



United States Mission to the OSCE

Reply 1 to the Russian Federation on the 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
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Mr. Chair, just to respond to our distinguished Russian colleague.

Just to assure our distinguished Russian colleague, I'm quite aware of the discussion that was held yesterday between my boss, Secretary Kerry, and Foreign Minister Lavrov, as well as the conversation held yesterday between Vice President Biden and President Poroshenko. And there is no contrast in what was discussed in those meetings and the assessment in my delegation's statement.

The point I was making was that if you continue to insist that you do care about a de-escalation of the conflict, and if many others continue to insist that Russian military support has and/or continues to come across the border, and if your President has admitted that the Russian government has been involved militarily in eastern Ukraine, and if Foreign Minister Lavrov said at the end of last year, falsely, that Ukraine's allies want Russia to be "fighting on two fronts, one in Ukraine and one in Syria," and thereby admitted again that Russia is engaged militarily in eastern Ukraine – then, if Russia wants to insist that this is false, it should be in Russia's interest, as well as the rest of us, to – as quickly as possible – facilitate full international monitoring of the international border.

And if Russia insists that Russia has no control over the separatists that it backs and to which it provides commanding control structures in eastern Ukraine, then the only practical way for full international monitoring to be brought to bear would be for Russia to facilitate the expansion of the mandate for the Border Observation Mission at two checkpoints which many of your colleagues around this table have urged the Russian Federation to consider favorably.

Given that I have taken the floor, I will also take the opportunity to respond to a few other points.

First, I wanted to underscore that it is not the case that we have said that there isn't progress to be made by all parties to the Minsk agreements. That seems to be something that gets repeated and it's certainly not the case, and when our statement is circulated you'll be able to go back and see the instances in our statement today.

Also, I'd like to make the point – coming back to the border issue – I've made this point before, but the fact that the SMM can episodically and unpredictably make visits for a short amount of time to the border does not constitute comprehensive observation of the border.

I've made this analogy before – but our distinguished Russian colleague has said that the SMM is able to reach the border more than once a day. If I said that the Russian Federation should have, for its Embassy security here in Vienna, a security service that would stop by once a day for an hour, you would think that is preposterous. The fact is that there are 24 hours in a day, there are around 400 km of the border which remains outside of the control of the lawful sovereign government that should be controlling it, and in those 24 hours there are many opportunities for things to come across the border which would contribute to the ongoing destabilization of the situation. And if Russia is concerned to de-escalate the situation it should be as concerned as the rest of us to have full observation of the rest of the international border.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.