Situation assessment: Sirte, Libya

ANALYSIS SUMMARY: This analysis is based on a rapid assessment of satellite imagery recorded 17 and 19 September 2011 over the area of Sirte in Libya. Additional images acquired since 31 October 2010 were also reviewed. Analysis determined multiple areas of likely combat taking place as forces aligned with the National Transitional Council sought to displace forces loyal to the Colonel Muammar al-Qadhafi. Despite active combat in the area Sirte remains largely intact.

SIRTE AREA, 17 AND 19 SEPTEMBER 2011

Defensive berm
Roadblock
Light trucks and armoured vehicles visible on 17 September. Vehicles were not present by 19 September.

Light trucks visible on 17 September. Vehicles were not present by 19 September.
Likely bomb damage at Gardabya Airport, near Sirte, on 19 September 2011. Damage occurred prior to 4 April 2011 according to imagery review.

Possible scorching
Damaged hangar
Destroyed hangar

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Satellite Data (1): Worldview2
Imagery Dates: 17 and 19 September 2011
Resolution: 50cm
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Source: FirstLook

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Conflict assessment – Sirte, Libya
By UNITAR/UNOSAT – 22 September 2011

ANALYSIS BACKGROUND: This is a satellite based analysis\(^1\) of the city of Sirte in northern Libya. Sirte has been the site of airstrikes conducted by NATO since 24 March 2011 as well as frequent combat between forces aligned with the National Transitional Council (NTC) and forces aligned with Colonel Muammar al-Qadhafi. Fighting in and around Sirte has increased since the capture of Tripoli by NTC forces in late August 2011.

ANALYSIS RESULTS: Sirte remains largely intact despite considerable ongoing fighting in the area. However, clear signs of combat are visible in the satellite imagery and forces on the ground are frequently displacing and repositioning from day to day. Considerable activity is visible in the satellite imagery acquired 17 and 19 September especially on the western edge of the city along the primary road. Specifically, numerous collections of light trucks and roadblocks are visible along this roadway and others, and vehicles visible on the 17\(^{th}\) are often absent from the imagery collected on the 19\(^{th}\). Similarly, roadblocks visible on the 17\(^{th}\) often show signs of alteration by the 19\(^{th}\), possibly due to being overrun by vehicles. In addition, the military area of Gardabya Airport to the south of Sirte has clear indications of bombing, with several hangars destroyed, others damaged, and possible signs of scorching in the area as well. Finally, the large government complex on the southern edge of Sirte appears intact (see Figure 1, this page) with little activity visible in the imagery acquired on 17 and 19 September 2011.

Figure 1: Government Complex, 19 September 2011\(^2\)

\(^1\) Satellite imagery used for this analysis included images from 17 and 19 September 2011 (DG-FirstLook), as well as multiple additional images dating to 31 October 2011 used for reference.

\(^2\) Image rotated 180 degrees to improve visibility.