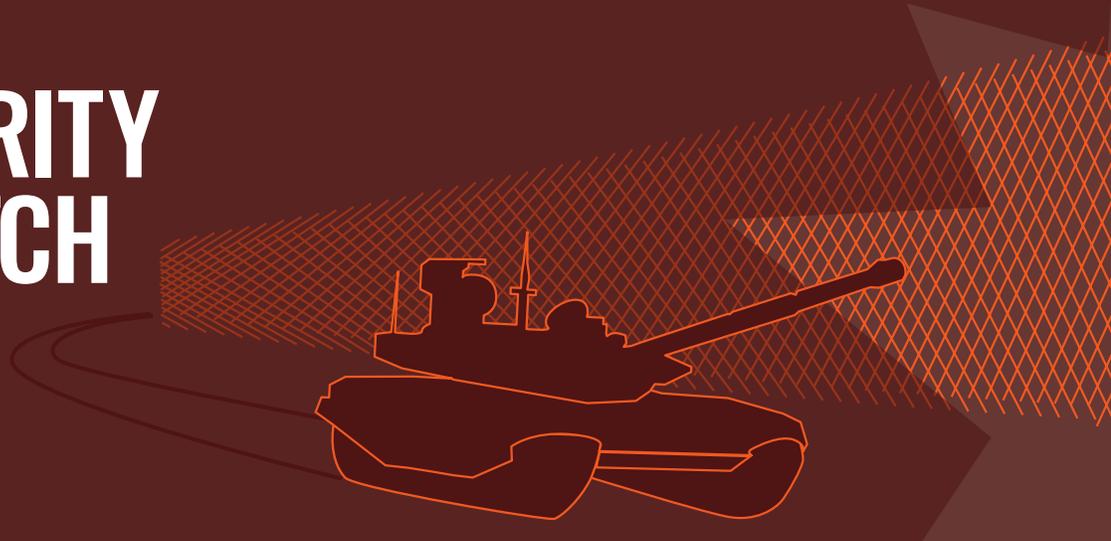




EGYPT SECURITY WATCH



WEEK IN BRIEF DECEMBER 10–17, 2018

Summary

- On December 16, an army captain and sergeant were reported to have been killed when an improvised explosive device (IED) detonated during a counter-terrorism raid in central Sinai. The Islamic State claimed the attack, stating it had lured them into an ambush.
- On December 14, the Islamic State's Amaq channel released a statement and video detailing and depicting the beheading of two men the group accused of working with pro-state tribal militias in North Sinai.
- The Egyptian army spokesman issued the 30th statement on Comprehensive Operation Sinai, a military campaign that has been ongoing in the province since February this year. The statement listed the deaths of 27 alleged jihadist militants in operations, and the arrest of 403 other individuals it described as “criminals,” though no information was provided on possible charges related.

IED Kills Egyptian Military Sergeant and Captain

On December 16, a captain and a sergeant in the Egyptian Armed Forces were reportedly killed by an explosion during an attempted raid on a militant stronghold in central Sinai. Wilayat Sinai claimed the attack the next day, stating that they had lured the security forces into an ambush before killing two and injuring 20 of them. No official statements have been made regarding the incident, nor has any information surfaced about total casualties. Captain Amr Farid Abdel Zaher and Sergeant Sharif Ghanem would represent the 45th and 46th members of security forces to be killed this year by Wilayat Sinai.

The activity marks the 90th claimed Wilayat Sinai attack this year, compared to 348 attacks by this date last year, as well as 49 deaths reported in total, compared to 704 by this date last year.

Three Construction Workers Kidnapped in Central Sinai

Three construction workers employed by the armed forces were reported to have been kidnapped over the weekend by militants in Hassana, in central Sinai, when their truck was stopped while it was transporting iron. Two of the captives were released and the status of the third worker remains unknown.

The event marks a pattern of attacks on construction workers: In a prior kidnapping in the middle of November 2018, unidentified militants kidnapped the owner and four employees of a construction company engaged in similar business with the Egyptian military near Bir al-Abd. The four workers were released, but the fate of the business owner, Mahmoud Hamdi al-Qalagi, remains unknown.

Wilayat Sinai Releases Video of Beheading of Tribal Militiamen

On December 14, the Islamic State's Amaq channel announced the execution of two militiamen who had been allegedly working with the Egyptian army south of Rafah, located near the border with Gaza. The announcement was accompanied by a video of the men's beheading; in the video, the men, both of whom are from the Rafah area, provide testimonials stating that they joined the militias to fight the Islamic State in the province.

Executions of tribal militiamen in North Sinai have been on the rise as tribal militias have become more involved in the conflict in recent years. To date, Wilayat Sinai has reported 11 deaths of tribal militiamen, though this incident marks the first direct claim of responsibility of a tribal execution in 2018 (though other executions of alleged pro-government militiamen or collaborators have been reported this year in North Sinai, they were not claimed by Wilayat Sinai). To learn more about the Sinai tribes' involvement in the conflict, read TIMEP's "Sinai Tribes in Egypt's War on Terror" brief.

Islamic State Magazine Reports Seven Attacks, Killing Nine, in North Sinai

The Islamic State's 160th issue of its *al-Naba* magazine reported seven operations from its Wilayat Sinai fighters, resulting in nine deaths. It is unclear whether the execution of the militiamen were included in these figures.

These operations included a sniper attack near Arish on December 10.

Egypt Army Spokesman Releases Statement on Comprehensive Operation Sinai

On December 12, the Egyptian army spokesman released the 30th statement on Comprehensive Operation Sinai, commonly referred to as Operation Sinai 2018. The statement listed the arrest of 403 individuals for "criminal" activity but did not provide details on the location of arrest or possible charges, as well as the destruction of 344 explosive devices. IEDs are a common weapon, especially in North Sinai, where 365 IED attacks have been reported in the past two years.

The statement listed the deaths of 24 alleged militants in operations, bringing the total of deaths reported in the campaign, which began in February and was slated to last only a few months, to 465. The statement also reported air strikes in the Western Desert, which killed three individuals and destroyed 61 vehicles and was accompanied by still images from a gun camera depicting the strikes.

U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Visits Egypt

On December 12, Interior Minister Mahmoud Tawfiq hosted U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen as part of her visit to Egypt. The two spoke about joint cooperation in security endeavors and current security developments on a domestic and transnational level. According to Egyptian media, Nielsen praised Egyptian efforts in combating terrorism and illegal migration, and

she offered assistance on behalf of the Department of Homeland Security in terms of technical support and cooperation.

The day prior, Nielsen met with Minister of Defense Muhammad Ahmed Zaki. The two discussed boosting cooperation in the fields of security, information exchange, and combating international crime as well as regional issues of mutual concern.

Egypt Hosts Joint Training Exercises

On December 13, Egypt concluded counter-terrorism and hostage rescue training exercises with the militaries of Nigeria, Sudan, and Burkina Faso. The military announced these exercises as part of its ongoing efforts to strengthen inter-Sahelian and Saharan cooperation to counter terror.

On December 11, Egypt announced its fourth Aqaba joint training exercises with Jordan. The exercise included both land and naval activities.



The Tahrir Institute
for Middle East Policy

1140 Connecticut Ave NW Suite 505
Washington, DC 20036
office 202 969 3343
fax 202 480 2178
timep.org

EGYPT **SECURITY**
 **WATCH**

Egypt Security Watch provides the most comprehensive available resource to monitor Egypt's security situation, with a dataset that includes all instances of violence and state operations, state actor and terror group profiles, and expert analyses.