



The Military-Industrial Complex is Being Exported to Egypt

By Malou Innocent February 28, 2013

It's almost impossible to escape the Washington establishment's hysteria over sequestration—the \$85 billion in across-the-board spending cuts, a less than 2.3 percent reduction of the \$3.64 trillion federal budget. Despite all the overwrought rhetoric about what the sequester will mean for military spending—described as "devastating," a "doomsday scenario," and even a "hollowing out of the force"—few Americans know where their hard-earned tax dollars are going, and whether or not such spending is absolutely necessary. Among the many spendthrift federal programs is the American taxpayers' multidecade subsidy to Egypt's military.

Excluding economic and development assistance, since 1987, Washington has given Cairo \$1.3 billion a year in military aid, much of it in grants and loans through Foreign Military Financing. Under Foreign Military Financing, U.S. arms manufacturers contract with the Defense Department to provide Egypt with military weapons systems and services, upgrades, and follow-on maintenance. According to the Congressional Research Service, although figures are hard to verify, it is estimated that U.S. military aid covers as much as 80 percent of the Egyptian Defense Ministry's weapons procurement costs.

That ample assistance has enabled Egypt to become the fourth-largest operator of F-16s, and to acquire some 4,000 battle tanks. In fact, U.S. taxpayers help facilitate the coproduction of the M1A1 Abrams Battle Tank—and now the new M1A2 tank—of which some parts are made in Egypt, and some are produced in America, which are then shipped to Egypt for final assembly. Under the terms of the program, the main contractor is General Dynamics in Sterling Heights, Mich..

A week before President Hosni Mubarak's resignation, Sue Sturgis, of the Institute for Southern Studies, compiled an exhaustive list of defense companies and consulting firms with deals related to Egypt, they include:

Lockheed Martin in Texas and Florida

US Motor Works in California and Texas

DRS C3 and Aviation (a subsidiary of the Italian company Finmeccanica) in Pennsylvania

L-3 Communication Ocean Systems in California and Texas

Boeing in Arizona and Missouri

Raytheon in Arizona and Massachusetts

Goodrich Corporation in Massachusetts

Columbia Group in Washington, D.C.

Michelin Aircraft Tire in South Carolina

Wyle Laboratories, Camber Corporation, and Summa Technology in Alabama

WRSystems Ltd., TASC, Deloitte Consulting, and AgustaWestland in Virginia

Clayton International in Georgia

Over the last four years, leaders in Washington have doled out hundreds of millions of dollars in military equipment in just those aforementioned states alone, on everything from stinger missiles and vehicle spare parts to reconnaissance systems for F-16s and sensors for Apache helicopters.

Here, senior U.S. officials would interject to claim that aid sustains their influence with counterparts in Cairo. Perhaps, but what U.S. officials fail to explain persuasively is to what extent America's interests can still be advanced in the absence of our abundant generosity. For instance, Egypt's devastating defeats at the hands of Israel is what primarily dissuades its military from launching another fruitless war, not aid. Moreover, and oddly enough, the Egyptian military cannot even fully utilize much of the state-of-the-art U.S. equipment it's gifted because it has too few troops trained to use them.

Unfortunately, many in Congress are reluctant to upset districts that depend on the private-public nexus of the military-industrial complex. The few leaders brave enough to upset the status quo should challenge the Obama administration, specifically on the foreign operations appropriations bill.

Among its other stipulations, section 7041 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2012 (P.L. 112-74) specifies that no military funds be provided to Egypt until the administration certifies that Cairo is supporting the transition to civilian governing, that includes holding free and fair elections; implementing

policies to protect freedom of expression, association, and religion; and due process of law. The Obama administration waived those conditions in the face of Morsi's arbitrary and antidemocratic actions.

Mubarak's atrocious human rights record should have prevented U.S. taxpayer subsidies from going to Egypt decades ago. Today, in a time of domestic budgetary constraints, and with many Americans in favor of cutting foreign aid-charity, ending such generous handouts should be common sense.