



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on February 1, 2013

Senate Rejects Paul Amendment to Prevent Arms Sales to Egypt

By [a vote of 79-19](#), an amendment to the debt limit bill offered by Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) was rejected by the Senate. The Paul amendment would have prohibited the U.S. government from selling F-16 jet fighters, M1A1 tanks, and similar military weapons to the Egyptian government.

Prior to the vote, [Senator Paul took to the floor to explain his bill](#). He began by questioning the wisdom of sending “our most sophisticated fighter planes” to a country whose government is believed by many to be in danger of “unraveling.”



Paul is right. The head of Egypt’s armed forces, General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, warns that the week-long widespread civil unrest that has resulted in the death of 52 people threatens to bring down the Mohamed Morsi regime.

Sisi wrote [on the army’s Facebook page](#), “The continuation of the struggle of the different political forces ... over the management of state affairs could lead to the collapse of state.”

The irony of this instability is, as Paul correctly identifies, the fact that similar dissatisfaction with totalitarianism and martial law inspired the Arab Spring only a year ago. Now, those same people who united to overthrow a government bent on instituting martial law, are threatened with persecution by leaders of the new government.

Paul reminded his colleagues that as government-backed mayhem pushes Egypt toward the brink of dictatorship and abrogation of all civil liberties, President Obama’s response is “to send them some of the most sophisticated weapons we have: F-16 fighters and Abrams tanks.”

Beyond the political, there is the religious component of Cairo’s chaos cocktail. As Senator Paul explained, “Egypt is currently governed by a religious zealot, a religious zealot who said recently that ‘Jews were bloodsuckers and descendants of apes and pigs.’ This doesn’t sound like the kind of stable personality we would be sending our most sophisticated weapons to.”

In 2010, while he [served as leader of the Muslim Brotherhood](#), President Morsi gave a speech urging his countrymen to “[nurse our children](#) and our grandchildren [on hatred](#)” for Jews and Zionists. Months later, he told a television interviewer that Jews in Israel and their Zionist allies were “bloodsuckers who attack the Palestinians, these warmongers, the descendants of apes and pigs.”

President Obama’s plan to bypass Congress and follow through with the delivery of American fighters and tanks is a near guarantee of regional instability. Besides, putting some of our most sophisticated and technologically advanced weapons in the hands of a person with verifiable hatred of Jews is hardly a way to follow through on his promises to the nation of Israel.

Senator Paul recognized the increase in the potency of the threat to Israel in his speech.



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"I am concerned that these weapons, some of the most sophisticated weapons in the world, someday may be used against Israel," he said. "I'm concerned that these weapons threaten Israel's security and that [the United States is] sending weapons to a country with a president who recently was seen to be chanting 'amen' to a cleric that was saying 'death to Israel and death to those who support Israel.'"

Senator Paul, who has [expressed interest in running for president in 2016](#), appears to be building his pro-Israel credibility in advance of the campaign. Last week, for example, at a closed-door meeting of GOP bigwigs in Charleston, South Carolina, [Paul reportedly told](#) a Christian minister that Israel would be among his highest priorities.

Beyond the political upheaval and the conflicting message it sends to our only reliable regional ally — Israel — the gift of firepower is likely to spark an arms race that will have the United States playing the role of supplier to both sides of the area's sometimes cold, sometimes hot, war.

Perhaps Paul's most powerful condemnation of the scheduled delivery of jets and tanks to Egypt, was his reference to the fact that it has been only months since an American diplomat was murdered in the region.

"I think it is a blunder of the first proportion to send sophisticated weapons to a country that allowed a mob to attack our embassy and to burn our flag. I find it objectionable to send weapons, F-16s and tanks, to a country that allowed a mob chanting 'death to America' to threaten our American diplomats."

With the Senate's failure to prevent this "folly," the president will probably insist on keeping to the timetable for delivery of the weapons systems originally announced in December 2009.

Lockheed Martin won the contract to build 16 F-16Cs and four F-16Ds. The first four were delivered last week, according to a Fox News story.

General Dynamics, another giant defense contractor, will be paid \$395 million to build 125 M1A1 Abrams tanks to be delivered in July 2013.

Rising to speak against the Paul amendment, Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) painted the measure as economically harmful to American industry and seemed to talk down to its sponsor.

"Would that this amendment was as simple as the junior senator from Kentucky described it," Leahy said, after Senator Paul sat down. "His amendment would hinder our military assistance program, licenses for commercial sales of all major military equipment, including aircraft, ships, tanks, armor, parts and so on."

"It would mean a loss of thousands of American jobs. We'd incur more than two billion dollars in contract-termination penalties for U.S. taxpayers," Leahy added.

Leahy then protected the lucrative U.S. position as provider of deadly materiel to both sides of the arms race, explaining, "Do I have problems with the way the Morsi government is going? Certainly," he said. "But removing our ability to be involved, with keeping that peace agreement and our ability to influence those — this is not the way to do it."

In [a written statement](#), Leahy argued that the Paul amendment was useless as current U.S. law requires Egypt to abide by the terms of its peace treaty with Israel and to protect the rights of due process for its citizens as conditions on continuing to receive U.S. aid.

Not so.



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In March 2012, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced that aid to Egypt would continue “[despite Cairo’s failure to meet pro-democracy conditions.](#)”

The flow of U.S. military aid to Egypt was supposed to depend on Egypt’s demonstration of progress toward free elections, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and other democratic reforms. Secretary Clinton bypassed that provision of the law, however, invoking a clause that allows her office to waive those conditions in a case of national security.

With the defeat of Senator Paul’s amendment, 79 senators violated their oaths of office by authorizing military aid to a foreign nation. The Constitution nowhere grants Congress the power to send aid of any sort — military or otherwise — to any other nation.

It seems Senator Paul has a hard row to hoe in carrying out his [plan to restore the Founders’ vision of foreign policy.](#)

Photo of Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.): AP Images

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