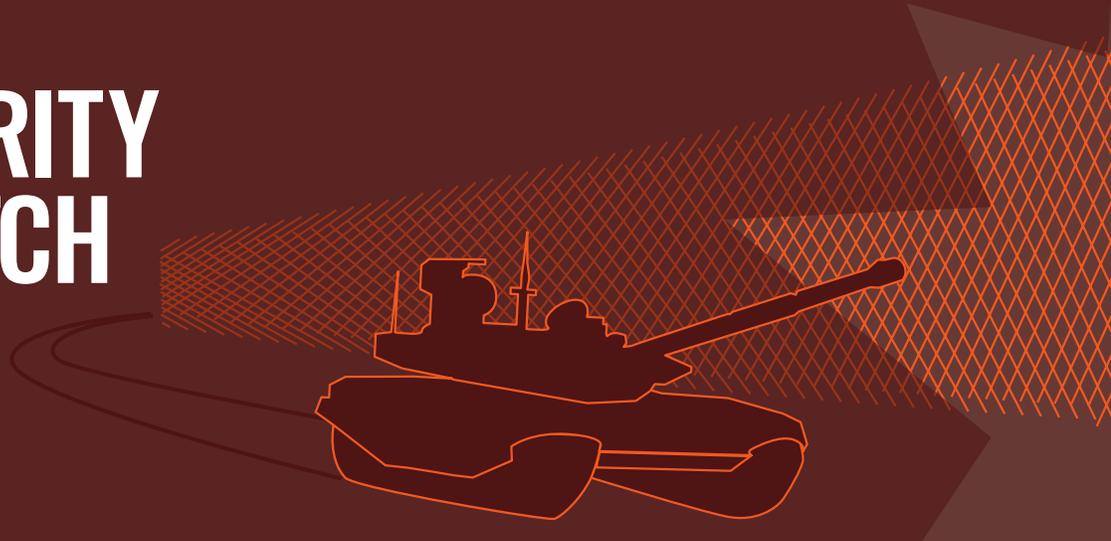




EGYPT SECURITY WATCH



WEEK IN BRIEF MAY 4–10, 2019

Summary

- The Court of Cassation upheld a 2017 sentence from the Giza Criminal Court in which 13 alleged members of Ajnad Masr received the death penalty.
- Egypt received the third of four submarines that it purchased from German company ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems.
- Apache helicopter strikes **targeted** the Jihad Abu Tabl neighborhood south of Arish as the Armed Forces and police **fortified** infrastructure throughout the city.
- Wilayat Sinai claimed two improvised explosive device (IED) attacks in North Sinai.

Court of Cassation Upholds Ajnad Masr Death Sentences

On May 7, Egypt's Court of Cassation rejected an appeal of a 2017 ruling that sentenced 13 individuals convicted of belonging to Ajnad Masr to death, confirming a Giza Criminal Court ruling. The defendants were convicted of killing security personnel, joining an illegal organization, possessing firearms, and contributing to 26 operations conducted by Ajnad Masr between 2013 and 2015. A December 2017 Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights release, which covered the original case in the Giza Criminal Court, noted several due process violations including the forced disappearance of the defendants, premature issuance of arrest warrants, and the detention of defendants in unlawful places. "State officers" were also accused in the report of torturing at least four defendants, and all defendants later recanted their confessions, citing the threat of torture. Without a presidential pardon, the 13 individuals will be executed, continuing a trend of death sentences that are being upheld despite serious concerns over due process violations. Seventeen others in the case received life sentences in prison, and two were sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment.

Ajnad Masr began conducting operations in November 2013 throughout the Greater Cairo area. The group emerged as Egypt's mainland al-Qaeda affiliate, and its salafi-jihadi orientation characterized its affinity with the Sinai-based Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (which would later distance itself from the al-Qaeda network and become an Islamic State province as Wilayat Sinai). In contrast to other salafi-jihadi groups, however, Ajnad Masr did not immediately concern itself with establishing a caliphate. Rather, the group's stated purpose was retribution for those killed by security forces in the aftermath of the July 2013 ouster. The Cairo Court for Urgent Matters labeled the group a terrorist organization in May 2014, and the U.S. State Department designated the group as a foreign terrorist organization in December 2014. Ajnad Masr's operational tempo slowed in April 2015, when their leader, Hammam Muhammad Attiyah was killed by police in a firefight in Cairo. The group's last reported claim of responsibility was in August 2015, when militants attacked a power transformer using an IED in the town of Hehya in Sharqia, causing the transformer to collapse and damaging a fence along a railway.

Construction of Defensive Fortifications Continues in Arish; Airstrikes Target Militants in Jihad Abu Tabl

Mada Masr reported that the armed forces and police fortified infrastructure and reinforced bridges connecting the west and east sides of Arish. The market of al-Khamis and a road which has been frequently used by Wilayat Sinai for exfiltration were also fortified. The website noted that the enhanced security was in response to attacks last week.

Security forces' approach of reinforcing infrastructure in Arish can be contrasted with counter-terrorism efforts in Rafah. A February article in the Islamic State's weekly al-Naba newsletter detailed ongoing efforts to construct a buffer zone around Rafah by clearing an area of 79 square kilometers around the town. Buffer zones are created to aid in IED detection and make the areas they surround more easily defensible, though they have been heavily criticized for the mass displacement, at times forcible, of the area's residents.

Mada Masr reported through local sources that Apache helicopter bombarded the agricultural area of Jihad Abu Tabl south of Arish on April 28. Wilayat Sinai operates with a large degree of freedom in Jihad Abu Tabl's olive groves: Mada Masr has called the area a "terrorist outpost." The report speculated the airstrikes were conducted in advance of the construction efforts undertaken in Arish throughout the week.

German Company Delivers Submarine to Egyptian Navy

ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems delivered the third of four Type 209 diesel-electric submarines to the Egyptian Navy. German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen and Vice Admiral Ahmed Khalid Hassan, commander of the Egyptian Navy, attended a ceremonial demonstration of the submarine in Kiel. The first two of the four Type 209 submarines were delivered in 2016 and 2017 respectively, while the final submarine is expected to be delivered in 2021. In November, it was reported that Egypt ordered four A-200 frigates from ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems.

Wilayat Sinai Claims Two IED Attacks

On May 6, Wilayat Sinai claimed two improvised explosive device (IED) attacks. The first targeted a dismounted patrol near Arish, while the second damaged a military vehicle near Sheikh Zuweid. This remains Wilayat Sinai's preferred attack method: since the beginning of 2019, 37 of Wilayat Sinai's 57 claimed attacks have used IEDs.



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

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**SECURITY
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