Russia, Ukraine hold nearly 4 hours of U.S.-mediated talks

BY BASSAM HATOUM
Associated Press

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates – Russia and Ukraine on Tuesday held their first U.S.-mediated talks in nine months on ending the 4½-year-old war, with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio calling the meeting "very productive" and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy saying the session was "constructive and quite substantive."

Hopes of ending Europe's biggest conflict since World War II are tempered, however, by the absence of any significant breakthroughs in three previous rounds of talks earlier this year.

There's nothing to suggest a new posture that would lead to a breakthrough, but circumstances surrounding the talks have been changed by the outcome of the U.S. midterm elections as well as increased pressure on Russia's wartime economy. Moscow also is seeking to break Ukrainians' will as another winter sets in by ramping up its battering of the country's power grid.

Neither Rubio nor Zelenskyy attended the talks in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates. The session lasted four hours and another is scheduled for a second day Wednesday.

Delegations from Moscow and Kyiv met as Washington, represented by U.S. President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner and envoy Steve Witkoff, renewed its push to stop the fighting.

"It looks like the talks in Abu Dhabi were very productive," Rubio said in Paris at the Group of Seven meeting, although he urged patience. "There's a lot of work to be done in that regard. It's not like something that's on the verge of being solved in the next 24 hours or anything like that."

Zelenskyy said the talks were largely about humanitarian issues, including prisoner exchanges and returning Ukrainian civilians in captivity, as well as children taken from the country. Security guarantees also were discussed, he added during an appearance at the University of Copenhagen in Denmark.

A senior Ukrainian official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to comment publicly said Ukraine and Russia talked about a large scale prisoner swap, although the details will be discussed in the coming days.



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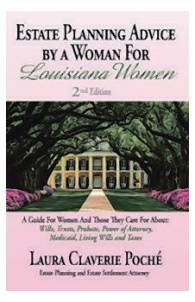
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