

Lavrov Says Nationalists to Blame for Kiev Snipers

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Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov at an Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in 2012.

In an interview given to Russian state media on Sunday, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that snipers who wounded and killed numerous protesters during the Euromaidan movement could have been lead by the ultra-nationalist group Right Sector.

Although he noted that he was not 100 percent certain, Lavrov said that "many factors point to this [conclusion]," RIA Novosti reported. The minister said there was evidence suggesting several cases of violence instigated by the group, which, according to the long-serving official, includes the organization of the snipers in central Kiev.

Lavrov also noted that Moscow has already shared their concerns about nationalists with Western partners, and he hopes that the investigation of the issue will not be "swept under the carpet."

Right Sector has been under the spotlight in recent days after Ukrainian security forces killed one of the group's leaders during an attempt to arrest him in western Ukraine, sparking anti-

government statements from and the subsequent detention of some of the group's members.

During Sunday's interview on Russia's Channel One, Lavrov said that Russia is fully behind the establishment of a new Ukrainian constitution that provides for a federal structure that would protect the rights of Russian speakers in the country's east.

Lavrov also said he hoped Russia and Western countries could "express a common position" with regards to matters in Kiev, stating that the West had previously tried to "separate Ukraine from Russia."

The interview came after Lavrov categorically denied Western claims that Russia was planning an invasion of Ukraine, having positioned troops close to its borders, saying, "We have absolutely no intention and no interests in crossing the borders of Ukraine."

Western leaders are concerned that Russia is planning an incursion into mainland Ukraine, after initial violence in Kiev led to Moscow's claims that Russians in the country were under threat, an explanation that ultimately led to Russia's annexing Crimea.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry is scheduled to meet Lavrov Sunday evening in Paris to discuss Ukraine for the first time since Russia and the U.S. exchanged sanctions following the annexation.

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