

Russia to 'Drastically' Wind Down Military Presence Near Kyiv, Chernihiv

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Anti-tank hedgehogs in the center of Kyiv. **Aleksandr Sinitsa / UNIAN**

Russia will "drastically" reduce its military activity near Ukrainian cities Kyiv and Chernihiv as peace talks with Ukraine progress, Moscow's deputy defense minister said Tuesday.

The change of focus for Russia's monthlong invasion aims to "increase mutual trust for future negotiations to agree and sign a peace deal with Ukraine," Alexander Fomin [told](#) state television.

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"Given that the talks on the preparation of an agreement on the neutrality and non-nuclear status of Ukraine have moved into a practical field... a decision has been made to drastically, by several times reduce the military activity in the areas of Kyiv and Chernihiv," Fomin said from the sidelines of talks with Ukrainian negotiators in Istanbul.

Chief Russian negotiator Vladimir Medinsky said there had been a "meaningful discussion" at the talks and that Ukrainian proposals would be put to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The comments come as the Russian advance near the Ukrainian capital has stalled.

Separately on Tuesday, Ukrainian negotiators said they were calling for an international agreement under which other countries would serve as guarantors of Ukraine's security.

Both Russian and Ukrainian negotiators indicated that a meeting between the presidents of the two countries could take place.

"After today's meaningful discussion we have agreed on and propose a solution, according to which the meeting of the heads of state is possible simultaneously with the foreign ministers initialing the treaty," Medinsky said.

"On the condition of quick work on the agreement and finding the required compromise, the possibility to make peace will become much closer," he said.

Top Ukrainian negotiator David Arakhamia echoed this statement.

"The results of today's meeting are sufficient for a meeting at the leaders' level," Arakhamia said.

AFP contributed reporting.

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