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## Mubarak's fall poses new challenge for U.S.

By Susan Webb

**T**he fall of President Hosni Mubarak, greeted with jubilation in Egypt and throughout the Middle East, came after a wave of strikes this week demonstrated the depth and breadth of the Egyptian uprising. The numbers were so large and the participants so wide-ranging - port workers, textile workers, postal workers, transport workers, farmers, the unemployed, journalists and more, from the Nile Delta to the Suez Canal, - that even the New York Times featured the story on its front page.

With developments in Egypt changing moment by moment, two things are clear: This is a revolution that will profoundly impact not only Egypt but the wider region as well. And it has forced the U.S. to a foreign policy crossroads, compelled to choose a path as the freight trains of history rush by at breakneck speed.

The Obama administration has shifted its response considerably since Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's ill-advised response on the first day of the uprising, Jan. 25, when she said that "the Egyptian government is stable."

During that first week, many complained that the White House was giving mixed messages, but by the end of that week, it said the United States would review the \$1.5 billion yearly aid it provides to Egypt (nearly all of it military



aid). Obama publicly expressed displeasure with Mubarak and said he had pressed the Egyptian ruler to make major reforms "to meet the aspirations of the Egyptian people." After Mubarak reshuffled his government and named intelligence chief Omar Suleiman as vice president, State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley tweeted that Mubarak "can't reshuffle the deck and then stand pat." On Feb. 1, when Mubarak said he would not run for re-election in September, Obama took on

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a sharper tone, telling the Egyptian ruler that "an orderly transition must be meaningful, it must be peaceful and it must begin now."

The White House has maintained that position since, but it took no further public steps, despite many calls for it do so.

**The U.S. will have to decide if it will continue to trumpet “stability” at the expense of the Egyptian people.**

There were growing calls for the U.S. to cut off military aid to Egypt as a way to exert pressure for change. Now, with Egypt’s military playing a leading role in the post-Mubarak period, such calls may subside. But they will undoubtedly rise again if real changes demanded by the Egyptian people don’t happen immediately.

The announcement of Mubarak’s departure said he was handing over power to the military. While rank and file soldiers come from the masses, the military elite has been characterized as an oligarchy. Suleiman’s role remains unclear. As head of Egyptian intelligence since 1993, Suleiman directed the regime’s apparatus of repression.

Mohamed ElBaradei, the diplomat who has emerged as a significant opposition leader, said Thursday it is the new forces, not the outgoing regime, who should be in charge of what happens next. “There is no credibility in either Mubarak or Suleiman or anybody who is associated with that regime,” he said in an interview with Foreign Policy magazine.

Egyptians are looking for substantive changes.

Immediate demands are for a transitional national unity government that includes the movements that organized this revolution, and an interim constitution that guarantees human rights and a democratic process for September’s presidential elections. The protesters in Cairo’s Tahrir Square are highly unlikely to accept a military dictatorship of any kind.

Commenting on the U.S. response, ElBaradei said, “Events have gone so fast, you know, nobody predicted. It’s like the 1979 Iranian Revolution in that things took everybody by surprise, including us even. And they had to adjust their policy every half hour.”

The U.S. will have to decide if it will continue to trumpet “stability” at the expense of the Egyptian people. Much to the surprise of the U.S. foreign policy establishment, the Egyptian people themselves have shown that this is no longer a viable policy.



**Susan Webb is co-editor of the *People’s World*.**

## Celebrating Reagan?

By PW Editorial Board

**W**e are now celebrating the anniversary of Ronald Reagan, who, if the corporate press is anything to go by, came down from heaven exactly 100 years ago to save us all. They are making such a fuss about Ronnie that there is even a proposal to add his handsome features to the rogues’ gallery on Mount Rushmore, in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

I well remember his famous trickle down theory of economics, whereby the wealth deriving from massive tax concessions to the super rich was supposed to trickle down to the rest of us below.

I did feel something trickling down on my head pretty soon after Reagan came to power, but when I checked, it turned out not to be wealth: It didn’t pass the smell test. The same is true of all the rest of Reagan’s policies, foreign and domestic: They stank. The tax cuts for the corporations and the rich were a strong factor in stimulating corporate globalization, while they undercut the

social safety net for working people and the poor in the United States. The busting of the union representing air traffic controllers brought a thrill to the hearts of anti-worker reactionaries everywhere. The paeans to Reagan we are hearing right now include giving him credit for ending the Cold War and defeating communism. What he did was to help unleash a new tsunami of ravenous, imperialistic capitalism on the entire world. We have not recovered yet.

And such nice friends he had, too! There was not a right-wing dictator or fascist that he did not consider to be “the moral equivalent of our founding fathers”, a term which he first applied to the Contras, a group of U.S.-financed cutthroats who were rampaging around in Nicaragua, murdering health workers and teachers, in an effort to overthrow the Sandinista government. His “defeat” of the USSR foisted people like Al Qaeda on the world. He stood up for “freedom”, but only the freedom to exploit and oppress.

**What he did was to help unleash a new tsunami of ravenous, imperialistic capitalism on the entire world.**

# U.S. Chamber planned dirty tricks, smears against unions

By John Wojcik

Investigators have found that the U.S. Chamber of Commerce paid a law firm to initiate a campaign of political sabotage against unions and other progressive groups that have opposed its policies.

ThinkProgress announced Feb. 10 that it had learned that Chamber lawyers hired private security companies to develop tactics for damaging progressive groups and labor unions, in particular Change to Win, SEIU, U.S. Chamber Watch, Stop The Chamber.com and ThinkProgress itself.

One of the campaigns developed by the security companies was an entrapment scheme.

The proposal called for first creating a false document to give to a progressive group opposing the Chamber, and then to subsequently expose the document as a fake to undermine the credibility of the Chamber's opponents.

In addition, the security groups proposed creating a "fake insider persona" at the Chamber to "generate communications" with Change to Win.

The firms hired by the Chamber lawyers had hoped to make \$2.2 million altogether, but the ThinkProgress investigation may have short-circuited the Chamber's ability to carry out the final plans.

Leaked emails show the Chamber's law firm, Hunton & Williams, met with the security companies to plan the sabotage in late 2010. A Jan. 13 email indicated that the security companies assumed the project was on, though another e-mail showed that the Chamber would not pay until after the work was completed.

ThinkProgress says, in view of the release of its investigation, it is not clear whether the Feb. 14 meeting was actually held.

The Chamber has said on its website, that the



allegations in the investigative report are "baseless attacks" because "the Chamber has never seen the document in question," but most observers see this as a carefully worded denial that actually does not deny the findings.

The Chamber can claim not to have "hired" private security companies for a sabotage campaign because, until as recently as Feb. 3, at least, the security firm was working without pay.

Even the saboteurs, it turns out, may have been "victimized" by the Chamber, having done a month of dirty work for free while the Chamber decided whether it wanted to officially hire them.

The Chamber also covered itself by using the law firm as a go-between, never actually meeting with the saboteurs directly.

ThinkProgress raised the Chamber's ire after publishing numerous articles last year about its efforts to coordinate a lobbying campaign on behalf of JPMorgan and its efforts to kill financial reform, as well as articles exposing the Chamber's solicitation of foreign corporate donations and its links with the notorious Koch brothers.

**One of the campaigns developed by the security companies was an entrapment scheme.**

## ‘Stop breaking the law,’ protest tells Chicago charter school

By John Bachtell

**T**eachers at the Chicago Mathematics and Science Academy, voted 67 percent in favor of joining the Chicago Alliance of Charter Teachers and Staff (Chicago ACTS) in June of last year. CMSA management fired Rhonda Hartwell, a leader of the organizing effort who was eight months pregnant, fifteen minutes before teachers announced they were forming a union. CMSA said her firing was for budgetary reasons but later announced a \$1.5 million profit.

The teachers saw joining the union as a means to gain a voice in school decisions. They have been shut out and the resulting frustrations contributed to a high turnover rate.

They have been in a battle for recognition ever since. Instead of investing resources in staff salaries, CMSA hired a notorious, expensive union busting firm, Seyfarth Shaw (partner Jim Powers has since left the law firm but took the CMSA account with him).

Charter schools are covered under Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board, but CMSA refused to accept this and took their case to the National Labor Relations Board.

But the NLRB ruled CMSA is indeed a public school receiving public funds and management must follow state law. CMSA has appealed the decision and in the meantime walked away from the bargaining table.

Chicago ACTS said every board member of CMSA would be pressed because they were personally responsible for the downward spiral the school finds itself in. They started with Sulejman Dizdarevic; a delegation delivered a letter to his office demanding management comply with state law.

## Amplia coalición de grupos exige aire limpio para todos

Por Sierra Club

**E**n una conferencia de prensa telefónica con los medios de comunicación, líderes de Médicos por la Responsabilidad Social, la NAACP, el Sierra Club y un economista de Yale resaltaron las amenazas de la contaminación contra la salud de todos y urgieron a que se establezcan sólidas salvaguardas por parte de la Agencia de Protección Medioambiental (EPA) para todas nuestras familias.

“Las corporaciones quieren continuar contaminando sin límites a costa de la salud de todos”, dijo Michael Brune, director ejecutivo del Sierra Club. “Hay razones por las cuales ‘protección’ es parte del nombre de esta agencia”.

Los líderes participantes discutieron sus serias preocupaciones por la salud del país y urgieron al establecimiento de las más estrictas salvaguardas de la EPA para proteger la salud pública.

“El propósito fundamental de la EPA es proteger la salud de todos”, dijo la Dra. Kristen Welker-Hood, directora de medioambiente y salud de Médicos por la Responsabilidad Social. “La contaminación del aire enferma a las personas y puede causarles la muerte. Puede matar tanto a los ancianos como a los niños. Debemos aunarnos para proteger a nuestras comunidades y asegurarnos de que pueden vivir libres de sufrimientos a causa de la contaminación”.

“No podemos permitirnos más que las corporaciones antepongan la

contaminación a nuestra salud”, dijo Jacqueline Patterson, directora del programa de justicia medioambiental y climática de la NAACP, resaltando los aspectos discriminatorios y de derechos civiles de la contaminación. Agregó que las comunidades de color y las de bajos ingresos están desproporcionadamente expuestas a los efectos nocivos de la contaminación. El 71% de las comunidades afro-americanas vive en áreas de gran peligro medioambiental, comparado con el 58% de la población blanca.

Además, el 66% de los hispanos vive peligrosamente cerca de un lugar tóxico.

Esta semana un nuevo informe develó que las mismas salvaguardas de la EPA que van a proteger el aire de nuestras comunidades tienen el potencial de crear más de 1.5 millones de nuevos empleos sólo en los próximos cinco años.

“Muchas de las propuestas de la EPA y su puesta en práctica tienen la relación costo-beneficio más favorable de todas las agencias federales”, dijo el Dr. Matthew Kotchen, catedrático de economía de Yale; y agregó que, “las compañías carboneras no tienen razón alguna para descontinuar sus emisiones tóxicas sin un sólido marco legal que les obligue”.

El Sierra Club ha defendido durante décadas progresar hacia una economía de energía limpia y paulatinamente dejar de lado los combustibles fósiles.

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