

# Ukraine Crisis Update: May 28, 2015

**1** May 21-28: Separatist forces shelled Ukrainian military positions around the villages of Shyrokyne (south) and Hranitne (north) in southern Donetsk Oblast. A Grad MLRS strike was reported north of Hranitne on May 21. The OSCE international monitoring mission reported intensive exchanges of indirect fire around Shyrokyne on May 24 after two days of relative calm.



**2** May 27-28: Ukrainian forces clashed with Russian-backed separatists near the government-held town of Marinka, immediately southwest of separatist-controlled Donetsk. A clash was also reported near the village of Berezove, along the key highway between Donetsk and Mariupol. Separatist shelling was reported in both areas including "Grad" multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS) near Berezove.



**3** May 22-28: Separatists launched indirect fire strikes on Ukrainian military positions north of Donetsk city. MLRS strikes were reported in a village north of Avdiivka. The OSCE international monitoring mission reported shelling against separatist positions north of Donetsk near the Donetsk airport and the village of Spartak.



**4** May 26-28: At least three civilians were killed and four wounded in shelling in residential areas of separatist-controlled Horlivka from May 26. The Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) accused Ukrainian forces of shelling the city while Ukrainian military and government officials blamed the DNR for staging the attacks. Ukrainian forces clashed with DNR forces west of Horlivka on the night of May 27. Separatist forces continued to shell Ukrainian-held areas north of the city.



**5** May 22, 28: Separatists launched artillery, mortar and anti-tank missile strikes on Ukrainian military positions near the Artemivsk-Debaltseve highway.



● Donetsk People's Republic (DNR)

★ Acting Regional Admin Center

● Luhansk People's Republic (LNR)

★ Regional Admin Center

● Cossack

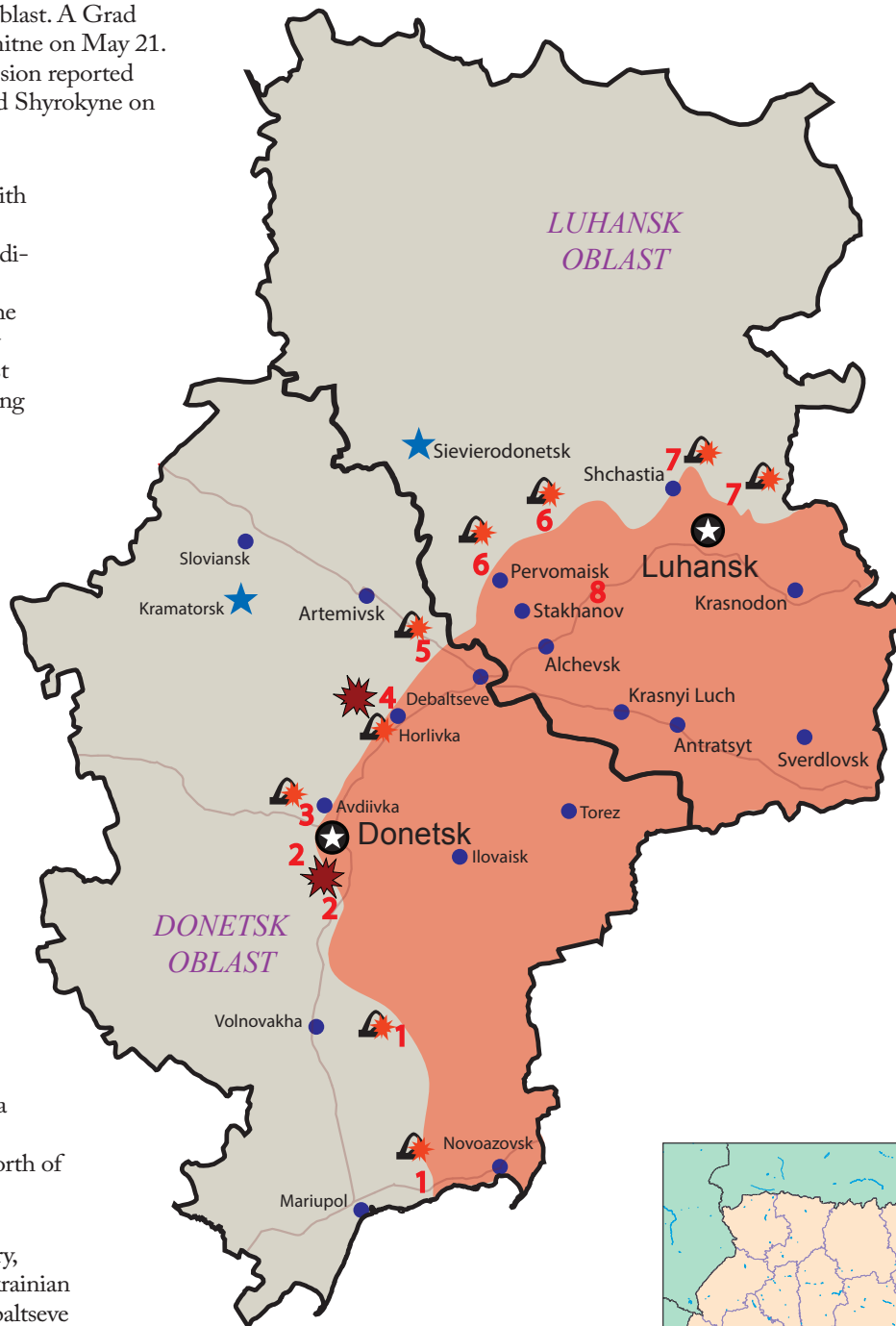
■ Separatist Held Territory

● Combined Separatist

★ Major Clash

● Ukrainian Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO)

★ Indirect Fire



**6** May 22-28: Separatists shelled and skirmished with Ukrainian forces along the contested "Bakhmutka" highway (east) and in the Ukrainian held city of Popasna (west). At least one Ukrainian soldier was killed and several more injured near the Ukrainian-held frontline city of Zolote, an area which endured particularly heavy attacks including an MLRS strike.



**7** May 22-28: Separatist forces attacked Ukrainian positions around the city of Shchastia (west) and the town of Stanytsia Luhanska (east) including from tanks. One Ukrainian soldier was wounded and another killed by a separatist grenade booby trap near Stanytsia Luhanska on May 27.



**8** May 23: Unknown gunmen killed independent separatist commander Alexey Mozgovoy and up to six others while they were travelling between the cities of Luhansk and Alchevsk. Members of Mozgovoy's "Ghost" brigade gave him a public burial in Alchevsk, where the autonomous separatist unit is headquartered, on May 27. A report from a leading Ukrainian military analyst suggests that the Russian-backed "Luhansk People's Republic" (LNR) has undertaken efforts to incorporate the "Ghost" brigade since Mozgovoy's assassination.



Hugo Spaulding

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The continued broadening of attacks on Ukrainian frontline positions in Donbas suggests that the Russian-backed separatists have transitioned to a new phase of offensive operations. Ukrainian forces recorded clashes and heavy indirect fire along most of the front line this week. This pattern of widespread separatist offensive activity contrasts with the concentrated separatist shelling around a few key areas witnessed in March and April 2015 following the February 12 ceasefire agreement. Separatists expanded their offensive operations most ostensibly into Ukrainian-held areas south and west of the city of Donetsk. For the second week in a row, separatists targeted previously quiet areas north of Debaltseve. Both of these new targets are centered around strategic highways leading to the Ukrainian strongholds in the north and south of the oblast. An offensive maneuver along these highways would allow the Russian-backed separatists to advance toward the key government-controlled cities of Artemivsk and Mariupol. The separatists' operational shift from isolated shelling to widespread attacks across a large front will make preparations for such a maneuver difficult to detect. There is no indication that the Russian-backed forces are prioritizing a particular target including the highways to Artemivsk and Mariupol. Reports this week of increased Russian military staging along Ukraine's open southeastern border may indicate Russia's preparation to support a maneuver.