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‘Why Are We Handing Russia What It Wants?’: EU’s Chief Diplomat Blasts U.S. Over Ukraine

By Pyotr Kozlov

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EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas. **European Parliament / flickr**

BRUSSELS — The European Union’s top diplomat slammed U.S. President Donald Trump’s administration for sidelining Ukraine and engaging with Russia’s Vladimir Putin without consulting Kyiv or Europe.

U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth told allies in Brussels on Wednesday that Ukraine’s aspirations to join NATO and reclaim its 1991 borders as part of a peace settlement were “unrealistic.” He also said the U.S. would “no longer tolerate” European NATO members relying on Washington for security.

The remarks, followed by a surprise phone call between Trump and Putin in which the two agreed to enter peace talks, have stunned European officials and raised concerns that Kyiv

may be sidelined in discussions about its own future.

“They [the U.S.] say that it’s not going to be NATO membership, but some other security guarantees. Then the questions need to be answered by everybody — what are these security guarantees, really?” said Kaja Kallas, the EU’s foreign policy chief, ahead of a NATO defense ministers’ meeting.

“Being in NATO, where we have these structures, is actually the best security guarantee,” she added.

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Kallas, a former Estonian prime minister known for her staunch support of Ukraine, condemned what she described as a reckless diplomatic maneuver that rewards Russian aggression before negotiations even begin.

“We shouldn’t take anything off the table before negotiations start. It plays into Russia’s hands. And it is exactly what they want,” she said. “Why are we giving them everything they want even before negotiations begin? Appeasement has never worked.”

German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius echoed her concerns, warning against making public concessions ahead of talks.

“In my view, it would have been better to discuss Ukraine’s possible NATO membership or the country’s possible loss of territory only at the negotiating table, not to rule it out beforehand,” Pistorius said in Brussels.

Kallas stressed that any peace deal imposed without the consent of Ukraine and European allies was doomed to fail.

“There’s an agreement being made behind our backs that simply will not work,” she said. “For any kind of agreement, you need Europeans to implement it, you need Ukrainians to implement it.”

“It doesn’t look good if somebody agrees on something and everybody else has to say, ‘OK, you have agreed, but we will not follow this.’ Ukrainians will resist, and we will support them,” Kallas added.

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NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte took a more diplomatic tone, arguing that the statements from Trump and Hegseth merely underscored the need for dialogue within the alliance.

“Secretary Hegseth’s comments, and what later emerged from Washington, were significant statements,” Rutte said.

“At the same time, this is how an alliance should function,” he said. “We are a coalition of democracies. We need to debate. But I see a clear convergence: we all want peace, we want it to

be lasting and we must ensure Ukraine is in the strongest possible position."

At the same time, Rutte noted that Europe "must also step up defense spending and industrial production."

"On that, there is clear agreement," he said.

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