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Trump's "Sanctions Deadline" Is Running Out—Will Putin Change Course?



President Trump's "10- or 12-day" **deadline** for Putin is running out this week. This isn't the first deadline Trump has **set** in an effort to move the Russia-Ukraine peace process forward.

It's evident that the U.S. didn't anticipate such a prolonged negotiation process. Yet, the talks continue.

Trump's pressure campaign centres on the **proposed** Sanctioning Russia Act of 2025, which outlines a sweeping set of secondary sanctions.

The bill calls for a 500% tariff on all Russian goods and services, as well as on imports from any country that knowingly trades Russian uranium or petroleum.

It would also prohibit the export, re-export, or in-country transfer of any U.S.-produced energy to or within Russia. Additionally, the legislation proposes asset-blocking sanctions on any Russian financial institution — either fully or partially state-owned — and any foreign bank that engages in transactions with them.

One of the more straightforward provisions would be visa bans for Putin and members of his inner circle, preventing them from entering the U.S.

Since Washington never **ratified** the Rome Statute, which recognises Putin as a war criminal, the Russian president is still technically able to visit the U.S., as some of his subordinates currently **do**.

The bill has been widely **promoted**, particularly by Senator Lindsey Graham, a close ally of Trump. However, this week Congress is going into recess without voting on the legislation, leaving the decision on further sanctions in the hands of the president alone.

In recent weeks, Trump has shifted his rhetoric dramatically, now speaking far more forcefully against Russia.

Just last Saturday, he announced that the U.S.

had **moved** nuclear-capable submarines to "appropriate regions" in response to a nuclear threat posted on social media by former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev. "Medvedev was talking about nuclear, when you talk about nuclear, we have to be prepared. We are totally prepared," Trump **said**.

Whether this latest deadline will bring about real consequences remains uncertain. It may simply be extended once again.

The most heavily sanctioned country in the world

Russia is already the most heavily **sanctioned** country in the world — surpassing even Iran and North Korea. In the fourth year of its full-scale war against Ukraine, Moscow continues to find ways around many restrictions, including **rerouting** EU goods through Central Asia.

Last week, reports emerged that India may be growing wary of U.S. secondary sanctions: at least four tankers carrying Russian oil are **idling** off the Indian coast, unable to unload after local refineries refused to accept the shipments.

Yet, The New York Times later **reported** that Indian officials remain firm in their decision to continue buying Russian oil despite Trump's threats. China, for its part, shows no signs of **scaling** back its imports either.

Last week, President Putin made fresh statements about the peace process, suggesting he saw signs of progress, notably pointing to prisoner exchanges. At the same time, he made clear that his objectives have remain unchanged since June 2024 — not February 2022, when Russia just launched its full-scale invasion.

Putin and Lukashenko both signalled they don't take Washington's ultimatums seriously

Those goals include a formal Ukrainian pledge never to join NATO, maintaining a neutral, non-nuclear status, and, most significantly, the full withdrawal of Ukrainian troops from the entire territory of Donbas, as well as the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions – including areas Russia never managed to occupy.

Notably, Putin has stopped referencing the vague and previously **emphasised** demands of Ukraine’s “denazification” and “demilitarisation.”

His remarks came during a speech at a garden within the Spaso-Preobrazhensky Monastery in Valaam, where Belarusian Alexander Lukashenko backed him, dismissing Trump’s pressure tactics and saying that politics is not made by deadlines. Both leaders signalled they don’t take Washington’s ultimatums seriously.

It’s possible that earlier this year, sanctions gave Putin some incentive to explore a ceasefire before summer weather created good conditions for an offensive.

But in July, Russia had seized more Ukrainian territory than in any other month this year.

Russian troops are now just 25 kilometres from Zaporizhzhia. That’s 11 kilometres closer than in April. In the east, Pokrovsk is being steadily **encircled** and cut off from supplies and evacuation routes.

Russian forces have also stepped up attempts to cross into the right bank of the Kherson region, which Ukraine liberated in November 2022.

Zelenskyy wants transparency, Putin wants secrecy

From a purely military standpoint, Russia currently has the upper hand, and that alone gives Putin little reason to scale back.

Still, negotiations with Ukraine continue, with further prisoner exchanges reportedly in the works. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has

stated his desire for a direct meeting with Putin.



Media coverage and Western political support for Ukraine rely heavily on openness, and Zelenskyy is unlikely to give up this leverage

The two last **met** in person in December 2019 in Paris, and Putin has not spoken to Zelenskyy directly since mid-2020. A rumoured phone call between them in 2024 never materialised, **derailed** by the offensive in Russia’s Kursk region.

Zelenskyy, for his part, has long-standing ties within the Russian elite and indirect lines of communication through trusted contacts. His chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, has Kremlin-linked figures in his phonebook – from oligarchs to senior members of Putin’s administration.

For now, Putin insists that talks should be **held** behind closed doors. But Zelenskyy sees public transparency as critical. Media coverage and Western political support for Ukraine rely heavily on openness, and Zelenskyy is unlikely to give up this leverage.

Even if new sanctions are passed, the key question remains: how much pressure will they really apply – and how soon? Secondary sanctions take time to implement and enforce.

Even Trump himself has expressed scepticism: “We’ll put sanctions on, but he’s pretty good with sanctions. He knows how to avoid them,” he said recently.

As long as Russia maintains momentum on the battlefield, Putin has little reason to change

course. With favourable weather on the ground, August is likely to be a difficult month for Ukraine.

Therefore, even if Donald Trump personally imposes new sanctions against Russia, the chickens will most likely only hatch in the fall.