

# What are the US weapons used by Israel in Gaza, and where are they made?

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On November 2, Will Lehman, the Mack Trucks worker who ran as the rank-and-file socialist candidate for president of the UAW, issued a video statement demanding the immediate cessation of production for equipment and munitions used by the Israeli military. At the time of writing, his statement has been viewed over a hundred thousand times, particularly on TikTok where it was widely shared.

In his statement, Lehman endorsed the call of the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions asking workers around the world to “refuse to build weapons destined for Israel ... refuse to transport weapons to Israel ... [to] take action against complicit companies involved in implementing Israel’s brutal and illegal siege.”

Lehman noted, however, that the leadership of the UAW “has ignored the appeal by the Palestinian trade unions,” with UAW President Shawn Fain—the backed candidate of the DSA—inviting President Joe Biden to Michigan “to posture as a friend of working people.” At the time of writing, the UAW leadership remains silent on the call of the Palestinian Federation of Trade Unions to shut down the production of bombs, missiles, and other equipment for war.

More than 1,100 General Dynamics workers in Ohio, Michigan and Pennsylvania were set to strike on October 22 but the UAW announced a last-minute deal to prevent a walkout at the giant defense contractor, which supplies weapons to Israel.

## **The American weapons being used by the IDF to destroy Gaza**

Over ten thousand Palestinian civilians have been killed by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). In just one month of bombing, the IDF has killed 4,000 children. Responding to the slaughter which has been made possible by Biden and the imperialist powers in Europe, United Nations (UN) Secretary General Antonio Guterres described Gaza as a “graveyard for children” on Monday.

The vast majority have been killed inside their apartments, tents, or place of shelter, as bombs fired by Israeli warplanes either kill them on impact or collapse the infrastructure around them, in which case they are crushed to death or suffocate beneath the rubble. Civilians hear the whistling of the bombs for several seconds before the bombs land on their homes and explode. On-the-ground footage from independent journalists, such as Motaz Azaiza (Instagram) and Eye on Palestine (Instagram), shows Palestinian civilians desperately trying to free their relatives and loved-ones from the rubble every day—hoping for signs of life beneath the concrete.

The IDF has one of the more advanced militaries on the planet—funded, almost exclusively, by billions of American tax-dollars. The US has spent over \$130 billion on supplying Israel with weapons since the country’s founding in 1948.

The IDF drops bombs on Gaza from a fleet of American made warplanes. Cross-referencing information from Reuters, the International Institute for Strategic Studies, and Al Jazeera suggests this fleet consists of:

- 40 F-35 advanced Lockheed Martin stealth warplanes (Reuters reports

that a total of 75 have been ordered)

- 196 F-16 multi-purpose planes made by General Dynamics and Lockheed Martin

- 83 F-15 fighters designed and produced by McDonnell Douglas (which is now Boeing)

These warplanes are equipped with bombs, missiles, and guidance kits largely manufactured in the United States.

According to Al Jazeera, almost all of the bombs used are from the MK80 class of aerial munitions. MK80s date back to the Vietnam war and come in different sizes from 120kg (265 lb) to 1,000 kgs (2,204lb). As of the beginning of November, Israel had dropped 25,000 tons of ammunition—about double the power of the atomic bomb dropped by the United States on Hiroshima in World War II.

These bombs, however, have several component parts integral to their use. Most important is the Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) which is an add-on kit that takes an MK80-class bomb, or another “dumb” bomb, and gives it the ability to use GPS guidance. The JDAM kit is essential to targeting US-made bombs in modern warfare.

All of the world’s JDAMS are made by Boeing in a single factory in St. Louis, Missouri. Almost all of the Israel’s MK80 bombs are made by General Dynamics in Garland, Texas. These two sprawling facilities are vital nexuses of US imperialism and form parts of the almost “almost daily” flow of weapons and equipment from the Pentagon to Israel.

There are hundreds of other factories, mines, and ports that help to produce, source, or distribute material for the tanks, fighter jets, ammunition, and other devices used by the IDF to carry out its genocide in Gaza. Israel itself has one of the largest defense industries on the planet, and domestically produces the Merkava 4—its main battle tank.

While the US “defense” industry, as a whole, has experienced dwindling union membership since the 1980s, many of the factories producing weapons are organized under the United Auto Workers (UAW) or the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM).

## **“Cease production of all equipment intended for the Israeli military”**

The working class must be mobilized to oppose imperialist war. The Palestinian General Federations of Trade Unions called on workers to “cease production of all equipment intended for the Israeli military.” UAW presidential candidate Will Lehman explained:

When production of munitions and military equipment for Israel is stopped, all workers in the affected factories must be paid 100 percent of their salaries by the corporations who have profited from contracts with the perpetrators of war crimes. A coordinated education campaign must be initiated to inform the entire UAW membership about the ongoing genocide in Gaza, and resolutions in support of the appeal by our brothers and sisters in Palestine

must be passed in every local.

Significant protests have targeted the weapons pipeline coming out of the United States.

- On Thursday, November 2, 60 protesters blocked the entrance to Raytheon in Tucson, November, demanding the company end its extensive sales to the IDF.

- On Friday, November 3, hundreds of protesters and several rank-and-file members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) stalled the military vessel *Cape Orlando* in Oakland, California, as it headed to Israel with military supplies.

- On Monday, November 6, hundreds more protesters tried to block *Cape Orlando* in Tacoma, Washington. At least three dock workers refused to handle the cargo.

- Also on Monday, 75 young protesters blocked entrances to the Boeing plant outside of St. Louis, Missouri, the one which builds JDAMS, delaying the start of the shift by four hours, according to St. Louis Public Radio.

- Several protests have occurred at Elbit Systems, one of the largest Israeli defense companies. This includes a protest of over 200 people at Elbit's US headquarters in Boston.

Internationally, workers have also intervened in an effort to stop the war:

- Last week Belgian airport unions called on workers not to handle arms shipments to Israel.

- This week, dockworkers in Barcelona, Spain announced they would refuse to handle any military material as the war rages.

Every effort should be made to appeal to workers in these industries to develop their own rank-and-file committees to discuss the war and its direct relationship to the escalating attack on the working class.

Manufacturing workers in the US have been crushed under years of spiraling inflation, deteriorating conditions on the shopfloor, anemic pay increases, and the erosion of health and pension benefits. Meanwhile, trillions go to war!

While the major American trade unions, including the ILWU and UAW, have issued calls to not handle goods headed towards Russia—following their Democratic Party keepers—hypocritically, none of them have issued statements condemning the slaughter in Gaza, nor demanded the cessation of production and distribution of goods headed to Israel.

Below the *World Socialist Web Site* reports on the key nodes of production for American-made armaments being used in Israel's war against Gaza, and for US imperialism more broadly.

#### **Garland, Texas**—General Dynamics

What it produces: *all-purpose MK-80 series bombs, the most widely used air-to-surface bomb.*

General Dynamics Ordnance and Tactical Systems has a monopoly on the government contract to produce the MK-80 bomb bodies for the US military. According to a Federal government synopsis, “[t]he MK-80 Series GP bombs are used as building blocks for numerous variants of non-guided and precision-guided air-delivered munitions.”

According to the US Army, the General Dynamic facility in Garland, Texas, is a sprawling 38-acre, 37-building armaments center, encompassing 650,000 square feet. It had 247 employees in 2011. It is unclear how the facility has changed since 2011.

The MK-80 series ordnance is the primary bomb being used by the IDF as it destroys Gaza. The IDF uses several variants of the MK-80 with a JDAMS kit to guide it. General Dynamics only produces the shell of the MK-80 type bomb, before sending it off to a US Army Military Ammunition Plant. The bomb is then filled by the US Army before delivered to a customer.

#### **McAlester, Oklahoma**—US Army

There are seven Army Ammunition Plants in the United States. Based on news reports, it seems that the main filling station for the MK-80 type bombs is in McAlester, Oklahoma, at the McAlester Army Ammunition Plant.

The facility produces a wide variety of bombs, including the infamous Massive Ordnance Air Blast (MOAB), whose yield is comparable to a tactical nuclear weapon. The MOAB was first used by the United States government in 2017 on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border—the largest ever non-nuclear weapon detonated.

#### **St. Louis, Missouri**—Boeing

What it produces: *Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAMs), “bunker busters” (GBU-72s), F-15s, F-16s.*

Boeing runs several sprawling armaments and military manufacturing facilities in the northwest suburbs of St. Louis. Boeing Building 598 in the St. Charles area of the St. Louis area is responsible for the entire world's supply of JDAMS, a crucial piece of military hardware. JDAMS are kits that are attached to munitions, like a MK-80 type bomb, to enable a bomb to target a particular GPS coordinate. These “smart bombs” allow militaries to target specific areas. As the ongoing onslaught in Gaza demonstrates, such capabilities do not in any way lead to a minimization of civilian casualties.

According to a November 3 article by *Time*, Boeing is speeding up the delivery of as many as 1,800 JDAMS. As reported, protesters blocked the Boeing 598 building which produces the world's JDAMS this week, delaying the shift by four hours.

Nearby, Boeing produces the F-18 and F-15 fighter jets. The F-15, in particular, plays a key role in Israel's air force.

While it is unclear how many of the Boeing workers in this area are unionized, at least 2,500 of them are represented by the International Association of Machinists (IAM). These workers had a major contract negotiation last year, during which rank-and-file anger initially helped to reject a sell-out contract. Workers were upset about the inadequate pay increases in the face of record inflation. The IAM has rammed through concessionary contracts, with pay raises below the rate of inflation, at Southwest Airlines and the defense contractor Eaton Corp. in Davenport, Iowa.

Boeing's Air Force manufacturing factories are just one or two miles from Ferguson, Missouri, the site of mass protests in 2014 following the murder of 18-year-old Michael Brown, during which military hardware was deployed against civilian protestors.

#### **Archbald, Pennsylvania**—Lockheed Martin

What it produces: *GBU-12 (Paveway 2) ammunition, advanced laser-guided munitions, Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (GMLRS), Patriot missiles.*

According to Lockheed Martin, its Archbald facility is 350,000 square feet—“a full-service Missiles and Fire Control (MFC) mission area that provides design, manufacturing, engineering, and field service and support to its domestic and international customers.” More than 500 workers are employed there.

The GBU-12 is the most widely used laser-guided bomb. The Paveway 2 refers to the guidance kit, whereas the GBU-12 refers to the overall weapon series. The bomb was developed in the Vietnam war to hit moving National Liberation Front targets on the Ho Chi Minh trail. These are primarily used by aircraft to hit ground targets.

According to *Business Insider*, the IDF is likely using GBU-12s in its 40 F-35 fighters, the most advanced warplane it possesses. GBU stands for Guided Bomb Units (GBUs), and is a general term used by the military. GBU-12s are designed to be used against armored targets and weigh 500 pounds.

#### **Fort Worth, Texas**—Lockheed Martin

What it produces: *F-35, F-16, other.*

Lockheed Martin employs over 20,000 people in Texas. Its main

manufacturing site and headquarters is in Fort Worth, west of Dallas. Technically owned by the US Air Force, the USAF Plant 4 produces the most advanced fighter jet—the F-35.

Both the F-35 and F-16 are used by the IDF and have been essential in the IDF's destruction of Gaza.

#### **Tucson, Arizona**—Raytheon Missile Systems

What it produces: *GBU-28 "bunker busters." Laser-guided bombs, missiles.*

According to the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), which investigates companies for divestment campaigns, Raytheon "makes missiles, bombs, components for fighter jets, and other weapon systems used by the Israeli military against Palestinian civilians. Its surveillance technology is also used to monitor the U.S.–Mexico border."

More than 12,000 people work at Raytheon's main headquarters and production facilities in Tucson, according to the company (which is now called RTX). The facilities help to produce a variety of key armaments for the IDF, including a bunker buster bomb used by the IDF in the 2022 assault on Gaza (the GBU-28). Government contracts show that Raytheon makes their own variant of the Paveway laser-guided bomb kit and a variety of other missiles for the IDF, including the TOW, the AGM-65 Maverick, the Sidewinder, and the AIM-120 AMRAAM missile.

The AFSC explains that Raytheon also "provides weapon systems, components, and maintenance services to the Israeli Air Force's fleet of F-15, F-16, and F-35 fighter jets. For example, the company and its subsidiary Pratt & Whitney have provided F100 engines—the 'engine of choice' for F-15 and F-16 aircraft—and APG-82(V)1 radars."

Raytheon makes a variety of smaller electronic components as well for the IDF, regularly working with Elbit Systems, a leading Israeli weapons company. Elbit's headquarters have been the seat of several major protests and blockades in the last few weeks.

#### **Scranton, Pennsylvania**—General Dynamics

What it produces: *projectiles, mortar ordnance, 155mm ordnance.*

The General Dynamics facility in Scranton is a massive half million square foot government-owned facility, also known as the Scranton Army Ammunition Plant. The factory is the single most important armament factory for the war in Ukraine, producing the key 155mm and 120mm ordnance used by the artillery that dominate its bloody trench-warfare. These munitions are also used by the Israeli government and other partners of US imperialism around the world—but they are not currently central to the onslaught against Gaza.

There are about 400 employees at the Scranton plant organized under UAW Local 1193.

#### **Camden, Arkansas**—Lockheed Martin, Raytheon

What it produces: *Patriot missiles, or PAC-3 missiles; Tomahawk and Standard missiles; Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-missile systems, ATACMS, MLRS, and HIMARS.*

According to a 2022 *Politico* article, "Some of the most crucial weapons in the Ukraine war are made in Camden, Arkansas. But a shortage of skilled workers risks slowing the production lines."

Over 1,000 employees are employed at Lockheed Martin's 85,000 square-foot Camden facility. A significant \$142 million investment was made to expand the site in 2019, with the intention of producing the more advanced PAC-3 MSE variant of the Patriot missile at higher rates. The expansion should raise yearly output to 500 MSE missiles for the Patriot missile system.

Lockheed Martin produces the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) and its associated missiles in Camden. These missiles have been a crucial part of the war in Ukraine since Ukraine began using them in June 2022. Lockheed also produces a variety of ammunition for the HIMARS in Camden. This includes the MGM-140 Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS), the MLRS, and the GMLRS.

A total of approximately 2,800 workers are employed in Camden.

Raytheon, now known as RTX, has plans to open a new, \$33 million missile factory in 2025 which will produce SkyHunter missiles for the United States and Israeli militaries.

#### **Lima, Ohio**—General Dynamics

What it produces: *Abrams tank, other tanks.*

The Lima Army Tank Plant is the key production site for the US's leading battle tank, the Abrams. According to the local city government, "the Lima plant is the only producer of tanks in America. It is now called the Joint Systems Manufacturing Center... to more accurately reflect the plant's mission of manufacturing more combat vehicles than just tanks."

In the last year, the Lima plant has been heralded as a critical production site for the war in Ukraine, given the importance of US Abrams tanks. As of last month, 31 M1A1 Abrams tanks had been delivered to Ukraine by the US government. Israel does not own any Abrams tanks.

The Lima production line employs 800 people in a vast 369-acre facility. During World War II, at the height of wartime production, it employed over 5,000 people.

#### **Sterling Heights, Michigan** (General Dynamics)

What it produces: *repairs for Abrams tank, M10 Booker Combat Vehicle, Stryker Double-V Hull.*

General Dynamics' Sterling Heights facility helps to produce and repair a variety of key military combat vehicles. It won a \$47.6 million contract this year to provide technical support for the Abrams tank earlier this year. This facility is organized by the UAW.

#### **Conclusion**

This list is only a partial account of some of the key nodes of military hardware and ordnance production in the United States. Other important facilities include Lincoln, Nebraska, (General Dynamics), Springboro, Ohio, (General Dynamics), Ridley Park, Pennsylvania, (Boeing), Irvine, Pennsylvania, (Elwood National Forge), and Greenville, South Carolina, (Lockheed Martin).

The assault on Gaza is not an isolated event. Rather, it is a part of a web of conflicts and plans that threaten a Third World War. In Ukraine, the US aims to destabilize Russia, potentially dismembering it and redividing its resources. In Iran, one of the last-remaining bastions of cheap, undeveloped, oil reserves, and home to tens of millions of people—the US hopes to remove a long-standing thorn in its side. But above all, the US is concerned about China and its meteoric economic rise, which the Pentagon sees as the leading existential threat to continued American hegemony.

In all these plans, Israel remains a key strategic regional asset in the oil-rich Middle East. As President Biden recently stated in Congress, "[Israel] is the best three billion dollar investment we make. Were there not an Israel, the United States would have to invent an Israel to protect her interests in the region." Robert F. Kennedy, the rabidly pro-Israel anti-vax Democratic Party presidential candidate, more bluntly stated, China, Russia, the 'BRICS' "will control 90% of the world in the oil if Israel disappears... It's almost like having an aircraft carrier in the Middle East."

The fight against the slaughter in Gaza, and the more fundamental fight against the US's march towards global war, requires the mass mobilization of the working class.

As the Editorial Board of the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote earlier this week,

[T]he social base for opposing Israel's war crimes, and the broader imperialist war of which it is a part, is the working class, the vast majority of the world's population. It is not through appeals to the capitalist states and the parties of the ruling class that the genocide will be stopped, but through the mobilization of that social force which produces all of society's wealth.

This report shows how concentrated the American arms industry is. This concentration points to the immense power the American working class has in resisting and opposing the war plans being hatched behind their back in Washington D.C.

The American working class, like its brothers and sisters across the globe, is objectively hostile to the plotting of the Pentagon. Trillions of dollars spent on death must be redirected to social services and the reconstruction of societies around the world. American workers must join with their class brothers in Belgium, Spain, Palestine, and all around the world, in opposing the destruction of Gaza and the descent into World War III.



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