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Russia's Foreign Minister Calls on France and Germany to Ensure Peace in Ukraine

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Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov talks to the media during a news conference in Moscow March 10, 2015

Russia appealed to Germany and France on Saturday to ensure Kiev does not try to incite violence in east Ukraine to encourage the United States to send Ukrainian forces lethal weapons.

Paris and Berlin helped mediate a peace deal in the Belarusian capital Minsk on Feb. 12 to try to end fighting between government forces and pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine but the truce remains fragile.

In an interview with Russian television, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said he was concerned Kiev might stage "provocations" to try to persuade the United States that it should aid Kiev by sending it lethal weapons.

"Provocateurs in Kiev ... could try to 'whip something up' in the expectation that this will influence the world public and weapons will flow into Ukraine," he told the new program Vesti

on Saturday with Sergei Brilev.

"I am convinced that Berlin and Paris, as the most important players ..., should prevent such a turn of events."

Lavrov also repeated Russia's opposition to United Nations peacekeepers being sent to the east.

The United States has been considering whether to provide lethal weapons to Ukraine but has taken no decision on this yet.

Kiev accuses Moscow of not carrying out the terms of the Minsk agreements. It and the West say Russia backs the separatists in east Ukraine with weapons and troops but Moscow denies this.

More than 6,000 people have been killed in almost one year of fighting in the east. The truce there is fragile, with Moscow and Kiev clashing publicly over who is to blame for the failure to carry out all the steps outlined in the Minsk agreements.

The European Union and the United States have imposed economic sanctions on Russia over the Ukraine crisis, which has caused the worst strains in relations between the West and Moscow since the end of the Cold War.

EU leaders decided on Thursday that the sanctions would stay in place until the peace deal is fully implemented, effectively extending them to the end of the year if need be.

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