

Ukraine Crisis Update: April 23, 2015

1 April 17-23: The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) international monitoring mission brokered a local truce in Shyrokyne that reportedly lasted for 67 hours. Pro-Russian forces resumed attacks on Ukrainian Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) positions around Shyrokyne following the withdrawal of the monitors. Reports suggest pro-Russian forces are concentrating tanks and heavy weapons near the village.

2 April 17-23: Pro-Russian forces continue to shell and attack Ukrainian forces near the destroyed Donetsk airport. Ukrainian forces and the OSCE international monitoring mission reported pro-Russian tank and heavy weapon fire in the area. The OSCE reported that "Grad" rockets hit a residential area of the Ukrainian-held city of Avdiivka and that separatists had recently removed at least four "Grad" systems from a storage site. Mortar attacks on a residential area of Avdiivka were reported on April 23.

3 April 17-23: Ukrainian Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) positions were assaulted and shelled by pro-Russian forces using tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, mortars, and small arms near the T1303 "Bakhmutka" highway. Ukrainian forces repelled a separatist infantry attack on its positions near the village of Trokhizbenka.

4 April 18-23: Pro-Russian forces attacked Ukrainian ATO positions with mortars, small arms, and automatic grenade launchers elsewhere in the Stanytsia-Luhanska District of Luhansk Oblast. Separatists reportedly fired "Grad" rockets on the Ukrainian-held village of Valuiske. The Kyiv-back Luhansk Oblast governor reported that two Ukrainian soldiers were wounded in a mine explosion near the village of Krasna Talivka (north), near the Russian border.

5 April 19-21: Pro-Russian forces attacked Ukrainian ATO forces outside the separatist-held city of Horlivka with self-propelled artillery, heavy mortars, tanks, and anti-aircraft guns.

6 April 20: Operation Fearless Guardian, the six-month U.S.-led training mission, began in Yavoriv, Lviv Oblast. Approximately 290 U.S. paratroopers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade will train 900 members of the Ukrainian National Guard, created in March 2014, for defensive and civil military operations. Russia has said the arrival of foreign military trainers could destabilize the situation in Ukraine.

7 April 22: The spokesman for the Ukraine's ATO reported that a Mi-8 helicopter, likely from the Russian military, violated Ukrainian airspace near the Russian-controlled Crimean peninsula.

8 April 22-23: Hundreds of Ukrainian coal miners protested outside government buildings in Kyiv. The miners demanded that mines under Kyiv control remain open, a raise in pay, the restoration of subsidies to mines, and the dismissal of Ukraine's Energy Minister.



- Donetsk People's Republic (DNR)
- Luhansk People's Republic (LNR)
- Cossack
- Combined Separatist
- Ukrainian Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO)
- ★ Acting Regional Admin Center
- ★ Regional Admin Center
- Separatist Held Territory
- ★ Major Clash
- ⚡ Indirect Fire



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A renewed pro-Russian offensive may be imminent in eastern Ukraine. Russian-backed separatists appear to have abandoned the February 12 ceasefire agreement after redeploying banned heavy weapons to the front line and intensifying their attacks on Ukrainian positions. Separatist attacks have escalated most significantly around the destroyed Donetsk airport, the most advanced Ukrainian positions to the separatist stronghold of Donetsk, and Shyrokyne, the closest separatist position to the key Ukrainian port city of Mariupol. Both areas have seen indirect fire exchanges and skirmishes over the past two months but fighting escalated this week to a level not seen since the separatist victory at the rail hub of Debaltseve. Attacks by previously withdrawn "Grad" multiple launch rocket systems and other heavy weapon on Ukrainian-held populated areas also indicate the separatists' abandonment of the ceasefire agreement and possible efforts to clear civilians from the area in preparation for an offensive. Russian-backed separatists may be timing the launch of offensive operations to coincide with the start of the U.S. training mission in western Ukraine, which began this week, and Victory Day demonstrations on May 9. As in the January-February 2015 offensive which ruptured the first ceasefire agreement, pro-Russian forces would likely sequence two offensive maneuvers to capitalize on the element of surprise and seize key territory. The concentration of pro-Russian forces and attacks around the Donetsk airport and Shyrokyne suggest that the offensive maneuvers would target Ukrainian military positions and populated areas near these points of strategic significance. Russia increased its military support for the separatists this week, with a shipment of military vehicles and a 25th uninspected aid convoy. The U.S. State Department reported the highest number of Russian soldiers along the Ukrainian border and the largest presence of Russian air defense systems in Donbas since 2014.