

Ukraine Crisis Update: May 21, 2015

1 May 15-21: Russian-backed separatists launched artillery and direct fire attacks on Ukrainian positions north of the city of Donetsk. The OSCE international monitoring mission reported indirect fire strikes on positions held by the Donetsk People's Republic in and around the city. Ukraine's Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) press center claimed that separatists were carrying out a "scorched earth" operation in the Ukrainian-held village of Pisky using incendiary ammunition, possibly white phosphorous shells. On May 21, the Kyiv-backed police chief reported two civilians wounded in mortar shelling in Avdiivka. ATO forces north of Donetsk shot down an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) described as a Russian-made "Forpost" drone on May 21.

2 May 15-20: Clashes continued around the village of Shyrokyne, where Ukrainian forces reported coming under heavy artillery and tank fire. Three Ukrainian soldiers were wounded during a three hour fight near Shyrokyne on May 19.

3 May 15-20: Ukrainian forces reported assaults and shelling against their positions north of the city of Horlivka, held by the Donetsk People's Republic. On May 16, Russian-backed separatists shelled civilian areas in the Ukrainian-held city of Dzerzhynsk, northwest of Horlivka.

4 May 15-21: On May 18, a separatist mechanized force of three infantry combat vehicles with infantry support attacked Ukrainian positions near the village of Troitske, south of the Ukrainian frontline city of Popasna. On May 19, Russian-backed separatists ambushed Ukrainian forces near the village of Katerynivka, northeast of Popasna. Three Ukrainian soldiers were killed and six were wounded in the attack. An improvised explosive device detonated under a rail line near Popasna on May 18.

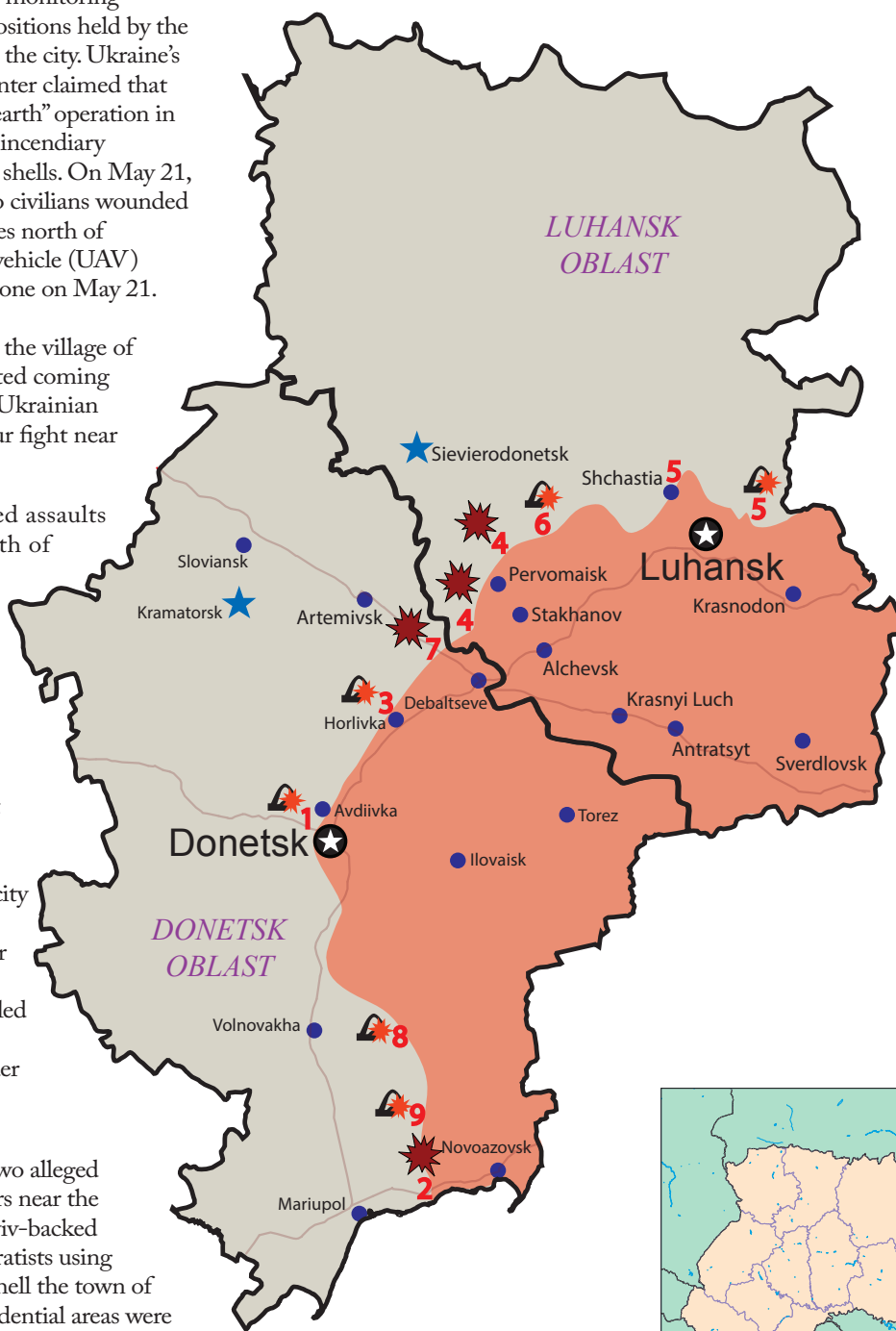
5 May 15-21: Ukrainian forces captured two alleged Russian military intelligence (GRU) officers near the city of Shchastia (west) on May 17. The Kyiv-backed governor of Luhansk Oblast reported separatists using "Grad" multiple launch rocket systems to shell the town of Stanytsia Luhanska (east) on May 16. Residential areas were hit by the shelling in Stanytsia Luhanska.

6 May 15-18: Separatist forces shelled residential areas along the T1303 "Bakhmutka" highway in the village of Zolote on May 16 and the village of Trokhizbenka on May 17. One civilian was wounded on May 15 and another on May 16 during fighting between Ukrainian forces and separatists in the village of Krymske.

7 May 16-17, 20-21: Russian-backed separatist forces clashed with Ukrainian Anti-Terrorist Operation forces along the Artemivsk-Debaltseve leg of the M03 highway around the Ukrainian-held city of Svitlodarsk, inflicting ATO casualties.

8 May 17-20: Russian-backed separatists concentrated shelling on the Ukrainian villages of Hranitne and Starohnativka, east of the key Donetsk-Mariupol leg of the H20 highway. Civilian areas in Hranitne were hit by separatist shells on May 18.

9 May 17, 20: Separatist forces assaulted the villages of Chermalyk and Pavlopil on May 17. International observers from the OSCE reported advanced Russian-made 9K35 Strela-10 surface-to-air missile systems being deployed by separatist forces near the village of Oktiabr, east of Pavlopil and Chermalyk.



- 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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Russian-backed separatists broadened their offensive operations along the frontline in Donbas ahead of Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko's trip to the EU Eastern Partnership summit in Riga, Latvia. Russia may facilitate expanded separatist offensive operations in retaliation to Ukraine's participation in the partnership initiative, which Moscow views as a hostile encroachment on its sphere of influence. Russia's delivery of a 27th supply convoy to Donetsk and Luhansk, the deployment of advanced Russian-made surface-to-air missile systems east of Mariupol and Ukraine's shooting down of a Russian-made drone north of Donetsk and capture of two reported Russian military personnel near Schastia in Luhansk Oblast signal Russia's continued efforts to bolster separatist fighting capabilities along the front line. Fighting along the M03 highway between the cities of Artemivsk and Debaltseve reached its peak intensity since combined Russian-separatist forces captured Debaltseve on February 18. A sharp escalation of separatist attacks in the neighboring Popasna District of Luhansk Oblast may signal separatist intent to posture for a future Debaltseve-style "cauldron" maneuver to encircle Artemivsk. Such a maneuver would allow the Russian-backed separatists to advance north and threaten the Kyiv-backed Donetsk Oblast government and the Ukrainian Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) headquarters in Kramatorsk. Ukraine's ATO press service reported that separatists fired incendiary munitions as part of a "scorched earth" operation against the village of Pisky, west of the destroyed Donetsk airport. This report and continued shelling of civilian areas around Donetsk and elsewhere may point to separatist operations to clear out populated frontline areas prior to launching offensive maneuvers.