

# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, January 7, 2024

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January 7, 2024, 5:45pm 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 2:00pm ET on January 7. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the January 8 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.**

**Russian President Vladimir Putin continued to court Russian servicemen and their families ahead of the March 2024 presidential election during a meeting with family members of deceased Russian servicemen on January 6.** Putin met with family members of Russian servicemen who died in Ukraine at his residence in Novo-Ogaryovo to celebrate Orthodox Christmas.[1] Putin highlighted the heroism of the deceased Russian servicemen who “defend[ed] the interests of [Russia].” Putin repeatedly reiterated the Russian government’s support for the families of Russian servicemen and delegated responsibility for the continuous support of these families to Russian officials at all levels throughout Russia. Putin has recently attended similar events during which he presented himself as a gracious leader who cares about the well-being of Russian military personnel and paraded his power to fulfill servicemen’s requests and deal with issues.[2] Putin is likely using these recurring, publicized meetings as part of his election campaign, as Russian servicemen and their family members comprise a sizable constituency, and their public support for Putin is vital for the Kremlin’s ability to present the Russian population as largely in support of the war in Ukraine.

The Kremlin appears to have chosen the families that attended Putin’s meeting carefully, likely to minimize the risk that they might say or ask inconvenient things.[3] The Kremlin has shown itself to be sensitive to recent public complaints from family members of Russian servicemen and is continuing its efforts to censor these complaints in the public domain.[4] Russian opposition outlet *Agentstvo Novosti* stated on January 7 that the relatives of five deceased Russian servicemen attended the meeting and that many of those relatives themselves have ties to the Russian government and military.[5] *Agentstvo Novosti* stated that attendees included a former Rosgvardia serviceman’s widow, who currently serves as the head of the Committee of Families of Soldiers of the Fatherland in Balashikha and advisor to the head of Balashikha; the widow of a Russian serviceman, who currently works as the head of the Tambov branch of the Kremlin-created Defenders of the Fatherland Foundation; and family members of the former rector of the church at the headquarters of the Russian Strategic Missile Forces, who previously participated in conflicts in Chechnya and Syria and was known

as the “paratroopers’ priest.” *Agentstvo Novosti* stated that all five deceased servicemen whose families attended the meeting posthumously received the Hero of Russia and Order of Courage awards and that two of the children present had also attended an event with Putin on November 4 in Moscow. The Kremlin practice of carefully selecting those who attend public events with Putin and sometimes having the same individuals appear at multiple events seems to be standard Kremlin practice, however.[6] Putin similarly misrepresented a meeting with 18 hand-picked women holding influential positions in the Russian political sphere as an open discussion with mothers of mobilized personnel on November 25, 2022.[7]

**Head of the Kremlin-controlled Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Kirill of Moscow stated that Russia cannot reject Russian citizens who “understand they made a mistake” by fleeing Russia after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine and now want to return home.** Kirill stated during an interview with TASS CEO Andrei Kondrashov on January 7 that it is not necessary to reject “sinners if they repent” and referenced the biblical story of the prodigal son, in which, Kirill observed, a son wrongs his father by demanding his inheritance early to go out into the world, only to return home after squandering his wealth and opportunity.[8] Russian President Vladimir Putin called the trend of Russians returning from abroad “very good” and “very important” during a speech on September 12, 2023.[9] Russian State Duma Chairperson Vyacheslav Volodin had publicly threatened returning Russians in October and November 2023, however, openly contradicting the Kremlin’s position.[10] Kirill’s comment is more in line with the Kremlin’s position and indicates that the Kremlin may be more successfully coordinating its narrative regarding returning Russians ahead of the March 2024 presidential election.[11]

Kirill also emphasized the role of “spiritual strength” and “revival” in Russia’s claimed success in Ukraine, echoing Putin’s January 6 emphasis on the importance of Russian Orthodoxy and Russia’s other “traditional” and “fraternal” faiths (Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism) to Russian society.[12] The Russian government has used the 2016 “Yarovaya Law” to prosecute any religious organizations and churches in Russia, including Protestant and Roman Catholic churches, that are not members of the four “fraternal” faiths.[13] Kirill denied Western reports that the Russian Orthodox Church carries out Russian state policy abroad, despite sending Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban a holiday greeting on January 7.[14] Putin added on January 6 that the Russian government “helps... but does not interfere in the affairs” of the Russian Orthodox Church and claimed that the Russian Orthodox Church “wants to be separate from the state.”[15] ISW has previously reported on the Russian Orthodox Church’s role in solidifying the Kremlin’s control over occupied Ukraine through a systematic campaign of religious persecution against other faith communities and punishing members of the Russian Orthodox Church who do not support Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.[16]

**Two Russian government officials defended migrants’ continued presence in Russia amid ongoing migrant crackdowns, generating heavy milblogger criticism and indicating that the Russian government likely still lacks a unified policy toward migrants in Russia.** Russian Presidential Commissioner for the Protection of Entrepreneurs’ Rights Boris Titov stated on January 7 that Russian fears that migrants are taking Russian jobs are “completely unfounded” and claimed that the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) statistics show that Russian citizens commit many more crimes than migrants.[17] Russian outlet *Kommersant* reported that foreign citizens committed two percent of the total number of crimes in Russia from January to November 2023 citing MVD statistics.[18] Russian milbloggers heavily criticized Titov’s statements, called him out of touch with ordinary Russian life, and accused him of wanting to replace the ethnic

Russian population of Russia with migrants.[19] Another milblogger claimed that unspecified "specific diasporas" control entire sectors of the Russian economy and claimed that many migrants who receive Russian citizenship commit crimes and therefore, are not reflected in the low statistic of crimes committed by foreigners in Russia.[20] Russian milbloggers also attacked the Nizhny Tagil (Sverdlovsk Oblast) Police Department Deputy Head Colonel Taras Bulgakov for claiming that people "made a big deal out of nothing" regarding a December 29 incident wherein two migrant teenagers beat a presumably ethnically Russian child in Nizhny Tagil.[21] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian authorities should send Bulgakov to fight in Ukraine and claimed that migrants pose a counterintelligence threat since Russia's largest tank production factory, Uralvagonzavod, is in Nizhny Tagil.[22]

Titov's statement attempting to dispel fears of migrants' involvement in the Russian economy is likely part of an effort to build Russian public support for continued reliance on migrant labor to offset domestic labor shortages induced by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Russia reportedly faced a domestic labor shortage of about 4.8 million people in 2023, likely including both skilled and unskilled labor.[23] ISW continues to assess that the Russian government is pursuing competing and incoherent efforts to coerce migrants into the Russian military, leverage them to offset Russian labor shortages caused by the war, and restrict them from working in Russia, in part, to appease the xenophobic pro-war Russian ultranationalist community. Titov's statements defending migrants' contributions to the Russian economy likely reflect the view of the parts of the Russian government that seek to sustain the Russian economy through migrant labor. Russian military and security elements - particularly the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), MVD, Rosgvardia, Investigative Committee, and the Federal Security Service (FSB) — appear to be spearheading efforts to coerce migrants into the Russian military. These Russian government organs have consistently conducted raids on migrant communities to issue military summonses to naturalized migrants, recruited migrants from migrant detention facilities, offered Russian citizenship in exchange for military service, and advertised Russian military contract service in Central Asian languages.[24] The MVD has also submitted laws to the Russian government aimed at restricting migrant labor, likely to coerce them into military service.[25]

**Russian forces conducted a series of missile and drone strikes against Ukraine on the night of January 6 to 7.** Ukrainian military sources reported that Russian forces launched 28 Shahed-136/131 drones and three S-300 missiles and that Ukrainian forces destroyed 21 of the Shahed drones over Zaporizhia, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Dnipropetrovsk, Kirovohrad, Vinnytsia, and Cherkasy oblasts.[26] Ukrainian officials reported that Russian S-300 missiles struck a civilian building in Rivne, Donetsk Oblast on the evening of January 6, killing 12 people including five children.[27] US Ambassador to Ukraine Bridget Brink stated that the strike is a reminder of the daily reality of Russian strikes across Ukraine.[28]

**Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat refuted media reports that the Danish Ministry of Defense (MoD) is delaying its first delivery of six F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine for up to six months.**[29] Ihnat stated that there are no official announcements on the Danish MoD's websites that would confirm the claimed delays in F-16 provisions. Ihnat urged Ukrainians to only trust official sources and noted that this is a "sensitive" topic for Ukraine given that Ukrainian pilots are undergoing F-16 training in extremely fast time frames.

### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Russian President Vladimir Putin continued to court Russian servicemen and their families ahead of the March 2024 presidential election during a meeting with family members of deceased Russian servicemen on January 6.**
- **Head of the Kremlin-controlled Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Kirill of Moscow stated that Russia cannot reject Russian citizens who “understand they made a mistake” by fleeing Russia after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine and now want to return home.**
- **Two Russian government officials defended migrants’ continued presence in Russia amid ongoing migrant crackdowns, generating heavy milblogger criticism and indicating that the Russian government likely still lacks a unified policy toward migrants in Russia.**
- **Russian forces conducted a series of missile and drones strikes against Ukraine on the night of January 6 to 7.**
- **Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat refuted media reports that the Danish Ministry of Defense (MoD) is delaying its first delivery of six F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine for up to six months.**
- **Russian forces made confirmed advances west and southwest of Donetsk City amid continued positional engagements along the front.**
- **Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated on January 7 that Russia has pushed back the deadline for the establishment of the new Moscow and Leningrad Military Districts (MMD and LMD) for at least the second time due to weapons and personnel shortages and bureaucratic issues.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree on January 4 that will allow Russia to forcibly grant citizenship to deported Ukrainian children.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of January 7, 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.

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

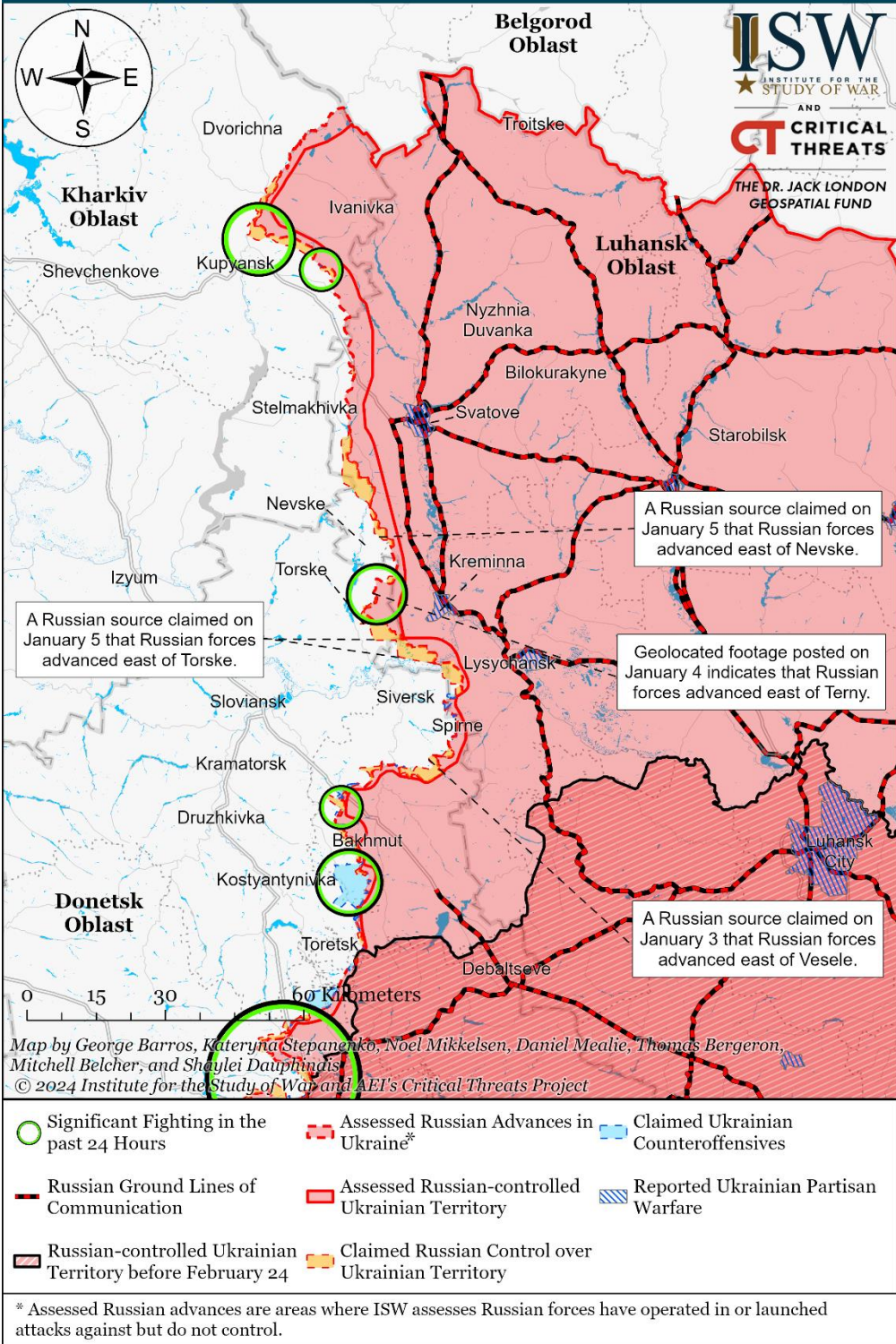
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety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

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

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

Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional engagements along the Kupaynsk-Svatove-Kreminna line on January 7, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional engagements continued northeast and east of Kupyansk near Synkivka, Lake Lyman, Ivanivka, and Petropavlivka and west of Kreminna near Yampolivka and Terny.[30] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces captured several positions near Synkivka and recently made significant advances southwest and west of Kreminna near the Serebryanske forest area, Torske, Terny, and Yampolivka, but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims.[31] Elements of the Russian 1st Guards Tank Army (Western Military District) are reportedly operating in the Kupyansk direction.[32]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of January 7, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

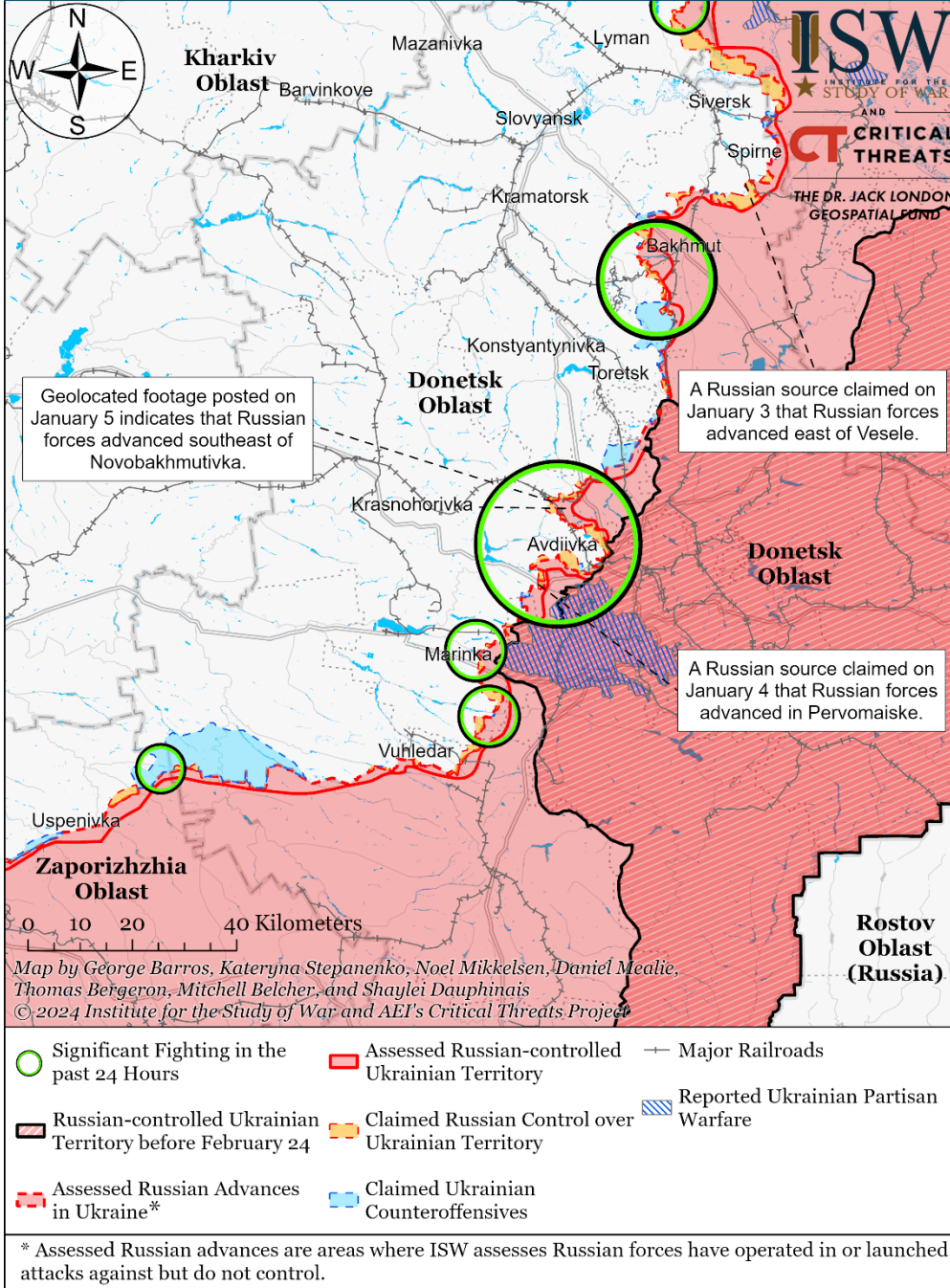
Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional engagements near Bakhmut on January 7, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional engagements occurred north of Bakhmut near Orikhovo-Vasylivka and Bohdanivka; west of Bakhmut near Khromove and in the Chasiv Yar direction; and south of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka and Andriivka.[33] Elements of the Russian 331st Airborne (VDV) Regiment (98th VDV Division) reportedly continue to operate near Bakhmut.[34]

Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional engagements near Avdiivka on January 7, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional fighting continued northwest of Avdiivka near Novobakhmutivka, Stepove, and the Avdiivka Coke Plant and southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske, Nevelske, and Vodyane.[35] Ukrainian Avdiivka City Military Administration Head Vitaliy Barabash reported on January 7 that Russian forces are conducting assault operations from all directions toward Avdiivka for the third consecutive day and that Russian forces conduct “several dozen” air strikes per day near Avdiivka.[36] Elements of the Russian 9th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People’s Republic Army Corps) reportedly continue operating near Avdiivka.[37]

Russian forces recently advanced west and south of Marinka (west of Donetsk City). Geolocated footage published on January 7 indicates that Russian forces marginally advanced in western Marinka and on the southern outskirts of Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City).[38] Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional engagements continued near Marinka, Heorhiivka (west of Marinka), Novomykhailivka, and Pobieda (southwest of Donetsk City).[39] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian and Ukrainian forces have heavily mined the area around Novomykhailivka making it difficult for both Russian and Ukrainian forces to advance.[40] A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are attempting to advance to Heorhiivka in order to achieve the operational goal of capturing Kurakhove (west of Marinka).[41] Elements of the Russian 33rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (20th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) reportedly continue operating near Novomykhailivka.[42]

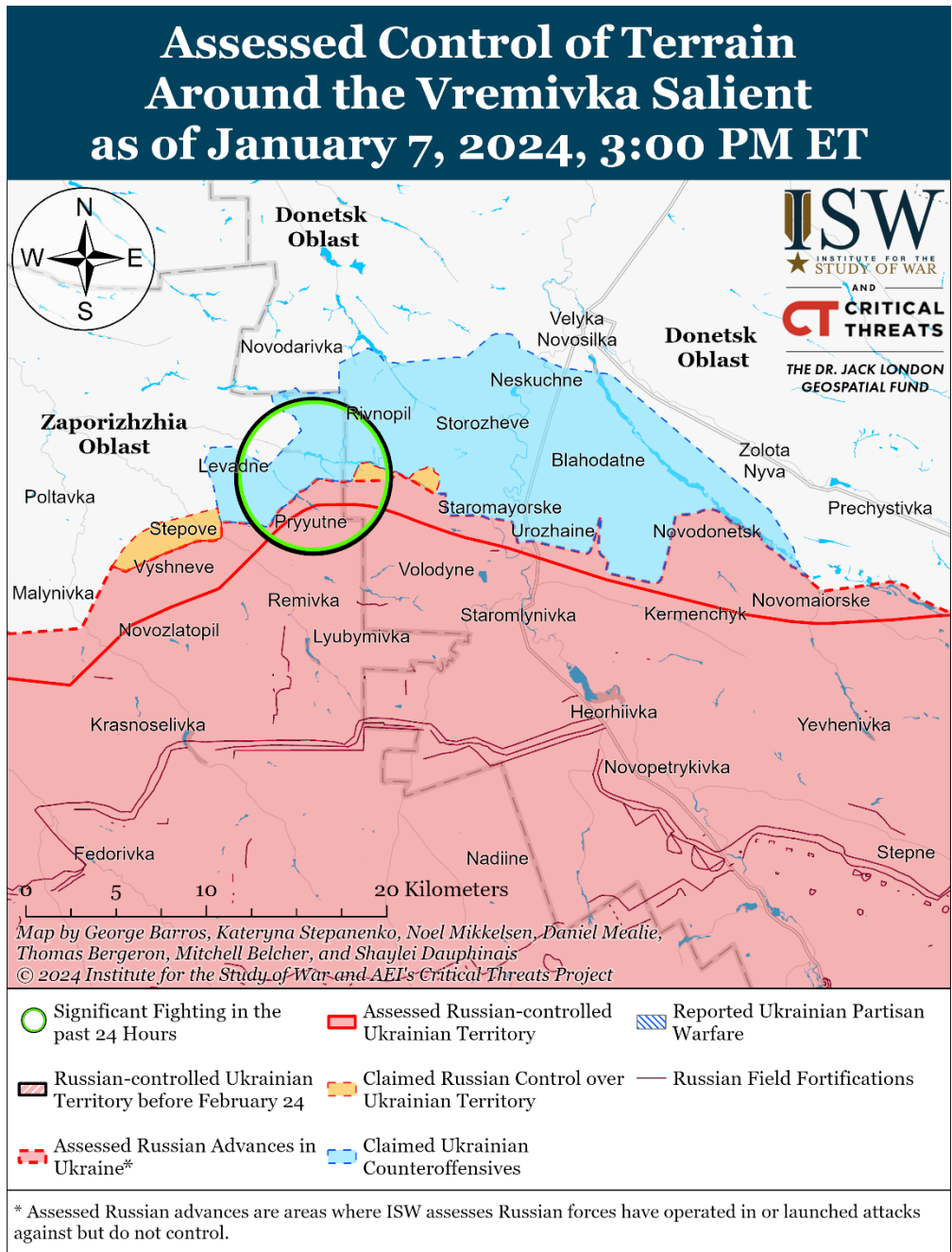


# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of January 7, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



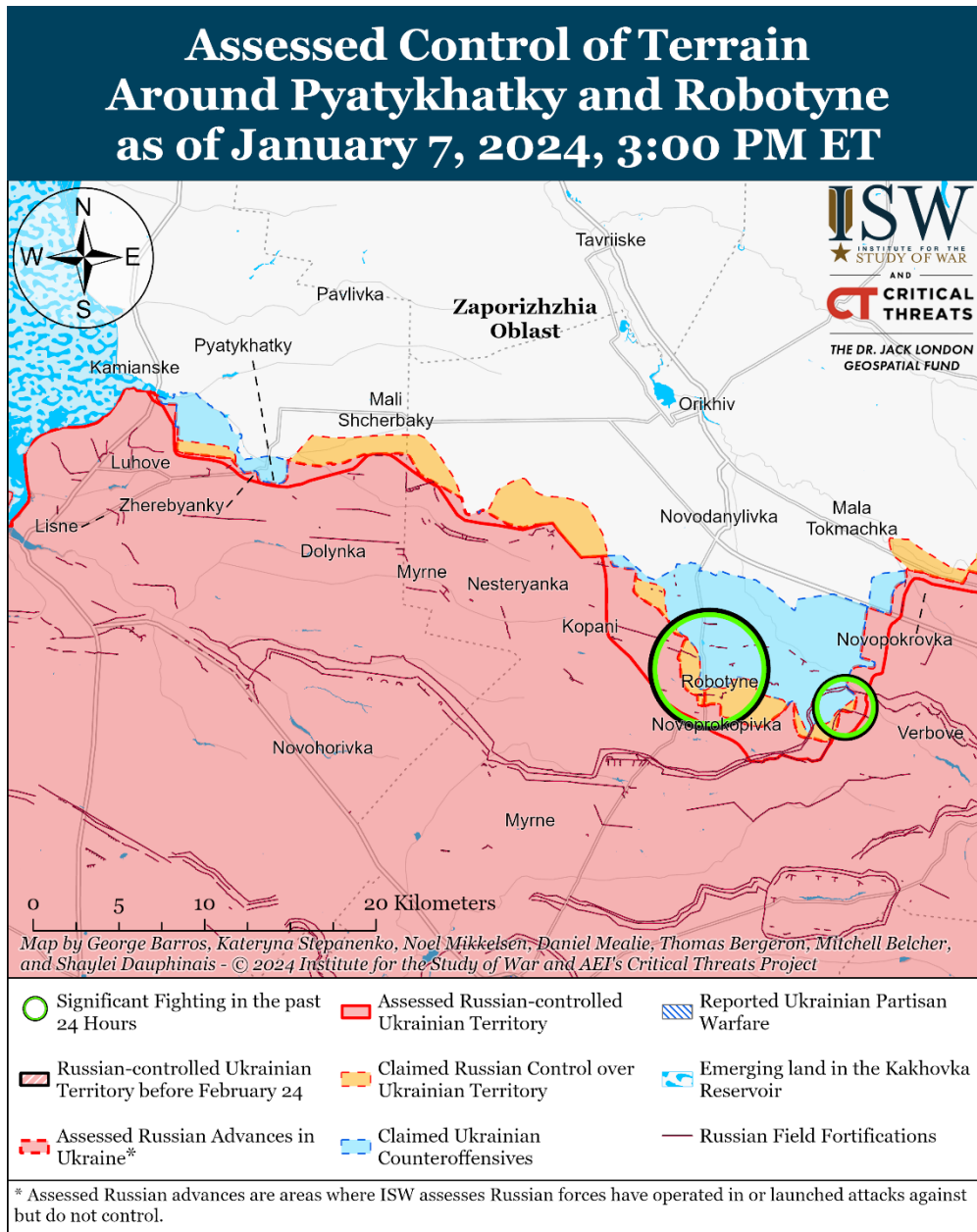
## **Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)**

Limited positional engagements continued in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area and there were no frontline changes on January 7.[43] Russian and Ukrainian forces participated in unspecified positional battles from the Vremivka to the Vuhledar direction near the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area and south of Novodarivka (southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[44] Elements of the Russian 29th Separate Radiation, Chemical, and Biological Protection Brigade (Central Military District) are operating near Urozhaine (south of Velyka Novosilka).[45]

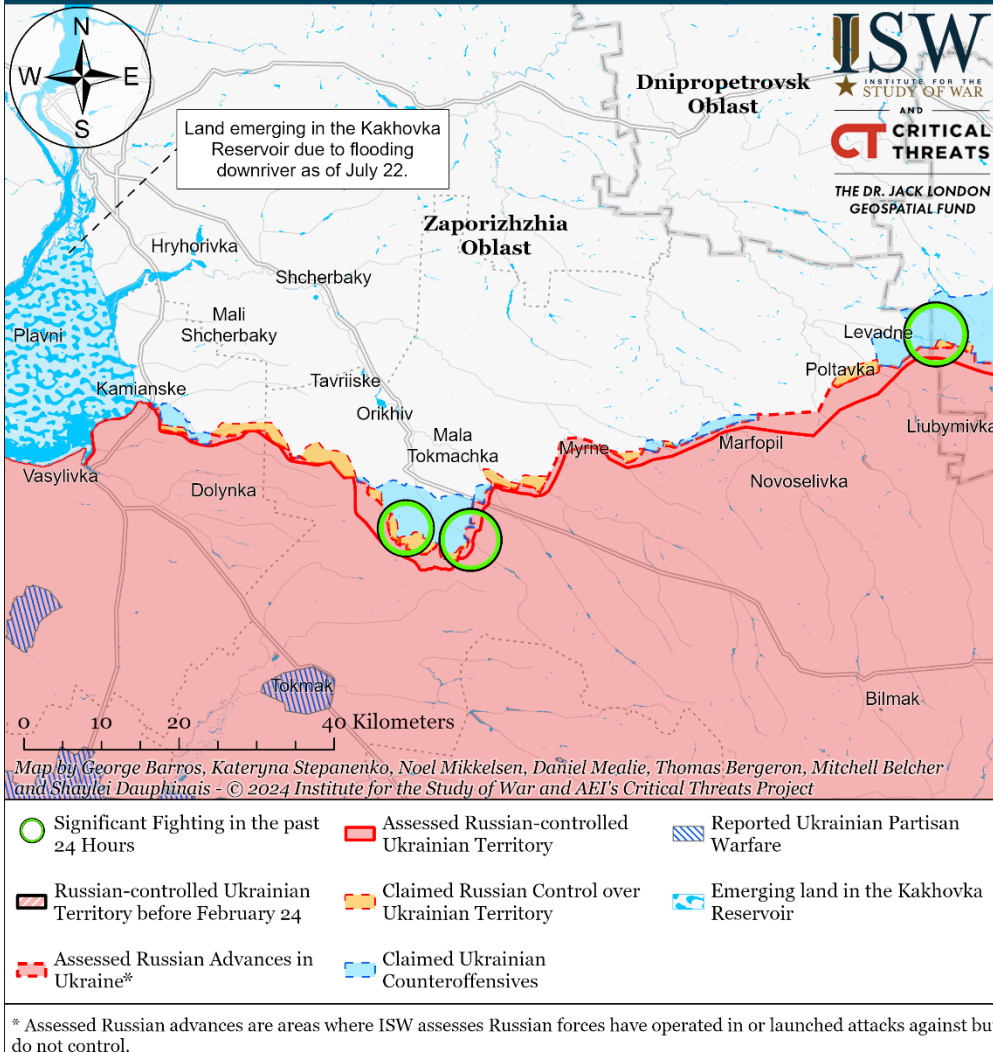


Ukrainian Mariupol Mayoral Advisor Petro Andryushenko reported on January 7 that Ukrainian forces carried out a precision strike on a half-built Russian railway bridge in the Hranitne (23km north of Mariupol) area.[46]

Positional engagements continued in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast near Robotyne on January 7, but there have been no frontline changes in the area. Engagements reportedly continued near Robotyne; west of Verbove (east of Robotyne); and near Novoprokopivka (south of Robotyne).[47] A Russian milblogger claimed that engagements in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast are tactical despite Ukrainian forces' transition to maneuver defense and that Russian forces continue to lack comprehensive support against Ukrainian drones in the area.[48] Irregular elements of the Russian BARS-3 (Combat Army Reserve) "Rodina" Battalion and the "Tsarskiye Volki" Brigade are reportedly operating in the Zaporizhzhia direction.[49]

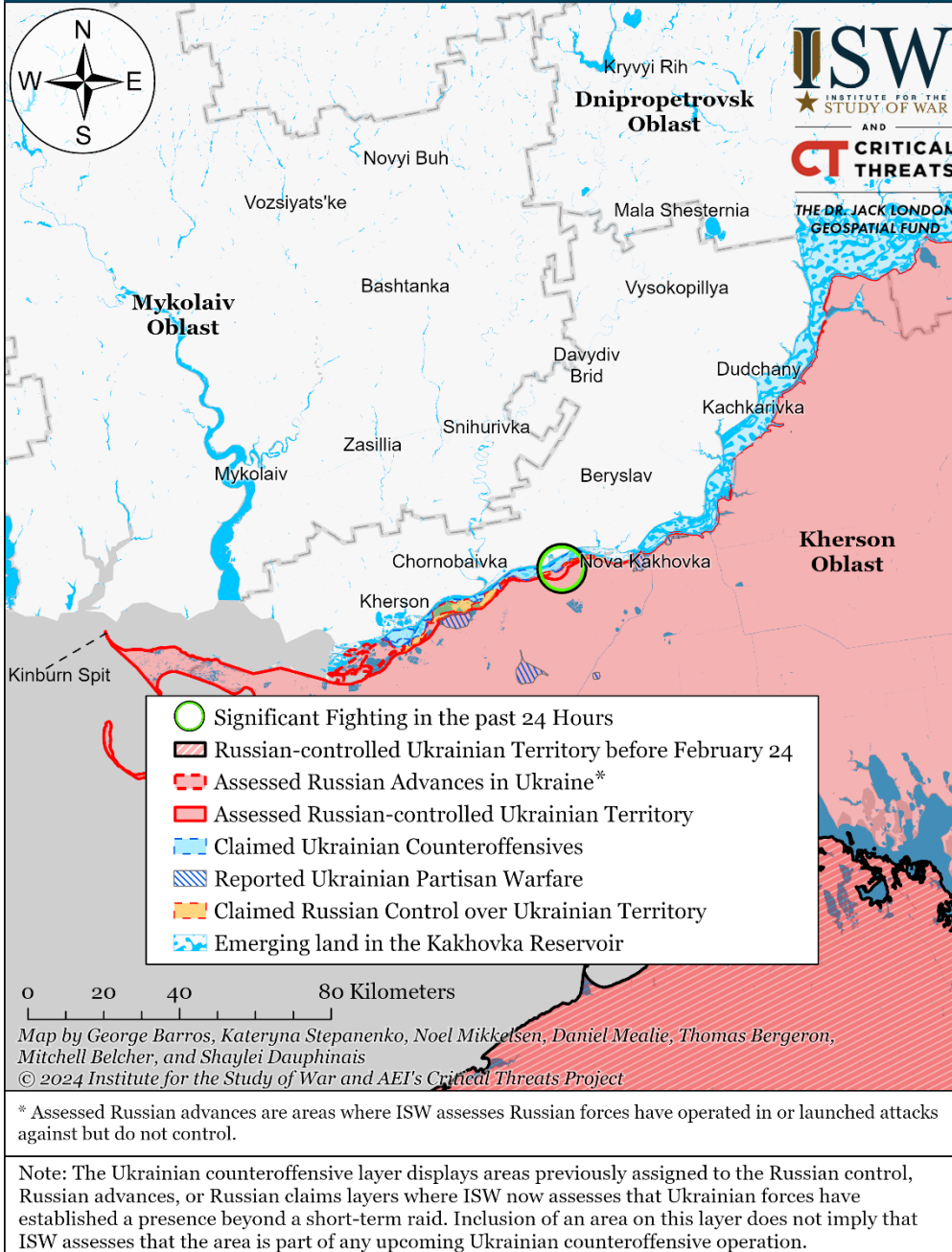


# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of January 7, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Ukrainian forces continued to hold positions in the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast as of January 7, and the frontline has not changed. Positional battles continued near Krynky on the east bank of the Dnipro River.[50] A Russian milblogger claimed that the successful Ukrainian downing of Russian aircraft in December 2023 is impeding Russian use of aircraft in the Kherson direction and added that Russian forces are still facing challenges with the operational flow of information, communications, electronic warfare (EW), and unit cooperation in Krynky and other areas on the east bank.[51] The milblogger similarly observed that Ukrainian forces are actively mining Russian ground lines of communication (GLOCs) in the Kherson direction.[52] Ukrainian servicemen operating in the Krynky area stated that Russian forces regularly attack Ukrainian positions in Krynky with small infantry groups of up to 10 people and cited Ukrainian challenges operating on the east bank, such as the inability to evacuate deceased servicemen in time or the Russian use of drones.[53]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of January 7, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Ukrainian Crimean-based partisan group “Atesh” reported on January 7 that Russian forces are establishing many repair bases in occupied Crimea, likely to offset the heavy losses of Russian military equipment and are likely building a new base north of Yevpatoria (western Crimea).[54]

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

Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated on January 7 that Russia has pushed back the deadline for the reestablishment of the Moscow and Leningrad Military Districts (MMD and LMD) for at least the second time due to weapons and personnel shortages and bureaucratic issues.[55] Mashovets reported that the MMD is forming the 34th Artillery Division, including the 273rd and 303rd Artillery Brigades, 62nd Separate Control Battalion, and 1249th Separate Logistics Battalion; 42nd Control Brigade; 119th Signal Brigade; and is transferring an already-formed unspecified reserve regiment of the 20th Combined Arms Army (CAA) presumably from the Western Military District (WMD). The LMD is forming a motorized rifle regiment and self-propelled artillery regiment of the Soviet-era 68th and 69th Motorized Rifle Divisions; a tank regiment of the 72nd Motorized Rifle Division (44th Army Corps); a separate reserve regiment and separate radio technical regiment of the 6th CAA; 86th Separate Military Cargo Escort Battalion; 1204th Regional Metrology Center; and 620th Brigade of Rescue Ships. ISW cannot independently confirm this report.

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed on January 7 that the Russian Young Army Cadets National Movement (Yunarmia) currently has 1.5 million children and youth members.[56] The Russian MoD claimed that the Yunarmia movement has over 261 training centers throughout Russia and occupied Ukraine, including 79 centers that opened in 2023. ISW previously reported that the Yunarmia movement provides children with military and “patriotic” education and likely represents Russian attempts to invest in long-term force generation.[57]

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

Russian state-owned defense conglomerate Rostec announced on January 6 that Rostec subsidiary Kalashnikov will produce “miniature” reconnaissance drones and tactical strike loitering munitions in 2024.[58]

A Ukrainian military analyst stated on January 6 that he observed Russian forces using drones with machine vision and automatic target acquisition in an unspecified area of the front.[59] The analyst stated that the drone is more accurate, less reliant on a human pilot, and is not affected by electronic warfare (EW) complexes.[60]

## **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 President Vladimir Putin signed a decree on January 4 that will allow Russia to forcibly grant citizenship to deported Ukrainian children. The Ukrainian Ministry of Reintegration argued that Putin’s decree allows children who are foreign citizens and are in a Russian organization for orphans, left without parental care, or under the guardianship of a Russian citizen to receive Russian citizenship by a personal decision of the Russian president, without taking into account the federal law requirements.[61] Russian authorities have notably placed deported Ukrainian children in orphanages in Russia or placed them in Russian foster families, and ISW previously assessed that high-ranking Russian officials may be engaged in a wider scheme of forcibly adopting deported Ukrainian children.[62]

Russia continues to forcibly deport children from occupied Ukraine to Russia under the guise of medical and holiday retreats. Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk met on January 6 with three Ukrainian boys who returned to Ukraine after facing deportation to Russia in May 2022 under the guise of a wellness retreat to a sanatorium in Moscow Oblast.[63] Vereshchuk stated that there was a total of 31 deported Ukrainian children ranging from six to 17 years old in the boys' group and that Ukraine has returned six of the children from the group. The Kherson Oblast occupation administration stated on January 7 that 25 Ukrainian children from occupied Kalanchatskyi raion, Kherson Oblast traveled to the Mordovia Republic over the New Year's holiday following an invitation from the head of the republic.[64]

Kremlin officials continue attempts to integrate occupied Ukraine into Russia as Russian Presidential Administration First Deputy Head Sergei Kiriyenko led a delegation to occupied Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts on January 7. Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) Head Leonid Pasechnik stated on January 7 that he and Kiriyenko presented state awards to residents of occupied Luhansk Oblast and visited a museum in occupied Stanytsia Luhansk and a hospital in Luhansk City.[65] Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Head Denis Pushilin stated on January 7 that he and Kiriyenko visited a church and several Russian military units in occupied Donetsk Oblast.[66]

Russia is reportedly using Rosgvardia units as a military occupation force in Ukraine, as ISW previously assessed. The Ukrainian Resistance Center stated on January 7 that data from the underground movement in occupied Ukraine indicates that there are about 35,000 Rosgvardia personnel in occupied Ukraine.[67] The Ukrainian Resistance Center stated that about half of the Rosgvardia personnel are in regular formations divided into brigades, five battalion-tactical groups (BTGs), and 44 tactical groups and the rest are in more than 100 combined units formed from Rosgvardia's special rapid response and riot police (OMON and SOBR) that are rotated into occupied Ukraine from Russia. ISW previously assessed that the Kremlin is actively attempting to use newly-formed Rosgvardia forces to solidify Russia's control over occupied rear areas, and Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated on December 24, 2023, that the number of Rosgvardia personnel in occupied Ukraine is 34,300 troops.[68]

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

The Kremlin-affiliated Russian Orthodox Church used the occasion of Orthodox Christmas on January 7 to advance Russia's diplomatic interests with Hungary. Head of the Kremlin-controlled Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Kirill of Moscow sent Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban Christmas and New Year holiday greetings on January 7.[69] Russian opposition outlet *SOTA* observed that the Russian Orthodox Church only published Kirill's greetings to Orban and did not indicate whether Kirill sent greetings to other foreign officials.[70]

Russian First Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations Dmitry Polyansky continued the Kremlin narrative that Russia is engaged in an indirect conflict with the West in Ukraine. Polyansky claimed that Ukrainian forces are not planning to march on Moscow because the "Kyiv regime will lose soon," but noted that NATO threatens Russia's existence because the alliance is leading the war against Russia in Ukraine.[71] Polyansky's statements are similar to Russian President Vladimir Putin's January 1 identification of the West as Russia's "enemy" and are likely aimed at setting information conditions aimed at convincing the West to betray Ukraine through negotiations.[72]

A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger spread a narrative that the West is attempting to undermine Russia's influence over Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, possibly indicating concern over Russia's weakening influence in Central Asia as a result of its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The milblogger claimed that the West is trying to influence Kyrgyzstan into not passing the "foreign agents" law that would impose restrictions on foreign organizations in the country – a law likely closely modeled after the Russian "foreign agents" law from 2012.[73] The milblogger claimed that the West previously successfully influenced Georgia into discarding a similar law and completely omitted the fact that both Kyrgyzstan and Georgia are independent countries that are capable of pursuing their own domestic policies outside of Russia's influence. The milblogger also accused Western-educated environmental activists in Kazakhstan of trying to discredit Russian nuclear operator Rosatom to pursue cooperation with French nuclear operators.[74]

### **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)**

Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated on January 7 that Russian forces have an aviation group consisting of 32 combat aircraft and 29 helicopters in Belarus as of January 5.[75] Mashovets stated that Russian forces have five Mi-8/17 helicopters and nine Mi-24/35 helicopters at Machulishchi air base; 10 Su-25K/UBK aircraft at Lida air base; and seven Su-30SM aircraft, eight MiG-29/29S/29UB aircraft, seven Su-25K/UBK, six Mi-24/35 helicopters, and nine Mi-8/17 helicopters at Baranovichi air base.

**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.**



[1] <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/73235> ; <https://meduza.io/news/2024/01/07/putin-vstretit-rozhdestvo-v-novo-ogarevo-s-semyami-pogibshih-voennyh>

[2] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-december-24-2023> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar010224> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar121423>

[3] <https://t.me/agentstvonevs/4860>

[4] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar120323> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar120923> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar120723> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar113023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-november-22-2023> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar100423>



[5] <https://t.me/agentstvoneews/4860>

[6] <https://www.newsweek.com/speculation-swirls-putin-accused-using-same-woman-multiple-photos-1770576> ; <https://t.me/agentstvoneews/1956> ; <https://t.me/agentstvoneews/4860>

[7] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-november-25>

[8] [https://t.me/tass\\_agency/225472](https://t.me/tass_agency/225472) ; <https://meduza dot io/news/2024/01/07/patriarh-kirill-zayavil-chno-rossiya-ne-dolzhna-otvergat-lyudey-uehavshih-iz-strany-posle-nachala-voyny-esli-oni-vozvrashchayutsya-s-osoznaniem-svoey-viny> ; <https://t.me/sotaproject/71955>

[9] <https://tass dot com/politics/1673199>

[10] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar112623> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-11-2023> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar011323>

[11] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-11-2023>

[12] [https://t.me/tass\\_agency/225486](https://t.me/tass_agency/225486) ; <https://tass dot ru/interviews/19670473>

; <http://kremlin dot ru/events/president/news/73235> ; <https://t.me/vrogov/13743> ; <https://meduza dot io/news/2024/01/07/putin-vstretit-rozhdestvo-v-novo-ogarevo-s-semyami-pogibshih-voennyh> ; <https://t.me/sotaproject/71952> ; <https://t.me/sotaproject/71953> ; <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09637490802013198>

[13] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-april-9-2023>

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