

# Putin Set to Skip Russia-Ukraine Peace Talks in Turkey: Kremlin

Both Washington and Kyiv have called for leader-level meetings to hammer out a peaceful settlement to the Ukraine war.

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Russian President Vladimir Putin gives a statement to the media at the Kremlin in Moscow, Russia, on May 11, 2025. Sergey Bobylev/Host agency RIA Novosti/Handout via Reuters



By Tom Ozimek

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Russian President Vladimir Putin will not attend the Russia-Ukraine peace talks in Turkey this week, according to a Russian delegation list

published late Wednesday by the Kremlin, despite Ukraine's demands and Western pressure.

The Kremlin's Telegram channel [announced](#) on May 14 that presidential aide Vladimir Medinsky, who led unsuccessful talks with Ukraine in 2022, will head Russia's delegation to peace talks in Istanbul. The delegation includes Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Galuzin, Deputy Defense Minister Alexander Fomin, and Russian military intelligence (GRU) chief Igor Kostyukov, supported by expert advisers from the Foreign and Defense Ministries and the presidential administration.

Moscow delayed confirming its delegates for the Istanbul peace talks, which Putin unexpectedly [announced](#) early Sunday amid Western-supported demands for a 30-day cease-fire in Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy [said](#) that he is ready to take part in the talks and that Putin's presence or absence would indicate whether Russia is sincere about pursuing peace.

President Donald Trump also [indicated](#) he might fly to Turkey and join the negotiations, urging Putin and Zelenskyy to come to the table and hammer out a deal that would finally put an end to the battlefield carnage. Trump, who has called for a cease-fire in Ukraine since taking office in January, said that current estimates of about 5,000 soldiers killed or wounded each week on both sides of the conflict are an undercount, and the scale of bloodshed is worse.

While Trump said he would attend "if he thought it would be helpful" and said he hoped Putin would attend the talks in person, the list of Russian delegates published by the Kremlin strongly suggests the Russian leader will not be there—absent a last-minute surprise showing.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has so far refused to say whether Putin will travel to Turkey, telling reporters earlier this week that Russia is "serious" about pursuing a diplomatic settlement to the long-running war while declining to provide details.

Besides the Kremlin's list of delegates that does not feature Putin, there have been other signals that the Russian president will skip the talks. Senior Russian lawmaker Vladimir Dzhabarov was [cited](#) by Russian state media TASS as saying that the prospect of a face-to-face meeting between Putin and Zelenskyy in Istanbul is dim.

Zelenskyy aide Mykhaylo Podolyak said earlier this week that the Ukrainian leader is prepared to meet directly with Putin but not with lower-level Russian officials.

“There is one decision-maker on Ukraine’s side ... and one decision-maker in Russia,” Podolyak told exiled Russian journalist Alexander Plyushchev in a YouTube interview, as [cited](#) by The Moscow Times. “Everything else is just formalities without results.”

While Podolyak said that a lower-level “technical meeting” between the two sides was still possible in Istanbul even if Putin does not attend, he added that, “if Russia isn’t represented at the highest level, it means they’re not ready to stop the war.”

Zelenskyy [said](#) Wednesday in his nightly video address to the nation that he is waiting to see who from Russia will come to Turkey to take part in the talks.

“It is evident that the sole remaining obstacle to peace is Russia’s lack of clear will to do it,” he said. “Today, we held several meetings with the team regarding the format in Turkey. I am waiting to see who will come from Russia, and then I will decide which steps Ukraine should take.”

Trump, [speaking](#) to reporters on May 14 aboard Air Force One, said that many details about the meeting are still unclear, including whether Putin will show up. The president added that he remains willing to make a detour from his current Middle East tour to attend if it means helping get the peace deal across the finish line.

“We’re going to [the United Arab Emirates] tomorrow so we have a very full situation,” Trump told reporters. “Now, that doesn’t mean I wouldn’t do it to save a lot of lives and come back.”

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