



## **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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At last week's Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC), Russia presented its narrative about the crisis in and around Ukraine. This narrative was not new, nor was it accurate.

The Russian Federation reiterated its claim that the Russian military is not present in Ukraine. We know from the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine's regular reports that this is not accurate. For example, on June 29, the SMM reported on the movement towards Donetsk City of a convoy of 25 large trucks escorted by the military forces of the so-called "Donetsk People's Republic." The SMM reported that these trucks had covered license plates, with the exception of two trucks that displayed Russian plates. The SMM described the trucks as carrying heavy loads, which we can only assume was military equipment resupplying the combined Russian-separatist forces operating in eastern Ukraine.

Evidence of the Russian role in Ukraine has also proliferated on social media. Video footage taken by a UAV, and available on the Internet, shows combined Russian-separatist personnel fortifying a camp near Sontseve in Donetsk.

As the United States pointed out during the ASRC, the sheer volume of artillery shells, rockets, and small arms fired each day at Ukrainian forces is further clear evidence of Russia's direct involvement in eastern Ukraine.

Lieutenant General Hodges, Commander of U.S. Army Europe, explained that the military operations carried out against the government of Ukraine over the past 15 months require the industrial base, logistical support, operational expertise, and command and control capabilities that only a militarily advanced country such as Russia can provide.

The fact is that Russia is fueling this conflict through its direct military involvement, including hardware and personnel, in eastern Ukraine. That is why we use the term 'combined Russian-separatist forces' when describing the situation on the ground in eastern Ukraine.

Russia made commitments in the Minsk agreements, including pledging its constructive participation in the Trilateral Contact Group with Ukraine and the OSCE. During the ASRC, the Russian Federation argued the only way to resolve the crisis is for the leaders of Ukraine to sit down and talk with the leaders of the so-called "people's republics" of Donetsk and

Luhansk. In fact, the Russian Federation has the power and the influence to end the ceasefire violations. Moreover, Russia's argument belies the fact that these individuals have no legitimacy to speak on behalf of the people of Donbas, the majority of whom fled the conflict started by Russia and the separatists it backs. Those who remain suffer under separatist control in a region where law and order has broken down. The so-called "separatist" so-called "leaders" were not chosen by the people of Donbas in a legitimate election. In fact, Russia and the separatists appear to be trying to avoid a legitimate election held according to OSCE standards, and observed by ODIHR, as agreed in Minsk.

The irony here is that the two sides to this conflict – Russia and Ukraine – are already sitting down and talking to each other. Under the auspices of the Normandy Format, Russia and Ukraine have expressed political support at the highest level for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. As two of the three members of the Trilateral Contact Group, Russia and Ukraine have made clear commitments to turn that political support for peace into a practical reality on the ground. However, while Ukraine continues to follow through on these commitments, Russia uses claims about the status of the separatists to distract from the ongoing ceasefire violations and other failures to implement Minsk.

The critical work of the Trilateral Contact Group has been guided during the past year by the steady hand of Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini. Let me again express the thanks of the United States for Ambassador Tagliavini's superb work. The fact that she was able to bring the Trilateral Contact Group this far is testament to her skill as a diplomat. We wish Ambassador Martin Sajdik success as he takes this process forward, and hope he can soon report to the Permanent Council on concrete progress thanks to Russia engaging in good faith in the Trilateral Contact Group, and Russia and the separatists engaging in good faith in the working groups.

Mr. Chair, colleagues, Russia and the separatists must implement their Minsk agreements and adhere to a genuine ceasefire. They must withdraw all heavy weaponry from the line of contact as stipulated in the February Minsk implementation plan. Russia must remove all of its military forces and equipment from Ukraine and end its support for the separatists. Russia and the separatists must release all Ukrainian hostages, including Nadiya Savchenko, Oleg Sentsov, and Oleksander Kolchenko. Russia must return control of Crimea to Ukraine, of which the peninsula remains an integral part.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.