

Russia, Ukraine must make concessions to end war, says Rubio

Talks between US President Donald Trump and Russian leader Vladimir Putin produced enough movement to justify a meeting with Ukrainian and European leaders, US secretary of state Marco Rubio told CBS on Sunday.

Rubio also said both Russia and Ukraine would have to make concessions to end the war, adding that the US might not be able to produce a scenario guaranteeing peace. "I'm not saying we're on the verge of a peace deal, but I am saying we saw movement, enough to justify a follow-up meeting with Zelensky and the Europeans," Rubio said. His comments were among the first by senior US officials present at the talks with Putin. In a social media post, Trump wrote, "Big progress on Russia. Stay tuned!" he gave no details.

Speaking separately to Fox News, Rubio said the talks had narrowed down the key issues. These included drawing borders, long-term security guarantees for Kyiv, and which military alliances Ukraine could have, he said, adding "there's a lot of work that remains."

Putin has ruled out Ukraine becoming a member of Nato. Article 5 of the alliance's charter is a mutual defence pact obliging allies to defend a member from attacks.

Steve Witkoff, Trump's special envoy to Russia, told CNN the US side had won "the concession that the US could offer Article Five-like protection." Pressed for details, he said "the US is potentially prepared to be able to give Article Five security guarantees, but not from Nato, directly from the US, and other European countries." This would be one of the topics for discussion Monday, he said.

Sources said Trump and Putin discussed proposals for Russia to relinquish pockets of occupied Ukraine in exchange for Ukraine ceding a swathe of fortified land in the east.

"We may not like it, it may not be pleasant, it may be distasteful, but in order for there to be an end of the war, there are things Russia wants that it cannot get, and there are things Ukraine wants that it's not going to get," said Rubio.



Workers remove debris in a block of flats damaged by overnight shelling in Donetsk Sunday

Outline emerges of Moscow's peace proposal to Kyiv

Russia would relinquish tiny pockets of occupied Ukraine and Kyiv would cede swathes of its eastern land which Moscow has been unable to capture, under peace proposals discussed by Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump at their Alaska summit, sources briefed on Moscow's thinking said.

At face value, at least some of the demands would present huge challenges for Ukraine's leadership to accept.

Putin's offer ruled out a ceasefire until a comprehensive deal is reached. Under the proposed Russian deal, Kyiv would fully withdraw from the eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions in return for a Russian pledge to freeze the front lines in the southern regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, the sources said. Ukraine has already rejected any retreat from Ukrainian land such as the Donetsk region.

Russia would be prepared to return comparatively small tracts of Ukrainian land it has occupied in the northern Sumy and northeastern Kharkiv regions.

Sources said they knew Putin was also seeking — at the very least — formal recognition of Russian sovereignty over Crimea. It's not clear if that meant recognition by the US or all Western powers and Ukraine. REUTERS

In another interview with ABC, Secretary Rubio said if a deal could not be reached to end the Ukraine war, existing US sanctions on Russia would continue, and more could be added. REUTERS

Chinese Foreign Minister on two-day visit to India from today

NEW DELHI, Aug 17 (PTI)

CHINESE Foreign Minister



Wang Yi will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his two-day

visit to India beginning Monday, according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

The meeting, to be held on Tuesday, assumes significance as it is taking place days before Modi's planned trip to China to attend the annual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

Before calling on the Prime Minister, Wang will hold separate talks with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval that could see both sides deliberate on a range of key issues including border situation, trade and resumption of flight services.

Putin says, Russia wants to see Ukraine conflict end

MOSCOW, Aug 17 (IANS)

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin has said that Russia would like an early cessation of hostilities in Ukraine by peaceful means.

Putin said at a meeting on the results of his talks with US President Donald Trump that Russia respects the position of the US administration, which sees the need for an early cessation of hostilities, and Russia would like to move on to resolving all issues by peaceful means.

He said his visit to the US state of Alaska was timely and very useful, adding that the talks covered almost all areas of Russia-US cooperation, as well as a possible settlement of the Ukrainian crisis on a fair basis, Xinhua news agency reported.

He said the conversation with Trump was "very frank," and "brings us closer to the necessary decisions".

Putin put forward a demand that Ukraine needs to withdraw from the eastern Donetsk region as a condition for ending Moscow's war with Kyiv during the Alaska Summit with Trump on Friday.

However, the Russian President also told Trump that if his core demands were met, he would be open to freezing the rest of the frontline, according to a media report.

According to the report, Trump called Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and European leaders on Saturday to



communicate Putin's demand.

He also urged Ukraine and Europe to drop efforts to secure a ceasefire from Moscow.

Russia has been in partial control of the Donetsk region for more than a decade. If Putin's demand is met, he will get control of the territory where his forces have made the most gains in the war since November last year. Putin made it clear to Trump that his core demand of addressing 'the root causes' of the conflict still stands. He wants NATO's eastward expansion to end, meaning Ukraine would not be allowed to join the alliance.

But he is reportedly prepared to compromise on other issues, including territory, if he is satisfied that the "root causes" are addressed. Putin and Trump on Friday wrapped up their talks in the US city of Anchorage in Alaska, but no deal was reached.

The talks, which lasted about three hours, focused primarily on the Ukraine crisis, as well as on reshaping bilateral relations that have largely stalled in recent years.

Putin told Trump that in

exchange for Donetsk and Luhansk, he would halt further advances and freeze the frontline in the southern Ukrainian region of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, where Russian forces occupy significant areas.

Russian forces control about 70 percent of the Donetsk region. Ukraine still has control over the region's westernmost chain of cities, which are said to be critical to Kyiv's military operation and defences along the eastern front. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said that he would not swap territory with Russia and would not allow a second partition of the country.

He is meeting Trump on Monday in Washington, where this topic will certainly come up.

EUROPEAN LEADERS TO JOIN UKRAINE'S ZELENSKY FOR MEETING WITH TRUMP: EUROPEAN and NATO leaders announced Sunday they will join President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Washington for talks with President Donald Trump on ending Russia's war in Ukraine, with the possibility of US security guarantees now on the negotiating table.

Meanwhile, special US envoy Steve Witkoff said Sunday that Russian leader Vladimir Putin agreed at his summit with President Donald Trump to allow the US and European allies to offer Ukraine a security guarantee resembling NATO's collective defence mandate as part of an eventual deal to end the 3 1/2-year war.

Trump admin wants to end UN peacekeeping in Lebanon

WASHINGTON, Aug 17 (AP)

THE future of UN peacekeepers in Lebanon has split the United States and its European allies, raising implications for security in the Middle East and becoming the latest snag to vex relations between the US and key partners like France, Britain and Italy. At issue is the peacekeeping operation known as UNIFIL, whose mandate expires at the end of August and will need to be renewed by the UN Security Council to continue.

It was created to oversee the withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon after Israel's 1978 invasion, and its mission was expanded following the month-long 2006 war between Israel and the militant group Hezbollah.

The multinational force has played a significant role in mon-

itoring the security situation in southern Lebanon for decades, including during the Israel-Hezbollah war last year, but has drawn criticism from both sides and numerous US lawmakers, some of whom now hold prominent roles in President Trump's administration or wield new influence with the White House.

Trump administration political appointees came into office this year with the aim of shutting down UNIFIL as soon as possible.

They regard the operation as an ineffectual waste of money that is merely delaying the goal of eliminating Hezbollah's influence and restoring full security control to the Lebanese Armed Forces that the Government says it is not yet capable of doing.

After securing major cuts in US funding to the peacekeeping

force, Secretary of State Marco Rubio signed off early last week on a plan that would wind down and end UNIFIL in the next six months, according to Trump administration officials and congressional aides familiar with the discussions.

It's another step as the Trump administration drastically pares back its foreign affairs priorities and budget, including expressing scepticism of international alliances and cutting funding to UN agencies and missions. The transatlantic divide also has been apparent on issues ranging from Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza and the Russia-Ukraine conflict to trade, technology and free speech issues.



At WH meet, Zelensky to be joined by European leaders

Attempt To Keep Emerging Trump-Putin Bonhomie In Check

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

Washington: European leaders, including the heads of France, Germany, Britain and Italy, will join Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky at the White House on Monday for talks with President Trump that could determine the future course of many nations, including India on the economic front.

The Trump-engineered peace agreement envisages Kyiv giving up Russian-captured territory in return for non-Nato security guarantees, proposals the Europeans and Ukraine are chary of given the US President's convivial ties with Putin. But challenging Trump also risks continuing a war that Trump thinks Ukraine is certain to lose and fracturing the 75-year-old Atlantic alliance that has depended on the US for security.

European leaders at the Sunday meeting projected unity, welcoming US talk of a security guarantee but stressing no discussions over territory could take place without Kyiv's involvement and clear arrangements to safeguard the rest of Ukraine's land.

A communique released by the UK, France and Germany after the meeting said their leaders were ready "to deploy a reassurance force once hostilities have ceased,



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky and European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen address the press in Brussels Sunday

and to help secure Ukraine's skies and seas and regenerate Ukraine's armed forces."

Some European countries, led by the UK and France, have been working since last year on such a plan, but other countries in the region remain reluctant to become involved militarily, underlining how fraught peace discussions are even among Kyiv's allies.

Zelensky will return to the Oval Office with the world's eyes trained on the meeting. He will be accompanied by European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen and Nato secretary general Mark Rutte, as they try to forestall what is essentially a surrender before the emerging Trump-Putin alliance. The Ukraine president said there had been "clear support for Ukraine's independence and sov-

ereignty" at the meeting. "Everyone agrees that borders must not be changed by force," he said, adding that any prospective security guarantees "must be very practical, delivering protection on land, in the air, and at sea, and must be developed with Europe's participation."

For his part, Putin briefed his close ally, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, about the Alaska talks, and also spoke with Kazakhstan's President Kasym-Jomart Tokayev.

Trump exuded confidence ahead of the meeting, posting "Big progress on Russia. Stay tuned!" and excoriating the liberal media for describing the Alaska summit as a win for Putin.

But analysts say permitting Russia to keep captured Ukrainian territory sets a dangerous precedent for

smaller countries facing bigger neighbours with historical grievances eyeing their territory. Trump though sees Ukraine being in an unwinnable position — certainly without US support — and would rather have Kyiv sue for peace by conceding lost territory and keeping what remains.

India, which has little to do with the Russia-Ukraine war but has high stakes in a peace deal, looks likely to face several more weeks of agony and uncertainty, as the Ukraine-EU combine puts up resistance against Trump-Putin initiative to end the war while seeking a trilateral meeting to hash out details.

There is growing disapproval among regional experts over Trump's handling of ties with Delhi, in particular his victimisation of India with punitive tariffs to achieve peace on the Russia-Ukraine front. "Because US-Russia negotiations are incomplete, the Trump admin can't make any concrete decisions on India, Washington has put India, a friendly strategic partner, in an indefinite holding pattern — terrible diplomacy on display," Derek Grossman, an Indo-Pacific national security expert said on X, after Washington postponed a visit to Delhi by a trade team.

(With Reuters inputs)