The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Putin Wants End to NATO Expansion, Sanctions Relief for Peace in Ukraine – Reuters

May 28, 2025



Vladimir Putin. **Kremlin / TASS**

President Vladimir Putin's conditions for ending the war in Ukraine include a demand that Western leaders pledge in writing to stop enlarging NATO eastwards and lift a chunk of sanctions on Russia, according to three Russian sources with knowledge of the negotiations.

U.S. President Donald Trump has repeatedly said he wants to end the deadliest European conflict since World War II and has shown increasing frustration with Putin in recent days, warning on Tuesday the Russian leader was "playing with fire" by refusing to engage in ceasefire talks with Kyiv as his forces made gains on the battlefield.

After speaking to Trump for more than two hours last week, Putin said that he had agreed to work with Ukraine on a memorandum that would establish the outlines of a peace agreement, including the timing of a ceasefire. Russia says it is currently drafting its version of the memorandum and cannot estimate how long that will take.

Kyiv and European governments have accused Moscow of stalling while its troops advance in eastern Ukraine.

Related article: Trump Envoy Slams Medvedev for 'Stoking Fears of WWIII'

"Putin is ready to make peace but not at any price," said one senior Russian source with knowledge of top-level Kremlin thinking, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The three Russian sources said Putin wants a "written" pledge by major Western powers not to enlarge the NATO military alliance eastward — shorthand for formally ruling out membership to Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova.

Russia also wants Ukraine to be neutral, some Western sanctions lifted, a resolution of the issue of frozen Russian sovereign assets in the West and protection for Russian speakers in Ukraine, the three sources said.

The first source said that, if Putin realizes he is unable to reach a peace deal on his own terms, he will seek to show the Ukrainians and the Europeans through military strength that "peace tomorrow will be even more painful."

The Kremlin did not respond to a request for comment on Reuters' reporting. Putin and Russian officials have repeatedly said any peace deal must address the "root causes" of the conflict, a reference to Moscow's stated war goals of "denazifying" and demilitarizing Ukraine.

Kyiv has repeatedly said that Russia should not be granted veto power over its aspirations to join NATO. Ukraine says it needs the West to give it strong security guarantees to deter any future Russian attack.

Related article: War of Drones: Russia and Ukraine Intensify UAV Attacks as Technologies Advance

Trump, who prides himself on having friendly relations with Putin and has expressed his belief that the Russian leader wants peace, has warned that Washington could impose further sanctions if Moscow delays efforts to find a settlement. Trump suggested on social media on Sunday that Putin had "gone absolutely CRAZY" by unleashing an unprecedented air attack on Ukraine last week.

The first Russian source said that if Putin saw a tactical opportunity on the battlefield, he would push further into Ukraine — and that the Kremlin believed Russia could fight on for years no matter what sanctions and economic pain were imposed by the West.

A second source said that Putin was now less inclined to compromise on territory and was sticking to his public stance that he wanted the entirety of the four regions in eastern Ukraine claimed by Russia.

"Putin has toughened his position," the second source said of the question of territory.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/05/28/putin-wants-end-to-nato-expansion-sanctions-relief-for-peace-in-ukraine-reuters-a89252