



Russian accusation unsettles peace talks

Kyiv rejects claim by Putin of attack, counters that it's a distraction

BY SIOBHÁN O'GRADY, ANASTACIA GALOUCHKA AND NATALIA ABBAKUMOVA

KYIV — Russian President Vladimir Putin, in a call with President Donald Trump on Monday, accused Ukraine of attacking one of his residences, a claim Ukrainian leaders denied and called a distraction from peace talks and a pretext for further Russian attacks.

The escalating accusations, which came just a day after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met with Trump in Florida for negotiations to end the war, cast a shadow over the talks and demonstrated the fragility of the White House-led peace process that so far has failed to lead to a breakthrough.

"I don't like it. That's not good. ... I learned about it from President Putin, and he was very angry about it," Trump told reporters on Monday. "It's a delicate period of time. This is not the right time."

He also noted that he had previously refused Ukraine's request for long-range Tomahawk missiles. "I stopped the Tomahawks," he said. "I didn't want that."

Russian officials did not immediately provide evidence for the claim of a Ukrainian attack. The CIA declined to comment on whether it had detected the type of attempted strike Moscow alleged.

SEE RUSSIA ON A15

Former legislators seek return to Congress

At least 18 ex-lawmakers are asking voters to send them back

BY ANNA LISS-ROY

Republican House candidate Mayra Flores keeps getting the same question: Is she insane?

Flores lost her seat representing her Texas district in 2022 just months after winning a special election. Two election cycles later, she's fighting to win it back.

On the Hill, the direction of travel is toward the door. Members of both parties — some disgruntled with a dysfunctional institution, some older and just ready to retire — have already said they're departing. But outside of Washington, another group is emerging: former lawmakers who want to return.

"People are jumping ship — and we're trying to get back on it. Why would anyone do that?" joked Democrat Tom Malinowski, who is running to reclaim a seat in New Jersey.

By The Washington Post's latest tally, at least 18 former members of Congress — 11 Democrats and seven Republicans — are asking voters to send them back to D.C. next year.

They're seeking to rejoin a club that is decidedly unpopular: Recent Gallup polling shows 80

SEE CONGRESS ON A2



PHOTOS BY N. KIRKPATRICK/THE WASHINGTON POST

Altadena fire survivors confront hard choices on path to recovery

BY N. KIRKPATRICK, REIS THEBAULT, ALICE LI AND JANICE KAI CHEN IN ALTADENA, CALIF.

Nearly a year ago, wildfire swallowed this quiet town in the foothills of Los Angeles, killing 19 people, destroying thousands of homes and forever reshaping a beloved community. Twelve months later, recovery has been many things: plodding and painful, hard and hopeful, confusing and chaotic. But most of all, it has been uneven.

Roughly half of those 5,632 homeowners who lost their homes have already applied for a rebuilding permit or sold their properties, according to publicly available data. Many others have made moves toward returning that don't show up in those databases — hunting for architects, hiring builders, poring over plans. And still more remain in limbo, unsure what they will do, awaiting insurance

payouts and crunching numbers.

Much of Altadena looks like West Las Flores Drive, a street on the town's hardest-hit west side, where The Washington Post has been embedded on one block since January, documenting the disaster's aftermath on the residents of its 27 homes. Here, two properties have sold. Two more are under construction. A freshly framed four-bedroom has risen beside still-empty lots. Promise and persistent uncertainty hover over the charred debris and new green growth.

By day, the din of construction echoes down the block. Nail guns throb, workers yell, trucks beep. By night, the street is still, lit by just one lamppost. The only sounds are the far-off freeway and the cries of coyotes roaming the neighborhood unchallenged.

Many of the block's residents hope to move back. Some have already said goodbye. Here are the stories of nine families, told in their own words.

SEE ALTADENA ON A4

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Ed Aitken, 71, whose home was destroyed by the Eaton Fire, stands on the property where he parks his RV in Altadena. From left, Corinne, 18, Mia, 13, Jeff, 51, Elianna, 16, and Jodi Moreno, 49, in front of their home in Pasadena. Jethro, 44, and Brittany Rothe-Kushel, 40, at their home in San Marino.



What we can learn from those we lost

From left, Robert Redford, Jane Goodall, Joseph McNeil, Roberta Flack, Jim Lovell and Sandra Grimes were among the notables who died in 2025. Their wisdom, grand or simple, carries on. **Story, A10-11**

Trump projects unity in meeting with Netanyahu

MAR-A-LAGO VISIT IS LEADERS' FIFTH IN 2025

Rifts on Mideast strategy have threatened Gaza plans

BY CAT ZAKRZEWSKI, SHIRA RUBIN, LOVEDAY MORRIS AND ISAAC ARNSDORF

WEST PALM BEACH, FLA. — President Donald Trump presented a united front with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at his Mar-a-Lago estate on Monday, showcasing his friendship with the Israeli leader after tensions between Washington and Jerusalem threatened the fragile ceasefire that the United States brokered in Gaza earlier this year.

Netanyahu's trip to Florida marked his fifth visit this year with Trump and delivered a public reset as Israel's approach to Gaza and Iran appeared at odds with the Trump administration's diplomatic efforts. Israel and Hamas have accused each other of not fully implementing the first phase of the peace plan, slowing Washington's efforts to advance to the second phase focused on dismantling military and weapons infrastructure in Gaza.

After meeting with Netanyahu for several hours on Monday, Trump said that Israel had "lived up to the plan 100 percent." He also warned Iran not to build up its weapons program. Ahead of the meeting, he signaled openness to Israel using force to prevent the Islamic republic from rebuilding its ballistic missile capabilities.

"Speaking of Iran, I hope they're not trying to build up again," Trump said during the news conference. "Because if they are, we're going to have no choice but to very quickly to eradicate that buildup."

Trump also said that Hamas would be provided "a very short time to disarm," and asserted without evidence that countries other than Israel would "wipe them out" if the group did not comply. The international force at the heart of Trump's plan to demilitarize Gaza has struggled to get off the ground as some countries have backpedaled offers to send troops.

Disarmament is among the most difficult unresolved issues in the implementation of Trump's 20-point plan for postwar Gaza, which requires the enclave to demilitarize and for weapons to be placed "beyond use" through a process with independent monitors. None have been established to conduct that process.

Trump acknowledged that he and Netanyahu were not yet aligned on the West Bank, but he declined to elaborate.

Trump sought to highlight the strength of his personal relationship with Netanyahu, calling him a "hero" as he arrived at Mar-a-Lago.

SEE TRUMP ON A16

Tehran: Reports of recent missile tests have raised questions. **A15**

How Vance brokered a Trump-Musk truce

Months-long effort leads to fragile reconciliation, with risks for both sides

BY ELIZABETH DWOSKIN, NATALIE ALLISON AND FAIZ SIDDIQUI

Vice President JD Vance was doggedly working the phones, trying to quell a rebellion in his midst. Elon Musk had just declared his intention to form a third party this spring, turning a simmering feud into an all-out war against the MAGA movement.

Backlash to Musk's radical government cost-cutting campaign, the U.S. DOGE Service, along with his public swipes at President Donald Trump on social media, had damaged the relationship between the president and his billionaire backer. Now, Vance and those around him feared that a new party could hurt the GOP in the 2026 midterms and beyond, according to two people familiar with his thinking, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe

private conversations.

Vance already had appealed to Musk directly. This time, he urged Musk allies to push him to back off his third-party plans. And Vance would later personally lobby lawmakers to support restoring the nomination of Musk ally Jared Isaacman to head NASA, the agency that funds Musk's space exploration business, SpaceX, said the two people.

The months-long offensive by Vance and other White House officials, the details of which have not been previously reported, has worked. Having scrapped his third-party project, Musk appeared at the White House in November, attending a dinner for Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia. The killing of conservative activist Charlie Kirk spurred Musk to put support behind GOP campaigns in the midterms, said a person directly familiar with his political operation, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss its inner workings. Privately, Musk is considering reworking his donations by seeding existing groups with cash rather than wielding his own super PAC, the person added.

SEE DOGE ON A5

IN THE NEWS

2021 political plot Authorities say a Virginia man admitted to leaving bombs at the Republican and Democratic national committee headquarters. **B13**

How young is too young? A wave of new studies assessed the risks of early smartphone access and heavy screen use. **B1**

THE NATION President Trump said he might sue Fed Chair Jerome H. Powell for "incompetence." **A2**
Trump said a loading dock was destroyed in Venezuela, without giving specifics. **A2**

THE WORLD An aviation meltdown this month exposed India's long-brewing pilot fatigue crisis. **A13**
China launched a military drill after the U.S. approved a record arms package to Taiwan. **A16**

THE ECONOMY Electric utilities hope to use excess capacity to stem higher rates as energy use increases. **A17**

STYLE In her Disney+ docuseries, Taylor Swift discusses the importance of evolving as an artist and her plans for the future. **B1**

SPORTS The Commanders may stick with Josh Johnson as quarterback for Sunday's season finale against the Eagles. **B7**
The time to feast on cupcakes is ending for top women's college basketball teams, who are moving into conference play. **B7**

THE REGION Eleven endangered black-footed ferrets were born at the Smithsonian National Zoo facility in Virginia via a cloning effort. **B13**
In Maryland, the long-standing "committee dinners" with lobbyists and lawmakers have come under scrutiny. **B13**

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