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EGYPT AFTER MORSI: AS SITUATION STABILIZES, HAMAS MARGINALIZED AND SINAI ISLAMISTS ATTACKED, ONGOING U.S. SUPPORT FOR BROTHERHOOD IS PUZZLING

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EGYPTIANS BEWILDERED OVER SUPPORT FOR MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

Michael Armanious

[Gatestone Institute](http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org), Aug. 23, 2013

The Egyptian people are astounded. They simply do not understand the Obama Administration's efforts to bring the Muslim Brotherhood back to power. In an effort to make some sense of the Obama Administration's policies, Amr Adeeb, a prominent Egyptian commentator, argues that the U.S. is helping the Muslim Brotherhood to achieve power, in order to turn Egypt into a magnet for jihadist fighters. The goal, Adeeb states, is to turn Egypt into another Syria or Afghanistan and discredit Islamism as a viable political movement.

To Westerners, this may seem like a bizarre conspiracy theory, but for Egyptians it helps explain why the U.S. government is supporting an organization that has openly declared jihad against the West, engaged in threats of war with Israel and Ethiopia, demolished dozens of ancient historic churches, set hospitals on fire, and murdered Christians in the streets. The Muslim Brotherhood has no respect for the rule of law, but the

Obama Administration treats the Egyptian military that removed the group from power as a threat to democracy itself.

The fact is, the Ikhwan (as the Muslim Brotherhood is called in Arabic) engaged in some pretty undemocratic behavior in the election that brought it to power in June 2012. Morsi lied about his background, telling voters he worked for NASA when he did no such thing. He falsely promised to spend \$200 billion on an Egyptian renaissance only to say, once he was elected, that it was just an idea. He bribed voters with cooking oil, sugar, and medicine. On the day of the election, with threats of violence, the Muslim Brotherhood stopped thousands of Coptic Christians from voting. Further, in a little known aspect of the election, many voters complained of receiving ballots that had already been marked in Morsi's favor.

Egyptians were willing to overlook these irregularities in hopes that Morsi would bring order and stability to their country. They hoped he would follow through on his promise to build a modern Egypt; create jobs, and put together an inclusive government and constitution. They hoped he would honor his promise to spend \$200 billion on repairing Egypt's infrastructure as part of an Islamic "Renaissance Project." Instead, Morsi worked systematically to dismantle the institutions of a 7,000 year-old country. He gathered his cronies to speak openly, on national television, of destabilizing Ethiopia in a fight over the use of water from the Upper Nile River....

To buttress the support of his base, Morsi released members of Gamaa al-Islamiyya, founded by the "Blind Sheikh," Omar Abdel-Rahman, who attempted the first World Trade Center attack. This group, considered a terrorist organization by the United States, killed over 60 tourists in Luxor in 1997. That history did not stop Morsi from appointing one of its members governor of Luxor, over the objection of local residents who are dependent on tourism for their livelihood. Nor did it stop him from assigning another member of this group as Minister of Culture. With these decisions, Morsi delivered a final blow to Egypt's tourism industry. And if people are not even willing to visit Egypt, how will they invest in the country?...

As Morsi started driving his country into a civilizational ditch, so of the passengers rebelled. A grassroots movement called "Tamarud" ("Rebellion") mobilized over 30 million people, who took over the streets of Egypt, and called for the removal of Morsi and his radical government. Their legitimate goal was to take the steering wheel from a group of madmen who wanted to bring about famine and take Egypt back to the dark ages. To prevent a civil war, the Egyptian army removed Morsi and installed an interim government with the support of Al-Azhar University, the most respected Islamic authority in Sunni Islam; the El Nour Party (an ultraconservative group); the Coptic Church, and a number of secular parties.

Predictably, the Muslim Brotherhood responded with threats and violence, especially targeting the Christians of Egypt. Members of the Muslim Brotherhood shot a 10-year-old Christian girl in the streets as she returned home from church. They beheaded a Christian merchant, shot a priest in Sinai and marched Franciscan Nuns in the streets like war prisoners. They burned Christian business, homes, and churches, especially the ancient churches in Upper Egypt. Their goal was to terrorize Christians and erase all of evidence of Egypt's Christian past. Apparently, destroying the country's hope for the future was not enough....

Many Egyptian are asking: Why are the West and United States insisting on supporting the Muslim Brotherhood in the name of democracy? It was the same type of "democracy" -- merely an election, which is only a small part of a democracy -- that brought Hitler to power in Germany and Hamas to power in the Gaza Strip. If Hamas is outlawed in the West, why isn't the Muslim Brotherhood?

What many Egyptians cannot understand is: Why is the U.S. Administration siding with the forces of oppression in their country and assisting with its transformation into a failed state under the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood? These conditions all run contrary to American interests.

In the Middle East, a strong economy, military, and police are the cornerstones of stability. Egypt was the first Arab nation to choose the path of peace with Israel. Egypt is the nerve system of the Arab and the

Islamic world. The U.S. has a strong interest in a stable, modern, and prosperous Egypt. It simply cannot be allowed to become another Somalia or Afghanistan, controlled by its own version of the Taliban.

Michael Armanious is a Coptic-American who has written extensively about his homeland, Egypt.

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EGYPT'S SINAI EMERGES AS NEW ARENA FOR JIHAD

Maggie Michael

[Real Clear World](#), Sept. 4, 2013

An Egyptian doctor once close to Osama bin Laden is bringing together multiple al-Qaida-inspired militant groups in Egypt's Sinai to fight the country's military, as the lawless peninsula emerges as a new theater for jihad, according to Egyptian intelligence and security officials. There have been other signs of a dangerous shift in the long-time turmoil in the peninsula bordering Israel and Gaza since the military's July 3 ouster of Islamist President Mohammed Morsi, the officials say. With the shifts, Sinai's instability is becoming more regionalized and threatens to turn into an outright insurgency.

Sinai has seen an influx of foreign fighters the past two months, including several hundred Yemenis. Several militant groups that long operated in the area to establish an Islamic Caliphate and attack their traditional enemy Israel have joined others in declaring formally that their objective now is to battle Egypt's military. Also, Sinai has become the focus of attention among major regional jihadi groups. Al-Qaida's branch in Iraq last weekend called on Egyptians to fight the military, as did al-Qaida's top leader, Ayman al-Zawahri. The militant considered the most dangerous man in the Sahara - one-eyed terror leader Moktar Belmoktar, a former member of al-Qaida's North Africa branch - joined forces with a Mali-based jihadi group last month and vowed attacks in Egypt.

Topping the most wanted list in Sinai is Ramzi Mawafi, a doctor who joined al-Qaida in Afghanistan in the 1990s. Mawafi, 61, escaped from an Egyptian prison in 2011 in a massive jailbreak that also sprung free Morsi and more than a dozen Muslim Brotherhood members during the chaos of the uprising against autocrat Hosni Mubarak. Mawafi is now believed to be in Sinai coordinating among militant groups and helping arrange money and weapons, security officials told *The Associated Press*. The four officials were from military intelligence, the military and the security forces and spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the press....

Morsi's fall opened the way for an escalation by Sinai's jihadis. Most militants had seen Morsi as too willing to compromise in bringing rule by Islamic Shariah law in Egypt. But his removal by the military, backed by liberals, was seen as an attack on Islam. More importantly, it ended the policy Morsi pursued during his year in office of negotiating with Sinai armed groups, restraining security operations against them in return for a halt in attacks on the military....

Mawafi specialized in bomb-making during his years in Afghanistan, the officials said. He also supervised clinics that treated wounded Islamic fighters, earning him the nickname "bin Laden's doctor" - though Naeem said he never treated the late al-Qaida leader himself. An Egyptian court in June last year accused Mawafi, along with members of Muslim Brotherhood group, including Morsi, of conspiring with Hamas and Hezbollah to orchestrate the 2011 break from Wadi Natroun prison. The court described Mawafi as "the secretary general of al-Qaida in Sinai."

The number of jihadi groups operating in Sinai's rugged, mountainous deserts has mushroomed over recent years, believed to have thousands of fighters. Some are mainly Egyptian, such as Ansar Jerusalem - thought to include Egyptians from outside Sinai - and the Shura Council of Mujahedeen of Environs of Jerusalem - which is mostly Sinai locals - and the Salafi Jihadi group....

Now multiple groups are overtly calling for "jihad" against Egypt's military. Several hundred Yemeni fighters came in after Morsi's ouster in response to religious edicts by clerics back home urging them to

fight jihad in Egypt, according to a Yemeni security official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the press. Al-Qaida in Yemen, known as al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, is considered the most active branch of the terror network.

The Egyptian officials say fighters have also come from Saudi Arabia, Libya and Syria. The military intelligence official said commanders of jihadi groups are joining ranks with prominent Sinai-based militants who belong to major tribes to ensure protection and facilitate weapons smuggling. One of the most influential tribes, the Swarkas, has split between anti- and pro-government families.

An Egyptian military official in el-Arish said there are at least nine main training camps run by jihadists in Sinai, hidden in villages controlled by allied tribes or in mountainous regions. Ismail el-Iskandarani, a researcher at the Egyptian Center for Social and Economic rights who writes extensively about Sinai, says it's hard to pin down the number of militants or camps because local jihadis hide in homes among their own families after carrying out hit-and-run attacks. "Even their relatives might not know they are involved in Islamic militancy," he said.

He said there is also no single leader, with small cells of differing ideologies. The situation is further complicated by the overlap of militants and criminal networks involved in smuggling, sometimes with the involvement of corrupt police officials. "Different security agencies are meddling in making it hard to tell who is doing what," he said.

Now international terror groups are adding their calls for jihad in the wake of the coup. In an Aug. 3 statement, al-Qaida leader al-Zawahri mocked Morsi's participation in democratic process, calling democracy "an idol made of date paste" created by secularists. He called upon "the soldiers of the Quran to wage the war for the Quran."

On Saturday, a leader of al-Qaida's Iraqi branch, Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, also called on Egyptians to fight their army. From North Africa, the militant leader Belmoktar and a Mali jihadi group announced last month that they aim to form a jihadi front from the River Nile to North Africa's Atlantic coast.

So far, Egypt's military has not launched a major offensive against armed groups in Sinai. El-Iskandarani, the researcher, believes the generals are wary of a sparking a wider confrontation with disgruntled Bedouin tribes. Also, Sinai jihadis have powerful new arsenals of heavy anti-aircraft guns, rockets and other weapons smuggled from Libya. "The price will be very heavy," el-Iskandarani said.

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EGYPT'S WAR ON HAMAS

Khaled Abu Toameh

[Gatestone institute](#), Sept. 12, 2013

For the past two months, the Egyptians have been at war not only with the jihadis in Sinai, but also in an all-out war with the Palestinian Hamas movement in the Gaza Strip. This war is being waged on two fronts: in the media and along the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. As far as Hamas is concerned, this is a war of survival that it cannot afford to lose. The Egyptian war is clearly hurting Hamas much more than the two military offensives launched by the Israel Defense Forces in the Gaza Strip since 2008. Hamas officials in the Gaza Strip are now talking openly about the Egyptian war, which they believe is aimed at toppling their regime there.

The officials admit that they were not prepared for this war from the largest Arab country, which until last June was their main ally in the Arab and Islamic countries. Since the ouster of Egypt's President Mohamed Morsi, the state-controlled media in Egypt has turned Hamas into the country's number one enemy. Almost every day an Egyptian newspaper runs a story about Hamas's ongoing attempts to undermine Egypt's national security, and its involvement in terror attacks against the Egyptian army....

Apart from banning Hamas representatives from entering Egypt, the Egyptian authorities have imposed severe travel restrictions on residents of the Gaza Strip. The Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt has been shut for most of the time over the past two months, with the Egyptian authorities citing "security reasons" for the closure.

But the most drastic measure taken by the Egyptians so far, which is really hurting Hamas, is the destruction of hundreds of smuggling tunnels along the border with the Gaza Strip. The Egyptians are now in the process of creating a buffer zone between the Gaza Strip and Egypt after having razed several homes and leveled land along the border. These are the same Egyptians who used to condemn Israel for every military strike aimed at thwarting rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip against Israeli cities and towns. All these measures have prompted some Hamas officials to wonder whether Egypt was planning to launch a military operation inside the Gaza Strip under the pretext of combating terror.

Hamas believes that as part of this war, Egyptian intelligence officials are behind a new group called Tamarod [Rebellion] whose members have vowed to overthrow the Hamas regime in November. In recent weeks, Hamas arrested dozens of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip on suspicion of being involved with the new group, which carries the same name as the Egyptian movement that campaigned against Morsi.

The Egyptian security measures have thus far resulted in a severe shortage of basic goods and fuel in the Gaza Strip. Some Hamas leaders warned this week that the Gaza Strip is facing a humanitarian and economic crisis as a result of the Egyptian army's measures. Until recently, Hamas leaders were careful not to engage in a direct confrontation with the new rulers of Egypt. But in recent days several Hamas officials are beginning to regard Egypt's security measures as an act of war against the Gaza Strip.

For now, the Egyptians do not want to admit that they are at war with Hamas, preferring instead to describe their measures as part of a campaign against terror. Hamas, for its part, has internalized the fact that it is at war with Egypt. Hamas, as it is being pushed to the wall and increasingly isolated, faces two options: either to initiate a new confrontation with Israel to create Arab and Islamic pressure on Egypt to halt its war, or to confront the Egyptian army in a direct military engagement by joining forces with the jihadis in Sinai.

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EGYPT AND ITS PATRONS

Paul Mutter

[The Arabist](#), Sept. 6, 2013

Why does Egypt receive between \$1.3 and \$1.5 billion of US aid annually? "Because of Israel" is the most common answer to that question. Certainly, that is driving much of the American political wrangling over whether aid should be suspended. The New York Times reports that during the back-and-forth among the US and its allies leading up to Morsi's ouster, Israeli officials argued against cuts, and told the military not to put stock in US threats to cut off aid. The Israelis, like the US, greatly prefer the Egyptian security forces to be in charge of the country....

The massive corporate investment in Egyptian or Saudi defense expenditures certainly contributes to Congressional deliberations against aid cuts. And while one might examine the head of President Obama, and whether his reluctance to "take sides" really suggests a desire to reduce a US commitment to Egypt, the fact that the aid has not yet been publicly cut off suggests that Washington has tacitly taken a side: that of the military's, guarantor of the status quo.

It was, in fact, not just the Israelis telling General Sisi et al. to pay no mind to the US law that requires all aid to be suspended to a country if a coup takes place there. It was King Abdullah [Saudi Arabia] telling the Egyptian generals that the Kingdom would make up for any cutoffs in economic or military aid - the latter, almost assuredly in the form of American-made weapons in Riyadh's possession.

Riyadh's role is extremely important in all of this, especially with respect to Iran's containment. As the CNAS [Center for a New American Security] think tank noted in February 2011, Egypt's strategic importance in the wider region has nothing to do with the current deployment of US forces in the country, where the only fully staffed American military station is a US Navy medical center. It instead has to do with the nightmare scenario that would threaten the US's interests in the Persian Gulf: the sudden collapse of any one of the Gulf monarchies that host the radar sites, listening posts, airfields, and weapon emplacements pointing at Iran:

"The United States has no military bases of its own in Egypt. Its headquarters for directing air and ground troops in the Middle East, Afghanistan and Iraq, are in Qatar. Stockpiles of tanks, ammunition, fuel, spare parts and other war materiel are warehoused in Kuwait, Qatar and Oman. U.S. missile batteries are deployed along the Persian Gulf's west coast. The U.S. Navy's regional headquarters is in Bahrain.

But in contingencies or crises, American forces have depended heavily on Egyptian facilities built with U.S. aid to U.S. specifications to accommodate U.S. forces as they move from the United States and Europe to Africa or westward across Jordan and Saudi Arabia to the Persian Gulf. American nuclear powered aircraft carriers, whose jets are playing a major role in Afghanistan, rely critically on their expedited use of the Suez Canal, giving them easy access to the Red Sea and Persian Gulf."

Jane's Defence Weekly presented an analysis of commercial satellite imagery compiled between 2011 and 2012 to illustrate the expansion of US, UK, and GCC "conventional combat capabilities" in the Persian Gulf. The analysis highlighted the most salient points of this cooperation, which all ultimately leads back over that waterway and the Saudi desert to Egypt's own airspace and port facilities.

Meanwhile, the suggestion that the failure of the Brotherhood's political experiment in Egypt may be necessary for the House of Saud's survival is not farfetched. Though security concerns largely determine American actions, for the Saudis, there is also the matter of not wanting competition from the transnational Brotherhood as a mass Islamist movement.

While in years past, the Saudis supported the Brotherhood in Egypt - against Nasser, primarily, whose pan-Arabism and meddling in Yemen during the Cold War threatened the House of Saud's shaky legitimacy. But then the Brothers' messaging and aspirations began to appeal to dissidents within the Kingdom, as did other rival Islamist precepts, threatening absolute monarchy with the prospect of replacement. In recent years, top Saudi officials have made extremely negative remarks about the Brotherhood, most notably the late Crown Prince Nayef. Last month, Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal fired a Kuwaiti preacher from his Al Resalah channel for having pro-Brotherhood leanings. As a Foreign Policy article recently noted about Saudi efforts to arm anti-Assad Syrian militias, "Saudi Arabia does not only despise the Muslim Brothers, but political Islamic movements and mass politics in general, which it sees as a threat to its model of absolute patrimonial monarchy."

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[Egyptian Military Spokesman: Army To Continue Operations Till Sinai Terrorist-Free](#): *Israpundit*, Sept 16, 2013—Spokesman for the Egyptian Armed Forces, Ahmed Ali, says there will be more military operations against "terrorist" strongholds in Sinai, adding there is no timeframe for army action in the Peninsula.

[Egyptian Media Attack U.S.](#): L. Lavi and N. Shamni, *MEMRI*, Sept. 14, 2013—Since Egyptian President Morsi's removal from power, the Egyptian public and media - both pro- and anti-Morsi - have been fiercely attacking the U.S.

[Egyptian Army Saves Christians from Muslim Terrorists](#): Tzvi Ben-Gedalyahu, *Jewish Press*, Sept. 17, 2013—The Egyptian military regime escalated its war on radical Islamists Monday and came to the rescue of Christians whose village has been terrorized.