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Kremlin Welcomes Biden's Push for Dialogue on Ukraine

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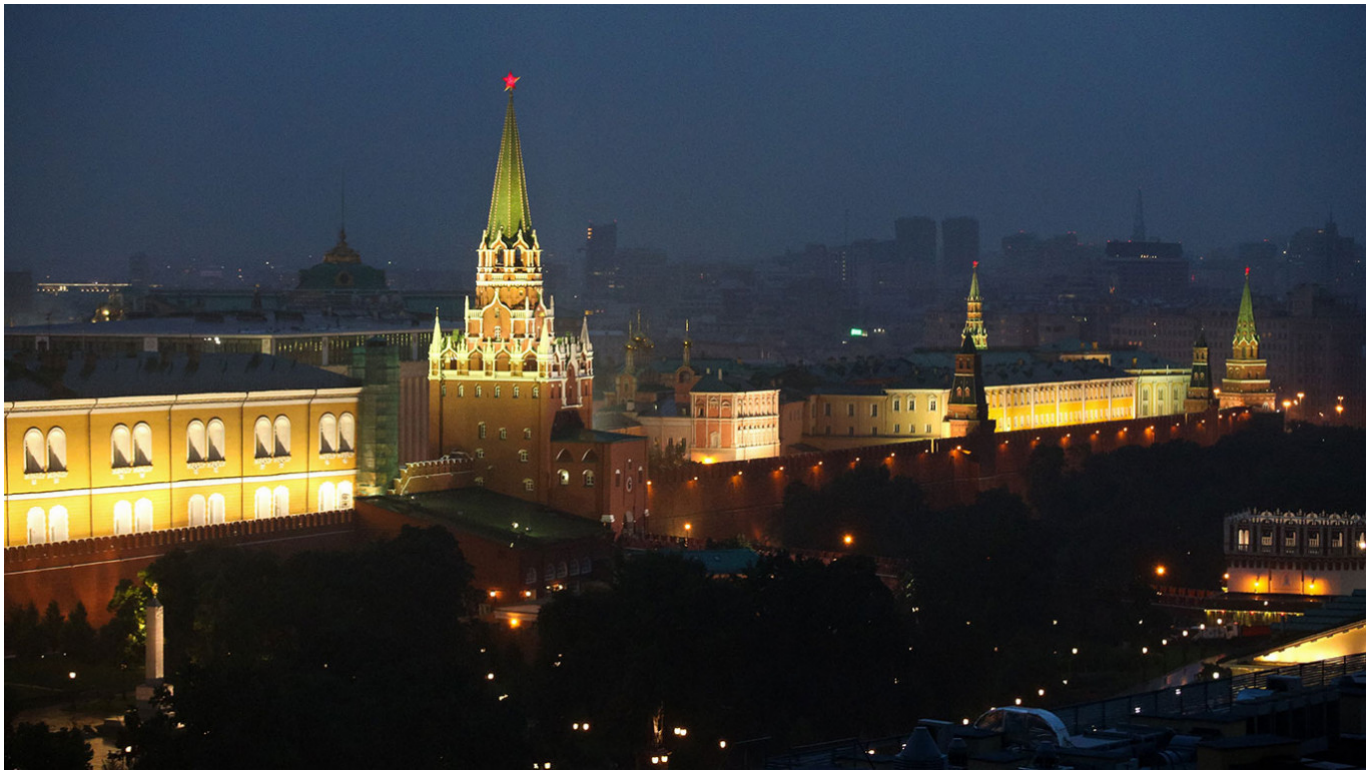

Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency

The Kremlin said Wednesday it welcomed U.S. President Joe Biden's readiness to continue talks on the Ukraine crisis.

Biden vowed to push for a diplomatic solution to the crisis Tuesday, but also warned that a Russian invasion of Ukraine remained "very much a possibility" despite Moscow's announcement of a partial pullout of its troops from the Ukrainian border and willingness to continue dialogue.

"It seems positive that the U.S. president is also stating his readiness to start such serious negotiations," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

Peskov reiterated Russia's insistence that its security demands, which include seeking a guarantee that Ukraine will never join NATO, are discussed in negotiations with the West.

While the U.S. and NATO have rejected the demand to block Ukraine from the Western military

alliance, European leaders maintain that Ukraine's bid for NATO membership is not currently on the agenda.

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Russia has said that it is in the final stages of formulating its own response to the U.S. and NATO's recent proposals on European security guarantees.

Western leaders have stepped up diplomatic efforts in recent weeks to avert what they call an imminent Russian invasion of Ukraine. Moscow has defended the movements of more than 100,000 Russian troops massed on three sides of its ex-Soviet neighbor as non-threatening maneuvers within Russian territory.

During his televised speech Tuesday, Biden again noted that Washington stood ready to impose sanctions on Russia if it were to invade Ukraine.

In his daily press briefing, Peskov criticized the sanctions threats, which he said are "repeated like a mantra" that Moscow is "tired" of hearing.

"It's probably welcome that the president of the United States of America, one of the largest countries in the world, one of the most powerful states, really thinks about the Russian people," he said, referring to Biden's direct appeal to Russian citizens that "you are not our enemy."

"If we had heard the appeal without threats, then, probably, the Russian people would have been much more impressed," President Vladimir Putin's spokesman said.

Echoing Putin's characterization of the eight-year war between Ukraine and its separatist-held territories as a "genocide" against Russian speakers living there, Peskov said "it would have been even more impressive if [Biden] called on the Ukrainian people never to shoot each other."

"That would be very cool," the state-run TASS news agency quoted him as saying.

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