

Russian Arms Sales Double as Sales to Syria Continue

By [Alexander Bratersky](#)

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Isaikin has said he is counting on new weapons markets to replace those which have shrunk or disappeared. **Maxim Shemetov**

Russia sold twice as many weapons abroad in 2012 as in the previous year. It now has a portfolio of \$37 billion in foreign orders and continues to sell anti-aircraft systems to Syria, a senior arms trade executive told reporters Wednesday.

Although India is still the country's No. 1 weaponry client, sales continue to Syria, Anatoly Isaikin, the head of Rosoboronexport, said at a news conference Wednesday at the Foreign Affairs Ministry.

Isaikin spoke ahead of the IDEX defense industry expo in Abu-Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, which starts next week. Dozens of Russian companies are expected to show their products there to buyers from Gulf countries and the rest of Middle East.

Arms sales to Syria include anti-aircraft missiles and spare parts, not aviation equipment, he added.

The sale of spare parts to Syria came into the spotlight in October, when a civilian airliner carrying spare military parts was stopped at the Istanbul airport.

Russia, which denied the fact that the plane had any munitions on board, said later that the plane was delivering parts for an anti-aircraft radar.

Military experts said at the time that information about the shipment could have been leaked from the U.S. to Turkey, which has thrown its support behind the Syrian opposition.

Isaikin also said Rosoboronexport had signed a package of weapons contracts with Iraq worth \$ 4.2 billion, one of the biggest deals for Russia's defense industry for the past few years.

"Those contracts have been signed, but they haven't come into force yet," Isaikin said. He added that government ministries are reviewing the contracts.

Some experts also see sales to Iraq as a way for Russia to regain its economic status in Iraq. In 2008, both countries reached an agreement to cancel the \$11.3 billion debt racked up by Saddam Hussein's government.

The U.S. is "not worried" about Iraqi plans to buy weapons from Russia, since they would concern a limited range of products, said Theodore Karasik, a senior expert at the Dubai-based Inegma think tank.

"Washington knows there are certain equipment requirements from Russia that only Moscow can fulfill," he said in an e-mail Wednesday. "On the other hand, when purchasers look at specific aircraft, Washington knows that Iraq will look to the United States."

America is Russia's toughest competitor in the aircraft market. Isaikin has said that the Su-35, a modernized fourth-generation fighter jet, is in "great demand" by foreign countries.

Russia recently lost several tenders in India that provided for the supply of advanced MiG-35 fighter jets and Mi-28N combat helicopters.

The main problem was that the aircraft have no track record, since they are not yet in use by the Russian military, Isaikin said.

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