**After Anchorage, still no ceasefire. Zelenskyy & European leaders will meet with Trump tomorrow in Washington.**

Presidents Putin and Trump at press conference following their meeting Friday in Anchorage.

On August 6, Steve Witkoff, President Trump's Special Envoy who had met with President Putin on several occasions earlier this year, met with him again in Moscow for three hours. After the meeting, Witkoff spoke with President Trump, who subsequently said the meeting was "highly productive." In a phone conversation with a number of European leaders, including President Zelenskyy, Trump said he would meet in person with Putin, possibly sometime in the following week, and would later meet with both Putin and Zelenskyy.

On August 8, Trump posted a message on Truth Social that "the highly anticipated meeting between myself, as President of the United States of America, and President Vladimir Putin, of Russia, will take place next Friday, August 15, 2025, in the Great State of Alaska." Later, in comments to reporters, he suggested there had been some discussion between Putin and Witkoff about potentially "swapping" territory as part of a ceasefire agreement: "We're actually looking to get some back and some swapping. It's complicated. It's actually nothing easy. It's very complicated. But we're going to get some back. We're going to get some switched. There'll be some swapping of territories to the betterment of both and…. we'll be talking about that either later or tomorrow or whatever." Putin's plan, as Witkoff described it and Trump subsequently described to the European leaders, including President Zelenskyy, would involve Ukraine turning over to Russia the Donbas area of eastern Ukraine, which consists of the regions of Luhansk and Donetsk, and Russia relinquishing the portions of Kherson and

Zaporizhzhia regions in southeastern Ukraine it currently holds. Needless to say, there was an uproar, not only among the Ukrainians but also among the European leaders as well. Zelenskyy understandably objected strenuously to the plan, saying in a statement soon after Trump announced the meeting that "Ukrainians will not give their land to the occupier." And in a video address, he said, "Any decisions made against us, any decisions made without Ukraine, are at the same time decisions against peace…We will not give Russia any awards for what it has done." It was widely assumed, incorrectly, that Trump got the message and understood, going into Friday's meeting with Putin in Anchorage, that "swapping" was off the table.

On Friday, Presidents Putin and Trump met for three and a half hours in Anchorage. At the press conference after the meeting, Putin, who spoke first, said, "Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen. We held our talks in a constructive and mutually respectful atmosphere, and they have proved substantive and productive…..As you know, Russian- American summit talks have not been held for over four years. That is a long time. This period has proved exceptionally difficult for bilateral relations, and, let's face it, they have deteriorated to their lowest point since the Cold War. And this does not benefit either our countries or the world in general. Obviously, sooner or later we had to remedy the situation, to move from confrontation to dialogue, and in this regard, an in-person meeting between the two heads of state was really overdue – of course, with serious and thorough preparations, and this work has been done."

Continuing, he said, "President Trump and I have established very good direct contacts. We have had frank conversations on the phone multiple times. As you know, the US President's Special Envoy, Mr. Witkoff, has visited us in Russia several times. Our aides and heads of foreign ministries have maintained regular contacts. As you are well aware, the situation around Ukraine is one of the key issues. We acknowledge the commitment of the US administration and President Trump personally to help resolve the Ukrainian conflict, and the President's willingness to understand the root causes and its origins. I have repeatedly said that the developments in Ukraine present fundamental threats to Russia's national security. Moreover, we have always considered the Ukrainian people – and I have said this many times – a brotherly people, no matter how strange it may sound in today's circumstances. We share the same roots, and the current situation is tragic and deeply painful to us. Therefore, our country is sincerely interested in ending this. Yet, we are convinced that, for the conflict resolution in Ukraine to be long-term and lasting, all the root causes of the crisis, which have been repeatedly explained, must be eliminated; all of Russia's legitimate concerns must be taken into account, and a fair security balance must be restored in Europe and the rest of the world."

"I agree with President Trump. He said today that Ukraine's security must be ensured by all means. Of course, we are ready to work on this. Hopefully, the understanding we have reached will bring us closer to this goal and open up the road to peace in Ukraine. We hope that Kiev and the European capitals will take the current developments

constructively and will neither try to put up obstacles nor attempt to disrupt the emerging progress with provocative acts or behind-the-scenes plots. I would like to thank Mr. Trump for our joint work and for the friendly and trust-based conversation. The main thing is that there was a commitment on both sides to produce a result. We see that the US President has a clear idea of what he wants to achieve, that he sincerely cares about his country's prosperity while showing awareness of Russia's national interests."

"I hope that today's agreements will become a reference point, not only for resolving the Ukrainian problem but also for resuming the pragmatic business relations between Russia and the United States. To conclude, I would like to add the following. I remember that in 2022, during my last contacts with the former US administration, I tried to convince my former US counterpart that we should not bring the situation to a point fraught with serious repercussions in the form of hostilities, and I said directly at the time that it would be a big mistake. Today, we hear President Trump saying: "If I had been president, there would have been no war." I believe it would have been so. I confirm this because President Trump and I have established a generally very good, businesslike and trustworthy contact. And I have every reason to believe that, as we move along this path, we can reach – and the sooner the better – the end of the conflict in Ukraine."

President Trump said, "Thank you very much, Mr. President. That was very profound, and I will say that I believe we had a very productive meeting. There were many, many points that we agreed on, most of them, I would say, a couple of big ones that we have not quite gotten there, but we have made some headway. So, there is no deal until there is a deal. I will call up NATO in a little while. I will call up the various people that I think are appropriate, and I will, of course, call up President Zelenskyy and tell him about today's meeting. It is ultimately up to them. They are going to have to agree with Marco [Rubio] and Steve [Witkoff] and some of the great people from the Trump administration who have come here, Scott [Bessent] and John Ratcliffe. Thank you very much…. We really made some great progress today. I have always had a fantastic relationship with President Putin, with Vladimir. We had many tough meetings, good meetings…. So just to put it very quickly, I am going to start making a few phone calls and tell them what happened. We had an extremely productive meeting, and many points were agreed to. There are just a very few that are left. Some are not that significant. One is probably the most significant, but we have a very good chance of getting there. We did not get there but we have a very good chance of getting there. I would like to thank President Putin and his entire team, whose faces, who I know, in many cases, otherwise, other than that, whose faces I get to see all the time in the newspapers. But we had some good meetings over the years, right? Good, productive meetings over the years, and we hope to have that in the future. But let's do the most productive one right now. We are going to stop, really, five, six, seven thousand, thousands of people a week from being killed, and President Putin wants to see that as much as I do. So again, Mr. President, I would like to thank you very

much, and we will speak to you very soon, and probably see you again very soon. Thank you very much, Vladimir." The press conference concluded with Putin saying, in response to Trump's comment about seeing him again very soon, "Next time in Moscow." They took no questions from the press.

President Trump subsequently spoke with President Zelenskyy and with the European leaders and reportedly informed them that Putin had demanded, as he had told Witkoff in Moscow, that, in exchange for ending Russia's offensive operations in Ukraine's southeastern regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia and withdrawing from both, Ukraine would have to withdraw from the portion of Donetsk region it still holds and Russia would retain all of the two regions – Luhansk and Donetsk– that make up the Donbas. Evidently, "swapping" territory – specifically, Russia getting the Donbas in exchange for Ukraine keeping Kherson and Zaporizhzhia – is still on Putin's agenda and still the price he insists Ukraine pay for a ceasefire.

Zelenskyy spoke on the phone with Trump for an hour after the Anchorage meeting. After the phone conversation, he wrote that, "President Trump informed [me] about the meeting with the Russian leader and the main points of their discussion," and said he will fly to Washington Monday to meet with Trump. Trump, meanwhile, told a reporter that he had indeed discussed the "swapping" of territory with Putin. He said, "I think those are points that we negotiated, and those are points that we largely have agreed on. I think we're pretty close to a deal. Ukraine has to agree to it." But, he added, "Maybe they'll say no." He said, "I think those are points that we negotiated, and those are points that we largely have agreed on. I think we're pretty close to a deal. Ukraine has to agree to it." But, he added, "Maybe they'll say no." Later, Trump said on Truth Social that he expects to speak with Zelenskyy Monday afternoon and that, "if all works out, then we'll schedule a meeting with President Putin." He added that, in his opinion, "the best way to end the horrible war" would be "to go directly to a Peace Agreement, which would end the war, and not a mere Ceasefire Agreement, which oftentimes do not hold up."

The Trump-Zelenskyy call was joined by a number of European leaders. Following the call, those leaders – President Macron, Prime Minister Meloni, Chancellor Merz, Prime Minister Starmer, President Stubb, Prime Minister Tusk, European Council President Costa, and European Commission President von der Leyen – had a second call with Zelenskyy and then issued the following statement: "Early this morning, President Trump debriefed us and President Zelenskyy following his meeting with the Russian President in Alaska on 15 August 2025. Leaders welcomed President Trump's efforts to stop the killing in Ukraine, end Russia's war of aggression, and achieve just and lasting peace. As President Trump said, "There's no deal until there's a deal." As envisioned by President Trump, the next step must now be further talks including President Zelenskyy, whom he will meet soon. We are also ready to work with President Trump and President Zelenskyy towards a trilateral summit with European support. We are clear that Ukraine must have ironclad security guarantees to effectively defend its

sovereignty and territorial integrity. We welcome President Trump's statement that the U.S. is prepared to give security guarantees. The Coalition of the Willing is ready to play an active role. No limitations should be placed on Ukraine's armed forces or on its cooperation with third countries. Russia cannot have a veto against Ukraine's pathway to EU and NATO. It will be up to Ukraine to make decisions on its territory. International borders must not be changed by force. Our support to Ukraine will continue. We are determined to do more to keep Ukraine strong in order to achieve an end to the fighting and a just and lasting peace. As long as the killing in Ukraine continues, we stand ready to uphold the pressure on Russia. We will continue to strengthen sanctions and wider economic measures to put pressure on Russia's war economy until there is a just and lasting peace. Ukraine can count on our unwavering solidarity as we work towards a peace that safeguards Ukraine's and Europe's vital security interests."

Starmer also issued a separate statement: "President Trump's efforts have brought us closer than ever before to ending Russia's illegal war in Ukraine. His leadership in pursuit of an end to the killing should be commended. While progress has been made, the next step must be further talks involving President Zelenskyy. The path to peace cannot be decided without him. This morning, I spoke to President Zelenskyy, President Trump and other European partners, and we all stand ready to support this next phase. I welcome the openness of the United States, alongside Europe, to provide robust security guarantees to Ukraine as part of any deal. This is important progress and will be crucial in deterring Putin from coming back for more. In the meantime, until he stops his barbaric assault, we will keep tightening the screws on his war machine with even more sanctions, which have already had a punishing impact on the Russin economy and its people. Our unwavering support of Ukraine will continue as long as it takes."

Today a number of European leaders – Starmer, Macron, Merz, Meloni, Stubb, von der Leyen, and NATO Secretary General Rutte – confirmed they will join Zelenskyy when he travels to Washington for his meeting tomorrow with Trump. Their joint presence will obviously convey not only Europe's collective support for Ukraine but also for Zelenskyy personally and will presumably protect him from verbal pressure from Trump to accept Putin's territorial demands in exchange for a ceasefire and/or the start of peace talks.

Also today, Zelenskyy met with von der Leyen at EU headquarters in Brussels to discuss some of the issues related to the EU-Ukraine relationship that may be discussed tomorrow in Washington. At a joint press conference, von der Leyen said she was glad to be joining Zelenskyy and the other European leaders in Washington tomorrow. And importantly, she also said, "We will continue to support you for as long as it takes," adding that the EU backs a trilateral meeting between Ukraine, Russia and the United States. She also noted that the EU will move forward next month with its 19$^{th}$ package of sanctions on Russia unless it ends its wars against Ukraine. "Since the territorial issue is so important, it should be discussed only by the leaders of Ukraine and Russia at the

trilateral Ukraine, United States, Russia," Zelenskyy told reporters at the European Commission on Sunday. "So far, Russia has given no sign that the trilateral will happen," he added.

On Friday, the attention of the world was focused on Anchorage and the meeting between Trump and Putin. Tomorrow, the attention of the world will be focused on Washington and the meeting between Trump and Zelenskyy. And in Ukraine, the war will continue, with no end in sight.

David R. Cameron
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