

WikiLeaks cable shows close US ties with new Egyptian vice president

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On Saturday, the US-backed president of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak, announced that he was appointing Omar Suleiman, director of the Egyptian General Intelligence Directorate, as his new vice president. Suleiman's appointment to the long vacant position places him at the top of the line of succession for president if Mubarak leaves.

The news was greeted with contempt by the masses of Egyptian protesters who are demanding an end to Mubarak's rule. In addition to having close ties with the military, Suleiman, as head of Egypt's intelligence agency since 1993, has worked closely with the United States and Israel in suppressing the population of Egypt and the entire region.

A document released by WikiLeaks on Friday, reporting an April 21, 2009 meeting between Suleiman and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen, further exposes the close ties between the US, Suleiman and the Egyptian government as a whole. The Obama administration continues to back the Mubarak regime because of the central role that he has played in maintaining US interests in the region.

According to the memo, Suleiman emphasized at the meeting that "his overarching regional goal was combating radicalism, especially in Gaza, Iran, and Sudan." He stressed his support for undermining Hamas control of Gaza and the restoration of the Palestinian Authority, which has worked closely with both the US and Israel. "A Gaza in the hands of radicals will never be calm," he said.

On Iran, the report states, "Suleiman said Egypt was 'succeeding' in preventing Iran from funneling financial support to Hamas through Egypt. Suleiman hoped that the US could encourage Iran to abandon its nuclear ambitions and stop interfering in regional affairs, but cautioned that Iran 'must pay a price' for

its actions."

Domestically, the document reports on the government's attempts to stamp out opposition. "Suleiman noted that only the Muslim Brotherhood remained and the Egyptian government continued to 'make it difficult' for them to operate." Other documents released by WikiLeaks expose US complicity in Egypt's use of torture against opponents of the regime. (See WikiLeaks exposes US complicity in murder, torture by Egyptian government)

In an article in the *New Yorker*, Jane Mayer notes that Suleiman, "suave, sophisticated and fluent in English ... has served for years as the main conduit between the United States and Egypt."

As the head of Egypt's intelligence agency, Suleiman "was the CIA's point man in Egypt for renditions—the covert program in which the CIA snatched suspects from around the world and returned them to Egypt and elsewhere for interrogation, often under brutal circumstances," Mayer writes.

Mayer cites material in Stephen Grey's book, *Ghost Plane*, which documents the direct discussions between Suleiman and the CIA. Mayer writes, "Edward S. Walker, Jr., a former US ambassador to Egypt, described Suleiman as 'very bright, very realistic,' adding that he was cognizant that there was a downside to 'some of the negative things that the Egyptians engaged in, of torture and so on. But he was not squeamish, by the way.'"

Another cable, prepared in May 2007, discusses the possibility of Suleiman succeeding Mubarak as president, placing him second after Mubarak's son, Gamal, in the list of candidates. It refers to Suleiman as Mubarak's "consigliere," who "was often cited as likely to be named to the long-vacant vice-presidential post."

“Many of our contacts believe that Suleiman, because of his military background, would at least have to figure in any succession scenario for Gamal, possibly as a transitional figure,” the document states.



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