

Weekly Update from the OSCE Observer Mission at Russian Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk based on information as of 27 October 2015

KAMENSK-SHAKHTINSKIY, RUSSIAN FEDERATION 28 October 2015

Please note that this report is for media and the general public.

SUMMARY

Kamensk-Shakhtinskiy, Russian Federation. The Observer Mission (OM) continues to operate 24/7 at both Border Crossing Points (BCPs). The overall cross-border traffic decreased at both BCPs. A forty-first Russian Convoy crossed the Donetsk BCP.

DETAIL

OM's staff composition

The OM is currently operating with 17 permanent international staff members (incl. the Chief Observer). Five staff members are currently on leave.

Cross-border movements common to both BCPs

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

1. Families on foot or travelling by car and busses, with a lot of luggage, often accompanied by elderly people;
2. Adults (usually of younger age) with no luggage or empty cars;
3. People wearing military-style clothes with or without backpacks, crossing on foot or in vehicles.

Compared to last week, the average number of entries/exits decreased overall from 11,210 to 11,069 per day for both BCPs; the average net flow went from minus 258 to minus 87 (i.e. more exits from the Russian Federation). This continues to reflect the trend observed by the OM for the past few weeks of more people returning to Ukraine through the two BCPs. The Donetsk BCP continued to experience more traffic than the Gukovo BCP. The cross-border movements registered at both BCPs accounted for just over thirty-six per cent of all entries/exits in the Rostov region. The majority of the vehicles crossing the border have number

plates issued in Ukraine (Luhansk region), including a number of articulated trucks and long-distance coaches commuting between Ukraine (Luhansk region) and cities in the Russian Federation.

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 Services conducted checks and controls.

Regular local and long-distance bus connections continued to operate between Ukraine (Luhansk region) and cities in the Russian Federation. In addition to regular bus connections, the Observer Teams (OTs) continued to observe bus connections on irregular routes. Often the busses do not state their route; instead they just have a sign on the windshield saying “Irregular”. Among the irregular lines observed by the OTs the following destinations were noted: eight busses bound for Kharkiv, one bus on the route Alchevsk-Kharkiv, one bus on the route Alchevsk-Kyiv, two busses on the route Krasnodon-Kharkiv, one bus on the route Luhansk-Kharkiv and two busses on the route Alchevsk-Kharkiv-Kyiv.

During the reporting period, the number of men and women in military-style dress, crossing the border in both directions, increased from 149 to 190 at both BCPs. These people continued crossing the border individually or in groups and on foot or using different types of transport (in addition to private cars, some used busses and also motorbikes). Approximately eighty-four per cent of this category’s crossings occurred at the Donetsk BCP. The OTs continued to observe that from time to time persons in military-style dress have travelled across the border by bus, making it more difficult for the OTs to observe their movement across the border. Furthermore, the OTs continued to observe physically fit young and middle-aged men in civilian clothing, with short haircuts, many of whom carried camouflage-coloured backpacks.

The OTs continued to observe vehicles with Ukrainian license plates, including articulated trucks, with “Donetsk People’s Republic / Lugansk People’s Republic” (“DPR/LPR”) and “Novorossiia” stickers on their license plates replacing the Ukrainian flag.

During the reporting week, the OM continued to observe a high number of trucks, crossing the border in both directions, including intense cargo truck traffic at both BCPs and dumper trucks transporting coal from Ukraine (Luhansk region) to the Russian Federation through the Gukovo BCP. While the majority of the trucks are registered in the Luhansk region, the OTs frequently observed trucks registered in the Donetsk and Kharkiv regions and occasionally in Zaporizhia region. The OTs also observed trucks registered in the Russian Federation and Republic of Belarus that crossed the border. During the reporting week the number of trucks registered in the Republic of Belarus has decreased from 69 to 57; these trucks were observed crossing the border only at the Donetsk BCP. Separately, the OTs also observed tanker trucks crossing the border in both directions at both BCPs. The number of tanker trucks has decreased from 53 last week to 30 this week. Twenty-nine of these trucks crossed at the Donetsk BCP, but only one crossed at the Gukovo BCP. These trucks, for the most part, had the words “Propane” and “Flammable” written across the tanks in Russian. The majority of tanker trucks have hazardous signs indicating that they transport propane or a mix of propane with butane.

Military movement

At the two BCPs the OM did not observe military movement, apart from the movement of Russian Federation Border Guard Service vehicles transporting BCP personnel and supplies.

Observation at the Gukovo BCP

The traffic flow at the Gukovo BCP has slightly increased compared to last week. A daily average of 3,835 entries and exits was recorded, which accounted for over twelve per cent of all entries/exits in the Rostov region. The net flow went from plus 150 to plus 162 (i.e. more entries to the Russian Federation) on average per day.

During the reporting period, the OM observed a total of 29 persons in military-style clothing crossing the border at the Gukovo BCP, 10 of whom left for Ukraine while 19 entered the Russian Federation.

As in previous weeks, the OM observed dumper trucks transporting coal from Ukraine to the Russian Federation.

The OTs continued to pick up on the sound of trains running on the train tracks located approximately 150 meters south-west of the BCP. During the reporting week, the OTs heard trains on 18 occasions; the OTs estimated that 10 trains were going to the Russian Federation and 8 trains were bound for Ukraine. Visual observation was not possible because of the line of trees in between the train tracks and the BCP.

During the reporting week the OTs observed one ambulance crossing the border from Ukraine to the Russian Federation through the Gukovo BCP. The OTs could not ascertain whether there was any injured person in the ambulance or not.

Observation at the Donetsk BCP

During the reporting period the activity at the Donetsk BCP decreased compared to last week. The daily average of 7,234 entries and exits was recorded. This accounted for over twenty-three percent of all entries/exits in the Rostov region. The net flow changed from minus 408 to minus 249 (i.e. more exits from the Russian Federation) on average per day.

During the reporting week, the OTs observed 161 persons in military-style clothing crossing the border at the Donetsk BCP, 91 persons entered the Russian Federation while 70 left for Ukraine.

During the reporting week the OTs observed two ambulances at the Donetsk BCP. The OTs could not ascertain whether there was any injured person inside any of these ambulances or not.

On 20 October at 18:40hrs the OT observed a van arriving at the BCP from the Ukraine side with two men dressed in civilian clothes on board. "Cargo 200" was written in Russian on the inside of the windshield. It remained at the BCP for 15 minutes and crossed the border to the Russian Federation. The OT could not ascertain whether there was a coffin on board or not.

On 24 October at 14:20hrs the OT observed a hearse cross the border from Ukraine to the Russian Federation and return 15 minutes later. The vehicle was registered in Ukraine and had two persons on board. However, the OT could not ascertain whether there was a coffin on board while crossing to the both sides.

CONVOY

On 22 October 2015 at 06:58hrs (Moscow time), a Russian Convoy arrived at the Donetsk BCP (see the OM Spot Report of 22 October). A total of 46 vehicles - 39 cargo trucks and 7 support vehicles - were visually checked by the Russian border guard and customs services; one service dog was present on the site during the convoy crossing. Ukrainian representatives were present on site and performed visual observation of the trucks, both when the convoy crossed into Ukraine and when it returned to the Russian Federation. All the vehicles had crossed back into the Russian Federation by 14:47hrs.

Contacts

Communication and Media Relations Section

OSCE Secretariat

Phone: + 43 676 71 74 592

