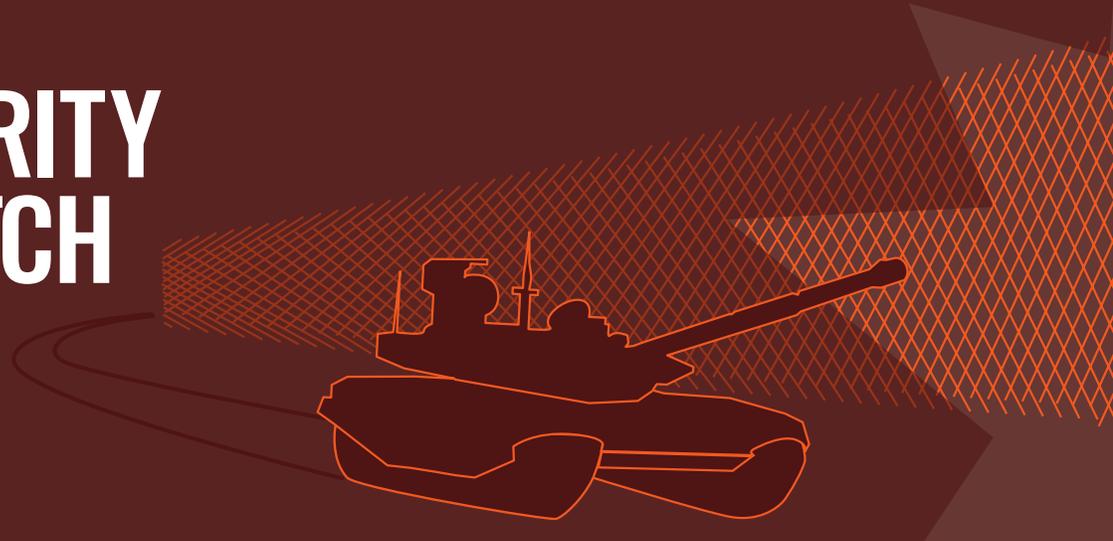




EGYPT SECURITY WATCH



WEEK IN BRIEF JUNE 28–JULY 12, 2019

Summary

- Wilayat Sinai claimed two attacks over the past two weeks. Three unclaimed terrorist incidents were also reported.
- On July 5, Egyptian President Abdel-Fatah El Sisi discussed developments in Libya and Sudan with American President Donald Trump. On July 3, Egyptian Defense Minister Muhammad Zaki met with his Jordanian counterpart.
- The Ramses 2019 joint military exercise between Egypt and France concluded on July 4.
- The Supreme State Security Criminal Court sentenced an al-Azhar University professor to 15 years in prison and a fine of 500,000 Egyptian pounds for working with an officer of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard.

Wilayat Sinai Claims 2 Attacks and Continue Kidnappings in Sinai

On June 27, Wilayat Sinai claimed responsibility for damaging an Egyptian army bulldozer in an improvised explosive device (IED) attack near the Arish airport. On July 5, Wilayat Sinai claimed responsibility for a June 30 IED attack on another military bulldozer, north of Sheikh Zuweid.

The Islamic State's al-Naba magazine reported that two men kidnapped by Wilayat Sinai are alive but have been referred to Wilayat Sinai's sharia court. Wilayat Sinai kidnapped Sheikh Muhammad Abu Qardod and his son on June 17 from their farm near Bir al-Abd.

On June 30, Wilayat Sinai claimed responsibility for executing three suspected Egyptian army spies, south of Arish. Mada Masr reported that the executions were related to the June 13 kidnappings in which Wilayat Sinai kidnapped 14 civilians west of Arish. Previously, the most recent reports of Wilayat Sinai executing its prisoners were in December 2018, when the group claimed responsibility for executing two militiamen who had collaborated with the Egyptian army. Three other similar incidents were reported in 2018.

Mada Masr reported that militants robbed the Rawda post office on July 1, stealing 100,000 Egyptian pounds (LE). Though Mada Masr reported Wilayat Sinai as the suspected perpetrators, no group has yet claimed responsibility for the incident. On July 3, a report on social media, citing a security source, stated that an unclaimed IED attack injured two soldiers when it detonated near a Central Security Forces (CSF) armored personnel carrier in Bir Lahfen, south of Arish. In an incident on July 6, a Sinai-based journalist reported on Twitter that Wilayat Sinai kidnapped a civilian in an ambush east of Bir al-Abd, though the group did not issue a claim of responsibility.

Sisi and Egyptian Cabinet Officials Dialogue with Foreign Counterparts

Egyptian Defense Minister Lieutenant General Muhammad Zaki met with his Jordanian counterpart and Jordanian Prime Minister Omar Razzaz in Cairo to discuss cooperation in military training between the two nations, amid regional conflict. The ministers expressed interest in greater cooperation on security matters going forward to ensure regional stability.

President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi and U.S. President Donald Trump spoke on the phone on July 5 to discuss the situation in Libya and Sudan. In Libya, Egypt has provided support to Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) faction in its offensive on Tripoli, which is held by the Government of National Accord. The United States officially recognizes the GNA and supports the United Nations' plan to end the conflict, though the Trump Administration has offered conflicting messages of support for Haftar's counter-terrorism efforts. Trump and Sisi also discussed Egypt's counter-terrorism efforts and the importance of continued cooperation and coordination in these operations.

Ramses 2019 Joint Military Exercise Concludes

The Egyptian Ministry of Defense announced the conclusion of the "Ramses 2019" joint air and sea military exercises with France on July 4, 2019. The exercises included the participation of French aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle* as well as Egyptian F-16 fighter aircraft. Between 2013 and 2017, France surpassed the United States as the top exporter of arms to Egypt.

Al-Azhar Professor Sentenced for Work with Iranian Revolutionary Guard

The Supreme State Security Criminal Court sentenced Alaa Moawad, a professor at al-Azhar University, to 15 years in prison and a LE500,000 fine for working with an officer of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, providing him with information and recruiting others for espionage. Five other defendants (Hassan Derbaghi, Muhammad Makari, Hamida al-Ansari, Karimi Mohsen, and Shafii Hussein) were sentenced in absentia to life in prison and LE500,000 fines. While the sentences were reported in several international media outlets, the story was less reported in Egyptian state and private media.

Al-Azhar—a Sunni, government-run institution—has long discouraged its staff from cooperating with Shi'a organizations, especially Iranian ones. In 2014, al-Azhar suspended and investigated a professor for attempting to launch a counter-extremism initiative with a Shi'a seminary in Hawzah, Iran. Egypt's Shi'a are frequently caught in the middle of political struggles between Iran and 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.