The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Donetsk Rebel Leaders to Push for More Territory at Minsk Talks

December 18, 2014

The leaders of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic plan to push for more east Ukrainian territory at a Dec. 21 round of peace talks in Minsk, RIA Novosti reported Thursday.

"The agenda will include questions on withdrawing heavy equipment, the armistice, prisoners' exchange, the removal of economic blockades, and the special status of the Donbass [region of eastern Ukraine]," Denis Pushilin, the republic's spokesman, said in comments carried by state news agency RIA Novosti.

"At the negotiations, we will insist on expanding the borders [of the self-proclaimed republic] to meet the borders of the Donetsk region. We want to achieve that peacefully, by political means," Pushilin said.

Currently, Ukrainian troops occupy part of the territory that Pushilin referred to. The talks are set to include representatives of Russia, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and Pushilin, on behalf of the separatists.

Leaders of the self-proclaimed republics of Luhansk and Donetsk proclaimed their sovereignty in May, refusing to recognize the new authorities in Kiev and declaring the establishment of a territory called Novorossia.

The battle between Ukrainian troops and pro-Russian separatist fighters throughout the ensuing conflict claimed about 4,700 civilian lives, according to the latest data available from the United Nations. Another 10,000 civilians were injured throughout the conflict.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko confirmed the talks during a visit to Warsaw on Wednesday, saying "there was hope" that they would take place on Sunday, the Interfax news agency reported.

The negotiations had initially been scheduled for earlier this month, but they were pushed back so that the parties could agree on the topics to be discussed.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/12/18/donetsk-rebel-leaders-to-push-for-more-territory-at-minsk-talks-a42446