

A farewell to arms  
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A hundred beats

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Out of all the many dangerous and maniacal ideas that the United States has come up with, this has to be the most dangerous and indeed the most maniacal -- as well as the most foolish, most frightening, and most short sighted -- idea yet. The United States, under the grand vision of George W Bush, intends to ask Congress to approve a multi-billion (twenty billion dollars to be precise) arms deal to Saudi Arabia. The aid package, which will contain the parcelling out of more money to other 'friendly' Middle Eastern nations, such as Egypt, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, includes another generous ten billion dollars to Israel. Certainly these countries have received American dollars in the past, but the Bush administration's paranoid fear of Iran now necessitates that money be thrown at countries like Saudi Arabia and Israel so as to counter the Persian threat.

According to the New York Times, Saudi Arabia will receive significant military muscle over the next ten years. As part of the twenty billion dollar deal, Saudi Arabia will be given advanced satellite guided bombs known as JDAMs in the 500 and 2,000 pound models, spiffy new naval vessel and warplane upgrades meant to enhance their military's striking ability, and sophisticated weaponry and technology designed to ensure swift and effortless mass murder. For its own peace of mind, Israel's annual handout of \$2.4 billion dollars will be raised to a comfortable three billion dollars per annum -- more than any other country in the world receives from the United States -- so as to maintain their "qualitative edge" in the region. Saudi Arabia will also be made to pinky promise that they will house their precision strike capability weapons as far from Israel as possible. State Department spokesperson, Scott McCormack, defended his country's asinine decision to arm two of the region's most offensive countries to the teeth by insisting that "historic tensions" (translation: American oil issues) in the Middle East would have to be "overcome" (translation: safeguarded by massive influxes of arms, money, and American troops regime changing as many Arab governments as possible) if a "different kind of Middle East was to be realised" (translation: an American sponsored, puppet run 'Middle Beast').

That's all very well and good -- if you happen to have no understanding of geo political dynamics or common sense -- but this arms package to Saudi Arabia raises some serious questions. The first begs the question -- what kind of people are in charge of Saudi Arabia? Since the murder of King Faisal, Saudi Arabia has consistently worked against pan Arabism and Third Worldism and has sacrificed its standing as a country of political and religious leadership to skip merrily behind whom ever handed out the most amount of cash (America). Saudi Arabia's arms deal depends on it working against its neighbours who are the only countries not under American influence or occupation -- Lebanon, Syria, and Iran. This is Vichy style collaboration.

Secondly, there's the small matter of human rights. American law prohibits their country from providing military aid to any nation that "engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognised human rights". The 1967 US Arms Export Control Act stipulates that

it is illegal to use American weapons in "extra judicial killings" and that arms must only be sold to friendly countries for "internal security and legitimate defence" purposes. Technically this should mean that Saudi Arabia and Israel are out of luck. Saudi Arabia's human rights record is virtually non-existent. The country routinely engages in corporal punishments for criminals, including amputations, has a proud history of public beheadings and stonings that carry on to this very day, forbids women to drive cars, tortures homosexuals, and maintains a total gag on freedom of speech. That's a pretty consistent pattern of gross violations.

As for Israel, you might want to turn on the news any hour of any day to get an idea of just how committed they are to human rights. Israel has and does use American bought weapons such as helicopters, F-16 missiles, and tanks to target Palestinian protestors and homes. This isn't a secret. Even in the US State Department's human rights report of 2000 it was noted that the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) act with an "excessive amount of force" commonly using live ammunition, even in situations where the soldiers themselves were not in imminent danger, and that the IDF's strategy of retaliation against Palestinian attacks include "shelling Palestinian Authority civil institutions and civilian areas". So there you have it -- major arms deals awarded to countries known for a predilection towards violence. Mind you, this isn't especially aberrant for the United States; let's not forget who armed the Taliban back in the 1980s.

The third problem is a sticky one. The United States has been railing against Pakistan since 9/11 for not doing enough to combat terrorism. Barack Obama, the best candidate for the American presidency, even threatened to attack Pakistan should we not shape up and should he become president in a year's time. As the United States is particularly worried about fighting terrorism, might it not be totally stupid to arm and finance the countries who have given the world some of the most notorious terrorists? Osama Bin Laden -- mastermind of countless terrorist attacks and the hit on the World Trade Centre on a Tuesday in September 2001 -- happens to hold a Saudi Arabian passport. It might be prudent to note that fifteen out of the nineteen 9/11 hijackers were from Saudi Arabia. Al Qaeda itself is a testament to Wahabism and is chock a block full of radical and angry Saudi Arabians. Ayman al Zawahiri, one of the hundred men referred to as OBL's 'right hand man' or 'number two' and generally considered a nasty piece of work, is from Egypt, a country that takes in \$1.3 billion dollars a year for its cooperation. Abu Musab Zarqawi, who brought us the beheadings in Iraq as well as the Casablanca and Amman bombings in 2003 and 2005 respectively, was Jordanian. Until the Saudi arms deal gets pushed through Congress, Israel, Egypt, and Jordan are the largest recipients of American aid. Think about it for a minute.

It surprises me that not a lot has been said about this arms deal; it's the only deal that matters to me. I'm not sure I want to imagine a world where Saudi Arabia is in possession of twenty billion dollars worth of weapons and the United States is swept up in an obsessed fervour that will eventually endanger the whole world. It's all a bit too cold war for my comfort.