

# Bolton Warns Russian S-300 Missile Sale to Syria Would be “Significant Escalation”

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**Update:** U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton said on Monday that the Russian plans to supply Syria with a S-300 missile system would be a “significant escalation” by Moscow and hopes it will reconsider. His statement follows the Russian announcement from early Monday that Russia will supply the surface-to-air missile system to Syria in two weeks, one week after Moscow blamed Israel for indirectly causing the downing of a Russian military plane in Syria, despite strong Israeli objections.

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It appears Israel has paid a huge price for last week’s attack on Syria which led to the accidental “friendly” fire downing of a Russian reconnaissance plane with 15 personnel on board as the door could now be forever shut on striking targets in Syria with impunity. **The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) has announced plans to deliver its advanced S-300 air defense system to Damascus within two weeks.**

Prior plans to deliver the system, which is considered vastly more effective and can strike at a greater range than Syria’s current S-200 and others, were nixed after Israeli threats that delivery would constitute a “red line” for which Israel must act.

The Russian MoD acknowledged this and said **the situation has “changed”** upon announcing its intent to follow through on what Syria has already purchased:

“In 2013 on a request from the Israeli side we suspended the delivery to Syria of the S-300 system, which was ready to be sent with its Syrian crews trained to use it,” the MoD statement said.

**Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu** [said early Monday](#),

**“A modern S-300 air defense missile system will be supplied to the Syrian Armed Forces within two weeks. It is capable of intercepting air assault weapons at a distance of more than 250 kilometers and hit simultaneously several air targets.”**

Significantly, Syria’s systems will be integrated with Russian systems via the S-300, in order to prevent instances of “blind” firing (or failure to have friend or foe identification

capabilities).

Russia had in previous statements blamed Israel for the last Tuesday incident in which a Russian Ilyushin-20 reconnaissance plane was accidentally brought down by an aging Syrian S-200 defense system after Russia had scrambled its jets to respond to an attack by four Israeli F-16s on Syrian government targets.

Shoigu said the S-300 system will prevent such future mishaps:

**“The command posts of Syrian air defense forces and units will be equipped with automated control systems only supplied to the Russian armed forces.** This will facilitate centralized control over all forces and resources of the Syrian air defense, monitor the situation in the air, and ensure operative issuance of orders.”

He added that,

“Most importantly, we will guarantee the identification of all Russian aircrafts by the Syrian air defense systems,” according to [TASS](#).

Russian MoD presented a detailed 3D timeline of Il-20 downing in Syria on September 17. [pic.twitter.com/efajZnqmYB](https://pic.twitter.com/efajZnqmYB)

— Military Advisor (@miladvisor) [September 23, 2018](#)

The Russian-made S-300s are widely acknowledged to be far superior in their capability and reach than Syria’s current S-200 system. If installed — something which Russia has promised will happen in two weeks time — **Syria might very well become nearly untouchable.**

Israel has long claimed to be acting primarily against Iran inside Syria, often firing from over “neutral” Lebanese airspace, but additional new electronic countermeasures to be erected along with the S-300 system will hinder this, [per RT](#):

The third measure announced by the Russian defense ministry is a blanket of electronic countermeasures over Syrian coastline, which would **“suppress satellite navigation, onboard radar systems and communications of warplanes attacking targets on Syrian territory.”** Shoigu said the measures are meant to **“cool down ‘hotheads’** and prevent misjudged actions posing a risk to our service members.” He added that if such a development fails to materialize, the Russian military “would act in accordance to the situation.”

All of this is precisely the game-changer that Israel’s leadership has long worried about as they’ve sought to maintain “freedom of action” in Syria, according to prior statements by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

As a [Haaretz](#) report noted previously, the range of the new defense system will give Damascus the ability to detect potentially hostile aircraft from point of origin:

**“With Putin’s S-300, Assad’s army could even ‘lock-on’ IAF aircraft as they take off from bases within Israel.”**

And as one Israeli defense analyst [put it](#),

**“Israel should be worried.”**

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