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Oleshky Ceasefire and Aid Operation End Without Any Violations, Lantratova Says

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Russian Human Rights Commissioner Yana Lantratova holds briefing on the Oleshky humanitarian operation. **REUTERS / Ramil Sitdikov**

A ceasefire in and around the Russian-occupied town of Oleshky in southern Ukraine concluded this weekend without any violations being reported, Russia's human rights chief said Monday, adding that discussions are under way to provide for regular humanitarian deliveries to civilians remaining in the area.

At the same time, Ukraine's military accused Russian forces the six-day humanitarian ceasefire to strengthen their positions, while the Kremlin said it assumed Ukrainian troops had also used the pause to regroup.

The temporary pause in fighting, which began last Tuesday and ended Sunday, was organized to allow initial demining operations followed by the delivery of humanitarian relief to Oleshky's residents, who faced acute shortages of food and medicine. Both Russia and Ukraine praised U.S. first lady Melania Trump for mediating the agreement.

“I want to emphasize that there were no incidents or violations of the ceasefire. Everything went according to plan,” Yana Lantratova, the Russian human rights commissioner, told reporters at a news conference in Moscow.

Her remarks contradict a statement issued on Saturday by Russia’s Foreign Ministry, which claimed that a Ukrainian drone strike on a vehicle in Oleshky had injured two civilians.

The Kremlin on Monday called the humanitarian operation in Oleshky a success, praising the “level of coordination achieved among participants from all sides,” though it noted there were no immediate plans for similar missions elsewhere.

Neither Lantratova nor the Kremlin have addressed the Foreign Ministry’s claim of a ceasefire violation. Ukraine has also not commented on the matter.

Ukraine's General Staff said it had recorded rotations of Russian units, fortification of positions, expansion of anti-drone measures along roads and increased logistics activity including deliveries of ammunition.

In response, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said he had no specific information about Russian military operations, but that he assumed Ukrainian forces had also used the ceasefire to regroup.

"This is standard practice in such situations. But I'm not familiar with the specifics," he said.

Russia seized Oleshky shortly after President Vladimir Putin ordered the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Related article: Oleshky Evacuees Arrive in Ukraine

Lantratova said it was still unclear how many people ultimately left Oleshky during the six-day pause in fighting. While Russian authorities had prepared enough buses to evacuate up to 750 civilians, she acknowledged that many returned largely empty.

“A great deal of buses drove back empty,” she said. “Naturally, far fewer than 750 people left. To be completely honest with you, we simply had neither the time nor the opportunity to count people.”

Dismissing political scrutiny of the effort, Lantratova added, “I know there are attempts to politicize this. Unfortunately, all such attempts are petty and wrong, because our mission is not political, but humanitarian.”

Lantratova said she and her Ukrainian counterpart, Dmytro Lubinets, had agreed to seek regular, “at least monthly,” humanitarian missions to Oleshky. She asked Melania Trump to help mediate those future efforts.

“Moving forward, we will assess what other needs exist,” Lantratova said. “We are aware of the settlements near Oleshky, and we have already dispatched humanitarian aid to those areas.”

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky over the weekend called the Oleshky mission a success, expressing gratitude to those involved in negotiating the pause, including Melania Trump.

“When there is the attention of the world, there is the salvation of people,” Zelensky wrote in a post on Telegram.

Reuters contributed reporting.

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