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Russia and Ukraine Agree to Halt Black Sea Strikes in Tentative Step Toward Peace, White House Says

By AFP

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A Russian warship in the bay of Sevastopol. **Sergei Malgavko / TASS**

Russia and Ukraine agreed Tuesday to "eliminate the use of force" in the Black Sea, marking a tentative first step toward peace following three days of talks in Saudi Arabia.

With U.S. President Donald Trump urging a swift end to the war that has claimed tens of thousands of lives, U.S. negotiators met separately with delegations from Kyiv and Moscow.

In parallel statements, the White House said both countries "agreed to ensure safe navigation, eliminate the use of force and prevent the use of commercial vessels for military purposes in the Black Sea."

The U.S. reiterated Trump's "imperative that the killing on both sides of the Russia-Ukraine conflict must stop" as a crucial step toward a lasting peace settlement.

"To that end, the United States will continue facilitating negotiations between both sides to achieve a peaceful resolution, in line with the agreements made in Riyadh," the White House said.

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In the most significant concession to Russia since Western sanctions were imposed after the 2022 invasion, the U.S. pledged to "help restore access to the world market" for Russian agricultural and fertilizer exports.

While the U.S. never directly sanctioned Russian agriculture, it restricted access to payment systems used in international transactions.

Moscow said the deal would come into force after the “lifting of sanctions restrictions” on the Russian Agricultural Bank and other “financial institutions involved in international trade of food,” and only after they are reconnected to the SWIFT international payment system.

The issue became a major talking point for Russia, which told developing countries that U.S. policies, not the war itself, were driving up global prices.

Ukraine, under heavy pressure from Trump — including a brief halt in military aid — said further technical talks were needed to finalize the Black Sea ceasefire details.

"It is important to hold additional technical consultations as soon as possible to agree on all the details and technical aspects of the implementation, monitoring and control of the arrangements," Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov, who took part in the talks, wrote on social media.

He warned that if Russian warships moved from the eastern Black Sea, "Ukraine will have full right to exercise its right to self-defense."

Earlier this month, Ukraine accepted a U.S.-proposed unconditional ceasefire, but Russia rejected it, with Kyiv accusing Moscow of seeking a battlefield advantage.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov showed no signs of Moscow moving closer to a broader ceasefire, emphasizing the priority of shipping through the Black Sea.

A previous UN-brokered deal allowed millions of tons of grain and other exports to leave Ukraine's ports, but Russia said it was unfavorable to its trade.

However, the Kremlin said Tuesday that Russian and U.S. officials have agreed to work out “measures” aimed at implementing a 30-day truce on energy infrastructure mooted by President Vladimir Putin.

“Russia and the U.S. agreed to develop measures to implement the agreements of the presidents of the two countries to ban strikes on Russian and Ukrainian energy facilities.”

Before the U.S. announcement on agricultural exports, Lavrov accused Western countries of

trying to ''contain'' Russia like ''Napoleon and Hitler.''

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