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Few years ago, Libya put forward as global fragility act country. Coastal west Africa is another global fragility. So ten year effort 3d, development, diplomacy and defense so state, DoD and USAID all contributing. Mis/dis considered important enough for an object for Libya that after ten-year plan, a stratcom plan added in 10-year plan finalized in 2023. So we have been thinking of that as part of our broader wholistic strategy.

<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/GFA%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/The-U.S.-Strategy-to-Prevent-Conflict-and-Promote-Stability-10-Year-Plan-for-Libya-Accessible-3.22.24.pdf

Ten-year plan is available publicly. So the first three objectives are about political objectives and security and one is focused on mis/dis which is mostly countering Russia and not China. To that end, in 2023, the Libya external office put forward a project on **hate speech and disinformation to provide trainings to local international Libyan partners and support to journalists and fact checkers to provide support to media/info space**… [There is a second project that is forthcoming] for this year, this will be more on background bc not finalized yet, the external office is putting forward another project on media integrity, it is an agreement with BBC media action. Platform in Libya called el-kul, Libyan social media platform with 1.2 million. Previous one for fy 2023 is run out of public affairs and the el kul is USAID. That is similarly same language, promote information integrity to support Libyan partners and journalists. They gain access to software to track trends, messaging, trainings on media lit, … work with el kul to amplify.

BBC office in Tunis.

I wish our ppd colleague was on the line, he has been working with embassy on this. That is foreign assistance stuff bc GFA is supposed to be complementary of all our efforts. Will send the strategy. (Strategy documents on the Documents folder for Libya)

State department effort,

**Background on political situation in Libya**

Between 2011 and now a lot of turmoil, a lot of different forms of gov, but want to boil it down, the country is divided in two now. An internationally recognized gov in Tripoli and in the east that is governed in effect by the Libyan national army (LNA). There was a long running civil war, the last real push was 2019 where heftwar with the help of wagner tried to take over Tripoli but failed because the Turks helped Tripoli, brought in Syrian militias and mercenaries and the west pushed back on the LNA and at one point the Egyptians said to the LNA if you cross this line down the middle, Egypt will intervene. Since then the country has been partitioned in effect. There is a Gov now in Tripoli in place for tow (?) years that would have led the country to elections, elections never happened, so the country, for a while been a fragile status quo and only survived … sufficient oil revenue flowing from east but gets deposited by bank accounts in the west. So as long as some sort of equitable or agreed upon revenue distribution things work out but that distro has come to a strain. In east primary backer is Russia and in the west the backer has been Turkey. When it was just Wagner we were concerned but after Pergozin death, Russia moved hard and fast against Libya and took over Wagner assets first. We see a Russian presence and not mercenary. Russia used it as a hub for all its sahel operations in Africa. Very destabilizing effects, coups in the sahel. They have been steaming vessels in long before, … unloading hardware, Russians have ambassador in Tripoli. Russian Amb in Tripoli wi… Libya … as that picked up Russia worked to formalize presence. Obviously concerned before that but USG primary concern is it is antithetical to US interest for a permanent Russian naval base (don’t quote) in Libya. That is not in our interest. So we have… prior to … Russia arrival in Libya our goal was to fix the political equation. If get governments to unify they work together and say they don’t need foreign actors and take over own security and reassert sovereignty. But the status quo has continued to hold and no motivation for anyone to compromise bc they line pockets and status quo is beneficial. We came to believe that had to not handicap our other short term interests for this pie in the sky idea…. The last UN representative, could not achieve… how can we expect elections are near term. Policy now shifted to focus on help Libyans reassert sovereignty by integrating their security elements. Convo between elements in the east and west, how can we isolate and accelerate cooperation and security nexus on type of activity that should be non-controversial, border security in the south. If draw sandbox, Libyans from east and west play in sandbox you get training and expertise and engagement and that should be incentive for Libyans to work toward sovereignty. Encourage the Libya in the east to resonconsider their security relationships. … that has been the shift in our focus. We are focused on economic factors, only reason country not a total failure bc they have money. We are working to stabilize key institutions, national bank and the national oil corporation… can be a glue that keeps a fractured country together. If keep those pillars then you can keep the country held together longer, enable the political process and enable security integration side. That is where we are focused on .

Russia trying to portray their presence as beneficial for Libya. Downplay destabilize activities in the sahel. They say France left, [highlight how U.S. is violating arms embargo by giving military training (though this training in actuality is just for CT). In the east, Libya has UN arms embargo, in essence you are not supposed to be bringing in military equipment, Russia in flagrant violation of this. You can do more in the west bc that is where the gov is, you can’t ava… the Russians, a lot of machinery has to work to insulate or hide or cover what they are doing in terms of bringing hardware and use it as a platform for its self interested operations elsewhere. The Libyans not across the board, ppl themselves, not supportive of Russia’s presence. We hear Libyans fiercely independent. They don’t want a Russian naval base. And ppl don’t. but when you are the LNA and have constraints of arms embargo and no other partner, if you don’t work with Russians who can you work with. The Russians, in addition to trying to cover what they are doing, painting a better light, also working to troll us and others. So for example, it is kind of absurd, they came out hard in the media going after us because some article that accused the US of providing private military contractor support in Tripoli. Company called Amentum. But Amentum is providing classroom based training in Tunis under anti-terror assistance program. Nothing close to what Russia accused us and not in the same universe of what Russia doing. But by stoking the fire there they distract. The reason you see programming like this, for us Russia killing the us in the info space and I don’t know if we have a good solution. There are real resources the Russians put to this and it is evident what you see online and anecdotal from Libyans. So major line of effort. Bc so invested in Libya, with fall of Assad, a lot of us think Russia will double down on Libya. Particularly in the info space. If they lose ports and airbases in Syria they will need alternatives for Libyan fleet.

We are increasing our programming on this. I am watching us getting our lunch eaten in Libya and it is not resources but to be honest that is not something we focus a lot on. In my experience we think our actions speak for themselves. But there is ripe space for countering disinformation and whole component of state that focuses on this. But a

We are never going to compete dollar for dollar in countering Russia. That is kind of the whole point of GFA that Alex laid out. If we attack all these different sectors will move the needle more than a DOD MISO effort

**Low hanging fruit?** The low hanging fruit, they see so much day to day, the benefit of this there will be dedicated gov resources on this for the next ten years. We have broad leverage to scope what we want to do. The folks here take what … I think as the LEO (Libya external office), as they continue to scope every year what they want to spend money on and it changes year to year depends on priority. Knowing we have … the ten year effort is the overarching thing but every year new resource or strategy.

Counter disinfo programs referenced above are one year efforts.

Usaid footprint? Not a ton of money. Bilateral is 17million and funding for GFA is 18 million.

Couple things on my mind. A lot of internal convo, do you call the Russians out for violations of arms embargo bc blatant disrespect for Libyan sovereignty. It is not a surprise to Libyans what Russians doing and they don’t like it so not a lot to get by focusing on that.

**It is good to empower Libyan voices to be the ones talking about this. The challenge is, Libya is not a very open and free media environment and while it is good for us to help some of these folks speak out they might also cross redlines, the folks with power in the east and west. Those in the east more sensitive to talk about Russia but anything critical of either gov or power will get ppl cross-eyes with authorities.**

Ppl don’t want to criticize their own government. If you are in the east, Benghazi and rail against Russia, it is clear to everyone that Russia is there at the invitation of the LNA and could cross a barrier. Can’t pay a journalist to do more investigative reporting bc ppl know what’s going on and they might not want to go against the gov.

Getting [the U.S. Embassy] back to Tripoli [will be helpful]! Every major power is back, we just signed a lease for a property. So we are in the slow process of going back. That helps but that is insufficient. I am not an expert in this domain but what I say, I am sure there is a way to chip away at some of the narratives pushed by Russian backed actors .

Civil society? Pretty weak. One of the terms we use here, it is a closing civic space. We try to support civil society when we can but we are limited in little ways, anecdotal, the authorities banned the use of the term gender. A lot of our projects seek out women, so need to say this is for women. Don’t use the word gender.

Gov capacity? Very weak. Don’t be mistaken it is a real gov, ….

Possible visit to Tripoli? If you were to go, you would want to talk to a US company that has traveled there, would need security. It is very possible, we can put you in contact with us Libya business council. They have a dc based executive. We do a two week window where we cycle people in.

Seeing our mission in Tunis will be most valuable. A lot of Libyans come through Tunis.

Who do you recommend we interview? For civil society, can talk to some colleagues, they are sensitive to sharing info. I can see if someone will talk to us.

Sensitivities with “disinfo”? Usaid is looking to move mis/dis to info integrity. I’d footstomp that (that there are great power sensitivities in Libya).

Info integrity issues? the country has been in a civil war since 2011 so gov services, education, all these kinds of things in second, third, fourth priorities. Proliferation of media outlets, so ppl can find whatever info they want and if active info pushed to them they don’t have the ability to compare/contrast. Basic educational issues.

Government being source of info: I don’t know.

Other gov? there are reoccurring contact groups on political, econ, security, with closest allies, the UK, France, Germany, Italy. As you start to get bigger concentric circles, Egypt, turkey, algeria, Morocco.