



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on February 2, 2015

Published in the February 2, 2015 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 31, No. 03

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## Inside Track

### Of Course They Are: U.S. Weapons Going to Iranian-backed Militias

According to a damning [report](#) from Bloomberg News January 8, “U.S. weapons intended for Iraq’s beleaguered military are winding up in the possession of the country’s Shiite militias,” militias that are allied with Iran.



Obama administration officials publicly denied the weapons transfers even as other Obama officials privately confirmed the transfers to Bloomberg. “We have no reason to believe that there is any effort by the Iraqi government to transfer U.S.-supplied weapons to Shia militia,” White House spokesman Alistair Baskey [told](#) Bloomberg News.

Bloomberg posted one photo (shown) from Facebook of an Iraqi militia member with a U.S.-made Abrams tank draped in a Hesbollah flag. Hesbollah, which means “party of God” — a Lebanese Shiite political party that used guerrilla warfare and terrorism against Israel during its occupation of the Golan Heights — has been labeled a terrorist organization by the U.S. government.

Former Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency Mike Flynn [told](#) Bloomberg that, while the U.S. government can account for all its weapons, “the accountability of weapons systems, once turned over to any Iraqi, is at best weak and it may be nonexistent.”

Bloomberg paraphrases an anonymous Obama administration official [saying that](#) “the risk of not aiding them was greater than the risk of aiding them ... adding that this didn’t mean the administration was unconcerned about the risks involved.” Part of the problem may be that the Iraqi militias — which attacked U.S. forces early during the American occupation — became partners with the U.S. government during the “surge” in 2007-08. Federal officials, unable to destroy the militias, simply decided to live with what they couldn’t destroy. As Alex Kingsbury [explained](#) in the *Boston Globe* back on November 17, 2014,

[Some Iraqi militias] took cash payments to not fight and to man checkpoints rather than bomb them. The American soldiers I traveled with hated paying the Sons of Iraq, men who’d been insurgents only a day earlier. But they hated fighting them even more. It all led to a lull in the killing, one of the surge’s key goals. When the Iraqi government stopped the flow of money, the violence began anew.

In essence, the success of the “surge” was based upon bribing and arming the very militias after 2007 that had been killing American soldiers before 2007. Once American aid slowed, the militias no longer considered themselves bought off.

The ongoing arms shipments have been part of a political calculation that places a premium on fighting ISIS rather than achieving sectarian peace in Iraq and containing Iran. Bloomberg News reports, One senior administration official told us that the U.S. government is aware of this, but is caught in a



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dilemma. The flawed Iraqi security forces are unable to fight Islamic State without the aid of the militias, who are often trained and sometimes commanded by officers from Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps. And yet, if the U.S. stopped sending arms to the Iraqi military, things would get even worse, with IS overrunning more of the country and committing human-rights horrors on a broader scale.

*Photo: U.S.-made Abrams tank draped in a Hesbollah flag*



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