

TRANSFERRING ARMS TO THE UAE IS NOT IN U.S. SECURITY INTERESTS

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U.S. and Emirati soldiers participate in joint exercise Native Fury 20 in the United Arab Emirates on March 15, 2020. Sgt. Kyle McNan U.S. Marine Corps/DVIDS

The Biden administration's decision to approve a \$23 billion package of F-35 combat aircraft, MQ-9 armed drones, and \$10 billion in bombs and missiles to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) contradicts its pledge to make human rights and long-term U.S. interests the central factors in deciding which nations to supply with U.S. arms. The UAE is an unreliable partner that has fueled conflict, transferred U.S.-supplied weapons to extremist groups, and inflicted severe human rights abuses on its own population. Its conduct has done more harm than good with respect to U.S. security interests. Whatever pledges the UAE may make regarding its use of the U.S. weapons involved in the current package, the UAE's record does not inspire confidence that it will abide by them.

Conduct that should disqualify the UAE from receiving U.S. arms includes:

- Despite claims to the contrary, the UAE [continues](#) to play a role in the brutal war in Yemen, which has [resulted](#) in nearly a quarter of a million deaths and pushed millions to the brink of famine, even as it has created more space for extremist groups like Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) to operate and recruit new members and [driven](#) the Houthi rebels closer to Iran.

- The UAE is a [primary supplier](#) of weaponry to the forces of Gen. Khalifa Haftar in Libya and has engaged in [drone strikes](#) that have killed civilians, all in violation of a United Nations arms embargo. There is also evidence to suggest it has [financed](#) the Wagner Group, a collection of Russian-backed mercenaries fighting in Yemen.
- The UAE has [transferred](#) U.S. supplied weapons, including armored vehicles, to extremist militias in Yemen, some of which have ties to AQAP. The UAE has [security ties](#) to Russia and China and has [purchased](#) Russian missile defense systems, raising the danger of sensitive U.S. technology being supplied to these two nations.
- The weapons in the \$23 billion package are more likely to be used in wars like those in Libya and Yemen than to deter or fight Tehran.
- UAE purchases of arms from Russia could subject it to [sanctions](#) under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act ([CAATSA](#)), which, if enforced, could preclude it from receiving advanced U.S. weaponry, as happened with Turkey with respect to its purchases of Russian S-400s and its exclusion from the F-35 program.
- The sale of F-35s to the UAE could open the door to sales of these aircraft to other Gulf States, spurring an arms race in the region.
- The sales will [likely](#) include the transfer of U.S. technology and jobs to the UAE via offset agreements with U.S. companies. For example, the UAE is [seeking](#) the opportunity to build parts for the F-35 that will be used not just on the jets they are purchasing but on all U.S. F-35s produced worldwide, reducing jobs in the United States as a result.



Destruction caused to a Yememi school in Sa'ada by 2015 Saudi-led coalition airstrike. Philippe Kropf/United Nations OCHA Flickr