Zelenskyy & European leaders meet with Trump in Washington

Presidents Trump and Zelenskyy and other European leaders at the White House yesterday.

On Friday, Presidents Trump and Putin met for three and a half hours in Anchorage. After the meeting, Trump spoke with President Zelenskyy and a number of European leaders and described Putin's terms for ending Russia's offensive operations in Ukraine. Trump and Zelenskyy spoke for about an hour, after which Zelenskyy said he would fly to Washington and meet with Trump yesterday at the White House. In phone calls after the Anchorage meeting, Trump told a number of European leaders that Putin had demanded, as he had previously told Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff in Moscow on August 6, that, in exchange for ending Russia's offensive operations in Ukraine and withdrawing from the portions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions in southeastern Ukraine it now holds, Ukraine would have to withdraw from the portion of Donetsk region it still holds and accept Russian control of the regions of Luhansk and Donetsk that make up the Donbas. Trump subsequently told a reporter he had discussed "swapping" those territories: "I think those are points that we largely have agreed on. I think we're pretty close to a deal." But he added, "Ukraine has to agree to it. Maybe they'll say no." Later, Trump said on Truth Social that he expected to speak with Zelenskyy and that "if all works out, then we'll schedule a meeting with President Putin." He added that he thought "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 often times do not hold up."

Zelenskyy flew to Brussels on Sunday and met with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and then flew on to the U.S., arriving at Joint Base Andrews

Sunday night for his meeting yesterday with Trump. Several European leaders – from the left in the photo above, von der Leyen, Prime Minister Starmer, Finland President Stubb, and after Presidents Zelenskyy and Trump, President Macron, Prime Minister Meloni, Chancellor Merz, and NATO Secretary General Rutte – also flew to Washington and joined Zelenskyy at the White House yesterday.

After her meeting in Brussels with Zelenskyy, Von der Leyen made three key points: "First, we must have strong security guarantees to protect both Ukraine and Europe's vital security interest. Ukraine must be able to uphold its sovereignty and its territorial integrity. There can be no limitations on Ukrainian armed forces, be it cooperation with other third countries or assistance from other third countries – no limitations for the Ukrainian armed force…. We welcome President Trump's willingness to contribute to Article 5-like security guarantees for Ukraine. [Article 5 of the NATO Treaty states that an attack on one is an attack on all.] And the Coalition of the Willing, including the European Union, is ready to do its share…. My second point with regard to any territorial questions in Ukraine, our position is clear: International borders cannot be changed by force. These are decisions to be made by Ukraine and Ukraine alone, and the decisions cannot be taken without Ukraine at the table. My third and final point: As long as the bloodshed in Ukraine continues, Europe will maintain diplomatic and, in particular, economic pressure on Russia. We will continue to strengthen sanctions. We have adopted 18 packages so far, and we are advancing preparation for the 19th. This package will be forthcoming in early September. We know that sanctions are effective, we have already put Russia's immobilized assets to work for the benefit of Ukraine, and we will continue to put pressure on Russia's war economy to bring President Putin to the negotiation table."

Yesterday, President Zelenskyy met with President Trump at the White House for about an hour, after which they were joined by the European leaders – Starmer, Stubb, Macron, Meloni, Merz, Rutte, and von der Leyen – in a discussion that went on for several hours. According to a spokesperson for Zelenskyy, the talks are expected to continue today.

David R. Cameron
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