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Russia's Putin, Ukraine's Zelenskiy to Meet Privately in Paris – Kommersant

November 27, 2019



Volodymyr Zelensky **president.gov.ua**

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy are "close to 100%" likely to meet for the first time in Paris next month, the Kommersant business daily reported Wednesday.

The face-to-face is expected to take place on the sidelines of their anticipated four-way summit with French and German leaders on Dec. 9. The summit last convened in 2016 in an attempt to resolve the conflict between pro-Russian rebels and Kiev that broke out in eastern Ukraine in 2014.

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"It's not hard" for Putin and Zelenskiy to meet privately in Paris, Kommersant cited an unnamed source familiar with Russian-Ukrainian negotiations and preparations for the summit.

Kommersant previously reported that Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany are expected to adopt steps toward de-escalating the conflict in eastern Ukraine. It also said that Putin could invite Zelenskiy to attend events commemorating the end of World War II in Moscow next year.

Putin spoke with Zelenskiy by phone Monday. The leaders discussed Russian natural gas supplies to Ukraine and gas transit to Europe before the countries' current deal expires on Dec. 31. Zelenskiy asked Putin to return equipment that he says was stolen by Russia when it seized three Ukrainian naval vessels in November 2018.

Russia returned the three ships to Ukraine last week, two months after returning the 24 Ukrainian sailors in a prisoner exchange.

The UN estimates the eastern Ukrainian conflict has killed 14,000 people since it started in 2014.

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