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# Secretary Antony J. Blinken And Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov Before Their Meeting - United States Department of State

*Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State*

4-5 minutes

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Remarks

Hotel Wilson

Geneva, Switzerland

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**FOREIGN MINISTER LAVROV:** (Via interpreter) State Secretary, colleagues, we're very grateful to you for this proposal to hold talks in Geneva in the context of the work that was started on the security guarantees. When you made the phone call to me and proposed that we meet to achieve greater clarity with regard to our concerns, we believed that to be a very good idea, because we believe that it would help you come up with concrete answers to our concerns, to our proposals, and, if need be, to come up with counter proposals.

Yesterday we spent a great deal of time to familiarize ourselves with the large body of information prepared by State Department about Russia's alleged misinformation. It is with great interest that I read them, but I do hope that not everyone in the State

Department was working on those materials and there were some who worked on the essence of our proposals, on their substance.

So I heard one of your last statements during your European tour when you said that you did not expect a breakthrough from these negotiations. We do not expect a breakthrough at these negotiations either. What we expect is concrete answers to our concrete proposals in the vein and in compliance with the obligations that were adopted at the highest level within the OSCE. I'm referring particularly to the principle of indivisibility of security, as well as the obligation of countries not to strengthen their own security at the expense of security of others. We would very much be interested to listen to how the U.S. interprets these obligations and these principles.

Thank you, and once again, I'm very glad to see you.

**SECRETARY BLINKEN:** Sergey, thank you very much. It's good to see you as well, and I appreciate this opportunity for all of us to get together. This is part of an ongoing effort to de-escalate tensions and to prevent further Russian aggression against Ukraine. I come from consulting with allies and partners, as well as from Ukraine itself. That too is part of an ongoing effort to work closely, coordinate with, consult with all of our allies and partners who share our deep concerns about the moment we're in. We are – all of us – equally committed to the path of diplomacy and dialogue to try to resolve our differences.

But we're also committed, if that proves impossible and Russia decides to pursue aggression against Ukraine, to a united, swift, and severe response. I do want to take this opportunity to share directly with you the common view of allies and partners, as well as concrete ideas to address some of the concerns that you've

raised, as well as the deep concerns that many of us have about Russia's actions. I'll also make clear the fundamental principles that we are committed to defend.

I also want to say, Sergey, that we need to talk about two U.S. citizens, Paul Whelan and Trevor Reed, who were tourists in Russia, were arrested, convicted without credible evidence, and we again ask Russia to do the right thing and let them come home.

But the bottom line is this: This is a critical moment. You're right, we don't expect to resolve our differences here today. But I do hope and expect that we can test whether the path of diplomacy, of dialogue, remains open. We're committed to walking that path, to resolving our differences peacefully, and I hope we can test that proposition today and see where we go from here. Thanks for being here.