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Russia Plans S-400 Deliveries to India in 2021

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India's $5 billion contract with Russia for the S-400 systems puts Delhi at risk of U.S. sanctions. **Vitaly Nevar / TASS**

Russia plans to start deliveries of its S-400 air defense system to India late next year, a Russian official said Wednesday of the arms deal that risks landing Delhi under U.S. sanctions.

India, the largest purchaser of Russian military hardware, agreed on the roughly $5 billion deal in 2018. The U.S. has said countries trading with Russia's defense and intelligence sectors would face automatic sanctions.

Related article: India Signs $5Bln Deal to Buy Russia's S-400 Missile System, Despite U.S. Pressure

"The first batch is scheduled for delivery by the end of 2021," Vladimir Drozhzhov, the deputy head of Russia's Federal Service for Military and Technical Cooperation, was quoted by Interfax as saying.

“The training of Indian specialists will begin before the start of delivery,” Drozhzhov said.

Moscow is expected to deliver all five S-400 missile batteries to New Delhi by 2025, a senior Russian diplomat in India said last month.

The S-400 would give India’s military the ability to shoot down aircraft and missiles at unprecedented ranges.

Washington has said countries trading with Russia's defense and intelligence sectors would face automatic sanctions under a sweeping legislation called Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).

India is hoping that President Donald Trump's administration will give it a waiver on the weapons systems which Delhi sees as a deterrent against China's larger and more superior military. A senior U.S. State Department official said last month that India would not receive a “blanket waiver” on sanctions.

The United States in 2018 imposed sanctions on China's military for its purchase of combat fighters and the S-400 missile system from Russia.

Drozhzhov estimated that India has ordered $15 billion worth of Russian arms in three years. India has purchased around $70 billion in weapons from Russia since 1991, he said.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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