

India to Go Ahead with Purchase of Russia S-400 Air Defense System Despite US Sanctions Threat

By [Press TV](#)

Asia-Pacific Research, January 11, 2021

[PressTV](#) 9 January 2021

Region: [South Asia](#)

Theme: [Defence](#)

India says it will go ahead with the purchase of Russia's S-400 air defense system despite the US sanctions threat, reminding Washington of New Delhi's independent foreign policy.

“India has always pursued an independent foreign policy. This also applies to our defense acquisitions and supplies which are guided by our national security interests,” said the Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Anurag Srivastava in a Friday statement as quoted by Time of India daily.

The ministry further emphasized that while India and the US have a “complete world strategic partnership,” New Delhi maintains “a particular and privileged strategic partnership with Russia.”

The development came after a US Congressional report had recently warned that India's purchase of the Russia-built S-400 air defense system may provoke American sanctions.

The report, prepared for members of the US Congress to take “informed decisions,” said, “India's multi-billion dollar deal to purchase the Russian-made S-400 air defense system may trigger US sanctions on India under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).”

Despite its name, the act has been brandished by Washington against allied nations mulling weapons deals with Russia — namely India and Turkey.

This is while Russia's ambassador to India, Nikolay Kudashev, emphasized recently that both New Delhi and Moscow regarded all sanctions except those imposed by the UN Security Council as illegal.

He also underlined that the proposed deal for supplying the S-400 to India was “advancing well.”

Washington last month imposed CAATSA on Turkey for “knowingly engaging in a significant transaction” with Rosoboronexport, Russia's major weapons export company, by procuring the same S-400 system.

It further described the measure as a clear signal that the US will not tolerate “significant transactions” with Russian defense and intelligence sectors.

Moscow and New Delhi originally signed a general agreement on the sale of five units of the air defense systems back in October 2016. They signed the contract for the procurement, worth 5.43 billion dollars, in October 2018.

The US has so far made numerous attempts to scuttle the deal, warning New Delhi that the Russian systems could purportedly restrict India's "interoperability" with American systems. Washington has also hinted that it could subject the Asian country to economic sanctions over the purchase.

Russia announced in February 2020 that it has started the production of a batch of S-400 missile defense systems for India under a deal the two countries reached two years earlier, despite the threat of sanctions by the US against New Delhi over the purchase of the advanced air defense system.

The S-400 Triumph missile defense systems, designed and produced by Russian state-owned company Almaz-Antey, are capable of engaging targets at a distance of 400 kilometres and at an altitude of up to 30 kilometres.

The missile system can destroy aircraft as well as cruise and ballistic missiles. It can also be used against land-based targets.

"The Almaz-Antey concern has begun manufacturing the S-400 systems for India, and Russia will deliver the S-400s to India within the timeframe stipulated by the contract," Russia's Industry and Trade Minister Denis Manturov declared at the time.

Manturov added that training centers had already been set up in India to prepare the Indian operators of Russia's most advanced long-range air defense platform.

Also in January 2020, a senior US State Department official called on New Delhi to reconsider purchasing the Russian air defense system or face the "risk of application of sanctions" under CAATSA.

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