

The Independent – 22.01.2015

By Charlotte McDonald-Gibson

Ukraine crisis: Ceasefire on the brink of breaking down entirely

Українська криза: угода про припинення вогню на межі повного зриву

За офіційним попередженням НАТО в зоні конфлікту на сході України ескалація бойових дій перевищила максимальний до цього рівень. «Ситуація на лінії зіткнення в Україні не дуже добра», - сказав Філіп Брідлав, командувач НАТО в Європі.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/ukraine-crisis-ceasefire-on-the-brink-of-breaking-down-entirely-9996590.html?origin=internalSearch>



A tenuous ceasefire in eastern Ukraine appears on the brink of breaking down entirely, with a Nato official warning that the recent escalation of fighting in some areas surpassed levels of violence seen before the September truce.

The deaths of at least 13 civilians when a mortar hit a trolleybus stop in Donetsk today was the latest incident in a week of violence.

“The situation along the line of contact in Ukraine is not good,” said Philip Breedlove, US Air Force General and Nato’s top commander in Europe. “The fighting has intensified to essentially pre-agreement or pre-standdown levels and in some cases beyond.”

Ukraine’s President, Petro Poroshenko, alleged earlier this week that there were now 9,000 Russian troops in Ukraine. While General Breedlove did not confirm this number, he said that there was evidence of increasing Russian operations on the ground and potentially more forces on the move.

“What we do see is that the Russian-backed forces have renewed capability now to bring pressure on the Ukrainian forces and have in several places moved the line of contact to the west and this is concerning,” he said. “We are beginning to see the [heat] signatures of air defence systems and electronic warfare systems that have accompanied past Russian troop movements into Ukraine.”

Russia has denied any official involvement in Ukraine’s near year-long civil war and has accused the Ukrainians of shelling the bus stop as a “blunt provocation aimed at undermining efforts to seek a peaceful solution of the Ukrainian crisis”.

Ukrainian Prime Minister, Arseny Yatseniuk, blamed pro-Russian separatists.

The recent incidents threaten the terms of the ceasefire signed in Minsk in September, and lessen the likelihood that the European Union will ease sanctions against Moscow which have been in place since last year.

“Economic sanctions were unavoidable,” the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, said in Davos. “They can be lifted if the reasons why they were introduced are removed. But unfortunately we are not there yet.”

Talks between Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany in Berlin had come to an agreement on a dividing line from where the sides should pull back their heavy weapons on Wednesday, with talks continuing today. General Breedlove said Nato was trying to re-establish top military contacts with Moscow.