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Kremlin Doubles Down on Opposition to European Troops in Ukraine

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Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. **kremlin.ru**

The Kremlin on Wednesday reiterated its opposition to European troops being deployed in Ukraine, saying Moscow's efforts to prevent a NATO military presence there were among the initial reasons for launching its full-scale invasion in 2022.

"We view such discussions negatively," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters when asked about reports of a possible European peacekeeping force as part of a postwar settlement.

The Financial Times reported Tuesday that Ukraine's Western allies had drafted a three-tier defense plan as part of security guarantees for Kyiv. The proposal includes a demilitarized zone patrolled by peacekeepers from a neutral third country, followed by NATO-trained Ukrainian troops defending a fortified border and U.S.-backed European deterrence forces forming a third line of defense.

Ukraine's presidential chief of staff Andriy Yermak told the newspaper that discussions

included four to five European brigades on the ground plus "strategic enablers" from the United States.

Peskov rejected the idea of European forces being deployed in Ukraine, noting that most European militaries are NATO members. He said preventing NATO's presence in Ukraine was "probably" one of the initial drivers of the invasion.

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The Kremlin spokesman added that ongoing talks to end the war included security guarantees for Ukraine, calling them "one of the most important issues," but said it was "inappropriate" to discuss details publicly.

Ukraine is seeking Western-backed guarantees to prevent future Russian attacks, while Moscow has demanded Kyiv cede more territory in the east as a condition for ending the war. A so-called coalition of the willing, led by Britain and France, has vowed to shield the country from future aggression, but questions remain over what commitments the group of around 30 countries are ready to make.

Peskov also dismissed U.S. President Donald Trump's efforts to organize a summit between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

"Any high-level or top-level contact must be well-prepared in order to be effective," he said, adding that Russian and Ukrainian negotiators remain in contact but have not set a date for new talks.

AFP contributed reporting.

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