

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, January 4, 2024

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January 4, 2024, 5:20pm 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 12:10pm ET on January 4. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the January 5 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian military officials reported that Ukrainian forces struck at least one Russian military target in occupied Crimea, while Russian officials and milbloggers claimed that the Ukrainian strike was unsuccessful. Ukrainian Armed Forces Center for Strategic Communications (StratCom) stated on January 4 that Ukrainian forces struck a Russian command post near Sevastopol in the afternoon.[1] Ukrainian Air Force Commander Lieutenant General Mykola Oleshchuk implied that Ukrainian strikes against Sevastopol and Yevpatoria may have targeted the locations of Russian military leaders.[2] Oleshchuk also amplified footage of a smoke plume geolocated to the eastern outskirts of Uytne and a report by a Crimean source, which stated that a projectile reportedly struck a Russian air defense unit near Uytne (just west of Yevpatoria).[3] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces shot down 10 Ukrainian missiles over Crimea.[4] Russian sources, including the MoD and Sevastopol occupation governor Mikhail Razvozhayev, claimed that Russian air defenses repelled the Ukrainian strike.[5]

US National Security Council Spokesperson John Kirby stated on January 4 that Russia has already launched ballistic missiles acquired from North Korea at targets in Ukraine and continues efforts to acquire similar missiles from Iran. Kirby stated that North Korea provided Russia with ballistic missile launchers and an unspecified number of ballistic missiles and that Russian forces launched at least one of the North Korean missiles into Ukraine on December 30, 2023.[6] Kirby also stated that Russian officials continue efforts to buy ballistic missiles from Iran. *The Wall Street Journal (WSJ)* reported earlier on January 4 that unspecified US officials stated that Russia could receive Iranian short-range ballistic missiles as early as spring 2024 but that the officials do not believe that Russia and Iran have yet completed a deal.[7]

Russia may be intensifying efforts to source ballistic missiles from abroad because these missiles appear to be more effective at striking targets in Ukraine in some circumstances. Russian forces routinely use short-range ballistic missiles to strike Ukrainian cities closer to the frontline, and these missiles appear to be more effective at penetrating or avoiding Ukrainian air defenses. Ukrainian air defenses have intercepted 149 of a reported 166 Russian cruise missiles in intensified attacks since December 29, 2023, but have only intercepted a handful of the ballistic missiles that Russia has launched at Ukraine in the same period, for example.[8] Russian forces have repurposed S-300 and S-400 air defense missiles for conducting strikes against surface targets in Ukraine, and Ukrainian officials have acknowledged that Ukrainian air defenses struggle to intercept these unorthodox missile attacks using their own S-300 and S-400 systems.[9] Ukrainian forces have also appeared to be less successful in intercepting Iskander ballistic missiles during recent strikes, although Ukrainian forces did intercept an Iskander-M missile during a less intense series of Russian missile and drone strikes on December 30.[10] Ukrainian forces reportedly intercepted all Iskander-M or S-300/S-400 missiles that Russian forces launched at Kyiv on December 12.[11] Ukrainian forces reportedly also intercepted all 10 Kinzhal missiles that Russian forces launched at Ukraine on January 2 with Western-provided Patriot systems.[12] The effectiveness of Russian ballistic missiles thus appears to depend in part on the configuration of Ukraine's air defense umbrella in the target area and the strike package of which the missiles are part.

The relative success that Russian forces have had in striking targets in Ukraine with ballistic missiles in combination with cruise missiles and drones may be prompting an intensification of Russian efforts to source ballistic missiles from abroad. Russia can reportedly produce roughly 42 Iskander missiles and four Kinzhal missiles per month, although it is unclear how many S-300/S-400 missiles Russia can produce.[13] Russia's defense industrial base (DIB) likely cannot produce ballistic missiles at the scale required for a persistent strike campaign in Ukraine that relies on regularly expending a large volume

of ballistic missiles, and Russia likely has to source ballistic missiles from abroad if it wishes to maintain large-scale missile strikes against Ukraine.

US National Security Council Spokesperson John Kirby dismissed recent Western reporting of Russian President Vladimir Putin’s willingness to engage in peace negotiations with Ukraine as “ballyhoo” during a press conference on January 3.[14] Kirby stated that Putin “sure doesn’t act like a guy who’s willing to negotiate,” referring to Russia’s recent large-scale strikes against Ukraine from December 29, 2023, to January 2.[15] Kirby added that Putin is doing everything possible to put Ukraine in a disadvantageous position and reiterated the importance of continued Western support for Ukraine.[16] Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba stated during an interview with *CNN* on January 3 that Ukraine is confident that Western aid to Ukraine will continue and that Ukraine does not have a “plan B.”[17] Kuleba noted that a theoretical Russian victory in Ukraine would embolden other world leaders with predatory expansionist objectives and cited recent Russia’s missile strikes against Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities as a clear indication of Putin’s unwillingness to negotiate with Ukraine.[18] ISW has long assessed that Putin does not intend to negotiate with Ukraine in good faith and that Russia’s goals in Ukraine — which are tantamount to full Ukrainian and Western surrender — remain the same.[19]

Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree strengthening procedures for granting foreign citizens Russian citizenship in exchange for Russian military service in Ukraine, likely as part of ongoing efforts to coerce migrants into the Russian military. The January 4 decree grants Russian citizenship to foreign citizens who have signed at least a year-long contract with the Russian military or “military formations,” likely referencing volunteer formations and private military companies (PMCs), during periods of “special military operations.”[20] The decree also grants Russian citizenship to the spouses, children, and parents of the foreigners serving with the Russian military.[21] The decree reduces the time it takes for these foreigners to receive and be considered for Russian citizenship from three months to one month.[22] Putin previously signed a decree in September 2022 simplifying the process of obtaining Russian citizenship and dropping some prerequisites for foreigners who signed contracts with the Russian military.[23] The January 4 decree likely aims to further streamline and simplify the citizenship application process while formalizing migrant recruitment efforts following increased raids on migrant communities since summer 2023 in which Russian officials have issued military summonses to migrants with Russian citizenship.[24]

Russian State Duma’s Information Policy Committee Head Alexander Khinshtein noted that the January 4 decree would “solve the problem” of foreign countries’ extradition requests for their citizens who fought in Ukraine.[25] Khinshtein prevented the deportation of an Uzbek citizen who allegedly fought in the Wagner Group and successfully requested that Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) grant the Uzbek citizen asylum in Russia in December 2023.[26] Russian authorities have routinely offered Russian citizenship to migrants in exchange for Russian military service in Ukraine and have threatened to revoke Russian citizenship from naturalized migrants if they refuse to serve in the Russian military.[27] ISW continues to assess that the Kremlin does not have a clearly defined policy regarding migrants as Russian authorities continue to pursue incoherent and competing efforts to restrict them working in Russia, coerce them into the Russian military, and leverage them to offset Russian labor shortages caused by the war. Putin’s January 4 decree suggests that the Kremlin may be prioritizing coercing migrants into the military over relying on migrants to offset domestic labor shortages.

Kyrgyzstan sentenced a Kyrgyz citizen to five years in prison for participating in the war in Ukraine as a member of the Wagner Group. A court in Kyrgyzstan announced on January 4 that it sentenced Beknazar Borugul uulu, a Kyrgyz citizen, to five years in prison on December 7, 2023, under the article for participation “in armed conflicts or military operations on the territory of a foreign state or undergoing training to commit a terrorist act.”[28] Wagner reportedly recruited Borugul uulu while he was in a Russian prison. Kyrgyzstan previously sentenced another Kyrgyz citizen who joined a Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR) military unit to 10 years in prison on charges of mercenarism in May 2023, and the case was sent to a retrial in August 2023 after an appeal to replace the mercenarism charge with charges of participating in a military conflict in a foreign country.[29] Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have also recently sentenced some of their citizens on mercenarism charges after those citizens fought with Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) and Wagner forces in Ukraine.[30] ISW previously assessed that Russia’s continued use of Central Asian populations in Central Asia and Russia for force-generation purposes will likely create friction between Russia and its Central Asian neighbors.[31] Central Asian countries are charging and detaining their citizens for fighting in Ukraine upon their return to Central Asia, and Russian President Vladimir Putin’s decree granting foreigners expedited Russian citizenship in exchange for Russian military service may be aimed at combatting this issue.

Russia has begun negotiations with Algeria, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Saudi Arabia to open Russian cultural centers (*Russkii dom*) abroad, likely aimed at increasing Russian influence in the Middle East and North Africa. Russian Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation (*Rosstrudnichestvo*) Deputy Head Pavel Shevtsov told Kremlin

newswire *Tass* on January 4 that Russia has begun similar negotiations with other unnamed countries and noted that he is confident that the agreements will be completed “quickly enough” due to mutual interest between parties.[32] Russian media previously reported that Russia is also in negotiations to open additional *Russkii dom* centers in Brazil, South Africa, Angola, and Mali by 2025.[33] Russia currently has over 80 *Russkii dom* centers concentrated in Europe, Africa, and Central and Southeast Asia aimed at promoting Russian culture, strengthening the influence of the Russian language, supporting “compatriots abroad,” and preserving historical sites abroad with significance to Russia.[34] Moldovan and Ukrainian officials have previously warned that Russian officials use *Russkii dom* centers to promote Russian propaganda and conduct “subversive work” abroad.[35]

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian military officials reported that Ukrainian forces struck at least one Russian military target in occupied Crimea, while Russian officials and milbloggers claimed that the Ukrainian strike was unsuccessful.**
- **US National Security Council Spokesperson John Kirby stated on January 4 that Russia has already launched ballistic missiles acquired from North Korea at targets in Ukraine and continues efforts to acquire similar missiles from Iran.**
- **Russia may be intensifying efforts to source ballistic missiles from abroad because these missiles appear to be more effective at striking targets in Ukraine in some circumstances.**
- **US National Security Council Spokesperson John Kirby dismissed recent Western reporting of Russian President Vladimir Putin’s willingness to engage in peace negotiations with Ukraine as “ballyhoo” during a press conference on January 3.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree strengthening procedures for granting foreign citizens Russian citizenship in exchange for Russian military service in Ukraine, likely as part of ongoing efforts to coerce migrants into the Russian military.**
- **Kyrgyzstan sentenced a Kyrgyz citizen to five years in prison for participating in the war in Ukraine as a member of the Wagner Group.**
- **Russia has begun negotiations with Algeria, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Saudi Arabia to open Russian cultural centers (*Russkii dom*) abroad, likely aimed at increasing Russian influence in the Middle East and North Africa.**
- **Russian forces made confirmed advances near Kreminna and Avdiivka as positional engagement continued along the entire frontline.**
- **Ukrainian sources reported that Russian authorities are planning to mobilize Ukrainian teenagers living in occupied Ukraine.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree on January 4 streamlining the process for certain Ukrainians to receive Russian citizenship.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of January 4, 2024, 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.

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.

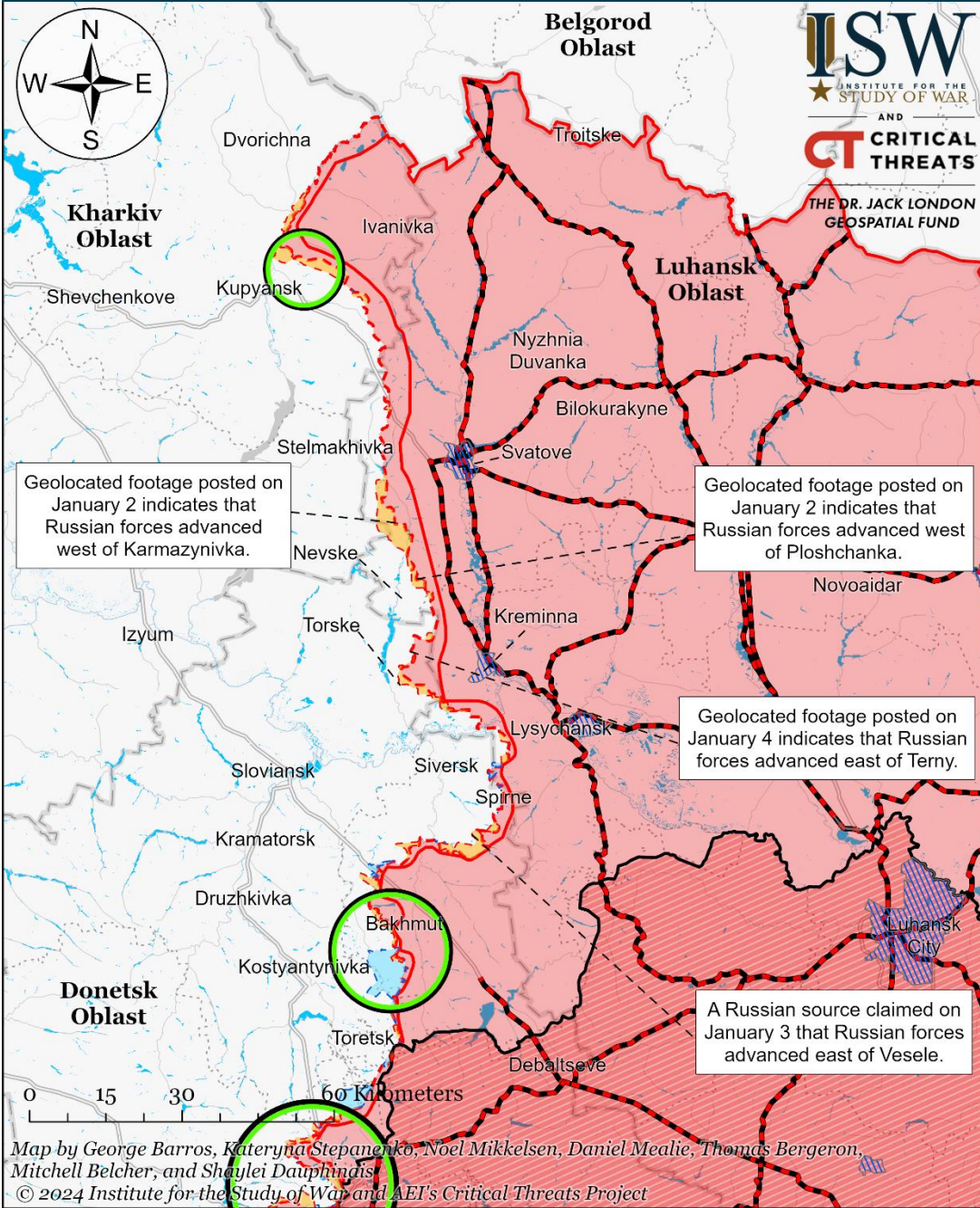
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety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

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 forces recently made a confirmed advance near Kreminna. Geolocated footage published on January 4 indicates that Russian forces advanced east of Terny (northwest of Kreminna).[36] Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional engagements continued in the Kupyansk direction east of Petropavlivka (east of Kupyansk) and near Synkivka (northeast of Kupyansk), Ivanivka (southeast of Kupyansk), and Karmazynivka (southeast of Svatove) and in the Lyman direction near Terny (northwest of Kupyansk), Torske (west of Kreminna), Dibrova, and the Serebryanske forest area (both southwest of Kreminna).[37] Ukrainian Ground Forces Command Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Volodymyr Fityo reported that the tempo of localized Russian offensive operations in the Kupyansk direction has decreased possibly due to deteriorating weather conditions.[38] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 25th Motorized Rifle Brigade (6th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Western Military District [WMD]) recently unsuccessfully attacked north of Synkivka and south of Vilshana (northeast of Kupyansk) and that elements of the Russian 128th Motorized Rifle Brigade (6th CAA, WMD) recently attacked along the railway line west of Vilshana.[39] Mashovets also reported that elements of the Russian 15th Motorized Rifle Regiment (2nd Motorized Rifle Division, 1st Guards Tank Army, WMD) have recently unsuccessfully attacked along the Orlianka-Yahidne line (west of Kupyansk).[40] Elements of the Russian 123rd Motorized Rifle Brigade and 6th Motorized Rifle Brigade (both of the 2nd Luhansk People's Republic [LNR] Army Corps) reportedly continue to operate near Berestove and in the Siversk direction (both south of Kreminna), respectively.[41]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of January 4, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



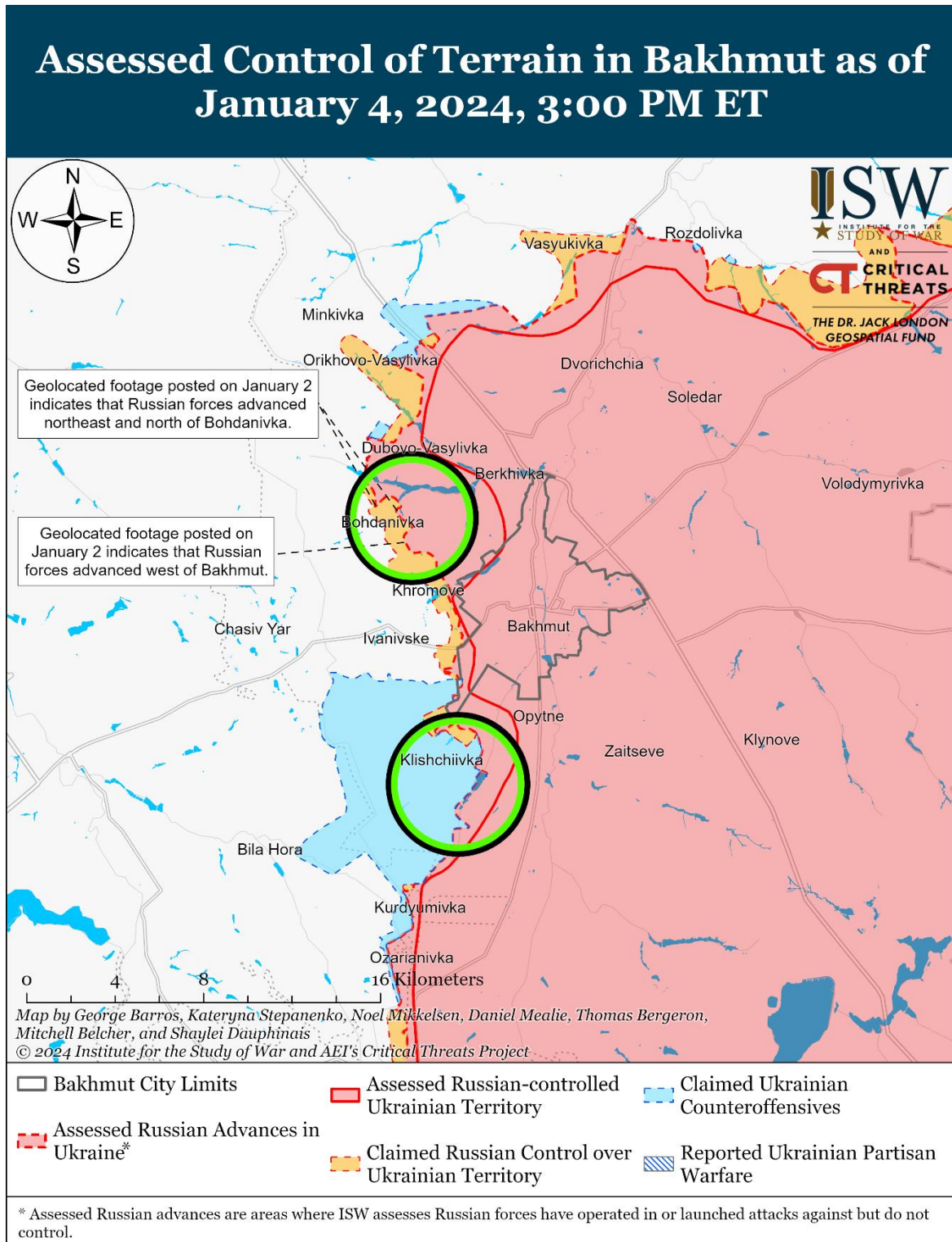
Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, and Shaylei Dauphinais
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Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours	Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*	Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
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.

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

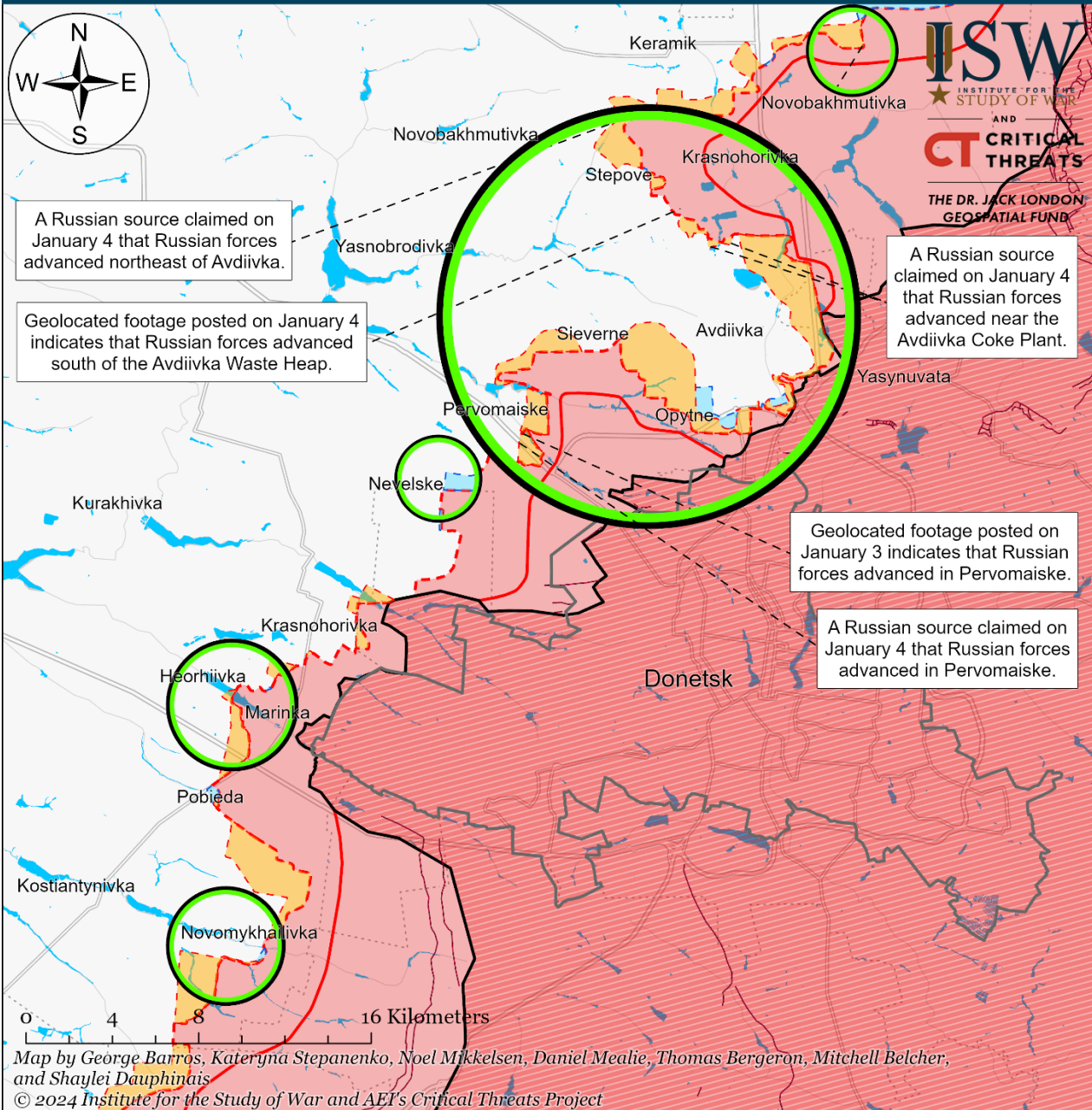
Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional engagements near Bakhmut on January 4. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional fighting occurred northeast of Bakhmut near Spirne; northwest of Bakhmut near Bohdanivka and Khromove; and southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka, Andriivka, and Kurdyumivka.[42] Elements of the Russian “Sever-V” Volunteer Brigade (Russian Volunteer Corps) are reportedly operating near Bohdanivka, and elements of the Russian 98th Airborne (VDV) Division are reportedly operating near the Oo506 (Khromove-Chasiv Yar) highway west of Bakhmut.[43]



Russian forces recently advanced near Avdiivka and reportedly intensified positional engagements with Ukrainian forces in the area on January 4. Geolocated footage published on January 4 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced near the Avdiivka waste heap (northeast of Avdiivka).[44] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced in dacha areas southeast of the Avdiivka waste heap.[45] Another Russian milblogger claimed on January 3 that Russian forces advanced up to a kilometer in length and 150 meters in depth northeast of Berdychi (northwest of Avdiivka) and 200 meters in depth near Ocheretyne (northwest of Avdiivka).[46] ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated on January 4 that positional fighting continued northwest of Avdiivka near Novobakhmutivka, Berdychi, and Stepove; near the Avdiivka Coke Plant in northwestern Avdiivka; on Avdiivka's northeastern and southeastern outskirts; south of Avdiivka near Opytne; southwest of Avdiivka near Vodyane, Pevomaiske, and Nevelske; and west of Avdiivka near Tonenke.[47] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Commander Brigadier General Oleksandr Tarnavskiy stated that Russian forces almost doubled the intensity of ground assaults over the past day.[48] Ukrainian Avdiivka City Military Administration Head Vitaliy Barabash stated that Russian forces are primarily attacking Stepove in an effort to disrupt Ukrainian ground lines of communication (GLOCs) but that Ukrainian forces still retain control of the settlement.[49]

Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 132nd Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] Army Corps) and the 30th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Combined Arms Army, Central Military District) are operating near Novobakhmutivka; that elements of the 114th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd DNR Army Corp), the 21st Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Combined Arms Army, Central Military District), and the 30th Motorized Rifle Brigade are operating near Stepove, Kamianka (northeast of Avdiivka), and Vesele (northeast of Avdiivka); that elements of the 1st Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st DNR Army Corps) are operating near the industrial zone southeast of Avdiivka; that elements of the 55th and 74th Motorized Rifle Brigades (41st Combined Arms Army, Central Military District) are operating near Vodyane and Sieverne; that elements of the 9th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st DNR Army Corps) are operating near Pisky; and that elements of the 110th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st DNR Army Corps) are operating near Nevelske.[50]

Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of January 4, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



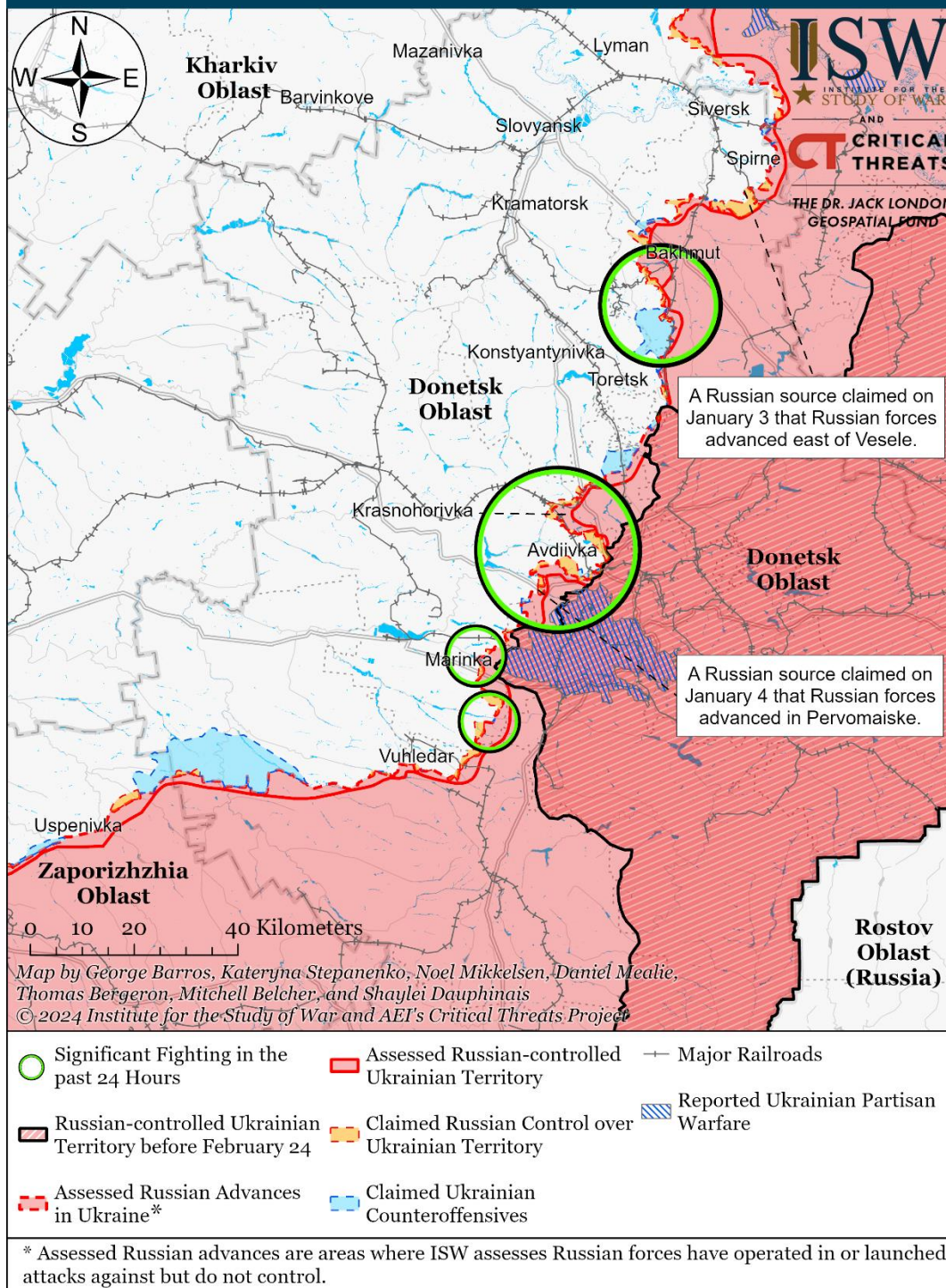
- Donetsk City Limits
- ▨ Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- ▨ Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- ▨ Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- ▨ Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Russian Field Fortifications

* 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 3 that Russian forces advanced west of a railway line northeast of Berdychi and advanced along a frontline one kilometer wide and 150 meters deep. A Russian source claimed on January 3 that Russian forces advanced 200 meters toward Ocheretyne. A Russian source claimed on January 2 that Russian forces advanced over the railroad line northwest of the so-called Toshmash dacha area and advanced approximately 500 meters.

Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional engagements west and southwest of Donetsk City on January 4. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional engagements continued west of Donetsk City near Heorhiivka and Marinka and southwest of Donetsk City near Novomykhailivka.[51] Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 33rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (20th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) are operating near Novomykhailivka.[52]

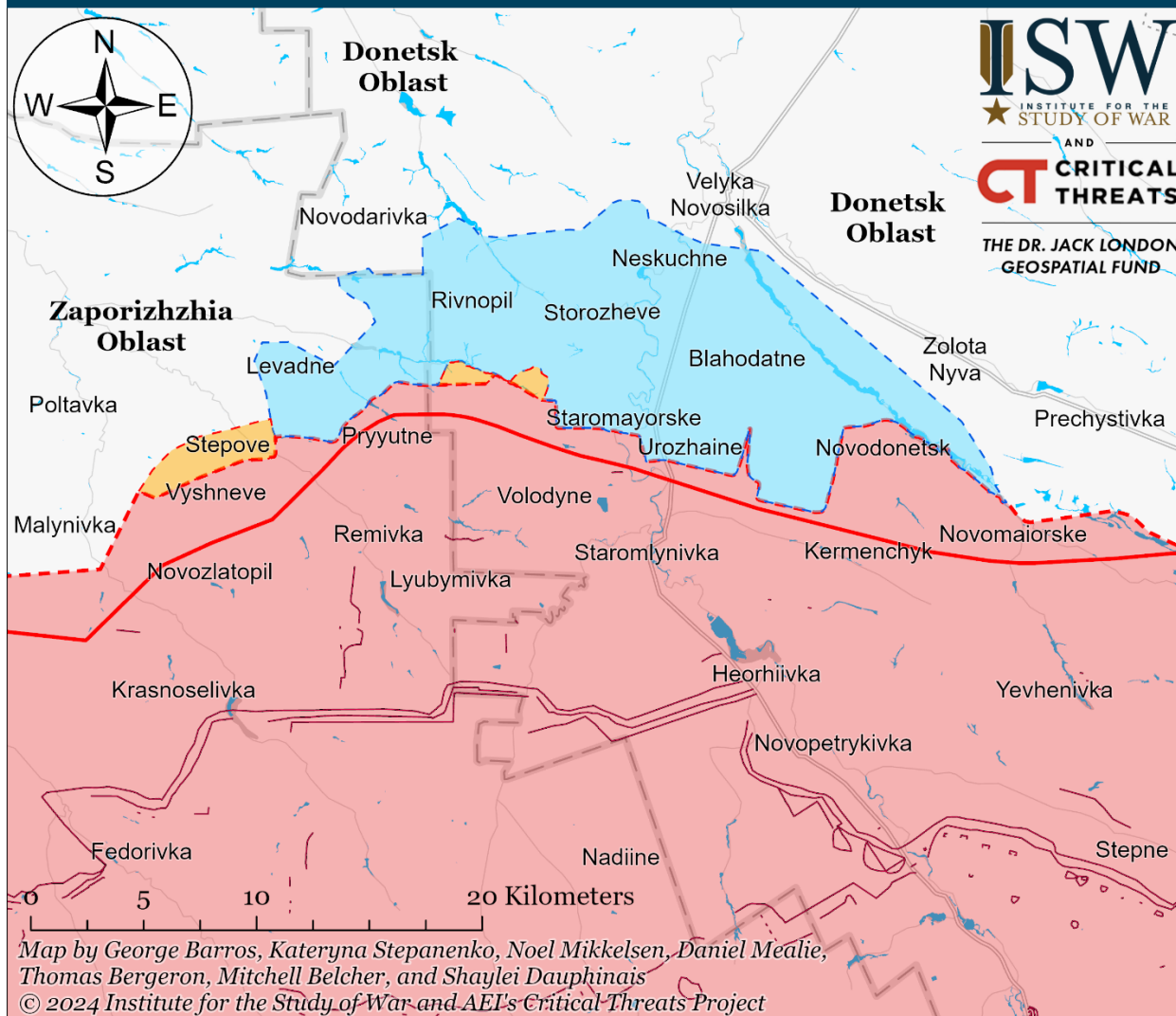
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of January 4, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that neither Russian nor Ukrainian forces conducted offensive ground operations in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area on January 4.[53]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of January 4, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



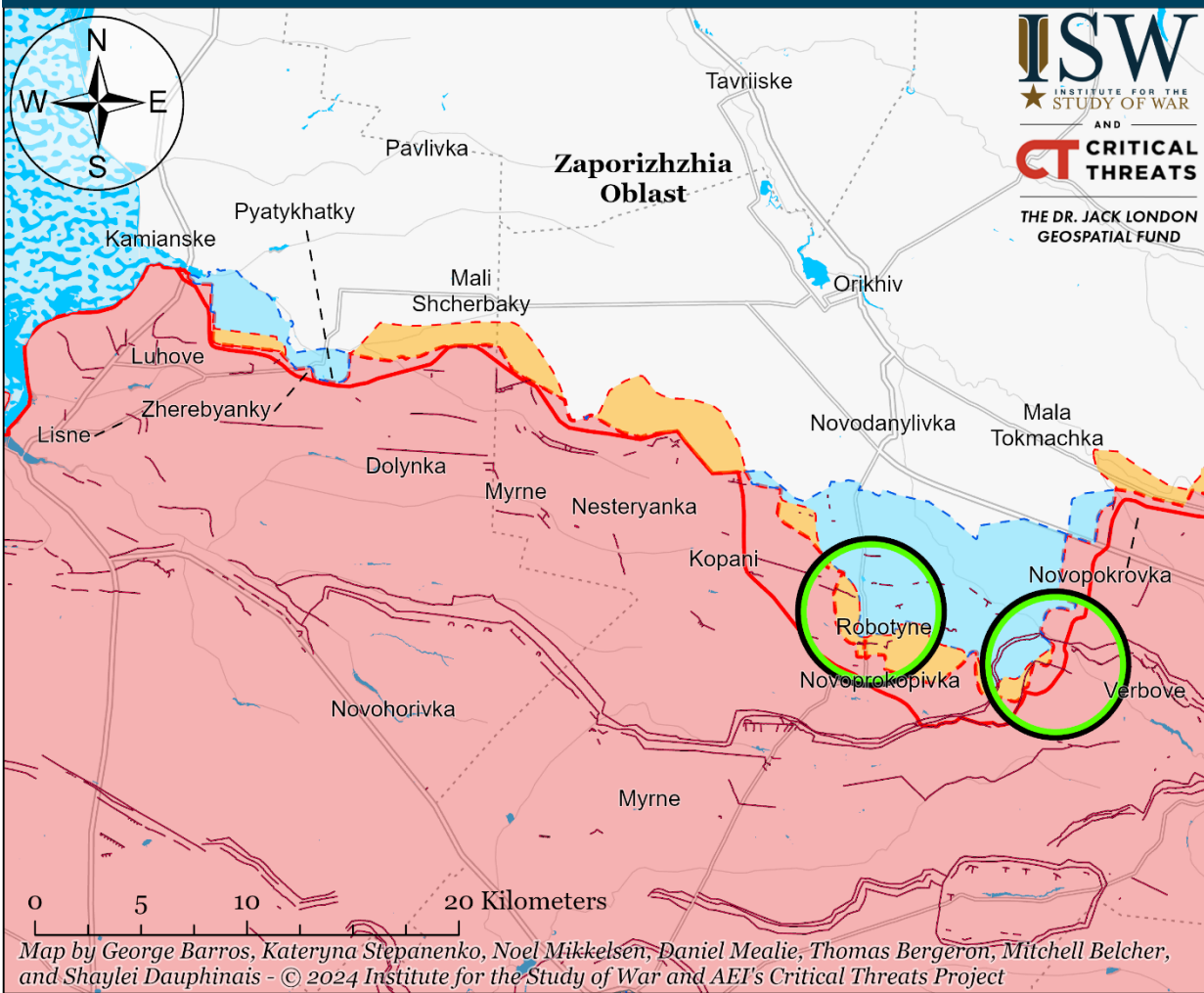
Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, and Shaylei Dauphinais
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- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- 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.

Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional engagements in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on January 4, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Russian and Ukrainian forces stated that positional fighting continued near Verbove (east of Robotyne), Robotyne, and Novopropkivka (south of Robotyne).[54] Elements of the Russian 42nd Motorized Rifle Division (58th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) reportedly continue to operate in the Zaporizhzhia direction.[55] Elements of the Russian 108th Airborne (VDV) Regiment (7th VDV Division) reportedly continue to operate near Verbove.[56]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of January 4, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

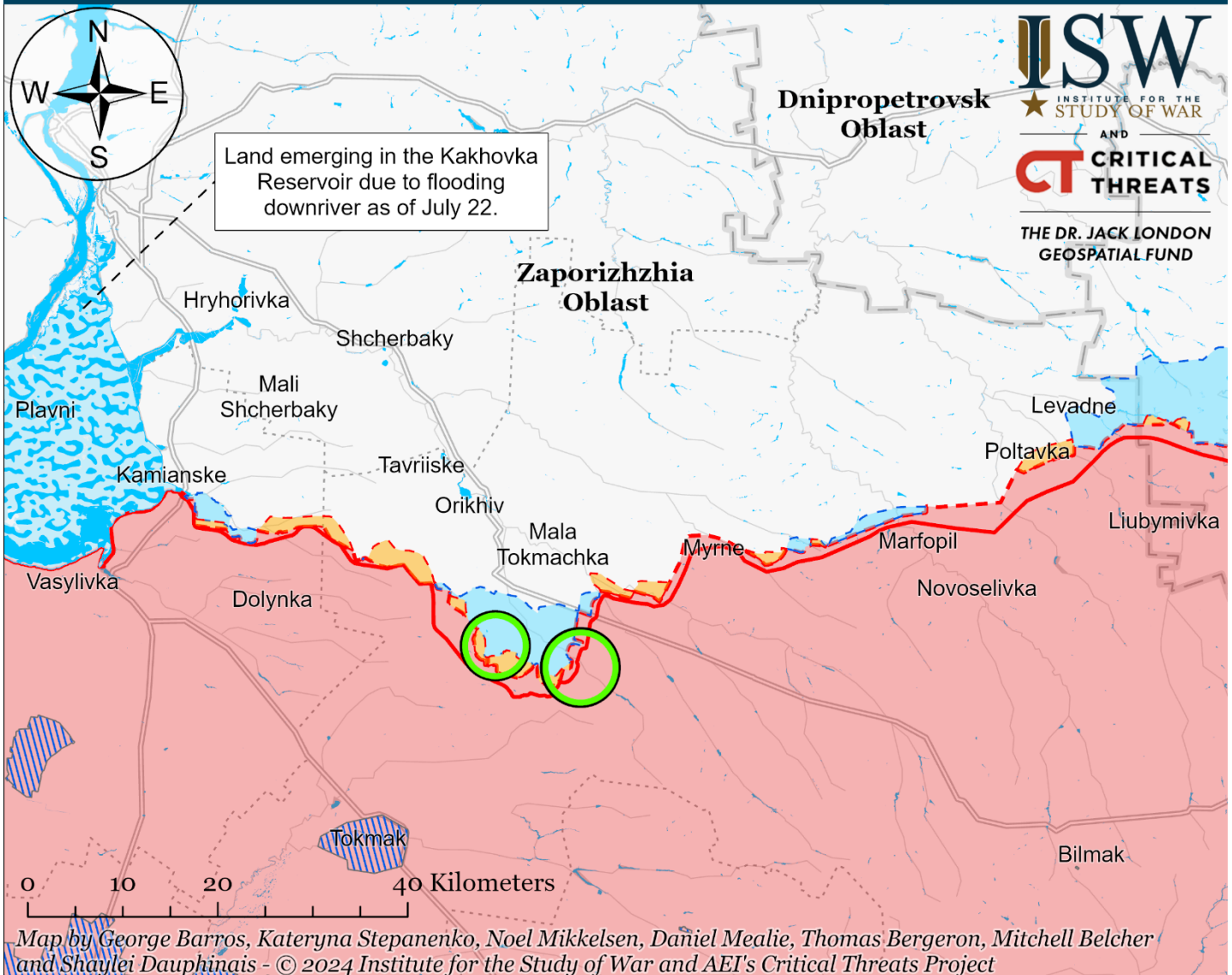


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|---|--|---|
|  Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours |  Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory |  Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare |
|  Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24 |  Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian 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.

Note: A Russian source claimed on January 1 that Russian forces have captured 38 square kilometers of the 327 square kilometers that Ukrainian forces recaptured during the summer counteroffensive.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of January 4, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir

* 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 1 that Russian forces have captured 38 square kilometers of the 327 square kilometers that Ukrainian forces recaptured during the summer counteroffensive.

Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional engagements on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast on January 4, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional engagements continued on the east bank, including in Krynky.[57] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are using drones *en masse* on the east bank near Krynky, Oleshky, and Kakhovka and that Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW) is hampering Russian efforts to use drones.[58] Ukraine's Southern Operational Command stated that Russian forces conducted a missile strike, possibly using S-400 ballistic missiles, on Snihurivka, Mykolaiv Oblast, and conducted an airstrike with four glide bombs on Beryslav and Chervonyi Mayak, Kherson Oblast.[59]



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

Ukrainian sources reported that Russian authorities are planning to mobilize Ukrainian teenagers living in occupied Ukraine. The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on January 4 that Russian military registration and enlistment offices in occupied Ukraine plan to require 17-year-old Ukrainians living in southern occupied Ukraine to register for military service with the Russian Armed Forces beginning March 2024.[60] The Ukrainian Resistance Center stated that Russian authorities plan to increase the pace of mobilization after the March 2024 Russian presidential elections and warned that Russian forces will likely use Ukrainian citizens serving in the Russian military as “cannon fodder.”[61] Ukrainian Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov reported that Zaporizhia Oblast occupation authorities are compiling a list of Ukrainian citizens eligible for conscription, including citizens as young as 17 years old.[62] Fedorov stated that occupation authorities promised to give conscripts money and unspecified social benefits in exchange for military service.[63]

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

Russian “Geran” Research and Production Enterprise Chief Designer Oleg Zhukov told Kremlin newswire *TASS* in an interview published on January 3 that Russian forces are using BR-2, BR-1, and Miner BR-1 unmanned ground vehicle robotic platforms to provide artillery support for ground attacks, evacuate wounded personnel, and remotely mine territory in the south Donetsk (western Donetsk Oblast) and Zaporizhia directions.[64]

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 President Vladimir Putin signed a decree on January 4 streamlining the process for certain Ukrainians to receive Russian citizenship. The decree states that Ukrainian citizens who were born and permanently resided in Crimea or Sevastopol prior to Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea on March 18, 2014, have the right to apply for Russian citizenship.[65] The decree also simplifies the Russian citizenship process for citizens of Ukraine, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Yemen who were born in the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) and had Soviet citizenship.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported on January 3 that ZNPP authorities continue to deny IAEA experts access to the reactor halls of three units of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) that are in cold shutdown.[66] The IAEA reported that the ZNPP has repaired electrical transformers to ensure that the ZNPP has immediate access to backup power.[67] The IAEA noted that the ZNPP has manually had to connect its backup power line to the ZNPP to restore power since mid-2023 and that the new repair is a major development. The IAEA cautioned that the off-site power situation at the ZNPP is still fragile as the backup power line must remain operational to provide immediate power to the ZNPP if the main power line fails.

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Pro-Kremlin international actors are attempting to legitimize Russia’s occupation of Ukraine by falsely portraying Russia as a liberator and the rightful ruler of Ukrainian lands. The Italian-based Russian Cultural Association of Emila Romagna announced on January 3 that it will hold an exhibition in Modena, Italy, on January 20 about the reconstruction of occupied Mariupol after Russia’s “liberation” of the “martyr city” following the “Kyiv junta’s occupation” of the city.[68] Russian Ambassador to Italy Dmitry Shodin and other pro-Kremlin individuals will speak at the event.[69] The Russian Cultural Association of Emila Romagna states that its mission is to promote Russian-Italian geopolitical relations and economic integration, support the integration of the “Eurasian space,” and diffuse Russian culture in Italy.[70] The Russian Cultural Association of Emila Romagna has previously hosted local exhibitions in cooperation with Russian regional officials, and its former president, Stefano Bonilauri, previously acted as a false independent observer in illegal Russian-backed parliamentary elections in South Ossetia in 2019.[71] Russia has used alleged independent election observers to claim that its illegal elections in occupied Ukraine are legitimate and will likely use pro-Russian actors in the international space to spread Kremlin narratives about the false legitimacy of Russia’s occupation of Ukraine.[72] Ukrainian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Oleh Nikolenko condemned the Russian Cultural Association of Emila Romagna’s event on January 4.[73]

A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger continued to target Nordic states likely in an effort to undermine military assistance to Ukraine. The milblogger claimed that Norway is supporting Ukraine at the expense of maintaining its own military.[74] Kremlin-affiliated mouthpieces have recently appeared to be setting informational conditions to blame the West for a potential future conflict in the Arctic, which would include Nordic states, and falsely imply that these states lack sovereignty.[75]

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 signed amendments to the law “on the President of the Republic of Belarus” on January 3 that allows the Belarusian president to make proposals to the All-Belarusian People’s Assembly to send military personnel abroad to participate in “ensuring collective security and activities for maintaining international peace and security.”[76]

Belarusian state news outlet *Belta* reported on January 4 that Belarus will open a consulate in Rostov-on-Don until July 1, 2024.[77]

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/AFUStratCom/21982>

[2] <https://t.me/MykolaOleshchuk/181>

[3] <https://t.me/Crimeanwind/51390> ; <https://t.me/Crimeanwind/51378> ; <https://t.me/MykolaOleshchuk/181> ; <https://twitter.com/Osinttechnical/status/1742923585117934023>

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