

APPENDIX 1. OVERVIEW OF MILITARY EVENTS (1 APRIL UNTIL DECEMBER 2014)

Andrei Šlabovitš

A Military Chronology of the Conflict in Eastern Ukraine

April 2014

10 April: Leader of the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) Puškov announces the formation of the 'self-defence forces'.

12 April: A well-equipped group of 50–100 people (with firearms, machine guns, and antitank weapons) under the leadership of I. Girkin (Strelkov) takes control of the police and SBU buildings in Slavyansk. There has been shooting, but the number of casualties is not known. Group members wore military uniforms and carried military equipment. Based on their way of speaking it is clear that many of them are not locals. An assumption: it could be a reconnaissance and diversion group of Russian origin tasked with creating confusion in the rear area of the enemy and attract attention (the Russian border is approx. 150 km distant). In addition, government buildings were taken over in other towns of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts: Kramatorsk, Artjemovsk, Krasnoy Liman, etc.

13 April: An Ukrainian SBU unit made an attempt to enter Slavyansk (a possible reason: negotiations), but was caught under fire of the Girkin group in one check-point. – a SBU soldier and an insurgent were killed. Insurgents also occupy government buildings in Mariupol, Yenakievo, and Makeyvka. Local militia and 'Berkut'²⁴⁸ do not attempt to stop them but go to their side instead. Turtshinov announces the anti-terrorist operation (ATO).

14 April: Gorlovka, Zhdanovka, Kirovskoye are controlled by insurgents.

15 April: Ukrainian Special Forces (the SBU and militia) reoccupy the Kramatorsk airport. Pro-Russian activists make an attempt to occupy the Slavyansk airport, but they are fended off.

16 April: The Ukrainian VDV convoy enters Kramatrsk. Part of it is blocked by a group of civilians and unknown armed individuals (both women and men in uniform

²⁴⁸ Special police within the Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs between 1992–2014.

without insignia) who seize six IFVs immediately sent to Slavyansk. On the same day insurgents raid a military unit in Mariupol. An armed attack is fended off by Ukrainians. Three insurgents were killed and 67 were captured.

At the end of the month several areas, including government and militia buildings in the Donetsk oblast are taken by insurgents, whereas military units are mostly controlled by Ukraine.

22 April: A group from the Ukrainian Right Sector movement (*Pravōj sektor*) makes an attempt to penetrate (or attack) a checkpoint of insurgents. As a result, three insurgents and one Ukrainian soldier were killed. Ukrainian units withdrew.

28 April: The so-called ‘Luhansk People’s Republic’ is proclaimed. Government and militia buildings are occupied. The militia is loyal to the insurgents.

May 2014

2 May: Ukrainians assemble their units near Slavyansk. Slavyansk is clearly a centre where insurgents aim to direct the attention of Ukrainians. Ukrainians present an ultimatum to Girkin to surrender by May 2. The insurgents did not meet these requirements and the first major offensive begins. However, this is fended off with major losses: Ukrainians lost three helicopters (wrecked or heavily damaged), (unexpectedly insurgents had anti-aircraft rockets at their disposal), and there were also casualties. Ukrainians occupied some checkpoints and areas on top of a ridge (Karashun) but were unable to enter the town. The insurgents preferred fighting in the town. The battles last until the 5th of May. Fighting, including ambush in the close rear area of the Ukrainian forces, and indirect fire in Slavyansk and around it continued throughout the month. Insurgents had both antitank and anti-aircraft weapons.

7–13 May: Clashes in Mariupol. Government forces (National Guard and the special battalion ‘Azov’) attempted to retake the city administration buildings using heavy fighting and mortars. Insurgents wear mostly civilian clothes (unlike Slavyansk) and are capable of seizing or destroying three Ukrainian armoured vehicles. However, after getting some support, ‘Azov’ and the National Guard units are able to clear the downtown and take control of Mariupol.

22 May: A group of insurgents attacks the Ukrainian checkpoint near Volnovaha early in the morning. It is possible that the checkpoint was actually the forward command post of the Ukrainian 51-Motorized Rifle Brigade (MrBr) (many of the casualties and injured were staff officers of the 51–51 -Motorized Rifle Brigade). According to different sources, there were 9 or 16 Ukrainians killed and 3 armoured vehicles destroyed. There is no information about insurgent casualties. Possibly, it was a well-prepared diversion group of the enemy to act against the command elements of Ukraine. Ukraine suffered greater losses.

25–26 May: Insurgents attempted to take control of the Donetsk airport controlled by Ukrainian forces. A few days before previously large armed groups arrived in Donetsk from Russia (e.g. Chechens), these groups even participated in a ‘parade’. The insurgent assault was unsuccessful – Ukrainian special forces, *spetsnaz*, managed to fend off these assaults with the support of air force units. When withdrawing they went under friendly fire and suffered great losses – up to 100 were killed (many Russians and Chechens among them). The conflict begins to escalate. Throughout the summer of 2014 the battles continue and there are a number of assaults (indirect fire) at Donetsk airport.

29 May: Insurgents shoot down a helicopter near Slavyansk. General Kultshinski and 14 soldiers were killed. A diversion group of insurgents attacked an Ukrainian convoy near Izyum on the same day. The insurgents become active and act in deep rear area of Ukraine.

June 2014

3 June: A military offensive on Slavyansk. Ukraine recaptures Krasnoy Liman.

5 June: Insurgents attack the Ukrainian border guard checkpoint in Marinovka. Attacks from the Russian Federation are carried out and fended off. From the beginning of June insurgents attempt to take control of the border with Russia; they succeeded in securing several checkpoints (Izvarino, Dyakovo, etc.).

6 June: Insurgents down reconnaissance aircraft Ukraine An-30 near Slavyansk. Battles for positions in and around Slavyansk continue throughout June. Ukraine does not have much success in changing the situation.

Later in June: In general terms the insurgents are focused on securing the areas near the Russian border. This is relatively simple since the Ukrainian authorities are not in control of their border. Fighting continues north of Luhansk. In Luhansk Ukrainian aircraft IL-76 is downed, killing 49 Ukrainian soldiers. Insurgents continue their diversionary attacks against the Ukrainian units in their rear area and against the convoys in and around Slavyansk. Ukraine uses air force units. At the end of the month insurgents reported that they managed to secure the BUK air defence system in an air defence unit in Donetsk. Despite the official ceasefire, clashes and fighting continue throughout June. In June the ceasefire is ended. Insurgents report that they have obtained Ukrainian tanks and armoured vehicles as spoils of war, and their units will use them. They really have tanks T-64 and armoured vehicles BMP-2, etc. at their disposal. The Ukrainians deny that they have lost that many pieces of equipment in good working order. The exchange of military goods (in Russian *voentorg*) becomes more and more active.

July 2014

Beginning of the month: Ukraine starts a combat operation with the aim to regain control of its border, while insurgents make every effort to stop them from achieving this.

5 July: Girkin's units withdraw from Slavyansk and arrive in Donetsk. In Donetsk and by the border with Russia the situation of Ukrainians becomes more and more difficult: insurgents left Slavyansk, Kramatorsk and some other towns, while their concentration has increased in Donetsk and in border areas. Battles for an important ridge Saur-Mogila start.

11 July: The attack of the MLRS in the field camp area of Ukraine near Zelenopolye (ab. 7 km from the Russian border). This is the first time the multiple rocket launcher BM-21 Grad is used against Ukraine. Ukraine suffers extensive losses; the camp area is completely burnt down and destroyed.

14 July: Ukrainian transport plane An-26 is shot down at high altitude (more than 5000 m). This means that more efficient air defence systems must have been used to destroy the plane than the weaponry used before (e.g. shoulder fired air defence systems with an effective range of up to 3–3.5 km).

16 July: Insurgents (incl. the Girkin's group from Slavyansk) start counter-offensives in an area between Donetsk and the Russian Federation (Stepanovka, Marinovka, etc.), sealing off the groups located near the border. Ukrainians are isolated: on one side there are towns controlled by insurgents (Shahtersk, Makeyevka, etc.), and on the other side there is the border of the Russian Federation. Ukrainians are in defence claiming that armed groups coming from Russia are attacking them and they are being shot at by the Russian Federation. Ukraine uses its air force units in support of its encircled units more widely.

17 July: MH17 shot down.

End of the month: Ukraine continues attacks in all areas of the conflict zone. Insurgents are kept under pressure from both north of Donetsk (liberated Lisitskansky and Debaltsevo) and south of Donetsk (seized Saur-Mogila). Insurgents continue to use air defence systems (Ukrainians lose two assault planes Su-25).

August 2014

Beginning of the month: The Ukrainian offensive continues. Fighting for Shahterski, Torez, Snezhnoye continues. Ukraine attempts to encircle the insurgents between Donetsk and Luhansk and keep the pressure on in the border areas. The situation

becomes more difficult and critical for the insurgents. The insurgents report getting equipment from Ukrainians much more frequently – they take dozens of units in working order at one time. At the beginning of August, the Ukrainian units in the border areas come under indirect fire more often. The enemy uses UAVs and reconnaissance groups to control indirect fire. Shooting continues from the direction of the Russian Federation.

10 August: Fighting for Ilovaysk.

11 August: Zahhartshenko declares the DPR army to be ready for extensive counter-offensive activities since the Ukrainian forces are worn out.

12 August: Insurgents reported having at least 200 units of armoured equipment ‘obtained’ from Ukrainians that they will soon start to use.

12–23 August: The Ukrainian offensive slows down and at times the Ukrainians are forced to withdraw. Since their resistance grows more adamant, it is clear that the insurgents receive continuous support from the Russian Federation. Some areas frequently change ownership, and in some areas Ukraine is forced to withdraw.

23–24 August: A press officer from the DPR armed forces says that another three brigades and one regiment were formed. He also reports that the armed forces of the DPR would change their strategy and tactics – employing the offensive activities of large formations instead of small groups.

24 August – end of the month: Large-scale attack of the DPR army. With effective artillery fire the tactical battle groups of the enemy armoured battalion isolate Ukrainian units and encircle them in the Ilovayski-Starobeshevo region. Also, Novozovsk is secured towards Mariupol. Ukrainian forces withdraw in all directions, suffering great losses. The use of Russian armed forces in Ukraine has been proved (‘operation’ Northern Wind).

September 2014

5 September: A cease-fire is established following meetings in Minsk.

Overview of the month: Despite the announced cease-fire, fighting continues in all regions of the conflict zone (especially at Donetsk Airport, which is shelled throughout September, most actively at the end of the month). However, the fighting is considerably less intense compared to August. It is possible that the bulk of the RF forces have left for Russia.

October 2014

4 October: Representatives of the DPR report that they have taken control of the Donetsk Airport; however, this is only partially true. Some of the airport buildings are still held by the Ukrainian military (incl. both terminals and the air traffic control tower). This could be called a war of position.

Overview of the month: Artillery assaults and fighting continue both around the Donetsk Airport and elsewhere.

November 2014

Overview of the month: Artillery assaults and fighting continue both around the Donetsk Airport and elsewhere. Fierce fighting breaks out in the Donetsk Airport region from 30.11 to 01.12. Pro-Russian rebels are able to take control of the old terminal.

December 2014

12 December: A cease-fire is declared at Donetsk Airport. The rotation of Ukrainian forces takes place under the control of pro-Russian rebels.

Overview of the month: The situation is relatively calm, some fighting and artillery assaults occur. There are confrontations between rebel groups (including the murder of 'Batman' in Luhansk and clashes between Cossacks and LPR security forces) and preparations for future battles (i.e. personnel and weapons are resupplied by the Russian Federation).