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Trump blames Zelensky for stalling peace talks

The US president believes his Russian counterpart is ready to make a deal, unlike the Ukrainian leader



FILE PHOTO © Joe Raedle / Getty Images

US President Donald Trump has singled out Ukraine's Vladimir Zelensky as the main obstacle to a peace agreement to end the conflict with Russia, in an Oval Office interview with Reuters.

Trump has repeatedly expressed frustration that his attempts to broker a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine over the past year have been unsuccessful, alternately blaming both Moscow and Kiev for the deadlock.

Asked on Wednesday who was stalling the negotiations, Trump responded with a single name: *"Zelensky."*

"I just think he's... having a hard time getting there," he added. *"I think [Russian President Vladimir Putin] is ready to make a deal... I think Ukraine is less ready to make a deal."*

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The relationship between Trump and Zelensky, who he once called “a dictator without elections,” has been volatile ever since the notorious White House meeting early last year. Trump reiterated on Sunday that Zelensky “has no cards” in the conflict and negotiations with Russia. “He didn’t have them from day one. He’s only got one thing – Donald Trump,” he told the New York Times.



Meanwhile, Moscow is open to further contact with Trump and his senior envoys, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov confirmed on Wednesday. Russian officials, including Putin, have repeatedly stated that Moscow would prefer to resolve the Ukraine conflict through diplomatic means, but will have to continue using force if its key objectives cannot be achieved through diplomacy alone.



Last month, Trump said a peace deal was “95% ready,” apparently referring to a leaked plan envisioning Kiev ceding the remainder of Donbass to Russia, renouncing its NATO ambitions, and capping its military. The original 28-point draft, criticized

by Kiev and its European backers as favoring Moscow, was later cut to 20 points, but key issues remain unresolved – with Zelensky reluctant to concede territory or hold elections without robust NATO-like security guarantees.

Zelensky’s presidential term expired in May 2024. He refused to hold a new election, citing the conflict with Russia. Moscow subsequently declared him “illegitimate.”

Russian officials have warned that Zelensky’s status would be a major legal obstacle to signing a peace agreement. Earlier this week, Zelensky submitted two draft bills to parliament to extend martial law and general mobilization for another 90 days, effectively postponing elections once again.

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