Ukraine Shuts Down 8 Checkpoints on Russian Border

By The Moscow Times

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A view shows a checkpoint on the Ukrainian-Russian border near the settlement of Uspenka in Donetsk region, Ukraine.

Ukraine has shut down several checkpoints on its Russian border in the country's eastern Luhansk and Donetsk regions, where governmental forces have been struggling to battle a separatist insurgency.

The Thursday evening decision to shut down eight checkpoints was taken to "prevent threats to the population's life and health due to dangerous events in certain regions," a statement on the Ukraine government website said.

Pro-Russian rebels in Ukraine's east have conducted a string of successful attacks on checkpoints in recent days, forcing Ukraine border guards to abandon a 130-kilometer stretch of its border with Russia, former Ukrainian Interior Minister Yury Lutsenko said Thursday on his Facebook page.

Ukrainian border guard units lack the manpower and the heavy weaponry available to insurgents to successfully oversee the 2,300-kilometer border with Russia, newspaper Gazeta.ru wrote Friday, citing Ukrainian political and military analysts.

Lutsenko and spokespeople for the Ukrainian Border Guard Service have claimed rebels are receiving military support from the Russian side of the border but Russian authorities have repeatedly denied the claims.

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