

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



## Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

*Intel for Advocacy*

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SL: The United Arab Emirates: Unpacking the myth of a benign ally

### [RETHINKING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE U.S AND THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES](#)

Another major Trump-related scandal was revealed this week that (once again) flew by largely unnoticed: According to a House Oversight Committee [report released on Monday](#), Trump's presidential campaign, via a wealthy interlocutor, offered officials from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) the opportunity to vet one of Donald Trump's "America First" campaign speeches on energy—a move that possibly violated laws on individuals influencing U.S. policy or opinion at the behest of a foreign government.

The very same day, the Senate failed to override another Trump veto of a bipartisan effort to rein in his support for the Saudi/UAE-led war against Houthis in Yemen, a war that has devastated the country and exacerbated one of the worst humanitarian crises.

While there has been quite a bit of attention paid to Trump carrying water for Saudi Arabia despite its numerous nefarious activities, including the murder of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi, his relationship with the UAE, and indeed, the UAE's cozy relationship with Washington writ large, has also flown under the radar.

Indeed, as Win Without War Policy Director Kate Kizer [noted in a piece](#) in the American Prospect this week, "most policy makers in Washington are blissfully unaware of how the UAE operates," as "the Emirates' [massive lobbying and public relations](#) machine, [orchestrated](#) by UAE ambassador to Washington Yousef Otaiba, has largely shielded the UAE from scrutiny."

### **DEVASTATION IN YEMEN**

The military intervention against Houthis in Yemen, and the havoc it has wreaked, has largely been portrayed as a Saudi affair. But the UAE has just as much blood on its hands. In addition to playing a major role in the air campaign that is the leading cause of civilian casualties, the UAE leads on recruiting ground forces, which include child soldiers from Darfur and al-Qaeda affiliated militants, who have received American weapons from the UAE and Saudi Arabia in

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likely violation of U.S. law. The UAE has even paid American mercenaries to carry out political assassinations in Yemen.

As perhaps evidence of the effectiveness of the UAE's public relations campaigns, the UAE has been praised for its purported "withdrawal" from the Yemen campaign. But the Emiratis continued military occupation in southern Yemen and aid to separatists—moves that only serve to further destabilize the country and hinder wider peace efforts—have gone relatively unnoticed.

## THE SUPPOSED COUNTERTERROR PARTNER

Defenders of the rock-solid U.S. relationship with the UAE often point to its cooperation in counterterrorism, specifically in the fight against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which largely operates out of Yemen. As noted above, the UAE is arming and paying off the very same militants in Yemen they're supposed to be helping the United States combat. The Emiratis have even [armed forces](#) under the command of a militia leader sanctioned by the Treasury Department in 2007 for his links to AQAP and the self-described Islamic State in Yemen.

Moreover, the UAE's [widespread](#) use of arbitrary detention, forced disappearances, [torture](#), and [sexual abuse](#) of Yemeni terror suspects, with the alleged involvement of U.S. personnel, only empowers violent groups that perpetrate terrorism and anti-American sentiment.

The UAE has also played a destabilizing role outside Yemen and throughout the region, for example, [intervening](#) on behalf of militants opposed to the U.S./UN backed government in Libya and playing a [key role](#) in the ongoing blockade of Qatar.

## GROSS HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AT HOME

Again, while Saudi Arabia's rights violations have garnered widespread media attention more recently, the UAE's track record has hardly been as scrutinized. Emirati leaders have crushed dissent against the ruling monarchy, even going so far as to [hire former American National Security Agency operatives](#) to conduct surveillance and hacking operations on dissidents, foreign journalists, and other domestic political adversaries.

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While there's no question that Trump's [seemingly corrupt relationship with the United Arab Emirates](#) is unique and requires further investigation, the reality is that the myth of the UAE as a benevolent U.S. partner transcends partisan politics and has entrenched itself in halls of power in Washington.

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“[T]here has yet to be a systematic evaluation of the UAE’s regional intentions, which have critical consequences for U.S. policy in the Middle East,” Kizer [writes](#). “Peeling back the layers of the UAE’s involvement in Yemen and in the region more generally is essential if there is ever to be accountability for the UAE’s destabilizing activities that undermine human rights, peace, and security throughout the Middle East and North Africa.”

- **FURTHER READING:** “His Town -- Yousef Al Otaiba is the most charming man in Washington: He's slick, he's savvy and he throws one hell of a party. And if he has his way, our Middle East policy is going to get a lot more aggressive.” [\[LINK\]](#)

## **BURIED LEDES**

A new [report](#) from the Center for International Policy found that **90 percent of U.S. arms offers to Saudi Arabia involved one of the top four U.S. defense firms** and were worth more than \$125 billion.

[It's not just Khashoggi](#): “A *Vanity Fair* investigation reveals **how Saudi Arabia attempts to abduct, repatriate—and sometimes murder—**citizens it regards as enemies of the state.

**Organizations opposed to a progressive vision of U.S. policy toward the Middle East** [are dropping like flies](#).

**NO CAPITULATION:** A security conference in Israel [gamed out the U.S.-Iran crisis](#) and concluded that the best outcome for Trump’s Iran policy **would be a slightly upgraded nuclear deal negotiated by Barack Obama.**

A Trump crony at the Pentagon [recently moved](#) to terminate a long-standing advisory group comprised of prestigious academics, physicists, scientists, and other experts, showing “how the Trump administration’s crackdown on the role of independent science in the U.S. government is **reaching into areas long thought immune from political influence.**”

[Meanwhile](#), “a State Department intelligence analyst who recently resigned warned that the White House is **systematically suppressing science and objective analysis on how large a threat climate change is to national security.**”

Win Without War Policy and Advocacy Program Manager Mariam Iskajyan [wrote](#) about how **survivors of Syria’s brutal civil war deserve justice and not deportation.**

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Peace and rights activists are [beginning to rethink](#) “international security” given that many efforts led by the U.S., EU or the UN “**often end up worsening and perpetuating the conflicts they are supposed to stop or prevent.**”

[Is the American Empire](#) “economically *necessary* for us to maintain our standard of living? **Or is it neutral vis-à-vis the majority of the American public—even possibly a net drain?**”

[And finally](#), while Trump tries to build his needless, racist border wall, **those who live near it just want to play on a see-saw together.**