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Stop the Arms Shipments Now



Image by Curioso Photography.

Here's a story I've told before. I'm telling it again because of its continued relevance, especially in this particular moment of war and impending greater war. When I was a ten year old child I lived on a US military base near Peshawar, Pakistan. The purpose of the base was to spy on the Soviet Union, China and whatever other country in the region the Pentagon decided should be spied on. The year was 1965. My birthday, which falls on September 13th, was the first night the bombs fell. The bombers were planes owned by the Indian Air Force and the bombs were dropped on Pakistani targets a couple miles from the US base. Our family held hands in our house and prayed. Over the next six days we spent our nights in a makeshift bomb shelter dug in our backyard. The bombs fell a couple miles away and anti-aircraft fire lit up the sky. I learned in my later years that the targets were mostly located near the civilian/military airport run by the Pakistanis with US assistance. For the most part, the targets were military in nature. Of course, civilian targets were also hit. This is par for the course in so-called air warfare. Bombs fall where the elements and gravity takes them, no matter how smart their manufacturers claim they are. The armaments being deployed in 1965

were not smart at all. Just ask the Vietnamese or the US pilots that flew B-52 bombers over fields and jungles in Vietnam, carpet bombing the land, waters, livestock and the people living there, killing and poisoning their gardens and rice fields.

Anyhow, the war between India and Pakistan had been heating up since late spring. It was over the disputed and semi-autonomous provinces of Kashmir and Jammu. This region remains a point of conflict between India and Pakistan and had been since the founding of both states in 1947 when the British crown gave up its imperial dominion over India. Northwestern Pakistan, where Peshawar is located, had only recently become part of the Indian aerial incursion. The bombing continued every night for several days. The women and children living on the US base were evacuated on September 19, 1965, seven days after the first night of air raids on my tenth birthday. After an overland trip from Peshawar to Kabul, Afghanistan, we boarded C-130 cargo planes outfitted for personnel transport to Istanbul, Turkey. We were then transported by bus and ferry to another US military base in Karamursel, Turkey. We spent the next three months living in barracks on the base, eating at the mess hall and going to school in temporary quonset huts. It was an adventure for some of us and a trial for others.

Meanwhile, the war continued. So did efforts by Washington and the Soviet Union to end it. Arms deliveries to both sides were cut off. Together with the seesaw nature of the conflict itself, ceasefire talks intensified. A truce was reached by October. The decrease in the flow of weapons and ammunition had created a situation where negotiations made the most sense.

I tell this little story for a simple reason. When the tools of war are depleted or denied, the participants in said conflict have to seek some other means to end it. Total victory for either side becomes an illusion impossible to attain, even in their own dreams. Lives are saved. The political and economic interests that propelled the armies to wage war must seek other means of conflict resolution. In other words, they must sit down and negotiate a ceasefire maybe even a permanent truce. In the conflicts in Palestine and Ukraine, it is well past time for the United States and its subsidiaries to stop deliveries of weapons and ammunition. No participant in either conflict can win militarily, no matter what the arrogant leaders involved think or say. The roots of the conflicts are political, as are the means to resolve them. I repeat, Washington, as the primary arms merchant in both conflicts, must end its shipments immediately. Only then will the political actors involved begin to talk. Only then will the way towards a fair and reasonable peace open up.

I am certain some people will object to this call to stop all arms and ammo shipments to Israel and Ukraine. Indeed, I would be surprised if they didn't. Some who support an arms embargo on Israel will oppose one on Ukraine. This disagreement with the suggestion mostly proves how our general consciousness is so distorted that war seems not only reasonable, but that it can be stopped by prolonging it. Furthermore, even though these conflicts are different, the essential truth that the continued flow of arms insures their continuation cannot be denied. In

Palestine, the people and their resistance groups will have an opportunity to take care of their immediate survival. In Ukraine, where both Moscow and Kyiv have alternately called for negotiations instead of war, a similar scenario would unfold. Maintaining and supporting a military approach places territory and power above human life and, at its most fundamental puts war industry profits above peace. In doing so, the continued dominance of the masters of war is guaranteed. And the unnecessary loss of life goes on.

Ron Jacobs is the author of [Daydream Sunset: Sixties Counterculture in the Seventies](#) published by CounterPunch Books. He has a new book, titled [Nowhere Land: Journeys Through a Broken Nation](#) coming out in Spring 2024. He lives in Vermont. He can be reached at: ronj1955@gmail.com

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