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Cyprus: 'Turks causing harm'

Claim that threats aim to hurt economy

NICOSIA (AP) - A Cypriot minister yesterday accused Turkey of trying to wreck the island's economy by creating a furor over the Greek Cypriots' planned purchase of Russian anti-aircraft missiles. "Turkey's objective through the constant threats of the use of force is to consolidate the occupation of [northern] Cyprus and to strike at the strength of our economy," said Defense Minister Yiannakis Omirou. He was reacting to statements on Saturday by Turkish President Suleyman Demirel, who reiterated warnings that Turkey would prevent the planned deployment of the Russian S-300 missiles.

In Ankara yesterday, Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem said the missiles would threaten not only northern Cyprus but also other eastern Mediterranean countries, including Turkey, as well as NATO defense systems. "With their strong radars, the S-300 command systems - to be operated by Russian military personnel together with Greek Cypriot soldiers - will control a large area, including the Incirlik airbase," Cem said. Incirlik in southern Turkey is used by British and U.S. jets.

Omirou accused critics of the missile deployment of hypocrisy. "If they had protested just as strongly about Turkey's refusal to respect UN Security Council resolutions demanding the withdrawal of the Turkish occupation troops, possibly the Cyprus problem would have been settled a long time ago," he said. (Page 2)