



Iran to Sell Arms and Ammunition to Iraq

Iran has signed a deal to sell \$195 million dollars' worth of arms and ammunition to Iraq, according to documents seen by Reuters news agency, which broke the story.

Information from the documents indicated that the agreement between the two former adversaries was reached last November, soon after Nouri al-Maliki, Iraq's prime minister, met with President Obama at the White House on November 1. During that visit, Maliki asked Obama for increased military and intelligence assistance to combat the forces he said are threatening his government.



A November 8 report from VOA on the Obama-Maliki meeting stated:

The request for assistance represents a dramatic turnaround for Maliki, who two years ago rejected a continued U.S. military presence in Iraq. Critics charge that since then, he has exacerbated sectarian tensions in Iraq and forged a close relationship with Iran, thus raising fears of Iranian ascendancy in the region.

The Qatar-based Al Jazeera news agency reported that the documents seen by Reuters revealed that six of the eight contracts were signed with Iran's Defense Industries Organization to supply Iraq with light and medium arms, mortar launchers, ammunition for tanks, artillery, and mortars.

Two more contracts were signed between Iraq and the state-owned Iran Electronic Industries for night-vision goggles, communications equipment, and mortar guiding devices.

Reuters reported that Ali Mussawi, a spokesman for Maliki, would neither confirm nor deny the sale, but said that such an agreement would be understandable given Iraq's current security troubles. "We are launching a war against terrorism and we want to win this war. Nothing prevents us from buying arms and ammunition from any party and it's only ammunition helping us to fight terrorists," said Mussawi.

Reuters reported that the Iranian government has denied any knowledge of the arms deal, which would be the first between the two Islamic nations and would also "highlight the growing bond between them in the two years since the departure of U.S. troops from Iraq."

During State Department spokesperson Jen Psaki's daily press briefing in Washington on February 24, a reporter asked her if she was aware of the Iran-Iraq arms deal. Psaki replied:

Well, we've certainly seen those reports. If true, this would raise serious concerns. Any transfer of arms from Iran to a third country is in direct violation of UNSCR 1747. We are seeking clarification on this matter from the government of Iraq, and to ensure that Iraqi officials understand the limits that international law places on arms trade with Iran.

Psaki's response was consistent with U.S. government language used ever since President George W.



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Bush decided to launch an invasion of Iraq in 2003. She noted that an arms transfer from Iran to Iraq violated United Nations Security Council Resolution 1747; President Bush also cited Iraq's violations of UN resolutions as justification for the invasion.

For example, on September 12, 2002, Bush addressed the General Assembly and delivered a list of complaints against the Iraqi government, including, "In violation of Security Council Resolution 1373, Iraq supports terrorist organizations that direct violence against Iran, Israel, and Western governments."

And in a letter of March 18, 2003 to the speaker of the House and the president pro tempore of the Senate, Bush wrote, "Reliance by the United States on further diplomatic and other peaceful means alone will neither (A) adequately protect the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq nor (B) likely lead to enforcement of all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq."

When a reporter asked if the deal between Iraq and Iran would affect the cooperation between the United States and Iraq on arms deals, Psaki again referred to "international sanctions," which generally originate with UN resolutions:

Well, again, we're still looking into those reports. Iraq, of course, is a sovereign country with its own unique identity. But given the international sanctions with Iran, the government, of course, of Iraq should use caution as it looks to these reports or to any proposed deals.

When a reporter asked if the Iraqi government's purchase of arms from Iran would mean that the United States would be required or morally obligated to end its FMS (Foreign Military Sales) program with Baghdad, Psaki replied, "We would be very concerned ... if we found this to be true.... Obviously, we'd have to evaluate things. But I don't want to go too far in terms of what that would mean."

Putting this latest cooperative arrangement between Iraq and Iran into perspective, we must recall that the two countries engaged in a lengthy war from September 1980 to August 1988 that resulted in hundreds of thousands of soldiers and more than 100,000 civilians killed on both sides. Largely because Iran had come under the control of a militant, anti-American Islamic theocracy following the 1979 revolution that displaced the pro-American Shah, the United States openly supported Iraq, then ruled by Saddam Hussein, in the conflict. In a sworn court declaration made in the U.S. District Court for Southern Florida on January 31, 1995, former National Security Council staff member Howard Teicher stated:

3. In the Spring of 1982, Iraq teetered on the brink of losing its war with Iran....

6. In June, 1982, President Reagan decided that the United States could not afford to allow Iraq to lose the war to Iran. President Reagan decided that the United States would do whatever was necessary and legal to prevent Iraq from losing the war with Iran. President Reagan formalized this policy by issuing a National Security Decision Directive ("NSDD") to this effect in June, 1982. I have personal knowledge of this NSDD because I co-authored the NSDD with another NSC Staff Member, Geoff Kemp.

As noted, the Iran-Iraq war ended in a stalemate in 1988. The relationship between Saddam Hussein and the United States deteriorated following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, which led to the passage of resolutions in the UN Security Council giving Iraq a deadline to leave Kuwait and approving the use of force if Iraq did not comply.



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On March 6, 1991, President George H.W. Bush announced: “What is at stake is more than one small country; it is a big idea — *a new world order*, where diverse nations are drawn together in common cause to achieve the universal aspirations of mankind: peace and security, freedom, and the rule of law.” (Emphasis added.) The United States once again led an invasion to enforce the UN’s new world order and invaded Iraq. As part of the cease-fire agreement, UN trade sanctions were imposed on Saddam until Iraq complied with all terms.

Iraq would remain under UN sanctions and be the object of numerous UN resolutions until Bush’s son, as president, cited violations of the sanctions as justification for the 2003 invasion that removed Saddam Hussein from power.

Following the 2001 9/11 terrorist attacks, said to have been carried out by the al-Qaeda terrorist organization founded by Osama bin Laden, the United States made the decision to invade Afghanistan, where the Taliban government had provided a safe haven for the al-Qaeda terrorist network. Bin Laden, like Saddam Hussein, had at one time received support from the United States, when he was part of the Mujahedeen forces fighting the Soviet occupiers of Afghanistan. However, bin Laden turned on the United States after U.S. forces were deployed in Saudi Arabia (regarded as sacred soil to devout Muslims) during the 1990 invasion of Iraq following Saddam’s invasion of Kuwait.

While removing the Taliban from power was a logical response to 9/11, the invasion of Iraq served no purpose, other than to remove Saddam Hussein and to strengthen the influence of the United Nations.

And although Saddam had been portrayed by our government as evil incarnate, he had actually served as a counterweight to the influence of Iran and even the al-Qaeda terrorists. In September 2006, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence released a report that said about Saddam’s alleged links to al-Qaeda: “Postwar findings indicate that Saddam Hussein was distrustful of al-Qa’ida and viewed Islamic extremists as a threat to his regime, refusing all requests from al-Qa’ida to provide material or operational support.”

Therefore, after a great expenditure of blood and money by the United States to unseat Saddam, who was unfriendly to both Iran and al-Qaeda, we found ourselves backing the government led by Nouri al-Maliki.

And Maliki, it seems, is highly regarded by Iran, our on-and-off nemesis. As *The New American’s* senior editor, William F. Jasper, noted in his article “Global Blowback,” on April 28, 2008:

The U.S. government has sacrificed the lives of thousands of American troops, along with hundreds of billions of dollars, to back the government of Nouri al-Maliki. But the Maliki government is closely allied with Iran — which, the administration tells us, is our deadly enemy. In Iraq’s violent inter-sectarian and intra-sectarian violence, the administration is backing “good” Sunni and Shia factions, which have terrorist pedigrees equally as vulgar as those of the “bad” Sunni and Shia factions we are opposing. Hence we find the U.S. military arming and training the Iranian-backed Badr Brigades and other forces of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI).

The affinity between Iran and Iraq was noted in great detail in a June 4, 2012 report for *The World Post* by Qassim Abdul-Zahra and Brian Murphy that stated: “Iran has played many political roles in Baghdad since the fall of Saddam Hussein: spoiler to American-crafted administrations, haven for Iraqi political outcasts and big brother to Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki’s Shiite-led government.”

The report quoted Syracuse University professor and Iran specialist Mehrzad Boroujerdi:



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No doubt Iran is a significant political force in Iraq. They are actively and aggressively trying to keep al-Maliki in power. The fear is that the downfall of al-Maliki, coupled with the uncertainties about Assad's fate in Syria, could leave the Iranians suddenly looking at unfriendly faces.

The article also noted that al-Maliki was given a "red carpet welcome" during a visit to Tehran in April 2012, where he had once lived in exile as an anti-Saddam activist.

The greatest worry in Washington, apparently, is that a deal by which Iran sells arms to Iraq would be a violation of a UN Security Council Resolution. As the history of our involvement in the Middle East has shown, however, it would be wise for our government to distance itself from both the UN and involvement in the Middle East. The former has consistently undermined our sovereignty and dragged us into numerous wars, while the latter has produced blowback that fueled terrorist attacks such as that against the USS *Cole* and 9/11.

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