

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, January 8, 2024

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January 8, 2024, 6:30pm 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 12:30pm ET on January 8. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the January 9 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian officials highlighted the need for more air defense systems after another large series of Russian missile and drone strikes against Ukraine on the night of January 7 to 8. Ukrainian military officials reported that Russian forces launched a total of 59 missiles and drones against Ukraine including: eight Shahed-136/-131 drones; seven S-300/400 missiles; four Kh-47M2 Kinzhal hypersonic missiles; 24 Kh-101/555/55 and eight Kh-22 cruise missiles; six Iskander-M ballistic missiles; and two Kh-31P air guided missiles.[1] Ukrainian military officials reported that the Russian strikes targeted critical and civilian infrastructure, and military facilities in Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhia, and Khmelnytskyi oblasts and that Ukrainian forces downed all eight Shaheds and 18 Kh-101/555/55 cruise missiles.[2] Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat reported that the percentage of Russian air targets that Ukrainian forces shot down on the night of January 7 to 8 did not change in comparison to previous, more intense Russian strikes, but that Ukraine needs to intercept more Russian missiles and drones given the large number of such systems that Russia regularly launches.[3] Ihnat stated that only “specific means,” such as Patriot air defense systems, can down ballistic missiles and that Ukrainian forces have yet to down a Kh-22 cruise missile.[4] Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated in a virtual address to Sweden's annual national Society and Defense Conference on January 8 that Ukraine needs to strengthen its air defense capabilities at the front to better protect Ukrainian positions against Russian strikes and in the rear to protect civilians.[5] Zelensky stated that Ukrainian forces have intercepted over 70 percent of the over 500 Russian missiles and drones launched over the past “several days” thanks to air defenses systems from Western partners but that this current interception rate is insufficient.[6] Zelensky stated that Russian forces will lose their power on the battlefield if Russian forces lose air superiority.[7]

Western provisions of air defense systems and missiles remains crucial for Ukraine as Russian forces attempt to adapt to current Ukrainian air defense capabilities and as Ukraine develops its defense industrial base (DIB). ISW assessed that Russian and Ukrainian forces are currently engaged in a tactical and technological offensive-defense race wherein both sides are constantly experimenting and adapting their long-range strikes and air defenses.[8] The continued and increased Western provision of air defense systems and missiles to Ukraine is crucial as Russian forces continue to experiment with new ways to penetrate Ukrainian air defenses. The inclusion of Western-provided air defense systems into Ukraine's air defense umbrella has been essential to Ukraine's ability to defend against Russian missiles, particularly ballistic missiles.[9] Western air defense systems and air defense missile provisions to Ukraine in the near- and medium-term are also essential to protecting Ukraine's growing DIB as Russian forces continue to target Ukrainian industrial facilities.[10] US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller called the provision of US aid to Ukraine “critical” on January 4 because Ukraine is not yet able to defend itself but noted that US aid will not need to continue at previous levels because Ukraine is working to expand its DIB to “stand on its own feet.”[11]

Ukrainian forces are adapting to battlefield difficulties from equipment shortages but are struggling to completely compensate for artillery ammunition shortages and insufficient electronic warfare (EW) capabilities. The *Wall Street Journal* (*WSJ*) reported on January 8 that Ukrainian forces are struggling with artillery ammunition shortages on the frontline but that Ukrainian forces are using first person view (FPV) drones to compensate for these shortages until Ukraine receives more ammunition.[12] Ukrainian soldiers near Robotyne, western Zaporizhia Oblast told the *WSJ* that they are able to strike small Russian vehicles and soldiers transporting supplies with FPV drones and hinder Russian logistics, but that the FPV drones carry smaller payloads so that Ukrainian forces cannot use them to strike Russian field fortifications as they can with artillery. *The New York Times* (*NYT*) reported on January 7 that Ukrainian forces, particularly in western Zaporizhia Oblast, are struggling to overcome difficulties due to Russian ground attacks, FPV drone strikes, and EW capabilities.[13] A Ukrainian deputy battalion commander told *NYT* that Ukrainian

morale is “all right” but that the soldiers are “physically exhausted.” The *Financial Times (FT)* reported on January 7 that Russian forces have an advantage in EW and are prioritizing the production of strike drones and reiterated the importance of bolstering Ukraine’s EW capabilities to counter Russian drones and missiles.[14] *FT* noted that Ukraine has heavily invested in its EW capabilities since the start of the full-scale invasion but that Russian forces retain the upper hand due to Russia’s pre-war EW capabilities.

Russian authorities are reportedly illegally deporting Ukrainian civilians to Russia and holding them in penal colonies and pre-trial detention centers without charges, investigations, trials, access to lawyers, or designated release dates. The *BBC’s Russian Service* reported on January 8 that Russian authorities have detained thousands of Ukrainian civilians in penal colonies and pre-trial detention centers in Russia and occupied Ukraine for “opposing the ‘special military operation.’”[15] *BBC’s Russian Service* reported that Russian authorities are holding the Ukrainian civilians without formal records of their detention, without initiating criminal or administrative cases, and without ongoing investigations, so the detainees do not “formally” exist in the Russian penitentiary system and have no access to lawyers. The *BBC’s Russian Service* reported that some former Ukrainian civilian detainees stated that Russian authorities treated them “like subhumans” and tortured them. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) reportedly responded to a request about one of the detained civilians, stating that Russian authorities are holding the detainee in accordance with “the requirements of the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War.” The *BBC* noted that the Geneva Convention prohibits the taking of civilian hostages who are non-combatants.[16] The *BBC* reported that there is currently no mechanism in international law for the release of civilians from captivity, and the Geneva Convention only allows for POWs to be exchanged for other POWs.[17] The *BBC’s Russian Service* stated that the work of third parties, such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), that recently helped mediate a prisoner exchange that included the return of Ukrainian civilians, have proven vital for the return of the civilian detainees. The Ukrainian Ministry of Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories stated that there were 4,337 Ukrainians in Russian captivity as of November 2023, including 763 civilians, but the *BBC* noted that these numbers rely on data from the Red Cross, which does not always have access to places where Russian authorities hold Ukrainian civilians, including detention centers and penal colonies in occupied territories.[18] Ukrainian Commissioner for Human Rights Dmitry Lubinets stated that about 25,000 Ukrainian civilians are missing and that Russian forces may have kidnapped a significant number of the missing individuals.[19] The *BBC* quoted the Ukrainian “Find Ours” project as estimating that there may be about 7,500 Ukrainian civilians unlawfully detained in Russia and occupied Ukraine.[20] The *BBC’s Russian Service* stated that Russian and Ukrainian human rights activists have identified more than 30 penal colonies and pre-trial detention centers in which Ukrainian civilians have been reportedly detained.[21]

A Russian insider source claimed that Russian officials dismissed First Deputy Head of the Main Directorate of the Russian General Staff (GRU), Lieutenant General Vladimir Alekseyev, who was reportedly in charge of the Russian “Volunteer Corps” that was intended to replace the Wagner Group. A Russian insider source, which has previously provided accurate information about Russian command changes, claimed in response to a source reportedly affiliated with Russian authorities (*siloviki*), that Russian officials forced Alekseyev to resign in fall 2023.[22] The *siloviki*-affiliated source originally claimed that Alekseyev’s irregular armed formation, the “Volunteer Corps,” was facing similar equipment and shell shortages that Wagner experienced in early 2023.[23] The *siloviki*-affiliated source claimed that almost all units of the “Volunteer Corps” have been experiencing an acute shortage of fuel and lubricants for the past two months, especially on the Bakhmut and Avdiivka frontlines. The *siloviki*-affiliated source added that the “Volunteer Corps” is struggling with these shortages even though it was integrated into the GRU organizational structure under the 462nd Special Purpose Training Center. The *siloviki*-affiliated source claimed that Alekseyev is assuring his subordinates that such shortages are temporary and that the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) is delaying weapon and supply provisions to the “Volunteer Corps” - in a similar fashion to his prior efforts to calm now-deceased Wagner financier Yevgeny Prigozhin in the spring of 2023. A Russian political blogger (who has an audience of 150,000 followers) argued that the Russian MoD likely is not intentionally failing to provide military equipment and supplies to the Russian “Volunteer Corps” since that irregular formation cannot pose the same political threat to the Kremlin as Wagner and Prigozhin’s mutiny did in June 2023.[24] The blogger argued that the reported shell shortages indicate potential systematic supply shortages across all Russian forces or more likely suggest that the Russian MoD is withholding ammunition from certain units whose functions it deems to be “less relevant.” The blogger observed that elements of the Russian “Volunteer Corps” are primarily engaged in infantry assaults and that Russia is conserving means, such as the use of aircraft, in certain directions.

ISW cannot confirm either Alekseyev’s dismissal in fall 2023 or the reports of shell shortages disproportionately affecting the Russian “Volunteer Corps.” ISW last observed reports of Alekseyev awarding servicemen of the Russian “Hispaniola” Soccer Fan Volunteer Reconnaissance and Assault Brigade on November 30, 2023.[25] *BBC’s Russian Service* reported that Alekseyev was present during the negotiations with Prigozhin after his mutiny, and *Radio Liberty* reported that Wagner channels referred to Alekseyev as “one of the founders” of Wagner.[26] Alekseyev also accompanied Prigozhin around the Russian Southern Military District (SMD) headquarters in Rostov-on-Don during the mutiny and later recorded a video of himself asking Prigozhin to stop the mutiny.[27] *BBC’s*

Russian Service reported that Alekseyev was one of the main managers of all “volunteer” irregular formations – including the Redut private military company (PMC).

Russian authorities continue efforts to consolidate control over the Russian information space ahead of the March presidential elections. Kremlin newswire TASS stated on January 8 that the Russian Prosecutor General’s Office, Ministry of Digital Development, and Russian federal information monitoring service Roskomnadzor prepared a bill on the rapid blocking of illegal content on the internet using a specialized information system.[28] The Prosecutor General’s Office stated that it sent 555 demands to Roskomnadzor to block “fakes” that “discredit” the Russian Armed Forces and Russian authorities in 2023 and that Russian authorities deleted or blocked over 69,000 internet resources.[29] The Prosecutor General’s Office stated that the topics of these “fakes” included the war in Ukraine, decisions made by government authorities, and violations of the electoral process during the September 2023 elections.

Russian opposition outlet *Verstka* reported on January 8 that recent polling shows decreased domestic support for Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine ahead of the March 2024 Russian presidential elections. *Verstka*, citing polling data from independent Russian opposition polling organizations *Chronicles* and the Public Sociology Laboratory and unspecified Kremlin sources, reported that the percentage of Russians who support Russia’s withdrawal from Ukraine “without achieving the [war] goals” exceeded the percentage of Russians who support continuing the war for the first time at the end of 2023.[30] An unnamed source with reported connections to the Russian Presidential Administration told *Verstka* that fewer than 50 percent of respondents in a recent Kremlin-sponsored poll supported the continuation of Russia’s war in Ukraine while more than 30 percent are in favor of peace negotiations.[31] *Verstka* stated that decreased support for the war has not yet led to a vocal anti-war political movement due to continued domestic political support for Russian President Vladimir Putin, however.[32] *Chronicles* stated on November 30, 2023, that data from its October 17–22, 2023 telephone survey indicates that respondents who are “consistent” supporters of the war – those who expressed support for the war, do not support the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine unless Russia achieves its war aims, and think that Russia should prioritize military spending – decreased from 22 percent to 12 percent between February 2023 and October 2023.[33] *Chronicles* stated that 40 percent of respondents supported a withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine without Russia having achieved its war aims and that this number has remained consistent at about 39 to 40 percent throughout 2023.[34] Independent Russian polling organization Levada Center reported on October 31, 2023, that 55 percent of respondents believe that Russia should begin peace negotiations while 38 percent favor continuing to conduct the war, noting that these numbers have largely remained consistent since July 2023.[35] The Levada Center released a poll on December 5, 2023, that showed that the Russian public continues to have questions about the end and outcome of the war as well as mobilization and prospects for peace consistent with increased domestic support for a Russian withdrawal from Ukraine and peace negotiations.[36]

Russian government and media officials recently have died, possibly under mysterious circumstances. Russian authorities found the editor-in-chief of the online editorial office of the Kuban branch of the Russian State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company (VGTRK), Zoya Konovalova, and her husband dead in Krasnodar Krai on January 6, and the cause of death is reportedly poisoning.[37] Many Russian milbloggers and war correspondents are associated with VGTRK.[38] Vladimir Egorov, the deputy chairman of the Tobolsk City Duma and member of the United Russia party, died on December 27, 2023, after falling from a third-story window in his home.[39] A Russian source claimed that the most likely cause of death was a heart problem.[40] Russian news outlet *RBK* stated that Egorov was sentenced to correctional labor in 2016 for not collecting rent from businessmen after leasing municipal land, but the charges were dropped due to the statute of limitations.[41]

A Russian state media outlet confirmed that the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) detained three officers of its Directorate “M” in connection with a high-profile bribery scheme. Kremlin newswire TASS cited Russian law enforcement agencies on January 8 as reporting the detention of FSB officer Alexander Ushakov and house arrests of officers Alexei Tsaryev and Sergei Manyshkin for accepting bribes totaling over five billion rubles (\$55.6 million) and other unspecified crimes.[42] TASS’s report confirms part of a claim from a Russian insider source on November 28, 2023, that the FSB detained an “Ushakov,” two unspecified Directorate “M” officers, and two unspecified Directorate “T” officers in connection with a five-billion ruble bribery case.[43] TASS reported that the FSB’s Directorate “M” is responsible for counterintelligence and combating corruption in various Russian government and law enforcement agencies, including the Russian Supreme Court, Prosecutor General’s Office, Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), Ministry of Justice, and Investigative Committee.[44]

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian officials highlighted the need for more air defense systems after another large series of Russian missile and drone strikes against Ukraine on the night of January 7 to 8.**

- **Western provisions of air defense systems and missiles remains crucial for Ukraine as Russian forces attempt to adapt to current Ukrainian air defense capabilities and as Ukraine develops its defense industrial base (DIB).**
- **Ukrainian forces are adapting to battlefield difficulties from equipment shortages but are struggling to completely compensate for artillery ammunition shortages and insufficient electronic warfare (EW) capabilities.**
- **Russian authorities are reportedly illegally deporting Ukrainian civilians to Russia and holding them in penal colonies and pre-trial detention centers without charges, investigations, trials, access to lawyers, or designated release dates.**
- **A Russian insider source claimed that Russian officials dismissed First Deputy Head of the Main Directorate of the Russian General Staff (GRU), Lieutenant General Vladimir Alekseyev, who was reportedly in charge of the Russian “Volunteer Corps” that was intended to replace the Wagner Group.**
- **ISW cannot confirm either Alekseyev’s dismissal in fall 2023 or the reports of shell shortages disproportionately affecting the Russian “Volunteer Corps.”**
- **Russian authorities continue efforts to consolidate control over the Russian information space ahead of the March presidential elections.**
- **Russian opposition outlet *Verstka* reported on January 8 that recent polling shows decreased domestic support for Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine ahead of the March 2024 Russian presidential elections.**
- **Russian government and media officials recently have died, possibly under mysterious circumstances.**
- **A Russian state media outlet confirmed that the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) detained three officers of its Directorate “M” in connection with a high-profile bribery scheme.**
- **Russian forces recently made confirmed advances near Donetsk City and Verbove, and positional engagements continued along the entire line of contact.**
- **The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on January 8 that there are more than 450,000 Russian military personnel in Ukraine as of December 2023.**
- **Russia continues to forcibly deport children from occupied Ukraine under the guise of vacations.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of January 8, 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

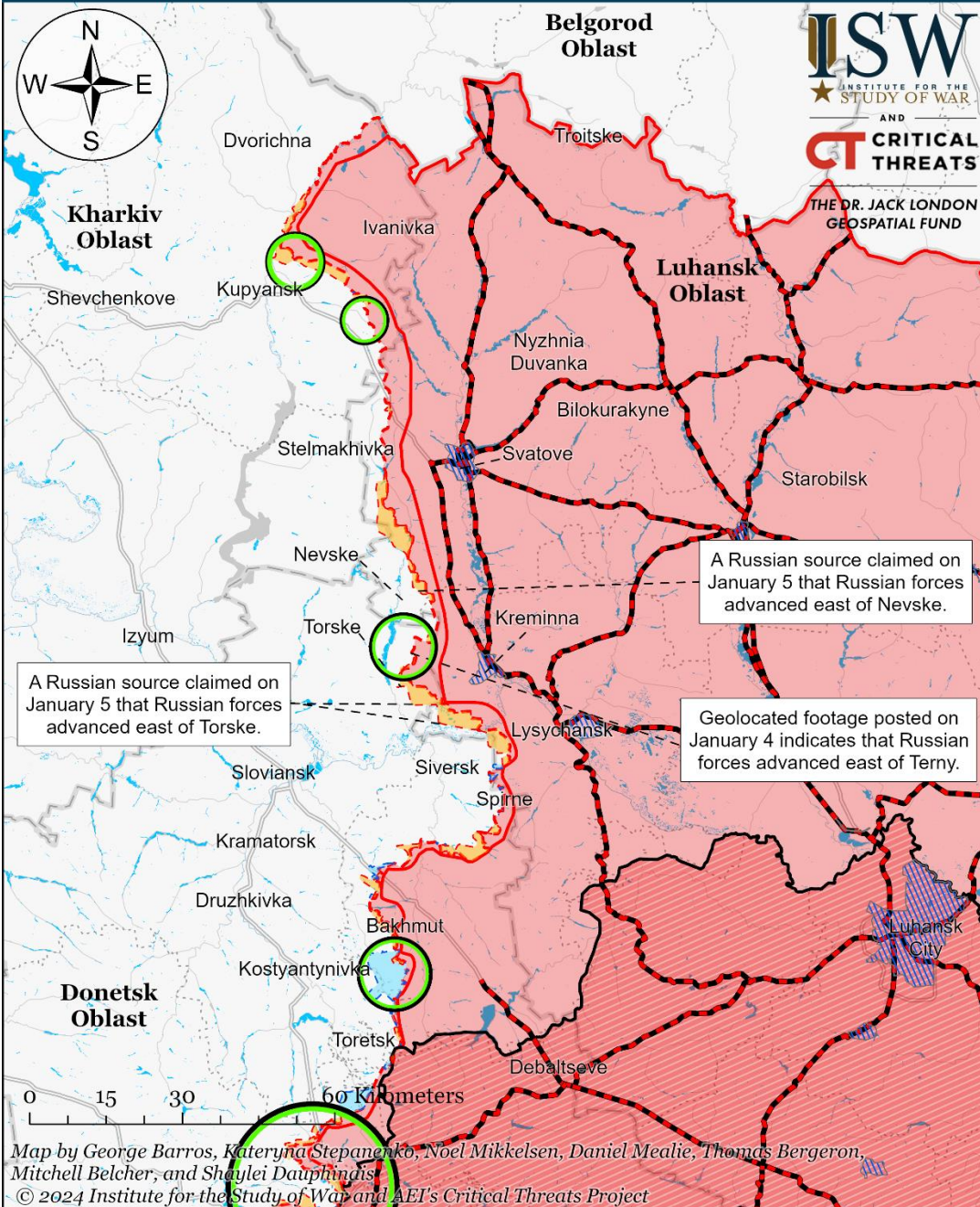
Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

Positional fighting continued along the Kupyansk-Kreminna line on January 8, but there are no confirmed changes to this front line. Positional fighting continued northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka, Lake Lyman, and Ivanivka, and west and northwest of Kreminna near Terny and Zhytlivka.[45] Ukrainian Ground Forces Commander Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi noted that the situation in the Kupyansk direction remains difficult but that Ukrainian forces have a good command of the situation.[46] The Chechen Spetsnaz “Aida” Group reportedly continues to operate in forest areas near Kreminna.[47]

Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets reported that the Russian military command is withdrawing some elements of the 11th and 15th Motorized Rifle Regiments (2nd Guards Motorized Rifle Division, Western Military District [WMD]) to rear base areas in Belgorod and Kursk oblasts in order to fill these units out with additional personnel. Mashovets observed that separate assault detachments of the 11th and 15th Motorized Rifle Regiments are continuing to attack north of Synkivka and south of Olshana (13km northeast of Kupyansk) in the offensive zone of the Russian 25th Motorized Rifle Brigade (6th Combined Arms Army, WMD). Mashovets added that the Russian command plans to finish the transfer of up to 5,000 personnel from training grounds located in Kursk Oblast – largely from the 346th Motorized Rifle Regiment of the Mobilization Reserve – to the base area of the 2nd Guards Motorized Rifle Division by January 16 to reinforce the division’s units. Mashovets added that the Russian command continues to strengthen its “Kursk” and “Belgorod” groupings of forces with forces and materiel deployed in the Kupyansk direction by transferring elements of the 11th Army Corps (Baltic Fleet) to Belgorod and Kursk oblasts – namely the elements of the 11th Tank Regiment and the 79th Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment (18th Guards Motorized Rifle Division). Mashovets assessed that the Russian command is likely pulling some companies, battalions, and batteries in the Kharkiv and Sumy directions starting January 4–5 – possibly as part of an “operational game.”[48]

Russian forces accidentally dropped an unguided bomb on a residential area in occupied Rubizhne, Luhansk Oblast. Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR) Head Leonid Pasechnik claimed that a FAB-250 bomb accidentally fell on a residential area in Rubizhne without inflicting casualties and that occupation officials evacuated the area.[49] Ukrainian Luhansk Oblast Head Serhiy Lysyohor stated that the incident did cause casualties, however.[50]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of January 8, 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

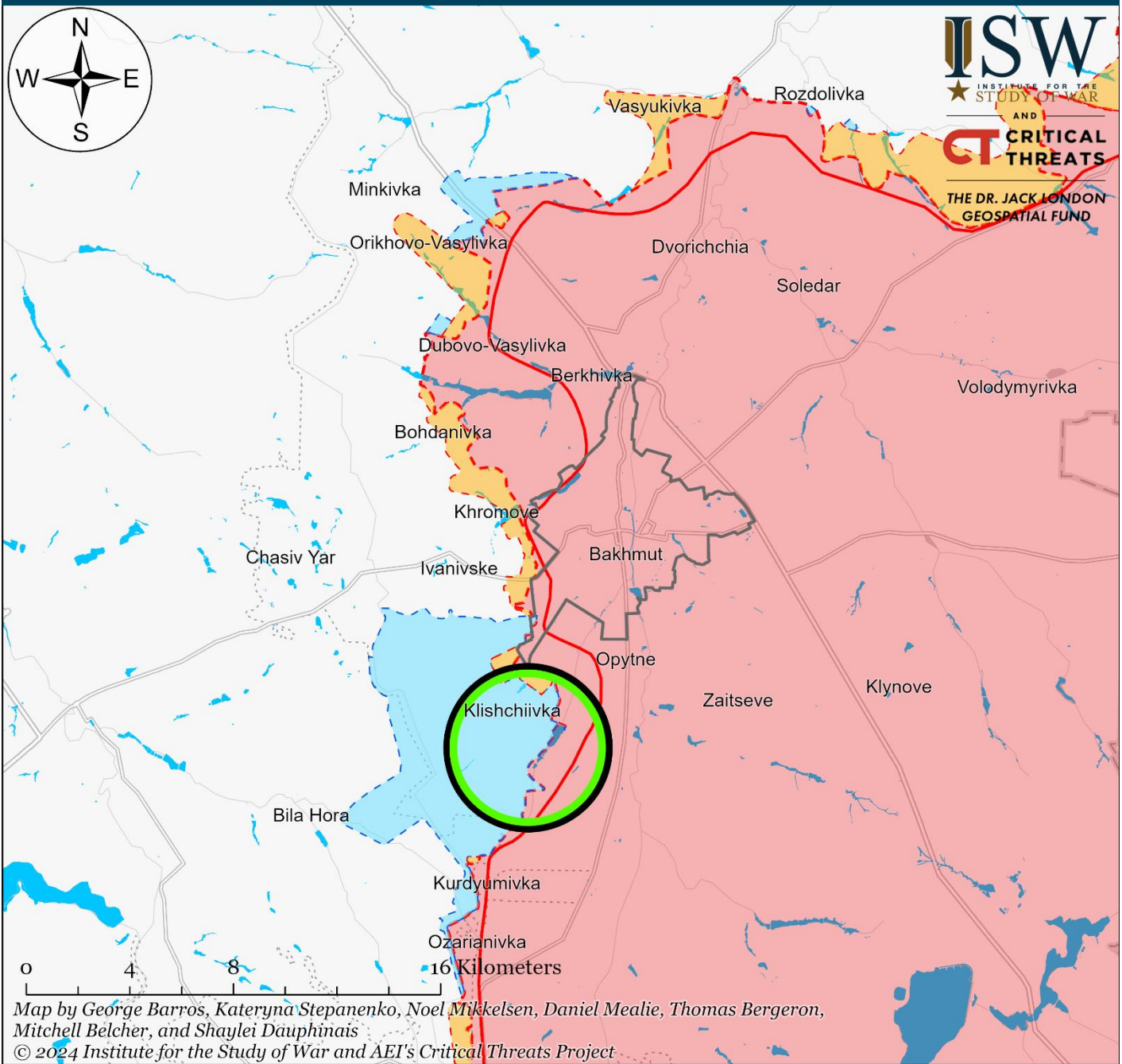
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

Elements of the Luhansk People’s Republic’s (LNR) 6th Separate Guards Motor Rifle Brigade (2nd Army Corps [AC]) reportedly continued to operate near Spirne (northeast of Bakhmut), and the frontline did not change in the Siversk (west of Lysychansk) direction as of January 8.[51]

Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional engagements north and south of Bakhmut on January 8 but there were no confirmed frontline changes. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced northwest of Bakhmut near Bohdanivka as Ukrainian forces withdrew further south, but ISW cannot verify this claim.[52] Positional engagements continued northwest of Bakhmut near Bohdanivka; west of Bakhmut near Khromove; and southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka and Andriivka.[53] Elements of the Donetsk People’s Republic’s (DNR) 58th Separate Spetsnaz Battalion (1st AC) are reportedly operating in the Bakhmut direction.[54] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets reported that elements of the Russian 1307th Motorized Rifle Regiment of Russian Territorial Forces (6th Motorized Rifle Division, 3rd AC) and 72nd Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (3rd AC) have been unsuccessfully trying to capture dominant heights northwest of Klishchiivka by attacking northwest and east of the settlement, but that Russian forces only advanced a couple hundred meters towards these heights.[55]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of January 8, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



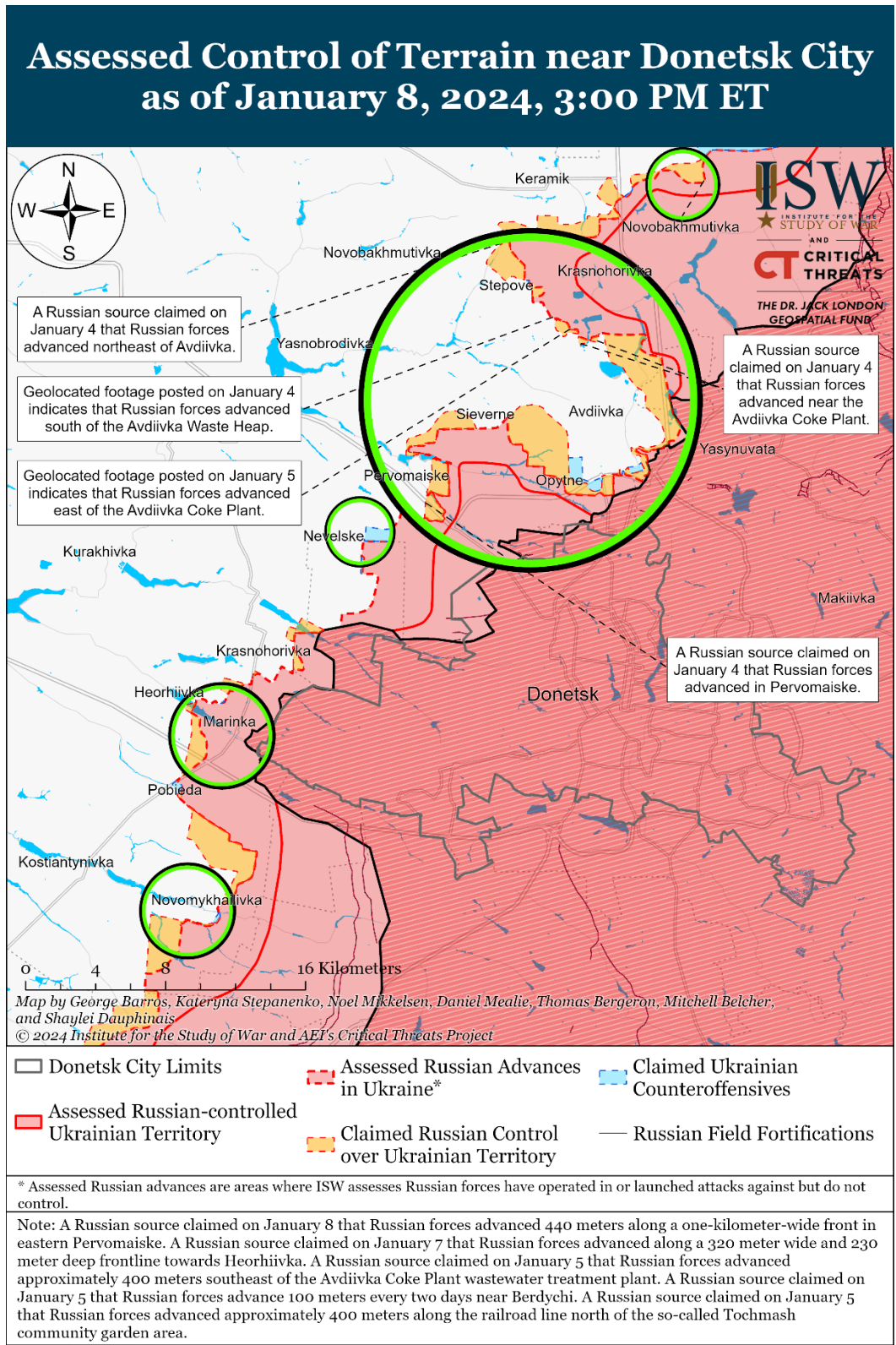
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Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, and Shaylei Dauphinais
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- Bakhmut City Limits
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

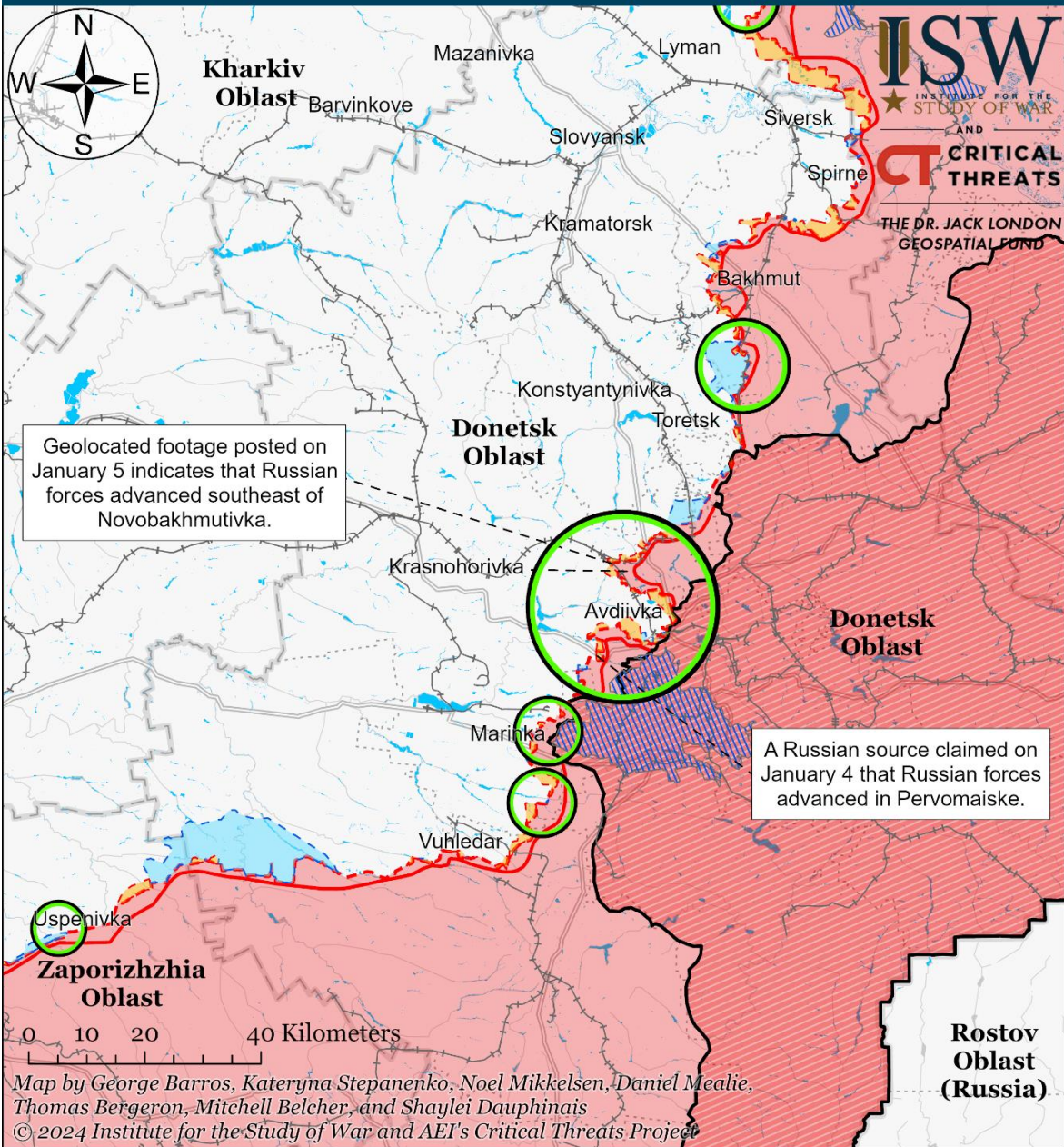
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces marginally advanced west of Avdiivka on January 8, but ISW has not observed visual evidence confirming this claim. The milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced up to one kilometer in width and 440 meters in depth in eastern Pervomaiske (west of Avdiivka).[56] Russian forces reportedly attacked near Avdiivka; northwest of Avdiivka near Stepove, Tonenke, Novobakhmutivka, and two kilometers east of the Avdiivka Coke Plant; west of Avdiivka near Sieverne and Pervomaiske; southwest of Avdiivka near Nevelske; and southeast of Avdiivka near the industrial zone.[57] Elements of the DNR's 9th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st AC), "Sparta" and "Somali" battalions, and the "Pyatnyashka" International Brigade are reportedly operating in the Avdiivka direction.[58]



Russian forces recently marginally advanced west of Donetsk City. Geolocated footage published on January 7 shows that Russian forces advanced on Heorhiivka's (6km west of Donetsk City) eastern outskirts.[59] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces captured two churches in Heorhiivka and advanced 300 meters, and that Russian forces also advanced on the opposite bank of the Osykova River from Marinka (directly west of Donetsk City).[60] Positional engagements continued west of Donetsk City near Marinka and Heorhiivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Novomykhailivka and Pobieda.[61] Elements of the Russian "Ruskiye Yastreby" (Russian Hawks) detachment of the 33rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (20th Guards Motorized Rifle Division, 8th Guards Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating near Novomykhailivka.[62] Mashovets argued that the Russian military command will likely commit an additional battalion from the 155th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) to battle in the Slavne (9km south of Donetsk City) – Volodymirivka (11km southeast of Vuhledar) direction.[63]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of January 8, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

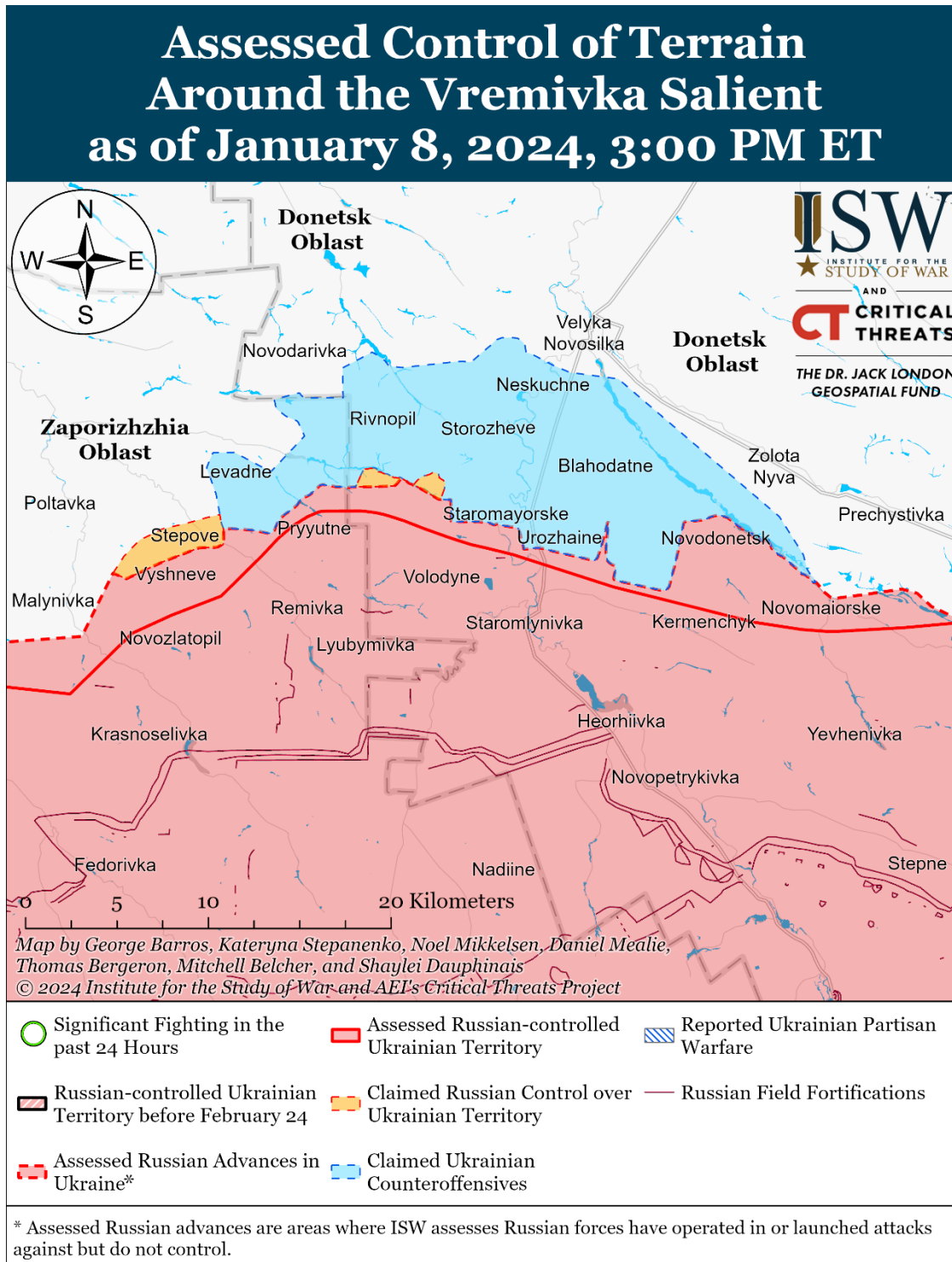


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- + Major Railroads
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

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

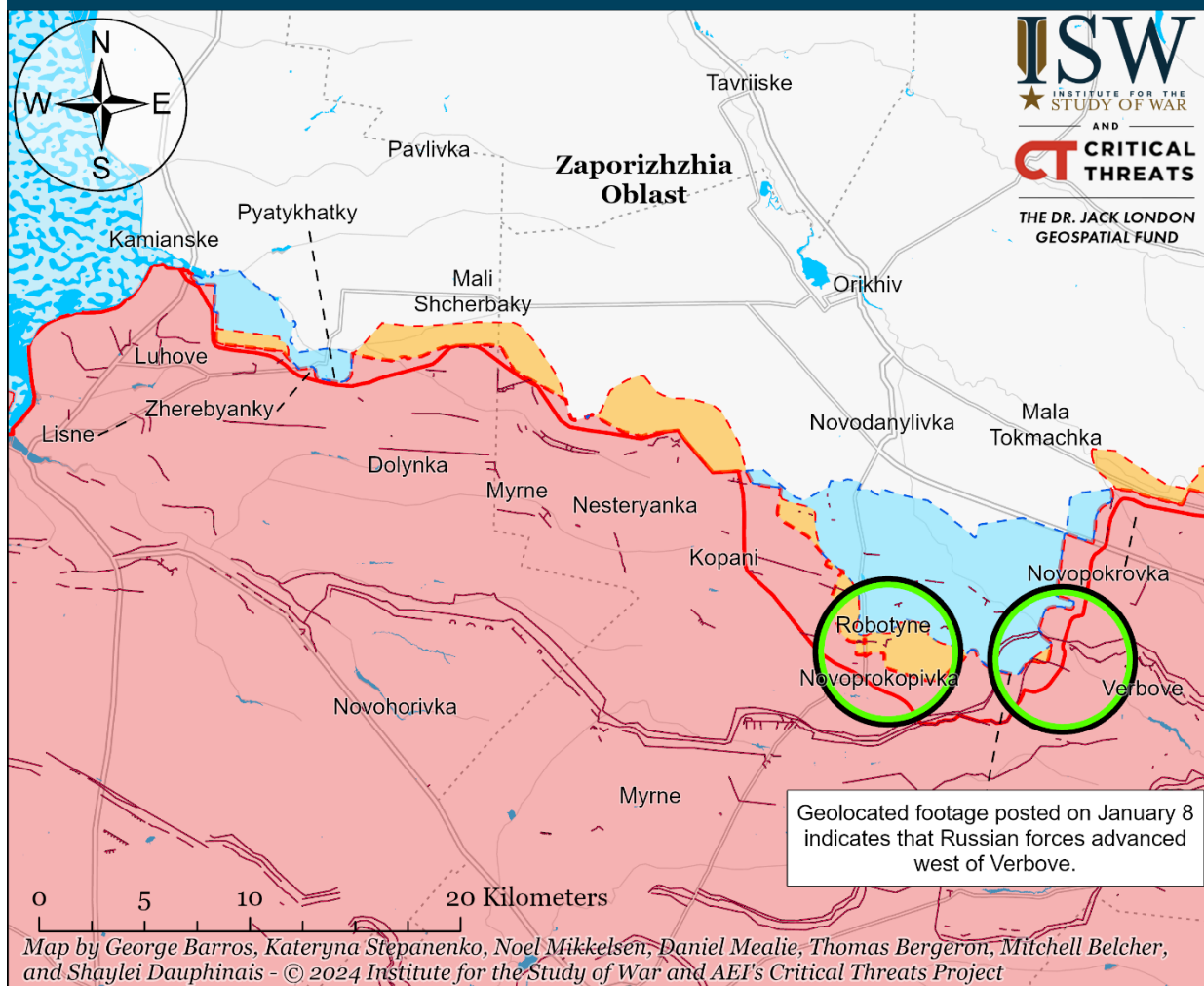
Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional engagements in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on January 8, but there were no confirmed changes in this frontline area. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional engagements continued near Novodarivka (southeast of Velyka Novosilka) and Pryyutne (southwest of Velyka Novosilka) and south of Chervone (southwest of Velyka Novosilka in eastern Zaporizhia Oblast).[64] Elements of the Russian 34th Motorized Rifle Brigade (49th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) and elements of the 7th Company of the 37th Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade (36th CAA, Eastern Military District) reportedly continue to operate in the Velyka Novosilka area and near Urozhaine (south of Velyka Novosilka), respectively.[65]



Russian forces recently made a confirmed advance in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast. Geolocated footage published on January 8 indicates that Russian forces marginally advanced west of Verbove (east of Robotyne).[66] Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional engagements continued near Robotyne, west of Verbove, and north of Novopropkivka (south of Robotyne).[67] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces can only reach their positions with armored tracked vehicles in the Zaporizhzhia direction due to worsening icy road conditions.[68] Zaporizhzhia Oblast occupation official Vladimir Rogov claimed that the poor weather conditions in Zaporizhzhia Oblast are inhibiting Russian and Ukrainian forces from using drones to adjust artillery fire.[69] Elements of the 7th Airborne (VDV) Division reportedly continue to operate near Verbove.[70]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of January 8, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



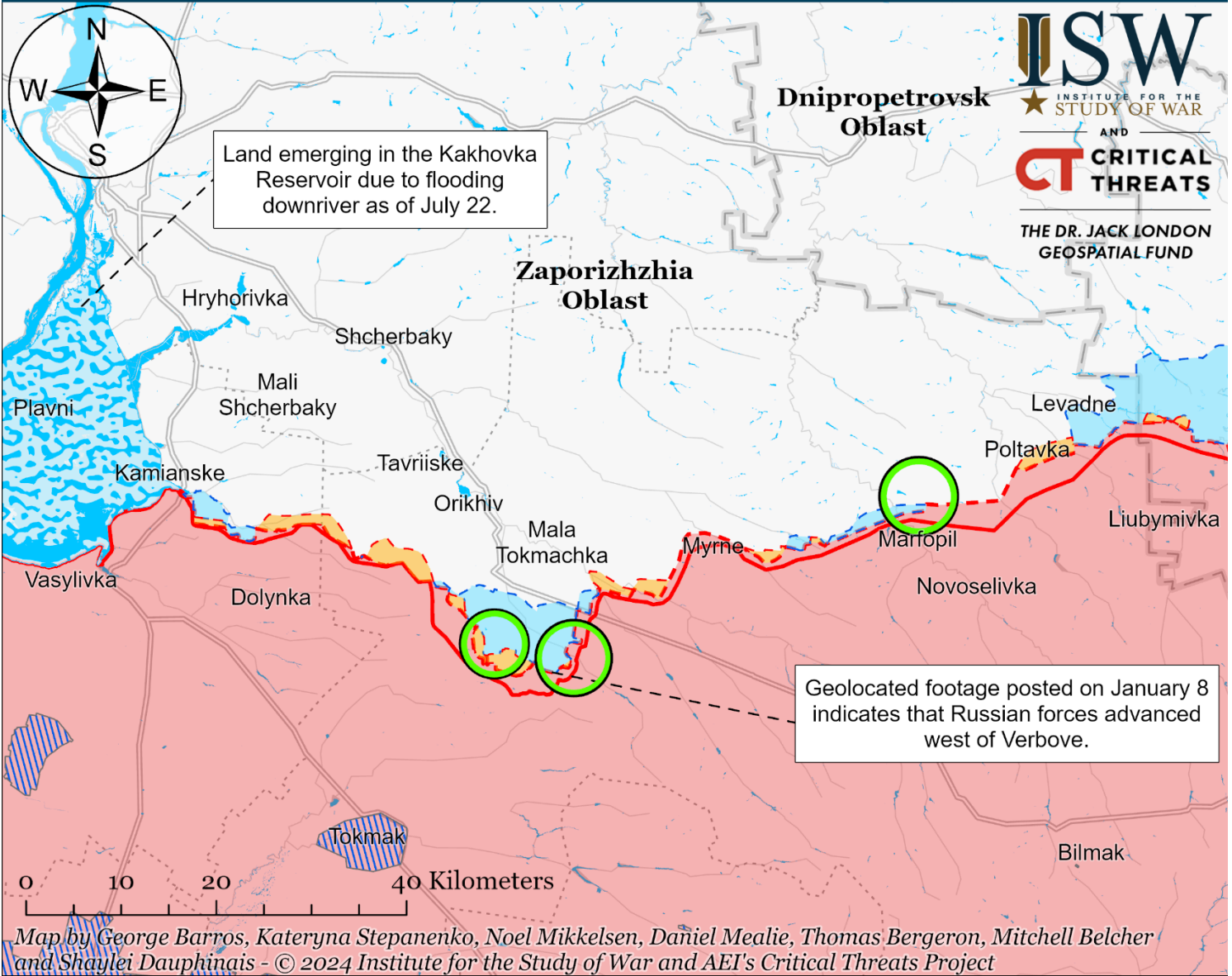
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- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours | Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory | Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare |
| Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24 | Claimed Russian Control over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

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of January 8, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



-  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.

Ukrainian forces continued to hold positions in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast on January 8, and there are no confirmed changes to this frontline area. Positional battles continued near Krynky in east bank Kherson Oblast.[71] Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Captain First Rank Nataliya Humenyuk reported that Russian forces are intensifying aviation operations in the Kherson direction after largely pausing aviation operations since Ukrainian forces downed three Russian Su-34 aircraft in the Kherson direction in late December 2023.[72] Humenyuk noted that Russian forces are unsuccessfully conducting unguided bomb strikes, as opposed to glide bomb strikes, on Ukrainian positions in east bank Kherson Oblast.[73] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets reported that elements of the Russian 328th and 337th VDV Regiments (104th VDV Division) and elements of the 26th Motorized Rifle Regiment (70th Motorized Rifle Division [MRD], 18th CAA, SMD) are operating near Krynky.[74] Mashovets stated that the Russian military may soon deploy elements of the Russian 17th Tank Regiment (70th MRD, 18th CAA, SMD) to near Krynky from near Nova Mayachka (46km southeast of Kherson City and 18km southeast of Krynky).[75]



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

The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on January 8 that there are more than 450,000 Russian military personnel in Ukraine as of December 2023.[76] Russian President Vladimir Putin stated on December 14, 2023, that there are 617,000 Russian personnel in the “combat zone.”[77] Putin’s more comprehensive figure likely included more military personnel such as mobilized personnel, contract soldiers (*kontraktniki*), and volunteers (*dobrovolsy*) in irregular formations operating along the frontline and in the rear.[78]

A Russian weapons expert provided additional information about the North Korean KN-23 ballistic missile in response to Western reporting that Russian forces launched the missiles at targets in Ukraine.[79] Russian weapons expert Vitaly Lebedev told a Russian milblogger on January 7 and 8 that the KN-23 ballistic missile system, which Lebedev referred to as the “Kimskander,” due to its comparability to the Russian Iskander-M ballistic missile system, can be deployed using both wheeled and tracked launching systems and from diesel-electric subs. Lebedev stated that the KN-23 missiles have gas-jet rudders that, like aerodynamic rudders, can significantly reduce the likelihood of interception due to high maneuverability. Lebedev added that KN-23 missiles have an autonomous inertial guidance system based on a gyro-stabilized platform and may also have an additional correction module with a satellite navigation system. Lebedev, citing unspecified North Korean press releases and South Korean, Japanese, and US military reports, stated that the KN-23 can change its trajectory, increasing the likelihood of the missile evading a missile defense system and hitting its target. US National Security Council Spokesperson John Kirby stated on January 4 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.[80] ISW previously assessed that 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.[81]

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

A Russian source claiming to be affiliated with Chechen “Akhmat” Spetsnaz published footage on January 8 purportedly showing Chechen forces testing a first-person viewer (FPV) drone with an encrypted communication system that protects the drone from electronic warfare (EW) interference.[82] The source claimed that the drone can carry a warhead weighing over four kilograms, is impervious to rain and snow, and can be operated from up to 300 meters away. The source claimed that Chechen forces also tested a drone designed to conduct strikes during Ukrainian unit rotations and a new EW system that successfully downed a drone from over 1.5 kilometers away. The source claimed that Chechen forces immediately deployed the drone to a trained crew in “one of the hottest positions on the front.”

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)

Russia continues to forcibly deport Ukrainian children from occupied Ukraine under the guise of vacations. The Kherson Oblast occupation administration stated on January 7 that Russian authorities transferred a Ukrainian child from occupied Kherson Oblast to a children’s camp in occupied Crimea.[83] The Ukrainian Resistance Centers stated on January 8 that Russia has deported more than 19,500 Ukrainian children as of December 2023 but that this data is incomplete.[84]

Russian regional and occupation authorities continue infrastructure programs designed to integrate occupied Ukraine into Russia. Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) government chairperson Yevgeny Solntsev stated on January 8 that DNR and Rostov Oblast authorities plan to build a railway line between occupied Donetsk City and Rostov-on-Don, Rostov Oblast in 2024.[85] Solntsev stated that the railway line would significantly increase the delivery of goods to occupied Donetsk Oblast.[86]

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Nothing significant to report.

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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