

# The Great Global Arms Bazaar

“The military industrial complex” is thriving

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Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#)

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We all would do well to read or re-read perhaps, Anthony Sampson’s outstanding anatomical study or investigation into the international arms trade: “The Arms Bazaar”. As it gives us some perspective on how the “defence industry” has grown to become what it is now; an unwieldy Golem, that’s out of control.

Currently, “the military industrial complex” seems to be thriving even in these hard times. There are mammoth weapon sales galore underway on a global scale. For instance in Asia, the U.S is bolstering militarily co-operation with its close ally and Chinese foe, by selling a large weapons package to the island of Taiwan. A regional arms race seems to be developing. This has really riled the Chinese who have “vehemently” protested by means of all diplomatic channels available to them. The reaction to Washington’s planned military shipment to Taipei was swift and strident. “The People’s Daily” considers the U.S. move to be a sign of a “pre-emptive cold-war mentality and moral hypocrisy,” it stated.

In response to the \$ 6.4 billion USD deal, Beijing has cut off all “military dialogue” with Washington in the wake of the arms deal with Taiwan. China has also threatened economic reprisals. Beijing is considering sanctions against U.S defence firms involved with Taiwanese the deal such as “Boeing” corporation which has reportedly sold 12 missiles to Taiwan as part of the overall sale. The arms shipment to Taiwan totals in all, 114 patriot missiles and 60 attacks Black Hawk helicopters (1).

Analysts are concerned about the growing tensions which could perhaps occur along the strait of Taiwan for instance, which separates mainland China from the “break-away” Island. At a recent meeting meeting of strategic experts in London this week, the IISS (International Institute for Strategic Studies) chief specifically referred to a possible stand-off developing, between the US and Chinese navies. “Defining ways in which the two navies might acceptably operate in areas near to China would be a good subject for the military-to-military talks... that unfortunately can easily be placed in jeopardy when the countries find themselves in a political dispute, especially over Taiwan,” the institute’s director, John Chipman remarked recently (2).

Hence the risk of an armed confrontation between the old (U.S) and new (rising China) superpower rises each day.

Middle-East, Persian Gulf: More military tinder is stacked for the pyre or fire to come.

Shifting to the Middle East, there are resurging tensions with Iran. They are reaching potentially explosive levels. The U.N. plans further and more stringent sanctions against

Tehran, as part of the on-going efforts by the West to curb Iranian nuclear ambitions. In the view of NYT columnist Thomas Friedman, "If these sanctions prove incapable of getting Iran to halt its suspected nuclear weapons program, the chances for a U.S. or Israeli military strike against Iran will grow very high before the end of this year. Here in the Persian Gulf, apprehension is off the charts." His words of warning appear to be far from empty rhetoric. They may be a veiled threat of what may happen next.

Furthermore, in addition to the sanction regime against Tehran, arms deals are being done to further intimidate Iran. These weapons sales are most likely meant to contain the potential belligerent by rearming the Persian Gulf region. As part of the record \$ 708 billion USD allocated by Congress for military spending in 2011, the Obama administration is "boosting friendly states' military capabilities." (3) This military build up is obviously meant to offset Iran's strategic missile threat. Thus, Washington plans to sell a \$ 410 million USD "Patriot" missile defence system to Kuwait, and another similar system worth \$ 7.8 Billion USD, to Turkey. And in doing so, further encircling Iran with "defensive" deterrents.

In addition, to re-arming the Gulf region there are also "substantial" armament sales to other regional allies such as Egypt, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates in the works according to the Financial Times newspaper (Ibid).

The Russians want to get into the Game too.

Russia has signed a deal with Libya to supply with small-arms and other weapons to the value of \$1.8bn (€1.1bn, 1.3bn euros), Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has announced (4).

The Lybiandefence minister, Yunis Jaber was in Moscow recently to negotiate this "arms package". Russian media sources have reported the deal includes 20 fighter aircraft, a mobile missile defence system known as the "S-300". It also includes "T-90C" type tanks. Indeed, the world is witnessing an arms sales bonanza, which risks setting volatile regions in Asia, the Persian Gulf and North Africa ablaze.

## Notes

- (1) BBC News , "US slates China's Taiwanese response", (02/03/10)
- (2) AFP news agency, "Asia bolsters defences as West feels pinch: IISS", (02/03/10)
- (3) "US vows more help for allies in Mideast", The Financial Times, (02/02/10)
- (4) BBC News, "Russia announces Libya arms deal worth \$ 1.8 bn", (01/30/ 10)

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