
Lavrov: Russia waiting for US to provide 'details' on proposed safe zones in Syria

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Moscow is waiting for Washington to lay out the details of how it intends to establish safe zones in Syria, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said, adding that the proposal must also be agreed upon by the Syrian government.

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Lavrov said the issue was raised last week during his conversation with US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on the sidelines of the G20 meeting in Bonn, Germany.

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"The US side informed us that this concept (safe zones) is currently in development," the top diplomat said, adding that Moscow *"will wait for further details"* from Washington.

The minister said that Russia is ready to consider the proposal, as well as any others the US may have on cooperation in Syria, expressing hope that Washington is now really interested in working with Moscow to settle the conflict.

"Such initiatives should take into account the real situation on the ground in Syria, where many players are working with their ground forces and in Syrian airspace," he stressed.

"Of course, we will stress that any initiatives relating to Syrian territory need to be agreed upon by the Syrian government. Otherwise, these and other steps will probably not be so easy to implement," Lavrov added.

US President Donald Trump, who announced in late January that he *"would absolutely do safe zones in Syria,"* reiterated his plan on Sunday, saying it would be good to create places for civilians in war-torn countries *"so they can stay there and live safely"* instead of bringing them to the US.

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As for funding the project, Trump said "we're going to have the Gulf States pay for those safe zones. They've got nothing, but money."

Lavrov said that he first met America's new secretary of state in Bonn on February 16, when the two diplomats discussed bilateral relations as well as the situation in Syria, Afghanistan, and Ukraine. Afterwards, both parties described the talks as *"productive,"* stressing that they were eager to find ways to mend Russia-US relations.

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However, the sensitive issue of the sanctions that the Obama administration imposed on Moscow was not raised in Bonn.
