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Trump Envoy Arrives in Moscow as Ceasefire Deadline Approaches

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MOSCOW, August 6, 2025 — U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff arrived in Moscow on Wednesday as part of a high-stakes diplomatic mission backed by former President Donald Trump, aimed at pressuring Russia into accepting a ceasefire in Ukraine. The Kremlin has not ruled out a potential meeting between Witkoff and Russian President Vladimir Putin, raising the stakes for a breakthrough in stalled negotiations.

Witkoff, a real estate executive-turned-diplomat, was received by Russian investment envoy Kirill Dmitriev, according to a source familiar with the visit. His arrival follows Trump's ultimatum to the Kremlin earlier this week, warning that new sanctions will be imposed if Moscow does not agree to a ceasefire by Friday. The proposed measures would include steep tariffs on countries purchasing Russian oil, such as India and China.

While no official meeting has been confirmed, the Kremlin stated Monday that a meeting between Putin and Witkoff was a possibility. A Washington-based source also indicated that Witkoff is expected to hold discussions with senior Russian officials during his stay.

Despite the diplomatic push, Kremlin insiders suggest that Putin is unlikely to yield. Several sources close to the Russian leadership said Putin believes Russia is gaining ground in Ukraine and remains committed to achieving military objectives, regardless of Western pressure. Russia continues to maintain that any ceasefire must adhere to terms it has promoted for more than two years.

“The visit of Witkoff is a last-ditch effort to find a face-saving solution for both sides,” said Austrian political analyst Gerhard Mangott. “But I don’t think there will be a compromise. Russia will likely say it is open to a ceasefire, but only under its longstanding conditions.”

Trump, who remains a dominant political force ahead of the 2026 midterms, has emphasized that failure to reach a ceasefire will lead to increased economic penalties. These may include restrictions on Russian exports of oil, gas, and possibly uranium, escalating an already tense standoff with Moscow.

Witkoff joined Trump’s team in January despite lacking formal diplomatic experience. His earlier solo visit to Moscow in April drew attention, as he sat across from Putin and other top Kremlin officials without diplomatic aides. He has also faced criticism for past remarks, including a March interview in which he downplayed Russian ambitions in Ukraine and dismissed concerns about further aggression in Europe.

Nonetheless, Trump has defended Witkoff’s role, citing his negotiating skills and business background as assets. Whether these qualities will yield results in Moscow remains to be seen.

With the Friday deadline looming, the world is watching to see whether diplomacy can halt a conflict now in its fourth year or if additional sanctions will further deepen the divide between Washington and Moscow.