

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

Davit Gasparyan, Grace Mappes, Nicole Wolkov, Olivia Gibson, William Runkel, and George Barros

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Note: The data cut-off for this product was 12 pm ET on January 15. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the January 16 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russian forces conducted a large series of missile and drone strikes against Ukrainian energy infrastructure on the night of January 14 to 15. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched 74 Shahed and other strike drones and 43 missiles at Ukraine, including one Iskander-M ballistic missile from Belgorod Oblast, seven Kh-22/32 cruise missiles from airspace over Tula Oblast, four Kalibr cruise missiles from ships in the Black Sea, 27 Kh-101/55SM cruise missiles from airspace over Volgograd Oblast, and four Kh-59/69 cruise missiles from airspace over Belgorod Oblast.[1] The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Ukrainian forces downed 23 Kh-101/55SM missiles, three Kalibr missiles, four Kh-59/69 missiles, and 47 drones, and that 27 drones became "lost" and did not hit their targets. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky reported that the Russian strikes targeted Ukrainian gas facilities and other energy infrastructure.[2] Ukrainian officials reported damage to energy and critical infrastructure facilities in Ivano-Frankivsk, Kharkiv, and Lviv oblasts and residential areas in Kirovohrad Oblast.[3] Ukrainian Energy Minister Herman Halushchenko and Ukrainian state electricity transmission operator Ukrenergo reported temporary emergency shutdowns in Kharkiv, Sumy, Poltava, Donetsk, Zaporizhia, Dnipropetrovsk, and Kirovohrad oblasts on the morning of January 15 due to the strikes.[4] Ukrenergo has since lifted the emergency shutdowns but noted that Ukrainians still need to limit their energy consumption following the strikes.[5] Russia has regularly targeted Ukrainian energy infrastructure in large strike series since the Winter of 2022-2023 likely in an attempt to collapse Ukraine's energy grid, limit its defense industrial capacity, and degrade Ukrainians' will to fight.[6]

Ukraine and Russia conducted a one-for-one prisoner of war (POW) exchange on January 15, their first POW exchange in 2025. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky announced on January 15 that Ukraine received 25 Ukrainians who suffer from serious injuries and illnesses and stated that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) mediated the exchange.[7] The Ukrainian Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War reported that Ukraine received a civilian previously captured by Russian forces during the exchange.[8] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) reported that Russia received 25 Russian POWs.[9] Ukrainian Human Rights Commissioner Dmytro Lyubinets announced on January 6 that Ukraine and Russia had reached a preliminary agreement to conduct regular POW exchanges in 2025 and that Ukraine will prioritize returning seriously ill and wounded Ukrainians.[10]

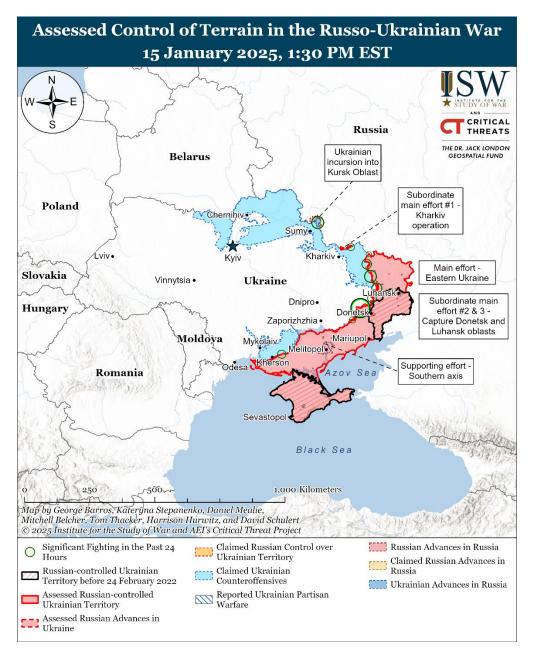
A Russian source claimed that Ukrainian drone and artillery capabilities are providing Ukrainian tanks with tactical advantages over Russian tanks in unspecified, select areas of the frontline. A Russian milblogger claimed on January 12 that Russian forces are unable to field tanks and armored vehicles in frontline areas where Ukraine has deployed at least two Ukrainian firstperson view (FPV) strike drone companies and two Ukrainian reconnaissance drone companies operate because Ukrainian drone operators strike most or all Russian armored vehicles three to six kilometers from the frontline.[11] The milblogger also claimed that Russian forces are also unable to field tanks in frontline areas where Ukrainian forces have a sufficient number of shells due to the high accuracy of Ukrainian artillery strikes. The milblogger complained that Russian drones are less effective than the Ukrainian drones and that the Russian military command only supplies Russian FPV operators advanced FPV models operating on non-standard frequences and fiber-optic drones — both of which are more resistant to Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW) — to priority sectors of the frontline. The milblogger further claimed that an insufficient amount of Russian artillery coupled with insufficient Russian drone capabilities in select sectors of the frontline allow Ukrainian forces to field tanks more easily for indirect and direct fire. Effective Ukrainian drone and artillery operations in select areas of the frontline may be straining Russia's ability to field tanks amid reports that Russian forces continue to accrue vehicles losses that are likely unstable in the medium term.[12] Ukraine's ability to damage and destroy Russian armored vehicles and tanks with FPV drones and artillery will likely strain Russia's ability to replace such losses as current armored vehicle and tank production rates indicate that these losses will be prohibitive over the longer term.

Transnistrian President Vadim Krasnoselsky announced on January 15 that Russia will soon provide Transnistria with gas as "humanitarian aid" but did not specify the delivery date or method.[13] Krasnoselsky visited Moscow from January 10 to 14 and negotiated possible gas deliveries to Transnistria with the Russian Energy Ministry.[14] Krasnoselsky added that Russia will provide Transnistria with enough gas for thermal power engineering, industrial enterprises, and civilian use, noting that Russia will not be supplying the rest of Moldova with gas.[15]

Armenia continues to enhance its relations with Western partners amid waning relations with Russia. The US State Department reported on January 14 that Armenia and the US launched the US-Armenia Strategic Partnership Commission, signaling a significant step in their bilateral relations.[16] US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan formalized the agreement aimed at expanding bilateral cooperation in economic, security, defense, and governance sectors. Blinken emphasized US support for Armenia's sovereignty and territorial integrity while Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov criticized the partnership agreement, accusing the US of destabilizing the South Caucasus.[17] Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov also expressed dissatisfaction with Armenian government's January 9 approval of a European Union (EU) accession bill. Overchuk and Lavrov argued that Armenia's potential future EU membership is incompatible with Armenia's membership in the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and framing Armenia's EU accession bill as a potential withdrawal from the EAEU.[18] Overchuk and Lavrov also claimed that such decisions are Armenia's sovereign right yet highlighted potential consequences, reinforcing Kremlin's longstanding pattern of threatening and pressuring neighboring countries through indirect and direct means. The Kremlin reactions to Armenia's deepening ties with the West demonstrate a broader Russian strategy of undermining the sovereignty of neighboring and previously colonized countries through initial ultimatums and veiled coercion, often escalating to direct action and military violence when Russia's influence is challenged, as is the case in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine.

Key Takeaways:

- Russian forces conducted a large series of missile and drone strikes against Ukrainian energy infrastructure on the night of January 14 to 15.
- Ukraine and Russia conducted a one-for-one prisoner of war (POW) exchange on January 15, their first POW exchange in 2025.
- A Russian source claimed that Ukrainian drone and artillery capabilities are providing Ukrainian tanks with tactical advantages over Russian tanks in unspecified, select areas of the frontline.
- Transnistrian President Vadim Krasnoselsky announced on January 15 that Russia will soon provide Transnistria with gas as "humanitarian aid" but did not specify the delivery date or method.
- Armenia continues to enhance its relations with Western partners amid waning relations with Russia.
- Russian forces recently advanced in the Borova, Chasiv Yar, and Toretsk directions.
- Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated on January 15 that about 600,000 Russian soldiers are currently operating in Ukraine.



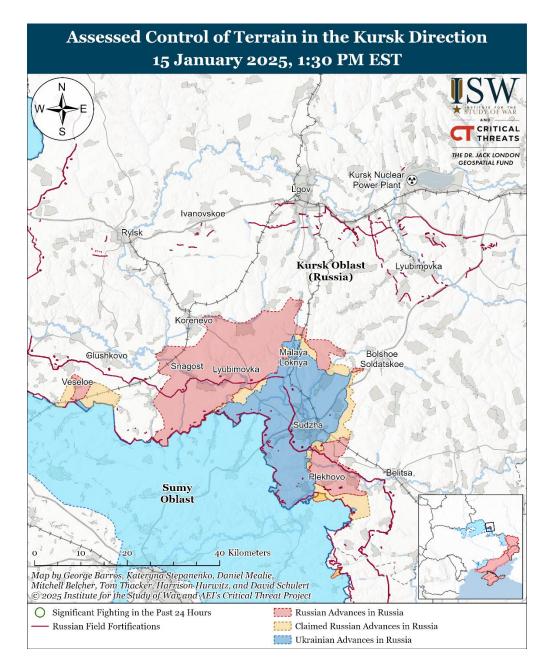
We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We will continue to evaluate and report on the effects of these criminal activities on the Ukrainian military 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.

- Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation
- Russian Main Effort Eastern Ukraine (comprised of three subordinate main efforts)

- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort Southern Axis
- Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Russian Technological Adaptations
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas
- Significant Activity in Belarus

Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation

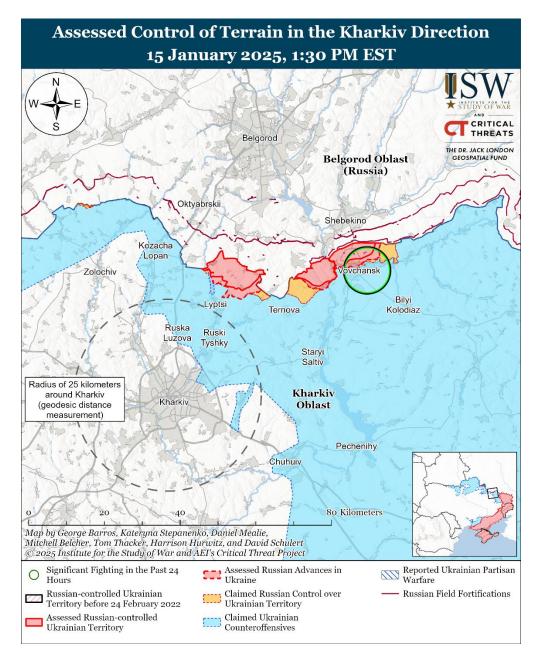
Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Ukrainian salient in Kursk Oblast on January 15 but did not advance. A Russian milblogger denied claims that Russian forces seized Makhnovka (south of Sudzha), while another milblogger claimed that Russian forces will soon seize the settlement.[19] Another milblogger reiterated claims that Russian forces seized Cherkasskoye Porechnoye, but ISW has not observed confirmation of this claim.[20] Fighting continued near northwest of Sudzha near Kruglenkoye, Nikolaevka and Nikolayevo-Darino; north of Sudzha near Cherkasskoye Porechnoye, Pogrebki, Staraya Sorochina, and Novaya Sorochina; and south of Sudzha near Makhnovka on January 14 and 15.[21] Elements of the Russian 106th Airborne (VDV) Division and 83rd VDV Brigade are reportedly operating near southern Nikolayevo-Darino (northwest of Sudzha); elements of the Russian 155th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet, Eastern Military District [EMD]) are reportedly operating in Malaya Loknya (north of Sudzha); and elements of the Russian 104th VDV Regiment (76th VDV Division) reportedly continue to operate in Kursk Oblast.[22]



Russian Main Effort - Eastern Ukraine

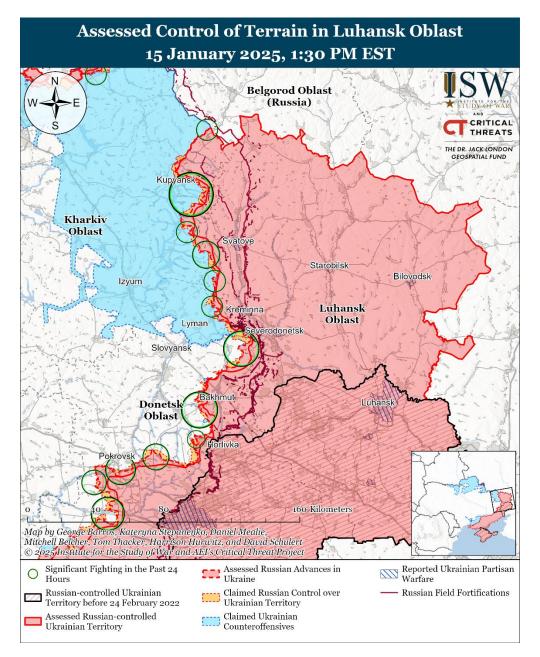
<u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Kharkiv Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City)

Russian forces continued offensive operations northeast of Kharkiv City near Vovchansk and Tykhe on January 14 and 15 but did not advance.[23] Elements of the Chechen "Zapad-Akhmat" Battalion and the Russian 128th Motorized Rifle Brigade (44th Army Corps [AC], Leningrad Military District [LMD]) are reportedly operating in Vovchansk.[24]

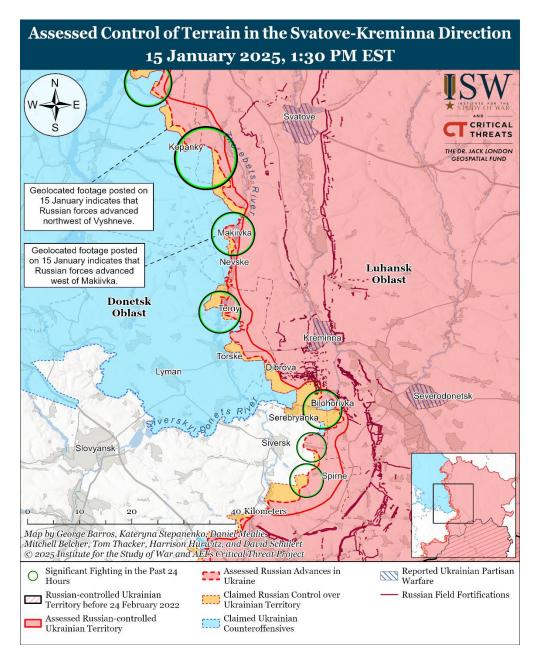


<u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Luhansk Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Kupyansk direction on January 15 but did not advance. Russian forces continued attacking northeast of Kupyansk near Topoli; east of Kupyansk near Petropavlivka; and southeast of Kupyansk near Tabaivka on January 14 and 15.[25]



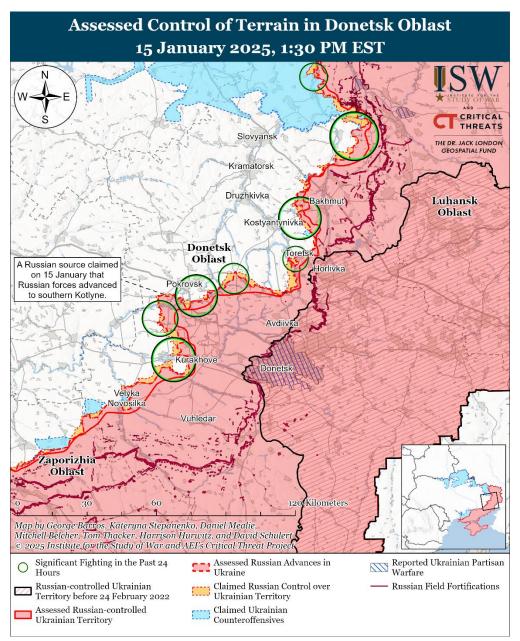
Russian forces recently advanced northeast and southeast of Borova amid continued offensive operation in the direction on January 15. Geolocated footage published on January 4, 14, and 15 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced north and northwest of Vyshneve (northeast of Borova) and west of Makiivka (southeast of Borova).[26] Russian forces attacked northeast of Borova near Nova Kruhlyanivka and Bohuslavka; east of Borova near Kopanky; and southeast of Borova near Makiivka, Hrekivka, Novoserhiivka, and Tverdokhlibove on January 14 and 15.[27] Elements of the Russian 27th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Guards Tank Army [GTA], Moscow Military District [MMD]) are reportedly operating near Zelenyi Hai (northeast of Borova).[28]



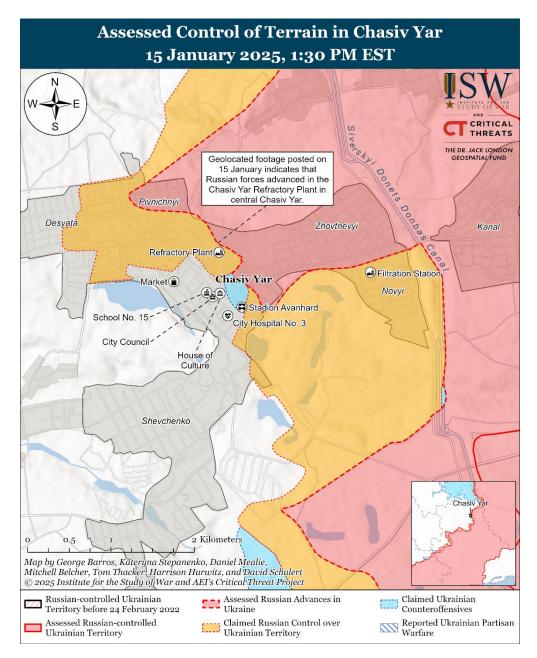
Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Lyman direction on January 15 but did not advance. Russian forces attacked northeast of Lyman near Terny and Kolodyazi; and east of Lyman near Zarichne on January 14 and 15.[29] The commander of a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Lyman direction stated that Ukrainian drones and artillery are destroying up to 80 to 90 percent of Russian equipment, including armored vehicles, in the area.[30] The commander stated that Ukrainian forces maintain superiority in the number and targeting accuracy of drones in the area.[31] Elements of the Russian Chechen Akhmat Spetsnaz "Shram" Group reportedly continue to operate in the Lyman direction.[32]

<u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – Donetsk Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia's proxies in Donbas)

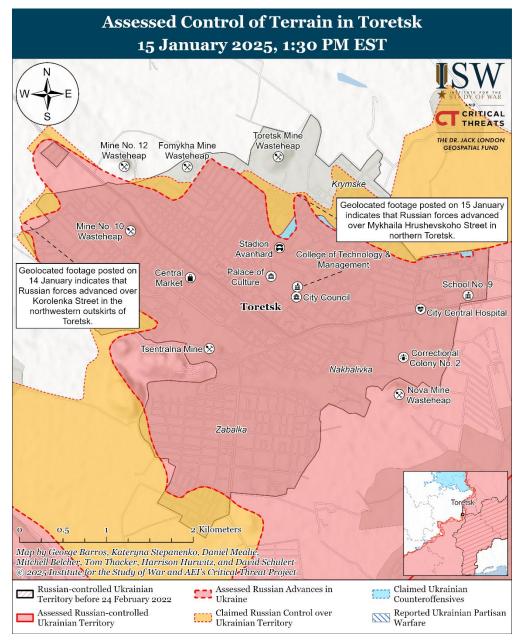
Russian forces continued offensive operations northeast of Siversk near Bilohorivka; east of Siversk near Verkhnokamyanske, and southeast of Siversk near Vyimka and Ivano-Darivka on January 14 and 15.[33]



Russian forces recently advanced in the Chasiv Yar direction amid continued offensive operations in the direction on January 15. Geolocated footage published on January 15 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced within the Refractory Plant in central Chasiv Yar.[34] Russian forces continued attacking within Chasiv Yar itself and south of Chasiv Yar near Predtechyne, Stupochky, and Oleksandro-Shultyne on January 14 and 15.[35] Drone operators of the Russian 200th Separate Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade (14th Army Corps [AC], Leningrad Military District [LMD]) are reportedly operating near Chasiv Yar.[36]



Russian forces recently advanced within Toretsk amid continued offensive operations in the area on January 15. Geolocated footage published on January 14 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced in northwestern and northern Toretsk.[37] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces are advancing near Shcherbynivka (west of Toretsk), but ISW has not observed confirmation of this claim.[38] Russian forces continued attacking within and near Toretsk itself and west of Toretsk near Shcherbynivka on January 14 and 15.[39] Elements of the Russian 132nd Motorized Rifle Brigade (51st Combined Arms Army [CAA], formerly 1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] AC) are reportedly operating near Toretsk.[40]

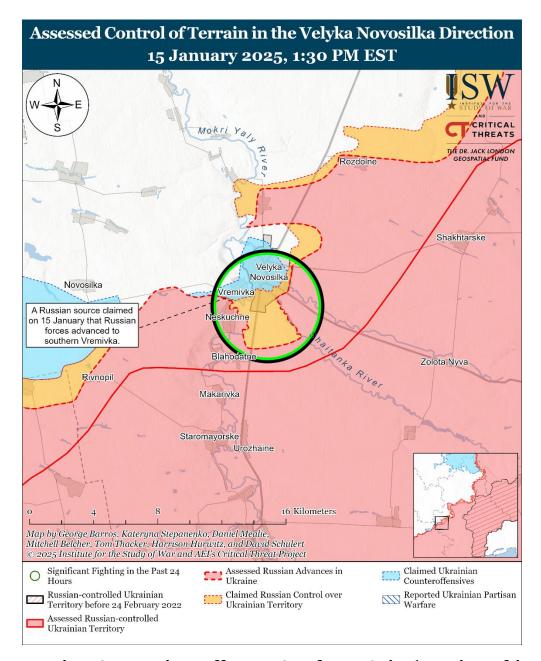


Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Pokrovsk direction on January 15 but did not make any confirmed advances. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced east of Udachne, northwest of Yasenove, west of Novoyelyzavetivka, up to eastern Novoserhiivka and Uspenivka, and up to southern Zvirove and Kotlyne (all southwest of Pokrovsk).[41] ISW has not observed confirmation of these claims, however. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed on January 15 that elements of the Russian 80th Tank Regiment (90th Tank Division, 41st CAA, Central Military District [CMD]) seized Ukrainka, although ISW assessed that Russian forces seized the settlement as of December 27.[42] Russian forces continued offensive operations near Pokrovsk itself; northeast of Pokrovsk near Nova Poltavka, and Tarasivka; east of Pokrovsk near Baranivka, Novotoretske, Yelyzavetivka, and Promin; southeast of Pokrovsk near Lysivka; south of Pokrovsk near Novyi Trud, Shevchenko, Chunyshyne, and Zelene; southwest of Pokrovsk near Zvirove, Uspenivka, Novoandriivka, Yasenove

and Nadiivka on January 14 and 15.[43] The deputy commander of a Ukrainian battalion operating in the Pokrovsk direction stated that Russian forces are not fielding fiber-optic drones at scale in the area because Russian forces lack the experienced drone pilots to operate them.[44] Ukrainian military officials stated that Russian forces are intensifying guided glide bomb strikes and drone operations in the Pokrovsk direction due to favorable weather conditions.[45] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 433rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (27th Motorized Rifle Division, 2nd CAA, CMD) and 55th and 74th motorized rifle brigades (41st CAA) are operating near Kotlyne; elements of the 35th Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st CAA) are operating near Zelene-Chunyshyne-Dachenske (south of Pokrovsk); elements of the 589th and 506th MRRs (27th Motorized Rifle Division) and 137th Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st CAA) are operating near Mykolaivka-Myrnohrad (southeast and east of Pokrovsk); elements of the 239th Tank Regiment, 428th Rifle Regiment, and 87th Rifle Regiment (all 90th Tank Division) are operating near Uspenivka; and elements of the 6th and 80th tank regiments, 228th Motorized Rifle Regiment, and 67th Rifle Regiment (all 90th Tank Division) are operating in the Yasenove-Slovyanka-Petropavlivka area (southeast of Pokrovsk).[46]

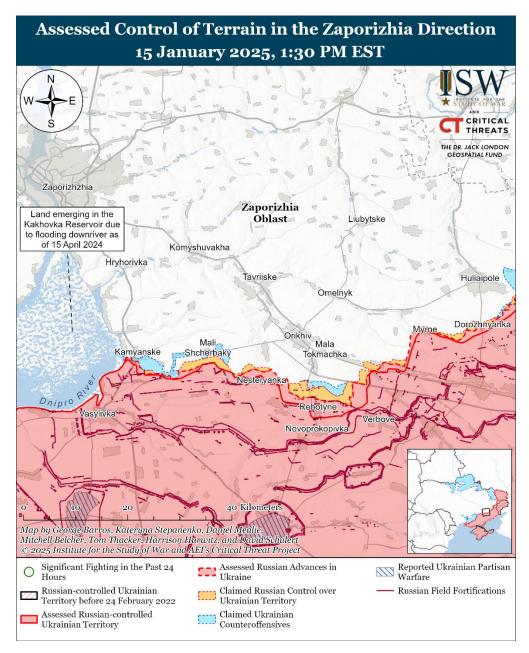
Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Kurakhove direction on January 15 but did not make any confirmed advances. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced west of Petropavlivka (northwest of Kurakhove) and southeast of Dachne (west of Kurakhove), but ISW has not observed confirmation of this claim.[47] Russian forces continued attacking northwest of Kurakhove near Petropavlivka; and west of Kurakhove near Dachne, Andriivka, and Kostyantynopil on January 14 and 15.[48] Elements of the Russian 33rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (20th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA, Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating in the Kurakhove direction.[49] Mashovets stated that elements of the 36th Motorized Rifle Brigade (29th CAA, Eastern Military District [EMD]), 57th Motorized Rifle Brigade (5th CAA, EMD), 114th Motorized Rifle Brigade (51st CAA), 39th Motorized Rifle Brigade (68th AC, EMD) are operating along the northern bank of the Sukhi Yaly River southwest of Kurakhove.[50]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Velyka Novosilka direction on January 15 but did not make any confirmed advances. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced to Vremivka (immediately west of Velyka Novosilka).[51] Russian forces continued attacking near Velyka Novosilka itself, Vremivka, and Neskuchne (southwest of Velyka Novosilka) on January 14 and 15.[52]

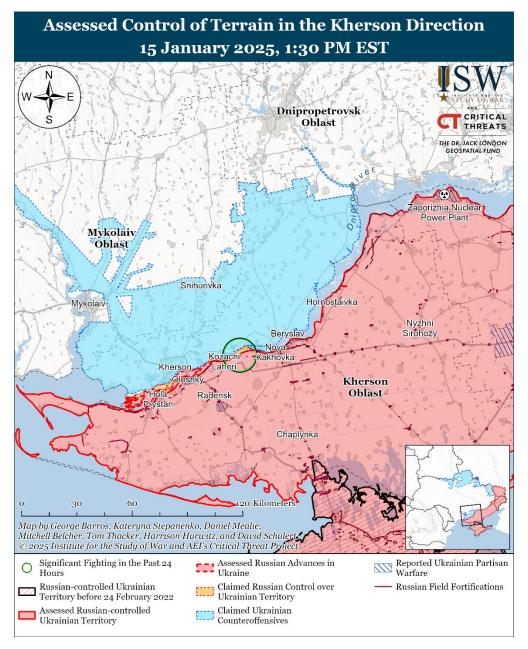


<u>Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis</u> (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Limited positional fighting continued in western Zaporizhia Oblast on January 14 and 15 but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline.[53] Scout elements of the Russian 42nd Motorized Rifle Division (58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating near Novodanylivka (north of Robotyne).[54]



Russian forces continued assaults in the Dnipro direction on January 14 and 15 but did not make any confirmed advances.[55]



The Crimea-based Ukrainian "Atesh" partisan organization reported on January 14 that Russian forces recently stationed unspecified military equipment at the Yevpatoria-Tovarna freight railway station in occupied Yevpatoria, Crimea.[56] Atesh reported that Russian forces recently incorporated the railway station into the Russian military's logistics network and added that Russian forces lacked adequate resources to provide security for the station.

<u>Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign</u> (Russian Objective: Target Ukrainian military and civilian infrastructure in the rear and on the frontline)

See topline text.

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

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated on January 15 that about 600,000 Russian soldiers are currently operating in Ukraine.[57] Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed in June 2024 that nearly 700,000 Russian soldiers were fighting in Ukraine.[58] Ukraine's Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Deputy Head Major General Vadym Skibitskyi reported in November 2024 that Russia had deployed nearly 580,000 personnel to Ukraine.[59]

Russian authorities continue efforts to expand the "Time of Heroes" veteran program aimed at militarizing federal, regional, and local branches of the Russian government. Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration Rector Alexey Komissarov reported on January 15 that over 17,500 Russian veterans have applied to participate in the Time of Heroes program so far during the November 15-to-January 25 application window.[60] Komissarov reported that over 61,000 Russian veterans have applied for the Time of Heroes program in total. The Time of Heroes program reported that Russian authorities already appointed 18 participants of its first cohort to positions in Russian federal and regional governments and that several others are preparing for new jobs.

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) continues to recruit foreigners to fight in its war against Ukraine. *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's* (RFE/RL) Sistema project reported on January 15 that a Central African Republic (CAR) citizen who fought in an assault company of the Russian 155th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet, Eastern Military District [EMD]) was killed in action near Novoivanovka, Kursk Oblast, marking the first confirmed case of a CAR citizen killed while fighting in Kursk Oblast since Ukraine's incursion in August 2024.[61] The CAR citizen's brother told Sistema that the soldier signed a military contract with Russia's Ministry of Defense (MoD) in September 2024, and a source close to the 155th Naval Infantry Brigade's command told Sistema that there are "plenty" more CAR citizens fighting in Kursk Oblast, but the exact number is unknown.[62]

Russian authorities are reportedly coercing Ukrainians detained in Russia to fight with the Russian military. Independent Belarusian media outlet *Vot Tak* reported on January 13 that Russian authorities have been preventing Ukrainians, who were recently released from Russian penal colonies, from leaving a migration center in Orenburg Oblast for months.[63] *Vot Tak* reported that representatives of the Russian MoD have been approaching the detained Ukrainians to offer freedom, money, and Russian citizenship in exchange for signing military contracts with the Russian MoD.

A Russia insider source blamed an officer of the Russian General Staff for the short training period for Russian servicemembers and claimed this contributed to Russia's failure to repel the Fall 2022 Ukrainian counteroffensive in Kharkiv Oblast. The insider source responded on January 15 to a recent complaint from a Russian milblogger and former Storm-Z instructor that the recent two-to-three-week training periods for Russian soldiers are inadequate.[64] The insider source claimed that the Head of the Russian General Staff's Main Organizational and Mobilization Directorate and Deputy Chief of the General Staff General Yevgeny Burdinsky is responsible for Russia's training failures, including building new brigades and formations entirely from new recruits rather than transferring experienced personnel from other units.[65] The insider source claimed that this failure prevented the Russian 3rd Army Corps (AC) (formed in late Summer 2022) from defending against the Fall 2022 Ukrainian counteroffensive in Kharkiv Oblast and rendered its 72nd, 85th, 88th, and 123rd motorized rifle brigades and 6th Motorized Rifle Division practically combat incapable. The insider source claimed that

Burdinsky only maintains his post due to his personal relationship with Russian Chief of the General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov.

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

Russia is attempting to expand its production of fiber-optic drones, which are resistant to electronic warfare (EW). Russian Ushkuynik Scientific and Production Center General Director Alexey Chadayev announced on January 15 that the center will begin producing the "Prince Vandal Novgorodsky" fiber-optic first-person-view (FPV) drone at several franchised assembly plants in several unspecified Russian regions, including some close to the frontline.[66]

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

ISW is not publishing coverage of activities in Russian-occupied areas today.

<u>Significant activity in Belarus</u> (Russian efforts to increase its military presence in Belarus and further integrate Belarus into Russian-favorable frameworks)

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.



- [1] https://t.me/kpszsu/26954
- [2] https://suspilne dot media/925379-zelenskij-rf-vipustila-ponad-40-raket-sered-cilej-gazova-infrastruktura-ta-energeticni-obekti/; https://t.me/V Zelenskiy official/12975
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