

Video: Game Changer: What's Behind US-Turkish Conflict over S-400 Deal

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According to the Turkish National Defense Ministry, receipt of the first batch of Russian S-400 missile defense systems was completed on July 25th. Besides making headlines all around the world and causing a harsh response from the US, the delivery demonstrated Turkey's readiness to provide independent defense and foreign policies in its own interests despite all the difficulties that it may face on this path.

The Russian S-400 missile defense system, according to Stratfor, is the "best all-around." It is approximately 30 years in the making, as development began in the late 1980s, and it was officially announced in 1993.

The first successful tests of the system were conducted in 1999 at Kapustin Yar in Astrakhan and the S-400 was scheduled for deployment by the Russian army in 2001. By 2003, the system was yet to be deployed to Russia. Following various setbacks it was finally cleared for service in 2007.

- The S-400 Triumph package consists of a 30K6E battle management system, six 98ZH6E SAM systems, 48N6E3 and (or) 48N6E2 surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) ammunition load and 30TsE maintenance facilities. Use of the 48N6E SAM is possible.
- An S-400 Transporter Erector Launcher has four missile containers. Each container can house one 48N6E or four 9M96 surface-to-air missiles.
- The S-400 can be used with a semi-mobile package of towed trailer-mounted radars and missiles. Typically, it is towed by the Russian 6×6 truck BAZ-6402-015.
- It takes 5-10 minutes to set system assets from traveling position and about 3 more minutes to set it to ready from the deployed position.

The S-400 has a target detection range of approximately 600 km, while being able to simultaneously track around 300 targets. The maximum speed of the target may be up to 4,800 m/s, approximately Mach 14.

It can simultaneously engage approximately 36 targets, or 72 guided missiles. It can engage an aerodynamic target at a range of between 3 and 250 kilometers, while a ballistic target can be engaged at 60 kilometers.

- The Russian armed forces have several S-400, located at various positions, as well as plans to equip the Kirov-class battlecruiser Admiral Nakhimov with the

48N6DMK anti-aircraft missile derived from the land-based S-400. By 2020 Russia plans to have 28 S-400 regiments, each comprising of two or three battalions. In turn, each battalion consists of at least eight launchers with 32 missiles and a mobile command post.

- Two S-400 systems are deployed in Syria for use in protection of Russian personnel.
- Since 2016, Belarus has two S-400 missile systems, both provided by Russia free of charge, as per a 2011 agreement.
- China received its first S-400 regiment in May 2018 and carried out successful tests in August 2018. There was an issue where Russia had to send dozens of replacement missiles in early 2019 since a Russian cargo ship, reportedly carrying an export variant of the S-400's most advanced interceptor, the 40N6E, was forced to return home as a result of damages sustained during a storm in the English Channel. On July 25th, 2019, Russia began the delivery of China's second S-400 missile defense system regiment;
- In October 2017, Saudi Arabia announced that it had finalized an agreement for the delivery of the S-400 missile defense system. Unsurprisingly, the US' key ally in the Middle East wasn't subject to sanctions and constant warnings over purchasing the S-400. In February 2019, the Kingdom and Russia held consultations on the S-400.
- The S-400 missile defense system is expected to enter into service in India in October 2020. The United States threatened India with sanctions over India's decision to buy the S-400 missile defense system from Russia. So far, it's proving as effective as the threats towards Turkey.
- As of January 2018, Qatar has allegedly been in advanced talks for the purchase of S-400, but no additional information has been provided since.
- There are various rumors and confirmations by officials from Pakistan, Iraq, Iran and Egypt for interest towards the S-400.

The US strongly opposes the purchase of S-400 by its allies, but mainly by Turkey, since Turkey was a key partner in the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program. According to US officials, there were constant fears that it could be used to steal the fighter jet's secrets. Turkey has, for over a year now, maintained that the deal was done and there was nothing the US could do to dissuade it from purchasing despite threats of sanctions and other aggressive actions.

In a last ditch and quite absurd effort US Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, allegedly on behalf of US President Donald Trump, suggested that the Turkish side may choose to "simply not turn on" their \$2 billion system to avoid difficulties in the Turkish-US relations. This absurd proposal was later repeated by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

US media claim that negotiations on an offer by the US for Turkey to purchase a Raytheon Patriot missile system are still on-going despite the S-400 delivery. How that makes sense is unclear, but the new US Defense Secretary Mark Esper was, after all, a Raytheon lobbyist. Regardless, the cost of the proposed Patriot is \$3.5 billion, compared to the \$2 billion Russian system.

Another factor why the US military political leadership opposes deliveries of Russian state-of-the-art air defense missile systems to other states is that such deals contribute to the Russian development programmes in this field. Right now, the Russian military is developing

and testing interceptors of the A-235 Nudol anti-ballistic missile system and anti-satellite weapon. The system is set to replace the current one defending Moscow and the surrounding region from nuclear attacks, the A-135 Amur.

According to reports, the Nudol will operate in three stages:

- Long-range, based on the 51T6 interceptor and capable of destroying targets at distances up to 1500 km and altitudes up to 800 km
- Medium-range, an update of the 58R6 interceptor, designed to hit targets at distances up to 1000 km, at altitudes up to 120 km
- Short-range (the 53T6M or 45T6 interceptor (based on the 53T6)), with an operating range of 350 km and a flight ceiling of 40-50 km

The main contractor for the project is Almaz-Antey, who created the S-300, S-400 and is working on the S-500. According to military experts, the future of the missile defense systems A-235 and S-500 will form the basis for the comprehensive, integrated aerospace defense system of Russia, which will include a variety of modern ground-based detection tools.

The additional experience and funds obtained by Almaz-Antey and Russian military experts during implementation of S-300 and S-400 deals around the world and their usage in the conflict zones such Syria will allow Russia to make its aerospace defense systems even more sophisticated and effective.

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