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'Fresh clashes' in Egypt's Sinai

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Sunday's attack has prompted a strong military response

Fresh fighting has broken out between gunmen and police in Egypt's Sinai peninsula, according to state TV.

The clashes near a police station in the town of al-Arish come a day after the Egyptian military launched an offensive against suspected Islamist militants in the region.

The military action followed the killing of 16 border guards on Sunday.

The Egyptian president sacked the country's intelligence chief and the province's governor on Wednesday.

Nile News TV said on Thursday that "clashes resumed between armed men and police forces in front of police station number two in al-Arish".

There are no reports as yet of casualties.

The violence began on Sunday, when militants carried out the deadliest and most brazen attack against Egyptian troops in the Sinai region for decades.

Further attacks on checkpoints in al-Arish on Wednesday left a number of people wounded.

The military offensive was then launched hours later.

According to military officials, 20 people were killed in the village of Touma, while the Sheikh Zuwaid area to the west was also hit.

The offensive continued on Thursday, according to state news agency Mena, with a focus on the al-Arish, Sheikh Zuwaid and Rafah areas.

It follows criticism of President Mohammed Mursi for not taking decisive action.

Egypt's military presence in Sinai is limited and requires Israeli approval under the terms of the 1979 peace treaty which returned Sinai to Egyptian control.

Analysts say that the security situation in the area has deteriorated following the fall of Hosni Mubarak last year, and that Islamist extremists appear to have gained a foothold.

The Egyptian army has begun sealing off and destroying tunnels linking Egypt to the Gaza Strip, Mena says.

There are more than 1,200 illegal tunnels along the Egypt-Gaza border that are used for smuggling people and goods, Mena reports.

The militants who launched Sunday's attacks are believed to have used them as an escape route.



Are you in the Sinai peninsula? Have you witnessed the clashes? Tell us your story using the form below.