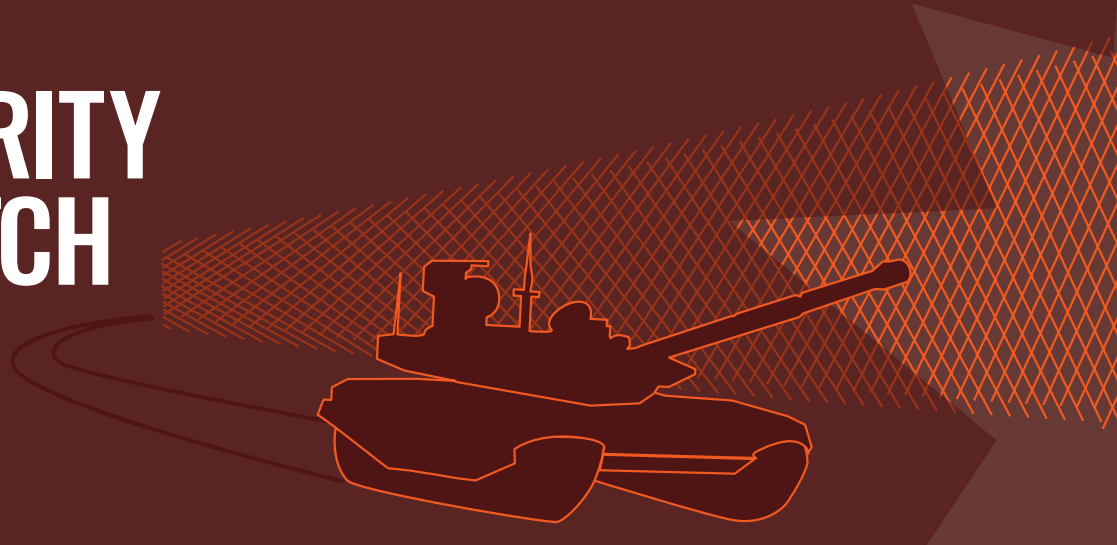




EGYPT SECURITY WATCH



WEEK IN BRIEF MAY 11–17, 2019

Summary

- On May 16, the Armed Forces' General Command issued an update on the Sinai Peninsula, claiming that 47 individuals were killed in counter-terror operations and another 158 arrested over a span of about two months. No details were provided on suspected affiliation or involvement in terror activity for those killed.
- Civilian casualties were reported last week after the military clashed with militants in Sheikh Zuweid. Mada Masr's reporting also implied that a power outage that affected Sheikh Zuweid last week was a result of militant activity.
- The Cairo Criminal Court sentenced two men to death for their role in a 2017 attack on the Mar Mina Coptic Orthodox Church.
- Wilayat Sinai claimed responsibility for two improvised explosive device (IED) attacks in Arish.

The Armed Forces Releases Update On Security Operations

A May 16 statement issued by the Egyptian Armed Forces said that 47 suspected militants had been killed and another 158 were arrested in northern and central Sinai over a span of about two months. The statement also reported that the military had destroyed 29 suspected terrorist hideouts. The update acknowledged that five Egyptian soldiers had been killed in combat during the reporting period. When tallied with the two previous 2019 updates, the Armed Forces have reported a total of 152 suspected militants killed and another 400 arrested in 2019 operations.

Civilians, Infrastructure Reported As Collateral Damage in Sheikh Zuweid

Mada Masr reported that three Sheikh Zuweid residents, including two children, were killed or wounded this week, apparently unintentionally. This is not the first report of such collateral damage. In October 2018, one civilian was killed and another was injured when artillery shelling destroyed a Sheikh Zuweid home. Mada Masr's article on the violence this week cited data from the North Sinai Social Solidarity Directorate that an estimated 621 civilians were killed and another 1,247 were injured from stray bullets and shelling between July 2013 and mid-2017.

In addition to the human costs, clashes with militants disrupted power lines throughout last week in and around Sheikh Zuweid. An electrical tower in nearby Qabr Umayr was reported damaged on May 5 by an official Facebook page. Repair efforts faltered as technicians contended with a fatal accident and threats from militants. By May 9, blackouts continued into daylight hours, forcing Sheikh Zuweid's residents to rely on electric generators.

Cairo Criminal Court Sentences Two Mar Mina Church Attackers to Death

The Cairo Criminal Court sentenced two men to death for their role in a 2017 attack on the Mar Mina Coptic Orthodox Church, which was claimed by the Islamic State. In the operation, one militant opened fire in the sixth-century church and an adjacent Christian shop. Though accounts differ between the government, independent media, and the Islamic State, the attack reportedly killed at least nine people. The attacker, one of the two sentenced to death, was injured as police responded. The other individual to receive the death sentence was sentenced in absentia. Two others were sentenced to life in prison, four were sentenced to 10 years, two were sentenced to three years, and one defendant was acquitted as part of the same verdict.

Last week, the Court of Cassation rejected an appeal and upheld death sentences for 13 individuals convicted of involvement with the terrorist group, Afnah Masr. Egypt's application of the death penalty and executions have been on the rise in recent years amid evidence of due process violations; recently, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights called on Egypt to halt all executions until such violations were addressed.

Wilayat Sinai Claims Two Attacks

Wilayat Sinai claimed two attacks near Arish this week. On May 11, the group claimed an IED attack on a tank near Arish. On May 13, the group announced that it had executed a military spy, operating out of Arish's Malik al-Musamir neighborhood.

In January 2018, Wilayat Sinai made a similar claim of responsibility for an incident in which it executed a military spy in Rafah. In addition to conventional operatives embedded in urban populations, the Armed Forces has also partnered with the Sinai's tribesmen to obtain local intelligence in more rural areas.



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**SECURITY
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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.