

Ukraine Crisis Update: April 2, 2015

1 March 27-April 1: Ukrainian Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) forces clashed with Russian-backed separatists near the village of Shyrokyne, a constant flashpoint over the first six weeks of the Minsk II ceasefire. The international monitoring mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) described the village as under the control of the “Donetsk People’s Republic” (DNR) separatist group, suggesting that ATO forces have been pushed to the outskirts of the village since claiming to capture the village in early February.

2 March 27-April 1: Pro-Russian forces, likely affiliated with the DNR, launched indirect fire weapons on Ukrainian ATO positions north and west of separatist-held Donetsk city. Ukrainian military sources reported coming under fire from heavy mortar and artillery, weapons which were required to be withdrawn per the February 12 Minsk II ceasefire agreement. Members of a Russian military unit thought to have fought in the siege of Debaltseve arrived in Donetsk, according to the ATO’s deputy commander.

3 March 27-30: Separatists, likely affiliated with the “Luhansk People’s Republic” (LNR) and pro-Russian Cossack formations, attacked Ukrainian forces with grenade launchers and automatic weapons along the Siverskyi Donets River near the Ukrainian-held villages of Trokhizbenka and Krymske. Ukrainian and pro-Russian forces also skirmished near the village of Novotoshkivske (westernmost).

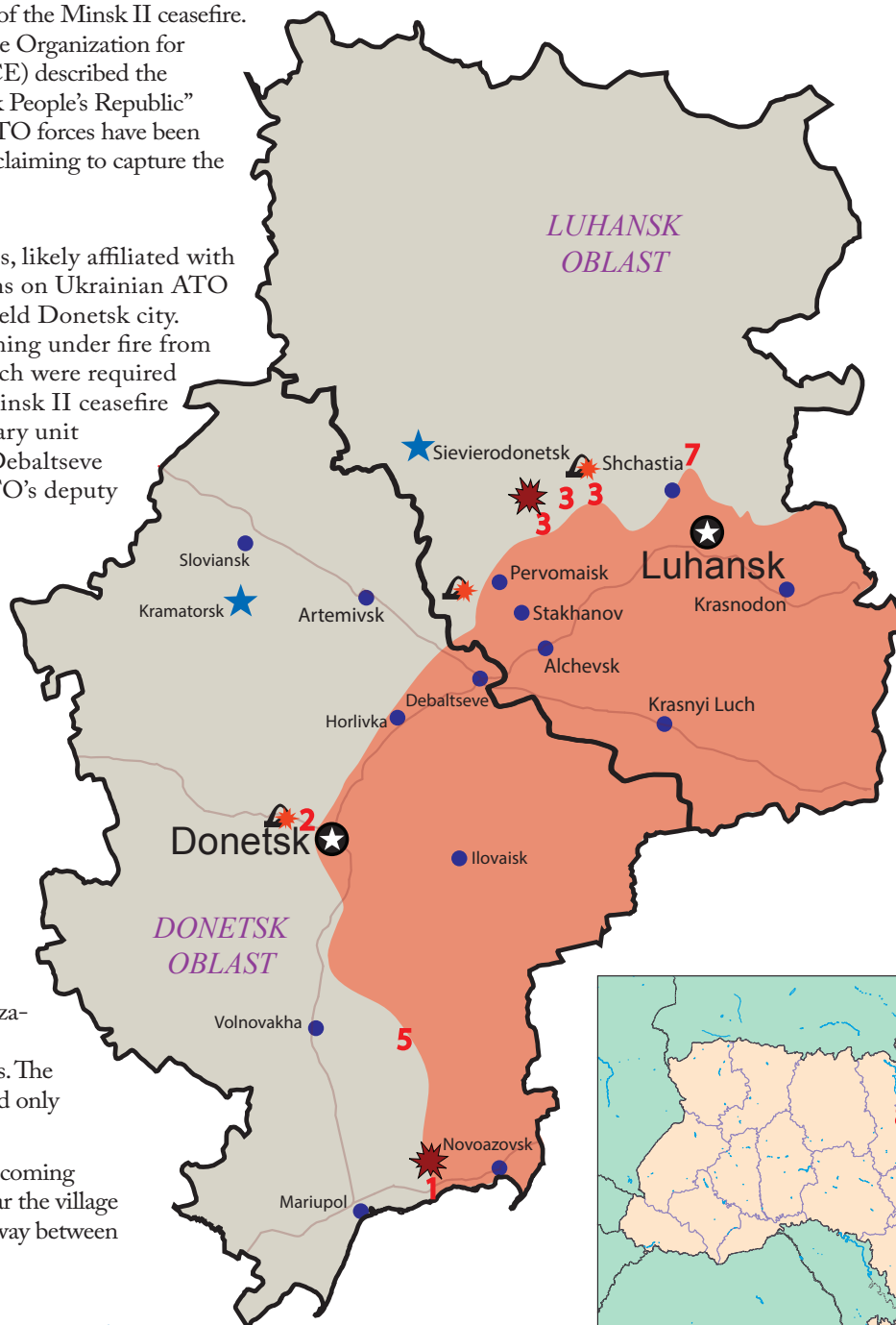
4 March 28: An improvised explosive device (IED) detonated near a gas pipe outside a building in Odesa housing organizations which support Ukraine’s ATO forces including the “Azov” Regiment Civic Corps. The explosion took place late at night and caused only minor material damage.

5 March 29-30: Ukrainian forces reported coming under fire from separatist heavy mortars near the village of Hranitne, east of the strategic H20 highway between Donetsk and Mariupol.

6 March 30-31: Two explosions rocked a railway station in Ukraine’s second city of Kharkiv, causing material damage. The first suspected attack caused fuel storage intended for the Ukrainian Armed Forces to explode while the second detonated under a moving train, destroying several meters of rail tracks.

7 April 1: According to the Kyiv-backed governor of Luhansk Oblast, members of the “Aidar” battalion, a volunteer unit incorporated into the Armed Forces of Ukraine, seized a bread factory near the Ukrainian frontline town of Petrivka. The ATO and Ministry of Defense (MoD) denied that any unit of the Armed Forces was involved in the incident. The governor had appealed to the MoD a day prior accusing “Aidar” members of using their weapons against civilians and law enforcement officials

8 April 2: An IED detonated outside a bank branch in Kyiv, causing minor damage to the building.



- 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



Hugo Spaulding and the ISW Ukraine Team

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Pro-Russian forces may be positioning themselves to launch surprise offensive maneuvers. Reports of regular Russian soldiers arriving in Donetsk and ongoing heavy mortar and artillery strikes on Ukrainian forces suggest pro-Russian forces may be softening Ukrainian defenses before seizing key terrain on the northwestern perimeter of the separatist stronghold. An indication from international monitors that Ukrainian forces no longer occupy the southern village of Shyrokyne suggests that the Russian-backed separatists have made gains in the Mariupol area despite the ceasefire. The continuation of heavy clashes near the village indicate that the eastern approach to Mariupol remains an offensive priority for the separatists, in contrast to the shelling outside of Donetsk which may reflect an immediate defensive objective. A rift between the “Aidar” Ukrainian volunteer battalion and Kyiv-backed Luhansk Oblast governor Hennadiy Moskal may also present a vulnerability in Ukraine’s defense of frontline positions along the Siverskyi Donets River, which came under attack throughout the week.