

WARNING IN LIBYA: THE RISE OF AN IMMINENT THREAT

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The pattern of violent incidents attributed to Salafist groups in Libya from March 2012 to September 2012 indicate that security across the country, and particularly in Benghazi, had deteriorated prior to the attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi.

Salafist attacks over the last six months were concentrated in the eastern city of Benghazi. An important inflection point marking an increase in attacks was a demonstration held in Benghazi on June 7, 2012, in which heavily armed Salafist groups from across the country called for the establishment of Sharia law in Libya.

During this time, militant Salafists targeted U.S. and other Western diplomatic and humanitarian entities, such as the U.N. and U.K. missions in Libya and the offices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), before the attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi on September 11, 2012. Violence against Western targets increased dramatically during the month of June 2012, as illustrated by the timeline on the following slide. Salafist groups claimed credit for several attacks.

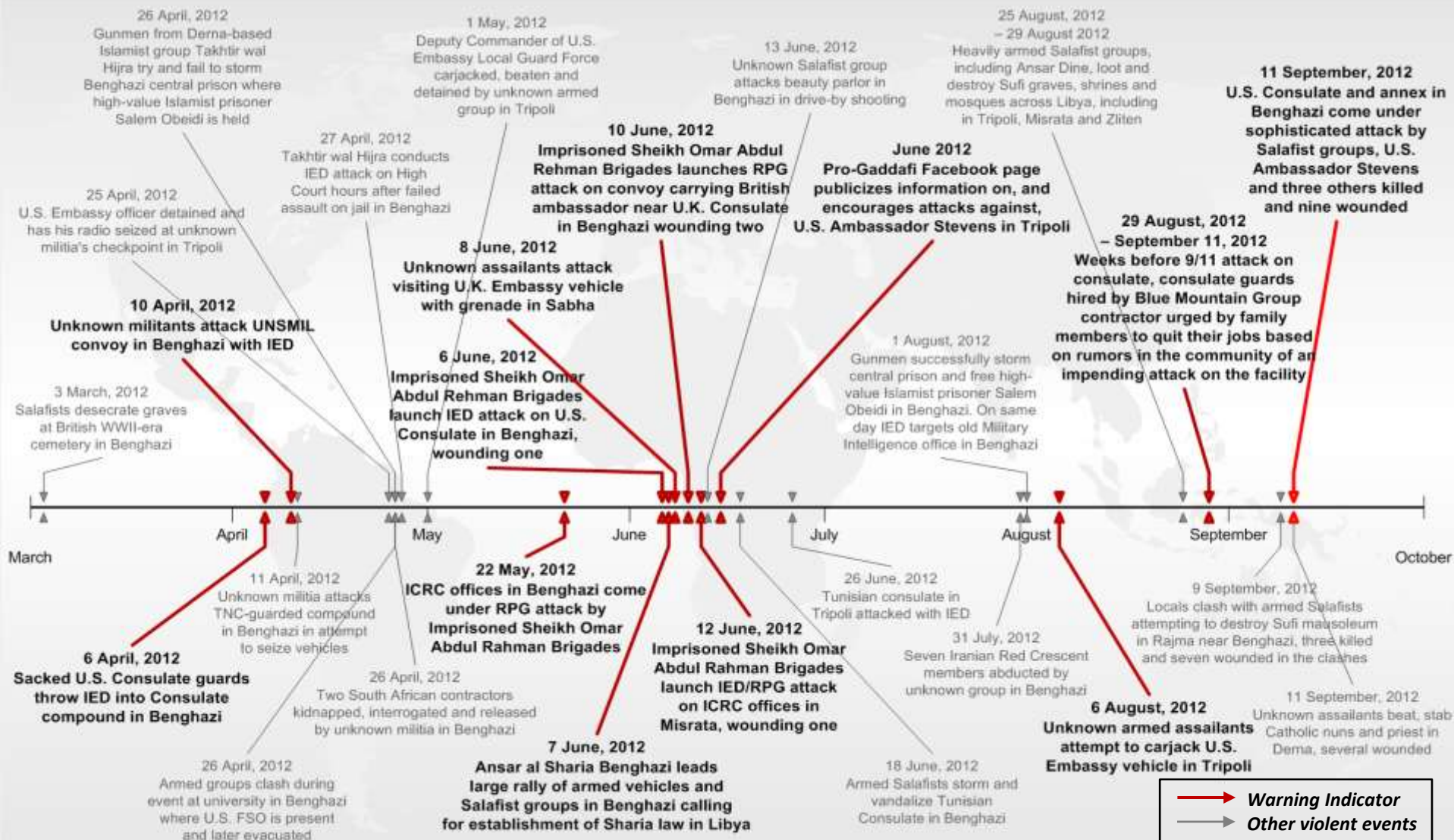
Attacks against Western interests during this time targeted not only physical structures such as Consulates and office buildings, but also softer mobile targets such as diplomatic vehicles, sometimes in broad daylight. Attackers employed weapon systems ranging from grenades and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) to improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

An IED attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi in early June 2012 caused a significant breach in the facility's perimeter. This event in particular demonstrated a vulnerability that justified the establishment of a heightened threat level at the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi and should have corresponded with increased physical security and increased intelligence gathering.

In the weeks prior to the attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, members of the Consulate's local guard force, comprised of contracted members of a local militia, heard rumors of a pending militant attack on the facility. This reflection, if reported prior to the attack, could have triggered a warning and a heightened state of alert. Instead, physical security at the U.S. Consulate on September 11, 2012 remained at a minimal posture that proved insufficient to withstand a direct attack.

TIMELINE OF ATTACKS IN LIBYA: MARCH 2012 – SEPTEMBER 2012

Attacks leading up to the assault on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi demonstrated an imminent threat and justified a heightened state of alert.



THE U.S. CONSULATE IN BENGHAZI: PHYSICAL SECURITY

The U.S. Consulate in Benghazi sustained a deliberate, coordinated, and complex attack. Physical Security was insufficient to withstand the attack.



On September 11, 2012, the main building of the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi was attacked by militants armed with RPGs, truck mounted artillery, and small arms. Attackers penetrated the compound via the main gate. U.S. security forces attempted to retake the compound, but they were unsuccessful. Ambassador Stevens and Sean Smith were killed at the main building.

Personnel retreated to a secondary compound located .5 miles to the south of the main building, identified as the "annex." Upon arriving at the annex, personnel were assaulted by mortar and small arms fire. It was during this attack that Tyrone Woods and Glen Doherty were killed, and several security personnel were critically wounded.

Alan McLean, Sergio Pecanha, Archie Tse, and Lisa Waananen | "The Attack on the American Mission in Benghazi, Libya" | *New York Times* | 1 October 2012

The U.S. Consulate facility was neither purpose-built nor hardened to match the threat, specifically to withstand penetration and attacks by grenade, RPG, or explosive devices. The facility was gated, equipped with a safe room, and guarded by layered security.

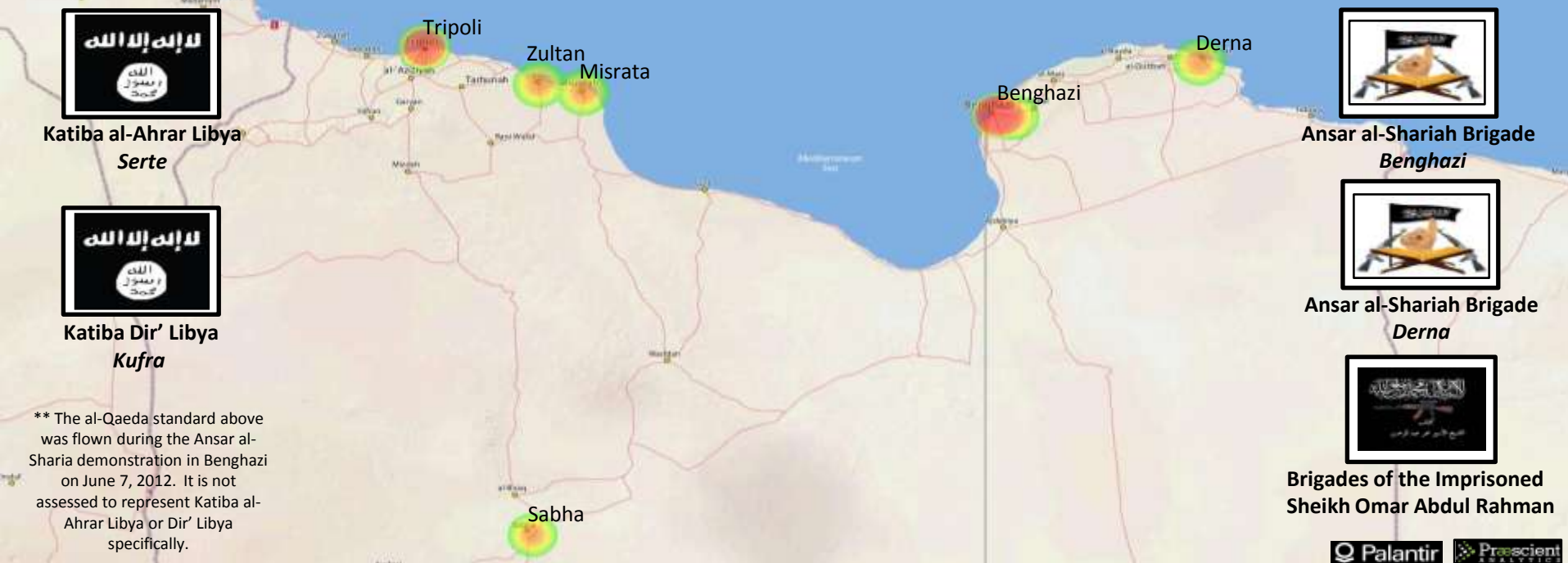
The layered security posture was insufficient to match the threat:

- Marine Embassy Guards were not present at the U.S. Consulate at Benghazi.
- Five State Department Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) personnel were on hand. The DSS posture was insufficient to withstand the assault.
- External security was provided by members of a local militia, the "17th of February Martyrs Brigade," paid at a rate of \$30/day, contracted through the Blue Mountain Group. Three members were located at the U.S. Consulate at the time of the attack.
- A Quick Reaction Force was located at the "annex." The QRF and Libyan security forces secured both compounds after six hours.

SALAFIST GROUPS IN LIBYA: MARCH 2012 – SEPTEMBER 2012

Information gained from international media sources about Libyan Salafist groups, al-Qaeda in Libya, and the escalating pattern of attacks across Libya justified an increased threat level.

This map illustrates the geographic concentrations of attacks in Libya, March 2012 – September 2012.



At least three known Libyan Salafist groups, based out of Benghazi and Derna, present a threat to U.S. interests in Libya: Ansar al-Sharia Brigade in Benghazi, Ansar al-Sharia Brigade in Derna, and the Brigades of the Imprisoned Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman.

While the network affiliations of these groups remain unclear, their existence aligns with reported al-Qaeda objectives to establish a presence in Libya. Several key AQ figures, to include Abd-al-Basit Azuz, Abu Anas al Libi, and Wisam Ben Hamid, are assessed to be active in Libya and cultivating additional networks. Additional networks mentioned in reporting include Katiba al- Ahrar Libya in Serte and Dir' Libya in Kufra.

Before the attack on September 11, 2012, information from international media sources about these Libyan Salafist groups and al-Qaeda's objectives in Libya, viewed in light of the spread of attacks across Libya as well as the concentration in Benghazi, justified an increased threat assessment to U.S. interests there. An increased threat level could have generated an overall increase in the security posture of U.S. diplomatic missions in Libya.

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