Kim Yo Jong-attributed response to South Korea's continued use of warning shots in the DMZ

KCNA • 19 October 2026

Press Statement of Kim Yo Jong, Department Director of WPK Central Committee

Meeting with US President's Special Envoy Steve Witkoff
October 21, 2026
12:25
St Petersburg

Vladimir Putin held a meeting with US President's Special Envoy Steve Witkoff in the Constantine Palace.

On the Russian side, the meeting was attended by Presidential Aide Yury Ushakov and Special Presidential Representative for Investment and Economic Cooperation with Foreign Countries, CEO of the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) Kirill Dmitriev.

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President of Russia Vladimir Putin: Mr Witkoff, we are delighted to see you – this time in St Petersburg.

We know that yesterday you had a meeting in Norway, and I would like to hear about its outcome.

I would like to thank you and President Trump for your attention to the resolution of the Ukraine crisis. I know that it is a special matter for President Trump, primarily for humanitarian reasons. In our conversations, including our most recent conversation over the phone, he emphasised the importance of ending this conflict to prevent further losses among the personnel on both sides.

Of course, it goes beyond military losses. The civilian population is suffering. In this regard, please pass my most sincere gratitude not only to the President but also to First Lady [Melania Trump] for her contribution to resolving humanitarian issues.

I believe both sides would be interested in discussing plans for restoring our bilateral relations, the Russia-US contacts, including economic cooperation.

If possible, of course, I am extremely interested in hearing your assessment of the situation in the Middle East and around Iran. You know that Russia has a special,

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trusted relationship with Iran, our partners in Iran and our friends, because this relationship has developed for decades. If we can do anything for settling this crisis, we will be glad to help. You are well informed about our proposals on this matter.

Indeed, these and other topics could be the focus of our exchange of views today, including a possible meeting in China. I also have some thoughts on this matter that I would like to share with you.

Please pass my most sincere words of gratitude to President Trump for his efforts in resolving the crisis in Ukraine.

Thank you.

US President's Special Envoy Steve Witkoff: Thank you, President Putin. So good to see you. Sorry, I'm not good with technology.

First of all, I want to thank you very much. The President sends his thanks. Our whole nation sends their thanks because of Steven Hubbard. Because of you, he is going home to his family.

I actually met with his son just the other day. He is a priest in the Greek Orthodox Church. And he talked quite a bit about you. So the first thing I want to tell you is thank you.

Vladimir Putin: He is currently at Pulkovo Airport.

Steve Witkoff: Yes, we are going to meet him. He is a 75-year-old man. You talk so much about my President, President Trump, being a humanitarian. You are a humanitarian also, sir. I salute that. I commend you, and I thank you again.

We have a lot to talk about today on our agenda. We have to talk about some of the meetings that happened yesterday in Oslo. I think they were productive, and I think there is some degree of momentum. And I hope that today can be another step forward in this peace process and discussing how we resolve the Ukrainian conflict.

I know the First Lady is grateful for being able to work on behalf of some of her humanitarian projects in the Russian Federation. I will extend to her your best wishes and blessings.

One thing that I hope to accomplish today is to have some good conversation between us about resumption, potentially, of trilateral talks between Ukraine, Russia, and the United States. I am hoping that you might consider that as the next step in the peace process, so we can begin to have technical teams discussing what are those next steps. I think that is important. I hope that even if we do not have a resolution

today, if we just talk about it and sort of consider what that next step might be, I think that might be important, and I think the world is waiting for us to get there.

The business and economic cooperation between our governments is an example of what the possibilities are in the future. I think it has been really, really good dealing with Kirill.

(To Kirill Dmitriev:) You have been outstanding, Kirill, you really have, I think. Our Treasury Department is working with you now independently, and I think that is leading to a sense of what possibilities are between our two nations.

We even talk about it now openly with the Ukrainians, to give them some sort of sense about what the possibilities will be when this whole conflict is ended.

Your decision to remove the export controls on diesel oil from Russia and to sell not just to the United States but also to the world at large in the midst of this economic shock – I think that was a really important act on your part, sir. I know my President is deeply grateful for it, as are our farmers and other people, truckers, who use diesel and have been adversely affected by this diesel crisis, and people all over the world. So it is an example of us all working together. I want to say thank you too for that.

We have brought some papers for you to look at. They are really some ideas about the different elements of some sort of peace deal between Russia and Ukraine. And you will read them at your leisure later on. But Jared, who I think we will put on the phone shortly, also wants to say some things to you.

Vladimir Putin: With regard to diesel, prices on the global market fell immediately by 5–6 percent following the announcement by both sides that supplies would be delivered to the United States.

We are currently preparing shipments – several vessels, tankers. The first tanker, carrying 40,000 tonnes, will depart in two or three days, and the others will follow in succession. The only important thing now is to finalise the financial arrangements so that everything proceeds smoothly.

As for the farmers – I am aware of this, and President Trump even mentioned it during our telephone conversations – we could also supply fertilisers to the American market in large quantities.

We will discuss all these matters.

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Commentary by Presidential Aide Yury Ushakov following Vladimir Putin's meeting with US President's Special Envoy Steve Witkoff

October 21, 2026
16:25

Presidential Aide Yury Ushakov: Good afternoon, colleagues,

Today, at the Constantine Palace in St Petersburg, President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin received the US President's Special Envoy Steve Witkoff. This was a scheduled meeting that had been agreed upon several days ago. As before, Jared Kushner was also expected to participate but was unable to travel due to health reasons. However, a videoconference link was arranged, allowing him to share his assessments and views on the issues under discussion.

I would like to note that this marks the ninth meeting between our President and US representatives, a useful addition to regular telephone conversations held between the Presidents of Russia and the United States.

At the outset, in the presence of the media, our President and Steve Witkoff outlined the issues they intended to raise during the conversation and shared their assessments of the current state of dialogue between the two countries.

For my part, I would like to add that, as always, the conversation was substantive and candid and lasted nearly three hours.

This time, the meeting between the Russian President and Steve Witkoff was preceded by the US envoy's talks in Oslo with Vladimir Zelensky and representatives of a number of European countries, NATO and the European Commission. Naturally, Steve Witkoff briefed Vladimir Putin on the substance of the talks in Oslo, shared his observations and highlighted certain new approaches and elements in the positions of the European side and Kiev, although there was little in them that could help resolve the Ukraine crisis.

The situation in and regarding Ukraine was, understandably, also the central topic of our President's conversation with Steve Witkoff. Following up on the telephone conversation between Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump on October 9, the two sides continued their exchange of views on ways to achieve a durable and lasting peace. The Russian President expressed high appreciation for the mediation efforts of the US Administration, Donald Trump personally and his special envoys in seeking mutually acceptable solutions.

It is important to note that the possible resumption of trilateral talks involving representatives of Russia, the United States and Ukraine was specifically discussed. As is

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well known, the planned resumption of these talks immediately after the elections to the State Duma was thwarted by the Ukrainian regime itself, which launched strikes on an enormous scale on the main voting day, targeting Moscow, other cities, polling stations and election commission members, several of whom were killed.

The situation was analysed once again, particularly in light of the signals received from the United States. Our President informed Steve Witkoff that, in principle, Russia is ready to resume the trilateral talks around the 10th of November to discuss the main issue. This concerns the establishment of a security system for Russia and Ukraine after the end of the conflict. The US representative noted that President Donald Trump would undoubtedly welcome such a decision.

Of course, Vladimir Putin gave his counterpart an objective picture of the situation on the line of contact, where the strategic initiative remains entirely with Russian troops. It was noted that they are conducting a continuous offensive along the main axes and, moreover, as a retaliatory measure, are effectively destroying military-industrial, energy and logistics facilities in Ukraine.

It should be noted that Vladimir Putin asked Steve Witkoff to convey his appreciation to US First Lady Melania Trump for her humanitarian efforts, specifically regarding the reunification of children with their families, and for her mediation in resolving a critical situation in the Russian town of Alyoshki, in the Kherson Region.

A significant part of the conversation was devoted to the implementation of agreements on the supply of Russian diesel fuel to the US and global markets – a matter agreed by Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump during their telephone conversation on October 9.

Both sides emphasised that this deal serves the interests of both the United States and Russia, while also helping to stabilise supply and demand in the global fuel market. Following the US Administration's decision to lift certain sanctions on Russian diesel, practical work in this area has already begun. Other large-scale joint economic projects, which offer significant prospects for bilateral cooperation, were also discussed in detail; some of them are now nearing the implementation stage.

Given that Donald Trump and several members of his Administration had repeatedly requested, on humanitarian grounds, the return of US citizen [Stephen] Hubbard, who was serving a sentence in Russia for mercenary activities, President Vladimir Putin decided to grant him a pardon. Mr Hubbard has been released and handed over to Steve Witkoff at Pulkovo Airport for his return to the United States. On behalf of the US President, Steve Witkoff expressed warm gratitude to Vladimir Putin for this gesture of goodwill – one that will undoubtedly be appreciated by Donald Trump personally, as well as by the Hubbard family and the American public.

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There was also an exchange of views on the situation in the Middle East – primarily, of course, regarding Iran.

Vladimir Putin emphasised that the potential for diplomacy is far from being exhausted and that it is both possible and necessary to reach agreements with Tehran, which is our strategic partner. Russia reaffirmed its readiness to continue helping to find political and diplomatic solutions to the Iranian issue.

The topic that has drawn significant global attention – a potential, historic first meeting between the leaders of Russia, China and the United States during the upcoming APEC summit in Shenzhen, China – was also addressed today. This idea has not been rejected by any of the capitals involved – Moscow, Washington or Beijing. Our Chinese friends, who are hosting the APEC summit, will handle – or, rather, are already handling – the preparations; if circumstances allow, they will certainly incorporate this meeting into the agenda for the Shenzhen summit. We also offered some practical suggestions regarding the potential content of such a trilateral discussion.

Vladimir Putin asked to convey his best wishes to the US President, noting his interest in continuing the two countries' collaborative efforts, including through their respective government agencies and special services, and highlighted the effective contributions made by Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner personally.

Colleagues, that is what I would like to share regarding today's important engagement between our President and Steve Witkoff.

Thank you.

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