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Russia Not Seeking to End Ukraine War by May 9 – Foreign Minister

By AFP

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Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov gives a press conference in Moscow on April 27, 2022.
Alexander Shcherbak/TASS

Russia is not looking to end its war in Ukraine by Victory Day on May 9, its foreign minister said, as the country looks set to mark the key anniversary under the cloud of a deadly conflict.

Speaking with Italian outlet Mediaset, Sergei Lavrov insisted Moscow would not rush to wrap up its so-called "special military operation" in time for the anniversary, which celebrates Nazi Germany's surrender to allied forces — including the then Soviet Union — in 1945.

"Our military will not artificially adjust their actions to any date, including Victory Day," Lavrov said in the interview released Sunday.

"The pace of the operation in Ukraine depends, first of all, on the need to minimize any risks for the civilian population and Russian military personnel," he added.

Russia typically marks Victory Day in grand style, with a large military parade in central Moscow and a speech by President Vladimir Putin hailing the country's leading role in the defeat of fascism in Europe.

But this year's celebrations will come against the backdrop of Moscow’s bloody military campaign in Ukraine, which Putin has justified with claims the ex-Soviet country requires "denazification" and other allusions to World War II.

"We will solemnly celebrate May 9, as we always do. Remember those who fell for the liberation of Russia and other republics of the former U.S.S.R., for the liberation of Europe from the Nazi plague," Lavrov said.

Thousands of civilians have been killed and millions displaced by Russia's invasion, which began on Feb. 24.

Moscow has said that over a thousand of its soldiers have been killed in the operation. Ukraine claims Russia's losses are much higher.

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