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Russian Envoy Seeks Cooperation With U.S. at Landmark Washington Talks

By AFP

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Kirill Dmitriev meets with journalists in Washington. **Zoya Rusinova / TASS**

The most senior Russian official to visit Washington since the start of the Ukraine war said Thursday he had discussed potential cooperation with the United States in the Arctic and on rare earth metals but acknowledged that "disagreements" remain.

Kirill Dmitriev, head of Russia's sovereign wealth fund and President Vladimir Putin's special envoy on economic cooperation, said he saw "positive dynamics" in relations with the United States.

The White House has not commented on the talks but they came as President Donald Trump has pushed for a thaw in ties with Moscow, while also expressing frustration at the lack of progress in halting the conflict that has ravaged Ukraine since Russia's 2022 invasion.

U.S. media reported that Dmitriev arrived Wednesday and was to meet with presidential envoy

Steve Witkoff at the White House.

In a video briefing with Russian journalists, Dmitriev said the two sides "discussed possible cooperation in the Arctic, in rare earth metals, in various other sectors where we can build constructive and positive relations."

He added that there was also "active work on restoring air travel, and we hope to make progress on this issue."

"Of course, there are disagreements on various points, but there is a process, there is a dialogue, which in our understanding will help to overcome these disagreements," Dmitriev told the briefing.

He said there were "positive dynamics" in the relationship but that "it will take a number of more meetings for us to resolve all our differences."

"The dialogue process, the resolution process, it's going to take some time. But, at the same time, it's definitely proceeding in a positive and constructive way."

The head of the Russian Direct Investment Fund was recently appointed Putin's special envoy on economic cooperation with foreign countries.

He has praised Trump's higher tariffs on its allies and foes and highlighted that Russia was not one of the countries named, though it already faces massive U.S. sanctions over the Ukraine war.

Trump 'angry'

While Trump has stepped up discussions with Russia, he has also voiced anger at the slow pace of negotiations to reach a ceasefire in the Russia-Ukraine war.

Putin last month rejected a U.S.-Ukrainian proposal for a full and unconditional ceasefire, and has made a U.S.-proposed truce in the Black Sea dependent on the West lifting some sanctions.

Trump told NBC News over the weekend that he was "very angry, pissed off" with Putin after he suggested Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky be removed from power as part of a peace settlement.

But he claimed to have "a very good relationship" with his Russian counterpart and said "the anger dissipates quickly... if he does the right thing."

Russia is hoping Washington will lift the massive sanctions on its economy as part of a peace settlement, including those targeting its state-owned agricultural lender.

Dmitriev, who was himself sanctioned by the United States, was allowed to visit only after the restrictions on him were temporarily eased, U.S. media reported.

A former Goldman Sachs banker and graduate of Stanford University in California, Dmitriev has played a key role in the Russia-U.S. rapprochement, taking part in the first talks with

Trump officials in Saudi Arabia in February.

Witkoff, a real estate developer and close Trump ally, travelled to Russia to meet Putin last month.

Senior Russian diplomat Sergei Ryabkov said Thursday that recent contacts had not yet yielded a "breakthrough."

"Step by step, slowly, we are beginning to move, I hope, towards normality," he told Russia's International Life magazine.

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