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U.S. Vice President Condemns Debaltseve Offensive in Talks with Ukrainian Leaders

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Fighters with the separatist self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic army walk by a destroyed Ukrainian armoured personnel carrier near Debaltseve, February 20, 2015

U.S. Vice President Joe Biden, in phone calls with Ukrainian leaders on Friday, strongly condemned an offensive by pro-Russian separatists on the town of Debaltseve in eastern Ukraine, the White House said.

In separate calls with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and Prime Minister Arseny Yatseniuk, Biden discussed options for "effective monitoring" of a cease-fire and withdrawal of heavy weapons from eastern Ukraine, the White House said in a statement.

Biden also agreed with the Ukrainian leaders that Russia cannot continue to hide behind "the false claim" that the separatists are acting alone, the White House said.

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