

Security Expert Says Ukraine Conflict Could Continue for Years

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A house damaged by recent shelling is seen in the village of Semyonovka near Slovyansk, eastern Ukraine.

A Ukrainian security official has estimated that the conflict with pro-Moscow separatists in the east is likely to continue for another four to five years before Kiev can expect to regain control over the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

"I am inclined to say that the conflict in eastern Ukraine will be protracted, and solving the problem that was delivered to us is impossible in the near future. It will take years," Ukrainian Security Service adviser Markiyan Lubkivskiy was quoted by Ukrainian media as saying Tuesday.

"We are talking about four to five years," he added. "That is the time when Ukraine, under certain circumstances, can take over control over the territories that are now outside of its control."

Crimea, a southern peninsula Moscow annexed from Ukraine in March, was apparently not

included in Lubkivskiy's estimate.

Ukraine and Western governments accuse Russia of fueling the conflict in the east. While Moscow says it sympathizes with the rebels' cause, it has denied accusations of supplying them with weapons and insists that Russian troops in Ukraine are fighting only as "volunteers."

Ukrainian officials have previously accused Moscow of trying to create a protracted "frozen conflict" in the self-proclaimed separatist states of Donetsk and Luhansk.

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