Trump Team to Meet Russians, Ukrainians in Saudi Arabia – U.S. Officials

By [AFP](#)

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ROBERTO SCHMIDT/AFP

A senior team from U.S. President Donald Trump's administration will start talks in Saudi Arabia with Russian and Ukrainian negotiators on ending the Ukraine war, U.S. officials said Saturday.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio, White House National Security Advisor Mike Waltz and Trump's Middle East negotiator Steve Witkoff will head to Saudi for the talks, the officials said.

The move comes just days after Trump announced that he had spoken to Russian President Vladimir Putin for the first time since returning to office and that they had agreed to start talks on a ceasefire in Ukraine. The officials gave no further details of when the meetings

would happen or when the officials would travel.

But Rubio had already been due to visit Saudi Arabia as part of his first tour of the Middle East, which began on Saturday when he arrived in Israel, an AFP journalist reported.

Rubio earlier Saturday had a telephone call with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov, in which he "reaffirmed President Trump's commitment to finding an end to the conflict in Ukraine," the State Department said.

Former property developer Witkoff was heavily involved in a prisoner exchange deal earlier this week that paved the way for the call between Trump and Putin.

Witkoff even traveled to Moscow to bring home US detainee Marc Fogel.

In a social media post announcing the Putin call earlier this week, Trump had said he had tasked Rubio, Waltz, Witkoff and CIA chief John Ratcliffe to immediately get to work on a deal with Russia to end the Ukraine war.

Kyiv and its European allies were however blindsided by Trump's sudden move to start negotiations with Russia.

Both fear being frozen out of negotiations on Ukraine's future after the biggest land invasion in Europe since World War II.