

## **Decision on where icon gifted to Lavrov truly belongs can be made only after examination - Russian Orthodox Church**



The Russian Orthodox Church believes that it is premature to hand over the St. Nicolas icon gifted to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to Ukraine before the icon is examined by experts.

“As far as I know no evidence has been presented thus far that this icon is Ukraine’s heritage. I think that experts ought to step in, and if this [...] icon had been stolen, a circumstance the donator of this icon might not have known, then it of course must be returned,” Department for External Church Relations Chairman Metropolitan Hilarion told the *Church and the World* program on the Rossiya-24 television channel.

However, if it is not so, experts should present their conclusion that will confirm the origin of the icon, he said.

As reported earlier, Serb member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Milorad Dodik gave Lavrov an 18th-century gilded icon during the Russian foreign minister's visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina on December 15, 2020.

It became known on December 18 that the Ukrainian embassy to Bosnia and Herzegovina sent a note to Sarajevo, demanding that the 300-year-old icon allegedly originating from Lugansk be returned. Kiev claims that it is part of "Ukrainian cultural heritage".

Subsequently, Russia handed over the icon to the embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Moscow in agreement with the donator, at the same time recommending that available legal mechanisms be applied to establish all the circumstances of this matter, including the origin of the aforesaid artifact.

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