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Introduction

There are usually two reshuffles of senior commanders and officers of the Egyptian army, that are carried out on a regular basis in June and December every year; where the first reshuffle takes place in June, and the second one takes place in December – after having the approval of the Supreme Commander of the Egyptian Armed Forces.

1- Reshuffle of top army commanders as follows:

- First: the transfer of commanders from senior positions to other senior positions, or promotion of new commanders to senior positions within the Egyptian army, such as heading one of the main branches of the armed forces, an army authority, a military zone, or a field army. This level of command that constitutes the 26 members of the Supreme Council of the Egyptian Armed Forces (SCAF), is usually known as the 'first-class leaders'¹.
- Second: the promotion of middle-level officers to senior positions in advanced ranks, such as the chief of staff of a major branch, a military authority, a military zone, or a field army; and thus they join the senior officers of the Egyptian army, or the so-called 'second-class leaders'.
- Third: the retirement of commanders or officers, due to military laws related to the pension age or for other reasons, such as a chronic disease that hinders the officer from carrying out tasks entrusted to him, or simply for security reasons based on military investigations periodically conducted for all officers.

2- Reshuffle of middle-rank leaders and junior officers:

This reshuffle includes hierarchical promotion of officers to higher ranks and positions within battalions, authorities, etc.', as well as transfer of officers from one military zone to another, according to the distribution geography set by the reshuffle bulletin.

¹ Mahmoud Gamal, The Egyptian Military Council: Information file, Egyptian Institute for Studies, 13 February 2018, [link](#)

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No.	Statement
01	Appointment of Major General Staff Assem Ashour as commander of the Central Military Zone instead of Major General Staff Khaled Shawky, who was appointed as deputy head of the Military Operations Authority Lt. General Osama Askar.
02	Appointment of Major General Staff Moheb Habashi as commander of the Southern Military Zone, instead of Major General Staff Khaled Labib, who was appointed as head of the Military Research Authority.
03	Appointing Major General Staff Yasser Al-Asrigi as Director of the Department of Morale Affairs instead of Major General Staff Ahmed Fathi Khalifa; and appointing Major General Staff Ahmed Fathi Khalifa as head of the Regulation and Administration Authority, (Accordingly, Major General Staff Ahmed Fathi Khalifa becomes member of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces).
04	Appointment of Major General Staff Fahmy Heikal as commander of the Northern Military Zone, instead of Major General Staff Yasser Al-Asrigi, who was appointed as head of the Department of Morale Affairs.
05	Appointing Major General Staff Tarek Al-Shazly as commander of the Third Field Army instead of Major General Staff Khaled Kenawy, and appointing Major General Staff Khaled Kenawy as director of Nasser Military Academy.
06	Appointment of Major General Staff Emad Al Yamani as commander of the Border Guard Forces, instead of Major General Staff Ayman Shehata.
07	Transfer of Major General Staff Mahmoud Al-Aidarous from the position of head of the Signal Corps to the position of deputy director of the Military Intelligence Service, Major General Staff Khaled Megawer, where the name of the military intelligence was changed from the Military Intelligence and Reconnaissance Administration to become the Military Intelligence Authority, headed by Major General Khaled Megawer and his deputy Major General Al-Aidarous. The new authority includes 4 departments: Military Intelligence, Signal Corps, Systems, and Electronic Warfare.
08	Transfer of Major General Staff Mehrez Abdel Wahab from his position as deputy Director of the Nasser Military Academy to the position of deputy Commander of the Republican Guard, where Commander of the Republican Guard is of Major General Staff Mustafa Shawkat and his deputy of Major General Staff Mehrez Abdel Wahab.
09	Promotion of Major General Staff Walid Abul-Magd from the position of deputy Director of the National Service Authority to the position of Director General of the National Service Authority.
10	Appointment of Major General Staff Mohamed Abdella as Assistant Minister of Defense.

Sisi's strategy on reshuffle of top officers:

Reshuffles within the army are not new, as they were made on an annual basis in the eras of presidents Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Hosni Mubarak, but not necessarily including changes in the positions of senior leaders in each reshuffle. The strategy of Nasser and Mubarak, in particular, was to stabilize positions of leaders for long periods of time, considering that such stability would support the stability of the military institution and secure survival of the regime and ensure maintaining the army's loyalty. Sadat's policy in this concern was completely different from that of Nasser and Mubarak. Sadat assumed power in 1970, only three years after the defeat of the Egyptian army in 1967, as Lt. General Mohamed Fawzy was the Minister of War at the time, succeeding Field Marshal Abdel Hakim Amer. Fawzy was working on dismantling and re-structuring the Egyptian army, within the framework of the liberation plan that he was developing together with the army commanders. However, Lt. General Fawzi clashed with Sadat at the early beginnings of his rule over the liberation plan, where finally Sadat overthrew Fawzy in the so-called 'reform revolution' at the time. Then, Sadat clashed with Lt. General Mohamed Sadek, then with Lt. General Saad Eddin al-Shazly, due to plans for war and liberation. Sadat also clashed with Lt. General Ahmed Badawi because of differences on the armament commissions that were composed of army commanders close to Sadat, according to Officer Lamei Hafez in his book "Corruption and the Fierce Clash between Sadat and Badawi", where he hinted that Badawi was assassinated in the 1981 plane accident. This prompted Sadat to make periodic changes on a regular basis within the army, with the aim of controlling the joints of the army and prevent formation of centers of power within the army that might threaten his rule².

Observers of army reshuffles since July 2013 note that each reshuffle included fundamental changes in the ranks of senior commanders, and in members of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces in particular, where Sisi changed all commanders that participated in the 3 July 2013 coup against the first democratic experiment in Egypt, with the exception of three leaders who continue with him until now, namely:

² Mahmoud Gamal, Trends of Change within the Military Institution, Egyptian Institute for Studies, 16 July 2019, [link](#)

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- Lt. General Mohamed Farid Hegazy, who was in charge of the Ministry of Defense's General Secretariat during the rule of the late President Mohamed Morsi, and was subsequently appointed by Sisi as Chief of Staff of the Egyptian Army.
- Lt. General Osama Askar, who was in command of the Third Field Army during the rule of the late President Mohamed Morsi, and was appointed after the September 2019 movement, as head of the Egyptian Armed Forces Operations Authority.
- Major General Staff Mamdouh Shaheen, Assistant Minister of Defense for Constitutional and Legal Affairs.
- Commander of the Republican Guard under late President Mohamed Morsi Maj. General Mohamed Zaky, was appointed by Sisi in mid-2018 as Minister of Defense, and promoted to the rank of Lt. General, although he was not a member of SCAF in July 2013.

Otherwise, Sisi removed all SCAF members who, together with him, plotted and carried out the coup against the democratic experiment on July 3, 2013.

Al-Sisi's strategy in governance has transformed the system of government from the rule of the military institution as a whole to the rule of the military individual, 'a dictator with an extremely narrow circle of his supporters around him' who together control all institutions and agencies, for fear of the fate of Mubarak, who was overthrown by the army in January 2011. However, the army did not dare to take such step (overthrowing Mubarak) except with the presence of a defense minister who was actually in control of the army, that is Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi. In fact, Tantawi remained in his position as a minister of defense for more than 20 years starting from 1991 (till the January revolution), as the longest term for an Egyptian defense minister since 1952. Indeed, Tantawi effectively controlled the military institution; while Mubarak controlled the presidential institution; and when a dispute arose between the two institutions, the armed forces that had the power resolved it and overthrew Mubarak. Taking into mind that Sisi knows this fact well – being the last director of military intelligence under President Mubarak – he is now seeking to fill gaps and avoid committing the same mistakes that Mubarak did; therefore, he is keen not to keep military commanders in their positions for a long time.

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In order not to form potential centers of power that might pose a threat to him at times of disagreement over certain issues, Sisi would transfer senior officers from positions to other positions or refer some to retirement, specifically those who disagree with him on some issues. This is what exactly happened with Lt. General Mahmoud Hegazy, father-in-law of his son, whom Sisi removed from his position as chief of staff of the army in October 2017 due to differences on some security issues³. Before that, Sisi dismissed Major General Ahmed Wasfi, who stated in a TV interview that the events of 3 July 2013 would become a military coup if Sisi accessed power in Egypt. Therefore, he was excluded from the leadership of the Second Field Army in February 2014, and then from the leadership of the Training Authority in December 2016.

Al-Sisi did not suffice with not allowing leaders to stay in their positions for long periods, or removing those who differed with him in views on some issues, to secure his rule from any threats, but he also abused military leaders that believed that his survival in power would be dangerous for everyone. He sent Lt. General Sami Anan to the military prison for leading a political front, including both military and civilians, that wanted to replace him through elections. Al-Sisi also abused Lt. General Ahmed Shafik, the former commander of the Air Defense Forces, for declaring his intention to run for the 2018 elections against Sisi. There are also middle-rank and junior officers that could not escape Sisi's abuse, such as the abuse of Colonel Ahmed Konsowa who represented the middle-rank officers within the army who believed that the regime was going in a wrong way. Colonel Konsowa tried to reform the imbalance through the legal and constitutional path, but he was met with the most severe degree of abuse from Sisi and the narrow circle around him. Ahmed Konsowa is now held and abused in the military prison, according to his wife Rasha Safwat⁴, with the aim of scaring other officers who want reform. However, Konsowa is not the only army officer that is abused, as many officers are detained in the military prison because of their political differences with the current regime.

The June 2021 reshuffle of senior army officers came as a manifestation of this approach adopted by Sisi, that he considers the most appropriate approach for securing his rule.

³ Mahmoud Gamal, Egypt: Dismissal of Hegazi - Dimensions and Interpretations, Egyptian Institute for Studies, [link](#)

⁴ 25 years of service in the army.. Colonel Ahmed Konsowa's wife appeals to Sisi to release him, Al Jazeera Mubasher, 21 February 2021, accessed 9 June 2021, [link](#)

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Reviewing the June 2021 reshuffle of army officers, the following is noted:

- The exclusion of Major General Staff Khaled Shawky from the leadership of the Central Military Zone and the appointment of Major General Staff Assem Ashour in his place, only one year after Shawky was assigned to lead the 'important' Central Military Zone, that controls Greater Cairo, (Cairo, Giza, and Qalyubia)⁵.
- The exclusion of Major General Staff Khaled Labib from the leadership of the Southern Military Zone, one year after his appointment in this position, and replacing him by Major General Staff Moheb Habashi.
- The transfer of Major General Staff Emad Yamani from the Military Police Command, six months after his appointment in the position, to become the deputy commander of the Republican Guard, taking into mind that the transfer of a chief commander to a deputy is not considered a promotion⁶.
- The transfer of Major General Staff Mahmoud Al-Aidarous from the Signal Corps, six months after his appointment in the position, to be appointed as deputy Director of the Military Intelligence Authority, under its new title.
- The transfer of Major General Staff Yasser Al-Asrigi from the Northern Military Zone command, only one year after appointment in the position, to take over the Department of the Morale Affairs.
- The transfer of Major General Staff Mehrez Abdel-Wahab from his position as deputy Director of the Nasser Military Academy, that he was appointed in for only six months, to the position of deputy Commander of the Republican Guard. Thus, the commander of the Republican

⁵ Mahmoud Gamal, Sisi's Reshuffle of Top Army Officers (June 2020): Causes and Implications, The Egyptian Institute for Studies, 19 June 2020, [link](#)

⁶ The December Military Reshuffle, AlMarsad, [link](#)

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Guard Forces becomes Major General Staff Mustafa Shawkat with his deputy Major General Staff Mehrez Abdel Wahab.

- The most prominent aspect of the June 2021 reshuffle of top military officers is the transformation of the Military Intelligence Department into the Military Intelligence Authority. The Military Intelligence was previously called the Military Intelligence and Reconnaissance Department, including four agencies: the Military Security, Reconnaissance and Information, Naval Intelligence, and the Security Research and Development. Now, according to the new formation, four other agencies have been included under the new authority: the Signal Corps, the Electronic Warfare, the Information Systems, and the Morale Affairs.
- The remarkable thing in the June 2021 reshuffle of top military officers was the exclusion of Major General Staff Ahmed Fathi from the leadership of the Department of Morale Affairs and his appointment as head of the Organization and Administration Authority, whereby he 'has become a SCAF member', and the appointment of Major General Staff Yasser Al-Asrigi in his place; and the transfer of the mandate of the Department of Morale affairs to the Military Intelligence Authority in its new form. Some observers believe that the Department of Morale Affairs is now undergoing a restructuring process due to the negative assessment of its performance in the recent period, specifically in the media issue. It is also reported that this assessment is undertaken by Colonel Ahmed Shaaban, who is in charge of the media file at the General Intelligence Service, who will coordinate with the Military Intelligence Authority on how to administer the media file in the next stage.

Based on this, the departure of Major General Staff Ahmed Fathi Khalifa from the Department of Morale Affairs seems logical, as Khalifa is close to Major General Mohsen Abdel Nabi, current Director of the Sisi Office, who had been in charge of the Department of Morale Affairs before Major General Staff Ahmed Fathi Khalifa; given that the Morale affairs in its new form will be completely controlled by the Military Intelligence Authority and its director Major General Staff Khaled Megawer. Some believe that Khalifa was appeased by this promotion to become a SCAF member, being head of the Organization and Administration Authority.