Egypt’s Security: Threat and Response

Terror Violence and Counter-terror Operations

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The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy

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The Project

The Egypt Security Watch project is an ongoing project developed by the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP) and can be accessed at www.timep.org/esw for live updates, analyses, and an interactive map.

This report marks the completion of Phase I of the project, presenting findings, analysis, and recommendations.

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Foreword

There is no doubt that Egypt is currently facing security challenges. Violent attacks on state and civilian actors occur almost daily in the country, and while there was a peak in July and August of 2013, these attacks show no sign of slowing. The coordinated attacks of October 24, 2014 that left 28 dead in Sinai are a chilling testament to this fact. These attacks—the deadliest in over a year—occurred the same week as bombings at Cairo University, demonstrating that this is not a localized threat.

In response to these serious threats, the Egyptian state has fully engaged in a self-proclaimed “war on terror,” one that has required not only the state’s security efforts, but also subsumed the judicial, political, media, and rights arenas as well. Most recently, in the wake of the October attacks the state imposed a three-month state of emergency in North Sinai.

And yet, remarkably little independent data exists through which to examine trends in terror violence and gauge the efficacy of Egypt’s security policy. The majority of prior research in this field has been focused on the restive Sinai Peninsula, where organized jihadists have been engaged in violence for decades. However, as our data indicates, this focus fails to capture the steady increase in terror violence throughout the rest of Egypt, particularly in Greater Cairo and increasingly at Egypt’s western border.

Furthermore, many recent analyses have focused heavily on the period after the ouster of former President Mohammed Morsi (in July and August 2013), as a catalyst moment in the proliferation of terror violence. While it is true that the security situation during this period was qualitatively and quantitatively unique in the marked increase in violence, viewing the current security situation as a product of a single moment fails to account for the root causes and contextual conditions in which terror violence grows and in which it must be combated and prevented.

The report was developed as a part of TIMEP’s Egypt Security Watch project. In this project, through our unique efforts to aggregate the most up-to-date and comprehensive data and contextual analysis, we explore not only the dialectic relationship of terror acts and state response, but also the larger political landscape in which these developments occur. This report was written in the interest of covering the first phase of the project, providing the data necessary to dig deeper than causal explanations for the proliferation of terror violence and to make sense of the ways in which Egypt’s war on terror has and has not been effective.

As part of our mission at TIMEP, we are committed to supporting citizens’ and societies’ rights to the restoration and primacy of the rule of law; the equality of all citizens before the law; access to fair and swift justice; respect for human rights, including freedom of expression and of religion; and the protection of civil and political liberties.

This original project would have not been possible without the creative initiative of TIMEP’s Research Director, Allison McManus, who has skillfully developed the project concept and effectively managed the project team, providing excellent research and analytic insight. The research team, Hannah Paukstis, Jay Roddy, and Maged Maher Gabra had invaluable contributions in developing this report and TIMEP’s Egypt Security Watch project on which this report is based. This important initiative would not have been at all possible without the collaboration of the entire TIMEP team and the support of our funders.

Addressing a legitimate security threat and ensuring a safe and democratic society is of interest to any policy maker around the globe today. The Egypt Security Watch project in totality is intended to provide them and the general public with the data that they need to be able to make effective judgments to counter a legitimate regional security threat without undermining democratic development. We hope that this report will trigger a wider conversation among experts, analysts, and policymakers about the best possible ways to deter the increasing threats of terrorism without compromising rights, freedoms, and the rule of law.

Dr. Nancy Okail
Executive Director
The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy
Executive Summary

Egypt’s Security: Threat and Response aims to assess recent trends in terror violence and the state response in the face of an increasing security threat. The collected data, its findings, and the recommendations herein are intended to better inform policy makers in their efforts to develop and encourage effective strategies to eliminate the threat of terror violence in Egypt while avoiding social and economic costs.

This report features a survey of the history of terror violence in the country, as well as quantitative analysis of TIMEP’s unique dataset, which records all reported acts of terror and counter-terror operations in the country. Appendices describe the methodology and offer profiles of relevant state actors and terror groups.

Main Findings

Terror Threat

◊ After a significant spike in terror attacks in July and August of 2013, the rate of terror attacks in the period of September 2013 to September 2014 remains steady, with an average of 27.3 attacks per month.

◊ Terror attacks are most common in the restive Sinai Peninsula, but have become increasingly common in the populous Greater Cairo region in the period of July 2013 to September 2014. Attacks in these regions have different characteristics:

◊ Sinai Peninsula:

  Attacks in the Sinai are more likely to be carried out by organized jihadi groups than elsewhere in the country.

  These also feature the use of more advanced weaponry, including rockets, rocket-propelled grenades, and, once, man-portable air-defense systems.

◊ Greater Cairo:

  Attacks in Greater Cairo are more often timed with particular political events than elsewhere in the country.

  While attacks in Greater Cairo are typically primitive, these have proven more deadly when they have been carried out by known jihadi groups.

◊ While there were a greater number of attacks in the period of July 2013 to January 2014, attacks from February 2014 to September 2014 have been increasingly deadlier.

◊ Terror groups have adapted their recruitment strategies and tactics to weaknesses in state security strategy, focusing efforts on disenfranchised populations in the Sinai and on university campuses.

◊ Terror groups’ affiliations outside Egypt are dynamic, with the prominent Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis aligning with Al-Qaeda until a recent apparent affiliation with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

State Response

◊ Counter-terror operations have increased steadily from May 2013 to September 2014, with sharp increases in August 2013 and January 2014 after significant terror attacks.

◊ Despite the increase in operations, these actions have had little impact on halting terror attacks. This is evident particularly in key areas like Greater Cairo and the Sinai, where there is no correspondence between state campaigns and decreases in terror activity.

◊ The naming of the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization, paired with broad anti-terror legislation, has led to the arrest of over 4,300 people from August 2013 to September 2014, with 60% of these arrested in January 2014 to September 2014.

◊ These arrests have had no discernible impact on mitigating the terror threat. This is in large part due to the fact that many of those arrested on charges of terrorism are non-violent actors expressing criticism of the state, which is classified as terrorism under Egypt’s penal code.

◊ The Egyptian government does not appear to have a substantive anti-terror strategy to prevent future threats. There have been no concerted efforts to offer the necessary development, education, employment, and other social programs to neutralize terrorist recruitment.
Executive Summary

Conclusions

◊ The Egyptian strategy to combat terrorism is almost solely dependent on security efforts, an approach that failed to address the terror threat in the 1980s and 1990s.

◊ The reliance on indiscriminately broad and repressive security measures has historically failed to counter terrorism and have not been effective in the period of analysis from January 2010 to September 2014.

◊ The current failure to effectively engage the population and to develop legislative procedures in line with international norms and recommendations to combat terrorism give worrying signs for the future of Egypt's security.

◊ Given the strategic position of Egypt, between the rapidly deteriorating state of Libya and the militia-dominated Sahel to the west and the tenuous de-escalation of conflict in Palestine and the expansion of ISIS to the east, an effective strategy to establish security is imperative.

Recommendations

The security threat that is posed in Egypt presents a very real danger for domestic and regional security, with implications for global security. Accordingly:

◊ Regional and international partners should work with Egyptian counterparts to develop a strategic dialogue that would address both the immediate security situation in the country, as well as develop a medium- and long-term strategy that would eliminate root causes of terrorism.

◊ An immediate strategy should avoid overly broad and indiscriminate security campaigns, as these have proven to isolate local populations that are crucial for intelligence-gathering and have been used to attract disenfranchised demographics toward waging jihad against the state.

◊ Medium- and long-term strategies to combat terrorism should depend on targeted intelligence gathering, investigations, and specific operations to neutralize existing terrorist threats. This strategy should also consider social solutions (particularly education, development of infrastructure, and employment) in geographic and demographic areas where terrorist groups most actively recruit.

◊ Evaluation of terror groups’ public relations, recruitment strategies, and media is essential, but monitoring programs should be conducted in line with international norms that protect (particularly internet) liberties.

◊ Efforts should be made to reform anti-terrorism legislation to bring it in line with international standards. This would allow for a reduction of the politicization of the war on terror, allowing security forces to target proven terrorist threats.

Recognizably, these initiatives may not take effect immediately. However, the data presented in detail in the following sections of this report clearly indicate that the continuation of the same approaches of the past will not be effective in eliminating terror threats. Egypt should revise the policies of the security apparatus to adopt a long-term holistic approach to countering terror. This endeavor requires the support of and partnership from the international community as terror violence is not a challenge limited to political boundaries; this global threat has been made all too apparent recently.

While this report provides analysis of the recent trends in the terror threat and state response, further analysis will be developed in subsequent reports related to the Egypt Security Watch project. Subsequent reports in the series will continue to evaluate the threat and additionally provide experts analysis of counter-terror strategy, as well as timely policy recommendations.
Introduction

On July 24, 2013, then Defense Minister Abdel-Fattah El Sisi addressed the nation asking Egyptians for a popular mandate to confront a wave of terrorism that was plaguing the country.¹

Sisi’s remarks came on the heels of one of the bloodiest months in Egypt’s recent history; in the 30 days prior to Sisi’s address, assailants had carried out 70 acts of terror, resulting in the deaths of 35 Egyptians. These terror acts, defined in this report as premeditated violence intended for political ends (see Appendix A: Methodology), do not account for significant other sporadic conflict that had been occurring throughout the country in the form of spontaneous rioting or violent demonstrations. Based on our data, the country has seen nearly 400 attacks in the year since Sisi appealed for a mandate—more than one attack every day.

The continued threat of attacks against state and civilian actors in Egypt requires a concerted strategy to effectively combat groups and individuals who desire to achieve a climate of terror in the country. Yet, there is little data and information available to clearly understand the nature of this threat, its development over the past few years, and its dynamic character in locations throughout Egypt. Using quantitative data analysis of reported attacks and counter-terror operations, this report provides a picture of terror attacks in the country from 2010 until the present day to better guide effective counter-terrorism strategies that will avoid high social and economic costs.

Since the July 24 address, and the subsequent demonstrations in support of the regime, Egypt’s war on terror has only intensified, yet the security situation in the country remains frighteningly fragile. Massive campaigns of indiscriminate arrest throughout the country (facilitated by broad anti-terror legislation that does not conform to international norms), the heavy militarization of the restive Sinai Peninsula, and a steady stream of security rhetoric from both state and private media have done little to quell terrorist acts.

The character of the attacks is changing as terror groups adapt their tactics to exploit weaknesses in the state’s security approach, at times learning from regional counterparts. As will be demonstrated in the report, civilians casualties have increased in recent months, marking a divergence from previous attacks on primarily state actors.

Terror group recruiters are exploiting the enduring crackdown at Egyptian universities, using these as a feeding ground for new recruits.² And, in August 2014, prominent terror group Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM) published a video displaying the beheading of four men of whom they suspected ties to Israel.

This was the first time an Egyptian group had displayed such brutality in a video. This video, and recent statements from ABM,³ indicate at least an embryonic relationship between the Egyptian group and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).⁴

Presenting a background history of terror attacks in Egypt is necessary in order to provide an understanding the changing nature of the attack before presenting the analysis in the following sections. A methodology is provided at the end of the report explaining data collection and the analytic approach. This report covers the first phase of the ongoing Security Watch project that is continuously updated and enhanced with recent data and insights from experts in the field.

Background


An understanding of the history of terror violence in the country is crucial to understanding Egypt’s current state of insecurity and important to understanding effective response. In the 1970’s, Egypt witnessed a revival of Islamist activities and the emergence of a number of small armed Islamist groups.⁵ Whereas President Gamal Abdel Nasser had repressed Islamists and imprisoned Islamist leaders during his reign, President Anwar al-Sadat’s government was more tolerant, allowing Islamists to organize and express their views freely, as well as releasing a number of Islamist leaders. During this time, the Jama’a al-Islamiya (also known as the Gama’a al-Islamiya) began growing as an Islamist student association. At first the Jama’a al-Islamiya and Sadat maintained a friendly relationship, as they both had interests in weakening the socialists and communists who had dominated campuses across Egypt. However, Sadat was committed to making peace with Israel, aligning with U.S. foreign policy, and consistently failed to implement shari’a law. The Jama’a al-Islamiya ended its support of Sadat in 1979 and radical elements within the group broke off to form or join militant groups, which would lead to the rise of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ).⁶

The EIJ had its roots in the first armed jihadi group in Egypt, the Islamic Liberation Party, which had been founded in Jerusalem in 1953 and brought to Egypt by an ex-member, a Palestinian and Jordanian national named Salah Selim. Selim was executed in 1976 and his group mostly dissolved by 1977, but the nucleus of the group provided the basis for the founding of EIJ in Cairo and Alexandria in 1979. A year later, Karam Zuhdi brought his offshoot of Jama’a al-Islamiya followers into the EIJ, forming the Upper Egypt faction.⁷ The EIJ sought the creation of a universal Islamic nation ruled by a true caliph and the full implementation of shari’a law, advocating for immediate revolt.
Background

Muhammad Abd al-Salam Faraj, founder of the Cairo branch, viewed the assassination of President Sadat as an essential first step in their mission. Consequently, in 1981 EIJ successfully carried out the assassination of President Sadat. In response, authorities cracked down on Islamist groups, executing Faraj and other militant leaders and imprisoning hundreds more.

B. Post-1980 Resurgence

Zuhdi’s Upper Egypt faction seceded in 1984 and adopted tactics of terror violence, once again under the name Jama’a al-Islamiya, an offshoot of the broader student movement with the same name from a decade earlier.

Though the newly-revived Jama’a al-Islamiya sought the creation of an Islamic state similar to EIJ, the group had a different strategy and outlook: Whereas the EIJ advocated a more narrowly militaristic strategy to achieve its goals, the Jama’a al-Islamiya sought to combine violent opposition to the state with the preaching of Islam to promote a re-Islamization of society.

Although weakened as a result of the crackdown following the 1981 assassination, both groups were able to survive and reorganize over the next decade. Both groups were successful in recruiting students, in large part due to the resurgence of Islamism across university campuses during the 1970s, and also due to the fact that many EIJ and Jama’a al-Islamiya leaders got their start in universities. Ayman al-Zawahiri, for instance, who led the EIJ after 1991 and is the current leader of Al Qaeda, began as a medical student in Egypt in the 1960s. Drawn to Islamist theory at a young age, Zawahiri became increasingly radicalized after the Nasser regime arrested thousands of Muslim Brotherhood members and hanged leading Islamist thinker, Sayyid Qutb. By the time Zawahiri graduated from medical school in 1974, he was an active member in an EIJ cell.

Throughout the 1980s, a number of jihadists travelled to Afghanistan to fight against the Soviet Union. By the later years of the decade, these experienced fighters were returning to Egypt to train fellow members of the EIJ and Jama’a al-Islamiya. By 1990, the organizations had sufficiently regrouped to launch a full-blown assault on the Mubarak regime. Members of the groups targeted government figures, secular intellectuals, foreigners and tourists, and Coptic Christians. The majority of the violence took place between 1990 and 1996, climaxing in the Jama’a al-Islamiya-orchestrated Luxor massacre of 1997 that killed 58 foreigners and four Egyptians.

The Mubarak regime used both harsh repression and heightened security measures to combat terrorism. The state rounded up and imprisoned thousands of suspects, restricted civil society activities, and cracked down on the Muslim Brotherhood. The terrorist groups themselves also contributed to their downfall. For one, they were unable to sustain a wide base of support. They consistently alienated the public by employing violent tactics and destroying Egypt’s tourism industry. By 1996, the tide had turned and terrorist groups were on the decline, unable to withstand Mubarak’s repressive measures without support from the public. Security forces were able to arrest hundreds of EIJ operatives between 1993 and 1996, effectually dismantling the Jama’a al-Islamiya’s 1997 Luxor massacre was a final, desperate act by the group. Many within the Jama’a al-Islamiya began to recognize their defeat and the Luxor massacre only deepened divisions had been brewing with the group, with imprisoned leaders calling for a ceasefire and exiled leaders calling for continued action. In 1999 the Jama’a al-Islamiya officially issued a ceasefire, which effectively ended all Jama’a al-Islamiya attacks.

Although the EIJ had largely been dismantled within Egypt, the group vowed to continue fighting, indicating that although Mubarak may have temporarily succeeded in eliminating terrorism in Egypt, the victory was not to last. After being pushed out of Egypt, then-EIJ leader Zawahiri adopted an international agenda, focusing largely on American versus Egyptian targets and joined Osama bin Laden in 1997. He formally merged the EIJ with Al Qaeda in 1998 and by 2001, most of Al Qaeda’s leading operatives originated in EIJ.

C. Recent Developments (2000-2011)

Egypt enjoyed a brief phase of relative peace in the early 2000s, but from 2004 onwards, terrorist attacks resumed and the wave of terror violence that plagues Egypt today clearly indicates that the state has consistently failed to eradicate the roots of terrorism. This is particularly clear as much of the leadership and ideologies of terror groups have endured over decades and various state campaigns (see more in section 4(e) Alliances and Networks).

For its part, the Muslim Brotherhood has historically pursued a publicly non-violent strategy, but the state consistently demonstrated distrust of the group and has responded harshly to any indication or display of violence. In 2006, for instance, a group of Muslim Brotherhood students lined up in the middle of a square in Al-Azhar University and performed martial arts exercises for 25 minutes. Four days later, more than a hundred students and a number of senior leaders were arrested.
Trend Analysis: Terror violence

A. Recent Developments: Morsi Era
In December 2013, the Muslim Brotherhood was declared a terrorist organization. The decision to categorize the Brotherhood as a terrorist organization came after the suicide bombing of a police headquarters that killed 16 people, which the state blamed on the Muslim Brotherhood, but for which the militant group Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis later claimed responsibility. Although the state has frequently cracked down on the organization throughout its existence, particularly during phases of terrorism, this is the first time the state has formally named it a terrorist organization.

While the Muslim Brotherhood has yet to claim any terror violence that has occurred in the country, many analysts point to the ousting of President Mohammed Morsi as a catalyst for the proliferation of terror violence in the country. Indeed, during July and August 2013, the country saw a heightened increase in acts of terror (see following section, Trend Analysis: Terror violence). Thus, some see the rise in terror violence as dependent on the inclusion or exclusion of the Muslim Brotherhood. Key statements made by Brotherhood leadership, in addition to the timing of a marked increase in violence at Morsi’s ouster, indicate to some that the Brothers have been instrumental in promoting terrorism.

Of greater concern, known and influential terrorist elements released during both the interim rule of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) and under Morsi have regrouped in the country, emerging as leadership in some of the country’s most currently active terror groups. Most likely, with successive governments turning (at the least) a blind eye to violent activity in the region amidst largescale popular dissent and political uprising, the spike in terror attacks after Morsi’s removal indicates the seizure of an opportune moment of turmoil during which to launch attacks. The continuation of violence despite Sisi’s July declaration of a “war on terror,” provides the basis for the analysis presented in this report.

B. Overall Trends
After a significant spike in terror attacks in July and August of 2013, the situation in Egypt calmed a bit, but attacks have remained steady from September 2013 to September 2014 at average monthly levels around six times as high as any previous yearlong period (Figure 4.1). Although the months from September 2013 to September 2014 have seen relative moments of increased or decreased activity, usually corresponding to particular events or event anniversaries (like the constitutional referendum), the general trend in terror violence is that it has remained steady, with an average of 27.3 attacks per month in the period from January 1, 2014 to September 30, 2014 (Figure 4.2).
4. Trend Analysis: Terror violence

Terror attacks are not a problem of one particular region in Egypt, but rather have been carried out in governorates across the country since 2010 (Figure 4.5). While these attacks have historically been concentrated in the restive Sinai Peninsula, and this area is still the most active in terms of terror activity, the Cairo and Giza governorates (comprising the Greater Cairo region) increasingly have been home to terror attacks (Figures 4.6 and 4.7). The attacks that have thus far been carried out in the Greater Cairo region also differ qualitatively from those in the Sinai, with Sinai groups using more advanced weaponry and with Greater Cairo attacks intensifying at moments of political note (anniversaries or political events—see Section 4(a) for more detail). The strategic geographic location and remoteness of the Sinai make it an ideal home for terror groups, and the population density and symbolic and political value of targets in Cairo make it an important target. Thus, these two regions are of particular importance to understanding the security threat that terror attacks pose to Egypt as a whole.
4. Trend Analysis: Terror violence

4.8 Claimed and Unclaimed Attacks

A series of coordinated attacks in January 2014 and in June 2014 caused a high number of casualties; however other months were much less deadly (4.11). The January attacks, which coincided with the anniversary of the January 25 Revolution of 2011, and the June attacks, which took place to coincide with the anniversary of the June 30, 2013 protests to demand Morsi’s resignation, were claimed by known terror groups Ajnad Misr and ABM. Thus, the most deadly months in Greater Cairo have also corresponded with those months in which known and organized terror groups were operating.

C. Key Regions: Greater Cairo and the Sinai

As previously mentioned, Greater Cairo and the Sinai Peninsula have been the areas most actively targeted with terror attacks in the past year. Attacks have particularly increased in Greater Cairo, which historically has seen very little terror violence. While this upsurge began in July 2013, it reached a later crescendo than the rest of the country as a whole, and attacks have persisted through late summer 2014, albeit at a lesser rate than earlier in the year (Figure 4.9 and 4.10).

4.11 Injuries and Deaths in Greater Cairo

The types of attacks carried out in Greater Cairo are particularly limited to more primitive types, rarely displaying a high degree of coordination or advanced weaponry (4.12). These attacks are typically conducted using improvised explosives or small arms.

4.12 Types of Attacks in Greater Cairo
4. Trend Analysis: Terror violence

Terror attacks in the Sinai have a decidedly different character than their urban counterparts. The Sinai, a sparsely inhabited desert region, has historically been home to terrorist strongholds and, at times, has been a safe haven for criminal elements traveling in the region. However, this region was particularly quiet in the months (and years) leading up to around August 2012 when extremists enacted more violent public acts, attacking security checkpoints in groups and carrying out shootings. A man was found beheaded in August 2012; although it appears this may have been the result of a tribal dispute, this act suggested not the only reappearance, but an intensification of violence as well.

4.13 Attacks in Sinai

The increase in violence in the Sinai around this time may well have corresponded to the prior release of terror group leadership from prisons during the period of SCAF rule after Hosni Mubarak’s fall and under Morsi. While there were rumblings of increased terror acts, it was not until Morsi’s ouster in early July that terror activity became truly extreme (Figure 4.13). July 2013 saw 86 attacks in the North Sinai governorate, more than nine times any previous month since 2010 and more than any month since that time. August saw 46 attacks, and the peninsula began to quiet after this point; thus far 2014 has seen an average of ten attacks per month in the North Sinai province—well above the pre-August 2012 frequency.

The number of injuries and deaths in the Sinai roughly corresponds to the number of attacks, though attacks during July and August 2013 were on average far less deadly than the historical norms for the region (Figure 4.14). This likely indicates a lesser degree of planning and coordination during the months of July and August 2013, most likely because these were in response to the relatively unforeseen event of Morsi’s fall. Recent attacks have been relatively deadly and civilians are increasingly the victims of these attacks, including several instances of child fatalities. Coordinated attacks on October 24, 2014 in Sinai resulted in at least 28 deaths; this was the deadliest event in nearly a decade.

4.14 Injuries and Deaths in Sinai
(08/2013-08/2014)

Because of the terror groups’ coordination, training, and possession of more advanced weaponry, attacks in the Sinai typically display a greater degree of organization and sometimes include the use of rockets, rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), or portable air defense systems (MANPADS) (Figure 4.15).

Also, key targets in the Sinai (as well as the rest of Egypt to a lesser degree) include military outposts and gas pipelines. While many attacks on these targets do not result in casualties, these have still been severely detrimental to the security situation.

4.15 Types of Attacks in Sinai
4. Trend Analysis: Terror violence

D. Targets

The vast majority of targets of terror attacks have been state security forces, and often individuals have been specifically referenced by name for their alleged violent actions (see the Ajnad Misr profile in Appendix A for further information on the targeting of state actors). The extent of state targeting gives this period of violence a qualitatively different character than previous decades, where spectacular attacks on civilians seemed to be the modus operandi for groups using violence to attempt to influence politics. The targeting of state actors, in fact, seems to be more aligned with insurgencies or guerilla movements, like those seen in Latin America in the 1970s. It is largely the religious undertones to the violence in Egypt currently that sets it apart from these movements.

While this report provides only analysis of terror attacks that have occurred within Egypt, it is noteworthy that many Egyptian-based terror groups have also claimed attacks on Israel. This was the case during the recent escalation of violence in the Gaza Strip, as ABM published confirmed videos of nearly a dozen attacks on various targets in Israel. ABM later claimed that its leadership was killed by an Israeli drone strike, although both Israel and Egypt denied the penetration of sovereign airspace.

Despite the focus on state forces, civilian attacks have recently increased throughout Egypt, not only in number, but also in the composition of targets as a whole (Figures 4.16 and 4.17). This is in large part due to the fact that organized terror groups—in particular ABM—have increased their civilian targeting. The group carried out only one attack that resulted in civilian casualties in 2013, which was in fact an attempted assassination targeting Minister of the Interior Mohamed Ibrahim, who heads Egypt’s police and paramilitary forces (see Ibrahim’s profile in Appendix B).21 In 2014, the group has already carried out five attacks on civilians, including January bombings that killed six and injured over 75 others.

E. Recruitment and Tactical Development

The recruitment tactics employed by organized terror groups have adapted in relation to domestic security strategy and the regional gains of other jihadi groups. This is particularly clear in the case of ABM, which has exploited weaknesses of state security strategy.
4. Trend Analysis: Terror violence

Egypt’s Sinai is a relatively impoverished desert region that is remote from the rest of mainland Egypt. The local population depends primarily on small-scale agriculture for subsistence, complemented by the black-market economies of smuggling and marijuana cultivation. Extended military campaigns over the past year have not only destroyed agricultural land, but have also eliminated access to black-market income. The failure to supplement security campaigns with successful economic development programs has left the Sinai population frustrated and antagonistic toward the Egyptian government.

Capitalizing on these frustrations, ABM has recently launched initiatives specifically targeted at winning the hearts and minds of local populations. In at least two distinct instances, the group has engaged in extensive flyer campaigns, distributing pamphlets that describe its members as the “brothers and neighbors” of residents (see ABM profile in Appendix B). The group also released a video on August 10, 2014, that depicts a woman in front of her home, which had been destroyed in a military air strike. The woman in the video exclaims “And they [the government] call us terrorists? This is terrorism!”

The recent trial of ABM members also suggests that the group (and perhaps other groups) have also been exploiting the recent unrest and entrenchment of state security on university campuses to recruit disenchanted students. As described in the Background section of this report, this recruitment tactic has proven to be particularly effective in the past.

Other terror groups inside Egypt have also displayed flexibility in adapting their tactics to solicit support or to capitalize on weaknesses. Ajnad Misr, based in Greater Cairo, has effectively adopted language that references the failure to have achieved the “objectives” of the January 25 revolution, and its statements also particularly focus on the role of security forces taken against protesters, particularly female protesters (see Ajnad Misr profile in Appendix A).

Terror groups outside Egypt now appear to be posing a security threat, exploiting Egypt’s porous borders and weak border security. This became painfully evident in one of the most recent and most deadly attacks, which took place in Egypt’s New Valley province, an area that had not previously seen a single act of terror violence in the period from January 2010 to July 2014. In a July 19, 2014 attack, 22 soldiers were killed at a security checkpoint near Farafra when attackers overtook their post. While the government blamed the attack on ABM, it appears unlikely that the group actually carried out this act—the group is quick to claim attacks and never claimed this one, despite extensive activity on social media. More likely is that one of the many and recently-empowered militias operating out of Libya and through the Sahel recognized the weakness of the post, located about 150 km from the political border of Egypt and Libya, in the middle of a vast expanse of desert.

F. Alliances and Networks

The basis of alliance and tactical cooperation between Egyptian and other regionally-based jihadi groups was formerly centered on joint training exercises in the Sinai and Gaza (particularly with the al-Qassem Bridges). However, the tightening of border security and the increased use of internet communications have likely caused Egyptian groups to look beyond their Gazan counterparts for support elsewhere in the region.

The release of prisoners like Ahmed Salam Mabrouk, who has strong ties with Ayman al-Zawahiri and Al-Qaeda, had previously drawn the support of these networks. Zawahiri himself has praised the violent activity being carried out in the Sinai. Most recently, however, ABM leadership is reported to have made statements and carried out violent acts that indicate a deepening of ties with ISIS and a distancing from Zawahiri’s Al-Qaeda. The recent videotaped beheadings contradict an earlier statement from Zawahiri explicitly condemning such actions as they would threaten to lose “Muslim hearts and minds.”

The level of coordination between groups operating within Egypt is unclear, but there has been recognition between Ajnad Misr and ABM, with ABM referring to Ajnad Misr as their “brothers.” Should groups within Egypt continue to strengthen their channels of communication and organization, there is ample reason to believe that groups operating in Greater Cairo may be able to access resources and training that will allow them to become more coordinated and deadlier in the future.
5. Trend Analysis: Counter-terror operations

A. Overall Trends

Overall, counter-terror operations in Egypt have increased steadily from May 2013 (See Figure 5.1). This increase, which began during Morsi’s time in power, seems incongruous with corresponding theories that the former president was sympathetic to terrorists’ goals. Some anecdotal evidence indicates that the president may have struck a deal with known terrorists in the region to minimize terror activity during his time in power. Neither claim can be independently verified by the data in this report, but it is clear that this period marked the beginning of extensive campaigns in the Sinai, particularly to close tunnel crossings from Rafah to Gaza.

5.1 Counter-terror Operations
(2010-2014)

As attacks in the Sinai and throughout the rest of Egypt only increased after Morsi’s ouster, and given remarkable continuity in the leadership of the security sector even after Morsi’s fall (see Appendix C), the campaigns in the Sinai and the proclaimed “war on terror” led to a sharp increase in August 2013. Another increase in counter-terror efforts occurred after the deadly Mansoura Security Directorate bombing,28 which led to the naming of the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization, although the bombing was claimed by ABM.

5.2 Arrests 2010-2014

The increased operations after this time can largely be accounted for by the immense number of arrests that have been carried out in the name of countering terrorism in the wake of Morsi’s ouster and especially since the Muslim Brotherhood was declared a terrorist organization (Figure 5.1). Most anti-state activity was previously termed “criminal”—not “terrorist”—in Ministry of Interior media statements. Although many with Brotherhood ties had been arrested previously on suspicion of terrorist activities, the designation of the Brotherhood as a terrorist organization now means that any affiliation with the group is classified itself as terrorism. Over 4,300 people have been arrested on charges of terrorism since January 2010; 95% of these arrests occurred in the thirteen months from August 2013 to September 2014 and 61% were in the period from January 2014 to September 2014 alone.

B. Targets

Egyptian security forces have clearly intensified their counter-terror operations. As mentioned in the previous section, this intensification has been largely directed toward the Muslim Brotherhood, which was declared a terrorist organization in December 2013.29 Indeed, this designation has corresponded with a marked increase in operations, as seen in the Overall Trends described above.

5.3 Arrests by Reported Affiliation
(01/2010-07/2014)
5. Trend Analysis: Counter-terror operations

Despite their designation as a terrorist organization, the Muslim Brotherhood has yet to claim any terrorist attacks. Actions taken against other known threats, in particular Ajnad Misr, have been relatively low in comparison to the violence claimed and threatened by these groups (see Figures 5.3 and 5.4). This failure to address known threats was clearly displayed in the Ajnad Misr bombings in June 2014.\(^{30}\) Despite the group having posted clear threats indicating the placement of bombs in advance of the attacks, security forces were unable to address these in a timely fashion, and the group successfully carried out attacks that left two dead and 13 injured.

### 5.4 Attacks by Reported Affiliation

(01/2010-07/2014)

- **Ajjad Misr**
- **Al-Furqan Brigades**
- **Majlis Shura al-Mujahideen**
- **Takfir wal-Hijra**
- **Ansar al-Jihad**
- **Bedouin tribesmen**

While the scale of the targeting of non-violent actors has had little discernible impact and is likely to yield negligible future results in countering terror, coordinated efforts between state security forces have had yielded some successes where they have targeted known terrorist threats. This was the case with March 2014 raids on Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis during which security forces arrested key operatives and seized weapons stores.\(^{35}\)

### C. Efficacy

Comparing data on terror attacks and counter-terror operations reveals that both terror attacks and counter-terror efforts have increased, if not at the same pace, over roughly the same time period (Figure 5.5). This is not surprising, given the immediate increase in terror attacks, and the state’s proclaimed response to combating terror. However, increases in terror operations do not show any corresponding decrease in terror activity, likely connected to the fact that, as mentioned previously, the greatest known threats are largely not the targets of these efforts. Data from the year period of August 2013 to September 2014 in particular shows a plateau, but not a decrease, in terror activity compared with a continuing increase in counter-terror operations.

### 5.5 Terror and Counter-terror Trends

(\(\text{Egypt whole}\))

This discord is even more evident in a comparison of terror activity versus counter-terror operations in the two most active regions, Greater Cairo (Figure 5.6) and the Sinai (Figure 5.7). There appears to be no discernible impact, at least in the short term, of counter-terror efforts undertaken there.
5. Trend Analysis: Counter-terror operations

Some have argued that the state’s broad, militarized, and indiscriminate approach to countering terror violence has the opposite effect of further radicalizing the population and, in fact, contributes to more violence. Given the many complex social, political, and individual variables that contribute to the development of the conditions for terror violence, it is difficult to say whether or not the increase in terror violence could be considered a product of the state’s strategy. What is clear from the data presented here is that, thus far, the state’s approach has not been effective in addressing the terror threat, and the threat has continued to escalate in concert with an escalation in security efforts. This continued escalation may be explained by the concept of “cosmic war,” whereby terrorist jihadi ideology attributes worldly struggles to a larger notion of a struggle of “good” versus “evil,” and thus escalates violence in response to the state’s escalation.

Finally, despite evidence of the recruitment strategies outlined in Section 4(e): Recruitment and Tactical Development, the Egyptian government has not engaged in any comprehensive anti-terrorism strategy. While counter-terrorist operations address the immediate and existing threat of terrorism, anti-terrorism strategy seeks to prevent the development of potential future threat. The state has undertaken extensive efforts to co-opt religious discourse to condemn terrorist groups. While addressing the religious and ideological motivations for engaging in violent jihad is an important component of an anti-terror strategy, this effort alone is insufficient. Aside from the co-optation of religious discourse, there have been no concerted efforts to offer the necessary development, education, employment, and other social programs necessary to neutralize terrorist recruitment.
6. Findings

A. Terror Groups

The findings of this report demonstrate that the nature of the terror threat is different throughout Egypt. Some groups operating within Sinai are led by veteran jihadists who fought with Al Qaeda, and have access to more advanced weaponry, using rocket-propelled grenades, man-powered air-defense systems, and mortars—as opposed to attacks in Greater Cairo and other governorates primitive means and sporadic attacks were used.

In the past six months, Sinai-based groups seem to have maintained their activities exclusively within the Sinai Peninsula. The strongest among them, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM) shows its presence with concentrated media campaigns, appealing to local populations’ resentment of the Egyptian government. Although there is some anecdotal evidence that local populations are becoming more sympathetic to the groups’ cause, without more independent reporting from the region, it is difficult to tell to what extent this is the case. What remains clear, however, is that despite statements on the death of some of the ABM leadership, the group remains active in the peninsula, suggesting a sustained supply of resources and guidance. They published videos of attacks against Israel in July and August 2014 and have displayed potential signs of increased coordination with ISIS, including enacting beheadings and communicating with leadership.

Groups operating outside of the Sinai have proliferated in the past year. These groups have less formal training than their Sinai counterparts and rely on improvised explosives and targeted assassinations. There is increasing evidence of integration and recognition between Sinai-based and outside-Sinai groups; increased access to training and materiel for outside-Sinai groups poses a grave security risk.

The most notable new terror group is Ajnad Misr, operating in Greater Cairo. The group uses Salafist-jihadi discourse in its statements, as well as refers to “the Egyptian revolution” to attract disenchanted youth. The group specifically targets police.

B. Counter-terror Operations

The nature of counter-terror operations varies throughout Egypt as well. Broad military campaigns characterize the response in the Sinai, while massive and indiscriminate arrests characterize the campaigns throughout the rest of the country.

Air strikes and ground operations have destroyed local infrastructure in the Sinai, isolating the local population and preventing access to intelligence. (Just after 2011, the Bedouin population had offered intelligence as they anticipated local development initiatives; when these did not materialize, the local population stopped its assistance.) As aforementioned, this failure to engage local populations, particularly in the Sinai, has been exploited and used as a tool of terror groups. Additionally, the failure of government plans to develop the area—despite past promises to do so—has further contributed to local populations’ frustrations with the state. A development approach has been proposed by many experts in order to provide services and employment opportunities as long-term mechanisms to counteract recruitment into and local sympathies toward terror groups.

Coordinated efforts between the Ministry of Interior and the military have yielded positive results when investigations have been conducted thoroughly and efficiently, resulting in key raids and arrests in the Sinai.

Current legislation on terrorism is overly broad, allowing for politicization of security efforts. Political opponents are targeted as well as legitimate security threats, creating a climate that is less conducive to transparent investigations. At the very least, the massive and indiscriminate arrests of Muslim Brotherhood supporters, labeled as “terrorists” often without any prior investigation, has yielded no discernible impact on terrorist attacks in the country. Additionally, such terror laws allow for the prosecution of juveniles and non-violent actors expressing dissent, and the many and long sentences handed down to those suspected of ties to the Muslim Brotherhood may contribute to social animosity toward the government and lead to continued radicalization in Egyptian prisons.

Almost no effort is being made to enact social measures that would prevent target populations from their susceptibility to joining terrorist groups. The failure to implement a long-term anti-terror strategy may have devastating results as prior success in combating terror groups was contingent on local populations’ rejection of these groups. Sympathy toward terrorists or the acceptance of their social and/or ideological platforms has led to the entrenchment of these groups in other areas in the Middle East and North Africa (namely given the quasi “state-building” endeavors of ISIS).
6. Findings

C. Summary Findings

This report indicates that the security threat that is posed in Egypt presents a very real danger for domestic and regional security, with implications for global security: Particularly given the strategic position of Egypt, between the rapidly deteriorating state of Libya and the militia-dominated Sahel to the west and the tenuous de-escalation of conflict in Palestine and the expansion of ISIS to the east, an effective strategy to establish security is imperative.

However, the current security approach has displayed neither an effective countering of the threat nor the implementation of a coherent strategy to address its root causes. The reliance on indiscriminately broad and repressive security measures has historically failed to counter terrorism and in fact, led to increased terror violence in Egypt’s history. In particular, the securitization of university campuses has troubling precedents, as the current climate of disenfranchisement has encouraged the exploitation of this arena by terror group recruiters, reminiscent of the era in which Ayman al-Zawahiri became radicalized.

Historical data indicates that a popular rejection of terror groups, paired with targeted investigations and effective prosecution of terror group leadership was effective in creating a period of stability in Egypt prior to 2005. The current failures to effectively engage the population, and the failure to develop legislative procedures in line with international norms and recommendations to combat terror, give worrying signs for the future of Egypt’s security.

Historical records also suggest that an exclusively security-based approach to countering terror, similar to that which was adopted by the Ministry of Interior in the 1980s and 1990s, would not lead to the eradication of terrorism and violence—and may actually increase it. The lack of a long-term comprehensive approach addressing the issues of religious discourse, poverty, education, and lack of employment will likely yield similar results to preceding decades. The current strategy appears poised to achieve only a tenuous suspension of terror activities in Egypt at best and may simply drive violent actors to hone their recruitment strategies, targeting those that are increasingly frustrated with the state, and gain support from those who are marginalized in the community.

Additionally, this approach drove violent actors in the past to regroup outside of Egypt, carrying out violence elsewhere and later lending support and resources to groups within the country.

7. Recommendations

The findings of this report indicate that:

◊ Regional and international partners—including the United States—should work with Egyptian counterparts to develop a strategic dialogue that would address both the immediate security situation in the country, as well as develop a medium- and long-term strategy that would eliminate root causes of terrorism.

◊ An immediate strategy should avoid overly broad and indiscriminate security campaigns, as these have proven to isolate local populations that are crucial for intelligence gathering and have been used to attract disenfranchised demographics toward waging jihad against the state.

- This should entail cancellation of the current state of emergency in North Sinai.

- In urban areas, and particularly on university campuses, efforts should be undertaken to secure campuses without resorting to disproportionate violence.

◊ Close evaluation of the public relations, messaging, and discourse of terror groups is necessary, along with intelligence gathering. Such evaluation (and any monitoring programs) should adhere to Egypt’s international commitments and should by no means restrict web freedoms or target channels of peaceful communication, especially among youth.
7. Recommendations

◊ Medium and long-term strategies to combat terrorism should depend on targeted intelligence gathering, investigations, and specific operations to neutralize existing terrorist threats. These strategies should also consider social solutions (particularly education, development of infrastructure, and employment) in geographic and demographic areas where terrorist groups most actively recruit. Such a solution would also encourage the development of a free and independent press that would be able to investigate and bring to light the positive and negative effects of security campaigns and gauge the sympathy of local populations to terrorist actors.

◊ Efforts should be made to reform terrorism legislation to bring it in line with international standards. This would allow for a reduction of the politicization of the war on terror, allowing security forces to target proven terrorist threats.
Appendix A: Methodology

The data collection process for this report began in March 2014. The research team worked in conjunction with the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) project, a comprehensive dataset that monitors reports of conflict events, recording the dates and locations of violence in over 50 countries. Using ACLED data, the TIMEP research team extracted a unique dataset to reference terror violence in Egypt. Data was collected from the period beginning in 2010, in order to capture the nature of the security situation throughout the recent period of political turmoil and over various eras of governance.

Accessing newswire reports or government statements corresponding to each individual event, the team cross-referenced every data entry from ACLED. The effort to capture all historical data from 2010 was paired with daily media monitoring to update the dataset as developments occurred. The team tracked all reports of violence from state, private, and social media outlets.

Additionally, the report relies on verified statements and media published by terror actors themselves. Access to these statements was obtained through monitoring of jihadi web forums and terror groups’ social media pages. Analysis of past statements was often facilitated through the clearinghouse website Jihadology.

Data collection for counter-terror operations was also conducted in conjunction with ACLED. TIMEP additionally independently monitored all statements on Egyptian Ministry of Interior and the Egyptian military spokesperson’s social media accounts, where both institutions publish a thorough record of their public activities.

Each act of terror or counter-terror operation was recorded, capturing the date of the attack, a brief description, the closest determinable coordinates, the governorate in which the attack or operation was carried out, the type of attack or operation, any casualties (or arrests in the case of counter-terror operations), and the targets. In the case of terror attacks, the perpetrator was designated where one was claimed, or, in the instance of a suspected perpetrator, this information was also recorded. The dataset represents the most comprehensive available, capturing all reported acts of terror or counter-terror operations as they occur.

Using TIMEP’s unique data, this report offers a quantitative analysis of trends in attacks and operations. The analysis is both diachronic and synchronic, in keeping with the goal of offering a holistic picture of the dynamic nature of Egypt’s state of security.

In determining which events to record, the report tracks only those events which could reasonably be considered acts of “terrorism” or the state’s proclaimed response to such acts. Yet, “terrorism” and “terrorist” are themselves heavily-contested terms. Article 86 of Egypt’s Penal Code defines terrorism as:

“any use of force or violence or any threat or intimidation to which the perpetrator resorts in order to disturb the peace or jeopardize the safety and security of society and of such nature as to harm or create fear in persons or imperil the lives, freedoms or security; harm the environment; damage or take possession of communications; prevent or impede the public authorities in the performance of their work; or thwart the application of the Constitution or of laws or regulations.”

However, while such acts may be construed as acts of terrorism based on Egyptian legislation, our data indicates that many acts currently prosecuted as terrorist acts do not adequately represent the true security threat; at times, even simple acts of vandalism are viewed as “terrorism” (See Section 5B on targets of counter-terror operations).

Thus, in order to capture the current threat faced by Egypt, this report adopts a definition of “terror attack” as one that entails premeditated violence enacted for political ends. This does not include the threat of attack, but rather only enacted violence. Political ends may be defined as any which have a reasonable bearing on changing an established power dynamic. For this reason, premeditated targeting of religious institutions where it could be reasonably assumed that these were targeted in their political nature are included; however, religious institutions or religious minority civilians targeted as a result of local conflict are not included.

Likewise, “counter-terror operation” is ill-defined, particularly as Egyptian government actions (particularly in the legal arena) have been lately construed as part of a larger “war on terror.” For the purposes of this report, only security actions taken to combat declared terrorist groups have been considered “counter-terror efforts.” (This includes the Muslim Brotherhood only after their designation as a terrorist group.) This definition does not include judicial action.

Finally, the report also employs the terms “jihadi,” “terror group,” and “Islamist” at various times. Here, “terror group” is meant to indicate any organized group of individual actors who intend to create a climate of violence in order to achieve political ends, regardless of religious or other affiliation or ideology. “Jihadi” is meant to designate those groups or actors that particularly profess to employ the Islamic principle of jihad as a means to achieving these ends. “Islamist” refers to those actors who desire to see Islam as the basis for social and political organization, whether or not they view jihad or violence as a means to achieve it.

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Appendix B: Profiles of Terror Groups

Ajnad Misr

Other Names: Soldiers of Egypt, Ajnad Misr

Location: Greater Cairo

Characteristics: Ajnad Misr is the only terrorist group operating exclusively in the Greater Cairo area. The group typically relies on the use of primitive weaponry, including homemade IEDs, to execute its attacks.

Recent leadership: Unknown.

Background: On January 23, 2014, Ajnad Misr declared its presence with a tweet: “In the name of God the Merciful, may He stand beside us.” The following day, the group released their first statement where they claimed responsibility for several attacks as early as November 20, 2013, and began a media campaign, “Retribution is Life,” which they promoted as a twitter hashtag (in Arabic).

Since this time, Ajnad Misr has been the most active terrorist group operating in Egypt outside of the Sinai Peninsula.

On May 12, 2014, the Ministry of Interior announced that it had apprehended and obtained confessions from Ajnad operatives in Giza. The Ministry released video confessions of the alleged terrorists. These confessions, however, have not been independently verified, and often similar confessions are elicited under threat of torture.

Ideology: Ajnad Misr differs from other terrorist groups operating in Egypt in that it does not fully insist on the establishment of an Islamic caliphate. Ajnad Misr recognizes the legitimacy of Egypt as a distinct nation (as opposed to the Islamic umma). The group also employs the language of the January 25, 2011 revolution, lamenting that “the goals the revolution” have not been fulfilled.

Despite this difference, the group has adopted language in its statements that would align it with a Salafi jihadi ideology, and the group quotes Ibn Taymiyyah, an Islamic scholar from the Middle Ages whose teachings have greatly influenced Salafism.

Also unlike some other jihadi groups (particularly those affiliated with Al Qaeda), Ajnad Misr takes a sympathetic view toward civilians, even those in opposition to the group. Ajnad Misr directs its hostilities toward state actors; although several of the terror acts for which it has claimed responsibility have also resulted in the loss of civilian lives, the group claims to avoid this at all costs. (Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, for instance, does claim to avoid civilians, however they do not hesitate to claim attacks in which there are high civilian death tolls.)

The group specifically targets particular individuals whom it sees as offenders; this included Brigadier General Ahmed Zaki, killed in an April 23, 2014 attack, and whom the group condemned for his complicity in the arrest and torture of Egyptian youth.

The group takes particular issue with the Egyptian state’s treatment of women, referencing abuse of female protesters and promising retribution to the mothers of those who had been killed at the hands of the state.

In this sense, Ajnad Misr’s ideological and operational logic falls somewhere between a traditional insurgency and the Salafi jihadi groups operating in the Sinai. Regardless of any possible ideological differences, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis has declared Ajnad Misr to be their “brothers.”

Notable Attacks: According to TIMEP’s data, Ajnad Misr has claimed at least 15 attacks in Greater Cairo, many of which have been targeted toward particular police officers and/or their vehicles.

Ajnad Misr’s first coordinated attack took place on January 24, 2014, when a series of bombs exploded on the eve of the anniversary of the start 2011 uprising that resulted in the ouster of Hosni Mubarak. Ajnad Misr claimed responsibility for two attacks on police in Giza, killing eight and wounding over 90. Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis also claimed responsibility for the attacks, although they later ceded at least partial credit to Ajnad Misr.

On April 2, 2014, Ajnad Misr executed a series of bombings at Cairo University, killing a police officer and wounding others.

On the year anniversary of massive protests calling for Morsi’s ouster, Ajnad Misr planned a series of explosions occurred outside Ittihadeya Palace in Heliopolis. A Ministry of Interior explosives expert was killed while trying to defuse an explosive that detonated and other personnel were injured. A second bomb exploded an hour later, injuring a policeman. The third explosion killed another explosives expert who was trying to defuse an explosive device. Ajnad Misr had announced these attacks via social media and later claimed to have defused some of the devices in order to minimize civilian casualties.

Ansar al-Jihad

Other Names: Al Qaeda in the Sinai Peninsula

Location: Sinai Peninsula

Characteristics: The group is very loyal to Al-Qaeda, and according to local terror experts, is in possession of advanced weapons, including man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS) and mortars.
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Recent leadership: Ramzi Mahmoud al-Mowafi - Al-Mowafi, also known as “The Chemist” is well-known for being the personal physician of Osama Bin Laden. He spent a significant amount of time with Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, where he worked as an explosives and chemical weapons expert. Al-Mowafi was serving a life sentence for unknown charges when he escaped in the infamous January 2011 Wadi al-Natroun prison break.


Ideology: Ansar al-Jihad considers itself the military wing of Al-Qaeda in the Sinai Peninsula, and indeed it appears to have the closest formal ties through al-Mowafi’s connections. After announcing its foundation, the group declared its allegiance to Ayman al-Zawahiri, whom they called their “beloved Mujahid sheikh.”

Al-Qaeda’s ideology is reflected in the statements of Ansar al-Jihad, which call for war against foreign elements present in Muslim lands, particularly targeting the United States and Israel.

Notable Attacks: Ansar al-Jihad has claimed a series of gas pipeline attacks, including an attack on May 2, 2012, in retaliation for the death of one of its leaders in a Cairo prison.

While Ansar al-Jihad never formally claimed responsibility for the attack, a brutal August 19, 2013 attack on Central Security Forces has been linked to the group; 25 soldiers were executed while being transported between Al Arish and Rafah. Adel Mohamed Ibrahim, also known as Adel Habara, was arrested in Arish on August 31, 2013. Habara, who has suspected ties to Ansar al-Jihad, confessed to having led the massacre.

Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis

Other Names: Ansar Jerusalem, Jihadi Jerusalem, Supporters of the Holy House, Supporters of Jerusalem, Champions of Jerusalem, ABM

Location: The group typically operates in North Sinai and directs many of its attacks toward Israel, although it has claimed attacks in Greater Cairo, Dakahlia, and Ismailia. It is thought that the group has cells throughout Egypt.

Characteristics: According to Egyptian intelligence reports, the group is thought to have around 1,000 members, many of whom may have operated in other jihadi groups in the past. The group is one of the strongest and best coordinated in Egypt, and is in possession of advanced weaponry, including man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS), rocket-propelled grenades, and Grad rockets.

Recent leadership: Ahmed Salam Mabruk - Mabruk is a long-time militant with a sordid history in violent extremism across the region, and he has strong ties to Ayman al-Zawahiri and Al-Qaeda. Mabruk was extradited to Egypt as part of the infamous “Returnees from Albania” case in 1999, where he faced charges related to his activity with al-Gama’a al-Islamiya, one of Egypt’s most active extremist groups in the 1990s. Since his 2012 release from prison, Egyptian officials have suggested that Mabruk has played a leadership role in Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis.

Ibrahim Mohamed Farag Abu Eita - The Egyptian military claimed to have killed Farag (also known as Abu Suhail) during a December 2013 operation.

Shadi Meneai - Meneai’s involvement with Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis has been a source of mild controversy. Egyptian security forces claimed to have killed Meneai, whom they described as the “leader” of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, in a May raid. Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, however, vehemently denied both Meneai’s death and his having been the leader of the group.

Kamal Alam - Described as a leader in the group’s organization, Alam was reportedly killed during a January 2014 counter-terror operation.

Background: Since its formation, judged to be at some point in 2011, the group seems to have gained support in the peninsula, seeming to breathe life into jihadi cells that had been neutralized by former campaigns in the Sinai. This has been evidenced by the leadership of the group, many of whom are experienced militants who had previously been allied with other jihadi groups, particularly Tawhid wal-Jihad and the Mujahideen Shura Council (MSC) in the Environs of Jerusalem. When Israel killed Tawhid wal-Jihad/MSC leaders in 2012, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis vowed retribution.

The group ingratiates itself to local the local population, calling on them to stand with Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis in their fight against the state. In a recent campaign, the group had been reported to be distributing fliers to local (and highly marginalized) populations that stated: “If you are not with us, do not be against us.” In a recent statement, the group described itself as “your brothers...men from [Egypt]...perhaps your neighbors or relatives.”
Appendix B: Profiles of Terror Groups

On April 9, 2014, the United States declared Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis a terrorist organization. Egypt followed suit shortly thereafter, declaring the group to be a terrorist organization on April 14, 2014.

Egyptian security forces have launched a number of successful operations against Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis operatives, including a March 2014 raid that resulted in the death of six militants, the capture of eight others, and yielded a cache of weapons and strategic documents. Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis released a statement on July 25, 2014, lamenting the death of three of its leaders by an “Israeli drone,” Egyptian authorities vehemently denied the penetration of airspace. Despite these setbacks, the group continues to be active in the Sinai, releasing regular and frequent statements on social media.

**Ideology:** Early statements from the Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis mainly targeted the Jewish population in nearby Israel, where the majority of the group’s efforts were focused (with the exception of pipeline attacks on Egyptian soil). Soon after the removal of President Muhammed Morsi, however, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis shifted its attention to the Egyptian government for waging war against Islam.

Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis has attacked gas pipelines and tourists in its efforts to wage economic war.

**Notable Attacks:** The group has claimed responsibility for several pipeline attacks, as far back as February 5, 2011, and as late as January 17, 2014.

In its first attack after the ouster of President Muhammed Morsi, on September 5 Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis attempted to assassinate Minister of the Interior, Mohamed Ibrahim, but was unsuccessful. This attack was carried out by former Egyptian military officer Walid Badr, who had traveled to wage jihad in Syria, was also known to have connections with the Muhammad Jamal Network.

The group’s deadliest known attack to date was a December 24, 2013 attack on the Security Directorate building in Mansoura. This remains one of the deadliest attacks in Egypt in the past decade: 16 people were killed and 134 were injured in the bombing. This bombing also represented a moment of intense escalation in the Egyptian government’s “war on terror,” despite not having been connected with the attack, the Muslim Brotherhood were declared a terrorist group the following day.

Also on the day after the Mansoura attack, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis released a video of an attack on a helicopter. Militants used a man-portable air-defense system (MANPADS) to take down the aircraft, killing the five men on board.

In its first attack on tourists, an Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis suicide bomber attacked a bus of South Korean tourists traveling near the Israeli border on February 16, 2014. The attack killed three of the tourists and the Egyptian bus driver.

The group was engaged in a campaign against Israel during a period of the intense conflict between Israel and Gaza in July 2014. The group released videos of Grad and 107mm rocket attacks on the Israeli town of Eilat, two attacks on the village Bnei Netzarim, and an attack on an Israeli border military base.

In August, 2014, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis turned its attention back to Egypt. The group released a video first documenting the murder of Egyptian police on August 18. Ten days later, on August 28, the group released a video in which they document the beheading of four Egyptian men they accuse of collaboration with Israeli intelligence. The August beheadings are the first violence of this type for the group, marking a chilling change in tactic.

**Jaysh al-Islam**

**Other Names** Army of Islam

**Location** Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip, with attacks

**Characteristics:** The group primarily attacks civilian targets via kidnappings and bombings. The group has also been known to launch rockets into Israel.

**Recent leadership:** Mumtaz Dughmush - Dughmush, also known as Abou Abir, is a leader of the Dughmush clan of Gaza City and a former member of the Hamas party.

**Background:** Jaysh al-Islam was founded by Dughmush in 2006.

On May 19, 2011, the United States designated Jaysh al-Islam a terrorist organization.

**Ideology:** In a statement claiming responsibility for the 2007 kidnapping of journalist Alan Johnston, Jaysh al-Islam condemned the occupation of Palestine and held the British responsible for the creation of the state of Israel; the group also condemned the United States as taking part in a crusade against Islam. In this statement, Jaysh al-Islam explicitly stated that there is no difference between the governments of these countries and their people “whose bloody and money are free for the taking.”

The group desires the destruction of nations and the establishment of an Islamic caliphate, and it has publicly praised Al Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden.

The group also has worked to carry out attacks with the Mujahideen Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem (MSC).
Appendix B: Profiles of Terror Groups

While Jaysh al-Islam has carried out operations with Hamas' militant wing, the Al Qassam Brigades, Dughmush has particularly challenged Hamas' authority, and the two groups have been in serious conflict since as early as 2007. Johnston was kidnapped as a hostage to be used in negotiations aiming for the release of Jaysh al-Islam operatives arrested by Hamas and for the release of XXX, an Islamic cleric held in Britain. The kidnapping led to months of Hamas attacks on Jaysh al-Islam strongholds.

Three months into Johnston's arrest, Jaysh al-Islam issued a message to the Al Qassam brigades, praising them for their actions in the Gaza strip, declaring that they would stand behind the group if they were to announce the establishment of an Islamic caliphate, and asking them not to request for Johnston's release.


In August of that year, the group kidnapped two Fox News correspondents and held them in Gaza; this was the longest duration hostages had been held in the territory until that time. While the kidnapping was originally claimed by the unknown “Holy Jihad Brigade,” it was later attributed to Jaysh al-Islam.

On March 20, 2007, Jaysh al-Islam made headlines when they kidnapped BBC journalist Alan Johnston in Gaza. In a video released by the group, they featured journalist Alan Johnston in captivity, with a suicide belt strapped to his waist and asking for intervention to prevent his imminent death. He was eventually freed on July 4, 2007, days after Hamas seized full control of Gaza.

The Egyptian Ministry of Interior blamed a New Years Eve 2011 attack on a Christian church on Jaysh al-Islam. The group denied the attack, which killed 21 church-goers in Alexandria.

An August 5, 2012 attack on a group of Egyptian army soldiers preparing to break their Ramadan fast was credited to Jaysh al-Islam. Although others attributed this attack to the MSC, the group denied responsibility.

Jund al-Islam

Location: Sinai

Characteristics: According to reports from Police General Hani Zaher and terror expert Maher Fergahi, Jund al-Islam is in possession of advanced weaponry, including rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and anti-aircraft missiles. In their one known attack, the group employed RPGs and two vehicles loaded with explosives.

Background: Jund al-Islam was widely unknown before 2011, however both Zaher and Fergahi have indicated that Jund al-Islam conducted a military show on the day of Osama Bin Laden’s death in May of that year.

Four months later, on September 11, they claimed a large attack on a military intelligence building in Rafah.

Ideology: In a statement claiming responsibility for the September 11 attack, Jund al-Islam denounced the Egyptian military as traitors to Islam and held them responsible for crimes committed in the interest of “the Jews.”

Although this statement was the only official Jund al-Islam proclamation, the timing of the military show and the military intelligence attack suggests at least a loyalty to Al-Qaeda.

Notable Attacks: The September 11, 2013 attack on the Rafah intelligence building killed at least six people and injured 17 more, including 7 civilians.

Kita‘ib al-Furqan

Other Names: Al-Furqan Brigades

Location: Throughout Egypt, with operational centers in Cairo and Ismailia

Characteristics: The group typically carries out targeted attacks and publicizes these through social media. According to investigations from Egyptian National Security, the group has received significant funding and training from the al-Qassem Brigades in Gaza.

Recent leadership: The group’s founders are alleged to be Hany Mustafa Amer Amer Mahmoud and Abou Ahmed al-Haj.

Background: While very little is known publicly about the group, Egyptian National Security has launched extensive investigations into the group since their infamous 2013 attack on ships in the Suez Canal.

It clear from the prosecutor’s investigations that the group is operating in conjunction with Ansar Bayt Al-Maqdis, however the level of integration between the two groups is unclear, and Kitab al-Furqan releases their own media.

Ideology: The group views the current government as illegitimate as it does not apply shari’a law, and therefore they believe they are justified in armed resistance, conducting attacks against any state actors or institutions (including media).
Appendix B: Profiles of Terror Groups

The group has also claimed that it views the path to righteousness as through the “ammunition box, not the ballot box.”

Notable Attacks: In September 2013, the group released a video showing two of its operatives firing rocket-propelled grenades at merchant ships in the Suez Canal in July and August of that year.

On October 7, 2013, the group launched two rocket-propelled grenades at a satellite station in the Cairo suburb of Maadi.

The group has also released numerous videos detailing targeted shootings against state security.

**Mujahideen Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem (MSC)**

**Other Names:** Majlis Shura al-Mujahideen fi Aknaf Bayt al-Maqdis, Majlis Shura al-Mujahideen

**Location:** Gaza Strip, Sinai Peninsula

**Characteristics:** The group has lately operated more in the Gaza Strip, although it remains active in the Sinai Peninsula as well.

**Recent Leadership:** Unknown.

**Background:** MSC was founded in 2012 by Hisham al-Saeedni, a Palestinian who was a member of Tawhid wal-Jihad. Saeedni was killed by an Israeli drone in October 2012, but MSC launched a series of rocket and mortar attacks on Israel in April 2013, and followed that with a rocket attack in August of the same year. It is not known who assumed control of the group following Saeedni’s death.

**Ideology:** MSC shares much of its ideology with Tawhid wal-Jihad, the group from which it sprang. State institutions are viewed as illegitimate, with governments preventing the full application of shari’a law.

**Notable Attacks:** In addition to the aforementioned attacks, MSC claimed responsibility for an attack along the Israeli border in June 2012 that killed one civilian. Egyptian security forces charged two individuals, alleged to be members of the group, in the “Second Rafah Massacre”—in which more than two dozen Central Security Forces conscripts were killed while traveling in North Sinai—but the group denied any involvement.

**Takfir wal-Hijra**

**Other Names:** Jama’at al-Muslimin, Takfeer wal-Hegra, Black Flags

**Location:** Primarily Egypt’s Sinai, specifically Sheikh Zuweid

**Characteristics:** The group wears black masks and carries black flags bearing the confession: “There is no god but God.” The group is known to be well-organized and in possession of highly advanced weapons.

**Recent Leadership:** Abdel-Fattah Hasan Hussein Salem—Salem was arrested with an aide in October 2013.

**Mohamed Eid al-Tihi**—Tihi was arrested on November 13, 2011; sources claimed he died in a Cairo prison in February 2012.

**Background:** An earlier iteration of the group was led by Shokri Mustafa, who became radicalized in Egypt’s prisons during his imprisonment from 1965 to 1971; Mustafa was executed in 1977 after the group assassinated Muhammad al-Dhabbi, the former Minister of Waqf. At this time the group was largely driven underground.

However, the downfall of Mubarak in 2011 marked the emergence of a new entity calling themselves Takfir wal-Hijra, in the Sinai. Other than their reprise of Takfir wal-Hijra ideology and tactics, this group does not appear to have any substantial connections with the Takfir wal-Hijra of the 1970s.

While there has been some limited evidence to suggest the presence of Takfir wal-Hijra “networks” in the Middle East and North Africa throughout the period after 1977, there is no evidence to indicate anything but a nominal relationship between these groups and either the earlier or later group operating in Egypt.

**Ideology:** Initially the Jama’at al-Muslimin, the media began using the name Takfir wal-Hijra—roughly meaning “Excommunication and Emigration”—because of the group’s belief that jihad is not possible in today’s world, and thus members must isolate themselves physically and emotionally from society.

The group adheres to a particularly extreme interpretation of Sayyid Qub’s teachings. This interpretation claims as apostates nearly all who are not themselves members of the group, including all state leaders who do not govern under a strict interpretation of shari’a, any peoples governed by such leaders and thus complicit in their leadership, and any religious leader who does not condemn such leaders as apostates.

**Notable Attacks:** In November 2011, a raid on a Takfir wal-Hijra hideout resulted in the death of one police officer.

While Takfir wal-Hijra has not explicitly claimed attacks in recent years, groups with similar tactics and characteristics have enacted attacks in Sinai, including attacks on January 29 and February 7, 2011. Reports indicated that dozens of men carrying machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades, and other arms attacked a police station in Sheikh Zuweid, leaving five dead in the January
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incident, and injured two at a police barracks in Rafah in the later one.

Tawhid wal-jihad

Other Names: Tawhid wal-Gehad

Location: Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip; the group views the Sinai as a base for launching its ground operations against Israel.

Characteristics: Based on detainees’ confessions, the group is thought to number around 300. For the large part, Tawhid wal-Jihad funds its activities through the theft of cars and equipment from the state.

Recent leadership: Ahmed Hamadan Harb Malki - Known as “Abu Mariam,” the military commander was reportedly killed during a firefight with the military in January 2014.

Kamal Alam - Described as a leader in the group’s organization, Alam was reportedly killed during the same operation as Abu Mariam.

Shadi Meneai - According to terror expert Maher Fergahi, Shadi Meneai was active in the operational leadership of Tawhid wal-Jihad.

Background: Tawhid wal-Jihad has been one of the largest and most dangerous groups present in the Sinai in recent history, dominating terrorist activity in the Sinai in the decade before Mubarak’s ouster.

The group was founded in 1997 by two friends from Al Arish, Khaled Masaad and Nasser Khamiees El-Malakh, who recruited new members to the group during their religious sermons in local mosques.

Although the group was formed in Sinai, they have been active in the Gaza Strip as well, including a 2007 training stint with the al-Qassem Brigade, the militant branch of Hamas.

While the military engaged in a serious crackdown on the group after the tourist attacks, there is evidence to suggest that their leadership (namely Kamal Alam) has merged with that of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis.

Ideology: The group shares an extreme ideology similar to Al Qaeda, although no evidence has ever emerged of formal ties; its members view state institutions as illegitimate and state actors as infidels that prevent the full application of shari’a law.

Despite evidence of tactical coordination between the al-Qassem Brigade and Tawhid wal-Jihad, the latter generally rejects Hamas as being too moderate. Its relationship with Hamas came to a head in April 2011, when militants suspected to be members of the Tawhid wal-Jihad posted a video showing kidnapped Italian activist Vittorio Arrigoni in an attempt to pressure Hamas to release a Tawhid wal-Jihad leader, Jordanian Hisham al-Saedi. Despite Hamas attempts to rescue Arrigoni, he was brutally murdered. Tawhid wal-Jihad leaders later rejected any involvement, though they stated his death was a “natural outcome” of government policies. (For its part, Hamas did later release al-Saedi, in August 2012).

Notable Attacks: The group is widely understood to be responsible for the deaths of hundreds of tourists in attacks in 2004, 2005, and 2006. These attacks took place in the resort towns of Taba, Sharm el-Sheikh, and Dahab, respectively.
Appendix C: Profiles of State Actors

Ashraf Abdallah: Assistant Minister of Interior

Rank: Major General
Title: Assistant Minister of Interior for Central Security (since March 2013)
Duties: Commander of all Central Security Forces (CSF) troops
Location: Cairo
Prior Appointments: Head of CSF in Suez Canal Zone, regional head of CSF in Cairo

Background: Abdallah was promoted to his current position in March 2013. The promotion came amid civil unrest throughout Egypt, including a strike by police and CSF conscripts; CSF director Maged Nuh was relieved of his duties, and Abdallah tapped to replace him, in a successful attempt to win back the rank and file in the CSF.

One of the reasons for discontent among the rank and file—as well as public dissatisfaction with the Interior Ministry forces—was that Interior Ministers Ahmed Gamal al-Din (through January 2013) and Mohammed Ibrahim Mustafa and CSF chief Maged Nuh were too close to the Muslim Brotherhood leadership. Abdallah sought to publicly distance himself from the Brotherhood, saying that the CSF would not offer Brotherhood officials or property special protection, but did reiterate that he had no intention of withdrawing the police entirely: “If the police fall, the people fall.”

Abdallah has consistently been an advocate for legal measures that give security forces, including the CSF, broad powers to break up gatherings and round up perceived opponents of the state. Abdallah has continued to present the CSF as “the people’s shield, not the scepter of the authorities.” As part of a major shakeup of the Interior Ministry in July 2014, Abdallah was removed from his post and assigned as Assistant Minister of the Interior for the Training Sector.

Notable Events: In November 2013, Abdallah defended the new protest law that was issued by the cabinet, saying that it was necessary to restore order and that the ministry would not reject reasonable requests to protest. He also lobbied for a new anti-terror law that was passed in the spring of 2014; the law would give the state more tools to confront the Brotherhood, which was labeled a terrorist organization in December 2013.

In December 2013, he publicly committed to securing all churches during New Year’s and Christmas celebrations.

Abdallah tried to walk the fine line between not occupying uni versities during a string of campus protests in the spring of 2014 and not abandoning the clearly overmatched campus guards.

Previously, documents released by the Morsi government in April 2013 implicated Abdallah in excessive police brutality against protesters in February 2011 during initial anti-Mubarak uprisings in Suez.

Osama Askar: Commander of the Third Field Army

Rank: Major General
Title: Commander of the Third Field Army (since August 2012)
Duties: Commands army units operating in central and southern Sinai
Location: Suez
Prior Appointments: Chief of Staff of Third Army (under Sedki Sobhy)

Background: Askar graduated from the Military Academy in Cairo in 1970, and held a number of positions in the infantry ranks until becoming the chief of staff of the Third Army under Sedki Sobhy. Sobhy was promoted to Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces in August 2012, and, a week later, Askar was promoted to his current position. Askar was described as a “son of the Third Army” in a story covering his promotion.

Askar has led the Third Army through several bouts of upheaval that have threatened the stability of the region and the authority of the state. In late 2012 and early 2013, strikes and riots broke out in the Suez Canal cities of Port Said, Ismailiya, and Suez. Askar announced in January 2013 that his soldiers would not use force to enforce a curfew that had been declared in the region, despite dire warnings issued by then-Defense Minister Abdel Fattah al-Sisi about the instability.

Askar and the Third Army have continued to conduct both military operations against terrorists and outreach to the local population. Askar claimed in April that Sinai was “90%” calm and that the Suez Canal was totally under the government’s control. Askar and the Third Army have continued to call on the local population to support the state’s efforts to control the situation, referring to the Bedouin as Egypt’s first line of defense.

Notable Events: In July 2013, Askar announced that his troops had seized 19 Grad rockets that were being smuggled—allegedly by Hamas—into Egypt to assist the Muslim Brotherhood.

Terrorist attacks in Tur Sinai and against a military motorcade in
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early October 2013 prompted a military operation in response, which was led by Askar and resulted in five arrests.

The Third Army took the responsibility of securing polling places for the 2014 constitutional referendum. Askar promised that citizens would be safe from the moment they left their house until their return, offering plans outlining steps taken by the government; two weeks before the referendum, a group of Bedouin sheikhs handed large caches of weapons over to the government, and voting passed without incident in Suez and South Sinai.

In February 2014, Askar was hailed as the mastermind of an operation that killed 16 militants. Two days later, the government announced a number of “service projects for citizens”, including two new bakeries selling subsidized bread.

Ahmed Helmy: Assistant Interior Minister (ret.)

Rank: Major General

Title Assistant Interior Minister for Security (retired)

Duties Responsible for public safety (including police), travel, immigration, port security, and criminal investigation.

Location: Cairo

Prior Appointments: Head of Criminal Investigations in the Ministry of Interior

Background: Helmy was promoted in a move as part of a package of firings, retirements, and promotions that were seen as a reaction by the new president, Muhammad Morsi, to the security sector’s failures to control jihadist activity in the Sinai Peninsula. Helmy, along with Minister of Interior Ahmed Gamal al-Din and Cairo security head Osama al-Sagheer, was tasked with promoting security in the Sinai and restoring the Interior Ministry’s prestige.

Helmy continued to be involved in the state response to the situation in the Sinai after Morsi’s removal. He gave a long interview to al-Ahram newspaper in December 2013 in which the interviewer asked about the abduction of soldiers from May 2013, suggesting that there was a deal or conspiracy involving President Morsi. Helmy acknowledged that while the jihadists and Muslim Brotherhood had common ideological tenets, there was no proof of any sort of conspiracy. Helmy did, however, criticize Morsi’s pardon of convicted terrorists early in his term, calling it the “peak of moral support for these terrorist organizations.” In the same interview, Helmy dismissed Brotherhood claims of government complicity in domestic attacks.

In addressing claims of misconduct by the security forces, Helmy insisted Ministry of Interior was not responsible for the death of Mohammed Reda, a student who was shot dead during one of the many university protests that occurred during his tenure.

Helmy was discussed as a potential replacement for Minister of the Interior Muhammad Ibrahim Mustafa in early 2014, as rumors of a cabinet shakeup swirled. However, when Ibrahim Mehleb became prime minister in February, he kept Ibrahim as interior chief. Helmy, too, remained in his position, and continued to dismiss all claims of misconduct by the security forces.

In April 2014, Helmy retired from his position upon reaching the statutory maximum age. He was succeeded by his deputy, Osama al-Sagheer.

Notable Events: Helmy played a role in the government’s handling of several security threats in Cairo, as well, including the protests that erupted on university campuses in the 2013-14 school year, the effort to secure the constitutional referendum (Helmy was the face of the ministry’s attempts to convince the public that the referendum would be secure), and the general instability of the period.

Mohammed Ibrahim Mustafa: Interior Minister

Rank: Major General

Title Interior Minister (appointed in 2013 under Morsi)

Duties Law Enforcement; oversees Central Security Forces, Police, and Egyptian Homeland Security

Location: Cairo

Prior Appointments: Assistant Minister for the Prisons Sector, Head of Security in Assiut

Background: Morsi appointed Ibrahim as minister of interior in the aftermath of the constitutional referendum of December 2012. Prior to the referendum, protests against Morsi had spiraled into violent clashes between his supporters and opponents, in which security forces frequently did little to intervene. Morsi responded by shuffling his cabinet in January 2013, including promoting Ibrahim and charging him with quelling the dissent. There was no further major political violence under Morsi, until the protests of June 30; however, dissent within the Interior Ministry grew, as groups of officers refused to protect Morsi or otherwise suppress unrest. The ministry was noticeably absent during the protests of June 30-July 3, and when a transitional government was announced, Ibrahim remained Minister of Interior.

Notable Events: Ibrahim has overseen a crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood since Morsi’s removal from office. His forces have been responsible for the worst of the atrocities committed
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against the Brotherhood, including the dispersal of protest camps in Raba’a al-Adawiya and Nahda Squares in August 2013. Similarly, the police have been frequent targets of terrorist activity, with officers repeatedly killed everywhere from conflict zones to traffic duty in Cairo.

Ibrahim himself was the target of a September 2013 assassination attempt, when a car bomb exploded as his motorcade traveled through the Cairo suburb of Nasr City. Ibrahim was unharmed, though more than twenty people, both policemen and civilians, were injured. Ibrahim has blamed the terror attacks on the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas, and has at times presented information to that effect, including confessions. In May 2014, Ibrahim claimed at a press conference that the Ministry of Interior had uncovered forty terror cells since April.

Maged Nuh: Assistant Minister of the Interior (2012-2013)

Rank: Major General

Title: Assistant Minister of the Interior for Central Security (August 2012 – March 2013)

Duties: Commander of all Central Security Forces (CSF) troops

Location: Cairo

Prior Appointments: Leader of CSF post in Rafah

Background: Nuh was the leader of the CSF post in Rafah during the January 25 Revolution, and throughout a period of alleged Hamas involvement in prisons breaks. This put him in daily contact with senior ministry officials at this time, and he was appointed to the Assistant Minister position as part of a broader shakeup of the security forces due to continuing unrest in Sinai. Despite his experience in the region, violence in Sinai continued. In September and November 2012, explosions occurred at two CSF bases in Sinai; the November attack coincided with an explosion at a military intelligence building in Rafah.

In early 2013, unrest in several cities along the Suez Canal—Port Said, Ismailia, and Suez—led to the imposition of a curfew and widespread deployment of security forces, both civilian and military, to quell the unrest. By March, members of the police and CSF had been pushed to the breaking point, announcing a strike that spread around the country. When Nuh went to Ismailia on March 6, he was detained by CSF officers, who demanded the resignation of Interior Minister Mohammed Ibrahim Mustafa and wider changes in policy from the Morsi administration. Nuh was released after three hours.

Two days later, after his release, Nuh was removed from his position and replaced by Ashraf Abdallah. Despite the demands of the striking officers, and widespread rumors of his dismissal, Interior Minister Ibrahim retained his post. While the government claimed that Nuh’s firing would allow for reform within the ministry and the CSF particularly, others saw him as a scapegoat for the government’s failures.

Notable Events: Nuh publicly discussed the government’s approach to handling demonstrations in front of the Ittihadiya Presidential Palace in December 2012, claiming that while protestors were “respectable” people, “thugs” were responsible for escalating the violence.

In a January 2014 interview on al-Mahwar, Nuh claimed that Morsi wanted to use CSF forces against his opponents, but that Nuh had refused to deploy them. In the same interview, Nuh said that hundreds of “elements” belonging to Hamas and Hezbollah were active in Egypt and being monitored during the January 25 Revolution.

Nuh further claimed that Hamas had a plot to take over Sinai, but that goal was thwarted by the June 30 Revolution.

Osama al-Sagheer: Assistant Interior Minister

Rank: Major General

Title: Assistant Interior Minister for Security (since April 2014)

Duties: Responsible for public safety (including police), travel, immigration, port security, and criminal investigation.

Location: Cairo

Prior Appointments: Assistant Interior Minister for Cairo Security

Background: Despite being a member of the “old guard” in the Ministry of the Interior, Osama al-Sagheer emerged from the shakeup of the security services in August 2012 in an enhanced position as Assistant Interior Minister for Cairo Security.

Upon Ahmed Helmy’s retirement from the post (which was required due to age limits), Sagheer was promoted to Assistant Interior Minister for Security. The move was praised in the press, with reports lauding his “dedication to his work” and high moral character.

Notable Events: Sagheer played a role in anti-terror operations during Morsi’s term in office, taking part in the arrest of the Nasr City terror cell in October 2012.
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Since Morsi's ouster, Sagheer was involved in planning an operation that resulted in the capture of an infamous criminal from Sinai who was operating in Cairo in 2013. Sagheer supervised a December 2013 campaign against 32 “elements” wanted by security forces: Egyptian Homeland Security participated in those raids alongside Interior Ministry forces. In April 2014, Sagheer was reportedly consulted by the prosecutor-general during investigations into recently-arrested terror groups.

Gamal Muhammad Shehata: Director of Military Police

Rank: Major General

Title: Director of Military Police (since January 2013)

Duties: Heads Military Police branch of the Egyptian Armed Forces

Location: Cairo

Prior Appointments: Commander of the Northern Military Zone (NMZ), and Chief of Staff of NMZ under Nabil Muhammad Fahmy.

Background: Shehata appears to have been handpicked for his current position by Sisi, given his short service time as head of the NMZ and rumors that President Morsi requested that Hamdy Badeen, the previous head of the military police, be replaced. After becoming head of the military police, Shehata promised to build the country and restore order, and to support the country’s political leadership.

Shehata has kept a low profile since assuming his current role. He was not a visible figure during the protests against Morsi, the army’s removal of Morsi, and the violence in the months that followed, though military police were visible throughout Cairo and were actively securing the city.

Notable Events: Shehata visited polling places during the constitutional referendum in January 2014.

After an attack on a military police unit killed six members of the security forces in March 2014, Shehata visited the targeted station and ordered expanded security perimeters for police stations.

Shoaib Siaam: Assistant Minister of Interior

Rank: Major General

Title: Assistant Minister of Interior for Central Security (since July 2014)

Duties: Commander of all Central Security Forces (CSF) troops

Location: Cairo

Prior Appointments: Director of the General Directorate of Central Security

Background: Despite the immense security challenges facing the country in 2013 and 2014, Siaam largely remained out of the public eye. He was involved in securing campuses during the university protests of the spring 2014 term, but does not appear to have been responsible for counterterror operations. In the massive reshuffling of the Interior Ministry in July 2014, Siaam was promoted to Assistant Minister of Interior for Central Security.

Notable Events: On January 28, 2011—one of the biggest days of protests and clashes during the revolution—Siaam was the leader of a unit that was deployed to control bridges leading from Giza to Cairo.

In November 2012, Siaam was injured during major demonstrations on Mohammed Mahmoud Street in downtown Cairo; then-Interior Minister Ahmed Gamal al-Din visited him in the hospital. Siaam was described in news reports as the commander of security forces around the Ittihamy Palace during protests in February 2013. It was during these protests that one particularly savage and bizarre beating took place, that of Hamada Saber. Saber was stripped nearly naked and beaten by police, with the incident being captured on a widely shared video. Saber initially openly accused the police, then was apparently coerced into recanting his statements, while his family maintained that the police were culpable. When Saber went back to his original story, blaming the police for what happened, Siaam accused him of exposing himself to a truck of police officers and attempting to urinate on them before being beaten.

Abdel-Fattah El Sisi: President

Rank: Field Marshal (ret.)

Title: President of the Republic of Egypt

Duties: Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces

Location: Cairo

Prior Appointments: Minister of Defense and Military Production, Commander of the Northern Military Zone, Director of Military Intelligence

Background: Sisi is a product of the military system: He attended the Air Force’s high school as a cadet, graduated from Egypt’s Military Academy (al-Kuliya al-Harbiya), and rose steadily through the ranks. He held a succession of senior positions within the military, both administrative and unit commands, becoming Commander of the Northern Military Zone in
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February 2008. Sisi was appointed as the Director of Military Intelligence in January 2010 after serving a stint as deputy director of the same agency. In that capacity, Sisi openly spoke about the use of virginity tests on female protesters in Tahrir Square in March 2011, and promised in June that they would not be used again.

Following the deaths of 16 Egyptian soldiers in Sinai in August 2012, Egypt’s newly-elected President Muhammad Morsi forced the resignation of several senior military officials, including Defense Minister Field Marshal Hussein al-Tantawy and Chief of Staff General Sami Hafez Anan. Sisi was promoted to full general and appointed as minister of defense and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. Sisi was actively engaged in the fight against terrorism in the Sinai, visiting the region to inspect security facilities.

Despite early rumors that he had been appointed because of his sympathy for Morsi’s Muslim Brotherhood—Sisi’s personal piety is well-known—Sisi warned as early as January, as the military intervened to quell unrest in the Suez Canal, that political events could lead to the “collapse of the state.” In April 2013, apparently speaking off-the-cuff, Sisi said, “Any hand stretched against Egypt must be cut off.” Both supporters and opponents of the Brotherhood interpreted his words as supporting their positions.

Notable Events: Notable responses to security crises during Sisi’s period as Defense Minister include the strikes against militants in August 2012 and the more measured response following the abduction of troops in May 2013.

As the possibility of mass protests on June 30, 2013 became evident, Sisi said that, while the army would remain neutral in any dispute, it would not allow the country to descend into chaos; after the first day and a half of protests, the military released a statement giving political factions 48 hours to negotiate a power-sharing deal. On July 3, the military forced Morsi from office and installed Judge Adly Mansour as interim president.

Less than a month later, Sisi called for mass demonstrations supporting a mandate for the military to fight terrorism. The military-led government used these marches as justification of their crackdown on pro-Brotherhood protesters in Cairo and other cities, which reached the peak of violence during the bloody clearing of the Rabaa al-Adaweya and Nahda protest camps, as well as continuing their violent opposition to militants in Sinai. The efficacy of the government’s attempts to eradicate violent opposition are debatable: Attacks on government forces throughout Egypt have been the norm since Sisi became the de facto leader of the government in July 2013, and have continued through his formal inauguration in June 2014.

Sedki Sobhi: Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces

Rank: General (also translated as Colonel General or First Lieutenant General; equivalent to a four-star rank)

Title: Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Armed Forces, Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, Minister of Defense and Military Production

Duties: Head of the Egyptian Armed Forces, a member of the Egyptian cabinet and ex officio member of the National Security Council and National Defense Council

Prior positions: Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces and Vice Chairman of SCAF (August 2012–March 2014); Commander of the Third Field Army (August 2009-August 2012); served as Chief of Staff of the Third Field Army and Director of Operations of the Third Field Army prior to assuming command of the same; rose through the ranks of the mechanized infantry; graduated from the Military Academy (al-Kuliya al-Harbiya) in 1976

Background: Sobhi’s ascension through the ranks of the Third Field Army follows a typical career progression, serving in administrative positions and as executive officer before taking command of the army. His promotion to chief of staff of the armed forces and vice-chairman of SCAF came as the most senior military officials were forced to retire by then-President Muhammad Morsi, but both Sobhi and Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Sisi—promoted to defense minister and chairman of SCAF at the same time—held sufficiently prestigious titles that their ascension did not upset the military as a whole. When Sisi resigned his commission and portfolios in order to run for the presidency in March 2014, Sobhi was the logical choice to replace him.

Notable events: During Sobhi’s time as commander of the Third Field Army, South Sinai—the Third Army’s area of operations—was significantly quieter than North Sinai, where the Second Field Army operates. Sobhi, like other military leaders, stressed the relationship between the army and the people of Suez and Sinai, and the Third Army undertook a number of “national service projects”. Relations with Bedouin, however, were not always smooth: Locals complained about exclusion from opportunities in the military and development issues. A handful of violent incidents did occur, including a raid on a police station and a string of kidnappings in 2012, but many of these were attributed to local concerns and actors rather than organized groups of terrorists or insurgents.

Since his promotion to chief of staff and then commander-in-chief of the armed forces, Sobhi has undoubtedly played a role in formulating national strategy in the counterterror campaign
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however, little information is available tying him to specific events.

(Mohammad) Hussein Tantawi: Minister of Defense (Feb-Aug 2011)

Rank: Field Marshal (ret.)

Title: Minister of Defense, Minister of Military Production, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces (until 2012). He was Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces from February 2011 - August 2012.

Duties: De facto ruler of Egypt from February 2011 - August 2011

Location: Cairo

Prior Appointments: Head of Republican Guard, Commander of the Second Field Army

Background: In his time as defense minister, Tantawi resisted pressure from the United States to reform American military assistance away from prestige military hardware (such as tanks, fighter aircraft, and helicopters) and toward equipping and training Egyptian forces for counterinsurgency and border patrol. In a 2010 cable to U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen, staff at the U.S. embassy in Cairo described Tantawi as “one of our chief impediments to transforming our security relationship” and urged Mullen to “encourage Tantawi to place greater emphasis on countering asymmetric threats rather than focusing almost exclusively on conventional force” in his upcoming visit to Egypt.

Several cables from 2008 carry similar messages. In one, Amb. Francis Ricciardone says the United States “should urge Minister Tantawi towards a broader and more flexible partnership based on shared strategic objectives, including border security, counterterrorism, peacekeeping and civil defense.” Though a cable from that year summarizing a meeting with Tantawi and U.S. officials indicates that Tantawi was sympathetic to border control issues, the Egyptian military’s lack of reform toward anti-terror and anti-smuggling policies continued.

Tantawi was given the additional title of deputy prime minister in Hosni Mubarak’s last cabinet reshuffle on January 29, 2011. When Mubarak resigned, SCAF assumed control of the nation.

A deadly August 2012 terrorist attack against a military checkpoint in North Sinai generated a significant groundswell of anger against the Egyptian military leadership domestically, and President Morsi used this opportunity to significantly reshape the senior military leadership. Tantawi and Sami Enan—the Chief of Staff and Vice-Chair of SCAF—were made to resign, along with the heads of each of the military service branches. Former Director of Military Intelligence General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi was appointed as minister of defense and commander-in-chief of the armed forces, and Major General Sedki Sobhi, formerly head of the Third Field Army, was made chief of staff of the armed forces. All of the removed officers received jobs elsewhere in the government, but despite being named a presidential adviser, Tantawi quietly receded from public life.

Notable Events After the January 25 Revolution, the military decided to confront criminal and insurgent activity. The military launched “Operation Eagle” in August 2011, deploying approximately 2,500 soldiers and 250 armored vehicles to North Sinai. A number of suspected militants were arrested, and the operation was eventually approved by the Israeli government; however, the killing of two apparently innocent locals sparked Bedouin discontent, leading to protests. Israel further allowed an increased number of Egyptian troops into the region in October 2011.

In addition to the unrest that plagued Sinai during SCAF’s seventeen months in power, the military government also had to contend with protests in major urban areas, which were often met with violence. Notable incidents of brutality from the security forces include the Maspero massacre in October 2011 and the clashes at Mohammed Mahmoud Street and the Cabinet building in November and December. In June 2012, Muhammad Morsi was elected president of Egypt, and Tantawi and SCAF handed executive authority to a civilian president for the first time in Egyptian history (though not before reserving rights to themselves in a constitutional declaration). Tantawi remained minister of defense and chair of SCAF.

Emad al-Din al-Wakeel: Assistant Minister of Interior (2011-2012)

Rank: Major General

Title: Assistant Minister of Interior for Central Security (November 2011 – August 2012)

Duties: Commander of all Central Security Forces (CSF) troops

Location: Cairo

Prior Appointments: General Director of CSF in Southern Upper Egypt

Background: Emad al-Din al-Wakeel was a long-time officer in the Central Security Forces. Wakeel was promoted to Major-General and given command of a CSF directorate in 2007, and in April 2011 he was injured in a car accident while serving as the
Appendix C: Profiles of State Actors

head of CSF in Southern Egypt. By November 2011, he was the Assistant Minister of the Interior for Central Security, where he drew the ire of rights organizations for coordinating CSF’s harsh response to protesters that month. Wakeel claimed that protesters, not CSF forces, were using gas during clashes.

In the shakeup of the security sector in August 2012, Wakeel lost his position. Several outlets reported that he had been reassigned to lead the Canal Zone Security forces—a demotion in all but name—but others included him in a list of officers “referred for retirement.” Reports on the firings of August 2012 describe Wakeel as being against reform of the security sector and his removal from office as part of incremental change.

Notable Events: In January 2013, Wakeel endorsed Muhammad Ibrahim Mustafa as Interior Minister and complained about the quality of CSF conscripts.
Endnotes

1 El Sisi asks for mandate to combat terrorism.” The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy: timep.org/timeline/jul24-13
5 Byman, Daniel. Understanding Proto-Insurgencies. RAND Corporation. 2007.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
17 For instance, see http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2014/01/10-egypt-muslim-brotherhood-terror-byman-wittes
18 For example, Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohamed al-Beltagy declared that attacks in the Sinai would stop once Morsi was reinstated: “Beltagy claims he referred to ‘protests’ in famous Sinai video.” Egypt Independent. 31 Aug 2013: http://www.egyptindependen.com/news/beltagy-claims-he-referred%20%20%20%20%20protests-famous-sinai-video
22 For a detailed explanation of the effects of the recent military campaign in the Sinai, see Sabry, Mohammad. “By Military or Militants, Society is the Casualty in Sinai.” The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy. 24 Jul 2014: http://timep.org/esw/articles-analysis/military-militants-society-casualties-sinai
25 Several media outlets reported that the group did indeed claim the attacks on social media, however these reports are patently false and were based on an unverified and fake social media account.
Endnotes

30Fick, Maggie. “Two police officers killed in bomb blasts near Cairo palace.” Reuters. 30 Jun 2014: http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/06/30/us-egypt-blast-idUSKBN0F50Q20140630


32Ministry of Interior Facebook page, 30 May 2014: https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=725857194124613


34For more see El-Sadany, Mai. “Remand: Guilt before Innocence in Egypt’s Rule of Law.” The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy. 21 Jun 2014: http://timep.org/commentary/remand-guilt-innocenceegypts-rule-law


36Ibid.


38This theory was developed by scholar Mark Juergensmeyer to conceptualize religious motivations for political violence. As religious extremists view the world through a lens of “Good” versus “Evil,” violence committed in the name of “Good” is morally and eternally justified, and that committed in the name of “Evil” must be combated. The finality of death is secondary to the sacred cause, and intensification from the side of perceived “Evil” (in the case of Egypt, from state actors) must be met with equal or greater intensification from the side of perceived “Good.” For more on “Cosmic War” and religious violence, see Juergensmeyer, Mark. Terror in the Mind of God. University of California Press: 2000.


42Learn more about the project on ACLED’s website: http://www.acleddata.com/

43Learn more about this project from analyst Aaron Y. Zelin at its website: http://jihadology.net/

44To access TIMEP’s Egypt Security Watch data, please submit a request to info@timep.org.