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Arms & Security
Project



“LITTLE SPARTA”:
THE UNITED STATES-
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
ALLIANCE AND
THE WAR IN YEMEN



CENTER FOR
INTERNATIONAL POLICY

Advancing a peaceful, just and sustainable world

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The Arms and Security Project does independent research, media outreach, and public education on issues of nuclear policy, Pentagon spending, and the impacts of the global arms trade, with an eye towards promoting reforms in U.S. policy.

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“LITTLE SPARTA”: THE UNITED STATES-UNITED ARAB EMIRATES ALLIANCE AND THE WAR IN YEMEN

Summary

The central role of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the war in Yemen has yet to receive the attention it deserves. The role of Saudi Arabia in the air campaign has killed thousands of civilians. And other actions by Saudi Arabia and its allies in the Yemen war have contributed to the deaths of well over 60,000 people and sparked the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. These actions have rightly drawn criticism from the United Nations, human rights and humanitarian groups, and key members of Congress.¹ The UAE, another key member of the coalition of states that has been fighting in Yemen since March of 2015, has contributed substantially to the death toll and destruction, through its role in the air and ground wars, its alleged involvement in torture, and its role in the naval blockade that has impeded the import of urgently needed food and medical supplies.² As the primary source of arms and military support for the UAE military, the United States bears some responsibility for that country’s actions in Yemen.

The major findings of this report include the following:

- The United States has made offers of over \$27 billion worth of weaponry to the UAE under the Pentagon’s Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program since 2009, in 32 separate deals. The offers have included 97 Apache attack helicopters, over 30,000 bombs, 4,569 Mine Resistant Armor Protected (MRAP) vehicles, 16 Chinook transport helicopters, and a Theater High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defense system. Over 90% of these deals were made under the Obama administration, with just two new offers so far during the Trump term. A significant amount of the equipment offered during the Obama and Trump administrations has yet to be delivered.
- The bulk of U.S. arms offers to the UAE in 2018 came via the commercial sales program, which involves direct deals between U.S. arms and training providers and the UAE military that are licensed by the State Department. Commercial sales offers to the UAE in 2018 totaled over \$666 million, including \$187.5 million to upgrade military vehicles, \$344.8 million to support the UAE’s Patriot missile defense system, and \$122.7 million to provide “infantry-related training” and advisory assistance to the elite Emirati Presidential Guard.
- The United States is by far the largest arms supplier to the UAE, accounting for over 60% of all weapons delivered to that nation since 2009. The next biggest supplier was France, at 10% of deliveries, followed by Russia, at 6.8% of deliveries over the same time period.
- More than one-quarter of the offers made to the UAE under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program since 2009 – valued at \$7.2 billion – were for bombs such as the Paveway and the Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) and tactical missiles such as the Hellfire that have been used in the war against ISIS and in the Saudi/Emirati-led intervention in Yemen.

- A deal for up to 60,000 precision-guided bombs that was discussed with Congress in May of 2018 has been stalled after Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ) put a hold on it over concerns about civilian casualties caused by air strikes carried out by the Saudi/UAE coalition. The UAE deal and a parallel offer of bombs to Saudi Arabia are now on indefinite hold due to growing Congressional opposition to U.S. support for the Saudi/UAE war effort in Yemen.
- The United States has also been a major supplier of military training to the UAE military. U.S. training has been provided to over 5,000 UAE troops since 2009, including personnel from the UAE Navy, Army, Air Force and Special Forces. And according to internal Air Force documents acquired by investigative journalist Nick Turse, the United States is training UAE pilots “for combat operations in Yemen.”
- The United States has close relations with the UAE military and government. Prior to his stint as secretary of defense in the Trump administration, Gen. James Mattis served as an unpaid advisor to the UAE military. He began this arrangement while the Saudi/UAE intervention in Yemen was already under way. Among other ties, Rear Admiral Robert Harward (USN Ret.), the former deputy director of the U.S. Central Command, now runs the UAE operations of Lockheed Martin, America and the world’s largest weapons contractor.
- The UAE has been the driving force behind an on-again, off-again series of assaults on the area in and around the port of Hodeidah, which is the main point of entry for food, medicine, and humanitarian aid coming into Yemen. Attacks on Hodeidah have been halted for the moment as a result of a United Nations-brokered ceasefire, which took effect in mid-December of 2018. It is urgently important that the ceasefire hold. Humanitarian aid groups have warned that a resumption of fighting there could put hundreds of thousands of lives at risk even as it tips the whole country into famine.
- The UAE – which has deployed thousands of its own troops to Yemen -- has also trained and financed a series of private militias and foreign mercenaries operating in Yemen, including child soldiers and members of the infamous Janjaweed militias from Sudan.
- An investigative report by CNN has found that Saudi Arabia and the UAE “have transferred American-made weapons to al Qaeda-linked fighters, hardline Salafi militias, and other factions waging war in Yemen, in violation of their agreements with the United States.”³
- According to press accounts and reports by independent human rights organizations the UAE and its allies have engaged in extreme acts of torture in a network of secret prisons in southern Yemen since at least 2017. A recent report by the Daily Beast cites claims by former detainees in UAE-run prisons in Yemen that U.S. personnel may have been present while they were being tortured by their UAE captors.
- There is also evidence to suggest that Saudi Arabia or the UAE may be responsible for attacks that have killed dozens of fishermen in the southern Red Sea. The majority of the strikes were carried out with attack helicopters, and Saudi Arabia and the UAE are the only parties to the Yemen war that possess such equipment.⁴

- The UAE is one of the closest U.S. military allies in the Middle East and has participated in a long series of U.S. interventions, including those in Somalia, Iraq (1991), Kosovo, Libya, and Syria. U.S. forces have used the UAE's Al Dhafra air base to launch U.S. missions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria during the past decade. According to press reports, the U.S. has 3,500 personnel based at Al Dhafra.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that it involves billions of dollars worth of weaponry, the U.S./UAE arms transfer relationship receives relatively little attention among the public, in the media, or in Congress. In part this is because the UAE connection is overshadowed by the U.S. role as the primary arms supplier to Saudi Arabia, and Saudi Arabia's use of U.S. arms in its brutal bombing campaign in Yemen.⁵ The Saudi role in Yemen has garnered increased scrutiny in the media and Congress in the wake of the regime's October 2018 murder of U.S. resident Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, but the additional attention to the war and its consequences has not elevated discussion of the UAE's central role in the conflict to the same degree. It is long past time to subject the UAE's military role in Yemen and the greater Middle East to closer scrutiny.

THE UAE'S ROLE IN YEMEN

The UAE has played a primary role in the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, in some respects as destructive as the role of Saudi Arabia itself.⁶

The UAE maintains an estimated 1,500 Special Forces in Yemen, troops that have been central to the prosecution of the war both through their role in direct combat and in their role in training and directing local militias.⁷ It directly commands at least five brigades of Yemeni security forces outside the chain of command and supervision of the Yemeni government.⁸ The UAE's tactics in Yemen have sought to secure its own interests in Yemen, which primarily focus on basing rights on the Gulf of Aden and in the Red Sea. The International Institute for Strategic Studies has described the UAE as "the dominant element of the coalition force in southern Yemen," and the UAE and the forces it controls are also working their way up the Red Sea coast.⁹

The UAE's role in Yemen follows over two decades during which that nation has consciously set out to hone its military capabilities so that it can play a significant military role in the Persian Gulf and beyond. As part of this strategy, UAE forces have participated in a series of military interventions, including Somalia, the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, and Yemen.¹⁰ The UAE also provided troops to the Gulf Cooperation Council's Peninsula Shield forces led by Saudi Arabia, which intervened in Bahrain to help the regime put down the democracy movement in 2011.¹¹

Perhaps the most important role played by the UAE in Yemen is its training and coordination of local militias. Peter Salisbury, Senior Research Fellow at Chatham House, described the UAE's role in Yemen as follows: "The Special Forces unit within the Emirati Presidential Guard has taken

the lead in Yemen in coordinating the Yemeni militias for the UAE ... and have very close relations with US Special Forces present in Yemen."¹² UAE military officers have said that the UAE has trained, paid and equipped more than 25,000 Yemeni soldiers operating in the southern part of the country, both in Hadramout province and near Aden.¹³

The UAE has also facilitated the involvement of other countries and mercenary groups in the war, by, for example, providing funding and logistical support for the deployment of troops from Sudan to Yemen.¹⁴ A December 2018 New York Times report suggests that up to 14,000 Sudanese militia members, allegedly armed with U.S.-supplied weapons, are fighting on the side of the Saudi/UAE coalition in Yemen, including substantial numbers of child soldiers. These Sudanese forces include members of the Janjaweed militias that are under US and international sanctions for gross violations of human rights and war crimes.¹⁵ The Saudi government has denied providing U.S.-supplied weapons to Sudanese fighters in Yemen.¹⁶

There have also been reports of the UAE working with a private military contractor to recruit and train mercenaries from Colombia, Chile, and other Latin American countries for deployment to Yemen as part of the Saudi-led coalition.¹⁷ Just as troubling have been reports that Americans with special forces experience have worked as mercenaries for the UAE in Yemen.¹⁸

The UAE has contributed ships to the naval blockade of Yemen. The blockade has impeded the delivery of civilian aid into the country. As a result, the naval blockade has been a major contributor to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, in which shortages of food, medical supplies, and clean water have contributed to widespread malnutrition and preventable deaths.¹⁹ A March 2018 UN Security Council statement references the blockade and other activities that have blocked the delivery of humanitarian supplies as follows:

"The Security Council . . . notes with great concern the impact that access restrictions on commercial and humanitarian imports have had on the humanitarian situation . . . and calls the parties to immediately facilitate access to these essential imports [including] the full and sustained opening of all of Yemen's ports, including Hodeida and Saleef ports, and stresses the importance of keeping these functioning and open to all commercial and humanitarian imports, including food, fuel, and medical imports."²⁰

The UAE's role in the blockade has included the deployment of Bayunah class corvettes (small warships).²¹ The Bayunah class corvettes are built by Abu Dhabi Shipbuilding (ADSB) with assistance from Constructions Mecaniques de Normandie (CMN) of Cherbourg, France. Raytheon has provided missiles and missile launchers that are deployed on the ships.²²

The UAE and the local forces it has armed and trained have spearheaded the on-again, off-again assaults on the critical port of Hodeidah, the entry point for 70 to 80 percent of the humanitarian aid coming into Yemen. In Hodeidah, the UAE has supported the Amaliga, or "Giants" brigade, a sectarian Salafi militia. The UAE is now also supporting Tareq Saleh, a controversial figure and nephew of former Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh. Tareq Saleh headed his uncle's regime's Republican Guard and has been implicated in the killing of civilians.²³ Tareq Saleh was aligned with the Houthi coalition for much of the war but later switched allegiances and joined with the Saudi/UAE forces. His uncle Ali Abdullah Saleh was killed by Houthi forces shortly after the Saleh

forces changed sides in the conflict.²⁴

Officials from the United Nations and aid groups have said that an all-out attempt to retake the port from Houthi rebels would impact hundreds of thousands of people and tilt the country into a full-scale famine. As of mid-December 2018, fighting in and around the port had stopped as part of a UN-brokered ceasefire, part of larger talks on bringing an end to the Yemen war.

There have been credible reports that UAE-backed militias in Yemen have been involved in systematic human rights abuses, including enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, and torture. For example, Nadwa Al-Dawsari, Senior Nonresident Fellow with the Project on Middle East Democracy, has cited the following abuses:

"I believe the documented cases of enforced disappearance and ill-treatment by the [Emirati-trained] Hadrami Elite Forces are part of a much wider problem . . . there seems to be a pattern of violations, rather than a problem resulting from lack of training and supervision. The Emirates have built a detention center at Mukalla Airport . . . where the detainees are taken, and where they are subject to inhumane treatment, including torture."²⁵

The UAE role in Yemen drew additional criticism after a June 2017 investigation by the Associated Press indicated that UAE forces and UAE-trained militias had been running a network of secret prisons in southern Yemen where individuals suspected of ties to Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) were subjected to extreme torture. These torture methods have included the use of "the grill," which has been described in the Associated Press report as a technique in which "the victim is tied to a spit like a roast and spun in a circle of fire."²⁶

The Associated Press report also noted that U.S. personnel were involved in interrogating suspects in Yemen, prompting the late John McCain, then Senate Armed Services Committee chair, and ranking Democrat Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI) to send a letter to then secretary of defense James Mattis asserting that "Even the suggestion that the United States tolerates torture by our foreign partners compromises our national security mission by undermining the moral principle that distinguishes us from our enemies— our belief that all people possess basic human rights."²⁷

A summer 2018 report by Amnesty International indicates that torture and disappearances carried out by UAE allies in Yemen continue:

"Dozens of families in southern Yemen are desperately looking for loved ones whose whereabouts remain unknown months and years after they have been detained by Yemeni security forces that report to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). These forces that do not fall under the control of the internationally-recognized government of President Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi have been carrying out arbitrary arrests, unlawfully depriving individuals of their liberty and engaging in enforced disappearances, torture and other ill-treatment. One year after the media and human rights groups exposed a network of secret prisons operated by these forces and the UAE, revealing a range of shocking abuses, many detainees are still missing, serious violations continue, and impunity is rife."²⁸

A recent, Congressionally-mandated report on detainee abuse by the UAE has shed little light on whether the situation has improved since the torture was first reported on in 2017. An analysis

at the web site Just Security described the report as “a deliberately misleading and deceptively evasive account of U.S. and Emirati actions in Yemen.”²⁹

A recent report by the Daily Beast cites claims by former detainees in UAE-run prisons in Yemen that U.S. personnel may have been present while they were being tortured by their UAE captors.³⁰

Attorney Jennifer Gibson of the human rights organization Reprieve commented on the new allegations as follows:

“Earlier this month [January 2019], the Department of Defense again denied it had any ‘credible’ evidence that its key partner in Yemen is torturing people in its prisons. Now a few brave Yemenis are speaking out, telling stories not just of UAE torture, but of American involvement in that torture—indeed of Americans in the room while they were being tortured . . . The American public urgently needs answers about what the U.S.’ role is in these abuses—and who knew about it at the Pentagon.”³¹

Meanwhile, an investigative report by CNN has found that Saudi Arabia and the UAE have “transferred American-made weapons to al Qaeda-linked fighters, hardline Salafi militias, and other factions waging war in Yemen, in violation of their agreements with the United States.” Items diverted range from small arms, to anti-tank weapons, to land systems like the Mine Resistant Armor Protected (MRAP) vehicle.³²

THE UAE AS “LITTLE SPARTA”

The UAE is considered to have one of the most capable militaries in the Middle East. As Gen. James Mattis, the Trump administration’s former secretary of defense, has put it, “They’re not just willing to fight — they’re great warriors.” Mattis has also noted that the UAE is well regarded by the U.S. military: “there’s a mutual respect, an admiration, for what they’ve done — and what they can do.”³³

The United States has close relations with the UAE military and government. Research by the Project on Government Oversight has revealed that before he was appointed secretary of defense, Mattis sought and received approval to serve as an unpaid advisor to the UAE military, commencing in August of 2015.³⁴ Mattis is not the only former U.S. military official with a relationship to the UAE. Vice Admiral Robert Harward (USN-Ret.), the former deputy director of the U.S. Central Command, is now head of Lockheed Martin’s UAE operations.³⁵ Brig. General Jeffrey McDaniels (USAF Ret.) is now the Vice President for International Strategy at the U.S. defense contractor Leidos, with the UAE as one of his countries of focus. Rear Admiral Gary W. Rosholt (USN Ret.), a former defense attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi, UAE, is now the VP of Middle East Operations for L3.³⁶

The UAE’s growing military activism and ambitions have led Mattis and other U.S. generals to refer to it as “Little Sparta,” with the implication that it is playing a disproportionately large military

role in the region relative to its size.

As a result of its military activism, the UAE now has one of the most effective fighting forces in the region. The wisdom of each of these military ventures is another matter. This is particularly true in the case of its intervention as part of the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, in which it has helped foment a humanitarian emergency while opening space for Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) to make political gains.

The UAE's role in Afghanistan provides a good example of how it has used its military in coalition operations. UAE ground troops were in Afghanistan for 11 years, conducting raids and training elite Afghan troops in cooperation with U.S. Special Forces. And the UAE deployed F-16s to engage in bombing and close-air support from 2012 to 2014, at the same time that many European allies were reducing their presence in Afghanistan. UAE aircraft flew hundreds of air support operations in support of U.S. troops in southern Afghanistan, bombing Taliban positions to interfere with their ability to continue attacking U.S. forces.³⁷

After a long period in which the UAE only allowed the U.S. to station refueling aircraft at its Al Dhafra air base, the facility is now being used as a launching point for U.S. missions to Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq. It is also one of the most active bases in the world for U.S. surveillance aircraft, including everything from U-2s to Global Hawk unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). In all, the United States has over 3,500 military personnel and 60 aircraft stationed at Al Dhafra. The base hosts a squadron of F-15s, as well as four current generation F-22 combat aircraft.³⁸

The UAE has sharply increased its military spending over the past decade, more than doubling its military budget from \$10.3 billion in 2005 to over \$24 billion in 2014, the most recent year for which full statistics are available.³⁹ Figures are in constant 2016 dollars.

Among the most important U.S. systems the UAE has acquired are 70 F-16 combat aircraft. The UAE's version of the plane is more advanced than the F-16s possessed by the U.S. Air Force.⁴⁰ Superior features of the UAE's F-16 included increased range and fuel capacity, and more advanced radar systems. An analysis by Inside Defense describes the UAE's F-16s as being "a half a generation ahead" of U.S. Air Force models.⁴¹

The primary stated rationale for the UAE's cultivation of greater military capabilities is as a counterbalance to Iran. Yet some of its actions don't clearly align with that goal, and may even undermine it. For example, while the intervention in Yemen is often described as a response to Iranian interference, most experts on the region point out that the Houthi forces that are the primary target of the intervention have longstanding grievances that have nothing to do with Iran. As Thomas Juneau, an expert on Iranian foreign policy, has noted, "Tehran's support for the Houthis is limited, and its influence in Yemen is marginal. It is simply inaccurate to claim that the Houthis are Iranian proxies."⁴² If sustained, the Saudi/UAE coalition intervention in Yemen is likely to serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy, ultimately increasing Iran's influence in Yemen by pushing the Houthi forces to continue to seek outside support to sustain themselves.

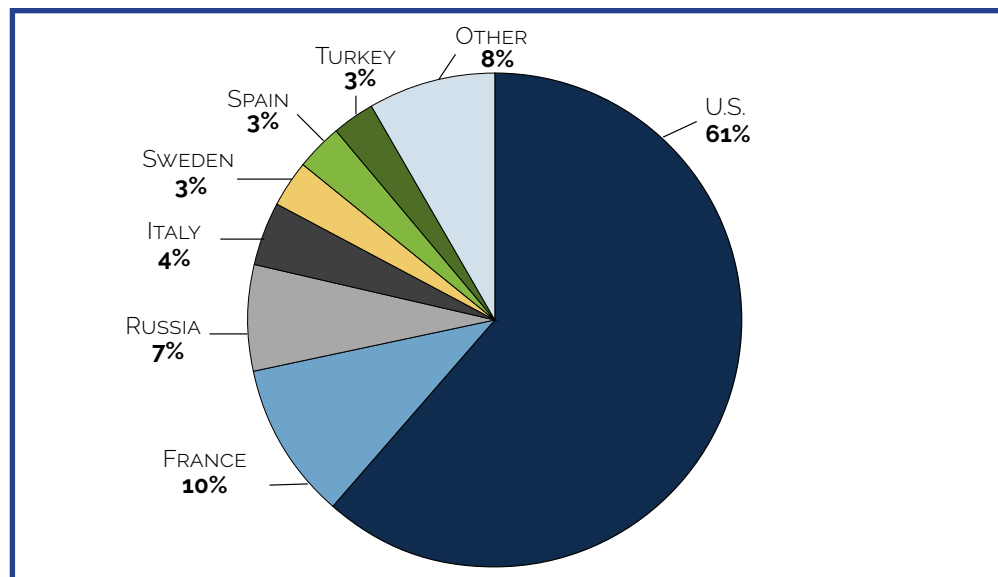
The UAE is also building up a capability for power projection in the region by establishing a military facility in Eritrea that has been used as a launching point for the deployment of Sudanese

troops to Yemen and a base of operations for UAE combat ships that are involved in ferrying troops and enforcing the naval blockade on Yemen.⁴³ The UAE also recently signed a controversial agreement with the government of Somaliland to open a base there, in what is internationally considered to be an autonomous region of Somalia, creating a deepening rift with the government of Somalia.

U.S. SUPPLIES OF ARMS AND TRAINING TO THE UAE

According to statistics compiled by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the United States has been far and away the largest arms supplier to the UAE, providing over 60% of all major weaponry delivered to that nation since 2009. Next on the list were France, at 10%, and Russia, at 6.8% of total deliveries to the UAE over the same time period.⁴⁴

SHARE OF ARMS DELIVERIES TO THE UAE, BY COUNTRY, 2009-2017



SOURCE: CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICY, CALCULATED USING DATA FROM THE STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

The most recent U.S. arms offer to the UAE was a batch of Sidewinder air-to-ground missiles that was officially reported to Congress on March 8, 2018. The largest recent U.S. offer to the UAE – announced to Congress on May 11th of 2017 – is a \$2 billion sale of PAC-2 and related anti-missile and anti-aircraft missiles.

A deal for up to 60,000 precision-guided bombs to the UAE that was discussed with Congress in May of 2018 has been stalled after Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ) put a hold on it over concerns about civilian casualties caused by air strikes carried out by the Saudi/UAE coalition.⁴⁵ The UAE deal and a parallel offer of bombs to Saudi Arabia are now on indefinite hold due to growing

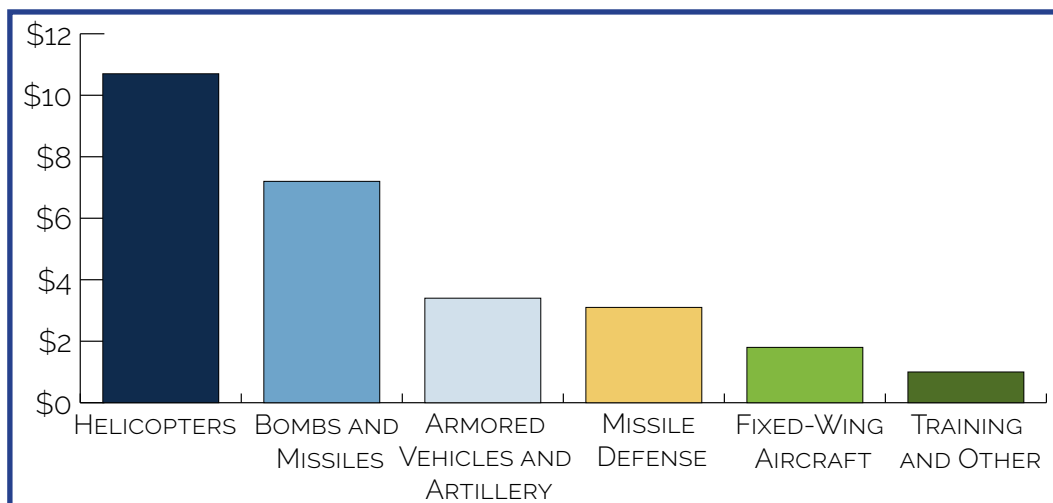
Congressional opposition to U.S. support for the Saudi/UAE war effort in Yemen.

The U.S. is poised to be a major supplier to the UAE for years to come. The U.S. has offered the UAE over \$27 billion in weaponry under the Pentagon's Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program since 2009. These figures represent only offers made under the FMS program, which is by far the largest channel for the transfer of major defense equipment like combat aircraft, tanks, helicopters, combat ships, and bombs and missiles. It is important to note that not all FMS offers result in final sales; but they are a good gauge of the U.S. intent to arm a given nation.

There is also a deal pending to provide 30 F-16 E/F Block 61 aircraft to the UAE via a commercial sale outside of the Pentagon's FMS program. But the deal was first announced in 2014 and it is not clear whether it will move forward in its current form.⁴⁶

The largest offers to the UAE under the FMS program since 2009 include a \$5 billion deal for 60 Apache attack helicopters; a \$4 billion deal for "various munitions and support" (including 1,600 bombs); a second, \$3.5 billion deal for 37 Apache attack helicopters; a \$2.5 billion deal for 4,569 Mine Resistant Armor Protected (MRAP) vehicles; a \$2 billion deal for 16 Chinook transport helicopters; a \$2 billion deal for a PAC-2 missile defense system and related anti-aircraft equipment; and a \$1.1 billion deal for a Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defense system. See the appendix for dates of each offer.

FMS OFFERS TO THE UAE, 2009-2017, IN BILLIONS OF DOLLARS



SOURCE: CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICY, CALCULATED USING DATA FROM THE DEFENSE SECURITY COOPERATION AGENCY

It should be noted that virtually all of the FMS offers to the UAE involved substantial amounts of support equipment, so that it would not be correct to calculate the unit cost of each item by simply dividing the value of the deal by the number of major systems included in that deal. Total values fluctuate widely depending upon the amount and types of support equipment and military services included in a given deal.

More than one-quarter of the items offered to the UAE under the FMS program since 2009 – \$7.2 billion worth – involved bombs and missiles of the type being used in the war in Yemen and in the campaign against ISIS. The munitions included over 4,800 Hellfire air-to-surface missiles and over 30,000 bombs such as the Paveway and the Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM). The JDAM is a tail kit that can be used to make existing general-purpose bombs more accurate. These substantial offers of bombs and missiles are consistent with the scale of the UAE's operations in Yemen and in the fight against ISIS. A May 2015 offer of guided bombs notes that they can be used "to provide the UAE with additional precision guided munitions capability to meet the current threat represented by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, and Houthi aggression in Yemen."⁴⁷ These rationales no doubt apply to all of the offers of bombs from the U.S. to the UAE.

The UAE is also investing heavily in transport aircraft, from the Chinook and Black Hawk helicopters to the C-17 and C-130J transport planes. According to the descriptions of the offers provided to Congress by the Pentagon's Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), the aircraft "will provide the UAE the capability to transport equipment and troops in the region, as well as to support U.S. and NATO airlift requirements in Afghanistan." In addition to Afghanistan, the only area "in the region" where the UAE has deployed large numbers of ground troops is Yemen. The Black Hawk helicopters are described as being for "intra-country transportation of UAE officials to militarily critical training and operations sites."⁴⁸ Although the Pentagon's description of the deal focuses on use of the aircraft within the UAE, they are also capable of transporting troops within Yemen should the UAE leadership choose to utilize them in that fashion.

Other U.S.-supplied systems that can be utilized in Yemen are the Apache attack helicopters, which can provide close-air support to troops on the ground; and the 4,659 Mine Resistant Armor Protected (MRAP) vehicles, which are specially designed to deal with the threat of improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

The bulk of U.S. arms offers to the UAE in 2018 came via the commercial sales program, which involves direct deals between U.S. arms and training providers and the UAE military that are licensed by the State Department. Commercial sales offers to the UAE in 2018 totaled over \$666 million, including \$187.5 million to upgrade military vehicles, \$344.8 million to support the UAE's Patriot missile defense system, and \$122.7 million to provide "infantry-related training" and advisory assistance to the elite Emirati Presidential Guard. See Appendix II below for further details.

The United States has also been a major supplier of military training to the UAE military, training over 5,000 students from 2009 to 2016. U.S. training has been provided to personnel from the UAE Navy, Army, Air Force and Special Forces.⁴⁹ And according to an internal Air Force document acquired by investigative journalist Nick Turse, despite Pentagon assurances that it has stopped support for air operations on the part of the Saudi/UAE coalition in Yemen, it has been training UAE F-16 pilots "for combat operations in Yemen."⁵⁰

U.S.-SUPPLIED WEAPONRY ALREADY IN THE UAE'S ARSENAL

The UAE Air Force is the prime beneficiary of U.S. weapons transfers to that nation. Of its 138 fighter planes, 78 are U.S.-supplied, Lockheed Martin F-16s, and 60 are French Mirage-2000s. In keeping with its reliance on U.S. combat aircraft, the UAE uses the Sidewinder, AMRAAM, HARM and Maverick tactical missiles, as well as the Paveway laser-guided bomb. The UAE relies heavily on U.S. equipment for airlift, with 7 Boeing C-17s and 4 Lockheed Martin C-130H's. It also has 28 Boeing Apache attack helicopters.⁵¹

The UAE land forces possess no U.S.-supplied tanks or armored personnel carriers. This is apparently part of an effort by the UAE to diversify its sources of supply, but the U.S. remains its largest source of new armaments nonetheless. The main fighting vehicles in the UAE Army are 340 French Leclerc tanks, 370 French Panhard armored personnel carriers, and 390 Russian BMP-3 armored infantry fighting vehicles. The only major U.S.-supplied ground equipment consists of 85 M-109 howitzers and 140 Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS). But the role of U.S. ground equipment in the UAE's arsenal should increase dramatically as the deliveries of 4,569 Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles proceed. A documentary by Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ) found that U.S.-supplied M-ATV armored vehicles were found in the possession of the Abu al-Abbas Brigade in Yemen, which the U.S. Treasury Department has singled out for its ties with Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). The vehicles could only have come from Saudi Arabia or the UAE, as both nations have taken deliveries of these vehicles from the United States.⁵²

The UAE also possesses a U.S.-supplied Patriot PAC-3 missile defense system.

THE CORPORATE CONNECTION

In the United States, the biggest beneficiaries of U.S. arms sales to the UAE are Lockheed Martin (F-16 combat planes, C-130J transport aircraft, Black Hawk transport helicopters and Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defense systems); Boeing (C-17 transport aircraft, Apache helicopters, and Joint Direct Attack Munitions); and Raytheon (THAAD, as well as missiles deployed on the UAE's Bayunah Class corvettes).⁵³ The weapons mentioned above are part of deals worth over \$15 billion. It is impossible to break down the costs of each system precisely as they are generally announced as part of packages that include multiple systems and related services – but they are clearly a huge source of revenue to the companies like Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and Boeing (see Appendix I). These are just the prime contractors for the largest arms deals between the U.S. and the UAE. Including contractors on smaller systems and subcontractors would extend the list substantially.

In addition to selling weapons systems, a number of U.S. firms have also been involved in helping to build up the UAE's arms and aerospace industries. Lockheed Martin has been the most active. According to Lockheed Martin CEO Marillyn Hewson, her firm has formed a joint ven-

ture with a Swedish firm and UAE-based Injaz National to make “an advanced robot machining tool” that “has applications in many industries, including aerospace, defense, and automobiles.” Hewson says the goal of the project is to “establish the UAE as the leading supplier of this cutting-edge, automated manufacturing technology.”⁵⁴ Lockheed Martin also runs a Center for Innovation and Security Solutions at Masdar City in the UAE. The center has trained UAE personnel in computer simulation, cybersecurity, and space technologies.⁵⁵ Textron and Raytheon have also established offices or entered into joint ventures with UAE firms in the past few years.⁵⁶ Many of these investments are provided to partially offset the cost to the UAE of buying billions of dollars worth of U.S. weaponry.

One unusual application of the offset concept comes in the form of cash payments by U.S. contractors into a fund that is purportedly meant to fund economic development projects in the UAE. But an investigation by the Intercept found that \$20 million from the fund was used for a grant to the Middle East Institute, a DC-based think tank that has largely espoused the Saudi/UAE position on the Yemen war. One critic has termed the offset money a “slush fund.”⁵⁷ UAE offset funds have also been used to purchase weaponry for the Jordanian military.⁵⁸

U.S. POLICY TOWARD THE UAE GOING FORWARD

The role of the UAE in the war in Yemen, a war that has resulted in widespread hunger and the largest cholera outbreak in the world due to greatly diminished access to clean water and basic health care, is troubling. In all, roughly 80% of Yemenis – 24 million people – are in need of humanitarian aid.⁵⁹ The naval blockade is a major reason for that dire situation, as are coalition air attacks on vital civilian infrastructure.⁶⁰ The United Nations-led peace talks that have resulted in a ceasefire in the war and are seeking a long-term solution to the conflict offer the best hope of ending the suffering of the Yemeni people.⁶¹ The United States should withhold further arms, training and military support to the UAE until it is clear that it will sustain the ceasefire, negotiate in good faith for a peaceful settlement of the war, and account for the abuses committed by its own forces and those that it has armed, financed, and trained.

Appendix I

U.S. ARMS OFFERS TO THE UAE UNDER THE FOREIGN MILITARY SALES PROGRAM 2009 TO PRESENT

	DATE	INITIAL ESTIMATED COST	TRANSFER DETAILS
1	March 8, 2018	\$270,400,000	AIM-9X-2 Sidewinder Block II Missiles
2	May 11, 2017	\$2,000,000,000	Patriot PAC-3 and GEM-T Missiles
3	December 8, 2016	\$3,500,000,000	Apache AH-64E Helicopters and Services
4	October 24, 2016	\$75,000,000	Exercise Participation Support
5	July 19, 2016	\$785,000,000	Munitions, Sustainment, and Support
6	May 13, 2016	\$476,000,000	AGM-114 R/K Hellfire Category III Missiles
7	February 24, 2016	\$225,000,000	Infrared Countermeasures
8	November 5, 2016	\$380,000,000	Joint Direct Attack Munitions
9	July 29, 2015	\$335,000,000	Infrared Countermeasures
10	May 29, 2015	\$130,000,000	Guided Bomb Units
11	September 29, 2014	\$900,000,000	Artillery Launchers
12	September 26, 2014	\$2,500,000,000	MRAP Vehicles
13	January 24, 2014	\$270,000,000	F-16 Aircraft Support
14	January 8, 2014	\$150,000,000	Blanket Order Training
15	October 15, 2013	\$4,000,000,000	Various Munitions and Support
16	November 5, 2012	\$1,135,000,000	THAAD Missile Defense System
17	August 1, 2012	\$35,000,000	F117-PW-100 Engines
18	December 16, 2011	\$60,000,000	JAVELIN Anti-Tank Missiles
19	November 30, 2011	\$304,000,000	Joint Direct Attack Munitions
20	September 22, 2011	\$401,000,000	MIDS/LVT LINK 16 Terminals
21	September 22, 2011	\$65,000,000	AGM-114R3 HELLFIRE Missiles
22	June 24, 2011	\$217,000,000	UH-60M BLACKHAWK Helicopters
23	May 25, 2011	\$100,000,000	F-16 Program Support
24	April 19, 2011	\$251,000,000	AIM-9X-2 SIDEWINDER Missiles
25	November 4, 2010	\$140,000,000	Army Tactical Missile Systems
26	November 4, 2010	\$5,000,000,000	AH-64D Block III APACHE Helicopters
27	May 26, 2010	\$250,000,000	Support for C-17 Aircraft
28	December 28, 2009	\$119,000,000	C-130 support
29	December 28, 2009	\$290,000,000	Enhanced Guided Bomb Units
30	December 18, 2009	\$501,000,000	C-17 Aircraft
31	December 3, 2009	\$2,000,000,000	CH-47F CHINOOK Helicopters
32	August 4, 2009	\$526,000,000	HELLFIRE Missiles

Appendix II

U.S. COMMERCIAL SALES OFFERS TO THE UAE, 2018

	DATE	INITIAL ESTIMATED COST	TRANSFER DETAILS
1	January 9, 2018	\$9,764,350	Model 249 5.56 caliber machine guns, Model M2 HB QCB, .50 caliber machine guns, and accessories
2	April 18, 2018	\$187,500,000	Export of defense articles, including technical data, and defense services for integration and installation into military vehicles
3	April 18, 2018	\$86,000,000	Training, maintenance, and engineering support on AT-802U and S2R-660 Archangel border patrol aircraft
4	August 15, 2018	\$344,818,223	To establish a Patriot Weapon System Additional Equipment and Spare Parts Program
5	August 20, 2018	\$10,410,000	Upper receiver assemblies with 14.5 inch barrels and lower parts kits
6	September 6, 2018	\$122,760,000	Infantry-related military training and other advisory assistance for the Presidential Guard Command
7	September 10, 2018	\$1,144,800	Automatic 5.56mm rifles

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