

MEMO

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Egypt Must Do More to Secure Sinai

Egypt's Sinai Peninsula has deteriorated into a chaotic situation during the past several months. Terrorist organizations and Bedouin tribes have exploited this lawless region to step up weapons smuggling and perpetrate a sophisticated attack on the Jewish state, which killed eight Israelis. The United States and the international community must further press Egypt's leaders to bolster security along the Israeli-Egyptian and Egyptian-Gazan borders as part of Cairo's maintenance of its international obligations, including the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty.

The security situation in the Sinai Peninsula has become increasingly chaotic, threatening civilians within Israel.

- Since the fall of the Mubarak regime in February 2011, the security situation in the Sinai has become increasingly unstable, allowing Bedouin tribes and terrorists opposed to Israel to smuggle contraband and plan attacks.
- The highly coordinated Aug. 18 terror attack in southern Israel, which left eight Israelis dead, is a clear result of this breakdown in security in the Sinai.
- Israeli security officials said the



Israeli medics evacuated one of the dozens of wounded in the terrorist attack that emanated from Gaza and Sinai.

- terrorist teams went through the Gaza border crossing into the Egyptian Sinai and then infiltrated Israel through the 165-mile Israeli-Egyptian border. Israeli officials describe the type of attack as a "U-turn" maneuver.
- Following the attack against Israeli civilians and security forces, the United States warned against the continuing lawlessness in the Sinai. "This violence only underscores our strong concerns about the security situation in the Sinai Peninsula," said Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.
- Egyptian facilities, including police stations, have come under attack by terrorists in the Sinai. Since February, the gas pipeline from Egypt to Israel and Jordan has been attacked five times.
- Before the attack in southern Israel, Egypt had carried out operation to arrest a number of suspected terrorists. Egypt's cabinet also announced measures to enhance economic development and security in the Sinai. Much more needs to be done beyond these initial steps to enforce the law and stop weapons smuggling in the area.

The lawlessness in Sinai is also aiding Hamas and other terrorist groups in Gaza to build up their weapons capabilities and carry out attacks.

- The lack of control in Sinai enables Hamas and other terrorist groups in Gaza to more easily smuggle weapons, money and people into and out of Gaza.
- Hamas and other terrorist groups have been able to build up their stockpile of an estimated 10,000 rockets, including longer-range rockets that can reach the outskirts of Tel Aviv. Following the Aug. 18 attack, terrorists have fired more than 160 rocket and mortars into Israel forcing 1 million Israelis to take shelter in bunkers.
- Beyond weapons from Iran, missiles and other weapons originating in Libya are being smuggled through Egypt into Gaza. “Weapons are available in Libya as a result of the unstable situation there, and Hamas has exploited it to buy weapons from Libyan smugglers,” Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Moshe Ya’alon said in late July.
- In March, Israel seized nearly 50 tons of weapons from a ship bound for Egypt that would have been smuggled into Gaza through the Sinai. Included in the shipment were six anti-ship missiles that would have greatly enhanced Hamas’ military capabilities.

Israel is taking steps to secure the Israeli-Egyptian border to protect against infiltrators and attacks.

- Israel started significant work on constructing a security barrier along the Israeli-Egyptian border in November 2010. To date, 28 miles have been completed, with 31 miles under construction. The barrier is expected to cost \$360 million and be finished in 2012.
- With the 1979 Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty strictly limiting the number of Egyptian security personnel to be stationed in the Sinai, Israel has taken a risk in allowing Egypt to deploy additional forces and equipment to improve control of area security.
- Despite the security challenges facing Israel, Jerusalem has continued facilitating humanitarian aid to Gaza. During the week of the attack, Israel facilitated the delivery of nearly 35,000 tons of goods into Gaza and nearly 300 patients and family members crossed into Israel for medical treatment or to travel to other countries for treatment.
- Israel is also striving to safeguard its security relationship with Egypt. The Israeli government, time and again, has reaffirmed the importance of peace with its southern neighbor. As Israeli Defense Minister Barak has said, “The Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty has great importance and much strategic value for the stability of the Middle East.”

The United States should take additional steps to encourage Egypt’s military rulers to better police and control the Sinai.

- The United States—which provided Egypt with \$1.55 billion in aid during fiscal year 2011—and the international community should make clear their expectations that Egypt uphold the 1979 peace treaty with Israel.
- The United States should continue to speak out against the lawlessness in the Sinai and the need for Egyptian forces to gain control of the area.
- Congress should also continue to support Israel’s right to self-defense against the recent upsurge in rocket attacks. During the past year, Hamas and other terrorists have fired more than 500 rockets and mortars into Israel.
- Congress can also help to strengthen Israel by approving full security assistance funding and by enhancing cooperative rocket and missile defense programs like Iron Dome—which successfully intercepted more than 20 rockets during the latest upsurge in attacks.