



Militancy/Terrorism

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Egypt Alert (UPDATE): EAAF confirms explosion at gas pipeline in North Sinai Governorate's Sabika during late night hours of November 19; shows threat to strategic infrastructure

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Please be advised:

- During the late night hours of November 19, the Egyptian Armed Forces (EAAF) Spokesperson confirmed that an explosion occurred at the al-Arish-al-Qantara natural gas pipeline in North Sinai Governorate's Sabika, which connects Egypt and Israel.
- According to the statement, no casualties were recorded.
- An investigation is underway to uncover the cause of the incident.
- Islamic State (IS) claimed that Wilayat Sinai militants detonated an IED at the gas pipeline in Sabika earlier on November 19. According to the claim, the attack resulted in significant material damage.
- An unconfirmed report quoting a senior Israeli official denied that the pipeline had been damaged.
- Sabika is located approximately 30 km west of al-Arish and approximately 40 km east of Bir al-Abd city.

Assessments & Forecast:

1. While Wilayat Sinai-perpetrated attacks are frequently recorded in North Sinai Governorate, the latest incident is highly notable given the reported target of the attack, namely a gas pipeline. However, this is not without precedent. On [February 2](#) IS claimed an IED attack against the East Mediterranean Gas (EMG) pipeline connecting Israel and Egypt, which was reopened in January, in al-Talul village, located approximately 20 km east of Bir al-Abd city. While the EAAF Spokesperson did not confirm Wilayat Sinai's involvement in the latest incident, the claim remains partly credible. This is due to the fact that Wilayat Sinai militants are known to maintain an operational presence in the North Sinai Governorate, including in the al-Arish region. Moreover, Wilayat Sinai is known to periodically target the government's energy infrastructure, such as power grids and water supply lines, in the region. However, given precedent as well as reports from both the EAAF and the senior Israeli official, the extent of the material damage inflicted was likely exaggerated in the claim.
2. Attacks on energy infrastructure are likely aimed at showcasing the Egyptian government as being unable to secure the North Sinai Governorate, despite the heightened security protocols in the region. When successful, these attacks also result in significant electricity and water shortages in

the governorate, which is likely aimed at exacerbating the locals' existing socio-economic grievances with the government. This is particularly because some locals already perceive the government's security measures as restrictive. By projecting the authorities' inability to secure such infrastructure despite the restrictive measures, Wilayat Sinai likely aims to undermine the former. This would allow it to attract support from segments of the population that are disenfranchised with the government and thereby maintain its influence in the region.

3. Furthermore, by specifically targeting a pipeline connecting Egypt and Israel, Wilayat Sinai likely aims to denounce the bilateral cooperation between the two countries. This is particularly relevant amid the elevated anti-Israel sentiments among segments of the local population following the signing of normalization agreements under the [Abraham Accords](#) between Israel, Bahrain, and the UAE, on September 15. These agreements have been denounced by large segments of the Arab and Muslim communities. In this context, on October 18, IS leader Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi called for an increase in attacks following the signing of the agreements. Therefore, the attack is likely also aimed at gaining support from elements harboring anti-Israel sentiments.
4. Moreover, while the attack was likely unsuccessful, it nonetheless serves to damage Egypt's economy. This is because the attack showcases Wilayat Sinai's ability to circumvent the authorities' security protocols and target strategic infrastructure. This is particularly because these attacks, if successful, would disrupt the flow of natural gas from Israel into Egypt, which the latter aims to use to meet its high domestic energy demands, while keeping prices relatively low, as well as to support its energy exports to Europe, as part of its aspirations to become a regional energy hub. Moreover, by posing a threat to such infrastructure, Wilayat Sinai likely also aims to deter foreign investment in the country, which would further hinder the Egyptian economy.
5. **FORECAST:** Going forward, the EAAF will likely significantly increase their counter-militancy measures in and around al-Arish, including in Sabika, over the coming days and weeks. This may include the increased deployment of on-ground security personnel for raids as well as airstrikes. The EAAF will likely also aim to target Wilayat Sinai cells currently concentrated in other parts of the governorate, such as the Rabaa area, located about 25 km west of Bir al-Abd. Moreover, the authorities will likely increase security protocols around key government infrastructure. However, this may provide IS with additional targets for attacks. Overall, additional attacks targeting strategic infrastructure may occur in the North Sinai Governorate over the coming months.

Recommendations:

1. Travel to Cairo and Alexandria may continue while adhering to all security precautions regarding militancy and civil unrest. Consult with us for itinerary-based travel recommendations.
2. Avoid all travel to the North Sinai Governorate and border areas with Libya, Sudan, and Israel due to the persistent risk for militant attacks, kidnappings, and general lawlessness.
3. We further advise to maintain heightened vigilance in the Southern Sinai Peninsula, the Suez Canal Zone, the Upper Nile area, and the Nile Delta region due to the heightened risk of militant attacks, relatively high rates of criminal activity, and lack of infrastructure.
4. Avoid nonessential travel to the mountainous areas to the east and west of the Nile River in central and southern Egypt.
5. As a general security precaution, remain vigilant in areas surrounding and avoid the immediate vicinity of government installations, police stations, and religious centers, particularly churches, as these locations remain under elevated threat of militant attacks. When traveling in central squares or in areas with persistent police deployments, avoid the immediate vicinity of security forces, particularly fixed traffic booths, as such personnel and facilities have come under attack by militant elements.