

U.S. Expands Support for Egypt's Air Defense with Major Equipment Sales

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The United States has approved a series of high-value defense sales to Egypt in 2025, aiming to modernize the country's air defense and maritime surveillance capabilities. These developments reinforce the strategic relationship between Washington and Cairo, though they also renew debate over military aid to nations with poor human rights records.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency authorized a \$304 million package for Egypt that includes the AN/TPS-78 long-range S-band radar system. The radar, known for its mobility and range of up to 240 nautical miles, will enhance Egypt's capacity to detect and track aerial and maritime threats. The package also includes secure GPS units, encrypted communication devices, spare parts, and training for Egyptian personnel.

In addition, a separate arms deal worth approximately \$600 to \$625 million will upgrade Egypt's fast missile craft fleet. This agreement includes combat management consoles, electro-optical/infrared sensor enhancements, electronic warfare systems, and fire control radar upgrades. Lockheed Martin is expected to lead the implementation of these maritime upgrades, significantly improving Egypt's naval operational readiness.

These new deals build on earlier approvals of over \$5 billion in U.S. military equipment for Egypt, which included Abrams tanks, Hellfire missiles, and precision-guided munitions. Despite regular criticism from human rights organizations, Egypt remains one of the largest recipients of U.S. military assistance outside of NATO.

Egypt's air defense strategy involves a layered system composed of various global technologies. Its arsenal includes the German IRIS-T SLM and SLS systems, French AESA radars, Russian S-300VM systems, and the Chinese-made HQ-9B long-range missile platform. The addition of the U.S. radar system further strengthens Egypt's ability to counter a wide array of aerial threats, including ballistic and cruise missiles, drones, and stealth aircraft.

These upgrades come as regional tensions continue to escalate, particularly amid increased Chinese military cooperation with Egypt, including recent joint air exercises. The Red Sea and Eastern Mediterranean remain volatile zones, making strategic defense investments all the more critical.

While U.S. officials maintain that these arms transfers will not shift the regional military balance, critics argue that such support should be contingent on improvements in Egypt's domestic governance. Lawmakers and advocacy groups are calling for greater oversight, particularly in light of Cairo's track record on civil liberties.

As implementation moves forward, the arms sales highlight the United States' continued reliance on Egypt as a security partner, even as ethical concerns around governance remain unresolved.