

A FINAL FARWELL



DAVID EULITT/KANSAS CITY STAR

Fireworks exploded over Olympic Stadium during the Closing Ceremony of the 2012 Summer Olympic Games in London, England, Monday.

Britain Bids Goodbye To Games

BY STACY ST. CLAIR
Chicago Tribune ©2012 MCT

LONDON — Britain bid a lyrical farewell to the Olympics on Sunday in a manner reflective of the way the host country embraced these Games for the last two weeks: With a bit of self-deprecation, an exhibition of national pride and a genuine desire to show the world a good time.

With performances from The Who, Muse, George Michael, One Direction and a reunited Spice Girls, London aimed to celebrate the idea that music has been one of Britain's greatest exports during the last century. Even deceased legends such as John Lennon and Freddie Mercury led singalongs via massive video screens.

The British government earmarked an extra \$64.3 million to double budget for the opening and closing ceremonies in the weeks leading up to the Games, a move officials justified by saying the events would give the United Kingdom "a once-in-a-lifetime" opportunity to promote itself.

At the very least, they'll boost iTunes sales.

The Spice Girls drew the evening's biggest response — particularly from camera phone-wielding members of Team USA — performing their hit "Spice Up Your Life" as they rolled around Olympic Park atop London cabs. The Who ended the night with a medley of hits, including "Baba O'Riley," "See Me, Feel Me" and "My Generation." Opening ceremonies often are

likened to weddings because of their long-held traditions, solemn oaths and promised possibilities. If that's the case, London's closing ceremony was the raucous reception in which everyone was encouraged to cut loose and each generation got a chance to play DJ.

One Direction, the Pet Shop Boys and Kinks frontman Ray Davies opened the show with songs meant to celebrate daily life in London. Fatboy Slim, Annie Lennox and Jessie J. all performed on a Union Jack-shaped stage surrounded by athletes.

In a nod to British humor, Monty Python's Eric Idle had the stadium whistling to a performance of "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life" that featured roller-skating nuns and a man being shot from a cannon. And comedian Russell Brand was given the honor of covering the Beatles' "I Am the Walrus" — though it was unclear whether it was meant to be a joke or a serious homage.

Yet for all the much-anticipated musical acts, it was the ceremony's use of classic lines from British literature that spoke to the heart of these Games. Quotes from the likes of Chaucer, Shakespeare and Keats appeared in various ways throughout the show, perfectly capturing an emotional fortnight in which Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt seemed immortal, South African runner Oscar Pistorius redefined the word disability and Michael Phelps became the most decorated Olympian in history.

Morsi Seizes Power Back From Military

BY HAMZA HENDAWI AND SARAH EL DEEB
The Associated Press

CAIRO — Egypt's Islamist president ordered the retirement of the defense minister and chief of staff on Sunday and made the boldest move so far to seize back powers that the military stripped from his office right before he took over.

Mohammed Morsi has been locked in a power struggle with the military since he took office on June 30. But after militants killed 16 Egyptian soldiers a week ago at a border post with Israel in Sinai, he has sought more aggressively to assert his authority over the top generals.

He fired the nation's intelligence chief a few days ago and made two highly publicized visits to Sinai in the company of top commanders. He also chaired several meetings with the military brass and made a point of calling himself the supreme commander of the armed forces in televised speeches.

It was not immediately clear whether Morsi's surprise decisions had the military's blessing. But the appointment of outgoing Defense Minister Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi and Chief of Staff Gen. Sami Annan as presidential advisers and awarding them some of the nation's highest honors suggested they may have agreed, perhaps grudgingly, in advance.

Egypt's official Middle East News Agency, quoting an unnamed military official in a brief report, said late Sunday that Morsi's moves were "deliberated and coordinated" in advance. It said there were no "negative reactions" from within the military.

A few hours after the decisions were announced, Morsi called on Egyptians to rally behind him in the face of the nation's many challenges.

"Today's decisions are not directed at certain persons or meant to embarrass certain institutions. ... I only had in mind the interest of this nation and its people," he said in a televised speech. "I want (the armed forces) to dedicate themselves to a mission that is holy to all of us and that is the defense of the nation."

After nightfall, thousands of jubilant Morsi supporters celebrated in Tahrir Square, birthplace of the uprising that ousted Hosni Mubarak 18 months ago. Another crowd of supporters formed outside the presidential palace in Cairo's suburb of Heliopolis.

Adding to the sweeping changes in the military leadership, Morsi also ordered the retirement of the commanders of the navy, air defense and air force, but named two of them to senior positions.

He appointed a senior judge, Mahmoud Mekki, as vice president. Mekki is a pro-reform judge who publicly spoke against election fraud during Mubarak's 29-year rule.

If Morsi's decisions go unchallenged, it could mean the end of six decades of de facto military rule since army officers seized power in a coup in 1952. But removing Tantawi and Annan does not necessarily mean that the military, Egypt's most powerful institution, has been defeated or that it would give up decades of perks and prestige without a fight.

Egypt's first civilian president acted at a moment when the military was humiliated over a major security failure in Sinai, the deadliest internal attack on soldiers in modern history. Several days before the killings, Israel warned that an attack was imminent. The intelligence chief was sacked after it emerged in Egyptian media that he knew of the Israeli warning but did not act.

Sinai has been plunged into lawlessness and the rest of the country has seen a sharp deterioration in security while the military ruled.

Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood, a fundamentalist Islamist group, won both parliamentary and presidential elections in the first free and fair votes in Egypt's modern history. The group had been repressed under Mubarak, who ran a secular state.

The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which ruled Egypt for 17 months after Mubarak was forced out, stripped the presidency of many of its key powers before it handed the office to Morsi. Tantawi was the head (SCAF) and Annan was No. 2 on the ruling council.

The two men appointed to replace them were also members of the SCAF — something that could indicate either the military's agreement to the shuffle or splits at the highest level of the armed forces. Lt. Gen. Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi replaced Tantawi and Lt. Gen. Sidki Sayed Ahmed replaced Annan. They were sworn in shortly after the announcement.

Days before the inauguration, the ruling generals decreed constitutional amendments that gave them the power to legislate after the military dissolved parliament, as well as control over the national budget. It also gave them control over the process of drafting a new constitution.

With Sunday's moves, Morsi restored to his office the powers taken from him, seizing back sole control of the constitution drafting process and the right to issue laws.

He decided that if the 100-member panel currently drafting the document did not finish its work for whatever reason, he will appoint a new one within 15 days and give it three weeks to finish its work. The draft will then be put to a vote in a national referendum within 30 days. Parliamentary elections will follow if the draft is adopted.

"There was a duality of power," said Saad Emara, a senior Muslim Brotherhood member. "This had to be settled in favor of one authority. The boat with two captains sinks."

Omar Ashour, a visiting Scholar at the Brookings Doha Center who has interviewed SCAF members over the past year, said Morsi's decisions were negotiated with several of the generals who sat on the military council.

"The military council was not going to last forever," he said. "It is a critical battle, but this is not final."

With power now concentrated in the hands of the Muslim Brotherhood, some fear Egypt will only move from an authoritarian state to an Islamic state.

"Now the military returns to the barracks and Morsi has absolute powers," said Abdullah el-Sinawi, a prominent political commentator and longtime supporter of the military as the guardian of Egypt's fast-fading secular traditions.

Abdel-Rahman Youssef, a liberal popular TV presenter and a supporter of Morsi, said this is a historic opportunity for political reform in Egypt.

"Egypt is now before a real test — to have a powerful president yet to stop him from being repressive," he said.

While Morsi's Brotherhood is considered to be the country's strongest political group, its base of support remains limited when compared to the respect enjoyed by the military. There is hardly an Egyptian family that does not include a member in active service or who had military experience. The military has a vast economic empire that accounts for about 25 percent of GDP.

But the military has been tainted in the 17 months they ran the country after Mubarak's ouster, with the SCAF accused of mismanaging the transitional period and committing human rights violations.

For now, however, Morsi appeared the victor.

Hours after announcing the shake-up, a confident looking president appeared at an annual religious ceremony to hand monetary awards to young Muslims from Egypt and elsewhere who have learned the Quran, Islam's holy book, by heart.

Mohammed Aboul-Ghar, a founder of the new Egyptian Social Democratic Party — a secular group critical of the military as well as Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood — said the power struggle has now been settled in Morsi's favor.

"The military council was forced out of power and lost its position and this was inevitable," he said. "In the power struggle, the military council was increasingly weakened because of its decisions" and its failure to secure a more straightforward path to democratic transition, he said.

Syrian Opposition Figure Calls For No-Fly Zone

BEIRUT (AP) — The head of Syria's main opposition group in exile called Sunday for international powers to impose a no-fly zone in border areas to protect civilians who are coming under increasingly intense attacks by regime warplanes and helicopters.

The president of the Syrian National Council, Abdelbaset Sieda, told The Associated Press that such a move by the interna-

tional community would show President Bashar Assad's regime that his opponents around the world are serious.

The Syrian opposition has been calling for a no-fly zone over Syria for months. But Sieda renewed the plea a day after U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said Washington and Turkey were discussing a range of steps including a no-fly zone over some parts of Syria as the

regime increasingly uses its air force to attack rebels.

"There must be special protection," Sieda said by telephone. "The numbers of martyrs are increasing and destruction too. If the country keeps going this way, then we are heading to a catastrophe."

Asked who will impose the no-fly zone, Sieda said: "We leave it to the international community."

Flier

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like we had a 20 mph wind. It gives you an indication of how dry it is and what kind of situation we've got."

The residents and firefighters were lucky that day, he added.

"There was a police officer and a couple of firefighters on scene pretty fast," Nickles said. "They pulled the garden hoses and got it stopped around the houses. That's close to town. If you put that same scenario out at the Lewis and Clark Lake, where the response time can be 10 minutes, it would have been a whole different ball game. We would have had a lot bigger mess."

Had there been two inches of

rain the night before, Nickles said he doesn't know that it would have made a difference in how things played out.

"Two inches is not going to bring us out (of this dryness)," he stated. "There is all that stuff that is dead and dormant. Until it comes out of dormancy or we get some snow, the risk is still going to be there. We want people to know that. We don't want people thinking, 'We've got two inches of rain, so we can go out and be careless.'"

So far this year, Nickles said firefighters in the county have dealt with 50-acre and 28-acre fires, but most blazes have been small and handled quickly. A majority of the fires are believed to have been started by cigarettes, he stated.

"That's something we can't put a stop to, other than by asking people to start using the ashtrays in their cars and being

careful where they deposit their cigarettes," Nickles said.

Officials are hoping to post a dozen "Please Use Your Ashtray" signs around the county to remind people to dispose of their cigarettes responsibly.

Nickles said he also hopes residents read the wildfire protection guide and follow the tips it offers, which range from keeping vegetation at bay to having a garden hose that can reach around the house.

It also suggests that people visit www.firewise.org, which features a variety of information about wildfire safety.

"Our goal is to make sure our residents are doing the same things they do in the Black Hills to reduce the risk of property damage," Nickles said.

You can follow Nathan Johnson on Twitter at twitter.com/AnInlandVoyage

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