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No Kerry Meeting With Lavrov on Agenda Yet

By The Moscow Times

February 20, 2013



WASHINGTON — U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry does not have a face-to-face meeting planned with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on his first trip abroad as secretary.

The trip, which begins Sunday, has a jam-packed itinerary through nine nations including several in Europe.

Kerry spoke by telephone over the weekend with Lavrov, and the two agreed to meet soon, despite the disagreements between their governments.

"If it works on the trip, that's great," State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said. "If not, then we'll keep working on soon thereafter."

On Kerry's maiden voyage, he will visit close U.S. allies and partners in Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Qatar. His diplomacy will

focus on the conflicts in Mali, Syria and Afghanistan, Nuland said.

Nuland said the former senator is primarily on a "listening tour" when it comes to Syria, and would not be advocating any shift in U.S. policy that would see American military support for the rebels fighting President Bashar Assad's regime. He will continue Syria diplomacy in meetings in Cairo; Ankara, Turkey; Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates and Doha, Qatar.

Russia has up to now stymied American efforts to halt the violence in Syria through international sanctions or other pressure.

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