

## Weekly update from the OSCE Observer Mission at Russian Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk based on information as of 10:00 (Moscow time), 11 February 2015

KAMENSK-SHAKHTINSKY, RUSSIAN FEDERATION 12 February 2015

**This report is for media and the general public.**

### SUMMARY

*Kamensk-Shakhtinsky, Russian Federation. The Observer Mission (OM) continues to operate 24/7 at both BCPs. Overall cross-border traffic flows slightly increased at both Border Crossing Points (BCPs). The OM continued to observe a number of persons in military-style clothing crossing the border in both directions.*

### DETAIL

#### OM's staff composition

The OM is currently operating with 18 staff members, consisting of 16 permanent international observers (incl. the Chief Observer), one temporary international observer and one administrative assistant. Seven international observers are currently on leave.

#### Cross-border movements common to both BCPs

The profile of the people crossing the border remains unchanged and can be categorised as follows:

1. Families on foot or by car with a lot of luggage;
2. Elderly people with few bags;
3. Adults (usually of younger age) with no luggage or empty cars;
4. People wearing military-style clothes with or without backpacks.

The average number of entries/exits slightly increased overall from 6,632 to 6,776 per day for both BCPs during the reporting period, although traffic flow at the Gukovo BCP slightly decreased compared to last week. More people entered the Russian Federation than Ukraine. The average net flow (i.e. the balance of entries and exits) was plus 539 per day for both BCPs. The Donetsk BCP continued to experience more traffic than the Gukovo BCP. The cross-border movements registered at both BCPs accounted for 30.4

percent of all entries/exits in the Rostov region. The majority of the vehicles crossing the border have number plates issued in the Luhansk region, including the long-distance coaches commuting between Luhansk and cities in the Russian Federation, predominantly in the Rostov region.

### **Common observations at the BCPs**

The situation at both BCPs remained calm. The OM continued to observe that the Russian Federation border guard and customs service conducted checks and controls.

Regular local and long-distance bus connections continued to operate between the Luhansk region and cities in the Russian Federation. The Observer Teams (OTs) continued to observe more people on the buses arriving from Ukraine than leaving the Russian Federation. In addition to regular bus connections, the OTs also continued to observe bus connections unusual for the two BCPs: Rovenky (Luhansk Oblast) - Kharkiv, and Luhansk-Kharkiv. Due to military activity in the area of the bus connections, these routes were temporarily redirected through the Russian Federation. Instead of a direct 330km ride, people have to travel more than 750km to reach Kharkiv, spending 14-16 hours travelling instead of 7-8 with a direct bus. The price of the ticket has also increased. Previously people had to pay 250 hryvnia for a direct trip, whereas now the price is 500 hryvnia.

During the reporting period, the OTs observed 554 men and women in military-style dress crossing the border in both directions. These people have been crossing individually or in groups. 94 percent of border crossings occurred at the Donetsk BCP. The OTs continued to observe a number of Cossacks, who were identified by their traditional hats, as well as by Cossack insignias. Furthermore, the OTs continued to observe cars with “DPR/LPR” stickers on their licence plates replacing the Ukrainian flag. The OTs observed two vehicles with licence plates from other European countries which is unusual for the two BCPs.

People crossing the border in particular at BCP Donetsk continued to approach the OTs to share their stories, experiences and observations from the Ukrainian side of the border. People continued to tell the OTs that it is very difficult to live in areas where military activity is taking place and they do not feel safe leaving their houses. Other people leaving Ukraine were doing so not because of insecurity but because of lack of job opportunities. People crossing the border also remarked that aid sent by the Russian Federation was not reaching those in need. A few interlocutors claimed to have seen this aid for sale at local markets in Donbass. This has made people very discontented. Repeatedly people asked for the OSCE to get involved and oversee distribution of aid. People also commented that the OSCE is not seen as doing enough and asked for more OSCE presence and visibility especially in areas where military activity takes place.

During the reporting week, the OTs observed tanker trucks crossing the border both ways but predominantly to Ukraine. These crossings occurred mainly at BCP Gukovo. These trucks for the most part had the word “Propane” and “Flammable” written across the tanks in Russian.

### **Military movement**

At the two BCPs the OM did not observe military movement, apart from the usual vehicles of the Russian Federation Border Guard Service.

### **Observation at the Gukovo BCP**

The traffic flow at the Gukovo BCP decreased compared to last week. A daily average of 1,721 entries and exits was recorded, which accounted for approximately eight percent of all entries/exits in the Rostov region. Compared to last week more people entered the Russian Federation. The net flow went from plus 102 (i.e. more exits from Ukraine) to plus 79 on average per day.

During the week, the OM observed a total of 35 persons in military-style clothing crossing the border at the Gukovo BCP, 13 of whom left for Ukraine while 22 entered the Russian Federation.

As in previous weeks, the OM observed dumper trucks transporting coal from the Luhansk region to the Russian Federation. As reported previously, the observers saw Russian Federation customs officers verifying that the trucks were empty while leaving the Russian Federation.

The OTs picked up on the sound of a train passing by the BCP on seven occasions during the reporting week; the OTs estimated that four trains were going to Ukraine; two were bound for the Russian Federation. It was not possible to identify the direction of one train. Visual observation of the trains was not possible.

During the reporting week, the OT heard single shots on three different days. On each occasion, the sound came from the west-north-west. The shots were most probably fired from a nearby shooting range located on the territory of Ukraine

### **Observation at the Donetsk BCP**

During the reporting period the activity at the Donetsk BCP increased. The daily average of 5,056 entries and exits accounted for approximately twenty three percent of all entries/exits in the Rostov region. The net flow changed from plus 578 (i.e. more entering the Russian Federation) to plus 460 on average per day which describes a slowing down of the number of people crossing from Ukraine and to the Russian Federation.

The OT observed 519 persons in military-style clothing crossing the border at the Donetsk BCP individually and in groups; 254 persons entered the Russian Federation while 265 left for Ukraine.

During the reporting week, the OTs heard again the sound of artillery on two separate days. The artillery sound on 9 February was identified to have come from the south-west. It was not possible to identify the direction of artillery sound heard on 4 February.

On one occasion the OT picked up on a sound of approximately 20 rifle shots being fired from the south-west.

On 8 February a helicopter was spotted flying in the vicinity and over the BCP. In as far as the OT could observe, the aircraft did not violate the Ukrainian airspace when flying in the vicinity of the BCP.

Over the past week, the OTs observed three ambulances at BCP Donetsk. On 4 February an ambulance arrived from the Russian Federation side to pick up a male with leg wounds. The wounded man was brought in a white van from the Ukrainian side. On 7 February an ambulance arrived from the Russian Federation side to pick up a person that was brought from the Ukrainian side in another ambulance. The two ambulances were parked in such a way that the OT was able to only partially observe the patient. The third ambulance came from the Russian Federation side on 10 February in the evening and at a high speed drove towards Ukraine. It returned 20 minutes later. The OT did not see if it crossed the border.

On two occasions the OTs observed white minivans with a “Cargo 200” sign which is the code word referring to casualties. On 6 February a white minivan with the “Cargo 200” sign arrived from the Russian Federation side. After about 20 minutes, the van was permitted to cross into Ukraine. Another minivan with the “Cargo 200” sign arrived from Ukraine, the vehicle was inspected with the X-Ray machine and allowed to cross about 25 minutes later.

### **CONVOY**

#### **SUMMARY**

On 8 February 2015 at 04:50 (Moscow time), a Russian convoy arrived at the Donetsk Border Crossing Point (BCP). A total of 70 vehicles were inspected by the Russian border guard and customs services. Ukrainian border and customs officers stationed next to the BCP were present at the BCP when the convoy

crossed. All the vehicles crossed back into the Russian Federation (RF) at 16:33 the same day.

## **Contacts**

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