

By Patrick Wintour

*Ukraine ambassador attacks Trump allies' secret peace plan  
Under deal reportedly discussed by allies of US president and Ukrainian politician  
Russian sanctions would be lifted*  
*Український посол критикує секретний мирний план Трампа та союзників.*

*Український політик та Трамп обговорювали зняття санкцій з Росії.  
Український посол у Лондоні повідомив, що особистий адвокат Трампа та його колишній  
діловий партнер зустрічалися з депутатом українського парламенту для обговорення  
секретного мирного плану, який передбачав оренду Росією Криму в обмін на мир у східній  
частині України.*

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/20/ukraine-ambassador-attacks-trump-aides-secret-peace-plan>



A secret attempt to persuade Donald Trump to strike a deal that would involve Moscow keeping Crimea in return for ensuring peace in eastern Ukraine must be seen off, the Ukrainian ambassador to London has said.

The New York Times reported on Sunday that Trump's personal lawyer and a former business associate met privately in New York last month with a member of the Ukrainian parliament to discuss a peace plan that could give Russia long-term control over territory it seized in 2014 and lead to the lifting of sanctions against Moscow.

The report added to concerns that people close to Trump are manoeuvring to bring about a strategic shift in US relations with Moscow, using Ukraine as a key bargaining chip.

The meeting with Andrii Artemenko, the Ukrainian politician, involved Michael Cohen, a Trump Organisation lawyer since 2007, and Felix Sater, a Russian immigrant to the US who has worked on real estate projects with Trump's company.

The meeting suggested that those in the region aligned with Moscow hoped to use Trump's associates as a way of changing US foreign policy. It came against a backdrop of reports of an ideological struggle over foreign policy within the Trump administration.

Asked about the meeting on the Today programme on BBC Radio 4, Ukraine's ambassador to the UK, Natalia Galibarenko said such interventions were in breach of the Ukrainian national interest. "We are not trading our territories. We are not going to say, 'Let us abandon Crimea and in return let us see peace in Donbas'." she said.

Donbas and Crimean were Ukrainian territories, "so why should we trade this with Russia?", Galibarenko said. Any Ukrainian politicians involved in such deals were answerable to their conscience, she added.

The Kremlin said it had no prior knowledge of Artemenko's peace plan, and called it absurd. "There's nothing to talk about. How can Russia rent its own region from itself?" its spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said.

Galibarenko said she was assured by remarks from the US vice-president, Mike Pence, and the British foreign secretary, Boris Johnson, that sanctions would be maintained against Moscow until it ended its support for Russian nationalists in eastern Ukraine.

She admitted she had been concerned by Trump's previous remarks about Ukraine but, after meetings between Pence and the Ukrainian president, Petro Poroshenko, in Munich at the weekend, said she was convinced "America will not accept the annexation of Crimea and will insist that Russia fulfil the Minsk agreement. The policy will be consistent on sanctions against Russia."

She was sceptical about the advent of a ceasefire in Ukraine, due to come into force on Monday, saying it was the fifth time such a ceasefire had been declared, and in numerous cases the absence of hostility had lasted little more than a day.

Under the plan reported by the New York Times, Ukrainian voters would decide in a referendum whether Crimea, the territory Russia seized in 2014, would be leased to Russia for a 50-year or 100-year term. Artemenko said Russian leaders supported his proposal, the newspaper reported.

Artemenko belongs to a bloc that opposes Poroshenko. The group's efforts were previously aided by Paul Manafort, Trump's former campaign manager.

Cohen has been in the spotlight since his name was mentioned in a dossier prepared by a former British spy hired by Trump's political opponents that suggested he had served as a liaison between the Kremlin and the Trump campaign, an allegation he has emphatically denied.