The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Moscow, Astana Mull Missile Defense

December 08, 2010



Russia and Kazakhstan are looking to cooperate on a ballistic missile early warning system and Moscow is planning to sell Astana its S-300 defense missile system, Itar-Tass reported Wednesday.

Russia froze an order of the surface-to-air missiles to Iran earlier this year, citing restrictions under sanctions the UN Security Council imposed on Tehran in June over its nuclear activities.

Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov and his Kazakh counterpart, Adilbek Jaksybekov, met on Wednesday in Moscow to discuss strengthening military ties.

"The talks focused on ... Kazakhstan's participation in the ballistic missile early warning system," Defense Ministry spokeswoman Irina Kovalchuk said after the meeting, Itar-Tass reported.

Moscow has been urging NATO to allow Russia's cooperation in a U.S.-led European missile defense system plan. President Dmitry Medvedev says failure to include Russia on the alliance's missile defense plans would trigger a new arms race.

The S-300 is a high-precision missile system, which Moscow has supplied to China and Venezuela.

"The discussions are under way for the relevant contracts," said Kovalchuk, without mentioning how many units it planned on buying.

Analysts say Kazakhstan has been in talks to buy two units of the system, which would cost about $150 million.

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