#### **Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment**

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January 20, 2024, 4:15pm 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 20. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the January 21 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Note: ISW has added a new section on Ukrainian defense industrial base (DIB) efforts to the daily Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment to track the development of Ukraine's DIB and the international support for Ukraine's DIB efforts. ISW will be publishing its assessments in this section based on public announcements, media reporting, and official statements.

Russian President Vladimir Putin falsely claimed that Russia supports the "unconditional equality" and "sovereignty" of all states in a January 20 letter to the Non-Aligned Movement Summit, contradicting Russia's official position on its war in Ukraine and its wider imperial ambitions. Putin claimed that Russia rejects "neocolonialist ambitions, double standards, as well as forceful pressure, dictatorship, and blackmail as a means of achieving foreign policy and foreign economic goals."[1] Russian officials have routinely denied Ukraine's sovereignty and refused to treat it as an equal. The Kremlin rejects Ukrainian statehood and nationhood by incorporating Ukraine into the ideological and geographic conception of the Russian World (Russkiy Mir), which includes any Russian speakers and "carriers of Russian history and culture" as "compatriots" and includes all of the former territories of Kyivan Rus, the Kingdom of Muscovy, the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and the contemporary Russian Federation."[2] Russia uses the framework of "Russkiy Mir" to justify Russian imperialist expansion and the subjugation of independent, sovereign states and their peoples within a pseudo-cultural and historical context. Russian officials have routinely justified the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by claiming that Russia aims to protect its "compatriots" abroad, again rejecting Ukraine's sovereignty.[3] Russia also continues to trivialize the sovereignty of other post-Soviet countries and has been setting information conditions to escalate tensions in the Baltics and Moldova under the guise of protecting its "compatriots" abroad.[4] Russia has been in violation of its own commitments to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity and "inviolability of borders" and its agreement to center relations with Ukraine on "non-use of force or threat of force" and "non-interference in internal affairs" undertaken in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum since its initial invasion in 2014.[5] Putin's

false claims that Russia respects "equality" and "sovereignty" are likely intended to cater to states that the Kremlin desires to pull into its wider sphere of influence, much as it initially intended to do with Ukraine before the initial 2014 invasion.

Russian Ambassador to Denmark Vladimir Barbin threatened Denmark, a founding member of NATO, on January 20 in response to a recent US-Danish agreement allowing US forces access to military bases in Denmark. Barbin claimed during an interview with Russian news outlet RIA Novosti that the December 2023 US-Danish agreement "creates new challenges" for Russia's security in the Baltic Sea region and stated that Russia will determine the "necessary responses" to such actions.[6] The US and Denmark signed a Defense Cooperation Agreement on December 21, 2023, allowing the US to permanently station forces and equipment at military bases in Denmark.[7] Barbin called the agreement a "deliberate course towards further degradation of the military-political situation in the region under the slogans of containing and intimidating Russia. [8] A prominent Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger previously claimed that Finland is becoming a "second Ukraine" in response to a similar US-Finnish agreement.[9] Russian officials, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, have recently threatened Finland, and the Kremlin's threats against a founding member of NATO that shares no borders with Russia is a notable challenge to the wider alliance.[10] Russian threats made towards a founding member of NATO also undermine Russia's longstanding information operation that its aggressive actions are in response to NATO expansion.[11]

Russian energy exports to China significantly increased in 2023 amid increasing Russian reliance on oil revenues to manage the fiscal burdens of the war in Ukraine. Kremlin newswire *TASS* amplified data from the Chinese General Customs Administration on January 20 that shows a 24 percent increase in Russian crude oil exports to China from 2022 to 2023 and a 23 percent increase in Russian exports of Liquified Natural Gas (LNG).[12] *TASS* noted that Russia became China's largest oil supplier in 2023.[13] Increased Russian energy exports to Indo-Pacific states, primarily India and China, and widespread Russian efforts to skirt the G7 price cap on Russian crude oil and petroleum products allowed Russia to significantly increase oil revenues in 2023.[14]

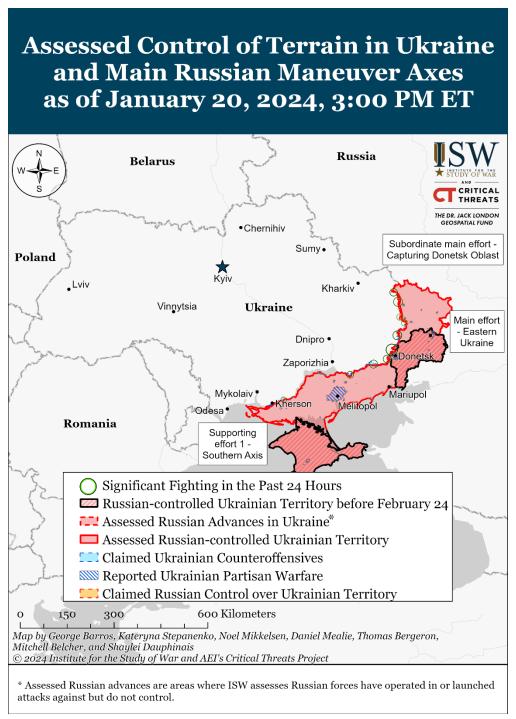
European Union (EU) Internal Market Commissioner Thierry Breton stated on January 20 that the EU will have the capacity to produce 1.3 to 1.4 million artillery shells by the end of 2024 and will ensure that it delivers the "majority" of the shells to Ukraine.[15] Breton stated that the EU will be able to produce one million shells per year by March or April 2024 and intends to "significantly" increase its shell production capacity in 2025.[16] NATO announced on January 19 that it plans to announce a major unspecified investment in artillery ammunition on January 23.[17]

A poll conducted by independent analytical platform VoxUkraine found that 63 percent of Ukrainians who left the country because of Russia's invasion had returned by July-August 2023.[18] The poll also found that 64 percent of respondents who have not yet returned to Ukraine do have plans to return and that 27 percent will return to Ukraine. At the same time, the war continues as long as there are suitable housing and employment opportunities.[19] As many as 6.2 million Ukrainians are living abroad due to the war, according to various international estimates.[20]

Russian forces conducted a limited series of strikes against Ukraine on January 20 amid continued Russian efforts to test and pressure Ukrainian air defenses. Ukrainian military officials reported that Russian forces launched seven Shahed-136/131 drones from Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai, and three S-300 missiles from occupied Luhansk Oblast.[21] Ukrainian officials reported that Ukrainian forces intercepted four of the drones and that the S-300 missiles struck Novohrodivka, Donetsk Oblast.[22] Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat stated that recent Russian strike series have attempted to overload Ukrainian air defenses and that Russian forces continue to launch drones and missiles in ways designed to avoid, penetrate, and degrade limited Ukrainian air defense capabilities.[23] Russian forces will likely continue to adapt missile and drone strike packages in an effort to penetrate Ukrainian air defenses and place pressure on Ukrainian air defense deployments.[24] Ihnat acknowledged that Ukrainian forces have concentrated a considerable amount of air defense near Kyiv to defend against regular Russian strikes and that it will be difficult for Ukrainian forces to disperse these systems as Russia's strike campaign continues.[25]

#### **Key Takeaways:**

- Russian President Vladimir Putin falsely claimed that Russia supports the "unconditional equality" and "sovereignty" of all states in a January 20 letter to the Non-Aligned Movement Summit, contradicting Russia's official position on its war in Ukraine and its wider imperial ambitions.
- Russian Ambassador to Denmark Vladimir Barbin threatened Denmark, a founding member of NATO, on January 20 in response to a recent US-Danish agreement allowing US forces access to military bases in Denmark.
- Russian energy exports to China significantly increased in 2023 amid increasing Russian reliance on oil revenues to manage the fiscal burdens of the war in Ukraine.
- European Union (EU) Internal Market Commissioner Thierry Breton stated on January 20 that the EU will have the capacity to produce 1.3 to 1.4 million artillery shells by the end of 2024 and will ensure that it delivers the "majority" of the shells to Ukraine.
- Russian forces made confirmed advances along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, and in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area amid continued positional engagements along the front.
- A Russian Storm-Z instructor claimed on January 16 that Rosgvardia personnel operating in occupied Ukraine have systematic issues with equipment and weapons storage.
- Occupation authorities continue preparations for the March 2024 Russian presidential election.



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

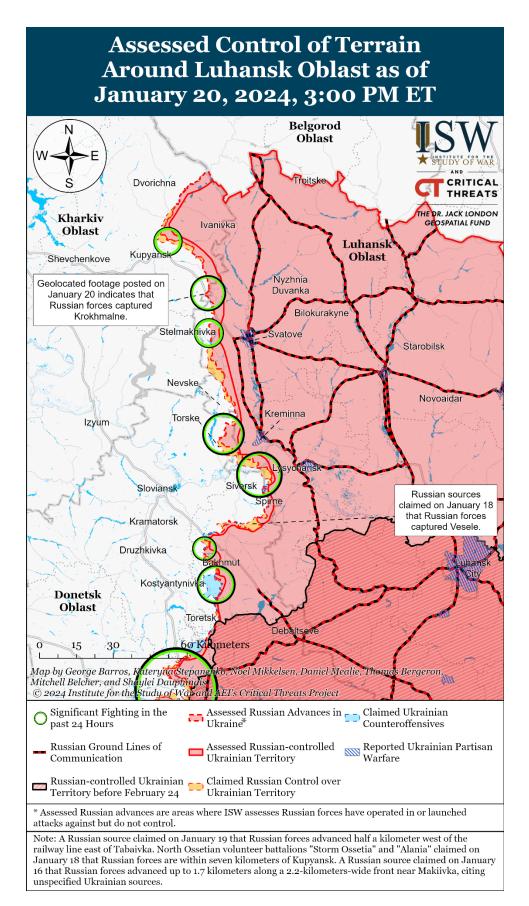
- Russian Main Effort Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 Capture the entirety of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

#### Russian Main Effort - Eastern Ukraine

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

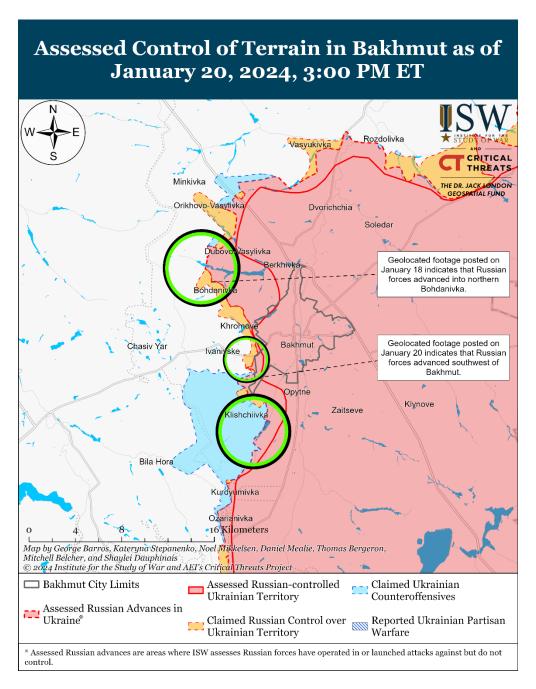
Russian forces recently advanced along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on January 20. Geolocated imagery published on January 20 indicates that Russian forces captured Krokhmalne (20km northwest of Svatove), and Russian milbloggers earlier claimed that Ukrainian forces withdrew from positions near the settlement.[26] Geolocated footage published on January 20 indicates that Russian forces marginally advanced east of Ivanivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk).[27] Additional geolocated footage published on January 18 indicates that Russian forces marginally advanced just east of Zolotarivka (17km south of Kreminna).[28] Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional fighting continued northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka and Petropavlivka; southeast of Kupyansk near Tabaivka; northwest of Svatove near Berestove; west of Kreminna near Terny and Yampolivka; southwest of Kreminna near Hryhorivka and the Serebryanske forest area; and south of Kreminna near Bilohorivka and Verkhnokamyanske.[29] Elements of the Russian 1st Guards Tank Army (Western Military District [WMD]) are reportedly attacking in the Kupyansk direction and elements of the 20th Combined Arms Army (WMD) are reportedly conducting assaults in the Lyman direction.[30]

The spokesperson of a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Lyman direction stated on January 20 that Russian forces are conducting infantry-led assaults with armored vehicle support in the Lyman direction.[31] The spokesperson stated that a large number of Russian tanks, BMPs, and armored vehicles are moving in an unspecified area in the Lyman direction and that Russian forces are suffering significant armored vehicle losses in the area. The spokesperson stated that increased Russian attacks in the Lyman direction may be due to orders from Russian leadership to reach "specific boundaries" by a certain date, potentially in reference to the upcoming Russian presidential election in March. ISW has not yet observed footage of large columns of Russian vehicles operating in the Kupyansk or Lyman directions at the time of writing this report but will consider visual evidence of such columns and the consistent occurrence of mechanized Russian assaults as leading indicators that Russian forces have begun a larger offensive operation in the area. Notable Russian gains along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line would also likely be indicators of a larger Russian offensive effort in the area given the previous year of positional fighting along this sector of the front.



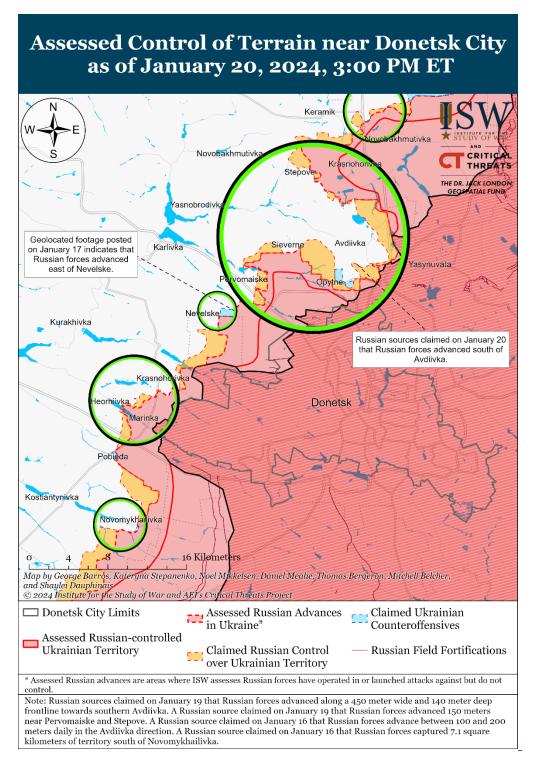
### <u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia's proxies in Donbas)

Russian forces recently advanced southwest of Bakhmut. Geolocated footage posted on January 20 shows that Russian forces recently advanced in a small forest belt northwest of Klishchiivka (southwest of Bakhmut).[32] Ukrainian and Russian sources reported fighting northwest of Bakhmut near Bohdanivka; west of Bakhmut near Ivanivske; and southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka and Andriivka.[33] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces captured the rest of Bohdanivka, but later withdrew the claim and stated that Ukrainian forces still maintained control of some of the settlement.[34] ISW has not yet observed visual evidence of these Russian gains in Bohdanivka. Elements of the Russian 98th Guards Airborne (VDV) Division, Sever-V volunteer brigade, and 58th Spetsnaz Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] Army Corps) reportedly continue operating in the Bakhmut area.[35]



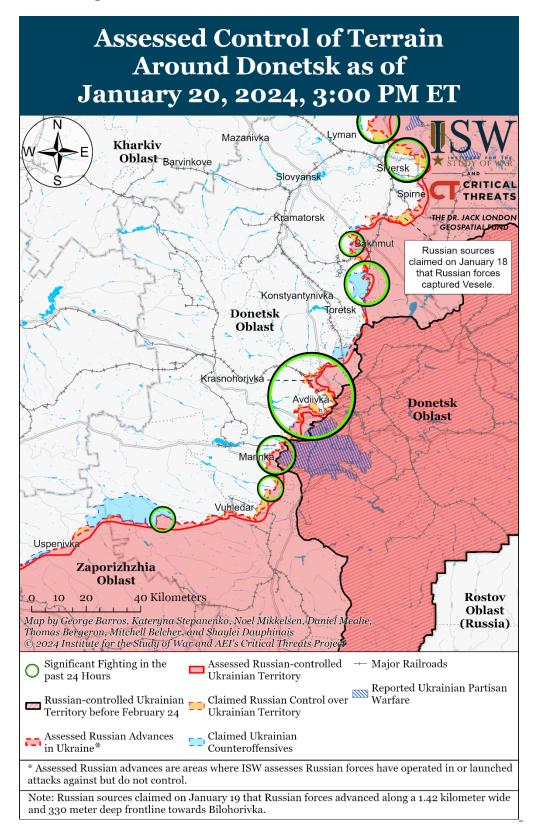
Russian forces reportedly advanced on the southern outskirts of Avdiivka on January 20. Several Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces captured a Ukrainian fortified area near the "Tsarska Okhota" restaurant (500 meters south of Avdiivka), broke through to Chernyshevskoho and Sportyva Streets, and are advancing north towards Avdiivka along Soborna Street.[36] Milbloggers also claimed that Russian forces captured the Skotovata dacha area on the southern outskirts of Avdiivka.[37] ISW has not yet observed visual evidence of these purported Russian gains in southern Avdiivka. Russian and Ukrainian sources reported that positional engagements continued northwest of Avdiivka near Stepove, Novobakhmutivka, and Novokalynove; west of Avdiivka near Sieverne and Tonenke; and southwest of Avdiivka near Vodyane, Pervomaiske, and Nevelske.[38] Elements of the

DNR's "Pyatnashka" international volunteer brigade and "Dikaya Divisiya" formation are reportedly operating in the Avdiivka direction.[39]



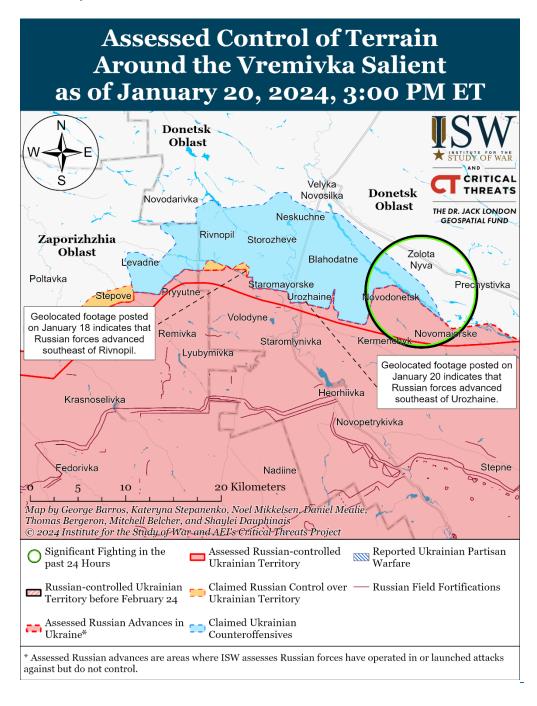
Positional engagements continued west and southwest of Donetsk City on January 20, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Russian and Ukrainian sources reported fighting west of Donetsk City near Heorhiivka and Marinka and southwest of Donetsk City near

Novomykhailivka.[40] Some Russian sources claimed that Russian forces have been focusing on interdicting the Oo532 Marinka-Vuhledar road.[41]

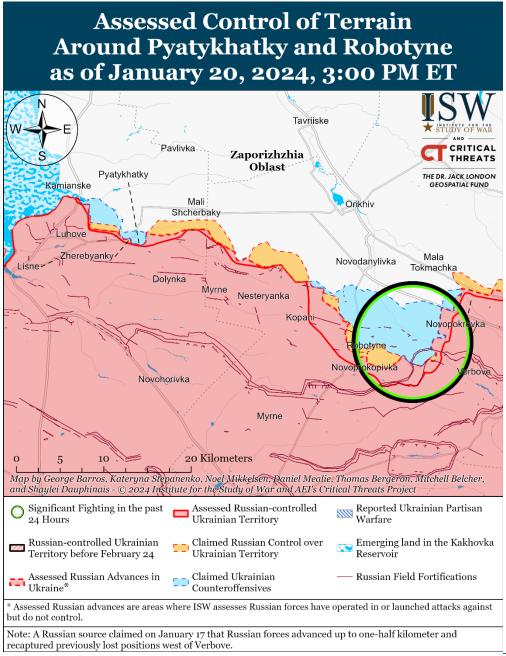


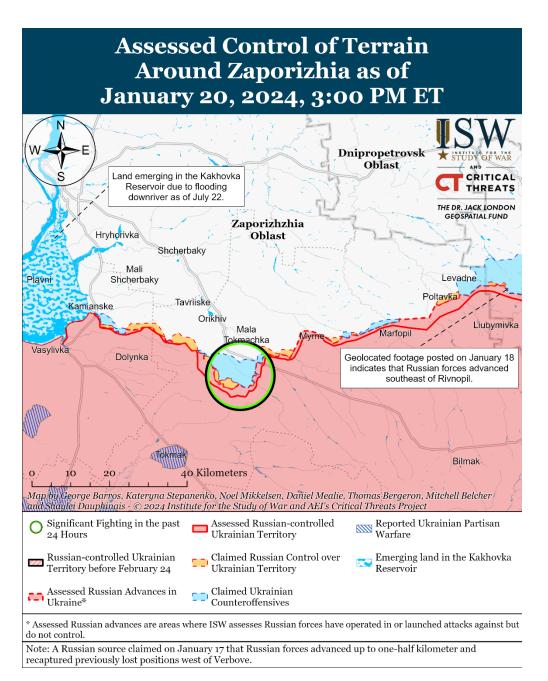
### <u>Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis</u> (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Russian forces made a marginal advance in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area. Geolocated footage posted on January 20 shows limited Russian gains southeast of Urozhaine (10km south of Velyka Novosilka).[42] Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional fighting occurred south of Zolota Nyva (southeast of Velyka Novosilka) and south of Velyka Novosilka near Urozhaine and Staromayorske.[43]



Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional engagements in western Zaporizhia Oblast on January 20. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional fighting continued near Robotyne and east of Robotyne near Verbove.[44]





Ukrainian forces maintain positions on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast as of January 20, but there were no changes to the frontline in this area. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled 10 Russian assaults on the left bank. [45] A Russian milblogger claimed that weather is constraining operations on the left bank, although Kherson Oblast occupation head Vladimir Saldo claimed that Ukrainian forces recently resumed attempts to cross the Dnipro River after icy conditions on the river thawed. [46] The United Kingdom Ministry of Defense (UK MoD) assessed that Russian forces will likely continue to attempt to dislodge Ukrainian forces from positions near Krynky in the coming weeks despite growing manpower losses. [47]



The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) stated on January 19 that its observers at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) noted that unspecified actors, likely Russian forces, mined the perimeter of the ZNPP between the facility's internal and external fence, where IAEA observers had previously seen mines as of November 2023.[48] Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Spokesperson Andriy Yusov stated that there is nothing new about Russian forces

mining the territory of the ZNPP and that Russian threats to the facility will remain as long as Russian forces occupy it.[49] Russian threats to the ZNPP occur amid Russia's ongoing effort to compel the IAEA and the international community to normalize Russia's occupation of the ZNPP.[50]

## <u>Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts</u> (Russian objective: Expand combat power without conducting general mobilization)

A Russian Storm-Z instructor claimed on January 16 that Rosgvardia personnel operating in occupied Ukraine have systematic issues with equipment and weapons storage caused by inflexible regulatory documents. The instructor claimed that improper storage of military equipment and weapons led to a fire at a Rosgvardia checkpoint in southern Donetsk Oblast on January 15.[51] The instructor claimed that Rosgvardia requires its personnel to lock weapons and equipment on cables in storage facilities which prevented personnel from saving the equipment and weapons from the fire.[52] The instructor claimed that Rosgvardia personnel are strictly following documents that regulate the storage of weapons in this way and bemoaned the practice as constraining Rosgvardia's ability to quickly respond to threats.[53] Russia appears to be continuing efforts to use newly formed Rosgvardia units to build out a military occupation force in Ukraine separate from frontline Russian units but appears to be facing systemic issues in doing so.[54]

Russia continues to rely on covert schemes to acquire critical components from abroad to support Russia's defense industrial base (DIB). The US Department of Justice (DOJ) reported on January 18 that US authorities arrested an individual with US, Israeli, and Russian citizenship who the US DOJ accused of using a network of businesses in China and other countries to transfer hundreds of thousands of semiconductors to sanctioned businesses with ties to the Russian military and Russian Federal Security Service (FSB).[55]

### <u>Russian Technological Adaptations</u> (Russian objective: Introduce technological innovations to optimize systems for use in Ukraine)

Nothing significant to report.

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

Click here to read ISW's new analysis on Ukrainian long-term efforts to develop a self-sufficient DIB with US and European support.

The Ukrainian Ministry of Defense (MoD) reported on January 20 that the Ukrainian MoD's Internal Audit Service and the US Embassy in Ukraine's Defense Cooperation Department conducted the first joint inspection of US-provided weapons in Ukraine.[56] The Ukrainian MoD reported that Ukrainian and US inspectors checked weapons' serial numbers, technical conditions, and storage conditions, and stated that US representatives had "no comments" during the joint inspection.[57] Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Yuriy Dzhygir stated that Ukraine is providing partner countries access to storage locations and conducting systematic joint inspections to "increase transparency and strengthen trust."[58]

## <u>Activities in Russian-occupied areas</u> (Russian objective: Consolidate administrative control of annexed areas; forcibly integrate Ukrainian citizens into Russian sociocultural, economic, military, and governance systems)

Occupation authorities continue preparations for the March 2024 Russian presidential election. The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on January 20 that occupation authorities in occupied Enerhodar, Zaporizhia Oblast are recruiting local pensioners to form a "council of veterans" to campaign for Russian President Vladimir Putin ahead of the presidential election.[59] Occupation officials will provide the pensioners with additional food and medicine in exchange for campaigning for Putin.[60] Ukrainian Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov stated that Russian authorities have selected proxies in occupied Ukraine to collect signatures for Putin and ensure "100 percent voter turnout" and at least 90 percent of local votes for Putin.[61]

Russian officials continued efforts to highlight the economic potential of occupied areas of Ukraine, likely in part to attract Russians to move to occupied Ukraine. Russian Presidential Administration First Deputy Head Sergei Kiriyenko presented an award on January 20 to Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) chairman Sergei Kozlev recognizing the LNR as one of the "best supporter[s] of local producers" during a ceremony honoring Russia's "federal territories" at the Rossiya international forum and exhibit.[62] Zaporizhia Oblast occupation governor Yevgeny Balitsky claimed that Russian authorities recognized occupied Primorsk and Berdyansk cities as "best projects to create a comfortable urban environment" in 2023.[63]

#### **Russian Information Operations and Narratives**

A Russian ultranationalist milblogger continued to express fear that Russia is losing influence over Armenia amid deteriorating Armenian-Russian relations. A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger criticized Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's statements in support of creating a new Armenian constitution instead of reforming the existing constitution.[64] The milblogger claimed that Pashinyan may want to declare Armenia's "neutral status" in a proposed new constitution, thereby removing Armenia from the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and allowing Armenia to ally with "countries unfriendly to Russia."[65]

# <u>Significant Activity in Belarus</u> (Russian efforts to increase its military presence in Belarus and further integrate Belarus into Russian-favorable frameworks and Wagner Group activity in Belarus)

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko continues to promote Russia's 2023 transfer of tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus. Lukashenko stated on January 20 that Russia transferred nuclear weapons to Belarus with Iskander launch vehicles in 2023 and that he signed a decree on the "procedure for using nuclear weapons" that specifies that nuclear weapons may only be used by order of the president" (presumably by order of Russian President Vladimir Putin since Russia retains control over the weapons).[66] Belarusian Defense Minister Lieutenant General Viktor Khrenin announced on January 16 that Belarus' new draft military doctrine accounts for the use of Russian tactical nuclear weapons stationed in Belarus for the first time.[67] ISW continues to assess that neither Russia nor Belarus seeks nuclear escalation and that Russian use of nuclear weapons remains unlikely.[68]

Ukrainian Joint Forces Commander Lieutenant General Serhiy Nayev stated on January 19 that Belarus continues to supply and repair weapons and military equipment that Russian forces use in Ukraine. Nayev also stated that the Belarusian defense industrial base (DIB) continues to produce new and recycle obsolete ammunition to transfer to Russian forces.[69]

Belarusian Ambassador to Russia Dmitry Krutoy, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexey Overchuk, and Union State Secretary of State Dmitry Mezentsev met on January 19 to discuss preparations for the next Supreme State Council of the Union State meeting and Russian-Belarusian trade and economic cooperation.[70]

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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