

.New round of Ukraine peace talks open in eastern city

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Interfax news agency said the rebels were talking to the so-called "contact group" which includes former President Leonid Kuchma, Moscow's ambassador to Kiev and representatives of the OSCE rights and security watchdog.

A first round of talks was held last Monday and ended with a rebel commitment to honor a ceasefire earlier declared by government forces and which is due to end at 10 p.m. (1900 GMT) on Friday.

But the Kiev government says the rebels have carried out numerous breaches of the ceasefire over the past week, including the downing of a military helicopter on Tuesday killing nine service personnel.

(Additional reporting by Aleksandar Vasovic in Donetsk and Pavel Polityuk in Kiev; Writing By Richard Balmforth, Editing by Timothy Heritage)