

FOR OBAMA ADMINISTRATION, HUMAN RIGHTS IN EGYPT LESS IMPORTANT THAN PAYMENTS TO ARMS MANUFACTURERS

Obscured somewhat by the latest revelations and speculations on the US soldier who killed 16 Afghan civilians on Sunday, today's New York Times carries an article on page A6 of the print edition informing us that the Obama administration is intending to re-start payment of military aid to Egypt:

The Obama administration plans to resume military aid to Egypt, American officials said on Thursday, signaling its willingness to remain deeply engaged with the generals now running the country despite concerns over abuses and a still-uncertain transition to democracy.

The Times explains that there is a pesky barrier in the way of re-starting military aid, as Congress has made military aid dependent on "protection of basic freedoms". The generals running Egypt since Mubarak stepped down clearly fall short of that standard, but the Obama administration of late has shown that it has no reservations about flouting the law. In this case, they are relying on Hilary Clinton to "authorize" the latest law-breaking:

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton is expected to waive the requirement on national security grounds as soon as early next week, according to administration and Congressional officials. That would allow some, but not yet all of \$1.3 billion in military

aid this year to move forward, said the officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity so that they could discuss internal deliberations.

But why would the US do this? Clearly, Congress intended to put pressure on Egypt's generals when it put into place the requirement that they would have to meet certain standards to continue receiving military aid. And, as the article points out, it likely was the threat of loss of funding that prompted the generals to release the US-based NGO representatives who were being held earlier this year.

We have to wait until the thirteenth paragraph of an article that is only eighteen paragraphs long to get to the real reason the Obama administration is using the waiver authority it forced into the law:

Within weeks Egypt risks missing payments on defense contracts, largely with American arms manufacturers, forcing Mrs. Clinton to decide the certification question now. "It's coming up sooner than some people wanted," one senior official said.

Heaven forbid we should interrupt the flow of cash to America's poor, cash-starved arms manufacturers who have been so harmed by over ten years of endless war. Is preventing interruption of cash flow for US arms manufacturers the "national security" basis for Clinton waiving assurance of basic rights for the Egyptian people? This move tells us all we need to know about the priorities of the Obama administration.