

U.S. still training Saudi pilots after Yemen school bus attack



Washington, September 1 (RHC)-- The U.S. Air Force has recently put out request for information (RFI) forms, calling on contractors to come forward with pricing and availability details for training no less than 41 Royal Saudi Air Force personnel, the website The Young Turks network has reported.

While there are no details available about the program's starting dates, a submission deadline of September 24 for the RFIs shows that the program is slated to begin in near future. The Pentagon has posted another document that lays out the required training instructors, noting that the objective would be to train Saudi pilots for operating the F-15 fighter jets.

The records even mention weapons-specific training, including “F-15S Weapons School Instructor Pilot” and “Air Battle Manager/Weapons School Weapons Director Instructor.”

Considered the backbone of Saudi Arabia's air force, the F-15s have been used to carry out the bulk of the thousands of airstrikes that Riyadh and its allies have carried out on Yemeni cities since the unprovoked war began in March 2015.

More interestingly, the RFI forms went online less than two weeks after a Saudi warplane targeted a Yemeni school bus in Sa'ada, killing 40 children. Ironically, an American-made 500-pound (227 kilogram) laser-guided bomb was used to hit the bus.

The attack caused much uproar, forcing U.S. officials, who first refused to address it, to react. After selling Saudis billion of dollars in weapons and intelligence to attack Yemen, Washington is now reportedly asking the regime to reduce civilian casualties.

Earlier this week, U.S. media reported that the Pentagon had apparently warned Riyadh that it will reduce intelligence and military support for the kingdom unless necessary action is taken to limit civilian casualties.

U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis and General Joseph Votel, who oversees U.S. military operations in the Middle East, are concerned that the U.S. is helping Saudis and their allies, including the United Arab Emirates, with killing civilians, unnamed officials familiar with the Pentagon's view told CNN.

It is not yet clear whether U.S. President Donald Trump, who has been very supportive of the Saudis after inking a hefty \$110-billion arms deal with the oil-rich kingdom last year, would allow a reduction of support for the Riyadh regime.

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