

Russia escalating Donbas conflict as part of talks, Ukraine official says **Ukraine**

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Analyst: "Some of the pro-Russian armed groups are acting independently and are interested in undermining the plans for local elections."

KYIV, May 25, 2016 (UBO) - The Russian government is escalating the armed conflict in the Donbas region to force Ukraine and its international partners to accept its demands on the OSCE armed police mission in the conflict zone, Ukrainian Presidential Administration Anti-Terrorist Operation Spokesman Andriy Lysenko told Ukrainian television on May 24. Concorde Capital informed its clients of the situation in an online advisory and quoted Lysenko as saying: "We haven't had such a day this year in which so many boys were killed and it's no coincidence that the Kremlin representative (Dmitry) Peskov outlined how the OSCE international mission is supposed to work and be armed." In the 24 hours leading up to noon, May 24, seven Ukrainian soldiers were killed and nine injured, as reported by National Security and Defense Council Secretary Oleksandr Turchynov. The same day, Russian Presidential Spokesman Peskov said his government understands the OSCE mission to be one of monitoring, not policing. He also said an armed OSCE mission would have to be positioned on the separation line between Ukraine and the separatist enclaves, rather than on the Russian border with the enclaves, which was rejected by the Ukrainian government. Concorde analyst Zenon Zawada added: "For much of the Donbas war's duration, the Russian government has used the strategy of escalating the fighting as an instrument of pressure in negotiations with Western leaders, who are sensitive to public opinion. That is likely the case in this episode, though it's also the case that some of the pro-Russian armed groups are acting independently and are interested in undermining the plans for local elections."

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File photo