

Zelensky Offers to Resign in Exchange for Ukrainian NATO Membership

By [AFP](#)

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Russia's TASS news agency reported that U.S. and Russian diplomats would meet in the next week. **AP Photo/ Ivan Sekretarev/ TASS**

Volodymyr Zelensky said Sunday — the eve of the third anniversary of Russia's invasion — that he was ready to quit as Ukraine's president if it meant Kyiv would be admitted to the NATO military alliance.

He spoke as Russia's TASS news agency reported that U.S. and Russian diplomats would meet in the next week, a follow-up to Riyadh talks between Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

Zelensky has faced fierce criticism from the new U.S. administration and said he wants to meet Donald Trump before the U.S. president meets his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin.

Zelensky has been calling for Ukraine to be given NATO membership as part of any deal to end

the war, but the Washington-led alliance has been reluctant to make a pledge.

"If there is peace for Ukraine, if you really need me to leave my post, I am ready. ... I can exchange it for NATO," Zelensky told a Kyiv press conference, adding he would depart "immediately" if necessary.

Zelensky and Trump have been engaged in a war of words since U.S. and Russian officials met last week in Saudi Arabia for their first high-level talks in three years. The move shook the West's policy to isolate the Kremlin and infuriated Ukrainian and European leaders as they were not invited.

In a series of verbal attacks over the last week, Trump has branded Zelensky a "dictator," falsely claimed Ukraine "started" the war and said, contrary to independent opinion polls, that Zelensky was unpopular at home.

Zelensky said he was not "offended" by Trump's comments and was ready to test his popularity in elections once martial law ends in Ukraine.

"One would be offended by the word 'dictator,' if he was a dictator," Zelensky told the press conference.

"I want very much from Trump understanding of each other," he said, adding that "security guarantees" from the U.S. president were "much needed."

The Ukrainian leader also called for Trump to meet with him before any summit with Putin. He added that there had been "progress" on a deal to give the United States preferential access to Ukraine's critical resources.

As its troops advance on the battlefield and it continues massive aerial attacks, Russia has revelled in the diplomat spat between Trump and Zelensky.

Earlier, the Kremlin hailed dialogue between Trump and Vladimir Putin — whom spokesman Dmitry Peskov called two "extraordinary" presidents — as "promising."

Despite Zelensky's push for long-term security assistance and Trump talking up a peace deal, it is unclear whether the U.S. moves can bring Moscow and Kyiv closer to a truce.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres meanwhile called Sunday for a Ukraine peace deal that respects the country's "territorial integrity."

Scrambling to respond to Trump's dramatic policy reversal, French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer will travel to Washington this week to make the case for supporting Ukraine.

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