

Kiev Government No Longer Controls Armed Forces: Troops Sent to Eastern Ukraine Switch Sides

Six Ukrainian Army Vehicles Join Pro-Federalist Protesters

By [Ria Novosti](#)

Global Research, April 16, 2014

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Personnel From 6 Armored Transport Vehicles Sent To Kramatorsk In East Ukraine Switch To Side Of Pro-Federalist Activists.

SLAVIANSK, April 16 (RIA Novosti) – The personnel of six armored transport vehicles sent to the eastern Ukrainian city of Kramatorsk have switched sides and have joined the pro-federalist activists, witnesses told RIA Novosti on Wednesday.

“We found them at a square near the railway station. A group of women surrounded them, we started telling them we were peaceful residents who are just fighting for their rights and that there are no terrorists here,” the witness said, adding: “They won’t shoot us.”

“The main armored transport vehicle had a Russian flag on it and they left together with our [protesters] towards Slaviansk,” the witness said.

The number of personnel from the transport vehicles was not specified.

The Ukrainian army started a special operation Tuesday in a crackdown on self-defense activists in eastern Ukraine. The operation targeted the cities of Kramatorsk and Slaviansk in the Donetsk region. At least four protesters were killed and two others wounded Tuesday as Ukrainian troops stormed an airfield in Kramatorsk, local pro-federalization supporters said. Two others were wounded.

Eastern Ukraine has been swept by rallies beginning last month. Federalization supporters in Kharkiv, Donetsk, Gorlovka, Slaviansk and Kramatorsk refuse to recognize the legitimacy of the current Ukrainian government and are urging interim authorities to hold referendums similar to the one held in Crimea last month, which led to the republic’s reunification with Russia.

Russia condemned the decision by the new Ukrainian authorities to use force against the federalization supporters, saying it was an extremely unpleasant turn of events.

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