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Trump Says Ukraine Peace Deal Closer Than Ever Before

By AFP

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U.S. President Donald Trump. **Molly Riley / The White House**

U.S. President Donald Trump said Monday that he believes a deal to end the Ukraine war is closer than ever before, coming after White House envoys met with Ukrainian officials in Berlin to discuss a peace proposal.

Trump said he had "very long and very good" talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and the leaders of NATO and European countries, including Britain, France and Germany.

"We're trying to get it done, and I think we're closer now," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office when asked about talks in Berlin. "We had numerous conversations with President Putin of Russia, and I think we're closer now than we have been ever, and we'll see what we can do."

Asked if he had recently spoken directly to Vladimir Putin, Trump replied, "Yeah, I have," but he did not give any details.

Trump also appeared to suggest that in exchange for security guarantees, Ukraine must agree to hand Russia parts of the eastern Donbas region that Kyiv still holds, something Zelensky has previously ruled out.

"Well, they've already lost the territory, to be honest," the U.S. president said when asked what incentive Ukraine would have to give up land to Russia.

Trump said Europe would be a "big part" of any security guarantee.

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Before Trump's call with Zelensky, U.S. officials speaking on condition of anonymity had described the Berlin meetings, led by White House special envoy Steve Witkoff and the president's son-in-law Jared Kushner, as positive.

However, the officials warned that Ukraine must also accept the deal, which they said would provide security guarantees in line with NATO's Article Five, a provision that treats an attack on one member as an attack on all.

"The basis of that agreement is basically to have really, really strong guarantees — Article Five-like. Also a very, very strong deterrence" in the size of Ukraine's military, one U.S. official said.

"Those guarantees will not be on the table forever," he said.

Trump has previously ruled out Ukraine joining NATO and suggested that Kyiv's aspiration to join the Western military alliance was the reason Russia launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022.

Another U.S. official voiced confidence that Russia would back the peace proposal, saying the security guarantees were "very, very strong."

"I think, hopefully, the Russians are going to look at it and say to themselves, 'That's OK because we have no intention' — we're going to take them at their word — 'We have no intention of violating,'" he said.

"But violations are going to be addressed with the securities package," the official added.

The first official acknowledged that there was still no agreement on territory but said the United States discussed with Zelensky the idea of an "economic free zone" in the area of eastern Ukraine that is now contested.

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