

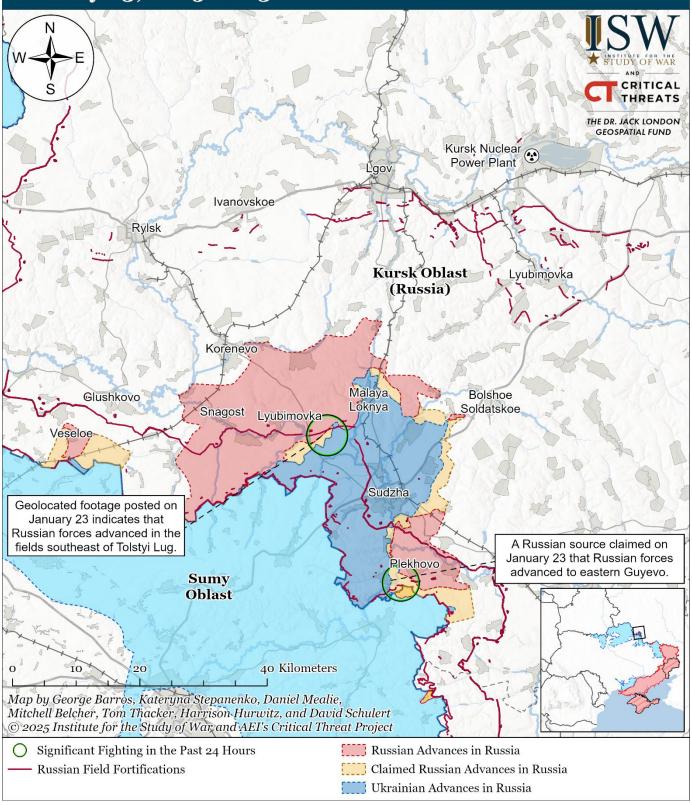
Angelica Evans, Nicole Wolkov, Davit Gasparyan, Grace Mappes, Olivia Gibson, and Frederick W. Kagan

January 23, 2025, 4:30pm ET

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 11:50am ET on January 22. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the January 23 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russia is reportedly planning to deploy additional North Korean forces, missiles, artillery systems, and multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS) to Kursk Oblast to support Russian long-range fire operations. Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Head Lieutenant General Kyrylo Budanov told The War Zone in an article published on January 22 that North Korea will deploy an unspecified number of additional missile and artillery troops to Kursk Oblast at an unspecified future time.[1] Budanov reported that North Korea is unlikely to deploy a large number of additional ground combat troops, however. Budanov stated that North Korea has provided Russia with roughly 120 M-1989 Koksan 170mm self-propelled artillery systems and 120 M-1991 240mm MLRS since November 2024 and will likely send at least 120 more of each system in the future. The GUR previously reported in November 2024 that North Korea had provided Russia with roughly 100 of each of these systems as of October 2024.[2] Budanov stated that North Korea plans to provide Russia with 150 additional KN-23 short-range ballistic missiles in 2025 and sent Russia 148 KN-23 missiles in 2024. Budanov noted that North Korean troops typically operate North Korean-provided weapons in Kursk Oblast and are also training Russian forces on these systems. A US senior defense official recently told the New York Times (NYT) that additional North Korean forces will arrive in Russian "within the next two months (roughly mid-March 2025)."[3]

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The Kremlin appears to be growing increasingly concerned about perceptions of Russia's economic instability. *Reuters*, citing five sources with knowledge of the situation, reported on January 23 that Russian President Vladimir Putin is growing increasingly concerned about "distortions" in the Russian economy due to the war in Ukraine.[4] Two sources familiar with "thinking in the Kremlin" told *Reuters* that there is a camp within the Russian elite that views a negotiated end to the war in Ukraine as desirable and key to addressing Russia's economic issues. One source claimed that Putin recognizes the strain that the war is placing on the Russian economy and assesses that he has achieved his "key war goals" in Ukraine, including seizing land in southern Ukraine to connect Russia within occupied Crimea and weakening the Ukrainian military. The source did not speculate on Putin's willingness to end the war, however. Russian opposition outlet *Meduza* reported on January 9 – citing sources in the Russian presidential administration, State Duma, and wider Russian federal government and regional governments — that Russian elites are growing increasingly dissatisfied with the impact of the war on the Russian economy.[5] ISW noted on January 22 that the Kremlin recently launched an information operation that seeks to create the false impression that the Russia economy is performing well despite numerous continued indicators of macroeconomic distress.[6]

Russian forces recently executed at least six unarmed Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) in Donetsk Oblast. Ukrainian sources circulated footage on January 23 of Russian soldiers shooting unarmed Ukrainian POWs in an unspecified area of Ukraine.[7] Ukrainian Human Rights Commissioner Dmytro Lyubinets and the Ukrainian Attorney General's Office reported on January 23 that Ukrainian officials are investigating social media footage of Russian forces executing six captured and unarmed Ukrainian servicemembers in an unspecified area of Donetsk Oblast.[8] Lyubinets noted that the footage shows a seventh Ukrainian POW in this group but that it is unclear what happened to the seventh POW based on the footage. ISW has frequently reported that Russian forces are conducting frontline executions of Ukrainian POWs and continues to assess that Russian military commanders are either complicit in or enabling their subordinates to conduct these executions.[9]

Key Takeaways:

- Russia is reportedly planning to deploy additional North Korean forces, missiles, artillery systems, and multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS) to Kursk Oblast to support Russian long-range fire operations.
- The Kremlin appears to be growing increasingly concerned about perceptions of Russia's economic instability.
- Russian forces recently executed at least six unarmed Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) in Donetsk Oblast.
- Russian forces recently advanced in Kursk Oblast and near Toretsk and Pokrovsk.
- The Kremlin is reportedly taking measures to protect industrial facilities in Russian border regions from Ukrainian strikes.

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We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because these activities are wellcovered 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.

- Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation
- Russian Main Effort Eastern Ukraine (comprised of three subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 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
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas
- Significant Activity in Belarus

Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation

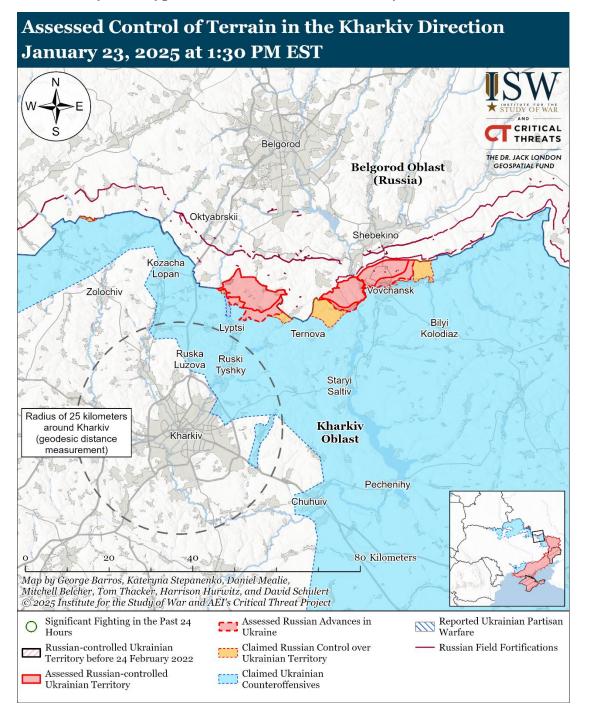
Russian forces recently advanced in the Ukrainian salient in Kursk Oblast amid continued fighting in the area on January 23. Geolocated footage published on January 22 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced southeast of Tolstiy Lug (northwest of Sudzha).[10] Russian milbloggers claimed on January 23 that Russian forces entered Guyevo (south of Sudzha) and Viktorovka (northwest of Sudzha).[11] ISW has not observed confirmation of these claims, however. Russian forces reportedly continued attacks northwest of Sudzha near Pogrebki, Nikolskiy, and Krugkenkoye; and south of Sudzha near Kurilovka and Guyevo.[12] A Ukrainian reconnaissance group commander operating in Kursk Oblast reported on January 22 that Russian forces only attack during the day in this direction and usually conduct infantry assaults without equipment.[13] Elements of the Russian 34th Motorized Rifle Brigade (49th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating near Pogrebki, and elements of the Chechen "Khokhla" Detachment of the 204th "Akhmat" Spetsnaz Regiment are reportedly operating in the Sudzha direction.[14]

A Ukrainian drone battalion posted footage on January 22 of the battalion striking a Russian Tor air defense system in Belgorod Oblast.[15]

<u> Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine</u>

<u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Kharkiv Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City)

Russian forces continued limited ground attacks in the Kharkiv direction on January 23 but did not advance.[16] Russian milbloggers claimed on January 23 that positional fighting continues north of Kharkiv City near Lyptsi and northeast of Kharkiv City near Vovchansk. [17]

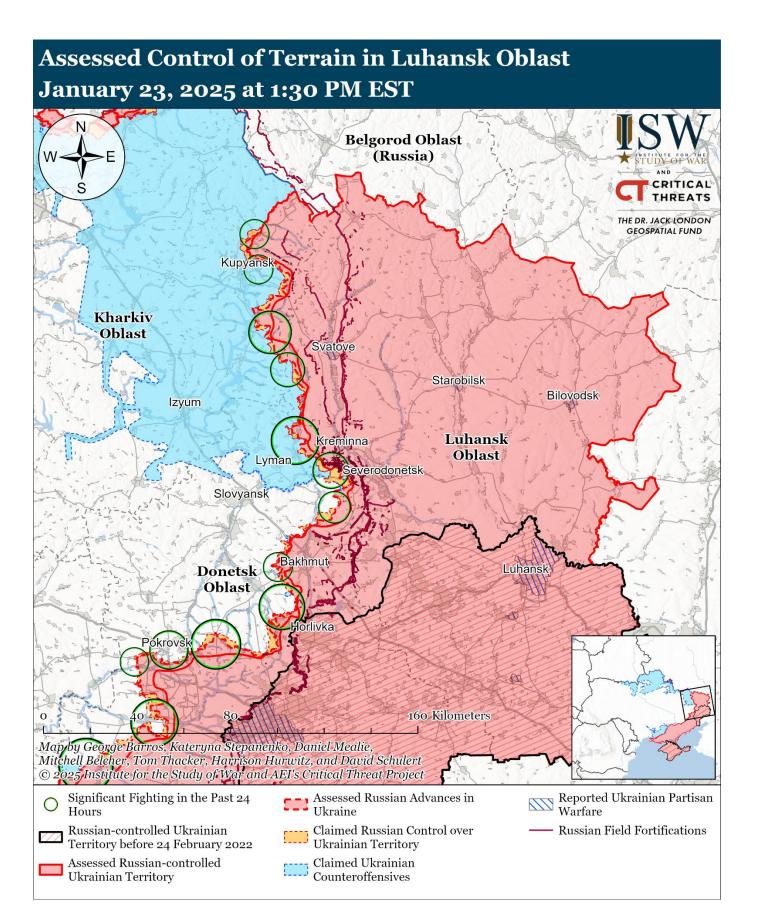


<u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Luhansk Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Kupyansk direction on January 23 but did not make confirmed advances. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces are advancing in northern Dvorichna (northeast of Kupyansk), recently advanced 1.5 kilometers deep within western Dvorichna, and will attempt to reach Kutkivka (northwest of Dvorichna) from Zapadne (southwest of Dvorichna).[18] One milblogger noted that Russian forces need to establish stable logistics across the Oskil River to conduct significant advances, however.[19] A source reportedly affiliated with Ukrainian military intelligence stated that Russian forces are trying to advance towards Dovhenke (northwest of Dvorichna), Zapadne, and Kindrashivka (northwest of Kupyansk and southeast of Dvorichna).[20] Russian forces also continued ground attacks east of Kupyansk near Petropavlivka on January 22 and 23.[21]

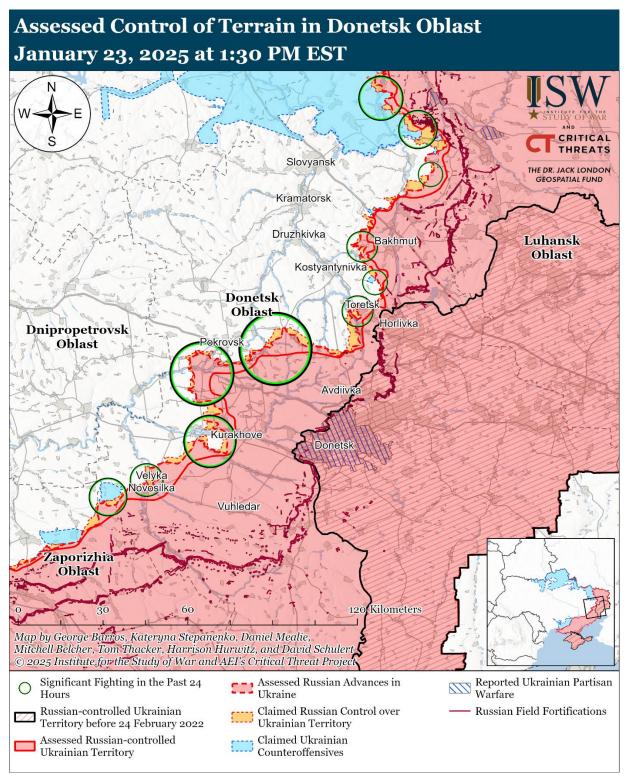
Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Borova direction on January 23 but did not advance. Russian forces attacked northeast of Borova near Lozova, Zeleny Hai, and Zahryzove; east of Borova near Pershotravneve and Kopanky; and southeast of Borova near Novoserhiivka on January 22 and 23.[22] The Ukrainian Khortytsia Group of Forces reported on January 23 that Russian forces attacked near Nova Kruhlyakivka (northeast of Borova) with armored vehicle support.[23]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Lyman direction on January 23 but did not advance. Russian forces continued ground attacks north of Lyman near Zelena Dolyna; northeast of Lyman near Novolyubivka and Yampolivka; and east of Lyman near Zarichne and Kuzmyne and in the Serebryanske forest area on January 22 and 23.[24] A Russian milblogger claimed on January 23 that Ukrainian forces counterattacked northeast of Lyman near Terny and Torske.[25]



<u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – Donetsk Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia's proxies in Donbas)

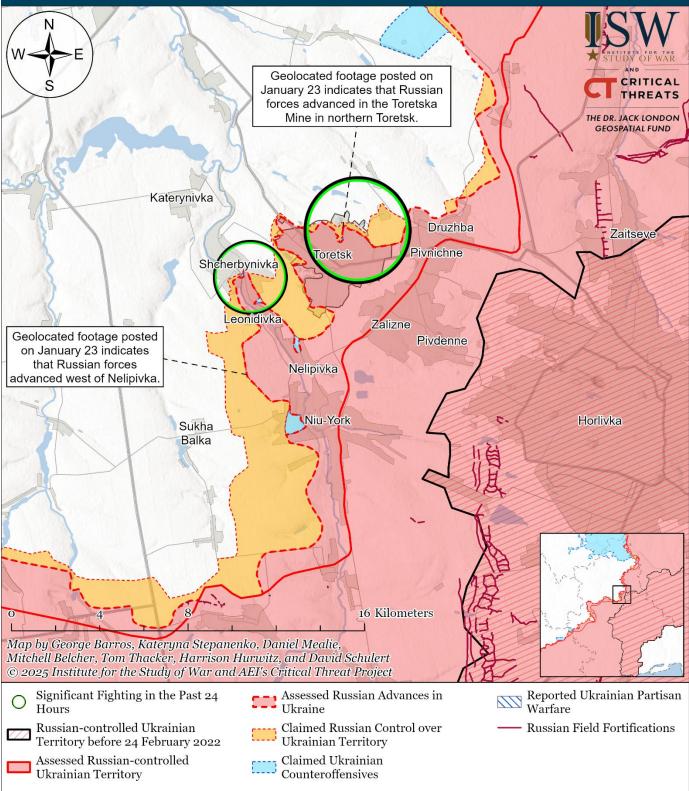
Russian forces continued limited ground attacks southeast of Siversk near Ivano-Darivka on January 23 but did not advance.[26]



Russian forces continued ground attacks near and within Chasiv Yar on January 22 and 23 but did not make confirmed advances.[27] Russian milbloggers claimed on January 23 that Russian forces cleared Ukrainian forces from the Refractory Plant's workshops in central Chasiv Yar and are now fighting west of the first workshop.[28] One milblogger claimed that Russian forces struck a Ukrainian pontoon crossing in Kostyantynivka (southwest of Chasiv Yar).[29] Ukrainian Luhansk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Dmytro Zaporozhets reported on January 23 that Ukrainian forces struck a concentration of 100 Russian military personnel in Kalynivka (north of Chasiv Yar) on January 9 after Russian forces transferred personnel to Kalynivka through the Siverskyi Donets Donbas Canal pipe south of Chasiv Yar.[30]

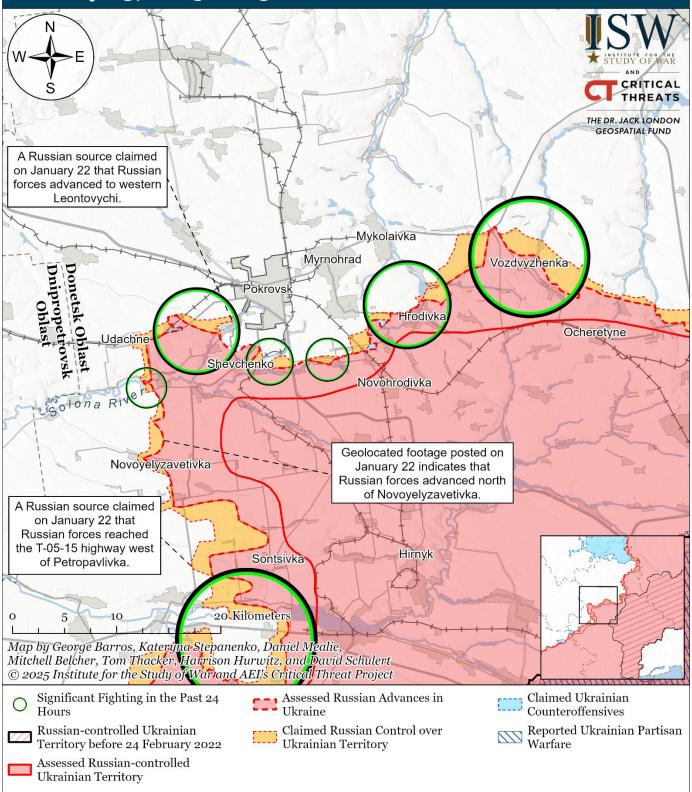
Russian forces recently advanced in northern Toretsk and southwest of the town amid ongoing offensive operations near Toretsk on January 23. Geolocated footage published on January 23 indicates that Russian forces recently marginally advanced at the Toretska Mine in northern Toretsk and advanced west of Nelipivka (southwest of Toretsk).[31] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces have seized at least half of the Toretska Mine and advanced in Krymske (north of Toretsk).[32] Russian forces continued assaults in Toretsk itself and north of Toretsk near Dyliivka and Krymske on January 22 and 23.[33] Elements of the Russian "Sparta" Battalion and the 132nd Motorized Rifle Brigade (both of the 51st Combined Arms Army [CAA], formerly the 1st Donetsk People's Republic Army Corps [DNR AC]) are reportedly operating in Toretsk.[34]

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Russian forces recently advanced southwest of Pokrovsk amid continued offensive operations in the area on January 23. Geolocated footage published on January 22 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced north of Novoyelyzavetivka (southwest of Pokrovsk).[35] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced near Novoandriivka, Nadiivka (both southwest of Pokrovsk), Kotlyne (west of Pokrovsk), and Leontovychi (south of Pokrovsk), but ISW has not observed confirmation of these claims.[36] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed on January 23 that Russian forces seized Solone (southwest of Pokrovsk), but ISW assesses that Russian forces likely seized the settlement as of January 13.[37] Russian forces continued attacking near Pokrovsk itself; east of Pokrovsk near Vodyane Druhe, Zelene Pole, Myrolyubivka, Yelyzavetivka, Promin, and Myrnohrad; southeast of Pokrovsk near Lysivka; south of Pokrovsk near Novyi Trud, Zvirove, Leontovychi, and Petropavlivka; and southwest of Pokrovsk near Novoserhiivka, Kotlyne, Uspenivka, and Sribne and in the direction of Hryshyne on January 22 and 23.[38]

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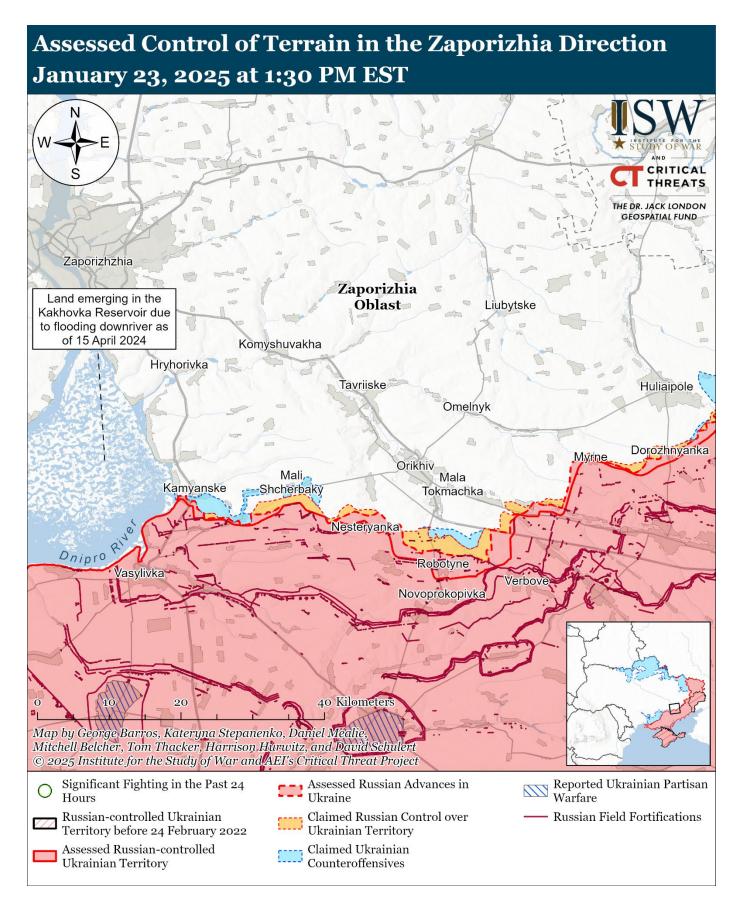


Russian forces continued offensive operations near Kurakhove on January 23 but did not make confirmed advances. A Russian milblogger claimed on January 23 that Russian forces cleared Ukrainian forces from positions near Yantarne, advanced past the T-0515 highway west of Petropavlivka (northwest of Kurakhove), and are advancing towards Ulakly (both southwest of Kurakhove).[39] Russian milbloggers claimed that elements of the Russian 68th Tank Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA, Southern Military District [SMD]) recently repelled a reinforced platoon-sized Ukrainian assault near Kurakhove.[40] Russian forces continued assaults northwest of Kurakhove near Shevchenko and towards Andriivka; west of Kurakhove near Dachne; and southwest of Kurakhove near Ulakly, Zelenivka, Yantarne, Rozlyv and in the direction of Kostyatynopil on January 22 and 23.[41] Drone operators of the Russian 57th Spetsnaz Brigade and elements of the 381st Artillery Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division) are reportedly operating near Dachne.[42]

Russian forces are intensifying offensive operations aimed at seizing Velyka Novosilka. Ukraine's Khortytsia Group of Forces reported that Russian forces have launched over 80 attacks on Velyka Novosilka within the past day.[43] Khortytsia Group of Forces Spokesperson Major Viktor Trehubov stated on January 23 that Russian forces have not completely encircled Ukrainian forces in the Velyka Novosilka area but noted there is a risk of Russian forces encircling Ukrainian forces in the area.[44] Trehubov also noted that the rivers near Velyka Novosilka – likely referring to the Mokri Yaly, Kashlahach, and Shaitanka rivers – are complicating the Ukrainian military's ability to maneuver in the area. Russian milbloggers, including a Kremlin-affiliated milblogger, claimed that Russian forces advanced along the T-0518 Pavlivka-Velyka Novosilka highway in central Velyka Novosilka, cut the settlement in half, and encircled a small Ukrainian group in southern Velyka Novosilka.[45] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces are advancing further in northeastern and eastern Velyka Novosilka and in several forested areas south of the settlement and hold positions along the Mokri Yaly and Kashlahach rivers.[46] ISW cannot independently confirm any of these claims. Russian forces continued attacking near Velvka Novosilka itself, just west of Velvka Novosilka near Vremivka, and southwest of Velyka Novosilka near Novodarivka on January 22 and 23.[47] Likely elements of the Russian 5th Tank Brigade (36th CAA, Eastern Military District [EMD]) are reportedly operating in Velyka Novosilka, and elements of the 37th Motorized Rifle Brigade (36th CAA) are reportedly operating north of Novyi Komar (north of Velyka Novosilka).[48]

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

Neither Russian nor Ukrainian sources reported ground activity in western Zaporizhia Oblast on January 23. Drone operators of the Russian 1455th Motorized Rifle Regiment (reportedly of the 42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly striking Ukrainian positions near Orikhiv, and drone operators of the 429th Motorized Rifle Regiment (19th Motorized Rifle Division, 58th CAA) are reportedly remotely mining Ukrainian logistics routes near Pyatykhatyky (northwest of Robotnye).[49]



Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project 2025

Russian forces continued limited ground attacks in the Dnipro direction in Kherson Oblast on January 22 and 23.[50]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kherson Direction January 23, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST Dnipropetrovsk S Oblast THREATS THE DR. JACK LONDON **GEOSPATIAL FUND** porizhia Nuclear Power Plant **Mykolaiv** Oblast Snihurivka Hornostaivka Mykolaiv Nyzhni Beryslav Sirohozy Nova achi Kakhovka Laheri Kherson Oleshkv Kherson Oblast Radensk Chaplynka

60 20 Kilometers 30 0 Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Tom Thacker, Harrison Hurwitz, and David Schulert. © 2025 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threat Project -, Assessed Russian Advances in Significant Fighting in the Past 24 **Reported Ukrainian Partisan** C Ukraine Hours Warfare Russian-controlled Ukrainian Claimed Russian Control over **Russian Field Fortifications** 1 Territory before 24 February 2022 Ukrainian Territory Claimed Ukrainian Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory Counteroffensives

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

Russian forces conducted a series of drone and missile strikes against Ukraine on the night of January 22 to 23. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched four Iskander-M/KN-23 ballistic missiles from Voronezh Oblast against Zaporizhzhia City and 92 Shahed and decoy drones from Millerovo, Rostov Oblast; Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai; and Oryol, Kursk, and Bryansk oblasts.[51] The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Ukrainian forces downed 57 drones over Poltava, Sumy, Kharkiv, Chernihiv, Mykolaiv, Kherson, Zaporizhia, and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts; that 27 drones were "lost," likely due to Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW) interference; and that three drones remained in Ukrainian airspace as of 0930. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian strikes killed one and injured 51 civilians in Zaporizhzhia City and that drone debris damaged residential buildings but no critical or residential infrastructure in Kyiv Oblast.[52]

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

The Kremlin is reportedly taking measures to protect industrial facilities in Russian border regions from Ukrainian strikes. Russian Security Council Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev met with a group representing the Bryansk Oblast Military Industrial Commission on January 23 and discussed increasing Russian air defense system production and protecting industrial and state storage facilities in the oblast.[53] Medvedev also visited the Bryansk Chemical Plant to "see what the situation was there" as the plant continues to fill the Russian state defense order following previous Ukrainian strikes against the plant. Ukrainian strikes in the Russian rear have largely targeted defense industrial base (DIB) and other facilities supporting Russia's war effort, including the Bryansk Chemical Plant.[54] The Kremlin may be increasingly interested in bolstering air defense capabilities to protect DIB facilities in particular as the state of the Russian domestic economy continues to deteriorate.

Russian federal subjects continue increasing financial incentives to recruit Russians into signing military service contracts. Republic of Tatarstan Head's Spokesperson Liliya Galimova stated on January 23 that Tatarstan increased one-time payments from 2.2 million rubles (around \$22,000) to 2.8 million rubles (around \$28,000) to those who sign contracts with the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD).[55]

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

Nothing significant to report.

<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)

ISW is not publishing coverage of activities in Russian-occupied areas today.

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

Nothing significant to report.

Note: ISW does not receive any classified material from any source, uses only publicly available information, and draws extensively on Russian, Ukrainian, and Western reporting and social media as well as commercially available satellite imagery and other geospatial data as the basis for these reports. References to all sources used are provided in the endnotes of each update.



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[2] https://interfax.com dot ua/news/general/1030885.html https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessmentnovember-29-2024

[3] https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-22-2025

[4] https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-growing-concerned-by-russias-economy-trumpmulls-more-sanctions-2025-01-23/

[5] https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-9-2025; https://meduza.dot.io/feature/2025/01/09/zhdali-chto-voyna-zakonchitsya

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[7] **Warning - graphic footage:** https://t.me/ButusovPlus/16816 ; https://t.me/andriyshTime/32515

[8] https://gp.gov dot ua/ua/posts/za-faktom-rozstrilu-vorogom-ukrayinskix-viiskovopolonenix-nadoneccini-rozpocato-rozsliduvannya; https://suspilne dot media/931631-armia-rf-rozstrilala-6ukrainskih-vijskovopolonenih-lubinec-zvernuvsa-do-oon-ta-

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[10] https://x.com/giK1893/status/1882387858599862774; https://t.me/ua_marines_36brigade/2668 https://t.me/creamy_caprice/8197

[11] https://t.me/DnevnikDesantnika/22826; https://t.me/dva_majors/63013

[12] https://t.me/dva_majors/62972; https://t.me/DnevnikDesantnika/22826; https://t.me/RVvoenkor/85004

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[16] https://t.me/GeneralStaffZSU/20188

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[18]https://t.me/yurasumy/20728;https://t.me/RVvoenkor/84974;https://t.me/notes_veterans/21545

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[23] https://t.me/Khortytsky_wind/4360

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[34] https://t.me/RVvoenkor/84999

[35] https://t.me/creamy_caprice/8194; https://www.facebook.com/groups/875241613663737/permalink/1330107578177136

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[40] https://t.me/RVvoenkor/84961

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