The Moscow Times
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Witkoff Says Putin Open to 'Permanent Peace' Deal With Ukraine

April 15, 2025



Steve Witkoff and Vladimir Putin. **kremlin.ru**

U.S. President Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff said Monday that Russian President Vladimir Putin is open to a "permanent peace" deal with Ukraine, but did not indicate whether any of the Kremlin leader's previous demands for a ceasefire in Ukraine had changed.

Witkoff met with Putin in St. Petersburg last week, their third meeting since Trump returned to the White House in January. Following that five-hour discussion, where Putin aides Yuri Ushakov and Kirill Dmitriev were also present, the Trump envoy said he sees a peace deal "emerging."

"Putin's request is to have a permanent peace here. So, beyond the ceasefire, we got an answer to that," Witkoff told Fox News in a Monday interview, adding, "It took a while for us to get to this place."

Witkoff said the peace deal currently under discussion involves "five territories," referring to

Ukrainian regions currently occupied by Russian forces, but emphasized that the talks go beyond that — including Moscow's demand that Ukraine abandon its NATO membership bid.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has previously ruled out any territorial concessions to Russia as a potential step toward a ceasefire.

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"It's a complicated situation rooted in some real problematic things happening between the two countries," Witkoff told Fox News. "I think we might be on the verge of something that would be very, very important for the world at large."

He said business ties between the U.S. and Russia were also part of the talks.

"I believe there's a possibility to reshape the Russian-U.S. relationship through some very compelling commercial opportunities that I think give real stability to the region too," Witkoff said.

On Tuesday, the Kremlin sought to temper expectations after Witkoff's meeting with Putin last week, saying that diplomatic efforts to end the war in Ukraine were "tense and ongoing."

"The issue is so complex that it's unrealistic to expect immediate results," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. Still, we hope for the best, that this work will eventually bring positive outcomes."

Despite the Trump administration's diplomatic push, little progress has been made on the U.S. president's goal of securing a quick Ukraine ceasefire.

Last month, Putin rejected a joint U.S.-Ukrainian proposal for a full and unconditional pause in hostilities. The Kremlin has made a Black Sea truce conditional on the West lifting certain sanctions, a move that both Ukraine and the EU oppose.

AFP contributed reporting.

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