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Lavrov Says Ukraine Security Talks 'Road to Nowhere' Without Russian Involvement

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Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. **Sergei Bulkin / TASS**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told reporters on Wednesday that any discussions of Western security guarantees for Ukraine that do not include Moscow would be "a road to nowhere" and fail to address what Moscow refers to as the "root causes" of the war.

"I am confident that in the West, and especially in the U.S., they fully understand that seriously discussing security guarantees without involving Russia is a utopia — a road to nowhere," Lavrov said, noting defiantly that Russia has no plans to back down from "defending its legitimate interests."

His remarks came as top military brass from NATO's 32 member states held a virtual meeting on Wednesday to discuss security guarantees for Ukraine as part of a possible peace agreement between Kyiv and Moscow.

U.S. President Donald Trump, who held a high-stakes summit with European leaders and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at the White House on Monday, claimed Russia's Vladimir Putin was ready to accept some kind of guarantees for Ukraine.

Attention is now shifting to what concrete commitments Ukraine's Western allies are prepared to make to ensure the country's security after the war, amid fears Russia could strike again. Trump has suggested U.S. support could include air defense, but he ruled out sending American troops.

French and British troop deployments have resurfaced in discussions, though London already appears to be wavering on the issue, with Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Tuesday calling it "premature" to talk about putting British forces on the front line.

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Trump, who had vowed to end the war in Ukraine by day one of his presidency, has been pushing for a quick end to the war in Ukraine since taking office in January. However, as the president himself admitted earlier this week, the conflict, now in its fourth year, has proven far more difficult to bring to some kind of settlement than he had earlier anticipated.

The American leader's short-term goal in mediating an end to the war is now organizing a face-to-face meeting between Zelensky and Putin.

While Zelensky affirmed on Monday that he is ready to meet with Putin, the Kremlin has yet to confirm whether it is actively involved in any planning for that kind of summit. Instead, top officials in Moscow have issued vaguely worded statements in recent days that suggest they are simply open to the idea in principle but not ready to make solid commitments.

On that front, Lavrov reiterated some of his remarks from Tuesday, when he claimed that Putin has always been open to meeting with Zelensky in person, even though the Russian leader rejected such an offer in May, while also earlier questioning his Ukrainian counterpart's legitimacy as president.

"Following his phone conversation the day before yesterday with U.S. President Donald Trump, our president, Vladimir Putin, proposed not only continuing these talks but also considering raising the level of the delegation heads," Lavrov told reporters on Wednesday.

"We are open to any formats. But when it comes to meetings at the highest level, they must be prepared with the utmost care at every stage beforehand, so that summits do not worsen the situation but instead bring a real conclusion to the negotiations we are ready to continue," he added.

Lavrov also criticized European leaders who visited the White House earlier this week alongside Zelensky, calling their efforts "clumsy attempts" to sway Trump and accusing them of offering no constructive proposals.

The West's "confrontational position, a position to continue the war, does not find understanding in the current U.S. administration, which... seeks to help eliminate the 'root causes' of the conflict," he said, referring to NATO's eastward expansion after the collapse of

the Soviet Union and Ukraine's allegedly "anti-Russian" policies.

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