

A photograph of a protest. In the foreground, a man with a long white beard and glasses holds a wooden sign that reads "STOP SELLING WEAPONS TO SAUDI ARABIA". He is wearing a denim jacket and holding a small yellow and red rose. In the background, a crowd of people is visible, some holding other signs. The scene is outdoors during the day.

# ARMING REPRESSION: U.S. MILITARY SUPPORT FOR SAUDI ARABIA, FROM TRUMP TO BIDEN

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ARMS AND SECURITY PROGRAM



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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 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, we bring diverse voices to bear on key foreign policy decisions and make the evidence-based case for why and how the United States must redefine the concept of national security in the 21st century.

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*Cover photo is of hundreds of protesters against dictatorial regimes including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt and Turkey, gathered outside the main road entrance to the venue at Excel in East London. Photo via Alisdare Hickson/Flickr.*





*President Donald Trump poses as the guest of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. Photo via White House Archives/Flickr*

## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During the Trump administration, the United States doubled down on its support of the regime in Saudi Arabia, regardless of how harshly the Kingdom cracked down on human rights or how much devastation it caused through its war in Yemen. Early on, it appeared that President Biden would depart from the Trump administration's cynical, transactional approach to U.S.-Saudi relations, but the Biden administration's record so far has been mixed at best. The administration has halted two bomb sales to the Saudi regime, but it has offered \$500 million in crucial maintenance and support for Saudi aircraft and continued the flow of U.S. arms offers already in the pipeline. The administration has also made a \$650 million offer of air-to-air missiles to the Saudi Royal Air Force. Most importantly, the Biden administration has refused to use U.S. leverage – in the form of a threat to cut off crucial U.S. spare parts and sustainment for the Saudi military – to force Riyadh to end its devastating blockade on Yemen and move towards an inclusive peace agreement to end the war.

### **THIS REPORT DETAILS THE U.S. ROLE IN SUPPORTING THE SAUDI MILITARY. ITS MAJOR FINDINGS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:**

- The bulk of the weapons transferred to Saudi Arabia since 2009 date back to deals made during the Obama administration. Arms sales offers to the Kingdom totaled over \$118 billion during the eight years of the Obama administration, compared with \$25 billion during the four years of the Trump administration and \$1.1 billion so far in first year of the Biden term.

- The most damaging deals of the Trump years involved transfers of tens of thousands of precision-guided bombs that were pushed through despite opposition from a majority of the members of Congress. Saudi Arabia has used U.S. bombs to target and kill thousands of civilians in Yemen, and to enforce its blockade there by carrying out actions like bombing the runway of Yemen's main airport in Sana'a. Two offers of bombs made late in Trump's term, in December 2020, were halted by the Biden administration.
- It's hard to overstate the degree to which the Saudi military relies on U.S. weapons and related support. The bulk of the Saudi arsenal is made in the U.S., including nearly two-thirds of its combat aircraft, nearly four dozen attack helicopters, and over 2,300 heavy armored vehicles.
- Without U.S. maintenance and spare parts, the Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) would be grounded in short order, as noted by Bruce Riedel of the Brookings Institution. Since 2018, the United States has entered into contracts worth more than \$10 billion to supply spare parts, maintenance, and other support for Saudi aircraft.
- The U.S. has trained over 21,000 Saudi military personnel since 2009, including a \$4 billion contract to arm and equip the Saudi Arabian National Guard (SANG), which is responsible for internal security but has also been involved in the war in Yemen. These figures do not include training purchased by Saudi Arabia through direct commercial arrangements with U.S. companies. Such was the case with the Tier 1 group, which trained four Saudi operatives who went on to play a role in the 2018 murder of U.S.-resident Saudi journalist and Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi.
- The greatest beneficiaries of U.S. arms offers to Saudi Arabia over the past decade have been major contractors like Boeing, Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, and General Dynamics. All of the largest sales since 2009, including a \$29 billion deal for Boeing F-15 aircraft, a \$25 billion deal for Boeing Apache helicopters, a \$15 billion deal for a Lockheed Martin THAAD missile defense system, \$10 billion deal for Lockheed Martin Multi-Mission Surface Combatant ships, a \$5.4 billion deal for Raytheon PAC-3 missile defense interceptors, and a \$1.57 billion deal for Raytheon Paveway bombs involved one of the four firms mentioned above as the primary supplier.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**In the interests of ending U.S. support for the Saudi war in Yemen, the Biden administration should do the following:**

1. Suspend all U.S. arms sales and military support to the Saudi regime – both new offers

and systems still in the pipeline and yet to be delivered – as leverage to get Riyadh to end its blockade on humanitarian aid and commercial goods into Yemen, open Sana’a airport, and engage in good faith efforts to end the war.

2. Absent an immediate halt to arms flows, the administration should provide timely data on pending arms deliveries to the Saudi military to give Congress the opportunity to review and if necessary block specific transfers.

**For its part, Congress should do the following:**

1. Force an end to all U.S. military support for Saudi Arabia by passing a War Powers Resolution in both houses of Congress.
2. Pass legislation to end all U.S. arms, maintenance and spare parts to the Saudi regime.
3. Make it easier to block future sales to Saudi Arabia and other human rights abusers by requiring affirmative Congressional approval of key arms sales, as opposed to the current approach which calls for veto-proof, joint resolutions of disapproval in both houses of Congress.



*Iron Hawk 14 in Saudi Arabia, 2014. Photo via Sgt. Harley Jelis/DVIDS*

## INTRODUCTION

The United States doubled down on its support for Saudi Arabia during the Trump administration despite harsh crackdowns on human rights activists and the regime's role in the ongoing war in Yemen. In a move that surprised diplomats and foreign policy experts alike, Trump chose Saudi Arabia as the location for his first foreign visit as president. Once in Riyadh, Trump posed as a deal maker par excellence, persuading the Saudis to pledge to buy \$110 billion in U.S. weaponry and crowing that the arrangement would create "jobs, jobs, jobs" in the United States.<sup>1</sup> His claims of the size of the arms deal and the benefits for U.S. employment were greatly exaggerated, but Trump nevertheless touted the jobs for U.S. workers and revenues for U.S. contractors flowing from the U.S.-Saudi military relationship even in the wake of the regime's October 2018 murder of U.S.-resident Saudi journalist and dissident Jamal Khashoggi:

"\$110 billion will be spent on the purchase of military equipment from Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and many other great U.S. defense contractors. If we foolishly cancel these contracts, Russia and China would be the enormous beneficiaries – and very happy to acquire all of this newfound business. It would be a wonderful gift to them directly from the United States!"<sup>2</sup>

Trump's statement ignored the fact that given its overwhelming dependence on arms from the U.S. and the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia could not readily switch to Russian or Chinese supplies in the absence of U.S. support without sidelining large parts of its military, but it was a clear example of his willingness to offer a blank check to the Saudi regime regardless of its conduct.

President Trump also defended the Saudi regime against its critics in Congress, vetoing bipartisan initiatives that would have blocked U.S. military support for the Saudi/UAE-led war in Yemen and stopped a major sale of precision guided bombs.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps even more egregiously, a report by the State Department's Office of Inspector General (OIG) found that the Trump administration was intentionally continuing billions of dollars of controversial arms

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1. Justin Glawe, "Trump Says His Saudi Deal Will Create Jobs. The Companies Involved Aren't So Sure.", Washington Post, May 24, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2017/05/24/trump-says-his-saudi-deal-will-create-jobs-the-companies-involved-arent-so-sure/>

2. "Statement by President Donald J. Trump on Standing With Saudi Arabia," White House Press Release, November 20, 2018.

3. Mark Landler and Peter Baker, "Trump Vetoes Measure to Force End of U.S. Involvement in Yemen War," New York Times, April 16, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/16/us/politics/trump-veto-yemen.html> and Karoun Demirjian and Colby Izkowitz, "Trump Vetoes Congress's Attempt to Block Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia," Washington Post, July 24, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-vetoes-congresss-attempt-to-block-arms-sales-to-saudi-arabia/2019/07/24/7b047c32-ae65-11e9-a0c9-6d2d7818f3da\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-vetoes-congresss-attempt-to-block-arms-sales-to-saudi-arabia/2019/07/24/7b047c32-ae65-11e9-a0c9-6d2d7818f3da_story.html)



sales at dollar values below those requiring Congressional notification, including for weapons that had been objected to by Congress.<sup>4</sup>

Early on, it appeared that President Biden would depart from the Trump administration's cynical, transactional approach to U.S.-Saudi relations. As a candidate for president, Biden called Saudi Arabia a "pariah" and pledged to end U.S. arms sales to the Saudi military.<sup>5</sup> In his early weeks in office, he rescinded the Trump administration's designation of the Houthi opposition in Yemen as a foreign terrorist organization, easing the way for delivery of desperately needed humanitarian aid. He chose the occasion of his first foreign policy speech to announce that the U.S. would no longer provide support for "offensive operations" in Yemen, along with suspending "relevant arms sales." In keeping with this pledge, the Biden administration suspended two deals for guided bombs destined for the Royal Saudi Air Force.<sup>6</sup> He also released intelligence information on the role of Saudi leader Mohammed Bin Salman in directing the murder of Jamal Khashoggi.<sup>7</sup> The foundations of a new U.S. approach to the Saudi regime appeared to be in place.

So far, the Biden administration's actions towards Saudi Arabia have not lived up to its rhetoric. The administration has refused to provide substantive answers to Congressional requests for a definition of what it means by arms sales relevant to offensive operations in Yemen, and other than pausing the two bomb offers mentioned above, there is no evidence it has done anything to slow deliveries of billions of U.S. arms for Saudi Arabia that are already in the pipeline.<sup>8</sup> Even worse, in September it announced a new deal for \$500 million in maintenance and spare parts for the Saudi military, support that enables them to wage a brutal war in Yemen, which according to the United Nations has contributed directly and

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4. Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of State, "Review of the Department of State's Role in Arms Transfers to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates," August 2020, <https://sgp.fas.org/othergov/oig-armstransfers.pdf>; see also Forum on the Arms Trade, "U.S. Arms Exports Under Congressional Notification Thresholds," resource page, accessed November 10, 2021, <https://www.forumarmstrade.org/underthreshold.html>

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

6. In a February 4th, 2021 press briefing, Biden National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan stated that the deals had been "halted," suggesting that the decision to hold up the bomb deals may be final, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/press-briefings/2021/02/04/press-briefing-by-press-secretary-jen-psaki-and-national-security-advisor-jake-sullivan-february-4-2021/>

7. Karen DeYoung, "Saudi Crown Prince Approved Operation that Led to Death of Journalist Jamal Khashoggi, U.S. Intelligence Report Concludes," Washington Post, February 26, 2021, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/khashoggi-killing-intelligence-report-release-mbs-saudi-arabia/2021/02/26/df5f6e58-7844-11eb-948d-19472e683521\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/khashoggi-killing-intelligence-report-release-mbs-saudi-arabia/2021/02/26/df5f6e58-7844-11eb-948d-19472e683521_story.html)

8. Alex Emmons, "Congress Sought Details About Biden's Plan to End U.S. Support for Yemen War. The Got a 'Non-Answer,'" The Intercept, May 27, 2021, <https://theintercept.com/2021/05/27/yemen-biden-support-congress-letter/>

indirectly to the deaths of nearly a quarter of a million people since it began in March 2015.<sup>9</sup>

Bruce Riedel of the Brookings Institution summed up the Biden record to date as follows: “I think the Saudis are showing their utter contempt for Joe Biden’s human rights policy [. . .] They’ve had more than eight months now to size up the administration and they’ve come to the conclusion that it’s not serious on this issue.”<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps worst of all, the Biden administration has failed to do everything it can to end the Saudi blockade of Yemen, a primary cause of the humanitarian catastrophe in that nation. The administration’s special envoy for Yemen Timothy Lenderking has denounced any actions that impede the delivery of humanitarian aid or commercial goods to Yemen, but the administration has not used maximum leverage to end the blockade, which should include cutting off arms sales, maintenance, and spare parts, as called for in a successful amendment to the House version of the National Defense Authorization Act sponsored by Rep. Ro Khanna (D-CA).<sup>11</sup>

## U.S. ARMS IN THE SAUDI ARSENAL

It’s hard to overstate the degree to which the Saudi military relies on U.S. arms and related support.<sup>12</sup> In terms of Saudi Arabia’s immediate ability to continue its military intervention in Yemen, the most important weapons are those already in the Saudi arsenal or part of signed deals for equipment that is now in the pipeline. These systems rely on U.S.-supplied spare parts and maintenance, which gives Washington considerable leverage over Riyadh with respect to its ability to continue to carry out military operations—leverage they have thus far not used to push Saudi Arabia to end the blockade in Yemen and enter into good faith peace negotiations. The preponderance of U.S. equipment used by Saudi forces also makes it difficult for another supplier like Russia or China to replace the United States as a major supplier to Riyadh. It would take decades for the Kingdom to wean itself from dependence on U.S. equipment, training and support, and new equipment might not be easily interoperable with U.S.-supplied systems. Saudi Arabia could buy a Russian or Chinese system here or there to send a political message, but they could not easily replace the role of sales

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9. “UN Humanitarian Office Puts Yemen War Dead at 233,000, Mostly from ‘Indirect Causes,’” United Nations press release, December 1, 2020, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1078972>

10. Laura Kelly, “Biden Struggles to Rein in Saudi Arabia Amid Human Rights Concerns,” The Hill, October 17, 2021, <https://thehill.com/policy/international/576987-biden-struggles-to-rein-in-saudi-arabia-amid-human-rights-concerns>

11. “House Passes Khanna Amendment to End Support for Saudi-Led Coalition’s War in Yemen,” press release, Office of Rep. Ro Khanna (D-CA), September 23, 2021, <https://khanna.house.gov/media/press-releases/release-house-passes-khanna-amendment-end-support-saudi-led-coalition-s-war>

12. Figures in this section are drawn from The Military Balance 2020, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), Routledge Press, February 2020.





*7th Marines assigned to Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force in Saudi Arabia, 2020. Photo via Sgt. Spc. Duong Le/DVIDS*

and support from the United States, along with the United Kingdom, as the major bulwark of its military capability.

## ■ U.S.-Supplied Aircraft

Roughly two-thirds of Saudi Arabia's estimated 355 fighter and fighter/ground attack aircraft came from the United States, including, including 217 variants of the Boeing F-15. Other U.S.-supplied aircraft in the Saudi armed forces include:

- **9 KC-130 refueling tankers;**
- **33 C-130 Hercules transport planes; and**
- **5 E-3A early warning and control aircraft.**

Of the 217 F-15's, 135 are F-15S fighter/ground attack aircraft. These U.S.-supplied planes have played a central role in the Saudi-led bombing campaign in Yemen, along with 67 Tornado aircraft supplied by the United Kingdom and 71 Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft supplied by a consortium consisting of the U.K., Germany, Italy, and Spain.

The Saudi armed forces also have 47 Apache attack helicopters, with 35 allotted to the Royal Saudi Land Forces and 12 allotted to the Saudi Arabian National Guard (SANG).



*U.S. Soldiers conduct routine maintenance on a AH-64 Apache helicopter, 2018 in Germany. Photo via Charles Rosemond/DVIDS*

## **Bombs and Missiles**

The London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) lists JDAMs (Joint Direct Attack Munitions) and Paveway guided munitions as the main bombs in the Saudi arsenal. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has reported deliveries of 1,900 JDAMs and 3,200 Paveway bombs to Saudi Arabia (see Table 2 in the appendix). The figure may be much higher given a \$1.29 billion 2015 offer of over 19,000 bombs. In addition, a deal for Raytheon precision-guided munitions and bomb components cleared Congress in March 2017 over strong opposition. The latter deal was put forward by the Trump administration after it reversed a December 2016 decision by the Obama administration to suspend the sale over concerns about Saudi bombings of civilian targets.<sup>13</sup> The deal was nearly voted down by the Senate, with a bipartisan group of 47 Senators voting against it.<sup>14</sup> And again in 2019, Trump vetoed another effort by Congress to block a major deal for 64,000 precision-guided munitions and related components to Saudi Arabia.<sup>15</sup>

13. Missy Ryan and Anne Gearan, "Trump Administration Looks to Resume Saudi Arms Sale Criticized As Endangering Civilians in Yemen," Washington Post, March 8, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-rity/trump-administration-looks-to-resume-saudi-arms-sale-criticized-as-endangering-civilians-in-yemen/2017/03/08/a259090a-040e-11e7-b1e9-a05d3c21f7cf\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-rity/trump-administration-looks-to-resume-saudi-arms-sale-criticized-as-endangering-civilians-in-yemen/2017/03/08/a259090a-040e-11e7-b1e9-a05d3c21f7cf_story.html)

14. Helene Cooper, "Senate Narrowly Backs Trump Arms Sale to Saudi Arabia," New York Times, June 13, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/13/world/middleeast/trump-weapons-saudi-arabia.html>

15. William D. Hartung, "Trump's Saudi Arms Vetoes, Deconstructed," Lobelog, July 26, 2019, <https://lobelog.com/trumps-saudi-arms-vetoes-deconstructed/>; see also Forum on the Arms Trade resource page, "Trump Administration – Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia," accessed November 10, 2021, <https://www.forumarmstrade.org/resource-page--trump--saudi-arms-sales.html>

## Ground Equipment

Saudi Arabia has a substantial number of U.S.-supplied armored vehicles. According to data from IISS, the Saudi Royal Land Forces (RSLF) and the Saudi Arabian National Guard (SANG) together possess over 2,300 U.S.-origin heavy armored vehicles, including:

- **370 M1-A2/A2S tanks;**
- **370 M-60A3 tanks (the generation prior to the M-1);**
- **380 Bradley infantry fighting vehicles; and**
- **1,190 M-113 armored personnel carriers.**

The Saudi Arabian National Guard also has over 1,600 variants of the Light Armored Vehicle (LAV), many of which are produced by a Canadian subsidiary of General Dynamics. The Saudi military also has a significant number of U.S.-supplied artillery pieces, including 110 M-109 howitzers.

## NAVAL EQUIPMENT

A naval blockade of Yemeni ports has been an integral part of the Saudi-led coalition's war in Yemen. The Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF) is much less dependent on U.S.-supplied equipment than the other branches of the Saudi armed forces. In October 2015, however, the United States announced a deal to supply Saudi Arabia with four Multi-Mission Surface Combatant (MMSC) ships. According to the State Department, this case was implemented in October 2017 at a value of \$6 billion. The ships are an adaptation of the Freedom variant of the U.S. Navy's Littoral Combat Ship. The Pentagon has stated that "this acquisition will enhance the stability and maritime security in the sea areas around the Arabian Peninsula and support strategic objectives of the United States."<sup>16</sup> Once it has been accomplished, a process that will take years to complete, the transfer will also enhance Saudi navy's ability to enforce a future blockade of the sort currently being imposed in Yemen. The Saudi Navy also possesses four corvettes and nine patrol craft armed with U.S.-supplied Harpoon anti-ship missiles.

16. Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), "Kingdom of Saudi Arabia – Multi-Mission Surface Combatants (MMSC), October 20, 2015, <https://www.dscamilitary.com/press-media/major-arms-sales/kingdom-saudi-arabia-multi-mission-surface-combatant-mm-sc-ships>





*Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel and the Minister of the National Guard of Saudi Arabia, 2014. Photo via Master Sgt. Adrian Cadiz/DVIDS*

## MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEMS

Saudi Arabia currently owns a U.S.-supplied Patriot missile defense system that has been used, on a number of occasions, to shoot down Houthi missiles aimed at targets in Saudi Arabia. In October 2017, the Trump administration notified Congress of a \$15 billion deal to provide Saudi Arabia with a Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system consisting of 44 launchers, 360 interceptor missiles, and related equipment (see Appendix Table 1). The THAAD system has yet to be delivered.

## MILITARY TRAINING

### ■ Training the Saudi Arabian National Guard

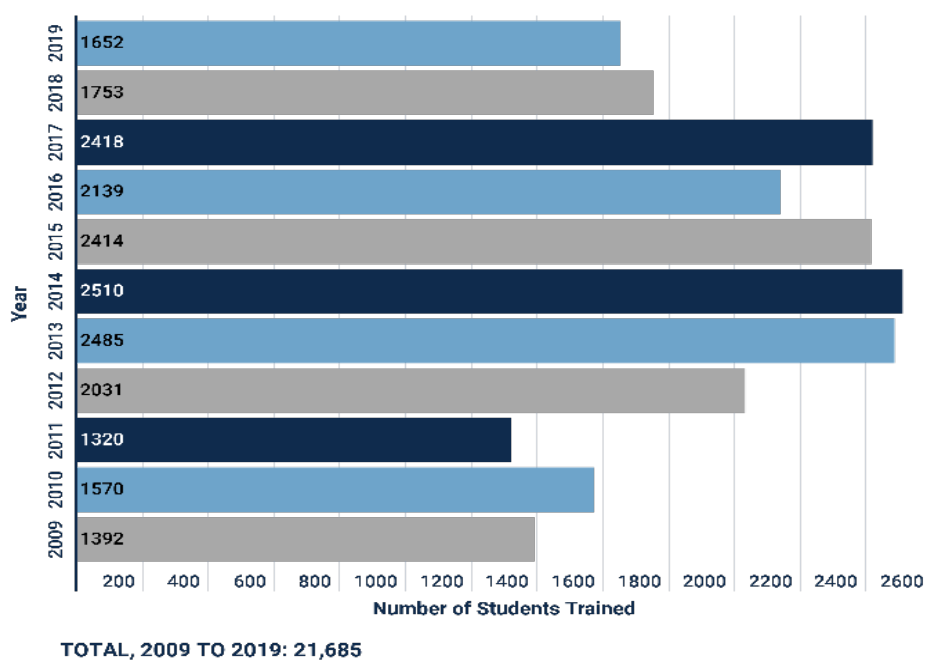
The Saudi Arabian National Guard (SANG), at 73,000 troops, rivals the Royal Saudi Land Forces in size. SANG's mission includes both internal security and operations on and outside Saudi borders, including a role in the Saudi/UAE-led war in Yemen. Since at least the 1990s, SANG has been trained and equipped by the United States, with training conducted by Vinnell Arabia, a formerly independent firm that is now part of the Northrop Grumman Corporation. The most recent offer of support and training for the SANG was in June 2013 and involved \$4 billion for a "continuation of the United States-supported effort to modernize the Saudi Arabian National Guard (SANG), and associated equipment, parts, training and logistical support."<sup>17</sup>



## Other Military Training Programs

The training of the Saudi national guard is just one element of an extensive U.S. program of training Saudi military personnel that goes back decades. From 2009 to 2019 alone, the U.S. trained over 21,000 Saudi military personnel (see Figure 1, below).

Figure 1: Number of Students Trained Under U.S. Defense and State Department Programs, 2009 - 2019



The figures above do not include training purchased by Saudi Arabia through direct commercial arrangements with U.S. companies. Such was the case with Tier 1 group, which trained four Saudi operatives who went on to play a role in the 2018 murder of U.S.-resident Saudi journalist and *Washington Post* columnist Jamal Khashoggi.<sup>18</sup>

## MAINTENANCE AND SPARE PARTS

A critical but rarely discussed aspect of U.S. military support for the Saudi regime involves the provision of spare parts and assistance in maintenance of U.S.-supplied weaponry. As Bruce Riedel of the Brookings Institution has noted, the Saudi air force would be grounded

17. Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), "Saudi Arabia: Saudi Arabian National Guard Modernization Program," June 20, 2013, <https://www.dsca.mil/press-media/major-arms-sales/saudi-arabia-saudi-arabian-national-guard-modernization-program>

18 Mark Mazetti, Julian E. Barnes, and Michael LaForgia, "Saudi Operatives Who Killed Khashoggi Received Paramilitary Training in the U.S.," *New York Times*, June 22, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/22/us/politics/khashoggi-saudi-kill-team-us-training.html>

in short order without this kind of support.<sup>19</sup> In September of this year, the Pentagon's Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) announced a \$500 million offer for "continuation of maintenance support services" focused on support for U.S.-supplied helicopters and transport planes, including Apache attack helicopters of the kind used by Saudi Arabia in its military intervention in Yemen.<sup>20</sup>

Other maintenance related contracts with Saudi Arabia have included the following, which have a cumulative value of over \$10 billion.<sup>21</sup>

- **2020 \$9.8B** "indefinite-delivery/indefinite-quantity contract for F-15 support for Saudi Arabia"
- **2019 \$1.8B** contract for "aircraft follow-on support and services" including " follow-on logistics support and services for the [RSAF] aircraft, engines, and weapons... support equipment; spare and repair parts; repair and return"
- **2018 \$106.8M** contract for "Maintenance and Support Services (MSS)" to support Royal Saudi Land Forces Aviation Command ... rotary-wing aircraft fleet, engines, avionics, weapons, and missile components." This contract also requires "the assignment of one (1) U.S. Government and up to three hundred twenty (320) contractor representatives to travel to Saudi Arabia"

## USE OF U.S. ARMS IN ENFORCING THE BLOCKADE

Air strikes launched by the Saudi-backed coalition in Yemen have caused massive levels of death and suffering in Yemen, both through the targeting of civilians and through their use of U.S.-supplied weapons to enforce a naval blockade and interfere with traffic in and out of Sana'a airport. As reported by the Yemen Data Project, in March 2021 the Saudi air force bombed the main runway at Sana'a airport, an act for which it has suffered no consequences from the Biden administration or the international community.<sup>22</sup> The inability of Yemenis to fly in and out of Sanaa has put thousands of people at risk, as they are not able

19. Ryan Goodman, "Options for Congress to Respond to Saudi Transgressions: Here's What Works According to Former Senior U.S. Officials," Just Security, October 22, 2018, <https://www.justsecurity.org/61172/effective-ineffective-congressional-responses-saudi-arabia-arm-sales-sanctions-khashoggi/>

20. Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA): <https://www.dsca.mil/press-media/major-arms-sales/saudi-arabia-saudi-arabian-national-guard-modernization-program>

21. Elias Yousif, "Enduring U.S. Support for Saudi-Led Operations in Yemen," Security Assistance Monitor, Center for International Policy, June 2021, <https://securityassistance.org/publications/enduring-u-s-support-for-saudi-led-operations-in-yemen/>

22. Yemen Data Project, Airwar database, accessed October 27, 2021, <https://yemendataproject.org/data.html>

to leave the country for urgently needed, specialized medical care that could save their lives. An August 2021 statement by CARE and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) noted that the closure of the airport by the Saudi-led coalition has left at least 32,000 Yemeni patients stranded without access to life-saving measures. In the words of NRC's Yemen Acting Country Director Isaac Ooko, "It's like a hostage situation that has lasted for five years. Patients are trapped in Yemen, even when there is a route to save them. For thousands of sick Yemenis who need urgent medical treatment abroad, these last five years have amounted to a death sentence. For five years Yemenis have been stripped of their right to travel abroad to seek medical care, conduct business, work, study or visit family."<sup>23</sup>

The naval blockade has been particularly devastating because it has choked off necessary imports of fuel that are needed to support basic services, including powering hospitals and health clinics. According to the UN Office of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), fuel imports dropped by 64% in September 2021 relative to a year prior, a reduction that is directly attributable to the blockade.<sup>24</sup>

As noted by CARE and the Norwegian Refugee Council, the nearly complete halt to medical supplies and equipment entering Sana'a airport, combined with restrictions on fuel through Yemen's Red Sea ports, has simultaneously caused "prices of some medicine to double, making it unaffordable for most of the population and further contributing to the decline of Yemen's health system, already decimated by the conflict."<sup>25</sup> These inflated prices have put critical medical care and life-saving treatments out of reach for millions of Yemenis.

Impediments to the provision of aid and the import of commercial goods have made an already horrific humanitarian situation in Yemen even worse. Back in March of this year, David Beasley, then head of the United Nations' World Food Programme, warned that 400,000 children were at risk of dying without urgent intervention. He specifically mentioned the impacts of the blockade:

**"It's like a hostage situation that has lasted for five years. Patients are trapped in Yemen, even when there is a route to save them."**

23. "Thousands of Critically Ill Patients Stranded with Sana'a Airport Closure," Norwegian Refugee Council, August 5, 2021, <https://www.nrc.no/news/2021/august/thousands-of-critically-ill-patients-stranded-with-sanaa-airport-closure/>

24. Statement of Ramesh Rajasingham, Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations Security Council briefing, October 14, 2021, <https://undocs.org/en/S/PV.8878>

25. Norwegian Refugee Council, op. cit.

“To add to all their misery, the innocent people of Yemen have to deal with a fuel blockade. For example, most hospitals only have electricity in their intensive care units because fuel reserves are so low. I know this first-hand because I’ve walked in the hospital. And the lights were off. The electricity was off. The people of Yemen deserve our help. That blockade must be lifted, as a humanitarian act. Otherwise, millions more will spiral into crisis.”<sup>26</sup>



Yemen, 2015. Photo via Carl Waldmeier/DVIDS

## ARMS OFFERS UNDER TRUMP AND BIDEN

New arms offers to Saudi Arabia under the Biden administration have so far lagged behind the levels reached during the Trump and Obama years. The most notable and concerning sales during the Trump administration were sales of precision-guided bombs of the kind that have been used in strikes on civilian targets in Yemen.

The brutal Saudi-led bombing campaign in Yemen has utilized U.S.-supplied weaponry to target civilians, causing the deaths of thousands. Since the kingdom launched its war in Yemen in 2015, indiscriminate air strikes carried out by the Saudi-led coalition have hit marketplaces, hospitals, civilian neighborhoods, water treatment centers and a school bus. American-made bombs have repeatedly been used in these incidents, including at a wedding, where 21 people, including children, were killed by a GBU-12 Paveway II guided bomb

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26. “Yemen Is Headed Towards the Worst Famine in Modern History, WFP Chief Warns UN Security Council,” United Nations World Food Programme, March 11, 2021, <https://www.wfp.org/news/yemen-heading-to-ward-biggest-famine-modern-history-wfp-chief-warns-un-security-council>



manufactured by Raytheon.<sup>27</sup> A General Dynamics 2000-pound bomb with a Boeing JDAM guidance system was used in a March 2016 strike on a marketplace that killed 97 civilians, including 25 children.<sup>28</sup> A Lockheed Martin laser-guided bomb was utilized in an August 2018 attack on a school bus that killed 51 people, including 40 children.<sup>29</sup> A September 2018 report by the Yemeni group Mwatana for Human Rights identified 19 air strikes on civilians that involved the use of U.S.-supplied weapons, noting that the strike on the school bus was “not an isolated incident, but the latest in a series of gruesome [Saudi-led] Coalition attacks involving U.S. weapons.”<sup>30</sup>



*Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator in Yemen, 2017. Photo via United Nations/Flickr*

The Saudi air force continues to launch air strikes in Yemen in connection with the battle for control of Marib. The fight for Marib has also involved attacks in which the Houthi rebels have committed gross human rights violations in their efforts to take control of the city, with potential dire consequences for internally displaced Yemenis who have taken refuge there – all the more reason to press for an immediate ceasefire and an inclusive peace agreement to end the war. As noted above the Saudi air force also continues to be used to enforce the blockade on Yemen, which has put millions at risk of death from starvation or preventable

27. Nima Elbagir, Salma Abdelaziz, and Laura Smith-Spark, “Made in America: Shrapnel in Yemen Ties US Bombs to Civilian Deaths,” CNN, <https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2018/09/world/yemen-airstrikes-intl/>

28. Human Rights Watch, “Yemen: Saudi-led Coalition Strikes Market with U.S.-Made Bombs,” April 6, 2016, at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/04/07/yemen-us-bombs-used-deadliest-market-strike>; for an overview of U.S. the use of U.S. arms in the Saudi conflict and the U.S. companies that produce them see Alex Kane, “Here’s Exactly Who’s Profiting from the War on Yemen,” In These Times, May 20, 2019, <http://inthesetimes.com/features/us-saudi-arabiayemen-war-arms-sales.html>

29. Nima Elbagir, Salma Abdelaziz, Ryan Browne, Barbara Arvanitidis, and Laura Smith-Spark, “Bomb that Killed 40 Children in Yemen Was Made in the U.S.,” CNN, August 17, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/08/17/middleeast/us-saudi-yemen-bus-strike-intl/index.html>

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

diseases, including hundreds of thousands of children.

Overall, the Trump administration offered roughly \$25 billion in weaponry to Saudi Arabia between 2017 and 2020, with the largest deal being for a Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defense system at a potential cost of \$15 billion. Other arms offers included \$1.5 billion in precision-guided bombs, \$2.6 billion in “aircraft support” and \$300 million in spare parts for U.S.-supplied armored vehicles. This is a conservative estimate because billions of dollars in U.S. weapons have been supplied in packages that fall below the threshold for reporting to Congress or the public.

In contrast to the Trump record, the Biden administration has made two major offers in its early months, one for \$500 million worth of maintenance and spare parts to keep existing U.S.-supplied weapons systems up and running, and one for \$650 million worth of air-to-air missiles. Although small relative to some of the other weapons deals between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, the maintenance offer is critical in enabling the regime to continue waging war in Yemen. The Biden administration could use the threat of withholding maintenance and spare parts as leverage to get the Saudi regime to end its role in the blockade in Yemen and enter into good faith negotiations for an inclusive peace agreement to end the Yemen war, but so far it has failed to do so.

By far the largest tranche of arms to Saudi Arabia came during the eight years of the Obama administration – over \$118 billion in offers, including a \$60 billion multi-part offer in October 2010 that included F-15 combat aircraft, Apache attack helicopters, and an array of armored vehicles.<sup>31</sup> Some of these arms are still in the pipeline, yet to be delivered, but others have served as the backbone of Saudi military operations in Yemen. Overall, the Obama administration averaged \$14.8 billion in arms offers to Saudi Arabia per year in its two terms in office, compared with an average of \$6.2 billion during the Trump administration, more than double.

See Appendix Table 2 for a listing of U.S. arms deliveries to Saudi Arabia that have extend-

**“The Obama administration averaged \$14.8 billion in arms offers to Saudi Arabia per year in its two terms in office, compared with an average of roughly \$6.2 billion per year during the Trump administration.”**

31. William D. Hartung, “U.S. Military Support for 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)

ed into the period from 2016 to 2020. As noted above, Appendix Table 1 lists all U.S. arms offers to the Saudi regime since January 2017, the beginning of the Trump administration.



*President Donald Trump aboard for the start of their overseas visit to Saudi Arabia, 2017. Photo via White House Archives/Flickr*

## THE CORPORATE ROLE

The greatest beneficiaries of U.S. arms offers to Saudi Arabia over the past decade have been major contractors like Boeing, Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, and General Dynamics. As many of the arms packages notified to Congress involve multiple weapons systems and related services, it would be incorrect to assume that all of the revenue generated by these offers went solely to the four companies profiled here. Yet, all of the largest sales since 2009, including a \$29 billion deal for Boeing F-15 aircraft, a \$25 billion deal for Boeing Apache helicopters, a \$15 billion deal for a Lockheed Martin THAAD missile defense system, \$10 billion deal for Lockheed Martin Multi-Mission Surface Combatant ships, and a \$5.4 billion deal for Raytheon PAC-3 missile defense interceptors, involved one of the four firms mentioned above as the primary supplier. And despite the Biden administration's halting of two bomb deals to Saudi Arabia in February 2021, the Saudi regime has received thousands of precision-guided weapons, including Raytheon Paveway bombs and Boeing Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMs) tied to earlier deals (see appendix for more details).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In the interests of ending U.S. support for the Saudi war in Yemen, the Biden administration should do the following:

- Suspend all U.S. arms sales and military support to the Saudi regime – both new offers



and systems still in the pipeline and yet to be delivered – as leverage to get Riyadh to end its blockade on humanitarian aid and commercial goods into Yemen and to engage in good faith efforts to end the war.

- Absent an immediate halt to arms flows, the administration should provide timely data on pending arms deliveries to the Saudi military to give Congress the opportunity to review and if necessary block specific transfers.

**For its part, Congress should do the following:**

- Pass legislation ending to all U.S. military support for Saudi Arabia by passing a War Powers Resolution in both houses of Congress.
- Force and end to U.S. arms, maintenance and spare parts to the Saudi regime.
- Make it easier to block future sales to Saudi Arabia and other human rights abusers by requiring affirmative Congressional approval of key arms sales, as opposed to the current approach which calls for veto-proof, joint resolutions of disapproval in both houses of Congress.<sup>32</sup>

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32. On this point, Title II of the National Security Powers Act: “Murphy, Lee, Sanders Introduce Sweeping Bipartisan Legislation to Overhaul Congress’s Role in National Security,” press release, July 20, 2021, <https://www.murphy.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/murphy-lee-sanders-introduce-sweeping-bipartisan-legislation-to-overhaul-congresss-role-in-national-security#:~:text=The%20National%20Security%20Powers%20Act,-Funding%20for%20Activities%20Lacking%20Authorization&text=Any%20congressional%20authorization%20will%20have,requirements%2C%20including%20an%20automatic%20sunset>; see also Title II of the parallel House measure, the National Security Reforms and Accountability Act (NSRAA): “McGovern, Meijer Lead Introduction of Sweeping New Legislation to Reassert Congressional Power Over National Security,” press release, September 30, 2021, <https://mcgovern.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=398752>



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## **APPENDIX: U.S. ARMS OFFERS AND ARMS DELIVERIES TO SAUDI ARABIA**

Table 1 below lists all major U.S. arms offers to Saudi Arabia between January 2017 – the beginning of the Trump administration – and the present. And Table 2 below lists major arms deliveries to Saudi Arabia that include deliveries of systems that stretched into 2016 and beyond, based on data collected by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. The SIPRI data is based on publicly available sources. Neither the U.S. nor Saudi governments provide reliable or consistent data on when U.S. arms are delivered to the kingdom, greatly undermining Congressional oversight and efforts to gauge the real-time impact of U.S. weapons on the war in Yemen.

**Table 1. U.S. arms offers to Saudi Arabia, January 2017 to Present**

<b>Date of Notification</b>	<b>Description of System / Service</b>	<b>Dollar Amount (in millions)</b>
11/04/2021	Air-to-Air Missiles	\$650
09/16/2021	Maintenance Support Services	\$500
12/29/2020	GBU-39 Small Diameter Bomb I (SDB I) Munitions*	\$290
12/22/2020	Paveway Bombs*	\$478
12/01/2020	Security Assistance Office Support Services	\$350
05/24/2019	Aircraft Follow-On Support and Services	\$1,800
05/24/2019	Tactical Air Surveillance System Aircraft Support	\$136
05/24/2019	Aircraft Follow-On Support and Services	\$800
05/24/2019	Paveway Bombs	\$1,571
04/05/2018	155MM M109A6 Paladin Medium Self-Propelled Howitzer System	\$1,310
03/22/2018	Maintenance Support Services	\$106.8
03/22/2018	Foreign Military Sales Order (FMSO) II	\$300
03/22/2018	TOW 2B (BGM-71F-Series) Missiles	\$670
01/17/2018	Maintenance Support Services	\$500
10/06/2017	Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) and Related Support	\$15,000
06/05/2017	AN/TPQ-53(V) Radar Systems and Related Support	\$662
06/05/2017	Air Force Blanket Order Training	\$750
05/23/2017	Navy Blanket Order Training	\$250
01/23/2017	74K Persistent Threat Detection System	\$525
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$25,998.80</b>

\*Paused by the Biden administration

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

**Table 2. U.S. arms deliveries to Saudi Arabia, January 2016 to Present**

Aircraft			
System	Type	Year(s) Delivered	Quantity Delivered
PTDS	Alliance Ground Surveillance Aircraft	TBD	10
King Air-350 ISR	Alliance Ground Surveillance Aircraft	2019-2020	2
King Air-350 ISR	Alliance Ground Surveillance Aircraft	2015-2016	4
MH-60R Seahawk	Anti-Submarine Warfare Helicopter	2018-2019	10
AH-64E Apache	Combat Helicopter	2015-2016	24
AH-64E Apache	Combat Helicopter	2015-2016	24
AH-6S	Combat Helicopter	2016-2018	24
F-15 Advanced Eagle	Fighter Ground Attack Aircraft	2016-2020	84
F-15 Advanced Eagle	Fighter Ground Attack Aircraft	2016-2020	7
S-70/UH-60L	Helicopter	2017	9
S-70/UH-60L	Helicopter	2018-2020	30
KC-130J Hercules	Tanker / Transport Aircraft	2016	2
CH-47F Chinook			
Armored Vehicles			
System			
M-ATV	Ambush Protected Vehicle	2014-2016	534
M-ATV	Ambush Protected Vehicle	2016-2017	1325
M-88A2 HERCULES	Armored Recovery Vehicle	2019-2020	20
M-1A2S	Tank	2012-2017	314
M-1A2S			
Bombs and Missiles			
System			
AGM-154 JSOW	Guided Bomb	2016-2018	355
AGM-154 JSOW	Guided Bomb	2019-2020	350
GBU-39 SDB	Guided Bomb	2017-2020	800

JDAM	Guided Bomb	2016	600
JDAM	Guided Bomb	2018	2645
Paveway	Guided Bomb	2013-2016	3100
Paveway	Guided Bomb	2016-2017	8120
Paveway	Guided Bomb	2019-2020	20000
Paveway	Guided Bomb	2020	500
AGM-88 HARM	Anti-Radiation Missile	2018-2020	300
AGM-84H SLAM-ER	Anti-Ship Missile	2022-2028**	64*
Harpoon Block-2	Anti-Ship Missile	2016-2020	400
Harpoon Block-2	Anti-Ship Missile	2020	50
AGM-114L HELLFIRE	Anti-Tank Missile	2015-2016	2176
BGM-71 TOW	Anti-Tank Missile	2015-2018	10747
BGM-71F TOW-2B	Anti-Tank Missile	2015-2018	4941
AIM-120C AMRAAM	Beyond Visual Range Missile	2015-2019	500
AIM-9X Sidewinder			

#### Naval Equipment

System	Type	Year(s) Delivered	Quantity Delivered
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#### MMSC

#### Missile Defense Systems

System	Type	Year(s) Delivered	Quantity Delivered
MIM-104F PAC-3	Anti-Ballistic Missile	2017-2019	320
MIM-104F PAC-3	Anti-Ballistic Missile	2020	130
MIM-104F PAC-3	Anti-Ballistic Missile	2024**	N/A
MIM-104F PAC-3	Anti-Ballistic Missile	2023**	N/A
THAAD missile	Anti-Ballistic Missile	2021-2027**	360*
THAAD	Anti-Ballistic Missile System	2021-2027**	7*
RIM-116A RAM	Surface-to-Air Missile	TBD	100*
RIM-116A RAM	Surface-to-Air Missile	TBD	512*
RIM-162 ESSM	Surface-to-Air Missile/Anti-Ballistic Missile System	2014-2017	21
Patriot PAC-3	Surface-to-Air Missile/Anti-Ballistic Missile System	2017-2019	3
Patriot PAC-3			



## System Components

Item	Type	Year(s) Delivered	Quantity Delivered
AAQ-33 Sniper	Aircraft Electro-Optical System	2016-2020	82
DB-110	Aircraft Reconnaissance System	2014-2016	10
AAQ-13 LANTIRN	Combat Aircraft Radar	2016-2020	124
APG-78 Longbow	Combat Helicopter Radar	2014-2016	37
6V-53	Diesel Engine	2013-2017	670
VT-400	Diesel Engine	2015-2017	60
C13	Diesel Engine	2018-2020	535
Mk-41	Naval Surface-to-Air Missile Launching System	TBD	5*
F110	Turbofan	2017-2019	25

Deliveries in this chart are a SIPRI estimate

\*Quantity ordered

\*\*Scheduled delivery year

SOURCE: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) arms transfer database





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