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First S-400 Missile System Parts Land in Turkey, Russia Confirms

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The first parts of a Russian S-400 missile defense system were delivered to NATO member Turkey on Friday, Russia has confirmed.

Turkey's acquisition of the Russian system is a source of tension between Turkey and NATO ally United States. The U.S. has demanded that Ankara abandon its deal with Moscow and purchase American-made Patriot systems instead, threatening tough new sanctions if the demand isn't met.

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Russia's Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation confirmed on Friday it had started delivering the S-400s to Turkey and that the deliveries would continue as per an agreed schedule, the state-run RIA news agency reported.

The S-400 consignment was delivered to the Murted Air Base outside the capital Ankara, Turkey's defense ministry said earlier Friday, in a statement which triggered a weakening in the Turkish lira to 5.7 against the dollar from 5.6775 on Wednesday.

"The delivery of parts belonging to the system will continue in the coming days," Turkey's Defense Industry Directorate said separately. "Once the system is completely ready, it will begin to be used in a way determined by the relevant authorities."

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said after meeting President Donald Trump at a G20 summit last month that the United States did not plan to impose sanctions on Ankara for buying the S-400s. Trump said Turkey had not been treated fairly but did not rule out sanctions.

The United States says the S-400s are not compatible with NATO's defense network and could compromise its Lockheed Martin F-35 stealth fighter jets, an aircraft Turkey is helping to build and planning to buy.

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Under possible U.S. sanctions, Turkey could face expulsion from the F-35 program, a move Erdogan has dismissed. But Washington has already started the process of removing Turkey from the F-35 program, halting training of Turkish pilots in the United States on the aircraft.

Investors in Turkey have been concerned about the impact of potential U.S. sanctions on an economy which fell into recession after a currency crisis last year.

Ankara and Washington are also involved in disputes over strategy in Syria east of the Euphrates River, where the United States is allied with Kurdish forces that Turkey views as foes.

The Murted base, northwest of Ankara, was formerly known as Akinci Air Base. It was used by putschist soldiers in the attempted coup of July 2016.

Reuters contributed reporting.

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