



“Russian Violations of the Rule of Law: How Should the U.S. Respond? 3 Case Studies”
Sen. Roger Wicker
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your leadership and for calling a hearing on this worrying trajectory in terms of Russia’s commitment to the OSCE’s core principles. I also want to welcome our witnesses, and I look forward to hearing their insights on how we can encourage Russia to respect the rule of law, both internationally and at home.

When it comes to the American people and our own national security, my first concern is Russia’s increasingly dismissive attitude towards its international security obligations. I’m sure our NATO colleagues in Europe feel the same. As the saying goes, it takes much longer to build something than destroy it, and it appears to me that a European security structure hammered out over more than a quarter of a century is in danger of collapsing in a period of less than two years.

Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea and its ongoing military presence in eastern Ukraine is a direct assault on pretty much each of the ten Helsinki Final Act principles. While clearly foremost in our minds, this violation of the Budapest Memorandum is hardly an isolated instance of Russian disregard for its OSCE and international security obligations. Per the 1990 Vienna Document, Russia’s ongoing buildup of an estimated 40,000 troops next to the Ukrainian border, along with associated combat vehicle movements and ongoing military exercises, should be subject to advance notice and OSCE member state inspections. No such notice or observation access has been

forthcoming. On the treaty front, in March of this year, Russia officially abandoned the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, an agreement it has openly flouted since 2007. Repeated cancellations of planned U.S. and European overflights of the same Russian-Ukrainian border regions run contrary to Russia's Open Skies commitments. Finally, according to the State Department's 2015 Arms Control Report, Russian testing of cruise missile technology over the past few years directly violates the bedrock 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty, which from where I sit poses a potentially strategic security threat to the United States.

Two weeks ago we held an Armed Services Committee hearing examining Russia's military actions in Syria. While that is not our focus today, I do think it is important to note that several of our witnesses then suggested that Russia decided to enter Syria militarily based in part on their perception of flagging U.S. leadership – that we no longer cared strongly enough to push back, whether it be in Afghanistan, the Middle East, or Europe. While one can argue national interests and legal obligations in a place like Syria, when it comes to our own security and that of our European allies, as well as the legal agreements we have signed our names upon, there can be no ambiguity. Instead of standing behind a line and waiting for it to be crossed, we need stand in front, so that Russia understands that when it comes to our collective security and our principles, we will not be pushed back.