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Ukraine's Poroshenko Calls Minsk Agreement a 'Pseudo Cease-Fire'

By The Moscow Times

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Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko (L) delivers a speech as he visits an army training center in Chernihiv region, Ukraine.

BERLIN — Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko called the Minsk agreement a "pseudo-cease-fire" in an interview with German broadcaster ZDF.

Despite Kiev and Moscow agreeing to a truce in February, shooting has continued around the coastal town of Shyrokyne, near the strategic port city of Mariupol.

Poroshenko and German Chancellor Angela Merkel held talks in Berlin on Wednesday. Ahead of their meeting, Merkel said the Minsk agreement was still being violated on a regular basis.

On Wednesday, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry called for a halt to fighting around the Ukrainian coastal town of Shyrokyne as NATO backed his demand that Russia fully implement a Ukraine ceasefire agreement.

Excerpts of the interview released in advance showed that when asked about whether the port city of Mariupol was under threat from Russian separatists who wanted to create a land corridor to Crimea, Poroshenko said: "Clearly."

Russia denies it is providing troops or arms to pro-Russian rebels who launched a separatist uprising in April of last year. It accuses Kiev of breaching the February cease-fire agreement.

Capture of Mariupol port could help separatists cement a hold on eastern Ukraine's Luhansk and Donetsk regions. Kiev fears it could also provide the pivot for an advance along Ukraine's south coast to link up with Crimea, annexed by Russia last March.

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