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Trump Drops Ukraine Ceasefire Demand After Putin Summit

By Shaun Tandon for AFP

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Andrew Caballero-Reynolds / AFP

Donald Trump on Saturday dropped his push for a ceasefire in Ukraine in favor of pursuing a full peace accord — a major shift announced hours after his summit with Russian leader Vladimir Putin yielded no clear breakthrough.

Prior to the high-stakes meeting in Alaska, securing an immediate cessation of hostilities had been a core demand of Trump and European leaders including Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky, who will now hold talks with the U.S. president in Washington on Monday.

The shift away from an urgent ceasefire would seem to favor Putin, who has long argued for negotiations on a final peace deal — a strategy that Ukraine and its European allies have criticized as a way to buy time and press home Russia's battlefield advances.

"It was determined by all that the best way to end the horrific war between Russia and Ukraine

is to go directly to a peace agreement, which would end the war, and not a mere ceasefire agreement, which often times do not hold up," Trump posted on his Truth Social platform after the Alaska talks.

Before the summit, Trump had warned of "severe consequences" if Moscow did not accept a ceasefire.

In a call with European leaders on his flight back to Washington, Trump said the U.S. was prepared to provide security guarantees for Ukraine — an assurance German Chancellor Friedrich Merz hailed as "significant progress."

But there was a scathing assessment of the summit outcome from the European Union's top diplomat Kaja Kallas, who accused Putin of seeking to "drag out negotiations" with no commitment to end the bloodshed.

"The harsh reality is that Russia has no intention of ending this war any time soon," Kallas said.

The New York Times, citing two European officials briefed on Trump's call with European leaders, said the president had expressed support for Putin's proposal for Ukraine to cede territory it controls to Russia in exchange for an eventual ceasefire.

Zelensky back in White House

The main diplomatic focus now switches to Zelensky's talks with Trump in Washington on Monday.

An EU source told AFP that a number of European leaders had also been invited to attend.

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The Ukrainian president's last visit to the White House in February ended in an extraordinary shouting match, with Trump and Vice President J.D. Vance publicly berating Zelensky for not showing enough gratitude for U.S. help against the Russian invasion.

Zelensky said Saturday after a "substantive" conversation with Trump about the Alaska summit that he looked forward to his Washington visit and discussing "all of the details regarding ending the killing and the war."

In an interview with Fox News after his sit-down with Putin, Trump had suggested that the onus was now on Zelensky to secure a peace deal as they work towards an eventual trilateral summit with Putin.

"It's really up to President Zelensky to get it done," Trump said. "And I would also say the European nations, they have to get involved a little bit, but it's up to President Zelensky."

European pressure

The leaders of France, Britain and Germany are due to host a video call Sunday for their so-called "coalition of the willing" to discuss the way forward.

In an earlier statement, they welcomed the plan for a Trump-Putin-Zelensky summit, but added that they would maintain pressure on Russia in the absence of a ceasefire.

"We will continue to strengthen sanctions and wider economic measures to put pressure on Russia's war economy until there is a just and lasting peace," the statement said.

Meanwhile, the conflict in Ukraine raged on, with Kyiv announcing Saturday that Russia had launched 85 attack drones and a ballistic missile during the night.

Back in Moscow, Putin said his summit talks with Trump had been "timely" and "very useful."

"The conversation was very frank, substantive, and, in my opinion, brings us closer to the necessary decisions," he said.

In his post-summit statement in Alaska, Putin had warned Ukraine and European countries not to engage in any "behind-the-scenes intrigues" that could disrupt what he called "this emerging progress."

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