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Kremlin Denies Putin Sending Signals to U.S. for Ukraine Peace Talks

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Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. **kremlin.ru**

The Kremlin on Friday denied reports that President Vladimir Putin is probing to see whether the United States is willing to engage in talks for ending the war in Ukraine.

A Bloomberg report published the day before cited two anonymous sources close to the Kremlin as saying that Putin had indirectly "put out feelers" to unidentified senior U.S. officials in December.

The Russian leader was said to have indicated he would not oppose Ukraine's "neutral status" and eventual NATO membership if Kyiv accepted Kremlin control of partially occupied regions. Ukraine, backed by Washington and other Western allies, has vowed to reclaim those territories.

"That's false information, it's completely untrue," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters Friday, referring to the Bloomberg report.

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Yet in comments made to Bloomberg in Thursday's report, Peskov was quoted as saying that "President Putin has stated numerous times that Russia was, is and will continue to be open for negotiations on Ukraine."

"[We] would prefer to complete [our goals] by diplomatic means. If not, the military operation will be continued till we reach our goals," Peskov told the news outlet.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky rejects Moscow's territorial claims and calls for a full withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine.

As the invasion nears its second anniversary, U.S. media outlets have in recent months reported that Putin may have been signaling an openness to a ceasefire deal since at least September.

But the Russian leader could change his mind if his forces were to regain momentum on the battlefield, The New York Times reported in December, citing anonymous former Russian officials.

Later that month, the Japanese newspaper Nikkei, citing multiple anonymous sources familiar with Russian-Chinese diplomatic maneuvering, reported that Putin had told Chinese leader Xi Jinping that his invasion of Ukraine would last five years.

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