



Moving Forward on Turkish Acquisition of Russian S-400s

OE Watch Commentary: Turkey signed a \$2.5 billion agreement with Russia in December 2017 to purchase the S-400 anti-aircraft missile system and remains committed to it, despite the concerns of its NATO allies. The accompanying passages, one from the Turkish state owned *Anadolu Ajansı* and the other from English-language daily *Hurriyet Daily News*, provide information regarding why Turkey is moving ahead with the purchase, the steps it is taking to incorporate this system into its defense capabilities and the possible implication on Turkey as a NATO member.

The first passage from *Anadolu Ajansı*, quotes Turkish Minister of Defense Hulusi Akar stating, the S-400 purchase “was not a matter of choice for us, but necessity.” Turkey plans to complete the installation of the S-400 by October 2019 and is in the process of selecting the personnel to send to Russia for training at the beginning of 2019. Akar did not reveal any details regarding where the air-defense system will be deployed. Additionally, Akar claimed that this system will not interfere with NATO and that the concerns of their allies were irrelevant.

The second article from *Hurriyet Daily News* notes that while Turkey strengthens NATO militarily, Russia has made efforts to exploit the problems Turkey has had with its allies. The article quotes the former secretary general Rasmussen saying, “Russia is posing a threat to NATO, not just militarily, but also in terms of hybrid warfare and disinformation campaigns.” Regardless, it appears that the Turkish government is moving forward with the purchase of the S-400. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**

“No doubt Russia will exploit signs of a split in our alliance and will make offers you cannot refuse.”

Source: Merve Yıldızalp. “S-400’lerin kurulum çalışmalarına Ekim 2019’da başlanacak” (The installation of S-400s will begin in October 2019), *Anadolu Ajansı*, 25 October 2018. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/bilim-teknoloji/s-400lerin-kurulum-calismalarina-ekim-2019da-baslanacak/1292537>

Minister of Defense Hulusi Akar said “the installation of the S-400 missile defense system will begin in October 2019.”...

Akar highlighted that the S-400 is a matter of defense and pointed out that there are serious aerial and missile threats against Turkey and the Turkish population.

“Currently, we are in process of selecting personnel. The selected personnel will be sent for training in Russia starting in the beginning of 2019,” Akar said. “They will get the necessary training there and then they will come back for duty...”

Akar noted that the location where the system will be placed is still in progress. [Turkish] Air Forces Command is working to assess the aerial and missile threats. The decision of where the [S-400] systems will be placed is going to be made according to the assessment results.

...Saying that the anti-aircraft missile system will be used independently from NATO systems, Akar said: “We find U.S. and NATO concerns irrelevant. We never allow any interference in U.S. or NATO systems. This was not a matter of choice for us, but necessity ...”

Akar said that Turkey wants to also be a producer, not just a buyer, of these systems, stressing that it will continue working on projects that incorporate Turkish collaboration in production.

Source: Barçın Yinanç. “Turkey will marginalize itself in NATO with the S-400s purchase,” *hurriyetaidailynews.com*, 25 October 2018. <http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/opinion/barcin-yinanc/turkey-will-marginalize-itself-in-nato-with-the-s-400s-purchase-138243>

Turkey is... [a]NATO member enjoying good relations and intensive cooperation on both bilateral and regional issues with Moscow...

Yet, despite being in the same alliance, Turkey has experienced severe strains with some NATO countries, especially with the United States. Russia has not missed the opportunity to exploit these rifts to widen the gap among alliance members.

Looking from that perspective, Turkey stands as a member that strengthens NATO militarily, but weakens it politically.

Following the panel, I approached Rasmussen to ask him about his views on Turkey... “Russia poses a threat to NATO, not just militarily, but also in terms of hybrid warfare and disinformation campaigns,” he said.

Then he went on to say, “Obviously, we have some internal challenges like Turkey...”

“...we are of course concerned about Turkey’s purchase of Russian military equipment that is not compatible with NATO equipment. The risk is of course that gradually Turkey will marginalize itself security wise within NATO. It will marginalize itself not by NATO’s decision but by its own decision,” said Rasmussen.

He said he agreed that Turkey was fulfilling its military commitments to NATO, however, the government decision to purchase S-400s is not just posing a political challenge but a strategic challenge, according to the former secretary general.

“No doubt Russia will exploit signs of a split in our alliance and will make offers you cannot refuse,” he said.

“My conclusion is we should keep Turkey as a full-fledged member and we should step up our dialogue with the government in Ankara,” said Rasmussen.