



President Donald Trump and President Vladimir Putin of Russia meet at the G20 Summit in 2019 in Osaka, Japan. Trump and Putin on Friday will discuss a path to ending the war that began when Russia invaded Ukraine three and a half years ago.

Q&A

What’s at stake at the Trump-Putin summit in Alaska

BY NEIL MACFARQUHAR
NYT News Service

President Donald Trump is set to meet with President Vladimir Putin of Russia in Alaska on Friday. The abrupt nature of the summit and Trump’s penchant for pursuing deals are feeding questions about the potential outcome.

The meeting, arranged in barely a week, will mark a significant policy change for the United States. Washington has largely treated Putin as a pariah since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, which has caused hundreds of thousands of deaths and widespread destruction for both countries. The mere fact that an American president is willing to meet is considered a diplomatic victory

for the Kremlin.

On Wednesday, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine joined a phone call between Trump and European leaders, who said they had hammered out five principles for the negotiations. They included the idea of pursuing a ceasefire first, according to the Ukrainian president.

Given that the meeting will not include a representative from Ukraine, chances of a breakthrough are considered slim. Trump has said that he would call Zelenskyy directly after his talks with Putin and that he considered the Alaska summit a prelude to a Putin-Zelenskyy meeting.

Where is the summit happening?

Trump will meet Putin at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage

on Friday, according to the Kremlin and a White House official familiar with the planning.

The Kremlin said the meeting was expected to begin around 11:30 a.m. local time. Trump and Putin will first hold a “tete-a-tete” discussion with interpreters, it said in a statement Thursday, followed by negotiations by delegations and “a working breakfast.” The two men are expected to hold a joint news conference at the end, the Kremlin added.

Karoline Leavitt, the White House press secretary, on Tuesday described the meeting as a “listening exercise” for Trump that would give him a better idea of the Russian leader’s plans.

In 2018, Trump and Putin met alone, except for interpreters, for more

than two hours during a summit held in Helsinki, Finland.

Why is the summit happening now?

Ever since Trump took office in January, the United States and Russia have repeatedly raised the possibility of a summit between the American president and Putin.

While the Russian leader has been eager for a meeting, Putin had balked at taking any concrete steps toward ending the war while he believed that Russia was advancing on the battlefield.

Trump, initially supportive of Russia and critical of U.S. military aid to Ukraine, held off on a meeting while ending the war appeared impossible. He repeatedly expressed his frustration.

Then, last week, he moved up the deadline for imposing new sanctions or tariffs unless Putin ended the war. He also raised tariffs on Indian imports to the United States to 50% to penalize it for continued imports of Russian oil. With the sanctions deadline looming, the Russians requested a summit.

What does Putin want from a summit?

It is possible that Putin is using the summit as another stalling tactic, as

well as a way to try to improve frayed ties with Washington. He also might seek to discuss issues outside the framework of Ukraine, including economic deals or cooperation in the Arctic.

Putin, having called the 1991 breakup of the Soviet Union “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century,” has sought for decades to reassert Moscow’s control over Ukraine.

Russia and Ukraine have held three rounds of talks in Istanbul, and Moscow has used those meetings to try to achieve territorial gains that proved elusive on the battlefield.

Putin could well make the same maximalist demands at any meeting with Trump: claiming eastern Ukraine as Russian; keeping Ukraine out of NATO; preventing the alliance from expanding into former Soviet realms; limiting the size of Ukraine’s military and ensuring that its government is friendly toward Moscow.

What’s at stake for Trump?

One of Trump’s campaign promises was to end the war in Ukraine in 24 hours after taking office for the second time. More than 200 days have passed, but he still considers himself a supreme deal-maker. He has also made no secret of wanting a Nobel Peace Prize and has linked his being deserving of the prize to his efforts in Ukraine, among other conflicts.

“Everyone agrees this War must come to a close, and we will work towards that in the days and weeks to come,” Trump wrote last week on his social media platform.

His position on the war has been volatile. Earlier this year, he seemed to align himself with the Kremlin, limiting military aid to Ukraine for a time and browbeating Zelenskyy during a notorious Oval Office meeting in February.

But as his frustration with Putin grew, he recently authorized more arms sales intended for Ukraine. He criticized Russia’s bombardment of Ukrainian cities as both “disgraceful” and “distasteful.” And a month ago, he directly criticized

Putin.

Speaking to reporters Wednesday, Trump said “there will be very severe consequences” for Russia if Putin does not agree to halt the war after the Friday meeting. Asked if he believed he could convince Putin to stop targeting Ukrainian civilians, Trump said the two leaders had already discussed that.

“I’ve had a lot of good conversations with him, and then I go home, and see a rocket hit a nursing home or a rocket hit an apartment building, and people are laying dead in the streets,” Trump said.

What leverage does the U.S. have over Russia?

Although Trump has threatened severe direct and secondary sanctions against Russia in order to try to end the war, he has conceded that they might be ineffective.

While previous American presidents might have agreed to a summit as a reward for concessions toward a peace deal, there is no sign that Putin has changed his attitude toward rejecting any such outcome.

Continued energy sales have allowed Russia to endure the toughest Western sanctions imposed thus far, and the country has minimal direct trade with the United States. Trump has not imposed the sharp tariffs on Russian imports levied against some American trading partners.

Trump said in an interview with CNBC last week that “Putin will stop killing people if you get energy down another \$10 a barrel.” But Trump has not moved to sanction China, the largest importer of Russian oil, and Indian officials have said they intend to continue buying Russian oil.

What was Ukraine’s reaction?

Zelenskyy has said that any peace deal that excludes Ukraine would be stillborn.

Despite the enormous toll that the war has taken on Ukraine in death and destruction, polls indicate that a solid majority of Ukrainians reject the idea of making the territorial and other concessions demanded by the Kremlin.



British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, left, gives a very warm welcome to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy outside 10 Downing Street in London on Thursday morning as the Ukrainian leader arrived for talks ahead of a landmark U.S.-Russia summit that could decide his country’s fate.

Zelenskyy meets Starmer in Britain ahead of US-Russia summit

BY PAUL GODFREY
UPI.com

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer hosted Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Downing Street on Thursday to maintain the momentum of a European push to influence a summit between U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The high-profile meeting between the British and Ukrainian leaders, reported by the BBC, Sky News and The Telegraph, was described as a carefully choreographed display of support timed just hours before the historic U.S.-

Russia summit in Alaska.

Neither man commented nor provided any details of their discussion when the pair emerged after around 60 minutes.

The London talks came as the Kremlin confirmed “resolving the Ukraine crisis” would be the main focus of the summit and that the delegation headed by Putin would include top aide Yuri Ushakov, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Defense Minister Andrey Belousov, Finance Minister Anton Siluanov and Russian sovereign wealth fund CEO Kirill Dmitriev.

Co-chairing a meeting of European leaders, Zelenskyy and Trump on

Wednesday, Starmer said a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine was a viable outcome from what he called Friday’s “hugely important” meeting, but stressed Ukraine’s “territorial integrity” must be defended and international borders “must not be changed by force.”

“As I’ve said personally to President Trump for the three-and-a-bit years this conflict has been going on, we haven’t got anywhere near a prospect of actually a viable solution, a viable way of bringing it to a ceasefire,” said Starmer.

“And now we do have that chance, because of the work the president has put in.”

However, Starmer said any ceasefire would have to be lasting and therefore needed “robust and credible security guarantees,” and that European allies had established “this Coalition of the Willing” to back a post-war Ukraine militarily, with troops if necessary, to preempt Russia from breaking any peace agreement.

The bloc backed Zelenskyy’s demand that no decisions be made without Ukraine at the table.

Trump emerged from the meeting to put Putin on notice he would face “severe consequences” if he did not agree to a ceasefire when the pair meet in Anchorage on Friday. Trump said that, provided the meeting went well, he would also seek a second meeting between Putin and Zelenskyy to hammer out the details of a peace deal.

Hunter Biden won’t apologize for statements on Melania Trump

BY LISA HORNUNG
UPI.com

First Lady Melania Trump is demanding Hunter Biden, son of former President Joe Biden, retract statements that he said about how President Donald Trump met her.

A legal notice dated Aug. 6 and written by the first lady’s lawyer, Alejandro Brito, demanded Biden “immediately retract the false, defamatory, disparaging and inflammatory statements made about Mrs. Trump,” including claims by Hunter Biden that Trump met his wife through convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

The comments were made during an interview earlier in the month on the YouTube show Channel 5 with Andrew Callaghan.

On Thursday, Biden revisited the show and did not retract his statements.

“They spent an enormous amount of time together,” Biden said of the president and Epstein.

“That’s how Melania, the first lady and the president met. Yeah, according to Michael Wolff,” he said, referring to the author of several biographies of Trump.



Hunter Biden called Melania Trump’s lawsuit threat a “designed distraction” in an interview that aired Thursday.

Callaghan asked Biden if he would like to apologize to the first lady, and he said, “That’s not going to happen.”

He cited news reports dating back to 2019 that “reported that sources said that Jeffrey Epstein claimed to be the person to introduce Donald Trump to Melania at that time.”

Melania Trump said she will sue for \$1 billion.

Attention to the Epstein case has ballooned in recent weeks after Tesla CEO Elon Musk said that Trump’s name is in the Epstein files.

Trump was once close friends with Epstein, who trafficked underage girls

to adult men, but has denied visiting Epstein’s private islands in the Caribbean. Epstein died by suicide in prison.

Since then, Congress and the Department of Justice have requested files and sent out subpoenas, and Epstein’s accomplice Ghislaine Maxwell has recently given testimony about the case.

Hunter Biden called Melania Trump’s lawsuit threat a “designed distraction.”

“I don’t think that these threats of a lawsuit add up to anything other than a designed distraction, because it’s not about who introduced whom to who,” he said.