

Ukraine's Zelenskiy Says Ready for Russian Escalation, Claims Coup Plot Uncovered

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy. [president.gov.ua](https://www.president.gov.ua)

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy [said](#) Friday that Ukraine is ready for any escalation in tensions with Russia, and that his administration had uncovered a plot for a coup in early December.

The comments come as Russia musters military units on its border with Ukraine. Moscow has dismissed growing Western claims that Russia may be preparing to invade Ukraine, instead accusing NATO of provocations.

"There is a threat today that there will be war tomorrow," Zelenskiy told a marathon press conference with Ukrainian and international media. "We are entirely prepared for an escalation."

Zelenskiy also called on Russian President Vladimir Putin to deny he was planning to invade

Ukraine.

"The president of Russia should say in public: 'We are not planning this'," he said.

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg repeated Western concerns about the build-up on Friday and warned that "if Russia uses force against Ukraine, that will have costs, that will have consequences."

Kiev has been at war with pro-Russian rebels in eastern Ukraine for nearly eight years in a conflict that has taken over 13,000 lives. Ukraine and its Western allies accuse Russia of funding and arming the rebels, claims Moscow denies.

Coup plot

Zelenskiy did not give details of the coup plot or accuse the Russian state of involvement, although he did say it involved Russian citizens.

"I received information that a coup d'etat will take place in our country on Dec. 1-2," he said.

Zelenskiy said the Ukrainian security services obtained audio recordings in which the alleged plotters — named only as "representatives" of Ukraine and Russia — discuss their plans, mentioning billionaire Rinat Akhmetov's possible involvement.

He clarified that he believes Akhmetov, an energy tycoon whose media holdings have ramped up criticism of Zelenskiy in recent weeks, is not involved in the coup plot himself.

"Let's just say [the plotters] are discussing with Russia Rinat Akhmetov's participation in the coup d'état in Ukraine, which will attract \$1 billion," he said.

The Kremlin denied any involvement.

"We don't engage in that," Interfax [quoted](#) Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov as telling reporters.

Zelenskiy's "de-oligarchization" campaign to reduce the influence of Ukraine's wealthiest people on the country's politics has been met with criticism from the Ukrainian elite.

AFP contributed reporting.

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