



Another forecasting tool is thrown out

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ANALYSIS

Trump-Putin bromance flowered, then soured



President Donald Trump has spent years praising and appearing to carefully avoid criticizing Russian President Vladimir Putin. MARCOS BRINDICCI/REUTERS

U.S. president appears to be shifting his thinking

Kim Hjelmggaard, Francesca Chambers and Cybele Mayes-Osterman
USA TODAY

President Donald Trump said he would end the war in Ukraine within his first 24 hours in office.

But now, more than 4,000 hours in, Trump’s patience with Russian President Vladimir Putin, whom the U.S. president in June called “very kind,” appears to be wearing thin.

Relations have hit a wall as Russia’s leader has pushed forward with intensifying drone and missile attacks on Ukrainian cities while appearing to repeatedly rebuff Trump’s attempts to broker a ceasefire.

“We get a lot of (expletive) thrown at us by Putin, if you want to know the truth,” Trump told reporters on July 9, summing up what Ukrainians and other seasoned Russia watchers have been saying for two decades. “He’s very nice to us all the time, but it turns out to be

meaningless.”

Trump initiated direct talks with Putin shortly after taking office, saying – much to Putin’s delight – that he was effectively ready to let Russia keep the Ukrainian territory it had already taken when Moscow invaded Kyiv in February 2022. Trump also said Ukraine’s Crimea region, which Putin seized in 2014, “will stay with Russia.” At the same time, Trump said he was not interested in spending more on Ukraine’s defense, an issue that exploded out into the open when Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited the White House in February.

“You don’t have the cards right now,” Trump told Zelenskyy in remarks that were carried live on TV and appeared to belittle Ukraine’s leader.

Trump said Putin had been the victim of a “phony” American “witch hunt.” He said Ukraine would need to make concessions and started pressing Kyiv to sign an agreement over its mineral wealth.

Ukraine attacks escalate

American intelligence agencies and officials have for years struggled to un-

Momentum is building for bipartisan legislation that would impose severe sanctions on Russia – amounting to a 500% tariff – on any country that buys, sells or supplies Russian oil, gas and petroleum if Russia refuses to negotiate a peace deal with Ukraine.

derstand Putin’s precise foreign policy goals. In Ukraine, their best guess is he wants to weaken it as much as possible as part of an effort to keep it out of the NATO military alliance and retain or restore Russia’s cultural and economic sphere of influence around its borders. That means grabbing Ukraine’s land and wearing down the morale of its people and communities through wave

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Recovery effort on pause

Weather advisory includes hard-hit Texas county

John Bacon, Rick Jervis and Christopher Cann
USA TODAY

Thunderstorms and the threat from rising waters in south central Texas on July 13 hampered the grim search for survivors and victims of the flooding that swept through the region more than a week ago, killing over 100 people and leaving devastation in its wake.

All search and recovery operations along the Guadalupe River were suspended. Rescue personnel, equipment and vehicles “should be removed from the river area immediately,” Kerr County officials said in social media posts on July 13. It warned that up to 2 inches of rain could fall in an hour.

The National Weather Service warned that isolated areas could possibly be overwhelmed with an additional 9-12 inches and lead to flash flooding. The flood watch was in effect until 7 p.m. local time.

The confirmed death toll from the July 4 flooding had risen to 129 on July 12, including 103 in Kerr County alone. Kerr was one of more than a dozen counties listed in the weather service advisory.

‘Code Red’ in Kerr County

The Kerr County Sheriff’s Office issued a “Code Red” message on July 13.

“This is not an evacuation, but a preparation notification,” the sheriff’s office said in the social media post. “Be prepared to evacuate along the Guadalupe River due to bad weather and flooding.”

A candlelight vigil planned for July 13 in Ingram, in Kerr County, was postponed because of the flood threat. No new date was announced.

The confirmed death toll from the July 4 flooding had risen to 129 on July 12, including 103 – 67 adults and 36 children – in Kerr County alone, according to the county’s Joint Information Center. That includes at least 27 campers and counselors from Camp Mystic, an all-girls Christian camp.

Scores of residents remain missing, although it was not clear how many might have fled to safety ahead of the

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