

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, January 13, 2024

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January 13, 2024, 5:00pm 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 12:30pm ET on January 12. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the January 13 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

A recent video appeal by a Serbian mercenary addressed to Russian President Vladimir Putin has unleashed discussions about an ongoing “clan war” within the Kremlin and the Russian information space against the backdrop of the Russian presidential campaign. Serbian sniper Dejan Beric (also known as “Deka”) – who has reportedly fought with Russian forces in Ukraine since Russia's initial invasion in 2014, conducts Russian mercenary recruitment in Serbia, and became a member Putin's election team – published a video appeal on January 8 wherein he accused military commanders of the Russian 119th Guards Airborne (VDV) Regiment (106th Guards VDV Division) of mistreating Serbian mercenaries in the “Wolves” (Volki) detachment.[1] Elements of the 119th Guards VDV Regiment are currently operating on Bakhmut's southern flank near Klishchiiivka.[2] Beric claimed that commanders of the 119th VDV Regiment forced Serbian mercenaries to conduct an assault without sufficient weapons, which prompted the entire detachment to refuse to continue attacks and demand a transfer to the nearby Chechen “Akhmat” Spetsnaz units.[3] Beric stated that Russian military officials and police declared that the Serbian mercenaries were deserters and war criminals, disarmed them, pushed them out of their trenches, and forced them to admit that they were spies.

A Russian political insider source – who routinely discusses specific details of Russian political and military command changes – claimed that Beric's appeal is a direct indication that a “clan war” has broken out among some Russian strongmen (*siloviki*) within Putin's inner circles.[4] The source claimed that Beric's appeal is likely a part of widely discussed informational attacks against a group of Russian milbloggers who are independent and openly critical of the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and that these informational attacks are part of an organized campaign against VDV commanders and their patrons. The source claimed that Beric's appeal was part of a retaliatory attack executed on behalf of Secretary of the Russian Security Council Nikolai Patrushev's and Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu's respective factions within the Kremlin against the faction of Igor Sechin – Putin's “de facto deputy” and CEO of Russian state oil company Rosneft. The source specified that

Tula Oblast Governor Alexei Dyumin is an active member of Sechin's faction and the patron of the 106th VDV Division and assessed that the Beric's public attack against 119th VDV Regiment's command was likely an attempt to undermine Dyumin, 106th VDV Division Commander Major General Vladimir Seliverstov, and Russian VDV and "Dnepr" Grouping of Forces Commander Colonel General Mikhail Teplinsky. Dyumin, Teplinsky, and Seliverstov have previously been involved in feuds with the Russian MoD and affiliated themselves with the Wagner Group and opposition to Shoigu.[5] The source implied that Sechin's faction launched public attacks on Patrushev's faction by amplifying problems with Russian egg supplies, which had been inadequately handled by Russian Minister of Agriculture Dmitry Patrushev – who is also Patrushev's son.[6] Shoigu's faction had also faced similar public attacks on its inability to deal with the collapse of the communal infrastructure in Moscow Oblast and problems with the Defenders of Fatherland Foundation. Putin notably recently obliquely criticized Dmitry Patrushev and Shoigu for their respective failures.[7] The source implied that factions are attempting to discredit each other in Putin's eyes to ensure that they can secure new positions within the Kremlin following the presidential election. Another insider source claimed that First Deputy of the Main Directorate of the Russian General Staff (GRU) Lieutenant General Vladimir Alekseyev approved Beric's appeal to bring Putin's attention to the lack of supplies within the military amidst rumors about Alekseyev's dismissal.[8]

In-fighting and factional dynamics within the Kremlin are not new phenomena and do not indicate the imminent collapse of Putin's regime, particularly because power verticals are the foundation of Putin's regime. ISW has routinely assessed that Putin deliberately creates an environment in which officials within his inner circle must compete for his favor, largely to ensure that his lieutenants remain loyal to him and his regime.[9] ISW also observed that Putin has an affinity for rotating officials and military commanders instead of outright dismissing them to prevent any single individual from amassing too much political influence and to maintain support among competing factions.[10] Putin is unlikely to change this system and eliminate these power verticals as they serve as a foundation of his rule. ISW has also observed numerous instances of Russian officials and commanders using the Russian information space to attract Putin's attention, discredit an opposing faction, and influence changes within Putin's inner circle.[11] Such factional feuds have notable but not dispositive battlefield effects. They can damage cohesion between Russian forces and demoralize Russian personnel but are unlikely to lead to mass conflict within the Russian ranks or wider society. A Russian "Storm-Z" assault unit instructor observed in response to Beric's appeal that numerous Russian detachments and units are facing problems similar to those experienced by the Serbian mercenaries and implied that the Russian military has systematic issues that are prevalent outside of factional dynamics.[12] **Permanent friction among the different factions that play roles in Putin's war in Ukraine can impede Russia's decision-making, however, and limit the Kremlin's ability to bring coherence and efficiency to the Russian military.**

Russian forces launched a medium-sized drone, missile, and air attack against Ukraine on the night of January 12-13 using a strike package similar to the recent Russian strike packages. Ukrainian military sources reported that Russian forces launched 40 long-range munitions at Ukraine from various directions—seven S-300/S-400 anti-aircraft missiles from Belgorod Oblast; three Shahed-131/131 drones from Kursk Oblast; six Kh-47 "Kinzhal" aero-ballistic (ostensibly hypersonic) missiles from six MiG-31K aircraft over Tambov Oblast; up to 12 Kh-101/555/55 cruise missiles from 11 Tu-95MS strategic bombers over the Caspian Sea; six Kh-22 cruise missiles from Tu-22M3 bombers over Bryansk Oblast; two Kh-31P anti-radar missiles from two Su-35

bombers over occupied Kherson Oblast; and four Kh-59 cruise missiles from two Su-34 bombers over Bryansk Oblast.[13] Ukraine’s Air Force Command reported that Ukrainian air defense destroyed seven Kh-101/555/55 cruise missiles and one Kh-59 cruise missile.[14] Ukrainian military officials notably stated that Ukrainian forces also disabled over 20 of the missiles using “active countermeasures by means of electronic warfare,” which may be an inflection in Ukrainian electronic warfare capabilities that are normally credited with disabling Russian drones but not missile systems.[15] ISW previously assessed that Russia’s ongoing strike campaign against Ukraine, and Ukrainian adaptations to counter new Russian strike packages, is part of a wider tactical and technological offense-defense race between long-range strike and air defense capabilities.[16] Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Yuriy Ihnat noted that the Russian strike package used on January 13 was similar to the strike package that Russian forces used on January 8 and in previous recent strikes—suggesting that Ukrainian forces may be able to discern patterns in recurring Russian strike packages and innovate and adapt accordingly.[17]

Russian forces are reportedly increasingly using chemical weapons in Ukraine in continued apparent violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention, to which Russia is a party. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces have used chemical weapons 626 times since the beginning of the full-scale invasion and have used them at least 51 times so far in 2024.[18] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces currently launch chemical weapons at Ukrainian positions up to 10 times a day and that Russian forces typically use drones to drop K-51 grenades filled with irritant CS gas (2-Chlorobenzalmalonitrile), a type of tear gas used for riot control (also known as a Riot Control Agent [RCA]), onto Ukrainian positions.[19] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces used a new type of special gas grenade containing CS gas against Ukrainian positions on December 14, 2023.[20] The Russian 810th Naval Infantry Brigade previously acknowledged on December 22 that the brigade deliberately uses chemical weapons by dropping K-51 grenades from drones onto Ukrainian positions near Krynky in the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast.[21] Russia is a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which prohibits the use of RCAs as a method of warfare.[22]

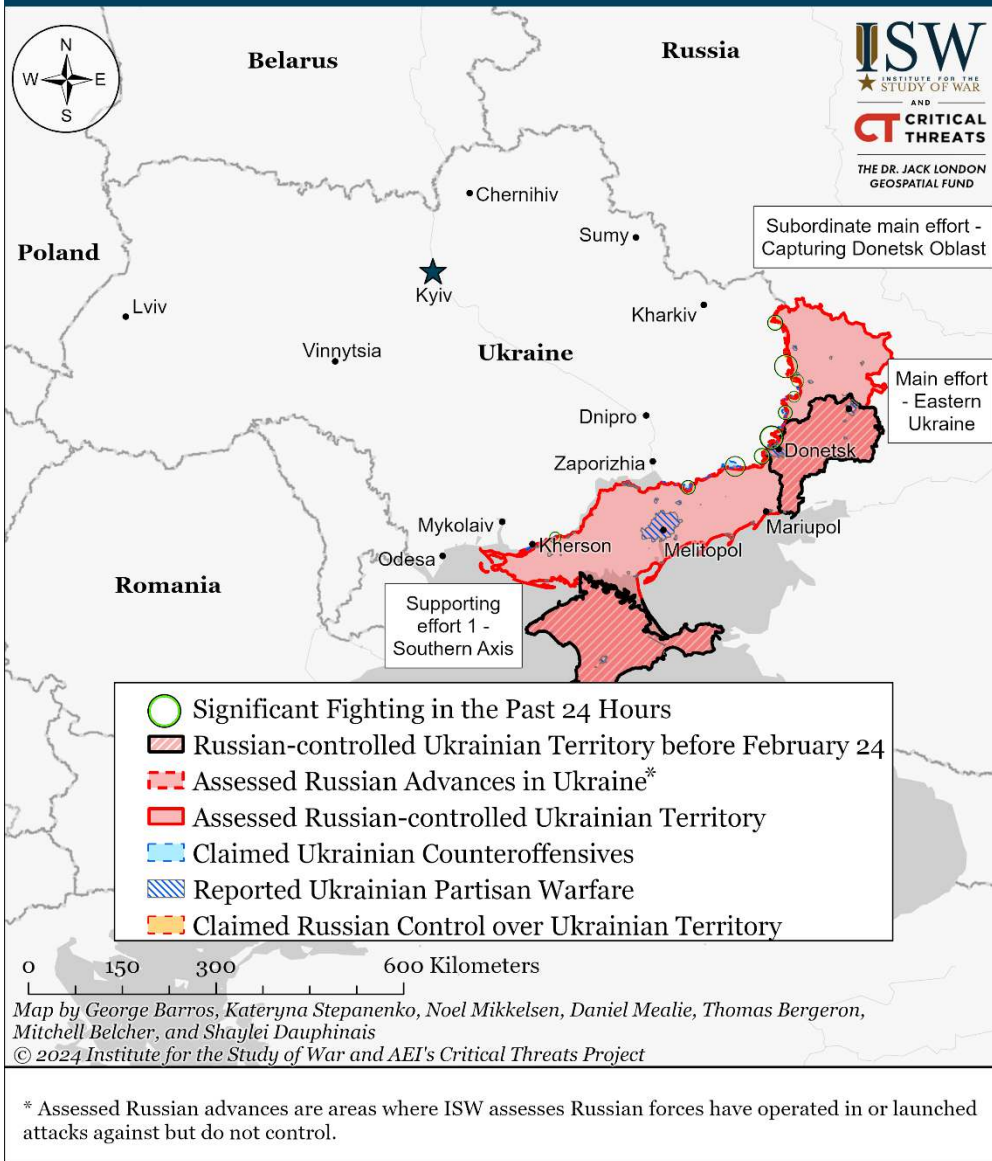
A fire destroyed a large warehouse in St. Petersburg belonging to Russia’s largest online retailer Wildberries on January 12.[23] Russian sources claimed that on the night of January 10 to 11 a mass fight broke out between migrant workers at the facility and that this prompted Russian authorities to conduct a raid on the warehouse, during which several migrants received military summonses.[24] Russian law enforcement recently detained 700 migrants at a Wildberries warehouse in Moscow Oblast and issued some military summonses in November 2023.[25] Russian authorities have consistently conducted raids on migrant communities to issue military summonses to naturalized migrants and coerce other migrants into military service.[26] Wildberries appears to be a notable target for these mobilization raids, and the company has previously admitted that such raids have interrupted their operations.[27]

Key Takeaways:

- **A recent video appeal by a Serbian mercenary addressed to Russian President Vladimir Putin has unleashed discussions about an ongoing “clan war” within the Kremlin and the Russian information space against the backdrop of the Russian presidential campaign.**

- **In-fighting and factional dynamics within the Kremlin are not new phenomena and do not indicate the imminent collapse of Putin's regime, particularly because power verticals are the foundation of Putin's regime.**
- **Russian forces launched a medium-sized drone, missile, and air attack against Ukraine on the night of January 12-13 using a strike package similar to recent Russian strike packages.**
- **Russian forces are reportedly increasingly using chemical weapons in Ukraine in continued apparent violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention, to which Russia is a party.**
- **A fire destroyed a large warehouse in St. Petersburg belonging to Russia's largest online retailer Wildberries on January 12.**
- **Russian forces made confirmed advances near Kreminna and Avdiivka amid continued positional engagements along the entire front line.**
- **Russian forces may be forming air assault brigades within combined arms ground formations as part of ongoing large-scale military reforms.**
- **Russian officials continue to fund social projects in occupied Ukraine in an effort to integrate these territories further into Russia and create the veneer of an active civil society in occupied areas.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of January 13, 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.

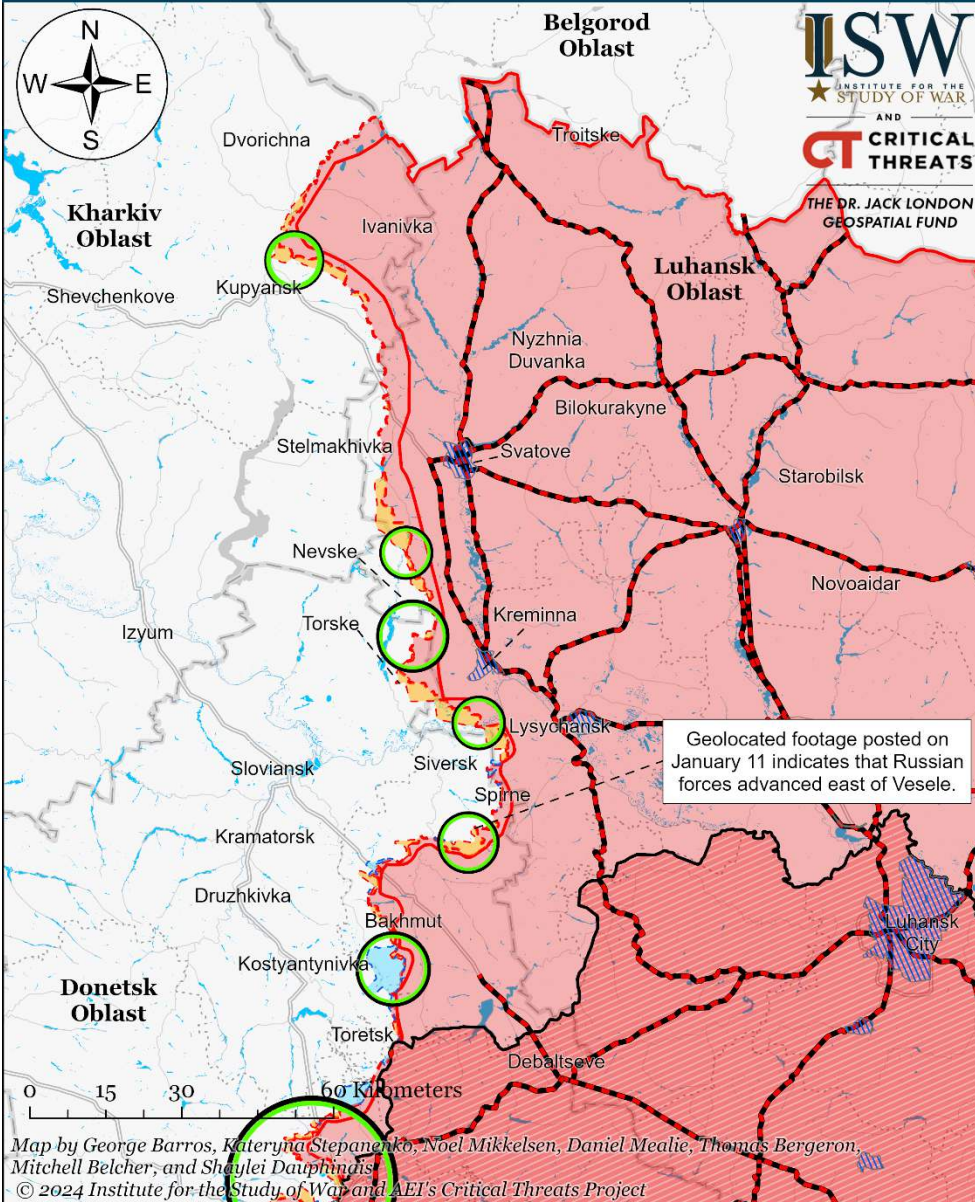
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety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

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 west of Kreminna amid continued positional fighting along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on January 13. Geolocated footage published on January 13 indicates that Russian forces advanced east of Torske (15km west of Kreminna).[28] Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional engagements northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka and Petropavlivka; southwest of Svatove near Makiivka; west of Kreminna near Terny and Torske; and southwest of Kreminna near Dibrova, Hryhorivka, and the Serebryanske forest area.[29] Elements of the 1st Guards Tank Army (Western Military District) are reportedly operating near Synkivka, and elements of the Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR) 7th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Army Corps) are reportedly operating near Bilohorivka (south of Kreminna).[30]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of January 13, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Geolocated footage posted on January 11 indicates that Russian forces advanced east of Vesele.

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		

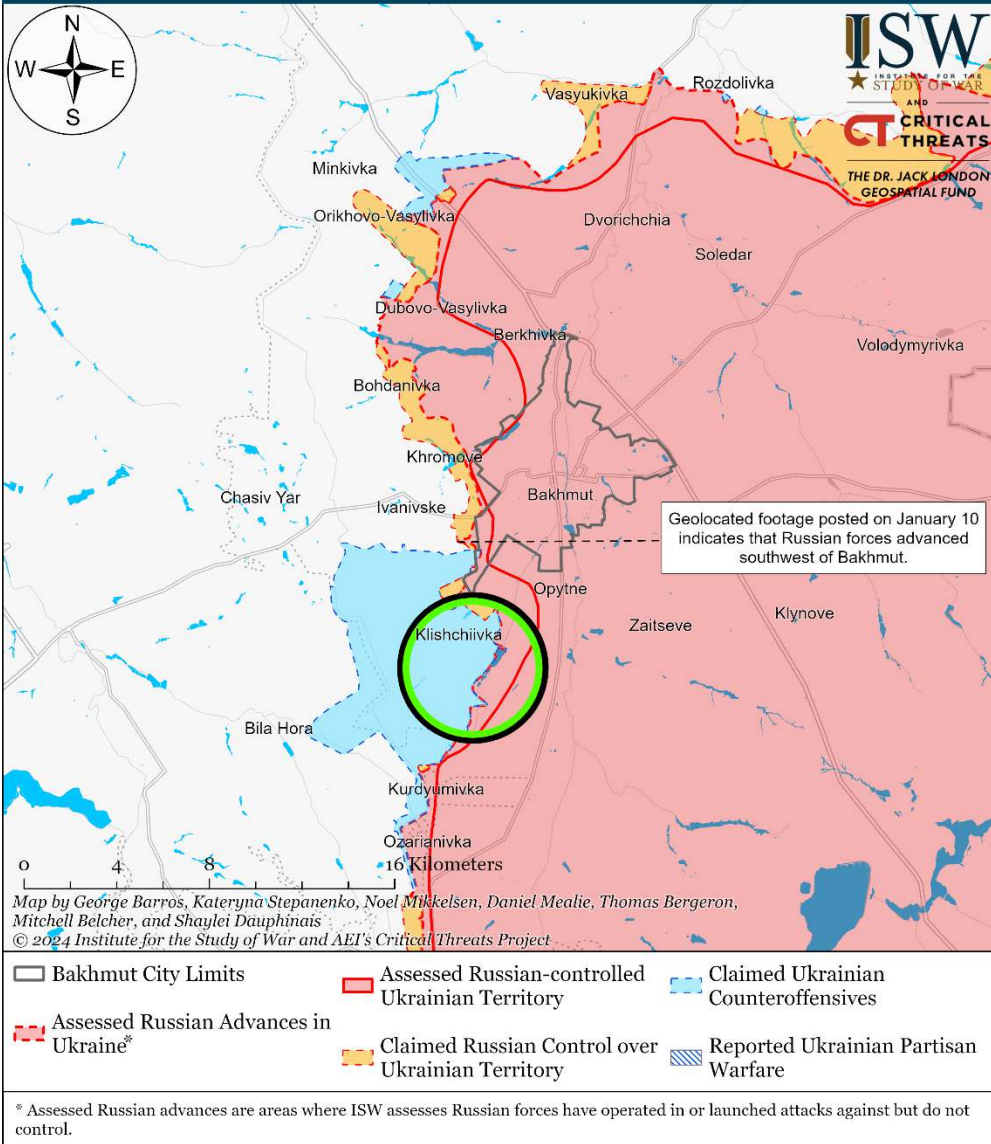
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: A Russian source claimed on January 11 that Ukrainian forces captured 1.7 square kilometers of territory near Orlyanske. A Russian source claimed on January 10 that Russian forces advanced up to three kilometers in the Serebryanske Forest.

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

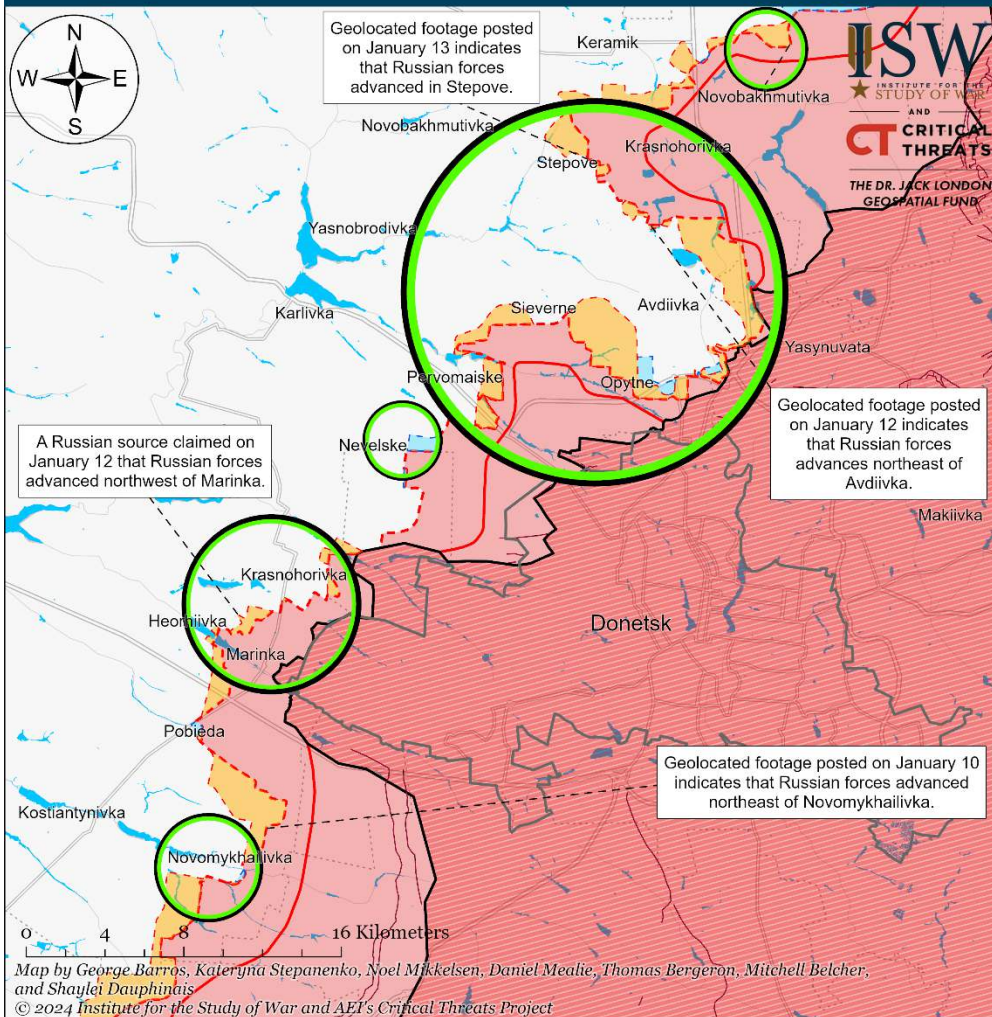
Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional engagements northeast, west, and south of Bakhmut on January 13, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced along a section of the railway in the direction of Vyimka (northeast of Bakhmut) and near Bohdanivka (west of Bakhmut), although ISW has not observed confirmation of these claims.[31] Ukrainian and Russian sources claimed that positional fighting continued west of Bakhmut near Bohdanivka, Ivanivske, and Khromove and southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka, Andriivka, and Niu York.[32] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces decreased the intensity of their assaults and counterbattery fire near Klishchiivka.[33] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that Russian forces have advanced 3.6 kilometers in the direction of Bohdanivka and 2.1 kilometers in the direction of Ivanivkse since intensifying offensive operations in the Bakhmut direction in late October.[34] Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 123rd Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People’s Republic [LNR] Army Corps) advanced northwest of Vesele (northeast of Bakhmut) and that elements of the Russian 51st Airborne (VDV) Regiment and 119th VDV Regiment (both of the 106th VDV Division) are operating in the Siversk direction northeast of Bakhmut.[35] Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade (Northern Fleet) and 98th VDV Division are operating west of Bakhmut and that elements of the Russian 2nd and 3rd Army Corps reinforced with mobilized reservists and territorial defense forces are operating south of Bakhmut.[36] Elements of the Russian 331st VDV Regiment (98th VDV Division) reportedly continue to operate northwest of Bakhmut.[37]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of January 13, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces advanced northwest of Avdiivka amid continued positional fighting in the area on January 13. Geolocated footage published on January 13 indicates that Russian forces advanced in western Stepove (3km northwest of Avdiivka) and east of Stepove.[38] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced northwest of Avdiivka near the Avdiivka Coke Plant and southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske.[39] Positional fighting continued northwest of Avdiivka near Novokalyнове, Novobakhmutivka, and Stepove; near the Avdiivka Coke Plant in northwestern Avdiivka; west of Avdiivka near Sieverne; and southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske and Nevelske.[40]

Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of January 13, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



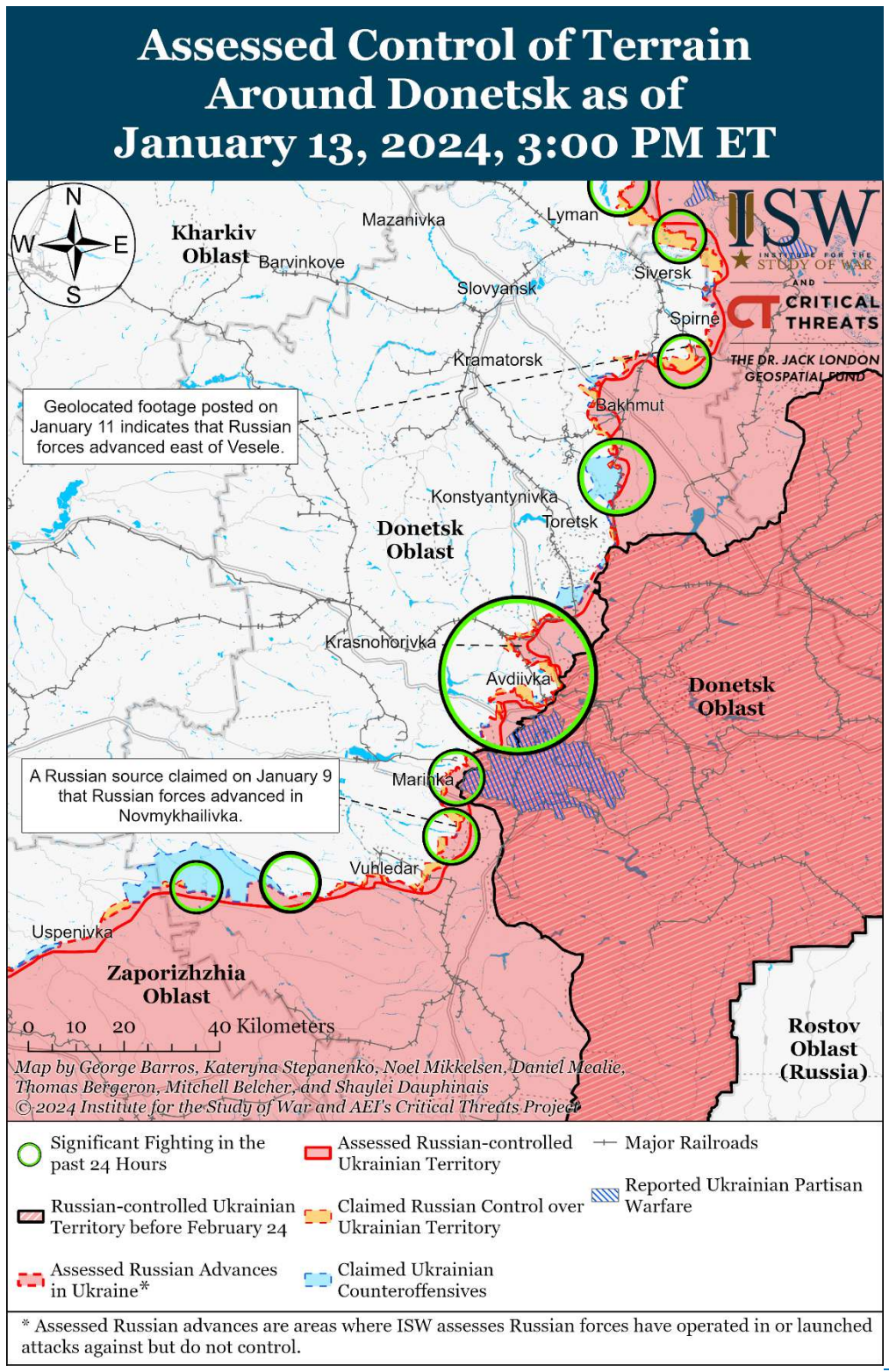
- Donetsk City Limits
- ▬ Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- ▬ Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- ▬ Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- ▬ Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- ▬ Russian Field Fortifications

* 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 11 that Russian forces advanced up to 730 meters along a 1.82-kilometers-wide front near the Solonenka Gully on January 9 and 800 meters along a 960-meter-wide front on January 10, citing unspecified Ukrainian sources. A Russian source claimed on January 10 that Russian forces advanced 700 meters along a four-kilometers-wide front near the Solonenka Gully. Russian sources claimed on January 10 that Russian forces captured two square kilometers of territory in the Kurakhove direction. A Russian source claimed on January 11 that Russian forces advanced two kilometers in the Novomykhailivka direction.

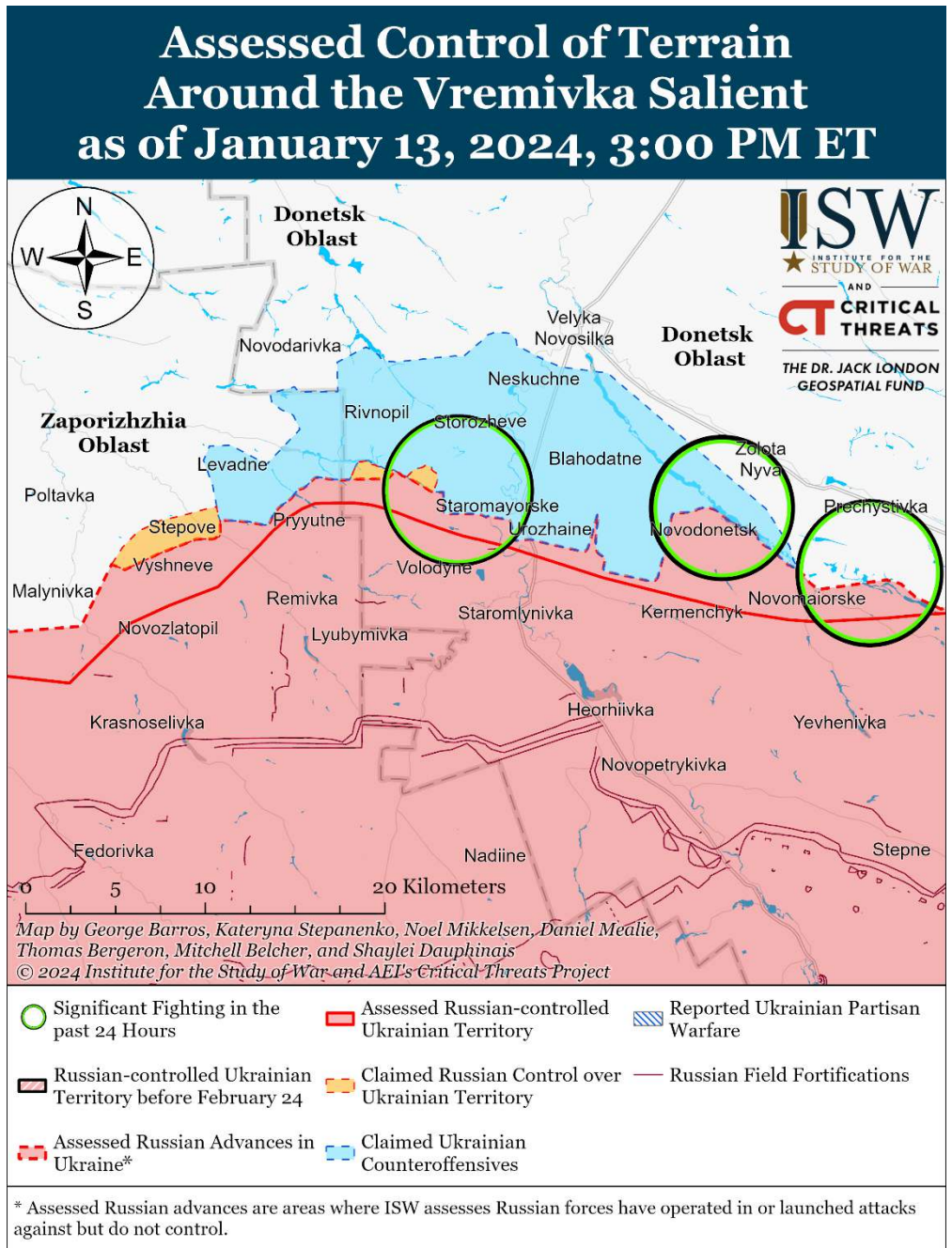
Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional engagements west and southwest of Donetsk City on January 13, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Russian sources claimed that Russian forces advanced north of Marinka (west of Donetsk City) and towards Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City).[41] Positional engagements occurred west of Donetsk City near Krasnohorivka, Marinka, and Heorhiivka and southwest of Donetsk City near

Novomykhailivka.[42] Elements of the Russian 103rd Motorized Rifle Regiment's (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) 2nd Battalion are reportedly operating near Marinka.[43]



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

Russian and Ukrainian forces continued limited positional engagements in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on January 13. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional fighting occurred south of Prechystivka and Zolota Nyva (southeast of Velyka Novosilka) and west of Staromayorske (south of Velyka Novosilka).[44]



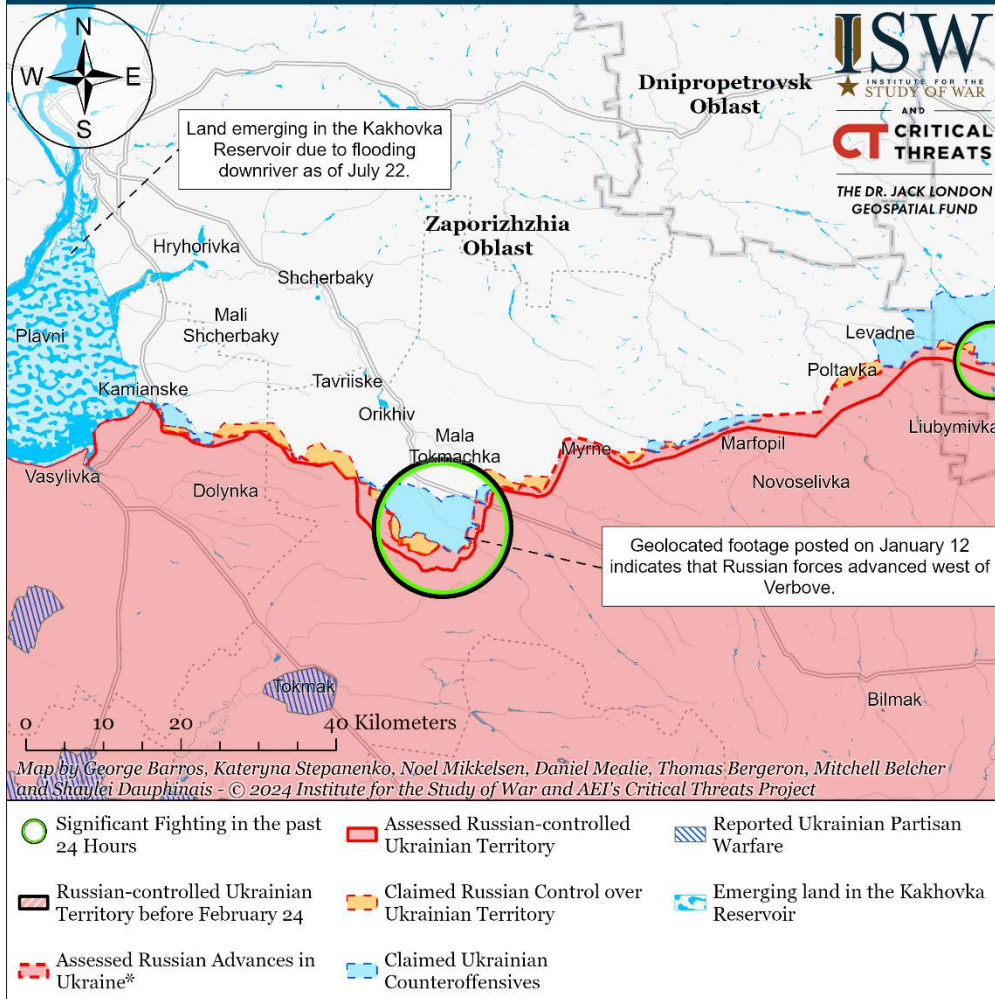
Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional engagements in western Zaporizhia Oblast on January 13, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in the area. A Russian milblogger

claimed that Russian forces advanced less than a kilometer southeast of Robotyne and west of Verbove (east of Robotyne).[45] Another milblogger claimed that Russian forces have recently intensified tactical actions near Nesteryanka (northwest of Robotyne) and captured an unspecified Ukrainian position in this area on January 12.[46] ISW has not observed evidence of these claimed Russian advances, however. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional fighting continued near Novofedorivka (east of Robotyne), Verbove, Novoprokopivka (south of Robotyne), and Robotyne.[47]



Zaporizhzhia Oblast occupation official Vladimir Rogov claimed on January 13 that Russian forces intercepted two Ukrainian missiles targeting the port area in occupied Berdyansk, Zaporizhzhia Oblast.[48] Ukrainian officials reported that residents in Berdyansk heard explosions and air alert alarms.[49]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of January 13, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher and Shauhei Dauphinais - © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

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

Ukrainian forces maintain positions in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast as of January 13, but there were no confirmed changes in the area. Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional engagements on the east bank, including in and near Krynky.[50] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that the command of the Russian 17th Tank Regiment (70th Motorized Rifle Division, 18th Combined Arms Army) has been trying to evacuate damaged Russian armored vehicles near Krynky for the past two weeks and has been committing both regular repair personnel as well as combat personnel to these efforts.[51] Mashovets stated that Ukrainian drone activity is so widespread on the east bank that the Russian “Dnepr” Grouping of Forces has started to issue alerts to their personnel about when Russian drones will operate in their area since Russian forces are increasingly mistaking their own drones for Ukrainian drones and are firing on them.[52] Mashovets stated that elements of the 70th Motorized Rifle Division’s 24th Motorized Rifle Regiment are

operating in northern and northwestern Oleshky and that elements of the 17th Tank Regiment and an unspecified unit of the 70th Motorized Rifle Division are operating near Pishchanivka and Poyma.[53]



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

Russian forces may be forming air assault brigades within combined arms ground formations as part of ongoing large-scale military reforms. Some Russian milbloggers claimed on January 11 that Russian combined arms armies are beginning to form air assault brigades, which will act as specialized units that can conduct landings and reconnaissance behind Ukrainian lines.[54] Russian sources noted that this is not a new concept for the Russian military and drew parallels to Soviet operations in Afghanistan.[55] One Russian source noted that air assault brigades within ground formations would be able to carry out landings in Ukrainian near-rear areas without parachutes, presumably by landing helicopters in near-rear areas for the rapid deployment of personnel, as was the case during the initial fighting for Hostomel airport near Kyiv on February 24, 2022.[56] Russian sources claimed that such an air assault brigade, the 49th Separate Air Assault Brigade, is already active in the Zaporizhia direction as part of the 58th Combined Arms Army (Southern Military District).[57] Air assault brigades exist within the modern Russian army as part of the Russian Airborne Forces (VDV), so the suggestion that Russian *ground formations* may be trying to implement these formations is noteworthy. ISW has previously observed instances of the formation of reconnaissance and assault brigades within combined arms formations and assessed that the creation of such specialized formations is meant to respond to specific tactical challenges that Russian forces have faced thus far in Ukraine.[58] The deployment of air assault brigades in isolation from the wider VDV force structure, however, will likely mean that these specialized air assault brigades will be used as yet another means of conducting attritional infantry-led frontal assaults on Ukrainian fortified positions in the short term.

A prominent Russian milblogger complained about the unfair treatment of units staffed by prison recruits in comparison with regular Russian contract servicemen (*kontraktniki*).[59] The milblogger noted that convict recruits in Russian "Storm-Z" units fall outside the purview of Russian military legislation and are therefore not entitled to the same benefits as *kontraktniki*. The milblogger claimed that Storm-Z fighters only receive 50,000 to 300,000 rubles for injury compensation compared to the 3 million rubles that *kontraktniki* receive and complained that Storm-Z fighters do not receive any social benefits because the Russian MoD considers presidential pardons for convict recruits as the only reward these servicemembers deserve. Prison recruits in various private military companies (PMCs) and volunteer battalions reportedly face the same issue, according to the milblogger.[60] The Russian MoD is likely incentivized to recruit from prisons to minimize the costs associated with providing social benefit payouts to servicemen.

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

Russia continues to leverage import substitution to obtain foreign components to augment military-technological adaptation. The Ukrainian National Agency for the Prevention of Corruption updated its database of foreign components in Russian and Iranian weapons to include foreign components of portable detectors for unspecified non-contact explosive devices and the "ORION" navigation system of the GLONASS and NAVSTAR satellite systems.[61] Ukrainian outlet *InformNapalm* published an investigation on January 12 detailing how the Russian Special Technology Center group bypasses sanctions to import foreign components for the production of Orlan-10 reconnaissance drones via complex multinational supply chains.[62] A Russian insider source also claimed that Russia is buying cheap commercial flashlights from Chinese online retailer AliExpress to use in Russian night operations in Ukraine.[63]

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 officials continue to fund social projects in occupied Ukraine in an effort to integrate these territories further into Russia and create the veneer of an active civil society in occupied areas. The Kherson Oblast occupation administration stated on January 13 that the Russian Presidential Grants Fund will give "non-profit" organizations operating in occupied Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts 428 million rubles (\$4.9 million) in 2024 to fund 64 projects.[64] ISW has previously observed that Russian occupation elements utilize government affiliated and organized "non-governmental organizations" to create the impression of grassroots popularity in occupied areas.[65] Russian Presidential Administration First Deputy Head Sergei Kiriyenko reportedly chaired the commission that issued the grants, which further confirms the Kremlin linkages to such nominally non-profit organizations.[66]

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian sources continue to promote Kremlin narratives intended to set conditions to justify potential future Russian provocations against Baltic and Scandinavian countries. A prominent Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger accused Finland and Sweden of "anti-Russian" rhetoric and actions in response to Finland's decision to extend the closure of the Finnish-Russian border until February 11 in light of Russia's recent attempts to generate a migrant crisis on the Finnish border, as well as Swedish Civil Defense Minister Karl-Oskar Bulin's warning that there "could be a war in Sweden" if Russia wins in Ukraine.[67] ISW has previously observed Kremlin-affiliated mouthpieces make similar accusations against Denmark and the wider NATO alliance.[68]

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)

Nothing significant to report.

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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[1] <https://t.me/bbcruussian/59003>; <https://t.me/rusbrief/189277>; <https://www.newsweek.com/serbian-mercenary-dejan-beric-turns-russian-military-leaders-1859008>;

- [2] https://t.me/dva_majors/30386 ; <https://t.me/vrogov/13221>
- [3] <https://understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-12-2024>
- [4] https://t.me/vizioner_rf/6758
- [5] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-july-15-2023>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Aug%204%20Russian%20Offensive%20Campaign%20Assessment%20PDF.pdf> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-25-2023>
- [6] <https://www.newsweek.com/russia-egg-crisis-nato-turkey-export-backfires-h5n1-bird-flu-1860155#:~:text=The%20egg%20crisis%20has%20been,in%20prices%20and%20localized%20short%20ages.>
- [7] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar122623> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-december-24-2023> ; <https://understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-december-14-2023>
- [8] <https://t.me/vchkogpu/45017>;
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- [9] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-december-22-2023>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-march-12-2023>; <https://understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-april-30-2023>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-update-february-5-2023>
- [10] <https://understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-april-30-2023>
- [11] <https://understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-april-30-2023>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-march-12-2023>
- [12] https://t.me/philologist_zov/776; https://t.me/philologist_zov/777; https://t.me/philologist_zov/778
- [13] <https://t.me/kpszsus/9766>
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