
'We aren't slaves': Erdogan defies US pressure over S-400 deal with Russia, says S-500 may follow

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Ankara is not a slave to an America in which Washington decides which weapons system Turkey can purchase, the country's president proclaimed, stressing its deployment of Russia's S-400 air defense systems will proceed as planned.

Ankara's resilience against US pressure over the purchase of the S-400 systems remains rock solid, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan clarified on Wednesday, stressing that Turkey is a sovereign nation which has the right to choose its trade partners and arms suppliers.

"It's done. There can never be a turning back. This would not be ethical, it would be immoral. Nobody should ask us to lick up what we spat," Erdogan [told](#) Kanal 24.

We're an independent country, not slaves.

The fuss over the Russian deal is now even forcing Turkey to consider upgrading to the next-generation of Russian air defense systems, the S-500, once it enters Russian military service sometime in 2020, Erdogan said.

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Claiming the need to protect NATO interoperability and to conceal the technical characteristics

of US hardware from the Russians, and specifically with the Lockheed Martin F-35s, Washington has been using coercive diplomacy against Ankara, trying to force it to back down from its S-400 deal. The US insists Turkey should instead spend \$3.5 billion on US Patriot missiles, an offer Ankara has repeatedly turned down in the past but is now vaguely considering if the conditions were suitable.

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The S-400 remains *"a problem to all of our aircraft, but specifically the F-35,"* Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti [told](#) the Senate Armed Services Committee on Wednesday arguing that the US should stop the stealth fighter transfer to Turkey and *"forfeit"* sales of other military technology to its NATO ally, if Ankara deploys the Russian-made defensive weaponry as expected in July. Earlier this week a Pentagon spokesman warned of *"grave consequences"* and of *"broader implications"* unless Turkey cancels the purchase.
