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Germany's Scholz Open to More Talks With Putin Despite 'Frustration'

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The German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. **gov.uk**

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said he is willing to speak with Russian President Vladimir Putin again despite "frustrating" talks with him last month, according to German broadcaster RTL.

Scholz spoke with Putin for the first time in almost two years on Nov. 15, calling for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine and urging him to "show a willingness" to negotiate with Kyiv. Putin reiterated Moscow's position that any ceasefire deal should take into account Russia's security interests and territorial gains in southeastern Ukraine.

"It was frustrating," Scholz told RTL, according to the dpa news agency, "because he just repeated all his formulas again."

But the German leader said it was necessary to continue making clear to Putin that Berlin's support for Ukraine will not waver. Germany is Ukraine's second-largest backer behind the United States.

“This has to be done, and I’ll do it again. But we must not have any illusions,” Scholz said, adding that Russia’s troop withdrawal would lay the groundwork for peace.

Ukraine responded angrily to Berlin reviving its lines of communication with Moscow, with President Volodymyr Zelensky saying it had opened a “Pandora’s box” of bringing Putin out of international isolation.

Moscow and Kyiv have not engaged in direct peace talks since the early weeks of the Russian invasion, which is closely approaching the three-year mark.

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