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## Russia, China to intensify opposition to US missile System in South Korea

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File photo of a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) interceptor being launched during a successful intercept test

Beijing says China and Russia have agreed to step up their coordinated efforts in opposition to the planned deployment in South Korea of a US missile system, insisting the move will harm regional security.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said Beijing and Moscow had agreed “they will continue to strengthen their coordinated opposition to THAAD,” an acronym for the US Terminal High Altitude Area Defense.

South Korea decided last year to deploy US-made THAAD missile system on its soil as a countermeasure to what Seoul and Washington call threats posed by North Korean ballistic missiles.

China and Russia, however, worry that the deployment would further destabilize the already-restive Korean Peninsula. They also say THAAD’s powerful radar system can penetrate their territory and challenge their security.

Beijing and Moscow originally agreed to take unspecified “countermeasures” in response to THAAD’s deployment back in January.

This is while South Korean authorities have described the deployment of THAAD as a purely defensive measure against “North Korean threats,” underlining that it does not target any other nation.

Meanwhile, South Korea's Defense Ministry signed a deal earlier this week with an affiliate of the nation’s giant retail conglomerate, the Lotte Group, to acquire land southeast of its capital, Seoul, for the deployment of the missile system.



South Korean anti-war activists hold placards during a rally against the visit of the US Defense Secretary James Mattis in Seoul on February 2, 2017 as they denounce the planned deployment of THAAD.

The agreement triggered strong opposition from China’s state media, which urged a boycott of major South Korean products exported to China such as cars and telephones. They further called on Chinese citizens to boycott Korean entertainment exports.

Additionally, South Korean people residing near the land, which was turned over to the military by the Lotte Group, have taken legal action against the country's Defense Ministry.

The lawsuit, filed by residents of Seongju County and neighboring Gimcheon on Tuesday, claimed that the ministry had bypassed legally-required procedures, including prior agreement from local people and an environmental impact assessment.

South Korean authorities have announced that they expect the US missile system to be deployed and operational later this year.