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Ukrainian Activists in Kharkiv Target Soviet War Memorial

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Activists in the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv claimed Sunday to have painted a local Soviet war monument in Ukraine's national colors — blue and yellow — to mark the country's upcoming independence day.

The statue is the latest Soviet-era monument to Red Army soldiers in Eastern Europe subjected to what Moscow has described as vandalism.

Many such monuments have been painted in Ukraine's national colors.

Local activists said on Twitter that they painted the chest of Kharkiv's Liberator Warrior statue — a monument to Soviet soldiers in World War II — with a blue and yellow heart and cross in celebration of Ukraine's Independence Day, celebrated Monday.

Just a few kilometers from the Russian border, Kharkiv has been a focal point for clashes between pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian activists in recent months, with many Ukrainian officials fearing that separatist sentiment could be whipped up against Kiev.

The activists claimed in a video posted on YouTube to have painted the statue in broad daylight.

Local police are investigating the claim, Russia's Ekho Moskvy radio station reported Sunday.

Russia has demanded that local authorities across Eastern Europe take steps to protect Soviet war monuments from vandalism.

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