

Russian Minister Says UK-Russia Ties 'Close to Zero'

By [AFP](#)

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Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. **Gavriil Grigorov / TASS**

Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said Friday Moscow's ties with London were at a low point as he met with U.K. Defense Secretary Ben Wallace for rare talks amid soaring tensions over Ukraine.

"Unfortunately, the level of our cooperation is close to zero and about to cross the zero meridian and go into negative, which is undesirable," Shoigu said in remarks carried by Russian news agencies.

He said he hoped for talks "without any escalation and raising the temperature even higher" in relations between Russia and the NATO bloc.

Shoigu also accused the West of "gorging" Ukraine with weapons.

"It is coming from all sides and it is done publicly. It is done demonstrably. Not entirely clear

why," he said.

Wallace, who is accompanied by the U.K.'s Chief of the Defense Staff Tony Radakin, will also meet with the powerful chief of staff of the Russian army Valery Gerasimov.

He is the latest Western official to shuttle to Moscow in a desperate effort to find a diplomatic solution to the Ukraine crisis.

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Russia has around 100,000 troops stationed near its borders with Ukraine, with the West fearing the Kremlin could order an attack.

Wallace's visit comes a day after Britain's Foreign Secretary, Liz Truss, met with her Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov in Moscow for talks that appeared to be fruitless and ended in mutual accusations.

Relations between London and Moscow are at an all-time low, with Russia singling out the U.K. as particularly hostile of all the Western countries.

The last meeting between the U.K. and Russian defense minister took place in 2013.

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