

Trump's Russia-Ukraine Envoy Excluded from Negotiations at Kremlin's Behest – NBC News

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Keith Kellogg, the U.S. Special Envoy for Ukraine and Russia. **Evgeniy Maloletka / AP / TASS**

President Donald Trump's special envoy to Ukraine and Russia was absent from recent talks aimed at ending the war in Ukraine at the Kremlin's request, NBC News [reported](#) Wednesday, citing a U.S. administration official and a Russian official.

Keith Kellogg, a retired lieutenant general and decorated Vietnam War veteran, was not at the negotiating table at two recent summits in Saudi Arabia where Russian and Ukrainian officials took turns meeting with U.S. officials.

"Kellogg is a former American general, too close to Ukraine. Not our kind of person, not of the caliber we are looking for," NBC News quoted an anonymous senior Russian official as saying.

An anonymous U.S. official confirmed this to NBC News.

NBC News quoted former Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Fedorov as saying the

decision to exclude him was due to Kellogg's position to freeze the front line in Ukraine.

Russia wants Ukraine to completely withdraw from all four of the regions that Russia annexed in 2022 despite not fully controlling any of them, according to Fedorov.

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Steve Witkoff, Trump's special envoy to the Middle East, has taken on a leading role in negotiating an end to the Russia-Ukraine war instead of Kellogg.

Witkoff met President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on Thursday for a second time to discuss how to end the war.

After U.S. President Donald Trump criticized Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky for being a "dictator without elections," [Kellogg took a softer stance](#), calling Zelensky "the embattled and courageous leader of a nation at war."

Indications of Kellogg's stance on the Russia-Ukraine war can be found in "America First, Russia & Ukraine," an April 2024 strategy paper he co-authored while serving as co-chairman of the Center for American Security at the America First Policy Institute think tank.

In the paper, [Kellogg said](#) the necessary "America First" approach required a strong U.S. military, "prudent" use of military force and "working in alliances and with partners to promote regional security while requiring alliance members and allies to carry their full weight in defending security in the region."

Kellogg has criticized former U.S. President Joe Biden's piecemeal support of Ukraine and said a peace deal should involve the security guarantees.

"To convince Putin to join peace talks, President Biden and other NATO leaders should offer to put off NATO membership for Ukraine for an extended period in exchange for a comprehensive and verifiable peace deal with security guarantees," the report said.

Fred Fleitz, former chief of staff of the National Security Council, was co-author of the paper.

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