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## Trump Envoy Presses Kremlin as Ukraine Ceasefire Deadline Nears

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Steve Witkoff, a special envoy appointed by US President Donald Trump, arrived in Moscow on Tuesday for high-level talks with Russian officials. His visit comes as the White House ramps up pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin to agree to a ceasefire in Ukraine ahead of a Friday deadline set by Washington. Failure to comply may trigger a fresh wave of US sanctions targeting Russia's covert oil exports.

President Trump has grown increasingly frustrated with the lack of progress toward peace in the region and is now pushing for swift diplomatic engagement. According to White House sources, if President Putin does not make meaningful steps toward a truce by the end of the week, the United States will target Russia's so-called "shadow fleet", a network of oil tankers operating under obscure ownership to avoid current sanctions.

The move to penalise Russia's maritime oil trade marks a strategic escalation. The shadow fleet plays a key role in sustaining Russia's energy exports, which continue to be a significant source of revenue despite ongoing Western restrictions. US officials believe that sanctions on this fleet would be a calculated yet limited step, designed to raise economic pressure without sparking a broader escalation.

Moscow has not officially responded to the ultimatum, but sources close to the Kremlin have indicated that President Putin is unlikely to yield under threat of sanctions alone. Russian leadership remains defiant, suggesting the decision to end the war will not be dictated by foreign pressure.

In Kyiv, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky confirmed on Monday that he held what he described as a "productive" call with President Trump. The two reportedly discussed a range of issues including ongoing US support, sanctions on Russia, and a pending agreement on advanced drone technology for Ukraine's military.

The ceasefire deadline set by President Trump reflects a broader shift in US foreign policy under his administration, which has shown a preference for assertive diplomacy combined with economic leverage rather than prolonged military entanglements. While the Trump administration has continued to support Ukraine with military and financial aid, it has made clear that ending the conflict remains a top priority.

Analysts say that Friday's deadline could either mark a turning point or lead to a further tightening of sanctions, depending on Moscow's response. As tensions remain high, all eyes are on the outcome of Witkoff's meetings in the Russian capital. The coming days are likely to determine whether a path to peace is within reach or if the conflict will enter a new phase of geopolitical brinkmanship.