

# Will Putin sign a mutual defense treaty with Iran?



by Lev Tsitrin

Russia's Putin is [scheduled to meet](#) with Iran's president on Friday in Turkmenistan. According to "Yury Ushakov, Putin's aide on foreign policy , , , "This meeting has great significance both for discussing bilateral issues as well as, of course, discussing the sharply escalated situation in the Middle East."

For Putin, it may just be one other conversation on the sidelines of "an event celebrating a Turkmen poet." For Iran though, the situation could not be more critical, and the need for Russia's support more dire. Iran's insurance policy against Israel's attack on its nuclear facilities, Hezbollah, having proven a failure, much of its arsenal of missiles and rockets destroyed, its leadership decapitated – and Iran, having lobbed 181 ballistic missiles at Israel as revenge in a

clear act of war now awaiting Israeli response, while knowing full well that Iran's air defenses are weak – it badly needs a strong ally to shield it from what's coming.

Ostensibly, ayatollahs' show no sign of worry since part of their calculus is that God will come to their defense. Yet Hezbollah's Nasrallah made the very same calculation – and lost his organization and his life. Hence, for all their pious rhetoric, ayatollahs urgently seek a powerful earthly protector to replace Hezbollah as guarantor of regime's safety. Hence, the need to interrupt Putin's homage to a Turkmen poet.

And there is plenty that Iran can offer Russia. It already supplied thousands of Iranian attack drones that Russia used in Ukraine – and Russians are hungry for more. Iran has the largest arsenal of ballistic missiles in the Middle East, and Russia craves those, too, for its Ukraine war.

And what would Iran want in return? Air defense systems are a sure bet – but Russia badly needs those to protect its own airspace against increasingly numerous, precise, and destructive Ukrainian drones, so that's likely off the table. How about Russia's help with weaponizing Iran's uranium stockpiles? Sure, but once detected, such cooperation would act as a trigger for decisive military action; it would hurt more than help.

So what can Russia offer to Iran in exchange for a massive shipment of Iranian missiles?

How about a declaration that Iran is now protected by Russia against all threats – in the form of a mutual defense pact intended to scare off all potential attackers? Perhaps this is what Iran's new president would ask Putin to sign – in exchange for, say, a thousand Iranian missiles?

Needless to say, such treaty would escalate tensions in the Middle East exponentially, bringing much closer the prospect

of World War III – which is perhaps something that Putin would rather relish. But it would be unlikely to deter the Israelis who would now be determined to inflict maximum damage on Iran's military and economic assets to minimize Iran's value to Russia as a partner worth defending.

And speaking of defending Iran – how would Russia do it? Being bogged down in Ukraine, Russia is not likely to be able to offer much of a shield – and attacking Israel itself would, at a bare minimum, be suicidal to its mission of bolstering Assad in Syria; and it would cause reshuffling of all geopolitical cards worldwide on such grand scale that Putin would hardly be willing to take the chance.

So after all, perhaps the meeting between Putin and the new Iranian president would indeed be hardly more than just a talk, a discussion of “bilateral issues” and “of Middle East” – in addition, of course, to expressing the parties' sincere mutual admiration for Turkmen poetry?