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Kremlin Claims Ukraine Exited Peace Talks on U.S. Orders

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The Kremlin blamed the United States for the breakdown in peace talks between Russia and Ukraine on Thursday, claiming that Kyiv pulled out of negotiations on Washington's orders.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov claimed the two warring sides had drafted a peace deal in March, one month into Moscow's full-scale invasion, when Kyiv's delegation suddenly stepped back from the negotiation table.

President Vladimir Putin considered it "obvious that such unwillingness to negotiate and the rejection of previously agreed terms happened ... on an order from Washington," Peskov was quoted as saying by state media.

Despite delegations from Moscow and Kyiv holding a series of meetings in Belarus and Turkey in March, the two sides were unable to strike a deal, a result Moscow has repeatedly accused as being at the behest of Kyiv and its Western allies.

Russian President Vladimir Putin allegedly told Guinea-Bissau President Umaro Sissoco Embalo that he was ready for peace talks with his Ukrainian counterpart during a meeting Tuesday.

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“I was in Russia yesterday, I met with President Putin, and he asked me to speak with you and to convey a message. He told me that he is ready for negotiations with President Zelensky,” Embolo, who is visiting both Moscow and Kyiv this week, said Wednesday, according to a recording published by Ukraine’s presidential office.

Asked about these remarks, Peskov said "we are ready to ensure our interests at the negotiating table."

"We want this, but in this case we are talking about a complete unwillingness on the part of Ukraine," he said, adding that there was "no specific message" for Kyiv.

But Ukrainian President Zelensky said Moscow should first stop bombing Ukrainian cities and infrastructure, blocking Ukraine’s Black Sea ports and threatening the use of nuclear weapons before pursuing negotiations.

“As for the signals from the Russian side, Mr. President [Putin] said he wants to build bridges,” Zelensky said.

“In order for there to be bridges between one country and another, one needs to not blow up the other’s infrastructure,” he added.

AFP contributed reporting.

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