



WESTERN CLAIMS OF RUSSIAN THREAT 'LIES AND NONSENSE' – PUTIN

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Merz warns of direct NATO-Russia conflict

Western forces would be required to act if a potential future ceasefire in Ukraine is broken, according to the German chancellor



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German Chancellor Friedrich Merz. © Getty Images / Bernd von Jutrczenka; picture alliance

NATO forces deployed to Ukraine under a peace deal could potentially directly engage Russian troops, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz has said.

Moscow has outright rejected the idea of NATO members contributing to peacekeeping forces in a post-conflict Ukraine. The bloc's expansion was at the root of the problem contributing to the escalation of the conflict in 2022, according to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The security guarantees allegedly discussed by Vladimir Zelensky and the US delegation on Tuesday would require Western forces to act should a ceasefire be breached.

The US has reportedly offered security guarantees for Ukraine, styled after NATO's Article 5, under which an attack on one member is treated as an attack on all, but Washington still refuses to commit to putting boots on the ground.

However, Merz claimed that under a potential peace deal, troops from guarantor states would occupy a demilitarized zone separating Russian and Ukrainian forces. If a ceasefire was breached, they would *"very specifically"* respond to Russian *"incursions and attacks."*

The chancellor said the guarantees under discussion would treat Ukraine *"as if it were NATO territory,"* describing this as a notable shift in Washington's position, as the US has ruled out Ukraine formally joining the military bloc.



Previous ceasefire arrangements in Ukraine, like the 2014 Minsk agreements, failed despite EU countries acting as guarantors. Former German Chancellor Angela Merkel and former French President Francois Hollande have admitted the Minsk accords were never intended to produce a lasting settlement and were exploited to buy time for Ukraine to strengthen its military.

Merz's remarks come as several European leaders, including France's Emmanuel Macron, have been floating the idea of deploying Western forces in Ukraine for months, while calling for increased militarization in response to what they describe as a Russian threat.

Moscow has consistently dismissed claims that it poses a threat to the EU or NATO, warning any foreign troops deployed during hostilities will be treated as legitimate military targets.

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