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Ukraine Peace Talks May Drag Into 2026, Russian Negotiator Warns

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Yegor Aleyev / TASS

Talks between U.S. and Russian officials in Saudi Arabia earlier this week failed to make significant progress in Ukraine peace negotiations, which may drag into next year, Russian negotiator Grigory Karasin said Friday.

Monday's 12-hour discussions in Riyadh "haven't led to any radical breakthrough yet, but the opportunities are there," Karasin told the state-run broadcaster Rossiya 24.

"It would have been naive to expect any breakthroughs," said Karasin, a former diplomat and current senator in the upper-house Federation Council.

The discussions covered safe navigation in the Black Sea and potential restoration of access for some Russian banks to the SWIFT international payments system, he added.

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U.S. negotiators, including senior National Security Council director Andrew Peek and State Department policy planning chief Michael Anton, initially presented "proposals that are unacceptable to Russia," Karasin claimed.

"But then, in my opinion... they realized that a team of civilized, reasoned interlocutors was sitting in front of them," he said, describing the talks as having a "good atmosphere" despite the lack of progress.

Karasin said he expects U.S.-Russian negotiations on Ukraine to continue at least until the end of 2025 or beyond.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Thursday that progress in technical discussions depended on Russia before any higher-level negotiations could take place.

The White House initially announced Tuesday that Russia and Ukraine had separately agreed to a ceasefire in the Black Sea. However, Moscow later outlined a series of conditions, including sanctions relief, that would need to be met before the agreement takes effect.

On Thursday, President Vladimir Putin said the Russian military was close to "finishing off" Ukrainian forces and suggested placing Ukraine under a UN-backed "temporary administration" before signing any peace deal.

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