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Lavrov Warns Finland Against Joining 'Anti-Russia' NATO

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Russia's President Vladimir Putin (R) shakes hands with Finland's President Sauli Niinisto during a meeting in Naantali, Finland, July 1, 2016. **Kremlin Press Service**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has urged Finland not to join NATO, saying that the move would provoke a Russian military 'response,' the TASS news agency reported Monday.

“We do not believe that our Finnish neighbors would be tempted to join in with anti-Russian activity," Lavrov said.

“It is purely a military and a technical issue. If an organization that presents itself as your opponent moves its infrastructure to your borders, then you must react,” he said.

Lavrov's words echoed Russian president Vladimir Putin's speech on Friday. Putin said that Russia valued Finland's “neutral status” and had moved Russian troops away from the border as a sign of respect.

“We will respect any choice of the Finnish people,” Putin said. “But do you think we will

continue to act in the same way [if Finland joins NATO?] We have withdrawn our troops to a distance of 1500 kilometers from the border. Do you think they will stay there?" he said.

Relations with Russia are thought to be high on the agenda at the upcoming biennial NATO summit in Warsaw from 8 to 9 July The Finnish president's office Monday confirmed that Finland's president, defense minister and foreign minister will all attend the summit.

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