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Growing Army Defections Reported in Libya

By Jason Ditz

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The massive violence in the protester-heavy city of Benghazi looks to be coming to a halt today, after reports that a [batallion of troops that defected to the side of the protesters had marched into the eastern city and attacked the presidential compound, where the remnants of the Gadhafi regime had been holed up, and chased them out.](#)

The troops hiding in the compound had been believed to be behind the major attacks on mourners at funerals in the city over the past two days, attacks which brought the death toll in Benghazi alone to over 200 slain.



Though the protesters virtually hold the streets across all of Eastern Libya, and have been moving inexorably west toward the capital, [the formal ouster of the remnants of the Gadhafi forces makes the major city of Benghazi the first confirmed to have fallen](#) entirely under protester rule, thanks in no small part to some local military leaders who were apparently fed up with the government turning the guns on the people.

While the Benghazi defection is the largest so far it does not appear to be the only one, as small groups of troops have been reported to have fanned out in favor of the protesters in a number of places across the country. [Libya's Ambassador to China, Hussein Sadiq al-Musrati, also resigned, on air on al-Jazeera](#), condemning the crackdown on the protesters, and said he had heard or reports that Gadhafi had already fled Libya.