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Lavrov Tells Blinken West Seeking to Provoke Ukraine Conflict

By AFP

February 12, 2022

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov **Russian Foreign Ministry/TASS**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Saturday accused the United States of seeking to provoke a conflict in Ukraine, during a call with his U.S. counterpart Antony Blinken, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

Lavrov said "the propaganda campaign unleashed by the United States and its allies concerning 'Russian aggression' against Ukraine pursues provocative goals," the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

That had the effect of "encouraging the authorities in Kyiv to sabotage the Minsk agreements and harm attempts to resolve the 'Donbass problem' by force," it added, referring to eastern Ukraine.

Lavrov and Blinken spoke by phone as U.S. President Joe Biden and France's Emmanuel

Macron prepared to sound out Russian leader Vladimir Putin later Saturday after Washington warned that an all-out invasion could begin "any day."

Weeks of tensions have seen Russia surround its western neighbor with more than 100,000 troops. Moscow is demanding binding security guarantees from the West that includes a pledge to roll NATO forces out of eastern Europe and to never expand into Ukraine.

Washington has flatly rejected the demands while offering to discuss a new European disarmament agreement with Moscow.

On Saturday Lavrov reiterated that the West had ignored "key" Moscow demands, the Foreign Ministry said.

"It was emphasized that these issues will be at the center of our assessment of the documents received from the U.S. and NATO," the ministry added.

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