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Arms Sales to Asia and the Gulf Vital to US Corporations

Posted By [John Glaser](#)

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The Pentagon's plan to sell 5,000 bunker-buster bombs to the United Arab Emirates does conform to the Obama administration's strategy to strengthen military ties with allies in the Persian Gulf, [but the deal may have been propelled for other reasons](#).

The planned sale is a gift for U.S. defense contractors who are setting their sights on weapons exports to countries abroad in anticipation of cuts to the domestic defense budgets.

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, the arms industry got paid like it hadn't done in years. "Over the course of the decade," the Financial Times recently reported, "the U.S. annual defense budget has doubled in cash terms to reach nearly \$700 billion in 2010. The profits of the U.S. defense industry have quadrupled over that period."

Now, with budget restraints both at home and in Europe, American military contractors are looking to [Asia and the allied Gulf states to export weapons](#). And they're being helped by the Pentagon and the political leadership who hype regional threats from China and Iran, respectively.

Tens of billions of dollars worth of weapons and military equipment have recently been sold to states in the Gulf Cooperation Council – Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain – and that number will likely increase in coming years.

A [recent Congressional Research Service report](#) listed the most popular quantities and types of arms the US sold to Near East nations in recent years: 339 tanks and self-propelled guns; 71 APCs and armored cars; 3 minor surface combatants; 38 supersonic combat aircraft; 35 helicopters; 397 surface-to-air missiles.

Recent vows by the Pentagon [to have a stronger military presence in Asia-Pacific](#), construct [permanent military bases in Australia](#), and keep arms sales to Taiwan exorbitantly high are other examples of keeping the military industrial complex swimming in cash.

Meanwhile, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and a circus of leading members of Congress have expressed plans to [scuttle the debt committee's obligations to cut defense budgets](#). Amid hyped warnings that any cuts would threaten national security, the biggest military contractors may be insulated from the austerity after all.