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The U.S. Plan for Ending the Ukraine War: What Do We Know?

By Ania Tsoukanova for AFP

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U.S. White House Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff and U.S. President Donald J. Trump
EPA / TASS

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky will meet senior U.S. army figures in Kyiv on Thursday, after Washington presented a plan to Ukraine that would end the war on terms favorable to Moscow.

The surprise proposal from the United States envisages Ukraine giving up land to Russia and limiting its military capacity, concessions that Kyiv has previously rejected as an unacceptable capitulation to Moscow, which launched its full-scale invasion almost four years ago.

Here's what we know about it:

Territory

Details of the plan, shared with AFP by a senior source familiar with the matter, suggest Ukraine is being asked to give in to some of Russia's key demands, while it remains "unclear" what commitments Russia would make in return.

On territory, the plan calls for the "recognition of Crimea and other regions that the Russians have taken," the source said.

Russia's army occupies around a fifth of the country — much of it ravaged by years of fighting.

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In 2022, the Kremlin annexed four Ukrainian regions — Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson — despite not having full control over them.

Russia also annexed the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine in 2014.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has previously demanded Ukraine completely withdraw its troops from Donetsk and Luhansk and offered to freeze the front line in the southern Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions, according to Turkey's foreign minister, who mediated three rounds of peace talks earlier this year.

Ukraine has said it will never recognize Russian control over its land, but has conceded it might be forced to get it back through diplomatic means.

Ceding territory in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions that Ukraine still controls could leave Ukraine vulnerable to future attacks by Russia.

"It is a matter of our country's survival," Zelensky said recently.

Army and weapons

The plan calls for Ukraine to reduce its army to 400,000 personnel, cutting its military by more than half, the same source told AFP.

Kyiv would also be required to give up all long-range weapons.

That fits with other Russian demands put to Ukraine at talks in Istanbul earlier this year when Moscow called for a reduction in troop numbers, a ban on mobilization and a halt to the flow of Western weapons.

Russia has also repeatedly said it will not tolerate any NATO troops on Ukrainian soil.

By contrast, Ukraine wants concrete Western-backed security guarantees, including a European peacekeeping force, to prevent Russia from re-invading in the future.

Whose plan?

U.S. media outlet Axios reported the plan had been drawn up by the Trump administration in secret consultation with Russia.

Many elements appear to echo Moscow's demands for how the conflict should end.

"It seems that the Russians proposed this to the Americans, they accepted it," the senior source told AFP.

"An important nuance is that we don't understand whether this is really Trump's story" or "his entourage's," the official added.

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Since returning to the White House, U.S. President Donald Trump's position on the Ukraine war has shifted dramatically back and forth.

Over 2025, he has gone from calling Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky a "dictator" to urging Kyiv to try to reclaim all the land captured by Russia and hitting Moscow with sanctions.

Reactions

There has been no official reaction to the plan in Kyiv. The Kremlin said it had nothing to say when asked about the reports.

The EU's top diplomat Kaja Kallas said any peace settlement must have the agreement of both Kyiv and Brussels.

"For any plan to work, it needs Ukrainians and Europeans on board," Kallas told reporters ahead of a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Brussels.

"We have to understand that in this war, there is one aggressor and one victim. So we haven't heard of any concessions on the Russian side," she added.

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