contacts that unknown actors continue to work down a list of former Qadhafi regime officials who had been targeted for extra-judicial killings. Security contacts at United Nations Benghazi who were on the scene within minutes and questioned eye-witnesses, tell us that it is just as likely that the driver of the car, Abdul Baset Hufaitha, may have been in possession of the explosive device and detonated it accidentally.

8. (SBU) **Great Manmade River Authority (GMRA):** Press reported a September 9 explosion that targeted power lines in the Wadi Mansour area between Tarhouna and Bani Walid and cut the major source of electrical power to parts of the Great Manmade River. On September 10, GMRA Acting Chairman Nasser Bubteina told us that auxiliary power lines had kept the GMMR running, but confirmed press reports that “huge 400 kilowatt” lines and towers, including their foundations, had been completely destroyed by the explosion. Bubteina told us that repairs would take a minimum of two weeks, but quite possibly longer because he first had to secure permission from local militias and mobilize security forces to insert workers from the Ministry of Energy and the General Electric Company into the area. With about USD 10 billion invested since its inception in the 1980s, the Great Manmade River (GMMR) Project links wholesale water supplies

from underground aquifers in southern and eastern Libya to municipal, agricultural, and industrial end users in Benghazi and points west toward Tripoli. The GMMR Authority manages the system, a structure of about 2500 miles of pipes, about one hundred operational wells, multiple reservoirs, and multiple supply, pump, and delivery stations that supply water to more than two-thirds of Libya's population. Details to follow septel.

9. (SBU) **Ambassador to Open American Space Benghazi:** The Ambassador will launch American Space Benghazi, a public platform for cultural and educational outreach by U.S. Mission Libya. The American Space will contain a small library, computer lab, and open space for programming. Embassy Tripoli will support the center with regular programs and speakers. We have already used the space to engage in dialogue with 15 young adults about U.S. foreign policy in the country and Libya's political transition.

10. (SBU) **MEPI Projects:** In our ongoing effort to assist and monitor USG implementers, we visited with some of the two dozen civil society organizations that operate in Benghazi with MEPI assistance, including: the *Libyan Society for Industrial Engineering*, which has created eastern Libya's first mobile public library; *My Environment Society*, which conducts environmental education campaigns with school-age children; *Rayhan Elshohadaa Association*, which works to empower disadvantaged youth with employable skills, including computer literacy and English education; and *the Cure Foundation*, which has conducted education campaigns about cancer and hemophilia to patients and their families. Additionally, the Embassy-supported ACCESS program in Benghazi, offers evening English-language instruction to disadvantaged teenagers.

11. (SBU) **UK Presence:** British Charge d'Affairs Gill Frasier visited U.S. Mission Benghazi during a September 5 trip to determine whether conditions were appropriate for the re-opening of the British Consulate. According to Frasier, London will make its decision about reopening the consulate sometime in October. The British withdrew their presence from Benghazi after the widely reported June 11 RPG attack on the British Ambassador's motorcade.

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