

Where Will the US “Lethal Weapons” for Ukraine Actually End Up?

By [Andrey Polevoy](#)

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The real suspense of the Ukrainian crisis centers on the legalization of [the US lethal weapons supply to Kiev](#) “to protect it against Russian aggression.” However, it is unclear precisely what sort of weapons would be needed to give Kiev an advantage. In the war against Novorossia, Kiev has been using small arms and armored vehicles, multiple launch rocket systems, artillery, cluster and [phosphorus](#) ammunition, [tactical missiles](#) and, until recently, aircraft (as of last fall the militia had destroyed almost all of Ukraine’s airworthy military aircraft).

We are using the word “legalization” deliberately. Because in fact, [NATO has long been supplying Kiev](#) with illegal weapons through Poland, Lithuania, and other countries. There is no shortage of evidence (watch e.g. a video below). Bizarrely, the odious Senator McCain is [arguing](#) that only because the Ukrainian army lacks conventional weapons is it being forced to use these banned weapons of mass destruction against the citizens of the Donbass.

However, even if Kiev receives the most modern weapons, that does not at all guarantee that they will be fired in the right direction. Unmotivated Ukrainian soldiers and officers, more interested in making money than war, often simply sell arms and ammunition to their opponents. Many weapons [find their way onto the “black market”](#) – in the past year the price of weapons in Ukraine has fallen by one-half to two-thirds. An AK-47 can be picked up nowadays in Kiev for \$500-600, and a grenade for \$8-10.

And this buying and selling also takes place outside of Ukraine’s borders.


During the years of Ukraine’s independence, arms from Ukrainian depots have mushroomed across the globe, from time to time “cropping up” in hot spots. The most memorable incident was in September 2008, when [Somali pirates captured the MV Faina](#), a ship carrying approximately 30 Ukrainian tanks, as well as grenade launchers, small arms, MANPADS, and ammunition. Although the Ukrainian government hastily persuaded Kenya to accept the cargo, few doubted that the payload’s original destination were the rebels in then unrecognized South Sudan.

On Feb. 6, 2015, [reports](#) surfaced claiming that the weapons Kiev was getting from its Western partners were being resold to Syria. Ukraine’s deputy defense minister, Petro Mehed, and the Syrian Brigadier General Talal Makhoul (a crony of Bashar al-Assad as well

as his closest relative on his mother's side) were behind that deal. One juicy tidbit – the money obtained from selling arms to Syria ended up in personal accounts belonging to Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk and Interior Minister Arsen Avakov.



According to a [CyberBerkut](#) leak dated Nov 25, 2014, Ukraine requested Pentagon for 400 sniper rifles and 2,000 assault rifles, 720 grenade launchers, about 200 mortars, missile systems, and also various types of military equipment and ammunition. The American weapons that were listed in a letter from the Ukrainian deputy minister of defense to the Syrian general are almost identical to the arms that officials in Kiev had requested for the Ukrainian armed forces.

*A non-paper, handed by the Ukrainian military officials
to Joe Biden's staff during his visit to Kiev on Nov 20-21, 2014.* 



This means that shipping weapons to Ukraine is no different from putting them on the global black market or providing them to the Syrian government that is battling the pro-Western opposition.

Andrey Polevoy is the international policy analyst based in Moscow.

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