

RUSSIA'S TOP MISSILE SYSTEM HAS MANY BUYERS

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The Russian Army began using the S-400 missile defence systems, designed to intercept and shoot down any threat from the sky, in 2007.

According to its producer, the state-owned Almaz-Antey company, it has a range of 400 km and can be deployed within just five minutes.

It consists of several vehicles: a command centre, various mobile radar stations and up to 12 launch vehicles that each carry four missiles.

Dozens of S-400s have already been deployed throughout Russia, from the country's most western point in the Kaliningrad exclave to its far eastern corners.

Four S-400s are also stationed in Crimea, the Black Sea peninsula annexed by Russia from Ukraine in 2014.

Two have been deployed to Syria, where Moscow intervened militarily on the side of the Damascus regime, to protect Russia's airbase in Hmeimim and the Tartus naval facility.

Who has bought it?

China was the first country to buy the weapon from Russia, ordering several S-400s for an estimated \$3 billion. Deliveries began in April 2018 and the first tests took place at the end of June 2019. Few other details of the missile deal were made public.

India bought five S-400 systems for \$5.2 billion. Their delivery is due to begin at the end of next year.

Around a dozen other countries — including Iraq, Qatar and Saudi Arabia — have shown interest in the S-400, in some cases as a means of putting pressure on the United States to lower prices on its weapons systems.

The S-400 is one of the most modern air defence systems in the world, and comes at a lower price than its U.S. competitor, the Patriot.

The U.S. and NATO have said the S-400 is incompatible with equipment used by other members of the alliance. Moscow has been able to use the S-400 as a political weapon: by selling the system to Turkey, it sows discord between Ankara and its NATO allies, whose ties are already strained.

Russia plans to launch the S-500, the successor of the S-400, in the 2020s.

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