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Israel, Russia in Drone Deal; Laser Tech Next?

9/7/21010

First, Israel will beef up Russia's robotic air force. Down the road, perhaps, Vladimir Putin may return the favor, by equipping Israeli drones with Russian laser tech.

On Monday, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak and his Russian counterpart, Anatoly Serdyukov, [signed a first-of-its kind military agreement](#) between the two countries. It's the latest step towards cooperation for two countries that have traditionally been at each other's throats.

In 2009, [Moscow bought a dozen Israeli unmanned aerial vehicles](#) — two Bird Eye 400 systems, eight I-View MK150 tactical UAVs and two Searcher Mk II tactical short range UAVs, according to the well-connected *Defense Update*. That was after [Georgia relied on Israeli spy drones](#) during the South Ossetia War.

Now, Russian officials say, Jerusalem and Moscow have agreed to a second, \$100 million deal for another 36 drones. Delivery is slated for later in the year. A joint venture to cooperate on UAV production, worth an estimated \$300 million, hasn't been hammered out, yet. But both sides seem eager. Russian boss-for-life Vlad Putin says Russia is even [“considering the possibility of equipping Israeli aircraft with our devices – space technology and laser technology,”](#) the premier said.

I'm pretty sure Pooty-poo means laser range finders, not blasters. But it is worth noting that the Russian military seems to be showing interest in rekindling its long-dormant energy weapons program. Reports out of Moscow “suggest that Russia has re-started

work on a Cold War project intended to [produce a laser cannon mounted on an enormous military transport aircraft](#),” *The Register’s* Lew Page notes. The most likely application for the ray gun: blinding enemy satellites.

Tensions between Israel and Russia haven’t been blasted away, yet. As [Defense Update](#) observes, Russia is still working on plans to sell arms to Syria, including [Yakhont P-800 supersonic anti-ship missiles](#) which could keep Israeli naval vessels at risk throughout the eastern Mediterranean. Then there’s Moscow’s contract with Iran for advanced [S-300 surface-to-air missiles](#). Tehran could make any strike on its nuclear facilities much more complicated with such an air defense system. So if that deal goes through, all the new good feelings between Russia and Israel could crash like a malfunctioning drone.