

## U.S. Unblocks Bahrain F-16s Sale

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The U.S. State Department has informally notified congressional leaders that the Trump administration intends to proceed with the sale of 19 Lockheed Martin Corp. F-16 fighter jets to Bahrain, dropping the human rights conditions that had held up the deal during the Obama administration. Army Gen. Joseph Votel, commander of U.S. forces in the Middle East, told the House Armed Services Committee on March 29 that the delay in the sale worth as much as \$4 billion in aircraft and upgrades to Bahrain's existing F-16 fleet, due to "concerns of potential human rights abuses in the country, continues to strain our relationship" with the Persian Gulf country. Bahrain's Sunni Muslim minority leadership, citing what it says are threats from Shiite Muslim Iran, has cracked down on protests predominantly by the majority Shiite population. The informal notification to the chairmen and ranking members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Senate Foreign Relations Committee is generally followed by formal notification, which starts a 30-day period during which Congress can block the sale.

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