

Amnesty report: ISIS armed with U.S. weapons

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Story highlights

- Amnesty International's report found much ISIS munitions comes from stockpiles captured from U.S.-allied Iraqi military
- The bulk of ISIS arsenal, says Amnesty, made up of older Soviet-era weapons, from Iraq-Iran War and from 2003-2007 U.S. occupation

(CNN)A new report from a prominent human rights group has found that ISIS has built a substantial arsenal, including U.S.-made weapons obtained from the Iraqi army and Syrian opposition groups.

Amnesty International's 44-page report, released late Monday, found that much of ISIS' equipment and munitions comes from stockpiles captured from the U.S.-allied Iraqi military and Syrian rebels.

The findings come as President Barack Obama has recommitted to leaning on regional forces, including the Iraqis, Kurds and Syrian opposition, to try to wipe out ISIS rather than committing significant numbers of U.S. ground troops.

"The strategy that we are using now -- airstrikes, (U.S.) Special Forces and working with local forces who are fighting to regain control of their own country -- that is how we'll achieve a more sustainable victory," Obama said in a speech Sunday. "And it won't require us sending a new generation of Americans overseas to fight and die for another decade on foreign soil."

These local forces will receive assistance in the form of weapons, backup via coalition airstrikes and training from U.S. special operations forces.



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The Amnesty International report, however, concluded that it was these local forces that had inadvertently contributed arms to ISIS.

After analyzing thousands of videos and images taken in Iraq and Syria, Amnesty determined that a large proportion of ISIS' current military arsenal is made up of "weapons and equipment looted, captured or illicitly traded from poorly secured Iraqi military stocks."

ISIS has also gained access to weapons from other sources through the capture or sale of Syrian military stocks supplied to armed opposition groups in Syria by countries including Turkey, the Gulf States and the U.S., according to the organization.

These weapons, including many accumulated by Iraq over five war-torn decades, were designed or manufactured in 25 countries and range from assault rifles to tanks and anti-aircraft defense systems, the report said.

Amnesty International found that the quantity and range of ISIS' arms and ammunition "ultimately reflects decades of irresponsible arms transfers to Iraq and multiple failures by the U.S.-led occupation administration to manage arms deliveries and stocks securely, as well as endemic corruption in Iraq itself."

By failing to account for the weapons that have been transferred to Iraq over the last several decades, the U.S. and other supplier nations have allowed them to freely flow through the region and fall into the hands of ISIS and other armed groups in the region, the human rights group charged.

Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Wounded passengers are treated following a suicide bombing at the Brussels Airport on March 22, 2016. [The attacks on the airport and a subway](#) killed 32 people and wounded more than 300. ISIS claims its "fighters" launched the attacks in the Belgian capital.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Syrians gather at the site of a double car bomb attack in the Al-Zahraa neighborhood of the Homs, Syria, on February 21, 2016. [Multiple attacks in Homs and southern Damascus](#) kill at least 122 and injure scores, according to the state-run SANA news agency. ISIS claimed responsibility.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Syrian pro-government forces gather at the site of a deadly triple bombing Sunday, January 31, in the [Damascus suburb of Sayeda Zeynab](#). ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack, according to a statement circulating online from supporters of the terrorist group.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Yemenis check the scene of a car bomb attack Sunday, December 6, in Aden, Yemen. [Aden Gov. Jaafar Saad and six bodyguards died in the attack](#), for which the terror group ISIS claimed responsibility.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Investigators check the scene of a mosque attack Friday, November 27, in northern Bangladesh's Bogra district. [ISIS has claimed responsibility for the attack](#) that left at least one person dead and three more wounded.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Wounded people are helped outside the Bataclan concert hall in Paris following a series of coordinated attacks in the city on Friday, November 13. The militant group ISIS claimed responsibility [for the attacks](#), which killed at least 130 people and wounded hundreds more.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Emergency personnel and civilians gather at the site of a [twin suicide bombing](#) in Beirut, Lebanon, on Thursday, November 12. The bombings killed at least 43 people and wounded more than 200 more. ISIS appeared to claim responsibility in a statement posted on social media.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Smoke rises over the northern Iraqi town of Sinjar on November 12. Kurdish Iraqi fighters, backed by a U.S.-led air campaign, [retook the strategic town](#), which ISIS militants overran last year. ISIS wants to create an Islamic state across Sunni areas of Iraq and Syria.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Syrian government troops walk inside the Kweiras air base on Wednesday, November 11, after they broke a siege imposed by ISIS militants.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Members of the Egyptian military approach the wreckage of a Russian passenger plane Sunday, November 1, in Hassana, Egypt. [The plane crashed](#) the day before, killing all 224 people on board. ISIS claimed responsibility for downing the plane, but the group's claim wasn't immediately verified.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

An explosion rocks Kobani, Syria, during a reported car bomb attack by ISIS militants on Tuesday, October 20.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Shiite fighters, fighting alongside Iraqi government forces, fire a rocket at ISIS militants as they advance toward the center of Baiji, Iraq, on Monday, October 19.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Smoke rises above a damaged building in Ramadi, Iraq, following a coalition airstrike against ISIS positions on Saturday, August 15.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Iraqi men look at damage following a bomb explosion that targeted a vegetable market in Baghdad on Thursday, August 13. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

In this image taken from social media, an ISIS fighter holds the group's flag after the militant group [overran the Syrian town of al-Qaryatayn](#) on Thursday, August 6, the London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported. ISIS uses modern tools such as social media to promote reactionary politics and religious fundamentalism. Fighters are destroying holy sites and valuable antiquities even as their leaders propagate a return to the early days of Islam.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

An ISIS fighter poses with spoils purportedly taken after capturing the Syrian town of al-Qaryatayn.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Smoke rises as Iraqi security forces bomb ISIS positions in the eastern suburbs of Ramadi, Iraq, on August 6.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Buildings reduced to piles of debris can be seen in the eastern suburbs of Ramadi on August 6.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

The governor of the Asir region in Saudi Arabia, Prince Faisal bin Khaled bin Abdulaziz, left, visits a man who was wounded in [a suicide bombing attack on a mosque](#) in Abha, Saudi Arabia, on August 6. ISIS claimed responsibility

for the explosion, which killed at least 13 people and injured nine others.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Saudi officials and investigators check the inside of the mosque on August 6.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Mourners in Gaziantep, Turkey, grieve over a coffin Tuesday, July 21, during a funeral ceremony for the victims of a suspected ISIS suicide bomb attack. [That bombing killed at least 31 people](#) in Suruc, a Turkish town that borders Syria. Turkish authorities blamed ISIS for the attack.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Protesters in Istanbul carry anti-ISIS banners and flags to show support for victims of the Suruc suicide blast during a demonstration on Monday, July 20.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

People in Ashmoun, Egypt, carry the coffin for 1st Lt. Mohammed Ashraf, who was killed when the ISIS militant group [attacked Egyptian military checkpoints](#) on Wednesday, July 1. At least 17 soldiers were reportedly killed, and 30 were injured.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Syrians wait near the Turkish border during clashes between ISIS and Kurdish armed groups in Kobani, Syria, on Thursday, June 25. The photo was taken in Sanliurfa, Turkey. ISIS militants disguised as Kurdish security forces infiltrated Kobani on Thursday and killed "many civilians," said a spokesman for the Kurds in Kobani.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Residents examine a damaged mosque after an Iraqi Air Force bombing in the ISIS-seized city of Falluja, Iraq, on Sunday, May 31. At least six were killed and nine others wounded during the bombing.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

People search through debris after an explosion at a Shiite mosque in Qatif, Saudi Arabia, on Friday, May 22. ISIS [claimed responsibility for the attack](#), according to tweets from ISIS supporters, which included a formal statement from ISIS detailing the operation.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Iraqi soldiers fire their weapons toward ISIS group positions in the Garma district, west of the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, on Sunday, April 26. Pro-government forces said they had recently made advances on areas held by Islamist jihadists.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

A member of Afghanistan's security forces stands at the site where a suicide bomber on a motorbike blew himself up in front of the Kabul Bank in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, on Saturday, April 18. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack. The explosion killed at least 33 people and injured more than 100 others, a public health spokesman said.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Iraqi counterterrorism forces patrol in Ramadi on April 18.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Thousands of Iraqis cross a bridge over the Euphrates River to Baghdad as they flee Ramadi on Friday, April 17.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Yazidis embrace after being released by ISIS south of Kirkuk, Iraq, on Wednesday, April 8. [ISIS released more than 200 Yazidis](#), a minority group whose members were killed, captured and displaced when the Islamist terror organization overtook their towns in northern Iraq last summer, officials said.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Kurdish Peshmerga forces help Yazidis as they arrive at a medical center in Altun Kupri, Iraq, on April 8.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

A Yazidi woman mourns for the death of her husband and children by ISIS after being released south of Kirkuk on April 8. ISIS is known for killing dozens of people at a time and carrying out public executions, crucifixions and other acts.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

People in Tikrit inspect what used to be a palace of former President Saddam Hussein on April 3.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

On April 1, Shiite militiamen celebrate the retaking of Tikrit, which had been under ISIS control since June. The push into Tikrit came days after U.S.-led airstrikes targeted ISIS bases around the city.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Iraqi security forces launch a rocket against ISIS positions in Tikrit on Monday, March 30.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

The parents of 19-year-old Mohammed Musallam react at the family's home in the East Jerusalem Jewish settlement of Neve Yaakov on Tuesday, March 10. [ISIS released a video purportedly](#) showing a young boy executing Musallam, an Israeli citizen of Palestinian descent who ISIS claimed infiltrated the group in Syria to spy for the Jewish state. Musallam's family told CNN that he had no ties with the Mossad, Israel's spy agency, and had, in fact, been recruited by ISIS.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Iraqi Shiite fighters cover their ears as a rocket is launched during a clash with ISIS militants in the town of Al-Alam, Iraq, on Monday, March 9.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Displaced Assyrian women who fled their homes due to ISIS attacks pray at a church on the outskirts of Damascus, Syria, on Sunday, March 1. ISIS militants abducted at least 220 Assyrians in Syria.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Safi al-Kasasbeh, right, receives condolences from tribal leaders at his home village near Karak, Jordan, on Wednesday, February 4. Al-Kasasbeh's son, [Jordanian pilot Moath al-Kasasbeh](#), was burned alive in a video that was recently released by ISIS militants. Jordan is one of a handful of Middle Eastern nations taking part in the U.S.-led military coalition against ISIS.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

A Kurdish marksman looks over a destroyed area of Kobani on Friday, January 30, after the city had been liberated from the ISIS militant group. The Syrian city, also known as Ayn al-Arab, had been under assault by ISIS since mid-September.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Kurdish people celebrate in Suruc, Turkey, near the Turkish-Syrian border, after ISIS militants were expelled from Kobani on Tuesday, January 27.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Collapsed buildings are seen in Kobani on January 27 after Kurdish forces took control of the town from ISIS.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Junko Ishido, mother of Japanese journalist Kenji Goto, reacts during a news conference in Tokyo on Friday, January 23. ISIS would later kill Goto and another Japanese hostage, Haruna Yukawa.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

ISIS militants are seen through a rifle's scope during clashes with Peshmerga fighters in Mosul, Iraq, on Wednesday, January 21.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

An elderly Yazidi man arrives in Kirkuk after being released by ISIS on Saturday, January 17. The militant group released about 200 Yazidis who were held captive for five months in Iraq. Almost all of the freed prisoners were in poor health and bore signs of abuse and neglect, Kurdish officials said.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Smoke billows behind an ISIS sign during an Iraqi military operation to regain control of the town of Sadiyah, about 95 kilometers (60 miles) north of Baghdad, on Tuesday, November 25.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Fighters from the Free Syrian Army and the Kurdish People's Protection Units join forces to fight ISIS in Kobani on Wednesday, November 19.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

A picture taken from Turkey shows smoke rising after ISIS militants fired mortar shells toward an area controlled by Syrian Kurdish fighters near Kobani on Monday, November 3.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Iraqi special forces search a house in Jurf al-Sakhar, Iraq, on Thursday, October 30, after retaking the area from ISIS.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

ISIS militants stand near the site of an airstrike near the Turkey-Syria border on Thursday, October 23. The United

States and several Arab nations have been bombing ISIS targets in Syria to take out the militant group's ability to command, train and resupply its fighters.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Kurdish fighters walk to positions as they combat ISIS forces in Kobani on Sunday, October 19.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Heavy smoke rises in Kobani following an airstrike by the U.S.-led coalition on October 18.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Cundi Minaz, a female Kurdish fighter, is buried in a cemetery in the southeastern Turkish town of Suruc on Tuesday, October 14. Minaz was reportedly killed during clashes with ISIS militants in nearby Kobani.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Kiyemet Ergun, a Syrian Kurd, celebrates in Mursitpinar, Turkey, after an airstrike by the U.S.-led coalition in Kobani on Monday, October 13.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Alleged ISIS militants stand next to an ISIS flag atop a hill in Kobani on Monday, October 6.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

A Kurdish Peshmerga soldier who was wounded in a battle with ISIS is wheeled to the Zakho Emergency Hospital in Duhuk, Iraq, on Tuesday, September 30.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Syrian Kurds wait near a border crossing in Suruc as they wait to return to their homes in Kobani on Sunday, September 28.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

A elderly man is carried after crossing the Syria-Turkey border near Suruc on Saturday, September 20.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

A Kurdish Peshmerga fighter launches mortar shells toward ISIS militants in Zumar, Iraq, on Monday, September 15.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Kurdish Peshmerga fighters fire at ISIS militant positions from their position on the top of Mount Zardak, east of Mosul, Iraq, on Tuesday, September 9.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Displaced Iraqis receive clothes from a charity at a refugee camp near Feeshkhabour, Iraq, on Tuesday, August 19.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Aziza Hamid, a 15-year-old Iraqi girl, cries for her father while she and some other Yazidi people are flown to safety Monday, August 11, after a dramatic rescue operation at Iraq's Mount Sinjar. A CNN crew was on the flight, which took diapers, milk, water and food to the site where as many as 70,000 people were trapped by ISIS. But only a few of them were able to fly back on the helicopter with the Iraqi Air Force and Kurdish Peshmerga fighters.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Thousands of Yazidis are escorted to safety by Kurdish Peshmerga forces and a People's Protection Unit in Mosul on Saturday, August 9.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Thousands of Yazidi and Christian people flee Mosul on Wednesday, August 6, after the latest wave of ISIS advances.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

A Baiji oil refinery burns after an alleged ISIS attack in northern Selahaddin, Iraq, on Thursday, July 31.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

A Syrian rebel fighter lies on a stretcher at a makeshift hospital in Douma, Syria, on Wednesday, July 9. He was reportedly injured while fighting ISIS militants.

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Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Children stand next to a burnt vehicle during clashes between Iraqi security forces and ISIS militants in Mosul on Tuesday, June 10.

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"The main suppliers of Iraq historically have been Russia, China and the U.S.," Patrick Wilcken, the report's author, told CNN.

The bulk of ISIS' arsenal, he said, is made up of older Soviet-era weapons, brought into Iraq during the Iraq-Iran War and the U.S. occupation between 2003 and 2007.

"It is mainly old stock, but they do have some more sophisticated weaponry that were more recently manufactured," he said.

One of the most common types of weapon used by ISIS fighters is the Russian-made AK automatic rifle, but ISIS forces are also equipped with U.S. military-issue M-16s and guns manufactured in China, Germany, Croatia and Belgium, according to the report.

It also said that ISIS has captured large numbers of U.S.- and Russian-made armored vehicles in addition to mortars, anti-tank missiles and surface-to-air missiles from the Iraqi army and Kurdish forces.

In response to the report, Pentagon spokesman Maj. Roger Cabiness told CNN that the U.S. closely monitors equipment provided to partners in order "to prevent and detect illegal transfers to third parties, in order to protect American technology, and, where relevant, to ensure partner compliance with requirements placed on all recipients of U.S. defense articles."

However, the Pentagon admitted that these monitoring programs don't apply to equipment that is lost on the battlefield.

[READ: Will any of Obama's ISIS proposals succeed?](#)

Despite ISIS diversity of weapons, Wilcken said it is difficult to assess whether or not the group has the firepower to consistently defeat Kurdish and other militia forces in Syria.

He said ISIS was able to effectively use some of its more sophisticated weapons, specifically anti-tank missiles, to capture the Iraqi cities of Mosul, Tikrit and Fallujah last year but has recently resorted to using improvised explosives, rather than conventional weapons, to inflict mass casualties on enemies.

These weapons have not only increased ISIS' effectiveness on the battlefield against U.S.-backed local forces, but have been used in human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law across Iraq and Syria by ISIS, according to the report.

Documenting specific abuses, the human rights group said ISIS' military campaign has "relentlessly targeted civilians with small arms, artillery fire and huge quantities of improvised explosive devices" across Syria and Iraq.

[READ: Inside the \\$2 billion ISIS war machine](#)

In order to avoid further proliferation to armed groups in the region and the misuse of these weapons by groups like ISIS, Amnesty International is calling for supplier states, including the U.S., to work with Iraqi authorities to quickly implement stricter controls on the transfer, storage and deployment of arms.

"The big takeaway for us is that you have to look historically at this and the long process whereby states often

recklessly and irresponsibly send arms to Iraq ... often in a very uncoordinated and chaotic manner," Wilcken said.

Even if ISIS is uprooted, other armed groups will be there to take their place if the issue of proliferation continues, he said.

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