

Ukraine Crisis Update: September 9, 2015

1 September 6: Separatists launched a small arms attack against Ukrainian forces in the village of Talakivka near the northeastern outskirts of the strategic port city of Mariupol.



2 September 3-8: Separatists launched daily attacks on Ukrainian forces north and west of Donetsk city, however the scale of the attacks decreased significantly compared to the heavy artillery shelling experienced in the area during August. Separatists engaged Ukrainian forces primarily with small arms and grenade launchers. Separatist forces launched attacks with mortars, tanks and anti-aircraft guns on the night of September 4 and infantry fighting vehicles on September 6 and 8.



3 September 5-7: Separatists launched a few small arms attacks on Ukrainian military positions north of the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) stronghold of Horlivka. The city and the surrounding government-controlled areas were the site of some of the most intense artillery exchanges along the front line in August. Fighting has sharply decreased since the announcement of the September 1 ceasefire that was designed to limit civilian casualties at the start of the new school year.



4 September 4-8: Separatist forces launched a few small arms attacks on Ukrainian forces near the village of Luhanske, along the highway between the separatist-held transit hub of Debaltseve and the key government-held city of Artemivsk.

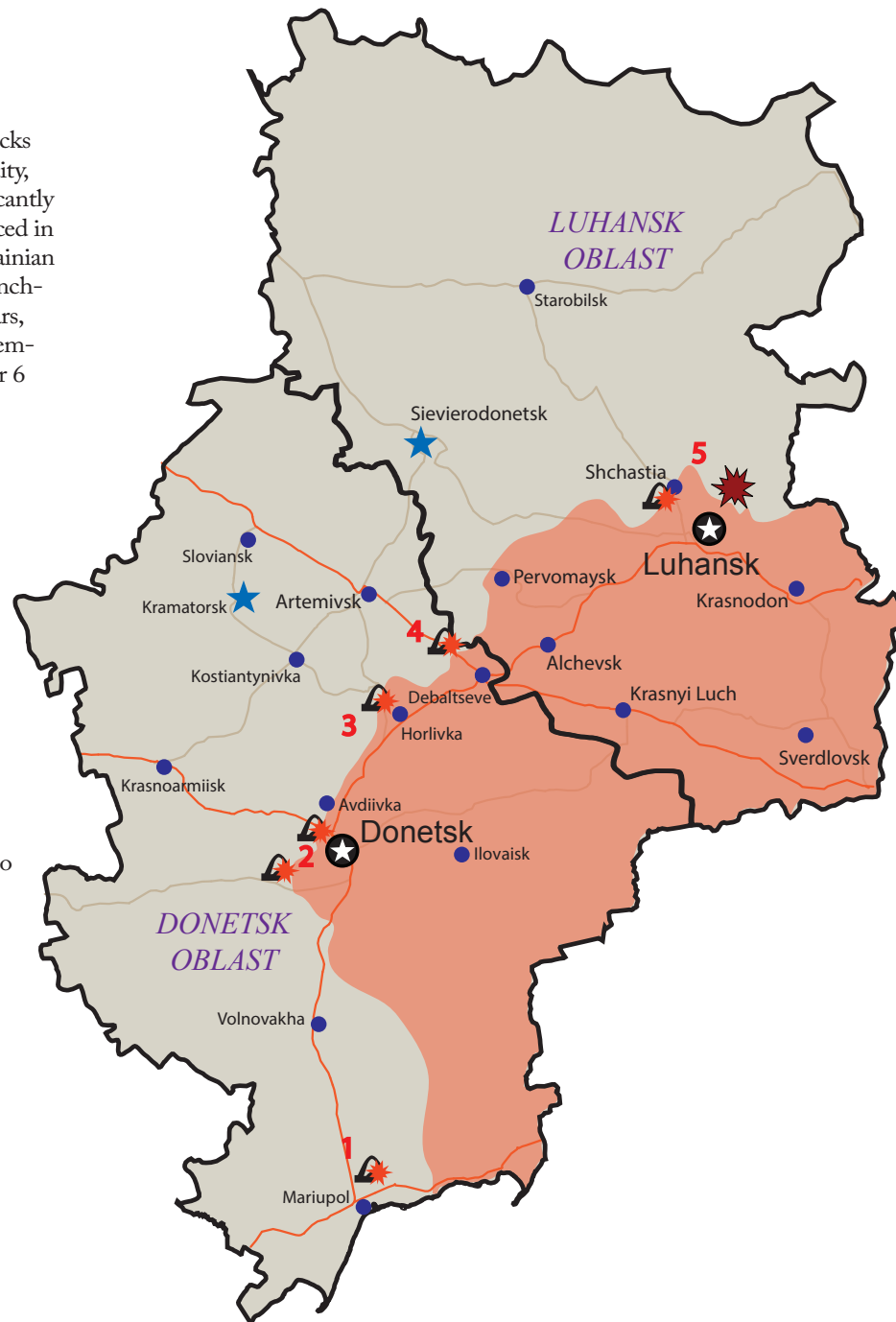


5 September 3-9: Separatists launched attacks with small arms and grenade launchers on Shchastia, a government-held town north of the separatist stronghold of Luhansk city. Separatist sabotage and reconnaissance groups clashed with Ukrainian forces near the government-held frontline town of Stanytsia Luhanska on September 7-9, killing three Ukrainian soldiers.



6 September 3: The Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) reported that it thwarted an attempt to blow up an apartment block in Kyiv by a pro-Russian nongovernmental organization. The SBU reported the detention of four members of the group in the early morning following the individuals resisting arrest, including a hand grenade thrown by a member of the group. The arrest took place near a donation collection center for the ATO forces fighting in Donbas run by far-right paramilitary group "Pravyi Sektor" ("Right Sector"), although it remains unclear whether this center was the target of the planned attack.

7 September 5: Paratroopers from Ukraine's 79th brigade were reportedly detained by Russian border guards near Ukraine's administrative border with Crimea. Russia accused the paratroopers of illegally crossing into the Russian-controlled peninsula but has promised to return them.



● Donetsk People's Republic (DNR)



Indirect Fire

■ Separatist-held Territory

● Luhansk People's Republic (LNR)



Clash

★ Regional Admin Center

● Ukrainian Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO)



Battle

★ Acting Regional Admin Center



Content: Hugo Spaulding and ISW Ukraine Team
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Russian-backed separatists have dialed back offensive operations in connection with a September 1 ceasefire agreement. The September 1 ceasefire was agreed upon in an effort to limit casualties at the start of Ukraine's school year and was intended to last at least a week. Separatist forces have almost entirely halted heavy artillery shelling, which was prevalent along most of the front line throughout August. Nevertheless, separatist forces continue to launch intermittent small arms attacks along the front line and have inflicted Ukrainian casualties during clashes in Luhansk Oblast for the second week in a row. Russian-backed forces also used tanks and infantry fighting vehicles to fire on Ukrainian forces near the separatist-held city of Donetsk, indirect fire attacks that suggest separatists have the capacity to quickly escalate. Overall, the scale of separatist offensive operations remains low compared to August 2015. Ukrainian, Russian and separatist negotiators returned to Minsk, Belarus on September 8 to continue talks on the implementation of the February "Minsk II" ceasefire agreement. Negotiations centered on proposals to withdraw light artillery and tanks from the front line. While nothing concrete was agreed during the talks, the separatists have voiced optimism that the withdrawal agreement will be reached in the near future. The separatists may be supporting negotiations while they engage in a period of operational reset; alternately, they may again accuse Kyiv of failing to meet ceasefire conditions as a justification to escalate offensive operations in the near term.