

Zelensky Ready to Join Putin, Trump in Budapest If Invited

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has said that he would be ready to join Russian President Vladimir Putin and his U.S. counterpart Donald Trump at their upcoming summit in Hungary if he is invited.

Trump and Putin said they would meet in the Hungarian capital, possibly in a matter of weeks, as the U.S. leader continues to try to broker a peace deal to end the three-and-a-half-year war, triggered by Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion.

“If I am invited to Budapest — if it is an invitation in a format where we meet as three or, as it's called, shuttle diplomacy, President Trump meets with Putin and President Trump meets with me — then in one format or another, we will agree,” Zelensky told reporters in remarks released on Monday.

The Ukrainian president criticized the choice of Hungary, which has a tense relationship with Kyiv and is seen as the European Union member most sympathetic to the Kremlin.

"I do not believe that a prime minister who blocks Ukraine everywhere can do anything positive for Ukrainians or even provide a balanced contribution," Zelensky said, referring to Hungarian leader Viktor Orban.

Kyiv has said it is ready to join a three-way meeting between Zelensky, Putin and Trump in several neutral countries, including Turkey, Switzerland and the Vatican.

"Another 'Budapest' scenario wouldn't be positive either," Zelensky said, referring to the 1994 Budapest Memorandum in which Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan gave up their nuclear weapons in exchange for security guarantees.

Trump has been aiming for a speedy end to the years-long war in Ukraine since he returned to White House earlier this year, pushing for a series of direct talks between Ukrainian and Russian officials and hosting Putin for a summit in Alaska. However, his diplomatic efforts have not led to any breakthrough thus far.

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