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Trump Expects 'Constructive Conversation' With Putin

By AFP

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Juan Mabromata / AFP

U.S. President Donald Trump said Monday he expects to have "constructive conversations" with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin and expressed displeasure with Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky for ruling out territorial concessions.

The U.S. president has spent the first months of his second term in office trying to broker peace in Ukraine — after boasting he could end the conflict in 24 hours — but multiple rounds of talks, phone calls and diplomatic visits have failed to yield a breakthrough.

Trump and Putin will hold a summit in Alaska on Friday in a bid halt the conflict, which was triggered by Moscow's February 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

It will be the first between sitting U.S. and Russian presidents since Joe Biden met Putin in Geneva in June 2021.

"I'm going to speak to Vladimir Putin and I'm going to be telling him 'you've got to end this war'," Trump told a White House press conference, saying that he would "like to see a ceasefire very, very quickly."

"I think we'll have constructive conversations," said the president, noting that he would seek out Putin's "parameters" for peace, then call Zelensky and other European leaders right after the meeting.

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Trump said last week that "there'll be some swapping of territories to the betterment of both" Ukraine and Russia — a suggestion Zelensky rejected.

'There'll be some swapping'

The Ukrainian president warned Saturday that "decisions without Ukraine" would not bring peace and said his country's people "will not give their land to the occupier."

Trump said he was a "little bothered" by Zelensky's stance on territorial concessions, and insisted that land swaps would take place.

"There'll be some swapping, there'll be some changes in land," he said.

But Trump also stated that he would not make a unilateral agreement: "I'm not going to make a deal, it's not up to me to make a deal," he said, while emphasizing that he thinks "a deal should be made."

Three rounds of negotiations between Russia and Ukraine have failed to bear fruit, and it remains unclear whether the Trump-Putin summit would bring peace any closer.

Russian bombardments have forced millions of people to flee their homes and have destroyed swathes of eastern and southern Ukraine, and Putin has resisted multiple calls from the United States, Europe and Kyiv for a ceasefire.

Trump said he will know fairly quickly into the talks with Putin whether or not a deal would be coming, and that he may still walk away from trying to broker peace in Ukraine.

"I may leave and say good luck and that'll be the end. I may say this is not going to be settled," Trump said.

The U.S. president said his aim is to bring Putin and Zelensky together, with or without being present himself.

"Ultimately I'm going to put the two of them in a room, I'll be there or I won't be there, and I think it'll get solved," Trump said.

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