Tomorrow's Affairs

By: TA | AP Insight

US and Russia agreed to reestablish military dialogue

The U.S. and Russia agreed Thursday to reestablish high-level, military-to-military dialogue for the first time in more than four years in another sign of warming relations between the two countries since President Donald Trump took office and sought to end the war in Ukraine.

The agreement emerged from a meeting between senior Russian and American military officials in the capital of the United Arab Emirates, the U.S. military in Europe said.

The restored communication channel "will provide a consistent military-to-military contact as the parties continue to work towards a lasting peace," the U.S. European Command said in a statement.

High-level military communication was suspended in 2021, as relations between Moscow and Washington became increasingly strained ahead of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

U.S. Gen. Alexus Grynkewich, who is the commander in Europe of both U.S. and NATO forces, was in Abu Dhabi, where talks between American, Russian and Ukrainian officials on ending the war entered a second day.

Meanwhile, Moscow escalated its attacks on Ukraine's power grid in an apparent effort to deny civilians power and to weaken public support for the fight, while hostilities continued along the roughly 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line snaking through eastern and southern parts of Ukraine.

An effort to lower tensions

The resumption of the military-to-military hotline marks an effort to ease tensions that soared after the start of the war and to avoid collisions between Russian and U.S. forces.

In one such incident in March 2023, the American military said it ditched an Air Force MQ-9 Reaper drone in the Black Sea after a pair of Russian fighter jets dumped fuel on it, and then one of them struck its propeller while

flying in international airspace.

Moscow has denied that its warplanes hit the drone, alleging that it crashed while making a sharp maneuver.

The Kremlin said its aircraft reacted to a violation of a no-fly zone Russia has established in the area near Crimea.

Moscow has repeatedly voiced concern about intelligence flights by the U.S. and other NATO aircraft over the Black Sea, and some Russian officials charged that the American surveillance flights helped gather intelligence that allowed Ukraine to strike Russian targets.

NATO members have been increasingly worried about intrusions into allied airspace

NATO members have been increasingly worried about intrusions into allied airspace. Some European officials described the incidents as Moscow testing NATO's response.

In September, a swarm of Russian drones flew into Poland's airspace, prompting NATO aircraft to scramble to intercept them and shoot down some of the devices.

It was the first direct encounter between NATO and Moscow since the full-scale invasion. Later that month, NATO jets escorted three Russian warplanes out of Estonia's airspace.

Russia, Ukraine exchange prisoners following talks

The delegations from Moscow and Kyiv were joined Thursday in Abu Dhabi by U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, according to Rustem Umerov, Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council chief, who was present at the meeting.

They were also at last month's talks in the same place as the Trump administration tries

to steer Russia and Ukraine toward a settlement.

Officials have provided no information about any progress in the discussions.

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Following the talks on Thursday, however, Russia and Ukraine said they carried out a prisoner exchange.

The Russian Defense Ministry said it brought 157 Russian servicemen back from Ukrainian captivity, as well as three Russian nationals captured during Kyiv's incursion into Russia's Kursk region. Ukrainian officials said 150 Ukrainian servicemen and seven civilians returned from Russian captivity.

The Russian Defense Ministry said the released Russian soldiers are currently in Belarus, getting medical assistance, before being taken back to Russia "for treatment and rehabilitation."

Ukrainian human rights ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets said that among the 150 service members who returned from Russian captivity, 18 were "illegally sentenced by Russia."

He said that "overall, those released are in a difficult psychological condition, and some are critically underweight."

Zelenskyy says 55,000 Ukrainian troops killed in the war

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said 55,000 Ukrainian troops have died since Russia's invasion almost four years ago. "And there is a large number of people whom Ukraine considers missing," he added in an interview broadcast late Wednesday by French TV channel France 2.

Zelenskyy has said his country needs security guarantees from the U.S. and Europe to deter any postwar Russian attacks

The last time Zelenskyy gave a figure for battlefield deaths, in early 2025, he said 46,000 Ukrainian troops had been killed.

Zelenskyy has repeatedly said his country needs security guarantees from the U.S. and Europe to deter any postwar Russian attacks.

Ukrainians must feel that there is genuine progress toward peace and "not toward a scenario in which the Russians exploit everything to their advantage and continue their strikes," Zelenskyy said on social media late Wednesday.

Last year saw a 31% increase in Ukrainian civilian casualties compared with 2024, the advocacy group Human Rights Watch said in a report published Wednesday.

Almost 15,000 Ukrainian civilians have been killed and just over 40,000 wounded since the start of the war through last December, according to the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine.