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Zelenskyy Calls for Direct Talks as Trump Sets August 8 Deadline for Ukraine Peace Deal

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is urging direct negotiations with Russian President Vladimir Putin, as former United States (US) President Donald Trump has issued a firm deadline of August 8 for achieving peace in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. The announcement came alongside a notable show of force, with Trump ordering the repositioning of US nuclear submarines in response to remarks from a senior Russian official.

On Friday, Trump posted on Truth Social that he had directed two US nuclear submarines to be moved following what he described as “highly provocative statements” from Dmitry Medvedev, the former Russian President and now Deputy Chairman of the Security Council of the Russian Federation. “Words are very important, and can often lead to unintended consequences,” Trump wrote. “I hope this will not be one of those instances.”

That same day, Acting US Representative to the United Nations (UN), John Kelley, addressed the UN Security Council and reiterated Trump’s call for a ceasefire and peace agreement to be reached by August 8. “President Trump has made clear this must be done by August 8. The United States is prepared to implement additional measures to secure peace,” Kelley said.

Kelley reaffirmed Washington’s support for Ukraine’s sovereignty and its right to self-defence, and distinguished international aid provided to Ukraine and support being given to Russia. He urged UN member states to halt military assistance to Moscow, specifically naming North Korea, Iran, and China. While China has not directly supplied weapons, Kelley identified it as a “decisive enabler” for Russia’s war efforts due to its provision of industrial goods and materials to the Russian defence sector.

Despite the diplomatic push, Russia remains reluctant to engage in direct peace talks. The Russian Mission to the UN has maintained that Moscow is not aiming to destroy Ukraine but seeks a peaceful coexistence between the Russian and Ukrainian communities. However, recent military actions have raised concerns. In the early hours of Thursday, Russian forces launched their most lethal airstrike on Kyiv this year, deploying more than 300 drones and eight missiles. According to Reuters, 31 people were killed, including five children, one just two years old, and more than 150 others were injured, among them 16 children.

With the August 8 deadline looming, the international community is closely watching whether renewed diplomacy will prevail or if further military escalation lies ahead.