The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Ukraine Cease-Fire Generally Observed Despite Some Violations

February 15, 2015



Local residents walk with their cow on the road as military vehicle past near by near Artemivsk, eastern Ukraine Feb. 14, 2015

Ukraine's military said Sunday pro-Russian rebels had shelled Ukrainian positions ten times since a ceasefire came into effect at midnight, but that the truce was in general being observed.

The cease-fire, negotiated in four-power talks on Thursday, foresees the creation of a neutral buffer zone and withdrawal of heavy weapons responsible for many of the 5,000 deaths in a conflict that has caused the worst crisis in Russia-West relations since the Cold War a generation ago.

"As of the morning of February 15, there have been ten shelling attacks on our positions by rebels — mainly in the area of Debaltseve," spokesman Anatoly Stelmach said.

At around 07:00 GMT a witness in east Ukraine heard the sound of heavy artillery fire coming from the direction of Debaltseve, a key transport hub where government forces have been

hard pressed by encircling separatists.

Another military spokesman, Vladyslav Seleznyov, said the cease-fire was being observed in general. "Shelling [by rebels] has been not regular and [has been] localized," he said.

Separatist news service DAN quoted a senior rebel commander as saying rebels had opened fire in defense, after Ukrainian forces had violated the cease-fire around Debaltseve.

"Units were forced to open fire in response," Eduard Basurin was quoted as saying.

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