

# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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January 24, 2024, 8:20pm 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 1:30pm ET on January 24. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the January 25 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.**

**A Russian Il-76 military transport aircraft crashed in Belgorod Oblast on January 24.** Geolocated footage posted by various Russian sources shows the Il-76 crashing in Yablonovo, Belgorod Oblast (about 50km northeast of Belgorod City).[1] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that the Il-76 was carrying 65 Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) and was en route to a pre-arranged POW exchange at the Kolotyivka border-crossing checkpoint between Russian and Ukraine.[2] The Russian MoD accused Ukraine of hitting the plane with two unspecified missiles, killing the 65 POWs, six Russian crew members, and three Russian military personnel.[3] Senior Russian propagandist and Editor-in-Chief of state-controlled outlet *RT* Margarita Simonyan published a list of the names of the Ukrainian POWs supposedly on the flight, but several Russian and Ukrainian sources noted that at least one of the alleged POWs had already been exchanged in a previous POW swap on January 3.[4] Ukrainian officials, including Ukrainian Human Rights Commissioner Dmytro Lubinets and the Ukrainian Coordinating Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War, immediately responded to the incident by emphasizing that Ukraine is investigating the crash and urged audiences not to draw premature conclusions about the crash based on unconfirmed reporting.[5] Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Spokesperson Andriy Yusov confirmed that a POW exchange was scheduled to take place on January 24 but that the exchange was no longer taking place and that GUR is investigating the circumstances of the crash.[6] GUR later stated that Ukraine “does not have reliable and comprehensive information about who exactly was on board the plane.”[7] The Ukrainian General Staff did not directly respond to the incident but emphasized that Russia has conducted 19 missile strikes against Kharkiv Oblast from Belgorod Oblast over the past week and stressed that Ukraine “will continue to take measures to destroy means of delivery” and “control the airspace” in the Kharkiv-Belgorod border area.[8] Ukrainian outlet *Ukrainska Pravda*, citing unspecified sources in the Ukrainian Armed Forces, claimed that the Il-76 was transporting S-300 air-defense missiles, which Russian forces frequently use in strikes against ground targets in Kharkiv Oblast.[9] Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated in his nightly address on January 24 that Ukraine is working to establish “all clear facts” and that GUR is looking into “the fate of all prisoners.” **ISW offers no assessment of the circumstances of the Il-76 crash at this time and cannot independently verify Russian or Ukrainian statements on the incident.**

**Russian information space actors are seizing on the Il-76 crash to sow domestic discontent in Ukraine and undermine Western will to continue giving military support to Ukraine.** Russian State Duma Defense Committee Chairperson Andrei Kartapolov claimed that Ukraine deliberately shot down the Il-76 knowing that it contained Ukrainian POWs and called for all POW exchanges to pause indefinitely.[10] Deputy Chairperson of the Russian Security Council Dmitry Medvedev accused Ukrainian “internal political struggles” of contributing to the crash.[11] Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who is currently in New York for UN Security Council (UNSC) meetings, called for an urgent UNSC meeting to address the crash and accused Ukraine of terrorism.[12] Such Russian accusations are meant in part to sow discontent in Ukraine and galvanize distrust of the Ukrainian government, which is consistent with several other Russian information efforts aimed at weakening Ukraine domestically.[13] POW exchanges are a sensitive issue in both Russia and Ukraine, and rhetorical invocations of POWs predictably elicit emotional responses. Russian officials additionally made unsubstantiated claims that Ukraine struck the Il-76 with US- or German-provided missile systems, likely in an attempt to discourage Ukraine's Western partners from providing Ukraine with critical air defense systems necessary for Ukraine's continued defense.[14]

**Russian law enforcement authorities are codifying xenophobic profiling methods suggesting that migrants are predisposed to criminal activity against the backdrop of continued conflicts between Russian citizens and naturalized migrants.** Russian outlet *RTVI* reported on January 24 that the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) published a “criminogenic index” detailing which countries' migrants committed the most crimes in Russia in response to a request from Russian State Duma Deputy Mikhail Matveev to determine if “immigrants from certain countries have criminal characteristics.”[15] The MVD report found that crimes committed by migrants from “neighboring countries”

declined between 2013 and 2019 but have increased since 2019.[16] The MVD report also found that citizens of Uzbekistan committed 40 percent of all crimes committed by foreigners from “neighboring countries” between January 2022 and May 2023. Uzbek citizens likely account for the highest percentage of crimes because there are more migrants from Uzbekistan in Russia than migrants from other Central Asian and South Caucasus countries.[17] Matveev stated that the MVD’s report excludes migrants with naturalized Russian citizenship, implying that migrants commit more crimes than reflected in the MVD’s official findings.[18] Russian Investigative Committee Head Alexander Bastrykin similarly claimed in September 2023 that the number of serious crimes that foreign citizens committed in Russia increased by 32 percent from 2022 to 2023.[19] Russian authorities’ deliberate attempts to highlight migrant crimes and portray migrants as a danger to Russian society are likely part of an ongoing effort to appease the pro-war Russian ultranationalist community that also routinely expresses xenophobia toward migrant and diaspora communities and to coerce migrants into Russian military service by limiting work opportunities in Russia.

Sakha Republic Head Aisen Nikolaev and other Russian sources claimed that unspecified foreign actors may have incited protests in Yakutsk, Sakha Republic, after a naturalized citizen from Tajikistan allegedly murdered a Russian citizen.[20] Nikolaev suggested that foreign agents may have encouraged these protests to incite conflict and divide Russian society.[21] Nikolaev instructed Sakha Republic authorities to monitor migrants and investigate the circumstances under which the murder suspect obtained Russian citizenship.[22] Nikolaev’s response of both condemning the protests as externally conceived and maintaining a harsh stance against a naturalized Russian citizen likely reflects the wider struggle Russian ultranationalists continue to face in attempting to portray non-ethnic Russian diaspora communities as an internal threat to Russian society while the Kremlin continues to portray Russia as a harmonious multiethnic society.

**The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported that Ukrainian hackers recently conducted cyberattacks on Russian intelligence and communications infrastructure.** The GUR reported on January 24 that Ukrainian hackers conducted a successful cyberattack against the Russian “Planet” Scientific Research Center of Space Hydrometeorology’s Far East branch, specifically targeting the center’s database, servers, and supercomputers.[23] The GUR reported that the attack destroyed a database that received and processed satellite data and contributed to products for over 50 Russian government agencies, including the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), General Staff, and Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD). The GUR noted that the database contained two petabytes (two million gigabytes) of data potentially worth over \$10 million. The GUR reported that the attack also rendered the center’s supercomputers inoperable and unable to be completely restored and brought down the center’s servers and physical infrastructure. The GUR stated that the attack will leave dozens of unspecified strategic defense companies without “critically important information” for a long time. The GUR reported on January 23 that unspecified “cyber volunteers” attacked Russian internet provider Akado-telecom, which services the Russian Presidential Administration, Federal Security Service (FSB), Federal Protective Service, Moscow Oblast governing bodies, Russian state-owned bank Sberbank, and others, causing a large-scale internet failure on January 21 and 22.[24]

**NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated during the 18th Ukraine Defense Contact Group at Ramstein Air Base in Germany that recent Russian missile strikes against Ukraine underscore the need to strengthen Ukraine’s air defenses.** Stoltenberg noted on January 23 that NATO has already transferred a variety of air defense systems to Ukraine, including Patriots, IRIS-T, and NASAMS, and that NATO is supplying Ukraine with additional demining equipment, winter equipment, and fuel as part of its Comprehensive Assistance Package.[25] Ukrainian Ministry of Defense (MoD) Press and Information Department Head Illarion Pavlyuk stated that Ukrainian and Western officials discussed increasing the supply of long-range weapons to Ukraine, including adapting Western anti-aircraft missiles to Soviet-era launch platforms and expanding the production and supply of ammunition and artillery systems to Ukraine.[26] ISW previously assessed that Russian forces likely continue to experiment with new strike packages with different means of penetrating Ukrainian air defenses and to pressure Ukrainian air defense deployments following recent Ukrainian adaptations to prior Russian strike packages.[27] ISW continues to assess that Western provisions of air defense systems and missiles remain crucial in defending Ukraine’s growing defense industrial base (DIB) against Russian strikes.[28]

**Russian and Chadian officials met in Moscow on January 24, suggesting that Chad may be the Kremlin’s next target among former French colonies on the African continent.** Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Chadian junta leader Mahamat Idriss Deby to discuss counterterrorism efforts in Chad and announced an upcoming agreement expanding Russian–Chadian cooperation.[29] Russian Deputy Defense Ministers Colonel General Alexander Fomin and Colonel General Yunus-Bek Yevkurov also met with Chadian Minister of the Armed Forces, Veterans Affairs, and War Victims Dago Yacouba to discuss bilateral military and military-technical cooperation and regional security.[30] Fomin and Yevkurov previously met with Nigerian National Defense Minister Major General Saliufou Modi.[31] ISW previously reported that Russia and the Central African Republic (CAR) are in negotiations to construct a Russian military base in CAR.[32] Russia appears to be attempting to expand its involvement with and influence on authoritarian regimes in western and central Africa, particularly focusing on former French colonies in the Sahel such as Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger.

**The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) controlled Africa Corps published photos on January 24 claiming to show Africa Corps personnel arriving in Burkina Faso.**[33] The Africa Corps claimed that 100 Russian personnel will perform executive protection and conduct counterterrorism operations in Burkina Faso and that another 200 personnel will arrive in the country in the near future.[34] ISW previously reported that the Kremlin is likely attempting to expand Russia's influence in Africa through the Russian MoD and the MoD-controlled Africa Corps and assessed that the Kremlin is likely attempting to expand the Africa Corps' operations in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali.[35] The Kremlin may also eventually set conditions to expand the Africa Corps' operations in Chad, given January 24 Russian–Chadian government meetings.

**NATO announced on January 24 that the Steadfast Defender 2024 exercises have started and will run until May 31, 2024.**[36] NATO reported that the exercises will occur in the High North, Central Europe, and Eastern Europe.[37] ISW continues to assess that Russia will attempt to misrepresent these exercises as a threat against Russia despite the exercises' defensive nature in response to real Russian aggression against Ukraine and overt Russian threats to NATO states.[38]

#### **Key Takeaways:**

- **A Russian Il-76 military transport aircraft crashed in Belgorod Oblast on January 24.**
- **Russian information space actors are seizing on the Il-76 crash to sow domestic discontent in Ukraine and undermine Western will to continue giving military support to Ukraine.**
- **Russian law enforcement authorities are codifying xenophobic profiling methods suggesting that migrants are predisposed to criminal activity against the backdrop of continued conflicts between Russian citizens and naturalized migrants.**
- **The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported that Ukrainian hackers recently conducted cyberattacks on Russian intelligence and communications infrastructure.**
- **NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated during the 18th Ukraine Defense Contact Group at Ramstein Air Base in Germany that recent Russian missile strikes against Ukraine underscore the need to strengthen Ukraine's air defenses.**
- **Russian and Chadian officials met in Moscow on January 24, suggesting that Chad may be the Kremlin's next target among former French colonies on the African continent.**
- **The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) controlled Africa Corps published photos on January 24 claiming to show Africa Corps personnel arriving in Burkina Faso.**
- **NATO announced on January 24 that the Steadfast Defender 2024 exercises have started and will run until May 31, 2024.**
- **Positional engagements continued throughout the theater.**
- **Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov continues efforts to bolster the reputation of Chechen forces.**
- **Russian occupation authorities are setting conditions to coerce voter turnout in the upcoming March 2024 presidential elections.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of January 24, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, and Shaylei Dauphinais

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

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

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

### **Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine**

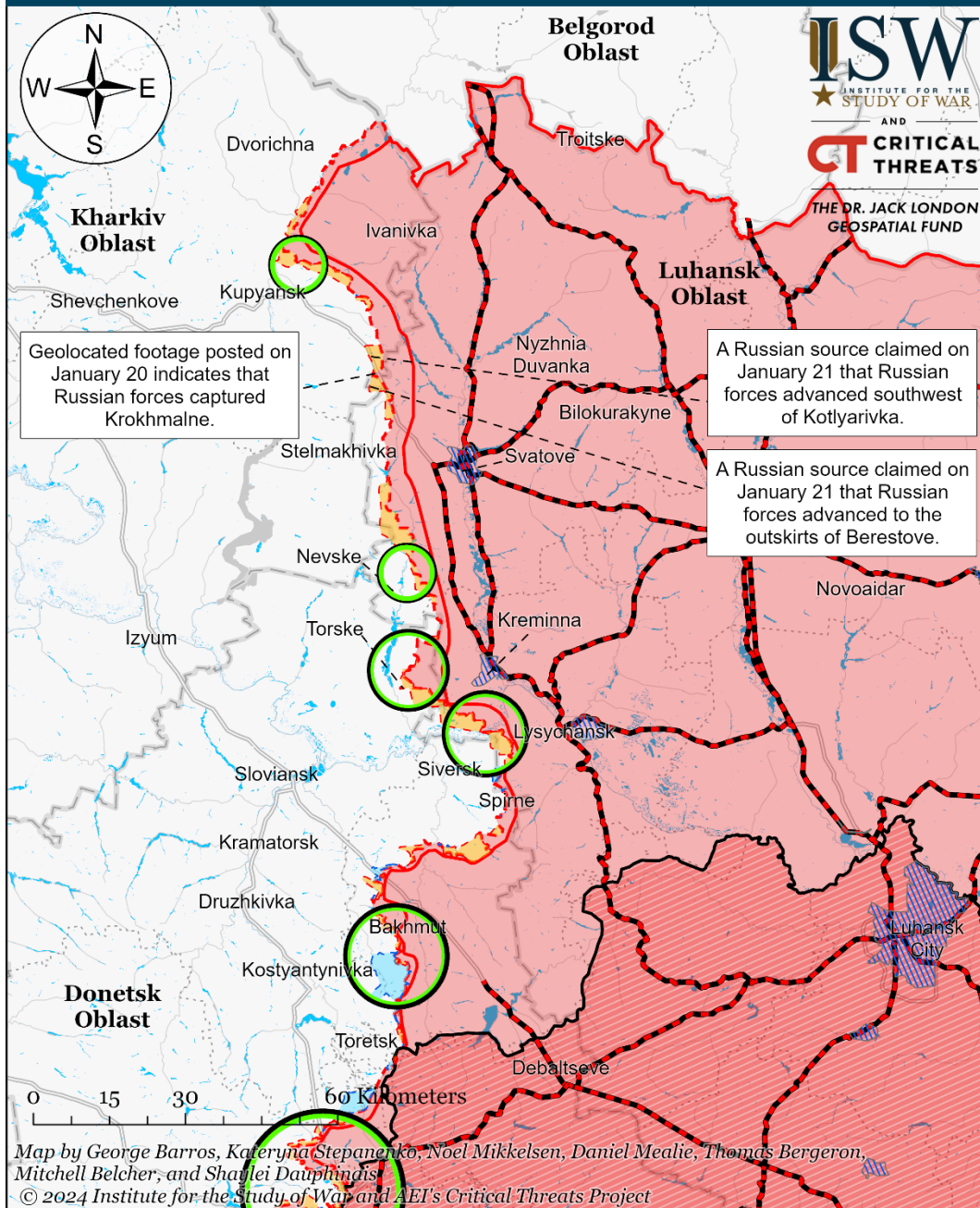
#### **Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)**

Ukrainian Joint Forces Commander Lieutenant General Serhiy Nayevo reported on January 24 that Russian sabotage groups attempted to cross the international border between Russia and Ukraine, likely referring to Russian claims that Russian forces captured Pletenivka, Kharkiv Oblast, less than two kilometers from the Kharkiv-Belgorod Oblast international border, on January 23.[39] A prominent Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger amplified claims that characterized the January 23 Russian attack on Pletenivka as a “daring raid” after which Russian forces withdrew to their original positions.[40] ISW has not observed visual evidence supporting the claim that Russian forces captured Pletenivka and continues to assess that Russian forces may conduct small-scale, tactical-level attacks across the Belgorod-Kharkiv Oblast border to fix and divert Ukrainian forces away from the Kupyansk direction.[41]

Russian forces reportedly advanced in the Kupyansk direction on January 24, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced to Berestove and along the P07 Svatove-Kupyansk highway toward Tabaiivka (both northwest of Svatove), although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims.[42] Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional engagements continued northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka.[43] Elements of the 1st Guards Tank Army (Western Military District) reportedly continue to operate in the Kupyansk direction.[44]

Positional engagements continued in the Lyman direction on January 24, but there were no confirmed changes in this area. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional engagements continued northwest of Kreminna near Makiivka, Yampolivka, and Terny; west of Kreminna near Torske; southwest of Kreminna in the Serebryanske forest area and Dibrova; and south of Kreminna near Hryhorivka (the Hryhorivka 15km southwest of Kreminna and not the one northwest of Bakhmut).[45]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of January 24, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



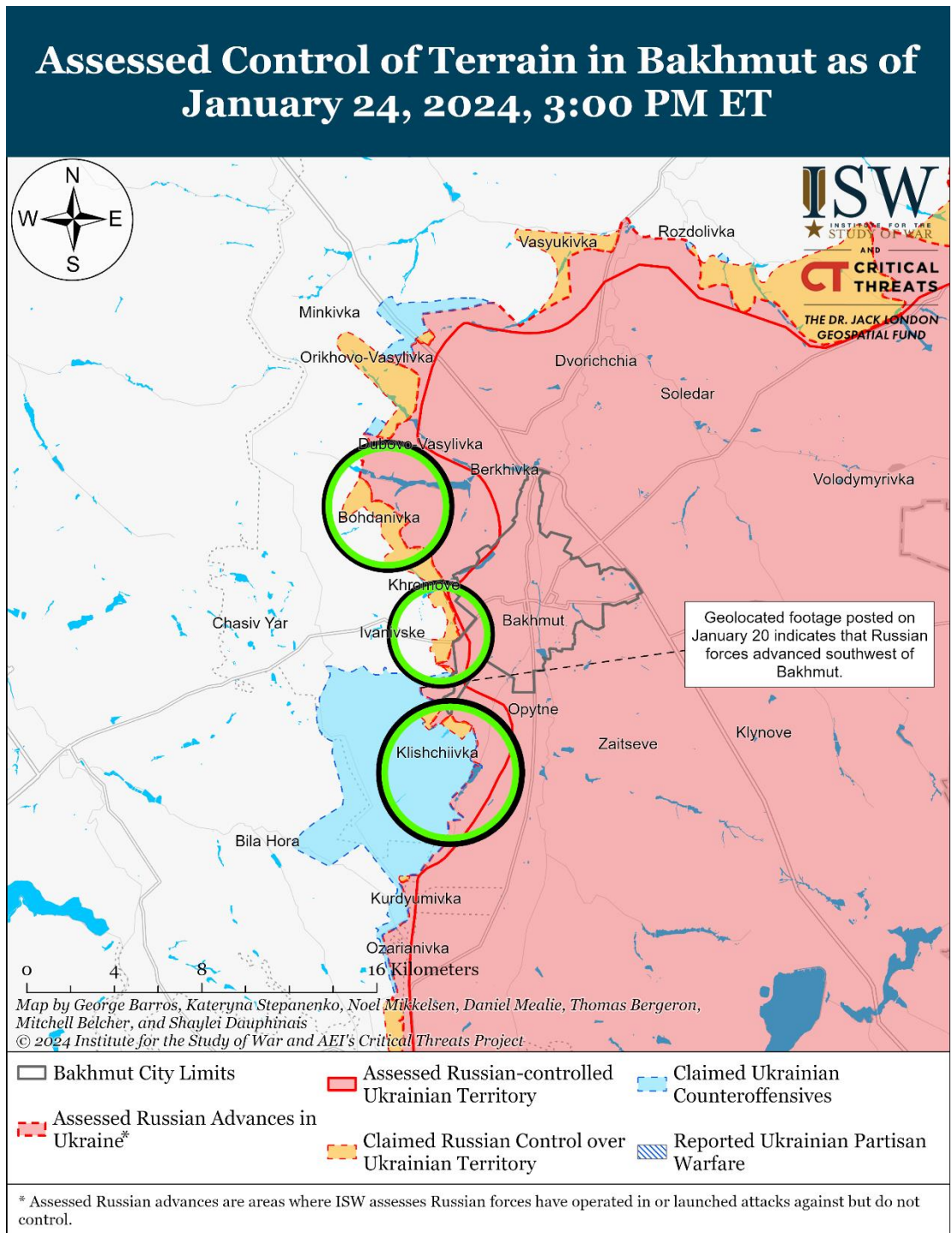
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- - - Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- - - Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- - - Russian Ground Lines of Communication
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory 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.

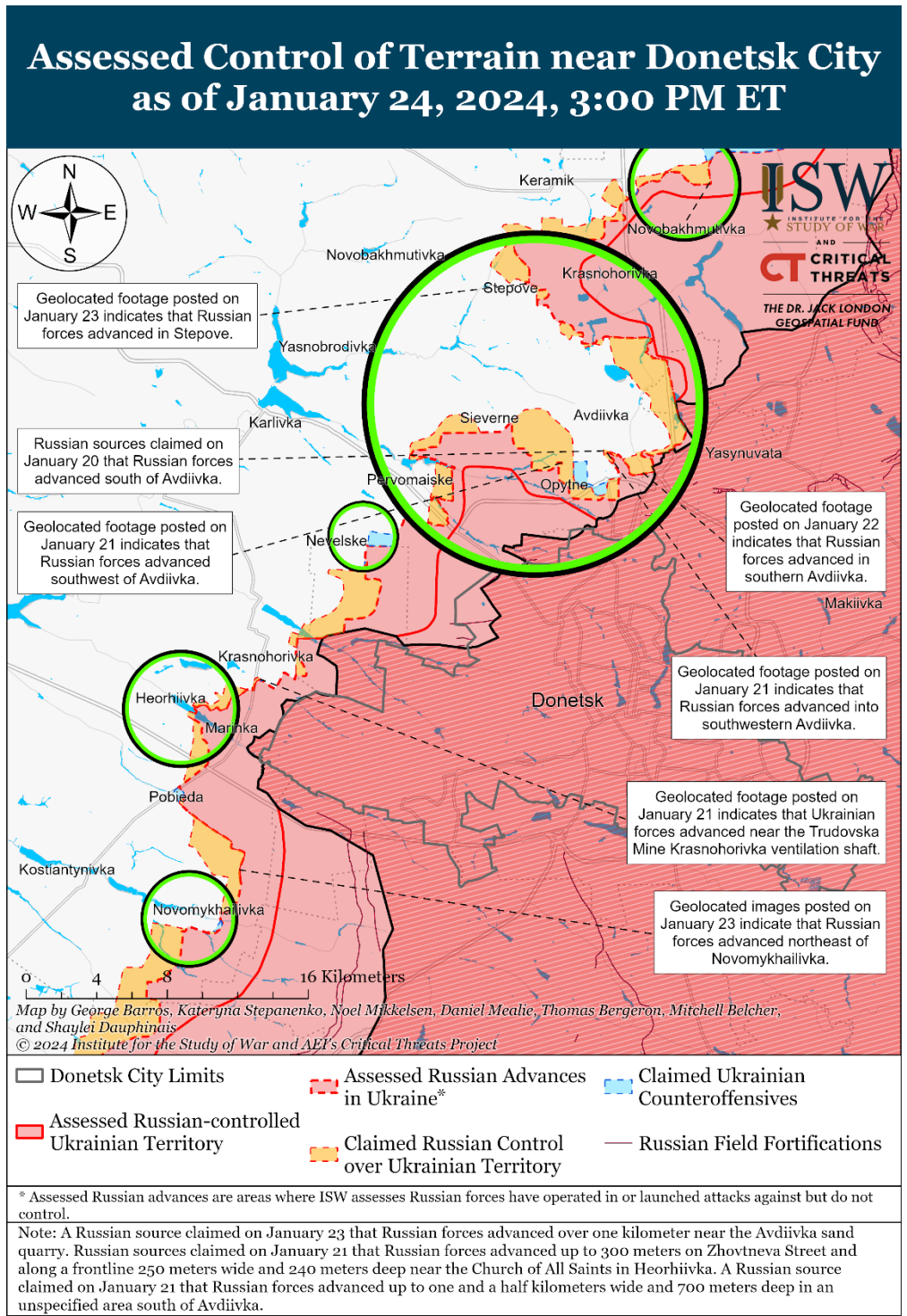
Note: A Russian source claimed on January 21 that Russian forces advanced up to 400 meters along a 1.5-kilometers-wide front near Bilohorivka. A Russian source claimed on January 21 that Russian forces advanced four kilometers along a 1.5-kilometers-wide front along the Kotlyarivka-Kyslivka line.

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

Positional fighting continued near Bakhmut on January 24, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced west of Bakhmut near Ivanivske and from Khromove, southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka, although ISW has not observed visual evidence of these claims.[46] Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional fighting continued northeast of Bakhmut near Bilohorivka and from Vesele towards Vyiimka and Spirne; north of Bakhmut near Vasyukivka; northwest of Bakhmut near Bohdanivka; west of Bakhmut near Ivanivske; southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka; and northwest of Horlivka near Shumy.[47] Elements of the Russian 102nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th Guards Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) and the 85th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People’s Republic [LNR] Army Corps) are reportedly operating near Bakhmut, and elements of the Russian 200th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (Northern Fleet) are reportedly operating on Bakhmut’s northern flank.[48]



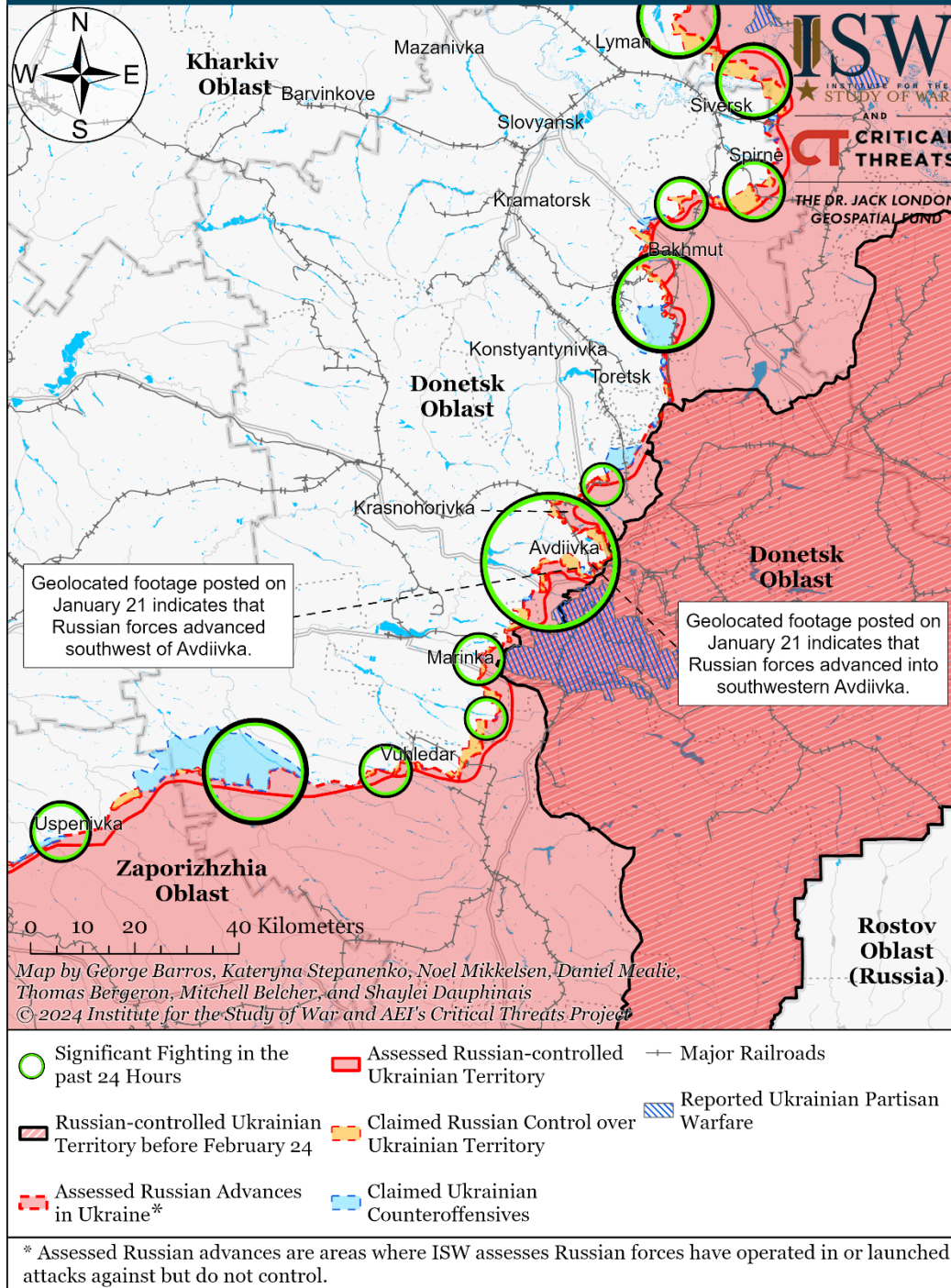
Positional fighting continued near Avdiivka on January 24, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces marginally advanced southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske, although ISW has not observed visual evidence of this claim.[49] Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional fighting continues northwest of Avdiivka near Novobakhmutivka and Stepove; in southeastern Avdiivka near the “Tsarska Okhota” restaurant area; west of Avdiivka near Sieverne and Tonenke; and southwest of Avdiivka near Vodyane, Pervomaiske, and Nevelske.[50] Ukraine-based open-source organization Frontelligence Insight reported that Russian shelling has destroyed most of the buildings in Avdiivka’s southeastern residential area and that Russian forces continue to shell northwest of Avdiivka near Stepove, Berdychi, Novobakhmutivka, and Novokalynove.[51] Frontelligence Insight reported that the situation on Avdiivka’s flanks is more stable, allowing Ukrainian forces to continue defending Avdiivka in the face of ongoing shell and manpower shortages.[52] Russian milbloggers claimed that the Russian “Veterany” Reconnaissance and Assault Brigade (Volunteer Assault Corps) participated in assaults in the “Tsarska Okhota” area on January 17, using underground tunnels to penetrate the area.[53]





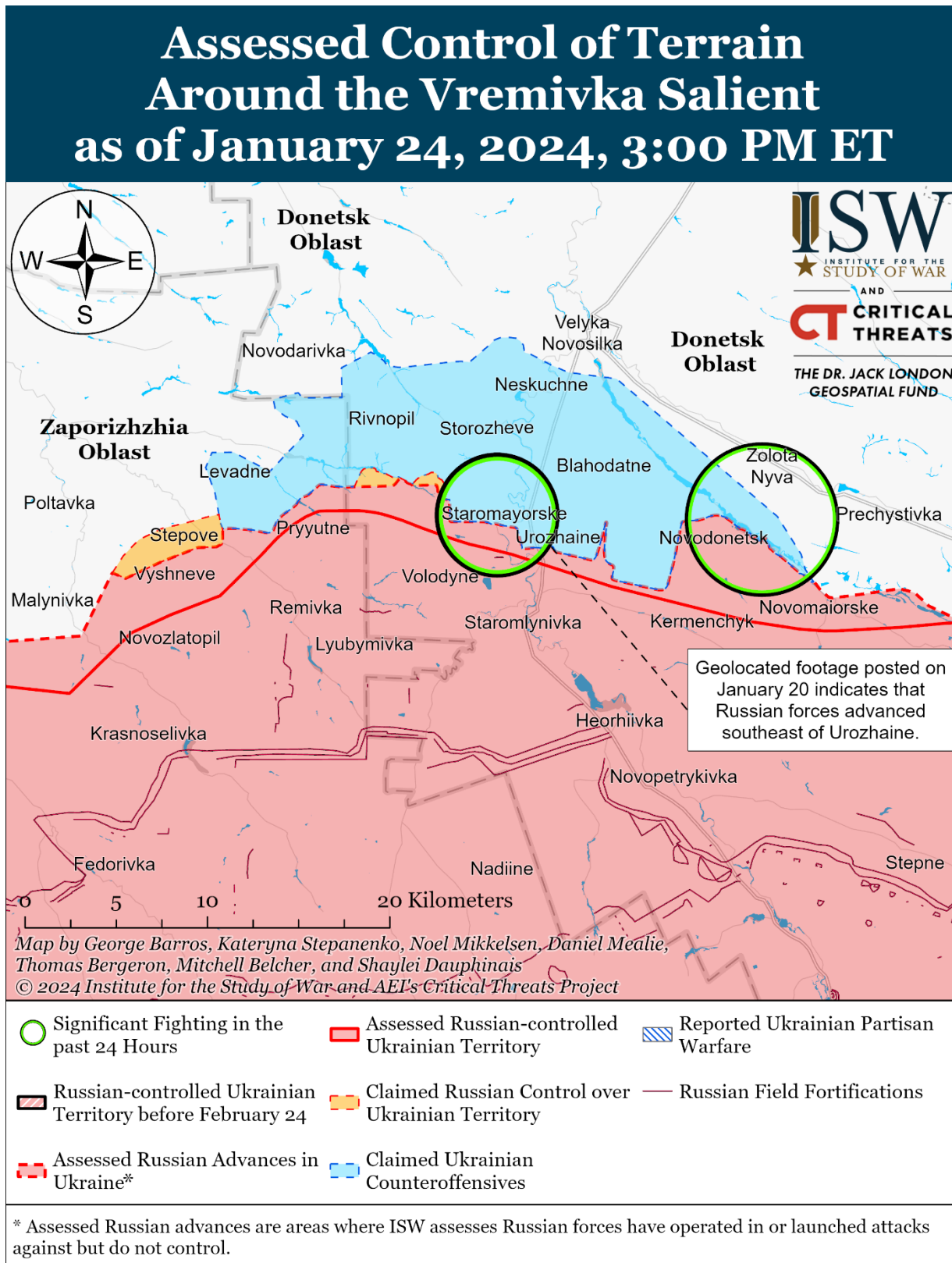
Positional fighting continued west and southwest of Donetsk City, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces marginally advanced near Heorhiivka (west of Donetsk City) but ISW has not observed evidence of this claim.[54] Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that there were positional engagements west of Donetsk City near Heorhiivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Novomykhailivka.[55] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces are attempting to bypass Novomykhailivka from the south to attack the Vuhledar area.[56] Elements of the Russian 5th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] Army Corps) are reportedly operating near the Trudovska mine area near Marinka (west of Donetsk City).[57]

## Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of January 24, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



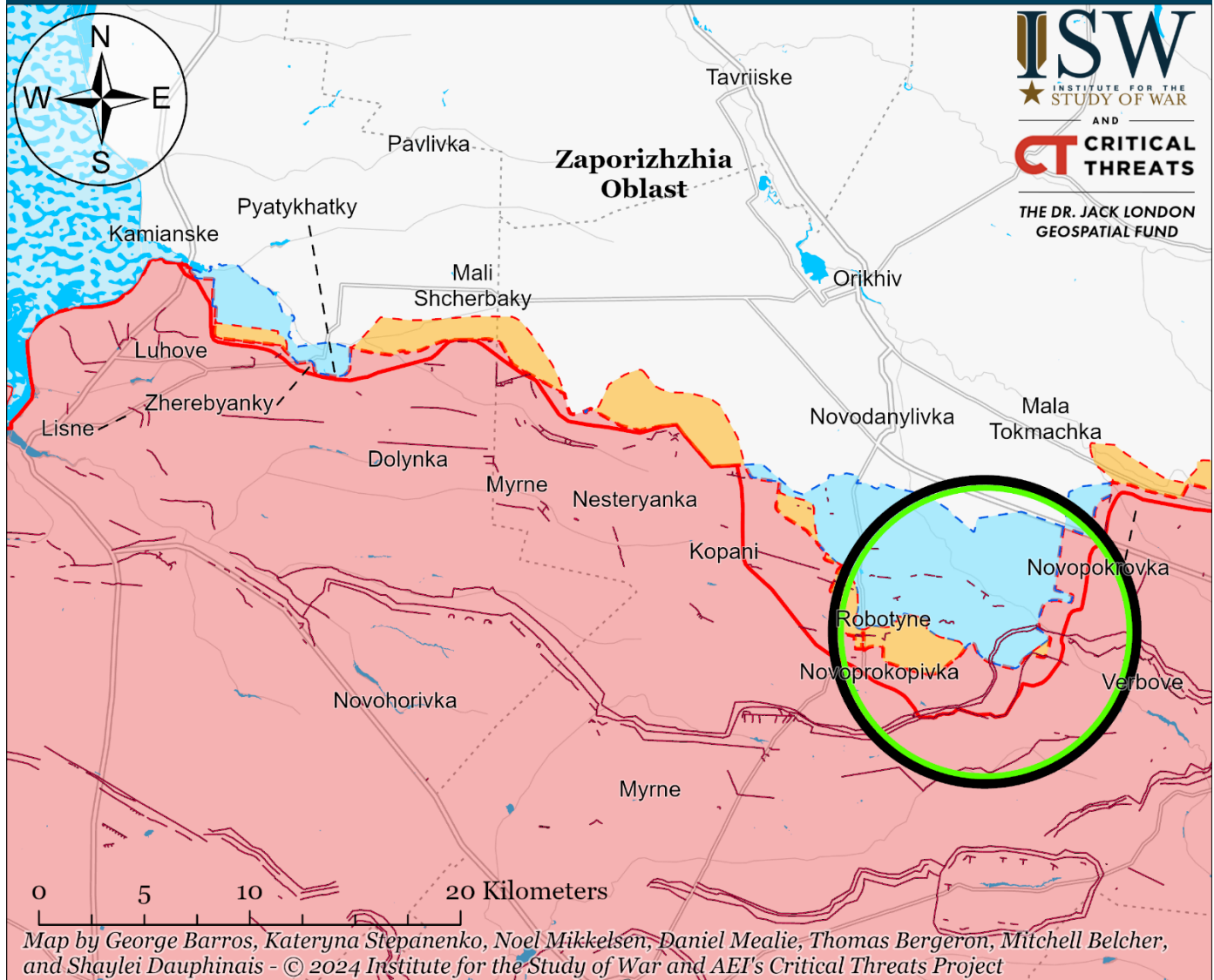
**Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)**

Positional fighting continued in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area on January 24, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Russian and Ukrainian sources reported positional fighting south of Velyka Novosilka near Urozhaine and north of Staromayorske and southeast of Velyka Novosilka near Novodonetske and east of Zolota Nyva.[58] Limited positional fighting also continued south of Chervone (southeast of Hulyaipole).[59]












Positional fighting continued in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on January 24, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Positional fighting continued near Robotyne, south of Robotyne near Novoprokopivka, and east of Robotyne near Verbove.[60]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of January 24, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

-  Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
-  Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
-  Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
-  Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
-  Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
-  Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
-  Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
-  Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
-  Russian Field Fortifications

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

Positional fighting continued on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast near Krynky on January 24, but there were no confirmed changes to the front in this area.[61] The Russian “Aksai” detachment, possibly of the volunteer “Don” Cossack Brigade, is reportedly operating on the Kinburn Peninsula in occupied Kherson Oblast.[62]



Crimean-based Ukrainian partisan group “Atesh” reported on January 24 that Russian forces redeployed a Ropucha class large landing ship to Hrafska Bay in Sevastopol.[63] Atesh reported that Russian forces camouflaged the ship and will likely deploy it to the Black Sea for combat missions.

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

Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov continues efforts to bolster the reputation of Chechen forces. Kadyrov posted footage on January 23 reportedly showing the “Baysangur Benoyevsky” Chechen Rosgvardia battalion and the “Sheikh Mansur” battalion completing training at the Russian Spetsnaz University in Gudermes, Chechnya.[64] Kadyrov claimed that Spetsnaz instructors worked with the Chechen battalions for three months and trained them in tactical fire, machine gun operation, combat medicine, and drone operation. Kadyrov also posted footage of the “Sheikh Mansur” battalion receiving Niva SUVs from the Chechen Regional Public Fund.[65] Kadyrov’s sixteen-year-old son Adam Kadyrov, who “oversees” the “Sheikh Mansur” battalion, accepted the Niva SUVs.[66] The conduct of Chechen fighters in Ukraine has recently drawn criticism from the Russian information space, as ISW reported on January 22.[67] Kadyrov likely continues to amplify the skill, training, and equipment of Chechen formations to distract from criticism of Chechen forces and to bolster his own reputation.

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

Russia’s defense industrial base (DIB) continues attempting to adapt to Ukraine’s increased use of drones. Russian media reported on January 23 that Russia is completing tests of anti-drone “mini-missiles” that Russian forces will fire using modernized Pantsir-SM air defense systems to protect critical military assets against Ukrainian drone and quadcopter strikes.[68] The “mini-missiles” are reportedly much smaller than standard Pantsir missiles, allowing Russian forces to equip Pantsir-mounted combat vehicles with 48 of the smaller missiles as opposed to the typical 12 standard-sized missiles.[69]

### **Ukrainian Defense Industrial Efforts (Ukrainian objective: Develop its defense industrial base to become more self-sufficient in cooperation with US, European, and international partners)**

Several countries announced new military aid packages to Ukraine following the 18th Ukraine Defense Contact Group at Ramstein Air Base in Germany on January 23. Canadian Defense Minister Bill Blair announced that Canada will provide 10 Zodiac multi-purpose boats worth \$20 million CAD (about \$14.7 million) to Ukraine and provide instructors and aircraft to support Ukrainian soldiers training on F-16 fighter jets.[70] German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius announced that Germany will provide six multipurpose Sea King Mk41 helicopters to Ukraine.[71] The Danish Ministry of Defense (MoD) announced on January 24 that Denmark will contribute 91 million Danish kroner (about \$13.3 million) to support the Ukrainian MoD and military cyber defense as part of the IT coalition for Ukraine.[72] UK Ambassador to Ukraine Martin Harris stated on January 23 that the recently announced 200 million GBP (about \$254 million) of UK military assistance allocated for producing and procuring drones will go toward reconnaissance, long-range, and first-person view (FPV) drone production in Ukraine and the UK.[73]

Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Dmytro Klimentov stated on January 24 that the Ukrainian MoD is implementing new weapons and equipment procurement standards in accordance with NATO standards.[74] Klimentov also reported that Ukraine is creating supervisory councils to oversee the Ukrainian State Operator of the Rear and Defense Procurement Agency, both of which conduct weapons and equipment procurement.[75]

### **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 are setting conditions to coerce voter turnout in the upcoming March 2024 presidential elections. Zaporizhia Oblast occupation election commission chairperson Galina Katyushchenko announced on January 24 that residents of occupied Zaporizhia Oblast will be able to vote in the presidential elections with Ukrainian passports.[76] Katyushchenko’s announcement is notable given that Russian occupation authorities have recently intensified passportization efforts in occupied areas in preparation for the upcoming presidential elections.[77] Russian occupation authorities may face greater resistance to passportization efforts than anticipated and may be softening the Russian passport requirement for the election to encourage Ukrainian passport holders to vote. The Kremlin likely seeks to generate high voter turnout in occupied Ukraine in order to create a guise of widespread local legitimacy of the Russian occupation of Ukraine and likely is realizing that authorities will have to lower the barriers to voting in order to accomplish the desired voter turnout.

## **Russian Information Operations and Narratives**

The European Union (EU) Foreign Policy Service published a report on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) on January 23 stating that Ukraine was the most-targeted country of all information attacks in 2023.[78] The EU Foreign Policy report also noted that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is one of the most targeted individuals in 2023. EU High Representative Josep Borrell stated that rapid action is essential to preventing manipulated information from spreading and that it must be debunked before it goes viral and admonished Russia's role in facilitating information operation attacks against Ukraine.[79]

Kremlin mouthpieces continue to attack post-Soviet states for enacting perceived anti-Russia policies. Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Maria Zakharova claimed that Bulgaria is trying to “rewrite history” by editing textbooks that allegedly “generate gratitude towards Russia.”[80] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger accused a Kazakh media outlet of generating anti-Russian sentiment by discussing the Kazakh famine of 1930 to 1933 and describing the famine as a “genocide” at the behest of Western actors.[81]

A prominent, Kremlin affiliated milblogger continued to attack Armenia for rejecting the Russian narrative attempting to portray Russia as the only mediator capable of creating a lasting peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan.[82]

### **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)**

Kremlin newswire TASS reported on January 24 that the deputy head of the Belarusian General Staff Military Academy's Faculty, Colonel Andrei Bogodel, stated that Belarus' updated military doctrine identifies the Baltic states, Poland, the US, Ukraine, and NATO as “unfriendly countries and organizations” to Belarus.[83]

The Belarusian Ministry of Defense (MoD) reported on January 24 that elements of the Belarusian 6th Separate Guards Mechanized Brigade (Western Operational Command) participated in fire training exercises at the Gozhsky Training Ground in Grodno, Belarus, and that elements of the 120th Guards Mechanized Brigade conducted training exercises at the 227th Combined Arms Training Ground in Borisov, Belarus.[84]

**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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