

Turkey Supplies Syrian Rebels With Air Defense Missiles - TV

By [Global Research](#)

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MOSCOW: Turkey has supplied the Free Syrian Army rebels fighting President Bashar al-Assad's regime with nearly two dozen man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS), NBC News reported on Tuesday night referring to rebel sources.

There was no immediate confirmation of the information from the Turkish media.

According to NBC, the missile supplies were possibly initiated by Turkey, Saudi Arabia or Qatar which have repeatedly called for lending military support to the Syrian opposition.

The report did not provide details on the exact type of shoulder-fired missiles, though Turkey produces under license the Stinger missile which was used against Soviet helicopters in Afghanistan during the war there in the 1980's according to [Globalsecurity.org](#). Turkey also used its predecessor, the older Redeye system, [Globalsecurity](#) says.

Such a weapon would be a significant threat to the helicopter gunships the Syrian government forces have deployed against rebel strongholds such as Aleppo, where intense fighting has raged for nearly two weeks.

Aleppo, a city of 2.5 million people, has remained the hotspot of Syria's civil conflict since last week, when pro-government forces launched a massive assault on the city in a colossal push to regain control of key territories across the country. The Al-Watan newspaper proclaimed the fight for Aleppo "the mother of all battles."

Aleppo's southeastern district of Salaheddin remains the main bastion of opposition forces, mostly members of the Free Syrian Army.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad told the Turkish Cumhuriyet daily in an interview in early July that Turkey "has supplied all logistic support to the terrorists who have killed our people."

The Syrian conflict has already claimed up to 19,000 lives since it broke out in March 2011, according to UN data based on activist accounts. About 200,000 Syrians have fled to neighboring countries, including Turkey, which has registered 88,000 Syrian refugees so far.

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