

Egyptian Army Planning Eventual Military Intervention in Gaza Strip

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A picture taken from the southern Gaza Strip shows an Egyptian soldier standing guard on the border between Egypt and the Palestinian territory on September 12, 2013. (Photo: AFP - Said Khatib)

Egypt is preparing a plan for a possible military intervention in the Gaza Strip, security sources told Ma'an news agency on Wednesday.

Officials told Ma'an that Egyptian planes had entered Gazan airspace and examined a number of locations near the border in Rafah and Khan Younis to be targeted if military attacks against Egyptian troops intensify in Sinai.

Egyptian aircrafts could also target vehicles traveling across the border with smuggled goods, the sources added, highlighting that "all options are open."

Egyptian military sources claim that ongoing attacks in Sinai are carried out by organizations based both in Sinai Peninsula and in the Gaza Strip.

"The Egyptian army does not believe the population of Gaza is involved in the violence in Sinai, but certain factions strongly support Sinai groups. The tunnels play a major role in the communication between both sides," a senior Egyptian official told Ma'an.

"In addition, Hamas, although its involvement is limited, is responsible for maintaining control of the smuggling tunnels as well as the factions operating in the coastal enclave," he added.

Hundreds of people have been killed and more than 2,000 arrested across Egypt in the crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood following the army' ouster of President Mohammed Mursi in July.

The Egyptian military has stepped up a campaign against militant groups operating out of the Sinai Peninsula since, as attacks against the army have intensified.

The Egyptian military has accused Hamas, the current rulers of the Gaza Strip, of being connected to the violence and of having ties to Mursi.

(Ma'an, Al-Akhbar)

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