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Putin Taps Spy Chief, Veteran Diplomat and U.S.-Sanctioned Financier for Ukraine Peace Talks – Bloomberg

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Yury Ushakov and Sergei Naryshkin. **Mikhail Metzel / TASS**

Russian President Vladimir Putin has enlisted his spy chief, a veteran diplomat and a U.S.-sanctioned financier for anticipated peace talks aimed at ending the war in Ukraine, Bloomberg reported Friday, citing anonymous sources familiar with the matter.

The "heavyweight" composition of the negotiating team signals Putin's determination to "secure a favorable outcome," as well as his unwillingness to make concessions, according to the report.

It includes Yury Ushakov, the Kremlin's chief foreign policy adviser and former ambassador to Washington, who brings more than 50 years of diplomatic experience and extensive knowledge of U.S.-Russia relations.

Sergei Naryshkin, head of the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) and a longtime confidante of

Putin from their time in the Soviet KGB, is also involved.

Both Ushakov and Naryshkin were part of the negotiating team that failed to secure a ceasefire in Ukraine shortly after Russia's invasion in spring 2022.

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Other members of that team, such as presidential aide Vladimir Medinsky, may rejoin later to assist in talks with Ukrainian representatives, Bloomberg reported.

Kirill Dmitriev, a U.S.-sanctioned financier who studied at both Stanford and Harvard, will reportedly serve in an "unofficial back-channel" role with Trump's team. Dmitriev was involved in recent talks to secure the release of American teacher Marc Fogel from a Russian prison, Bloomberg said, citing sources.

The financer, who had stints at U.S. firms like McKinsey & Co. and Goldman Sachs Group Inc., has run Russia's sovereign wealth fund since 2011.

U.S. President Donald Trump said this week that he held a long phone call with Putin, during which the two leaders agreed to begin negotiations for ending the war in Ukraine.

However, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Friday that he would not agree to hold direct talks with Moscow unless Kyiv and Washington developed a unified position on the conflict.

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