Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

Angelica Evans, Riley Bailey, Nicole Wolkov, Karolina Hird, and Frederick W. Kagan January 29, 2024, 5:45pm 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 1:00pm ET on January 29. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the January 30 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Note: ISW added a new section on Russian air, missile, and drone campaign to track Russian efforts to target Ukrainian rear and frontline areas, grow its drone and missile arsenals, and adapt its strike packages.

The Ukrainian Ministry of Defense (MoD) denied rumors about the purported resignation or dismissal of Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief General Valerii Zaluzhnyi on January 29.[1] Ukrainian People's Deputy Oleksii Honcharenko claimed on January 29 that "Zaluzhnyi announced his resignation, but there is no decree yet."[2] Former Ukrainian People's Deputy Boryslav Bereza claimed that the Ukrainian Presidential Office "dismissed" Zaluzhnyi.[3] Western media amplified Honcharenko's and Bereza's posts, and Russian sources and state media outlets also picked up claims of Zaluzhnyi's dismissal or resignation.[4] The Ukrainian MoD apparently responded to the rumors by saying "no, this is not true," but has not yet offered additional information on the situation as of the time of this writing.[5] ISW cannot independently confirm rumors about Zaluzhnyi's dismissal or resignation at this time. Russian sources are seizing on rumors of Zaluzhnyi's dismissal or resignation to further several information operations about domestic Ukrainian affairs they have been conducting for some time.[6] Veteran Russian propagandist and RT editor-inchief Margarita Simonyan emphasized that whether or not reports of Zaluzhnyi's removal are true, "chaos ... is useful to [Russia]."[7]

Russia may be retooling aspects of its air defense umbrella in deep rear areas amid continued Ukrainian drone strikes within Russia. Russian outlet *Kommersant* reported on January 29 that the Russian Ministry of Digital Development ordered Russian authorities in Leningrad, Novgorod, and Pskov oblasts to block 4G LTE internet connection until January 30 so that Russian officials can "fine-tune" anti-drone and air defense systems.[8] Leningrad, Novgorod, and Pskov oblasts previously announced disruptions to 4G LTE internet services from January 25 to January 30 in connection with technical adjustments to the "radio frequency spectrum."[9] One of *Kommersant*'s sources stated that Voronezh Oblast is conducting similar efforts that have been "planned at the federal level" and that many other unspecified Russian federal subjects are pursuing these efforts at different paces.[10]

Kommersant stated that Russian electronic warfare (EW) systems and mobile internet providers both operate on frequencies permitted by the Russian State Commission on Radio Frequencies (SCRF), and Kommersant's source stated that indiscriminate EW use can interfere with mobile data.[11] It is unclear what impact internet operations may have on the reorientation of EW systems or the deployment of new capabilities and vice versa. It is equally possible that Russian forces may be testing new EW capabilities and preemptively turned off internet services to avoid sudden disruptions. Russian officials may also be limiting access to the internet to conceal the movement of conventional air defense systems within Russia after Ukrainian drone strikes in Leningrad Oblast on January 18 and January 21 suggested that Russian air defenses in northwestern Russia may be ill-deployed to defend against drones launched from Ukraine.[12] Yaroslavl Oblast Governor Mikhail Yevraev claimed on January 29 that Russian EW systems downed a Ukrainian drone targeting the Slavneft-Yanos oil refinery in Yaroslavl Oblast.[13] Russian sources amplified images of the downed drown at the refinery and claimed that it did not cause any damage.[14] Kommersant's source stated that they believe that the timing of the internet disruptions is also associated with security for Russian President Vladimir Putin's ongoing trip to St. Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast.[15]

Russia appears to be fueling and seizing on neo-imperialist and nationalist sentiments in Europe in order to drive wedges between Ukraine and its western neighbors. Right-wing Hungarian politician and Our Homeland Movement party leader Laszlo Toroczkai stated on January 27 that Hungary should claim Ukraine's Zakarpattia Oblast in Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project 2024

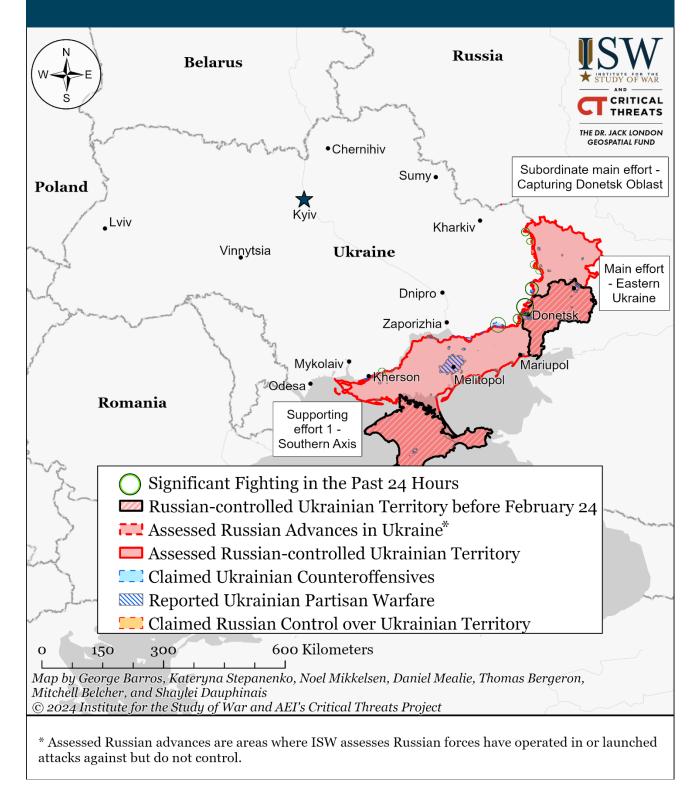
the event of a Ukrainian defeat in the war.[16] Right-wing Romanian politician and Alliance for the Union of Romanians party leader Claudiu Tarziu emphasized on January 29 that Romania needs to "reintegrate" areas of Ukraine neighboring Romania where Romanian populations lived in order to maintain sovereignty.[17] Russian sources amplified Toroczkai's and Tarziu's statements and emphasized these ultranationalist Romanian and Hungarian claims to Ukrainian territory.[18] Russia previously proposed the idea of a "partitioned Ukraine" between Russia and the West prior to the full-scale invasion.[19] Russian President Vladimir Putin and other senior Russian officials reignited this narrative in December 2023 by claiming that Ukraine has historical "territorial disputes" with Poland, Romania, and Hungary but could maintain its "sovereignty" if the whole country is comprised of the borders of Lviv Oblast.[20] The Russian ultranationalist framework of the Russian World (*Russkiy Mir*) concept appears to have gained traction among nationalist European factions as applied to their own nationalist ideologies, and Russian information space actors likely seek to leverage this ideological bent to drive a wedge between Ukraine and its European neighbors.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko signed a series of economic and technological agreements on January 29 advancing the Kremlin's efforts to further integrate Belarus into the Union State structure. Putin and Lukashenko approved three agreements on the implementation of the Union State Treaty, joint scientific and technological development, and the coordination of both countries' foreign policies during a meeting of the Supreme State Council of the Union State in St. Petersburg.[21] Putin reiterated claims that Russians and Belarusians are "fraternal peoples," united by a common history and values.[22] Lukashenko highlighted Russian and Belarusian cooperation in Africa, claiming that he coordinated his December 2023 trips to various African countries with Putin, and stated that Russia and Belarus have not yet resolved the issue of creating common markets for gas, oil, and petroleum products under the Union State framework.[23] Lukashenko has previously resisted the Kremlin's efforts to further integrate Belarus into the Union State, but the fallout of the Wagner Group's armed rebellion, which Lukashenko reportedly played a role in mediating, and the death of Wagner financier Yevgeny Prigozhin may have hindered Lukashenko's ability to resist further Union State integration efforts.[24]

Key Takeaways:

- The Ukrainian Ministry of Defense (MoD) denied rumors about the purported resignation or dismissal of Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief General Valerii Zaluzhnyi on January 29.
- Russia may be retooling aspects of its air defense umbrella in deep rear areas amid continued Ukrainian drone strikes within Russia.
- Russia appears to be fueling and seizing on neo-imperialist and nationalist sentiments in Europe in order to drive wedges between Ukraine and its western neighbors.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko signed a series of economic and technological agreements on January 29 advancing the Kremlin's efforts to further integrate Belarus into the Union State structure.
- Russian forces recently advanced near Kreminna and Avdiivka and in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area.
- Russia reportedly deployed more Rosgvardia troops to occupied Ukraine ahead of the March 2024 Russian presidential election.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of January 29, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

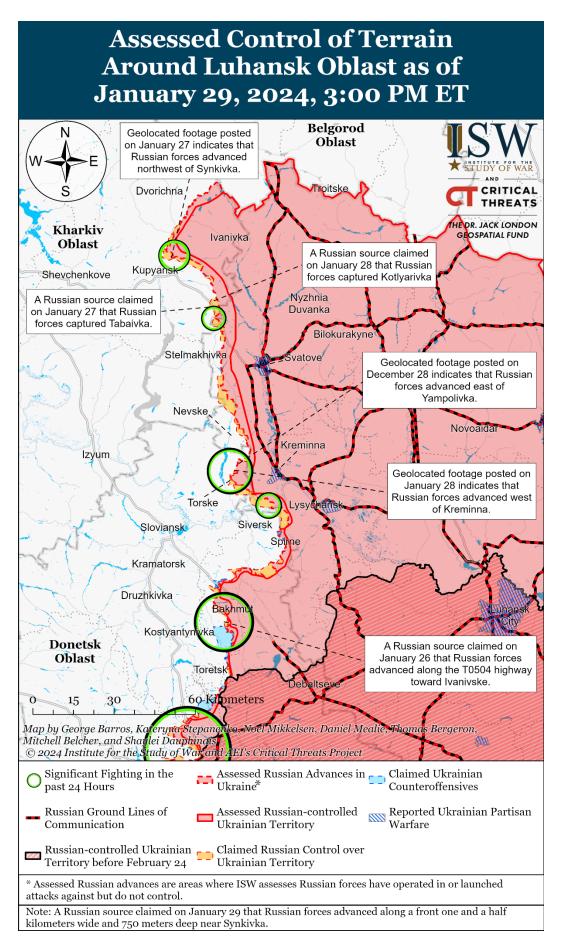
- Russian Main Effort Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort Southern Axis
- Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign
- 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)

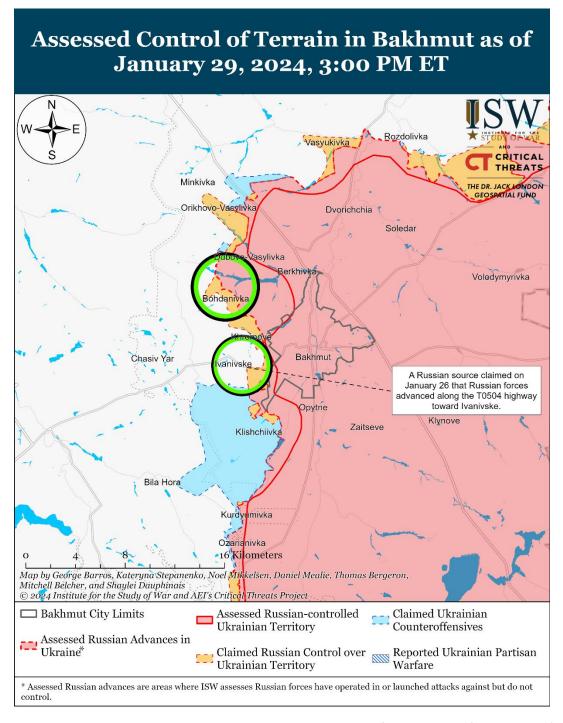
Russian and Ukrainian sources continued to disagree over the status of Tabaivka (southeast of Kupyansk) on January 29. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that elements of the Russian Western Grouping of Forces captured Tabaivka, and many Russian milbloggers amplified this claim.[25] ISW has not yet observed visual confirmation of the purported Russian capture of Tabaivka, and Ukrainian Ground Forces Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Volodymyr Fityo reported on January 29 that fighting is ongoing in the area but that Russian forces have not captured the settlement.[26] A Russian milblogger claimed on January 29 that Russian forces advanced near Synkivka (northeast of Kupyansk) up to 1.5 kilometers in width and 750 meters in depth, although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this Russian advance.[27] Ukrainian and Russian sources reported continued positional engagements northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka and southeast of Kupyansk near Pishchane.[28] Elements of the Russian 6th Combined Arms Army (Western Military District) and 47th Tank Division (1st Guards Tank Army, Western Military District) reportedly continue to operate the Kupyansk direction.[29]

Russian forces recently advanced west of Kreminna. Geolocated footage posted on January 28 shows that Russian forces made a marginal gain in a forest strip just east of Yampolivka (west of Kreminna).[30] Russian milbloggers also claimed that Russian forces advanced towards Torske and Yampolivka.[31] Ukrainian and Russian sources reported continued positional engagements west of Kreminna near Terny and Yampolivka; southwest of Kreminna in the Serebryanske forest area; and south of Kreminna near Bilohorivka.[32] Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadryov posted footage reportedly of the "Aida" group of Chechen "Akhmat" Spetsnaz using drones to strike Ukrainian positions near Bilohorivka.[33]

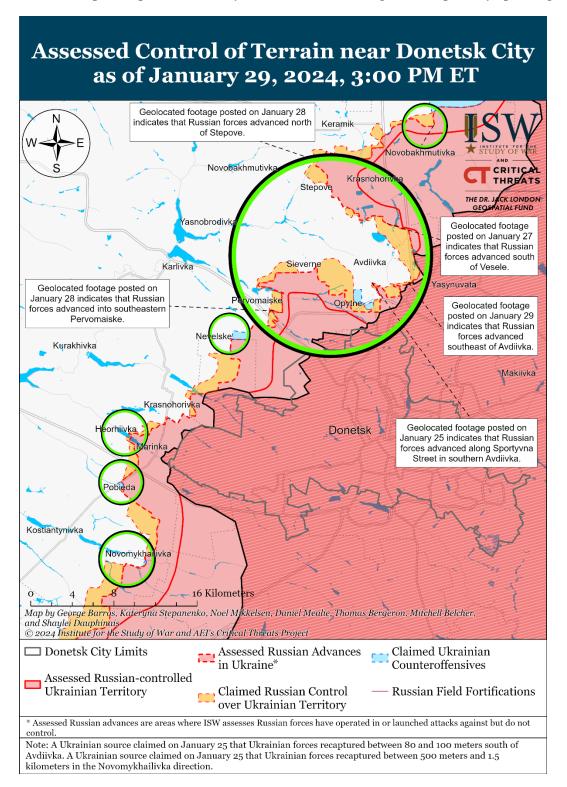


<u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia's proxies in Donbas)

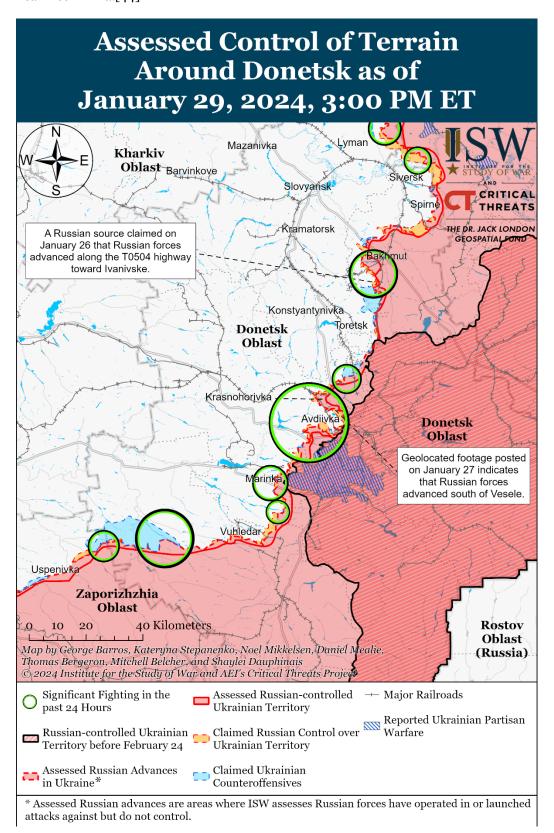
Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional engagements near Bakhmut on January 29, but there were no confirmed changes to the front in this area. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are advancing near Bohdanivka (northwest of Bakhmut) and Klishchiivka (southwest of Bakhmut) and towards Chasiv Yar (west of Bakhmut).[34] The milblogger claimed that Russian forces also recaptured unspecified previously lost positions along a railway line near Ivanivske (west of Bakhmut).[35] Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional fighting continued near Bilohorivka (northeast of Bakhmut), Bohdanivka, Ivanivske (west of Bakhmut), Klishchiivka, Shumy (west of Horlivka), and Pivnichne (west of Horlivka).[36] Elements of the Russian 102nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) and the 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade (Northern Fleet) are reportedly operating near Bakhmut and elements of the "Sever-V" Volunteer Brigade (Russian Volunteer Corps) reportedly continue to operate near Bohdanivka.[37]



Russian forces recently marginally advanced near Avdiivka amid continued positional fighting in the area on January 29. Geolocated footage published on January 29 indicates that Russian forces recently marginally advanced on the southeastern outskirts of Avdiivka.[38] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced northwest of Avdiivka near Stepove and south of Novokalynove and along Voroshylova Street in Pervomaiske (southwest of Avdiivka), although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of Russian gains in these areas..[39] Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that there were positional engagements northwest of Avdiivka near Ocheretyne, Novobakhmutivka, and Stepove; east of the Avdiivka Coke Plant in Avdiivka's northwestern outskirts; in the "Tsarska Okhota" restaurant area in the southeastern outskirts of Avdiivka; west of Avdiivka near Tonenke; and southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske and Nevelske.[40] Elements of the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) "Pyatnashka" volunteer brigade are reportedly operating southeast of Avdiivka.[41]

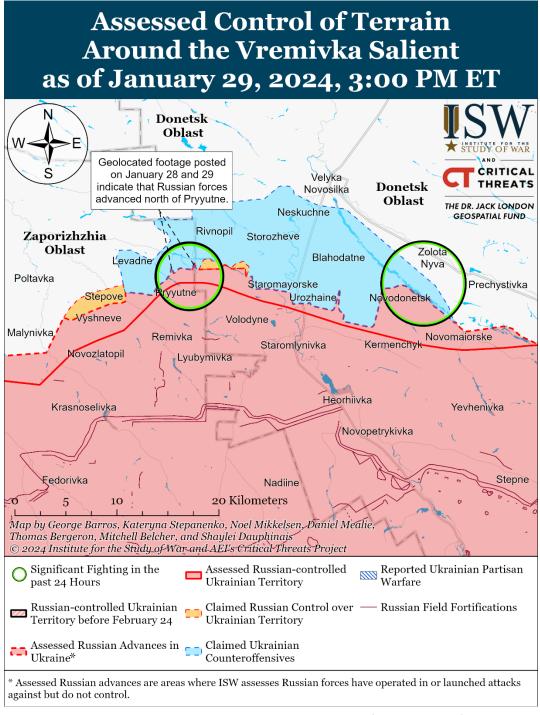


Positional fighting continued west and southwest of Donetsk City on January 29, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced near Heorhiivka (west of Donetsk City) and Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City).[42] Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional fighting continued near Heorhiivka, Pobieda (southwest of Donetsk City), and Novomykhailivka.[43] Elements of the Russian 5th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st DNR Army Corps) and the 238th Artillery Brigade (8th CAA, SMD) are reportedly operating near Heorhiivka.[44]



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

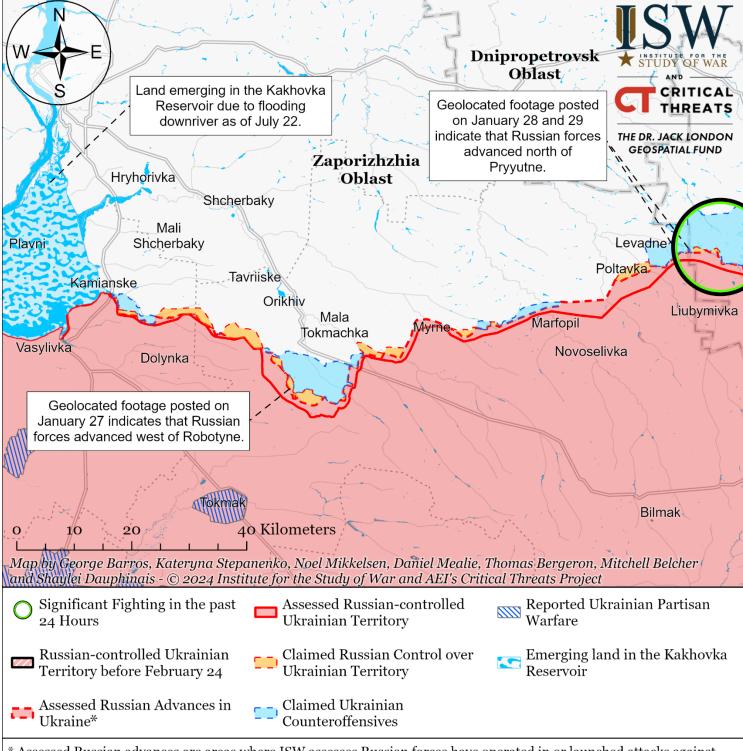
Russian forces recently advanced in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area amid continued positional fighting on January 29. Geolocated footage published on January 28 indicates that Russian forces advanced north of Pryyutne (southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[45] Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional fighting occurred north of Pryyutne and near Zolota Nyva (southeast of Velyka Novosilka) and Staromayorske (south of Velyka Novosilka).[46] Elements of the 394th Motorized Rifle Regiment (127th Motorized Rifle Division, 5th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Eastern Military District [EMD]) and the 40th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) are reportedly operating in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area; elements of the 143rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (127th Motorized Rifle Division, 5th CAA, EMD) are reportedly operating near Pryyutne; and elements of the 60th Motorized Rifle Brigade (5th CAA, EMD) and the 14th Spetsnaz Brigade (Special Forces of the Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces [GRU]) are reportedly operating near Staromayorske.[47]



Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional engagements in western Zaporizhia Oblast on January 29. Russian milbloggers claimed that positional fighting continued near Robotyne and Verbove (east of Robotyne).[48] Elements of the 291st Motorized Rifle Regiment and the 70th Motorized Rifle Regiment (both of the 42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th CAA, Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating in western Zaporizhia Oblast.[49]

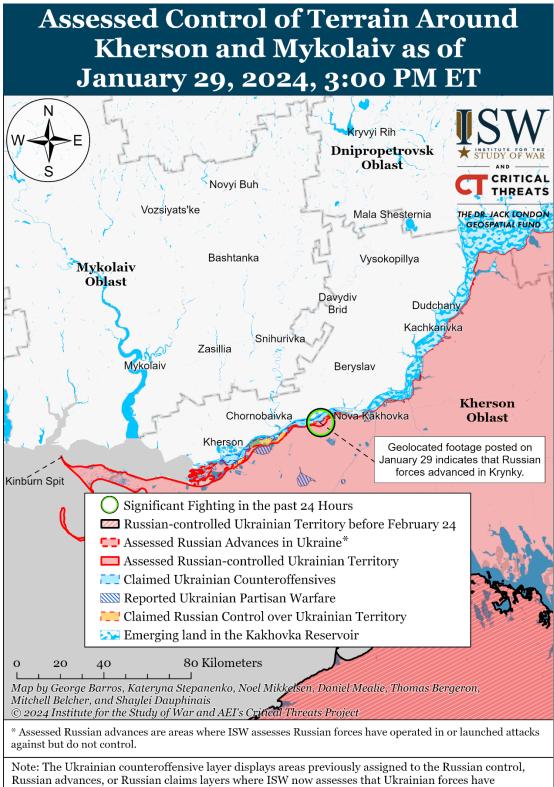


Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of January 29, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

Russian forces recently made a marginal gain within Krynky and continued positional engagements with Ukrainian forces in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast on January 29. Geolocated footage published on January 29 indicates that Russian forces recently made a marginal gain within Krynky.[50] Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional battles continued on the east bank of the Dnipro River, including near Krynky.[51] Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Colonel Nataliya Humenyuk stated that Russian forces in occupied Crimea are forming new groups and units in order to reinforce unspecified Russian units in east bank Kherson Oblast that have suffered significant manpower and equipment losses.[52]



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

<u>Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign</u> (Russian Objective: Target Ukrainian military and civilian infrastructure in the rear and on the frontline)

Ukrainian military officials stated that Russian forces launched six S-300 missiles at Myrnohrad, Donetsk Oblast and Muzykivka, Kherson Oblast and eight Shahed-136/-131 drones and one Iskander-M missile at other targets in Ukraine.[53] The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Ukrainian forces downed all eight Shaheds.[54] Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat stated that Ukrainian forces are studying downed Shahed drones in order to improve Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW) systems and identify foreign components in Shahed drones.[55]

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

Nothing significant to report.

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

Russian officials are attempting to expand capacities for testing new technological adaptations. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu inspected the Russian Ministry of Defense's (MoD) 12th and 48th Central Research Institutions in Moscow Oblast on January 29 during a working trip to the Western Military District (WMD).[56] Head of the 12th Central Research Institution Lieutenant General Igor Kolesnikov told Shoigu that the 12th Institution is reducing the length of state tests for new weapons, improving testing conditions, and increasing the number of tests it conducts.[57]

<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)

Ukraine continues efforts to align the Ukrainian Armed Forces with NATO standards. The Ukrainian Ministry of Defense (MoD) reported on January 28 that Ukraine implemented over 18 NATO standards between December 2023 and January 2024, including standards for protecting personnel, communication training for naval forces, and procedures for information and transportation systems.[58]

Ukraine's partners continue efforts to build out their own defense industrial base (DIB) capabilities in support of Ukraine. German arms manufacturer Rheinmetall CEO Armin Papperger stated in an interview with *Bild* on January 28 that Rheinmetall is building a new ammunition factory in Germany to create a "strategic security of supply" and ensure uninterrupted supply to Ukraine. Papperger also noted that Rheinmetall received over 10 billion Euros in military procurement orders from the German Federal government in 2023 for the German Armed Forces and Ukraine and that this will likely increase to 15 billion Euros in 2024.[59]

<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)

Russia reportedly deployed more Rosgvardia troops to occupied Ukraine ahead of the March 2024 Russian presidential election. The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported that Russia deployed an unspecified number of additional Rosgvardia personnel to occupied Ukraine to guard polling stations and force Ukrainians civilians in occupied areas to vote to increase voter turnout.[60] Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence (GUR) Representative Andriy Yusov stated on January 17 that there are 35,000 Rosgvardia personnel in occupied Ukraine.[61]

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Secretary of the Russian Security Council Nikolai Patrushev reiterated a common Russian information operation attempting to blame the West for the war in Ukraine.[62] Patrushev claimed that "enemy has come with fire and sword to our land," despite the fact that Russia initiated military conflict with Ukraine in 2014 and then again in 2022.

A prominent Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger criticized Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan for proposing a non-aggression pact with Azerbaijan, likely as part of wider ongoing criticisms of Pashinyan for distancing Armenia from Russian influence.[63]

A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger reiterated boilerplate claims that defensive Finnish and NATO military exercises in Finland are a threat to Russia.[64] ISW continues to assess that Russia will attempt to misrepresent military exercises in NATO

countries near Russia, including the Steadfast Defender 2024 exercises, as a threat against Russia despite the exercises' defensive nature in response to real Russian aggression against Ukraine and overt Russian threats to NATO states.[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 Air Forces and Air Defense Forces Deputy Commander Leonid Davidovich stated on January 28 that Belarusian forces are prepared to counter perceived "NATO provocations," including provocations related to the 2025 Belarusian presidential elections.[66]

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://t.me/ministry_of_defense_ua/8732
- [2] https://t.me/oleksiihoncharenko/39666
- $[4] \ https://twitter.com/olliecarroll/status/1752016775430983683; \ https://x.com/GloOouD/status/1752014824907718749?s=20; \ https://x.com/GloOouD/status/1752020993877389805?s=20; \ https://t.me/tass_agency/228888; \ https://t.me/tass_agency/228886; \ https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/53624; \ https://t.me/milinfolive/115270; \ https://www.facebook.com/borislav.bereza/posts/pfbido2Boj1pKvEmWhoLpNyXwNGGqGNMtFXgiU1XXvj2Q8RMWMVuBUJWFHYqbb5RCbtUdv2l; \ https://t.me/RVvoenkor/61193; \ . \ https://t.me/milinfolive/115269; \ https://t.me/dva_majors/33585; \ . \ https://t.me/RVvoenkor/61194; \ https://t.me/RVvoenkor/61195$
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- [13] https://t.me/tass_agency/228761; https://t.me/evraevmikhail/4305

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