

PROMOTING STABILITY OR FUELING CONFLICT?

THE IMPACT OF U.S. ARMS SALES ON
NATIONAL AND GLOBAL SECURITY

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Executive Summary

Following Saudi Arabia's recent decision to cut oil production, a move that will raise prices in the West and is widely seen as a slight to the United States, two Democratic lawmakers have called for a freeze in all arms sales and military support to the Kingdom.¹ For years, U.S. politicians and commentators have claimed that American support for Saudi Arabia — which includes providing 70 percent of its weapons and technical support that its air force relies on to conduct its bombing campaign against Yemen — is necessary to ensure the Kingdom will provide stable energy supplies and side with the United States in geopolitical disputes. But the latest Saudi move has given the lie to these claims. It provides yet another urgent prompt to rethink U.S. arms transfer policies to Saudi Arabia and, in fact, around the world.

The administration needs to address a number of key issues if U.S. policy on arms sales is to be made consistent with long-term U.S. interests. The key policy consideration is how to restrict sales to those that will help allies defend themselves without provoking arms races or increasing the prospects for conflict. Of particular note, the Australia-UK-U.S., or AUKUS submarine deal will benefit U.S. contractors but risks fueling arms competition and increasing tensions with China.

Aid designed to help Ukraine defend itself from Russia has proceeded at the most rapid pace of any U.S. military assistance program since at least the peak of the Vietnam War. But the United States has failed to offer an accompanying diplomatic strategy aimed at ending the war before it evolves into a long, grinding conflict or escalates into a direct U.S.-Russian confrontation.

Finally, Washington needs to take steps to ensure that the financial interests of a handful of weapons contractors do not drive critical U.S. arms export policy decisions.

¹ Mueller, Julia. "Democratic duo proposes banning arms to Saudi Arabia over OPEC cuts." *The Hill*, October 9, 2022.
<https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/3680496-democratic-duo-proposes-banning-arms-to-saudi-arabia-over-opec-cuts/>.

Of the \$101 billion in major arms offers since the Biden administration took office, over 58 percent involved weapons systems produced by four companies: Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon, and General Dynamics. The concentrated lobbying power of these companies — including a “revolving door” from the Pentagon’s arms sales agency and the leveraging of weapons export-related jobs into political influence — has been brought to bear in efforts to expand U.S. weapons exports to as many foreign clients as possible, often by helping to exaggerate threats.

A number of policy measures can be taken to increase the prospects that major sales will serve broader U.S. interests in peace and stability in key countries and regions, rather than undermine them:

- Restricting the revolving door between government and industry as a way to weaken the grip of weapons makers over arms transfer decision making.
- Making it possible for Congress to block dangerous weapons sales, through a revision to the Arms Export Control Act that would require an affirmative congressional vote on major deals — as opposed to the current system, which requires a veto-proof majority to block any arms sale.
- Providing greater transparency so Congress and the public know what sales are being made, when arms are being delivered, and how U.S. arms are being used. Without this level of information, it is virtually impossible for Congress or the public to fully assess the risks and consequences of U.S. arms transfers.
- Requiring better risk assessments by the Pentagon and State Department as to the likely impact of particular sales regarding arms race dynamics, fueling conflict, enabling of human rights abuses, or diversion of U.S.-supplied arms into the hands of U.S. adversaries, and hiring sufficient staff to carry out these analyses.

About the Author

William D. Hartung is a senior research fellow at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft. His work focuses on the arms industry and U.S. military budget. He was previously the director of the Arms and Security Program at the Center for International Policy and the co-director of the Center's Sustainable Defense Task Force. He is the author of *Prophets of War: Lockheed Martin and the Making of the Military-Industrial Complex* (Nation Books, 2011) and the co-editor, with Miriam Pemberton, of *Lessons from Iraq: Avoiding the Next War* (Paradigm Press, 2008). His previous books include *And Weapons for All* (HarperCollins, 1995), a critique of U.S. arms sales policies from the Nixon through Clinton administrations.

From July 2007 through March 2011, Mr. Hartung was the director of the Arms and Security Initiative at the New America Foundation. Prior to that, he served as the director of the Arms Trade Resource Center at the World Policy Institute. He also worked as a speechwriter and policy analyst for New York State Attorney General Robert Abrams. Hartung's articles on security issues have appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Nation*, and the *World Policy Journal*.

He has been a featured expert on national security issues on CBS 60 Minutes, NBC Nightly News, the PBS Newshour, CNN, Fox News, and scores of local, regional, and international radio outlets.

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I would like to thank Faezeh Fathizadeh and Nick Cleveland-Stout for providing research assistance during the production of this report. I am also grateful to my Quincy Institute colleagues Ben Freeman, Sarang Shidore, Lora Lumpe, Trita Parsi, Jessica Rosenblum and Marcus Stanley for providing useful comments along the way, and Jeff Abramson of the Forum on the Arms Trade and Elias Yousif of the Stimson Center for their invaluable feedback on the draft of the paper. — William D. Hartung

COVER PHOTO: U.S. Air Force munitions systems specialists, assigned to the 179th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, load AGM-88 HARM missiles onto a Block 50 F-16CM Fighting Falcon at Prince Sultan Air Base, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, June 11, 2022. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Master Sgt. Glen Flanagan).

Introduction

This paper assesses the security impacts of the Biden administration's approach to foreign arms sales. It takes into account the policies of prior administrations and the longstanding role of the United States as the world's leading arms exporting nation.

Issues addressed include the role of U.S. arms transfers in fueling conflict, enabling human rights abuses, and entangling the United States in unnecessary conflicts. The paper focuses particularly on transfers to Europe and Asia, in line with the "great power" focus of U.S. national security strategy; the security impacts of ongoing sales to the Middle East; and a discussion of the counterproductive effects of an overly militarized U.S. approach to counterterrorism policy in North Africa and the Sahel.

The role of weapons contractors in shaping — and profiting from — U.S. arms sales are also addressed, including the role of Raytheon in pressing for arms sales to Saudi Arabia despite its devastating use of U.S. weapons in Yemen. The paper concludes with recommendations on how to improve U.S. arms policy so that it aligns with the country's security interests, in part by reforming the arms sales decision making process.

The Biden policy in context

On arms sales, the Biden administration has shown more continuity than change relative to the policies of the prior two administrations. President Biden pledged during the 2020 presidential campaign that America would no longer "check its values at the door to sell arms."² In his first foreign policy speech he pledged to end U.S. support for

² Woods, Lauren. "Despite Rhetoric, Biden Is Continuing Trump's Weapons Sales." *War on the Rocks*, August 8, 2022.
<https://warontherocks.com/2022/08/despite-rhetoric-biden-is-continuing-trumps-weapons-sales/>.

offensive operations in Yemen, as well as relevant arms sales.³ The administration also suspended sales to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates pending a policy review, but aside from blocking one proposed bomb sale to Riyadh, its policy quickly reverted to the status quo ante.



U.S. President Joe Biden delivers remarks on arming Ukraine, after touring a Lockheed Martin weapons factory in Troy, Alabama, U.S. May 3, 2022. REUTERS/Jonathan Ernst.

The Biden administration has continued to arm reckless, repressive regimes — like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, Nigeria and the Philippines — that have acted in ways that undermine U.S. interests and risk entangling the United States in unnecessary conflicts. The potential impacts of sales to each of these nations are outlined below.

In assessing any administration's approach to arms transfers, it is important to note that the process of deciding on and supplying weapons can unfold over several years or

³ White House. "Remarks by President Biden on America's Place in the World." February 4, 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/02/04/remarks-by-president-biden-on-america-s-place-in-the-world/>.

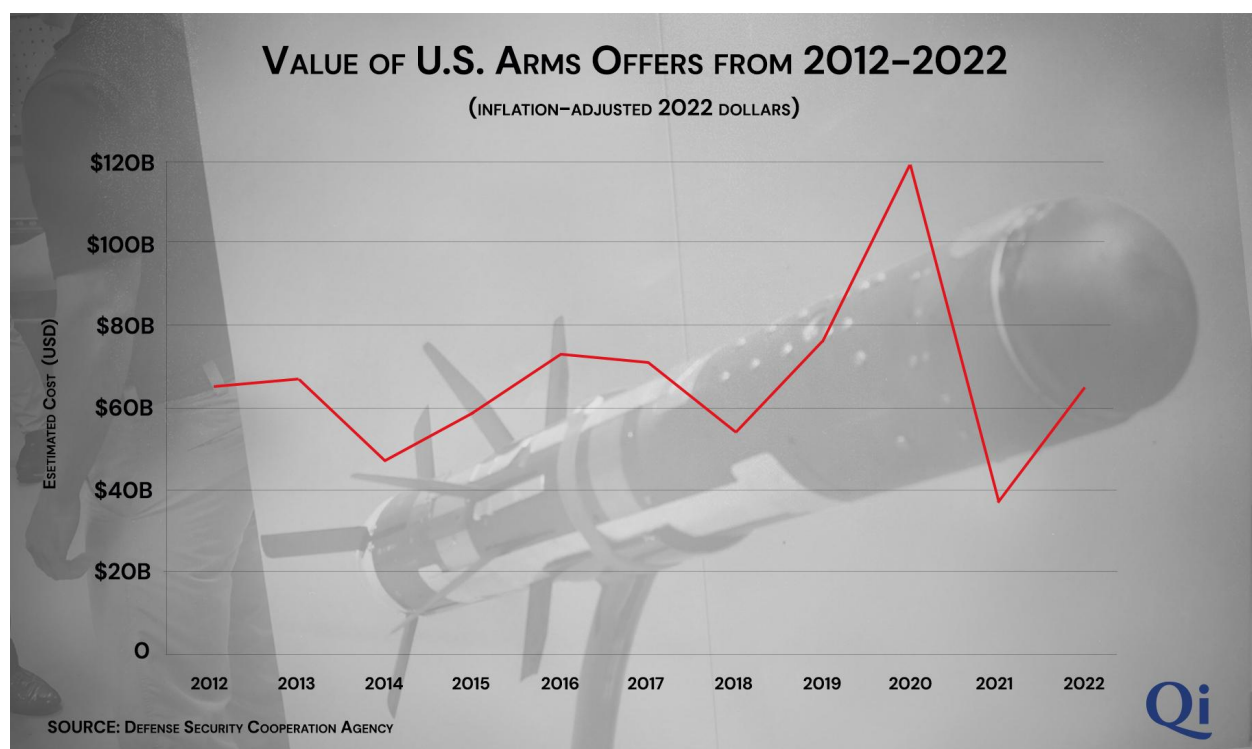
more. This means that deals offered under one administration may have had their roots in a prior one. However, the specific offers to the countries cited above received final sign off during the Biden years, meaning that the administration can and should be held accountable for the potential impact of these sales.

The analysis of the impacts of arms sales is further complicated by the differences in the two main channels of arms supply — government-to-government sales under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program and Direct Commercial Sales (DCS) licensed by the State Department. FMS offers give the U.S. government more input into the terms of the deal and include follow-on support like arranging the provision of spare parts, but they also include a 3 percent administrative surcharge that some suppliers and recipients prefer to avoid. Commercial sales involve direct negotiations between the supplying company and the recipient, offering the arms exporting firm more freedom to negotiate the price and to set the terms of supporting arrangements like co-production deals, which involve production of components of a weapons system in the recipient nation.⁴ Offers of major defense equipment under the FMS program are subject to detailed notifications to Congress that include the equipment offered, its anticipated dollar value, a brief description of its rationale, identification of the main contractors involved, and an indication of how many U.S. personnel may be deployed to the recipient country in support of the sale.

By contrast, DCS authorizations are poorly and haphazardly reported. The weapons systems are described only as a part of broad categories, with no indication of which authorizations eventuate in final sales or deliveries to client nations. For most of the data included in this paper, the totals reflect only FMS deals. This channel includes most sales of major systems like military aircraft, armored vehicles, artillery, missiles, and combat ships.

⁴ Gilman, Derek. "A Comparison of Foreign Military Sales Versus Direct Commercial Sales." Defense Security Cooperation Agency, September 30, 2014.
https://www.dsca.mil/sites/default/files/final-fms-dcs_30_sep.pdf.

U.S. arms offers showed a sharp drop in the first year of the Biden administration, to \$36 billion, down from \$110.9 billion in the final year of the Trump administration.⁵ This drop may have been partly due to a less aggressive approach to arms sales promotion, but was more likely the consequence of market saturation caused by the huge volume of deals concluded during the Obama and Trump administrations. Offers have shown a major uptick in 2022, to \$65 billion as of October.⁶ This is due in part to increases in sales to Europe and Asia tied to the Pentagon's focus on "great power competition" with Russia and China.



The administration's approach to arms sales going forward might be clarified once it releases its long-delayed policy directive on the issue. At a minimum, the release of the document will offer an opportunity for additional congressional and public debate

⁵ Hartung, William D., and Elias Yousif, "U.S. Arm Sales Trends 2020 and Beyond: From Trump to Biden." *Security Assistance Monitor*. Center for International Policy, April 2021. <https://securityassistance.org/publications/u-s-arms-sales-trends-2020-and-beyond-from-trump-to-biden/> and "Major Arms Sales Notifications Tracker." *Forum on the Arms Trade*, 2022. <https://www.forumarmstrade.org/major-arms-sales-notifications-tracker.html>.

⁶ "Major Arms Sales Notifications Tracker."

regarding the consequences of U.S. weapons exports and what criteria should be used in deciding which nations to arm.

The U.S. role in the global arms trade

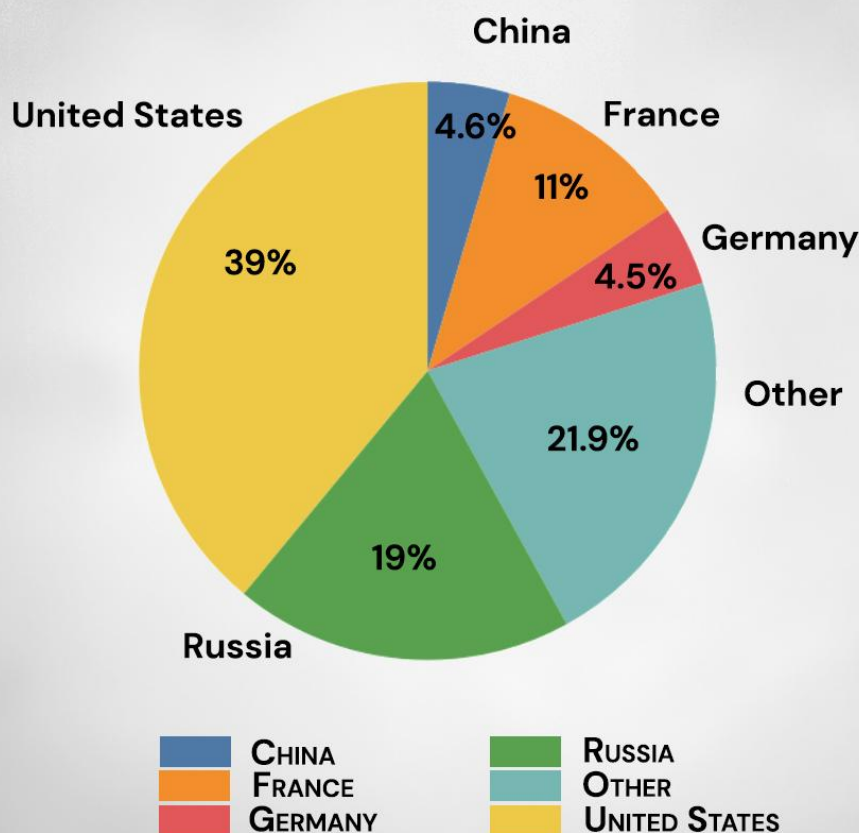
The United States accounted for 39 percent of major weapons deliveries for the five-year period from 2017–21, according to figures compiled by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). This is twice as large as Russia's share of the market, and over eight times China's share.⁷

Arms sales can also pose risks to U.S. security by fueling conflicts, provoking U.S. adversaries, stoking arms races, and drawing the U.S. into unnecessary or counterproductive wars.

Advocates of weapons exports promote sales by claiming they help U.S. allies provide for their own defense, stabilize key regions, deter U.S. adversaries, build U.S. military-to-military relationships with current and potential partner nations, provide political and diplomatic influence, and create jobs in the United States. But arms sales can also pose risks to U.S. security by fueling conflicts, provoking U.S. adversaries, stoking arms races, and drawing the U.S. into unnecessary or counterproductive wars. U.S. sales can also enable human rights abuses by partner nations; these often provoke a backlash and increase the ability of terrorist groups to recruit. Too often, arms sales decisions are driven as much or more by the parochial interests of defense contractors as they are by security considerations.

⁷ Wezeman, Pieter D., Alexandra Kuimova, and Siemon T. Wezeman, "Trends in International Arms Sales, 2021." Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, March 2022. <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2022/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-international-arms-transfers-2021>.

MARKET SHARES OF GLOBAL ARMS MARKET 2017-2021



SOURCE: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

Qi

Current U.S. arms policy and practice too often fuel war rather than deterring it. Roughly two-thirds of current conflicts — 34 out of 46 — involve one or more parties armed by the United States.⁸ In some cases U.S. arms sales to combatants in these wars are modest, while in others they play a major role in fueling and sustaining the conflict. Of the U.S.-supplied nations at war, 15 received \$50 million or more worth of U.S. arms

⁸ Davis, Ian, and Claudia Pfeifer Cruz. "Global Developments in Armed Conflict, Peace Processes, and Peace Operations." *SIPRI Yearbook 2022; Armaments, Disarmament, and International Security*, Oxford University Press, 2022, pp. 27-28. Data on U.S. arms transfers to countries in conflict is from U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), "Historical Sales Book, Fiscal Years 1950 to 2021." https://www.dsca.mil/sites/default/files/dsca_historical_sales_book_FY21.pdf.

between 2017 and 2021. This contradicts the longstanding argument that U.S. arms routinely promote stability and deter conflict. While some U.S. transfers are used for legitimate defensive purposes, others exacerbate conflicts, increase tensions, and fuel regional arms races. There is a pronounced lack of transparency about the role of U.S. arms in many of these wars, but the fact that U.S. weapons are going to so many conflict zones is a concern in its own right, and demands better tracking of the precise role of U.S.-supplied equipment.

The United States also routinely sells to undemocratic regimes, many of which commit major human rights abuses. As of 2021, the most recent year for which full statistics are available, the U.S. has provided weapons and training to 31 nations that Freedom House has defined as “not free.”⁹ Arming these kinds of governments runs contrary to the Biden administration’s commitment to support “democracy” over “autocracy.” As Asli Bali noted in a Quincy Institute issue brief, “What is needed is not selective human rights conditionality but an end to arms sales to abusive regimes.”¹⁰ A number of cases where this approach may apply are outlined below.

Table 1: Countries at War that Received \$50 Million or More of U.S. Weapons between 2017 and 2021

Country	Type of Conflict	Value of Arms Supplied (USD)
Afghanistan	Major War	\$9.1 billion
Brazil	High Intensity	\$221.9 million
Colombia	High Intensity	\$232.8 million
Egypt	High Intensity	\$3.7 billion

⁹ Repucci, Sarah and Amy Slipowitz. “Freedom in the World 2022: The Global Expansion of Authoritarian Rule.” Freedom House, 2022.

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2022/global-expansion-authoritarian-rule>

¹⁰ Bali, Asli. “The Humanitarian Paradox: Why Human Rights Require Restraint.” Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, August 1, 2022.

<https://quincyinst.org/report/the-humanitarian-paradox-why-human-rights-require-restraint/>.

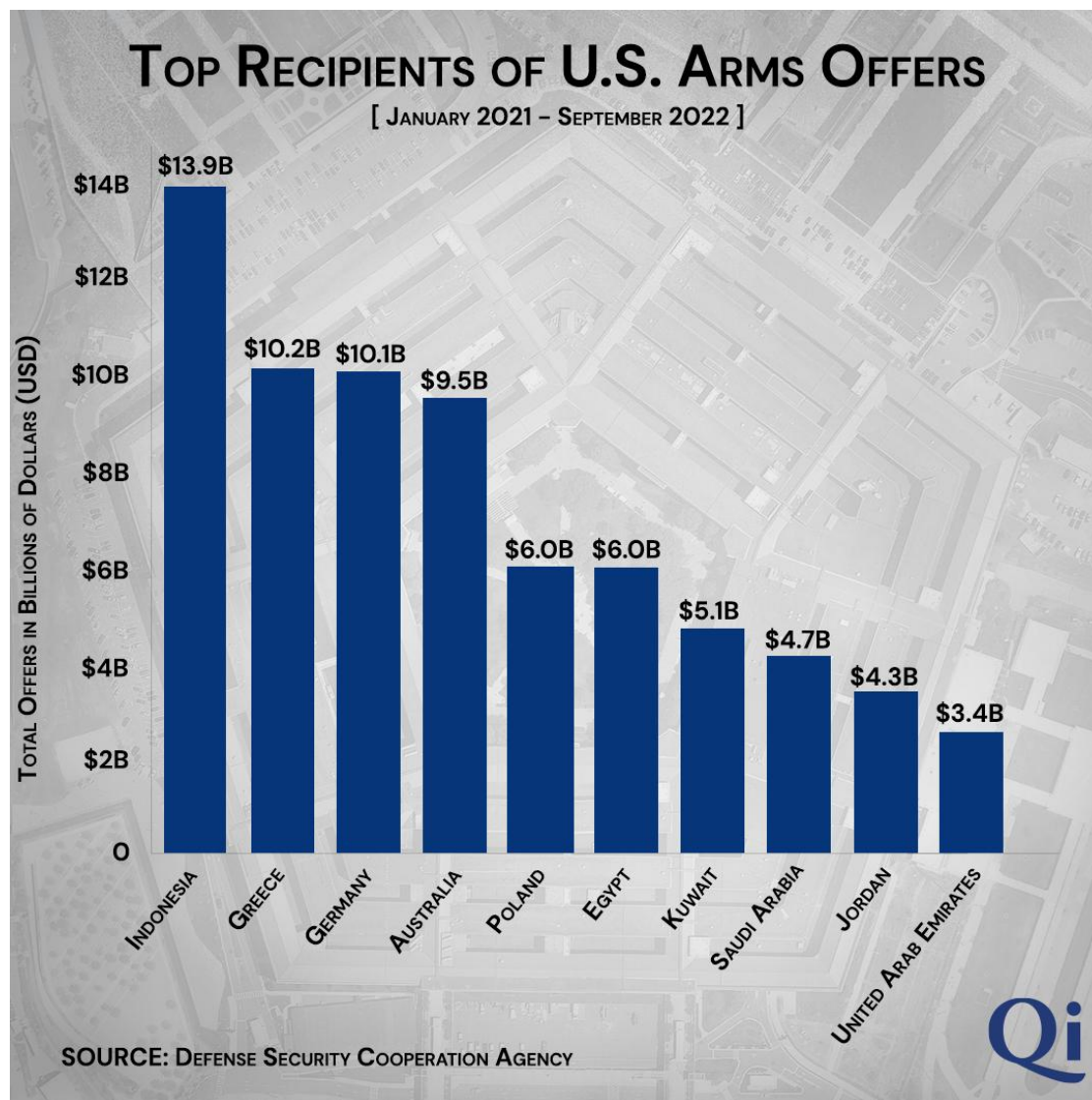
Israel	Low Intensity	\$7.1 billion
Kenya	High Intensity	\$168.3 million
Lebanon	High Intensity	\$500.5 million
Mexico	Low Intensity	\$90.5 million
Nigeria	Low Intensity	\$503.9 million
Philippines	Low Intensity	\$521.9 million
Saudi Arabia*	Major War	\$34.5 billion
Thailand	Low Intensity	\$753.7 million
Turkey	High Intensity	\$724 million
UAE*	Major War	\$9 billion
Ukraine**	High Intensity	\$1.6 billion

* Parties to war in Yemen

** Figures prior to February 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine

SOURCES: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, SIPRI Yearbook 2022, chapter 2; Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project; and U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Security Cooperation Agency. Conflict intensity is defined as follows: major war, 10,000 or more fatalities in a year; high intensity war, 1,000 to 9,999 fatalities in a year; low intensity war, 25 to 999 fatalities in a year.

A roster of the top recipients of U.S. arms offers under the Biden administration is below.



U.S. sales to nations at war: The case of the greater Middle East

While the center of gravity for U.S. arms sales is beginning to shift from the Middle East to Europe and East Asia, the recent history of weapons transfers to the Middle East underscores the risk of using arms sales as a central instrument of foreign and military policies. Not only do U.S. arms sales fail to provide influence, as alleged, but they can destabilize entire regions and increase the risk of the United States being drawn, directly

or indirectly, into conflicts that do not serve its strategic interests, or staying involved in conflicts long after U.S. involvement has become counterproductive.

Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the war in Yemen

The Saudi-led intervention in Yemen has gone on for more than seven years, at great cost to human life and regional stability. The United States has been the primary weapons supplier to Saudi Arabia and the UAE — the two main players in a coalition that has been fighting the Houthi-led opposition in the Yemen war. The Houthi coalition is an indigenous political movement with longstanding grievances that predate the current war, not merely an Iranian proxy force, as is sometimes claimed.¹¹

There was a fragile truce in the Yemen war that began in April of 2022, but it expired on October 2, raising fears of renewed fighting.¹²

Since 2015, the United States has provided tens of billions of dollars in arms and military support to the Saudi and UAE regimes, much of it for systems that have been used in Yemen. According to a June 2022 Government Accountability Office report, the United States administered over \$54 billion in arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE from 2015 — the first year of the Yemen war — through 2021.¹³ For the five years from FY 2017 to FY 2021 — the period for which full breakdowns are available — sales to

¹¹ Juneau, Thomas. “No, Yemen’s Houthis Aren’t Iranian Puppets.” *Washington Post*, May 16, 2016. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/05/16/contrary-to-popular-belief-houthis-arent-iranian-proxies/>.

¹² Al Haj, Ahmed. “Yemen’s Warring Parties Fail to Extend UN-backed Truce.” Associated Press, October 2, 2022. <https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-united-nations-yemen-civil-wars-sanaa-ba7d97673e3330ba85a34e6b11560c31>.

¹³ United States Government Accountability Office. “Yemen: State and DoD Need Better Information on Civilian Impacts of U.S. Support to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.” GAO Report, June 15, 2022. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-22-105988#:~:text=What%20GAO%20Found,fiscal%20years%202015%20through%202021>.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE accounted for 17 percent of total sales under the U.S. government's Foreign Military Sales program.¹⁴

The consequences of the war in Yemen have been disastrous. More than 24,000 people have died in indiscriminate air strikes, including nearly 9,000 civilians, tied to the bombing of targets like marketplaces, water treatment facilities, hospitals, a school bus, a wedding, and even a funeral.¹⁵ Many of these attacks have been carried out by the Saudi Royal Air Force using U.S.-supplied munitions and aircraft. According to a joint investigation by the *Washington Post* and the Security Force Monitor at Columbia Law School, "a substantial number of the raids were carried out by jets developed, maintained, and sold by U.S. companies, and by pilots that were trained by the U.S. military."¹⁶

"For as many bad guys that we kill with this strategy, we create two more. Ultimately, our involvement is making the United States less safe as we create conditions that radicalize a generation of young Middle Easterners against us." — Sen. Chris Murphy

The toll of the war on the people of Yemen has gone well beyond the impact of the bombing campaign. A Saudi-led air and sea blockade has impeded the import of critical items like fuel, food and medical supplies, pushing Yemen to the brink of famine and resulting in the deaths of nearly 400,000 people.¹⁷ Not only has the Yemen war

¹⁴ Defense Security Cooperation Agency. "Historical Sales Book, Fiscal Year 1950 through 2021." Department of Defense, Fiscal Year 2021.
https://www.dsca.mil/sites/default/files/dsca_historical_sales_book_FY21.pdf.

¹⁵ Lee, Joyce Sohyun, Meg Kelly, and Atthar Mirza. "Saudi-led Airstrikes in Yemen Have Been Called War Crimes. Many Relied on U.S. Support." *Washington Post*, June 4, 2022.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/interactive/2022/saudi-war-crimes-yemen/>.

¹⁶ Lee, Joyce Sohyun, et al. *Washington Post*, June 4, 2022.

¹⁷ Al Jazeera Staff. "Yemen War Deaths Will Reach 377,000 By End of the Year: UN." *Al Jazeera*, November 23, 2021.

brought immense suffering, it has also sparked instability in the region and fostered resentment towards the United States that has undermined its ability to achieve its strategic objectives. Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT) has discussed the negative security impacts of U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia:

“There is a U.S. imprint on each of these civilian deaths. As the humanitarian nightmare worsens, it also provides the fuel to recruit young men into terrorist organizations such as al Qaeda and ISIS, which have been able to thrive in the power vacuum created by the war. For as many bad guys that we kill with this strategy, we create two more. Ultimately, our involvement is making the United States less safe as we create conditions that radicalize a generation of young Middle Easterners against us.”¹⁸

Now that the truce in the Yemen war has ended, the United States must press Saudi Arabia and other involved parties to engage in good faith negotiations for a peace agreement. Toward that end, over 100 members of the House of Representatives are supporting a Yemen War Powers Resolution (WPR) introduced by representatives Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) and Peter DeFazio (D-OR).¹⁹ A companion measure has been introduced in the Senate by Senators Bernie Sanders (D-VT), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA). The resolutions would stop U.S. military support for Saudi Arabia, including spare parts and maintenance that sustain the Saudi war machine. As Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA), a co-sponsor of the House WPR, has noted, “The clearest and

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/23/un-yemen-recovery-possible-in-one-generation-if-war-stops-now>.

¹⁸ Murphy, Chris. “U.S. Is Enabling War That is Making Yemen a Hell on Earth for Civilians.” CNN, December 6, 2018.

<https://www.cnn.com/2018/12/06/opinions/us-involvement-yemen-war-murphy-opinion>.

¹⁹ Jayapal, Pramila, and Mark Pocan. “Why We Intend to Pass a New Yemen War Powers Resolution.” *The Nation*, February 7, 2022. <https://www.thenation.com/article/world/yemen-wars-power-resolution/>.

best way to press all sides to the negotiating table is for Congress to immediately invoke its constitutional war powers to end U.S. involvement in this conflict.”²⁰

Now that the truce in the Yemen war has ended, the United States must press Saudi Arabia and other involved parties to engage in good faith negotiations for a peace agreement.

Despite these congressional initiatives and its own early statements on sales to the Gulf States, in July 2022 the Biden administration took a further step towards resuming and even expanding U.S. military support for the Saudi regime when the president met with de facto Saudi leader Mohammed Bin Salman and pledged closer security ties. The final communique from the meeting, which was held under the auspices of the Gulf Cooperation Council, made no new formal commitments but spoke of “deepening security ties” between the United States and its Gulf partners. It also affirmed the “United States’ commitment to its strategic partnership with GCC member states” and its pledge to “work jointly with its partners in the GCC to deter and confront all external threats to their security.”²¹

²⁰ White House Press Release. “Members of Congress Introduce Bipartisan War Powers Resolution.” White House, June 1, 2022.

<https://progressives.house.gov/2022/6/members-of-congress-introduce-bipartisan-war-powers-resolution-to-end-unauthorized-u-s-involvement-in-saudi-war-in-yemen>; “Sanders, Leahy and Warren Introduce War Powers Resolution to End U.S. Involvement in Saudi War in Yemen.” Press Release, July 14, 2022. <https://www.sanders.senate.gov/press-releases/news-sanders-leahy-and-warren-introduce-war-powers-resolution-to-end-u-s-involvement-in-saudi-war-in-yemen/>.

²¹ White House Press Briefing. “Joint Statement Following the Summit of the Leaders of the United States and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries.” White House, July 16, 2022. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/07/16/joint-statement-following-the-summit-of-the-leaders-of-the-united-states-and-the-gulf-cooperation-council-gcc-countries/>.



Three F-15 Eagles and two Eurofighter Typhoons with the Royal Saudi Air Force escort a U.S. Air Force 23rd Expeditionary Bomb Squadron B-52H Stratofortress over Saudi Arabia in support of a Bomber Task Force mission, Sep. 4, 2022. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Michael A. Richmond).

Shortly after the president's visit, on August 2, 2022, the Pentagon announced offers of missile defense systems to Saudi Arabia and the UAE worth over \$5 billion in total. And in mid-July the administration announced an offer of sustainment services for the UAE's U.S.-supplied C-17 transport planes worth almost \$1 billion (see appendix for details on sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE during the Biden administration). There have also been reports that the administration might lift its suspension on the transfer of offensive weapons to Saudi Arabia, reports that administration officials have so far been denied but appear to be discussing internally.²² These reports come alongside the Biden administration's continuing failure to define what it means by an "offensive" versus

²² Spetalnick, Matt, Aziz El Yaakoubi, and Mike Stone. "Exclusive: U.S. Weighs Resumption of Offensive Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia, Sources Say." Reuters, July 11, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/exclusive-us-weighs-possible-resumption-offensive-arms-sales-saudis-sources-2022-07-11/>.

“defensive” weapons, as noted in a recent report by the Government Accountability Office.²³ The distinction between offensive and defensive weapons can be hard to draw, as it can have as much to do with how the weapons are likely to be used as it does with the qualities of the weapons themselves.

The administration’s arms sales to the Gulf states come against the backdrop of efforts to strengthen a coalition of those nations with Israel, in part under the rubric of the Trump administration–sponsored Abraham Accords. These could just as easily be dubbed the “arms sales accords” given U.S. weapons offers to the region since they were initiated in September 2020 Saudi Arabia is not a formal signatory to the accords but has moved closer to Israel in parallel to their creation.²⁴ As Trita Parsi, Quincy Institute co-founder and executive vice president, has noted, this focus on arms sales over diplomacy could also undermine the future of the Iran nuclear deal and sideline prospects of an improvement of relations with Tehran:

“The United States cannot expect an arms control agreement with Iran to endure if it simultaneously seeks to expand the Abraham Accords into an anti-Iran military alliance and to provide ever more sophisticated weapons systems to Iran’s regional rivals. Cementing regional divisions and intensifying Iranian suspicions about its neighbors will only give Iran new incentives to cheat on the agreement and pursue a nuclear deterrent.”²⁵

The administration’s “reset” of relations with Saudi Arabia is a far cry from Biden’s description of Saudi Arabia as a “pariah state” on the campaign trail.²⁶ The new policy has been rationalized by a desire to encourage the Saudi regime to pump more oil to offset the impacts of sanctions on Russia, as well as a renewed impetus for building an

²³ Government Accountability Office. June 15, 2022.

²⁴ Hartung, William D. “Don’t Let the Abraham Accords Become the Arms Sales Accords.” CNN, October 4, 2020. <https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/04/opinions/abraham-accords-hartung/index.html>.

²⁵ Parsi, Trita. “Last Chance For America and Iran.” *Foreign Affairs*, August 26, 2022. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/iran/last-chance-america-and-iran-new-nuclear-deal?check_logged_in=1.

²⁶ Sanger, David E. “Candidate Biden Called Saudi Arabia a ‘Pariah.’ Now He Has to Deal With It.” *New York Times*, February 24, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/24/us/politics/biden-jamal-khashoggi-saudi-arabia.html>.

alliance against Iran. As suggested above, more arms sales to Saudi Arabia are likely to flow from these new arrangements.

Saudi Arabia is extremely unlikely to increase its oil exports in response to requests from the Biden administration.²⁷ In fact, in September of 2022, OPEC – in which Saudi Arabia wields substantial influence – announced that it would be *reducing* oil output. Saudi Arabia has also been purchasing oil from Russia in contravention of sanctions on Moscow tied to its invasion of Ukraine.²⁸ In early October, the Saudi government joined hands with Russia to push through a greater reduction in oil production likely to increase inflation in energy prices in the United States and globally. As Rep. Ro Khanna (D-CA) and Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) noted in an essay co-authored with Jeffrey Sonnenfeld of the Yale School of Management, “The Saudi decision was a pointed blow to the U.S., but the U.S. also has a way to respond: It can promptly pause the massive transfer of American warfare technology into the eager hands of the Saudis.”²⁹

The Biden administration has pledged that there will be “consequences” due to Saudi collaboration with Russia on oil output, but it has yet to specify what those consequences may be.³⁰

It is not clear whether the current controversy over arming Saudi Arabia will impact the administration’s efforts to use arms sales to facilitate the creation of a political and military bloc against Iran centered on Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. Creating such a

²⁷ Skibell, Arianna. “Biden’s Saudi Trip Won’t Help Gas Prices.” *Politico*, July 11, 2022. <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/power-switch/2022/07/11/what-to-expect-from-bidens-saudi-trip-00045109>.

²⁸ Krauss, Clifford. “Ostracized By the West, Russia Finds a Partner in Saudi Arabia.” *New York Times*, September 14, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/14/business/energy-environment/russia-saudi-oil-putin-mbs.html#:~:text=In%20April%2C%20Saudi%20Arabia%20and%20other%20countries%20at%20elevated%20prices>.

²⁹ Blumenthal, Richard, Ro Khanna, and Jeffrey Sonnenfeld. “The Best Way to Respond to Saudi Arabia’s Embrace of Putin.” *Politico*, October 9, 2022. <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2022/10/09/the-u-s-has-leverage-over-saudi-arabia-its-time-to-use-it-00061082>.

³⁰ Northam, Jackie. “The White House Accuses Saudi Arabia of Aiding Russia and Coercing OPEC Oil Producers.” National Public Radio, October 13, 2022. <https://www.npr.org/2022/10/13/1128523146/saudi-arabia-russia-opec-oil-cut-biden-congress-washington>

bloc will only increase the risks of a war with Iran while undermining diplomatic efforts, brokered by Iraq, to cool tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The arms industry has mounted a concerted effort to tilt U.S. policy toward selling the full spectrum of U.S. weapons to Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

For its part, the UAE has been the primary partner of Saudi Arabia in the Yemen war, but its role has received considerably less attention. In February 2020, the UAE announced that it had pulled most of its troops out of Yemen, but it continues to arm, train and back militias involved in the war, which total 90,000 members in all. The UAE-backed militias have been implicated in abuses ranging from indiscriminate artillery shelling to torture to recruitment of child soldiers.³¹ The UAE has also enforced a de facto occupation of Socotra Island, a Yemeni possession in the Gulf of Aden, establishing a strong political and economic presence there and setting up a military base in pursuit of potential control over vital sea traffic and expanding its already considerable influence in the Horn of Africa.³² Giorgio Cafiero of Gulf State Analytics has summarized UAE's role on Socotra:

"Socotra has become an Emirati possession in all but name, with the UAE seeking to systematically separate it from Yemen and run it as its own territory —

³¹ Hartung, William D. "Fueling Conflict: U.S. Arms Sales to the United Arab Emirates and the U.S./UAE Military Alliance." Center for International Policy, January 2021.
https://3ba8a190-62da-4c98-86d2-893079d87083.usrfiles.com/ugd/3ba8a1_2186f64c26724d5182d3cf33dccc26687.pdf; Hartung, William D., and Elias Yousif. "The UAE's Role in the Yemen War, 2015 to Present." *Security Assistance Monitor*, December 2020.

<https://securityassistance.org/publications/issue-brief-the-uaes-role-in-the-yemen-war-2015-to-present/>; United Nations Human Rights Council. "Situation of Human Rights in Yemen, Including Violations and Abuses Since September 2014." September 29, 2020.
<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/GEE-Yemen/A-HRC45-CRP.7-en.pdf>.

³² Cafiero, Giorgio. "The UAE's Expansionist Agenda in Yemen is Playing Out on Socotra." *Democracy in the Arab World Now (DAWN)*, April 8, 2022.
<https://dawnmena.org/the-uaes-expansionist-agenda-in-yemen-is-playing-out-on-socotra/#:~:text=Socotra%20has%20become%20an%20Emirati,against%20Houthi%20rebels%20in%202015.>

part of its expansive agenda in Yemen following its intervention against Houthi rebels in 2015.”³³

In addition to issues related to the war in Yemen, selling arms to the UAE endorses or enables its reckless conduct in the Middle East and North Africa, including its role in arming the opposition forces of Gen. Khalifa Hiftar in Libya in violation of a U.N. arms embargo.³⁴

The arms industry has mounted a concerted effort to tilt U.S. policy toward selling the full spectrum of U.S. weapons to Saudi Arabia and the UAE (see section below on Raytheon’s lobbying for bomb sales to Saudi Arabia).

In addition to the risk of further embroiling the United States in current and potential Middle East conflicts, U.S. arms transferred to the region also frequently end up inadvertently in the hands of U.S. adversaries, where they may be used against U.S. allies or even U.S. military personnel. Examples include Yemen, where the Pentagon lost track of \$500 million in weapons supplied to the dictatorship of Ali Abdullah Saleh.³⁵ The arms were believed to have ended up either with Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula or the Houthi-led opposition that has been fighting the U.S.-backed Saudi-UAE coalition that invaded Yemen in March 2015. In addition, as CNN and independent analysts have documented, the UAE transferred U.S.-supplied weapons — including Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles— to extremist militias fighting in Yemen.³⁶ The UAE suffered no consequences for its mishandling of the U.S. weapons, despite the fact that the transfers violated U.S. law.

³³ Cafiero, Giorgio. DAWN, April 8, 2022.

³⁴ Hartung, William D. “Transferring Arms to the UAE is Not in U.S. Security Interests.” Center for International Policy, April 2021.
https://3ba8a190-62da-4c98-86d2-893079d87083.usrfiles.com/ugd/3ba8a1_ae9ac6e13b0d47a4bff8facd3ce733a9.pdf.

³⁵ Whitlock, Craig. “Pentagon Loses Track of \$500 Million in Weapons, Equipment Given to Yemen.” *Washington Post*, March 17, 2015.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/pentagon-loses-sight-of-500-million-in-counter-terrorism-aid-given-to-yemen/2015/03/17/f4ca25ce-cbf9-11e4-8a46-b1dc9be5a8ff_story.html.

³⁶ Elbagir, Nima, Salma Abdelaziz, Mohamed Abo El Gheit, and Laura Smith-Spark, “Sold to an Ally, Lost to an Enemy.” CNN, May 22, 2020.
<https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2019/02/middleeast/yemen-lost-us-arms/>.

Egypt

The United States has provided or offered over \$9.4 billion in weapons to the el-Sisi regime since it came to power in a military coup in 2013 – all financed by grants provided annually by the U.S. Congress as payment for making peace with Israel in the 1979 Camp David Accords.³⁷

The el-Sisi regime has taken numerous positions contrary to U.S. interests. These include supporting the Assad regime in Syria; aiding rebel forces fighting against the internationally recognized government in Libya; backing anti-democratic military leaders in Sudan; and building military ties with Russia through arms sales, military exercises, and a security agreement.³⁸ The notion that the United States should look the other way rather than risk destabilizing the Camp David Accords, the 1979 U.S.–brokered peace agreement between Israel and Egypt, no longer holds up to scrutiny. It is in Egypt's interest to maintain political and security relations with Israel whether or not it receives billions of dollars in U.S. arms transfers and military aid.³⁹ Andrew Miller, a former Obama administration State Department and National Security Council official whose portfolio included Egypt and Israel, underscored this point:

“The Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty is no longer dependent on U.S. mediation or intervention. Egypt has no interest in conflict with Israel, which has become one of Cairo's most important regional partners. In fact, Egypt has allowed Israel to conduct airstrikes on Egyptian territory against mutual enemies, something that was unthinkable 40 years ago.”⁴⁰

³⁷ Forum on the Arms Trade. “Major Arms Sales Notifications Tracker,” 2022. <https://www.forumarmstrade.org/major-arms-sales-notifications-tracker.html>; Major Arms Sales. Defense Security Cooperation Agency, 2022. <https://www.dsca.mil/press-media/major-arms-sales>.

³⁸ Major Arms Sales. 2022.

³⁹ Miller, Andrew. “Commentary: Five myths about U.S. aid to Egypt.” Reuters, August 13, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-miller-egypt-commentary/commentary-five-myths-about-u-s-aid-to-egypt-idUSKBN1KY1WJ>.

⁴⁰ Miller, Andrew. Reuters, August 13, 2018.

Rep. Tom Malinowski (D-NJ) has summarized the high costs and minimal benefits of U.S. security assistance to Egypt as follows:

“In exchange for the favors that Egypt gets from the White House, they don’t actually do anything for us. This is not a situation where we are trading off human rights for something that advances the U.S. national interest. Egypt...contributes nothing to the goals of peace and security... [U.S. arms transfers] do absolutely nothing to benefit Egyptian security or ours.”⁴¹

The el-Sisi regime is widely regarded as the most repressive in Egypt’s history. Its security forces have gunned down unarmed demonstrators, jailed thousands of political opponents and human rights defenders, and used torture. Its military has waged a scorched earth counter-terror campaign in the northern Sinai that has killed civilians and driven thousands of people from their homes.⁴²

Recent U.S. arms offers run counter to President Biden’s pledge on the campaign trail of “no blank checks for Trump’s favorite dictator.” A growing number of non-governmental organizations and members of Congress pressed the administration to withhold \$300 million in military aid to Egypt to pressure Cairo into improving its dismal human rights record, but the administration decided to withhold only \$130 million.⁴³ Scaling back or eliminating U.S. military support for Egypt should be a central feature of U.S. policy going forward, given the el-Sisi regime’s human rights record and its foreign policy positions that don’t align with U.S. interests in the Middle East.

⁴¹ Malinowski, Tom. “Al-Sisi in Washington: Egyptian President Seeks Support for Power Grab.” Capitol Hill Forum, beginning at 28:05 of recording, April 9, 2019. <https://pomed.org/event/sisiindc/>.

⁴² Hartung, William D., and Seth Binder. “U.S. Security Assistance to Egypt: Examining the Return on Investment.” Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED) and Center for International Policy, May 5, 2020. <https://pomed.org/report-u-s-security-assistance-to-egypt-examining-the-return-on-investment/>.

⁴³ Wong, Edward, and Vivian Yee. “U.S. to Move Forward on Military Aid to Egypt Despite Lawmakers’ Concerns.” *New York Times*, September 14, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/14/us/politics/egypt-military-aid-biden.html>. “Egypt Human Rights Caucus Co-Chairs Statement on U.S. Military Assistance to Egypt.” Press release, office of Rep. Don Beyer (D-VA), September 27, 2022. <https://beyer.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=5682>.

Israel

Arms transfers to Israel will continue at a brisk pace as it works through a 10 year, \$37 billion U.S. military aid pledge made in 2016, with an eye towards preserving its “qualitative military edge” over other Middle East states.⁴⁴ In May 2021 the Biden administration introduced an offer to Israel of JDAMs — guidance kits that convert existing unguided bombs into precision-guided “smart” munitions — just days before a major military operation in Gaza. The administration did not hold back the sale or condition it on an end to the fighting.⁴⁵

Continuing to provide large quantities of military aid to Israel in the absence of a diplomatic strategy to promote peace between Israel and the Palestinians is a recipe for perpetuating a conflict that will continue to destabilize the region. Given Israel’s continued occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, its ongoing settlement expansion, and its own growing military capabilities, the question is whether continuing to provide billions in annual, unconditional military assistance aligns with U.S. interests.⁴⁶ The United States has continued to provide military aid to Israel despite its military’s long history of carrying out attacks on Gaza that have been disproportionate, causing

⁴⁴ Horton, Jake. “Israel-Gaza: How Much Money Does Israel Get From the US?” BBC, May 24, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/57170576>; Baker, Peter and, and Julie Hirschfeld Davis, “U.S. Finalizes Deal to Give Israel \$38 Billion in Military Aid.” *New York Times*, September 13, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/14/world/middleeast/israel-benjamin-netanyahu-military-aid.html>.

⁴⁵ Alemany, Jacqueline. “Biden Administration Approves \$735 Million Weapons Sale to Israel, Raising Red Flags for Some House Democrats.” *Washington Post*, May 17, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/05/17/power-up-biden-administration-approves-735-million-weapons-sale-israel-raising-red-flags-some-house-democrats/>.

⁴⁶ Ruebner, Josh, Salih Booker, and Zaha Hassan. “Bringing Assistance to Israel in Line With Rights and U.S. Law.” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 12, 2021. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/05/12/bringing-assistance-to-israel-in-line-with-rights-and-u.s.-laws-pub-84503>.

thousands of deaths and immense civilian harm, far exceeding the severity and humanitarian impact of attacks by Hamas and other organizations on targets in Israel.⁴⁷

The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the upsurge of arms sales to Europe

U.S. arms sales to Europe are bound to increase in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as NATO fortifies its eastern flank. Despite Russia's relatively poor showing in combat in Ukraine, political and strategic concerns about potential future Russian aggression are likely to drive the market for larger systems like combat aircraft, tanks, and large anti-aircraft systems like the Patriot. Germany's sharp increase in military spending will offer opportunities to U.S. weapons contractors, as evidenced by the decision by Germany to strike an \$8.4 billion deal with Lockheed Martin for F-35s.⁴⁸ In July 2022 the Czech Republic announced its interest in buying U.S. F-35s over potential European-produced alternatives, another indication that U.S. firms may be the prime beneficiaries of increased military spending by NATO members spurred by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.⁴⁹ In early 2022 Poland was offered \$6 billion worth of General Dynamics M-1 tanks, a deal that will likely be accelerated in light of the Russian invasion.⁵⁰ One counter-trend was evidenced by Poland's decision to enter a massive

⁴⁷ 'Israel/Gaza Violence: The Conflict Explained.' BBC, August 8, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-44124396>; Bergman, Ronen, Patrick Kingsley, and Raja Abdulrahim. "Israel Strikes Gaza As Tensions Rise." *New York Times*, August 5, 2022 (update August 7th). <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/05/world/israel-gaza-airstrikes>; "The 2014 Israeli Attack on Gaza ("Operation Protective Edge") One Year Later." Institute for Middle East Understanding, July 8, 2015. <https://imeu.org/article/2014-israeli-attack-on-gaza-one-year-later>; "Israel/Gaza: "Operation 'Cast Lead': 22 Days of Death and Destruction." Amnesty International, July 2, 2009. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/mde150212009eng.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Defense Security Cooperation Agency. "Germany – F-35 Aircraft and Munitions." July 28, 2022. <https://www.dsca.mil/press-media/major-arms-sales/germany-f-35-aircraft-and-munitions>.

⁴⁹ Lopatka, Jan. "Czechs Want F-35 Fighter Jets, CV-90 Fighting Vehicles." Reuters, July 20, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/czechs-want-f-35-fighter-jets-cv-90-fighting-vehicles-media-says-2022-07-20/>.

⁵⁰ Defense Security Cooperation Agency. "Poland – M1A SEPv3 Main Battle Tank." February 17, 2022. <https://www.dsca.mil/press-media/major-arms-sales/poland-m1a2-sepv3-main-battle-tank>.

multi-billion dollar deal with South Korea for 50 fighter jets and 1,600 tanks and howitzers.⁵¹



Team Dover Airmen load pallets of ammunition onto a C-17 Globemaster III bound for Ukraine during a security assistance mission at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, Aug. 9, 2022. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Cydney Lee).

As of late August of 2022 the Biden administration's first two emergency aid packages in response to the Ukraine crisis had authorized in excess of \$23 billion for military purposes.⁵² In late September Congress passed an additional Ukraine aid package that contains \$8.2 billion for military purposes, including replenishment of U.S. stocks of systems already supplied to Ukraine, plus a boost in funding for the Ukraine Security

⁵¹ Smith, Josh. "Analysis: With Massive Polish Arms Deal SK Steps Closer to Ukraine War." Reuters, July 28, 2022.
<https://www.reuters.com/world/with-massive-polish-arms-deal-skorea-steps-closer-ukraine-war-2022-07-28/>.

⁵² Kheel, Rebecca. "\$20 Billion for the Pentagon to Arm Ukraine Gets First Approval in Congress." *Military.com*, May 11, 2022.
<https://www.military.com/daily-news/2022/05/11/20-billion-more-pentagon-arm-ukraine-gets-first-approval-congress.html>.

Assistance Initiative.⁵³ Foreign weapons sales–related spending will include hundreds of millions of dollars in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for NATO allies.

The United States has committed \$17.5 billion of the military aid authorized for Ukraine since Russia’s invasion on February 24, 2022.⁵⁴ Most of this assistance has been delivered quickly by drawing weapons from existing U.S. stocks. To put the aid committed so far in context, it surpasses the level of military aid provided over the peak year of U.S. assistance to Afghan Security Forces and is over four times the level of annual U.S. military aid to Israel.⁵⁵ The majority of the aid has come by way of Presidential Drawdown Authority, which involves direct transfers of weapons from existing U.S. stockpiles.⁵⁶ Items transferred through drawdown procedures include Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, Javelin anti-tank missiles, HIMARS long-range rocket systems, armed and surveillance drones, armored vehicles, and howitzers.⁵⁷

The United States has committed \$17.5 billion of the military aid authorized for Ukraine since Russia’s invasion on February 24, 2022.

A notable exception to the use of drawdown authority is a \$3 billion military aid package announced in late August 2022 and the emergency package approved by Congress in

⁵³ Williams, Jordan. “\$12.3 Billion for Ukraine Included in Continuing Resolution.” *The Hill*, September 27, 2022.

<https://thehill.com/policy/defense/3663008-12-3-billion-for-ukraine-included-in-continuing-resolution/>.

⁵⁴ U.S. Department of Defense, “Fact Sheet on U.S. Security Assistance to Ukraine.” October 4, 2022.

<https://media.defense.gov/2022/Oct/04/2003090857/-1/-1/0/UKRAINE-FACT-SHEET.PDF>.

⁵⁵ Yousif, Elias. “Ukraine to Set Record for U.S. Security Assistance.” Stimson Center, May 23 2022.

<https://www.stimson.org/2022/ukraine-to-set-record-for-u-s-security-assistance/>.

⁵⁶ Copp, Tara. “U.S. Details its Biggest Ukraine Arms Package Yet.” *Defense One*, August 24, 2022.

<https://www.defenseone.com/policy/2022/08/us-expected-announce-3b-more-arms-aid-ukraine-independence-day/376213/>.

⁵⁷ U.S. Department of Defense. “Fact Sheet on U.S. Security Assistance to Ukraine.” September 15, 2022.

<https://media.defense.gov/2022/Sep/16/2003078831/-1/-1/1/UKRAINE%20FACT%20SHEET%20e2%80%93%20SEP%2015.PDF>; Arabia, Christina L., Andrew S. Bowen, and Cory Welt. “U.S. Security Assistance to Ukraine.” Congressional Research Service, June 24, 2022 (Updated August 29, 2022). <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12040>.

late September, which came through the Pentagon's Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative and involved billions in assistance. This aid will provide funds for the Ukrainian government to buy equipment directly from U.S. weapons manufacturers, for systems that could take anywhere from one to three years to build and deliver.⁵⁸

So far the United States has not transferred systems like combat aircraft, in part to avoid escalation of the conflict to the level of a U.S.–Russia confrontation, and in part due to concerns about how long it would take to train Ukrainian pilots and establish a capability to sustain the systems. Defense Undersecretary for Policy Colin Kahl noted in a press briefing on August 24 that “fighter aircraft remain on the table” but the administration has made no final decisions on whether or when to transfer such systems.⁵⁹

While supplying aid to Ukraine for its self-defense from Russian aggression makes sense, doing so without a diplomatic strategy to bring an end to the war risks enabling a long, grinding conflict that will both vastly increase the humanitarian suffering in Ukraine and risk escalation to direct U.S.–Russian confrontation. It is not the arms sales by themselves that are problematic, but the policy context in which they are being supplied.

U.S. arms sales to Asia: Deterrence or escalation?

The Biden administration has stepped up arms transfers to East Asia as part of a policy of deterring potential Chinese military aggression in the region, including possible military action against Taiwan. While some of these sales make sense in this context, others may risk escalation that can spark a costly and unnecessary U.S.–China arms race while increasing the risk of conflict between two nuclear-armed powers — an outcome that could lead to massive devastation and global disruption.

⁵⁸ Copp, Tara. *Defense One*, August 24, 2022.

⁵⁹ Department of Defense Briefing on Ukraine Assistance. August 24, 2022.
<https://www.c-span.org/video/?522476-1/pentagon-briefs-latest-3-billion-ukraine-assistance-package>.



CM-11 tanks maneuver during the 2-day live-fire drill, amid intensifying military threats from China, in Pingtung county, Taiwan, 7 September 2022. (Photo by Ceng Shou Yi/NurPhoto).

Taiwan

Taiwan has received nearly \$20 billion in U.S. arms orders over the past five years, in 24 separate deals, with more to come.⁶⁰ Items transferred to Taiwan have included F-16 combat aircraft, Harpoon anti-ship missiles, advanced torpedoes, surveillance systems, and a variety of anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles. Some members of Congress are pushing to offer Taiwan long-range strike systems that can reach deep into Chinese territory, an escalation that would likely increase the possibility of a conflict between the United States and China.⁶¹ A more effective strategy would focus on the provision of

⁶⁰ Data on sales to specific countries are from Defense Security Cooperation Agency, "Major Arms Sales." <https://www.dsca.mil/press-media/major-arms-sales>.

⁶¹ Echols, Connor. "As Pelosi Visit Looms, Menendez Bill Would 'Gut' One China Policy." *Responsible Statecraft*, August 1, 2022. <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2022/08/01/as-pelosi-taiwan-visit-looms-menendez-bill-would-gut-one-china-policy/>.

air—and missile— defense systems and anti—ship missiles. These systems would be part of a strategy that would make Chinese military action against Taiwan far more costly. One aspect of this approach is underscored in an August 2022 Quincy Institute report on a roadmap for a new U.S. defense strategy for Asia:

“Taiwan cannot hope, by itself, to gain air superiority. Indeed, its aircraft are unlikely to survive long against a combination of air base attacks and large Chinese fighter sweeps to destroy surviving aircraft in the air. Rather, heavy emphasis on ground-based air defense, capable of denying full air superiority to China, is likely to offer the best solution, with aircraft operating from hardened bases playing an auxiliary role.”⁶²

A solution to the Taiwan question should be political, not military, including a reassertion of U.S. adherence to its traditional “one China” policy. This entails defensive support for Taiwan without obligating the United States to defend the island directly, regardless of the circumstances, and refraining from pursuing high—level political ties that can be interpreted by Beijing as U.S. support for formal Taiwanese independence. This is the best way to keep the peace and open the door to renewed U.S.—Chinese cooperation on issues of mutual concern, such as combating climate change, preventing pandemics, and stabilizing the global economy. Unfortunately, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan and statements from President Biden that the United States would send troops to defend Taiwan in the event of a Chinese invasion have severely undermined the one China policy and increased China—U.S. tensions.⁶³

⁶² Odell, Rachel Esplin, Eric Heginbotham, John Culver, Eric Gomez, Brian Killough, Steven Kosiak, Jessica J. Lee, Brad Martin, Mike Mochizuki, and Michael D. Swaine. *Active Denial: A Roadmap to a More Effective, Stabilizing, and Sustainable U.S. Defense Strategy in Asia*. August 2022, p. 216. <https://quincyinst.org/report/active-denial-a-roadmap-to-a-more-effective-stabilizing-and-sustainable-u-s-defense-strategy-in-asia/#full-report>.

⁶³ Bunnstrom, David, and Trevor Hunnicutt. “Biden Says U.S. Forces Would Defend Taiwan in Event of a Chinese Invasion.” Reuters, September 19, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/world/biden-says-us-forces-would-defend-taiwan-event-chinese-invasion-2022-09-18/>.

Australia

Elsewhere in Asia, the attack submarine deal embedded in the AUKUS arrangement will benefit U.S. firms even as it may provoke countervailing expenditures and developments by China.⁶⁴ As Sarang Shidore of the Quincy Institute has noted regarding the AUKUS alliance of which the submarine deal is a central part:

“It catapults Australia into the ranks of “frontline states” in a U.S.-led strategy toward China that looks less like balancing and more like containment with every passing year, with attendant arms races and potential for military crises.”⁶⁵

The Biden administration has offered \$9.5 billion in weaponry to Australia in its first year—and-a-half in office, over \$3 billion more than was offered in the full four years of the Trump administration. Items offered include HIMARS long-range artillery pieces, Apache attack helicopters, heavy armored vehicles, and MQ-9B armed drones.

Japan and Korea

In addition, South Korea and Japan will be key to the U.S. strategy of balancing China’s rise. With that in mind sales of missile defense systems, strike missiles, and combat aircraft are likely to continue and expand, as are U.S. co-production and military-industrial cooperation activities with both nations. While each nation has received modest arms offers during the Biden administration to date, that is likely to change over the next few years. Japan received \$488 million in arms offers in 2021 and 2022, while South Korea received \$424 million in offers over the same period. But these figures don’t fully reflect the U.S. arms relationship with each country. The United States

⁶⁴ “Australia Is Getting Nuclear Subs, With American and British Help.” *The Economist*, September 15, 2021.
<https://www.economist.com/asia/australia-is-getting-nuclear-subs-with-american-and-british-help/21804790>.

⁶⁵ Shidore, Sarang. “AUKUS Military Alliance is Another Western Attempt to Isolate China.” *Responsible Statecraft*, September 17, 2021.
<https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2021/09/17/uk-us-australian-nuclear-sub-deal-is-another-western-attempt-to-isolate-china/>.

offered Japan a staggering \$38.8 *billion* in U.S. arms during the four years of the Trump administration, most notably in a \$23.2 billion deal for its ongoing F-35 program, which includes assembly of F-35s in Japan; and a \$4.5 billion deal for upgrades of Japan's U.S.-supplied F-15 combat aircraft. For its part, South Korea received over \$6.4 billion in U.S. arms offers from 2017 to 2020, including a \$2.1 billion offer for P-8A maritime patrol aircraft and a \$2.5 billion deal for Aegis missile defense systems.⁶⁶

The Philippines

U.S. arms transfers to the Philippines are of particular concern. The United States supplied or offered billions of dollars worth of small arms, attack helicopters, and other weapons systems to the Duterte regime, a government notorious for murdering and imprisoning thousands of civilians and human rights and democracy activists under the guise of fighting a "war on drugs."⁶⁷ The sales were made as part of an anti-China containment strategy, despite the fact that the Philippines offers little value on that front. If one of the goals of current U.S. policy is to bolster allies militarily in an effort to create a balance vis-a-vis China, the Philippines is a poor candidate for playing that role.⁶⁸

The United States has stepped up arms sales to the Philippines in recent years, with offers worth \$4.6 billion since 2019.⁶⁹ A number of the weapons systems recently offered to the Philippines — such as attack helicopters — are more suited to internal

⁶⁶ Data in this paragraph are based on notifications to Congress published by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency. For further details on arms offers to Japan and South Korea see the appendix.

⁶⁷ Ratcliffe, Rebecca. "Philippines War on Drugs May Have Killed Tens of Thousands, U.N. Says." *The Guardian*, June 4, 2020.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/04/philippines-police-may-have-killed-tens-of-thousands-with-near-impunity-in-drug-war-un>.

⁶⁸ See, for example, John Edward Mariano. "U.S. Security Assistance and Arms Sales to the Philippines from Duterte to Marcos." Center for International Policy, September 2022.
https://cfde140b-3710-4a65-aa9a-48b5868a02dd.usrfiles.com/ugd/3ba8a1_d6279d417d4c4ef4af78038f9398a079.pdf.

⁶⁹ Forum on the Arms Trade. "Major Arms Sales Notification Tracker."

repression than they are to addressing the challenges posed by China, while others, like F-16 aircraft, would be of only marginal utility in responding militarily to China.

It remains to be seen whether the new Philippine president, Ferdinand Marcos, Jr., an ally of Duterte who took office in May 2022, will pursue different policies than the prior government's. On the one hand, since Marcos took power the Philippines has engaged in a major military exercise with the United States and Philippine defense officials have met with U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin.⁷⁰ But Marcos has also called China the country's "strongest partner," an indication that his government cannot necessarily be counted on in any effort to deter, or, in the worst case, fight China. Preventing war should be a U.S. policy priority.⁷¹ At a minimum, Marcos appears to want to strike a balance between relations with the United States and relations with China, rather than be drawn into a conflict that would require choosing one superpower over the other.

U.S. arms and training in Nigeria and the Sahel: Countering terrorism or fueling it?

In April the United States offered AH-1Z attack helicopters for \$997 million to Nigeria, marking the latest stage in a warming of relations between the two countries that began early in the Trump administration.⁷² The Biden administration decided to provide attack

⁷⁰ Lema, Karen. "Philippines and U.S. Kick Off Naval Exercises Amid China Tension," Reuters, October 3, 2022.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/philippines-us-kick-off-naval-exercises-amid-china-tension-2022-10-03/>.

⁷¹ Mercado, Neil Arwin. "Bongbong Marcos: China PH's 'strongest partner' but independent foreign policy to stay." *Inquirer*, June 10, 2022.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1609099/bongbong-marcos-calls-china-strongest-partner-good-friend>; Venzon, Cliff. "Marcos Says Philippine-China Ties 'Set to Shift to Higher Gear.'" *Nikkei Asia*, May 18, 2022. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Philippine-elections/Marcos-says-Philippine-China-ties-set-to-shift-to-higher-gear>.

⁷² Defense Security Cooperation Agency. "Nigeria – AH-1Z Attack Helicopter Related FMS Acquisitions." April 14, 2022.

helicopters to Nigeria despite the fact that there have been no noticeable improvements in the efficacy and conduct of the Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF).

U.S. counterterrorism policy in North Africa and the Sahel has leaned heavily on arming and training local military forces, accompanied by regular deployments of U.S. special forces. While the value of arms transfers involved in carrying out the strategy is far less than in other major regions, the security consequences are immense. U.S. weapons sales to Nigeria are a case in point: U.S. arms and training have not only failed to contribute to a significant reduction in terrorism, but have also helped create the conditions for terrorism to persist, and in some cases even thrive.⁷³

Even as its military initiative against Boko Haram and Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) has been ineffectual, the human rights violations by Nigerian security forces, like those described below, have served as a recruiting tool for the terrorist groups and served to delegitimize the anti-terror effort in the eyes of many Nigerians. More U.S. arms at this moment are only likely to make matters worse, to the detriment of the wider U.S. effort to stem terrorism in North Africa and the Sahel region.

There are many downsides to a militarized approach to counter-terrorism in the Sahel and Africa as a whole, and to the failure to address the corruption, human rights abuses, and economic deprivation that set the conditions for current and future internal conflicts. Stephanie Savell of the Costs of War Project at Brown University has summarized some of the main problems with the current approach:

“Many governments use the U.S. narrative of terrorism and counterterrorism... to repress minority groups, justify authoritarianism, and facilitate illicit profiteering, all while failing to address poverty and other structural problems that lead to widespread frustration with the state. Thus, in a vicious cycle, what the U.S. calls security assistance actually accomplishes the opposite... it has fed insecurity,

<https://www.dsca.mil/press-media/major-arms-sales/nigeria-ah-1z-attack-helicopter-related-fms-acquisiti ons>.

⁷³ Chapell, John Ramming. “A New Framework for U.S. Policy in the Sahel.” Marcellus Institute, Spring 2021. <https://jqas.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Chappell-Analysis.pdf>.

bolstering the militants that react against the government injustices exacerbated by this aid.”

Persistent human rights abuses committed by the Nigerian Armed Forces have created an environment in which it is easier for terrorist organizations to recruit. A few recent examples of these abuses suffice to make the case.

U.S. arms and training have not only failed to contribute to a significant reduction in terrorism, but have also helped create the conditions for terrorism to persist, and in some cases even thrive.

According to a report compiled jointly by the Security Assistance Monitor at the Center for International Policy, the Brown University Costs of War Project, and Interaction, field-based NGO workers interviewed between February and April 2022, “...cases of civilian casualties resulting from Nigerian airstrikes have increased considerably in recent years, accompanied by a notable lack of accountability and follow up to allegations by NAF.”⁷⁴

The Nigerian military has also committed torture on a massive scale and targeted civilians, which they justify as a necessary aspect of their campaign against Boko Haram, a terrorist group, and its offshoots — such as ISWAP. As Human Rights Watch noted in its *World Report* covering events that occurred in 2021 and prior, the International Criminal Court has indicated it has “reasonable basis to believe” that both Boko Haram, other terrorist groups and Nigerian security forces have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity.⁷⁵ Amnesty International reported that 10,000

⁷⁴ Brown University Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies, Security Assistance Monitor at the Center for International Policy, and Interaction. “U.S. Security Partnerships and the Protection of Civilians: The Case of Nigeria and the Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF).” May 2022, 10. <https://watson.brown.edu/chrhs/files/chrhs/imce/partnerships/Civ-Mil/Nigeria-May-2022-Factsheet.pdf>.

⁷⁵ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2022: Events of 2021*, 502. https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2022/01/World%20Report%202022%20web%20pdf_0.pdf.

civilians died between 2011 and 2020 from extreme neglect in prisons run by the Nigerian military.⁷⁶ Amnesty described the imprisonment of civilians as “unlawful detention” because many individuals were swept up and jailed without any evidence that they had ties to Boko Haram.

Corporate Beneficiaries of U.S. arms sales

The bulk of the benefits from U.S. arms sales go to just four companies — Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon and General Dynamics. Of the \$101 billion in major arms offers since the Biden administration took office, \$59.1 billion — over 58 percent — involved weapons systems produced by one of these four companies.⁷⁷ Not all of this revenue went to the top four firms, both because some offers involved ancillary equipment built by other companies and because production of major systems includes sharing revenue with subcontractors. But the fact that such a large portion of total U.S. arms offers goes to such a small group of companies indicates the extreme concentration of the trade in major conventional weapons.

Lockheed Martin had the largest share of involvement in major deals. The weapons it produces are the main component of deals worth \$25.8 billion since February 2021, the first full month of the Biden administration. Major deals include a \$6.9 billion offer of multi-mission combat ships to Greece; a \$4.2 billion offer of F-16 combat aircraft to Jordan; a \$1.75 billion share of an offer of Apache attack helicopters to Australia; and a \$1.67 billion offer of F-16s to Bulgaria.

⁷⁶ Olukoya, Sam. “10,000 Nigerians Died in Military Custody, Alleges Amnesty.” The Associated Press, December 8, 2020. <https://apnews.com/article/nigeria-3d776068be7dd09c5e3bf58ef435f778>.

⁷⁷ Calculations in this section are based on Congressional notifications of proposed arms sales, from the Defense Security Cooperation Agency. Not all of these notifications result in sales. This notification and review period is required by law before the arms companies can offer to sell major weapons systems to a foreign government.

Boeing ranked a close second, with arms deals at \$22.65 billion. Major offers included \$13.9 billion in F-15s to Indonesia; \$2.6 billion in Chinook helicopters to Egypt; \$2.2 billion in P-8A maritime patrol aircraft to India; and \$1.77 billion for P-8As to Germany.



A Lockheed Martin Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile interceptor is seen during the third annual "Made in America Product Showcase" on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, U.S., July 15, 2019. REUTERS/Kevin Lamarque.

General Dynamics ranked a distant third in involvement in major arms offers, with a \$6 billion offer of M-1 tanks to Poland and a share of a \$1.7 billion offer of heavy armored vehicles to Australia, for a total of \$7.7 billion since February 2021.

Raytheon was involved in deals worth \$4.7 billion, including a \$1.25 billion modification of a frigate combat ship for Greece; \$950 million for AMRAAM air-to-air missiles for Norway; \$691 in TOW anti-tank missiles for Egypt; and \$650 million in AMRAAM missiles for Saudi Arabia.

The biggest payoffs for major contractors come from sales of combat aircraft, followed by missile defense systems.

Arms firms can tap into immense lobbying resources at any time to promote arms sales or other company interests.

Weapons companies use all the resources at their disposal to create policies that are conducive to selling as much weaponry to as many foreign clients as possible. One of the most egregious examples of an arms manufacturer-driven lobbying campaign in recent years was Raytheon's effort to blunt congressional efforts to block sales of the company's precision-guided munitions to Saudi Arabia.⁷⁸

More generally, arms firms can tap into immense lobbying resources at any time to promote arms sales or other company interests. While many U.S. sales are largely uncontroversial (e.g., to NATO allies), sales to countries like the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, and Nigeria have caused concern in Congress. The arms industry has responded to congressional resistance with aggressive lobbying efforts.

As the Center for Responsive Politics (since renamed Open Secrets) has noted, the arms industry spent \$2.5 billion on lobbying over the past two decades, accompanied by \$285 million in campaign contributions.⁷⁹ Arms industry political donations to parties

⁷⁸ Fang, Lee, and Alex Emmons. "State Department Team Led by Former Raytheon Lobbyist Pushed Mike Pompeo to Support Yemen War Because of Arms Sales." *The Intercept*, September 21, 2018.

<https://theintercept.com/2018/09/21/mike-pompeo-yemen-war-raytheon/>; Wong, Edward and Catie Edmondson. "Democrats to Scrutinize Ex-Lobbyists' Role in Trump's Arms Sales to Gulf Nations." *New York Times*, June 11, 2019.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/11/us/politics/democrats-charles-faulkner-arms-sales.html>;

LaForgia, Michael, and Walt Bogdanich. "Why Bombs Made in America Have Been Killing Civilians in Yemen." *New York Times*, May 16, 2020.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/16/us/arms-deals-raytheon-yemen.html>.

⁷⁹ Auble, Dan. "Capitalizing on Conflict: How Defense Contractors and Foreign Nations Lobby for Arms Sales." Open Secrets, February 25, 2021.

<https://www.opensecrets.org/news/reports/capitalizing-on-conflict>.

and candidates have totaled \$19 million during the first two years of the Biden administration, and are likely to increase sharply in the runup to the 2024 elections.

The arms industry employed 766 lobbyists in 2021, far more than one for every member of Congress.⁸⁰ Fully 300 of those lobbyists were employed by the top four weapons exporting companies cited above. The vast majority of these lobbyists passed through the “revolving door” from senior positions in the Pentagon, Congress, the State Department and the White House, and are using their connections with former colleagues to provide an inside track to advocate for the interests of weapons manufacturers.

In November 2021, Heidi Grant, former head of the Pentagon’s arms sales coordinating body, moved to the Boeing Corporation. Grant joined Boeing just one day after her retirement from the Department of Defense.⁸¹ Her predecessors in the role, Vice Admiral Joseph Rixey and Vice Admiral Jeffrey A. Wieringa, went to work for Lockheed Martin and Boeing, respectively, after leaving the Pentagon. And Vice Admiral Robert S. Harward left his post as deputy director of the U.S. Central Command to oversee Lockheed Martin’s operations in the UAE. In all, the Project on Government Oversight has identified over a dozen former Pentagon and military officials who went from government positions related to arms sales and security assistance to work for the weapons industry.⁸²

⁸⁰ Calculated from the Open Secrets database.

<https://www.opensecrets.org/industries/lobbying.php?cycle=2022&ind=D>.

⁸¹ Project on Government Oversight. “Pentagon Revolving Door Database.” Accessed August 22, 2022.

<https://www.pogo.org/database/pentagon-revolving-door/companies/boeing>.

⁸² Smithberger, Mandy. “Brass Parachutes: Defense Contractors’ Capture of Pentagon Officials Through the Revolving Door.” Project on Government Oversight, November 5, 2018. 24 – 27.

https://s3.amazonaws.com/docs.pogo.org/report/2018/POGO_Brass_Parachutes_DoD_Revolving_Door_Report_2018-11-05.pdf.

Case study: Raytheon lobbying for bomb sales to Saudi Arabia

While Congress has never successfully blocked an arms sale and rarely tries, beginning in 2016 it actively opposed U.S. military support and arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE over their role in the war in Yemen. Their opposition accelerated in 2018, after the Saudi regime murdered Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi columnist for the *Washington Post* who was a U.S. resident. The series of congressional initiatives aimed at reducing or eliminating U.S. military support for Saudi Arabia is unprecedented, including majority votes under the Arms Export Control Act of 1976 and the War Powers Resolution of 1973. President Trump vetoed both the arms sales and war powers efforts, but they were historic nonetheless, representing the first time both houses of Congress had mustered a majority vote aimed at stopping an arms sale or invoked the War Powers Resolution.⁸³

While Congress has never successfully blocked an arms sale and rarely tries, beginning in 2016 it actively opposed U.S. military support and arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE over their role in the war in Yemen.

A central focus of these congressional efforts was a concerted attempt to block the sale of precision-guided munitions of the kind that had been used in Saudi air strikes that hit hospitals, marketplaces, civilian infrastructure, funerals, and even a school bus. To cite one example of many, in April 2018 a GBU-12 Paveway II guided bomb manufactured by Raytheon was used in an air strike on a wedding, in which 21 people,

⁸³ Congressional Research Service. "Congress and the War in Yemen: Oversight and Legislation, 2015 to 2021." Updated February 10, 2022. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/mideast/R45046.pdf>.

including children, were killed.⁸⁴ This was just one of dozens of documented examples of U.S. weapons used to strike civilian targets in Yemen; given the preponderance of U.S. bombs and combat aircraft in the Saudi arsenal, there were undoubtedly many more.⁸⁵

Incidents such as the strike on the wedding prompted a series of congressional actions, including an amendment sponsored by Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) that called on the State Department to certify that Saudi Arabia was taking adequate steps to avoid civilian harm in its use of U.S.-supplied weapons in Yemen. Despite strong evidence to the contrary, the State Department gave the Saudi regime a clean bill of health, primarily due to advocacy by Charles Faulkner, a former Raytheon lobbyist who was at that time working as the head of the State Department's Bureau of Legislative Affairs. In their arguments to clear Saudi Arabia, Faulkner and his colleagues said explicitly that "lack of certification will negatively impact pending arms sales."⁸⁶

Faulkner turned up again when key members of Congress raised questions about his potential role in crafting an emergency declaration by the Trump administration designed to evade congressional opposition to a \$1.5 billion sale of Raytheon 64,000 Paveway bombs and components, along with other military equipment, to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Jordan.⁸⁷ Both Houses of Congress voted against the deal anyway, but

⁸⁴ Elbagir, Nima, Salma Abdelaziz, and Laura Smith-Spark. "Made in America: Shrapnel Found In Yemen Ties U.S. Bombs to String of Deaths Over Course of Bloody Civil War." CNN, September 2018. <https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2018/09/world/yemen-airstrikes-intl/>.

⁸⁵ Mwatana for Human Rights. "U.S. Weapons Responsible for Civilian Deaths in Yemen." September 20, 2018. <https://mwatana.org/en/us-weapons/>.

⁸⁶ Fang, Lee and Alex Emmon. "State Department Team Led by Former Raytheon Lobbyist Pushed Mike Pompeo to Support Yemen War Because of Arms Sales." *The Intercept*, September 21, 2018. <https://theintercept.com/2018/09/21/mike-pompeo-yemen-war-raytheon/>; Nissenbaum, Dion. "Top U.S. Diplomat Backed Continuing Support for Saudi War in Yemen Over Objections of Staff." *Wall Street Journal*, September 20, 2018. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/top-u-s-diplomat-backed-continuing-support-for-saudi-war-in-yemen-over-objections-of-staff-1537441200>.

⁸⁷ Wong, Edward, and Catie Edmondson. "Democrats to Scrutinize Ex-Lobbyist's Role in Arms Sales to Gulf Nations." *New York Times*, June 11, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/11/us/politics/democrats-charles-faulkner-arms-sales.html>.

were not able to muster the two-thirds majority needed to overcome a veto by President Trump.⁸⁸

Spending on weapons produces 40 percent fewer jobs than spending on infrastructure or green energy, and 100 percent fewer jobs than spending on education.

President Trump repeatedly touted the role of weapons sales to Saudi Arabia in providing revenue for U.S. contractors and jobs for U.S. workers. At one point Trump claimed that 500,000 U.S. jobs were tied to arms sales to Saudi Arabia, a vast exaggeration given that the correct figure was likely 10 to 20 times lower.⁸⁹ Trump also invoked competition with Russia and China in his lobbying efforts:

\$110 billion will be spent on the purchase of military equipment from Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and many other great U.S. defense contractors. If we foolishly cancel these contracts, Russia and China would be the enormous beneficiaries — and very happy to acquire all of this newfound business. It would be a wonderful gift to them directly from the United States!⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Landler, Mark, and Peter Baker. "Trump Vetoes Measure to Force End to U.S. Involvement in Yemen War." *New York Times*, April 16, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/16/us/politics/trump-veto-yemen.html>; Kennedy, Merrit. "Trump Vetoes Bills Intended to Block Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia." National Public Radio, July 25, 2019. <https://www.npr.org/2019/07/25/745200244/trump-vetoes-bills-intended-to-block-arms-sales-to-saudi-arabia>.

⁸⁹ Kessler, Glenn. "Trump's Claim of Jobs From Saudi Deals Grows By Leaps and Bounds." *Washington Post*, October 22, 2018. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2018/10/22/trumps-claim-jobs-saudi-deals-grows-by-leaps-bounds/>.

⁹⁰ Hartung, William D., Christina Arabia, and Elias Yousif. "The Trump Effect: Trends in Major Arms Sales 2019." Security Assistance Monitor, Center for International Policy, May 2020. https://static.wixstatic.com/ugd/3ba8a1_768ab66d079849fd98eabc50ed60a723.pdf; "Statement by President Donald J. Trump on Standing With Saudi Arabia." White House Press Release, November 20, 2018. <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-donald-j-trump-standing-saudi-arabia/>.

The amount of weaponry offered to Saudi Arabia during Trump's tenure was far less than he claimed — about \$24 billion in all, most of which went for a \$17 billion offer of a THAAD missile defense system that had likely been negotiated at the end of the Obama administration.⁹¹ But the types of weapons that were supplied during his presidency, including tens of thousands of bombs and air-to-ground missiles, were critical to sustaining ongoing Saudi attacks in Yemen. As noted above, these deliveries were made despite vigorous opposition from Congress and advocates of a negotiated end to the Yemen war.

Arms exporters and the U.S. government routinely cite job creation as a reason to sell weapons to foreign clients. But the number of jobs associated with arms sales is greatly exaggerated.

Obviously, selling billions of dollars worth of arms will create some jobs, but the number of people employed in arms manufacturing amounts to a small percentage of the total U.S. workforce, less than virtually any other spending activity would create.⁹² Spending on weapons produces 40 percent fewer jobs than spending on infrastructure or green energy, and 100 percent fewer jobs than spending on education.⁹³

⁹¹ Details on U.S. arms sales offers to Saudi Arabia during the Trump term, from 2017 to 2020, are available on the Forum on the Arms Trade's arms sales notification tracker.

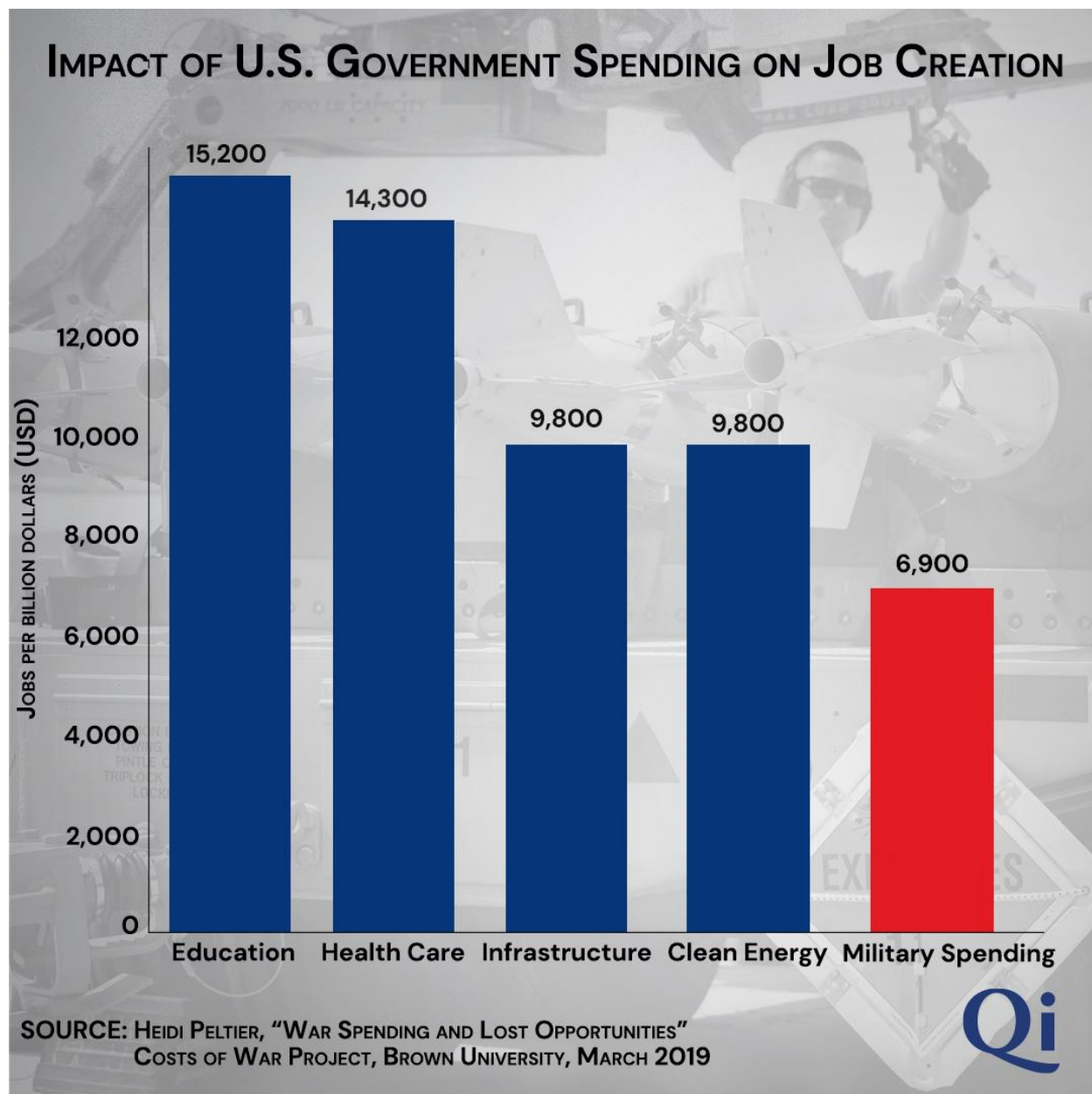
<https://www.forumarmstrade.org/major-arms-sales-notifications-tracker.html>; Additional detail is provided on the Forum's resource page on arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

<https://www.forumarmstrade.org/resource-page---trump-saudi-arms-sales1.html>.

⁹² Forum on the Arms Trade. Arms Sales Notification Tracker, 2017–20.

⁹³ Peltier, Heidi. "War Spending and Lost Opportunities." Brown University Costs of War Project, March 14, 2019.

<https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2019/March%202019%20Job%20Opportunity%20Cost%20of%20War.pdf>.



President Trump's advocacy on behalf of Raytheon and other U.S. weapons makers did not occur in a vacuum. As a *New York Times* investigation revealed, the company devoted considerable energy to cultivating a relationship with Peter Navarro, an influential White House trade advisor who promoted weapons sales as part of a larger economic strategy based on pumping up the arms-industrial sector. For example, in 2017, after consulting arms industry executives, Navarro urged the White House to

intervene against a move by Sen. Bob Corker (R-TN) to put a hold on arms sales to Saudi Arabia, penning a memo entitled “Trump Mideast arms sales deal in extreme jeopardy, job losses imminent.”⁹⁴

Lobbying on arms sales by Raytheon and other major arms exporters continues, but much of it occurs behind closed doors, making it more difficult to document these activities at the level of detail revealed in the case of Raytheon lobbying for bomb sales to Saudi Arabia.

Recommendations

Decisions on what weapons to sell — and whether the sales truly defend vital U.S. national interests or might actually undermine core interests — call for a level of careful consideration and close scrutiny that is not currently in evidence.

A more effective, less counterproductive U.S. arms sales policy is predicated on a dramatic change of approach from the Executive Branch. Pending that eventuality, a number of measures can be taken now to increase the prospect of major sales serving U.S. interests in peace and stability in key countries and regions. They include the following:

- Restrict the revolving door between government and industry to weaken the grip of weapons makers over arms transfer decision making.
- Strengthen the ability of Congress to block dangerous sales by requiring congressional approval for major deals, as specified in the National Security Powers Act.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ La Forgia, Michael, and Walt Bogdanich. “Why Bombs Made in America Have Been Killing Civilians in Yemen.” *New York Times*, May 16, 2020.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/16/us/arms-deals-raytheon-yemen.html>.

⁹⁵ Ohlbaum, Diana, and Rachel Stohl. “Yes, Congress, There Is Something You Can Do About Reckless Arms Sales.” *Just Security*, June 9, 2020.
<https://www.justsecurity.org/70652/yes-congress-there-is-something-you-can-do-about-reckless-arms-sales/>.

- Conduct better risk assessments. The Pentagon and State Department should determine whether particular sales are liable to fuel conflict — in essence, an Arms Race Impact Statement. They should also evaluate the potential for U.S.–supplied weapons to be used to commit human rights abuses, or to end up in the hands of U.S. adversaries. More staff should be hired to enable these more detailed risk assessments to be successfully carried out.⁹⁶
- Provide greater transparency so Congress and the public know what sales are being made, when arms are being delivered, and how U.S. arms are being used. Measures that should be undertaken include regular reporting on the timing of arms sales deliveries and offers; and clear, publicly available reporting on commercial arms sales licensed by the State Department (DCS) as well as government–to–government Foreign Military Sales (FMS), including details on the items being transferred and their value. Without this level of information, neither Congress nor the public can assess the risks and consequences of U.S. arms transfers.

⁹⁶ Thrall, Trevor A., and Jordan Cohen. “2021 Arms Sales Risk Index.” Cato Institute, January 18, 2022. <https://www.cato.org/study/2021-arms-sales-risk-index>.

Appendix: Major U.S. arms sales under the Biden administration, January 2021 to October 2022

COUNTRY	WEAPONS DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT (MILLIONS)
ARGENTINA	T-6 AIRCRAFT SUSTAINMENT	\$73
	TOTAL	\$73
AUSTRALIA	AUSTRALIA – UH-60M BLACK HAWK HELICOPTERS	\$1,950
	JOINT AIR-TO-SURFACE STANDOFF MISSILES - EXTENDED RANGE (JASSM ER)	\$235
	AGM-88E2 AARGM E2 MISSILES	\$94
	HIMARS LAUNCHERS	\$385
	DEFENSE ARTICLES RELATED TO MULTIFUNCTIONAL INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM JOINT TACTICAL RADIO SYSTEMS	\$42
	LAIRCM LINE REPLACEABLE UNITS (LRUS)	\$122
	HELLFIRE AGM-114R2 MISSILES	\$108
	MH-60R MULTI-MISSION HELICOPTERS AND RELATED DEFENSE SERVICES	\$985
	EA-18G GROWLER AIRCRAFT AND RELATED DEFENSE SERVICES	\$125
	DEFENSE SERVICES RELATED TO FUTURE STANDARD MISSILE PRODUCTION	\$350
	AH-64E APACHE HELICOPTERS	\$3,500
	MQ-9B REMOTELY PILOTED AIRCRAFT	\$1,651

	HEAVY ARMORED COMBAT SYSTEMS	\$1,685
	CH-47F CHINOOK HELICOPTERS	\$259
	TOTAL	\$11,491
BAHRAIN	M270 MULTIPLE LAUNCH ROCKET SYSTEMS (MLRS) UPGRADE	\$175.98
	TOTAL	\$175.98
BELGIUM	F-16 SUSTAINMENT	\$127
	TOTAL	\$127
BRAZIL	BRAZIL – JAVELIN MISSILES	\$74
	TOTAL	\$74
BULGARIA	F-16 C/D BLOCK 70 AIRCRAFT	\$1673
	TOTAL	\$1673
CANADA	AEGIS COMBAT SYSTEM	\$1700
	TOTAL	\$1700
CHILE	STANDARD MISSILE-2 (SM-2) BLOCK IIIA MISSILES	\$85
	TOTAL	\$85
EGYPT	CH-47F CHINOOK HELICOPTERS	\$2600
	TOW 2A RADIO FREQUENCY (RF) MISSILES AND SUPPORT	\$691
	C-130J-30 SUPER HERCULES AIRCRAFT	\$2200
	AIR DEFENSE RADAR SYSTEMS	\$355
	ROLLING AIRFRAME MISSILES (RAM) BLOCK 2 TACTICAL MISSILES	\$197
	TOTAL	\$6043

ESTONIA	M142 HIGH MOBILITY ARTILLERY ROCKET SYSTEM (HIMARS)	\$500
	TOTAL	\$500
FINLAND	EXTENDED RANGE GUIDED MULTIPLE LAUNCH ROCKET SYSTEM	\$91.2
	TOTAL	\$91.2
FRANCE	MQ-9 COMMUNICATIONS INTELLIGENCE SENSOR POD SUITES	\$88
	MQ-9 FOLLOW-ON CONTRACTOR LOGISTICS SUPPORT	\$300
	ELECTROMAGNETIC AIRCRAFT LAUNCH SYSTEM (EMALS) AND ADVANCED ARRESTING GEAR (AAG)	\$1321
	TOTAL	\$1709
GEORGIA	JAVELIN MISSILES	\$30
	TOTAL	\$30
GERMANY	F-35 AIRCRAFT AND MUNITIONS	\$8400
	P-8A AIRCRAFT AND ASSOCIATED SUPPORT	\$1770
	TOTAL	\$10170
GREECE	S-70B PROGRAM FOLLOW-ON SUPPORT AND SUSTAINMENT	\$162.07
	FOLLOW-ON SUPPORT FOR F100-PW-229 ENGINE MAINTENANCE	\$233
	MEKO CLASS FRIGATE MODERNIZATION	\$2500
	MULTI-MISSION SURFACE COMBATANT (HELLENIC FUTURE FRIGATE (HF2))	\$6900
	F-16 SUSTAINMENT MATERIEL AND SERVICES	\$270
	FMSO II, CLSSA SERVICES	\$165
	TOTAL	\$10230.07

INDIA	HARPOON JOINT COMMON TEST SET (JCTS)	\$82
	P-8I AND ASSOCIATED SUPPORT	\$2420
	TOTAL	\$2502
INDONESIA	F-15ID AIRCRAFT	\$13900
	TOTAL	\$13900
ISRAEL	CH-53K HEAVY LIFT HELICOPTERS WITH SUPPORT	\$3400
	TOTAL	\$3400
JAPAN	AIM-120C-7/8 ADVANCED MEDIUM-RANGE AIR-TO-AIR MISSILES (AMRAAMS)	\$293
	AEGIS CLASS DESTROYER SUPPORT	\$134
	RAM BLOCK 2 TACTICAL MISSILES	\$61.5
	TOTAL	\$488.5
JORDAN	GUIDED MULTIPLE LAUNCH ROCKET SYSTEMS (GMLRS) ALTERNATE WARHEAD (AW) UNITARY ROCKET PODS	\$70
	F-16 C/D BLOCK 70 AIRCRAFT	\$4210
	F-16 AIR COMBAT TRAINING CENTER	\$60
	TOTAL	\$4340
KOREA	MK 54 LIGHTWEIGHT TORPEDOES	\$130
	PRECISION GUIDED MUNITIONS	\$258
	AGM-114R HELLFIRE MISSILES	\$36
	TOTAL	\$424
KUWAIT	ADVANCED WEAPONS IN SUPPORT OF EUROFIGHTER TYPHOON AIRCRAFT PROGRAM	\$397
	DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE KUWAIT MINISTRY OF DEFENSE HEADQUARTERS	\$1000

	COMPLEX	
	NATIONAL ADVANCED SURFACE TO AIR MISSILE SYSTEM (NASAMS), MEDIUM RANGE AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM (MRADS)	\$3000
	M1A2K TANK OPERATIONAL AND TRAINING AMMUNITION	\$250
	HEAVY TACTICAL VEHICLES	\$445
	TOTAL	\$5092
LITHUANIA	JAVELIN MISSILES	\$125
	TOTAL	\$125
MOROCCO	MOROCCO – GROUND COMMAND AND CONTROL	\$141.1
	TOTAL	\$141.1
NATO SUPPORT AND PROCUREMENT AGENCY (NSPA)	PRECISION GUIDED MUNITIONS	\$22.7
	TOTAL	\$22.7
NATO COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION AGENCY (NCIA)	UHF SATCOM RADIO SYSTEMS	\$65
	TOTAL	\$65
NIGERIA	AH-1Z ATTACK HELICOPTER RELATED FMS ACQUISITIONS	\$997
	TOTAL	\$997
NORTH MACEDONIA	STRYKER VEHICLES	\$210
	TOTAL	\$210
NORWAY	AIM-120 C-8 OR D ADVANCED MEDIUM-RANGE AIR-TO-AIR MISSILES	\$950
	JAVELIN FGM-148 MISSILES	\$36
	TOTAL	\$986

PAKISTAN	F-16 CASE FOR SUSTAINMENT	\$450
POLAND	M1A2 SEPV3 MAIN BATTLE TANK	\$6000
	TOTAL	\$6000
SAUDI ARABIA	PATRIOT MIM-104E GUIDANCE ENHANCED MISSILE-TACTICAL BALLISTIC MISSILES (GEM-T)	\$3050
	MULTIFUNCTIONAL INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM-LOW VOLUME TERMINALS (MIDS-LVT)	\$23.7
	AIM-120C ADVANCED MEDIUM RANGE AIR-TO-AIR MISSILES (AMRAAM)	\$650
	CONTINUATION OF MAINTENANCE SUPPORT SERVICES (MSS)	\$500
	TOTAL	\$4223.7
SINGAPORE	MUNITIONS AND FOLLOW-ON TRAINING AND SUSTAINMENT FOR PEACE CARVIN V (F-15 TRAINING DETACHMENT)	\$630
	TOTAL	\$630
SPAIN	MH-60R MULTI-MISSION HELICOPTERS WITH SUPPORT	\$950
	FOLLOW-ON CONTRACTOR LOGISTICS SUPPORT (CLS) FOR MQ-9A BLK 5 AIRCRAFT	\$110
	TOTAL	\$1060
TAIPEI ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL REPRESENTATIVE OFFICE IN THE UNITED STATES (TECRO)	BLANKET ORDER CONTRACTOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SUPPORT	\$108
	SHIP SPARE PARTS AND SHIP SYSTEM SPARE PARTS	\$120
	CONTRACTOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	\$95
	INTERNATIONAL ENGINEERING SERVICES PROGRAM (IESP) AND FIELD SURVEILLANCE	\$100

	PROGRAM (FSP) SUPPORT	
	CONTRACT LOGISTICS SUPPORT FOR SURVEILLANCE RADAR PROGRAM (SRP)	\$665.4
	AGM-84L-1 HARPOON BLOCK II MISSILES	\$355
	AIM-9X BLOCK II SIDEWINDER MISSILES	\$85.6
	155MM M109A6 PALADIN MEDIUM SELF-PROPELLED HOWITZER SYSTEM	\$750
	TOTAL	\$2279
THAILAND	JAVELIN MISSILES	\$83.5
	TOTAL	\$83.5
THE NETHERLANDS	PATRIOT MIM-104E GUIDANCE ENHANCED MISSILE-TACTICAL (GEM-T) BALLISTIC MISSILES	\$1219
	AIM-9X BLOCK II MISSILES	\$117
	AH-64 PILOT TRAINING AND LOGISTICS SUPPORT	\$190
	CH-47 PILOT TRAINING AND LOGISTICS SUPPORT	\$125
	TOTAL	\$1651
THE PHILIPPINES	F-16 BLOCK 70/72 AIRCRAFT	\$2430
	AIM-9X SIDEWINDER BLOCK II TACTICAL MISSILES	\$42.4
	F-16 CASE FOR SUSTAINMENT	\$450
	AGM-84L-1 HARPOON AIR LAUNCHED BLOCK II MISSILES	\$120
	TOTAL	\$3042.4
UKRAINE	NON-STANDARD AMMUNITION	\$165
	TOTAL	\$165
UAE	TERMINAL HIGH ALTITUDE AREA DEFENSE	\$2245

	<u>(THAAD) SYSTEM MISSILES AND THAAD FIRE CONTROL AND COMMUNICATION STATIONS</u>	
	<u>C-17 AIRCRAFT SUSTAINMENT</u>	\$980.4
	<u>OCEANOGRAPHIC OBSERVATION EQUIPMENT SYSTEM</u>	\$206
	<u>FOREIGN MILITARY SALES ORDER (FMSO) II CASE</u>	\$65
	TOTAL	\$3496.4
UNITED KINGDOM	<u>JAVELIN LIGHTWEIGHT COMMAND LAUNCH UNITS</u>	\$300
	<u>TOMAHAWK WEAPON SYSTEM (TWS) FOLLOW-ON SUPPORT</u>	\$368.53
	<u>BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE RADAR (BMDR) AND COMMAND AND CONTROL BATTLE MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS (C2BMC)</u>	\$700
	TOTAL	\$1368.53

About the Quincy Institute

The Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft is an action-oriented think tank launched in 2019 to promote ideas that move U.S. foreign policy away from endless war and toward vigorous diplomacy in the pursuit of international peace.

QI is committed to improving standards for think tank transparency and potential conflict-of-interest avoidance. QI's conflict-of-interest policy can be viewed at <https://quincyinst.org/coi/>

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