

'Potential War Crimes:' Supplying Brutal Saudi Regime with Weapons

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Merchants of Death

Indeed, who really is the guilty party when it is widely known that an oppressive, authoritarian, fundamentalist beheading, murderous regime would utilise advanced weaponry to slaughter -- is it the known murderous regime or those entities that supply it with weapons to mass murder innocents that incur blame and take responsibility? Of course the major offender is the suppliers of the means to slaughter. So now we should ask why are weapons manufacturers more than willing to dispose of their weapons to such regimes? The answer is obvious, amorality and MONEY combined with the pressing need to pay for manufacture through sales. Weapons are not a versatile commodity as they have a limited application, to kill and destroy.

The weapons become outmoded almost as soon as they're released for use and so must be constantly upgraded, which FACT sustains weapons manufacturers in a loop of constant development, destruction and recovering COSTS. Guilt in this regard is hardly arguable because the formula outlined above ALWAYS levels responsibility on weapons manufacturers, plain to see.

In the wake of the U.S.-backed Saudi-led coalition's horrific bombing of a [school bus](#) last week that killed 40 Yemeni children and amid [reports](#) on Tuesday of dozens more civilian deaths after a new wave of Saudi bombings, Rep. Ted Lieu (D-Calif.) has sent a detailed [letter](#) to the Department of Defense Inspector General demanding an investigation into whether Trump administration officials violated U.S. or international law by assisting the Saudis in their assault on Yemen.

The Saudi-led coalition, which receives essential military support and intelligence from the U.S., "has repeatedly hit civilian targets—including schools, hospitals, funerals, and weddings—nowhere near military targets," Lieu writes, pointing to an analysis by the [Yemen Data Project](#) showing that a third of Saudi bombings in Yemen have hit civilian targets. "I previously served on active duty as a JAG [Judge Advocate General] and a number of the coalition's airstrikes look like war crimes."

"If the coalition's targeting of farms, food storage sites, and water sites was deliberate, these airstrikes would constitute a violation of Article 14 of Additional Protocol II and customary international law in non-international armed conflict," Lieu adds. "I am deeply concerned that continued U.S. refueling, operational support functions, and weapons transfers could qualify as aiding and abetting these potential war crimes."

The California congressman goes on to note that the U.S.-backed Saudi attacks on civilian targets cannot be attributed to mere faulty intelligence or incompetence.

"The coalition, which has air superiority, has in a number of cases very precisely struck civilian targets," Lieu notes. "For example, coalition jets precisely struck a [funeral](#) attended by a large number of people and then came around and struck the same civilian target again. It is indisputable that the DoD-supported coalition has killed large numbers of children, women, and men who are civilians."

In a [letter](#) of her own on Tuesday, Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) called on Gen. Joseph Votel—the top commander of U.S. forces in the Middle East—to [explain](#) the U.S. military's role in the Saudi-led coalition's bombings of Yemeni civilians.

"According to public reports and non-governmental organizations operating on the ground in Yemen, coalition airstrikes, including some that are likely to have been supported by U.S. refueling and supplied with U.S. munitions, have resulted in the deaths of thousands of Yemeni civilians since the beginning of the military campaign in 2015, including most recently a school bus carrying dozens of children," Warren noted.

Lieu and Warren's letters come as Yemen-based journalists reported that yet another Saudi-led bombing campaign in the port city of Hodeidah on Tuesday killed more than 30 people, including women and children.

Since the U.S.-backed Saudi coalition's bombing of a school bus last week, journalists and human rights advocates have denounced the attack as a clear war crime and demanded to know precisely what role the U.S. played in the massacre.

As Democracy Now! noted in a [segment](#) Tuesday morning, images posted to social media suggest that the bomb used in the attack was a Mark-82, which is manufactured by the massive American defense contractor Raytheon.

While U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis has dispatched an American general to assist the Saudis with its "investigation" into the school bus bombing, Shireen Al-Adeimi—a human rights activist and professor at Michigan State University—told Democracy Now! that it is "preposterous to think" that the Saudis can properly investigate their own crimes, particularly given that one Saudi official has already described the school bus as a "[legitimate target](#)."

"Every single day, there are airstrikes and casualties and civilians who have been killed by Saudi-led airstrikes. They have essentially absolved themselves of all wrongdoing every time they have investigated themselves," Al-Adeimi concluded. "What Yemenis need is really an independent investigation, which has been put forward in the U.N. twice already and has been rejected by the Saudi-led coalition and the U.S. unfortunately has provided cover for the Saudi-led coalition at the U.N."

Watch Al-Adeimi's full interview on Democracy Now:

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