

Video shows missile fired where Turkey cleared way for S-400 test, prompting US warning

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ISTANBUL/WASHINGTON: A missile was fired into the sky on Friday on Turkey's Black Sea coast where the military was expected to test its Russian-made S-400 defense systems, according to local video obtained by Reuters, drawing a strong warning from the US State Department.

The video, taken in the coastal city of Sinop, showed a narrow column of smoke headed high into the blue sky. In recent days Turkey had issued notices restricting air space and waters off the coastal area to allow firing tests. Tests of the S-400s, if verified, could stoke tensions between Turkey and the United States, which sharply opposed Ankara's purchase of the weapons from Moscow on grounds they compromise shared NATO defense systems.

State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus said the United States has expressed to the most senior levels of the Turkish government that the acquisition of Russian military systems such as the S-400 is unacceptable, adding that Washington has been clear on its expectation that the system should not be operationalized.

Opinion

This section contains relevant reference points, placed in (Opinion field)

"We have also been clear on the potential serious consequences for our security relationship if Turkey activates the system," Ortagus said.

"If confirmed, we would condemn in the strongest terms the S-400 test missile launch as incompatible with Turkey's responsibilities as a NATO Ally and strategic partner of the United States," she added.

A US official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, confirmed that Turkey had tested the S-400 system on Friday but did not provide details.

Turkey's defense ministry said it would neither deny nor confirm missile tests.

Washington reacted last year by suspending Turkey from its F-35 jet program and has threatened sanctions.

Defense analyst Turan Oguz said a preliminary assessment of the color, intensity, angle and route of the smoke in the video coincided with S-400 missiles. The angle of the column suggested the target "must not be too high," he added.

Last year the military conducted radar tests of the surface-to-air defenses,

which is among the world's most advanced and can spot and track incoming aircraft at medium and long ranges.

Turkey signed the S-400 deal with Russia in 2017. Deliveries of the first four missile batteries, worth \$2.5 billion, began in July last year.

Last week – after reports of the planned tests circulated – two US senators called again for President Donald Trump's administration to impose sanctions on Turkey.



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Turkey at loggerheads with EU over east Mediterranean Greece blames Turkey for holding foreign minister's plane

[Finance minister says Iraq's leaders willing to make reforms](#)

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By SAMYA KULLAB | AP

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Thu, 2020-10-15 15:25

BAGHDAD: Iraq's finance minister said Thursday there is growing political will to undertake drastic reforms needed for the country to tackle a daunting liquidity crisis, which has pushed Iraq to the brink of collapse.

"There is more will now than there was five months ago," Finance Minister Ali Allawi told The Associated Press. "Now, I think there is recognition that unless oil prices go up miraculously, this is something we have to cope with and manage."

Low oil prices have slashed state coffers in the crude-exporting country by nearly half, and over-reliance on oil has limited the government's ability to seek out other income. A widening month-to-month deficit has cast uncertainty over how future payments will be made for public wages, external debts and essential imports of food and medicine.

Iraq's unsustainable economy, laid bare by fiscal pressures spurred by spiraling oil prices and the coronavirus pandemic, is a long-standing problem that has flummoxed reformists for over a decade.

This week, Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi's government issued a much-anticipated 95-page "white paper" for economic reform that, if implemented, would prompt a drastic overhaul of the entire system within three to five years.

"It is a paper designed to create a strategic and policy framework for a new Iraqi economy," said Allawi. "In the end of this period of change and reform ... we are supposed to have a restructured and more dynamic economy, that is the point of it."

The absence of support from major political elites has undermined similar efforts in the past. Al-Kadhimi's government still depends on an endorsement by Parliament for the vision to gain steam.

"There is less denial, before it was all denial," said Allawi.

With oil prices not expected to rebound in the near-term, only reforms will see Iraq avoid an economic catastrophe, top officials in al-Kadhimi's government, including Allawi, have repeatedly said. The future of the project faces a major test: Parliament endorsement in the form of a binding resolution or legislation.

Later, aspects of the plan outlined in the paper will be incorporated into the 2021 budget, said Allawi, something that will also require a parliament vote. Government subsidies in the electricity and oil sectors will face particular scrutiny.

In September, Iraq made \$3.16 billion in oil exports, which accounts for 90% of state revenue – less than half of the \$7 billion needed to pay for salaries, pensions, imports and debts. September salaries were delayed and the payment of October wages depends largely on the government borrowing internally. A previous bill allowing for \$12 billion in internal borrowing has been used up; a new one, asking for \$35 billion, faces a parliament vote. "I hope parliament will approve it," said Allawi of the bill. "If it doesn't, we have potential for other alternatives, but it will be more difficult." Iraq's dollar reserves stand at \$53 billion.



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[Atomic energy watchdog seeks details on secret Iranian nuclear site](#)

Thu, 2020-10-15 22:17

CHICAGO: Officials of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have asked the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) to provide details of their claims that Iran maintains a secret nuclear site hidden from the world as a UN-mandated nuclear arms embargo on Iran expires this week.

Lifting the UN arms embargo against Iran will allow Tehran to purchase and sell military arms with neighboring countries like Syria, Iraq and Yemen, a panel of experts hosted by the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington (AGSIW) said Thursday. They said Iran will be able to purchase weapons from

China and Russia, including hi-tech fighter jets, sophisticated missiles and other weapons, and they agreed that it would allow Iran to pursue its nuclear agenda.

Iranian Parliament-in-Exile member [Ali Safavi told the Arab News-sponsored Detroit radio program "The Ray Hanania Show" on Wednesday that the NCRI has evidence that Iran has been operating a secret nuclear facility.](#) During the radio interview, Safavi said the NCRI will disclose the information publicly at a press conference that is scheduled for Friday.

Iran's plans for building a nuclear weapon have been checked by a UN-mandated embargo that was imposed in July 2007 under the terms of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The JCPOA expires on Oct. 18. US President Donald Trump said he will impose an embargo on Tehran, but experts said they expect European countries to sell weapons and equipment to Iran once the UN embargo expires.

Those weapons could include "armored combat vehicles, large-caliber artillery, combat aircraft and attack helicopters, warships and more significantly cruise missiles and launchers," said panel host Hussein Ibish, AGSIW resident scholar.

"All of this has become possible precisely because the US effort to use the JCPOA grievance mechanism didn't work and nobody wanted to go along with the extension," he added.

Thursday's discussion titled "After the Embargo: Iran's Weapons Agenda and its Regional Impact" also included AGSIW Senior Fellow Ali Alfoneh, AGSIW Non-Resident Fellow David Des Roches, and National Defense University Associate Professor Kirsten Fontenrose.

The military and arms experts agreed the embargo's ending will not fuel an arms build-up by Iran's non-state clients, like Hezbollah, but said they expect an increase in Iranian weapons purchases and sales with countries like Syria, Iraq and Yemen, impacting regional security concerns.

"Hezbollah would not be following UN Security Resolutions in any chance," said Ali Alfoneh. "The biggest impact would not be on the non-state clients of Iran like Hezbollah."

The lifting of the embargo would open the door to regional governments like Iraq and Syria possibly purchasing weapons from Iran to bolster their arsenals.

"The Iranians have smuggled many embargoed items to their affiliates in the region. But with the embargo being lifted, it makes that volume and that flow much more significant," Fontenrose said.

"The failure of the JCPOA was a huge shock to the political leadership in Iran," Alfoneh said.

"The future is very insecure. Even if that administration changes, I am not entirely convinced that presidential candidate Joe Biden would go back to a

JCPOA as it was before. It is very likely there will be some changes made to the JCPOA.”

Fontenrose anticipates that regardless of who wins the upcoming US election, she can foresee scenarios in which Israel would strike at Iran’s nuclear facilities with support from their Emirati partners, especially if Israel believes that the US is “too soft” on Iran.

“You are going to have hardliners in Tehran who slow-roll a nuclear deal and either have no deal with the Trump administration ... or you will have Iran at the table but agreeing to very little with the Biden administration,” Fontenrose said.

“What you see is Israel saying we need to do something about this nuclear program if Iran continues to escalate it. If it stays in place it is a different story. But if Iran continues to ramp up its withdrawal from the JCPOA or ramp up its production, I can see Israel undertaking strikes again against their facilities. And at this point, will we see the UAE involved in the planning, not execution, of those strikes?”



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Egyptian army begins Radaa 2020 military drills

Author:

Thu, 2020-10-15 22:10

CAIRO: Radaa-2020 (Deterrence-2020 drills), carried out by units from the Egyptian Central Military Region with the participation of the branches of the Egyptian Armed Forces, is underway.

The drills will continue for several days as part of the annual plan for combat training of the Egyptian Armed Forces' formations and units, in conjunction with the celebrations of the country and the armed forces of the 47th anniversary of the October war.

The drills include training in the preparation and organization of battle, moving and conquering and then pushing the main force to attack the front border of the hostile defenses, and completing the attack to achieve the planned tasks using the MILES simulation.

Mohamed Farid Hegazy, chief of staff of the Egyptian Armed Forces, addressed a number of commanders and officers participating in the project about the way to carry out the tasks assigned to them.

He imposed a number of emergency tactical situations to ensure their ability to take the right decision to face sharp and rapid changes during the course of the battle.

The Egyptian and Russian navies are conducting joint exercises in the Black Sea until the end of this year.

During the exercises, the warships of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Navy and the Egyptian Navy, with the support of aircraft, will train to defend sea lanes against various threats.

Troops will be deployed to organize communications and resupply at sea, and participants in the exercises will conduct searches for suspicious ships.

Commander of the Egyptian Air Force Mohamed Abbas Helmy said on Tuesday that the Egyptian Army had air forces capable of reaching the farthest range to confront threats to Egypt's national security.

Helmy confirmed that all major branches, including the air force, had witnessed an unprecedented boom in weapons systems, especially in recent years.

He said that events in neighboring countries and the targeting of terrorist organizations, in addition to regional developments, was a push to modernize the armament system within the air force.

The choice of modern air weapons was based on the nature of the tasks

required, and challenges and potential threats against Egyptian national security, with the aim of protecting the capabilities and wealth of the Egyptian state, and if there was a need to strike terrorist elements.



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Egyptian Air Force commander hails modernization efforts
Public outcry following death of Egyptian Maadi girl who was dragged by car

[Israeli parliament backs UAE, Bahrain normalization deals](#)

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JERUSALEM: Israel's parliament voted Thursday in favor of the normalization of ties with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain after a marathon debate

with over 100 speeches lasting more than eight hours.

A total of 80 lawmakers voted to approve the US-brokered agreements, with 13 against, members of Israel's United Arab List party.

"This historic agreement... will bring us closer to other countries in the region to sign other peace agreements," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said.

Netanyahu said Israel had contact recently with another country in the region for the first time, but did not reveal its name.

The UAE in August became the first Arab nation to establish relations with Israel since Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994, followed after by Bahrain. The US-brokered deals were formalized at the White House on September 15. The Gulf agreements were condemned by the Palestinians as a "betrayal," and broke with years of Arab League policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The US administration is trying to broker other deals between the Jewish state and other Arab nations.





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