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<http://www.defenseone.com/business/2016/08/us-tank-deal-exposes-saudi-losses-yemen-war/130623/print/>

## Saudi Losses in Yemen War Exposed by US Tank Deal

By Marcus Weisgerber

August 9, 2016

The U.S. State Department and Pentagon Tuesday OKed a \$1.2 billion sale of 153 Abrams tanks to Saudi Arabia Tuesday. But that's not the real news.

Turns out: 20 of those tanks, made in America by General Dynamics Land Systems, are "battle damage replacements" for Saudi tanks lost in combat.

Even though the formal announcement of the sales does not say where the tanks were fighting, the Saudi military is believed to have lost some of its 400-plus Abrams tanks in Yemen, where it is fighting Iranian-backed Houthi separatists.

This revelation was tucked inside a benign Pentagon announcement of the deal, one that for the most part reads just like dozens of other arms sales approved each year. The announcement does not even mention the conflict in Yemen, yet it gives a glimpse into this wildly underreported war between Arab states, the U.S., and the Houthis.

While the secretive Saudi government has not formally disclosed its battles losses from its 16-month involvement with its neighbor's civil war, videos posted on YouTube purport to show

rebels blowing up Abrams tanks with Iranian-made rockets. A year ago, Houthi fighters reportedly destroyed two Saudi Abrams and captured others. In February, Iran's state-run Fars News Agency reported that five more tanks had been destroyed.

The deal approved by the U.S. government this week also includes 20 armored recovery vehicles, which are used to fix broken or damaged tanks on the battlefield.

“The proposed sale will improve Saudi Arabia's capability to meet current and future threats and provide greater security for its critical infrastructure,” a Pentagon notice announcing the approval of the sale said. “The addition of these tanks and recovery vehicles to the [Royal Saudi Land Force] inventory will enhance Saudi Arabia's ability to support its soldiers in the field and to defend the Kingdom's borders.”

In most cases, the State Department and the Pentagon must formally notify Congress of major arms deals 30 days before contracts are finalized. Congress then has the opportunity to block the sale or take no action.

In addition to this Abrams tank deal, the State Department has approved two other sales to Saudi Arabia, \$200 million for training, and \$155 million for Gatling guns that defend ships from missiles — sending the week's total value past \$1.5 billion. Still, Riyadh's 2016 shopping bill has a ways to go to match last year's total, when State approved more than \$20 billion in sales of ships, helicopters, missiles defenses, bombs and ammunition.