

RELEASE IN PART B6

From: Sidney Blumenthal <[REDACTED]>
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To: H
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Attachments: hrc memo morsi gaza 111512.docx

B6

CONFIDENTIAL

November 15, 2012

For: Hillary

From: Sid

Re: Morsi reaction to Israel Gaza strikes

SOURCE: Sources with direct access to the governments of Libya and Israel, as well as the highest levels of European governments, and Western Intelligence and security services.

1. During the day on November 14, 2012, Egyptian President Mohamad Morsi discussed the current fighting between Israel and Hamas in Gaza with his senior Army commander General Abdel Fatah al-Sissi and the leadership of the Military Intelligence Service (MI - Mukhabarat el-Khabeya). According to an extremely sensitive source, Morsi was concerned that if the situation in Gaza continues escalate Egypt could be drawn into the fighting. He also expressed frustration with the Hamas Government in Gaza, over which he has been unable to exert significant influence. Al-Sissi assured the President that while MI has not fixed the

specific underlying cause of the exchange between Hamas and the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) both sides will continue to retaliate for each attack. That said, al-Sissi assured Morsi that MI officers were meeting secretly with their Israeli counterparts and the meetings remained professional in tone. In this regard the IDF commanders agreed with Morsi's plan to send Egyptian Prime Minister Hesham Qandil to Gaza on November 16 in an effort to stop the pattern of retaliation, at least while he is on the scene. Al-Sissi added that he is not certain that the IDF officers coordinated this discussion with the office of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu; it was clear to him that the IDF was looking for a way to stop the Hamas rocket attacks, which had now reached Tel Aviv, even if only for a few days.

2. (Source Comment: In the opinion of al-Sissi the IDF intelligence officers believe that the situation is precarious for all involved. Their concern is that the most senior officers in the IDF believe that Hamas has lost its fear of the Israeli Army. Accordingly, these Israeli generals, working with Israeli Minister of Defense Ehud Barak, may be inclined to move against radicals in Gaza in the immediate future. At the same time, internal political pressures in Israel may lead Netanyahu to press for aggressive action in Gaza. Al-Sissi speculated that the Israeli decision to attack and kill Hamas leader Ahmed al-Jabari, may be related to his role in organizing the kidnapping of Israeli soldier Gilam Shalit, which is still an important, emotional political issue in Israel. For his part, Morsi agrees with al-Sissi that even if IDF forces enter Gaza in force Egypt cannot be drawn into direct conflict with the Israelis. The President also cited MI reports that Israel's "Iron Dome" anti-missile system is apparently very effective in operations against the Hamas rockets, which should reduce the casualties in Israeli cities, and, perhaps, may reduce the pressure on the IDF to move into Gaza in force.)

3. According to this individual, Morsi is frustrated with the leadership of Hamas, which has resisted his secret efforts to prevent or moderate their plans to attack Israel. Morsi recognizes Hamas' anger after the death of al-Jabari, but notes that this move and Hamas' calls for help from the new regimes of the Arab Spring puts his new Islamist Government under pressure inside of Egypt. Morsi noted that more radical Islamic leaders in Egypt are now

calling for war with Israel and even his more traditional political opponents are criticizing his government and the new leadership of the Army for not being more forceful during this crisis. Morsi's advisors point out that the new governments in Libya and Tunisia will face the same pressure that could threaten their internal stability.

4. (Source Comment: This knowledgeable individual adds that al-Sissi is concerned privately that the situation in Gaza will escalate beyond the capacity of any individual or government to control. He adds that certain IDF liaison officers point out in secret that Netanyahu is unpredictable, the Hamas leaders are fanatics, and Morsi is a new leader with a precarious hold on his country, which creates a dangerous environment. Al-Sissi has not shared this particular view with the Egyptian President, wishing to avoid undercutting his confidence at this critical time.)