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Country Report on Terrorism 2018 - Chapter 5 - Islamic State-Sinai Province

Aka Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis; Ansar Jerusalem; Supporters of Jerusalem; Ansar Bayt al-Maqdes; Ansar Beit al-Maqdis; ISIL Sinai Province; Islamic State in the Sinai; Jamaat Ansar Beit al-Maqdis; Jamaat Ansar Beit al-Maqdis fi Sinaa; Sinai Province; Supporters of the Holy Place; The State of Sinai; Wilayat Sinai.

Description: Originally designated as a FTO on April 9, 2014, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM, as it was known then) rose to prominence in 2011 following the uprisings in Egypt. It is responsible for attacks against Israeli and Egyptian government and security elements, and against tourists in Egypt. In November 2014, ABM officially declared allegiance to ISIS. In September 2015, the Department of State amended ABM's designation to add the aliases ISIL Sinai Province and Islamic State-Sinai Province (ISIS-SP), among others.

Activities: ISIS-SP claimed responsibility for numerous attacks against Israeli and Egyptian interests from 2012 through 2014, including attacks on Israeli economic and military assets, as well as attacks on the Egyptian military and tourist sectors. On November 4, 2015, ISIS-SP released an audio recording in which it claimed responsibility for the October 31 bombing of a Russian passenger plane carrying 224 people from the Egyptian resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh to St. Petersburg, Russia. All 224 passengers and seven crew members were killed.

On August 5, 2015, ISIS-SP claimed responsibility for the July 22 abduction of Croatian citizen Tomislav Salopek, who worked as a topographer for a French energy company. Salopek was kidnapped on July 22 in the western desert, approximately 20 kilometers west of the suburbs of Cairo. ISIS-SP demanded the release of all female Muslims in Egyptian prisons within 48 hours in exchange for Salopek. Salopek was ultimately beheaded, and ISIS-SP claimed responsibility for the killing.

Throughout the course of 2016, ISIS-SP carried out numerous attacks in the Sinai, including a January double bombing that killed two Egyptian policemen and two military officers. The group was also responsible for a July wide-scale coordinated attack on several military checkpoints that reportedly killed more than 50 people. On December 11, 2016, an attack on St. Mark's Cathedral, a Coptic Christian church in Cairo, killed 29 people.

In 2017, ISIS-SP attacked two Coptic Christian churches on Palm Sunday (April 9), killing 30 people at St. George's Church in Tanta and killing 17 people at St. Mark's Church in Alexandria. In May 2017, the group's attack on a bus of pilgrims en route to St. Samuel the Confessor, a Coptic monastery near Minya, killed 29 people. In September 2017, ISIS-SP attacked an Egyptian police convoy in an ambush that killed 18 soldiers and injured others. In November 2017, an attack on the al-Rawda mosque in North Sinai—Egypt's deadliest in modern history—killed more than 300 individuals at prayer. While the attack

was unclaimed, press reported the Egyptian Prosecutor General’s office as attributing the attack to ISIS-SP and alleging that attackers carried an ISIS flag. The group’s December 2017 attack on St. Mina, a Coptic Christian near Cairo, killed 11 people.

In 2018, the group continued operations against the Egyptian military. ISIS-SP attacked an Egyptian army base in April and attacked an Egyptian police checkpoint in December, killing 15 soldiers in each attack. On November 2, 2018, the group’s attack on a bus of pilgrims traveling from St. Samuel the Confessor killed seven and wounded 14 others.

Strength: ISIS-SP is estimated to have between 800 and 1,200 fighters in the Sinai Peninsula and affiliated cells in the Nile Valley.

Location/Area of Operation: ISIS-SP operations are based out of the Sinai Peninsula, but the group’s reach extends to Cairo, the Egyptian Nile Valley, and Gaza.

Funding and External Aid: Although the source of ISIS-SP’s funding is largely unknown, there are indications that it may receive funding from ISIS in Syria.

ecoi.net summary:

Brief description of Islamic State-Sinai Province (Excerpt of chapter 5 of the country report on terrorism 2018)



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