

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, January 18, 2024

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January 18, 2024, 7:30pm 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 1:00pm ET on January 18. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the January 19 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.

Please note that ISW has corrected the update to indicate that the "Tarantul-class corvette" was the "Project 205P Tarantul patrol boat." We apologize for the error.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov reiterated that Russia's maximalist objectives in Ukraine remain unchanged and that Russia is not interested in negotiations with Ukraine or the West. Lavrov stated at a press conference on January 18 that Russia "will achieve the goals of its 'special military operation' consistently and persistently."^[1] The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MFA) readout of this speech included a link to Russian President Vladimir Putin's February 24, 2022 speech in which Putin outlined Russia's goals of "demilitarizing" and "denazifying" Ukraine and his demand that NATO commit not to admit new members – goals which are tantamount to full Ukrainian and Western surrender.^[2] Lavrov reiterated that these goals are unchanged, claiming that "serious" talks about the "realistic" conditions for ending the war "presuppose [Ukraine's] renunciation of Nazi ideology, Nazi rhetoric, racism towards everything Russian, and entry into NATO."^[3] Lavrov attempted to justify these conditions as necessary for preserving the Ukrainian people's independence and identity, despite the fact that ISW has routinely documented how Russian forces and occupation officials have been engaging in large-scale and deliberate ethnic cleansing campaigns and efforts to eliminate the Ukrainian language, culture, history, and ethnicity in areas that Russian forces occupy.^[4] Lavrov also denied Ukraine's agency as a sovereign state, claiming that "it is not Ukraine that will decide when to stop and start talking [with Russia] seriously" about the end of the conflict, but that it is the West that will make this decision. Lavrov dismissed a question about recent media publications about the possibility of negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, stating that "rumors are just that - rumors." Lavrov claimed that the

West – not Russia – is to blame for the absence of negotiations and threateningly stated that “those [in the West] who refuse [to negotiate] must understand that the longer they wait, the harder it will be to negotiate” and that “there is no hope that Russia will be ‘defeated.’” Lavrov made similar statements on December 15, 2023, suggesting that the Kremlin believes that the longer the war continues, the more territory Russia will be able to occupy, and that the course of the war will increasingly weaken Ukraine’s negotiating position.[5]

Lavrov also claimed that support of the war has unified the Russian people and strengthened Russian identity. Lavrov claimed that the war contributed to the “cleansing of people who do not feel involved in” ethnic Russian history and culture and the history and culture of the Russian state.[6] Lavrov claimed that some of these people left Russia at the beginning of the war, but that an “overwhelming part of [Russian] society came together in an unprecedented way.” Lavrov’s statements are meant to frame Russian society as unified around the war, despite heavy Kremlin efforts to crack down on any dissent and disproportionately amplify factions who support the war. Lavrov’s statements also indicate that the Kremlin continues to lack a unified position about the return to Russia of those citizens who previously left, as some Kremlin officials, including Putin, have celebrated the trend of Russians returning from abroad, whereas others have publicly threatened them.[7]

The battlespace in Ukraine continues to be the center of the technological offense-defense race between Russian and Ukrainian forces. Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Deputy Chief Major General Vadym Skibitskyi stated on January 18 that Russian forces “learn quickly enough” and have completely adapted the Kh-101 air-launched cruise missile compared to the model that Russia used in 2022.[8] Skibitsky stated that new Kh-101s are equipped with an active electronic warfare (EW) system and “thermal traps” to prevent the missiles from emitting trackable heat signatures.[9] Skibitsky noted that Ukrainian forces need to innovate and adapt in response to Russian adaptations to “prevent the loss of territories.”[10] The GUR assessment of Russian technological innovation in the air domain is consistent with ISW’s previous observations that Russian forces are adapting their methods and means for conducting strikes on Ukraine, and that Ukraine in turn must adapt and innovate with Western support to respond to such strikes.[11] Moscow Duma Deputy Andrei Medvedev identified similar adaptation-response dynamics in a January 18 post where he discussed the use of drones by both Russian and Ukrainian forces.[12] Medvedev stated that Russia has opted for the mass production of drones, leading to the production of large numbers of drones that lack the technological adaptations needed to compete with Ukrainian drones based on battlefield experience. Medvedev noted that Ukrainian forces are constantly improving their drones and warned that constant Ukrainian innovation may eventually make Russian mass-produced drones ineffective. Medvedev’s discussion of the importance of constant technological adaptation and innovation on the battlefield emphasizes ISW’s assessment that Russian and Ukrainian forces are engaged in a technological and tactical offense-defense race.[13]

Recent widespread GPS disruptions across Poland and the Baltic region are prompting speculation about the potential operation of Russian electronic warfare (EW) systems in the region. Polish outlet *Radio Zet* cited data from the GPSJAM GPS interference tracking site on January 16 that showed unprecedentedly high levels of GPS jamming across northern and eastern Poland, including across Warsaw and as far south as Łódź.[14] GPSJAM data also shows similarly high levels of GPS jamming across the southern Baltic Sea and northwestern and central Poland between December 25-27, 2023, and on January 10, 2024.[15] Polish media outlets suggested that the December 2023 outages may have been caused either by unspecified NATO military exercises in the

Baltic region or could be linked to recent Russian EW tests in the Kaliningrad region.[16] Swedish Military Intelligence and Security Service (MUST) opened a case into the disturbances on January 12 in light of Russian Baltic Fleet EW exercises.[17] Swedish Lieutenant Colonel Joakim Paasikivi stated on January 6 that he believes that recent GPS interference levels are a result of "Russian influence activities or so-called hybrid warfare," and noted that Russia has previously interfered with GPS signals in northern Europe to protect Russian activities in Murmansk Oblast or disrupt NATO exercises.[18] Russian media reported that elements of the Russian Baltic Fleet have been training with the Borisoglebsk-2 EW system in Kaliningrad Oblast since mid-December 2023, which some sources linked to the disturbances.[19] ISW cannot independently verify the cause of the GPS jamming levels at this time, but the suggestion that Russian EW capabilities in Kaliningrad Oblast could so significantly impact Poland and the Baltic region is notable.

The French Ministry of Defense (MoD) announced on January 18 that it launched an “artillery coalition” to strengthen support for Ukraine amid continued Ukrainian statements that Russian forces in Ukraine have superior artillery capabilities.[20] The French MoD stated that it launched the “Artillery for Ukraine” coalition – one of five "capability" coalitions within the Contact Group for the Defense of Ukraine, which also include coalitions that aim to help support Ukraine with air defense, armored vehicles, air force capabilities, and maritime security.[21] The French MoD stated the “artillery coalition,” which France will co-chair with the US, will provide Ukrainian forces with artillery capabilities in the short term and aims to build out Ukrainian artillery capabilities in the long term through industrial partnerships.[22] French Defense Minister Sebastien Lecornu also announced that France will deliver six Caesar artillery systems to Ukraine in the coming weeks and supply 50 AASM Hammer glide bombs to Ukraine per month starting in January 2024.[23] Lecornu stated that France can produce 72 Caesar artillery systems for Ukraine in 2024 and will spend 50 million euros (\$54.3 million) to finance the production of 12 of the Caesar systems, but that France will need partner support to finance the 60 other systems.[24]

Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov stated that ammunition shortages are an urgent problem for Ukrainian forces and that Russian efforts to expand Russia’s defense industrial base (DIB) have enabled Russian forces to launch tens of thousands of artillery projectiles at Ukrainian positions every day.[25] Umerov stated that Russian artillery fire exceeds Ukrainian artillery fire at ratios between five-to-one and ten-to-one depending on the sector of the front and combat intensity.[26] Ukrainian officials have previously indicated that a combination of artillery ammunition shortages and delays in the provision of Western security assistance is likely causing Ukrainian forces to husband materiel.[27] Umerov stated that improved artillery capabilities are a key necessity for winning the war and that Ukraine is pursuing efforts to expand shell production.[28] Ukraine is also currently expanding its production of first-person view (FPV) drones to offset the impacts of artillery ammunition shortages with the goal of producing one million FPV drones in 2024.[29]

Ukrainian partisans and satellite imagery confirmed that Ukrainian strikes against occupied Crimea in late December 2023 sank a Russian Project 205P Tarantul patrol boat near Sevastopol. The Crimean-based “Atesh” Ukrainian partisan group reported on January 18 that it discovered a sunken Tarantul patrol boat in Hrafska Bay, Sevastopol, and satellite imagery of the Atesh-provided coordinates confirms that the corvette sank between December 28 and 31, 2023.[30] Russian and Crimean occupation officials claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian air and naval drone strikes against Sevastopol on December 28 and 30, 2023.[31] This confirmation

of a previously unaccounted-for successful Ukrainian strike indicates that Ukraine's recent strike campaign against occupied Crimea may have been more successful than has been confirmed thus far by open sources.[32] Ukrainian forces previously conducted a successful strike campaign against Russian Black Sea Fleet (BSF) assets in summer 2023 that forced Russian forces to move ships away from its main base in occupied Sevastopol, Crimea.[33]

The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reportedly conducted a successful drone strike on Russian military facilities in Leningrad Oblast on January 18. A source within the GUR told Ukrainian outlet *Suspilne* on January 18 that there were confirmed strikes against unspecified targets in Leningrad Oblast and noted that Russian military facilities in St. Petersburg are "within reach" of Ukrainian forces.[34] Russian media stated that Russian electronic warfare (EW) systems suppressed two Ukrainian drones over the Gulf of Finland and that Russian forces shot down a third Ukrainian drone near the St. Petersburg oil terminal.[35] A Russian source claimed that this is the first attempted Ukrainian strike on Leningrad Oblast in the course of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.[36] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that it intercepted one drone over Leningrad Oblast in the early morning hours of January 18.[37]

Russian forces conducted a series of drone and missile strikes against Ukraine on the night of January 17 to 18. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched 33 Shahed-136/131 drones at unspecified targets throughout Ukraine and two S-300 ground-to-air missiles in the direction of Kharkiv Oblast.[38] Ukrainian air defenses downed 22 Shaheds and an unspecified number of Shaheds did not strike their intended targets.[39] Ukrainian Kharkiv Oblast Military Administration Head Oleh Synhubov reported that Russian S-300 missiles struck Chuhuiv in Kharkiv Oblast.[40]

The European Union (EU) Parliament voted to endorse another step in a rule of law procedure that could eventually suspend Hungary's voting rights after Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán vetoed an EU vote for further military assistance to Ukraine. The EU Parliament endorsed both a condemnation of Orbán's recent veto of assistance to Ukraine and a nonbinding resolution that calls on EU member states to "take action and to determine whether Hungary has committed serious and persistent breaches of EU values" in accordance with the EU's rule of law framework.[41] The EU rule of law framework establishes a three-step process, including an assessment, recommendation, and follow-up monitoring, to determine and prevent any threats to the rule of law in the EU.[42] The EU notably declared in 2022 that it can no longer consider Hungary a "full democracy" but rather a "hybrid regime of electoral autocracy," as Hungary's "respect for democratic norms and standards is absent." [43] *Reuters* noted that a possible deprivation of Hungary's EU voting rights through this procedure in accordance with EU Treaty Article 7 is unlikely to occur quickly and that the EU vote aims to pressure Orbán ahead of the EU leaders' summit on February 1, which will include discussions for further assistance to Ukraine.[44]

Russia and the Central African Republic (CAR) are in negotiations regarding Russian military basing in CAR. Russian Ambassador to CAR Alexander Bikantov stated that Russia's and CAR's defense ministries are discussing the creation of a Russian military base in CAR and are currently selecting the base's location.[45] Russian outlet *RBK* reported that the Russian Embassy in CAR stated that Russian and Central African officials have not yet finalized the size of the potential Russian contingent in CAR or the date of its arrival.[46] Kremlin-backed outlet *Africa Initiative* reported on January 16 that CAR Presidential Advisor Fidel Ngouandika stated that CAR wants Russia to build a military base in the country and that CAR's government has "already provided

a site in Beringo, 80km from Bangui, where there is an international airport.”[47] The site in Beringo reportedly can accommodate up to 10,000 personnel.[48] The Kremlin continues efforts to expand Russia’s influence in Africa through the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) controlled Africa Corps and is likely attempting to expand the Africa Corps’ operations in Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, and CAR.[49] The Russian military’s apparent ability to negotiate deploying expeditionary forces to the CAR indicates that Russia has offset some of the acute manpower shortages that the Russian military experienced in 2022 and 2023. The Russian military hastily redeployed forces from Russia’s (small) foreign bases in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan Armenia, and Syria, to Russia in 2022, likely in response to acute personnel shortages from Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.[50]

Key Takeaways:

- **Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov reiterated that Russia’s maximalist objectives in Ukraine remain unchanged and that Russia is not interested in negotiations with Ukraine or the West.**
- **The battlespace in Ukraine continues to be the center of the technological offense-defense race between Russian and Ukrainian forces.**
- **Recent widespread GPS disruptions across Poland and the Baltic region are prompting speculation about the potential operation of Russian electronic warfare (EW) systems in the region.**
- **The French Ministry of Defense (MoD) announced on January 18 that it launched an “artillery coalition” to strengthen support for Ukraine amid continued Ukrainian statements that Russian forces in Ukraine have superior artillery capabilities.**
- **Ukrainian partisans and satellite imagery confirmed that Ukrainian strikes against occupied Crimea in late December 2023 sank a Russian Project 205P Tarantul patrol boat near Sevastopol.**
- **The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reportedly conducted a successful drone strike on Russian military facilities in Leningrad Oblast on January 18.**
- **The European Union (EU) Parliament voted to endorse another step in a rule of law procedure that could eventually suspend Hungary’s voting rights after Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán vetoed an EU vote for further military assistance to Ukraine.**
- **Russia and the Central African Republic (CAR) are in negotiations regarding Russian military basing in CAR.**
- **Russian forces made confirmed advances near Bakhmut, Avdiivka, and the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area amid continued positional engagements along the front.**
- **Russian officials continue to target naturalized migrants as part of ongoing crypto-mobilization efforts.**
- **Russian occupation authorities continue efforts to restore logistics infrastructure in occupied Ukraine.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of January 18, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

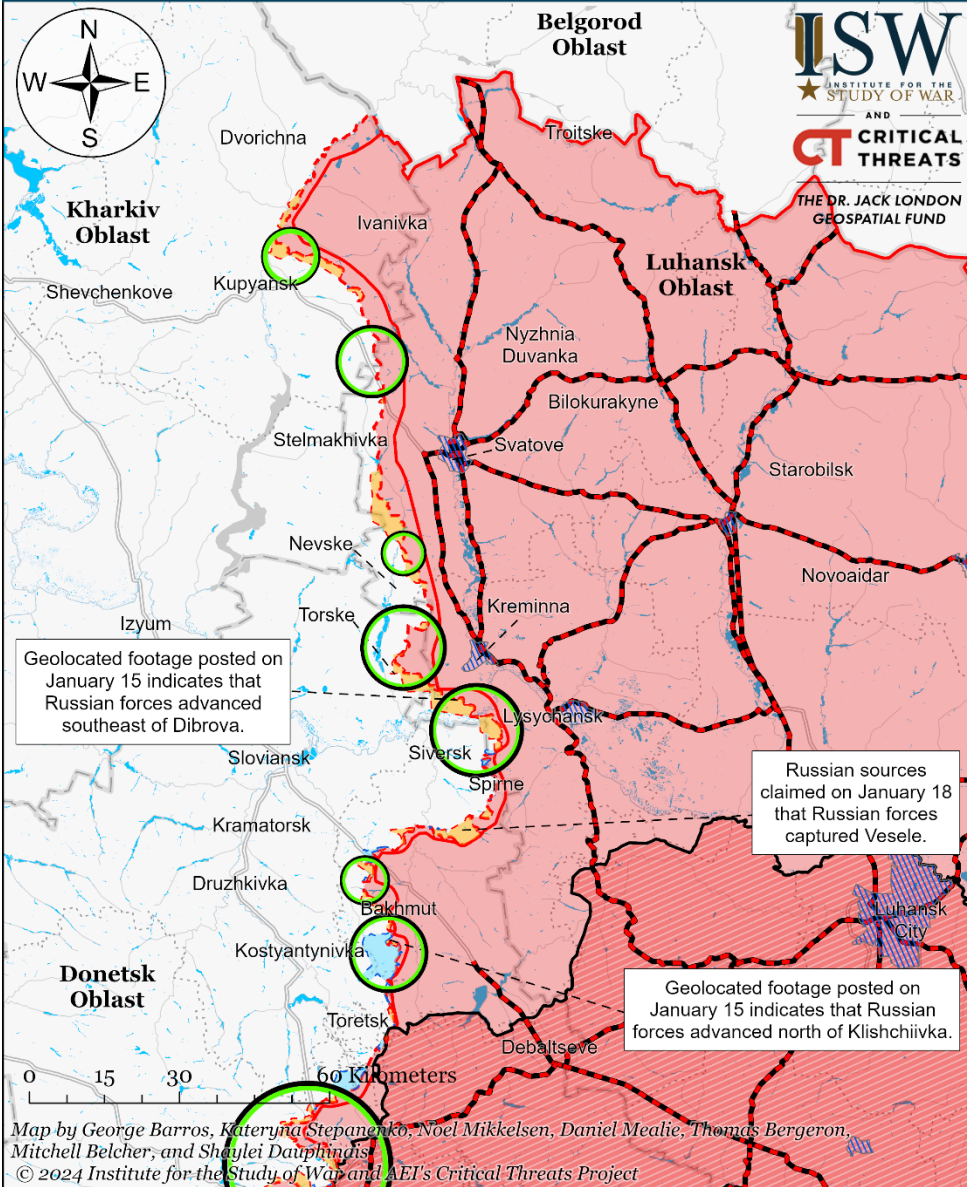
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety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

Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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

Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional engagements along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on January 18, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional fighting continued northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka; east of Kupyansk near Petropavlivka; southeast of Kupyansk near Tabaivka and Berestove; northwest of Kreminna near Makiivka; west of Kreminna near Terny, Torske, and Yampolivka; southwest of Kreminna near Dibrova and the Serebryanske forest area; and south of Kreminna near Hryhorivka and Bilohorivka (12km south of Kreminna).[51] A Russian source claimed that Russian forces are seven kilometers away from Kupyansk, although open sources have only permitted ISW to assess that the closest Russian positions near Kupyansk are roughly eight kilometers from the settlement.[52] Ukrainian Ground Forces Commander Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi stated that Russian forces continue concentrating their offensive actions in the Kupyansk direction on capturing Synkivka.[53] Ukrainian Ground Forces Command Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Volodymyr Fityo stated that Russian forces conducted 54 drone strikes in the Kupyansk and Lyman directions whereas Russian forces previously did not launch more than 30 drone strikes in a day.[54] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces in the Lyman direction are focusing offensive operations on Bilohorivka and intend to encircle and capture the rest of the settlement.[55]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of January 18, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



- 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.

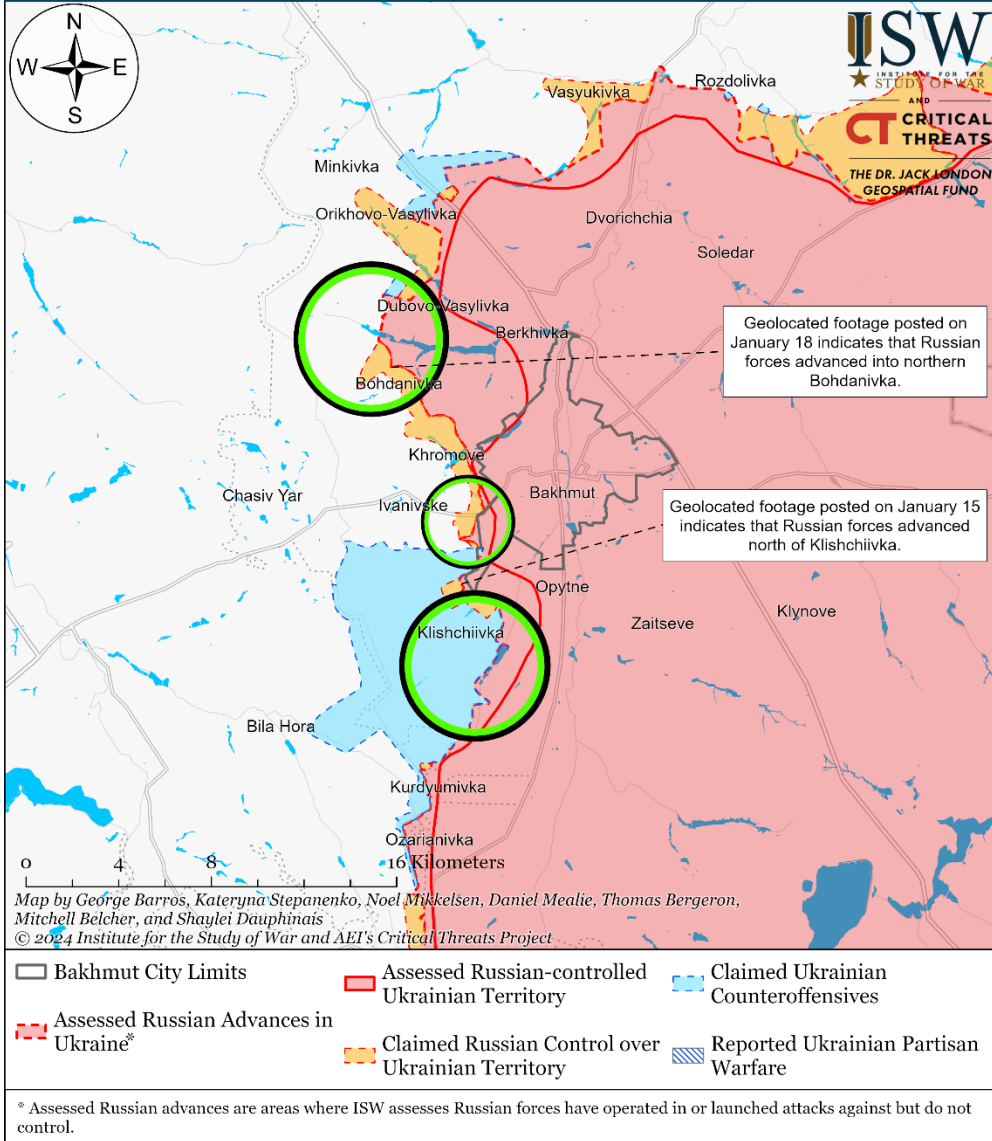
Note: North Ossetian volunteer battalions "Storm Ossetia" and "Alania" claimed on January 18 that Russian forces are within seven kilometers of Kupyansk. A Russian source claimed on January 16 that Russian forces advanced up to 1.7 kilometers along a 2.2-kilometers-wide front near Makiivka, citing unspecified Ukrainian sources.

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

Russian sources, including the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), claimed that Russian forces captured Vesele (northeast of Bakhmut) on January 18, but ISW has not yet observed visual confirmation of this claim.[56] *RT* Editor-in-chief and veteran Russian propagandist Margarita Simonyan claimed that the capture of Vesele is important because it will give Russian forces access to the T0513 Siversk-Bakhmut road and open a new route of attack towards Siversk itself (23km north of Vesele).[57] Russian forces’ prospects for conducting operationally significant offensive towards Siversk in the near term are doubtful, however. Russian forces have held positions 9 kilometers east of Siversk for a considerable amount of time but have not been able to significantly threaten Siversk from their current positions, so the purported capture of Vesele (which is further away from Siversk than other Russian positions) is unlikely to substantially aid a potential Russian effort to advance towards Siversk in the near term. The terrain immediately west of Vesele that Russian forces would need to cross to reach the T0513 route is additionally uphill on local tactical heights that Ukrainian forces currently control, which could complicate Russian forces' ability to advance. One Russian milblogger claimed that Vesele is still a contested grey zone, however.[58] Russian milbloggers reported heavy fighting on the outskirts of Vesele and near Spirne (northeast of Vesele).[59]

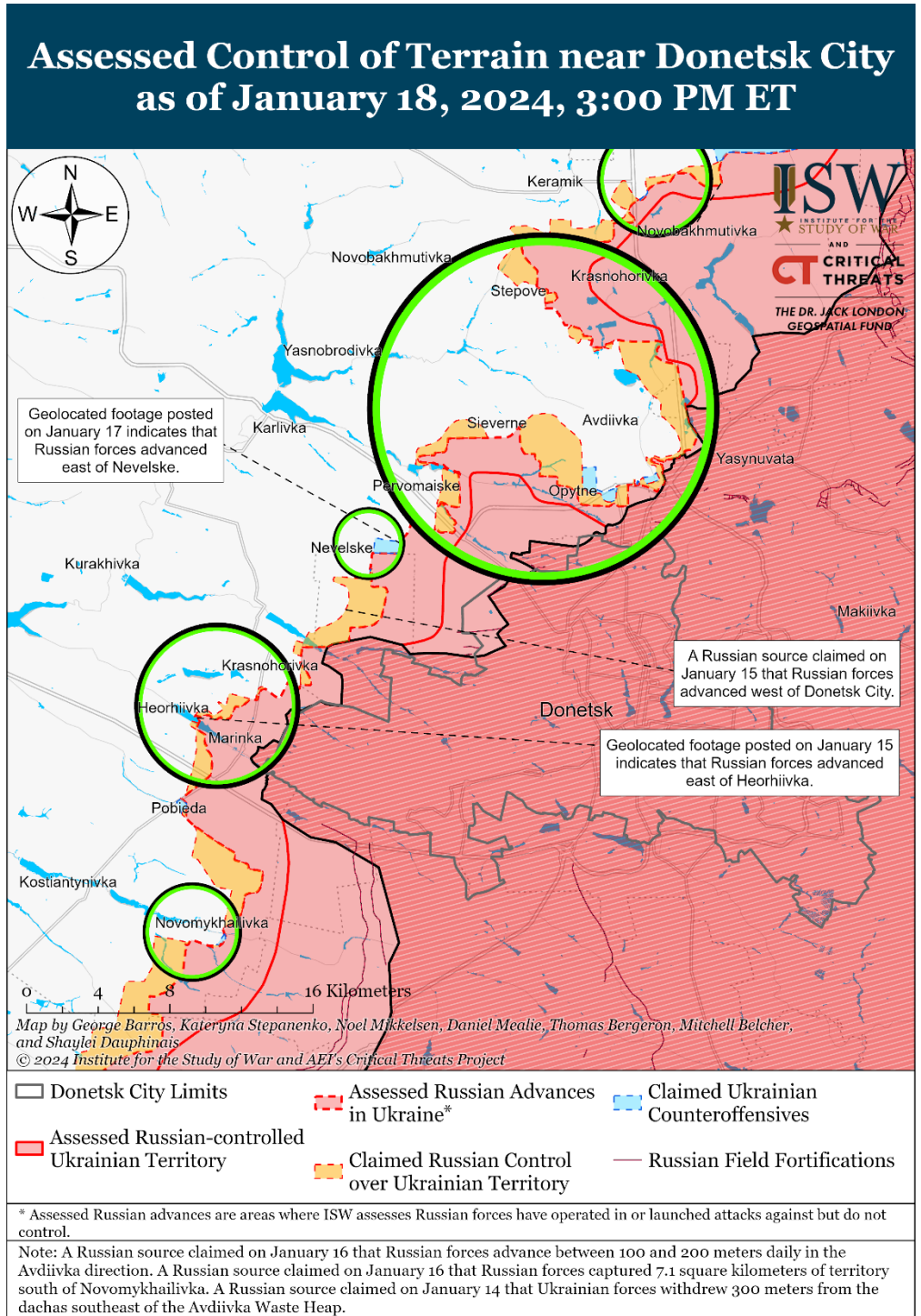
Russian forces recently made a confirmed advance northwest of Bakhmut. Geolocated footage published on January 17 shows that Russian forces recently made a marginal gain in the residential area in northern Bohdanivka (northwest of Bakhmut).[60] Ukrainian Ground Forces Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Volodymyr Fityo reported on January 18 that Russian forces continue to intensify their efforts in the Bakhmut direction.[61] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Russian forces are trying to take control of the O0506 Khromove-Chasiv Yar route.[62] Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional engagements continued northwest of Bakhmut near Hryhorivka and Bohdanivka, west of Bakhmut near Khromove and Ivanivske, and southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka and Andriivka.[63] Elements of the Russian 98th Guards Airborne (VDV) Division are reportedly operating northwest of Bakhmut.[64]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of January 18, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



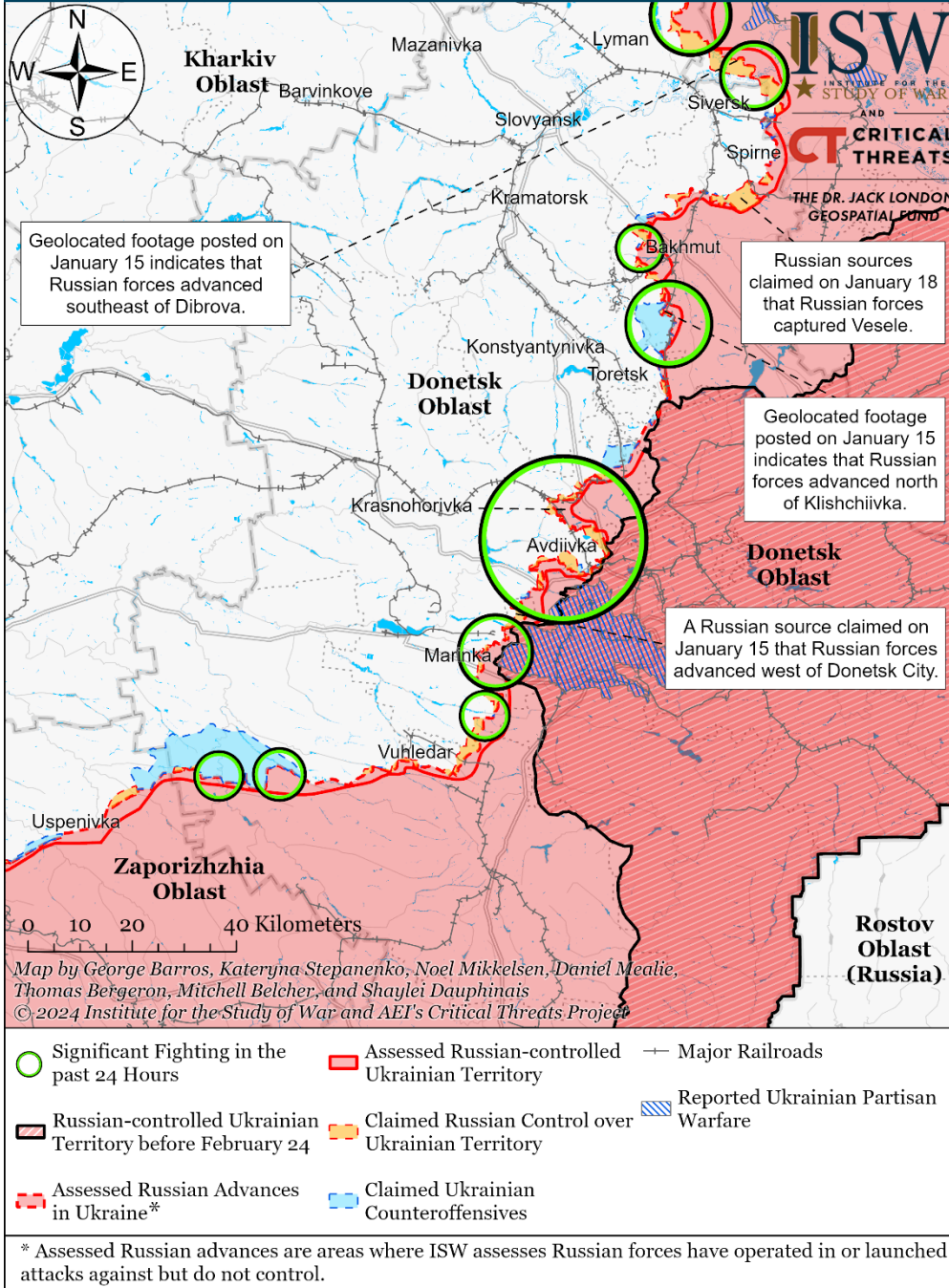
Russian forces recently made a confirmed advance southwest of Avdiivka. Geolocated footage published on January 17 shows Russian forces assaulting and capturing a position east of Nevelske (southwest of Avdiivka).[65] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Commander Brigadier General Oleksandr Tarnavskiy stated on January 18 that Russian forces likely in the Avdiivka direction are actively using armored vehicles to support and deploy dismounted infantry and that these tactics have led Russian forces to lose 41 armored vehicles, including 17 tanks, in the area in the past three days.[66] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun noted that Russian forces typically use one or two tanks, several armored personnel carriers, and MT-LBs (tracked armored fighting vehicles) to transport infantry before withdrawing quickly, upon which

Ukrainian forces strike the armored vehicles.[67] Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional engagements continued northwest of Avdiivka near Stepove, Novokalynove, and Novobakhmutivka; near the Coke Plant in northwestern Avdiivka and the industrial zone in southeastern Avdiivka; west of Avdiivka near Sieverne; and southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske and Nevelske.[68]



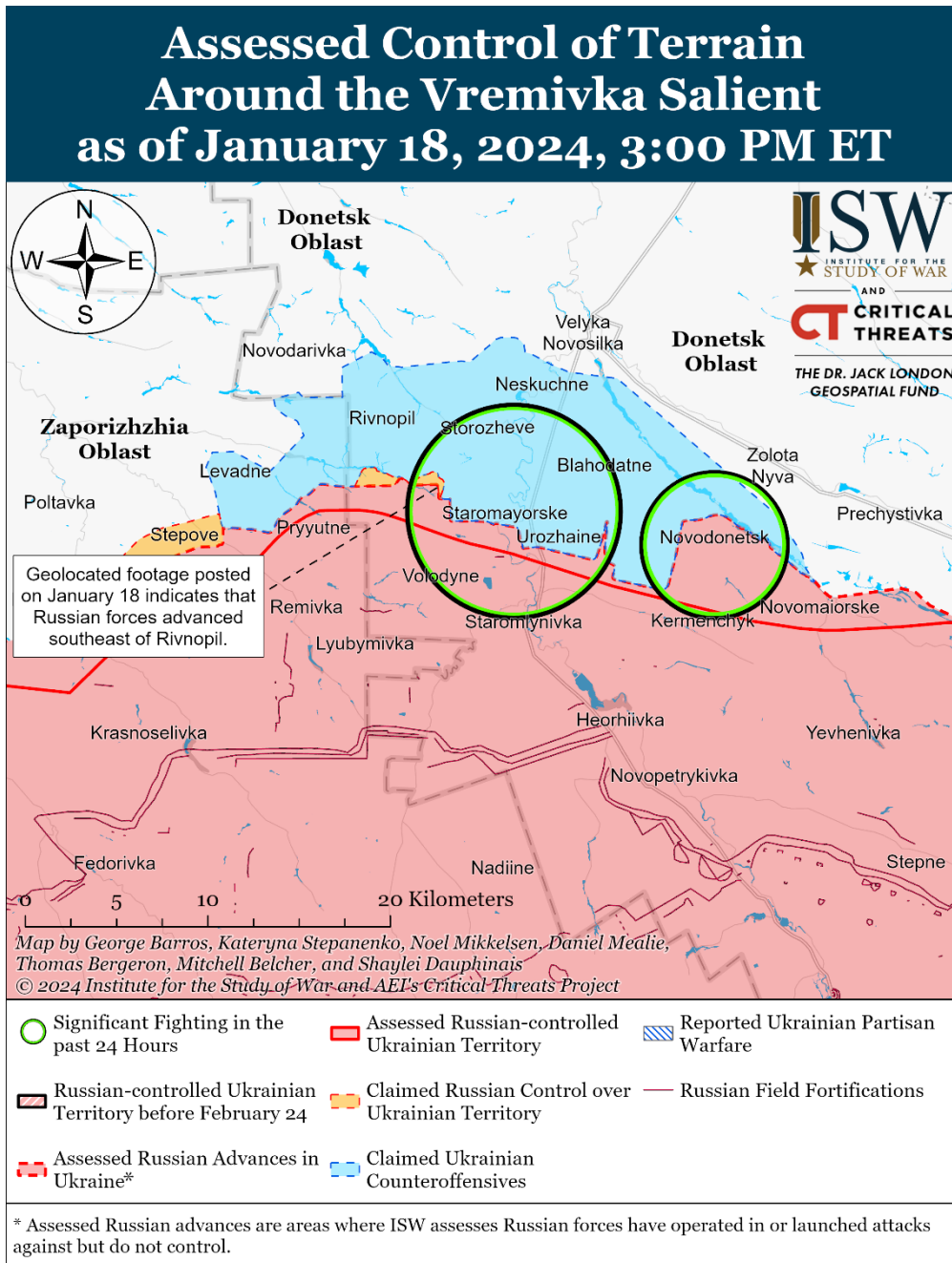
Positional engagements continued west and southwest of Donetsk City on January 18, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that fighting continued near Marinka, Heorhiivka, and Krasnohorivka (all west of Donetsk City) and Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City).[69] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces are trying to develop an offensive towards Kurakhove (15km west of Marinka) and are trying to bypass Novomykhailivka from the south while attacking from the north.[70]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of January 18, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



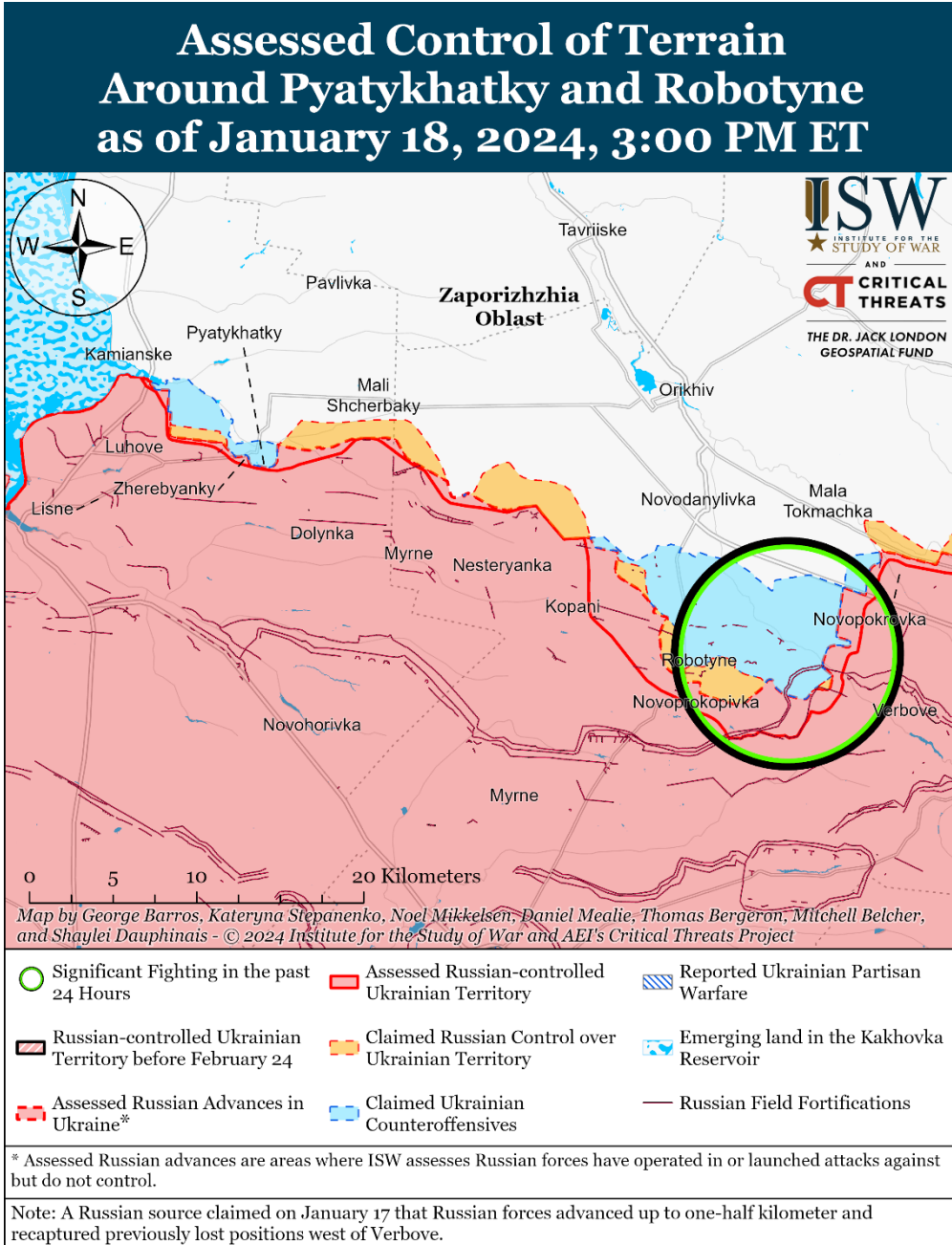
Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Positional fighting continued in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area on January 18. Geolocated footage published on January 18 shows that Russian forces previously marginally advanced southeast of Rivnopil (southwest of Velyka Novosilka), but this is unlikely a recent advance.[71] Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional fighting continued west of Staromayorske and south of Urozhaine (both south of Velyka Novosilka) as well as north of Novodonetske (southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[72]

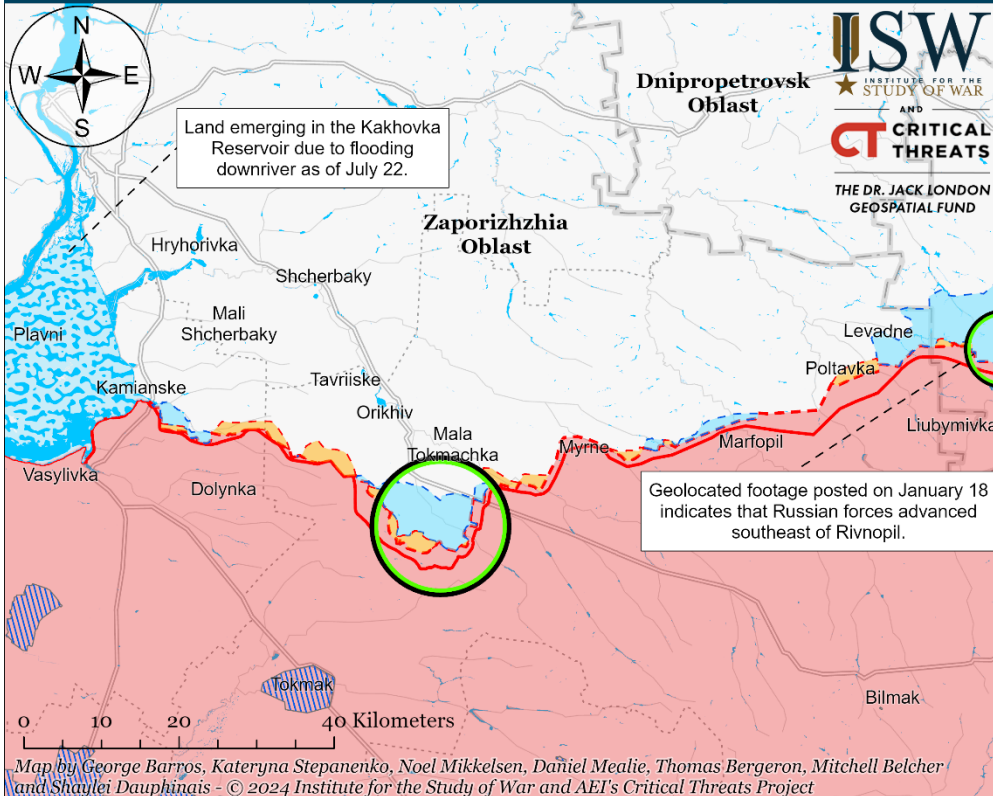


Positional fighting continued in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on January 18, but there were no confirmed changes to the front line. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional fighting continued near Robotyne; northwest of Robotyne near Pyatykhatky; south of Robotyne near

Novopokopivka; and east of Robotyne near Verbove.[73] Elements of the Russian 429th Motorized Rifle Regiment (19th Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) reportedly operate in the Zaporizhia direction, and elements of the Chechen “Vostok-Akhmat” Battalion reportedly operate in the Robotyne direction.[74]



Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of January 18, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

- 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

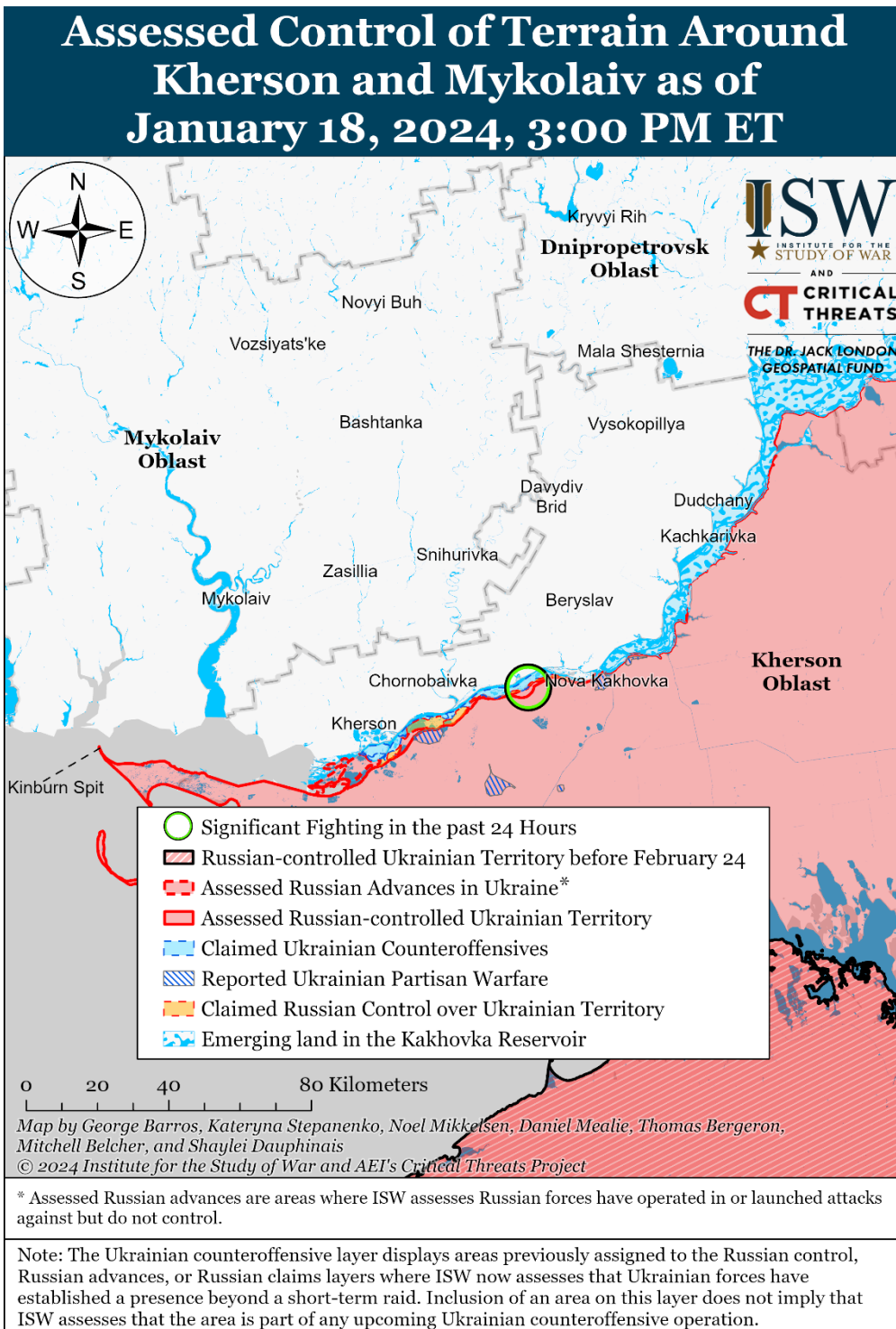
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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.

Ukrainian and Russian forces continued positional engagements on the east (left) bank of the Dniester River on January 18. Russian milbloggers claimed that an element of the Russian 810th Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet) made a partial advance into Krynky but that Ukrainian forces still firmly control positions within the settlement.[75] ISW has still not observed confirmation of this claimed Russian advance into Krynky. Geolocated footage published on January 18 shows that a Ukrainian HIMARS strike destroyed a Russian electronic warfare (EW) system in Nova Kakhovka.[76]

Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat stated on January 17 that Ukraine's recent destruction of a Russian A-50 long-range radar detection aircraft and Il-22 airborne command post aircraft has temporarily degraded Russia's air operations over the Sea of Azov.[77] Ihnat stated that

only one or two Russian planes currently patrol the Sea of Azov. Ihnat stated that Russian forces previously flew two A-50s near the Sea of Azov in conjunction with an Il-22 as well as a third A-50 in eastern Ukraine.[78] Ihnat noted that Russian forces will adapt to the loss of these aircraft, however.



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

Russian officials continue to target naturalized migrants as part of ongoing crypto-mobilization efforts. Russian opposition outlet *Astra* stated on January 18 that Russian officials issued military summonses to at least 15 foreigners immediately after their citizenship ceremony in St. Petersburg.[79] Russian officials similarly issued summonses at a naturalization ceremony in St. Petersburg on December 20.[80] ISW continues to assess that the Russian government is struggling to reconcile the discordant and competing objectives of exploiting migrant labor to alleviate Russian labor shortages and prioritizing crypto-mobilization efforts to send migrants to the frontline.[81]

Select former Wagner Group fighters are reportedly trying to maintain their clout within Russian regular units. Russian human rights project *Gulagu.net* stated on January 18 that former Wagner Group penal recruits, who are reportedly now serving in an assault company in the 331st Airborne (VDV) Regiment in Ukraine, sent a video message and evidence to *Gulagu.net* about how the former Wagner fighters conducted an independent “special operation” to detain Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR) Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) State Road Safety Inspectorate police lieutenant Alexander Makartsev, who, they claimed, trafficked drugs to Russian military personnel in occupied Luhansk Oblast.[82] *Gulagu.net* stated that the former Wagner fighters claimed that they handed over evidence to the Federal Security Service (FSB)’s military counterintelligence department but that the FSB turned them away. *Gulagu.net* stated that Makartsev’s relatives reported him missing and claimed that the former Wagner fighters stole 500,000 rubles and gold from him. The Russian Special Rapid Reaction Squad (SOBR) and MVD Internal Security Department reportedly opened a case against the former Wagner fighters and detained two of them for robbery and kidnapping. *Gulagu.net* stated that the former Wagner fighters appealed to *Gulagu.net* because Russian Special Rapid Reaction Squad (SOBR) and Spetsnaz units are allegedly going to “storm” (likely prosecute) them.

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

Kremlin newswire *TASS* reported on January 18 that the Russian Stratim Design Bureau has begun development of a budget analogue of the Iranian Shahed drone called the “Yastreb” (Hawk) with a range of 350 kilometers.[83] Stratim stated that prototype flight tests are currently ongoing, and that there are plans to begin flight tests on a finished, redesigned product in the first half of 2024. Stratim claimed that Russian forces will use the Yastreb drone as a decoy to distract Ukrainian air defense systems – a tactic Russian forces have employed previously in strike series in Ukraine.[84]

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu visited the “Raduga” State Machine Building Design Bureau (GosMKB “Raduga”), a subsidiary of Tactical Missile Corporation (KTRV), in Moscow Oblast on January 18.[85] KTRV General Director Boris Obnosov responded to Shoigu’s demand that the enterprise increase the range of an unspecified weapon from 250 kilometers to over 300 kilometers, claiming that they have already tested an unspecified weapon with a range of 310 kilometers. Obnosov claimed that GosMKB “Raduga” has reduced the cost of this weapon’s production and increased its warhead from 450 kilograms to 800 kilograms. GosMKB “Raduga” General Director Sergei Bogatikov claimed that the enterprise has doubled its workforce, bought new test equipment and tools, increased its production space, and established 12-hour shifts that allow for 24-hour operations and increased production. Bogatikov claimed that some indicators show that GosMKB “Raduga” increased its production volume of high-precision weapons by a multiple of eight since the beginning of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

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.

Ukrainian National Defense and Security Council Secretary Oleksiy Danilov stated on January 18 that Ukraine is one of the top three drone manufacturers in the world and that private companies in Ukraine are currently supplying weapons to Ukrainian forces.[86] The Kyiv City Council announced that it will allocate 500 million hryvnias (\$13.27 million) to purchase drones for Ukrainian forces in 2024.[87]

Ukrainian First Deputy Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko stated on January 18 that Ukraine is focused on developing its defense industrial base (DIB) in 2024 and plans to launch five joint ventures with Western arms manufacturers in Ukraine, including technological exchange partnerships with Day and Zimmermann, Northrop Grumman, Lockheed Martin, and Raytheon.[88]

Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski stated on January 18 that Poland is preparing a new military assistance package for Ukraine and plans to increase its own domestic production of ammunition and military equipment.[89]

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

Russian occupation authorities continue efforts to restore logistics infrastructure in occupied Ukraine. Russian rail company Novorossiia Railways' Luhansk Oblast branch First Deputy Director Nikolai Baboido claimed that Russia has begun restoring railway tracks in occupied Luhansk Oblast as part of the "Railways of Novorossiia" initiative and that Russia intends to build a railway between Moscow and Luhansk City.[90] The establishment of new rail lines in occupied Ukraine will increase the difficulty for Ukrainian forces to disrupt Russian logistics as new Russian construction will reduce vulnerabilities from existing infrastructure bottlenecks.

Russian occupation authorities continue efforts to crack down against pro-Ukrainian actors and strengthen control of the information space in occupied Ukraine. Ukrainian Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov reported that a new Russian law will allow Russian federal censor Rozkomnadzor to track down "dissenters" in occupied Ukraine by IP address through local internet providers and track users' online activities and locations.[91] The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported that Russian forces are trying to strengthen counterintelligence activities in occupied Ukraine and plan to increase the number of mobile groups conducting searches of locals.[92]

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian sources are attempting to portray Armenia as regretful for its "mistakes" in straying away from Russia while casting Russian-led peace negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan as more

“promising” than Western efforts. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov claimed on January 18 that Western advice is hindering the normalization of Armenia-Azerbaijan relations and claimed that Russian-led negotiations are “promising.”[93] The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) announced on January 17 that Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Galuzin met with Armenian Ambassador to Russia Vagharshak Harutyunyan to discuss Armenian-Azerbaijani normalization and the revival of the trilateral Russian-Armenian-Azerbaijani negotiation format.[94] Russian milbloggers claimed on January 18 that the meeting indicates that Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan is ready to “grovel” and “bow down to Moscow,” although one milblogger warned that Armenia’s renewed interest in Russian-led negotiations could be a “diplomatic trap.”[95]

Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukraine is conducting information operations to spoil Russian influence in Kazakhstan.[96] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian information operations are using “any excuses and means” possible to spread “Russophobia” in Kazakhstan and that the West is attempting to surround Russia with a “hostile circle of states.”[97] Another prominent Russian milblogger baselessly claimed that the United Kingdom controls Ukraine’s anti-Russian information operations in Kazakhstan.[98] Russian milbloggers have recently criticized the Kazakh government for efforts to rename rail stations to Kazakh language names from Russian names and have accused Kazakhstan of increasingly drifting towards the West.[99]

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

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko repeatedly emphasized on January 18 that Belarus is a sovereign country during discussions about ongoing Russia-Belarus Union State integration efforts.[100] Lukashenko has routinely attempted to underscore that Belarus is a sovereign state and equal partner to Russia within the Union State structure amid the Kremlin’s efforts to exert control and achieve Russia’s desired *de facto* annexation of Belarus.[101]

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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