

Big Guns in East Ukraine Fall Silent

September 01, 2015

The  **Moscow Times**

An injured national guard officer is carried away by comrades outside the parliament building in Kiev, Ukraine, Aug. 31.

A fragile truce between Ukrainian government forces and pro-Russian separatists appeared to be holding on Tuesday as both sides made a renewed effort to silence their guns and make the much-abused cease-fire work.

Sporadic shelling and shooting, which each side has blamed on the other, had ensured a steadily mounting death toll despite the cease-fire called as part of a peace plan worked out in Minsk, Belarus, in February.

Government and separatist representatives agreed last week to strive to end all violations from Tuesday.

A Kiev military spokesman said first signs were that parties to the Minsk deal were adhering to the call for a more effective truce to mark the start of a new school year.

"As of 12 p.m. there were no reports of violations by the illegal armed groups. Now the

situation is calm," the spokesman, Oleksander Motuzyanyk, said.

No soldiers had been killed or wounded over the past 24 hours, he said.

However, two more guardsman have died from wounds sustained in violent protests outside Ukraine's parliament, the National Guard said.

The Minsk agreement, brokered by the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France, is regarded as the bedrock of international efforts to end the conflict in Ukraine's eastern regions. More than 6,500 people have been killed since a separatist rebellion erupted there in April last year.

But violent nationalist-led protests outside parliament on Monday and political opposition inside to reforms indicate that President Petro Poroshenko may struggle to win broad support for the Minsk deal.

Several explosive devices, including smoke bombs and one grenade, were thrown from the crowd at the parliament during a rowdy debate on constitutional amendments that would give greater self-governance to rebel-held areas in the east.

One guardsman was reported on Monday as having been killed in the unrest and nearly 90 wounded.

Police detained 18 people, including a person who had thrown a grenade. Police say he is a member of the nationalist Svoboda political party.

Original url: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/09/01/big-guns-in-east-ukraine-fall-silent-a49279>