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Egypt 2017: Developments in the Military Scene

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Introduction

The military institution in Egypt over the past year – 2017 – has undergone internal transformations, including:

First: dismantling and reshaping the military:

The military institution witnessed during 2017 the dismissal of 14 military commanders from the military, including 13 members of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces; one was killed as a result of a car accident. Their names were:

1. Lt. General Abdel Moneim Al-Taras, former Commander of the Air Defense Forces (member of the Military Council)
2. Lt. General Osama Mounir Rabea - Former Commander of the Marine (Member of the Military Council)
3. Staff Major General Ahmed Ahmed Wasfi - Former Head of Training Commission (Member of the Military Council)
- 4 – Lt. General Osama Askar - Commander of the Unified Command in the Sinai (Member of the Military Council)
5. Staff Major General Ahmed Tawhid Tawfiq - Chairman of the Armed Forces Training Organization (Member of the Military Council)
- 6 – Staff Major General Ahmed Mohamed Abdullah - Commander of the Third Field Army (Member of the Military Council)
7. Staff Major General Ahmed Nasser Al-Assi - Commander of the Second Field Army (Member of the Military Council)
8. Staff Major General Ahmed Yahya Taha al-Humili, Former Commander of the Southern Region (Member of the Military Council)
9. Staff Major General Ahmad Muhammad al-Zamlout - Former Commander of the Northern Region (Member of the Military Council)
10. Staff Major General Ahmad Waheed Ezzat, Former Commander of the Western Region (Member of the Military Council)
11. Staff Major General Ahmed Ahmed Ibrahim - Commander of the Border Guard Forces (Member of the Military Council)
12. Brigadier General Mohammed Samir – the Military Spokesperson (not a Member of the Military Council)



13. Lt. General Mahmoud Hegazi, former Chief of Staff (Member of the Military Council)

14. Staff Major General Ahmed Mohamed Lutfi - Former Commander of the Northern Region (a Member of the Military Council – killed as a result of a car accident)

1- The situation inside the military institution before the dismissal of those commanders was not stable. Some described it as “the period of the emergence of clear differences within the military institution”; more specifically in October, 2016 during the fifth meeting of the military council. The meeting was held and led by Sisi, and its purpose was to discuss the internal situation and the repercussions of what was called “the revolution of the poor” which was supposed to take place on November 11th, 2016.

Special sources said that the meeting witnessed an internal division on Sisi's practices in governance. The sources said that there was a group within the council who saw that Sisi's actions would put the Egyptian army into jeopardy. That group tried to convince Sisi not to run for a second term as a president. It is also said that the security measures taken by the Egyptian government to prevent the demonstrators from taking to streets on November 11th 2016, were not due to the regime's fear from demonstrators, but rather due to fears from within the regime itself. In other words, the regime was afraid that a group within the Egyptian army might try to take advantage of those street events to take an action against the regime. What supported that theory was the fact that the troops that were deployed in the streets at the time were the “Rapid Deployment Forces”, formed by Sisi before announcing his candidacy for the presidential elections in 2014.

2- Before Sisi's dismissal of both Lt. General Abdul Moneim Al-Taras and Lt. General Osama Mounir Rabea in mid-December 2016 (it was the same period when he laid-off 12 military figures from within the Military Council); Lt. General Abdul Moneim Al-Taras visited UAE on 30 November 2016, under the pretext of holding meetings with Emirati officials. Upon his return after the visit on 18 December 2016, he was laid-off by Sisi along with 11 other military leaders.

3- After the dismissal of Muhammad Suleiman al-Zamlout in December 2016, Staff major General Mohammed Lutfi Yusuf was appointed as commander of the Northern Region. However, six months after his appointment, he died in a car accident. It was

not the first incident of its kind, but it was the fourth incident amid reports of conflicts within the military.

4. The dismissal of the Lt. General Mahmoud Hegazi on 28 October 2017, and the appointment of Mohamed Farid Hijazi as the Army Chief of Staff, was one of the most significant transformations within the military in 2017. It came after Al Wahat Al Bahriah attack on 20 October 2017, and after Mahmoud Hegazi's visit to the United States to attend an anti-terrorism conference. The most striking thing in the case of the dismissal of Mahmoud Hegazi was that since July 2013, Egypt has seen several large incidents similar to the one in Al-Wahat Al Bahriah, such as the events of Sinai in 2015; Sisi then did not dismiss anyone, but created a unified command to run the operations in Sinai and appointed Lt. General Osama Askar as commander of the troops.

Explanations suggest that what was behind the dismissal of Hegazi were internal conflicts within the military council. Sisi not only dismissed Hegazi from his position as the chief of staff, but also removed him from the chairmanship of the Egyptian committee concerned with the Libyan file, while appointing Major General Mohammed al-Kashki, assistant secretary of defense for foreign relations, instead.

In light of what is happening within the military institution, we find that the military is likely to see more tensions in the next stage. We may see more dismissals of leaders within the institution, so that Sisi could further dominate the Egyptian army and control all its decisions and courses in the coming period.

Second: Issues related to army officers:

After the attack of Al-Wahat Al-Bahriah on 20 October 2017, media reports said that the former Special Forces officer Hisham Ashmawi, and officer Imad Abdul Hamid are the ones who led armed groups in the Western Desert. Military intelligence arrested three officers and interrogated them on charges of embracing jihadist ideas and communicating with jihadists to carry out operations against the police and army forces.

In addition to the officers who want to change the internal situation of the Egyptian army, Colonel Dr. Eng. Ahmed Qonsoah announced his candidacy for the presidency against Sisi to change the political life in Egypt through elections. He said that he was doing what Sisi did four years ago by running for the presidential elections in 2014. But the Egyptian regime arrested Colonel Ahmed Qonsoah and he was sent to the Military

Prosecution where he faced charges of conducting practices that could harm the military institution in Egypt.

This means that there are segments of different ages within the security and military institutions, like Hisham Ashmawi, who are close to forty years old, who refuse how the Egyptian regime is currently handling the situation. Those people have different opinions, and they are working to change the current situation, whether through elections, or through any other means seen appropriate from their point of view.

Third: Sisi and the General Intelligence:

During 2017, Sisi issued his eighth decision after the military coup on July 03, 2013, dismissing some General Intelligence agents. On 26 January 2017, Sisi issued a presidential decree to refer 19 General Intelligence agents to pension.

One of those agents was the one responsible of the file of Palestine, Wael Mohammed Abdul Ghani Al-Safti. Mekameleen Satellite Channel broadcasted, in September 2016, a leaked audio recording between Al-Safti and the former leader of the Fatah Movement and the Palestinian Authority Mohammed Dahlan. The recording showed the true Egyptian position of the Palestinian Authority and its President, Mahmoud Abbas. It showed also how the Egyptian intelligence treated the Palestinian Authority. Al-Safti described President Mahmoud Abbas as “incapable to understand, think or concentrate. His sole concern is to remain in power”.

Fourth: Egyptian-American Relations:

On August 22nd, 2017, the United States decided to withhold \$95.7 million dollars of US economic aid to Egypt and delay \$195 million dollars of US military aid. This was due to Egypt's failure to make progress on human rights and for non-compliance with democratic norms.

The New York Times reported that, “the relations between Cairo and Pyongyang, as well as human rights violations in Egypt, were behind the Trump Administration's decision to cease the US aid to Egypt and delay the military aid.” UN investigations said that they got evidence of undeclared trade relationships between North Korea and the Middle East and Africa in the fields of encrypted military communications, MANPADS and guided missiles.



In addition to the US decision to block \$95.7 million dollars in US economic aid to Egypt in addition to the postponement of military grants worth \$195 million dollars, the United States Senate Committee on Appropriations voted on Wednesday, 06 September 2017, in favor of reducing military aid to Egypt by \$300 million dollars, due to what the Monitor, a US website, described as "in light of the growing frustration of Congress from the depressing human rights record of Egypt under the leadership of Sisi".

A summary of the bill for fiscal year 2018 by Senator Patrick Leahy, a Democrat with the Senate subcommittee on foreign aid, said the senators also want to cut economic aid to Egypt by \$37 million dollars from current levels this year. Patrick Leahy, said to the Monitor website in an email following the vote, "There are growing concerns within Congress and the administration regarding the repressive policies of the Sisi government."

The Egyptian response came on 9 September 2017, when the Egyptian Defense Minister visited Seoul, the South Korean capital supported by the United States and the traditional rival of North Korea. Sedki Sobhi held a series of meetings with senior officials of the State and South Korean Armed Forces. South Korea's defense minister said that during the Egyptian Minister, Sedki Sobhi talks with his South Korean counterpart Song Yong Moo, Egypt said that it had already cut all military ties with North Korea. Sobhi said, according to the Korean Defense Ministry, "Egypt will actively cooperate with South Korea against North Korea's practices that threaten peace". This was followed by a US response on 22 September 2017, during Trump and Sisi's meeting in the United States. The US President Donald Trump confirmed that his country would discuss the issue of bringing back the military aid to Egypt again. Until now, US authorities have not released the blocked US military and economic aid to Egypt.

In the same context, the CIA presented a report in the book "World Facts" on the importance of Egyptian-American military relations. The title of the report is: "Egypt: Return to America after Trump's Presidency."

It is likely that the blocked US military aid to the Egyptian army will be released. This is confirmed by the US Defense Department spokesman Manning's statement on Monday, November 27, 2017. He said that the terrorist attack on Friday, 24 November 2017, that targeted a mosque in northern Sinai and killed more than 300 people including women and children, is "an example of the need for the United States to

continue its role in the Middle East”. He also said the United States should help its allies build their defense capabilities and support the police force “to ensure that [ISIS], al-Qaeda and other groups cannot plan and carry out attacks”. While the statement did not indicate how Washington could help build defense capabilities and support the police, this could spark a debate within the administration about the need to resume military aid to Egypt, which has been suspended.

Fifth: Foreign military interventions:

1- Egypt and Libya:

After targeting a bus carrying a group of Copts in Minya governorate in Upper Egypt by armed group on Friday, 26 May 2017, Sisi announced that his armed forces were shelling areas in the city of Derna, Libya, 1400 kilometers away from Minya. The Egyptian air force announced that it launched raids against what it called “terrorist camps in Libya” by Rafal aircrafts. The statement added that the raids destroyed the main headquarters of the Shura Council of Mujahideen Derna. The Egyptian Defense Ministry broadcasted pictures of warplanes departing from an airbase, saying that it targeted terrorist camps in Libya.

On the other hand, military sources in the Shura Council of Mujahideen in Derna, eastern Libya, said that the warplanes bombed the area Ftaih east of Derna. The spokesman of the Shura Council of Mujahideen in Derna, Mohammed Mansouri, denied that the bombing targeted the sites of the Council. He said that the bombing targeted civilian sites and caused damages to houses, cars and farms belonging to citizens. Some sources said that an Egyptian Special Forces unit was present at a camp near Derna, and security sources announced the presence of Special Forces of Egyptian paratroopers and intelligence units in the camps of Al-Qebah.

2. Egypt and Yemen:

Maj. Gen. Ahmed Asiri, adviser to the Saudi defense minister, spokesman for the Arab Coalition Forces for the Support of Legitimacy in Yemen and deputy head of Saudi intelligence, said that Egypt offered to participate in the coalition to support the legitimacy in Yemen at the beginning by sending a ground force of about 40 thousand soldiers. In his answer to a question about the size of the Egyptian forces participating in the coalition to support legitimacy in Yemen, Asiri said that “the Egyptian army is



involved in the maritime effort and in the air effort (currently). What I have mentioned was initial conversation that took place in the past (at the beginning of operations) where there was a suggestion to send 30 – 40 thousand soldiers as ground forces”. After the statements made by Asiri, a wide controversy has been raised. Asiri said, “What we have talked about was in the light of what was previously presented by Egypt during the proposal to form a joint Arab force, which was discussed at the League of Arab States. It came out of the keenness of Egypt that the security of the Arab nation is indivisible and has nothing to do with the issue of participation in the war of Yemen”. He added: "There are soldiers of the Egyptian armed forces performing security operations in the southern Red Sea and Bab al-Mandeb, which are areas of strategic importance to the national security of Egypt, Arab and the region."

3 - Egypt and Syria:

Reports talked about the presence of a number of Egyptian military pilots at Hama airbase to provide support to the forces of the Syrian regime. Other reports mentioned the participation of many Egyptian military experts on the fronts in Syria. They said that there were many types of Egyptian support in Syria such as providing military expertise, providing ammunition that matches the kind of armory that Assad regime has, and that there is an armed brigade of the Egyptian army inside Syrian territory under the name "Al-Murabitin Brigade" that includes Egyptian officers and soldiers working for the Bashar al-Assad regime. In the same context, the Egyptian intelligence chief, Khaled Fawzi, visited Damascus at the end of September 2017, during which he met with Ali Mamlouk, head of the Syrian National Security Bureau, according to the French intelligence journal “Intelligence Online”.

4-Egypt and Sudan:

On February 22, 2017, during the visit of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir to the UAE, he accused the Egyptian government of supporting the government of South Sudan with weapons and ammunition. He said that his administration has information that Cairo supports the government of South Sudan, noting that the Egyptian government is not fighting in southern Sudan, but rather provide it with weapon. Bashir said that there are institutions in Egypt dealing with Sudan in a hostile way, and accused unnamed parties within these institutions of leading the wave.

5. Egypt and Iraq:

The Israeli website "Netziv Net" reported that Egypt trained four Iraqi units for the war against terrorism in light of what it described as “strengthening of relations between Egypt and the Iranian axis in the region”. The website added "after Egypt agreed to send peace forces to Syria as a response to Iran's request, and after Iraq's decision to replace Saudi Arabia as a cheap energy supplier to Egypt, military cooperation has become a natural step for the continued consolidation of relations between Egypt and the Iranian-Iraqi axis”.

6. Egypt and Ethiopia:

On Tuesday, 28 February 2017, the Turkish news agency, Anatolia, reported that the Ethiopian forces responded to an armed attack targeting Al Nahda Dam. The agency said that informed political sources in the Ethiopian government revealed that the Ethiopian armed forces responsible for the protection of Al-Nahda Dam reacted to an attack by an armed group affiliated to the Ethiopian opposition. According to the sources, the Ethiopian forces managed to capture eight members of the attacking group, killed another number (did not specify the exact number), and seized military equipment and weapons belonging to the group. The agency pointed out that the preliminary investigations indicated that the armed group followed the banned and opposed movement "Cannabut Sabat" (May 7 Movement). Ethiopia accuses Eritrea of harboring this group, which Asmara has always denied. In a related context, the newspaper "Sudan Today" revealed that the Egyptian General Intelligence had lengthy meetings with representatives of the Sudanese opposition, especially armed groups located in Egypt and abroad. The newspaper reported that representatives of the Egyptian intelligence held lengthy meetings with representatives of the Justice and Equality (Ibrahim Jibril Group), and representatives of the new Justice and Equality Movement led by Mansour Arbab. Recently, the Egyptian intelligence official responsible for the Sudan file met separately and several times with the President of the Office of Justice and Equality, Mohammed Hussein Sharaf. He also met Mansour Arbab and Hazaiifa Mohie Eddin. The newspaper said that meetings took place last February in the Egyptian capital Cairo. Several meetings were held also in Paris during the same month between the representatives of the Egyptian intelligence and the head of the Justice and Equality Office – Ibrahim Jibril Group.

It is expected that the coming days will witness further tension in the Egyptian-Ethiopian relations. The tension will also affect Egyptian-Sudanese relations due to the announcement of the failure of the Egyptian-Ethiopian negotiations regarding the Al-Nahda Dam file.

7. Egypt and NATO:

A diplomatic representation of Egypt was accredited to NATO for the first time in the history of Egypt. Abdel Fattah al-Sisi issued a decree No. 116 of 2017 establishing a mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the decision was published in the formal newspaper on March, 17th 2017. The Secretary-General of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg, welcomed the decision of Egypt to appoint an ambassador to the alliance and cooperation between NATO and Cairo, pointing out that the decision will enhance the form and type of joint cooperation between NATO and Cairo and increases the volume of joint exercises between the two parties.

Possible contingencies regarding external interventions of the Egyptian army:

* We are likely to see in the coming days more foreign movements of the Egyptian army, specifically in Libya, after the recent operation in Al-Wahat Al-Bahriah, and the Egyptian regime confirmation that the group that carried out the operation trained and planned its operation in the city of Dernah, Libya. This was expressed during the “intelligence-guided” TV interview between Emad Eddin Adib and Abdel Rahim Al-Mesmari, one of the survivors of the incident of Al-Wahat Al-Bahriah. Another indication regarding possible Egyptian-Russian attacks on sites within the Libyan state was the Egyptian-Russian agreement, which allows each country to use military installations and bases in the other country for a period of 5 years. Based on what the Voice of America reported, the Russian armed forces used Egyptian installations to conduct raids inside Libya in recent months. US officials said last March that Russia deployed forces in Egypt, especially near the Libyan borders.

* In light of good Russian-Egyptian relationships, the Egyptian regime will work to strengthen Bashar al-Assad's forces more with all kinds of logistical and human support. Perhaps one of the most important goals of the military regime in Egypt is to



maintain the Syrian regime's survival, and to stop any process of change looming on the horizon. In this regard, the survival of the Assad regime is important to the Egyptian regime to order to stop Turkey, the first supporter of the Egyptian opposition.

* After announcing that the Egyptian negotiations with Ethiopia and Sudan on the file of the Al-Nahda Dam has failed, some believed that the Egyptian regime is working very hard to provide the Ethiopian opposition with all kinds of support to create a state of tension within the Ethiopian state. Some believed that the Egyptian regime is likely to execute a "limited" air strike in accordance with Israel against the Al-Nahda Dam, from the Egyptian military base located in Eritrea. The aim of this airstrike is to force Ethiopia to return to the negotiating table, and for Sisi to restore his popularity in front of the Egyptians, whom lost their confidence in him over the past year.

* Sisi is likely to support the state of South Sudan to destabilize the security of the state of Sudan, which Sisi sees as a threat to the national security of Egypt. It is also because of Sudan's role, from the point of view of the Sisi regime, in the file of Al-Nahda Dam and its stand alongside Ethiopia. Furthermore, it is due to the relationship of Sudan with the Muslim Brotherhood, Sudan's relations with Qatar, and the Sudanese-Turkish strategic relations in all fields. The latest developments in this regard took place on 12 May 2017, where the Sudanese Defense Minister Lt. General Awad Mohammed Ahmed bin Auf signed a number of military cooperation agreements with his Turkish counterpart, Fikri Ishik, in Istanbul during the participation of the Sudanese Minister of Defense in the International Exhibition for Industries. Therefore, some see that Sisi considers that Sudan is the third country, beside Qatar and Turkey, which is not in line with the policy of the Saudi-Emirati-Egyptian axis allowing it to avoid attempts for the replacement of the ruling regime in Sudan by those countries. Some believed that what Sisi is doing towards Sudan is a plan prepared in advance between both Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Egypt to get rid of al-Bashir, and the Egyptian escalation and its support to the rebels in Darfur and South Sudan with weapons is its way to achieve that goal.

* Sisi will train and arm the Iraqi army because he wants to find an alternative oil supply to Saudi Arabia. Therefore, he will receive enough supply of Iraqi oil for Egypt, in case the possibility that Saudi Arabia halts pumping oil to Egypt if the relationship between Egypt and Saudi faces tension again, as what has happened last year.

Sixth: Military Bases:

1. The Democratic Union of the Red Sea (the Eritrean opposition) recently revealed that the Eritrean government gave Egypt the green light to build a military base inside its territory. Opposition officials said Asmara allowed Cairo to obtain a military base in the town of Nora on the island of Dahlk indefinitely. They added that the agreement came during a visit by an Egyptian security and military delegation to Eritrea in early April 2017 and those 20 to 30 thousand Egyptian troops will be deployed at that base.

2. Sisi opened on Saturday, 22 July 2017, what was described as the largest military base in the Middle East and Africa named "Mohammed Najib", in Al-Hamam military city west of Alexandria. He opened the "Barani" base in the western region, hundreds of kilometers away from the Egyptian-Libyan border. Sisi was keen to invite a number of Arab leaders for the opening ceremony, including Mohammed bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces; Khalid Al Faisal, Advisor to the King and the Saudi Prince of Mecca; Salman bin Hamad bin Isa Khalifa, Crown Prince of Bahrain; Mohammed Al-Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah Minister of Defense, on the behalf of the Amir of Kuwait; and the Lt. General Khalifa Haftar commander of the so-called Libyan National Army. The most significant transformation was highlighted at the opening of the Sisi base of Mohammed Najib is the emergence of the brigade "the Ninth Bridge". This brigade was previously stationed in Dahshur, where it was assisting the third army in the eastern region of Sinai in Al-Hamam. This means that the scope of the Egyptian army moved from the south of the canal into the West along the border with Libya.

Seventh: Military exercises:

The Egyptian army conducted 17 joint military training exercises throughout 2017. The most prominent training exercises of the Egyptian army throughout 2017 were the following:

- 1- The Egyptian-American joint military training, the Bright Star, was resumed in September 2017, after an eight-year suspension. The training took place at the Mohammed Najib Military Base in the northern Egyptian military zone.
2. For the second year in a row, the exercises of the Egyptian-Russian friendship were conducted, although it is not on the annual training planned for the Egyptian army. The training came after the cessation of American military aid to the Egyptian army.

3 - For the first time, military exercises were conducted involving the Egyptian army and the Israeli army side by side. The exercises came in the memory of the 44th October War.

4. The Turkish Foreign Ministry objected to the joint military cooperation between Egypt and Greece on the Greek island of Rhodes, east of the Aegean Sea off the north and north-eastern shores of the island of Crete. The Turkish Foreign Ministry said in a statement that the joint military exercises between Egypt and Greece on the Greek island of Rhodes is a clear violation of international law. The Turkish Foreign Ministry said it had received from military sources that Egypt and Greece conducted joint amphibious exercises on the island of Rhodes, from 30 October to 4 November. "The Paris Peace Treaty of 1947 stated that all types of military exercises in Rhodes should be prohibited. Rhodes was given by Italy to Greece on the condition that the island would be disarmed," the statement added.

According to the Turkish news agency, the statement said, "We stress on our expectations on our neighbor Greece to cease any hostile activities and violation of international law. We call on third parties (Egypt) not to participate in such violations with Greece." In the same context, Greek news websites reported that Turkey had spied on the plans of the Egyptian-Greek joint operation "Medusa 5" by trying to intercept communications and analyze signals used in communication between Egyptian and Greek ships participating in the training currently underway in the Aegean Sea.

According to the Greek media, Turkey sent two CN235s to collect information on the training plans. Both planes flew close to the training area on 31 October and 1 November 2017. A Turkish helicopter and CN235 flew in the same area entering the Greek airspace 5 times and recording 3 breaches of aviation laws. In the same context, the Greek Defense Minister, Panos Camions, and the Commander of the Greek Naval Forces, Nicolaus Tsunis, visited the Egyptian helicopter carrier, Anwar Sadat, Mistral. They were received by Egyptian naval commander Ahmed Khalid, and they witnessed the main stage of the Egyptian-Greek Air-Navy Joint Exercise "Medusa 5".

Eighth: Military Ports and Airports:

In 2017, the Egyptian armed forces, represented by the Engineering Authority, developed and upgraded the capacity of 10 civil and military-civilian airports as follows:

- * Matrouh International Airport, serving as a joint military-civilian airport (Matrouh Air Base).
- * Barah al-Arab International Airport, a joint civilian-military airport.
- * West Cairo Airport (Sphinx International Airport). The airport is located 45 km away from the Cairo-Alexandria Desert Road, towards Alexandria. The airport gate is located through the gate of West Cairo Military Airport. It was built on part of the land of the Gharb Air Base.
- * Cairo International Airport, which is being developed and upgraded. It has also a military part (Sharq Air Base).
- * Airport of Katameya, which is basically a military airport (the air base of Katameya or the air base of Wadi Jandali). It was built on part of the air base land to become an international airport dedicated to serve the new administrative capital.
- * Malis Airport (Bardawil International Airport), originally a military airport (also called Bir Jafja airport). The airport is currently being developed to become a joint military-civilian airport, serving Central and North Sinai, as well as the development hub in the Suez Canal area, "Bardawil airport".
- * El Arish International Airport, a joint civilian-military airport. An airport that received US strategic airlift planes to assist Israel with weapons and ammunition during the October 1973 war.
- * Dakhla Airport, a small civilian airport, also used in military operations, was originally serving the archaeological areas of the Dakhla Oasis, and is being developed and upgraded currently.
- * Sharq Al Owainat Airport, a small civil airport originally intended for export of agricultural crops and the reception of various equipment necessary for the development of the East Awainat area. The airport is being upgraded and developed to become a joint civilian-military airport.
- * Bernese Airport, originally an air base, but was developed to convert it into a joint military-civil airport for military use, as well as serving tourism in existing villages and tourism projects planned from the south of Marsa Alam city to Hala'ib and Shalateen.



In addition, to help exploiting the wealth of Hala'ib, Shalateen, and Abu Ramad. The Ras Banas Marine Base is also being constructed in Bernese.

The Egyptian Navy is currently constructing 3 new naval bases in three strategic locations on the Mediterranean and Red Sea, as follows:

- * Ras Banas marine base in Bernese on the Red Sea in southeastern Egypt.
- * Port Said East Port, which oversees the northern entrance of the Suez Canal on the Mediterranean Sea. The base will provide, in cooperation with Port Said Base, the protection and insurance required for the economic zone and Port Said port and city, as well as navigation in the northern part of the Suez Canal and the northern coasts of the Sinai Peninsula Egyptian to the port of El Arish.
- * The Jarjoub naval base in El Nigila, west of Matrouh. It will be responsible for securing the western part of Egypt's northern coast on the Mediterranean Sea and securing the planned economic zone in western Egypt, including the commercial port of Jerjoub, the industrial and logistic center, the economic and tourist center.
- * The current naval bases are: Alexandria (Ras El Teen, Abu Qir), Port Said, Suez, Safaga, Matrouh (Lanshat Base), base in the Damietta port, base in the Hurghada port, and a base in Sharm Al-Shiekh.

The development and upgrading of military airports came at a time where the Sinai provinces in the east of Egypt and Western Sahara in the west are witnessing frequent clashes between the Egyptian security forces and armed groups present in those areas. The leadership of the Western Region sent a message to the General Command of the Egyptian armed forces saying the future clashes should include the Air Force because the smugglers and insurgents in the Western Sahara and in the areas adjacent to the Libyan-Egyptian border set explosives in their areas, therefore, it is difficult to confront them with armored vehicles and infantry. This indicates that in the coming period, confrontations in Western Sahara and Sinai will focus on the air force, enabling infantry forces to resolve the clashes on the ground.

The Air Force alone will not be able to resolve battles, but it would be one among other factors that must be available to win the battles. In other words, the Air Force, whatever its accuracy in carrying out the missions, must be accompanied with forces on the ground. However, it seems that the Egyptian infantry forces are suffering greatly in their clashes with the militants inside the Egyptian state, which, as we have



seen, contain a number of people who were serving in the Egyptian army and police before.

It is likely that the coming period will witness Egyptian and Russian planes bombing the areas inside Libya, as they did for months bombing the city of Derna. This could explain the recent agreement between Egypt and Russia using military bases in both countries for five years.

Ninth: Aviation Accidents:

1- On August 12, 2017, a warplane crashed over an agricultural area in Sinbillawin, Dakahlia governorate, and its pilot, Mohammed Adel Shibl, was killed.

2 - Libyan activists revealed through social media that who they have described as "smugglers" shot down an Egyptian F16 fighter plane near the border with Libya, killing its pilot Abdullah al -Atai Rifai. The activist "Khalifa Hariri" said, "an Egyptian F16 aircraft has been shot down near the border with Libya and its pilot, Abdullah al-Atai Rifai, was killed ... The plane was shot down by smugglers using a SAM 7 missile". SAM 7 is a short-range surface-to-air missile defense system that works on thermal guidance of the missile. Activist Ahmed Maulana published a confirmation to the news to the "Nores Center". He said that the name of the pilot is "Abdullah Rifai."

Tenth: Forces and units:

During the year 2017, new forces were formed under the name of "Counterterrorism Unit 888". It is an elite, highly armed, equipped and trained unit that contains the best members of the Special Forces units in addition to special weapons such as attack helicopters. The unit carries out counterterrorism missions, such as raids against the leadership and the headquarters of terrorists to eliminate and purge them. The unit does not engage in confrontations or long battles like the Rapid Intervention Forces, which, in turn, are equivalent to a small army in size and has a broader mandate.