

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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January 31, 2025, 8:30 pm ET

Click <u>here</u> 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 <u>here</u> to see ISW's interactive map of Ukraine's offensive in Kursk Oblast.

Click <u>here</u> 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 <u>here</u> 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 12:00pm ET on January 31. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the February 1 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

The United Kingdom (UK), Finland, and Czechia announced several immediate and longer-term military assistance packages for Ukraine on January 31. Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov stated on January 31 that the UK will provide Ukraine with a military assistance package valued at two billion GBP (about \$2.5 billion), primarily for the purchase of air defense systems and funding for the localization of defense production in Ukraine.[1] Finnish Defense Minister Antti Hakkanen announced on January 31 that Finland will provide Ukraine with a new tranche of military assistance valued at almost 200 million euros (about \$207 million).[2] Czech Foreign Minister Jan Lipavsky stated on January 31 that the Czech government is considering creating a new initiative to purchase artillery ammunition for Ukraine.[3]

Russian forces are expanding their salient north of Kupyansk as part of long-term operational efforts to push Ukrainian forces from the east (left) bank of the Oskil River. Russian offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna (Kupyansk-Borova-Lyman) line gradually intensified in September 2024 after a relatively low tempo period in early and mid-2024 during which Russian forces primarily conducted infantry assaults and occasional platoon-sized mechanized assaults in the area.[4] Ukrainian forces repelled a reinforced battalion-sized Russian mechanized assault near Pishchane (southeast of Kupyansk) in late September 2024 – the first large Russian mechanized assault in this direction since Winter 2023-2024.[5] Russian forces have recently intensified offensive operations north of Kupyansk, particularly near Dvorichna, as part of this broader

intensification in the Kupyansk, Borova, and Lyman directions. Geolocated footage published on January 30 and 31 indicates that Russian forces recently marginally advanced north of Dvorichna (north of Kupyansk and on the west [right] bank of the Oskil River), advanced in the southern outskirts of Zapadne (southwest of Dvorichna), and advanced northward along the west bank of the Oskil River northwest of Novomlynsk (northeast of Dvorichna).[6] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed on January 28 and 31 that Russian forces recently seized Dvorichna, and a Russian milblogger claimed on January 31 that Russian forces seized Novomlynsk.[7] ISW has not observed confirmation of these claims, however.

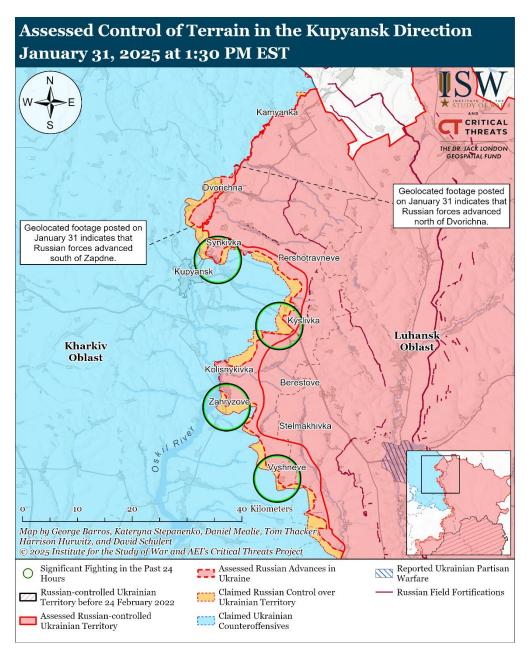
Russian forces are also leveraging mechanized assaults to expand their salient north of Kupyansk. Russian forces have conducted five company-sized mechanized assaults and at least one reduced battalion-sized mechanized assault in the Kupyansk direction since late October 2024.[8] The commander of a Ukrainian drone battalion operating in the Kupyansk direction stated on January 28 that Ukrainian forces have repelled four mechanized assaults of unspecified echelon since January 22 alone.[9] The Russian military command has historically allocated armored vehicles to priority frontline areas and intensified mechanized activity could indicate that the Kupyansk direction is becoming a priority sector for Russian forces.[10]

Elements of the 6th Combined Arms Army (CAA) (Leningrad Military District [LMD]) are reportedly leading the Russian effort to expand the salient north of Kupyansk. Russian sources, including the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), credited elements of the 25th Motorized Rifle Brigade (6th CAA) with seizing Dvorichna on January 28.[11] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated on January 25 that elements of the Russian 69th Motorized Rifle Division (6th CAA), the Russian Volunteer Corps, and the 2nd Spetsnaz Brigade (Russian Main Military Intelligence Directorate [GRU]) are attacking Dvorichna from the south, advanced to the P-79 Dvorichna-Kupyansk highway, and advanced to Kindrashivka (south of Zapadne and north of Kupyansk) as part of efforts to bypass Zapadne from the south.[12] Mashovets stated that the Russian military command has also redeployed most of the 6th CAA's artillery to the Dvorichna area, including elements of the 9th Artillery Brigade.[13]

The tempo of Russian offensive operations along this sector of the front was generally much lower than elsewhere in eastern Ukraine throughout most of 2024 and Russian units in the area are likely well-rested and prepared to begin a months-long campaign to envelop Kupyansk. The Russian military does not appear to have significant uncommitted reserves to funnel into this effort, but the Russian military command may be willing to redeploy frontline units from another sector of the frontline to exploit any significant tactical gains in the Dvorichna-Kupyansk area.[14] Mashovets suggested that the Russian military command may redeploy elements of the 6th CAA, including elements of its 25th Motorized Rifle Brigade and 69th Motorized Rifle Division, from the Vovchansk area (northeast of Kharkiv City) to Dvorichna if Russian forces begin to make substantial advances north of Kupyansk.[15] The Russian military command may want to redeploy additional elements of the 6th CAA to the Dvorichna area rather than redeploying forces from another relatively inactive area, as redeploying forces that are relatively nearby and are subordinated to the same formation as the forces already north of Kupyansk could help reduce command and control (C2) and coordination issues between frontline units operating immediately north and northwest of Kupyansk. Russian forces have historically struggled with C2 issues when redeploying units from multiple discrete formations and areas of the frontline to new

efforts, a problem that was particularly notable during the Russian defense against Ukraine's incursion into Kursk Oblast.[16]

Elements of the Russian 1st Guards Tank Army (GTA) (Moscow Military District [MMD]) are also participating in the envelopment of Kupyansk and are attempting to advance east of Kupyansk and to expand the Russian salient south of Kupyansk near Kruhlyakivka likely in order to prepare for advances south of Kupyansk, cross the Oskil River, and pressure Borova. Mashovets stated recently that elements of the 1st GTA's 4th and 47th tank divisions were unsuccessfully attacking east of Kupyansk near Kotlyarivka.[17] Elements of the 1st GTA, including its 4th and 47th tank divisions, 27th Motorized Rifle Brigade, and 2nd Motorized Rifle Division, are also reportedly operating along the Kolisnykivka-Kruhlyakivka-Zahryzove salient.[18] Russian forces in this salient have advanced to the east (left) bank of the Oskil River but have thus far struggled to cross the river. Russian advances beyond the Oskil River and further Russian advances in the Dvorichna area are a necessary first step in Russian efforts to envelop Kupyansk from the northwest and southwest. The Oskil River will likely continue to constrain further Russian advances westward from the Kruhlyakivka salient, however. Elements of the 1st GTA are also operating near Lozova and Zelenyi Hai (both southeast of the Kruhlyakivka salient) and have been attacking westward to expand the southern flank of the salient, suggesting that Russian forces are also trying to push towards Borova (southwest of the Kolisnykivka-Zelenyi Hai line). It is unclear if elements of the 1st GTA will be able to undertake two simultaneous operational efforts to advance on Borova and cross the Oskil River to support Russian efforts to envelop Kupyansk.



Russian forces appear to be developing and disseminating a doctrinal method for advances throughout the theater that aims to conduct slow envelopments of frontline towns and settlements at a scale that is reasonable for Russian forces to conclude bfore culminating. The Russian Central Grouping of Forces' seizure of Avdiivka in February 2024 was Russia's first relatively successful envelopment after Russian forces regained the theater-wide initiative in Fall 2023, and Russian forces spent four months closing a gap 12 to 15 kilometers wide and ultimately forced Ukrainian troops to withdraw under threat of tactical encirclement. The seizure of Avdiivka likely served as the Russian military command's blueprint for future envelopments in other frontline areas. The Russian Eastern Grouping of Forces' effort to envelop Vuhledar successfully forced Ukrainian troops to withdraw from Vuhledar, and Russian forces seized the settlement in October 2024.[19] Elements of the Russian Eastern Grouping of Forces were then able to leverage the seizure of Vuhledar,

advance further west, and interdict Ukrainian egress routes to envelop and seize Velyka Novosilka in January 2025.[20] Russian forces have been successful in closing smaller envelopments around Vuhledar and Velyka Novosilka, but ongoing Russian efforts to conduct larger envelopments around Pokrovsk and Kupyansk will test the extent of Russian capabilities.

The Russian military command also appears to be experimenting with involving multiple military districts in a single envelopment. The Russian military command achieved significant tactical successes via envelopments in the Vuhledar and Velyka Novosilka directions in Fall 2024 and early Winter 2024-2025, possibly due in part to keeping these two operational efforts under a single command – the Eastern Grouping of Forces. Having a unified command over both these directions likely helped minimize coordination issues and ensured a cohesive and unified vision in operational-level planning in the area. The Russian Central Grouping of Forces is currently overseeing the envelopment of Pokrovsk from the northeast and southwest by bringing together tactical advances near Vozdvyzhenka (east of Pokrovsk) and Kotlyne (southwest of Pokrovsk) in an arc around Pokrovsk and Myrnohrad and closing a gap that is currently 30 kilometers wide.[21] The Russian military command appears to be involving elements of both the 6th CAA (LMD) and 1st GTA (MMD) to envelop Kupyansk, which could complicate offensive operations in the area. The Russian military command will likely continue to experiment with envelopments of various depths and involving various force groupings as it works to further refine this method and learn from battlefield successes and failures.

The Russian military's ability to iterate on this method across multiple military districts is notable and indicates that the Russian General Staff may be improving its ability to disseminate lessons learned across multiple sectors of the frontline. Russian forces have previously failed to learn and implement lessons learned across areas of responsibility (AoRs), which has resulted in costly troop and armored vehicle losses throughout the frontline over the last three years.[22] Russian forces have historically been more adept at learning and implementing lessons among units within a single grouping of forces/military district, but Russian forces' ability to undertake an envelopment in the Kupyansk direction modeled on Russian activity in Donetsk Oblast indicates that the Russian General Staff is at least attempting to disseminate lessons learned and possibly new doctrine throughout the theater.[23]

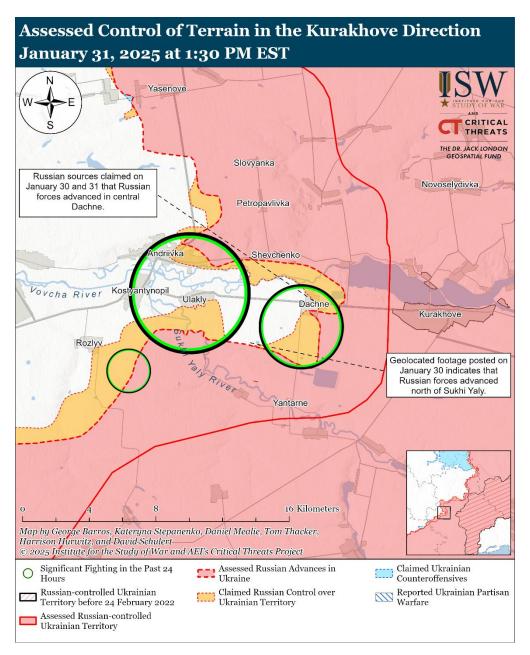
The Russian military command has shown that it is willing to commit to operations that could take six to nine months to conclude. Russian commanders are likely operating under the assumption or direct knowledge that Russian President Vladimir Putin does not intend to end the war in Ukraine in the near future. Russian forces have been incrementally working to push Ukrainian forces from the east bank of the Oskil River since Winter 2023-2024, and the Russian military command has previously deprioritized the Kupyansk-Borova-Lyman line in favor of other operational efforts in Ukraine. [24] The envelopment of Kupyansk will almost certainly be a months-long effort that requires Russian forces to close a gap 25 to 30 kilometers wide while also fording and maintaining logistics across the Oskil River, seizing small settlements in their path, and repelling Ukrainian counterattacks. Mashovets and a Russian milblogger have suggested that the Russian military command may intend to leverage advances near Dvorichna and Vovchansk to advance on Velykyi Burluk from the northwest and southeast. [25] Russian forces are currently 30 and 35 kilometers from Velykyi Burluk from their closest point of advance in the Kupyansk and Vovchansk directions respectively, and Russian forces could spend six months to a year making slow, grinding advances toward Velykyi Burluk before they truly threaten the settlement.

Russian commanders do not seem concerned about the speed or consistency of their advances in Ukraine, likely because they believe that the war will drag on until Russia militarily defeats Ukraine. The Russian military expended four months on the seizure of Avdiivka, spent most of 2024 working to level the frontline in western Donetsk Oblast, and has devoted the last three years to seizing the remainder of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts but does not appear particularly concerned with expediting these advances. [26] Putin has previously articulated a theory of victory that assumes that the Russian military will be able to continue gradual, creeping advances in Ukraine indefinitely and has repeatedly indicated that he has no interest in a resolution of the war on any terms but those he dictates. [27] Putin's commanders are internalizing these statements and likely coming to the logical conclusion that Putin has no interest in ending the war and intends to continue fighting until he accomplishes his objectives in Ukraine, which are the toppling of the current Ukrainian government and the categorical destruction of the Ukrainian military. [28]

This Russian offensive method is bringing about slow operational maneuver on the battlefield, but these envelopments require significant planning, foresight, manpower, and equipment and do not restore rapid, mechanized maneuver to the battlefield. Russian forces' recent envelopments have demonstrated that these efforts require substantial numbers of personnel, armor, and artillery systems to sustain their tempo of advance. The personnel and vehicle losses that Russia is suffering to make these creeping, gradual advances are unsustainable given Russia's current force generation and defense industrial capacities. Reports of Russian tank and armored vehicle losses in 2024 indicate, for example, that such losses will likely be prohibitive over the longer term, particularly as Russia continues to exhaust its finite Soviet-era stocks.[29] Russia's current monthly recruitment rate is also likely either just equal to or below the quantity needed to replace Russia's monthly casualty rate one-to-one, but there are reports that select Russian regions are failing to meet their monthly recruitment quotas as citizens are less willing to volunteer to fight.[30] Russia's ability to continue slowly enveloping settlements, instead of attempting to conduct rapid mechanized maneuver that penetrates Ukraine's defensive lines and quickly achieves operationally significant advances, in the medium to long term is contingent on Russia's ability to supply the high quantities of personnel and materiel needed to sustain these operations.

Russian forces are also intensifying their efforts to close the remaining Ukrainian pocket west of Kurakhove. Geolocated footage published on January 30 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced in fields north of Sukhi Yaly (southwest of Kurakhove) during a motorized assault and have likely collapsed the southern part of the Ukrainian pocket along the Zelenivka-Sukhi Yaly-Yantarne line.[31] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces also advanced northeast of Sukhi Yaly, but ISW has not observed confirmation of this claim.[32] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces are prioritizing advances towards Kostyantynopil from the south and Andriivka from the north (both west of Kurakhove) to encircle Ukrainian forces near Dachne and Ulakly (both west of Kurakhove and east of the Kostyantynopil-Andriivka line).[33] Russian forces recently advanced across fields up to the eastern outskirts of Andriivka, and further advances in and south of Andriivka will likely complicate Ukrainian forces' ability to withdraw from the pocket.[34] Russian milbloggers claimed on January 31 that Russian forces also advanced to central Andriivka and pushed Ukrainian forces to the outskirts of Kostyantynopil but that Russian forces have not yet entered Kostyantynopil.[35]

Russian forces are also pushing against the pocket from its eastern side. ISW assessed on January 28 that Russian forces likely advanced in fields southeast of Dachne, and Russian milbloggers claimed on January 29 and 30 that Russian forces further advanced towards the settlement.[36] Russian milbloggers claimed on January 31 that there are reports that Russian forces control half of Dachne and that Russian forces may encircle Ukrainian forces near Dachne if Russian forces cut the H-15 highway near Ulakly.[37] Footage published on January 31 shows Russian forces conducting an airstrike against a Ukrainian bridge across the Sukhi Yaly River near Kostyantynopil, and a Russian milblogger noted that this is the second bridge that Russian forces have destroyed in the area – likely part of the Russian effort to trap Ukrainian forces in the pocket.[38] Russian forces likely aim to close or collapse the Ukrainian pocket west of Kurakhove to free up Russian forces operating in the area for offensive operations elsewhere, such as advances towards the Donetsk-Dnipropetrovsk Oblast administrative border from either the Pokrovsk direction or the Velyka Novosilka direction, as ISW has previously assessed.[39]



Moldovan and Transnistrian authorities agreed to accept a European Union (EU) package that includes funding for gas purchases for Transnistria, further limiting Russia's economic influence over the pro-Russian breakaway republic. Moldovan Prime Minister Dorin Recean stated on January 31 that Moldovan and Transnistrian authorities reached an agreement to accept an EU package totaling 64 million euros (about \$66.3 million).[40] Recean stated that 20 million euros (about \$20.7 million) will go towards purchasing gas for Transnistria and that another 10 million euros (about \$10.3 million) will go to Moldova for its electricity purchases. The EU will also give Moldova 34 million euros (about \$35.2 million) to support its federal budget. Russian business outlet *Kommersant* reported on January 30 that unspecified sources stated that Transnistria will use its EU-allocated funds to buy gas on the European market from February 1 to 10 through Moldovan state electricity company Energocom, which Moldovan gas company Moldovagaz will then

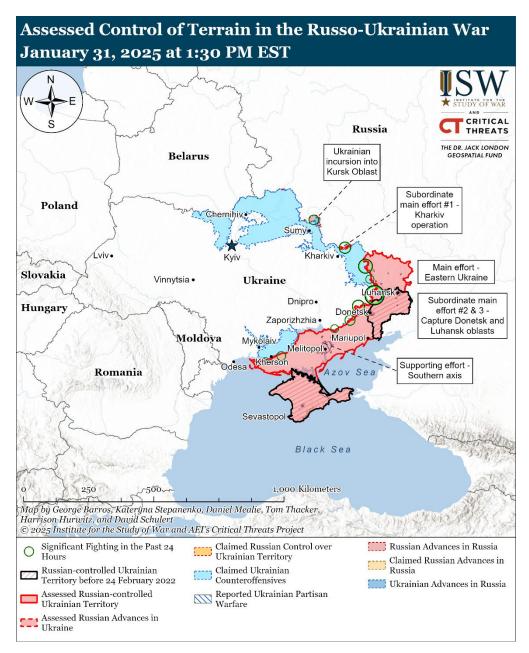
supply to Transnistria.[41] *Kommersant*'s sources stated that Transnistria intends to use Russian funding to buy gas from a yet-to-be-determined Hungarian company starting February 11. Transnistria's acceptance of the EU aid heavily degrades Russia's economic influence over Transnistria, as free Russian gas supplies to Transnistria's power plant supported electricity exports that sustained Transnistria's budget.[42] Russian and pro-Kremlin Transnistrian authorities will likely attempt to play up Russia's role in providing Transnistria with limited funding for gas purchases starting in mid-February in order to promote Russia as Transnistria's benefactor and savior. EU funding for Moldova's electricity purchases will also likely degrade the efficacy of Russian anti-EU narratives, particularly those about Moldova's turn to higher-priced European electricity, ahead of the Summer 2025 Moldovan parliamentary elections.

Ukrainian forces struck a Russian oil refinery in Volgograd Oblast amid continued strikes against Russian energy and defense industrial infrastructure. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on January 31 that elements of Ukraine's Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR), Unmanned Systems Forces, and other Ukrainian forces struck the Volgogradneftoperobka Oil Refinery in Volgograd City on the night of January 30 to 31, causing an explosion in the area.[43] Ukrainian Center for Countering Disinformation Head Lieutenant Andriy Kovalenko reported on January 31 that the Lukoil-Volgogradneftoperobka Oil Refinery is the sixth largest oil refinery in Russia.[44] Volgograd Oblast Governor Andrei Bocharov claimed on January 31 that drone debris caused a fire at an unspecified oil refinery in the oblast.[45] A Russian insider source posted footage purportedly showing an explosion near the Lukoil-Volgogradneftoperobka Oil Refinery.[46] Ukrainian forces previously struck the Lukoil-Volgogradneftoperobka Oil Refinery in February and May 2024.[47]

Key Takeaways:

- The United Kingdom (UK), Finland, and Czechia announced several immediate and longer-term military assistance packages for Ukraine on January 31.
- Russian forces are expanding their salient north of Kupyansk as part of long-term operational efforts to push Ukrainian forces from the east (left) bank of the Oskil River.
- Elements of the 6th Combined Arms Army (CAA) (Leningrad Military District [LMD]) are reportedly leading the Russian effort to expand the salient north of Kupyansk.
- Elements of the Russian 1st Guards Tank Army (GTA) (Moscow Military District [MMD]) are also participating in the envelopment of Kupyansk and are attempting to advance east of Kupyansk and to expand the Russian salient south of Kupyansk near Kruhlyakivka likely in order to prepare for advances south of Kupyansk, cross the Oskil River, and pressure Borova.
- Russian forces appear to be developing and disseminating a doctrinal method for advances throughout the theater that aims to conduct slow envelopments of frontline towns and settlements at a scale that is reasonable for Russian forces to conclude before culminating.

- The Russian military command has shown that it is willing to commit to operations that could take six to nine months to conclude. Russian commanders are likely operating under the assumption or direct knowledge that Russian President Vladimir Putin does not intend to end the war in Ukraine in the near future.
- This Russian offensive method is bringing about slow operational maneuver on the battlefield, but these envelopments require significant planning, foresight, manpower, and equipment and do not restore rapid, mechanized maneuver to the battlefield.
- Russian forces are also intensifying their efforts to close the remaining Ukrainian pocket west of Kurakhove.
- Moldovan and Transnistrian authorities agreed to accept a European Union (EU) package that includes funding for gas purchases for Transnistria, further limiting Russia's economic influence over the pro-Russian breakaway republic.
- Ukrainian forces struck a Russian oil refinery in Volgograd Oblast amid continued strikes against Russian energy and defense industrial infrastructure.
- Russian forces recently advanced near Kupyansk, Lyman, Toretsk, Pokrovsk, and Kurakhove.
- Western and Ukrainian officials continue to report that North Korean forces have withdrawn from frontline positions in Kursk Oblast.



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.

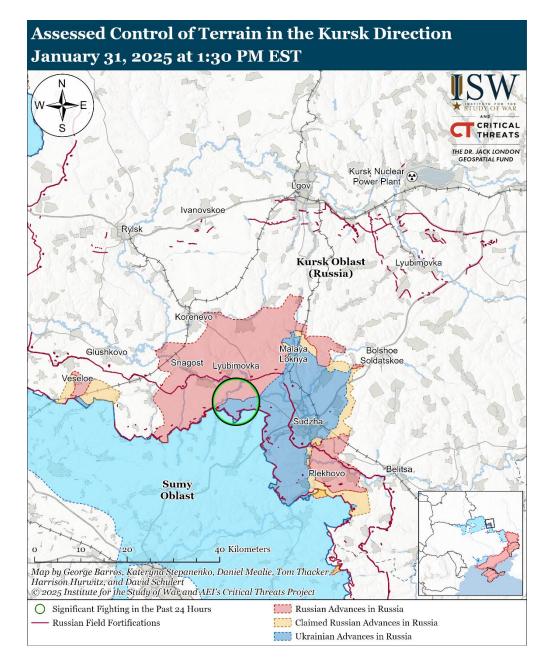
- Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation
- Russian Main Effort Eastern Ukraine (comprised of three subordinate main efforts)

- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort Southern Axis
- Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Russian Technological Adaptations
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas
- Significant Activity in Belarus

Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation

Russian forces continued assaults in the Ukrainian salient in Kursk Oblast on January 31 but did not make confirmed advances. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced up to 600 meters in Makhnovka (south of Sudzha), but ISW has not observed confirmation of this claim.[48] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces attacked in forested areas near Nikolskiy (northwest of Sudzha) and Sverdlikovo (northwest of Sudzha).[49] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Novaya Sorochina and Staraya Sorochina (both northwest of Sudzha at the northernmost point of the salient).[50] Elements of the 34th Motorized Rifle Brigade (49th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating in Pogrebki (northwest of Sudzha), and drone operators of the Russian 1434th "Akhmat-Chechnya" Regiment are reportedly operating in the Sudzha direction.[51]

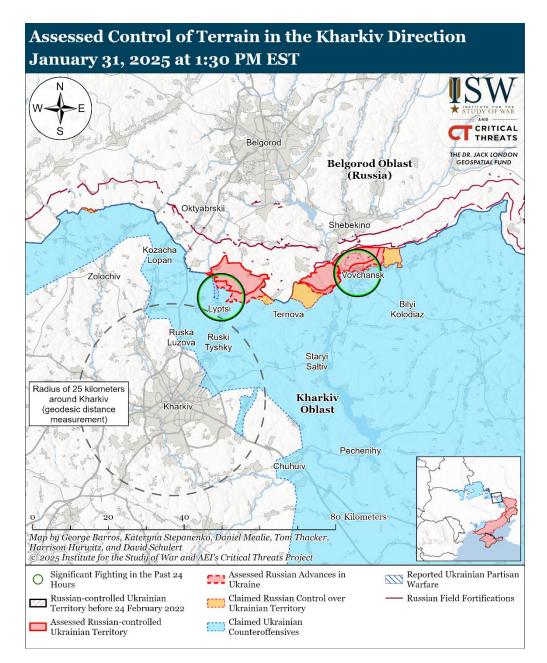
The Ukrainian General Staff reported on January 31 that Ukrainian missile and artillery forces destroyed a Russian command post in Rylsk (northwest of Sudzha).[52] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that the January 31 strike is part of an ongoing Ukrainian operation aimed at destroying Russian command posts and depriving Russian forces of effective command and control (C2) in Kursk Oblast. Ukrainian forces struck a command post of the Russian 810th Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet [BSF], Southern Military District [SMD]) in Belaya, Kursk Oblast on January 7.[53]



Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

<u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Kharkiv Oblast (</u>Russian objective: Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City)

Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks north of Kharkiv City near Lyptsi and northeast of Kharkiv City near Vovchansk on January 30 and 31 and did not advance.[54] Drone operators of the Chechen Akhmat Spetsnaz "Bati" Detachment are reportedly operating in northern Kharkiv Oblast.[55]



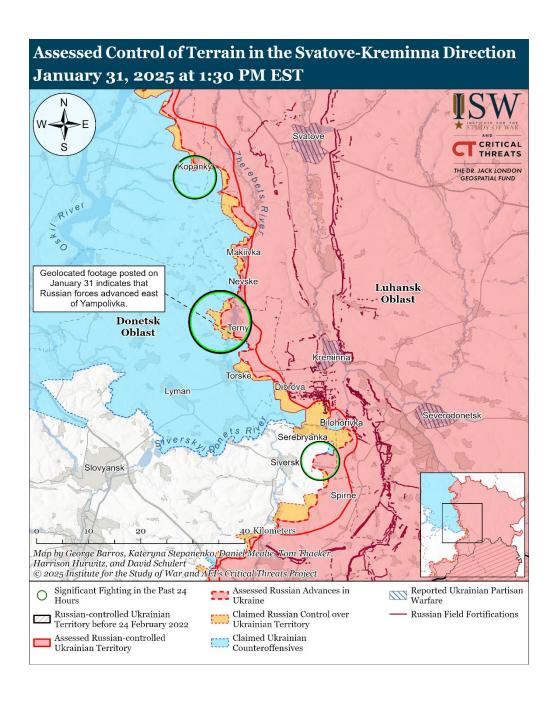
<u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Luhansk Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

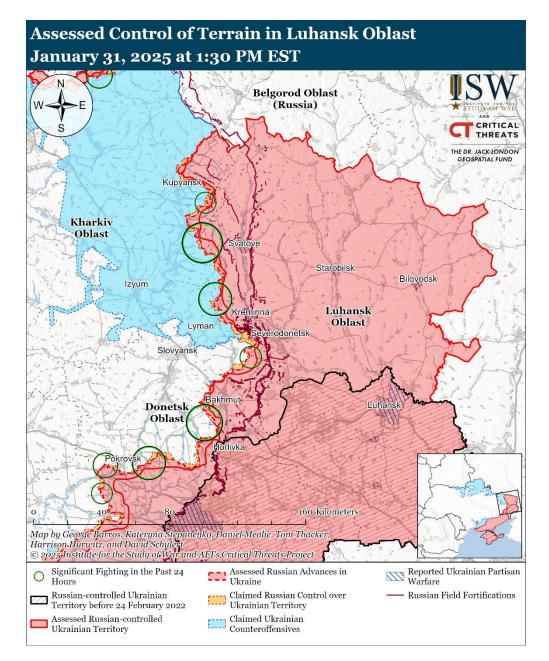
Russian forces continued offensive operations in other areas of the Kupyansk direction on January 31. attacking east of Kupyansk near Petropavlivka and southeast of Kupyansk near Pishchane on January 30 and 31.[56] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Petropavlivka.[57] The chief of staff of a Ukrainian battalion operating in the Kupyansk direction stated on January 31 that Russian forces usually conduct assault operations during the daytime and artillery strikes at night.[58] The chief of staff reported that Russian forces are continuing to leverage manpower advantages to conduct meat assaults against Ukrainian forces in this direction. Elements of the Russian

375th Separate Anti-Tank Artillery Battalion (47th Tank Division, 1st Guards Tank Army [GTA]) are reportedly operating in the Kupyansk direction.[59]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Borova direction on January 31 but did not advance. Russian forces continued attacking northeast of Borova near Nova Kruhlyakivka and Zahryzove and east of Borova near Kopanky on January 30 and 31.[60] Elements of the Russian 20th Combined Arms Army [CAA] (Moscow Military District [MMD]- including the 84th Reconnaissance Battalion- are reportedly attacking near Novoyehorivka (southeast of Borova).[61]

Russian forces recently advanced northeast of Lyman amid continued offensive operations in the area on January 31. Geolocated footage published on January 31 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced east of Yampolivka (northeast of Lyman).[62] Russian forces continued attacking north of Lyman near Zelena Dolyna; northeast of Lyman near Kolodyazi, Balka Zhuravka (formerly Nevske), Yampolivka, Terny, and Novolyubivka; and southeast of Borova near Novomykhailivka on January 30 and 31.[63] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked east of Yampolivka.[64] Elements of the Russian 144th Motorized Rifle Division (20th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Moscow Military District [MMD]) reportedly continue operating in the Lyman direction.[65]



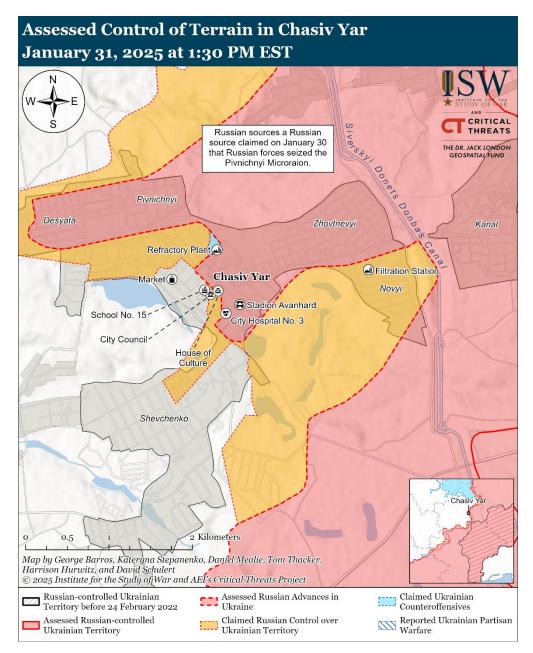


<u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – Donetsk Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia's proxies in Donbas)

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Siversk direction on January 31 but did not advance. Russian milbloggers claimed on January 31 that Russian forces advanced into Verkhnokamyanske (east of Siversk).[66] Russian forces attacked northeast of Siversk near Bilohorivka, east of Siversk near Verkhnokamyanske, and southeast of Siversk near Spirne on January 30 and 31.[67] Ukraine's Khortytsia Group of Forces reported on January 31 that Russian forces attacked with armored vehicle support near Bilohorivka and Verkhnokamyanske and that Ukrainian forces destroyed and damaged 10 armored fighting vehicles involved in the assault.[68] Drone operators of the Russian 6th Motorized Rifle Brigade (3rd Combined Arms Army [CAA], formerly 2nd

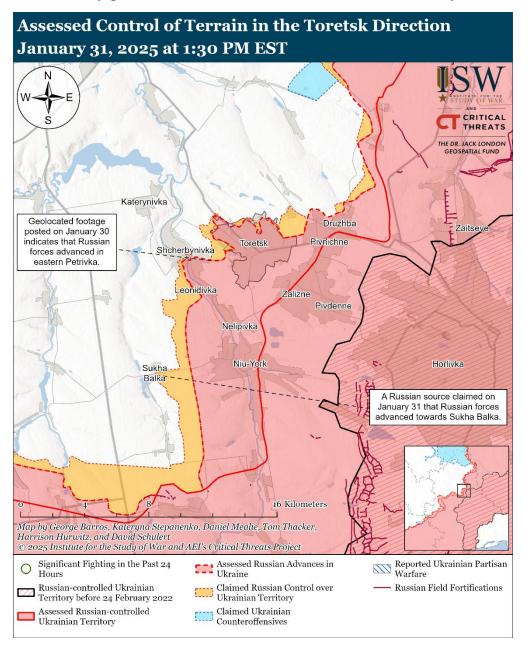
Luhansk People's Republic [LNR] Army Corps [AC]) are reportedly operating in the Siversk direction.[69]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Chasiv Yar direction on January 31 but did not make confirmed advances. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces seized Pivnichnyi Microraion (northern Chasiv Yar) and advanced elsewhere within Chasiv Yar, including near the Refractory Plant in central Chasiv Yar, and toward Mykolaivka (west of Chasiv Yar).[70] ISW has not observed confirmation of these claims, however. Russian forces attacked near Chasiv Yar itself; north of Chasiv Yar near Novomarkove and Orikhovo-Vasylivka; and south of Chasiv Yar near Stupochky, Bila Hora, and Predtechyne on January 30 and 31.[71] A Russian milblogger claimed that Shevchenko Microraion (southwestern Chasiv Yar) is a contested "gray" zone.[72] Drone operators of the Russian 215th Reconnaissance Battalion (98th Airborne [VDV] Division) and the 4th Motorized Rifle Brigade (3rd CAA) reportedly continue to operate near Chasiv Yar, and elements of the 88th "Hispaniola" Volunteer Brigade (Russian Volunteer Corps) and the 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade (14th AC, Leningrad Military District [LMD]) reportedly continue to operate in Chasiv Yar.[73]



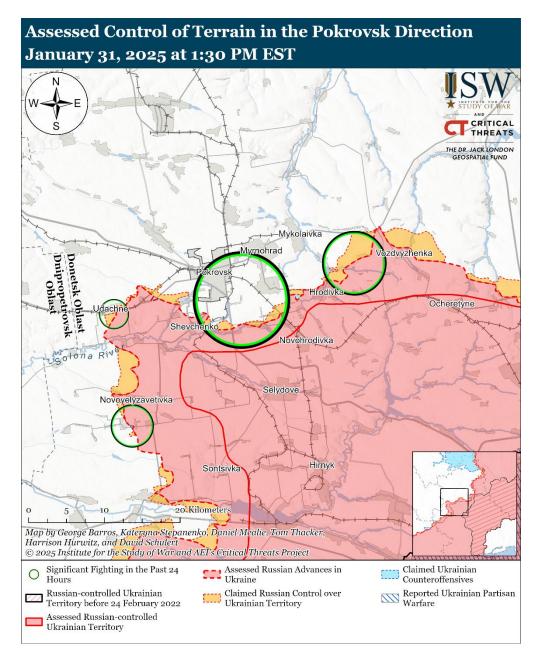
Russian forces recently advanced in the Toretsk direction amid continued offensive operations in the area on January 31. Geolocated footage published on January 30 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced in Petrivka (west of Toretsk) and eliminated the pocket between Toretsk and Shcherbynivka (west of Toretsk).[74] Additional geolocated footage published on January 30 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced in southern Toretsk.[75] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced into central Shcherbynivka and that Russian forces reached the eastern outskirts of Sukha Balka (southwest of Toretsk), but ISW has not observed confirmation of these claims.[76] ISW recently assessed that Russian forces are likely to leverage the seizure of Toretsk to advance quickly into more open fields west of the settlement, as Russian forces may prioritize applying pressure on the Ukrainian fortress belt in Donetsk Oblast in the Spring and Summer 2025.[77] ISW also recently assessed that Russian forces may continue to prioritize the Pokrovsk direction in order to eliminate the Ukrainian

pocket between Vozdvyzhenka (east of Pokrovsk) and Toretsk.[78] Russian forces attacked within Toretsk itself, north of Toretsk near Dyliivka and Krymske, and south of Toretsk near Shcherbynivka on January 30 and 31.[79] A Russian milblogger claimed on January 31 that Russian forces have seized half of the Toretska Mine in northern Toretsk and that Ukrainian forces are counterattacking in the area.[80] The milblogger claimed that Russian forces have seized 70 percent of Krymske. ISW has not observed any geolocated evidence of Russian advances into Krymske.



Russian forces recently advanced in the Pokrovsk direction amid continued offensive operations in the area on January 31. Geolocated footage published on January 29 indicates that Russian forces recently marginally advanced west of Kotlyne (west of Pokrovsk).[81] The Russian Ministry of Defense [MoD] claimed on January 31 that Russian forces seized Novovasylivka (southwest of Pokrovsk), but ISW assesses that Russian forces seized the settlement as of January 1.[82] A Russian milblogger claimed

on January 30 that Russian forces advanced southeast of Vodyane Druhe (east of Pokrovsk) and south of Uspenivka (southwest of Pokrovsk) and another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced to eastern Sukhvi Yar (southeast of Pokrovsk), but ISW has not observed confirmation of these claims.[83] Russian forces attacked near Pokrovsk itself; east of Pokrovsk near Vodyane Druhe. Yelyzavetivka, Promin, Novotoretske, Myrolyubivka, and Malynivka; southeast of Pokrovsk near Lysivka; and southwest of Pokrovsk near Novoukrainka, Udachne, Kotlyarivka, Novoandriivka, Nadiivka, Zvirove, Zaporizhzhia, and Preobrazhenka on January 30 and 31.[84] A Russian milblogger claimed on January 31 that Ukrainian forces maintain positions in southern Uspenivka and that Russian forces are repelling Ukrainian counterattacks near Nadiivka.[85] Reuters reported on January 31 that the deputy commander of a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Pokrovsk direction stated that Russian forces have much higher quantities of infantry in the area and are attacking in small groups that are willing to take high casualties.[86] The deputy commander stated that Russian forces are "adeptly" exploiting the terrain and low-visibility weather conditions to hide from Ukrainian drones near Pokrovsk. Elements of the "Maxim Krivonos" volunteer detachment, allegedly formed by former members of the Ukrainian Armed Forces who defected to fight for Russia, are reportedly operating in the area.[87]



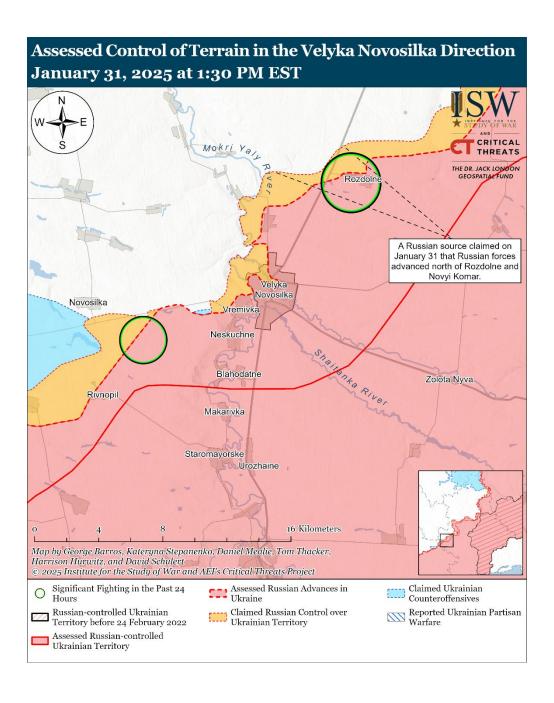
A Russian milblogger claimed on January 30 that Russian sabotage and reconnaissance groups are entering the easternmost part of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast on a regular basis.[88] ISW has not observed confirmation of this claim but has observed geolocated confirmation that Russian forces are roughly four kilometers from the Donetsk-Dnipropetrovsk Oblast border at their nearest point south of Udachne.

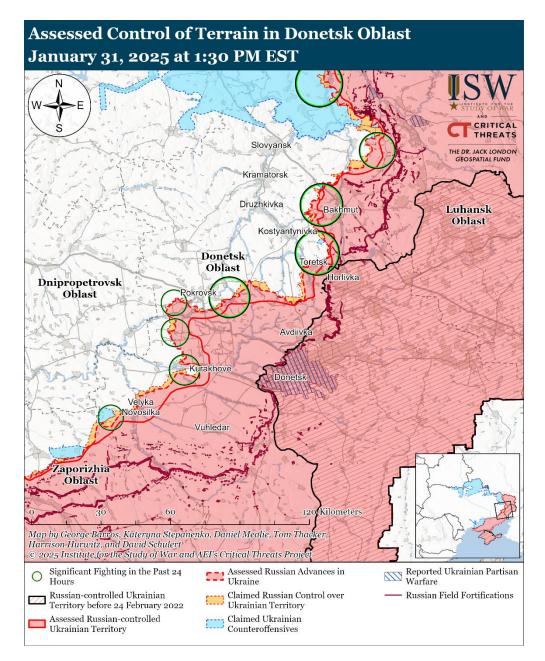
See toplines for further updates on Russian activity in the Kurakhove direction.

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Kurakhove direction on January 31. Russian forces conducted offensive operations west of Kurakhove near Kostyantynopil and Andriivka and southwest of Kurakhove near Rozlyv and Zelenivka on January 30 and 31.[89] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced two kilometers north of Rozlyv, but ISW has not observed confirmation of this

claim.[90] Elements of the Russian 102nd Motorized Rifle Regiment and 68th Tank Regiment (both of the 150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA, SMD [Southern Military District]) are reportedly operating in Dachne; elements of the 381st Artillery Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division) are reportedly operating near Kurakhove; elements of the 114th Motorized Rifle Brigade (51st CAA, formerly 1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] AC) are reportedly operating in the Bahatyr direction (west of Kurakhove); and drone operators of the "Vizantiya" detachment are reportedly operating in the Kurakhove direction.[91]

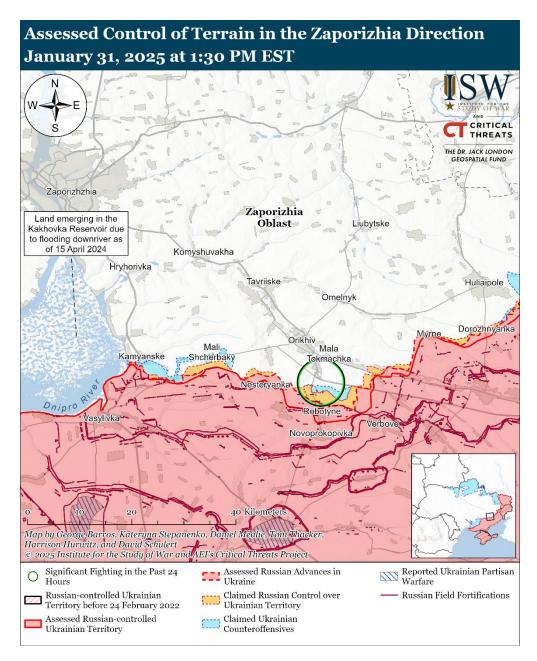
Russian forces continued offensive operations near Velyka Novosilka on January 31 but did not make any confirmed advances. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced north of Rozdolne (northwest of Velyka Novosilka) and north of Novyi Komar (north of Velyka Novosilka), but ISW has not observed confirmation of these claims.[92] Russian forces conducted offensive operations north of Velyka Novosilka near Novyi Komar; northwest of Velyka Novosilka near Rozdolne; west of Velyka Novosilka near Novopil on January 30 and 31.[93] A Russian source claimed that Ukrainian forces are counterattacking in unspecified areas of the Velyka Novosilka direction.[94] Elements of the Russian 5th Tank Brigade (36th CAA, Eastern Military District [EMD]) reportedly continue to operate in Velyka Novosilka.[95]



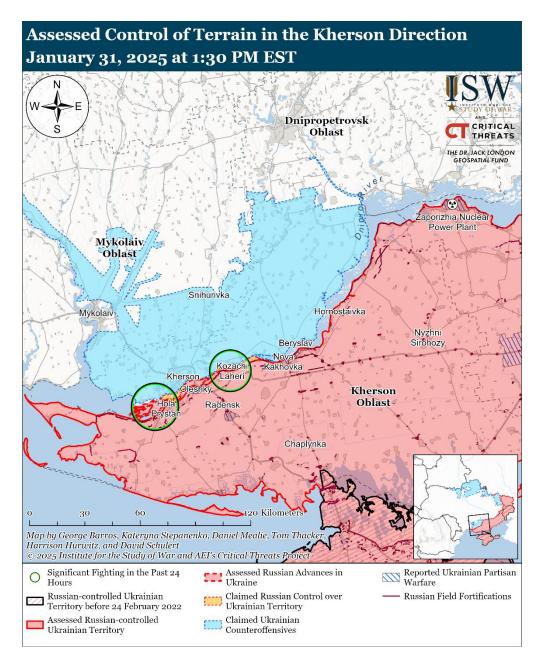


<u>Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis</u> (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Russian forces continued limited offensive operations in the Zaporizhia direction on January 31 but did not make any confirmed advances. Zaporizhia Oblast occupation official Vladimir Rogov claimed on January 31 that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian counterattack near Kamyanske (northwest of Robotyne and south of Zaporizhzhia City) and advanced to the center of the settlement.[96] ISW has not observed confirmation of this claimed Russian advance, however. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted ground attacks north of Robotyne near Novodanylivka on January 31.[97] Artillery elements of the Russian 50th Self-Propelled Artillery Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly striking Ukrainian positions in Mala Tokmachka (north of Robotyne).[98]



Russian forces continued limited ground attacks in the Dnipro direction and on the islands of the Dnipro River Delta on January 30 and 31.[99]



<u>Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign</u> (Russian Objective: Target Ukrainian military and civilian infrastructure in the rear and on the frontline)

Russian forces conducted drone strikes against Ukraine on the night of January 30 to 31. The Ukrainian Air Force reported on January 31 that Russian forces launched 102 Shahed and decoy drones from Millerovo, Rostov Oblast; Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai; Kursk and Bryansk oblasts; and occupied Cape Chauda, Crimea.[100] The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Ukrainian forces downed 59 drones over Kharkiv, Poltava, Sumy, Kyiv, Chernihiv, Cherkasy, Kirovohrad, Zhytomyr, Khmelnytskyi, Dnipropetrovsk, Mykolaiv, and Odessa oblasts; that 37 drones were "lost," likely due to Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW) interference; that drones impacted Sumy, Odesa, and Cherkasy oblasts; and that four drones remained in Ukrainian airspace as of 0900. Ukrainian outlet *Suspilne* reported on January 31 that a Russian drone damaged an apartment building in

Cherkasy City, Cherkasy Oblast.[101] Odesa Oblast Head Oleh Kiper reported on January 31 that Russian drones struck Chornomorsk and damaged a hospital, a warehouse, and buildings.[102]

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

Western and Ukrainian officials continue to report that North Korean forces have withdrawn from frontline positions in Kursk Oblast. The New York Times (NYT) reported on January 30 that Ukrainian and US officials stated that the Russian military command pulled North Korean forces in Kursk Oblast from the battlefield after suffering heavy casualties and that Ukrainian forces have not seen North Korean forces in the area for about two weeks (since about January 17).[103] US officials noted that the withdrawal of North Korean forces from the battlefield may be temporary and that North Korean forces could return to combat after receiving more training or after the Russian military command comes up with a way to deploy the North Korean forces and avoid such high losses. A Ukrainian official stated that North Korean forces' disorganization and lack of cohesion with Russian forces quickly increased North Korean casualties. Ukrainian officials and soldiers stated that North Korean forces had been advancing with few armored vehicles and rarely paused to regroup or fall back. The NYT reported that North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un might expect Russia's help in advancing North Korea's missile program as well as diplomatic assistance at the United Nations (UN) in exchange for sending North Korean forces to Russia. ISW recently reported that North Korean forces likely withdrew from active combat operations in Kursk Oblast.[104] Ukrainian Ground Forces Commander Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi recently stated that Ukrainian forces have inflicted roughly 5,500 causalities on the 11,000 to 12,000-strong North Korean military contingent since November 2024.[105] The reported withdrawal of North Korean forces follows repeated statements from Ukrainian officials noting that North Korean troops were suffering unsustainable casualty rates in Kursk Oblast.[106]

The Russian government continues to expand the federal "Time of Heroes" program, which aims to place Kremlin-selected veterans of the war in Ukraine into government positions, by creating similar programs at the regional level. Nizhny Novgorod Oblast Governor Gleb Nitkin announced on January 31 the creation of the "Heroes, Nizhny Novgorod Oblast" program, a regional analogue of the "Time of Heroes" program.[107] Kursk and Irkutsk Oblast authorities similarly recently announced their regional analogues of the "Time of Heroes" program, and the Kremlin instructed all Russian federal subjects to establish these programs.[108]

The Russian government continues to increase financial incentives for signing military contracts with the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) as part of ongoing efforts to bolster voluntary recruitment, including in occupied Ukraine in violation of the Geneva Convention. Saratov Oblast Governor Roman Busargin announced on January 31 that Samara Oblast increased the one-time payment for recruits who sign contracts between February 1 and December 31, 2025, from 500,000 rubles to 700,000 rubles (\$5,072 to \$7,101).[109] The Kherson Oblast occupation administration posted an advertisement offering individuals who sign military contracts in occupied Kherson Oblast a one-time payment of 800,000 rubles (\$8,116), a monthly salary of 210,000 rubles (\$2,130), and an annual salary of 3.32 million rubles (\$33,684).[110] Article 51 of the Geneva Convention explicitly prevents an occupying power from compelling the population it occupies to serve in the occupying power's military, including via "pressure or propaganda which aims at securing voluntary recruitment."[111]

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

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) reported that it plans to introduce new technology using artificial intelligence (AI) to the battlefield in Ukraine.[112] Several senior Russian civilian and defense officials attended the "ERA Technopolis" exhibition about AI on January 31 and selected unspecified "samples and technologies" for Russian forces to use on the battlefield in Ukraine.

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

ISW is not publishing coverage of activities in Russian-occupied areas today.

<u>Significant activity in Belarus</u> (Russian efforts to increase its military presence in Belarus and further integrate Belarus into Russian-favorable frameworks)

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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