

February 11, 2021

Dear President Biden,

Thank you for announcing an end to the United States' ongoing military support and weapons sales for offensive operations in the Saudi- and Emirati-led intervention in Yemen. After six years of the United States directly aiding and abetting this coalition's devastating and harmful military campaign, an end to this support is a welcome and necessary first step towards peace, and we are eager to support you in this endeavor.

Curtailing U.S. military support for Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) should not be limited to arbitrary definitions of what equipment and services are "offensive" or "defensive," but instead should be guided by these countries' past behavior as required by U.S. and international law, within their borders and in the wider region, particularly regarding respect for human rights and civilian harm. As your administration works to implement this decision and reset the U.S. diplomatic role in the conflict, we, the undersigned organizations and experts, urge you to use this decision as an opportunity to instill much-needed accountability in the U.S. relationships with Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Any determination of U.S. military support and arms sales that constitutes "offensive operations" must incorporate long-standing U.S. export controls, the recent history and broad use of U.S. weapons by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and the consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally-recognized human rights by these governments. These monarchies have committed and continue to commit human rights violations, not only domestically—where hundreds of human rights defenders, journalists, academics, and artists languish in jail—but also throughout the region in Yemen, Libya, and beyond. U.S. munitions and other support to the UAE and Saudi Arabia have been used in a consistent pattern of airstrikes against civilians and on civilian areas and civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, markets, weddings, and water wells, including in likely violations of international humanitarian law. There are well-documented reports of mass detention, torture, and targeted assassinations against political opponents by the UAE and allied militias in southern Yemen, as well as the financing of non-state armed groups, including the diversion of U.S. weapons and equipment to affiliates of al-Qaeda, in Yemen and Libya. These are abuses – which disproportionately impact women, children, and Yemeni activists working for peace – many that cannot go unaddressed if the United States wants to be a credible actor for peace in Yemen and Libya, let alone the rest of the region. Moreover, such abuses should inform the provision of any "defensive" support, which should only be supplied in accordance with U.S. and international law.

Any determination must also account for the Houthi, as well as other Yemeni armed groups' own serious human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, particularly with respect to the treatment of detainees and the obstruction of humanitarian aid. As the UN Panel of Experts on Yemen recently noted, coalition "air strikes continue to give the Houthis the opportunity to unify the population against their enemies." Rather than continuing to assist abusive coalition forces, the United States should press the coalition to end their violations by working with counterparts on the UN Security Council to promote tangible accountability mechanisms for all violations committed by all parties during the conflict.

Given Saudi Arabia and the UAE’s consistent disregard for both international and U.S. law, the administration should block all relevant weapons, equipment, training, services, maintenance, and other activities for their current military operations. This should include arms and services—or similar equipment—currently under consideration or previously approved that have likely been misused or implicated in civilian harm or violations of end-use agreements; implicated in enforcing the coalition’s de facto air and sea blockade on Yemen; could open U.S. personnel up to potential liability for violations of international law; or would run afoul of U.S. commitments to international norms, such as those enshrined in the Arms Trade Treaty and the Missile Technology Control Regime. It should also include spare parts and services that are not on the U.S. munitions list (USML) but are critical to conducting “offensive operations,” and permission from the United States for third-parties to re-transfer U.S. origin defense articles.

Based on publicly available information, we have identified \$36.5 billion worth of sales, support services, and other assistance to these countries that would meet such “offensive operations” criteria, which have been previously approved by the executive branch since 2017. These include:

Country	Estimated cost (millions USD)	Proposed Weapon, Equipment, Support, or Other Assistance	Notification Date
Saudi Arabia	290	GBU-39 Small Diameter Bomb I (SDB I) Munitions	12/29/2020
Saudi Arabia	478	Paveway II, Enhanced Paveway II, Paveway III, Enhanced Paveway III, and Paveway IV Weapons Systems for the Royal Saudi Air Force F-15, Tornado, and Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft.	12/22/2020
Saudi Arabia	1800	Aircraft Follow-on Support and Services	5/24/2019
Saudi Arabia	136	Continued Tactical Air Surveillance System Aircraft Support	5/24/2019
Saudi Arabia	800	Aircraft Follow-on Support and Services	5/24/2019
Saudi Arabia	1571	Transfer defense articles, defense services, and technical data for the assembly, design, development, intermediate level maintenance, modification, operation, repair, design, development, intermediate level maintenance, modification, operation, repair, testing, and demilitarization of Paveway II, Enhanced Paveway II, Paveway III, Enhanced Paveway III, and Paveway IV Weapons Systems for the Royal Saudi Air Force F-15, Tornado, and Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft.	5/24/2019
Saudi Arabia	209	Transfer defense articles, defense services, and technical data to support the manufacture of the Aurora Fuzing System for the Paveway IV Precision Guided Bomb Program.	5/24/2019

Saudi Arabia	175.9	Technical data and defense services in order to provide technically qualified personnel to advise and assist the Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) in maintenance and training for the RSAF F-15 fleet of aircraft.	5/24/2019
Saudi Arabia	549	Defense articles, including technical data and defense services, to support the performance of maintenance and repair services of F10 engines to support the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Ministry of Defense.	5/24/2019
Saudi Arabia	50.8	Export of 15,000 120mm M933A1 mortar bombs to Saudi Arabia for end use by the Saudi Arabian Royal Land Forces.	5/24/2019
Saudi Arabia	1310	155MM M109A6 Paladin Medium Self-propelled Howitzer System	4/5/2018
Saudi Arabia	670	TOW 2B (BGM 71-F-Series) Missiles	3/22/2018
Saudi Arabia	300	Royal Saudi Land Forces Ordnance Corps Foreign Military Sales Order (FMSO) II Case	3/22/2018
Saudi Arabia	106.8	Helicopter maintenance - Continuation Of Maintenance Support Services (MSS)	3/22/2018
Saudi Arabia	500	Joint Direct Attack Munitions, Paveway laser-guided bombs for Saudi Tornado and Typhoon aircraft, and the integration of the Kaman FMU-152A/B Joint Programmable Fuze into the MK-80, BLU-109, and BLU-100 munitions	5/23/2017
UAE	150	Foreign Military Sales Order (FMSO) II Case	4/23/2020
UAE	556	Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) Vehicles	5/7/2020
UAE	10400	F-35 Joint Strike Fighter	11/10/2020
UAE	10000	Munitions, Sustainment and Support	11/10/2020
UAE	2970	MQ-9B Remotely Piloted Aircraft	11/10/2020
UAE	270.4	Sidewinder AIM 9X Block II+ (Plus) Tactical Missile	11/9/2020
UAE	900	Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System (APKWS)	5/24/2019
UAE	80	RQ-21A Blackjack Unmanned Air Vehicles	5/24/2019
UAE	102	Javelin Guided Missiles	5/24/2019
UAE	830.3	CH-47F Chinook Cargo Helicopters	11/7/2019

UAE	684.9	Transfer of defense articles, defense services, and technical data to support the integration, operation, training, testing, repair, and operational level maintenance of the Maverick AGM-65 Weapons System and Paveway II, Paveway III, Enhanced Paveway II, and Enhanced Paveway III Weapons Systems for use on the Rafale, Cougar, F-16 Block 60, Hawk 100 Series, Mirage 2000, and Air Tractor 802 aircraft for end use by the United Arab Emirates' Air Defense Force and Air Force.	5/24/2019
UAE	325.3	Transfer defense articles, defense services, and technical data to support the export and integration of 60,000 FMU-152NB Joint Programmable Bomb Fuze systems into the UAE-GHQ's fleet of the following aircraft and associated weapons: F-16, Mirage 2000, AT-802 Air Tractor and S2R-600 Archangel.	5/24/2019
UAE	270.4	AIM-9X-2 Sidewinder Block Ii Missiles	3/7/2018

Permanently cancelling these transfers is an essential step toward ending the cycle of impunity that U.S. policy has helped create, but it does not on its own constitute peace, healing, or justice for the Yemenis – as well as countless other civilians throughout the region – who have long suffered, in significant part as a result of a virtual blank check of U.S. military support for these countries. To date, there has been no transparent, independent efforts to investigate nor provide reparations for civilian casualties, human rights abuses, and violations of international and domestic law caused by the use of these weapons. Without a full accounting of the harms done and tangible steps towards accountability as a result of the sale and use of these weapons – including a comprehensive moratorium on any military support that is at-risk of misuse – the U.S. cannot be a credible actor for peace.

We are ready to support your administration’s bold commitment to peace in Yemen, and humbly suggest that emerging as an effective diplomatic broker in the midst of this complex conflict requires ending the blank check for impunity that Saudi Arabia and the UAE have enjoyed in Washington. Polling indicates that majorities of Americans across the ideological spectrum will support such a move. Any return to business as usual when it comes to the U.S. relationship with these two countries will be woefully insufficient to meet your own campaign promises or the needs of the Yemeni people at this moment.

Sincerely,

Organizations:

Action Corps
Action on Armed Violence
Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB)
Amnesty International USA
Bridges Faith Initiative
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
Campaign Against Arms Trade

Center for International Policy
CODEPINK
Colombian Campaign To Ban Landmines
Common Defense
Demand Progress
Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN)
Fellow Travelers Blog
Freedom Forward
Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)
Human Rights Watch
Institute for Policy Studies, New Internationalism Project
Interfaith Peace Network of WNY
Jewish Voices for Peace Action
Just Foreign Policy
Justice Democrats
Knowdrones.com
MADRE
MoveOn
National Iranian American Council Action
National Priorities Project at the Institute for Policy Studies
New York Center for Foreign Policy Affairs
Our Revolution
Pax Christi USA
Peace Action
Peace Direct
Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED)
Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft
Saferworld
Security Policy Reform Institute (SPRI)
September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows
Shadow World Investigations
United For Peace and Justice, Administrative Committee
United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
US Campaign for Palestinian Rights (USCPR)
Veterans for Peace
Western New York Peace Center
Win Without War
Working Families Party
Yemeni Alliance Committee
Yemen Relief and Reconstruction Foundation (YRRF)

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CC:

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