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Kremlin Hails Putin-Trump Dialogue as Promising

By AFP

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Trump's overtures to Moscow have triggered alarm in Kyiv and across Europe **Artem Priakhin / SOPA Images via ZUMA Press Wire / TASS**

The Kremlin on Sunday hailed dialogue between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin — two "extraordinary" presidents — as "promising", and vowed it would "never" give up territory seized in eastern Ukraine.

Trump broke with Western policy earlier this month by phoning Putin to discuss how to end the Ukraine war — a call hailed by Moscow as ending three years of isolation for the Kremlin leader since he launched his full-scale offensive in February 2022.

Top Russian and U.S. officials then met in Saudi Arabia last week to discuss a "restoration" of ties and start a discussion on a possible Ukraine ceasefire — all without the involvement of Kyiv or Europe.

"This is a dialogue between two extraordinary presidents," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told state TV on Sunday.

"That's promising," he added.

"It is important that nothing prevents us from realizing the political will of the two heads of state."

Trump's overtures to Moscow have triggered alarm in Kyiv and across Europe.

But it is unclear whether his moves will be able to bring Moscow and Kyiv closer to a truce.

Peskov on Sunday ruled out any territorial concessions as part of a settlement.

"The people decided to join Russia a long time ago," he said, referring to Moscow-staged votes in eastern Ukraine held amid the offensive that were slammed as bogus by Kyiv, the West and international monitors.

"No one will ever sell off these territories. That's the most important thing."

Amid his outreach to Moscow, Trump has also verbally attacked Ukraine's leader, Volodymyr Zelensky falsely claiming Kyiv started the war and that Zelensky was hugely unpopular at home.

The bitter war of words has threatened to undermine Western support for Kyiv at a critical juncture in the conflict.

Zelensky on Sunday called for the Western coalition that has been helping Kyiv fend off the Russian offensive for the last three years to hold strong.

"We must do our best to achieve a lasting and just peace for Ukraine. This is possible with the unity of all partners: we need the strength of the whole of Europe, the strength of America, the strength of all those who want lasting peace," Zelensky said on Telegram.

Moscow has reveled in the spat between Trump and Zelensky.

"Zelensky makes inappropriate remarks addressed to the head of state. He does it repeatedly," Peskov said Sunday.

"No president would tolerate that kind of treatment. So his [Trump's] reaction is completely quite understandable."

Scrambling to respond to Trump's dramatic policy reversal, French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer will travel to Washington next week to make the case for supporting Ukraine.

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