



**WILLIAM  
HARTUNG**  
Arms and Security  
Program

# FUELING CONFLICT:

U.S. ARMS SALES TO THE  
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES AND  
THE U.S.-UAE MILITARY ALLIANCE



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The Center for International Policy (CIP) is an independent nonprofit center for research, public education and advocacy on U.S. foreign policy. CIP works to make a peaceful, just and sustainable world the central pursuit of U.S. foreign policy. CIP's programs offer common sense solutions to address the most urgent threats to our planet: war, corruption, inequality and climate change. CIP's scholars, researchers, journalists, analysts and former government officials provide a unique mixture of issue-area expertise, access to high-level officials, media savvy and strategic vision. The Center was founded in 1975, in the wake of the Vietnam War, by former diplomats and peace activists who sought to reorient U.S. foreign policy to advance international cooperation as the primary vehicle for solving global challenges and promoting human rights. Today CIP brings diverse voices to bear on key foreign policy decisions and makes the evidence-based case for why and how the United States must redefine the concept of national security in the 21st century, and adopt greater cooperation, transparency and accountability in the international relations of the United States.

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The Arms and Security Program 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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*Report cover image is of U.S. and Emirati soldiers participate in joint exercise Native Fury 20 in the United Arab Emirates on March 15, 2020. Source: U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Kyle McNan via DVIDS*



## SUMMARY

In November 2020, the Trump administration notified Congress of offers of F-35 combat aircraft, MQ-9 armed drones, and bombs and missiles to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) worth a total of over \$23 billion -- the largest U.S. arms package ever offered to the Emirates. These deals threaten to increase violence and fuel conflict at a time when the Biden administration should prioritize ending conflicts in the greater Middle East.

The arms deals announced last November generated controversy due to the UAE's role in the devastating war in Yemen, including its diversion of U.S.-supplied weapons to extremist militias and Houthi rebels; its role in the devastating bombing campaign there; its use of torture and other detention-related abuse; its violation of the United Nations arms embargo on Libya; and its domestic record of severe human rights abuses. Some members of Congress also raised the issue of whether the sale of F-35s to the UAE would degrade Israel's qualitative military edge (QME) in the region, but Israeli officials signed off on the deal after the normalization of relations with the UAE under the Abraham Accords and the U.S. pledge to increase sales to Tel Aviv as needed to maintain its advantage.<sup>1</sup>

Despite all of these concerns, Congressional opposition was not sufficient to block the package from moving forward. Resolutions of disapproval aimed at stopping the sales from going forward failed to muster a majority in the Senate in December 2020, although virtually every Democrat in the Senate voted to block the transfers.<sup>2</sup> But the Biden administration can and should reverse the deal.<sup>3</sup> Arms sales to the UAE should be cut off as part of a review of the entire U.S.-UAE alliance in light of the urgent need to revise U.S. strategic objectives in the Middle East as a whole.

The latest arms sales come in the context of a longstanding U.S. military relationship with the UAE which will be detailed in this report.

### The major findings of this report include the following:

- The \$23 billion arms package to the UAE is one of the largest deals offered during the four years of the Trump administration, rivaled only by a \$23 billion offer to Japan as part of its program of purchasing U.S. F-35 combat aircraft. The UAE deal includes

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

2. Andrew Desiderio, "Senate Sinks Dem-Led Effort to Block Trump's Arms Sales to the UAE," Politico, December 9, 2020, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/12/09/trump-uae-arms-sales-444002>

3. Ali Harb, "UAE Arms Deal: Critics Turn to Biden As Senate Fails to Block \$23B Sale," Middle East Eye, December 11, 2020, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/uae-arms-deal-critics-turn-biden-senate-fails-block-23bn-sale>

up to 50 F-35s at a cost of \$10.4 billion; 18 MQ-9 armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) worth \$2.97 billion; and thousands of bombs and air-to-ground missiles worth \$10 billion. These are all offensive weapons systems that can be put to use in conflicts in the Middle East like the wars in Yemen and Libya, where the UAE continues to play a central role.

- Prior to the \$23 billion deal offered in November 2020, the United States made offers of over \$36 billion worth of weaponry to the UAE under the Pentagon's Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program from 2009 to 2019, in 38 separate deals. This brings total U.S. arms offers to the UAE to \$59 billion since 2009, more than half of which (\$31 billion) have occurred during the Trump administration. These figures represent only a portion of the arms offered to Abu Dhabi as they do not include Commercial Sales licensed by the State Department during this time frame. Past 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.
- The United States is by far the largest arms supplier to the UAE, accounting for over 68% of all weapons delivered to that nation from 2015 to 2019, according to statistics compiled from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's arms transfer database. The next biggest supplier was France, at 11% of deliveries, followed by the Netherlands, at 3% of deliveries over the same time period.
- Almost one-third of the \$59 billion in FMS offers to the UAE from 2009 to the present – valued at \$17.2 billion in total – have been 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 the Saudi/Emirati-led intervention in Yemen.
- The UAE has intervened in the civil war in Libya in violation of a United Nations arms embargo by supplying weapons to the forces of Gen. Khalifa Haftar and carrying out air and drone strikes in support of his military campaigns in the country, which are contrary to the objectives of the U.S. policy of supporting the U.N.-recognized government (the GNA, or Government of National Accord). Haftar's forces have engaged in extensive human rights abuses in the war, including killing scores of civilians.
- The UAE is responsible for large numbers of civilian deaths as a result of its central role in the war in Yemen, where it, as a leader in the Saudi/Emirati-led coalition fighting Houthi rebels, has deployed ground forces, taken part in the coalition's aerial campaign and naval blockade, armed, trained and backed thousands of Yemeni militia members, and hired mercenaries to engage in the conflict. The UAE and the militias it supports have also been implicated in torture, disappearances and other

detention-related abuse. In addition, reports suggest that some U.S.-supplied weapons were diverted from the UAE to extremist militias – including some with ties to Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula – and to Houthi opposition forces. In February 2020, the UAE announced that it had pulled back most of its troops in Yemen, but it continues to arm, train and back militias involved in the war, which total 90,000 members in all, who continue to be implicated in abuse ranging from indiscriminate artillery shelling to child recruitment.

- A deal for up to 60,000 precision-guided bombs for the UAE and Saudi Arabia was rammed through Congress in June of 2019 under emergency procedures invoked by the Trump administration. Despite this effort to evade Congressional input, both houses of Congress voted to block the deal, only to have their action vetoed by President Trump. At the request of Congress, the propriety of the administration's declaration of an emergency was investigated by the State Department's Office of Inspector General, which did a perfunctory investigation that cleared the administration of wrongdoing but also noted that it was not taking adequate care to ensure that U.S.-supplied weapons were not being used to harm civilians.
- The United States has also been a major supplier of 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.
- The United States has close relations with the UAE military and government. Prior to his stint as secretary of defense in the Trump administration, former secretary of defense 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. In December 2020 he lobbied Congress in favor of the Trump administration's \$23 billion arms offer to the UAE. Among other ties, Rear Admiral Robert Harward (USN Ret.), the former deputy director of the U.S. Central Command, now runs Lockheed Martin's Middle East operations.
- The UAE has a record of severe human rights abuses at home. As Human Rights Watch has noted: "UAE residents who have spoken about human rights issues are at serious risk of arbitrary detention, imprisonment, and torture. Many are serving long prison terms or have left the country under pressure." Dissidents who have left the country and their families have faced harassment, intimidation and surveillance by the UAE government's security apparatus
- 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 as a staging ground for U.S. missions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria.



*F-35As wait to taxi at Hill Air Force Base, Utah, on May 20, 2020, 10 days before deploying to Al Dhafra Air Base in the United Arab Emirates. Source: R. NialBradshaw/Air Force Magazine*

## INTRODUCTION

Until the recent \$23 billion arms package, the U.S./UAE arms transfer relationship had received relatively little attention among the public, in the media, or in Congress. Abu Dhabi's arms relationship with Washington has been largely overshadowed by the U.S. role as the primary arms supplier to Saudi Arabia and the use of U.S. arms in the Saudi/Emirati-led coalition's brutal bombing campaign in Yemen.<sup>4</sup> And though the Saudi role in Yemen 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, the additional attention to the war and its consequences did not elevate discussion of the UAE's role in the conflict to the same degree. Although it announced a pullback of its troops from Yemen in February 2020, the UAE continues to be involved in the conflict through its role in arming, training, and backing militias engaged in combat there.<sup>5</sup>

Its current and prior roles in the Yemen war, its violations of the United Nations arms embargo in Libya, and its record of internal repression all raise serious questions about the wisdom of supplying additional U.S. weaponry to the UAE at this time.

4. For more details, see William D. Hartung, "U.S. Arms Transfers to Saudi Arabia and the War in Yemen," Center for International Policy, November 2018, [https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/3ba8a1\\_5e9019d625e84087af647e6cb91ea3e2.pdf](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/3ba8a1_5e9019d625e84087af647e6cb91ea3e2.pdf)

5. Ibrahim Jalal, "The UAE May Have Withdrawn From Yemen, But Its Influence Remains Strong," Middle East Institute, February 25, 2020, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/uae-may-have-withdrawn-yemen-its-influence-remains-strong>

## ■ The UAE's Role in Yemen

The UAE has played a primary role in the Saudi/Emirati-led coalition in Yemen, in some respects more crucial than the role of Saudi Arabia itself. Over 112,000 people have died in the war, including over 12,600 civilians killed in attacks such as bombings or artillery fire.<sup>6</sup> Millions more have been driven to the brink of famine, and 80% of the country's 24 million people require some form of humanitarian assistance.<sup>7</sup>

At the height of its involvement in Yemen, the UAE maintained an estimated 1,500 Special Forces there, troops that were central to the prosecution of the war both through their role in direct combat and in training and directing local militias.<sup>8</sup> Despite its cutback in its troop presence, the UAE remains a central player in the conflict through its support of Yemeni militias with a total of 90,000 members in all.<sup>9</sup>

The UAE 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.<sup>10</sup> A December 2018 New York Times report suggested that up to 14,000 Sudanese militia members, allegedly armed with U.S.-supplied weapons, were fighting on the side of the Saudi/UAE-led coalition in Yemen, including substantial numbers of child soldiers. These Sudanese forces included members of the Janjaweed militias that are under US and international sanctions for gross violations of human rights and war crimes.<sup>11</sup>

6. Armed Conflict Location and Events Data (ACLED), "ACLED Resources: War in Yemen," accessed December 14, 2020, <https://acleddata.com/2020/03/25/acled-resources-war-in-yemen/#:~:text=Since%20then%2C%20ACLED%20estimates%20that,civilians%20killed%20in%20targeted%20attacks.&text=ACLED%20tracks%20political%20violence%20in,with%20data%20updated%20each%20week>.

7. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "About Yemen OCHA," accessed December 14, 2020, <https://www.unocha.org/yemen/about-ocha-yemen>

8. The figure of 1,500 UAE special forces in Yemen represents just part of its total troop presence. A figure of 4,000 UAE troops in Yemen is cited in International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2016* (Routledge: 2016), p. 315. Up to 1,500 UAE troops have been involved in the on-again, off-again assaults by the Saudi/UAE-led coalitions on the port of Hodeidah. On this point see Gareth Browne, "Who Are the Yemeni Ground Forces Fighting in Hodeidah," *The National*, June 14, 2018, available at <https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/who-are-the-yemeni-ground-forces-fighting-in-hodeidah-1.740197>

9. William D. Hartung 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/>; and United Nations Human Rights Council, "Situation of Human Rights in Yemen, Including Violations and Abuses Since September 2014," September 29, 2020, p. 15, <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/HRCouncil/GEE-Yemen/A-HRC-45-CRP.7-en.pdf>

10. The Emirati role in ferrying Sudanese troops to Yemen is cited in Alex Mello and Michael Knights, "West of Suez for the United Arab Emirates," *War on the Rocks*, September 2, 2016, available at <http://warontherocks.com/2016/09/west-of-suez-for-the-united-arab-emirates/>

11. David Kirkpatrick, "On the Front Line of the Saudi War in Yemen: Child Soldiers from Darfur," *New York Times*, Decem-

There were also 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.<sup>12</sup>

Additionally, public reporting suggests that U.S. weapons supplied to the UAE – including small arms and armored vehicles – were diverted to Yemeni militias and extremist groups, and even ended up in the hands of the Houthi opposition.<sup>13</sup> For example, a documentary by Arab Journalists for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ) found that U.S.-supplied M-ATV armored vehicles were found in the possession of the Abu al-Abbas Brigade, 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.<sup>14</sup> The UAE's irresponsible stewardship of U.S. arms transfers should give pause about supplying additional weaponry to the regime.

There have been credible reports that the UAE and UAE-backed militias in Yemen have been involved in grave violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, and torture. These activities were described in two investigations released on the same day in June 2017 by the Associated Press and Human Rights Watch that 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) and the Yemeni Islah party were disappeared, tortured and otherwise abused.<sup>15</sup>

As noted in a recent report by the Yemeni organization Mwatana for Human Rights, torture by UAE-backed militias continues.<sup>16</sup> As described by Mwatana, “The UAE and its allies are . . . using detentions to suppress any opposition to their activities and abuse in Yemen. Mwata-

ber 28, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/28/world/africa/saudi-sudan-yemen-child-fighters.html>

12. Emily B. Hager and Mark Mazzetti, “Emirates Secretly Sends Colombian Mercenaries to Yemen Fight,” *New York Times*, November 25, 2015, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/26/world/middleeast/emirates-secretly-sends-colombian-mercenaries-to-fight-in-yemen.html>

13. Nima Elbagir, Alison Main, Salma Abdelaziz, Laura Smith-Spark, and Jennifer Hansler, “The U.S. Cleared the Way for a New Arms Sale to the UAE, Despite Evidence It Violated the Last One,” *CNN.com*, May 22, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/22/world/state-department-uae-arms-sale-yemen-intl/index.html>

14. See “Yemen and the Global Arms Trade,” broadcast on Deutsche Welle, at <https://www.dw.com/en/yemen-and-the-global-arms-trade/av-46580888> For documentation of the delivery of U.S. M-ATVs to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, see the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) arms trade database at [www.sipri.org](http://www.sipri.org)

15. Human Rights Watch, “Yemen: UAE Backs Abusive Local Forces,” June 22, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/06/22/yemen-uae-backs-abusive-local-forces>; and Maggie Michael, “In Yemen’s Secret Prisons, UAE Tortures and U.S. Interrogates,” *Associated Press*, June 22, 2017, <https://apnews.com/article/yemen-international-law-archive-only-on-ap-prisons-4925f7f0fa654853bd6f2f57174179fe>

16. Mwatana for Human Rights, “In the Darkness: Abusive Detention, Disappearance and Torture in Yemen’s Unofficial Prisons, May 2016 to April 2020,” pp. 18-19, <https://mwatana.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/In-the-Darkness.pdf>



na has documented the detention of activists due to their criticism of Coalition practices and of its military and security operations. . . . Detainees are subjected to different forms of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, including beating, kicking, burning, waterboarding, hanging, deprivation of water and food, preventing them from performing religious rituals, sexual abuse that could amount to rape and threats of rape.”<sup>17</sup>

It should be noted that the UAE and its proxies are not alone in committing severe human rights abuses. The Houthi opposition has engaged in similar practices.<sup>18</sup>

Despite its February 2020 pullback, the UAE remains a central player in the Yemen war. Since it continues to arm, train and pay the salaries of militias that have engaged in systematic human rights abuses in Yemen, and play a central role in the Saudi/UAE-led coalition, the UAE continues to bear responsibility for stoking the war there, one reason among others to bar it from receiving U.S. arms.

The UAE has also played a role in the Coalition’s aerial campaign. According to a 2018 Human Rights Watch report, “Saudi Arabia and the UAE have played the largest role among coalition members in military operations in Yemen, including carrying out aerial attacks.” The report cites the UAE state news agency reporting that the UAE had deployed fighter jets to take part in coalition operations in Yemen, and that these forces had carried out airstrikes.<sup>19</sup> In 2020, a UN inquiry on Yemen noted that the UAE stated, after its withdrawal of ground forces, that it would continue its air operations in Yemen.<sup>20</sup>

While the Saudi/UAE 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.”<sup>21</sup> And although Iran is the principal external supplier of the Houthi opposition, those transfers have been limited, with most Houthi weapons ob-

17. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-18.

19. Human Rights Watch, “Hiding Behind the Coalition: Failure to Credibly Investigate and Provide Redress for Unlawful Attacks in Yemen,” August 24, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/08/24/hiding-behind-coalition/failure-credibly-investigate-and-provide-redress-unlawful>

20. United Nations Human Rights Council, “Situation of Human Rights in Yemen, Including Violations and Abuses Since September 2014,” September 29, 2020, p. 15, <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/GEE-Yemen/A-HRC-45-CRP.7-en.pdf>

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

tained from former Yemen army units that joined their coalition, items that were captured, or locally produced weapons from a variety of illicit sources.<sup>22</sup>

Despite these realities, the Trump administration cited Iran in its decision to designate the Houthi as a terrorist organization, a move that critics say will undermine the chances of a peace agreement in Yemen and reduce deliveries of much needed humanitarian aid.<sup>23</sup>

Gregory D. Johnsen has summarized the emerging situation with respect to the Houthi and their relations with Iran as follows:

“The Houthis are a domestic insurgency not a global terrorist organization, and no one — particularly not the secretary of state — should conflate the two. There is also an element of self-fulfilling prophecy with such a designation. Saudi Arabia went to war in Yemen in early 2015 because it was worried that the Houthis were an Iranian proxy. They weren’t, but after nearly six years of war, the Houthis and Iran are closer than ever, exchanging ambassadors and battlefield lessons.”<sup>24</sup>

As Sen. Todd Young (R-IN) has noted with respect to the Trump administration’s decision to designate the Houthi movement as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO), “this designation will further destabilize a war torn country, which is already the home of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, cut off our ability to continue negotiations toward peace, and will force the many NGOs in Yemen to stop providing lifesaving assistance in the country.”<sup>25</sup>

22. The volume of arms transfers from Iran to the Houthi coalition is hard to quantify, but SIPRI’s database has recorded \$20 million in transfers during the 2015 to 2019, measured in Trend Indicator Values. The data base is <http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/values.php>

23. Gregory D. Johnsen, “The Mistake of Designating the Houthis As a Foreign Terrorist Organization,” Brookings Center for Middle East Policy, November 25, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/11/25/the-mistake-of-designating-the-houthis-as-a-foreign-terrorist-organization/>

24. Ibid.

25. Office of Sen. Todd Young, “Young Condemns Houthi Designation in Yemen,” press release, January 11, 2021, <https://>

**“DESPITE THESE REALITIES, THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION CITED IRAN IN ITS DECISION TO DESIGNATE THE HOUTHIS AS A TERRORIST ORGANIZATION, A MOVE THAT CRITICS SAY WILL UNDERMINE THE CHANCES OF A PEACE AGREEMENT IN YEMEN AND REDUCE DELIVERIES OF MUCH NEEDED HUMANITARIAN AID.”**

## I The UAE's Role in Libya

The UAE has also been a key player in the war in Libya, supplying arms, financing, and air support to the forces of Gen. Khalifa Haftar, who is waging a campaign against the internationally recognized government. Haftar's forces have killed large numbers of civilians in the civil war, in many cases using weaponry supplied by the UAE.<sup>26</sup>

As is the case in Yemen, the UAE's role in Libya has not received attention commensurate with its involvement in the conflict, as noted in a November 2020 article in Foreign Policy:

“While the UAE has been the biggest military backer of Haftar as part of its broader effort to quash political Islam in the region, the Gulf state's role in the conflict has received significantly less scrutiny than Russia's intervention. Experts attribute this to the UAE's formidable lobbying efforts in Washington, and the country's role in other key U.S. foreign policy objectives, such as the maximum pressure campaign on Iran and the UAE's peace deal with Israel, which has been hailed as a rare foreign policy success for the Trump administration.”<sup>27</sup>

In September 2020, a UN experts group noted the primary roles of Turkey and the UAE in supplying the two sides in the war, with Turkey backing the central government and the UAE supporting Haftar's opposition forces: “since the more direct engagement by Turkey in 2019 and the United Arab Emirates in January 2020 arms transfers to Libya by those two member states have been extensive, blatant and with complete disregard to the sanctions measures.”<sup>28</sup> Equipment transferred by the UAE has included armored personnel carriers, patrol vehicles, attack helicopters and a French Dassault Mirage 2000-9 jet fighter.<sup>29</sup> The full volume of weaponry supplied by the UAE to Haftar's forces is likely much more extensive. As the experts' panel noted, the UAE made more than 150 cargo flights to areas controlled by Haftar between January and April of 2020 and has also been accused of supplying fuel to his forces.<sup>30</sup> And the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency has suggested that the UAE

[www.young.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/-young-condemns-houthi-designation-in-yemen](http://www.young.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/-young-condemns-houthi-designation-in-yemen)

26. Middle East Eye, “Haftar's Forces ‘Responsible For the Majority of Civilian Deaths’ in Libya Since 2019,” June 2, 2020, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/tripoli-offensive-leads-surge-civilian-deaths-libya-study-finds>

27. Amy Mackinnon and Jack Detsch, “Pentagon Says UAE Possibly Funding Russia's Shadowy Mercenaries in Yemen,” Foreign Policy, November 30, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/11/30/pentagon-trump-russia-libya-uae/>

28. Edith M. Lederer, “Experts: Libya Rivals UAE, Russia, Turkey Violate UN Embargo,” Washington Post, September 9, 2020, via the Associated Press, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/experts-libya-rivals-uae-russia-turkey-violate-un-embargo/2020/09/09/0e851144-f260-11ea-8025-5d3489768ac8\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/experts-libya-rivals-uae-russia-turkey-violate-un-embargo/2020/09/09/0e851144-f260-11ea-8025-5d3489768ac8_story.html) and “UAE Delivered Weapons to Libya's Haftar Despite UN Embargo,” Middle East Eye, September 30, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/11/30/pentagon-trump-russia-libya-uae/> <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/uae-libya-arms-deliveries-haftar-un-embargo>

29. Lederer, op. cit., Note 15.

30. Middle East Eye, op. cit., note 13.

may be providing funding to the Wagner Group, a Russian-backed mercenary organization operating in Libya.<sup>31</sup>

The UAE has also played a role in air attacks in Libya, which Chris Cole of the UK Group Drone Wars has described as “ground zero for drone wars.”<sup>32</sup> A 2017 UN experts panel report indicated that armed drones flying out of the Haftar forces’ Al Khadim airbase were “most probably” operated by the UAE.<sup>33</sup> And the BBC uncovered evidence of the use of a UAE-operated drone in a January 2020 attack that killed 26 military cadets in the Libyan capital of Tripoli.<sup>34</sup> In August 2019, UAE-operated Chinese drones were named as being responsible for a strike that targeted a town hall meeting in south-western Libya that killed at least 45 people.<sup>35</sup>

Ghassam Salame, the former head of the UN mission in Libya, has described the war there as “possibly the largest drone war theatre now in the world.” According to Frederic Wehrey of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, “The Emirates’ role has been especially destructive — its drones and fixed-wing aircraft have conducted hundreds of strikes, according to the United Nations, causing scores of civilian deaths.”<sup>36</sup>

In addition to fueling severe harm to Libya’s civilian population, “prolonged conflict almost certainly will strengthen armed groups, including those linked to radical Islamist organizations such as al-Qaeda and ISIS,” according to the International Crisis Group.<sup>37</sup> Fighting has diminished from peak levels since the ramping down of an offensive by Haftar forces against government forces in Libya’s capital of Tripoli in mid-2020, but the risk of future escalation remains as long as outside players like the UAE continue to fuel the war with funds and weaponry.

31. Mackinnon and Detsch, op. cit., note 14.

32. Dan Sabbagh, Jason Burke, and Bethan McKernan, “Libya Is Ground Zero: Drones on Frontline in Bloody Civil War,” *The Guardian*, November 27, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/nov/27/libya-is-ground-zero-drones-on-frontline-in-bloody-civil-war>

33. Al Jazeera, “UN Report: UAE Violates Libya Arms Embargo,” June 14, 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/6/14/un-report-uae-violates-libya-arms-embargo>

34. BBC, “UAE Implicated in Lethal Drone Strike in Yemen,” August 28, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-53917791>

35. Sabbagh et. al., op. cit.

36. Akbar Shahid Ahmed, “Trump Wants to Sell a Dictator \$23 Billion in Weapons. Here’s Where They Could Go.,” *Huffington Post*, December 9, 2020, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/uae-weapons-sale-yemen-libya\\_n\\_5fd00aa7c5b68ce17183473f](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/uae-weapons-sale-yemen-libya_n_5fd00aa7c5b68ce17183473f); and Frederic Wehrey, “Libya’s Bloodshed Will Continue Unless Foreign Powers Stop Backing Khalifa Haftar,” *The Guardian*, February 2, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/feb/02/libya-foreign-powers-khalifa-haftar-emirates-russia-us>

37. International Crisis Group, “Avoiding a Protracted Conflict in Libya,” July 22, 2019, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/north-africa/libya/avoiding-protracted-conflict-libya>



*Destruction caused to a Yememi school in Sa'ada by 2015 Saudi-led coalition airstrike. Source: Philippe Kropf/United Nations OCHA Flickr*

## ■ The UAE's Human Rights Record

The UAE's internal human rights record is also cause for serious concern. The regime does not tolerate criticism of any sort. As Human Rights Watch has noted: "UAE residents who have spoken about human rights issues are at serious risk of arbitrary detention, imprisonment, and torture. Many are serving long prison terms or have left the country under pressure."<sup>38</sup>

Human Rights Watch has also reported that forced labor of immigrant workers remains an issue, and that UAE law restricts the rights of women to work outside the home and does not outlaw domestic violence.<sup>39</sup> Dissidents who have left the country and their families have faced harassment, intimidation and surveillance by the UAE government's security apparatus.<sup>40</sup>

38. Human Rights Watch, World Report 2019, "UAE: Events of 2018," accessed December 8, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/united-arab-emirates>

39. Human Rights Watch, op. cit., note 21; and Amnesty International, "United Arab Emirates 2019," accessed December 8, 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/united-arab-emirates/report-united-arab-emirates/>

40. Human Rights Watch, "UAE: Unrelenting Harassment of Dissidents' Families," December 22, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/12/22/uae-unrelenting-harassment-dissidents-families>

## ■ 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 68% of all major weaponry delivered to that nation between 2015 and 2019. Next on the list were France, at 11%, and the Netherlands at 3% of total deliveries to the UAE over the same time period.<sup>41</sup>

The \$23 billion package of proposed arms sales to the UAE announced in November 2020 includes up to 50 F-35 combat aircraft at a cost of \$10.4 billion; 18 MQ-9 armed drones for \$2.97 billion; and \$10 billion for over 10,000 bombs and missiles.

A deal for up to 60,000 precision-guided bombs for the UAE and Saudi Arabia cited above was rammed through Congress in June of 2019 under emergency procedures invoked by the Trump administration.<sup>42</sup> Despite this effort by the Trump administration to evade Congressional input, both houses of Congress voted to block the deal, only to have their action vetoed by President Trump.<sup>43</sup> At the request of Congress, the propriety of the administration's declaration of an emergency was investigated by the State Department's Office of Inspector General, which cleared the administration of wrongdoing but also noted that it was not taking adequate care to ensure that U.S.-supplied weapons were not being used to harm civilians.<sup>44</sup>

Prior to the \$23 billion November 2020 package for combat aircraft, armed drones, bombs and missiles, 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 appendix for full list of U.S. arms offers to the UAE since 2009).

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41. Figure compiled by the author from the SIPRI arms transfer data base, available at <https://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>

42. Patricia Zengerle, "Defying Congress, Trump Sets \$8 Billion-Plus in Weapons Sales to Saudi, UAE," May 24, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-saudi-arms/defying-congress-trump-sets-8-billion-plus-in-weapons-sales-to-saudi-arabia-uae-idUSKCN1SU25R>

43. Merrit Kennedy, "Trump Vetoes Bills Intended to Block Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia," NPR, July 25, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/07/25/745200244/trump-vetoes-bills-intended-to-block-arms-sales-to-saudi-arabia>

44. Edward Wong and Michael LaForgia, "Watchdog Says State Department Failed to Limit Civilian Deaths from Saudi Arms Sales," New York Times, August 11, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/11/us/politics/pompeo-state-inspector-general-saudi-weapons-civilian-casualties.html>

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.

**“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 68% OF ALL MAJOR WEAPONRY DELIVERED TO THAT NATION BETWEEN 2015 AND 2019.”**

Almost one-third of the \$59 billion in arms offered to the UAE under the FMS program since 2009 – \$17.2 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 40,000 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.

The U.S. is poised to be a major supplier to the UAE for years to come. As noted above, the U.S. has offered the UAE over \$59 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.

The United States has also been a major supplier of military training to the UAE military, training over 5,000 students since 2009. U.S. training has been provided to personnel from the UAE Navy, Army, Air Force and Special Forces.<sup>45</sup>

### **■ U.S.-Supplied Weaponry Already in the UAE’s Arsenal**

The UAE Air Force is the principal Emirati beneficiary of U.S. weapons transfers. Of its 137 fighter and ground attack aircraft, 78 are U.S.-supplied Lockheed Martin F-16s, and 59 are

45. Training data is from the Security Assistance Monitor, available at <http://securityassistance.org/data/country/trainee>

French Mirage-2000s. In keeping with its reliance on U.S. combat aircraft, the UAE uses the U.S.-origin 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 seven Boeing C-17s and four Lockheed Martin C-130H's. It also has 28 Boeing Apache attack helicopters.<sup>46</sup>

The UAE land forces possess no U.S.-supplied heavy combat vehicles such as tanks or armored personnel carriers. This is apparently part of an effort by the UAE to diversify its sources of supply. 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 will increase due to the delivery of thousands of Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles that have been notified to Congress.

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

## ■ The UAE as “Little Sparta”

The UAE's role in Yemen followed over two decades during which that nation set out to hone its military capabilities so that it could 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.<sup>47</sup> The UAE also provided troops to the GCC Peninsula Shield forces led by Saudi Arabia, which intervened in Bahrain to help the regime put down the democracy movement in 2011.<sup>48</sup>

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

46. Information on U.S.-supplied systems in the UAE arsenal are from the 2020 edition of the International Institute for Strategic Studies Military Balance publication, op. cit., pp. 381-383.

47. Rajiv Chandrasekaran, “In the UAE, the United States Has a Quiet, Potent Ally Nicknamed ‘Little Sparta,’” Washington Post, November 9, 2014, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/in-the-uae-the-united-states-has-a-quiet-potent-ally-nicknamed-little-sparta/2014/11/08/3fc6a50c-643a-11e4-836c-83bc4f26eb67\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/in-the-uae-the-united-states-has-a-quiet-potent-ally-nicknamed-little-sparta/2014/11/08/3fc6a50c-643a-11e4-836c-83bc4f26eb67_story.html)

48. Ethan Bronner and Michael Slackman, “Saudi Troops Enter Bahrain to Help Put Down Unrest,” New York Times, March 14, 2011, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/15/world/middleeast/15bahrain.html> As of 2014, police from the UAE were still based in Bahrain. See Amy Austin Holmes, “The Military Intervention that the World Forgot,” Al Jazeera America, March 29, 2014, available at <http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/3/bahrain-uprisinginterventionsaudiara-biaemirates.html>



done — and what they can do.”<sup>49</sup>

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.<sup>50</sup> Mattis – who in December 2020 lobbied Congress on behalf of a controversial \$23 billion arms package to the UAE -- is not the only former U.S. military official with ties to the UAE.<sup>51</sup> Vice Admiral Robert Harward (USN-Ret.), the former deputy director of the U.S. Central Command, headed Lockheed Martin’s UAE operations before going on to head its entire Middle East business operation.<sup>52</sup> Brig. General Jeffrey McDaniels (USAF Ret.) served as the Vice President for International Strategy at the U.S. defense contractor Leidos from 2015 to 2018 -- with the UAE as one of his countries of focus -- before going on to take a position at the defense firm Booz Allen Hamilton.<sup>53</sup> Rear Admiral Gary W. Rosholt (USN Ret.), a former defense attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi, UAE, and Deputy Commanding General for Special Operations Command, U.S. Central Command, is now the VP of Middle East Operations for L3 (now L3Harris).<sup>54</sup>

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.

Though the wisdom of each of these military ventures is another matter, as noted above with respect to Yemen and Libya, the UAE now has one of the most effective fighting forces in the region as a result of its military activism.

The UAE’s role in Afghanistan provides a good example of how it has used its military in

49. Chandrasekaran, op. cit.

50. Jeremy Herb, “Mattis Advised UAE Military Before Joining Trump Administration,” CNN.com, August 2, 2017, available at <http://www.cnn.com/2017/08/02/politics/mattis-advised-uae-military/index.html>

51. Akbar Shahid Ahmed, “Jim Mattis Privately Defends Trump’s Biggest Arms Sale As Congressional Opposition Grows,” Huffington Post, December 8, 2020, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/jim-mattis-donald-trump-uae-arms-sale\\_n\\_5fcfa77d-c5b6787f2a9b1fea](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/jim-mattis-donald-trump-uae-arms-sale_n_5fcfa77d-c5b6787f2a9b1fea)

52. Project on Government Oversight, “Brass Parachutes: Defense Contractors’ Capture of Pentagon Officials Through the Revolving Door,” November 5, 2018, p. 26, <https://www.pogo.org/report/2018/11/brass-parachutes/>; and “Lockheed Martin Appoints Bob Harward to Head Middle East Business,” Lockheed Martin press release, June 25, 2018, <https://www.lockheedmartin.com/en-ae/news/lockheed-martin-appoints-bob-harward-to-lead-middle-east-busines.html>

53. Project on Government Oversight, op. cit., plus Jeffrey McDaniel’s LinkedIn page, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jeffmcdaniels/>

54. Information on Rosholt is from the Project on Government Oversight’s revolving door database, and from “L3 Appoints Retired Rear Admiral Gary W. Rosholt as Vice President of Middle East Operations,” Business Wire, February 8, 2017, <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20170208006270/en/L3-Appoints-Retired-Rear-Admiral-Gary-W.-Rosholt-as-Vice-President-of-Middle-East-Operations>

coalition operations as a means of gaining diplomatic and political leverage. 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.<sup>55</sup>

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 has been 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.<sup>56</sup>

Among the most important U.S. systems the UAE has acquired so far 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.<sup>57</sup> Superior features of the UAE's F-16 include 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.<sup>58</sup> The pending deal for F-35s would further enhance the capabilities of the UAE Air Force in a way that the Pentagon has acknowledged will "alter the military balance in the region."<sup>59</sup>

The UAE is also building up a capability for power projection in the Middle East and North Africa 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 enforcing the naval blockade on Yemen.<sup>60</sup>

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55. Herb, *op. cit.*, note 19.

56. Tara Copp, "Air Force Part of the "More" for Islamic State Fight, Carter Says," *Stars and Stripes*, April 17, 2016, available at <http://www.stripes.com/news/middle-east/air-force-part-of-the-more-for-islamic-state-fight-carter-says-1.404911>

57. "Top Falcons: The UAE's Block 60/61 Fighters," *Inside Defense*, January 26, 2014, available at <https://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/the-uaes-f-16-block-60-desert-falcon-fleet-04538/>

58. *Ibid.*

59. U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, "United Arab Emirates: F-35 Joint Strike Fighter," Congressional Notification, November 10, 2020, <https://www.dsca.mil/press-media/major-arms-sales/united-arab-emirates-f-35-joint-strike-fighter>

60. Alex Mello and Michael Knights, "West of Suez for the United Arab Emirates," *op. cit.*

## I The Corporate Connection

The biggest beneficiaries of U.S. arms sales to the UAE are Lockheed Martin (F-35s, 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, Paveway guided bombs, and Sidewinder air-to-ground missiles).<sup>61</sup> 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 for companies like Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and Boeing (see appendix for full list of deals and systems involved). Lockheed Martin, Boeing and Raytheon 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 former Lockheed Martin CEO Marillyn Hewson, her firm formed a joint venture 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.”<sup>62</sup> 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.<sup>63</sup> Textron and Raytheon have also established offices or entered into joint ventures with UAE firms in the past few years.<sup>64</sup> Many of these investments are provided to partially offset the cost to the UAE of buying billions of dollars-worth of U.S. weaponry, and they undercut the argument that U.S. arms sales to the Gulf States are major job creators in the United States.

The UAE has assiduously cultivated its domestic arms industry in recent years. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), EDGE Group, a UAE-based

61. Information on major contractors involved in U.S. arms offers to the UAE is from the official notifications to Congress (see appendix). Information on the Raytheon missiles deployed on the UAE's Bayunah class corvettes is from <https://www.naval-technology.com>, op. cit. For additional detail on contractors see “Program Acquisition Costs by Weapon System FY2017,” available at [http://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/documents/defbudget/FY2017/FY2017\\_Weapons.pdf](http://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/documents/defbudget/FY2017/FY2017_Weapons.pdf)

62. Quotes are from Remarks of Marillyn A. Hewson, Global Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, December 13, 2016, available at <http://www.lockheedmartin.com/us/news/speeches/1213-hewson-global-summit-women-speakers-parliament-uae.html>

63. Ibid.

64. Marcus Weisgerber, “Defense Firms Put Down Roots in the UAE,” Defense One, February 24, 2015, available at <http://www.defenseone.com/business/2015/02/defense-firms-put-down-roots-uae/106002/>

military contractor created through the combination of 25 smaller firms in 2019, is now the 22nd largest arms company in the world, the first time a Middle Eastern company has cracked the top 25.<sup>65</sup> EDGE and its subsidiaries are involved in the production of armored vehicles, precision-guided missiles, munitions, and small arms, among other products.<sup>66</sup>



*Image of a Boeing Apache AH-64D, a type of attack helicopter the U.S. supplies to the United Arab Emirates. Source: Jakob Schröck/Flickr*

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.<sup>67</sup> One critic has termed the offset money a “slush fund.”<sup>68</sup> UAE offset funds have also been used to purchase weaponry for the Jordanian military.<sup>69</sup>

65. “Global Arms Industry: Sales by Top 25 Companies Up 8.5 Percent; Big Players Active in Global South,” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, December 7, 2020, <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2020/global-arms-industry-sales-top-25-companies-85-cent-big-players-active-global-south>

66. More information available on the EDGE Group’s web site, at <https://edgegroup.ae/>

67. Ryan Grim, “Gulf Government Gave Secret \$20 Million Gift to DC Think Tank,” The Intercept, August 9, 2017, <https://theintercept.com/2017/08/09/gulf-government-gave-secret-20-million-gift-to-d-c-think-tank/>

68. Alex Emmons, “Funds Intended for Economic Development Being Secretly Diverted to Lobbying,” The Intercept, August 17, 2017, available at <https://theintercept.com/2017/08/17/weapons-money-intended-for-economic-development-being-secretly-diverted-to-lobbying/>

69. Shana Marshall, “Jordan’s Military-Industrial Complex and the Middle East’s New Model Army,” Middle East Report No. 267, Summer 2013, pp. 42-45.

## U.S. Policy Toward the UAE Going Forward

The overarching strategic objective of U.S. policy towards the greater Middle East, North Africa, and the broader region should be to promote political reconciliation and negotiated conclusions to the wars in the area, including those in Yemen, Libya, Somalia, and Syria. This will require a de-escalation and demilitarization of the activities of the U.S., the UAE and other key players in the region.

In keeping with these goals, the Biden administration should suspend the Trump administration's \$23 billion in offers of F-35 combat aircraft, armed drones, and precision-guided bombs to the UAE until that nation ceases its reckless behavior in the region and its human rights abuses at home.

### Before it qualifies for U.S. arms sales, the UAE should:

- End its support for militias in Yemen, which have engaged in torture and other serious human rights abuses;
- Conduct credible, impartial and transparent investigations into alleged violations of the laws of war involving national armed forces in Yemen, and provide prompt and adequate redress for civilian victims and their families for deaths, injuries and property damage resulting from wrongful attacks;
- Support a durable ceasefire and engage in good faith negotiations for an end to the Yemen war;
- Stop its arms transfers to the forces of Gen. Khalifa Haftar in Libya, which are a blatant violation of a United Nations embargo;
- Support a ceasefire and engage in multilateral negotiations for an end to the war in Libya;
- Stop its repression of democracy activists, human rights defenders and journalists, and free political prisoners

## APPENDIX: U.S. Arms Offers to the UAE Under the Pentagon's Foreign Military Sales Program, 2009 to 2020

Date	Offer	Cost	Total Cost
November 10, 2020	F-35 Joint Strike Fighter	\$10.4 billion	
November 10, 2020	MQ-9B Remotely Piloted Aircraft	\$2.97 billion	
November 10, 2020	Munitions, Sustainment and Support	\$10.0 billion	
May 7, 2020	Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles	\$556 million	
April 23, 2020	Aircraft Spare Parts	\$150 million	
<b>2020 Total</b>			<b>\$24.1 billion</b>
November 7, 2019	CH-47 Chinook Cargo Helicopters	\$830.3 million	
May 24, 2019	Marine Corps Training	\$100 million	
May 24, 2019	Javelin Guided Missiles	\$102 million	
May 24, 2019	RQ-21 Blackjack Unmanned Aerial Vehicles	\$80 million	
May 24, 2019	Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System	\$900 million	
May 3, 2019	Patriot Missile System	\$2.728 billion	
<b>2019 Total</b>			<b>\$4.7 billion</b>
March 8, 2018	AIM-9X-2 Sidewinder Block II Missiles	\$270.4 million	
<b>2018 Total</b>			<b>\$270.4 million</b>
May 11, 2017	Patriot PAC-3 and GEM-T Missiles	\$2 billion	
<b>2017 Total</b>			<b>\$2 billion</b>
December 8, 2016	Apache AH-64E Helicopters	\$3.5 billion	
October 24, 2016	Exercise Participation Support	\$75 million	

Date	Offer	Cost	Total Cost
July 19, 2016	Munitions, Sustainment, and Support	\$785 million	
May 13, 2016	AGM-114 R/K Hellfire Category III Missiles	\$476 million	
February 24, 2016	Large Aircraft Infrared Countermeasures	\$225 million	
<b>2016 Total</b>			<b>\$5 billion</b>
November 5, 2015	Joint Direct Attack Munitions	\$380 million	
July 29, 2015	Infrared Countermeasures	\$335 million	
May 29, 2015	Guided Bomb Units	\$130 million	
<b>2015 Total</b>			<b>\$845 million</b>
September 29, 2014	High-Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS)	\$900 million	
September 26, 2014	Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) Vehicles	\$2.5 billion	
January 24, 2014	F-16 Aircraft Support	\$270 million	
January 8, 2014	Training of UAE Presidential Guard	\$150 million	
<b>2014 Total</b>			<b>\$3.8 billion</b>
October 15, 2013	Various Munitions and Support	\$4 billion	
<b>2013 Total</b>			<b>\$4 billion</b>
November 5, 2012	THAAD Missile Defense System	\$1.135 billion	
August 1, 2012	F117-PW-100 Engines for C-17s	\$35 million	
<b>2012 Total</b>			<b>\$1.2 billion</b>
December 16, 2011	JAVELIN Anti-Tank Missiles	\$60 million	
November 30, 2011	Joint Direct Attack Munitions	\$304 million	
September 22, 2011	MIDS/LVT LINK 16 Terminals for F-16s	\$401 million	

Date	Offer	Cost	Total Cost
September 22, 2011	AGM-114R3 HELLFIRE Missiles	\$65 million	
June 24, 2011	UH-60M BLACKHAWK Helicopters	\$217 million	
May 25, 2011	F-16 Program Support	\$100 million	
April 19, 2011	AIM-9X-2 SIDEWINDER Missiles	\$251 million	
<b>2011 Total</b>			<b>\$1.4 billion</b>
November 4, 2010	Army Tactical Missile Systems	\$140 million	
November 4, 2010	AH-64D Block III APACHE Helicopters	\$5 billion	
May 26, 2010	Support for C-17 Aircraft	\$250 million	
<b>2010 Total</b>			<b>\$5.4 billion</b>
December 28, 2009	Support for C-130 Aircraft	\$119 million	
December 28, 2009	Enhanced Guided Bomb Units	\$290 million	
December 18, 2009	C-17 Aircraft	\$501 million	
December 3, 2009	CH-47F CHINOOK Helicopters	\$2 billion	
August 4, 2009	HELLFIRE Missiles	\$526 million	
<b>2009 Total</b>			<b>\$3.4 billion</b>
<b>2009 - 2020 Total</b>			<b>\$59.6 billion</b>

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Security Cooperation Agency.





2000 M Street, NW Suite 720  
Washington, D.C. 20036

**Phone:** +1 (202) 232-3317

**Email:** [info@internationalpolicy.org](mailto:info@internationalpolicy.org)

[www.internationalpolicy.org](http://www.internationalpolicy.org)



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