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U.S. Envoys Make First Kyiv Visit Amid Ukraine Peace Push

By Reuters

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Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy welcomes Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kyiv, Ukraine September 6, 2026. **Valentyn Ogirenko/Reuters**

U.S. peace envoys Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in Kyiv on Sunday as the Trump administration renewed its push to end Russia's war against Ukraine.

Kushner and Witkoff travelled from Moscow, where they held three hours of talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday but did not appear to secure a breakthrough in the conflict.

Previous rounds of U.S.-mediated peace talks encouraged by U.S. President Donald Trump, who campaigned on a promise to quickly end the war, have yielded few results. He suggested on Friday that the U.S. had a fresh proposal, though he did not elaborate.

Kremlin aide Yury Ushakov described Saturday's meeting as "highly useful," while a White House official told Reuters that next steps would be announced in the coming weeks.

The two envoys met Zelensky and other top Ukrainian officials in central Kyiv.

Zelensky, who believes Washington will be key to any peace deal, has said a window of opportunity to make peace exists before the U.S. begins focusing on its next presidential election.

After the first round of talks between Ukrainian and U.S. negotiators that lasted about three hours, the U.S. envoys said that they were looking forward to making more progress.

"Substantive, important, and we are very encouraged," Witkoff told reporters after the talks, which also included a working lunch.

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Zelensky said that more talks, which would also include European representatives, were planned later on Sunday. British, French and German national security advisers were in Kyiv on Sunday.

"Security guarantees are needed. A dignified post-war peace is needed. Our proposals have been drawn up," Zelensky said as his negotiating team was preparing to meet U.S. envoys.

Cautious optimism on the streets of Kyiv

Witkoff and Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, have visited Moscow several times in their roles as peace envoys. But Sunday is their first visit to Kyiv in their capacity as U.S. negotiators.

Ukraine's leadership has long sought their visit, and on the streets of Kyiv, which has been heavily bombarded in recent weeks, some residents were hopeful.

"The issue can be solved in the blink of an eye. We want peace. I've fought myself, so I know what war is like. We need peace, because there's no other way," said military veteran Stepan Yermak.

In previous talks, the sides have remained far apart on key issues, including the future of the eastern Ukrainian region of Donbas. Russia has demanded Ukraine's withdrawal from an entrenched belt of towns that it still controls there, but Kyiv has refused, reasoning that it can still hold on.

For Ukraine, hard security guarantees from its European allies and the U.S. are crucial to deterring Russia from invading again.

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"We need an agreement that will never be broken," said Svitlana Kurylenko, a 19-year-old cafe worker.

"Just leave Ukraine alone and let people live in peace."

Temporary halt in strikes

Though the front lines of the ground war remain largely static, both Russian and Ukrainian forces have intensified long-range air strikes in recent months.

Russia has pounded the Ukrainian capital day and night with missiles and drones for the past two weeks, including an attack on Friday on the headquarters of the SBU security service.

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The Kremlin has said it would pause strikes on Kyiv until Monday, while Zelensky has said Ukraine would also halt strikes on Moscow.

There was no let-up in fighting along the 1,200-kilometer (750-mile) front, however, and Russia bombarded other Ukrainian cities on Saturday.

Ukraine has inflicted damaging hits throughout the summer on Russian refineries, oil terminals and the warehouses of online retailers in an attempt to raise the cost to Moscow of continuing the war.

Ukraine said on Sunday it had struck the Ryazan oil refinery, around 480 kilometers (300 miles) inside Russia, overnight, causing a fire.

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