

MP-IDSA *Commentary*

US Weapons Sales to West Asia amidst the Iran War

S Samuel C Rajiv

April 13, 2026

S*ummary*

The challenge for the US defence industrial base will be to meet the increased demands of allies in conflict zones for critical high-end defence equipment.

The US State Department on 19 March 2026 approved possible foreign military sales (FMS) to the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Jordan of multiple defence equipment worth over US\$ 16 billion. These included a Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) long-range discrimination radar (LRDR) and related equipment for US\$ 4.5 billion, Fixed Site-Low, Slow, Small Unmanned Aircraft Integrated Defeat System (FS-LIDS) and related equipment for US\$ 2.1 billion, Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAMs) and related equipment for US\$ 1.22 billion, F-16 fighter aircraft munitions and upgrades, including Joint Direct Munitions (JDAM) Guidance Sets, for US\$ 644 million (all to the UAE);¹ Lower Tier Air and Missile Defense Sensor Radars (LTAMDS) for an estimated cost of US\$ 8 billion (to Kuwait)² and aircraft and munitions support to Jordan for US\$ 70.5 million.³

The State Department noted that the proposed sales will meet the national security objectives of the United States and help its regional partners meet current and future threats. The notifications highlight that the Secretary of State has determined that an ‘emergency exists’ which requires the ‘immediate sale’ of these weapons systems to these partner nations, waiving the Congressional review requirements under Section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act [AECA].

The AECA requires the US President to notify the US Congress 30 calendar days (or 15 days for weapons sales to Australia, Israel, NATO member states, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea) before concluding government-to-government FMS agreements. The AECA also gives the President the authority to waive the review periods, but must provide a justification and a description of the emergency circumstances.⁴ In April 2019, then Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, for the first time, waived the Congressional reporting period for arms sales to Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.⁵ Critics point out that the use of this reporting waiver precludes effective legislative scrutiny of the proposed arms sales.⁶

¹ [“United Arab Emirates – Long-Range Discrimination Radar with Terminal High Altitude Area Defense Integration”](#), US Department of State, 19 March 2026; [“United Arab Emirates – F-16 Munitions and Upgrades”](#), US Department of State, 19 March 2026; [“United Arab Emirates – Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles \(AMRAAMs\)”](#), US Department of State, 19 March 2026; [“United Arab Emirates – Fixed Site-Low, Slow, Small Unmanned Aircraft Integrated Defeat System”](#), US Department of State, 19 March 2026.

² [“Kuwait – Lower Tier Air and Missile Defense Sensor Radars”](#), US Department of State, 19 March 2026.

³ [“Government of Jordan – Aircraft Repair, Return, and Spares”](#), US Department of State, 19 March 2026.

⁴ Paul K. Kerr, [“Arms Sales: Congressional Review Process”](#), Congressional Research Service, 27 March 2026, p. 6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.

⁶ Stavroula Pabst, [“Emergency Waivers Move Arms for Israel, UAE to Speed Lane”](#), Responsible Statecraft, 9 April 2026.

Most State Department notifications to the US Congress in recent years regarding the sale of equipment through FMS to Israel and other regional countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, did not invoke the Congressional review waiver. On 3 February 2026, for instance, the US State Department notified Congress of a possible US\$ 3 billion F-15 sustainment sale to Saudi Arabia.⁷ On 30 January 2026, an FMS sale to Israel of AH-64E Apache helicopters and related equipment, estimated at US\$ 3.8 billion, was notified to the US Congress without a waiver of Congressional review.⁸ In February 2025 and December 2023, though, Secretary Rubio waived the AECA Section 36 Congressional review requirements for the sale of munitions (including JDAM guidance kits) and 120 mm tank cartridges to Israel, as indeed for the sale of ‘non-standard ammunition’ in April 2022 and Hawk missile system sustainment-related sales in April 2024 (both to Ukraine).⁹

The 19 March State Department notifications relating to the proposed arms sales to the UAE, Kuwait and Jordan, meanwhile, highlight the requirement for ‘immediate sale’ of the listed weapons systems. Representative Gregory Meeks, Ranking Member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, criticised the Trump administration for the latest arms sales proposals and pointed out that only one of the defence items (out of the ‘dozen weapons cases covered by the emergency declaration’) is available for ‘immediate export’.¹⁰

The US State Department on 6 March notified Congress about the sale of 12,000 ‘BLU-110A/B general purpose, 1,000-pound bomb bodies’ to Israel. That notification specifically stated that ‘part of the BLU-110A/B requirement will be transferred from stock’.¹¹ As and when the G2G agreement takes place, therefore, the transfer of most of the equipment proposed to be sold to the UAE, Kuwait and Jordan may not be from current stockpiles but will have to be manufactured for eventual export. US defence corporations flagged in the 19 March 2026 notifications include Northrop Grumman, RTX Corporation, RTX Missile Defence Technologies, SRC Corporation, Lockheed Martin and S&K Aerospace.

The equipment proposed for sale meanwhile relates to air defence systems, radar equipment and munitions for fighter aircraft. Iran has attacked multiple military and commercial infrastructure in the Gulf countries through unmanned aerial vehicles and missiles in response to Operations Epic Fury and Roaring Lion. On 18–19 March,

⁷ [“Kingdom of Saudi Arabia – F-15 Sustainment”](#), Defense Security Cooperation Agency, 3 February 2026.

⁸ [“Israel – AH-64E Apache Helicopters”](#), Defense Security Cooperation Agency, 30 January 2026.

⁹ Paul K. Kerr, [“Arms Sales: Congressional Review Process”](#), no. 4, pp. 6–9.

¹⁰ [“House Foreign Affairs Ranking Member Meeks Calls out Trump Admin for Again Abusing Emergency Authorities to Bypass Congress on Arms Sales”](#), United States Representative Gregory Meeks, 19 March 2026.

¹¹ [“Israel – Munitions and Munitions Support”](#), US Department of State, 6 March 2026.

for instance, Iran’s attack on Qatar’s LNG infrastructure wiped out 17 per cent of the country’s export capacity and caused an estimated loss of US\$ 20 billion in export revenues.¹²

According to Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED), Iran has launched more than 1,500 strikes across the region in response to the over 3,000 strikes on Iran by the US and Israel since 28 February. ACLED notes that the UAE has suffered the largest share of successful impacts in Iran’s retaliatory strikes, while Kuwait has recorded the highest number of casualties.¹³ Israel’s attacks on Iran’s South Pars gas field and the Asaluyeh processing hub on 18 March triggered a wave of Iranian retaliatory strikes against energy infrastructure in Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar.

Reports note that many of the Gulf States were running low on their stockpile of air defence interceptors in the wake of the Iranian drone and missile barrages. Some reports estimate that the UAE used up to 75 per cent of its stockpile of Patriot interceptors since 28 February.¹⁴ According to the UAE Ministry of Defence, as of 9 April 2026, UAE Air Defences engaged a total of 537 ballistic missiles, 26 cruise missiles and 2,256 UAVs.¹⁵ Analysts note that the US and allies used more than 900 Patriot missile interceptors (equivalent to 18 months of production stockpile).¹⁶ Moreover, the US, Israel, Gulf States and other coalition forces used more than 11,000 munitions in the first 16 days of the conflict, at a cost of nearly US\$ 26 billion.¹⁷

The impact of the high use of munitions and interceptors in the West Asian context is also having repercussions for other war zones, such as Ukraine. Reports note that Spain has pledged to provide five PAC-2 missile systems from its inventory to Ukraine to help it tide over the shortage caused by the heavy use of these interceptors in the Middle East.¹⁸ Lockheed Martin, the company that makes the Patriot interceptors, agreed to more than triple the interceptors’ production in January 2026 (from 600 to 2,000 per year). Still, it could take multiple years to reach these production

¹² Maha El Dahan, Andrew Mills and Yousef Saba, [“Exclusive: Iran Attacks Wipe Out 17% of Qatar’s LNG Capacity for up to Five Years, QatarEnergy CEO Says”](#), *Reuters*, 19 March 2026.

¹³ [“Middle East Overview: April 2026”](#), ACLED, 8 April 2026.

¹⁴ Efrat Lachter, [“More Than 90% of Iranian Missiles Intercepted, but a Dangerous Imbalance Is Emerging”](#), JINSA, 26 March 2026.

¹⁵ United Arab Emirates Ministry of Defence, [“Ministry of Defence confirms UAE airspace free of any air threats...”](#), X, 9 April 2026.

¹⁶ David Crowe, [“The Next Big Iran War Question: Who Will Lose from the Missile Shortage?”](#), *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 April 2026.

¹⁷ Macdonald Amoah, Morgan D. Bazilian and Lieutenant Colonel Jahara Matisek, [“Over 11,000 Munitions in 16 Days of the Iran War: ‘Command of the Reload’ Governs Endurance”](#), RUSI, 24 March 2026.

¹⁸ Yuliia Zavadska, [“Spain to Send 5 Patriot Missiles to Ukraine Amid Air Defense Shortage”](#), *Kyiv Post*, 30 March 2026.

targets.¹⁹ Reports in mid-March also noted that the US was re-deploying a THAAD missile system from South Korea to the Gulf, to bolster regional missile defences. This was in the aftermath of THAAD radars and associated equipment being hit by Iranian drone and missile barrages in Jordan and Saudi Arabia.²⁰

The LRDR, meanwhile, is a fixed long-range active electronically scanned array (AESA) radar, as opposed to the transportable AN/TPY-2 AESA radar that was reportedly damaged in Iranian strikes in Jordan. The proposed sale of the LRDR to the UAE is significant, as it will be the first country, after the US, to operate the radar. The Missile Defense Agency (MDA) completed the LRDR’s operational trial period for the US Space Forces’ (USSF) Combat Forces Command (CFC) in December 2025.²¹ This marked the operational acceptance of the radar for the CFC. It is unclear, though, when the ‘immediate’ sale of the LRDR to the UAE will take place.

Kuwait will also become only the second international customer to integrate the LTAMDS AESA radar into its air and missile defence architecture, after Poland. The US\$ 1.7 billion deal to supply 12 radar units for integration into Poland’s Patriot missile batteries was signed in August 2024, following the Letter of Acceptance in October 2023. Nine of these 12 units were delivered to Poland in September 2025.²² RTX Corporation, the manufacturer of the radar system, delivered the first six LTAMDS radars to the US Army in 2025. In April 2025, the company noted that it would produce 8 radars per year and ramp up production to 12 per year to meet global demand.²³

Given the high rates of use of ammunition and air defence interceptors in recent military operations, therefore, coupled with the charged regional security situation, US arms sales to the Gulf allies can only be expected to increase in the near to mid-term. At the same time, the challenge for the US defence industrial base will be to not only meet increased demands in West Asia and ongoing conflicts such as in Ukraine, but also address critical equipment requirements of US allies in East Asia, such as South Korea and Japan.

¹⁹ David Crowe, [“The Next Big Iran War Question: Who Will Lose from the Missile Shortage?”](#), no. 16.

²⁰ Thomas Bordeaux and Gianluca Mezzofiore, [“Radar Bases Housing Key US Missile Interceptor Hit in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and UAE, Satellite Images Show”](#), *CNN*, 6 March 2026; Alex Abraham, [“THAAD Missile System Move: Why the US is Shifting Defences from Korea to the Middle East”](#), *Gulf News*, 13 March 2026.

²¹ [“Combat Forces Command Long Range Discrimination Radar \(LRDR\) Operational Acceptance”](#), USSF Combat Forces Command, 8 December 2025.

²² [“RTX Awarded \\$1.7 Billion Contract for LTAMDS”](#), RTX, 23 September 2025.

²³ [“RTX’s Lower Tier Air and Missile Defense Sensor Positioned for Production”](#), RTX, 21 April 2025.

About the Author



Dr. S. Samuel C. Rajiv is Research Fellow at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi.

Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses is a non-partisan, autonomous body dedicated to objective research and policy relevant studies on all aspects of defence and security. Its mission is to promote national and international security through the generation and dissemination of knowledge on defence and security-related issues.

Disclaimer: Views expressed in Manohar Parrikar IDSA's publications and on its website are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Manohar Parrikar IDSA or the Government of India.

© Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA) 2026