



United States Mission to the OSCE

Right of Replies to Russia on its Ongoing Violations of International Law and Defiance of OSCE Principles in Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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Our distinguished colleague raised a couple of points from the previous item on our agenda, and I wanted to respond here.

First, with respect to the citation of President Putin's words in the TV news conference, where he said that Russia had been engaged in the "military sphere," I will go back and look at the record of that. I don't remember him putting that in the context of praising President Poroshenko for his vision of peace, and in the context of the JCCC, and in the context of that being only experts who were trying to do evaluations of ceasefire violations, as our distinguished Russian colleague said. I remember that being an answer to a question about Russian military engagement in the conflict in Donbas, to which he answered something like "we've never denied that Russia has been engaged in the military sphere in the Donbas," which was a confession of sorts of what we already knew, which was that Russia had already for some months been providing both personnel and equipment to fuel the conflict.

This also followed his previous confession of Russian special forces' engagement in the invasion and attempted annexation of Crimea, which Russia had also publically denied for some months before President Putin then confessed to it.

I understand that this puts Russian diplomats in an uncomfortable position, having espoused certain positions for months to then find their official line changed without, perhaps, their awareness. But that is what I recall and, as I said, I will go back and look at the record. But I think the citation of "military sphere" was actually an accurate, or a decent, translation of what President Putin said in terms of my understanding of the translation. Obviously, our distinguished Russian has advantages in Russian language skills over me.

With regard to the second point that our distinguished Russian colleague made, and one that he has made several times, about diplomatic engagement by the United States: it is certainly the case that the United States has been intensively engaged diplomatically with Russia, with Ukraine, with the other two Normandy countries, to do whatever we can to help support implementation of Minsk and a peaceful de-escalation of the conflict. However, the implication in the statements made by our distinguished Russian colleague is that if we are engaged

diplomatically, we must then be silent about ongoing aggression and actions happening on the ground. And I simply reject that. I think we have to be engaged diplomatically, we have to be looking for solutions, we have to be identifying ways to move forward for all sides, all of those who have signed the Minsk agreements, all of the States that are members of the Trilateral Contact Group, to move forward. But that doesn't mean that we are blind to what is happening on the ground. And the fact is that Russia's continued fuelling of the conflict in eastern Ukraine makes productive diplomatic engagement all the more difficult. So we express our concerns in this forum and in other fora about Russia's continued aggression against Ukraine because we want to see the diplomatic engagement bear fruit. And Russia has repeatedly stated, not only in this forum but also at the highest levels, that it would like to see Minsk implemented. And our ongoing concern remains the divergence between Russia's stated position with regard to a desire to see Minsk implemented, and the actions that it continues to take on the ground. And this divergence between words and actions is a real concern.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

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Even if the tenor of the back and forth today is not the tenor that we would like for our discussions, I think it's important to recognize that one of the things we often call for is dialogue and debate. And we are having dialogue and debate. And it's too bad we're not finding more common ground, but I think we should recognize that dialogue and debate is what we are engaged in here today.

I just wanted to respond to our distinguished Russian colleague and his several statements about my delegation engaging in what he terms "rhetoric," which isn't necessarily a bad thing - there is a time and place for rhetoric - but I assume from the context that he was suggesting that this is unhelpful.

I want to be clear about this specific kind of "rhetoric" that he referred to as "anti-Russian rhetoric". My delegation is not anti-Russian. As a country, our policy wants nothing more with respect to our relationship with Russia than to be able to sit down at the many common tables that we share or have shared with Russia, whether those are bilateral or multilateral, and to be able to work towards common goals and living up to our shared rules together. We are pro-Russia. We are 'pro' a Russia that is part of a rules-based order, not isolated within it. We are 'pro' a Russia that is able to deliver for its citizens, that is not failing to do so because of its actions overseas. So I just reject completely the notion that there is anything anti-Russian in anything we are saying.

Now, it's also the case that when things happen, you know, when Mr. Johnson steals a car, it is not 'anti-Mr. Johnson rhetoric' to say that Mr. Johnson has stolen a car. There are descriptions of fact that may be uncomfortable, they may be things that we all regret, but it can't simply be dismissed as 'anti-' if it's a description and a good faith effort to identify concerns about a series of events.

So I just want to reassure our distinguished Russian colleague that the intent of my delegation and my government is to try to find a resolution to the continuing conflict; more broadly to try to find a resolution to what is seen in many ways as Russia's increasing dissatisfaction with or rejection of the international system and its rules; and to try to find a way that we can move forward working on the numerous, non-optional challenges that we all face in the world today, whether these are challenges related to public health, or to global terrorism, or to climate change - to find a way to be able to move forward in good faith on tackling those shared challenges together in the years ahead.

Thank you very much.

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