



Biden Breaks Campaign Promise, Approves Arms Sale to Saudi Arabia

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Every so often, we get a glimpse at who is actually running this joint.

People like President Biden, former President Trump, Minority Leader McConnell and House Speaker Pelosi give every appearance of being in charge of their respective spheres, and make no mistake, the power they wield is enormous. Consider those four: Pelosi could halt all legislation, McConnell can come close to doing the same, Trump is running the Republican Party, and Biden can peel the mantle off the Earth with an order to his nuclear command center.

Above and beyond the reach of powerful politicians is the true business of the United States, its most profitable enterprise and its ideologically ingrained mission: war. Practically nothing seems to get in the way of imperialism and war, and specifically the sale of U.S. war weapons abroad. War is not often allowed into the Overton window of permissible discussion, and when it is, we perceive it through a riot of patriotic noise.

War has the best advertisers the U.S. has to offer; their marketing puts all else to shame. Think about it: A politician proposes a social program designed to help starving children, and the first question, always, is, “How much will it cost?” But when expensive cruise missiles are launched by expensive sailors from an incredibly expensive warship to assassinate a foreign leader or obliterate some buildings, few people ask how much that costs. Hundreds of millions, usually, each time. It takes a fantastic ad campaign to haul down that level of popular buy-in, especially when it cuts deeply against people’s own well-being.

While the actual business of shooting wars is grossly profitable, they tend to draw significant media attention, at least for a while. Wars also historically had a tendency to be short term. Before Iraq and Afghanistan, Vietnam was the only active war that kept paying out on a daily basis for 20 years. Every bullet fired, every bomb dropped, every missile launched, every helicopter shot down, every body bag filled, translates into revenue for someone. For the war profiteers, those three actions made for 60 years of profit combined.

That being said, the long, quiet and reliable money is, and has been for decades, in this nation’s worldwide sale of weapons. Called “Foreign Military Sales” or FMS, it is a business with

enormous reach and clout in Washington. At present, the U.S. represents 37 percent of all global arms sales, with half of that going to the Middle East. The U.S. is currently selling weapons to 96 countries around the world, and 169 countries have purchased U.S. weapons since 2001.

“The U.S. sold \$175 billion in weapons to foreign partners and allies in fiscal 2020, a 2.8 percent rise from the previous year’s total, according to a Friday announcement from the Defense and State departments,” reports *DefenseNews*.

There are a number of laws on the books to try and regulate the practice of FMS. “The 1976 Arms Export Control Act, the 1997 Leahy Law, and the 2008 Foreign Assistance Act all require in various ways that the U.S. government give consideration to risks,” explains the Cato Institute. “Risks,” meaning “how dangerous are the countries we sell the stuff to.” The State Department inspector general also has an alleged say in how this business is run, and who these weapons are sold to. That say has severe limits, however.

In 2020, the Trump administration was bound and determined to sell billions in arms to Saudi Arabia. Inspector General Steve Linick attempted to investigate the sale, based on Saudi Arabia’s documented record of atrocities in the Yemen war. He was fired by the administration for attempting that investigation. In December of 2020, despite enormous pushback from many in Congress, the State Department approved the sale of \$290 billion in weapons to Saudi Arabia. It was finalized an hour before Biden took the oath of office on January 20.

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President Biden came into office on a wave of tough talk about Saudi Arabia, specifically regarding their responsibility for the murder of *Washington Post* journalist Jamal Khashoggi. He accused the Saudi hit squad who murdered Khashoggi of acting “on the order of the crown prince” during a Democratic primary debate in November. “They have to be held accountable,” he said. During that same debate, Biden vowed not to sell more weapons to the Saudis if he became president. “We are going to make them pay the price and make them, in fact, the pariah that they are,” he said.

Not only did President Biden fail to punish Saudi Arabia over the Khashoggi murder when given a clear opportunity to do so, he is now preparing to break the other promise he made during that debate. Worse, he is doing so by way of an avalanche of weasel words and nodding winks.

“The Biden administration plans to suspend the sale of many offensive weapons to Saudi Arabia approved under the Trump administration,” reports *The New York Times*, “**but it will allow the sale of other matériel that can be construed to have a defensive purpose**, U.S. officials said on Wednesday. The plan, which was briefed to Congress last week, is part of an administration review of billions of dollars in arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) that the White House announced soon after President Biden’s inauguration.” (Emphasis added.)

The United Arab Emirates also has bloody hands regarding the Yemen conflict. From this deal, the UAE and Saudi Arabia can expect to receive “defensive” weapons like the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (if they can keep it in the air) and armed Reaper drones. These items are many things, but to call them “defensive weapons” is an insult to the language, and a further insult to the thousands who have suffered in the Yemen war being waged by Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The U.S. sells war globally to the tune of hundreds of billions a year. A portion of those weapons become involved in scenarios that “demand” a U.S. military response. Billions, if not trillions, are spent in those responses (read: wars), with the money going to war-maker corporations like Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and Boeing, and to their pet politicians by way of campaign donations. Some politicians and the people may shout and scream, but as it was said in *Dune*, Frank Herbert’s classic novel, “The spice must flow.”

You tell me. Who’s really in charge around here?