

# Ukraine Crisis Update: August 5, 2015

**1** August 2: Approximately 300 demonstrators, including members of the ultranationalist “Azov” volunteer regiment, held a protest in the strategic port city of Mariupol against proposals to withdraw Ukrainian soldiers and heavy weapons from the village of Shyrokyne fifteen kilometers to the east. The protestors echoed widespread concerns that such a withdrawal would expose Mariupol to an assault by Russian-based separatist forces. On August 5, Ukraine’s presidential administration stated that a decision to withdraw tanks and light artillery from the village would be made in the “near future.”

**2** July 29–August 4: Separatists continue to launch indirect fire attacks on Ukrainian forces east of the strategic Donetsk–Mariupol highway. Although separatist forces had previously concentrated their shelling in southern Donetsk Oblast against the village of Shyrokyne east of the strategic port city of Mariupol, recent incidents appear to be shifting north towards the Pavlopilske Reservoir following the unilateral separatist withdrawal from Shyrokyne on July 2.

**3** August 1, 4: Local residents reported heavy shelling in the city of Donetsk on the nights of August 1 and 4 according to Ukrainian media sources. The Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) accused Ukrainian forces of shelling the city using tanks and artillery with one reported civilian casualty.

**4** July 29–August 5: Separatist forces launched indirect fire attacks using tanks and heavy artillery on Ukrainian positions north of DNR-held city of Donetsk. These positions have been regularly targeted since the signing of the Minsk II ceasefire agreement in February. Separatists also continued to shell Ukrainian positions west of Donetsk, continuing a trend which began in early June following the repulsion of a separatist combined arms assault on the area. On August 3, Russian-backed separatist forces began concentrating their attacks west of Donetsk on a checkpoint near Marinka, wounding three Ukrainian border guards and one soldier.

**5** July 29–August 5: Ukrainian and separatist forces exchanged indirect fire in and around the DNR-held city of Horlivka throughout the week. Separatist sabotage and reconnaissance groups also clashed with Ukrainian forces northwest of Horlivka and north of the DNR-controlled Donetsk–Horlivka highway on August 4. The OSCE international monitoring mission recorded evidence of shelling in civilian areas and reports of civilian casualties in Horlivka, while the DNR alleged that seven civilians had been killed in the frontline city throughout July.

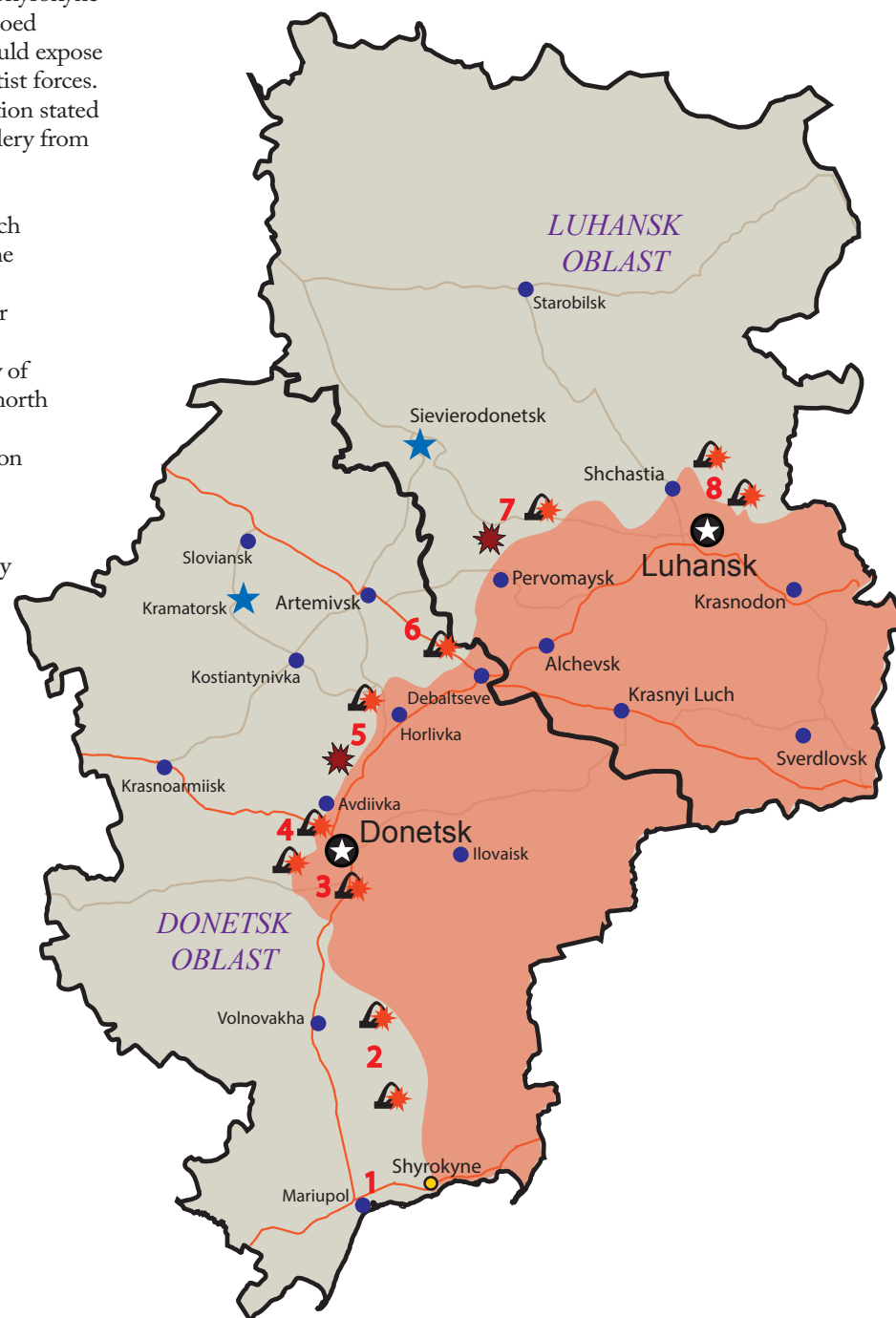
**6** July 29–August 4: Separatists continued to shell Ukrainian frontline positions along the highway between Debaltseve, which was captured by combined Russian and separatist forces on February 18, and Artemivsk, which serves as the gateway to government-controlled portions of northern Donetsk Oblast. The OSCE international monitoring mission reported that two Ukrainian troops were killed and twelve injured in shelling near the highway on August 2.

**7** July 29–August 4: Separatist forces continued to launch indirect fire strikes on Ukrainian positions along the contested “Bakhmutka Highway” in western Luhansk Oblast. On July 31, two civilians were wounded by shelling in government-held Toshkivka, a previously untargeted village 10 kilometers north of the frontline. On the same day, a separatist sabotage and reconnaissance group clashed with Ukrainian forces near the city of Zolote, just west of the highway.

**8** July 29–August 4: Separatist forces continued to shell Ukrainian frontline positions near the towns of Shchastia and Stanytsia Luhanska, located north and northeast of the Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR)-controlled city of Luhansk. Two Ukrainian soldiers were killed in heavy artillery fire in Stanytsia Luhanska on the night of August 2.

**9** August 3: Around 50 Ukrainian ultranationalists attacked the office of a pro-Russian MP with small arms and bricks in Kharkiv, the second-largest city in Ukraine. The far-right demonstrators accused the security detail of the MP of targeting them with gunfire. The incident arose in connection with rival protests over the pro-Russian parliamentary faction’s registration for local elections, which authorities in Kharkiv Oblast blocked over a technicality on August 3.

**10** August 3: An unidentified person threw an improvised explosive device (IED) at the gate of a pro-Ukrainian civil defense organization in the Black Sea port city Odesa, where IED attacks have occurred frequently since November 2014.



- 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 ISW Ukraine Team  
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Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine continued to launch indirect fire and probing infantry attacks against Ukrainian forces in a similar pattern to recent weeks as negotiators from Kyiv, Moscow and the separatist “republics” convened in Minsk to discuss the failing February 2015 ‘Minsk II’ ceasefire agreement. Negotiations on August 3 and 4 reportedly centered on a proposal to withdraw armor and light artillery from the front line as an expansion of a previous requirement for the removal of heavy weapons which was included in the February truce. On the eve of the Minsk talks, approximately 300 demonstrators including members of an ultranationalist Ukrainian volunteer unit gathered in the strategic port city of Mariupol to protest other proposals for the withdrawal of Ukrainian forces and heavy weapons from the village of Shyrokyne east of the city, arguing that such a move would leave Mariupol vulnerable to a separatist offensive maneuver. Following the talks in Minsk, separatist officials claimed that they had pressed for the immediate withdrawal of tanks and light artillery from major flashpoints along the front line and accused the Ukrainian government of “freezing” talks by insisting that weapons in these areas be withdrawn last. This claim contradicts previous separatist statement released on July 18 announcing that separatist forces also planned to delay the withdrawal of weaponry from hotly-contested areas. This contradiction, when taken in conjunction with the separatists’ record of openly violating the requirement to withdraw heavy weapons mandated by the ‘Minsk II’ agreement, suggests that Russian-backed separatist forces are using the negotiations to cast the Ukrainian government as the principle obstacle to peace and have little intention of deescalating major flashpoints unless it provides a direct military advantage.