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Rubio Says It's Too Early for Higher-Level Talks With Russia

By AFP

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U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio. **Freddie Everett / U.S. Department of State**

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Thursday that it would be premature to expect higher-level talks between Russian and U.S. officials as Washington assesses Moscow's response to its efforts to end the war in Ukraine.

"I think you have to make more progress on a technical level," Rubio told reporters. "There's a lot of work to be done with both sides, particularly with the Russian side, which we haven't talked to for years."

When asked how long it would take to make that progress, Rubio said: "I just can't put a timeframe on that because it doesn't depend on us."

The secretary of state said U.S. President Donald Trump's administration would hold consultations to discuss the outcome of recent meetings in Saudi Arabia with Russian and

Ukrainian officials.

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Trump has repeatedly said he hopes to meet soon with Russian President Vladimir Putin, possibly in Saudi Arabia.

On Tuesday, the White House announced that Russia and Ukraine had agreed separately to a ceasefire in the Black Sea. However, Russia later said it had a number of conditions before that ceasefire could come into force, including relief from some Western sanctions.

Rubio had earlier urged Russia to accept unconditionally a Ukrainian-backed proposal for a broad 30-day ceasefire.

French President Emmanuel Macron, meanwhile, rejected Russian calls for an easing of sanctions, saying it was too soon and that more progress in peace talks was needed.

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