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# SECURITY ASSISTANCE LEGISLATION AND POLICY

## Sale of Defense Equipment to Saudi Arabia

By

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International Security Affairs**

[The following is a reprint of a statement presented by Mr. Bartholomew in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in Washington DC on October 4, 1990.]

We have come before you this morning to discuss the Administration's plans to proceed expeditiously with an important sale of defense equipment to Saudi Arabia. As you know, two weeks ago we began consultations with members of the Congress on Saudi Arabia's urgent requests for defense equipment. Following those consultations, the President directed us to proceed with the sale in two phases, the first of which we notified last week.

This morning, we will ask you to consider, as we have, how this sale bears on U.S. interests and objectives in the current Gulf crisis and beyond, not only *vis-a-vis* Saudi Arabia, but also for the region as a whole. In that context, the Administration believes that this sale is but one step—an important step—in assisting the nations of the area in the current crisis, and in building lasting stability in the region.

In his remarks to the United Nations General Assembly on October 1, President Bush delineated the objectives and stakes that led to the dispatch of major U.S. military forces to the Gulf. As the President said:

The present aggression in the Gulf is a menace not only to one region's security, but to the entire world's vision of our future. It threatens to turn the dream of a new international order into a grim nightmare of anarchy, in which the law of the jungle supplants the law of nations. That is why the United Nations reacted with such historic unity and resolve. And that is why this challenge is a test we cannot afford to fail. I am confident that we will prevail.

The Iraqi aggression is a watershed. Even after Iraqi aggression is undone, it will be necessary to take steps to establish and maintain a stable balance—to deter and defend against aggression and to ensure the security and confidence of our friends in the Gulf, regardless of the fate of Saddam Hussein. We must work with our friends to achieve this objective.

This will require more planning and consultation. But we know already that lasting security in the Gulf should not depend on the long-term presence of U.S. forces. Nor should it depend solely on a willingness to repeat Desert Shield. Ultimately, lasting regional stability will require that our friends in the region do more to help themselves, in close cooperation with the United States.

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We seek through this sale to:

- Help build an increased capability to deter and defend against potential aggressors;
- Buy more time, in the event deterrence fails, for mobilization of support from friendly governments;
- Develop the interoperability that will allow the U.S. and other friendly forces to reinforce the Saudis more effectively should that ever again be necessary; and
- Help contribute to stronger and more stable post-crisis security arrangements.

Neither the states in the region, nor we, think that they can build, by themselves, the full range of force that in itself can deter and defeat potential aggressor states—states which have a far larger population base than our Desert Shield partners enjoy. Support by the United States and others for security relationships in the Gulf is now and will continue to be an element essential to the success of such an endeavor.

But Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states themselves must collectively serve as the principal partners in any such security arrangement. They must have the defensive strength to raise the initial costs to an aggressor high enough to help deter aggression and, if deterrence should fail, they must be able to delay an aggressor until help arrives. This would be a marked improvement upon the situation that prevailed on August 2.

The Saudis and the other GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council] states have made clear to us that they want to do more in their defense, both in the current crisis and in the long-term. Their troops have been deployed in the front lines since the early days of the crisis. In the ensuing two months, we and the Saudis have discussed what was needed and available to enable them to assist in defending against the Iraqi threat. The first Saudi arms package, announced in August, partially met those needs by providing 24 F-15C/D air defense aircraft, Stinger missiles, M60A3 tanks, and M833 depleted uranium ammunition. But, important as that sale was, it was only an initial response.

We are now proposing a larger response, in phases, to bolster Saudi Arabia and its GCC partners as they continue to face armor and air attack threats. The items in Phase I, which have been notified for your review, address specific Saudi requirements:

- **for air defense:** We propose to bolster Saudi capabilities, against both aircraft and short-range ballistic missiles, by providing six Patriot missile combat fire units.
- **for anti-armor:** We propose a significant enhancement of Saudi armor capabilities by making available 150 M1A2 Abrams tanks, 200 Bradley fighting vehicles, support vehicles, 150 TOW 2A launchers with 1750 missiles, and 12 Apache helicopters with 155 missiles. In addition, we are planning to furnish 27 M60A3 tanks to the Bahrainis who also have forces in Saudi Arabia.
- **for fire support:** We plan to provide the Saudis nine Multiple-Launch Rocket System (MLRS) launchers with 2880 rockets.
- **for logistical support:** We intend to provide 10,000 tactical wheeled vehicles, seven KC-130 aerial tankers, 10 C-130H airlift aircraft, and eight UH-60 Blackhawk medical evacuation helicopters.

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- **for command, control, and communications:** We propose to provide an upgrade of Saudi naval communications.

Phase II, which we are planning to submit for your consideration in January, would continue the improvement of Saudi and Gulf state abilities to defend against Iraqi or other aggressor-state threats. While we expect its components to evolve with circumstances in the area, we anticipate it also would focus on meeting armor and air-attack threats.

What we have proposed to sell our friends in the Gulf, and what we will propose to sell them, constitute the elements of a force that can provide a basic, defensive capability and can be absorbed. This will not provide the Saudis or other Gulf states with a major offensive capability. Rather, by providing a substantially strengthened deterrent, that defensive capability will meet the need for a better balance of regional forces in the Persian Gulf—a need that has been underscored by Iraq's aggression.

Mr. Chairman, let me reassure you on one particularly important point. As we always do, we have considered the potential impact of this sale on the security of Israel. Though the President and the members of his Cabinet have underscored this point in recent days, it bears repeating here today. This Administration's commitment to the security of Israel is unshakeable. A crucial part of this is our commitment to help maintain Israel's qualitative superiority over its potential adversaries. We do not believe that enhancing the deterrent and defensive capabilities of our Saudi and Gulf partners will detract from this fundamental commitment. We believe that security and stability in the Gulf region will support Israel's security as well.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, what the President proposes with these sales is to take a step, an important step, toward the security and stability that we want to help create in the region. That will mean strengthening existing bilateral ties and working with the countries in the region to support realistic, effective security arrangements. While the will and commitment that those arrangements imply must come first and foremost from Saudi Arabia and the GCC states, it must also be backed by capability. In this regard, we have a crucial role to play, as a reliable supplier and a supporting partner, willing to back our friends. The proposed sales the President has submitted for your consideration are a necessary key to that enhanced capability.

We must begin to provide for this capability now. Some of the items we have proposed for sale will be available quickly, and will contribute on-the-ground to the Desert Shield mission. But even those items not available immediately can contribute to our efforts today. They demonstrate our commitment to a mutual effort, not only to our friends who look to us to help in their self-defense, but also to those who might be tempted to prolong the crisis to test our resolve. They demonstrate our commitment to a lasting solution to instability in the region, a solution that is indigenous to the region rather than one imposed from the outside. And, in so doing, they will protect crucial American interests and advance the case of peace.