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Russian and U.S. Lawmakers Meet to Discuss Ukraine War and Bilateral Relations

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State Duma lawmakers representing the Russian delegation in Washington on March 26, 2026. **RepLuna / X.com**

A delegation of State Duma lawmakers met with members of Congress in Washington on Thursday, during which they discussed a broad range of issues, including Ukraine peace talks and resuming direct flights between the two countries, according to a Russian official who attended the rare sitdown.

Rep. Anna Paulina Luna, a Florida Republican who hosted the Russian delegation, said it was imperative that "the world's two greatest nuclear superpowers" maintain "open dialogue, ideas and open lines of communication."

"We will continue to foster this dialogue and push for peace in support of this admin's push for peace, as well as economic opportunity," Luna posted on X.

President Vladimir Putin's economic envoy Kirill Dmitriev, who was not a part of the delegation to Washington, shared the congresswoman's post with the comment "historic."

Svetlana Zhurova, a State Duma member from the ruling United Russia party, said Ukraine was "the most prominent" issue discussed during the meeting, followed by questions surrounding visas and Russian diplomatic properties in the United States that were seized under the Obama and first Trump administrations.

"We talked about restarting student exchanges. We also discussed the full return of our athletes to the Olympic Games — which, incidentally, will next be held in the United States — and Luna also promised to raise this issue with Trump," Zhurova said in a video message.

"I wouldn't say everyone on the other side was pleased with what we're doing as a country, but they expressed their position and are nevertheless open to dialogue," Zhurova added, appearing to refer to Russia's war against Ukraine.

Since U.S. President Donald Trump returned to the White House last year, officials in Russia and the United States have held multiple rounds of diplomatic talks focused on normalizing bilateral ties.

While both sides have expressed optimism about those efforts, the Trump administration introduced sanctions on major Russian oil companies in October, suggesting a full detente is still beyond the horizon.

At the same time, authorities in Moscow have said that some of their key requests from Washington, including the restoration of direct flights, have gone ignored.

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The U.S. and Russian lawmakers on Thursday also discussed "humanitarian cooperation, the restoration of cultural ties and performances by the Bolshoi and the Mariinsky theaters in America," Zhurova said. "This should bring our countries closer."

Mikhail Delyagin, a lawmaker from the A Just Russia party who was also part of the Russian delegation in Washington, told the state-run news agency RIA Novosti, that "unlike the previous administration, this one understands they're shooting themselves in the foot with sanctions. This applies to a wide range of issues that were raised."

Luna's congressional delegation included Rep. Derrick Van Arden, a Wisconsin Republican, Rep. Andy Ogles, a Tennessee Republican, Rep. Eli Crane, an Arizona Republican, and Vicente Gonzalez, a Texas Democrat.

The Hill reported that some of their colleagues in Congress opposed the meeting with Russian lawmakers, with at least one U.S. representative equating it to "having visitors of the Third Reich."

State Duma member Boris Chernyshov, a member of the far-right Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR), said "conveying our position, the truth" was the Russian delegation's main goal in

meeting with their American counterparts. “We succeeded,” he said.

Vyacheslav Nikonov, a United Russia member who led the Russian delegation, said the two sides discussed the possibility of U.S. lawmakers making a visit to Moscow. Nikonov is a grandson of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin’s foreign minister, Vyacheslav Molotov.

Russian lawmakers are under U.S. personal sanctions for having voted in favor of Putin’s decision to launch the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

In January, Luna said she had received State Department authorization for four State Duma members to travel to Washington for a congressional meeting despite the sanctions, which prevent them from entering the U.S.

A separate “federal government delegation” is scheduled to hold a meeting at the U.S. Institute of Peace on Friday, a State Department spokesperson told The Moscow Times this week.

The Kremlin said it welcomes “any efforts to revive dialogue with the United States” when asked about the State Duma visit to Washington.

Last year, Luna said members of Congress were planning to meet with Russian lawmakers to discuss UFOs, though she did not provide the date, format, or location.

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