

Lavrov Bristles at U.K. Visa Remark

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Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has dismissed as "inappropriate" a statement by a British minister that his country would not ease visa rules with Russia until a former KGB bodyguard implicated in a London murder is jailed in Britain.

David Lidington, minister of state for Europe, was cited by Interfax as saying Wednesday that British investigators have enough proof of Andrei Lugovoi's involvement in the death of former FSB officer-turned-Kremlin critic Alexander Litvinenko, poisoned in London in 2006.

But Lavrov said in an interview with Rossia-24 channel aired Thursday that British officials later denied linking the Litvinenko case to visa talks. He said Lugovoi should not be declared guilty until an investigation is wrapped up.

Lugovoi, now a State Duma deputy, reiterated his denial of involvement in Litvinenko's death Wednesday.

Germany's Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations wants rules obliging

travelers between EU and Russia as well as other states to apply for visas to be abolished by 2018 at the latest, group chair Eckhard Cordes said Thursday, Bloomberg reported.

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