

'Assassination Attempt' on Separatist Leader in Ukraine's Donetsk – Reports

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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"Motorola" sits atop of an armored personnel carrier during the Victory Day parade in Donetsk, Ukraine, May 9, 2016.

An explosion at a hospital in the eastern Ukrainian city of Donetsk has been described as an assassination attempt on a notorious rebel commander, the RIA Novosti news agency reported on Friday.

Alexander Zakharchenko, head of the self proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) has claimed that the commander of the republic's Sparta Battalion, Arseny Pavlov, was the intended target of the blast.

"They primed an explosive device. It was a terrorist attack. There are many places that they could have got at him, yet these people chose a hospital." said Zakharchenko.

Pavlov, a Russian citizen, was receiving treatment in the hospital at the time. The explosion

took place as he was leaving the building. The DNR authorities reported that he was unharmed in the blast, the Interfax news agency reported. There are no reports of any casualties.

Arseny Pavlov — better known by the nom de guerre Motorola — is a notorious pro-Russian leader of the DNR's Sparta battalion, which rose to prominence during battles in and around Donetsk airport in the winter of 2014-15.

He has been linked to war crimes, namely the execution of captured prisoners of war, a crime he reportedly confessed to in a telephone interview with a Russian reporter in April 2015. Motorola and his battalion are also accused of torturing captured Ukrainian soldiers.

Since the first phase of the Ukraine conflict, many of the most notorious and violent Russian-backed separatist leaders have either gone missing, been killed or returned to obscurity in Russia.

The conflict in eastern Ukraine has killed more than 9,000 civilians and combatants since hostilities began in April 2014. Fighting has died down since the end of battles in April 2015 but low-level fighting still continues in hot spots in Luhansk and Donetsk provinces.

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