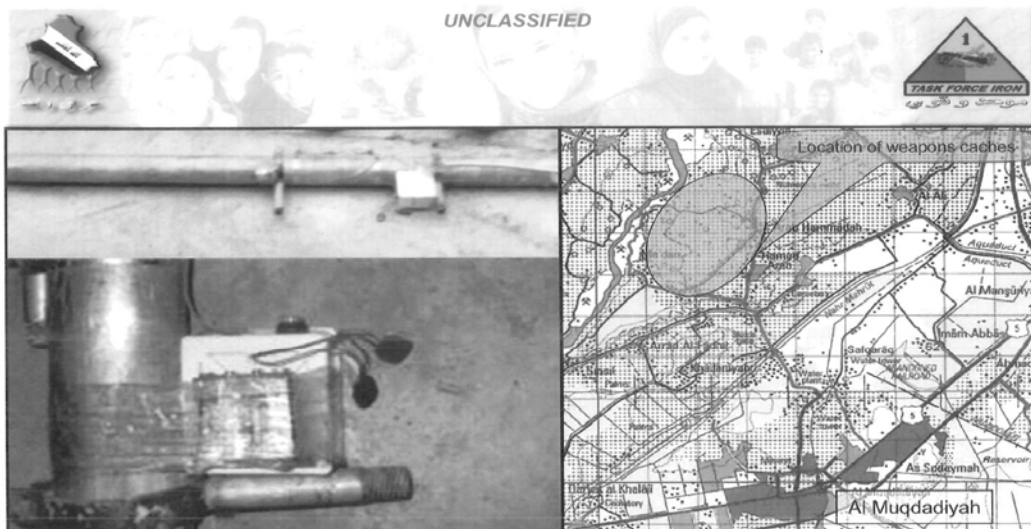


Missile Watch #3: Black Market Missiles Still Common in Iraq

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Despite a million dollar buyback program and hundreds of raids on illicit weapons caches, US and Iraqi forces are still uncovering surface-to-air missiles in insurgent stockpiles. US military press releases and media reports reveal that, since October 2006, at least 121 such missiles have been recovered, along with 4 additional launchers and various components. These reports suggest that insurgents still have ready access to surface-to-air missiles, including MANPADS, at least some of which are reportedly still operational. The missiles pose an immediate threat to civilian and military aircraft in Iraq and a potential threat to aircraft in the region.

An analysis of data collected from US military and media sources reveals much about the illicit surface-to-air missiles in the hands of insurgents. Before summarizing these findings, however, it is important to note the limitations of the data. Not all raids on illicit arms caches are reported to the public, and those that are often lack key details, including the number and types of recovered missiles, their condition and their likely origin. Furthermore, at least one item initially identified as a surface-to-air missile turned out to be a different type of weapon entirely. Documents released in response to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request filed by the FAS reveal that a “surface-to-air missile launcher and platform” seized from an arms cache north of Muqdadiyah in December 2007 was actually a home-made rocket-propelled grenade launcher (See photo below). The FAS has filed FOIA requests for additional information on other missiles recovered in Iraq and will update these findings to reflect the contents of any responsive documents.



During the month of December 2007, 1st Armored Division conducted Operation Iron Reaper. The area north of Muqdadiyah was, at the time, a known Insurgent safe haven, with numerous enemy weapons caches being discovered by Coalition Forces during this operation. In reference to the surface to air missile system and platform that were initially reported as being discovered, further sensitive site exploitation and identification of weaponry confirmed that this weapons system was a home made, shoulder fired, rocket propelled grenade launcher, pictured above left.

Photo #1: Home-made rocket-propelled grenade launcher mistaken for a MANPADS, December 2007. Photo obtained by the FAS under the Freedom of Information Act.

With these caveats in mind, below is a brief summary of the data, starting with a table that lists media and US military reports on surface-to-air missiles recovered or destroyed, and training networks dismantled, by US and Iraqi forces from October 2006 through November 2008.

Table 1: Illicit MANPADS Recovered in Iraq October 2006-November 2008¹		
Date	Missile	Remarks
10/8/06	1 SA-7 missile	Found in a weapons cache west of Baghdad.
12/2/06	2 SA-14 missiles	Recovered from a farmhouse in the Baghdad neighborhood of Bayaa.
12/9/06	1 SA-7 launcher	Found in a weapons cache south of Baghdad. In poor condition, probably unusable.
12/9/06	1 SA-7 missile, launcher, and battery	Found in a weapons cache in Haqlaniyah.
2/17/07	50 unspecified "Russian-made surface-to-air missiles"	Found by Iraqi Security Forces in a large arms cache near Baghdad. The missiles were "still usable" according to an Iraqi government spokesman.
2/26/07	2 SA-7 launchers	Found in a weapons cache near Maalef. Weapons were buried in plastic containers and refrigerators "arrayed in a 200 meter radius circle."
3/10/07	1 unidentified surface-to-air missile case	Found in weapons cache in a cemetery near Yusifiyah.
3/11/07	Network providing training in the use of SA-7 missiles	Iraqi forces arrested 9 insurgents suspected of providing weapons and tactical training to members of Ansar al Sunna, Al Qaeda in Iraq and other groups. The network reportedly relied on "Former Regime Elements to conduct and facilitate the training."
3/16/07	6 unidentified surface-to-air missiles	Found in a weapons cache in Mosul by the Iraqi security forces.
5/31/07	Unidentified surface-to-air missile	U.S. Apache helicopter pilot reported seeing what he believed was a MANPADS in a truck driven by insurgents that fired on the helicopters, which were en route to Baghdad International Airport. The truck carrying the missile was destroyed.
6/3/07	1 SA-7	Seized from a home southeast of Fallujah
9/23/07	Unspecified number of Misagh-1 missiles	Smuggled into Iraq in first half of 2007 by Iran, according to Rear Admiral Mark Fox
10/19/07	1 unidentified surface-to-air missile	Found in arms cache near Manajid Al Hamad
12/21/07	15 SA-7A missiles	Discovered during a raid of a car bomb factory in Baghdad. The SA-7A is the first MANPADS produced by the USSR.
2/1/08	1 "complete" SA-7 missile	Found in an arms cache located near Diwaniyah
4/2-5/08	Unspecified number of SA-7 missiles and an SA-7 battery	Found in an old radar station reportedly being used by al Qaeda in Iraq as a training camp and arms cache
4/8/08	2 SA-7 missiles	Found in one or more of 9 arms caches located north of Habbaniyah
5/8/08	Unidentified "surface-to-air rocket launcher"	Found in arms cache located south of Baghdad. Iraqi forces were alerted to the arms cache by members of the Sons of Iraq.
3/23-5/20/08	21 unspecified surface-to-air missiles	Found during Operation Sawlat al-Fursan (Charge of the Knights) in Basra
6/6/08	2 SA-7 missiles and launchers	Found in weapons cache located near an al Qaeda in Iraq safehouse near Samarra
6/26/08	1 unspecified surface-to-air missile	Found in weapons cache north of Baghdad
6/29/08	unspecified "surface to air missiles"	Found in weapons cache in Amarah district of Baghdad
7/14/08	1 SA-7 "rocket"	Turned in by a "concerned citizen" near Baghdad
9/14/08	1 SA-14 missile	Found in weapons cache west of Baghdad
10/4/08	9 SA-7 missiles	Found during raids on 20 weapons caches near Baghdad
10/23/08	1 SA-7 "rocket"	Found in weapons cache north of Baghdad

Assuming that most of these reports are accurate, the types of missiles recovered recently – first and second generation Soviet designed infra-red seekers – remains consistent with missiles recovered in

previous years. Of the 42+² seized missiles and launchers that were identified by model, at least 38 were SA-7s and 3 were SA-14s. Other models manufactured by Warsaw Pact countries, including SA-16s, have also been reported in Iraq but not in the last two years. Of the 83 remaining missiles and launchers, at least 50 are described as “Russian,” suggesting that at least 91 (73%) of the 125 missiles and launchers identified in Table One were Warsaw Pact missiles.

Item	Quantity
SA-7 missile (with or without launcher)	At least 35
SA-7 launcher (alone)	3
SA-14 missile (with or without launcher)	3
Misagh-1 missile	At least 1
Russian surface-to-air missile, unidentified	50
Surface-to-air missile, unidentified	At least 32
Surface-to-air missile launcher, unidentified	1

The prevalence of Warsaw Pact missiles is not surprising given that Saddam Hussein’s regime stockpiled thousands of SA-7s, SA-14s and SA-16s, and that hundreds, possibly thousands, of these missiles were looted from government depots after the regime collapsed in 2003.³ These reports are also consistent with public knowledge of the global inventory of illicit MANPADS, the majority of which appear to be SA-7 and SA-14 missiles.⁴ This is good news in that the SA-7s and the SA-14s could be nearing the end of their shelf life (depending on when they were manufactured and how they were stored) and are less capable than their third and fourth generation counterparts.⁵ Yet even first generation missiles can be effective, as evidenced by the November 2003 shoot downs of a Chinook transport helicopter that killed or injured 36 soldiers⁶ and a DHL A300 cargo aircraft, the crew of which was forced to perform a harrowing throttles-only landing after their plane was hit by an SA-7 as it was departing from Baghdad International Airport.⁷

While apparently much smaller in number, missiles produced by other countries – namely Iran – have also been discovered in Iraq. During a September 2007 press conference, RDML Mark Fox reported that “in recent months, we have seen Iran smuggle advanced weaponry into Iraq...including the Misagh-1 [man-transportable] surface-to-air missile.”⁸ This is the second public report of an Iranian MANPADS in Iraq since 2004, when Coalition forces reportedly found an abandoned Misagh-1 near Baghdad International Airport.⁹

Also notable is the apparent absence of western missiles in Iraq. To date, there has not been a single report of an illicit US, British, French, or Swedish MANPADS in Iraq. This is also consistent with global trends and is probably explained by a variety of factors. Western MANPADS are less numerous and widely proliferated than the ubiquitous SA-7, which has been exported to at least 71 countries, according to Jane’s Information Group.^{10†} Western governments are also, generally speaking, more discriminating regarding whom they sell MANPADS to and what they demand of importers. The US, for example, conducts annual 100% on-site physical inventories by serial number of nearly all exported Stinger missiles. That is not to say that Western MANPADS have never been diverted into the black market; the CIA lost control of hundreds of Stingers, Blowpipes and SA-7s that it distributed to the Mujahideen in the 1980s, and dozens of Swedish RBS-70 missiles were reportedly diverted to Iran in the mid-80s.¹¹ But the apparent absence of Western missiles

from insurgent arsenals in Iraq and elsewhere in recent years does suggest that current US and European export controls on MANPADS are fairly effective.

It is also important to note that some of the unidentified surface-to-air missiles may not be man-portable. Documents released in response to a FOIA request filed by the FAS in 2007 revealed that a cache of “22 surface-to-air missiles” seized by US forces north of Baghdad in January 2006 were not MANPADS but 73-kg SA-13 Gopher short-range, low-altitude surface-to-air missiles.¹² The FAS has filed similar FOIA requests for information about several of the unidentified missiles identified above and will notify *Missile Watch* readers when responsive documents are received.

While the reports show that illicit surface-to-air missiles are still relatively widespread in Iraq, the data tell us little about actual number of illicit missiles still in circulation. Even though the number of missiles seized over the past two years has held steady (sixty-six from 10/06-9/07 and fifty-nine from 10/07 to 10/08), it is possible that the total number of missiles in circulation is much lower than in previous years and that a larger percentage of the missiles that remain are being recovered as a result of stepped-up neighborhood patrols.¹³ According to the Brookings Institute, seizures of caches increased from 2,660 in 2006 to 6,969 in 2007.¹⁴

Item	Quantity
Oct 06 – Mar 07	63 ¹⁵
Apr 07 – Sep 07	At least 3
Oct 07 – Mar 08	17
Apr 08 – Nov 08	At least 42

Less ambiguous is the decrease in crashes resulting from missile attacks and other ground fire. Despite the continued presence of illicit MANPADS and other small arms in Iraq, the number of successful attacks has declined significantly over the past year. According to data compiled by the Brookings Institute, not a single helicopter has been lost to hostile fire in the last twelve months, and the last spate of deadly shoot downs was nearly two years ago.¹⁶ This decline is probably explained by several factors, including tactical adjustments made after a spate of deadly attacks in early 2007.¹⁷ The threat persists, however, as evidenced by reports of missile launches at a C-130 cargo plane carrying a Congressional delegation in August 2007¹⁸ and at an Apache helicopter flying over Sadr City in May 2008.¹⁹

To sign up for Missile Watch, go to <http://www.fas.org/press/subscribe.html>.

For more information:

“Appendix 14A: Global Efforts to Control MANPADS” in *SIPRI Yearbook 2007: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford University Press, June 2007),

<http://www.fas.org/asmp/library/reports/2007SIPRIYearbookappen14A.pdf>

“MANPADS Proliferation: Understanding the Threat,” *ASMP Issue Brief #1*,

<http://www.fas.org/programs/ssp/asmp/MANPADS.html>.

DOD Should Apply Lessons Learned Concerning the Need for Security over Conventional Munitions Storage Sites to Future Operations Planning, U.S. Government Accountability Office, GAO-07-444, March 2007, <http://www.fas.org/asmp/resources/110th/GAO07444.pdf>

"Ira[q] Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-Saddam Iraq," Brookings Institution, 28 August 2008, <http://www.brookings.edu/saban/~media/Files/Centers/Saban/Iraq%20Index/index20080828.pdf>

"Iraq's Looted Arms Depots: What the GAO Didn't Mention," *FAS Strategic Security Blog*, 9 April 2007, http://www.fas.org/blog/ssp/2007/04/iraqs_looted_arms_depots_what.php

"MANPADS: Combating the Threat to Global Aviation from Man-Portable Air Defense Systems (Second Edition)", State Department, 31 July 2008, <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/rls/fs/107632.htm>

The Small Arms Trade (London: Oneworld Publications, 2006), http://www.amazon.com/Small-Arms-Trade-Beginners-Guides/dp/185168476X/ref=pd_bbs_sr_1/103-24182145500616?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1174082427&sr=8-1

NOTES

¹ All data on the missiles and launchers listed in Table One was compiled from press releases posted on the Official Website of Multi-National Force-Iraq, http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=category§ionid=1&id=4&Itemid=21) with the exception of the 50 missiles seized on 17 February 2007 and six missiles seized on 16 March 2007, data on which were obtained from “Anti-aircraft missiles found near Baghdad,” *Reuters*, 17 February 2007 and “Admiral Recounts First Month of Baghdad Security Plan,” *US Fed News*, 19 March 2007, respectively.

² Two of the reports that identify the model of the missile do not specify the number of missiles, saying only that multiple missiles were seized or transferred.

³ Government Accountability Office, *Further Improvements Needed in U.S. Efforts to Counter Threats from Man-Portable Air Defense Systems*, May 2004, p. 11.

⁴ Matt Schroeder, “Rogue Missiles: Tracking MANPADS Proliferation Trends,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, November 2007.

⁵ The SA-18, for example, is faster, has a larger warhead, a longer range and maximum altitude, and is more resistant to infrared countermeasures than both the SA-7 and SA-14. See *Jane’s Land-Based Air Defense 2008-2009*, p. 36.

⁶ Theola Labbe and Rajiv Chandrasekaran, “Missile Hits U.S. Copter in Iraq; 16 Dead; 20 Soldiers Hurt in Crash Near Fallujah,” *The Washington Post*, 3 November 2003.

⁷ David Learmount, “Great Escape: The crew who survived last year’s Airbus A300 freighter shootdown at Baghdad relive their terrifying experience of coaxing their stricken aircraft back to earth,” *Flight International*, 21 December 2004.

⁸ The US military did not reveal how many Misagh-1s were smuggled into Iraq or who received them. “Press Conference: Rear Adm. Mark Fox and Dr. Tahseen Sheikhly,” Multi-National Force – Iraq, 23 September 2007, http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=14274&Itemid=128.

⁹ “Iranian Support for Lethal Activity in Iraq,” Powerpoint Presentation, 11 February 2007, <http://www.talkingpointsmemo.com/docs/iran-in-iraq/?resultpage=14&>.

¹⁰ James C. O’Halloran, ed., *Jane’s Land-Based Air Defense 2008-2009* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 36.

¹¹ Matt Schroeder, Rachel Stohl and Dan Smith, *The Small Arms Trade* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2006), pp. 73-85 & 121.

¹² Matt Schroeder, “New Information on Iraqi Missile Cache,” *FAS Strategic Security Blog*, 24 May 2007, http://www.fas.org/blog/ssp/2007/05/new_information_on_iraqi_missi.php.

¹³ Jim Michaels, “Confiscated weapons pile up in Iraq: Record amount of guns, rockets, bomb material seized so far this year,” *USA Today*, 31 July 2007.

¹⁴ Michael O’Hanlon & Jason H. Campbell, “Iran Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-Saddam Iraq,” Brookings Institution, 28 August 2008, p. 12, <http://www.brookings.edu/saban/~media/Files/Centers/Saban/Iraq%20Index/index20080828.pdf>.

¹⁵ Data for this timeframe is skewed by a single seizure of 50 missiles in February 2007.

¹⁶ O’Hanlon, p. 29.

¹⁷ Rick Jervis, “New tactics stem rash of downed choppers,” *USA Today*, 21 March 2007.

¹⁸ "C-130 conducts Evasive Maneuvers with Congressional Delegation on board," Press Release, *Multi-national Force-Iraq*, 31 August 2007.

¹⁹ Stephen Farrell and Michael Gordon, "Missile Is Fired at Copter Over Baghdad," *The New York Times*, 13 May 2008.