



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna¹¹

Statement by the Delegation of Ukraine
at the 947th FSC Plenary Meeting on Russia's ongoing aggression against
Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea

(27 May 2020, via Zoom platform)

(Agenda item 3, General Statements)

Mr. Chairperson,

On behalf of the Delegation of Ukraine, in a national capacity, let me deliver a statement on the subject of Russia's on-going aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea.

We would like to draw the attention of the delegations to the **complex informational and psychological operation recently carried out by the Russian occupation forces (ROF) near occupied Horlivka**. This operation has been aimed at discrediting Ukrainian troops and the OSCE SMM. One of its main focuses is the destructive psychological impact on the local population of the occupied territories in order to maintain the degree of hatred, formed around resonant stories about shelling, injuries or deaths. At the same time, the local population of the occupied territories receives metered, incomplete and distorted information about the tragic events exclusively through the channels of Russian propaganda, while the SMM attempts to obtain information from the scene and to conduct independent research are blocked on a regular basis. **This may indicate signs of deliberate crimes committed by Russian occupation forces in Donbas in order to stage propaganda stories.**

Propaganda in the occupied territories blames the OSCE for the lack of monitoring. During last month, Russian propagandists purposefully bombarded the local population around the city of Horlivka with messages about the lack of the OSCE monitoring in their videos: On April 5, 2020, propagandists of the so-called "UNM DPR" press service on their YouTube channel (<https://youtu.be/jRdRxu22r-c?t=18>) blamed the UAFs for shelling a residential neighborhood and the SMM for allegedly not monitoring this area.

"How often do OSCE staff appear?" The voice-over in Russian asks in the video. "Rarely, the last time I saw them was a long time ago, near the village council," resident of the village of Zaytseve replies. The propagandists also resorted to similar manipulation in the story on April 9 (<https://youtu.be/eZUdlXFEJWk?t=84>): "At the moment, the biggest problem for us is that the OSCE mission does not come here and does not record the shelling," - the so-called "head of the village administration" of Zaitseve controlled by the ROFs, said on video. Later in the story, the propagandist behind the scenes again emphatically asks the local resident: "How often do OSCE staff appear in the area?" "We don't see the OSCE here," the woman in the video replies.

Now, let's look again at the propaganda stories about lack of the OSCE monitoring in the area. On April 10, propagandists continued to focus on the lack of OSCE monitoring

(<https://youtu.be/ucum-BQcVkc?t=68>). Behind-the-scene person asks: “*Did the OSCE react?*” “*The OSCE presence has not been recorded,*” - the so-called “head of administration” of Nikitovsky district of Horlivka, controlled by the ROFs, replied with a smiley. Her sarcasm is very cynical, because only 2 weeks earlier **Russian forces have blocked the OSCE SMM patrols in Horlivka three times: on March 26, April 2, and April 10.**

On the morning of 10 April, at a checkpoint near Horlivka, three members of the Russian armed formations denied an SMM patrol, travelling from government-controlled areas, passage into temporarily occupied areas, citing “orders from commanders that nobody may pass”, said in SMM Spot Report 10/2020. The SMM daily report No. 86/2020 of April 11 states: “On 10 April, staff at a hospital in Horlivka declined to share information with the SMM about civilian casualties, citing the necessity to receive “instructions from superiors”.

The restrictions of the freedom of movement of the SMM patrols and drones near Horlivka were recorded in SMM reports prior to the COVID-19 quarantine. They can be seen as systemic obstacles to the OSCE Mission in the area. This is a very cynical situation where, on the one hand, Russian propagandists have for several weeks been imposing on the local population the opinion that the SMM does not want to record violations and shelling, and on the other hand, the occupying forces do not allow observers access and refuse to provide information on the dead or wounded, referring to the “instructions from superiors”.

The ROF have repeatedly been caught violating international humanitarian law, norms and principles of warfare. They repeatedly fired at not only Ukrainian troops but also at residential neighborhoods, placed GRAD MLRS and artillery between civilian homes, and carried out provocative shelling at public transport in Donetsk and Volnovakha in order to blame the UAF for the death of civilians.

According to the SMM Spot Report 26\2020 from 23 May, on May 22, while an SMM UAV was flying over areas near the town of Vesela Hora (TOT Luhansk region), observers heard 50 small arms shots about 2 km to the northwest. It is estimated that the fire was opened in the direction of the UAV, which at that time was flying about 2 km northwest of the patrol position. Later, during the UAV landing, the Mission staff heard more than 20 shots from small arms; the bullets flew about 10 m above them (it is estimated that the fire was about 300 m to the north-northwest). The patrol immediately left the area without returning the UAV, which at that time was flying at a distance of approximately 300 m west-southwest. **On the SLIDE you can see the scheme** where it is clear that Ukrainian forces were not able even theoretically to participate in the accident and that the only side can be blamed for the attack on the SMM asset – **it is the Russian occupation forces.**

Russia continues the illegal transfers of its weapons, military equipment, ammunition and its troops to the Donbas through part of Russia-Ukraine border, uncontrolled by the Ukrainian government. According to the MoD of Ukraine, ten days ago Russia delivered more than ten tanks, eight armored combat vehicles, and vehicles loaded with ammunition to Donbas. In the middle of May, three wagons of ammunition, including for weapons of banned caliber, more than ten tanks (three new and the rest – repaired ones), eight armored combat vehicles, and up to 30 vehicles loaded with ammunition for small arms and grenade launchers, were delivered from Russian territory through uncontrolled border areas to the Russian occupation forces. Russian propagandists tried to justify an increase in such illegal arms supplies to the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions with the alleged “threat of offensive” by the Ukrainian Joint Forces in late May. Furthermore, Russia manages all internal processes in the occupied territories. It is the main driving force of the war and a cause of the death of many civilians. It is the RF that should bear full responsibility for the deaths and suffering of tens of thousands of Ukrainians, the broken

lives, destroyed buildings and infrastructure. The war can be ended only if Russia stops its aggression against Ukraine.

We continue to inform the delegations on the mortal and destructive activity of the Russian snipers in the occupied areas of the Donbas region. One of the most notorious examples of those snipers in Russian hybrid forces was foreign mercenary “Dejan Beric” or “Deci”, who, being an international mercenary and war criminal, at the same time played the role of a member of the pool of foreign journalists regularly present and asking questions at briefings in the Russian MFA. We informed in detail about this person and demonstrated numerous photos in July last year at one of the FSC plenary meetings.

According to the Jane’s Defence Weekly (16 October, 2019), which referred to the “Russian New generation Warfare Handbook”, Russian snipers have been deployed to Ukraine in platoons rather than as smaller sniper teams accompanied by machine gunners and infantry. The purpose of the sniper platoons is to channel tactical formations into pre-set areas for attack by artillery barrages, minefields or ambushes.

According to this publication, snipers from the ROF in the region were either active Russian servicemen or former servicemen with experience of sniping in Chechnya. The presence of Russian snipers was felt by Ukraine quickly: the war started in April 2014 and already on 9 May 2014 an unidentified Russian sniper had shot the defenders of the district police department in Mariupol.

The quality of Russian snipers in the Donbas region of Ukraine has varied. At the beginning they were inexperienced, but at the later stage of the war professional Russian military personal were integrated into those formations to improve performance.

The combat missions conducted by Russian snipers in Ukraine have assumed several forms. After withdrawal, according to the February 2015 Minsk II agreement, of heavy artillery from the front line, ROF in Ukraine have relied increasingly on snipers for pressuring Ukrainian AFs. The OSCE continues to list ceasefire violations daily and its reports often include information on sniper fire. The snipers also serve an access denial function in the occupied part of Donbas. There were several SMM reports as well as JCCC reports on such denials. One of the reports, according to the Jane’s Defence Weekly, stated that Russian snipers had entered the region to destroy SMM’s stationary cameras that monitor events over 24 hours and record any violations.

The experience of the OSCE SMM in Ukraine shows the role played by Russian snipers, which can be used to influence the battlefield as a whole as well as the narrative around a conflict. Some reports also noted that Ukrainian forces cannot move freely because of the threat from Russian snipers. Therefore, the use of snipers by the ROF can severely limit a mobility of Ukrainian defenders.

The Donbas region is also used by Russia for snipers` training. They have such sniper schools in the Rostov region, close to the Russia-Ukraine border. According to the “Jane’s Defence Weekly”, at the end of 2017 five sniper school graduates were deployed to Novoazovsk in Donbas. The Russian sniper schools usually concluded each training course with a month-long life–fire exercise in the Donbas region of Ukraine.

On the end of February, 2020 the Russian FSB Special operations sniper group was detected in the temporary occupied part of Luhansk oblast. **Next 7 SLIDES demonstrate evidences of this Russian military presence in Ukraine.**

During the last FSC-946 plenary meeting, of 20 May, we **demonstrated information about high-ranking Russian public officials, Russian civil servants and citizens who control and manage today the terrorist formations in eastern Ukraine** (who now occupy positions of so called “ministers” and other “officials” of so called “DPR”). Besides, during

the last PC plenary meeting of 21 May, we demonstrated the copies of Russian passports of other so called “high-ranking officials” of the puppet so called “republics”, in particular, **Mr. Pushilin, Mr.V.Deinego and Ms.N.Nikonorova**. These people can by no means be considered “representatives” of the occupied territories of Ukraine or “invitees” for the TCG meetings in Minsk, since they are citizens of the Russian Federation. Now let me again demonstrate the Russian passports of these people, as they have never been demonstrated in the FSC. – **SEE 3 SLIDES.**

In conclusion, we urge the Russian Federation to stop its aggression against Ukraine, reverse its illegal occupation of Crimea, de-occupy parts of the Donbas region of Ukraine, and restore freedom of navigation through the Kerch Strait and in the Sea of Azov. Russia must fully implement its commitments under the Minsk agreements, including withdrawal of its forces, illegal armed formations and weapons from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.