

Beat: News

Launch of the Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group (ACA) for Ukraine

By the U.S., U.K. and European Union

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USPA NEWS - The United States, along with the European Union and the United Kingdom, has created the Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group (ACA). This joint initiative will directly support the efforts of the War Crimes Units of the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine (OPG) to document, preserve, and analyze evidence of war crimes and other atrocities committed in Ukraine, with a view toward criminal prosecutions.

As we launch this initiative, the Department of State will continue to work closely with the Department of Justice and other partners to support the pursuit of justice and accountability. As the recent joint statement issued by the Attorney General and his international counterparts makes clear, we are united across the globe in our resolve to hold perpetrators responsible.

Evidence of atrocities by members of Russia's forces in Ukraine continues to mount. Initially, this violence took the form of bombardments and missile and artillery strikes hitting densely-populated cities and towns, causing thousands of civilian deaths and destruction of civilian infrastructure. Later, when journalists, human rights defenders, and Ukrainian officials gained access to areas following the retreat of Russia's forces, we saw reports of violence of a different order — credible reports of unarmed civilians shot in the back; individuals killed execution-style with their hands bound; bodies showing signs of torture; and horrific accounts of sexual violence against women and girls. Most recently, credible reports are emerging of Ukrainian children being forcibly transferred out of the country.

The establishment of this multilateral accountability effort, therefore, comes at a critical time. The ACA will provide strategic advice and operational assistance to the War Crimes Units of the OPG, the legally constituted authority responsible for prosecuting war crimes and other atrocities in Ukraine. Although the United States and our partners are supporting a range of international efforts to pursue accountability for atrocities, the OPG will play a crucial role in ensuring that those responsible for war crimes and other atrocities are held accountable. The ACA is an essential element of the United States' commitment that those responsible for such crimes will be held to account.

The ACA's assistance to the War Crimes Units of the OPG includes expanded funding for the work of a multi-national team of international prosecutors and other war crimes experts already deployed to the region. This interdisciplinary team is providing strategic advice and operational assistance in areas such as collection and preservation of evidence, military analysis, investigation of conflict-related sexual violence, and co-operation with international and national accountability mechanisms. In this regard, the ACA will liaise with the Department of Justice as it pursues accountability in U.S. courts.

The ACA will streamline coordination and communication efforts to ensure best practices, avoid duplication of efforts, and encourage the expeditious deployment of financial resources and skilled personnel to respond to the needs of the OPG. The ACA's engagement with the OPG and other justice, law enforcement, and security agencies of Ukraine has been, and will continue to be, driven by the needs of the Ukrainian government, and the parameters of its support will be developed in close consultation with the OPG.

We look forward to working with Madame Prosecutor General Iryna Venediktova to further the cause of justice for the people of Ukraine. At the same time, our Department of Justice and other law enforcement agencies will be vigilant in doing our part to promote accountability for the war crimes and other atrocities being committed by Russia's forces.

Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State

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Wendy writes for the United States Press Agency and is a former columnist with the Fulton County Expositor, Wauseon, Ohio.

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

United Press Association, Inc.
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168
Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA
(702) 943.0321 Local
(702) 943.0233 Facsimile
info@unitedpressassociation.org
info@gna24.com
www.gna24.com