



Weekly Update, 19 July 2016

For the period from 10:00 12 July 2016 to 10:00 19 July 2016 (Moscow time)

SUMMARY

Kamensk-Shakhtinskiy, Russian Federation. The Observer Mission (OM) continues to operate 24/7 at both Border Crossing Points (BCPs). The overall cross-border traffic decreased at both BCPs.

OPERATIONAL REMARKS

The OM is currently operating with 21 permanent international staff members, including the Chief Observer (CO). The Mission is supported administratively by a Vienna-based staff member.

OBSERVATIONS AT THE BORDER CROSSING POINTS

Persons crossing the border

The profile of the people crossing the border can be categorized as follows:

1. Adults travelling on foot or by car with little or no luggage;
2. Persons in military-style outfits;
3. Families (often including elderly people and/or children) on foot or by car with a significant amount of luggage.

The average number of entries/exits decreased overall from 11,700 to 11,632¹ per day for both BCPs compared to last week. The average net flow for both BCPs went from plus 128 to plus 167 (i.e. more entries to the Russian Federation).

The Donetsk BCP continued to experience more traffic than the Gukovo BCP. The cross-border movements registered at both BCPs accounted for more than 35.7 per cent of all entries/exits in Rostov region¹.

¹ Data received from Rostov region Border Guard Service.

Persons in military-style outfits

During the reporting period, the number of men and women in military-style outfits crossing the border in both directions, decreased from 125 last week to 90 this week at both BCPs; 49 of them crossed into the Russian Federation, while 41 of them crossed into Ukraine. Approximately 85 per cent of this category's crossings occurred at the Donetsk BCP. Men and women continued to cross the border individually or in groups. Most individuals crossed by foot, however, some made use of private vehicles, buses or minivans, making it more difficult for the observer teams (OTs) to observe their movement across the border, especially since many of the private vehicles have tinted windows, and buses and minivans have drawn curtains.

Families with a significant amount of luggage

During the reporting period, the OTs observed families, often with elderly people and/or children, crossing at both BCPs with a significant amount of luggage or travelling in heavily loaded cars. Four families were observed crossing into the Russian Federation while one was observed crossing into Ukraine.

Bus connections

Regular local and long-distance bus connections continued to operate between Ukraine (Luhansk region) and cities in the Russian Federation. In addition to regular bus connections, the OTs continued to observe bus connections on irregular routes. Often the buses do not state their route; instead they just have a sign on the windshield stating "Irregular".

Among the bus connections observed by the OTs, the following "irregular" routes or destinations were noted: Luhansk-Sochi, Luhansk-Yalta, Luhansk-Yevpatoria, Sverdlovsk-Luhansk, Rovenki-Kyiv, Luhansk-Kyiv, Luhansk-Sukhumi, Luhansk-Sevastopol, Stakhanov-Kharkiv Kyiv and Odessa.

During the reporting period, on some occasions the OTs at the Donetsk BCP observed buses with children on board crossing the border in both directions.

On some occasions, the OTs noticed the bus drivers removing the itinerary signs from the windshields of their buses. The majority of long-distance coaches commuting between Luhansk region and cities in the Russian Federation have licence plates issued in Luhansk region.

Trucks

The OM continued to observe trucks crossing the border in both directions and at both BCPs. Compared to the previous week, the number of trucks decreased from 758 to 624; 341 of these trucks crossed to the Russian Federation and 283 crossed to Ukraine. Most of the trucks observed by the OTs were registered in Luhansk region.

Separately, the OTs also observed tanker trucks crossing the border in both directions. The number of tanker trucks decreased to 55 from 49 in the previous week. These trucks were observed crossing the border at both BCPs. The trucks mainly had the words “Propane” and “Flammable” written across the tanks in either Russian or Ukrainian. The majority of tanker trucks have hazard signs, indicating that they are transporting propane or a mix of propane with butane.

All trucks undergo systematic inspection by Russian Federation officials, which may include an X-ray check. No X-ray checks could be observed at the Gukovo BCP since the OT has no view of the mobile X-ray unit, but it could be heard operating several times during the reporting period. One hundred and forty six X-ray checks were observed at the Donetsk BCP. Out of the 146 trucks scanned during the reporting period, 78 trucks (53 per cent) were bound for Ukraine; the remaining 68 trucks (46 per cent) crossed into the Russian Federation.

Minivans

The OM continued to observe passenger and cargo minivans² crossing the border in both directions and at both BCPs. The OTs observed minivans predominantly registered in Luhansk region; however, the OTs frequently saw minivans registered in the Russian Federation.

Compared to the previous week, the number of cargo minivans decreased from 359 to 323; 151 crossed to the Russian Federation and 172 to Ukraine.

Trains

The OTs continued to pick up the sound of trains running on the train tracks located approximately 150 metres south-west of the Gukovo BCP. During the reporting week, the OTs heard trains on 21 occasions; the OTs estimated that 11 trains were travelling to the Russian Federation and 10 trains were bound for Ukraine. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to

² **Cargo minivans:** light commercial vehicles with a maximum authorized mass of more than 3.5 t and not more than 7.5 t; with or without a trailer with a maximum mass of less than 750 kg (small cargo vehicles which correspond to driving license C1).

Ukraine was informed about the trains bound for Ukraine. Visual observation was not possible because of the line of trees located between the train tracks and the BCP and unfavourable light conditions.

Other observations

The majority of vehicles crossing the border have licence plates issued in Luhansk region or in the Russian Federation.

The OTs continued to observe vehicles with Ukrainian licence plates, including articulated trucks with “LPR” or “Novorossiya” stickers, or in rare cases “DPR” stickers on their licence plates masking the Ukrainian flag.

During the reporting period the OTs observed ambulances on four occasions. These ambulances were registered in both Russian Federation and Ukraine and were crossing the border in both directions at both BCPs. No wounded or injured persons were observed on board of these ambulances.

On 18 July the OM Observation Team (OT) in the Donetsk Border Crossing Point (BCP) observed a Russian Federation Ministry of Emergency Situations (MES) truck (white Kamaz with official black registration plates) entering Donetsk BCP at 05:15 from RF side. The truck was one of those usually used for convoys, but without any inscription concerning humanitarian aid. The truck had two uniformed MES officers inside and crossed the border to Ukraine. On the same day at 13:05 the truck returned and crossed the border to the Russian Federation (See OM Spot Report from 18 July 2016).

TRENDS AND FIGURES AT A GLANCE

(For the period from 10:00 12 July 2016 to 10:00 19 July 2016)






