



United States Mission to the OSCE

The Russian Federation's Ongoing Aggression Against Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Michael Carpenter
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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Since our last meeting a week ago, Russia has launched four more waves of missile and drone attacks on Ukraine. Just two hours ago, it sent multiple drone volleys into Kyiv. In the early hours of May 22, Russia's forces targeted Dnipro's infrastructure with 16 reported ballistic and cruise missiles and an additional 20 one-way-attack drones. This is on top of more than 30 drones sent towards Kyiv and other parts of Ukraine on May 19th and 20th. If the Kremlin thinks that escalating war crimes will lead to a decrease in international resolve to stand with Ukraine, then I've got news for them. Russia's attacks only make us more determined to help Ukraine win and to hold every single one of the perpetrators of these heinous acts accountable.

Fortunately, Ukraine's air defenses are proving highly successful in countering Russia's missile and drone attacks, and we are determined to help Ukraine improve the quality of their air and missile defenses even further, including by working with our allies and partners to train Ukrainian pilots on F-16 aircraft.

The Kremlin must sense the tide is shifting because it's spinning even more preposterous lies to its own population. If you were to believe Russia's state-controlled media, then you would think Russian missiles had destroyed several dozen Patriot systems in Ukraine. But lies don't change reality on the ground, even if they stop some from seeing it. And the reality is that Ukraine is getting stronger every day.

It is also clear that Russia is losing confidence in its ability to control the parts of Ukraine it occupies. There have been credible reports in recent days of Russia's security services and Russia-installed occupation authorities in Zaporizhzhya and Mariupol setting up more checkpoints and spying on civilians' electronic communications to feed Russia's filtration camps, in a desperate attempt to prevent the local population from rising up against their occupiers.

Last week, we heard from two people whose lives have been deeply affected by this abhorrent system: a civilian survivor of Russia's filtration system and a woman whose husband is still being held captive in Russia. They came to tell the world what is happening to Ukrainians in Russia-occupied areas.

Maryna Kostyuk recounted how her husband, Oleksandr, disappeared into the Russian filtration gulag. Oleksandr, having been captured by Russia's forces while evacuating other civilians in Sumy, was moved around on an armored vehicle for ten days. It was March and extremely cold. He was just sitting on the top of the vehicle as they were driving through attacks. As she noted, "he was scared to death." She described his captivity as follows: "...he got to the filtration camp... He was interrogated and went four times... to mock

[executions]. They said they would cut off his fingers, they said they would shoot through his knees.” Today, Oleksandr remains one of an estimated tens of thousands of civilian prisoners held by Russia. Many of them are being held inside the Russian Federation in jails administered by Russian authorities.

Vyacheslav Zavalnyy, who said he was detained as he tried to evacuate his family from Mariupol, recalled how he was passed through the Melitopol filtration camp on his way to Russia. He described how he was beaten and reflected on his time in Russia’s gulag as follows: “...I was all in blood. These three weeks in Kursk – I am drawing your attention to the name of these pre-trial detention facilities [because] these facilities have... officials who are running them... these people have to stand accountable just as... the concentration camp directors in the Second World War.” Zavalnyy went on to speak of the federal penal authorities who tortured him, saying, “...they are not military, they are not afraid of being conscripted and being taken prisoner, so they have impunity. They torture people.” He added, “They are the successor to the NKVD with the same mentality and same attitude to human life. Nothing has changed in Russia for 100 years.” Zavalnyy was released in a prisoner exchange with Russia for a number of corpses - yes, corpses - and captured soldiers. He said it was a miracle, and perhaps indeed was, but I would like to draw your attention to the fact that Russia is exchanging POWs for noncombatant civilians.

As I mentioned, tens of thousands of Ukraine’s civilians are estimated to be imprisoned far from the battlefield and barred from contact with the outside world, either in Russia-occupied parts of Ukraine or in Russia itself. The entire filtration process, as it’s called, including the detention of civilians for no reason, interrogations without due process, torture, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings are part of a centralized plan to compel Ukrainian civilians to submit to Russia’s authority and to break their will. Is it any wonder that those who survive are sworn enemies of the occupying state? That they will come forward and testify in future trials? Because these atrocities and abuses are being reported, evidence of crimes is being collected, and records are being preserved so that there will be justice and accountability.

Mr. Chair, on May 19, the United States and its Allies and partners imposed a substantial package of additional sanctions on Russia and its accomplices, implementing commitments President Biden made at the G7 Leaders’ Summit. This package further increases the costs to the Kremlin and those who support its war effort, specifically those complicit in sanctions evasion and circumvention, those who maintain Russia’s capacity to wage this illegal war, and those who support Russia’s future energy revenue sources. Additionally, the United States is designating individuals and entities that are part of Russia’s occupation and those involved in the theft of Ukrainian grain and in the forcible deportation of Ukraine’s children.

The United States will continue to hold Russia and its enablers accountable for this unjustified and illegal war. And this Council must continue to expose Russia’s war crimes and crimes against humanity for the entire world to see.

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