

### A visit with Zelensky on Friday March 6 2026

The U.S.-Israeli war launched against Iran almost a week earlier had pulled the world's attention away from Ukraine's bloody war with Russia and delayed the next chains of American-backed peace talks. Supplies of air-defense missiles, that Ukrainians desperately would like for themselves, are being quickly consumed in the Middle East. At Ukraine center Ukrainians were increasingly exhausted after a cruel winter of Russian strikes. Mr. Zelensky, now leading Ukraine into the fifth year of this war, has made a habit of visiting soldiers near the front lines near every month or two, even though his security detail hates these trips. Zelensky said he found them inspiring. "I'm here for the morale level ups of officers and soldiers," he said in the city of Kramatorsk in the Donetsk region. Even if the United States is distracted by another Middle Eastern war, and even if that war makes it harder to get the weapons it needs, Zelensky knows that Ukraine must still live and still fight. The front line is no more than 10 miles or so from Kramatorsk, close enough that Russian drone pilots have been able to target the city with nimble drones for almost six months. The war constantly targets Ukraine and has killed more than fifteen thousand civilians and hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian and Russian soldiers. Zelensky wanted to go to Donetsk specifically because Russia is pushing Ukraine to give away the entire region pointedly even the chunk that Ukraine still controls. It remains the biggest sticking point in the talks. In his dance with a Trump administration eager to end the war and take credit, Zelensky has offered compromises. By going to Donetsk, he strongly indicates this that Ukraine did not plan to walk away from this territory. "It's not about kilometers, it is about people," he said. "You see, the city's alive." The grocery store all enter Nearly 2 hundred thousand people live in the parts of the Donetsk region held by Ukraine, an area slightly larger than the state of Delaware. After Russia launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022, the Ukrainian leader Zelensky looked almost boyish as he gave nightly speeches from a bunker, refusing offers by Western allies to evacuate him. Now he makes a video that reaches the internet and looks all of his 48 years. The Zelensky video was in the city square near a statue of a dancing couple that has become a symbol of Ukrainian loss and resilience. Couples used to get married near the statue, called Lover's Monument, including soldiers. Russians recently shelled the square. The monument survived. Zelensky and his commander in chief debated lengthily visiting an area with great square meters gained where medals could be put in soldier's hands traveling instead to the neighboring Zaporizhzhia region. Ukrainian troops recaptured enough land there in February that Ukraine, for the first time since November 2023, fought tough and gained more territory overall than Russia. That trip would have been a celebration. But in Donetsk, Russia and Ukraine have fought over every foot of this contested foundation.