



Written by [Paul Dragu](#) on August 15, 2025

Russia-Ukraine Fighting Continues Before Trump-Putin Meeting

Ukraine hit two Russian cities with drone attacks the day before President Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin were set to meet in Alaska.

Ukraine hit the cities of Rostov-on-Don and Belgorod. Reuters [reported](#):

Thirteen people were wounded, two seriously, when a drone struck an apartment building in the southern Russian city of Rostov-on-Don, the acting regional governor said. Three civilians were wounded in the city of Belgorod near the border with Ukraine, according to the governor of that region, who posted video appearing to show a drone striking a car in the centre of the city.



AP Images

Meanwhile, Russian troops have been making significant gains in the Donetsk region. They've "pierced Ukrainian lines in a dramatic advance that could compromise the defense of the region," [according](#) to reports. *The Kyiv Independent* [reported](#) earlier this week:

Over the past few days, Moscow's forces advanced 10 kilometers toward the Dobropillia-Kramatorsk highway by leveraging its numerical superiority, the Ukrainian monitoring group DeepState reported on Aug. 11.

Manpower Shortage

Experts see Russia's recent advancement as another sign that the Ukrainian military is falling apart. They "point to broader systemic issues within the Ukrainian military, such as the severe shortage of manpower and poor strategic vision among the top command," *The Kyiv Independent* reported.

Ukraine's manpower problem has become a major talking point around this war. Vice President J.D. Vance brought it up all the way back in February when Trump famously chided Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and told him he didn't "have the cards."

Territory Issues

Some see this latest push by the Russians into the Donetsk region as the Kremlin's way of bolstering its position ahead of the meeting between Trump and Putin. Russia has made it clear that an acceptable deal will have to include new boundaries. It controls about 20 percent of Ukraine now, Crimea included, and Putin will try to negotiate for as much of that territory as possible. Trump too has recognized that



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both sides are going to have to agree on “some land swapping,” although there’s no indication as to what territory Russia is willing to give up. Vance has reiterated this point, saying that an acceptable deal will come with land agreements.

Zelensky and a number of European leaders held a [virtual meeting](#) with Trump Wednesday to ensure the president didn’t negotiate away territory or other elements on behalf of Ukraine. All the parties emerged from the meeting agreeing that Trump would seek while talking to Putin a follow-up meeting that would include Zelensky.

More Sanctions

Trump has threatened Russia with “very severe consequences” if Putin doesn’t agree to end the war. He has indicated he plans to implement more sanctions against Russia if nothing comes of the talks.

Russia is already the most sanctioned country in the world. Western nations have hit the Kremlin with sanctions on its energy and banking sectors. Some [analysts](#) say Russian oil exports dropped 40 percent in the year following its invasion into Ukraine. Analysis also shows that Russia has regained some of its experienced a significant GDP drop as a result of the war, they have clawed some of those losses back.

The Next Meeting

On Thursday, Trump emphasized that his major goal with Friday’s meeting is to set up another meeting, which he frames as the one that will bring a peace deal across the finish line. He said:

I think it’s going to be a good meeting. I think it’s going to be a good meeting. But the more important meeting will be the second meeting that we’re having. We’re going to have a meeting with President Putin, President Zelensky, myself, and maybe we’ll bring some of the European leaders along, maybe not. I think President Putin will make peace. I think President Zelensky will make peace. We’ll see if they can get along. Tomorrow, all I want to do is set the table for the next meeting, which should happen shortly.

President Trump said Thursday he thinks Russia's Putin "would like to see a deal," and their Friday meeting in Alaska won't be as important as a second meeting that he said would include Ukraine's Zelenskiy <https://t.co/LCPt4Em2Tp> pic.twitter.com/N0xWHq4ufp

— Bloomberg (@business) [August 14, 2025](#)



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