

'IS fighting US using American weapons'

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RT: *At the end of September the Pentagon signed a \$251 million deal to buy more Tomahawk missiles. Can the U.S. financially afford leading such a war?*

Max Abrahms: I think the US can indeed afford this war, but I certainly agree with the thrust of your question: wars of course are very expensive. The Pentagon has estimated that the US is spending about \$8 million per day on this air campaign. Interestingly, if you look at share's prices of major defense contractors, major defense firms, and places like Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics, and Raytheon since August 8 - when the US has begun military operations against ISIS- you see the price of their stocks going up. These companies are gaining larger and larger contracts like for the Tomahawk missiles in the case of Boeing for their precision guided munitions. Basically the cost of this war will not be distributed equally among companies, among the American public. Many sectors will probably pay a price for the war but other ones like in the defense industry are profiting.

RT: *Shares of weapons manufacturers are going up right now. Do you think these companies would like to prolong the fighting?*

MA: The short answer is: "yes." In terms of the companies' own interest, in terms of their profit, in terms of their revenue, surely war facilitates that if you are in the defense industry in the same way that if you are a physician; you are not going to be paid very much if there is no sickness. If you roll back the clock before this summer when Islamic State started making gains throughout Syria and Iraq there was an expectation that the Pentagon was going to dramatically cut its

spending because the war had wound down in Iraq, Obama withdrew the troops in 2011, and in December of this year the US will be withdrawing from Afghanistan. If you are a defense contractor of course you are going to begin to wonder where is that new demand going to come from. Essentially Islamic State has offered it.

RT: *Do you agree that the defense sector is developing at the expense of the other branches of the economy?*

MA: I think that is true. There isn't perfectly even growth right now. There hasn't been a large spike in employment levels. But the defense industry is certainly profiting. If you look at the major indexes like the Standard & Poor's 500, and you compare the defense industry to other sectors, it is really quite clear that the price of stocks is rising at a faster rate for the defense industry than for other industries. So, I agree with that completely.

RT: *The war promises to generate more business not just from US government contracts but other countries in a growing coalition, including European and Arab states. So who is profiting from these wars?*

MA: Sure. These defense companies are not limited to American companies, and I think that they do all benefit in the case of something like the IS because so many countries right now feel the need to arm and to rearm themselves in order to keep peace with the growing terrorism threat. It is not just the US investing heavily in the defense industry, but frankly every member of the coalition - whether it is the UAE or the Saudis or the Jordanians. They need to keep the peace, and they are buying weapons too, often times US weapons. Of course the irony is that the US in a larger coalition is using these weapons often times against IS, which has been armed inadvertently by the US and by this Sunni coalition countries because we provided arms in the context of the Arab Awakening to support the uprising against Assad and IS ended up prying these weapons away from the so-called moderate Syrian rebels as well as by scaring the Iraqi Federal Forces into submission. The US had been arming to the teeth the Iraqi government. So IS is actually fighting using our own weapons against us.

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