

U.S. Should Sell Bradley Tomatoes, Not Bradley Tanks

While surfing cable channels in mid-July to catch up on the macabre situation in Syria, I caught the last 90 seconds of a report on a U.S.-funded “weapons fair.”

“The Business of Kaboom” featured a handful of foreign reporters touring a remote desert area of Jordan.

From what I gleaned, the United States has provided Jordan’s King Abdullah a \$200 million grant to build a desert training base replete with a model of a military transport airplane, helicopters, a five-story concrete structure of the type one finds in Near Eastern capitals, and combat training ranges.

A gigantic air-conditioned warehouse served as the exhibit venue for what the reporter referred to as a “weapons fair trade show.”

The interior of the warehouse was a carefully staged and choreographed “Home Depot” of U.S. weapons, experts, demonstrations and well-designed digital graphics.

The surrounding exterior served as the training area for the prospective buyers’ armies.

And, much like customers at a Best Buy, prospective buyers were allowed to inspect and test the hardware and software that run much of the sophisticated weaponry.

Two people were shown inspecting and handling an 18-inch shiny cannon shell with the same diligence that museum curators handle a rare and fragile artifact.

The video zeroed in on helicopters, machine guns, bullets, scopes, bombs, shells and missiles of every type and size.

The reporter pointed out that while the arms were manufactured by U.S. companies, the customers were primarily Middle Easterners and Africans.

Whether it is Libya, Egypt, Israel, Syria, Mali, Somalia, Sudan, Nigeria, the

Congo, Pakistan or Afghanistan (to name but a few hot spots), the Merchants of Death from the so-called civilized Western Hemisphere (including Russia) have been exploiting millions of human beings around the world.

For 30 years now, the annual \$1.5 billion U.S. military aid to Egypt has propped up a corrupt and brutal regime that has hindered serious peace negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.

The Israelis have been infinitely smarter; they worked out a deal with successive U.S. presidents and 536 congressmen whereby their military is given \$2.5 billion per year.

The monies are used to develop sophisticated electronic weapons systems that are then sold to the U.S. military, the former Soviet republics, India and China.

No one wants to discuss this sweetheart deal. It not only exports American jobs to Israel, but it also supplies China with some of the most sophisticated electronic gadgetry in the weapons industry.

This year alone, the United States sold Saudi Arabia \$60 billion worth of arms to help keep 7,000 Saudi princes in power.

The West has become a victim of its addiction to oil and Africa's rich minerals. It is this addiction that forces us to prostitute our principles by propping up brutal dictators and thugs, who sit atop oceans of black gold and precious minerals.

Four years ago, Barak Obama charmed us with his personal journey. Like so many, I took it - hook, line and sinker.

After eight years of warmongering, I was so ready for change I could believe in. And as the personal attacks on him increased, my respect and support took on a deeper respect and empathy.

However, when he began to walk away from the principles he articulated in his early speeches as president, I slowly began to walk away from him.

After it became obvious that he served the powerful special-interest groups that plague American politics, and after watching his secretary of state prance through foreign capitals selling arms to tyrannical thugs, I became convinced that he was answering the same 3 a.m. phone call that Hillary Clinton referred to

during her campaign.

Imagine how much better this world would be had the U.S. government built a warehouse in Jordan that exhibited water pumps, drip-irrigation technology, fertilizers, seeds of every sort (including fruit, shade and forest reclamation seedlings that are climate-appropriate), garden and yard tools, soil-testing kits, earth-tilling machinery and tractors for every type of soil and terrain.

Imagine if agricultural experts handed out brochures loaded with information on all aspects of agriculture and horticulture.

Best of all, imagine if American farmers and agriculture students manned the various stations with hands-on projects and worked in tandem with Asian, African and Latin American citizens to empower them and sell them tools of hope instead of tools of death.

For some 20 years, I handed small packets of Bradley tomato seeds to my foreign students in an end-of-the-semester ritual.

For some 40 years, I have been sending seeds of the same brand - first developed in Bradley County, Ark. - to friends and acquaintances across the United States and the globe.

I merely use this simple gesture as a metaphor; given the proper nurturing, diplomacy is like a seed.

Imagine what this world would be like if Secretary of State Clinton took some Arkansas-bred Bradley tomato seeds - instead of Bradley tanks - on her trips abroad.

Just imagine. This would be a change in which all humanity could believe.

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