

Turkey awards missile system study to Franco-Italian group, Turkish firms

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Turkey took a step on Friday towards closer defence cooperation with France and Italy with a contract for a study into the development and production of a long-range air and missile defence system.

Turkey awarded the 18-month contract to the Franco-Italian Eurosam consortium and its Turkish partners Aselsan and Roketsan, Eurosam said in statement.

The study, which Eurosam announced on the sidelines of a meeting in Paris with French President Emmanuel Macron and his Turkish counterpart Tayyip Erdogan, is to lay the ground for a development and production contract.

The three-country missile programme is scheduled to be ready by the middle of the next decade and aims to defend against threats from stealth aircraft, drones and missiles, Eurosam said.

"The joint development activity is expected to support Turkey's indigenous air and

missile development programme in addition to opening up prospects for exports and longer-term co-operation of Turkey, Italy and France," Eurosam said.

The Eurosam consortium is made up of European missile maker MBDA, itself a joint venture between Airbus and Italy's Leonardo and Britain's BAE Systems and French defence contractor Thales, whose main shareholders are the French state and fighter jet maker Dassault Aviation.

The French, Italian and Turkish defence ministers signed a letter of intent in November on cooperation in joint defence projects.

Erdogan had said earlier on Friday that he would discuss defence cooperation with NATO ally France during his visit to Paris, highlighting an "important" step which Turkey would be taking with Eurosam without giving any details.