



United States Mission to the OSCE

May 12 Detention of OSCE Monitors in South Ossetia

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 19, 2005

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman.

The United States joins in expressing our extreme concern over the May 13th spot report from the OSCE Mission in Georgia that two OSCE military monitors, acting totally within their mandates and fully in accordance with all agreements, were detained for a few hours at gunpoint by South Ossetian soldiers.

Such behavior by the South Ossetian forces is outrageous, it is dangerous, and it is in contravention of all agreements that permit OSCE monitors to move freely about the Zone of Conflict.

We are relieved that intervention by officials of the Joint Peacekeeping Forces led to the monitors' release. We call on the commander of the Joint Peacekeeping Forces to investigate this incident and to ensure that the agreements that permit access by the monitors be strictly enforced, and that the monitors' safety above all be guaranteed by all sides.

We further note that the monitors observed an illegal mortar in the area that they were visiting. This is a clear instance of South Ossetian forces *twice* violating existing agreements.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to use this opportunity to reiterate the view of the United States that the five international monitors for South Ossetia is too low a number -- it is too low to do the job, it is too low to monitor and prevent violations of agreements in the Zone of Conflict. It is our hope that Georgia's request for an increase in the number of OSCE monitors can be revisited and given positive consideration.

Thank you.