

Turkey needs armed drones to defend Syrian border: Official

A top defense official says Turkey needs to develop and use armed drones against Katyusha rockets fired by ISIL militants into the province of Kilis

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Katyusha rockets fired by Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) militants into the southeastern province of Kilis were a new threat for Turkey, according to Turkey's top defense procurement official, who said Kilis could be protected by armed drones.

"It is difficult to detect and fight with them [rockets] technologically ahead of their firing. There are several countries which are in an active fight with such early systems, but even their systems reach partial success. The best method is to develop and have a capability that will monitor the region which is under threat and to hit this target immediately. Armed drones constitute a good example here," said İsmail Demir, head of the Undersecretariat for Defense Industries (SSM), in an exclusive interview with daily Hürriyet at the production hub of Roketsan.

He noted that Turkish commanders were pleased to use local products, as they found them of high quality.

Demir said that Turkey has now reached a crucial point in terms of local defense production and aimed to make the development



Undersecretariat for Defense Industries (SSM) chief İsmail Demir (R) is seen relating the latest developments in the sector in the Roketsan headquarters.

of several key products by 100 percent local means, praising the high quality of many local products by Roketsan, Aselsan, Havelsan, TAI and others in a complementary and integrated way.

"In the past, we tried to figure out from where we should buy our defense products. Yet we have been asking ourselves: How can we develop which product? It is of course not possible for any country to make all parts of any products. The point is to make a priority classification to determine which parts are of the most crucial...

Turkey has been in urgent need of some defense products in several fields on which it has been in an active fight. Our companies are ready to meet these demands immediately. Our slogan is as following: We can make the better version of any human-made product," he said.

"The point is here to be able to make products with the capability of destroying, monitoring and receptivity of higher quality at home. Our aim is to reach 100 percent locality in such products, as the dependency on foreign sources in

these fields is always a problem. Although Turkey has been a late comer in local defense production, its sector has now reached some \$15 billion project development capacity," he noted.

Joint work with NATO 'key' in air defense

Turkey will gradually develop an air defense system which will be integrated into the NATO system, said Demir, adding that joint work with NATO would accelerate the process.

"We did not cancel the project,

but just scrapped the bidding. We will soon enter to a new development process, in which our local companies, including Roketsan and Havelsan, will take part. We have already continued our projects to develop systems with medium, high and low ranges... We will gradually extend the ranges. As we will not make any direct acquisition, our gradually developed system will be integrated into NATO's system. Our doors are open for any support here. Any joint work with NATO will accelerate the process," said Demir.