

How Trump backed away from promising to end the Russia-Ukraine war in 24 hours

-Meg Kinnard, AP News

During his campaign, Donald Trump said repeatedly that he would be able to end the [war between Russia and Ukraine](#) “in 24 hours” upon taking office. He has changed his tone since becoming president again.

As various U.S. emissaries have held talks looking for an end to the war, both Trump and his top officials have become more reserved about the prospects of a peace deal. Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Friday suggested the U.S. might soon back away from negotiations altogether without more progress, adding a comment that sounded like a repudiation of the president’s old comments.

“No one’s saying this can be done in 12 hours,” he told reporters.

The promises made by presidential candidates are often felled by the realities of governing. But Trump’s shift is noteworthy given his prior term as president and his long histories with both Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The White House on Friday did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment on Trump’s evolving deadline comments.

Here’s a look at Trump’s evolution on the way he talks about the Russia-Ukraine war:

‘A very easy negotiation’

MARCH 2023: “There’s a very easy negotiation to take place. But I don’t want to tell you what it is because then I can’t use that negotiation; it’ll never work,” Trump told Fox News Channel host Sean Hannity, claiming that he could “solve” the war “in 24 hours” if he were back in the White House.

“But it’s a very easy negotiation to take place. I will have it solved within one day, a peace between them,” Trump said of the war, which at that point had been ongoing for more than a year since Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

MAY 2023: “They’re dying, Russians and Ukrainians. I want them to stop dying. And I’ll have that done — I’ll have that done in 24 hours,” Trump said during [a town hall](#) on CNN.

JULY 2024: When asked to respond to Trump’s one-day claim, Russia’s United Nations Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia [told reporters](#) that “the Ukrainian crisis cannot be solved in one day.” Afterward, Trump campaign spokesperson Steven Cheung said that “a top priority in his second term will be to quickly negotiate an end to the Russia-Ukraine war.”

AUGUST 2024: “Before I even arrive at the Oval Office, shortly after I win the presidency, I will have the horrible war between Russia and Ukraine settled,” Trump told a National Guard Conference. “I’ll get it settled very fast. I don’t want you guys going over there. I don’t want you going over there.”

After Trump wins in November

DEC. 16, 2024: “I’m going to try,” Trump said during a news conference at his Mar-a-Lago club, asked if he thought he could still make a deal with Putin and Zelenskyy to end the war.

JAN. 8, 2025: In a Fox News Channel interview, retired Lt. Gen. Keith Kellogg — now serving as Trump’s special envoy to Ukraine and Russia — proposed a 100-day deadline to end the war. Friday marked 100 days since that interview. The 100th day of Trump’s presidency is April 30.

Trump becomes president and starts negotiations

JAN. 31: Trump says his new administration has already had “very serious” discussions with Russia and says he and Putin could soon take “significant” action toward ending the grinding conflict.

“We will be speaking, and I think will perhaps do something that’ll be significant,” Trump [said in an exchange with reporters](#) in the Oval Office. “We want to end that war. That war would have not started if I was president.”

FEB. 12: Trump and Putin speak for more than an hour and Trump speaks afterward with Zelenskyy. Trump [says afterward](#), “I think we’re on the way to getting peace.”

FEB. 19: Trump [posts on his Truth Social site](#) that Zelenskyy is serving as a “dictator without elections.” He adds that “we are successfully negotiating an end to the War with Russia, something all admit only ‘TRUMP,’ and the Trump Administration, can do.”

FEB. 28: Trump and Zelenskyy have a contentious [Oval Office meeting](#). Trump berates Zelenskyy for being “disrespectful,” then abruptly calls off the [signing of a minerals deal](#) that Trump said would have moved Ukraine closer to ending the war.

Declaring himself “in the middle” and not on the side of either Ukraine or Russia in the conflict, Trump went on to deride Zelenskyy’s “hatred” for Putin as a roadblock to peace.

“You see the hatred he’s got for Putin,” Trump said. “That’s very tough for me to make a deal with that kind of hate.”

The Ukrainian leader was asked to leave the White House by top Trump advisers shortly after Trump shouted at him. Trump later told reporters that he wanted an “immediate ceasefire” between Russia and Ukraine but expressed doubt that Zelenskyy was ready to make peace.

MARCH 3: Trump [temporarily pauses](#) military aid to Ukraine to pressure Zelenskyy to seek peace.

Trump claims his 24-hour promise was ‘sarcastic’

MARCH 14: Trump says he was “being a little bit sarcastic” when he repeatedly claimed as a candidate that he would have the Russia-Ukraine war solved within 24 hours.

“Well, I was being a little bit sarcastic when I said that,” Trump says in a clip released from an interview for the “Full Measure” television program. “What I really mean is I’d like to get it settled and, I’ll, I think, I think I’ll be successful.”

MARCH 18-19: Trump speaks with both Zelenskyy and Putin on successive days.

In a March 18 call, Putin told Trump that he would agree not to target Ukraine’s energy infrastructure but refused to back a full [30-day ceasefire](#) that Trump had proposed. Afterward, Trump on social media heralded that move, which he said came “with an understanding that we will be working quickly to have a Complete

Ceasefire and, ultimately, an END to this very horrible War between Russia and Ukraine.”

In their own call a day later, Trump suggested that Zelenskyy should consider giving the U.S. ownership of Ukraine’s power plants to ensure their long-term security. Trump told Zelenskyy that the U.S could be “very helpful in running those plants with its electricity and utility expertise,” according to a White House statement from Secretary of State Marco Rubio and national security adviser Mike Waltz.

APRIL 14: Trump says “everybody” is to blame: Zelenskyy, Putin and Biden.

“That’s a war that should have never been allowed to start and Biden could have stopped it and Zelenskyy could have stopped it and Putin should have never started it,” Trump told reporters in the Oval Office.

Talk of moving on

APRIL 18: Rubio says that [the U.S. may “move on”](#) from trying to secure a [Russia-Ukraine peace deal](#) if there is no progress in the coming days.

He spoke in Paris after landmark talks among U.S., Ukrainian and European officials produced outlines for steps toward peace and appeared to make some long-awaited progress. A new meeting is expected next week in London, and Rubio suggested it could be decisive in determining whether the Trump administration continues [its involvement](#).

“We are now reaching a point where we need to decide whether this is even possible or not,” Rubio told reporters. “Because if it’s not, then I think we’re just going to move on. It’s not our war. We have other priorities to focus on.”

He said the U.S. administration wants to decide “in a matter of days.”

Later that day, Trump told reporters at the White House that he agreed with Rubio that a Ukraine peace deal must be done “quickly.”

“I have no specific number of days but quickly. We want to get it done,” he said.

Saying “Marco is right” that the dynamic of the negotiations must change, Trump stopped short of saying he’s ready to walk away from peace negotiations.

“Well, I don’t want to say that,” Trump said. “But we want to see it end.”