

# The US arsenal lost in Iraq

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The US has lost track of about 190,000 weapons issued to Iraqi security forces since the 2003 invasion, some of which will have ended up in the hands of insurgents, according to an official report published in Washington. Among the missing items are AK-47 rifles, pistols, body armour and helmets.



The disclosure adds to the picture of the chaotic and clumsy administration of Iraq that has emerged over the last four years. The report, by the government accountability office, which sent its report to Congress last week, found a 30% gap between the number of weapons issued to Iraqi forces and records held by US forces in [Iraq](#). No one in the Bush administration knows where the weapons are now.

The 20-page report - *Stabilising Iraq: Department of Defence cannot ensure that US-funded equipment has reached Iraqi security forces* - says the Pentagon and the multinational force in Iraq responsible for training "cannot fully account for about 110,000 AK-47 rifles, 80,000 pistols, 135,000 items of body armour and 115,000 helmets reported as issued to Iraqi forces as of September 22 2005".

During that period the US was desperate to get the Iraqi security forces up and running and was arming them as fast as it could.

The failure of the US to account for so many weapons is an embarrassment for the Bush administration after months in which it has repeatedly accused Iran of supplying weapons and explosives to the insurgents.

The report says the former commander of the training of Iraqi forces said about 185,000 AK-47 rifles, 170,000 pistols, 215,000 pieces of body armour and 140,000 helmets were issued as of September 2005. But the property books contain records for only about 75,000 AK-47 rifles, 90,000 pistols, 80,000 pieces of body armour and 25,000 helmets.

Since June 2006, the multinational force has paid more attention to record-keeping. But the government accounting office's review of the property books in January "found continuing problems with missing and incomplete records".

Last year the estimate of missing weapons was put at a mere 14,000 by another congressional investigative body.

A Pentagon spokesman said the multinational force in Iraq was preparing a response to the report. The Pentagon has accepted its recommendations for improved accountability procedures.

Over the past four years, the US has provided about \$19.2bn (£9.4bn) to develop Iraqi security forces. The Pentagon has asked for a further \$2bn to help equip and train them.

The Washington Post quoted a senior Pentagon official saying that some of the weapons probably were being used against US forces. He cited an Iraqi brigade created in Falluja that dissolved in September 2004 and turned its weapons against US troops.

In previous conflicts, the US state department took responsibility for training and distribution of weapons. But the Pentagon insisted on taking responsibility for arming the Iraqi forces.

In Baghdad, the US and Iran yesterday held the first meeting of a sub-committee to discuss ways to cooperate in

ending sectarian violence. It follows two meetings between the ambassadors of the two countries, the first dialogue since the Iranian revolution in 1979. The discussions were described as frank.

At Talafar, in the north of Iraq, often cited by the US as one of its success stories in terms of security, a truck bomb yesterday killed 33 people, many of them women and children, said Iraqi police.