

Ukraine Crisis Update: March 12, 2015

1 March 7: Multiple roadside IEDs detonated near the separatist-held city of Alchevsk, injuring the Cossack commander of the "Prizrak" (Ghost) Brigade, a unit affiliated with the Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) which controls the city. A pro-Kyiv group calling itself the "Tini" (Shadows) Partisan Detachment claimed responsibility for the attack although their involvement is unconfirmed. Increased reports of separatist infighting in Luhansk Oblast and the location of Alchevsk around 40 kilometers within separatist-held territory suggest that the LNR may also have staged the assassination attempt.

2 March 9: A rail bridge was blown up near the village of Orikhove. Representatives of both the Ukrainian Anti-Terror Operation (ATO) and the Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) acknowledged the explosion and the ATO suggested that separatists were to blame. Separatist sources said the destroyed rail bridge was the last connecting LNR-held territory to Ukrainian-controlled Luhansk Oblast.

3 March 9-10: According to the General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, separatists clashed with Ukrainian ATO forces near the village of Maiorske outside Horlivka.

4 March 9-11: Separatist forces likely affiliated with the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) launched grenade, mortar, and artillery strikes on Ukrainian Anti-Terror Operation (ATO) positions to the immediate north and west of Donetsk city.

5 March 9-12: Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) militants clashed with Ukrainian forces near the village of Shyrokyne, the site of the most intense fighting since the Ukrainian withdrawal from Debaltseve on February 18. ATO sources reported coming under separatist tank, mortar, and sniper fire and repelling attacks from separatist infantrymen.

6 March 10: According to the ATO press center, Cossack militants launched mortar strikes near Stakhanov on other separatists likely affiliated with the Luhansk People's Republic (LNR). The ATO reported the previous day that Cossack commander and LNR critic Pavel Dromov was preparing for clashes with the LNR near Stakhanov and Antratsyt. Ukrainian military analyst Dmytro Tymchuk reported that the Cossacks had been defeated by the LNR in Antratsyt and Krasnyi Luch and at least some units had agreed to join the LNR.

7 March 10: Pro-Russian separatists launched mortar strikes on the villages of Lozove and Luhanske.

8 March 12: An explosion occurred at a business center in Odesa, damaging the office of the "Samopomich" (Self Help) party. As has been typical of IED attacks in Odesa, the explosion took place in the middle of the night and did not inflict civilian casualties. "Samopomich" is Ukraine's third most represented party in parliament and is headed by Lviv mayor Andriy Sadovyi.

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



Content:
Hugo Spaulding and Ukraine Team

Graphics:
John Sauerhoff

©2015 by the Institute for the Study of War

While Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko announced that both the separatists and Ukrainian Anti-Terror Operation (ATO) forces had withdrawn a large amount of heavy weaponry in accordance with the February 12 ceasefire agreement, shelling and clashes persisted in several key areas across the frontline. The village of Shyrokyne, east of the strategic port city of Mariupol, remains the most actively contested area in the Donbas region. Not only has the ceasefire agreement failed to improve the situation on the ground in Shyrokyne, which became a flashpoint when Ukraine's "Azov" regiment captured it on February 10, but the heavy weapon withdrawal from other areas on the front line may have exacerbated the situation by allowing the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) to concentrate weapons around the village.

Russia and the leadership of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics (DNR and LNR) also appear to be utilizing the pause in major offensive operations to solidify the security structure within separatist-controlled territory. Reports of infighting between Cossack commander Pavel Dromov and the LNR and an assassination attempt by unknown actors on another Cossack commander, Aleksey Mozgovoy, suggest that the LNR may have launched a campaign to break down and incorporate autonomously acting separatist units in the region. An ATO report of an increase in Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) agents in the area may indicate the Kremlin's hand in these "cleansings." The integration of disparate separatist units into the security structure of the DNR and LNR, or even a united Novorossiia, likely represents a key Russian military objective as it attempts to bolster the military and political resiliency of its fledgling proxy states.