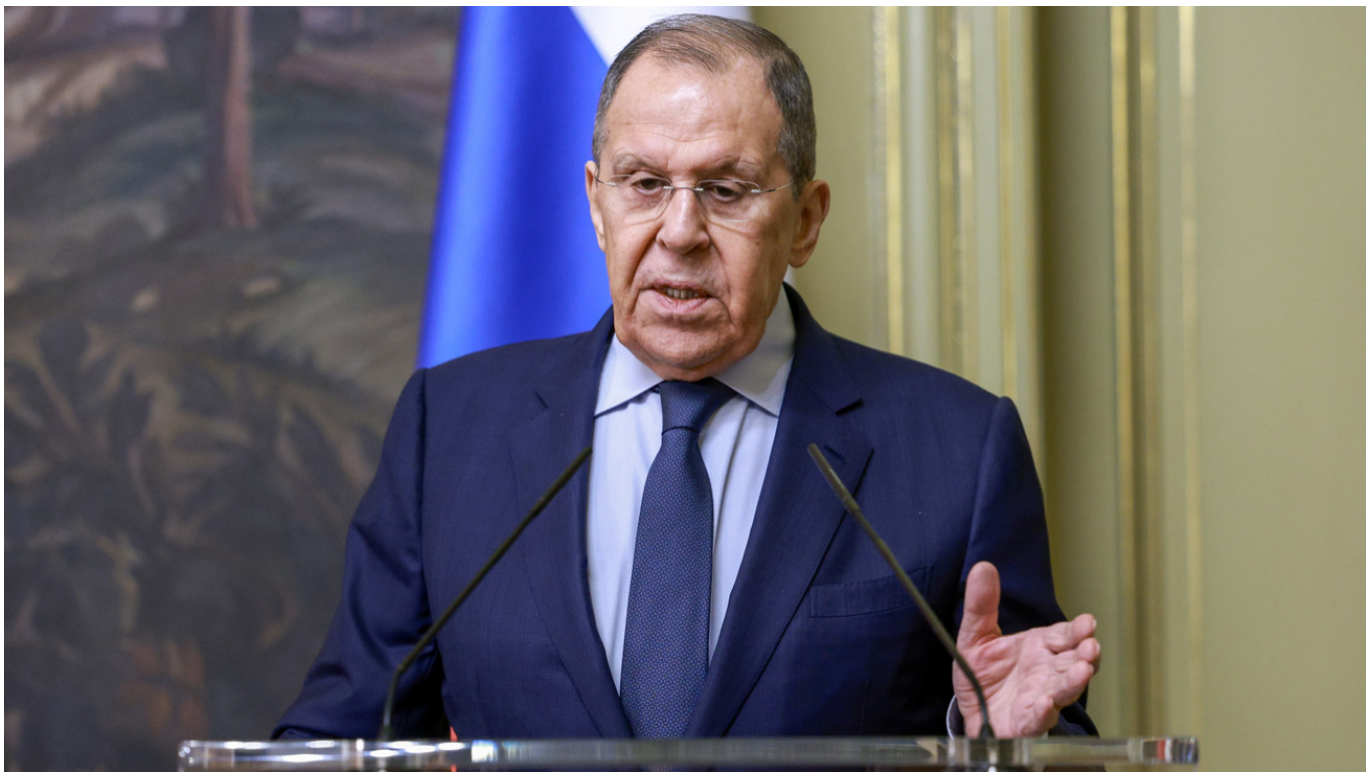
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Russia Condemns Macron's Nuclear Umbrella Proposal

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Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. **Alexander Shcherbak / TASS**

Russian officials on Thursday criticized French President Emmanuel Macron's proposal to extend France's nuclear umbrella to European partners and the possible deployment of European forces to Ukraine as a deterrent against Russia.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov called Macron's remarks in a televised address Wednesday evening "very, very confrontational."

"It seems that France indeed wants the war [in Ukraine] to continue," Peskov told the state-run news agency TASS. "This is nuclear rhetoric and [France's] claim toward nuclear leadership in Europe."

Macron "did not mention Russia's legitimate concerns and fears and, in this regard, the need for Russia to take retaliatory measures," Peskov added.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, responding to Macron's warnings that Moscow poses

a threat to Europe, described the speech as a "threat against Russia."

Related article: Macron Proposes French Nuclear Extension, Ukraine Troop Deployment

Likewise, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova dismissed Macron's comments as "detached from reality" and contradictory to his previous statements.

Macron's remarks come amid concerns over U.S. President Donald Trump's shift in transatlantic policy and efforts to broker peace talks between Russia and Ukraine.

In a televised address, Macron said the French were "legitimately worried" about the dawn of a "new era" after Trump, early in his second term, seemingly reversed U.S. policy on Ukraine and risked a historic rupture with Europe.

"Russia has become, at the moment I am speaking to you and for the years to come, a threat to France and Europe," he said. "It would be madness to remain a spectator in this world of danger."

Macron announced plans to discuss extending France's nuclear deterrent to European partners and raised the possibility of deploying European troops to enforce a peace deal in Ukraine.

"Who can believe that this Russia of today will stop at Ukraine?" he added.

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