



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

# **Ongoing Violations of International Law and Defiance of OSCE Principles and Commitments by the Russian Federation in Ukraine**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
May 14, 2015

Each week we express concern over the continued ceasefire violations and intense fighting in eastern Ukraine, which demonstrate the failure of Russia and the separatists it backs to comply with the provisions laid out in Minsk. This week has been no exception.

The Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) observed the increased movement of military forces in off-limit areas established by the Minsk agreements, particularly in separatist-controlled areas.

On May 6, the SMM witnessed an exercise near Debaltseve conducted by combined Russian-separatist forces using anti-tank weapons, armored personnel carriers, and small arms.

On May 10, the SMM registered the movement by the separatists of six T-72 main battle tanks, three multiple launch rocket systems, self-propelled howitzers, and anti-aircraft systems.

And the weekly report distributed yesterday included evidence that the separatists continue to acquire new kinds of weapons. I'd like to quote: "Near 'DPR' controlled Samsonove (81km south-east of Donetsk), the SMM spotted some Grad-P portable rockets (9P132) and their tripod launchers. This highly mobile weapon system is more commonly seen in the Middle East than in this conflict, but Ukrainian military analysts reported seeing them in the 'Lugansk People's Republic' ('LPR')-controlled areas in late March. Now the Grad-Ps are seen near the line of contact in 'DPR'-controlled territory, as confirmed by SMM Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) video footage."

I would note also in connection to this the reported arrival today of the latest illegal resupply convoy in the city of Donetsk.

The SMM continued to observe intense fighting with heavy weapons near the Donetsk airport and Shyrokyne, two locations where the Russia-backed separatists are trying to extend their control beyond the ceasefire line.

While the SMM reported that monitors were able to visit two formerly off-limits towns in separatist-controlled territory on May 7, large-scale access restrictions on the part of combined Russian-separatist forces continue.

Even more worrisome is the fact that the SMM could not patrol as broadly as intended in the run up to the May 9 Victory Day celebrations due to an upsurge in violence. The safety and security of SMM monitors is of the utmost importance. We are concerned by a report that an SMM patrol came under fire from a member of the Ukrainian armed forces who was not aware of the patrol's presence in the area. While the Ukrainian commander apologized to the SMM for the incident, we urge appropriate follow-up actions and renewed caution and restraint. As Secretary Kerry made clear in his public remarks following his May 12 meeting with President Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov, both sides need to take every possible step to implement Minsk fully, and that includes preventing any breaches of the ceasefire.

Mr. Chair, let us remember that the SMM is an instrument of the international community, and the access the SMM is permitted in eastern Ukraine is indicative of what the parties want the international community to know about the situation on the ground. The SMM has nearly full access to areas under Ukrainian government control. In contrast, the SMM continues to be denied access to large swathes of territory controlled by the combined Russian-separatist forces, particularly areas along the border with Russia.

This indicates that Russia and the separatists do not want the international community to know the real situation on the ground, both the military situation and the humanitarian situation.

Further evidence of this was the closing last week of the International Rescue Committee's offices in Donetsk, where gunmen appeared and detained international aid workers before expelling them from separatist-controlled territory. This action demonstrates the brutality of those running the separatist-held territories. It also speaks to the critical need to implement the Minsk agreements fully and ensure a lasting peace.

Russia has repeatedly argued that Ukraine has failed to engage in dialogue with its citizens in the east. Yet, as we speak, in Kramatorsk, the Donetsk Oblast administration, in cooperation with the OSCE Project Coordinator in Ukraine (PCU), is holding a forum with community and business leaders to discuss economic development, infrastructure, security, the humanitarian situation, and the improvement of cooperation between government authorities and civil society.

Similarly, Ukraine's Human Rights Commissioner, jointly with ODIHR, recently launched a two-year civil society project that will enhance mechanisms to address human rights issues throughout Ukraine.

We applaud Ukrainian national and local authorities, the PCU, and ODIHR, for undertaking activities that will advance efforts to forge a peaceful and democratic future for all of Ukraine's people.

It is Russia's actions, in fact, that are hindering efforts toward a peaceful future for all of Ukraine. Russia maintains military command and control elements in eastern Ukraine, and coordinates joint military operations with the separatists. Russia continues to support and train the separatists. These actions are clearly contrary to the Minsk agreements.

We welcome the inaugural meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group's working groups, while stressing that their success rests on the full implementation of the Minsk agreements through a genuine ceasefire and the verifiable withdrawal of heavy weapons. We urge the members of the working groups to take immediate and concrete actions that ensure the full implementation of Minsk. The test of success is not in the holding of meetings, but in progress on the ground. As the working groups get underway, we support the ongoing efforts of Ambassador Tagliavini to convene the representatives of Ukraine and Russia in the Trilateral Contact Group format.

In closing, let me remind colleagues that as we discuss the immediate situation in eastern Ukraine, we should not forget that this crisis began when Russian troops entered Crimea in 2014. Russia must respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and end its occupation of Crimea.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.