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Russian FM: Syrian Rebels Have 50 US Stinger Missiles

By Jason Ditz

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In a meeting today with a defected former Syrian official, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov reported that his country has learned rebels are [in possession of](#) at least 50 US-made Stinger missiles, an advanced shoulder-mounted anti-aircraft weapon.

“Those who are supplying arms to the opposition are delivering systems not intended for defense,” Lavrov said, citing past [comments](#) by the Free Syrian Army (FSA) rebels that they consider civilian aircraft a legitimate target.

Russian officials [noted the presence](#) of Stinger missiles last month, with US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta saying he “doesn’t know” of any examples of the US providing such weapons to the rebels.

Of course, the US has delivered Stinger missiles to dozens of nations over the years and even to some rebel factions, so even if the US is not directly providing them (and it would be unlikely they would, fearing their use against civilian planes would harm their narrative) there are plenty of ways in which the weapons could find their way into rebel hands.