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U.S. Envoy Reports 'Constructive' Ukraine Talks With Russia

By AFP

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U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff **Brendan Smialowski/AFP**

U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff said Saturday he had held constructive talks with a Russian envoy in Florida as part of Washington's drive to end the war in Ukraine.

The meeting came just a day before Ukrainian and Russian negotiators were scheduled to meet in Abu Dhabi to discuss a U.S.-backed plan to halt the nearly four-year conflict that began with Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"Today in Florida, the Russian Special Envoy Kirill Dmitriev held productive and constructive meetings as part of the U.S. mediation effort toward advancing a peaceful resolution of the Ukrainian conflict," Witkoff posted on X.

"We are encouraged by this meeting that Russia is working toward securing peace in Ukraine," he added.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner and White House Senior Advisor Josh Gruenbaum also attended the talks, he said.

Earlier Saturday, a source close to the talks had told AFP that they had started at 8:00 am and that Dmitriev had arrived in Miami.

Neither side released details of what was discussed.

Dmitriev, Russian President Vladimir Putin's top economic envoy, met Witkoff and Kushner earlier in January on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

He also held talks with U.S. negotiators on Ukraine in a visit to Miami in December.

The second round of talks in Abu Dhabi are set to start on Sunday, even if Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky suggested earlier this week that it might be postponed because of the U.S.-Iran crisis.

Zelensky said in his evening address Saturday his negotiators were also waiting to hear from the United States on further meetings.

"Ukraine is ready to work in all working formats," said Zelensky. "It is important that there are results and that the meetings take place. We are counting on meetings next week and are preparing for them."

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Teams from Ukraine and Russia met Friday and Saturday last week in Abu Dhabi in their first in-person negotiations on a plan being pushed by Trump.

The United States says both sides are close to a deal, but they have so far been unable to find a compromise on the key issue of territory in a post-war settlement, according to Kyiv.

The Kremlin on Friday said Putin had agreed to a pause on striking Kyiv — ending Sunday — following a request by Trump.

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