
MONTENEGRO DEEPENS DEFENCE INDUSTRY TIES TO TURKEY

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Montenegro is set to approve an agreement on defence industry cooperation with Turkey designed to boost defence and military relations with Ankara.

The agreement, seen by BIRN, relates to the "production and trade of defence goods and services, maintenance and logistical support".

The deal also stipulates the sales of finished military and defence equipment produced through joint projects to third countries, and technology transfers and joint research.

The Turkish and Montenegrin governments will form a joint commission to implement the agreement and select projects to be carried out jointly.

"Classified information, documents and commercially sensitive hardware and software will be transmitted through government-to-government diplomatic channels," the agreement reads.

Turkey was not previously one of Montenegro's key partners when it comes to the arms trade, unlike the US, the UK or Norway.

Closer military cooperation with Ankara comes as Turkish business influence grows in Montenegro.

More than 400 Turkish companies were registered in the country in 2017, compared to 76 in 2016, according to the official business register.

Turkish foreign direct investment, FDI, rose to 23.8 million euros in value in 2017, compared to 17 million euros the year before.

Montenegro's modest defence industry mostly relies on old factories from the Yugoslav era, which were mostly privatized in recent years.

The sector includes the former state-owned TARA arms factory in Mojkovac, Poliex in Berane and a small Optel factory in the town of Bijelo Polje.

The new defence deal was likely reached during February's visit of Montenegrin Defence Minister Predrag Boskovic to Ankara.

He met Turkey's top defence officials and said cooperation between the two countries in defence would be a platform for future relations, and help with the modernization of Montenegro's armed forces.

Montenegro's military largely depends on donations or on a 50-million-euro budget allocated yearly to modernize its forces by purchasing Western weapons or equipment.

Turkey in recent years has become a global player in the defence industry and was the sixth largest arms importer in the world between 2011 and 2015, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Turkish defence exports meanwhile totalled 1.5 billion euros in value in 2017.

Recently, the country signed a similar agreement with Ukraine as well as a new multi-million deal with Pakistan.

<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/turkey-montenegro-to-enhance-defence-industry-ties-03-23-2018>

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