

# Ukraine Crisis Update: July 22, 2015

**1** July 15-22: Separatists renewed attacks on Ukrainian forces near the village of Shyrokyne near the Azov Sea, 15 kilometers east of Mariupol. Ukrainian forces reported coming under fire near the northeastern outskirts of Mariupol and driving out a separatist sabotage and reconnaissance group around the village of Lebedynske, northwest of Shyrokyne. The resumption of attacks around Shyrokyne adds further evidence to suggest that separatist forces remain in an offensive posture in the area despite withdrawing from the village and calling for the creation of a demilitarized zone on July 2.



**2** July 16-22: Separatists targeted Ukrainian positions along the eastern side of the strategic Donetsk-Mariupol highway with heavy indirect fire. The highway likely represents a priority target for the separatists as a means to outflank Ukrainian forces in Mariupol.



**3** July 18-19: Separatists reported indirect fire in Donetsk city center, the first such instance since February 2015 when the "Minsk II" ceasefire was signed. The OSCE deputy chief monitor reported that the separatists had launched attacks from the city center on Ukrainian positions west of Donetsk and that Ukrainian forces had returned fire. Ukrainian military officials accused the separatists of firing on the city in order to implicate Ukrainian forces in the attacks, which killed up to four civilians and damaged a hospital.



**4** July 17-22: Separatists continued to shell Ukrainian positions west of Donetsk city, including Marinka and Krasnohorivka, the targets of a June 3 separatist assault.



**5** July 16-22: Separatists continued heavy shelling of Ukrainian-held areas north of Donetsk city and increasingly shelled civilian areas. At least six civilians were killed in multiple indirect fire attacks in and around the city of Avdiivka. Ukrainian forces repelled a separatist sabotage and reconnaissance group near Avdiivka.



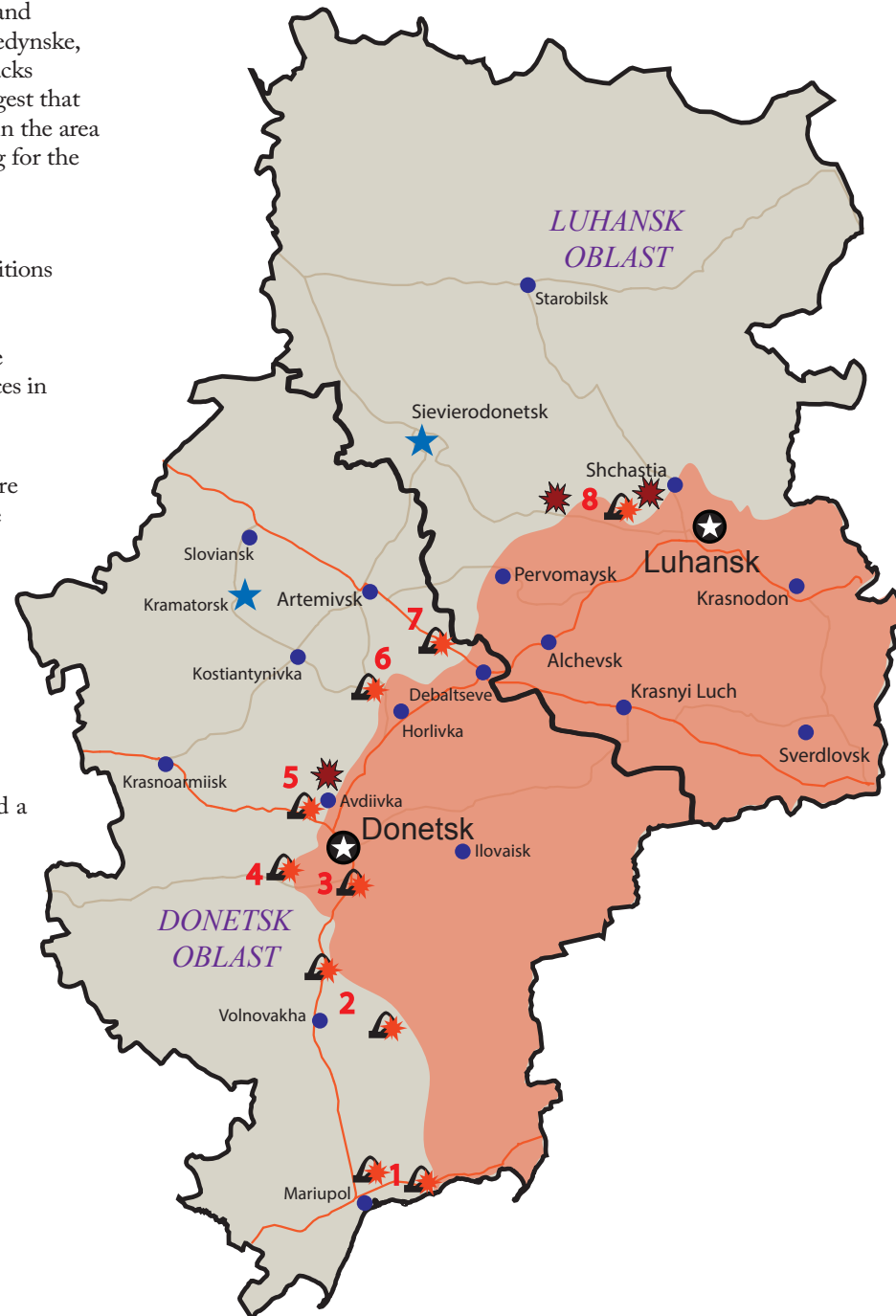
**6** July 15-21: Separatists continued daily shelling of Ukrainian military positions north and west of the city of Horlivka, controlled by the "Donetsk People's Republic" (DNR). The DNR accused Ukrainian forces of shelling Horlivka.



**7** July 19-22: Separatists targeted Ukrainian positions along the highway between Debaltseve, captured by separatists on February 18, and Artemivsk, a strategic gateway city to government-held northern Donetsk Oblast.



**8** July 15-22: Separatists targeted Ukrainian positions with small arms and indirect fire north of Luhansk city and to the west along the contested T1303 "Bakhmutka" highway. Ukrainian forces clashed with separatist sabotage and reconnaissance groups in the region, along the "Bakhmutka" highway and near the government-held frontline city of Shchastia.



- 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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Civilian areas in both government and separatist-held areas came under increased fire this week despite a breakthrough in negotiations over the withdrawal of weapons from the front line. Ukrainian and separatist officials reached a preliminary agreement to include previously exempt tanks and lighter weapons in the framework of the heavy weapons withdrawal prescribed by the February "Minsk II" ceasefire agreement. On June 21, OSCE international monitors confirmed that separatist and Ukrainian forces began withdrawing armor from the front lines in accordance with this addendum, which has yet to be signed. While it is too soon to discern whether the withdrawal will reduce the intensity of fighting in eastern Ukraine, a statement by the separatists that they will retain armor around the key cities of Donetsk and Debaltseve suggests that the Russian-backed forces may concentrate heavy fire around a few isolated flashpoints rather than coordinate shelling across the front. This tactical shift would allow the separatists to retain an offensive posture around strategically significant areas while reducing their level of offensive activity across the front line in a way that demonstrates their willingness to abide by agreements with Kyiv. Given previous violations of ceasefire and heavy weapons pull-back agreements by the separatists, it is likely that the separatists will only comply with a broader weapons withdrawal agreement when it suits their military and political objectives. A recent U.S.-backed initiative by Kyiv to consider granting temporary partial autonomy to separatist-held territory may have contributed to the separatists' willingness to agree an expanded withdrawal agreement at this time. Both Russian and separatist leaders have criticized the proposed autonomy legislation, however, because of its temporary nature and because it was drafted without the consultation of the separatists. Amid ongoing negotiations between Ukrainian Petro Poroshenko and his Russian, German and French counterparts, the separatists will likely remain poised to re-escalate their offensive operations even as they demonstrate their "commitment to the Minsk agreements" by withdrawing armor from the front lines.