

US ambassador to NATO says 'we have a lot of issues with Turkey'

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Ahead of a summit where leaders of the NATO alliance meet in Brussels on July 11th, the United States has said that it is worried about Turkey, a fellow member in the Nato alliance, expressing particular concerns with Ankara's decision to procure Russian S-400 anti-missile defence systems.

Speaking to CNBC, Kay Bailey Hutchinson -- U.S. ambassador to Nato -- has said that Washington is worried about Turkey.

"We are worried, we are definitely worried, we want Turkey to be a democracy, to stay as a rule of law country and we are concerned about some of the things we see.", Hutchinson told CNBC, "Also we are very worried about this S-400, that Turkey says they will buy from Russia. That would be a terrible blow..." She said.

Touching on the topic of how Turkey could resolve its relations with the Nato alliance

from the U.S. viewpoint and reverse its course of falling within the Russian ambit of influence, Hutchinson said that Turkey ought to buy U.S. missile defence Systems.

"[buy] a patriot missile defence, but others as well, and that was a joke, but there are other missile defence systems that could work just as well that would be interoperable with Nato."

The Turkish delegation to Nato, headed by president Erdogan, is set to have a series of closed meetings among world leaders. According to Hurriyet, Ankara will also try and demonstrate its commitment to Nato by volunteering itself for new missions in Nato. Notably, Ankara is expected to assume the command of Nato's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) in 2021, but the decision will only be made in December 2018.

VJTF will be a joint force of German-Dutch, British, French, Italian, Spanish, Polish and Turkish troops to be able to respond to a 'national security' crisis within a week.

In response to statements made by Kay Bailey Hutchinson, retired Air Force Lieut-Gen Erdogan Karakus said that Nato was engaging in a double standard, particularly because it allowed Greece to use S-300s purchased from Russia in the late 1990's and which were renewed as recently as 2015.

US Assistant Secretary of State, Wess Mitchell, told a Foreign Relations subcommittee hearing on US relations with Europe in late June that Ankara ought to be sanctioned by the U.S for contravening the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act by cooperating with Russia's defence and intelligence sectors.

"We've been clear in all of our communications with the Turkish government that acquisition of the S-400, which we would assess to have occurred when there's actual -- an actual delivery of the technology -- we've been clear on multiple occasions with the highest levels of the Turkish government, there will be consequences" he said.

The statements came only a week after the US Senate adopted the National Defense Authorization Act of 2019, which threatened to temporarily halt arms sales to Turkey if it decided to go along with buying Russia's S-400 missiles.