

Ukraine Troops Take Checkpoint North of Slovyansk

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Ukrainian security force officers walk past a checkpoint set on fire and left by pro-Russian separatists near Slovyansk on Thursday.

KHRESTYSHCHE, Ukraine — Ukrainian troops with five light armored vehicles took control of a checkpoint north of Slovyansk on Thursday after pro-Russian separatists appeared to abandon the position, Reuters journalists said from the scene.

When the armored unit approached along a road from Svatogorsk, which Ukraine's government said it recaptured on Wednesday, militants set up a smokescreen of burning tires. Within half an hour, the Ukrainian force was in control of the position near the village of Khrestyshche. No shots were heard.

Ukrainian forces appear to be closing in around Slovyansk, a city of 130,000 which has become a military stronghold for the pro-Russian movement and is entirely controlled by separatist fighters.

Journalists saw Ukrainian troops digging in outside the city on the main road south to the

regional capital Donetsk.

Earlier in the morning, a spokeswoman for the separatist authorities in Slovyansk, Stella Khorosheva, said on Facebook that two people were killed at a checkpoint overnight.

Local online news site slavgorod.com.ua quoted other separatist representatives saying one man was dead and another seriously wounded after a group of local militia fighters from a checkpoint went to engage a group of "armed men" between Slovyansk and Sviatogorsk and were then fired on from a wood.

The Ukrainian government said troops repelled an overnight raid on a base at Artemivsk, to the south of Slovyansk on the road to Donetsk. A soldier was wounded in the attack by about 70 people who Interior Minister Arsen Avakov said on Facebook were led by Russian soldiers.

Moscow denies having forces in eastern Ukraine.

Casualty details for the attackers were not clear, Avakov said.

Read more:

[Ukraine Says Army Repelled Overnight Attack on Base](https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/04/23/ukraine-troops-take-checkpoint-north-of-slovyansk-34610-a34610)

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