

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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October 23, 2023

The Honorable Lloyd Austin
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Austin,

The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is conducting oversight of the Department of Defense's (DoD) processes and policies for ensuring that American military aid and weapons are properly distributed and used abroad. The Committee has seen reports that U.S.-manufactured weapons are being redistributed and resold in secondary markets to terrorist organizations, including Hamas. The potential possession of U.S. weapons by terrorists is alarming in light of the terrorist group's recent horrific attack on Israel. Therefore, the Committee seeks a staff briefing on DoD procedures for preventing, addressing, and mitigating weapon diversion abroad.

The Committee is aware of a recent Defence Intelligence of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine report alleging that Russian intelligence has repurposed weapons seized during the Ukraine-Russia war, which were manufactured in the United States and the European Union (EU).¹ An Israel Defense Forces (IDF) commander echoed concerns in June 2023, stating that Palestinian groups in the Gaza strip possessed U.S. weapons seized by the Taliban during the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021.² These reports raise issues about how U.S. funding and weaponry are being safeguarded amidst global conflicts.

The Committee is concerned by reports that Hamas and other terrorist organizations may have obtained American-made weapons. Recently released photos show Hamas terrorists allegedly holding what appear to be M4A1 Carbines, which were "specially designed for U.S. Special Operations Forces."³ This would not be the first time our military service members and

¹ Tom Porter, *Russia gave captured US weapons to Hamas as a ploy to undermine Ukraine, report says*, Insider (Oct. 10, 2023).

² Tom O'Connor, *Israel Worries U.S. Weapons for Ukraine Are Ending Up in Iran's Hands*, Newsweek (June 15, 2023).

³ Moshe Hill, *The Biden Factor in Israel's War with Hamas*, Newsweek, (Oct. 10, 2023); Navy Seals, M4A1, <https://navyseals.com/weapons-demo/m4a1/>.


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allies have been targeted by terrorist organizations misappropriating American-made weapons.⁴ Previously, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) reportedly provided Stinger Anti-Aircraft Missiles to the Afghan Mujahideen, which were later obtained and utilized by the Taliban.⁵ More recently, the Taliban released videos and photographs in 2021 of their members flying a U.S. UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter.⁶ The Committee seeks transparency as to how the DoD ensures that military aid, including American-made small arms, are being carefully distributed, safeguarded, and tracked abroad to prevent further incidents.

To assist us in examining this matter and to help our Committee understand DoD's processes for tracking weapons and preventing improper diversion, we request a briefing with Committee staff as soon as possible, but no later than October 30, 2023. The briefing should include information on DoD's current procedures, policies, weapon-recovery measures, and collaborative efforts with U.S. intelligence agencies to safeguard military aid and weaponry abroad. The briefing should address any use of U.S. weapons by Hamas or any other terrorist organization.

To schedule the briefing or ask any related follow-up questions, please contact the Committee staff at (202) 225-5074. The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is the principal oversight committee in the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

Sincerely,


James Comer
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Accountability


Marjorie Taylor Greene
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Jamie Raskin, Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Accountability

⁴ Declan Walsh, Afghanistan War Logs: US covered up fatal Taliban missile strike on Chinook, The Guardian (Jul. 25, 2010).

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Brett Forrest, *Taliban Seeking to Expand Capabilities With U.S. Weaponry*, Wall Street Journal (Sept. 1, 2021).