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From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
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Subject: Fw: Israel approves more Egyptian troops in Sinai (Reuters)

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Sent: Wed Feb 16 04:36:08 2011
Subject: Israel approves more Egyptian troops in Sinai (Reuters)

JERUSALEM (Reuters) - Israel has agreed to a second limited deployment of Egyptian troops to secure the demilitarised north Sinai, where suspected sabotage has disrupted gas supply from Egypt, an official said on Wednesday.

The movement of Egyptian soldiers into the zone, a step Israel has described as temporary, has fuelled debate among Israelis over whether the fall of Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak would affect a peace treaty signed in 1979.

Under that pact, only a limited number of Egyptian police are permitted to patrol the border area. It also restricts the nature and size of Israeli forces on the other side of the frontier.

An Israeli official said Egyptian reinforcements "in the hundreds" had been brought in to help secure the zone, which saw rioting against the now-ousted Mubarak government as well as a suspicious fire at a gas pipeline facility on Feb. 5.

Egyptian gas supplies to East Mediterranean Gas Co (EMG) and its Israeli clients were expected to resume later this month, Ampal-American Israel Corp <AMPL.TA., a holding company with a 12.5 percent interest in EMG, said on Wednesday.

Israel's Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper reported that 700 Egyptian soldiers had been deployed in the demilitarised zone in recent days, beefing up some 800 troops there since Jan. 30.

After the initial deployment, Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak said their movement into the area with Israel's blessing represented "a temporary situation, until the situation in Egypt has been stabilised".

The Israeli official who spoke to Reuters on Wednesday said the remarks by Barak, who has been in contact with the head of Egypt's Higher Military Council, reflected government policy toward the second Egyptian deployment as well.

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