



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on August 20, 2013

Has the Obama Administration Suspended Aid to Egypt?

Conflicting reports indicate that the Obama administration may have suspended military aid to Egypt.

Unnamed Obama administration officials and a United States Senator indicate that the United States has temporarily suspended most of its military aid to Egypt as turmoil continues to pervade the nation following the ousting of Islamist President Mohamed Morsi. The suspension is to include most of the \$1.3 billion in military aid as well as weapons and economic aid. But the administration is disputing the report.



Fox News [reports](#), "To date, officials have said that aid is merely under review, and that they would not make a determination on whether the ouster of ex-President Mohammed Morsi qualifies as a coup — because such a finding would, under U.S. law, require the administration to cut off aid."

But the administration is reportedly treating the overthrow as a coup, at least for the moment. One administration official explained to the [Daily Beast](#), "The decision was we're going to avoid saying it was a coup, but to stay on the safe side of the law, we are going to act as if the designation has been made for now. By not announcing the decision, it gives the administration the flexibility to reverse it."

Likewise, Senator Patrick Leahy's (D-Vt.) office confirmed that claim. In a statement to Fox News radio, the office said that Leahy's subcommittee "was told that the transfer of military aid was stopped, that this is current practice, not necessarily official policy, and there is no indication of how long it will last."

Still, the White House continues to deny these statements. "No decisions have been made to cut or postpone aid other than what we have already announced," a White House official told Fox News.

Similarly, Pentagon spokesman George Little said "no changes have been decided." "I am unaware of any de facto suspension of assistance," Little added. "I don't know where that came from," he said regarding reports of the aid being suspended.

Egypt erupted in violence between the military and Muslim Brotherhood supporters of recently deposed President Mohamed Morsi. Members of Congress are conflicted over the appropriate policy to apply to the situation in Egypt. Some, like Senator John McCain, assert that the administration should view the overthrow of Morsi as a coup and suspend aid, while others contend that the administration should sustain the aid and prevent the Brotherhood from taking power.

President Obama condemned the Egyptian military for its assault on civilians last week but did not make a statement regarding aid, stating only that the administration would be performing a complete review on all aspects of the relationship between the United States and Egypt.

"While we want to sustain our relationship with Egypt, our traditional cooperation cannot continue as usual when civilians are being killed in the streets and rights are being rolled back," he said.

State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said Monday that some economic support has been



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temporarily suspended, as was reported in the *New York Times*. “After sequestration withholding, approximately \$585 million remains unobligated. So, that is the amount that is unobligated,” Psaki noted. “But it would be inaccurate to say that a policy decision has been made with respect to the remaining assistance funding.”

“Programs with the government designed to promote free and fair elections, health assistance, programs for the environment, democracy, rule of law and good governance can also continue in cases even where a legal restriction might apply,” Psaki continued. “But to the extent where there are ESF programs that would benefit the government, which is obviously a section, we are reviewing each of those programs on a case-by-case basis to identify whether we have authority to continue providing those funds or should seek to modify our activities to ensure that our actions are consistent with the law.”

Lawmakers and staffers intent on using military aid to control the outcome in Egypt opine that the administration is attempting to box Congress out of the decisions regarding Egyptian aid.

“This approach seems to be to cut by half, leaving the U.S. with little leverage in Egypt and appearing to condone gross violations of human rights in the process,” said one senior GOP Senate aide. “It is also unclear that Congress intended to give the executive branch this much leeway in implementing the coup provision in Section 7008” of the law.

And some believe that the best approach would be for the United States to formally announce its decision to suspend military aid to Egypt as to place greater pressure on Egypt. “Cutting off the aid and announcing that puts the maximum pressure on the Egyptian government to correct its path,” said Radwan.

Meanwhile, libertarian-leaning lawmakers like Republican Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky have been advocating for a suspension of foreign aid to nations such as Egypt for a long time. “All I can see is the billions of American tax dollars that he [Obama] chooses to send overseas,” Paul [said](#) just last month. “The president sends billions of dollars to Egypt in the form of advanced fighter plans and tanks while Detroit crumbles.”

And the crisis in Egypt has served as further ammunition for Paul’s argument in favor of cutting off Egypt’s aid. “While President Obama ‘condemns the violence in Egypt,’ his administration continues to send billions of taxpayer dollars to help pay for it. The law is very clear when a coup d’etat takes place, foreign aid must stop, regardless of the circumstances,” Paul urged.

The crisis in Egypt has led to an [unlikely union](#) between senators like Rand Paul and John McCain, who very rarely agree on foreign policy. McCain has recently issued a statement in support of suspending aid to Egypt. “It is neither in our long-term national interest nor consistent with our values and laws to continue providing assistance at this time to Egypt’s interim government and military,” he said.

Photo of pro-Morsi protestors demonstrating in Cairo, Egypt: AP Images



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