

UK condemns Russia's escalating activity and narratives, and urges renewed risk reduction: UK statement to the OSCE

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UK Senior Military Advisor, Lt Col Joby Rimmer, reaffirms the UK's unwavering support for Ukraine while condemning Russia's escalating actions, including nuclear rhetoric and missile deployments, urging renewed risk reduction measures and calling on Russia and Belarus to return to international compliance to preserve regional security.

The United Kingdom's steadfast support for Ukraine, defending its sovereignty, protecting its people, and resisting aggression, remains unwavering, and will endure for as long as it takes. Yet while Ukraine and its partners pursue a just peace based on international law, Russia continues to choose to intensify its campaign at every turn. Its irresponsible nuclear rhetoric, together with the irresponsible and deliberately escalatory deployment of the Oreshnik intermediate range system including in Belarus, are actions designed to elevate tension, undermine serious negotiations, and distract from Russia's ongoing war of aggression. They undermine regional stability, erode confidence, heighten the risk of miscalculation across the OSCE area.

First, on Russia's actions and the Oreshnik system now stationed in Belarus. Ground-launched intermediate range missiles of this type were systems prohibited under the INF Treaty. Assertions from Moscow and Minsk that 'the West destroyed arms control' disregard the documented sequence of events. The INF Treaty collapsed because Russia developed and fielded a noncompliant system, the SSC8 ('Screwdriver'), a weapon later used in combat in Ukraine. Faced with Russia's persistent violations, the United States concluded that remaining bound by a treaty the other party was openly breaching had little utility. This decision did not 'open Pandora's box'; it recognised that Russia had already opened it through covert development and deployment.

Second, on nuclear rhetoric. Russia's use of irresponsible nuclear rhetoric is not deterrence as practised by responsible states; it is intimidation intended to suppress support for a UN recognised sovereign state defending itself from aggression. Such rhetoric is incompatible with both the letter and spirit of the NPT, as well as the OSCE's foundational commitments. The United Kingdom will not legitimise it.

Nor will we be drawn into debating Belarus's NPT posture in this forum. But we must register, in the clearest terms, that Belarus's public commentary on the INF Treaty, echoing Russian talking points, is unacceptable. The claim that 'the West destroyed the INF regime' is demonstrably false. Compliance matters. Russian non-compliance ended the Treaty and security across the entire OSCE region is now undermined by the Treaty's absence.

Third, the imperative of risk management and mitigation. History and present events illustrate how quickly strategic signalling can spiral into crisis. The recent trends of nuclear-related dialogues beyond the Euro-Atlantic shows how difficult it becomes to rebuild cooperation once channels are lost. That lesson applies equally here. The OSCE's value lies in practical risk reduction: transparency, notifications, hotlines, incident prevention, and restraint in posture and rhetoric. The FSC should be used to restore practical guardrails, greater transparency on deployments, revitalised incident prevention mechanisms, renewed deconfliction channels, and restraint in exercises and strategic signalling. With the political will to do so, these measures remain achievable - including

now.

The Kremlin's aim is to divide Europe, weaken NATO, and reassert dominance over neighbours. If illegal aggression is allowed to succeed, it will be repeated. That is why Allies are strengthening defence industrial capacity, modernising forces, and deepening interoperability: to deter further aggression and to preserve peace. The United Kingdom will continue to support Ukraine's self-defence for as long as it takes, uphold the European security order, and invest in credible deterrence alongside Allies. We urge Russia to cease its aggression, withdraw its forces, and return to compliance with its international obligations. We urge Belarus to step back from actions and narratives that further militarise our region.

Thank you.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/uk-condemns-russias-escalating-activity-and-narratives-and-urges-renewed-risk-reduction-uk-statement-to-the-osce>