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# Russia Claims Progress in Talks With Kyiv on a Neutral Ukraine

By AFP

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Medinsky said Friday that negotiators were "half-way" towards an agreement on the "demilitarisation" of Ukraine. **TASS / EPA**

Russia's top negotiator at talks with Ukraine said Friday that Moscow and Kyiv had brought their positions "as close as possible" on a proposal for Ukraine to become a neutral state.

The Kremlin on Wednesday said that a neutral Ukraine along the lines of Sweden or Austria was being discussed at talks with Kyiv to end three weeks of a Russian military operation there.

But Ukraine rejected the proposal, and said it wanted its security to be guaranteed by international forces.

"The topic of neutral status and Ukraine's non-accession to NATO is one of the key points of the talks, this is the point on which the parties brought their positions as close as possible,"

Russia's lead negotiator Vladimir Medinsky said on Friday, cited by Russian news agencies.

But he added that there were "nuances" when it came to "security guarantees" requested by Ukraine.

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Russia, which has been conducting a military operation in Ukraine since February 24, has requested that its neighbour never join the Western NATO military alliance, as well as demanding its "demilitarisation" and "denazification."

Medinsky said Friday that negotiators were "half-way" towards an agreement on the "demilitarisation" of Ukraine.

Mikhailo Podolyak, an advisor to Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky taking part in the negotiations, however said his country's position had not budged.

"Negotiation status. The statements of the Russian side are only their requesting positions," he wrote on Twitter.

"All statements are intended, inter alia, to provoke tension in the media. Our positions are unchanged. Ceasefire, withdrawal of troops & strong security guarantees with concrete formulas."

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