

# Ukraine Crisis Update: August 26, 2015

**1** August 20-25: Separatists launched indirect fire on Ukrainian positions east of Mariupol including Sartana, a village on the northeastern outskirts of the strategic port city that the separatists previously targeted with an artillery barrage on August 16. Two Ukrainian marines were reported killed in shelling less than ten kilometers outside Mariupol on August 25.



**2** August 19-25: Separatist forces continued to launch indirect fire strikes on Ukrainian forces east of the highway between the separatist-held city of Donetsk and Ukrainian-held Mariupol. Ukrainian forces reportedly repelled a separatist reconnaissance and sabotage group along the highway around 20 kilometers outside Donetsk on August 25.



**3** August 19-26: Separatist forces continued to launch heavy indirect fire on Ukrainian positions west and north of the DNR-held city of Donetsk. On August 25, the separatist mayor's office of Donetsk accused Ukrainian forces of shelling Staromykhailivka, a separatist-held village on the western outskirts of the city, killing one civilian.



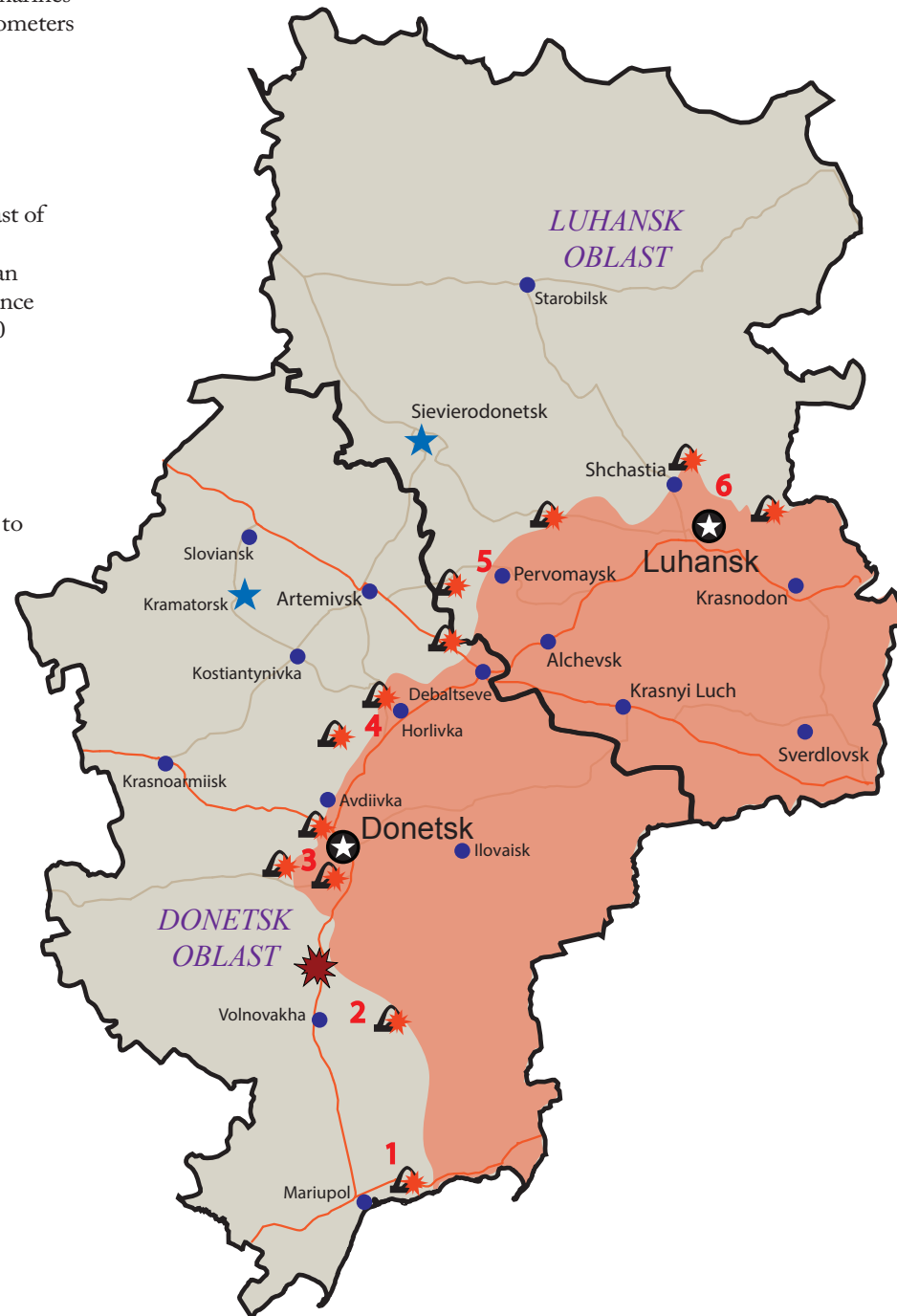
**4** August 20-26: Separatist forces continued to launch indirect fire on Ukrainian positions north and west of the DNR-held city of Horlivka. On August 21, three Ukrainian national guardsmen were reported wounded around 15 kilometers inside Ukrainian territory, north of the separatist-held Donetsk-Horlivka highway. Separately, the OSCE international monitoring mission assessed that mortars struck Horlivka on August 25 from northwest of the city, where Ukrainian forces are positioned. Separatist officials reported that one civilian was killed in the shelling.



**5** August 20-25: Separatist forces continued to launch indirect fire on Ukrainian positions along the contested "Bakhmutka" highway in western Luhansk Oblast and the highway between separatist-held Debaltseve and the key government-controlled city of Artemivsk. Ukraine's military reported separatist attacks with multiple launch rocket system (MLRS) on government-held villages between the two highways on August 20 and 23. On August 24, the OSCE assessed that another MLRS attack launched from a likely separatist position against a Ukrainian-held area near the "Bakhmutka" highway. The OSCE also assessed that indirect fire, likely launched from Ukrainian positions, struck separatist positions near the "Bakhmutka" highway.



**6** August 19-25: Separatist forces continued to launch attacks with grenade launchers, mortars, and high caliber rifles around the Ukrainian frontline towns of Shchastia and Stanytsia Luhanska, north and northeast of LNR-held Luhansk city. The OSCE assessed that indirect fire, likely launched from Ukrainian positions, struck separatist positions near Stanytsia Luhanska. On August 25, Ukraine's national security chief accused Russian military units of building five pontoon bridges across the Siverskyi Donetsk River, which runs along a portion of the Russian-Ukrainian border, in order to reinforce the separatists with conventional Russian forces.



- 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



Content: Hugo Spaulding and Ukraine Team  
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Russian-backed separatists continued to engage Ukrainian forces with indirect fire along the front line in Donbas, as talks resumed on the implementation of the February "Minsk II" ceasefire agreement. Separatist indirect fire killed two Ukrainian troops less than 10 kilometers outside of Mariupol, one week after a separatist artillery barrage killed three civilians in a suburb of the strategic port city. These developments, taken in conjunction with the August 10 separatist combined arms assault east of the Donetsk-Mariupol highway and the uptick in heavy separatist shelling of Ukrainian-held areas outside the port city indicate that the separatists have assumed a more offensive posture in the area since ceasefire negotiations paused on August 4. Russia and the separatists have previously expanded offensive operations in order to bring Kyiv to the negotiating table on more favorable terms, a strategy that has so far resulted in two unimplemented ceasefire agreements. Russia and the separatists have demonstrated that they have no intention to implement a lasting ceasefire and are using the ceasefire to disguise their offensive territorial objectives and to extract political concessions from Kyiv. Near-term separatist escalation or de-escalation in the Mariupol area will reflect the progress of ceasefire negotiations in Minsk and presidential-level talks between Ukraine and Germany, France and Russia, the three other countries behind the original negotiation of "Minsk II," and the degree to which they serve separatists' interests.