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## **Russia and US sign accord on weapons for Afghanistan**

MOSCOW, June 20: Moscow and Washington have agreed to a deal in principle over the supply of Russian weaponry to the Afghan army in its fight against the Taliban, senior diplomats announced in a statement on Friday.

The deal was signed in the Russian capital as part of the United States-Russia Working Group on Counterterrorism (CTWG), although no immediate figures were put on any Russian supplies.

“An agreement in principle to provide Russian military material to the Afghanistan National Army,” was concluded during a two-day meeting of the CTWG, the communique said.

Twin Nato and US operations are currently active in Afghanistan, following the US-led invasion of 2001. Russia, as part of the then Soviet Union, fought an 11-year war in Afghanistan from 1978 to 1989.

“We in the past have already provided military equipment to Afghanistan and we feel there is now a demand by the Afghan population and the ability of Afghanistan to take its security in its own hands,” Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Kislyak told reporters.

Kislyak said it was “possible” that Russia could increase the delivery of arms to Afghanistan. “It is possible but I would not be eager to put a number on it,” he answered in response to a question.

Kislyak was speaking alongside the Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, William J. Burns, as part of the conclusions of the 16th meeting of the CTWG, which meets alternately in Moscow and Washington.

The CTWG works to improve bilateral cooperation between Russia and the United States, while also concentrating on Afghanistan, the fight against drug trafficking, the financing of militant groups and weapons of mass destruction.

The Taliban launched an insurgency after being removed from power in Kabul in 2001. There are currently around 70,000 foreign troops in the country.—AFP

