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Pro-Moscow Rebels Reject Evidence of Russian Tanks in Eastern Ukraine

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Zurab Dzhavakhadze / TASS

Pro-Russian rebels in eastern Ukraine have rejected newly published evidence of Russia's military involvement in one of the deadliest battles of Ukraine's five-year conflict.

The battle of Ilovaysk, which pitted Ukrainian forces against Russian-backed rebels in August 2014, resulted in hundreds of deaths on both sides. Russia has consistently denied that it has provided arms or troops to eastern Ukrainian separatists despite evidence to the contrary.

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The London-based Forensic Architecture research agency on Sunday released satellite images of Russian-armed convoys in Ukraine and documented sightings of Russian-owned T-72B3 tanks at the time of the battle.

The pro-Russian separatist republic of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine denied the agency's

findings, saying its tank units were exclusively made up of seized Ukrainian tanks in the battle of Ilovaysk.

“There was no talk of any Russian equipment,” Eduard Basurin, a senior military official in the self-proclaimed Donetsk people’s republic, told Interfax on Monday.

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Forensic Architecture’s research, commissioned by the European Human Rights Advocacy Center (EHRAC), will reportedly be added to the Ukrainian volunteer fighters’ lawsuit against Russia in Europe’s human rights court.

The conflict between Ukrainian troops and Russian-backed forces in the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine has killed more than 13,000 people since it broke out in 2014.

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