

War in Ukraine

US in talks to send Israel's Patriot systems to Ukraine

Transfer of up to eight batteries would mark shift in Israel's relations with Moscow



A transfer of Israeli Patriot systems to Ukraine could dramatically improve Kyiv's defensive capabilities and allow it to more easily strike Russian military aircraft © David Silverman/Getty Images

James Shotter in Jerusalem, **Henry Foy** in Brussels, **Christopher Miller** in Kyiv, **John Paul Rathbone** in London and **Felicia Schwartz** in Washington 6 HOURS AGO

The US, Israel and Ukraine are in talks to supply Kyiv with up to eight Patriot air defence systems, dramatically improving its ability to counter Russian air strikes.

While not finalised, the arrangement would likely involve the highly prized Patriot systems being sent first from Israel to the US, before being delivered to Ukraine.

The outlines of the deal, which would mark a shift in Israel's relations with Moscow, have been discussed between ministers and senior officials of the three countries, according to five people briefed on the negotiations.

Israel said in April that it would begin retiring its eight Patriot batteries, which date back more than 30 years, and replacing them with more advanced systems.

But the batteries, which have been used in Israel's current war with Hamas, have not yet been discontinued due to concerns that tensions with the Iran-backed Hizbollah militant group could erupt into a full-blown war.

If realised, such a transfer would represent a step change in Ukraine's defensive capabilities. The country currently has at least four Patriot systems, supplied by both the US and Germany.

Ukraine has frequently requested that western allies supply it with air defence systems, in particular the US-made Patriots. Last week, the US [announced](#) that it was pausing the delivery of Patriot interceptor missiles to other nations to prioritise supply to Ukraine.

Israel has been cautious about taking sides over Russia's invasion of Ukraine given the clout Moscow holds in Syria, where the Israeli air force often acts against Iranian proxies.



A destroyed residential building in the town of Toretsk, Ukraine. Israel has been cautious about taking sides over Russia's invasion of Ukraine given the clout Moscow holds in Syria, where the Israeli air force often acts against Iranian proxies © Roman Pilipey/AFP/Getty Images

But US officials have sought to convince Benjamin Netanyahu's government that Russia's increasingly close ties with Iran, particularly in the field of military co-operation, are a more pressing concern.

Washington gives Israel about \$3.8bn annually in military support, and by April had released an additional \$14bn in emergency funds for its ally since the war with Hamas broke out.

"It would be fortuitous if these older Patriot missiles were put to good use in another theatre before they aged out," said Tom Karako, head of the missile defence project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies think-tank in Washington, "especially given the levels of US military aid to Israel".

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While the transfer of an eight systems was being discussed, they might not all end up being sent to Ukraine, four of the people said.

Three of the people with knowledge of the discussions said Ukrainian foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba had held talks on the matter with his US counterpart Antony Blinken in recent weeks.

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan had spoken on the issue at least twice with Andriy Yermak, the chief of staff to the Ukrainian president, the three people said.

“Ukraine continues to work with various countries around the world on obtaining additional Patriot systems,” Kuleba told the Financial Times, though he did not confirm the talks.

“We once again urge all countries that have such systems to provide them to Ukraine,” he added.

As well as discussions between the US and Ukraine, a person familiar with the diplomacy said there had also been direct talks between Israel and Kyiv on the transfer of Patriots.

The US and Ukrainian governments declined to comment.

Israel's prime minister's office referred questions to the defence ministry, which did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Ukraine is battling to defend against Russian missile and bombing attacks that have [crippled its infrastructure](#) and terrorised its cities. Russia's latest and most intense long-range air strike campaign escalated in March.

Israel's M901 PAC-2 batteries are of an older variety than many of the Patriot systems currently in Ukraine. But according to military analysts, the older model is still fully compatible with the newer ones.

Crucially, Israel has also ample stocks of interceptor missiles — which Ukraine also needs — to go with the batteries, according to one person familiar with the size of Israel's arsenal.

Analysts also said the old Israeli interceptor missiles had a longer range and a bigger warhead than the newer PAC-3 model.

This could make them well suited for intercepting the Russian fighter jets that have

been dropping devastating [glide bombs](#) on Ukrainian cities and military positions from far behind the front lines.

“PAC-2 is actually more useful than PAC-3 for long range intercepts against aircraft, so they’d certainly be useful [in Ukraine],” said Justin Bronk, senior research fellow at the Royal United Services Institute in London.

Former officials and analysts said the Israeli systems would most likely be sold back to the US, which could then send them on to Ukraine.

But they added that the bigger question is whether Israel is prepared to alienate its on-off ally Russia, despite Moscow’s ever-closer relationship with Iran.

Israel has previously denied Ukrainian requests for air defence systems. It also has an agreement with Russia that allows Israeli jets to access Syrian air space.

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