### Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, January 10, 2024

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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 10. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the January 11 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

The Kremlin's effort to use the mythos of the Great Patriotic War (Second World War) to prepare the Russian public for a long war in Ukraine is at odds with Russia's current level of mobilization and Russian President Vladimir Putin's rhetorical attempts to reassure Russians that the war will not have lasting domestic impacts. St. Petersburg outlet Fontanka published an interview with Russian State Duma Defense Committee Chairman Andrei Kartapolov on January 9 wherein Kartapolov stated that even in the "victorious years of 1944" to 1945" the Soviet forces faced difficulties, prompting the interviewer to ask Kartapolov if Russia was now figuratively in 1944-1945 (i.e. nearing the end of the war in Ukraine).[1] Kartapolov attempted to expand the erroneous analogy between the Soviets' fight against Nazi Germany and Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by claiming that Russia is currently figuratively somewhere in December 1943 and moving into 1944.[2] The Soviet military launched a series of successful offensive operations following its defensive victory at the battle of Kursk in July 1943 and by December 1943 had reached the banks of the Dnipro River and Kyiv in Ukraine. Kartapolov explained his logic by claiming that Ukrainian forces failed in the summer 2023 counteroffensive in Zaporizhia Oblast in a way similar to Nazi Germany's losses in battles in 1943.[3] Kartapolov's analogy makes little sense, particularly given the fact that the Russian forces have not gained notable ground in recent months as the Soviet forces did in the months before December 1943.[4] The interviewer asked Kartapolov if his analogy suggests that Russia's war in Ukraine will end in 2024, forcing Kartapolov to admit that Russia's war in Ukraine and the Second World War cannot be literally compared. [5] Kartapolov nevertheless continued to use allusions to the Second World War to claim that the Russian military would continue the war in Ukraine until it installed a "banner over the Reichstag" (i.e. complete victory in Ukraine that achieves all of Putin's maximalist objectives).[6]

Kartapolov also alluded to the Second World War in response to a question about demobilization for Russian servicemen called up during Russia's partial mobilization by arguing that mobilized Soviet personnel did not go home in 1942 just because they had been fighting for a year.[7] Kartapolov characterized Russian calls for demobilization as part of operations by Ukrainian and Western intelligence services.[8] The interviewer pushed back against Kartapolov's allusion and stated that the entire Soviet Union was mobilized during the Second World War whereas only one percent of the Russian population is mobilized today (likely referencing Putin's December 1 decree alleging that the Russian military has a total of 2.039 million personnel, 1.32 million of whom are combat personnel on a population of roughly 145 million).[9] The interviewer argued that either Russian officials should mobilize the entire country or mobilized personnel unwilling to sign contracts should be able to conclude their military service.[10] Kartapolov responded by reiterating the Kremlin's rhetorical line that there is no need for general mobilization now or in the near future.[11]

This exchange prominently highlights the disconnect between Russian force generation efforts and efforts to gradually mobilize Russia's defense industrial base (DIB) and the Kremlin's routine rhetorical reliance on the mythos of the Great Patriotic War. The Soviet Union mobilized roughly 34.5 million people during the Second World War, including roughly 35 percent of its male population, and committed almost the entirety of Soviet industry not destroyed by Nazi Germany to the war effort.[12] The Russian leadership continues to indicate a deep desire to avoid a wider mobilization and continues efforts to gradually mobilize Russia's DIB in a way that is less disruptive to the Russian economy.[13] Kartapolov was likely attempting to promote a victorious portrayal of events in Ukraine while arguing that the Russian public should be prepared for a longer war effort. The Kremlin has routinely relied on allusions to the Second World War to try to achieve this effect throughout the war in Ukraine.[14]

Kremlin rhetoric casting Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine as a long total war for national survival also undermines Putin's efforts to reassure Russians about the domestic impacts of the war and assuage discontent about the Russian state's expectations for Russian service. Putin met with residents in Anadyr, Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, on January 10 and attempted to reassure residents that there are no issues with material or financial support for Russian servicemembers in Ukraine.[15] Putin also promised residents that Russian personnel should have a right to receive leave for a six-month period in which they received no leave as well as for the next six-month period.[16] Putin's focus on providing promised leave is notably at odds with Kartapolov's description of a war effort reminiscent of the Soviet Union's in the Second World War, during which soldiers did not get regular leave. Putin and the Kremlin have routinely tried to assuage Russian concerns that the war in Ukraine will have long term economic impacts, and appeals to Russian economic anxiety appear to be a major aspect of Putin's 2024 presidential campaign.[17] Kartapolov may be purposefully promoting longer-term Kremlin messaging that Putin and other higher-ranking Kremlin officials may want to avoid during Putin's presidential campaign. There is no indication that erroneous Russian comparisons between the war in Ukraine and the Second World War reflect an intent within the Kremlin to bring Russia to a wartime footing remotely reminiscent of the Soviet Union's full-scale mobilization during the Second World War. Constant Kremlin allusions to World War II are meant in part to create the entirely false impression that Russia today can sweep aside its enemies relying on mass and weight of overwhelming manpower and materiel as the Red Army supposedly did to Nazi Germany.

The Kremlin may be instructing actors in the Russian-backed breakaway republic of Transnistria to set information conditions for a possible false-flag operation in Transnistria as part of wider Kremlin efforts to destabilize Moldova. The Transnistrian Ministry of State Security (MGB) issued a press release on January 10 claiming that an "incident" occurred on January 7 during which "two Transnistrian citizens were transferred to the territory of Ukraine" but that authorities are clarifying the circumstances of the "incident."[18] The MGB is a Russian-dominated organization that is commonly understood to be a "department of the Russian FSB (Federal Security Service)" that likely takes orders directly from Moscow.[19] Kremlin newswire *TASS* published an interview with Transnistrian President Vadim Krasnoselsky on January 9 wherein he claimed that Moldova's "militarization" threatens Transnistria, blamed Moldova for halting negotiations with Transnistria, and emphasized Transnistria's "extensive" cooperation agreements with Russia.[20] Krasnoselsky's interview was likely part of efforts to set information conditions aimed at destabilizing Moldova and justifying any future Russian campaigns in the region.[21] The MGB's January 10 press release is likely also part of such Kremlin efforts.

The Kremlin may attempt to use false flag operations in Transnistria as an effort to claim that Russia must protect ethnic Russians and Russian-speakers. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) stated on January 10 that it summoned the Moldovan Ambassador to Russia to protest Moldova's "unfriendly actions," including the "politically motivated persecution of Russian and Russian-language media" and "cases of discrimination against Russian citizens entering Moldova."[22] The Russian MFA threateningly stated that if such actions continue, "the Russian side reserves the right to take additional retaliatory measures." The Russian MFA also claimed that there are media reports that Moldova plans to assist NATO in training Ukrainian forces on Moldovan territory, which would amount to Moldova's "direct involvement" in hostilities on the side of Ukraine. Kremlin officials have recently intensified references to "compatriots abroad" and the "Russian World" (*Russkiy Mir*), concepts that Russia often uses to justify its right to defend ethnic Russians and Russian-speakers beyond its borders.[23] Russia notably used similar justifications when it militarily intervened on behalf of separatist Transnistria in 1992.[24]

The Kremlin likely attempted to set information conditions for a possible false-flag operation in Transnistria in April 2022 and February 2023 but failed in part for economic reasons.[25] CTP previously assessed that the Kremlin was unable to draw Transnistria into its war in Ukraine at the time because Transnistrian businesses – notably those of Moldovan-Russian businessman Viktor Gushan, who effectively controls Transnistria's government and a large part of its economy – benefited from ties with the West and Ukraine.[26] The EU's Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) agreement with Moldova allowed Transnistrian businesses registered in Moldova to enjoy tariff-free access to EU markets as long as they followed Moldovan custom checks.[27] Recent changes to the Moldovan Customs Code that require Transnistrian businesses to pay import customs duties to Moldova may have disrupted these benefits.[28] Moldova has also indicated in recent months its willingness to initially join the EU without Transnistria, which would further deprive Transnistrian businesses of special access to EU markets.[29]

The Kremlin may also be reviving its efforts to leverage Transnistria to create instability in Moldova in order to undermine Ukrainian grain exports along the western coast of the Black Sea. *Reuters* reported on January 10 that Romania's Black Sea port of Constanta recorded 36 million metric tons of shipped grain in 2023 – a record high - and that about 40 percent of these shipments consisted of Ukrainian grain.[30] ISW previously assessed that

Ukrainian strikes against Russian Black Sea Fleet (BSF) assets forced Russian naval operating patterns to change and forced the BSF to move some ships away from its main base in occupied Sevastopol in western Crimea.[31] Ukrainian strikes against BSF assets have also successfully facilitated the civilian use of Ukraine's Black Sea grain corridor as international support for the corridor continues to increase despite Russia's withdrawal from the Black Sea Grain Initiative and military threats against it. The Kremlin may view a false flag operation in Transnistria as an alternative way to deter countries from participating in Ukraine's grain corridor despite Russia's weakened presence in the western Black Sea.

Iran has reportedly developed a new Shahed drone for Russian forces to use against Ukraine and is "close" to providing Russia with surface-to-surface ballistic missiles and **systems.** An unspecified security source told *Sky News* in an article published on January 10 that Iran has developed an "explosive and reconnaissance" Shahed-107 drone and has offered "a few units" to Russia for over \$2 million.[32] The source stated that the Shahed-107 has a range of up to 1,500 kilometers and has a video livestream transmitter.[33] ISW recently observed reports that Russian forces had launched a new Shahed model, the Shahed-238, which is different from the Shahed-107, against Ukraine.[34] Sky News' source also stated that Russia is expecting to receive surface-tosurface ballistic missiles and systems from Iran "sometime soon." [35] US National Security Council Spokesperson John Kirby reported on January 4 that Russian officials continue efforts to buy ballistic missiles from Iran.[36] ISW assessed that Russia may be intensifying efforts to source ballistic missiles from abroad because these missiles appear more effective at striking targets in Ukraine in some circumstances.[37] Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian discussed the development of a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement, trade cooperation, the construction of the Rasht-Astara railway in Iran, and the Israel-Hamas war among other topics in a January 9 phone call. [38]

European Union (EU) Internal Market Commissioner Thierry Breton stated that the EU will be able to supply Ukraine with one million shells by spring 2024.[39] Breton stated that the EU will need to reduce its ammunition exports to non-EU countries and ensure that EU countries pressure their defense industries to increase production.[40] Breton stated that it is "extremely important" for the EU to have the same weapons production capacity as Russia and that the EU could reach this goal within 18 months to two years.[41] *CBC News* reported on January 9 that Canada has yet to deliver the NASAMS air defense system that it pledged to send to Ukraine in January 2023.[42] *CBC News* also reported that one of the two companies building the NASAMS system claimed that it does not have a Canadian contract for the system.[43] Ukrainian military officials recently noted that Ukraine has a shortage of anti-aircraft guided missiles after several recent large Russian missile and drone strikes.[44] Ukrainian forces also reportedly face artillery ammunition shortages on the frontline.[45]

**Lithuania announced a new long-term military aid package to Ukraine worth 200 million euros (about \$220 million) on January 10.[46]** The World Bank reported that Lithuania's GDP in 2022 totaled \$70.97 billion indicating that this long-term military aid package is equivalent to 0.3 percent of Lithuania's total GDP.[47] The Kiel Institute for the World Economy reported that Lithuania's total bilateral aid to Ukraine totaled 1.4 percent of its GDP as of October 31, 2023.[48] US aid to Ukraine amounted to roughly 0.3 percent of US GDP as of October 2023.[49] Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky met on January 10 with Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda, who reaffirmed Lithuania's support for Ukraine joining NATO and stated that

Lithuania is forming a "demining coalition" to support Ukraine.[50] The Ukrainian Ministry of Strategic Industry and the Lithuanian Defense and Security Industry Association also signed a memorandum of understanding to support joint defense industry projects.[51] Ukrainian state-owned defense enterprise Ukroboronprom signed letters of intent with Lithuanian technology and defense companies RSI Europe, Brolis Semiconductors, DMEXS, and NT Service.[52]

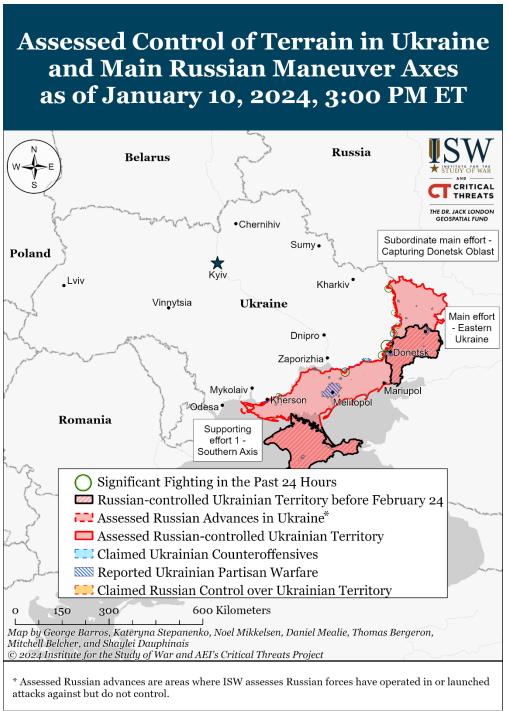
The very characteristics that make the Russian ultranationalist milblogger community popular – its perceived independence from and willingness to criticize the Russian government – likely continue to complicate the Kremlin's efforts to co-opt the **community as Kremlin mouthpieces.** A group of Russian milbloggers, led by a prominent Kremlin-affiliated milblogger, publicized efforts allegedly backed by Russian authorities to censor a smaller group of milbloggers who have criticized Russian operations in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast.[53] The milbloggers claimed that Russian authorities are attempting to censor any milbloggers and military correspondents who are critical of the Russian military and Russian operations in Ukraine.[54] The Kremlin-affiliated milblogger, whom Russian President Vladimir Putin and the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) have previously awarded, also claimed that unspecified Russian officials highlighted his January 9 post about command and communications issues in east bank Kherson Oblast as an example of "discrediting" Russian Airborne Forces (VDV) Commander Colonel General Mikhail Teplinsky and the Russian Armed Forces.[55] Russian authorities have previously used the criminal charge of discreditation of the Russian Armed Forces to imprison other critical actors within the Russian information space, although it is unclear if the Kremlin is willing to use this charge against an affiliated and decorated milblogger. [56]

ISW has previously observed a concerted Kremlin campaign following the Wagner Group's armed rebellion in June 2023 and the death of Wagner financier Yevgeny Prigozhin in August 2023 to establish more control of the Russian information space that largely achieved the intended effect of reducing public criticism of how the Russian military is conducting the war in Ukraine.[57] ISW previously assessed that prominent Russian milbloggers likely have a monetary incentive to regularly report information about the war in Ukraine that is uncritical of Russian authorities and Russian milbloggers may benefit from calling attention to censorship efforts targeting their channel, real or otherwise, to dispel the idea that they have become Kremlin mouthpieces.[58]

Russian insider sources continue to discuss the reported removal of First Deputy Head of the Main Directorate of the Russian General Staff (GRU), Lieutenant General Vladimir Alekseyev, who was reportedly in charge of the Russian "Volunteer Corps" that was intended to replace the Wagner Group in Ukraine. A Russian insider source claimed on January 10 that Alekseyev continues to fulfill his duties in an unspecified position overseeing unspecified GRU operations in Ukraine. [59] The insider source claimed that Alekseyev has accumulated a lot of control and "compromising evidence" against Russian authorities during his time in the GRU and that the Kremlin has not formally removed Alekseyev due to concerns that Alekseyev's removal could provoke an "uncontrollable" conflict within the Russian military and GRU. [60] The insider source reiterated claims that Major General Denis Barylo "leads" the Russian "Volunteer Corps." [61] Another Russian insider source claimed on January 8 that Russian officials forced Alekseyev to resign in fall 2023. [62]

#### **Key Takeaways:**

- The Kremlin's effort to use the mythos of the Great Patriotic War (Second World War) to prepare the Russian public for a long war in Ukraine is at odds with Russia's current level of mobilization and Russian President Vladimir Putin's rhetorical attempts to reassure Russians that the war will not have lasting domestic impacts.
- The Kremlin may be instructing actors in the Russian-backed breakaway republic of Transnistria to set information conditions for a possible false-flag operation in Transnistria as part of wider Kremlin efforts to destabilize Moldova.
- The Kremlin may also be reviving its efforts to leverage Transnistria to create instability in Moldova in order to undermine Ukrainian grain exports along the western coast of the Black Sea.
- Iran has reportedly developed a new Shahed drone for Russian forces to use against Ukraine and is "close" to providing Russia with surface-to-surface ballistic missiles and systems.
- European Union (EU) Internal Market Commissioner Thierry Breton stated that the EU will be able to supply Ukraine with one million shells by spring 2024.
- Lithuania announced a new long-term military aid package to Ukraine worth 200 million euros (about \$220 million) on January 10.
- The very characteristics that make the Russian ultranationalist milblogger community popular its perceived independence from and willingness to criticize the Russian government likely continue to complicate the Kremlin's efforts to co-opt the community as Kremlin mouthpieces.
- Russian insider sources continue to discuss the reported removal of First Deputy Head of the Main Directorate of the Russian General Staff (GRU), Lieutenant General Vladimir Alekseyev, who was reportedly in charge of the Russian "Volunteer Corps" that was intended to replace the Wagner Group in Ukraine.
- Russian forces advanced southwest of Bakhmut and Donetsk City and in the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast amid continued positional engagements along the entire front.
- Russian Navy Commander-in-Chief Admiral Nikolai Yevmenov stated on January 10 that the Russian military plans to reorganize the five existing naval infantry brigades of Russia's fleets into naval infantry divisions and the Caspian Flotilla's naval infantry regiment into a naval infantry brigade in the medium-term.
- Russian authorities continue to deport prisoners from prisons in occupied Ukraine to Russia and are likely using penal colonies as part of widespread efforts to collect data on Ukrainian citizens.



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.

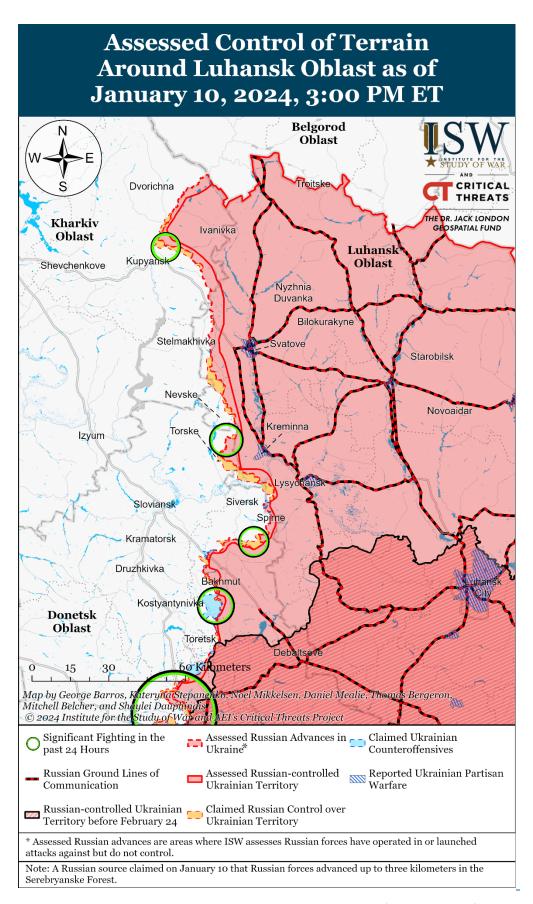
- Russian Main Effort Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 Capture the entirety of 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

#### <u>Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine</u>

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

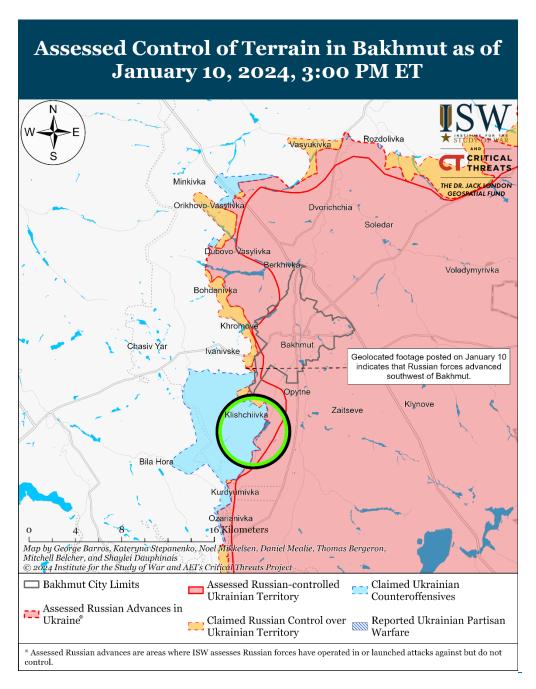
Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional engagements along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on January 10, but there were no confirmed changes in this area. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced up to three kilometers in depth in the Serebryanske forest area (southwest of Kreminna), although ISW has not observed visual evidence of this claim.[63] Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional engagements continued in the Kupyansk direction near Synkivka (northeast of Kupyansk) and in the Lyman direction east of Terny (northwest of Kreminna) and near Torske (west of Kreminna), the Serebryanske forest area, and Vesele (south of Kreminna).[64] The deputy commander of a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Kupyansk direction stated that Russian forces are using fewer loitering munitions in the Kupyansk direction due to cold weather.[65] A spokesperson of another Ukrainian brigade operating in the Kupyansk direction stated that Russian forces will likely increase the number of assaults in the Kupyansk direction within the next several days, having brought more personnel and possibly more equipment to the area.[66]

Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated on January 10 that the Russian military is moving some elements of the Russian 11th Army Corps (Baltic Fleet) from areas in occupied Luhansk Oblast to border areas in Belgorod, Bryansk, and Kursk oblasts. Mashovets stated that the Russian military transferred one unspecified tank battalion of the 11th Tank Regiment (18th Motorized Rifle Division [MRD]) to Rzhevka, Belgorod Oblast, and an unspecified howitzer artillery battalion of the 7th Motorized Rifle Regiment to an unspecified area in Belgorod Oblast.[67] Mashovets also stated that the Russian military transferred one unspecified motorized rifle battalion of the 79th Motorized Rifle Regiment (18th MRD) to Sushany, Bryansk Oblast, and one unspecified tank battalion of the 7th Motorized Rifle Regiment and one howitzer artillery battery of the 11th Tank Regiment to Staraya Pogoshch, Bryansk Oblast.[68] Mashovets reported that the Russian military transferred one unspecified tank battalion and two howitzer batteries (11th Tank Regiment) to Olkhovka, Kursk Oblast.[69]

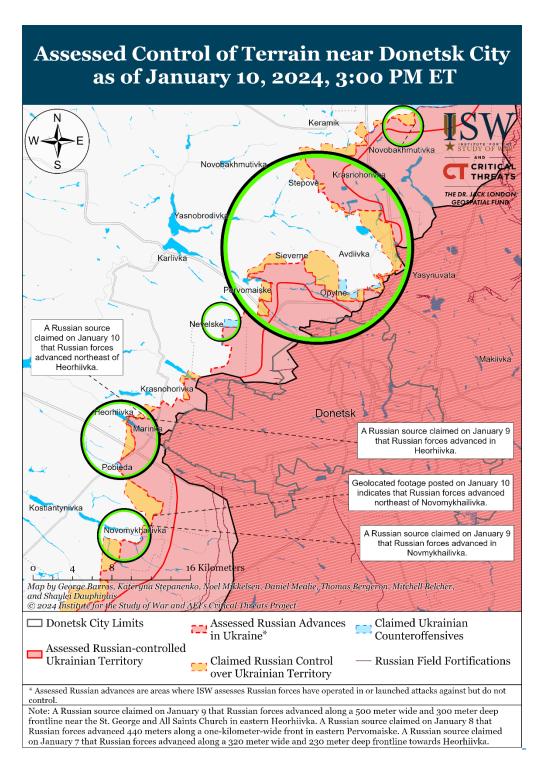


## <u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia's proxies in Donbas)

Russian forces recently advanced southwest of Bakhmut amid continued positional fighting on January 10. Geolocated footage published on January 10 indicates that Russian forces advanced southwest of Bakhmut.[70] Russian milbloggers claimed on January 9 and 10 that Russian forces advanced west and southwest of Khromove (west of Bakhmut) and on the northwestern approaches to Klishchiivka (southwest of Bakhmut).[71] Positional fighting continued northeast of Bakhmut near Vesele, west of Bakhmut near Bohdanivka and Ivanivske, and southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka and Andriivka.[72] The spokesperson for a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Bakhmut direction stated on January 10 that freezing weather conditions are contributing to less intense infantry assaults in the area.[73] Elements of the Russian 331st Airborne (VDV) Regiment (98th VDV Division) reportedly continue to operate northwest of Bakhmut.[74]

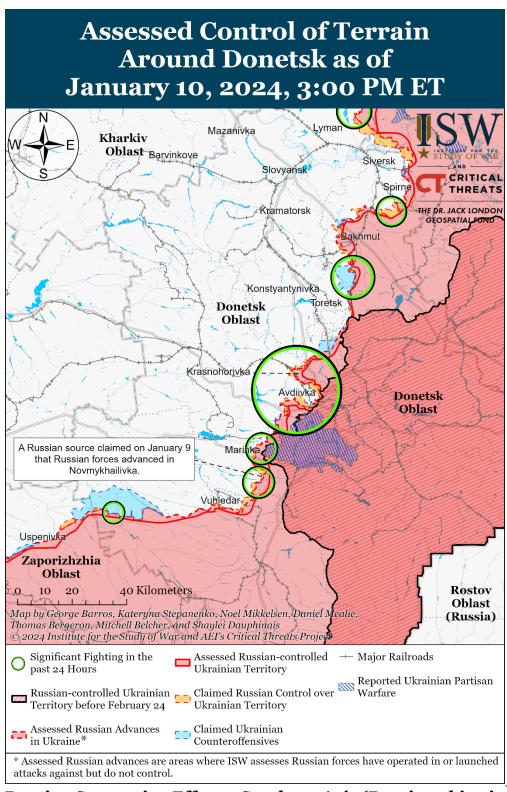


Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional engagements near Avdiivka on January 10, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Positional fighting continued northwest of Avdiivka near Novobakhmutivka, Stepove, and the Avdiivka Coke Plant; southeast of Avdiivka in the industrial zone; west of Avdiivka near Sieverne; and southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske and Nevelske.[75] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed on January 9 that Russian forces advanced near Ocheretyne (northwest of Avdiivka).[76] A Russian milblogger, citing an alleged report from a Russian serviceman in the Avdiivka direction, claimed that Ukrainian drones are complicating Russian efforts to evacuate wounded personnel and maneuver between positions.[77]



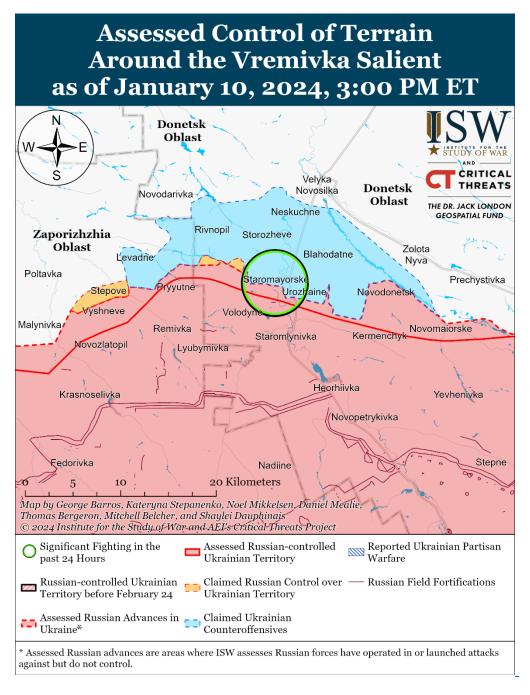
Russian forces recently advanced southwest of Donetsk City amid continued positional engagements on January 10. Geolocated footage published on January 10 indicates that Russian forces advanced northeast of Novomykhailivika (southwest of Donetsk City).[78] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed on January 9 that Russian forces captured an unspecified Ukrainian position southeast of Novomykhailivka and advanced south of Novomykhailivka.[79] Other Russian milbloggers claimed on January 10 that Russian forces advanced near Heorhiivka (west of Donetsk City) and northwest of

Solodke (southwest of Donetsk City).[80] Positional fighting continued west of Donetsk City near Marinka and Heorhiivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Pobieda and Novomykhailivka.[81] A Russian milblogger amplified footage claiming to show elements of the Russian 26th Radiological, Chemical, and Biological Protection Regiment (36th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) operating in the south Donetsk direction.[82]



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

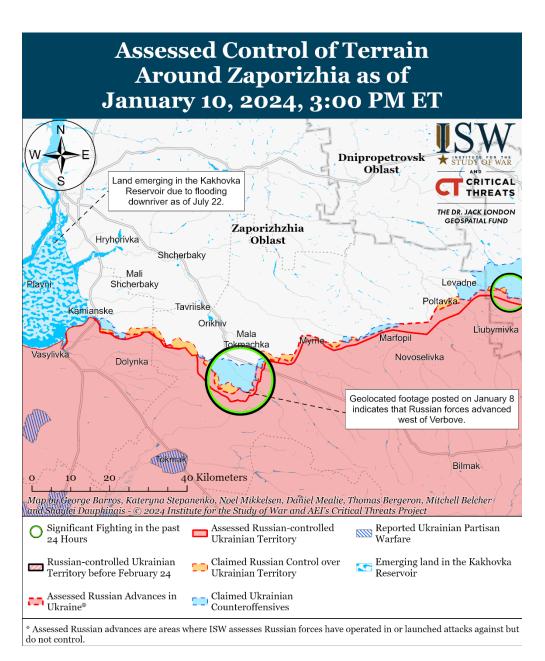
The Ukrainian General Staff reported on January 10 that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area near Staromayorske (south of Velyka Novosilka).[83] Ukrainian Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov stated on January 9 that satellite imagery indicates that Russian forces have built tens of kilometers of new trenches and defensive structures in the last months of 2023 in Zaporizhia and Donetsk oblasts.[84]



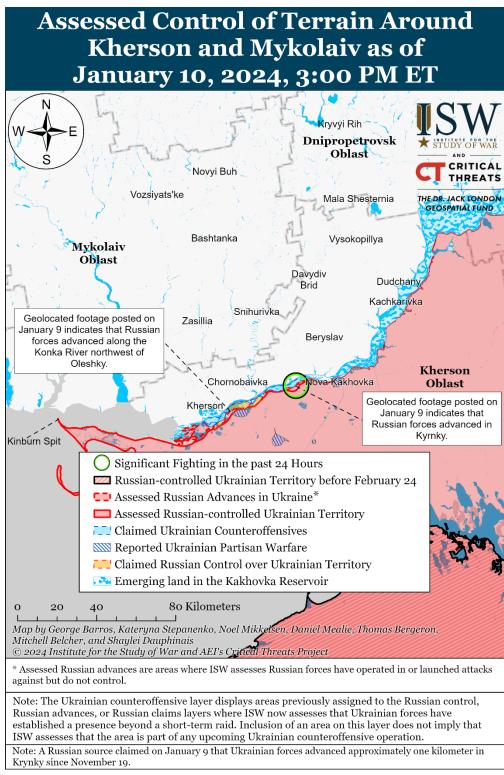
Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional engagements in western Zaporizhia Oblast, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area on January 10. Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional engagements continued near Robotyne, Verbove (east of Robotyne), and Novoprokopivka (just south of Robotyne).[85] Russian milbloggers claimed on January 10 that

Russian forces are regaining previously lost positions west of Verbove, but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims.[86] Elements of the Russian 7th Airborne (VDV) Division, including the 108th VDV Regiment, are reportedly operating in the Zaporizhia direction, including near Verbove.[87]





Russian forces recently made a confirmed advance in the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast. Geolocated footage published on January 9 indicates that Russian forces advanced southwest of Krynky.[88] Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional engagements continued on the east bank, including in Krynky.[89]



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

Russian Navy Commander-in-Chief Admiral Nikolai Yevmenov stated on January 10 that the Russian military plans to reorganize the five existing naval infantry brigades of Russia's fleets into naval infantry divisions and the Caspian Flotilla's naval infantry regiment into a naval infantry brigade in the medium-term.[90] The Russian military reportedly returned the Russian Northern, Pacific, Black Sea, and Baltic fleets and the Caspian Flotilla to direct subordination under Yevmenov on December 1, 2023.[91] Russian sources have speculated that the Russian military may be reforming the Pacific Fleet's 55th Naval Infantry Division (disbanded in 2009), but ISW has not observed any significant evidence of this.[92] Russia's naval infantry brigades and regiments have heavily participated in combat operations in Ukraine and have suffered significant degradation that has likely left them well below their intended end strengths.[93]

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

Russia continues to expand its production of glide bombs to support operations in Ukraine. Russian state-owned defense conglomerate Rostec claimed on January 10 that it successfully tested the "Drel" glide bomb and plans to start manufacturing them in 2024.[94] Rostec claimed that the "Drel" glide bomb can carry 15 self-aiming components that can strike a target and that Rostec designed the glide bomb to destroy armored vehicles, radar stations, and air defense systems.[95] Rostec also claimed that the new glide bomb would be almost undetectable on radar.[96] Russian milbloggers posted a picture on January 10 purporting to show a Russian FAB-1500M54 glide bomb with universal planning and correction modules (UMPCs) that allegedly has a greater flight range than FAB-250/500 glide bombs with UMPCs.[97] Russian forces have been increasingly relying on the mass use of glide bombs dropped from manned aircraft to support operations in Kherson Oblast and in eastern Ukraine, likely due to the reported Ukrainian ability to suppress long-range Russian artillery and shoot down Russian rotary wing aircraft.[98]

# <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)

Russian authorities continue to deport prisoners from prisons in occupied Ukraine to Russia and are likely using penal colonies as part of widespread efforts to collect data on Ukrainian citizens. The Ukrainian Resistance Center stated on January 10 that the Ukrainian Cyber Resistance movement gained access to data from the Russian penal system in occupied Luhansk Oblast that indicates that Russian occupation officials sometimes illegally deport prisoners in occupied Luhansk Oblast to Rostov Oblast for trial.[99] The Ukrainian Resistance Center stated that a significant number of prisoners are Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) or people whom Russian authorities kidnapped from occupied Ukraine. The BBC's Russian Service previously reported that Russian authorities are illegally deporting Ukrainian civilians to Russia and holding them in penal colonies and pre-trial detention centers without charges, investigations, trials, access to lawyers, or designated release dates.[100] The Ukrainian Resistance Center stated that the Ukrainian Cyber Resistance was able to identify at least three penal colonies in occupied Luhansk Oblast where Russian authorities are holding Ukrainian POWs.[101] The Ukrainian Resistance Center stated that more than half of the prisoners in occupied Alchesk have tuberculosis and that many of the convicts in occupied Khrustalnyi are former members of Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) militias or former occupation officials who fell out of favor with newly installed occupation administration officials. Russian authorities are reportedly requiring relatives of missing or captured Ukrainians to send official

requests, which sometimes include scans of both the families' and the missing person's passports and other official documents, to occupation administrations to confirm or deny the whereabouts of their relative in the prison system.

Russian authorities continue to construct infrastructure projects designed to integrate occupied Ukraine into Russia and expand Russian military infrastructure in Ukraine. Frontelligence Insight, led by a Ukrainian reserve officer, stated on January 9 that satellite imagery indicates that Russian authorities are actively constructing a new branch of the railway between Russia and Mariupol that will pass through occupied Burne and Malovodne, Donetsk Oblast.[102] Frontelligence assessed that Russian authorities may complete the Burne-Malovodne section of the railway in 2024, despite slowing construction of a new railway bridge over the Kalmius River after a possible Ukrainian strike on the bridge. Frontelligence stated that the Kalmius River bridge section of the railway will remain vulnerable to Ukrainian strikes in the future, however. Frontelligence stated that Russian authorities are in the early stages of constructing a railroad between Taganrog, Rostov Oblast, and occupied Mariupol and Crimea to act as an alternative logistics route to the Kerch Strait Bridge. Frontelligence assessed that Russian authorities are unlikely to complete the Taganrog-Mariupol-Crimea railroad in 2024.

### **Russian Information Operations and Narratives**

Russian officials continue to claim that Western countries intend to interfere in the March 2024 Russian presidential election. The Russian MFA claimed on January 9 that Western countries are attempting to prevent Russian citizens living abroad from voting.[103] Russian diplomatic sources told Russian outlet *Vedemosti* in an article published on January 9 that Russian consulates in an unspecified number of "unfriendly" countries do not plan to open voting stations for the March 2024 presidential election.[104] Russian officials previously claimed that unspecified actors in Russia and abroad have begun efforts to discredit the presidential election and will likely continue to make similar claims.[105]

<u>Significant activity in Belarus</u> (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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