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Azerbaijan Hosted Secret Russian-German Talks, President Aliyev Says

July 21, 2026

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz hold a joint press conference. **president.az**

Russian and German officials met for secret talks in Azerbaijan earlier this month, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev told reporters on Tuesday, though he did not detail what was discussed during the meeting.

"Our territory was used for such a meeting without our knowledge... Flight data allows me to state that a secret meeting did take place in Baku," Aliyev said during a joint press conference with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz.

Merz said he was unaware of the meeting.

According to the German tabloid Bild, Azerbaijan's border services recorded former minister president of Brandenburg Matthias Platzeck and former chief of staff of the German chancellery Ronald Pofalla arriving in the South Caucasus country on July 12.

Russia's former prime minister and current Gazprom board chairman Viktor Zubkov and current presidential human rights chief Valery Fadeyev reportedly arrived in Azerbaijan shortly after. Kommersant reported that Aliyev confirmed their visit to the country.

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German and British media first reported on the Russian-German meeting last week.

The "core group" of emissaries has had at least four meetings in Baku and Abu Dhabi since the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, according to those reports.

"If this meeting can help end the war between Russia and Ukraine, we can only welcome it," Aliyev told reporters.

In June, German media reported that Merz's office was quietly laying the groundwork for talks with Russian officials after consulting with France and Britain. The British, French and German ambassadors met with senior officials at Russia's Foreign Ministry last month.

While European leaders have spent weeks floating the possibility of direct talks with Russia, the Kremlin has dismissed the idea of the European Union as a possible mediator in Ukraine peace negotiations.

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