

Turkey (Türkiye): Possible F-35 Sale and Sanctions Relief

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U.S.-Turkey (alt. Türkiye) efforts are ongoing to resolve issues related to [Turkey's 2019 acquisition](#) of a Russian [S-400 surface-to-air defense system](#). Turkey is seeking a purchase of 40 [F-35 Lightning II aircraft](#), and an end to [U.S. sanctions](#) on Turkey's main defense procurement agency (and four related persons) under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA, [P.L. 115-44](#)). In July 2026, President Donald Trump [said](#) "we're going to be taking the sanctions off" and "certainly we would consider" selling F-35s to Turkey. While Turkey [has arguably increased its value](#) as a [North Atlantic Treaty Organization ally](#) on various regional matters, [public debate](#) persists on [whether or not](#) F-35 transfers and sanctions relief should occur and how to address statutes related to these issues, with [action or inaction by Congress potentially decisive](#).

F-35/S-400/CAATSA Issues and U.S. Law

Turkey was an original member of the U.S.-led international consortium formed to share development and costs of the F-35, but was removed in July 2019 after procuring the S-400 (potentially costing Turkey [billions of dollars](#) in lost industrial participation). In announcing the removal, U.S. officials [cited](#) concerns about possible Russian use of the S-400 to collect intelligence on F-35 stealth capabilities.

In December 2019, Congress enacted Section 1245 of the FY2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA, [P.L. 116-92](#)) to prohibit F-35 transfers to Turkey. According to the provisions of Section 1245, the executive branch can waive the prohibition 90 days after it certifies that Turkey (1) no longer possesses the S-400 (or other associated items), (2) has provided credible assurances it will not reacquire the system, and (3) has not acquired other defense equipment from Russia that "would increase the risk of compromising the capabilities of the F-35 aircraft and its associated systems."

One year later, the first Trump Administration imposed [sanctions under Section 231 of CAATSA](#). Lifting CAATSA sanctions on Turkey [may be a precondition](#) for Turkish industry to continue developing and maintaining defense systems that "depend on US-origin technologies or export approvals." A Turkish official reportedly [stated](#) in 2025 that sanctions have obstructed the procurement of around \$20 billion in spare parts for Turkey's existing F-16s.

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Section 236 of CAATSA authorizes the President to waive sanctions against a person (individual or entity) for national security reasons; or to terminate them if (1) the person is not engaging in the sanctionable activity or has taken “significant verifiable steps” toward stopping, and (2) “the President has received reliable assurances” that the person will not “knowingly engage” in such activity going forward. Section 216 provides for a congressional review period of such a waiver or termination for either 30 or 60 days (depending on the date the notice is filed), during which time the President is prohibited from taking those actions. A separate “modified waiver authority” under Section 231 (added via Section 1294 of P.L. 115-232) authorizes a national security waiver that is not subject to congressional review. It would require the President to certify (among other things) that the otherwise sanctionable activity “would not significantly increase the risk of compromising United States defense systems and operational capabilities.”

It is unclear what [actions](#), if any, might influence U.S. officials to waive the FY2020 NDAA prohibition on F-35 transfers, and/or seek to waive or terminate CAATSA sanctions. A media report [has stated](#) that Turkey may be in talks with Russia about a possible resale of Turkey’s S-400 system to the United Arab Emirates.

Possible Sale of U.S.-Origin Jet Engines

Turkey is reportedly seeking to develop operational versions of the [domestically produced Kaan fighter](#) (which has some stealth characteristics) by 2028-2029. Current versions of the aircraft use U.S.-origin General Electric F110-GE-129E/F engines. The Trump Administration [reportedly formally notified Congress](#) in June 2026 of a possible sale to Turkey of roughly 80 F110 engines for the Kaan, [apparently overriding an informal hold](#) from a congressional committee leader who [asserted](#) that the Administration refused to make “a good-faith effort” to brief him on the sale’s implications. In July, nine Members co-sponsored a joint resolution of disapproval ([H.J.Res. 200](#)). Some observers maintain CAATSA sanctions may not apply to the potential engine sale because it [would probably not directly involve](#) the sanctioned Turkish procurement agency.

Possible Policy Considerations

Some factors for policymakers in evaluating potential U.S. defense transfers or sanctions relief for Turkey could include:

- **Russia.** Aspects of [Turkey-Russia relations](#) beyond the S-400 issue may be relevant, including the [two countries’](#) economic and energy [cooperation](#) and Turkey’s [support for Ukraine](#).
- **Opportunities for U.S. industry.** Turkey is reportedly considering the purchase of a [U.S. or European missile defense system](#) as an alternative to the S-400. Additionally, an F-35 deal might impact Turkey’s interest in other fighter aircraft, including [advanced F-16s](#) and [Eurofighter Typhoons](#).
- **Israel and Greece.** An F-35 sale to Turkey could affect the [military balance with Israel](#), which [already operates](#) 50 F-35s, and expected F-35 recipient Greece. [Israeli](#) and [Greek](#) officials have reportedly communicated concerns to U.S. counterparts. [Public warnings from Israel](#) about potential U.S. F-35 or F110 engine deals with Turkey may partly stem from [Turkey’s relationship with Hamas](#) and [a growing Turkey-Israel regional rivalry](#) that has featured closer Israeli cooperation with Greece and the Republic of Cyprus (two countries with which Turkey maintains [decades-long disagreements](#)).

Congressional Options and Views

Congress can influence potential defense transactions with Turkey, including via legislation to maintain, add, change, or remove conditions. Enactment of joint resolutions of disapproval under the

[Arms Export Control Act](#) or CAATSA, respectively, could affect executive branch action regarding arms sales or sanctions relief, respectively. Those laws set forth various procedures that, in certain cases, could potentially expedite House and/or Senate action on such joint resolutions. Veto-proof majorities in both chambers may be necessary to overcome presidential opposition to a measure passed by Congress.

Perspectives from Members of Congress vary regarding a prospective U.S. sale of F-35s to Turkey. Some lawmakers may not object to a sale if Turkey [no longer possesses](#) the S-400 or [resolves concerns](#) about the S-400's possible misappropriation of F-35 technology. Others oppose a sale, arguing that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan [shows](#) "aggression toward our greatest partners" and [jails](#) "his political opponents." Additionally, some in Congress are [scrutinizing](#) some Administration members' dealings with Turkey, and some lawmakers [have petitioned House leadership](#) to introduce a joint resolution of disapproval under CAATSA if the Administration seeks to "circumvent or waive" its requirements without a "credible legal basis."

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