

Ukraine Crisis Update: April 9, 2015

1 April 2-8: Separatist forces continued to fire on Ukrainian military positions from mortars, grenade launchers, tanks, and artillery north and west of the “Donetsk People’s Republic” (DNR) stronghold of Donetsk. Three Ukrainian soldiers were killed and two injured in a landmine explosion near the Ukrainian-held city of Avdiivka, north of the destroyed Donetsk airport. The DNR released 16 Ukrainian POWs in the town of Marinka, west of Donetsk.

2 April 2-8: Clashes and exchanges of indirect fire continued near the coastal village of Shyrokyne, which is at least partially controlled by Russian-backed separatists. Two Ukrainian soldiers were killed and one injured when their SUV triggered an anti-tank mine near the village. Separatist indirect fire attacks on Ukrainian positions were reported north of Shyrokyne near the villages of Chermalyk and Mykolaivka. There was an uptick in Ukrainian reporting of separatist surveillance drone overflights in the greater Mariupol area.

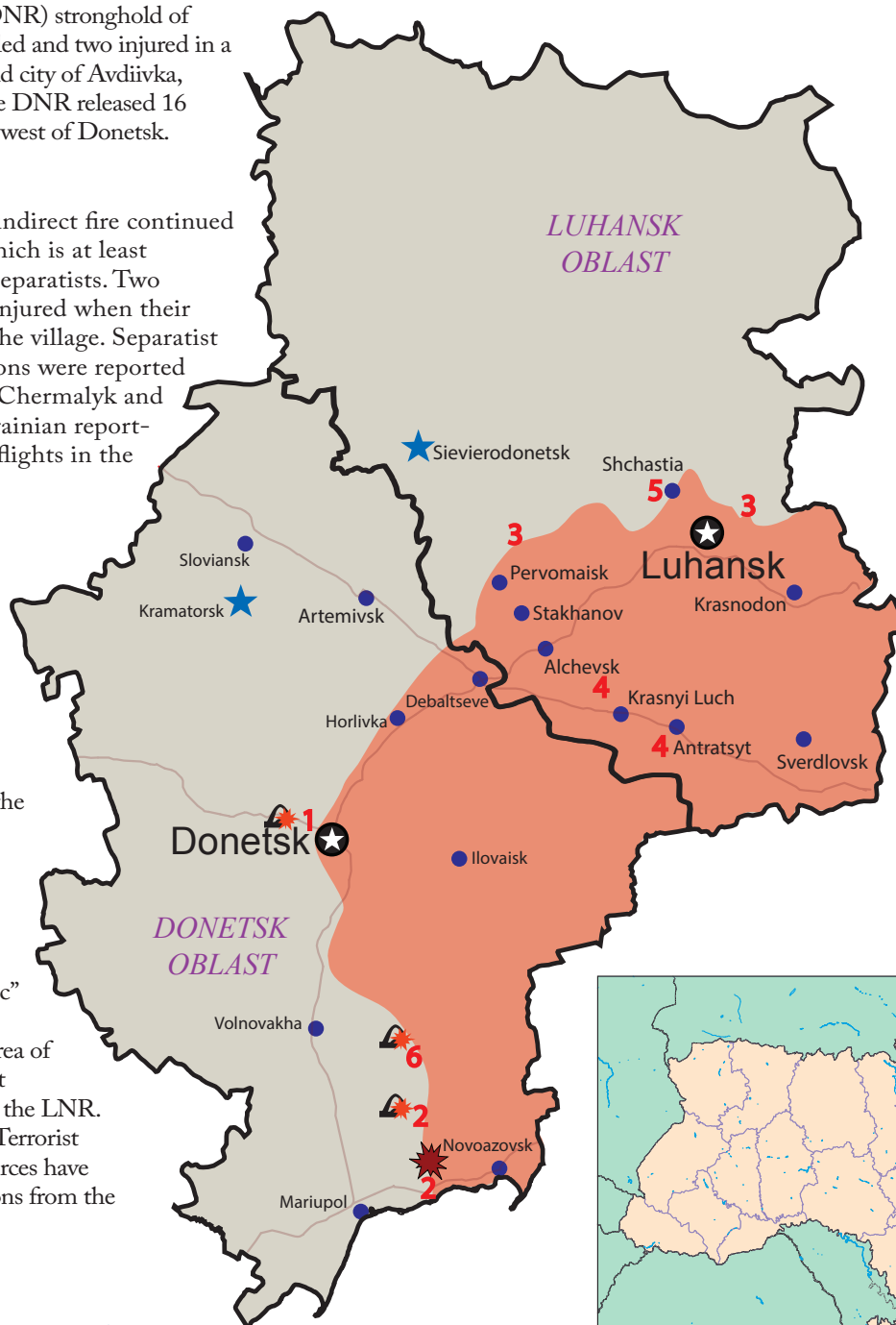
3 April 2-9: Firefights and separatist indirect fire strikes were reported across the frontline in Luhansk Oblast from a Ukrainian checkpoint on the Bakhmutka highway east to the town of Stanytsia Luhanska. Ukrainian forces fended off what was reported as a “company-size” group of pro-Russian infantrymen with armored support along the Bakhmutka highway in western Luhansk Oblast.

4 April 3, 9: Armed men, likely either Russian special forces or members of the Russian-backed “Luhansk People’s Republic” (LNR), arrived in the cities of Petrovske (north) and Antratsyt (south) to clear the area of Cossack forces, which support the separatist movement but operate independently from the LNR. The deputy commander of Ukraine’s Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) reported that Cossack forces have deployed artillery to defend against incursions from the LNR.

5 April 5: Four soldiers from Ukraine’s 92nd mechanized brigade were killed while crossing a bridge in the frontline city of Shchastia. Local Ukrainian officials differed in their reporting of the incident, with some stating that the soldiers’ vehicle was hit by an anti-tank missile and others suggesting separatists had mined the bridge.

6 April 6: Separatist forces fired on Ukrainian forces from a “Nona” 120 mm self-propelled mortar near the village of Hranitne, according to an ATO report.

7 April 6-7: Two explosions took place at night inside and south of Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second biggest city, inflicting no casualties. The first explosion took place on a railroad south of the city, causing damage to the track, while a second blast took place at a flagpole flying the Ukrainian flag in a northern district of Kharkiv.



- 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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Ukraine took steps to integrate the remaining independent Ukrainian paramilitary units in accordance with the February 12 Minsk ceasefire agreement, while avoiding an armed confrontation between regular and irregular forces participating in the counterinsurgency. In addition to an integration agreement with the independent OUN (“Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists”) battalion, Kyiv appointed Dmytro Yarosh, the head of far-right political and independent paramilitary group Pravyi Sector (“Right Sector”), as an advisor to the Commander-in-Chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

In contrast to Ukraine’s military consolidation effort, “Luhansk People’s Republic” (LNR) militants, likely with the help of Russian special forces, intensified operations to neutralize independent Cossack separatist units by launching clearing missions in Cossack-held areas of Luhansk Oblast. These efforts reflect the Russian-supported objective to legitimize the proxy administrations in Donetsk and Luhansk and their armed formations following the February ceasefire agreement and ahead of proposed internationally monitored local elections later this year.