

Lavrov Says No UN Mandate for Strikes on Libya

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Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Monday that attacks on forces loyal to Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi amounted to intervention in a civil war and were not backed by the UN resolution that authorized no-fly zones.

In the latest Russian criticism of military action by the Western coalition, Lavrov said the resolution passed by the UN Security Council on March 17 set the sole aim of protecting Libyan civilians.

"And yet there are reports — and nobody denies them — of coalition strikes on columns of Gadhafi's forces, reports about support for actions by the armed insurgents," Lavrov said. "There are clear contradictions here.

"We consider that intervention by the coalition in what is essentially an internal civil war is not sanctioned by the UN Security Council resolution," Lavrov said when asked about Libya at a news conference with his Kyrgyz counterpart.

Russia holds veto power as a permanent UN Security Council member but chose not to block the resolution, which authorized "all necessary measures to enforce compliance" with no-fly zones.

However, Russian leaders have vocally expressed concern that the resolution gave coalition forces too much leeway. Prime Minister Vladimir Putin compared the resolution to "medieval calls for crusades."

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