

Trump and Zelensky Clash in Oval Office Shouting Match

By [Danny Kemp for AFP](#)

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Volodymyr Zelensky and Donald Trump in the Oval Office. **Pool/ABACA/TASS**

U.S. President Donald Trump cut short a meeting with Volodymyr Zelensky on Friday and said the Ukrainian leader is "not ready" for peace with Russia in an extraordinary meltdown in the Oval Office that threw question marks over chances for a truce.

Zelensky was meant to be making a full White House visit to sign a U.S.-Ukrainian deal for joint exploitation of Ukraine's mineral resources, as part of a post-war recovery in a U.S.-brokered peace deal.

Instead, an ugly clash blew up almost immediately in the Oval Office where Trump and Vice President JD Vance shouted at Zelensky, accusing him of not being thankful for U.S. help in the three-year war against Russian invasion.

Trump berated Zelensky, telling him to be more "thankful" and that without U.S. assistance

Ukraine would have been conquered by Russia.

"You're either going to make a deal or we're out," Trump added. "And if we're out, you'll fight it out and I don't think it's going to be pretty."

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!!A heated back and forth between [@ZelenskyyUa](#), [@POTUS](#), and [@VP](#) now in the Oval. pic.twitter.com/j1YCy4Jm3K

— Misha Komadovsky (@komadovsky) [February 28, 2025](#)

Zelensky left in his motorcade shortly after without holding a planned joint press conference. The resources deal was left unsigned, the White House said.

Trump took to his Truth Social platform to castigate Zelensky saying "he disrespected the United States of America in its cherished Oval Office."

Zelensky is "not ready for Peace," Trump wrote. "He can come back when he is ready for Peace."

Compromise row

The extraordinary meltdown came after Trump said Ukraine would have to make "compromises" in a truce with Russia, which has occupied swaths of Ukraine, destroying entire cities and towns along the way.

"You can't do any deals without compromises. So certainly he's going to have to make some compromises, but hopefully they won't be as big as some people think," Trump said.

But showing Trump pictures of war atrocities and referring to Russian President Vladimir Putin, Zelensky said there should be "no compromises with a killer on our territory."

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"Crazy Russians," he said, deported Ukrainian children and committed war crimes during their three-year invasion of his country.

The dramatic public breakdown in the long-tense relationship between Zelensky and Trump came after their meeting — in front of a large group of journalists — had appeared to get off to a friendlier start.

Zelensky had said, "I think President Trump is on our side."

Truce talks in doubt

The clash left in doubt efforts led by Trump to cast himself as a mediator in the war.

The leaders of France and Britain also came to the White House this week, seeking to persuade Trump not to take the Russian line and to bolster U.S. support for Ukraine in a future truce.

After the drama in the White House, Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk told Zelensky: "You are not alone."

Trump has alarmed Kyiv and European allies with his abrupt U-turn in U.S. policy, ending what had been full-throated support for Ukraine's attempt to defeat the Russian invasion and casting himself as a mediator between Putin and Zelensky.

Trump said in the Oval Office that he had "spoken on numerous occasions" to Putin — more than has been publicly reported beyond the lengthy call between the two leaders earlier this February.

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Speaking before the shouting match erupted, Trump told Zelensky that a truce is "fairly close."

The U.S. leader also said that the proposed minerals deal would be "very fair."

The proposal was to give Washington financial benefits for helping Ukraine in a truce, even if Trump has repeatedly refused to commit any U.S. military force as a backup to European troops who might act as peacekeepers.

'Dictator without elections'

The clash came after Trump has flip-flopped in his tone on Zelensky.

Trump called him a "dictator" last week and has repeatedly blamed Ukraine for Russia's February 2022 invasion and echoed a series of Kremlin talking points about how the war started.

But on Thursday, Trump said at a joint press conference with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer: "I have a lot of respect for him."

"We're going to get along really well," he said.

Trump, who has repeatedly expressed admiration for Putin, said this week he trusts Putin to "keep his word" on any ceasefire.

Senate Democrats accused Trump and Vance of siding with Putin.

They are "doing Putin's dirty work. Senate Democrats will never stop fighting for freedom and democracy," Democratic Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer posted on social media.

"Disgraceful," said Senator Chris Van Hollen.

As tensions between Moscow and Washington escalated, Russia's assault on Ukraine continued.

Russian infantry were on Friday storming the Ukrainian border from the Russian region of Kursk, near areas of the region that were seized last summer by Ukrainian forces, Kyiv said.

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