Russia & Ukraine agree to President Trump request for three-day ceasefire and exchange of POWs

Latest UK Defence Intelligence update on the battlefield situation in Ukraine.

On May 7, 1945, Gen. Alfred Jodl, the Chief of Staff of the German Army, signed four Instruments of Surrender with representatives of the U.S., the UK, the USSR, and France at the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) in a brick schoolhouse in Reims, France. The instruments ordered all German forces to cease active operations at 11:01 p.m. on May 8, 1945. The Soviet chief of staff expressed concern about the continuing battle between the German and Soviet forces in the east and wanted a separate Act of Military Surrender with certain additions and alterations signed by Germany. Those documents were signed in Berlin at 11:01 p.m. on May 8, 1945, by which time it was already May 9 in Moscow, which is why the Soviet Union celebrated, and Russia now celebrates, May 9 as Victory Day.

Ukraine celebrated a Day of Remembrance and Reconciliation on May 8, followed by celebration of Victory Day over Nazism in World War II on May 9, from 2015 to 2023. But in the wake of Russia's war against Ukraine, on May 8, 2023, President Zelenskyy submitted legislation to the Verkhovna Rada (Ukraine's parliament) establishing May 8 as the Day of Remembrance and Victory over Nazism in World War II 1939-1945. On May 29, 2023, the parliament cancelled the celebration of Victory Day over Nazism in World War II on May 9 and made the Day of Remembrance and Victory over Nazism in World War II 1939-1945 on May 8 a national holiday

May 8 and 9 are days for Ukrainians and Russians, respectively, to celebrate the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in World War II. But they are also days to remember that more than 8 million Soviet military personnel – possibly as many as 11 million – and 15 to 20 million Soviet civilians were killed in the war. And they

are days for citizens in both countries to mourn the loss of so many of their fellow citizens in the current war.

On Monday, Russia's Defense Ministry announced a unilateral two-day ceasefire in Ukraine yesterday and today to mark the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II. But it warned that if Ukraine attempted to disrupt Russia's May 9 celebration in Red Square, Russia would carry out a "massive missile strike on the center of Kyiv." In response, President Zelenskyy said Ukraine would observe a truce beginning at 12 a.m. on Wednesday and would respond in kind to Russian actions from that moment on while the truce was in effect.

On Friday, President Trump announced on social media that Russia and Ukraine had agreed to a three-day ceasefire: "I am pleased to announce that there will be a THREE-DAY CEASEFIRE (May 9th, 10th, and 11th) in the War between Russia and Ukraine. The Celebration in Russia is for Victory Day but, likewise, in Ukraine, because they were also a big part and factor of World War II." He said the ceasefire would include the exchange of 1,000 prisoners of war by each country. He said he had made his request "directly" to the two presidents. "Hopefully, it is the beginning of the end of a very long, deadly, and hard-fought War." He added that talks continue over ending the war "and we are getting closer and closer every day." President Zelenskyy for his part said Ukraine's decision was shaped in part by the prospect of freeing some of its prisoners of war: "Red Square matters less to us than the lives of Ukrainian prisoners of war who can be brought home." Subsequently, President Zelenskyy issued a formal decree declaring Red Square off-limits for any Ukrainian attacks for the duration of the Russian celebration of May 9.

In a comment posted on President Putin's official site, his foreign policy aide Yury Ushakov said in a post, "On the instructions from President of Russia Vladimir Putin, I confirm that the Russian side considers acceptable the initiative just proposed by US President Donald Trump concerning a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine for the purpose of conducting a prisoner exchange. The relevant understanding was reached during our telephone contacts with the US administration. In turn, US representatives were in contact with Kiev. The key agreement is to carry out, during the ceasefire period from May 9 to May 11 inclusive, an exchange of 1,000 prisoners from each side. We welcome this initiative, which follows up on the recent telephone conversation between the Presidents of Russia and the Untied States, during which the leaders specifically noted that our countries had been allies during the Second World War and also discussed the possibility of a ceasefire during the Victory Day celebrations. It is important that President Trump's initiative is specifically timed to coincide with the 81st anniversary of Victory over Nazism, our sacred holiday. Thank you."

Hopefully, the three-day ceasefire will be extended and followed by a resumption in talks among American, Russian, Ukrainian, and European officials that will bring about an enduring end to a war that has been immensely costly, in terms of the numbers killed or wounded, for both sides.

David R. Cameron
May 9, 2026