

Egypt Security Watch
Monthly Briefing
March 2015



Summary

March 2015 marked **another month of a high rate of terror attacks in the country**, with 107 reported attacks in March 2015—bringing the total for the first quarter of 2015 (331 attacks) only 22 shy of the number of reported attacks in the entire year of 2014 (353 attacks).

The end of the month saw **significant changes in United States military assistance to Egypt**, particularly revisions to future military financing that would ostensibly target such assistance more specifically to counter-terrorism purposes. In response to the changes, **TIMEP acknowledged the necessity of overhauling security assistance**, while cautioning that such **adjustments “should not overshadow urgent concerns** about Egypt’s ongoing human rights and the need for fundamental democratic reforms.” (Full statement: [White House Announces Major Changes in Aid Relationship with Egypt, Resumption of Military Aid.](#))

President **Abdel-Fattah El Sisi welcomed the announcement** of the release of defense articles and resumed aid as confirmation of shared U.S.-Egyptian interests in combatting terrorism.

Attacks continued throughout Egypt, with **reported attacks in 21 of 27 provinces**, and the lowest percentage of attacks occurring in the North Sinai province (17% of all reported attacks) in at least four years (Figure 1). (This figure marked an outlier in a usual high rate of monthly attacks in North Sinai, and preliminary figures for April—at least 14 attacks in the first half of the month—suggest that this does not represent a new trend.)

Figure 1: Map of Attacks throughout Egypt March 2015



Summary

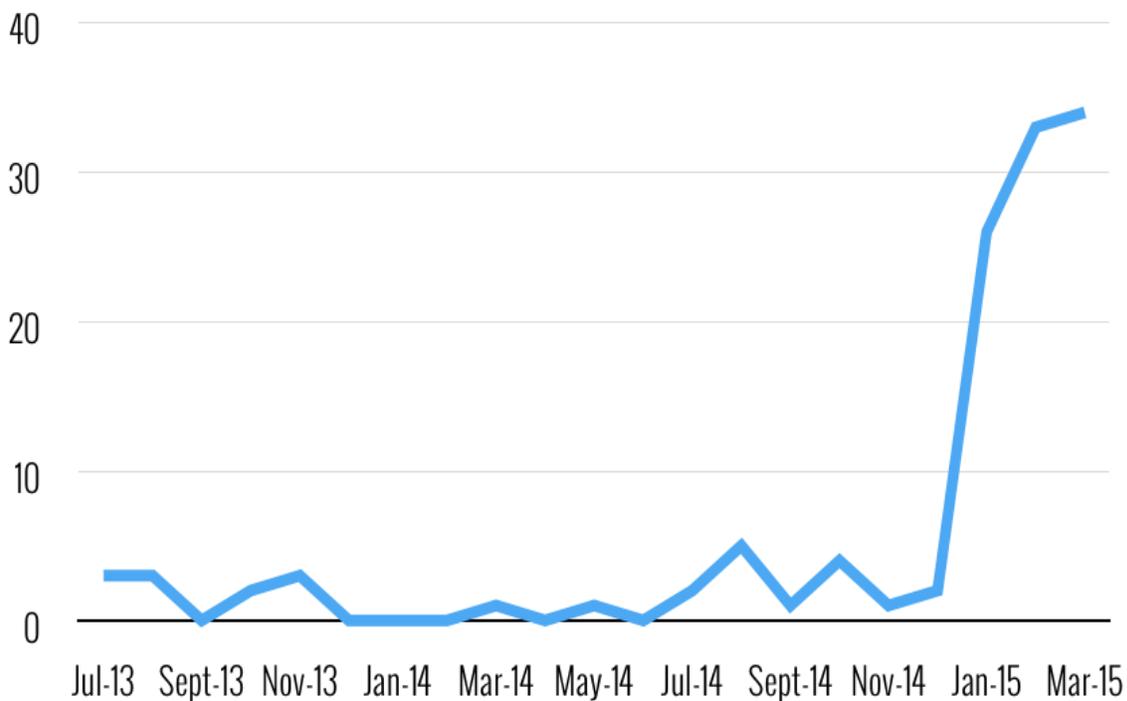
The Allied Popular Resistance Movement (APRM) continued to conduct attacks throughout Egypt, explicitly **claiming at least 32 attacks across the country**, with a high concentration in Fayoum: Afnan Misr carried out only **one attack in the month** (at Ain Shams University); and **Wilayat Sinai claimed six attacks**, all in North Sinai.

Wilayat Sinai (WS) carried out a **coordinated attack on a military installation in Arish, using a stolen water tanker laden with several tons of explosives**. While the group claimed that “tens” were killed in the attack, official reports placed the death toll at two.

Wilayat Sinai also **claimed to have seized the engine of an American-made M60 Patton tank**. The group had previously released footage of the late October seizure of an Egyptian military tank, although it is unclear if the group has the capability to actually repair and use the tank.

Attacks on economic and property targets continued to increase, with 34 attacks in March; attacks particularly focused on the banking and telecommunications sectors (Figure 2).

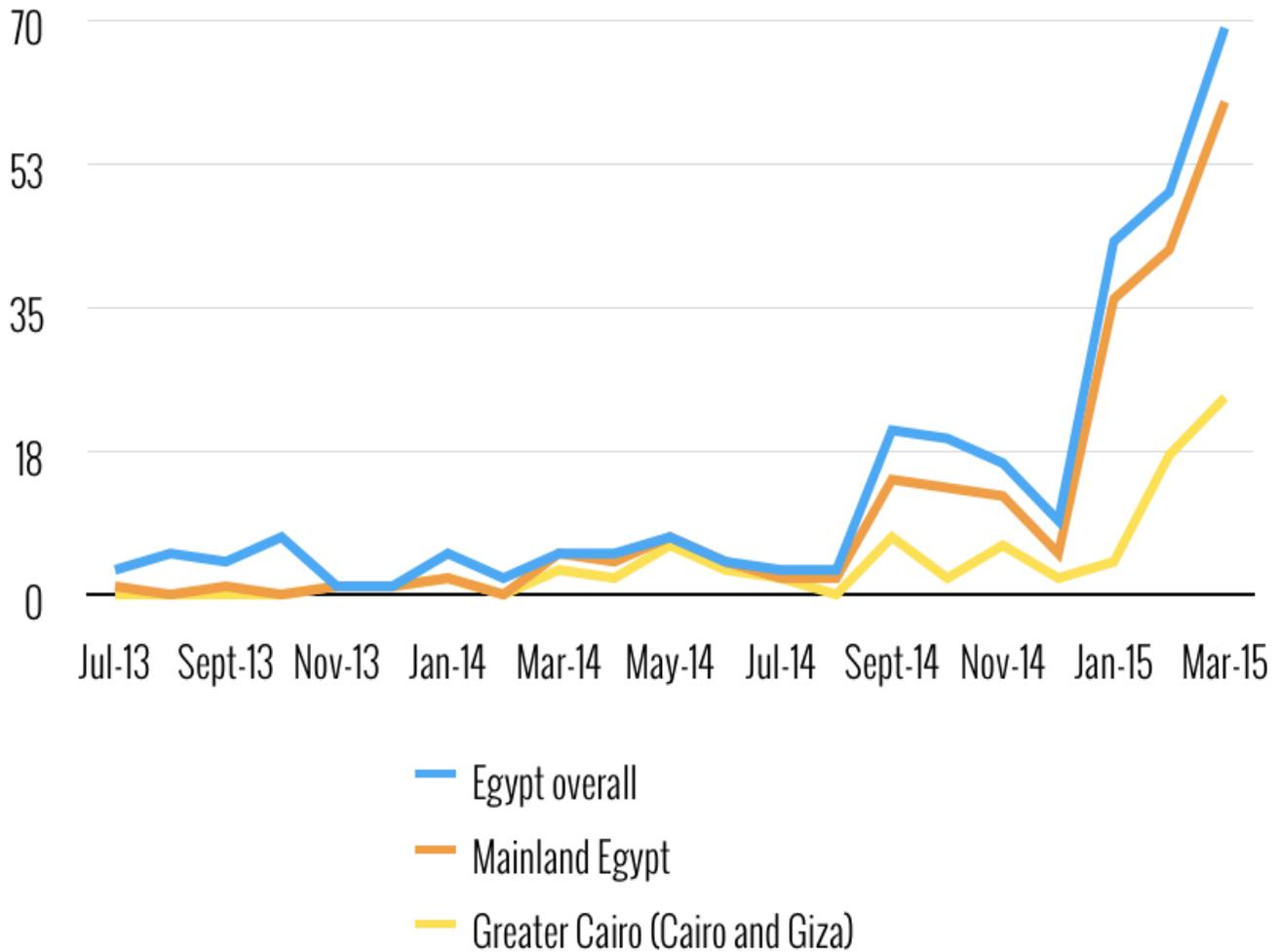
Figure 2: Attacks on Economic/Property Targets



Reported improvised explosive device (IED) attacks also increased, from 49 in February to 69 in March. The attacks primarily occurred in mainland Egypt (60 reported attacks) with a high number (24 reported attacks) in greater Cairo (Figure 3).

Summary

Figure 3: IED Attacks through March 2015



While there were continued discrepancies between official and news media reports, **counter-terror operations increased from February**; 255 operations were reported overall, 161 of which were reported by official government spokespeople.

A reported **1,841 alleged terrorists were arrested** in March 2015, including **1,223 alleged members of the Muslim Brotherhood** (Figures 12 and 13).

This briefing highlights developments in terror groups and state security, 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. Figures from previous months' reports are constantly reviewed and revised for further accuracy. For more information on the project's methodology, please see Appendix A of the [Egypt Security: Threat and Response](#) report.

Terror Groups Notable Developments:

(Allied) Popular Alliance Movement

The Allied Popular Resistance Movement (APRM) continued to carry out attacks throughout March. 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 (For more information, see TIMEP’s profile here: [Allied Popular Resistance Movement](#).)

While the group claimed dozens of activities via social media, at least **32 of these amounted to distinct premeditated attacks on determined targets** (other activities included spontaneous roadblocks or similar acts). The attacks were claimed in 12 provinces across Egypt, with a high concentration of claimed attacks in Fayoum (11 total: see Figure 4).

Figure 4: A Map of All APRM Attacks in Egypt in March



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.

Terror Groups Notable Developments:

These attacks included five arson attacks, 19 IED attacks, six shootings, an armed attack on a police station in Fayoum, and a grenade attack on a police station in Giza that could not be corroborated via any independent reports.

The group **focused efforts around the time of the Egyptian Economic Development Conference**, proclaiming its intentions in a statement on March 9 **to target corporations supporting the “coup”** (military ouster of former President Muhammad Morsi), explicitly naming Mobinil, Emirates NBD bank, and KFC.³

The group also carried out several attacks in retaliation for the [execution of Mahmoud Ramadan](#), the first person to be executed after highly publicized [mass death sentences](#) were handed down throughout 2014. (Ramadan’s charges were related to the murder of a Morsi critic in July 2013, when a mob pushed the young man off of a terrace to his death.)

[Wilayit Sinai \(WS\)](#) - Formerly Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis

On March 24, WS published a statement of its full activities in the month of March. These included six attacks:⁴

- The group claimed to have killed an officer with sniper fire on *Saturday, March 7*, in south Rafah.
- On *Monday, March 9*, three security officials were killed when WS detonated an IED, destroying their vehicle west of Sheikh Zuweid. The military issued a [press release](#) to offer condolences.
- On *Tuesday, March 10*, [one officer was killed and three conscripts were injured](#) after WS targeted an armored vehicle by setting up a fake checkpoint and detonated an IED.
- Also on *Tuesday, March 10*, WS carried out a [highly coordinated attack on a military compound in Arish](#). They drove a water tanker laden with a reported “10 tons” of explosives into the compound. While [the military spokesperson confirmed five deaths](#) in what it described as “clashes,” WS claimed that “tens” of security forces were killed in the attack.
- On *Thursday, March 12*:
 - WS claimed an IED attack on a military Humvee that injured an unknown number of soldiers on the airport road to Arish.
 - WS claimed an arson attack on a military fuel tank on the outskirts of Sheikh Zuweid.
- On *Sunday, March 18*, WS publicized the **seizure of an engine for an American-made M60 Patton tank from the Egyptian military**. While WS has not used tanks in its attacks previously, [footage from the November 2014 “Sawlat” video](#) depicts its members atop what appears to be an M60 Patton tank captured in the October 24 attack; it is possible the engine may be intended to be used for this tank, or that the group would like to suggest that is its intended use. The military has not responded formally, either to the initial capture of the tank or of the engine.

³ While APRM rarely explicitly claims attacks on KFC branches, the chain has been increasingly targeted since the beginning of 2015 and the movement often refers to it in their social media posts. For more insight into the targeting of KFC specifically, see Mokhtar Awad and Samuel Tadros [“Allah versus KFC”](#) (Foreign Policy).

⁴ These entries represent claims from Wilayat Sinai’s official media sources. Where independent reports or security responses corroborate or conflict with these accounts, these are noted or included as reference links.

Terror Groups' Notable Developments:

The group departed from its usual social media posts about attacks and other organizational activities to publish a photo series on *March 25*—entitled “Spring in the Sinai”—**depicting blossoming desert flowers to celebrate the coming of the spring season.**

On *March 13*, WS published a video of a member sitting in a field and offering “missives” encouraging disaffected Egyptians to join the cause.

Earlier in the month, the group published pictures of alleged **Egyptian military air strikes in North Sinai that destroyed homes and killed civilians**, including an elderly man in a wheelchair. One photo shows a helicopter strike, while another shows a child holding a portion of debris, with a close-up shot displaying identifying markings of a fin designed for use on a Mark-81 bomb.⁵ While this bomb is designed for low-altitude use, TIMEP’s research suggests helicopters do not typically drop unguided ordnance, casting doubt on the connection between the photos.

On the *first of the month*, WS had published a **series of photos depicting what it termed a “military parade:” at least a dozen WS technicals** (improvised fighting vehicles) and at least 40 fighters, some carrying rocket-propelled grenade launchers, man-portable air-defense systems, and mounted machine guns. The convoy was shown traveling unmolested near an urban area during daylight hours, and while its location could not be verified, the video challenges security reports indicating that the group’s strength has diminished considerably and that [security forces have regained control of North Sinai](#) (security officials issued no formal response to the video).

Ajnad Misr

Ajnad Misr claimed [only one attack](#) in March, a **March 28 attack on Cairo University that injured eight people**—four police officers and four civilians.

The group publicized the attack in a video entitled “The Roar of Explosives.” The video also showed a compilation of footage of previous attacks (a [December 4](#) attack at Ain Shams University, a [January 6](#) attack that killed one policeman, a [January 22](#) attack in Heliopolis, a [January 23](#) attack in Alf Maksan, a [January 25 attack](#) in Heliopolis, and a [February 13 attack](#) at Ain Shams).

⁵ The Mark-81 bomb, or MK-81, is an older general purpose bomb previously manufactured in the United States (its manufacture has been discontinued).

Terror Attacks Trend Report:

The number of reported terror attacks remained high from February 2015 to March 2015. **March saw 107 reported attacks**, bringing the total for the first quarter of 2015 (331 attacks) only 22 shy of the number of reported attacks in the entire year of 2014 (353 attacks) (Figure 5).

Reported attacks continued to occur and increase in new areas, moving away from a previous trend of a majority of attacks occurring in North Sinai. In March 2015, **attacks were reported in 21 of 27 provinces** (Figure 1).

Attacks in Fayoum and Alexandria continued at a much higher rate, with 11 attacks in Alexandria and 19 attacks reported in Fayoum in March 2015; in contrast, these provinces saw a total of 15 and 7 attacks total in 2014, respectively (Figure 6).

Figure 5: Number of Attacks Countrywide

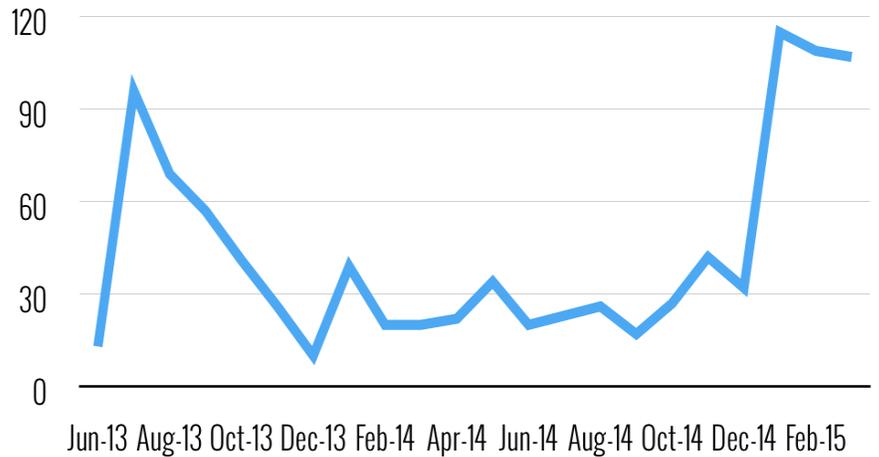
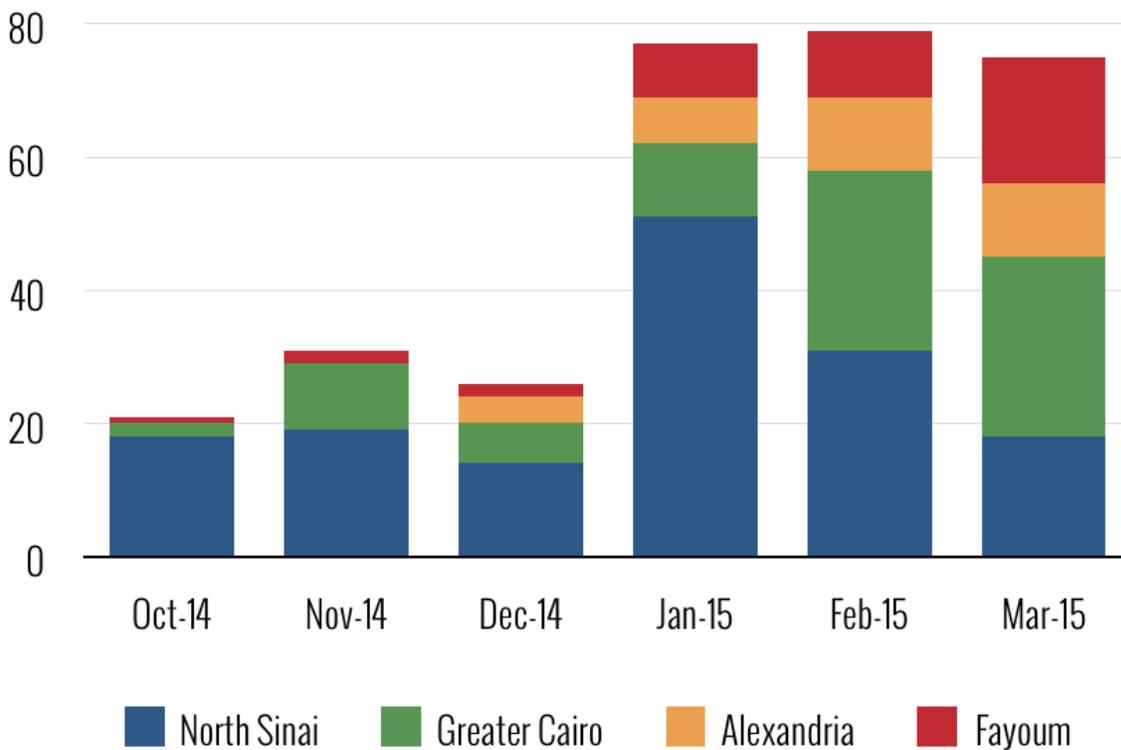


Figure 6: Number of Attacks in Key Areas



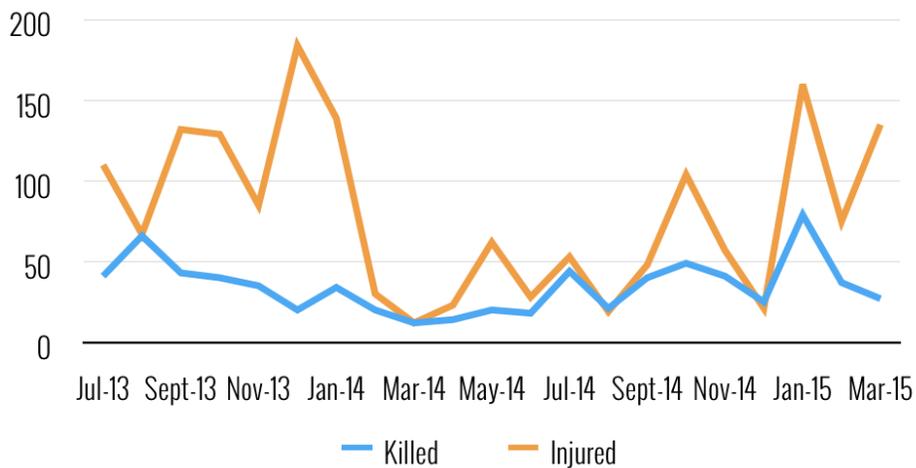
Terror Attacks Trend Report:

Attacks in **North Sinai** accounted for the lowest share of total attacks in at least five years, with only 17% of attacks occurring in the province (19 out of 107; see Figure 6).

The number of reported deaths in attacks continued to decrease, with the number of deaths below average for the year (27 reported deaths versus a monthly average of 32 in the year to April 1), likely due to the absence of any large-scale attacks during the month (Figure 7).

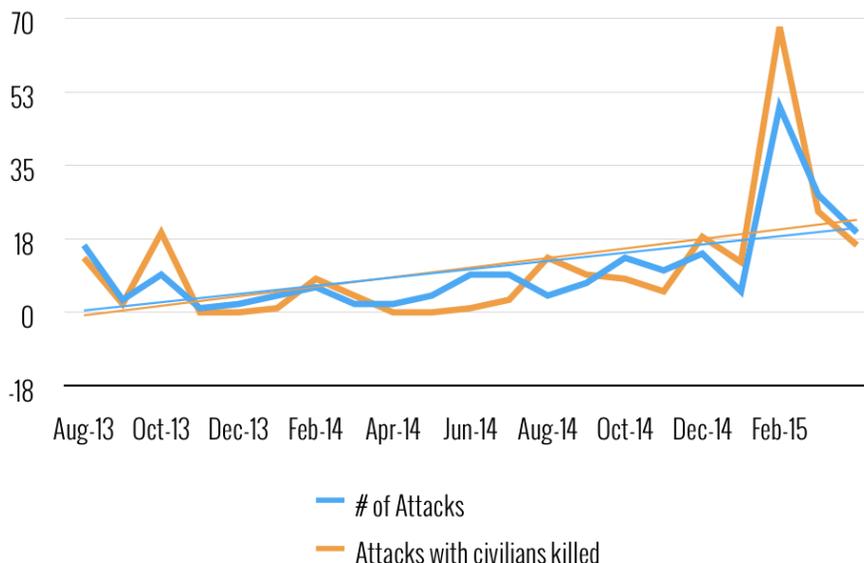
Injuries increased significantly from 75 reported in February to 135 reported in March (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Number of Deaths in Attacks



Attacks with **civilian casualties decreased** from a high point in January 2015, but still contributed to an **overall trend of increased civilian casualties** in attacks over past years. In March 2015, 19 attacks occurred on civilian targets or where civilians were killed; 16 individuals were killed in these attacks (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Attacks with Civilian Casualties



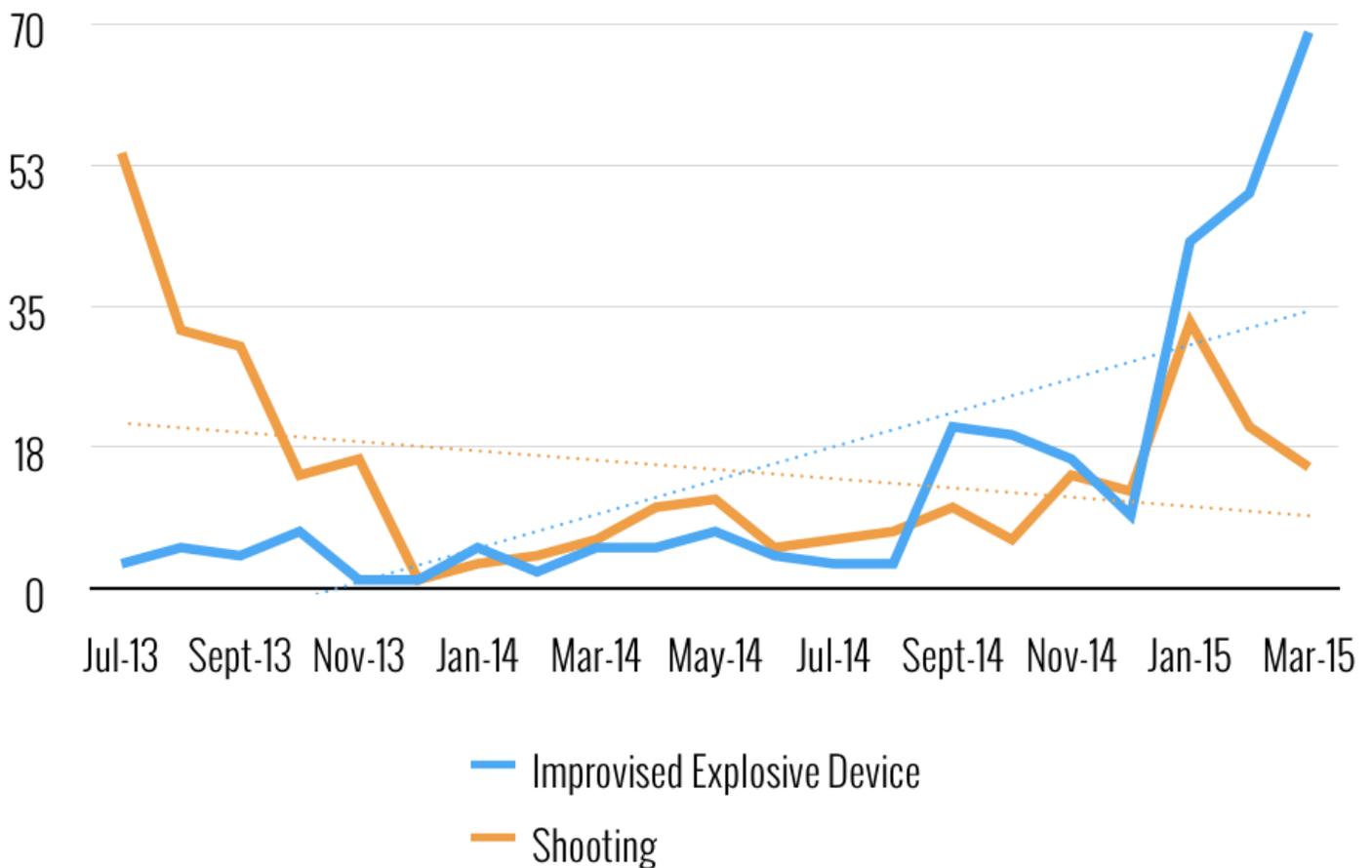
Terror Attacks Trend Report:

March 2015 saw a significant increase in a **growing trend in the use of IEDs**, with 69 IED attacks in March. This trend was further pronounced in the percentage share of overall attacks. **IED attacks accounted for 65% of all reported attacks** in March 2015 (Figures 3, 9, and 10).

This trend was particularly due to the increase in IED attacks outside of North Sinai, with a continued increase in attacks in greater Cairo (Figure 3).

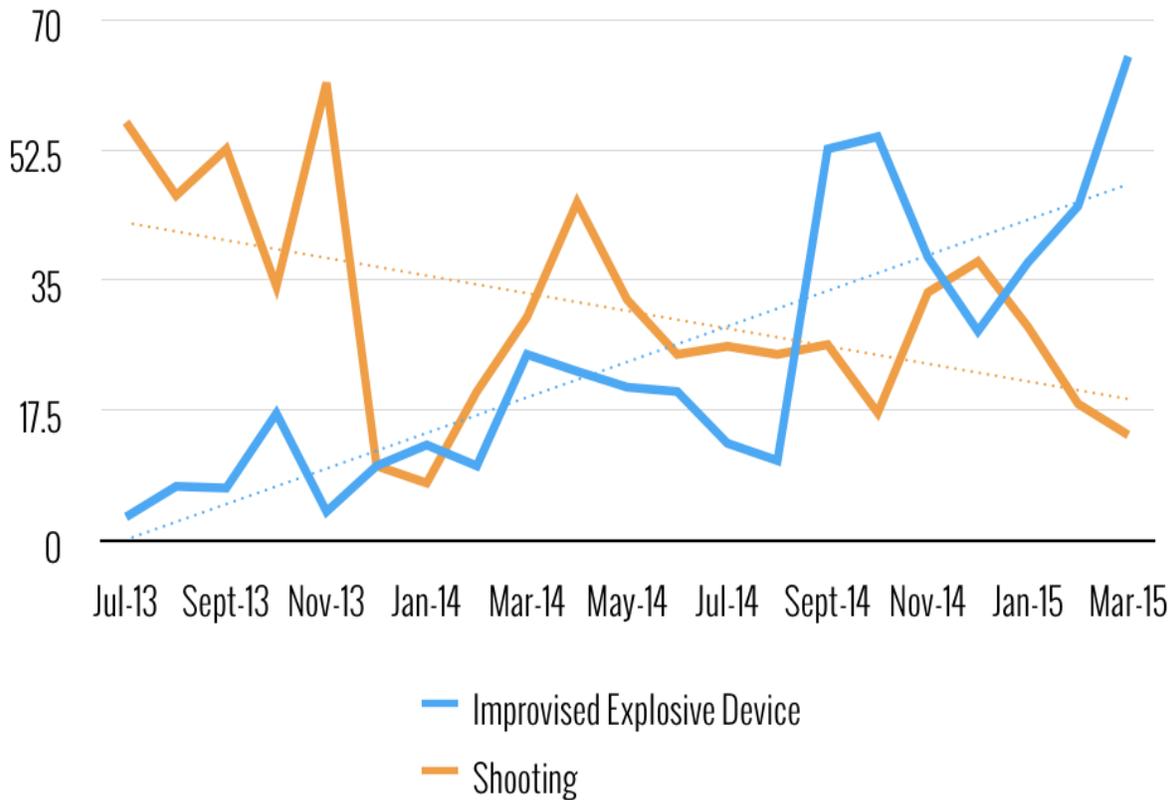
Small arms attacks (targeted shootings in particular) continued to decrease, with only 15 targeted shootings reported (Figures 9 and 10).

Figure 9: Trends in Types of Attacks (by Number of Attacks)



Terror Attacks Trend Report:

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



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

- **Transportation:** three attacks on rail transportation and one on a port
- **Telecommunications:** Thirteen total attacks on telecommunications targets included six attacks on mobile phone stores (Mobinil and Vodaphone), five attacks on communications towers (Mobinil and Etisalat), an attack on Mobinil headquarters, and an attack on a television transmission station in Beni Suef.
- **Banks:** Five bank branches were attacked, including Barclays, National Bank of Egypt, HSBC, Emirates NBD, and the American Commercial Bank.
- **Utilities Infrastructure:** Four attacks on electricity targets and one on a gas target occurred.
- **Culture and tourism:** One attack occurred near UNESCO in Maadi (Cairo) and an IED attack was carried out on the Helnan Auberge in Fayoum (no injuries were reported).
- **Shopping centers:** A bomb exploded in front of the Grand Mall in Maadi (no injuries were reported) and one person was killed and five wounded when a bomb detonated outside of a Carrefour in Alexandria.

State Security Report:

On March 31, the **White House announced major changes in its military assistance relationship**⁶ with Egypt, particularly creating new or using existing flexibility to allow for a more strategic assistance to combat the threat of terrorism. These changes included:

- **The release of FY14 and FY15 aid money**, which had been held to certify conditions placed on the aid.⁷
- **The release of defense articles**, including 12 F-16 aircraft, 20 Harpoon missiles, and up to 125 M1A1 Abrams tanks. (While it is doubtful that the aircraft or Harpoon missiles would be used in domestic counter-terror operations, it is possible that the Abrams tanks could be used in operations in the Sinai.)
- **The continued request of annual \$1.3 billion in foreign military financing (FMF)**, making Egypt the second largest recipient of U.S. FMF funds worldwide (after Israel).
- **The end of cash flow financing** in 2018, discontinuing Egypt’s ability to purchase equipment on credit and giving the U.S. more flexibility to tailor assistance to conditions and needs on the ground.
- **Explicit designation of FMF funds** beginning in 2018, and focusing on four key areas—counter-terrorism, border security, maritime security, and Sinai security, to promote shared interests and particularly the “defeat of terrorist organizations.”

President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi welcomed the announcement, indicating that the decision signaled support for shared U.S.-Egyptian objectives of combatting terrorism and securing the Sinai Peninsula.

TIMEP **recognized the need to adjust the security assistance relationship** to become more flexible in supporting Egypt’s need to combat domestic security threats, while also expressing the hope that these changes would not overshadow **urgent concerns about ongoing rights’ abuses and the need for democratic reform**. (See the full TIMEP press release here: [White House Announces Major Changes in Aid Relationship with Egypt, Resumption of Military Aid](#).)

On March 5, Sisi [announced a reshuffle of his cabinet](#), a move that saw **former Minister of the Interior Mohamed Ibrahim relieved of his position**. In keeping with longstanding practice with fired senior security officials, Ibrahim was immediately appointed to a newly created post of Security Adviser to the Prime Minister. The reassignment does not come with any formal command or institutional duties.

As Ibrahim’s replacement, Major General **Magdy Abdel Ghaffar was assigned to the position of Minister of the Interior (Moi)**, the first interior minister in four years who was not a Central Security Forces officer. Abdel Ghaffar was an officer in Egyptian Homeland Security (EHS) (also translated as National Security), which is the successor body to the former State Security Investigations Service. Abdel Ghaffar was appointed as the head of EHS and tasked with reforming the SSIS after the 2011 revolution.

After his appointment as minister, Abdel Ghaffar moved aggressively to bring change to the ministry, [replacing twenty assistant ministers](#) in his first days on the job.

6 See the full comment from the National Security Council [here](#).

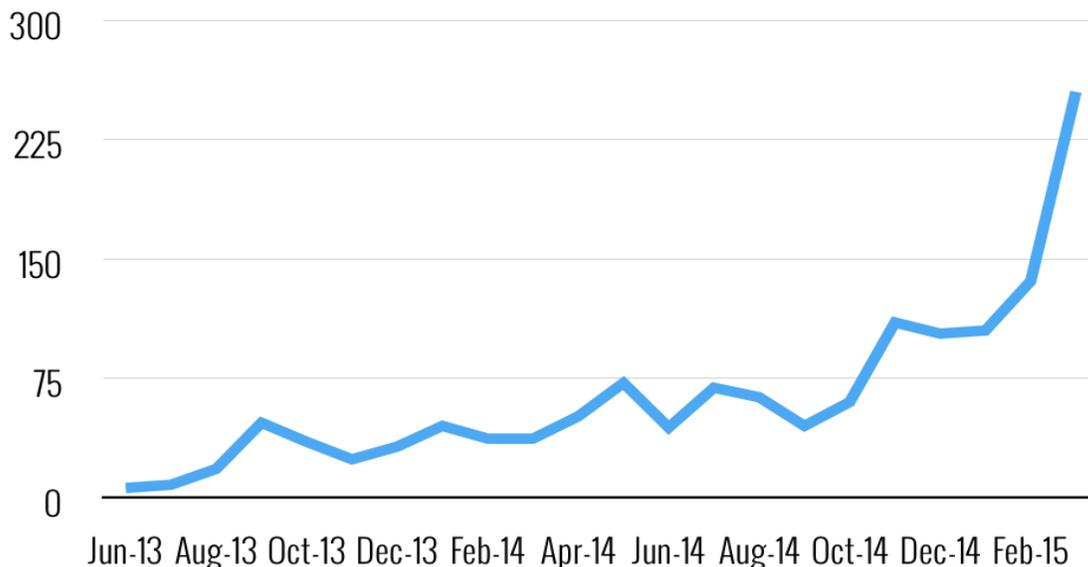
7 While the Administration did not certify that Egypt was making progress in democratic transition, the aid was released based on the condition that it was important to U.S. national security.

Counter-terror Operations Trend Report:

March saw **continued discrepancy between news media and official reporting** on counter-terror operations. While many reports on counter-terror activities reference statements from (most often unnamed) security officials, official reports on activities (published on the Ministry of Interior or military spokesperson Facebook pages) often did not correspond with these.⁸ (For example, on March 16, state-owned Al-Ahram reported that [military air strikes in North Sinai had killed 11 terrorists south of Sheikh Zuweid](#); [Youm7 reported that nine were killed](#) in air strikes; and [the military reported that 25 were killed in this area during the week](#).)

Thus, while **255 counter-terror activities were reported overall in the month**, official reports accounted for only 161 of these. These figures represented an increase in both overall reported counter-terror activities, as well as official state-reported counter-terror activities (Figure 11).⁹

Figure 11: Number of Operations Countrywide



After a decrease in both overall reported arrests of “terrorists”¹⁰ as well as arrests of alleged Muslim Brotherhood members in February, arrests continued to increase in March. A reported **1,841 alleged terrorists were arrested** in March 2015 (1,475 based on official state media); of these, **1,223 were alleged members of the Muslim Brotherhood** (Figures 12 and 13).

Official state media reported that **161 terrorists were killed in counter-terror operations**, bringing the total for 2015 to 356.

⁸ In order to account for double-posting information on operations, TIMEP reviews each official report and cross-checks with news media reporting.

⁹ February 2015 figures have been revised from ESW Monthly Briefing 5 to account for all reported operations (from 96 to 136 operations); ESW Monthly Briefing 5 relied only on figures from official reports.

¹⁰ 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.

Counter-terror Operations Trend Report:

Figure 12: Number of Arrests in Counter-terror Operations Countrywide

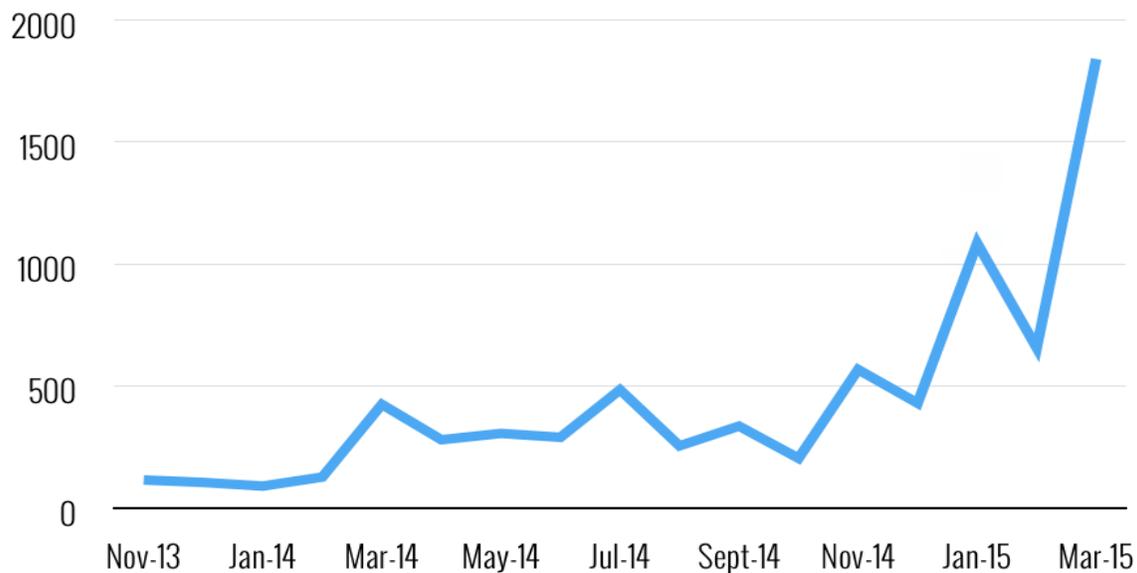
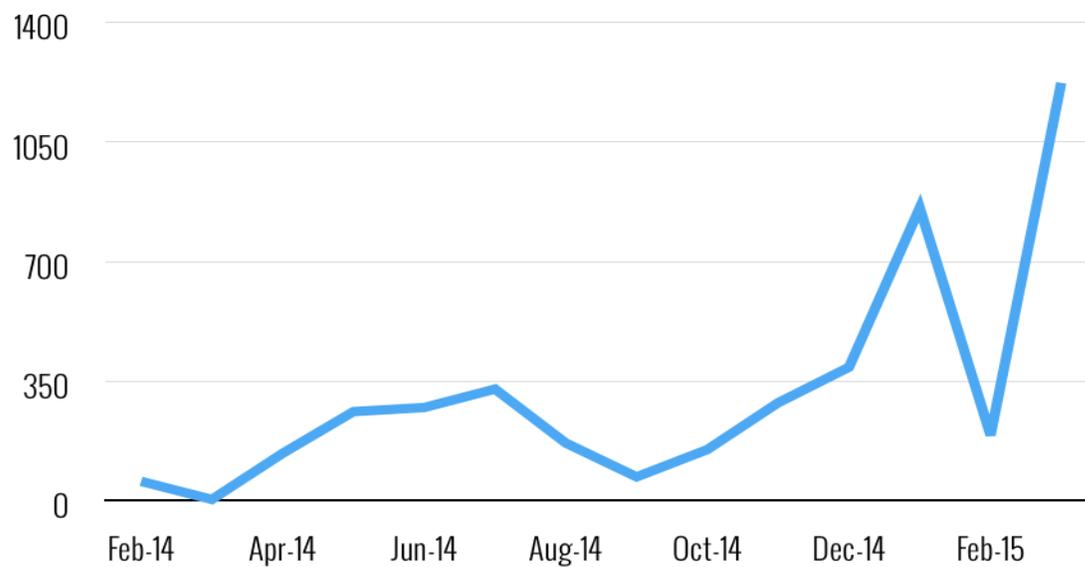


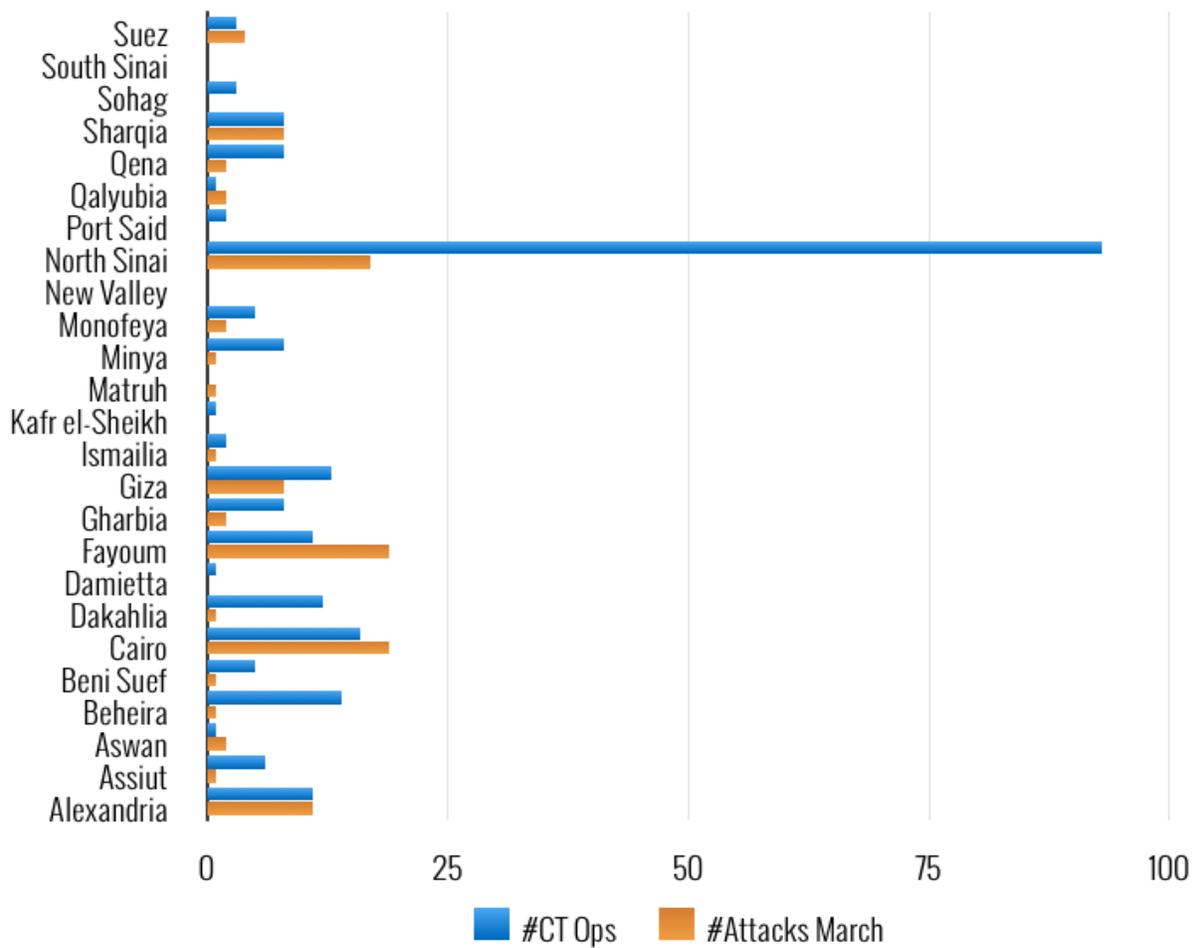
Figure 13: Arrest of Alleged Muslim Brotherhood members



Counter-terror Operations Trend Report:

By far, the **largest number of counter-terror operations took place in North Sinai** (93 reported operations; see Figure 14).

Figure 14: Terror Attacks and Counter-terror Operations by Province



The Mol claimed to have [arrested the perpetrators of the March 2 Supreme Court bombings](#) and **published videotaped confessions that call into question adherence to due process rights**, guaranteed under Article 96 of Egypt’s constitution. Additionally, the Mol described the findings of an investigation that drew connections between the Muslim Brotherhood, Afnad Misr, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, Revolutionary Punishment, and the [Black Bloc](#) (among others) in a conspiracy to carry out the attacks; no evidence has been released and no previous evidence suggests that these groups coordinate any activities.