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Ukrainian government and Russian rebels begin ‘day of silence’

Ceasefire revival attempted as Russia restarts delivery of natural gas to Ukraine ahead of possible new peace talks

*Уряд України та російські повстанці розпочинають «день тиші».
Передумовою відновлення режиму припинення вогню можна вважати
відновлення газових поставок в Україну з Росії напередодні можливих мирних
переговорів*

Напередодні можливих мирних переговорів урядові війська України та повстанці, які підтримуються Росією, запровадили «день тиші». Повстанці підтримали пропозицію українського президента Порошенка стосовно мораторію на бойові дії. При цьому українські військові говорять про порушення умов «дня тиші» з боку повстанців. Влада ж самопроголошених республік стверджує, що їхні війська стріляють лише у відповідь.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/09/ukraine-russia-day-of-silence-ceasefire-natural-gas>



Government forces and Russia-backed rebels fighting in eastern Ukraine have begun a “day of silence” in an attempt to revive a moribund ceasefire ahead of possible new peace talks.

In another tentative step toward resolution of the crisis, Russia restarted delivery of natural gas to Ukraine after it was cut off in June in a payment dispute influenced by the worsening political ties between the countries.

Rebels welcomed president Petro Poroshenko’s suggestion last week of a moratorium on combat operations. Ukrainian forces began an open-ended ceasefire on Tuesday morning but Kiev said its troops had a right to shoot back if fired upon.

Doubts appeared to dominate the day of silence almost as soon as it began, however, and officials in Minsk in Belarus said that neither party had confirmed their attendance at peace talks that were scheduled to start later that day.

The Ukrainian military said its troops in the contested city of Debaltsevo had documented two violations of the ceasefire by the rebels on Tuesday.

Rebels said government forces shelled Donetsk airport around 10am, where Ukrainian forces have retained a toehold despite fierce close-quarter combat between the two sides since the nominal ceasefire began on 5 September. It has been broken almost daily with shelling from both sides.

Alexander Zakharchenko, head of the self-declared Donetsk People’s Republic, later said fighting was ongoing around the city of Gorlovka and that his forces would respond to any attack on their positions.

An official from the neighbouring Luhansk People’s Republic said that government forces had shelled rebels in the city of Pervomaisk. Previously Luhansk separatist leader Igor Plotnitsky had said “we always keep our powder dry” in case the day of silence wouldn’t be observed.

Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov told state news agency RIA Novosti in an interview on Tuesday that the sides would meet for peace talks in Minsk “in the coming days” but noted that “we are far from the goal” of a resolution to the conflict.

At least 1,000 people have been killed in eastern Ukraine since representatives of Kiev, Moscow, the rebels and the OSCE agreed on a ceasefire in Minsk in September, including 192 government soldiers. More than 4,300 have been killed and one million displaced since the conflict began in April, according to the United Nations.

Kiev and the rebels have also said they are planning to exchange hundreds of prisoners as part of the new peacemaking attempts. The onset of winter will make large-scale military operations much more difficult.

Meanwhile, the final shipments of MH17 wreckage have arrived in the Netherlands for the investigation into the airliner’s downing over eastern Ukraine, which killed 298 people.

The resumption of gas supplies from Russia should mean heat for Ukrainian homes through the coming winter after the European Union helped broker a deal in October. Ukraine has paid Russian gas giant Gazprom £242m in advance for December, and 1.5bn cu ft of gas will be imported daily.

Russia has turned off the tap for Ukrainian and European consumers over price disputes in the past.