



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 Chargé d’Affaires Michele Siders
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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For the second week in a row, Russia-led forces have attacked the SMM’s Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, firing missiles from batteries positioned deep in Russia-controlled territory, followed by anti-aircraft fire the SMM assessed as directed at its UAV. Russia-led forces again carried out a deliberate attack on the SMM, demonstrating its disregard for the Minsk agreements. Statements by Russia’s proxies that the attack was somehow unintentional are ludicrous. The SMM gave advance notice to the sides of the general area where the flight was to occur, and confirmed the UAV’s transponder was working before takeoff. Russia-led forces fired at the UAV not once, but *three times*.

Why would the Russian Federation, which joined us in mandating the SMM to operate safely across the entire territory of Ukraine, support forces who regularly fire at an unarmed civilian monitoring vehicle? A deeper look into the SMM’s reporting yields clues.

Last week, SMM reports showed a surge of Russian heavy weapons in the conflict area – from 10 to 115 within a single week – all contrary to the withdrawal lines established in the Minsk agreements. The surface-to-air missile systems that fired at the SMM’s UAV were among them. Despite continued jamming and outright attacks, the long-range UAVs spotted 102 of these weapons. The SMM may have found many more had the UAVs operated unhindered.

We can draw two conclusions from these facts. First, Russia is engaged in a build-up of heavy weaponry close to the contact line, creating an environment of insecurity and raising the risk of increased violence. Second, Russia is trying to hide this fact from the international community.

The danger level along the line of contact is clearly rising. Instead of taking steps to de-escalate the situation, Russia-led forces have fortified their positions near the Donetsk Filtration Station, as reported by the SMM on June 15 and again on June 17. Such actions fly in the face of Russian claims that their forces are ready to disengage from the station.

These moves are callous when considering the plight of civilians living in the conflict area. At least thirteen civilians were injured or killed on both sides of the line of contact last week, with eight more this week. Homes and schools are regularly damaged or destroyed by shelling. We remind all forces of the need to reduce the risk of harm to civilians. We also

underscore the need for an end to restrictions on the provision of humanitarian aid to conflict-affected people, particularly east of the line of contact, to ensure life-saving assistance can reach those who need it most.

Mr. Chair, we are appalled that Russia has yet to allow Ukraine's ombudsperson access to Ukrainian filmmaker and activist Oleh Sentsov, who is languishing in a prison in Russia on fabricated charges of terrorism. Sentsov is in his 38th day of a hunger strike, advocating for the release of all Ukrainian political prisoners unjustly held by the Kremlin for opposing Russia's occupation of Crimea. We are also concerned about the condition of activist Volodymyr Balukh, currently on his 95th day of a hunger strike. Russian authorities should immediately allow Ukraine's ombudsperson access to these prisoners, and release without further delay all those held unjustly.

In conclusion, Mr. Chair, Russia's aggression against Ukraine undermines the core principles and commitments of the OSCE, as well as our shared security. The United States supports Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We do not, nor will we ever, recognize Russia's purported annexation of Crimea. Crimea-related sanctions on Russia will remain in place until Russia returns full control of the peninsula to Ukraine. The United States joins our European and other partners in restating that our sanctions against Russia for its aggression in eastern Ukraine will remain until Russia fully implements its commitments under the Minsk agreements.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.