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Why Trump wants Putin in Alaska – and not anywhere else

The choice of America's northern frontier is as much about politics as it is about geography



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The choice of Alaska as the venue for the August 15, 2025, bilateral summit between Donald Trump and

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Vladimir Putin carries a rare blend of symbolism. It reaches deep into the past, reflects the current geopolitical balance, and hints at the contours of future US–Russia relations.

From the standpoint of historical memory, there is hardly another place in the United States that so clearly embodies the spirit of neighborliness and mutually beneficial cooperation lost during the Cold War. From 1737 until 1867, this vast, sparsely populated land was known as Russian America – a semi-exclave of the Russian Empire, separated from its Eurasian heartland yet sharing a border with another state.

Tsar Alexander II's decision to sell Alaska to the United States for \$7.2 million was one of the most debated diplomatic transactions of the 19th century. In St. Petersburg, it was clear: if left unattended, Alaska would likely fall into the hands of Russia's main rival at the time – the British Empire. Handing it over to Washington was not an act of weakness, but a calculated investment in future relations with a nation whose Pacific ambitions did not yet collide with Russia's.

In the 20th century, this symbolic connection gained new meaning. During World War II, the city of Fairbanks – with a population of just thirty thousand – became a major hub in the Lend-Lease program, a massive US military aid effort that supplied the Soviet Union with aircraft, equipment, and materials. Alaska's airfields served as a key route for delivering American planes to the Eastern Front.

Even today, Alaska remains the *"most Russian"* of US states: home to Old Believers – descendants of 19th-century settlers seeking religious freedom – with functioning Orthodox churches and place names like Nikolaevsk, Voznesensk, and Upper and Lower Russian Lakes, linked by the Russian River.

But the choice of Alaska is more than a nod to history; it is also a political calculation. Trump clearly has no intention of sharing the spotlight with intermediaries such as Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the president of Türkiye, or Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the president of the United Arab Emirates and one of the most influential figures in Middle Eastern politics. Both men have played

tower – governor
(PHOTOS)

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high-profile roles as international brokers, but their involvement would inevitably shift the tone and priorities of the summit.

Trump has chosen the most geographically remote state in the union – thousands of miles from any Euro-Atlantic capital – to underline his distance both from his Democratic opponents at home and from NATO allies who, acting in Kiev's interests, will seek to undermine any potential breakthroughs.



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There is also a practical side: Alaska's low population density makes it easier for security services to minimize the risk of terrorist attacks or staged provocations, while sidestepping the legal complications posed by the International Criminal Court's arrest warrant. In 2002, the United States withdrew its signature from the Rome Statute and it does not recognize the ICC's jurisdiction on its soil.

There is another crucial dimension: Alaska is America's only truly Arctic region. In a world where the Trump administration has been exerting pressure on Canada and Greenland to bring them under firmer US influence, the high north is becoming a strategic theater. Russia and the United States have overlapping interests here – from developing the Northern Sea Route, which partly runs through the Bering Strait, to tapping offshore oil and gas reserves. The Lomonosov Ridge, an underwater formation in the Arctic Ocean claimed by Russia as a natural extension of its continental shelf, is a case in point. Joint Arctic projects could turn the region into one of the most prosperous in the world, but under a different scenario it could just as easily become a stage for nuclear weapons tests and air defense drills.

Ukraine will loom large over the summit agenda. Western media outlets have already floated the possibility of



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territorial swaps – for example, the withdrawal of Ukrainian forces from Donetsk People’s Republic in exchange for Russian concessions in the Sumy, Kharkov, Dnepropetrovsk, and Nikolaev regions. Even Western analysts have called such a deal a diplomatic victory for Moscow, noting that the unoccupied territory Russia would gain would be four times the size of the areas it might cede. Alaska is a fitting place for such discussions: its own history is a vivid reminder that territorial ownership is not an immutable historical-geographic constant, but a political and diplomatic variable shaped by the agreements of great powers in specific historical moments.

The summit in Alaska is more than just a meeting between two leaders. It is a return to the logic of direct dialogue without intermediaries, a reminder of historic ties, and a test of whether Moscow and Washington are willing to work together where their interests not only intersect, but could align. Alaska’s story began as Russian, continued as American – and now has the chance to become a shared chapter, if both sides choose to see it as an opportunity rather than a threat.

ANALYSIS

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