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Relations DV's (Sept)**

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**

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During September, 2018, there were many foreign interactions tackled by the Egyptian military institution, that were manifested in many visits and meetings inside and outside Egypt, as well as a number of military events, as follows:

1- Egypt-US military relations

On the sidelines of the Bright Star 2018 exercise, which was held from 8 to 20 September, there were several meetings between Egyptian and US military officials as well as inspection visits by Egyptian commanders as follows:

1- Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi met on Saturday, Sept. 8, with Commander of the United States Central Command General Joseph Votel in the presence of Defense Minister Lieutenant-General Mohamed Zaki, according to Presidential Spokesman Bassam Rady. "Sisi welcomed the launching "Operation Bright Star 2018" military drills, and reviewed the current developments of combating terrorism in all strategic aspects," Rady added. Votel, for his part, lauded the strength of military relations with Cairo, expressing Washington's interest in boosting bilateral ties in all domains. He said that Bright Star military drills reflect the importance and depth of military cooperation with Egypt in light of the challenges which threaten the stability of region and world. Votel highly appreciated Egypt's efforts to eliminate terrorism, hailing the role played by Cairo to foster the regional security and stability. The meeting touched on ways of improving the military cooperation between the two countries in addition to the latest developments on the regional level. Chargé d'Affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Cairo Thomas Goldberger was present at the meeting.

2- Egypt's Minister of Defence General Mohamed Zaki met on Saturday, Sept. 8 with the Head of the US Central Command Joseph Votel where they discussed means of bolstering bilateral military ties in light of the latest regional and international developments. In a statement, Egypt's army spokesman Tamer El-Refaie said Minister Zaki expressed his appreciation of the partnership between the armed forces of both countries, hoping that the current period witnesses more joint cooperation in all fields. The meeting also tackled Egypt's efforts to combat terrorism and reach security and stability in the region. Zaki and Votel also discussed the Bright Star 2018 joint military drills, which are taking place at Mohamed Naguib military base in Egypt from 8-20 September with the participation of forces from Egypt, the US, and a number of brotherly countries. Votel also met with army's Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Mohamed Farid to discuss a number of issues and topics of mutual interest, including the joint Bright Star drills. The meeting was also attended by a number of armed forces commanders.

3- On Sept. 10, General Joseph Votil, Commander of the US Central Command, accompanied by the commander of the Northern Military Zone, Major General Staff Adel Ashmawi inspected forces participating in the joint training activities Bright Star 2018.

4- Lt. General Mohammed Farid, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, met on Sept. 17 with Michael Garrett, Commander of land Forces, US Central Command, and his accompanying delegation as they are currently visiting Egypt. The two sides discussed the aspects of joint military cooperation, which culminated in the recent period in the exercises of Bright Star 2018, which is being implemented at the Mohamed Naguib military base with the participation of Egyptian and American forces and a number of

friendly and fraternal countries. The meeting also discussed the developments in the Middle East, regional and international efforts to eliminate terrorism and restore security and stability in the region.

2- Egypt and the Horn of Africa

Sudanese diplomatic sources in Cairo revealed that Khartoum has granted Egypt two million square meters for the establishment of an industrial zone, on the Nile, near the capital Khartoum. The sources added that this step comes within a series of other economic investments with political and military dimensions in the Red Sea region. The sources said that one of the issues that caused escalation of differences between the two countries and strained their relations earlier, was the agreements that had previously been signed by the Sudan and Turkey, including an agreement allowing Ankara to exist on the island of Suakin on the Red Sea. (In December, 2017, Sudan and Turkey agreed to temporarily put Suakin island under Turkey's care for reconstruction, a move which Egypt was opposed to.) The sources pointed out that the formula of the Egyptian presence in Sudan through industrial areas or investments on the coast of the Red Sea, contributed to calming Cairo, which is no longer representing only itself at that stage.

In fact, the Egyptian interest in the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa is a proxy move in favor of the UAE, which enjoys close relations with the Egyptian regime currently. Abu Dhabi funds many activities aimed at strengthening its influence in the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa, and Egypt is currently playing the spearhead in the UAE orientation towards Sudan, for the aim of gradually drawing Khartoum to end the Turkish-Qatari influence in that region.

The military bases in the Horn of Africa are widely spread. While the US maintains a military and strategic presence in this region to protect its interests, France, China, Japan, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and a number of EU countries, as well as Turkey and Iran have a future perspective on the importance of this region. Despite its strategic, political and economic significance to Egypt's national security, Cairo has been focusing on the military presence in the countries of this region. Recently, the Red Sea Afar Democratic Organization (RSADO), an Eritrean opposition group, has recently revealed that the Eritrean government gave Egypt the green light to build a military base inside its territory. According to opposition officials, citing "reliable" sources in Eritrea, Asmara allowed Cairo to obtain a military base in the town of Nora on the island of Dahlk for an indefinite period. The RSADO added that the agreement came in the wake of the high-level visit by an Egyptian delegation to Eritrea early April, 2017. The organization said between 20 and 30,000 Egyptian troops would be deployed at the planned base.

All the Arab movements in the Red Sea are part of the US military and security strategy in the Middle East and the Red Sea, where none of these countries that have bases or that plan to have bases in the Horn of Africa in the future will be able to come out of this strategy. Based on this, some observers say that the Egyptian army is following and implementing the US policy in the region and that all the Egyptian army's movements are currently only a functional role for the the United States or its affiliates that bear the expenses and funding such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE. This means that the Egyptian move to establish a military base in Eritrea and to be present in other areas in the Horn of Africa, including the Sudan was upon a green light from the US; and Egypt will work inside Eritrea and other countries where the Egyptian army is

present within the framework of the rules of the American game set for the “Cooperative State”, or the so-called local military agents according to the Pentagon standards.

3- Egyptian-Libyan relations

Egyptian sources in the committee assigned to follow up Libya's file, headed by Maj. Gen. Mohamed al-Keshki, said that “what is happening there in the Libyan capital, Tripoli, confirms the Egyptian view on the need to support the Libyan National Army (name given by retired general Khalifa Haftar to his militias), stressing at the same time Cairo’s “rejection of the election path defined by the Paris Agreement”, describing it as “inappropriate”, and adding that “if they (elections) are conducted, they will lead to more chaos, and that there are Western partners that share with us the same position.”

The Egyptian regime and the UAE has been providing all the military and logistic support to the forces of Khalifa Haftar since the beginning of Operation Dignity in 2014, and perhaps the main objective of that support is the keenness of the Egyptian and the UAE regimes to resolve the situation inside the Libyan territory in favor of someone who has got a military background, Haftar, to avoid any of the Islamic groups’ access to power in Libya.

With the Russian-Egyptian-Emirati support, Khalifa Haftar’s militias have almost controlled Eastern Libya. Based on directions from his supporters, Haftar has moved towards Western Libya in attempt to control some territory there, so that he would be having the upper hand in any coming negotiations, based on the policy adopted by Russia, Egypt, and the UAE for dealing with the actors in the Libyan interior, according to their strength and influence on the ground.

4- Egyptian-Yemeni relations

Yemeni Foreign Minister Khaled al-Yamani praised the Egyptian military presence in the southern Red Sea and Bab al-Mandeb, adding that the Egyptian presence contributed to the activation of the international embargo imposed by Article 14 of Security Council Resolution No. 2216 on arms supplies to Houthis (mainly from Iran). Khalid al-Yamani stressed that the Egyptian army protected Bab al-Mandab from Iran, adding that: “There are Egyptian naval vessels deployed in Bab al-Mandab, which is an active participation from the Egyptian armed forces in the (Saudi-UAE) coalition to support the legitimacy in Yemen.”

The Egyptian navy has recently been deployed extensively in the Red Sea as a result of the tension in the region, after the Houthis backed by Iran had controlled the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, and a number of ports and important axes on the Red Sea, is very important to the Egyptian national security, especially as the Egyptian economy depends heavily on the Suez Canal which connects the Mediterranean Sea with the Red Sea. On the other hand, the spread of the Egyptian navy in the territorial waters of the Red Sea comes as a response to the remarkable spread of the Iranian navy in the Red Sea recently. It is noteworthy that Iran built a naval base in the Eritrean port of Assab in southern Eritrea in 2009, and transferred troops, equipment and long-range ballistic missiles to the base through ships and submarines, according to reports from Eritrean opposition groups and a number of diplomats and relief organizations personnel.

Other observers referred the intensive spread of the Egyptian navy in the Red Sea territorial waters to the fear of both Egypt and Israel of using the Assab port by the Iranians to smuggle weapons to Hamas and Hezbollah. Egypt considers the Red Sea as

a strategic place that is important to its national security, while Israel regards the Red Sea as a strategic place, being its only commercial outlet with the Asian countries.

5- Egyptian-Syrian relations

The Egyptian regime is very cautious about the proposals submitted to resolve the crisis in the Syrian province of Idlib; and fears the transfer of “terrorists” from the province to other countries, especially to Egyptian territory, which was expressed by Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry during his meeting with the UN envoy to Syria Staffan de Mistura. In this context, Egyptian media reports revealed that the Egyptian regime considers itself a key party on this file, adding that “Cairo is against directing a comprehensive military strike against Idlib, and at the same time refuses allowing a safe passage for the militants out of Idlib, fearing their transfer to the number of regions, particularly North Sinai in Egypt, in addition to Libya, which represents a strong threat on the western border of Egypt.”

The reports said that “the Egyptian side adopts a vision that seeks a political solution to the crisis, ensuring the continued presence of armed elements in Idlib, and preventing them from moving to other areas, with the launch of qualitative operations targeting the heads and senior leaders of these organizations,” adding that “the Egyptian regime seeks to continue pressure to reach a formula to fight the militants and protect civilians at the same time to prevent emergence of a new refugee crisis.” According to these reports, Egypt seeks to bring its vision closer to Saudi Arabia in addressing the Idlib crisis. While the Egyptian regime wants to ensure continuation of the armed elements in Idlib to avoid their threat to the Egyptian national security, this would be at the same time consistent with the desire of Saudi Arabia to maintain a

certain role drawn to armed elements to remain a threat to the Iranian influence in Syria.

6- Egyptian-Kuwaiti relations

Egypt's Armed Forces Chief of Staff Mohamed Farid flew to Kuwait on Sept. 10 to participate in the 15th meeting of the Supreme Committee of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Chiefs-of-Staff that kicked off Monday in Kuwait City. The Egyptian Army Chief of Staff's participation came in response to an invitation from his Kuwaiti counterpart. Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) army chiefs-of-staff met on Wednesday (Sept. 12) with their counterparts from Egypt and Jordan in Kuwait City to discuss military and defense cooperation. The gathering, also reportedly attended by officials from the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), comes two days after another meeting in Kuwait of GCC army chiefs-of-staff. That meeting saw the participation of Qatar's army chief for the first time since mid-2017, when a four-nation Arab bloc led by Saudi Arabia collectively severed relations with Doha. According to a statement issued by the Kuwaiti military, Wednesday's follow-up meeting was held to discuss regional security and the fight against terrorism, among other things. Wednesday's meeting prompted speculation in Arab media about the possible emergence of an "Arab NATO Alliance". Private Kuwaiti daily Alrai quoted unnamed U.S. Defense Department sources as saying that the meeting was aimed at "enhancing military ties between participant countries and discussing plans for dealing with any emergency, crisis or circumstance, including the eruption of regional wars".

7- Egyptian-Uzbek relations

Abdel Fattah El Sisi and his Uzbek counterpart Shavkat Mirziyoyev on Wednesday, Sept. 5, 2018, attended the signing ceremony of several cooperation agreements. The agreements seek boosting joint cooperation between the foreign ministries of both countries along with enhancing relations in the domains of investments, sports, agriculture, justice, tourism and culture, said Egyptian Presidential Spokesman Ambassador Bassam Radi in press statements.

