

OSCE Military Monitoring Mission Sent to Crimea

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, or OSCE, said Wednesday that 18 of its member states were sending a total of 35 unarmed military personnel to Ukraine's Crimea region on the request of the interim government in Kiev with the aim of monitoring the present situation.

Unidentified military forces started spreading rapidly throughout the region over the weekend, surrounding Ukrainian army bases and taking control of various military installations and transport facilities.

Russia's Federation Council on Saturday voted to give President Vladimir Putin permission to send troops to Ukraine, However Putin and a number of his top acolytes have said that the occupying forces in Crimea, which has a large ethnic-Russian populace and contains Russia's Black Sea Fleet, are not Russian, but local self-defense units.

Despite some high profile defections to the Russian side, Ukraine's military has stepped up its resistance to the occupation without firing a shot, refusing to leave various bases in the face of intimidation by the pro-Russian forces and reaching out to the West for support.

Ihor Prokopchuk — Ukraine's ambassador to the Vienna-based OSCE, a forum for security issues that was set up during the Cold War — said Monday at a meeting of the organization's permanent council that Kiev will use "all possible means" to defend itself from a Russian military threat, Reuters reported Tuesday.

Britain, the United States and Germany are among the nations that have supplied personnel for the military observation mission that has been set up with the intention of diffusing tensions.

An earlier version of this report said that an OSCE military monitoring mission had been barred from entering Crimea. However, it was in fact a different OSCE mission that was blocked on Wednesday. The military mission was blocked Thursday.

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