



AMCHAM LIBYA

The American Chamber of Commerce in Libya

AmCham Tunisia and AmCham Libya Lunch Discussion

March 30, 2017 Sheraton Hotel, Tunis
Debbie Hirst Director – AmCham Libya

*Rebuilding
Libya
together!*



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Summary

- What is AmCham?
- My Libya experience
- Tips for doing business in Libya
- Myths about doing business in Libya
- Current situation
- What AmCham can do for you

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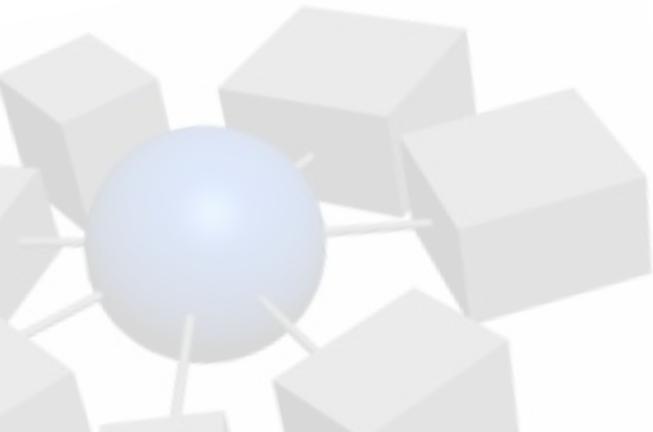


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U.S. Chamber of Commerce

- World's largest business organization representing the interests of more than 3 million businesses of all sizes, sectors, and regions
- 117 international Chambers in 103 countries that are affiliated with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce based in Washington D.C.
- Focused on pro-business policies that create jobs and grow the economy
- Promotes the highest standards of commercial practice
- Serve as a channel of communication between foreign trade partners and the American business public





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American Chambers of Commerce Overseas

- Serve as a channel of communication between foreign trade partners and the American business public
- Helps to create opportunities for American businesses in foreign countries
- Makes connections between American businesses and local partners, creating value for both
- Informs foreign governments about policies that can attract needed foreign investment
- Mission in Africa is to build lasting prosperity for Africans and Americans through job creation and entrepreneurial spirit



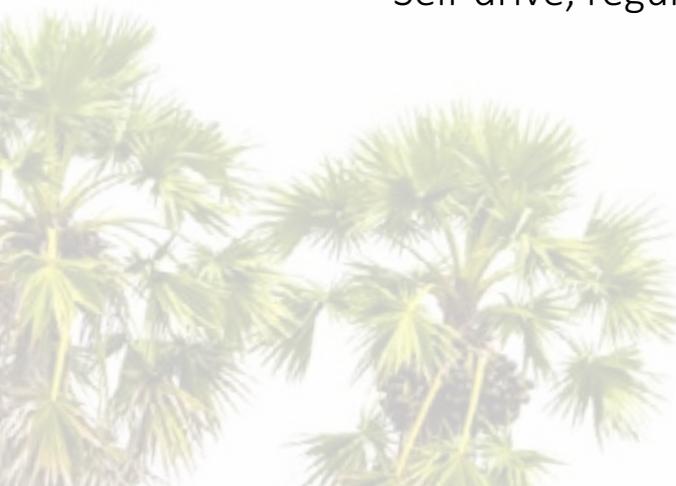


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My Libya Experience

- Moved to Tripoli in 2013
- Background in power development, project finance, government advisory
- Attracted to the Libya “story”: Decades of underinvestment; oil provides revenues to support investment; tribal conflicts, not religious conflict; limited historic “problematic” foreign intervention; needs everything; security situation presents unique opportunities for companies willing to go in today
- Lived in Palm City, Oea, Regatta and now an apartment in Janzour
- Self-drive, regularly between Tripoli, Khoms and Misrata





My Libya Experience (con't)

- Projects:
 - Trading company set up to import cement
 - *Status: attempting to get letters of credit*
 - Industrial company set up to develop gypsum board plant
 - *Libya has world-class gypsum reserves, largely undeveloped*
 - *Conveniently located close to Zawia (coast)*
 - *Status: reserves located in Bir al Ghanem; road has been blocked since mid-2014*
 - Tasks completed:
 - *establishing Libyan companies*
 - *obtaining all authorizations and permits required to operate*
 - *putting teams together in order to ensure the smooth functioning of the companies*
 - *successfully securing mineral rights from the national mining authority.*

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15 tips for foreigners doing business (and life in general!) in Libya

- Drive a dirty, beat up car. There is no benefit to attracting attention. However, it should be high enough to be able to jump a curb when necessary, and to get through deep water on rainy days.
- Don't show your anger to Libyans, even if you think the situation deserves it. It will be completely unproductive to anything you are trying to accomplish.
- Pick your partners carefully. Try not to get yourself in a vulnerable position from a business point of view. Someone may see an opportunity to take advantage of that.
- Accept that there is a double standard for foreigners. Actions that Libyans get away with on a daily basis will be frowned upon if it's a foreigner doing it. Don't forget, we're guests in their country. Act as you would if you were a guest in someone else's home: politely and respectfully.





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15 tips for foreigners doing business in Libya (cont.):

- Try to learn a couple words of Arabic. A little “shin joe” will get you far.
- Accept that no important information is passed or business conducted on the phone or by email. You’ve got to go in person.
- Smile! It helps a lot. Libyans are generally very friendly people, and a smile sets the tone for the interaction.
- Realize that many Libyans would go to the end of the earth to help you. But, be observant always. If something doesn’t feel right, don’t ignore it.
- Respect the Muslim culture when you’re here.
- Realize that every foreigner is effectively an ambassador for their country. What you do will be ascribed to all people from your country. So, act well.

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15 tips for foreigners doing business in Libya (cont.):

- People will stare at you. It's normal. We stick out and Libyans are very curious. Don't let it bother you.
- Try and find an amazing fixer. A good Libyan can get you out of just about any bind you may find yourself in. Bring them to the airport with you!
- Be prepared for the unexpected and think through what your Plan B is. It is a high crime zone; act accordingly.
- Realize it takes 10 tries to get anything done (if you're lucky!) You'll need to be relentless to get things done here.
- Don't expect to make money quickly. If your project needs to make money quickly to survive, it's probably not a good idea.





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Four Myths About Doing Business in Libya

- Myth #1: It's very dangerous and expats can't live there
- Reality:
 - The situation is fluid, and due to the lack of embassies, generally expats are discouraged from coming, but there are still Western expats here.
 - There has never been a true lack of essentials.
 - Travel in and out is inconvenient.
 - By living cautiously and carefully, the security situation can be managed.





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Four Myths About Doing Business in Libya (cont.)

- Myth #2: Libya is just ISIS and illegal immigrants and their traffickers
- Reality:
 - International media tends to just talk about these issues; however the ISIS efforts were centered around Sirte, and the immigrant issue doesn't affect our daily lives.
 - There is a high level of general criminality in Tripoli currently, and you need to adjust your behavior accordingly.





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Four Myths About Doing Business in Libya (cont.)

- Myth #3: The political struggle in Libya is between the Islamists and the Secularists
- Reality:
 - The current situation is fundamentally a power struggle among different powerful individuals who would like the wealth of Libya for themselves.
 - Alliances shift and change, sometimes very quickly.
 - No armed group appears to be strong enough to forcibly take power from any of the other armed groups, but no one appears prepared to sit down and work out a compromise.

A circular graphic in the bottom right corner. It features the text "Rebuilding Libya Together!" in a cursive font. "Rebuilding" is in red, "Libya" is in green, and "Together!" is in blue. Below the text is a stylized American flag with red and white stripes and a blue field with white stars.

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Four Myths About Doing Business in Libya (cont.)

- Myth #4: Libya is a failed state.
- Reality:
 - Libya is facing significant challenges. The lack of one national government means that the large government contracts that are necessary to rebuild the country cannot be signed.
 - The security situation could be managed if there was money to be made. If there's no money to be made (i.e. government contracts not being signed), it doesn't make sense to be here.
 - Libya is blessed with natural resources that have the potential to generate a level of revenue that could create a comfortable existence for every Libyan for generations to come. But, in order to achieve this, the leaders of the current warring factions need to take decisions that are in the best interests of Libya as a whole and not just themselves or their tribe.
 - We all hope that a resolution will come soon, but it will not be overnight, and there will most certainly be bumps along the way. However, Libya is not a failed state and in my opinion it is not highly probable that it will become one.

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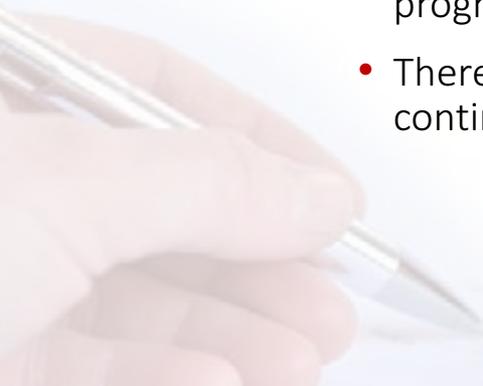


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Current Situation

- GNA has not galvanized Libya as it was hoped would happen
- Uncertainty as to what the “final” government will look like or when it will occur
- Each of the power centers (Old GNC – supported by certain Misrata factions, HoR – supported by Haftar-backers, GNA -- some support from all sides, but not enough to propel it ahead of the pack) still has enough backers to prevent it from disappearing
- If contracts can be signed with reasonable possibility of payment (i.e. authorized signatory, legal budgetary approval), companies will manage the security situation
- There won't be an “ah ha” moment when everything suddenly gets better; progress will be incremental
- There will be more problems; the key is to be prepared, with continuous focus on avoiding them



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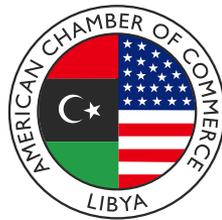
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What AmCham Libya Can Do For You

- Mission of AmCham is to provide service to member firms
- Facilitates business between the U.S. and Libya
- Helps American companies with their on-the-ground needs
- Another Libya information resource for American companies looking to come back/enter
- Helps Libyan companies find the right American partner
- Currently rebuilding the membership
- I'm happy to discuss any questions or issues you may have





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www.libyaamcham.com

Debbie contact info

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