

Strategic Shift in Military Alliances? Is Turkey Giving Up on Russia's S-400 SAM System to Get Back Into the US-NATO F-35 Program?

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During a [press briefing after the 79th session of the UN General Assembly on September 28](#), Russian **Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov** was asked to comment on reports about **Turkey's potential resale of the Russian-made S-400 SAM (surface-to-air missile) system**.

As there are [no official reports](#) about this issue, [Lavrov initially said he had no comment, but added that](#) "each of our weapon sales agreements includes a clause on the end user certificate", [pointing out that](#) "handling a product supplied with a certificate that states the initial recipient as an end user would require the consent of the initial seller".

This was a clear message to Ankara that such resales without Russian consent would be illegal. It's critically important that Turkey gets the memo, as it has the propensity to illegally resell weapons that were supplied to its military. [Serbia recently had issues with this](#), as Ankara resold MLRS munitions it bought from Belgrade to the Kiev regime.

Back in 2017, Russia and Turkey signed a \$2.5 billion deal on the purchase of the S-400 SAM system. In response, **the United States expelled Ankara from the JSF (Joint Strike Fighter) program**, effectively banning the sale of [troubled F-35 fighter jets](#).

Since then, Washington DC has been antagonizing Turkey, imposing various sanctions and restrictions, particularly on military cooperation. This includes the refusal to allow the modernization of F-16 fighter jets, leaving the Turkish Air Force technologically far behind its principal opponents in the area, particularly Greece, which kept its fleet not only up to date, but also modernized it heavily with purchases of new gear. Initially, Ankara insisted it would not give up on its S-400 systems. However, in recent months, [there have been numerous reports](#) that it's secretly negotiating the return to the JSF program. Such deals are certainly not out of the ordinary, as [Erdogan allowed Sweden to join NATO in return for F-16 modernization](#).

The latest reports regarding the S-400 in Turkish service suggest that the country is distancing itself from the Russian-made SAM system, including by omitting it from national air defense projects. Back in early August, reports surfaced about the so-called "Steel Dome" program designed to enhance Turkish air defense capabilities. Described as a "system of systems" as it integrates several air defense assets, the "Steel Dome" is essentially Turkey's take on [multilayered SAM systems](#). This includes around a dozen projects that are either in development or already in service with the Turkish military. However, [the S-400 was excluded from the program](#), despite being by far the most capable air defense system in Ankara's service. Back in early August, Turkish businessman and

politician Cavit Caglar, who also served as the Minister of State in the early 1990s, [suggested that Turkey could sell its Russian-made S-400 SAM systems](#) to third parties, such as India or Pakistan.

This prompted many to start speculating on how Russia would react to such a move and what implications could this have for Russian-Turkish relations. Worse yet, [quoting the Turkish Cumhuriyet](#) daily, [Forbes reported](#) that some officials suggested that the S-400 could be “put in boxes” and then “inspected” by US personnel. By the end of August, pro-government outlets such as [the Daily Sabah had to resort to damage control and publish rebuffs](#). Namely, on August 29, Turkish officials stated that “there is no change in [their] position amid recent speculation that Ankara was keen to keep S-400 air defense missile systems in storage in return for the US lifting its ban on F-35 fighter jets”. However, when asked whether Turkey was working on the return to the JSF program and the resumption of F-35 purchases, its Defense Minister Yasar Guler said that “talks between Ankara and Washington DC continued on the matter”. This suggests that the [reports aren't entirely unfounded](#).

What's perhaps most disturbing is the involvement of Victoria Nuland. Namely, earlier this year, [she said that](#) Washington DC is **“open to welcoming Turkey back into the F-35 program if the issue over the S-400s is resolved”**. Given the fact that she was one of the architects of the Maidan coup that installed the Neo-Nazi junta and [effectively jumpstarted the NATO-orchestrated Ukrainian conflict](#), nothing good can come from her involvement. There's been a lot of speculation on how exactly Ankara could return to the JSF program, including reports that the Kiev regime could get the S-400. However, one thing is certain - as long as Turkey operates the Russian-made long-range SAM system, the US is virtually guaranteed to prevent Ankara's potential purchases of the F-35. Allowing the US/NATO to inspect the S-400 could be an alternative, but it's highly unlikely that Moscow wouldn't find out about such a massive breach of contract.

Despite reports that neighboring Greece supposedly already transferred its own S-300PMU1 SAM systems (one of the S-400's direct predecessors) to the Kiev regime, [Athens is adamant this isn't true](#), suggesting that the [two old rivals still cherish their Russian-made air defenses](#), as they're far more capable than the US/NATO-sourced systems such as the [overhyped “Patriot”](#).

However, since Greece already sent weapons directly to the Kiev regime, Washington DC approved the sales of the latest military tech to Athens, including the troubled F-35 fighter jets. Thus, [Turkey might be desperate](#) to match this and at least allow the US to inspect the S-400s. A possible loophole for Ankara might be to allow American inspections on Turkish territory, possibly at US bases in the country, particularly the Incirlik Air Base which is largely under USAF control (even nuclear weapons are stored there). This could be an alternative to transferring the S-400 directly to other NATO member states.

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