

Russia Demanded 'Neutralization' of Ukraine in Early Peace Treaty – Reports

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Alexander Kryazhev / TASS

Russia demanded that Ukraine drastically reduce its military and cede partially occupied territories, as well as that the West lift its sanctions, in the early stages of peace talks during Moscow's 2022 invasion, the investigative outlet Systema [reported](#) Monday, citing a draft treaty proposal it said it obtained.

Russia and Ukraine entered peace talks on Feb. 28, 2022, four days after Moscow launched a full-scale invasion of its neighbor. The negotiations broke down in April.

Systema reported that Russia's treaty proposal was composed in Moscow and handed to the Ukrainian delegation at the third round of talks in Belarus on March 7, 2022.

It reportedly called for Ukraine to shrink its army fivefold to fewer than 50,000 personnel and formally recognize Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions and Crimea as Russian lands — and demanded that all Ukrainian and Western sanctions since 2014 be lifted.

The Russian proposal would also have barred Ukraine from developing or deploying missiles with a range of more than 250 kilometers and gave Moscow the option to prohibit other types of weapons in the future, according to the report.

Systema, an affiliate of the U.S.-funded news organization RFE/RL, said it obtained the draft from an anonymous Ukrainian source familiar with the negotiations and confirmed its authenticity with a Russian source close to the talks.

Russia's terms "would have neutralized Ukraine to the point of making it defenseless," Eric Ciaramella, a senior fellow in the Russia and Eurasia program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, was quoted as saying after being asked to read the proposal.

"The document was structured as if Ukraine were the aggressor defeated on the battlefield, which, of course, did not reflect reality," Ciaramella said, adding that it was difficult to determine whether Moscow was making genuine attempts to negotiate.

The Kremlin has referred to the spring 2022 negotiations as "obsolete" but [declined](#) to discuss its specific terms after later drafts of treaty proposals were published earlier this year.

Systema said the early Russian peace treaty "shed light on President Vladimir Putin's goals behind the ongoing invasion of Ukraine, which he has not publicly renounced and has regularly vowed to accomplish."

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