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Kerry and Lavrov Discuss Crisis in Ukraine

By The Moscow Times

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Sergei Lavrov and John Kerry have discussed ways to settle the political crisis in Ukraine.

The top diplomats of Russia and the U.S. have discussed ways to settle the political crisis in Ukraine, the Russian Foreign Ministry has said.

"The foreign affairs heads exchanged views about concrete Russian and U.S. proposals aimed at guaranteeing civil peace and conciliation in that country," the ministry said Tuesday in a statement.

Russia's Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, also told his U.S. counterpart John Kerry that the people of Crimea have the right to "determine their own future in accordance with international norms."

"The Russian side emphasized that the interests of all Ukrainian people and regions need to be fully respected during the search for a solution to the crisis," the statement reads.

The phone conversation between Lavrov and Kerry was held at the initiative of the U.S. The sides agreed to continue "intense consultations" on Ukraine.

The turbulent political crisis gripping Ukraine has led to a standoff between Russia and the West over the fate of Crimea, an autonomous Ukrainian region with a narrow ethnic Russian majority.

Crimean authorities have refused to recognize the legitimacy of the new central government in Kiev, which was installed after the ouster of President Viktor Yanukovych in late February.

The parliament of Crimea declared independence Tuesday ahead of a popular vote on secession and annexation by Russia. Kiev and Western leaders have said the planned vote and any attempt to secede are illegal.

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