After U.S. discusses peace plan with Europeans and Ukraine, Witkoff and Kushner meet with Putin in Moscow.

U.S. & Ukraine representatives discussing President Trump's peace plan in Florida Sunday. (Facing the camera, Steve Witkoff, Secretary of State Rubio, and Jared Kushner.)

Witkoff and Kushner meeting with President Putin in Moscow yesterday.

On Nov. 20, President Trump issued a 28-point peace plan to end Russia's war against Ukraine. The plan was reportedly drafted by Steve Witkoff, President Trump's personal representative who has met on several occasions with President Putin in Moscow and St. Petersburg and with Putin's envoy, Kirill Dmitriev, with input from Secretary of State Rubio and Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and former presidential advisor.

Several of the 28 points in the plan raised concerns for Ukraine, NATO, and some European governments. Point 3, for example, stated, “It is expected that Russia will not invade neighboring countries and NATO will not expand further.” That Russia won’t invade neighboring countries and NATO won’t expand further may be an American expectation. But the words “NATO will not expand further” could be interpreted as an implicit commitment that the U.S. will oppose any further expansion of NATO and, if necessary – that is, if no other member state opposed a further expansion – would veto any further expansion of NATO.

Point 5 stated, “Ukraine will receive reliable security guarantees.” The text doesn’t indicate which state or states will provide those guarantees nor does it elaborate on what basis a security guarantee for Ukraine would be judged as “reliable.”

Point 6 stated “The size of the Ukrainian Armed Forces will be limited to 600,000 personnel.” The Ukrainian Armed Forces are currently estimated to have approximately 900,000 personnel with more than 2 million in reserve. The size of the Ukrainian Armed Forces is something Ukraine alone has the authority to decide and is not something the U.S. can unilaterally limit.

Point 7 stated “Ukraine agrees to enshrine in its constitution that it will not join NATO, and NATO agrees to include in its statutes a provision that Ukraine will not be admitted in the future.” Even if Ukraine were to enshrine that provision in its constitution, an agreement between the U.S. and Ukraine obviously can’t presume to speak for the member states of NATO and can’t mandate that NATO includes in its statutes a provision that Ukraine will never become a member.

Point 8 stated “NATO agrees not to station troops in Ukraine.” Obviously, a plan drafted by the U.S. can’t unilaterally decide that NATO will not station troops in Ukraine.

Point 10 stated “The U.S. guarantee: The U.S. will receive compensation for the guarantee.” The guarantee in question is presumably one of the “reliable security guarantees” mentioned in point 5. The notion that the U.S. will receive “compensation” for a security guarantee is not only highly unusual but quite extraordinary unless it is meant to refer to the costs that would be incurred by the U.S. in providing Ukraine with the “reliable security” mentioned in point 5.

Point 14 stated “Frozen funds will be used as follows: $100 billion in frozen Russian assets will be invested in US-led efforts to rebuild and invest in Ukraine; The US will receive 50% of the profits from this venture. Europe will add $100 billion to increase the amount of investment available for Ukraine’s reconstruction. Frozen European funds will be unfrozen. The remainder of the frozen Russian funds will be invested in a separate US-Russian investment vehicle that will implement joint projects in specific areas.” The plan doesn’t explain how $100 billion in frozen Russian assets will be made available for investment in U.S.-led efforts to rebuild Ukraine, it doesn’t explain how Europe will add $100 billion to the amount available for investment except to suggest it

will use the now-frozen Russian funds in European banks, which of course is a decision the Europeans might or might not make but which the U.S. cannot make, and it also neglects to mention that the EU is considering a proposal to provide Ukraine a €140 billion "reparations loan" based on the cash balances of the Russian financial assets that are frozen in EU banks to support the Ukrainian economy and cover its anticipated 2026-27 budget deficit, although Belgium is opposed to the plan and may block it when it is considered at the Dec. 18-19 European Council meeting. The plan also doesn't explain why the U.S. should receive 50% of the profits from a venture in which some unknown number of other states may participate and contribute some unknown portion of the funds – and why, for that matter, the U.S. should receive any profit at all for providing funds to assist the reconstruction of an economy severely damaged by war.

Point 19 stated that the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant will be put under the supervision of the IAEA and the electricity produced by it will be distributed equally between Russia and Ukraine – despite the fact that, although it's located in a Ukrainian region that has been unilaterally annexed by Russia, it's located in a portion of that region that is still controlled by Ukrainian forces.

Point 21 stated: "Territories: Crimea, Luhansk and Donetsk will be recognized as de facto Russian, including by the U.S. Kherson and Zaporizhzhia will be frozen along the line of contact, which will mean de facto recognition along the line of contact. Russia will relinquish other agreed territories it controls outside the five regions. Ukrainian forces will withdraw from the part of Donetsk Oblast that they currently control, and this withdrawal zone will be considered a neutral demilitarized buffer zone, internationally recognized as territory belonging to the Russian Federation." Ukraine obviously strongly objects to this point – not only to the recognition of Crimea, Luhansk, and Donetsk as de facto Russian but also to the "de facto recognition" of the portions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions now held by Russia and to the stipulation that Ukraine will withdraw from the portion of Donetsk region it currently controls and that portion will be considered a "neutral demilitarized buffer zone, internationally recognized as territory belonging to the Russian Federation." Obviously, Ukraine cannot accept, and will not accept, any of the provisions in this point.

Point 28 stated, "Once all parties agree to this memorandum, the ceasefire will take effect immediately after both sides retreat to agreed points to begin implementation of the agreement." Ukraine objects to this point and intends, with the support of the Coalition of the Willing, to retain control of all of the territory it will hold at the time the ceasefire takes effect.

Not surprisingly, release of the plan and, in particular, the points pertaining to Ukrainian territory (#21), Ukraine's military (#6), and NATO (#3, 7, and 8), immediately raised concerns not only in Ukraine but with European leaders and prompted a number of conversations and discussions among those leaders. On Nov. 21, the day after the plan was issued, Prime Minister Starmer spoke with President Macron, Chancellor Merz, and President Zelenskyy, after which he said the leaders had "reiterated their unwavering

commitment for a just and lasting peace for Ukraine. They underlined their support for President Trump's drive for peace and agreed that any solution must fully involve Ukraine, preserve its sovereignty, and ensure its security. The leaders agreed to coordinate with partners and allies in the coming days, including at the G20, as discussions on how best to achieve a lasting peace."

The next day, prior to the G20 summit in Johannesburg later that day, Starmer said "Today Ukraine's friends and partners will meet in the margins of the G20 summit to discuss how we can secure a full ceasefire and create the space for meaningful peace negotiations. We will discuss the current proposal on the table, and in support of President Trump's push for peace, look at how we can strengthen this plan for the next phase of negotiations…No one wants peace more than the Ukrainian people…. Ukraine has been ready to negotiate for months, while Russia has stalled and continued its murderous rampage. That is why we must all work together, with both the US and Ukraine, to secure a just and lasting peace once and for all. We will continue to coordinate closely with Washington and Kyiv to achieve that. However, we cannot simply wait for peace, we must strain every sinew to secure it. We must cut off Putin's finance flows by ending our reliance on Russian gas. It won't be easy, but it's the right thing to do. We must support Ukraine to repair and restore its energy supplies, callously destroyed by endless Russian attacks that have plunged thousands into the cold and darkness. And we must intensify work to pursue the proposal for reparations loans secured against Russian sovereign assets, ensuring Ukraine has the means to defend itself for years to come. We must now all fight hard for peace."

In their meeting at the G20, Starmer, Macron, Merz, and other European leaders agreed to meet the next day, Sunday, Nov. 23, in Geneva and continue their discussion of the U.S. plan. After that meeting, Starmer spoke with Trump and conveyed to him a sense of the reaction of the European leaders to the plan, including to several of the specific points in the plan. Starmer also spoke with President Zelenskyy about the talks in Geneva and the diplomatic discussions that took place following the talks in Geneva. T Today Starmer hosted a call involving Zelenskyy and Macron and the other leaders of the states participating in the Coalition of the Willing. After noting that Kyiv had once again suffered a huge Russian drone and missile attack last night, Starmer, turning to Macron, said, "And so the talks in Geneva, Emmanuel, were as you say good – progress was made. And I welcome some of the developments that have now come forward. It was a chance to ensure that the draft plan [i.e., Trump's plan] fully reflects Ukraine's interests and lays the ground for a lasting peace…. And of course some of our National Security Advisers were there in Geneva to support the talks. So I do think we're moving in a positive direction – and indications today that in large part the majority of the text looks as though, Volodymyr is indicating, could be accepted. But I'd just like to make a few points about the next steps…First, we do need to continue to support these negotiations – and be really clear about the fundamental principles that have driven this Coalition of the Willing in the nine months since we set it up. We're nine months old, we have now 36 countries that are now involved in this. And the principles we've

always been driven by are: Ukraine should be able to defend itself in the future. Hugely important. Ukraine's sovereignty must be maintained. And that matters about Ukraine, and its future must be determined by Ukraine…And of course, our US friends recognize that elements relating to Europe and NATO …would need the consent of Europe and NATO members. Secondly, we should keep up our work on preparing robust security guarantees. As Emmanuel has said, that's the driving purpose behind this Coalition. And security guarantees were an important element of the draft US plan. Because Ukraine needs real reassurance that Russia cannot come again in the future. And so when we say peace, it must be lasting peace. That will not happen if we don't have robust security guarantees. So we need to prepare the planning and financing to build Ukraine's True Force so it can defend itself. The Multinational Force Ukraine will be a vital part of this."

President Macron, Chancellor Merz, and other leaders, while noting that Trump's plan "includes important elements that will be essential for a just and lasting peace," nevertheless publicly objected to some of the provisions. Meanwhile, Witkoff and Kushner discussed the plan with Rustem Umerov, President Zelenskyy's national security adviser, and U.S. Secretary of the Army Daniel Driscoll presented the plan to Zelenskyy. Trump initially said he expected Ukraine to agree to the plan by last Thursday. But Ukraine, several European governments, and NATO expressed their strong opposition to several of the 28 points in the plan, and after discussions among the European leaders at the G20 summit in Johannesburg and then in Geneva, the plan was as reportedly amended and the amended plan discussed on Sunday with Ukrainian officials at Hallandale Beach in Florida.

Last week President Trump announced he would send Witkoff yesterday to Moscow to discuss the amended plan with President Putin and on Monday Witkoff, accompanied by Jared Kushner, flew to Moscow. Yesterday, Witkoff and Kushner met for five hours with Putin, who was accompanied at the meeting by Presidential Aide Yury Ushakov and Special Presidential Representative for Investment and Economic Cooperation with Foreign Countries and CEO of the Russian Direct Investment Fund Kirill Dmitriev.

David R. Cameron
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