

U.S. 'Gravely Concerned' at Fighting in Eastern Ukraine

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Members of the separatist self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic army collect parts of a destroyed Ukrainian army tank in the town of Vuhlehirsk, about 10 km to the west of Debaltseve.

WASHINGTON — The U.S. has said it is "gravely concerned" by fighting in and around Debaltseve in eastern Ukraine that flared up after a cease-fire agreement, and that it is closely monitoring reports of a new column of Russian military equipment moving toward the region.

"These aggressive actions and statements by the Russia-backed separatists threaten the most recent cease-fire," the U.S. State Department said Monday in a prepared statement. "We call on Russia and the separatists it backs to halt all attacks immediately."

Fighting subsided in many parts of eastern Ukraine under a ceasefire deal reached last week in marathon talks involving the leaders of France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine.

But the truce appears to have been stillborn in Debaltseve, where the most intensive fighting has taken place in recent weeks.

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