Macron to hold Ukraine war talks with Rubio, Witkoff in Paris

AFP – French President Emmanuel Macron was set to meet in Paris Thursday with America's top diplomat about crafting a Ukraine ceasefire as Washington and Europe seek common ground on ending the fighting.
Top Ukrainian officials were also in the French capital on Thursday to meet EU and US delegations, President Volodymyr Zelensky's chief of staff said, without specifying who.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and US envoy Steve Witkoff arrived in Paris as President Donald Trump's push for a ceasefire has yet to bear fruit despite his pledges to quickly end the war.

Russia's strikes that have recently killed dozens of people including many children in Ukraine's cities of Sumy and Kryvyi Rig show how the war is taking a hefty toll despite a series of diplomatic efforts.

Late Wednesday, a Russian drone attack on the Ukrainian city of Dnipro killed three people, including a young girl, authorities said.

Macron has taken the lead in seeking to forge a coordinated European response to defending Ukraine, both during the current conflict and in its eventual aftermath after Trump shocked the world by opening direct negotiations with Russia.

Zelensky's chief of staff Andriy Yermak said he and Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiga as well as Defence Minister Rustem Umerov were in Paris to meet France, Germany, Britain and the United States – but did not say exactly who they would meet.

A French diplomatic source had said earlier Rubio and France's

Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot would discuss “the war in Ukraine, the situation in the Middle East and the Iranian nuclear file”.

This will be Rubio’s third trip to Europe since taking office.

Witkoff said on Monday, just days after his third meeting with Putin, that he himself sees a peace deal “emerging”.

The Paris talks come after discussions between the United States and Iran on Tehran’s nuclear program were held Saturday in Oman.

Another round is scheduled for April 19, also in Oman.

Separately, the French defence minister, Sebastien Lecornu, will travel to Washington on Thursday.

He is set to meet with Pete Hegseth, US Defense Secretary, for talks on a number of issues including Ukraine, Iran and Gaza.

He was also expected to hold talks with National Intelligence director Tulsi Gabbard and Keith Kellogg, Trump’s Ukraine envoy.

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