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Ukraine War Talks Delayed to Wednesday, Zelensky Says

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. **Telegram/V_Zelenskiy_official**

A second round of talks between Russian, Ukrainian and U.S. officials on a U.S.-drafted plan to end the nearly four-year Ukraine war will begin on Wednesday, instead of Sunday, President Volodymyr Zelensky said.

Zelensky did not give a reason for the delay.

The announcement comes a day after one of Russian President Vladimir Putin's top envoys held surprise talks with U.S. officials in Florida without Kyiv.

"The dates for the next trilateral meetings have been set — February 4 and 5 in Abu Dhabi," Zelensky said in a post on X.

Neither the Kremlin nor the United States have confirmed the new dates.

Washington says it is "very close" to brokering a deal to end the conflict, Europe's deadliest since World War II, but negotiations remain deadlocked over the key issue of territory in a post-war settlement.

Russia has meanwhile attacked Ukraine throughout the negotiating process.

A Russian drone strike on a bus carrying mine workers in Ukraine's eastern Dnipropetrovsk region killed at least 12 people late Sunday, officials said.

Zelensky called the strike a "crime" in his evening address.

Talks deadlocked

The U.S. has sought to craft a peace settlement through talks with both sides.

But the most crucial issue of territory remains unresolved, despite Russia and Ukraine agreeing on most other points, Kyiv says.

The first round of trilateral talks on the U.S. plan, held in Abu Dhabi last Friday and Saturday, failed to yield a breakthrough.

Russia, which occupies around 20 percent of its neighbour, is pushing for full control of Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region as part of any deal.

It has threatened to take it by force if talks fail.

But Ukraine has warned ceding ground will embolden Moscow and that it will not sign a deal that fails to deter Russia from invading again.

Many Ukrainians find the idea of surrendering territory that their soldiers have defended for years unconscionable.

Maternity hospital hit

Ukraine, which Russia has bombed throughout the peace process, says its neighbour is not serious about ending the war.

A Russian drone strike on a bus carrying mine workers in Ukraine's eastern Dnipropetrovsk region killed at least 12 people on Sunday, hours after a drone attack on a city in the same region killed a man and a woman, according to officials.

An earlier Russian drone strike on a maternity hospital in the southern city of Zaporizhzhia injured seven people, including two women undergoing a medical examination, the region's governor and rescuers said.

The attacks came the same day the Kremlin said a week-long reduction in strikes announced by U.S. President Donald Trump would end — though Ukraine says Russia kept up its attacks regardless.

Trump said Thursday that Putin had agreed to stop strikes on Kyiv and "various towns"

during cold weather, an agreement that the Kremlin said would last until Sunday.

The terms of Trump's agreement with Putin were not clear and the Kremlin did not link the supposed truce to the weather.

Ukraine's defense minister on Sunday thanked Elon Musk after the U.S. tycoon said efforts to stop Russia from using Starlink satellites for drone attacks seemed to have worked.

"The first steps are already delivering real results... Thank you for standing with us. You are a true champion of freedom and a true friend of the Ukrainian people," Defense Minister Mykhailo Fedorov said.

Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, describing it as a "special military operation" to prevent the expansion of NATO — a war aim that Kyiv has called a pretext for an illegal land grab.

The conflict has resulted in a tidal wave of destruction that has left entire cities in ruins and killed tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians.

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