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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia and Ukraine Begin First Stage of Major Prisoner Exchange

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A Ukrainian prisoner of war after being released from Russian captivity. **@V_Zelenskiy_official**

Russia and Ukraine began the first stage of a multi-day prisoner exchange on Friday after they agreed in direct negotiations last week to hold a major prisoner swap.

The Russian Defense Ministry said Ukraine returned 270 Russian prisoners of war and 120 civilians, adding that they were all currently receiving medical attention in neighboring Belarus.

"I Want to Live," a Ukrainian hotline that helps Russian soldiers surrender, told the exiled broadcaster TV Rain that the exchange "is planned to continue in the coming days."

During their first direct talks since early 2022 in Istanbul last week, Russian and Ukrainian negotiators agreed to exchange 1,000 prisoners each. However, the sides never confirmed when and where the swap would take place.

Earlier on Friday, U.S. President Donald Trump had claimed that Russia and Ukraine

“completed” the exchange, expressing hope the move could “lead to something big.”

“Congratulations to both sides on this negotiation. This could lead to something big???” he wrote in a post on Truth Social.

Russia and Ukraine last released 205 prisoners of war each on May 6. The United Arab Emirates brokered that exchange.

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