

Exclusive: Putin wants Ukraine ceasefire on current frontlines

MOSCOW/LONDON, May 24 (Reuters) – Russian President Vladimir Putin is ready to halt the war in Ukraine with a negotiated ceasefire that recognises the current battlefield lines, four Russian sources told Reuters, saying he is prepared to fight on if Kyiv and the West do not respond.

Three of the sources, familiar with discussions in Putin's entourage, said the veteran Russian leader had expressed frustration to a small group of advisers about what he views as Western-backed attempts to stymie negotiations and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy's decision to rule out talks.

"Putin can fight for as long as it takes, but Putin is also ready for a ceasefire – to freeze the war," said another of the four, a senior Russian source who has worked with Putin and has knowledge of top level conversations in the Kremlin.

He, like the others cited in this story, spoke on condition of anonymity given the matter's sensitivity.

For this account, Reuters spoke to a total of five people who work with or have worked with Putin at a senior level in the political and business worlds. The fifth source did not comment on freezing the war at the current frontlines.

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