

A New Reality on the Egypt-Gaza Border (Part I): Contents of the New Israel-Egypt Agreement

Sep 19, 2005



Brief Analysis

A look at the details of the September 1, 2005 agreement between Egypt and Israel regarding border security near Rafah.

[Read \(/node/8185\) Part II of this two-part series. \(/node/8185\)](#)

On September 1, 2005, following lengthy negotiations, Egypt and Israel signed the Agreed Arrangements Regarding the Deployment of a Designated Force of Border Guards along the Border in the Rafah Area (the Agreed Arrangements). This agreement was designed to enable Israel to evacuate the Philadelphia corridor, an eight-mile (thirteen-kilometer) military zone along the Gaza-Egypt border, through the deployment of Egyptian border patrol forces to the Egyptian side of the border in order to prevent smuggling into Gaza. In eighty-three clauses, the agreement describes the mission, weaponry, infrastructure, and obligations of the parties.

Relationship to the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty: The Agreed Arrangements stipulate that they are wholly subject to the provisions of the 1979 Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty and do not constitute an amendment, revision, or modification of it. Article IV of the new document describes its purpose as “additional mission-oriented security measures . . . in order to augment the security arrangements contained in the Security Annex (of the Peace Treaty).” This means enhancing Egypt’s capability to fight smuggling along the border while maintaining the demilitarization of Sinai as established by the Peace Treaty. The new agreement specifies that the newly permitted Egyptian forces are to deal exclusively with the acts or threats of smuggling, infiltration, or terrorism. The agreement explicitly stipulates that the new force should serve no military purpose.

Composition and structure of the force: The Agreed Arrangements provide for an Egyptian border guard force (BGF) to replace the Egyptian police force previously deployed in the area under the Peace Treaty. The Peace Treaty tasked the police force with combating smuggling, which the police failed to do. The police force did not include trained border patrol forces nor did it have the proper equipment. The BGF must include only border patrol personnel, a requirement that implicitly excludes military personnel. The BGF is to have 750 ground-force personnel, divided between headquarters and four companies. An additional several dozen auxiliary aerial and naval personnel will directly support the mission of the BGF.

Weapons and equipment: The Agreed Arrangements specify the weaponry and equipment that the BGF may have. The weaponry is generally light, consisting primarily of about five hundred assault rifles, sixty-seven light machine guns, and twenty-seven light anti-personnel launchers. Some ground radars are permitted. The permitted vehicles include thirty-one police-style vehicles as well as forty-four logistical and auxiliary vehicles. Heavy armored vehicles are prohibited. Permitted infrastructure includes a specified number of sentry posts, watchtowers, and logistical

facilities. The Agreed Arrangements prohibit fortification, additional headquarters, and arms depots, as well as military-style intelligence-gathering equipment.

Aerial and naval forces: The aerial forces will employ up to six unarmed police-mode Gazelle and two unarmed MI or Westland police-mode helicopters, bearing consistent markers of the BGF. All aerial activity will be coordinated with the Israel Defense Force (IDF) in advance. The Agreed Arrangements allow Egyptian naval forces to patrol the area south of Gaza more extensively, while Israel will continue to patrol the coast off Gaza. The infrastructure and equipment of the naval force include four coastal patrol ships. At any one time, three may operate simultaneously in the Rafah area while two may anchor at the soon-to-be-constructed Rafah pier. Up to thirty Egyptian naval personnel, not including crews of the patrol ships, may be stationed in Rafah to support the BGF mission. The agreement contains strict limitations on the use of weapons by the naval forces. Israel and Egypt jointly will enforce civilian-no-sail and military-no-training zones one mile (1.6 kilometers) on either side of the sea border between Gaza and Egypt. Naval activities may be carried out at any time.

Coordination and liaison between the parties: In the past, Israel has charged Egypt with weakening the liaison provisions of the 1979 Peace Treaty. The Agreed Arrangements create a new liaison system meant to provide operational coordination and intelligence sharing. Israel and Egypt will deploy liaison cells at the IDF brigade and BGF headquarters levels and liaison officers at the IDF battalion and BGF front company levels. The liaison cells will work around the clock to facilitate all contact between the parties; this will allow for real-time exchange. The agreement sets a schedule of regular meetings and debriefings at different levels and provides for ad-hoc meetings and debriefings as events require.

The Agreed Arrangements are subject to bilateral yearly reviews. Evaluation will be based on such criteria as successful interceptions by the BGF of smuggling attempts; quantity and frequency of attempted and successful infiltrations; apprehension of terrorists, infiltrators, suppliers, and other elements; scope of tunneling activity; and activity in the no-sail zone. The consent of both parties is required for any amendment to the Agreed Arrangements, including reducing or withdrawing the forces.

Monitoring and verification: The existing U.S.-headed Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) will conduct third-party monitoring for the implementation of the Agreed Arrangements. The MFO was established in 1981 to monitor compliance with the Peace Treaty, with operational costs mostly split between Egypt, Israel, and the United States. The approximately 2,000-strong force is comprised of troops from ten countries. The agreement calls for the MFO to expand its mandate to assure that the deployment, equipment, and activities of the BGF in the Rafah area comply with the Agreed Arrangements. Among other tasks, the MFO will conduct weekly ground and aerial inspections and report deviations from the Agreed Arrangements to Israel and Egypt. The MFO may also take part in urgent meetings between the two parties.

Additional responsibilities: The Agreed Arrangements make it clear that Egypt's responsibility to combat smuggling extends beyond the BGF and its area of operation. Article XI stipulates, "The deployment of the BGF is one of a series of additional measures to be taken . . . against hostile and violent activities, smuggling, and infiltration across the border." Article II speaks of the need for a "comprehensive and systematic effort." Israel has argued that Egypt must apprehend terrorists and smugglers anywhere they are found, not only in the area adjacent to the border. The Agreed Arrangements do not specify what additional measures Egypt will take. Proposals have included such steps as intelligence collection to expose smugglers and smuggling routes; deterrent and punitive action against known smugglers; and the prevention of easy access to the border area.

The final article of the agreement stipulates that if any disagreement arises, it will be resolved solely between Israel and Egypt, without referring to a third party.

An addendum was attached to the Agreed Arrangements at Israel's request indirectly forbidding Egyptian supply of arms to the Palestinian Authority without Israeli consent.

Initial deployment: Beginning September 10, Egypt commenced the deployment of the new forces to the specified area of operation—approximately nine miles (fourteen kilometers) inland from the Mediterranean Sea to a point just past Kerem Shalom (where Gaza, Israel, and Egypt meet) and up to thirteen miles (twenty kilometers) into Sinai. On September 12, Israel withdrew its forces from the Philadelphia corridor. Chaos and confusion in the Rafah area followed the Israeli pullout, with thousands of people crossing the borders in both directions. The lessons of the initial deployment and issues likely to arise during the implementation of the agreements will be the subject of the Part II of this two-part PeaceWatch.

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