

# US Weapons Sales: President Bush Arming Fellow Tyrants Globally

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"In the last six years, Washington has stepped up its sales and transfers of high-technology weapons, military training, and other military assistance to governments regardless of their respect for human rights, democratic principles, or nonproliferation," according to a report in the current(Jan.-Feb.) "Arms Control Today," published online by the Arms Control Association (ACA). "All that matters is that they have pledged their assistance in the global war on terrorism."

You read it right. The Bush regime has been using 9/11 as an excuse for the reckless sale of weapons around the globe, working \$16.9 billion in new arms deals in 2006, 41.9 percent of the world's total. This compares to runners-up Russia, \$8.7 billion, and Great Britain, \$3.1 billion, writes Rachel Stohl, a senior analyst at the Center for Defense Information(CDI), which tracks such data.

Despots once banned from getting U.S. weapons and training are being showered with both. "By providing military assistance with a disregard for human rights(HR) conditions, the U.S. is not only giving up the opportunity to use military assistance as leverage to improve (HR conditions), but is also rewarding abusive governments for their unconscionable actions," Stohl writes.

Noting that U.S. aid is growing "at the same time as human rights conditions are worsening," Stohl cites the example of Ethiopia, "which is carrying out a brutal counterinsurgency campaign within its own borders" and Nepal, whose security forces "opened fire on peaceful strikers and anti-government demonstrations." Bush is also funneling millions into Uzbekistan, where thousands of Muslims have been imprisoned without due process and many tortured to death.

One headline-making scandal, of course, is the \$10 billion in taxpayer's money Bush has funneled to the Pakistan military since 9/11, where General Pervez Musharraf has habitually disappeared his political foes, and recently invoked emergency rule, suspended the constitution and jailed thousands. Bush okayed the multi-billion dollar sale to Musharraf of F-16 jet fighters that can pack nuclear warheads, just as he okayed their sale earlier to India, escalating the capability of these long-time antagonists to inflict dreadful atrocities if they go to war.

Since 2001, CDI has tracked skyrocketing U.S. military aid to the following 25 countries that "have a unique role in the 'war on terror' through the strategic services they provide the U.S.": Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Bahrain, Oman, Yemen, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan,

Algeria, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya.

CDI documented U.S. aid in foreign military, and direct commercial, sales to the 25 soared 400% over the five years prior to 9/11. This despite a 2006 U.S. State Department finding of "serious," "grave," or "significant" abuses committed by them against their own citizens.

CDI summarizes, "the U.S. is sending unprecedented levels of military assistance to countries that it simultaneously criticizes for lack of respect for human rights and, in some cases, for questionable democratic processes."

According to reporter Stohl, what the U.S. is billing as "counterterrorism training" often is nothing more than "counterinsurgency training." This results, she says, in the U.S. "involving itself in internal conflicts around the world and is in practice encouraging countries to continue their internal struggles that predate September 11, 2001."

President Bush is just back from the Middle East where he preached the virtues of "democracy." His arms sales, though, betray his forked tongue.

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