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<http://news.antiwar.com/2014/02/14/saudis-give-syrian-rebels-anti-aircraft-missiles/print/>

## Saudis Give Syrian Rebels Anti-Aircraft Missiles

By Jason Ditz

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Officials have confirmed that Saudi Arabia intends to provide Chinese-made anti-aircraft missiles to rebel factions in Syria soon in a move to “tip the balance” against a Syrian military which has enjoyed air superiority.

Shoulder-mounted “manpad” missiles have been smuggled into Syria after the looting in Libya, but never in huge quantities. Rebel factions, including those supported by the West, have repeatedly said that if they were able they would use such missiles to attack civilian airliners flying over Syrian airspace, saying all civilian aircraft are “legitimate targets” in their war.

It is those threats which have made the US oppose such arms shipments in the past, and while they say their position “has not changed” they don’t appear to be seriously opposing Saudi shipments, and indeed plan to bankroll the same rebels with millions of dollars in new aid.

Though Saudi Arabia has bought large amounts of US arms, the decision to use Chinese weapons for the rebel shipments is no doubt an attempt to retain plausible deniability for the US when the inevitable happens and the “moderate” rebels start shooting down passenger jets across the region.