

# Arms Sales Policy Toward States of the Persian Gulf

By

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**Secretary of Defense**

[The following is a reprint of a letter from Secretary of Defense Frank C. Carlucci to Senator Robert J. Dole regarding U.S. arms sales policy toward the Persian Gulf in general and policy on the sale of Stinger missiles in particular. The letter was inserted by Congressman Lee H. Hamilton (D, Indiana) in the *Congressional Record*, Vol. 133, No. 188, November 30, 1987, p. E4585, the source of the reprint herein.]

Hon. Robert J. Dole,  
Minority leader of the Senate, U.S. Senate, Washington D.C.

Dear Bob: I am writing to you about the general issue of United States security cooperation with the moderate Gulf states, including their increasing support for our military operations and our provision of carefully limited amounts of weapons and technical assistance. This letter also sets forth the Administration's position on the sale of Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, an important issue which has generated considerable interest in the Congress.

There has been a quiet but significant and unprecedented improvement in security cooperation with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and other GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council] states over the past six months. As Iranian attacks and threats against these states have mounted, and as they have developed greater confidence in our reliability, our friends in the Gulf have begun to provide increasingly liberal access to their facilities for our naval and air units.

For example, U.S. Air Force tankers operate out of Saudi Arabia in support of both Saudi and United States military aircraft; our aircraft and ships also use Saudi and Bahraini airfields and ports for vital logistical and reconnaissance purposes. Friendly Gulf states have begun acting in parallel with our forces, and those of our NATO allies in the Gulf, to promote our shared objectives. Saudi minesweepers and Kuwaiti tugs refitted as minesweepers help keep the shipping lanes clear of mines in concert with our minesweeping efforts; their ships and aircraft perform important surveillance functions, complementing our own capability to detect possible Iranian attacks; Kuwait also provides free fuel for our naval vessels in the Gulf.

Bahrain has been especially forthcoming in its assistance to us. The Bahraini government has permitted for several years the headquartering of the U.S. Navy Middle East Force administrative and security unit. U.S. military personnel and significant amounts of equipment expeditiously transit Bahrain on their way to service in the Gulf. Our mine countermeasures and ship protection efforts would be ineffective and perhaps even impossible without Bahrain's continued support. As you know, there are also a number of other significant areas of cooperation which security considerations preclude my putting in this letter.

On the political side, the GCC states--under the leadership of Saudi Arabia--played the decisive role in the very favorable outcome of the recent Arab Summit in Amman. Saudi and GCC leadership was especially important in the Summit's decision to reintegrate Egypt into the Arab world on Egypt's terms and with the Egyptian Israeli peace treaty completely intact. The Saudis

have since the Summit joined seven other moderate Arab governments in restoring diplomatic relations with Egypt. Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf Arab states, strengthened by firm U.S. diplomatic support and by our military presence in the Gulf, took a strong stand on Iran at the Summit and succeeded in rejecting radical efforts to place the blame for increasing tensions on the U.S., as Soviet and Iranian propaganda has been trying to do. Instead, the Summit strongly supported our position on the need for Iran to end the war with Iraq immediately by implementing Security Council Resolution 598.

As the recent staff report of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee points out, all the GCC states--not only Saudi Arabia--have legitimate needs for certain essentially defensive weapons. Experience has demonstrated time and again that when the U.S. is unable to respond, other governments are more than ready and able to do so--whether it be with British Tornado fighter bombers, which Saudi Arabia bought when it could not get additional U.S. F-15 fighters, even without ground attack capability, or the Soviet handheld SA-7 and SA-14 anti-aircraft missiles supplied to certain Gulf states when the U.S. was unwilling to provide portable anti-aircraft weapons, such as the Stinger.

The U.S. Government is very selective in selling the Stinger abroad, and we will continue to be so. In considering possible sales of this weapon to our friends in the Gulf, we look at three key factors: the overall nature of our relationship with the prospective buyer, including the extent of our security cooperation; the suitability of the Stinger (rather than another weapon) as a response to a particular military threat; and very importantly, the adequacy of safeguards against diversion. We are fully conscious of the threat posed by Stingers falling into irresponsible hands.

I have already reviewed the unprecedented increase in support provided by key Gulf Arab states--particularly Bahrain--for vital U.S. military operations in the Gulf. The Iranian air threat to those countries has grown apace with--and at least partly because of--Arab cooperation with us. However, Iran has shown itself to be averse to air losses, and thus even a limited number of Stingers can constitute considerable deterrence.

The Stinger's portability, "fire and forget" mode of operation, effectiveness against helicopters and low-flying, high-speed aircraft, and relatively low-cost make it the best available system for certain countries, such as some of the Gulf states, to fill gaps in existing air defense coverage. The U.S. Navy has equipped its ships in the Gulf with Stingers for this reason.

We share fully Congressional concerns over the possibility of diversion. To guard against such an eventuality, stringent safeguards have been established that are mandatory for all FMS purchasers. These safeguards include:

- Access limited to authorized military personnel who are thoroughly trained in U.S. required accountability procedures;
- Frequent, periodic inventory of all missiles by serial number (all inventory reports available for inspection by USG personnel);
- Return of damaged or expended components;
- Annual inspection by USG experts for inventory of missiles and other system components;
- Separate storage of missiles and launchers;
- Reports for USG whenever Stinger system is operationally deployed and when launchers and missiles are assembled for training or testing;

- Prohibition of access by third country nationals.

We have sold Stingers under FMS to NATO and to a number of non-NATO countries, including Australia, South Korea, New Zealand, Japan, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. Our safeguards have achieved a spotless record in ensuring the security of Stingers transferred to these foreign governments. In September, a U.S. military inspection of Stingers in Saudi Arabia found that country's security safeguards and inventory control to be 100% effective.

Let me reemphasize that the alternative to provision of Stingers to friendly governments in the Gulf who genuinely need them is an even greater proliferation of SA-7s and other portable Soviet air defense systems, which already number over 20,000 in the Middle East. That would mean a further increase in the likelihood that such systems would be diverted to hostile hands, since the Soviet SAMs are not carefully safeguarded. It would also mean an erosion of Gulf Arab confidence in us at a time when Iranian threats and Gulf support for our military operations have both reached unprecedented levels.

The Administration's approach to Stinger sales will continue to be careful and measured, consistent with our absolute insistence on strict safeguards as well as our broader interest in supporting the legitimate self-defense needs of our security partners in the Gulf and elsewhere.

My colleagues and I in the Administration look forward to discussing these important issues with you in greater detail.

Sincerely,

Frank C. Carlucci

# U.S. Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia

[The following is reprinted from *GIST*, October 1987. *GIST* is a quick reference aid on U.S. foreign relations published by the Bureau of Public Affairs, U.S. Department of State.]

## BACKGROUND

The U.S. and Saudi Arabia have maintained close ties for more than 40 years. These ties have been deepened by the profound threat to regional security caused by the Iran-Iraq war and further strengthened by our continuing efforts to bring about a cease-fire and withdrawal; by our common interest--and action--in keeping the gulf open to the flow of oil despite Iranian intimidation; and by our mutual interest in countering Soviet efforts to expand its military presence and diplomatic influence in the gulf. In meeting these and other long-term threats, the Saudis must continue to modernize their modest defense forces. After careful consultation with Congress, the Administration proposes to sell the following: F-15 aircraft to replace losses from the Saudi force of 60; upgraded electronics and avionics for existing Saudi F-15s; modernization of Saudi M-60A1 tanks; and ammunition support vehicles for Saudi artillery. Saudi Arabia's interests coincide with many of our own; in strengthening its ability to defend itself, we assist a country that cooperates with the U.S. in meeting regional threats, including that from Iran.

## U.S.-SAUDI RELATIONSHIP

The U.S.-Saudi relationship is based in part on a common interest in promoting the stability and orderly development of the gulf region and the Middle East as a whole. The Saudi Government frames its policies with a global perspective; traditionally it has been the most moderate member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), consistently showing concern for the health of the world economy. On occasion it has maintained oil production at high levels to offset shortages and has priced Saudi crude well below OPEC levels to preserve price stability in the world oil market. Saudi Arabia also has been a force for moderation in the Arab and Islamic world. It devotes nearly 4% of its GNP to foreign assistance for such moderate Arab and Islamic states as Morocco, Turkey, Pakistan, Sudan, Oman, Jordan, and Bahrain, often complementing U.S. efforts. Never a direct participant in the Arab-Israeli dispute, Saudi Arabia has played a quiet but effective role in urging other Arab states to accept negotiations. The Fahd plan, proposed by Crown Prince (now King) Fahd to the Islamic summit in 1982 and adopted unanimously, was a major breakthrough in moving Arab states away from confrontation with Israel and toward acceptance of a negotiated Arab-Israeli settlement.

## COUNTERING SOVIET EFFORTS

The Saudis have been a principal force in countering Soviet efforts to increase their influence in the region. They led the Arab world in condemning the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and have assured that this subject receives priority treatment in Arab and Islamic councils. The Saudis also make significant material contributions to the Afghan resistance.

## IMPORTANCE OF OIL

Saudi Arabia is the world's key oil producer and will remain so well into the future. The Persian Gulf produces 22% of world oil consumption, with Saudi Arabia accounting for 36.5% of gulf exports. A disruption in overall gulf oil production would have an immediate, harmful impact on the world economy, including the U.S..

## SAUDI SECURITY

Traditionally, Saudi Arabia has relied for security on diplomacy and its unique position as guardian of the holiest shrines of Islam. However, the emergence of an expansionist Iran, the continuation of the war between Iran and Iraq and its spread into the gulf, and the growth of Soviet influence in the region have greatly altered Saudi Arabia's security environment. Saudi Arabia is now actively supporting U.S. naval operations in the gulf. Saudi AWACS aircraft provide critical air defense data to our forces; Saudi F-15s protect both Saudi and U.S. AWACS; and Saudi minesweepers hunt mines in Saudi waters and international sealanes. When we have asked for logistical and other support as well as emergency assistance, the Saudi Government has responded positively.

Saudi activism and support for U.S. objectives carry a risk. The Saudi Government needs a modern military establishment to offset its relative lack of manpower and to protect its borders, oilfields, and ability to ship oil. During four decades of U.S.-Saudi military cooperation, we have supported the development of a Saudi capability for individual and regional self-defense by providing appropriate defense systems. We also have helped build the bases, housing, and supply and maintenance facilities needed to support a defense capability. The Saudi need is greater now than in the past. Iran has tried to undermine Saudi stability through military pressure, subversion, and propoganda, and will remain a military threat in the future. Moreover, the Saudis understand that a power vacuum in the Persian Gulf could invite unwanted interference from outside powers, particularly the Soviet Union, and must not be permitted.

## U.S.. SECURITY INTERESTS

The proposed sales will serve U.S. security interests in several important ways:

- By continuing to provide the Saudis with the means to defend themselves, we help build a deterrent force that a potential adversary will be less inclined to challenge.
- We will bolster U.S. credibility as a reliable security partner, essential if the Saudis and other gulf states are to believe that the benefits of supporting our regional strategy outweigh the political costs and increased security risks.
- By assisting Saudi Arabia now, we reduce the potential for future U.S. military deployment to the area. If, however, U.S. forces are required to be sent in a crisis, they will find Saudi Arabia a cooperative partner equipped with compatible, U.S.-origin defense systems.

## ISRAELI SECURITY

The proposed sale poses no threat to Israel and will not change the overall military balance in the region. Israel's security is a paramount U.S. interest. In part due to generous U.S. aid, Israel has increased its margin of superiority over its adversaries since the 1973 war. Sales to Saudi Arabia and other regional states are carefully measured to maintain Israel's qualitative and strategic edge.