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No ‘Positive Response’ From U.S. on Main Ukraine Demand, Says Russia

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Moscow is seeking sweeping guarantees to limit NATO’s expansion in eastern Europe. **Artyom Geodakyan / TASS**

Russia did not receive a “positive response” from the United States or NATO on its main security demand concerning Ukraine, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Thursday, but there may still be room for more discussion of other questions.

Moscow is seeking sweeping guarantees to limit NATO’s expansion in eastern Europe and the post-Soviet space, including a pledge that Ukraine will never join the Western military alliance.

But in written responses to Moscow submitted on Wednesday evening, the U.S. and NATO rejected Russia’s demand to block Ukraine from NATO, reiterating their commitment to NATO’s open-door membership policy.

“There was no positive response to the main question” of Russia’s demands, Lavrov said in a statement, adding that "there is a response which gives hope for the start of a serious

conversation on secondary questions."

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In separate press conferences on Wednesday, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said they had outlined diplomatic pathways out of the current crisis with several areas for increased cooperation.

While Blinken and Stoltenberg said they did not plan to make their responses public, Lavrov indicated that their replies would be published "soon."

"One can't say that our ideas and concerns were taken into account," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in a call with journalists on Thursday.

Peskov said the documents are now in the hands of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"All these papers are with the president," he said. "Let's not rush to conclusions, it takes time to analyze."

Western countries have for months raised alarm over Russian troop build-up near Ukraine's borders, warning of an "imminent" invasion of Moscow's pro-Western neighbor.

The West has warned of severe, unprecedented sanctions on Russia if it were to invade Ukraine.

Russia denies planning to attack Ukraine, accusing the U.S. and NATO of fueling regional tensions.

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