



[Three Israelis and One Egyptian Killed in Border Crossing Incident, Will it Affect Their Relationship?](#)

Three Israeli soldiers and an Egyptian policeman were killed in a rare incident on the Egyptian-Israeli border. Details of the incident remain disputed. Egyptian authorities are calling this incident an “accident” while Israeli authorities are describing it as a “serious attack.” The Egyptian Army is claiming the incident was the result of a hot pursuit of drug smugglers by the Egyptian policeman. The Israeli military is claiming the Egyptian policeman killed two Israeli soldiers while they were standing guard at the border. Another Israeli soldier and an Egyptian policeman were killed in the subsequent confrontation.

Despite this tense moment in their relationship, it appears that cooler heads are prevailing. Israeli armed forces spokesperson Lt. Col. Richard Hecht told reports in a briefing about the situation that, “Our assumption is that this was connected to the drug-smuggling attempt, but we can’t be sure yet,” He went on to say “It could be (the Islamic State, the terrorist group active in Egypt’s Sinai region), it could be a rogue border guard, it could be a smuggler, we’re still looking into it.” Hecht assured that “cooperation with Egypt is good, it’s ongoing. This is not a geopolitical incident.” Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met on Tuesday to discuss the incident and subsequent investigation. They both released a statement indicating cooperation between the two countries. Both countries stated after the meeting that they would launch a thorough collaborative investigation.

Statements from Lt. Col Hecht and the cooperation between Egyptian and Israeli governments investigating the incident indicate there is no real danger of this incident snowballing, at least in terms of diplomatic relations. Public perception is what needs to be watched right now. Despite Egypt and Israel signing a peace agreement in 1979, the people from each country still have a negative outlook on each other’s country. There is the potential for bad actors to exploit this incident to sow anti-Egyptian sentiment in Israel or vice-versa. Though it is likely feelings will fester, it is unlikely that these negative feelings will lead to any violence. Israel’s relationship with Egypt, albeit tense, has benefited both sides in certain ways. Security cooperation between the two countries has allowed for better counter-terrorism operations to take place, eliminating mutual enemies, and increasing economic aid offers another form of stability.

The Egyptian policeman was 22-year-old Mohammed Salah. Israel claims they found that he was carrying a rifle with 6 magazines, 2 combat knives, and a Quran. Some Israeli politicians have said his carrying of the Quran indicates he was an Islamist extremist. There is currently no evidence to corroborate this claim. Family members of Salah indicate that he had recently expressed anger about “the silence over the killing of one of his military friends by Israeli soldiers during his military service at

the border.” It is possible that this policeman wanted to avenge the death of his comrade. His body was returned by the Israeli government to be buried in Egypt.

The conflicting reports and lack of clear facts make it difficult to determine with certainty if this will lead to any type of broader conflict, militarily or politically, but history indicates that this is unlikely. Similar incidents have taken place in the past. One such incident was when an Egyptian Border Policeman, Suleiman Kharter, killed 7 Israeli tourists in Sinai. He received a life sentence from an Egyptian court. This incident did not lead to a larger conflict, so there is no reason to think this one will.