

## Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, January 2

George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Angela Howard, Grace Mappes, Layne Philipson, and Frederick W. Kagan  
January 2, 7 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 air defenses reportedly intercepted all drones from two consecutive nights of Russian drone strike attacks against Ukraine on December 31 – January 2.** Ukraine's air force reported on January 1 that Ukrainian air defense forces shot down all 45 Russian Iranian-made Shahed-136 drones that Russia fired at Ukraine on New Year's Eve.[1] Ukrainian Air Force Spokesman Yuriy Ignat stated on January 1 that Ukrainian forces used the US-provided NASAMS air defense system to shoot down these drones.[2] The Ukrainian General Staff reported on January 2 that Ukrainian forces intercepted all 39 Shahed-136 drones launched against Ukraine between the night of January 1 and 2.[3] The Ukrainian General Staff again reported on January 2 that Ukrainian forces shot down all 27 Shahed-136 drones that Russian forces launched against Ukraine on January 2, though it is unclear if this figure includes the previously reported intercepts from the night between January 1 and 2.[4] Deputy Head of the Ukrainian Main Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Vadym Skibitsky reiterated on January 1 that Russian forces only have enough cruise missiles to conduct two to three more large-scale missile attacks against Ukraine.[5]

**Russia's air and missile campaign against Ukraine is likely not generating the Kremlin's desired information effects among Russia's nationalists.** Russian forces conducted a cruise missile strike against an object in Khmelnytskyi Oblast — reportedly a base of the Ukrainian 8th Separate Special Forces Regiment — on December 31.[6] A Russian milblogger stated that the strike, while well-executed and a good information operation, is too little too late.[7] The blogger argued that Russia needed to systematically conduct such strikes earlier on in the war, that the strike should have had follow-up strikes to ensure maximum damage, and that the timing of this strike was inopportune since Ukrainian elements were unlikely to be at the base on New Year's Eve.[8] The blogger noted that this was not the first time that Russian forces failed to deliver effective strikes due to an absence of secondary strikes and that Russia should generally be more thorough in its destruction.[9]

**A devastating Ukrainian HIMARS strike on a Russian base in Makiivka, Donetsk Oblast, on December 31 generated significant criticism of Russian military leadership in the Russian information space.** The Ukrainian General Staff reported that a Ukrainian precision strike on a Russian manpower and military equipment concentration point in Makiivka destroyed up to 10 pieces of equipment but did not release an official casualty number as of January 2.[10] The Department of Strategic Communications of the Ukrainian Armed Forces stated on January 1 that the strike killed 400 mobilized personnel and injured 300.[11] Geolocated footage published on January 1 also placed the aftermath of the strike at the Vocational School No. 19, fewer than 13km east of the frontline.[12] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) acknowledged the strike, claiming that four of the six rockets killed 63 Russian servicemen.[13] Samara Oblast Governor Dmitry Azarov confirmed that among the deceased servicemen are residents of the oblast, and some Russian sources claimed that 600 servicemen of a mobilization regiment were in the school building at the time of the strike.[14] Some milbloggers claimed that the death count was about 110, with over 100 wounded personnel.[15]

**The Russian MoD is likely attempting to deflect the blame for its poor operational security (OPSEC) onto Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) officials and mobilized forces.** DNR law enforcement officials told Russian state wires that the strike occurred when Russian servicemen violated operational security by using personal cell phones, allowing Ukrainian forces to conduct a precision strike at the base.[16] Kremlin-leaning outlets and some milbloggers amplified the claim, stating that Russian forces should not underestimate the Ukrainian ability to exploit poor OPSEC practices on the frontlines and called on the Kremlin to introduce stricter guidelines on cell phone use among servicemen.[17] Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) Deputy Interior Minister Vitaly Kiselyov amplified milblogger reports that military commanders are demanding the resignation of DNR Head Denis Pushilin.[18] Some DNR public officials have also called for the punishment of the official who had decided to use the school.[19] The Russian MoD may have deliberately relied on the DNR officials to blame OPSEC violations on mobilized servicemen for the attack in an effort to make the DNR the responsible party.

**The Russian MoD's vague acknowledgment of the strike generated criticism towards the Russian military command, however.** Wagner-affiliated milbloggers stated that Russian military command had made it easy for the Ukrainian forces to strike several hundred servicemen in one location, calling the DNR explanation of cell phone usage a "lie." [20] A former Russian officer had also stated that Russian forces stored ammunition in the school's basement, enabling the devastating strike.[21] Other milbloggers stated that the Russian command witnessed similar strikes throughout the

past 11 months but were “criminally negligent” and failed to disperse the Russian forces quartered in Makiivka into smaller groups further in the rear.[22] Several milbloggers referred to a Putin statement about the necessity for the Ministry of Defense (MoD) to take accountability and listen to criticism on December 21 while calling on the Kremlin to punish the commander responsible for the OPSEC failures.[23] Wagner financier and avid critic of the Russian military command, Yevgeniy Prigozhin, offered an uncharacteristic and vague comment about the situation — stating that he could not reveal how Wagner prevents similar OPSEC problems.[24] ISW previously reported on two other instances of mass milblogger criticism: the failed Russian river crossing in Bilohorivka in May 2022 and the botched Russian offensive operation on Pavlivka in October 2022.[25]

**Such profound military failures will continue to complicate Putin’s efforts to appease the Russian pro-war community and retain the dominant narrative in the domestic information space.** Russian sources claimed that Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the military and the Investigative Committee to investigate the incident in Makiivka by January 6.[26] Putin’s inability to address the criticism and fix the flaws in Russia’s military campaign may undermine his credibility as a hands-on war leader.

**Russian sources responded lukewarmly to Russian President Vladimir Putin’s staged New Year’s address, while Russian milbloggers lauded Wagner Group financier Yevgeniy Prigozhin’s appearances on the frontlines over the New Year’s holidays.** Several Russian milbloggers amplified social media criticisms that Putin used background actors rather than standing with real soldiers during his address.[27] These criticisms and a chain of Putin’s canceled public appearances and meetings with ordinary citizens may show Putin as out of touch. One pro-Kremlin milblogger acknowledged the debate via an editorial in a popular Russian newspaper in which he vehemently denied that Putin used actors at his speech.[28] Former militant commander and prominent Russian milblogger Igor Girkin drew a direct comparison between Putin and Prigozhin.[29] Girkin posted that he would not comment on Putin’s speech but that Prigozhin decided to fight bureaucracy and corruption and gave a sensational New Year’s speech.[30] Meanwhile, several Russian sources praised Prigozhin for a series of appearances with real Russian soldiers on the frontlines in Ukraine on New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day.[31]

**Prigozhin used reporting on deceased Wagner Group mercenaries and his prominence in New Year’s features to continue to push for legal recognition of Wagner Private Military Company (PMC) and to criticize bureaucrats not favorable to Wagner PMC.** Prigozhin continues to seek increased legitimization of and state benefits for Wagner forces, although private military companies are illegal in Russia.[32] Prigozhin told a reporter who questioned why Wagner soldiers’ relatives are not receiving the bodies of their deceased soldiers that Wagner forces took care of the dead even on New Year’s while the Russian government, which is supposed to provide death certificates, has “[rested] since the beginning of the war.”[33] Prigozhin accused bureaucrats of desecrating the memory of the dead by treating dead servicemembers as objects in plastic bags.[34] Prigozhin publicly visited a Wagner-specific cemetery and memorial and the main base of the Wagner Group in Krasnodar Krai on January 1.[35] Prigozhin has previously complained that Russian authorities refuse to allow for the burial of Wagner mercenaries in Russian military cemeteries, as ISW has reported.[36]

**The Kremlin is likely co-opting some Russian milbloggers who are willing to sell out in exchange for political prestige.** Prominent Russian milbloggers Alexander Sladkov and Yevgeniy Poddubny attended the Kremlin primetime New Year’s Eve television show *Goluboy Ogonek 2023* in Moscow on December 31.[37] This program airs immediately after Putin’s annual New Year’s Eve speech and is attended by Putin and Kremlin political and cultural elites. Sladkov and Poddubny have both criticized the Russian military’s failures in Ukraine. The creators of the prominent Telegram channel *Rybar* had also stated that they received offers to create an open-source intelligence (OSINT) program to benefit Russian private businesses and force structures.[38] *Rybar* added that they already gave a lecture at the elite Russian state-run Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) and are continuing to work in Putin’s “special military operation” working group.

## Key Takeaways

- **Ukrainian air defenses reportedly intercepted all drones from two consecutive nights of Russian drone strike attacks against Ukraine on December 31 – January 2.**
- **Russia’s air and missile campaign against Ukraine is likely not generating the Kremlin’s desired information effects among Russia’s nationalists.**
- **A devastating Ukrainian HIMARS strike on a Russian base in Makiivka, Donetsk Oblast, on December 31 generated significant criticism of Russian military leadership in the Russian information space.**
- **The Russian MoD is likely attempting to deflect the blame for its poor operational security (OPSEC) onto Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) officials and mobilized personnel.**

- Russian sources responded lukewarmly to Russian President Vladimir Putin's staged New Year's address, while Russian milbloggers lauded Wagner Group financier Yevgeniy Prigozhin's appearances on the frontlines over the New Year's holidays.
- Russian forces continued to carry out unsuccessful attempts to improve their tactical positions northwest of Svatove after reportedly conducting a tactical pause.
- The Ukrainian Center for Defense Strategies reported that Russian forces are continuing to deploy personnel on the Kharkiv-Siversk frontline.
- Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces are redeploying along the eastern axis while struggling to maintain their pace of artillery strikes.
- Russian forces attempted limited offensive operations in Zaporizhia Oblast and continued efforts to reinforce defensive structures.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin continues to extend financial promises made to Russian soldiers as Ukrainian officials continue to warn of an impending wave of Russian mobilization.

## Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of January 2, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



***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)**

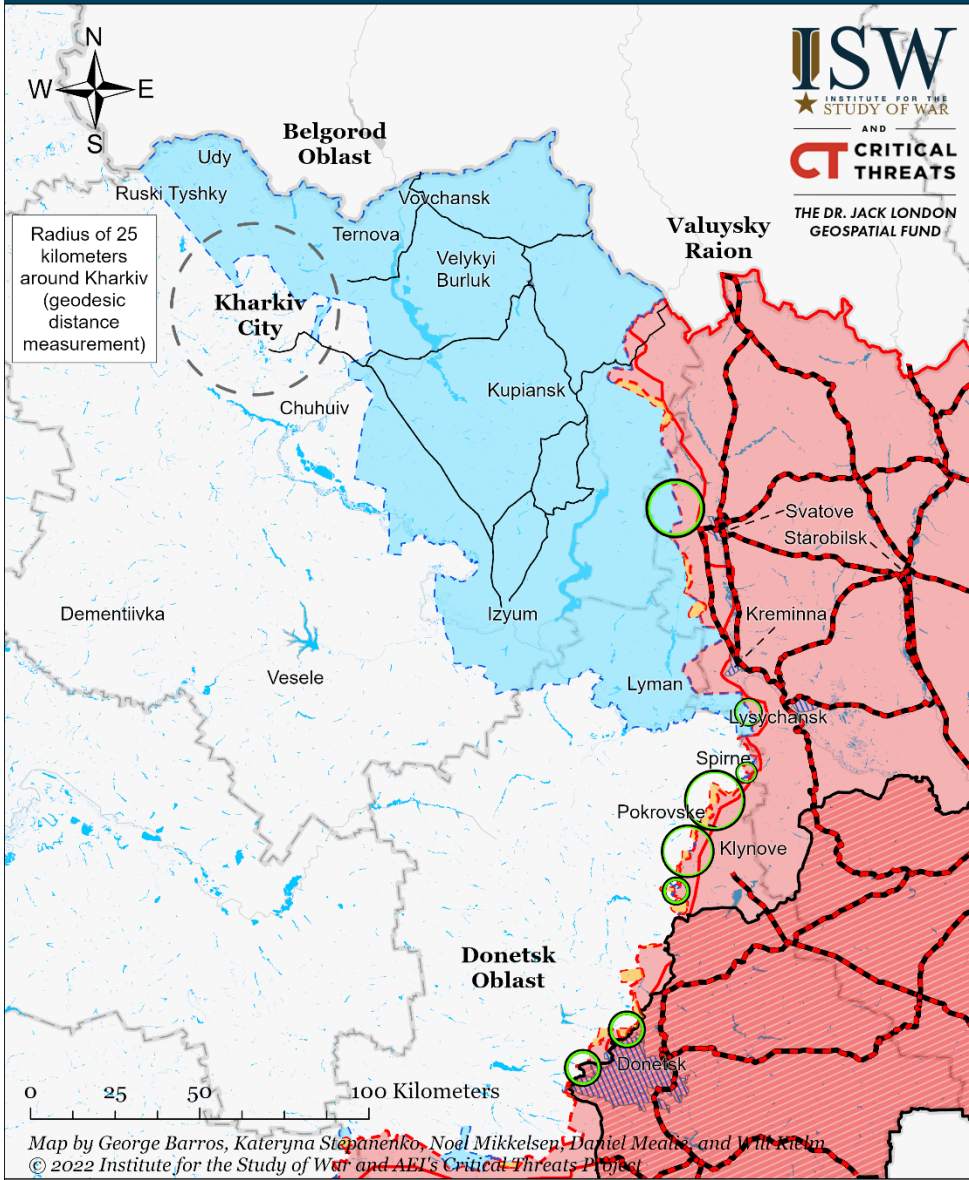
Russian forces continued conducting unsuccessful attempts to improve their tactical positions northwest of Svatove on January 1 and 2, after reportedly conducting a tactical pause around the New Year's holiday. A Russian milblogger claimed that both Ukrainian and Russian forces conducted a tactical pause on New Year's but have likely resumed fighting around January 2.[39] A Russian milblogger reported that Russian forces attacked Stelmakhivka (about 16km northwest of Svatove) on January 2 but did not describe the outcome.[40] The Ukrainian General Staff also reported on January 2 that Ukrainian forces repelled a Russian assault on Stelmakhivka.[41] Another Russian source claimed that heavy artillery duels continued along the Kupyansk-Svatove line and stated that Ukrainian forces are reconnoitering Russian positions in the vicinity of Kyslivka, Pervomaiske, and Vilshana.[42]

Ukrainian forces continued to repel Russian counterattacks around Kreminna on January 1 and 2. Spokesperson for the Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Serhiy Cherevaty reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks on Bilohorivka (approximately 13km southeast of Kreminna), and the Luhansk Oblast Administration reported that Ukrainian forces eliminated a Russian armored group near Ploshchanka (approximately 13km northwest of Kreminna).[43] A Russian milblogger also claimed that Russian forces attempted an attack on Ploshchanka but did not specify an outcome.[44] Another Russian source claimed that Ukrainian forces are preparing a large-scale attack near Kreminna and noted that Russian forces are expecting a Ukrainian counteroffensive operation once the ground freezes in the area.[45] The source also added that Ukrainian forces are erecting pontoon crossings southwest of Kreminna and are reconnoitering Russian positions near Dibrova (approximately 6km west of Kreminna), Kreminna, and Bilohorivka. ISW makes no effort to assess the validity of these claims.

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces launched a series of HIMARS attacks on Russian rear positions in occupied Luhansk Oblast. The Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) claimed that Ukrainian forces struck Pervomaisk, Chmyrivka (on the eastern outskirts of Starobilsk), Svatove, and Rubizhne in occupied Luhansk Oblast with HIMARS.[46]

The Ukrainian Center for Defense Strategies, a Ukrainian national security think tank, reported that Russian forces are largely operating Western and Central Military District (WMD and CMD) elements on Kharkiv-Siversk frontline. The center noted that 23 to 28 Russian battalion tactical groups (BTGs) of the Western and Central Military districts currently cover about 154km of frontline in this sector with a spread of about 5.5km per BTG.[47] The Center identified that WMD elements of 1st Tank Army and its 4th and 47th Tank Divisions; 6th Combined Arms Army (CAA), 3rd Motorized Rifle Division of the 20th CAA, and the 11th Army Corps (AC) of the Baltic Fleet, CMD elements of the 90<sup>th</sup> Tank Division, 201<sup>st</sup> Military Base (the Russian base in Tajikistan), 2nd CAA, and 41st CAA, Northern Military District elements of the 14th AC, Russian airborne elements of the 76th Air Assault Division, 106th Airborne Division, and separate special operations forces of the Airborne Forces are operating in this direction.[48] The report additionally stated that elements of the Donetsk and Luhansk 1st and 2nd Army Corps and Wagner Group elements are also fighting on this frontline. These BTGs are likely not at their normal end strength and are degraded from combat. ISW also notes that the UK MoD reported on November 29 that the Russians are no longer deploying in BTG formations.[49]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of January 2, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Meade, and Will Klein  
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- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Russian Ground Lines of Communication
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- 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 Zhytliivka (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)**

Ukrainian sources reported that Russian forces are redeploying along the eastern axis while struggling to maintain the pace of artillery strikes. Spokesperson for Ukraine’s Eastern Group of Forces Colonel Serhiy Cherevaty stated on January 2 that Russian forces have decreased their rate of shelling from 20–80,000 rounds per day to a maximum of 20,000 per day and are searching for Soviet 122mm and 152mm caliber ammunition stores both domestically and internationally.[50] Cherevaty stated that Russian forces prioritize shelling the Bakhmut and Avdiivka frontline over other areas of the front. The Ukrainian Center for Defense Strategies stated on January 1 that two Russian battalion tactical groups (BTGs) of the 137th Guards Airborne Regiment of the 106th Guards Tula Airborne Division arrived near Popasna, Luhansk Oblast, and are expected to operate in the Popasna-Soledar or Popasna-Bakhmut directions.[51] These BTGs are likely degraded and demoralized.

Russian forces continued to conduct ground attacks near Bakhmut and Avdiivka on January 1 and 2 at a low rate of advance. Wagner Group financier Yevgeniy Prigozhin stated that Ukrainian forces have heavily fortified the residential area around Bakhmut so there is a new line of defense “every 10 meters.”[52] The Ukrainian General Staff reported on January 1 and 2 that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian ground attacks near Bakhmut; north of Bakhmut near Krasna Hora; northeast of Bakhmut near Soledar, Bilohorivka, Rozdolivka, and Bakhmutske; south of Bakhmut near Ozaryanivka; and southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka.[53] A Russian source claimed that Russian forces captured a few Ukrainian positions near Klishchiivka, and geolocated footage shows that Russian forces have made marginal advances near the settlement.[54] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced up to 1.7km in the Soledar-Bakhmutske area and captured Ukrainian positions northeast of Bakhmut near Pidhorodne, but ISW cannot confirm these claims.[55] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian ground attacks southwest of Avdiivka near Opytne and Krasnohorivka on January 2.[56] A Russian milblogger claimed that fighting is ongoing near Marinka and that Russian forces are attempting to advance from the Nevelske, Pervomaiske, and Opytne directions towards Kamianka.[57]

A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that the Russian offensive against Vuhledar in southern Donetsk Oblast has “closed,” supporting ISW’s recent assessment that the Russian offensive along the Donetsk Oblast frontline is likely culminating.[58] The milblogger noted that Russian forces conduct daily offensive operations along the entire eastern axis, but that these actions are largely tactical in nature.



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of January 2, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, and Will Kieln  
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-  Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
-  Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
-  Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
-  Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
-  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 continued limited ground attacks across the southern axis between January 1 and 2. Ukraine's Southern Operational Command spokesperson Natalia Humenyuk stated on January 2 that Ukrainian forces continue to repel Russian attempts to attack Ukrainian positions in Kherson Oblast on the left (east) bank of the Dnipro River and force Russian troops to regroup.[59] A Russian milblogger claimed on January 2 that Russian forces conducted a raid on Ukrainian positions in Novopokrovka, Zaporizhia Oblast and that Russian forces entrenched themselves in captured Dorozhnyanka, having advanced through to Myrne (10.5km west of Dorozhnyanka).[60] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) alleged that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully counterattacked in the vicinity of Dorozhnyanka.[61] ISW cannot independently verify these claims. Russian forces continued to shell settlements along the southern axis.[62]

Various sources continued to report that Russian forces are constructing defenses and rebuilding force capacities in Zaporizhia Oblast and Crimea. Sentinel satellite imagery shows trench constructions apparently completed by Russian soldiers as of December 29 along the P37 road near Bohdanivka in central Zaporizhia Oblast.[63] Ukraine's Center for Defense Strategies reported on January 1 that Russian forces are deploying "territorial troops" (formed from mobilized men in light infantry units), endeavoring to restore combat capability to the 205th and 34th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigades of the 49th Army, and deploying a logistics hub and two logistics routes in Crimea and southern Zaporizhia Oblast.[64] Advisor to the Ukrainian Mayor of Mariupol Petro Andryushchenko similarly stated on January 2 that Russian authorities deployed freshly mobilized soldiers to Urzuf, Donetsk Oblast (4km from the border with Zaporizhia Oblast).[65] Satellite imagery shows that Russian forces expanded the Belbek Air Base in Crimea between June 30, 2022 and January 1, 2023.[66] [67]

Russian forces also continued defensive operations in Kherson Oblast. Ukraine's Southern Operational Command spokesperson Natalia Humenyuk stated on January 1 that Russian forces are preparing for defensive operations on the left (east) bank of the Dnipro River.[68] Humenyuk reported that Russian forces maintain a significant, unspecified number of forces in the south despite force shortages along the eastern axis and that Russian forces are bringing mobilized reserve forces to the frontlines in Kherson Oblast.[69] An open-source intelligence (OSINT) analyst shared images of Russian forces allegedly conducting river patrols in the swamps south of Kherson City.[70] The Ukrainian General Staff stated on January 1 that Russian forces are shelling settlements on the left (east) bank of the Dnipro River across from Kherson City to coerce the local population into evacuating and destabilize the humanitarian situation in Kherson Oblast.[71]

Ukrainian forces continue to strike concentrations of Russian personnel and equipment along the southern axis.[72] The Ukrainian General Staff stated on January 2 that Ukrainian forces struck Tarasivka, Basan, Polohy, Berdyansk, and Tokmak, killed more than 175 Russian soldiers, and destroyed a Russian ammunition depot and 12 pieces of weapons and military equipment.[73] An OSINT analyst amplified unconfirmed reports from local residents that Ukrainian forces struck the Arabatska Spit in Crimea in the night between January 1 and 2, causing a panic among local authorities.[74]



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of January 2, 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.

Light reconnaissance elements of the Ukrainian Carlson special volunteer unit placed a Ukrainian flag on a tower in the wetlands on the left bank of the Dnipro River, approximately 600 meters south of Kherson City and claimed the area will become a Ukrainian bridgehead that will support future operations to further liberate southern Kherson on December 3. ISW does not assess that Ukrainian forces have established a bridgehead or lodgment in this location as Carlson claimed as of December 3. The Carlson element's ability to operate in the area uncontested and the lack of observed Russian fortifications or defensive forces in the area indicate that Russian forces do not exercise full control over the area. Russian control lines are likely south of the Konka River.

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

Some Russians continue to challenge Russian force-generation efforts. A Russian news outlet reported that an unidentified man threw a Molotov cocktail at the gate of a military recruitment center in Moscow on January 1.[75]

Russian President Vladimir Putin continues to extend financial promises made to Russian soldiers and compound financial burdens placed on the Russian state by Russian force-generation efforts. Putin issued a decree on December 30 extending a November 2 decree that granted a one-time payment of 195,000 rubles (about \$2,747) to mobilized men and soldiers who signed a contract after the declaration of partial mobilization to include soldiers called up for service in the Russian National Guard (Rosgvradia) and Rosgvradia soldiers who signed a contract after September 21.[76]

Official Ukrainian sources continue to warn of a coming Russian wave of mobilization, which will apply to residents of Russia and occupied territories in southern Ukraine.[77] The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on January 2 that although Russian mobilization has never slowed, Russia will strengthen mobilization measures and close Russian borders to isolate the country over an unspecified timeframe.[78] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian occupation authorities in Crimea are checking lists of persons of unspecified citizenship subject to mobilization in 2023.[79]

## **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)**

Russian occupation authorities continue efforts to consolidate the legal and administrative systems of occupied Ukrainian territories to support an effort to govern them as Russian federal subjects. Russian occupation authorities officially banned the use of the Ukrainian hryvnia (Ukraine's national currency) on January 1 and announced that all transactions throughout occupied territories in Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts must be tendered in the Russian ruble.[80] The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on January 2 that Ukrainians in occupied territories are largely ignoring this ban against the hryvnia.[81] The Luhansk Oblast Military Administration stated on January 1 that Russian occupation officials will choose a Head of the Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) as stipulated in the new Constitution of the Luhansk People's Republic of the Russian Federation that Russian authorities adopted on December 30.[82]

Russian occupation authorities seek to regulate utilities and housing in occupied Ukraine as Russian authorities do in Russia. A Russian source claimed on January 1 that DNR occupation authorities began increasing rates for housing and utility services in DNR territory so to equalize them with the costs in other Russian federal subjects.[83] The source stated that rates in DNR territory are 2–2.5 times lower than those in Russia's neighboring Rostov Oblast.[84] Advisor to the Mayor of Mariupol Petro Andryushchenko stated on January 1 that Russian occupation authorities began dispersing utility bills to residents of Mariupol after Russian authorities increased the tariffs.[85]

Russian forces and occupation authorities continued intensifying filtration measures in occupied territories on January 1–2. The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on January 2 that Russian forces blocked civilians from entering or leaving occupied Polovinkine, Luhansk Oblast, to subject residents (whom Russian forces accused of facilitating strikes on Russian positions) to filtration measures.[86] The Ukrainian General Staff reported on January 1 that Russian forces intensified counterintelligence measures in occupied Lyman Druhyi, Kharkiv Oblast, to identify pro-Ukrainian civilians.[87]

Russian occupation authorities continue to repurpose civilian infrastructure in occupied territories for military use. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on January 1 that Russian forces are treating wounded Wagner forces at a maternity hospital in Pervomaiske, Luhansk Oblast.[88] The Luhansk Oblast Military Administration stated that Russian forces have placed over 350 wounded Russian servicemen at a previously repurposed civilian hospital in Bilovodsk, Luhansk Oblast as of January 1 — an increase since December 29 when only 100 wounded servicemen were reportedly present at the hospital.[89]

**ISW will continue to report daily observed indicators consistent with the current assessed most dangerous course of action (MDCOA): a renewed invasion of northern Ukraine possibly aimed at Kyiv.**

***ISW's December 15 MDCOA warning forecast about a potential Russian offensive against northern Ukraine in winter 2023 remains a worst-case scenario within the forecast cone. ISW currently assesses the risk of a Russian invasion of Ukraine from Belarus as low, but possible, and the risk of Belarusian direct involvement as very low. This new section in the daily update is not in itself a forecast or assessment. It lays out the daily observed indicators we are using to refine our assessments and forecasts, which we expect to update regularly. Our assessment that the MDCOA remains unlikely has not changed. We will update this header if the assessment changes.***

Observed indicators for the MDCOA in the past 48 hours:

- Nothing significant to report.

Observed ambiguous indicators for MDCOA in the past 48 hours:

- A Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) representative stated on January 2 that Russian forces intend to conduct offensive actions against Ukraine in 2023, but that Ukrainian intelligence does not yet know where Russian forces will attack.[90] The representative stated that Russian forces could attack Ukraine from the north and the east simultaneously and that Ukraine is ready for any scenario.[91]

Observed counter-indicators for the MDCOA in the past 48 hours:

- A Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) representative emphasized on January 2 that Russian forces in Belarus do not have the capability to conduct an attack against northern Ukraine.[92]
- The Ukrainian General Staff reiterated that it has not observed Russian forces in Belarus forming a strike group as of January 2.[93]

**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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[1] <https://t.me/kpszs/2244>;  
<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbidopx17JYofcWFAJGmgdus25ymCRFaEehzNwrYkXYPfLmMP9ELJUGtvUmPcbdcNru2l>

[2] <https://chas dot news/news/lupili-yak-z-artilerii-u-zsu-rozpovili-pro-visoku-efektivnist-zrk-nasams>

[3] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02pBfP>

[4] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02VmG3saYvs1K9CS1euY9A5ZSS2eQaJEG2dzjZqCBF7jPU5PQMECRbn6yZHnoMxPzEl>

[5] <https://gur.gov dot ua/content/rosiia-pochala-zminiuvaty-taktyku-obstriliv-ukrainy.html>

[6] [https://t.me/Bratchuk\\_Sergey/26054e](https://t.me/Bratchuk_Sergey/26054e); <https://t.me/kommunist/14629>; <https://t.me/rybar/42426>;  
[https://t.me/boris\\_rozhin/74204](https://t.me/boris_rozhin/74204)

[7] [https://t.me/Sladkov\\_plus/6950](https://t.me/Sladkov_plus/6950)

[8] [https://t.me/Sladkov\\_plus/6950](https://t.me/Sladkov_plus/6950)

[9] [https://t.me/Sladkov\\_plus/6950](https://t.me/Sladkov_plus/6950)

[10] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02VmG3saYvs1K9CS1euY9A5ZSS2eQaJEG2dzjZqCBF7jPU5PQMECRbn6yZHnoMxPzEl>

[11] <https://t.me/AFUStratCom/11318>

[12] <https://t.me/horevica/8613>; [https://twitter.com/666\\_mancer/status/1609799984697806849](https://twitter.com/666_mancer/status/1609799984697806849); 4  
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