

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, January 5, 2024

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January 5, 2024, 7:30pm ET

Click [here](#) to see ISW's interactive map of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

Click [here](#) to see ISW's 3D control of terrain topographic map of Ukraine. Use of a computer (not a mobile device) is strongly recommended for using this data-heavy tool.

Click [here](#) to access ISW's archive of interactive time-lapse maps of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These maps complement the static control-of-terrain map that ISW produces daily by showing a dynamic frontline. ISW will update this time-lapse map archive monthly.

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 12:45pm ET on January 5. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the January 6 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Correction: ISW inaccurately stated that Google's 4.6 billion ruble fine from a Moscow court is equivalent to \$50.3 billion. The fine is actually equivalent to \$50.3 million.

Russian forces may intensify efforts to capture Kupyansk, Kharkiv Oblast, in the coming weeks and have a grouping of forces in the area that appears to be less degraded than Russian groupings responsible for offensive efforts elsewhere in eastern Ukraine. Russian forces appear to have conditions conducive to intensifying operations in the Kupyansk direction (Kharkiv-Luhansk oblast area) with the intent of making territorial gains in areas that are more operationally significant than other areas that Russian forces are currently attempting to seize. Ukrainian officials have stated that Russian forces aim to capture Kupyansk and Borova (35km west of Svatove) during winter 2024.[1] Russian seizure of those towns would likely force Ukrainian forces off the east bank of the Oskil River in Kharkiv Oblast and set conditions for future Russian offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line. The tempo of Russian operations in the Kupyansk direction and the apparent configuration of Russian forces in occupied Luhansk and Kharkiv oblasts overall does not indicate an impending Russian offensive effort along the entire Kupyansk-Lyman line (Kharkiv-Luhansk-northeastern Donetsk oblast area), similar to the failed Russian offensive effort in northeastern Ukraine in winter-spring 2023. Russian forces likely have not accumulated enough forces in Belgorod Oblast to support launching large-scale offensive operations elsewhere in northern or northeastern Kharkiv Oblast as of this writing.[2]

Ukrainian officials have not publicly reported any sudden buildup of Russian forces in the Kupyansk direction indicating that a large-scale offensive to advance to the Oskil River is imminent. Russian forces appear to have gradually reconstituted units badly degraded during the Ukrainian counteroffensive in September 2022 and Russia's failed winter-spring 2023 offensive, and the Russian command likely intends these relatively well-rested and reconstituted units to intensify localized offensive operations that Russian forces started in the area in October 2023.[3] Russian forces operating in the Kupyansk direction appear not yet to have committed a substantial force to current offensive operations in the area and thus have been able to sustain localized ground attacks without suffering losses similar to those that Russian forces have suffered in operations around Avdiivka and in

southern Ukraine.[4] Russian forces operating in the Kupyansk direction, comprised largely of the 1st Guards Tank Army (GTA) and 6th Combined Arms Army (CAA) (both of the Western Military District [WMD]), have not heavily participated in large offensive operations since the culmination of the Russian winter-spring 2023 offensive in April 2023.[5] 1st GTA and 6th CAA elements have likely reconstituted to a considerable degree through the incorporation of manpower generated by Russia's September 2022 partial mobilization and continued crypto-mobilization efforts.[6] Russian forces may be deploying new forces to the Kupyansk direction at a rate roughly equal to Russian losses in the area as they have done throughout Ukraine, although these elements are likely poorly trained Storm-Z and Storm-V assault detachments and not more combat-effective regular elements of the 6th CAA and 1st GTA.[7] These elements likely do not need to reconstitute their kit to full doctrinal end strength to support new offensive operations because current Russian offensive operations in the Kupyansk direction rely heavily on dismounted infantry assaults and only sporadically use small mechanized assaults.[8] Russian regular forces in the Kupyansk direction are drawn primarily from the Western Military District and thus benefit from a degree of organizational coherence unlike Russian forces in other parts of Ukraine, which are often thrown together from various military districts and airborne (VDV) units.[9] The relative coherence of the WMD force grouping in the Kupyansk direction likely generates relatively more effective command and control (C2) among these forces, although it remains unclear if these WMD elements are able to conduct large-scale assaults that would be significantly more effective than the disorganized and costly Russian offensive operations around Avdiivka.

UK outlet the *Telegraph* reported on January 4 that an unspecified source "close" to the Ukrainian military stated that Russian forces may conduct a "ground offensive" as early as January 15.[10] Ukrainian Ground Forces Command Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Volodymyr Fityo responded to the *Telegraph* article on January 5 and stated that the Ukrainian military has not observed a change in the composition of Russian forces in Kharkiv Oblast or in Russia bordering Kharkiv Oblast and that Russian forces continue offensive operations near Synkivka with the aim of capturing Kupyansk.[11] Ukrainian Kharkiv Oblast Head Oleh Synehubov also responded to the *Telegraph* noting that Russian forces are not concentrating in Kharkiv Oblast in preparation for a large-scale offensive and that the intensity of Russian attacks in the Kupyansk direction has decreased in the past three days due to bad weather conditions.[12] Synehubov noted that Russian forces are using the slower tempo of operations caused by poor weather conditions to deploy reinforcements to the frontline and to train and coordinate units.[13] Fityo and Synehubov's comments are consistent with ISW's assessment that Russian forces may intensify offensive operations, though not launch a full-scale offensive operation, with the existing grouping of forces in the Kupyansk direction. Russian forces may have conducted a gradual buildup of forces since Ukrainian officials reported that the Russian military concentrated over 100,000 personnel in the Kupyansk and Lyman directions as of October 2023.[14]

Ukrainian forces reportedly conducted a series of drone and missile strikes against Russian targets in occupied Crimea and Krasnodar Krai on the night of January 4 to 5.

The Ukrainian Armed Forces Center for Strategic Communications (StratCom) stated on January 5 that Ukrainian forces struck Russian ammunition warehouses near Pervomaiske (82km north of Simferopol) in occupied Crimea.[15] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces downed 36 Ukrainian drones over Crimea, a drone in Krasnodar Krai, and a Ukrainian Neptune missile in the northwestern part of the Black Sea.[16] Saky occupation head Aleksandr Ovdienko claimed that Russian forces successfully repelled a large Ukrainian drone attack along the Saky-Yevpatoria coast on the evening of January 4.[17] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian drones and missiles targeted Yevpatoria, the Russian airfield in Saky, the Kerch Strait Bridge, and

Novorossiysk in Krasnodar Krai.[18] ISW has not observed visual confirmation of Ukrainian strikes hitting Russian targets on the night of January 4 to 5. These Ukrainian strikes follow Ukrainian strikes near Uyutne (west of Yevpatoria) and Yevpatoria on January 4, which reportedly struck at least one Russian command post.[19] The Ukrainian Crimean-based "Atesh" partisan group claimed that Ukrainian forces struck a Russian air defense radar system and a communications center in Yevpatoria responsible for coordinating Russian air defense operations in occupied Crimea on January 4.[20]

Russian forces conducted Shahed 131/136 drone strikes and missile strikes against frontline areas in Ukraine overnight on January 5. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched two waves of Shahed drones at frontline areas in Kherson and Mykolaiv oblasts and that Ukrainian forces shot down 21 of the 29 drones.[21] Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat stated that Russian forces targeted frontline areas of southern Ukraine, particularly Kherson Oblast, where it is more difficult for Ukrainian forces to intercept the drones.[22] Kharkiv Oblast Military Administration Head Oleh Synhubov stated that Russian forces launched 10 S-300 missiles at Liptsi, Kharkiv Oblast on the night of January 4 to 5.[23]

Germany announced a new military assistance package to Ukraine on January 4.[24] The package includes 10 Marder infantry fighting vehicles, two demining tanks, 30 drone detection systems, 155mm artillery ammunition, missiles for Patriot and IRIS-T air defense systems, and a Skynex air defense system.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) will convene on January 10 and discuss Russia's reported use of North Korean ballistic missiles in Ukraine, a likely violation of UNSC resolutions. US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield stated on January 4 that US officials will raise the issue of the reported ballistic missile use at a January 10 UNSC briefing on Ukraine.[25] US National Security Council Spokesperson John Kirby stated on January 4 that Russian forces launched ballistic missiles acquired from North Korea at targets in Ukraine on December 30, 2023, and January 2, 2024.[26] Ukrainian officials stated on January 5 that Russian forces have used foreign-made ballistic missiles in strikes against Ukraine but that Ukrainian officials have yet to identify the country of origin.[27] North Korea has reportedly begun transferring an unspecified number of short-range ballistic missiles to Russia in recent weeks.[28]

UNSC resolutions on North Korea specifically call for North Korea to suspend all ballistic missile activities and prohibits member states from exporting and importing weapons to and from North Korea.[29] The UNSC resolutions also prohibit any trade with North Korea that can contribute to nuclear, ballistic missile, or weapons of mass destruction (WMD)-related activities.[30] Russian Ambassador at Large Oleg Burmistrov stated on October 15, 2023, that Russia "strictly adheres to its international obligations towards [North Korea] through the UNSC." [31] Russia's increasing procurement of ammunition and weapons systems from North Korea materially violates the UNSC resolutions on North Korea, however. UNSC resolutions do not commit member states to enforce any secondary sanctions against third parties trading with North Korea, but the US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) has wide sanctions enforcement powers to sanction any entity trading goods or services with North Korea and any foreign financial institution knowingly facilitating transactions with North Korea.[32]

Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov strangely offered to exchange 20 Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) for lifting sanctions against his family members. Kadyrov's oddly public offer to negotiate with the Ukrainian government for personal gain follows indicators that the

Kremlin may be engaging in POW negotiations to offset reports of Russian abuses of Ukrainian POWs and posture Russia as interested in operating within the bounds of international law and norms.[33] Kadyrov's proposal undermines this larger Kremlin posturing. Russian milblogger and Kremlin Human Rights Council member Alexander "Sasha" Kots criticized Kadyrov for "dispos[ing] of prisoners [of war] as goods for personal purposes." [34] Kadyrov likely negotiated with the Ukrainian government independently from the Kremlin for personal gain when he claimed to have paid Ukrainian special services for the return of his racehorse, Zazu, in May 2023.[35]

The Moscow Arbitration Court ordered Google to unblock four YouTube channels belonging to Russian state-affiliated channel 5TV on January 5, likely as part of an ongoing effort to consolidate control over the Russian information space ahead of the March presidential elections. Moscow's Arbitration Court upheld a previous ruling that Google must unblock 5TV's YouTube channels or pay a 100,000 ruble (roughly \$1,094) fine for each day Google refuses to reinstate the channels.[36] YouTube blocked access to channels associated with Russian state-funded media in February and March 2022 to enforce a policy that "prohibit[s] content denying, minimizing, or trivializing well-documented violent events" including the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine.[37] The Kremlin has likely been attempting to force Google to cease operations in Russia by imposing increasing fines for failing to comply with Russian censorship and data privacy laws.[38] A Moscow court fined Google 4.6 billion rubles (roughly \$50.3 million) on December 20, 2023, for refusing to comply with Russian censorship laws and remove "fake" information about the Russian war in Ukraine.[39] *Reuters* reported on January 3 that Russian fines against Google, YouTube, Meta, TikTok, and Telegram "appear to have been settled" as they no longer appear as debtors on the Russian Federal Bailiff Service's database, but the reason for this omission is unclear.[40]

Key Takeaways:

- **Russian forces may intensify efforts to capture Kupyansk, Kharkiv Oblast, in the coming weeks and have a grouping of forces in the area that appears to be less degraded than Russian groupings responsible for offensive efforts elsewhere in eastern Ukraine.**
- **Ukrainian forces reportedly conducted a series of drone and missile strikes against Russian targets in occupied Crimea and Krasnodar Krai on the night of January 4 to 5.**
- **Russian forces conducted Shahed 131/136 drone strikes and missile strikes against frontline areas in Ukraine overnight on January 5.**
- **Germany announced a new military assistance package to Ukraine on January 4.**
- **The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) will convene on January 10 and discuss Russia's reported use of North Korean ballistic missiles in Ukraine, a likely violation of UNSC resolutions.**
- **Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov strangely offered to exchange 20 Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) for lifting sanctions against his family members.**
- **The Moscow Arbitration Court ordered Google to unblock four YouTube channels belonging to Russian state-affiliated channel 5TV on January 5, likely as part of an**

ongoing effort to consolidate control over the Russian information space ahead of the March presidential elections.

- **Russian forces made a confirmed advance near Avdiivka as positional engagements continued along the entire frontline.**
- **International sanctions are reportedly impeding Russia's Su-34 aircraft production.**
- **The Kremlin continues to solidify federal administrative oversight of local and regional occupation administrations in occupied Ukraine.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of January 5, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

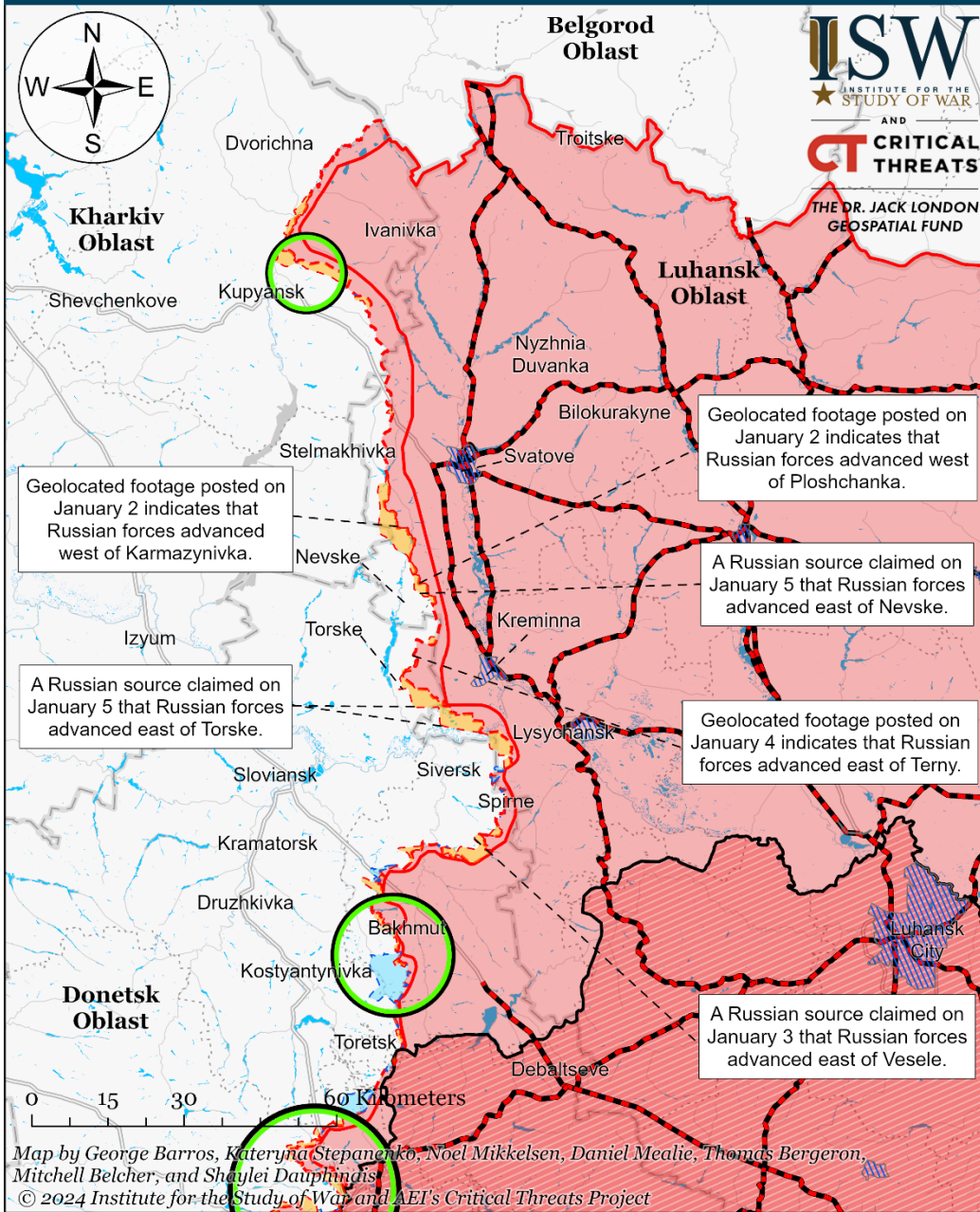
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Russian Technological Adaptations
- 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 reportedly advanced in the Kupyansk and Lyman directions on January 5, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces pushed Ukrainian forces from positions in northern and central Synkivka (northeast of Kupyansk) and that Synkivka is now a contested grey zone.[41] Another milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced to positions within three kilometers of Terny and Yampolivka (west of Kreminna), and stated that Russian forces are trying to eliminate the Ukrainian bridgehead on the right bank of the Zherebets River in this area.[42] ISW has not yet observed visual confirmation of these purported gains in the Kupyansk or Lyman directions, however. Russian and Ukrainian sources reported that positional engagements continued in the Kupyansk direction near Synkivka and east of Petropavlivka, and in the Lyman direction near Terny and in the Serebryanske forest area.[43]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of January 5, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

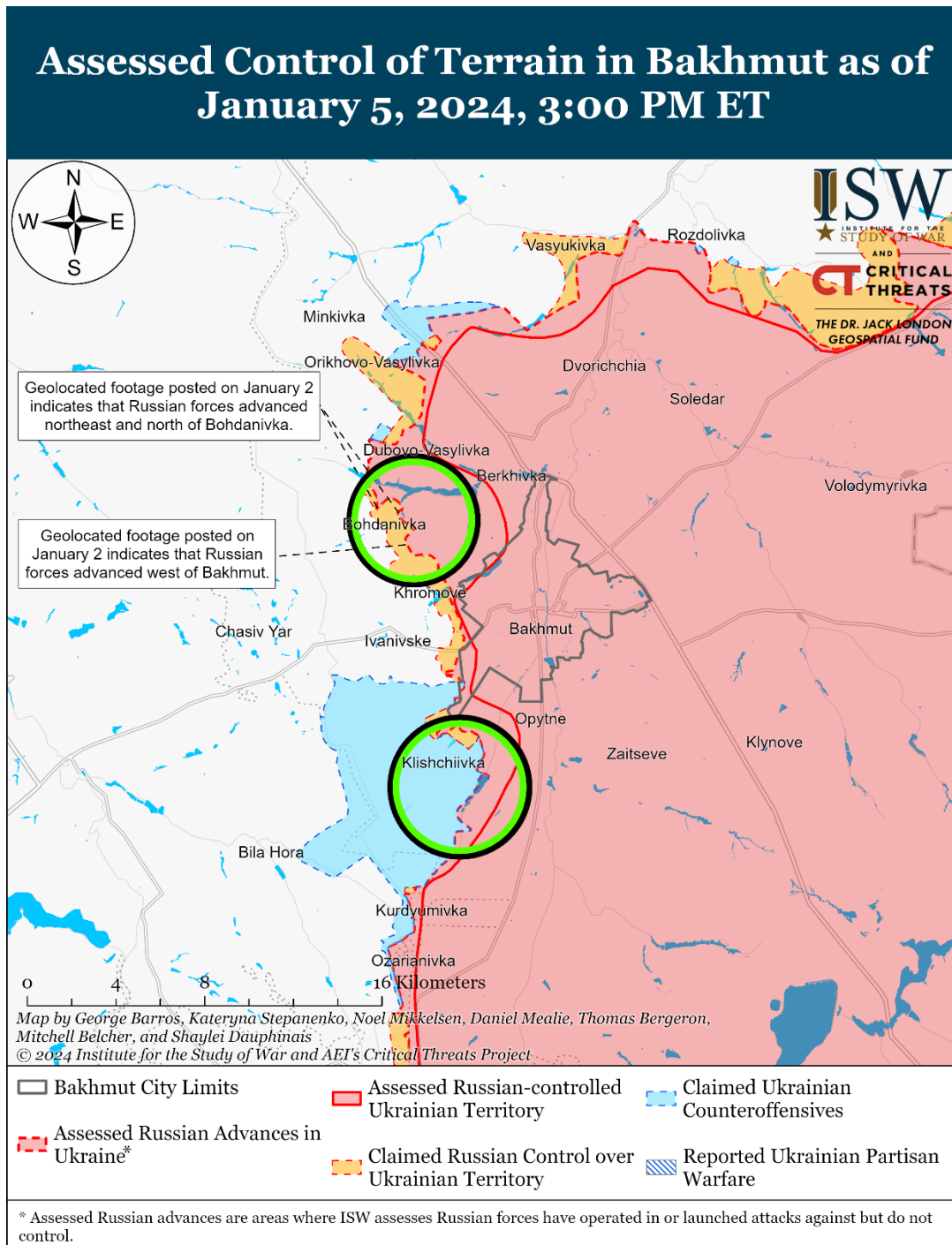


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- - - Russian Ground Lines of Communication
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- - - Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- 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.

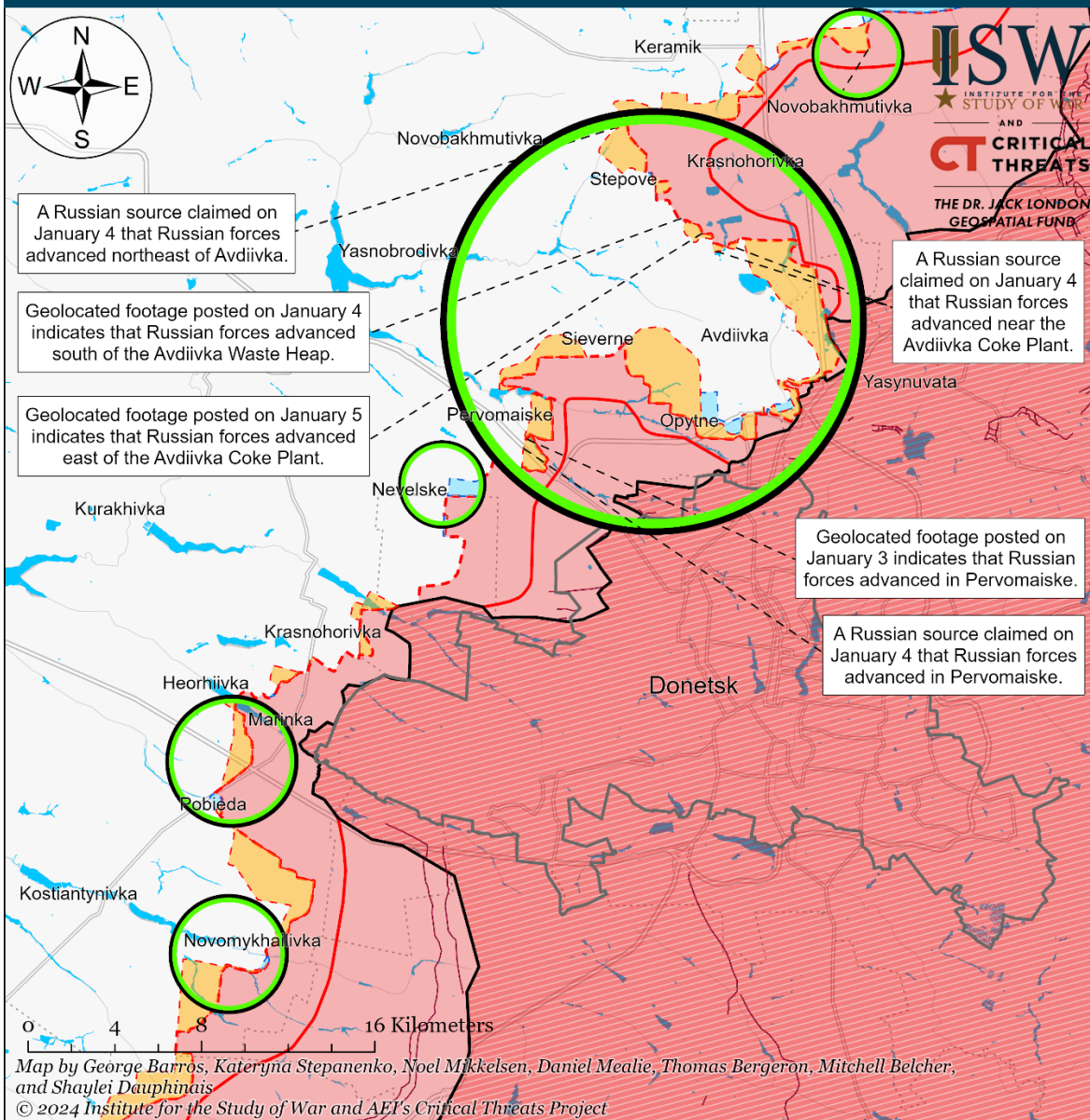
Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)

Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional battles northwest and south of Bakhmut on January 5, but there were no confirmed changes to the front line. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional fighting continued northwest of Bakhmut near Bohdanivka, west of Bakhmut near Ivanivske, and southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka and Andriivka.[44] Elements of the Russian 331st VDV Regiment (98th VDV Division) reportedly continue to operate near Bakhmut and elements of the "Russian Hawks" detachment (33rd Motorized Rifle Regiment, 1st Donetsk People’s Republic [DNR] Army Corps] are reportedly operating south of Bakhmut near Horlivka.[45]



Russian forces recently marginally advanced near Avdiivka and intensified the tempo of their offensive operations in the area. Geolocated footage published on January 4 shows that Russian forces advanced north of Avdiivka near the Avdiivka Coke Plant and northwest of Avdiivka along the rail line near Novobakhmutivka.[46] Russian milbloggers claimed on January 5 that Russian forces also advanced 400 meters along the railway line north of the "Tochmash" dacha area northwest of Avdiivka and 400 meters near the Avdiivka Coke Plant.[47] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces northwest of Avdiivka near Berdychi advance on average 100 meters every two days.[48] Russian forces attacked near Avdiivka, Novobakhmutivka, Stepove, Pervomaiske, and Nevelske.[49] Avdiivka City Military Administration Head Vitaliy Barabash stated that Russian forces began attacking from 20 different directions, likely referring to sub-tactical directions, on January 4 following a lull between January 1 and 3 and that Russian forces are conducting heavy air and artillery strikes in the area.[50] Barabash noted that Russian forces aim to capture Avdiivka before the March 17 presidential election but are unlikely to do so.

Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of January 5, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

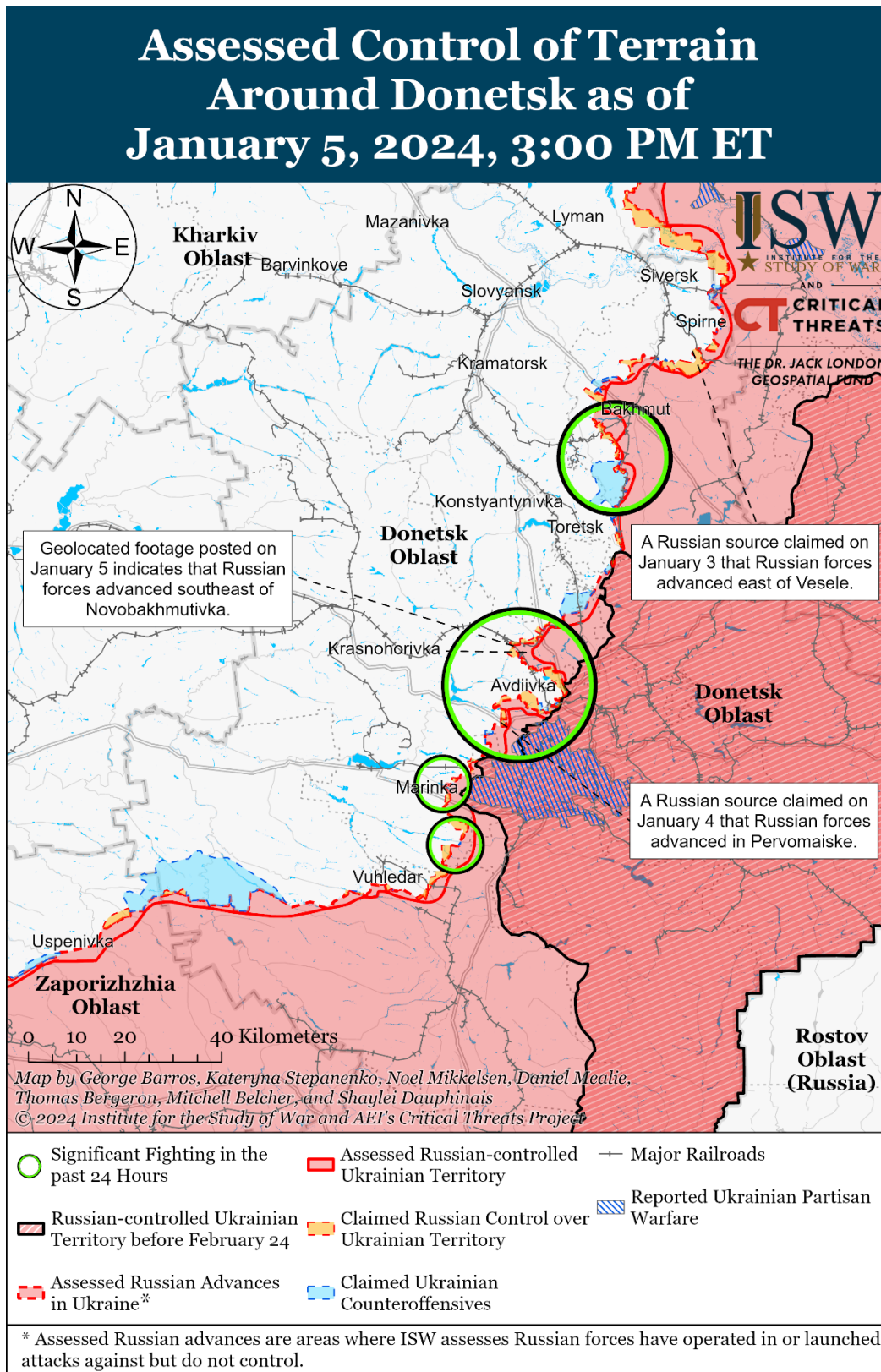


- Donetsk City Limits
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Russian Field Fortifications

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

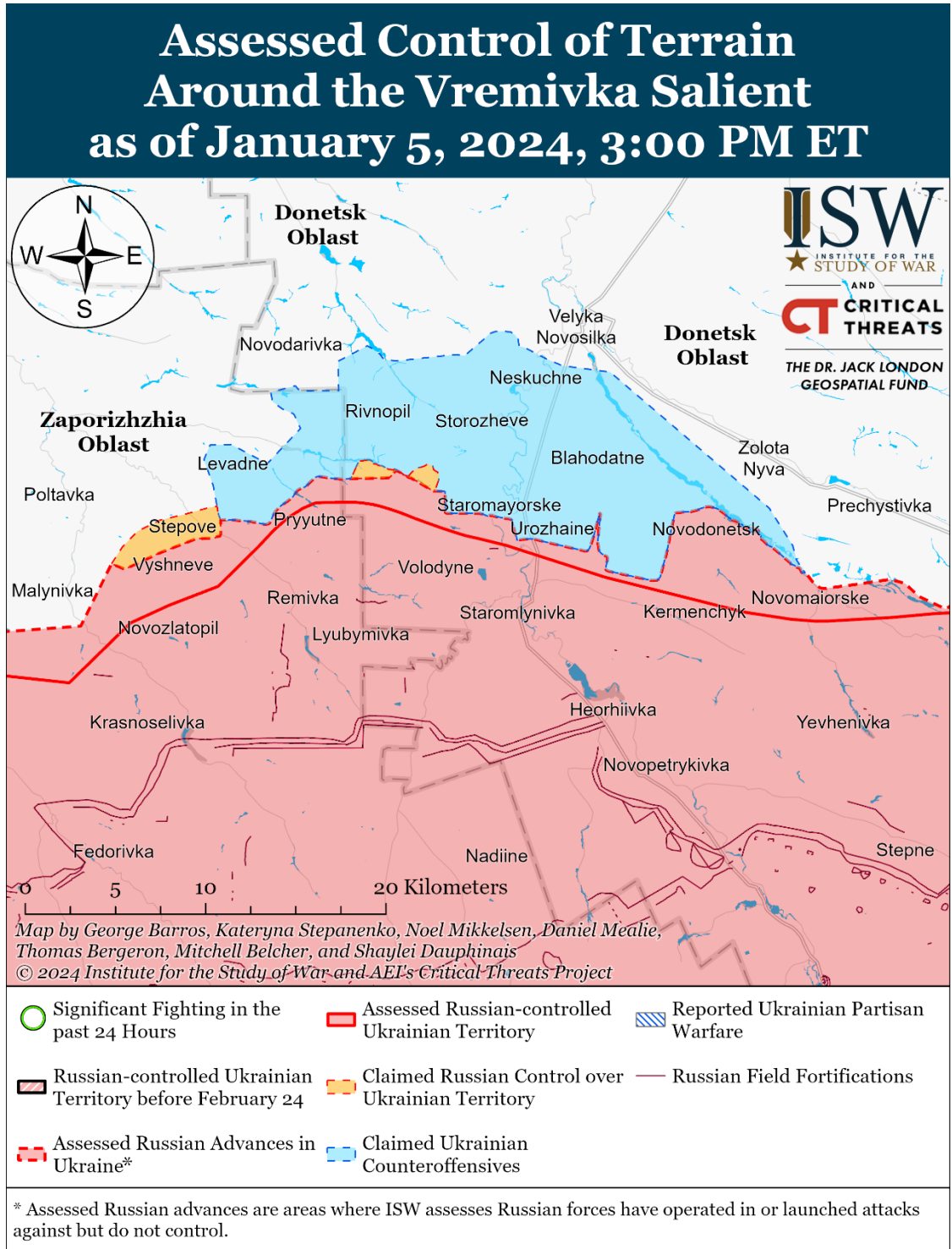
Note: A Russian source claimed on January 5 that Russian forces advanced approximately 400 meters southeast of the Avdiivka Coke Plant wastewater treatment plant. A Russian source claimed on January 5 that Russian forces advance 100 meters every two days near Berdychi. A Russian source claimed on January 5 that Russian forces advanced approximately 400 meters along the railroad line north of the so-called Tochmash community garden area. 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 Tochmash community garden area and advanced approximately 500 meters.

Positional fighting continued west and southwest of Donetsk City near Marinka, Heorhiivka, Pobieda, and Novomykhailivka on January 5.[51] Elements of the DNR's "Kaskad" operational combat tactical formation, which the Russian military command is reportedly dissolving, reportedly continue to operate near Novomykhailivka.[52]



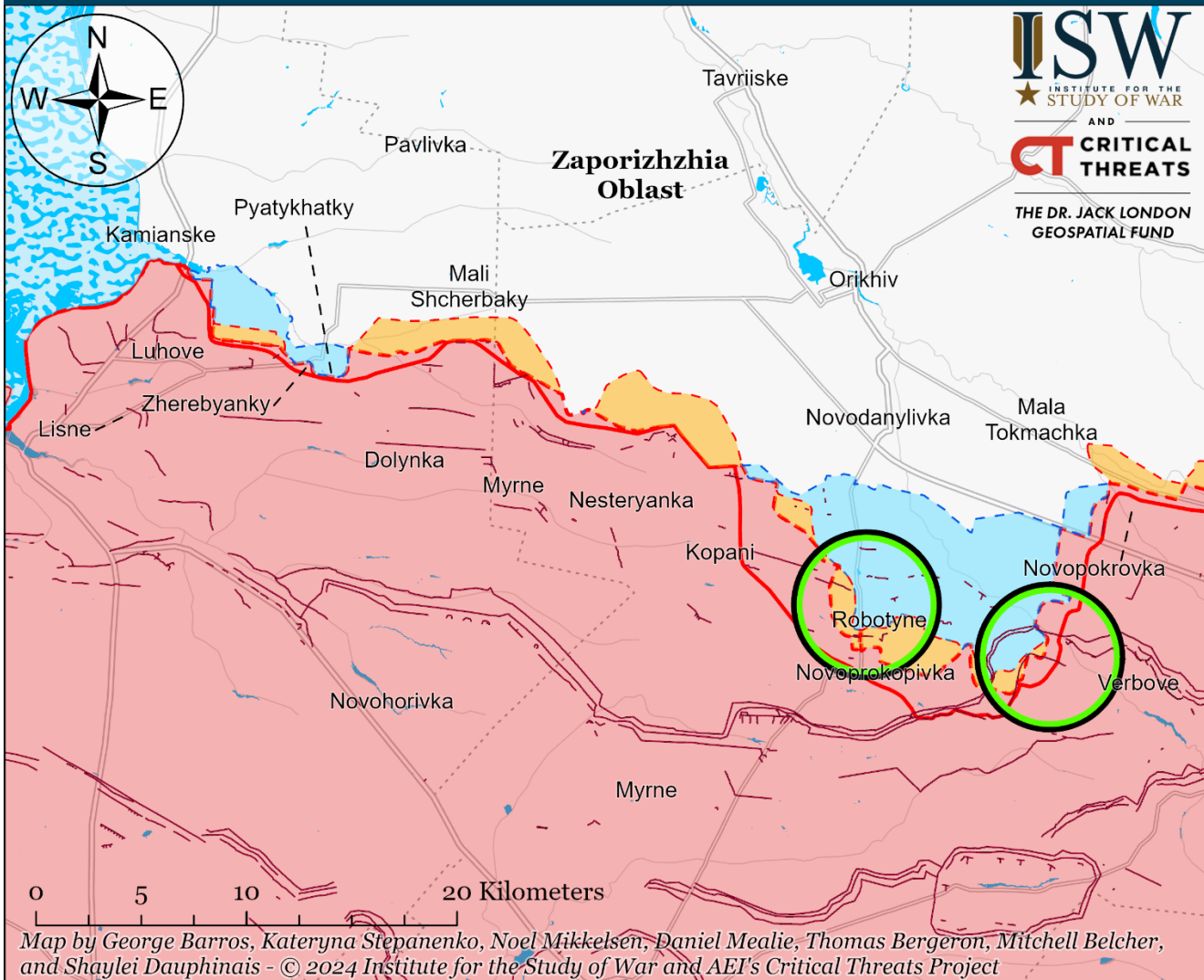
Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces did not conduct any assaults in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on January 5.[53] Elements of the Russian 394th Motorized Rifle Regiment (127th Motorized Rifle Division, 5th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) are reportedly operating south of Velyka Novosilka and elements of the 218th Tank Regiment (127th Motorized Rifle Division) are operating near Pryyutne (southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[54]



Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional engagements in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on January 5. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional fighting continued near Verbove (east of Robotyne), Robotyne, and Novoprokopivka (south of Robotyne).[55]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of January 5, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

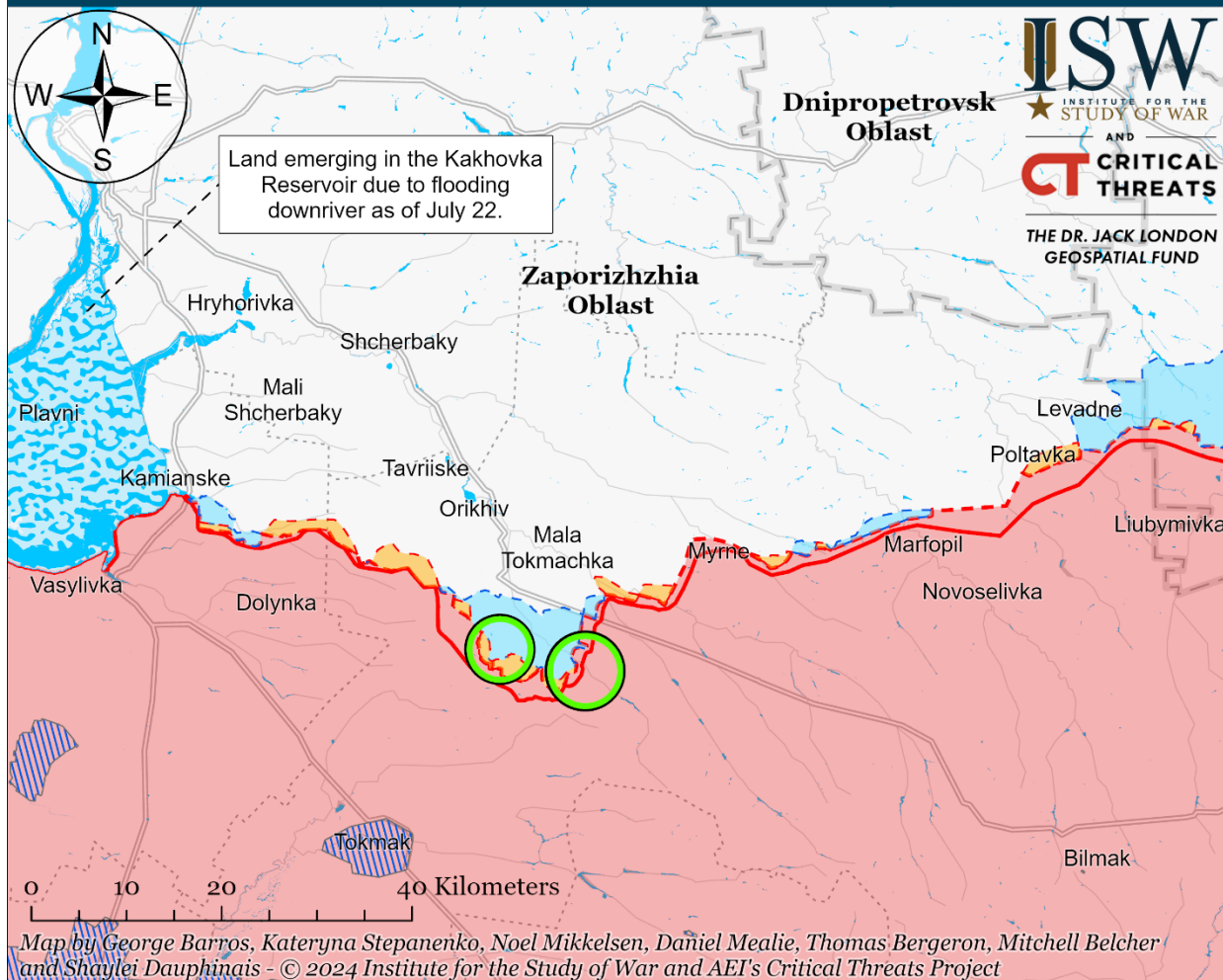


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|---|--|---|
| Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours | Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory | Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare |
| Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24 | Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian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

Ukrainian forces maintain positions on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast as of January 5 but there were no changes to the frontline in the area. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled 10 Russian assaults on the east bank of the Dnipro River.[56] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces continue to transfer reinforcements to positions near Krynky and that Russian drones have become more effective at operating within range of Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW) systems in the area.[57]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of January 5, 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
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives

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

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of January 5, 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

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

Note: The Ukrainian counteroffensive layer displays areas previously assigned to the Russian control, Russian advances, or Russian claims layers where ISW now assesses that Ukrainian forces have established a presence beyond a short-term raid. Inclusion of an area on this layer does not imply that ISW assesses that the area is part of any upcoming Ukrainian counteroffensive operation.

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

International sanctions are reportedly impeding Russia's Su-34 aircraft production. Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat stated on January 5 that Russia produced a new batch of two to three Su-34 aircraft in 2023 and can only produce this many aircraft per year because the aircraft require foreign components.[58] Ihnat noted that sanctions likely make it difficult for Russia to acquire foreign parts to repair and build new aircraft. Ukrainian forces shot down at least four Russian Su-34 aircraft in late December 2023.[59]

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

Russian state news outlet *TASS* reported on January 5 that Russian state-owned defense conglomerate Rostec delivered the latest versions of the Koalitsiya-SV self-propelled gun to the Russian military at the end of 2023.[60] Rostec reported that it completed successful tests of the Koalitsiya-SV system in October 2023. The latest version of the Koalitsiya-SV can reportedly fire over 10 rounds per minute and is built on the chassis of a T-90 tank.[61]

Russian state news outlet *RIA Novosti* reported on January 4 that the first batch of modernized T-90BVM tanks entered service in an unspecified area in the Zaporizhia direction.[62] A Russian tank unit commander told *RIA Novosti* that the modernized T-90BVM tanks have a new communications system and enhanced vehicle protections.[63]

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)

The Kremlin continues to solidify federal administrative oversight of local and regional occupation administrations in occupied Ukraine. Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree on January 5 expanding changes to the composition of the Russian Council for the Development of Local Self-Government, which is a Kremlin advisory body that strengthens local self-government systems in Russia and now in illegally annexed parts of Ukraine.[64] The January 5 decree appoints Galina Danilchenko as the official head of the Melitopol City occupation administration and confirms Denis Pushilin and Leonid Pasechnik as official heads of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics (DNR and LNR), respectively, amending their titles from that of "acting heads." [65] This decree effectively codifies Kremlin-approved officials as the formal heads of occupied municipalities and regions.

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian sources are trying to preempt possible issues between Russia and India by alleging that Western countries are purposefully supplying Indian-produced artillery ammunition to Ukraine. The Indian branch of Russian government media outlet *Sputnik* claimed on January 3 that an Indian Air Force veteran accused Slovenia of purchasing Indian 155mm artillery ammunition under false pretenses and supplying the ammunition to Ukraine to damage the Russian-Indian bilateral relationship.[66] *Sputnik India* stressed India's neutral position on the war in Ukraine and its close strategic partnership with Russia.[67] Indian outlet *Economic Ties* reported that Russian officials contacted the Indian government about Indian-made ammunition reaching Ukraine through European intermediaries.[68] ISW has not observed confirmation that any belligerent has used Indian-made

artillery ammunition in Ukraine. Russian sources and officials are likely trying to frame the issue as a Western provocation to diffuse possible tensions with India. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov met with Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar on December 27 likely to maintain Russia's critical trade relationship with India.[69]

A Russian milblogger amplified a claim that “terrorists” can easily enter Europe due to the war in Ukraine likely in an attempt to undermine Western support for continued aid to Ukraine and discussions on Ukraine's accession to the European Union (EU). The milblogger amplified an article from the German outlet *Bild* that claimed that Islamic State Khorasan Province terrorists from Tajikistan are easily entering Europe by posing as refugees from Ukraine.[70] The milblogger amplified a map showing the alleged route the terrorists take to reach Germany, which indicates that the path goes through Russia.[71] ISW has observed nothing to verify any of *Bild*'s claims. The milblogger likely amplified the claim in an attempt to link European fears of terrorist attacks and debates about migration with continued support for Ukraine.

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)

Nothing significant to report.

Note: ISW does not receive any classified material from any source, uses only publicly available information, and draws extensively on Russian, Ukrainian, and Western reporting and social media as well as commercially available satellite imagery and other geospatial data as the basis for these reports. References to all sources used are provided in the endnotes of each update.

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[1] <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-september-8-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-22-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-november-11-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-11-2023>

[2] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-11-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-november-10-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-4-2024>

[3] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-19-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-6-2023>

[4] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar123123>

- [5] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-april-1-2023>
- [6] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-december-31-2023>
- [7] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-november-27-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-november-21-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-december-7-2023>
- [8] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar120823> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar120723> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar112123>
- [9] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-19-2023>
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