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# PERSPECTIVES

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**AN EMERALD EDITORIAL**

**S**o, the United States is temporarily happy. China has finally taken a step toward fitting into our view of what the world should look like; it has stopped providing nuclear technology to Iran.

Let the world rejoice. Finally, only the good guys will be able to get their hands on the tools needed to build weapons capable of killing us all.

The only problem is that every person killed in armed conflict over the past 40 years has died from non-nuclear weapons. The real threat to world security doesn't come from China and Russia helping Iran build a nuclear reactor; it comes from sales of conventional weapons.

Unfortunately for the United States and its efforts to create a menacing image of China, the real villain in the "new world order" is the United States, which is responsible for the largest share of conventional weapons sales in the world.

According to Arms Sales Monitor, the U.S. government provided \$12.5 billion in arms to other nations in 1995. Private industry sold another \$3.6 billion worth of weapons to foreign governments. China — that great threat to world security — only sold \$600 million in arms.

Overall, the massive military-industrial complex of the United States accounts for roughly one-half of global arms sales. In addition, the U.S. Army is among the biggest and most expensive in the world.

Despite its claims that these sales go only to nations with legitimate security interests, the fact is that U.S. arms have done as much to contribute to instability throughout the world as have any other weapons shipments. The United States has provided weapons to a number of nations that promptly used them for immoral purposes.

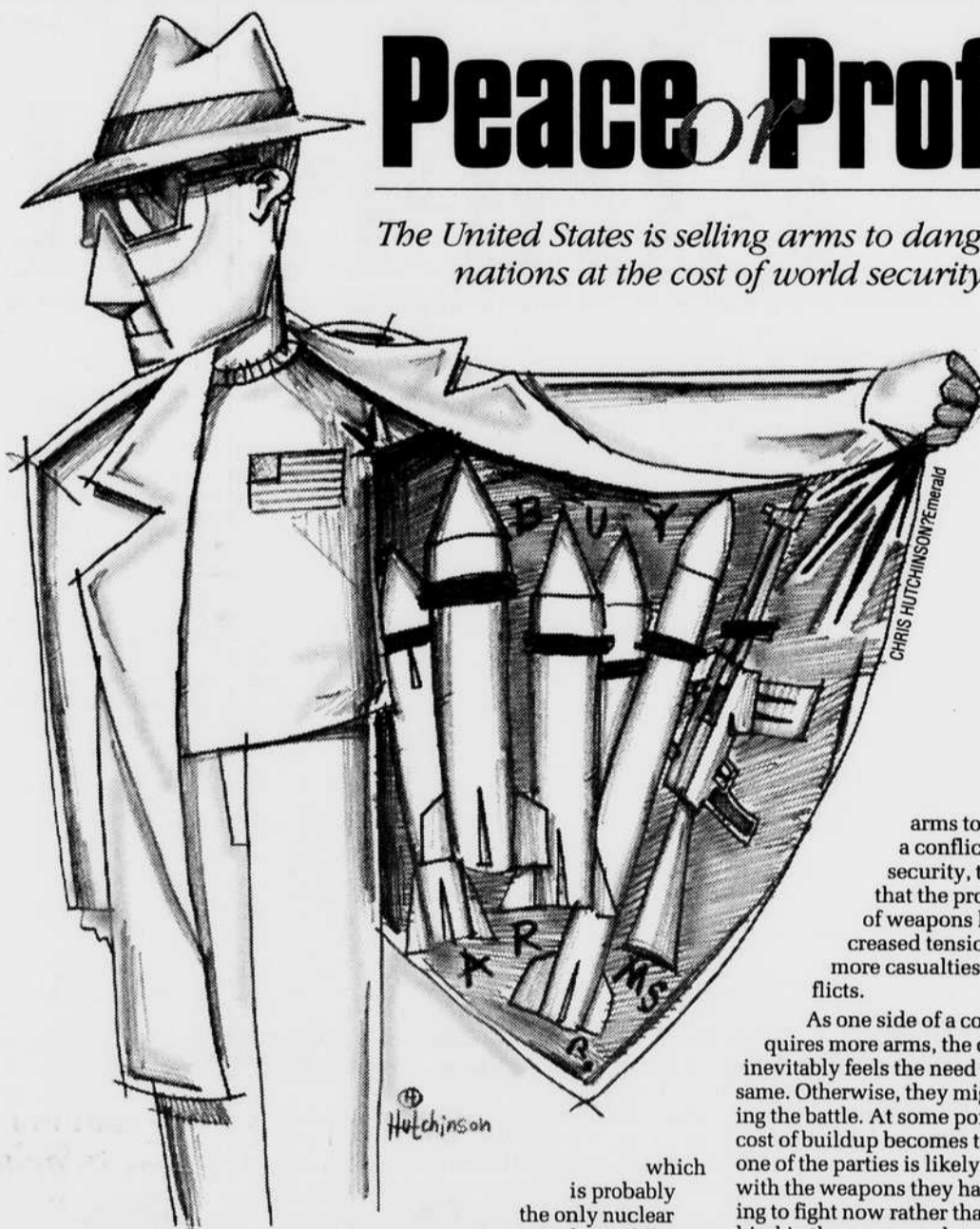
For example, the United States has long provided arms and other assistance to the Indonesian government, despite its abysmal human rights record. According to Matthew Jardine, who was writing in Z Magazine, the United States at one point in the 1980s was providing more than \$1 billion in annual aid to the Indonesian government. Even now, in the post-Cold War era, 1994 sales to the nation from the United States are estimated at more than \$80 million.

The United States has propped up a variety of corrupt Latin American governments at various times because of the perceived strategic importance of the region. Guatemala, El Salvador, Panama and Nicaragua,

among others, have all suffered under military dictatorships because the United States was buying the loyalty of the generals in charge by giving them the weapons needed to oppress their people.

Even Iraq, our enemy in the Persian Gulf War, was at one time a weapons-receiving ally because we backed the secular Iraqis in their civil war against fundamentalist Iran. Saudi Arabia, which finally ended slavery in the 1980s; Kuwait, where less than 20 percent of the people are eligible to vote; and Egypt all receive arms from the United States.

Few nations benefit more from our military friendship than Israel,



## Peace *OR* Profit

*The United States is selling arms to dangerous nations at the cost of world security*

arms to all sides of a conflict ensures security, the fact is that the proliferation of weapons leads to increased tensions and more casualties in conflicts.

As one side of a conflict acquires more arms, the other side inevitably feels the need to do the same. Otherwise, they might risk losing the battle. At some point, as the cost of buildup becomes too high, one of the parties is likely to let loose with the weapons they have, choosing to fight now rather than fall behind in the arms race later.

If the United States is interested in building a secure future for the world, the solution lies in putting a stop to arms sales, not in giving weapons to whomever our ally of the week happens to be.

China's decision to stop providing nuclear technology to Iran is admirable. If the United States would follow suit by ceasing to sell arms to even one of the aggressive governments we currently prop up, that would represent a sign that world stability truly was the goal of the remaining superpower.

*This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses may be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu.*

which is probably the only nuclear power in the Middle East because of its strategic importance to the United States. According to an article recently published in Harper's, U.S.-built missiles were found in the wreckage of civilian vehicles destroyed by Israeli helicopters.

It is reprehensible for the United States to demand that China, Russia and other nations stop sales of arms to countries the United States deems dangerous while U.S. leaders and companies continue to ship billions of dollars worth of weapons to nations with documented human rights abuses.

The solution is not to simply allow more arms sales throughout the world. Despite the claim of certain members of Congress that providing

**Thumbs**



**PRO-MEASURE 51 COMMERCIALS:**

We never want to hear about assisted suicide at the dinner table, but a recent commercial by the proponents of Measure 51 is particularly upsetting. The spot, which many local stations have refused to run, features a young actor who, we are told, erroneously decides to end his own life despite not really having a terminal illness. Not only does the ad capitalize on misunderstanding of the assisted suicide issue, but it also includes descriptions of Billy, the youth in question, dying as he chokes on his own vomit. Political commentary should speak to the brain, not the stomach.



**A STANDARD BLOOD-ALCOHOL LIMIT:**

President Bill Clinton recently proposed national legislation that would set the legal limit for blood alcohol of drivers at .08. This ought to be the absolute maximum states could set; there would be nothing wrong with allowing them to limit drinking and driving even further. For the average 180-pound man, .08 corresponds to five drinks in a one-hour period — more than enough to inhibit driving ability. Even a drink or two can adversely affect a person's ability to drive.

## DRAWING BOARD

