

Islamic State gets hands on Syrian anti-aircraft missiles

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Washington: The dreaded Islamic State terror group has reportedly captured Syria's Russian made anti-aircraft missiles, raising concerns that the deadly weapons could be used against US-led coalition jets.

Several SA-6 mobile anti-aircraft missiles were captured near the northeastern Syrian city of Dayr Az Zawr, where in recent weeks US and allied aircraft have conducted airstrikes against oil and gas facilities controlled by ISIS, Pentagon officials told the Washington Free Beacon.

Four missiles and two tracked mobile SA-6 launchers were captured by the group, the officials said.

However, it was not clear whether the associated fire control radar and other equipment needed to fire the missiles were captured as well.

Russian military forces, concerned that the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) would use the anti-aircraft missiles against its warplanes, conducted airstrikes to try and destroy the SA-6s.

But the Russians missed and the missiles were moved from the Dayr Az Zawr area and hidden, officials were quoted as saying.

A photo of a captured SA-6 was posted by an ISIS social media account on January 20, the report said.

The weapon is an unlikely threat to aircraft, a military official in the region said of the missiles.

However, missile warheads could be used by ISIS in suicide vehicle bombs.

"All they have is the missile, which could be used to make IEDs or truck bombs. They lack the launchers and radars," the official said.

ISIS probably lacks the expertise needed to use the launchers, even if they were able to capture those items, the official added.

ISIS frequently conducts suicide attacks using vehicle bombs when striking regime targets in Syria and government facilities in Iraq.

On the SA-6 missile threat, Colonel Steve Warren, a spokesman for the US-led military coalition in the region, said pilots are aware of the dangers.

"Coalition aircraft employ sophisticated self-defence measures on every mission. Make no mistake; our pilots are in harm's way, but force protection is our top priority," Warren told the news portal.

Coalition forces have carried out 10,242 airstrikes as of February 10, including 3,166 in Syria and 4,669 in Iraq, according to US Central Command.

The SA-6 is an older air defence system that has been in service around the world since 1970. The missile is armed with a 130-pound high-explosive warhead.

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