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Putin Urges Ukrainian Troops in Kursk Region to Surrender

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Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday urged Ukrainian forces in the southwestern Kursk region to surrender after his U.S. counterpart Donald Trump asked him to spare the lives of "thousands of Ukrainian troops."

"We have reviewed today's statement by U.S. President Trump...we emphasize that Ukrainian militants have committed numerous crimes against civilians in the incursion zone," Putin said in a televised address, adding that Russia's Prosecutor General's Office classified "these actions" as terrorism.

"I want to emphasize that if they lay down their arms and surrender, their lives will be guaranteed, and they will be treated with dignity in accordance with international law and the laws of the Russian Federation," Putin said.

"In this context, for President Trump's call to be effectively implemented, the Ukrainian military-political leadership must issue the appropriate order to their military units to lay

down arms and surrender," he added.

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Trump's statement came after Kyiv agreed to a U.S.-brokered 30-day ceasefire during negotiations in Saudi Arabia. The Kremlin has not formally accepted the deal to pause fighting, but Putin voiced support for the proposal in principle while raising concerns over Ukrainian troops in Russia's partially occupied Kursk region.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky acknowledged Friday that the country's troops were coming under mounting pressure from the Kremlin's army in Kursk.

Since Kyiv launched its cross-border assault into Kursk last August — the largest by a foreign army into Russia since World War II — Moscow has been pushing back.

The Russian counteroffensive in Kursk has wrested much of the land Ukraine originally captured, denying Kyiv a vital point of leverage over Moscow in any potential peace talks.

AFP contributed reporting.

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