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U.S.-Russia Talks Scheduled for Monday in Saudi Arabia, Putin Aide Says

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Russian presidential aide Yuri Ushakov. **AP / TASS**

U.S.-Russia negotiations on the war in Ukraine will continue Monday in Saudi Arabia, with a Russian delegation led by a senior intelligence officer and a former diplomat who were both involved in the 2014 Ukraine crisis, Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov said Thursday.

The upcoming talks in Riyadh will focus on ensuring safe navigation in the Black Sea, Ushakov said, confirming that he had spoken by phone with U.S. National Security Adviser Mike Waltz.

The White House said Tuesday that U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin had agreed to hold "technical negotiations" on a maritime ceasefire in the Black Sea after Putin agreed to a 30-day pause in attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure.

"From the Russian side, the [negotiations] will be attended by Grigory Karasin, chairman of the Federation Council committee on international affairs, and Sergei Beseda, adviser to the head of the FSB security service," Ushakov said in comments published by the Kremlin.

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Karasin, a former deputy foreign minister, was among the Russian negotiators who hammered out ceasefire agreements with Ukraine and Moscow-backed separatists in 2015. France and Germany mediated those negotiations.

Beseda, an intelligence officer, visited Kyiv at the height of Ukraine's 2014 pro-democracy protests, with Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) later claiming his trip was meant to secure Russian diplomatic facilities in the city.

After Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, investigative journalist Andrei Soldatov reported that Beseda had briefly fallen out of favor with Putin and was imprisoned over faulty intelligence in the lead-up to the war before being quietly reinstated.

"These are truly experienced negotiators who are well-versed in international issues," Ushakov said.

U.S. President Donald Trump's Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, initially told Fox News that the U.S.-Russia talks were scheduled to take place in Jeddah on Sunday.

Later on Thursday, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said that Ukrainian and U.S. officials will meet separately in Saudi Arabia on the same day as U.S.-Russian talks to make progress on a proposed pause in Russian and Ukrainian strikes on energy facilities.

"Our technical teams will be there," Zelensky said at a press conference in Norway.

"As I understand it, the structure will be either a meeting between Ukraine and America, then America and Russia. Or they will be parallel meetings in the same country on the same topic," he added.

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