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## Despite Truce, Shelling Continues in Parts of Ukraine

*Незважаючи на перемир'я, в деяких частинах України тривають  
артобстріли*

*Перший день перемир'я в Східній Україні затьмарив смертоносний артобстріл, причому і українські військові, і підтримувані Росією сепаратисти звинуватили один одного в порушенні нової угоди. Слідом за тимчасовим затишшям після наступив опівночі перемир'я, вранці відновився артобстріл біля оспорюваного сторонами міста Дебальцеве. Доля 8 тис. українських солдатів, що знаходяться в цьому районі, в ході переговорів залишилася невирішеною. У суботу один з лідерів повстанців попередив, що угода не буде поширюватися на цю територію, якщо українська армія спробує прорвати те, що він назвав оточенням. Президент України Петро Порошенко заперечує, що Дебальцеве оточене. Суперечка йде про один відрізок дороги, що простягнувся приблизно на дев'ять миль від селища Луганське, що знаходиться під контролем урядових військ, до Дебальцеве.*

[http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/16/world/europe/despite-truce-shelling-continues-in-parts-of-ukraine.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/16/world/europe/despite-truce-shelling-continues-in-parts-of-ukraine.html?_r=1)



Ukrainian soldiers playing Sunday on a road in Svitlodarsk, approaching the disputed town of Debaltseve. Shelling resumed in some areas Sunday. CreditVolodymyr Shuvayev/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

The first day of a cease-fire in eastern Ukrainewas marred by deadly artillery fire on Sunday, and both the Ukrainian military and Russian-backed separatists accused each other of violating the new accord.

Some lingering violence was expected, given the recent intensity of the combat, yet over all, Ukrainian officials said, the accord reached last weekwas holding.

A lull after the midnight cease-fire deadline, however, was followed Sunday morning by a resumption of shelling near the disputed town of Debaltseve, where the fate of about 8,000 Ukrainian soldiers remained unresolved in the negotiations leading to the cease-fire.

By midday, shells and rockets were flying in both directions over the front line about nine miles north of the besieged town.

The separatists had violated the cease-fire 10 times at various locations, a Ukrainian military spokesman, Anatoliy Stelmakh, said in a statement on Sunday. A local official said two people had died in shelling.

The separatists said the Ukrainian Army had opened fire and their forces had little choice but to respond, a rebel news agency, DAN, quoted Eduard Basurin, the military spokesman for the Donetsk People's Republic, as saying. "Units were forced to open fire in response," Mr. Basurin said.

The clashes focused, as they have for weeks, on Ukraine's fragile, attenuated and possibly severed supply route into Debaltseve.

A rebel leader had warned on Saturday that the accord would not apply to that area, if the Ukrainian Army tried to break out of what he said was an encirclement. The Ukrainian president, Petro O. Poroshenko, has denied that Debaltseve is surrounded.

The argument hinges on one section of road stretching about nine miles from this village, Luhanskoye, into Debaltseve. It is heavily mined and within range of both armies' artillery, meaning that neither side can travel it and that neither the separatists nor Kiev can claim undisputed control over it. If Ukraine cannot evacuate or resupply the thousands of soldiers there, the casualties, from artillery barrages, and the eventual surrender of the survivors, could tip the outcome of the war, and quite likely destabilize Ukrainian domestic politics. Mr. Poroshenko has said he may ask Parliament to declare martial law.

A dozen or so soldiers, filthy, bearded and wide-eyed, turned up on Sunday at a hospital in Ukrainian-held territory after escaping from the town. They said that comrades in another truck had been blown up by a separatist missile.

They were the first known people to have left Debaltseve since Thursday, though their exit seemed to shed no light on the dispute over the openness of the road.

After unloading three wounded colleagues and a body, one of the soldiers, who offered only his first name, Viktor, slumped in a hospital corridor and said, "We got out only because we were lucky."

Soldiers on the supply route have said for days that it was impassable, contrary to the senior leadership's claims. From the last Ukrainian checkpoint here in Luhanskoye, the road stretched off into the mist Sunday morning, cratered and vacant, with nothing moving in either direction. "You should leave here as quickly as you can," a twitchy Ukrainian soldier said. "This road is closed."

Kommersant, an influential Russian newspaper, reported over the weekend that eight of the 16 hours of cease-fire talks involving the leaders of France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine in Minsk, Belarus, last week circled around the fate of Debaltseve.

"Almost half of the time was spent discussing the Debaltseve kettle," wrote the newspaper's Kremlin reporter, Andrey Kolesnikov, using the Russian term for a military encirclement.

"Above all, does it exist or not?" he wrote. "Vladimir Putin insisted that it exists and that if a cease-fire agreement is reached, it will be odd if it isn't violated: Those in the kettle will certainly try to get out of there; those who have boiled that kettle will try to collect the foam."



Zhanna Molodetskykh, seated, at the funeral of her son Igor, 7, who was killed when a shell hit his school in Artemivsk. CreditBrendan Hoffman/Getty Images

Over the weekend, President Obama spoke by telephone with Mr. Poroshenko and expressed “grave concern” about the Debaltseve problem. Mr. Obama also spoke with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany.

President François Hollande of France and Ms. Merkel also spoke by phone to Mr. Poroshenko and the Russian president, Mr. Putin, about the truce, according to a statement issued by Mr. Hollande’s office.

On the first day of the cease-fire, many people began stirring from bunkers and basements and assessing the damage.

In Luhanskoye, soldiers stood outside, smoking against a backdrop of destruction — discarded ammunition boxes, broken tree limbs and shattered glass. Not a single house had its windows intact.

Illustrating how poorly the army was equipped, one soldier was using the lull to repair a battery for his armored personnel carrier, saying he had no spare.

Kneeling in a muddy street, he melted a piece of plastic with a cigarette lighter and allowed the blobs to plug a leak in the wall of the battery.

A lone pedestrian picked his way through craters on a street, carrying a bag of bread that he said he would feed to his chickens that had not been cared for since Thursday. He was not sure how many had made it. “It’s not a big deal,” he said. “But I do want to keep them.”

Despite the continued shelling, some residents in these front-line villages said they were focused on the benefits the deal had already brought.

Aleksei V. Kravchenko, 73, a retiree in Svitlodarsk, watched plumbers repair a water pipe burst in an artillery strike on Saturday, before the cease-fire took effect.

He said he wanted to thank Ms. Merkel for negotiating the truce, despite its limitations, on behalf of his grandchildren. Mr. Kravchenko had built a bomb shelter in his basement and had spent nights with the children during the shelling.

“They would say, ‘Grandpa, I don’t want to die young,’ and I held them, and they were shaking, and I looked in their eyes, and they were afraid,” he said. “Now we are hoping.”

