



FRONTLINE PERSPECTIVE

TURKISH FERTILISERS USED IN ISLAMIC STATE IEDs IN IRAQ

OVERVIEW

The decision by Turkey's Agriculture Minister to suspend sales of nitrate fertiliser nationally, announced on Thursday 9 June 2016 after two car bombings killed 17 people, is likely to impact Islamic State (IS) bomb-making capacities in Iraq.

Following two years of investigation into IS weapons in Iraq and Syria, Conflict Armament Research (CAR) has found that the majority of IS improvised explosive devices (IEDs) consist of a mixture of aluminium and nitrate-based fertiliser such as ammonium nitrate. In its February 2016 report, CAR revealed that Turkey is the most

important choke point for components used in the manufacture of IEDs by IS forces. These components include chemical precursors such as fertiliser, containers, detonating cord, cables, and wires, manufactured or sold in Turkey before IS forces acquired them in Iraq. Furthermore, among the Turkish companies identified in the IS IED supply chain, most are intermediaries that serve the Turkish domestic market and do not export goods to Iraq. CAR's evidence suggests that IS forces, or intermediaries acting on their behalf, acquire components in Turkey and subsequently transfer them to Iraq.

CAR's continued investigation into IS acquisition of nitrate-based fertiliser suggests that a suspension of the sale of Turkish-origin fertilisers will have a disruptive impact on its IED component supply chain.

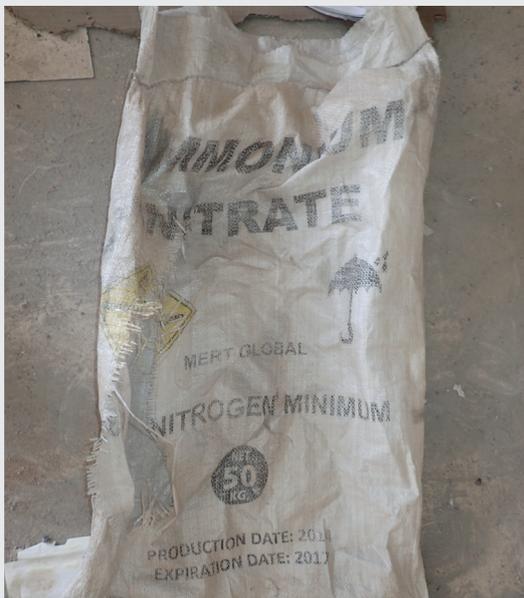


DOCUMENTATION

IS forces consistently employed ammonium nitrate fertiliser manufactured by the Turkish company Mert Global in the production of homemade explosives in 2015 in Tikrit, and in 2016 in Ramadi.

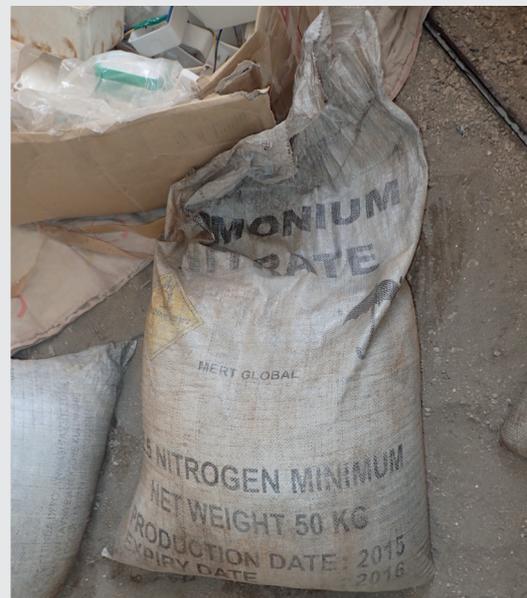
During the second battle of Tikrit, the Iraqi Jund al-Imam brigade recovered a warehouse in which IS forces were producing homemade explosives with ammonium nitrate produced in Turkey in 2014 by Mert Global, Antakya. A CAR field investigation team documented the warehouse's contents on 29 April 2015. CAR later sent requests for information to Mert Global on 8 October and 4 November 2015. CAR has yet to receive a written response from Mert Global.

During the recapture of Ramadi on 1 February 2016, Iraqi Anbar Emergency Units seized a bag of ammonium nitrate produced in Turkey in 2015 by Mert Global, Antakya. The fertiliser was used in the manufacture of explosives by IS forces. A CAR field investigation team documented the item on 21 February 2016, in Ramadi, Iraq (GPS: 33.4396400023, 43.3176119719). CAR has issued a request for information to Mert Global, and is awaiting response.



A bag of ammonium nitrate produced in Turkey in 2014

Tikrit, Iraq, April 2015



A bag of ammonium nitrate produced in Turkey in 2015

Ramadi, Iraq, February 2016

"Turkey's decision to suspend sales of nitrate fertiliser is a reaction to the widespread use of this substance by groups such as Islamic State in the manufacture of explosives. CAR's Iraq and Syria investigations have consistently highlighted the cross-border supply of nitrate fertiliser, and other explosive precursors, to Islamic State forces."

JAMES BEVAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CONFLICT ARMAMENT RESEARCH

IS forces in Iraq have employed ammonium nitrate fertiliser sold on the Turkish domestic market.

On 1 February 2016, Iraqi Anbar Emergency Units seized a bag of ammonium nitrate produced by the Turkish company Vitagro Gubre Dagitim. A CAR field investigation team documented the item on 21 February 2016 in Ramadi, Iraq (GPS: 33.4396400023, 43.3176119719). IS forces had used the item in the production of homemade explosives. In a written response provided on 25 April 2016 from Vitagro, the company states that it does not export this type of product to Iraq and/or Syria, adding that “Vitagro only sells to the Turkish domestic market. Its customers are Turkish fertilizer dealers and distributors, and Vitagro makes no sales outside of this market.”



A bag of ammonium nitrate produced in Turkey in 2014

Ramadi, Iraq, February 2016

To read CAR's full report, *Tracing the Supply of Components Used in Islamic State IEDs*, visit conflictarm.com/publications.