

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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January 19, 2024, 8:15pm ET

Click [here](#) to see ISW's interactive map of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

Click [here](#) to see ISW's 3D control of terrain topographic map of Ukraine. Use of a computer (not a mobile device) is strongly recommended for using this data-heavy tool.

Click [here](#) to access ISW's archive of interactive time-lapse maps of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These maps complement the static control-of-terrain map that ISW produces daily by showing a dynamic frontline. ISW will update this time-lapse map archive monthly.

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 1:15pm ET on January 19. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the January 20 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Note: ISW has added a new section on Ukrainian defense industrial base (DIB) efforts to the daily Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment to track the development of Ukraine's DIB and the international support for Ukraine's DIB efforts. ISW will be publishing its assessments in this section based on public announcements, media reporting, and official statements.

Russia is conducting an information operation to misrepresent NATO's defensive "Steadfast Defender 2024" exercises – a response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine and Russian threats directed towards NATO members - as provocative. NATO's Steadfast Defender 2024 exercises begin this week and will continue through May 2024.[1] NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe General Chris Cavoli stated on January 18 that 90,000 personnel from all 31 NATO member states and Sweden will participate in "Steadfast Defender." [2] The exercises will reportedly include over 50 ships; over 80 fighter jets, helicopters, and drones; and at least 1,100 combat vehicles, including 133 tanks and 533 infantry fighting vehicles.[3] Cavoli stated that NATO "will demonstrate its ability to reinforce the Euro-Atlantic area via trans-Atlantic movement of forces from North America...during a simulated emerging conflict scenario against a near-peer adversary." [4] Chair of the NATO Military Committee Admiral Rob Bauer stated on January 18 that NATO must prepare for a conflict with Russia as NATO cannot take peace as "a given" and must "expect the unexpected." [5] German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius stated on January 19 that Germany must consider that Putin may try to attack a NATO member in five to eight years, given threats from the Kremlin "almost every day." [6]

The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) responded to the initial announcement of the Steadfast Defender exercises in September 2023 and misleadingly claimed that NATO exercises have been increasingly provocative and aggressive in nature.[7] The Russian MFA claimed that NATO is

continuing a "demonstration of force" on Russia's "doorstep." The Russian MFA claimed that Russia had regularly proposed de-escalation initiatives to NATO, called for NATO to abandon its provocative actions, and transferred Russian military exercises to the country's interior. Russian sources claimed that NATO is using exercises to "wind up" and incite the Baltic states to prepare for war with Russia and characterized such exercises as a "series of provocations." [8] Yulia Zhdanova, a member of the Russian delegation at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) 1066th plenary meeting, similarly claimed on January 17 that NATO exercises on the Russian and Belarusian borders "provoke a game of nerves" and "compress the spring of escalation even more." [9] A prominent Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger dismissed Pistorius' comments about a possible future Russian attack on NATO, claiming that European officials regularly make statements about the "concept of the 'Russian threat'" and that few Germans actually agree with these statements. [10] The milblogger implied that the German government is attempting to artificially create a threat from Russia that doesn't actually exist by paying experts to "say the right words."

The Russian information operation aimed at painting defensive NATO actions in response to real Russian aggression on NATO's eastern flank as provocative seeks to deflect from recent aggressive Russian rhetoric and behavior towards NATO. Russian officials, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, recently threatened Finland and the wider NATO alliance. [11] Putin identified the West as Russia's "enemy" and implied that Russia is fighting in Ukraine in order to defeat the West. [12] Kremlin officials and Kremlin-affiliated actors have also repeatedly attempted to set information conditions for future aggressive action against NATO member states and their neighbors. [13] Russian electronic warfare (EW) exercises in Kaliningrad may have caused unprecedentedly high levels of GPS jamming across northern and central Poland and the southern Baltic region on December 25-27, 2023 and January 10 and 16, 2024. [14] ISW continues to assess that Putin invaded Ukraine in 2022 not to defend Russia against a nonexistent threat from NATO but rather to weaken and ultimately destroy NATO – a goal he still pursues. [15]

Russian forces will be able to determine the location, tempo, and operational requirements of fighting in Ukraine if Ukraine commits itself to defensive operations throughout 2024 as some US officials are reportedly pressing Kyiv to do. The *Financial Times (FT)* reported on January 19 that US officials are advocating for Ukraine to take a more "conservative" operational approach focused on holding current territory and generating materiel and forces in 2024 for future counteroffensive operations in 2025. [16] One US official reportedly argued that a strategy of "active defense" would allow Ukraine to build out operational requirements and prepare for a counteroffensive in 2025. [17] US military doctrine defines an active defense as the "employment of limited offensive action and counterattacks to deny a contested area or position to the enemy." [18] Ukrainian officials have stated that Ukrainian forces are conducting active defensive operations in areas where Russian forces are engaged in localized offensive efforts. [19] An active defense throughout the theater, however, would require routine and widespread Ukrainian counterattacks and therefore still demand that Ukrainian forces commit considerable offensive capabilities to the front. *FT* reported that US officials believe that Ukrainian forces still could opportunistically exploit weak spots in the Russian defense while conducting a theater-wide active defense. [20] Limited opportunistic counterattacks - especially when not resourced adequately- are unlikely to result in gains commensurate with the resources they will inevitably consume, however.

A theater-wide defensive posture would cede the strategic initiative to Russia and permit Russia to launch major attacks at times of its choosing, forcing Ukraine to burn scarce resources it would supposedly be generating during a period of “active defense.” Former Ukrainian Defense Minister Andriy Zahorodnyuk stated to *FT* that focusing on defense without any offensive component would be “a mistake of historic proportions” for Ukraine as it would hand Russian President Vladimir Putin the initiative and allow Putin to double down on ongoing efforts to convince the West and the rest of the world that Ukraine cannot win the war.[21] Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Lieutenant General Kyrylo Budanov similarly stated that Ukrainian forces need to continue to press Russian forces, particularly through operations that target Russian logistics in occupied Crimea.[22] A Ukrainian “active defense” into 2025 would cede the theater-wide initiative to Russian forces for at least a year and possibly longer, allowing the Russian command to determine where, when, and at what scale fighting occurs over that period. This extended period of theater initiative would also give the Russian command significant control over determining what resources both Ukrainian and Russian forces must bring to bear. The Russian command would therefore have an ample operational window to conduct a series of campaigns of differing intensities across the theater in Ukraine that could be specifically designed to constrain and degrade critical Ukrainian operational capacities needed for a future counter-offensive.

Offensive and defensive operations place similar requirements and constraints on Ukrainian materiel and personnel, and Ukrainian defensive operations do not necessarily present Ukraine with more opportunities to husband materiel and expand reserves for future counteroffensive operations. Russian and Ukrainian forces rely on the same weapons and equipment to conduct both defensive and offensive operations. Equipment such as armored vehicles, artillery, and drones are just as critical for defending positions as they are for capturing positions. Defensive operations do not eliminate manpower requirements or losses, moreover, as holding positions and counterattacking can produce significant force requirements and losses, particularly when the aggressor can set the terms of battle each time. The stability of a defensive line relies in part on the ability of defending forces to conduct sufficient rotations, rapidly reinforce weakened sectors of the frontline, establish physical fortifications, and when necessary, conduct orderly withdrawals from threatened positions, all of which require significant resources and a significant amount of committed and immediately available manpower. Offensive operations have required more materiel and manpower than defensive operations in Ukraine as in most wars, but both Russian and Ukrainian forces have regularly suffered significant losses on the defensive as well.[23]

Just as defensive operations do not guarantee that Ukraine will be able to amass resources for future counteroffensives, offensive operations do not necessarily preclude Russia from continuing efforts to build out stockpiles of equipment and establish operational reserves. ISW currently assesses that the tempo of Russian offensive operations in Ukraine and Russia’s ongoing crypto-mobilization campaign is enabling Russian forces to conduct regular operational-level rotations but that Russian forces are unlikely to be able to rapidly establish operational reserves.[24] Russian forces have recently expended considerable amounts of equipment on failed offensive efforts in eastern Ukraine and are currently consuming artillery ammunition far faster than Russia’s gradually mobilized defense industrial base (DIB) can produce.[25] Ukrainian officials have indicated that Russian forces are funneling newly produced weapons and ammunition to the frontline for immediate use and not for expanding stockpiles for future operations.[26] These constraints on Russian materiel and manpower are not inevitable characteristics of Russian offensive operations in Ukraine, however. Russian forces could ease these constraints while still conducting

offensive operations if the Russian command changed the intensity or tactics of these operations, intensified force generation efforts, or significantly expanded efforts to mobilize Russia's DIB. Granting Russia a year or more of holding the theater-wide initiative would allow the Russian command to choose freely between prioritizing its own offensive efforts and operational requirements, amassing its own resources for future use, and forcing Ukraine to expend the resources Kyiv would be seeking to amass for future Ukrainian counteroffensive operations.

Russian forces will likely choose to conduct localized offensive operations as well as larger offensive efforts throughout the theater in order to force Ukraine to commit scarce materiel and manpower to defensive efforts. Ukrainian Ground Forces Command Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Volodymyr Fityo stated on January 19 that the entire eastern front from Kupyansk to Bakhmut is active and reported intensified Russian assaults in the Kupyansk-Lyman and Bakhmut directions.[27] Fityo warned that while Ukrainian forces are destroying Russian tanks and armored vehicles, Russian forces have “a large reserve of resources.”[28] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that Russian forces have recently “switched to the offensive” in certain areas of the Lyman direction, particularly west of Svatove and west and southwest of Kreminna.[29] Mashovets noted that Russian forces are likely preparing for larger-scale actions in the Lyman direction in the near future.[30] A prominent Kremlin-affiliated milblogger also claimed that Russian forces have begun a “massive offensive” in the Kupyansk-Lyman direction.[31] ISW previously assessed that Russian forces may intensify efforts to capture Kupyansk, Kharkiv Oblast in the coming weeks.[32] Russian sources have repeatedly acknowledged Russia's intent to continue active operations throughout Ukraine intended to destroy Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.[33]

FT also reported, citing unspecified Ukrainian officials, that Russian forces are planning to conduct a large-scale offensive in Ukraine in the summer of 2024 and will attempt to capture the rest of the four illegally annexed oblasts (Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhia oblasts).[34] *FT*'s unspecified Ukrainian sources did not rule out the possibility of Russian forces attempting to recapture Kharkiv or Kyiv cities.[35] German outlet *BILD* reported similar Russian plans on December 14, 2023, and ISW noted at the time that Russia's reported plans for the war are generally consistent with ongoing localized offensive operations in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.[36] Russian offensive operations in Ukraine will likely not have to achieve significant territorial advances to force Ukraine to expend valuable and limited resources on defensive efforts. Ukrainian forces will likely be unable to husband materiel and personnel while defending against Russian offensive operations, localized or large-scale, that are meant to prevent them from doing so. **Ukraine would risk consuming resources it hoped to conserve for its own counteroffensive operations in efforts to stop continuing Russian attacks, likely while losing ground, if it went over to the strategic defensive as some US officials are apparently recommending. The side in war that holds the initiative generally has the advantage, and it is unwise to suggest that Ukraine should cede that advantage to Russia for longer than is absolutely necessary.**

US officials reportedly assess that Ukraine will have to fight a long war and continue efforts to secure as much security assistance as possible for Ukraine before 2025 while expecting that positional fighting may continue in Ukraine until 2026. *CNN* reported on January 19 that US President Joe Biden, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, and Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines met with US lawmakers on January 17 to urge lawmakers to support additional security assistance to Ukraine.[37] Biden Administration officials highlighted air defense systems and artillery ammunition as key Ukrainian capabilities that could be depleted without

additional US aid, ending Ukraine's ability to conduct long-range strikes against occupied Crimea and Russia's Black Sea Fleet.[38] An unspecified US official told *CNN* that getting as much aid to Ukraine approved as possible before 2025 is "on the minds of a lot of folks." [39] *CNN* reported that unspecified US intelligence officials assess that the war will last at least two more years, with some assessing there may be up to five years of fighting. *CNN* reported that unspecified US officials do not believe that a *short-term* "drop-off" in US assistance to Ukraine will have a major battlefield impact, but that a *long-term* lack of US assistance could allow Russia to regain momentum by stockpiling weapons produced domestically and by Iran and North Korea, however.[40] **ISW continues to assess that the positional war in Ukraine is not a stable stalemate and could be tipped in either direction by decisions made in the West and Russia and that the collapse of Western aid to Ukraine would likely lead to the eventual collapse of Ukraine's ability to hold off the Russian military and significant Russian advances further west, likely all the way to the western Ukrainian border with NATO member states.**[41]

Russia is trying to mend its relationship with South Korea to mitigate the impacts of its growing reliance on North Korea. Russian Ambassador to South Korea Georgy Zinoviev stated on January 18 that Russia would "welcome" South Korea into the circle of Russia's "friendly countries" and suggested that South Korean businesses should invest in the restoration of occupied Donbas.[42] Zinoviev claimed that South Korea does not want to see Russia strategically defeated in Ukraine and warned South Korea against supplying military aid to Ukraine. Zinoviev also falsely claimed that Russian-North Korean cooperation is not violating any international sanctions. Recent direct signaling from South Korean officials suggests that South Korea is increasingly at odds with the Kremlin, particularly due to growing Russian cooperation with Pyongyang. South Korean President Yoon Suk-Yeol stated on September 17, 2023 that Seoul believes that Russian and North Korean military-technical agreements may violate UN Security Council sanctions, and South Korean officials have recently warned that North Korea is increasing weapons and ammunition transfers to Russia.[43] Ukraine-based open-source organization Frontelligence Insight published a report on January 19 mapping the logistics routes along which North Korea is transferring ammunition to Russia for use in Ukraine, highlighting the dramatic impact of North Korean ammunition deliveries on the Russian war effort.[44] Continued Russian cooperation with North Korea is likely further driving South Korea away from Russia, and the Kremlin likely fears the impacts of these shifting dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region.

Protests in support of an imprisoned prominent Bashkort activist continued in the Republic of Bashkortostan, but Kremlin mouthpieces denied reports that the protests are significant in scale. Russian opposition sources reported that anywhere from "hundreds" to 1,500 supporters of imprisoned Bashkort activist Fail Alysnov protested in Bashkortostan's capital Ufa on January 19 and that Russian Special Purpose Mobile Units (OMON) detained at least 10 demonstrators.[45] Russian authorities sentenced Alysnov to four years imprisonment on January 11 for "inciting hatred" and publicized the ruling on January 17, prompting mass protests outside the courthouse in Baymak, Bashkortostan.[46] Footage published on January 19 shows dozens to hundreds of Alysnov's supporters demonstrating in the center of Ufa, and footage published later in the day suggests that the protests concluded for the day.[47] Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov claimed on January 19 that there were no mass riots in Bashkortostan and that local law enforcement is handling "individual" local demonstrations.[48] A Russian political blogger, who reported on the initial protests and denounced Alysnov as a "separatist" with "neo-fascist" values, claimed that no more than 50 people

protested in Ufa and that half had dispersed by midday – a claim inconsistent with footage of the actual protests.[49]

The Russian government continues efforts to codify legal oversight of the activities of migrants living in Russia. The Russian Cabinet of Ministers approved an action plan for the State Concept of Migration Policy, which the Russian government will implement throughout 2024-2025.[50] The action plan includes six sections that address the entry of foreign citizens to Russian territory; the assimilation of foreigners into Russian society; the free movement of students, scientific personnel, and teaching staff between Russia and other countries; and the prevention of violations to Russian migration laws.[51] The action plan also requires the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) and Federal Security Service (FSB) to submit proposals by March 20, 2024 to the Cabinet of Ministers on how to strengthen punishments for foreigners who violate Russian laws.[52] The plan also includes several provisions to facilitate the integration of migrants into Russia's domestic sphere including Russian language proficiency assessments and assimilation courses to help foreigners internalize Russian "traditional spiritual and moral values." [53] Migrants will also have to create a "digital profile" by the end of 2024, which will allow the Russian government to track arrivals of those coming from countries that have a visa-free entry regime with Russia, as well as to expand the collection of biometric data of foreigners who arrive at Moscow airports.[54] ISW previously assessed that Russia was using similar digital surveillance technologies to expand its societal control toolkit during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, and it appears that the Kremlin is applying such surveillance and control measures to monitor the activities of foreigners in Russia.[55] The Kremlin likely seeks to quickly enact this action plan in order to gain more oversight over foreigners and manage growing tensions with some migrant communities within Russia.[56]

Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree allocating funds for the search, registration, and legal protection of Russian property abroad, which includes property in former territories of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union.[57] The decree directs the Russian Presidential Administration's Foreign Property Management Enterprise and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) with power and funds to search for, register, and legally protect "property," though the exact parameters of what constitutes current or historical Russian property are unclear. The Kremlin may use the "protection" of its claimed property in countries outside of its internationally recognized borders to forward soft power mechanisms in post-Soviet and neighboring states ultimately aimed at internal destabilization.[58] A prominent milblogger responded to the decree by implausibly calling for Russia to start enacting the law in "Alaska" and throughout a significant portion of eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.[59]

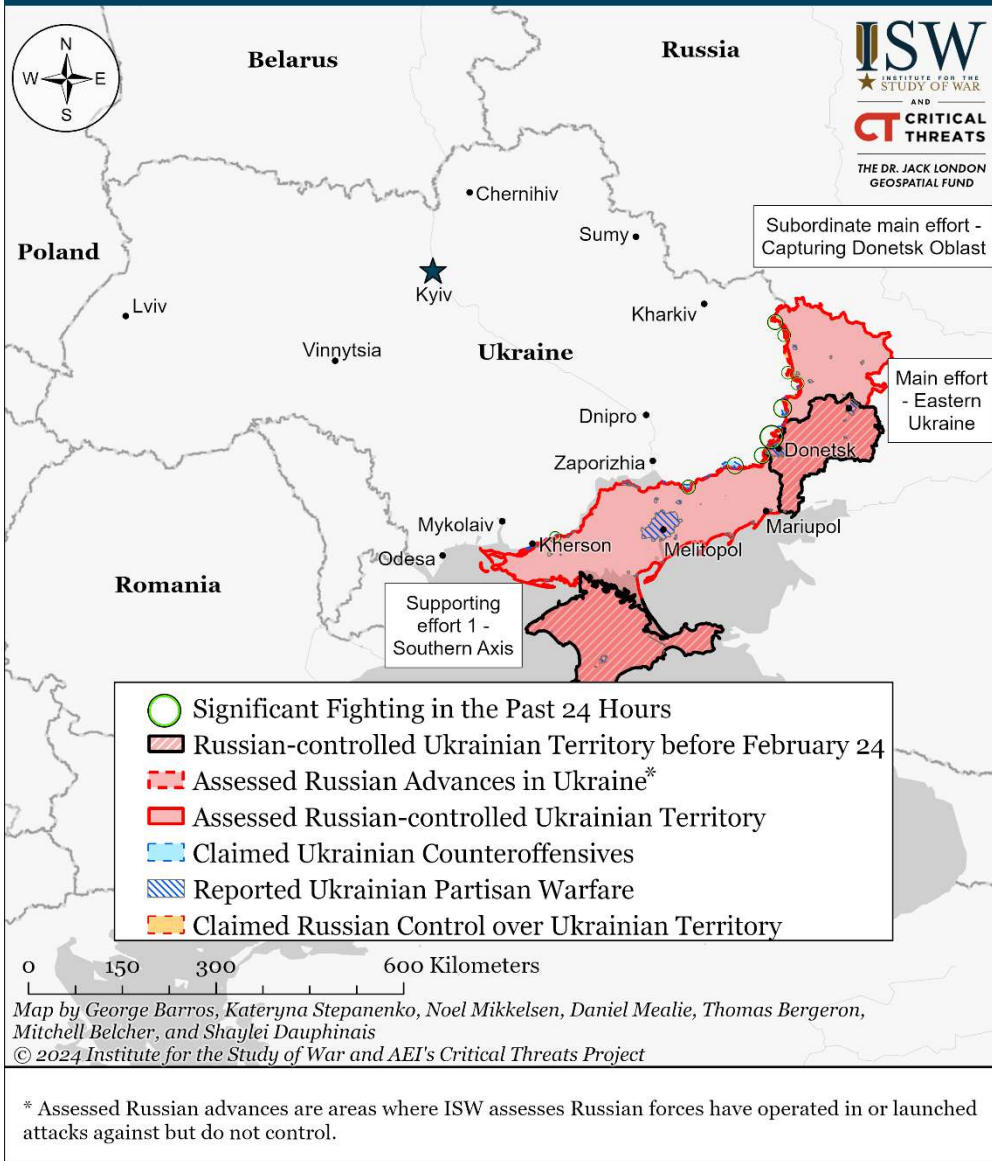
Key Takeaways:

- **Russia is conducting an information operation to misrepresent NATO's defensive Steadfast Defender 2024 exercises – a response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine and Russian threats directed towards NATO members - as provocative.**
- **Russian forces will be able to determine the location, tempo, and operational requirements of fighting in Ukraine if Ukraine commits itself to defensive operations throughout 2024 as some US officials are reportedly pressing Kyiv to do.**
- **US officials reportedly assess that Ukraine will have to fight a long war and continue efforts to secure as much security assistance as possible for Ukraine**

before 2025 while expecting that positional fighting may continue in Ukraine until 2026.

- **Russia is trying to mend its relationship with South Korea to mitigate the impacts of its growing reliance on North Korea.**
- **Protests in support of an imprisoned prominent Bashkort activist continued in the Republic of Bashkortostan, but Kremlin mouthpieces denied reports that the protests are significant in scale.**
- **The Russian government continues efforts to codify legal oversight of the activities of migrants living in Russia.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree allocating funds for the search, registration, and legal protection of Russian property abroad, which includes property in former territories of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union.**
- **Russian forces recently made confirmed advances southeast of Kupyansk, and Ukrainian forces recently regained positions southeast of Kupyansk amid continued positional engagements along the entire line of contact.**
- **The Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) “Vostok” Battalion stated on January 19 that it will resume fighting on the frontlines in Ukraine when the period of positional fighting ends and will “continue to serve” after the war, presumably subordinated to Rosgvardia.**
- **Russian occupation authorities continue to leverage the provision of social benefits and healthcare to augment passportization efforts in occupied Ukraine.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of January 19, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We will continue to evaluate and report on the effects of these criminal activities on the Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population and specifically on combat in Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Russian Technological Adaptations
- Ukrainian Defense Industrial Base Efforts
- Activities in Russian-Occupied Areas
- Russian Information Operations and Narratives
- Significant Activity in Belarus

Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

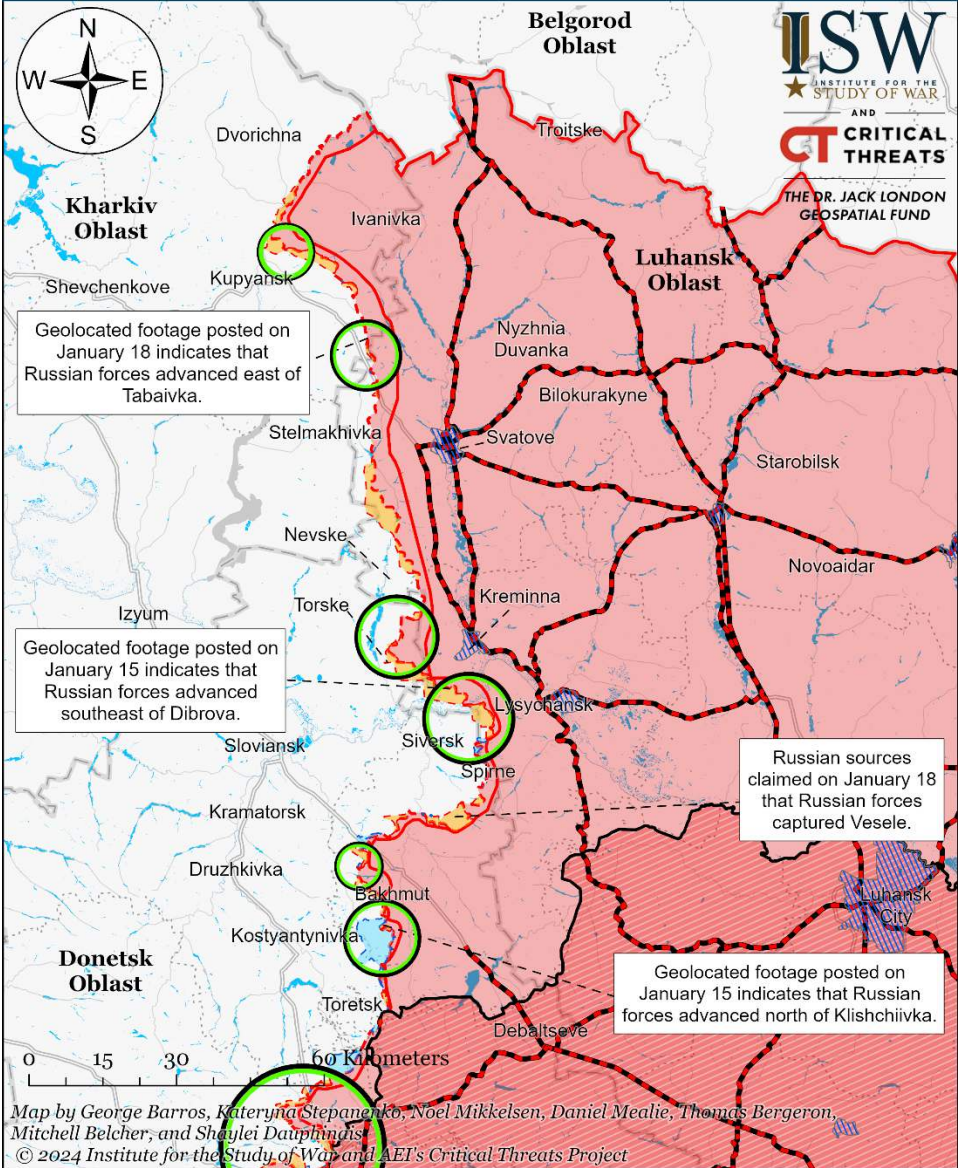
Russian forces recently advanced on the Kupyansk-Svatove line southeast of Kupyansk. Geolocated footage posted on January 18 shows that Russian forces have advanced in the forest area east of Tabaivka (about 25km southeast of Kupyansk).[60] A prominent Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed on January 19 that Russian forces began a "massive offensive" in this area and advanced up to half a kilometer west of the railway in the direction of Krokhmalne and Tabaivka.[61] ISW has not yet observed visual confirmation of Russian advances across the railway line in this area or any indicators that Russian forces have begun a "massive" offensive effort here. Ukrainian Ground Forces Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Volodymyr Fityo noted that Russian forces have intensified attacks along the Kupyansk-Lyman line in recent days and are advancing.[62] Fityo also stated that Ukrainian forces destroyed 13 tanks and 14 BMP infantry fighting vehicles in the Kupyansk and Lyman directions over the past day, indicating that Russian forces have likely committed a substantial amount of armor to this area.[63] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces continue to pressure Ukrainian forces in the Synkivka area (northeast of Kupyansk).[64] Russian and Ukrainian sources reported positional engagements northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka and Petropavlivka, and southeast of Kupyansk near Tabaivka.[65]

Ukrainian forces recently regained limited positions on the Kupyansk-Svatove line southeast of Kupyansk. Geolocated footage posted on January 19 shows Ukrainian forces assaulting a Russian position east of Berestove (just south of the Tabaivka-Krokhmalne area and 18km northwest of Svatove), forcing Russian troops to withdraw and retreat further east of Berestove.[66] Russian and Ukrainian forces reported that positional engagements continued near Svatove, particularly near Berestove and Makiivka (both northwest of Svatove).[67] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets reported that elements of the 752nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (3rd Motorized Rifle Division, 20th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Western Military District [WMD]) are attacking Makiivka from the northeast.[68]

Russian sources claimed that Russian forces advanced south of Kreminna on January 19 amid continued positional engagements in the Kreminna area. Several Russian milbloggers claimed on

January 19 that Russian forces advanced 1.42 kilometers wide and 330 meters deep towards Bilohorivka (11km south of Kreminna), although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of Russian advances in this area.[69] Russian and Ukrainian sources reported that positional engagements continued west of Kreminna near Terny and Yampolivka; southwest of Kreminna near Dibrova and in the Serebryanske forest area; and south of Kreminna near Bilohorivka.[70] Mashovets noted that Russian forces in this direction have transitioned to offensive actions in the past several days and that elements of the 283rd Motorized Rifle Brigade (144th Motorized Rifle Division, 20th CAA, WMD) and 164th Motorized Rifle Brigade (25th CAA, Central Military District [CMD]) are attacking towards Terny.[71] Elements of the "Aida" group of the "Okhotnik" detachment of Chechen "Akhmat" Spetsnaz are reportedly fighting in the Serebryanske forest area.[72]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of January 19, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, and Shaylei Dauphinais
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Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours	Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*	Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
Russian Ground Lines of Communication	Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory	Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24	Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory	

* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

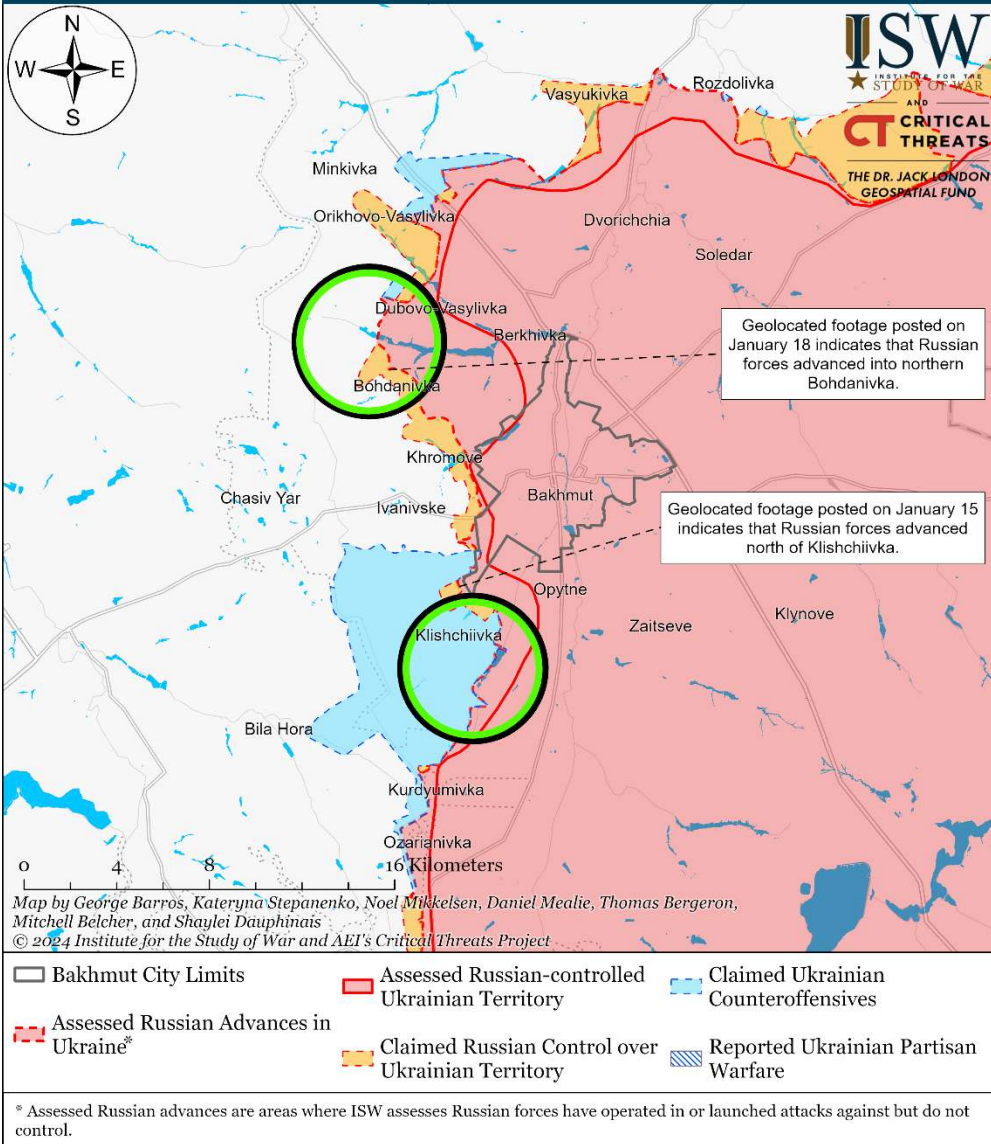
Note: A Russian source claimed on January 19 that Russian forces advanced half a kilometer west of the railway line east of Tabaivka. North Ossetian volunteer battalions "Storm Ossetia" and "Alania" claimed on January 18 that Russian forces are within seven kilometers of Kupyansk. A Russian source claimed on January 16 that Russian forces advanced up to 1.7 kilometers along a 2.2-kilometers-wide front near Makiivka, citing unspecified Ukrainian sources.

Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)

Positional engagements continued northeast of Bakhmut near Siversk, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Some Russian milbloggers claimed on January 19 that Russian forces made additional advances near Vesele (southeast of Siversk and northeast of Bakhmut) after allegedly capturing the settlement as of January 18, but ISW has not observed confirmation of the Russian claims from January 18 or 19.[73] The Russian 123rd Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People’s Republic [LNR] Army Corps) continues to operate southeast of Siversk near Berestove.[74]

Positional fighting continued near Bakhmut on January 19, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Russian and Ukrainian sources reported that positional fighting continued northwest of Bakhmut near Bohdanivka; west of Bakhmut near Khromove, and southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka and Andriivka.[75] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces made a tactical advance near Bohdanivka, but ISW has not observed confirmation of this claim.[76]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of January 19, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

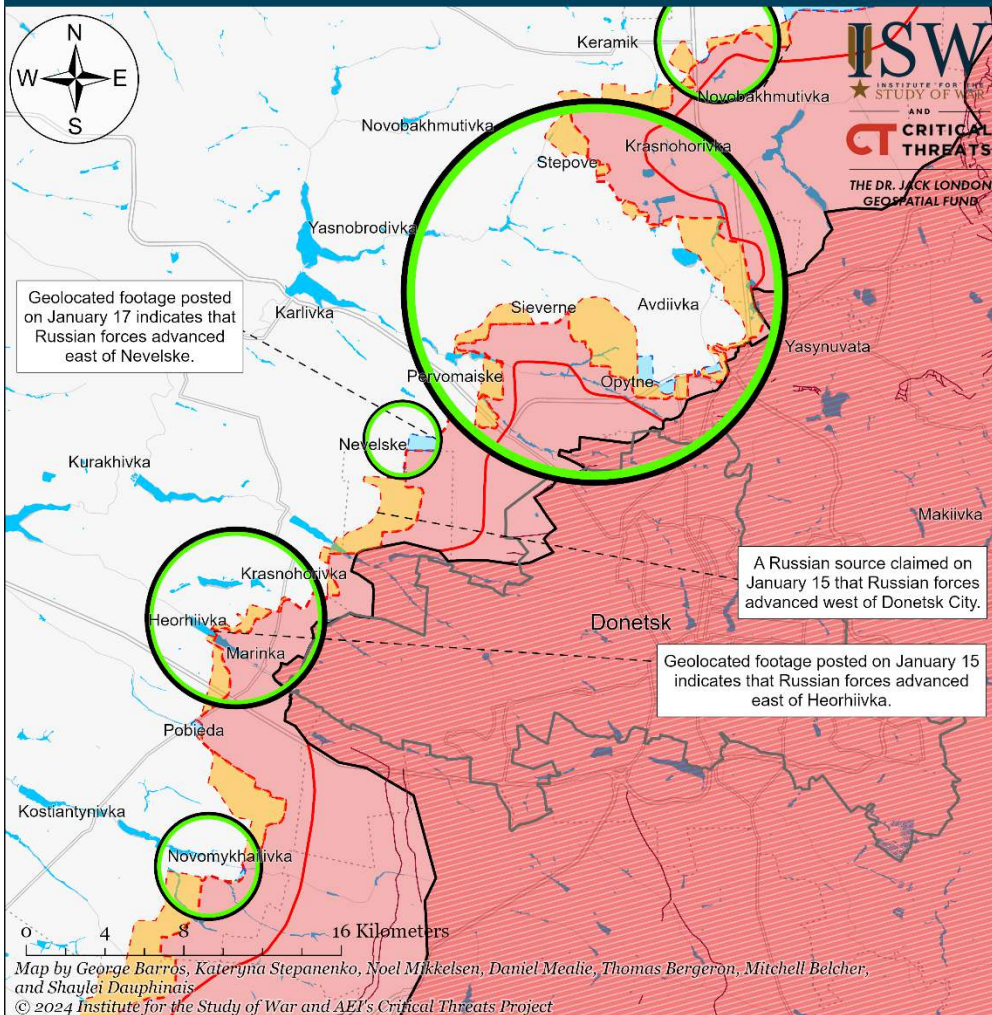


Russian forces reportedly advanced on the outskirts of Avdiivka amid continued positional fighting in the area on January 19. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces made tactical advances on the outskirts of Avdiivka; north of Avdiivka near Stepove; and southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske and Nevelske.[77] Ukrainian journalist Yuriy Butusov claimed that small Russian infantry groups entered Avdiivka, and a Ukrainian soldier operating in the area reported that Russian forces marginally advanced in Avdiivka’s residential sector in the eastern part of the city.[78] ISW has not observed any confirmation of reported Russian advances near or in Avdiivka, however. Ukrainian and Russian sources reported that positional engagements also continued northwest of Avdiivka near Novokalynove and Novobakhmutivka; west of Avdiivka near Tonenke; near the Coke Plant in northwestern Avdiivka, the “Blue Lakes” quarry immediately north of Avdiivka, and the industrial zone southeast of Avdiivka;

and east of Avdiivka near Kamyanka.[79] Avdiivka City Military Administration Head Vitaliy Barabash stated that weather conditions in the Avdiivka direction recently allowed Russian forces to conduct mechanized assaults against the city on frozen ground, but that the ground then thawed and inhibited Russian mechanized attacks on January 18.[80] Barabash also stated that Russian forces no longer have a significant numerical advantage in first-person view (FPV) drones in this area of the front.[81]

Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets reported on January 19 that elements of the Russian 114th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Army Corps) were supposed to bypass the Avdiivka Coke Plant from Vesele and Kamyanka (both to the northeast) but that this plan stalled due to challenging terrain and the failure of the Russian 30th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd CAA, Central Military District) to capture a position near the quarry before the 114th Brigade attacked.[82]

Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of January 19, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Donetsk City Limits	Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*	Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory	Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory	Russian Field Fortifications

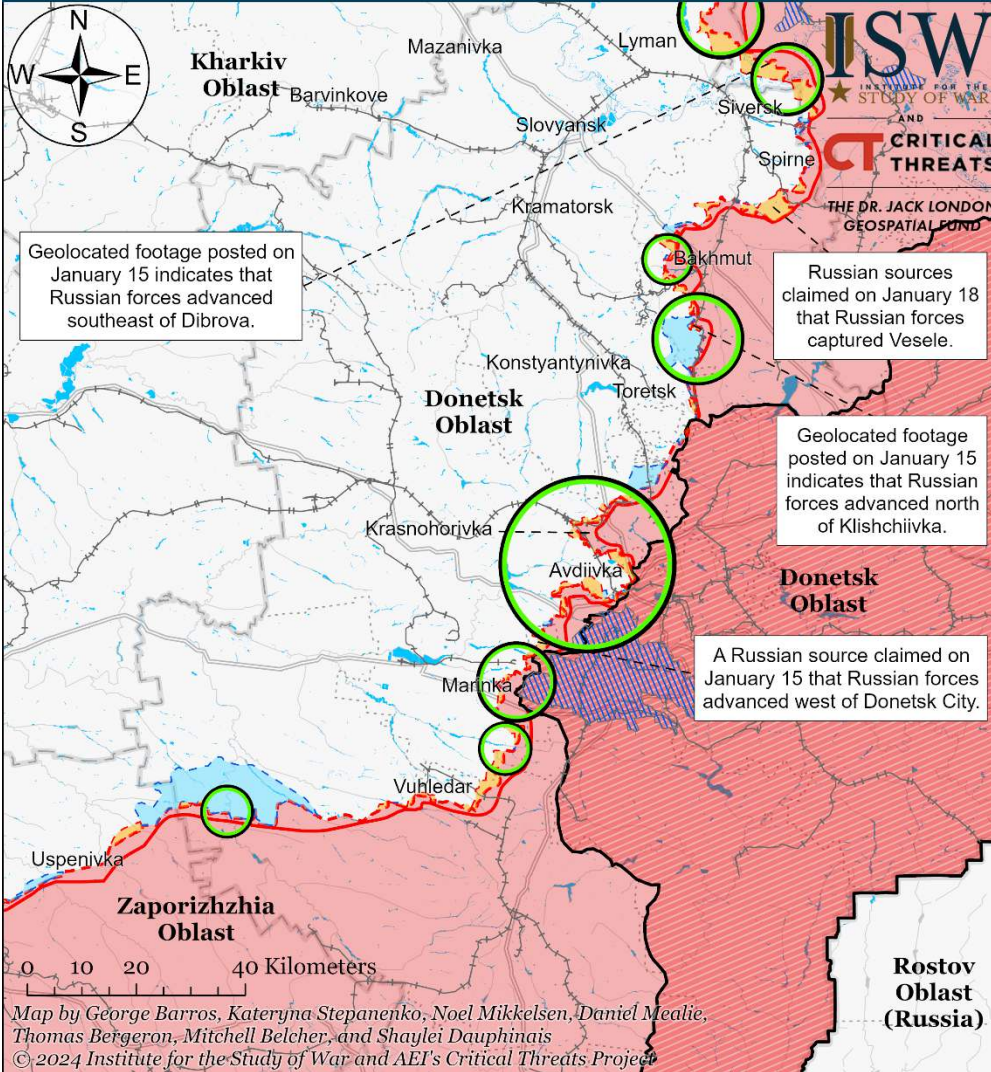
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: A Russian source claimed on January 16 that Russian forces advance between 100 and 200 meters daily in the Avdiivka direction. A Russian source claimed on January 16 that Russian forces captured 7.1 square kilometers of territory south of Novomykhailivka.

Positional engagements continued west and southwest of Donetsk City on January 19, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Russian and Ukrainian sources reported continued positional fighting west of Donetsk City near Krasnohorivka, Marinka, and Heorhiivka, and southwest of Donetsk City near Novomykhailivka.[83] Mashovets reported that Russian forces conducted a tactical regrouping of forces operating in the Novomykhailivka-Kostyantynivka direction south to southwest of Marinka such that Russian forces operating in the area include: the 103rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (150th MRD, 8th CAA, Southern Military District) in the Marinka-Pobieda direction; likely a reinforced

battalion of the 155th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet, EMD) in the Oleksandrivka-Novomykhailivka direction; and elements of the 39th Motorized Rifle Brigade (68th Army Corps, EMD) in the Slavne-Novomykhailivka direction and near Solodke.[84]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of January 19, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



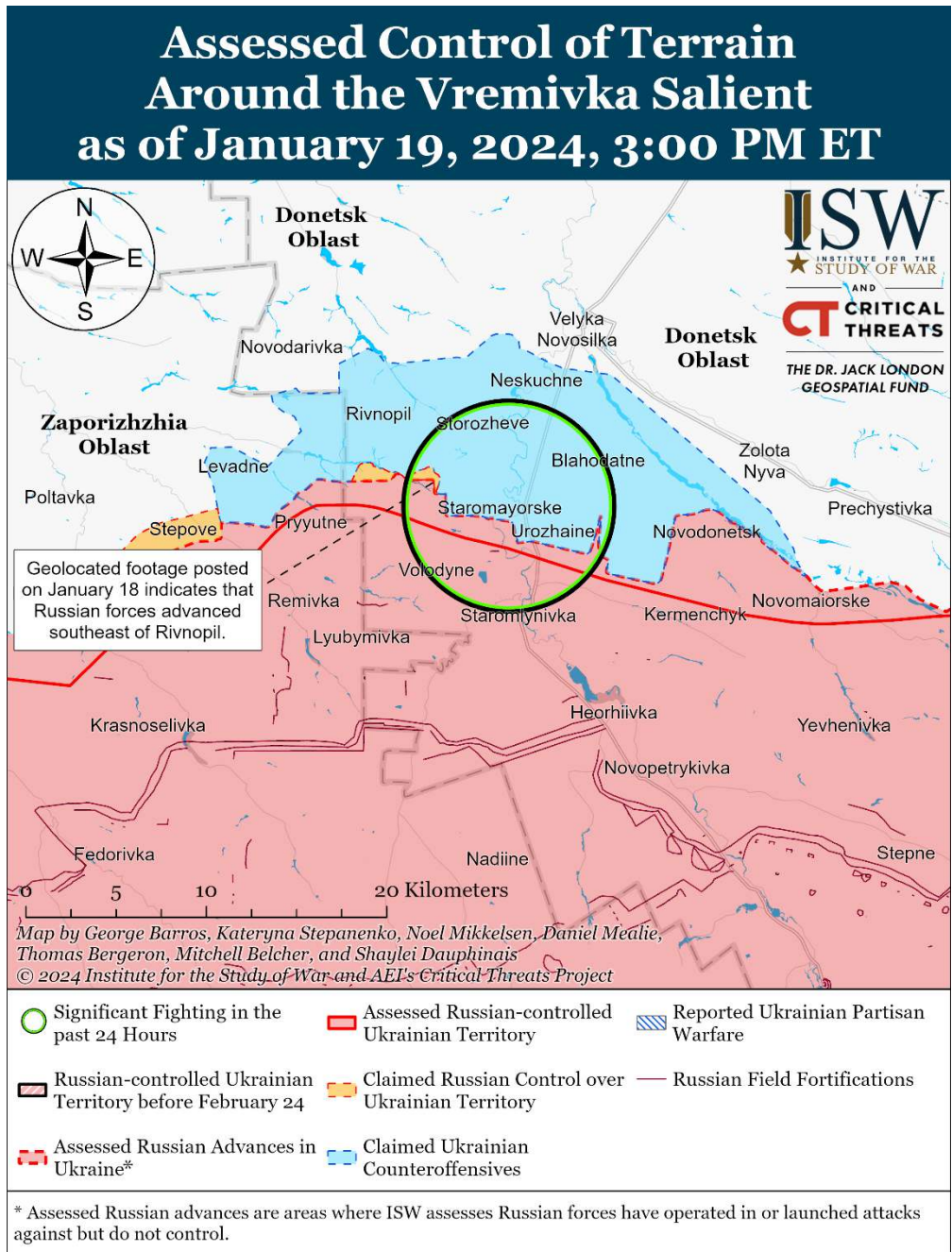
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Major Railroads

* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: Russian sources claimed on January 19 that Russian forces advanced along a 1.42 kilometer wide and 330 meter deep frontline towards Bilohorivka.

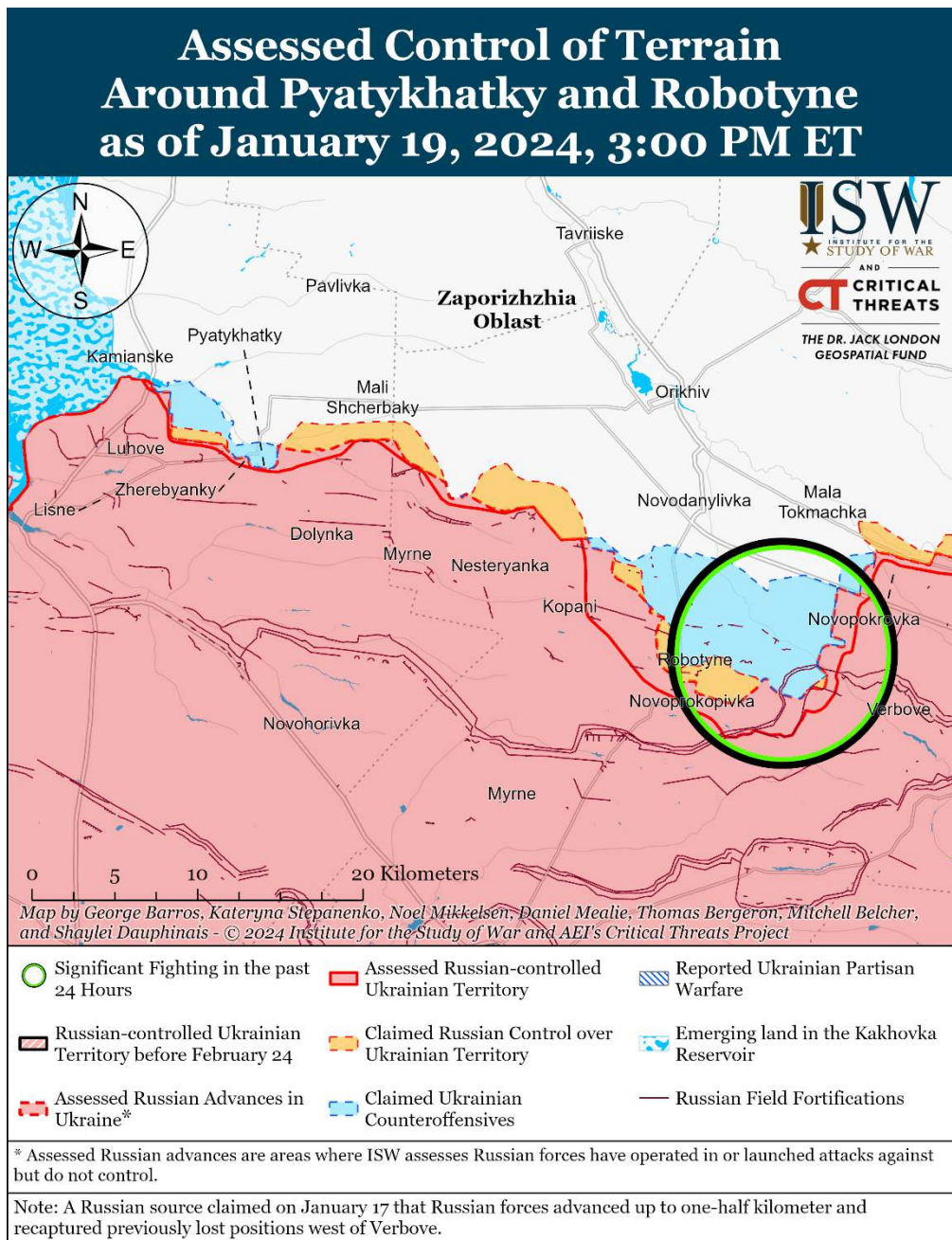
Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Positional engagements continued in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area on January 19. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional engagements continued west of Staromayorske and east and south of Urozhaine (both south of Velyka Novosilka).[85]



Positional engagements continued in western Zaporizhia Oblast, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area on January 19. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional

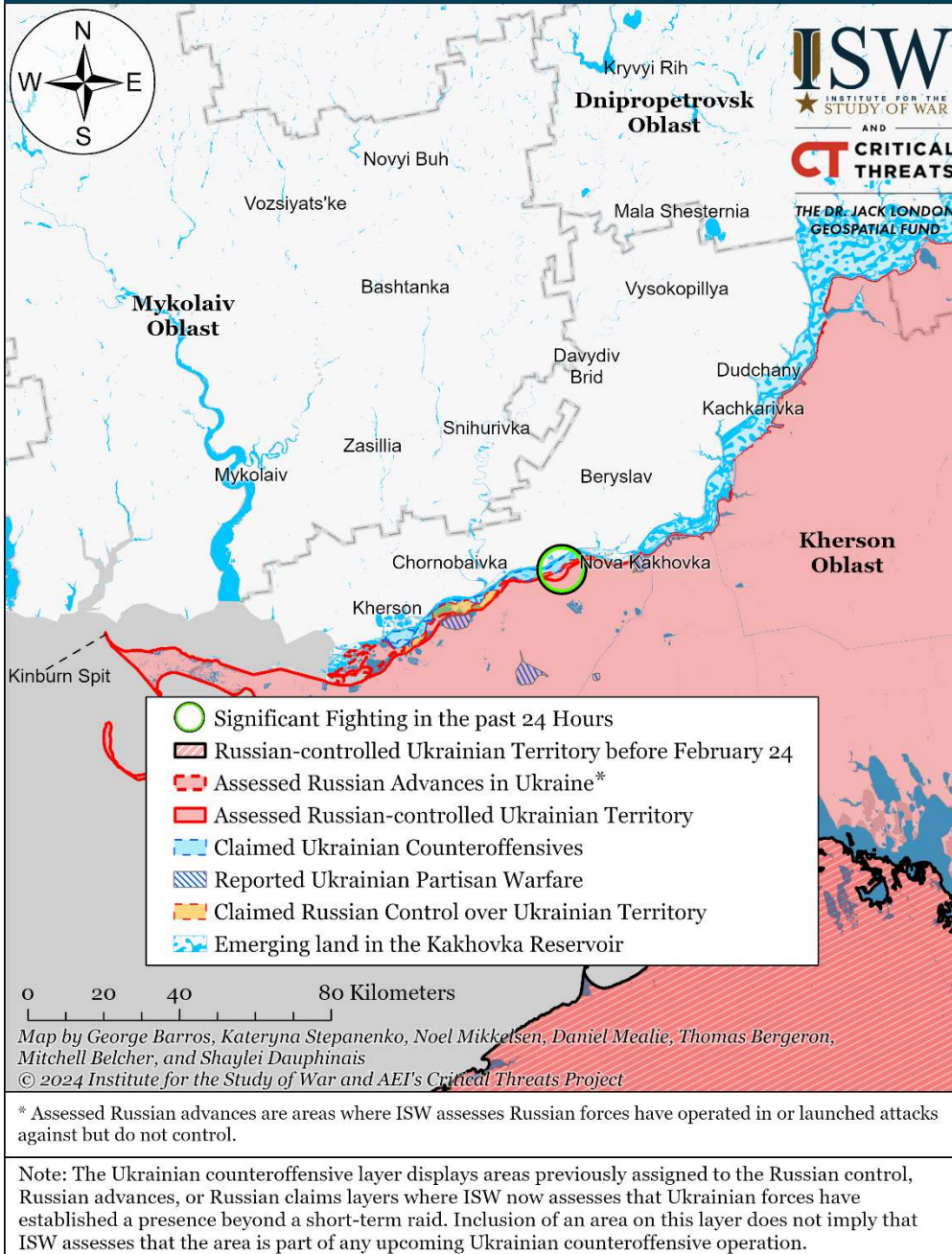
engagements continued west of Verbove (east of Robotyne) and near Robotyne and Novoprokopivka (south of Robotyne).[86]



Positional engagements continued in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast on January 19. Ukrainian and Russian forces stated that positional engagements continued near Krynyky.[87] Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Colonel Nataliya Humenyuk stated that Russian forces significantly reduced artillery and drone reconnaissance activity in southern Ukraine in the past day.[88] Humenyuk stated that the total number of Russian personnel on the east bank of the Dnipro River is "extremely high." The *Financial Times (FT)* reported that a Ukrainian soldier operating near Krynyky stated that Russian forces have at least four or five times more personnel than Ukrainian forces

in the area.[89] *FT* reported that Ukrainian personnel stated that Ukraine's goal on the east bank was to create a position from which Ukrainian forces could launch new attacks deeper into Russian-controlled territory, but that Ukrainian forces are suffering from logistics issues and are unable to transport larger weapons across the Dnipro River. Ukrainian forces operating near Krynky have previously described difficulties with operating across the river and establishing positions on the east bank.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of January 19, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts (Russian objective: Expand combat power without conducting general mobilization)

The Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) “Vostok” Battalion stated on January 19 that it will resume fighting on the frontlines in Ukraine when the period of positional fighting ends and will “continue to serve” after the war, presumably subordinated to Rosgvardia.[90] The “Vostok” Battalion claimed that

it is “licking [its] wounds” and “putting [itself] in order” before returning to the frontline. The “Vostok” Battalion emphasized that it is not a “temporary formation” and has been operational for 10 years. The “Vostok” Battalion stated on January 3 that it will continue to operate subordinated to Rosgvardia following the reported dissolution of the “Kaskad” operational combat tactical formation of the DNR’s Internal Affairs Ministry (MVD).[91]

Foreign nationals serving with the Russian military in Ukraine detailed their experiences with corruption and poor medical treatment in footage published on January 19. Social media footage purportedly showed a Chinese national expressing his desire to end his contract with the Russian military and return to China due to concern that he will die of an otherwise treatable unspecified illness contracted on the front.[92] The Chinese national claimed that Russian military doctors are unable to treat him and that he contacted the Chinese Embassy in Russia but was turned away since he voluntarily signed a military service contract.[93] The Chinese national appealed to other Chinese citizens to contact the Chinese government on his behalf and secure his return to China.[94] Another video posted to social media shows an interview with a reported Ethiopian national in Ukrainian custody who claimed to have joined the Russian military after being promised a Russian passport in exchange for military service.[95] The reported Ethiopian prisoner of war claimed that Russian authorities told him that he would be able to fulfill his military service in Russia and would not have to fight in Ukraine.[96] The reported Ethiopian national claimed that he signed a contract with the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) on December 3, 2023, and that Ukrainian forces captured him on January 7.[97] ISW has previously reported that Russian forces are quickly sending poorly trained personnel to reinforce assault elements in Ukraine, and it is possible that Russia is similarly quickly deploying poorly trained migrants and foreign recruits to the front.[98]

Russian opposition outlet *Mobilization News* reported on January 19 that at least 207 graduates of the Ryazan Higher Airborne Command School have died fighting in Ukraine, an estimated 4.5 percent of the school’s total number of graduates since 2014.[99] *Mobilization News* reported that four of the 25 (16 percent) graduates of the school’s class of 2016 have already died in Ukraine and that another graduate is in Ukrainian custody.[100]

Russian schools reportedly continue to use drones to teach Russian children and college students how to operate combat drones, likely to militarize Russian youth and set long-term conditions for future force generation efforts. Russian opposition outlet *Vedomosti* reported on January 19 that educational institutions in 52 Russian federal subjects (regions) purchased 1.2 billion rubles worth of drones for drone combat and “homeland defense” courses in 2023.[101] *Vedomosti* reported that there was a surge in drone purchases in November and December 2023 following the Russian Ministry of Education’s draft order that could enable Russian schools to teach courses on drone combat within “homeland defense” courses.[102] *Vedomosti* reported that Russia’s top three federal subjects in drone purchases are the Republic of Bashkortostan (411.5 million rubles or \$4.67 million), Moscow Oblast (181.5 million rubles or \$2.06 million), and the Republic of Chechnya (74.1 million rubles or \$840,000).[103] *Vedomosti* reported that Russian schools will likely purchase additional drones in 2024.[104]

Russian Technological Adaptations (Russian objective: Introduce technological innovations to optimize systems for use in Ukraine)

Ukraine's "Army of Drones" initiative reported on January 19 that Russian forces are equipping tanks with Sania anti-drone electronic warfare (EW) systems that allow Russian forces to suppress individual drones and drone swarms within a range of 1.5 kilometers.[105] The system reportedly only degrades first-person view (FPV) drones while not interfering with other signals and automatically turns off after downing the drone.[106]

Ukrainian Defense Industrial Efforts (Ukrainian objective: Develop its defense industrial base to become more self-sufficient in cooperation with US, European, and international partners)

Click [here](#) to read ISW's new analysis on Ukrainian long-term efforts to develop a self-sufficient DIB with US and European support.

Ukrainian Minister of Strategic Industries Oleksandr Kamyshin stated on January 18 that Ukrainian forces used a Ukrainian-made drone to strike a target in St. Petersburg.[107] The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reportedly conducted a successful drone strike on unspecified Russian military facilities in Leningrad Oblast on January 18.[108] Kamyshin stated that the Ukrainian drone flew more than 1,250 kilometers towards its target and emphasized that Ukraine needs more drones.[109] Ukraine produced 50,000 FPV drones per month as of December 2023 and plans to produce a total of one million FPV drones in 2024.[110]

The Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers approved changes to a government resolution on January 19 that will exempt conscripted employees of critical enterprises within Ukraine's defense industrial base (DIB) from military service.[111] The amended resolution provides exemptions to Ukrainian DIB employees regardless of military rank, age, or specialty and places no restrictions on the number of employees that may receive an exemption.[112] Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Nataliya Kalmykov stated at the meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers that Ukrainian defense-industrial enterprises must work like clockwork to increase production capacity of weapons and equipment.[113]

Activities in Russian-occupied areas (Russian objective: Consolidate administrative control of annexed areas; forcibly integrate Ukrainian citizens into Russian sociocultural, economic, military, and governance systems)

Russian occupation authorities continue to leverage the provision of social benefits and healthcare to augment passportization efforts in occupied Ukraine. Ukrainian Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov stated on January 19 that Russian occupation authorities are targeting elderly and sick Ukrainian residents who need government assistance to survive as part of Russian efforts to force Ukrainians to obtain Russian passports.[114] The Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) Territorial Compulsory Medical Insurance Fund stated on January 19 that they are operating a mobile office in occupied Luhansk Oblast where residents can register for compulsory medical insurance policies, likely meant to coerce passportization in exchange for medical insurance.[115]

Russian federal subjects continue to establish patronage networks with occupied areas of Ukraine. Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Head Denis Pushilin claimed on January 19 that the Yamalo-Nenets

Autonomous Okrug is supporting infrastructure projects in and sending humanitarian supplies, vehicles, and construction equipment to occupied Donetsk Oblast.[116]

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian officials are intensifying efforts to misrepresent French support for Ukraine as escalatory in an effort to constrain ongoing and future French security assistance to Ukraine. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) summoned French Ambassador to Russia Pierre Levy on January 19 to discuss a Russian strike on Kharkiv City on January 16 that the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) alleged killed and wounded “French mercenaries.”[117] Russian MFA Spokesperson Maria Zakharova claimed that the Russian MFA presented Levy with evidence about “French mercenaries” serving in Ukraine and alleged that this represents an escalation with Russia and makes France an accomplice to Ukrainian “war crimes.”[118] The Russian Embassy in France also condemned recent French security assistance to Ukraine and suggested that France is placing support for Ukraine above the lives of civilians.[119] Russian officials likely intensified information operations aimed at France in reaction to France’s January 18 announcement that it launched a coalition to expand Ukrainian artillery capabilities and will send up to 72 Caesar artillery systems to Ukraine in 2024 as well as French President Emmanuel Macron’s announcement on January 16 that he would finalize a bilateral security agreement with Ukraine in February 2024 and that France would send 40 SCALP missiles and “several hundred” bombs to Ukraine in the coming weeks.[120]

Likely Kremlin-affiliated actors continue efforts to accuse the West of mistreating Russians and Russian-speakers abroad. The German-based Association for the Prevention of Discrimination and Isolation of Russian Germans and Russian-speaking Fellow Citizens in Germany (VADAR) called on January 19 for the German Ministry of Defense (MoD) and German intelligence agencies to disclose information about Germany’s policy towards its Russian-speaking population.[121] VADAR made the calls in response to an article published by German outlet *BILD* on January 16 about a reported German MoD document detailing a hypothetical Russian attack against NATO.[122] Russian actors routinely allege mistreatment of ethnic Russian and Russian-speaking populations in the West in an effort to justify Russia’s overall objectives to weaken and dismantle Western alliances.[123] The Kremlin has repeatedly used appeals to “compatriots abroad,” which includes both ethnic Russians and Russian speakers, as a pretext for escalation with neighboring countries and to justify the objectives of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.[124]

Significant Activity in Belarus (Russian efforts to increase its military presence in Belarus and further integrate Belarus into Russian-favorable frameworks and Wagner Group activity in Belarus)

Belarusian Defense Minister Lieutenant General Viktor Khrenin stated on January 19 that the deployment of Russian tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus is part of Belarus’ strategic deterrence.[125] Khrenin stressed that Belarus’ updated military doctrine, which the Belarusian Ministry of Defense (MoD) announced on January 16, aims to prevent military and political situations from escalating and considers Russian tactical nuclear weapons as deterrence mechanisms.[126] ISW continues to assess that Russian use of nuclear weapons remains unlikely.

Note: ISW does not receive any classified material from any source, uses only publicly available information, and draws extensively on Russian, Ukrainian, and Western reporting and social media as well as commercially available satellite imagery and other

geospatial data as the basis for these reports. References to all sources used are provided in the endnotes of each update.

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