



## **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  
May 28, 2015

We are gravely concerned by the significant increase in fighting in eastern Ukraine. Last week's reports from the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) had described lower levels of fighting, but in the last few days the SMM has reported intensive shelling in and around Donetsk airport, Avdiivka, and Shyrokyne. The shelling has come from mortars, heavy artillery, and tanks, which were supposed to have been withdrawn according to the Minsk agreements.

Russian-separatist forces are responsible for the overwhelming majority of the ceasefire violations as they attack Ukrainian positions on the Ukrainian side of the line of contact, in clear violation of the Minsk agreements. Each Russian-separatist attack, each new provocation of a defensive response, is a violation that makes a real ceasefire more difficult to attain.

We again call for a full cessation of the fighting and for full implementation of the Minsk agreements, including unrestricted and safe access for SMM monitors so that they can monitor and verify the ceasefire and heavy weapons withdrawal.

According to SMM reports, more than 200 explosions, consistent with rounds from heavy weapons, were recorded in and around Donetsk airport on May 24. That same day in Shyrokyne, the SMM observed intensive shelling as well as anti-aircraft and heavy machine gun fire. We condemn these ceasefire violations that undermine the peace initiatives laid out in Minsk.

We, like others, were alarmed by the report of bullets from small-arms fire coming dangerously close to SMM monitors. This is unacceptable. We once again call on all actors to cease and desist from actions that threaten the safety of SMM monitors or restrain their ability to carry out their mission.

The SMM observed the presence and movement of heavy weapons, contrary to the Minsk agreements. On different days during the past week the SMM made observations such as 10 tanks in an area controlled by the so-called "Luhansk People's Republic (LPR)" and 11 tanks in an area controlled by the so-called "Donetsk People's Republic (DPR)." These weapons

were observed in the areas the SMM could access or observe. However, combined Russian-separatist forces consistently deny the SMM access to large portions of territory, and the SMM has been unable to report on what weapons are kept in these areas and what kind of military activities are being carried out there. We know from other sources that what is occurring in these black holes are large-scale exercises by combined Russian-separatist forces, such as the live fire exercise carried out last week in separatist-controlled territory in Luhansk. Images of the exercise circulated via social media show tanks, armored personnel carriers, trucks, and military personnel on maneuvers.

Russian support for the separatists and active participation continues to fuel the violence in eastern Ukraine. In the last week, combined Russian-separatist forces attacked a coke and chemical plant in Avdiivka, 13 kilometers from Donetsk. The Avdiivka coke and chemical plant employs over 30,000 people, and serves as a temporary home for many who are unable to return safely to their houses in nearby areas.

Combined Russian-separatist forces began their attack with a bombardment on May 21 that damaged the plant's facilities and killed one worker. They continued their attack through May 23.

The SMM, which was in the area at that time, reported artillery impacts on the plant that injured one person, started a fire, and created an ammonium leak.

Over the course of several days, Russian-separatist forces hit the plant with 45 mortar and artillery rounds. More than 200 shells are estimated to have hit the plant since it first came under attack in July 2014. The plant's ability to continue operating amidst the incessant shelling is becoming more tenuous. The SMM's weekly report, issued on May 27, called the latest attack on the plant "a critical and worrying turning point." Considering the central role the plant plays in the region's economy, the SMM concluded that the consequences of the most recent attack "may reverberate long after the fighting ends."

These attacks by combined Russian-separatist forces threaten both the security of the area and the economy. Russia and the separatists insist they are concerned about the residents of eastern Ukraine. Yet, by destroying the plant, all they will have accomplished is to damage the region's economy, destroy more lives, and further destabilize Ukraine.

Once again, we have evidence that Russia's aggression has tremendous human costs.

Residents of areas under control of Russia's proxies do not have access to medical care, clean water, and food, and children are denied the opportunity to attend school. The SMM weekly report notes that residents of the so-called "LPR" controlled Krasnodon complained of a lack of basic services and the inability of the so-called "LPR" to uphold the rule of law in areas under its control.

According to the UN, more than 5 million people in Ukraine are in need of aid, including more than 1.2 million internally displaced persons. As of May 19, the UN Humanitarian Response Plan for Ukraine has received approximately \$81 million in funding and commitments -- just 26 percent of the UN's \$316 million appeal. We urge donor nations to consider making further contributions.

The United States recently announced an additional \$18 million in aid to those affected by the conflict in eastern Ukraine and attempted annexation of Crimea. With this funding, total U.S. humanitarian assistance since the start of the crisis will reach more than \$61 million. This funding will support efforts to meet the most critical protection and assistance needs of persons affected by the conflict.

Mr. Chair, following the attack on the coke and chemical plant in Avdiivka, one of its employees stated to a reporter, “We don’t need a ceasefire, we need peace.” A peaceful resolution of the violence in eastern Ukraine depends on the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. Russia must fulfill its commitment to cease arming, training and equipping separatists inside Ukraine, withdraw all Russian forces from Ukrainian territory, respect Ukraine’s sovereignty, and end its occupation of Crimea.

Russia must go beyond rhetoric and put its words into action. If Russia says it is committed to peace and to implementing the Minsk agreements, then it must increase its support for the OSCE to facilitate local ceasefires in key hotspots, push the separatists it backs to accept a disengagement plan in Shyrokyne, work on a results-oriented basis within the Trilateral Contact Group, and allow international organizations to inspect any convoys or other deliveries crossing Ukraine’s border and monitor the full length of that border.

Mr. Chair, colleagues, the path towards peace is clear. The question remains whether Russia will follow through on its commitments.

Should it fail to do so, Russia faces additional costs.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.