



Trump, not Putin, budes

AFP, Anchorage

Donald Trump wanted to go bold -- a high-pomp, high-stakes summit with Vladimir Putin to test whether the Russian leader would compromise on the Ukraine war.

In the end, it looks like it was Trump, not Putin, who budged.

Putin, visibly delighted as he set foot in the West for the first time since ordering the 2022 invasion, made no apparent concession at the talks at an Alaska air base.

In a brief joint media appearance with Trump, who unusually took no questions, Putin again spoke of addressing the "root causes" of the Ukraine war and warned Kyiv and Europeans against disrupting "emerging progress" with the United States, the top defender of Ukraine under Trump's predecessor Joe Biden.

Trump, who bills himself as a master negotiator, acknowledged there was "no deal" but said there were "very few" areas of disagreement, although he was vague on what they were.

But posting hours later on his Truth Social account, Trump said he wanted Russia and Ukraine to "go directly to a peace agreement, which would end the war" and not a ceasefire.

Trump's own administration had been pushing a ceasefire for months, with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky signing on after intense pressure from Trump. Putin had repeatedly rejected truce offers and kept up attacks on Ukraine, seeking to maximise battlefield advantage.

Trump had vowed to be firm with Putin after wide criticism of the US president's cowed appearance before him at a 2018

summit in Helsinki.

But Putin again found ways to flatter and trigger Trump, who, in his second term, constantly speaks unprompted about his many grievances.

Putin told Trump before the cameras that there would have been no war -- which Putin himself launched -- if Trump were president in 2022 rather than Biden, a frequent Trump talking point.



Trump bemoaned the effect on ties with Putin of what he again called the "hoax" of the findings by US intelligence that Russia meddled in the 2016 election to help him.

In an interview with Fox News host Sean Hannity after the summit, Trump said that "one of the most interesting things" Putin told him was about... the US voting system.

Trump said approvingly that Putin -- who has held power in Russia since 2000 and was declared the winner of elections last year with 88 percent of the vote -- told him of the risks of mail-in ballots and said of Trump's 2020 loss to Biden, "You won that election by so much."

US election authorities and experts have found no evidence of wide-scale fraud from

mail-in ballots in the 2020 election, which Trump, uniquely in US history, refused to concede.

Trump's Democratic rivals voiced outrage that the summit secured no breakthrough and said it only served to normalise Putin, who faces an arrest warrant from the International Criminal Court.

"By quite literally rolling out the red carpet, Trump has legitimised Russia's aggression and whitewashed Putin's war crimes. It's shameful," said Gregory Meeks, the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Experts said it was too early to write off the summit completely, as much is not known about what was discussed behind closed doors. Trump will meet Zelensky on Monday at the White House.

Jennifer Kavanagh, director of military analysis at Defense Priorities, which backs US restraint, said that Trump's critics have been proven wrong in saying he would "give Ukraine to Putin or force Kyiv to accept surrender."

"His focus has been and remains getting Putin to the negotiating table. Mr Trump deserves credit rather than condemnation for his efforts so far," she said.

But Kristine Berzina, a senior fellow at the German Marshall Fund, said an initial read was that "Putin scored a victory by showing up, and Trump's limited words and tense demeanor left Putin to control the narrative."

"For a man so attached to showmanship, Trump unusually allowed Putin to be the star of what should have been the Trump show," she said.

Trump says Xi won't invade Taiwan while he is in office

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump said on Friday that Chinese President Xi Jinping told him China would not invade Taiwan while Trump is in office.

Trump made the comments in an interview with Fox News, ahead of talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

"I will tell you, you know, you have a very similar thing with President Xi of China and Taiwan, but I don't believe there's any way it's going to happen as long as I'm here. We'll see," Trump said during an interview on Fox News' "Special Report."

"He told me, 'I will never do it as long as you're president.' President Xi told me that, and I said, 'Well, I appreciate that,' but he also said, 'But I am very patient, and China is very patient.'"

Trump said.

Trump and Xi held their first confirmed call of Trump's second presidential term in June. Trump also said in April that Xi had called him but did not specify when that call took place.

China views Taiwan as its own territory and has vowed to "reunify" with the democratic and separately governed island, by force if necessary. Taiwan strongly objects to China's sovereignty claims.

Although Washington is Taiwan's main arms supplier and international backer, the US -- like most countries -- has no formal diplomatic ties with the island.

While Taiwan's government has yet to respond to Trump's remarks, a senior lawmaker from the ruling Democratic Progressive Party said that Taiwan was grateful for support from "our major ally".



Pakistan floods toll rises to 340

AFP, Peshawar

Rescuers were struggling to retrieve bodies from debris after flash floods triggered by heavy monsoon rains across northern Pakistan killed at least 344 people in the past 48 hours, authorities said yesterday.

The majority of deaths, 328, were reported in mountainous Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority said.

Most were killed in flash floods and collapsing houses, while at least 120 others were injured.

The provincial government has declared the severely affected mountainous districts of Buner, Bajaur, Swat, Shangla, Mansehra and Battagram as disaster-hit areas.

The meteorological department has issued a heavy rain alert for Pakistan's northwest, urging people to take "precautionary measures".

The monsoon season brings South Asia about three-quarters of its annual rainfall, vital for agriculture and food security, but it also brings destruction. Landslides and flash floods are common during the season, which usually begins in June and eases by the end of September.

'Netanyahu has become a 'problem'

AFP, Copenhagen

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen yesterday said that Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu has become a "problem", adding she would try to put pressure on Israel over the Gaza war as her country currently holds the EU presidency.

"Netanyahu is now a problem in himself," Frederiksen said in an interview with the Jyllands-Posten daily, adding that the Israeli government was going "too far."

The centre right leader slammed the "absolutely appalling and catastrophic" humanitarian situation in Gaza.

"We are one of the countries that wants to increase pressure on Israel, but we have not yet obtained the support of EU members," she said.

Frederiksen added that she wanted to consider "political pressure, sanctions, whether against settlers, ministers, or even Israel as a whole," referring to trade or research sanctions.

China's Wang to visit India on Monday

AFP, Beijing

China's top diplomat will visit India next week for talks about their shared boundary, Beijing's foreign ministry said yesterday, as the two countries consider resuming border trade after a five-year halt.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi will visit India on Delhi's invitation from Monday until Wednesday for "the 24th special representatives meeting on the China-India border issue", a spokesperson said in a statement.

Past trade between the neighbours across icy, high-altitude Himalayan border passes was usually small in volume, but any resumption is significant for its symbolism.

It stopped following a deadly 2020 clash between border troops.



National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel conduct a search and rescue operation at the site of a flash flood at a village in the Kishtwar district of India's Jammu and Kashmir yesterday. The latest deadly flood crashed through a Himalayan village, killing at least 60 and washing away dozens more.

PHOTO: AFP

Indian media reported this week that Wang was expected to hold talks in New Delhi on Monday.

He will meet Indian national security adviser Ajit Doval, New Delhi's foreign ministry confirmed in a statement yesterday. Wang will also hold talks with his Indian counterpart Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, who visited Beijing in July, the statement said.

The two major economic powers have long competed for strategic influence across South Asia.

However, they have moved to mend ties after being caught up in global trade and geopolitical turbulence triggered by US President Donald Trump's tariff blitz.

Chinese and Indian officials have said in recent weeks that the two countries were discussing the resumption of border trade.

BUYING RUSSIAN OIL No imminent plans to penalise China: Trump

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump said on Friday he did not immediately need to consider retaliatory tariffs on countries such as China for buying Russian oil, but might have to "in two or three weeks."

Trump has threatened sanctions on Moscow and secondary sanctions on countries that buy its oil if no moves are made to end the war in Ukraine. China and India are the top two buyers of Russian oil.

The president last week imposed an additional 25% tariff on Indian goods, citing its continued imports of Russian oil.

In his executive order, Trump explained that Russia's continued

military actions in Ukraine constituted a "national emergency" and it was therefore "necessary and appropriate" to place heightened tariffs on India, a major consumer of its petroleum products.

However, Trump has not taken similar action against China.

He was asked by Fox News' Sean Hannity if he was now considering such action against Beijing after he and Russian President Vladimir Putin failed to produce an agreement to resolve or pause Moscow's war in Ukraine.

"Well, because of what happened today, I think I don't have to think about that," Trump said after his summit with Putin in Alaska.

"Now, I may have to think about it in two weeks or three weeks or something, but we don't have to think about that right now. I think, you know, the meeting went very well."

Chinese President Xi Jinping's slowing economy will suffer if Trump follows through on a promise to ramp up Russia-related sanctions and tariffs.

Xi and Trump are working on a trade deal that could lower tensions - and import taxes - between the world's two biggest economies. But China could be the biggest remaining target, outside of Russia, if Trump ramps up punitive measures.

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