

Russian Border Guards Want to Build Anti-Tank Ditches Near Ukraine

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Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatseniuk (R) listens to explanations as he inspects the "Wall" project, which should reinforce the border with Russia on Oct.15, 2014.

Security officials in southern Russia are looking for a contractor to dig an anti-tank ditch that would separate parts of the Bryansk region from Ukraine, according to a document posted on a government procurement website.

The contact, worth up to 10 million rubles (\$152,205), would involve digging 50 kilometers of ditches in a number of southern Bryansk districts and should be completed by September, according to a description submitted by the regional border guard agency and posted on the [zakupki.gov.ru](#) procurement website.

An unidentified border service official in Bryansk was quoted by the RBC news agency as saying the project was part of routine border-strengthening measures and unrelated to the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

The West has accused Russia of supplying fighters and weapons to Moscow-backed rebels fighting government forces in eastern Ukraine, and Kiev announced plans last year to build a wall along the border with Russia to keep out the alleged influx of troops and heavy weaponry.

Ukraine has also urged Russia to seal its porous border, but Moscow denies accusations of arming separatists.

Bryansk lies northeast of Ukraine, bordering the areas that are controlled by Kiev forces and are close to — but beyond — the separatist-controlled regions in the southeast.

When Ukraine announced plans in mid-September to build the wall, Russia's TASS quoted a spokesperson from the Bryansk FSB's border service as saying the agency had been fortifying the Russian side of the border.

The official said that similar trench-digging was underway on the Ukrainian side, but maintained that the situation along the Bryansk stretch of the border had remained calm throughout the Ukrainian conflict, TASS reported.

The construction of trenches along the Russian-Ukrainian border began in 2005, with the official explanation being the need to contain smuggling, the report added.

Bryansk residents dubbed the trenches "friendship ditches," TASS reported.

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