

Iran Says It Finalized Deal to Buy Russian Aircraft

Latest Developments

Iran has finalized plans to purchase military aircraft from Russia, Iranian state media [reported](#) on November 28. The aircraft include Su-35 fighter jets, Mi-28 attack helicopters, and Yak-130 combat trainer aircraft, said Iranian Deputy Defense Minister Mehdi Farahi. The [Yak-130s](#) began [arriving](#) in Iran in early September, but there has been no indication that Tehran has yet received the Su-35s or Mi-28s. Moscow has not confirmed the deal.

Expert Analysis

“Caution is warranted regarding this latest report, as Iranian officials have previously purported to have finalized a deal for the Su-35. Still, it’s clear that Russia and Iran are deepening their military-military and military-technical ties. If Moscow ultimately does provide Su-35s to Tehran, Moscow may get Iranian short-range ballistic missiles in return, expanding Russia’s capacity for long-range strikes against Ukraine.” — [John Hardie](#), *Deputy Director of FDD’s Russia Program*

“Su-35s would represent a significant improvement over the aircraft Iran currently possesses, but the degree of improvement will depend on several variables — including the weapons, training, and other capabilities that accompany the aircraft — as well as the degree to which they are integrated with Iran’s formidable integrated air and missile defense systems. Regardless, security cooperation between Russia and Iran is growing, and that is a serious problem for Europeans, Americans, Israelis, and Arab partners of the United States. Instead of worrying about the problem separately, Washington and its allies and partners should act collectively to counter the growing Russian-Iranian axis.” — [Bradley Bowman](#), *Senior Director of FDD’s Center on Military and Political Power*

“Seeing is believing when it comes to the Su-35 deal. If Iran does receive these aircraft, it will not turn Iran into a conventional military superpower overnight. However, they will make the Islamic Republic a more potent hybrid military actor. Su-35s, coupled with Tehran’s domestic and foreign air defense systems, would better equip Iran to defend its skies. This, in turn, would complicate Western military planning, which must ensure that a credible threat against Iran’s nuclear program remains on the table no matter the regime’s evolving military aptitudes.” — [Behnam Ben Taleblu](#), *FDD Senior Fellow*

Russia-Iran Su-35 Saga

In September 2022, Brigadier General Hamid Vahedi, commander of the Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force, [said](#) Tehran hoped to buy Su-35 fighter jets. Iran reportedly may [acquire](#) as many as 24 Su-35s originally intended for Egypt, which backed out of the deal under U.S. pressure. In December 2022, U.S. officials [said](#) Iranian pilots had trained on the Su-35 in Russia the previous spring, indicating Tehran “may begin receiving the aircraft within the next year.” The officials described the potential deal as part of Russia’s “unprecedented level” of military-technical support for Iran in exchange for Tehran’s aid for Moscow’s war against Ukraine.

Earlier this year, [various](#) Iranian [officials](#) and [media](#) said Tehran indeed planned to purchase Su-35s from Russia, while satellite imagery [indicated](#) that Iran was preparing to station the Su-35s at a new underground airbase. But [Vahedi](#) and Iran's [defense minister](#) later appeared to suggest the deal was in doubt. Israeli, Saudi, and Emirati officials have reportedly [lobbied](#) Moscow not to go through with the sale.

Related Analysis

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[“Eyeing Tehran, U.S. and GCC Partners Seek to Develop Regional Security Architecture,”](#) FDD Flash Brief