

Beat: News

ON SYRIA, U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE JOHN KERRY NEGOTIATING DAY WITH SERGEY LAVROV

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USPA NEWS - In Moscow (Russia), on December 15, 2015, was held a Press Availability with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry in presence of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE JOHN KERRY: Well, Sergey, thank you very much. I want to thank Foreign Minister Lavrov...

In Moscow (Russia), on December 15, 2015, was held a Press Availability with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry in presence of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE JOHN KERRY: Well, Sergey, thank you very much. I want to thank Foreign Minister Lavrov and President Putin for their welcome here today and for the amount of time both of them afforded to this very important series of discussions that we had today.

I talk with Sergey very frequently in addition to the meetings that we see each other at, but it is always better to be able to sit down in person and spend the significant amount of time that we're able to do today to really hash out details and not feel the pressure of another meeting at a multilateral event. So I'm grateful for President Putin. Particularly, I think we spent more than three and a half hours discussing a number of different topics as well as some critical issues that President Obama wanted me to raise with him.

There is absolutely no question that when the United States and Russia work together effectively, our two countries benefit, and we think also so does the global community. In July "" I just remind everybody "" we were able with the P5+1 partners to remove a potential danger to peace and security in the Middle East by negotiating the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and we remain together now committed to the full implementation of this agreement, which was designed to make certain that Iran does not secure a nuclear weapon.

I'm pleased to report that just today, this afternoon, the Board of Governors of the IAEA passed on a resolution regarding the PMD activities, which was a critical component of the implementation process.

So, despite our countries' differences, we've demonstrated that when the United States and Russia pull together in the same direction, progress can be made. And as Sergey said today, our meetings focus principally on Syria, on counterterrorism, and on Ukraine.

I reaffirmed to President Putin that the United States stands ready to work with Russia to defeat Daesh, but provided, obviously, that Moscow chooses to direct its fire on the real threat, which is Daesh. And I made clear about our concern that some of Russia's strikes have hit the moderate opposition rather than focusing on Daesh. And I'm pleased to say President Putin took that under advisement. And we talked about the areas of our operations and theirs, and he was very much accommodating in his notion that we need to make certain that our militaries are talking in order to make sure there is a complete de-confliction.

We obviously agree that Daesh poses a threat to all of us. It's a threat to the region and beyond it. And we talked at great length about the threat of Daesh and the potential of extremism in the region. Russia and the United States agree that you can't defeat Daesh without also de-escalating the fight in Syria because Syria is the magnet, is the center, if you will, of the Daesh operations.

We also absolutely agree that dealing with both Daesh and Syria is going to require a political process "" not a political process for Daesh, but a political process for Syria so that we can better focus our efforts against Daesh. And so in accordance with the Geneva communique of 2012 and under the UN auspices, we discussed today in great detail the need to accelerate the effort in order to

proceed under the UN to that political process.

I agree with Sergey, which he announced in Russian, that we will meet this Friday on the 18th in New York with the International Syria Support Group, and then for the purposes of affirming under the UN auspices what we are doing within that group, and if promoted, that we would pass a UN resolution regarding the Vienna communiqués and the next steps with respect to negotiations and hopefully a ceasefire.

As I emphasized today, the United States and our partners are not seeking so-called “regime change,” as it is known in Syria. What we have said is that we don’t believe that Assad himself has the ability to be able to lead the future Syria, but we didn’t — we focused today not on our differences about what can or can’t be done immediately about Assad; we focused on a process — on the political process whereby Syrians will be making decisions for the future of Syria. But we do believe that nobody should be forced to choose between a dictator and being plagued by terrorists. Our challenge remains creating the conditions on which an alternative can emerge.

So while we don’t see eye to eye on every single aspect of Syria, we certainly agreed today — and President Putin agreed — that we see Syria fundamentally very similarly. We want the same outcomes. We see the same dangers. We understand the same challenges. And we all believe that a united, nonsectarian Syria represents the future, and we also agreed that it is a future without Daesh and we’re committed to try to continue to destroy Daesh.

So last week, at a conference hosted by the Saudi Arabians, they began to bring together the opposition that is part of our discussion when we go to New York. We’re also laying the groundwork for a nationwide ceasefire as soon as possible, and we hope that we can achieve that soon. I want to also say that I very much appreciate Sergey’s efforts and his cooperation as a co-convenor to help move all of these tasks forward.

I also underscored today the need to take steps with respect to the implementation of the Minsk agreements and our efforts mutually to try to bring an end to the conflict in Ukraine. We had a good discussion about Ukraine and we agreed on the spot that we will continue to grow out the bilateral process that the presidents agreed on and established recently — some months ago, as a matter of fact. And it’s our hope that the sooner the Minsk agreements are implemented and implemented in full, the better, and U.S. and EU sanctions can be rolled back. So we’re prepared to use all of the tools at our disposal and we all understand what has to happen: The OSCE needs access.

President Putin has agreed on steps that need to be taken. The government in Kyiv also has steps that we agree need to be taken, and we intend to work hard in order to see that both sides’ obligations under this agreement are met.

So this was a productive day. Our discussions were constructive. We both know there’s a lot of work to be done. I think it’s fair to say that we both believe that our countries are better off, our people are better off, and the global community benefits when we can find common ground.

We came here today — it was an effort — in an effort to try to expand that space. And even as we are honest with our differences, we are also trying to be extremely constructive about how we can find ways to improve both our day-to-day working relationship as well as augment the leadership that we think we can offer on critical crises facing the global community.

With that, we’re happy to take some questions.

... TO BE CONTINUED BETWEEN RUSSIAN SECRETARY SERGEY LAVROV & U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE JOHN KERRY
FACING JOURNALISTS' QUESTIONS

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