

# Russia Won't Take More Ukrainian Territory, Lavrov Says

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Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Friday that the Kremlin does not want to take over more Ukrainian territory, but repeated a call for Kiev to grant more powers to regional authorities.

The West has accused Russia of placing 40,000 troops near the border with Ukraine and is worried that Moscow could send forces into the east of the country following its annexation of Crimea last month.

"We cannot have such a desire. It contradicts the core interests of the Russian Federation. We want Ukraine to be whole within its current borders, but whole with full respect for the regions," state-run RIA Novosti quoted Lavrov as saying.

Russia has denied any substantial build-up on the Ukrainian border but says it has the right to protect ethnic Russians and Russian speakers who are dominant in regions of eastern Ukraine.

NATO and the United States have accused Russia of stirring separatist unrest in cities in eastern Ukraine where pro-Moscow protesters have taken over public administration buildings and demanded more autonomy from Kiev.

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