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# Heightened Foreign Activity of Egyptian Military – What for?

**Mahmoud Gamal**



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TURKEY- ISTANBUL

Bahçelievler, Yenibosna Mh 29 Ekim Cad. No: 7 A2 Blok 3. Plaza D: 64  
Tel/Fax: +90 212 227 2262 E-Mail: [info@eis-eg.org](mailto:info@eis-eg.org)

## Heightened Foreign Activity of Egyptian Military – What for?

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There was tense foreign activity of Egypt's military and intelligence officials in July (2018), including meetings both abroad and at home, most notably:

### Intelligence Director Abbas Kamel in Washington

An American-Egyptian meeting on 24 July discussed developments in the Gaza Strip in the light of Egypt's renewed efforts to achieve Palestinian reconciliation and to stabilize the Gaza Strip.

A “high-level Egyptian military and security delegation”, headed by Abbas Kamel, the new director of the Egyptian General Intelligence Service, held talks with Trump administration officials in Washington on 24 July on developments in the Gaza Strip in the light of Egypt's renewed efforts to achieve Palestinian reconciliation and achieving stability in the Strip.

Jason Greenblatt, President Trump's assistant and special representative for international negotiations, stated on his Twitter account on Wednesday, 24 July that he had met with Kamel, along with Jared Kushner, Trump's senior advisor and son-in-law. In the meeting, which Greenblatt described as a “pleasure,” the officials discussed the “strategic relationship between Egypt and the USA and the important leadership role Egypt is playing in connection with Gaza.” [Greenblatt: A pleasure to meet with General Abbas Kamal, Director of the Egyptian Intelligence Service together with Jared Kushner. We discussed the strategic relationship between Egypt and the USA, as well as the important leadership role Egypt is playing in connection with Gaza.]

### Defense Minister Mohamed Zaki in France

On Monday morning, July 2, 2018, Defense Minister Mohamed Zaki left for the Paris, heading a high-level military delegation on a two-day official visit. During the visit, the meetings also included discussions on topics of common interest for both countries, both regionally and

internationally, as well as developments in the Middle East. La Tribune, a French newspaper, has reported that the subsequent visit of the Egyptian Minister of Defense, Lieutenant General Ahmed Zaki, to France carried important topics and re-established the Egyptian-French relations in the field of armaments, which were completely idle during the last period since the beginning of 2018.

### British Defense Senior Advisor in Egypt

British Defense Senior Advisor to the Middle East and North Africa John Lorimer on Wednesday, 18 July 2018, began a visit to Egypt to strengthen the strategic military partnership between the two countries. During the visit, Lorimer said Egypt's safety is key for Britain's security, according to a statement by the British embassy in Cairo. Lorimer's remarks came during talks with Egyptian counterparts including Commander of Egyptian Naval Forces Vice Admiral Ahmed Khaled, head of the Armed Forces Armament Authority Major General Tarek Saad Zaghloul, and director of Military Intelligence and Reconnaissance Major General Mohamed Farag El-Shahat. The officials discussed "shared challenges and threats" faced by the two countries as well as "the UK's commitment to security in the region," the statement said. "Egypt is a country of vital strategic importance in the region and keeping Egypt safe means keeping Britain safe," Lorimer said. "We know how important it is that we stand together in the face of shared threats to our security, and my visit this week is an important opportunity to explore further defense collaboration," he added.

The visit came less than a week after the navies of both countries carried out a multi-day joint military exercise in the Mediterranean off Egypt's northern coast. "We open a new chapter in our defense cooperation, and a new chapter in improving the security and stability of Egypt, the UK and the Middle East region," British Ambassador to Cairo John Casson was quoted as saying in the statement. The visit came after Egyptian and British naval forces carried out a joint training exercise in the Mediterranean Sea in July 2018.

## Egypt's Envoy to Cyprus Threatens Turkey Militarily

The Turkish NTV channel said Egyptian Ambassador to Cyprus Mai Taha Mohammed said that her country will not hesitate to use military force against Turkey if it is affected by the recent search of natural gas in the Mediterranean Sea. According to the Turkish TV channel, the Egyptian ambassador's speech came during the "Cyprus Abroad" conference in Greek Cyprus. The Ambassadors of Israel and the United States were also attending the conference.

The same channel reported that Israel's ambassador to Cyprus, Aammy Ravel, threatened to use military force against Turkey for Turkey's reacting to the unilateral natural gas search of Cypriot's Greeks with Israeli companies, saying "I wish that Israel would not have to be involved in military intervention because of Turkish threats". US Ambassador also gave support to anti-Turkey stance, saying that "Turkey's attitude towards Cypriots is unacceptable."

However, Egyptian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ahmed Abu Zaid on Tuesday, July 31, these reports (in a press release to "Russia Today" website), stressing that the Egyptian ambassador to Cyprus did not make such statements.

## Assistant Defense Minister Hosting Libyan Meeting

On Monday, July 2, 2018, the Egyptian capital Cairo hosted a meeting related to consultations on resolving the Libyan crisis, including the Egyptian Committee on the Libyan File headed by Major General Mohammad al-Kishki, Assistant Minister of Defense for Foreign Relations, with representatives of the High Council of State headed by Khaled Al-Mashri, and the Presidential Council, headed by Fayez Al-Serraj, in the presence of the Speaker of the House of Representatives in Tobruk Aqila Saleh. The meeting discussed several issues related to the Libyan crisis, the most important of which were the recent developments related to the oil installations which were handed over by retired Major General Khalifa Hafter to government of Abdullah al-Thani, based in the eastern Libyan city of Baidha, which is not recognized internationally.

## General Intelligence and Palestinian File

Hamas said in a statement that “its delegation left Cairo on Friday, July 13, 2018, after holding meetings with Egyptian Intelligence Service (GIC) Director Major General Abbas Kamel and leading GIC officers.” The Hamas statement added that “The delegation discussed in-depth several key matters, especially the latest political developments, the dangers posed to the Palestinian cause, and the ways to end the Palestinian people's suffering due to the unjust siege imposed by the Israeli Occupation on Gaza, as well as the ways to confront the risks surrounding the Palestinian cause.” Both sides also talked about the internal Palestinian situation and the mechanisms to unite and reconcile the Palestinian people in the face of the various challenges posed to their cause.

Hamas leader and member of the delegation Moussa Abu Marzouk, said, "I would not be exaggerating if I described the meeting as the most important and the most comprehensive in terms of content," Abu Marzouk said on his twitter account. "I wish all success for the team on charge of the Palestinian file in the Egyptian Intelligence Service.

In a related context, Hamas announced on Thursday, July 19, 2018, that it had officially informed Egypt of the approval of the Egyptian paper presented to the delegation of the Movement delegation during its recent visit to Cairo. Hamas said in a statement that the head of its political bureau, Ismail Haniyeh, told the Egyptian GIC Director Maj. General Abbas Kamel, of Hamas’ approval of the Egyptian paper which was presented to the movement delegation to Cairo." The statement said that Haniyeh discussed with Lt. General Kamel developments in particular the file of reconciliation and humanitarian projects for the people of the Gaza Strip, in addition to the recent Israeli escalation, and congratulated him during a telephone call on take over his duties as GIC directors. Haniyeh also expressed his appreciation for “the positive spirit that prevailed discussions during the visit of Hamas delegation headed by Sheikh Saleh Al-Arouri.”

## Syrian Armed Factions Meet in Cairo

A number of armed Syrian opposition factions in the coastal region of Syria have signed on Monday evening (July 16) a cease-fire agreement in Cairo under the sponsorship of the Egyptian General Intelligence Service, guaranteed by the Federal Republic of Russia, and by Sheikh Ahmed Al-Jarba, the head of the Syrian Tayyar Al-Al-Ghad current. The deal included an agreement on participation in efforts to combat terrorism, and working towards reaching a political settlement to the Syrian crisis, the return of refugees and displaced to their residences, and the releasing of detainees. Other Syrian armed factions in the North Homs country side, including Gaish Al-Tawhid, have also signed an agreement under the sponsorship of Egypt, guaranteed by Russia and through the mediation of Sheikh Ahmed Al-Jarba to join the efforts to combat terrorism in Syria and found a peace force in the area.

## Egyptian Army and Proposed Arab NATO

US and Arab officials have confirmed that the administration of US President Donald Trump is moving ahead with efforts to form a new security and political alliance that includes the United States, Gulf states, Egypt and Jordan, is aimed at countering Iran's expansion in the region. According to several sources, the Trump administration hopes to discuss the current Middle East Strategic Alliance at a summit tentatively scheduled in Washington on October 12-13. A spokesman for the National Security Council of the White House said that the strategic alliance of the Middle East will be a bulwark against Iranian aggression, terrorism and extremism, and will establish peace in the Middle East. Reuters reported, citing an American source, that Saudi officials suggested the idea of establishing the security alliance before Trump's visit to the Kingdom last year. The proposed plan aims to form what Arab officials as an Arab version of NATO or an "Arab NATO" for the Sunni Muslim allies.

A source familiar with the plan said that among the objectives of this alliance is to establish a missile defense shield in the region, in addition to training and modernizing the armies of the Arab countries participating in it.