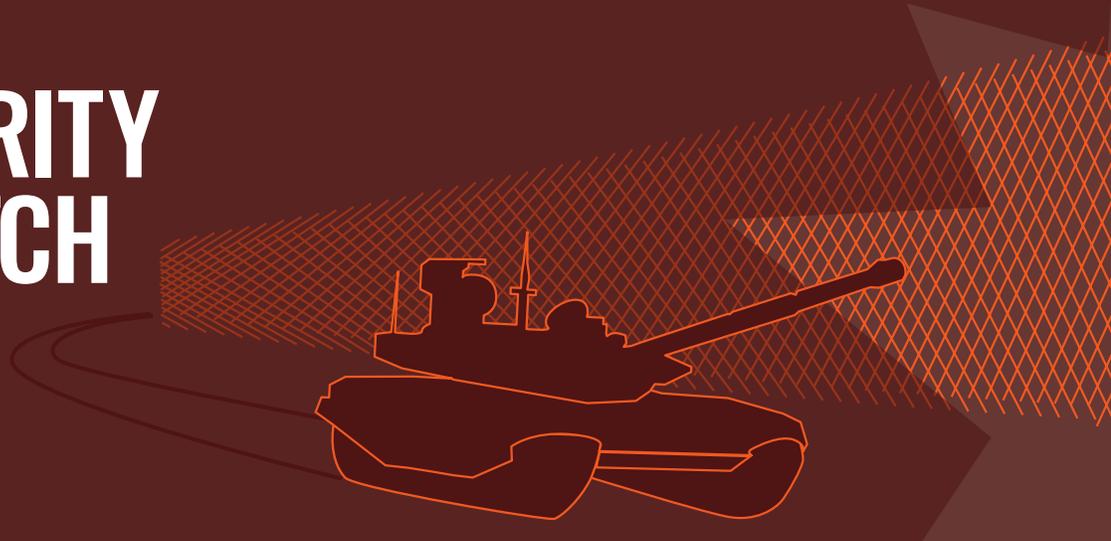




EGYPT SECURITY WATCH



WEEK IN BRIEF FEBRUARY 16–22, 2019

Summary

- After allegedly planting two improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in Giza Square on February 15, an individual named al-Hassan Abdullah detonated an IED in al-Darb al-Ahmar on February 18, killing three policemen.
- In their largest attack yet this year, Wilayat Sinai claimed a raid on a checkpoint near the Arish airport, and reported that 15 soldiers were killed or wounded.
- Reports of airstrikes from official and unofficial sources reported several ground and air counter-terror operations throughout North Sinai.
- On February 14, Al-Naba, the Islamic State's newsletter, profiled Abdel Malik al-Dagestani, who was killed in an airstrike after joining Wilayat Sinai.
- Egypt **executed** nine men accused in the Hisham Barakat assassination case, amid concerns over due process violations.

Two IED Attacks Reported in Greater Cairo, Wounding Eight and Killing Three

Egypt's Ministry of the Interior said on its Facebook page on February 15 that it had dismantled an IED near the al-Istiqama Mosque in Giza Square, Giza, claiming that it had been planted by the Muslim Brotherhood. Social media reports said that one of the devices detonated while security forces attempted to dismantle it, injuring five.

On February 18, three members of Egypt's security forces were killed and three were wounded in a suicide improvised explosive device (IED) attack in al-Darb al-Ahmar, Cairo. According to the interior ministry, the perpetrator was approached by security personnel as he scouted locations to plant an IED. Once surrounded, the perpetrator detonated his device, killing a member of Egyptian Homeland Security and two police warrant officers.

The perpetrator of both incidents has been identified as al-Hassan Abdullah by state television. *Al-Ahram Weekly*, citing the interior ministry and state-affiliated commentators, tied him to Hassm, Revolutionary Punishment, and Wilayat Sinai, though none of the groups claimed the attempted attacks. Authorities later found IED-making materials in the suspect's home. Tahrir News reported that Abdullah holds American citizenship, though that claim has not been repeated in other outlets.

Hassm and the Islamic State have both been active in Egypt's mainland in 2019. On January 25, Hassm claimed responsibility for a failed IED attack in Giza in which explosives prematurely detonated when the car transporting them collided with another car. On February 5, the Islamic State claimed responsibility for an attack on a checkpoint in Egypt's New Valley governorate. Though unspecified in the claim, four policemen were reportedly wounded.

Wilayat Sinai Claims Raid Killing 15, West of Arish

Wilayat Sinai claimed a coordinated assault on Arish's Gouda-3 checkpoint on February 17. The Egyptian army spokesman framed the incident as a thwarted attack, citing seven Wilayat Sinai casualties. Wilayat Sinai also claimed victory and distributed photographs of the operation. The attack represents Wilayat Sinai's most lethal of its 26 claimed attacks in 2019. The group last targeted a military installation in a coordinated attack on December 16 that resulted in 20 casualties, and has consistently maintained operational activity since 2014.

On February 18, Wilayat Sinai also claimed a sniper attack near Sheikh Zuweid, killing a soldier and wounding another.

Counterterrorism Operations Conducted Throughout North Sinai

On February 20, the Egyptian military spokesman released an update to operations in Sinai. The statement said that the Egyptian air force destroyed seven hideouts, killed eight militants, and destroyed two vehicle-borne IEDs. Mada Masr reported that security forces limited access to Rafah and Sheikh Zuweid and conducted airstrikes throughout the area.

On February 19, airstrikes were reported throughout Arish and Sheikh Zuweid and two ground operations reportedly killed 16 alleged militants. Twitter reports said that security forces foiled a Wilayat Sinai attack on Medan checkpoint, west of Arish, the same day.

Islamic State Eulogizes Russian Wilayat Sinai Fighter

The Islamic State's weekly electronic newsletter, al-Naba, eulogized Abdel Malik al-Dagestani, who was killed in an airstrike after joining Wilayat Sinai. The eulogy was dated February 14, but al-Naba did not specify when the airstrike occurred or when al-Dagestani (a *kunya* or nom du guerre) joined the group. While Russian foreign fighters have been widely reported in the Syrian conflict, al-Dagestani represents the first Russian foreign fighter documented to enter a North African conflict.

Hisham Barakat Assassination Defendants Executed

Nine members of the cell responsible for the assassination of Prosecutor-General Hisham Barakat were executed on February 20. Barakat was assassinated in June 2015 as a car bomb detonated as his motorcade left his neighborhood in Heliopolis, Cairo. Six additional convicts have been executed for other crimes in 2019. Human rights organizations have objected to the executions, citing violations in Egyptian law and due process.



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EGYPT
**SECURITY
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