The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Why Were the Ukraine Peace Talks in London Downgraded?

By Moscow Times Reporter

April 23, 2025

Secretary Marco Rubio meets with Ukraine Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha, Ukraine Defense Minister Rustem Umerov and Ukrainian Presidential Advisor Andriy Yermak at the Elysee Palace in Paris, France, April 17, 2025. **Freddie Everett / U.S. Department of State**

Planned talks in London aimed at ending the war in Ukraine were downgraded at the last minute Wednesday amid reported disagreements between the U.S. and its European and Ukrainian counterparts over Washington's proposed peace deal.

The rollback signals the latest roadblock in efforts to negotiate an end to Russia's over-three-year assault on its neighbor, which U.S. President Donald Trump has been pushing for since his inauguration in January.

British Foreign Secretary David Lammy had been due to lead a meeting of foreign ministers in London on Wednesday, but his ministry said the talks had been left to senior staff.

“The Ukraine Peace Talks meeting with Foreign Ministers today is being postponed. Official-level talks will continue," the Foreign Office said, without specifying details.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Trump special envoy Steve Witkoff backed out of the London meeting after Ukraine signaled it wanted to focus on a 30-day ceasefire proposal rather than a broader U.S. framework, a U.S. official involved in the talks told Axios.

That framework, according to Axios, includes U.S. recognition of Russia’s annexation of Crimea, de facto acknowledgment of Moscow’s control over four other partially occupied Ukrainian regions, sanctions relief and the promise of future economic cooperation. The outlet noted that security guarantees for Ukraine remain vague.

Most of these points are non-starters for both Kyiv and its allies in Europe.

Rubio, who presented the U.S. proposal at a meeting last week in Paris, canceled plans to visit London but had a phone call with Lammy.

Washington’s special Ukraine envoy Keith Kellogg was still in attendance, as was Macron's diplomatic adviser Emmanuel Bonne.

Embed:

> We are working at pace with US, Ukraine and European allies to end the war and secure a just and lasting peace, with senior official talks in London today.
>
> Valuable meeting @andrii_sybiha and @rustem_umerov with @JohnHealey_MP at this critical moment for our security. pic.twitter.com/SZWiUIsS49
>
> — David Lammy (@DavidLammy) April 23, 2025

Andriy Yermak, a top aide to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, arrived in London with Defense Minister Rustem Umerov and Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha.

"Despite everything, we will work for peace," Yermak wrote on Telegram.

Meanwhile, U.S. Vice President J.D. Vance warned that Washington would "walk away" unless Russia and Ukraine agree to a peace deal.

The New York Times described the scaled-down U.S. presence in London as a setback for European leaders as they try to play a greater role in the peace process.

The London meeting also came amid speculation in the media about what might be on the table for Moscow and Kyiv.

Russian leader Vladimir Putin reportedly offered to halt the war on the current front line during a meeting with Witkoff in St. Petersburg earlier this month, the Financial Times reported Tuesday, citing people familiar with the matter.

The Russian leader indicated he would be willing to withdraw Moscow's claims to parts of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, four regions it partially occupies, FT reported.

In return, the U.S. might accede to Russia's other major demands, the financial daily added, including recognizing its sovereignty over Crimea, which it annexed in 2014, and barring Ukraine from joining NATO.

The Kremlin responded to the report by saying that "a lot of fakes are being published at the moment."

Zelensky ruled out ceding territory and called Wednesday for an "immediate, full and unconditional ceasefire."

AFP contributed reporting.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/04/23/why-were-the-ukraine-peace-talks-in-london-downgraded-a88848