

VOA NEWS

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I'm VOA's Joe Ramsey with this worldwide news update.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday he agrees with proposals to halt the fighting in Ukraine but said more discussions are needed on a U.S. proposal for a 30-day cease-fire. Putin told reporters at the Kremlin any deal would need to lead to long-term peace and address what he called the "original causes of this crisis."

The Russian president thanked U.S. President Donald Trump for his efforts to end the war.

President Trump at the White House on Thursday said Russia's response was "promising" and said it would be "very disappointing" if Russia doesn't accept the deal.

Both presidents suggested they were ready to speak to each other for further discussions.

Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff, was in Moscow on Thursday to meet with senior Russian officials.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Putin is, quote, "essentially preparing to reject the cease-fire." Zelenskyy said in his nightly address that Putin is afraid to tell President Trump directly that he wants to continue this war and that he wants to kill Ukrainians. Ukraine accepted the cease-fire proposal earlier this week.

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte praised President Trump on Thursday for his actions leading the cease-fire proposal discussions with Ukraine and Russia.

Rutte visited the White House's Oval Office on Thursday and he also backed Trump's efforts to motivate countries in the transatlantic alliance to increase defense spending.

Trump's recent comments have rattled allies. European military leaders met this week after the president raised doubts about the U.S. protecting other NATO countries.

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The U.S. and EU on Thursday traded threats over alcohol tariffs.

President Trump responded to the EU's planned tax on American whiskey with a post on social media. He wrote, quote, "If this tariff is not removed immediately, the U.S. will shortly place a 200 percent tariff on all wines,

champagnes and alcoholic products coming out of France and other EU-represented countries," adding, quote, "This will be great for the wine and champagne business in the U.S."

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said Thursday the bloc's trade commissioner is scheduled to have discussions on Friday with his U.S. counterpart. She equated the tariffs to taxes and said, quote, "They are bad for business and they are bad for consumers."

But von der Leyen defended the European import tax which came in response to the Trump administration's upcoming steel and aluminum tariffs. And she said, quote, "At the same time, I also want to emphasize that we are open for negotiations."

The leader of the Democrats in the U.S. Senate says he will help advance a Republican-led funding bill to keep the government open.

The threat of a government shutdown had been growing in recent days. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said a shutdown would be worse than passing the bill and said not funding the government before Friday's midnight deadline could hand Trump and his billionaire backer, Elon Musk, more power as they work to cut federal operations.

The Democrats are facing pressure to do something to slow down or stop Trump and Musk's Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, which has played a role in the firings of thousands of federal workers.

Republicans had also threatened to blame their opposition for the shutdown despite arguments from Democrats that they were not involved in negotiations and do not have a majority in either chamber of the United States Congress.

The spending bill is expected to have major consequences for the nation's capital city. The mayor of Washington, D.C. has said it would require the district to cut more than \$1 billion in spending, including to education and public safety.

The Trump administration immediately appealed an order from a federal judge on Thursday to rehire thousands of probationary workers across multiple agencies.

The San Francisco-based judge said the firings didn't follow federal law, ruling in a lawsuit brought by a coalition of labor unions. The agencies include the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense, Energy, Agriculture, the Interior and Treasury.

That wraps up this update, but the world and news never stop. For additional updates, visit our website, [voanews.com](https://www.voanews.com). I'm Joe Ramsey, VOA News.