

Ukraine Soldier Killed by Separatist Sniper

By [AFP](#)

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The Ukraine-Russia conflict has claimed more than 13,000 lives. **EPA**

A Ukrainian soldier was killed by a separatist sniper in the country's war-ravaged east, the military said Thursday, following an escalation of tensions between Kiev and Moscow.

He was shot and fatally wounded near the village of Novotoshkivske in the separatist-controlled Lugansk region that borders Russia, the military said in a statement.

Kiev has been battling pro-Russia separatists in the eastern Donetsk and Lugansk regions since 2014, following Moscow's annexation of the Crimean peninsula.

After a lull last year, fighting escalated at the start of 2021 and last month Russia amassed 100,000 troops near the Ukrainian border and in Crimea, prompting warnings from NATO.

Although Russia later announced a pullback, both Washington and Kiev say that the withdrawal has been limited.

The conflict, which has claimed more than 13,000 lives, has seen at least 38 Ukrainian soldiers killed since the start of the year compared to 50 in all of 2020, while the separatists say some 30 of their fighters have died.

Kiev and its Western allies accuse Russia of sending troops and arms to support the separatists, which Moscow has denied.

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