

Ukraine Crisis Update: June 5, 2015

1 May 31- June 4: Separatist forces fired on Ukrainian positions around the town of Marinka, which was almost untouched by shelling during the ceasefire period until May 27. On June 3, Russian-backed separatists launched at least two waves of combined arms assaults on Marinka and Krasnohorivka, a city north of Marinka. The ensuing battle was the largest since combined Russian and separatist forces captured the city of Debaltseve on February 18. Ukrainian forces repelled the attack but separatists continue to shell the area and threaten to re-launch the maneuver.

2 May 31- June 5: Separatists sharply intensified shelling on Ukrainian positions along the northern leg of the strategic highway between Donetsk and Mariupol in tandem with the launch of maneuver operations west of Donetsk. On June 1, Ukrainian forces reported clashes with a separatist reconnaissance unit near the villages of Slavne and Mykolaivka, on either side of the highway. On June 3, separatist forces fired on the Ukrainian-held villages of Novotroitske, Buhas, and Berezove along the highway. Separatist forces launched “Grad” rocket strikes on Ukrainian positions near the villages of Hranitne and Starohnativka around 15 kilometers east of the highway.

3 June 2-3: The OSCE international monitoring mission to Ukraine reported firing by Ukrainian forces on civilian areas in the city of Donetsk on June 2. Ukrainian forces also fired artillery into the city of Donetsk during the separatist attack on Marinka on June 3, resulting in power outages throughout the city. The Ukrainian general staff subsequently admitted that the “Anti-Terrorist Operation” forces redeployed and fired heavy weapons withdrawn under the February ceasefire agreement following the launch of a separatist maneuver..

4 May 31- June 4: Russian-backed separatist forces fired mortars and artillery on Ukrainian military positions north of Donetsk in the buildup to and aftermath of the offensive maneuver west of the city. These positions were a primary focus of separatist shelling throughout the ceasefire and continue to be targeted as the Russian-backed forces begin maneuver operations west of the city.

5 May 31- June 3: Fighting continues around separatist-held Horlivka and the government-held territory north of the city. Separatist leaders claim that Ukrainian forces shelled the Horlivka and the nearby town of Holmivskyyi on May 31. Separatists fired on Ukrainian positions in the villages of Novhorodske, Kirove, and Leninske with small arms, grenade launchers and heavy machine guns from June 1 onward. The separatists may attempt to break through the front line north of Horlivka to support an offensive against Artemivsk.

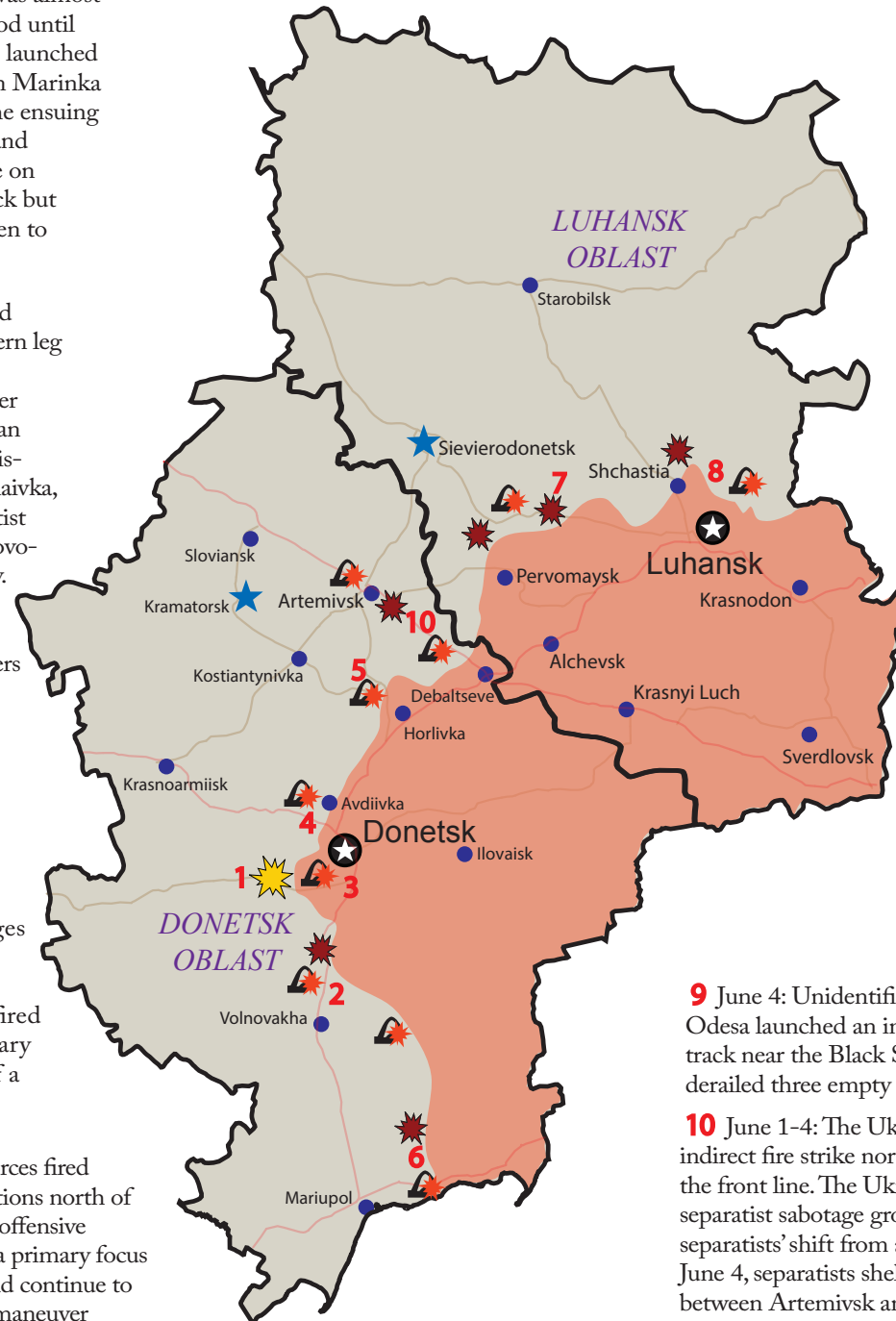
6 May 30- June 4: Fighting intensified east of the strategic port city of Mariupol. Ukrainian forces clashed with Russian-backed separatists near the village of Chermalyk, northeast of Mariupol, where the separatists were reportedly attempting to penetrate the front line. Separatists have targeted an expanded number of Ukrainian positions north of Shyrokyne, one of the main focal points of separatist indirect fire throughout the ceasefire period.

7 June 1-5: Separatist forces skirmished and exchanged fire with Ukrainian troops around the contested “Bakhmutka” highway. A separatist mortar shell struck a vehicle at least 10 kilometers north of the front line on June 3, killing two civilians. Clashes between separatists and Ukrainian soldiers occurred near the village of Katerynivka on June 4, west of the “Bakhmutka” highway. The Kyiv-backed governor of Luhansk Oblast reported separatist assaults against the Ukrainian 29th Checkpoint on the highway on June 5.

8 May 31-June 5: Shelling and skirmishes continued near Ukrainian positions north and northeast of Luhansk city. A grenade booby trap killed two civilians near the town of Stanytsia Luhanska on May 31. A leading Ukrainian military analyst reported two attempted penetration maneuvers near the Ukrainian-held city of Shchastia on June 3. Stanytsia Luhanska suffered a power outage on June 3 due to separatist shelling.

9 June 4: Unidentified members of suspected pro-Russian cells in Odesa launched an improvised explosive device attack on a railway track near the Black Sea port city. The blast damaged two tracks and derailed three empty train cars.

10 June 1-4: The Ukrainian military reported a long range separatist indirect fire strike northwest of Artemivsk, nearly 30 kilometers from the front line. The Ukrainian military also reported a clash with a separatist sabotage group just southeast of Artemivsk, highlighting the separatists’ shift from artillery softening to penetration maneuvers. On June 4, separatists shelled Ukrainian positions along the highway between Artemivsk and Debaltseve, a key transit hub encircled by combined Russian-separatist forces in February.



- Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR)
- Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR)
- Ukrainian Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO)
- ☄ Indirect Fire
- ☄ Clash
- ☄ Battle
- Separatist-held Territory
- ★ Regional Admin Center
- ★ Acting Regional Admin Center

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Russian-backed separatists launched an offensive maneuver on June 3 after several weeks of military buildup and an expansion from concentrated shelling to attacks across a coordinated front. Separatist combined arms forces stormed Ukrainian military positions bordering the western city districts of Donetsk. Ukraine’s military claimed to have repelled the initial maneuver. However, previous patterns of Russian-backed offensive operations suggest that additional assaults will be launched around Ukrainian positions. A sharp uptick in attempted separatist penetration maneuvers and artillery strikes deep into Ukrainian territory in other areas along the front line suggest that the Russian-backed forces may mount a signature tandem offensive in sync with the maneuver west of Donetsk. A recent shift in separatist targeting to the highways leading north to Artemivsk and south to Mariupol may indicate Russian and separatist preparations for an offensive toward these key government-held cities. As Russia and the separatists demonstrated in Ilovaisk in August 2014 and Debaltseve in February 2015, a tandem offensive would isolate Ukraine’s frontline forces and prevent them from organizing a cohesive defense.