

Sweden to Boost Gotland Air Defense Amid Russia Tensions

By [Reuters](#)

July 01, 2019



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Sweden's military said on Monday it would deploy an updated ground-to-air missile defense system on the Baltic Sea island of Gotland in another sign of tension in the region with Russia.

The new system, developed and built by defense firm Saab, replaces the mobile anti-aircraft guns the military on Gotland have previously been equipped with.

"Gotland is an important area from a military-strategic perspective," Micael Byden, supreme commander of the Swedish Armed Forces, said in a statement.

"Its geographical location gives the island significant military advantages in terms of protection and control of sea traffic, the Baltic's airspace and the ability to base military units and capabilities."

Although it is not a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member, Sweden has close ties

to the alliance and has been beefing up its armed forces after decades of neglect amid increased anxiety over Russian saber-rattling in the Baltic Sea region.

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Earlier this year, Sweden called in Russia's ambassador after a Russian fighter buzzed a Swedish military plane in international air space over the Baltic, flying just 20 meters away.

Sweden has in recent years complained over several incidents involving Russian military planes, including violations of Swedish airspace.

Gotland lies around 330 kilometers from Kaliningrad, the headquarters of Russia's Baltic Fleet.

Original url:

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