

\$100 Billion in Weapons to the Saudis Buys a World Full of Hurt

The meaning of 'friendship' in Riyadh's case has been distorted beyond all reality.

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On December 13, the United States Senate made history with a vote invoking the 1973 War Powers Act to stop America's military participation in, and support of, the unauthorized and immoral war against the desperate people in Yemen.

Never before had a vote of this nature passed the Senate. The measure passed with 56 senators voting in support and 41 voting against. It marked the first time the Senate has been able to put the breaks on our involvement in Yemen, a war that was never authorized by Congress, as is required by our Constitution.

Meanwhile, Speaker Paul Ryan went to extraordinary lengths to forestall a vote on a similar motion in the House of Representatives.

The history here is worth noting.

The 1973 War Powers Act was written to protect such motions from political shenanigans. However, in 2017, the leadership killed [House Concurrent Resolution 81](#), using parliamentary trickery to table the motion without a vote. In November 2018, the House Rules Committee, controlled by Ryan and company, slipped a rule into the Wolf Protection Act to de-privilege H.Con.Res.138 so that a vote would again be thwarted. When the measure was brought up again in December, the Rules Committee inserted a rule on Res.142 [into the farm bill](#), which again prevented Congress from voting on the issue.

Why so much effort on Capitol Hill to protect and perpetuate an illegal war that has brought the 14 million people of Yemen to the brink of starvation? Why so much support for enabling the Saudi government's inhumane naval blockade and bombing campaign, which are intentionally designed to starve the Yemenis and prevent other supplies, particularly medicines, from coming into Yemen?

When queried, the typical supporter of this horror tells us we have to support the Saudis because they are "our friends." But how can we call those who willfully perpetrate such unthinkable misery "our friends"? For many years, our political, military, and press leadership have intoned the "our friends" mantra. Why? Exactly who benefits from this so-called friendship?

Ben Freeman at the Center for International Policy's Foreign Influence Transparency Initiative [has identified](#) many of the American firms that receive [vast sums of money](#) from

the Saudis. This money is laundered through these firms and [into the campaign coffers](#) of our political leaders.

It is difficult to imagine how a country that has spent [billions of dollars both around the world](#) and [in America](#) supporting a virulently anti-American jihadist ideology can be considered a friend. Adherents of this ideology, Saudis, comprised the leadership, the funders, the operatives, and 15 of the 19 hijackers who attacked us on September 11, 2001, killing 3,000 Americans. Yet Riyadh [has not](#) stopped funding madrassas overseas that teach extremism (despite a recent [pledge](#) to do just that), enabling these schools to breed and train new terrorists for the last five decades. America's leadership has turned a blind eye in order to continue to protect their money flow.

Our national leaders also tell us that selling weapons to the Kingdom gives us the benefit of jobs in our country. This is somewhat deceptive. To paraphrase *TAC* columnist Doug Bandow: we do have people working to make the weapons, but we do not fully benefit from the export of arms because we do not benefit from them here. Instead, the products are sent overseas, often at our expense.

Also, due to this shortsighted practice, our technology and resources end up in dangerous and unstable regions where our own weapons are often used against our troops. The arms bonanza also raises serious questions about arming a bunch of nations that are hospitable to terrorist organizations. What is in it for America besides large sums of money for lobbyists and politicians?

Laughably, the defense industry suggests that the price of weapons, planes, and services will cost the taxpayers less money to purchase if the Military Industrial Complex mass produces the equipment for export. They forget to point out in this fairy tale that U.S. troops [often end up fighting the terrorist networks to which America provides those same military-grade weapons](#). That forces us to spend even more resources to protect our troops from our own weapons. This has cost American lives and trillions in taxpayer dollars since 2001.

Americans would fare much better if the defense industry charged taxpayers more per plane, precision missile, and bombs—and then kept our weapons and troops home to defend U.S. interests. We could forego the inevitable trench warfare that kills and injures U.S. soldiers and wastes treasure and instead rebuild America's infrastructure.

And don't think the American public would be averse to holding back such aid. In a poll commissioned by the Committee for Responsible Foreign Policy in 2017, 57 percent of those surveyed thought giving weapons and other military aid to Saudi Arabia was "counterproductive."

The Saudis are good friends to those who benefit from their lobbying largesse and military contracts. But they're not so good for the rest of us who have to pay the human, social, and financial costs, and suffer under a corrupted political process.

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