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## Russia warns US against arms delivery to Ukraine

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Moscow has strongly warned Washington against providing Ukraine's military with lethal arms in its operations against pro-Russia forces in the east.

"We repeatedly heard confirmations from the (US) administration that only non-lethal weapons would be delivered to Ukraine. If there is a change in this policy, then this is a highly destabilizing factor that could seriously influence the balance of power in the region," Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Alexander Lukashevich told a news conference in the capital, Moscow, on Thursday.

"That (would be) a direct violation of agreements reached, including (agreements reached) with the participation of the United States," the Russian official added.

Lukashevich's remarks came a day after Tony Blinken, the US deputy national security adviser, told a US Senate committee that Washington should consider strengthening Ukraine's armed forces through supplying weaponry.

"I believe that, given the serious Russian violations of the agreement that they signed...that one thing that could hopefully get them to think twice and deter them from further action is strengthening the capacity of the Ukrainian forces, including with defensive lethal equipment," Blinken said on Wednesday.

The two mainly Russian-speaking regions of Donetsk and Lugansk in eastern Ukraine have been the scene of deadly clashes between pro-Russia protesters and the Ukrainian army since Kiev's military operation started in mid-April in a bid to crush the protests.

Violence intensified in May after the two flashpoint regions held local referendums in which their residents voted overwhelmingly in favor of independence from Ukraine and joining the Russian Federation.