



By: TA | AP Brief

Russia declares a truce in Ukraine to mark Victory Day



Russia's Defense Ministry declared a unilateral ceasefire in Ukraine for Friday and Saturday to mark the 81st anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II, but it threatened to strike back at Kyiv if it tries to disrupt the Victory Day festivities.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in response said his country would observe a truce beginning at 12 a.m. on Wednesday and respond in kind to Russia's actions from that moment on. He did not put an end date on the truce.

The announcements on Monday come as Russia prepares to celebrate its most important secular holiday with a traditional **military parade** on Moscow's Red Square pared down due to what officials say are concerns over possible Ukrainian attacks.

Ukraine has been launching drone attacks deep inside Russia to counter its more than 4-year-old invasion.

They also follow a familiar pattern of previous attempts to secure ceasefires – most recently around Orthodox Easter – that had little to no impact.

The Defense Ministry said if Ukraine attempts to disrupt Saturday's celebrations, Russia will carry out a "massive missile strike on the center of Kyiv."

It warned the civilian population there and employees of foreign diplomatic missions of "the need to leave the city promptly."

Zelenskyy responded by saying that while Kyiv has not received any official requests for a truce, in the time left until midnight on Wednesday "it is realistic to ensure" that a ceasefire takes effect.

He urged the Kremlin "to take real steps to end their war, especially since Russia's Defense Ministry believes it cannot hold a parade in Moscow without Ukraine's goodwill."

The parade will take place

without military equipment

For years, the Kremlin has used the pomp-filled Victory Day parade to showcase its military might and global clout, and it has been a source of patriotic pride.

But this year, the parade in the Russian capital will take place without tanks, missiles and other military equipment for the first time in nearly two decades.

Some of the smaller parades that are held elsewhere across the country have also been pared down or even canceled for security reasons.

Speaking at a summit with European leaders in Armenia on Monday, Zelenskyy said that the Russian authorities "fear drones may buzz over Red Square" on May 9. "This is telling. It shows they are not strong now, so we must keep up the pressure through sanctions on them," he said.

Last week, Putin floated the idea of a ceasefire for Victory Day in a phone conversation with Donald Trump

World War II remains a rare point of consensus in Russia's divisive history under Communist rule.

The Soviet Union lost 27 million people in what it called the Great Patriotic War in 1941-45, an enormous sacrifice that left a deep scar in the national psyche.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has ruled Russia for over 25 years, has turned Victory Day into a key pillar of his tenure and has tried to use it to justify the war in Ukraine.

Last year's parade on the 80th anniversary drew the most **global leaders** to Moscow in a decade, including high-profile guests like Chinese President Xi Jinping, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Slovakia's Prime Minister Robert Fico.

Fico will attend the parade this year, as well.

Putin had declared a unilateral 72-hour **ceasefire** starting May 7, 2025, and authorities blocked cellphone internet in Moscow for several days to avert Ukrainian drone attacks.

Last week, Putin floated the idea of a ceasefire for Victory Day this year, too, in a phone conversation with U.S. President Donald Trump.

Russian media reported Monday that the country's cellphone operators have begun to warn their customers of cellphone internet restrictions in Moscow and St. Petersburg in the coming days.