Scenario **"Nations of the Desert"**

**December 2016**

At the beginning of the week, one could understand from intelligence sources a large attack on Raffah is evolving, based on the infrastructure of Sinai District in Al-Arish with cooperation of officials in the Gaza Strip; It's possible the attack will be targeted at Israeli outposts inside Israel as well. Israel has delivered the information to the Egyptian military.

The Egyptian military, which can be seen in the area, dawdles with its response (fears operating against the district's infrastructure in Al-Arish) and any thwarting efforts fail. Egyptian officials send an official request to the IDF to enter additional capabilities to the military base in Sinai in areas near-by Israel.

Intelligence sources indicate that Hamas is expecting to receive a delivery of advanced weapons (anti-tank) through the district infrastructure of Al-Arish, and therefore allows the existing cooperation between the district and officials in the Gaza Strip. Approximately two weeks ago, the Egyptians captured two divers of Hamas in Sinai on their way to Gaza; they stayed there for training, at the training base of "Sinai District", towards a sophisticated attack on Raffah. From their interrogation, we can understand they planned attacking an Israeli missile-boat.

Last night, a base of MFO forces was attacked near the Philadelphian axis by a couple of squads of the "Sinai District" activists. 11 American, Canadian and Fijian observers were killed and their bodies were left on the ground; Israel helped the MFO rescue their forces from Al-Gora, approximately thirty observers, some of which were wounded, were brought in to Israel and given medical aid.

At the same time intelligence sources indicated that the "Sinai District" is preparing to launch missiles towards ships in Eilat. Consequently, a container which was on its way to Aqaba stopped at the entrance of Straits of Tiran, since Lloyd's company isn't willing to insure its activity.

Further on, it turned out 4 Bedouins, Israeli citizens, cooperated with the "Sinai District" squad in the attack at North Sinai. The connection was established based on family ties of Tarabin tribe, which can be found in Sinai and Negev. In their investigation, the families of the suspects said that they didn't know about any tight relations between their sons and Jihad ideas.

In discreet and urgent meetings with POCs at secret agencies of Egypt, Israel demanded officials from Cairo to operate immediately. Out of the conversations with Egypt, we can understand that the Egyptian military doesn't have the operational capability to operate immediately against "Sinai District".

**Strategic System**

**The Egyptian regime** strengthened its basis in Sinai, however the Egyptian military lacks any suitable capabilities and there is deterrence from direct contact opposite the district.

Cairo's policy regarding **Sinai** is changing, and the military is increasing its presence mainly in the North and South, after years of negligence which create fundamental governance problems in the Safer area. Despite that, the local population still begrudges the government in Cairo. Sinai is under pressure economic wise since the establishment of the barrier at the Israeli side, which has stopped at ones the economic sources in Sinai: trading women and drugs. The tourism in Sinai has been badly harmed as well in the last year; this was the main economic source of Sinai residents'. Together with and as a result of that, the religious Salafi radicalizes in Sinai, affects structures of traditional tribes and strengthens the existence of Salafism.

**The Islamic State** was hurt lately due to Russian and international involvement in Syria. As a result, ISIS has withdrawn its forces from most territories it had invaded in Syria and Iraq. Lately, it has managed to execute a number of showcase type of terror attacks in Europe, Africa and America, all inspired by ISIS activists. The districts in Sinai, Libya and the core in South Jordan (Ma'an) continue to operate and gain financial support from the state and grow in terms of number activists based on local Salafi activists.

A few days ago, following a severe strike on his forces in Syria, Baghdadi gave a speech declaring that "even if the 'Islamic State' is hit within its territory, the idea of the Salafia Jihadia will keep growing and expanding because the 'Islamic State' aims its efforts at harming the international coalition anywhere. Baghdadi alerted especially the heretic regimes' in Jordan and in Egypt, which are cooperating with the western coalition.

**"Sinai District"** of the "Islamic State" rules certain areas in North-East Sinai, including a significant basis in El-Arish city. Moreover, there are additional cells of the district in center and east Egypt. The district takes advantage of the great influence of the local population in areas it controls, economic and weapon wise by ISIS, from North to the Horn of Africa. According to Egypt, "Sinai District" leadership has badly suffered in the last year. Its new leadership, includes local religious leaders, supported by devoted religious from the "Islamic State", has been vigorously dealing with rehabilitating the district. Since the "Islamic State" is decreasing in the North, it allocates resources to Sinai in order to strengthen it and justify its existence. According to them, it seems like the next big terror attack evolving in Sinai, will have a great impact and be a symbol for rehabilitation.

**The international presence in Sinai by MFO forces** has changed dramatically in the last year, and the forces have gathered in their bases in Al-Gore and Sharm el-Sheikh, while performing their tasks through mobile patrols.At the same time, given the new ties between al-Sisi's regime and Moscow, Putin offered to send Russian forces to train the Egyptian military in Sinai.

**In the USA**, the new regime after the election increases its involvement in Sinai via strengthening the Egyptian military. The many changes in the territory require the USA and MFO to review the array of our forces coordinated with Egypt-Israel.

The religious and Palestinization radicalism among the **Bedouin residents in the Negev**, which have begun about a decade ago, are still growing, given the negligence and sense of continuous discrimination. Since the establishment of the barrier, the economic relations that used to be between the Bedouins in the Negev and the ones in Sinai, including big families their whole lives were about dealing with smuggling women, drugs and money. Now, these families are developing ties with executives from "Sinai District" in-order to find alternatives to make a living. The connections between the tribes from both sides of the border encourage building cells of the "Islamic State" among the Bedouin residents in the Negev as well as the Israeli Arabs.

The **Hamas Regime in Gaza** has remained as it was, and yet the continued blockade on Gaza, which is enforced by Israel and Egypt, intensifies the economic crisis in Gaza. The Gaza Strip desperately needs a solution for medical and economical needs, as well as the need to deliver weapons. The relationship between Hamas and "Sinai District" are instrumental, as Hamas achieves smugglings hosted by the District and the District establishes active cells in Gaza while Hamas turns a blind eye to the phenomenon.

**Israel** is interested in maintaining the strategic relations with Egypt at any cost. Israel strives for cooperation with Egypt while receiving minimal response from the Egyptian military.

**Guideline of the Prime Minister to the Head of the National Security Council:**

Following the events and alerts, the Prime Minister convened a special defense discussion. During the discussion the PM expressed his concern from the events in Sinai and lack of Egyptian ability to stabilize between dealing efficiently with the "Sinai District" problem and preserving strategic cooperation with Egypt, which is a vital component in the security of the State of Israel, by all means.

The Prime Minister ordered to gather all efforts and formulate an answer for thwarting a terror attack.

In light of recent events, especially given the frequent alerts, the PM appointed a special inter-organizational team that will formulate strategy and guidelines. He required the team to formulate a strategy and a systemic idea that will ensure the vital interests of the State of Israel.