

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, January 24, 2023

Karolina Hird, Riley Bailey, Grace Mappes, George Barros, and Frederick W. Kagan
January 24, 9:30 pm ET

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

A coalition of NATO member states reportedly will send Ukraine modern main battle tanks. The *Wall Street Journal* reported on January 24 that US President Joe Biden is preparing to send "a significant number" of Abrams M1 tanks to Ukraine and that the White House may announce the delivery as soon as January 25.¹ German newspaper *Der Spiegel* reported on January 24 that German Chancellor Olaf Scholz decided to deliver at least one tank company (14 tanks) of Leopard 2 main battle tanks to Ukraine in an unspecified time frame.² Poland likely will send Ukraine Leopard 2 tanks following Germany's decision. Polish Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak stated on January 24 that Poland formally requested Germany grant permission to transfer Poland's Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine, and German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock stated that Berlin would not interfere if Poland wanted to send its Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine.³ British officials confirmed on January 16 that the United Kingdom would send Ukraine 14 Challenger 2 tanks to Ukraine.⁴ French President Emmanuel Macron stated he would not rule out the possibility of France sending Ukraine Leclerc tanks on January 22.⁵

Western states' provision of main battle tanks to Ukraine will help enable Ukraine to conduct mechanized warfare to defeat the Russian military and liberate Ukrainian territory. ISW previously assessed that the West has contributed to Ukraine's inability to take advantage of having pinned Russian forces in Bakhmut by slow-rolling or withholding weapons systems and supplies essential for large-scale counteroffensive operations.⁶ Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief Valery Zaluzhny previously emphasized in December 2022 that Ukraine needs 300 main battle tanks (among other weapon systems) to enable Ukrainian counteroffensives.⁷

Russian Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov continued efforts to portray himself and the traditional Russian military command structure as the true defenders of Russia.

Gerasimov reiterated on January 23 that Russian President Vladimir Putin approved Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu's plan to develop Russian forces' ability to respond to "new threats to the military security" of Russia, and Gerasimov accused Ukraine and NATO states of aiming to threaten Russia.⁸ Gerasimov invoked the Russian General Staff's historical role in guiding and protecting Russia through several military crises, including the Great Patriotic War (World War II). Gerasimov claimed that "modern Russia has never known such a level and intensity of hostilities" and heavily implied that the current war in Ukraine presents the greatest threat to Russia since the Great Patriotic War, therefore necessitating the leadership and protection of the Russian General Staff under Gerasimov's leadership. Gerasimov's framing of the war and the General Staff's ongoing revitalization efforts within the historical context of the Great Patriotic War is part of the continued campaign to counter the growing power and influence of Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin, Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov, and their respective paramilitary structures, all of which threaten Gerasimov and the Russian General Staff as ISW has previously reported.⁹ It also continues Putin's efforts to reframe the current struggle as an effort like the Great Patriotic War to justify protracted demands for sacrifice and mobilization by the Russian people.¹⁰

Russian outlet *RBK* claimed on January 23 that Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu appointed Colonel General Sergey Kuzovlev as the Southern Military District (SMD) commander and Lieutenant General Yevgeny Nikiforov as the Western Military District (WMD) commander.¹¹ *RBK* claimed that Nikiforov replaced Kuzovlev as WMD commander after Kuzovlev held the position from December 13, 2022, to January 23, 2023.¹² The United Kingdom Ministry of Defense (UK MoD) claimed that the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) appointed Kuzovlev WMD Commander in late October of 2022.¹³ *RBK* claimed that the Russian MoD had appointed Lieutenant General Roman Berdnikov as WMD commander in October of 2022, however.¹⁴ The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported on December 26, 2022, that Nikiforov left his position as Chief of Staff of the Eastern Military District (EMD) to replace Kuzovlev as a part of the internal power struggles between Wagner Financier Yevgeny Prigozhin, Shoigu, and Gerasimov.¹⁵ Nikiforov previously commanded Wagner Group fighters in Ukraine as commander of the 58th Combined Arms Army in 2014 and may have connections to Prigozhin.¹⁶ The conflicting reporting on the WMD and SMD command suggests that military district command dynamics remain opaque, indicating that the Russian military is struggling to institute sound command structures and maintain traditional command

Key Takeaways

- A coalition of NATO member states reportedly will send Ukraine modern main battle tanks.
- Russian Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov continued efforts to portray himself and the traditional Russian military command structure as the true defenders of Russia.
- Russian outlet *RBK* claimed on January 23 that Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu appointed Colonel General Sergey Kuzovlev as the Southern Military District (SMD) commander and Lieutenant General Yevgeny Nikiforov as the Western Military District (WMD) commander.
- Russian forces continued limited counterattacks along the Svatove-Kreminna line and Ukrainian forces reportedly continued counteroffensive operations near Kreminna.
- Russian forces continued to conduct ground attacks in the Bakhmut and Avdiivka-Donetsk City area. Russian forces made marginal territorial gains near Bakhmut.
- Russian sources claimed, likely to distract from the lack of progress in Bakhmut, that Russian forces launched an offensive around Vuhledar.
- Russian forces likely continued to conduct limited and localized ground attacks in Zaporizhia Oblast but likely did not make territorial gains, further undermining Zaporizhia Oblast occupation official Vladimir Rogov's prior territorial claims.
- Ukrainian special forces conducted a raid across the Dnipro River in Kherson Oblast on January 23-24.
- Russian authorities are likely continuing efforts to mobilize ethnic minorities to fight in Ukraine.
- Russia's defense industrial base (DIB) is reportedly increasing the production of drones and loitering munitions.

- **Ukrainian partisans targeted a member of the Zaporizhia occupation administration.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of January 24, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

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

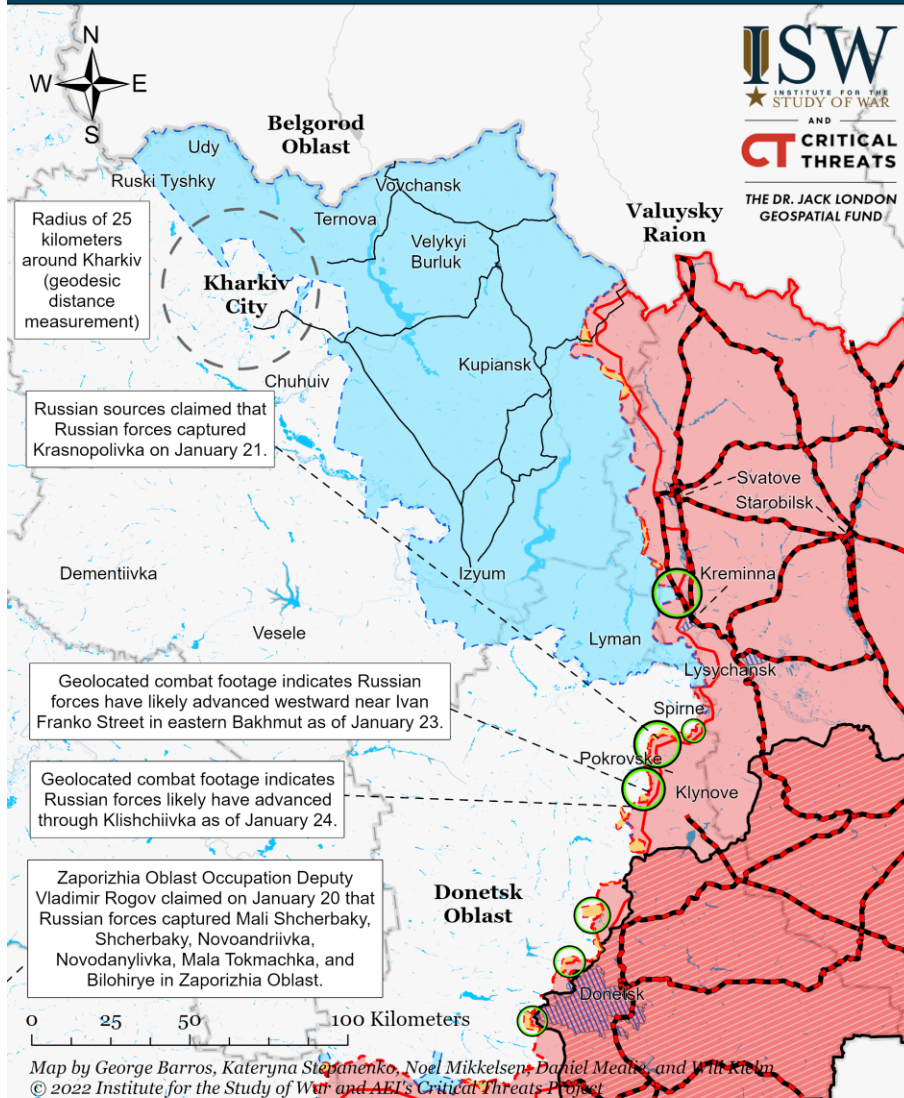
- Ukrainian Counteroffensives—Eastern Ukraine
- Russian Main Effort—Eastern Ukraine (comprised of one subordinate and one supporting effort);
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort—Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort—Southern Axis
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Activities in Russian-occupied Areas

Ukrainian Counteroffensives (Ukrainian efforts to liberate Russian-occupied territories)

Eastern Ukraine: (Eastern Kharkiv Oblast-Western Luhansk Oblast)

Russian forces continued limited counterattacks along the Svatove-Kreminna line, and Ukrainian forces reportedly continued counteroffensive operations near Kreminna on January 24. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that it that Russian forces continue to deploy many mobilized personnel to the frontline in Luhansk Oblast.¹⁷ A Russian milblogger claimed that battles are ongoing near Novoselivske (15km northwest of Svatove), where Russian and Ukrainian forces are fighting for control of the N-26 highway that leads to Svatove.¹⁸ A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are trying to hold positions near Novoselivske and push Russian forces out of the area to resume counteroffensive operations in the direction of Svatove.¹⁹ Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attempted to advance towards Stelmakhivka (16km west of Svatove).²⁰ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled a Russian assault near Chervonopopivka (6km north of Kreminna).²¹ A BARS (Russian Combat Reserve of the Country) commander claimed that Ukrainian forces are continuing to use small groups to attempt to gain positions in the forests around Kreminna and conduct infantry assaults toward Kreminna from the south.²² Russian and social media sources amplified footage of Russian Airborne forces (VDV) operating near Kreminna, including footage showing the 76th Guards Air Assault Division defending against a Ukrainian assault on an unspecified date near Hryhorivka (11km south of Kreminna).²³

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of January 24, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

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

The Ukrainian Main Defense Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine published an audio intercept on December 22 in which a Russian soldier operating in the vicinity of Chervonopopivka supported reports that Ukrainian forces captured part of the R-66 Kreminna-Svatove road in the vicinity of Zhytlivka (just south of Chervonopopivka). The Ukrainian General Staff has repeatedly reported since November 30 that Russian forces shelled Chervonopopivka, indicating Russian forces no longer control Chervonopopivka. The Russian Ministry of Defense claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attempted to establish a position in Chervonopopivka on November 27, indicating Ukrainian maneuvers near Chervonopopivka. The R-66 runs through Chervonopopivka and the road's capture by Ukrainian forces would be consistent with the evidence presented in the intercepted phone call plus the Ukrainian General Staff's reports.

Russian Main Effort—Eastern Ukraine

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

Russian forces continued offensive operations around Bakhmut on January 24. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults near Bakhmut itself; within 22km northeast of Bakhmut near Bilohorivka, Rozdolivka, Sil, and Krasna Hora; and 7km southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka.²⁴ Geolocated footage posted on January 23 likely indicates that Russian forces have advanced west of Pidhorodne (5km northeast of Bakhmut) and that they control the settlement.²⁵ Geolocated footage posted on January 23 indicates that Russian forces have likely made marginal advances in the eastern outskirts of Bakhmut.²⁶ The Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) Territorial Defense reiterated claims that Russian forces captured Dvorichchia (12km north of Bakhmut) and Krasnopolivka (15km northeast of Bakhmut) as of January 23, although ISW has not observed visual confirmation to corroborate these claims.²⁷ Russian milbloggers claimed that Wagner Group fighters are attacking in the direction of Vesele (20km northeast of Bakhmut), Mykolaivka (17km northeast of Bakhmut), and north of Blahodatne (12km northeast of Bakhmut).²⁸ A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces entered the southeastern part of Paraskoviivka (9km north of Bakhmut), although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this advance.²⁹ Another Russian milblogger claimed that Wager Group fighters continued attempts to advance in the southern, northern, and eastern outskirts of Bakhmut.³⁰ Geolocated footage published on January 23 shows Russian forces south of Bakhmut and west of Klishchiivka and likely indicates that Russian forces control the settlement.³¹ Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces are attempting to advance toward Ivanivske (6km west of Bakhmut) and conducted an assault near Predtechyne (15km southwest of Bakhmut) to cut a section of the T0504 Kostyantynivka-Chasiv Yar-Bakhmut highway.³²

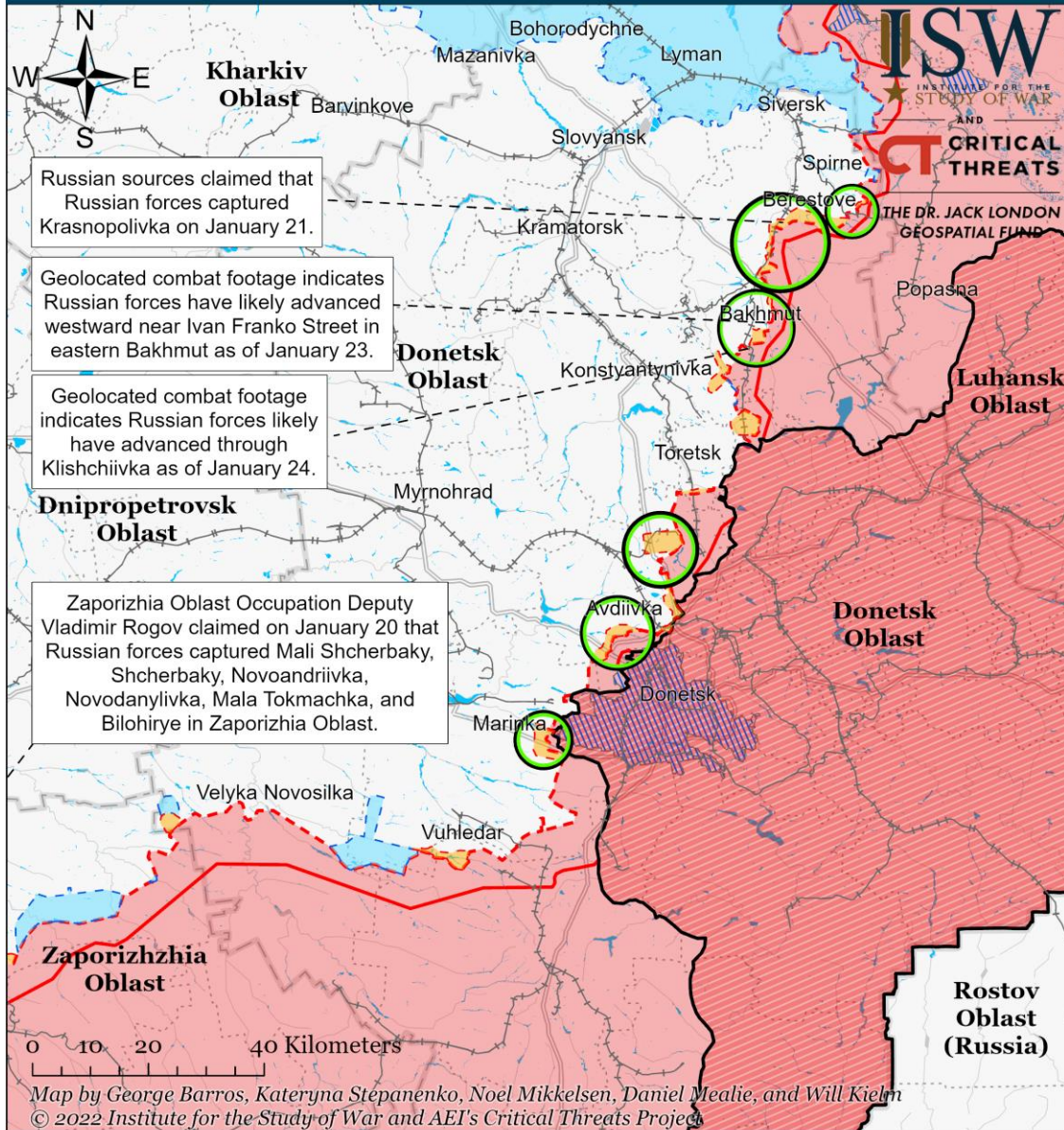
Russian sources continue to falsely claim that Russian forces are cutting off Ukrainian ground lines of communication (GLOCs) into Bakhmut as of January 24. DNR Head Denis Pushilin claimed that Ukrainian forces only control one road into Bakhmut after the Russian capture of Klishchiivka gave Russian forces operational control over the majority of the GLOCs in the Bakhmut area.³³ A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are able to completely interdict Ukrainian forces on the M03 highway between Pidhorodne, Paraskoviivka, and Krasna Hora as of January 20 and on the T0504 highway between Ivanivske and Bakhmut as of January 22.³⁴ The Russian milblogger claimed that the T0504 highway between Chasiv Yar and Bakhmut is Ukrainian forces’ last remaining GLOC into Bakhmut that Russian forces are not fully interdicting.³⁵ Another Russian source had previously claimed that Russian forces could completely interdict all Ukrainian GLOCs into Bakhmut as of December 1, 2022.³⁶ Russian sources are likely amplifying the claim that Russian forces can interdict the majority of Ukrainian GLOCs into Bakhmut to present recent tactical advances as operationally significant and to combat assessments that the Russian offensive to capture Bakhmut is likely culminating. ISW continues to assess that Russian forces have not cut the majority of Ukrainian GLOCs into Bakhmut. These GLOCs have been within the range of Russian tube artillery for months; recent Russian tactical gains around Soledar and Klishchiivka have not granted Russian forces new capability to interdict these GLOCs beyond what already possessed.

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Avdiivka-Donetsk City area on January 24. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults near Novobakhmutivka (14km northeast of Avdiivka) and within 32km southwest of Avdiivka near

Krasnohorivka, Vodyane, and Marinka.³⁷ Geolocated footage published on January 17 and 23 indicates that Russian forces have likely advanced into the outskirts of Vodyane (7km southwest of Avdiivka).³⁸ A Russian milblogger claimed that the DNR "Somalia" Battalion occupied unspecified high ground near Vodyane and pushed Ukrainian forces out of the settlement.³⁹ Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian Special Forces and the DNR "Sparta" Battalion captured Vodyane and cleared the settlement, although ISW still cannot independently verify that Russian forces have captured the settlement.⁴⁰ A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also conducted an assault in the direction of Pervomaiske (12km southwest of Avdiivka).⁴¹ Ukrainian forces conducted a HIMARS strike against Russian railroad infrastructure in Ilovaisk (14km east of Donetsk City) on the night of January 23 to 24.⁴²

Russian sources widely claimed that Russian forces launched an offensive around Vuhledar (28km southwest of Donetsk City) on January 24. The claim was likely meant to generate positive narratives to distract from the lack of progress in Bakhmut. Russian milbloggers claimed that elements of the 155th Naval Infantry Brigade of the Pacific Fleet broke through Ukrainian defenses in the Vuhledar area and advanced north of Pavlivka (32km southwest of Avdiivka) and west of Mykilske (27km southwest of Avdiivka).⁴³ Many Russian milbloggers amplified Vostok Battalion Commander Alexander Khodakovsky's claim that the 155th Naval Infantry Brigade took part in the operations, but Khodakovsky edited his initial post, removing references to specific Russian units.⁴⁴ DNR First Deputy Information Officer Danil Bezsonov claimed that the DNR "Kaskad" battalion also participated in offensive operations in the Vuhledar area.⁴⁵ Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces are continuing offensive operations towards Vuhledar and also near Velyka Novosilka (55km southwest of Donetsk City).⁴⁶ ISW has not observed any footage indicating that Russian forces have launched a localized offensive in the Vuhledar area as of January 25. Russian sources likely intend to repeat a similar ongoing effort in Zaporizhia Oblast, where Russian sources have circulated claims of localized Russian advances without any confirmation to distract from the fact that Russian forces have not made any operationally significant gains around Bakhmut.⁴⁷ Whether Russian forces are conducting localized offensive operations near Vuhledar or Russian sources are exaggerating Russian activity on this sector of the front, the Russian effort is likely focused on supporting this information operation and does not portend a resumption of a Russian offensive in western Donetsk Oblast. The 155th Naval Infantry Brigade was previously badly degraded during offensive operations in the Vuhledar area in November 2022 and is unlikely to have the capacity to relaunch a new offensive on this sector of the front.⁴⁸

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of January 24, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

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

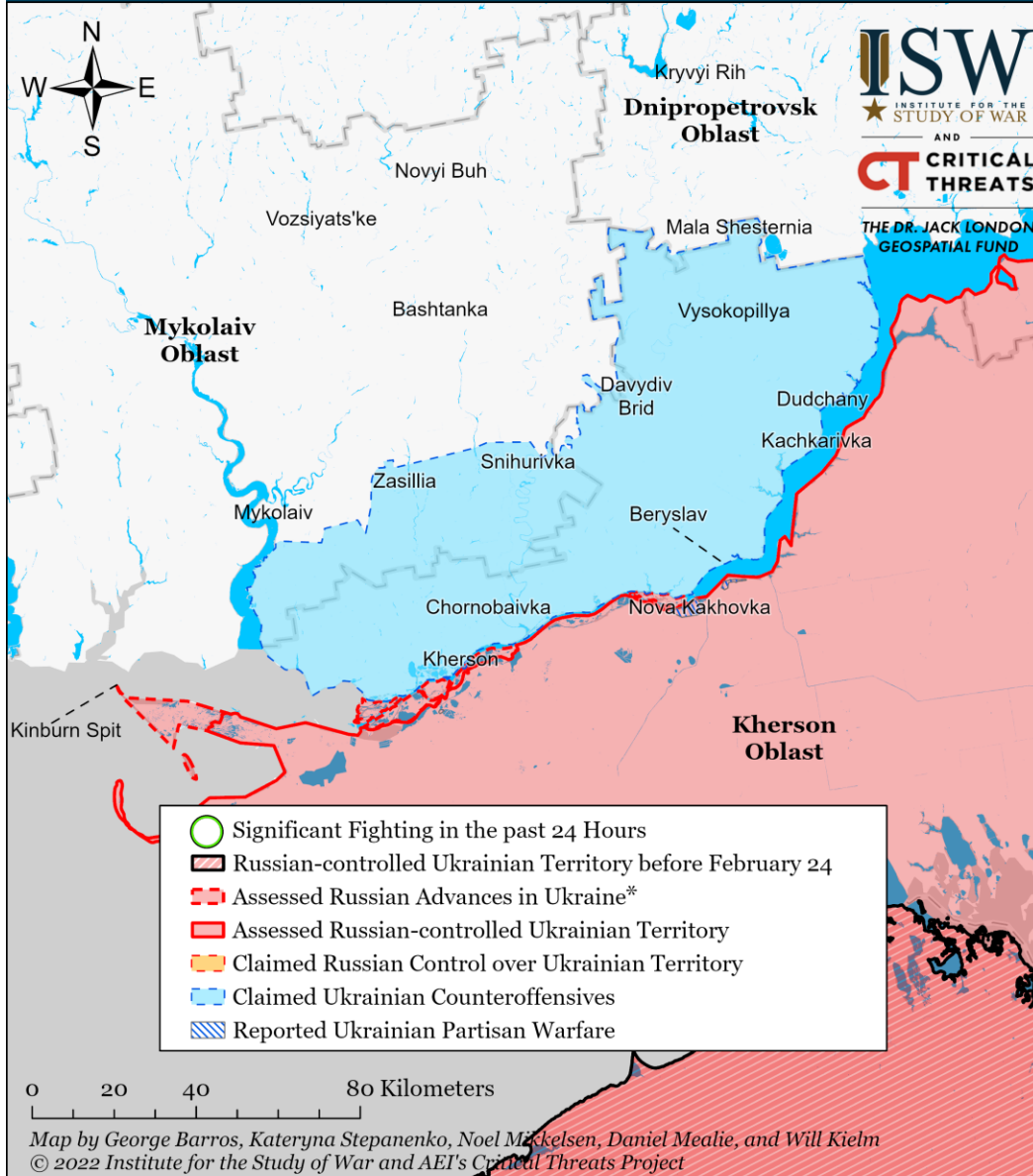
Supporting Effort—Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Russian forces likely continued to conduct limited and localized ground attacks in Zaporizhia Oblast on January 24. Russian sources claimed that Russian forces continued offensive operations at a slow pace but disagreed on whether elements of the Russian 58th Combined Arms Army of the Southern Military District made marginal territorial gains after attacking Mala Tokmachka, Novodanylivka, and the Novoandriivka-Novodanylivka line, or Ukrainian forces successfully repelled the attacks.⁴⁹ Another Russian source claimed that Russian forces gained positions along the Malynivka-Chervone line southeast of Hulyaipole.⁵⁰ A Russian source claimed that Russian forces made marginal gains along the bank of the Kakhovka Reservoir but claimed that Russian forces had not advanced into Kamianske despite claiming to have forced Ukrainian forces to withdraw from the village.⁵¹ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces transferred 450 wounded personnel to a hospital in Dniprorudne, Zaporizhia Oblast, (within 30km of the purported frontline) following unspecified battles with Ukrainian forces, supporting Russian reports that there has been combat in the Zaporizhia sector recently.⁵²

Russian and Ukrainian reporting indicated that Russian forces likely did not make territorial gains on January 24, further undermining Zaporizhia Oblast occupation official Vladimir Rogov's prior territorial claims. A milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces maintain positions in the vicinity of settlements that Rogov previously claimed Russian forces had captured, including Mala Tokmachka, Novodanylivka, and Bilohirya.⁵³ The milblogger also claimed that Russian forces shelled Mala Tokmachka, Novodanylivka, and Novoandriivka, all encompassed in Rogov's earlier claims.⁵⁴ Another milblogger characterized the purported Russian "offensive" in Zaporizhia Oblast as "unhurried," suggesting that any Russian ground attacks on this axis occur at a slow rate of advance similar to Russian ground attacks around Soledar and Bakhmut in Donetsk Oblast.⁵⁵ These Russian reports support Ukrainian official reporting about military activity in this sector. The Ukrainian General Staff and the Zaporizhia Oblast Military Administration continued to report that Russian forces shelled all six settlements that Rogov previously claimed as Russian-controlled: Mala Tokmachka, Novodanylivka, Novoandriivka, Bilohirya, Mali Shcherbaky, and Shcherbaky.⁵⁶ The continued undermining of Rogov's territorial claims further supports ISW's prior assessment that Rogov and other Russian sources conducted an information operation to distract from Russian forces' lack of promised progress near Bakhmut.⁵⁷

Ukrainian Special Forces conducted a raid across the Dnipro River in Kherson Oblast on January 23-24. The Ukrainian Main Intelligence Directorate (GUR) posted footage on January 24 showing Ukrainian Special Forces conducting a night raid in the vicinity of Nova Kakhovka on the east (left) bank of the Dnipro River.⁵⁸ GUR reported that Ukrainian forces discovered a Russian forward deployment point and destroyed a Russian command post during the raid. Russian milbloggers claimed on January 24 that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian attempt to land on east (left) bank Kherson Oblast near Kakhovka.⁵⁹ The milbloggers likely significantly exaggerated their claims of Ukrainian losses, likely in a further attempt to distract from the lack of Russian progress on the axis. One milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted a reconnaissance mission for a future attempt to establish a bridgehead on the east bank of the Kherson River and warned that Ukrainian activity in the area will likely escalate in the near future.⁶⁰

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of January 24, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

ISW recoded the northeast section of Velykyi Potomkin Island in Kherson Oblast from reported Ukrainian counteroffensives to Russian claims based on Russian milblogger reports and video footage published on January 5 that claimed Russian forces recaptured that part of the island where Ukrainian forces placed a flag on January 2. ISW cannot confirm if Russian forces recaptured the same positions as Ukrainian forces as of January 5. A Russian milblogger claimed on January 3 that the island is in a gray zone because Russian forces are still operating in the northern part of the island. Geolocated footage published on January 2 does show Ukrainian forces striking Russian positions on an adjacent island east of Velykyi Potomkin Island, which indicates that Russian forces are still operating within the Dniester River delta areas.

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

Russian authorities are likely continuing efforts to mobilize ethnic minorities to fight in Ukraine. *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty (RFE/RL)* reported on January 22 that Russian border guards are preventing Kyrgyz migrants from leaving Russia and telling migrants that their names are on mobilization lists.⁶¹ *RFERL's* report comes a week after Head of the Russian Investigative Committee, Alexander Bastrykin, proposed the mobilization of all migrants who received Russian passports.⁶² The Ukrainian Resistance Center noted on January 24 that the policy of mobilizing migrants might feasibly extend to forcibly deported Ukrainians who are now living in Russia and were forced to acquire Russian citizenship.⁶³ ISW previously reported on Russian military authorities' efforts to place the burden of mobilization on ethnic minority enclaves.⁶⁴

Russian and Ukrainian sources continue to discuss various forms of ongoing covert mobilization in Russian and occupied Ukrainian territory. A local Stavropol Krai media outlet reported on January 20 that several people received summonses to appear at military enlistment offices within a week to "clarify" their personal data.⁶⁵ Ukrainian sources also stated that Russian authorities are continuing covert mobilization in occupied Crimea and are now sending mobilization summonses to IT and economic sector workers who previously held deferments.⁶⁶ The Russian Ministry for Digital Development similarly announced on January 19 that IT employees who meet certain criteria will be eligible to apply for draft deferrals, suggesting that certain Russian industries are continuing efforts to preserve their workforce in the face of mobilization by expanding deferment opportunities.⁶⁷

Russia's defense industrial base (DIB) is reportedly increasing the production of drones and loitering munitions. Deputy Chairperson of the Russian Security Council Dmitry Medvedev visited the Kalashnikov Concern production plant on January 24 and announced that the Russian DIB is expanding its supply of reconnaissance and attack drones and loitering munitions to support operations in Ukraine.⁶⁸ Medvedev's claimed that the increase in drone and munition production disproves those who say Russia is running out of these assets and reported that the Russian DIB will be able to produce everything needed for operations in Ukraine in 2023.⁶⁹ Russian President Vladimir Putin previously complained that there is a lack of production of military supplies such as reconnaissance drones and called on his ministers to issue quicker state defense procurement contracts.⁷⁰ Russian officials have recently undertaken a line of effort to reinvigorate the Russian DIB to address Putin's appeals and the demands of troops in Ukraine.⁷¹

CNN reported on January 24 that it received a Ukrainian military intelligence document detailing Wagner's tactics in Ukraine.⁷² The intelligence document highlights the role of convict-based squad-sized assault groups of 12 or fewer that are followed by more experienced fighters with higher-quality equipment.⁷³ *CNN* emphasized that Wagner's success relies on the fact that it poses an outsized threat in close quarters due to the sheer number of convicts being hurled at a small area and whose deaths ultimately do not matter to Russian society.⁷⁴ ISW has previously reported on Wagner's use of a model relying on tactical attrition of convicts to support and drive its operations.⁷⁵

Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin is continuing efforts to bolster the reputation of Wagner's convict force and attritional operational model. Prigozhin submitted an appeal to Russian State Duma Chairperson Vyacheslav Volodin on January 24 to introduce an article to the Russian Criminal Code

that would "prohibit public actions discrediting" volunteers and convicts and disseminating information on "their past offenses."⁷⁶

Activity in Russian-occupied Areas (Russian objective: consolidate administrative control of and annexed areas; forcibly integrate Ukrainian civilians into Russian sociocultural, economic, military, and governance systems)

Ukrainian partisans targeted a member of the Zaporizhia occupation administration on January 24. Russian and Ukrainian sources reported that Ukrainian partisans blew up the car of Valentina Mamai, a pro-Russian collaborator, entrepreneur, and member of the Zaporizhia occupation council, in Berdyansk with an improvised explosive device (IED).⁷⁷ Russian law enforcement agencies and the Ministry of Emergency Situations are reportedly working at the site of the explosion and investigating it as a case of terrorism and extremism.⁷⁸ Russian occupation authorities in Berdyansk will likely escalate law enforcement crackdowns against perceived partisans in response to the incident.

Russian security authorities are continuing to target Crimean Tatar communities in occupied Crimea. Russian-backed head of the Crimean occupation administration, Sergey Aksyonov, claimed that law enforcement detained six individuals on suspicion of their affiliation with Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami (a pan-Islamist political organization that has historically been active in Central Asia and in Crimea amongst the Crimean Tatar community and that is banned in Russia).⁷⁹ The Crimean Solidarity human rights NGO stated that the Russian Federal State Security Service (FSB) conducted arbitrary raids on Crimean Tatar households in Dzankoi in the early hours of the morning on January 24 and are detaining six individuals in unknown locations.⁸⁰ Russian security services have historically targeted Crimean Tatar communities to consolidate social control of occupied Crimea and frame anti-Russian sentiment as extremist or terrorist activity by affiliating it with Hizb ut-Tahrir, which is banned in Russia.⁸¹

Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Head Denis Pushilin appointed a new head of the Mariupol occupation administration in an effort to solidify administrative control of a major occupied city in Donetsk Oblast. Pushilin signed a decree on January 24 appointing Oleg Morgun, previous head of the Novoazovsk raion, to be head of Mariupol.⁸² Russian media reported that Morgun replaced Konstantin Ivashchenko, although Pushilin's decree did not mention how or why Ivashchenko was replaced.⁸³ Ukrainian advisor to the Mayor of Mariupol, Petro Andryushchenko, suggested that Pushilin is trying to cater to Russian authorities by replacing DNR-affiliated officials with Russian-affiliated officials.⁸⁴ Pushilin likely made this change to consolidate administrative control of Mariupol and align DNR leadership with Russian authorities in order to ensure better funding for his administration's activities in Mariupol.⁸⁵

Russian occupation authorities are continuing efforts to consolidate social, economic, and bureaucratic control of occupied territories through instituting various "standard of living" projects. Russian President Vladimir Putin demanded on January 24 that Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin expedite a range of measures to improve the living standards in occupied areas of Ukraine and emphasized that funds have already been allocated for these purposes.⁸⁶ Kherson Oblast occupation head Vladimir Saldo claimed that Putin ordered the Kherson occupation administration to bring 85% of the roads in Kherson Oblast to an appropriate "normative" state by 2027 and allocated 10 billion rubles (about \$144,446) to this project.⁸⁷ Luhansk People's Republic Head Leonid Pasechnik outlined

efforts by the LNR's Ministry of Construction and Housing to prepare for a "Housing and Urban Environment" construction competition.⁸⁸ Pasechnik also noted that Russian officials from Tyumen Oblast have taken over a project to overhaul control of hospitals in Sorokyne, Luhansk Oblast.⁸⁹ DNR Head Denis Pushilin similarly announced that Russian officials from Rostov Oblast are constructing a pipeline to bring water from Rostov Oblast to occupied Donetsk Oblast.⁹⁰ Such infrastructure projects are likely intended to present the occupation administrations as productive and effective while generating a reliance on Russian infrastructure and social and economic services.

Russian occupation authorities continue measures to erase Ukrainian identity and instill pro-Russian ideals into the social sphere of occupied areas. The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on January 24 that Russian forces in occupied Luhansk Oblast are seizing books related to Ukrainian history and identity on a large scale.⁹¹ Ukrainian Mayor of Melitopol Ivan Fedorov stated that Russian forces are removing Ukrainian literature from bookstores and libraries and replacing them with Russian literature.⁹²

Russian occupation authorities are taking measures to build out local election infrastructure in occupied areas. A Russian opposition outlet reported, citing internal Kremlin sources, that the Russian Presidential Administration's election bloc is preparing for elections for oblast parliaments and municipal councils in occupied areas of Ukraine.⁹³ The article noted that the Kremlin hopes to hold local elections in September 2023 in line with Russia's Unified Voting day to saturate occupation administrations with pro-Russian collaborators.⁹⁴ Putin likely hopes to use local elections to create the veneer of legal legitimacy to Russia's occupation of regions of Ukraine by presenting the local population as engaged in the electoral process and willing to vote for pro-Russian politicians.

ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian military activity in Belarus.

ISW's most dangerous course of action warning forecast about a potential major Russian offensive against northern Ukraine from Belarus appears increasingly unlikely. ISW currently assesses the risk of a Russian invasion of Ukraine from Belarus as very low. ISW will continue reporting observed indicators we are using to refine our assessments and forecasts, which we expect to update regularly.

Observed significant military activities in Belarus in the past 24 hours that indicate an attack from Belarus is more likely:

- Nothing significant to report.

Observed significant military activity in Belarus in the past 24 hours that is ambiguous:

- Russian milblogger Boris Rozhin reported on January 24 that the Belarusian military officially opened unspecified Belarusian long-term military storage warehouses and began providing unspecified vehicles for combat coordination activities for the joint Russian-Belarusian Regional Grouping of Forces (RGV).⁹⁵ Russian forces may be using these vehicles for training in Belarus or may transport them to Russia to support combat operations in Ukraine. Belarus reportedly has been sending artillery ammunition from Belarusian ammunition depots to Russia since summer 2022.⁹⁶

- Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko signed a decree for the Belarusian annual spring conscription cycle on January 24. The Belarusian Ministry of Defense reported that Lukashenko signed a decree on January 24 to conscript Belarusian reservists in February and March 2023.⁹⁷ This activity is consistent with the usual Belarusian spring conscription cycle and does not indicate a Russian offensive against Ukraine from Belarus is any more likely. Lukashenko historically signs similar decrees in January or February each year.⁹⁸

Observed significant military activity in Belarus in the past 24 hours that indicates that an attack from Belarus remains unlikely:

- The Ukrainian General Staff reiterated that it has not observed Russian forces in Belarus forming a strike group as of January 24.⁹⁹

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.

¹ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/poland-formally-requests-german-permission-to-send-tanks-to-ukraine-11674558492>

² <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/krieg-in-der-ukraine-deutschland-schickt-leopard-panzer-a-e2dde871-88d0-4cf5-8aae-482d58fd850f>

³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/01/23/germany-poland-leopard-tanks-ukraine/>;
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<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/24/world/europe/germany-ukraine-tanks.html>

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