***The United States Federal Government should substantially reduce Direct Commercial Sales and/or Foreign Military Sales of arms from the United States.***

This is a generic foreign policy topic that encourages students to think about the U.S. role in the world.

This topic encourages conversations about murdered journalist Jamal Khashoggi and US policy towards Saudi Arabia, which frequently appears in the headlines as Congress seeks to end arms sales to nation. President Trump has made increasing arms sales a large part of his larger trade-oriented foreign policy, declared that US diplomats and other foreign service members abroad should actively sell U.S. manufactured arms and using increased arms sales to reduce the overall trade deficit.

This topic also hits home for many of our students. Gun violence is increasingly prevalent in schools, and/or our neighborhoods. Many foreign arm sales find their way back to the U.S., and violence abroad is a large motivator for immigration to the United States, last year’s topic. As part of the experience for many of our students, we expect robust interest and debate on the subject including both facts and figures, but also personal experiences that can help humanize these abstract figures.

Direct Commercial and Foreign Military Sales are the two most common (but not the only) mechanisms that the U.S. uses to transfer weapons, often as part of a broader diplomatic engagement attempting to expand U.S. influence in the recipient country. Both processes require approval of the U.S. government for sales to proceed.

There are several ways affirmative teams will approach the topic:

1. End Sales to a specific country or region (ex. Saudi Arabia, Israel, Taiwan, Ukraine, etc.)
2. End sales of a specific weapon to some or all countries (ex. No drone sales, don’t sell small arms)
3. End sales of specific item(s), to a specific country/region (ex. End sales of lethal weapons to Ukraine, end the sale of F-35s to Taiwan, etc.).

The United States sells weapons to more than 150 countries with some regularity. Affirmative teams will explore a specific scenario of U.S. sales abroad. The cases will usually discuss benefits of ends of sales on the region, on bi-lateral relations, or on other economic, social, or political factors such as human rights and terrorism.

On the negative, students will discuss the U.S. role in the world, the economics of arms sales, and consider whether arms sales are the best way to achieve foreign policy objectives (versus other carrot/stick options in the diplomatic toolbox).

The imagination and ability to debate definitions and topicality are the only boundaries to student creativity this year on a very broad topic, especially for the affirmative. I hope every student finds a part of the topic that speaks to them and encourages them to explore a new area of the world and learn something new.

The WUDL wants to get students thinking about some of the core topics, while leaving space for folks to take the topic wherever they want. Our core files represent an attempt to balance these concerns, and help you learn about some of the big questions in education policy these days. We’ve written the follow files to get you started:

Novice case areas:

Affirmative:

The US Should End Arm Sales to Saudi Arabia

The US Should End the Sale of its Small Arms to all nations

Negative:

Disadvantage: Arms Sales are important to sustain U.S. Influence/Hegemony

Disadvantage: Arms Sales are important to support the U.S. economy

Junior Varsity:

Affirmative:

The U.S. Should End Arms Sales to Honduras

The U.S. Should End the Sale of Drone Technology

The US Should End Arm Sales to Saudi Arabia (Expanded)

Negative:

Disadvantage: Attempts to End Arms Sales will ensure President Trump wins re-election in 2020

Disadvantage: Arms Sales are an abuse of Executive Powers (versus Congress)

Disadvantage: Arms Sales are important to sustain U.S. Influence/Hegemony (Expanded)

Counterplan: Congress Should Be Required To Actively Approve Arms Sales

Kritik: The way we conceptualize “Security” is a self-fulfilling prophecy that makes more enemies