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Iran Says It Has S-300 Missiles

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An S-300 missile system being shown off during Victory Day celebrations in Moscow in May 2008. Iran says it has obtained four S-300 surface-to-air missile systems, two from Belarus and two from anothe

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran has obtained four S-300 surface-to-air missile systems despite Russia's refusal to deliver them to Tehran under a valid contract, a semi-official Iranian news agency claimed Wednesday.

The Fars news agency, which has ties to Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard, Iran's most powerful military force, said Iran received two S-300s from Belarus and two others from another, unspecified source. Fars did not elaborate, and there was no official confirmation of the report.

Russia signed a 2007 contract to sell the S-300s but so far has not delivered. The powerful, long-range missiles would significantly boost Iran's defense capability, and Israel and the United States have strongly objected to the deal.

A spokesman for Belarus' state military trade committee, however, denied there were any missile deliveries.

“Talks with the Iranian side about the delivery of such systems have not taken place and, consequently, no deliveries to Iran have taken place, neither of these systems or elements of them,” said Vladimir Lavrenyuk. “The Belarussian side strictly observes all international agreements on export control.”

Moscow said in June that the latest round of UN sanctions would prevent it from delivering the S-300s to Iran. But last month, Russian Technologies head Sergei Chemezov said the contract to deliver the S-300s to Iran had not been annulled yet pending a decision by President Dmitry Medvedev.

Asked to comment on the Iranian report, Vyacheslav Davidenko, a spokesman for the state arms trader Rosoboronexport, said his company had not delivered any S-300s to Iran. “We are abiding by the UN sanctions,” he said.

Former Belarussian leader Stanislav Shushkevich, now an opposition politician, said Russia in the past has used Belarus as a conduit for weapons deliveries to rogue nations.

“Belarus might well have used the established ‘gray’ schemes to deliver S-300s to Iran,” Shushkevich said. “The deliveries of S-300s from Belarus to Iran would have been absolutely impossible without Russia’s knowledge and sanction.”

Iran has insisted that Moscow is under an obligation to carry out the contract to provide the S-300 missiles to Tehran.

U.S. sanctions against Iran are preventing state-connected Ilyushin Finance from delivering five passenger jets to Iran under a 2007 contract, Reuters reported.

Delivery of the Tu-204 planes would violate U.S. sanctions because U.S. company Pratt & Whitney helped develop their engines, Ilyushin Finance director Alexander Rubtsov said.

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