

Former U.S. Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul interview on PBS News Hour

This month, there have been several significant developments regarding existing accusations of war crimes involving Vladimir Putin and Russian forces.

International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutors asserted that the existing arrest warrants for President Putin will remain valid even if a US-led peace deal includes a blanket amnesty. The ICC initially issued a warrant for Putin in March 2023 for the war crime of the unlawful deportation of children from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation.

An attack on December 18, 2025, in the Odesa region saw a Russian drone strike a civilian car on a bridge, killing the driver and injuring her three children. This attack was labeled a "cynical war crime" by the head of the regional military administration.

Reports from December 2025 note ongoing Russian drone attacks on civilians, including on commuters and children, which have been described as a "terror campaign" and potential crimes against humanity by a May 2025 UN report.

On Saturday, December 27, 2025, Russia launched one of its largest air assaults on Kyiv and other parts of Ukraine in months. The attack occurred just one day before a high-stakes meeting in Florida between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and U.S. President Donald Trump to discuss a 20-point peace plan.

Russian state media and official reports, including public meetings involving Putin, made inflated or false claims about the Russian military's progress in the Kupyansk area of Ukraine, which some analysts suggest was an effort to present an image of inevitable victory.

President Trump and his administration have been strangely silent about these war crimes, ludicrously claiming today, following the Trump-Zelensky summit, that "Putin wants peace."

Following the summit, former U.S. Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul gave an interview on PBS News Hour in which he affirmed that he does not believe that Trump's current approach will successfully negotiate a Russia-Ukraine peace deal.

McFaul has previously stated that Trump's proposed deal amounts to "capitulation" and is built on "old talking points" from the Russian leader.

McFaul argues that Zelenskyy cannot accept a deal involving territorial concessions because Ukrainian society would never agree to it, making it "political suicide".

McFaul believes the Trump administration's negotiation strategy throughout 2025, which he sees as "appeasement," has not worked and has only encouraged Putin to ask for more concessions. Up until now, only Ukraine has made concessions. Russia has made none.

A primary concern is the absence of "ironclad" security guarantees for Ukraine in the proposed plan. McFaul stresses that without an Article 5-like commitment, Ukraine risks a repeat invasion in the future.

Instead of trying to change Putin's mind through diplomacy alone, McFaul argues the Trump administration should focus on changing Putin's capabilities by providing more advanced weapons to Ukraine and imposing tougher sanctions on Russia.

McFaul believes the current Trump strategy is to put all the pressure on Zelensky and none on Putin. This strategy is flawed and unlikely to produce a just and lasting peace, as it does not adequately address Ukraine's security needs or force Putin to earnestly negotiate an end to the war.

Please refer to:

What to know about U.S.-Ukraine talks to end Russia's war

Interview with Michael McFaul

Clip: 12/28/2025 | 5m 45s

PBS News Hour

Dec. 28, 2025

[PBS News Hour | What to know about U.S.-Ukraine talks to end Russia's war | Season 2025](#)

Trump is unlikely to stop appeasing Putin. Putin can't be trusted. Trump's "peace deal" plans ignore considerations of justice and are fated to fail.

Canada and its Coalition of the Willing allies, partners and friends should heed McFaul's advice: focus on changing Putin's capabilities by providing more advanced weapons to Ukraine and imposing tougher sanctions on Russia.