

Next Ukraine Ceasefire Talks Will Focus on Black Sea Shipping



Damage to a Ukrainian grain silo near Odesa after a Russian missile strike, 2023 (Operational Command South)

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When talks on the possibility of a ceasefire in Ukraine resume on Monday, the safety of Black Sea navigation will be on the agenda, according to both Ukraine and Russia.

On Monday, U.S. officials will be meeting with a Ukrainian delegation in Riyadh, then separately with a Russian delegation. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky told media on Thursday to expect "some shuttle diplomacy" as the Trump administration attempts to negotiate a maritime ceasefire deal.

Yuri Ushakov, aide to Russian President Vladimir Putin, said that the talks would include a discussion of the safety of shipping in the Black Sea. A conversation about sponsoring a safe navigation corridor began during Tuesday's phone call between Putin and Trump, according to Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov.

"There're a lot of nuances there, which need to be discussed. Hence, [negotiations would be necessary] to discuss these nuances, among other things," Peskov told Interfax.

Russian attacks on merchant vessels in Odesa have recently resumed after a long lull; despite Ukraine's success in deterring the Russian Black Sea Fleet with drone and missile strikes, the Odesa port complex remains in range of Russian ballistic missile attacks.

The most recent strike occurred last week, and reportedly [claimed](#) the lives of four seafarers aboard a Greek-managed bulker loading grain at Odesa. Three of the dead were foreign nationals. Two other individuals were injured, including one seafarer and one port employee.

A Black Sea ceasefire has been attempted before. In [July 2022](#), Russia, Ukraine and Turkey negotiated a "Black Sea Grain Initiative" that would pause Russian strikes on Ukrainian bulk food shipping, so long as all parties could inspect all Ukraine-bound ships. Russia repeatedly threatened to abandon the deal, and Russian officials slowed the inspection process to a near-halt, according to the unified command responsible for implementation. In [July 2023](#) the Kremlin walked away from the arrangement, blaming the West for banking sanctions that allegedly made it hard to export Russian fertilizer. Ukraine implemented its own safe navigation corridor by force, sinking or [damaging](#) more than a dozen Russian warships and driving the remainder to the safety of the sea's northeastern corner.