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By Guy Taylor

John Kerry in Ukraine says U.S. ‘does not seek a confrontation’ with Russia

Джон Керрі в Україні заявив, що США «не прагнуть конфронтації» з Росією

Незважаючи на обговорення американськими чиновниками останнім часом можливості відправки до України летальної зброї, держсекретар Джон Керрі заявляє, що США не прагнуть до конфронтації з Росією. Таке твердження він оголосив за декілька годин до того, як німецький та французький лідери обговорили чергову дипломатичну можливість вирішення конфлікту в Україні.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/feb/5/john-kerry-ukraine-says-us-does-not-seek-confrontation/>



Secretary of State John F. Kerry is pushing a message to Russian leaders that Washington “does not seek a confrontation,” despite reports that the Obama administration is carefully weighing whether to begin sending armor-piercing weapons to Ukrainian forces engaged in a growing war with Moscow-backed separatists.

Mr. Kerry made the assertion hours before the leaders of Germany and France announced a new peace plan for Ukraine Thursday, planning to fly together to Kiev and Moscow with a proposal to resolve the conflict that could be “acceptable to all.”

Reuters reported that the coordinated trip by Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Francois Hollande comes as pro-Russia separatists advanced on a key railway hub held by Ukrainian troops in the eastern part of the nation.

Mr. Kerry’s comments were delivered before he arrived in Kiev to announce a fresh \$16 million in non-lethal U.S. humanitarian aid aimed at helping Ukrainian officials deal with blowback from the violence in the east.

“The United States and countries that support Ukraine’s sovereignty and rights do not seek confrontation,” Mr. Kerry said Wednesday during a meeting of European foreign ministers at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Basel Switzerland.

“We are convinced that Moscow could rebuild trust and relationships if it simply helps to calm turbulent waters,” the secretary of state said, asserting that Moscow could still reengage in a peace process with Kiev known as the Minsk protocol.

The process has broken down during recent days amid growing violence between Russia-backed fighters and Ukrainian military forces during recent days.

Mr. Kerry did not speak explicitly on the debate in Washington over whether or not to begin sending U.S. weapons to the Ukrainian side — something Congress gave authorization for in December.

Pressure to start sending American drones and armor-piercing anti-tank missiles to Ukrainian troops mounted has mounted this week a report by three influential U.S. think tanks, which asserted that as many as 1,000 Russian military and intelligence officers are operating in eastern Ukraine and need to be given a clear sign that “the West will not accept the use of forces to change borders in Europe.”

The situation is “not a proxy war” but a “literal invasion by the Russian armed forces,” Strobe Talbott, the president of the Brookings Institution, said Monday as his organization released the report in coordination with the Atlantic Council and the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. “For the West not to up the ante in the deadly game is to invite [Russian President Vladimir] to continue to believe that the West is soft.”

Although Washington and the European Union have leveled economic sanctions against several Russian officials and companies, the Obama administration has resisted providing anything other than “soft” support to Ukraine’s military, sending such items as gas masks and radar technology but no missiles or other weapons.

Mr. Kerry reportedly met with Russian Foreign minister Sergei Lavrov on the sidelines of Wednesday’s OSCE meeting in Switzerland. Mr. Lavrov and Mr. Putin have argued over the past several months that Moscow is not providing military support to pro-Russia separatists in Eastern Ukraine.

Both have asserted that Washington’s claim to the contrary is overblown and designed to smear Moscow on the international stage.