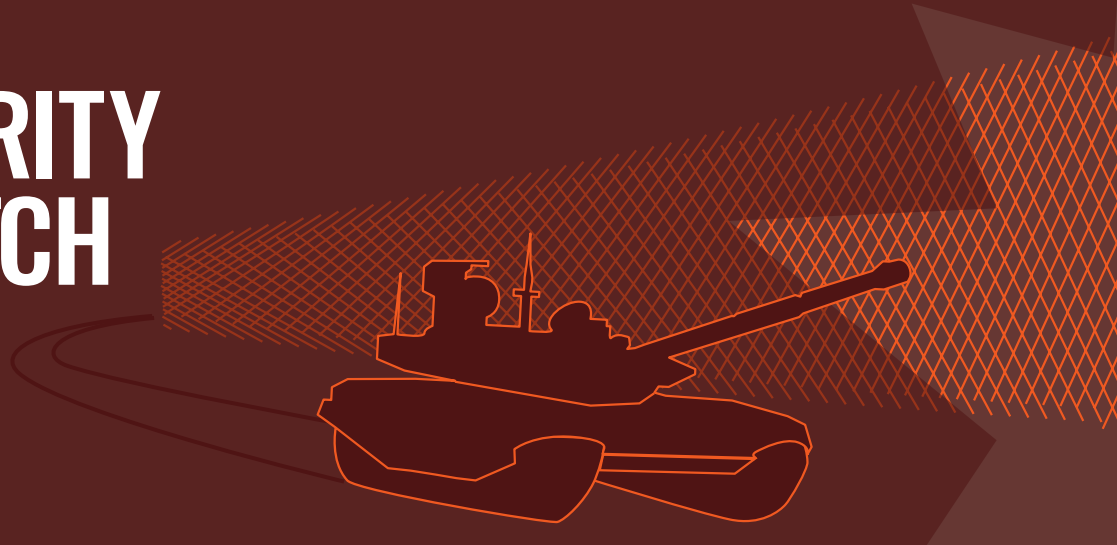




EGYPT SECURITY WATCH



WEEK IN BRIEF MARCH 2-8, 2019

Summary

- On March 7, Egyptian interior ministry forces killed seven alleged Hassm members after intercepting a van transporting explosives.
- On March 7, nine tunnels connecting North Sinai with Gaza were destroyed by counter-terrorism forces and military engineers.
- On March 3, Egyptian and French forces conducted joint training exercises in the northern Mediterranean Sea, southern Red Sea, and an unspecified air base.

Seven Hassm Members Killed in Shootout in Giza

Egypt's Ministry of Interior announced on March 7 that Egyptian police killed seven alleged Hassm members in a a shootout, which began on the Ring Road in Giza. According to the ministry's statement, police set up a checkpoint after receiving a tip that suggested that Hassm operatives planned to plant improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in the area. The ministry reported that as the cell's truck approached the checkpoint, the militants opened fire. The exchange killed three of the militants and wounded a police officer. Interior ministry forces later raided the surviving cell members' apartment in Sixth of October City, killing another four alleged terrorists. Hassm has not released a statement on the incident.

On January 23, another Hassm operation was disrupted when a vehicle carrying explosives prematurely detonated in a traffic collision. The group claimed that the resulting explosion killed or injured 10 members of the Egyptian security forces, but the claim was not corroborated by the government or independent reporting. Hassm's last successful operation came in October 2017, when the group claimed responsibility for detonating an IED outside the Myanmarese embassy in Cairo. Security forces have killed 33 alleged Hassm members since November 2016.

Security Forces Close Nine Tunnel Openings in North Sinai

Egyptian armed forces discovered and destroyed nine tunnel openings connecting North Sinai with the Gaza Strip. Fuel, vehicles, and IED-making materials were found in the tunnels. Smuggling has been a boon to both Wilayat Sinai in North Sinai and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. On February 11, a Hamas officer and an emergency responder died when Egyptian security personnel pumped toxic gas to close a similar smuggling tunnel.

French and Egypt Hold Joint Training Exercises

French and Egyptian naval and air forces participated in joint exercises. The training activities follow a visit from French President Emmanuel Macron in January. Reports mentioned that training on the French-made Rafale jets was a particular focus of the exercises; an Egyptian pilot of a Rafale reportedly died in late January in a training accident. France is the largest exporter of arms to Egypt.



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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.