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Weapons Industry Dumps Republicans, Backs Hillary

By [Leonard Doyle](#), [Independent UK](#). Posted [October 31, 2007](#).

The U.S. arms industry has all but abandoned its traditional allies in the Republican party and is putting their money on Hillary Clinton.

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The U.S. arms industry is backing Hillary Clinton for President and has all but abandoned its traditional allies in the Republican party. Mrs Clinton has also emerged as Wall Street's favourite. Investment bankers have opened their wallets in unprecedented numbers for the New York senator over the past three months and, in the process, dumped their earlier favourite, Barack Obama.

Mrs. Clinton's wooing of the defence industry is all the more remarkable given the frosty relations between Bill Clinton and the military during his presidency. An analysis of campaign contributions shows senior defence industry employees are pouring money into her war chest in the belief that their generosity will be repaid many times over with future defence contracts.

Employees of the top five U.S. arms manufacturers -- Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Northrop-Grumman, General Dynamics and Raytheon -- gave Democratic presidential candidates \$103,900, with only \$86,800 going to the Republicans. "The contributions clearly suggest the arms industry has reached the conclusion that Democratic prospects for 2008 are very good indeed," said Thomas Edsall, an academic at Columbia University in New York.

Republican administrations are by tradition much stronger supporters of U.S. armaments programmes and Pentagon spending plans than Democratic governments. Relations between the arms industry and Bill Clinton soured when he slimmed down the military after the end of the Cold War. His wife, however, has been careful not to make the same mistake.

After her election to the Senate, she became the first New York senator on the armed services committee, where she revealed her hawkish tendencies by supporting the invasion of Iraq. Although she now favours a withdrawal of U.S. troops, her position on Iran is among the most warlike of all the candidates -- Democrat or Republican.

This week, she said that, if elected president, she would not rule out military strikes to destroy Tehran's nuclear weapons facilities. While on the armed services committee, Mrs. Clinton has befriended key generals and has won the endorsement of General Wesley Clarke, who ran Nato's war in Kosovo. A former presidential candidate himself, he is spoken of as a potential vice-presidential running mate.

Mrs. Clinton has been a regular visitor to Iraq and Afghanistan and is careful to focus her criticisms of the Iraq war on President Bush,

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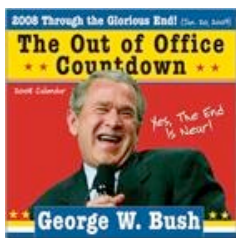
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rather than the military. The arms industry has duly taken note.

So far, Mrs. Clinton has received \$52,600 in contributions from individual arms industry employees. That is more than half the sum given to all Democrats and 60 percent of the total going to Republican candidates. Election fundraising laws ban individuals from donating more than \$4,600 but contributions are often "bundled" to obtain influence over a candidate.

The arms industry has even deserted the biggest supporter of the Iraq war, Senator John McCain, who is also a member of the armed services committee and a decorated Vietnam War veteran. He has been only \$19,200. Weapons-makers are equally unimpressed by the former New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani. Despite a campaign built largely around the need for an aggressive U.S. military and a determination to stay the course in Iraq, he is behind Mrs Clinton in the affections of arms executives. Mr. Giuliani may be suffering because of his strong association with the failed policies of President Bush and the fact he is he is known as a social liberal.

Mrs. Clinton's closest competitor in raising cash from the arms industry is the former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney, who raised just \$32,000.

"Arms industry profits are so heavily dependent on government contracts that companies in this field want to be sure they do not have hostile relations with the White House," added Mr Edsall.

The industry's strong support for Mrs. Clinton indicates that she is their firm favourite to win the Democratic nomination in the spring and the presidential election in November 2008. In the last presidential race, George Bush raised more than \$800,000 -- twice the sum collected by his Democratic rival John Kerry.

Mr. Edsall's analysis of the figures reveals that, over the past 10 years, the defence industry has favoured Republicans over Democrats by a 3-2 margin, making Mrs. Clinton's position even more remarkable.

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