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U.S., Rebutting Russia's Lavrov, Says No Change in Syria Position

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia Sergey Lavrov

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Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Wednesday the United States was increasingly receptive towards Moscow's position on the conflict in Syria, an assertion quickly disputed by Washington.

"I think the Americans are much more receptive [now] of the arguments we have been presenting for several years now," Lavrov told reporters in Moscow.

Lavrov referred to comments by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry last week after military talks restarted between Washington and Moscow on Syria, where a war shows no signs of abating after 4 1/2 years.

Washington has said it is troubled by Moscow's backing of Syrian President Bashar Assad, who the United States has said should leave office to allow a political transition.

"There is no change to our position or our concerns about what Russia is doing in Syria," U.S. State Department spokesman John Kirby said.

"Secretary Kerry has been clear, and he has been consistent. We would welcome a constructive role by Russia in countering ISIL, but if they are there to shore up Assad, it runs counter to any meaningful effort to bring an end to the conflict," Kirby added, using an acronym to refer to the militant group Islamic State.

An increase in Russia's military presence in Syria has complicated American efforts to fight Islamic State in that country. A U.S.-led coalition has hit the group with air strikes over the past year.

Separately on Wednesday, a Russian diplomatic source said that Moscow saw growing chances for an international deal on Syria.

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