

WAR IN UKRAINE

EUROPEAN LEADERS TO JOIN TALKS



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European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, right, and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy participate in a news conference Sunday at EU headquarters in Brussels, Belgium.

Envoy: Putin to allow security guarantees in eventual deal

**SAMYA KULLAB, JILL COLVIN
AND JOHN LEICESTER**
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — European and NATO leaders announced Sunday they will join President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Washington for talks with President Donald Trump on ending Russia's war in Ukraine, with the possibility of U.S. security guarantees now on the negotiating table.

Leaders from France, Britain and Germany are rallying around the Ukrainian leader after his exclusion from Trump's summit on Friday with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Their pledge to be at Zelenskyy's side at the White House on Monday is an apparent effort to ensure the meeting goes better than the last one in February, when Trump berated Zelenskyy in a heated Oval Office encounter.

"The Europeans are very afraid of the Oval Office scene being repeated and so they want to support Mr. Zelenskyy to the hilt," said retired French Gen. Dominique Trinquand, a former head of France's military mission at the United Nations.

"It's a power struggle and a position of strength that might work with Trump,"

he said.

Special U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff said Sunday that Putin agreed at the meeting in Alaska with Trump to allow the U.S. and European allies to offer Ukraine a security guarantee resembling NATO's collective defense mandate as part of an eventual deal to end the 3½-year war.

"We were able to win the following concession: That the United States could offer Article 5-like protection, which is one of the real reasons why Ukraine wants to be in NATO," he told CNN's "State of the Union." He added that it "was the first time we had ever heard the Russians agree to that" and called them "game-changing."

Article 5, at the heart of the 32-member military alliance, states that an armed attack against one of the members shall be considered an attack against all members.

Witkoff, who had joined Secretary of State Marco Rubio for the talks Friday at a military base in Alaska, offered few details on how such an agreement would work. But it appeared to be a major shift for Putin and could serve as a workaround to his long-standing objection to Ukraine's potential NATO membership.

Outlining some of the details about the private discussions, Witkoff also said Russia agreed to enact a law that it would not "go after any other European countries and violate their sovereignty. And there was plenty more."

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, speaking at a news conference in Brussels with Zelenskyy, said "we welcome President Trump's willingness to contribute to Article 5-like security guarantees for Ukraine. And the 'Coalition of the willing' — including the European Union — is ready to do its share."

Von der Leyen was joined Sunday by French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz in saying they will take part in Monday's talks at the White House, as will secretary-general of the NATO military alliance, Mark Rutte.

The European leaders' demonstration of support could help ease concerns in Kyiv and in other European capitals that Ukraine risks being railroaded into a peace deal.

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Kremlin turns up censorship, restrictions on Russian internet

Authorities using wide array of tools in effort to control online activity

DASHA LITVINOVA
Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia — YouTube videos that won't load. A visit to a popular independent media website that produces only a blank page. Cellphone internet connections that are down for hours or days.

Going online in Russia can be frustrating, complicated and even dangerous.

It's not a network glitch but a deliberate, multipronged and long-term effort by authorities to bring the internet under the Kremlin's full control. Authorities adopted

restrictive laws and banned websites and platforms that won't comply. Technology has been perfected to monitor and manipulate online traffic.

While it's still possible to circumvent restrictions by using virtual private network apps, those are routinely blocked, too.

Authorities further restricted internet access this summer with widespread shutdowns of cellphone internet connections and adopting a law punishing users for searching for content they deem illicit.

Russian authorities announced Wednesday they were "partially" restricting calls in messaging apps Telegram and WhatsApp.



DMITRI LOVETSKY, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pedestrians look at their phones while walking July 14 through St. Petersburg, Russia.

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