

Kiev Says Another Soldier Killed Battling Pro-Moscow Rebels in Ukraine

By [The Moscow Times](#)

March 05, 2015



Members of the Ukrainian armed forces ride on an armoured personnel carrier.

KIEV — One Ukrainian serviceman was killed and another wounded in fighting with pro-Russian separatists in the east, military spokesman Vladislav Seleznyov said Thursday, as Kiev accused rebels of increasing violations of a cease-fire deal.

President Petro Poroshenko, whose initiative to boost the armed forces by one-third was passed easily in parliament, has called the cease-fire the last chance for peace with the pro-Russian rebels.

Accusations of continued violence on both sides show the fragility of the peace accord, agreed in Minsk last month, which calls for the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the frontline.

Some 6,000 people have been killed in fighting since separatists took up arms last year in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland — the 'Donbass' — in response to the overthrow

of the Moscow-backed president, Viktor Yanukovich, in Kiev.

Interior Ministry adviser Zoryan Shkiryak said the rebels were not only failing to stop firing and pull back, but in fact building up forces in southern Donetsk province, near the Ukrainian-held port city of Mariupol.

"There is no use in talking about a cease-fire from the side of the rebels. They are not withdrawing arms, they are not observing the cease-fire, they continue to relocate units and increase their number of tanks and rocket launchers," he said.

Another military spokesman said rebels had attacked Ukrainian troops' positions or civilian targets 40 times within the previous 24 hours, including 17 artillery attacks. For their part, the rebels accuse Ukrainian forces almost daily of shelling and firing.

The conflict has plunged ties between Russia and the West to Cold War-era lows as Kiev, along with the United States and the European Union, say they have evidence that Moscow is arming the rebels and boosting their ranks with regular army soldiers.

Russia has repeatedly denied the accusations and accused the United States of pushing Kiev's pro-Western government into conflict with its own people.

At a parliamentary session, 270 lawmakers voted in favor of a bill, initiated by Poroshenko last month, to boost the armed forces by a third to 250,000 personnel.

"Whoever votes against this law or doesn't support this law is working for [Russian President Vladimir] Putin, for Russian aggression, so that the foot of the Russian occupier steps on our land in Donbass and our Crimean soil," said Radical Party leader Oleh Lyashko.

"It's obvious that our country will be strong and successful only when it has a powerful army."

The bill only needs Poroshenko's signature to become law.

NATO said this week that the cease-fire was holding overall, and urged both sides to continue to withdraw artillery from the frontline.

Since late last week, journalists have seen guns being sent back from the frontline on both sides.

However, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, entrusted with monitoring the pullout, says it cannot fully confirm it as it has not been given access to the locations where some weapons have been moved.

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