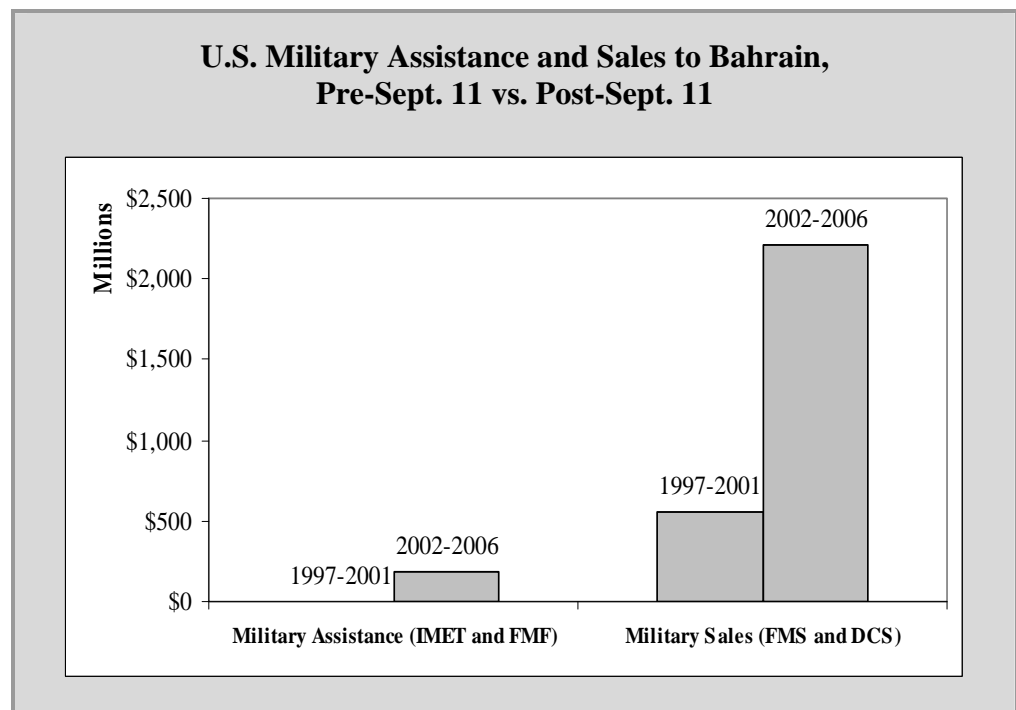




## BAHRAIN

### Background

The Persian Gulf state of Bahrain has been ruled by one family – the al-Khalifa family – since the late 1700s. In the 1830s, the al-Khalifa family signed treaties with the United Kingdom to become a British protectorate, joining Qatar and the seven sheikhdoms that later became the United Arab Emirates that had already aligned themselves with the United Kingdom. By the late 1960s, Britain was ready to disengage from its obligations in the Persian Gulf, owing to domestic financial trouble, and in 1971, Britain officially withdrew its advisers and ended its obligations to Bahrain.



After the British left, Sheik Isa bin Hamad al-Khalifa, who became Amir of Bahrain in 1961, took preliminary steps towards liberalizing the political system in Bahrain. In 1973, he established a constitution and the country's first parliament, whose members were elected in national elections. However, when the parliament subsequently attempted to pass laws ending the rule of the al-Khalifa family, the Amir disbanded the body and resumed his absolute governing powers.

With power concentrated in the hands of the Sunni al-Khalifa family while Bahrain's majority Shiite population remained disenfranchised, anti-regime tensions developed and came to a violent breaking point in the 1990s. In 1994, Shiites calling for greater democratic reforms organized protests throughout the country. In an attempt to appease his citizens, Sheik Isa increased the size of the Consultative Council to allow greater representation of Shiites in the government, and appointed a new

cabinet, which had not been done in 20 years. However, these attempted reforms were met with a wave of bombings orchestrated by Shiite militant groups, and the security forces responded forcefully, killing 20 citizens during a 1996 demonstration, and arresting and torturing thousands more.

Sheik Isa died in March 1999, and was succeeded by his son, Sheik Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa. Sheik Hamad made substantial reforms to the government, which eventually succeeded in quieting the unrest. In his 2001 National Action Charter, Hamad outlined his plans to transform Bahrain into a constitutional monarchy, establishing a bicameral parliament with a directly elected lower house. His plans also included a complete pardon for all political prisoners. The charter was submitted to a national referendum and was overwhelmingly approved; when the charter was implemented one year later, Hamad changed his title from Amir to King, to reflect the power shift. However, Hamad's reforms only went so far towards creating a consolidated democracy in Bahrain. The parliament still does not have the authority to introduce legislation – this power lies with the cabinet, which is appointed by the king. The king also has the ability to rule by decree, and the al-Khalifa family continues to control all branches of government, including the military. The leading Shiite opposition group, al-Wifaq, boycotted the 2002 parliamentary elections in protest over the fact that the upper house of parliament, appointed by the king, would have the same powers as the elected house. This boycott resulted in a lower house made up predominately of pro-government Sunni candidates. Al-Wifaq participated in November 2006 parliamentary elections, and Shiite candidates made significant gains, improving their degree of representation in the government.

Although the government has worked to advance human rights and improve citizens' ability to change their government through more democratic means, the U.S. Department of State notes several remaining human rights problems in Bahrain in its 2006 human rights report. The constitution calls for an independent judiciary, but courts are often subject to government pressure. The government recently took action to restore legitimacy to the judiciary by excusing five judges for corruption and conducting a transparent recruitment for new judges, but a lack of transparency in government activity makes it hard to assess the true levels of corruption that may exist. According to the State Department, there are "no known instances," either in 2006 or in previous years, in which members of the police or the security forces have been prosecuted for committing human rights abuses and human rights groups have taken issue with a 2001 amnesty which pardoned officials of any abuses committed during crackdowns on demonstrators during the 1990s. Violence and discrimination against women is common, as is discrimination based on religion and ethnicity. Forced labor and human trafficking are also problems, especially among the large non-citizen migrant worker population, who have no formal rights within Bahrain.

The removal of the Sunni regime in Iraq, which has made way for the Shiite majority to have greater control over that country, has resonated within Bahrain, where the Sunni al-Khalifa family rules over a majority Shiite population. When the liberalization of government and expansion of certain freedoms during Hamad's first few years in power failed to completely appease the populace and incited calls for even greater reforms, the government began reconsolidating its authority. The government must give authorization for all public gatherings of more than five persons. The government owns all radio and television outlets in Bahrain and maintains a significant degree of control over the print media, via censorship and harassment, and the resulting self-censorship of journalists. Citizens have been imprisoned for critiquing the government or addressing other sensitive issues such as sectarianism.

The Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, a Shiite organization that attempted to overthrow the Bahraini government in 1981 and perpetrated the 1996 bombing of the Diplomat Hotel, has now

integrated itself into the political process and renounced violence. The last round of parliamentary elections, held in late 2006, resulted in an Islamist-dominated parliament. Although tensions remain between the government and the citizens of Bahrain, they have not yet led to violence again as they did in the 1990s.

The U.S.-Bahraini relationship is largely predicated on defense issues. The United States has maintained a naval presence in Bahrain since the late 1940s. Following the 1991 Gulf War, Bahrain and the United States signed a 10-year defense agreement, which was renewed in 2001, that grants the United States access to Bahraini military facilities and allows for joint exercises between the two countries. The United States has used Bahraini facilities extensively, first during the 1991 Gulf War, and more recently as a base for operations in support of U.S. efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Bahrain was also designated a “major non-NATO ally” in 2002, in recognition of the long-standing U.S.-Bahraini military relationship, and its cooperation in counterterrorism efforts. This status makes Bahrain eligible for greater defense cooperation and training with the United States, and gives the country greater access to U.S. weapons systems.

### **U.S. Military Assistance Prior to Sept. 11, 2001**

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Strong U.S.-Bahraini defense ties led to substantial amounts of arms sales between fiscal year 1990 (FY 90) and FY 01. Direct Commercial Sales (DCS) totaled \$8.7 million, and Foreign Military Sales (FMS) totaled over \$1 billion and included several purchases of advanced weaponry. Bahrain purchased F-16 fighter jets as well as advanced medium-range air-to-air missiles (AMRAAM) for the jets, and has also purchased approximately 70 Stinger shoulder-fired missiles. In 2000, Bahrain endeavored to buy short-range ballistic missiles from the United States and the sale was approved, with the condition that the missiles are jointly controlled by the United States and Bahrain, and Bahrain does not have access to the launch codes.

Bahrain also received substantial amounts of weaponry through the Excess Defense Articles (EDA) program, and was by far the largest EDA recipient during this period. Between FY 90 and FY 01, Bahrain received over \$500 million worth of defense articles, including dozens of Cobra attack helicopters and battle tanks, numerous components of Hawk surface-to-air missile systems, grenade launchers, more than 2000 .38 mm pistols, hundreds of thousands of rounds of ordnance, and assorted other weaponry and weapon components, all purchased at drastically reduced prices.

Additionally, Bahrain received \$1.5 million in International Military Education and Training (IMET) funding and \$1.5 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) between FY 90 and FY 01.

### **U.S. Military Assistance Since Sept. 11, 2001**

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Bahrain is the headquarters of the U.S. Navy’s Fifth Fleet, and has provided basing and overflight rights for the U.S. military since the 1991 Gulf War. Bahraini government officials openly support U.S. efforts against international terrorism and Bahrain has used its role as a Middle Eastern banking center to work at freezing terrorists’ financial assets. In July 2004, Bahraini authorities arrested six men suspected of having ties to al-Qaida and plotting attacks on Western and U.S. targets. In addition to counterterrorism cooperation, the Bush administration has also lauded Bahrain for being a model of

democracy in the Middle East. These factors have helped make Bahrain one of the top recipients of U.S. military assistance and weaponry among the 25 countries examined in this series, and give the country access to much more sophisticated weaponry than its neighbors. For example, Bahrain is the only Middle Eastern country allowed to purchase Stinger missiles from the United States.

Bahrain is second only to Pakistan in the amount of FMF received since FY 02, which totals \$162 million, more than a hundred-fold increase over the total FMF received between FY 90 and FY 01. Although prior to Sept. 11, 2001, Bahrain had not been a regular recipient of FMF, steady appropriations began in FY 02, “in appreciation of Bahrain’s support in OEF and OIF,” according to the Congressional Research Service. Over \$15 million in FMF is requested for Bahrain in both FY 06 and FY 07. IMET funding has increased each year since FY 02, with \$649,000 allocated in FY 05 and comparable amounts requested in FY 06 and FY 07. Bahrain has concluded more commercial arms sales than any other country in this series, purchasing nearly \$2 billion in U.S. arms between FY 02 and FY 06 via DCS, and more than \$400 million in arms through FMS during the same time period.

Since FY 05, Bahrain has received funding to expand its counterterrorism capabilities through the Foreign Operations budget’s Anti-Terrorism Assistance program (NADR-ATA), which is part of the Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Activities account. Bahrain received nearly \$3 million in FY 06, and \$750,000 is requested from this account for FY 08.

<b>U.S. Military Assistance and Sales to Bahrain, FY 90 - FY 08</b>					
	<b>IMET</b>	<b>FMF</b>	<b>DCS</b>	<b>FMS</b>	<b>EDA</b>
<b>1990</b>	\$0	\$0	\$2,536,000	\$87,928,000	n/a
<b>1991</b>	\$0	\$0	\$677,000	\$59,876,000	n/a
<b>1992</b>	\$74,000	\$1,000,000	\$817,000	\$105,635,000	n/a
<b>1993</b>	\$103,000	\$500,000	\$85,000	\$67,468,000	\$547,491
<b>1994</b>	\$56,000	\$0	\$1,370,000	\$70,730,000	\$3,716,385
<b>1995</b>	\$75,000	\$0	\$1,853,000	\$39,574,000	\$67,950,226
<b>1996</b>	\$108,000	\$0	\$616,000	\$38,617,000	\$168,181,026
<b>1997</b>	\$149,000	\$0	\$98,000	\$61,092,000	\$33,145,654
<b>1998</b>	\$251,000	\$0	\$122,000	\$61,734,000	\$102,495,900
<b>1999</b>	\$228,000	\$0	\$152,000	\$48,229,000	\$78,363,040
<b>2000</b>	\$216,000	\$0	\$22,000	\$54,211,000	\$56,138,077
<b>2001</b>	\$249,000	\$0	\$342,000	\$334,765,000	\$5,829,360
<b>1990-2001</b>	\$1,509,000	\$1,500,000	\$8,690,000	\$1,029,859,000	\$516,367,159
<b>1997-2001</b>	\$1,093,000	\$0	\$736,000	\$560,031,000	\$275,972,031
<b>2002</b>	\$395,000	\$28,500,000	\$11,000	\$81,975,000	\$0
<b>2003</b>	\$448,000	\$90,000,000	\$246,000	\$96,493,000	\$2,031,230
<b>2004</b>	\$568,000	\$24,682,000	\$2,139,000	\$78,167,000	\$0
<b>2005</b>	\$649,000	\$18,847,000	\$921,775,000	\$61,988,000	\$0
<b>2006</b>	\$651,000	\$15,593,000	\$871,438,000	\$93,606,000	\$0
<b>2002-2006</b>	\$2,711,000	\$177,622,000	\$1,795,609,000	\$412,229,000	\$2,031,230
<b>2007</b>	\$640,000	\$15,750,000	\$7,352,000	\$22,000,000	\$0
<b>2008</b>	\$650,000	\$4,300,000	\$26,026,000	\$335,000,000	n/a

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