

A refutation of *alternative* evidence.

Case Study: Yemen

In an age of **alternative evidence**, some inconvenient facts about the war in Yemen.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have since March 2015 instigated a **humanitarian catastrophe** of Biblical proportions in the poorest of Arab nations. More than **10,000** people in Yemen have been killed in over two years of heavy airstrikes and fighting which have destroyed countless schools, hospitals, factories and other civilian targets. These attacks constitute **war crimes**. UN human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad al Hussein has [stated](#) that Saudi-led forces are “responsible for **twice as many civilian casualties as all other forces put together**, virtually all as a result of airstrikes.” Indeed, at least [3,158 aerial attacks](#) over the past two years have struck non-military sites. To access data on airstrikes collated by the independent Yemen Data Project, [click here](#).

Moreover, having imposed a **naval blockade**, Saudi Arabia has created a **man-made famine** that has put **17 million** Yemenis on the [brink of disaster](#). An entire generation of Yemeni children are now stunted in their growth. In addition, the worst outbreak of cholera in recorded history has afflicted [over one million Yemenis](#). Aid organizations are now [warning](#) of a diphtheria epidemic. Having extensively besieged Yemen, Saudi Arabia has also been systematically [targeting food supplies](#).



...**A**nd the United States is directly complicit in this calamity.

Last year, Saudi Arabia was **the world's second largest weapons buyer**, increasing its intake by 212% - mainly from the United States. President Donald Trump's trip to Riyadh in May featured the signing of a **\$110 billion arms deal**. As recently as late last month, it was [confirmed](#) that *Raytheon* and *Boeing* will sell **thousands of 'precision guided munitions'** worth \$7 billion as part of this mega agreement.

The Western munitions dropped by Saudi warplanes are mainly **Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMs)** and **Paveway missiles**. But Riyadh's aerial attacks on Yemen have, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, also included US-supplied cluster munitions. These bombs are banned under a treaty [signed by 119 nations](#).

Apart from being armed by the United States, the Saudi military also [relies on the Trump administration](#) to conduct war in Yemen. The Saudi-led bombing campaign has been **directly bolstered** by the provision of **targeting information, logistical support and daily refuelling** of warplanes **by US personnel**.

But to be fair, the systematic US complicity in the atrocities in Yemen didn't begin under Trump.

The United States has supported the Saudi-led bombing campaign from the very beginning, including by **refuelling Saudi-led warplanes** in mid-air. In 2015, a [sales process](#) began for more than 8,000 **laser-guided bombs** for the Saudi air force. It also included more than 10,000 general purpose bombs, and above 5,000 kits to convert munitions. The Obama administration signed a total of **42 weapons deals** with Saudi Arabia. Worth over **\$115 billion**, they were **highest** level of arms sales offers [by any administration in the history of the US-Saudi relationship](#).

Indeed, US offers of arms sales to Saudi Arabia under President Obama covered everything from small arms, to tanks, to helicopters, to attack aircraft, to bombs and missile systems, and to combat ships. The United States also provides maintenance and training, including a \$4 billion [contract](#) with the **Saudi National Guard**, which has played an important role in the war in Yemen.

Saudi Arabia's naval blockade of Yemen has directly cut off imports of everything from food to energy supplies, putting 17 million people on the brink of famine. Mindful of this, the United States in October 2015 announced a **\$10 billion deal** to supply Riyadh with [Multi-Mission Surface Combatant](#) (MMSC) ships. According to the Pentagon, the aim of this included "support [for the] strategic objectives of the United States." Prior US offers of naval equipment featured Mark V patrol boats, and the Phalanx Close-in-Weapons System for installation on Saudi Arabia's fleet of (also US-made) Patrol Chaser Missile Ships.

On to more (bombs and) missiles.

To reiterate, the United States is **selling** Saudi Arabia the **bombs and missiles** which it has been dropping on Yemen, and **also the means** which have enabled Saudi-led forces to do so. This has involved selling bombers, re-fuelling Saudi warplanes as well as providing targeting information.

The munitions which are being used by Saudi Arabia in Yemen include Raytheon's **Paveway IV** missile. This weapon has been found at scenes including **vital food stores** and civilian sites such as Yemen's Ministry of Commerce. The missiles commonly contain 500-pound MK-82 bombs.



PHOTO: Paveway IV missiles. Raytheon [concluded](#) a \$475 million deal to deliver Paveway systems to Saudi Arabia in 2011.

Lethal projectiles with ominous names such as **Brimstone** and **Storm Shadow**, as well as **PGM500** bombs and **ALARM** missiles have also been sold to **Saudi Arabia**.



PHOTO: MBDA has [sold](#) Saudi Arabia approximately 1,000 Brimstone missiles.



PHOTO: US Cluster Bomb Unit, CBU 58 A/B. This outlawed weapon has also been deployed in Yemen.



PHOTO: Remainder of US-made cluster bombs dropped by Saudi-led forces in Yemen. Other examples of US Cluster Bomb Units being used can be found [here](#).

Now, Yemenis are fighting back.

Ballistic missiles in Yemen are **nothing new**. Both South and North Yemen **imported such weapons** in the decades since the 1970s, mainly from the Soviet Union. Indeed, several SCUD missiles were deployed during their **civil war** in 1994. Late dictator Ali Abdullah Saleh further replenished his relatively expansive ballistic missile arsenal by purchasing **North Korean SCUDs**. The latter missiles were interdicted by Spanish forces in December 2002 and handed over to the US Navy. Ultimately evading both censure and seizure of these munitions - on account of being a staunch US and Saudi ally - Saleh was allowed to keep the North Korean missiles by the George W Bush administration ([yes, really](#)).



Thus, at the time of the outbreak of the war in Yemen in 2015, the country had an estimated 300 SCUDs. Some of these munitions, reportedly modified by Yemeni engineers, have been fired at Saudi Arabia in retaliation for the countless airstrikes over the past two years. In an intriguing turn of events, South Korean intelligence [confirmed](#) in July 2015 that SCUDs which had been fired into Saudi Arabia were the very North Korean missiles which the **United States** and **Saudi Arabia** had **green-lighted for delivery** to Yemen in 2002.

Unsurprisingly, the UN panel tasked with investigating Saudi and US claims of Iranian missile transfers to Yemen has neither found evidence of such supposed deliveries nor proof of foreign assistance with the use of such weapons. On the contrary, the panel has established **that exclusively Yemeni** experts fired the missiles in question, and that **no missile components** are likely to have been **smuggled into the country via the Red Sea** - directly contradicting the Saudi rationale for blockading Yemen. Curiously, the UN panel has reportedly found both [US and Iranian components](#) in the said missile fragments. On the basis of the logic presented by Saudi Arabia and the Trump administration, both the United States and Iran are thus apparently aiding Yemenis in their missile development.

Last but certainly not least, neither Saudi nor US officials have provided any information on when the supposed weapons deliveries took place. In fact, the Trump administration has indicated that it does not know when the alleged transfer of Iranian arms was made. Furthermore, US officials appear unaware of when and where some of the weapons in question were supposedly used.

- To Conclude:
- i. **Yemenis** are capable of firing missiles either tweaked or assembled in Yemen.
 - ii. No missile components have entered Yemen via **blockaded ports**.
 - iii. UN experts have found **both US and Iranian components** in Yemeni missile fragments.
 - iv. Neither the US nor Saudi Arabia have provided **any information on the dates** in which the alleged Iranian weapons were delivered, and **when** and **where** some of them are claimed to have been **used**.

Nothing stated by the Trump administration and its regional allies thus has any basis in truth, but rather in ‘alternative evidence’ or ‘alternative facts’. The world has seen this show before. It won’t entertain it again.

Iran has since the outset of the war in Yemen [offered](#) a reasonable and practical approach to address

this painful and unnecessary crisis—and it’s time to recognize that there is no military solution. Iran’s plan calls for an immediate ceasefire, humanitarian assistance and facilitation of intra-Yemeni dialogue, leading to the formation of an inclusive, broad-based national unity government. Iran has been calling for this from the outset of the war, and subsequent humanitarian crisis.

Iran is therefore hopeful that responsible actors outside the Middle East will focus their efforts on urging their allies in its region to take seriously its longstanding proposal for a regional dialogue forum. It holds the promise of a good start, and Iran once again invites all of its neighbors to participate. No one should want this suffering to continue.