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Trump Sends Envoy to Moscow Ahead of Sanctions Deadline

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United States President Donald Trump has confirmed that special envoy Steve Witkoff will travel to Moscow next week, as Washington tightens pressure on Russia over its ongoing war with Ukraine. The announcement coincides with Trump's public disclosure that two U.S. nuclear submarines have been deployed near Russian waters, signaling a clear warning ahead of a looming sanctions deadline.

Speaking to reporters on Sunday, Trump said Witkoff is expected to visit Russia "next week, Wednesday or Thursday," as part of diplomatic efforts to address the conflict that began with Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. While the specific mission details remain classified, Trump indicated that the visit is intended to urge

Russian officials toward a negotiated resolution. Asked what message Witkoff would deliver, Trump responded, “Yeah, get a deal where people stop getting killed.”

The President did not clarify whether the submarines mentioned were nuclear-powered or nuclear-armed, nor did he provide their precise location. The deployment follows a public exchange between Trump and former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, which added further tension to already strained U.S.-Russia relations.

Trump has imposed a deadline for Moscow to take steps toward ending the war by the end of next week or face additional punitive measures. These may include “secondary tariffs” aimed at countries continuing to trade with Russia, such as the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of India. Such actions could severely restrict Russia’s economic lifelines, but also risk broader geopolitical and economic fallout.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, responding to continued Western pressure, reiterated last Friday that his demands for ending the conflict remain unchanged. Speaking to reporters, Putin stated, “We need a lasting and stable peace on solid foundations that would satisfy both Russia and Ukraine,” but insisted that “the conditions certainly remain the same.” Among those conditions are Ukraine relinquishing claims to four regions Moscow has declared annexed and abandoning its bid to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)—terms Kyiv has firmly rejected.

Meanwhile, Ukraine has ramped up its own offensive capabilities. On Sunday, Ukrainian forces launched a drone strike that ignited a fire at an oil depot in Sochi, Russia. Kyiv has vowed to escalate air strikes in response to intensified Russian attacks on Ukrainian cities and infrastructure in recent weeks, which have resulted in dozens of civilian casualties.

In the latest military updates, Russia’s Ministry of Defense reported intercepting 61 Ukrainian drones overnight. Ukraine’s military administration confirmed that one civilian was killed in the southern Kherson region due to Russian shelling.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky announced progress toward a potential prisoner exchange involving 1,200 Ukrainian service members, following diplomatic talks held in Istanbul in July.

Trump, who began his second term with predictions that the war could soon end, has in recent weeks expressed increasing dissatisfaction with the Kremlin’s refusal to de-escalate. The upcoming visit by Witkoff may represent one of the administration’s final attempts at brokering a ceasefire before further sanctions are imposed.

