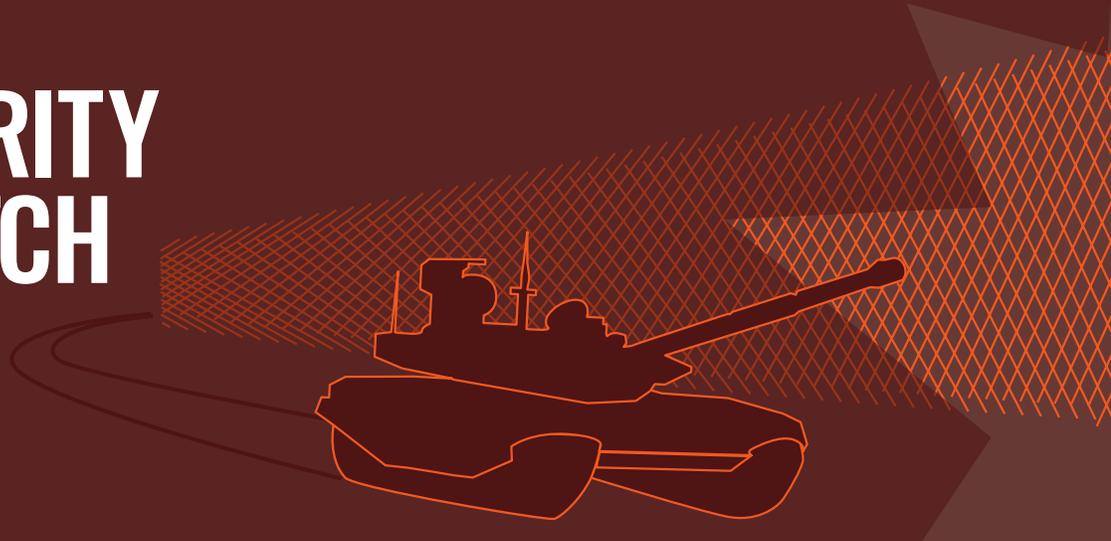




EGYPT SECURITY WATCH



WEEK IN BRIEF AUGUST 17-23, 2019

Summary

- Agence France-Presse reported that Chinese officials questioned Uighurs detained in Egypt's Tora Prison.
- The Sinai Tribes Union reported that two officers and four soldiers involved in stray-bullet incidents were called to the Military Judicial Department for investigation.
- The Egyptian Ministry of Interior reported that it had killed 11 suspected Wilayat Sinai militants south of Arish.
- Egyptian paratroopers began joint military exercises in Russia with Russian and Belarusian airborne forces.
- Wilayat Sinai claimed responsibility for one attack this week.

Egypt-China Cooperation on Uighur Interrogation

Agence France-Presse reported that Chinese officials questioned Uighurs detained in Egypt following a June 2017 security memorandum between Egypt and China. Egypt reportedly arrested over 90 Uighurs in July 2017, some of whom were detained in Tora Prison. AFP reported that Chinese officials interrogated many of the Uighurs in Egyptian custody, and nearly 25 were deported back to China.

Over the years, many Uighurs have traveled to Egypt to study at al-Azhar University.

In another channel of cooperation with China, Egypt's defense ministry released a statement announcing that the Egyptian navy was participating in drills with its Chinese counterpart in the Mediterranean out of Alexandria's port.

Egypt and China have strengthened political and economic ties, particularly since Sisi assumed the presidency in 2014. Since taking office, he has visited China five times and hosted Chinese President Xi Jinping in Cairo in 2016. China has also injected between \$16 and \$20 billion into the Egyptian economy in the form of loans, investments, and development projects, making Egypt a strategic element of China's Belt and Road initiative; Sisi's most recent visit was to China's second Belt and Road forum in April 2019.

Stray Bullets in North Sinai Injure Three, Kill One, Causing Officers to be Recalled

The Sinai Tribes Union reported that two officers and four soldiers involved in stray-bullet incidents, which injured three civilians and killed one in North Sinai over a one-week span, were called to the Military Judicial Department for investigation. One of the injured from Sheikh Zuweid was reported to be a child named Moussa Ouda.

Sheikh Zuweid, in particular, has had a number of injured civilians from stray bullets. In May, three civilians were killed in the crossfire between security forces and militants. An estimated 600 civilians were killed from stray bullets and shelling between July 2013 and mid-2017 in North Sinai, according to the North Sinai Social Solidarity Directorate.

Interior Ministry Says It Killed 11 Individuals South of Arish

The Egyptian Ministry of Interior's Facebook page reported that police raided a farm that suspected militants were using as a base of operations and killed 11. The ministry also claimed to have confiscated five FN Herstal rifles, two automatic rifles, a pistol, two explosive devices, and an explosive belt. The post did not mention any interior ministry casualties.

The incident marks the first interior ministry raid to be reported since 15 individuals were reported killed in August 8 raids against Hassm following the explosion at the National Cancer Institute. Forcibly disappeared individuals have been previously identified among those killed in counter-terrorism raids, where their corpses are posed as suspected militants.

Egyptian Paratroopers Begin Joint Military Exercises in Russia

Egyptian forces arrived in Russia to train alongside Russian and Belarusian forces on August 20 for the fourth round of drills named Protectors of Friendship. The last round was held in Cairo in October 2018. The exercises involved the airdrop of personnel, equipment, and vehicles. Earlier in the summer, the Egyptian foreign and defense ministers participated in the fifth iteration of 2+2 talks in Russia.

Wilayat Sinai Claims Responsibility For Single Attack

On August 19, Wilayat Sinai claimed responsibility for an improvised explosive device (IED) attack on a military bulldozer near Rafah. There was no claim of any casualties. The operation raised the number of attacks claimed by Wilayat Sinai so far in August to seven, four of which were reported in the month's first week.



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