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World

Russia starts S-300 missile supplies to Iran - Iranian MP

16:10 | 21/12/2008



TEHRAN, December 21 (RIA Novosti) - Russia has started the supplies of components for S-300 air defense systems to Iran, a senior Iranian lawmaker said on Sunday.

Esmail Kosari, deputy chairman of the parliamentary commission on national security and foreign policy told the Iranian news agency IRNA that Iran and Russia had held negotiations for several years on the purchase of S-300 air defense systems and had finalized a deal.

Kosari said the Islamic Republic would deploy S-300 surface-to-air missile systems to strengthen national defense on border areas.

Iran recently took delivery of 29 Russian-made Tor-M1 air defense missile systems under a \$700-million contract signed in late 2005. Russia has also trained Iranian Tor-M1 specialists, including radar operators and crew commanders.

The U.S. and Israel, which have consistently refused to rule out the possibility of military action against Iran, were earlier alarmed by media reports, which started circulating as early as 2005, on the possible delivery of S-300 surface-to-air missiles to Iran, as these systems could greatly improve Iranian defenses against any air strike on its strategically important sites, including nuclear facilities.

The advanced version of the S-300 missile system, called S-300PMU1 (SA-20 Gargoyle), has a range of over 150 kilometers (over 100 miles) and can intercept ballistic missiles and aircraft at low and high altitudes, making the system an effective tool for warding off possible air strikes.

The Islamic Republic has conducted several high-profile war games this year, including a three-day series of Air Force and missile defense exercises on September 15-18, while promising swift retaliation in the event of any act of aggression against the country.

Iran is currently under three sets of relatively mild UN Security Council sanctions for defying demands to halt uranium enrichment, which it says it needs purely for electricity generation despite Western accusations that the program is geared toward weapon production.

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