



Written by [Paul Dragu](#) on May 11, 2026

Putin Says Ukraine War Is Nearing End

It's been awhile since we've heard talk of an end to the war in Ukraine. Since President Donald Trump mired the U.S. in another Middle Eastern boondoggle, the White House hasn't spent as much time pressuring Russia and Ukraine toward a peace deal. But on Saturday, in the middle of an American-mediated "ceasefire" between the two heated rivals, Russian leader Vladimir Putin suggested the war was coming to an end.

"I think the matter is heading towards the completion of the Ukrainian conflict," Putin told reporters. [According](#) to Russian media, he believes that "the other side is now looking for ways to establish contact, fully understanding that further escalation could be very costly."



AP Images
Vladimir Putin

Ukrainian head of state Volodymyr Zelensky also signaled that he was open to meeting. "Now Putin himself says that he is finally ready for real meetings. We pushed him a little, and we have been preparing for meetings for a long time, so we need to find a format," Zelensky [said](#).

The Ceasefire

Putin's comments came in the middle of what was supposed to be a three-day ceasefire coinciding with Russia's Victory Day celebrations commemorating the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany. For the first time, the parade included North Korean troops, a nod to Pyongyang's help against Ukraine.

Trump announced the ceasefire Friday. It was supposed to be a cessation of all kinetic fighting and include a 1,000-for-1,000 prisoner swap. Both sides acknowledged it. But, as all past agreements between these two bitter enemies, each side has accused the other of violating the agreement. Russian media reported that Ukraine violated the ceasefire 8,970 times. And Zelensky said that, while the Kremlin held back on long-range strikes, the Russians never stopped fighting. "In the frontline areas, in the communities near the front, there was no peace," he [said](#). "The Russians continue their assault activity in those areas that are key for them. There are shellings, there were drone strikes of various types on the front. ... All our Ukrainian units act in a mirror manner, defending our positions exactly as needed."

Other than the apparent fact that both sides say they are open to an eventual meeting, no further arrangements seem to have been made. And even openness to a meeting is predicated on reaching a final agreement, Putin told reporters.

Both the Russians and the Ukrainians insist their goal is to ensure their nation's security. Putin told reporters, "We need to make sure that no one is threatening us. This is our goal." And Zelensky said, "We need to end this war, reliably guarantee security."



Neither Will Make Concessions

These are loaded demands. Ukraine has yet to unequivocally relinquish its pursuit of NATO membership. Russia, meanwhile, has attributed its 2022 invasion largely to Kyiv's dogged pursuit of NATO membership. Also, Ukraine has in the past insisted on "security guarantees" that include foreign troops of some sort, whether American or European. The Kremlin, however, considers the presence of any foreign European troops in Ukraine the same as having NATO there.

There is also the sticking point of territory. In the last four years, Russia has slowly and at great cost ground out the eastern portion of Ukraine. And it has never showed any sign that it is willing to fully relinquish it. It aims to keep all, if not most, of that territory. The Ukrainians, for their part, have not budged on their refusal to join any deal that includes territorial concessions.

So, whatever Putin and Zelensky — and President Trump — may say now, any hope for a peace deal is nothing more than a glimmer until there is a sign that one or both sides are willing to concede *something*. We've been here before many times, with various heads of state issuing optimistic forecasts, only to end at naught.

Zelensky the Actor

A former Zelensky employee has just spilled the ugly beans on her former boss and corroborated some of the worst rumors about Ukrainian corruption.

Iuliia Mendel was Zelensky's press secretary from 2019 to 2021. She recently sat down for an [interview](#) with Tucker Carlson, who has been extremely critical of Zelensky.

Mendel said Russia has committed "crimes against humanity" in Ukraine, and believes Putin is evil. However, she believes Zelensky is also evil. She told Carlson that her former boss is "one of the biggest obstacles toward peace," painting a picture of a "narcissist" who is nothing like he appears in public. She said Zelensky doesn't have emotional control. He thinks everyone is disposable, and doesn't have empathy. "He's absolutely [an] insanely great actor," Mendel said. Everything Zelensky says, according to her, is "detached from ... reality" or "pure lies."

Before becoming president, Zelensky was indeed an actor in Ukraine. Moreover, at one point, he even played the role of president.

According to Mendel, Zelensky ran on a peace platform. "He came promising that he would stand on his knees in front of Putin and beg Putin to stop. That's what he was promising," she said. "He was saying that [the] Ukrainian and Russian languages are both languages that need to exist ... that we need to be friends with Russia. He was saying all this stuff and that's why people voted for him. They didn't want war. Nobody wants war."

She further said that in December 2019, Zelensky told Putin in a private conversation that Ukraine will never join NATO. But by October 2024, Zelensky was still pushing for NATO membership, telling the Ukrainian parliament that it was the most important goal.

Corruption Corroborated

During her interview, Mendel also echoed allegations that Zelensky is involved in money laundering. She said she had a friend who was interviewed, including by Zelensky, for a government position and was told that he would need to create money-laundering schemes.



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A major reason there is so much corruption in Ukraine, she said, is because Ukrainian officials have very low salaries. She illustrated this point with a story about an official who received a bag of money in cash to clear the gap between what he wanted to earn and the cap for what he was officially allowed to earn. The moral of the story, she concluded, is, "If Zelensky knows it, it's not corruption."

The former press secretary said Zelensky has two worrisome slogans. "Ukraine is not ready for democracy" is one of them. The other is, "Dictatorship is an order." And, Mendel said, Zelensky is a dictator. She said the government has closed the border, which is illegal. It has also committed an "enormous" number of human-rights violations. And she corroborated reports that Ukrainians are snatched off the streets and thrown into the fight. In some cases, Zelensky has intentionally punished people he doesn't like by throwing them onto the front lines of the war, according to Mendel. Also, a former member of Parliament sits in jail today, she said, because he took to social media to call for an end to the war.

Mendel said that when Trump called Zelensky a dictator, it was after receiving intelligence information from inside Ukraine. This aligns with the fact that presidential and parliamentary elections in Ukraine have been canceled since 2022. Also, as we've reported in the past, several political parties have been eliminated since then, as have media outlets. And there have been numerous reports about corruption.

"On the Verge of Extinction"

While the real numbers are not available, Mendel believes hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians have died in this war. Add to those the millions who left for other parts of Europe, and Ukraine is being emptied out. "If you want to support Ukraine, the only way to support Ukraine today is to push for the peace deal," she said. "This is the only way that Ukraine can survive. I believe we are on the verge of extinction."



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