

Iraq becoming a top U.S. arms buyers

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- Iraq is becoming one of the United States' largest arms customers, switching from cheaper, less sophisticated Soviet weapons, a U.S. government official says. Iraq's government has committed nearly \$3 billion for U.S. weapons and equipment over the past year, Joseph Benkert, deputy assistant secretary of defense for global security affairs, told USA Today. Benkert said the deals for such weapons as the M-4 and M-16 assault rifles as well as the workhorse Humvee vehicle, are helping cement the future U.S.-Iraq relationship. After five years of working alongside U.S. forces, Iraq's army is trading its AK-47 assault rifles for the more accurate U.S. M-16 and M-4 rifles, Army Col. Gregory Perchatsch, deputy director of the U.S. Security Assistance Office in Iraq, reported.

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