

Information Clearing House

NEWS YOU WON'T FIND ON CNN

[Send Page To a Friend](#)

Why does Saudi Arabia need military aid?

The Saudis are getting \$13bn. How can they spend that? Have Prada moved into tanks?

By Mark Steel

08/01/07 "The Independent" -- -- Here's something they sneaked out this week with hardly anyone noticing - the Americans have announced a "military aid package" of sixty billion dollars for their allies in the Middle East. Or, to be grammatically correct, sixty billion, that's sixty thousand million bastard dollars!!!

How can they spend that? Have Prada moved into tanks? Maybe they now buy these things at fashion shows, where a commentator gasps: "Ooh, my, my!" as down the catwalk comes this exhilarating design for the very latest satellite-guided armour-penetrating missile modelled here by Kate Moss, designed, of course, by Stella McCartney, and "sure to be this summer's big bold hit when it comes to melting the Hizbollah".

This is \$250 for every living American, \$10 for everyone on the planet. Are they taking each weapon out individually for a meal at the Ivy? And \$13bn of this is for Saudi Arabia. Because if there's one family on this earth in need of financial aid, it's the Saudi royal family. Who's getting the rest - the Bee Gees? Anyway, why do the Saudis need military aid at all? Their favourite weapon seems to be the stone. I suppose now if a woman commits adultery or speaks out of turn she'll be battered to death with a bloody great ruby instead.

To get all this in perspective, after the G8 summit two years ago in Scotland, after the Make Poverty History march and concerts, a beaming Tony Blair announced a record-breaking global amount of aid of fifty billion dollars. This time they seem to be a bit more modest. No one came galloping out of the White House joyfully to explain that, after a whole week of negotiating, they've come up with more laser-guided firebombs than ever.

But they shouldn't be so modest. Because a sign of how hard it is to come up with

such sums can be seen from this year's G8 summit, when they admitted that instead of the \$50bn they promised in Scotland, it was back to \$25bn after all. So all those balloons, celebrations, smiley press conferences and declarations of a new start for Africa, were about the entire western world donating to an entire impoverished continent less than half of what one country has quietly coughed up in weapons for the Saudis, Egypt and Israel.

They do it quietly because how many people would agree with these priorities? On *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?*, when Chris Tarrant asks: "What would you do with the money if you won a million pounds?", very few people say: "I'd buy some cluster bombs." How many people, if they were taken on a tour of the Middle East, through Gaza and the wreckage of Iraq and the slums of Cairo, would say: "I know what this place needs above all else - \$60bn-worth of deadly weapons."

How many people would support a charity record called "Death Aid", or a night of TV comedy called "Smiles for Missiles", in which Vernon Kay wandered through Angola grimacing: "This village hasn't had a landmine for over a month. Please, please, please, send your donation so they too can know what it's like to watch someone explode", followed by a special edition of *A Question of Sport*.

One of the reasons given for the difficulty in providing aid to Africa is their leaders are corrupt, so there's every chance they'll swipe the money. So luckily, when it comes to Saudi Arabia they can rely on that country's rulers, who would never fiddle a billion dollars from British Aerospace or do illegal deals with, to pick someone at random, Jonathan Aitken.

Maybe the complaint about corruption has been misunderstood and the Africans aren't doing enough of it. So the White House gets reports that say: "Some ministers in Malawi go a whole month with barely a single prostitute being procured by the arms companies - how can we possibly do business with such people?" And half this generous gift, \$30bn-worth of arms, is being given to Israel. Surely the problem here is where will they put them all? They'll be like parents at Christmas when an over-generous grandparent delivers sacks full of presents, and you have to have a clearout of all the old stuff to make room. So if you want a cheap battleship, nip down to a charity shop in Hebron and you'll be able to pick one up for a score.

But more weapons is the answer to everything. For example, a US defence report on global warming has concluded it could lead to global instability and mass migration, proving the necessity of acquiring more weapons to deal with this.

If anyone from the Pentagon visits Moss Side or Peckham, they'll announce: "Hey, these places are in bad shape. So we've given everyone under 25 a pistol, a sword and a tank." If someone from the Pentagon ever worked as a chef, he'd taste the

sauce and say: "Hmm, it needs something - basil, perhaps, or a sprinkle of fennel? I know, it needs a Stealth bomber."

How does anyone get to see the world from the point of view of the Pentagon? Who would look around a world in which 5,000 children a day die for lack of clean water and decide that can wait, but the weapons can't?

But the biggest mystery is the official reason given for handing over this fortune to Egypt and Saudi Arabia - that, according to Zalmay Khalilzad, US ambassador to the United Nations, it's because "Saudi Arabia and others are not doing all they can to help us in Iraq". So they're rewarded like that. Well, I've done bugger all to help America in Iraq. Can I have a helicopter?

© 2007 Independent News and Media Limited

Click on "comments" below to read or post comments

[Comments \(61\)](#) [Comment \(0\)](#)

Comment Guidelines

Be succinct, constructive and relevant to the story. We encourage engaging, diverse and meaningful commentary. Do not include personal information such as names, addresses, phone numbers and emails. Comments falling outside our guidelines – those including personal attacks and profanity – are not permitted.

See our complete [Comment Policy](#) and [use this link to notify us](#) if you have concerns about a comment. **We'll promptly review and remove any inappropriate postings.**

[Send Page To a Friend](#)

In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, this material is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for research and educational purposes. Information Clearing House has no affiliation whatsoever with the originator of this article nor is Information ClearingHouse endorsed or sponsored by the originator.)

Sign up for our Daily Email Newsletter 

Privacy by  SafeSubscribeSM

Hi
Please help support
Information Clearing
House. Click here now



amazon honor system
[Learn more.](#)

[HOME](#)

[COPYRIGHT NOTICE](#)

[Video](#)