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Zelenskyy says Trump is ‘surrounded by disinformation’

U.S. leader's claim that Zelenskyy's approval rating is 4 percent is Russian disinfo, Ukrainian president says.

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Donald Trump accused Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of being "grossly incompetent". | Pool photo by Tetiana Dzhafarova/AFP via Getty Images

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BY [ELENA GIORDANO](#) AND [VERONIKA MELKOZEROVA](#)

KYIV — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said United States President Donald Trump is “surrounded by disinformation” after Trump falsely accused Ukraine of starting the war with Russia.

“I wish there was more truth,” the Ukrainian leader told journalists at a meeting in Kyiv Wednesday morning. “I hope we can break through that cycle.”

The Ukrainian president also accused the U.S. administration of enabling Russia to emerge from its international isolation. “It got there because of the invasion of Ukraine. But now I see Russia treated as if it is a victim,” he said.

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At a press conference Tuesday night, [Trump blamed Ukraine](#) for the war with Russia and argued that Kyiv should hold new elections, in his first public remarks following [high-level U.S.-Russia talks in Riyadh](#) earlier that day.

Trump claimed that Ukraine "should have never started" the war with Russia. He then accused Zelenskyy of being "grossly incompetent" and claimed his approval rating stands at 4 percent. "I don't usually comment on ratings — but after that claim, I checked, and my ranking is 57 percent," Zelenskyy said on Wednesday in response to Trump's remarks. "We knew about this 4 percent number. This is Russian disinformation going around."

Zelenskyy cited a study by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology published Wednesday morning that [found around 57 percent of Ukrainians](#) trust his leadership, marking an increase of 5 percentage points since December. The poll was carried out between Feb. 4 and 9.

Zelenskyy said that he is willing to provide full transparency to Trump's special envoy for Russia and Ukraine, Keith Kellogg, throughout his visit to Kyiv on Wednesday. He then invited Kellogg to speak directly with the Ukrainian people in order to ask them if they trust their president, how they perceive Russian leader Vladimir Putin, and for their reactions to Trump's recent claims about the war.

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Ukrainian officials — some of whom have themselves criticized their president — pushed back forcefully against Trump's dig.

"We may like Zelensky, or we may not, we may scold him, or we may praise him, we may condemn his actions, or we may applaud them ... Because he is OUR President." Borys Filatov, mayor of Ukraine's industrial city of Dnipro, wrote in a [social media post](#). "No lying creature, neither in Moscow, nor in Washington, nor anywhere, has the right to open his mouth against him."

"Make Zelenskyy great again," Ukrainian journalist [Pavlo Kazarin quipped](#).

This story has been updated. Elena Giordano reported from Brussels and Veronika Melkozerova reported from Kyiv.

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