

Pro-Russian Rebels Agree to Release 4 Ukrainian Prisoners

June 27, 2019



Natalia Fedorenko / TASS

Two pro-Russian separatist republics in eastern Ukraine have agreed to release four Ukrainian prisoners as a “goodwill gesture” later this week, news agencies reported Thursday.

Rebels in the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk people’s republics have for the past five years been at war with government forces in eastern Ukraine. Prisoner exchanges are [stipulated](#) in an internationally brokered ceasefire agreement that has regularly been violated since entering into force in early 2015.

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Donetsk and Luhansk have agreed to release the four Ukrainian captives, three of them soldiers, on Friday, the state-run TASS news agency [reported](#).

The head of Donetsk said he hoped the move would “stimulate” an all-for-all exchange. The head of Luhansk said the time and place of the release will be announced Friday.

The latest release was reportedly negotiated by Viktor Medvedchuk, a prominent Ukrainian politician with close ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin. In 2017, Medvedchuk had [urged](#) Putin to press the separatist leaders to agree to a prisoner swap.

Later on Thursday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy [called](#) on Putin to release the 24 Ukrainian sailors who were captured in the Kerch Strait, which links the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, late last year.

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