

OSCE Says Recruiting More Ukraine Monitors Despite Detentions

April 29, 2014

The  **Moscow Times**

VIENNA — The OSCE said Tuesday it was pressing ahead with plans to recruit hundreds more monitors for a civilian mission in Ukraine, despite the detention of seven military observers from a separate team captured by pro-Moscow rebels.

The 57 member states of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, including Russia, agreed last month to send civilian monitors to Ukraine in a bid to help defuse the crisis there. Initially numbering 100 monitors and now totaling 154, the team could expand to 500.

A vacancy notice for an extra 400 monitors was issued this month and "the process of secondment/recruitment is ongoing," a spokeswoman for the European security body said in an e-mail.

"The buildup is going on," said Roland Bless, a spokesman for Switzerland, which holds the rotating chairmanship of the European security body. "Developments on the ground make it clear you need more monitoring capacity."

The mission is separate from another OSCE-linked mission of unarmed military monitors invited by Kiev, eight of whom were seized by pro-Moscow separatist rebels on Friday. One Swedish officer has been released but four Germans, a Czech, a Dane and a Pole are still being held.

The military monitors, unlike the civilians, were sent to Ukraine under OSCE rules that did not require Moscow's consent.

Russia's OSCE envoy said Monday it had been "extremely irresponsible" to send them to the tense area, but that it would be good if they were released.

The self-declared mayor of a separatist-held town in eastern Ukraine where the men are being held said on Tuesday he would discuss their release with the West only if the European Union dropped sanctions against rebel leaders.

The rebels have described the military officers as prisoners of war and NATO spies.

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