



US providing bunker buster bombs for Israel's war on Gaza

The US has provided Israel with large bunker buster bombs, among tens of thousands of other weapons and artillery shells, to help dislodge Hamas from Gaza, US officials said.

The surge of arms, including roughly 15,000 bombs and 57,000 artillery shells, began shortly after the Oct. 7 attack and has continued in recent days, the officials said. The US hasn't previously disclosed the total number of weapons it sent to Israel nor the transfer of 100 BLU-109, 2,000-pound bunker buster bombs, The Wall Street Journal reported. The airlift of hundreds of millions of dollars in munitions,

primarily on C-17 military cargo planes flying from the US to Tel Aviv, shows the diplomatic challenge facing the Biden administration. The US is urging its top ally in the region to consider preventing large-scale civilian casualties while supplying many of the munitions deployed.

"I made clear that after a pause, it was imperative that Israel put in place clear protections for civilians, and for sustaining humanitarian assistance going forward," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in Dubai on Friday.

Some security analysts say the weapons transfers could undercut the administration's

pressure on Israel to protect civilians.

Unlike in Ukraine where the US has published regular updates on some of the weapons it has provided to support Kiev's fight against the Russian invasion, Washington has disclosed little about how many and what types of weapons it has sent to Israel during the current conflict. US officials say the lack of disclosure is a result partly of the fact that Israel's weapons come through a different mechanism, including military sales. Israel also is one of the largest recipients of US military aid, receiving \$3.8 billion every year. The arsenal of artillery, bombs

and other weapons and military gear have been used by the US in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia and Libya, among other places, usually to target large groups of gathered enemy forces. In Gaza, by contrast, Israel is battling fighters who are among civilians in dense urban environments.

"They are kind of the weapons of choice for the fights we had in Afghanistan and Syria in open, nonurban areas," said Mick Mulroy, a former deputy assistant secretary of defense and officer in the Marine Corps and CIA. "The US may use them in more urban areas, but first it would do a

lot of target analysis to make sure the attack was proportional and based on military necessity."

President Biden initially expressed full support for Israel and its military campaign against Hamas after the Oct. 7 attack, but the soaring civilian death toll in Gaza has caused the administration to shift in recent days.

More than 15,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have been killed in Gaza since the war began, according to the authorities in Gaza. The number doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants.

Among the munitions the

US has transferred to Israel are more than 5,000 Mk82 unguided or "dumb" bombs, more than 5,400 Mk84 2,000 pound warhead bombs, around 1,000 GBU-39 small diameter bombs, and approximately 3,000 JDAMs, which turn unguided bombs into guided "smart" bombs, according to an internal US government list of the weapons described to The Wall Street Journal by US officials.

The BLU-109 bunker buster carries a 2,000 pound warhead and is designed to penetrate a concrete shelter. The US military also used the bombs in the Persian Gulf War and the war in Afghanistan.

Will the US cause Iran to lose trust in it once again?



By Zohreh Qanadi
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The Islamic Republic of Iran has always had justified reasons for harboring a lack of confidence in the United States and its policies over the past decades. This distrust has manifested in various intensities, with one notable instance being the impactful withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), by former president Donald Trump in 2018. Trump claimed that the deal – which resulted in the lifting of many Western-led sanctions on Tehran in return for curbs on its nuclear activi-

ties – undermined the security of the American people, which he had sworn to protect, and, accordingly, ended US participation in it. He got the United States out of the agreement, and subsequently re-imposed those sanctions and more on Tehran. He also made it challenging for the European parties of the deal to keep it alive and closed the long-drawn diplomatic path that took years to yield results.

He did this despite a lack of evidence that Iran was violating the agreement. The International Atomic Energy Agency had verified Tehran's compliance numerous times.

It was the United States that was in violation of

an agreement that the international community believed was working. The US put the agreement under serious threat and prompted Tehran to retaliate by ramping up its nuclear activities to levels beyond what was allowed under the JCPOA. Trump's withdrawal raised doubts about US credibility and its ability to stick to international commitments.

In July 2021, upon Biden's administration taking office, Iran's Leader criticized the US as an untrustworthy partner, urging the new government to "learn" from the previous administration's experience of engaging with them.

"The US has no hesitation in violating its promises and commitments, just as it violated the [nuclear] agreement, making it completely useless," said Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

Shooting itself in the foot

Once more, the recent move by the US House of Representatives, passing a measure against another agreement with Iran, could undermine potential future agreements

with the country for years.

On Thursday, the House passed a bipartisan measure that would block the Islamic Republic from accessing the \$6 billion transferred by the US in a prisoner swap. This step was taken by the Democrats in response to Iran's alleged role in the deadly attacks last month by Hamas on Israel. Almost half of the Democratic congressmen voted against endorsing President Biden's prisoner deal with Iran, undermining his effective negotiations with Tehran. If it passes into law, it would be another instance of the US shooting itself in the foot, eroding diplomatic leverage and credibility once again.

The US and Iran reached an agreement in August that eventually saw the release of five detained Americans in Tehran, and an unknown number of Iranians imprisoned in the US, after billions of dollars in frozen Iranian assets were transferred from banks in South Korea to Qatar. But days after the October 7 attack by Hamas, the US and Qatar agreed that Iran would not be able to access the money in the meantime, with officials stopping short of a full

refreezing of the funds.

The Thursday bill — titled the No Funds for Iranian Terrorism Act — passed 307-119, as the voters sought to hold the Biden administration accountable for what they call their complicity in funding Iranian-backed terrorism in the Middle East.

This is while US officials have rebuffed this criticism, noting that not a single dollar has yet to be made available to Iran, and insisting that when it is, it can only be used for humanitarian purposes.

Critics like McCaul say that despite the money being restricted to aid, it is "fungible," and could free up other funds for Tehran to provide support to Hamas, as they believe it did before it attacked Israel in early October. Iran's Leader at the time praised the Palestinian youths and masterminds of the operation for achieving a remarkable victory, rejecting as "miscalculations" the claims that the "epic" act was not a "Palestinian job."

US officials also acknowledged that there was no concrete evidence of Iranian involvement in the Hamas attack from Gaza, with White House national security spokesman John Kirby saying that "Iran has long supported Hamas... but in terms of

specific evidence on this, these sorts of attacks, no, we don't have anything."

Also, a spokesperson for the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, said at the time that "Iran is a major player but we can't yet say if it was involved in the planning or training."

Iran's own money

Moreover, Republicans are accusing the Biden administration of allocating funds to Iran that rightfully belonged to the country.

Ultimately, should this measure be passed as law, aside from undermining Tehran's partially-regained trust in Washington and closing diplomatic channels, it would also disrupt humanitarian acts for the Iranian people. That law would force the US to impose sanctions on Qatari banks and any other entities engaged in transactions, preventing Iran's assets from being spent on the purchase of food and medicine.

The unfolding events will reveal whether the Biden administration will support these amendments in becoming law, potentially dismantling half-hearted diplomacy with Iran once again.

