

Putin Drops Peace Deal in Favor of Ukraine Land Grab – FT

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Russian President Vladimir Putin during an Easter service at the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour on April 24, 2022. **Sergei Fadeichev/TASS**

Russian President Vladimir Putin has dropped plans for a peace deal and appears set on capturing more Ukrainian territory after failing to secure a quick victory in the first phase of the war, the Financial Times [reported](#) Sunday, citing three sources briefed on conversations with him.

"There was hope for a deal. Putin was going back and forth," one of the people said.

But talks stalled after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky accused Putin of war crimes in Bucha and Mariupol. The reportedly infuriated Putin signaled peace efforts were at a "dead end" after the sinking of the Moskva missile cruiser.

"Putin was against signing anything... after the Moskva he doesn't look like a winner, because it was humiliating," the source added. "He needs to find a way to come out of this a winner."

Negotiators suggested Putin switched to a land-grab strategy because he told European Council President Charles Michel in a call Friday that Ukraine had "put up a wall" and it was "not the right time" to meet Zelensky, according to the Financial Times.

"He wants everything to be decided before their personal meeting," said a person involved in peace talks, adding that Putin is avoiding meeting Zelensky "with all his might."

A top Russian general said Friday that the second phase of the operation would involve [taking control](#) of east and south Ukraine to provide a land corridor to annexed Crimea.

Officials are increasingly worried that Russia could resort to using tactical nuclear weapons if it suffers further setbacks in the conflict, the Financial Times cited two people as saying.

Putin has also insisted in talks that Russian troops do not target civilians, a distorted view apparently presented to him by generals and depicted on Russian television, the newspaper reported.

"Putin sincerely believes in the nonsense he hears on [Russian] television and he wants to win big," said one person briefed on the talks.

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