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Kremlin Rejects Trump's Claim That Ukraine Can Win the War

September 24, 2025



Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. **Erik Romanenko / TASS**

The Kremlin on Wednesday dismissed U.S. President Donald Trump's suggestion that Ukraine could win in the war with Russia, insisting that Moscow would press on with what it calls its "special military operation" because it sees "no alternative."

After meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, Trump said on Tuesday that Ukraine could reclaim all of the territory lost since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022. He argued that Russia's failure to secure a quick victory showed it was weaker than it appeared, praising Ukraine's "great spirit" and saying it was "only getting better."

"Mr. Trump heard about what's happening from Zelensky's perspective. And, apparently, at this point, that version is what led to the assessment we heard," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in an interview with RBC Radio. In a press briefing later in the day, he told reporters that it would be a "mistake" to think Ukraine could recapture territory.

Peskov told RBC Radio that Russia would press forward with its "special military operation to ensure our national interests... We are doing this for the present and the future of the country. For many generations to come." In his words, Russia has "no alternative."

He added that Moscow is determined to address the "root causes" of the war in Ukraine, shorthand for the Kremlin's longstanding justifications for its full-scale invasion. "Putin repeatedly tried and offered to resolve those root causes," Peskov said.

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On Tuesday, Trump also described Russia as a "paper tiger," citing its inability to take control of most of Ukraine nearly four years into the war. He pointed to a recent wave of Ukrainian drone strikes on Russian energy facilities that have fueled gasoline shortages and record-high prices across Russia.

"Russia is hardly a tiger," Peskov told RBC Radio. "It's more often associated with a bear. And there's no such thing as a paper bear. Russia is a real bear. Putin has described our bear many times, and in different tones. There's nothing paper about it."

Trump has also called on countries including China, India and EU members to stop buying Russian oil as a way to put pressure on Moscow. Peskov dismissed the idea, saying the American president, a former businessman, was trying to increase sales of U.S. energy.

"The simplest thing is to force the whole world to buy more expensive American oil and more expensive American liquefied gas," the Kremlin spokesman said. "And without resorting to any elaborate diplomatic maneuvers, that's essentially what he is doing."

Despite hardening his rhetoric on Russia, Trump had so far avoided directly blaming President Vladimir Putin for launching the war against Ukraine. Pressed by reporters Tuesday on whether he believed Putin could be trusted in negotiations, Trump deflected: "I'll let you know in about a month."

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