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Airstrikes and Civilian Casualties in Libya

Since the 2011 NATO Intervention

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International Security

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Key Findings

- An important feature of the conflict in Libya post-2011 has been the rise of airstrikes by multiple domestic and international belligerents. At least **four foreign countries and three domestic Libyan factions** are reported to have conducted air and drone strikes in Libya since 2012.
- According to reports by some of the belligerents as well as news reporting and accounts in social media, the nations and local groups operating in Libya have conducted **at least 2,158 airstrikes and drone strikes** between September 2012 and June 10, 2018.
- According to news reports and accounts on social media, at least 237 civilians were killed in these strikes, taking the lowest estimate, and as many as 387 killed, by the highest estimate. **No nation or local group has stated responsibility for any of these civilian deaths. This study is the first overall accounting of these civilian deaths.**
- In addition to civilian fatalities, according to news reports and individual accounts on social media, **at least 324 civilians were wounded in airstrikes, by the lowest estimate, and 524, taking the highest estimate.**
- **Less than 50 percent of all reported airstrikes are officially declared.** A lack of international media reporting on the air war has helped to obscure the fact that a number of countries elect not to report their air strikes in Libya, including France, the United Arab Emirates and, at times, the United States and Egypt.
- **Reported civilian deaths from airstrikes in Libya are relatively low** when compared to higher-intensity conflicts in, for example, Iraq, Syria, or Yemen. Casualty estimates more closely match at present those from lower-intensity counterterrorism campaigns, such as the U.S. drone program in Pakistan and Somalia, albeit over a shorter time period. (This may reflect the fact that reporting mechanisms for civilian deaths in Libya are slight compared to countries such as Syria.)
- Libya's civil war began in earnest in May 2014, and almost 250 strikes reportedly occurred that year, which were conducted mostly by the Libyan National Army. This was followed by a slowing of strikes in 2015, as Gen. Khalifa Haftar's ground campaign targeting Islamist militias spread across the country. In contrast, **2016 and 2017 were high-volume years for airstrikes, with 1,015 and 574 reported strikes, respectively.** This jump

in numbers was in part due to a 2016 U.S. military operation targeting ISIS that involved 495 air and drone strikes on the city of Sirte.

- **Most strikes between September 2012 and June 10, 2018, have reportedly occurred in Benghazi, Sirte and Derna**, cities that were high-conflict zones during the Libyan rebellion and the 2011 NATO intervention. ISIS controlled territory in both Derna and Sirte in 2015 and 2016, contributing to high volumes of strikes in those locations. However, heavy bombardments of these cities in recent years have not been accompanied, as might be expected, by significant local reports of civilian harm. This may indicate a local under-reporting of the issue, which could be explained by difficulties accessing these cities during the high-volume periods of airstrikes. Additionally, Libya lacks local monitors such as the Syrian Network for Human Rights, which assesses civilian harm in Syria.
- **Gen. Haftar's LNA has reportedly conducted 1,112 airstrikes in Libya since 2014—more than any other belligerent.** These have reportedly resulted in 95 civilian deaths at minimum and potentially as many as 172 noncombatant deaths, based on the highest estimates. These fatalities account for almost 40 percent of the documented civilian deaths in our database—the highest reported number for any belligerent.
- **Of the four foreign states conducting strikes in Libya, the United States is the most transparent about its operations.** The United States conducted the campaign Operation Odyssey Lightning against ISIS forces in Libya from Aug. 1, 2016, to Dec. 19, 2016, which included 495¹ air and drone strikes, according to the U.S. Africa Command. (It reopened the operation for a single day on Jan. 19, 2017.) The U.S. military self-reported these strikes.² However, the United States may be inconsistent with its strike reporting. Our database includes 15 strikes attributed in local reports to the United States that have not been confirmed by American officials.
- According to our data, **the United States has conducted 524 strikes on militant targets in Libya since the NATO intervention**, primarily at Sirte during 2016, which according to Libyan reports resulted in 10 to 20 civilian fatalities, based on the minimum and maximum estimates in our database.
- Some strike allegations report different parties as responsible for the same strike (e.g., a local report might claim the LNA conducted a strike, while an international outlet reported that Egypt was responsible for the same action). Based on contested cases like these that implicate both the United States and another party, the United States could be responsible for up to 54 additional civilian deaths in Libya, primarily as a result of its strikes in

support of Libya's internationally recognized Government of National Accord, known as the GNA.

- Like the United States, the LNA faction has also declared many of its airstrikes. Between them, the two belligerents account for more than 75 percent of reported strikes. However, **neither party has publicly accepted responsibility for any reported civilian casualties.**
- The GNA has reportedly conducted 54 strikes, which have resulted in at least seven and at most nine civilian fatalities, according to local reports. However, **the GNA could be responsible for as many as 54 additional civilian deaths**, based on strike allegations that name more than one country or local group as responsible for certain strikes.
- The United Arab Emirates, which conducts actions in support of the LNA, has reportedly conducted at least 35 strikes in Libya, which are said to have resulted in **at least 11 and potentially as many as 18 civilian deaths.**
- Egypt also conducts strikes alongside the LNA, as well as unilateral actions against suspected militants on its borders. At least **41 strikes have been declared or reported, which have resulted in at least 13 and at most 14 civilian deaths**, according to local and international sources.
- **France has reportedly conducted at least five strikes in Libya, which have resulted in a minimum of four and potentially as many as eight civilian deaths.** France might also be responsible for a single strike on Aug. 12, 2016, that hit an urban area in Benghazi, killing more than two dozen civilians by some estimates. Sources blamed both the LNA and France for this strike.³
- **132 airstrikes in our database have been attributed to more than one party** in reports of the incident. For example, one source might say France conducted a strike in a specific location, while a separate source blames the LNA for a strike in an identical location on the same day. Theoretically, the strike may have been conducted by both parties jointly, or perhaps was misattributed to one of the parties. Since we can't be sure, these 182 strikes, and the 83 resulting civilian deaths are considered "contested" in our database and aren't included in the total strike and casualty estimates of each individual belligerent, underscoring the need for belligerents to report airstrikes and investigate allegations of civilian casualties.

- Based on news reports and social media accounts, **the number of militants that have been killed in airstrikes in Libya range from a minimum of 778 to 966**, taking the highest estimates. However, it is unclear how local belligerents and foreign militaries distinguish ‘enemy fighters’ from noncombatants and whether these distinctions are the same across aerial conflict participants.

Glossary of Belligerents

Aerial Conflict Belligerents in Libya⁴

Local Belligerents

- **Government of National Accord (GNA)** In December 2015, the United Nations brokered a political agreement between rival factions that were competing for influence in Libya after the toppling of the regime of Muammar al-Gaddafi. This resulted in the formation of the GNA, which was organized to oversee a political transition and consolidation of power. The GNA remains in conflict with the Libyan National Army (LNA), an armed rival organization with support in the east of Libya, which is obstructing the 2015 agreement. The GNA is based in Tripoli and led by Prime Minister Fayeze al-Sarraj.
- **The Libyan National Army (LNA)** Led by Gen. Khalifa Haftar, the LNA came to the fore in mid-2014 with the launch of Operation Dignity and effectively exercises control over the eastern part of the country. Haftar and his supporters battled Islamist militias in Benghazi for over three years before finally defeating them.
- **General National Congress (GNC)** In the immediate aftermath of the Gaddafi regime's collapse, a transitional government held elections for a temporary legislative body. This congress was intended to govern for one and a half years before holding parliamentary elections. On July 7, 2012, the GNC was elected by popular vote. In conjunction with and under pressure from militias, the GNC passed a law that barred a broad spectrum of Libyans from government employment. This exclusionary move, as well as opposition to the GNC's extension of its mandate and the alleged support of some parliamentarians for Islamist radicals in Benghazi, spurred a number of physical threats against it and the launch of Gen. Haftar's Operation Dignity in 2014. Elections in June 2014 for the GNC's successor body, the House of Representatives (HOR), failed to resolve the standoff and effectively split the country when the HOR moved to the Haftar-controlled east.

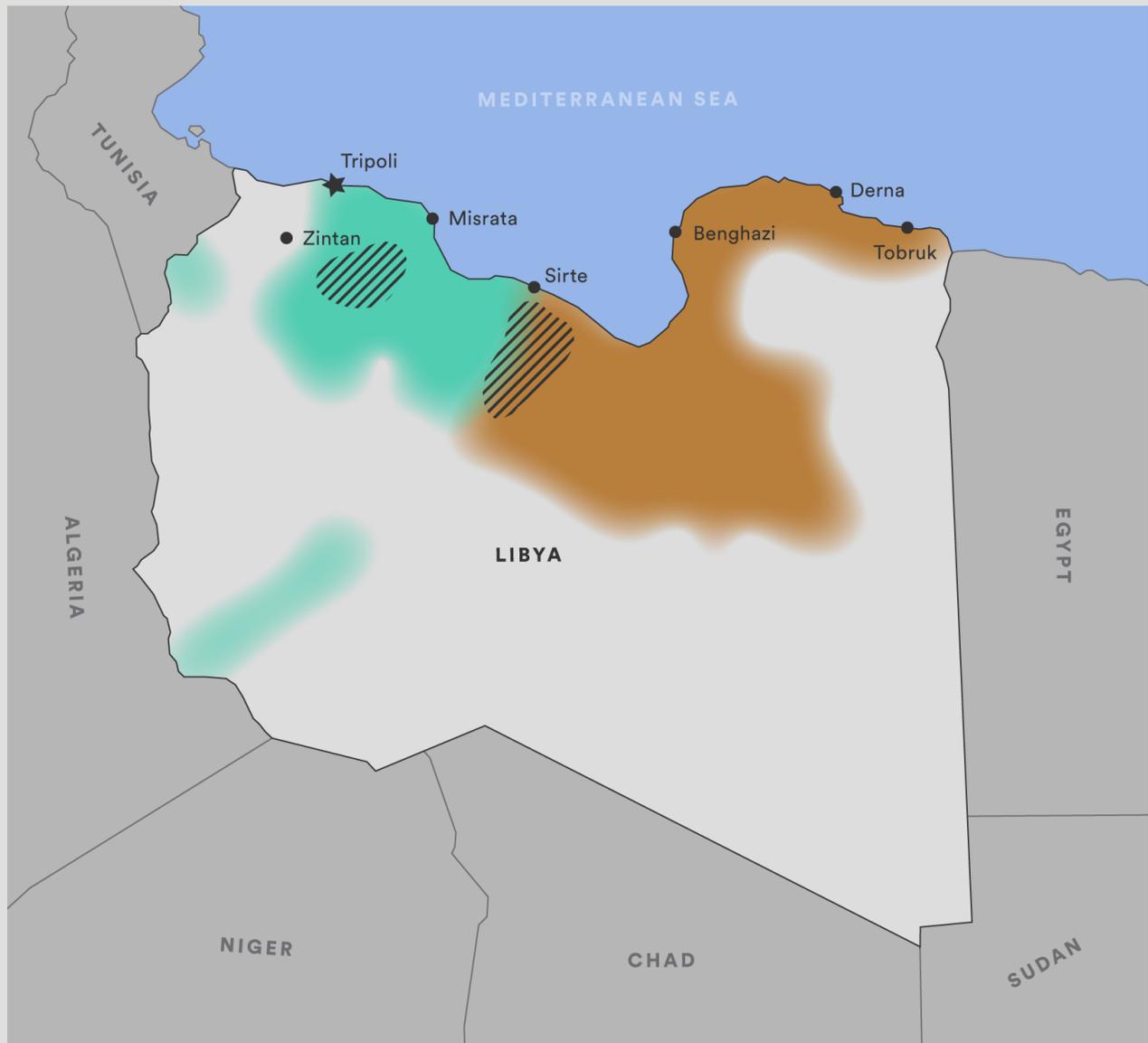
Foreign Belligerents

- **United States** The United States was drawn into the NATO intervention in 2011 by international pressure to protect civilians in Libya. The military

participated in an aggressive aerial campaign against the Gaddafi regime. The United States is among the nations that continue to conduct airstrikes in Libya against ISIS and al-Qaeda.

- **France** played a leading role in the 2011 NATO intervention and its eventual outcome, though its subsequent military role inside the country is less clear. The government's rationale for remaining entrenched in Libyan affairs today can be explained by Libya's close links to French interests in the Sahel, its importance as a transit route for migrants and asylum seekers, and domestic political considerations after a series of jihadist attacks on French soil in 2015. France, which supported the U.N. negotiations that produced the GNA, signaled a shift in its Libya position under President Emmanuel Macron. In May 2017, for the first time, French Foreign Ministry spokesman Romain Nadal urged a role for the LNA and Haftar in "defeating the terrorists" across Libya.⁵
- **Egypt**, which borders Libya, has provided an array of military and political support to the Haftar-led LNA, including advisers, weapons and airstrikes. In doing this, Egypt has worked closely with Russia and the United Arab Emirates. While Egypt's original motive in backing Haftar may have been to prevent the ascendance of political Islamists, airstrikes now seem directed more at securing its border with Libya. Egyptian airstrikes in support of the LNA are in violation of the U.N. arms embargo instituted by Security Council Resolution 1970 and challenge the legitimacy of the U.N.-led negotiation process that produced the GNA. In addition, Egypt has declared a number of unilateral airstrikes inside Libya's borders that it says were aimed at preventing the entry of militants and weapons into Egypt.
- **United Arab Emirates (UAE)** The UAE has provided military support to Haftar's LNA. The Emirates operate an air base in LNA territory from which they have reportedly flown drones and piloted close air support missions in support of the LNA's operations in Benghazi.⁶ Because the UAE is conducting strikes in support of the LNA, which is an opposition group, Emirati airstrikes are also in violation of the U.N. arms embargo instituted by Security Council Resolution 1970. Together with Egypt, the UAE is also reported to have launched airstrikes against Operation Dawn forces in Tripoli in August 2014.

Territorial Control in Libya as of May 2018



Legend

-  Government of National Accord
-  Libya National Army
-  ISIS Presence

Source: "Haftar's Ailing Narrative," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, (Image: Jalel Harchaoui, May 2018), http://carnegieendowment.org/images/article_images/Libya_SADA_ENlarge-11.jpg.

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An Overview of the Air Campaigns in Libya since 2012

A poem about the “suffering” of Sirte, Libya, accompanied a photo of two dead children that Khaled Alkhwaiti uploaded to his Facebook page. Hamad al-Sayeh Hambali’s home was flattened by airstrikes on Zafaran, a district in eastern Sirte, on March 9, 2016, and local Facebook accounts like Alkhwaiti’s contained the only reporting of the incident. Hambali’s young daughters, Isra and Wafaa, lay side by side in the graphic photo, their Minnie Mouse and Hello Kitty pajamas dusted with rubble, one covered in a pool of blood.⁷

Photographic evidence shows that a strike occurred on Hambali’s home that day, but there were no Western media reports of the event, and no country or local militia claimed responsibility for the strike. The deaths of Hambali’s children weren’t acknowledged outside of social media.

This is characteristic of the aerial conflict in Libya. New America and Airwars have documented more than 2,000 airstrikes that were reportedly conducted between September 2012 and June 10, 2018 in Libya, which resulted in at least 242 civilian deaths using the low-end estimate, and as many as 395 civilian deaths using the high-end estimate.⁸

In 2011, during a national uprising in Libya, NATO intervened to protect civilians from the forces of Libyan leader Muammar al-Gaddafi, a military action that significantly contributed to the regime’s defeat. Though the United Nations-sanctioned campaign ended on October 31, 2011, several countries and local militias have continued to conduct airstrikes and drone strikes intermittently with scant accountability.

New America and Airwars have documented more than 2,000 airstrikes that were reportedly conducted between September 2012 and June 10, 2018 in Libya, which resulted in at least 242 civilian deaths using the low-end estimate, and as many as 395 civilian deaths using the high-end estimate.

Some organizations have attempted to produce an accurate death toll of civilians in Libya and identify the responsible parties. However, a lack of reporting and self-reporting of strikes has enabled those responsible to go largely unnoticed. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) consistently provides figures for civilian casualties of the hostilities in Libya. However, according to its press releases, UNSMIL is usually unable to “determine with certainty” which parties contributed to the casualties, with the exception of the Libyan National Army.⁹ Human Rights Watch also reports casualties from “unidentified aircraft,” due to an inability to identify the country or militia group responsible. With some exceptions, no party typically claims responsibility for these airstrikes or their outcomes.

With the aid of a team of Libyan researchers, New America and Airwars have found 2,158 reported airstrikes in Libya from September 2012 to June 10, 2018. As outlined in the methodology section, those reports were collected from wide variety of sources. Because this study seeks to fill gaps in English-language reporting on civilian casualties in Libya, the vast majority of our sources are in Arabic.

Some of the strikes in the database include allegations of civilian casualties against the following parties: Libya’s Government of National Accord (GNA), which is recognized by the United Nations; the Libyan National Army (LNA), a rival military force led by Gen. Khalifa Haftar; the air force of the first post-Gaddafi Libyan government, the General National Congress (GNC); as well as Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, France and the United States.

→ **BOX 1**

A Note on Methodology

For the purposes of this data collection project, we are an all-source monitor. When documenting potential civilian deaths from airstrikes, we draw upon a wide range of materials. These include reports from international and local news agencies and nongovernmental organizations, as well as social media sites such as local residents’ groups, Facebook pages, YouTube footage of incidents, and local tweets relating to specific events. This project seeks to fill gaps in English-language reporting on civilian casualties in Libya. As a result, the vast majority of our sources are in the Arabic language.

These individual sources and links are compiled into a large and evolving event archive on the Airwars website, and data sheets are available on both the New

America and Airwars sites. In the data review process, the collated material received a grade from an English-language assessor to determine the likely credibility of the allegation.

Because of wide variations in the quality of casualty reporting, for this project we employed the following grading system for events alleging airstrikes with noncombatant victims:

- **Confirmed:** An international or local belligerent has accepted responsibility for the killing or injuring of noncombatants or allied forces in a particular incident.
 - **Fair:** There is reporting of an alleged incident from two or more credible sources (often coupled with biographical, photographic and/or video evidence). Crucially, there are also well-reported military strikes in the near vicinity for the date in question. We believe these cases in particular require urgent investigation.
 - **Weak:** There is reporting of an alleged incident from only one credible source. These often feature biographical details of victims along with photographic evidence from a reputable source. There are also reported airstrikes in the near vicinity for the date in question.
 - **Contested Events:** Incidents that involve competing claims for the origins of a violent incident (i.e., aircraft from two different countries/forces are reported as responsible for a single attack).
 - **Discounted:** Cases where our researchers or accused actors can demonstrate that those killed were in fact combatants, or that an incident likely did not result in any civilian casualties.
-

The Conflicts in Libya 2011-2018

The NATO Intervention in 2011

The Arab Spring, the wave of rebellion that swept across the Middle East and North Africa in 2011, was met with violent resistance in Libya when protesters began to call for the ouster of Muammar al-Gaddafi, whose despotic reign had extended for more than 40 years. In 2011, a number of Western and Arab nations intervened in Libya to protect Libyan civilians. While ostensibly not taking sides, the actual intervention as it was carried out paved the way for the toppling of Gaddafi.

Within weeks of the uprising against Gaddafi, which began in February 2011, early casualty estimates from the United Nations, the World Health Organization and the International Criminal Court suggested that civilians were at significant risk. On February 26, the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 1970, which imposed an arms embargo on the country and a travel ban and asset freeze on the Gaddafi family and other Libyan officials involved in the violence against demonstrators.¹⁰ This failed to deter Gaddafi, who continued to push from the capital toward rebel-held Benghazi. The Gulf Cooperation Council in early March called for a “no-fly zone” over Libya, which received immediate support from the Arab League.¹¹

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As Gaddafi’s forces pushed toward Benghazi, his son Saif al-Islam warned in a speech on state television of an impending slaughter if the uprising continued, announcing on February 21 that “rivers of blood” would flow through Libya.”¹² Gaddafi himself compared the rebels to “rats” and said his troops “will show no mercy and no pity to them,” raising fears of an imminent massacre of civilians.¹³

Meanwhile, on March 10, Nicolas Sarkozy, the French president at the time, met in Paris with Libyan rebel group representatives Mahmoud Jibril and Ali al-Esawi. The same day, France became the first Western nation to recognize a ragtag organization of Libyan rebels—dubbed the National Transitional Council—as the only legitimate government in Libya.¹⁴

On March 15, President Barack Obama met with his National Security Council, and intelligence officials warned him that Benghazi would fall to the regime in 24 hours.¹⁵ Convinced by his chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Michael Mullen, that a no-fly zone would make little difference to this outcome, President Obama directed U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice to strengthen the language of the proposed French-British resolution on Libya at the Security Council, which would give member states latitude to bomb Gaddafi's forces.¹⁶

The Security Council on March 17 authorized Resolution 1973 to protect Libyan civilians and for the first time in history invoked the U.N.'s Responsibility to Protect to authorize military action.¹⁷ French aircraft struck Gaddafi's columns advancing on Benghazi late in the afternoon of March 19, followed by British and American cruise missile attacks on air defense sites and Libyan government targets along the Mediterranean coast.¹⁸

Out of a desire not to “own” the Libyan conflict,¹⁹ the U.S. strategy was to use air power to cripple Gaddafi's air defenses. The United States, chastened by the failure of the Iraq occupation, elected to pursue an aerial campaign in Libya without significant political or diplomatic engagement with the rebel factions on the ground. This created gaps in U.S. understanding of the internal dynamics of the rebellion. The relationships between the loose factions of the anti-regime rebels were fraught, even before the uprising, creating the foundations for the predictable postwar power struggle that ensued.

French aircraft, directed by surveillance from U.S. Predator drones, on October 21 struck a convoy of regime vehicles as Gaddafi was spotted trying to flee his hometown of Sirte. He was removed from his vehicle and killed shortly after by rebel fighters on the ground.²⁰ On October 27, the U.N. voted to end foreign intervention in Libya, just a week after the dictator's death, ignoring a request from the interim government to extend the NATO presence to the year's end.²¹ NATO officially ended its mission in Libya on October 31, 2011. Much like after the toppling of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, militant jihadist groups moved into the vacuum left by the fall of the Gaddafi regime.

2011-2018: Revolution Turns to Civil War

Several leaders among the various rebel factions had begun to jockey for control over the direction of the revolution before Gaddafi's death, so when the regime

finally collapsed, the stage was set for bitter disagreements between rebel camps. The artillery and other weapons that had been funneled by Western and Arab states to the rebel coalition that defeated Gaddafi's forces were now in the possession of a range of competing factions.

Interim government

Immediately following the end of the NATO intervention in October 2011, the National Transitional Council (NTC)—led by provisional prime minister Mahmoud Jibril, whom Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had met with in Paris earlier in the year—appointed itself as the interim government and set out to develop a road map for political transition.²² The NTC had announced in August, when it was apparent that the regime would fall, its plan for an 18-month transition, which would commence promptly at the conflict's end.²³ There were several legislative hurdles to clear—appointing an interim government, establishing election law and an election commission, and holding congressional elections. However, the NTC struggled to maintain the confidence of the public because of a lack of transparency in its appointments and decision-making; a cohort of the NTC leadership that included former Gaddafi regime officials; and an effort to placate disgruntled militia members pushing for representation in the transitional body that included granting them amnesty for war crimes committed during the revolution.

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Also, former revolutionaries ignored calls to disarm or be absorbed into the national armed forces, and the NTC had no means to prevent rival militiamen from looting and fighting in violent late-night skirmishes. “We are the ones who are holding the power there—the people with the force on the ground—and we are not going to give that up until we have a legitimate government that will emerge from free and fair elections,” Anwar Fekini, a leader of a coalition of militias in the western mountains, told the *New York Times* in November 2011, abandoning a previous pledge to disarm.²⁴ Some armed groups took control of state buildings in the aftermath of the revolution, providing leverage over the NTC in negotiations for government jobs. The Zintan militia, which led the final

march on the Libyan capital, Tripoli, that had toppled the regime, took over Tripoli International Airport, and other militias controlled Tripoli's port, in some of the first signs of post-Gaddafi chaos.²⁵

Parliamentary elections

On July 7, 2012, Libya held its first congressional elections since Gaddafi's 1969 coup, for a body called the General National Congress (GNC), which was supposed to direct the drafting of a national constitution. This legislative body was designed to govern for 18 months, until the implementation of a constitution, after which new parliamentary elections would take place. Ninety-four percent of polling locations opened, despite interference from armed protesters in the east of Libya who anticipated, and feared, the dominance of the west of Libya in the elections.²⁶

The GNC seats were allocated to proportionally represent three main voting blocs: Islamists, which included the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists who sought to govern by sharia; the National Forces Alliance (NFA), Jibril's party of moderates, which won the most seats; and independents.²⁷ On August 8, the NTC handed over power to the elected assembly.²⁸

Despite the successful holding of elections, the GNC proved incapable of functioning, falling prey to factional infighting and pressure from militias. This culminated in the passage of the Political Isolation Law in May 2013—a sweeping piece of legislation that excluded broad swaths of Libyans from future government employment on the basis of their affiliation with the Gaddafi regime—as militia power continued to grow through access to state funds. In Benghazi and the east, the sense of marginalization was compounded by growing violence and a radical threat, exemplified most starkly by the 2012 attack on the U.S. diplomatic mission in Benghazi by Ansar al-Sharia.

The first civilian casualty case in our database perhaps stems from this 2012 attack. Several Libyans on Twitter on August 11, 2013, reported hearing explosions that might have been caused by U.S. airstrikes in retaliation against this group. Twitter account “@news_yemen” tweeted (in Arabic) that there was an airstrike targeting Ansar al-Sharia's headquarters in Al-Dahir, a district in Sirte.²⁹ The tweet also stated that there was “death.” This possible report of casualties was echoed by a Libyan man named Hatem Ben Mussa, who wrote (in Arabic) on his Twitter account that evening, “Urgent...four killed and 15 wounded in the bombing of Sirte.”³⁰

Major Karl Wiest told our researchers that AFRICOM has conducted “post-strike assessments” of all U.S. military actions in the region and after investigating two allegations of civilian casualties in Libya, found both to be not credible.³¹ Wiest said in an email, “From the Fall of 2016, the command has assessed two (2)

recorded CIVCAS allegations related to operations in Libya. After thorough investigations, both claims were deemed not credible.”³² Wiest did not specify which two claims were investigated. However, he also said, “with regards to the specific incidents you highlighted and asked our team to review, they are not assessed as credible with the information currently available.”³³ The August 11, 2013 strike was one of the highlighted cases sent to AFRICOM for review by New America and Airwars.

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Meanwhile, the GNC continued to clash with armed groups. On January 19, 2014, the GNC reportedly bombed militias at the Qweira al-Mal gate at the northern entrance to Sabha, an oasis city about 400 miles south of Tripoli. A Middle East news blog, World Akhbar, posted to its Twitter account (in Arabic) about an “aerial bombardment” at the site,³⁴ and another local account belonging to “@osama_targam” said three children were killed as a result of the air raid.³⁵ The strike may have killed Ramadan Faraj Khalifa, 14, Ayman Massoud Ali, 17, and Mu’tasim Mohammed, 14, according to the February 17th Martyrs Brigade, a pro-Gaddafi militia that posted the names of the alleged victims to its Facebook page, stating that they were killed.³⁶

(In the course of our research we’ve documented as many as 18 airstrikes that were attributed to the GNC from 2014 to 2015 in media reports and which resulted in four civilian deaths. For the dates and locations of these strikes, see [Appendix A.](#))

The original GNC term was set to conclude on February 7, 2014, but it extended its mandate despite its deep unpopularity in an effort to develop a new constitution.³⁷ The extension sparked protests, and deadlock within the body led to calls for new elections.³⁸

Amid this anger with the GNC’s extension, Gen. Khalifa Haftar of the Libyan National Army (LNA) announced the dissolution of the GNC in February 2014, presaging threats against the elected body. In May 2014, supported by eastern tribes and disaffected military units, Haftar launched Operation Dignity to rid Benghazi of Islamist militias and restore security, as well as to press for elections.

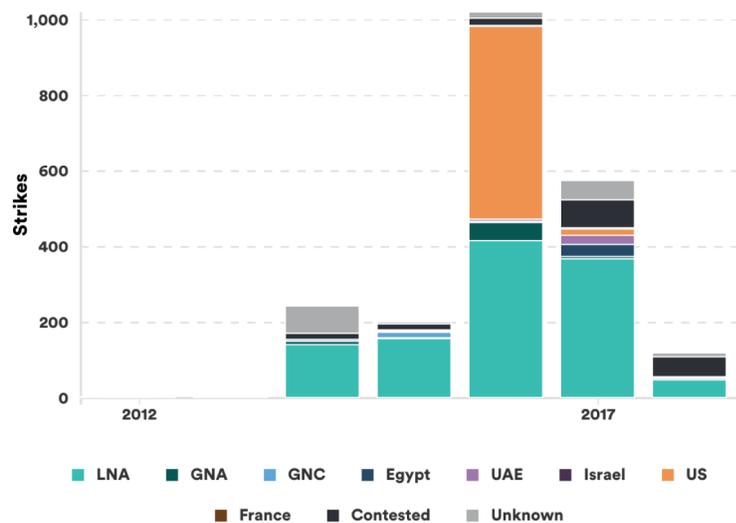
³⁹

The result of those elections, held June 25, was unfavorable to Islamist parties.⁴⁰ The newly elected and Haftar-aligned House of Representatives (HOR) took power, but some members of the old GNC held out in partnership with Libya Dawn, a coalition of Islamist and Misratan militias, along with boycotting HOR members from western Libya who feared for their safety because of the HOR's relationship with Haftar and its move to the eastern city of Tobruk. The end result was the fracturing of the country into two governments, each with its own parliament, militias and branches of the Central Bank.⁴¹

Civil war and airstrikes

Fighting between the two sides spread to southern Libya and, in late 2014 and early 2015, to the oil crescent, where both sides conducted airstrikes. Almost 250 strikes occurred in 2014, according to reports in our database, which were conducted mostly by the LNA (Fig. 1).

Figure 1 | Strikes in Libya, by Year and Belligerent



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On December 2, 2014, Libyan and other African workers at a food warehouse in Zwara, a city in western Libya, were hit from the air by missiles intended to target Islamist militants.⁴² Several local and international media outlets, including

Reuters, the Associated Press and the Libya Observer, reported between three and eight civilians dead and as many as 15 wounded as a result of the strike, which was attributed to the LNA.

Warehouses such as the one struck on December 2 are targets for the LNA and Haftar's campaign against Islamist militias, as his group claims they are weapons depots for the rival group, Libya Dawn. LNA spokesman Mohamed Hijazi confirmed the strikes to Reuters and said they targeted Libya Dawn, but did not accept responsibility for the civilian deaths.

A counterstrike by Libya Dawn, allied with the GNC at the time, came on December 28, 2014, and was aimed at Haftar's group. Libya Dawn reportedly launched an air raid on Ra's Lanuf, a coastal town on the Gulf of Sidra and home to a major oil terminal.⁴³ Bin Jawad field hospital, which treated wounded civilians, came under fire during the raid, resulting in the deaths of two physicians, Suleiman Hajeeba and Abdul Aziz Aaneibah.⁴⁴ Memorials to the two doctors were posted to social media sites, including the Facebook page of local media outlet, Al-Manara Media.⁴⁵

However, it is the LNA that is responsible for the most civilian deaths in the aerial conflict in Libya, accounting for at least 95 and as many as 172 civilians killed, or 40 to 44 percent of total reported civilian deaths since 2012. On May 25, 2015, LNA warplanes struck an oil tanker, the *Anwaar Afriqya*, while it was anchored near a Sirte power plant and carrying 30,000 metric tons of fuel.⁴⁶ The explosion, which set the ship aflame, reportedly killed one crewmember and injured several others. "They attacked [the tanker] after we unloaded the first tank and we were preparing to unload the second," a worker at the port told Al Marsad, a local news website.⁴⁷

However, it is the LNA that is responsible for the most civilian deaths in the aerial conflict in Libya, accounting for at least 95 and as many as 172 civilians killed, or 40 to 44 percent of total reported civilian deaths since 2012.

According to our data, since 2012, the LNA has reportedly conducted 1,122 airstrikes.

For more information about the LNA strikes, see “[Strikes by LNA](#).”

LNA representatives did not respond to request for comment about airstrikes and potential civilian deaths in Libya.

In December 2015, after a lengthy U.N.-led mediation process, representatives from the GNC and the LNA signed a deal in Skhirat, Morocco, to end their conflict.⁴⁸ In April 2016, the unity government called the Government of National Accord (GNA) took over in Tripoli.⁴⁹ However, the GNA remained contested by Haftar and his forces, and the HOR never endorsed the GNA as it was required to do.

This political contest, in conjunction with the expansion of militant-held territory in the country, sparked action from foreign states, which have conducted airstrikes in support of either the LNA or the GNA, and/or have targeted Islamist militants (in many cases, those objectives overlap). Western nations such as the United Kingdom, France and the United States were active in the mediation process that led to the GNA’s formation, and the United States has conducted hundreds of strikes in Libya with the consent of the GNA.

The United States has conducted at least 524 airstrikes in Libya since 2012 which have resulted in at least 10 and potentially as many as 20 publicly reported civilian fatalities. While the United States has declared most of its strikes, the Pentagon has not acknowledged any civilian deaths from its operations.

→ **BOX 2**

When AFRICOM confirms a “strike” in Libya, this may include one munitions, or multiple bombings on a single objective, based on information from press releases. In releases related to the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq and Syria, AFRICOM defines strikes in each release as the following:

“A strike, as defined in the Coalition release, refers to one or more kinetic engagements that occur in roughly the same geographic location to produce a single, sometimes cumulative effect in that location. For example, a single aircraft delivering a single weapon against a lone Daesh vehicle is one strike, but so is multiple aircraft delivering dozens of weapons against a group of Daesh-held buildings and weapon systems in a compound, having the cumulative effect of making that facility harder or impossible to use. Strike assessments are based on initial reports and may be refined.”

Some strikes in our database are attributed to more than one belligerent, and in these cases that also name the United States as responsible, the United States could potentially be responsible for up to 54 additional civilian deaths.

The United States conducted several airstrikes over Sirte on October 12, 2016, resulting in multiple allegations of possible civilian deaths. Five ISIS fighters were also reported to have died. Twitter user @majdiAshrif posted about a “US aircraft” bombing in progress and uploaded three pictures, one of a man cradling a visibly wounded toddler.⁵⁰ The two other images show two children dead, trapped under rubble.⁵¹ The dead children appeared in two other Twitter posts on October 12, 2016 and a Facebook account, which belonged to the “Great Jamahiriya Channel.”⁵² This post also included a separate photo of a wounded child slumped against a wall.⁵³

Researchers for our Libya airstrikes monitoring project sent AFRICOM a list of reported civilian harm incidents in Libya, which were linked by at least one source at the time to possible U.S. actions. (The list also included reported airstrikes in Libya conducted by “unknown belligerents”). AFRICOM responded on June 8, 2018, denying all allegations of civilian harm:

“Before responding to the questions you posed to the ambassador, I would like to be clear that U.S. Africa Command has many processes in place to ensure the safety and protection of the local population remains a top priority. These procedures, combined with precision strike capabilities, safeguard civilians and infrastructure in areas of operation. The protection of civilians is fundamentally consistent with the effective, efficient, and decisive use of force in pursuit of U.S. national interests. As a matter of policy, U.S. forces therefore routinely conduct operations under policy standards that are more protective than the requirements of the law of war that relate to the protection of civilians. U.S. forces also protect civilians because it is the moral and ethical thing to do. Although civilian casualties are a tragic and unavoidable part of war, no force in history has been more committed to limiting harm to civilians than the U.S. military.

As for your questions, since 2012 U.S. Africa Command has conducted post-strike assessments of all U.S. Military actions. From the Fall of 2016, the command has assessed two (2) recorded CIVCAS allegations related to operations in Libya. After thorough investigations, both claims were deemed not credible. In fact, the evidence gathered in one of the investigations strongly suggested that our adversaries in the region were simply lying about alleged civilian casualties in order to bolster their public perception. Evidence found at the time of the respective investigation to support this finding included our adversaries publishing photographs from

another area of responsibility while claiming they were new CIVCAS incidents in Libya.

Also, with regards to the specific incidents you highlighted and asked our team to review, they are not assessed as credible with the information currently available.

Lastly, U.S. Africa Command does not maintain a list of Host Nation or other Nations' strikes, nor do we track the military engagements of host nations. As such, we are unable to accurately assess the associated credibility of the unknown belligerent incidents on the spreadsheet you provided."

For more information on American air and drone strikes, see "[The U.S. Counterterrorism War and Libya](#)."

The GNA has also conducted airstrikes, but these are fewer in number. According to the public record, GNA strikes have killed an estimated seven to nine civilians—perhaps a reflection of its limited access to air power. However, some allegations of strikes or civilian casualties are attributed to more than one belligerent, which could mean that a plane was misidentified or that a strike was conducted jointly by, say, both U.S. and GNA warplanes. Considering these contested cases, the GNA might be responsible for 34 to 54 additional civilian deaths.

For more information about GNA strikes, see "[Strikes by GNA](#)."

GNA representatives did not respond to requests for comment on airstrikes and potential civilian deaths in Libya.

France, which was party to the negotiations that produced the GNA, has reportedly conducted five strikes in Libya, which have resulted in four to eight civilian casualties. An additional strike that was attributed to both France and the LNA could make that estimate higher; this strike hit an urban area in Benghazi on August 12, 2016, killing more than two dozen civilians by some reports.

We contacted French officials with the locations and dates of every airstrike in our database that media reports and local social media accounts linked to French aircraft. However, the French did not respond to requests for comment.

For more information on French strikes, see "[Strikes by France](#)."

For its part, the LNA has enlisted the help of Egypt and the United Arab Emirates in its aerial campaign. Egypt has declared or reportedly conducted at least 41 strikes, which according to local Libyan reports have resulted in 13 or 14 civilian deaths.

Egypt's strikes in Libya aren't always in the service of the LNA. Some are conducted unilaterally, ostensibly to defend the border between the two countries. However, civilians have been victims on occasion, according to reports, though Egypt hasn't claimed any unintended casualties. Three civilians were reportedly killed in an Egyptian strike on an unknown date between September 1 and September 16, 2016, near the Egyptian border in the vicinity of the remote desert village of Jaghbub, Libya. Thirty-year-old Salem Khattab Hamad bin Ali Buhajar, the only known survivor of the strike on young men who were on a fishing expedition near Jaghbub, told local news website Alwasat:

“The next morning [after fishing], the battery of the vehicle ran out because the refrigerator was running. We relaxed a bit and started to prepare the breakfast for my friends. In the meantime, a plane came flying around for half an hour. I ran a little away from the car that was blown up by the bombing. In fact, the scene was painful. My friend, Moataz died instantly, while the other two were alive, but one of them suffered severe burns and the other was hit by a bullet.”

Buhajar's two friends succumbed to their injuries in the days following. Alwasat reported the incident as occurring on the Egyptian side of the border. However, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, which investigates casualty reports, said that it actually occurred within Libya.

Civilians have been victims on occasion, according to reports, though Egypt hasn't claimed any unintended casualties.

We contacted Egyptian officials with the locations and dates of every airstrike in our database that media reports and local social media accounts linked to Egyptian aircraft. A public affairs official instructed us to direct our request for comment to Maj. Gen. Khaled Shawky, the Egyptian Defense Attaché to the United States. Maj. Gen. Shawky did not return our request for comment.

For more information about Egyptian strikes, see [“Strikes by Egypt.”](#)

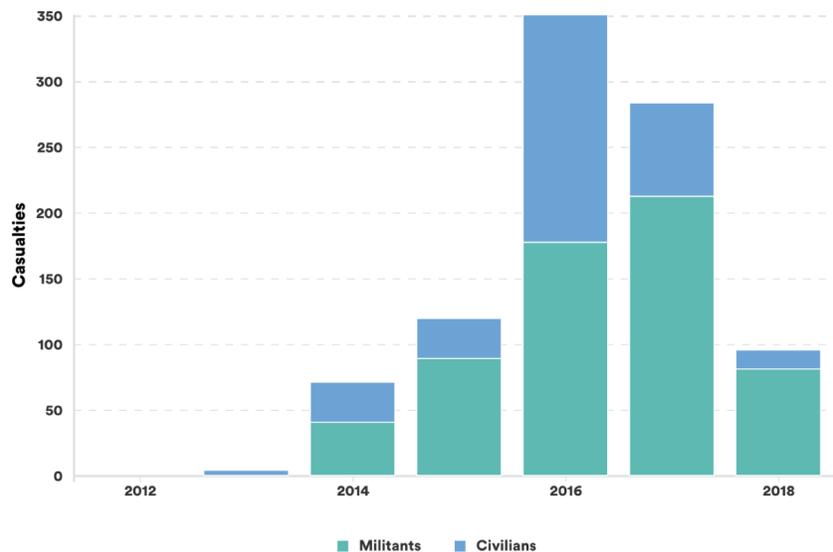
The LNA-allied United Arab Emirates reportedly is responsible for at least 35 strikes, resulting in at least 11 reported civilian deaths and, based on maximum

estimates, as many as 18 civilian deaths. As many as two civilians were killed and three others wounded in a strike attributed to the UAE in Ganfouda, a residential area, on December 16, 2016. Another strike the following month, on January 2, 2017, in the same residential neighborhood, was also attributed to the UAE and was reportedly conducted by a drone. This strike hit a home, killing three civilians and injuring several more. The UAE operates a drone base about 50 miles outside Benghazi, in Haftar-held territory.⁵⁴

We reached out on several occasions by phone and email to UAE officials with the locations and dates of every airstrike in our database that media reports and local social media accounts linked to Emirati aircraft. However, they did not return any requests for comment.

For more information about Emirati strikes, see “[Strikes by UAE.](#)”

Figure 2 | Deaths from Strikes, by Year and Combatant Status



For more information, please visit newamerica.org/counterterrorism-wars

NEW AMERICA

Reported civilian deaths as a result of the air wars in Libya from 2012 to 2018 number at least 242 and potentially as many as 395, based on the minimum and maximum estimates of civilian casualties in our database. These are low estimates compared to Iraq and Syria, similar conflicts in that multiple belligerents are conducting strikes. However, these numbers track with estimates of civilian fatalities resulting from U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan, albeit occurring over a shorter period of time. Of the total 2,158 strikes logged in our database, 81

contain allegations of civilian deaths. Put another way, 4 to 7 percent of the total strikes resulted in civilian fatalities. Across this period of analysis, the majority of allegations of civilian deaths are attributed to the LNA, Egypt and the UAE.

Civilian Deaths from Airstrikes Across Conflicts

	Libya 2012-2018	Iraq and Syria 2014-2018	Pakistan 2004-2018	Somalia 2003-2018	Yemen 2002-2018
Estimated range of civilian deaths	242-395	6,259	245-303	42-53	111-142
Total strikes	2158	29,641	413	91	253

Source: Libya civilian deaths data are based on the Airwars-New America study; Iraq and Syria civilian death estimates are based on figures from Airwars; and Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen civilian deaths data are based on figures from New America databases as of June 10, 2018. Note: Operations in Somalia and Yemen include a number of ground raids in addition to airstrikes.

Meanwhile in Benghazi, after three-plus years of fighting, Haftar’s efforts succeeded in restoring some degree of normalcy to the eastern city, though it continues to be wracked by car bombs and assassinations. Haftar-aligned militias have committed a number of extra-judicial executions of prisoners. In tandem, Haftar made a number of threats to march on Tripoli and topple the internationally recognized GNA.⁵⁵ Though the worst of the fighting appears to have passed for now, sporadic clashes continue to erupt over oil terminals at the ports and in the south of the country.

Highest-volume strike locations

Most strikes between 2012 and the present have occurred in Benghazi, Sirte, and Derna, cities that were highly contested during the Libyan rebellion and 2011 intervention. The chaos in these areas enabled militants to take root after the revolution, leading these cities to become hubs for jihadists.

Out of 2,158 reported strikes in our dataset, 725 (34 percent) occurred in Benghazi, which was ground zero for the revolution. Of the total strikes, 672 occurred in Sirte—many of which were conducted during Operation Odyssey Lightning, the U.S. military campaign against the terrorist group, ISIS. And in Derna, where ISIS first established itself before moving its headquarters to Sirte, 247 strikes have been reportedly conducted.

“All they cared about was liberating Sirte,” Salah Mohamed, a taxi driver in Sirte, told the *Washington Post* in a January 2018 report, referring to the 2016 offensive against ISIS.⁵⁶ “They didn’t care about the aftermath.” At the time of the report, Sirte still lacked functioning law enforcement and waste disposal services.⁵⁷

Also, it’s unclear how many site visits have been made to Sirte, Derna and Benghazi to corroborate civilian death allegations. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya offers the following note with every monthly report: “Due to the security situation, UNSMIL has not been able to carry out direct site visits to all relevant locations in Libya to obtain information. Fear of reprisals against sources further hamper information gathering.”⁵⁸

The Jihadist Environment in Libya Today

On March 6, 2018, Lt. Gen. Robert Ashley, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, addressed the Senate Armed Services Committee on the subject of worldwide threats, remarking: “The inability of rival Libyan governments to unify, coupled with a reduced but still active terrorist presence, poses the greatest security challenge to the North African region.”⁵⁹ Ashley’s testimony echoes statements from France, which has suffered a number of ISIS-directed or -inspired terrorist attacks in the past three years, and Algeria, Libya’s neighbor to the west, which is vulnerable to spillover from the conflict. “The main objective remains the fight against terrorism in this area of turbulence, where the presence of terrorists is reinforced because of the chaotic situation in Libya,” Algerian Foreign Minister Abdelkader Messahel said in 2017 after talks with France’s Foreign Ministry.⁶⁰

Messahel’s observation, that Libya’s chaos has created a vacuum which terrorists have exploited, is underlined by ISIS’s rapid surge there after 2014. Libya also has a long history of militancy that reaches back further than the revolution and is tangled up in old proxy conflicts such as the Afghan-Soviet war of the 1980s. Veterans of that conflict from Libya, known as the “Libyan-Afghans,” founded the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) in 1995.⁶¹ These militants had long conspired against the Gaddafi regime as a part of a secret movement in the 1990s. They had fighting experience, and some had links to al-Qaeda. Though the LIFG clashed with the regime in Benghazi and Derna on several occasions, its fighters were no match for Gaddafi’s superior army, and the group was largely expunged by the turn of the century. Nevertheless, in 2001, the LIFG was formally designated a terrorist organization by the U.S. Treasury Department in an effort to crack down on al-Qaeda and its offshoots.⁶²

As the LIFG dissipated, the al-Qaeda links developed in Afghanistan’s rebel camps enabled some members to leave Libya and join al-Qaeda’s core group. Three LIFG members, Abu Yahya al-Libi, Atiyah Abd al-Rahman and Abu Laith al-Libi, would go on to become senior members of al-Qaeda. All were killed in U.S. Predator drone attacks in Pakistan—Abu Laith in January 2008,⁶³ Atiyah on August 22, 2011,⁶⁴ and Abu Yahya on June 4, 2012.⁶⁵

Other LIFG members who remained in Libya would later recant their extremism as a part of a deradicalization program directed by Gaddafi’s son Saif al-Islam, modeled after a similar Egyptian effort.⁶⁶ Many of these former jihadists would go on to join Islamist militias during the 2011 uprising in Libya, and some led brigades of their own. Two former mujahideen and LIFG members, Libyan rebel leader Abdel Hakil al-Hasady and his field commander, Salah al-Barrani, were responsible for training and deploying anti-Gaddafi fighters on the contentious Derna front in 2011.⁶⁷ Abdulhakim Belhadj, who fought alongside Osama bin

Laden in Afghanistan, was the final leader of the LIFG before it disbanded in 2010 and is now a powerful politician in Libya.⁶⁸

The structure of the Libyan revolution—Gaddafi against everyone else—didn't allow for easy parsing of friends of the West versus foes of the West. A consequence was that, in their effort to tip the scales of power into the hands of the rebels, the French, British, and Americans provided support to broad coalitions of Islamist rebels whose ranks included militants. A *New York Times* investigation of the Benghazi attack that killed U.S. Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and three other Americans in 2012 determined that those responsible were “fighters who had benefited directly from NATO's extensive air power and logistics support during the uprising against Colonel Qaddafi.”⁶⁹

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Ansar al-Sharia, the U.S.-designated terrorist organization behind the 2012 Benghazi consulate attack, was founded in Libya by Mohammad al-Zahawi, emerging from the rubble of the 2011 Libyan revolution. (A group of the same name exists in Tunisia.⁷⁰) The chaotic aftermath of Libya's uprising created an environment that enabled groups like Ansar al-Sharia—and later ISIS—to recruit young members, who faced low employment prospects.⁷¹ On November 19, 2014, the U.N. Security Council approved sanctions on the militant group under a resolution targeting al-Qaeda and affiliates, noting that Ansar al-Sharia was responsible for terrorist attacks in Benghazi between 2011 and 2014 and “runs training camps for foreign terrorist fighters travelling to Syria and Iraq.”⁷² Weakened by significant losses in its ranks, Ansar al-Sharia announced its formal dissolution on May 27, 2017.⁷³ The group, which received support from sympathetic members in the General National Congress and Libya Dawn, had been warring with Gen. Haftar's Libyan National Army. As a result of Haftar's war in Benghazi, radicals within Ansar al-Sharia and other Islamist militias rose to the fore, eventually forming a tacit battlefield alliance with ISIS. Elsewhere in the east, Haftar battled a broad spectrum of local and Islamist militias, such as the Derna Mujahideen Shura Council and the Benghazi Defense Brigades, who counted in their ranks al-Qaeda members or supporters.

ISIS, which was trying to establish a caliphate in Syria and Iraq, also took advantage of the deteriorating security conditions in Libya. ISIS fighters began to trickle into Derna in 2014, shortly after the outbreak of civil war.⁷⁴ A trove of leaked ISIS files suggest that the terrorist network had already gained the allegiance of many Libyan jihadists who had flocked to Syria to fight alongside ISIS in 2013 and early 2014, indicating that there was an existing architecture in Libya for ISIS to exploit.⁷⁵ Libyan returnees, with help from senior ISIS members, began to form a new affiliate. ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi dispatched Abu Nabil al-Anbari, an Iraqi ISIS aide, to take the ISIS blueprint to Derna. In November 2014 Baghdadi declared the establishment of the Islamic State in Libya, which purported to span three provincial areas: Barqa (east), Tripolitania (west) and Fezzan (the south).⁷⁶

In their effort to tip the scales of power into the hands of the rebels, the French, British, and Americans provided support to broad coalitions of Islamist rebels whose ranks included militants.

The group declared allegiance to Baghdadi, who then issued a call urging supporters to join the new Libyan emirate.⁷⁷ ISIS spread to other areas in Libya, most notably to the western border city of Sabratha, a smuggling hub and transit point for Tunisian jihadists, and to Sirte, where the Islamic State co-opted the existing branch of Ansar al-Sharia and exploited tribal grievances—including among the now-marginalized, pro-Gaddafi tribes—to gain support. Evidence of coordination between ISIS-Libya and ISIS core, which came foremost from the release of a slick propaganda video depicting Egyptian Christians clad in orange jumpsuits being beheaded, stirred officials in Washington who had previously believed the Libya satellite to be somewhat detached from the core group.⁷⁸ On March 18, 2015, several gunmen—eventually determined to have been trained by the ISIS unit in Libya—opened fire in the historic Bardo National Museum in Tunisia, killing 22 people, 20 of them foreign tourists, signaling the growing capacity of Libyan ISIS members to launch attacks abroad.⁷⁹ Just over three months later, ISIS claimed responsibility for an attack on tourists in Sousse, Tunisia, which killed 38 people at a beach resort and was also linked to the Libyan unit.⁸⁰ In 2016, militias mounted an organized campaign against the group, supported by a U.S. military operation that consisted of 495 self-reported

airstrikes and drone strikes. The offensive forced the group back underground, into cells that remain scattered across the south and central regions.⁸¹

Support for anti-Gaddafi rebels has inadvertently undercut Libya's current internationally recognized government, leading to the creation of several highly organized and well-armed militias with the capacity to hold on to territory and an environment where terror networks can exist amid militias. This has contributed to the chaos in Libya today. In northern Libya, even after U.S. military operations, ISIS can't quite be uprooted, and now there are flickers of al-Qaeda in pockets of the south. This has had the paradoxical effect of providing the militias *raison d'être*. Many militias, led by ex-jihadists themselves, have at times successfully beaten back ISIS and other jihadist groups, generating a demand for rival states to continue to supply and support them—as Egypt, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates have done. Countries like France and the United States are pursuing their own counterterrorism agendas unilaterally.

→ **BOX 3**

What Is the U.S. Policy on Libya?

On December 1, 2017, President Donald Trump hosted Libyan Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj at the White House and reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to the internationally recognized Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA).⁸²

According to a White House press release about the meeting, the two discussed U.N. efforts at reconciliation between the warring parties on the ground in Libya, and Trump underscored America's "continued commitment" to defeating ISIS and other jihadists in the fractured North African country.⁸³ No policy pronouncements on Libya followed this meeting.

When asked in April 2017 if he saw a U.S. role in stabilizing Libya, Trump demurred. "I do not see a role in Libya. I think the United States has right now enough roles," he told reporters at a White House press conference, adding, "I do see a role in getting rid of ISIS. We're being very effective in that regard."⁸⁴

Libyan and American officials speaking on background to the *New York Times* for a February 7, 2018, report suggested a number of ideas for reassuring Libyan allies: "more frequent, highly visible diplomatic engagements with Libyan leaders; a new United States special envoy with a mandate to work closely with the rival Libyan factions; a seasoned diplomat to replace Peter W. Bodde, who retired at year's end as Washington's ambassador to Libya; closer support for European and United Nations-led efforts to reconcile the warring parties; and a greater number of Special Operations advisers on the ground."⁸⁵ The U.S.

Embassy closed in 2015, relocating to Tunis, Tunisia, where what is called the Libya External Office is led by Chargé d’Affaires Stephanie Williams.⁸⁶ On April 27, 2018, Williams signed agreements with the GNA—a Memorandum of Intent “for airport security” and a Letter of Agreement to “support Libyan policing, corrections, and justice sector development”—reaffirming the U.S. commitment to political reconciliation and improved security in Libya.⁸⁷

Meanwhile, other countries are jockeying for position in Libya. In January 2017, Russia’s only aircraft carrier welcomed aboard Gen. Haftar, who leads the Libyan National Army.⁸⁸ Russia also courted Haftar in other ways, inviting him to Moscow later that year.⁸⁹

The U.S. Counterterrorism War and Libya

Libya is the latest country to which the United States has extended its controversial armed drone program—part of its robust counterterrorism campaign in countries outside of conventional war zones such as Afghanistan and Iraq. These countries include Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen.⁹⁰

The U.S. drone targeted-killing program began in Yemen in 2002, under the Bush administration, when a Predator struck a sedan packed with six men driving east of Yemen's capital.⁹¹ It would be seven years before another strike occurred there. However, during this pause the United States conducted capture and rendition operations in Somalia, beginning in 2003, and on June 19, 2004, the United States conducted its first known drone strike in Pakistan, which targeted and killed the prominent Taliban leader Nek Muhammad in South Waziristan.⁹² The covert wars in these three countries increased dramatically under President Barack Obama, and in 2013, the Obama administration promulgated the Presidential Policy Guidance (PPG). This governed the execution of counterterrorism direct action operations, including drone strikes and ground raids, in countries outside of declared war zones such as Afghanistan and Iraq.

Libya is the latest country to which the United States has extended its controversial armed drone program—part of its robust counterterrorism campaign in countries outside of conventional war zones such as Afghanistan and Iraq.

Strikes in Libya were authorized under Obama's PPG in the second half of 2016, in an effort to destroy ISIS's stronghold in the coastal city of Sirte. At the request of the internationally recognized Government of National Accord, the United States launched a three-phase initiative to counter jihadist groups in Libya. The effort encompassed Operation Odyssey Resolve, which consisted of surveillance and reconnaissance missions; a target selecting operation named Operation Junction Serpent; and Operation Odyssey Lightning, a combination of drone attacks and airstrikes that started in August 2016.⁹³ The August tranche of strikes followed months of covert ground operations by U.S. Special Forces gathering intelligence from rebel groups.⁹⁴ "We are employing a variety of platforms to

provide key information to the GNA-aligned forces. As well, we have the ability to conduct manned and unmanned airstrikes against [ISIS] targets in Sirte to help enable the GNA-aligned forces to make a decisive and strategic advance,” Col. Mark Cheadle, a spokesman for the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), told the *Military Times* at the time.⁹⁵

AFRICOM concluded Operation Odyssey Lightning on Dec. 19, 2016, announcing in a press release that its goal of expelling ISIS from Sirte had been accomplished. “In partnership with the Libyan Government of National Accord,” the release stated, “the operation succeeded in its core objective of enabling GNA-aligned forces to drive Daesh [ISIS] out of Sirte by conducting 495 precision airstrikes against Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Devices, heavy guns, tanks, command and control centers and fighting positions.”⁹⁶

That operation didn’t completely quash ISIS in Libya, however, and since 2016, the United States has continued targeting the group with air and drone strikes. AFRICOM, which also oversees the strikes and raids in Somalia, publishes brief accounts of the strikes in Libya. However, U.S. government reporting of these strikes is inconsistent and, at times, incomplete. For example, the Department of Defense occasionally reports numbers on series of strikes without detailing specific incidents, excluding details such as the precise locations of strikes or casualty numbers. Additionally, AFRICOM does not distinguish between airstrikes and drone strikes in its reporting of individual attacks. According to the U.S. Air Force, 60 percent of the 495 strikes against ISIS in Sirte in 2016 were conducted by Reaper drones. Unmanned aircraft play a large role in the U.S. operations in Libya, mirroring U.S. counterterrorism tactics in similar conflicts.⁹⁷

The United States has the highest standard of reporting strikes among international parties to the aerial conflict in Libya, and has the lowest number of strikes that have been reported to result in civilian fatalities, according to New America and Airwars data. However, there are reasons to doubt some of the Pentagon’s reports of strikes and casualties—and to continue to push for greater transparency.

First, there is a lack of clarity around how the United States investigates allegations of civilian casualties. In a June 2017 briefing, Brig. Gen. Paul Bontrager, deputy director of operations for the U.S. Central Command, told reporters that the military rarely conducts site visits to locations where civilian casualties have been reported. “It’s a rare thing with strikes like this that we can get on the ground in person, or that we can talk to anybody on the ground.”⁹⁸ He was speaking about a March 2017 strike on a mosque in Aleppo, Syria, that Human Rights Watch says killed at least 38 civilians.⁹⁹

Also, the Pentagon has seemingly taken steps to conceal the extent of its operations in Libya and elsewhere. Since January 2017, the U.S. Air Force has conducted at least eight airstrikes in Libya. However, AFRICOM initially self-

reported only four of those strikes in press releases on its website—January 19, September 24, and September 28 in 2017; and March 24, 2018.

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The March 24 strike, which occurred near Ubari, Libya and killed two “terrorists,” according to AFRICOM, did not originally appear in a press release. When asked in email about the existence of a press release for this strike, Maj. Karl Wiest responded, “...our goal is always to be as transparent as possible while taking into account operational security, force protection and diplomatic sensitivities. Unless operational requirements prevent doing so, we acknowledge all strikes — either by press release or response to query. When we limit our acknowledgement to responses to query, as we did with the strike on March 24, it is because of a realistic operational security concern, a significant force protection matter, or potential diplomatic sensitivities.”¹⁰⁰

AFRICOM spokesman Maj. Wiest later disclosed, after being asked by a reporter, the additional four U.S. strikes in Libya that hadn’t appeared in Pentagon press releases. Wiest told the *New York Times* that commanders decided to use a practice called “responses to questions.” That means certain strikes are revealed only if journalists, who are sometimes tipped off by local reporting, specifically ask about them.¹⁰¹ In response to direct questions from Airwars and New America, the dates and locations of these four additional recent U.S. strikes in Libya have now been released. The dates and locations of these strikes are as follows: Friday, September 29, 2017, approximately 100 miles southwest of Sirte; Monday, October 9, 2017, approximately 250 miles south of Sirte; Wednesday, October 18, 2017, in the Wasdi al-Shatii district; and Tuesday, January 23, 2018, near Fuqaha in central Libya.¹⁰² All but one strike killed a “small number of ISIS militants.”¹⁰³ The January 23 strike destroyed two vehicles.¹⁰⁴

Similarly, New America and Airwars reached out to AFRICOM on June 6, 2018, after local social media reports linked U.S. aircraft to a strike on a car in Libya. AFRICOM responded in email, saying “U.S. forces conducted a precision

airstrike near Bani Walid, Libya, on June 6, killing four (4) ISIS-Libya militants” and then released an official statement to the media about the strike.¹⁰⁵

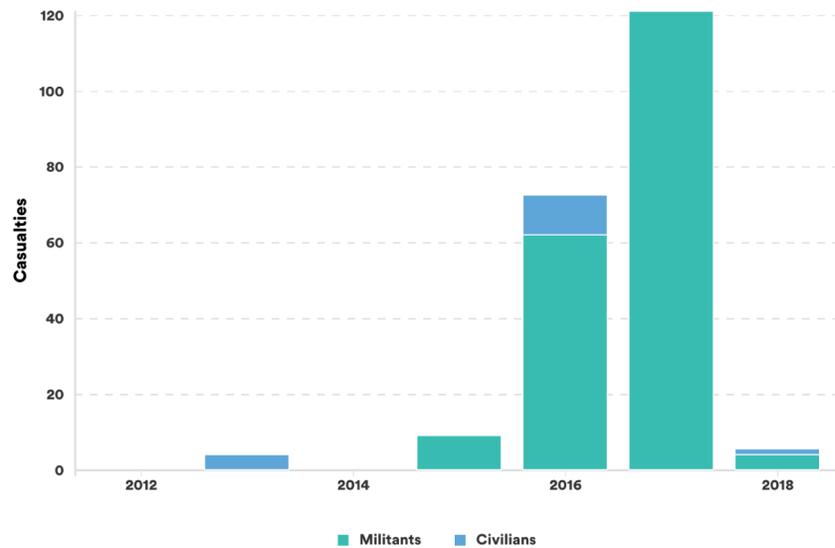
In response to direct questions from Airwars and New America, the dates and locations of these four additional recent U.S. strikes in Libya have now been released.

Second, on May 1, 2018,¹⁰⁶ the Trump administration missed a statutory requirement put in place by Congress for the Pentagon to submit a report to the legislature, no later than May 1 each year, on U.S. military operations that zero were “confirmed, or reasonably suspected, to have resulted in civilian casualties.”¹⁰⁷ The congressional mandate and a similar Obama-era executive order were part of a comprehensive effort to increase transparency around counterterrorism operations occurring “outside of a declared theater of active armed conflict,” which include Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Libya.

The Pentagon released the report on June 1, 2018, one month overdue, reporting 499 civilian fatalities from 2017 in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Yemen.¹⁰⁸ The report says there were no credible allegations of civilian deaths to emerge from Libya. New America and Airwars data on airstrikes in Libya supports the Pentagon claim of no civilian deaths in 2017 from U.S. airstrikes in Libya.

AFRICOM has not reported any civilian deaths in its operations in Libya. Yet according to New America and Airwars data, local reporting suggests the United States has killed between 170 and 218 militants in Libya and is reportedly individually responsible for at least 10 and potentially as many as 20 civilian deaths there (Fig. 4). As stated earlier in the report, some strikes in our database are attributed to more than one belligerent. This is because multiple belligerents may be claimed for a single strike if the incident is contested or the strike was a joint action. In these cases which also name the United States as responsible, the United States could potentially be responsible for up to 54 additional civilian deaths. As stated earlier, AFRICOM has denied all allegations of civilian casualties.

Figure 3 | Deaths from US Strikes, by Year and Combatant Status



For more information, please visit [newamerica.org/counterterrorism-wars](https://www.newamerica.org/counterterrorism-wars)

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On March 25, 2018, the United States conducted a drone strike targeting al-Qaeda in Libya, which was confirmed in a press release and to the *New York Times* by Robyn M. Mack, a spokeswoman for AFRICOM. Mack erroneously said this strike was the first against al-Qaeda in Libya, according to the *Times* report.¹⁰⁹ However, there had been a June 2015 airstrike targeting Mokhtar Belmokhtar, the mastermind of an attack on an Algerian gas plant that killed three Americans and dozens of other hostages—the first U.S. direct action against al-Qaeda in Libya, which preceded the counter-ISIS strikes.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, the March 25 strike might signal a shift in the U.S. counterterrorism campaign in North Africa. Barring the Belmokhtar strike, all previous strikes between 2012 and 2018 in Libya specifically targeted ISIS.¹¹¹ A move to expand U.S. strike targets to include al-Qaeda militants, who operate in pockets of southern Libya, could extend U.S. military activity in the country.

In the course of our research we've documented 540 total airstrikes that were attributed to the United States in media reports. Strikes in our database attributed solely to the United States resulted in a minimum of 20 and maximum of 17 civilian deaths. For some strikes, reports were mixed, with separate news sites attributing the same attack to the United States or other belligerents. These strikes resulted in a minimum of 34 civilian deaths and potentially as many as 54. For the dates and locations of all of these strikes, see [Appendix B](#).

Strikes by Libyan Belligerents: the GNA and the LNA

Tensions between Gen. Khalifa Haftar, who leads the Libyan National Army faction, and Fayez al-Sarraj, who heads the government recognized by the United Nations, have left Libya fractured despite several formal attempts to broker an agreement between them. The two strongmen lead the main forces operating on the ground in Libya: Sarraj's internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA), which controls the capital and a great deal of territory in western Libya; and the Libyan National Army (LNA), which has maintained influence in eastern Libya and seized four major oil ports.

With air support from the United States, the GNA has sought to hold territory and protect its legitimacy as Libya's central government. Haftar, who launched an offensive in 2014 to cleanse Benghazi of jihadist militants, has been conducting airstrikes on militants, moderate Islamist militias and GNA positions as part of a campaign to wrest power from the GNA.

Strikes by Government of National Accord

On September 20, 2016, residents of Hoon, an oasis in Libya's Fezzan region, heard warplanes flying over the town, which is surrounded by black basalt mountains and sand dunes. The planes, which were reportedly flying from Misrata in western Libya, bombed Ninah Park, a water park in Sokna village, in an attempt to strike a rival group in the area. A doctor at Hoon Hospital said that at least nine people were killed and 20 were injured, including women and children.¹¹² No group claimed responsibility for this attack.

Though Misratan forces, which are allied with the U.N.-backed GNA, denied responsibility for the attack via spokesman Mohammed Qannouno, several local social media accounts attributed the attack to them. The GNA has relied on the U.S. military and a mix of Islamists and Misratan militias to counter armed rivals.

GNA Prime Minister Sarraj has continued to try to reach a compromise with Haftar's LNA, but has been unable to negotiate a cease-fire or disarm militias, which the U.N. hoped his unity government would achieve. Algeria hosted talks in May 2017, but international mediation efforts have been disjointed, partially because of lack of certainty about the Trump administration's Libya policy.

According to New America and Airwars data that captures public reports of GNA airstrikes, the GNA has conducted 54 airstrikes in Libya from 2012 to May 20, 2018. These strikes have reportedly killed a minimum of seven civilians and as many as nine. This is relatively low compared to the toll from other countries and groups conducting airstrikes in Libya. However, this number could also be much

higher. Of the 2,158 strikes in the database, tens of cases implicate more than one combatant. For instance, 14 strikes were attributed to both the United States and the GNA, which could mean either or both parties were responsible. These strikes reportedly killed at least 34 civilians and as many as 54, using the highest estimates from reports.

In the course of our research we've documented 68 total airstrikes that were attributed to the GNA, including contested strikes, and altogether they resulted in a minimum of 41 and as many as 63 civilian deaths. For the dates and locations of these strikes, see [Appendix C](#).

Strikes by Libyan National Army

Many Libyans were skeptical of the intentions of Haftar and the LNA, whose aggressive airstrikes on jihadists often battered civilian sites as well. On June 1, 2014, the LNA bombed a Benghazi University building while targeting an Islamist militia base.¹¹³ No civilian deaths were reported; however, a staff member in the mechanical engineering faculty building and his bodyguard reportedly suffered shrapnel wounds that were treated at a hospital.¹¹⁴ C-5 missiles used in these strikes also hit some intended military targets: the former palace of the crown prince in Fuhayat, Benghazi, near the Tripoli bridge (where Ansar al-Sharia was headquartered at the time);¹¹⁵ a GNA battalion; and the February 17 Martyrs Brigade in Benghazi's Qawarsheh area. "Thank God, lectures had already finished," Dean Nasser al-Aqouri told Reuters about the university strike, "but there is huge material damage."¹¹⁶

The LNA hit many soft targets it claimed to be "terrorist targets" during Haftar's Operation Dignity, including small boats in coastal ports, apartment buildings and airports—despite the potential harm to civilians. A strike on August 11, 2014, injured at least three and potentially as many as 10 civilians in Derna's port district. A civilian named as the wife of Tamer Ramadan Hassan Rafik and their two children were among the wounded, suffering acute shrapnel injuries and burns.¹¹⁷ Pictures of the two small children, a boy and a girl, were posted to Facebook by the Arab Organization for Human Rights Libya and showed their scarred faces, which were badly blistered.¹¹⁸

The LNA hit many soft targets it claimed to be "terrorist targets" during Haftar's Operation Dignity.

The LNA's airstrike record is populated with cases like these—a January 5, 2015, strike on a Greek oil tanker that reportedly killed two civilians; a May 5, 2015, strike on the Shabia apartment buildings in Derna that reportedly killed 4-year-old Obwa Musa al-Harir; a March 6, 2018, strike that reportedly killed Saida Omar Sallouh; and tens of similar cases.¹¹⁹

The LNA continues to control most of eastern Libya, despite Haftar's sometimes tenuous grip on power. He was reportedly hospitalized in Paris in April 2018, with reports on his status ranging from a mild stroke to cerebral bleeding. Haftar returned to Libya on April 26 to resume his role as head of the LNA.¹²⁰ After his return, LNA forces continued to attack rival targets. As of May 15, 2018, the LNA had surrounded Islamist-controlled Derna, the last anti-LNA stronghold in the east.¹²¹

In the course of our research we've documented 1,264 total airstrikes that were attributed to the LNA in media reports, including contested strikes; altogether, they resulted in a minimum of 144 and as many as 245 civilian deaths. For the dates and locations of these strikes, see [Appendix D](#).

Reported Strikes by France, Egypt and the UAE

Strikes by France

France officially recognizes the United Nations-mandated Government of National Accord, led by Fayeze al-Sarraj. Despite this support, it has also reportedly developed a strong relationship with and provided military support to Gen. Haftar's rival LNA forces.¹²² French President Emmanuel Macron has called for a unified national army, combining the two main claimants to government, in order to target jihadists in Libya.¹²³ French support for the U.N.-backed government and Haftar has been driven in large part by France's desire to disrupt terrorist organizing in southern Libya that might threaten its own interests in the Sahel.¹²⁴ The region is of particular importance for France. In January 2014, 3,565 of the 8,150 French military personnel posted overseas were deployed in the Sahel.¹²⁵

In January 2016, then-President Francois Hollande explained: "We are making sure to contain the terrorism that took refuge there, in southern Libya. But France will not intervene in Libya because it's up to the international community to take its responsibility."¹²⁶

Despite claims that France would not intervene, it has conducted operations in Libya targeting ISIS and jihadists while maintaining secrecy about its actions. In February 2016, the French newspaper *Le Monde* revealed that France had conducted airstrikes in Libya and had used Special Forces on the ground.¹²⁷ The Defense Ministry did not comment when the story broke, but reportedly launched an investigation into the leak.¹²⁸

Despite claims that France would not intervene, it has conducted operations in Libya targeting ISIS and jihadists while maintaining secrecy about its actions.

In July 2016, the French government acknowledged it was conducting at least some operations in Libya when it confirmed that three French soldiers had died there after their helicopter crashed during what it called an intelligence-

gathering operation.¹²⁹ That confirmation sparked a rebuke from the U.N.-backed Libyan government and triggered protests in Tripoli and other Libyan cities against the French intervention, which may help to explain why France has sought to keep its operations covert.¹³⁰

France's operations in Libya are part of its broader counterterrorism strategy. Following the 2016 helicopter crash, Stéphane Le Foll, a government spokesman, justified the presence of the French soldiers within Libya as part of an effort to "ensure that France is present everywhere in the fight against terrorism."¹³¹ However, French actions are not without cost to local civilians—while adding to a prevailing sense of lawlessness when it comes to belligerents declaring their actions in Libya.

On August 12, 2016, for example, an apartment building housing mostly Sudanese residents was bombed in Benghazi's Ganfouda district. Al Jazeera Arabic, the Libya Observer and other foreign-language media sites implicated "foreign" warplanes in the attack, acting on behalf of Haftar's LNA. Local media website Al-Nabaa alleged that France was the perpetrator of the strike, which also hit a local prison, reporting (in Arabic) that "Al-Saraya Center, the media wing of the rebel council of Benghazi announced the death toll of the French air strikes that targeted the former regime prisoners yesterday."¹³² The report also stated, "Foreign aircraft supporting Haftar continue to bombard the Qanfouda area," hitting civilians in several cases.¹³³ Whether France was responsible for this and other events in which civilians were harmed remains unclear.

We have documented 15 total airstrikes that were attributed to France in local media reports; altogether, they were reported to have resulted in a minimum of 44 and as many as 55 civilian fatalities. For the dates and locations of these strikes, see [Appendix E](#).

Strikes by Egypt

Egypt's participation in the Libyan air war began not with strikes, but by providing bases in Egypt from which Emirati planes took off and struck Islamist-aligned militias in Tripoli in late August 2014.¹³⁴ Egypt at the time denied direct involvement, while the UAE remained silent.

Egypt's decision to play a role in Libya was motivated by a number of factors, including the porous 700-mile Libyan-Egyptian border through which illicit arms and Islamist militants have flowed and, more importantly, the Islamist groups inside Libya which the Egyptian government believed posed a direct and immediate threat to Egypt's stability. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who seized power in 2013 from the Muslim Brotherhood, sees all Islamist groups as a threat to his power.

According to Egyptian security officials, there was a clear web of connections among Islamist groups in Egypt, the most notable of which was Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, and those outside the country. An Egyptian intelligence official told Reuters in October 2014: “There’s a relationship between Libya’s militants, Islamic State, and Sinai militants. They have ideological ties and say they’re together.”¹³⁵

Egypt bombed Islamist militant groups in Benghazi on October 15, 2014. The Associated Press quoted Libyan lawmaker Tareq al-Jorushi, who confirmed that while the planes carrying the bombs were Egyptian, they were flown by Libyans. A leader of one of the groups hit by the Egyptian planes confirmed the same, though an Egyptian presidential spokesman later denied that Egyptian planes were used.¹³⁶

As Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Nathaniel Barr wrote in February 2015, Egypt had cause to be concerned with ISIS’s rise in Libya. “There is growing evidence,” they noted at the time, “that Libyan jihadist groups have developed relationships with the Sinai-based jihadist group Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM), which renamed itself Wilayat Sinai after pledging an oath of bayat (allegiance) to IS [ISIS].”¹³⁷

The Egyptian government first publicly acknowledged conducting airstrikes in Libya in February 2015, as retribution for the beheading of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians by a Libyan ISIS branch—Tripolitania Province of the Islamic State.¹³⁸ On February 15, 2015, various sources reported that Egyptian airstrikes hit two locations, the Bab Shiha neighborhood and the Jabal al-Akhdar Industrial Co.’s former headquarters, in east Derna, in the process killing at least seven civilians, including three or four children.

Amnesty International, which investigated the case, concluded that Egypt did not take proper precautions to protect civilians in its execution of the strikes. “According to eyewitnesses,” Amnesty International reported, “Egyptian fighter jets carried out airstrikes on several locations in and around Derna between 5:45am and 7:30am on 16 February. Most were on military targets, but eyewitnesses say two missiles were fired into a heavily populated residential area called Sheiha al-Gharbiya, close to the city’s university.”¹³⁹ Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, a Middle East and North Africa deputy director at Amnesty International, said in the report, “Even if the Egyptian military believed that fighters were present in the house or in the vicinity, they should have taken the necessary precaution to identify who else was in the house and in the neighbourhood to avoid or at least minimize civilian casualties.”¹⁴⁰ The strike also hit its targets, killing 64 ISIS militants, according to *The Guardian*.¹⁴¹

Amnesty International, which investigated the case, concluded that Egypt did not take proper precautions to protect civilians in its execution of the strikes.

Egypt's next reported airstrikes in Libya were in May 2017, retaliating for the deaths of 29 Coptic Christians who were traveling to a monastery 85 miles south of Cairo when they were attacked by 10 gunmen. ISIS claimed responsibility for that attack. The Egyptian strikes, carried out with the Libyan National Army, hit ISIS targets in Derna.¹⁴²

On May 15, 2018, a car in Kufra, Libya, bound for the Egyptian border and carrying eight African asylum seekers, was struck by a warplane, killing three Eritrean citizens.¹⁴³ A local freelance journalist, Jamal Adel, attributed the strike to the Egyptian Air Force (EAF) on his Twitter.¹⁴⁴ Adel said that the EAF also targeted human traffickers in a November 2017 strike.¹⁴⁵ The surviving passengers of the Kufra strike were taken to the Atiya al-Lassah General Hospital for treatment.¹⁴⁶

We documented 93 total airstrikes attributed to Egypt in media reports; altogether, they resulted in a minimum of 25 and as many as 32 civilian fatalities. For the dates and locations of these known strikes, see [Appendix F](#).

Strikes by the United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) began its own intervention in Libya in March 2011 to help topple the regime of Muammar al-Gaddafi. Joining an international coalition that consisted of NATO countries and Arab nations, including Jordan and Qatar, and under the authority of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 (also passed in March 2011), the UAE and these partner nations were successful in helping to establish the Transitional National Council (NTC), which was set up as an alternative to Gaddafi.

As Bruce R. Nardulli observed in the RAND Corporation's 2016 publication *Precision and Purpose: Airpower in the Libyan Civil War*, "Qatari and UAE political, diplomatic, and financial support to the NTC was instrumental in providing breathing space for the NTC to form and survive, and to lend legitimacy to it as a

governing alternative.”¹⁴⁷ Cooperation between the UAE and Qatar would not endure, as Libya became the site of one of the most complex post-Arab Spring proxy wars between the two countries and their allies.

Emirati airstrikes in Libya began, as previously noted, from an Egyptian air base in August 2014.¹⁴⁸ By this point, the UAE, joined by Egypt and Saudi Arabia in particular, and Qatar, allied with Turkey and Sudan, had put their support behind different Libyan groups. The strikes conducted by the UAE in August 2014 were primarily to undermine Misratan and Libya Dawn militias in Tripoli, which were supported by Qatar. Though Egypt denied being actively involved in these strikes and the UAE did not comment on them, four American officials confirmed both countries’ involvement.¹⁴⁹

Of the militias about which the Emiratis were particularly concerned, the Operation Dawn coalition based in Tripoli, which included both Islamists and non-Islamists,¹⁵⁰ was at the top of the list.¹⁵¹ Like the Egyptians, Emirati leaders were deeply concerned with the potential, as they saw it, of Islamist-led instability in Libya to threaten stability at home. To prevent this, the Emiratis threw their support behind Gen. Haftar, who led the Operation Dignity (and the Libyan National Army) campaign against the Qatari-backed Islamist militias, which were then waging Operation Dawn.¹⁵²

On January 5, 2017, Libya Alahrar TV reported on the news agency’s Facebook page that four children were killed in an airstrike conducted by the UAE in support of the LNA, which hit a two-family housing unit in the Ganfouda area of Benghazi.¹⁵³ Al-Nabaa news agency reported on its Twitter account that the strikes, which it said numbered four, were conducted by an unmanned aircraft.¹⁵⁴

Despite the fact that relations between the UAE and Qatar remain at an all-time low, both countries are members of the anti-ISIS coalition.¹⁵⁵ As recently as December 2017, the UAE was expanding its footprint at Al Khadim air base—roughly 65 miles east of Benghazi¹⁵⁶—in an effort to combat ISIS and other non-ISIS Islamist groups in Libya, but the primary focus of the UAE’s air campaign in Libya continues to be its opposition to Qatari-backed Islamist groups.

We found 163 total airstrikes that were attributed to the UAE, including contested strikes; altogether they resulted in a minimum of 38 and as many as 58 civilian deaths. For the dates and locations of these strikes, see [Appendix G](#).

Conclusion

Since the 2011 NATO intervention, Libya has remained quite unstable as two competing militaries—that of the internationally recognized government, the GNA, and the forces of Gen. Haftar’s LNA—struggle for power. Both of these militaries are deploying airstrikes, and in turn they are supported by foreign countries that are also launching airstrikes. Crucially, despite multiple reports of civilian casualties, the countries and militaries conducting airstrikes in Libya have not reported any civilian deaths, and it’s unclear what each participant’s process is for investigating claims of civilian harm in Libya, where it can be hard to reach specific sites.

The GNA is supported by the United States, which carries out strikes against ISIS and al-Qaeda, while the outside Arab states involved in the aerial conflict—Egypt and the UAE—are carrying out their own strikes either in support of the LNA or against Islamist militias. France is also striking Islamist militant targets in Libya and has expressed support for cooperating with the LNA on combating terrorism, despite its commitment—and that of other Western nations—to shoring up the GNA.

The airstrikes by these four nations and the two competing Libyan factions are intensifying the conflict in an already fragile country. They are also setting a poor precedent for future conflict, as many of these strikes are not authorized by international bodies such as the U.N., NATO or the Arab League, as was the case in the 2011 NATO intervention.

Though the GNA has consented to U.S. airstrikes in Libya, and it’s possible France may have obtained some similar authorization, lawlessness still persists in the skies over Libya, exemplified by the neglect of the belligerents to report many of their strikes as well as any civilian casualties, and the absence of any international pressure to do so.

The airstrikes by these four nations and the two competing Libyan factions are intensifying the conflict in an already fragile country.

France and Egypt have both defended their airstrikes in Libya using a self-defense argument that these strikes are aimed at terrorist groups that threaten

their security; this is the same kind of argument the United States has made since 9/11 to defend its covert drone program aimed at suspected terrorists in the tribal areas of Pakistan along its border with Afghanistan. The UAE has made no such arguments and its military operations in Libya seem aimed at curbing the power of Islamists without, it seems, the agreement of the GNA, nor with a known self-defense justification.

The United States is the most transparent of all the belligerents, and has sought to limit its involvement in Libya beyond the major campaign against ISIS in Sirte in 2016. Reported civilian harm from U.S. actions is relatively light, although this might be explained by the difficulty of reporting in areas like Sirte that experience high volumes of airstrikes, and by the low level of local monitoring capabilities among Libyans.

Comparatively, in Syria, local monitoring of civilian harm through citizen journalists and organizations such as the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and Syria 24 is much stronger. In the 2017 *New York Times* report “The Uncounted,” journalists determined that civilian casualties in Iraq were likely 31 times higher than the coalition was admitting. Our study similarly uncovered previously undisclosed cases of strikes and casualties, but the figures presented are almost certainly lower-end estimates due to the limitations of local monitoring and the dearth of international reporting on airstrikes in Libya.

A lack of international reporting on the air war has helped to obscure the fact that the countries involved in Libya elect not to report their airstrikes, including France, the United Arab Emirates and, at times, the United States and Egypt. Less than 50 percent of all reported airstrikes are officially declared.

Overall, reported civilian harm from airstrikes in Libya is relatively low when compared to higher-intensity conflicts in, for example, Iraq, Syria, or Yemen. This may indicate a local under-reporting of the issue.

Gen. Haftar’s LNA, while not the internationally recognized government of Libya, has nevertheless been relatively transparent in declaring its own military actions. Even so, like the United States, it has failed to accept responsibility for any civilian harm—undermining the legitimacy of its conduct at a local level.

Since 2014, Libya has increasingly become an arena for proxy warfare by multiple states. As in Syria, such proxy warfare not only has costs for Libya, its civilians and its stability, but it also may escalate the conflict within Libya or even outside Libya’s borders.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: General National Congress Airstrikes in Libya

2014

- Jan. 18 (2 strikes) in Tamanhint air base (Sabha)
- Jan. 19 (2 strikes) in Sabha: Qweira al Mal Gate (Sabha); 2 civilian deaths
- Dec. 28 (1 strike) in Bin Jawad (Sirte); 2 civilian deaths

2015

- March 3 (1 strike) in Sidra (Sirte)
- March 3 (1 strike) in Ras Lanuf (Sirte)
- March 4 (1 strike) in Zintan (Jabal al-Gharbi)
- March 11 (2 strikes) in Zintan (Jabal al-Gharbi)
- March 23 (1 strike) in Zintan (Jabal al-Gharbi)
- April 1 (2 strikes) in Zintan Airport (Jabal al-Gharbi)
- April 6 (2 strikes) in Zintan (Jabal al-Gharbi)
- July 19 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- Aug. 15 (2 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 17 (1 strike) in Sabratha (Zawiya)

APPENDIX B: United States Airstrikes in Libya

2012

- Sept. 13 (2 strikes) in unknown location

2013

- Aug. 11 (1 strike) in Al Dahir (Sirte); 4 civilian deaths
- Oct. 4 (2 strikes) in Sirte

2015

- June 14 (1 strike) in Ajdabiya (Al Wahat)
- Nov. 13 (1 strike) in Derna

2016

- Feb. 19 (3 strikes) in Sabratha: Qasr Talil/Alalqa (Zawiya); 4 civilian deaths
- Aug. 1 (1 strike) in Sirte
- Aug. 1 (5 strikes) in Tripoli

- Aug. 2 (3 strikes) in Tripoli
- Aug. 3 (1 strike) in Sirte
- Aug. 4 (2 strikes) in Sirte
- Aug. 6 (4 strikes) in Sirte
- Aug. 7, 2016 (5 strikes) in Sirte
- Aug. 8, 2016 (8 strikes) in Sirte
- Aug. 9 (1 strike) in Sirte
- Aug. 10 (7 strikes) in Sirte
- Aug. 11 (5 strikes) in Sirte
- Aug. 13 (1 strike) in Sirte
- Aug. 14 (4 strikes) in Sirte
- Aug. 15 (2 strikes) in Sirte
- Aug. 16 (9 strikes) in Sirte
- Aug. 17 (5 strikes) in Sirte
- Aug. 18 (3 strikes) in Sirte
- Aug. 19 (3 strikes) in Sirte
- Aug. 20 (2 strikes) in Sirte
- Aug. 21 (4 strikes) in Sirte
- Aug. 22 (3 strikes) in Sirte
- Aug. 23 (1 strike) in Sirte
- Aug. 24 (4 strikes) in Sirte
- Aug. 26 (1 strike) in Sirte
- Aug. 27 (2 strikes) in Sirte
- Aug. 28 (7 strikes) in Sirte
- Aug. 29 (7 strikes) in Sirte
- Aug. 30 (5 strikes) in Sirte
- Aug. 31 (4 strikes) in Sirte
- Sept. 1 (2 strikes) in Sirte
- Sept. 2 (1 strike) in Sirte
- Sept. 3 (6 strikes) in Sirte
- Sept. 4 (4 strikes) in Sirte
- Sept. 5 (4 strikes) in Sirte
- Sept. 6 (3 strikes) in Sirte
- Sept. 7 (2 strikes) in Sirte
- Sept. 8 (3 strikes) in Sirte
- Sept. 9 (3 strikes) in Sirte
- Sept. 10 (3 strikes) in Sirte
- Sept. 11 (4 strikes) in Sirte
- Sept. 12 (3 strikes) in Sirte
- Sept. 13 (1 strike) in Sirte
- Sept. 14 (3 strikes) in Sirte
- Sept. 15 (1 strike) in Sirte

- Sept. 18 (4 strikes) in Sirte
- Sept. 20 (3 strikes) in Sirte
- Sept. 21 (3 strikes) in Sirte
- Sept. 22 (8 strikes) in Sirte
- Sept. 23 (4 strikes) in Sirte
- Sept. 24 (1 strike) in Sirte
- Sept. 28 (1 strike) in Sirte
- Sept. 29 (1 strike) in Sirte
- Sept. 30 (3 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 1 (1 strike) in Sirte
- Oct. 2 (20 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 3 (5 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 4 (3 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 5 (2 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 7 (10 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 8 (16 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 9 (21 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 10 (4 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 11 (9 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 12 (10 strikes) in Sirte; 2 civilian deaths
- Oct. 13 (8 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 14 (24 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 15 (5 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 16 (7 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 17 (1 strike) in Sirte
- Oct. 18 (5 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 20 (1 strike) in Sirte, Libya; 4 civilian deaths
- Oct. 21 (4 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 22 (1 strike) in Sirte
- Oct. 23 (2 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 24 (4 strikes) in Giza neighborhood (Sirte); 0-7 civilian deaths
- Oct. 25 (5 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 26 (5 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 28 (1 strike) in Sirte
- Oct. 31 (14 strikes) in Sirte
- Nov. 8 (1 strike) in Sirte
- Nov. 10 (7 strikes) in Sirte
- Nov. 11 (2 strikes) in Sirte
- Nov. 12 (5 strikes) in Sirte
- Nov. 13 (1 strike) in Derna
- Nov. 13 (13 strikes) in Sirte
- Nov. 15 (2 strikes) in Sirte

- Nov. 18 (1 strike) in Sirte
- Nov. 19 (6 strikes) in Sirte
- Nov. 21 (13 strikes) in Sirte
- Nov. 22 (8 strikes) in Sirte
- Nov. 23 (6 strikes) in Sirte
- Nov. 24 (5 strikes) in Sirte
- Nov. 25 (7 strikes) in Sirte
- Nov. 26 (11 strikes) in Sirte
- Nov. 27 (7 strikes) in Sirte
- Nov. 28 (5 strikes) in Sirte
- Nov. 29 (4 strikes) in Sirte
- Nov. 30 (3 strikes) in Sirte
- Dec. 1 (3 strikes) in Sirte
- Dec. 2 (8 strikes) in Sirte
- Dec. 3 (14 strikes) in Sirte
- Dec. 5 (3 strikes) in Sirte
- Dec. 5 (5 strikes) in Sirte; 30-50 civilian deaths

2017

- Jan. 18 (2 strikes) in Sirte
- Jan. 28 (1 strike) in Derna
- July 7 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- July 21 (1 strike) in Abu Najim (Sirte)
- July 25 (1 strike) in Sirte
- Sept. 22 (6 strikes) in Sirte
- Sept. 26 (2 strikes) in Sirte
- Sept. 29 (1 strike) in Sirte
- Oct. 9 (1 strike) in Sirte
- Oct. 18 (1 strike) in Wadi al Shatii
- Nov. 17 (1 strike) in Fuqaha (Jufra)
- Nov. 19 (1 strike) in Fuqaha (Jufra)

2018

- Jan. 23 (1 strike) in Fuqaha (Jufra)
- March 24 (1 strike) in Ubari (Wadi al Hayaa)

APPENDIX C: Government of National Accord Airstrikes in Libya

2014

- Oct. 25 (2 strikes) in Zintan (Jabar al-Gharbi)

- Oct. 28 (7 strikes) in Qawalish (Jabar al-Gharbi)

2015

- Jan. 4 (3 strikes) in Misrata
- Jan. 5 (2 strikes) in Derna (Derna port); 2 civilian deaths
- March 5 (2 strikes) in Tripoli
- March 21 (3 strikes) in Tripoli
- May 26 (2 strikes) in Sirte (Port of Sirte); 1 civilian death
- Aug. 13 (3 strikes) in Sirte
- Aug. 15 (2 strikes) in Sirte

2016

- May 19 (1 strike) in Ca near villages of Al-Wushka, Al-Qadihah and Zamzam (Sirte)
- May 30 (1 strike) in Sirte
- June 21 (2 strikes) in Sirte
- June 23 (2 strikes) in Sirte
- Sept. 20 (1 strike) in Sokna (Jufra); 7-9 civilian deaths
- Sept. 29 (12 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 2 (6 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 3 (4 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 5 (2 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 7 (14 strikes) in Sirte
- Oct. 20 (1 strike) in Sirte; 4 civilian deaths
- Oct. 22 (1 strike) in Sirte
- Oct. 27 (2 strikes) in Sirte
- Dec. 2 (8 strikes) in Sirte
- Dec. 5 (5 strikes) in Sirte; 30-50 civilian deaths

2017

- Jan. 1 (1 strike) in Sabha
- Jan. 2 (1 strike) in Gwirat al-Mal checkpoint (Sabha)
- Jan. 21 (1 strike) in Bani Walid (Misrata)
- April 12 (1 strike) in Sabha
- April 13 (1 strike) in Sabha
- July 27 (1 strike) in Sirte

APPENDIX D: Libyan National Army Airstrikes in Libya

2014

- May 16 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- May 17 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- May 19 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- May 20 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- May 24 (2 strikes) in Derna
- May 28 (3 strikes) in Benghazi
- May 30 (3 strikes) in Benghazi
- June 1 (3 strikes) in Faculty of Mechanical Engineering (Benghazi)
- June 4 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- June 5 (4 strikes) in Benghazi
- June 5 (1 strike) in Derna
- June 6 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- June 7 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- June 9 (6 strikes) in Benghazi
- June 10 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- June 11 (2 strikes) in Ajdabiya (Al Wahat)
- June 20 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- June 21 (1 strike) in Ras al Helal: Ras al Helan Port (Benghazi)
- June 23 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- June 23 (2 strikes) in Derna
- June 28 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- July 2 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- July 9 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- July 23 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- July 24 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- July 29 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- July 30 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Aug. 1 (1 strike) in Ajdabiya (Al Wahat)
- Aug. 1 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Aug. 2 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- Aug. 11 (1 strike) in Derna Port (Derna)
- Aug. 18 (1 strike) in Tripoli
- Aug. 30 (1 strike) in Derna
- Sept. 3 (2 strikes) in Derna
- Sept. 3 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- Sept. 15 (1 strike) in Tripoli
- Sept. 24 (2 strikes) in Benghazi

- Oct. 5 (2 strikes) in Derna
- Oct. 8 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Oct. 10 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Oct. 12 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Oct. 15 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- Oct. 18 (2 strikes) in Bosnib (Benghazi)
- Oct. 20 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Oct. 22 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Nov. 10 (2 strikes) in Sabri (Benghazi)
- Nov. 12 (1 strike) in Derna
- Nov. 18 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Nov. 19 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- Nov. 22 (5 strikes) in Bi'r al-Ghanam (Zawiya)
- Nov. 22 (10 strikes) in Gheryan (Jabal al-Gharbi)
- Nov. 24 (2 strikes) in Mitiga International Airport (Tripoli)
- Nov. 25 (2 strikes) in Sabratha (Zawiya)
- Nov. 26 (3 strikes) in Zuwara (Nuqat al-Khums)
- Nov. 27 (2 strikes) in Zuwara (Nuqat al-Khums)
- Nov. 30 (3 strikes) in Misrata
- Dec. 2 (2 strikes) in Zuwara (Nuqat al-Khums); 3-5 civilian deaths
- Dec. 3 (2 strikes) in Zuwara port (Nuqat al-Khums), Libya; 0-7 civilian deaths
- Dec. 4 (1 strike) in Tripoli
- Dec. 5 (1 strike) in Ras Ajdir (Nuqat al-Khums)
- Dec. 5 (2 strikes) in Gheryan (Jabal al-Gharbi)
- Dec. 6 (1 strike) in Misrata
- Dec. 7 (1 strike) in Sabratha (Zawiya)
- Dec. 8 (2 strikes) in Bi'r al-Ghanam (Zawiya)
- Dec. 13 (2 strikes) in Ras Lanuf (Sirte)
- Dec. 16 (1 strike) in Sidra (Sirte)
- Dec. 17 (2 strikes) in Gheryan (Jabal al-Gharbi)
- Dec. 20 (1 strike) in Sirte; 0-19 civilian deaths
- Dec. 21 (2 strikes) in Sirte
- Dec. 22 (2 strikes) in Sirte
- Dec. 28 (1 strike) in Misrata
- Dec. 30 (2 strikes) in Sirte

2015

- Jan. 3 (2 strikes) in Misrata port; 2 civilian deaths
- Jan. 3 (3 strikes) in Port Sidra (Sirte)
- Jan. 4 (3 strikes) in Misrata
- Jan. 5 (2 strikes) in Derna port (Derna; 2 civilian deaths)

- Jan. 7 (2 strikes) in Sirte
- Jan. 14 (1 strike) in Benghazi port (Benghazi)
- Feb. 6 (3 strikes) in Benghazi
- Feb. 7 (3 strikes) in Benghazi
- March 20 (4 strikes) in Tripoli
- March 21 (3 strikes) in Tripoli
- March 21 (2 strikes) in Jufra
- March 24 (1 strike) in Tarhuna (Murqub); 8 civilian deaths
- May 5 (1 strike) in Ghazi (Derna); 1 civilian death
- May 9 (2 strikes) in Gharyan (Jabal al-Gharbi)
- May 11 (2 strikes) in Tobruk (Butnan); 1 civilian death
- May 16 (1 strike) in Derna
- May 25 (3 strikes) in Derna
- May 26 (2 strikes) in Port of Sirte (Sirte; 1 civilian death
- May 29 (2 strikes) in Sirte
- June 13 (1 strike) in Derna
- June 14 (2 strikes) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- July 14 (2 strikes) in Derna
- July 19 (2 strikes) in Benghazi port
- July 23 (4 strikes) in al-Sabri (Benghazi); 1-2 civilian deaths
- Aug. 7 (1 strike) in Derna port (Derna)
- Aug. 13 (3 strikes) in Sirte
- Sept. 19 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Sept. 25 (25 strikes) in Al Fatayah (Derna)
- Sept. 26 (6 strikes) in 319 camp (Benghazi)
- Sept. 27 (4 strikes) in Bouatni (Benghazi)
- Sept. 28 (6 strikes) in Benghazi port
- Oct. 1 (3 strikes) in Benghazi port (Benghazi)
- Oct. 9 (3 strikes) in Benghazi, Libya
- Oct. 12 (3 strikes) in Leithi (Benghazi)
- Oct. 13 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- Oct. 15 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Oct. 17 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Oct. 23 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Oct. 25 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Nov. 8 (3 strikes) in Nairouz family resort (Benghazi)
- Nov. 10 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Nov. 25 (2 strikes) in Derna
- Nov. 25 (1 strike) in Derna port (Derna)
- Nov. 26 (2 strikes) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- Nov. 28 (3 strikes) in Benghazi
- Dec. 5 (4 strikes) in Benghazi

- Dec. 5 (2 strikes) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- Dec. 7 (18 strikes) in Ganfouda (Benghazi)
- Dec. 10 (5 strikes) in Leithi (Benghazi)
- Dec. 14 (4 strikes) in Benghazi
- Dec. 16 (3 strikes) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- Dec. 20 (2 strikes) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- Dec. 26 (1 strike) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat); 1-3 civilian deaths

2016

- Jan. 5 (4 strikes) in Benghazi
- Jan. 6 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Jan. 6 (2 strikes) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- Jan. 10 (2 strikes) in Sirte
- Jan. 11 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Jan. 12 (6 strikes) in Benghazi power plant (Benghazi)
- Jan. 13 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Jan. 19 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Jan. 20 (6 strikes) in Benghazi
- Jan. 22 (3 strikes) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- Jan. 23 (5 strikes) in Bin Jawad (Sirte)
- Jan. 31 (5 strikes) in Leithi (Benghazi)
- Feb. 3 (1 strike) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- Feb. 4 (1 strike) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- Feb. 4 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Feb. 6 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Feb. 8 (2 strikes) in Derna
- Feb. 8 (2 strikes) in Derna
- Feb. 10 (5 strikes) in Jawhara resort (Benghazi)
- Feb. 11 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Feb. 11 (2 strikes) in Derna
- Feb. 20 (6 strikes) in Benghazi
- Feb. 22 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- Feb. 24 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Feb. 25 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Feb. 27 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- March 3 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- March 5 (3 strikes) in Benghazi
- March 9 (4 strikes) in Benghazi
- March 10 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- March 12 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- March 15 (2 strikes) in Benghazi port (Benghazi); 0-2 civilian deaths
- March 16 (1 strike) in Benghazi

- March 18 (1 strike) in Benghazi; 0-2 civilian deaths
- March 18 (5 strikes) in Benghazi
- March 29 (7 strikes) in Benghazi
- April 3 (3 strikes) in Benghazi
- April 5 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- April 9 (3 strikes) in Benghazi
- April 13 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- April 14 (3 strikes) in Benghazi
- April 16 (5 strikes) in Benghazi
- April 18 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- April 20 (2 strikes) in in Derna
- April 22 (2 strikes) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- April 22 (2 strikes) in Bayda (Jabal al-Akhdar)
- April 22 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- April 22 (2 strikes) in Derna
- April 23 (1 strike) in Shiha (Derna); 3 civilian deaths
- April 23 (1 strike) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- April 27 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- May 2 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- May 5 (9 strikes) in Benghazi
- May 10 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- May 10 (2 strikes) in Abu Qurayn (Sirte)
- May 11 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- May 11 (6 strikes) in Derna
- May 13 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- May 14 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- May 14 (1 strike) in Derna
- May 19 (3 strikes) in Benghazi
- May 24 (8 strikes) in Benghazi
- May 24 (3 strikes) in Derna
- May 25 (5 strikes) in Benghazi
- May 27 (6 strikes) in Benghazi
- May 29 (4 strikes) in Benghazi
- May 30 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- May 31 (3 strikes) in Benghazi
- June 1 (3 strikes) in Benghazi
- June 2 (3 strikes) in Qawarsheh (Benghazi)
- June 3 (3 strikes) in Benghazi
- June 4 (3 strikes) in Benghazi
- June 4 (3 strikes) in Derna
- June 5 (6 strikes) in Benghazi
- June 8 (2 strikes) in Benghazi

- June 9 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- June 9 (1 strike) in Mountain Company factory (Derna); 3-6 civilian deaths
- June 12 (5 strikes) in Benghazi
- June 13 (1 strike) in Derna; 2 civilian deaths
- June 16 (3 strikes) in Regency Hotel (Benghazi)
- June 18 (2 strikes) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- June 20 (2 strikes) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- June 21 (2 strikes) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- June 21 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- June 22 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- June 23 (4 strikes) in Benghazi
- June 23 (1 strike) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- June 24 (3 strikes) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- June 25 (1 strike) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- June 25 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- June 26 (4 strikes) in Ganfouda (Benghazi)
- June 26 (1 strike) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- July 1 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- July 1 (2 strikes) in in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- July 2 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- July 2 (2 strike) in in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- July 3 (2 strike) in Benghazi
- July 3 (3 strikes) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- July 6 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- July 7 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- July 8 (4 strikes) in Shneib (Derna); 1-10 civilian deaths
- July 10 (5 strikes) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- July 12 (1 strike) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- July 12 (1 strike) in Derna, Libya; 0-1 civilian deaths
- July 12 (3 strikes) in Benghazi
- July 13 (5 strikes) in al-Jelaydah (al-Wahat)
- July 14 (3 strikes) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- July 14 (1 strike) in Derna
- July 15 (2 strikes) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- Aug. 2 (2 strikes) in Sayeda Khadija (Derna)
- Aug. 4 (4 strikes) in Benghazi
- Aug. 5 (2 strikes) in Ganfouda (Benghazi); 1 civilian death
- Aug. 5 (10 strikes) in Derna
- Aug. 12 (1 strike) in Ganfouda (Benghazi); 20-31 civilian deaths
- Aug. 28 (18 strikes) in Ganfouda (Benghazi); 21 civilian deaths
- Aug. 29 (2 strikes) in Ganfouda (Benghazi)
- Aug. 31 (2 strikes) in Benghazi

- Sept. 9 (2 strikes) in Derna
- Sept. 11 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Sept. 11 (2 strikes) in Ajdabiya (al-Wahat)
- Sept. 11 (2 strikes) in Zuwetina (al-Wahat)
- Sept. 11 (2 strikes) in Ras Lanuf (Sirte)
- Sept. 13 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Sept. 13 (2 strikes) in Nofaliya (Sirte)
- Sept. 15 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- Sept. 18 (1 strike) in Bin Jawad (Sirte)
- Sept. 21 (3 strikes) in Benghazi
- Sept. 25 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- Sept. 28 (14 strikes) in Sirte
- Sept. 28 (4 strikes) in Derna
- Sept. 29 (1 strike) in Derna
- Sept. 29 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Oct. 1 (2 strikes) in Ganfouda (Benghazi)
- Oct. 4 (7 strikes) in Ganfouda (Benghazi); 10-16 civilian deaths
- Oct. 6 (1 strike) in Ganfouda (Benghazi)
- Oct. 15 (4 strikes) in Benghazi
- Oct. 16 (3 strikes) in Benghazi
- Oct. 16 (2 strikes) in Derna
- Oct. 17 (1 strike) in Derna port (Derna); 1 civilian death
- Oct. 26 (7 strikes) in Benghazi
- Oct. 30 (3 strikes) in Benghazi
- Nov. 15 (4 strikes) in Ganfouda (Benghazi); 8 civilian deaths
- Nov. 19 (3 strikes) in Benghazi
- Nov. 23 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Dec. 7 (1 strike) in Nofaliya (Sirte)
- Dec. 7 (2 strikes) in Sidra (Sirte)
- Dec. 8 (2 strikes) in Jufra
- Dec. 12 (1 strike) in Sokna (Jufra)
- Dec. 20 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- Dec. 26 (1 strike) in Hun (Jufra)
- Dec. 28 (1 strike) in Sokna (Jufra)

2017

- Jan. 3 (2 strikes) in Jufra air base (Jufra); 1 civilian death
- Jan. 4 (14 strikes) in Hun (Jufra)
- Jan. 5 (1 strike) in Ganfouda (Benghazi); 4 civilian deaths
- Jan. 7 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Jan. 13 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Jan. 14 (1 strike) in Derna

- Jan. 15 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- Jan. 16 (1 strike) in Derna port (Derna)
- Jan. 17 (1 strike) in Derna
- Jan. 18 (1 strike) in Derna
- Jan. 22 (1 strike) in Derna
- Jan. 24 (1 strike) in Derna
- Jan. 25 (1 strike) in Derna
- Jan. 28 (1 strike) in Derna
- Jan. 28 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Feb. 1 (1 strike) in Ganfouda (Benghazi); 10-20 civilian deaths
- Feb. 8 (5 strikes) in Benghazi
- Feb. 9 (1 strike) in Jufra air base (Jufra); 0-2 civilian deaths
- Feb. 12 (1 strike) in Ras Lanuf (Sirte)
- March 4 (4 strikes) in Ras Lanuf (Sirte); 3-4 civilian deaths
- March 5 (24 strikes) in Oil Crescent
- March 5 (2 strikes) in Derna
- March 5 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- March 7 (1 strike) in Sidra (Sirte)
- March 7 (2 strikes) in Ras Lanuf (Sirte)
- March 7 (2 strikes) in Nofaliya (Sirte)
- March 12 (1 strike) in Ras Lanuf (Sirte); 2 civilian deaths
- March 13 (4 strikes) in Ras Lanuf (Sirte)
- March 13 (1 strike) in Sidra (Sirte)
- March 13 (1 strike) in Nofaliya (Sirte)
- March 13 (1 strike) in Bin Jawad (Sirte)
- March 14 (2 strikes) in Sidra (Sirte)
- March 14 (2 strikes) in Ras Lanuf (Sirte); 1 civilian death
- March 19 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- March 23 (2 strikes) in Derna
- March 24 (2 strikes) in Derna
- March 25 (1 strike) in Derna
- March 27 (1 strike) in Derna
- March 29 (2 strikes) in Al Fatayah (Derna); 2-3 civilian deaths
- April 2 (6 strikes) in Benghazi
- April 4 (1 strike) in Jufra air base; 0-1 civilian death
- April 5 (4 strikes) in Tamanhint (Sabha)
- April 7 (4 strikes) in Tamanhint (Sabha)
- April 10 (4 strikes) in Tamanhint (Sabha)
- April 10 (4 strikes) in Sokna (Jufra)
- April 11 (1 strike) in Sokna (Jufra)
- April 12 (2 strikes) in Tamanhint (Sabha)
- April 12 (2 strikes) in Tamanhint (Sabha)

- April 14 (1 strike) in Al Fatayah (Derna); 1 civilian death
- April 14 (2 strikes) in Sabha
- April 15 (2 strikes) in Derna
- April 16 (3 strikes) in Benghazi
- April 18 (18 strikes) in Sabri (Benghazi)
- April 18 (2 strikes) in Tamanhint (Sabha)
- April 18 (2 strikes) in Sabha
- April 19 (1 strike) in Al Fatayah (Derna)
- April 20 (2 strikes) in Al Fatayah (Derna)
- April 20 (1 strike) in Tamanhint (Sabha)
- April 22 (1 strike) in Tamanhint (Sabha)
- April 23 (2 strikes) in Derna
- April 23 (8 strikes) in Benghazi
- April 23 (2 strikes) in Derna
- April 24 (2 strikes) in Sabha; 3-7 civilian deaths
- April 24 (1 strike) in Derna
- April 24 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- April 26 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- April 27 (18 strikes) in Benghazi
- April 28 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- April 28 (1 strike) in Tamanhint (Sabha)
- April 29 (1 strike) in Sokna (Jufra)
- April 29 (3 strikes) in Benghazi
- April 30 (1 strike) in Derna
- April 30 (1 strike) in Sabha
- May 11 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- May 12 (2 strikes) in Derna
- May 15 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- May 17 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- May 19 (2 strikes) in Jufra
- May 20 (12 strikes) in Benghazi
- May 20 (12 strikes) in Hun farm between Hoon and Sokna in Al-Jafra area (Jufra); 1-2 civilian deaths
- May 21 (2 strikes) in Jufra; 5-10 civilian deaths
- May 22 (2 strikes) in Hun (Jufra)
- May 23 (13 strikes) in Al-Wahat Hotel in Hun (Jufra); 0-5 civilian deaths
- May 26 (4 strikes) in Derna
- May 27 (14 strikes) in Hun (Jufra)
- May 28 (3 strikes) in Derna
- May 28 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- May 29 (2 strikes) in Hun (Jufra)
- June 1 (2 strikes) in Sokna (Jufra)

- June 4 (15 strikes) in Omar al-Mukhtar mausoleum (Benghazi)
- June 8 (4 strikes) in Benghazi
- June 14 (1 strike) in Sabha
- June 18 (2 strikes) in Sabri (Benghazi)
- June 19 (16 strikes) in Sabri (Benghazi)
- June 20 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- June 21 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- June 23 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- June 26 (3 strikes) in Benghazi
- July 2 (17 strikes) in municipal hotel (Benghazi)
- July 6 (14 strikes) in Benghazi
- July 7 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- July 10 (1 strike) in Derna
- July 10 (1 strike) in Derna
- July 17 (2 strikes) in Derna
- July 20 (2 strikes) in Derna
- July 22 (4 strikes) in Al Fatayah (Derna)
- July 23 (2 strikes) in Derna
- July 24 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- July 29 (2 strikes) in Derna
- Aug. 1 (1 strike) in Dhar al-Hamr (Derna)
- Aug. 8 (1 strike) in Derna port (Derna)
- Aug. 10 (2 strikes) in Derna
- Aug. 12 (2 strikes) in Derna
- Aug. 12 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- Aug. 13 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- Aug. 16 (2 strikes) in Derna
- Aug. 17 (2 strikes) in Derna
- Aug. 21 (2 strikes) in Derna
- Aug. 25 (2 strikes) in Derna
- Aug. 29 (1 strike) in Jufra
- Aug. 29 (2 strikes) in Derna
- Aug. 31 (1 strike) in Derna
- Sept. 2 (2 strikes) in Harawa (Sirte)
- Sept. 2 (3 strikes) in Wadi al Ahmar (Sirte)
- Sept. 3 (2 strikes) in Sirte
- Sept. 6 (2 strikes) in Derna
- Sept. 9 (2 strikes) in Derna
- Sept. 14 (2 strikes) in Derna
- Sept. 30 (2 strikes) in Derna
- Oct. 3 (1 strike) in Sabratha (Zawiya)

- Oct. 30 (2 strikes) in Al Fatayeh and Dhahr al-Hamr (Derna), Libya; 12-18 civilian deaths
- Nov. 1 (1 strike) in Wershafana (Jafara)
- Nov. 5 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- Nov. 11 (1 strike) in Derna
- Nov. 15 (1 strike) in Harawa (Sirte)
- Nov. 16 (1 strike) in Harawa (Sirte)
- Nov. 27 (1 strike) in Fuqaha (Jufra)
- Dec. 3 (2 strikes) in Sidi Kharibesh (Benghazi)
- Dec. 8 (2 strikes) in Fuqaha (Jufra)
- Dec. 10 (2 strikes) in municipal hotel (Benghazi)
- Dec. 14 (2 strikes) in Benghazi
- Dec. 26 (3 strikes) in Benghazi
- Dec. 28 (2 strikes) in Sidi Kharibesh (Benghazi)

2018

- Jan. 7 (2 strikes) in Derna
- Jan. 18 (3 strikes) in Kufra
- Jan. 28 (1 strike) in Derna
- Feb. 25 (1 strike) in southern Libya
- Feb. 28 (1 strike) in Sabha; 6 civilian deaths
- March 4 (2 strikes) in al-Zintan (Derna)
- March 6 (1 strike) in Murzuq
- March 6 (1 strike) in Sebha; 3 civilian deaths
- March 18 (4 strikes) in Haruj Mountains (Jufra)
- March 20 (2 strikes) in Tarbo (Murzuq)
- March 26 (2 strikes) in Tmassah (Murzuq)
- April 21 (2 strikes) in Bani Walid (Misrata)
- May 5 (2 strikes) in Derna
- May 15 (25 strikes) in Derna
- May 16 (2 strikes) in Derna

APPENDIX E: French Airstrikes in Libya

2016

- Jan. 10 (2 strikes) in Sirte
- Aug. 12 (1 strike) in Benghazi (Ganfouda); 20-31 civilian deaths
- Oct. 4 (7 strikes) in Benghazi (Ganfouda); 10-16 civilian deaths
- Nov. 14 (2 strikes) in Qaradah (Wadi al-Shatii); 4-8 civilian deaths

2017

- Sept. 7 (3 strikes) in Ubari (Wadi al-Hayaa)

APPENDIX F: Egyptian Airstrikes in Libya

2014

- Aug. 17 (2 strikes) in Tripoli
- Aug. 23 (12 strikes) in Tripoli
- Oct. 20 (2 strikes) in Benghazi

2015

- Feb. 15 (2 strikes) in Derna (Shiha); 7 civilian deaths

2016

- Sept. 16 (3 strikes) in Tobruk (Jaghbug); 3 civilian deaths

2017

- May 26 (4 strikes) in Derna
- May 29 (3 strikes) in Derna
- June 2 (3 strikes) Sukna
- June 4 (15 strikes) in Benghazi
- June 27 (2 strikes) in Butnan
- July 1 (2 strikes) in Benghazi (Sabri)
- July 16 (3 strikes) in Butnan
- Aug. 21 (3 strikes) in Butnan
- Sept. 28 (3 strikes) on the Libyan/Egyptian border (unknown exact location);
- Sept. 30 (2 strikes) in Derna
- Oct. 1 (2 strikes) in Derna
- Oct. 23 (3 strikes) on the Libyan/Egyptian border (unknown exact location)
- Oct. 30 (2 strikes) in Kufra; 12-18 civilian deaths
- Oct. 30 (3 strikes) in Derna (al-Fatayeh); 0-1 civilian deaths
- Nov. 22 (3 strikes) on the Libyan/Egyptian border (unknown exact location)
- Dec. 28 (2 strikes) in Benghazi (Sidi Kharibesh)

2018

- Feb. 15 (3 strikes) on the Libyan/Egyptian border (unknown exact location)
- May 5 (2 strikes) in Derna
- May 15 (1 strike) in Kufra, Libya; 3 civilian deaths

APPENDIX G: United Arab Emirates Airstrikes in Libya

2014

- Aug. 17 (2 strikes) in Tripoli
- Aug. 23 (12 strikes) in Tripoli

2016

- Feb. 7 (3 strikes) in Derna (Bab Tobruk); 2-4 civilian deaths
- Oct. 4 (7 strikes) in Benghazi (Ganfouda); 10-16 civilian deaths
- Nov. 12 (2 strikes) in Benghazi (Ganfouda); 1-3 civilian deaths
- Nov. 19 (3 strikes) in Benghazi
- Dec. 16 (1 strike) in Benghazi (Ganfouda); 0-2 civilian deaths

2017

- Jan. 2 (4 strikes) in Benghazi (Ganfouda); 3 civilian deaths
- Jan. 5 (1 strike) in Benghazi (Ganfouda); 4 civilian deaths
- Feb. 6 (1 strike) in Benghazi
- Feb. 28 (1 strike) in Benghazi (Ganfouda); 3-4 civilian deaths
- April 14 (18 strikes) in Benghazi (Sabri)
- April 19 (20 strikes) in Benghazi (Sabri)
- April 27 (18 strikes) in Benghazi
- May 20 (12 strikes) in Hun; 1-2 civilian deaths
- June 1 (2 strikes) in Benghazi (Sabri)
- Oct. 30 (2 strikes) in Kufra, Libya; 12-18 civilian deaths
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