



Fatal Car Bombs Hit Tripoli

Product of the Research & Information Support Center (RISC)

The following report is based on open source reporting.

August 27, 2012

Background

During the early morning hours of August 19, as worshippers in Tripoli prepared for morning prayers honoring Eid al-Fitr, a car bomb detonated near the Interior Ministry's administrative offices. The building sustained damage, but there were no casualties. Upon arriving at the scene, police uncovered and dismantled a second car packed with explosives. Within 30 minutes, a third car bomb exploded on the main Omar al-Mukhtar avenue, near an interrogation and detention center, where various former officials and fighters for the Qaddafi regime are likely being held. Two civilians were killed, and four others were injured. Security forces in Tripoli responded to the bombings by setting up checkpoints on main roadways in the city center.

This incident marked the first fatal car bombings in Tripoli since the civil war to oust the Qaddafi regime ended in October 2011, highlighting the improving capabilities of suspected Qaddafi loyalists. Since the fall of the Qaddafi regime, however, non-fatal car bombings and violent incidents have become common, underscoring the poor security environment that remains. On August 4, a car bomb exploded outside the headquarters of Tripoli's military police, injuring one person. Separately, in mid-August, a bomb targeting a military vehicle exploded outside Tripoli's Four Seasons hotel, where a number of military officers were staying; no injuries were reported. On August 20, security forces deactivated a car bomb in a suburb of the capital. One day later, an unspecified number of bombs were found in a waste disposal unit in Tripoli's Abu Salim district.

Suspected Qaddafi Loyalist Links

The August 19 car bombings occurred on the eve of the anniversary of Tripoli's fall during the Libyan civil war. It remains unclear whether the bombs were orchestrated to mark this anniversary. However, shortly after the attacks, authorities detained some 32 suspected Qaddafi loyalists based on evidence gathered from surveillance cameras. On August 22, officials seized 100 tanks and nearly 26 rocket launchers on a raid on the Brigade of the Faithful, a pro-Qaddafi group believed to be involved in the car bombings, in Tarhuna, around 60km southeast of Tripoli. One suspect was killed, eight injured, and 13 arrested during the raid.

Libyan officials have blamed Qaddafi supporters for sowing fear among the population to destabilize the current government. In an early August raid near the capital, police killed three alleged Qaddafi loyalists suspected of planning bomb attacks. One loyalist who survived the shootout was found with documents from one of Qaddafi's sons, Saadi, directing alleged sleeper cells operating in Libya. Amid a worsening security vacuum, remnants of the Qaddafi regime will likely seek to expand subversive efforts against the government to gain political influence and weaken democratic efforts.

Conclusion

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Despite democratic successes this summer with [elections](#) and the transfer of power from the Transitional National Council (TNC) to the National Assembly, the country still faces a number of challenges, including reconciliation with former regime officials. In May 2012, an envoy of Libya's then-interim leader Mustafa Abdel Jalil met with Ahmed Kadhaf Eddam, one of Qaddafi's cousins and former regime official, as part of a "national reconciliation" initiative. The Cairo meeting triggered widespread anger in Libya, leading the TNC to distance itself from the initiative and halt further efforts. Thus far, there have been no new initiatives to integrate Qaddafi loyalists into the new Libyan composition and it remains unclear whether the political will exists. However, disarming and conciliating with Qaddafi loyalists will prove vital for security in Libya, and without any effort to do so additional bombings and violent attacks will likely continue.

Due to the timing of the August 19 attack, vigilance should be taken on and around dates that may be significant to the former Qaddafi regime. Of particular concern should be the trial of Qaddafi's son Said Islam expected to begin in September and the anniversary of Qaddafi's death on October 20. The U.S. government warns "citizens against all but essential travel to Libya" in its [Travel Warning](#). OSAC will continue to monitor the situation and provide timely news and reports.

For Further Information

Please direct any questions regarding this report or the general security situation in Libya to OSAC's [Regional Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa](#).