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Putin and Hungary's Orban Discuss Ukraine in Call, Kremlin Says

By AFP

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Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban and Vladimir Putin. **Grigory Sysoyev / POOL / kremlin.ru**

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday discussed the war in Ukraine in a call with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who is casting himself as a possible peacemaker.

"There was a thorough exchange of views on Ukrainian issues," the Kremlin said in its readout of the call, adding that Putin said Kyiv had adopted a "destructive" position that ruled out a peace agreement.

The call was initiated at Orban's request, the Kremlin said, and comes a day after Budapest's top diplomat said Hungary would forge ahead with its self-styled Ukraine "peace mission."

Orban met U.S. President-elect Donald Trump, who has vowed to secure a peace deal within hours of coming to office in January, at his Mar-a-Lago estate earlier this week.

"Viktor Orban expressed interest in assisting the joint search for political-diplomatic paths to

resolve the crisis," the Kremlin said.

The Hungarian leader — the closest political partner of both Trump and Putin in the European Union — has repeatedly called for peace talks and refused to send military aid to Ukraine since Russia launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022.

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He infuriated fellow EU leaders in July by conducting breakaway diplomacy with Russia to explore a path to ending the conflict, just days after taking over the bloc's rotating six-month presidency.

Orban and Putin also discussed energy projects, the Kremlin said.

To the frustration of Brussels, Budapest remains a major buyer of Russian energy almost three years after Moscow ordered troops into Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky criticized Orban for undermining European unity with his call to Putin.

"No one should boost personal image at the expense of unity, everyone should focus on shared success. Unity in Europe has always been key to achieving it," Zelensky said in a post on X.

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