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Russia Claims Death of U.S. Ceasefire Monitor in Ukraine Is 'Provocation'

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Valentin Sprinchak / TASS

Russia's Foreign Ministry has claimed the death of a ceasefire monitor in eastern Ukraine was a "provocation" designed to jeopardize the peace process.

A U.S. paramedic died when an explosion hit a vehicle for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in the separatist-controlled Luhansk region on Sunday. Two more people were injured in the blast, the OSCE confirmed.

In a press release on Sunday evening, the Foreign Ministry described the attack as a "cynical act" aimed at undermining the ongoing ceasefire.

"It is obvious that escalating tensions are beneficial for those who are not interested in implementing the Minsk agreements," the ministry said.

The Ministry has offered no supporting evidence for the claim, however.

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The U.S. government has called on Russia to pressure local authorities to investigate the death.

"This death underscores the increasingly dangerous conditions under which these courageous monitors work, including access restrictions, threats, and harassment," the U.S. State Department said on Sunday. "The United States urges Russia to use its influence with the separatists to allow the OSCE to conduct a full, transparent, and timely investigation.

"This incident makes clear the need for all sides — and particularly the Russian-led separatist forces — to implement their commitments under the Minsk Agreements immediately," the statement said.

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