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U.S. Is Russia's 'Adversary,' Leading Diplomat Says

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Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov's words come at a time of intensifying tensions with Washington over the eastern Ukraine conflict. **Sergei Bobylev / TASS**

Russia sees the United States as its "adversary," a top Foreign Ministry official said Tuesday amid heightened tensions with Washington over the eastern Ukraine conflict.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov's words mark a departure from Russia's usual description of the U.S. as a "partner." They follow U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's warning that Moscow would face "consequences" for aggressive behavior in eastern Ukraine, where increased clashes and Russian military buildup have sparked international concern.

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"The United States is our adversary, doing everything to undermine Russia's position on the international stage; we see no other aspects in their approach toward us," Interfax quoted Ryabkov as saying to reporters.

“[U.S. officials] talk about a high price, but they never name it. What they have been doing so far, firstly, we have studied well, and secondly, we have adapted to. We don’t believe in such terminology: price, retribution and so on,” he said.

The diplomat added that Russia would continue to “defend its interests,” including those of Russian citizens and Russian speakers living in the disputed region.

Ryabkov also accused the U.S. and other NATO members of “deliberately turning Ukraine into a powder keg” and of increasing their arms supplies to Ukraine.

Intensified clashes between pro-Russia separatists and Ukrainian forces in the separatist-controlled Donbass and Luhansk regions this year have undermined a ceasefire that took effect last summer.

War monitors and the White House have said that Russia has amassed the largest military force near its border with Ukraine and in annexed Crimea since the conflict broke out in 2014, sparking calls for restraint from world powers.

The Kremlin has acknowledged the troop movements but insisted that Moscow does not intend to threaten anyone.

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