

Egypt army 'AIDS detector' instead finds ridicule

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This image made from undated video broadcast on Egyptian State Television on Tuesday, Feb. 25, 2014 shows a device that the Egyptian army claims will detect and cure AIDS and Hepatitis. Egypt's military is facing embarrassment after unveiling a so-called "miraculous" invention of a set of devices that allegedly detect and cure AIDS, Hepatitis and other viruses. The army's carefully managed image as protector of the nation has suffered after many experts dismissed the claims, saying they aren't technically sound. (AP Photo via AP video)

(AP)—Egypt's military leaders have come under ridicule after the chief army engineer unveiled what he described as a "miraculous" set of devices that detect and cure AIDS, hepatitis and other viruses.

The claim, dismissed by experts and called "shocking to scientists" by president's science adviser, strikes a blow to the army's carefully managed image as the savior of the nation. It also comes as military chief Field Marshal Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi, who toppled Mohammed Morsi in July after the Islamist leader ignored mass protests calling for him to step down, is expected to announce he'll run for president.

The televised presentation—which was made to el-Sissi, interim President Adly Mansour and other senior officials—raised concerns that the military's offer of seemingly inconceivable future devices will draw Egypt back into the broken promises of authoritarian rule, when Hosni Mubarak frequently announced grand initiatives that failed to meet expectations.

"The men of the [armed forces](#) have achieved a scientific leap by inventing the detecting devices," military spokesman Col. Ahmed Mohammed Ali wrote later on his official Facebook page. Ali said a patent has been filed under the name of the Armed Forces Engineering Agency.

Well-known writer Hamdi Rizk noted that video clips of the presentation had gone viral on social media, with tweets and blogs saying the military had made a fool of itself and put its reputation in jeopardy.

"The marshal's camp has been dealt a deep moral defeat," he wrote in a column in Thursday's Al-Masry Al-Youm newspaper. "God give mercy to ... the reputation of the Egyptian army, which became the target of cyber shelling around the clock."

Professor Massimo Pinzani, a liver specialist and director of the Institute for Liver and Digestive Health at University College London, said he attended a demonstration of the C-Fast device during a visit to Egypt but "was not given convincing explanations about the technology" and wasn't

allowed to try it for himself.

"As it is at present, the device is proposed without any convincing technical and scientific basis and, until this is clearly provided, it should be regarded as a potential fraud," he wrote in an email to The Associated Press.

None of the research has been published in a reputable journal.



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The uproar escalated when a scientific adviser to Egypt's interim President Adly Mansour denounced the claim and said it has no scientific base.

"What has been said and published by the armed forces harms the image of the scientists and science in Egypt," Essam Heggy, a planetary scientist at the California Institute of Technology, told the daily newspaper El-Watan in remarks published Wednesday. "All scientists inside and outside Egypt are in a state of shock."

He added that both Mansour and el-Sissi were surprised and their presence in the audience did not indicate approval.

The furor started when Maj. Gen. Taher Abdullah, the head of the Engineering Agency in the Armed Forces, gave a widely televised presentation to el-Sissi and other senior officials on what he calls an "astonishing miraculous scientific invention."

Abdullah said two of the devices named C-Fast and I Fast used electromagnetism to detect AIDS, hepatitis and other viruses without taking blood samples while the third, named Complete Cure Device, acted as a dialysis unit to purify the blood. He also said the C-FAST, which looks an antenna affixed to the handle of a blender, detected patients infected with viruses that cause hepatitis and AIDS with a high success rate.

A short film aired during the presentation showed the engineering team's leader Maj. Gen. Ibrahim Abdel-Atti telling a patient: "All the results are great, showing you had AIDS but you were cured. Thank God." The patient replies: "Thank God."

The next day, Abdel-Atti and his team held their own press conference at which the scientist said "I take AIDS from the patient and nourish the

patient on the AIDS by giving him a skewer of AIDS kofta," a meat dish.

Gamal Shiha, head of the Association for Liver Patients Care, one of Egypt's prominent centers that worked alongside with the military, said he was angry about the "hasty" announcements. He said only one of the devices—C-FAST—underwent thorough testing.

Shiha said the C-Fast uses electromagnetic frequencies similar to those used in bomb detectors and radars and had been tested on more than 2,000 patients with a high success rate.

"The technology of C-Fast is effective without doubt," he said. However, he dismissed the claims that the other two devices detect AIDS and cure viruses.

Despite the skepticism, Health Ministry spokesman Mohammed Fathallah said the ministry recognizes the devices as legitimate. Egypt's former Health Minister Amr Helmi, a liver surgeon by profession, said C-Fast had been approved by the ministry two years ago but he had never before heard of the other two devices.

For the general public, the uproar added to the uncertainty already fueled by years of turmoil since Mubarak's overthrow in February 2011.

"I hope that the invention turns out to be true but I don't have confidence this is the case," said 35-year-old taxi driver Ahmed Morad. "I don't believe anyone ... everything is very confusing. It is like a salad."

Associated Press writer Maggie Hyde contributed to this report.

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