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Putin Ally Says Russia Will Likely Reject Trump's Ukraine Deal

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Konstantin Malofeyev, owner of Tsargrad TV channel. **Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency**

Russian President Vladimir Putin will likely reject U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's Ukraine peace deal unless it includes concessions to Moscow, Western-sanctioned Russian tycoon and Kremlin confidant Konstantin Malofeyev said in two separate interviews with the Financial Times and Bloomberg.

There's a "50-50" chance of an eventual agreement with Trump, Malofeyev told Bloomberg on Monday, adding that one of Moscow's demands would be a legally binding neutral status for Kyiv.

Moscow also wants Trump to reverse Washington's approval for Ukraine to use its missiles within Russian territory, remove Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky from office and address Russia's broader security concerns in talks with Putin, Malofeyev told the Financial Times.

"For the talks to be constructive, we need to talk not about the future of Ukraine, but the

future of Europe and the world," he was quoted as saying.

As a lasting condition for peace, Moscow wants Trump to discuss wars in the Middle East, Russia's alliance with China and a U.S. acknowledgment that Ukraine is part of the Kremlin's "core interests," Malofeyev said.

"We want a long-term peace — some sort of general agreement about the global order," Malofeyev said. "Trump wants to go down in history, he'll be 80 soon, he's a grandfather. Putin's not 50 anymore either. It'll be the legacy they both leave us."

Trump has pledged to put a swift end to Russia's nearly three-year war in Ukraine during his presidential campaign, raising fears that he would try to force Ukraine to accept a deal on Russia's terms.

Putin has publicly demanded that Ukraine cede swaths of territory across its east and south as a precondition to halting the fighting. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said Sunday that his country needed security guarantees from NATO and more weapons to defend itself before any talks with Russia.

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Malofeyev, a nationalist and devout Orthodox Christian TV tycoon, said a potential peace deal would benefit Kyiv and Washington as the Russian military makes territorial gains in Ukraine.

"A truce right now is good for Ukraine and for the U.S., but for us it brings zero benefits — because we're winning," Malofeyev told Bloomberg.

"It's important that the future U.S. administration understands that a truce is not a gift that Russia is waiting for, that they will start talking to us and we will give in to everything," he added.

Malofeyev said assuming that the Kremlin's demands would change would be a mistake that could "lead to escalation and a conflict with the Trump administration."

He echoed Putin's nuclear threat in response to skepticism by Trump's recently nominated special envoy for the war in Ukraine, Keith Kellogg.

Kellogg had expressed doubt that Putin would start a nuclear war in Europe in response to Western agreement for Ukraine to fire its weapons on Russia. Malofeyev said Russia could fire a tactical nuclear weapon.

"There will be a radiation zone nobody will ever go into in our lifetime... and the war will be over," he told the Financial Times.

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