

# Fears of Putin-Trump Deal Without Kyiv Unsettle Ukraine



File photo of Volodymyr Zelensky, Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin.

KYIV (Reuters) -- Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky thanked European leaders on Sunday for backing his demand for a seat at the table as Russia and the United States prepare for a summit this week where Kyiv fears they could seek to dictate terms to it for ending the 3-1/2-year war.

U.S. President Donald Trump, who for weeks had been threatening new sanctions against Russia, announced instead last Friday that he would hold an August 15 summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska.

A White House official said on Saturday that Trump was open to

Zelensky attending, but that preparations currently were for a bilateral meeting with Putin.

The Kremlin leader last week ruled out meeting Zelensky at this point, saying the conditions for such an encounter were "unfortunately still far" from being met.

Trump said a potential deal would involve "some swapping of territories to the betterment of both (sides)", a statement that compounded Ukrainian alarm that it may face pressure to surrender more land.

Zelensky says any decisions taken without Ukraine will be "stillborn" and unworkable. On Saturday the leaders of Britain, France, Germany,

Italy, Poland, Finland and the European Commission said in a joint statement that any diplomatic solution must protect the vital security interests of Ukraine and Europe.

A European official said Europe had come up with a counter-proposal to Trump's, but declined to provide details. Russian officials accused Europe of trying to thwart Trump's efforts to end the war.

"The Euro-imbeciles are trying to prevent American efforts to help resolve the Ukrainian conflict," former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev posted on social media on Sunday.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in a vituperative statement that the relationship between Ukraine and the European Union resembled "necrophilia".

Roman Alekhin, a Russian war blogger, said Europe had been reduced to the role of a spectator. "If Putin and Trump reach an agreement directly, Europe will be faced with a fait accompli. Kyiv - even more so," he said.

Russia holds about a fifth of the country and has claimed the regions of Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia as its own, although it controls only about 70% of the last three.

## 10,000 People Protest Bridge Linking Sicily to Mainland Italy



People hold a banner during a demonstration against the bridge in Messina, Italy on Aug. 9, 2025.

ROME (AP) — Thousands of people marched in the Sicilian city of Messina to protest a government plan to build a bridge that would connect the Italian mainland with Sicily in a massive 13.5-billion-euro (\$15.5 billion) infrastructure project.

Protesters staunchly oppose the Strait of Messina Bridge project over its scale, earthquake threats, environmental impact and the specter of mafia interference.

The idea to build a bridge to connect Sicily to the rest of Italy has been debated off and on for decades but always delayed due to these concerns. The project, however, took a major step forward when a government committee over-

seeing strategic public investments approved the plan this week.

Transport Minister Matteo Salvini, the project's main political backer, called it "the biggest infrastructure project in the West."

Opponents are angry that about 500 families would have to be expropriated in order for the bridge to be built.

"The Strait of Messina can't be touched," protesters shouted as they marched in Messina. Many carried banners that said "No Ponte" (No Bridge). Organizers estimated crowd size at 10,000 people.

The proposed bridge would span nearly 3.7 kilometers (2.2 miles) with a suspended section of 3.3 kilometers (more

than 2 miles). It would surpass Turkey's Canakkale Bridge by 1,277 meters (4,189 feet) to become the longest suspension bridge in the world.

Preliminary work could begin as early as late September or early October, pending approval from Italy's Court of Audit. Full construction is scheduled to begin in 2026, with completion targeted between 2032 and 2033.

With three car lanes in each direction flanked by a double-track railway, the bridge would have the capacity to carry 6,000 cars an hour and 200 trains a day — reducing the time to cross the strait by ferry from up to 100 minutes to 10 minutes by car. Trains would save 2/12 hours in transit time, Salvini said.

The project could also support Italy's commitment to raise defense spending to 5% of GDP targeted by NATO, as the government has indicated it would classify the bridge as defense-related.

Italy argues that the bridge would form a strategic corridor for rapid troop movements and equipment deployment, qualifying it as "security-enhancing infrastructure."

Environmental groups, however, have lodged complaints with the EU, citing concerns that the project would impact migratory birds.

Italy's president has also insisted that the project remain subject to anti-mafia legislation that applies to all large-scale infrastructure projects. Salvini pledged that keeping organized crime out of the project was a top priority.

## Repeated Radioactive Leaks at UK Nuclear Base Spark Outcry

LONDON (Dispatches) — Radioactive water was allowed to leak into Loch Long, a sea loch near Glasgow, after repeated pipe failures at the United Kingdom's highly secure nuclear weapons base, according to newly released official documents.

The leaks occurred at the Coulport armaments depot, which stores nuclear warheads for the Royal Navy's Trident submarines. An investigation by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (Sepa) found that aging pipes and inadequate maintenance were to blame for the release of low levels of tritium, a radioactive isotope used to enhance nuclear warheads.

Sepa's reports reveal that up to half of the 1,500 water pipes on the base were beyond their intended service life when the leaks occurred. The agency described the flooding as a consequence of "shortfalls in maintenance," leading to the discharge of

"unnecessary radioactive waste" into the surrounding environment.

One significant incident took place in August 2019, when a burst pipe flooded a nuclear weapons processing area. The contaminated water, containing tritium, flowed through an open drain into Loch Long. While Sepa noted the levels of radioactivity were low and posed no risk to human health, the regulator criticized the Royal Navy's failure to adequately manage the aging infrastructure.

Internal reviews and Sepa inspections led the Ministry of Defence to commit to 23 remedial actions in early 2020 aimed at preventing further pipe failures. Despite this, two more pipe bursts occurred in 2021, prompting renewed scrutiny. Sepa's 2022 report highlighted slow progress on repairs and ongoing weaknesses in the base's asset management.

David Cullen, a nuclear weapons

expert at the Basic defense think tank in London, called the repeated incidents "shocking" and criticized efforts to keep the leaks secret. He said the Ministry of Defense's decade-long infrastructure program had failed to implement proper maintenance systems, exposing a broader problem of oversight in the UK's nuclear weapons program.

Because Coulport operates as a military installation, it is exempt from civilian pollution regulations, but Sepa said it holds the base to environmental standards "equivalent to those in environmental regulations" to protect the public and environment.

The Ministry of Defense, responding to the revelations, stated that it takes "the utmost importance" in safely handling radioactive materials and maintained that no unsafe releases into the environment had occurred.

## 'Political Extortion': Trump Demands \$1 Billion From UCLA Over Demos



Law enforcement officers stand guard at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), during a pro-Palestinian protest in Los Angeles, California, May 2, 2024.

WASHINGTON (Reuters) -- California Governor Gavin Newsom said that a \$1 billion settlement offer by President Donald Trump's administration for UCLA amounted to political extortion to which the state will not bow.

The University of California says it is reviewing a \$1 billion settlement offer by the Trump administration for UCLA after the government froze hundreds of millions of dollars in funding over pro-Palestinian protests.

UCLA, which is part of the University of California system, said this week the government froze \$584 million in funding. Trump has threatened to cut federal funds for universities over pro-Palestinian student protests against U.S. ally Israel's military assault on Gaza.

"Donald Trump has weaponized the DOJ (Department of Justice) to kneecap America's #1 public university system — freezing medical & science funding until @UCLA pays his \$1 billion ransom," the office of Newsom, a Democrat, said in a post.

"California won't bow to Trump's disgusting political extortion," it added.

"This isn't about protecting Jewish students - it's a billion-dollar political shake-down from the pay-to-play president."

The government alleges universities, including UCLA, allowed antisemitism during the protests and in doing so violated Jewish and Israeli students' civil

rights. The White House had no immediate comment beyond the offer.

Protesters, including some Jewish groups, say the government wrongly equates their criticism of Israel's war in Gaza and its occupation of Palestinian territories with antisemitism, and their advocacy for Palestinian rights with support for extremism.

Experts have raised free speech and academic freedom concerns over the Republican president's threats. The University of California says paying such a large settlement would "completely devastate" the institution.

Large demonstrations took place at UCLA last year. Last week, UCLA agreed to pay over \$6 million to settle a lawsuit by some students and a professor who alleged antisemitism. It was also sued this year over a 2024 violent mob attack on pro-Palestinian protesters.

Rights advocates have noted a rise in antisemitism, anti-Arab bias and Islamophobia due to conflict in the Middle East. The Trump administration has not announced equivalent probes into Islamophobia.

The government has settled its probes with Columbia University, which agreed to pay over \$220 million, and Brown University, which said it will pay \$50 million. Both accepted certain government demands. Settlement talks with Harvard University are ongoing.

## Report: Oligarchs Tracking UK's Fraud Investigations



LONDON (Dispatches) — A group of oligarchs under investigation by Britain's Serious Fraud Office (SFO) employed private spies to secretly surveil former prosecutors who had led some of the nation's most sensitive financial crime cases, according to newly obtained documents and images.

The surveillance, beginning in 2019, targeted individuals who had played key roles in a high-profile SFO inquiry into suspected corruption and fraud involving the Eurasian Natural Resources Corporation (ENRC), a mining giant backed by billions of dollars from the Kremlin. The investigation was eventually dropped in 2023 amid legal setbacks.

The Guardian newspaper said it has acquired photographs showing former prosecutors being followed and their homes monitored by operatives hired by the oligarchs. One image depicts Tom Martin, a former senior SFO prosecutor, standing outside his home on a day when he was taking his young son to a football match.

"It's an attack on the rule of law," Martin said after seeing the images. "We're not fair game."

The operation was reportedly orchestrated by Dmitry Vozianov, a Russian consultant with ties to the oligarchs, who hired private intelligence firms staffed by former military and intelligence personnel, including Damian Ozenbrook, a decorated British

ex-paratrooper.

The spies' objectives were to gather information about the SFO's investigative methods, identify confidential sources, and obtain compromising material to gain leverage over the agency. Although the oligarchs' lawyers acknowledged the surveillance, they insisted that any investigations were lawful and part of legal efforts to defend against the SFO.

Among those monitored was James Coussey, a respected prosecutor who spent years on the ENRC case before retiring. Coussey has since died. "He was one of the most up-right lawyers I ever met," said Martin.

The ENRC investigation exposed the challenges faced by Britain's top fraud watchdog as it pursued powerful, well-funded defendants backed by foreign state interests. The oligarchs, whose wealth was linked to former Soviet power structures, used a web of legal actions and private intelligence tactics to counter the inquiry.

The SFO confirmed it was aware of the risks posed by such surveillance but emphasized that the reported spying involved former employees, not current staff. The agency cited the safety and wellbeing of its personnel as a top priority.

The revelations raise broader questions about the regulation of private intelligence operations in the UK and the influence of foreign actors on domestic law enforcement efforts.

## News in Brief

LONDON (Reuters) -- London's Metropolitan Police arrested more than 466 people at a protest on Saturday against Britain's decision to ban the group Palestine Action, the force said. British lawmakers banned Palestine Action under anti-terrorism legislation in July after some of its members broke into a Royal Air Force base and damaged planes as part of a series of protests. The group accuses Britain's government of complicity in what it says are Israeli war crimes in Gaza. Protesters, some wearing black and white Palestinian scarves and waving Palestinian flags, chanted "hands off Gaza", and held placards with the message "I oppose genocide. I support Palestine Action", video taken by Reuters at the scene showed.

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BEIJING (Reuters) -- Nvidia's H20 chips pose security concerns for China, a social media account affiliated with China's state media said on Sunday, after Beijing raised concerns over backdoor access in those chips. The H20 chips are also not technologically advanced or environmentally friendly, the account, Huiyuan Tiantian, which is affiliated with state broadcaster CCTV, said in an article published on WeChat. H20 artificial intelligence chips were developed by Nvidia for the Chinese market after the U.S. imposed export restrictions on advanced AI chips in late 2023. China's cyberspace watchdog said on July 31 that it had summoned Nvidia to a meeting, asking the U.S. chipmaker to explain whether its H20 chips had any backdoor security risks - a hidden method of bypassing normal authentication or security controls. In its article, Huiyuan Tiantian said Nvidia chips could achieve functions including "remote shutdown" through a hardware "backdoor."

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SEOUL (Reuters) -- South Korea's military shrank by 20% in the past six years to 450,000 troops, largely due to a sharp drop in the population of males of enlistment age for mandatory service in the country with the world's lowest birthrate, a report said on Sunday. The dramatic decline in the pool of available males for military service is also causing a shortfall in the number of officers and could result in operational difficulty if it continues, the defense ministry said in the report. The report was made to the ruling Democratic Party member of parliament Choo Mi-ae, whose office released it. South Korea's military has steadily declined since the early 2000s when it had about 690,000 soldiers. The pace accelerated during the late 2010s and there were about 563,000 active-duty soldiers and officers in 2019. North Korea is believed to have an active-duty military of about 1.2 million, according to the latest estimate by the defense ministry in 2022.

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BEIJING (Reuters) -- Liu Jianchao, a senior Chinese diplomat widely seen as a potential future foreign minister, has been taken away by authorities for questioning, the Wall Street Journal reported on Sunday. Liu was taken away after returning to Beijing in late July from an overseas work trip. WSJ reported, citing people familiar with the matter. Liu, 61, has led the Communist Party's body in charge of managing ties with foreign political parties. Since taking the role in 2022, he has travelled to more than 20 nations and met officials from more than 160 countries. Liu's busy schedule, especially his meetings with the former U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Washington, stoked expectations that the former ambassador and ministry spokesman was being groomed to be the next foreign minister. His detention marks the highest-level probe involving a diplomat since China ousted its former foreign minister and President Xi Jinping's protégé, Qin Gang, in 2023 following rumors of an extramarital affair.

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N'DJAMENA (AFP) -- A court in Chad jailed former prime minister and opposition leader Succes Masra for 20 years, convicting him of hate speech, xenophobia and having incited a massacre. The court in N'Djamena jailed Masra, one of President Mahamat Idriss Deby Ito's fiercest critics, for his role in inciting inter-communal violence in which 42 people were killed on May 14. It also imposed a fine of one billion CFA francs (1.5 million euros). Most of the massacre victims were women and children in Mandakao, southwestern Chad, according to the court. On Friday, the state prosecutor had called for a 25-year sentence. Activists with Masra's Transform-ers Party gathered later Saturday to protest the conviction and condemn Deby. They said former finance Bedomra Kordje had been appointed interim party leader. Masra was arrested on May 16, two days after the violence, and charged with "inciting hatred, revolt, forming and complicity with armed gangs, complicity in murder, arson and desecration of graves".

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LONDON (Guardian) -- People aged over 75 are being excluded from health research due to arbitrary age cut-offs, potentially stalling the development of life-saving treatments, leading charities and research institutes have warned. Some clinical studies restrict participation for older people due to concerns about the potential frailty of participants and a belief that age may reduce the effect of the drug or device being studied. Such restrictions are contributing to health inequity by excluding an important demographic from medical research, according to more than 40 charities and leading research funders, including the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), Cancer Research UK, the British Heart Foundation, and the Medical Research Council.