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Ukraine Claims Russian Major Detained Near War-Torn Donetsk

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An armored column of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic forces is parked in a field during the withdrawal of armored vehicles further from the frontline in a field on the suburbs of Debaltseve in Donetsk region, Ukraine, July 21.

Ukrainian forces claim to have detained a Russian major who had been riding in a truck packed with ammunition as it passed a military checkpoint in war-torn eastern Ukraine, news site Kommersant reported Sunday.

Two men were reportedly on board the truck. Reuters cited Ukrainian military spokesman Oleksander Motuzyanyk as saying that the men had presumably taken the wrong direction while driving, winding up at the military checkpoint about 28 miles southwest of Donetsk.

Both of the men were wearing military uniforms without insignia and neither one was carrying identification documents, Reuters reported.

Kommersant reported that a pro-Russian rebel had been riding alongside the alleged Russian major.

"One of the men was a professional soldier in the Russian army — a major. The other one was involved with an illegal paramilitary group," an unidentified representative of the Ukrainian border guards service was cited by Kommersant as saying Sunday.

"Law enforcement officers found boxes with ammunition of different calibers in the KamAZ truck," Kommersant's source said, adding that the Russian officer's identity was in the process of being verified.

Officials of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) claimed the incident was staged by Ukrainian authorities in a bid to undermine Russia's execution of the Minsk agreements, which aimed to bring peace to war-torn eastern Ukraine, Russian state-run news agency RIA Novosti reported Sunday.

"They [the Ukrainian authorities] are looking for any reason they can find to accuse the Russian Federation of violating the Minsk agreements and international law and deploying troops [to eastern Ukraine]. This is not the first time Ukraine has made claims like this," DNR official Eduard Basurin was cited by RIA Novosti as saying Sunday.

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