

Lavrov Raises Questions on Non-Nuclear U.S. Weapons

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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ST. PETERSBURG — Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said conventional weapons must be taken into account when Washington and Moscow meet to discuss President Barack Obama's proposal to make radical reductions in their nuclear arsenals.

Obama said Wednesday in a speech in Berlin that he wants U.S. and Russian nuclear stockpiles reduced by one-third, more than required by a treaty that took effect two years ago.

But Lavrov said Friday that talks on further nuclear reductions should also factor in new types of American weapons, such as so-called "prompt global strike" weapons that would let the U.S. strike targets anywhere in the world in as little as an hour.

Lavrov didn't specify how Russia wants to limit such weapons, but noted that they have a capability comparable to nuclear weapons.

"Imagine a weapon that is delivered to any part of the Earth in one hour. That's the goal," he said. "It doesn't have an inhumane effect of a nuclear weapon, but militarily, it's much more efficient. We have to take this into account before we decide on any further reductions."

Lavrov's comments reflected Moscow's reluctance to conduct further nuclear arms cuts at a time when it is lagging far behind the United States in designing new weapons, and its conventional forces are a shadow of the Red Army's former might. All that has prompted Moscow to rely increasingly on its nuclear deterrent, and it has invested a large share of its petrodollars into modernizing its nuclear missiles and atomic submarines.

The minister said U.S. missile defense plans remained a top concern for Moscow, and the U.S. refusal to conclude a treaty that would bar space-based weapons has worried Moscow. He added that NATO's edge in conventional forces also should be taken into account.

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