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Russia Offers Iran Latest Anti-Aircraft Missiles

By The Moscow Times

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Russia had offered Iran its latest Antey-2500 anti-aircraft missiles.

Russia has offered Iran its latest Antey-2500 missiles, the head of Russian state defense conglomerate Rostec said Monday according to media reports, after a deal to supply less powerful S-300 missiles was dropped under Western pressure.

Sergei Chemezov said Tehran was now considering the offer, TASS news agency reported.

Russia scrapped a contract to supply Iran with S-300 surface-to-air missiles under Western pressure in 2010, and Iran later filed a $4-billion international arbitration suit against Russia in Geneva, but the two countries remain allies.

The U.S. and Israel lobbied Russia to block the missile sale, saying it could be used to shield Iran's nuclear facilities from possible future air strikes.

There was no immediate response to Chemezov's comments from Iran, Israel or the U.S.

"As far as Iran is concerned, we offered Antey-2500 instead of S-300. They are thinking. No decision has been made yet," Chemezov was quoted as saying.

Rostec includes state-owned arms exporting monopoly Rosoboronexport, which has the sole right to export and import arms in Russia.

The Antey-2500 was developed from the 1980s-generation S-300V system (SA-12A Gladiator and SA-12B Giant). It can engage missiles traveling at 4,500 meters per second, with a range of 2,500 kilometers (1,500 miles), according to the company that makes it, Almaz-Antey.

The S-300 missiles have a 125-mile range and Russia has stoked tensions with the West by trying to sell them to Syria and other Middle Eastern countries.

Chemezov told reporters that conflicts in the Middle East had helped boost Russian arm sales, according to TASS.

"I don't conceal it, and everyone understands this, the more conflicts there are, the more they buy off weapon from us. Volumes are continuing to grow despite sanctions. Mainly, it's Latin America and the Middle East," he was quoted as saying.

Last year, Russian foreign arm sales totaled $13 billion, he added.

Chemezov was sanctioned by the U.S. government in April over Russia's role in the Ukraine crisis.

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