

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, January 13, 2023

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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.

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) announced on January 13 that Russian forces seized Soledar, Donetsk Oblast, on the evening of January 12. The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces can now form a “cauldron” around Bakhmut and threaten Ukrainian supply lines running southwest of Soledar that support Ukrainian troops in the city.¹ The Russian MoD notably praised assault and army aviation, missile and artillery troops, and Russian airborne forces for seizing Soledar, without acknowledging Wagner Group's participation in the fighting for the city. Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov maintained that the situation around Soledar is difficult and noted that it is unclear if Russian forces control the settlement at this time, while other Ukrainian military official reported that Ukrainian forces continued to fight in Soledar during the night of January 12-13.² Ukrainian forces may still occupy some positions on the northwestern borders of Soledar but are unlikely to control significant territory within the settlement itself. ISW assessed on January 12 that Russian forces have likely captured Soledar on January 11, but such victory is unlikely to presage an imminent Russian encirclement of Bakhmut.³

The announcement sparked a significant backlash within the Russian information space due to the Russian MoD's failure to acknowledge the Wagner Group's participation in the capture of Soledar. The Russian MoD issued a follow up announcement six hours later recognizing Wagner volunteers and assault detachments as participants in the Battle for Soledar and noting that the Russian MoD received numerous inquiries regarding its original commemoration of select Russian forces.⁴ The Russian MoD attempted to justify their snub of Wagner by claiming that a Russian “heterogeneous grouping of troops” executed a “joint plan” in the Soledar direction and attributed the assault against residential areas to Wagner forces. Wagner financier Yevgeny Prigozhin vaguely responded to the Russian MoD's omission of Wagner, stating that he cannot comment on the situation and noting that journalists' questions about the matter expose their concern over commemorating Wagner's “heroic capture of Soledar.”⁵

Wagner financier Yevgeny Prigozhin staged conditions for such backlash by personally visiting Soledar days prior to its capture and taking his cadre of Wagner-affiliated milbloggers to commemorate Wagner forces' daily advances on Russian social media platforms.⁶ Prigozhin likely attempted to preempt the announcement on January 12 by accusing unnamed bureaucrats and government officials of “constantly trying to steal victory from [the] Wagner private military company” and belittling its merits.⁷ Milbloggers independent or affiliated with Wagner subsequently generated a series of criticisms calling out the Russian MoD for its misrepresentation of the claimed capture of Soledar.⁸

The Russian MoD's announcement highlighted the existing conflict between the Wagner Group and the Russian MoD – a dynamic that which ISW has previously observed and assessed. Several prominent milbloggers – including those affiliated with the Kremlin – stated that there is an ongoing conflict between the Russian MoD and Prigozhin behind closed doors and within the information space.⁹ Some noted that Prigozhin has overpowered the Russian MoD's deliberately vague rhetoric, forcing the Russian MoD, and by extension the Kremlin, to end its long-standing policy of refraining from recognizing Wagner and its war efforts.¹⁰ A Kremlin-affiliate milblogger, in turn, claimed that Prigozhin and the Russian MoD are both equally

attempting to undermine each other and accused Prigozhin of refusing to recognize the Russian Armed Forces as a participating force on the battlefield.

Former Russian officer and prominent nationalist voice, Igor Girkin, condemned the “acute conflict” between traditional military command and unofficial forces (referring to Wagner) during a time of war and claimed that Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu and Chief of the Russian General Staff Valery Gerasimov seek to disband private military companies like Wagner and incorporate its elements into the MoD structure.¹¹ Girkin stated that Soledar has exposed a major dilemma for Russian President Vladimir Putin, who he framed as having the options of either intensifying his efforts to appease both the Russian MoD and Prigozhin; doubling down on either side at risk of losing support for his war; or becoming an arbitrator and the commander-in-chief. ISW had previously assessed that Putin’s efforts to balance the at times mutually exclusive lines of effort of retaining Russian MoD support for his war, publicly distancing himself from military failures, and exploiting Prigozhin’s parallel military forces, may have ramifications on his power.¹²

Prigozhin likely seeks to use the victory in Soledar as a bargaining tool to elevate his authority in Russia. The Russian MoD’s subsequent mention of Wagner forces in response to public outcry signals a significant victory for Prigozhin, solidifying him as a crucial actor in this war. Reznikov stated that Prigozhin needed a victory in Soledar to deliver proof to Putin that his forces are better than the conventional army.¹³ Prigozhin also publicized a journalist’s question about his reported upcoming meeting with Putin to discuss victory in Soledar, singling out the question amidst an array of other similar questions on his response to the Russian MoD’s announcement.¹⁴ Prigozhin told the journalist to read his original statement on Soledar instead of “doing nonsense,” despite his comment stating that questions on Russian MoD’s exclusion of Wagner will “need answers but not now.” Prigozhin, who has used intentionally vague messaging in the past, also noted that everyone will soon understand why he withheld comment. While ISW cannot confirm that Prigozhin will have a meeting with Putin, he had previously offered his critiques to Putin on the progress of the war and will likely seize this opportunity to his benefit.¹⁵

Putin may be taking measures to cultivate a cadre of milbloggers loyal to the Putin and the Russian MoD to undermine Prigozhin’s effort to elevate himself. United Russia Party Central Executive Committee Head Alexander Sidyakin, United Russia State Duma parliamentarian Artyom Turovyyi, and Donetsk People Republic Head and Putin ally Denis Pushilin met with several milbloggers on January 13.¹⁶ These senior Putin allies presented a group of over 10 milbloggers – including Alexander Sladkov and a journalist who works for Wargonzo – an official certificate of thanks signed by Secretary of the General Council of the United Russia Party Andrey Turchak.¹⁷ This is the latest event in a string of Kremlin efforts to cultivate ties with select milbloggers.¹⁸ ISW previously assessed that the Kremlin undertook efforts to co-opt Sladkov, Wargonzo lead milblogger Semen Pegov, and other milbloggers who were willing to sell out in exchange for political prestige.¹⁹ Putin may seek to cultivate ties with these Kremlin-pliant milbloggers to marshal their media reach against the Prigozhin-aligned milbloggers’ efforts to promote Prigozhin and damage Putin’s reputation in the Russian information space.

High-ranking Ukrainian officials continue to forecast that Ukrainian and Russian operations will likely intensify in the spring of 2023, while a Russian offensive from Belarus remains unlikely. Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov stated in a January 13 interview with the *BBC* that “spring is the best period to refresh [military] movement for all sides” and that Ukrainian officials understand that Russian forces will be ready to start a higher pace of operations in the spring and therefore Ukrainian forces need to be ready to do so as well.²⁰ Reznikov also stated that the Russian military could be trying to accumulate forces, ammunition, and weapons for an offensive from areas it already occupies in southern and eastern Ukraine.²¹ Reznikov’s statement follows Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Chief Kyrylo Budanov’s statement that Ukrainian forces intend to launch a major counteroffensive throughout Ukraine in the spring.²² ISW has still not observed any indicators that Ukrainian forces intend to halt currently ongoing counteroffensive operations this winter in favor of conducting a major counteroffensive this spring. Ukrainian forces may instead

use ongoing counteroffensive operations to set conditions for a potential larger counteroffensive operation this spring.²³ Reznikov’s forecast of a higher pace of Russian operations in the spring partially supports ISW’s assessment that Russian forces are likely preparing for an intended decisive military effort in 2023.²⁴

Reznikov also stated that it “would take a lot of time” for Russian forces to prepare an offensive from Belarus and that the Russian military currently “has no resources” to support such an effort.²⁵ Ukrainian officials continue to routinely state that Russian forces are unlikely to invade Ukraine from Belarusian territory.²⁶ ISW continues to assess that the most dangerous course of action (MDCOA), a renewed Russian invasion of Ukraine from Belarus, remains unlikely and that Belarusian forces are highly unlikely to join the fighting in Ukraine.

Debate over how to respond to Russians who have fled abroad risks dividing Russian officials and exposing the gap between the Kremlin and certain extreme nationalist actors. Chairman of the Russian State Duma Vyacheslav Volodin proposed on January 12 that Russia amend its criminal code to confiscate the property of Russians who fled the country.²⁷ Occupation Head of Crimea Sergey Aksyonov praised Volodin’s proposal to punish the “scoundrels” who “betrayed” Russia.²⁸ A prominent Russian milblogger amplified Volodin’s proposal and polled his subscribers, finding that the majority supported or strongly supported Volodin’s proposal.²⁹ Kremlin Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov opposed Volodin’s proposal, however.³⁰ Peskov claimed that Russian citizens who left the country “are all our citizens, all equally, and could have different reasons for leaving” and stated that Russian authorities should create conditions to entice Russians abroad to return.³¹ The Kremlin may support the return of Russians abroad in hopes of solving growing labor shortages and demographic challenges, avoiding the ostracizing of more moderate Russian audiences, or distancing itself from the demands of the nationalist community. The Kremlin has rhetorically distanced itself from the prevalent nationalist milblogger demands by re-appointing widely criticized and favored military officials and may be attempting to regain control over the Russian information space.³²

Russian President Vladimir Putin reportedly ordered Russian occupation authorities to deport Ukrainian children to Russia using medical schemes at a meeting with members of the Russian Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights (HRC) on December 7. The Kremlin published a list of official orders on January 12 that Putin gave to HRC members on December 7. The document includes an order for Russian occupation officials to take unspecified measures to “meet healthcare system needs” in occupied Ukraine.³³ Zaporizhia Oblast Occupation Deputy Vladimir Rogov stated on January 12 that Putin personally ordered occupation authorities to administer preventative medical examinations to children in occupied Ukraine and that over 110,000 Ukrainian students have undergone medical examinations in occupied Zaporizhia, Kherson, Donetsk, and Luhansk oblasts.³⁴ Rogov stated that over 450 Russian “specialists” from Crimea and Adygea are conducting these examinations and are discovering thousands of children with undiagnosed medical conditions and sending them – possibly to Russia – for “treatment.”³⁵ Putin previously thanked Russians for their efforts to send children from occupied Ukrainian territory on “holidays” in Russia in his annual New Year’s speech.³⁶ ISW has previously reported instances of Russian officials using the guise of “holidays” and vacation schemes to justify the transfer of Ukrainian children to Russia and Russian-occupied Crimea.³⁷ ISW maintains that the forced deportation of Ukrainian children represents a possible violation of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

Key Takeaways

- **The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) announced on January 13 that Russian forces seized Soledar on the evening of January 12.**
- **The MoD’s initial announcement (which did not mention the Wagner Group) sparked a significant backlash within the Russian information space, forcing the MoD to issue a second announcement crediting Wagner.**
- **Prigozhin likely seeks to use the victory in Soledar as a bargaining tool to elevate his authority in Russia.**

- **Putin may be taking measures to cultivate a cadre of milbloggers loyal to the Putin and the Russian MoD to undermine Prigozhin’s effort to elevate himself.**
- **High-ranking Ukrainian officials continue to forecast an intensification of Ukrainian and Russian operations in the spring of 2023 and that a Russian offensive from Belarus remains unlikely.**
- **Russian officials’ responses to Russians who have fled abroad risks dividing the Kremlin and the ultra-nationalist pro-war community even further.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin reportedly ordered Russian occupation officials to deport Ukrainian children to Russia under medical relocation schemes.**
- **Russian forces conducted limited counterattacks along the Svatove-Kreminna line while Ukrainian forces reportedly continued counteroffensive operations near Kreminna.**
- **Russian forces continued offensive operations around Soledar, Bakhmut, and Avdiivka.**
- **Ukrainian Intelligence reported that Russian forces seek to raise personnel numbers to two million by an unspecified date.**
- **Ukrainian partisan attacks continue to divert Russian resources away from the frontline to rear areas in occupied territories.**

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 to regain lost positions along the Svatove-Kreminna line, and Ukrainian forces reportedly continued counteroffensive operations in the Kreminna area on January 13. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults near Stelmakhivka (16km west of Svatove) and Makiivka (22km northwest of Kreminna).³⁸ A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Ploshchanka (17km northwest of Kreminna) and Chervonopopivka (6km north of Kreminna), and that Ukrainian forces attempted to attack Russian positions near Kreminna.³⁹ The Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces concentrated sizeable forces in the area for an offensive against Kreminna, although ISW does not forecast specific future Ukrainian operations.⁴⁰ The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that artillery elements of the 76th Guards Air Assault Division (VDV) defeated Ukrainian assault brigades near Hryhorivka (11km south of Kreminna) and Serebrianka (11km southwest of Kreminna).⁴¹ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces also repelled a Russian assault near Bilohorivka (12km south of Kreminna).⁴²

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 Soledar on January 13. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults within 19km north of Soledar near Spirne, Rozdolivka, and Sil, and within 6km southwest of Soledar near Krasna Hora and Pidhorodne.⁴³ A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces conducted assaults near Bilohorivka (12km northeast of Soledar) and Berestove (15km northeast of Soledar).⁴⁴ Russian sources claimed that Russian forces captured the railway station in Sil (5km northwest of Soledar) and blocked the settlement from three sides, although ISW cannot independently verify these claims.⁴⁵ Ukrainian officials stated that Ukrainian forces continue to defend Soledar and Ukrainian drone footage posted on January 13 indicates that Ukrainian forces likely hold positions near the settlement, though ISW cannot confirm the presence of Ukrainian forces within the settlement itself.⁴⁶ CNN published a video report on January 13 from a Ukrainian trench roughly three kilometers away from Soledar stating that Ukrainian forces seem to be conducting an organized withdrawal from the settlement.⁴⁷ Russian sources claimed that Russian forces are still conducting clearing operations in Soledar as of January 13.⁴⁸ These reports indicate that Ukrainian forces maintain an organized defense west of Soledar and that Russian forces are likely prioritizing stabilizing their control of Soledar before attempting further advances. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces have successfully cut Ukrainian forces in Dvorichchia (4km west of Soledar) off from supply routes from Bakhmut and Siversk.⁴⁹ Russian sources claimed that Russian forces are conducting assault operations on the outskirts of Paraskoviivka (5km west of Soledar) and Krasna Hora (5km southwest of Soledar).⁵⁰ Geolocated footage published on January 12 and 13 shows Ukrainian forces operating in Krasna Hora despite Russian milblogger claims that Russian forces captured the settlement.⁵¹

Russian forces continued offensive operations around Bakhmut on January 13. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults near Bakhmut itself and within 16km southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka, Predtechine, and Kurdyumivka.⁵² Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) Head Advisor Igor Kimakovsky initially announced that Russian forces have begun the operational encirclement of Bakhmut but retracted that statement following criticism from Russian sources that his claim was inaccurate.⁵³ Russian milbloggers claimed that Wagner Group fighters continued attempts to advance on the eastern outskirts of Bakhmut.⁵⁴ Russian sources continued to claim that Russian forces have captured Opytne (4km south of Bakhmut), although ISW still cannot independently verify these claims.⁵⁵ A Russian milblogger claimed that the capture of Opytne allows Russian forces to advance on the southern outskirts of Bakhmut and attack Ukrainian fortified positions near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut).⁵⁶ Geolocated footage posted on January 12 indicates that Russian forces have likely made marginal advances south of Ozarianivka (16km southwest of Bakhmut).⁵⁷ Former Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR) Deputy Interior Minister Vitaly Kiselev claimed that Russian forces are preparing for an offensive along the Predtechine-Bila Hora-Dyliivka line.⁵⁸

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Avdiivka-Donetsk City area on January 13. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults within 27km southwest of Avdiivka near Vodyane, Nevelske, Krasnohorivka, and Marinka.⁵⁹ A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also conducted offensive operations near Pervomaiske (12km southwest of Avdiivka) and that Russian offensive operations southwest of Avdiivka were aimed at preventing Ukrainian counterattacks.⁶⁰ A BARS-13 (Russian Combat Reserve of the Country) affiliated source claimed that Ukrainian forces are fleeing positions near Marinka, although ISW cannot independently verify this claim.⁶¹ Geolocated footage posted on January 13 indicates that Russian forces have likely made advances south of Marinka.⁶²

Russian forces conducted a limited ground attack in western Donetsk Oblast on January 13. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled a Russian assault near Velyka Novosilka (55km southwest of Donetsk City) in western Donetsk.⁶³ The Ukrainian General Staff also reported that Russian forces continued routine indirect fire along the line of contact in Donetsk and eastern Zaporizhia oblasts.⁶⁴

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

Russian forces continued defensive preparations along the southern axis on January 13.⁶⁵ Odesa Military Administration Spokesperson Serhiy Bratchuk posted on January 13 a photo of a segment of Russian fortifications in western Crimea, reportedly situated between Zaozerne and Molochne.⁶⁶ Ukrainian Operational Command South Spokesperson Natalya Humenyuk stated on January 13 that poor weather conditions around the Kinburn Spit have complicated both Ukrainian reconnaissance efforts and Russian transit efforts.⁶⁷ Russian forces continued routine strikes on the west (right) bank of the Dnipro River on January 13.⁶⁸

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

The Ukrainian Main Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported on January 13 that the Russian Armed Forces seek to raise personnel numbers to two million by an unspecified date.⁶⁹ This target is half a million higher than the Russian force generation goals Deputy Chief of the Main Operational Directorate of the Ukrainian General Staff Brigadier General Oleksiy Hromov reported on January 12 and Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu proposed on December 21.⁷⁰ The Russian Armed Forces consisted of about 1.35 million personnel as of September 2022.⁷¹ The GUR stated that Russian authorities may launch a mobilization effort “in the coming days” to mobilize an additional 500,000 soldiers.⁷² ISW maintains that a second wave of Russian mobilization would neither be a separate effort from ongoing mobilization efforts, nor would it substantially improve Russia’s ability to wage war in Ukraine given Russia’s persistent problems with lack of trainers, supplies, and bureaucratic capabilities to administer large-scale mobilization and prepare troops for combat.

Russian authorities are likely preparing to expand the segments of Russian society eligible for mobilization. The GUR reported that Russian officials are preparing to change mobilization laws, ready military training centers, and are actively setting conditions for a second wave of mobilization.⁷³ Siber Reali and an opposition Russian source reported that Russian military enlistment offices and public utilities, the Moscow State Budgetary Institution, and Omsk State University are taking steps to verify credentials, restrict worker travel, or prepare to distribute mobilization notices ahead of the second wave of mobilization.⁷⁴ The Kremlin is continuing its cryptomobilization campaign by proposing to mobilize migrants with Russian citizenship, increasing the presence of volunteers from Serbia, and mobilizing personnel in occupied Luhansk and Kherson oblasts.⁷⁵

Kremlin officials issued contradictory statements regarding the expansion of mobilization eligibility, causing significant alarm and confusion among domestic Russian audiences. Russian Human Rights Council member Irina Kirkora confirmed to Russian State Duma Deputy Nina Ostanina and a prominent Russian news outlet that Russian Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov terminated mobilization exemptions for men with three or more children in December 2022.⁷⁶ Secretary of the General Council of the United Russia Party Andrey Turchak denounced Ostanina’s claims on January 13 and called on Russians to avoid hypothesizing on the topic of deferral eligibility changes.⁷⁷

Kremlin officials also sparked controversy by suggesting that Russia will commit reservists and civilian men to a mandatory call up for military training after expanding conscription eligibility as part of the mobilization reserve. Russian State Duma Deputy and Committee on Defense member Lieutenant General Viktor Sobolev announced that men over 30 years of age in the reserve and without prior military service experience would be subject to military training following the adoption of the law extending the legal conscription age.⁷⁸ Sobolev noted that Russia needs to develop a trained and combat-ready mobilization reserve, a goal that the Russian Ministry of Defense sought to accomplish in autumn 2021 prior to invading Ukraine.⁷⁹ Sobolev also proposed on January 11 that all Russian youth receive military training as well.⁸⁰ Several Russian milbloggers critiqued Sobolev’s announcement, claimed that he was speaking without authority, and questioned the theoretical effectiveness of

training programs for the mobilization reserve.⁸¹ Milbloggers noted that the mobilization reserve is unlikely to adequately prepare called up men for modern-day combat or have enough resources to properly train them.

A Russian information security group reported on January 12 that scammers used common Russian fears of pending mobilization to carry out a massive phishing scam.⁸² The group promised to provide information on the list of the soon-to-be mobilized.⁸³

The United Kingdom Ministry of Defense (UK MoD) reported on January 13 that Russian officials plan to use convict labor to address increased wartime production demands and labor shortages.⁸⁴ The UK MoD stated that low-tech weapons manufacturers will likely have the greatest demand for convict labor, especially as Russian authorities intensify demands for increased military production.⁸⁵ Russia's largest tank manufacturer, Uralvagonzavod, reportedly told local media in November 2022 that it would employ 250 prisoners.⁸⁶ Russia has a far greater supply of potential convict labor, with the Russian Federal Penal Service reportedly overseeing over 400,000 inmates.⁸⁷ ISW has previously reported on both Russian failures to meet military production needs and labor shortages due to mobilization.⁸⁸

Extremely low morale continues to limit Russian force effectiveness and to gain attention from Russian sources. Independent Russian news outlet *Meduza* amplified two videos in which mobilized soldiers from Novosibirsk complained that Russian leadership sent them to the frontlines to leave only when wounded or dead.⁸⁹ A prominent Russian milblogger posted on January 13 that one brigade commander polled his soldiers and only one soldier said that he wanted to fight.⁹⁰ The milblogger called for the restructuring of Russian forces to address the issue of low morale and called on Russian officials to promote motivated recruits to military leadership positions.⁹¹

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)

Russian authorities continue to deport Ukrainian children to Russia under the guise of adoption. Russian Commissioner for Children's Rights Maria Lvova Belova amplified a *TV Zvezda* television report on January 13 that celebrated the "adoption story" of a 16-year-old Ukrainian girl from the Donetsk City orphanage into a family in Russia.⁹² ISW maintains that the forced adoption of Ukrainian children into Russian families may constitute a violation of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.⁹³

Ukrainian partisan attacks continue to divert Russian resources away from the frontline to help secure rear areas. Russian and Ukrainian sources reported an explosion on the outskirts of Berdyansk, Zaporizhia Oblast, on January 13 and showed pictures of a car on fire.⁹⁴ Ukrainian partisans may have carried out an attack, given the prevalence of Ukrainian improvised explosive device attacks against cars in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast.⁹⁵ The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) reported on January 13 that occupation authorities in Zaporizhia Oblast introduced a vehicle inspection system for entry and exit in Berdyansk to "identify suspicious cars" there.⁹⁶ Ukrainian government officials reported on January 13 that Russian occupation authorities have intensified search and filtration measures in occupied territories over growing concern about collaboration between the local population and Ukrainian forces.⁹⁷ Ukrainian officials reported that Russian occupation authorities are focusing their searches on electronic devices, including recording residents' IMEI and SIM card numbers.⁹⁸

Russian occupation authorities continue to forcibly relocate Ukrainians in occupied territories. A Russian milblogger claimed on January 13 that Russian forces "evacuated" 250 Ukrainian residents from Soledar, Donetsk Oblast, over the past few days and are currently housing them in Shakhtarsk, Donetsk Oblast, further behind Russian lines.⁹⁹

Russian occupation authorities continue pushing “Russification” policies in occupied Ukrainian territories. A prominent Russian milblogger amplified a report on January 13 that Russian occupation officials started to require all Ukrainian applicants for Russian passports to translate their Ukrainian documents into the Russian language.¹⁰⁰ ISW assesses that this measure supports a larger Kremlin effort to eliminate the Ukrainian identity and proliferate Russian administrative norms in occupied territories.

Russian occupation authorities continue to seize and repurpose civilian hospitals to support the Russian military. Ukrainian sources reported that hospitals in Luhansk Oblast are completely full of wounded Russian service members, that Russian forces have transferred more medics to a military hospital in occupied Kherson Oblast due to an insufficient number of medical personnel, and that Russian forces are equipping more hospitals for military use in Zaporizhia Oblast.¹⁰¹

Russian occupation officials acknowledged that they may need over a decade to fully repair war damage to occupied settlements.¹⁰² Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) head Leonid Pasechnik announced on January 13 that he met with Russian Minister of Construction and Housing and Utilities Irek Faisulin to draft a plan on reconstructing occupied settlements.¹⁰³ Pasechnik assessed that Faisulin's previous experience working on the reconstruction of Mariupol informed their assessment that reconstruction in Severodonetsk would take until 2035.¹⁰⁴ A Kremlin document published on January 12 indicates that Russian President Vladimir Putin's ordered the Russian Human Rights Council to submit requests for the compensation to restore damaged housing in occupied territories on December 7.¹⁰⁵

ISW will continue to report daily observed indicators consistent with the current assessed most dangerous course of action (MDCOA): a renewed invasion of northern Ukraine possibly aimed at Kyiv.

ISW's December 15 MDCOA warning forecast about a potential Russian offensive against northern Ukraine in winter 2023 remains a worst-case scenario within the forecast cone. ISW currently assesses the risk of a Russian invasion of Ukraine from Belarus as low, but possible, and the risk of Belarusian direct involvement as very low. This new section in the daily update is not in itself a forecast or assessment. It lays out the daily observed indicators we are using to refine our assessments and forecasts, which we expect to update regularly. Our assessment that the MDCOA remains unlikely has not changed. We will update this header if the assessment changes.

Observed indicators for the MDCOA in the past 24 hours:

- Nothing significant to report.

Observed ambiguous indicators for MDCOA in the past 24 hours:

- Belarusian units continued conducting exercises. The Belarusian Ministry of Defense reported that artillery elements of the Belarusian 11th Separate Guards Mechanized Brigade conducted exercises as part of the joint Russian-Belarusian Regional Grouping of Forces (RGV) on January 13.¹⁰⁶
- Belarusian military recruitment authorities continued collecting data on Belarusian citizens eligible for military service. Russian state newswire TASS reported on January 13 that a senior Brest Oblast military official stated that Belarusian citizens eligible for military service may face restrictions on foreign travel if they have not provided their personal information to military recruitment centers.¹⁰⁷ Belarusian forces remain unlikely to join Russia's war in Ukraine.

Observed counter-indicators for the MDCOA in the past 24 hours:

- The Ukrainian General Staff reiterated that it has not observed Russian forces in Belarus forming a strike group as of January 13.¹⁰⁸
- Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov stated in a January 13 interview with the *BBC* that Russian forces lack resources to attack Ukraine from Belarus and that such an offensive would require much time to prepare.¹⁰⁹

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/mod_russia/23394

² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-64255249>; <https://armyinform.com> dot ua/2023/01/13/ukrayinski-vijskovi-trymayut-sytuaciyu-u-soledari-pid-kontrolem-sergij-cherevatyj/; <https://t.me/annamaliar/501>; https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2023/01/13/guerre-en-ukraine-c-est-la-bataille-de-verdun-du-xxie-siecle-qui-a-lieu-en-ce-moment-a-bakhmout-et-a-soledar_6157720_3210.html#xtor=AL-32280270-%5Bdefault%5D-%5Bios%5D

³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-64255249>

⁴ https://t.me/mod_russia/23402; https://t.me/concordgroup_official/266; <https://t.me/milinfoive/95437>; <https://meduza.io/news/2023/01/13/dannaya-boevaya-zadacha-byla-uspeshno-reshena-muzhestvennymi-i-samootverzhennymi-deystviyami-dobrovoltsev-chvk-vagnera-minoborony-rf-osturme-soledara>; <https://t.me/milinfoive/95457>

⁵ https://t.me/concordgroup_official/266

⁶ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-11-2023>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-9-2023>

⁷ https://vk.com/wall-177427428_1735

⁸ https://t.me/boris_rozhin/75224; <https://t.me/milinfoive/95457>; <https://t.me/milinfoive/95437>

⁹ <https://t.me/rybar/42670>; <https://t.me/strelkovii/3730>; <https://t.me/sashakots/38040>

¹⁰ <https://t.me/rybar/42670>

¹¹ <https://t.me/strelkovii/3730>

¹² <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-9>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-2>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-november-20>

¹³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-64255249>

¹⁴ https://t.me/concordgroup_official/271; https://t.me/concordgroup_official/266

¹⁵ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-november-7>

¹⁶ <https://t.me/pushilindenis/3071>

¹⁷ <https://t.me/pushilindenis/3071>

¹⁸

<https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Russian%20Offensive%20Campaign%20Assessment%20November%202020.pdf>;

<https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Russian%20Operations%20Assessment%20December%202020.pdf>;

<https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Russian%20Offensive%20Campaign%20Assessment%2C%20January%202020PDF.pdf>

¹⁹

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