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3 Ukrainian Soldiers Killed Following 'Day of Silence'

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Three Ukrainian soldiers were killed and eight wounded in attacks by pro-Russian separatists in the past 24 hours, a military spokesman said Thursday, further marring a truce which began with a "Day of Silence" on Tuesday.

Military spokesman Andriy Lysenko said government forces had come under attack from separatist shells 22 times in the past 24 hours, though the army itself was still observing Tuesday's "silence regime."

The renewed violence in Ukraine's east, where separatists have broken with the pro-Western government in Kiev and set up 'people's republics,' further clouded prospects for a resumption of peace talks to end eight months of conflict.

Though Russia said Thursday it was sparing no effort to convene another round of peace talks, Kiev has ruled out another meeting with Russia and the separatist leaders until the guns have fallen completely silent in a fully-supported cease-fire.

Russia, Ukraine and separatist leaders last met in the Belarussian capital Minsk in September under Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, or OSCE, auspices and mapped out a 12-point peace plan including a call for an immediate cease-fire.

But hundreds of Ukrainian troops, civilians and rebels have been killed since in unabated fighting.

More than 4,300 people have been killed in the conflict, which began after Ukraine's Russian-backed president was toppled by street protests in February.

Russia subsequently annexed Ukraine's Crimea peninsula and threw its support behind the separatists in the east, driving relations between Moscow and the West to the lowest point since the Cold War.

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