



United States Mission to the OSCE

Right of Reply to the Russian Federation on the IL-76 Plane Crash

As delivered by Political Counselor Erin Webster-Main
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 1, 2024

I want to very briefly respond to the Russian Federation's claims regarding the January 24 crash of an IL-76 plane in the Belgorod region. We have seen the press reports and are working closely with our counterparts in the Ukrainian Government to discern the facts.

It is worth noting that Russia bears full responsibility for *every* death in this war. The Russian Federation invaded a peaceful neighbor, and it is responsible for continued daily attacks on Ukraine. We would not be discussing this plane crash if Russia had not invaded Ukraine, and contrary to the claims made just now by the Russian Federation, the responsibility to end this conflict lies with the Russian Federation.

The problem we all face is that the crash happened in Russia, making it difficult to independently verify what happened. As you know, Russia does not allow free press and independent reporting, and therefore its claims are difficult, if not impossible, to confirm. Russia has also provided no evidence to support its claims thus far.

However, we do know that every day, including today, Russia's officials are attempting to spread disinformation about their war on Ukraine. We should all keep that in mind when considering claims the Russian Federation makes.

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