

# Ukraine Crisis Update: February 27, 2015

**1** February 20-25: Ukrainian forces clashed with pro-Russian militants around the contested village of Shyrokyne, which was captured by the Ukrainian "Azov" Regiment on February 10. The Ukrainian Anti-Terror Operation (ATO) press center reported that Ukrainian tanks destroyed a separatist ammunition depot, which exploded and killed around ten pro-Russian fighters on February 25. Shyrokyne has been the site of the heaviest fighting since a ceasefire was due to come into effect on February 15.



**2** February 22: An explosion killed 4 and injured 9 at a rally in Kharkiv marking the one year anniversary of the Yanukovich regime crackdown on protestors in Kyiv's Independence Square. The Kharkiv Oblast public prosecutor said a radio-detonated anti-personnel mine caused the explosion.

**3** February 22: Three Ukrainian medical volunteers from Lviv were killed in a mine explosion on the M03 highway between Artemivsk and Debaltseve, a key transit hub captured by separatist forces on February 18.



**4** February 23: Pro-Russian forces fired "Grad" multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS) on the government-held village of Lebrynske, according to a Ukrainian Anti-Terror Operation (ATO) statement.



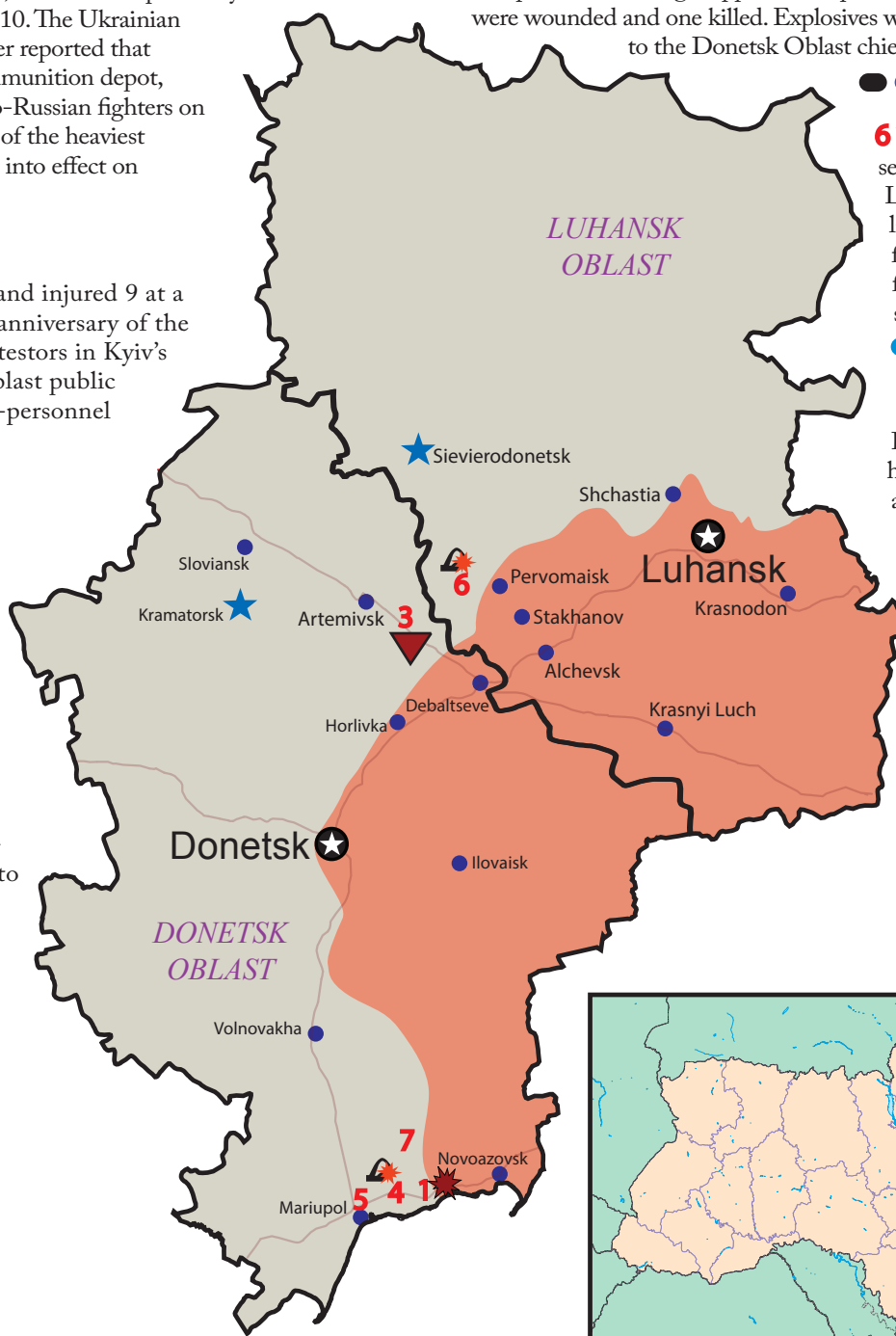
**5** February 23: Members of a pro-Russian sabotage and intelligence group opened fire on Ukrainian police after being stopped for inspection in Mariupol. Two police officers were wounded and one killed. Explosives were found in the vehicle, according to the Donetsk Oblast chief of police.



**6** February 23-26: Pro-Russian separatists, likely affiliated with the Luhansk People's Republic (LNR), launched mortar and artillery strikes from Pervomaisk onto the Ukrainian front-line city of Popasna and surrounding areas.



**7** February 24: The Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) claimed to have captured the villages of Pavlopil and Pyshechyk, northeast of Mariupol. A spokesman for the Ukrainian Anti-Terror Operation (ATO) said the villages were in a neutral buffer zone without Ukrainian forces. The Ukrainian Azov Regiment captured Pavlopil along with five other areas on February 10 but left the village thereafter, according to the ATO statement.



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



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In the week following the Ukrainian surrender of Debaltseve, a strategic rail junction between the separatist strongholds of Donetsk and Luhansk, the conflict has exhibited a pattern of hostilities reminiscent of the frequently violated ceasefire period from September 2014 to January 2015. As in the previous ceasefire period, shelling from both sides has persisted across the frontline and pro-Russian terrorist attacks were executed and thwarted in major cities outside the southeastern Donbas region. A shift from separatist offensive maneuvers to indirect fire exchanges, a prisoner exchange on February 21, and claims of a partial artillery withdrawal from the frontline by both sides all suggest that the ceasefire agreed on February 12 altered the situation on the ground in Donbas, albeit neither immediately nor permanently. Russia and the separatists may choose to extend this period of low-level fighting for several more weeks to reinforce the newly agreed front line before launching an offensive maneuver on the strategic port city Mariupol. Shyrokyne, a village 10 kilometers east of Mariupol, has become the most actively contested area in Donbas and reports from Ukrainian military analyst Dmytro Tymchuk suggest pro-Russian forces and equipment have moved into the area since the surrender of Debaltseve. This suggests that Russia and the separatists are positioning themselves for an eventual offensive on Mariupol under the guise of pursuing a ceasefire.