

Russia's War Against Ukraine: Diplomatic Talks and U.S. Policy

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Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. More than three-and-a-half years later, Russia and Ukraine remain engaged in Europe's largest war in scope and scale since World War II. With [estimates](#) of over 1 million killed or wounded, and with Russia in control of about 20% of Ukraine's territory, neither side appears poised to achieve a decisive military victory.

Since taking office in January 2025, President Trump has made efforts to facilitate an end to the Russia-Ukraine war, which he has characterized as a "[horrific and brutal conflict](#)" that "[should have never started](#)." In August 2025, President Trump held separate meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, as well as a multilateral meeting with Zelensky and several European leaders. President Trump also has called for Putin and Zelensky to meet. Members of Congress may evaluate the costs and benefits of, and prospects for, U.S. mediation between Russia and Ukraine, including implications for U.S. strategic interests.

Aspects of Negotiations

Talks have addressed or may address a number of issues, including the following:

- **Ceasefire or Comprehensive Settlement.** August 2025 talks centered in part on the question of whether negotiations should seek to achieve an interim ceasefire prior to a comprehensive peace settlement. Ukrainian officials have [expressed](#) support for an initial ceasefire. Russian officials have said talks should instead focus on achieving a comprehensive settlement, [including](#) neutrality for Ukraine and constraints on Ukrainian military power. After initial talks in March 2025, the White House announced [agreement](#) on a partial [ceasefire](#), but the agreement did not hold. Before his August meeting with Putin, President Trump [stated](#) he would not "be happy if I walk away without some form of a ceasefire." In his subsequent meeting with Zelensky, President Trump [said](#) he likes "the concept of a ceasefire" but "we can work ... on a peace deal while they're fighting."
- **The Status of Russian-Occupied Ukrainian Territory.** Ukraine lays claim to all its internationally recognized territory ([Figure 1](#)). The Russian government claims to have [annexed](#) most of the Ukrainian territory it occupies, as well as some areas not under

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Russian control. Prior to the August 2025 meetings, President Trump [said](#) there would “be some land swapping going on” but that Ukraine would have to “[make that decision](#).” In his meeting with President Trump, Putin reportedly [proposed](#) a ceasefire along the line of contact in two of Ukraine’s southern regions, if Ukraine transferred to Russia areas of the eastern Donetsk region still under Ukrainian control.

- **Security Guarantees for Ukraine.** Ukrainian officials have sought guarantees against further aggression, including, for example, through the deployment of Western peacekeeping forces and closer integration with NATO and the European Union. [President Trump](#) and other Administration [officials](#) have expressed the view that NATO membership for Ukraine is unrealistic but also [support](#) the provision of European-led security guarantees for Ukraine. [Some](#) reports [indicate](#) the United States may consider providing air defense and intelligence support in furtherance of such guarantees. During the August 2025 multilateral meeting President Trump [stated](#), “I’m optimistic that collectively we can reach [a security] agreement that would deter any future aggression against Ukraine ... the European nations are going to take a lot of the burden, we’re going to help them and we’re going to make it very secure.” Related discussions are ongoing.
- **Security Assistance to Ukraine.** Ukrainians [view](#) the ability to defend themselves as a critical element of a sustainable ceasefire or peace agreement. In July 2025, the Department of Defense (DOD) [reportedly](#) paused previously committed security assistance to Ukraine as part of what DOD referred to as a “[capability review](#) to ensure U.S. military aid aligns with our defense priorities” (an earlier assistance pause [occurred](#) in March). [According](#) to DOD, President Trump soon directed the resumption of weapons shipments to Ukraine. From May to August 2025, DOD [announced](#) approval of an estimated \$2.32 billion in Foreign Military Sales (FMS) to Ukraine. In July 2025, President Trump and NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte announced an [agreement](#) whereby NATO allies are to fund purchases from U.S. defense companies for Ukraine.
- **Sanctions and Related Measures Against Russia.** As of August 2025, U.S. sanctions on Russia established prior to President Trump’s inauguration remained in place. President Trump [periodically](#) has [expressed](#) readiness to impose additional sanctions on Russia if it does not cease attacks against Ukraine or conclude a peace agreement. On July 14, President Trump [stated](#) the United States would impose “secondary tariffs” on Russia “if we don’t have a deal in 50 days” (he later [shortened](#) the deadline).
On August 6, President Trump issued [Executive Order \(E.O.\) 14329](#), “Addressing Threats to the United States by the Government of the Russian Federation.” The E.O. establishes a 25% tariff on imports from India for “currently directly or importing Russian Federation oil” (on top of an existing 25% [tariff](#)). The White House [stated](#) the E.O. also establishes “a process for the potential imposition of similar tariffs on other countries” (e.g., [China](#)).
- **Prisoners, detainees, and forcibly transferred populations.** Talks between Russia and Ukraine have addressed the exchange of [prisoners of war](#) and [deceased persons](#) and the release of Ukrainian [civilian detainees](#) and forcibly transferred populations, including [children](#).

Potential Considerations for Congress

Members of Congress may assess the costs and benefits of potential outcomes of U.S.-mediated negotiations and the likelihood of a sustainable ceasefire or peace agreement. Members may evaluate the potential impact of negotiations on other U.S. policy interests, including relations with NATO allies and strategic challenges posed by China.

The Trump Administration and Congress may assess whether and on what terms to provide continued [support](#) to Ukraine alongside U.S. allies. Congress may authorize, appropriate, restrict, or conduct oversight on further assistance to Ukraine, as well as any possible support for a potential peacekeeping mission to Ukraine. Members of Congress also may consider the use of legislation (e.g., S. 1241/H.R. 2548) to maintain, strengthen, or lift [sanctions](#) on Russia.

Figure I. Ukraine



Source: CRS, using data from the Institute for the Study of War and the American Enterprise Institute Critical Threats Project, Global Administrative Areas, and ESRI.

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