

Separatist Leader Says Russia Paying Pensions in Eastern Ukraine

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Alexander Khodakovsky [YouTube](#)

Russia is financing pensions and state salaries in the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, a separatist leader has claimed.

Alexander Khodakovsky, commander of "Vostok" batalion and former secretary of Donetsk Security Council, [told the Reuters news agency](#) that Russia covered both expenditures "as a priority." He was removed from the Donetsk administration earlier this year after an internal dispute.

"Without outside help, it's impossible to sustain the territory," he said, claiming that Russia's financial help was greater than the Donetsk Republic's internal revenue.

The Kremlin has denied all claims, Reuters reported.

The Finance Ministry in the Luhansk People's Republic could not be reached for comment, while the Donetsk authorities said that they could not discuss the sources of their budget for

security reasons.

The Ukrainian government no longer pays pensions or public sector salaries to those registered as living in self-proclaimed republics, while fighting in the region has caused much of the area's industry to close.

More than 9,500 people have been killed in the eastern Ukrainian conflict since it began in early 2014.

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