Omar Suleiman

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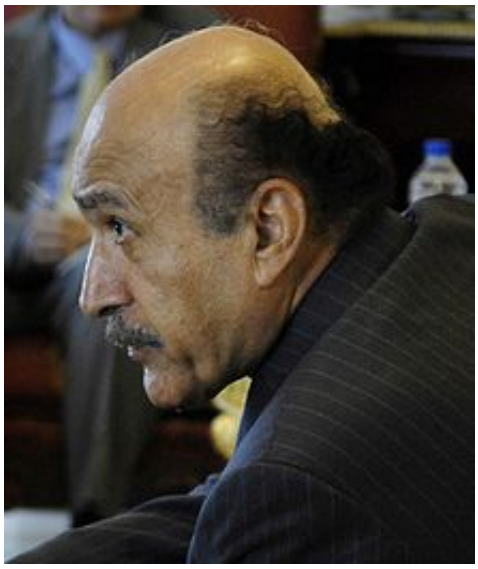
Omar Suleiman (Arabic: عمر سليمان, Egyptian Arabic pronunciation: ['ʕomɑrˀ seleˈmæːn]; 2 July 1936 – 19 July 2012) was an Egyptian army general, politician, diplomat, and intelligence officer. A leading figure in Egypt's intelligence system beginning in 1986, Suleiman was appointed to the long-vacant Vice Presidency by President Hosni Mubarak on 29 January 2011.[6][7] On 11 February 2011, Suleiman announced Mubarak's resignation and ceased being Vice President;[1] governing power was transferred to the Armed Forces Supreme Council,[8] of which Suleiman was not a member.[9] A new head of intelligence services was appointed by the ruling Supreme Council. Suleiman withdrew from the political scene and did not appear in public after announcing Mubarak's resignation.[10]

Millions of Egyptian citizens[11] involved in the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 opposed Suleiman or Mubarak remaining in power without elections taking place.[12][13] Human rights groups tied Suleiman's career to a regime marked by widespread human rights abuses,[14][15][16] and asserted that many Egyptians "see Suleiman as Mubarak II."[14] Torture victims and human rights groups charged that Suleiman oversaw the systematic use of torture on detainees and that in at least one instance he personally tortured a detainee during his career in intelligence.[17][18][19] In response to the 2011 protests, Suleiman blamed foreign influence and appealed to protestors to go home.[20]

On 19 July 2012, it was announced that Suleiman had died at Cleveland Clinic at the age of 76.[21]

Omar Suleiman
عمر سليمان



16th Vice President of Egypt

In office

29 January 2011 – 11 February 2011[1]

President	Hosni Mubarak
Preceded by	Hosni Mubarak*
Succeeded by	Sami Hafez Anan (Deputy Chairman)

Director of the General Intelligence Directorate

In office

22 January 1993 – 31 January 2011

President	Hosni Mubarak
Preceded by	Nour El Dien Afeefy
Succeeded by	Murad Muwafi

Personal details

Born	2 July 1936 Qena, Egypt
Died	19 July 2012 (aged 76)[2] Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.[3]
Political party	Independent
Alma mater	Egyptian Military Academy Frunze Military Academy

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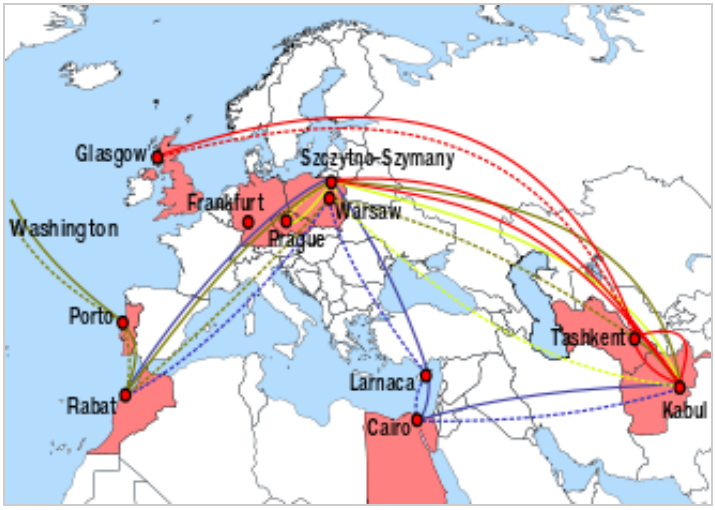
	Ain Shams University Cairo University
Religion	Islam
Military service	
Allegiance	Egypt
Service/branch	Army
Years of service	1954–1993
Rank	Major General
Battles/wars	North Yemen Civil War[4] Six-Day War[5] October War[5]

*Office vacant from 14 October 1981 – 29 January 2011.

Early life and education

Suleiman was born in Qena in Upper Egypt. In 1954 at the age of 18, he moved to Cairo to enroll in Egypt's prestigious Military Academy. He received additional military training in the Soviet Union at Moscow's Frunze Military Academy. He participated in both the Six-Day and October wars.[5] In the mid-1980s, Suleiman earned additional degrees, including a bachelor's degree from Ain Shams University and a master's degree from Cairo University, both in political science. A fluent English speaker,[22] Suleiman was transferred to military intelligence, where he worked on Egypt-United States relations.

Intelligence career



Torture victims and human rights groups assert Suleiman oversaw the systematic use of torture on detainees and personally tortured a detainee in controversial CIA renditions.[17][18][19]

Suleiman became deputy head of military intelligence in 1986, and its director in 1991.[23] In 1993, he became the chief of the Egyptian General Intelligence Service (EGIS). In 1995, he is said to have insisted that President Mubarak ride in an armored car during a visit to Ethiopia. A would-be assassin fired on the vehicle, but Mubarak escaped without injury due to the added precautions.[24] His name only became known in later years, breaking the tradition of keeping the name of the Egyptian head of Intelligence a secret known only to senior government officials. It was released in the media around 2000.[*citation needed*]

In his role as Director of EGID, the British newspaper the Daily Telegraph called him "one of the world's most powerful spy chiefs". In 2009, Foreign Policy magazine ranked him as the Middle East's most powerful intelligence chief, ahead of Mossad chief at the time Meir Dagan.[23][25]

According to diplomatic cables leaked to Wikileaks, Suleiman pledged in 2007 to Yuval Diskin of the Israeli Security Agency (ISA) to "cleanse" Sinai of Palestinian arms smugglers.[26]

Commentary on disrupting Palestinian elections

Suleiman promised Israel in 2005 that he would prevent Hamas from gaining control over Gaza in the 2006 Palestinian elections, according to a US diplomatic cable. Amos Gilad, head of the Israeli Defense Ministry's Diplomatic-Security Bureau, and Suleiman discussed their common fear of Hamas winning the Palestinian elections set for January 2006. Suleiman asserted to Gilad that there "will be no elections in January. We will take care of it." Suleiman did not elaborate as to how Egypt would stop the Palestinian elections from taking place.[27] Suleiman was separately quoted as saying Gaza could "go hungry, but not starve."[28]

The U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv wrote that Suleiman feared Hamas rule in Gaza would bolster the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.[29] Gilad requested that the U.S. closely hold this information and said he did not know how the Egyptians could prevent the elections from taking place but that the "only people the Palestinians can trust now are the Egyptians."[30]

CIA "rendition" program

Suleiman was directly implicated in the controversial CIA "rendition" program.[22][31] Journalist Stephen Grey in his work, *Ghost Plane*, states that after taking over as intelligence director, Suleiman oversaw an agreement with the US in 1995 that allowed for suspected militants to be secretly transferred to Egypt for questioning.[32] Although Suleiman's Egyptian Intelligence was required to provide "assurances" that prisoners handed over through this program would not be subjected to torture, at least one CIA officer testified that such assurances from them were unofficially regarded as being as worthless as "a bucket of warm spit".[22]

Suleiman was accused of complicity in the torture of Al-Qaeda suspects in Egypt,[33] particularly the case of Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, who was captured and handed over to Suleiman. The information al-Libi gave under torture was cited by US officials in the run-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq as evidence of a connection between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda. Al-Libi later retracted his confession.[32]

Political career

Suleiman was seen as a very close and trusted ally of former President Hosni Mubarak, sharing many of his views on key issues such as Iran, Egypt–Israel relations and the United States, and treatment of the Muslim Brotherhood.[24] Although he was a military man who by law is not a member of Mubarak's National Democratic Party, he preferred suits to military uniforms and was seen as a major link between Egyptian political and military elites.[24] Due to his role in the regional political scene and the lack of an alternative candidate acceptable to Hosni Mubarak, some speculated that Suleiman would succeed Mubarak as President. In particular, he was seen as the choice of the Egyptian military establishment.[24] Suleiman denied any intent to run for election to the office.[34] On 29 January 2011, he was named Vice President of Egypt during the civil unrest,[35] ending a vacancy in the position that lasted almost 30 years. He was sworn in two days later.[36]

On 5 February 2011, a senior Egyptian security source denied reports of an assassination attempt on Omar

Suleiman, saying there was no truth to them at all. Fox News reported that an unnamed official in the Obama Administration asserted there was an assassination attempt on Suleiman "soon after Suleiman was appointed", and claimed that it took the form of an attack on Suleiman's motorcade.[37] Wolfgang Ischinger, host of the Munich Security Conference and originator of the incorrect allegations, later said he "was led to believe that we had a confirmed report but in fact we didn't" and also added that the information had come from an "unsubstantiated source."[38] Later on 24 February 2011, Foreign Minister Ahmed Abul-gheit confirmed that Suleiman had survived an assassination attempt on 4 February, when a group of unidentified men opened fire on Suleiman's car from a stolen ambulance in Cairo.[39]

According to an interview with the Egyptian ambassador to the United States on 10 February 2011, Omar Suleiman became the de facto President of Egypt after President Mubarak transferred his power to Suleiman.[40] The following day Suleiman announced Mubarak's resignation and governing power was transferred to the Armed Forces Supreme Council.[8] According to the Egypt State Information Service, Suleiman subsequently ceased holding the office of Vice President.[1]

On 6 April 2012 Suleiman announced that he will be running for president, after some demonstration. Suleiman accused the Muslim brotherhood of planning the assassination attempt on 5 February. Moreover, he accused them of some threats of "SLAIN if he run for the president" that he had received before running for it. Furthermore, the Brotherhood and some Islamists arranged a huge protest against Suleiman whose popularity had grown dramatically.

Public image and perception

Al Jazeera described Omar Suleiman as the unelected Vice President of Egypt, *éminence grise* to President Hosni Mubarak, and point man for Egypt's secret relations with Israel.[41] Jane Mayer of The New Yorker noted that Suleiman remained controversial because he "has headed the feared Egyptian general intelligence service" and also described his role in allowing controversial torture methods under US rendition programs which may have generated bad intelligence.[42]

In turn, Suleiman blamed journalists for the current uprising in Egypt. "I actually blame certain friendly nations who have television channels, they're not friendly at all, who have intensified the youth against the nation and the state," Suleiman said in a TV address. "They have filled in the minds of the youth with wrongdoings, with allegations and this is unacceptable. They should have never done that. They should have never sent this enemy spirit," he said.[43] The Committee to Protect Journalists replied that "it is stupefying that the government continues to send out thugs and plainclothes police to attack journalists and to ransack media bureaus".[44] State Department spokesman Philip J. Crowley said "we have traced it to elements close to the government, or the ruling party," and said "I don't know that we have a sense how far up the chain it went."[45]

Domestic

Bloomberg reported that Suleiman "lacks the support where he now needs it most: the streets of Cairo". “The Egyptians don’t want Mubarak and they don’t want Suleiman,” said Chayma Hassabo, a researcher on Arab political movements at Cedej, a Cairo-based research center.[46] Al Jazeera wrote Suleiman "does not have a high opinion of Islam in politics, and is not shy about telling Western audiences the lengths he will go to allow his security services to keep the Muslim Brotherhood and their offshoots at bay."[41]

The young guard in Egypt is opposed to Suleiman running the country without elections taking place. Students, union activists and opposition bloggers within Egypt all remain opposed to Suleiman.[47] Veteran Egyptian journalist Nadia abou el-Magd said it comes down to the protesters. "They that made revolution and they are in the position to impose their conditions," said el-Magd, who works for the newspaper Al-Ahram and The Associated Press. "They don't see that ... anybody else is in a position to impose their conditions on them."[48]

Millions of Egyptians called for the dissolution of the Mubarak regime and new elections

In response to the appointment of Omar Suleiman as the new Vice President of Egypt, Mohammed ElBaradei stated that it was a "hopeless, desperate attempt by Mubarak to stay in power, I think it is loud and clear...that Mubarak has to leave today".[49]

United States

Diplomatic cables released by Wikileaks suggested Suleiman enjoyed a strong relationship with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). “Our intelligence collaboration with Omar Suleiman is now probably the most successful element of the relationship” with Egypt, said a 2006 U.S. diplomatic cable that used an alternative transliteration of his name, which also described Suleiman as Mubarak’s *consigliere* on foreign policy.[46]

In an op-ed for AlJazeera, Lisa Hajjar opined that Egyptian-born Australian citizen Mamdouh Habib, "who was innocent of any ties to terror or militancy", was seized from a bus by Pakistani security forces and suspended from a hook and electrocuted repeatedly at American behest. "His fingers were broken and he was hung from metal hooks. At one point, his interrogator slapped him so hard that his blindfold was dislodged, revealing the identity of his tormentor: Suleiman," Haijar asserts. According to Haijar, Suleiman ordered a guard to murder a shackled prisoner in front of Habib, which he did with a vicious karate kick.[50] After an article of the ordeal appeared in the Washington Post, the American government announced they would not charge Habib and that they would release him to Australia.[51] Habib said he would sue the Egyptian government for his treatment.[52] Tom Malinowski of Human Rights Watch asserts "the Americans knew what was going to happen to people who were rendered to Egypt".[53]

On 12 April, Suleiman announced his intentions to run in the Presidential elections, because of the fact that he feared Islamist forces would turn Egypt into a religious state and isolate Egypt from the international community.

Middle East

Luis Moreno, a U.S. intelligence analyst, wrote that although he deferred to the Embassy in Cairo for Egyptian succession scenario analysis, "there is no question that Israel is most comfortable with the prospect of" Suleiman. David Hacham stated an Israeli delegation led by Defense Minister Ehud Barak was "shocked by Mubarak's aged appearance and slurred speech," when it met him in Egypt. "Hacham was full of praise for Soliman, however." Hacham added that he sometimes spoke to Suleiman's deputy several times a day via a "hotline."[54][55] Maha Azzam, a fellow at Chatham House, a London-based international affairs research institute, said “the Israelis are happy with Omar Suleiman, he has been pivotal in the peace process, he’s someone they know and someone they can deal with.”[46] Avigdor Lieberman, the Deputy

Prime Minister of Israel, expressed "his respect and appreciation for Egypt's leading role in the region and his personal respect for Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Minister Suleiman".[56]

Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates each repeatedly pressed the United States not to cut loose the Mubarak regime; for example, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed of Abu Dhabi, whom some believe to be the real strongman of the UAE, emphasized the need for "stability" in Egypt. The New York Times reported these countries "worry that a sudden, chaotic change in Egypt would destabilize the region or, in the Arab nations, even jeopardize their own leaders, many of whom are also autocrats facing restive populations."[57]

PressTV, an Iranian state-owned news outlet, reported that Egyptians "associate Omar Suleiman, now the Vice President who was sworn in today, with a new puppet of the US government – someone to maintain hegemony here in this region because, as I mentioned, without Egypt you have no control over the Palestinian territory, especially Gaza; and, of course, the Israeli connection is something to note."[58]

Non-governmental organizations

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch assert Suleiman's career moved in lockstep with a regime marked by widespread abuses. "Torture is an endemic problem in Egypt and ending police abuse has been a driving element behind the massive popular demonstrations that swept Egypt over the past week," Human Rights Watch said in a January report.[46]

Human Rights Watch further wrote that "Egyptians, particularly those of us calling for an end to Mubarak's three-decade rule, see Suleiman as Mubarak II, especially after the lengthy interview he gave to Egyptian state television on February 3, 2011 in which he accused the demonstrators in Tahrir Square of implementing foreign agendas. He did not even bother to veil his threats of retaliation against protesters."[14] The Committee to Protect Journalists and Freedom House also criticized the Mubarak regime for its violence against protesters and suppression of journalists.[59][60][61]

Death

On 19 July 2012, Suleiman died in a hospital in Cleveland, Ohio, while undergoing medical testing for an unknown problem.[62][63] The official Egyptian state news service, MENA, reported that Suleiman had been suffering from heart and lung issues for several months and that he had died of a heart attack.[64] Hussein Kamal, one of his assistants, said it was an unexpected event. "He was fine. It came suddenly while he was having medical tests in Cleveland."[62] Preparations got underway to send his body to Egypt for burial.[62] Suleiman was given a military funeral, with Field Marshall Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, head of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, attending.[65]

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Political offices		
Vacant Title last held by **Hosni Mubarak**	**Vice President of Egypt** 2011	Succeeded by **Sami Hafez Anan (Deputy Leader)**

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