



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on September 5, 2019

Amendment to NDAA Would End U.S. Funding of Saudi War in Yemen

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Lawmakers in the House of Representatives are urging colleagues not to remove an amendment in the Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that would prohibit the United States from funding the Saudi-led war on Yemen.



The amendment, offered by Representative Ro Khanna (D-Calif.), was approved in the House's version of the defense budget package and will soon be taken up by the Senate, where its future is less certain.

In a [letter obtained by the Washington Post](#) penned by Khanna and his co-sponsors, the legislators ask their colleagues to include the measure in the final version of the defense funding bill.

"Inclusion of this amendment would ensure that our men and women in uniform are not involved in a war which has never been authorized by Congress, and continues to undermine rather than advance U.S. national security interests," the amendment's supporters explain.

Specifically, Khanna's amendment forbids money from the United States from being used to fund the protracted war waged by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) against the Houthis, an ethnic group in Yemen whose alignment with the Shia sect of Islam puts them at odds with the Saudis, who are Sunni Muslims, and the Saudi-backed government of Yemen.

Bottom line: Saudi Arabian Muslims want their version of Islam to control the region, Houthi "rebels" want their version of Islam to control the region, and, unfortunately for the Houthis in Yemen, their religious rivals in Saudi Arabia have an ally that is monetarily and militarily powerful, i.e., the United States of America.

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Of course, those in the federal government who support bankrolling the Saudi's brutal bombardment of Yemen claim that the Houthis are themselves supported by Iran and they refuse to countenance an Iran possessed of any additional power or influence in the Middle East.

So, as a foil to their decades-long foe, the war hawks in the U.S. government send billions of dollars in weapons and intelligence support to a hereditary monarchy that completely controls their country, including the \$11 billion in net oil revenue they made in 2018. For sake of reference, that's nearly twice what Apple netted last year!

In perhaps the most financially foolish case of cutting off one's nose to spite one's face, the Saudis and their allies — principally their fellow Sunnis in the UAE — have carried out their "holy war" in a most unholy and inhumane way.



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Just days ago, a Saudi bombing raid in Yemen resulted in more than 100 people dead and led to “Yemeni medical workers pull[ing] bodies from the bombed-out detention center run by the rebels [the Houthis].” The International Committee of the Red Cross reported that “dozens of people were wounded and more than 100 people were ‘presumed killed,’” as reported by the *Washington Post*.

It was this attack that motivated members of Congress to back a bipartisan bill to put an end to the U.S. government’s assets being used to commit such senseless acts of violence.

The Saudi savagery is unconscionable and the U.S. financing of it is unconstitutional. Setting aside the latter for a moment, here’s a report of some of the most barbaric atrocities committed by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as published by the *Washington Post*:

“The Saudi-led coalition, which is aligned with Yemen’s internationally recognized government, is accused of intentionally starving Yemenis as a tactic of war and killing thousands of civilians in airstrikes.”

And:

The stalemated conflict in Yemen, which has killed tens of thousands of people and thrust millions into near-famine conditions, has prompted widespread humanitarian criticism of the United States and Saudi Arabia.

By some estimates, the conflict has killed as many as 95,000 people, including tens of thousands of civilians, violating international humanitarian laws.

Time and again, the Saudi-led coalition has promised to investigate such alleged violations through its internal Joint Incidents Assessment Team. But coalition airstrikes on civilian targets — hospitals, clinics, markets, even school buses carrying children — have been unrelenting.

Regardless of congressional commitment to ending all U.S. involvement in the Saudi’s continuing combat missions in Yemen, constitutionalists will recognize instantly a weakness in such an act: The powers of the three branches of the federal government are no longer separated, so the president can do what he wants, and in the case of giving billions to the Saudi royal family for use in its military campaign in Yemen, the current president wants that to continue.

In May, President Donald Trump attempted to send money to the Saudis by side-stepping Congress through the declaration of an emergency. There was no emergency in Saudi Arabia, but the president and his administration insisted that were the United States to cease sending money and supplies to the Saudis, Iran would grow stronger and that would be an emergency for the U.S.

A bipartisan coalition of congressmen thwarted that maneuver in May, but that wouldn’t be the end of the battle of the branches.

In July, President Trump vetoed measures passed by representatives from both parties that would have halted the sale of U.S. weapons and technology to Saudi Arabia. From NPR:

President Trump said the three resolutions would “weaken America’s global competitiveness and damage the important relationship we share with our allies and partners.”

Lawmakers in support of the bills have criticized the Saudis’ actions in the Yemen conflict where thousands of civilians have died, and the death of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

The two measures vetoed by Trump aimed specifically at arms sales to Saudi Arabia were approved



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by the Senate last month with the support of seven Republicans, including Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and Sen. Susan Collins of Maine. Trump also vetoed a bill that would have limited the sale of weapons to the United Arab Emirates, which has been an important coalition partner to Saudi Arabia in its ongoing military campaign in Yemen.

With this stand-off unresolved, Representative Khanna put forward his amendment to the NDAA and, if it survives the Senate and a conference committee's changes, the oil-rich billionaires of the Saudi royal family will have to find some way to pay for their war on Yemen without the contribution of America's taxpayers.

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