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THE US MEDIATED TRILATERAL PEACE TALKS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND UKRAINE AND THE BLACK SEA SECURITY

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According to information reported in the international press, the US mediated trilateral peace talks between Russia and Ukraine in Abu Dhabi on 10-11 November 2026 ended with an agreement in principle on a large-scale prisoner exchange, but produced no breakthrough toward a ceasefire or peace settlement.[1] Apart from general news reports reflecting the official outcomes of the meeting, some exclusive reports suggest that Russian representatives circulated a position paper that mainly reflects the revival of Russias 2021 demands that NATO pull back to its 1997 positions[2].

As can be remembered, in December 2021, Russia presented two draft security treaties (one to the US and one to NATO) demanding a legally binding ban on NATO's eastward expansion and the withdrawal of NATO forces to their 1997positions[3].

As per these exclusive reports, the Russian position paper allegedly includes mainly the following points:

- A legally binding guarantee that NATO will cease all further enlargement.
- Retrenchment of NATO's military infrastructure and troop presence in Central Europe and its pre-Ukraine invasion ultimatum to roll back the alliance's footprint.
- Similar to the Yalta and Potsdam agreements of 1945, the division of Europe into European/American and Russian spheres of influence, as in the Cold War era, and thus the development of a model for a new continental security order.
- Ukraine must permanently abandon its bid to join NATO and remove the constitutional aspiration for membership from its laws. Also, even if Ukraine were to join the EU eventually, Russia demands that Ukraine be strictly prohibited from participating in the EU's collective security and defense policies.
- Broad restrictions on Ukraine's ability to strengthen its own military through defense cooperation with European partners.
- Russia's full territorial control over the Ukrainian regions it claimed to annex in 2022 and Ukrainian forces' withdrawal from the entirety of the Donbas region (Donetsk and Luhansk).

On the other hand, Russia has also reportedly requested that the ports of Odesa and Mykolaiv[4] should be demilitarized and barred from use as naval bases, while separate

arrangements should guarantee freedom of navigation in the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea. [5] It is also indicated that there is a reference in the Russian plan to Gagauzia that states the following:

"On Moldova, the plan envisions a federal republic made up of the core Moldovan territory, Transnistria and Gagauzia. If Moldova were to join the EU, Transnistria and Gagauzia would be allowed to hold referendums on independence. In return, the Russian side offers to withdraw nuclear weapons from Belarus and forgo the stationing of intermediate-range missiles there, according to the report."

As we have already stressed in our recent AVİM analysis titled "Security Oriented Arrangements in the Black Sea," Türkiye, as the littoral state with the longest coastline on the Black Sea, bears the responsibility for implementing the 1936 Montreux Convention, which is the essential element in the context of Black Sea security and stability.[6] Since the onset of the Russia-Ukraine war in 2014 (which escalated into a full-scale invasion by Russia in 2022), Türkiye has meticulously fulfilled the requirements of the Montreux Convention; in doing so, it has successfully prevented the conflict, at least at sea, from spreading to a wider area and has made a vital contribution to keeping the conflict's impact on the Black Sea to a minimum. Türkiye has done its utmost in this regard, applying legally binding international treaties with strict impartiality and in full accordance with their terms. The details of Türkiye's efforts in this regard and the issues surrounding the recent meeting among the Defense Ministers of Bulgaria, Romania, and Türkiye, amid growing concerns about attacks on civilian vessels in the Black Sea, are discussed in detail in our AVİM analysis referenced above. There is no doubt that the repeated attacks on civilian vessels and actions that escalate tensions in the Black Sea serve no one's interests.

In such an environment, the idea allegedly put forward by Russia at the Abu Dhabi meeting to create separate arrangements to guarantee freedom of navigation in the Black Sea is a questionable and surprising proposal which, in our judgment, requires clarification from Russia. It is important to keep in mind that proposing one-sided discussions on new arrangements for the Black Sea security would be an unworkable and unacceptable endeavor.

[1] The Guardian. Ukraine talks in Abu Dhabi bring progress on prisoners but not on peace. By Pjotr Sauer. November 11, 2026. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/nov/11/ukraine-talks-in-abu-dhabi-bring-progress-on-prisoners-but-not-on-peace

[2] The New York Times. Russia Revives Demand That NATO Retrench to Secure Ukraine Deal. November 12, 2026. https://www.nytimes.com/2026/11/13/us/politics/russia-demand-nato-ukraine.htm ; Bild, Exklusiv: Russlands brutale Forderungen an Europa (Exclusive: Russia's brutal demands on Europe), November 13, 2026.

[3] The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation. December 17, 2021. Press release on Russian draft documents on legal security guarantees from the United States and NATO, 17 December 2021, https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1790809/ ; Treaty between The United States of America and the Russian Federation on security guarantees, December 17, 2012, https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/rso/nato/1790818/?lang=en

[4] During the Crimean Khanate period, the city was known as "Balaban".

[5] Anatolian News Agency. Russia demands Finland leave NATO in Abu Dhabi talks: Report. By Ayhan Şimşek. November 13, 2026. https://aa.com.tr/en/world/russia-demands-finland-leave-nato-in-abu-dhabi-talks-report/4123836. Also see: RBC Ukraine. Bild reports that Russia demands Finland leave NATO, Kremlin responds. By Kateryna Shkarlat. November 13, 2026. https://newsukraine.rbc.ua/news/bild-reports-that-russia-demands-finland-1794574820.html

[6] Teoman Ertuğrul Tulun. Security Oriented Arrangements in the Black Sea. Analysis No. 2028/21. 04.11.2026. https://avim.org.tr/en/Analiz/SECURITY-ORIENTED-ARRANGEMENTS-IN-THE-BLACK-SEA

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