

By Larry Everest

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Today, millions of Egyptians are rising with rage and courage against the hated rule of President Hosni Mubarak, who has been in power since 1981.

As Egyptians protesting in the streets were being killed, beaten, or rounded up in the streets of Cairo and other cities before the eyes of the whole world, Vice President Joe Biden *defended* Mubarak, saying, "Look, Mubarak has been an ally of ours in a number of things and he's been very responsible on, relative to geopolitical interests in the region: Middle East peace efforts, the actions Egypt has taken relative to normalizing the relationship with Israel. I would not refer to him as a dictator." (

PBS Newshour

, Newsmaker Interview, January 27, 2011)

The U.S. government has long considered Mubarak one of its closest and most important allies in the world, and has provided his regime with billions of dollars in aid. As WikiLeaks revelations have made clear, the U.S. rulers have long been fully aware of the Mubarak regime's savage repression and robbery of the Egyptian people.

What role has Mubarak's Egypt played for the U.S.? Why has the U.S. considered it so crucial? And what impact has this alliance had on Egypt and the region?

There are many dimensions to the Mubarak regime's service as a client state for U.S. imperialism, and many ways this has caused enormous suffering and death—in Egypt and across the region. But here we focus on two: Egypt's enforcement of Israel's quarantine of Gaza and its torture of Egyptians and those "rendered" to Egypt by the U.S.

Mubarak's Alliance with Israel...and the Siege of Gaza

In 1978, the U.S.-brokered Camp David Accords were signed between Israel and Egypt, establishing diplomatic relations and ending the state of hostility between them. This treaty signaled a major strategic shift for Egypt: allying with (in reality becoming subordinated to) the U.S. and Israel. Since taking power in 1981 following the assassination of Anwar Sadat (who signed the accords with Israel), Mubarak has continued and deepened this orientation.

The U.S. political establishment and media universally hail the Camp David Accords as a big step toward peace in the region, but what has it meant for the people in the region—and most dramatically the Palestinian people of Gaza?

Israel's peace with Egypt has meant it has much greater freedom to deploy its military forces across the region, and much greater freedom to carry out this role, which includes its ethnic cleansing of Palestine (under cover of the "peace process"), and repeated acts of aggression across the region, such as the 1982 and 2006 attacks on Lebanon (with over 20,000 Lebanese and Palestinians killed during the 1982 invasion).

Egypt's support for Israel has also had a horrendous and criminal impact on the Palestinian people of Gaza. In 2007, Israel began a blockade of Gaza, a blockade which continues to this day. Many human rights organizations have denounced this as collective punishment against the 1.5 million people living in Gaza and a crime against humanity. The following from A World To Win News Service detailing the items Israel blocks from entering Gaza paints a picture of the extreme and deliberate cruelty of Israel's embargo of even the most basic stuff of everyday life:

"The list at first seems arbitrary, but its goals become apparent on careful study—as of course they are obvious to people in Gaza. The point is to keep people in Gaza on the verge of hunger, to kill them slowly, and to deny them sources of pleasure and information.

"A calibrated cruelty is evident even in the smallest details, like the prohibited condiments and spices. Some basic items such as tahini (sesame paste), garlic, zaatar (dried herbs) and cinnamon are allowed, but experience shows that sage, cardamom, coriander, cumin and ginger are not. No dried fruit, jam, halva, chocolate, biscuits or other sweets. Dried foodstuffs such as lentils, beans and rice and frozen meat and vegetables are permitted, as are canned goods, but fresh meat is banned. People are also denied toys, musical instruments, paper and newspapers.

"Some of the rules governing food are clearly designed to crush Gaza's local economy and force it to become more dependent on Israeli imports. For instance, the importation of tin cans is forbidden, so that farmers are unable to preserve and sell produce such as tomatoes, but Israeli tomato paste is allowed in. Anything to do with fishing—poles, nets and ropes—is banned. So are basic farming inputs, such as fertilizer, and crucial farm equipment and greenhouse items. Chicken farming seems to be a particular Israeli target, along with livestock in general. Industrial salt, margarine and other products used in food processing are barred.

"The blockade of all construction materials, including wood, concrete and pipes, brings extreme hardship to people whose homes, schools and other buildings were destroyed by the Israeli air strikes and invasion of December 2008-January 2009."

("An extraordinary admission of guilt: Obama, Israel and war crimes in Gaza," *Revolution* #203, June 13, 2010, www.revcom.us/a/203/AWTWNS_Gaza-en.html ; see also "Details of Gaza blockade revealed," BBC.co.uk, May 3, 2010)

This list was revealed during a court case in May 2010, and only adjusted after massive protests around the world including the Gaza Freedom March, George Galloway's convoys to Gaza, and repeated Freedom Flotilla efforts, including the flotilla led by the ship *Mavi Marmara*, which was attacked by Israeli commandos murdering nine people. And Israel's new, slightly expanded list of permitted items remains barbaric.

Egypt has a 25-mile border with Gaza. So Israel's blockade would be impossible without Egyptian enforcement of this blockade by closing its 25-mile border with Gaza and refusing to allow necessary humanitarian aid to come into Gaza, and violently suppressing political protests within Egypt by Egyptian and international activists opposed to the siege of Gaza.

More broadly, Israel's U.S.-brokered and directed alliance with Egypt means it can do whatever it wants to the people of Gaza (including repeated military assaults), without having to worry about the reaction of a neighboring country.

The New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman, a vocal supporter of U.S. global supremacy and Israel is telling the truth when he writes, "The peace treaty with a stable Egypt was the

unspoken foundation for every geopolitical and economic policy in Israel for the last 35 years." (*New York Times*, February 1, 2011)

The Mubarak regime's complicity in Israel's crimes against the Palestinians has been one key reason why the U.S. has backed him and his viciously repressive regime. (For an in-depth history and analysis of the U.S. and Israel, see "Bastion of Enlightenment... or Enforcer for Imperialism: The Case of Israel," *Revolution* #213, October 10, 2010, www.revcom.us/israel/israel.html)

1991: Mubarak's Egypt Joins the U.S.-led Invasion of Iraq

In addition to the role the Mubarak regime has played in collaborating with Israel, Egypt under Mubarak has played an important role in other U.S. strategic objectives in the Middle East, including participating in the first U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 1990.

The 1990 invasion was the first time the U.S. directly and massively invaded an Arab country, and Mubarak's Egypt was crucial in a number of ways. First, having Arab participation in the war coalition was essential to trying to spread confusion in terms of its actual imperialist character. Second, Egypt contributed some 30,000 troops. Most important, Egyptian military and logistical support was central in enabling the U.S.-led coalition to deploy such massive military forces (including over 500,000 U.S. troops). After the Gulf War, the U.S. rewarded Egypt with \$7 billion in debt relief and pressed its allies to forgive half of Egypt's \$20 billion debt to various Western governments.

Overall, Egypt's military has been a key weapon for U.S. regional dominance (including by suppressing the Egyptian people and keeping Egypt's pro-U.S. regime in power). Since 1979, the U.S. has given Egypt \$35 billion in military aid and built its armed forces into one of the ten largest militaries in the world, with nearly 500,000 personnel. The tear gas being fired on demonstrators today by Egypt's military and police is "Made in the U.S.A."

"The officer corps of Egypt's powerful military has been educated at defense colleges in the United States for 30 years," the *New York Times* reports. "The Egyptian armed forces have about 1,000 American M1A1 Abrams tanks, which the United States allows to be built on Egyptian soil. Egypt permits the American military to stage major operations from its bases, and has always guaranteed the Americans passage through the Suez Canal." ("Calling for Restraint, Pentagon Faces Test of Influence With Ally,"

New York Times,

January 29, 2011) Mubarak is a product of the Egyptian military, a career Air Force officer and chief of the Air Force before he was named vice president in 1975.

One retired Egyptian major general writes, "Military cooperation between the U.S. and Egypt is probably the strongest aspect of their strategic partnership. General Anthony Zinni the former Commandant of the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) once said Egypt is the most important country in my area of responsibility because of the access it gives me to the region. Egypt was also described during the Clinton Administration as the most prominent player in the Arab world and a key U.S. ally in the Middle East. U.S. military assistance to Egypt was considered part of the administration's strategy to maintaining continued availability of Persian Gulf energy resources and to secure the Suez Canal, which serves both as an important international oil route and as critical route for US warships transiting to the Gulf." (Mohamed Kadry Said, PhD, "Assessing the United States-Egyptian Military and Security Relations," Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, February 9, 2004)

A secret 2009 State Department cable discussing the \$1.3 billion in military aid the U.S. gives Egypt each year which was published by WikiLeaks, stated, "The tangible benefits to our mil-mil relationship are clear: Egypt remains at peace with Israel, and the US military enjoys priority access to the Suez canal and Egyptian airspace." ("WikiLeaks Cables Show Close US Relationship With Egyptian President," *Guardian/UK*, January 28, 2011)

"If you want someone to disappear—never to see them again—you send them to Egypt."

Today, the Obama administration claims to support the Egyptian people and their just demands, and acts as if it's now shocked to find out about the horrors faced by the Egyptian people at the hands of the Mubarak regime.

In reality, there's abundant evidence that the U.S. and Egypt's rulers have been very well aware of this, and deliberately turned Egypt into a torture state where even the most basic rights are nonexistent and opposition to the regime is violently suppressed, in order to maintain their grip on power and U.S.-imperial dominance of the region.

Egypt has been ruled under a "State of Emergency" since 1967 (except for an 18-month respite in 1980-81) under which the police have virtually unlimited powers, constitutional rights are

suspended, and censorship is legal. An estimated 30,000 people are being held as political prisoners. Arbitrary arrest, indefinite detention and torture are routine.

In 2005, the UN Committee Against Torture found that "Egypt resorted to consistent and widespread use of torture against detainees" and "the risk of such treatment was particularly high in the case of detainees held for political and security reasons." (United Nations, "Report of the Committee Against Torture," p. 227) Human Rights Watch's latest report on the Mubarak regime is titled: "'Work on Him Until He Confesses': Impunity for Torture in Egypt." (Online at: www.hrw.org/en/reports/2011/01/30/work-him-until-he-confesses-0

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All of this—and probably much more—has been very well known by the U.S. government for many, many years. In 2002, the U.S. State Department's own report on Egypt stated that detainees were "stripped and blindfolded; suspended from a ceiling or doorframe with feet just touching the floor; beaten with fists, whips, metal rods, or other objects; subjected to electrical shocks; and doused with cold water [and] sexually assaulted." (Jane Mayer, *The Dark Side: The Inside Story of How The War on Terror Turned into a War on American Ideals*, p. 112)

On January 15, 2009, the U.S. Ambassador in Egypt wrote the following in a secret cable published by WikiLeaks:

"Police brutality in Egypt against common criminals is routine and pervasive. Contacts describe the police using force to extract confessions from criminals as a daily event, resulting from poor training and understaffing. Brutality against Islamist detainees has reportedly decreased overall, but security forces still resort to torturing Muslim Brotherhood activists who are deemed to pose a political threat. Over the past five years, the government has stopped denying that torture exists, and since late 2007 courts have sentenced approximately 15 police officers to prison terms for torture and killings...NGO contacts estimate there are literally hundreds of torture incidents every day in Cairo police stations alone." ("US embassy cables: Police brutality in Egypt," *Guardian/UK*, January 28, 2011.)

On January 28, President Barack Obama spoke as if he and the U.S. had always upheld the political rights of the Egyptian people, stating, "I want to be very clear in calling upon the Egyptian authorities to refrain from any violence against peaceful protesters. The people of Egypt have rights that are universal. That includes the right to peaceful assembly and

association, the right to free speech, and the ability to determine their own destiny. These are human rights. And the United States will stand up for them everywhere." ("Obama delivers a statement to the press on Egypt," *Washington Post*, January 28, 2011)

In fact, this statement was made only *after* hundreds of thousands of Egyptians rose up against Mubarak and his regime. Before that, the U.S., including the Obama administration was silent about the treatment of Egyptian bloggers and political activists, even though they knew full well that the Mubarak regime's savage repression was directed at those expressing opposition to his regime. The U.S. Ambassador's January 15, 2009 cable reported that one activist, part of "the April 6 Facebook strike," had been arrested in November 2008 and that the Egyptian government was "probably torturing him to scare other 'April 6' members into abandoning their political activities." The cable reported the "sexual molestation of a female 'April 6' activist." ("US embassy cables: Police brutality in Egypt," *Guardian/*

UK

, January 28, 2011) One blogger told the U.S. Embassy that "following his arrest he was tortured severely with electric shocks and needed to be hospitalized..." ("U.S. reported 'routine' police brutality in Egypt, WikiLeaks cables show,"

Guardian/UK

, January 28, 2011;

www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/28/egypt-police-brutality-torture-wikileaks

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Such brutality is essential to the role Egypt plays as a client state of U.S. imperialism—and it is why the U.S. has given the Mubarak regime \$1.3 billion per year in military aid and has politically supported Mubarak.

The U.S. has not only fully supported the brutal torture carried out by Mubarak's regime—it has actively and directly utilized it. According to Human Rights Watch, the U.S. CIA has illegally "rendered" more prisoners to Egypt for torture and interrogation than any other country.

In fact, the point man for coordinating this rendition program with the U.S. was Omar Suleiman, the man the Obama administration is now pushing as the new "transitional" leader in Egypt. His role was underscored in one State Department cable published by WikiLeaks:

"In the context of the close and sustained cooperation between the USG and GOE on counterterrorism, Post believes that the written GOE assurances regarding the return of three

Egyptians detained at Guantanamo (reftel) represent the firm commitment of the GOE to adhere to the requested principles. These assurances were passed directly from Egyptian General Intelligence Service (EGIS) Chief Soliman through liaison channels—the most effective communication path on this issue. General Soliman's word is the GOE's guarantee, and the GOE's track record of cooperation on CT issues lends further support to this assessment." (Cited by Stephen Soldz, "The Torture Career of Egypt's New Vice President: Omar Suleiman and the Rendition to Torture Program," Commondreams.org, January 30, 2011)

A former CIA agent observed, "If you want a serious interrogation, you send a prisoner to Jordan. If you want them to be tortured, you send them to Syria. If you want someone to disappear—never to see them again—you send them to Egypt." ("Fact Sheet: Extraordinary Rendition," ACLU, December 6, 2005)

U.S. Hypocrisy

The United States knew about the torture, abuse, indefinite detention, political suppression, rape and sexual assault that had been taking place over years under the Mubarak regime that it fully backed. Did the U.S. ever threaten to cut off aid to Egypt's military and security apparatus? Never. Did it ever make a public issue of Egypt's treatment of dissidents? Never. Did the U.S., which claims to champion human rights as universal for all people, ever mount an effort in the United Nations to sanction or embargo Egypt, or even pass a resolution condemning Egypt's actions which flagrantly violate international laws on torture? Never.

In fact, just the opposite. Mubarak has been in power for 30 years—30 years of horrors for Egyptians and Palestinians, and 30 years of loyal service to U.S. imperialism. For this service, Mubarak has consistently been praised, supported, worked closely with, and given billions and billions in aid. Only now, when Mubarak has become the focus of massive and courageous demonstrations in the street, demanding he step down—only now when Mubarak threatens to be a liability to U.S. imperialism and its control of Egypt and the Middle East—only now is the U.S. trying to figure out how to carefully orchestrate a "transition" in which Mubarak eventually steps down but the Egyptian government remains subordinate to the needs of U.S. imperialism.