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Russia warns of retaliation against West bans: Lavrov

May 15, 2014

Russia has warned that it may consider taking retaliatory measures if the West's "hysterical" policy of sanctions against Moscow over the crisis in Ukraine continues.

"If the West continues these absolutely non-professional hysterical policies, we would have to think what we can do in return," Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in an interview with Bloomberg television on Wednesday.

Lavrov pointed out that any new sanctions by the United States and the European Union (EU) would only harden Russia's stance toward the current turmoil in Ukraine.

However, the top Russian diplomat emphasized that Moscow is not looking for "confrontations," adding that threats coming from Washington and Brussels stem from the Western governments' "desire to get revenge."

The US and the EU accuse Russia of destabilizing Ukraine. They have slapped a number of sanctions against Russian and pro-Russia figures.

Russia, however, rejects the accusation, saying the pro-Russia protests in Ukraine began spontaneously against the new government in Kiev.

A total of 61 Russians and Ukrainians have been targeted by EU visa bans and asset freezes since almost two months ago, when Crimea declared independence from Ukraine and subsequently joined the Russian Federation.

The US has also imposed its own sanctions on Russia. On April 28, the US imposed visa bans and asset freezes on several high-ranking Russian officials. Washington also imposed sanctions on 17 companies, claiming Moscow had failed to abide by the Geneva agreement to defuse the crisis in Ukraine.

The crisis in Ukraine erupted last November when the country's then President Viktor Yanukovich refrained from signing an association agreement with the EU in favor of closer ties with Moscow. Yanukovich left Ukraine for Russia as the political upheaval against his decision became increasingly violent.