

Lavrov Presents Kerry With Idaho Potatoes

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The potatoes that U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry presented to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov during talks about Syria might symbolize a "carrot-and-stick" approach, Lavrov said after a meeting marked by a show of camaraderie and an undercurrent of disagreement.

Kerry raised some eyebrows — and drew a chuckle from Lavrov — when he presented the Russian diplomat with two Idaho potatoes during their talks in Paris on Monday.

Kerry later told reporters that the gift was in reference to an earlier conversation about his Christmas vacation in Idaho and Lavrov's casual remark about the state's famed tubers.

"There's no hidden meaning. There's no metaphor. There's no symbolic anything," Kerry told reporters on Monday.

But Lavrov said that the spuds may have a deeper significance.

"The specific potato which John handed to me has the shape which makes it possible to insert 'potato' in the carrot-and-stick expression," Lavrov told the joint news conference in English, referring to tactics used to influence others through rewards and punishments.

The Paris talks, held to arrange a Syrian peace conference, were complicated by uncertainties about whether the Syrian opposition will attend, and by disagreements on whether to involve Iran in the conference, scheduled to take place in Switzerland next week.

The Foreign Ministry presented Kerry with a bright pink fur hat which went to U.S. State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki.

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