

# Retired US Air Force general is offered consulting job in Azerbaijan at rate of \$5,000 a day

🕒 00:15, 20.10.2022

Region: [World News](#)

Theme: [Economics](#), [Society](#)



More than 500 retired U.S. military personnel—including scores of generals and admirals—have taken lucrative jobs since 2015 working for foreign governments, mostly in countries known for human rights abuses and political repression, according to a Washington Post investigation, [The Washington Post reported](#).

The documents show that foreign governments pay handsomely for U.S. military talent, with salary and benefit packages reaching six and, sometimes, seven figures—far more than what most American service members earn while on active duty. At the top of the scale, active four-star generals earn \$203,698 a year in basic pay.

The Australian government, for example, has offered former senior US Navy officials more than \$10 million for consulting services. A retired US Air Force general was offered \$5,000 a day to work as a consultant in Azerbaijan.

In Saudi Arabia, 15 retired U.S. generals and admirals have worked as paid consultants for the Defense Ministry since 2016. The ministry is led by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom's de facto ruler, who U.S. intelligence agencies say approved the 2018 killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, a Post contributing columnist, as part of a brutal crackdown on dissent.

A prominent beneficiary of Mohammed's reign has been 78-year-old James L. Jones, the retired general who served as Obama's national security adviser and had been commandant of the Marine Corps. Jones owns two Virginia-based consulting firms—Ironhand Security LLC and Jones Group International LLC—that have held contracts to advise the Saudi Defense Ministry.

In his interview with The Post, Jones said he was “very shocked and surprised at what evidently happened” to Khashoggi. But he said Jones Group International applied for, and accepted, more work from the Saudi Defense Ministry in 2019 because “we received encouragement” from the Trump administration to do so. He said his companies now hold four Saudi contracts and employ 53 Americans in Riyadh. Of those, eight are retired generals and admirals, and 32 are lower-ranking military retirees.

Other U.S. military personnel have gone to work in Indonesia or the United Arab Emirates.

Under federal law, retired U.S. military personnel—generally defined as those who served at least 20 years in uniform and are entitled to a pension—are restricted from receiving anything of value from foreign governments that could compromise their sworn allegiance to the United States.

Congress permits retired troops as well as reservists to work for foreign governments if they first obtain approval from their branch of the armed forces and the State Department. But the U.S. government has fought to keep the hirings secret. For years, it withheld virtually all information about the practice, including which countries employ the most retired U.S. service members and how much money is at stake.

Those seeking authorization for foreign work must also pass a background check and counterintelligence review. The State Department and the armed forces have wide latitude to deny any application they think “would adversely affect the foreign relations of the United States.” But The Post investigation found that approval is almost automatic. Of the more than 500 requests submitted since 2015, about 95 percent were granted.

Documents show that one case involved retired Army Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, 63, who briefly served as national security adviser to President Donald Trump. An investigation by the Defense Department's inspector general found that Flynn collected \$449,807 from Russian and Turkish interests in 2015, one year after he retired from the Army, but failed to clear his work with U.S. officials.

Flynn's ties to Russian officials led to his downfall. In 2017, he pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about his contacts with the Russian ambassador to the United States. Trump pardoned him three years later.

The Post found that many military retirees take foreign jobs or gifts without notifying the U.S. government at all. The armed forces and the State Department have no mechanism to identify such cases. Unless rulebreakers come to public attention—as did Flynn—or someone reports them, they have no reason to fear getting in trouble.