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Russia slams US talks of imposing no-fly zone on Syria

Jun 16, 2013

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has warned against any effort by the United States and its allies to impose a no-fly zone over Syria, saying the move would be a ‘violation of international law.’

“You don’t have to be a great expert to understand that this will still violate international law, and we really hope that our American colleagues will align their actions in accordance with the approach of the Russian-American initiative in preparation for the conference (on Syria),” Lavrov said on Saturday.

The Russian foreign minister was referring to Western media reports that US F-16 warplanes and Patriot anti-aircraft missiles in Jordan might be used in creating a no-fly zone over Syria.

Pentagon spokesman George Little said in a statement on Saturday that the F-16 aircraft and the Patriot missile batteries would stay in Jordan after the end of the joint drill between the United States and Jordan this month.

US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel “has approved a request from the Kingdom of Jordan for a detachment of F-16s and Patriot Missiles to remain in Jordan following the conclusion of the Eager Lion Exercise next week,” Little stated.

“All other US personnel assigned to Jordan for Eager Lion will depart at the conclusion of the exercise. The United States enjoys a longstanding partnership with Jordan and is committed to its defense,” the Pentagon spokesman added.

Lavrov also dismissed as ‘unreliable’ Washington’s claims that the Syrian government has used chemical weapons.

He said the materials collected by the Obama administration regarding the use of chemical weapons would not meet the requirements of the Hague-based Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

The Russian foreign minister added, “Blood samples, urine, soil, and clothing are considered serious evidence only in the case where these samples are taken by experts from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and if these experts controlled these samples during the entire duration of the investigation in appropriate laboratories.”

On June 13, hawkish US Senator John McCain, who is a staunch supporter of arming the militants in Syria, said that Washington should even think of plans other than sending weapons to the militants “to change the equation on the battleground.”

The turmoil in Syria erupted in March 2011, and many people, including large numbers of Syrian soldiers and security personnel, have been killed so far.

In May, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said militants from as many as 29 different countries were fighting against the government in different parts of the country.