

U.S. Urges Russia to De-Escalate Tensions in Ukraine

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry (L) talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov at the start of a bilateral meeting to discuss the ongoing situation in Ukraine.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry has told Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in a telephone call that Washington will impose more sanctions on Russia if it does not help de-escalate tensions in eastern Ukraine, a senior U.S. official said.

The official said Kerry talked on Tuesday to both Lavrov and Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseny Yatsenyuk.

"With Foreign Minister Lavrov, the secretary expressed deep concern over the lack of positive Russian steps to de-escalate, cited mounting evidence that separatists continue to increase the number of buildings under occupation and take journalists and other civilians captive," he said.

"He urged Russia to tone down escalatory rhetoric, engage diplomatically in the east with the OSCE and Ukrainian government, and issue public statements calling for those occupying buildings to disarm and stand down in exchange for amnesty," he added.

The official said Kerry also reiterated that the absence of measurable progress on implementing last week's Geneva agreement would result in increased sanctions on Russia.

In Moscow, the Russian Foreign Ministry said Lavrov had told Kerry that Ukraine must take urgent steps to implement the Geneva agreement aimed at defusing the Ukraine crisis.

Lavrov said orders for the army to be deployed in the crisis should be reversed, the Right Sector Ukrainian nationalist group should be disarmed, arrested activists in southeast Ukraine freed and constitutional reforms started, the ministry said.

The U.S. official said Kerry had told Yatsenyuk that Kiev must take important steps as well to de-escalate tensions, "including progress on amnesty legislation, steps toward broadening the national dialogue on constitutional reform to include representatives of all regions and close coordination with the OSCE monitoring mission."

Washington has said it would decide "in days" on additional sanctions if Russia does not take steps to implement the agreement.

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