



United States Mission to the OSCE

Annual Security Review Conference Special Session: Ensuring security and stability in the OSCE region in light of developments with respect to Ukraine

As delivered by
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Mr. Chair, Ambassadors, Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen, good afternoon.

It is an honor for me to be with you today at this Special Session on Ukraine -- in this 40th anniversary year since the landmark Helsinki Accords were signed in 1975. Since then, the OSCE has been an indispensable part of European security architecture, and it remains just as essential today. We at U.S. Army Europe commend the OSCE for its vital role, most recently in Ukraine, and are grateful to the monitors who serve with courage despite the risks and hardships. We also commend Ambassador Tagliavini and Ambassador Apakan for their outstanding contributions as Special Representative of the Chair and Chief Monitor. We look forward to building a better future for Ukraine with her successor, Ambassador Sajdik. We have enormous respect for the OSCE and its mission, and look to you for continued leadership.

I am honored to share my professional opinion about military developments in Ukraine. The U.S. Army Europe has been working and training with the Ukrainian Land Forces since 1992, because there is much erroneous information about what the U.S. military is doing or plans to do with our NATO Allies and Ukrainian partners. I hope the facts that I offer today will clarify matters -- and where necessary, set the record straight -- and assist our governments, with and through the OSCE, in preventing the situation from deteriorating further. We must be clear about what is going on in Ukraine, because despite the valiant efforts of the OSCE, the EU, other multinational institutions, NGOs and individual actors, the conflict in Ukraine, including Crimea, remains serious and far from resolution.

I should reiterate at the outset that U.S. Army Europe would have much preferred to continue the cooperation we began with Russia in the 1990s and continued well into the Administration of President Obama. Since Russia seized and occupied Crimea, however, it has become impossible to overlook President Putin's attempt to reverse the democratic evolution of the post-Cold War security order in Europe -- which many of the countries represented here today painstakingly built. Ignoring the UN Charter and other treaties and multilateral instruments to which Russia is a party, President Putin used military force in an attempt to change the sovereign and internationally recognized borders of Ukraine, an OSCE participating State. We also recall Russia's invasion in Georgia and the ongoing presence of Russian military personnel in the Transnistrian region of Moldova -- despite its 1999 Istanbul Summit commitments.

All of these developments caused us at U.S. Army Europe to take notice, and to take steps in response.

It is important that we not lose sight of the big picture -- why we are where we are today. In 2014, in two successive free and fair elections observed by the OSCE and widely recognized as the most democratic elections since independence, an overwhelming majority of the people of Ukraine rejected the corruption and lawlessness of the Yanukovich regime and expressed a civilizational choice to become part of modern Europe, governed by democracy and the rule of law, and to live in a country with a strong market economy and an open society. Russian authorities set aside basic tenets of international law and core OSCE principles, including the idea that sovereign countries have a right to choose their own future. Russian active duty soldiers, Russian tanks and Russian trainers have sought to deny the people of Ukraine their freely expressed European future.

Russia has infiltrated large numbers of soldiers and huge quantities of weapons, ammunition and other military equipment into eastern Ukraine, fomenting conflict and unrest that has left more than 6,000 people dead and displaced well over 1.3 million. Let us be clear: the responsibility for this vast human suffering, economic devastation, and political and social turbulence lies squarely with the Kremlin and the separatists it so clearly supports.

During the 23 years U.S. Army Europe has been cooperating with the Ukrainian Land Forces, we have developed a good relationship and a solid understanding of what is happening in Ukraine. Let me share with you just a small part of what we have seen there in recent months:

--Today, almost five months after the February Minsk implementation agreement and nine months after the Minsk Protocol and Memorandum, combined Russian-separatist military forces continue to operate widely and in large numbers in eastern Ukraine. There is overwhelming publicly available evidence of this Russian activity, from independent news organizations, think tanks and academics around the world. Only those who wish to ignore this reality continue to believe Kremlin claims that it is not intervening in Ukraine. Russia is actively and massively fueling this conflict.

--I assume you are all familiar with the many reports of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, which amply document evidence of Russian military activity in eastern Ukraine, which the United Nations has noted as well. Just last night the Special Monitoring Mission -- your monitors, our shared eyes and ears -- reported more than 500 explosions just over this weekend. This comes after sustained attacks for many months, with thousands and thousands of explosions. This is what the Special Monitoring Mission reports tell us. As a professional military officer with service in war zones like Afghanistan and Iraq, I can assure you that this amount of explosive power cannot be applied without the benefit of a state-run defense industrial base capable of generating the material required to sustain this level of war fighting that Russia has waged for over a year now. This is not something that you put together in the basement of your home. Nor could this amount of explosive power be applied without a sophisticated supply chain that includes munitions of multiple types and calibers, fuel and repair parts. And of course, multiple complex weapons systems can only be operated by soldiers and leaders who have trained on these systems for years.

--We see clear and irrefutable evidence of Russian command and control support of military operations in Ukraine and continuing transfers of military equipment from Russia to eastern Ukraine through these open, uncontrolled and unmonitored borders -- borders which Russia refuses to return to Ukrainian sovereignty as called for by the Minsk Implementation Plan. Russia's refusal prevents the very political work Russia claims to want. The open border with

Russia feeds the conflict and obstructs the important work of the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission.

--The presence of Russian military equipment in eastern Ukraine has been documented beyond dispute. Versions of the T-72 tank, that only Russian forces possess, have been recorded in Ukraine since at least August 2014, with continued reporting throughout just this past week. The SA-22 or Pantsir-S1 Air Defense System was sighted as early as November 2014. The Russian Smerch rocket was recorded in eastern Ukraine as early as January and February of this year. Grad-K Rocket Systems were seen as early as January this year. These are uniquely Russian systems, as a career military officer I can assure you that the separatists, who President Putin refers to as coalminers and tractor drivers, could in no way maintain, resupply, or operate this equipment with tactical proficiency. These are all sophisticated weapons systems that operate within a network of similar systems which require extensive command and control, networking, and training. They are dependent on Russian forces operating within eastern Ukraine and just across the border.

--In addition to leadership, guidance, and weapons systems, Russia is also sending its own soldiers to the front. Moscow is not only supporting a combined Russian-separatist force; Russian soldiers are active parts of the fighting force. The Kremlin is rotating Russian units to the Ukrainian front, mixing tactical level fighters with separatists. Observations from soldiers, family members, journalists, concerned citizens and academics have accounted for the deployment of individuals from their garrisons and homes in Russia to the Donbas. Many of these have returned in the notorious "Cargo 200" shipments, a term which refers to the bodies of those killed in action returning home. These are not volunteers or mercenaries; they are trained, equipped, and uniformed active duty Russian soldiers. And when President Putin refers to them as "if they are soldiers then they are on leave" then what an incredible insult to the political leaders of our countries that he would talk to us that way and expect us to believe it. As a military officer, I should also add that I was shocked to see the Russian government recently deny that the two Russian soldiers captured in eastern Ukraine were theirs; this was presumably also a shock to those two soldiers, who thought they were fighting for their country.

Now let me outline for you briefly some of what U.S. Army Europe has been doing in recent months in NATO member states and Ukraine, because Russian propaganda outlets have inaccurately reported our activities:

--NATO and the EU are once again proving their unity and readiness, and the Alliance is delivering. NATO responded to Russia's occupation of Crimea in many ways, including at the Wales Summit, where the Alliance emerged stronger and more united than I have ever seen it. The Readiness Action Plan, agreed to at Wales, consists of an array of activities designed to reassure our Allies and deter aggression against NATO member states.

--In April 2014, at the request of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, one Company of paratroopers – that's about 150 soldiers – from the United States' 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, arrived in each of these four nations to begin Operation ATLANTIC RESOLVE, a continuous series of NATO exercises from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. These units have since been replaced on a rotational basis at approximately 3-month intervals, providing a persistent but not a permanent presence. Similar sized units have also trained with our Romanian, Bulgarian, and Hungarian Allies under the same rubric. We anticipate

continuing this rotational principle as long as our Allies want and request it. Their position, not surprisingly, depends on Kremlin behavior.

--In Ukraine, at the request of the government of Ukraine, U.S. Army Europe soldiers began training and equipping the first of three battalions of Ukrainian Interior Ministry soldiers, known as National Guard, in defensive measures at the Yavoriv training center in Lviv. The first training rotation just concluded, and it will be followed by two more ending in October. Further training beyond that is yet to be determined. A more professional and capable National Guard will help defend Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. By contrast, Russia is arming, training, and controlling the separatists on the territory of a neighboring state. The role, scope, and nature of U.S. activities in Ukraine are all for defensive purposes and respect the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity; they could not be more different from those of Russia and I reject any attempts to portray these activities as equivalent.

--In addition to the training conducted with the National Guard, the United States is providing Ukraine a variety of equipment to meet its security challenges. We have already delivered, or expect to deliver in the near future, the following: communications equipment; night vision devices; body armor; helmets; medical equipment; Lightweight Counter-Mortar Radar; 30 armored Humvees; 100 unarmored Humvees; generators; and tents.

These measures, taken by U.S. Army Europe, support our Ukrainian partners and in no way threaten Russia and fall well within the language and intent of the NATO-Russia Founding Act, which specifically states that "reinforcement may take place... in the event of defence against a threat of aggression." I was curious to read that President Putin recently said, "So far, I don't see anything that would force us to worry especially." But, almost the next day, he announced that Russia would add more than 40 nuclear weapons to its arsenal.

We are concerned about this and other bellicose language and aggressive actions coming out of Russia. NATO Secretary-General Stoltenberg said the statement on nuclear weapons from President Putin "confirm[s] the pattern and behavior of Russia over a period of time.... This nuclear saber-rattling of Russia is unjustified, it's destabilizing and it's dangerous." And we agree.

I also noted Russian Deputy Prime Minister Rogozin's recent comment about sanctions when he said "tanks do not need visas." Earlier this year, the Russian Ambassador in Copenhagen threatened Denmark as a nuclear target if it were to associate itself with a missile defense system. The Russian military has conducted numerous "snap" exercises involving tens of thousands of soldiers, very large amounts of armor, and aircraft adjacent to the borders of NATO countries.

In contrast to this obviously aggressive language and behavior, on a typical day, there are about 100 U.S. armored vehicles spread across eight NATO countries, and an average of about 200 U.S. Soldiers in each of the Baltic States, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria. These numbers fluctuate but have been in this order of magnitude for many months.

Today, U.S. Secretary of Defense Carter announced the positioning of a modest amount of heavy equipment to facilitate our training activities. This would comprise about 250 tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, and self-propelled howitzers; plus support vehicles, trucks, etc. that will be distributed across six different countries. These tanks and vehicles would barely fill the parking lot out here in front of the Hofburg, and will be modest in comparison to the very large

forces Russia maintains in the region, in some cases just miles across the border, and which it mobilizes regularly in so-called “snap exercises” with no warning. I ask you today: whose behavior is “provocative”?

Ukraine requested U.S. Army Europe presence -- and continues to request it, while President Putin has admitted Russian troops entered Crimea, a part of Ukraine, a sovereign European country, without an invitation (i.e., by force). Ukraine invited the U.S. and other NATO member states to train its forces; Ukraine did NOT invite Russia into Crimea or eastern Ukraine.

What needs to happen to put this military picture on a better track? The combined Russian–separatist forces must allow OSCE representatives from the Special Monitoring Mission unfettered access to ALL areas of eastern Ukraine, as they agreed when they signed the Minsk agreements. The OSCE Observer Mission on the Russian side of the border is doing excellent work despite huge restrictions imposed by Russia. Last week, Russia blocked its expansion beyond a few hundred meters total at the two checkpoints for a fourth time. This is the behavior of a guilty party -- it raises the question in any reasonable person: what is Russia hiding? We call on the Kremlin to support international monitoring of the international border, to restore Ukrainian control to its side of the international border, to use its influence with the separatists to stop their attacks immediately, to stop violating the ceasefire, to withdraw their heavy weapons in a verifiable manner, to halt the flow of fighters and equipment from Russia into Ukraine, and to end the training of the separatists. And Russia must end its occupation of Crimea.

What happens in Ukraine is inseparable from European security writ large. No amount of wishful thinking will change the fact that if we collectively fail to respond to Russian aggression, appropriately and steadfastly, we will diminish security and contribute to instability with wider economic and human costs. One person, President Putin, can return us to the road of partnership and cooperation, where we would much rather be.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.