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14 military killed in chopper downed in E. Ukraine - acting president

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Anti-government protesters in Slavyansk have downed a Ukrainian forces helicopter in the south-east of Slavyansk in the Donetsk region.

Fourteen servicemen, including a major-general, Vladimir Kulchitsky, have been killed in a helicopter crash near Slavyansk, according to the acting president of Ukraine, Aleksandr Turchinov, who spoke at a parliamentary session in Kiev.

Kulchitsky, 51, was the head of the department of Combat and Special training in Ukraine's National Guard.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's National Guard reported 12 dead: six servicemen, including the helicopter crew and six members of the Berkut forces.

Ukraine's army has started shelling the eastern Ukraine cities of Slavyansk and Kramatorsk, thereby resuming its massive military operation in the East of the country, local news outlets report.

*"A full-scale military operation has begun in Kramatorsk and Slavyansk. BM-21 launch vehicle "Grad" are being used,"* Donbas-based Ostrov agency says.

*"Intensive shooting has been heard in the region, and thick black smoke seen,"* he added.

One more damaged house in Slavyansk. The residents were outside during the attack.



Meanwhile, Itar-Tass has reported that fighter jets have been flying over the city of Kramatorsk in the Donetsk Region. *"The hospitals were told to evacuate patients from the upper floors,"* said a representative from the self-defense forces.

On Wednesday a school and a kindergarten were shelled in Slavyansk. In the kindergarten at least 9 civilians were injured, including a 4-year old boy.

A teacher from the targeted school said that the shell exploded right above the school hall, where children are usually gathered for festive events, and part of the roof "was simply blown away." Luckily, no children were in the hall at the time. All the pupils and teachers were quickly evacuated to the basement.