

Does Ukraine Have A Functional Air Defense System? Greece Denies Reports About Air Defense Systems Transfer to Kiev Regime

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In recent days, there has been a lot of speculation that Greece would deliver its Soviet/Russian-made air defenses, [particularly the S-300 series SAM \(surface-to-air missile\) systems to the Kiev regime](#). Even some reputable Greek media such as [the Kathimerini reported on this](#). The military transfer, according to reports, was to eventually include other Soviet-era military equipment, including the ZU-23-2 anti-aircraft guns, as well as the "Tor" and "Osa" short-range air defense systems.

Greece is by far the largest non-Warsaw Pact operator of Soviet/Russian-made weapons. It has acquired them both during and after the (First) Cold War. Athens was one of the few NATO members that sought to improve relations with Russia for decades, particularly in the aftermath of the illegal Turkish Neo-Ottoman invasion that resulted in the occupation of northern Cyprus in 1974.

As Moscow was among the first to condemn Ankara's aggression, Athens maintained a balanced geopolitical position, even at the height of the (First) Cold War, despite its NATO membership. However, after Russia was forced to launch the special military operation (SMO), the new administration in Greece naively decided to reject this legacy of good relations and position itself firmly on the Kiev regime's side. This can be somewhat understandable in [purely practical terms](#) and Moscow would've certainly had a great deal of understanding for the complex position of Athens. However, the latter made the mistake of agreeing to major weapons transfers, something that was wholly unnecessary and even self-defeating. Instead of such a major shift, Greece could've simply "condemned" the SMO in its official statements and be done with it.

This would've kept the relations with Russia largely intact, while there would've been ways to continue economic cooperation through various loopholes, [just as many countries are already doing in order to circumvent sanctions](#). Unfortunately, the Greek government went a step too far, resulting in a completely unnecessary cooling of relations with the Kremlin. The damage is already done, but it's important to at least prevent further deterioration in the millennium-old Greek-Russian ties. Luckily, this is precisely what Athens did, as it just denied reports about the supposed transfer of advanced air defense systems to the Neo-Nazi junta. Namely, on February 5, [Athens categorically denied reports](#) that it would send its Soviet/Russian-made S-300 SAM systems to the Kiev regime. Government spokesman Pavlos Marinakis dispelled and rejected the reports as fake.

“There must be a limit to fake news, especially when it has to do with the interests of the country and its international image. There is no such thing and I categorically deny it. There was not even the intention for Greece to risk the country's defense,” [Marinakis stressed in a statement](#).

This is certainly great news, not only for Russia, but Greece as well. What's more, it's also great news for the Ukrainian people, as any additional arms transfers to the Kiev regime only prolong the conflict. In the last two years, there were similar controversies about the potential transfer of Greek air defense systems, [including in December 2022](#), when the then Defense Minister Nikolaos Panagiotopoulos stated that Athens could deliver its Soviet/Russian-made S-300PMU-1 long-range SAM system to the Neo-Nazi junta. Panagiotopoulos also stated that this would not happen until after the United States deployed its MIM-104 “Patriot” SAM system on Crete. The S-300PMU-1 is a late 1980s/early 1990s modernization of the advanced S-300PMU and it was initially given a NATO reporting name SA-10D “Grumble” (only to later be redesignated as the SA-20 “Gargoyle”).

Greece acquired it in the aftermath of the 1997-1998 standoff between Turkey and Cyprus. At the time, Nicosia acquired the S-300PMU-1 from Russia to put a stop to decades of Turkish encroachment on its territorial integrity and sovereignty. Ankara responded by escalating the crisis to a potential conflict in which Greece pledged to support its fellow Cypriots. After a series of negotiations, the opposing sides came to an agreement that Cyprus would send the newly acquired Russian SAM system to Crete, while Turkey promised to remove its offensive capabilities from the direct vicinity of the island country. Thus, Greece inadvertently acquired the S-300PMU-1, one of the most advanced long-range SAM systems available at the time. Since then, it has maintained a regiment of four S-300PMU-1 systems with eight fire units and 32 launchers that also use the 200 km range 48N6 missiles.

According to relevant sources, the Greek military acquired 175 missiles from Russia and the SAM system's importance for the country's security cannot be overstated, particularly in the southern Aegean Sea. For approximately two and a half decades, the S-300PMU-1 has been serving as a deterrent to Turkish belligerence in the region, guarding Greek sovereign airspace with distinction. The Greek Air Force also operates at least 4 Tor-M1 systems with 16 missile launchers, while the Greek Army operates 21 systems with 84 launchers. The system's maximum engagement range is 12 kilometers and its main purpose is to protect the much longer-ranged S-300PMU-1. Similarly, the Osa-AKM's firing range is 15 kilometers and the SAM system has the same purpose as the Tor-M1. The Greek Army operates 39 Osa-AKM systems with at least 120 launchers.

The potential transfer of even a small part of this sizeable arsenal to the Neo-Nazi junta

would severely undermine Greek security and [encourage Turkish expansionism](#). This doesn't even have anything to do with the previously mentioned [shift in the country's foreign policy](#). The Mitsotakis government's pivot toward Washington DC and Brussels is [extremely unpopular among the vast majority of Greeks](#) (both in Greece and Cyprus), particularly after the decision to send weapons to the Kiev regime. Athens sent several types of weapons, including IFVs (infantry fighting vehicles) and ATGMs (anti-tank guided missiles). Many were rightfully furious, especially after it was revealed that the indigenous Greeks living in Mariupol and the surrounding areas were subjected to brutal treatment by the Kiev regime, [particularly its Neo-Nazi units like the infamous "Azov Battalion"](#).

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