

UKRAINE PULLS BACK ARTILLERY AND TROOPS
FROM FRONT LINE

УКРАЇНА ВІДВОДИТЬ АРТИЛЕРІЮ ТА ВІЙСЬКА ВІД
ЛІНІЇ ФРОНТУ

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Rebel militia and Ukrainian troops begin to withdraw from Novorossiya, resulting in a de facto independent statelet beyond Poroshenko's control.

The Russian-backed territory of “Novorossiya” in Ukraine has moved closer to de facto independence after Ukrainian troops and rebel militia began to retreat from the conflict's front line.

Petro Poroshenko, Ukraine's president, has faced criticism for agreeing to a ceasefire deal on Friday that ensures both sides

fighting in the east of the country withdraw by 15km (9.5 miles), creating a 30km demilitarised zone.

The Ukrainian leader's critics have said the move would see the Donetsk and Luhansk "people's republics" - collectively called Novorossiya, or New Russia by the Kremlin - become a quasi-autonomous statelet. The ceasefire agreement, which started to be implemented on Monday Sept 22, was signed in Minsk by representatives of Russia, Ukraine, the rebels and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Andriy Lysenko, spokesman for Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council, said withdrawals on both sides were in progress and the rebels had removed some heavy artillery, although the movement was "not as massive as we expected".

Mr Poroshenko admitted in a television interview on Sunday evening that a military victory for Ukrainian forces was now out of the question because of the level of support the rebels received from Russia. "I underline that it is impossible to win the war in Donetsk and Luhansk purely by military means," he said.

"The more Ukrainian army battalions or brigades are brought up, the more troops there are from the Russian Federation." He added that 60 to 65 per cent of Ukraine's military equipment on the front-line had been destroyed.

Under the latest deal, military aircraft are forbidden from flying over the conflict zone and "foreign mercenaries" must be withdrawn on both sides.

A ceasefire in the conflict was agreed, also in Minsk, on September 5 and both sides say it is in force despite repeated and serious violations.

The West and some Ukrainians support Mr Poroshenko's peace moves but others say they are a capitulation, allowing Vladimir Putin, the president of Russia, to go on propping up Novorossiya - a separatist territory that will destabilise Ukraine and impede its integration into Europe.

Yulia Tymoshenko, Ukraine's former prime minister, said on Sunday: "I don't believe in the president of Ukraine's peace plan,

and the three-way talks in Minsk are a fraud ... in order to disarm the [Ukrainian] army and so that Europe and America ease off their sanctions [against Russia] or cancel them altogether.”

Mr Poroshenko defended the peace initiatives saying they allowed prisoner exchanges and should lead to Russian forces withdrawing from Ukraine.

By [Tom Parfitt](#), 22 Sep 2014

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/11113907/Ukraine-pulls-back-artillery-and-troops-from-front-line.html>