

Syria War Preparations: NATO Selects Patriot Missile Sites In Turkey

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ANKARA: NATO military experts have selected sites for the deployment of at least three Patriot air defense systems along Turkey's border with Syria, local media reported on Monday.

NATO member Turkey formally requested Patriot missiles from the military alliance after weeks of talks with NATO allies about how to shore up security on its 900-kilometer (560 mile) border. Syria is believed to have several hundred surface-to-surface missiles capable of carrying chemical warheads.

Damascus has repeatedly stated that it would not use chemical weapons against its own people, but could deploy them to thwart "external aggression."

According to NATO sources cited by Turkey's private NTV television network, Germany has agreed to provide Ankara with two Patriot PAC-3 systems, while the Netherlands will deliver one Patriot PAC-2 missile system.

The missiles will be deployed within a triangular area including the provinces of Gaziantep, Malatya and Diyarbakar in southern and eastern Turkey, CNN-Turk reported.

Their deployment is expected to be formally approved during a ministerial meeting of the 28 NATO allies in Brussels on December 4-5.

US Patriot surface-to-air missiles were deployed to Turkey in 1991 and 2003, during the two Gulf Wars. At that time the missiles were provided by the Netherlands.

Russia has repeatedly voiced concern about plans to deploy Patriot missiles on Turkey's border with Syria, although Moscow avoided directly criticizing Turkey.

Russia believes the deployment would mean the direct involvement of NATO forces in the Syrian conflict, further undermining the already unstable situation in the region.

Russian President Vladimir Putin will raise the issue at a meeting with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan during his current visit to Turkey, his spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Monday.

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