

Tracing Islamic State's Weapons Back to Western Capitals

By [Nauman Sadiq](#)

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On the subject of the Islamic State's weaponry, it is generally claimed by the mainstream media the Islamic State came into possession of state-of-the-art weapons when it overran Mosul in June 2014 and seized large caches of weapons that were provided to Iraq's armed forces by Washington during the occupation years from 2003 to 2011.

Is this argument not a bit paradoxical, however, that Islamic State conquered large swathes of territory in Syria and Iraq before it overran Mosul and Anbar in early 2014 when it supposedly did not have those sophisticated weapons, and after allegedly coming into possession of those sophisticated weapons, it lost ground?

The only conclusion that can be drawn from this fact is the Islamic State had those weapons, or equally deadly weapons, before it overran Mosul and that those weapons were provided to all the militant groups operating in Syria, including the Islamic State, by the intelligence agencies of none other than the Western powers, Turkey, Jordan and the Gulf states.

In fact, Washington exercised such an absolute control over Syria's theater of proxy war that although the US openly provided the American-made antitank (TOW) weapons to Syrian militant groups, it strictly forbade its clients from providing anti-aircraft weapons (MANPADS) to the militants, because Israel frequently flies surveillance aircrafts and drones and occasionally carries out airstrikes in Syria, and had such weapons fallen into the wrong hands, they could have become a long term security threat to the Israeli Air Force.

In the final years of Syria's proxy war, some anti-aircraft weapons from Gaddafi's looted arsenal in Libya made their way into the hands of the Syrian militants, but for the initial years of the conflict, there was an absolute prohibition on providing MANPADS to the insurgents.

Last year, a report by the Conflict Armament Research (CAR) on the Islamic State's weapons found in Iraq and Syria was prominently featured in the mainstream media. Before the story was picked up by the corporate media, it was [first published](#) [1] in the Wired News in December 2017, which has a history of spreading dubious stories and working in close collaboration with the Pentagon and DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency).

The Britain-based Conflict Armament Research (CAR) is a relatively unknown company of less than 20 employees. Its one-man Iraq and Syria division was headed by a 31-year-old Belgian researcher Damien Spleeters.

The main theme of Spleeters' investigation was to discover the Islamic State's homegrown armaments industry and how the jihadist group's technicians had adapted the East

European munitions to be used in the weapons available to the Islamic State. Spleeters had listed 1,832 weapons and 40,984 pieces of ammunition recovered in Iraq and Syria in the CAR's database.

But Spleeters had only tangentially touched upon the subject of the Islamic State's weapons supply chain, documenting only a single PG-9 rocket found at Tal Afar in Iraq bearing a lot number of 9,252 rocket-propelled grenades which were supplied by Romania to the US military, and mentioning only a single shipment of 12 tons of munitions which was diverted from Saudi Arabia to Jordan in his supposedly 'comprehensive report.'

In fact, the CAR's report was so misleading that of thousands of pieces of munitions investigated by Spleeters, less than 10% were found to be compatible with NATO's weapons and more than 90% were found to have originated from Russia, China and the East European countries, Romania and Bulgaria in particular.

By comparison, a joint investigation by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) [uncovered](#) [2] the Pentagon's \$2.2 billion arms pipeline to the Syrian militants.

It bears mentioning that \$2.2 billion was earmarked only by Washington for training and arming the Syrian militants, and [tens of billions of dollars](#) [3] that Saudi Arabia and the oil-rich Gulf states pumped into Syria's proxy war have not been documented by anybody so far.

More significantly, a Bulgarian investigative reporter, Dilyana Gaytandzhieva, authored [a report](#) [4] for Bulgaria's national newspaper, Trud News, which found that an Azerbaijan state airline company, Silk Way Airlines, was regularly transporting weapons to Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Turkey under diplomatic cover as part of the CIA covert program to supply militant groups in Syria.

Gaytandzhieva documented 350 such 'diplomatic flights' and was subsequently fired from her job for uncovering the story. Not surprisingly, both these well-researched and groundbreaking reports didn't even merit a passing mention in any mainstream news outlet.

It's worth noting, moreover, that the Syrian militant groups, including the Islamic State, were no ordinary bands of ragtag jihadist outfits. They were trained and armed to the teeth by their patrons in the security agencies of Washington, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Jordan in the training camps located in Syria's border regions with Turkey and Jordan.

Alongside Saddam's and Egypt's armies, the Syrian Baathist armed forces are one of the most capable fighting forces in the Arab world. But the onslaught of militant groups during the first three years of the proxy war was such that had it not been for the Russian intervention in September 2015, the Syrian defenses would have collapsed.

The only feature that distinguished the Syrian militants from the rest of regional jihadist groups was not their ideology but their weapons arsenals that were bankrolled by the Gulf's petro-dollars and provided by the CIA in collaboration with regional security agencies of Washington's traditional allies in the Middle East.

Fact of the matter is that the distinction between Islamic jihadists and purported 'moderate rebels' in Syria was more illusory than real. Before it turned rogue and overran Mosul in Iraq

in June 2014, Islamic State used to be an integral part of the Syrian opposition and enjoyed close ideological and operational ties with other militant groups in Syria.

It bears mentioning that although turf wars were common not just between the Islamic State and other militant groups operating in Syria but also among rebel groups themselves, the ultimate objective of the Islamic State and the rest of militant outfits operating in Syria was the same: to overthrow the government of Bashar al-Assad.

Regarding the Syrian opposition, a small fraction of it was comprised of defected Syrian soldiers who go by the name of Free Syria Army, but the vast majority was comprised of Islamic jihadists and armed tribesmen who were generously funded, trained, armed and internationally legitimized by their regional and global patrons.

Islamic State was nothing more than one of numerous Syrian militant outfits, others being: al-Nusra Front, Ahrar al-Sham, Jaysh al Islam etc. All the militant groups that were operating in Syria were just as fanatical and brutal as the Islamic State. The only feature that differentiated the Islamic State from the rest was that it was more ideological and independent-minded.

The reason why the US turned against the Islamic State was that all other Syrian militant outfits only had local ambitions that were limited to fighting the Syrian government, while the Islamic State established a global network of transnational terrorists that included hundreds of Western citizens who became a national security risk to the Western countries.

Notwithstanding, Damien Spleeters of the Conflict Armament Research (CAR) authored [another report](#) [5] in November in which he stated that South Sudan's neighbors, Uganda in particular, had breached an arms embargo by funneling East European weapons to the South Sudan conflict.

South Sudan is the world's youngest nation which gained independence from Sudan in 2011. The United States is often said to have midwived South Sudan by leading the negotiations for its independence from Sudan, because South Sudan is an oil-rich country and produces about half a million barrels crude oil per day.

But a civil war began in 2013 between Dinka tribal group of South Sudanese President Salva Kiir and Nuer rebels led by warlord Riek Machar, and has triggered one of the world's largest humanitarian emergencies. Millions of South Sudanese have sought refuge in displacement camps in the country or in neighboring countries.

The Conflict Armament Research's report on the weapons found in South Sudan notes:

“One of the most astonishing findings is that 99 percent of the ammunition tracked by CAR is of Chinese origin. Some of it was legally transferred to South Sudan, but much of it was delivered secretly to the opposition via Sudan in 2015 and is still being used.”

Unsurprisingly, the Britain-based monitoring group has implicated China, Eastern Europe and South Sudan's neighbors for defying the embargo and providing weapons to the belligerents, and has once again given a free pass to the Western powers in its supposedly 'comprehensive and credible' report.

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Nauman Sadiq is an Islamabad-based attorney, columnist and geopolitical analyst focused on the politics of Af-Pak and Middle East regions, neocolonialism and petro-imperialism. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

Notes

[1] Tracing Islamic State's weapons supply chain:

<https://www.wired.com/story/terror-industrial-complex-isis-munitions-supply-chain/>

[2] The Pentagon's \$2.2 billion Soviet arms pipeline to Syria:

<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/the-pentagon-s-2-2-billion-soviet-arms-pipeline-flooding-syria-09-12-2017>

[3] Mark Curtis' book review, Secret Affairs: How Britain Colluded with Radical Islam?

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/how-britain-engaged-covert-operation-overthrow-assad-1437573498>

[4] Journalist Interrogated, Fired For Story Linking CIA And Syria Weapons Flights:

<http://www.zerohedge.com/news/2017-08-28/journalist-interrogated-fired-story-linking-cia-and-syria-weapons-flights>

[5] Uganda breached arms embargo in funneling European weapons to South Sudan:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2018/11/29/uganda-funneled-european-weapons-south-sudan-breaching-arms-embargo-report/>

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