

Vying for Influence, Russia Accuses U.S. Of Meddling in Macedonia

By [Reuters](#)

December 07, 2018



Sergei Lavrov / Russian Foreign Ministry

The United States is meddling in Macedonian domestic affairs by pushing a name accord with Greece to boost the Balkan state's bid to join NATO, Russia's foreign minister said, amid a tussle for influence in the region.

Athens and Skopje have agreed Macedonia will change its name to the Republic of North Macedonia to end a decades-long dispute and potentially enable it to join the transatlantic military alliance and European Union, which Russia opposes.

"It's obvious there is a rampant and continued intervention by the United States and the EU in Macedonia's domestic affairs," Russian minister Sergei Lavrov said in an interview with Greek newspaper Efimerida ton Syntakton published on Friday.

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Washington has voiced concern about Russia's "malign influence" in Macedonia and elsewhere in the Western Balkans, accusing it of trying to undermine governments and block their progress towards international integration.

Moscow denies that, accusing the West in turn of big-footing the region and pressuring to rush the Macedonian process through by early next year. It says a Macedonian parliament vote that backed the name change was rigged through blackmail, threats and vote-buying.

"It is noteworthy that such a hurry serves Washington's only aim for Skopje's forced integration to NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)," he added.

Greece has long objected to the tiny landlocked state being called simply Macedonia, arguing it implied territorial claims over a northern Greek province of the same name. Some on both sides view the name change as a sellout.

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