# Kremlin hails Putin-Trump dialogue as promising

AFP – The Kremlin on Sunday hailed dialogue between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin – two "extraordinary" presidents – as "promising", and vowed it would "never" give up territory seized in eastern Ukraine.
Trump broke with Western policy earlier this month by phoning Putin to discuss how to end the Ukraine conflict – a call hailed by Moscow as ending three years of isolation for the Kremlin leader since he launched his full-scale offensive in February 2022.

Top Russian and US officials then met in Saudi Arabia last week to discuss a "restoration" of ties and start a discussion on a possible Ukraine ceasefire – all without the involvement of Kyiv or Europe.

"This is a dialogue between two extraordinary presidents," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told state TV on Sunday.

"That's promising," he added.

"It is important that nothing prevents us from realising the political will of the two heads of state."

Trump's overtures to Moscow have triggered alarm in Kyiv and across Europe.

But it is unclear whether his moves will be able to bring Moscow and Kyiv closer to a truce.

Peskov on Sunday ruled out any territorial concessions as part of a settlement.

"The people decided to join Russia a long time ago," he said, referring to Moscow-staged votes in eastern Ukraine held amid the offensive that were slammed as bogus by Kyiv, the West and

international monitors.

“No one will ever sell off these territories. That’s the most important thing.”

– ‘God willed it’ –

Putin said God and fate had entrusted him and his army with “the mission” to defend Russia.

“Fate willed it so, God willed it so, if I may say so. A mission as difficult as it is honourable – defending Russia – has been placed on our and your shoulders together,” he told servicemen who have fought in Ukraine.

Russia was on Sunday marking “Defender of the Fatherland Day” – a holiday hailing soldiers and veterans – a day before the three-year anniversary of the start of its full-scale offensive.

“Today, at the risk of their lives and with courage, they are resolutely defending their homeland, national interests and Russia’s future,” Putin said in a video released by the Kremlin.

Moscow’s army had overnight launched a record 267 attack drones at Ukraine, Kyiv’s air force said.

Among them, 138 were intercepted by air defence and 119 were “lost”.

Ukraine did not say what happened to the remaining 10 but a separate armed forces statement on Telegram said several regions, Kyiv included, had been “hit”.

AFP journalists in the Ukrainian capital heard air defence systems in operation throughout the night.

– ‘Inappropriate remarks’ –

Amid his outreach to Moscow, Trump has also verbally attacked

Ukraine’s leader, Volodymyr Zelensky falsely claiming Kyiv started the war and that Zelensky was hugely unpopular at home.

The bitter war of words has threatened to undermine Western support for Kyiv at a critical juncture in the conflict.

Zelensky on Sunday called for the Western coalition that has been helping Kyiv fend off the Russian offensive for the last three years to hold strong.

“We must do our best to achieve a lasting and just peace for Ukraine. This is possible with the unity of all partners: we need the strength of the whole of Europe, the strength of America, the strength of all those who want lasting peace,” Zelensky said on Telegram.

Moscow has revelled in the spat between Trump and Zelensky.

“Zelensky makes inappropriate remarks addressed to the head of state. He does it repeatedly,” Peskov said Sunday.

“No president would tolerate that kind of treatment. So his (Trump’s) reaction is completely quite understandable.”

Scrambling to respond to Trump’s dramatic policy reversal, French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer will travel to Washington next week to make the case for supporting Ukraine.

AFP