



United States Mission to the OSCE

Replies to the Russian Federation on Ongoing Violations of OSCE Principles and Commitments by the Russian Federation and the Situation in Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 14, 2015

I just wanted to respond – especially since I was mentioned – to our distinguished Russian colleague’s comments about statistical analysis, and just to remind everyone of the reason why there is so much emphasis placed on access for our monitors, who are there on behalf of all 57 around this table.

The reason why it’s difficult – and here I guess I agree with our distinguished Russian colleague that one has to ask second order questions when looking at statistics – the reason why it’s difficult to do a statistical analysis is because on one side of the line of contact the SMM has almost complete access, and on the other side of the line of contact there are huge areas that are a black box.

And because the SMM quite diligently only reports what it itself has collected evidence of, it is always only giving us a partial picture; which is not a criticism of the SMM, it’s just the reality of their work on the ground. And that partial picture is much more incomplete on the separatist-controlled territory, on the separatist side of the line. Which is why we emphasize so often that there needs to be full, unfettered access.

It’s even incomplete in the areas where the separatists withhold access except when there’s an escort. Because holding up a patrol at a checkpoint for 15 minutes gives enough time to move heavy weapons off a road and into a barn. And escorting a patrol and determining their route gives the ability to make it impossible for the SMM to observe things that it would observe if it were operating freely.

So this is why we have to take with a grain of salt – particularly the statistics that were offered by Foreign Minister Lavrov a few weeks ago – any statistics, and ask the second order question: What kind of access does the SMM have in that area? And, are we comparing apples to oranges, or apples to apples? And in the case of the two sides of the line of contact, it is totally clear that the SMM has manifestly more access in the Ukrainian government-controlled territory than it does in the territory controlled by the separatists.

+++

I don't know what it was in my response that the distinguished Russian colleague found surprising, so let me just try to clarify again.

If you look at the map the SMM provides that shows the restrictions where it has blanket restrictions, where it can't access areas - that gives a picture of two very different experiences for the SMM on either side of the line - which reasonable people could expect would result in different data sets, because the SMM can't see all of the violations that are happening on the territory controlled by the Russians and the separatists.

So, what is striking is in fact that with the limited capacity the SMM has on the Russian and separatist controlled territory, that it sees so many violations. And we can only guess that in the parts where the Russians and the separatists prevent the SMM from going, they are hiding something, which is probably more egregious violations - it's left for us to guess.

If the Russians cared about implementing the Minsk agreements they would order their forces to withdraw their weapons, and they would order their proxies to make full and unfettered access available to the SMM so that there could be a verification that those violations aren't happening in those broad swathes of territory that are difficult for the SMM to access.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.