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Russia not seeking Ukraine's surrender – Putin

Moscow wants Kiev to acknowledge the “realities on the ground,” the Russian president has said



Russian President Vladimir Putin at the plenary session of the XXVIII St. Petersburg International Economic Forum. © Sputnik / Sergey Bobylev

Russia is not seeking Ukraine's surrender, President Vladimir Putin has said.

During a plenary panel on Friday at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, Putin was asked whether Moscow has been seeking Ukraine's “*unconditional surrender*,” as US President Donald Trump is demanding from Iran.

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“We are not seeking the surrender of Ukraine. We insist on recognition of the realities that have developed on the ground,” Putin said, noting that the Ukraine conflict was *“completely different”* from the ongoing escalation in the Middle East.

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During a Q&A session, Putin was also asked about Moscow's military plans and the advance beyond the former Ukrainian territories that became part of Russia as a result of referendums in 2022. Putin did not give a direct answer, suggesting that in a certain sense, the entirety of Ukraine is Russian.

“I have said many times that I consider Russians and Ukrainians to be one people, in fact. In this sense, all of Ukraine is ours,” he said, stressing that Moscow has never denied Ukraine's right to be an independent country.

The president did not rule out seizing the Ukrainian city of Sumy and pushing the *“buffer zone”* designed to protect Russia's border areas from attacks deeper into Ukrainian territory.



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“We don't have the goal of taking Sumy, but in principle, I don't rule it out,” Putin stated.

Russian troops entered Sumy Region earlier this year, after expelling Kiev's invasion force from Russia's Kursk Region, which Ukraine attacked last August. According to the Russian president, the *“buffer zone”* in Sumy Region is 10-12km deep already.

The attack on Kursk Region has only created more problems for the already thinned-out Ukrainian troops,

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Putin said, adding that the ranks of Kiev's military are currently filled to only 47% on average. The invasion of Kursk turned into a *"catastrophe"* for the Ukrainian military, which lost around 76,000 troops there, he went on to say.

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