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MANPADS THREAT

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MANPADS THREAT

Classified By: Ambassador Stephen Seche for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (S/NF) SUMMARY. On June 20-22, a PM/WRA delegation visited Yemen to discuss MANPADS threat reduction efforts with ROYG officials. Since 2004, US-ROYG cooperation has dramatically reduced the availability of MANPADS on the black market in Yemen. Although the program has likely recovered the bulk of the illicit MANPADS available on the black market, several more will likely be collected in the coming years. MOD insists that there are no official MANPADS stocks, and that they have already implemented necessary stockpile security and inventory controls, but the intelligence community and the National Security Bureau (NSB)



believe that is not the case. The USG will offer the MOD, through NSB interlocutors, payment for destruction of MOD MANPADS and stockpile security upgrades. ROYG officials seem more receptive to a TSA-sponsored MANPADS Assist Visit. END SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND

2. (S/NF) After years of uncontrolled weapons imports and the chaos of the 1994 civil war, MANPADS were widely available on the illicit arms market in Yemen, making these systems a critical proliferation threat. MANPADS that leaked from official Yemeni stocks were used in al-Qaeda (AQ) operations in Kenya, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen in 2001 and 2002. In 2003, the ROYG began collecting MANPADS from weapons souks throughout the country, and in 2004 the USG agreed to compensate the ROYG for the acquisition and destruction of these and other black market MANPADS. In February 2005, US-ROYG cooperation resulted in the destruction of 1,161 MANPADS.

MEETINGS READOUT

3. (S/NF) On June 20-22, a PM/WRA delegation consisting of Dennis Hadrick, PM/WRA Program Manager; Santo Polizzi, DHS liaison; Nils Talbot, PM/WRA technical expert; and Laurie Freeman, PM/WRA Foreign Affairs Officer, visited Yemen to discuss US-ROYG cooperation to reduce the threat of MANPADS. The delegation began with a June 20 meeting at the NSB with Col. Hefed Al-Jamrah, the NSB official in charge of airport security in Sana'a. Polizzi briefed Jamrah on the MANPADS threat to civilian aviation. He also offered a MANPADS Assist Visit (MAV), in which experts from the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) identify airport vulnerabilities to MANPADS attacks and recommend ways to mitigate them. Following the meeting, the delegation toured the current airport and the site of the new airport. During the tour, several lapses in airport security practices were observed regarding passenger screening, cargo security, and Secure Identification Display Area (SIDA) badge and access procedures. Polizzi recommended that the TSA Representative (TSAR) in Amman, Jordan be contacted for follow-on discussions with airport officials. NSB officials seemed receptive to the MAV offer.

4. (S/NF) On June 21, the delegation met with NSB Deputy Director Ammar Saleh to discuss ongoing efforts to acquire MANPADS from the black market in Yemen. Since the program's inception in August 2004, this program had resulted in the destruction of 1,161 black market MANPADS in 2005. Hadrick thanked the ROYG for its efforts, expressed the USG's continued interest in supporting the program, and pressed the ROYG to destroy an additional 102 MANPADS they had collected



since 2005.

5. (S/NF) Ammar Saleh agreed with USG assessments that the majority of black market MANPADS had been collected in Yemen, and said that a few more might trickle in with the increase in price. (Note: In July 2008, the price for first generation systems was increased from \$7,700 to \$15,000. End Note.) The small quantity of illicit MANPADS that still exist outside of state control in Yemen are in the hands of tribal leaders or AQAP, neither of which is likely to part with them at any price. He could not estimate how many MANPADS Yemeni tribal leaders possess, but he believes that AQAP has six MANPADS (NFI). Finally, he expressed skepticism that the MOD would accept U.S. assistance to destroy its

official MANPADS stocks (an offer on the table since 2005). He believes MOD would want a more modern air defense system in return, not cash payment or stockpile security upgrades. He offered to attempt to broker a cash-for-destruction deal.

6. (S/NF) Accompanied by NSB official Akram al-Qassmi, the delegation visited a warehouse to view 96 MANPADS collected between 2005 and May 2009 that were awaiting destruction. (Note: These systems had already been verified by U.S. personnel and disabled. End Note.) The delegation verified an additional six SA-7s, four SA-7 gripstocks, and six batteries collected by the NSB since May 2009. The delegation disabled the six MANPADS and expended the six batteries.

7. (S/NF) On their last day, June 22, the delegation accompanied the Ambassador to a meeting with Minister of Defense Mohammed Nasser Ahmed. Ahmed denied that the MOD has any MANPADS in its official stocks, saying that they had already been handed over to NSB and destroyed. (Note: This is in direct contradiction to NSB's June 21 assertion that the MOD had excess stocks of MANPADS, but would part with them only in exchange for a more modern air defense system. End Note.) The Minister described the MOD's progress on SA/LW issues since S/E Bloomfield's July 2008 visit. He noted that more than 250 weapons souks had been closed and more than 140 weapons dealers prosecuted. Furthermore, he remarked that the MOD has established an inventory system for all Armed Forces and MOD weapons, all of which are now marked. He invited U.S. officials to visit the warehouses to see how the system works. Finally, the Minister shared the delegation's concerns about the airport's MANPADS vulnerability, and said that as a member of the Supreme Security Committee, he would support a MAV.

NEXT STEPS

8. (S/NF) Post worked with NSB to ensure that all 102 collected MANPADS were destroyed on July 27 (septel). Post



has requested a meeting with the MOD Chief of Staff to observe the stockpile security and inventory control system reportedly in place. Post will follow up with NSB to find out whether it will accept a MAV and, if so, identify possible dates for the assessment. (Note: Despite ministerial-level support, the final decision on the MAV will be made by President Saleh. End Note.) Finally, Post will work with the Department to present a specific offer to the Yemeni government for assistance with physical security and stockpile management (PSSM) and destruction and marking of Yemeni SA/LW.

COMMENT

9. (S/NF) It is hard to know what to believe regarding the presence or absence of MOD MANPADS. In a subsequent meeting on June 27, Qassmi told PolOffs that the MOD does indeed have MANPADS, but would never speak of them because they are considered a state secret. While MOD realizes their MANPADS are of little military value, they consider them better than nothing and would turn them over for destruction only if they were able to get a modern air defense system in return, according to Qassmi. PolOffs agreed to continue negotiating the destruction of MOD MANPADS through NSB interlocutors, since the MOD appears unwilling to discuss the issue with USG officials directly. END COMMENT.

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