

Wikileaks: Sudanese launchpad for Egyptian attack on Ethiopian dam

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By Toby Collins

September 3, 2012 (LONDON) - Egyptian authorities fearful of a monopoly on Nile waters received agreement from Khartoum to build an airbase in Sudan, to launch attacks on Ethiopian damming facilities, [claims the anonymous media outlet; Wikileaks](#).

Wikileaks has leaked files allegedly from the Texas-based global intelligence company, [Stratfor](#), which quote an anonymous "high-level Egyptian source," claiming the Egyptian ambassador to Lebanon said in 2010 his nation would do anything to prevent the secession of South Sudan because of the political implications it will have for Egypt's access to the Nile.

The Nile is vital in providing fresh water to the people and agricultural projects of Egypt. Also in the Nile Basin and reliant on its waters are Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania and Burundi.

As Egypt is at the end of the river it is in a particularly politically precarious situation.

Ethiopia's massive hydroelectric damming projects have sent shockwaves throughout the region, highlighting the faults in previously-signed treaties on Nile water-sharing.

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam will be Africa's largest hydroelectric facility and will be built 40km upstream from Sudan on the Blue Nile River.

Ethiopia has denied Egypt's requests to inspect the dam, unless it relinquishes its colonial era veto on water allocation. Although, according the source, Ethiopia has agreed not to use the reservoir waters for irrigation, there are concerns about the extent of water loss due to evaporation from the dam's reservoir.

According to Wikileaks, a 2010 internal email records Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir's agreement to host an Egyptian airbase in Kursi in the west of Sudan's Darfur region. This base would be used to launch an Egyptian assault on the Ethiopian dam, if diplomatic efforts fail.

The anonymous source cites the "useful case-study" of Egypt's 1976 sabotage of another Ethiopia damming project.

However, the viability of joint Sudanese-Egyptian military operations have been brought into question in light of their fractious relationship.

According to Wikileaks, the Stratfor source claimed that "if it comes to a crisis, we will send a jet to bomb the dam and come back in one day, simple as that. Or we can send our special forces in to block/sabotage the dam."

Although they agree upon the Nile Basin Treaty, the contested Halayeb Triangle, in 2010, to Bashir accusing Egypt of occupying Sudanese territory.

The immediacy and extent of the Ethiopian threat to Egyptian freshwater access is questionable but its domestic political usefulness for the now ousted Mubarak regime is not.

The continued political application of the Ethiopian threat is, allegedly, now being exerted on the incumbent government by the Muslim Brotherhood.

On 26 August [Egypt denied allegations](#) that the new government is under pressure to persuade key regional investor, China, to not back such Nile development programmes.

The UN estimates that by 2050 the world's population will have increased by 3.5 billion, with the majority of the growth in developing countries where water stress is already in key issue, potentially making access to freshwater more incendiary than access to fossil fuels in the coming decades.

Although Egypt was a perennial economic underachiever during the Mubarak regime's years of mismanagement, it has the potential to be a regional powerhouse. This makes its need to secure future access to resources all the more important and potentially domineering.

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