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Ukrainian Forces Recapture Television Tower in Slovyansk Siege

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A pro-Russian armed man takes position near the town of Sloviansk, eastern Ukraine.

A television tower in the eastern Ukrainian town of Slovyansk has been retaken by government forces, the country's interior minister said, as separatists in the city were forced to retreat.

“The television tower in Slovyansk is under complete control of the Ukrainian government and is broadcasting Ukrainian channels,” Ukrainian Interior Minister Arsen Avakov told journalists Monday at a checkpoint outside the city, Interfax reported.

Pro-Russian separatists have been forced to pull back in the face of the ongoing offensive in Slovyansk and have suffered casualties, news reports said Monday.

The Ukrainian Interior Ministry later said five paramilitary police were killed. Separatists said four of their number had also died, Reuters reported.

Ukrainian forces launched the counter-terrorist offensive last Friday in a bid to regain control

of Slovyansk, a town that pro-Russian separatists had turned into a heavily-fortified stronghold.

The self-declared pro-Russian mayor of Slovyansk Vyacheslav Ponomarev told Reuters by telephone that the government were deploying “ever more forces here. Recently there was a parachute drop. ... For us, they are not military, but fascists."

Civilian casualties have also been reported in Slovyansk after a roadblock outside the city was shelled, killing a local resident and injuring six people, RIA Novosti reported without citing any sources.

Ukraine's Defence Ministry also said rebels had shot down a military helicopter, the fourth since Friday, with heavy machine-gun fire. The crew was rescued, though there were no immediate details on their condition.

Also see:

2 Dead as Ukraine Forces Try to Retake Slovyansk

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