

How 'Defense' Contractors Lobbied for War in Yemen and Reaped the Profits from Death and Destruction

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Global Research, March 25, 2020

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

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

Lobbying firms like the McKeon Group, headed by lobbyist Buck McKeon (who was the former chairman of the House Armed Services Committee in the US Congress), represent both US defense contractors and countries such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, who are ruthlessly bombing Yemen with US made weapons. Through lobbying firms like the McKeon Group and American Defense International, defense contractors such as Raytheon and Lockheed Martin spent millions to effectively pressure Congress members. Lobbying efforts focus on key members of committees, such as the aforementioned Armed Services Committee. This incentivizes Congress to approve legislation to sell arms to countries like Saudi Arabia and block any legislation that challenges the unethical arms sales.

On August 9th, 2018, Saudi Arabia used a laser guided MK-82 bomb, manufactured by America's lead defense contractor, Lockheed Martin, to intentionally blow up a school bus in Yemen. The bombing killed 44 Yemeni kids. MK-82s are general purpose bombs, but they were sold to Saudi Arabia in conjunction with precision-guided technology that made the MK-82 bomb act as a precision-guided munition (PGM).

The Obama administration outlawed the sale of PGMs to Saudi Arabia earlier in March 2016 after Saudi Arabia [bombed](#) an open-air market in Yemen and killed 97 civilians. In that bombing, Saudi used a precision-guided MK-84, manufactured by General Dynamics, another top American defense contractor. Unfortunately, the Obama administration's previous sales of PGMs to Saudi Arabia led to other incidents that same year, such as the October 2016 [bombing](#) of a funeral home in Sana'a. 155 people died, all of whom were civilians. A MK-82, similar to the model used in the 2018 bus bombing, was used in this bombing. This laser-guided bomb was also manufactured by Lockheed Martin.

As a side note, the Obama administration should not be heaped with praise for simply outlawing the sale of PGMs to Saudi Arabia. They still proceeded to sell Saudi Arabia other weapons that were used to slaughter Yemenis, they [refueled](#) Saudi bombers twice per day, and they gave logistical support and intelligence to the Saudis via the [Joint Planning Cell](#).



Those caveats aside, the Obama administration did outlaw the sale of PGMs to Saudi Arabia in March 2016. So, why did the Trump administration [overturn](#) the ban on PGM sales to Saudi in 2017? According to The Nation, in 2018 alone, defense contractors made over [\\$5 billion](#) in arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In their article, The Nation identified that Saudi Arabia used a GBU-12 Paveway II (which is a PGM), manufactured by yet another top US defense contractor, Raytheon, to blow up a wedding.

That's now three separate defense contractors, General Dynamics, Raytheon, and Lockheed Martin, that made billions off of selling Saudi Arabia munitions, including hi-tech PGMs, that were used to intentionally target civilian areas.

Hitting targets with PGMs is not like dropping regular munitions. There is rarely ever unintentional targeting of civilian areas. It is not accidental when a school bus, a wedding, or a funeral home is blown up with a PGM. If an ally is intentionally using PGMs to repeatedly target civilian areas, then selling those weapons to the buyer makes the seller culpable in the war crimes. Here is how the lobbyists overturned the March 2016 ban on PGMs.

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The Nation reported on the findings of the Lobbying Disclosure Act website. They found that in the year of 2018, "Boeing [spent \\$15 million](#) on lobbyists, Lockheed Martin [\\$13.2 million](#), General Dynamics [\\$11.9 million](#), and Raytheon [\\$4.4 million](#)." To understand the [revolving door](#) between Congress members and defense contractors look no further than the aforementioned Buck McKeon. According to Open Secrets, during his time in Congress, McKeon [received](#) campaign contributions of \$192,900 from Lockheed Martin, \$190,200 from Northrop Grumman, \$103,050 from General Dynamics, and \$94,400 from Boeing.

They were his top contributors throughout his time in Congress. Defense contractors bribed the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee to make sure that no one blocked unethical arms deals to fundamentalist theocracies, like Saudi Arabia, that are carrying out

mass slaughters overseas. McKeon currently represents both Lockheed Martin and General Dynamics through his lobbying firm.

While working for General Dynamics and Lockheed Martin, the McKeon Group also represented Saudi Arabia. In 2018, McKeon [took](#) \$920,148 from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to prevent bills that would have blocked arms deals to Saudi Arabia.

In 2018, the McKeon group lobbied the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Jim Inhofe, to vote against legislation that would have ended arms sales to Saudi Arabia. Weapons contractors work hand in glove with theocratic dictatorships overseas. They use the same lobbying firms to pressure Congress to vote down bills to stop genocides in places like Yemen, the poorest country in the Middle East.

American Defense International (ADI) lobbies on behalf of both the UAE and Saudi Arabia. According to [The American Conservative](#), ADI also represents “General Dynamics, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon, L3 Technologies, and General Atomics.” ADI was tasked with lobbying swing votes regarding the “Paveway (PGM) sales to the UAE.” One defense contractor, Raytheon, paid ADI \$120,000 in 2018 for their lobbying efforts. ADI specifically [met](#) with Steve Scalise, the House Majority Whip at the time. ADI lobbied him to vote against H.Con.Res 138, a bill that was drafted to remove the US from the war in Yemen.

Blowing up kids in poor countries is a successful business model. This is a harsh reality that is rarely talked about. This is just one more reason that the US needs to get money out of politics. As long as there is a revolving door between Congress members and lobbying firms, then US foreign policy will continue to reflect the interests of rich shareholders of the weapons companies.

(For a broader understanding of the revolving door between the relationship that Congress and the Department of Defense have with defense contractor lobbyists, I recommend reading chapter 16 of the book [The Separation of Business and State](#). It provides a holistic overview of the problem from Vietnam to Iraq)

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This article was originally published on [OneWorld](#).

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