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## Hezbollah`s Thermobaric Arsenal

By: David Hambling on: 22.08.2006 [23:25 ] (166 reads)



Thermobaric munition turn buildings from safe cover into death traps. (One US thermobaric test was called 'Bring Down The House'). Armored vehicles, unless buttoned down, also offer little protection.

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## Hezbollah`s Thermobaric Arsenal

August 22, 2006 02:28 PM | Ammo and Munitions  
Defense Tech Blog

-- David Hambling

Hezbollah have deployed a range of new high-tech weaponry in Southern Lebanon. Many commentators have noted the effectiveness of their anti-tank missiles against Israeli armor, with apparently reliable reports of Iranian-made copies of the AT-5 Spandrel and Russian-made Kornet-E and Metis-M anti-tank guided missile which were apparently supplied by Syria.

However, less attention has been paid to the reported use of missiles against infantry. In particular, in one instance <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3288870,00.html>

"a missile that was fired at a building soldiers were staying in caused the building to collapse, claiming the lives of nine reservists. "

That sort of effect does not suggest a HEAT warhead, which would punch a hole through a wall and do limited damage beyond. It looks more more like a powerful thermobaric blast, which produces a sustained pulse capable of knocking down walls. Both the Metis-M and Kornet-E missiles have thermobaric warhead options. Note that, as the Russians do not make a distinction, the makers describe Kornet warhead as 'fuel air explosive'.

According to the Marine Corps Gazette, US Marine developed the tactic of **using thermobaric SMAW-NE rounds in Fallujah**: "SMAW gunners became expert at determining which wall to shoot to cause the roof to collapse and crush the insurgents fortified inside interior rooms."

As previously noted <http://www.defensetech.org/archives/001969.html> with the proliferation of thermobaric rounds coming from China, Russia, Eastern Europe and possibly Iran, it was only a matter of time before they turned up in the hands of guerrilla forces. Thermobaric weapons are likely to cause greatly increased casualties for three reasons.

- As is clear from the above, they turn buildings from safe cover into death traps. (One US thermobaric test was called 'Bring Down The House'). Armored vehicles, unless buttoned down, also offer little protection.

- They negate any benefits given by body armor; some studies (NB - PDF) suggest that wearing armor may actually worsen the injuries produced by a thermobaric blast – "enhancing blast effects by increasing target surface area and changing the effective loading function on the thorax."

- The internal injuries produced may be much harder to treat in the field than more normal shrapnel wounds. Hence the rush for new diagnostic tools: "Early diagnosis of internal trauma induced by a primary blast wave via a field-deployable, rapid, and non-invasive technique will provide an invaluable tool in the subsequent success of treating such conditions".

When Israel was accused of using fuel-air weapons earlier on in the conflict there was a wave of objections to this type of munition. It will be interesting to see whether Hezbollah denies or confirms using them, and whether any similar objections are raised.

<http://www.defensetech.org/archives/002694.html>

