

Vladimir Putin arrives in Geneva for summit with Joe Biden

Presidents of the United States and Russia expected to meet for up to five hours.



Russian President Vladimir Putin arrives at Geneva Airport Cointrin, for a US-Russia summit in Geneva, Switzerland, on Wednesday. Photograph: EPA

Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in Geneva on Wednesday in advance of a summit with US president Joe Biden, with the stage set for a tense first meeting between the two leaders.

Both sides have played down the prospect of any major breakthroughs at the summit, with wide disagreements likely, but have said they hope their talks in a stately lakeside Geneva villa can lead to more stable and predictable relations.

The meeting marks a moment of high-stakes diplomacy at a time when both leaders agree that US-Russian relations are at an all-time low.

For four months, the two leaders have traded sharp rhetoric. Mr. Biden repeatedly called out Mr. Putin for malicious cyberattacks by Russian-based hackers on US interests, a disregard for democracy with the jailing of Russia's foremost opposition leader, and interference in American elections.

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Mr. Putin has pointed to the January 6th insurrection at the US Capitol to argue that the US has no business lecturing on democratic norms and insisting that the Russian government has not been involved in any election interference or cyberattacks despite US intelligence showing otherwise.

Now, the pair will meet for their first face-to-face as leaders — a conversation that is expected to last four to five hours. In advance, both sides set out to lower

expectations.

Even so, Mr. Biden has said it would be an important step if the United States and Russia were able to ultimately find “stability and predictability” in their relationship, a seemingly modest goal from the president for dealing with the person he sees as one of America’s fiercest adversaries.

“We should decide where it’s in our mutual interest, in the interest of the world, to cooperate, and see if we can do that,” Mr. Biden told reporters earlier this week. “And the areas where we don’t agree, make it clear what the red lines are.”

Mr. Putin’s spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said on Wednesday that no breakthroughs were expected and that “the situation is too difficult in Russian-American relations.

“However, the fact that the two presidents agreed to meet and finally start to speak openly about the problems is already an achievement,” Mr. Peskov said several hours before the summit’s scheduled start time. - Agencies

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