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Putin Says 'Effective Dialogue' With U.S. Possible

By AFP

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Russian President Vladimir Putin. **kremlin.ru**

Russian President Vladimir Putin told U.S. counterpart Joe Biden on Thursday he is "convinced" that "effective dialogue" between Moscow and Washington is possible, hours ahead of telephone talks as tensions rise over Ukraine.

Putin and Biden will hold their second telephone call in less than a month at 20:30 GMT in the latest effort to defuse tensions surrounding Moscow's military build-up on the border with Ukraine.

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"I am convinced that ... we can move forward and establish an effective Russian-American dialogue based on mutual respect and consideration of each other's national interests," Putin

said, according to a Kremlin statement carrying his holiday messages to world leaders.

A senior U.S. administration official told reporters that Biden will say "we are prepared for diplomacy and for a diplomatic path forward."

"But we are also prepared to respond if Russia advances with a further invasion of Ukraine," Biden will tell Putin, the official said, adding that "we continue to be gravely concerned" by Russian forces near the Ukrainian border.

The phone call comes ahead of talks between Russia and the United States in Geneva on Jan. 10.

Washington has led the charge in raising the alarm over Russian troop movements near ex-Soviet Ukraine and accusing Moscow of plotting a winter invasion of its neighbor.

Moscow has denied the charge and said it expects the West to agree to sweeping security demands it presented earlier this month.

They said NATO must not admit new members and the United States cannot establish new military bases in former Soviet republics.

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