

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, February 1, 2023

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February 1, 7:15 pm 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.

Ukrainian officials are continuing to warn about Russia's intention of conducting a decisive offensive operation in Donbas in February and/or March, supporting ISW's most likely course of action assessment (MLCOA). Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Representative Andriy Yusov stated on February 1 that Ukraine is on the eve of an active phase of combat that will take place over the next two months.[1] Yusov noted that the poor state of Russian military equipment will force the Russian military command to mass forces to outnumber Ukrainian defenders in order to make gains. Ukrainian Colonel Serhiy Hrabyski stated that Russia does not have sufficient forces to conduct an attack along the entire 1,500km frontline in Ukraine and will concentrate its efforts on seizing Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.[2] A prominent Russian milblogger observed that the prospect of a Russian offensive operation does not appear to be triggering panic among Ukrainian forces, who are continuing to build out their counteroffensive plans.[3] ISW reported on January 31 that Ukrainian military officials reiterated their intent to launch major counteroffensive operations by summer 2023.[4]

Russian President Vladimir Putin may be setting conditions for further Russian cross-border raids into northeastern areas of Ukraine, likely in an effort to further domestic information operations and pin Ukrainian forces against northern border areas. Putin held a meeting on February 1 to discuss the restoration of residential infrastructure in Crimea, Belgorod, Bryansk, and Kursk oblasts following "shelling by Neo-Nazi formations." [5] Putin noted that his administration is prioritizing the ending of Ukrainian shelling of border regions, but that this task is "the business of the military department." [6] Putin's focus on the supposed danger of Ukrainian shelling of border regions likely serves a two-fold purpose. It furthers an information operation intended to frame the war in Ukraine as an existential threat to Russian citizens in order to generate domestic support for a protracted war. ISW has reported on previous methods by which Russian authorities have engaged in this information operation. [7] Putin may also be setting conditions for escalated cross-border raids in order to distract and disperse Ukrainian forces from critical axes of advance by pinning them to northeastern border areas. ISW continues to assess that a Russian invasion from Belarus is exceedingly unlikely, and the ongoing information operation to pin Ukrainian troops against the northern Ukraine-Belarus border seems to be faltering as Ukrainian officials increasingly assess that this contingency is improbable. [8] The threat of cross-border raids from Belgorod, Bryansk, and Kursk oblasts into northern and northeastern Ukraine is likely an attempt to force Ukraine to deploy limited elements to these areas to protect against such attacks, thus dispersing Ukrainian troops to an extent in advance of a likely Russian offensive operation in the coming months. ISW has previously reported similar Russian distraction and dispersion operations in Zaporizhia Oblast. [9]

The Kremlin is likely seizing an opportunity to discredit Igor Girkin, a prominent critical voice within the Russian nationalist space and former Russian officer, following his altercation with Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin. Russian propagandist Vladimir Solovyov accused Girkin of cowardice following his decision to retreat from Slovyansk, Donetsk Oblast, in July 2014. [10] This is a common criticism Girkin's enemies direct at him. Solovyov's remarks echo Prigozhin's ongoing efforts to attack Girkin across the Russian information space, which ISW assessed was an attempt to undermine Girkin's patronage networks and influence among Russian ultranationalists. [11] Wagner-affiliated milbloggers also portray Girkin as a coward through shared interviews with individuals claiming to be Girkin's acquaintances. [12] ISW previously assessed that Prigozhin's criticism of Girkin will likely benefit the Kremlin, who will seize this opportunity to discredit an avid critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin. [13]

Key Takeaways

- **Ukrainian officials are continuing to warn about Russia's intention of conducting a decisive offensive operation in Donbas in February and/or March, supporting ISW's most likely course of action assessment (MLCOA).**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin may be setting conditions for further Russian cross-border raids into northeastern areas of Ukraine, likely in an effort to further domestic information operations and pin Ukrainian forces against northern border areas.**
- **Russian forces continued ground attacks northeast and southwest of Bakhmut.**
- **Russian forces continued limited ground attacks to regain lost positions on the Svatove-Kreminna line on February 1.**

- Russian forces are continuing to carry out unsuccessful disruption missions on islands in the Dnipro River delta in Kherson Oblast in an effort to prevent Ukrainian forces from gaining ground on the islands.
- Russian officials plan to propose a moratorium on the public procurement law to simplify spending procedures amid an increasingly costly war effort.
- The Wagner Group's prison recruitment efforts may have slowed in previous months.
- Crimean partisans may have conducted an improvised explosive device (IED) attack in occupied Crimea on January 30.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of February 1, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, and Will Kielm
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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 those 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 population and specifically on combat in Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn these Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict, Geneva Conventions, and humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

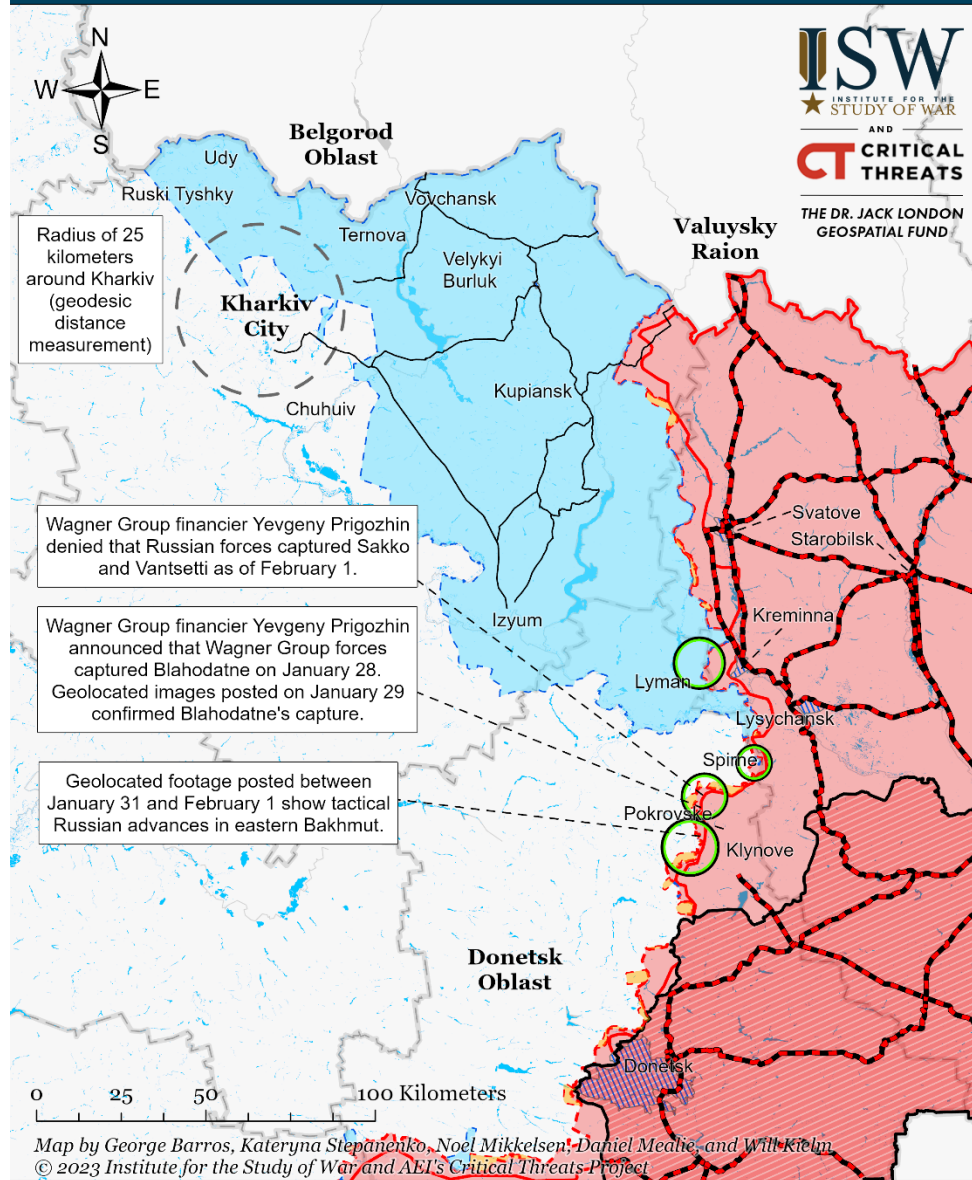
- Ukrainian Counteroffensives—Eastern Ukraine
- Russian Main Effort—Eastern Ukraine (comprised of one subordinate and one supporting effort)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort—Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort—Southern Axis
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Activities in Russian-occupied Areas

Ukrainian Counteroffensives (Ukrainian efforts to liberate Russian-occupied territories)

Eastern Ukraine: (Eastern Kharkiv Oblast-Western Luhansk Oblast)

Russian forces continued limited ground attacks to regain lost positions along the Svatove-Kreminna line on February 1. Luhansk Oblast Head Serhiy Haidai stated on February 1 that Ukrainian and Russian forces engaged in heavy fighting near Kreminna and Svatove. Haidai added that Russian forces have not yet formed an assault group in the Svatove-Kreminna direction but are continuing to accumulate manpower and military equipment in the area.[14] A Russian milblogger claimed on January 31 that the 144th Motorized Rifle Division of the 20th Combined Arms Army of the Western Military District continued offensive operations on the Svatove-Kreminna line, with the 488th Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment reportedly advancing 800 meters into Ukrainian positions.[15] The milblogger added that elements of the 254th Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment of the 144th Motorized Rifle Division are continuing to carry out counterbattery fire against Ukrainian forces on unspecified segments of the frontline. A Russian milblogger claimed on February 1 that the 144th Motorized Rifle Division also repelled Ukrainian efforts to advance into Kreminna, targeted Ukrainian supply routes in the area, and advanced into the forests west of Kreminna.[16] The Ukrainian General Staff reported on February 1 that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults near Yampolivka (16km west of Kreminna) in Donetsk Oblast.[17]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of February 1, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Radius of 25 kilometers around Kharkiv (geodesic distance measurement)

Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin denied that Russian forces captured Sakko and Vantsetti as of February 1.

Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin announced that Wagner Group forces captured Blahodatne on January 28. Geolocated images posted on January 29 confirmed Blahodatne's capture.

Geolocated footage posted between January 31 and February 1 show tactical Russian advances in eastern Bakhmut.

Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Medlie, and Will Kielm
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Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours	Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24	Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
Key Ukrainian Roads	Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*	Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
Russian Ground Lines of Communication	Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory	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.

The Ukrainian Main Defense Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine published an audio intercept on December 22 in which a Russian soldier operating in the vicinity of Chervonopopivka supported reports that Ukrainian forces captured part of the R-66 Kreminna-Svatove road in the vicinity of Zhytlyvka (just south of Chervonopopivka). The Ukrainian General Staff has repeatedly reported since November 30 that Russian forces shelled Chervonopopivka, indicating Russian forces no longer control Chervonopopivka. The Russian Ministry of Defense claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attempted to establish a position in Chervonopopivka on November 27, indicating Ukrainian maneuvers near Chervonopopivka. The R-66 runs through Chervonopopivka and the road's capture by Ukrainian forces would be consistent with the evidence presented in the intercepted phone call plus the Ukrainian General Staff's reports.

Russian Main Effort—Eastern Ukraine

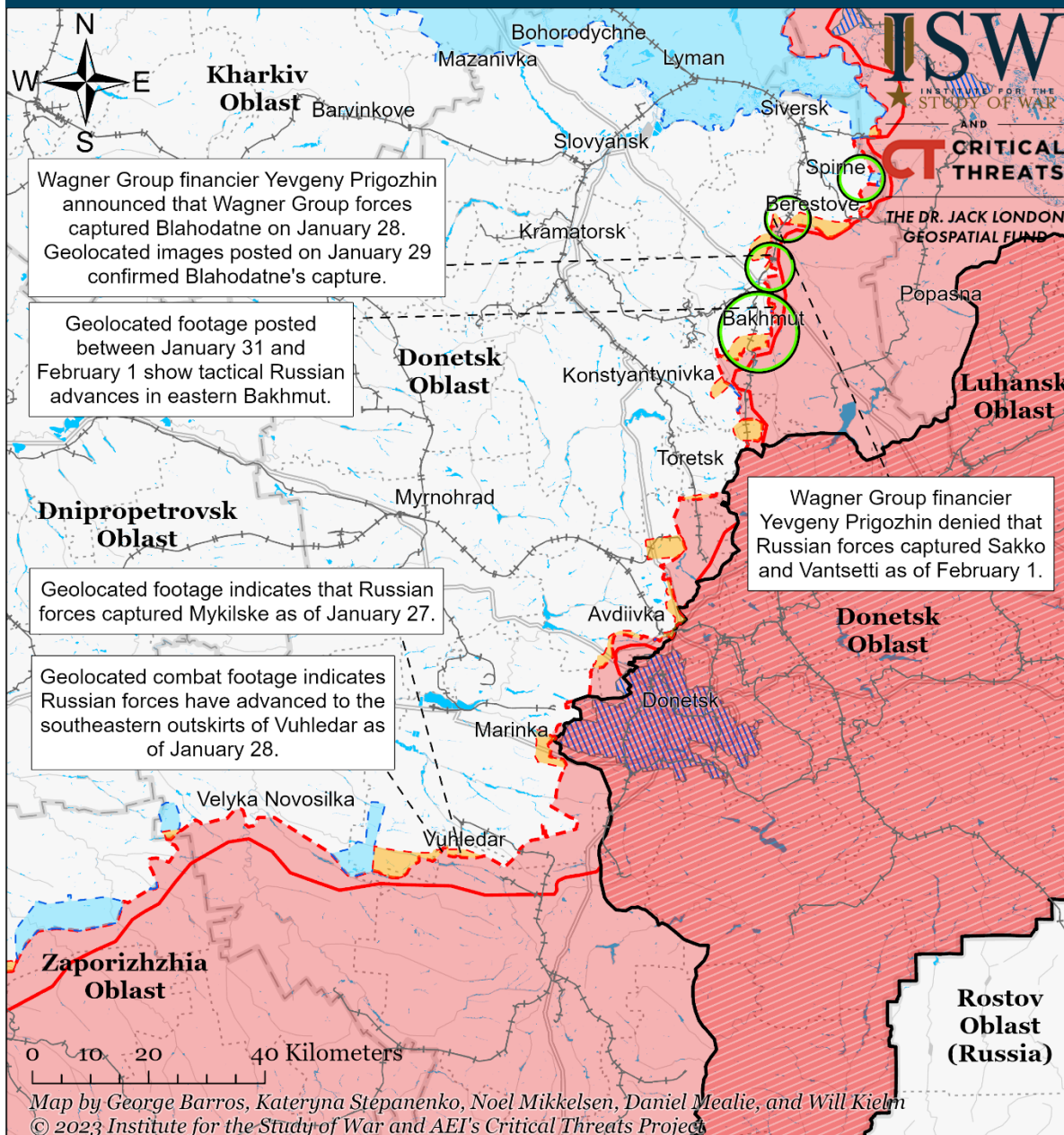
Russian Subordinate Main Effort—Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)

Russian forces continued ground attacks around Bakhmut on February 1. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian troops repelled Russian attacks on Bakhmut itself; northeast of Bakhmut near Spirne (25km northeast), Rozdolivka (15km northeast), Blahodatne (5km north), Krasna Hora (5km north, and Paraskoviivka (6km north); and southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka (7km southwest).[18] Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin stated that as of February 1, Russian forces still have not taken Bakhmut into an operational encirclement and denied January 31 claims from a Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) source that Russian forces took control of Sacco i Vanzetti village (17km north of Bakhmut).[19] Geolocated combat footage shows that Russian forces have made slight advances northeast of Bakhmut near Krasna Hora and on the northeastern and eastern outskirts of Bakhmut, as well as south of Bakhmut near Opytne and on Bakhmut’s southern outskirts.[20] A Russian milblogger posted video footage of a Wagner Group fighter in Blahodatne who claimed that Wagner has pushed Ukrainian forces three to four kilometers away from Blahodatne.[21] Russian milbloggers additionally claimed that Wagner has advanced along certain streets on the northern and eastern outskirts of Bakhmut itself.[22] Russian sources continued to claim that Wagner Group forces are pushing northwest of the Klishchiivka area towards Ivanivske and Bakhmut’s southwestern outskirts in order to cut the T0504 Kostyantynivka-Chasiv Yar-Bakhmut highway.[23]

A Ukrainian serviceman operating in Bakhmut provided granular insight into Russian tactics in the Bakhmut area. The Ukrainian Joint Forces Task Force posted an interview on February 1 with a Ukrainian soldier who stated that the situation in Bakhmut has recently “radically changed” since Russia has committed competent Wagner and Main Directorate of the Russian General Staff (GRU) operatives to the frontline.[24] Wagner and the GRU may be committing more elite special operations and reconnaissance elements to augment human wave attacks in the Bakhmut area. The serviceman also noted that Russian forces are conducting fairly successful infiltration techniques in Bakhmut by sending unarmed, unequipped “camels” (military personnel) to deliver ammunition and weapons to frontline positions. and that these “camels” often are able to approach Ukrainian positions without detection.[25] The serviceman stated that Russian forces identify and destroy buildings that Ukrainian forces operate out of.[26] These techniques, which are likely helping reinvigorate the stalled Russian advances in and around Bakhmut, are not likely scalable to support larger offensive operations. It is also unclear how effective they would be in terrain lacking the kind of cover they appear to be using immediately around and in Bakhmut.

Russian forces did not conduct any confirmed or claimed ground attacks on the western outskirts of Donetsk City or in western Donetsk Oblast on February 1. A Russian milblogger posted footage of the DNR “Sparta” battalion striking a Ukrainian reconnaissance group near Pervomaiske (on the northwestern outskirts of Donetsk City).[27] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces are counterattacking in the Vuhledar area southwest of Donetsk City.[28] Geolocated combat footage shows elements of the 40th Naval Infantry Brigade assaulting Ukrainian positions southwest of Vuhledar.[29] Russian forces continue to use the military-district-level TOS-1A thermobaric artillery system near Vuhledar, indicating relative prioritization of this area.[30]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of February 1, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Major Railroads
- 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.

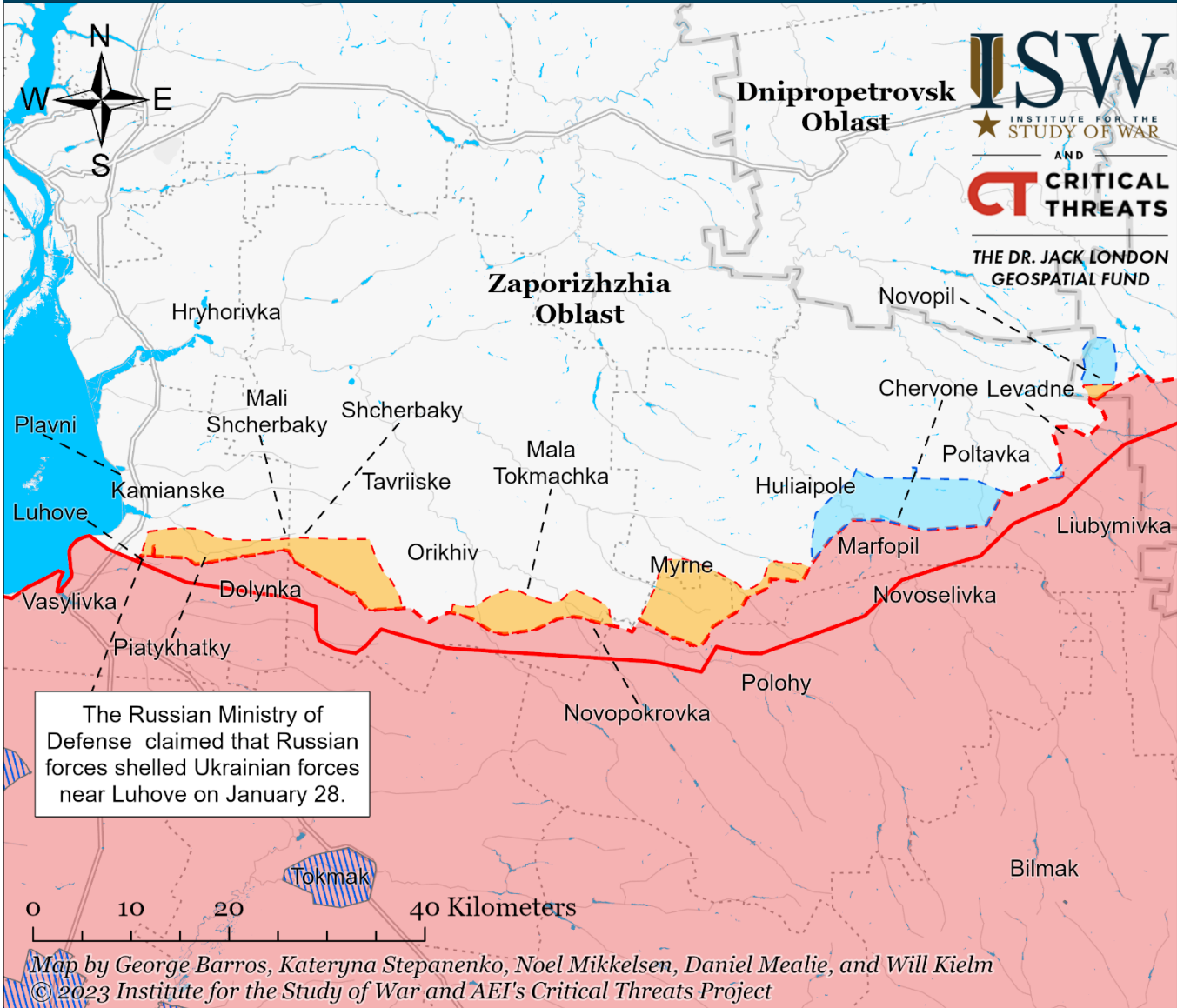
Supporting Effort—Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Russian forces are continuing to carry out disruption missions on islands in the Dnipro River delta in Kherson Oblast in an effort to prevent Ukrainian forces from gaining ground on the islands. Head of the Ukrainian Joint Coordination Press Center of the Southern Forces Nataliya Humenyuk stated on February 1 that Russian forces are increasing the number of reconnaissance and sabotage attempts in the area of the Dnipro River delta likely in an effort to simulate the threat of an escalation south of Kherson City.[31] Geolocated footage published on January 30 also likely showed the aftermath of Ukrainian artillery fire on Russian forces conducting a raid on one of the islands in the delta.[32] Humenyuk noted that Russian force composition, weather conditions, terrain, and the use of civilian boats are not sufficient to force the Dnipro River, however. Humenyuk added that there are no concentrations of the Russian special purpose forces or forces with high combat readiness that could threaten the west (right) bank Kherson Oblast. Russian forces did not have the capacity to hold western Kherson Oblast with an abundance of ammunition and elite forces due to disrupted logistics in fall 2022 and are unlikely to be able to restore lost positions in the region. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), in turn, claimed that Russian forces destroyed two motorboats and eliminated up to 10 Ukrainian servicemen near Kruhle Lake, about 5km south of Kherson City.[33]

Russian forces are continuing intense shelling of Kherson City and western Kherson Oblast likely intending to undermine Ukrainian raids on the east (left) bank of the Dnipro River. The UK MoD claimed that some of the most intense shelling is taking place along the Dnipro River in southern Ukraine, likely in an effort to degrade civilian morale and deter any Ukrainian counterattacks across the Dnipro River.[34] Humenyuk also noted that Russian and Ukrainian forces are continuously shelling the Kinburn Spit, which prevents both sides from securing positions on the spit.[35]

Russian occupation officials did not make new territorial claims on February 1 but maintained that Russian forces are continuing to attack in western Zaporizhia Oblast. Zaporizhia Oblast Occupation Deputy Head Vladimir Rogov claimed that Russian forces have established a first line of defense that encompasses claimed new Russian positions gained as a result of claimed offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast in late January.[36] Rogov also claimed that fighting is ongoing along the entire frontline but is largely concentrated around Orikhiv, Hulyaipole, and Charivne.[37] Ukrainian local and military officials did not report ongoing fighting in specified areas or any frontline changes.[38] Ukrainian Mayor of Melitopol Ivan Fedorov reported that Ukrainian forces struck a Russian military base in the Central Market (Tsentralnyi Rynok) area of Melitopol.[39]

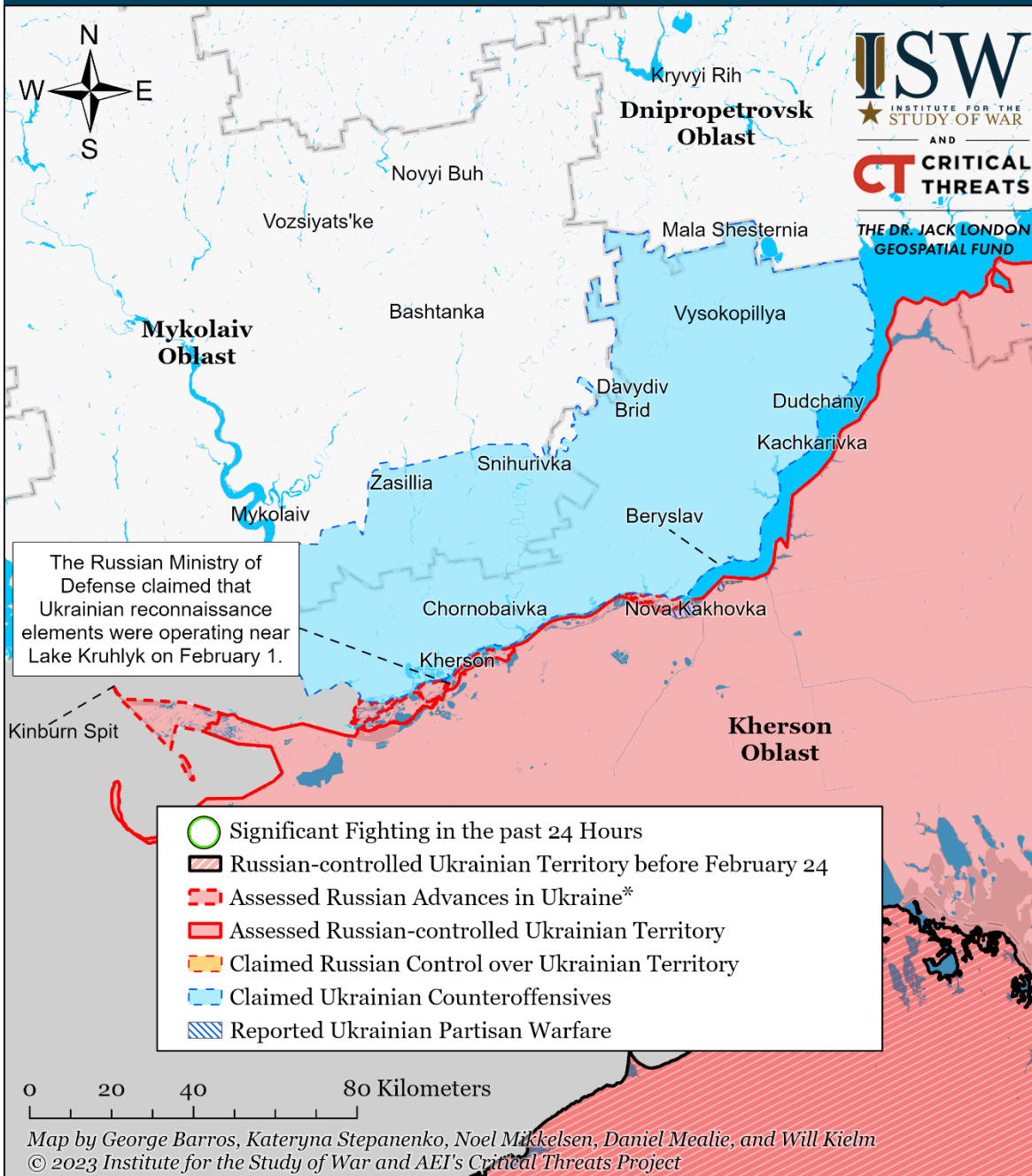
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of February 1, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



- 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
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*

* 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 Kherson and Mykolaiv as of February 1, 2023, 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.

ISW recoded the northeast section of Velykyi Potomkin Island in Kherson Oblast from reported Ukrainian counteroffensives to Russian claims based on Russian milblogger reports and video footage published on January 5 that claimed Russian forces recaptured that part of the island where Ukrainian forces placed a flag on January 2. ISW cannot confirm if Russian forces recaptured the same positions as Ukrainian forces as of January 5. A Russian milblogger claimed on January 3 that the island is in a gray zone because Russian forces are still operating in the northern part of the island. Geolocated footage published on January 2 does show Ukrainian forces striking Russian positions on an adjacent island east of Velykyi Potomkin Island, which indicates that Russian forces are still operating within the Dniپر River delta areas.

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

Russian officials plan to propose a moratorium on the public procurement law to simplify spending procedures amid an increasingly costly war effort. Russian Federation Council Speaker Valentina Matvienko stated on February 1 that she intends to instruct Deputy Speaker Nikolai Zhuravlev to appeal to the Russian government to impose a moratorium on the procurement law until the completion of the war in Ukraine so that Russian officials can quickly disperse funds.[40] Matvienko stated that the moratorium on the procurement law would allow Russian regions to make expedited decisions on the start of construction projects for infrastructure, social, and other facilities.[41] Matvienko stated that she will raise the issue with Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin and that the current procurement process stipulated by the law would prevent some funds from the annual budget from being available until June or July of 2023.[42] Russian officials likely proposed the moratorium in response to widespread procurement problems that are compounding pervasive provisioning issues in the Russian military. Russian officials, possibly under pressure from the Kremlin to fix procurement issues as soon as possible, likely believe that doing away with established procurement processes will alleviate these issues. The Kremlin's refusal to put the Russian economy on a war footing has created large discrepancies between demanded provisions and the Russian government's and economy's ability to provide requested materiel; and the relaxation of procurement processes is unlikely to resolve this discrepancy. The proposed moratorium would likely allow Russian officials to spend money without normal oversight, which would also likely allow already widespread Russian corruption to flourish, further undermining the effort to resolve procurement problems. Matvienko may also have connections to Wagner financier Yevgeny Prigozhin, and her proposal to loosen spending procedures may allow figures associated with unconventional and parallel military structures to better fund their efforts.[43]

The Wagner Group may have slowed its prison recruitment efforts in previous months. The Russian Federal Penitentiary Service released statistics on February 1 showing that the decrease in the overall number of prisoners in Russia has slowed since November of 2022.[44] The statistics show that the number of Russian prisoners decreased by 6,000 between November 2022 and January 2023 as compared to a decrease of 23,000 prisoners between September and October of 2022, when the Wagner Group was intensifying its prison recruitment campaign.[45] The Wagner Group's reputation for committing convict recruits to highly attritional human wave attacks in eastern Ukraine has likely engendered resistance among Russian prisoners to Wagner Group recruitment efforts. Prigozhin bolsters Wagner Group's reputation as a high casualty service through continued comments that frame service in the Wagner Group as punishment, most recently threatening a Russian journalist with service in a Wagner Group unit deployed to the Bakhmut area.[46] The likely substandard physical condition of the majority of Russia's prison population for military service is likely also constraining the Wagner Group's prison recruitment effort. The possible decline in the Wagner Group's prison recruitment campaign may be an indicator that the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) intends to sideline the Wagner Group in future offensive operations in Ukraine and thus that the Wagner Group no longer needs large numbers of convict volunteers for a high pace of attritional human wave attacks.

Former Wagner Group fighters further confirmed that the Russian government is likely preemptively expunging records and granting pardons for convicts who volunteer with the Wagner Group in Ukraine. Independent Russian outlet *Mediazona* conducted an interview with a convict who served with the Wagner Group in Ukraine and later fled, who stated that he signed pardon papers with the Wagner Group before leaving prison.[47] The former Wagner Group fighter stated that he returned to Russia to find that his criminal record was expunged and that he did not have to go through any formal review process with the Wagner Group or Russian authorities on the matter, suggesting that the Russian government issued him a preemptive pardon and expungement of his record before he began serving with the Wagner Group in Ukraine.[48] Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov confirmed on January 27 that Russian President Vladimir Putin is issuing preemptive pardons for convicts who serve in Russian operations in Ukraine.[49]

The Russian MoD continues to face criticism over the unclear status of volunteer formations. Russian milbloggers criticized the Russian MoD for deciding to address the provisioning of volunteer formations this late into the war in Ukraine and argued that the lack of thorough legislation clarifying the status of volunteer formations will continue to complicate their provisioning.[50] A Russian milblogger claimed that regional Russian authorities created volunteer battalion detachments and were responsible for their provisioning, as ISW previously assessed.[51] Russian regional authorities likely ran out of supplies and funds to continue provisioning these volunteer battalion detachments, leading to their overall decline as viable Russian formations in Ukraine. Russian milbloggers argued that Russian officials need to quickly build upon the November 2022 article recognizing volunteer formations in the federal law on defense to resolve issues with their provisioning.[52] A subset of Russian milbloggers have been heavily involved with various Russian volunteer formations in the past and will likely continue to criticize the Russian MoD over issues stemming from their unclear status.

Activity in Russian-occupied Areas (Russian objective: consolidate administrative control of and annexed areas; forcibly integrate Ukrainian civilians into Russian sociocultural, economic, military, and governance systems)

Crimean partisans may have conducted an IED attack in occupied Crimea on January 30. The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on February 1 that members of the Atesh Ukrainian-Tatar resistance movement used an IED to kill two Russian Rosgvardia officers driving from Sevastopol to Simferopol, occupied Crimea, on January 30.[53]

Russian officials and occupation authorities continue to lean on Russian federal subject patronages to implement infrastructure projects in occupied territories. Russian President Vladimir Putin held a meeting on February 1 to discuss the restoration of residential infrastructure in occupied territories.[54] Putin called for housing construction and an increased pace of restoration of cities and towns in occupied territories, emphasizing the introduction of preferential mortgages (reduced at a 2% rate) in “new, and in fact, old, historical territories.”[55] Putin stated that reconstruction work has already begun on social facilities such as kindergartens, schools, hospitals, clinics, communal infrastructure, roads, and communication networks following the cessation of hostilities in Russian-captured territories. Putin thanked Russian constituent entities for allocating financial resources, specialists, construction teams, and equipment to the “new regions.”[56] Yamal Governor Dmitry Artyukhov stated on February 1 that he personally spent several days overseeing reconstruction projects on schools, hospitals, and a blood transfusion station in occupied Volnovkha, Donetsk Oblast.[57] Artyukhov claimed that Donbas and Yamal share a historical link and emphasized that the Yamal Administration has “big plans” to sponsor residential buildings, life support facilities, and a youth center in Volnovkha in 2023.[58]

Significant activity in Belarus (ISW assesses that a Russian or Belarusian attack into northern Ukraine in early 2023 is extraordinarily unlikely and has thus restructured this section of the update. It will no longer include counter-indicators for such an offensive.

ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian military activity in Belarus, but these are not indicators that Russian and Belarusian forces are preparing for an imminent attack on Ukraine from Belarus. ISW will revise this text and its assessment if it observes any unambiguous indicators that Russia or Belarus is preparing to attack northern Ukraine.)

Belarusian forces are reportedly operating Russian-provided Iskander systems as of February 1. The Belarusian Ministry of Defense (MoD) stated that Belarusian servicemembers have begun the full independent operation of the Russian-provided Iskander systems, and independent Belarusian monitoring group *The Hajun Project* reported that the 465th Missile Brigade are operating the systems.[59] The Belarusian MoD stated that Belarusian servicemembers received training on how to use the systems in the Russian Federation and are currently conducting practical training on the systems at Belarusian training grounds.[60] Belarusian President Lukashenko stated in a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on December 19, 2022, that Russia would deliver Iskander complexes to Belarus.[61] The Russian delivery of the Iskander systems to Belarus is likely meant to coerce Belarus into further integration measures with Russia in the context of the Union State, particularly in the realm of defense.[62]

Belarusian and Russian forces may have concluded joint tactical aviation exercises as of February 1. The Belarusian MoD stated on February 1 that Belarusian Air Force Commander Colonel Andrey Lukyanovich presented awards to participants of the joint tactical flight exercises at the Machulishchi military airfield in Minsk Oblast.[63] The Belarusian MoD initially stated on January 8 that Belarusian and Russian aviation units that are a part of the Regional Grouping of Forces (RGV) would hold the exercises from January 16 to February 1. Neither Belarusian nor Russian officials have formally announced that the joint tactical aviation exercises have concluded, however.

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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- [11] <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-28-2023>; <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-26-2023>
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