

EDITORIAL

The Business of America Is Business by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'



“The chief business of the American people is business,” said Calvin Coolidge, the thirtieth U.S. President in 1925. He further added, “After all, the chief business of the American people is business. They are profoundly concerned with producing, buying, selling, investing, and prospering in

the world. I am of the opinion that the great majority of people will always find these the moving impulses of our life.”

In the year 2021, the United States exported 138 billion dollars worth of arms, a sharp decline compared to 2020 when the

U.S. exported arms worth 178 billion dollars. Thanks to the war in Ukraine, the U.S. export in 2022 will top that of 2020. Since the start of the war in Ukraine, the stocks of Halliburton (hal), General Dynamics (gd), Lockheed Martin (lmt) and Northrop Grumman (noc) have been gaining 3 to 5% every day.

U.S. arms sales to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have long been justified by the belief that they provide substantial numbers of jobs to American citizens—a line that was famously repeated, and exaggerated, by former President Donald Trump’s administration.

Do we really care about the suffering of the Ukrainian citizens? We didn’t care about the Iraqis and the Afghanis either. We invaded Iraq and killed its president due to the wrong information provided by our intelligence. All we said was “Oops.”

184,382 Iraqis were killed for our small mistake. 80,000 Afghani lives were lost in a war deemed meaningless. In the process, we sold hundreds of billions of arms to Israel, the Middle East countries, and Asia.

Talking of Ukraine, the U.S. riled up Putin, the mad man. All the U.S. had to do was assure that Ukraine won’t be a part of NATO. Admitting more countries into NATO equates to more arms sales. Now, the Balkan states are asking for more and more arms from the U.S. Another business opportunity!

Historically, the United States has sold weapons to almost any nation that wanted to buy them and it still does so indiscriminately. According to a Sludge review of financial disclosures, 51 members of Congress and their spouses own between \$2.3 and \$5.8 million worth of stocks in companies that are among the top 30

defense contractors in the world. In the Senate, nearly one-third of the members of the Defense Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee own stocks in top defense contractors. After all, more than 70% of Lockheed Martin’s \$51 billion in 2018 revenue came from sales to the U.S. government. Companies like Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, and Raytheon sell their products almost exclusively to the government through appropriations approved by Congress.

The defense sector is one of the most powerful political influencers. Individuals and political action committees associated with the defense sector contribute lavishly to political candidates and committees during the campaign cycle. When I worked for General Dynamics, our VP asked us to contribute to GD’s political action committee (of course, it wasn't mandatory). He said, “We give to both the parties (Democrats and Republicans).”

So, who cares about the Ukrainian people? Not us.

