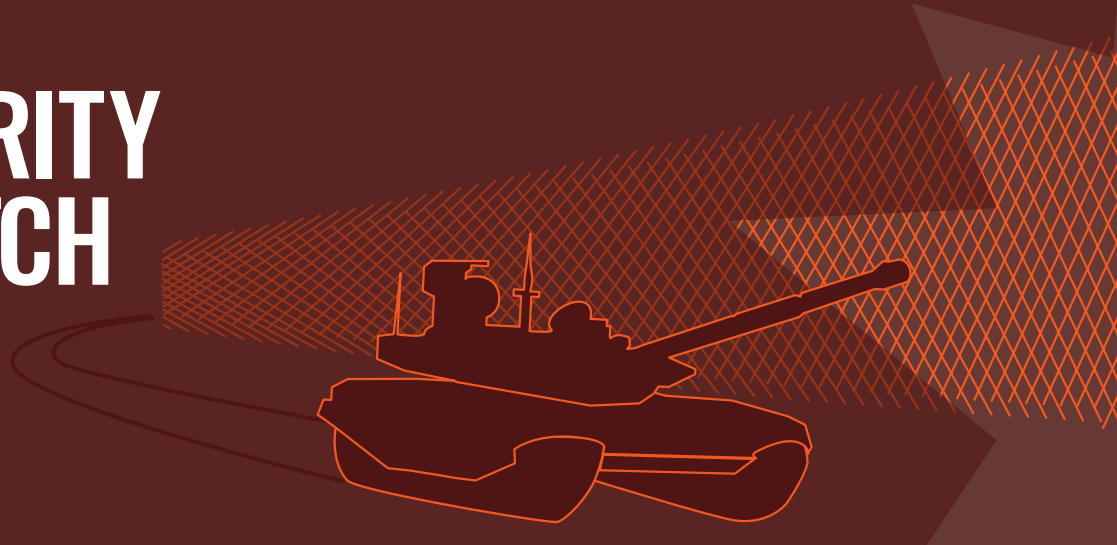




EGYPT SECURITY WATCH



WEEK IN BRIEF JUNE 1-7, 2019

Summary

- Wilayat Sinai claimed responsibility for four attacks this week, including a raid on Arish's Batal-14 checkpoint which the group claims killed 10 members of Egypt's Central Security Forces.
- Egypt's Ministry of Interior announced two counter-terrorism operations on June 5, killing a total of 22 individuals whom the ministry suspected of involvement in the Batal-14 checkpoint raid in Arish.
- The Sinai Tribes Union announced that a Wilayat Sinai leader, Salim Salem Abu Qurei had been killed. Abu Qurei was described as a former head of Wilayat Sinai's *hisbah*, or morality police.
- Mada Masr provided further details on the May 27 Goura shelling. The outlet reported that two airborne missiles hit the residence, killing five.

Wilayat Sinai Claims Four Attacks, Including Raid on Batal-14 Checkpoint

On June 3, Wilayat Sinai claimed responsibility for an improvised explosive device (IED) attack, targeting a group of soldiers near a Rafah checkpoint. The claim of responsibility was the first for Wilayat Sinai to state that the attack was part of a new “campaign of attrition.” On June 4, the group claimed two IED attacks: One in Bir Gifgafa targeted a military vehicle, and another dual-IED attack in Arish targeted two more military vehicles.

On June 5, Wilayat Sinai claimed responsibility for killing 10 members of Egypt’s Central Security Force (CSF) in a multipronged raid on the Batal-14 checkpoint outside Arish. According to the account published by Islamic State media, militants engaged security forces at two other checkpoints with diversionary forces, while a primary contingent targeted the Batal-14 checkpoint. Egyptian media outlets reported that eight CSF special operations members were killed. After the attack, Mada Masr, citing local sources, reported that the Egyptian Air Force conducted airstrikes around Arish and Sheikh Zuweid in response and that portions of Arish’s coastal road were closed.

Wilayat Sinai has demonstrated its ability to target and occasionally overrun remote checkpoints in the past. In February, Wilayat Sinai claimed that it had killed 15 soldiers in a raid on the Gouda-3 checkpoint near the Arish airport—though the Egyptian army spokesman framed the incident as successfully repelled attack, claiming soldiers had killed seven militants. In August 2018, Wilayat Sinai targeted a Arish’s Kilo 17 checkpoint in a successful suicide operation in August, which killed four and injured 10 interior ministry personnel. On June 6, following the June 5 raid, unconfirmed Twitter reports said that clashes were reported at the Batal-13 and Batal-15 checkpoints, with no reported casualties.

Interior Ministry Kills 22 Alleged Militants in Arish Counter-terrorism Raid

Following the June 5 raid on the Batal-14 checkpoint, Egypt’s interior ministry announced that it had killed 22 individuals it described as suspected militants over two raids in Arish. No interior ministry casualties were reported. Two similar interior ministry raids had been reported in May and April. On May 21, the interior ministry announced that it had killed 16 suspected militants in two Arish raids. On April 11, the interior ministry said that it had killed 11 suspected militants in Arish’s Abu Eita neighborhood.

In the past, retaliatory counter-terrorism operations had been reported following the December 2018 and May 2019 IED attacks on tour buses in Giza. Following the December 2018 announcement that interior ministry forces had killed 40 suspected militants in two operations in Giza, families of the deceased said that some of the suspected militants killed had been forcibly disappeared before the operation was announced.

Sinai Tribes Union Announces Death of Wilayat Sinai Hisbah Leader

The Sinai Tribes Union announced that a Wilayat Sinai leader, Salim Salem Abu Qurei, had been killed. Abu Qurei was described as a former head of Wilayat Sinai’s *hisbah*, or religious police, and was alleged by the Sinai Tribes Union to have been responsible for more than 20 operations which resulted in civilian deaths. The announcement did not specify how Abu Qurei was killed or the Sinai Tribes Union’s role in the operation. The Sinai Tribes Union has been active since 2015, when it presented the Egyptian government with counter-insurgency recommendations. The group has since developed into a coordinating body for North Sinai’s tribes and maintains a prolific social-media presence.

More Details Emerge Around May 27 Goura Shelling

Mada Masr reported through local sources that the May 27 shelling in Goura, south of Sheikh Zuweid, resulted from an Egyptian Air Force “double-tap” airstrike. Double-tap airstrikes are designed to concentrate human targets with an initial strike, eliminating them with a second strike. Goura was a known militant stronghold through 2015, as Wilayat Sinai attempted to gain control over Sheikh Zuweid but violence had subsided in recent years. The death toll from the incident has risen to five, after one of the victims succumbed to their injuries on June 1. An estimated 600 civilians have been killed from stray bullets and shelling between July 2013 and mid-2017 in North Sinai, according to the North Sinai Social Solidarity Directorate.



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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