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## Russia's foreign minister says decision by 3 European states to block his plane 'unprecedented'

*Presstv*

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**Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has condemned as an “outrageous action” the decision by three eastern European countries to block his plane, saying the move was “unprecedented” and “unthinkable.”**

As a result of waves of tough sanctions against Moscow over its “special military operation” in Ukraine that has begun in February 24, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, and Montenegro – all NATO member states – in an unprecedented move banned Lavrov’s Monday flight to the Serbian capital, Belgrade.

“There were a lot of questions from the media last night and this morning regarding our reaction to the unprecedented decisions taken by some US-led NATO member states and the decisions that prevented the Russian Foreign Minister from visiting the Republic of Serbia. The unthinkable has happened, of course; I understand the interest you are showing in our assessment of these outrageous actions,” Lavrov said on Monday at an online press conference, [TASS](#) news agency reported.

He also called the move by the three NATO members as “basically a deprivation of a sovereign state's right to conduct foreign policy,” adding, “Serbia's international activity is blocked, at least for the moment in the direction of Russia.”

Lavrov also noted that he had not yet received an explanation from the said countries for their decision, saying that he would instead invite his Serbian counterpart to visit him in Moscow.

“The main thing is no one will be able to destroy our relations with Serbia,” he said.

Earlier, the Serbian daily Danas cited Prime Minister Ana Brnabic saying that the situation around the top Russian diplomat's visit was “extremely complicated” and that President Aleksandar Vucic was dealing with the logistics of his trip.

It would have been the first visit of a high-ranking Russian official to Serbia since the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis and at a time when the European Union is preparing a new package of sanctions against Moscow.

“This is another very clear and instructive demonstration of the extent to which NATO and the EU can go to use the most lowbrow ways to influence those who are guided by national interests and not ready to sacrifice their principles, their dignity in favor of the very rules that the West imposes instead of international law,” Lavrov stated.

The Russian foreign minister further told reports that “If a visit by the Russian foreign minister to Serbia is seen in the West as something approaching a threat on a universal scale, then things in the West are clearly pretty bad.”

### **Kremlin: Decision to block Lavrov's plane 'hostile action'**

Separately on Monday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov also lambasted the decision by countries surrounding Serbia in closing their airspace as a “hostile action” by these countries.

“Such hostile actions against our country can cause certain problems,” he warned, while insisting that Russia and Serbia would continue contacts.

Peskov stressed said that such measures would not prevent Moscow from maintaining relations with friendly countries.

“We are convinced that such actions will not be able to prevent our country's continuation of contacts, especially with friendly countries,” he told reporters.

Serbia, a candidate for EU accession, has developed close relations with Russia over the years and has managed to fend off the West's pressure to condemn Russia's military operation in Ukraine.

The country has also been successful in securing its Russian natural gas supplies while other countries were cut off from the sources. Last Sunday, the Serbian leader announced a new three-year gas supply contract with Russia.

In late February and several days after the onset of operation in Ukraine, Lavrov was also forced to cancel a trip to Geneva, Switzerland, for disarmament talks, after the EU closed its airspace to Russian aviation.