

Five More Soldiers Killed by 'Terrorists' in Eastern Ukraine, Kiev Says

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Flames from burning tyres engulf the entrance gates, which bear the Ukrainian national coat of arms, to Ukraine's Defense Ministry during a protest in Kiev on Feb. 2, 2015.

KIEV — Five Ukrainian soldiers have been killed and 27 wounded in fighting with pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine's eastern regions in the past 24 hours, Kiev military spokesman Andriy Lysenko said Tuesday.

Ukrainian military say fighting has been particularly intense around the town of Debaltseve, a major rail and road junction northeast of the city of Donetsk, which government troops are still holding.

"Fighting is going on between the terrorists and military forces in the area of Debaltseve and nearby populated areas. The [separatist] fighters are unsuccessfully trying to surround units of the Ukrainian armed forces," Lysenko said at a briefing.

"Despite constant shelling and attacks, Debaltseve remains under the control of Ukrainian forces," he said.

Talks on Saturday between Ukraine, Russia and rebel officials in Belarus had raised hopes of a new cease-fire to stem the violence, but they broke up without progress. Fighting resumed soon after.

More than 5,000 people have been killed in the conflict between Russian-backed separatists and government forces, of which Ukrainian media estimate more than 1,500 are Ukrainian soldiers.

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