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## F-15 Sale to Saudi Arabia Part of Broader Effort

By Donna Miles and Karen Parrish

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The recently announced \$29.4 billion sale of F-15SA fighter aircraft to Saudi Arabia is just one part of a broader U.S.-Saudi military sales and defense cooperation effort that's central to regional security, Pentagon Press Secretary George Little said.

U.S. officials announced an agreement Dec. 29 to sell 84 new F-15 fighter jets and upgrades for 70 existing aircraft to Saudi Arabia. Little said the same represents less than half of the \$60.5 billion in U.S. sales of aviation capabilities agreed by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In addition to the Royal Saudi Air Force, this broader program includes aviation capabilities for the Saudi Arabian National Guard, Royal Saudi Land Forces and Saudi Royal Guard, he said.

“More broadly, the U.S.-Saudi military-to-military alliance is a central feature of regional security,” he said.

Little noted the U.S. Military Training Mission in Saudi Arabia, which was established in 1953 and remains a cornerstone of the U.S.-Saudi military-to-military relationship. U.S. and Saudi defense departments cooperate regularly at the highest levels, through established bilateral planning forums like the Strategic Joint Planning Commission and the Military Joint Planning Commission, he said.

In addition, the Royal Saudi Air Force trains with the U.S. Air Force in rigorous exercises that improve military cooperation and interoperability, and that facilitate the exchange of ideas, Little said. Among them is Red Flag, the U.S. Air Force's premier air-to-air combat training exercise,

conducted in Nevada. Red Flag gives pilots the experience of multiple, intensive air combat sorties from within the safety of a training environment.

In announcing the F-15 sales agreement Dec. 29, James N. Miller, principal deputy under secretary of defense for policy, and Andrew Shapiro, assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs, emphasized the close military-to-military ties between the United States and Saudi Arabia.

“The United States is firmly committed to the security of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as we have been for nearly seven decades, and ... more broadly, the United States and Saudi Arabia have a strong mutual interest in the security and stability of the Gulf,” Miller said.

The F-15s Saudi Arabia will receive under the agreement “will have the latest generation of computing power, radar technology, infrared sensors and electronic warfare systems,” he added.

“This agreement reinforces the strong and enduring relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia,” Shapiro said. “It demonstrates the U.S. commitment to a strong Saudi defense capability as a key component to regional security.”

State and DOD have worked to conclude the agreement since June 2010, Shapiro added.

The White House released a statement Dec. 29 detailing the full Foreign Military Sales program agreement, which also will provide munitions, spare parts, training, maintenance and logistics support for the F-15s to the Royal Saudi Air Force.