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Since he was appointed as Defense Minister by Egypt's first democratically elected president, Mohamed Morsi, against whom he led a military coup in 2013, General Abdel Fattah Al Sisi has been keen on attending the educational seminars organized by the Egyptian armed forces' department of morale affairs for military personnel, along with commanders of the armed forces, a number of interior ministry officials as well as a number of ministers, media men and clerics. It should be noted that Sisi has been used to making his boldest and strangest comments during these seminars.

On Sunday, 10 March 2019, General Sisi attended the 30th. educational seminars, in coincidence with Egypt's celebrations on "The Martyr Day", in the company of commanders of the Egyptian military junta, the director of the General Intelligence Service, Maj. General Abbas Kamel, the director of Sisi's Office, Maj. General Mohsen Abdel Nabi, the chief of staff of the armed forces, commanders of the main army branches, the Minister of Interior and a number of other ministers, a number of senior Interior ministry leaders, as well as the speaker of the House of Representatives (parliament) and many media men and public figures.

Within the framework of the seminar's program, Osama Heikal, the former minister of information and chairman of the parliament committee on information, delivered a speech where he spoke about how to spread awareness in the Egyptian society and the factors that are likely to affect it. Then, Mohamed Mokhtar Gomaa, Minister of Awakaf, spoke about the status of the martyr in Islam.

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Among the most prominent program elements of the 30th. educational seminar were the comments made by Sisi on the word of Osama Heikal, the former information minister, where Sisi was keen to send several messages, including:

1- Al-Sisi commented on the phrase of “false awareness” which was used by Osama Heikal in his speech, stressing that rumors stand behind creation of a state of false awareness that is likely to destroy states. He explained that those who circulate rumors are the enemies of the state. He added that Egypt has been subjected to spread of rumors that are unfortunately believed by people, citing as examples:

- *The rumor of the appointment of a person in the post of Minister of Transport, but later it was revealed that he died 10 years ago:*

The [story](#) started with a tweet posted on a pseudonymous Twitter account, “Khalid Ankh Amon I”, which confirmed that Eng. Mohamed Wagih Abdel Aziz was appointed as new minister of transport, and speaking in detail on the prominent achievements of the new “great minister”. The news spread quickly and reached some pro-regime media outlets, citing anonymous sources. Later, it turned out to be false news, especially after owner of the “Khalid Ankh Amon I” Twitter account announced that the minister mentioned in the tweet is in fact his own deceased father who died 10 years ago, adding that he targeted the media outlets which go after any news without verifying their sources. It is noteworthy that many media outlets close to the Sisi government, including some pro-regime talk show [programs](#), circulated the rumor as a highly credible true story, which signals a lack of professionalism with respect to these media outlets amid circulation of false news while attacking opponents of the regime.

- *The circulated reports that the army is the party which orchestrated citizens' storming of the headquarters of the former State Security Investigations (SSI) during the transitional period following the 25 Jan. Revolution (2011) the rule of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). These news stories said the army betrayed the police and brought demonstrators to the headquarters of the SSI in order to seize all secret documents and reports related to the military junta members and at the same time undermine the dignity of the police.*

However, It is not so simple as it seems to be, claiming that these reports were only rumors, especially that there are many reports from reliable sources confirming that the storming of the former SSI headquarters was carefully planned by the new authority at that time, the [Supreme Council of the Armed Forces](#), to achieve personal ends; and the effect of this incident is still influential in favor of the SCAF up till now, thanks to the treasure of precious information that they had put their hands on.

The story begins during the events of the 25 Jan. Revolution, when SCAF received information that an unknown person used live ammunition while attacking an army checkpoint in central Cairo; and after the arrest of that person, he turned out to be a SSI officer. According to this narrative, the arrested SSI officer confessed that he was a member of a special team, within the State Security Service, whose task was to watch army officers of various ranks, especially after the army objected to the possibility of Gamal Mubarak's access to power as a successor to his father, Hosni Mubarak. The arrested SSI officer also confessed that he had received fresh orders from SSI leaders to carry out attacks against the army, to make them think that they were targeted by the revolutionaries and gain the army's support to Mubarak and his regime. The

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investigations also revealed that the SSI had prepared top secret files on the military junta members to be used as a pressure card in the hands of the Mubarak regime.

According to this narrative, these reports angered the military junta that developed a robust plan to arrange storming the State Security Investigations headquarters by citizens in a way that would appear as if it was a move carried out by the revolutionaries. The target of the military junta was to put their hands on the secret reports and files that the SSI officers had prepared on senior army commanders and at the same time strike back at these officers for their anti-army moves.

2- In his speech, Sisi was keen to show that there are no differences or disputes within the military institution. He said Lt. General Kamel al-Wazir, the former head of the Engineering Authority of the Armed Forces, accepted without any hesitation his appointment in the post of Minister of Transport after receiving Sisi's orders. Al-Sisi said there was a rumor circulated that Kamel al-Wazir was dissatisfied with his new post. He added that the delay in al-Wazir's assuming of his new job was because completion of due measures was pending the Egyptian parliament's ratification of the decision.

It should be noted that some reports have pointed out that Kamel al-Wazir was actually not pleased with the idea of quitting the Engineering Authority of the Armed Forces, which oversees and carries out most economic projects within the Egyptian state, for the post of Minister of Transport, which he viewed as a kind of demotion although Sisi promoted him from Maj. General to Lt. General immediately before appointing him in the new post.

Other reports say that al-Wazir's promotion to the rank of Lt. General was an attempt to appease him, taking into consideration that Kamel al-Wazir is the only head of the

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engineering authority that was promoted to the rank of Lt. General among all his predecessors who had quitted service at the rank of staff Maj. General, such as: Maj. General Staff Emad Al-Alfi, Maj. General Staff Taher Abdallah. Maj. General Staff Ahmed Naeem Al-Badrawi, Maj. General Staff Maged George, Maj. General Staff Galal Serri, and Maj. General Staff Mahmoud Fahim Abdel Aziz. Therefore, this move from Sisi is seen as an attempt to get rid of al-Wazir or anyone that gains popularity and becomes a prominent figure among the army commanders for fear of posing a threat to him.

3- Sisi defended the stances of the SCAF during the transitional period that followed the Jan. Revolution events while he was director of the military intelligence service and also responsible for management of all security services at the time. Sisi claimed that the armed forces did not harm any Egyptian during that time although there were many demands that called on the military junta to leave power (for civilians), especially during the events of Mohamed Mahmoud, where the military junta was “accused of being killers and corrupt”, while the SCAF was “keen on sparing the lives of Egyptians” despite the huge number of casualties during the period from 2011 to 2015, a big price that was paid and will continue to be paid as consequences of these events, according to Sisi’s claims.

“The number of demonstrations in Egypt reached 200 only during these four years (2011-2015),” Sisi added, wondering: How can tourism or trade, or any other activity operate or move in such a situation? He said the bulk of foreign exchange reserves were significantly drained within only a year and a half starting from the events of January 2011, amid a state of instability that was behind the state’s inability to restore investment. Sisi also said that Lt. General Mohamed Zaki (currently Minister of

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Defense) was responsible for the security of the Tahrir Square at that time, “where the image that was exported during the events of Mohamed Mahmoud St. was that the army forces killed demonstrators there, while we were setting concrete barriers to protect them,” Sisi said.

It is noteworthy that there were many reliable reports at that time that the military junta was behind killing peaceful protesters not only at Mohamed Mahmoud St. but also in Maspero and Port Said Stadium. However, Sisi, in his comments, linked the acts of violence practiced during these events to a third party or unknown people that infiltrated within the demonstrators themselves. Sisi also said that “undoubtedly there were mistakes”, but he justified these mistakes by saying that “there were attempts to undermine the State”. In this way, Sisi attempts to clear the SCAF of any responsibility for the incidents and acts of violence that took place during the transitional stage after 25 January 2011.

4- Sisi also tried to clear himself of the charge of treason before army officers and soldiers. In this regard, he said that as director of the military intelligence and the security forces at that time, he was responsible for making communications with the Islamists in the post-revolution period, and that he advised them to keep away from the presidential elections, “because Egypt was facing crises and problems that were greater than the capacity of any movement or group”. (hinting at the Muslim Brotherhood), describing himself as an honest man.

5- Sisi still scares and frightens people that the threat to the Egyptian state comes from inside the country, not an external threat. He indirectly referred to the opposition media (overseas) and social networking sites which have recently been calling on the Egyptian people to stage demonstrations against the proposed constitutional

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amendments that allow Sisi to remain in power until 2036. Sisi described these calls as targeting the destabilization of the country and urged people not to pay any attention to such media outlets and social networking sites. He also noted that “social media platforms had negative effects during the 2011 incidents”, stressing that “he has repeatedly warned against rumors”.

Some observers link these comments to a campaign that has recently been launched by Moataz Matar, a TV presenter of a famous program, “With Moataz”, on Al-Sharq satellite channel, based in Istanbul, under the title, “Be assured, you are not alone” to reassure supporters of the Egyptian 25 January Revolution that they are not alone and ask them to move against Sisi’s constitutional amendments. This suggests that the current Egyptian regime is significantly concerned about the outcome of this campaign, for fear of likely eruption of a new revolution as that of 2011.