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Russia Says Kyiv's Statements on Peace Talks Contradictory

By AFP

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Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Saturday he "does not listen" to what he called Ukraine's contradictory statements on peace talks.

Lavrov spoke after Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba visited China for talks this week. President Volodymyr Zelensky then said Beijing sent a "clear signal" it supported Ukraine's territorial integrity.

Answering questions from Russian journalists on the sidelines of a meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in the Laos capital, Lavrov referred dismissively to Zelensky and Kuleba's comments.

Kuleba, in an interview with Ukraine's TSN channel Friday about his visit to Beijing, said Kyiv could not be forced to negotiate and that China, which has sought to paint itself as a mediator

after Russia's invasion, respected Ukraine's territorial integrity.

Kuleba "is saying this not for the first time and has sometimes said completely opposite things," Lavrov said.

"Not long ago they were talking about negotiations. Zelensky talked of readiness to finally sit at a table with Russian representatives. I don't listen to them, to be honest," he added.

Lavrov said that during talks with his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, in Vientiane, they discussed what was said during Kuleba's visit and Russians "sensed that the Chinese position remains unchanged".

Lavrov said Beijing insists the format of any peace talks must be "acceptable to all sides".

Zelensky said this month that Russia should be represented at a second peace summit after Russia was not invited to one in June in Switzerland and China did not attend because of this.

Lavrov also referred to Donald Trump's possible position on Ukraine if elected U.S. president, after ex-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo wrote about this in a Wall Street Journal article this week.

"About Trump, I've heard that he proposed instead of just giving Ukraine money to allocate $500 billion on lend-lease conditions," Lavrov said, calling this "the approach of a businessman".

"I can't comment on numerous ideas that aren't really serious," Lavrov added.

"When there is something serious proposed, of course, as the president said we are always ready for an honest conversation, taking into account the realities that exist now", the minister said.

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