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PROGRAM ABC World News Tonight STATION WJLA TV  
ABC Network

DATE January 17, 1983 7:00 PM CITY Washington, DC

SUBJECT New Soviet Missiles Arrive in Syria

TED KOPPEL: Another military threat surfaced today in the Middle East. New and more modern Soviet missiles have just been delivered to Syria.

Pentagon correspondent John McWethy has more on the story.

JOHN McWETHY: U. S. intelligence sources say that at least a dozen long-range SA-5 anti-aircraft missiles, like these, arrived in Syria over the weekend aboard a Russian ship. Analysts say the new missiles, with a range that could knock down Israeli planes over all of Lebanon, will be placed at three sites around Damascus, the capital city of Syria, along with shorter-range missiles designed to protect the new SA-5s.

Several hundred Soviet technicians are expected to actually man the sites.

Intelligence sources say that Syria is bringing in the longer-range Soviet missiles as a face-saving gesture prior to agreeing to a full withdrawal from Lebanon, rationalizing that with the missile's greater range, Syria could still defend the skies over Lebanon without actually basing troops there.

Sources say Israel is tolerating the new missile because the Begin government wants badly to get its forces out of Lebanon as well, to reduce both the financial and political costs at home. They also point out that Israel could destroy the new missiles almost at will if fighting again resumes.

John McWethy, ABC News, the Pentagon.

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