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Trump Says He’s Ready to Attend Istanbul Talks, But Unsure If Putin Will Show Up

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The White House

U.S. President Donald Trump said Wednesday that he was still considering whether he would attend Ukraine peace negotiations planned for Thursday in Istanbul.

"He'd like me to be there, and that's a possibility," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One, referring to Russian President Vladimir Putin. "I don't know that he would be there if I'm not there. We're going to find out."

Trump had earlier said that he could visit Istanbul for the talks as part of his trip to the Middle East this week. On Wednesday, he was traveling to Qatar, and his next stop on Thursday will be the United Arab Emirates.

"We have a very full situation. Now, that doesn’t mean I wouldn’t do it to save a lot of lives and come back," Trump said, according to a pool report from the Washington Post. Trump

noted that U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio would be at Thursday's talks in Istanbul.

Putin originally floated the meeting in an apparent effort to thwart plans by Western countries to introduce new sanctions if Moscow did not agree to a 30-day ceasefire on Monday. In response, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called on the Russian leader to meet him face-to-face in Istanbul.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Wednesday that Moscow would send a delegation to Istanbul but did not specify who would be representing Russia. He also refused to say whether Putin would attend the negotiations.

Zelensky has said that he will only meet with Putin in Istanbul, refusing to sit down with lower-level Russian officials, such as Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov or Kremlin aide Yury Ushakov, both of whom will reportedly attend Thursday's talks.

Reuters contributed reporting.

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