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The Arsenal of Genocide: The U.S. Weapons That Are Destroying Gaza

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On May 8, 2024, as Israel escalated its brutal assault on Rafah, President Biden announced that he had "paused" a delivery of 1,700 500-pound and 1,800 2,000-pound bombs, and threatened to withhold more shipments if Israel went ahead with its full-scale invasion of Rafah.

*The move elicited an outcry from Israeli officials (**National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir** tweeted "Hamas loves Biden"), as well as Republicans, staunch anti-Palestinian Democrats and pro-Israel donors. Republicans immediately prepared a bill entitled the Israel Security Assistance Support Act to prohibit the administration from withholding military aid to Israel.*

Many people have been asking the U.S. to halt weapons to Israel for seven months, and of course Biden's move comes too late for 35,000 Palestinians who have been killed in Gaza, mainly by American weapons.

Lest one think the administration is truly changing its position, two days after announcing the pause, the State Department released a convoluted report saying that, although it is reasonable to "assess" that U.S. weapons have been used by Israeli forces in Gaza in ways that are "inconsistent" with international humanitarian law, and although Israel has indeed delayed or had a negative effect on the delivery of aid to Gaza (which is illegal under U.S. law), I**srael's assurances regarding humanitarian aid and compliance with international humanitarian law are "credible and reliable."**

By this absurd conclusion, the Biden administration has given itself a green light to keep sending weapons and Israel a flashing one to keep committing war crimes with them.

In any event, as **Colonel Joe Bicino,** a retired U.S. artillery officer, told the BBC, Israel can "level" Rafah with the weapons it already has. The paused shipment is "somewhat inconsequential," Bicino said, "a little bit of a political play for people in the United States who are… concerned about this." A U.S. official confirmed to the Washington Post that Israel has enough weapons already supplied by the U.S. and other allies to go ahead with the Rafah operation if it chooses to ignore U.S. qualms.

The paused shipment really has to be seen in the context of the arsenal with which the U.S. has equipped its Middle Eastern proxy over many decades.

A Deluge of American Bombs

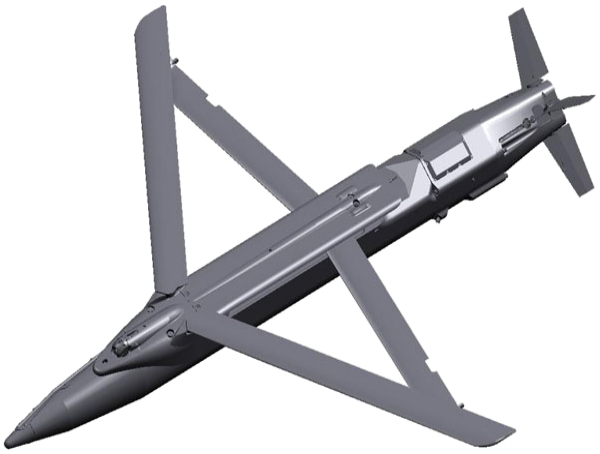
During the Second World War, the United States proudly called itself the "Arsenal of Democracy," as its munitions factories and shipyards produced an endless supply of weapons to fight the genocidal government of Germany. Today, the United States is instead, shamefully, the Arsenal of Genocide, providing 70% of the imported weapons Israel is using to obliterate Gaza and massacre its people.

As Israel assaults Rafah, home to 1.4 million displaced people, including at least 600,000 children, most of the warplanes dropping bombs on them are F-16s, originally designed and manufactured by General Dynamics, but now produced by Lockheed Martin in Greenville, South Carolina. Israel's 224 F-16s have long been its weapon of choice for bombing militants and civilians in Gaza, Lebanon and Syria.

Israel also has 86 Boeing F-15s, which can drop heavier bombs, and 39 of the latest, most wastefully expensive fighter-bombers ever, Lockheed Martin's nuclear-capable F-35s, with another 36 on order. The F-35 is built in Fort Worth, Texas, but components are manufactured all over the U.S. and in allied countries, including Israel. Israel was the first country to attack other countries with F-35s, in violation of U.S. arms export control laws, reportedly using them to bomb Syria, Egypt and Sudan.

As these fleets of U.S.-made warplanes began bombing Gaza in October 2023, their fifth major assault since 2008, the U.S. began rushing in new weapons. By December 1, 2023, it had delivered 15,000 bombs and 57,000 artillery shells.

Image: The GBU-39 Small Diameter Bomb (From the Public Domain)



The U.S. supplies Israel with all sizes and types of bombs, including 285-pound GBU-39 small diameter glide bombs, 500-pound Mk 82s, 2,000-pound Mk 84s and BLU-109 "bunker

busters," and even massive 5,000-pound GBU-28 bunker-busters, which Israel reportedly used in Gaza in 2009.

General Dynamics is the largest U.S. bomb manufacturer, making all these models of bombs. Most of them can be used as "precision" guided bombs by attaching Raytheon and Lockheed Martin's Paveway laser guidance system or Boeing's JDAM (Joint Direct Attack Munitions) GPS-based targeting system.

Little more than half of the bombs Israel has dropped on Gaza have been "precision" ones, because, as targeting officers explained to +972 magazine, their Lavender AI system generates thousands of targets who are just suspected rank-and-file militants, not senior commanders. Israel does not consider it worth "wasting" expensive precision munitions to kill these people, so it uses only "dumb" bombs to kill them in their homes—obliterating their families and neighbors in the process.

In order to threaten and bomb its more distant neighbors, such as Iran, Israel depends on its seven Lockheed Martin KC-130H and seven Boeing 707 in-air refueling tankers, with four new, state-of-the-art Boeing KC46A tankers to be delivered in late 2025 for over $220 million each.

Ground Force Weapons

Image: An AH-64 Apache from the U.S. Army's 101st Aviation Regiment in Iraq (From the Public Domain)

Another weapon of choice for killing Palestinians are Israel's 48 Boeing Apache AH64 attack helicopters, armed with Lockheed Martin's infamous Hellfire missiles, General Dynamics' Hydra 70 rockets and Northrop Grumman's 30 mm machine guns. Israel also used its Apaches to kill and incinerate a still unknown number of Israelis on October 7, 2023—a tragic day that Israel and the U.S. continue to exploit as a false pretext for their own violations of international humanitarian law and of the Genocide Convention.

Israel's main artillery weapons are its 600 Paladin M109A5 155 mm self-propelled howitzers, which are manufactured by BAE Systems in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. To the layman, a self-propelled howitzer looks like a tank, but it has a bigger, 155 mm gun to fire at longer range.

Israel assembles its 155 mm artillery shells from U.S.-made components. One of the first two U.S. arms shipments that the administration notified Congress about after October 7 was to

resupply Israel with artillery shell components valued at $147.5 million.

Israel also has 48 M270 multiple rocket launchers. They are a tracked version of the HIMARS rocket launchers the U.S. has sent to Ukraine, and they fire the same rockets, made by Lockheed Martin. U.S. Marines used the same rockets in coordination with U.S. airstrikes to devastate Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq, in 2017. M270 launchers are no longer in production, but BEA Systems still has the facilities to produce them.

Israel makes its own Merkava tanks, which fire U.S.-made tank shells, and the State Department announced on December 9, 2023, that it had notified Congress of an "emergency" shipment of 14,000 120 mm tank shells worth $106 million to Israel.

U.S. shipments of artillery and tank shells, and dozens of smaller shipments that it did not report to Congress (because each shipment was carefully calibrated to fall below the statutory reporting limit of $100 million), were paid for out of the $3.8 billion in military aid that the United States gives Israel each year.

In April, Congress passed a new war-funding bill that includes about $14 billion for additional weapons. Israel could afford to pay for these weapons itself, but then it could shop around for them, which might erode the U.S. monopoly on supplying so much of its war machine. That lucrative monopoly for U.S. merchants of death is clearly more important to Members of Congress than fully funding Head Start or other domestic anti-poverty programs, which they routinely underfund to pay for weapons and wars.

Israel has 500 FMC-built M113 armored personnel carriers and over 2,000 Humvees, manufactured by AM General in Mishawaka, Indiana. Its ground forces are armed with several different types of U.S. grenade launchers, Browning machine-guns, AR-15 assault rifles, and SR-25 and M24 SWS sniper rifles, all made in the USA, as is the ammunition for them.

For many years, Israel's three Sa'ar 5 corvettes were its largest warships, about the size of frigates. They were built in the 1990s by Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, Mississippi, but Israel has recently taken delivery of four larger, more heavily-armed, German-built Sa'ar 6 corvettes, with 76 mm main guns and new surface-to-surface missiles.

Gaza Encampments Take on the Merchants of Death

The United States has a long and horrific record of providing weapons to repressive regimes that use them to kill their own people or attack their neighbors. **Martin Luther King** called the U.S. government "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world," and that has not changed since he said it in 1967, a year to the day before his assassination.

Many of the huge U.S. factories that produce all these weapons are the largest employers in their regions or even their states. As President Eisenhower warned the public in his farewell address in 1960, "This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry" has led to "the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex."

So, in addition to demanding a ceasefire, an end to U.S. military aid and weapons sales to Israel, and a restoration of humanitarian aid to Gaza, the students occupying college campuses across our country are right to call on their institutions to divest from these merchants of death, as well as from Israeli companies.

The corporate media has adopted the line that divestment would be too complicated and costly for the universities to do. But when students set up an encampment at Trinity College in Dublin, in Ireland, and called on it to divest from Israeli companies, the college quickly agreed to their demands. Problem solved, without police violence or trying to muzzle free speech. Students have also won commitments to consider divestment from U.S. institutions, including Brown, Northwestern, Evergreen State, Rutgers and the Universities of Minnesota and Wisconsin.

While decades of even deadlier U.S. war-making in the greater Middle East failed to provoke a sustained mass protest movement, the genocide in Gaza has opened the eyes of many thousands of young people to the need to rise up against the U.S. war machine.

The gradual expulsion and emigration of Palestinians from their homeland has created a huge diaspora of young Palestinians who have played a leading role in organizing solidarity campaigns on college campuses through groups like Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP). Their close links with extended families in Palestine have given them a visceral grasp of the U.S. role in this genocide and an authentic voice that is persuasive and inspiring to other young Americans.

Now it is up to Americans of all ages to follow our young leaders and demand not just an end to the genocide in Palestine, but also a path out of our country's military madness and the clutches of its deeply entrenched MICIMATT (military-industrial-congressional-intelligence-media- academia-think-tank) complex, which has inflicted so much death, pain and desolation on so many of our neighbors for so long, from Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan to Vietnam and Latin America.

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Featured image: AR-15 assault rifles (From the Public Domain)

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