

# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, January 16, 2024

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January 16, 2024, 7:00pm 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 12:45pm ET on January 16. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the January 17 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.**

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

**Russian President Vladimir Putin continued to demonstrate that Russia is not interested in negotiating with Ukraine in good faith and that Russia’s maximalist objectives in Ukraine – which are tantamount to full Ukrainian and Western surrender – remain unchanged.** Putin claimed on January 16 during a meeting with Russian municipal heads that “Ukrainian statehood may suffer an irreparable, very serious blow” if the current battlefield situation continues.[1] Putin also reiterated Kremlin allegations of the prevalence of Nazism in Ukraine and claimed that “such people...cannot win.”[2] Russia’s continued calls for Ukraine’s “denazification” are thinly veiled demands for the removal of the elected Ukrainian government and its replacement with a government acceptable to the Kremlin.[3] Putin reiterated the Kremlin narrative that Ukraine – not Russia – is to blame for the absence of negotiations, claiming that Ukraine’s “peace formula” is actually a continuation of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky’s ban on negotiating with Russia and amounts to “prohibitive demands” on the negotiation process.[4] Putin claimed that any negotiation process is an “attempt to encourage [Russia] to abandon gains [it] has made in the past year and a half” and that this is “impossible.”[5]

The Kremlin appears to lack a consistent framing for current Russian offensive operations to present to the Russian public, despite the fact that Putin appears to be – at times – using his role as Commander-in-Chief of the Russian military as part of his election campaign.[6] Putin declared that Russian forces “completely” have the initiative in Ukraine following a failed Ukrainian counteroffensive.[7] This is a notable departure from Putin’s claim on December 14, 2023, that almost

all Russian forces are in “the active stage of action” and from Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu’s previous characterization of Russian offensive operations in Ukraine as an “active defense.”[8] ISW continues to assess that Russian forces have regained the initiative throughout most of the Ukrainian theater but have not seized the battlefield initiative in Kherson Oblast.[9]

**Russian President Vladimir Putin notably amplified a longstanding Kremlin effort to set information conditions for future escalations against the Baltic countries, likely as part of his wider effort to weaken NATO.** Putin claimed on January 16 that Latvia and other Baltic states are “throwing [ethnic] Russian people” out of their countries and that this situation “directly affects [Russia’s] security.”[10] Previous changes to Latvia’s immigration law stipulated that Russian citizens’ permanent residence permits would become invalid in September 2023 and that Russian citizens would need to follow the general procedure for obtaining EU permanent residence status in Latvia, including passing a Latvian language exam, by November 30, 2023.[11] The Latvian Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs stated in December 2023 that Latvia would deport about 1,200 Russian citizens who failed to apply for a new residence permit by the deadline.[12] Putin has long employed an expansive definition of Russia’s sovereignty and trivialized the sovereignty of former Soviet republics, and Russia has long claimed that it has the right to protect its “compatriots abroad,” including ethnic Russians and Russian speakers beyond Russia’s borders.[13] ISW has not observed any indication that a Russian attack against the Baltics is imminent or likely, but Putin may be setting information conditions for future aggressive Russian actions abroad under the pretext of protecting its “compatriots.” Putin recently threatened Finland in mid-December 2023 and reiterated a world view illustrating that he continues to pursue demanded changes to the NATO alliance that would amount to dismantling it.[14]

Putin subsequently tied alleged security threats to Russia in Eastern Europe to NATO’s “Open Door Policy,” a core principle of the alliance enshrined in its charter that allows it the discretion to admit new members. Putin claimed that NATO “open[ed] the doors to Ukraine and Georgia” in 2008 – referring to the Bucharest Declaration in which NATO promised Ukraine and Georgia paths to membership but took no concrete steps towards opening such paths – and claimed that this declaration went against Ukraine’s 1991 Declaration of Independence that stated that Ukraine is a neutral state.[15] Putin did not mention that the Russian Federation committed “to respect the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine,” which included Crimea and occupied Donbas, in 1994 in exchange for Ukraine’s return of the Soviet Union’s nuclear weapons on its territory to Russia.[16] Sovereignty includes the right of self-determination. Putin claimed that NATO’s 2008 declaration “completely changed the situation in Eastern Europe” and affected Russia’s security. ISW previously assessed that Putin did not invade Ukraine in 2022 to defend Russia against a threat from NATO but rather to weaken and ultimately destroy NATO – a goal he still pursues.[17] The Kremlin and Kremlin-affiliated actors have recently promoted information operations and conducted hybrid warfare tactics aimed at destabilizing NATO and may now be setting information conditions for possible future aggressive Russian actions against NATO countries and their neighbors.[18]

**Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky reiterated the importance of defeating Russia in Ukraine at the Davos World Economic Forum on January 16.** Zelensky emphasized that Russian President Vladimir Putin will not change – referring to Putin’s maximalist war aims – and noted that all attempts to restore peace have failed two years after the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion and 10 years since the illegal annexation of Crimea.[19] Zelensky stated that the Ukrainian

military is holding Putin back and that it is better to defeat Russia on the battlefield now than later. Zelensky's statements are consistent with ISW's longstanding assessment that the Kremlin is very unlikely to engage in good faith, meaningful peace negotiations.[20] European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen stated that Ukraine needs steady funding and supplies of weapons through 2024 and beyond in order to defend and reclaim its territory, indicating that Europe will continue to play an increasingly active role in supporting Ukraine.[21] Von der Leyen stated that Ukraine can win the war but that the West needs to expand Ukraine's capabilities.[22] Von der Leyen emphasized Ukraine's successes throughout the war thus far: "Russia has lost roughly half of its military capabilities," and Ukraine has recaptured half of the territory that Russian forces captured after the full-scale invasion, pushed back the Black Sea Fleet (BSF), and opened a grain corridor in the Black Sea.

Zelensky continued bilateral meetings with world leaders at the Davos World Economic Forum on January 16. Zelensky discussed US-Ukraine defense cooperation with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Russian strikes and NATO summit preparations with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, the battlefield situation and Ukraine's defense needs with Luxembourg Prime Minister Luc Frieden, and Ukrainian operations in and corridors through the Black Sea with business representatives.[23] Zelensky also met with Singaporean President Tharman Shanmugaratnam and invited Shanmugaratnam to join the Ukrainian peace formula and global peace summit.[24]

**Russian tactical aviation operations are reportedly decreasing near the Sea of Azov, and Russian aviation capabilities may be degraded after Ukrainian forces destroyed a Russian A-50 long-range radar detection aircraft and caused severe damage to a Russian Il-22 airborne command post aircraft on the night of January 14.** Ukrainian Air Force spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat stated on January 16 that Russian tactical aviation presence over the Sea of Azov is currently at a lower level "than ever before." [25] Ihnat stated that the A-50 and Il-20 aircraft helped Russian forces detect air targets at a range of up to 600 kilometers and transmitted information to Russian control points in Ukraine in real time.[26] Ihnat stated that this monitoring allowed Russian tactical aviation to see Ukrainian aircraft from afar and increased the effectiveness of tactical aviation operations.[27] Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported that Russian forces only had three A-50 and six modernized A-50U aircraft in service before January 14, 2024, and Ihnat stated that the destruction of one of these few aircraft would reduce Russian operational capabilities to some extent.[28] Ihnat stated that severe damage to the Il-22 aircraft rendered the aircraft inoperable but that Russian forces would likely replace both the destroyed A-50 and damaged Il-22 aircraft.[29] Ihnat clarified that the destruction of these aircraft will not impact the intensity of Russian missile and drone strikes since Russian forces program these missiles and drones with specified routes and targets from ground positions.[30] Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated on January 16 that Ukraine must gain air superiority just as it gained superiority in the Black Sea following strikes on Russian naval assets in occupied Crimea.[31]

**At least two state-owned Chinese banks reportedly ordered reviews of their business with Russian clients and will sever ties with sanctioned Russian entities and entities with ties to the Russian defense industry.** *Bloomberg* reported on January 16 that people familiar with the matter stated that at least two People's Republic of China (PRC)-owned banks ordered reviews of international transactions with Russian clients after the United States authorized secondary sanctions on financial institutions that facilitate Russian sanctions evasion and support the Russian war effort in Ukraine on December 22, 2023.[32] *Bloomberg's* sources stated that these

Chinese banks are auditing clients' business registrations, authorized beneficiaries, and ultimate controllers to determine whether the clients are Russian, conduct business in Russia, or transfer critical items to Russia through a third country.[33] *Bloomberg's* sources stated that these banks will sever ties with these clients, regardless of the currency or location of the transactions.[34] *Bloomberg* reported that the PRC's four largest state-owned banks have a history of complying with previous US sanctions against Iran and North Korea.[35] Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitri Peskov refused to comment on *Bloomberg's* reporting on January 16.[36] Russia has relied on Chinese entities for dual-use goods for use in Ukraine and for component parts in Russian military equipment.[37] ISW previously assessed that China has likely been heavily involved in various Russian sanctions evasion schemes, but it appears that US secondary sanctions may be threatening enough to force China to abandon many of these schemes.[38] The reported Chinese reaction to the US secondary sanctions further indicates that China has reservations concerning the Kremlin's desired "no limits partnership" between the two states.[39]

**Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov thanked North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son-hui for North Korea's support for Russia in the war during Choe's official state visit to Moscow on January 16.**[40] Lavrov highlighted his visit to Pyongyang in October 2023 and Russian President Vladimir Putin's meeting with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un in Russia in September 2023 as "only the beginning" to comprehensively developing relations between Russia and North Korea.[41] Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitri Peskov stated that Lavrov and Choe met with Putin to discuss new unspecified Russian-North Korean agreements.[42] Russia is likely advancing efforts to procure ammunition and ballistic missiles from abroad amid reported Russian ammunition shortages and missile production constraints. Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Deputy Chief Major General Vadym Skibitskyi reported that North Korea delivered one million rounds of artillery ammunition to Russia from September to November 2023, and Western and Ukrainian officials have stated that Russian forces have launched at least one North Korean ballistic missile against Ukraine.[43]

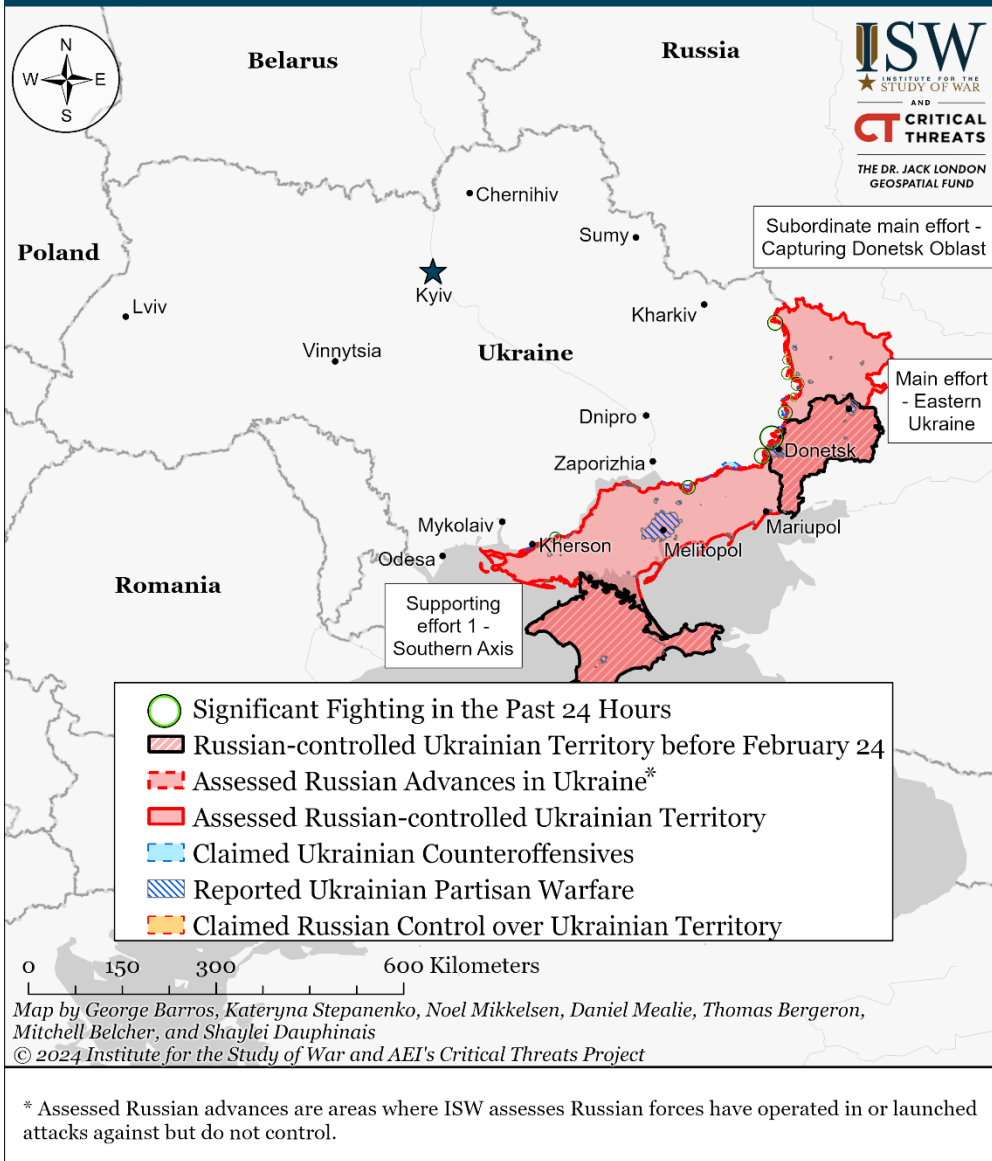
**The Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada adopted a law on its second reading to digitalize Ukrainian military records on January 16.**[44] The law will improve the register for mobilized personnel, conscripts, and reservists and introduce the possibility of creating a digital military accounting document.[45] The Ukrainian Ministry of Defense (MoD) reported that the draft law will also create an electronic services portal for military personnel and conscripts.[46] The Ukrainian MoD also stated that the draft law will allow Ukraine to strengthen its cyber defense, expand its access to unspecified allies' intelligence, develop and deploy new combat systems, and place its IT systems for military cloud storage in NATO member states, thereby allowing Ukrainian air defense systems currently protecting national data centers to cover military and civilian infrastructure.[47]

### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Russian President Vladimir Putin continued to demonstrate that Russia is not interested in negotiating with Ukraine in good faith and that Russia's maximalist objectives in Ukraine – which are tantamount to full Ukrainian and Western surrender – remain unchanged.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin notably amplified a longstanding Kremlin effort to set information conditions for future escalations against Baltic countries, likely as part of his wider effort to weaken NATO.**

- **Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky reiterated the importance of defeating Russia in Ukraine at the Davos World Economic Forum on January 16.**
- **Russian tactical aviation operations are reportedly decreasing near the Sea of Azov, and Russian aviation capabilities may be degraded after Ukrainian forces destroyed a Russian A-50 long-range radar detection aircraft and caused severe damage to a Russian Il-22 airborne command post aircraft on the night of January 14.**
- **At least two state-owned Chinese banks reportedly ordered reviews of their business with Russian clients and will sever ties with sanctioned Russian entities and entities with ties to the Russian defense industry.**
- **Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov thanked North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son-hui for North Korea's support for Russia in the war during Choe's official state visit to Moscow on January 16.**
- **The Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada adopted a law on its second reading to digitalize Ukrainian military records on January 16.**
- **Russian forces made confirmed advances near Kreminna and Bakhmut as positional engagements continued along the entire frontline.**
- **Russian State Duma deputies from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR) proposed a bill on January 16 that would create a legal status for volunteers of the Russian war in Ukraine that would grant them compensation in case of injury or death.**
- **Russian occupation officials from occupied Kherson, Zaporizhia, and Donetsk oblasts attended a meeting of Russian municipal representatives in Moscow with Russian President Vladimir Putin on January 16.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of January 16, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

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

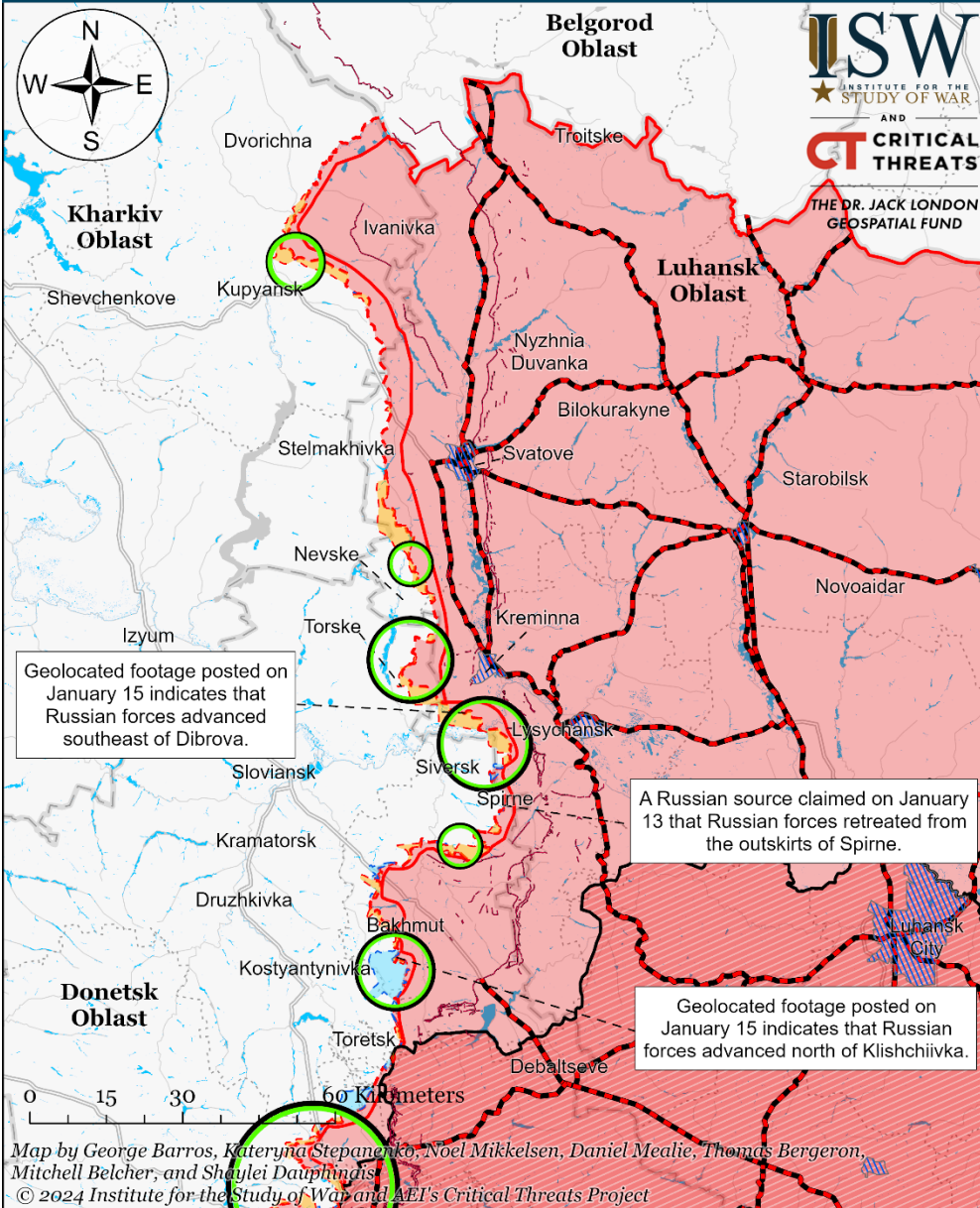
### **Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine**

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

Russian forces recently made a confirmed advance near Kreminna amid continued positional fighting along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on January 16. Geolocated footage published on January 15 indicates that Russian forces advanced north of Dibrova (southwest of Kreminna).[48] Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional engagements continued northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka; east of Kupyansk near Petropavlivka; northwest of Kreminna near Makiivka and Ploshchanka; west of Kreminna near Terny, Torske, and Yampolivka; southwest of Kreminna near the Serebryanske forest area and Dibrova; and south of Kreminna near Bilohorivka and Hryhorivka.[49] Russian milbloggers, citing alleged unspecified Ukrainian sources, claimed that Russian forces advanced near Makiivka up to 2.2 kilometers in width and up 1.7 kilometers in depth, although ISW has not observed visual evidence supporting this claim.[50] A Russian source claimed that Russian forces resumed “active offensive actions” using armored vehicles in the Serebryanske forest area after a hiatus of Russian offensive activity in the area.[51] Ukrainian Luhansk Oblast Military Administration Head Artem Lysohor stated on January 16 that Russian forces launched a large number of glide bombs at Ukrainian positions in the Serebryanske forest area and that Russian forces have been conducting offensive operations along the entire Luhansk Oblast frontline to seize the remainder of Luhansk Oblast for the past 1.5 weeks.[52]



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of January 16, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Russian Ground Lines of Communication
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

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

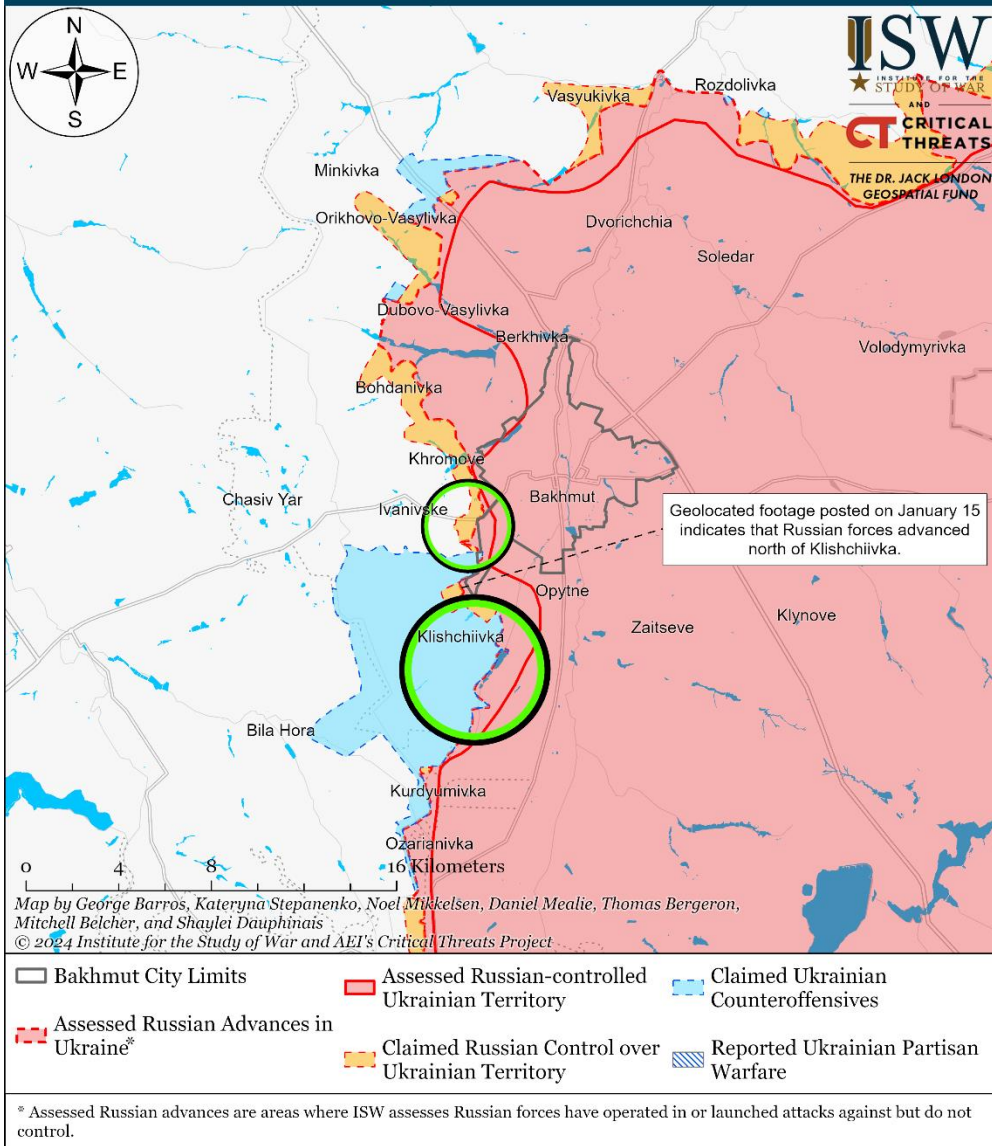
Note: A Russian source claimed on January 16 that Russian forces advanced up to 1.7 kilometers along a 2.2-kilometers-wide front near Makiivka, citing unspecified Ukrainian sources.



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

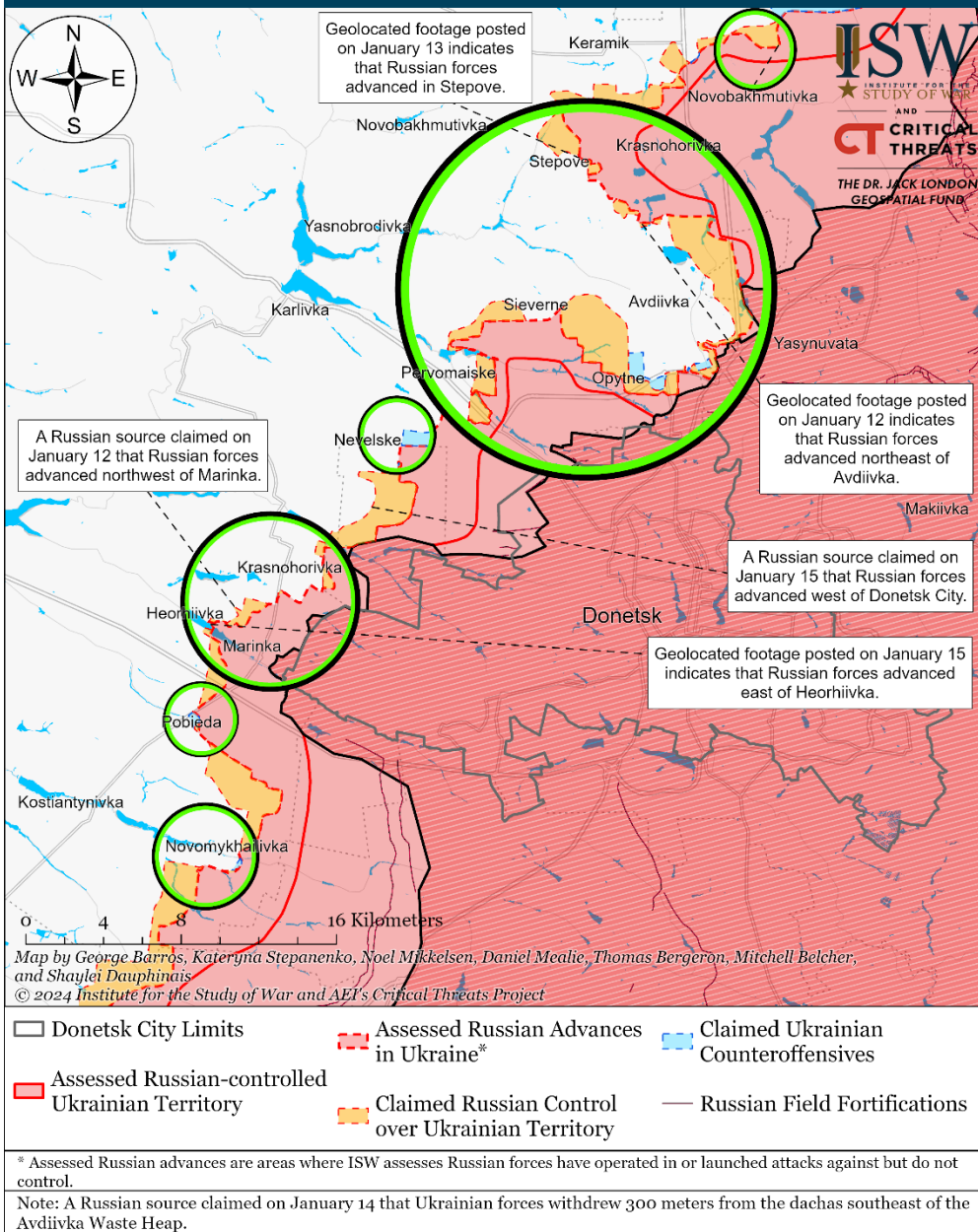
Russian forces recently made marginal gains near Bakhmut and continued positional engagements with Ukrainian forces in the area on January 16. Geolocated footage published on January 15 indicates that Russian forces recently marginally advanced north of Klishchiivka (southwest of Bakhmut).[53] Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional fighting occurred northeast of Bakhmut near Vesele and Verkhokamyanske; northwest of Bakhmut near Bohdanivka; west of Bakhmut near Ivanivske; and southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka and Andriivka.[54] Elements of the Russian 98th Airborne (VDV) Division reportedly continue to operate west of Bakhmut near the O0506 (Khromove-Chasiv Yar) highway, and elements of the Russian irregular “Lynx” unit are reportedly operating in the Bakhmut direction.[55]

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of January 16, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



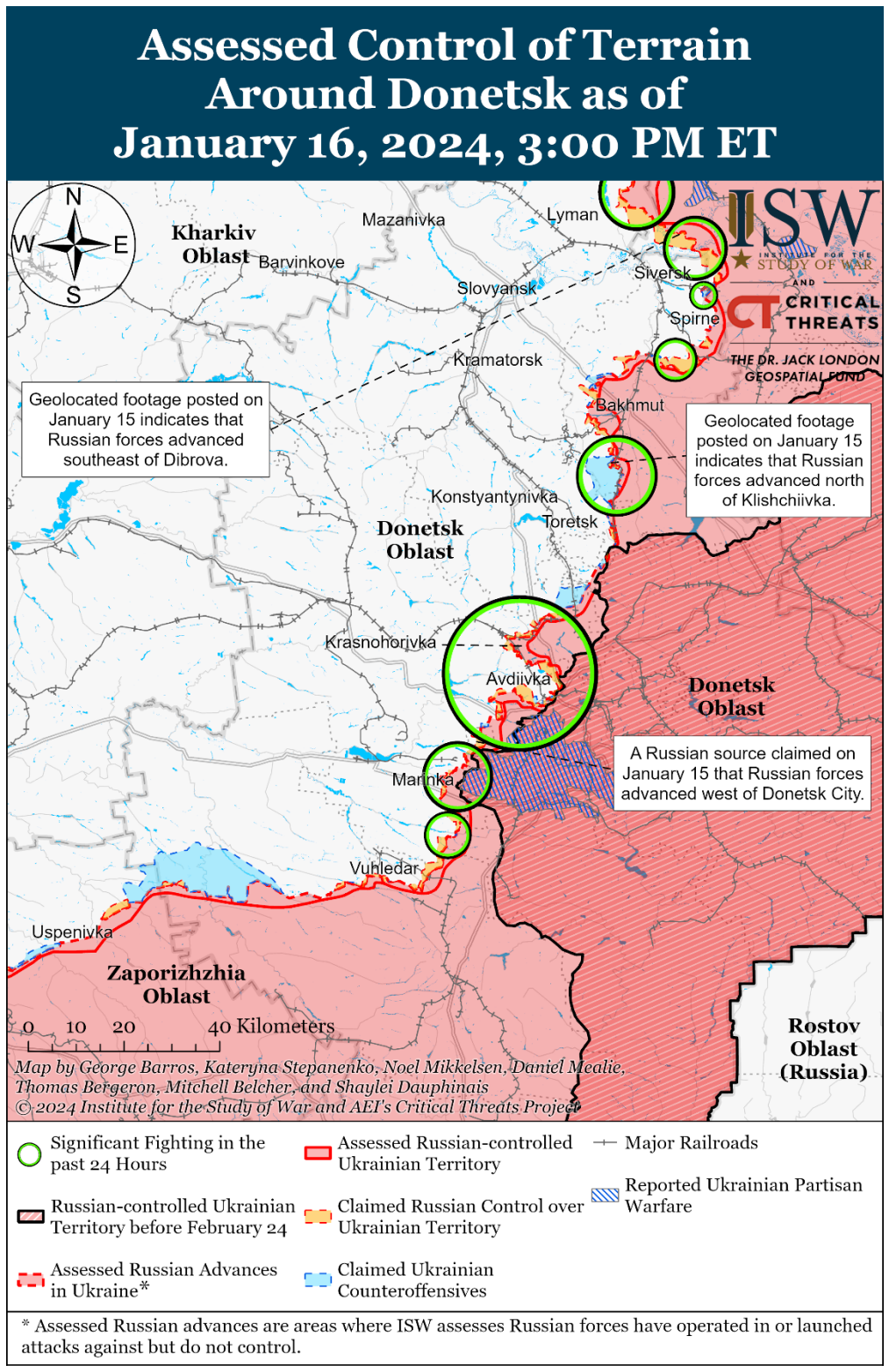
Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional engagements near Avdiivka on January 16. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional fighting occurred northwest of Avdiivka near Novobakhmutivka and Stepove, near the Avdiivka Coke Plant in northwestern Avdiivka, west of Avdiivka near Sieverne, and southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske and Nevelske.[56] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Commander Brigadier General Oleksandr Tarnavskyi stated that Russian forces intensified assaults with armored vehicle support in the Tavriisk direction (a wide area ranging from Avdiivka all the way through western Zaporizhia Oblast), likely referring to the Avdiivka and Marinka directions.[57]

# Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of January 16, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional fighting west and southwest of Donetsk City on January 16, but there were no confirmed changes in the area. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced northeast of Krasnohorivka (west of Donetsk City), although ISW has not seen confirmation of this claim.[58] Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional fighting occurred west of Donetsk City near Heorhiivka and Krasnohorivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Pobieda and Novomykhailivka.[59] A Russian milblogger claimed that recent freezing temperatures near Donetsk City were more conducive to mechanized maneuver but that dense

minefields impeded Russian armored vehicles from moving forward.[60] The Russian milblogger claimed that relatively warmer weather is currently constraining mechanized maneuver and that Russian armored vehicles are getting stuck in ruts created by armored vehicle tracks.[61]



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

Positional fighting continued in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on January 16, but there were no confirmed changes to the front in this area. Russian sources claimed that positional fighting continued southeast of Hulyaipole near Chervone; south of Velyka Novosilka near Zavitne Bazhnyia and east of Urozhaine; and northwest of Pryyutne (southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[62] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces captured several Ukrainian positions north of Kermenchyk and Staromylnivka (both south of Velyka Novosilka), but ISW has not observed visual evidence of this claim.[63]

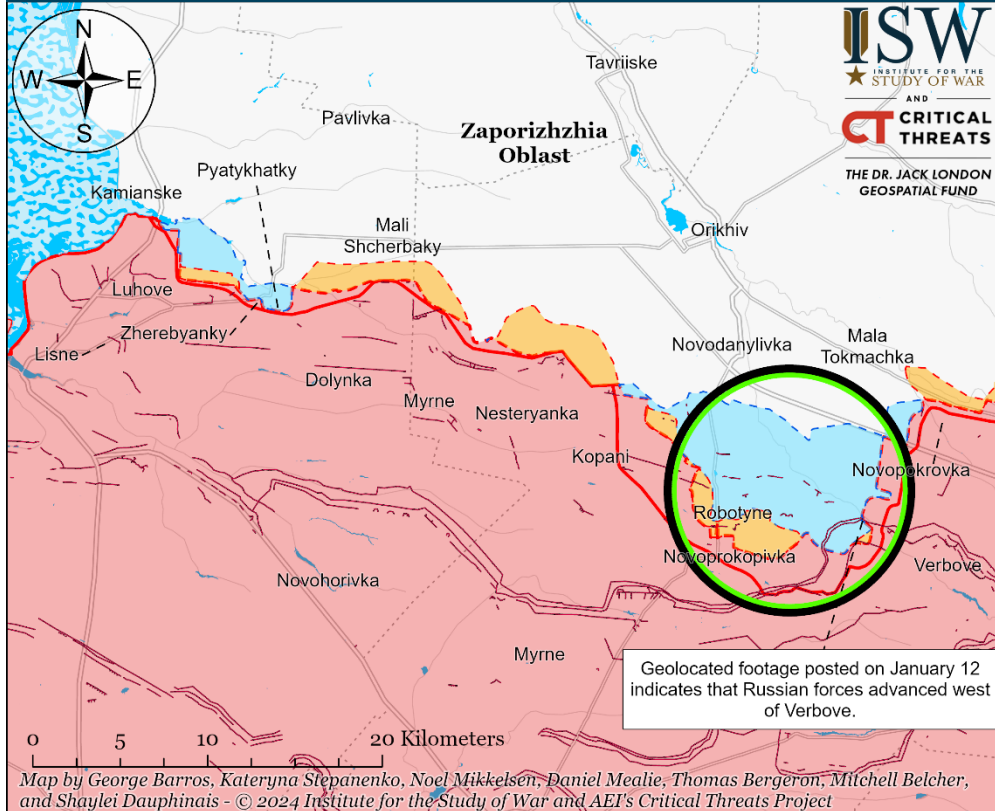


# Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of January 16, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Positional fighting continued in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on January 16, but there were no confirmed changes to the front in this area. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional fighting continued west of Verbove (east of Robotyne) and near Robotyne and Novoprokopivka (just south of Robotyne).[64]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of January 16, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

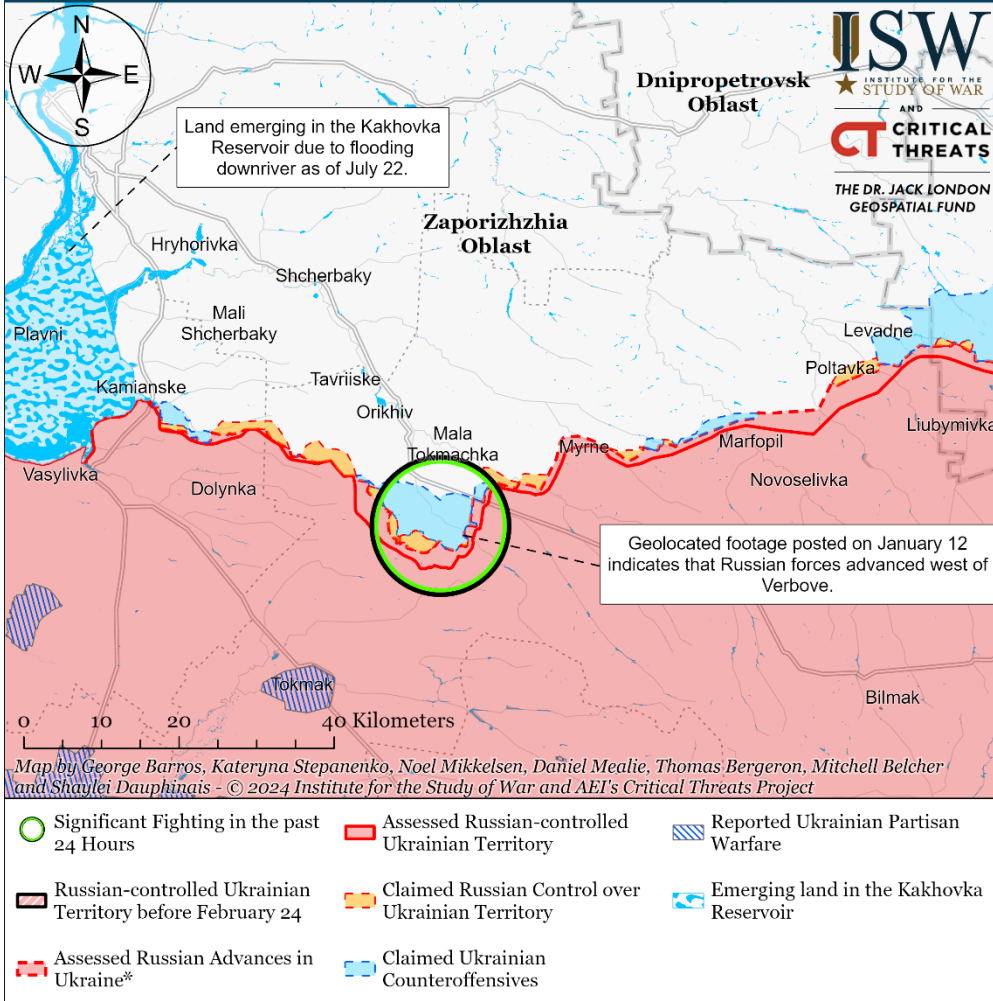


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Russian Field Fortifications

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



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of January 16, 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 the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast amid continued positional fighting on January 16, but there were no confirmed changes to the front in this area. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional engagements continued on the east bank, including near Krynky and Pishchanivka.[65] Recently collected satellite imagery indicates that Russian forces have repeatedly attempted to counterattack near Krynky with small detachments along the M14 highway.[66] Satellite imagery indicates that Russian forces are preparing to defend the area beyond Krynky, including the M14 highway, along which Russian forces have built a 0.5-kilometer trench and other defensive positions.[67] Elements of the Russian 8th Artillery Regiment (22nd Army Corps, Black Sea Fleet) are reportedly operating on the east bank.[68]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of January 16, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

Note: The Ukrainian counteroffensive layer displays areas previously assigned to the Russian control, Russian advances, or Russian claims layers where ISW now assesses that Ukrainian forces have established a presence beyond a short-term raid. Inclusion of an area on this layer does not imply that ISW assesses that the area is part of any upcoming Ukrainian counteroffensive operation.

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

Russian State Duma deputies from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR) proposed a bill on January 16 that would create a legal status for volunteers of the Russian war in Ukraine that would grant them compensation in case of injury or death.[69] The bill states that volunteer activities can include providing assistance to people in Ukraine and conducting counterterrorism or “special military operations.” The bill provides volunteers with 25,000-80,000 rubles (\$284-\$909) for mild-to-severe injuries, 150,000-500,000 rubles (\$1,705-\$5,684) for disabilities, and two million rubles (\$22,737) to beneficiaries in the case of death.

Russia continues to keep soldiers in service who are partially or completely medically unfit for military service. *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty* outlet *Idel Realii* reported on January 16 that the Russian military command deployed a group of ill soldiers, who had diseases including HIV and Hepatitis C and were awaiting a medical commission hearing, to conduct combat missions on the front line.[70] Russian opposition media outlet *Mobilization News* reported on January 16 that the mother of a Russian soldier diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder stated that her son was declared partially unfit for service and deemed unsuitable to handle weapons but that the command sent the soldier to the front, nonetheless.[71] The mother complained that other soldiers in the unit suffered from similar diagnoses and issues. Russian opposition outlet *Astra* reported that the Russian military will not release a contract soldier with cardiomyopathy from service despite his multiple health issues and the fact that his contract expired over a year ago.[72]

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

Kremlin newswire *TASS* reported on January 15 that the Tallamho Design Bureau in Grozny, Chechen Republic, developed the BUKH1a artillery reconnaissance system, a budget analog to the 1B75 “Penicillin” artillery reconnaissance system.[73] *TASS* claimed that the BUKH1a has a range of 100 meters to 20 kilometers depending on the weapon and can identify enemy targets within one minute.

Russian forces are installing electronic warfare (EW) systems on tanks to defend against drones. A Russian source amplified footage of a Russian T-80BV tank equipped with a “Saniya” anti-drone EW system, which can reportedly suppress drones at a range of up to 1.5 kilometers.[74]

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

***Click here to read ISW’s new analysis on Ukrainian long-term efforts to develop a self-sufficient DIB with US and European support.***

Three unspecified European Union (EU) diplomats told the *Financial Times (FT)* in an article published on January 16 that the EU’s External Action Service (EEAS) is conducting an audit of weapons that EU member states have provided to Ukraine since Russia’s full-scale invasion in February 2022.[75] The diplomats stated that the EEAS intends to conduct the audit in response to claims that some unspecified EU countries have not sent as much aid to Ukraine as they can and intends to present the findings before the EU summit on February 1.[76]

Latvian Defense Minister Andris Spruds stated on January 16 that Latvia has created a coalition of nearly 20 unspecified countries to provide Ukraine with thousands of new unspecified drones.[77]

Bulgarian Defense Minister Todor Tagarev stated in an interview published on January 15 that the Bulgarian defense industry is consistently producing ammunition, small arms, and light weaponry for direct or indirect security assistance to Ukraine. Tagarev stated that Bulgaria is currently producing 122mm and 152mm shells for Ukrainian artillery systems and plans to produce 105mm and 155mm shells for Ukraine's Western-provided artillery systems.[78] Ukrainian officials have recently highlighted shortages of 122mm and 152mm shells as a prominent battlefield challenge.[79]

The Australian Ministry of Defense (MoD) signed a contract with the Australian branch of US Defense Contractor Lockheed Martin worth 34.7 million AUD to produce HIMARS rockets starting in 2025.[80] Ukrainian forces routinely use HIMARS rockets to strike rear Russian areas and logistics in occupied Ukraine.

Belgian defense company John Cockerill announced on January 15 that it signed an agreement with the Swedish Volvo Group to acquire French armored vehicle manufacturer Arquus.[81] Ukrainian outlet *Militarnyi* reported that John Cockerill signed a contract with the Belgian government to modernize M113 armored personnel carriers for Ukraine in July 2023.[82]

The Ukrainian National Security Council stated that the Ukrainian state federal budget and special funds funded the Ukrainian security and defense sector with 2,503 billion hryvnias (about \$66 million) in 2023, which accounted for about 39 percent of Ukraine's expected GDP for the year. The Ukrainian National Security Council stated that funding in 2023 increased 63.9 percent from funding in 2022 and noted that the level of funding in 2023 allowed Ukraine to acquire materiel and technical resources, pay salaries to military personnel, and provide them with other social benefits.[83]

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

Russian occupation officials from occupied Kherson, Zaporizhia, and Donetsk oblasts attended a meeting of Russian municipal representatives in Moscow with Russian President Vladimir Putin on January 16.[84] Putin stated that all municipal development programs will be available to occupied territories in Ukraine, and Russian occupation officials stated that they discussed further integration efforts with Russian municipal officials at the meeting.[85] Occupation administrations at the regional and municipal levels have forged patronage networks with Russian federal subjects and cities and likely used the event to seek out new patronage partnerships.[86]

The Russian occupation of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast has reportedly caused millions of dollars' worth of damage to the facility. Ukrainian nuclear energy operator Energoatom President Petro Kotin stated on January 16 that Russian occupation has caused damages to the ZNPP totaling 30 billion hryvnia (\$791 million) and has caused Energoatom to incur 167 billion hryvnia (\$4.4 billion) in unrealized profits.[87]

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

Russian ultranationalists continue to criticize post-Soviet countries for promoting local languages. A prominent Kremlin-linked Russian milblogger amplified accusations that the Kazakh government is trying to replace official usage of the Russian language with Kazakh language citing efforts to change the names of railway stations from Russian to Kazakh.[88] The milblogger claimed that small efforts to promote local languages result in a "dangerous trend" in which post-Soviet countries, like the Baltic states, close Russian schools and remove Soviet monuments.[89] Russian officials have also criticized Central Asian efforts to promote indigenous languages at the perceived expense of the Russian language.[90]

Pro-war Russian ultranationalists continue to portray the West as Russia's main adversary through art and literature. Russian opposition outlet *Meduza* reported on January 16 that the Russian pro-war community produces pro-war art, poetry, music, literature, and films, which *Meduza* calls "Z-realism." [91] *Meduza* stated that this genre of art glorifies the Russian victory over Ukraine, NATO, and the "collective West." [92] *Meduza* noted that the Kremlin does not appear to actively promote the pro-war art that these ultranationalists produce and promote, though *Meduza* observed that Russian state-owned outlet *RT* has amplified some "Z-poetry." Prominent Kremlin-affiliated Russian milbloggers have produced and promoted pro-war poetry and art throughout the war, particularly pieces that glorify notable battles and Russian formations in Ukraine.[93]

Russian President Vladimir Putin continues to portray Russia as the protector of "traditional values" as part of an ongoing effort to define Russia as a cultural adversary to the West. Putin claimed at a meeting with representatives of municipalities from 89 Russian federal subjects that many Russian citizens are returning from abroad because they find it difficult to "live and to raise children" with "traditional values" in Western countries.[94] Russian officials routinely portray Russia as upholding "traditional values" and may intensify this rhetoric in the coming months as Putin declared 2024 the "Year of the Family." [95]

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

Belarusian Defense Minister Lieutenant General Viktor Khrenin stated at a Belarusian Security Council meeting on January 16 that Belarus' new draft military doctrine accounts for the use of Russian tactical nuclear weapons stationed in Belarus for the first time.[96] While the specifics of how the new doctrine applies to tactical nuclear weapons are unclear, ISW has observed no indications that Russia or Belarus seeks nuclear escalation and continues to assess that Russian or Belarusian use of nuclear weapons remains unlikely.[97] The inclusion of tactical nuclear weapons usage in Belarus' nuclear doctrine likely reflects Russia's deployment of Russian tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus in 2023.[98]

**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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