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## East Ukraine Clashes Add to Tensions With Russia

By Jason Ditz

March 14, 2014

Clashes in the eastern Ukrainian city of Donetsk have left dozens wounded and at least one person dead, as pro-Russian protesters clashed with fighters supporting the new “interim” government.



This has only added to the tensions between Ukraine and Russia, which are already on the rise as the interim government aims to stop Crimean secession, and Russia defends the Crimean peninsula from any Ukrainian intervention ahead of this weekend’s referendum.

Donetsk is far afield from the Crimea, but faces many of the same issues. The city and province, along the border with Russia, has a large ethnic Russian population, and was generally supportive of the ousted Yanukovich government, which protesters replaced with a pro-West one earlier this month.

Russia has tried to downplay the situation, saying they have no intention of military intervention in eastern Ukraine, but with anti-Russian sentiment soaring in the country, and the new Donetsk governor insisting ethnic Russians are entirely to blame for the unrest, Russia's foreign ministry also insists it will protect Russians from persecution abroad.

Either way, rumors of imminent attack from one side or the other (or both) are growing in Donetsk, and that's got tensions rising and protesters more at odds with one another than ever. Whatever ends up happening in Crimea, the pro-Russian sentiment in Donetsk and elsewhere in the east isn't going to change, and with the new unelected government looking to portray itself as consensus rulers of the whole Ukraine, that opposition is going to be a thorn in their side for a long time to come.