



Written by [Paul Dragu](#) on October 16, 2025

## Trump and Putin Patch Things Up, Plan Budapest Meeting

U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin appear to be back on good terms — at least for now.

Trump announced Thursday afternoon that he had a very “productive” call with the Russian head of state, who congratulated him for the “great accomplishment” of “peace in the Middle East.” The Russian leader also passed on niceties to the First Lady for her involvement with children.

The two leaders discussed potential business between the United States and Russia after “the War with Ukraine is over,” according to Trump’s version of the call. The Russians confirmed the call, which they [announced](#) as it was happening.



Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin in August 2025

Before hanging up, they agreed to a meeting of high-level advisors next week, to be followed up by an in-person meeting in Budapest, Hungary, where they’ll discuss ending the “inglorious” war between Russia and Ukraine.

The president ended his Truth Social [announcement](#) on a high note. “I believe great progress was made with today’s telephone conversation,” he said.

### Good News

The news was undoubtedly welcomed by sensible Americans who realize there is nothing to gain and too much at risk by egging on a war between two very corrupt nations on the other side of the planet, neither of which pose a serious threat to the U.S. homeland so long as we stay out of their business. Former Trump National Security Adviser General Michael Flynn was among them. “This is what we voted for,” he announced on social media. Flynn previously alleged that a group of warmongers were exerting undue influence on the president.

PEACE IN OUR TIME by a [@POTUS](#) who knows this is what we voted for.

Thank you [@realDonaldTrump](#) [pic.twitter.com/iUaFj2TFx5](#)

— General Mike Flynn (@GenFlynn) [October 16, 2025](#)

Those who’ve been keeping up with the TMZ-style drama between these two strongheaded world leaders and are cheering for de-escalation are, like Flynn, happy to hear this news — but there is also some trepidation. This is about the fifth rerun of this episode. The script goes something like this: The two talk, Putin flatters and reassures, and Trump emerges smitten, only to become disillusioned just weeks later. Nevertheless, this is better than how the saga had been tracking as of late.



## Escalatory Rhetoric

Just Wednesday, U.S. War Secretary Pete Hegseth implied he would wage war against Russia if it did not wind down *its* war against Ukraine. “If there is no path to peace in the short term then the United States, along with our allies, will take steps necessary to impose costs on Russia for its continued aggression,” Hegseth [said](#) Wednesday. “If we must take this step, the U.S. War Department stands ready to do our part in ways that only the United States can do.”

Hegseth said this during a meeting focused on Ukraine at the NATO headquarters. He apparently did not elaborate on whether he meant to say what it sounded like he said.

Before that, Trump was publicly mulling over the idea of sending the Ukrainians Tomahawks, long-range missiles with the capability to strike any major Russian city. The big idea was that doing this would cripple the Kremlin’s major source of revenue, its energy sector. On Sunday, Trump told reporters he was thinking of speaking to Russia to ask them if “they want to have Tomahawks going in their direction?” Maybe he did.

Russia had previously responded to the threat with its own warning, pointing out that sending that kind of power would directly implicate the United States. Somewhere in that melee of threats and bluster, Trump even called Russia a “paper tiger.”

## Just Bluffing?

All of that talk, however, may have been nothing more than bluffing designed to keep the Russians off balance and convince them to get serious about winding down the war. And maybe it worked.

Or maybe Hegseth’s rhetoric was the result of Trump waking up in an especially crabby mood on account of being edged out of the Nobel Peace Prize and ordering his War Sec to throw caution to the wind since they won’t award him with the accolade he badly wants, anyway. It’s hard to tell. As we’ve said before, there’s a good chance that when it comes to dealing with the mess in Eastern Europe, Trump’s so good at keeping everyone guessing that even he doesn’t know what he’ll do.

That’s probably why some European leaders, as much as they want Trump to get and stay tough with Putin, were reluctant to celebrate Hegseth’s comments. German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius told reporters, “I would read into that a kind of change of perspective and approach, but not more for the moment. I can’t interpret, really, what he did mean.”

## Unleash the Tomahawks

It’s telling that the folks at the Defense and Security Department at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) were ecstatic about the possibility that the United States would give the Ukrainians Tomahawks. “As with Hamas and the fighting in Gaza, bringing the Ukraine war to an end requires speaking the only language that Moscow understands: force,” [wrote](#) Seth G. Jones and Tom Karako in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed. More from Jones and Karako:

Without Tomahawks or a system with a similar payload and range, Ukraine can’t put real pressure on Russian supply lines, military production or long-range launchers into Ukrainian territory. Ukraine can use Tomahawks to target rear support areas sustaining Russian front-line operations, including weapons and fuel depots, tank-production facilities, and air bases used by Russian fighters and bombers.



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It's true that Putin might interpret America's friendly negotiation approach as weak and naïve. But it's also true that the CSIS is a profoundly hawkish outfit funded by defense contractors and staffed by people with strong ties to defense and intelligence agencies. They're the hand guiding the only tool the know of, the hammer, to the nail. Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and Boeing are among the [CISIS's financial backers](#). But that's three of many more. As the Quincy Institute [noted in 2023](#), when CSIS was complaining that the Pentagon wasn't spending enough, 20 different defense contractors were funding the CISIS. Moreover, Jones, the president of CSIS, is [a former Department of Defense senior official](#) and has worked with the CIA in advisory roles.

## Uncertain Outcome

Trump has been trying to mediate peace between these two sibling nations before he even moved back in the Oval Office. And despite what some think, it's hard to interpret his behavior, words, and efforts as a façade covering a hidden motive to start World War III. A more likely explanation is that Trump's erratic personality and allergy to details is what's prompting the vacillating, chaotic foreign policy of the U.S. government.

Putin and Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky have more in common than they may care to admit. Both are accused of being dictators. Both lead governments believed to have persecuted, even killed, dissident journalists. And both have an alleged track record of silencing government critics.

On Friday, Zelensky will be back in the White House, hat in hand. He'll likely have a bigger hat than the one he passes out in Europe because he'll be asking for Tomahawks. He'll likely try to convince Trump that, just like all the previous times, Putin's reassurances will come to naught and that the right thing to do is give Ukraine more firepower.

The question is, what will Trump do?



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