



**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 Acting Political Councilor Lane Darnell Bahl  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
July 2, 2020

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Over the last few weeks, we have noted a worrying uptick of incidents on the ground in eastern Ukraine that threaten the men and women of the Special Monitoring Mission as well as its cameras, unmanned aircraft, and other tools.

We are sadly familiar with reports of small-arms fire directed at SMM UAVs and jamming of their signals. We have also condemned the incidents in which SMM monitors suffered close calls with small-arms fire or explosions. Movement restrictions, which impede or discourage SMM patrols, are also a regrettable part of the reality the Kremlin has created on the ground.

These incidents are a key element of Russia's conduct in eastern Ukraine and indicate contempt for its OSCE commitments and for the well-being of OSCE personnel.

Since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, we have seen a considerable increase in the number of SMM spot reports focused on provocative incidents involving monitors and cameras and UAVs. The SMM has issued 34 spot reports since March 22 to document Russia-led interference with the Mission. Each corresponds to a specific incident or incidents in which Russia-led forces restricted the movement of SMM patrols, damaged or destroyed SMM assets, or endangered the lives of SMM personnel.

Spot Report 29/2020, issued on June 3, 2020, details the destruction of a SMM camera costing over 55,000 U.S. dollars. This valuable tool was targeted at close range by small-arms fire originating in Russia-controlled territory. Spot Report 28/2020, issued on May 29, 2020, documents an explosion within 100 meters of SMM monitors patrolling an area in Russia-controlled territory. Spot Report 26/2020, issued on May 22, 2020, recorded that rounds from small arms passed just overhead our SMM monitors as they conducted a UAV flight within Russia-controlled territory.

Spot Reports 24/2020 and 12/2020, issued on May 15, 2020 and April 13, 2020, respectively, describe SMM monitors encountering nearby explosions while patrolling in Russia-controlled territory. On June 22, Spot Report 33/2020 provided an initial damage

assessment for an SMM camera near Shyrokyne. Further review determined the shrapnel damage was caused by a round fired from Russia-controlled territory. And only today, we learned of yet another incident in which two SMM cameras were targeted and damaged in Russia-controlled territory.

Russia no longer appears committed to ensuring the safety and security of the Special Monitoring Mission. Instead, Russia-led forces act with apparent impunity in carrying out these incidents, and it is getting worse. Russia's interference and continued aggression is preventing the Mission from fulfilling its mandate and is wasting tens of thousands of dollars in financial assistance provided by the participating States.

In Crimea, Russia's occupation authorities trample on the human rights of Crimean Tatars and other Ukrainians, who have endured six years of abuses involving harassment, disappearances, arrest, and detentions. Russia is currently detaining over 80 political prisoners from Crimea. The majority are Crimean Tatars, some of whom already are serving terms of up to 19 years in prison. We are following the trial that began this week of the 69 year-old leader of the Crimean Tatar Regional Mejlis in Sudak, Ilver Ametov, who faces up to four years in prison for possession of a rusty WWII-era weapon found during a raid of his home. We condemn the use of Soviet-style punitive psychiatry against Crimean Tatar political prisoners.

Russia has militarized Ukraine's sovereign territory of Crimea with nuclear capable aircraft and missiles, other weapons, ammunition, and military personnel. And nearly 24,000 young Crimean residents have been conscripted into the Russian Armed Forces. These actions in Crimea violate international law and threaten our common security. We demand Russia end its occupation of Crimea, immediately release all Ukrainians it has unjustly imprisoned, and withdraw its forces and materiel from eastern Ukraine and Crimea.

Madam 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 affirm that our Minsk-related sanctions against Russia will remain in place until Russia fully implements its Minsk commitments and our Crimea-related sanctions will remain in place until Russia returns full control of the peninsula to Ukraine. We further take this opportunity to commend the European Council for its June 18 decision to renew robust sanctions on Russia for its occupation of Crimea as well as its June 29 renewal of sanctions on specific economic sectors for Russia's non-implementation of the Minsk agreements. We thank the European Union and all of our partners for once again demonstrating their clear condemnation of Russia's aggression in Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

###