

Novorossiya Army Being Formed in East Ukraine

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The former defense minister of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, Igor Strelkov, is expected to form the army of Novorossiya, the union of Donetsk and Luhansk republics in eastern Ukraine, DPR's Prime Minister Alexander Zakharchenko said Saturday.

"Igor Ivanovich [Strelkov] has done a lot to build the army of the Donetsk People's Republic. He has created the basis for forming the army according to the Russian model... Because such a model is the most understandable one to us in terms of mentality, in terms of the rich history of joint military action that our predecessors have conducted since the dawn of time. We understand the relationship between the commander and the subordinates," Zakharchenko said.

Strelkov, resigned from the post "due to his appointment to a new position" Thursday, according to the republic's official statement.

Zakharchenko said that Strelkov had completed the tasks in the DPR and would "do other important work" in Novorossiya, "which also needs military personnel, the command staff coordination between Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic," he added.

Both Zakharchenko and Strelkov criticized their Luhansk colleagues for weak activity in the military action. Strelkov was previously the leader of Slaviansk self-defense forces, and was included on the European Union's sanctions list.

Zakharchenko did not specify where Strelkov was at the moment, saying he deserved a vacation after "fighting a war for three months." DPR's activists previously wrote in blog post that Strelkov was wounded in fighting and was taken to Russia for treatment.

The name Novorossiya, chosen by the self-proclaimed republics, originates from a geographical region in southeastern Ukraine that was annexed by Russia from the Ottoman Empire at the end of the 18th century. The region included what is now the Donetsk Region, small portions of the Luhansk Region, as well as Crimea.

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