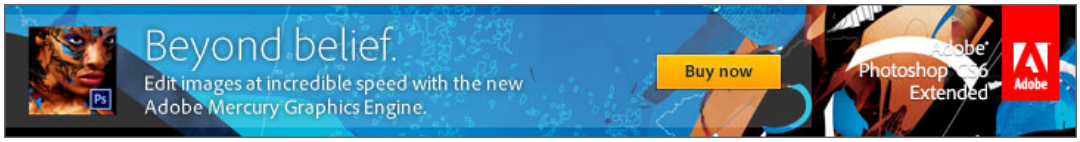
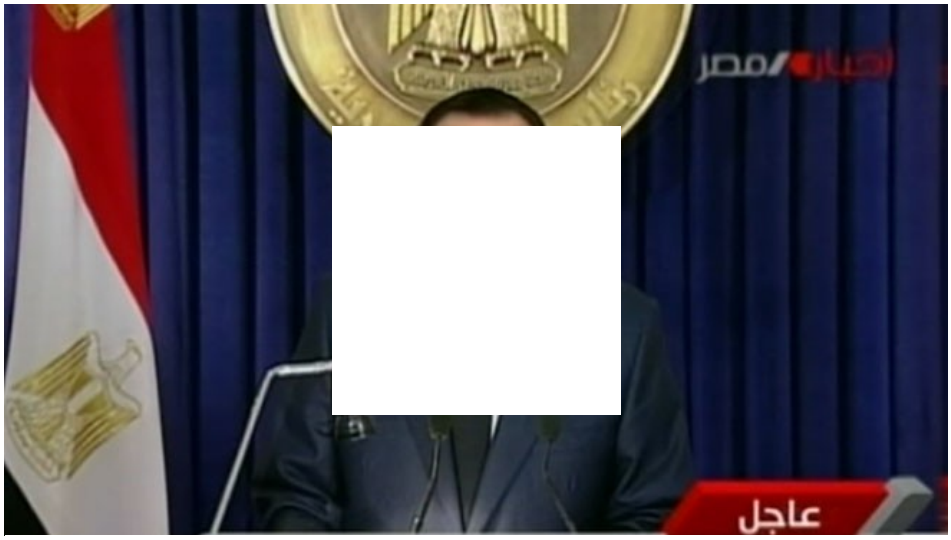


New Egyptian VP Ran Mubarak's Security Team, Oversaw Torture



(ABCNEWS.com)

By MATTHEW COLE and SARAH O. WALI
Feb. 1, 2011

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The intelligence chief tapped by Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak as his vice president and potential successor aided the U.S. with its rendition program, intelligence experts told ABC News, and oversaw the torture of an Al Qaeda suspect whose information helped justify the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

In the midst of Egypt's protests, Omar Suleiman went on television Monday to say that President Mubarak had ordered him to launch reforms and begin talking to opposition parties. But for the U.S., the CIA, Israel, and Egypt's Islamist opposition, 74-year-old Suleiman, who has been the head of Egyptian intelligence since 1993, represents a continuation of the policies of the old regime.

"Mubarak and Suleiman are the same person," said Emile Nakhleh, a former top Middle East analyst for the CIA. "They are not two different people in terms of ideology and reform."

Ron Suskind, author of the book The One Percent Doctrine, called

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Suleiman the "hit man" for the Mubarak regime. He told ABC News that when the CIA asked Suleiman for a DNA sample from a relative of Al Qaeda leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri, Suleiman offered the man's whole arm instead.

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"He's a charitable man, friendly," said Suskind. "He tortures only people that he doesn't know."

Suskind said Suleiman "was our point man in Egypt for many years. Everything went through Omar. We never had to talk to anyone else. When we wanted someone to be tortured, we'd send him to Egypt to have them tortured. We wanted to get intelligence and we didn't need it to be stuff that could be doublechecked."

"As chief of the Mukhabarat, or General Intelligence Directorate," said John Sifton, who authored the 2007 Human Rights Watch report on torture conducted by Egypt's other intelligence agency, SSI, Suleiman oversaw joint intelligence operations with the CIA and other Arab countries "which featured illegal renditions and tortures of dozens of detainees."

As revealed in U.S. cables released by WikiLeaks, Suleiman has cooperated closely with the U.S. and with Israel in trying to undercut Hamas, the Islamist party in the Palestinian territories. The Mubarak regime views Hamas, which has its roots in Egypt's own Islamist opposition, the Muslim Brotherhood, as a threat.

"Our intelligence collaboration with Omar Soliman," says a 2006 U.S. State Department memo, using an alternate spelling of his name, "is now probably the most successful element of the [U.S.-Egypt] relationship." During a 2009 meeting with U.S. military officials, Suleiman said his "overarching regional goal was combating radicalism, especially in Gaza, Iran and Sudan," according to another WikiLeaks cable.

Other U.S. cables describe paranoia within the Mubarak regime, call it a dictatorship, say "torture and police brutality are widespread" -- and that six years ago, Suleiman was already seen as likely to become vice president.

False Confessions Through Torture

According to British journalist Stephen Grey, author of "Ghost Plane," a book about the CIA's rendition program, Suleiman agreed in 1995 to let the U.S. secretly transfer suspects to Egypt for questioning. Under "extraordinary rendition," terror suspects can be taken to third countries and interrogated without oversight by the U.S. criminal justice system.

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kstone111111
4:51 PM EST
Feb 06, 2011

It's no secret that Suleiman is a nasty torturer who loves overseeing the dirty work of his regime. The question is: why is the Obama admin so willing to endorse or even negotiate with him? Yuck!!Not that is is US's role to negotiate Egypt's future, but it seems to be in that role whether anyone likes it or not.

moliere2012
6:46 PM EST
Feb 02, 2011

America: this is what your tax dollars are paying for. Extraordinary rendition of not only Egyptian nationals, but citizens of many other nations, including Americans as well.

sanfranciscoahoy
4:47 PM EST
Feb 02, 2011

Everyone has made mistakes in the past while believing they were doing the right thing. It is time to move on and forgive. That is the only path to positive spiritual growth for the Egyptian people.

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