

Sinai

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# Development of the military situation in Sinai – Dec.

Haitham Ghoneim



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TURKEY- ISTANBUL

Bahçelievler, Yenibosna Mh 29 Ekim Cad. No: 7 A2 Blok 3. Plaza D: 64  
Tel/Fax: +90 212 227 2262 E-Mail: [info@eis-eg.org](mailto:info@eis-eg.org)

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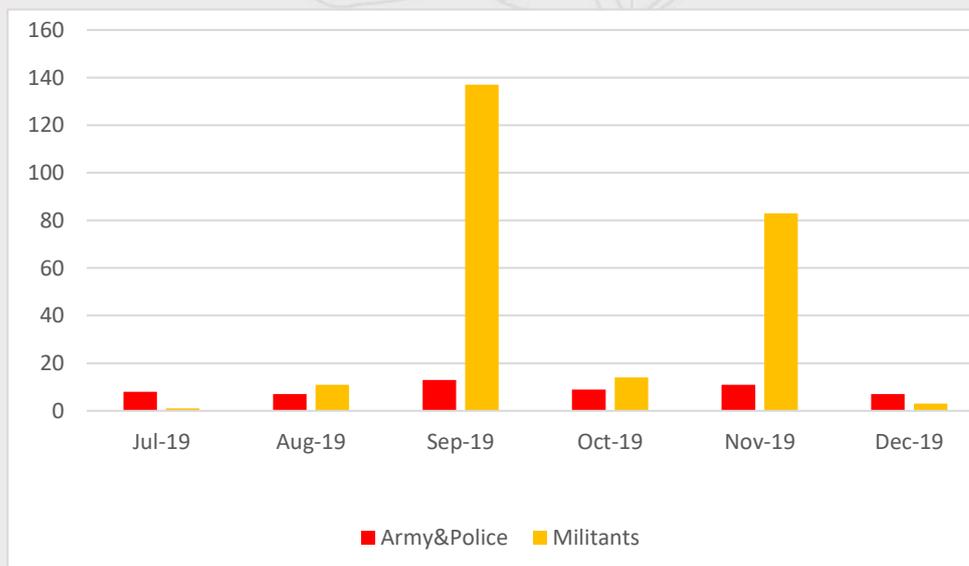
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In December 2019, there was a varied activity by the Islamic State's local organization, known as Sinai Province, in the evicted areas of Rafah, where the militant organization managed to diversify its attacks during December while maintaining a generally low frequency of operations, where its most prominent activity in Rafah was an attempt to target the "Al-Mina" checkpoint, west of the city, where it clashed with the force of the checkpoint and damaged the watchtower. The Egyptian army faced these attacks with air strikes immediately after most operations without announcing results of these raids so far, as no military statement was issued by the Egyptian army commenting on these operations during December. The Egyptian Ministry of Interior only issued a statement announcing that the National Security Sector killed three militants in the Gelbana area.

In this report, we will review the course of military and security operations in the Sinai Peninsula during December, 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](#):



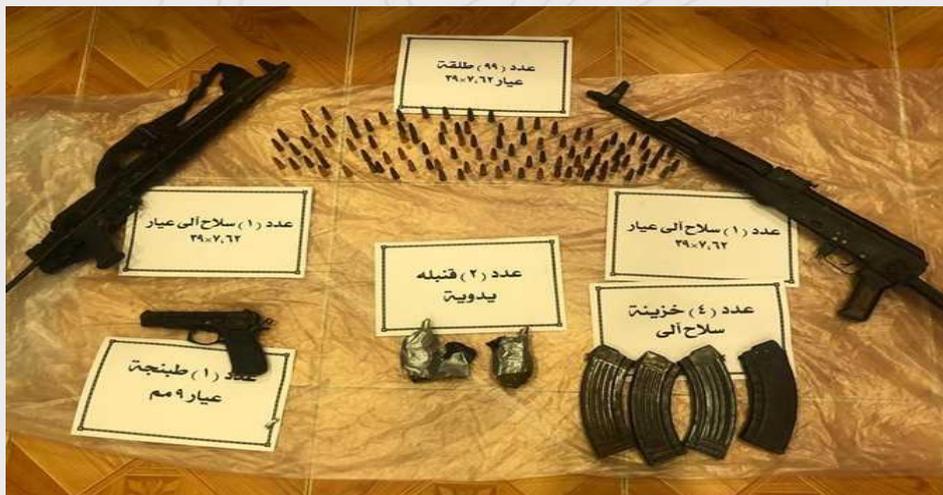
January 23, 2020

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

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

### 1- Casualties and losses as declared by the military spokesman and the Egyptian Interior Ministry

On December 5, the Egyptian Ministry of Interior announced that it killed 3 militants; and according to a [statement](#) of the Ministry of Interior, the National Security Sector received information that a group of militants in the Gelbana area, North Sinai, were planning to carry out operations against checkpoints of the police and armed forces and that three of them were monitored while riding motorbikes; and when they were surrounded by the police forces, they opened fire which prompted the police forces to kill them and seize 2 automatic rifles, a pistol, some ammunition and 2 grenades.



### 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](#) in December, the casualties and losses of the army and police forces were as follows:

- At least 7 military personnel were killed, including at least 2 non-commissioned officers; and 10 others were injured.
- We also monitored intensive activity by IS militants in the evicted parts of Rafah, where it was able to carry out sniper attacks, bombing and detonating explosive devices from a distance, in addition to

waging several armed clashes. During the month, we monitored the IS local affiliate organization's targeting of a foot patrol with two rocket-propelled grenades, and use of 5 anti-armor explosive devices, resulting in the destruction / damage of at least 4 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 December 2019:*

December witnessed a sharp decline in military operations compared to previous months, where the city of El-Arish did not witness any IS attacks inside it, but the militant organization maintained its presence in the areas east of the Bir al-Abed and the international road between the west of El Arish and the east of Bir al-Abed, in addition to sniping and clashes in the evicted parts of Rafah and the implementation of sniping and kidnapping in the south of Sheikh Zuwaid.

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

1- A low frequency of field military operations, with a varied activity of IS militants in the following areas:

- West of Rafah, with at least 6 attacks, ranging from sniping to clashes and detonating explosive devices from a distance.
- South of Sheikh Zuweid, with at least two attacks, where the militant organization carried out a kidnapping operation in addition to an attempt to snipe military personnel.
- East of Al-Arish, with at least one attack through detonation of an explosive device.
- East of Bir al-Abed, with at least 3 attacks, two of which were detonating explosive devices, and the third was hijacking a government vehicle from the international road between the west of El-Arish city and east of the city of Bir al-Abed.

- 2- The terrorist attacks varied during December, with more than one attempt to clash with government forces in the Rafah area.
- 3- The effective presence of the militant organization continues to exist in the east of Bir al-Abed city, but it appears that the IS-affiliate organization is keen on avoiding escalation with the army and police forces in this area, probably due to several factors, including lack of a popular base for the organization in those areas, as well as the militant organization's unwillingness to escalate to avoid an intense military and security campaign that may make it lose those areas where it has not yet established its presence.
- 4- The IS employment of operations in some cases better than the army and security forces. On December 2, the militant organization planted an explosive device on the international road between the two cities of El-Arish and Bir al-Abed near the village of Salmaneh; when it was later discovered by a military force, it blocked the road for two hours to handle the device, during which the IS organization seized the car of the head of the Bir al-Abed local council, Mohsen Salem, as he and others were heading to the scene.
- 5- Although the army forces destroyed the city of Rafah under the pretext of eliminating "terrorism", the Islamic State's local affiliate organization managed to launch many attacks there during December including targeting an armored vehicle with an explosive device.
- 6- The army forces command maintains the policy of concealing many of its casualties.
- 7- The warplanes continued to carry out air strikes against areas east of Bir al-Abed and Rafah.
- 8- Continued calm inside the city of El Arish, where no activity was recorded by the IS militants during this month.

December also saw the visit of US Ambassador Jonathan Cohen to the Multinational Force & Observers in the Sinai Peninsula, where he witnessed the ceremony where Major General Evan Williams from New Zealand assumed command of the Multinational Force and Observers instead of former commander MG Simon Stewart from Australia.

### Third: Israeli drone attacks and violation of sovereignty

We did not monitor any raids by the "Israeli" air forces during this month, but we monitored several air strikes from Egyptian warplanes targeting unknown targets in the areas of Rafah, Bir al-Abed, and Sheikh Zuwaid, on 2, 8, 9, 27 and 29 December.

However, it is believed that the "Israeli" warplanes were behind the air raid that resulted in the killing of "Imad Quqa", a member of the Islamic State's local affiliate in Sinai who had come from the Gaza Strip.

