

Reinforce the ceasefire of July 27, 2020

Naej DRANER

Naej.Draner@gmail.com

ND202106001-2 of June 4, 2021: Reinforce the ceasefire of July 27, 2020

Referenced texts :

[ND201707003 Ukraine Ceasefire - update - 2020-09-23 EN-US](#)

[ND201709001 Active Cease-fire control System - update - 2020-09-14 EN-US](#)

[2020-07-23 Press statement](#)

[2021-06-04 Renewed Ceasefire Commitment](#)

The July 27, 2020 cease-fire is the first cease-fire since 2014 that resembled a cease-fire.

It contained several important points:

- Commitment to prohibit any shooting, of any caliber,
- Commitment not to respond to possible violations,
- Recognition of a cease-fire monitoring system in case of violations or problems.

The July 22, 2020 agreement at the TCG formalized a commitment by all combatant parties to these points (see [2020-07-23 Press statement](#))

There were other elements, but these 3 elements were indispensable and necessary to hope for a cease-fire.

They remain essential for any effective cease-fire but it is noted that :

- Combatant hierarchies consider it normal to respond to any violation,
- Reports of violations by the parties are simply passed on to the SMM through the JCCC, which should have been a cease-fire monitoring system. In practice, the SMM does nothing with this information that looks like coordination or arbitration. *In other words, the cease-fire monitoring system is not fulfilling its expected role . The system became active in July 2020, and has become passive again.*

The fighting hierarchies are not very talkative, but they have expressed by their behavior a discomfort and a refusal of some commitments, by putting forward that their enemy does not respect these commitments.

Reinforce the ceasefire of July 27, 2020

What analysis of the situation?

Case analysis on ceasefire was done in 2017 in [ND201707003 Ukraine Ceasefire - update - 2020-09-23 EN-US](#) and [ND201709001 Active Cease-fire control System - update - 2020-09-14 EN-US](#)

The July 27, 2020 cease-fire took into account some of the identified causes. The analysis remains the same taking into account some additional elements that should be taken into account to strengthen the ceasefire.

The essence of what is proposed here is :

- **Transforming the Passive Ceasefire Control System into an active mode.**
- **Giving ourselves the means to act on the ground**
- **Implementing some regular preventive actions**
- **Practical actions to be carried out**

These points will be developed in the following pages

Transforming the Passive Ceasefire Control System into an active mode

How is the system passive?

SMM and JCCC report violation information. But is there any action taken after each violation ?

From the information I have so far, the SMM reports almost daily with 24-72 hours delay on incidents. Occasionally (weekly at best), bodies like TCG become aware of them but don't even seem to take action from there.

The system is passive because there is no action taken.

The system would be active if within hours (not days) of the incidents the sources of the violations were identified and actions were taken on them.

It is not a matter of militarily silencing the sources of fire, but of identifying the perpetrators or the geographical areas as precisely as possible as well as the local hierarchies in order to understand and launch actions to prevent this from happening again.

Where do the violations come from?

From both sides. If the official discourse of each side blames the other and only the other, the reality is that there are all cases, in one side as in the other.

Information is not action

Reporting violations is a passive system. It is necessary, but not sufficient.

To act is not to silence militarily but to persuade the combatants and their hierarchies to act differently

A military person usually thinks that to end an incident, the source must be militarily silenced. This usually leads to an escalation.

Reinforce the ceasefire of July 27, 2020

But persuading the combatants and their hierarchies would require some means of contacting the combatants and their hierarchies. The SMM observers are unable to do this alone. They could do so if they were assisted by members of each side, whom we will designate as liaison officers.

Creation and involvement of a coordination mechanism to respond to ceasefire violations

The agreement of July 22, 2020 provided for such a mechanism. In principle, it was to be provided by the JCCC. In practice, such a mechanism worked for some time and no longer works at all. The JCCC simply passes on information about violations from each side to the SMM, which in turn simply passes on the information to others or publicly.

In June 2021, there is still no coordination mechanism capable of responding to ceasefire violations.

Since there is no functioning coordination mechanism, each side takes the law into its own hands and each side considers that responding to any violation with arms is the only way to silence the violations, while it causes the opposite.

When such a coordination mechanism is functioning, the system will have become active. We hope that when this happens, the combatants and their leadership will give priority to the ceasefire coordination system.

How can we set up a coordination mechanism that works?

First we have to define one, then explain it to all fighters and make it work as defined.

Finding the combatants involved in the violations and contacting their direct superiors can only be done if we have special teams on the ground who will spend their time investigating and persuading local actors to stop. This must be done within an hour of the incident, not 3 days later. Two hours after the violation, if you haven't found anything you'll never find it. One or two hours means it's in **an area a few dozen kilometers wide**, not more.

It is not impossible, in a zone of a few dozen kilometers, to identify the local hierarchies and their fighters in each camp. It is necessary to establish contacts that can be activated at any time, at least by radio.

It certainly takes several days to identify a few combatant leaders from each side in an area several dozen kilometers wide (less than 100). At this point, local coordination officials can, after each incident :

- Send an inspection team to see what's going on
- Contact the local hierarchy in the area that appears to be the source of the violation,
- Define with local hierarchy the corrective actions to avoid recurrence

If there was a functioning local coordination, the combatants on each side should know how to contact this local coordination. Rather than returning fire, they should contact the local coordination as soon as possible, which, with the help of inspection teams and local contacts with hierarchy, will take the necessary action.

Reinforce the ceasefire of July 27, 2020

For there to be permanent local coordination, there must be the equivalent of a coordination center, called an operational PC (or coordination center). Each coordination center, in order to be reachable, must have a contact radio frequency. Since we want this to be usable by each side, it should be a fixed, unencrypted VHF frequency.

How many coordination centers (operational PCs) on the entire contact line?

A priori about ten. It is necessary to perform some actions :

- Defining the geographical area covered by each coordination center, record it on a map and communicate it to military hierarchy
- Defining the radio frequency of each center (which must be different for each center)
- Having teams that will operate 24/24 7/7 in coordination centers (or operational PCs)
- Attaching inspection teams to each coordination center that will be in the field, ready to go out and see what is going on. The inspection teams are almost never at the coordination center, but their investigations and inspections are requested by the coordination center and they report to the coordination center manager.

Do all coordination centers have to be active?

- It would be better if they were all active, but if it's a relatively quiet area, it can be lightened. There may not be enough resources to make them all work from the start.
- At least 4 active ones are needed in the Donetsk sector and 2 in the Luhansk sector

Global coordination

Of course, there should be global coordination in liaison with all the coordination centers, but it is not the global coordination that manages the incidents and the inspection teams. The global coordination should have daily updates with each coordination center. It is the global coordination that allocates the necessary resources to each center

In other words

- The whole security zone should be divided into sub-sectors (between 7 and 10: 2 or 3 for Luhansk and 5 to 7 for Donetsk). These sub-sectors should be defined on map and known to all. Their division should be done in such a way that the usual areas of tension are not on 2 sub-sectors. If this is the case, 2 sub-sectors should be combined into one. Not all subsectors need to be active. There may be some groupings. When the situation is calm, the Luhansk sub-sectors can be managed as one. When the situation is tense, it is necessary to make the Western Luhansk sub-sector active and separate from the others. Having sub-sectors allows to manage the situation properly, while it is impossible with a sector the size of Donetsk
- Each sub-sector should have a standard organization and at least some permanent coordination even if it is limited to 2 or 3 people and is done from a patrol vehicle rather than from a room in a hard building.
- Each sub-sector should have a fixed VHF listening frequency accessible by any combatant. This would allow everyone to know what is going on and what incidents are being addressed. Today, a combatant facing an incident does not know who to contact to have the incident reported and stopped. He addresses his hierarchy who will transfer the

Reinforce the ceasefire of July 27, 2020

information a few hours later to a single PC for the 2 sectors of Donetsk and Luhansk. Nobody can do anything with this information. If, on the other hand, the information were transmitted to the sub-sector level, if there were local coordination in the sub-sector that could take it into account and a few inspection teams to go and investigate the incident immediately, we might succeed. Today, the staffs on both sides have so little faith in the ceasefire monitoring and maintenance system's ability to do anything that they prefer to order their troops to respond militarily to any incident, which only makes the situation worse.

- In addition, in each sub-sector, we should try to get the local commanders of each side to talk to each other and start organizing the cleaning of the sub-sectors, starting with demining. None of this is happening, no one is talking to each other at the sub-sector level. Everything has to go through a hierarchical level that is incapable, at the highest level, of doing anything.
- The organization should be made to be able to act in the field. Today, it is only designed to pass on information to the chiefs, who cannot do anything with it because it is too far from the field. All they do is accuse each other of being responsible for incidents. Nothing works properly.
- We could go on and on about the dysfunctions. The JCCC never communicates in an objective manner. It is usually used by each side to try to validate its official information. Practically every day, the separatists publish a communiqué indicating that the JCCC has identified attacks from the Ukrainian side. Is this objective and useful information? No. These JCCC correspondents have never issued a single statement about violations of the separatists' camp, even though there are violations every day. This almost daily element in the communiqués from the DPR camp is probably the beginning of an explanation for the dysfunction of the JCCC. It has long been known that when the JCCC tries to give a view of incidents, there are Ukrainian military JCCCs doing their own count and separatist JCCC fighters doing theirs, and that they never converge. If there is a strong disagreement about an incident, the JCCC is unable to make a decision and act as an arbitrator. The JCCC, which was supposed to be an arbitrator under the July 27 ceasefire, has become incapable of doing so. It passes on violations to the SMM, which does little about them. The system has once again become passive and unable to have an impact on the violations observed.

What does it take to make it an active system?

- Existing information should be used as soon as possible and translated into action(s)
- When a violation is detected, at least and at the latest within one hour, contact the local commanders and identify the area where the violation started and make sure that it does not happen again.
- If nobody does anything, nothing will happen
- It is not enough to issue an incantatory order from the top of the hierarchy to change from a passive and static mode to an active mode
- All the actors involved, who all claim to be an essential link, need to work together and stop passing the buck by claiming that it is up to the other to do something.

Giving ourselves the means to act on the ground

Reinforce the ceasefire of July 27, 2020

Virtually every day, the SMM reports that it has seen a prohibited weapon at a location. The SMM writes it down in a report, perhaps tells the JCCC, and considers that it has done his job and that it is up to others to do the rest.

The problem is that the information never reaches the servants of the forbidden weapons and their direct hierarchy. Nothing happens, the system is passive. Special teams, called inspection teams, are needed, spread out over the field. Information from the SMM should be immediately transmitted to nearby inspection teams. An inspection team should contact the local hierarchies and go to the location where the weapon is identified and have it evacuated with logistical assistance from the JCCC.

Of course an SMM team will never succeed in going there or even in evacuating it. First of all because they do not know the military hierarchies and other reasons like a rough knowledge of the language and the field.

What is an inspection team?

There is a team leader who we will call an inspector. He is usually a former SMM team leader (but not only). He has in his team members that he has chosen or/and accepted:

- An assistant
- A Ukrainian liaison officer
- A separatist liaison officer

These liaison officers are an integral part of the inspection team. They may be in radio contact with the inspector or they may travel with the inspector and his or her deputy (in each camp, it is best to travel with your camp liaison officer and make sure he or she knows the area well: their safety will usually depend on with their liaison officer). Without a liaison officer, most inspectors will be unable to make any contact with the combatants and their local hierarchies

Participants in the inspection teams are all volunteers. Administratively, they are managed as SMM observers, but they only take orders from the inspection team leader. SMM managers are not the line managers of the inspection teams.

Reinforce the ceasefire of July 27, 2020

What should an inspection team do when they see prohibited weaponry?

With the help of the liaison officer, it must ask the local leaders and combatants to evacuate the prohibited weapons and organize with the logistic services of each camp their evacuation and storage in a safe and verifiable place.

Missions of the inspection teams

The missions are diverse but all have the objective of acting indirectly on the ground. Their action relies essentially on their ability to persuade the combatants and their hierarchy to do otherwise. The choice of liaison officers is essential for them.

Inspectors have a free hand in the means of investigation, whether directly by being in the field or indirectly through their liaison officers or other means.

Implement some regular preventive actions

- Check that each combatant has received the cease-fire instructions and knows the coordination center to which he is attached.
This alone is important. Theoretically, since July 2020, all weapons firing is prohibited. Do the combatants remember this? In principle, every time a combatant meets, the orders he has received should be checked and if it turns out that the orders are not clear, the local leaders should be asked to give orders that are clearer and correspond to what should be done.
- Every morning, each coordination center should review the previous day's incidents with local officials from each camp. This should take less than 30 minutes.
- If possible, organize regular meetings with members of each camp. These events can be formal meetings or festive. Developing contacts can help

All these regular preventive actions are under the responsibility of the coordination centers

Reinforce the ceasefire of July 27, 2020

Practical actions to be taken

The actions to be carried out chronologically are:

Preparation phase 1

- JCCC: define the sub-areas and translate it into a map where the sub-areas are defined
- JCCC & SMM: define the active sub-sectors (Out of 8 defined sectors, there may be only 4 active ones, corresponding to the traditional areas of tension in which it will necessarily be necessary: Mariupol, DFS, western part of the Luhansk sector encompassing the disengagement zone of Zolote and its surroundings - These 3 are necessarily in the active sub-sectors)
- JCCC: define the radio frequencies for each sub-sector. A coordination center can have an HF link with the global coordination (because of the distance) but must have a local VHF frequency on site (HF in the local proximity area is neither practical nor usual)
- Define who is responsible for each active sub-sector (they can come from the SMM or the JCCC)
- Provide logistics for the establishment of active coordination centers.
- Ensure that there are at least 2 people in active coordination centers at all times
- Confirming an inspection team leader as manager of all the inspection teams
- Have at least 30 inspection teams on hand (since a liaison officer is needed on each side, the number of JCCC members is insufficient to cover all needs). Each inspector (inspection team leader) can take whoever he wants as a liaison officer among the fighters he will meet.

Preparation phase 2

- It is necessary to redefine the content of the ceasefire that will be applied (see text [2021-06-04 Renewed Ceasefire commitment](#))
- Define the date and time of application of the complementary measures (at the latest 24 hours later)
- Prepare the necessary internal communications to be transmitted to the combatant hierarchies of each camp

Ceasefire organization and internal communication in each camp

To do this, the JCCC must start at the highest level of each side. Each side must rely on prepared communications that must allow each side and each combatant to know what will be implemented. (sub-sectors, frequencies, coordination centers,...) No need for media communication at this time. What is important is that each combatant knows what is planned and the cease-fire coordination system and knows who to contact (coordination center/operational PC) and knows the role of the inspection teams who can question anyone at any time, regardless of their role among the combatants).

Internal communication of this re-engagement must begin 12 hours prior to the effective time of implementation of all these measures.

If needed, it may be useful once or twice a month to launch an internal communication to a sub-sector or to all sub-sectors to give some common instructions to everyone.

Reinforce the ceasefire of July 27, 2020

We must avoid flooding everyone.

Daily debriefing

7 days a week, a brief debriefing (30 minutes) must be organized every morning, no later than 10:00 a.m., in each active coordination center.

The aim is to review the previous day's incidents and cross-reference them with information provided by SMM observers and inspection teams.

If the table of violations from the SMM reports were available at the time of debriefing, that would be great, but we will not debrief 48 hours or 72 hours after the events occurred.

If this table of violations is available at the debriefing, an SMM member will present the violations that concern the sub-sector. If he/she has nothing to present, he/she will be excused and is not asked to report on incidents on days other than the previous day from 00 a.m. to midnight.

Ceasefire Management committee

A comprehensive action tracking body must be implemented. It must include:

- An OSCE representative
- A SMM representative
- JCCC representative(s)
- One representative per active sub-sector
- The head of the inspection teams
- A person in charge of the global monitoring of the cease-fire

This monitoring body should meet weekly :

- Debriefing on the main events and issues
- on the application of the measures
- identify malfunctions
- propose and agree on adjustments and adaptations to the ceasefire coordination center

It is best to avoid bureaucratic and administrative inflation, but there will be adjustments to be made that must be done by this committee.

It would be nice to inform and/or consult with the author to ensure that what is decided and implemented remains consistent with a solution that works.