
Turkey says buying S-400 vital to 'protect our 82mn citizens'

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The Turkish defense minister has said that buying Russian S-400 air defense systems is a matter of necessity, vital for the protection of the country's population.

Speaking to the Anadolu agency editors' desk, Defense Minister Hulusi Akar confirmed the deployment of the Russian-made systems will begin in October. He doubled down on defending Ankara's decision to buy the S-400s, maligned in Washington.

We have to protect our 82 million citizens.

Turkey has been defying warnings from the US, a fellow NATO member, which has been trying to dissuade Ankara from procuring Russian-made weapons. Those attempts have ranged from threatening to punish Turkey under the Countering American Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) or review F-35 fighter jet sales, to saying that the S-400s are incompatible with NATO systems.

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Akar said while Turkey is fulfilling all of its NATO obligations, the alliance is not doing enough for Turkey's protection, and thus the country needs air defense systems from elsewhere.

The US has also been trying to pressure India into ditching its S-400 deal with Russia. New Delhi has said the issue is not up for discussion.
