Ukraine and Moldova Increase Border Control Measures

OE Watch Commentary: Since a 1990-1992 separatist conflict that left Transnistria a de facto autonomous republic, Moldova has been unable to control 454 kilometers of its border with Ukraine; i.e., that portion of its eastern border that runs alongside the breakaway republic. Russia has used that segment of Moldova's border to sustain Transnistria economically and to support approximately 1,500 Russian troops stationed there, where nearly 50 percent of the population has Russian citizenship. The accompanying excerpted articles from sources in the region report on how Ukraine and Moldova are emplacing multiple, jointly manned checkpoints on the Ukrainian side of their shared border, some of which will be specifically opposite Moldova's Russia-backed, breakaway Transnistria region. The program began on 17 July 2017 when Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko and Moldovan Prime Minister Pavel Filip opened the first joint crossing point. Up to seven additional checkpoints will be established in the near-term under stronger bilateral border control agreements negotiated last fall.

The excerpt from the *Moldovan State News Agency* (dated 23 May) announces Chisinau's recent and final approval of Moldovan-Ukrainian protocols addressing forthcoming joint control over border checkpoints directly across from Transnistria. The excerpt from Transnistria's *Pridnestrovye* news agency describes the separatist region's frustration with Chisinau's rejection of Transnistrian independence and its concern over Chisinau's newfound control over Transnistria's eastern border. The article references how both Transnistria and Russia perceive this as part of a greater "economic blockade" that began in 2015, when Ukraine canceled an agreement allowing Russia to cross its territory to supply Russian troops in the breakaway republic. The other excerpt from the *Moldovan State News Agency* (dated 30 May) quotes Moldova's position that the joint border checkpoints across from Transnistria are a purely bilateral arrangement with Ukraine, and are not an issue for discussion in the recurring Moldova-Transnistria Settlement negotiations.

Ukraine committed to helping Moldova immediately following Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, its support to separatists in Ukraine's Donbass region, and a growing concern that the Kremlin would attempt to connect these areas geographically with pro-Russian Transnistria. Perceiving Ukraine's own separatist challenges similar to those in Moldova, President Poroshenko has stated that the joint border checkpoints are intended not just to help Moldova regain control over its border, but are part of a broader effort to help restore Moldova's territorial integrity. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kurz)**

Transnistria-Ukraine Border Checkpoint, 2014.
Source: By Julian Nitzsche [CC BY-SA 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0)], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Transnistria_Ukraine_Checkpoint.JPG.

Source: V. Bercu, "Controlul comun moldo-ucrainean va fi instituit în acest an în opt puncte de trecere a frontierei (Moldovan-Ukrainian Joint Control to be Established at Eight Border Checkpoints in 2018)," *Moldovan State News Agency*, 23 May 2018. https://www.moldpres.md/en/news/2018/05/23/18004292

The cabinet of ministers today approved . . . the signing of protocols on the organization of joint control at eight Moldovan-Ukrainian border checkpoints. The joint control of people, transport means, goods and objects at the joint Moldovan-Ukrainian border checkpoints is provided for in the agreement signed by the two states' governments on 6 October 2017.

Source: Ekaterina Borodina, "Смертельно опасная иллюзия (A Potentially Dangerous Illusion)," *Pridnestrovye*, 28 May 2018. http://newspmr.com/novosti-pmr/politika/17816

Until [Transnistria] is recognized, any statements on reconciliation are nothing else but demagogy. ...Moldova boosted control at the Dniester-Ukrainian border, thus almost closing the circle of economic blockade around the Dniester region. ...These actions only confirm concerns that the change of Moldova's tactics in forcing the Dniester region [to accept its conditions] is behind the intensification of the talks, rather than Chisinau's peaceful intentions.

Source: "La Roma s-a desfășurat o nouă rundă oficială de negocieri în formatul '5+2' (New Official round of 5+2 Talks on Transnistrian Settlement Held in Rome)," *Moldovan State News Agency*, 30 May 2018. https://www.moldpres.md/en/news/2018/05/30/18004541

At the [Transnistria Settlement] meeting, chief negotiator of Chisinau, Deputy Premier Cristina Lesnic, reiterated and pointed out the necessity of . . . avoiding on the agenda the issues related to bilateral relations between Moldova and Ukraine (for instance: joint control of the central [Transnistrian] segment of the Moldovan–Ukrainian border)...

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