

Trump Says Turkey Won't Receive F-35s Over Russian Missile System

By [Bloomberg](#)

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President Donald Trump confirmed reluctantly that Turkey won't be able to buy the U.S. F-35 fighter that it helps build after the country began taking delivery this week of a Russian missile defense system.

"We are now telling Turkey that 'because you have really been forced to buy another missile system, we are not going to sell you the F-35 fighter jets,'" Trump said at a cabinet meeting on Tuesday. "It is a very tough situation that they are in, and it's a tough situation that we have been placed in, the United States."

It was the president's clearest statement on the issue since President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government began receiving components for the Russian-made S-400 last week. The Trump administration is still weighing other penalties over the issue, including tough economic sanctions.

Secretary of State Michael Pompeo “and the president are examining all of the options” under the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus told reporters Tuesday.

But suggesting there may yet be a way to avert the F-35 cutoff, Trump said, “We are working through it, we will see what happens.”

He again blamed his predecessor, Barack Obama, for Turkey’s purchase of the Russian S-400s, inaccurately saying that the former president wouldn’t let Turkey buy the U.S.-made Patriot system instead.

In fact, the U.S. has sought to sell Ankara the Patriot air-defense missile since at least 2013, but Erdogan insisted that it come with a transfer of technology so that Turkey could develop and build its own missiles. The Obama administration declined. Erdogan has since said Turkey’s defense needs required him to buy the Russian-made S-400.

Top Customers

Turkey, with its planned purchases of 100 of the F-35s built by Lockheed Martin Corp., is one of the four top foreign customers for the world’s costliest weapons program, along with Japan, Australia and the U.K. Ten Turkish companies are expected to be suspended from making more than 900 parts for the F-35 that over the program’s lifetime could generate more than \$9 billion in orders. Turkey’s first two jets were to have been delivered later this year.

Related article: [Russia’s S-400 Is ‘the Best Missile System All-Around,’ U.S. Firm Says](#)

Erdogan has sought to blunt any sanctions effort by appealing directly to Trump. Referring to a conversation the two leaders had at the G-20 meeting in Japan last month, Erdogan said on Sunday that Trump doesn’t favor sanctions, even if they are supported by some U.S. officials.

“I don’t believe Mr. Trump thinks the same as others under his management,” Erdogan said. “He has said this loud and clear to his friends in front of the whole world media during the last meeting we had in Osaka.”

In his comments Tuesday, Trump said, “Turkey is very good with us, very good.”

Shanahan’s Warning

The U.S. has long said Turkey’s decision to buy the Russian equipment is incompatible with its role in both NATO and the F-35 program. In a June 6 letter to Defense Minister Hulusi Akar, then-Acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan said there was still time for Turkey “to change course on the S-400” missile system, but he also laid out a timeline of how cooperation on the next-generation fighter would wind down.

“In addition to threatening the security of platforms like the F-35, Turkey’s procurement of the S-400 will hinder your nation’s ability to enhance or maintain cooperation with the United States and within NATO, lead to Turkish strategic and economic over-dependence on Russia, and undermine Turkey’s very capable defense industry and ambitious economic

development goals,” Shanahan wrote in the letter.

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