

The Menace of MANPADS

Man-portable air-defense systems or MANPADS (also referred to as shoulder-fired, surface-to-air missiles) are small, light, and easy to transport and conceal. Estimates of global MANPADS production range from 750,000 to 1,000,000, with thousands believed to be outside government control. The U.S. Department of State estimates that since the 1970s MANPADS were employed against more than 40 civilian aircraft, resulting in at least 28 crashes and over 800 deaths worldwide.

After the November 2002 attempted shoot-down of a civilian airliner in Kenya with MANPADS, the United States redoubled its already considerable efforts to keep these weapons from falling into the wrong hands. Countering the proliferation of MANPADS is an overriding U.S. national security



Two insurgents in Iraq with SA-7b and SA-14 MANPADS

have encouraged steps to reduce the number of these weapons available on the black market. The Office of Conventional Arms Threat Reduction in the Bureau for International Security and Nonproliferation works to prevent transfers of MANPADS—and the technology

to produce them—to undesirable end-users through bilateral and multilateral engagement, with an emphasis on responsible export controls.

At the direction of the White House, a MANPADS interagency task force was created that coordinates the efforts of the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and other Federal agencies and organizations. Within the Department of State, the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs and the Bureau for International Security and Nonproliferation have responsibility for the MANPADS security situation.

The international Civil Aviation Organization, the United Nations, the G-8, the Wassenaar Arrangement, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, the Organization of American States, and other international and regional organizations have recognized the MANPADS threat and

The U.S. Department of Defense supports international negotiations by providing expertise on the proper management and control of MANPADS, and by enforcing stringent physical security and accountability for MANPADS in U.S. possession. In 2001 the Department established the Golden Sentry program to monitor end-use sale of MANPADS through foreign military sales to ensure that they are not diverted to criminal use. The Defense Security and Cooperation Agency administers the Golden Sentry program, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency and the U.S. Army provide support.

Anatomy of a Typical MANPADS

Launch tube



U.S. Department of Homeland Security



Thermal Battery



Grip Stock

Missile



An SA-7 MANPADS