Biden admin approves potential multibillion-dollar arms sales to Saudi Arabia and UAE

By Jennifer Hansler, CNN
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Mandel Ngan/AFP/Getty Images

(CNN) — The Biden administration on Tuesday approved and notified Congress of possible multibillion-dollar weapons sales to both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

The notice of the approval comes just weeks after President Joe Biden met with the leaders of each nation in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, as he sought to improve relations between the US and the Saudis.

The approval was also notified on the same day that the United Nations announced a two-month extension of the truce in Yemen, where the Saudi-led coalition and the Houthi rebel group had, until recent months, been engaged in a years-long bloody conflict that has killed thousands of civilians.

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According to a news release from the US State Department, the agency approved a possible sale of PATRIOT MIM-104E Guidance Enhanced Missile-Tactical Ballistic Missiles (GEM-T) and related equipment to Saudi Araba for an estimated $3.05 billion.

“This proposed sale will support the foreign policy goals and national security objectives of the United States by improving the security of a partner country that is a force for political stability and economic progress in the Gulf region,” the State Department said of the sale.

“The proposed sale will improve the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s capability to meet current and future threats by replenishing its dwindling stock of PATRIOT GEM-T missiles,” it said. “These missiles are used to defend the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s borders against persistent Houthi cross-border unmanned aerial system and ballistic missile attacks on civilian sites and critical infrastructure in Saudi Arabia.”

“These attacks threaten the well-being of Saudi, International, and U.S. citizens (approximately 70,000) residing in the Kingdom. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will have no difficulty absorbing these missiles into its armed forces,” it added.

Separately, the State Department approved the possible sale of “Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) System Missiles, THAAD Fire Control and Communication Stations, and related equipment for an estimated cost of $2.245 billion” to the UAE.

“This proposed sale will support the foreign policy and national security of the United States by helping to improve the security of an important regional partner. The UAE is a vital U.S. partner for political stability and economic progress in the Middle East,” the State Department said. “The proposed sale will improve the UAE’s ability to meet current and future ballistic missile threats in the region, and reduce dependence on U.S. forces.”

Shortly after taking office, Biden announced the US would end its support for Saudi’s offensive operations in Yemen, “including relevant arms sales.” However, the administration has continued to sell arms to the kingdom for what it says are defensive purposes.

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