



## S-400s and F-35s: Two Weapons Systems Changing the Future of U.S.-Turkey Relations

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In recent years, complex conflicts and political concerns among Turkey’s regional neighbors – combined with heightened tensions triggered by the July 2016 coup attempt – have peaked Turkey’s interest in bolstering its military capabilities. In December of 2017, Turkey signed an agreement with Russia for the purchase of four S-400 air and missile defense batteries<sup>1</sup> with an estimated delivery in early 2020.<sup>2</sup> No NATO member has previously purchased the S-400,<sup>3</sup> and Turkey’s decision to purchase this system from Russia appears to be a symptom of worsening NATO relations.<sup>4</sup> This decision has raised serious concerns from the U.S. and other NATO allies, resulting in numerous threats of sanctions against Turkey, such as halting weapons sales.

On April 26, 2018, three members of Congress proposed the first of several pieces of legislation aimed at blocking the transfer of F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter aircraft to Turkey.<sup>5</sup> Turkey has been one of nine partner nations involved in producing the aircraft since January of 2007<sup>6</sup> and plans to buy over 100 F-35s, with the first aircraft already purchased and scheduled for shipment as soon as June of 2018.<sup>7</sup> According to those in Congress who support them, the proposed sanctions would serve as a response to concerns over Turkey’s acquisition of the S-400s, the continued imprisonment of an American pastor in Turkey, and prior Turkish threats of military engagement with U.S.-backed fighters in northern Syria. However, the U.S. also stands to lose billions should these sanctions be implemented.<sup>8</sup>

### S-400 Triumph Long-Range Anti-Aircraft Missile System



The S-400 is a Russian-made advanced long-range anti-aircraft missile system with the capacity to carry three missile types capable of destroying aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and both ballistic and cruise missiles. The system includes a multi-function radar, autonomous detection and targeting systems, launchers, and a command and control center. The S-400 can engage up to 36 targets simultaneously within a range of 400km and at an altitude of up to 30km. This mobile system can also be deployed within five minutes.<sup>9</sup>

### F-35 Lightning II



The F-35 Lightning II is a 5th-generation fighter, meaning that its speed and agility, fully fused sensor information, network-enabled operations, and advanced sustainment are all combined with advanced stealth capabilities.<sup>25</sup> This next-generation fighter jet was designed to evade the world’s top-tier missile defense systems, such as the Russian S-400.<sup>26</sup> The F-35 is produced by a consortium of nine member states (the U.S., the U.K., Italy, the Netherlands, Turkey, Canada, Australia, Denmark, and Norway), each existing as contributors and shareholders, with the U.S. funding the majority of the program.<sup>27</sup>

# S-400 Triumph Long-Range Anti-Aircraft Missile System

## U.S./NATO Concerns

The U.S. and other NATO allies have expressed a number of concerns over the S-400 deal between Turkey and Russia, as the S-400 system would not be interoperable with other NATO defense systems.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, these systems would not be subject to the same restrictions on deployments as NATO systems, meaning that Turkey could station them in places like the Armenian border or the Aegean coast. Some U.S. lawmakers believe that the S-400 deal is a violation of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), a law allowing for sanctions against states purchasing Russian military equipment.<sup>11</sup> In addition, NATO members fear that with increased Russian and Turkish cooperation, Russia could gain access to NATO intelligence or exploit this U.S.-Turkey friction to undermine the NATO alliance.<sup>12</sup>

**“The principle of sovereignty obviously exists in acquisition of defense equipment, but the same way that nations are sovereign in making their decision, they are also sovereign in facing the consequences of that decision.” – General Petr Pavel, Chairman of NATO's Military Committee<sup>13</sup>**

**“[The CAATSA law imposes sanctions] on any person that conducts a significant transaction with the Russian Federation's defense or intelligence sectors. These are mandatory sanctions and constitute a commitment by the United States to deter Russia from attacking the United States and its allies in the future.” – U.S. Senator Ben Cardin, in a letter to the Trump administration sent in September of 2017.<sup>14</sup>**

## Turkey's Viewpoint

Despite NATO concerns, several Turkish officials claim that the S-400 deal is complete and alterations to the deal are not possible.<sup>15</sup> Turkey turned to Russia's S-400 system after a previous deal to purchase a Chinese system was canceled under pressure from the U.S. in 2015.<sup>16</sup> Turkey's pursuit of a ground-to-air missile defense system escalated in the same year when the U.S., Germany, and the Netherlands decided not to renew their Patriot-missile deployments in southern Turkey.<sup>17</sup> Turkey's current missile defense consists of Spanish and Italian missile batteries linked to the NATO air-defense system.<sup>18</sup> Given its strategic geopolitical location, Turkey has some historically volatile neighbors, including Syria, Iran, and Iraq, thus leading to its heightened interest in defense investments. It is also believed that the S-400 is more advanced than the U.S.' primary MIM-104 (PAC-3) Patriot system, which

## COUNTRIES WITH S-400 MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEMS<sup>40</sup>



has a more limited range and carries only one type of missile compared to the S-400's three.<sup>19</sup> Regarding fears that the S-400 is not interoperable with NATO defense systems, Turkey believes that the system can be used independently without any external connection,<sup>20</sup> and plans to install software that would allow the system to distinguish between friend and foe aircraft.<sup>21</sup> Overall, the S-400 would serve as a temporary system until Turkey reaches its long-term goal of building up its own long-range air and missile defence systems<sup>22</sup>

**“Turkey has picked [the] S-400 over other options because the missile system possesses more advanced technical features than its rivals, with a better price and shorter delivery time.” – Ahmet Berat Conkar, Head of the Turkish delegation to NATO's Parliamentary Assembly<sup>23</sup>**

**“We take and will continue to take all necessary measures to ensure our national security. We are the hosts in our own house.” – Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President of the Republic of Turkey<sup>24</sup>**

# F-35 Lightning II

## Turkey's Viewpoint

Since Turkey's addition to the program, 10 Turkish companies have supported the development and/or production of F-35s.<sup>28</sup> With an integral role in the production process, the state-controlled Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI) produces center fuselages for the worldwide fleet of F-35s.<sup>29</sup> Overall, Turkish industries have the opportunity to become suppliers to the global F-35 fleet throughout the life of the program, and Turkish companies can expect the total industrial opportunities associated with this program to reach \$12 billion.<sup>30</sup> New legislation in the U.S. Congress threatens the sale of the F-35 to Turkey; however, Turkey is determined not to be deterred by the possible sanctions. Unlike Israel, Japan, South Korea, and Belgium – which are Foreign Military Sale (FSM) customers of the F-35 program – Turkey is an original partner country in the consortium.<sup>31</sup> As such, the F-35 does not qualify as an FSM, which complicates proposed sanctions schemes against Turkey. Ultimately, if unable to incorporate F-35s, Turkey might turn to other 5th-generation alternatives such as the Eurofighter Typhoon or Russia's Su-57 until Turkey's own TAI TFX fighter jet is fully operational.

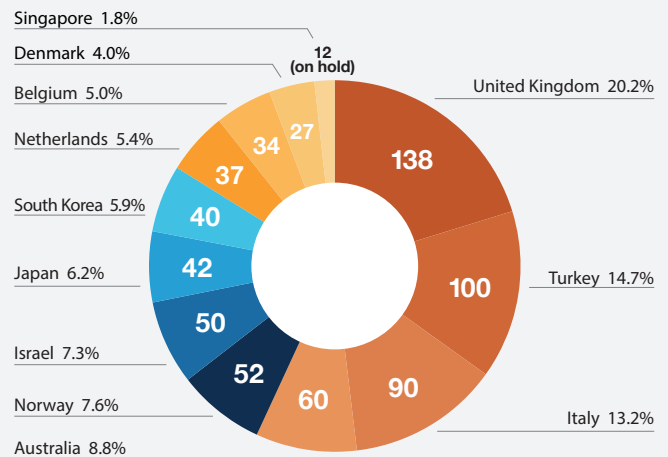
**“I have no concerns [about the F-35s]. Because this is a substantial legal agreement that includes the joint production of some materials. We have made our payments regularly and this deal has nothing to do with our procurement of the S-400s.”**  
– Mevlut Cavusoglu, Turkish Foreign Minister<sup>32</sup>

**“[The proposed F-35 ban goes] against the spirit of our alliance with the U.S...This is not a program managed solely by the U.S. It is a multinational program and we expect everybody to fulfill their obligations.”** – Hami Aksoy, Turkish Foreign Ministry Spokesperson<sup>33</sup>

## U.S. Concerns

Several members of Congress have proposed multiple pieces of legislation aimed at preventing the transfer of F-35s to Turkey. These proposed sanctions appear to be a tool of political leverage in retaliation for Turkey's S-400 deal with Russia, the imprisonment of American pastor Andrew Brunson in Turkey, and threats against U.S.-backed YPG forces in Syria. Statements by U.S. senators Thom Tillis, James Lankford, and Jeanne Shaheen have criticized recent Turkish actions and demanded the release of the American pastor.<sup>34</sup> According to the proposed Fiscal Year 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), Congress finds that U.S.-Turkey relations have become “increasingly strained due to several provocative actions taken by the Government of Turkey” and posits that the S-400s purchase

EXPECTED F-35 PURCHASES BY COUNTRY (EXCLUDING THE U.S.)<sup>44</sup>



could “exacerbate current NATO interoperability challenges with respect to common military architecture and information sharing.”<sup>35</sup> As such, the proposed 2019 NDAA “prohibits any action to execute delivery of major defense equipment...to the Republic of Turkey until the required report is delivered to the specified congressional committees.”<sup>36</sup> In addition, legislation proposed in May of 2017 by House Foreign Affairs Committee member David Cicilline called for a halt to the sale or transfer of F-35s (and related intellectual property and data) until President Trump can certify that Turkey is not “taking steps to degrade NATO interoperability, exposing NATO assets to hostile actors...[or] degrading the general security of NATO member states.”<sup>37</sup> These sanctions would only take effect if signed into law later this year.

**“Turkey’s strategic decisions regrettably fall more and more out of line with, and at times in contrast to, U.S. interests. These factors make the transfer of sensitive F-35 technology and cutting-edge capabilities to Erdogan’s regime increasingly risky.”** – U.S. Senator James Lankford<sup>38</sup>

**“President Erdogan’s choice to take hostages and imprison innocent Americans, to try to gain leverage over the United States, is egregious and unlawful.”** – U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen<sup>39</sup>

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