

U.K. Defense Chief to Moscow: 'You Are in a Position of Weakness, Not Strength'

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Britain's Defense Secretary John Healey arrives for a cabinet meeting at 10 Downing Street in central London on Feb. 11. **HENRY NICHOLLS / AFP**

BRUSSELS — British Defense Secretary John Healey on Thursday warned Russia against interpreting the United States' willingness to negotiate an end to the war in Ukraine as a sign of victory.

"I would tell them [Russia]: you are in a position of weakness, not strength," he said in response to a question from The Moscow Times on the sidelines of the NATO defense ministers' conference.

"You are losing [1,500 troops](#) per day [killed and wounded]. You are spending a third of your budget on war. Your economy is distorted. And you've got a range of allies determined to stay with Ukraine because they recognize that the front line of Europe's defense starts in Ukraine," Healey continued, adding that some in Moscow are "jumping ahead of events."

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Healey reaffirmed London's stance that any ceasefire negotiations must involve Kyiv.

"[Ukrainian President Volodymyr] Zelensky says what we also repeat — talks about Ukraine cannot happen without Ukraine. Ukraine must be involved. It's just common sense. There can be no settlement, no lasting peace or security, without Ukraine at the heart of the process," he told reporters.

Healey declined to comment on whether NATO allies had been informed in advance about Washington's reported preparations for Wednesday's phone call between U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, during which the two leaders agreed to hold peace talks.

He also refrained from addressing Zelensky's concerns that ceasefire talks could turn into bilateral negotiations between Trump and Putin.

According to Healey, NATO defense ministers' primary responsibility is to assist Ukraine in its ongoing fight against Russian forces rather than focus on diplomatic talks.

"Our priority is to support Ukraine now, while it is fighting on the battlefield and needs our help," he said.

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