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Lavrov and Rubio Set to Meet at ASEAN Summit to Discuss Ukraine Peace Talks

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Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. **Russian Foreign Ministry**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio are scheduled to meet Thursday on the sidelines of the ASEAN summit in the Philippines to discuss Ukraine peace negotiations and other bilateral issues.

"The meeting has already been arranged. We briefly saw Marco Rubio at a reception yesterday and confirmed that it will take place tomorrow in the first half of the day," Lavrov told reporters following a Russia-ASEAN ministerial meeting.

In separate remarks to reporters in Manila, Rubio confirmed the upcoming sit-down. He said his primary focus would be on potential paths to ending the war in Ukraine.

"Obviously, the war in Ukraine, I think, has, in many ways, impeded the ability of Russia and the United States to find areas of agreement on other topics," Rubio said.

"That doesn't mean we won't seek to find other areas of potential cooperation," the secretary

of state said, adding that he planned to discuss "other stuff" with Lavrov on Thursday. He hinted that nuclear arms control could be among the topics they discuss.

Lavrov said he plans to press Rubio about recent comments by U.S. President Donald Trump, who claimed earlier this month that a peace agreement in Ukraine was "closer than people realize."

The Russian foreign minister added that Moscow continues to operate under the assumption that U.S. officials "have not yet backtracked on their own proposals" made during last year's presidential summit in Alaska.

Since returning to the White House last year, Trump has tried to broker a peace agreement between Russia and Ukraine. But U.S.-brokered talks to end the war in Ukraine have stalled since Trump ordered attacks on Iran in late February.

Bloomberg reported Wednesday that President Vladimir Putin has hardened his stance on peace negotiations with Ukraine amid continuing long-range Ukrainian attacks. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov dismissed the report as "speculation."

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