

Taliban has billions in US weapons, including Black Hawks and up to 600K rifles



The war chest included at least 600,000 infantry weapons — including M16 assault rifles. Rahmat Gul/AP

The Taliban has seized US weapons left in Afghanistan worth billions — possibly including 600,000 assault rifles, some 2,000 armored vehicles, and 40 aircraft, including Black Hawks, according to reports.

The US gave the Afghan military an estimated \$28 billion in weaponry between 2002 and 2017 — including seven brand new helicopters delivered to Kabul just a month ago.

The war chest also included the supply of at least 600,000 infantry weapons — including M16 assault rifles — as well as 162,000 pieces of communication

equipment and 16,000 night-vision goggles.

In just two years from 2017 to 2019, the US gave 7,035 machine guns, 4,702 Humvees, 20,040 hand grenades, 2,520 bombs and 1,394 grenade launchers, The Hill noted, citing a report last year from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR).

“Everything that hasn’t been destroyed is the Taliban’s now,” one US official told Reuters, speaking on the condition of anonymity.



In just two years from 2017 to 2019, the US gave 7,035 machine guns.
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Admitting the weaponry seizures, National security adviser Jake Sullivan said Tuesday that the White House does not “have a complete picture” of what “has fallen into the hands of the Taliban.”

But the current assessment is that it includes 2,000 armored vehicles, including US Humvees, and up to 40 aircraft, potentially including UH-60 Black Hawks, scout attack helicopters, and ScanEagle military drones, another official told

Reuters.

Videos have already captured Taliban fighters triumphantly opening crates of seized weapons, including US-made M4 carbines and M16 rifles, The Hill reported. They've also been spotted with US Humvees.

The war chest will give the Taliban a huge advantage in quashing resistance.



Taliban fighters stand guard at a checkpoint in Kunduz city, northern Afghanistan. AP Photo/Abdullah Sahil, File

US officials also fear that the weapons of war could be handed to US adversaries like China and Russia — or even to more terror groups like ISIS.

“This poses a significant threat to the United States and our allies,” Rep. Michael McCaul, the top Republican on the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee, told Reuters.

President Biden’s administration has not ruled out airstrikes to destroy the larger equipment like the helicopters — but fears it will antagonize the Taliban while

people are still being evacuated, sources told Reuters.

On Wednesday, more than two dozen Republican senators demanded a “full account” of what’s been seized — and what plans are in place to get it back.

“It is unconscionable that high-tech military equipment paid for by US taxpayers has fallen into the hands of the Taliban and their terrorist allies,” the 25 senators told Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin.

Of greatest concern is their control of aircraft. The US gave Afghan forces more than 200, according to the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO).

As many as 50 were believed to have been used by Afghan pilots to escape the Taliban, who this week demanded their return. But the remaining stock included Black Hawks, which were supposed to be the Afghan military’s biggest advantage over the Taliban.



The White House does not “have a complete picture” of what weapons the Taliban now has, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said. Ken Cedeno/UPI

It has left US officials clinging to the hope that the aircraft will prove too tricky to maintain and fly for the Taliban to use effectively — with a leader this week admitting the group did not have trained pilots.

“Ironically, the fact that our equipment breaks down so often is a life-saver here,” a third official told Reuters.

But just having night-vision goggles — of which the US has given at least 16,000 since 2003 — is a huge advantage.

“The ability to operate at night is a real game-changer,” one congressional aide told Reuters.



Rep. Michael McCaul is one of many Republicans concerned about the Taliban’s growing possession of US weapons. Alex Wong/Getty Images

No matter how the Taliban uses it all, it is already a huge embarrassment for the US.

“Clearly, this is an indictment of the US security cooperation enterprise broadly,” Elias Yousif, deputy director of the Center for International Policy’s Security Assistance Monitor, told The Hill.

“It really should raise a lot of concerns about what is the wider enterprise that is going on every single day, whether that’s in the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia.”

With Post wires

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