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World's Largest Arms Dealers Lecture Americans on 'Assault Weapons'

By Will Porter
June 17, 2016

Almost immediately after the latest mass shooting incident in Orlando, Fla. last Sunday, the typical hue and cry regarding weapons bans has again crept out from the White House and state lawmakers.

In a statement to the press on Tuesday the President expressed support for a ban on "assault weapons," exhorting Congress to "Make it harder for terrorists to use these weapons to kill us."

Democratic presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton also weighed in with support for tougher restrictions, rolling out the mantra of "common sense gun reform."

"Florida doesn't regulate assault weapons or .50 caliber rifles or large-capacity ammunition magazines," Clinton told CNN on Monday. "It doesn't require a permit to purchase a gun. It doesn't require any registration, whatsoever."

Pandering and virtue signaling notwithstanding, it is the height of irony that such outrage effluxes from the mouths of two well-known political arms peddlers.

According to a December 2015 report from the Congressional Research Service, "In 2014, the United States led in arms transfer agreements worldwide, making agreements valued at \$36.2

billion (50.4% of all such agreements)." That figure was up from \$26.7 billion in the previous year.

While our humanitarians with guillotines wax compassionate about gun deaths in the United States, they help to flood the world with all manner of bombs, munitions, machine guns, and fighter jets.

Mother Jones reported earlier this year that, since 2009, the Obama administration has made over \$200 billion in arms deals – more than any other presidency – including the sale of legally-questionable cluster munitions to the state of Saudi Arabia to be used in its ongoing war with the nation of Yemen. (The Obama administration quietly put the kibosh on those sales in late May.)

Clinton, for her part, is no stranger to weapons deals. In 2011 her State Department oversaw a \$29.4 billion fighter jet sale to the Saudis, a "top priority" for the then-Secretary according to Andrew Shapiro, the former State Department Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs.

What's more, an *International Business Times* investigation found that "Under Clinton's leadership, the State Department approved \$165 billion worth of commercial arms sales to 20 nations whose governments have given money to the Clinton Foundation." Those include such rights-respecting regimes as Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.

"In all," the report continues, "governments and corporations involved in the arms deals approved by Clinton's State Department have delivered between \$54 million and \$141 million to the Clinton Foundation as well as hundreds of thousands of dollars in payments to the Clinton family, according to foundation and State Department records."

The noble proclamations from two of America's top gun controllers ought to ring hollow in the face of these facts, especially the President's reference to terrorists. Both Obama and his former Secretary of State have shown great willingness to arm violent jihadists from Libya to Syria.

In 2011, for example, Clinton's State Department approved a weapons shipment to Libyan rebels from a California-based firm, Dolarian Capital Inc., despite a UN arms embargo then in place. The rebel opposition which ousted the Libyan ruler in 2011 was comprised of a smattering of tribal, nationalist, and Islamist groupings.

While that particular shipment was ultimately canceled, there is evidence that the Secretary personally pushed for the idea. One month before the State Department's initial green-lighting of the transfer, Clinton told a senior aide in an email, "FYI. The idea of using private security experts to arm the opposition should be considered."

Indeed, the Obama administration has directly provided or facilitated the provision of weapons to Syrian fighters throughout the ongoing conflict ravaging that country. Despite a 2012 Defense Intelligence Agency report finding that support for the Syrian opposition may lead to the emergence of a "Salafist Principality," the administration and its allies continued to pour in the weapons anyway.

Not surprisingly, the bulk of those weapons have ended up in the hands of Islamist militiamen. The number of additional casualties in the war due to such arms transfers is likely hard to quantify, but with civilian massacres perpetrated by US-backed terror groups such as Ahrar al Sham, it's not a stretch to suggest they've directly contributed to the bloodshed.

If the President and the presidential aspirant wish to demonstrate their empathy, their concern for innocent human life, they might stop arming the oppressive regimes of the world and fueling death and destruction in foreign military conflicts. That would be a good place to start.