

ABC's *Good Morning America*

09/23/25

7:02:51 a.m. [TEASE]

10 seconds

GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS: It is a busy morning, including President Trump's set to address the United Nations late this morning and holding meetings on the wars in Ukraine and Gaza. Secretary of State Marco Rubio is going to join us live in our next hour.

(...)

7:14:25 a.m. [TEASE]

7 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Coming up on *GMA*; Sec. Marco Rubio Talks UN General Assembly]

MICHAEL STRAHAN: We will have much more on the President at the United Nations in our next hour. Secretary of State Marco Rubio will join us live.

(...)

8:00:19 a.m. [TEASE]

10 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Secretary Rubio Live; President on the World Stage]

STEPHANOPOULOS: President Trump, on the world stage, is set to address the United Nations, while holding meetings on the war in Ukraine and Gaza. Secretary of State Marco Rubio joins us live.

(...)

8:01:37 a.m.

6 minutes and 46 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Breaking at 8; Sec. Marco Rubio Talks UN General Assembly]

STEPHANOPOULOS: We're going to start with President Trump returning to the United Nations today for the first time since his reelection, also meeting with President Zelenskyy of Ukraine. Want to bring in his secretary of state right now, Marco Rubio. Mr. Secretary, thank you for joining us this morning.

SECRETARY OF STATE MARCO RUBIO: Good morning.

STEPHANOPOULOS: I want to start off with that meeting with President Zelenskyy of Ukraine. More than a month since President Trump met with President Putin in Alaska. Since then, Putin has intensified his attacks on Ukraine. He's crossed into NATO airspace as well. The President has repeatedly threatened to take action, but repeatedly backed off those threats against President Putin. How much more time is he going to give him?

RUBIO: Well, I think he has taken action. So, for example, we've imposed additional tariffs on India. And they're a close partner of ours and we had meetings again with them yesterday. And it has to do with their purchase of Russian oil. In addition, we've worked very hard —

STEPHANOPOULOS: But you're not being directly on Russia.

RUBIO: — and made a lot of progress — you look at the bill that Congress was considering on putting forward, the Lindsey Graham bill, that — that bill was about tariffs on India and China for the purchase of oil and gas from Russia. I think the President has also called on Europe to step up to the plate. You know, there are countries in Europe that are still buying a massive amount of natural gas and oil from Russia. In essence, directly fueling the war effort. The President has also instructed us, and we've made a lot of progress working unsecured guarantees. You know, shortly after the Alaska meeting, all of these leaders from Europe came to Washington. We agreed to work on security guarantees for the future of Ukraine after the end of this conflict. We've made a tremendous — a lot of progress in creating the outlines for that and that's going to be essential in any negotiation for an end to war.

STEPHANOPOULOS: It doesn't appear to be making any difference —

RUBIO: And then the President —

STEPHANOPOULOS: — for President Putin.

RUBIO: — well, I think that's right in the sense that we continue to see the war being carried out. By the way, by both sides. The Ukrainians, to their credit, have also inflicted substantial damage on the Russians. As an example, 20 percent of Russian refining capacity has been taken off-line because of Ukrainian strikes. And I think the Ukrainians have been very brave and worked — and done incredible things, despite being a smaller country here. Not just in defending their country, but imposing costs on Russia. Look, at the end of the day, the only leader in the world that everyone agrees to this — no one — this is why Zelenskyy keeps wanting to meet with him and all European leaders want to meet with them, is President Trump. He's the only one that can talk to both sides and try to make progress. He has dedicated a lot of time and energy to it. We hope to achieve it. He has expressed his deep disappointment at the direction this continues to go. He is well aware at this point of what our options are under his current authorities to impose more costs on Russia if they don't agree to peace — and that moment may arrive. But I hope it doesn't arrive because I hope we still have time to convince them to end this war. The impact it is having, it's a stupid war, it really is. I mean, the Russians in July lost 20,000 soldiers — were killed in action. 20,000. Way out of ratio of what Ukraine has lost. And it's a staggering number. That — this war needs and, the President is doing everything he can to end it. But, at some point, he'll have to take action if it doesn't.

STEPHANOPOULOS: You and — you and others in the administration have said several times that no one has died because of the administration's cuts to humanitarian aid and the shuttering the Agency for International Development. A host of international aid organizations have disputed that. They've detailed how many lives have been lost. Also, Nick Kristof of *The New York Times* had an extensive piece on Sunday, first-hand reporting on the deaths being caused by the cuts in aid. He went on to say this, I will show a tweet put up. He said: "I also obtained an internal Trump administration memo stating that the cost of shutting down USAID is \$64 billion over two years. That sum could save more than a million children's lives; instead, it is being spent to shut down programs that save lives." How do you account for that? How do you respond?

RUBIO: Well, that — wasn't in a memo. That was somebody who wrote an email giving their opinion internally. That is not an official document. That's someone who didn't agree with the decision. This is not about cutting aid. We're gonna do it.

STEPHANOPOULOS: It does cost money to shut down —

RUBIO: We're gonna give more humanitarian aid

STEPHANOPOULOS: — USAID, doesn't it? That is a fact.

RUBIO: No, we didn't shut it down. We moved — well, a couple of things. We shut down USAID because it was a dysfunctional organization. We moved it under the State Department. Number two, we are going to do more foreign aid than any country in the world — than any country in the world. More than anyone in the world again this year. But we're gonna do it the right way. We're gonna do it holistically. We're gonna do it as part of an integrated foreign policy. We are not going to fund an NGO industrial complex that built itself up, that was taking a substantial percentage of the money, and not going directly to the recipients. It was going to these organizations that had multibillion-dollar projects and budgets. We're not going to continue doing it that way. We are going to provide aid, we are providing aid now. We just rolled out our new initiatives on health. It's going to be much more successful and much more effective. We're going to enter into direct contacts with the countries. We're going to empower our embassies and our ambassadors to direct which projects we fund, and — and how much money countries are gonna be receiving. So, we are restructuring the way we do aid —

STEPHANOPOULOS: That — that — that's

RUBIO: — that'll be a lot more effective —

STEPHANOPOULOS: — that's all —

RUBIO: — and integrated into the holistic foreign policy.

STEPHANOPOULOS: — that's all in the future but are you standing by that comment that you're saying no one has died?

RUBIO: No, it's happening now.

STEPHANOPOULOS: No one — no one has —

RUBIO: It's not happening in the future. It's happening now.

STEPHANOPOULOS: — died because of aid cuts? Are all those aid organizations lying?

RUBIO: That's ridiculous. Well, first of all — well, then they died because England didn't give enough money or Canada didn't give more or China didn't. Let's blame the other countries that don't do any foreign aid. How about China? I mean, China's the second largest economy in the world. They don't give money these projects, so —

STEPHANOPOULOS: You're no longer disputing that aid cuts have cost peoples' lives?

RUBIO: — people died because China didn't give them more money?

STEPHANOPOULOS: You are no longer disputing that?

RUBIO: I — I — I think anybody who tells you that somehow the United States — if we cut a dollar somehow, we're responsible for some horrific thing going on the world is — is just not true. Beyond that, I would say that, in some of these places that they cite —

STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, but that dollar is going to feeding —

RUBIO: — the reason why aid didn't get there —

STEPHANOPOULOS: — someone food or medicine —

RUBIO: — no, excuse me, George.

STEPHANOPOULOS: — someone's going to die, aren't they?

RUBIO: One of the reasons why these places didn't get the aid is not because we cut the aid. It's because there's a war going on and the aid never got to the people. So, in Sudan for example, it's not just a humanitarian catastrophe, it's a war zone. The aid is stolen, the aid impeded and, in fact, they use aid as a tool against the people instead of — blocking aid as a tool and an arm of war. So, in some places, the reason why the aid isn't getting there is and can't be distributed. Look at Haiti. One of the reasons why aid can't be distributed in Haiti is because you can send all the aid in the world you want. It gets hijacked and stolen by criminal gangs that control the country. And so, they're the ones to blame for whatever's happening there, not us who provided more aid than anybody else —

STEPHANOPOULOS: Let me — just try one more time.

RUBIO: — to Haiti, in Africa, and in virtually every part of the world.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Are you standing by — are you standing by your contention that no one has died?

RUBIO: No one has died because the United States has cut aid. No. People have died because gangs steal the aid. People have died because the distributors of aid have not done well. People have died because other countries haven't stepped up. But the United States has saved more lives and continues to save more lives than any other country in the world. And we're going to continue to do it, but we're gonna do it the right way and in a responsible way. We're not going to continue to pour billions of dollars out the door of American taxpayer funds for programs that don't work, and, in some cases, were flat-out corrupt.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Mr. Secretary, thanks for your time this morning.