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Eastern Ukraine Assassination Attempt: Power Struggle or Provocation?

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Alexander Zakharchenko (R), leader of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DPR), and Igor Plotnitsky, leader of the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic (LPR), attend a news conference in Donetsk, Ukraine. **Maxim Shemetov / Reuters**

On Aug. 6 an explosion went off near the car of Igor Plotnitsky, the leader of the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic (LPR). The incident, caused by an improvised explosive device and described as an assassination attempt, left Plotnitsky and his guard wounded.

On the evening of the attack, Plotnitsky claimed in an audio message that the Ukrainian ⊠authorities and U.S. special forces were behind the attack.⊠

"You know that the war is not over yet and behind the Ukrainian ⊠government are, of course,

the intelligence services of the United ⊠States and those who are trying to destabilize the situation in Ukraine ⊠and in the whole world," Plotnitsky said in a message published on his ⊠official website.⊠⊠⊠

He also said that he would report any further incidents to Russian President Vladimir Putin and ⊠FSB head Alexander Bortnikov. This statement was later removed from his website.

"There is only one culprit being considered at the moment — Ukraine's security forces, and their aim is to destabilize the situation in ⊠the Luhansk People's Republic. I personally can't see any other interested parties," Russian Senator Franz Klintsevich said, according to the RIA Novosti news ⊠agency.

Kiev denied the claims. "The Ukrainian side was not involved in this assassination attempt, as it has absolutely no logic and does not solve a single problem," a representative of the Ukrainian presidential administration, Alexander Motuzyanik, told journalists. According to Yury Tandit, an advisor to the Ukrainian security forces, the attack on Plotnitsky is the result of the struggle between the separatists for power and control over cash flow in the LPR, the Ukrainskaya Pravda news website reported.

The attack on Plotnitsky comes several months after the Ministry of State⊠ Security of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) ⊠reported an assassination attempt on republic head Alexander ⊠Zakharchenko. Zakharchenko, who has survived several attempts on ⊠his life, claimed that his assassination was plotted ⊠by Ukraine's security forces.

Earlier in March, Plotnitsky's advisor ⊠Dmitry Kargayev was shot down in Luhansk.⊠

While the investigation of the attack on Plotnitsky is still ongoing, ⊠the incident may lead to more violence in the region.⊠⊠⊠The bombing comes amid increasing tensions in ⊠eastern Ukraine.

Zakharchenko threatened to take ⊠counter-measures in connection with Plotnitsky's attack.⊠⊠⊠"If the Ukrainians think that they have⊠ the right to carry out such assassination attempts, such as with Plotnitsky, adequate measures will be taken. We also have allies, ⊠supporters, and we are able to do the same in Ukraine," he said in an ⊠interview published on his website.

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