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CNN LIVE EVENT/SPECIAL

Egypt Uprising

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ANDERSON COOPER, CNN ANCHOR: Just some of the dramatic developments we have seen over the last 24 hours here as the sixth day of protests in Cairo and throughout Egypt have come to an end and the seventh day is just beginning. It is 5:00 here in the morning.

We're going to have continuing complete coverage all through this hour from here in Cairo, also in Alexandria, also in Washington, where Wolf Blitzer is standing by and also in Atlanta, where Isha Sesay is standing by. Our coverage continues as it has where for this many -- now going on seven days.

As I said, dramatic developments today. Mohamed ElBaradei, the Nobel laureate who returned to Egypt just on Thursday, appeared in Liberation Square today, which is the central point where a lot of the protests are taking place here in Cairo. He spoke to the crowd. We'll show you what that was like in just a moment.

The curfew is still in effect. Though, as you will see in Liberation Square, people defied the curfew in order to come out in large numbers. Right now, the streets around downtown Cairo are relatively calm, pretty empty, except for the heavy presence of Egyptian soldiers manning tanks and many of the intersections, many of the roadblocks.

There are also large civilian militias, just people, ordinary civilians who have armed themselves with kitchen knives, with bats, with clubs in order to try to protect their neighborhood since police are no longer visible on the streets here in Cairo. Though we have gotten a report from the government that police will be returning to the streets in a few hours on Monday. Whether or not that actually occurs and what kind of an impact that's going to have, we're just going to have to wait and see.

Here's what we saw, though, after the curfew, about three hours after the curfew went into effect at 4:00 on Sunday. We went to Tahrir Square, to Liberation Square, and here is what we saw.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

COOPER (voice over): Sunday night, the sixth day of protests in Liberation Square, was once again filled.

(on camera): They're calling for freedom and change and justice. Those are the words you will hear a lot. And they're saying that their demands haven't changed, they want Mubarak out.

(voice over): Defying Mubarak, defying the curfew, thousands showed up shouting into the night.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Mubarak get out.

COOPER (on camera): What's remarkable about this is -- for those of us who have reported from Egypt over the year is before, anytime you brought out a camera, instantly police would be all over you, stopping you from shooting, checking your papers. We have a camera out. Nobody is stopping us. And people are voicing their opinion.

(voice over): There is no one organizer of these protests. But tonight, Mohamed ElBaradei showed up to try to talk to the crowd.

(on camera): ElBaradei is right over there the crowd. Everybody wants to get a look at him, wants to hear anything he might have to say.

(voice over): The crowd rushed forward, and ElBaradei spoke briefly through the bullhorn.

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COOPER: His words were eloquent but few heard what he said. And the noise in the Square was simply too great.

(on camera): What is your message to President Mubarak?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: He should leave tonight.

COOPER (voice over): Soldiers on tanks watched and waited. There were no police to be seen in the Square on this night.

(on camera): Are you scared to be here?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: No, I'm not scared. There's no (INAUDIBLE), so nothing to be scared of.

COOPER (voice over): There's no telling how much longer this can go on for six days into the crisis and there is still no clear way for it to come to an end.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

COOPER: And Nic Robertson has been reporting from Alexandria. He was out today with protesters in the streets, where the soldiers were shooting overhead. Didn't seem to have much impact, though, on the crowd. Again, the crowd is defying curfew to voice their opinions in the streets of Alexandria.

Nic also looked into -- trying to get an understanding of how these protests are being organized and coordinated with Internet service shut down in many places. It is a very difficult task. Here's what he found.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE) NIC ROBERTSON, CNN SENIOR INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENT (on camera): We've come to this apartment building because it is where a secret meeting is taking place. The people that helped organize the demonstrations are now having a meeting to try and organize security here and we've been brought into this secret meeting.

Thank you. Hello, how are you doing?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Very good.

ROBERTSON: How are you doing?

ALI REGAL, STUDENT ACTIVIST: Nic, how are you?

ROBERTSON: So what's happening?

REGAL: In English or Arabic?

ROBERTSON: English would be great, yes.

REGAL: Now we are trying to make a plan, strategic plan for -- to close all the borders of Alexandria and the places where we are seeing -- the districts where we are seeing well-structured (INAUDIBLE) and vehicles and all this stuff we are hearing in the news.

ROBERTSON: To protect the -- to protect the population, yes?

REGAL: Yes, to protect the population.

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ROBERTSON: How is it going so far?

REGAL: Well, so far, it's starting to develop, so we hope we can finish it by 5:00 or 6:00.

ROBERTSON: And what about the Army? Are they -- are you working with the Army?

REGAL: Yes, the Army is very helpful and working with us and it's a great cooperation between the masses and the Army.

ROBERTSON: Do you feel that the Army is on your side or the president's side at the moment?

REGAL: Look, I cannot be sure of this. But what I'm very sure is there is a strong cooperation between the masses and the Army. That's what I can tell it so far.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

COOPER: Nic joins us now from Alexandria.

I'm amazed at how brave these people you spoke to seem to be. I mean, they don't seem to be frightened.

We are having a problem with Nic's connection. We are having a problem with Nic's connection. We'll try to link up with him a little bit later on throughout this hour.

But again, the ability for protesters to try to communicate and organize, it is a very difficult thing. Mohamed ElBaradei, who returned to this country on Thursday, said that he is in touch with some of the protest organizers and in communication with them, has been working with them and that they've all agreed on the need to form some sort of a national unity government or transitional government if and when Hosni Mubarak steps down.

But again, there is no sign of that. No indication that the president of Egypt, who has been the president for some 30 years now, is willing to do just that.

We're going to continue our coverage throughout this hour. Let's check in with Wolf now in Washington.

Wolf?

WOLF BLITZER, CNN CORRESPONDENT: Anderson, thanks.

As the protesters are organizing, analysts are trying to figure out what happens next. What would President Mubarak's departure mean for Egypt's peace with Israel, for example, and how would U.S. - Middle East relations be impacted?

Samer Shehata is an assistant professor of Arab politics at Georgetown University here in Washington. He is joining us now.

How popular is Mohamed ElBaradei in Egypt? Could he emerge as the next leader if Mubarak goes down?

PROF. SAMER SHEHATA, ARAB POLITICS, GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: He certainly could emerge. As far as his popularity, he has a wide- ranging popularity among intellectuals, among some elements of the middle classes. He's relatively unknown among broader segments of the society.

But something very interesting happened yesterday. The Muslim Brotherhood announced that they were supporting Mr. Baradei as an interim leader for Egypt. That, I think, is very, very significant, because before these events, before last Tuesday, they were considered the largest opposition movement. So I think he is emerging, certainly, as one of, if not the most important potential leaders in a democratic Egypt in the future.

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only a matter of time, would he likely emerge? Would Omar Suleiman, the new vice president, emerge? Or someone else? SHEHATA: Well, it depends how Mr. Mubarak goes down. If Mr. Mubarak simply resigns and then Omar Suleiman takes over as president. Mr. Baradei still excluded. The regime can still try to maintain itself. Can say that we've made a concession, we're moving forward.

I don't think that would be accepted. People are calling for the removal of Mr. Mubarak and a change of regime. Freedom, change and social justice.

So -- however, If the entire regime were to collapse, if the protest were to continue and overwhelm the regime as it were, then I think you would have an interim government and Mr. Baradei would certainly be a part of it.

BLITZER: I've heard that Mrs. Mubarak has already left Egypt, maybe in London, that Gamal Mubarak, the son, already in London. I don't know what you've heard but there are a lot of reports out there that they have left. What are you hearing?

SHEHATA: I'm hearing the same thing and I'm hearing the same thing from multiple sources, from British sources as well as Arabic satellite sources, that they are in London right now. And we also heard yesterday and this, I think, was confirmed that there were 17 or 18 private jets that departed from Egypt and landed in the Emirates and they included a number of very prominent Egyptian businessmen, including Naguib Sawiris, the 64th richest man in the world, telecommunications mogul, as well as Ahmed Ezz, a hated National Democratic Party figure who resigned several days ago.

BLITZER: If President Mubarak steps down and everybody seems to think that's going to happen, could he stay in Egypt or would he have to flee, go to London, or go to the Emirates, go to Saudi Arabia, someplace else?

SHEHATA: Well, again, it depends on what happens next. If Omar Suleiman becomes president and somehow the regime can maintain itself, and I don't think that's a likely scenario, then Mr. Mubarak would have the cover of Omar Suleiman being president. It would be somewhat like -- and this analogy isn't perfect - a Gerald Ford - Richard Nixon moment.

However, if the protesters continue, and I think this is more likely, and it overwhelms the state, then Mr. Mubarak will have to flee for his life and -- but the point is that people now are saying that he needs to be held accountable. He needs to be held accountable not only for 30 years of authoritarianism but for the damage that he has caused Egypt and the lives that have been lost over the last few days.

BLITZER: Samer Shehata of Georgetown University, thanks so much for coming in.

SHEHATA: You're welcome.

BLITZER: I know you're watching this especially closely because you still have family, a lot of family in Egypt right now. We hope all of them are OK. SHEHATA: Thank you.

BLITZER: Thanks so much for joining us.

Isha, this is a story with a lot of developments happening right now, and I know you want to update our viewers on what we know.

ISHA SESAY, CNN CORRESPONDENT: Yes, absolutely. Wolf, thank you.

Here is what we know. For American citizens who want out of Egypt, help is on the way. U.S. State Department says chartered evacuation flights will start taking off soon. Anybody taking one of those planes will have to reimburse the cost of their seat. Several other governments are also scrambling to get their people out. U.S. officials are monitoring the situation but treading carefully. Defense Secretary Robert Gates spent part of his weekend on the phone with his

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And we've seen the protests recently out of Tunisia, Yemen and now Egypt. So, where could this anti-government sentiment spread next in the region? That is the big question.

The next domino could be Syria where a very restrictive Ba'athist regime has been in charge for four decades now. I think you can bet Syrian leaders are watching events in Egypt very carefully tonight.

Now, back to Anderson in Cairo.

COOPER: Isha, we show a force today by the Mubarak regime. Fighter jets flying low over Liberation Square at the beginning of curfew around 4:00 this afternoon. We'll show you what impact it had on the protesters in the Square, probably not the impact President Mubarak had hoped it would have.

Also in the hour ahead, we're going to look at the roots of this uprising, roots that started not in Egypt but elsewhere in the region. We'll explain ahead.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Everybody will be here. You have also two choice. The first choice, Mubarak leave, and the second choice, we die here. We have no choice.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

COOPER: Just one of the many voices we have heard today.

Nic Robertson, now we lost communication with him a short time ago. We've re-established it. He's joining us now from Alexandria, which is to the north of where we are in Cairo. Nic, you spent time with some of the protest organizers over the last 24 hours. How are they organizing thing? How are they handling this protest, getting the message out because Facebook, Internet is shut down in most places?

ROBERTSON: You know what's incredible, Anderson, these guys are a bunch of young students, some of them lawyers, some of them studying such things as security in society. They're reduced to drawing maps on pieces of pape to try and figure out who gets to guard which neighborhood, how long they should be there, those sorts of things.

So they're trying to be effective but the mechanism, the Internet that they used to spread the word before to build these protests and get them out on the streets, they don't have access to that. You have a lot of groups now competing within the different neighborhoods for sort of dominance. You see, you have this sort of intellectuals, if you will, the students, you have the Muslim Brotherhood, who you'd see now corralling the demonstrations, a bigger presence in the demonstrations.

And even one neighborhood, and I show you this here that we picked up, a flyer, driving through one of the neighborhoods past the vigilante group. They handed this out to us this evening. And this is from a group, an Islamist group more radical, way more radical than the Muslim Brotherhood. They're demanding an Islamic state in Egypt. So you have all these different groups. And it's quite clear that over time, a struggle is going to evolve between them. Who controls what, where? Who has the power? That is something that appears to be coming down the line, Anderson.

COOPER: And President Mubarak has certainly used concern in the West and even concern here about Islamic fundamentalists to his advantage over these last 30 years as a way to stay in power.

On the streets here though, there has been an uptick in the involvement of folks from the Muslim Brotherhood and other organizations. It does not seem to have a very religious cast to it. You see a lot of young students, a lot of people

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the demonstrations peaceful. They're keeping -- when the demonstrators are out on the main roads here, they're keeping one side of the road open for traffic, keeping the demonstrators on one side, keeping it under control.

Why is the Muslim Brotherhood doing this? Well, there really are no sort of strong opposition groups that have the organization and influence that they do. So they are really stepping in to fill a vacuum. And they say themselves very clearly that they are moderate Islamist group, non-violent. But, of course, they're policies in the region are vastly different from President Hosni Mubarak's. And they do look at the United States and they do look at Hosni Mubarak as sort of being side by side in a policy that keeps, they feel, the Palestinians down. So, they are voicing on the streets now. We're seeing for the first time today here, very loudly, really, an anti-U.S. sentiment and we haven't seen that up to now. But that is sort of emerging, Anderson.

COOPER: And you can -- I don't know if you can hear in the background now, call to prayers. It is just after 5:00 a.m. here, day seven of this uprising. One of the more dramatic moments that we talked about a little bit ago was when F-16 fighter jets flew low over Liberation Square around 3:00 or 4:00 on Sunday afternoon. Our Ivan Watson was actually there on the ground when they flew over. Here's what he saw.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

(JETS FLYING)

IVAN WATSON, CNN CORRESPONDENT: This is an unmistakable show of military force, fighter jets flying low over Cairo's Tahrir Square, Liberation Square, which has been a symbol of defiance.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

COOPER: And Ivan Watson joins us now. And we said it before, but that did not have probably the impact or the effect that whoever ordered those planes to fly overhead wanted.

WATSON: No. If anything, people said they were not going to be intimidated. If it was a means to try to intimidate people, though, you know, there were the soldiers in the Square at the same time, and the demonstrators were handing out sandwiches and bananas and tea and taking photos with them on their tanks. So, perhaps getting mixed messages from parts of the Egyptian military right now.

COOPER: You know, before I came here, you hear, well, look, there's a curfew at 4:00. You kind of surmise -- that means there's an effort to impose that curfew. It doesn't seem like seeing the soldiers are really trying to impose the curfew.

WATSON: And they've been -- they've been a little bit more forceful, I think, and they were not allowing people to demonstrate here the way they had done two days ago, let's say. But so far, they are allowing people to move around.

I think what's interesting, again, is the neighborhood watch groups that have sprung up, who have taken upon themselves to stop cars, to search them. And now in the second vigil night that they're doing this, they have -- again, these are not people who are trained to be security officers. They're doing things like setting up their own signal systems, using whistles, for instance, so that they can call for help from one block to another.

And I was talking to one man who said they had already been attacked around 9:00 p.m. People trying to climb over the walls of their compound and break in and they were actually scaring off these types of criminals.

COOPER: We'll have more from Ivan throughout this hour and then obviously in the days ahead here in Cairo. We're also, of course, joined throughout this hour by Wolf Blitzer in Washington and Isha Sesay in Atlanta.

Isha?

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you through events over the last several weeks.

BLITZER: And we'll also hear from our own Ben Wedeman, who lives in Cairo with his family, has been on this story from day one. He's got a dramatic story to tell.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: We need good -- we need good education. (INAUDIBLE) We need freedom. All these people need freedom. And we need you to support us in our situation.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

COOPER: A lot of anger, a lot of frustration and also a lot of pride. You hear people say that a lot. They're very proud to see their fellow Egyptians out on the streets, calling for freedom, calling for an end to the Mubarak regime. Again, what can of an impact that will have, how long these protests can continue before something gives is not clear. Day seven has already begun here and no one can really anticipate what the next 24 hours will bring.

Joined again by Wolf Blitzer in Washington, Isha Sesay in Atlanta. Isha?

SESAY: Anderson, there's no doubt about it. Events unfolding in Egypt at lightning speed. But the seeds of unrest were planted long ago.

BLITZER: And indeed, within a span of only four weeks, revolt has spread across three Muslim countries in the Middle East. CNN's Suzanne Malveaux tells us where the spark was lit.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

SUZANNE MALVEAUX, CNN WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT (voice over): Starting with Tunisia, where an unemployed graduate student sets himself on fire after a city inspector confiscates his unlicensed fruit card and then allegedly slaps him. His death sparks unprecedented fury and protests against the government, forcing Tunisia's longtime president to flee.

In Algeria, riots break out over rising food prices and a housing crisis.

In Yemen, students take to the streets.

Emboldened by its neighbors in the region, on Tuesday, Egypt erupts. Angered by the alleged corruption, police brutality and lack of reforms in their own country, thousands pour into the streets, demanding Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who's held power for nearly three decades, resign. Protesters are met with tear gas and violence.

The next day, the violence escalates as Egyptian security forces turn water cannons and tear gas on the growing angry crowds. The Egyptian military urges calm. Social media sites like Facebook and Twitter report that they're being blocked by the government.

Thursday, a leading Egyptian opposition figure, Mohamed ElBaradei returns home from Europe, vowing to back the protesters. The Egyptian government then arrests a prominent leader of country's largest opposition group, the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Obama administration is alarmed by the growing intensity of the crisis but reacts with caution.

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: I want to be very clear in calling upon the Egyptian

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Qatar and Jordan to show demonstrators their support.

Mubarak goes on national television to tell Egyptians his government will resign but he will stay in power. His offer does not quell the angry and growing crowds. A thousand inmates break out of a prison outside Cairo. Looters ransack prison buildings and businesses. And vandals tear off the heads of mummies at the Egyptian museum. Journalists report a dangerous power vacuum.

BEN WEDEMAN, CNN SR. INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENT: The Army is sort of controlling the streets. Politically, there's a complete vacuum.

MALVEAUX (on camera): President Obama is trying to focus on some key domestic issues this week, including immigration and education. But senior administration officials are keeping a very close eye on what happens in the Egyptian streets and whether or not President Hosni Mubarak survives.

Suzanne Malveaux, CNN, Atlanta.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

COOPER: That is obviously a very open question -- whether or not he can survive. He has survived for some 30 years. He has many cards in his deck. We have yet to see him play his full hand.

We're going to have our continuing coverage. When we come back, we'll talk with Ben Wedeman who is in the neighborhood. He actually lives in here in Cairo, trying to literally protect the street that he lives in, along with his neighbors. He went out on an armed patrol with his neighbors, something that is happening on just about every block in nearly every neighborhood that we have driven through. People manning checkpoints by themselves with knives and clubs to protect from the concern about looters. We'll talk to Ben in his home, coming up.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE (through translator): Security forces fired at us and shot tear gas at us. More than 15 people lost their sight and vision. One was shot at right here.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

COOPER: One of our reporters, Ben Wedeman, the best reporter we have in this region, has been covering this from day one. I want to show you -- we're going to talk to him. He's actually in his community, the neighborhood where he lives in Cairo, concerned about the security of that neighborhood and actually went out on patrol with some of his neighbors who have taken matters into their own hands to protect the block that they live on.

But I just want to show you some of his reporting from way back on Tuesday. Seems like a long time ago, but it was just seven days now. This is some of what he saw then.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BEN WEDEMAN, CNN SR. INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENT (via telephone): This unrest is obviously going to have to cause some new calculations, political new calculations. Anyway, right now, I'm overwhelmed with tear gas.

VOICE OF UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Are you able to carry on or do you want to get to a place of safety, Ben?

WEDEMAN: I'll do my best, Martin (ph), I'll do my best. I just have to keep my one eye open.

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COOPER: Ben Wedeman joins us now.

Ben, I don't know if that seems like a long time ago to you or short time ago to you. It was just seven days ago. What surprises you most about what's happening right now?

WEDEMAN: The speed of it, Anderson. It's been so fast, so dramatic, that really initially all of us, the press, the protesters, the government, police, everyone has been taken utterly by surprise simply how fast all of this has happened. And I was -- in fact, I was having dinner at somebody's house just across the street from Tahrir Square the night before the first protests, and most of us seem to be of the belief that this would be a day of some protests, but life would go on. Life has just completely changed for everyone in Egypt since then. And we're slowly starting to digest the significance of it all. But it does seem that we're coming to the end of an era here in Egypt. Most Egyptians I have spoken to say it's just impossible for President Hosni Mubarak to carry under the pretense that he's the president of all Egyptians -- Anderson.

COOPER: Uniformed police have been off the streets. There is a report that police may come back tomorrow on Monday on the streets here. We're going to have to wait and see on that.

Are the secret police, the plainclothes police, the ones who roughed you up several days ago and have roughed up a lot of people and dragged people away, are they still out on the streets?

WEDEMAN: It appears they are, although I think they're keeping a fairly low profile and aware at this point that Egyptians have learned that they are powerful, too, and that they can fight back.

In my neighborhood, speaking to my neighbors, there's a new awareness that what the police did, ordinary citizens can do, that is maintain security without the kind of petty corruption, without the police brutality that created such a negative aura around the police.

As far as the secret police is concerned, they're not as apparent on the streets as before. But, of course, the worry of many people is that given the orders, they can go back and create the same kind of havoc that we saw them doing during the days of protest -- Anderson.

COOPER: Just one final question, Ben. In the United States, there's concern among some quarters about Islamists gaining power, taking control here in Egypt if Mubarak left. That is certainly something President Mubarak has used over his reign to continue Western -- to support Western support and to garner support here. How realistic is that? What sort of power do they have here in and, moving forward if Mubarak left, what sort of power would they have?

WEDEMAN: Most Egyptian analysts believe that if there were free and fair elections, that the Muslim Brotherhood and similar groups would win around 30 to 35 percent of the vote.

But certainly not only has the Mubarak government exaggerated the so-called Islamic threat in Egypt to the United States, but they did that to a great extent with the Egyptian people as well. Every time elections would come around, they would send out a message, either you vote for Mubarak, who will protect secular liberal Christian Egyptians or you vote for the Muslim Brotherhood and you will pay the price.

But that sort of blackmail, so to speak, doesn't really work anymore among ordinary Egyptians. They see that the -- that the Muslim Brotherhood isn't the sort of threat that President Mubarak and the government always said it was -- Anderson.

COOPER: Ben, we'll continue to check in with you. Now let's go to Wolf in Washington.

Wolf?

BLITZER: Anderson, American diplomacy right now facing a tough, tough test. U.S. strategic interests are colliding

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now a professor at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

In terms of -- on a scale of 1 to 10, Nick, 10 being the worst crisis, where would you rate this one?

NICHOLAS BURNS, FORMER U.S. UNDERSECRETARY OF STATE: This is up to 8 or 9 already, Wolf. You know, the consequences of instability in Egypt to the United States are really, really important. This country, I think, is the most important U.S. partner in the Middle East.

And so, as you rightly said, the strategic interests here of the United States are on the line. But, as you know, and as President Obama and Secretary Clinton have been saying, we are a democratic country, we affirm our own democratic values, we have to support the right of Egyptians for freedom of speech and assembly, to demonstrate peacefully. And so, we've seen a very difficult balancing act for the United States over the last seven days.

BLITZER: Should the president of the United States pick up the phone and call President Mubarak and say, guess what, it's over, it's time for you to leave, begin that process?

BURNS: You know, I thought when President Obama spoke on Friday night, he got it just about right. He made a quite forceful statement, for change in Egypt, for the government to open up, to allow reform, to move forward. I also thought it was appropriate for the president the other night not to call publicly for President Mubarak to resign.

BLITZER: I'm not saying publicly, I'm saying -- I'm asking privately. Should the president tell Mubarak privately it's over?

BURNS: I was just going to say, Wolf, this is not all about us. It's really about the Egyptians. They're the ones who have to steer this forward. I think that President Mubarak seems to be losing control of the streets of Alexandria and Cairo. The shocking absence of security forces, the disorder and the mistakes that President Mubarak made last week in using excessive force against the demonstrators.

So I think it is appropriate at some point in the next day or two for the U.S. to be saying privately that the government has to move forward. That means that President Mubarak has to declare publicly, I think, that he's not going to run in the September elections nor is his son, Gamal, that he's going to open up this process to a truly -- in a truly democratic way to allow people like Mohamed ElBaradei, whom you saw on the streets of Cairo today, to contest these elections. And I think if he doesn't do that, we're going to see rapid change on the streets and rapid change politically in Egypt.

BLITZER: Is it your sense that the longer he delays that, the worse potentially it is for everyone?

BURNS: My sense is that President Mubarak -- President Mubarak is a very serious, sophisticated, experienced person. And I had hoped that he would see the need last week to allow for a process of reform to begin. He hasn't done that. By appointing Omar Suleiman as his vice president is really just more of the same, it's military power.

The military is an important institution in Egyptian society. We should hope that the military will back a period of transition, a period leading to elections and hopefully allow for civil society to grow in Egypt as the country has never known democracy in its entire history, to give the Egyptian people a chance in an orderly, peaceful way towards an election.

Wolf, that's the best thing that I can see happening now, but the government of Egypt needs to get behind that and make it absolutely clear that it favors reform. It has not done that yet, and you see the crowds growing in the streets of Cairo and Alexandria.

BLITZER: Yes, that would be the best-case scenario if in fact that happens from the U.S. perspective and from the Egyptian perspective. But at least as of right now, everything that President Mubarak is saying doesn't indicate he is ready to give up, at least not yet.

Nick, thanks very much for joining us.

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BLITZER: Isha, let's get back to you.

ISHA SESAY, CNN CORRESPONDENT: Wolf, coming up, a walk through the dangerous streets of Alexandria and Cairo. Our CNN reporters take you straight to the scene of what is becoming a lawless situation with looting and gunfire.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

(SOUNDS OF GUNFIRE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SESAY: Plus, CNN senior international correspondent Nic Robertson is in the ancient port city of Alexandria, where Egyptians marched through the streets after curfew with gunshots providing a scary soundtrack.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: At the beginning, I thought Tuesday was the happiest day of my life because there were people for the first time gathering in huge numbers. This is the start of the rest of my life, the new happy life, honestly as cheesy as it sounds, that's exactly how I feel right now.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SESAY: I'm Isha Sesay at CNN headquarters in Atlanta, joined by my colleagues Wolf Blitzer in Washington D.C. and Anderson Cooper, who is in Cairo. We continue to cover the events in Egypt, where social order is collapsing with frightening speed. Reports of widespread looting and lawlessness are rampant. Late Saturday night, we received word of a massive prison break near Cairo. CNN took a flight and went there Saturday to investigate what was clearly a dangerous and deadly situation.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

FREDERIK PLEITGEN, CNN CORRESPONDENT (voice over): When we got to the prison in Abu Zaabal, a gun battle was still raging inside. The residents advised us to leave. Inmates had escaped, they told us, and stolen many weapons from the building's arsenal.

The problem is not just that the prisoners got out, this man told us. The problem is the prisoners got out and took all the weapons with them.

The townspeople later told us looters later stormed the prison and went on a shooting rampage and that there were still dead bodies on the premises. And no police around. A total breakdown of law enforcement. We came past half a dozen abandoned police stations looted and torched.

Local citizens are banding together, arming themselves, trying to protect their neighborhoods.

In this neighborhood, they stopped a stolen car full of armed men, one carrying an automatic weapon.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: We attacked them like a lot of people, we attacked them. One of our -- one of our friends hit them with a stick. The guy with the machine gun. So he starts shooting everywhere and then they fainted.

PLEITGEN: Irrigation engineer Ahemd Abdul Latif and his son are part of a community defense force. Recently, they've gotten help from the Army. Latiff says his wife and daughter are scared and did not want to be filmed.

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PLEITGEN: He blames one man for the upheaval overtaking his country.

LATIF: Thank you, Mr. Mubarak. I want to thank him very much for this situation we are in. We want to -- we want him -- please, Mr. Mubarak, please, thank you very much.

PLEITGEN: Latif and the others will probably have to spend more nights with their clubs defending their houses. Still, they say, these days are days of hope, even as chaos seems to reign.

Fred Pleitgen, CNN, Cairo, Egypt.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

COOPER: It is incredible just how, you know, you drive through neighborhoods and literally every block, you are stopped by six, a dozen young men, old men, armed with all sorts of weapons, makeshift weapons, clubs, kitchen knives, they check out who you are, they want to see some sort of identification. And then, when they realize you're not a looter, they're generally friendly and tell you to move on.

But it's block after block after block. It's very difficult now just even getting anywhere in Cairo because of the time it takes to get through all these -- all these roadblocks.

We're going to have our continuing coverage all the way through this evening. When we come back, we're going to take a look at what happens if President Mubarak does step down and does leave Egypt and what happens if he doesn't.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

ROBERTSON: The demonstration is getting much closer to one of the Army post. So the gunfire that we can hear rocketing through the air, the demonstrators say that's the Army firing to warn them to stay away. It's long...

(SOUNDS OF GUNFIRE)

ROBERTSON: More gunshots. It's long after curfew right now. And if the government was controlling the situation..

(SOUNDS OF GUNFIRE)

ROBERTSON: Trace of fire flying in the air. These people -

(END VIDEOTAPE)

BLITZER: Nic Robertson doing some amazing reporting for us from Alexandria.

With Egypt appearing to be on the brink of new leadership, right now analysts are trying to connect the dots on how it will impact the new future if President Mubarak is out and everyone seems to think he will be out, it's only a matter of time. What will happen to Egypt's peace with Israel, for example. If a new president comes in, how will that affect U.S. relations throughout the region?

Let's discuss with Professor Fouad Ajami He's professor of Middle East Studies at the Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies. Professor Ajami, if the president of the United States called you right now and said, Professor Ajami, what should we do, what would you tell President Obama?

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change. There is something wrong with our secretary of state saying that the Egyptian regime is stable when she knew better. There is something wrong with our Vice President Biden saying that Hosni Mubarak is not a dictator when every child in Egypt that we see and every reporter is showing you insists that Hosni Mubarak is a dictator.

So I think there is some real chaos. Not only there is chaos on the streets of Cairo but there's really chaos here on our end -- what to do about Egypt and how to understand Egypt.

BLITZER: So what should the U.S. do?

AJAMI: Well, I think, look, it's a long story and we have come to this -- I mean, this Egyptian protest is happening without any inspiration from the United States.

I mean, if you really look at what's happening, not only in Egypt but if you widen the lens, and you take a look at the Arab world as a whole, you see that there is a kind of irrelevance of American power because, in fact, the message was sent out early on in the Obama administration, that we do not interfere in the internal affairs of these autocracies but we are invested in these autocracies.

Our treasure is invested in Egypt, and we have this longstanding interest in Egypt, and we are very timid because we insist that should the despot fail, should the despot be removed, should he and his family leave, we insist that Egypt has no other option but Islamic fundamentalism. It's a kind of intellectual poverty, and it's hard.

BLITZER: If President Mubarak were watching CNN International right now and he might be, we don't know if he is but look in the camera and talk to President Mubarak and what would you say to him?

AJAMI: Well, look, President Mubarak had -- he's been in power, as we all know, 30 years. I think he had 12 good years. He was the son of Egypt. He was a man who rose from the Armed Forces. He cared about his country. He was a modest man. There is a general who was of Mubarak's generation and Mubarak's class, if you will, in the military, who described Mubarak to me as a civil servant with the rank of president. This is long gone now.

So, 12 good years he rendered service to the Egyptians, then finally he put together this unbelievable autocratic state. The Ministry of Interior has 1.7 million people working for it. The whole treasure of Egypt and the effort of Egypt and the effort of Mubarak has not been about developing Egypt, solving the poverty of Egypt, dealing with the problems of Egypt.

It's been about simply the police state that he has put together, and there was a demeaning of Egypt to insist that a son of his would have to be president. I mean, to be tempted to go that dynastic route, over 80 million people, the pact between Mubarak and his people has really been severed and broken.

He can only do one thing now for the Egyptians. He can simply step aside, as the Egyptians over and over again, when you hear, when you see these crowds, they're saying one word, derhal (ph), which means just be gone, leave. And this is really what -- there is -- the moral pact of Mubarak is severed.

BLITZER: Tunisia, Egypt, what's next? The next six months, look ahead for us, Professor Ajami. What do you see?

AJAMI: Well, you know, it's very hard. As someone said, it's hard to predict particularly the future. We don't really know. We don't even know if this upheaval, this tsunami that hit the Arab world -- look a man in Tunisia sets himself ablaze in a forgotten, forlorn Tunisian town and then you see the envy of Tunis, the Tunisia envy, if you will, in every Arab county.

What you have are these decadent regimes, autocratic regimes ruled by old men, ruled by people who loot these countries, whether it's Libya, whether it's Syria, whether it's Algeria, whether it's Tunisia, whether it's Egypt. Those are a band of regimes ruled by a man at the top with dynastic ambitions for their families, an incredible access to the treasures of the land, and a kind of cruelty toward the people. And I think the discrepancy between these young

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studies at Johns Hopkins University. Professor, thanks so much. We always learn from you and we hope to be learning for many, many more years. Thanks very much for coming.

AJAMI: Thank you very much, Wolf.

BLITZER: Let's go back to Anderson.

Anderson, you've been there now, what -- only a few hours, but give us your biggest impression.

COOPER: Yes. We flew in this morning. And it was interesting just flying in, obviously the airport is congested with people trying to get out. It's a little surreal to me coming into the place that everyone is trying to leave from. It's sort of -- I guess we're all pretty used to it here at CNN though.

But I talked to an American couple there who had been stuck for 48 hours. They were trying to get a flight to India. Finally, they just gave up. They were trying to -- decided to just go back into the city of Cairo. Not sure what they are going to do or how they are going to get out.

We now know the U.S. is going to start voluntary evacuations of American citizens on this day, on Monday, but again the organization is unclear. And it's really unclear, Wolf, what's going to happen over the next couple of hours. Really as Ben Wedeman said earlier, this is happening so fast, no one can really predict, Wolf.

BLITZER: It's really going to be fluid and we're going to watch it every step of the way.

Anderson, thanks so much.

Isha, thanks to you.

CNN will have complete coverage. CNN International as well. Stay with us for all the latest developments on the uprising in Egypt. Thanks very much for watching.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)