The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Trump Says Russia and Ukraine Reached ‘Energy Ceasefire'

By Reuters

October 11, 2026



Plumes of smoke rise from fires at an oil refinery following what the authorities say is a Ukrainian drone strike in the course of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, in Moscow, Russia. **Reuters/Stringer/File Photo**

Updated to include U.S. President Donald Trump’s comments.

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Sunday that Ukraine and Russia had agreed to what he described as an "energy ceasefire," hours after Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskiy had pushed back against U.S. pressure for a unilateral end to strikes on Russian refineries.

In a social media post, Trump said the energy ceasefire would take effect immediately, but did not elaborate further.

In an interview with Axios, Zelensky said Trump's post was the first he had heard of the deal, though a senior Ukrainian official told Reuters that Ukraine was ready to agree to such a ceasefire, if Russia was.

Earlier on Sunday, Zelensky said that Ukraine was ready to halt attacks on Russian oil refineries if Moscow ceased its own strikes on Ukrainian energy infrastructure.

On Saturday, Trump blamed Ukrainian strikes on Russian refineries for raising U.S. diesel prices and said Zelensky had "better damn well stop," adding that Ukraine should replace him as leader because he had missed several opportunities to strike a deal with Moscow.

The steep rise in global diesel prices, which followed the outbreak of the Iran war in February, has become a political liability for Trump's Republican Party ahead of next month's midterm elections, when opposition Democrats could gain control of one or both houses of Congress.

Zelensky on Sunday repeated Ukraine's long-standing position that it was willing to halt attacks on Russian refineries only as part of a mutual de-escalation of the conflict, which would require Moscow to cease its own strikes on Ukrainian power infrastructure.

Any such deal would need to come with "real guarantees," Zelensky said.

"The real cause of the war in Europe is Russia and Russia alone," Zelensky said, without alluding specifically to Trump's remarks. "It's possible to stop strikes on energy infrastructure as early as today, but [President Vladimir] Putin does not want to do so."

On Saturday, Zelensky responded angrily to Trump's announcement of a diesel supply deal with Russia, which he said would embolden Moscow's attacks on Ukraine.

Analysts said Trump's agreement with Moscow was unlikely to lead to sustained lower fuel prices, with the volumes still much lower than what Russia usually exports when its refineries are not under attack.

The diesel deal was also criticized by U.S. lawmakers, including one of Trump's fellow Republicans, Representative Don Bacon, who said it was time to apply more sanctions, not lift them.

On the streets of Kyiv, several residents expressed anger at Trump's suggestion that Ukraine should find a new leader willing to make a deal with Putin.

"No one has the right to tell us what to do, especially since elections cannot be held during wartime," said Sabina, a 40-year-old primary school teacher, referring to Ukraine's prohibition on elections under martial law for security reasons.

"In my view, it is a betrayal by our partners," she said, describing Trump's remarks.

Zelensky said he would continue discussions with European leaders on Sunday, and there were daily conversations around additional air defense packages, including ammunition for combat aircraft that are used to down Russia's jet-powered drones.

On Monday, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha is due to participate in a European Union Foreign Affairs Council meeting that is expected to discuss increasing sanctions pressure on Russia and advancing negotiations on Ukraine’s EU accession.

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