

Ukraine Crisis Update: November 11, 2015

1 October 25, November 7-10: Ukrainian authorities postponed local elections in the key port city of Mariupol amidst accusations of potential fraud by a pro-Russian political party backed by powerful oligarch Rinat Akhmetov. The Ukrainian military reported coming under fire from separatist snipers, mortars and grenade launchers beginning November 7 near the frontline village of Shyrokyne, east of Mariupol.



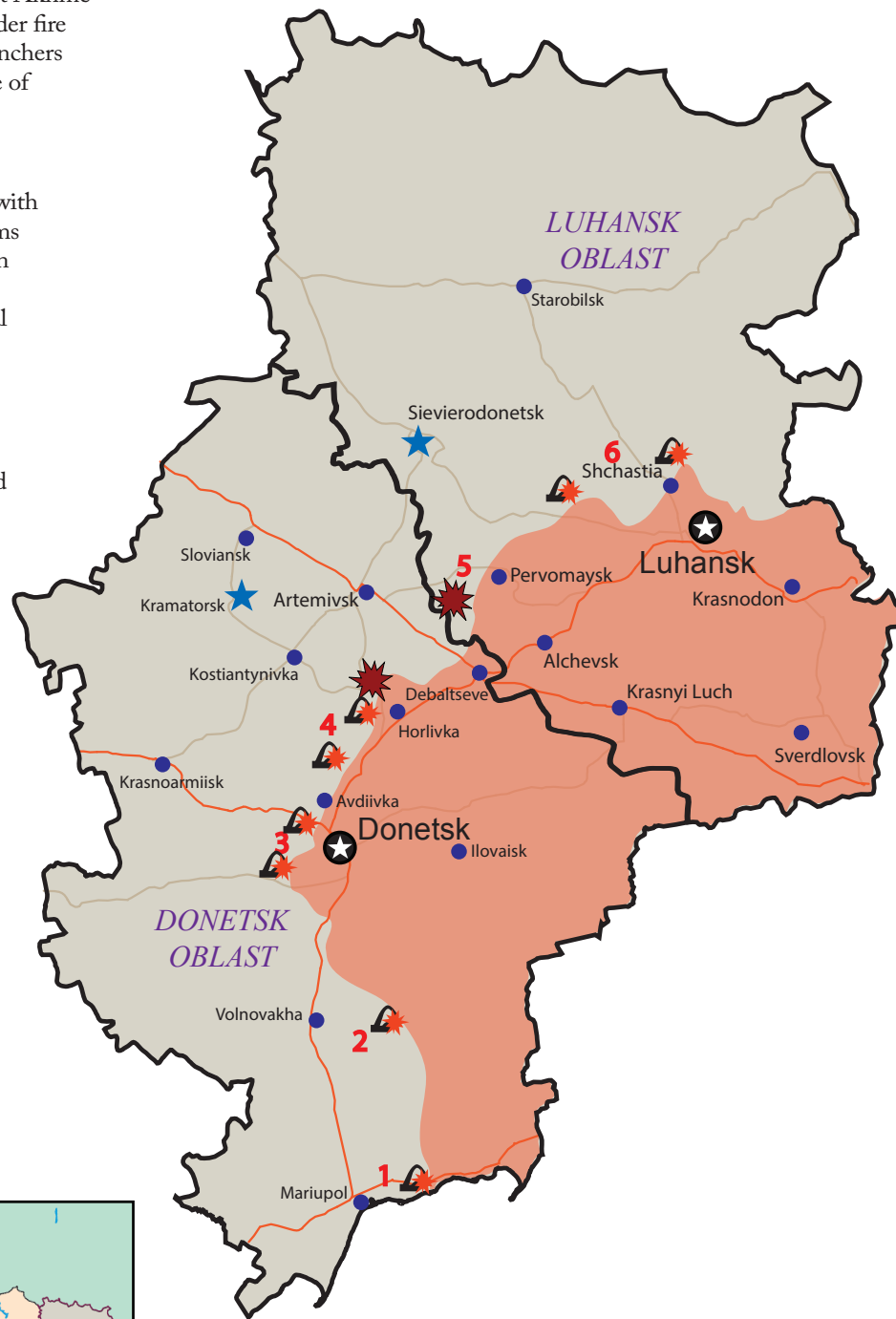
2 November 7-10: Separatists launched attacks with grenade launchers, heavy machine guns, small arms and mortars east of the strategic highway between Donetsk City and the key port city of Mariupol. Separatist forces reportedly destroyed an electrical substation in the frontline village of Hranitne on November 9, leaving the village without power.



3 October 26-November 11: Russian-backed separatists conducted frequent attacks on Ukrainian positions north of the separatist stronghold of Donetsk City with small arms, heavy machine guns and grenade launchers. International OSCE monitors assessed that Grad rockets fired from an area controlled by the Ukrainian government struck separatist-held areas in northwestern Donetsk City on November 3 and 8.



4 November 7-11: Russian-backed separatists launched attacks with mortars, grenade launchers, heavy machine guns and small arms on Ukrainian positions north and west of the separatist stronghold of Horlivka. A small group of separatist forces reportedly attempted to storm Ukrainian positions north of Horlivka on November 8.



5 November 10: Ukrainian forces clashed with separatist sabotage-and-reconnaissance groups near the government-controlled frontline town of Popasna in western Luhansk Oblast.



6 November 3, 7-8: Separatist forces wounded three Ukrainian soldiers near the contested 'Bakhmutka' Highway in western Luhansk Oblast on November 3. Separatist forces conducted grenade launcher and small arms attacks against the government-held frontline town of Shchastia, north of the separatist stronghold of Luhansk City.



7 October 31: The Security Service of Ukraine detained Ukrainian Association of Patriots (UKROP) party head Hennadiy Korban in the southeastern provincial capital of Dnipropetrovsk. UKROP is run by prominent oligarch Ihor Kolomoyskyi, whose allies won recent mayoral elections in the key cities of Kharkiv and Odesa. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko may have ordered the arrest in an effort to influence an upcoming runoff election in Dnipropetrovsk.

8 November 2: An unknown gunman unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate Ukrainian Prosecutor General Viktor Shokin, an ally of President Petro Poroshenko, with a sniper rifle in Kyiv. Shokin is widely viewed as an impediment to anti-corruption efforts and may have been the driving force behind the arrest of Hennadiy Korban on October 31.

- 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



By Hugo Spaulding

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Russian-backed separatist forces renewed coordinated offensive operations across the front line in eastern Ukraine on November 7. This escalation follows a two-month operational pause that coincided with the start of the Russian intervention in Syria. Both the separatist 'Donetsk People's Republic' (DNR) and the Ukrainian military reported the completion of the withdrawal of light artillery from the front line in the days leading up to the recent clashes. An agreement to withdraw light weapons and tanks served as the main focus of the September 1 renewed ceasefire. The decision to violate this ceasefire thus reaffirms the intent of Russia and its separatist proxies to continue destabilizing Ukraine through military aggression despite cyclical efforts to feign de-escalation. The Kremlin may be driving the most recent round of violence in response to indications that the European Union planned on extending sanctions against Russia beyond January 2016 during a summit later this year. Russia remains focused on its military campaign in Syria and it is not clear whether this escalation in Ukraine will lead to the first major offensive maneuvers to seize territory in Ukraine since February 2015. The resumption of hostilities will nevertheless fuel further popular dissatisfaction with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko. Poroshenko faces mounting pressure from his political opponents since a draft constitutional amendment acknowledging the "special status" of separatist-held eastern Ukraine provoked a deadly riot in Kyiv on August 31. The resumption of offensive operations by the Russian-backed separatists also follows nationwide local elections on October 25, which saw major victories in southern and eastern Ukraine for powerful oligarchs opposed to Poroshenko and politicians linked to the former Russian-backed regime. Russia likely seeks to use military force to reapply pressure on Poroshenko and force him to make unpopular concessions which further weaken his authority.