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# Turkey to Send Home Russian S-400 Missile System Experts in Signal to U.S. – Reports

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The U.S. had sanctioned Turkey over its purchase of the Russian-made air defense system for a reported $2.5 billion. **Sergei Malgavko / TASS**

*Updated at 2:15 p.m. on June 3.*

Turkey will send home Russian military experts helping it operate the Russian-made S-400 air defense system but will not budge on the key U.S. demand to scrap the deal altogether, Bloomberg reported this week.

Russia delivered its first of four S-400 batteries to NATO member Turkey in July 2019 as part of a reported $2.5 billion deal. In response, the United States expelled Ankara from its F-35 fighter jet program and hit Turkey's military procurement agency with an asset freeze and visa restrictions in addition to banning it from U.S. export licenses.

"We've sent many technicians [to Russia] for training. The Russian military experts won't

stay in Turkey," Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavusoglu said in remarks on state television Monday, according to Bloomberg.

"The S-400s will be under our 100% control," Çavusoglu reiterated. "It is not possible to accept calls from another country to 'not use' them."

The U.S. has long argued that Turkey's purchase of the S-400 system threatens the NATO alliance's defenses by potentially exposing intelligence on Western military capabilities, including on F-35 maker Lockheed Martin. Ankara has rejected those concerns and insisted that it was meeting its NATO commitments.

Russia's Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation, which oversees arms sales abroad, on Thursday denied that Turkey will send back the Russian S-400 experts.

"The return of Russian technical specialists who are in Turkey on a S-400 contract will be carried out in accordance with the approved schedule," FSVTS spokeswoman Valeria Reshetnikova told the state-run RIA Novosti news agency.

The Kremlin confirmed Reshetnikova's comments at a daily briefing Thursday.

Last week, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman said Washington had offered Ankara unnamed "alternatives" to lift sanctions over the S-400s.

"Turkey is well aware of the steps it needs to take," Sherman was quoted as saying in a CNN Türk interview.

Çavusoglu's comments are seen as readiness to compromise on parts of U.S. concerns over the Russian missile system ahead of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's meeting with U.S. President Joe Biden at the June 14 NATO summit in Brussels.

Biden is expected to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin in Geneva two days later in an attempt to smooth over tensions between Washington and Moscow that have soared to post-Cold War highs.

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