

TRACKING ARMS IN CONFLICT: LESSONS FROM SYRIA AND IRAQ

Findings

Conflict Armament Research (CAR) findings:

- There is a prevalence of newly manufactured Chinese, Iranian, Russian and Sudanese ammunition that was acquired during the Syrian conflict.
- Islamic State (IS) forces have been increasingly dependent on homemade/improvised munitions, including: mortars, rockets, associated launchers and explosives. This suggests that they lack a sufficient amount of military-grade equipment in their inventories.
- CAR has documented several weapons with their markings deliberately removed. This is done to conceal the origin and identity of the weapons.
- While CAR has documented US-made weaponry captured from Islamic State forces, they constitute a very small percentage of IS' overall arsenal. These weapons are mostly captured from Islamic State commanders as opposed to rank-and-file soldiers.
- Islamic State forces are producing and deploying improvised explosive devices (IEDs) on an industrial scale that is unprecedented in comparison to other IED-affected conflict arenas.

Small Arms Survey findings:

- Armed groups in Syria and Iraq have acquired dozens of man-portable air defense systems. (MANPADS), including recent-generation systems not previously seen outside of government control
- The vast majority of MANPADS in Iraq and Syria are Chinese-, Russian-, and Soviet-designed systems or foreign variants.
- Illicit MANPADS in Iraq and Syria pose a potential threat to aviation security in the region and beyond.

Researchers can be contacted directly:

Jonah Leff, Director of Operations, Conflict Armament Research, (347) 563-3810, leff@conflictarm.com
Matt Schroeder, Senior Researcher, Small Arms Survey, (202) 464-6010, matt.schroeder@smallarmssurvey.org

Comments

Rachel Stohl: "Understanding how weapons move into and through conflict zones shines a light on the consequences of the arms trade and is an important step in addressing the conditions that allow these transfers to continue with impunity."

Jeff Abramson: "The identification of weapons from multiple countries in the hands of non-state actors indicates the difficulty of controlling the flow of weapons into the Middle East while the prevalence of improvised and homemade devices underscores how that control does impact the nature of conflict."

Commenters can be contacted directly:

Rachel Stohl, Senior Associate, Stimson Center, (202) 464-2679, rstohl@stimson.org
Jeff Abramson, Founder, Forum on the Arms Trade, (202) 780-6215, jeff@ForumArmsTrade.org