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Ukrainian and US negotiators discuss peace deal on Christmas Day

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky gives a Christmas address that was released on ...



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had a “very good” conversation with US special envoy Steve Witkoff and President Donald Trump’s son-in-law Jared

Kushner on Christmas Day as negotiations over the terms of a potential peace deal

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continued.

“I thank them for the constructive approach, the intensive work, and the kind words and Christmas greetings to the Ukrainian people,” Zelensky said in a statement.

The two sides discussed “certain substantive details” about the ongoing peace negotiations and the conversation produced “some new ideas on how to bring about real peace,” Zelensky said.

The Ukrainian leader was joined on the call by other diplomats, including Defense Council Secretary Rустем Умеров.

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Умеров will have additional discussions with Kushner and Witkoff later on Thursday, Zelensky said.

“We believe this is the right approach – not to lose a single day or a single opportunity that can bring the result closer. May today’s conversation become another step toward peace,” he said.

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At a press conference in Moscow earlier on Thursday, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova noted that there is “slow but steady” progress being made in the negotiation process between Russia and the US.

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She went on to accuse the European Union of remaining committed to “escalating the conflict and prolonging hostilities.”

In his Christmas Day speech, Pope Leo also appealed for peace in Ukraine.

“May the clamour of weapons cease and may the parties involved with the support and commitment of the international community find the courage to engage in sincere, direct, and respectful dialogue,” the religious leader said.

The Trump administration’s peace effort has made gradual progress in recent weeks.

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Over the weekend, a Ukrainian delegation led by Umerov and Kremlin envoy Kirill Dmitriev met separately with their American counterparts in talks that Witkoff described as “constructive and productive.”

On Tuesday, Zelensky presented new details about a 20-point plan that he described as “a foundational document on **ending the war**, a political document between us, America, Europe, and the Russians.”

The Ukrainian president also discussed specifics of security guarantees between Ukraine, the United States, and European countries that would form a crucial part of any peace deal with **Russia**.

The plan would involve Ukraine pulling back its troops from areas of the Donetsk region, Zelensky said.

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Russia would subsequently need to withdraw its forces in a manner equivalent to the ground ceded by Ukrainian troops, effectively establishing a demilitarized zone around some of the present front lines.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said that Russia is “currently analyzing the materials” of the proposal.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said Ukraine must effectively cede all of Donetsk for a peace plan to work.

“We would prefer to do this, and eliminate the root causes of the conflict, through diplomacy,” Putin said at the annual meeting of the Russian Defense Ministry.

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“If the opposing country and its foreign patrons refuse to engage in substantive discussions, Russia will achieve the liberation of its historical lands through military means,” he added.

Trump has asserted that an end to the war in Ukraine is closer than ever, but an official deal that is agreeable to both sides has yet to materialize.

The diplomatic exchanges unfolded as Russia continues to unleash lethal strikes on Ukrainian targets.

The most recent campaign has focused on Odesa, Ukraine’s key port city positioned next to the Black Sea.

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Moscow's attacks have caused power outages in the city and surrounding areas, as well as damage to port infrastructure and civilian vessels.

Russia launched one of its largest aerial attacks this month on Ukraine on Tuesday, killing at least three people and injuring at least 17 others.

Kyiv's troops retreated from the town of Siversk in eastern Ukraine, according to the country's armed forces, as Russian forces pushed through "active offensive operations."

In turn, Ukrainian security services have **stepped up** drone and sabotage operations against Russian combat aircraft and submarines this month, carrying out long-range drones in attacks on Russian airfields in occupied Crimea and southern Russia.

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Ahead of Christmas, Zelensky said Kyiv's military is on alert for potential attacks, and he called on Ukraine's intelligence services to "significantly step up their work."

"We understand that precisely on these days they may — this is in their nature — carry out massive strikes on Christmas," Zelensky posted on X. He added that officials held a meeting about defending Ukrainian localities especially from December 23 through 25.

Meanwhile, a Russian general was **killed** in a car bombing in Moscow this week, with officials pointing the finger at Ukraine for the latest apparent assassination of a senior military officer.



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