

U.S. Says China Mulling Weapons for Russia in Ukraine War

By [AFP](#)

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U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken **TASS / EPA / Michael Reynolds**

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Sunday that China was considering providing weapons to Russia in its war against Ukraine, warning Beijing that any supplies would "cause a serious problem."

"The concern that we have now is based on information we have that they're considering providing lethal support," Blinken told CBS's "Face The Nation."

Asked what lethal support would entail, he said "everything from ammunition to the weapons themselves."

Blinken made similar comments in a series of interviews with American television from Germany, where on Saturday he attended the Munich Security Conference and met with his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi.

He told Wang then that "if China provides material support to Russia or assistance with systemic sanctions evasion," there will be consequences, a State Department official said.

Strained ties

Taken together, the U.S. comments appeared to be among the clearest warning yet that China might be poised to go beyond rhetorical, political or diplomatic support for Russia and be ready to help arm it in its nearly year-old fight against Ukraine.

They also came at a time when already strained U.S.-Chinese relations have been further tested by Washington's shooting down of what it said was a large Chinese spy balloon.

Appearing Sunday on ABC, Blinken emphasized that U.S. President Joe Biden had warned his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, as long ago as last March against sending weapons to Russia.

Since that time, "China has been careful not to cross that line, including by holding off on selling lethal weapons systems for use on the battlefield," according to an administration source familiar with the issue.

A top Republican senator who also attended the Munich conference, Lindsey Graham, said it would be a serious mistake for China to provide Russia with weapons.

Doing so now, he said, would be "dumber than dirt. It would be like buying a ticket on the Titanic after you saw the movie."

'No apology'

Graham, known as a well-informed foreign policy hawk, also said he had strong indications that the U.S. will soon announce plans to train Ukrainian fighter pilots, which would represent a further step in the West's gradually escalating efforts to arm Ukraine.

Graham said he believed the U.S. should declare Russia a state sponsor of terror for its actions in Ukraine — which would mean that China or any other country supplying it with arms would face sanctions.

Blinken's meeting with Wang — the highest-level encounter between the countries since U.S. jets shot down the Chinese balloon on Feb. 4 — did not appear to ease tensions.

"I told him quite simply that that was unacceptable and can never happen again," Blinken told CBS about the balloon incident.

Wang on Saturday dismissed the U.S. allegations of high-altitude spying in uncharacteristically strong language, calling them "hysterical and absurd."

Blinken said Sunday that his counterpart had offered him "no apology."

The tough-sounding exchanges came a day after U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris said in Munich that Russia had committed "crimes against humanity" in Ukraine through "widespread and systemic" attacks on the country's civilian population.

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