



## Ukraine invasion — explained

# Trump says he will meet Putin to start talks to end the war in Ukraine

UPDATED FEBRUARY 12, 2025 · 5:34 PM ET ⓘ

HEARD ON [ALL THINGS CONSIDERED](#)

By

[Danielle Kurtzleben](#)

,

[Teri Schultz](#)

,

[Joanna Kakisis](#)

,

[Charles Maynes](#)

,

[Willem Marx](#)



A Ukrainian tank passes by a burning car near the Russian-Ukrainian border, Sumy region, Ukraine, on Aug. 14, 2024.

*Evgeniy Maloletka/AP*

President Trump says he will be meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, after holding separate phone calls with the Russian leader and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy Wednesday to kick off talks to end almost three years of war.

## Podcast: Trump begins working to end the war between Russia and Ukraine

"The first time we'll meet in Saudi Arabia, see if we get something done," he said of a face-to-face with Putin, without providing a date. He said the two would also visit each other's countries to meet.

"I think we're on the way to getting peace," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office. "I think President Putin wants peace, and President Zelenskyy wants peace. I want peace. I just want to see people stop getting killed."

The governments of Russia and Ukraine each confirmed having phone calls with Trump Wednesday and agreed to negotiate.



### EUROPE

**Trump meets with American teacher Marc Fogel after he was freed from a Russian prison**



### WORLD

**Belarus has released 3 from prison, including an American and a journalist**

Zelenskyy said they had a "very substantive" and detailed conversation about "diplomatic, military and economic issues," adding that Trump told him about his conversation with Putin. "We believe that America's strength is enough to push Russia and Putin to peace together with us, together with all our partners," he said.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Putin and Trump talked for an hour and a half, discussing the war in Ukraine and other topics such as a prisoner exchange. On Tuesday, Russia [released American teacher Marc Fogel](#), and the U.S. is set to release [Russian national Alexander Vinnik](#) as part of the deal, according to a Trump administration official who spoke to NPR on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss it publicly.

## Defense Secretary Hegseth on the administration's vision



U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth speaks during a meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact group at NATO headquarters in Brussels, Wednesday.

*Omar Havana/AP*

The conversations came as Trump's new defense secretary, Pete Hegseth, laid out the administration's ideas about European defense and the future of Ukraine in a meeting in Brussels.

While remaining committed to NATO and defending partners in Europe, [he said](#), "the United States will no longer tolerate an imbalanced relationship which encourages dependency. Rather, our relationship will prioritize empowering Europe to own responsibility for its own security."

He called for countries to increase their defense spending, saying Trump wants to hike

up the military alliance's [expenditure guideline](#) from 2% to 5% of a nation's gross domestic product.



Hegseth went further to detail the administration's positions on how to end the Russia-Ukraine war, which this month will hit the three-year mark. He was speaking to a gathering of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, a collection of dozens of countries working on military support for Ukraine, at NATO headquarters.

"We must start by recognizing that returning to Ukraine's pre-2014 borders is an unrealistic objective," Hegseth said, referring to the year Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine. "Chasing this illusionary goal will only prolong the war and cause more suffering."

He also said, "The United States does not believe that NATO membership for Ukraine is a realistic outcome of a negotiated settlement."

Both statements could dash hopes in Ukraine, which has fought a costly war to defend and regain its territory from Russia, and has [pushed to join NATO](#). Putin [has insisted](#) that Ukraine drop its bid to join NATO and that Ukrainian forces withdraw from lands that Russia [claims to have annexed](#).

Hegseth said Trump "intends to end this war by diplomacy and bringing both Russia and Ukraine to the table."

European leaders will be watching for more U.S. foreign policy pronouncements as Vice President JD Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and other officials attend the Munich Security Conference later this week.

*Danielle Kurtzleben reported from Washington, D.C., Teri Schultz from Brussels, Joanna Kakissis from Kyiv, Ukraine, Charles Maynes from Moscow and Willem Marx from London.*

- donald trump
- pete hegseth
- war in ukraine
- russia
- nato
- ukraine
- russia ukraine
- russia-ukraine war



READ & LISTEN

[Home](#)

[News](#)

[Culture](#)

[Music](#)

[Podcasts & Shows](#)

## CONNECT

[Newsletters](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Press](#)

[Public Editor](#)

[Corrections](#)

[Contact & Help](#)

## ABOUT NPR

[Overview](#)

[Diversity](#)

[NPR Network](#)

[Accessibility](#)

[Ethics](#)

[Finances](#)

## GET INVOLVED

[Support Public Radio](#)

[Sponsor NPR](#)

[NPR Careers](#)

[NPR Shop](#)

[NPR Events](#)

[NPR Extra](#)

---

[terms of use](#)

[privacy](#)

[your privacy choices](#)

[text only](#)