

## EGYPT UPDATE 3

### Egypt Update No. 3 (amended)

February 15, 2011

Ever since the terse Mubarak resignation message was read by V.P. General Omar Suleiman on Friday, February 11, the former president has been living in his house in Sharm El Sheikh (Sinai). It is believed that Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi convinced him to do so. Some insiders also believe that Tantawi is in telephone communication with Mubarak and his attending physician. Mubarak could be gravely ill.

Since February 11, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) has taken over command of the country. The SCAF is the equivalent of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, with the exception that it has a larger number of commanders – fifteen instead of the five chairmen of the armed services of the United States. Tantawi is the Chairman of the SCAF. They are acting as the custodians of Egypt in a transitional stage following a popular transformative “revolutionary” movement which they have co-opted, ostensibly for the next six months only, with the intent to return to a constitutional legal order.



Figure 1 In this image taken from Egypt State TV, showing Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (r) as he swears in new Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq.

Prime Minister Lt. General Ahmad Shafiq and the cabinet sworn in by Mubarak remain in place on an interim basis. Shafiq is believed to receive his instructions from Tantawi. (The cabinet consists of 15 holdovers from the prior one and 13 new ones. Some of the holdovers, like the Minister of Justice, must be changed.) General Omar Suleiman’s position of Vice President was eliminated, and he no longer plays a role in the new structure, notwithstanding the support given to him by U.S., Israel, and Saudi Arabia, or maybe because of it.

The SCAF has taken to issuing communiqués (bayan), and have issued five as of this date. This is the same technique that was used by the Revolutionary Command Council under Nasser (1952-58). For all practical purposes, the SCAF is running the country much as the Revolutionary Command Council did under Nasser. The SCAF, however,

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announced that this will be limited to a period of six months. Communiqué no. 4 laid out a plan of action.

So far, these communiqués have suspended the Constitution (to be distinguished from its abrogation), and they have also dissolved the two houses of parliament. The SCAF appointed a retired justice of the Court of Cassation (Supreme Court) to amend the 1971 Constitution in 10 days and to submit the Amendments to a public referendum in 60 days. Elections are to follow, but no time-table has been set.

The SCAF made it a point in one of its communiqués to affirm that Egypt's international commitments remain in place. This is intended to reassure Israel and the U.S. that the 1979 peace treaty between Israel and Egypt will remain in effect.

As part of the transition, the SCAF will organize a council of 50 persons representing all political factions whose task will be to establish a set of goals and a timetable for Egypt's new constitutional legal order. It is not known whether this new council will have the power to put in motion whatever program the council determines. It is also possible that the SCAF will establish another council of their own choice, and it is not known what that other council will be required or allowed to do.

For all practical purposes, the Muslim Brotherhood is not in the picture, although some of its members are likely to be in the Council of 50 mentioned above, but in their personal capacity. It is not known whether they will be fielding a candidate for president, but it is likely that they will support independent candidates for the parliament.

It is expected that a new law will be drafted for the organization of political parties, and also to develop procedures for the next legislative and presidential elections – all of which is presumed to take place in the next six months. We do not know whether parliamentary elections will precede presidential elections.

It is believed that the SCAF will soon announce the abrogation of the Emergency Law of 1981, and they will also order the release of political prisoners (whose number is estimated between 5,000 and 15,000 persons). This will help to uplift the standing of the police.



Figure 2 The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. (Photo credit Reuters TV)

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The Ministry of Interior is under reorganization by its present Minister – Mahmoud Wagdy, a former police general. The police will gradually replace the army on the streets.

A priority of the SCAF is to clear the streets of demonstrators and to restore normalcy to the country. This is almost accomplished.

The impending economic crisis due to the looting of the Nation's resources by the Mubarak regime is addressed in the Background paper. Its full scale is yet to be assessed. This will be the next bombshell from Egypt.

The Prosecutor General has frozen the assets of five major figures in the Mubarak regime, and banned them from travel (including the former Minister of the Interior, and the former Secretary General of the NDP). Switzerland has unilaterally frozen the assets of the Mubarak family and those associated with it, whose assets are located in that country. How long the freeze lasts will depend on whether the Prosecutor General will formally request Switzerland to maintain it. It is not known whether the Prosecutor General will expand the number of persons who are believed to have engaged in corruption to be subject to criminal investigation for corruption or freezing of their assets pending such investigations, but there is popular demand for it.

In conclusion, the SCAF is in control of the country. It is developing reform initiatives, and it is staying ahead of the game while at the same time co-opting the revolution into the new interim process which is under its control.