The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Invites OSCE Observers to Border Crossings With Ukraine

July 15, 2014



A pro-Russian separatist stands guard nearby a rally in support of Novorossiya (New Russia) on Lenin Square in the center of the eastern Ukrainian city of Donetsk.

Russia has invited monitors from the European security and rights body OSCE to two of its border crossings with Ukraine as a sign of goodwill, the Foreign Ministry has said.

Ukraine has demanded that independent monitoring be established to ensure Russia is controlling its border. Kiev says Moscow is fanning violence in eastern Ukraine by allowing fighters and weaponry to cross into its territory.

The Russian statement released Tuesday said Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov had sent a letter to Didier Burkhalter, the acting head of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, or OSCE, inviting observers to the border points at Gukovo and Donetsk, which has the same name as the Ukrainian city seized by pro-Russian separatists.

The Russian Donetsk border crossing was the site of shelling at the weekend that killed a man and wounded a woman. On Tuesday, the country's Defense Ministry asked military attaches

from 18 countries including the U.S. to visit the town in the Rostov region where Moscow says the shell hit.

"The Defence Ministry of the Russian Federation has decided to familiarize foreign military specialists with the real situation in Donetsk in the Rostov region ... which [on Sunday] suffered destruction from artillery fire and shelling from Ukrainian territory," a ministry spokesman said.

Itar-Tass news agency quoted a defense official as saying military attaches from the other permanent members of the UN Security Council — France, Britain and China — were also invited.

The OSCE, which is working with Kiev and Moscow to end the violence, said in June it had scaled back monitoring operations in eastern Ukraine and frozen further deployments after eight of its observers were held hostage for a month by pro-Russian separatists.

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