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situation in Sinai – Sept

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Development of the military situation in Sinai – Sept Haitham Ghoneim

The month of September 2019 witnessed a wide-range spread of rumors related to the security situation in Sinai within the framework of the general political situation in Egypt after the calls made by the Egyptian contractor and actor Mohamed Ali on Egyptians to demonstrate against the regime of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. The most prominent circulated rumors was about 'withdrawal of army forces from Sinai', which was completely inaccurate. Also, Sinai activist Mossad Abu Fagr released several [videos](#) talking about a partnership between Deputy Director of the General Intelligence Service Mahmoud al-Sisi, son of head of the regime Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, on the one hand, and some drug dealers and smugglers from North Sinai on the other; a partnership that, according to Abu Fagr, generates monthly proceeds of \$ 45 million. The Sinai activist also accused Mahmoud Sisi and some GIS officers of planning and carrying out attacks against the Central Security Forces camp in El Ahrash area, Sinai, in 2017.

Also during September, the Egyptian regime allowed Habib bin Ali al-Jefri, a Yemnei Sufi scholar close to security services, to visit the army forces in El-Arish, northern Sinai. The authorities also allowed the return of 15 local families to the villages of Sheikh Zuwaid.

The IS-related local organization still has the ability to maintain an effective presence in the vicinity of the city of Bir al-Abed. During September, the militant organization was able to kidnap two citizens belonging to the Al-Dawaghra tribe but later released them.

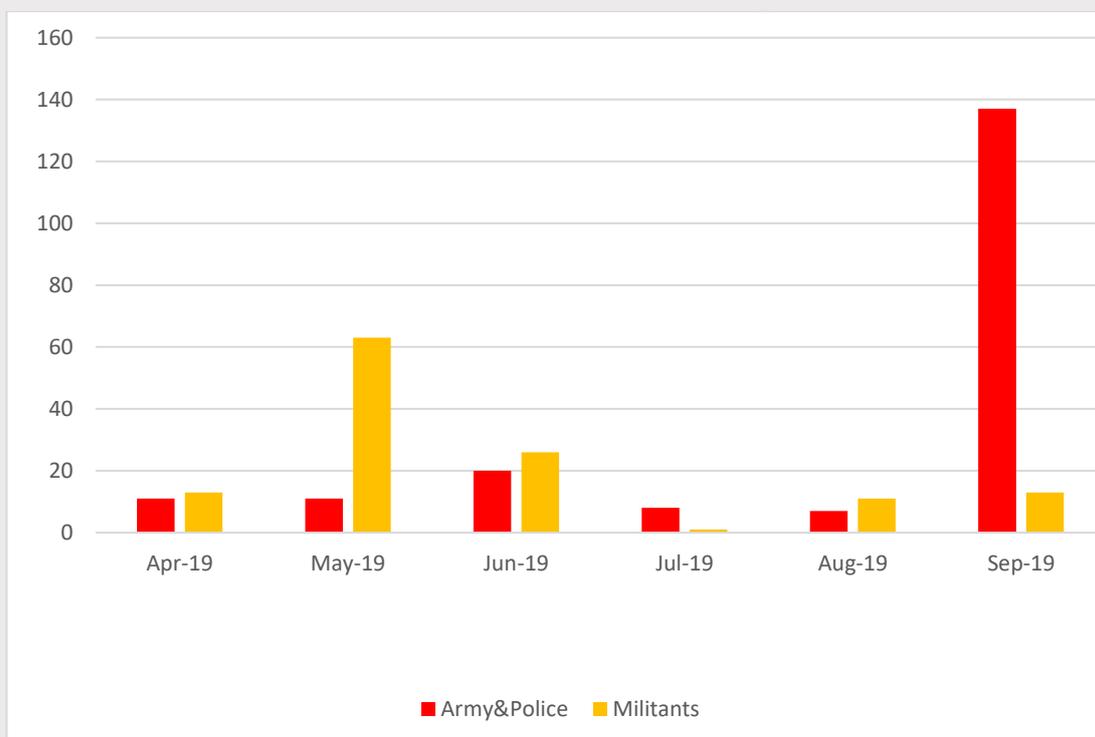
This month, the IS- local affiliated group, Sinai Province, released a video documenting its recent operations in the Sinai Peninsula under the title, "Pledge and Persistence 3". The video reviews several recent operations, including the militant group's recent attack on the Central Security Forces Batal 14 Checkpoint in El-Arish.

On the other hand, the policy of physical liquidation adopted by the army and the interior ministry's national security sector against forcibly disappeared citizens, as a way of responding to any losses or casualties caused by the Sinai Province militants.

In this report, we will review the course of military and security operations during September in the Sinai Peninsula, as follows:

Military and security developments

The following graph shows a comparison between the military losses of the two conflicting parties during the last six months, according to sources from both parties as well as the monitoring of the [Egyptian Institute of Studies](#):



First: Casualties and losses as declared by the Army and militants

Following are the casualties and losses during September 2019 disseminated through the Egyptian Army communiques and the statements declared by militants as well as media reports:

1- Casualties and losses as declared by Egyptian Interior Ministry

The military spokesman issued a military [statement](#) in September on the developments in the Sinai, announcing that:

- 33 hideouts and shelters used by militants were bombed by the Air Force,

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- 7 four-wheel drive vehicles were destroyed,
- 118 citizens were killed on the pretext of being militants,
- Discovery and bombing of (273) explosive devices,
- 11 tunnels, 37 vehicles, and 42 motorbikes were destroyed,

However, an officer was killed, and 9 soldiers were injured according to the military spokesman.



The Egyptian Ministry of Interior also issued two statements, (1) (2), on 15 and 29 September respectively. The first statement stated that several gunmen were killed without mentioning their number or names, except for a person called "Ahmed Adel Mohamed Said Abu Hamza". Reviewing the released photos, we found that the victims were three young people. The second statement said that 15 citizens were killed in an alleged shoot-out during a raid in the El Obour area of El Arish in North Sinai.

2- Casualties and losses as declared by militants and media report:

According to what was monitored by the [Egyptian Institute for Political and Strategic Studies](http://www.eipss-eg.org) in September, the casualties and losses of the army and police forces were as follows:

- At least 13 military personnel were killed, and 26 others were injured.

- Two citizens were killed by militants under the pretext of cooperating with the army and police forces.

At the level of operations, we have noticed that there was continued activity of the Sinai Province in the vicinity of Bir al-Abed city, where the IS local affiliate organization executed two citizens. We have monitored presence of a professional sniper within the ranks of the militant organization, which reflected on the accuracy of targeting and the killing rate this month.

During September, the militant organization engaged in 5 armed clashes against the army forces according to our monitoring. It also stormed a military checkpoint in the Tufaha area in Bir al-Abed. We monitored the organization's use of sniping weapons 3 times, and detonated 6 explosive devices, fired 3 rocket-propelled grenades and carried out mortar shelling. The operation resulted in the destruction/damage of at least 9 military vehicles.

Second: Overview of the developments of the military campaign in Sinai Peninsula

Following is an overview of the developments of the military operations in Sinai Peninsula during September 2019:

Except for the IS attack on the military checkpoint in Tufaha area, south of Bir al-Abed and killing all the force, there was a non-escalating rate of military operations in North Sinai governorate in September. This comes amid a continued presence of IS active groups of militants in that area compared to previous years.

Our assessment and observations on the developments in the military scene this month were as follows:

1- Continued low level of military operations between the Egyptian army and police forces on the one hand and IS militants on the other, noting that during September the militant organization used anti-tank missiles to target the army's vehicles.

2- IS operatives targeted the military base of Al-Jeghaili in Sheikh Zuwaid area with mortar shelling, which did not happen for a long time, after which IS fighters fired five missile shells.

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3- In September, the IS organ, Al-Naba Magazine, published a review of the Sinai Province operations against the army and police forces in North Sinai. It stated that during 1440 AH, the militant organization launched 228 attacks that killed and injured 463 military personnel, including 27 people killed on charges of working for Security forces, in addition to the destruction of 58 military vehicles.



4- IS operatives launched a lightning attack against a military checkpoint on September 27 in the Tufaha area south of Bir al-Abed. The attack resulted in destroying several military vehicles, killing a civilian and seven soldiers, including an officer, and injured five soldiers and five civilians.

5- The IS field presence continued in the vicinity of Bir al-Abed and its villages. They kidnapped two citizens, interrogated them, and released them after several days.

6- The militant organization sniped a soldier at the al-Kharafin checkpoint east of the city of Sheikh Zuwaid.

7- During this month, the IS local affiliated organization released photos of two people, Abdullah Mohamed Salameh Ayesh Khalaf and his brother Atef, after execution under the pretext of cooperation with the army.

8- The Interior Ministry's National Security Sector announced liquidation of 15 persons in El Obour area, El Arish. This is not the first liquidation incident in the same area. Although the Interior Ministry

announced the physical liquidation on 29 September, however activist [Mahmoud Gamal](#), close to security services published the news on 22 September.

Third: Israeli drone attacks and violation of sovereignty

September witnessed a low rate of airstrikes except on September 25, where we monitored that the Egyptian warplanes launched raids targeting the area of Umm Rigil in the center of the Bir al-Abed city in addition to other raids in the city center vicinity, targeting armed elements. On September 25, Israeli aircraft targeted areas in Rafah, Sheikh Zuwaid and El Arish.

It is noteworthy that intervention of "Israeli" drones in Sinai has been taking place on a regular basis since 2011, but Egypt has started to pay attention to the use of drones in Sinai since 2016.

