



TERROR IN THE SINAI

EMILY DYER | OREN KESSLER

Foreword by Mohannad Sabry



Published in 2014 by The Henry Jackson Society

The Henry Jackson Society
8th Floor, Parker Tower
43-49 Parker Street
London WC2B 5PS

Registered charity no. 1140489
Tel: +44 (0)20 7340 4520
www.henryjacksonsociety.org

© The Henry Jackson Society 2014
The Henry Jackson Society
All rights reserved

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and are not necessarily indicative of those of The Henry Jackson Society or its Trustees

Terror in the Sinai
By Emily Dyer and Oren Kessler
ISBN 978-1-909035-14-0

£15.00 where sold

All rights reserved

Front Cover Image: Looking north along Egypt-Israel border north of Eilat,
by Wilson44691 (Own work) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

TERROR IN THE SINAI

EMILY DYER | OREN KESSLER

with research assistance by

Kit Waterman and Samuel James Abbott

Foreword by Mohannad Sabry



The Henry Jackson Society

***The Henry Jackson Society* is a cross-partisan think-tank based in London.**

Our founders and supporters are united by a common interest in fostering a strong British, European, and American commitment towards freedom; liberty; constitutional democracy; human rights; governmental and institutional reform; and a robust foreign, security, and defence policy and transatlantic alliance.

The Henry Jackson Society is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales under company number 07465741, and a charity registered in England and Wales under registered charity number 1140489.

For more information about *The Henry Jackson Society* activities; our research programme; and public events, please see: www.henryjacksonsociety.org.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Mohannad Sabry for agreeing to write a Foreword and for providing invaluable assistance throughout the writing of this report. Thanks go to others who offered advice and expertise: David Barnett and Thomas Joscelyn of the *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, and independent analyst Zack Gold.

We would also like to thank Kit Waterman and Samuel James Abbott for their hard work and painstaking research, as well as our colleagues Robin Simcox, Olivier Guitta, Douglas Murray, Dr Alan Mendoza and Gary Millner.

About the Authors

EMILY DYER is a research fellow at *The Henry Jackson Society*. Her work focuses on Egypt, terrorism, and minority rights in the Middle East. Emily joined *The Henry Jackson Society* as a researcher, in January 2012, specialising in women and minority rights in the Middle East and North Africa. Her most recent publication, *Marginalising Egyptian Women*, looks at the role that the state played in reversing women's rights and roles in society, having spent time in Cairo interviewing women's-rights activists; NGO workers; and the Muslim Brotherhood. Beforehand, she co-authored *Al-Qaeda in the United States: A Complete Analysis of Terrorism Offenses* and helped present its findings to policymakers on various platforms, including British parliament; European parliaments; the White House; and the National Counterterrorism Center. She previously worked as a Higher Executive Officer for the Preventing Extremism Unit at the Department for Education, and at the think-tank, *Policy Exchange*. Emily has written for publications including *Foreign Affairs*; *The Observer*; *The Telegraph*; *The Huffington Post*; *City AM*; *The Atlantic*; *World Affairs*; *CTC Sentinel*; and *Standpoint Magazine* – largely on women's rights in the Middle East, on terrorism, and on human rights. Emily studied International Relations at the University of Birmingham, where she produced a First-class dissertation on Islamic feminism in Iran, and has travelled widely within Syria and Turkey.

OREN KESSLER is Middle East research fellow at *The Henry Jackson Society*, focusing on Israel; the Palestinian territories; Iran; and the wider region. Originally from Rochester, New York, Oren lived in Israel from 2006 to 2013, where he was *The Jerusalem Post*'s Arab-affairs correspondent and a writer; editor; and translator for *Haaretz* English Edition. A frequent contributor to *Foreign Policy*, he has also written for *The Wall Street Journal*; *World Affairs*; *The Weekly Standard*; *The Forward*; *Tablet*; *Middle East Quarterly*; and the *Journal of International Security Affairs*. Oren is a frequent contributor to broadcast news programmes analysing issues related to the Middle East, and has appeared on expert panels at the UK House of Commons and the EU Parliament. He has an Hon. BA in History (with High Distinction) from the University of Toronto, where he focused on the Middle East, and an MA in Government, Diplomacy and Conflict Studies track, from the IDC Herzliya. Fluent in Hebrew, Oren has also studied classical and colloquial Arabic in the United States; at the Diwan Centre in Tel Aviv; and at Al-Quds University in East Jerusalem. He has travelled widely across the Middle East, particularly in Israel and the Palestinian territories; Egypt; Jordan; and Turkey.

Contents

Foreword.....	1
Executive Summary.....	2
Introduction.....	5
Methodology.....	7
Glossary	8
Background.....	9
1. The Evolution of the Threat Post-2011.....	13
Al-Qaeda's Presence in the Sinai.....	13
Foreign Fighters in the Sinai.....	15
Weapons in the Sinai.....	17
Military Action in the Sinai.....	18
Bedouin-Jihadist Ties	21
The Threat to Israel	23
2. The Threat: A Statistical Analysis.....	27
The Threat to the Egyptian State	29
3. Militant Groups Operating in the Sinai	32
Group Profiles.....	33
Conclusion	42

Foreword

Following the 1982 withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Sinai Peninsula, the Hosni Mubarak regime imposed a full media blackout on Egypt's north-eastern frontier. Three decades later, the Sinai has returned to the front pages, due to an unprecedented wave of terrorism that poses major threats to Egypt, Israel and the future of peace in the region.

Amid political instability and civil unrest that followed the January 2011 revolution, militant groups flocked to the Sinai Peninsula to fill the security vacuum left by an ailing state. Terrorist attacks by armed groups based in Sinai are now a common occurrence in the Egyptian heartland, particularly in the capital Cairo and the Nile Delta.

Since the ouster of President Mohamed Morsi in July 2013, Egypt's military-led government has taken a heavy-handed approach to restoring stability. Having conducted several violent crackdowns against supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, the government has recently sentenced hundreds of its members to death. Not only have these actions stoked concerns in Western capitals – prompting policymakers to hold back military assistance to Cairo – it has also roused militant groups to begin, and justify, waging full-scale 'jihad' against the state. At the same time, Egypt's economy is in dire condition, battered by diminishing tourism and investors' concerns over continued instability.

Meanwhile, the Egyptian army has launched the largest military operations in the Sinai since its demilitarisation by the 1978 peace accords with Israel, claiming many successes in the killing and arrests of militants operating there. However, there have been few concrete signs of the army effectively curbing the threat and, with forthcoming elections in May, militant attacks are likely to rise instead. Mid-2014 could therefore leave Egyptian, Israeli and Western interests in the region vulnerable to even greater risk.

This new report by the Henry Jackson Society could not come at a more crucial time. *Terror in the Sinai* offers

fresh insights, and the most comprehensive statistical analysis to date, into new trends to have emerged in recent months. The report provides an in-depth study of the growing threat posed by Egypt's most dangerous militant groups – such as Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis – which are conducting ever-more organised attacks, and increasingly striking the Egyptian mainland.

Among the report's most troubling findings is the extent to which North Sinai is becoming a full-fledged terrorist base from which attacks are waged against Egypt and Israel. Foreign fighters and weapons continue to flow into the Sinai, and al-Qaeda and several of its most operationally active franchises are now making inroads into the peninsula.

Terror in the Sinai shows that Egypt's terrorist threat is not going away anytime soon; rather, it is poised to grow far beyond its current state. Thoughtful and nuanced analysis is therefore urgently needed for decision-makers to effectively confront and contain the ongoing crisis. This report is an invaluable contribution to that effort.



Mohannad Sabry

Mohannad Sabry is an Egyptian journalist and forthcoming author based in Cairo. He is a Managing Editor of Special Reports for The Groundtruth Project at GlobalPost, and a finalist for the 2011 Livingston Award for International Reporting.

May 2014

Executive Summary

Terror in the Sinai presents an in-depth analysis of the terrorist threat coming from the Sinai Peninsula. The report finds an increasingly sophisticated and co-ordinated terrorist threat more likely than ever to wage bomb attacks against the Egyptian mainland, a rising al-Qaeda (AQ) presence in the peninsula and a growing terrorist threat against the Egyptian state, Western tourists and Israel.

The report's first section – “The Evolution of the Threat” – examines why and how the threat has grown in the Sinai, with a focus on: AQ in the peninsula; the influx of foreign fighters and weapons; Bedouin-jihadist ties; and, the Egyptian military's recent anti-terror campaigns.

The second section of the report – “The Threat: A Statistical Analysis” – identifies key trends based on statistical data, such as the rate, type and location of Sinai militant attacks in the peninsula itself, in mainland Egypt and in Israel. The analysis – based on *The Henry Jackson Society's* database of all reported open-source attacks from 2010 to 2014 – shows how the threat and its targets have evolved over time.

The final section is a series of profiles on both Sinai- and Gaza-based militant groups reported to be operating in the Sinai.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE THREAT

Al-Qaeda in the Sinai

- **Al-Qaeda (AQ) ideology appears to have a growing presence within the Sinai.**
 - Al-Qaeda central (AQ); its most operationally active franchise, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP); and its offshoot the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) are reported to be making inroads into the peninsula.
 - Leaders of certain Sinai armed groups are believed to have links to AQ, AQAP, ISIS and, reportedly, unspecified leaders of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Ramzi al-Mowafi, (Osama bin Laden's former personal

physician), for example, is believed to reside in the peninsula. The leader of another group, Muhammad Jamal of the Muhammad Jamal Network (MJN), is believed to have been in contact with top-level AQ leadership.

- Several militant groups in the Sinai appear to have taken direct inspiration and/or instruction from AQ and its leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Foreign fighters in the Sinai

- **There are strong indications of a foreign fighter presence in the Sinai.**
 - Recent references from al-Qaeda (AQ)'s leadership regarding the presence of foreign fighters in the peninsula – combined with numerous reports of fighters entering the area from abroad – suggest a considerable foreign presence there. International jihadist leaders and ideologues have reportedly called for individuals to travel to the Sinai to fight.
 - The largest foreign fighter contingents in the Sinai likely hail from the Gaza Strip and Yemen, as well as North Africa (Sudan, Algeria and Libya), Saudi Arabia and Syria. As many as several hundred jihadists from Yemen – home to AQ's most active franchise, AQAP – are believed to have travelled to the Sinai.
 - Of all the Gaza-based groups operating in the Sinai, the Mujahideen Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem (MSC) and Army of Islam are reportedly the most active. Hamas has reportedly allowed militants to conduct training in the Gaza Strip on the condition that they take their operations out of the Strip and into its neighbours' territories instead.
 - As the Syrian civil war continues and Hamas tightens its control over the Gaza Strip, it is likely that the Sinai will become a key hub for the traffic of fighters to and from Gaza, Syria and elsewhere.

Weapons in the Sinai

- **The Sinai's longstanding smuggling routes are being used by militant groups to stockpile arms for use in attacks in the peninsula.**
 - While the flow of weapons used to travel through the Sinai to the Gaza Strip, this dynamic is now reversing.
 - As a result of Libya's breakdown in security, large amounts of Libyan arms have been smuggled into the Sinai.
 - Weapons arriving in the Sinai range from light to heavier arms, including landmines, RPGs, and Grad rockets.
 - Iran continues to funnel arms to the Sinai through arms factories and smuggling networks it operates in Sudan.
 - Hamas has likely set up rocket-production facilities and forward operating bases in the Sinai.

Military action in the Sinai

- **While the military regularly claims progress in confronting terrorist groups in the Sinai, actual evidence of its success is limited.**
 - The army's recent campaigns in the Sinai are causing Sinai residents to sympathise with militant groups, due to widespread damage to homes and the reported killing of innocent individuals during military operations.

Bedouin-jihadist ties

- **The government's deteriorating relationship with Bedouin tribal leaders and poor treatment of the wider population is undermining its attempt to re-establish stability in the peninsula.**
 - There appears to be an increasing overlap between Sinai Bedouins, Salafi ideology and militant groups. For example, some of the leading members of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis reportedly also belong to the Sinai's powerful Sawarka tribe.

- Mutual resentment and the breakdown in co-operation between the government and Bedouins have likely led to a weakened military-intelligence network, preventing forces from waging an effective security crackdown. The government's failure to address the Bedouins' grievances has therefore created long-term threats to Sinai security.
- Until the government addresses the peninsula's instability with not just military action but real development, it is unlikely to see real improvements to the security situation in the Sinai.

The threat to Israel

- **After Egypt, no country is more threatened by instability in the Sinai than Israel.**
 - Israel has been targeted at least 19 times by acts of sabotage and violence originating in Sinai.
 - The completed border fence between Israel and Egypt has reduced – but far from eradicated – the smuggling of weapons from the Sinai.
 - Military-to-military co-operation between Egypt and Israel appears to be at a high point, as both countries recognise their mutual interests lie in ensuring order in their shared buffer of the Sinai. Israel has allowed Egypt to significantly increase its military and police presence in the Sinai, despite the 1979 peace treaty limiting force numbers there.

THE THREAT: A STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Rate of attacks

- **Militant groups from the Sinai are now more than twice as likely to wage an attack against Egypt or Israel than in the period immediately prior to President Mohamed Morsi's ousting in July 2013.**
 - The 2011 revolution brought a steady rise in the number of attacks in and from the Sinai, with several larger spikes in February 2011 (7 attacks) and July-August (4-6 attacks, respectively). July 2013 saw the largest rise in attacks to date – to 112 from 7 the previous month (a fifteen-fold increase).

Types of attack

- **Militant groups in the Sinai have adopted increasingly co-ordinated and sophisticated methods of attack.**
 - While, in 2013, shootings were the most common type of attack, making up half of the total 270 attacks, 2014 has so far seen a reversal of this trend, as bombings are now more prevalent than shootings.
 - In December 2013, the number of bomb attacks (6) overtook that of shootings (2). In February 2014, bombings (8) made up 80% of all attacks, while there were no shootings.

Attack locations

- **In addition to waging more sophisticated attacks, armed groups have broadened the geographic spread of their operations. Now, attacks by Sinai militants are increasingly likely to target other locations in mainland Egypt and Israel rather than North Sinai.**
 - While nearly all attacks in 2011 took place in North Sinai, the figure has dropped to 54% in 2014 (January-March). Attacks in Cairo waged by Sinai militants have increased from just 2% of all attacks in 2013 to 20% in 2014.

The threat to the Egyptian state

- **Recent political events appear to have had a direct impact on the rhetoric and strategy of militant groups in the Sinai.**
 - In the lead-up and immediate aftermath of Morsi's removal in July 2013, attacks most commonly targeted security forces (nearly one-third of all attacks).
 - In August 2013, alongside the launch of a stepped-up military campaign in the Sinai, militant groups and jihadist ideologues called for Egyptians to take arms against the military. In the following month, almost half (49%) of the 39 reported attacks targeted the Egyptian armed forces. The military continued to be the leading target throughout the rest of 2013 and in February 2014.

- **The Egyptian state has paid a high cost (in personnel and property) in its attempt to restore security in the Sinai.**

- Of the 270 militant attacks in 2013, over three-quarters (79%) targeted the police, military, government and security forces.
- Of all the 41 attacks to have occurred so far in 2014 (between January and March), attacks against the police have been the most common, at just under a third (32%) of the total amount.

MILITANT GROUPS OPERATING IN THE SINAI

- The most operationally active and deadliest militant group in the Sinai is Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM, a.k.a. Ansar Jerusalem). Although an overwhelming majority of attacks (87%) go unclaimed, the group has taken ownership of 63% of all attacks for which responsibility has been claimed or attributed. Of all Sinai militant groups, ABM has the most diverse range of attack locations (the most common being North and South Sinai, Cairo, and Eilat, Israel).
- Of all groups believed to be linked to the Sinai, Aynad Misr is most likely to launch militant attacks in Cairo.

While North Sinai was once deemed the backyard of the volatile Gaza Strip, the peninsula itself is increasingly becoming a hub for terrorism and militant activity. From late 2013, militant groups have shown a marked difference in strategy, from relatively small-scale attacks on security forces in North Sinai to high-level attacks against military and political targets. Moreover, these attacks are increasingly likely to target Cairo and other towns, cities and tourist resorts throughout Egypt, as well as Israel, as North Sinai militants broaden their target locations. The fact that Sinai militants now favour al-Qaeda (AQ)-style co-ordinated bomb attacks presages still more sophisticated attacks in the future.

Introduction



© Lightguard/iStockPhoto.com

The 2011 revolution that toppled President Hosni Mubarak sparked a rise in Salafi-jihadist activity in the north of the Sinai Peninsula. In the years that followed, the Sinai has experienced a downward spiral in security, with police and security forces there facing regular militant attacks.

The removal of President Mohamed Morsi from power on 3 July 2013 – and the new interim government's subsequent crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood – not only turned Egypt's political landscape on its head, but sparked unforeseen violence in the Sinai. Militant groups began calling for Egyptians to take up arms against the army, while extremist ideologues called for jihad against the military-led government. The Sinai is now increasingly being used by militant groups as a hub from which to

launch terrorist attacks, not only in North Sinai, but throughout mainland Egypt and Israel.

The instability in the peninsula poses a serious threat, not only to Egyptian security and economic interests, but to the wider region. The Suez Canal and natural-gas pipelines are pillars of the Egyptian economy, yet both are increasingly becoming targets of militant attacks. The Egyptian army's campaign in the Sinai has brought previously strained relations with the US to a head, with Washington's postponement of arms sales prompting Egypt to look to new weapons providers such as Russia.

The importance of securing the peninsula has not been lost on the Egyptian authorities. Since late 2013, the interim government has prioritised its campaign

against rising militant activity, launching a series of military operations in the Sinai's northern governorate. However, despite the increasing use of military force and countless state reports of success (namely, the arrest or killing of Sinai-based militants), the area appears to be more dangerous than ever.

Continued Salafi-jihadist activity in the Sinai could potentially threaten the stability of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty, a cornerstone of Western (particularly American) Middle East policy. The treaty's stipulation that the Sinai remain largely demilitarised has long rankled Egyptians, many of whom deem it an infringement of their national sovereignty. Deteriorating security in the peninsula could exacerbate that feeling. Additional Sinai-based terror attacks in Israel, moreover, could prompt the Israeli public to demand firmer security measures from their government along the Egyptian border, potentially undermining Israeli-Egyptian relations further.

Terror in the Sinai examines the movement of foreign fighters and weapons into the peninsula; the threat militant groups in the Sinai pose to Western interests, the Egyptian state and Israel; Bedouin-jihadist ties and the Egyptian army's recent efforts in the area. Furthermore, this report provides the first statistical data of its kind to show how the militant threat has evolved throughout the Sinai's three-year wave of violence. The data provide a basis for analysing the nature of the threat, from shifts in intended targets to the locations and types of attacks, as well as profiles of militant groups reported to be operating in the Sinai. *Terror in the Sinai* aims to provide much-needed clarity to regional and Western policy makers in how to confront and contain this growing threat.

Methodology

The research and analysis which form the basis of the first chapter of this report are largely based on existing academic literature and media reports on the Sinai, and first-hand interviews with experts and Sinai residents. The statistical analysis in chapters 2 and 3 is based on a database of all reported Sinai-linked militant attacks, created by the report's authors. For more information, see below.

GROUP PROFILES

Chapter 3 of the report features profiles on Sinai and Gaza-based groups operating in the peninsula. Profiles have been given the following structure:

NAME: The name of the group most widely used, either by the group itself and/or by media; government; and intelligence sources

ALIASES: Group aliases, in Arabic and English

REPORTED LEADERSHIP/PROMINENT MEMBERS: Includes former leaders and/or deceased individuals

KNOWN/REPORTED LINKS: Includes known links to other individuals and groups, and known links to other terrorist/militant groups

ATTRIBUTED ATTACKS: Attacks claimed by groups themselves or attributed by credible media and/or government or intelligence sources

NOTES: Additional notes outlining the history, formation, and ideology of the group and its leadership

DATABASE OF ATTACKS

The database documents all reported militant attacks, both successful and attempted, in the Sinai – or elsewhere in Egypt or Israel if reportedly committed by militants operating in the Sinai. All attacks in the database took place between 1 January 2010 and 31 March 2014.

Multiple attacks that have taken place on the same day and/or by the same group, and/or in the same location are documented separately, except in cases of multiple rocket-fire and other co-ordinated attacks. For example, a series of attacks carried out on the same day by the same group but in different parts of the same city will be listed as separate attacks, whereas an attack on various targets (military; civilian; government; religious, etc.) in the same immediate location will be counted as one co-ordinated attack.

Glossary

ARABIC TERMS¹

Ansar: “Helpers”, “partisans” or “supporters”; the people of Madina who welcomed and aided the prophet Muhammad and his early companions

Bay’ah: The swearing of an oath of allegiance to an *emir*

Emir: A leader

Fatwa: An authoritative statement on a point of Islamic law

Hijra (Muhajireen): Emigration in the way of Allah. Islamic dating begins with the *Hijra* of Muhammad, from Makka to Madina, in 622 CE

Jihad: Struggle, particularly fighting in the way of Allah

Jund / Jaysh: Army, band, group, wing of the army; also denotes a military district

Kafir (pl. *Kuffar*) / *Kufr*: “Non-believer” (referring to non-Muslims); the term can also be used derogatorily to suggest disbelief (by a Muslim or non-Muslim) in God and/or denial of truth

Majlis: Assembly, ruling council

Bayt al-Maqdis: An archaic or poetic name for Jerusalem (Al-Quds)

Mujahid (pl. *Mujahideen*): A person or group of people who take part in *jihad*

Muslim (pl.): Muslims

Sharia / Shariah: “Law”; the Muslim religious code of conduct; a range of diverse religious traditions and interpretations, from strict rules to broad principles and objectives

Shura: “Consultation”, board of electors, a council of state, advisers to the sovereign, a parliament (in modern times)

Sunna / Sunnah: The customary practice of a group of people or of a person; has come to refer to the practice of Muhammad and of the first generation of Muslims

Takfir: To declare that someone is a *kafir* – an “unbeliever” or “pagan” – and thereby to excommunicate him or her from the community of believers

Tawhid: The doctrine of divine unity

Ummah: The Islamic “nation” of believers

¹ The majority of definitions listed are taken from: Bewley, A., *Glossary of Islamic Terms* (London: Ta-Ha Publishers, 1998).

Background

TIMELINE OF MAJOR EVENTS IN EGYPT (2011-2014)

- 25 January 2011: Egyptian revolution begins against President Hosni Mubarak's regime;²
- 5 February 2011: First attack on natural-gas pipeline to Israel (militants have attacked pipeline at least 18 times since);^{3 4}
- 11 February 2011: Mubarak resigns as president;⁵
- 18 August 2011: Cross-border multi-stage attack in and around Eilat, Israel,⁶ 8 Israelis reported killed;⁷
- August 2011: "Operation Eagle" launched in the Sinai;⁸
- 28 November 2011: Start of Egyptian presidential elections;⁹
- 24 June 2012: Mohamed Morsi elected president;¹⁰
- 5 August 2012: Ambush of Egyptian troops near the border with the Gaza Strip and Israel, 16 reported killed;¹¹
- August 2012: "Operation Sinai" launched in the Sinai after 5 August attacks, initially as extension of "Operation Eagle";¹²
- 30 June 2013: Large-scale protests against Morsi begin;¹³
- 3 July 2013: Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood removed from office;¹⁴
- 19 August 2013: Ambush of police in Rafah, North Sinai, 24 reported killed;¹⁵
- 20 November 2013: Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIED) attack on Egyptian soldiers, 11 reported killed;¹⁶
- 24 December 2013: Explosion at Daqahliya Security Directorate, 16 reported killed;¹⁷
- 24 January 2014: Bombing of Cairo security directorate, 6 reported killed, over 100 wounded;¹⁸
- 31 January 2014: Egyptian airstrike, 13 militants reported killed;¹⁹

² 'Timeline: Egypt's revolution', *Al Jazeera*, 14 February 2011, available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/01/201112515334871490.html>.

³ 'Suspected attack on Egyptian gas pipeline halts supply to Egypt', *Associated Press*, 5 February 2011, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/feb/05/egyptian-gas-explosion-sinai-peninsula>.

⁴ 'Sinai pipeline attacked for the second time in two days', *Daily News Egypt*, 12 February 2014, available at: <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2014/02/12/sinai-pipeline-attacked-second-time-two-days/>.

⁵ 'Egypt Erupts in Jubilation as Mubarak Steps Down', *The New York Times*, 11 February 2011, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/12/world/middleeast/12egypt.html?pagewanted=all>.

⁶ 'Timeline / Eight hours of terror in southern Israel', *Haaretz*, 18 August 2011, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/timeline-eight-hours-of-terror-in-southern-israel-1.379344>.

⁷ 'Counter-terror officer killed by terrorist fire near Eilat', *The Jerusalem Post*, 18 August 2011, available at: <http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Counter-terror-officer-killed-by-terrorist-fire-near-Eilat>.

⁸ 'Egypt launches massive operation to control Sinai', *The Jerusalem Post*, 14 August 2011, available at: <http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Egypt-launches-massive-operation-to-control-Sinai>.

⁹ 'Egyptian elections to start Nov. 28', *CNN*, 28 September 2011, available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/09/27/world/meast/egypt-elections/>.

¹⁰ 'Named Egypt's Winner, Islamist Makes History', *The New York Times*, 24 June 2012, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/25/world/middleeast/mohamed-morsi-of-muslim-brotherhood-declared-as-egypts-president.html?pagewanted=all>.

¹¹ '23 Major Terrorist Attacks in Post-Mubarak Egypt', *Arutz Sheva*, 23 September 2012, available at: http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/160207#.UyHVQyL_vYZ.

¹² 'Egyptian armed forces announce results of "Operation Sinai"', *Daily News Egypt*, 8 September 2012, available at: <http://thedailynewsegypt.com/2012/09/08/egyptian-armed-forces-announce-results-of-operation-sinai/>.

¹³ 'Egypt timeline: from revolution to the current crisis', *Associated Press*, 3 July 2013, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocan/egypt/10156802/Egypt-timeline-from-revolution-to-the-current-crisis.html>.

¹⁴ 'Mohamed Morsi ousted in Egypt's second revolution in two years', *The Guardian*, 4 July 2013, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/03/mohamed-morsi-egypt-second-revolution>.

¹⁵ 'Sinai attack kills 24 Egyptian policemen', *The Jerusalem Post*, 19 August 2013, available at: <http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Source-Dozens-of-Egyptian-policemen-killed-in-North-Sinai-blast-323552>.

¹⁶ 'Egyptian troops die in Sinai bomb attack', *BBC News*, 20 November 2013, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-25013655>.

¹⁷ 'Sinai's Ansar Beit Al-Maqdis claim responsibility for Egypt's Mansoura blast', *Ahram Online*, 25 December 2013, available at: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/89992/Egypt/Politics-/Sinai-Ansar-Beit-AlMaqdis-claim-responsibility-fo.aspx>.

¹⁸ 'Cairo court officially rules Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis a terrorist organisation', *Daily News Egypt*, 14 April 2014, available at: <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2014/04/14/cairo-court-officially-rules-ansar-beit-al-maqdis-terrorist-organisation/>; see also 'Egypt militants step up campaign with Cairo blasts', *BBC News*, 24 January 2014, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-25874370>.

¹⁹ 'Egyptian army aircraft pound Sinai terrorists, killing 13', *Associated Press*, 2 February 2014, available at: http://www.israelhayom.com/site/newsletter_article.php?id=15183.

- 3 February 2014: Egyptian airstrike, 30 militants reported killed;²⁰
- 7 February 2014: Egyptian airstrike, 16 militants reported killed;²¹
- 16 February 2014: Bomb attack on tourist bus in Taba, North Sinai, 3 South Korean tourists and Egyptian driver reported killed;²²
- 19 February 2014: Egyptian airstrike and ground operation, 16 militants reported killed;²³
- 22-24 February 2014: Combined Egyptian military operations, 14 militants reported killed;²⁴
- 24 February 2014: Interim government of Prime Minister Hazem el-Beblawi resigns;²⁵
- 26 March 2014: Gen. Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi announces resignation as military commander-in-chief and Defence Minister, declares presidential candidacy;²⁶
- 2 April 2014: Triple bomb attack in Cairo kills police brigadier-general, wounds five other police officers, Ajnad Misr claims responsibility.²⁷

²⁰ 'Military airstrikes kill 30 militants in North Sinai: media reports', *Ahram Online*, 3 February 2014, available at: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/93405.aspx>.

²¹ 'Egypt army says airstrikes kill Sinai rebels', *Al Jazeera*, 8 February 2014, available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/02/egypt-army-says-airstrikes-kill-sinai-rebels-201428154246812809.html>.

²² 'Egypt Bus Blast in Sinai Peninsula Kills Korean Tourists', *Bloomberg News*, 17 February 2014, available at: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-02-16/egypt-bus-blast-in-sinai-peninsula-leaves-korean-tourists-dead.html>.

²³ 'Egypt strikes strongholds of Al Qaida "chief terrorists" in Sinai', *World Tribune*, 24 February 2014, available at: <http://www.worldtribune.com/2014/02/24/egypt-strikes-strongholds-of-al-qaida-chief-terrorists-in-sinai/>.

²⁴ '14 militants killed in Egypt army raid in North Sinai', *Xinhua*, 25 February 2014, available at: <http://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2014/02/25/14-militants-killed-in-egypt-army-raid-in-north-sinai.html>.

²⁵ 'Egypt interim government resigns unexpectedly', *BBC News*, 24 February 2014, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-26323638>.

²⁶ 'Egypt's military chief Sisi quits to run for presidency', *BBC News*, 27 March 2014, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-26747101>.

²⁷ 'Egypt Bombings Target Police, 2 Dead', *Voice of America*, 2 April 2014, available at: <http://www.voanews.com/content/twin-bombs-in-egypt-kill-senior-police-officer/1884454.html>.

THE SINAI PENINSULA



*Shaded relief map of the Sinai Peninsula, 1992
(produced by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons)*

THE SINAI PENINSULA: A BRIEF GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The Sinai is a triangular peninsula of 60,000 square kilometres—²⁸ around three times the size of Israel—²⁹ that bridges North Africa and the Levant. To its east is Israel, the Gaza Strip, and the Gulf of Aqaba; to its west is the Suez Canal and Gulf of Suez; to its north is the Mediterranean; and, to its south, the Red Sea (see above map). The Sinai is divided into two of Egypt's 27 governorates—North and South Sinai—with district capitals in el-Arish and el-Tor, respectively.³⁰

While the Sinai makes up 6% of Egypt's land mass, it is home to just 600,000 people—or, 0.7% of Egypt's population of 86.5 million.³¹ For the sake of comparison, the cities of Port Said and Port Fuad, at the mouth of the Suez Canal, each have a population comparable to that of the entire peninsula.

The governorates of North and South Sinai cover the bulk of the peninsula (along with parts of the Port Said; Ismailia; and Suez governorates, all of which straddle the canal). Just one-third of the Sinai's people live in South Sinai; another third live in the peninsula's two largest towns (el-Arish and Sheikh Zuwayyed, both on the Mediterranean); and an additional third live elsewhere in North Sinai.

Bedouins—historically nomadic tribes with roots in Arabia who, for centuries, were occupied primarily in livestock-rearing—comprise approximately 70% of the Sinai's population, while the rest are non-Bedouin Egyptians (mostly recent or veteran immigrants from the Nile Delta).³² Of the Sinai's residents, 99% are Sunni Muslim. The peninsula's Christian population

is estimated at a few thousand; but, their numbers have dwindled since 2011.³³

Due to few opportunities for legitimate employment, trade has flourished in narcotics; weapons; and the trafficking of goods and people in and out of the Sinai.³⁴ Israel's 2005 pull-out from the Gaza Strip increased the flow of people and ideas with the peninsula,³⁵ and, two years later, Hamas' seizure of the Strip provided more opportunities for illegal activity. The blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip in 2007, by both Israel and Egypt, created one of the world's most lucrative markets for smuggling networks.³⁶

Over the last decade, the Sinai has seen a string of terror attacks against tourists—in 2004 in Taba and Nuweiba, in 2005 in Sharm el-Sheikh and in 2006 in Dahab—that collectively killed at least 123 people, including more than a dozen Britons.³⁷ The Egyptian government attributed the attacks to extremists from the Sinai (chiefly Tawhid Wal-Jihad) and the Gaza Strip, and subsequently arrested more than 2,000 people across the peninsula.³⁸

²⁸ Aronson, G., 'The tragedy of the Sinai', *Al-Monitor*, 20 February 2014, available at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/02/sinai-jihad-war-zone-egypt-israel.html>.

²⁹ 'Israel and Egypt strengthen military ties over Sinai fears', *The Financial Times*, 19 August 2013, available at: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/244b1fa8-08d6-11e3-ad07-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2z8zUatRm>.

³⁰ 'Egypt's Governorates', State Information Service—Egypt, available at: http://www.sis.gov.eg/En/Templates/Articles/tmpArticles.aspx?CatID=2631#.UyMiKvL_trM.

³¹ 'Egypt: Land and people', *Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa*, January 2012, available at: <http://eisa.org.za/WEP/egyptpeople.htm>.

³² Pelham, N., 'Sinai: The Buffer Erodes', *Chatham House* (September 2012), available at: <http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Middle%20East/pr0912pelham.pdf>; see also Yaari, E., 'Sinai: A New Front', *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, January 2012, available at: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PoilityNote09.pdf>.

³³ Abu Toameh, K., 'Ethnic Cleansing of Christians in the Sinai', *Gatestone Institute*, 1 October 2012, available at: <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/3374/sinai-christians>.

³⁴ Yossef, A., 'Securing the Sinai', *Foreign Affairs*, 28 September 2011, available at: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/68304/amr-yossef/securing-the-sinai>.

³⁵ 'Shin Bet forms new unit to thwart attacks on Israel by Sinai jihadists', *Haaretz*, 20 August 2013, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/.premium-1.542417>.

³⁶ Laub, Z., 'Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and Security', *Council on Foreign Relations*, 12 December 2013, available at: <http://www.cfr.org/egypt/egypts-sinai-peninsula-security/p32055>; see also: 'Hamas reeling from Egyptian crackdown', *Reuters*, 21 July 2013, available at: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/hamas-reeling-from-egyptian-crackdown-on-gaza-tunnels-1.1350825>.

³⁷ 'Al-Qaeda suspected in attacks at resorts in Egypt', *Associated Press*, 7 October 2004, available at: http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/2004-10-07-egypt-explosion_x.htm; see also: 'Shock in Sharm', *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 23 July 2005, available at: <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/752/fr4.htm>; and: 'Triple blasts rock Egypt resort', *BBC News*, 25 April 2006, available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4940506.stm.

³⁸ 'Egypt Gets Tough in Sinai In Wake of Resort Attacks', *The Washington Post*, 2 October 2005, available at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/10/01/AR2005100101293.html>; see also: 'Mass arrests after Sinai bombs', *BBC News*, 23 February 2005, available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4287445.stm.

1. The Evolution of the Threat Post-2011

The security breakdown following the 2011 revolution that toppled President Hosni Mubarak has severely weakened Sinai's police and security forces. Police stations were burnt down by disgruntled individuals and Bedouin tribes, and security personnel were chased from isolated bases by armed Bedouins on motorbikes and in pickup trucks.³⁹ Police officers across the Sinai's directorates – including el-Tor, Saint Catherine, Taba, and Ras Sidr – went on strike over being forced to work in “inhumane and degrading” conditions and protested against the government's refusal to allow them access to weapons despite the growing attacks on police stations.⁴⁰

International peacekeepers based in the peninsula have also come under repeated assault from Bedouins. The delegation of 1,660 Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) soldiers,⁴¹ 700 of whom are American, was deployed to North Sinai in 1982, in order to monitor security provisions of the 1979 Camp David peace treaty. Since the 2011 revolution, they have repeatedly been targeted for kidnappings and attacks. In March 2012, an MFO camp was surrounded by Bedouin tribesmen, for eight days.⁴² Later that year, in September, another MFO camp was attacked with automatic weapons and grenades.⁴³

The current conditions have restricted MFO operations to the extent that forces cannot leave their camps without body armour. Troops stationed at the biggest MFO camp (el-Gorah) have even had to build their own wells, so as not to have to rely on local supplies.⁴⁴

The security vacuum in the Sinai has allowed Salafi-jihadist groups to operate in the peninsula. In recent months, jihadist leaders have issued *fatwas* over Mohamed Morsi's removal, adding to the repeated calls by AQ's emir, Ayman al-Zawahiri, for “jihad” as a means of securing sharia law in Egypt. Salafi-jihadist groups have launched weekly – in some cases, daily – attacks against police and security forces, and occasionally against Israeli and foreign targets.

AL-QAEDA'S PRESENCE IN THE SINAI

There are strong indications that al-Qaeda central (AQ), al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) are establishing links to individuals and groups within the Sinai, and therefore that the Egyptian peninsula is becoming AQ's latest international hub.

Sinai militants reportedly have links to the upper echelons of al-Qaeda central. According to US intelligence officials, “aspiring al-Qaeda affiliates operating in the Sinai”⁴⁵ participated in a July 2013 “conference call” of more than 20 top-level al-Qaeda operatives – including Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of AQ central (*The Daily Beast* reported that security fears stoked by that call were one reason the US State Department temporarily closed its embassy in Tel

³⁹ Yaari, E., ‘Sinai: A New Front’, *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, January 2012, No. 9, available at: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyNote09.pdf>.

⁴⁰ ‘Egyptian police protest in Sinai, Cairo demanding weapons’, *Ahram Online*, 5 March 2013, available at: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/66160/Egypt/Politics-/Egyptian-police-protest-in-Sinai,-Cairo-demanding-.aspx>.

⁴¹ ‘Minister for Defence and Minister for Defence Materiel – Joint Media Release – Australian financial support to the Sinai Multinational Force and Observers mission’, Commonwealth of Australia, 10 April 2013, available at: <http://www.minister.defence.gov.au/2013/04/10/minister-for-defence-and-minister-for-defence-materiel-joint-media-release-australian-financial-support-to-the-sinai-multinational-force-and-observers-mission/>.

⁴² ‘Sinai peacekeepers under siege as Egypt battles Islamists’, *The Telegraph*, 17 September 2013, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocan/egypt/10316199/Sinai-peacekeepers-under-siege-as-Egypt-battles-Islamists.html>.

⁴³ Schenker, D., ‘Chaos in the Sinai: Will International Peacekeepers Be the Next Casualty?’, *The Weekly Standard*, 24 May 2013, available at: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/chaos-in-the-sinai-will-international-peacekeepers-be-the-next-casualty>.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Lake, E. and Rogin, J., ‘Exclusive: U.S. Intercepted Al Qaeda's ‘Legion of Doom’ Conference Call’, *The Daily Beast*, 7 August 2013, available at: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/08/07/al-qaeda-conference-call-intercepted-by-u-s-officials-sparked-alerts.html>.

Aviv).⁴⁶ A tribal sheikh told local journalist Mohannad Sabry later that year he believes no fewer than 1,000 al-Qaeda fighters to be operating in the peninsula, the majority of them having come from abroad.⁴⁷ In late 2013, *The New York Times* quoted US officials saying AQAP were in “regular contact” with extremists in the Sinai.⁴⁸

One group operating in the Sinai and thought to have particularly close links to AQAP, as well as AQ central and AQIM, is the Muhammad Jamal Network (MJN). Jamal, an Egyptian, travelled to Afghanistan in the 1980s to fight the “jihad” against the invading Soviet forces, and upon his return was jailed by Egyptian authorities for militant activities with Egyptian Islamic Jihad (an AQ forerunner led by al-Zawahiri). Released from prison after the 2011 Egyptian revolution, Jamal founded his network and allegedly began plotting attacks inside Egypt (he was re-arrested in November 2012, and remains imprisoned).⁴⁹

Jamal has been described by a United Nations Security Council committee as a link in the worldwide al-Qaeda network, one with a direct personal connection to AQAP leader Nasir ‘abd al-Karim Abdullah al-Wahishi, and leaders of AQIM.⁵⁰ According to the US State Department, Jamal is also thought to have received funding from AQAP, and to have “used the AQAP network to smuggle fighters into training camps.”⁵¹

In 2012, Egyptian authorities discovered letters between Jamal and al-Zawahiri in which the former discussed his plans to establish armed groups in the Sinai, train suicide bombers and acquire weapons. Al-Zawahiri responded by giving his blessing to waging attacks in Libya and Egypt (several of the

perpetrators of the deadly 2012 assault on the US consulate in Benghazi, for example, are believed to have trained in MJN’s Libyan camps). In the letters, Jamal described the Sinai as “the next confrontation area with the Jews and the Americans.”⁵²

In July 2011, a group calling itself “Al-Qaeda in the Sinai Peninsula” (AQSP) claimed responsibility for an attack in which as many as 100 gunmen targeted the el-Arish police headquarters and a gas pipeline to Israel.⁵³ Following the attack, the group demanded Egypt revoke its peace treaty with Israel.⁵⁴

While the size, composition or operational activity of AQSP is currently unclear, the group is believed to be led by the Egyptian Ramzi al-Mowafi⁵⁵ who, in the 1990s, travelled to Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan to render services to AQ, eventually becoming Osama bin Laden’s personal doctor and AQ’s chief chemical-weapons producer.⁵⁶ More recently, he escaped from an Egyptian prison following the 2011 revolution, before reportedly fleeing to the Sinai.⁵⁷ However, while both AQSP and the MJN rarely claim responsibility for militant attacks, as Thomas Joscelyn of *The Long War Journal* noted in his February 2014 testimony to the US House of Representatives Homeland Security Committee, AQ has often groomed local networks without explicitly taking credit for their operations.⁵⁸ The same could be the case for these two groups.

Sinai militant groups are adopting increasingly similar methods of attack to those of AQ. Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM), for example, is showing ever-more

⁴⁶ Lake, E. and Rogin, J., ‘Exclusive: U.S. Intercepted Al Qaeda’s ‘Legion of Doom’ Conference Call’, *The Daily Beast*, 7 August 2013, available at: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/08/07/al-qaeda-conference-call-intercepted-by-u-s-officials-sparked-alerts.html>.

⁴⁷ Sabry, M., ‘Al-Qaeda emerges amid Egypt’s turmoil’, *Al-Monitor*, 4 December 2013, available at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/12/al-qaeda-egypt-sinai-insurgency-growing-influence.html>.

⁴⁸ ‘Jihadist Groups Gain in Turmoil Across Middle East’, *The New York Times*, 3 December 2013, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/04/world/middleeast/jihadist-groups-gain-in-turmoil-across-middle-east.html>.

⁴⁹ ‘Terrorist Designations of the Muhammad Jamal Network and Muhammad Jamal’, US Department of State, 7 October 2013, available at: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/10/215171.htm>.

⁵⁰ ‘Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) concerning Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities’, United Nations Security Council, 21 October 2013, available at: <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/NSQJ31813E.shtml>.

⁵¹ ‘Terrorist Designations of the Muhammad Jamal Network and Muhammad Jamal’, US Department of State, 7 October 2013, available at: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/10/215171.htm>.

⁵² Joscelyn, T., ‘Al Qaeda’s Expansion in Egypt: Implications for U.S. Homeland Security’, *Foundation for Defense of Democracies* (February 2014), available at: <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/HM/HM05/20140211/101734/HHRG-113-HM05-Wstate-JoscelynT-20140211.pdf>.

⁵³ ‘Al-Qaeda in Sinai’, *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 4 August 2011, available at: <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1059/cg4.htm>.

⁵⁴ Joscelyn, T., ‘Al Qaeda’s Expansion in Egypt: Implications for U.S. Homeland Security’, *Foundation for Defense of Democracies* (February 2014), available at: <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/HM/HM05/20140211/101734/HHRG-113-HM05-Wstate-JoscelynT-20140211.pdf>.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Barnett, D., ‘Former bin Laden doctor reportedly heads al Qaeda in the Sinai Peninsula’, *The Long War Journal*, 17 July 2013, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/07/former_bin_laden_doc.php.

⁵⁷ ‘Osama bin Laden’s doctor resurfaces’, *CNN*, 17 August 2011, available at: <http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2011/08/17/osama-bin-ladens-doctor-resurfaces/>.

⁵⁸ Joscelyn, T., ‘Al Qaeda’s Expansion in Egypt: Implications for U.S. Homeland Security’, *Foundation for Defense of Democracies* (February 2014), available at: <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/HM/HM05/20140211/101734/HHRG-113-HM05-Wstate-JoscelynT-20140211.pdf>.

sophisticated operations – including an August 2011 cross-border attack that killed eight Israelis, and the downing of an Egyptian military helicopter in January 2014 – and has conducted a number of AQ-style suicide bombings.⁵⁹

ABM has also received the implicit blessing of al-Zawahiri, who played footage of one of its funerals in a January 2014 taped message.⁶⁰ The group's messages are also regularly featured prominently on Al-Fajr Media Centre – al-Qaeda's online forum – indicating the importance the AQ leadership attach to its activity.⁶¹ In Joscelyn's words to the House committee, ABM is "at a minimum, pursuing al-Qaeda's agenda and al-Qaeda's senior leadership approves of the organization." He added that there is a mounting body of evidence suggesting ABM is itself now part of AQ's international terror network.⁶²

ABM's recent videos have included speeches from leaders of ISIS – the AQ offshoot with roots in Iraq that is a one of the largest anti-government contingents in the Syrian civil war. In December 2013, an ISIS sharia-court judge in Syria addressed his "mujahideen brothers in Sinai," saying, "We and you are one ... we cooperate to establish the religion of Allah... with whatever we can support you with, we will cooperate with you to establish the religion of Allah."⁶³

In late April 2014, Cairo's *Almasry Alyoum* cited Egyptian military officials saying they had indications that ISIS operatives had relocated to the Sinai from the fighting in Syria, and had carried out attacks against Egyptian security forces.⁶⁴ As Ismail Alexanderni of the

Egyptian Centre for Economic and Social Rights observed, in reference to Sinai militants: "Within Islamist circles, it is a very clear sign that [ISIS'] ideology is their choice. They respect ISIS, but it's more than respect; it might be an organisational bond."⁶⁵

Other Sinai groups – while not proven to have firm ties with AQ – could nevertheless be described as being AQ-inspired. The Mujahideen Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem (MSC), for example, has dedicated attacks to al-Zawahiri and his predecessor bin Laden.⁶⁶ The Army of Islam – based in the Gaza Strip but operationally active in the Sinai – has reportedly contacted AQ central to ask whether it is permissible to sell drugs to "the Jews" in order to "harm them and take their money."⁶⁷

While it is difficult to precisely quantify al-Qaeda's presence in the Sinai, there are strong indications that the group's various branches are making inroads in the peninsula. Salafi-jihadists in the Sinai appear to be both inspired by AQ ideology and, in some cases, directly instructed by its leadership. As a result, both mainland Egypt and Israel now have a likely al-Qaeda hotspot at their front door, one that could also threaten Western visitors and strategic interests.

FOREIGN FIGHTERS IN THE SINAI

Given a lack of conclusive evidence, the precise scope of foreign fighter infiltration into the Sinai remains unclear. However, recent references from al-Qaeda regarding the presence of foreign fighters in the peninsula – combined with numerous reports of fighters entering the area from abroad – suggests a significant foreign presence there.

The most convincing indication so far of foreign fighter activity in the Sinai has come from the very top of al-Qaeda (AQ). On 24 January 2014, AQ leader Ayman al-Zawahiri released a message to "our people in the Sinai ... to offer sanctuary to your brothers the

⁵⁹ Joscelyn, T., 'Al Qaeda's Expansion in Egypt: Implications for U.S. Homeland Security', *Foundation for Defense of Democracies* (February 2014), available at: <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/HM/HM05/20140211/101734/HHRG-113-HM05-Wstate-JoscelynT-20140211.pdf>.

⁶⁰ Barnett, D., 'Zawahiri's message to 'our people in Sinai', *The Long War Journal*, 27 January 2014, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2014/01/zawahiris_message_to_our_peopl.php.

⁶¹ Barnett, D., 'Ansar Jerusalem confirms deaths of 6 members, 2 tied to Syria conflict', *The Long War Journal*, 24 March 2014, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/03/ansar_jerusalem_conf.php.

⁶² Joscelyn, T., 'Al Qaeda's Expansion in Egypt: Implications for U.S. Homeland Security', *Foundation for Defense of Democracies* (February 2014), available at: <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/HM/HM05/20140211/101734/HHRG-113-HM05-Wstate-JoscelynT-20140211.pdf>.

⁶³ Barnett, D., 'ISIS judge to Sinai jihadists: "We and you are one"', *The Long War Journal*, 14 December 2013, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2013/12/isis_judge_to_sinai_jihadists.php; see also al-Tamimi, A. J., 'ISIS and al-Qaeda compete for supremacy in global jihad', *Middle East Forum*, 11 February 2014, available at: <http://www.meforum.org/3782/isis-alqaeda-global-jihad>.

⁶⁴ 'Army confronts terrorists with Apaches, and ISIS elements enter Sinai', (Arabic), *Almasry Alyoum*, 10 February 2014, available at: <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/391252#>.

⁶⁵ 'Sinai jihadi group emerges at forefront of Egypt violence', *The Financial Times*, 31 January 2014, available at: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/b5ad40d0-8a7b-11e3-9c29-00144feab7de.html#axzz2z2yn5CyR>.

⁶⁶ 'Islamic group claims responsibility for attack on Egypt border', *The Times of Israel*, 19 June 2012, available at: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/islamic-group-claims-responsibility-for-mondays-terror-attack/>.

⁶⁷ 'Jaysh al-Islam's Questions to 'Atiyatullah Al-Libi (English Translation)', *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, available at: <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Jaysh-al-Islams-Questions-to-Atiyatullah-Al-Libi-Translation.pdf>.

Muhajireen [foreign fighters].”⁶⁸ Foreign fighters present in the Sinai reportedly include individuals largely from Afghanistan,⁶⁹ Syria,⁷⁰ Yemen,⁷¹ Sudan,⁷² Libya, Algeria,⁷³ Somalia,⁷⁴ Saudi Arabia,⁷⁵ and elsewhere.

Reports of foreign fighters in the Sinai date back to before Morsi’s removal in July 2013. Yemeni and Somalian jihadists were among those believed to be operating in the Sinai, according to a “senior diplomatic source” quoted in *The Daily Beast*, in January 2013.⁷⁶ The same month, Egyptian authorities voiced concerns that militants from Libya and Algeria had joined militant groups in the peninsula.⁷⁷

One of the largest reported contingents of foreign fighters in the Sinai appears to come from Yemen – the home of what is widely considered al-Qaeda’s

(AQ’s) most operationally active franchise,⁸⁰ al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).⁸¹ A *CNN* report from August 2012 quoted an Egyptian security official speaking of at least ten Yemeni militants operating in the Sinai, and two Bedouin tribal elders confirmed their presence there.⁸² An *Associated Press* report from September 2013 put the number of Yemenis in the hundreds – many believed to have arrived in the peninsula after Morsi’s ousting, in response to Yemeni clerics’ edicts to travel to Egypt fight a “jihad” against the Cairo government.⁸³

Furthermore, international jihadist leaders have called for individuals to travel to the Sinai to fight. In calling for Egyptian Muslims to take arms against the military in early-November 2013, the Mauritanian⁸⁴ ideologue Sheikh Abu al Mundhir al-Shinqiti said: ‘The goal of the security campaign that the tyrannical army in Egypt is directing in the Sinai is to protect Israel and its borders.’ Shinqiti praised attacks by ‘your *mujahideen* brothers’ in the Sinai and called on Egyptian Muslims to ‘support them [and] increase their ranks... jihad in the Sinai is a great opportunity for you to gather and unite under a pure flag.’⁸⁵

Groups originating from the Gaza Strip are thought to have a strong presence in North Sinai. The group which appears to be the most operationally active in the Sinai is the Gaza-based Mujahideen Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem (MSC) (see “Group Profiles”). Like all jihadist groups that operate in the Sinai, the exact size; structure; and composition of the MSC remain unclear. However, the MSC is believed to be an umbrella group formed by a merger

68 ‘Update: Zawahiri Praises Chechen Fighters As Models for Jihad, Reflects on Egyptian Revolution’, *SITE Monitoring Service*, 26 January 2014, available at: <https://news.siteintelgroup.com/index.php/19-jihadist-news/4119-zawahiri-praises-chechen-fighters-as-models-for-jihad>, cited in Barnett, D., ‘Zawahiri’s message to our people in the Sinai’, *The Long War Journal*, 27 January 2014, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2014/01/zawahiris_message_to_our_peopl.php.

69 ‘Special Report: Egyptian militants outwit army in Sinai battlefield’, *Reuters*, 16 March 2014, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/16/us-egypt-sinai-specialreport-idUSBREA2F05020140316>.

70 ‘Captured foreign fighters in Sinai say they were paid to fight Egypt’s military’, *World Tribune*, 6 August 2013, available at: <http://www.worldtribune.com/2013/08/06/captured-foreign-fighters-in-sinai-said-they-were-paid-to-fight-egypts-military/>.

71 Ibid.

72 ‘Local, foreign Islamic militants turn Egypt’s Sinai a new front for jihad’, *Associated Press*, 3 September 2013, available at: <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/09/03/local-foreign-islamic-militants-turn-egypt-sinai-new-front-for-jihad/>.

73 Bleach, A., ‘In North Sinai, Jihadis Stand Down the Egyptian Government’, *The Daily Beast*, 6 January 2013, available at: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/01/06/in-the-north-sinai-jihadis-stand-down-the-egyptian-government.html>.

74 ‘Captured foreign fighters in Sinai say they were paid to fight Egypt’s military’, *World Tribune*, 6 August 2013, available at: <http://www.worldtribune.com/2013/08/06/captured-foreign-fighters-in-sinai-said-they-were-paid-to-fight-egypts-military/>.

75 Sabry, M., ‘Al-Qaeda emerges amid Egypt’s turmoil’, *Al-Monitor*, 4 December 2013, available at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/12/al-qaeda-egypt-sinai-insurgency-growinginfluence.html>.

76 Bleach, A., ‘In North Sinai, Jihadis Stand Down the Egyptian Government’, *The Daily Beast*, 6 January 2013, available at: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/01/06/in-the-north-sinai-jihadis-stand-down-the-egyptian-government.html>.

77 Roggio, B., ‘Mujahideen Shura Council calls attack in Israel a “gift” to Zawahiri and al Qaeda “brothers”’, *The Long War Journal*, 30 July 2012, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/07/egyptian_jihadist_gr.php; see also: Barnett, D., ‘Saudi MSC in Jerusalem fighter fought in Libya, sought to join “mujahideen” in Somalia’, *The Long War Journal*, 27 January 2014, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/01/saudi_msc_in_jerusal.php.

78 Bleach, A., ‘In North Sinai, Jihadis Stand Down the Egyptian Government’, *The Daily Beast*, 6 January 2013, available at: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/01/06/in-the-north-sinai-jihadis-stand-down-the-egyptian-government.html>.

79 ‘Algeria raid puts a lawless region in the spotlight’, *Los Angeles Times*, available at: <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/jan/18/world/la-fg-algeria-hostages-20130118>.

80 ‘Brennan on bin Laden raid, and “dangerous” Yemen’, *CNN*, 20 April 2012, available at: <http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2012/04/20/brennan-on-bin-laden-raid-and-dangerous-yemen/>.

81 CIA director John Brennan, for example, has described AQAP as “AQ’s most operationally active” branch. See: ‘U.S. official: Al Qaeda in Yemen bigger threat than Pakistan’, *CNN*, 18 December 2010, available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/US/12/17/al.kaeda.yemen>.

82 ‘Official: Yemeni militants infiltrated Egypt before Rafah attack’, *CNN*, 17 August 2012, available at: <http://www.cnn.com/2012/08/17/world/mcast/egypt-yemen-militants/>.

83 ‘Local, foreign Islamic militants turn Egypt’s Sinai a new front for jihad’, *Associated Press*, 3 September 2013, available at: <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/09/03/local-foreign-islamic-militants-turn-egypt-sinai-new-front-for-jihad/>.

84 Zelin, A., ‘Know Your Ansar al-Sharia’, *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 21 September 2012, available at: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/know-your-ansar-al-sharia>.

85 Barnett, D., ‘Key jihadi ideologue: Jihad against Egyptian army is “religious duty”’, *The Long War Journal*, 6 November 2013, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/11/key_jihadi_ideologue.php#ixzz2yPPY17c4.

of two smaller Gaza-based groups – Ansar al-Sunna and Tawhid Wal-Jihad.⁸⁶

Saudi citizen Adi Saleh Abdullah al-Hadhli was one of two Mujahideen Shura Council (MSC) fighters killed after murdering an Israeli-Arab civilian working on the Egyptian-Israeli border fence in June 2012.⁸⁷ Following the attack – for which the MSC claimed responsibility – the group released a video dedicating the attack to Osama bin Laden; Ayman al-Zawahiri; and the ‘Syrian Muslim jihadi people’,⁸⁸ and stated its aim as the institution of sharia and the return of the Islamic Caliphate.⁸⁹

Another Palestinian group thought to be active in the Sinai is the Army of Islam (“Jaysh al-Islam”, in Arabic), run by the powerful Dughmush clan (see “Group Profiles”). The organisation grew out of Gaza; but, the bulk of its operations are now in the Sinai, which it uses as a base from which to attack the Egyptian Army and to launch rockets at Israel. The Army of Islam has, at times, referred to itself as “al-Qaeda in Palestine”⁹⁰ and has been linked to the Jordanian extremist cleric, Abu Qatada, whom the United Nations has sanctioned over his ties to al-Qaeda.⁹¹

Given the mounting reports of foreign fighters in the Sinai, it is possible that they now have a significant presence within the peninsula, posing an evolving and substantial threat to both the Sinai and mainland

Egypt. Furthermore, as the Syrian civil war continues indefinitely and Hamas tightens its control over the Gaza Strip, the Sinai could potentially become a key hub for the rising traffic of fighters to and from Gaza, Syria and elsewhere.

WEAPONS IN THE SINAI

The Sinai’s strategic location and rugged, mountainous terrain have for centuries proven ideal for smuggling goods through the peninsula. The breakdown of security following the 2011 revolution provided further opportunity for these existing smuggling networks to thrive, and for Sinai-based Salafi-jihadist groups to take advantage of them.

The majority of weapons smuggled into the Sinai arrive from Libya in the west, the Gaza Strip in the east, and the Sudan in the south. In Libya, the two-and-a-half years following the overthrow of leader Muammar Gaddafi have seen rebels looting vast amount of weapons from unsecured warehouses,⁹² and the central government in Tripoli remains virtually powerless to reassert control.⁹³ Amid the breakdown in security, large amounts of Libyan weapons have been smuggled into the Sinai Peninsula, often through towns along Egypt’s frontier with Libya such as Salloum⁹⁴ and Marsa Matruh.⁹⁵ Egyptian officials believe many of the weapons are earmarked for rebels fighting against the Syrian regime, as well as for Hamas and other militant groups in the Gaza Strip.⁹⁶

In November 2012, Egyptian authorities seized 185 crates of Libyan arms – including anti-tank and anti-aircraft munitions, landmines, rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), ammunition and explosives – worth

⁸⁶ ‘Israeli air strikes kill three Palestinian militants in Gaza’, *Reuters*, 14 October 2012, available at: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/10/14/uk-palestinians-israel-violence-idUKBRE89C0IY20121014>.

⁸⁷ Roggio, B., ‘Mujahideen Shura Council calls attack in Israel a “gift” to Zawahiri and al Qaeda “brothers”’, *The Long War Journal*, 30 July 2012, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/07/egyptian_jihadist_gr.php. see also: Barnett, D., ‘Saudi MSC in Jerusalem fighter fought in Libya, sought to join ‘mujahideen’ in Somalia’, *The Long War Journal*, 27 January 2014, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/01/saudi_msc_in_jerusal.php.

⁸⁸ Joscelyn, T., ‘Al Qaeda-linked group claims responsibility for attack in Israel’, *The Long War Journal*, 19 June 2012, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/06/al_qaeda-linked_group.php.

⁸⁹ ‘Islamic group claims responsibility for attack on Egypt border’, *The Times of Israel*, 19 June 2012, available at: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/islamic-group-claims-responsibility-for-mondays-terror-attack/>.

⁹⁰ ‘Profile of the Army of Islam’, *The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center*, August 2012, available at: http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/articles/Art_20385/E_169_12_1576235301.pdf; see also: ‘Army of Islam’, *Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium*, available at: <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/army-islam>.

⁹¹ ‘The List established and maintained by the Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee with respect to individuals, groups, undertakings and other entities associated with Al Qaida’, United Nations Security Council, available at: <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/AQList.htm> (Last updated 15 April 2014).

⁹² ‘Libya: Missing Weapons Unsecured, UN Envoy Says’, *Associated Press*, 6 November 2011, available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/06/libya-missing-weapons_n_1078468.html.

⁹³ ‘Western countries alarmed as Libya slides towards chaos’, *Reuters*, 6 March 2014, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/06/us-libya-conference-idUSBREA2522T20140306>.

⁹⁴ ‘Border troops seize huge amount of weapons at Salloum’, *Egypt Independent*, 29 July 2013, available at: <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/border-troops-seize-huge-amount-weapons-salloum>.

⁹⁵ ‘Four arrested in Matrouh on arms smuggling charges’, *Egypt Independent*, 10 January 2013, available at: <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/four-arrested-matrouh-arms-smuggling-charges>.

⁹⁶ ‘Arms smuggling explodes across Egypt-Libya border’, *McClatchy Newspapers*, 8 September 2011, available at: http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2011/09/08/123524/arms-smuggling-explodes-across.html#.Uh8_YUZWbIV.

\$3.3 million in total.⁹⁷ A week earlier, officials said they had seized more than 100 Grad rockets and 400,000 rounds of anti-aircraft ammunition that had arrived from Libya.⁹⁸ Israel Defense Forces (IDF) officials have recently claimed that advanced weapons including anti-tank guided missiles, Sniper Support Rifles (SSRs) and shoulder-fired missiles (a.k.a. MANPADS) were entering the Sinai from Libya in large quantities and being sold at open-air auctions to the highest bidder.⁹⁹

In early 2013, after Egyptian authorities had seized 60 anti-tank missiles smuggled in pick-up trucks from Libya, a European diplomat observed that Egyptian authorities “are becoming alarmed that [Libyan] weapons are now being stockpiled by Egyptian Salafi groups. They are starting to uncover arms trafficked from Libya in the [Nile] Delta and believe other weapons are being stored in Sinai. It is making them very nervous.”¹⁰⁰

Moreover, while Sinai was once deemed the backyard of the volatile Gaza Strip,¹⁰¹ this dynamic is in the process of being reversed. A report by the Shin Bet, Israel’s internal-security agency, reported that hundreds of high-quality weapons – including long-range rockets and advanced anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons – passed through the Sinai en route to Gaza in 2012 alone.¹⁰² What is more, Israeli officials believe that weapons smuggled into Gaza – many of them via the Sinai – are now being returned to the peninsula to be used against Egyptian targets.¹⁰³ As a result, since early 2013, Egypt’s

army has flooded tunnels between the Sinai and the Gaza Strip – with water, or even sewage¹⁰⁴ – to prevent a two-way flow of smuggled arms.

Even the Muslim Brotherhood regime of President Mohamed Morsi appeared to recognise the urgency of blocking the weapons flow the Gaza Strip. In February 2013, Morsi’s national-security adviser, Essam el-Haddad, said: ‘We don’t want to see these tunnels used for illegal ways of smuggling either people or weapons that can really harm Egyptian security [...] We would not like to see arms smuggled through these tunnels either in or out, [...] and we have captured actually across Egypt heavy arms that could be used in a very dangerous way.’¹⁰⁵ However, Morsi’s efforts to close tunnels were extremely ineffective, given that, a very low number of tunnels were flooded at that time, and, the majority of tunnels that were hit re-opened soon after.¹⁰⁶

Weapons are not only smuggled from the Gaza Strip to the Sinai, but are reportedly being produced within the peninsula as well. Hamas is reported to have set up rocket-production facilities and forward operating bases within the peninsula in late 2011, believing them to be far less vulnerable to Israeli airstrikes there than in the Gaza Strip.¹⁰⁷ In 2012, Maj. Gen. Warren Whiting, the then-head of the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), confirmed that Gaza-based militants had test-fired an Iranian advanced Fajr-5 missile within the Sinai.¹⁰⁸

The Shin Bet has described Sudan as the ‘central cross-roads’ in the chain of weapons transfers with the

⁹⁷ ‘Egypt reportedly intercepts large weapons shipment en route to Gaza from Libya’, *The Times of Israel*, 27 November 2012, available at: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/egypt-reportedly-seizes-large-weapons-shipment-en-route-from-libya-to-sinai/#ixzz2tyfSWSAK>.

⁹⁸ ‘Authorities intercept weapons smuggling from Libya’, *Egypt Independent*, 21 November 2012, available at: <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/authorities-intercept-weapons-smuggling-libya>.

⁹⁹ Alster, P.; Emerson, S., ‘The New “Silk Route:” Weapons to Gaza and Beyond’, *Family Security Matters*, 14 February 2013, available at: <http://www.familysecuritymatters.org/publications/detail/the-new-silk-route-weapons-to-gaza-and-beyond#ixzz2uEzK1ed0>.

¹⁰⁰ ‘Libyan Arms Stockpiles in Egypt Causing Concern’, *Voice of America*, 5 March 2013, available at: <http://www.voanews.com/content/libyan-arms-stockpiles-in-egypt-causing-concern/1615973.html>.

¹⁰¹ ‘Single terror group responsible for most attacks in Sinai, intelligence sources say’, *The Times of Israel*, 3 October 2012, available at: www.timesofisrael.com/one-terror-network-responsible-for-most-attacks-in-south-intelligence-sources/.

¹⁰² ‘2012 Annual Report: Terror Trends, Data and Responses’, Israeli Security Agency, available at: <http://www.shabak.gov.il/SiteCollectionImages/Hebrew/TerrorInfo/Years/2012-he.pdf> (Hebrew).

¹⁰³ Levitt, J., ‘Israel Security Officials: Weapons Smuggled Into Gaza to Attack Israel, Now Used Against Egypt’, *The Algemeiner*, 25 July 2013, available at: <http://www.algemeiner.com/2013/07/25/israel-security-officials-weapons-smuggled-into-gaza-to-attack-israel-now-used-against-egypt/>.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Foul sewage flooding raises Palestinian ire’, *Al Jazeera*, 9 March 2013, available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/03/201337135540513860.html>.

¹⁰⁵ ‘Egypt flooded tunnels to cut Gaza arms flow: aide’, *Reuters*, 18 February 2013, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/02/18/us-palestinians-tunnels-egypt-idUSBRE91H0JA20130218>; see also: ‘To Block Gaza Tunnels, Egypt Lets Sewage Flow’, *The New York Times*, 20 February 2013, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/21/world/middleeast/egypts-floods-smuggling-tunnels-to-gaza-with-sewage.html>.

¹⁰⁶ Interviews with Ibrahim El-Menaci, head of the independent Sinai Tribes Union in Rafah, Mustafa Sinjer, prominent Sinai leftist activist and writer in Sheikh Zuwayyed, an anonymous former smuggler from El-Arish, March-June 2013 (all three individuals spoke of this during the last four months of Mohamed Morsi’s time in office, when government officials claimed to have been effectively shutting down the tunnels).

¹⁰⁷ ‘Hamas sets up rocket production line in Sinai’, *The Jerusalem Post*, 11 December 2011, available at: <http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Hamas-sets-up-rocket-production-line-in-Sinai>.

¹⁰⁸ ‘Sinai peacekeeping force commander warns of weapons smuggling to Gaza’, *Haaretz*, 31 May 2012, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/sinai-peacekeeping-force-commander-warns-of-weapons-smuggling-to-gaza-1.433567>.

Sinai and the Gaza Strip.¹⁰⁹ In 2009, Israel reportedly conducted three¹¹⁰ airstrikes in Sudan against suspected Iranian weapons convoys bound for Gaza.¹¹¹ In 2012, Sudan accused Israel of bombing a Sudanese weapons-production facility that Israel and the United States believed was under Iranian control.¹¹² Following the 2012 airstrikes, Iran's then-foreign minister – Ali Akbar Salehi – said, “Let’s assume that Iran has established an arms factory in the Sudan. Is this forbidden? Within the framework of international laws, if there is a country that wants to buy weapons from us, we are ready.”¹¹³

Iranian weapon shipments bound for the Sinai and Gaza Strip have continued into 2014. In March 2014, the Israeli Navy intercepted a weapons shipment off the coast of the Sudan containing dozens of advanced 100-mile-range Syrian rockets. Israeli officials attributed the shipment to Iran, and said that, had the weapons reached their destination, they would have been a ‘game-changer’ for the Islamic Republic’s terror war against Israel.¹¹⁴ Israeli officials originally said the shipment had been bound for Gaza, but US intelligence analysts claimed the shipment was most likely headed for Sinai itself. Israel, it appears, was merely attempting to help its Egyptian partners save face.¹¹⁵

Israeli military officials have told the authors of this report that their co-operation with their Egyptian

counterparts is at a level unseen in years.¹¹⁶ If there is a silver lining to the chaos roiling Sinai, it is the realisation – by both Cairo and Jerusalem – that their mutual interest lies in a secure buffer between them.

MILITARY ACTION IN THE SINAI

Since the 2011 Egyptian revolution, Egypt’s army has launched three major anti-terror campaigns in North Sinai. The first (“Operation Eagle”) came on the back of an August 2011 cross-border attack that killed eight Israelis (and five Egyptian troops in the ensuing pursuit); the second (“Operation Sinai”) was in reaction to an attack a year later that killed 16 Egyptian troops; the third (“Operation Desert Storm”) came in response to a spike in attacks since July 2013. The operations’ success remains the subject of debate: the army has repeatedly released statements reporting large numbers of militants whom it says were arrested or killed. Yet, given the growing terrorist base in North Sinai, any validity behind the military’s claims is looking increasingly doubtful.¹¹⁷

The deterioration in the Sinai security environment from early 2011 pushed the Egyptian military to intervene in an attempt to stem the growing threat against police and security forces. Alongside the rise in Sinai militancy, the levels of troops and range of assets deployed have continued to increase: Operation Eagle, for example, included 1,000 soldiers and a few hundred armoured personnel carriers.¹¹⁸ Nonetheless, the violence has persisted. Operation Sinai, which took place a year later, marked a significant increase in the security presence in the peninsula^{119 120} and the first firing of missiles in the Sinai since 1973.¹²¹

¹⁰⁹ ‘Smuggling Weapons from Iran into the Gaza Strip through Sudan and Sinai’, Israel Security Agency, available at: <http://www.shabak.gov.il/English/EnTerrorData/Reviews/Pages/SmugglingWeapons.aspx>.

¹¹⁰ ‘Exclusive: Three Israeli Airstrikes Against Sudan’, *ABC News*, 27 March 2009, available at: <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2009/03/exclusive-three/>.

¹¹¹ ‘How Israel Foiled an Arms Convoy Bound for Hamas’, *TIME*, 30 March 2009, available at: <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1888352,00.html>.

¹¹² ‘Smuggling weapons to Gaza – the long way’, *CNN*, 19 November 2012, available at: <http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2012/11/19/smuggling-weapons-to-gaza-the-long-way/comment-page-2/>.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ ‘Israel Says It Seized Iranian Shipment of Rockets Headed for Gaza’, *The New York Times*, 5 March, 2014, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/06/world/middleeast/israel-says-it-seized-iranian-shipment-of-rockets-headed-for-gaza.html>; see also: ‘Israel: Iran missile shipment in Red Sea a “game-changer”’, *USA Today*, 5 March 2014, available at: <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2014/03/05/israel-iran-red-sea-rockets/6065215/>.

¹¹⁵ ‘Doubts surface on Gaza destination of rockets seized by Israel’, *Reuters*, 25 March 2014, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/25/us-israel-egypt-gaza-rockets-idUSBREA2O11720140325?feedType=RSS&feedName=worldNews>.

¹¹⁶ Series of author interviews with IDF officials throughout 2012 and 2013; see also: ‘Israelis, Egyptians Cooperate on Terror’, *The Wall Street Journal*, 13 August 2013, available at: <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887324085304579010990544276768>.

¹¹⁷ Sabry, M., ‘Sinai Attacks Cast Doubt on Egyptian Military’, *Al-Monitor*, 25 September 2012, available at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2012/al-monitor/repeated-attacks-raise-questions.html>.

¹¹⁸ ‘Egypt launches massive operation to control Sinai’, *The Jerusalem Post*, 14 August 2011, available at: <http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Egypt-launches-massive-operation-to-control-Sinai>.

¹¹⁹ El-Din, A., ‘And Then There Was Sinai’, *Carnegie Endowment*, 11 July 2013, available at: <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2013/07/11/and-then-there-was-sinai/geq5>.

¹²⁰ ‘Armed Forces hold press conference on Operation Eagle’, State Information Service – Egypt, 8 September 2012, available at: <http://www.sis.gov.eg/En/Templates/Articles/tmpArticles.aspx?ArtID=63774#UxRxVfnK60A>.

¹²¹ ‘Egypt launches Sinai air strikes’, *The Guardian*, 8 August 2012, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/aug/08/egypt-launches-missile-assault-sinai>.

Since Operation Sinai, military attacks and operations have not been undertaken as separate, long-term deployments but, rather, as follow-on operations. In mid-July 2013, following the violence in the Sinai that followed Morsi's dismissal, the army launched Operation Desert Storm.¹²² The operation marked yet another shift towards greater military force in North Sinai – with the deployment of two additional infantry battalions, helicopters and tanks, as well as the launch of nightly attacks against militants in the area.¹²³ According to the Egyptian military, 103 suspected militants were arrested and 60 were killed in the period between 5 July and 4 August 2013.¹²⁴

Since then, the army has regularly made claims of high numbers of militant deaths and arrests, particularly since Operation Sinai. Throughout the first month of that operation, the military said that it had killed some three dozen militants,¹²⁵ whereas, in a recent airstrike, it claimed that it had killed 30 militants in just a single day.¹²⁶ More recently, the period between late January and early March 2014 has shown the highest levels of apparent military success, as shown below:

- 31 January: Egyptian airstrike, 13 militants reported killed;¹²⁷
- 3 February: Egyptian airstrike, 30 militants reported killed;¹²⁸
- 7 February: Egyptian airstrike, 16 militants reported killed;¹²⁹

- 19 February: Egyptian airstrike and ground operation, 16 militants reported killed;¹³⁰
- 22-24 February: Combined operations, 14 militants reported killed.¹³¹

The army's statements, however, often contradict each other and cannot be independently verified. Furthermore, according to *The Henry Jackson Society* database of attacks, the military operations in question seem to have had little impact upon the persistence of more sophisticated militant activity in the Sinai. Since 2011, the overall trend has been of rising violence on both sides. In fact, despite apparent recent successes, the Egyptian military has been criticised for its weak intelligence network – a product of its deteriorating relations with Bedouin leaders.¹³²

As a consequence of the increasing violence in the Sinai, Israeli and Egyptian military co-operation has dramatically increased, and many of the provisions of the Camp David Accords have been effectively suspended. Through bilateral dialogue, Egyptian forces are now operating formerly banned equipment in the Sinai, and in far larger numbers than at any time since 1967.¹³³ Israel has allowed Egyptian Apache attack helicopters to undertake flyovers above the Gaza Strip and over the demilitarised “Zone C” close to the Israeli border.¹³⁴ Additionally, Israel has, on occasion, gained permission from Egypt to launch attacks on Egyptian territory: on 9 August 2013, for example, four militants were killed in an apparent Israeli drone strike. Western officials say that Egypt and Israel have agreed that the latter is allowed to take action against Sinai militants only as a last resort if the Egyptians are not in a position to stop an imminent threat.¹³⁵

¹²² ‘Egyptian military launches major Sinai offensive’, *The Times of Israel*, 27 July 2013, available at: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/egyptian-military-launches-major-sinai-offensive/>.

¹²³ ‘Egypt’s “Operation Desert Storm” hits new Al Qaida front in northeast Sinai’, *World Tribune*, 30 July 2013, available at: <http://www.worldtribune.com/2013/07/30/egypts-operation-desert-storm-hits-new-al-qaida-front-in-northeast-sinai/>.

¹²⁴ ‘103 “terrorists” arrested, 60 killed in Sinai security crackdown: Army statement’, *Ahram Online*, 7 August 2013, available at: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/78559.aspx>.

¹²⁵ ‘Egypt kills militants, seizes weapons in Sinai offensive’, *CNN*, 10 September 2012, available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/09/08/world/africa/egypt-sinai/index.html>.

¹²⁶ ‘Military airstrikes kill 30 militants in North Sinai: media reports’, *Ahram Online*, 3 February 2014, available at: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/93405.aspx>.

¹²⁷ ‘Egyptian army aircraft pound Sinai terrorists, killing 13’, *Associated Press*, 2 February 2014, available at: http://www.israelhayom.com/site/newsletter_article.php?id=15183.

¹²⁸ ‘Military airstrikes kill 30 militants in North Sinai: media reports’, *Ahram Online*, 3 February 2014, available at: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/93405.aspx>.

¹²⁹ ‘Egypt army says airstrikes kill Sinai rebels’, *Al Jazeera*, 8 February 2014, available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/02/egypt-army-says-airstrikes-kill-sinai-rebels-201428154246812809.html>.

¹³⁰ ‘Egypt strikes strongholds of Al Qaida “chief terrorists” in Sinai’, *World Tribune*, 24 February 2014, available at: <http://www.worldtribune.com/2014/02/24/egypt-strikes-strongholds-of-al-qaida-chief-terrorists-in-sinai/>.

¹³¹ ‘14 militants killed in Egypt army raid in North Sinai’, *Xinhua*, 25 February 2014, available at: <http://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2014/02/25/14-militants-killed-in-egypt-army-raid-in-north-sinai.html>.

¹³² Interviews with Ibrahim El-Menaci, head of the independent Sinai Tribes Union in Rafah, October 2013. Three other sources spoke of this later on condition of anonymity in January 2014.

¹³³ ‘Israel allowing Egypt army to operate in north Sinai’, *The Times of Israel*, 20 January 2014, available at: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-allowing-egypt-army-presence-in-north-sinai/>.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ ‘Israelis, Egyptians Cooperate on Terror’, *The Wall Street Journal*, 13 August 2013, available at: <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB1000142412788732408530457901099054427668>.

US military aid to Egypt has continued since Hosni Mubarak was overthrown in February 2011. In January 2014, Congress allowed the Obama administration to resume its \$1.5 billion in military aid to Egypt,¹³⁶ having withheld that aid (including tank-kits, Apache attack helicopters, harpoon missiles, and F-16 jets) since the previous July.¹³⁷ However, the Obama administration has yet to decide whether to resume military aid to Egypt, as Washington is still waiting for Cairo to address its concerns regarding the military-led government's crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood.¹³⁸

As a result, the Egyptian army has even looked to purchase weapons from Russia, following a proposed \$2 billion arms deal discussed in November 2013. Russia reportedly pledged to supply 24 MiG-29 fighter jets, air defence systems, the KORNET anti-tank missile complex and Ka-25, Mi-28 and Mi-25 combat helicopters.¹³⁹

While additional Russian aid would greater benefit the military's existing forces in combating the threat in North Sinai, and, despite its renewed co-operation with Egypt over security in the Sinai, Israel has still shown a wariness at the idea. Faced with the prospect of having its qualitative military edge degraded by a transfer of weapons from Russia,¹⁴⁰ Israel urged the Obama administration not to cancel the sale of 10 Apache helicopters to Egypt.¹⁴¹

On April 22 the US government agreed to let the sale go through, with American officials making clear that they view instability in the Sinai as a threat to the US, to its partner Egypt and to its ally Israel. According to Pentagon spokesman Rear Adm. John Kirby, 'This is

one element of the president's broader efforts to work with partners across the region to build their capacity to counter terrorist threats, and is the United States' national security interest'.¹⁴² A day later, State Department spokesperson Jen Psaki echoed the same sentiment: '[T]hese new helicopters will help the Egyptian Government counter extremists who threaten not just Egypt, but Israeli security as well as the United States'.¹⁴³ The same day, US Secretary of State John Kerry hosted a meeting lasting several hours with the head of Egyptian intelligence.¹⁴⁴

To conclude, the military campaign in the Sinai has several failings. Firstly, due to a lack of trust and communication between Bedouin tribes and the Egyptian government, the military's key sources of information and intelligence on the ground are likely to have largely disintegrated, thereby limiting its ability to curb the terrorist threat in North Sinai. While the rate of militant deaths has reportedly increased alongside the apparent decline in recent attacks, the terrorist threat in the Sinai is expanding and diversifying.

BEDOUIN-JIHADIST TIES

The government's deteriorating relationship with the Sinai's Bedouin tribal leaders is severely undermining its attempt to re-establish stability in the peninsula. Bedouins make up around three-quarters of the Sinai's population,¹⁴⁵ with their tribal system controlling the vast majority of the peninsula's land and smuggling networks. Yet, the Bedouins are showing an increasing reluctance to help the government, and, in many cases, have chosen to join rather than help fight militant groups.

The Sinai Bedouins – just 10% of whom are formally employed –¹⁴⁶ have long been neglected and

¹³⁶ Rogin, J., 'Congress to Give Egypt \$1.5 Billion in Aid', *The Daily Beast*, 13 January 2014, available at: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/01/13/congress-to-give-egypt-1-5-billion-in-aid.html>.

¹³⁷ 'US cutting military aid, hundreds of millions in cash assistance to Egypt', *Fox News*, 10 October 2013, available at: <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2013/10/10/us-cutting-hundreds-millions-in-aid-to-egypt/>.

¹³⁸ 'John Kerry says any resumption of aid to Egypt would depend on reforms in Cairo', *The Washington Times*, 12 March 2014, available at: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/mar/12/kerry-says-any-resumption-of-aid-to-egypt-would-de/>.

¹³⁹ 'Amid U.S.-Egypt chill, Sisi seeks military assistance from Russia', *Los Angeles Times*, 13 February 2014, available at: <http://articles.latimes.com/2014/feb/13/world/la-fg-wn-russia-egypt-sisi-putin-20140213>.

¹⁴⁰ 'Egypt's Arms Deal with Russia: Potential Strategic Costs', *The Washington Institute*, 4 March 2014, available at: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/egypts-arms-deal-with-russia-potential-strategic-costs>.

¹⁴¹ 'Don't cancel sale of Apaches to Egypt, Israel urges U.S.', *Haaretz*, 19 March 2014, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/.premium-1.580617>.

¹⁴² 'State Department clears Egypt to receive some military aid, including helicopters', *Associated Press*, 23 April 2014, available at: <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2014/04/23/state-department-clears-egypt-to-receive-some-military-aid-including/>.

¹⁴³ 'Daily Press Briefing', US Department of State, 23 April 2014, available at: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2014/04/225092.htm>.

¹⁴⁴ 'Department of State Public Schedule', US Department of State, 23 April 2014, available at: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/appt/2014/04/225073.htm>.

¹⁴⁵ 'Egypt mulls arming Sinai Bedouin security force', *Associated Press*, 8 October 2012, available at: http://seattletimes.com/html/nationworld/2019376330_apmlegyptsinaimilitias.html.

¹⁴⁶ 'Sinai Bedouin factions demand Egypt amend peace accord with Israel', *Haaretz*, 21 April 2012, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/sinai-bedouin-factions-demand-egypt-amend-peace-accord-with-israel-1.425661>.

discriminated against by the Egyptian government. Among their grievances are their systematic exclusion from police academies and the military, and the absence of basic public services in their towns and villages.¹⁴⁷ When, in 1967, Israel took control of the Sinai, in the Six-Day War, many Bedouins saw economic opportunity. Israeli tourism entrepreneurs built the resort towns of Sharm el-Sheikh; Taba; Nuweiba; and Dahab, and many Bedouins learned Hebrew and found work in the new hotels.¹⁴⁸

In 1982, three years after the Egypt–Israel peace treaty, the peninsula returned to Egypt.¹⁴⁹ For the Bedouins, the return to Egyptian sovereignty brought an attendant increase in government repression, as they were branded a “fifth column” for having worked with Israel. The regional government took control of the appointments of tribal chiefs; further strictures were imposed against Bedouins working with the army or security forces; and Bedouins were barred from employment with the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) international peacekeeping force.¹⁵⁰ The perception that some Bedouins “yearned for the days of Israeli occupation” built a mutual distrust, between the Bedouins and the Egyptian government, which remains today.¹⁵¹

Following the 2011 revolution, the Egyptian government turned to powerful Sinai Bedouin tribal leaders for help confronting the rise of Salafi militancy in the peninsula.¹⁵² Many agreed, hoping for a new period of prosperity post-Mubarak. Tribal leaders provided Egypt’s then-ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) – and, later, the Muslim Brotherhood government – the local intelligence needed to crack down on terrorism,¹⁵³ and the army

approached Bedouin leaders to help mediate crises involving militant groups. The seven soldiers kidnapped in May 2013, for example, were released unharmed only due to Bedouin mediation with the kidnappers.^{154 155} Under the rule of the SCAF,¹⁵⁶ the Brotherhood,¹⁵⁷ and the current interim government,¹⁵⁸ tribes have been contracted by the government and by state-owned companies to provide security for industrial sites and pipelines throughout the peninsula.^{159 160}

However, despite enhanced co-operation from the Bedouins, the government failed to deliver on its promises: ‘the development never came [...] the justice never came’, according to the Sinai-based journalist, Mohannad Sabry.¹⁶¹ The Egyptian military took a heavy-handed approach to its crackdown on violence in the peninsula, failing to differentiate between militants; criminals; and law-abiding citizens,¹⁶² resulting in Bedouins being caught in the crossfire in military raids.¹⁶³ As a result, the Bedouins have shown increasing reluctance to turn in their neighbours to the authorities.¹⁶⁴

In addition, Salafi-jihadist groups are making it increasingly difficult for the Bedouins to help the military restore order. On 4 October 2013, the group

¹⁴⁷ Revkin, M., ‘Islamic justice in the Sinai’, *Foreign Policy*, 11 January 2013, available at: http://mideastafrica.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/01/11/islamic_justice_in_the_sinai.

¹⁴⁸ ‘For Bedouins Of The Sinai, Modern Life Has Been A Mixed Bag’, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 17 June 1986, available at: http://articles.philly.com/1986-06-17/news/26046924_1_bedouins-nuweiba-sinai-peninsula.

¹⁴⁹ ‘Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula: From liberation to neglect’, *Ahram Online*, 25 April 2013, available at: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/70048/Egypt/Politics-/Egypt-Sinai-Peninsula-From-liberation-to-neglect.aspx>.

¹⁵⁰ Pelham, N., ‘Sinai: The Buffer Erodes’, *Chatham House* (September 2012), available at: <http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Middle%20East/pr0912pelham.pdf>.

¹⁵¹ Hauslohner, A., ‘The Trouble with Sinai: Egypt’s “Mexico” Problem’, *TIME*, 21 March 2010, available at: <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1973918,00.html>.

¹⁵² Heras, N., ‘Can the Sinai’s Bedouin Become a Counterterrorist Force?’, *Jamestown Foundation*, 31 October 2013, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5295dda94.html>.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Author interview with Mohannad Sabry, 27 August 2013.

¹⁵⁵ ‘Militants release seven Egyptians kidnapped in Sinai’, *Reuters*, 22 May 2013, available at: <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/militants-release-seven-egyptians-kidnapped-sinai>.

¹⁵⁶ In one case, six Bedouin tribesmen were contracted in late 2011, to protect 31 gas stations and areas in between the stations. See: ‘Egypt hires Bedouin guards for Sinai gas pipeline’, *DPA*, 1 August 2011, available at: <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/egypt-hires-bedouin-guards-sinai-gas-pipeline>.

¹⁵⁷ Under Muslim Brotherhood rule in late 2012, Minister of Interior Ahmed Gamal el-Dine agreed to 1,000 Sinai residents (to be nominated by tribal leaders) to be appointed as security guards in the Sinai. See: ‘Police recruit Sinai residents’, *Daily News Egypt*, 29 September 2012, available at: <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2012/09/29/police-recruit-sinai-residents/>.

¹⁵⁸ Sinai Bedouin reportedly helped armed forces in securing valleys in southern Sinai and areas of the Suez Canal. See: ‘Army commander: Sinai Bedouins are helping us secure valleys’, *Egypt Independent*, 28 July 2013, available at: <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/army-commander-sinai-bedouins-are-helping-us-secure-valleys>.

¹⁵⁹ ‘Bedouins contracted to provide security in Sinai industrial zones’, *Daily News Egypt*, 10 July 2013, available at: <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/07/10/bedouins-contracted-to-provide-security-within-industrial-zones-as-political-instability-and-repeated-lapses-in-security-take-their-toll-on-factories/>.

¹⁶⁰ ‘Egypt hires Bedouin guards for Sinai gas pipeline’, *DPA*, 1 August 2011, available at: <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/egypt-hires-bedouin-guards-sinai-gas-pipeline>.

¹⁶¹ Author interview with Mohannad Sabry, 27 August 2013.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ ‘Egypt’s Bedouin tribes caught in Sinai crossfire’, *The Financial Times*, 18 December 2013, available at: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/f898a2da-52c3-11e3-8586-00144fcaabdc0.html#axzz2vIveBFXR>.

¹⁶⁴ Author interview with Mohannad Sabry, 27 August 2013.

al-Salafiyya al-Jihadiyya released a statement threatening those caught providing ‘information and spies’ to the security forces: anyone ‘who participate[s] in their sinful campaigns against the villages, and works as a guide for them...is merely an apostate and deserves to be killed by us’.¹⁶⁵ The state’s failure to address Bedouin grievances, combined with the rise of Salafi power in the Sinai, has left the Bedouins ‘squeezed between terrorism and those fighting it’, according to writer and activist Mosaad Abu Fajr.¹⁶⁶ By late 2013, only a few Bedouin tribal leaders were still co-operating with the military.¹⁶⁷

This dynamic is manifesting itself in not only a lack of co-operation with Egypt’s military, but also an apparent thawing in relations between militants and the Bedouins. Salafi-jihadist groups in the Sinai have recently listed Bedouin-specific grievances alongside more typically Islamist demands (such as the abolition of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and the introduction of sharia law).¹⁶⁸ For example, in July 2011, a group calling itself al-Qaeda in the Sinai Peninsula (AQSP) circulated pamphlets denouncing discrimination against the Sinai Bedouins.¹⁶⁹

Salafi groups that emerged following the 2011 revolution have been active in recruiting Bedouin youth, who, in turn, have abandoned their tribal loyalties and lifestyles in favour of Islamism. This increasing overlap between the two cultures has begun to tip the balance of power and authority away from the Bedouin elders, towards Salafi group leaders.¹⁷⁰

For example, Shady al-Menaci – thought to be the best known field commander of militant group Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM) – belongs to the Menaci clan of Sinai’s large Sawarka tribe.¹⁷¹

Meanwhile, the traditional Bedouin legal code (known locally as *‘urf*) is being superseded by a more explicitly Islamic form of justice. Bedouin justice is seen as expensive and prone to corruption,¹⁷² while at the same time, many Bedouins resent the infiltration of the police and intelligence services in their daily lives. As a result, many see themselves as having no choice but to embrace the “Islamisation” of Sinai justice.¹⁷³

The Sinai Bedouins appear to have been pulled in opposite directions: from the military on one side, and armed groups on the other. Both forces have successfully recruited Bedouins – who, despite their marginalisation, remain the largest and most influential force in the peninsula – to their side. Still, the government’s failure to address the Bedouins’ grievances has created long-term threats to Sinai’s security. Mutual resentment and the breakdown in co-operation between the Egyptian government and the Bedouins have led to a weakened military-intelligence network, which has, in turn, prevented the Egyptian military from reasserting control. Until the government addresses the peninsula’s instability with not just military action but development, terror in the Sinai will only strike deeper roots.

THE THREAT TO ISRAEL

After Egypt, no country is more concerned by the security breakdown in the Sinai than Israel. Since 2011, Israel has come under attack from Sinai-based militants on numerous occasions, resulting in the deaths of over a dozen soldiers and civilians and injuring scores more. Groups such as the Gaza-based Mujahideen Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem (MSC) have described their attacks against Jews as a religious obligation from God to attack the “unbelievers.”^{174 175} Where once Israeli tourists flocked to Sinai’s beaches, Israeli authorities now warn

¹⁶⁵ Barnett, D., ‘Sinai jihadists threaten to kill anyone found aiding Egypt’s security forces’, *The Long War Journal*, 4 October 2013, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/10/sinai_jihadists_thre_1.php.

¹⁶⁶ ‘Egypt’s Bedouin tribes caught in Sinai crossfire’, *The Financial Times*, 18 December 2013, available at: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/f898a2da-52c3-11e3-8586-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2vIveBFXR>.

¹⁶⁷ Author interview with Mohannad Sabry, 27 August 2013.

¹⁶⁸ Riedel, B., ‘Al Qaeda’s New Sinai Front’, *The Daily Beast*, 21 August 2011, available at: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/08/21/al-qaeda-s-newest-front-in-sinai-could-deepen-arab-israeli-conflict.html>.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Interviews with several of Shady al-Menaci’s relatives from the Menaci clan in 2011, 2012 and 2013 (all spoke on condition of anonymity), and another interview with Islamist Judge Hamdin Abu Faisal in September 2013. Shady has also been identified by military and security sources numerous times before, and claimed to have been successfully targeted several times (although each time he has not been among the dead), the most recent being three days ago.

¹⁷² Revkin, M., ‘Islamic Justice in the Sinai’, *Foreign Policy*, 11 January 2013, available at: http://mideastafrica.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/01/11/islamic_justice_in_the_sinai.

¹⁷³ Interviews with Hamdin Abu Faisal, Sheikh Zuwayyed Shariah Court Judge; Asaad Al-Beik, El-Arish House of Islamic Law Judge; and, Yehia Al-Ghoul, prominent author and former Customary Judge. All interviews were conducted in 2011 and 2012.

¹⁷⁴ ‘Majlis Shura Al-Mujahidin – Response of the lions to the aggressions of the Jews – Shelling Zionist Sderot with three rockets’, *Defender of the Lands*, 2 September 2012, available at: <http://defenderofthelands.blogspot.co.uk/2012/09/majlis-shura-al-mujahidin-response-of.html>.

¹⁷⁵ ‘Salafi Terrorists: Jihad Against “Criminal Jews” is a Duty’, *Arutz Sheva* 7, 27 August 2012, available at: http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/159309#.UxXC9fl_tAR.

their citizens from travelling there.

The 1979 Egypt–Israel peace treaty placed strict controls over Egypt’s military presence in the region, prohibiting the Egyptians from deploying troops in the roughly two-thirds of the peninsula closest to Israel and limiting the number of police and security forces in the rest. The treaty essentially codified the peninsula’s status as a buffer zone, as it has been for most of modern history. Indeed, the British first drew the eastern border of Egypt, in 1906, with the primary objective of distancing the Ottoman Empire from the Suez Canal.¹⁷⁶

In the three decades since, Israel has come to expect relative tranquillity from its long border with Egypt: removing its Border Police from the Sinai in 2007,¹⁷⁷ as well as leaving the IDF troops stationed there with antiquated equipment.¹⁷⁸ In 2010, Israel began to build an electrified, computerised border fence along the entire length of its frontier with Egypt. Israel’s motive, however, had little to do with Sinai insurgents and far more to do with the flow of tens of thousands of Africans to the country seeking jobs and security.¹⁷⁹

The fence was completed in 2013 and, as a result, illegal African migration to Israel has stopped almost completely.¹⁸⁰ For the Israelis, it has been a welcome unintended consequence that the fence has also helped contain the Sinai insurgency from spilling over into the country. That containment, however, has not been total. The pipeline bringing Egyptian natural gas to Israel, for example, has been sabotaged at least a dozen times since the 2011 Egyptian revolution.¹⁸¹ Still, Israel’s own newly tapped natural-gas resources mean that it can compensate for its lost Egyptian fuel.

In February 2014, it signed a gas-export deal with Jordan,¹⁸² and may begin exporting gas to Egypt as well.¹⁸³

The fact that Egyptian security forces have reportedly discovered Hamas arms warehouses, workshops, and rocket-firing ranges in the Sinai has likely only added to Israeli concerns.¹⁸⁴ On several occasions, Israel has also come under direct attack from Sinai-based jihadists, the most devastating of which saw a triple-pronged attack on 18 August 2011, waged by nine Gazan and three Egyptian militants operating from the Sinai. First, the assailants opened fire at an Israeli civilian bus near Eilat, injuring several soldiers; another militant blew himself up next to a second bus that had stopped, killing himself and the driver; a third militant opened fire at a civilian car, killing the female driver. Minutes later, a bomb was detonated near an Israeli Army patrol close to the border; and, shortly thereafter, the assailants fired an anti-tank missile at a private car, killing all four family members inside. In all, the string of attacks lasted several hours and took the lives of six Israeli civilians; one police sniper; and one soldier. Some 40 Israelis were wounded. Israeli forces gave chase after the perpetrators, entering Egyptian territory and accidentally killing five Egyptian troops in addition to the 10 militants (the gunmen had worn brown uniforms similar to the Egyptian Army’s).¹⁸⁵

The ensuing uproar in Egypt led to diplomatic fallout between the two countries: crowds stormed the Israeli embassy in Cairo on 9 September 2011,¹⁸⁶ forcing a US-mediated¹⁸⁷ evacuation of the entire embassy staff (the deputy ambassador remained in Cairo, but

¹⁷⁶ Gardus, Y.; Shmueli, A. eds, *The Land of the Negev* (Hebrew), Israeli Ministry of Defense (1979).

¹⁷⁷ Israel removed its Border Police from Sinai in 2007 (cited in: Pelham, N., ‘Sinai: The Buffer Erodes’, *Chatham House* (September 2012), available at: <http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Middle%20East/pr0912pelham.pdf>).

¹⁷⁸ For example, until recently, the only artillery guns stationed along the border were the M-71 155mm howitzer – a towed artillery piece (most contemporary artillery is self-propelled) that Israel developed in the 1970s, for the Shah’s Iran. There were wide gaps between the various M-71 units, leaving the border vulnerable to any significant attack.

¹⁷⁹ ‘Israel built a new border wall to prevent migrants from “smuggling in terror”’, *Global Post*, 5 December 2013, available at: <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/middle-east/131204/israel-new-border-wall-egypt-terrorism-immigration-project-hourglass>.

¹⁸⁰ ‘Netanyahu: Egypt border fence halted flow of migrants’, *The Times of Israel*, 7 July 2013, available at: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-egypt-border-fence-halted-flow-of-migrants/>.

¹⁸¹ ‘Militants blast natural gas pipeline in Sinai’, *Ahram Online*, 26 February 2014, available at: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/95254/Egypt/Politics-/Militants-blast-natural-gas-pipeline-in-Sinai.aspx>.

¹⁸² ‘Israel has \$500M gas deal with Jordan, but wider exports still unclear’, *UPI*, 20 February 2014, available at: http://www.upi.com/Business_News/Energy-Resources/2014/02/20/Israel-has-500M-gas-deal-with-Jordan-but-wider-exports-still-unclear/UPI-55161392922931/.

¹⁸³ ‘Energy Firms in Talks to Sell Israeli Gas to Egypt’, *The Wall Street Journal*, 19 February 2014, available at: <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304914204579392772972259930>.

¹⁸⁴ ‘Egypt destroys Hamas arms depots in Sinai’, *The Times of Israel*, 11 December 2013, available at: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/egypt-destroys-hamas-arms-depots-in-sinai/>.

¹⁸⁵ ‘Timeline of the attacks on the Sinai border’, *The Jerusalem Post*, 18 August 2011, available at: <http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Timeline-of-the-attacks-on-the-Sinai-border>.

¹⁸⁶ ‘Egypt vows to prosecute those who targeted embassy’, *The Jerusalem Post*, 10 September 2011, available at: <http://www.jpost.com/Video-Articles/Video/Egypt-vows-to-prosecute-those-who-targeted-embassy>.

¹⁸⁷ ‘U.S. told Egypt it must rescue Israeli embassy workers or suffer “consequences,” sources say’, *Haaretz*, 20 September 2011, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/u-s-told-egypt-it-must-rescue-israeli-embassy-workers-or-suffer-consequences-sources-say-1.383675>.

worked out of the US embassy).¹⁸⁸ Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM) claimed responsibility; but, Israel pinned the blame on the Popular Resistance Committees, an armed group based in Gaza.^{189 190}

On 18 June 2012, militants (thought to belong to the MSC due to the group having claimed of responsibility) detonated an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) near Israeli civilians repairing the border fence, killing an Arab father of four from Haifa and wounding two other workers.^{191 192 193} Then, on 5 August 2012, up to two dozen militants¹⁹⁴ stormed an Egyptian military post near the border with Gaza and Israel, killing 16 soldiers. Stealing two armoured cars, they broke through the Israeli border, to which the Israeli air force responded with an airstrike, killing all of the attackers.¹⁹⁵ While no Israelis were wounded, Israel's then-defence minister, Ehud Barak, said that the incident should serve as a "wake-up call" to Egypt in confronting its terror problem in the Sinai.¹⁹⁶

Just a month later, however, an Israeli soldier was killed and another wounded when gunmen opened fire on a group of troops securing civilians working on the border fence near the Nitzana crossing. ABM once again claimed responsibility, declaring it an attempt

to 'punish the Jews for their heinous crimes' and a response to the anti-Islamic film, *Innocence of Muslims*.¹⁹⁷ In response, in August 2013, Israeli authorities took the unprecedented step of temporarily closing Eilat airport.¹⁹⁸ The closure came in response to Israeli intelligence alerts of an imminent attack, with rockets or rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) procured from post-Gaddafi Libya, targeting a civilian aircraft.¹⁹⁹

Indeed, rocket and missile attacks have also been a regular threat to southern Israel. In mid-November 2012, at least 14 missiles were fired at the Jewish state, with responsibility claimed by the MSC. The MSC also claimed March; April; and August 2013 attacks on the western Negev, as well as a 20 January 2014 rocket on Eilat that was intercepted by the Iron Dome system. After the last of these attacks, it issued this statement: 'Jews must understand that our war with the enemy inside [the Egyptian state] will not make us forget the prime enemy of the [Muslim] nation, who occupies the land and defiles the sacred places'.²⁰⁰

In light of the deteriorating security in the Sinai, Israel has at least twice allowed Egypt to significantly expand its security presence there. In August 2011, Egypt deployed 2,500 troops and 250 armoured personnel carriers in key spots in the Sinai – the first significant introduction of troops and heavy equipment since 1967.²⁰¹ A year later came the second major force – this time involving Apache helicopters – after the border attack that killed the Arab-Israeli civilian.^{202 203}

188 'After Attack on Embassy, Egypt Vows a Tougher Stance on Protests', *The New York Times*, 10 September 2011, available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/11/world/middleeast/11egypt.html?_r=3&.

189 'Behind the lines: Salafi insurgency fermenting', *The Jerusalem Post*, 15 February 2014, available at: <http://www.jpost.com/Features/Front-Lines/Behind-the-lines-Salafi-insurgency-fermenting-341415>.

190 'Israel launches strikes on Gaza after attacks', *Al Jazeera*, 19 August 2011, available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/08/201181893519247218.html>.

191 'Terror attack in the south', Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18 June 2012, available at: http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/terrorism/palestinian/pages/terror_attack_in_south_18-jun-2012.aspx.

192 'Haifa man named as victim of terrorist attack on Egypt border', *Haaretz*, 18 June 2012, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/haifa-man-named-as-victim-of-terrorist-attack-on-egypt-border-1.437130>.

193 'ICT Database Insight: "The Mujahideen Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem" A New Player in the Lawless "Wild West" of the Sinai Peninsula?', *International Institute for Counter-Terrorism*, 20 August 2012, available at: <http://www.ict.org.il/ResearchPublications/DatabaseReports/tabid/380/Articledid/1102/currentpage/1/Default.aspx>.

194 Hauslohner, A., 'Sinai Border Attack: What's Behind the Unrest in Egypt's Rogue Province', *TIME*, 6 August 2012, available at: <http://world.time.com/2012/08/06/sinai-border-attack-whats-behind-the-unrest-in-egypts-rogue-province/?iid=gs-main-mostpop1>.

195 Interview with Lt. Col. Peter Lerner, foreign media IDF Spokesman, in Jerusalem, October 2013, and Brig.-Gen. (res.) Yossi Kuperwasser, Director General of the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs, in Jerusalem, October 2013.

196 'Barak: Attack on Israel-Sinai border is "wake-up call" for Egypt government', *Haaretz*, 6 August 2012, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/barak-attack-on-israel-sinai-border-is-wake-up-call-for-egypt-government-1.456298>.

197 'Jihadists say launched border attack as "revenge over film"', *ynet*, 23 September 2012, available at: <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4284951,00.html>.

198 'Israel briefly closes Eilat airport, citing security threats', *Los Angeles Times*, 8 August 2013, available at: <http://www.latimes.com/news/world/worldnow/la-fg-wn-israel-eilat-airport-closure-20130808,0,789743.story#axzz2vZOBWN5FE>.

199 Schenker, D., 'How the Israeli Drone Strike in the Sinai Might Backfire', *The Atlantic*, 13 August 2013, available at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/08/how-the-israeli-drone-strike-in-the-sinai-might-backfire/278628/>.

200 'Egyptian militants claim rocket attack on Israel's Eilat', *Reuters*, 21 January 2014, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/01/21/us-israel-egypt-rockets-idUSBREA0K0ZX20140121>.

201 Cook, S., 'The Eagle Has Landed...In Sinai', *Council on Foreign Relations*, 17 August 2011, available at: <http://blogs.cfr.org/cook/2011/08/17/the-eagle-has-landed%E2%80%A6in-sinai/>.

202 'Analysis: Egypt, Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula', *Stratfor*, 17 November 2012, available at: <http://www.bi-me.com/main.php?id=60104&t=1>.

203 'Israel OKs Egypt attack helicopters in Sinai', *The Jerusalem Post*, 9 August, 2012, available at: <http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Israel-OKs-Egypt-attack-helicopters-in-Sinai>; see also: 'Barak agrees to Egypt deploying troops, vehicles in Sinai', *The Jerusalem Post*, 26 August 2011, available at: <http://www.jpost.com/Breaking-News/Barak-agrees-to-Egypt-deploying-troops-vehicles-in-Sinai>.

In all, over the past three years, Israel has approved at least two dozen specific Egyptian requests for a greater military presence in the Sinai, and Israeli–Egyptian military co-operation has never been closer. A salient example came in August 2013, when Egypt allowed Israel to conduct a drone strike over the Sinai – killing five militants preparing to launch rockets – the first planned Israeli military operation in the peninsula in three decades.²⁰⁴ Author interviews with high-level IDF officers confirm that military-to-military co-operation between Israel and Egypt are at record levels of co-operation, as both sides understand the imperative of ensuring order in their shared buffer of the Sinai.²⁰⁵

Still, Israeli officials have also urged caution, warning that, in some instances, Egypt has increased its military presence even without prior co-ordination with Israel. The introduction of tanks, in contravention of the peace treaty, has been of particular concern. In the words of Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman: ‘We must make sure that every detail is upheld, otherwise we’ll find ourselves [on] a slippery slope as far as the peace treaty is concerned.’²⁰⁶ In 2012, with the help of American mediation, the Israelis made these concerns known,²⁰⁷ and Arabic media reported that al-Sisi, the Egyptian defence minister, had called his Israeli counterpart to assure him that the peace treaty would remain respected. At the same time, then-president Morsi issued similar assurances that international treaties would be honoured, but refrained from mentioning Israel by name.²⁰⁸

It is the threat posed by Sinai-based jihadists, rather than that posed by the Egyptian Army, that is likely to be cause for most concern to Israeli officials. As Middle East analyst Jonathan Spyer wrote in *The*

Jerusalem Post, Israel now faces ‘the prospect of two de facto al-Qaida-controlled areas adjoining its border – one in southern Syria, and the other in the Salafi playground that is now northern Sinai.’²⁰⁹

²⁰⁴ Schenker, D., ‘How the Israeli Drone Strike in the Sinai Might Backfire’, *The Atlantic*, 13 August 2013, available at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/08/how-the-israeli-drone-strike-in-the-sinai-might-backfire/278628/>.

²⁰⁵ Series of author interviews with IDF officials throughout 2012 and 2013; see also ‘Israelis, Egyptians Cooperate on Terror’, *The Wall Street Journal*, 13 August 2013, available at: <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887324085304579010990544276768>.

²⁰⁶ ‘Lieberman: Don’t let Egypt get away with violations’, *ynet*, 21 August 2012, available at: <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4271499,00.html>.

²⁰⁷ ‘Developments in Iran and Sinai Deepen Israel’s Worries About Egypt’, *The New York Times*, 22 August 2012, available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/23/world/middleeast/israels-worries-about-egypt-deepen.html?ref=egypt&pagewanted=all&_r=0.

²⁰⁸ ‘Egypt Assures Israel It’s Committed to 1979 Peace Treaty: Report’, *International Business Times*, 24 August 2012, available at: <http://www.ibtimes.com/egypt-assures-israel-its-committed-1979-peace-treaty-report-758559>.

²⁰⁹ ‘Behind the lines: Salafi insurgency fermenting’, *The Jerusalem Post*, 15 February 2014, available at: <http://www.jpost.com/Features/Front-Lines/Behind-the-lines-Salafi-insurgency-fermenting-341415>.

2. The Threat: A Statistical Analysis

The authors have documented all reported attacks from 2010 to March 2014 in a proprietary database, in order to analyse trends in the nature and scope of attacks. The database includes all²¹⁰ reported attacks believed to have been carried out by Salafi-jihadist groups active in the Sinai – either in the peninsula itself, in mainland Egypt, or in Israel.

Rate of militant attacks

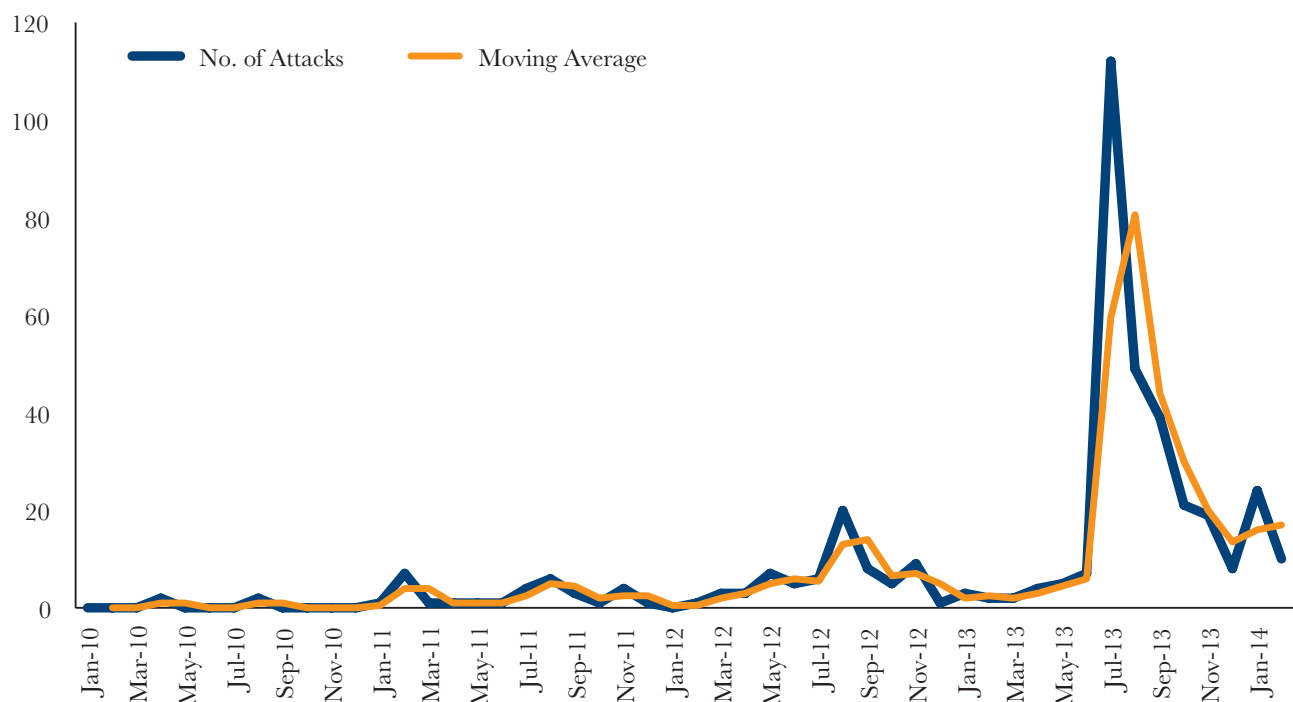
The 2011 revolution brought a steady rise in the number of militant attacks, with several larger spikes in February 2011 (7) and between July and August (4 and 6 attacks respectively). July 2013 – the month of President Mohamed Morsi's ousting – saw the largest rise in attacks to date, from 7 reported in June to fifteen times as many (112) the following month.

Following the July 2013 peak, the level of attacks steadily decreased, dropping to 8 in December of that year. However, the first three months of 2014 have shown a higher number of attacks (41) than the three months leading up to July 2013 (16) – showing a significantly higher threat than before Morsi's removal. For example, the number of attacks in January 2014 (24) was seven times that of the same month a year before (3).

Types of militant attacks

Militant groups in the Sinai have adopted increasingly co-ordinated and sophisticated methods of attack (one such example was the bombing of the Daqahliya Security Directorate in Mansoura, on 24 December 2013, which killed 16 people).²¹² In 2013, shootings

Figure 1: Timeline: Frequency of attacks, 2010-2014²¹¹



²¹⁰ While all known attacks from open sources have been included, there are likely to be additional attacks that have not been included, either due to failing to fit the report's criteria or not having been reported in open, non-private sources.

²¹¹ HJS Database, *The Henry Jackson Society*, 2014.

²¹² 'Sinai's Ansar Beit Al-Maqdis claim responsibility for Egypt's Mansoura blast', *Ahram Online*, 25 December 2013, available at: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/89992/Egypt/Politics-/Sinai-Ansar-Beit-AlMaqdis-claim-responsibility-fo.aspx>.

Figure 2: Types of militant attacks, 2011-2014 ²¹³

Figure 2a: Proportion of militant attack types, 2011

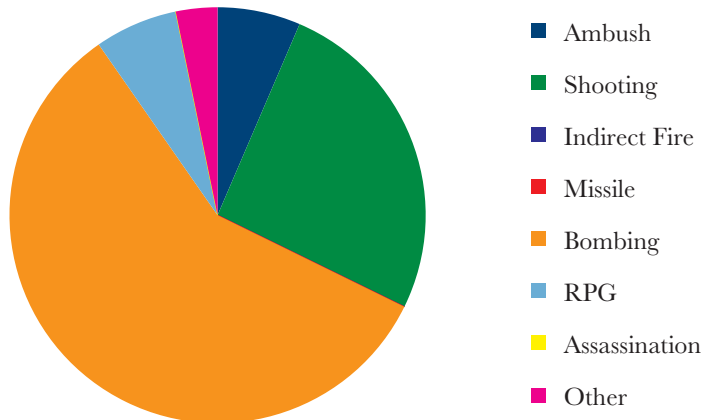


Figure 2b: Proportion of militant attack types, 2012

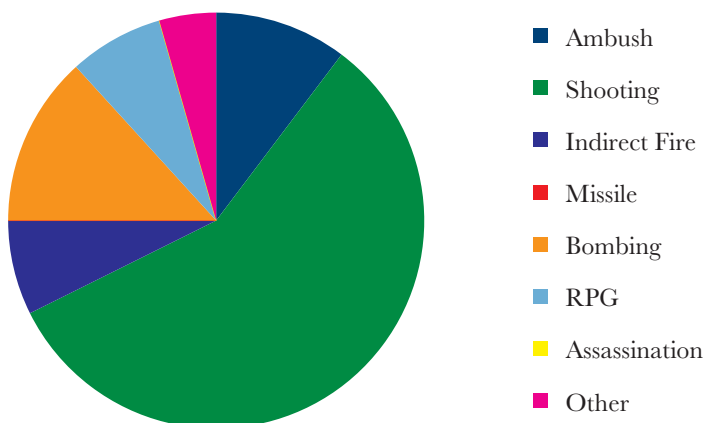


Figure 2c: Proportion of militant attack types, 2013

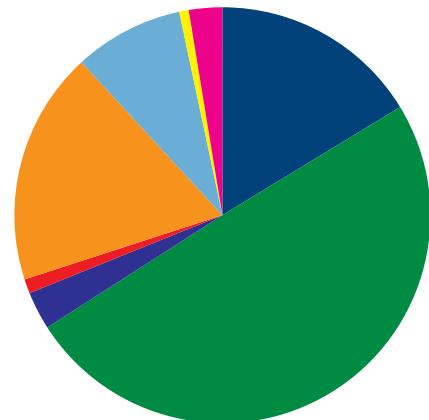
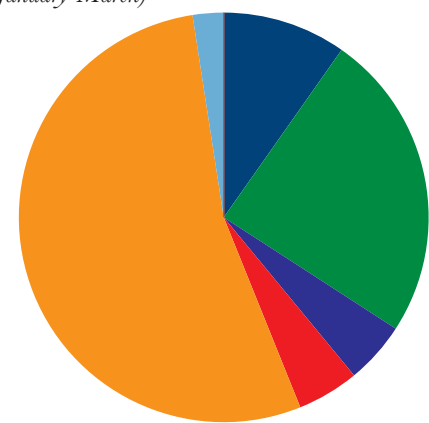


Figure 2d: Proportion of militant attack types, 2014 (January-March)



were the most common type of attack, making up half 50% (134) of the 270 attacks overall, and just under three times higher than the number of bombings (49) that year. July 2013 alone saw 65 shootings, making up 58% of all 112 attacks conducted that month.

The year 2014, however, has seen a reversal of that trend, moving instead towards more al-Qaeda-style bomb attacks. In December 2013, the six bomb attacks (including explosions; IEDs; VBIEDs and suicide attacks) overtook the two shootings and, in January 2014, bombings made up 58% (14) of all attacks, whilst shootings stood at 21% (5). In February 2014, bombings (8) made up 80% of all attacks in that month, while there were no shootings at all.

Location of militant attacks

The majority of attacks from January 2010 to March 2014 have taken place in North Sinai (329), making

up 79% of the total (414). However, in addition to waging more sophisticated attacks, armed groups have also broadened the geographic spread of their operations. In 2011 the vast majority (94%) of the 31 attacks took place in the Sinai (29), with most of those being in North Sinai (26 attacks, 84% of all attacks).

Following Morsi's dismissal in July 2013, however, the number of attacks outside the Sinai began to increase, spiking in early 2014. Overall, while attacks in North Sinai made up 84% of all attacks in 2011, they only made up 54% of all attacks in 2014 (January-March).

In 2014, attacks by Sinai militant groups are increasingly likely to target locations in mainland Egypt and Israel rather than in North Sinai itself. In fact, although Cairo saw only 2% (6) of all attacks (270) in 2013, the Egyptian capital was targeted in 20% (8) of the 41 attacks so far in 2014 (January-March).

From late 2013, militant groups have shown a marked difference in strategy, from relatively small-scale

²¹³ HJS Database, *The Henry Jackson Society*, 2014.

*Table 1: Percentage of attacks conducted in North Sinai, 2011-2014*²¹⁴

Year	No. attacks in North Sinai / Total attacks	Percentage
2011	26/31	84%
2012	45/68	66%
2013	236/270	87%
2014	22/41	54%

*Table 2: Percentage of attacks conducted in Cairo, 2011-2014*²¹⁵

Year	No. attacks in Cairo / Total attacks	Percentage
2011	0/31	0%
2012	0/68	0%
2013	6/270	2%
2014	8/41	20%

attacks on security forces in North Sinai to more co-ordinated, elaborate and well-planned attacks. The fact that Sinai militants now favour al-Qaeda (AQ)-style bomb attacks (including car bombs and suicide attacks) in larger towns and cities throughout Egypt presages still more sophisticated and far-reaching attacks in the future.

THE THREAT TO THE EGYPTIAN STATE

Following the ousting of President Mohamed Morsi in July 2013, the rhetoric and strategy of Sinai militant groups has become increasingly political, aimed at undermining the new military-led interim government and their supporters.

Armed groups have targeted the state at the highest level. In August 2013, several terror cells allegedly travelled from North Sinai to Cairo in an assassination plot against then-military leader Gen. Fattah al-Sisi; Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim and ex-presidential candidate Mohamed ElBaradei – the three key players behind Morsi's political downfall.²¹⁶

Jihadist groups have portrayed the interim government as waging a war on Islam. From late 2013, their statements have increasingly called for violent jihad against the supposed oppressors of the faith – including the “apostate” army and political leaders.²¹⁷ Groups have also played on anti-government grievances among Sinai Bedouin tribes while attempting to recruit Bedouin youths (see “Bedouin–Jihadist Ties”).

The interim government has been forthright in blaming the rise in terrorism against the Muslim Brotherhood. In November 2013, Interior Minister Ibrahim said the Brotherhood ‘supports and massively finances from abroad numerous radical terrorists in several groups.’²¹⁸ A month later, the government declared the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organisation.²¹⁹

For their part, hard-line Egyptian Islamists have explicitly threatened to conduct acts of violence in response to Morsi's removal. Egyptian Islamist Mohamed al-Zawahiri (the al-Qaeda leader's brother), for example allegedly warned that, if the deposed president were not returned to power, the

²¹⁴ HJS Database, *The Henry Jackson Society*, 2014.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

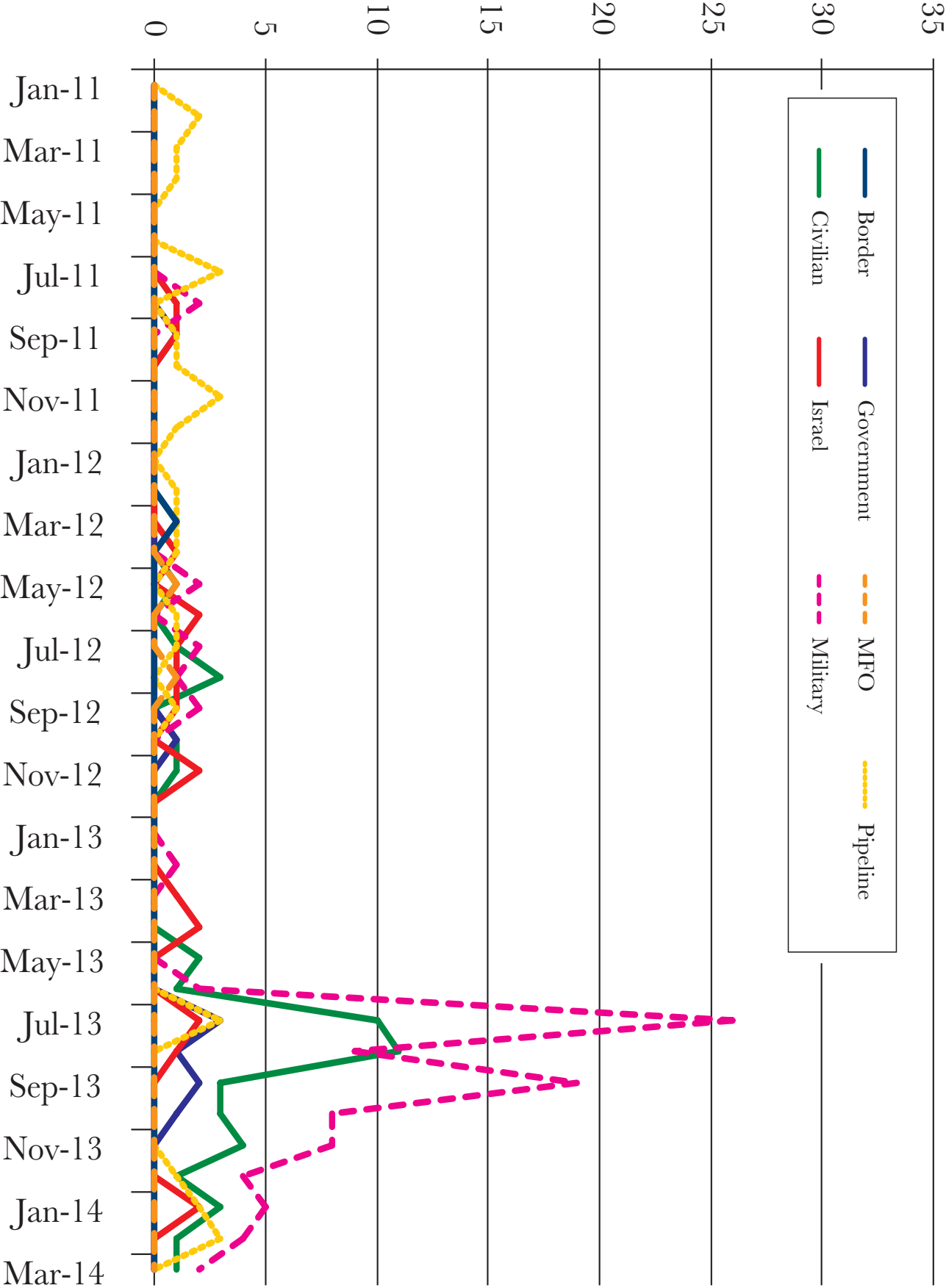
²¹⁶ ‘Alleged plot to assassinate Sisi uncovered, as Sinai violence resumes’, *The Jerusalem Post*, 5 August 2013, available at: <http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Alleged-plot-to-assassinate-Sisi-uncovered-as-Sinai-violence-resumes-322114>.

²¹⁷ ‘Al-Salafiyya Al-Jihadiyya in Sinai Call for War Against the “Apostate” Egyptian Army, Police’, *SITE Monitoring Service*, 15 January 2014, available at: <https://news.siteintelgroup.com/index.php/19-jihadist-news/3426-al-salafiyya-al-jihadiyya-in-sinai-call-for-war-against-the-apostate-egyptian-army-police>.

²¹⁸ ‘Muslim Brotherhood financing attacks: Egypt minister’, *AFP*, 24 November 2013, available at: <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/muslim-brotherhood-financing-attacks-egypt-minister>.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

Figure 3: Month-by-month breakdown of intended targets, 2011-2014 ²²⁰



²²⁰ HJS Database, The Henry Jackson Society, 2014.

AQ-affiliated group, al-Salafiyya al-Jihadiyya, would take up arms against Egyptian authorities.²²¹

The shift in militant attacks against the Egyptian state has not been contained to just political, military, police, and security personnel; rather, militant groups have made a conscious decision to attack the state through its economy. In September 2013, the al-Furqan Brigades issued a statement claiming responsibility for attacks on the Suez Canal and warned that they would launch future attacks against the canal,²²² as 'it is the lifeblood of trade for the states of infidelity and oppression'.²²³ ABM, who claimed responsibility for the attack on a tourist bus on 16 February 2014, warned that it would 'target [Egypt's] economic interests everywhere, to cripple them and their actions against the Muslim people.'²²⁴ The attack was yet another blow to Egypt's flagging tourism industry, which has suffered from the political unrest roiling the country since 2011.²²⁵ Furthermore, the repeated attacks on the natural-gas pipeline to Jordan and Israel have cost the Egyptian economy more than LE 1 billion (approximately \$166 million).²²⁶

From July 2013 onwards, groups have increasingly threatened to attack anyone perceived to support; work with; or belong to the government.²²⁷ For example, in December 2013, ABM released a statement warning the Egyptian police and military

to abandon their posts and stop working for the government, 'to preserve their religion and lives'.²²⁸

As *Figure 3* indicates, not only did the rate of attacks significantly increase following Morsi's removal from power, but so did the proportion of attacks against the state: the government; the military, police and security forces.²²⁹ In July 2013, attacks most commonly targeted security forces, making up 29% of attacks that month (33 out of 112). However, the police became the leading target just a month later, with 31% of August's (15 out of 49). In September, the military was the leading target at 49% of that month's attacks (19 out of 39), and remained such throughout the rest of 2013. Overall, of the total 270 attacks that took place in 2013, 79% (212) targeted the police, military, government and security forces.

Furthermore, while attacks against the police have been most common thus far in 2014 (January-March), accounting for 32% of the total (13), attacks against the military reached 40% (4 of 10) in February, showing a significant increase from the previous month.

Following the crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood in Cairo and militants in the Sinai – the militant threat from the Sinai has rapidly evolved, from small-scale attacks on police and security forces in North Sinai to targeting top military officials; government buildings; and infrastructure in Cairo and the Nile Delta. In its attempt to restore security in Egypt and the Sinai, the Egyptian state has paid a high price, as the military (alongside the police) continues to be the leading target among militant groups. Should al-Sisi win presidential elections in May, he, the government and the military are likely to face a still-greater threat.

221 'Egypt arrests Zawahiri brother for 'backing Morsi': source', *AFP*, 17 August 2013, available at: <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/08/17/egypt-arrests-zawahiri-brother-for-backing-morsi-source/>.

222 Gal, I., 'Terror in Sinai – Serious Threat to Egyptian Economy', *Israel's Homeland Security*, 21 October 2013, available at: <http://i-hls.com/2013/10/terror-in-sinai-serious-threat-to-egyptian-economy/>.

223 'Video Shows Rocket Attack on Suez Canal Ship, Group Says', *ABC News*, 6 September 2013, available at: <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/video-purports-show-rocket-attack-suez-canal-ship/story?id=20177635&singlePage=true>.

224 'Egypt warns tourists of Islamist terror threat', *The Telegraph*, 18 February 2014, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocan/egypt/10647319/Egypt-warns-tourists-of-Islamist-terror-threat.html>.

225 This is evidenced by a fall in revenue from tourism – from \$10 billion to \$6 billion – within one year, as the number of tourists fell by 31%. See: 'Terrorists Target Egypt's Red Sea Tourism – And It's Working', *International Business Times*, 18 February 2014, available at: <http://www.ibtimes.com/terrorists-target-egypts-red-sea-tourism-its-working-1556362>.

226 GASCO, the company that operates the pipeline, spent LE 100 million on repairs up until March 2012. See: 'Repeated attacks on Sinai gas pipeline cost Egypt \$166 mn: GASCO', *Ahram Online*, 7 March 2012, available at: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/3/12/36210/Business/Economy/Repeated-attacks-on-Sinai-gas-pipeline-cost-Egypt.aspx>.

227 'Video Shows Rocket Attack on Suez Canal Ship, Group Says', *ABC News*, 6 September 2013, available at: <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/video-purports-show-rocket-attack-suez-canal-ship/story?id=20177635&singlePage=true>.

228 'Egypt's military-backed government declares Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization', *The Washington Post*, 25 December 2013, available at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/egypts-military-backed-government-declares-muslim-brotherhood-a-terrorist-organization/2013/12/25/7cf075ca-6da0-11e3-aecc-85cb037b7236_story.html.

229 HJS Database, The Henry Jackson Society, 2014.

3. Militant Groups Operating in the Sinai

The origin and activities of militant Gaza- and Sinai-based groups operating in the peninsula remain the subject of debate, as well as their links to al-Qaeda (AQ) franchises. Egyptian authorities have attempted to downplay foreign penetration into the peninsula:

For example, Maj. Gen. Ahmed Bakr, the former head of North Sinai police, insists there ‘is no evidence of highly organised groups in Sinai regardless of such statements released on the net’.²³⁰ An increasing body of evidence, however, suggests the contrary.

BREAKDOWN: SALAFI-JIHADIST MILITANT GROUPS LINKED TO THE SINAI, 2010-2014²³¹

Group name	Reported leadership/ prominent member(s)	Most common attack type(s)	Most common target type(s)	Most common attack location(s)
Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis [Ansar Jerusalem] [ABM]	Ibrahim Aweida [deceased]; Mohamed Ibrahim Freg [deceased]; Shadi al-Menaei; Kamal Allam	Bombings	Military; Security forces; Israel	North Sinai; South Sinai; Cairo; Eilat, Israel
Tawhid Wal-Jihad in the Sinai Peninsula	Ahmed Hamdan Harb Malki [deceased]; Khaled Massaad Salem; Hisham al-Saedni [deceased]; Abu Munir [deceased]	Shootings	Police	North Sinai
Al-Qaeda in the Sinai Peninsula [AQSP] and Ansar al-Jihad	Ramzi Mahmoud al-Mowafi	Bombings	Pipelines	North Sinai
Muhammad Jamal Network [MJN]	Muhammad Jamal	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ajnad Misr	Unknown	Bombings	Police	Cairo
Mujahideen Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem [MSC]	Hisham al-Saedni [deceased]	Rocket attacks	Israel	Eilat, Israel
Army of Islam [Jaysh al-Islam]	Mumtaz Dughmush	Bombings; Ambush	Religious targets; Security forces	North Sinai; Alexandria

The most operationally active and deadliest militant group in the Sinai is Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM, a.k.a. Ansar Jerusalem). Although a clear majority of attacks (87%) go unclaimed, the group has taken ownership of 62% of all attacks for which responsibility has been claimed or attributed. ABM is

also more likely than any other group to launch bomb attacks, and to target the military.

²³⁰ ‘Al Qaeda-inspired group claims responsibility for border attack’, CNN, 24 September 2012, available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/09/23/world/mcast/israel-egypt-border-attack/>.

²³¹ HJS Database, *The Henry Jackson Society*, 2014.

GROUP PROFILES

ANSAR BAYT AL-MAQDIS (ABM)

Aliases: Ansar Jerusalem; Jihadi Jerusalem; Supporters of the Holy Places; Supporters of Jerusalem;²³² Champions of Jerusalem²³³

Reported leadership/prominent members: Ibrahim Aweida (*deceased*);²³⁴ Ibrahim Mohamed Freg (*deceased*);²³⁵ Shadi al-Menaci, 'leading member',²³⁶ 'leader of operations since 2011';²³⁷ Kamal Allam, 'leading member'²³⁸

Known/reported links: Unspecified links to al-Qaeda (AQ) and to Ahmed Salama Mabrouk, leader of Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ);²³⁹ possible links with Hisham al-Saedni (a.k.a. Abu al-Walid al-Maqdisi), the slain leader of Tawhid Wal-Jihad and the Mujahideen Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem (MSC); 'strong ties' to Tawhid Wal-Jihad²⁴⁰

Attributed attacks:

- 5 February 2011: Attack on natural-gas pipeline in the Sinai Peninsula, Egypt;²⁴¹

- 18 August 2011: Attack on a bus in Eilat, Israel, 8 Israeli civilians and 3 Egyptian security personnel reported killed;²⁴²
- 21 September 2012: Attack from the Sinai on IDF soldiers in Israel, 1 soldier reported killed;²⁴³
- 5 September 2013: Assassination attempt on Egyptian Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim;²⁴⁴
- 7 October 2013: Suicide attack on South Sinai Security Directorate in el-Tor, 3 reported killed;²⁴⁵
- 19 October 2013: Car bombing at military intelligence building in Ismailia, 6 soldiers wounded;²⁴⁶
- 20 November 2013: Shooting assassination of police Lt. Col. Mohamed Mabrouk, Nasr City, Cairo, Egypt;²⁴⁷
- 24 December 2013: Car-bomb attack against police station in Mansoura, Egypt, 12 reported killed, including 8 police officers;²⁴⁸
- 17 January 2014: Attack on natural-gas pipeline in the Sinai Peninsula, Egypt;²⁴⁹
- 20 January 2014: Two Grad rockets fired at Eilat, Israel;²⁵⁰
- 23 January 2014: Attack on police checkpoint in Beni Suef, Egypt (south of Cairo), 5 reported killed;²⁵¹

²³² 'Al Qaeda-inspired group claims responsibility for border attack', *CNN*, 24 September 2012, available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/09/23/world/meast/israel-egypt-border-attack/>.

²³³ '12 dead after blast rocks Egypt police station', *Associated Press*, 24 December 2013, available at: <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/12/23/egypt-explosion-police-station/4183027/>.

²³⁴ 'Al Qaeda-inspired group claims responsibility for border attack', *CNN*, 24 September 2012, available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/09/23/world/meast/israel-egypt-border-attack/>.

²³⁵ 'Egypt kills senior leader of Ansar Beit al-Maqdis', *World Bulletin*, 10 December 2013, available at: <http://www.worldbulletin.net/?aType=haber&ArticleID=124650>.

²³⁶ 'Egypt: Two Army Soldiers Martyred and Eight Others Injured, Three Terrorists Killed in Sinai', *AllAfrica*, 21 December 2013, available at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201312220157.html>.

²³⁷ Interviews with several of Shady al-Menaci's relatives from the Menaci clan in 2011, 2012 and 2013 (all spoke on condition of anonymity), and another interview with Islamist Judge Hamdin Abu Faisal in September 2013. Shady has also been identified by military and security sources numerous times before, and claimed to have been successfully targeted several times (although each time he has not been among the dead), the most recent being three days ago.

²³⁸ 'Egypt: Two Army Soldiers Martyred and Eight Others Injured, Three Terrorists Killed in Sinai', *AllAfrica*, 21 December 2013, available at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201312220157.html>.

²³⁹ Joscelyn, T., 'Al Qaeda's Expansion in Egypt: Implications for U.S. Homeland Security', *Foundation for Defense of Democracies* (February 2014), available at: <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/HM/HM05/20140211/101734/HHRG-113-HM05-Wstate-JoscelynT-20140211.pdf>.

²⁴⁰ Interviews with anonymous sources (largely from the Menaci clan) from villages of Mehdeyya, and Muqataa, South of Rafah.

²⁴¹ 'Suspected attack on Egyptian gas pipeline halts supply to Egypt', *Associated Press*, 5 February 2011, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/feb/05/egyptian-gas-explosion-sinai-peninsula>.

²⁴² Roggio, B., 'Ansar Jerusalem claims attack on Israeli troops in the Sinai', *The Long War Journal*, 23 September 2012, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/09/ansar_jerusalem_clai.php.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ 'Militants involved in South Sinai attack arrested: Third Field Army', *Ahram Online*, 10 October 2013, available at: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/83702/Egypt/Politics-/Militants-involved-in-South-Sinai-attack-arrested-.aspx>.

²⁴⁵ Barnett, D., 'Ansar Jerusalem claims credit for assassination attempt on Egypt's interior minister', *The Long War Journal*, 9 September 2013, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/09/ansar_jerusalem_clai_1.php.

²⁴⁶ 'Jihadists claim responsibility for Ismailia military bombing', *Daily News Egypt*, 21 October 2013, available at: <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/10/21/jihadists-claim-responsibility-for-ismailia-military-bombing/>.

²⁴⁷ 'Sinai militants claim responsibility for Cairo killing', *Ahram Online*, 20 November 2013, available at: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/86996.aspx>.

²⁴⁸ Malsin, J., 'Egypt's Military-Backed Rulers Brand Muslim Brotherhood "Terrorist" and Extend Crackdown', *TIME*, 26 December 2013, available at: http://world.time.com/2013/12/26/egypts-military-backed-rulers-brand-muslim-brotherhood-terrorist-and-extend-crackdown/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed:timeblogs/middle_east%28TIME:TheMiddleEastBlog%29.

²⁴⁹ Barnett, D., 'Ansar Jerusalem claims responsibility for recent Sinai gas pipeline attack', *The Long War Journal*, 19 January 2014, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2014/01/ansar_jerusalem_claims_respons.php#ixzz2wWi7WvSS.

²⁵⁰ 'Salafi group takes responsibility for Eilat rockets', *The Times of Israel*, 21 January 2014, available at: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/salafi-group-takes-responsibility-for-eilat-rockets/>.

²⁵¹ 'Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis claims responsibility for Beni Suef attack', *Egypt Independent*, 23 January 2014, available at: <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/ansar-bayt-al-maqdis-claims-responsibility-beni-suef-attack>.

- 24 January 2014: Four bombings in Cairo, Egypt – police headquarters, police station, metro station, cinema, 6 reported killed, over 100 wounded;²⁵²
- 25 January 2014: Strike on military helicopter in the Sinai, by a surface-to-air missile (SAM), 5 reported killed;²⁵³
- 26 January 2014: Attack on army bus in the Sinai, 3 reported killed;²⁵⁴
- 28 January 2014: Assassination of Mohamed al-Saied, head of the Interior Ministry's technical office;²⁵⁵
- 16 February 2014: Suicide bomb attack at border crossing with Israel, in Taba, Egypt, 2 Korean tourists and Egyptian driver reported killed.²⁵⁶

Notes:

Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM) is a Salafi-jihadist group operating in North Sinai and the Gaza Strip, and is responsible for more militant attacks than any other armed group in the peninsula. Since late 2013, the group has expanded its targets, striking locations in mainland Egypt including Cairo and Mansoura.

Recent estimates have put ABM's total number of fighters (with 'high strategic and technological capacity')²⁵⁷ as high as 1,000.²⁵⁸ The group's leading members, Shady al-Menaei and Kamal Allam, are reportedly based in Al Mahdeyya, a village in south Rafah, North Sinai.²⁵⁹ Al-Menaei, who is both a

Salafi and a prominent member of the Menaei clan of the Sinai's Sawarka tribe, is thought to be the group's best known field commander, and is said to have been running operations from Rafah since 2011. As a result of their presence there, the group is thought to have strong ties to militant group Tawhid Wal-Jihad, also thought to be based in south Rafah.²⁶⁰

ABM's largest cross-border attack occurred on 18 August 2011, when 12 gunmen infiltrated the Israeli border and opened fire on an Israeli bus near Eilat. Minutes later, assailants detonated a bomb near an Israeli army patrol, and fired an anti-tank missile at a private car. Eight Israelis – six civilians, a police sniper, and a soldier – were killed and dozens wounded. Israeli forces followed the perpetrators back into the Sinai, and five Egyptian troops were killed in subsequent Israeli airstrikes.²⁶¹

In September 2013, the group conducted a failed assassination attempt against Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim and bombed a police compound in the Nile Delta city of Mansoura, killing 16.²⁶² In February 2014, the group bombed a tourist bus in Taba, at the border crossing with Israel. Three Korean tourists and their Egyptian driver were killed in the first attack against tourists in the Sinai since 2005.²⁶³

ABM's own statements proclaim that it seeks 'to liberate our *Ummah* and Muslim people from the slavery of the oppressive, apostate regimes, and establish justice, dignity and freedom for them, and that is only through servitude to Allah alone and implementing His proper Shariah ... an army of Muslims that helps the Ummah and the religion is the way to liberate Jerusalem and the rest of Muslim lands

²⁵² 'Cairo hit by four bomb blasts on Friday, killing 6', *Ahram Online*, 24 January 2014, available at: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/92374.aspx>; see also: 'Cairo rocked by blasts on eve of anniversary of Egypt uprising', *The Financial Times*, 24 January 2014, available at: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/ac7f37a4-84bb-11e3-a793-00144feab7de.html?siteedition=uk#axzz2vwgGaEh>, and: 'Egypt militants step up campaign with Cairo blasts', *BBC News*, 24 January 2014, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-25874370>.

²⁵³ 'Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis claims responsibility for military helicopter crash and attacks', *Egypt Independent*, 26 January 2014, available at: <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/ansar-bayt-al-maqdis-claims-responsibility-military-helicopter-crash-and-attacks>.

²⁵⁴ 'Three soldiers dead in Sinai, more injured', *Daily News Egypt*, 26 January 2014, available at: <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2014/01/26/three-soldiers-dead-in-sinai-more-injured/>.

²⁵⁵ 'Ansar Beit Al-Maqdis takes responsibility for assassination of Al-Saied, army accuses Brotherhood', *Daily News Egypt*, 29 January 2014, available at: <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2014/01/29/ansar-beit-al-maqdis-takes-responsibility-assassination-al-saied-army-accuses-brotherhood/>.

²⁵⁶ 'Egypt militants warn tourists to leave country or face attack', *Associated Press*, 18 February 2014, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/1.574843>.

²⁵⁷ Al-Anani, Khalil, 'The Resurgence of Militant Islamists in Egypt', *Middle East Institute*, 14 February 2014, available at: <http://www.mei.edu/content/resurgence-militant-islamists-egypt>.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ 'Egypt: Two Army Soldiers Martyred and Eight Others Injured, Three Terrorists Killed in Sinai', *AllAfrica*, 21 December 2013, available at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201312220157.html>.

²⁶⁰ Interviews with several of Shady al-Menaei's relatives from the Menaei clan in 2011, 2012 and 2013 (all spoke on condition of anonymity), and another interview with Islamist Judge Hamdin Abu Faisal in September 2013. Shady has also been identified by military and security sources numerous times before, and claimed to have been successfully targeted several times (although each time he has not been among the dead), the most recent being three days ago.

²⁶¹ 'Timeline of the attacks on the Sinai border', *The Jerusalem Post*, 18 August 2011, available at: <http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Timeline-of-the-attacks-on-the-Sinai-border>.

²⁶² 'Sinai's Ansar Beit Al-Maqdis claim responsibility for Egypt's Mansoura blast', *Ahram Online*, 25 December 2013, available at: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/89992/Egypt/Politics-/Sinai-Ansar-Beit-ALMaqdis-claim-responsibility-fo.aspx>.

²⁶³ 'Ansar Beit Al-Maqdis claim Taba bus bombing', *Daily News Egypt*, 18 February 2014, available at: <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2014/02/18/ansar-beit-al-maqdis-claim-taba-bus-bombing/>.

and live in freedom, dignity and honour under the shade of the Shariah of the Lord of the Worlds.’²⁶⁴

While the extent of communication between ABM and al-Qaeda (if any) is unclear, ABM has received the implicit blessing of AQ leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, who also played footage of an ABM-held funeral in a January 2014 taped message.²⁶⁵

On 24 January 2014, ABM claimed responsibility for a string of bombing attacks on the Cairo security directorate building that killed six people.²⁶⁶ On 11 March 2014, Egyptian forces operating in Cairo killed ABM commander Mohamed el-Sayed Mansour el-Toukhy (also known as Abu Obaida). Egyptian authorities suspect el-Toukhy of being responsible for one of the 24 January bombings – at a security compound in Cairo, killing four people. The fact that the militant was killed in Cairo – over an attack that also occurred in the Egyptian capital – underscores the spread of Sinai-based terrorism beyond the peninsula.²⁶⁷

On April 9, 2014, less than two months after ABM’s deadly bus attack on the Korean tourists, the US State Department added the group to its list of Foreign Terrorist Organisations.²⁶⁸ Less than a week later, an Egyptian court followed suit and added the group to the country’s terror list.²⁶⁹

The ABM has shown recent signs of operational expansion into the mainland Egypt. On 23 April 2014, Egyptian security forces raided what they described as an ABM hideout southwest of Alexandria. One policeman and one militant were

killed in the raid, the Interior Ministry said, adding that the ABM cell was planning to target police, military and security forces.²⁷⁰

TAWHID WAL-JIHAD IN THE SINAI PENINSULA

Aliases: Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad fi Ard al-Knana;²⁷¹ Jamaat al-Tawhid Wal-Jihad²⁷²

Reported leadership/prominent members: Ahmed Hamdan Harb Malki (a.k.a. Abu Mariam), military commander (*deceased*);²⁷³ Khaled Massaad Salem, founder;²⁷⁴ Hisham al-Saedni (a.k.a. Abu al-Walid al-Maqdisi), founder (*deceased*); Abu Munir, military commander (*deceased*)²⁷⁵

Known/reported links: Al-Qaeda (AQ)²⁷⁶

Attributed attacks:

- 22 June 2011: Attack on police checkpoint and a Bank of Alexandria branch in el-Arish, 2 reported killed;^{277 278}
- 29/30 July 2011: Attack on police station in el-Arish, North Sinai, 5/6 reported killed.²⁷⁹

²⁶⁴ Barnett, D., ‘Ansar Jerusalem claims credit for suicide bombing of South Sinai Security Directorate’, *The Long War Journal*, 9 October 2014, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/10/ansar_jerusalem_clai_2.php#ixzz2xYPZWouS.

²⁶⁵ Barnett, D., ‘Zawahiri’s message to ‘our people in Sinai’, *The Long War Journal*, 27 January 2014, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2014/01/zawahiris_message_to_our_peopl.php.

²⁶⁶ ‘24 January terrorist attacks met with international condemnation’, *Daily News Egypt*, 24 January 2014, available at: <http://www.dailynewsegyp.com/2014/01/25/24-january-terrorist-attacks-met-with-international-condemnation/#sthash.5hqJpaC.dpuf>.

²⁶⁷ ‘Egyptian security forces kill “terrorist” in Cairo shoot-out’, *Reuters*, 11 March 2014, available at: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/03/11/uk-egypt-security-idUKBRE2A1HB20140311>.

²⁶⁸ ‘Terrorist Designation of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis’, US Department of State, 9 April 2014, available at: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/04/224566.htm>.

²⁶⁹ ‘Egypt court rules Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis terrorist group’, *Aswat Masiya*, 14 April 2014, available at: <http://en.aswatmasriya.com/news/view.aspx?id=900b0c4c-e998-4173-960c-3e944d48efd5>.

²⁷⁰ ‘Two policemen, militant killed in Egypt’, *Reuters*, 23 April 2014, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/23/us-egypt-violence-idUSBREA3M0CP20140423>.

²⁷¹ ‘The Gazan-based Salafist jihadi network Tawhid wal-Jihad carried out the terrorist attack on the Israeli-Egyptian border on June 18, 2012, in which an Israeli civilian was killed. The attack emphasized the threat to Israel from the Sinai Peninsula and Egypt’s difficulty in governing the region’, *The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center* (August 2012), available at: http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/articles/Art_20381/E_155_12_582238727.pdf.

²⁷² ‘Al-Qaida: Jihadists on the edge’, *Control Risks* (2012), available at: http://www.controlrisks.com/SiteAssets/Example%20Prime%20notes/Al_Qaida_Jihadists_on_the_edge.pdf.

²⁷³ ‘Egyptian army kills military commander of Al-Tawhid Wal-Jihad in Sinai’, *Ahram Online*, 19 January 2014, available at: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/91920/Egypt/Politics-/Egyptian-army-kills-military-commander-of-AlTawhid.aspx>.

²⁷⁴ Yaari, E., ‘Sinai: A New Front’, *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy* (January 2012), No. 9, available at: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PoilityNote09.pdf>.

²⁷⁵ Joscelyn, T., ‘Al Qaeda’s Expansion in Egypt: Implications for U.S. Homeland Security’, *Foundation for Defense of Democracies* (February 2014), available at: <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/HM/HM05/20140211/101734/HHRG-113-HM05-Wstate-JoscelynT-20140211.pdf>.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ ‘Egypt sentences 14 to death for 2011 Sinai attacks’, *The Times of Israel*, 24 September 2012, available at: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/egypt-sentences-14-to-death-for-2011-sinai-attacks/>.

²⁷⁸ The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights denounces attacking a police search point in Aresh’, *The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights*, 23 June 2011, available at: <http://en.eohr.org/2011/06/23/the-egyptian-organization-for-human-rights-denounces-attacking-a-police-search-point-in-aresh/>.

²⁷⁹ ‘Egypt sentences 14 to death for 2011 Sinai attacks’, *The Times of Israel*, 24 September 2012, available at: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/egypt-sentences-14-to-death-for-2011-sinai-attacks/>.

NOTES:

Tawhid Wal-Jihad is a militant group operating in North Sinai, although it reportedly has its roots in a Gaza-based group by the same name. The Sinai branch was founded in early 2000 by Khaled Massaad Salem, a Bedouin dentist, in el-Arish, and became operationally active in North Sinai around 2003.^{280 281} The group is also believed to have a presence in south Rafah, North Sinai, with ties to Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM), whose leaders are also thought to be based there.²⁸²

Tawhid Wal-Jihad has been described as ‘among the most active militant groups in Sinai’.²⁸³ The group was responsible for an October 2004 bomb attack in Taba (near the Israeli border), as well as blasts in July 2005 in Sharm el-Sheikh and in April 2006 in Dahab – all of them resorts in South Sinai popular with foreign tourists.²⁸⁴

The founder of the group, Hisham al-Saedni (assassinated by Israel in October 2012), is believed to have fought alongside al-Qaeda in Iraq.²⁸⁵ The name “Tawhid Wal-Jihad” is also sometimes used by various unaffiliated Bedouin gunmen and groups when claiming responsibility for an attack.²⁸⁶

AL-QAEDA IN THE SINAI PENINSULA (AQSP) (& ANSAR AL-JIHAD)

Aliases: Unspecified

Reported leadership/prominent members: Ramzi Mahmoud al-Mowafi²⁸⁷ (a.k.a. ‘The Chemist’)²⁸⁸

Known/reported links: Al-Mowafi, the group’s reported leader, is thought to have contacted militants from the Gaza-based group Army of Islam.²⁸⁹

Attributed attacks:

- 29 July 2011: Attack on police station in el-Arish: 6 reported killed²⁹⁰ (claimed by al-Qaeda in the Sinai Peninsula [AQSP])

Notes:

A group calling itself ‘Al-Qaeda in the Sinai Peninsula’ (AQSP) is one of the more recent Salafi-jihadist groups thought to have established a base in the Sinai. Debate continues as to its size and composition, as well as its links to official al-Qaeda (AQ) franchises. Ansar al-Jihad – thought to be AQSP’s so-called “military wing” – announced its formation in late 2011, pledging its allegiance to Osama bin Laden.²⁹¹

AQSP is believed to be led by the Egyptian Ramzi al-Mowafi.²⁹² In the 1990s, al-Mowafi travelled to Afghanistan; Saudi Arabia; and Pakistan, to render services to AQ, eventually becoming bin Laden’s personal doctor and AQ’s chief chemical-weapons producer.²⁹³ More recently, he escaped from an

²⁸⁰ ‘Al-Qaida: Jihadists on the edge’, *Control Risks* (2012), available at: http://www.controlrisks.com/SiteAssets/Example%20Prime%20notes/Al_Qaida_Jihadists_on_the_edge.pdf.

²⁸¹ ‘The Gazan-based Salafist jihadi network Tawhid wal-Jihad’, *The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center* (August 2012), available at: http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/articles/Art_20381/E_155_12_582238727.pdf.

²⁸² Interviews with anonymous sources (largely from the Menaci clan) from villages of Mehdeyya, and Muqataa, South of Rafah.

²⁸³ ‘Egyptian army kills military commander of Al-Tawhid Wal-Jihad in Sinai’, *Ahram Online*, 19 January 2014, available at: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/91920/Egypt/Politics-/Egyptian-army-kills-military-commander-of-AlTawhid.aspx>.

²⁸⁴ ‘EGYPT – Sinai prisoners stage hunger strike over trial-free detention’, *Wikileaks*, 4 March 2013, available at: http://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/18/1861743_egypt-sinai-prisoners-stage-hunger-strike-over-trial-free.html.

²⁸⁵ Joscelyn, T., ‘Al Qaeda’s Expansion in Egypt: Implications for U.S. Homeland Security’, *Foundation for Defense of Democracies* (February 2014), available at: <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/HM/HM05/20140211/101734/HHRG-113-HM05-Wstate-JoscelynT-20140211.pdf>.

²⁸⁶ ‘The Gazan-based Salafist jihadi network Tawhid wal-Jihad’, *The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center* (August 2012), available at: http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/articles/Art_20381/E_155_12_582238727.pdf.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ ‘Local sources say Bin Laden’s doctor trains Sinai militants, security official denies’, *Al Arabiya News*, 25 August 2011, available at: <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/08/25/163956.html>.

²⁹⁰ ‘EGYPT: Six dead in assault on Sinai police station’, *Los Angeles Times*, 30 July 2011, available at: <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/babylonbeyond/2011/07/egypt-six-dead-in-armed-assault-on-sinai-police-station.html>; see also: ‘The Mujahideen Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem’, *International Institute for Counter-Terrorism* (August 2012), available at: <http://www.iiict.org.il/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=mFck77US5U%3d&tabid=380>.

²⁹¹ Barnett, D., ‘Former bin Laden doctor reportedly heads al Qaeda in the Sinai Peninsula’, *The Long War Journal*, 17 July 2013, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/07/former_bin_laden_doc.php.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Barnett, D., ‘Former bin Laden doctor reportedly heads al Qaeda in the Sinai Peninsula’, *The Long War Journal*, 17 July 2013, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/07/former_bin_laden_doc.php.

Egyptian prison, following the 2011 revolution, before reportedly fleeing to the Sinai.²⁹⁴

Al-Mowafi was reportedly spotted in el-Arish later in 2011, where he is claimed to have made contact with the armed group Army of Islam (a.k.a. Jaysh al-Islam).²⁹⁵ He is said to have orchestrated a number of attacks,²⁹⁶ and to have provided military training to around 40 operatives – some as young as 15.²⁹⁷

AQSP has only once claimed responsibility for a militant attack: a 29 July 2011 shooting, at a police station in el-Arish, which killed 6 police officers.²⁹⁸ For its part, Ansar al-Jihad has claimed numerous pipeline attacks – one credible report linked the group to as many as 11 such attacks in a single year.²⁹⁹

MUHAMMAD JAMAL NETWORK (MJN)

Aliases: Jamal Network;³⁰⁰ Muhamed Jamal Abu Ahmed Group³⁰¹

Reported leadership/prominent members: Muhammad Jamal Abd-Al Rahim Ahmad al-Kashif³⁰² (a.k.a. Abu Ahmad al-Masri)³⁰³

Known/reported links: Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda (AQ);³⁰⁴ Nasir 'abd al-Karim, Abdullah al-Wahishi (AQAP); Qasim Yahya Mahdi al-Rimi

(AQAP); “Nasr City Cell”;³⁰⁵ unspecified leaders, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)³⁰⁶

Attributed attacks: None

Notes:

The Muhammad Jamal Network (MJN) operates in North Sinai – and in training camps in the Gaza Strip, Egypt and in Libya – and is thought to be part of al-Qaeda (AQ)’s international terrorist network. Muhammad Jamal established the network shortly after his escape from an Egyptian prison during the 2011 Egyptian revolution;³⁰⁷ he was then re-arrested in November 2012.

Jamal has established links to AQ (namely the group’s emir, Ayman al-Zawahiri) and jihadist networks in Europe, according to a United Nations Security Council committee.³⁰⁸ He was a leading member (head of the operational wing) of Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ)³⁰⁹ and was the leader of the “Nasr City Cell”, which has been accused of plotting attacks inside Egypt.³¹⁰

Through Jamal’s links to AQ, MJN has received funding from al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and has used the AQAP network to smuggle terrorists into MJN training camps run.³¹¹ In letters to al-Zawahiri, Jamal admitted to establishing armed groups in the Sinai; to training suicide bombers; and to acquiring weapons. Al-Zawahiri is reported to have given Jamal his blessing to launch terrorist attacks in Libya and Egypt.³¹² Several of the perpetrators of the deadly 2012 assault on the US diplomatic mission in

²⁹⁴ ‘Osama bin Laden’s doctor resurfaces’, *CNN*, 17 August 2011, available at: <http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2011/08/17/osama-bin-ladens-doctor-resurfaces/>.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ ‘Operatives captured of so-called ‘Free Egyptian Army’, (Arabic) *Al-Mashhad*, 17 July 2013, available at: <http://al-mashhad.com/Articles/303059.aspx>.

²⁹⁷ ‘Local sources say Bin Laden’s doctor trains Sinai militants, security officials denies’, *Al Arabiya News*, 25 August 2011, available at: <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/08/25/163956.html>.

²⁹⁸ Riedel, B., ‘Al Qaeda’s New Sinai Front’, *The Daily Beast*, 21 August 2011, available at: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/08/21/al-qaeda-s-newest-front-in-sinai-could-deepen-arab-israeli-conflict.html>.

²⁹⁹ ‘Sinai terror group claims responsibility for gas pipeline blasts’, *The Times of Israel*, 25 July 2012, available at: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/sinai-jihad-group-announces-responsibility-for-gas-pipeline-blasts/>.

³⁰⁰ ‘Jamal Network (MJN)’, *Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium*, available at: <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/jamal-network-mjn>.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² ‘QE.M.136.13. Muhammad Jamal Network (MJN)’, UN Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) concerning Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, 21 October 2013, available at: <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/NSQE13613E.shtml>.

³⁰³ ‘Jamal Network (MJN)’, *Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium*, available at: <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/jamal-network-mjn>.

³⁰⁴ ‘QE.M.136.13. Muhammad Jamal Network (MJN)’, UN Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) concerning Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, 21 October 2013, available at: <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/NSQE13613E.shtml>.

³⁰⁵ Joscelyn, T., ‘New photos of Nasr City cell members published’, *The Long War Journal*, 20 February 2014, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2014/02/new_photos_of_nasr_city_cell_m.php.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ ‘QE.M.136.13. Muhammad Jamal Network (MJN)’, UN Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) concerning Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, 21 October 2013, available at: <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/NSQE13613E.shtml>.

³⁰⁹ ‘U.S. brands Egyptian Muhammad Jamal as “global terrorist”’, *Reuters*, 7 October 2013, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/10/07/us-egypt-usa-jamal-idUSBRE9960TC20131007>.

³¹⁰ ‘QE.M.136.13. Muhammad Jamal Network (MJN)’, UN Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) concerning Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, 21 October 2013, available at: <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/NSQE13613E.shtml>.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid.

Benghazi, Libya, reportedly received terrorist training at Jamal's camps in Libya.³¹³

Despite Jamal's re-arrest that year, the group is still considered to be operational, with MJN operatives reportedly conspiring with other groups to undertake a number of militant attacks since.³¹⁴

AJNAD MISR

Aliases: Egypt's Soldiers

Reported leadership/prominent members:
Unknown

Known/reported links: Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM)³¹⁵

Attributed attacks:

- 20 November 2013: Bombing at police checkpoint in Cairo, 4 wounded;³¹⁶
- 25 November 2013: Improvised Explosive Device (IED) at police checkpoint in Cairo, 2 wounded;³¹⁷
- 7 January 2014: Grenade attack on police car in Cairo, 1 wounded;³¹⁸
- 31 January 2014: IED at police checkpoint in Cairo, 2 wounded;³¹⁹
- 7 February 2014: Bombing at police checkpoint in the Cairo suburb of Giza, 8 wounded;³²⁰

- 2 April 2014: Triple bomb attack in Cairo, police brigadier-general reported killed, 5 police officers wounded;³²¹
- 10 April 2014: Bomb attack against traffic policeman in Cairo, 1 police officer wounded;³²²
- 15 April 2014: Bomb attack in Cairo, 2 police officers, 1 civilian wounded;³²³
- 18 April 2014: Bombing in central Cairo square, 1 police major reported killed, 3 others wounded;³²⁴
- 11 March 2014: Bomb attack on police car near Israeli embassy in Cairo, no casualties;³²⁵
- 29 March 2014: Bombing at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, no casualties;³²⁶
- 2 April 2014: Triple bombing in Cairo, police brigadier-general reported killed, 5 police officers wounded.³²⁷
- 10 April 2014: Bombing in Cairo, 1 police officer wounded;³²⁸
- 15 April 2014: Bombing in Cairo, 2 police officers and 1 civilian wounded;³²⁹
- 18 April 2014: Bombing in central Cairo square, 1 police major reported killed, 3 others wounded;³³⁰

313 'QE.M.136.13. Muhammad Jamal Network (MJN)', UN Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) concerning Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, 21 October 2013, available at: <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/NSQE13613E.shtml>.

314 Joscelyn, T., 'Egyptian interior minister: Al Qaeda cell plotted suicide attack against Western embassy', *The Long War Journal*, 11 May 2013, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/05/egyptian_interior_mi.php.

315 Joscelyn, T., 'Al Qaeda's Expansion in Egypt: Implications for U.S. Homeland Security', *Foundation for Defense of Democracies* (February 2014), available at: <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/HM/HM05/20140211/101734/HHRG-113-HM05-Wstate-JoscelynT-20140211.pdf>.

316 'Cairo bomb attack wounds 4 police: security', *AFP*, 20 November 2013, available at: http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gMPqn-KXdvacagVU_amzlpRKvKq?docId=3ad3da94-5cef-4e8f-b555-63d976e3fe6b.

317 'Blast at Cairo checkpoint wounds two police', *AFP*, 25 November 2013, available at: <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/mena/522412-blast-at-cairo-checkpoint-wounds-two-police>.

318 'Bomb thrown in drive-by attack on Cairo police', *Reuters*, 7 January 2014, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/01/07/us-egypt-attack-idUSBREA0613K20140107>.

319 'New militant jihadi group formed in Egypt, claims responsibility for attacks on police', *Associated Press*, 1 February 2014, available at: <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/02/01/new-militant-jihadi-group-formed-in-egypt-claims-responsibility-for-attacks-on/>.

320 'New Egyptian militant group claims responsibility for Giza bombing', *Associated Press*, 8 February 2014, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/08/egyptian-militant-giza-bombing-police>.

321 'Jihadist group Ajnad Misr claims Cairo bombings', *Al Arabiya*, 2 April 2014, available at: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/04/02/Two-blasts-in-central-Cairo.html>.

322 'Bomb Wounds Egyptian Policeman in Cairo Suburb', *NaharNet*, 10 April 2014, available at: <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/126050>.

323 Barnett, D., 'Ajnad Misr claims 3 more attacks in Cairo area', *Threat Matrix*, 18 April 2014, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2014/04/ajnad_misr_claims_three_more_a.php; see also 'Bomb Attack in Cairo Wounds 2 Police, Civilian', *NaharNet*, 15 April 2014, available at: <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/126633>.

324 'Blast in busy Cairo square kills 1 police officer', *Associated Press*, 18 April 2014, available at: <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/blast-busy-cairo-square-kills-1-officer>.

325 'Bomb explodes near Israeli embassy in Cairo, no one hurt', *Reuters*, 11 March 2014, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/11/us-egypt-israel-idUSBREA2A1UL20140311>; see also Barnett, D., 'Ajnad Misr claims 3 more attacks in Cairo area', *Threat Matrix*, 18 April 2014, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2014/04/ajnad_misr_claims_three_more_a.php.

326 Ibid.; see also 'Bomb explodes close to Al-Azhar', *Mada Masr*, 29 March 2014, available at: <http://madamasr.com/content/bomb-explodes-close-al-azhar>.

327 'Jihadist group Ajnad Misr claims Cairo bombings', *Al Arabiya*, 2 April 2014, available at: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/04/02/Two-blasts-in-central-Cairo.html>.

328 'Bomb Wounds Egyptian Policeman in Cairo Suburb', *NaharNet*, 10 April 2014, available at: <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/126050>.

329 Barnett, D., 'Ajnad Misr claims 3 more attacks in Cairo area', *Threat Matrix*, 18 April 2014, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2014/04/ajnad_misr_claims_three_more_a.php; see also 'Bomb Attack in Cairo Wounds 2 Police, Civilian', *NaharNet*, 15 April 2014, available at: <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/126633>.

330 Michael, M., 'Blast in busy Cairo square kills 1 police officer', *Associated Press*, 18 April 2014, available at: <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/blast-busy-cairo-square-kills-1-officer>.

- 23 April 2014: Bombing near Cairo, police brigadier general reported killed.³³¹

Notes:

Ajnad Misr (“Egypt’s Soldiers”) is the most recent militant group to have emerged in Egypt, announcing its existence in January 2014 in a statement condemning “criminal” elements within the Egyptian government. Since the start of the year the group has taken credit for more than a dozen attacks, all of them in Cairo and its vicinity.

Little is known about whether Ajnad Misr is based in the Sinai and/or the Egyptian mainland. In April 2014, however, Egyptian Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim described the group as an offshoot of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM), and charged that it is run by the Muslim Brotherhood. As Ibrahim – himself the target of an ABM assassination plot in September 2013 – told Egyptian media, “Call it Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, call it Soldiers of Egypt, either way, it is a Muslim Brotherhood militia, and the Brotherhood-era youth minister Osama Yassin was behind them.”³³² If Ibrahim’s descriptions are correct, then Ajnad Misr – more than any other group – exemplifies the Sinai’s growing militant threat to the Egyptian mainland, particularly its capital and population centres. For its part, ABM refers to Ajnad Misr as “our brothers.”³³³

Ajnad Misr claimed responsibility for a 2 April 2014 triple bomb attack in Cairo that killed a police brigadier-general and wounded five other police officers.³³⁴ On 17 April, the group released its first-ever video – a 23-minute montage of the government’s anti-Islamist activity – in which it claimed no fewer than eight attacks.³³⁵ A day later, it claimed an 18 April bombing in Cairo’s upscale

Mohandessin district that killed a police major, and wounded another high-level police officer and two other individuals.³³⁶ Five days later, it claimed another Cairo bombing which killed a police brigadier general.³³⁷

MUJAHIDEEN SHURA COUNCIL IN THE ENVIRONS OF JERUSALEM (MSC)

Aliases: Majlis Shura al-Mujahideen Fi Aknaf Bayt al-Maqdis (full);³³⁸ Majlis Shura al-Mujahideen (short);³³⁹ Holy Warriors’ Guidance Council³⁴⁰

Reported leadership/prominent members: Hisham al-Saedni (a.k.a. Abu al-Walid al-Maqdisi), co-founder, member, former head of Tawhid Wal-Jihad (*deceased*)^{341 342}

Known/reported links: Tawhid Wal-Jihad,³⁴³ Ansar al-Sunna³⁴⁴

Attributed attacks:

- 18 June 2012: Cross-border attack on Israel,³⁴⁵ 1 Israeli civilian reported killed;³⁴⁶
- 5 August 2012: Cross-border attack on Israel, 16 troops reported killed³⁴⁷ (attack also attributed

³³¹ ‘Two policemen, militant killed in Egypt’, *Reuters*, 23 April 2014, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/23/us-egypt-violence-idUSBREA3M0CP20140423>.

³³² ‘Interior Ministry: Soldiers of Egypt formed by MB leader’, *Egypt Independent*, 19 April 2014, available at: <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/HM/HM05/20140211/101734/HHRG-113-HM05-Wstate-JoscelynT-20140211.pdf>.

³³³ Joscelyn, T., ‘Al Qaeda’s Expansion in Egypt: Implications for U.S. Homeland Security’, *Foundation for Defense of Democracies* (February 2014), available at: <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/HM/HM05/20140211/101734/HHRG-113-HM05-Wstate-JoscelynT-20140211.pdf>.

³³⁴ ‘Jihadist group Ajnad Misr claims Cairo bombings’, *Al Arabiya*, 2 April 2014, available at: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/04/02/Two-blasts-in-central-Cairo.html>.

³³⁵ Barnett, D., ‘Ajnad Misr releases first video of attacks’, *Threat Matrix*, 17 April 2014, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2014/04/ajnad_misr_releases_first_vidoe.php.

³³⁶ Barnett, D., ‘Ajnad Misr claims 3 more attacks in Cairo area’, *Threat Matrix*, 18 April 2014, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2014/04/ajnad_misr_claims_three_more_a.php.

³³⁷ ‘Two policemen, militant killed in Egypt’, *Reuters*, 23 April 2014, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/23/us-egypt-violence-idUSBREA3M0CP20140423>.

³³⁸ ‘Mujahidin Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem (MSC)’, *Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium*, available at: <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/mujahidin-shura-council-environs-jerusalem-msc>.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ ‘Israeli air strikes kill three Palestinian militants in Gaza’, *Reuters*, 14 October 2012, available at: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/10/14/uk-palestinians-israel-violence-idUKBRE89C0IY20121014>.

³⁴¹ Barnett, D., ‘Mujahideen Shura Council is consolidation of Salafi-Jihadist groups in Gaza: sources’, *The Long War Journal*, 14 October 2012, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/10/mujahideen_shura_cou.php.

³⁴² ‘Mujahidin Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem (MSC)’, *Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium*, available at: <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/mujahidin-shura-council-environs-jerusalem-msc>.

³⁴³ ‘Israeli air strikes kill three Palestinian militants in Gaza’, *Reuters*, 14 October 2012, available at: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/10/14/uk-palestinians-israel-violence-idUKBRE89C0IY20121014>.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Joscelyn, T., ‘Al Qaeda-linked group claims responsibility for attack in Israel’, *The Long War Journal*, 19 June 2012, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/06/al_qaeda-linked_grou.php.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ ‘The Mujahideen Shura Council’, *The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center*, 22 April 2013, available at: <http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/20504>.

to Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM), the Army of Islam, and Takfir Wal-Hijra);³⁴⁸

- 14 November 2012: Four Grad rockets fired at western Negev, Israel, no reported casualties;³⁴⁹
- 17 April 2013: Two rocket attacks fired at Eilat, Israel, no reported casualties;^{350 351}
- 13 August 2013: Grad rocket attack on Eilat, Israel, no reported casualties.^{352 353}

Notes:

The Mujahideen Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem (MSC) formed in 2012, paying homage to Osama bin Laden and declaring itself ‘a building block in the global project aiming for the return of the rightly-guided Caliphate and the institution of the pure Shariah.’³⁵⁴ The Ibn Taymiyyah Media Center (ITMC) is the MSC’s official “public-relations” firm.³⁵⁵

The MSC is believed to be an umbrella organisation resulting from the merger of several Gaza-based groups – Ansar al-Sunna and Tawhid Wal-Jihad – operating in the Sinai.³⁵⁶ Today, the MSC is part of an extensive network of armed groups in Gaza and has focused its attacks primarily at Israel.³⁵⁷

The MSC was co-founded by the leaders of Ansar al-Sunna (Ashraf al-Sabah) and Tawhid Wal-Jihad (Hisham al-Saedni), both of whom were killed by Israeli forces in October 2012.³⁵⁸ Its current leadership is unknown.

³⁴⁸ For reports on the attribution of this attack to the Army of Islam and Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM), see their individual profiles.

³⁴⁹ ‘The Mujahideen Shura Council’, *The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center*, 22 April 2013, available at: <http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/20504>.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ ‘Iron Dome intercepts rocket bound for Eilat’, *The Times of Israel*, 13 April 2013, available at: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/iron-dome-intercepts-rockets-bound-for-eilat/>.

³⁵² Barnett, D., ‘MSC in Jerusalem claims rocket attack on Eilat’, *The Long War Journal*, 13 August 2013, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/08/msc_in_jerusalem_cla_1.php.

³⁵³ ‘Iron Dome intercepts rocket bound for Eilat’, *The Times of Israel*, 13 August 2013, available at: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/iron-dome-intercepts-rockets-bound-for-eilat/>.

³⁵⁴ Joscelyn, T., ‘Al Qaeda-linked group claims responsibility for attack in Israel’, *The Long War Journal*, 19 June 2012, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/06/al_qaeda-linked_group.php.

³⁵⁵ ‘Ibn Taymiyyah Media’, *Bentaymia*, available at: <http://bentaymia.tumblr.com/>.

³⁵⁶ ‘Israeli air strikes kill three Palestinian militants in Gaza’, *Reuters*, 14 October 2012, available at: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/10/14/uk-palestinians-israel-violence-idUKBRE89C0IY20121014>.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

ARMY OF ISLAM

Aliases: Jaysh al-Islam; Palestinian Islamic Army³⁵⁹

Reported leadership/prominent members: Mumtaz Dughmush³⁶⁰

Known/reported links: Hamas,^{361 362} Hizbollah³⁶³

Attributed attacks:

- 2006: Kidnapping, in Gaza, of two *Fox News* journalists, both held for two weeks;³⁶⁴
- 22 February 2009: Attack on a market in Cairo, Egypt, 1 French tourist reported killed;³⁶⁵
- 1 January 2011: Attack on a Coptic church in Alexandria, Egypt, 25 reported killed;³⁶⁶
- 5 August 2012: Cross-border attack near the border with the Gaza Strip and Israel, 16 troops reported killed³⁶⁷ (attack also attributed to Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM), the Mujahideen Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem (MSC), and Takfir Wal-Hijra);³⁶⁸
- Numerous occasions: Rocket-fire on Israel.³⁶⁹

Notes:

The Army of Islam (Jaysh al-Islam) is a Gaza-based militant group operating primarily in the Sinai, from

³⁵⁹ ‘Osama bin Laden’s doctor resurfaces’, *CNN*, 17 August 2011, available at: <http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2011/08/17/osama-bin-ladens-doctor-resurfaces/>.

³⁶⁰ ‘Shin Bet forms new unit to thwart attacks on Israel by Sinai Jihadists’, *Haaretz*, 20 August 2013, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/.premium-1.542417>.

³⁶¹ ‘Profile of the Army of Islam’, *The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center* (August 2012), available at: http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/articles/Art_20385/E_169_12_1576235301.pdf.

³⁶² ‘Shin Bet forms new unit to thwart attacks on Israel by Sinai Jihadists’, *Haaretz*, 20 August 2013, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/.premium-1.542417>.

³⁶³ Fishman, A., ‘Tracking Sources of Sinai Terror, All Roads Lead to Gaza’, *Al-Monitor*, 13 August 2012, available at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/iw/contents/articles/security/01/08/the-sinai-war.html>.

³⁶⁴ ‘2 Kidnapped Journalists in Gaza Freed Unharmed’, *The New York Times*, 27 August 2006, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/27/world/middleeast/27cnd-mideast.html>.

³⁶⁵ ‘Profile of the Army of Islam’, *The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center* (August 2012), available at: http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/articles/Art_20385/E_169_12_1576235301.pdf.

³⁶⁶ ‘Egypt blames Gaza group for bombing’, *Al-Jazeera*, 23 January 2011, available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/01/201112311414915283.html>.

³⁶⁷ Herzog, M., ‘Powder Keg in Gaza’, *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 1 November 2012, available at: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/powder-keg-in-gaza>.

³⁶⁸ For reports on the attribution of this attack to the other three groups listed (excluding Takfir Wal-Hijra), see their individual profiles.

³⁶⁹ ‘Designation of Army of Islam’, US Department of State, 19 May 2011, available at: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/05/163838.htm>.

which it launches frequent attacks against the Egyptian Army and Israel. The group – founded in the Gaza Strip by Mumtaz Dughmush, a member of the powerful Dughmush clan – is described by the US State Department as ‘a splinter group of Hamas’.³⁷⁰

The Army of Islam was responsible for the 2006 kidnappings, in the Gaza Strip, of two *Fox News* journalists who, after a gunpoint conversion to Islam, were released through Hamas mediation. The same year, it abducted IDF Cpl. Gilad Shalit, holding him for five years, and, the following year, took *BBC* reporter Alan Johnston hostage, holding him for four months.³⁷¹

The organisation has been linked to the Jordanian extremist leader, Abu Qatada, and has, at times, referred to itself as “al-Qaeda in Palestine.”³⁷² In 2009, it waged an attack in Cairo’s iconic Khan el-Khalili market, killing a French tourist.³⁷³ The following year, its leader Mohammad Namnam was killed in an Israeli airstrike on Gaza City, after Egyptian authorities tipped off their Israeli counterparts that he was planning an attack on American and Israeli forces in the Sinai.³⁷⁴ On New Year’s Day 2011, Egyptian authorities implicated the Army of Islam in an attack on a Coptic church that left 23 worshippers dead – the worst attack on Egyptian Christians in a decade.³⁷⁵

Israeli intelligence believes that Mumtaz Dughmush runs the majority of terrorist-training camps in the Gaza Strip, providing training lasting several weeks to foreign fighters who then travel to operate from locations including Yemen; Syria; and the Sinai. This flow of trained foreign fighters from Gaza is

reportedly due to Hamas allowing Dughmush to continue training on condition that he not threaten internal stability or Hamas rule in the Strip.³⁷⁶ In mid-2011, the US State Department placed the Army of Islam (and, several months later, Dughmush himself) on its terror blacklist, due to its numerous attacks on Egyptian and Israeli targets.³⁷⁷

In a 2005 letter, Army of Islam leaders asked al-Qaeda (AQ) operative Atiyatullah al-Libi whether it was permissible to sell drugs to “the Jews” and their soldiers in an effort to weaken them. The 11-page letter – uncovered by US troops in the 2011 raid in Pakistan that killed Osama bin Laden – is the clearest extant evidence of a link between the Army of Islam and AQ.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁰ ‘Designation of Army of Islam Leader Mumtaz Dughmush’, US Department of State, 16 August 2011, available at: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/08/170593.htm>.

³⁷¹ ‘Designation of Army of Islam’, US Department of State, 19 May 2011, available at: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/05/163838.htm>.

³⁷² ‘Profile of the Army of Islam’, *The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center*, August 2012, available at: http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/articles/Art_20385/E_169_12_1576235301.pdf; see also: ‘Army of Islam’, *Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium*, available at: <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/army-islam>.

³⁷³ ‘Profile of the Army of Islam’, *The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center* (August 2012), available at: http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/articles/Art_20385/E_169_12_1576235301.pdf.

³⁷⁴ “‘Ticking bomb’ terrorist killed in Gaza air strike”, *The Jerusalem Post*, 4 November 2010, available at: <http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Ticking-bomb-terrorist-killed-in-Gaza-air-strike>.

³⁷⁵ ‘Thousands clash in Egypt over Coptic Christian killings’, *Associated Press*, 7 January 2010, available at: <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/thousands-clash-egypt-coptic-christian-killings-article-1.459644>.

³⁷⁶ ‘Shin Bet forms new unit to thwart attacks on Israel by Sinai Jihadists’, *Haaretz*, 20 August 2013, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/.premium-1.542417>.

³⁷⁷ ‘Designation of Army of Islam’, US Department of State, 19 May 2011, available at: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/05/163838.htm>.

³⁷⁸ ‘Jaysh al-Islam’s Questions to ‘Atiyatullah Al-Libi (English Translation)’, *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, available at: <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/jaysh-al-islams-questions-to-atiyatullah-al-libi-english-translation-2>.

Conclusion

The Sinai insurgency is unlikely go away anytime soon; on the contrary, it should be expected to grow in intensity. Following Morsi's dismissal, Sinai attacks increased fifteen-fold in just one month and, while the rate of attacks has fallen since late 2013, it has remained far higher than before the Brotherhood's fall from power. Recent efforts by the Egyptian army to restore order have shown an unprecedented use of force, yet much remains to be done in order to effectively curb the threat.

This report's data show that the Sinai threat is simultaneously expanding and diversifying, with attacks becoming increasingly sophisticated and wide-reaching. From late last year, militant groups have shown a marked difference in strategy, from waging relatively small-scale attacks on security forces in North Sinai to high-level attacks against military and political targets. Groups have adopted increasingly co-ordinated methods, with al-Qaeda-style bomb attacks overtaking shootings in recent months. Attacks are now more likely than ever to take place beyond North Sinai: throughout mainland Egypt, particularly Cairo and along the Suez Canal.

Meanwhile, militant groups' ties to global-jihad movements are becoming both more intimate and more complex. There are strong indications that al-Qaeda central, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and potentially al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham have made inroads into the peninsula. It is therefore not inconceivable that, as the Syrian civil war drags on and Hamas tightens its control over the Gaza Strip, the Sinai could become a launch pad for training and dispatching jihadists to Syria. Among the extremist leaders believed to be currently in the Sinai, Ramzi al-Mowafi (Osama bin Laden's former personal physician) and Muhammad Jamal are among the most dangerous, given their alleged connections to high-level international jihadists.

Western governments and businesses are rightly concerned about the Sinai insurgency's spill-over

effect on the Suez Canal, Egypt's vital trading route. Yet, the canal is now just one target among many. The Multinational Force and Observers – 700 of whom are American – have come under increasing threat of late, including kidnappings and attacks. Western tourists in southern Sinai holiday resorts such as Sharm al-Sheikh are, despite the private security, also at risk of similar mass-casualty attacks that struck Sinai resorts between 2004 and 2006.

Western policymakers are also understandably concerned about the resilience of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. Israel – which appeared to have relaxed its security measures along its Egyptian border during the Mubarak era – now faces an unprecedented threat on its frontier with Egypt. To many al-Qaeda-inspired groups and fighters, the Sinai provides the ideal battleground for waging war against Israel and the West, as well as Egypt's military.

Tunnel smuggling to and from Gaza continues to destabilise the Sinai, yet Egyptian authorities appear to have acknowledged that Egypt's national security – not just Israel's – is undermined by the tunnel industry. And, while Egyptian-Israeli military co-operation seems to be at a high point, Western countries – particularly the US – must facilitate additional co-operation. Israel has world-class intelligence capabilities, but is prevented from placing its intelligence agents on Egyptian ground or even launching surveillance drones. Egyptian authorities have significant on-the-ground presence in the Sinai, yet appear to lack Israel's knowledge and expertise. For the security of both countries, it is essential that bilateral military and intelligence co-operation continue and expand.

Yet, to tackle its terror problem, Egypt will have to apply measures beyond military action. Bedouins in the Sinai remain the gatekeepers of information on the ground, and are therefore crucial to the government's efforts to tackle the terror threat. However, the Bedouins' increasing disillusionment with the government's longstanding mistreatment of Bedouin

tribes and heavy-handed presence in the peninsula is cutting off the government's most precious lifelines in the Sinai. The United States, Britain, and other Western allies of Egypt must encourage Cairo to help integrate the Bedouins into Egyptian life.

Priority must therefore be given to Bedouin education and employment programs and to devoting significantly more infrastructure investment to the North and South Sinai governorates. Bedouins must be allowed into the army and security forces, in order to feel that they have a say in the country's future. They must be allowed to work at the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) – in management, and not just menial, roles – and, while Egyptian forces must be vigilant in rooting out terrorists in the Sinai, there can be no excuse for detaining Bedouins simply because they are Bedouins.

Militant attacks from the peninsula now pose an unparalleled threat to Egypt, Israel and Western interests. The peninsula's strategic importance means that it demands close, constant attention from Egypt, its neighbours and the international community. As this report has demonstrated, the risks of failing to confront the terror threat in the Sinai could not be greater.



TERROR IN THE SINAI

First published in 2014 by The Henry Jackson Society

The Henry Jackson Society, 8th Floor, Parker Tower,
43-49 Parker Street, London WC2B 5PS

Tel: 020 7340 4520

www.henryjacksonsociety.org

© The Henry Jackson Society, 2014

All rights reserved

The views expressed in this publication are those
of the author and are not necessarily indicative of
those of The Henry Jackson Society or its Trustees

ISBN 978-1-909035-14-0

£15.00 where sold