

# Ukraine Says Deadly Russian Strikes Threaten U.S.-Backed Peace Talks

By [AFP](#)

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## State Emergency Service of Ukraine

Ukraine on Saturday accused Russia of undermining negotiations to end their almost four-year war by launching fresh deadly strikes, as officials from both countries and the United States met for a second day of direct talks in Abu Dhabi.

Bombardments killed one person and injured 27 in Kyiv and the northeastern city of Kharkiv overnight, authorities said, as Ukrainian and Russian negotiators were set for a second day of talks on the latest U.S.-brokered proposals.

"Peace efforts? Trilateral meeting in the UAE? Diplomacy? For Ukrainians, this was another night of Russian terror," Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiha said.

He said Russia's President Vladimir Putin "ordered a brutal massive missile strike against Ukraine right while delegations are meeting in Abu Dhabi to advance the America-led peace

process. His missiles hit not only our people, but also the negotiation table."

The first known direct contact between Ukrainian and Russian officials on the proposal began on Friday.

Ukraine's chief negotiator Rustem Umerov said the discussions focused "on the parameters for ending Russia's war and the further logic of the negotiation process."

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An initial U.S. draft drew heavy criticism in Kyiv and western Europe for hewing too closely to Moscow's demands, while Russia rejected later versions for proposing European peacekeepers in Ukraine.

Both sides say the fate of territory in the eastern Donbas region is the main outstanding issue in the search for a settlement to a war that has killed tens of thousands, displaced millions and devastated parts of Ukraine.

U.S. President Donald Trump met his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky at the World Economic Forum in Davos on Thursday and U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff later held talks with Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin.

### **'Massive' Russian attack**

Thousands of people in Kyiv went without heating in sub-zero temperatures due to Russian strikes.

The European Union, which has sent hundreds of generators to Ukraine, has accused Moscow of "deliberately depriving civilians of heat".

"Kyiv is under a massive enemy attack," Mayor Vitali Klitschko posted on Telegram, reporting the latest overnight strikes. He added that several non-residential buildings had been hit.

Fires broke out in several buildings hit by drone debris while heat and water services in parts of the capital were interrupted, he said.

Zelensky said Russia had launched "over 370 attack drones and 21 missiles of various types."

The strikes left 88,000 families temporarily without power in Kyiv, according to DTEK, Ukraine's largest energy provider.

Meanwhile, the head of the northern Chernihiv region, Vyacheslav Chaus, said "hundreds of thousands" were without electricity after Russian strikes on a critical energy facility in the Nizhyn district.

Zelensky last week declared a "state of emergency" in the energy sector, battered by relentless Russian strikes on heat and electricity supplies.

While diplomacy to end Europe's worst conflict since World War II has gained pace, Moscow

and Kyiv appear deadlocked over the issue of territory.

### **Donbas territory dispute**

Hours after Putin met Witkoff — and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner — in Moscow, the Kremlin said its demand that Kyiv withdraw from the eastern Donbas region still stood.

"Russia's position is well known on the fact that Ukraine, Ukrainian armed forces, have to leave the territory of the Donbas," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

"This is a very important condition," he added.

Kyiv has rejected such terms. "The Donbas is a key issue," Zelensky told reporters on Friday, ahead of the talks.

Zelensky said he and Trump had agreed on post-war security guarantees in Davos.

Russian and Ukrainian negotiators are last known to have met face-to-face in Istanbul last summer, in talks that ended only in deals to exchange captured soldiers.

The Abu Dhabi meeting is the first time they have faced each other to talk about the Trump administration's plan.

Putin has repeatedly said Moscow intends to get full control of eastern Ukraine by force if talks fail.

Trump has in the past pressured Ukraine to agree to terms that Kyiv sees as capitulation.

"I believe they're at a point now where they can come together and get a deal done," he said on Wednesday.

"If they don't, they're stupid — that goes for both of them."

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