



United States Mission to the OSCE
U.S. Statement for the
Forum for Security Cooperation:
General Statements –
Russia’s War of Aggression Against Ukraine

As delivered by Chief Arms Control Delegate Daniel Wartko
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Thank you, Madam Chair,

We have seen and heard a great deal of misinformation and disinformation in this Forum about Russia’s war against Ukraine. We have a saying in the United States that “sunshine is the best disinfectant,” and we find that plain facts and openness work wonders against disinformation.

At the close of the last trimester, and yet again more recently, our Russian colleague alleged that the, quote, “relentless bolstering of the NATO military contingent on the ‘eastern flank’ is today capping the degradation of confidence-building and arms control mechanisms.” End quote. That is to say, it was NATO’s “military buildup,” and not Russia’s actual invasion, that was responsible for undermining arms control and CSBMs.

Well, let’s look at the facts:

Since 2017, three years after Russia invaded Ukraine, NATO Allies have deployed four multinational battalion-size battlegroups of roughly one thousand troops to each of the Baltic states and Poland. Four battlegroups. One Thousand troops each.

After Russia’s further invasion of Ukraine in 2022, four additional battlegroups of the same size and composition were deployed to other Allies along NATO’s eastern flank. So, a total of eight battlegroups of ~1000 troops each. Juxtapose that against Russia’s deployment of nearly 200,000 troops to renew its invasion of Ukraine on February 24 of last year, not to mention the more than 300,000 troops that were called up more recently.

So, how does Russia know what has been operationally deployed on the territory of these sovereign States, NATO members, with the full consent of these States and in conformity with their obligations and commitments? It's because those countries informed Russia and every other participating State in this Forum.

How do we know the numbers of Russia's troops involved in the unprovoked and illegal invasion of Ukraine? Was it transparent? Did Russia or Belarus notify this Forum of the concentration of their forces above Vienna Document thresholds, or invite observers? Did Russia or Belarus respond in any meaningful way to legitimate inquiries under Vienna Document paragraph 16 about the unusual buildup of those forces?

So, consider those facts again:

- On one hand: hundreds of thousands of Russia's troops actively waging an illegal war and occupying thousands of square kilometers of Ukraine's sovereign territory.
- And on the other hand: NATO forces a fraction of that size deployed in a defensive, proportionate, and transparent manner on Allies' territory with the full consent of the host states.

It is obvious to everyone in this room that it is Russia that is the clear threat to European security. The degradation of confidence-building and arms control mechanisms in Europe today is Russia's fault alone. Unprovoked, Russia launched the largest land war in Europe since World War II. And Russia has the gall, as it levels cities and beats Ukraine bloody, to glare at us all and say, "Look what you made me do!"

Our Russian colleague also recently had a lot to say about his country's pending denunciation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), which is just the latest in a series of Russia's actions to undermine Europe's security architecture. TASS quoted the Russian delegate claiming that the United States and other NATO Allies had used "far-fetched pretexts" to justify non-ratification of the CFE Adaptation Agreement. Again, the facts: The reality is that it is Russia's failure to fulfil its commitments that prevented ratification and entry into force of the Adaptation Agreement.

Since the 1999 OSCE Summit in Istanbul, the United States and our Allies have been crystal clear that ratification of the Adaptation Agreement could only be envisaged in the context of compliance by all States Parties with the existing Treaty's agreed limits on armaments and equipment and consistent with the commitments contained in the Final Act of the 1999 CFE Conference of States Parties and related Istanbul Summit commitments. And this included those requiring the withdrawal of Russian military forces from Georgia and Moldova by 2002. Russia not only failed to fulfil its commitments by the timelines set out in Istanbul, but Russia continues to this day to station forces in both Georgia and Moldova without host nation consent.

So, what are the facts? Does Russia have host nation consent for the forces present today within the internationally recognized borders of Georgia? Does Russia have host-nation consent for the forces present today within the internationally recognized borders of Moldova? And of course, since the signing of the CFE Adaptation Agreement, Russia now has forces present within the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine without consent.

Russia did not meet its commitments, so we did not ratify the Adaptation Agreement. To be clear, the only thing "far-fetched" here is Russia's rationalizations as to why it feels it has the right to follow some rules and not others or invade its neighbors while it complains about imagined threats to its territorial integrity. Just the other week, our Russian colleague told us that Russia, quote, "will follow its own rules." Well, perhaps he can explain to this Forum (when he returns) what those rules are.

It appears that Russia's sole justification for its actions is "might makes right," and everything else is just distraction or disinformation.

Consider:

- Russia launches the largest, most destructive war in Europe since World War II and claims that it was because it had been threatened.
- Russia undermines the arms control and confidence-building framework and accuses others of sabotaging it.

- The Russian delegates say they want dialogue immediately before they flee from the room.
- And Russia wages war using a ruthless group, founded by a man with SS tattoos on his neck, named in honor of Hitler's favorite composer, and then claims that it is the one fighting against Nazis.

Now, you may lose touch with reality, but reality has a way of finding its way back to you:

Russia's so-called special military operation is on day 454 of a two-week operation. An offensive to take Bakhmut, which started last year, has left tens of thousands of Russia's soldiers and mercenaries dead, their bodies unceremoniously abandoned or shipped back to Russia under cover of darkness for quiet burial, so that Russia's people will be shielded from the knowledge of how badly the war is going for Russia. How long before the soldiers' mothers again bring the scale of these losses to light?

Ukraine is valiantly defending itself and reclaiming its territory. So-called unstoppable missiles are being shot out of the sky by Ukraine's missile defense systems. A multitude of Russia's war crimes are being investigated.

But in this Forum, our Russian colleagues continue to tell us that everything is fine and going according to plan. All objectives are being met. Maybe our Russian colleagues could explain what that plan is?

Madam Chair,

I don't want to respond too much in depth to the commentary that we heard today from the Russian delegate, but I do want to just note that today, we heard the Russian delegate crowing about the destruction of Bakhmut. A city of 71,000 that dated back to 1571. The Soviets changed the name to "Artemivsk" in honor of a Bolshevik, and the Ukrainians changed it back. So, for now, Russia's forces are in temporary possession of a bloodstained rubble named after a Bolshevik. What a source of national pride.

Thank you, Madam Chair.