

Trump administration

Trump's Ukraine envoy pick proposed forcing peace talks by withdrawing US weapons

In a co-authored document presented to Trump in April, Keith Kellogg also said US should give Ukraine more weapons if Russia doesn't join negotiations



Keith Kellogg, former national security adviser to Mike Pence, speaks to reporters at the White House on 22 September 2020. Photograph: Carlos Barria/Reuters

Edward Helmore in New York

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Donald Trump's plan to tap the retired US lieutenant general Keith Kellogg as US envoy to Ukraine and Russia has triggered renewed interest in a policy document he co-authored that proposes ending the war by withdrawing weapons from **Ukraine** if it doesn't enter peace talks - and giving even more weapons to Ukraine if **Russia** doesn't do the same.

Trump is said to have responded favorably to the plan - **America First, Russia & Ukraine** - which was presented to him in April and was written by Kellogg and the former CIA analyst Fred Fleitz, who both served as chiefs of staff in Trump's national security council from 2017 to 2021.

The document proposes halting further US weapons deliveries to Kyiv if it does not enter peace talks with Moscow, while simultaneously warning Moscow that, should it refuse to negotiate, US support for **Ukraine** would increase.

It blames "unserious and incoherent" US foreign policy under **Joe Biden** for the three-year conflict, including what it describes as a "precipitous" US withdrawal from Afghanistan, the supposed antagonization of US allies including Israel and Saudi Arabia, and a policy to China described as "weak and confusing".

The paper further accuses the **Biden administration** of putting "the idealistic agendas of the global elite ahead of a working relationship with Russia" - a "hostile policy" that it claims "made it an enemy of the US, drove Russia into the arms of China and led to the development of a new Russia-China-Iran-North Korea axis".

Kellogg and Fleitz criticize what they said was a decision to scold **Vladimir Putin** and threaten "unprecedented" sanctions as it prepared to invade

Ukraine, “instead of using negotiations to de-escalate tensions”.

“An America First approach could have prevented the invasion,” they write.

Trump’s vice-president-elect, the Ohio senator JD Vance, has aired comparable views, arguing in effect that US support for Ukraine is a drain on resources necessary to counter Washington’s principal security threat with China.

The selection of Kellogg comes as the Biden administration pushes to complete more weapons transfers to Ukraine before the president’s term ends. A decision to approve the use of US-made Atacms missiles on targets inside [Russia](#) was met by Russia’s use of a powerful intermediate range missile, Oreshnik, on the Ukrainian city of Dnipro.

In an interview with [Fox News](#), Kellogg said Biden’s decision to approve Ukrainian strikes inside Russia has given Trump “more leverage”.

“It gives president Trump more ability to pivot from that,” he said.

On Tuesday, Moscow responded to a New York Times report that unidentified western officials had suggested Biden could give Ukraine nuclear weapons before he steps down. The Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said discussions in the West about arming Ukraine with nuclear weapons was “absolutely irresponsible”.

But the Kellogg-Fleitz plan, though lacking in details, appears to mirror the counsel of Gen Mark A Milley, Biden’s former chief military adviser who argued that since neither Russia nor Ukraine could win the conflict, a negotiated settlement was the sole route to peace.

Under the plan, Moscow would also be coaxed to the table with the promise of Nato membership for Ukraine being delayed or abandoned.

“We tell the Ukrainians, ‘You’ve got to come to the table, and if you don’t come to the table, support from the United States will dry up,’” Kellogg told Reuters in June. “And you tell Putin, ‘He’s got to come to the table and if you don’t come to the table, then we’ll give Ukrainians everything they need to kill you in the field.’”

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In that interview, Fleitz said Ukraine would not need to formally cede territory to Russia, but would come to recognize that it would not be able to regain effective control of all its territory.

“Our concern is that this has become a war of attrition that’s going to kill a whole generation of young men,” Fleitz said, adding that a lasting peace in Ukraine would require additional security guarantees, including “arming Ukraine to the teeth”.

But in the policy paper the pair acknowledged that it would be hard for Ukraine to accept a peace deal “that does not give them back all of their territory or, at least for now, hold Russia responsible for the carnage it inflicted on Ukraine”.

Asking whether he endorses Kellogg’s position paper, the president-elect told NBC News: “I’m the only one who can get the war stopped. It should have never started in the first place.”

Trump said that European nations should contribute more aid, a position echoed by Vance at the Republican national convention in July. “We will make sure our allies share in the burden of securing world peace,” he said. “No more free rides for nations that betray the generosity of the American taxpayer.”

Trump chose Kellogg, an 80-year-old retired army lieutenant general, to be his top adviser on defense issues. He served as national security adviser to Vice-president Mike Pence, was chief of staff of the national security council, and then stepped in as an acting security adviser for Trump after Michael Flynn resigned.

During the Vietnam war he served in the 101st airborne division, also known as the Screaming Eagles, and after the first Iraq war he was named commander of special operations command Europe (SOCEUR). He retired in 2003 as a lieutenant general.

During the [January 6 Capitol riot](#), Kellogg demanded that the Secret Service not evacuate Pence from the building, which would have prevented the vice-president from certifying Biden’s electoral victory. “Leave him where he’s at. He’s got a job to do. I know you guys too well. You’ll fly him to Alaska if you have a chance. Don’t do it,” he [reportedly said](#).

After naming Kellogg as envoy to Ukraine and Russia, Trump said Kellogg “was with me right from the beginning”!

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