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There has been much debate about the Egyptian regime's keenness on purchase of so much military equipment and arms amid the country's economic problems, raising many questions about the political and security objectives behind Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi's armament fever. Also, the Egyptian army has joined exercises with Western and Arab forces, including the US. Following are the Egyptian Army's most recent exercises and arms purchases:

First: Armaments

Egypt's French Corvette Gowind 2500

Egyptian Alexandria Shipyard has started construction of the second of three Gowind 2500 corvettes to be built in Egypt. Under a contract signed with French DCNS in June 2014 for the design and construction of four Gowind 2500 corvettes, the Egyptian Navy has acquired four corvettes with an option for two more ships. The first vessel was agreed to be built in France while the other three were scheduled to be built in Egypt under a technology transfer program. The first vessel was built by DCNS in Lorient, and on Friday 22 September 2017 Egyptian Navy received the first Gowind 2500 corvette. The ceremony took place in Lorient in the presence of Admiral Ahmed Khaled, commander in chief of the Egyptian Navy, Hervé Guillou, President and CEO of Naval Group and senior officials of the French Navy and the French armament procurement agency. Alexandria Shipyard has been responsible for the construction of the remaining three vessels.

August 14, 2018

The second corvette “Port Said” is pending inauguration and its water demarcation soon, at a major ceremony attended by Sisi and senior commanders of the armed forces, workers and engineers in the naval arsenal.

Construction of the third Corvette will be in 2019, to enter service by 2020.

In a related context, Mer et Marine, a French website specialized in the maritime news, reported that France’s Naval Group (DCNS) is delivering sensor masts to Egypt for installation on the Gowind corvettes being locally built by Alexandria Shipyard, with the first locally built vessel almost ready for launch. According to Mer et Marine, one of the masts was loaded onto a freighter on 10 July in the port of Lorient and headed for Alexandria.

German MEKO A200 Frigates

La Tribune, a French newspaper, has announced that there are negotiations between German ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems (TKMS) and the Egyptian navy to provide them with two light frigates of the MEKO A200 type worth 1 billion euros. According to information received from the newspaper sources, the German company is willing to complete the contract with Cairo quickly, and Egypt requested to supply them with the French long-range air defense missiles: Aster 30. The deal is a breath of fresh air for the company, especially as it is threatened with selling, after failing to win the contract of the German navy frigates worth 3.5 billion euros, as well as losing a huge contract for the export of submarines.

Egypt’s Defense Expo EDEX Exhibition

Within the framework of efforts exerted to promote the Egypt Defense Expo EDEX international arms exhibition to be held in Cairo on 3-5 December 2018 jointly with

August 14, 2018

Clarion Defense and Security Ltd, the promotion team has recently announced the following:

- France's Dassault Aviation has confirmed participation in the exhibition as Platinum Sponsor.
- British BAE Systems, the UK's defense and aviation defense systems, has confirmed participation in the event as Gold Sponsor.
- European MBDA, the European company for missile industries, has confirmed participation in the exhibition as Gold Sponsor.
- French Naval Group, the French shipbuilding and submarine company, has confirmed its participation in the exhibition as Gold Sponsor.
- US General Electric GE, the US aircraft and power systems and electronics manufacturer, confirmed participation as Silver Sponsor.

French Thales Renault Trucks and Safran defense have also confirmed participation in the Egyptian exhibition; along with a large number of defense and security companies from The United States, Russia, China, Italy, France, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and a number of other countries that have recently strengthened their military ties with Egypt.

Second: Military Exercises

Egyptian-French joint training

Egyptian and French armed forces conducted joint naval exercise taking place at Red Sea naval base on Friday and is set to last for several days. A group of Egyptian and French vessels participate in an extensive training aiming to boost cooperation between both armed forces, master the latest systems and techniques of naval warfare as well as maximize the mutual benefits for the militaries of both countries.

August 14, 2018

The training includes the implementation of many activities such as the use of modern tactics to counter threats against maritime security, fight terrorism and protect vital targets against non-traditional security threats. The joint naval exercise also comprises advanced training on formations for sailing during day and night, while demonstrating the ability of participating naval units to take positions with a high degree of accuracy and speed.

In March 2018, Egypt and France conducted the “Cleopatra 2018” naval exercises, one of the biggest joint marine exercises that have taken place in the Red Sea, as part of the Egyptian armed forces plan for training with allied countries, during which troops launched a landing operation on an island.

Egyptian-British joint training

Egyptian and British naval forces carried out a joint training exercise in the Mediterranean Sea over the past few days as part of an extensive plan by Egypt to carry out military drills with friend and brotherly countries, the Egyptian Armed Forces said in a statement on Friday, 13 July, 2018. In an official statement, Egypt’s military spokesman Tamer El-Refaie said the exercises were launched upon the arrival of the British Royal Navy’s HMS Argyll to Egypt’s Alexandria, where Lieutenant-General Ahmed Khaled, the commander of the Egyptian naval forces, met with his British counterpart for the MENA region to discuss cooperation between the two countries’ navies.

The training included anti-terror exercises, fighting maritime security threats, securing vital targets against unconventional threats, conducting sailing formations, practicing an exchange of helicopters on board of vessels, carrying out inspections and protecting naval units as they cross dangerous areas. Naval vessels also carried out exercises with live ammunition to repel and destroy targets. “The training supports the pillars of joint

August 14, 2018

cooperation between the Egyptian and British armed forces, as well as getting familiarized with the most advanced systems and maritime combat," the statement said.

Joint military exercises between Egyptian and US armies

The naval forces of both the Egyptian army and the US Army participated in two military training during July 2018. The training was as follows:

a- The U.S. Navy with the Egyptian Naval Forces commenced exercise Eagle Response 18 at the Red Sea Naval Base, Egypt, July 24. Eagle Response 18 is an explosive ordnance disposal and diving exercise conducted with the Egyptian Naval Force and other participating nations to enhance interoperability and warfighting readiness, fortify military-to-military relationships and advance operational capabilities of all participating units. "We are fortunate to have this opportunity to build strong relationships to strengthen our maritime security capabilities," said Lt. John James, the U.S. Navy on-scene commander for the exercise. "Training opportunities like these give our Sailors the unique chance to learn from different nations and show them what we can do." The U.S. Sailors represent Task Force 52, U.S. 5th Fleet's mine warfare task force. The U.S. delegation is part of Task Group 52.3, and includes deployed Sailors from Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit 6; Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit 2, Company 25; and the Naval Oceanography Mine Warfare Center.

b- On July 1, 2018, the guided-missile destroyer USS Jason Dunham (DDG 109) and the Egyptian Navy frigate El Zafer (F951) conducted a passing exercise (PASSEX), July 1. PASSEX is an exercise in which multiple ships, operating in close vicinity, practice evolutions together to improve crews' knowledge, navigation and familiarity with operability. "This was another great opportunity to work with the Egyptian Navy and

August 14, 2018

continue to build, foster and solidify rapport with a maritime-military nation who shares a lot of the same interests in this area of operations," said Cmdr. John Hamilton, Dunham's commanding officer. The PASSEX commenced with Dunham and El Zafer performing divisional tactics and maneuvers. "It's good to see how they operate, and it's good for them to see how we operate," said Hamilton. "If something were to happen in the region, we would already have that ground work, that foundation, and that general understanding." The exercise concluded with a gunnery exercise. A floating smoke target was dropped for the ships to fire upon, and Dunham shot five rounds from the ship's 5-inch gun, followed by 20 rounds from El Zafer's 37mm machine gun.

