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**What's Trump's View on Ukraine
Ahead of The Alaska Summit?**

by

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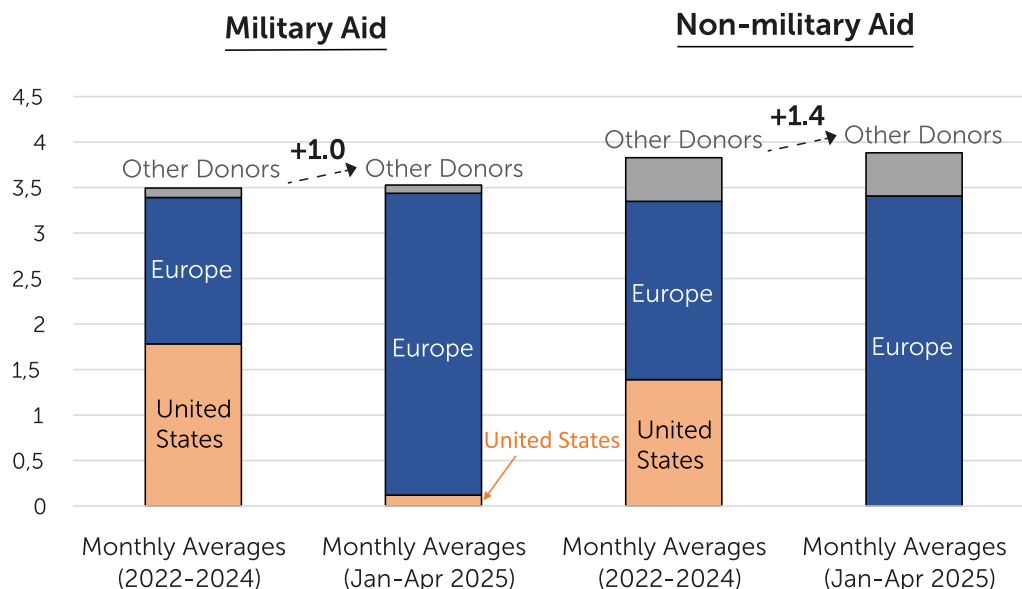
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Executive Summary

- ✦ Ahead of the 15 August Summit in Alaska between Trump and Putin, we discuss what the position by Trump is vis a vis Ukraine. This is crucial to understand what concessions the US President may be willing to make in order to obtain a ceasefire from Putin.
- ✦ In mid-July 2025, the United States President Donald Trump took a U-turn on Ukraine's policy, authorising the delivery of US-made Patriot air defense systems to Ukraine via NATO allies and threatening to impose secondary sanctions and 100% tariffs on Russian goods entering the US. Although this represents a shift toward renewed support, the aid is minimal, including only 10 missiles instead of the 30 previously promised, and its structure, triangulated through Europe, limits direct US commitment.
- ✦ While rhetorically strong, enforcement is unlikely given inflationary risks, geopolitical constraints, and past failures to impose similar measures. Within the 50-day window, Russia will likely intensify its summer offensive, utilising the timeframe to consolidate territorial gains and pressure Ukraine militarily. Moscow appears to interpret Trump's ultimatum as political posturing rather than a credible shift in US foreign policy, and this is likely to become apparent at the Summit in Alaska.

KEY PICTURE: Aid Allocations to Ukraine – Monthly Averages 2022-24 Vs Jan-Apr 2025



Note: This graph shows the average monthly aid levels across two periods: from 2022 to 2024, and from January to April 2025. It distinguishes between military aid and non-military aid (humanitarian and financial aid).

Source: [Trebesch et al. \(2023\) Kiel Working Paper,, Ukraine Tracker](#)

1. Background: Trump's U-Turn

On Sunday, 13 July 2025, US President Donald Trump announced the United States (US) would send Patriot air defence systems to Kyiv, insinuated new sanctions on Russia would be imposed, voiced 'displeasure' with Russian President Vladimir Putin, and signalled a 'major' statement on Ukraine on Monday.¹ NATO's Secretary-General Mark Rutte confirmed the US had decided to 'massively supply Ukraine through NATO', with European Member States 'footing the bill'.² In other words, European countries will send Ukraine their own Patriot air defence system to repel Russia's air strikes, and the United States will then issue replacements.

Rutte said Germany, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Canada wanted to be a part of rearming Ukraine.³

On the same announcement, during an Oval Office meeting with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Secretary-General Mark Rutte, Donald Trump announced the US would will 'be doing very severe tariffs if we do not have a (ceasefire) deal in 50 days'.⁴ Donald Trump outlined that if the Kremlin did not agree to a deal within 50 days, the US would roll out secondary sanctions against Russia's trading partners, and impose a 100 per cent tariff on all Russian goods that enter the US.⁵

2. Comprehending the Trump Administration's U-Turn

In December 2024, Trump said he 'vehemently' disagreed with supplying Ukraine with US-provided weapons to strike inside Russia, considering the US would be escalating a war and worsening the situation.⁶ The Trump Administration's approach to the war in Ukraine has shifted over time, reflecting President Donald Trump's growing frustration that the conflict he aimed to resolve remains ongoing, while President Putin has shown little indication of changing course. These shifts have been evident: from criticising Zelensky in the Oval Office in February, calling him a 'dictator without elections, to an intimate one-on-one conversation in the Vatican in April.⁷

Since Donald Trump's election on 20 January 2025, achieving a ceasefire in Ukraine has been one of his diplomatic priorities. Throughout his first six months of mandate, limited efforts have been made to achieve this objective. The two rounds of ceasefire talk on 16 May and 2 June 2025 resulted in the agreement of trading 1 000 prisoners of war.⁸ On 23 July 2025, Ukrainian and Russian delegations met in Istanbul for a third round of negotiations, lasting under an hour, where Ukraine proposed a summit between both Presidents before the end of August.⁹

Trump's decision represents a significant pivot on the administration's policy on the Ukraine-Russia conflict, especially given that just two weeks ago halted the supply of some military hardware, including air defence missiles which were already in route to Ukraine.¹⁰ First, domestic political pressure may play a considerable role, including disapproval reaching over half of Americans, including 27% of Republicans, who believed Trump was too aligned with Russia¹¹. The decision comes after Trump voiced 'disappointment' if Putin would not agree to a ceasefire in March, 'unhappiness' after Russia conducted the deadliest strike in Kyiv and 'frustration' in April, and lack of progress after an hour-long phone call with Putin in July.¹² Second, the announcement showcases the growing frustration by Vladimir Putin's defiance and uncooperativeness in achieving a solution.¹³ Trump's proposed peace deal, which was heavily skewed in Russia's favour, involving freezing battlefield lines and lifting all sanctions, was rejected by Putin, leaving Trump 'humiliated'. The decision comes after Trump articulated 'disappointment' if Putin would not agree to a ceasefire in March, 'unhappiness' after Russia conducted the deadliest strike in Kyiv and 'frustration' in April, and lack of progress after an hour-long phone call with Putin in July.¹⁴

3. A Real Change? Analysing the Potential Impact

Trump's threat to impose secondary sanctions on Russia would mark a significant departure from existing Western sanctions policy if implemented. Since the beginning of the conflict, Western allies have avoided

measures that would directly block Russia's oil exports, opting instead for measures like price caps. Should Trump want to proceed with the secondary sanctions once the 50-day period has elapsed, he would probably have the backing to do so. Currently, 85 out of the 100 US senators are ready to back legislation that would authorise the imposition of tariffs of up to 500% on any country aiding Russia, but the Republican leaders in the Senate have held off on bringing the bill to a vote, awaiting Trump's approval.¹⁵ Tariffs on countries aiding Russia, which could include India, Türkiye and China, could raise input costs for US manufacturers and potentially trigger retaliatory tariffs, escalating already tense trade tensions.

Donald Trump may hesitate to implement secondary tariffs if the decision risks alienating key business constituencies or worsening inflation in the run-up to the 2026 midterm elections.

Why a 50-day delay? Sources report this period is how long Russia's current summer offensive is predicted to last.¹⁶ On the battlefield, 50 days would provide Russia with an extended window during a renewed summer offensive to make territorial gains. The Trump Administration likely considers that once the summer offensive has finished, especially if the expected gains are not accomplished, Putin may be more likely to negotiate a ceasefire agreement. Trump's 'ultimatum' is designed to pressure Russia into a ceasefire. However, this is not the first time that the Trump Administration pressured Moscow, and previous deadlines have already failed to change Putin's stance.¹⁷ Indeed, given Trump's habit of shifting deadlines, his proposals should be interpreted with caution regarding their stated deadline.¹⁸

Altogether, Trump's mid-July reversal signals increased pragmatism, but also inconsistency. While projecting renewed support via NATO-brokered Patriot transfers and the threat of sanctions, the approach remains tentative. The 50-day ultimatum, despite being dramatic, sparks scepticism as it seems symbolic and unlikely to be enforced, given the risks of inflation and economic backlash in the country. Furthermore, Russia's unfazed reaction to Trump's statement adds another layer to the seriousness of the threat. Russia is likely to continue its summer offensive, viewing the threats from the Trump Administration as temporary and emotionally driven. Ultimately, the U-turn reflects Trump's effort to deliver on his promises, find a solution to the conflict, reset his image and respond to pressure.

All this will be put to test at the Summit in Alaska, which will be discussed in a post-mortem analytical paper.

NOTES

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