

LOCAL HEAD OF INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE PREVENTED FROM LEAVING EGYPT

Remember when Egypt raided the offices of a bunch of US NGOs?

Egypt's Supreme Council of the Armed Forces raided 17 civil society and human rights groups yesterday, in some cases holding staffers at the NGO offices as the raid proceeded. The raid has the odd effect of pitting the Generals we've mentored and funded—to the tune of billions—against civil society experts we've also funded, through State Department funding streams.

The orchestrated move by Egypt's generals, apparently keen to play up to anti-US and nationalist feelings in the country, will be seen as highly provocative in Washington, which underwrites military aid to Egypt to the sum of \$1.3bn (£843m) annually.

"We are deeply concerned," a State Department official told the Guardian.

And I suspect this won't be the end of the demonizing of civil society NGOs. After all, these NGOs have been involved, for years, in training some of the activists who went on to lead the revolution. Even some of the activists (who may have been state operatives) have accused those with ties to these NGOs of "treason." The State Department

developed an explicit plan to foster reform in Egypt through these NGOs five years ago.

Well Egypt just prevented Secretary Ray LaHood's son, Sam, who is the head of IRI in Egypt, from getting on a plane to leave the country.

A person familiar with the case says Sam LaHood, who heads the International Republican Institute in Egypt, was recently kept from boarding a flight out of Egypt. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue.

This is our military aid at work, propping up authorities who detain a Cabinet Secretary's son.

That doesn't seem like a very good investment!