

RELEASE IN PART B6

From: Sidney Blumenthal [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, December 21, 2012 5:22 PM
To: H
Subject: H: Egypt army, MB, Morsi. Sid (Also, feel better)

B6

CONFIDENTIAL

December 21, 2012

For: Hillary
From: Sid
Re: Egypt army, MB, Morsi

SOURCE: Sources with access to the highest levels of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, The leadership of the Armed Forces, and Western intelligence, diplomatic, and security services.

1. During the week of December 17, 2012 Egyptian Army commander General Abdel Fatah al-Sissi privately reassured Egyptian President Mohamad Morsi that the Army continues to support his administration; even as anti-government demonstrations continue in Cairo and other parts of the country. Al-Sissi noted that, as Morsi predicted, the new constitution he supports was supported by between 57 and 60 per cent of voters in the first round of voting, which was held in urban areas. For his part Morsi cautioned that, while he expects the second round, set in rural areas, to produce a greater margin of victory for the government. At the same time he warned that government officials and security forces must be prepared for violent demonstration from the secular/liberal/Christian opposition groups, many of which are boycotting the voting in an effort invalidate the process.

2. According to this individual, Morsi expressed his approval of the restraint shown by the military during this period of unrest, adding that he continues to believe it best that the

police and security services lead the effort to control the violence. Morsi stated that he is willing to give the protestors a degree of latitude to express their concerns rather than take steps that might create new martyrs. That said, he and al-Sissi agreed that the Military Intelligence Service (MI -Mukhabarat el-Khabeya) would continue to build files on the leaders of the opposition, against the day when the anti-government protests become a greater threat to the regime.

3. (Source Comment: In the opinion of this source the MI is also continuing to monitor, and in some cases disrupt the activities of the Salafist groups, particularly the al Nur party. All though these groups generally support Morsi's Islamist reforms, they distrust him and are concerned that he may become a dictator. Al-Sissi assured Morsi that the MI and the Army in general are continuing to watch the Salafists, arresting any who pose a violent threat to the government. He added that, interestingly, some of the most radical Salafists have chosen to leave Egypt for the present, traveling to support allied groups active in the Syrian revolution and in Libya.)

4. According to a particularly sensitive source, Morsi is maintaining his position of strength within the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), as well as his control of its associated Freedom and Justice Party (FJP). Morsi tells close associates that his greatest tool in this regard is the fact that Supreme Guide Mohammad Badie and the MB leadership now accept the idea that his presidency is the key to their future control of Egypt. Morsi's advisors add that the MB/FJP infrastructure has been crucial in turning out support for the constitution. Their polling efforts have been particularly important in allowing Morsi to time his various moves during this crucial period. Morsi also believes that the opposition has no effective leaders, adding that Mohamed el Baradei and the opposition National Salvation Front (NSF) are too weak to have any real influence on the current situation.

5. (Source Comment: Morsi and al-Sissi agreed that one of their greatest concerns relates to the threat by some of Egypt's Supreme Court Judges to boycott their traditional role, monitoring/validating the second round of voting. According to this source, Morsi sees this as

an effort by old enemies to take advantage of the secular/liberal effort to invalidate the vote. He believes that because many of these judges are holdovers from the regime of former President Hosni Mubarak, they see Morsi's Islamic agenda as a direct threat to their position in Egyptian society. At the same time, the secular/liberal opposition groups called for new protests in Tahrir Square on December 18. Morsi is confident that he can find enough officials to certify the election results, despite these concerns.)

6. In commenting on the situation with the judges, FJP parliamentary leader Saad al-Katany stated in private that the judges are concerned with their personal interests, and, in his opinion do not belong to either the government or the opposition camps. He speculated that if the secular/liberal faction were in power the judges would probably act in a similar manner. Al-Katany continued, saying that in his opinion, these judges have reason to be concerned given their old ties to the Mubarak regime. That said, he added that he, Badie, and Morsi believe that the judges situations are tenuous at best and as the country is transformed the new political system must stand above the judiciary, since the judges are part of the old regime. The parliamentary leader added that, as the situation has developed, a number of judges seem to be courting both sides in the debate, and have privately expressed their support for Morsi.

7. (Source Comment: According to a source with access to the leadership of the Army, al-Sissi believes the MB/FJP and secular/liberal/Christian political factions are growing further apart. The Army commander is also concerned that much of the population is staying out of the debate over the constitution, noting that only 33 percent of the eligible voters turned out for the constitutional referendum. Al-Sissi is also focused on reports from private friends in the MB that al-Katany may urge Morsi to use the Army to watch polling stations for signs of corruption, if there are not enough judges to fill this traditional role. The general does not want the Army drawn into this debate in such a direct manner.)

8. An individual with access to the leadership of the MB added that Badie, speaking in private, noted that he and many other members of the leadership continue to be surprised by Morsi's resilience and stamina during this constitutional crisis. Badie had never considered

Morsi one of the leading lights of the movement, however, he now sees Morsi as a sophisticated politician, whose presidency provides the MB with its best chance to develop long term control of Egypt, and through that, support their fellow brothers throughout the region.