



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 Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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Russia invaded Crimea 11 months ago and set in motion a crisis that continues with the current offensive by Russia-backed separatists. The separatists continue to ignore the Minsk agreements completely as they pursue an offensive against Ukrainian government troops beyond the ceasefire line, aided and abetted by Russia's irresponsible and dangerous decision to support and resupply them.

Rather than fulfill its Minsk commitments, Russia is working actively to undermine even further Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. As we face the rapid increase in violence in eastern Ukraine, we must not lose sight of the fact that Russia continues to occupy the Crimean peninsula in clear violation not only of OSCE commitments but also of international law. But rather than heeding the demands of the international community that it end its occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea, and end the human rights abuses that it continues to perpetrate there, Russia has instead proliferated its acts of violence and lawlessness.

Since December, Russia has transferred hundreds of pieces of military equipment to Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine, including tanks, armored vehicles, rocket systems, heavy artillery, and other military equipment. In mid-to-late January, Russia deployed into eastern Ukraine advanced surface-to-air missile and anti-aircraft systems, marking the highest level of Russian air defense presence in eastern Ukraine since September 2014.

Russia continues to move tanks, armored vehicles, heavy artillery, and other military vehicles to sites near the Ukrainian border. Significant numbers of tanks, armored vehicles, and heavy artillery are now located at sites which frequently serve as staging points before transporting Russian military equipment to the Russia-backed separatists in Ukraine.

As a result of Russia's actions, the separatists now have a fighting force that includes hundreds of tanks, armored vehicles, heavy artillery pieces, and other military vehicles, and they are using this assistance from Russia to attack not only the Ukrainian forces, but innocent civilians.

Russian military forces still operate in eastern Ukraine, where they play a coordinating role and provide command and control support to pro-Russian separatists.

During the last Permanent Council, the distinguished Russian representative said that Russia had no interest in the continuation of fighting in Ukraine or undermining the Minsk

agreements. At previous Permanent Councils, he has stated that there is no evidence that Russia is sending weapons, materiel, or troops across the border into Ukraine. If that is the case, there is no reason Russia should be afraid to agree to expand the Observer Mission to all checkpoints along the border and allow it to monitor the areas in between these checkpoints. There is no reason Russia should decline to instruct the separatists it backs to allow the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) full access to the Ukrainian side of the border.

We again renew our call to Russia to end its support for the separatists immediately, allow effective OSCE monitoring of the Ukraine-Russia border, return control of Ukraine's side of that border to Ukraine's government, withdraw all weapons, fighters and financial backing from the separatists, release all hostages, and bring the occupation of Crimea to an end. Otherwise, U.S. and international pressure on Russia and the separatists will only increase.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.