

US Congress Tries to Restrict F-35 Sales to UAE for All the Wrong Reasons

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Global Research, November 05, 2020

Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)

Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#)

Congressmen Eliot Engel (D-NY) and a number of his colleagues from both sides of the aisle have introduced legislation into the House that would prohibit the sale of F-35 fighter jets to the UAE unless a long list of conditions are met that would ensure the sale doesn't jeopardize Israel's "Qualitative Military Edge," something which the U.S. is beholden to do under federal law involving arms sales in the Middle East.

To say nothing of the UAE's complicity with the war of genocide in Yemen, Engel maintains that it's Congress' job to ensure that Israel maintains the ability to militarily outgun any of their Muslim neighbors.

Stating that the Trump Administration has no qualms about selling arms to dangerous governments, which as seen from the exercise of his Presidential veto on [22 joint resolutions which passed the Senate last year](#), is true, Engel resolves that "it's up to Congress to consider the ramifications of allowing new partners to purchase the F-35 and other advanced systems".

"We need to know that such weapons will be used properly and in a way aligned with our security interests, which include protecting Israel's qualitative military edge and ensuring adversaries can't get their hands on American technology," [said](#) Engel, who chairs the House Foreign Relations Committee.

It's already to the great shame of the Obama and Trump administrations that the United States launched, continued, and then failed to stop, the Saudi-UAE persecution of the Yemenis, which has been called the [world's worst humanitarian crisis by the UN](#). It's been more than a year since the UN models predicted that at least 140,000 victims of the war on the people of Yemen have been children under the age of 5, and the same report predicted that if things carried on in the same vein that the number would become 316,000, and the total human deaths closer to half a million.

The Yemen Civil War

In 2015 when the former Saudi-supported President of Yemen, Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi was chased out of Sanaa by a Zaydi-Shia rebel group called the Houthis, Saudi Arabia took charge of a military coalition that includes Bahrain, the UAE, the United States, France, Senegal, Qatar, and Morocco, called the Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen.

The vast majority of the war has consisted of UAE and Saudi bombing campaigns, which have indiscriminately targeted civilians in their homes, as well as grain silos, water treatment facilities, [international aid hospitals](#), [UNESCO Heritage architecture](#), and even

[flocks of sheep on the heights](#).

Radio host and foreign policy expert Scott Horton has described it as “a deliberate campaign of genocide against the civilian population,” while adding that his sources claim American Air Force pilots fly in the Saudi and Emirati jets “all the way to the target”.

[Blockades of the ports in the south of Yemen](#) by the UAE have contributed to the food shortages that in 2018 were placing 13 million men, women, and children at risk of starvation.

Yemen has also played host to the largest cholera epidemic in recent history, and in 2017, approximately 700,000 cases of cholera had been recorded [according](#) to Human Rights Watch.

The United States has been selling weapons to the Saudis and Emiratis for years, and it has been airstrikes that have been responsible for the vast majority of battlefield deaths in the conflict.

As Shi’ites, the Houthis violated the United States’ stance in the Middle East of restricting Iranian influence in the region, and it’s been alleged by the Pentagon and State Department that the Houthis are funded by Iran.

However al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the direct perpetrators of the September 11th attacks, is also present in the country, aiding and ignoring the Sunni Saudi-UAE coalition forces. In reality, the U.S. stands only 2 degrees of separation away from flying as al-Qaeda’s air support in the War in Yemen.

Taking all this into account, it doesn’t seem possible that a man with even half a heart would fail to suggest that sales of advanced fighter jets to a country actively bombing a civilian population in league with AQAP, should be the principle topic in any legislation to restrict the sale of arms, an action which Congress has limited involvement in.

However, as Philip Weiss recently wrote, Engel is nothing if not ardently aware of every potential threat towards Israel.

Dual Loyalties

Receiving [nearly \\$600,000 in campaign contributions](#) from right-wing pro-Israel groups, Engel bragged at an American Israeli Political Action Committee (AIPAC) meeting that “there’s a bunch of legislation coming out of the Foreign Affairs Committee. I want to tell you that I sit down with AIPAC on every piece of legislation that comes out. I think it’s very, very important. In the past 30 years I have attended 31 consecutive AIPAC conferences in March, I haven’t missed one”.

Supporting progressive policies like the Green New Deal, universal American healthcare, better treatment of immigrants, and higher minimum wages hasn’t stopped Engel from ensuring Israel is continually militarized and protected against all things, even from his [colleagues’ occasional criticism](#) of their treatment of the Palestinian people.

Engel has been chair of the House Foreign Relations Committee since 1994, and could be considered as a paramount force in pushing the base of the Democratic Party towards the

U.S.-Israeli alliance. He [criticized](#) Trump for withdrawing troops from Germany, since Germany is used by the United States as one of the closest American power centers to the Middle East.

He is the perfect example of men in Washington that have, as Congresswoman Ilhan Omar (D-MI) described last year, “dual loyalties”.

“Protecting Israel’s qualitative military edge,” is something that Engel has devoted his whole career to, and so it’s unsurprising that the focus of the proposed arms limitations for the UAE is how it affects Israel, even though she recently [normalized relations](#) with the UAE after 26 years, and not on how it may affect the people of Yemen.

Far from simply idle tunnel vision, Engel boasted in his 2018 AIPAC speech about becoming head of the Appropriations Committee, in addition to the Foreign Affairs Committee, meaning that at any time he could rally his fellow Congressmen, who last year voted in the House and Senate to [invoke the War Powers Resolution](#) to end all support to the Saudi-UAE bombing in Yemen, to alter the National Defense Authorization Act so as to appropriate nothing for Yemen-related activities.

Instead the NDAA for fiscal year 2021 added no such restrictions on the allowances for action in Yemen, leaving almost nothing in American law to protect the Yemenis.

All they have to hope for now is that Engel’s law passes, and the UAE doesn’t violate two subject lines in the bill which state: “the recipient country will not violate international humanitarian law or internationally recognized human rights,” and “the recipient country will consult with the United States relating to the mission, flight plan, and purpose of use of the weapons.”

International law forbids war on civilians, targeting civilian infrastructure, and targeting international aid facilities, but a lot of good those laws have done the Yemenis thus far.

It’s for speculation why men like Engel and Trump care so much about Israel and the UAE, and so little about Yemen, even though it’s Yemen that the world will look back on in the 2030s as potentially the site of the greatest tragedy of the century, the culpability of which rests largely in the lands of the United States and the United Arab Emirates.

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