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Blinken Says 'No Signs' at G20 of Russia Engaging on Ukraine

By AFP

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U.S. State Secretary Antony Blinken (R) sits next to Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly (L) during the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia, 08 July 2022. **EPA/DITA ALANGKARA / POOL / TASS**

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Saturday that Washington saw "no signs" of Russia engaging with G20 diplomats over its invasion of Ukraine after Moscow faced a barrage of criticism at talks in Indonesia.

Russia's top diplomat Sergei Lavrov stormed out of a meeting with G20 foreign ministers on the resort island of Bali on Friday after Washington and its allies condemned Moscow's assault on its neighbor during the closed-door talks.

"We saw no signs whatsoever that Russia is prepared to engage in meaningful diplomacy," Blinken said after meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on Saturday.

"If there is an opportunity for diplomacy, we will seize it."

Lavrov walked out of a morning session on Friday as his German counterpart Annalena Baerbock criticized the invasion. He then left an afternoon session before Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba addressed the ministers virtually.

"There was a strong consensus and Russia was left isolated, as it has been many times since this war begin," Blinken said.

"In fact, Foreign Minister Lavrov left the meeting early, maybe because this message had been so resoundingly clear."

Speaking after an unusually long five hours of talks with Wang, Blinken said he had pressed Beijing on its tacit support of the invasion and called on China to distance itself from the Kremlin.

He also announced the United States would provide another $360 million in support to Ukraine, including for food, clean drinking water, emergency health care and shelter.

The G20 meeting in Indonesia came against the backdrop of raging battles in eastern Ukraine, and with tensions between Moscow and Western nations at their highest in decades.

Blinken snubbed a direct meeting with Lavrov and instead accused Russia of triggering a global food crisis, demanding Moscow allow grain shipments out of war-battered Ukraine.

"To our Russian colleagues: Ukraine is not your country. Its grain is not your grain. Why are you blocking the ports? You should let the grain out," Blinken said in the closed-door session on Friday, according to a Western official present.

Lavrov had previously told reporters he would not "go running" after Washington for talks.

"It was not us who abandoned contact, it was the United States," he said.

French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna told AFP on Friday that the Russian diplomat left after finding little support on the Ukraine war.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said Lavrov was not listening to his colleagues.

"That's not the most constructive way to attend a G20 meeting," he told AFP.

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