

Escalation in Western Sahara sparks arms race between Morocco, Algeria

Morocco seeks the Israeli Iron Dome defence system and the advanced version of the US Patriot system defence. Algeria covets the Russian S-500 system.

Wednesday 24/11/2021



A Royal Moroccan Air Force CH47 Chinook military helicopter takes off during the "African Lion" military exercise in the Tan-Tan region in southwestern Morocco, on June 18, 2021. (AFP)

RABAT--The diplomatic gains made by Morocco over the Western Sahara dispute have led to Algerian escalation and threats of war, triggering an arms race between the two neighbouring countries.



In fresh show of
Suggested By
support, US

Editor praises Morocco



proposal on
Western Sahara
(fresh show support-
praises morocco-
u Separatist morocco-
proposal western-
polisario front
sahara)
announces



'escalation' in
Western Sahara
(separatist-
polisario front-
announces
fr Morocco stresses
escalation western
Western Sahara)
sahara)



settlement
(Morocco-
stress
commitment-
(morocco-stresses-
western-sahara-
Algerias closure-
settlement)
of border with)



Morocco
continues to
divide families
(algerias-closure-
(algerias-closure-
border-morocco-
border-morocco-
continues-divide-

The Arab Weekly

“serious, credible and realistic” plan for the Western Sahara, in reference to the plan for expanded autonomy fielded by Morocco.

“We continue to view Morocco’s autonomy plan as serious, credible and realistic, and one potential approach to satisfy the aspirations of the people of Western Sahara,” US State Department spokesman Ned Price said after Blinken welcomed Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita. Political analysts say that Rabat’s diplomatic strategy gained traction with Rabat diversifying its partners on the basis of recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over the Western Sahara and the kingdom’s desire to expand economic partnerships with African, European countries and with other nations, such as the United States and Israel.

Morocco seized on the opportunities offered by such alliances and partnerships on more than one level, including military and technological cooperation.

In this context, Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz has started a two-day visit to Morocco, Tuesday.

This visit aims to “set the foundation for all future security cooperation between Israel and Morocco”, an Israeli official said.

Israeli sources had previously announced that Morocco is on a list which includes 26 other countries, that have requested the acquisition of the “Skylock” anti-drone system. The “Skylock Dome” is also able to

thwart SAM-6 and SAM-7 missiles

The Arab Weekly

closer ties to the United States, is striving to reach a deal to acquire the new Russian S-500 missile system, expected to come into service by the end of this year.

Russian military experts have listed Algeria among potential clients interested in purchasing the S-500 system, but did not rule out possible objections to this from Russian military leaders.

Analysts say that Algeria has found itself forced to return to its historical alliance with the Russians amid its severe crisis with France. But it remains to be seen to what extent the Kremlin is willing to accommodate the Algerians.

What frustrates the Algerians' efforts to obtain the new system is that Russian military officials have ruled out delivering it to Algeria before 2030.

Available statistics show that Algeria is the third largest importer of Russian military equipment in the world, acquiring more than 60 per cent of its weapons from Moscow. These include six Russian-made submarines, in addition to the S-400 air defence system.