

Egypt Security Watch
Monthly Briefing
February 2015



Summary

February 2015 saw the **continuation of a high rate of terror attacks**, with 109 attacks reported throughout Egypt.

While there were no large-scale coordinated attacks in February, the month saw the **continuation of a trend in the increased use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs)**, with 49 IED attacks—more than any month in at least ten years (Figure 1). This trend is particularly pronounced outside of North Sinai, as 42 of the 49 attacks occurred in Egypt's mainland, and 17 of these were in greater Cairo.

A trend in **increased targeted attacks on economic property targets continued throughout February** (Figure 2). Thirty attacks occurred on transportation, banks, restaurants, telecommunications, electricity infrastructure and other targets.

A network of local actors known as the allied Popular Resistance Movement (PRM) continued its surge of attacks throughout the country, **targeting mainly those actors it saw as supportive of “the coup.”** While this group has become significantly more active over the past two months, **it does not display the same degree of sophistication in its attacks and media messaging** as more established terror groups (like Ajnad Misr and Wilayat Sinai).

Wilayat Sinai (formerly Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis) **continued to carry out attacks in February**, publishing a catalog of attacks in the Islamic month of Rab'i al-Thani and providing new details on their large January 29 attack.

On February 24, President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi **ratified a controversial terrorist entities law**, expanding the state's definition of terrorism and granting state institutions more power in taking immediate measures to address terrorism.

Monitoring activities and **collecting data on activities in North Sinai has become increasingly difficult**. Media reports in February relied almost solely on unnamed security sources, and an official account published on the military spokesperson's Facebook page at the end of February bore no resemblance to the reports published throughout the month.

The month saw a **continuation of a trend of a decreasing number of counter-terror operations: a 6.7% decrease in operations** from January brought February's total to 96 announced counter-terror operations.

Reported arrests **Muslim Brotherhood members saw a sharp decline**, from 857 arrests in January to 178 in February.

This briefing highlights the terror group developments, as well as the changing trends in location and character of terror attacks and counter-terror operations.¹

¹ All data in the TIMEP briefings and TIMEP Egypt Security Watch project has been gathered from news reports, Egyptian state (military or ministry of interior) social media statements, terror group social media, and data drawn from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Dataset. For more information on the project's methodology, please see Appendix A of the [Egypt Security: Threat and Response](#) report.

Summary

Figure 1: Types of Attacks

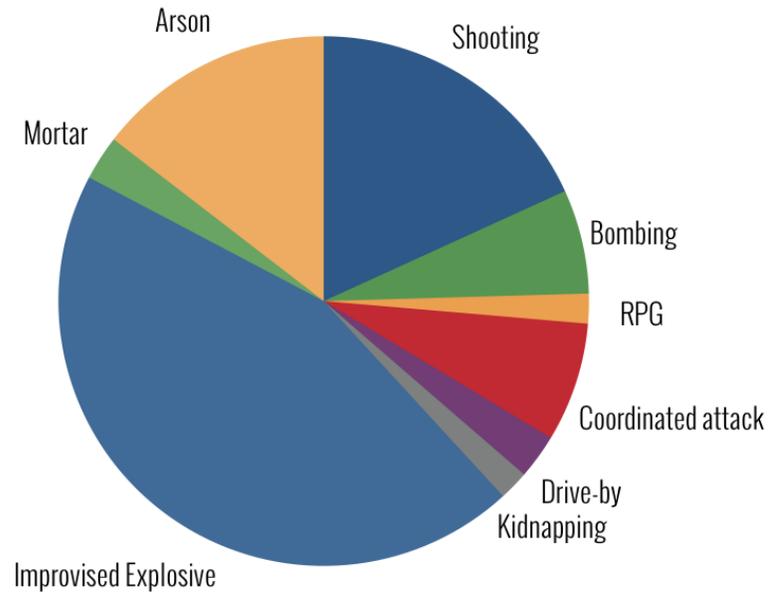
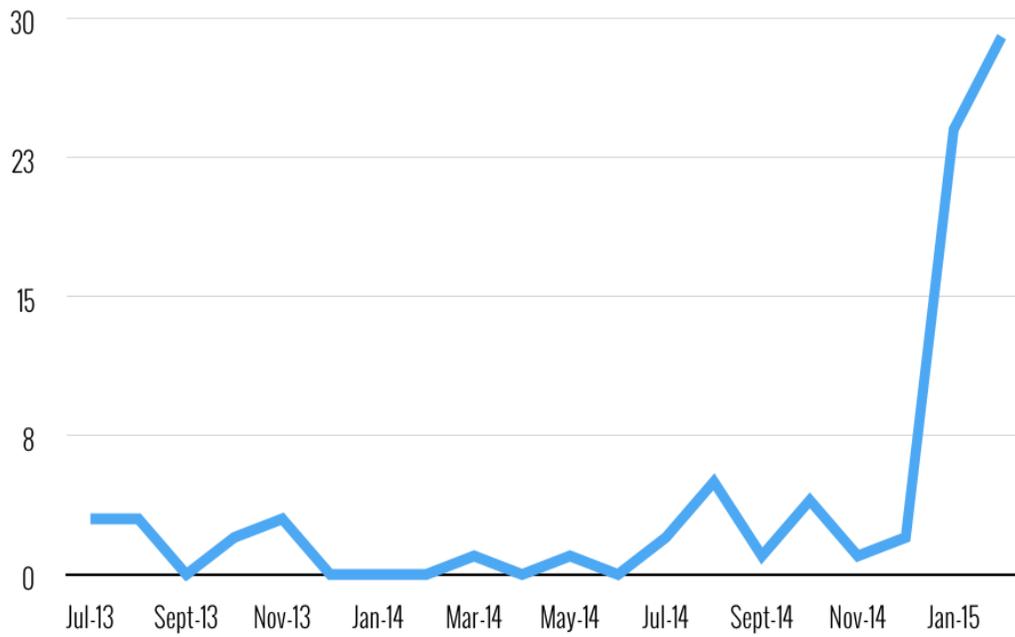


Figure 2: Attacks on Economic/Property Targets



Terror Groups Notable Developments:

“Allied” Popular Alliance Movement

The Popular Resistance Movement (PRM) continued to enact attacks throughout February. The movement can best be described as a **network of local actors**, including locally-based Popular Resistance affiliate groups and the “Revolutionary Punishment” group.²

The group typically publishes claims of its activities on multiple social media accounts, which are then reposted and shared, particularly by the clearinghouse account “Below the Ashes.” However, **social media activity is often poorly coordinated**, indicating the diffuse nature of the groups’ operations, particularly in comparison to well-organized groups like Afnad Misr or Wilayat Sinai.

Many attacks enacted by the allied PRM groups represent a **very low degree of coordination, best described as random acts of violence** (e.g., burning of cars in abandoned lots or setting up road blocks).³

Some attacks, however, display distinct premeditation and political purpose, as evidenced in the filming and dissemination of the attacks and ideological underpinnings—these include targeted attacks in retribution for group members’ arrest or “martyrdom,” or attacks on those deemed to be in support of the military-backed ouster of former president Muhammad Morsi in what the groups regularly refer to as “the coup.”

- The Popular Resistance Movements and allies tend to focus their attacks on economic targets, particularly those they deem in support of “the coup.” Thus, while the group has attacked a broad range of economic and property targets, they regularly target **Mobil and make direct reference to Naguib Sawiris**, referencing his “support” for the “coup regime.” They explicitly **attack Emirati targets**, including Emirates NBD and Etisalat, because of the “Emirati support” for the current regime; in one statement they **addressed Ginny Rometty, chairwoman of IBM**, during her trip to Egypt, asking her awareness of a time of “thievery” and “tyranny;” and they have issued an **open call threatening the upcoming economic conference in Egypt**.
- The allied groups also describe **retaliation for acts against their members or supporters**, naming and attacking particular security officers and their property. These attacks have included targeted attacks on the businesses and vehicles of police officers, announced via Twitter and Facebook.

2 In a January 24, 2015, statement from the now-defunct Allied Popular Resistance Facebook page, the group listed its allies: The Popular Resistance Movement, the Determination Movement, the Revolutionary Punishment Movement, the Movement for Revolution in Beni Suef, and the Execution Movement.

3 For the purposes of this project, TIMEP defines a terror act as a premeditated act of violence by non-state actor carried out for political purposes. Terror groups are those groups who publicly claim to execute terror acts and do not necessarily correspond to official U.S. or Egyptian designations for terrorist entities.

Terror Groups Notable Developments:

Allied PRM attacks are carried out using **only the most rudimentary weaponry**, primarily crude improvised explosive devices, Molotov cocktails, and stun grenades.

Many of the attacks claimed cannot be independently verified, and **often media reports conflict with the groups' claims**. This was the case when the group claimed the detonation of a "sound bomb" (typically referring to a stun grenade) at the Cairo airport on February 3 to coincide with Ginny Rometty's visit to Egypt; media reported [that explosives were found and defused](#).

The groups' ideology may be described as "**religiously nationalist,**" **but not jihadist**, as their ideology revolves around nationalist causes like retribution for Morsi's removal from power, rather than the jihadist mission of a unified caliphate or worldwide oppression of Muslims. The group **generally does not make overt references to religion or performing jihad as a motivating factor in their activities**, though statements conclude with a regular signature of "God and Country," and several statements have featured the hashtag "Egypt is Islamic." A single February 26 statement referenced the Islamic Caliphate, but later dissemination of this statement removed the reference.

Moderate indications suggest that the group has **some ties to the Muslim Brotherhood**: some of these indications include the support for Muslim Brotherhood president Muhammad Morsi, their early and strong [coverage on Brotherhood-affiliated media](#), and their participation in Brotherhood-affiliated Friday protests. While these may be circumstantial, one statement, published on a now defunct Facebook page, referenced the organization outright. In a list of "latest developments that portend black days for the military" PRM described:

"...the unprecedented appearance of the new revolutionary thoughts of the Muslim Brotherhood youth leadership and ongoing discussions about their ability to take the reins of the organization."

Terror Groups' Notable Developments:

Wilayit Sinai (WS) - Formerly Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis

On February 9, **Wilayat Sinai released a graphic video of beheadings in revenge for military activity** in Sinai. The video begins by purportedly showing bodies of civilians slain by Egyptian forces and vows revenge. It then shows two men being shot to death in a pickup truck with subtitles that say they were police in civilian clothes. It then shows eight men being decapitated for allegedly cooperating with the Egyptian military and for spying for Israel.

On February 16, the group **republished the [Islamic State Libya video](#)** showing the graphic beheading of Egyptian Coptic Christians in Libya titled "A Message Signed with Blood to the Nation of the Cross." (Read TIMEP's [Press Release](#) on the brutal execution.)

On February 18, WS released a compilation of **photographs showing their preparations against the Egyptian military**, entitled "Sit and wait for them at every place of ambush." (Some reports indicated that the photos depicted Kamal Alam, a leader of the group reportedly killed in 2014, but photo evidence indicated that the man in the photos was not actually Alam.)

On February 24, WS published a full account of their activities for the Islamic month of *Rabi' al-Thani*, marking the Gregorian period of January 21 to February 19, 2015. The report indicated the following attacks:⁴

- January 25: An **attack using light weaponry** was carried out near Sheikh Zuweid.
- January 29: WS described the day's events in detail, updating their previous reports with **claims that hundreds were killed in this attack**. (While there were no official reports, most media reports indicated somewhere around 30 killed.)

In the morning of January 29, the group carried out an **attack on the village of al-Touma** south of Sheikh Zuweid, using heavy weaponry and IEDs.

In the evening, around **100 fighters carried out coordinated attacks** in three areas:

- *In Arish*, **three suicide, vehicle-borne IEDs (SVBIEDs) were deployed**. One, filled with 10 tons of explosives, attacked Army Battalion 101. The other two targeted a military hotel and security buildings. In other attacks in south and southeast Arish, the group used rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and light and medium artillery.
- *In Sheikh Zuweid*, militants **attacked the al-Joura security checkpoint** with heavy weapons, including a DShK (Soviet heavy machine gun) and other heavy (.57 caliber) machine guns; they **attacked the Abu Tawila and al-Bawawba security checkpoints** with light weaponry; and they **attacked the al-Zuhur military camp** with 60 mm mortars.

⁴ Information on some of these attacks (in particular the deadly January 29 attacks) update TIMEP's previous ESW Monthly Briefing 4 for January. Because of the nature of reports and claims on attacks, often information is not released immediately. TIMEP always endeavors to provide information that is both accurate and timely, and current monthly briefings will provide any corrections to previous versions.

Terror Groups' Notable Developments:

- *In Rafah*, **attacks on the Wali Lafi and al-Masawra checkpoints** used medium and heavy weaponry.
- January 30: In an **attack on the Wali Lafi checkpoint** near Rafah, militants used RPGs and other weaponry, killing one and claiming to have injured more than 10 others, though these numbers were not corroborated by independent reports.
- February 1: The group claimed an **IED attack on an armored personnel carrier** on the northern sea road of Arish, though the attack was not reported elsewhere.
- February 5: WS claimed a **drive-by attack on soldiers in central Arish**; [reports indicated that three soldiers were killed](#).
- February 8: WS claimed another **attack on an armored personnel carrier**, north of Rafah, and claimed that it was “burned completely.”
- February 14: WS claimed an attack **on the al-Masawra security checkpoint** near Rafah, using 60 mm mortars.

Ajnad Misr

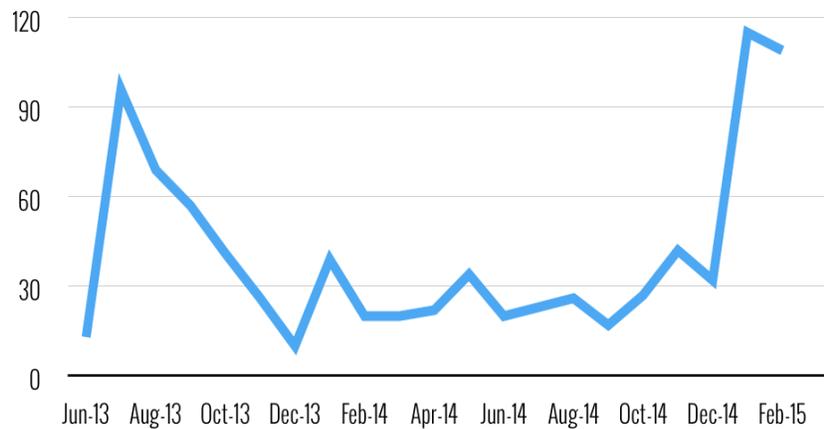
On February 1, Ajnad Misr’s leader Mohamed Bilal al-Qahiri, published a missive, which he disseminated through his own Twitter account, describing **a battle of “good” versus “evil” in a struggle against “systems of oppression.”** To illustrate this point, he references the “war in the Sinai,” and particularly he focuses on the crimes of the military and the complicity of even conscripted soldiers in the oppression of the Egyptian people.

Ajnad Misr claimed **only one attack in February**: On February 13, Ajnad Misr claimed a roadside attack in the Ain Shams neighborhood that killed two and injured eight.

Terror Attacks Trend Report:

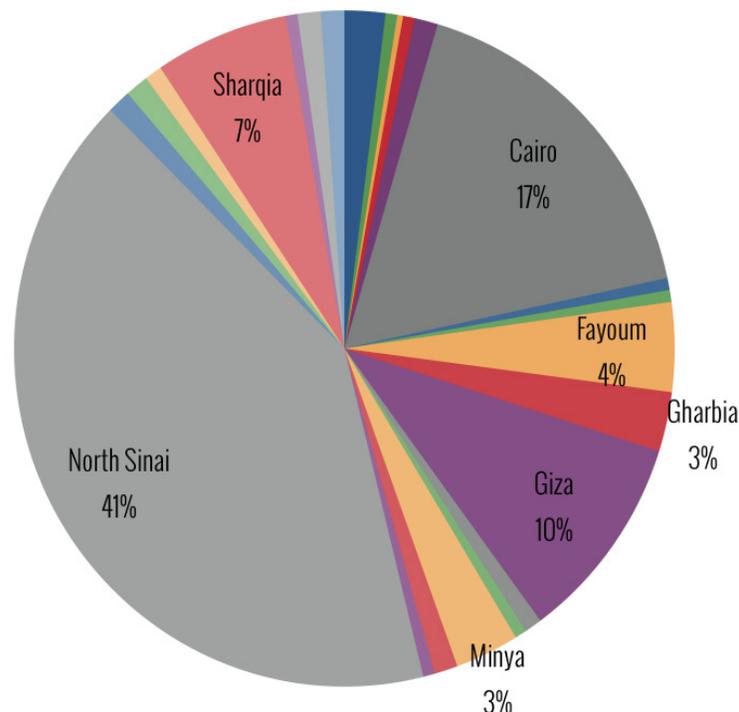
The number of reported terror attacks remained high from January 2015⁵ to February 2015. February saw 109 attacks, yet again more than the period of violence in July and August 2013, months in which 96 and 69 attacks were carried out, respectively (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Number of Attacks Countrywide



Attacks in February 2015 saw a more even geographic distribution than in the past, when attacks were mostly concentrated in North Sinai. (Figures 4-6 depict the share of attacks overall in 2014 versus in January and February 2015.)

Figure 4: Distribution of Attacks 2014



⁵ January 2015 numbers were revised upward (from 109 to 115 attacks) from ESW Monthly Briefing 4 to account for attacks claimed or reported after the issuance of the briefing.

Terror Attacks Trend Report:

Figure 5: Distribution of Attacks January 2015

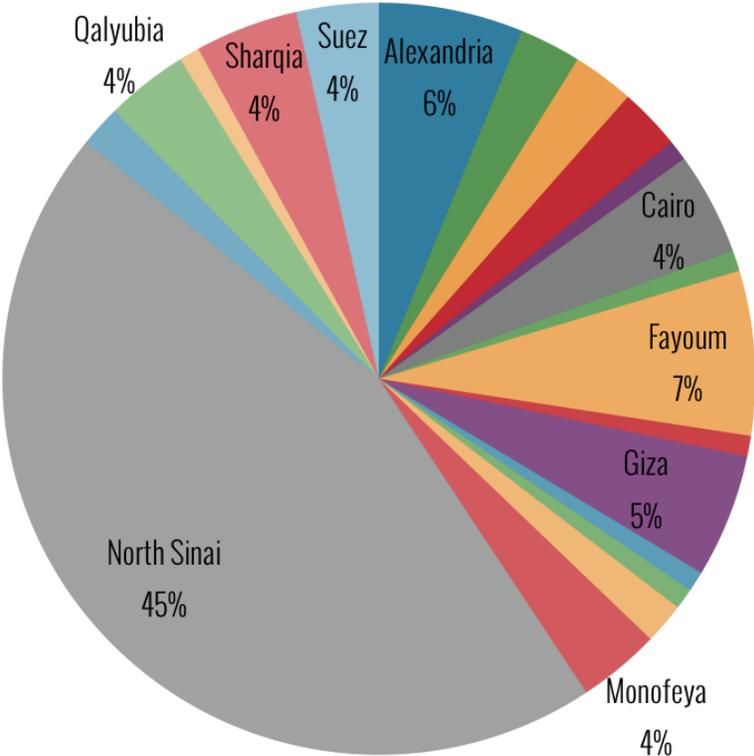
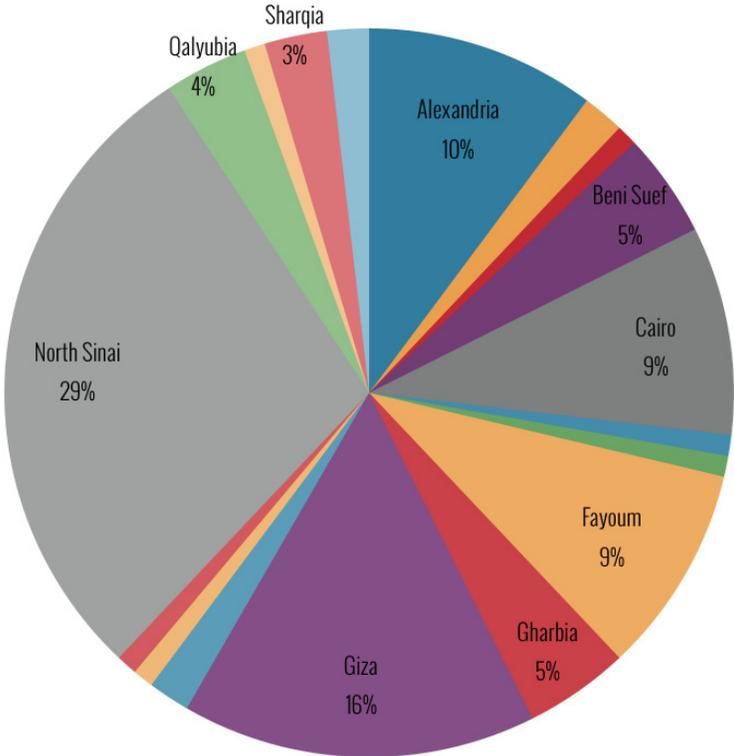


Figure 6: Distribution of Attacks February 2015



Terror Attacks Trend Report:

After the deadly January 29 coordinated attacks in the Sinai, February saw no such large-scale operations. Thus, while there were a great number of attacks, these resulted in a lower casualty count from January to February, **with 37 killed and 75 injured** (Figure 7).

The month also saw a decrease in the number of attacks with civilian casualties and the overall number of civilian casualties from February, but the **20 killed in 24 attacks did represent the continuation of an overall trend of large effects on civilians** (Figure 8).

When compared to the number of attacks, however, the deadliness quotient⁶ reveals that **attacks in February were both less deadly and less deadly for civilians** than in prior months (Figure 9).

Figure 7: Number of Deaths in Attacks

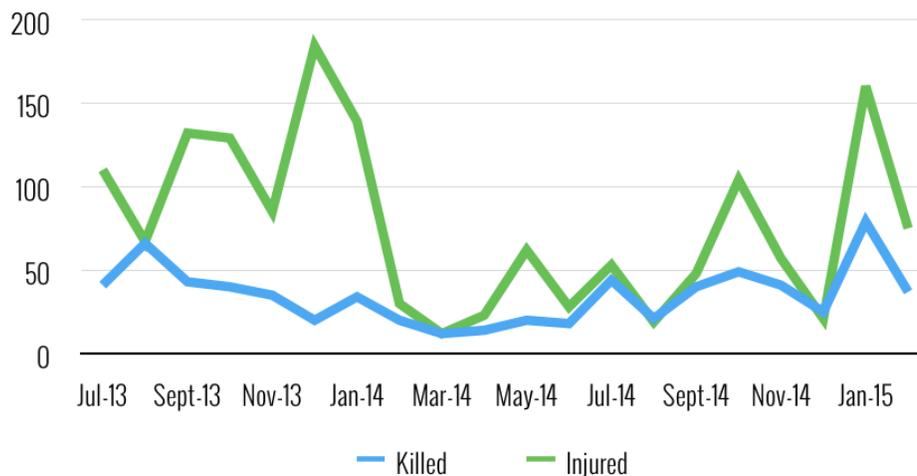
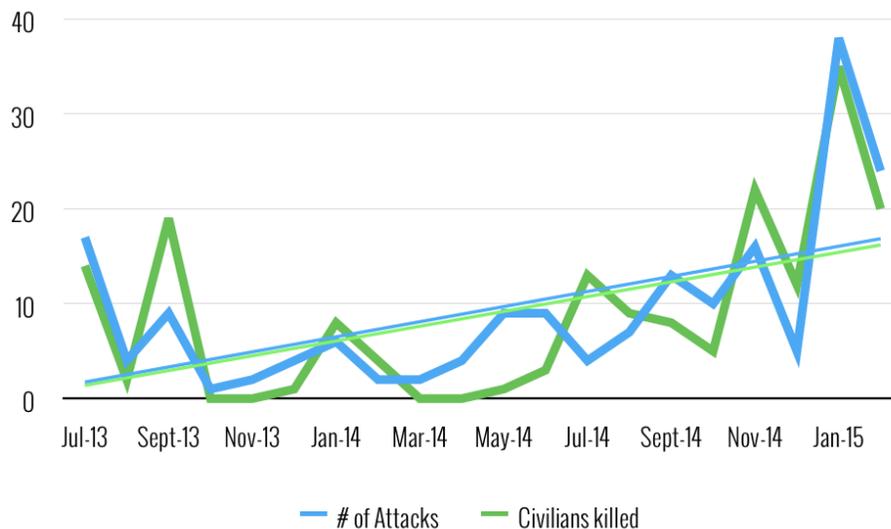
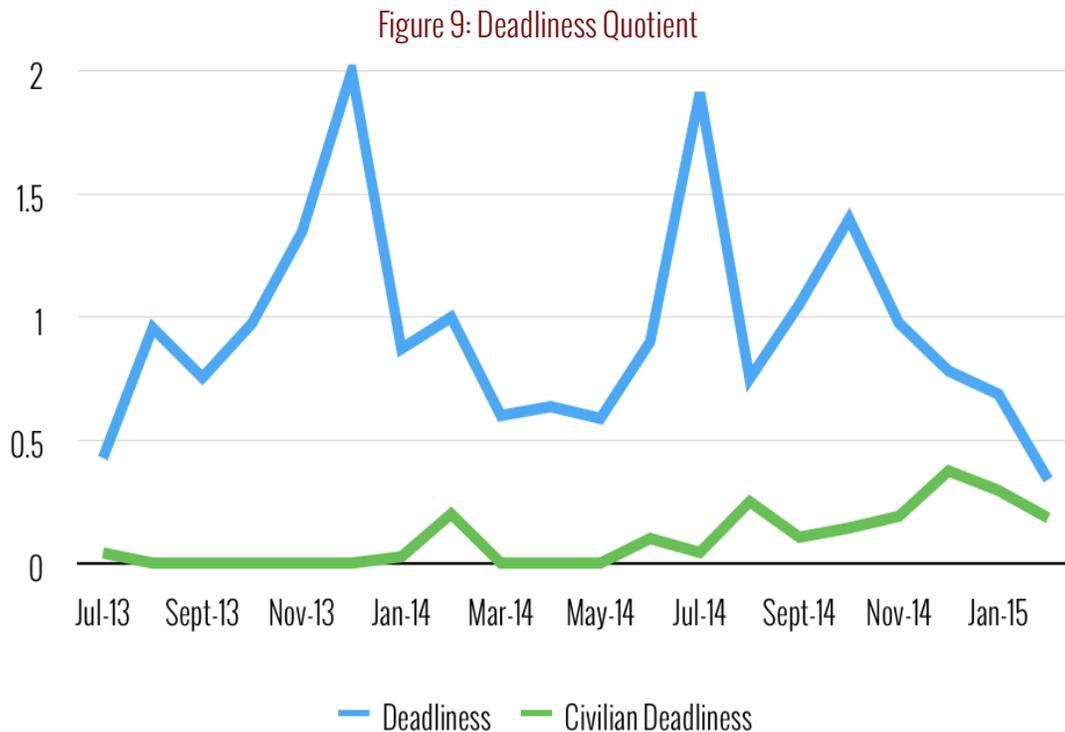


Figure 8: Attacks with Civilian Casualties



6 The deadliness quotient is calculated by dividing the number of deaths in attacks by the number of attacks overall for the month.

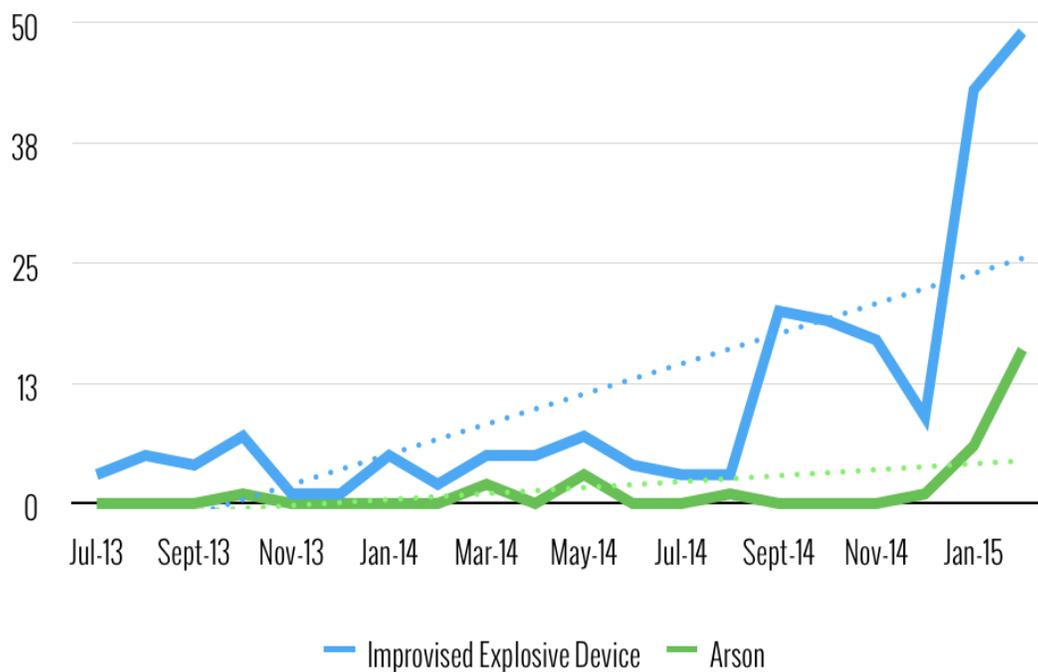
Terror Attacks Trend Report:



February 2015 saw the continuance of **a growing trend in the use of IEDs**, with 49 IED attacks in February, as well as the emergence of an upward trend in arson attacks (16; Figures 1 and 10).

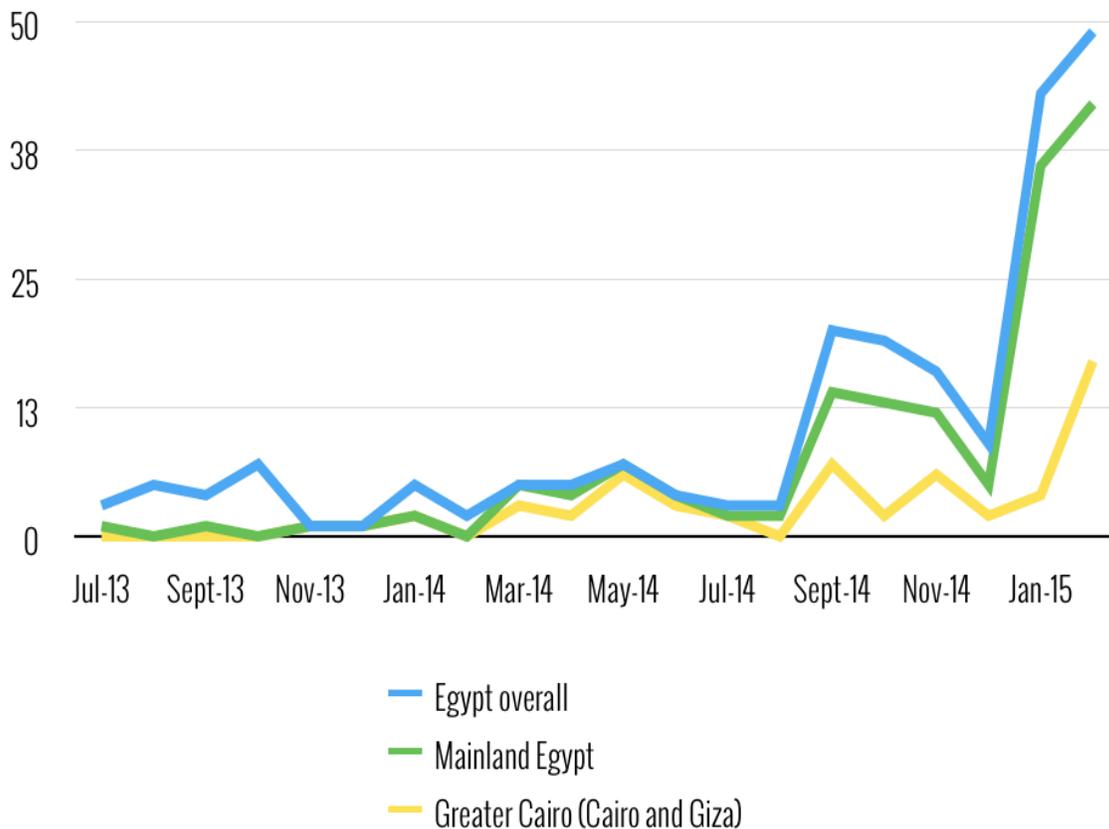
This trend was particularly due to the increase in IED attacks outside of North Sinai, with a sharp increase in greater Cairo (Figure 11).

Figure 10: Trends in Types of Attacks (by Number of Attacks)



Terror Attacks Trend Report:

Figure 11: IED Attacks in February 2015



February saw the **continuation of a trend in attacks on economic and property targets** (Figure 2). Thirty distinct attacks on property or economic targets—**eleven of which were claimed by Popular Resistance Movement affiliates**—included attacks on:

- **Transportation:** Seven attacks on rail lines and three attacks on bus transportation
- **Telecommunications:** One attack on a telecommunications center in Cairo, two attacks on Mobinil towers and three attacks on Mobinil stores (in which one person was burned to death), two attacks on Emirati Etisalat towers and one attack on an Etisalat store, and one attack on a Vodafone store
- **Restaurants:** One attack on a pizza restaurant and two attacks on KFC franchises in February (in which one person was burned to death).
- **Banks:** Two Emirates NBD branches and one Bank of Alexandria branch were burned.
- **Electricity Infrastructure:** Three IED attacks targeting electricity infrastructure
- **Pipeline:** Two explosions along the gas pipeline to Jordan in North Sinai, with no claim to the attacks
- **Other:** Other attacks on private property or individual businesses targeted individuals described as police informants.

Counter-terror Operations Trend Report:

On February 1, **General Muhammed Abdellah replaced Osama Askar** as the new commander of the Third Army, overseeing operations in Suez and South Sinai. (For more information, see TIMEP ESW State Actor profiles of [Muhammed Abdellah](#) and [Osama Askar](#).)

On February 17, **the Ministry of Interior claimed to have apprehended nine** of those responsible for attacks on **KFC and Mobinil branches** that resulted in the deaths of two citizens, publishing their video confessions.

On February 24, **President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi issued a decree to ratify a pending “terrorist entities law,”** paving the way for the designation of a presumably forthcoming terrorist entities list. In an [analysis of the draft legislation published on December 12, 2014](#), TIMEP Non-Resident Fellow Mai el-Sadany explained:

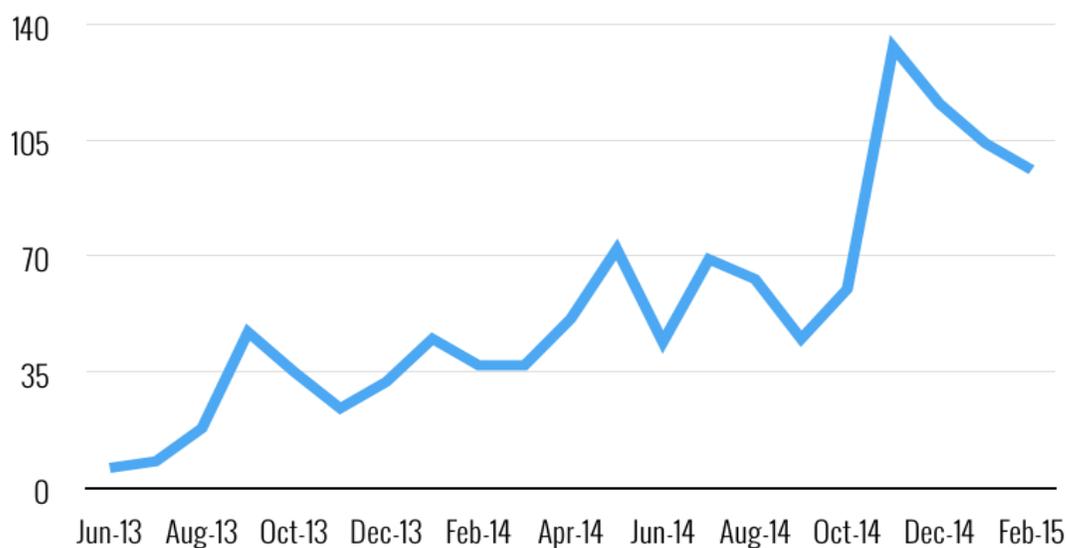
“The new Terrorist Entities law comes into the country’s legal scheme to affirm and slightly expand the existing Penal Code’s definition of ‘terrorism,’ as well as to empower the state’s institutions with the authority to take immediate administrative steps against designated terrorists.”

February saw **increased opacity on the situation in North Sinai**. Media reports relied almost exclusively on figures reported by unnamed security sources, and these often conflicted on any given day. For example, separate reports on February 25 describe “scores,” 20, or [38 militants killed](#) on that day.

Figures published in a [final February 28 account of all operations in North Sinai](#), published on the official Military Spokesperson Facebook page, bore no resemblance to the totals aggregated from various news reports⁷.

Overall, **counter-terror operations decreased slightly for the second month in a row from January 2015 to February 2015**, with 96 distinct operations in February. However, this still remained high above the yearly average and median figures (68.6 and 63 year over year, respectively; see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Number of Operations Countrywide

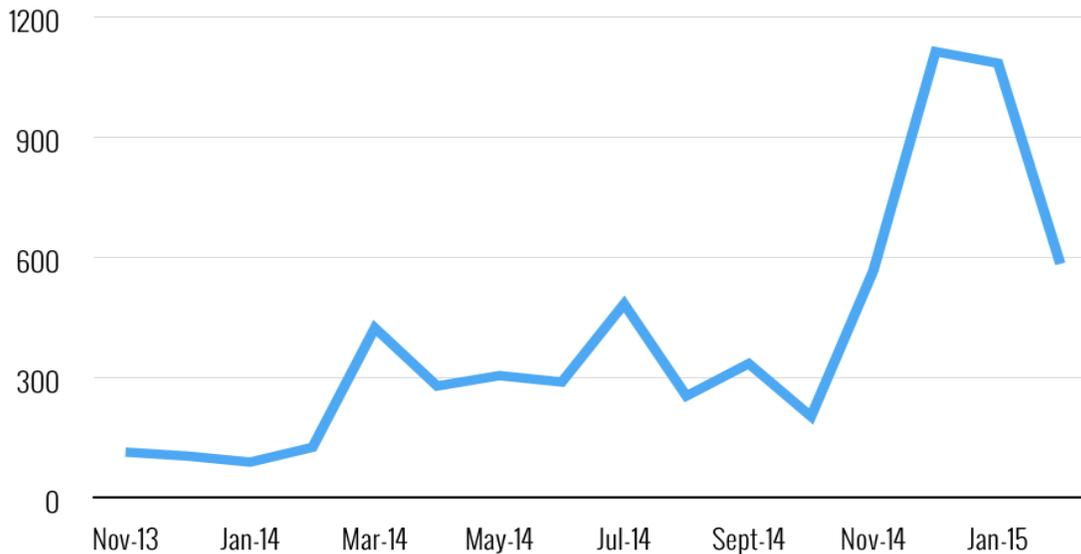


⁷ A tally from independent reports indicate that 402 militants were reported killed and 58 reported arrested, while the Military Spokesperson account indicates 170 killed and 359 arrested in North Sinai. The ESW project and this report rely only on the official tally for February.

Counter-terror Operations Trend Report:

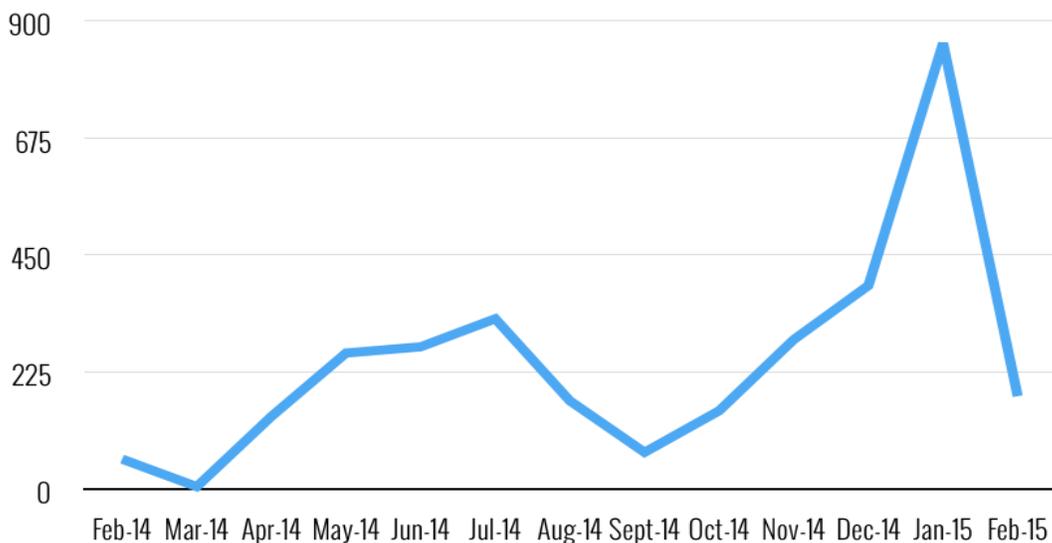
584 alleged terrorists⁸ were reportedly arrested in February 2015, a significant decrease from previous months (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Number of Arrests in Counter-terror Operations Countrywide



A trend in the arrest of Muslim Brotherhood members, which began when the group was declared a terrorist organization in January 2014 and increased through January 2015, abated significantly in February 2015. The month saw the arrest of 178 individuals for allegedly belonging to the “terrorist Muslim Brotherhood” organization compared to an average of 511 arrests per month in the three prior months (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Arrest of Alleged Muslim Brotherhood members



⁸ This briefing and the ESW project monitors arrests of specifically designated “terrorist” actors, as deemed by the Egyptian state. These figures do not account for those arrested as part of the broader engagement in Egypt’s “war on terror,” nor those who may be later charged with terrorist acts.