

Trump Says He's 'Very Angry' at Putin and Threatens Secondary Tariffs on Russia

President Trump said he could impose tariffs on nations that buy oil from Russia if it thwarts negotiations for a peace deal in Ukraine. He suggested the same step was possible for Iran.

By Erica L. Green
New York Times

President Trump leveled his strongest criticism to date against President Vladimir V. Putin on Sunday, threatening to impose “secondary tariffs” on Russia’s oil if the country thwarted negotiations on a cease-fire deal with Ukraine that would stop the fighting.

The comments, relayed on “Meet the Press” by the show’s host, Kristen Welker, reflected a conversation she said she had hours earlier with Mr. Trump, in which he signaled growing impatience with the negotiations. Mr. Trump told her that tariffs of 25 to 50 percent on Russian oil could be imposed at “any moment” and that he planned to speak with his Russian counterpart this week.

“If Russia and I are unable to make a deal on stopping the bloodshed in Ukraine, and if I think it was Russia’s fault — which it might not be — but if I think it was Russia’s fault, I am going to put secondary tariffs on oil, on all oil coming out of Russia,” Mr. Trump said.

Mr. Trump has previously referred to secondary tariffs as levies on imports from countries that purchase products from a nation he’s targeted in his foreign policy. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The comments were notable given the steps that Mr. Trump [has taken to align himself](#) with Mr. Putin, despite the United States’ support for Ukraine since Russia’s full-scale invasion more than three years ago. Since taking office, Mr. Trump has declined to acknowledge that it was Russia who started the war, falsely declared President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine a “dictator,” but not Mr. Putin, and accused Mr. Zelensky of not wanting peace.

Mr. Trump’s remarks also reflected his increasing promise to use tariffs to compel countries to bend to his domestic and foreign policy goals. In the same phone call, he said he would consider secondary tariffs on Iran if it did not reach a deal with the United States to ensure it did not develop a nuclear weapon, Ms. Welker said.

Mr. Trump told Ms. Welker that he was “very angry, pissed off” at Mr. Putin for questioning the credibility of Mr. Zelensky, and for discussing the prospect of new leadership in that country. Mr. Trump suggested that such comments could set negotiations back, and that they were “not going in the right location.”

“New leadership means you’re not going to have a deal for a long time, right?” Mr. Trump said.

Russia and Ukraine [have agreed to a limited truce](#), but that has fallen short of the complete pause in combat that Trump administration officials have sought, with Ukraine’s support. The limited cease-fire remains tenuous as Russia seeks more concessions and Ukraine has expressed doubt that a truce would be upheld.

On negotiations about Iran’s nuclear capabilities, Mr. Trump said officials from both countries were “talking,” according to NBC’s account of Ms. Welker’s call with the president, although he raised the prospect of military action if economic and other measures do not succeed.

“If they don’t make a deal,” Mr. Trump said about Iran, “there will be bombing. It will be bombing the likes of which they have never seen before.”

Earlier this month, Mr. Trump sent the letter to Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, urging direct negotiations with the government in Tehran on a deal to curb the country’s advancing nuclear program. The letter said Mr. Trump [preferred diplomacy over military action](#).

Mr. Trump’s raising of secondary tariffs on oil from Russia and Iran was the latest example of the president’s interest in using the prospect of economic pressure on third-party nations.

Last week, he issued [an executive order on Monday to crack down on countries](#) that buy Venezuelan oil by imposing tariffs on the goods those nations send into the United States, claiming that Venezuela has “purposefully and deceitfully” sent criminals and murderers into America.

Mr. Trump called the new levies he threatened on buyers of Venezuelan oil “secondary tariffs,” a label that echoed “secondary sanctions” — penalties imposed on other countries or parties that trade with nations under sanctions.

Some trade and sanctions experts said existing secondary sanctions associated with countries such as Russia and Iran already were not well enforced, and questioned whether the United States would have the capacity to pull off new tariff-based penalties.