

## Russia indicates no S-300s for Iran

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No Russian game changer sold to Iran: Moscow  
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MOSCOW (AP) &mdash; Russia's Foreign Ministry suggested Thursday that Moscow would not sell advanced anti-aircraft missiles to Iran, a possibility that has alarmed Israel.

Observers have said sophisticated S-300 missile systems could be used by Iran to defend military targets like the Russian-built Bushehr nuclear power plant.

That would make any military strike more difficult, and Israel, the United States and other nations have pressured Russia not to sell such weapons to Iran, Syria or other nations that have threatened Israel.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said he discussed Russian weapons sales during a visit to Moscow this week.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Andrei Nesterenko was asked by reporters Thursday whether Russia had promised Israel it would not sell weapons such as S-300s.

"We have declared more than once at the very highest political level that we do not intend to supply those types of armaments to countries located in regions that are, to put it mildly, uneasy," he said. "This is not in the interests of our country's policy or the interests of preserving stability in one region or another of the world."

He said Russia would make decisions on selling weapons systems based on "both preserving the balance of power in the given region, and taking into account the need to provide stability and security in the region."

Iran's president has vowed that Israel should be "wiped off the map" &mdash; and Israel fears that the nuclear program Iran says is to produce power is actually meant to manufacture weapons.

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Source Tehran Times

Russia's arms-export giant has reportedly denied plans to equip Iran and Syria with the powerful S-300 surface-to-air defense system.

"We have no information of this kind," a spokesman for the Russian state-owned firm, Rosoboronexport, said in response to claims about the potential sales of the advanced S-300 missile to Middle Eastern countries.

The report by Russia's Interfax news agency came as the Israeli caretaker Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said that he would discuss issues of 'special, immediate concern' including the supply of advanced missiles and weapons technology to Tehran and Damascus during his two-day visit to Moscow.

Israel maintains that the missile defense deal would 'upset the military-strategic balance in the Middle East'.

Tel Aviv's opposition to Moscow-Tehran military ties comes only days after the Pentagon announced plans to sell 1,000 GBU-39 smart bombs to Israel.

The Guided Bomb Unit-39 (GBU-39), 'bunker-buster' bombs, has been developed to penetrate fortified facilities located deep underground - such as Iran's nuclear facilities.

Tel Aviv has threatened to launch air strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities under the pretext that Tehran, a signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), has plans to develop nuclear weapons.

This is while, in its latest report on Iran, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) announced that it could not find any 'components of a nuclear weapon' or 'related nuclear physics studies' in the country.

According to intelligence officials familiar with S-300 defense capabilities, the surface-to-air system would effectively rule out an Israel-waged war against Iran.

The S-300 missile has a range of 150 kilometers (90 miles) and is capable of striking a plane up to 30 kilometers (18 miles) high.

"If Tehran obtained the S-300, it would be a game-changer in military thinking for tackling Iran," long-time Pentagon advisor Dan Goure said.

"This is a system that scares every Western air force," he added.

Amid contradictory statements about the sales of the sophisticated Russian-made S-300 anti-aircraft missiles, Iran has denied reports that it has purchased the system.

When asked in a September press conference whether Iran had recently acquired the sophisticated system, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Hassan Qashqavi said, "Such reports are incorrect."

Qashqavi said Iran's missile and technical capabilities are the product of a homegrown technology developed by Iranian experts.

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