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# Kremlin Negotiator Invokes Peter the Great's 21-Year War With Sweden in Ukraine Talks

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Vladimir Medinsky addresses reporters in Istanbul. **Alexander Ryumin / TASS**

The Kremlin's chief negotiator in peace talks with Ukraine on Friday cited the Great Northern War of 1700-1721 as evidence that Russia is ready to continue its war against Ukraine for as long as it takes.

Speaking after Russia's first direct talks with Ukraine in three years, Vladimir Medinsky said that Moscow was "satisfied with the results and ready to continue contacts" before drawing historical parallels with the 18th-century conflict, where Tsarist Russia led a coalition of forces across Europe to challenge Sweden's dominance in the Baltic region.

"The Great Northern War with Sweden lasted 21 years. Twenty-one years. But just a few years after it began, Peter the Great offered peace to the Swedes... What did the Swedes say? 'No, we will fight to the last Swede,'" Medinsky said in an interview with pro-Kremlin TV host Yevgeny Popov.

Earlier Friday, The Economist correspondent Oliver Carroll cited a "well-placed source" as saying that Medinsky had said "We don't want war, but we're ready to fight for a year, two, three — however long it takes. We fought Sweden for 21 years. How long are you ready to fight?" in the negotiating room.

"Maybe some of those sitting here at this table will lose more of their loved ones. Russia is prepared to fight forever," Medinsky also reportedly said during the talks, which lasted just over 90 minutes.

**Embed:**

State-run Rossiya 24 host Popov confirmed that the Great Northern War was mentioned during the talks in Istanbul.

Popov also confirmed reports that Russian negotiators threatened to seize northeastern Ukraine's Kharkiv and Sumy regions — in addition to the five regions it has already annexed — if Moscow's demands were not met.

"Regarding the statement made by the Russian side during the negotiations, one of our sources confirmed that a member of the Russian delegation did in fact say: 'If the four new Russian regions are not recognized now, in the near future, then next time there will already be six'," Popov said during a television broadcast.

"We can confirm that this phrase was indeed voiced during the talks," Popov said, citing unnamed sources.

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A Ukrainian diplomatic source also told AFP on Friday that Russian negotiators demanded that Ukraine give up land that is still under Kyiv's control.

"Russian representatives are putting forward unacceptable demands... such as for Ukraine to withdraw forces from large parts of Ukrainian territory it controls in order for a ceasefire to begin," the source told AFP.

Russia and Ukraine agreed to each exchange 1,000 prisoners of war following Friday's talks.

Negotiators from both sides also said they discussed the possibility of a ceasefire as well as a potential meeting of their countries' leaders.

*AFP contributed reporting.*

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