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Russia Wants to End the War in Donbass, Ukraine Leader Says

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Sergei Lavrov **Russian Foreign Ministry**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy that Moscow wants to end the five-year war in eastern Ukraine, Zelenskiy has said.

More than 13,000 people have been killed since the conflict between pro-Russian rebels and the Ukrainian government erupted in the region known as the Donbass in 2014. Sporadic fighting continues despite a ceasefire agreement and a recent prisoner exchange between Russia and Ukraine.

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"Mr. Lavrov came up to me and said he wanted to get acquainted. He said they want very much for the Donbass war to end and congratulated me on the [prisoner] exchange," Zelenskiy said of their conversation at the UN General Assembly on Wednesday.

Speaking to reporters at a press briefing, Zelenskiy said he told Lavrov that "if you're ready, okay, let's end the war, give us our territories, exchange people."

He added that he told Lavrov "this is our country, our land," in reference to Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014, and the self-proclaimed pro-Russian republics in eastern Ukraine.

"Both sides expressed interest in resolving the conflict in accordance with the Minsk [ceasefire] agreements," Lavrov said of the encounter on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York.

Zelenskiy has found himself at the center of a political firestorm in the United States over a mid-July phone call with President Donald Trump, where Trump pressed Zelenskiy to investigate Democratic presidential frontrunner Joe Biden.

A whistleblower from within the U.S. intelligence community brought a complaint relating to Trump's conversation with Zelenskiy, and the Democratic-led House of Representatives announced an official impeachment inquiry over the call.

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