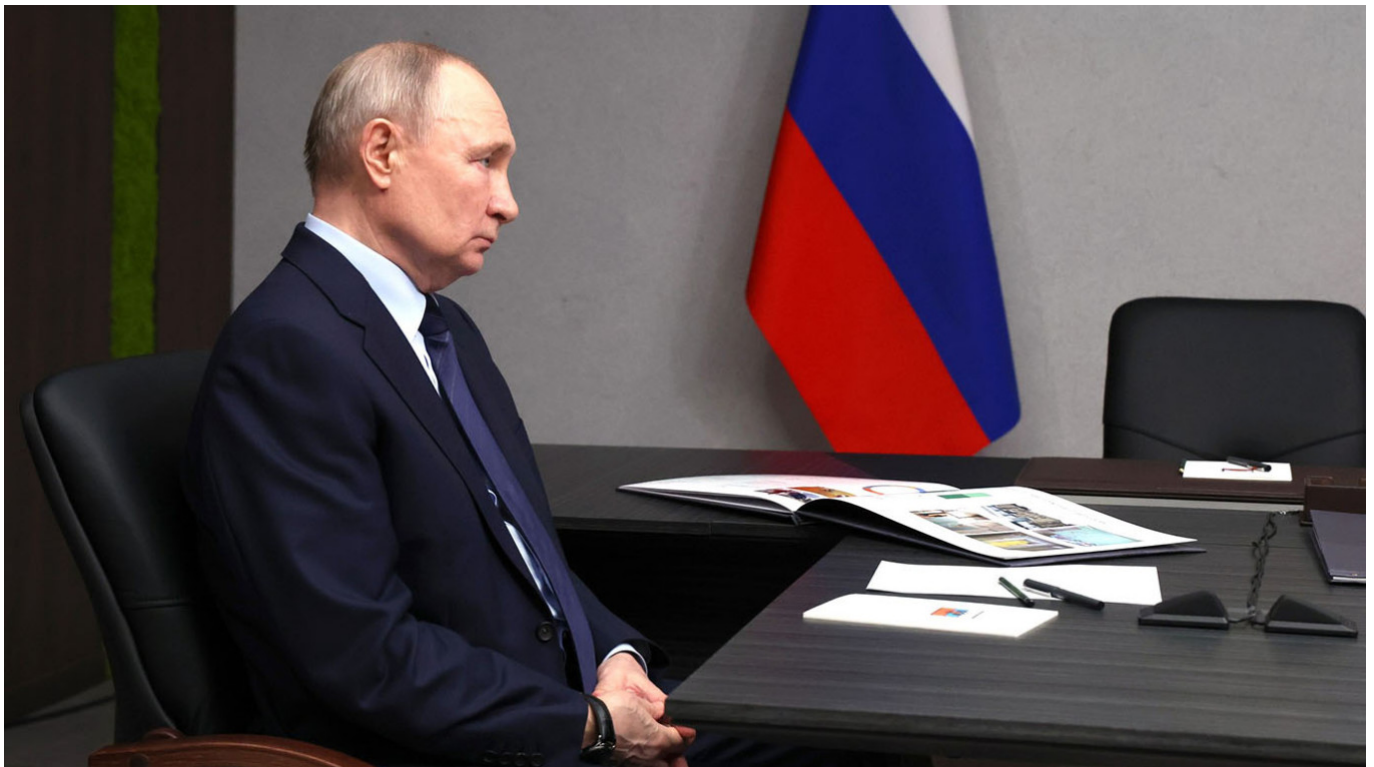


Putin Says Ukraine Peace Talks Possible, But Not With Zelensky

By [AFP](#)

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Vladimir Putin. kremlin.ru

Russian President Vladimir Putin said late Tuesday that his country could hold peace talks with Ukraine, but still ruled out speaking directly with President Volodymyr Zelensky, whom he described as an "illegitimate" leader.

"If [Zelensky] wants to participate in the negotiations, I will send people to take part," Putin said in comments to state TV journalist Pavel Zarubin, calling the Ukrainian leader "illegitimate" since his presidential term expired last year during martial law.

"If there is a desire to negotiate and find a compromise, let anyone lead the negotiations there... Naturally, we will strive for what suits us, what corresponds to our interests," the Kremlin leader added.

Putin also claimed that fighting in Ukraine would end in two months or less if the West cut its

support to Kyiv.

"They will not exist for a month if the money and, in a broad sense, the bullets run out. Everything would be over in a month and a half or two," the Russian president said.

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Zekensky later responded by saying that Putin was "afraid" of negotiations and was using "cynical tricks" to prolong the nearly three-year conflict.

"Today, Putin once again confirmed that he is afraid of negotiations, afraid of strong leaders, and does everything possible to prolong the war," Zelensky wrote on X.

Since taking office last week, U.S. President Donald Trump has put pressure on both sides to end the war, threatening tougher sanctions on Russia while also claiming that Zelensky is ready to negotiate a "deal."

Kyiv has warned against it being excluded from any peace talks between Moscow and Washington, accusing Putin of wanting to "manipulate" Trump.

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