

Russia's top spy offers view on why Ukraine crisis remains deadlocked

Kiev's Western "masters" are to blame, Sergey Naryshkin says



US President Joe Biden welcomes Ukraine's President Vladimir Zelensky at the South Lawn of the White House. © AFP / Olivier Douliery

Kiev is unable to engage in peace talks with Moscow because the US and its allies forbid it from doing so, Russian spy chief Sergey Naryshkin has said.

"The overseas masters of the Ukrainian regime won't allow getting [the Ukrainian] dossier off the ground," Naryshkin told Tass on Tuesday.

He brought up the negotiations that took place between Russia and Ukraine in Istanbul in late March, when *"certain basic agreements were reached."*

"However, those in Washington, those in London, told their associates in Kiev: 'No, [there should be] no peace talks, no peace. We've already paid you several dozen billion. We've invested in you; we'll continue to pump money and weapons, and your task is simple – go and fight,'" Naryshkin insisted.

The Ukrainian government then quickly backtracked on all the promises it had made in Istanbul, with the sudden change of mood occurring shortly after then-UK prime minister Boris Johnson visited Kiev.

Russia and Ukraine haven't sat behind the negotiating table since then, with Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky even signing a decree that officially banned him from talking

to his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin.



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Zelensky is now promoting a UN-hosted international summit planned for New York on February 24 – the anniversary of the launch of the Russian military operation in Ukraine. The event, in which a settlement to the conflict will be discussed without Moscow, is expected to focus on the 10-point “*peace plan*” previously outlined by Kiev, which, among other things, calls for Russia to withdraw to borders claimed by Ukraine, pay reparations and submit to war crimes tribunals.

Moscow has rejected Zelensky’s proposal, saying that it refuses to account for the reality on the ground and actually shows Kiev’s unwillingness to find a solution to the crisis. However, Putin and other Russian officials have repeatedly stated that Moscow is prepared to engage in dialogue, but on its own terms, one of which is Ukraine recognizing the status of Donetsk, Lugansk, Kherson, and Zaporozhye as parts of Russia.

Earlier this week, the head of the Russian Foreign Ministry’s Second CIS

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(Commonwealth of Independent States) Department, Aleksey Polishchuk, pointed out that if negotiation between the sides eventually take place, they’ll likely talk to each other directly as “*Western mediators often pursue their own goals and try to influence the course of negotiations ... in their own political and economic interests.*”