Peskov suggests date for third round of Russia-Ukraine talks likely to be announced later this week.

Ukrainian and Russian negotiators at June 2 meeting in Istanbul.

In their first meeting in Istanbul on May 16, the Russian and Ukrainian delegations agreed that each side would return to the other side 1,000 prisoners of war over three days on May 23-25. Despite the fact that the war continued both on the ground and in the air in the form of missiles and drones, the exchange took place as scheduled and was completed. On June 2, the two teams of negotiators met again in Istanbul and discussed the memorandums each side had prepared prior to the meeting regarding a potential future peace agreement. The memorandums outlined a range of provisions such as the principles for a settlement, the timeframe for a possible peace agreement, and other matters including a potential temporary ceasefire. And building on the success of the May 23-25 exchange, the two sides agreed to exchange on an all-for-all basis prisoners of war who were severely wounded or seriously ill or are 18 to 25. They also agreed to return 6,000 bodies of soldiers killed in the war.

Yesterday, Russian Presidential Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov said the Russian and Ukrainian negotiating teams are continuing their contacts at an expert level: "We're continuing our work as part of the dialogue at an expert level, which is ongoing. The agreements reached during the second round of the Istanbul talks are being implemented. Exchanges of prisoners and bodies are also continuing.” And importantly, he said “there will soon be more clarity holding the third round of the negotiations. Therefore, we’re continuing the process, and certainly, we’re concentrated above all on addressing our issues, those issues that are given priority on our agenda, namely the attainment of the goals set by President Putin at the start of the special miliary

operation. We expect some estimates for the third round this week. It's hard to guess now, but some dates should appear." In response to a question whether Russia was seeking Ukraine's surrender, he noted that at Friday's plenary session of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum Putin had said, "We're not seeking Ukraine's surrender. But we insist on it acknowledging the realities on the ground" – which means, of course, Ukraine accepting Russia's continued control of the territory in Ukraine it now holds.

David R. Cameron
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