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Iraq in Talks to Buy Russian Missile Systems – Lawmaker

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Earlier talks to purchase the S-300 systems from Russia were suspended over U.S. threats of sanctions.
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Iraq has resumed talks with Russia to buy its S-300 surface-to-air missile systems, a senior Iraqi lawmaker told the state-run RIA Novosti news agency following the U.S. killing of a top Iranian commander and Iran's retaliatory missile strikes there.

Meanwhile, firebrand lawmaker Vladimir Zhirinovsky urged Iran to buy Russia's advanced S-400 missile systems in the wake of a flare-up in tensions with Washington.

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"I told Iran's leadership to buy our more powerful S-400 and S-500 missile defense systems and to open air, naval and land bases like in Syria," the state-run TASS news agency quoted Zhirinovsky as saying.

Iraq has several months ago “renewed negotiations on an S-300 contract” with Russia, Mohammad Reza al-Haider, the chairman of the Iraqi parliament’s defense committee, told RIA on Thursday.

Earlier talks — after alleged Israeli strikes on Iran-linked targets in August — were suspended over U.S. threats of sanctions, he said. The S-300 manufacturer is subject to U.S. and European sanctions.

“We expect pushback from the U.S. on this matter,” al-Haider told RIA.

Al-Haider said he was unaware what stage the Russian-Iraqi negotiations have reached, but noted that Baghdad’s leadership has authorized the S-300 purchase.

Iraq has expanded its defense cooperation with Russia in recent years with increased purchases of Russian aircraft and tanks.

Iran fired missiles Wednesday at bases in Iraq where U.S. troops were stationed in retaliation for Iranian military commander Qassem Soleimani's killing in a U.S. drone strike in Baghdad on Jan. 3. U.S. President Donald Trump said he authorized Soleimani’s assassination because the Iranian commander had planned to blow up a U.S. embassy.

In August, Russia’s ambassador in Baghdad told Iraq’s parliamentary speaker that Moscow was ready to support its UN Security Council initiative to expand its air defense capabilities.

An Iran-linked militia leader visited Moscow in September in what analysts said was “probably connected to Iraq’s interest in expanding military-technical contacts with Russia and purchasing Russian air defense systems.”

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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