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Both Sides in Ukraine Standoff Call For New Tactics

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A participant at a pro-Russian rally in the eastern Ukrainian city of Donetsk shows a helmet featuring the emblem of the Donetsk People's Republic.

A day after fighting broke out between pro-Russian separatists and forces loyal to the new Kiev government in the eastern Ukrainian city of Slovyansk, both sides in the ongoing standoff upped the stakes and called for new tactics: guerrilla warfare and female battalions, among other things.

Pro-Russian separatists in Kramatorsk on Sunday reported Ukrainian National Guard units moving from the city's aerodrome toward separatist headquarters in the center of town. The Ukrainian Defense Ministry confirmed confrontations and gunfire between soldiers and separatists near the Kramatorsk aerodrome, but said that separatists had attempted to approach the aerodrome.

In a statement that could not be immediately verified from Stella Khorosheva,

a representative of the Slovyansk "People's Mayor" Vyacheslav Ponomaryov, the pro-Russian side said the Ukrainian National Guard had resorted to shooting deserters.

"Ten people [from the Ukrainian soldiers] wanted to go over to our side, but the Ukrainian National Guard — the officers shot them," Khorosheva said, RIA Novosti reported. Khorosheva also said that a drone aircraft had been spotted near the Slovyansk railway station, though there has been no confirmation of that report.

Pro-Russian forces have previously reported sighting drones, either American or Ukrainian, in eastern Ukraine and Crimea, though Ukraine is not believed to possess drone aircraft and the U.S. has repeatedly denied the presence of drone aircraft in Ukraine. In March, the Russian government claimed that it had captured a U.S. drone over Crimea, though no proof of the drone's existence was provided, and the U.S. government continued to deny the presence of drones in the area.

The report of the execution of deserters likewise was not confirmed by any other sources. National Guard soldiers are known to be among the Ukrainian military formations surrounding the city, and Ukrainian Interior Minister Arsen Avakov wrote on Facebook that a National Guard camp had fought off an attack last Monday night, leaving one of their attackers dead and one wounded.

In addition to ongoing clashes between uniformed forces, both sides called for expanding irregular warfare: Right Sector leader Dmytro Yarosh suggested executing separatist leaders in the east of Ukraine, saying that federalization of Ukraine must be prevented at all costs.

Yarosh also called for guerrilla warfare in Crimea against the new Russian administration, saying that the "Crimean Tatar factor" should be utilized to organize resistance and that "Crimea was and remains Ukrainian."

Yarosh's statement came as Crimean Tatars marked the 70th anniversary of Soviet deportations with a rally attended by thousands. There has been no sign of armed resistance from Tatars to date, however, and even the banned "Hizb ut-Tahrir" Islamist party has called for peaceful interaction with the new government.

On the other side of the conflict, Donetsk separatist leader Igor Strelkov also suggested new methods in the ongoing conflict, complaining of a lack of volunteers for separatist forces and calling for female volunteers in a video posted to YouTube.

Strelkov said the separatist movement now had enough weaponry to arm all willing citizens, but not enough volunteers willing to fight.

"I admit, and never expected this, that throughout the whole region not even 1,000 male volunteers could be found who are capable of risking their lives. ... Donetsk needs defenders, separatists who are volunteer soldiers, who are disciplined. If men are not capable of this, we will have to call on women," Strelkov said.

"It is a shame that there are no officers among women, not active or in the reserves. But what difference does it make when no officers are coming to us at all?"

In Luhansk, a women's battalion has already been created, though they fulfill solely

noncombat functions, Interfax reported.

"We are not fighting units. We fulfill the same women's work as usual," said women's battalion leader Yekaterina Strelchenko, Interfax reported.

A video of another group posted on YouTube implied that some women in Donetsk were prepared to take up arms, though the group did not identify itself and it was not clear if it was backed by other separatists in the region.

"We are the women of the Russian Orthodox Army; we declare war ... on those who have come to our land. We have taken up arms. We have been pushed to this. Leave. You have exactly 24 hours," a masked woman holding a rifle said in the video.

The video's authenticity was not immediately verifiable, and several commentators noted that the women in the video appeared to be holding wooden weapons.

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