Vladimir Putin's remarks on the 30-day ceasefire proposal

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(Excerpt from the published transcript of Vladimir Putin's joint news conference with President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko)

As for Ukraine's readiness for a ceasefire, I will tell you how I view it, of course.

But I would like to start by thanking the President of the United States, Mr. Trump, for paying so much attention to the Ukraine settlement. We all have enough of our own domestic affairs to attend to. But many leaders of states, among them the President of the People's Republic of China, the Prime Minister of India, the Presidents of Brazil and the Republic of South Africa are addressing this issue and give it a lot of their time. We are grateful to all of them for that, because this activity is aimed at achieving a noble mission – the mission of ending hostilities and loss of life. This is my first point.

Second. We agree with the proposals to cease hostilities but proceed from the assumption that this cessation should lead to long-term peace and eliminate the root causes of this crisis.

Now, on Ukraine's readiness to cease the hostilities. You know, on the face of it, the US-Ukraine meeting in Saudi Arabia may look like the Ukrainian side made this decision under pressure from the United States. In fact, I am absolutely convinced that the Ukrainian side should have asked the Americans for this decision most emphatically, in view of the situation evolving on the ground, as has just been mentioned here.

And what is the current situation on the ground? Many of you have surely noticed that yesterday I visited the Kursk Region and listened to reports from the Chief of the General Staff, the Commander of the North group of forces and his deputy on the situation in the border area, first of all in the Kursk Region, or rather, in the incursion zone in the Kursk Region.

What is happening there? The situation there is completely under our control, and the grouping that invaded our territory has been isolated. It is completely isolated and under complete fire control. The control of Ukrainian troops inside this incursion zone has been lost. At the initial stages, just a week or two ago, Ukrainian servicemen tried to get out of there in small groups. Now it is impossible. They are trying to get out in very small groups of two or three men because everything is under our complete fire control.

The military equipment has been completely abandoned and it is impossible to remove it; it will remain there, one hundred percent. If this area is physically blocked in the next

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few days, then no one will be able to leave. There will only be two options: surrender or die. I think in these conditions it would be good for the Ukrainian side to achieve a ceasefire for at least 30 days. We are also in favour of it, but there are nuances. What are they?

First, what will we do about the incursion section in the Kursk Region? What would that mean if we cease fire for 30 days? Does this mean that everyone who is in there will just walk out without a fight? Do we have to let them go after they committed numerous heinous crimes against civilians? Or will the Ukrainian leadership issue a command for them to lay down their arms and just surrender? How will this happen? It is not clear.

How will other issues along the entire contact line be solved? It is almost 2,000 kilometres long. As you know, Russian troops are advancing in almost all areas of combat contact. Conditions are also very favourable there for us to block rather large units there.

So, how would these 30 days be used? For forced mobilisation to continue in Ukraine? For more weapons to be supplied there? For retraining the mobilised units? Or would none of this be done?

If so, how will issues related to control and verification be addressed? How can we guarantee and receive guarantees that nothing like this would happen? How will control procedures be organised? I hope everyone understands the complexity of all this at the level of common sense. These are all serious issues.

Who will order to cease fire? What is the price of these orders? Just imagine: almost 2,000 km. Who will be able to determine who violated the potential ceasefire agreement over a distance of 2,000 km and where exactly? Who will be held responsible for violating the ceasefire? All these issues must be meticulously worked upon by both sides. The idea itself is right, and, of course, we support it.

However, there are issues that must be discussed. I think we must talk them over with our American colleagues and partners, perhaps have a telephone conversation with President Trump and discuss them with him. However, the idea to put an end to this conflict by peaceful means gets our full support.

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