

**March 7, 2017**

**Testimony before the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs  
Subcommittee, Senate Committee on Appropriations**

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**Russian Policies & Intentions towards specific European countries: Ukraine**

To: Members of the Subcommittee

Let me thank you for giving me this opportunity to share with you our assessments and related first-hand information on Russian policies towards **a big European country – towards Ukraine.**

The current **policies of Russia** towards Ukraine can be expressed in one word – **the war.**

It has been already 3 years since **Russia launched a military aggression** against Ukraine on 20 February 2014. The **appalling number of victims** highlights the immorality of Kremlin's war against the Ukrainian people: over 9,800 Ukrainian citizens have been killed, about 23 000 wounded and almost 1.8 million have become internally displaced persons. 7.2 % of Ukrainian territory has been seized by Russia and millions of Ukrainian citizens live there under occupation and endless terror.

Two years after the Package of Measures for the **Implementation of the Minsk Agreements** was signed, **none of its provisions has been fulfilled by the Kremlin** and its proxies, including the very first step - comprehensible and sustainable ceasefire.

- In 2016 there were about 16 thousand ceasefire violations, including about 5 thousand ceasefire violations with prohibited artillery and large-caliber mortars.
- In 2017 the OSCE SMM has recorded a notable increase in the use of weapons proscribed by the Minsk agreements, including multiple launch rocket systems and artillery.

The recent spike in violence in and around Avdiivka is an eloquent example of **controlled escalation strategy** and a clear indication of Russia's blatant disregard of its commitments under the Minsk Agreements.

I would like to thank our partner the United States for **training** provided to the Ukrainian military, which have already shown its effectiveness. The battalion of the 72-nd brigade trained in Yavoriv by the U.S. instructors was one of the most effective in repeling the Russian-control attacks on Avdiivka.

The **units prepared by the U.S. instructors** appear to be very effective on the frontline and they demonstrate the **lowest level of losses in manpower**, better **joint maneuvers** and **tactics implementation.**

That is why we believe this kind of **training** and **support in enhancing Ukraine's defense** is very important and should be continued.

Moscow's attempts to **make security on the ground conditional on implementation of its political demands** breach the Minsk Agreements and further exacerbate the dire situation of civilians in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

The sustained attacks of the Russian hybrid forces would not be possible without **continued logistic support**.

Russia keeps sending weapons, ammunition and manpower to Ukraine through the 409.7-km of uncontrolled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian state border.

Heavy flamethrower TOS-1 "Buratino", radar jamming system "Zhytel", drone Orlan-10 – all manufactured in Russia and used exclusively by the Russian Army – have been registered by the OSCE SMM in Donbas over the past year and in 2017.

Russia continues to cover up the reinforcement of its proxies as **"humanitarian aid"**.

On February 28 the Kremlin dispatched its 61th so-called **"humanitarian convoy"** without consent and inspection by the Ukrainian authorities and ignoring the coordinating role of the ICRC as well as principles of international humanitarian law. **Political settlement** on the East of Ukraine is possible only **if adequate security preconditions are provided by Russia**.

No political settlement on the East of Ukraine is possible while there is constant shelling, wide presence of Russian troops and mercenaries, weapon supply from Russia and no control by Ukraine over its border.

Russia is imposing by brutal force **a model of hybrid elections** – without termination of aggression, without legal institutions and law enforcement agencies, without environment for return and expressing their position through vote of over two million displaced persons, without disarmament of illegal armed formations exercising terrorism.

**The Kremlin's Decree of February 18, 2017 on recognition of so-called documents** issued on the territories of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, confiscation of Ukrainian assets (public and private enterprises) and introduction of the "ruble zone" are yet **another evidence of Russian occupation** of the part of Donbas as well as a clear **violation of international law and the Minsk Agreements**.

**Russia is also trying to water down the trilateral format of the Minsk talks** by granting the illegal «representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk» full member status in the process of consultations.

**Moscow** is willing to disclaim all liability for the developments in Donbas by **insisting on its mediator status**. Russia hopes that such an approach will help it to mitigate or even to get rid of sanctions.

The developments in the **humanitarian sphere** require every strong consolidated effort **to unblock this important track of the Minsk Agreements**. The civilian population continues to suffer from restrictions, deprivation and hardships inflicted upon them by the Russian hybrid forces.

Despite Kremlins' commitments to put additional pressure on the illegal armed formations **to grant the international humanitarian organizations**, including the ICRC, access into the region, the situation on the ground has not seen even the slightest change.

During the previous month, the **OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine** faced **increased restrictions** on freedom of movement for the monitors and other impediments to its activities **in non-government-controlled areas**.

Such actions carried out by the Russian and Russia-backed militants in areas under their control **are meant to disrupt the OSCE SMM mandated activities**, particularly those aimed at monitoring and verifying withdrawal of heavy weapons, as envisaged by the Minsk Agreements.

According to the latest OSCE SMM daily reports covering the period of 1-28 February 2017, the **OSCE monitors registered over 130 incidents** of impeding the SMM's activities by the illegal armed formations.

The international solidarity and **consistency of international policy of non-recognition of the annexation of Crimea is very important**.

The **illegal annexation of Crimea** and the city Sevastopol has imposed very serious challenges to the international security and to human rights of people remaining in Crimea. The occupied Crimea has become a "grey zone" where the militarization, repression and political persecution are in growing progress.

The atmosphere of fear, intimidation, physical and psychological pressure forced about **35-40 thousand Ukrainian citizens (including over 20 thousand Crimean Tatars) to leave occupied Crimea** and settle in other areas of Ukraine. Today the Crimean Tatars, having survived a genocide of the Soviet deportation in 1944, once again face severe repressions.

We witness murders, tortures, harassment, illegal detentions, enforced disappearances, intimidation, raids and searches, attacks on property and arrests under fabricated charges, and the persecution of journalists, human rights defenders and activists.

The Russian authorities use such methods to eliminate any public opposition to the occupation of Crimea and to the current government. For the same reasons local

independent media and journalists have nearly all been co-opted, forced to flee, or run out of business.

Russia has designated **the militarization of Crimea as a top priority**. The aim is to make the peninsula a powerful military base to ensure full control over adjoining regions thus to counterbalance NATO forces in the Black Sea region.

Comparing to the pre-occupation period, **Russia has more than doubled personal strength of its military in Crimea** (from 12.500 before the occupation to 29.300 as of October 2016). In the near future (2020-2025) it should further increase up to 43.000.

Russia also has **substantially reinforced and modernized its Crimean military land, air and naval components**. Since January 2014 it has increased:

- a number of tanks from 0 to 40
- armed combat vehicles from 92 to 583
- artillery systems of the caliber more than 100 mm from 24 to 162
- combat aircraft from 22 to 101
- combat helicopters from 37 to 56
- anti aircraft systems from 0 to 16
- combat ships from 26 to 30
- submarines from 2 to 5

Particularly dangerous are the Russian actions to prepare Crimean military infrastructure **for deployment of nuclear weapons**, including refurbishing of the infrastructure of Soviet-era nuclear warheads storage facilities. Potential carriers of nuclear weapon, such as warships, short-range missile systems and combat aircraft, have been already deployed in the Crimean Peninsula.

In fact, Russia turns Crimea into a “grey zone”, which is *de-facto* not covered by the existing multilateral arms control agreements.

Crimea has been already **used by Russia for its outreached activities (in Syria)**. Such role for military facilities in Crimea might be developed in the future.

The militarization of Crimea complicates the process of its de-occupation and poses serious **threats both to the national security of Ukraine and regional security**.

The **only effective response to aggressive actions of Russia should be international solidarity with Ukraine** and strengthening political, diplomatic and economic pressure on the aggressor. Russia must fully implement the Minsk Agreements and restore the territorial integrity of Ukraine, including de-occupation of Crimea. Unless so done, **the imposed sanctions must be not only preserved but enhanced**.

I am also confident that Ukraine can **effectively retaliate the Russian aggression** only when its defense is strong and Kremlin understands that further hostilities will be even more costly. Appeasement and concessions made to the aggressor would only encourage it for further aggression.

In this regard, we highly value the **bicameral and bipartisan unity and support of the US Congress** on the issue of utilizing sanction policy against Russia.

**We are grateful for your advocacy of an increased U.S. security assistance to Ukraine, including through provision of defensive weapons.**

**I would like to ask you to support the appropriation of funds authorized for security assistance to Ukraine in the NDAA, 2017.**

The NDAA, 2017 reaffirms once again the high level of continued bicameral and bipartisan support in the U.S. Congress for Ukraine fighting the ongoing Russian aggression.

**It is also important that the U.S. security assistance to Ukraine does not decrease in the forthcoming 2018 budget.**

We are grateful that the United States has already provided \$3 billion in loan guarantees to Ukraine.

We also very much appreciate the fact that the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2017 cleared by this subcommittee has authorized providing of U.S. loan guarantees to Ukraine in FY 2017 budget.

**I would like to ask you to support the appropriation of the necessary funds for the above purposes in the FY 2017, and, possibly, FY 2018 budgets.**

I would like to draw special attention to the situation with **humanitarian needs of Ukrainian people affected by the Russian aggression**. The horrors of war and its terrible consequences are daily reality for millions of people, with no hope for a quick end to their suffering. Totally Ukraine has **3.8 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, including 1.7 million – in need of an immediate assistance**.

According to UN estimates, there is a need of **at least \$214 million** in additional humanitarian aid **for 2017** with a critical requirement of \$127 million. Ukraine's huge budget resources alongside assistance from our Western partners are being spend on humanitarian aid, but all these joint efforts are not able to meet existing challenges. The United States is a lead donor of humanitarian assistance to conflict-affected Ukrainians with more than \$49 million provided last year. At the same time, given the scope of urgently needed help we would appreciate a decision of the US government to extend humanitarian aid programs in Ukraine.

Given the large scope of challenges faced by Ukraine because of Russian aggression, **we count on increased U.S. financial assistance for Ukraine** that will help us implement the comprehensive reform agenda and ensure Ukraine's economic sustainability.

Let me convey our strong belief that the Congress of the United States will remain united in supporting Ukraine defending its independence and choice for free and democratic future.

I thank you.