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Kremlin Accuses Kyiv of 'Lacking Will' to Continue Peace Talks

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Maxim Guchek / BELTA / TASS

Talks aimed at ending hostilities in Russia's nearly three-month attack on Ukraine have come to a standstill because of a "lack of willingness" on Kyiv's part, the Kremlin said Wednesday.

Russian and Ukrainian negotiators have held several rounds of peace talks since the start of the invasion in February. But the talks have lost momentum as Kyiv — emboldened by battlefield successes and angry over apparent atrocities by Russian forces — has become less interested in making concessions to Moscow.

"Talks are indeed not moving forward and we note the complete lack of will of Ukrainian negotiators to continue this process," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, according to the state-run RIA Novosti news agency.

On Tuesday, Kyiv's lead negotiator Mykhaylo Podolyak said that talks with Moscow were "on hold."

Russia's chief negotiator Vladimir Medinsky claimed this week that he was yet to receive a response to a draft peace agreement sent to Ukraine on April 15.

Top Ukrainian negotiator Rustem Umerov said Tuesday that Russia was operating with "fakes and lies."

A key sticking point in the talks is whether Russia will hold onto territories it has seized in the war, or retreat to its internationally recognized borders.

"If Russia wants to get out, they can get out to their borders even today. But they are not doing it," Umerov told The New York Times.

"The real problem is that Russia does not show the desire to participate in real and substantive negotiations," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba told German news outlet Die Welt last week.

A series of counter-offensives around the northeastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv in recent days have driven Russian troops back to within a few kilometers of the Russian border, giving Kyiv's forces a morale boost.

Kyiv is also bolstered by a continual flow of Western weapons, with analysts predicting Ukraine is better placed to fight a long war of attrition.

"Now that we feel more confident in the fight, our position in the negotiations is also getting tougher," Kuleba told Die Welt.

AFP contributed reporting.

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