

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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January 17, 2024, 8pm ET

Click [here](#) to see ISW's interactive map of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

Click [here](#) to see ISW's 3D control of terrain topographic map of Ukraine. Use of a computer (not a mobile device) is strongly recommended for using this data-heavy tool.

Click [here](#) to access ISW's archive of interactive time-lapse maps of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These maps complement the static control-of-terrain map that ISW produces daily by showing a dynamic frontline. ISW will update this time-lapse map archive monthly.

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 12:30pm ET on January 17. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the January 18 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.

A Ukrainian intelligence official reported that Russian forces lack the necessary operational reserves to conduct simultaneous offensive efforts in more than one direction in Ukraine. Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Deputy Chief Major General Vadym Skibitskyi reported on January 17 that Russia does not have enough reserves to conduct large-scale offensive operations in several directions at the same time.[1] Skibitskyi stated that it is impossible for Russian forces to conduct strategically or operationally significant offensive operations without "powerful" reserves and implied that Russia does not have such reserves.[2] Skibitskyi noted that mobilization measures are ongoing in Russia, likely referring to the current Russian crypto-mobilization campaign that relies heavily on volunteer recruitment and the coercive mobilization of convicts and migrants.[3] It is unclear if Russia's ongoing crypto-mobilization campaign has provided or would be able to provide the increased number of personnel that an intensified Russian offensive effort would require. Skibitskyi reported on January 15 that Russia recruits about 30,000 personnel per month, which the Russian military uses to replenish losses and form reserve regiments, and that Russia would need to conduct "mobilization" (likely referring to another "partial mobilization" like Russia conducted in September 2022 or a large-scale general mobilization) to establish a "powerful strategic reserve." [4] Skibitskyi's statements suggest that although the Russian military is able to generate enough manpower to conduct routine operational-level rotations in Ukraine, Russian forces may not necessarily be able to generate manpower at a rate that would allow Russian forces to quickly re-establish the operational reserves necessary for simultaneous offensive efforts in several directions.[5]

Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev reiterated on January 17 that the elimination of Ukrainian statehood and independence remains one of Russia's core war aims. Medvedev claimed that "the presence of an independent state on historical Russian territories" is a "constant reason for the resumption of hostilities" and that Ukraine's very existence as an independent state is therefore "mortally dangerous" for Ukrainians.[6] Medvedev claimed that an independent Ukraine will never be a legitimate state regardless of who leads the government and that a future conflict for Ukrainian territory is inevitable whether or not it is a new conflict or the continuation of the current Russian war in Ukraine.[7] Medvedev's January 17 statement is one of many recent signals from senior Russian officials, including President Vladimir Putin, that Putin and the Kremlin have no interest in good-faith negotiations with Ukraine and that Putin's maximalist war aims in Ukraine remain unchanged.[8] Medvedev attempted to portray Russia's commitment to these maximalist objectives as unwavering by claiming that Ukrainian accession to the European Union (EU) or NATO will not prevent future conflict.[9] Medvedev notably did not define what he considers to be historical Russian territories, but Putin has defined historical Russian lands as the territory of the former Russian Empire and Soviet Union.[10] Medvedev's opacity may be intentional, as the Kremlin's loosely defined concept of "historical Russian territories" allows the Kremlin to pursue expansionist objectives wherever and whenever it so determines in a broad area including Central Asia, the Caucasus and parts of Eastern Europe.[11] Medvedev's emphasis on the destruction of any Ukrainian state on these "historical Russian territories" could indicate that some actors in the Kremlin prioritize expansionist objectives over the identified objective of regime change under calls for the "de-nazification" of Ukraine.

Russian forces conducted a series of missile and drone strikes largely targeting Odesa and Kharkiv cities on the night of January 16 to 17. The Ukrainian Air Force stated that Russian forces launched two S-300 missiles from

Belgorod Oblast towards Kharkiv City and 20 Shahed-136/-131 drones from Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai and that Ukrainian forces shot down 19 of the drones over Zaporizhia, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Dnipropetrovsk, and Kirovohrad oblasts.[12] Ukraine's Southern Operational Command stated that Russian drones largely targeted Odesa City.[13] Ukrainian officials reported that Russian drones and missiles damaged residential buildings in Odesa and Kharkiv cities.[14]

Ukraine successfully employed a Ukrainian-refurbished hybrid air defense system (FrankenSAM) for the first time. Ukrainian Minister of Strategic Industries Oleksandr Kamyshin stated on January 17 that Ukrainian forces destroyed a Russian Shahed drone with a hybrid air defense system — referring to the so-called FrankenSAM systems that merge advanced Western air defense missiles with modified Soviet launchers or other missile launchers — for the first time.[15] Kamyshin noted that the full development of Ukraine's own air defenses will take years, so Ukraine is creating home-made air defense systems using Soviet components and Western missiles. ISW continues to assess that Western provisions of air defense systems and missiles remain crucial as Ukraine develops its defense industrial base (DIB).[16] Kamyshin also stated that Ukraine has doubled its ammunition production for NATO-caliber artillery systems.[17] Ukraine began domestically producing 155mm shells, which are a NATO-standard used by Western-supplied guns that Ukraine's defense industrial base (DIB) had never produced before, no later than September 2023.[18]

Germany and France announced additional military assistance to Ukraine on January 16. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced on January 16 that Germany will provide Ukraine with military goods worth more than seven billion euros (roughly \$7.62 billion) in 2024.[19] The German government announced that the aid package includes ammunition for Leopard tanks, armored personnel carriers, reconnaissance drones, and Marder infantry fighting vehicles.[20] Germany provided 5.4 billion euros (\$5.89 billion) worth of military assistance to Ukraine in 2023.[21] French President Emmanuel Macron announced on January 16 that he would finalize a bilateral security agreement with Kyiv during a visit to Ukraine in February 2024.[22] Macron also stated that France will send 40 SCALP long-range missiles and “several hundred” unspecified bombs to Ukraine in the coming weeks.

Western officials highlighted Ukraine's battlefield successes at the Davos World Economic Forum on January 16 and 17. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan noted that Ukraine has opened a corridor to export grain in the Black Sea, weakened the Russian Black Sea Fleet (BSF), and liberated more than half of its territory that Russian forces captured since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion.[23] Sullivan also highlighted Ukraine's efforts to develop its own defense industrial base (DIB).[24] US Secretary of State Antony Blinken stated that a ceasefire between Ukraine and Russia is unlikely in the near future — in line with ISW's long-standing assessment that Russia is not interested in engaging in meaningful, good-faith negotiations with Ukraine.[25] Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky met with Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh and Ghanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo and called on them to support Ukraine's peace formula.[26] Zelensky also met with Polish President Andrzej Duda and discussed bilateral relations, the situation on the battlefield in Ukraine, and Ukraine's accession to the European Union (EU).[27]

The Russian ultranationalist community will likely concretize xenophobia and insecurities about Russia's ethnic composition as key shared principles within the community in 2024, as Russian ultranationalists continue to seize on incidents involving migrants and non-ethnic Russian groups to call for anti-migrant policies and express growing hostility towards non-ethnic Russians in Russia. Russian information space actors within the ultranationalist milblogger community have increasingly fixated on singular incidents that implicate migrant communities in acts of violence or resistance in 2023 and have weaponized this rhetoric to call on Russian officials to more widely mobilize migrants to fight in Ukraine, curtail migrants' access to social and economic opportunities, and substantively change Russia's existing migration policies.[28] Russian ultranationalists have also increasingly advocated for ethnic Russians to receive more domestic power in Russia and continue to promote hyper-nationalist ideologies that are generating domestic tensions between ethnic minority communities and ethnic Russians.[29] s may malign the nominal rights to autonomy that many non-ethnic Russian communities have through their respective federal Russian republics and are likely to react harshly to discussions centering on the political, economic, and social concerns of non-ethnic Russians.[30]

The Kremlin's ongoing attempt to court the Russian ultranationalist community will likely generate increasing friction between the Kremlin's desired rhetoric and policies concerning migration and interethnic relations and those of Russian ultranationalists. Russian officials appear to have tolerated or even endorsed ultranationalists' increasing anti-migration rhetoric since it likely generated social pressures that have augmented Russian efforts to coerce migrants into military service in Ukraine.[31] The Kremlin now appears to be struggling to reconcile efforts to increase Russian industrial capacity while also coercing migrants into military service and disincentivizing them from working in Russia.[32] Any efforts to appease Russian ultranationalists will likely only exacerbate inconsistent and contradictory Kremlin policies concerning migrants. Hostility towards non-ethnic Russians in Russia directly contradicts Russian President Vladimir Putin's effort to promote the concept of a wider and ethnically

inclusive “Russian World” (*Ruskiy Mir*) that encompasses non-ethnic Russians in both modern Russia and the former territory of the Soviet Union and Russian Empire.[33] The Kremlin continues to rely on the ultranationalist community in its effort to solidify pro-war sentiments, hyper-nationalism, Russian orthodoxy, and “traditional” social values as core tenets of the Russian state.[34] The Kremlin will likely struggle to balance these parallel efforts as Russian ultranationalists display increasing animus to non-ethnic Russians in Russia and in neighboring countries.

Significant protests erupted in Baymak, Bashkortostan Republic, following a Russian court’s guilty verdict for a prominent Bashkort activist, prompting a swift Russian government response as well as backlash from the Russian ultranationalist community. Bashkortostan’s Baymaksy Court found prominent Bashkort activist Fail Alsynov guilty on January 11 of inciting ethnic hatred and sentenced him to four years in prison, which the court announced publicly on January 17 following a closed-door trial.[35] Alsynov allegedly gave a speech on April 28, 2023, that insulted ethnic groups from the Caucasus.[36] Hundreds of Alsynov’s supporters had gathered at the courthouse ahead of his January 17 verdict announcement, and protests involving hundreds to thousands of supporters lasted for hours following the verdict. Some Russian opposition sources reported that 2,000-5,000 people protested in support of Alsynov and that responding Russian authorities detained anywhere from five to several dozen protestors.[37] The reported scale of the Baymak protest appears comparable to if not larger than that of the antisemitic riots in Dagestan in October 2023.[38] Footage shows Russian riot police using tear gas and stun grenades to dispel the protestors, two of whom Russian police beat with batons and 20-40 of whom sought medical attention following the protests.[39] Russian law enforcement reportedly detained around 20-40 protestors, and Alsynov’s supporters negotiated with Russian law enforcement to cease protests for the day in exchange for the release of the detained protestors.[40] The protests have dispersed as of this publication, though it is unclear whether activists are planning for further protests on subsequent days. Hundreds to thousands of activists gathered outside the Baymaksy Court in the days leading up to the public announcement of Alsynov’s sentence, suggesting that the size of the protests on January 17 was not necessarily spontaneous.[41]

Russian authorities appear to be better equipped to handle the Bashkortostan protests than the October 2023 Dagestan protests. The Russian Investigative Committee announced on January 17 that it is opening a criminal investigation into the protest for the organization of and participation in “mass riots” and for the use of violence against authorities.[42] Multiple Telegram channels that the Bashkort activists reportedly used to coordinate and spread news of the protest became temporarily unavailable on January 17, a possible Russian government censorship attempt to limit the protest from growing or spreading.[43] The Russian ultranationalist community latched onto the Bashkortostan protest in anger despite the swift government response. Some criticized Alsynov’s supporters as “extremists” and “wolves in sheep’s clothing” who only aim to separate Bashkortostan from Russia.[44] Others amplified footage of military personnel in Bashkortostan’s “Minigali Shaimuratov” Battalion disavowing the protesters and Alsynov as “traitors,” “extremists,” and “separatists.”[45] The Russian government and Bashkort military personnel’s swift response suggest that the Russian government may intensify efforts to ensure that non-ethnic Russian communities support the war in Ukraine. Russian sources’ characterization of the protesters as “separatists” organized by outside forces suggests that Russian ultranationalists will continue to label any notable unrest from non-ethnic Russians as a hybrid warfare attack against Russia.[46]

Widespread Russian milblogger complaints about an Uzbek community leader in Russia prompted the Russian Investigative Committee to open a criminal investigation, suggesting that the Russian government may feel increasing pressure to respond to milblogger demands as the ultranationalist information space coalesces around xenophobic and anti-migrant ideals. The Russian Investigative Committee announced on January 17 that it opened a criminal investigation into Interregional Uzbek Community “Vatandosh” President Usman Baratov for a social media post allegedly “insulting the participants of the special military operation” after unspecified Russian military correspondents appealed to Investigative Committee Head Alexander Bastrykin.[47] Russian ultranationalist milbloggers widely criticized Baratov’s social media posts and called for Baratov to leave Russia.[48] The Investigative Committee’s swift response to milbloggers’ requests may prompt them to make future demands of the Russian government. The Investigative Committee’s prompt announcement also suggests that the Russian government is monitoring and potentially responding to demands of the Russian ultranationalist community — a subsection of the Russian information space that it routinely attempts to cultivate and co-opt to advance government narratives. Russian milbloggers also widely criticized an allegedly naturalized Russian citizen of Azeri ethnicity against whom the Investigative Committee opened a case for “attempted murder and incitement of hatred based on ethnicity” on January 17.[49] Russian milbloggers increasingly fixate on crimes that non-ethnic Russians reportedly commit, and some milbloggers have claimed that unspecified non-ethnic Russian diasporas control entire sectors of the Russian economy.[50] The Russian ultranationalist community’s framing of non-ethnic Russian diaspora communities as an internal threat to Russian security and economic interests are irreconcilable with the Kremlin’s portrayal of Russia as a harmonious multiethnic society. The Russian ultranationalist community may increasingly pressure the Russian government to take actions against migrant and non-ethnic Russian diaspora communities, which may exacerbate the fracture between the ultranationalist community and the government.

The Russian military command continues to convict Russian officers in cases associated with Ukrainian strikes as part of a likely effort to improve discipline across the Russian military. Moscow’s Second Western District Military Court sentenced the former head of Rosgvardia’s maritime department, Colonel Sergei Volkov, to six years in prison on January 16 for allegedly supplying low-quality radar systems to protect the Kerch Strait Bridge in occupied Crimea and a gas pipeline from Krasnodar Krai to occupied Crimea from Ukrainian drone strikes.[51] The court found Volkov guilty of “abuse of office with grave consequences” for his participation in a 400 million ruble (\$4.5 million) corruption scheme involving the acquisition of two radar systems that Volkov reportedly knew could not properly defend against Ukrainian drones.[52] The Second Western District Military Court convicted two Russian air defense officers on December 6, 2023, for negligence in failing to prevent a Ukrainian strike on Russian territory.[53] Russian authorities also previously detained the commander of the 1st Special Purpose Air and Missile Defense Army on corruption and bribery charges, likely for failing to prevent drone strikes against Moscow City in July and August 2023.[54] The Russian military command likely intends to set a precedent across the Russian military concerning possible punishment for failures to defend against Ukrainian strikes — particularly strikes against high-value targets — regardless of whether the cases explicitly allege that these officers violated Russian rules of combat duty or tangentially associate the officers’ dereliction of duties with corruption schemes.[55] The Russian command likely hopes that these precedents will improve discipline writ large among Russian forces in Ukraine, although ISW has not observed such an effect.

The Kremlin continues efforts to expand Russia’s influence in Africa through the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and the MoD-controlled Africa Corps. The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported that the Russian military is forming squads of “military instructors” to deploy to African countries, likely referring to the Africa Corps, and that Russia is recruiting these squads in Russia and occupied Ukraine, particularly in Crimea.[56] ISW previously reported that the Africa Corps aims to subsume the Wagner Group’s operations in Africa after the Russian MoD failed to directly recruit former Wagner personnel.[57] Russian officials have routinely referred to Wagner personnel operating in Africa as “military instructors” and “advisors” since 2018 despite Wagner’s combat roles in the Central African Republic (CAR) and Mali.[58] The GUR reported that Russia is particularly focused on recruiting Russian reservists who specialized in maintaining air defense systems, former sailors, and other specialists and that Russian reservists are attracted to this opportunity due to high salaries and the hope of avoiding fighting in Ukraine.[59] ISW has previously observed the Africa Corps advertising “high salaries” beginning at 110,000 rubles (\$1,240) but stipulating that interested applicants who are currently fighting in the war in Ukraine cannot transfer to serve in the Africa Corps.[60] The Russian MoD announced on January 17 that Russian Deputy Defense Ministers Colonel General Alexander Fomin and Colonel General Yunus-Bek Yevkurov met with Nigerien National Defense Minister Major General Salifou Modi to discuss bilateral military and military-technical cooperation.[61] ISW previously assessed that the Kremlin is likely attempting to expand the Africa Corps’ operations in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali.[62]

The threat of US secondary sanctions is reportedly having a large-scale effect on Turkish–Russian financial ties. Russian outlet *Kommersant* stated on January 17 that Turkish banks have “universally” begun to refuse to work with Russian banks.[63] *Kommersant* reported that sources indicated that Turkish banks’ fear of secondary sanctions sharply increased after the United States authorized secondary sanctions on financial institutions on December 22, 2023, that facilitate Russian sanctions evasion and support the Russian war effort in Ukraine. *Bloomberg* reported on January 16 that at least two state-owned Chinese banks ordered reviews of their business with Russian clients and will sever ties with sanctioned Russian entities and entities tied to the Russian defense industry following the US’ December 2022 secondary sanctions authorization.[64]

The Russian government likely continues efforts to gain access to data on Russian citizens. Kremlin newswire *TASS* stated on January 17 that a Moscow court fined Amazon Cloud Services more than 200 million rubles (about \$2,256,400) for not having a representative office in Russia.[65] Russian law stipulates that Russian authorities can fine entities that operate in Russia without opening a branch or representative office in Russia a penalty amounting to one-fifteenth to one-tenth of their total revenue for the year. Russia previously fined Google for a similar law that requires foreign internet-based services to localize databases of Russian users as of July 1, 2021.[66] Russia also previously fined Yandex for failing to adhere to Russian laws regarding the disclosure of users’ personal data to the Russian government.[67]

Key Takeaways:

- **A Ukrainian intelligence official reported that Russian forces lack the necessary operational reserves to conduct simultaneous offensive efforts in more than one direction in Ukraine.**
- **Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev reiterated on January 17 that the elimination of Ukrainian statehood and independence remains one of Russia’s core war aims.**
- **Ukraine successfully employed a Ukrainian-refurbished hybrid air defense system (FrankenSAM) for the first time.**

- **Germany and France announced additional military assistance to Ukraine on January 16.**
- **The Russian ultranationalist community will likely concretize xenophobia and insecurities about Russia's ethnic composition as key shared principles within the community in 2024, as Russian ultranationalists continue to seize on incidents involving migrants and non-ethnic Russian groups to call for anti-migrant policies and express growing hostility towards non-ethnic Russians in Russia.**
- **The Kremlin's ongoing attempt to court the Russian ultranationalist community will likely generate increasing friction between the Kremlin's desired rhetoric and policies concerning migration and interethnic relations and those of Russian ultranationalists.**
- **Significant protests erupted in Baymak, Bashkortostan Republic, following a Russian court's guilty verdict for a prominent Bashkort activist, prompting a swift Russian government response as well as backlash from the Russian ultranationalist community.**
- **Widespread Russian milblogger complaints about an Uzbek community leader in Russia prompted the Russian Investigative Committee to open a criminal investigation, suggesting that the Russian government may feel increasing pressure to respond to milblogger demands as the ultranationalist information space coalesces around xenophobic and anti-migrant ideals.**
- **The Russian military command continues to convict Russian officers in cases associated with Ukrainian strikes as part of a likely effort to improve discipline across the Russian military.**
- **The Kremlin continues efforts to expand Russia's influence in Africa through the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and the MoD-controlled Africa Corps.**
- **The threat of US secondary sanctions is reportedly having a large-scale effect on Turkish-Russian financial ties.**
- **Positional engagements continued along the entire line of contact on January 17.**
- **Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence (GUR) Representative Andriy Yusov confirmed that Russian authorities are increasing the size of the Rosgvardia contingent in occupied Ukraine to strengthen occupational control.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of January 17, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, and Shaylei Dauphinais
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* 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
- Ukrainian Defense Industrial Base Efforts
- Activities in Russian-Occupied Areas
- Russian Information Operations and Narratives
- Significant Activity in Belarus

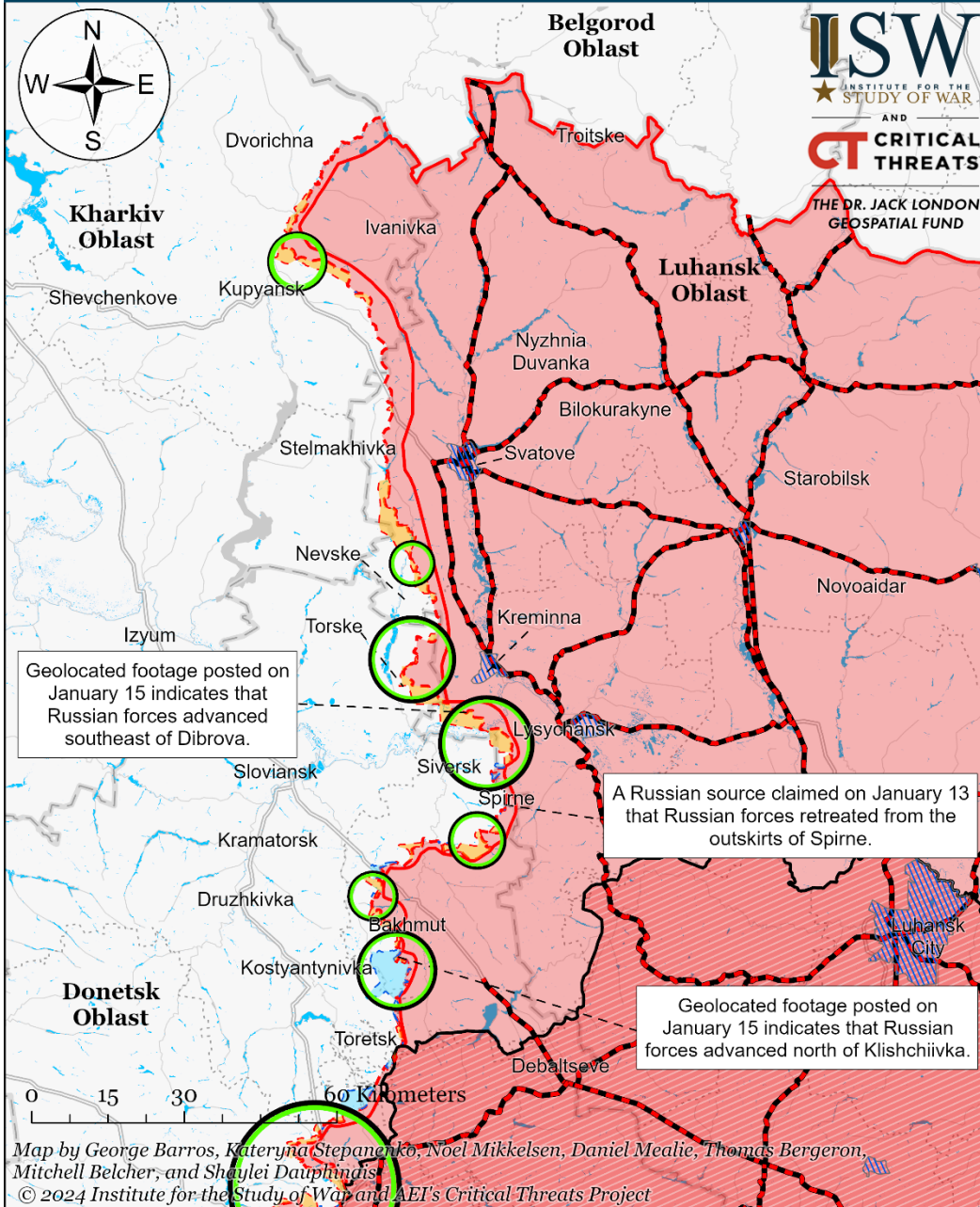
Russian Main Effort — Eastern Ukraine

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 reportedly advanced south of Kreminna amid continued positional fighting along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on January 17. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces captured unspecified positions east of Bilohorivka in Luhansk Oblast (south of Kreminna) and advanced west of Kreminna near Makiivka, although ISW has not observed visual evidence of these claims.[68] Positional fighting continued northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka and Petropavlivka; northwest of Kreminna near Ploshchanka and Makiivka; west of Kreminna near Terny, Yampolivka, and Torske; southwest of Kreminna near Dibrova, north of Hryhorivka, and near the Serebryanske forest area; and south of Kreminna near Bilohorivka (12km south of Kreminna).[69] Elements of the Russian 1st Guards Tank Army (Western Military District) reportedly continue to operate in the Kupyansk direction, and elements of the Russian 7th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People's Republic [LNR] Army Corps) reportedly continue to operate near Bilohorivka.[70]

Ukrainian officials continue to suggest that Russian forces are preparing to renew offensive actions in the Kupyansk and Lyman directions, likely in late January or early February 2024. Ukrainian Ground Forces Command Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Volodymyr Fityo reported on January 17 that Russian forces are currently shifting their offensive efforts from the Kupyansk direction to the Lyman direction.[71] Ukrainian Kharkiv Oblast Military Administration Head Oleh Synhubov stated that Russian attacks in the Kupyansk direction have decreased in the past three weeks to two to five attacks per day.[72] Synhubov stated that Ukrainian forces are expecting renewed Russian assaults in the Kupyansk direction as soon as consistent sub-zero temperatures freeze the fields and soil in the area.[73] Current weather forecasts suggest that the temperature in Luhansk Oblast will hover at or below consistent temperatures cold enough to freeze the ground in late January 2024, suggesting that Russian forces could renew assaults with ground conducive to maneuver in late January or early February 2024.[74]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of January 17, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, and Shaylei Dauphinais
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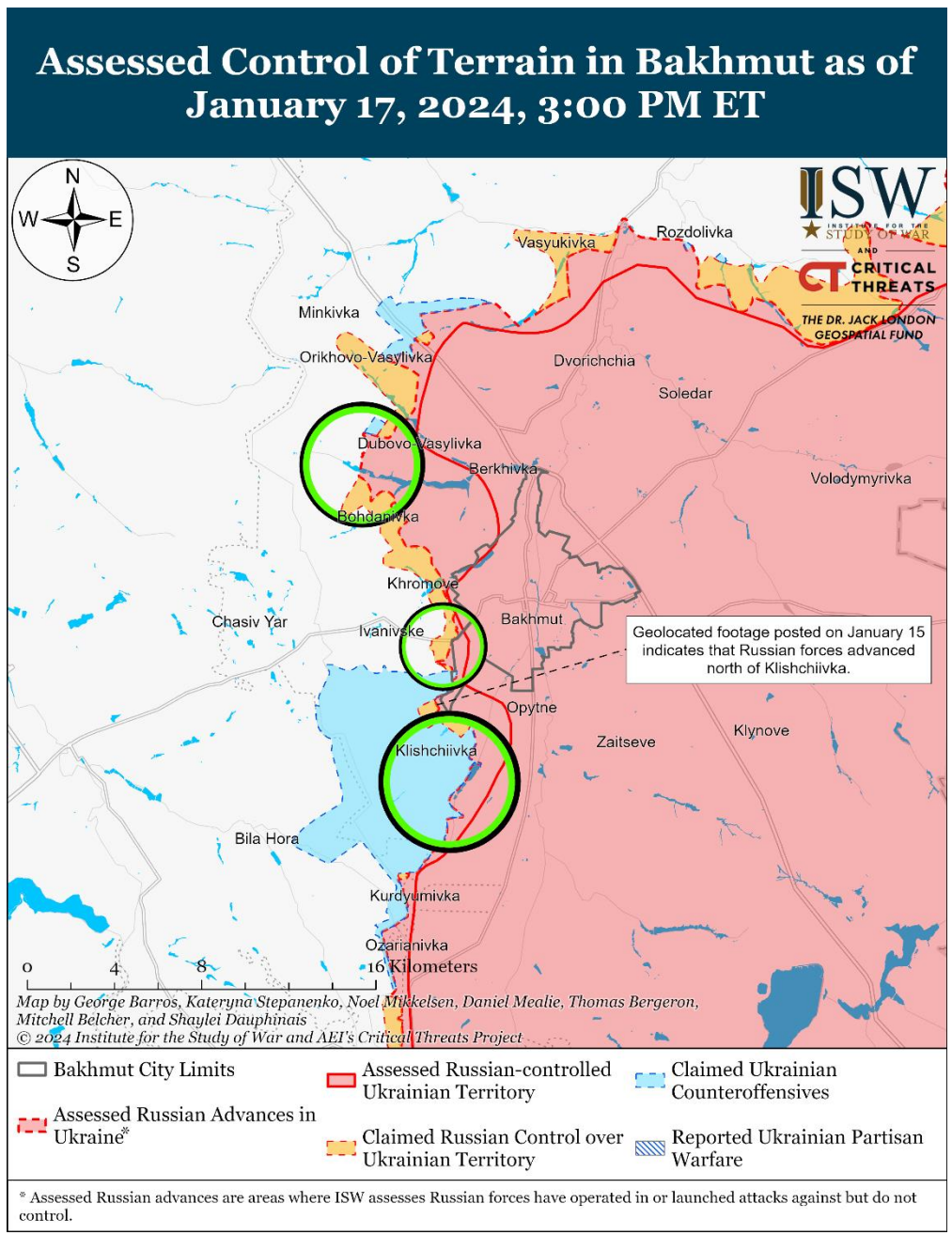
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- - - Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- - - Russian Ground Lines of Communication
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- ▨ Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory

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

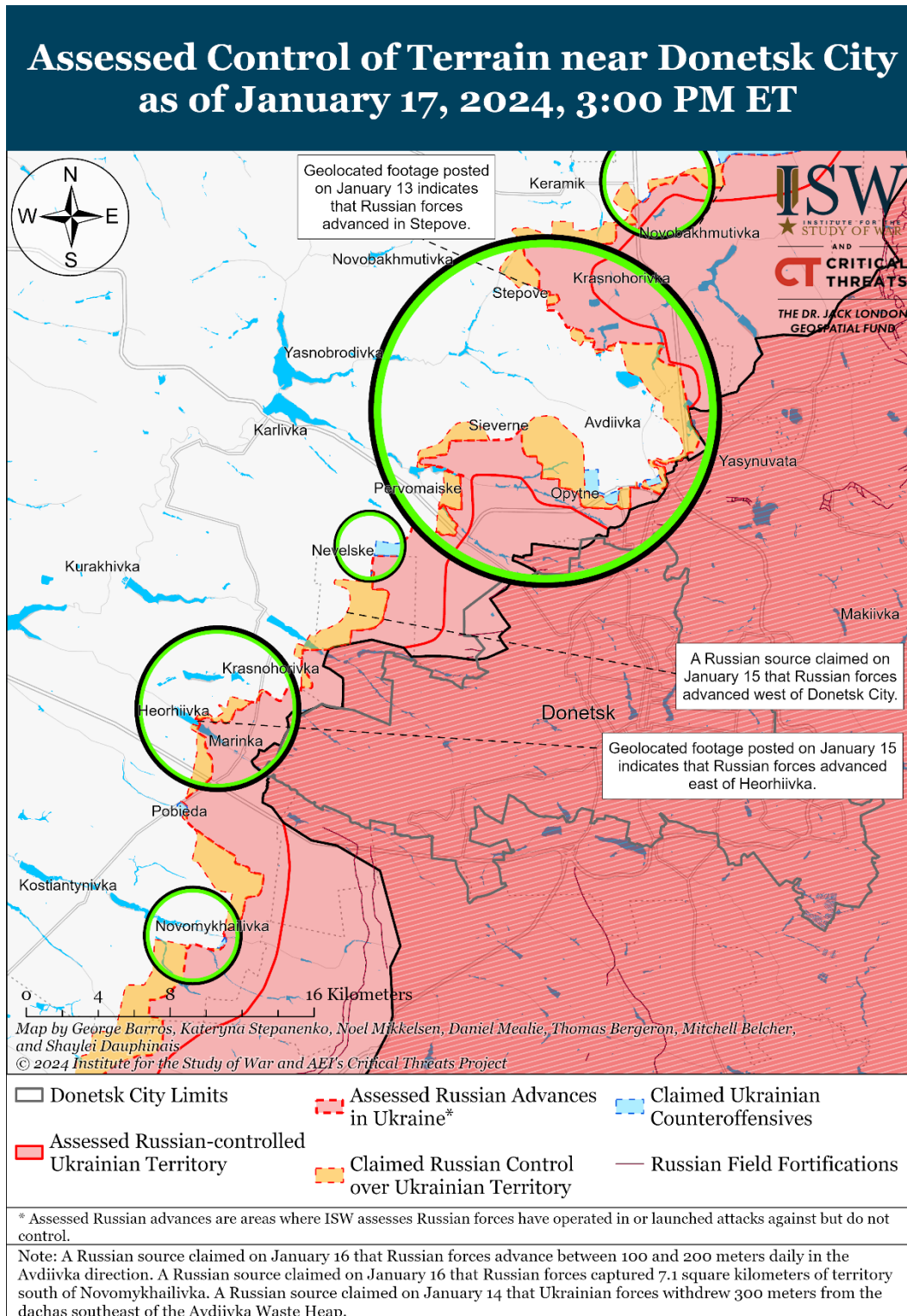
Note: A Russian source claimed on January 16 that Russian forces advanced up to 1.7 kilometers along a 2.2-kilometers-wide front near Makiivka, citing unspecified Ukrainian sources.

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

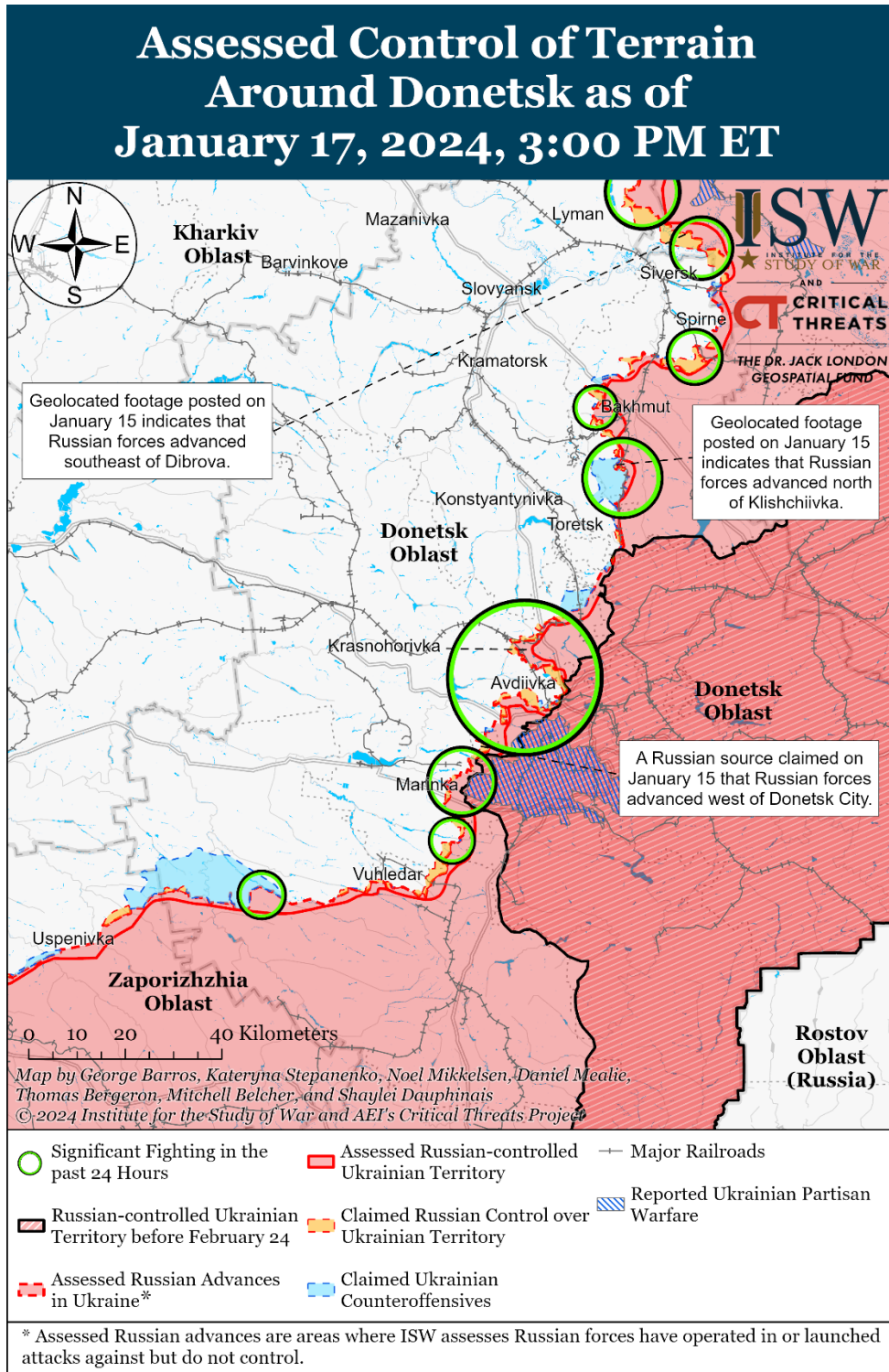
Positional engagements continued near Bakhmut on January 17, but there were no confirmed changes to the front in this area. Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional engagements continued northeast of Bakhmut near Vesele, Bilohorivka (21km northeast of Bakhmut), and Spirne; north of Bakhmut near Rozdolivka; northwest of Bakhmut near Hryhorivka, and Bohdanivka; west of Bakhmut near Khromove and Ivanivske; and southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka and Andriivka.[75] A Russian milblogger claimed that the rate of Russian advance in the Bakhmut direction has slowed after Russian forces made “significant” advances in the previous 1.5 months.[76] ISW has not observed Russian forces make operationally or tactically significant advances in the Bakhmut direction since the start of localized Russian offensive operations in the area in early November 2023.[77] Elements of the Russian 98th Airborne (VDV) Division reportedly continue to operate northwest of Bakhmut, and elements of the 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade (Northern Fleet) reportedly continue to operate in the Bakhmut direction.[78] Elements of the Russian “Sever-V” Volunteer Brigade (Russian Volunteer Corps) reportedly continue to operate near Bohdanivka, and elements of the Russian “Nevsky” Detachment are reportedly operating in the Soledar direction as part of the Russian Volunteer Corps.[79]



Positional engagements continued near Avdiivka on January 17, but there were no confirmed changes to the front in this area. Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional engagements continued northwest of Avdiivka near Novokalynove, Novobakhmutivka, and Stepove; near the Avdiivka Coke Plant in northwestern Avdiivka; northeast of Avdiivka near Kamianka; and southwest of Avdiivka near Sieverne, Pervomaiske, and Nevelske.[80] A Russian milblogger claimed that the Russian rate of advance near the water treatment facilities close to the Avdiivka Coke Plant is about 100 to 200 meters per day.[81] Ukrainian Donetsk Oblast Military Administration head Vadym Filashkin stated that Russian forces have dropped 250 glide bombs on Avdiivka since the beginning of 2024, compared to 149 glide bombs in all of 2023.[82] Elements of the Russian 110th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] Army Corps) are reportedly operating near Avdiivka.[83]

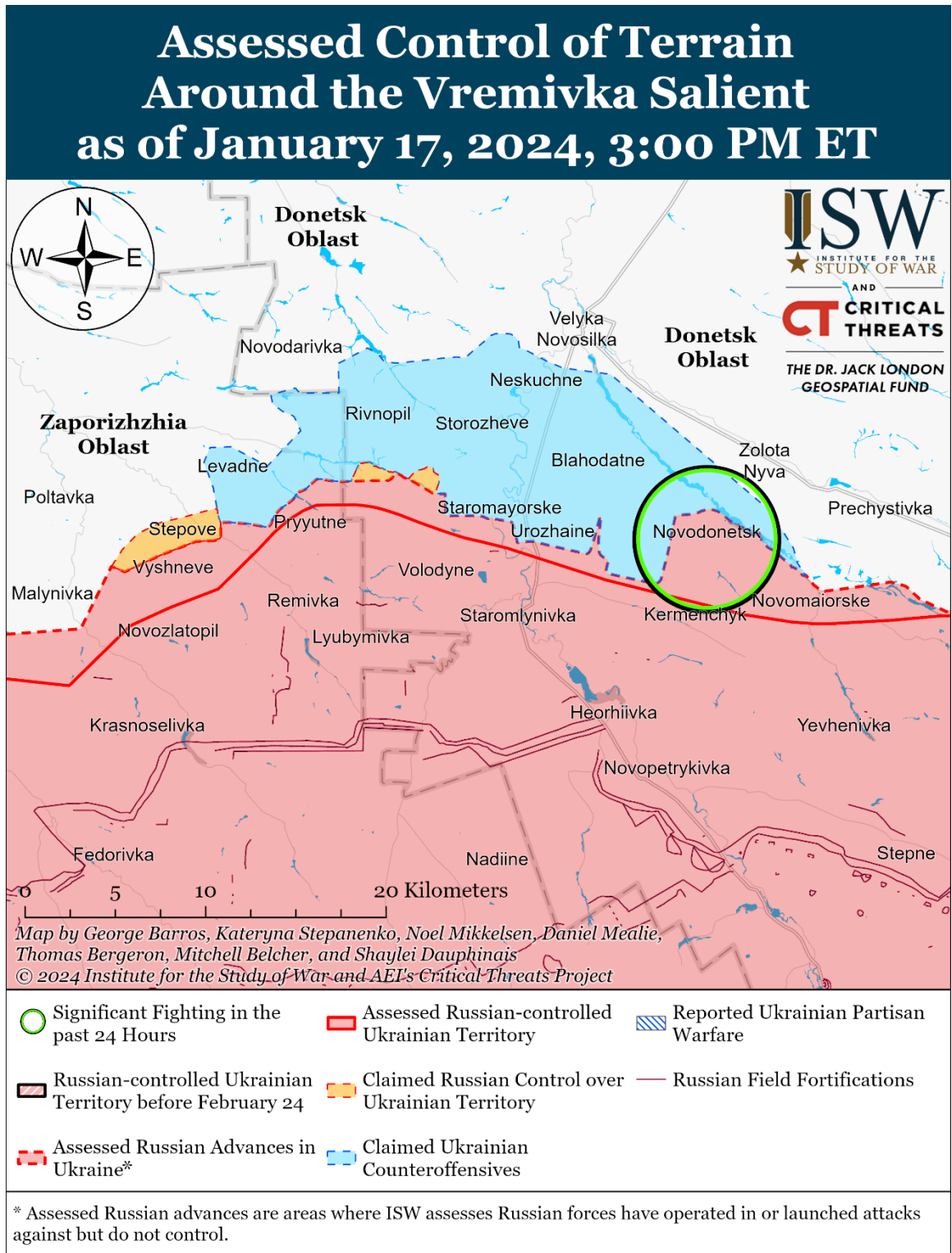


Russian forces reportedly advanced west and southwest of Donetsk City, but there were no confirmed changes to the front in this area on January 17. Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional engagements continued west of Donetsk City near Krasnohorivka and Marinka and southwest of Donetsk City near Heorhiivka and Novomykhailivka.[84] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced northwest and west of Marinka.[85] Milbloggers also claimed that Russian forces advanced south of Novomykhailivka, with some milbloggers claiming on January 16 that alleged Ukrainian sources stated that Russian forces advanced more than seven kilometers south of Novomykhailivka in the previous day.[86] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces have shifted the direction of their attacks south of Novomykhailivka and are attempting to reach the O0532 (Marinka-Kostyantynivka-Vuhledar) highway.[87] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian drone and artillery activity is complicating Russian logistics and that Ukrainian mines are limiting Russian vehicle movement.[88]



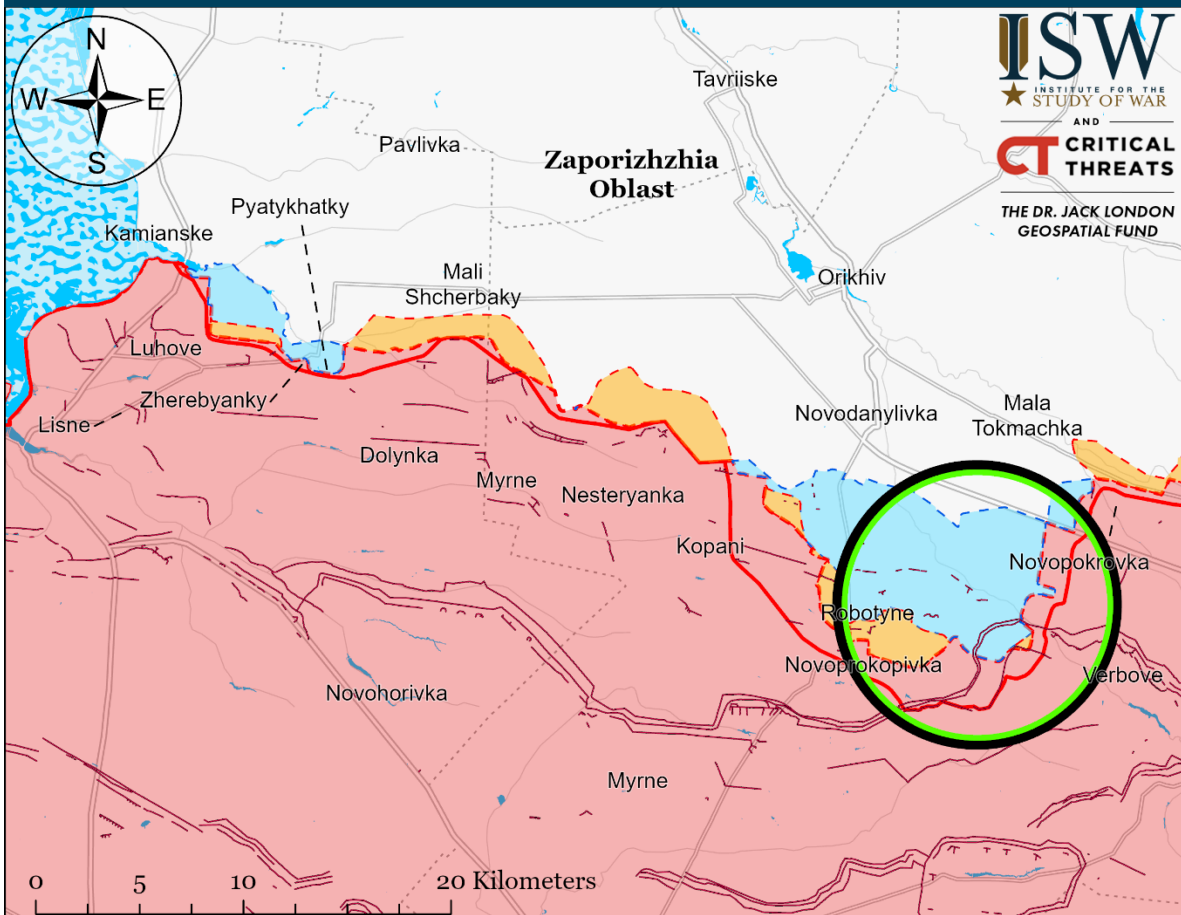
Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Positional engagements continued in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area on January 17, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Positional engagements continued south of Vuhledar, north of Novodonetske (both east of Velyka Novosilka), west of Staromlynivka, and near Urozhaine (both south of Velyka Novosilka).[89] Elements of the Russian 34th Motorized Rifle Brigade (49th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) and 394th Motorized Rifle Regiment (127th Motorized Rifle Division, 5th CAA, Eastern Military District) reportedly continue operating in the Velyka Novosilka area and near Staromayorske, respectively.[90]



Positional engagements continued in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on January 17, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. A prominent Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced up to 500 meters and recaptured previously lost positions west of Verbove (east of Robotyne), although ISW has not observed visual evidence confirming this claim.[91] Positional engagements continued near Pyatykhatky (27km northwest of Robotyne), Kopani (northwest of Robotyne), Robotyne, Verbove, and Novoprokopivka (south of Robotyne).[92] Elements of the Russian 429th Motorized Rifle Regiment (19th Motorized Rifle Division, 58th CAA, SMD) and 136th Motorized Rifle Brigade (58th CAA, SMD) reportedly continue to operate in the Zaporizhzhia direction and along the Robotyne-Kopani line, respectively.[93]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of January 17, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



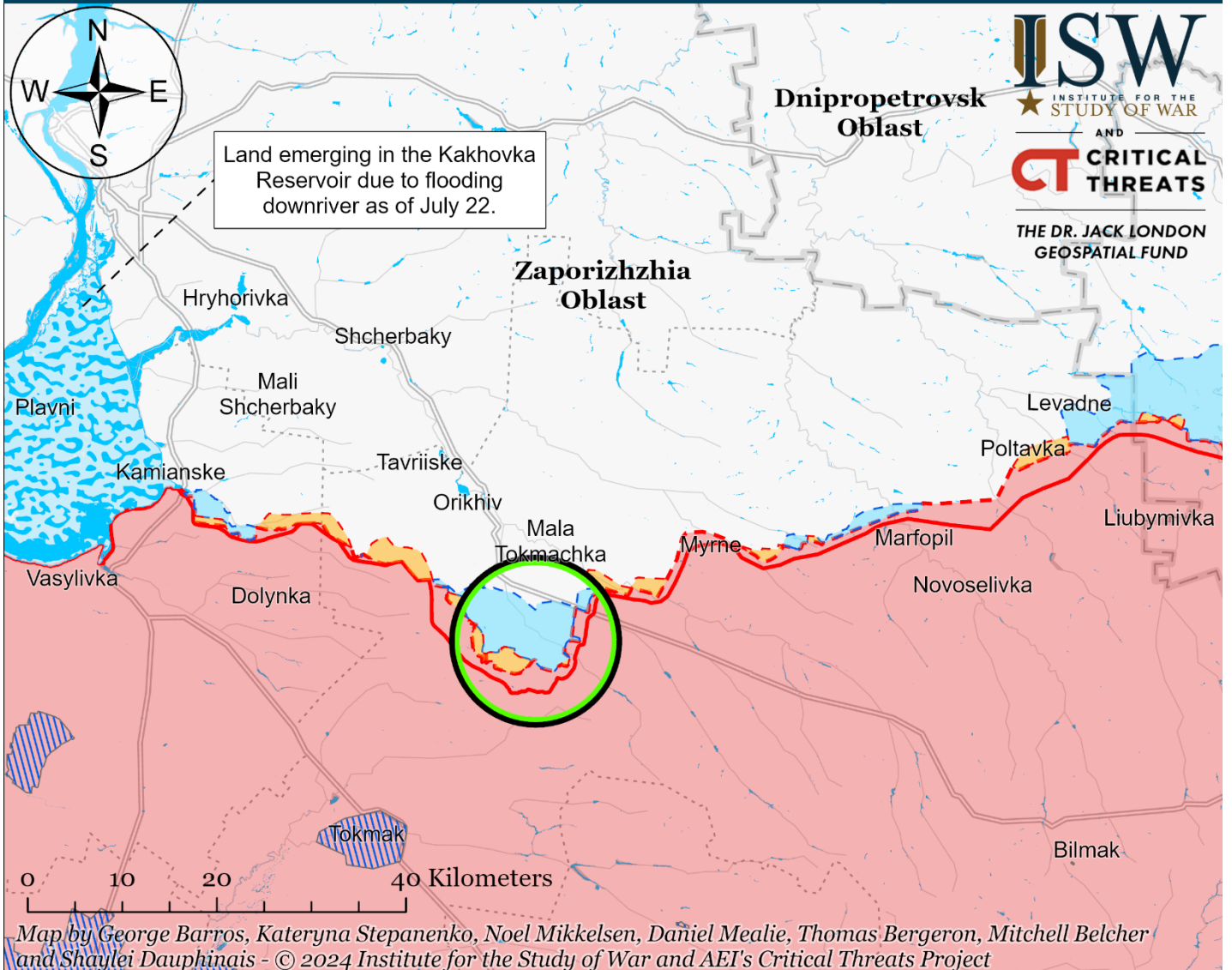
Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, and Shaylei Dauphinais - © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 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.

Note: A Russian source claimed on January 17 that Russian forces advanced up to one-half kilometer and recaptured previously lost positions west of Verbove.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of January 17, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

- 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

* 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 17 that Russian forces advanced up to one-half kilometer and recaptured previously lost positions west of Verbove.

A prominent Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces have recently concentrated artillery and aviation activity in frontline areas but have also conducted successful strikes in rear areas in Kirovohrad, Kharkiv, and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts.[94] ISW has observed a recent increase in Russian Shahed drone strikes on Ukrainian frontline positions.[95]

Ukrainian forces maintain positions on east (left) bank Kherson Oblast amid continued positional engagements on January 17, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. A Russian milblogger claimed that personnel from the 8th company of the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet) hoisted a Russian flag over the center of Krynyky, although ISW has not observed any visual evidence confirming this claim.[96] Positional engagements continued near Krynyky.[97] Russian sources claimed that the Dnipro River has frozen in many areas making it difficult for Ukrainian forces to cross the river and for Russian forces to operate on Dnipro River islands.[98] Elements of the Russian 205th Motorized Rifle Brigade (49th CAA, SMD) and 2nd Anti-Aircraft Missile Regiment (104th Airborne [VDV] Division) are reportedly operating near the Dnipro River islands and near Kozachi Laheri (west of Krynyky), respectively.[99]



Zaporizhia Oblast occupation official Vladimir Rogov claimed on January 17 that Russian air defense downed two Storm Shadow missiles near Popivka near the Chonhar Bridge, which connects occupied Kherson Oblast to occupied Crimea.[100] ISW cannot confirm Rogov's claim.

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

See topline text.

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

Kremlin newswire TASS reported on January 16 that Russian weapons manufacturers, including aviation producer Technodinamika JSC, have developed cluster munitions that will allow Russian forces to remotely lay anti-tank mines using multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS).[101] TASS reported that Russian manufacturers have already conducted field tests and that the new munitions will allow Russian forces to lay minefields more efficiently and quickly from longer distances.[102]

A Russian milblogger amplified footage on January 16 showing Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) People's Militia commander Viktor Anosov testing the "Bratishka" unmanned tracked vehicle.[103] Anosov claimed that Russian forces can use the unmanned tracked vehicle to demine and mine areas, deliver weapons and ammunition, conduct reconnaissance, deploy electronic warfare (EW) systems, evacuate wounded personnel, and support assaults on positions while under fire.[104] Russian sources claimed that unspecified Russian producers in Kazan, Republic of Tatarstan, finished developing the "Bratishka" vehicle in September 2023.[105]

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.

Two of Ukraine's international partners announced that they have refurbished some of the Leopard tanks purchased for the Ukrainian military. The Dutch Ministry of Defense (MoD) announced on January 17 that German defense enterprise Rheinmetall refurbished the first two of 14 Leopard 2 A4 tanks that the Netherlands and Denmark had ordered in 2023 and that Rheinmetall will complete restoration of the other 12 Leopards in the coming months.[106] The Dutch MoD reported that it is transferring these Leopards to Poland where Ukrainian forces will train to operate the tanks.

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)

Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence (GUR) Representative Andriy Yusov confirmed that Russian authorities are increasing the size of the Rosgvardia contingent in occupied Ukraine to strengthen occupational control.[107] Yusov confirmed that there are 35,000 Rosgvardia personnel in occupied Ukraine and that Russian authorities are considering deploying more Rosgvardia personnel to occupied areas.[108] ISW observed reports in late December 2023 that Rosgvardia deployed three newly formed regiments of its 116th Special Purpose Brigade — the 900th, 901st, and 902nd Special Purpose Regiments — to occupied Donetsk Oblast, increasing the total number of Rosgvardia personnel in occupied Ukraine to about 34,300 troops.[109]

Russian authorities continue to forcibly deport children from occupied Ukraine to Russia under the guise of medical treatment. Kremlin-appointed Commissioner on Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova stated on January 17 that 17 children from occupied Donetsk Oblast will undergo treatment at the Ogonyok Rehabilitation Center near Moscow.[110] Lvova-Belova claimed that the Ogonyok Rehabilitation Center, Wonderland Charitable Foundation, and the Russian Presidential Grants Fund implemented the "A Country for Children" program that brought 150 children from occupied Ukraine to Russia for rehabilitation treatments in 2023.[111]

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

The Kremlin and its mouthpieces are intensifying efforts to portray the West as a threat to both Russians who reside in Western states and to Russia itself. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) claimed on January 17 that Western

states are using Russia’s war in Ukraine to justify various “violations” against and “unsightly attitudes” towards Russian citizens residing in Western states by denying them access to bureaucratic procedures, sports and cultural events, and Russian media.[112] Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov promoted the recent Kremlin effort to portray itself as the protector of all Russian-speakers and not just Russian citizens, claiming that Russian-speaking communities abroad face “unprecedented Russophobia” and that the Russian government will continue efforts to support these communities abroad.[113] Russian MFA Spokesperson Maria Zakharova claimed that Baltic states intend to resolve the “Russian question” by deporting Russian-speaking residents *en masse*. [114] Russian Ambassador to the US Anatoly Antonov claimed that the West, chiefly the United States, is constraining the Russian government’s ability to allow Russians abroad to vote in the March 2024 presidential elections by limiting the number of Russian consulates and MFA personnel.[115] Russian state outlet *RIA Novosti* amplified on January 17 a Kremlin readout from January 14 in which Russian President Vladimir Putin instructed senior members of the Russian government to submit proposals by July 1 to repatriate Russians abroad in case of “unfriendly” countries deporting Russians.[116] Putin initially issued the instructions on December 4, 2023, and *RIA Novosti* likely amplified this order on January 17, 2024, in support of Putin’s January 16 accusations that Baltic states are “throwing [ethnic] Russian people” out of their countries, thereby “directly affect[ing]” Russian security.[117]

Prominent Russian ultranationalists continued attacking Kazakhstan for recent Kazakh government efforts to promote the Kazakh language.[118] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger amplified a criticism on January 17 that Kazakh people are losing their sense of identity by “discarding history, including historical names” – referring to the Kazakh effort to rename rail stations from Russian language names to Kazakh language names. Another prominent Russian milblogger accused Kazakhstan of “Russophobia” and of increasingly drifting towards the West.[119]

Russian government officials continue to falsely accuse Ukrainian officials of “committing criminal acts” against minors in Ukraine in response to multiple reports that Russian forces are forcibly deporting Ukrainian children from occupied Ukraine. The Russian Supreme Court supported a bill aimed at strengthening criminal liability for abducting minors during a period of partial mobilization.[120] Federation Council Deputy Chairperson of the Committee on Constitutional Legislation and State Construction Irina Rukavishnikova claimed that the bill is aimed at protecting minors from crimes that the Ukrainian government allegedly commits.[121] Yale University’s Humanitarian Research Lab published an independent investigation in February 2023 that found that Russian authorities have likely deported over 14,700 Ukrainian children to Russia, and the European Parliament adopted a resolution in September 2023 recognizing that Belarus is involved in the forced deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia.[122]

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

Nothing significant to report.

Note: ISW does not receive any classified material from any source, uses only publicly available information, and draws extensively on Russian, Ukrainian, and Western reporting and social media as well as commercially available satellite imagery and other geospatial data as the basis for these reports. References to all sources used are provided in the endnotes of each update.

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