



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 James S. Gilmore III
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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The last week there were numerous ceasefire violations in eastern Ukraine, where Russia-led forces persist in their efforts to undermine a sovereign neighbor. We should all be on notice of this escalation that is ongoing and what the potential consequences of that might be. We certainly can't see an implementation of the Minsk Agreements unless there's a ceasefire. Yet, the effort to destroy that ceasefire is escalating and increasing. Moscow's multi-year aggression is a direct challenge to the security of Europe. It is clear that neither the COVID-19 pandemic nor the appeal by UN Secretary General Guterres for a global ceasefire in all conflict areas has persuaded Moscow to stop fueling an armed conflict in Ukraine.

Much of the recent violence has been centered east of Mariupol, around Pikuzy, which saw the highest number of armed clashes. Also of concern was fighting around the "disengagement site" of Zolote in Luhansk oblast, which saw the highest number of explosions throughout April.

The conflict that Russia has instigated and led in eastern Ukraine puts the lives of thousands in danger. So far in 2020 more than 65 civilians have been wounded or killed in eastern Ukraine.

Russia-led forces in eastern Ukraine obstruct the movement of the Special Monitoring Mission, as has been widely discussed in statements already today, inhibiting the Mission's ability to report on ceasefire violations and endangering the safety and security of our monitors. Over the past week, the Mission reported its movement restricted on multiple occasions. The Canadian and Swiss representatives have taken note of this dramatic violation that occurred this last week far in excess of anything that has happened before, where monitors were delayed, captured, made to lie down on the ground, assaulted, asked for their property. This is unacceptable behavior and an escalation of the problem. We call upon Russia to direct the forces it controls in eastern Ukraine to cease their harassment of the Monitors or certainly to explain why it is that these violations are increasing and escalating.

Russia pretends it is not engaged in military hostilities in eastern Ukraine, which is absurd. Are we to believe that Russia's proxies in eastern Ukraine possess the resources to independently procure high-tech Russian military equipment like the Pantsir S-1 anti-air system or the T-72 B3 battle tank? Such equipment and other items, like the Leer-3 electronic warfare system, have operated in Ukraine on multiple occasions, as has been widely reported by various media and independent organizations. These weapon systems

were not brought on line even in Russia until decades after Ukraine's independence from the former Soviet Union.

The border observation mission reports routinely on trucks crossing the unsecured border from Russia into Ukraine. This has been addressed today with the extension of the mandate. Are we to believe that these convoys from Russia are not a conduit for the Russia-made military equipment spotted in eastern Ukraine? Perhaps, today, our Russian colleagues, who have advised us today that this mission operates strictly as a matter of good will, if these shipments really do reflect the "goodwill of the Russian government" as Moscow claims, what do they have to hide? In the interest of goodwill, why not allow the OSCE SMM to look in and do its job and look into the trucks, and then report to the Permanent Council what they saw. Not to mention, the necessity of looking at the other thousands of kilometers that are today unmonitored by the OSCE.

In the face of Russia's denials, deflection, and disinformation, the collective responsibility of those of us who truly believe in the Helsinki Final Act principles and OSCE commitments is clear. We must hold Russia accountable for acting contrary to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and for the abuses it has committed in eastern Ukraine and occupied Crimea.

As long as Russia fuels the conflict in Ukraine, a lasting and peaceful resolution in Europe will remain elusive. We challenge Russia to match the Zelenskyy administration's political will and courage and work constructively to end this conflict, including through the full implementation of the Minsk agreements, starting with Russia's security obligations.

The situation in Crimea demands our continued focus. In recent weeks we have called to your attention Russia's violations of international law, including the conscription of 3,300 young Crimeans. Occupation authorities daily restrict the rights of Crimeans through harassment and worse. We join others in the international community in calling on Russia to release all those unjustly detained and return them to their homes and families.

As we approach the May 18 anniversary of Stalin's 1944 mass deportation of nearly 200,000 Crimean Tatars from Crimea, we recall the victims of this act of brutality. Seventy six years later, Russia's severe repression of opponents of its occupation has forced tens of thousands of Crimeans to flee the peninsula, while hundreds of others have been deported as "foreigners" after refusing to accept the Russian citizenship that has been imposed upon them. As a result, many Crimean Tatars find themselves forcibly displaced from their homeland by authorities in Moscow for the second time in their lives.

Mr. Chair, the United States fully supports Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, including its territorial waters. We do not, nor will we ever, recognize Russia's purported annexation of Crimea. We join our European and other partners in affirming that our Minsk-related sanctions against Russia will remain in place until Russia fully implements its Minsk commitments. The Crimea-related sanctions will remain in place until Russia returns full control of the peninsula to Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.