London follow-up to last Thursday's Paris meeting cancelled, and Witkoff goes to Moscow to talk again with Putin

President Macron, U.S. Presidential Envoy Witkoff, Secretary of State Rubio, and French Foreign Minister Barrot at the Elysée last Thursday.

Last Thursday, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Presidential Envoy Steve Witkoff met with French President Macron and other French, German, British and Ukrainian officials in a series of meetings at the Elysée Palace in Paris. The meetings were prompted by the continued refusal of Russia to agree to a ceasefire in its war against Ukraine and the conditions for Russia's acceptance of a ceasefire that President Putin conveyed to Witkoff in their five-hour meeting at the Presidential Library in St. Petersburg on April 11.

At last Thursday's meeting, the U.S. officials gave the Ukrainian officials a one-page document that was described as President Trump's "final offer." Under the proposal, Russia would receive: 1) De jure recognition by the U.S. of Russian control of Crimea; 2) De facto recognition of the occupation of nearly all of Luhansk oblast (region) and the occupied parts of Donetsk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia oblasts; 3) A promise that Ukraine will not join NATO; 4) A lifting of the sanctions against Russia that have been in place since the annexation of Crimea in 2014; and 5) Increased economic cooperation with the U.S., including in the energy and industrial sectors. Under the proposal, Ukraine would receive: 1) A "robust security guarantee" involving a special group of European and potentially non-European like-minded countries; 2) The return of a small part of Kharkiv oblast occupied by Russia; 3) Unhindered navigation along the Dnipro River in areas where it runs along the line of contact; and 4) Compensation and assistance for reconstruction (no funding sources and amounts indicated). The

"final offer" also refers to U.S. control over the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, which would be considered Ukrainian territory, with electricity from it supplied to both Ukraine and Russia.

Not surprisingly, when President Zelenskyy was informed about the Russian conditions for a ceasefire, he objected strenuously to all of them and made it clear that Ukraine won't agree to any of them. Yesterday, he said, "There is nothing to talk about – it is our land, the land of the Ukrainian people." In a long post on Truth Social, Trump said, "Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, is boasting on the front page of The Wall Street Journal that, "Ukraine will not legally recognize the occupation of Crimea. There's nothing to talk about here." This statement is very harmful to the Peace Negotiations with Russia in that Crimea was lost years ago…and is not even a point of discussion. Nobody is asking Zelenskyy to recognize Crimea as Russian Territory but, if he wants Crimea, why didn't they fight for it eleven years ago when it was handed over to Russia without a shot being fired? …. It's inflammatory statements like Zelenskyy's that makes it so difficult to settle this War…The situation for Ukraine is dire — He can have Peace or, he can fight for another three years before losing the whole Country. I have nothing to do with Russia, but have much to do with wanting to save, on average, five thousand Russian and Ukrainian soldiers a week, who are dying for no reason whatsoever. The statement made by Zelenskyy today will do nothing but prolong the "killing field," and nobody wants that! We are very close to a Deal, but the man with "no cards to play" should now, finally, GET IT DONE. I look forward to being able to help Ukraine, and Russia, get out of this Complete and Total MESS, that would have never started if I were President!"

On Tuesday, Yuri Ushakov, Putin's foreign policy adviser, said Putin would be meeting with Witkoff later in the week. Karoline Leavitt, the White House Press Secretary, confirmed the report later that day. Witkoff and Putin are expected to meet Friday and continue their discussion of the terms of a possible ceasefire. In the meantime, the war continues, with no end in sight.

David R. Cameron
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