

Lavrov Sees Iran 'Chain Reaction'

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A military attack on Iran would trigger a "chain reaction" that could destabilize the world, and new sanctions over the country's disputed nuclear program would "stifle" its economy, hurting its people, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warned Wednesday.

Lavrov said Russia is "seriously worried" about the prospect of military action and is doing all it can to prevent it. ☒

"The consequences will be extremely grave," he said. "It's not going to be an easy walk. It will trigger a chain reaction, and I don't know where it will stop."

Russia has long walked a fine line on the Iranian nuclear crisis, mixing careful criticism of an important trading partner with calls for more talks. Although Moscow, which built Iran's first nuclear power plant, has backed some previous UN sanctions, it has recently rejected new ones.

Lavrov predicted that a military attack on Iran would send refugees streaming into Azerbaijan and further on to Russia. He said sanctions on Iranian oil are simply "aimed at stifling the Iranian economy and the population in an apparent hope to provoke discontent."

✖Russia believes that "all conceivable sanctions already have been applied" and that new penalties could derail hopes for continuing six-way negotiations, he said. ✖

"We believe that there is every chance to resume talks between the six powers and Iran, and we are concerned about obstacles being put to them," he said. "The sanctions could hardly help make the talks productive." ✖

Lavrov also said Russia will block any attempt to secure UN support for the use of force against Syria. ✖

"If some intend to use force at all costs ... we can hardly prevent that from happening," he said. "But let them do it at their own initiative, on their own conscience. They won't get any authorization from the UN Security Council."

✖Lavrov said he didn't need to respond to suspicions that a Russian ship delivered munitions to Syria despite an EU arms embargo. ✖

"We haven't violated any international agreements or the UN Security Council resolutions," he said. "We are only trading with Syria in items that aren't banned by international law."

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