

### **Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment**

Grace Mappes, Christina Harward, Olivia Gibson, Nate Trotter, William Runkel, and Frederick W. Kagan

January 3, 2025, 6:50 pm ET

Click <u>here</u> 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 <u>here</u> to see ISW's interactive map of Ukraine's offensive in Kursk Oblast.

Click <u>here</u> 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 <u>here</u> 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 pm ET on January 3. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the January 4 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky outlined the conditions that must be met to push Russia to agree to a "just peace." Zelensky stated on January 2 that achieving a "just peace" in future negotiations – a concept Zelensky highlighted in his December 31 New Year's address – requires a strong Ukrainian military, security guarantees from Western allies, and Ukraine's future membership in NATO and the European Union (EU) in order to deter Russia from renewed aggression against Ukraine.[1] Zelensky stated that Ukraine cannot achieve a just peace with a small military, such as "40,000 or 50,000 soldiers" – a reference to Russian President Vladimir Putin's initial demand during the Istanbul peace talks between Russia and Ukraine in Spring 2022 that Ukraine demilitarize and only maintain a force of roughly 50,000 personnel.[2] Putin and other Kremlin officials have repeatedly demanded conditions for ending the war that amount to Ukraine's complete capitulation, including the removal of the legitimate Ukrainian government and Ukraine's demilitarization.[3] These demands have not changed since 2021.

Ukrainian officials continue to signal that Ukraine is working to further increase its drone and missile capabilities in support of this goal. Zelensky stated on December 31 that Ukrainian missiles and drones are Ukraine's "arguments for a just peace."[4] Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal stated on January 3 that Ukraine plans to produce about 3,000 cruise missiles and "drone-missiles" and at least 30,000 long-range drones in 2025.[5] Shmyhal stated that Ukraine's defense industrial base (DIB) will also increase production capacity to about \$30 billion

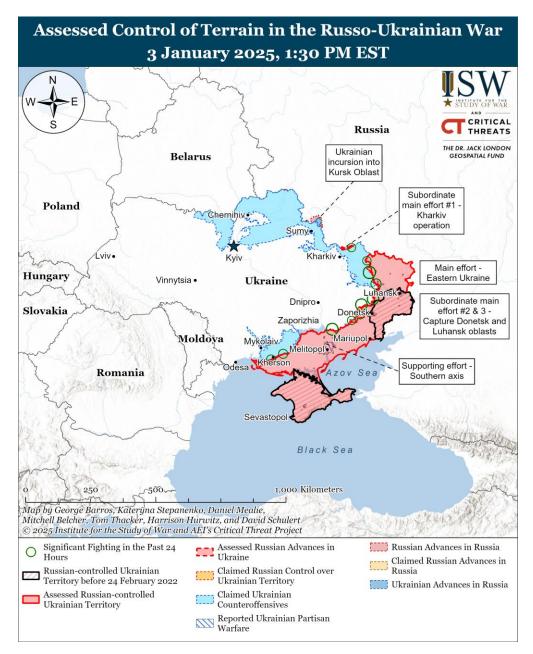
worth of goods and attract \$1 billion in foreign investment in 2025. The *Telegraph* reported on January 2 that Ukraine is working to mass produce the "Trembita" cruise missile, which has a 90-mile range, a 40-pound payload, and costs \$10,000 per missile to produce.[6]

Zelensky reiterated on January 2 that the Ukrainian constitution and Ukrainian law prohibit Ukraine from holding presidential and parliamentary elections during periods of martial law.[7] Zelensky stated that Ukrainian authorities will be able to consider lifting martial law when the "hot phase" of the war comes to an end and when Ukraine is in a "strong position" with a "strong army, a strong package of weapons, [and] security guarantees." Ukraine's law, "On the legal regime of martial law," originally passed in 2000, states that Ukrainian authorities can end martial law "provided that the threat of attack or danger to the state independence of Ukraine and its territorial integrity has been eliminated."[8] Kremlin officials, including Putin, have repeatedly used deliberate misreadings of Ukraine's law and constitution to claim that Zelensky is an illegitimate president of Ukraine after Ukraine, adhering to the law and constitution, did not hold elections under martial law in 2024.[9] The Ukrainian government legally cannot abolish martial law while Russia continues to attack Ukraine.

Ukraine's Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported that several Russian ships will soon arrive at the Port of Tartus in Syria to evacuate Russian military assets to Libya. The GUR reported on January 3 that the *Ivan Gren* Ivan Gren-class large landing ship, the *Alexander Otrakovsky* Ropucha-class landing ship, and the *Sparta* cargo ship are scheduled to arrive at Tartus on January 5 while the *Sparta II* cargo ship and the *Ivan Skobelev* tanker are scheduled to arrive on January 8 to transfer Russian military assets to an unspecified location in Libya.[10] The GUR previously reported in mid-December 2024 that Russia had deployed the *Ivan Gren*, *Alexander Otrakovsky*, *Sparta*, and *Sparta II* from northern Russia to Syria.[11]

#### **Key Takeaways:**

- Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky outlined the conditions that must be met to push Russia to agree to a "just peace."
- Ukrainian officials continue to signal that Ukraine is working to further increase its drone and missile capabilities in support of this goal.
- Zelensky reiterated on January 2 that the Ukrainian Constitution and Ukrainian law prohibit Ukraine from holding presidential and parliamentary elections during periods of martial law.
- Ukraine's Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported that several Russian ships will soon arrive at the Port of Tartus in Syria to evacuate Russian military assets to Libya.
- Russian forces recently advanced near Pokrovsk, Kurakhove, and Vuhledar.
- The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) continues to support its official "Glaz/Groza" reconnaissance and strike unit coordination software package despite Russian soldiers' continued reliance on other ad hoc communications systems.



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.

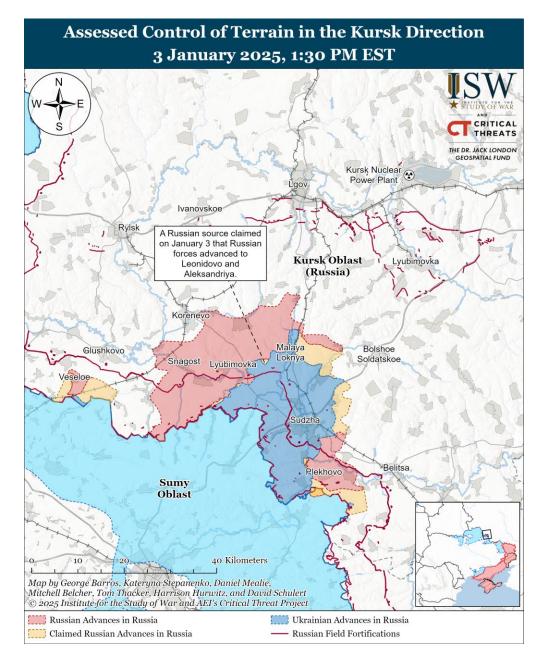
- Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation
- Russian Main Effort Eastern Ukraine (comprised of three subordinate main efforts)

- 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**

Ukrainian and Russian forces continued combat engagements in Ukraine's salient in Kursk Oblast on January 3, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced to northeastern Leonidovo and northern Aleksandriya (both southeast of Korenevo).[12] ISW has not observed confirmation of these claims, however. Russian milbloggers claimed that fighting is ongoing southeast of Korenevo near Leonidovo, Aleksandriya, Viktorovka, Nikolaevo-Darino, and Kruglenkoye and south of Sudzha near Kurilovka.[13] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces have not been able to fully seize the initiative in Kursk Oblast.[14] Drone operators of the Russian 56th Airborne (VDV) Regiment (7th VDV Division), elements of the "Tigr" Volunteer Detachment (Russian Army Combat Reserve [BARS]), reconnaissance elements of the "Anvar Spetsnaz" detachment (possibly referring to the BARS-25 "Anvar" volunteer detachment), and elements of the "Veterany" Assault Brigade (Russian Volunteer Corps) are reportedly operating in Kursk Oblast.[15]

A Russian court recently ordered Russian internet technology and telecommunications company Yandex to remove or blur maps and photographs of one of Russia's largest oil refineries due to Ukrainian drone strikes on the facility.[16] Russian opposition outlets *Astra* and *Mediazona* reported that the facility, which the court documents mentioned only by address, is Rosneft's Ryazan Oil Refinery in Ryazan Oblast.[17] Ukrainian forces struck the Ryazan facility, which supplies the Russian military, in March, May, and July 2024, with one source reporting a strike in August that ISW has been unable to confirm.[18] The court's order represents the first judicial move to obfuscate information about strategically important defense industry facilities after successful Ukrainian strikes.[19]

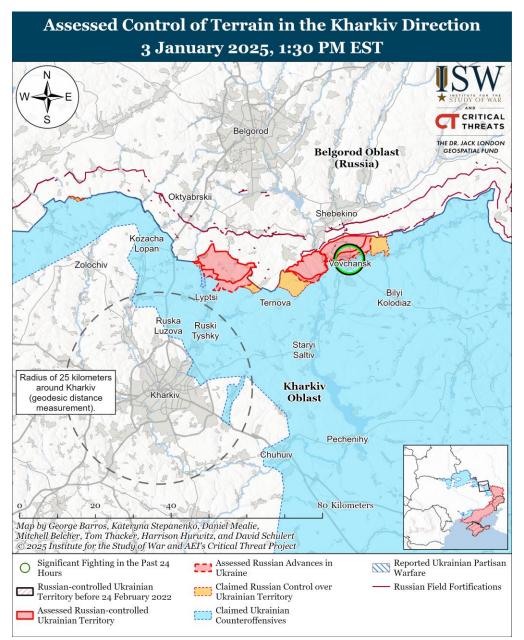


#### Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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

Russian forces continued offensive operations near Vovchansk (northeast of Kharkiv City) on January 2 and 3 but did not make any confirmed advances.[20] A Russian milblogger claimed on January 3 that Ukrainian forces counterattacked four times near Lyptsi (north of Kharkiv City).[21] Ukraine's Pivnich (Northern) Operational Command Spokesperson Colonel Vadym Mysnyk reported on January 3 that Russian sabotage and reconnaissance groups are mostly operating during poor weather conditions in the border areas of northern Ukraine with drone and artillery support.[22]

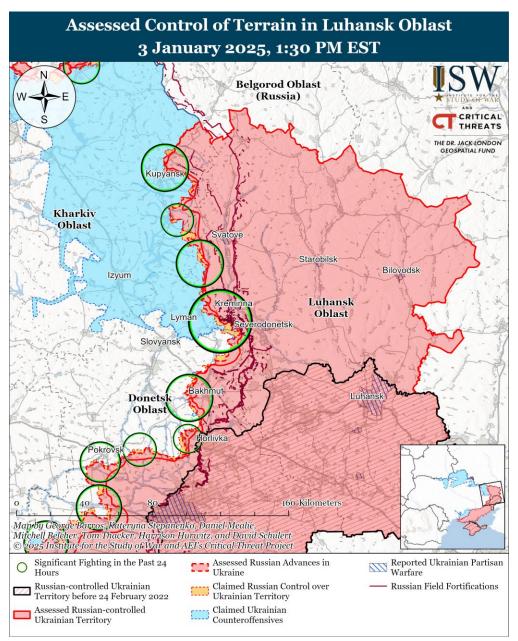
Mysnyk added that the Russian sabotage groups operating in the area have significantly reduced levels of training.



# <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 along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on January 3 but did not make any confirmed advances. A Russian milblogger continued to claim on January 3 that Russian forces crossed the Zherebets River and advanced to Ivanivka (northwest of Kreminna), but ISW has still not observed confirmation of this claim.[23] Russian forces continued ground attacks north of Kupyansk near Zapadne and Dvorichna; southeast of Kupyansk near Zahryzove and

Lozova; west of Svatove near Nadiya and Kruhlyakivka; northwest of Kreminna near Makiivka, Terny, and Cherneshchyna; and southwest of Kreminna near Hryhorivka and in the Serebryanske forest area on January 2 and 3.[24]



### <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)

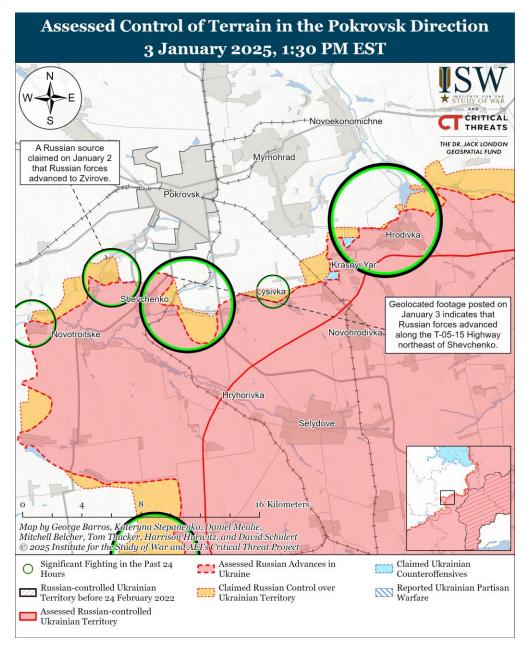
Russian forces continued offensive operations northeast of Siversk near Bilohorivka on January 2 and 3 but did not make any confirmed advances.[25]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Chasiv Yar direction on January 3 but did not make any confirmed advances. Russian forces attacked within and near Chasiv Yar itself and south of Chasiv Yar near Bila Hora, Predtechyne, and Stupochky on January 2 and 3.[26] A Russian

milblogger claimed on January 3 that Ukrainian forces are counterattacking near the Refractory Plant in central Chasiv Yar.[27] Drone operators of the Russian 7th Military Base (49th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating near Chasiv Yar.[28]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Toretsk direction on January 3 but did not make any confirmed advances. Russian forces attacked within Toretsk, northeast of Toretsk near Dyliivka, west of Toretsk near Shcherbynivka, and south of Toretsk near Niu York on January 2 and 3.[29] The commander of a Ukrainian mortar battery operating in the Toretsk direction stated that Russian forces are disguising themselves using civilian clothing in order to bypass Ukrainian frontline positions – a war crime, if confirmed.[30] An officer in a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Toretsk direction stated that Russian forces are using infantry groups comprised of two to 20 soldiers and are increasing the use of drones with fiber optic cables that are resistant to Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW) countermeasures.[31] The officer stated that Russian forces are improving and increasing the ranges of the fiber optic cable drones and that the drones currently have a range of over 10 kilometers. A Ukrainian brigade operating in the Toretsk direction reported that Russian forces are mostly using infantry to conduct assault operations and prefer to attack in bad weather.[32] Drone operators of the Russian 9th Motorized Rifle Brigade (51st CAA, formerly the 1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] AC) are reportedly operating in the Toretsk direction.[33]

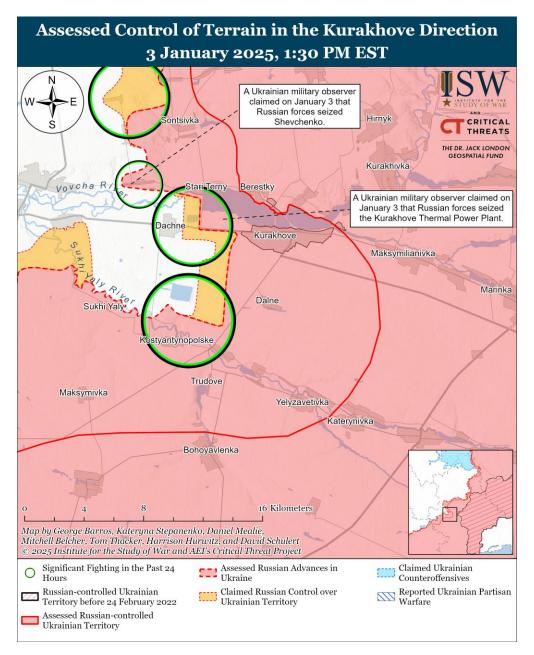
Russian forces recently advanced in the Pokrovsk direction amid continued offensive operations in the area on January 3. Geolocated footage published on January 3 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced north of Novohrodivka (southeast of Pokrovsk) and along the T-05-15 Pokrovsk-Novotroitske highway northeast of Shevchenko (south of Pokrovsk).[34] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced to Zvirove (southeast of Pokrovsk), northwest of Vozdvyzhenka (east of Pokrovsk), one kilometer north of Vovkove (southwest of Pokrovsk), and towards Nadezhdynka (southwest of Pokrovsk).[35] ISW has not observed confirmation of these claims, however. Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Pokrovsk itself; east of Pokrovsk near Vodyane Druhe, Baranivka, Myrolyubivka, and Promin; southeast of Pokrovsk near Lysivka; south of Pokrovsk near Dachenske, Shevchenko, Zelene, and Novyi Trud; and southwest of Pokrovsk near Pishchane, Zvirove, Solone, Kotlyne, Uspenivka, and Novovasylivka on January 2 and 3.[36] Elements of the Russian "Vega" Spetsnaz Detachment (24th Spetsnaz Brigade, Main Intelligence Directorate of the Russian General Staff [GRU]) are reportedly operating in the Pokrovsk direction.[37]



Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that the Russian military command is redeploying elements of the 41st CAA (Central Military District [CMD]) from east of Pokrovsk to the area of responsibility (AoR) of the 2nd CAA (CMD) south and southwest of Pokrovsk.[38] Mashovets stated that elements of the 433rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (27th Motorized Rifle Division, 2nd CAA) and elements of the 55th Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st CAA) are attacking towards Kotlyne (southwest of Pokrovsk) in order to cut the T-04-06 Pokrovsk-Mezhove highway. Mashovets stated that elements of the 90th Tank Division (41st CAA) are concentrated south of Pokrovsk, with elements of its 80th and 239th tank regiments and 228th Motorized Rifle Regiment attacking along the Novovasylivka-Novoyelizavetivka line towards Uspenivka (west of Novovasylivka) and Nadezhdynka (west of Novoyelizavetivka). Mashovets' statements suggest that the Russian military command is focusing on the areas south and southwest of Pokrovsk, as opposed to east of Pokrovsk.

This is consistent with ISW's assessment that Russian forces may be at least temporarily shifting their focus from the envelopment of Pokrovsk from the east and west to making opportunistic advances west towards the Donetsk-Dnipropetrovsk Oblast border.[39]

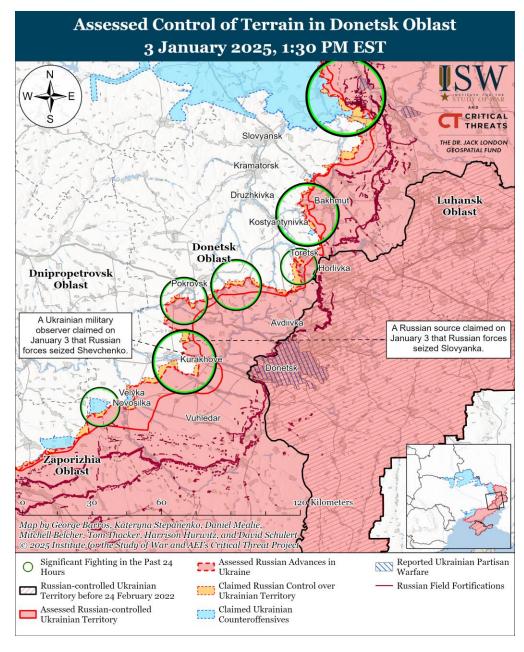
Russian forces reportedly recently advanced near Kurakhove amid continued offensive operations in the area on January 3. Mashovets stated that Ukrainian forces likely recently completely withdrew from the Kurakhivske Thermal Power Plant (TPP) west of Kurakhove and that Russian forces have seized Shevchenko (northwest of Kurakhove).[40] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces seized Slovyanka (northwest of Kurakhove), but ISW has not observed confirmation of this claim.[41] Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Kurakhove itself; northwest of Kurakhove near Slovyanka, Petropavlivka and Shevchenko; and west of Kurakhove near Dachne on January 2 and 3.[42] Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 5th and 110th motorized rifle brigades (both 51st CAA, SMD), 6th Tank Regiment, 428th Motorized Rifle Regiment, and 67th Rifle Regiment (all 90th Tank Division) are attacking north of the Vovcha River in the Shevchenko-Andriivka, Sontsivka-Petropavlivka, and Zorya-Slovyanka directions (all northwest of Kurakhove).[43] Mashovets stated that elements of the 20th and 150th motorized rifle divisions (both 8th CAA, SMD) are operating near Maksymilyanivka (east of Kurakhove), Dalne (south of Kurakhove), and Uspenivka (south of Kurakhove). Mashovets stated that elements of the 5th and 110th motorized rifle brigades (51st CAA) are also operating near Dalne. Elements of the Russian 9th Motorized Rifle Brigade (51st CAA) are reportedly operating near Sontsivka (northwest of Kurakhove), and elements of the 238th Artillery Brigade (8th CAA) are reportedly operating in the Kurakhove direction.[44]



Russian forces recently advanced northwest of Vuhledar amid continued offensive operations in the area on January 3. Geolocated footage published on January 2 shows that Russian forces recently advanced in fields south of Rozlyv (northwest of Vuhledar).[45] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced 600 meters towards Andriivka (northwest of Vuhledar and west of Kurakhove), but ISW has not observed confirmation of this claim.[46] Russian forces continued offensive operations northwest of Vuhledar near Yantarne, Kostyantynopil, Kostyantynopolske, and Rozlyv on January 2 and 3.[47] Mashovets stated that elements of the 36th Motorized Rifle Brigade (29th CAA, EMD) and 39th Motorized Rifle Brigade (68th Army Corps [AC], EMD), reinforced by elements of the 114th Motorized Rifle Brigade (51st CAA, SMD) and 57th Motorized Rifle Brigade (5th CAA, EMD), are attacking near the Sukhi Yaly River.[48] Assault elements of the Russian 5th Motorized Rifle Brigade and 150th Motorized Rifle Division, supported by artillery elements of the

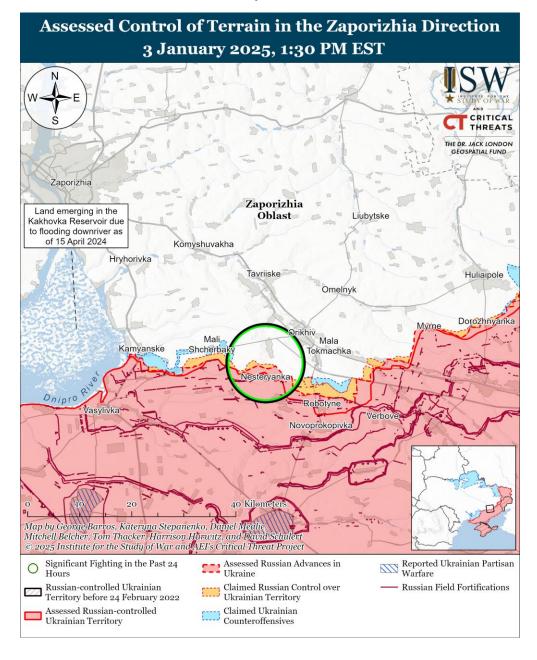
238th Artillery Brigade, are reportedly operating near Ulakly (northwest of Vuhledar and west of Kurakhove).[49]

Russian forces continued offensive operations near Velyka Novosilka on January 3 but did not make any confirmed advances. Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Velyka Novosilka itself, southwest of Velyka Novosilka near Vremivka, and west of Velyka Novosilka near Novosilka on January 2 and 3.[50] A Russian milblogger claimed on January 3 that Ukrainian forces periodically conduct counterattacks near Velyka Novosilka.[51] The spokesperson of a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Vremivka direction reported on January 3 that Russian forces are primarily focused on disrupting Ukrainian ground lines of communication (GLOCs) supplying forces in the Kurakhove and Velyka Novosilka directions.[52] The spokesperson added that small Russian infantry groups are entering contested "gray zones" to try to advance to Ukrainian positions.

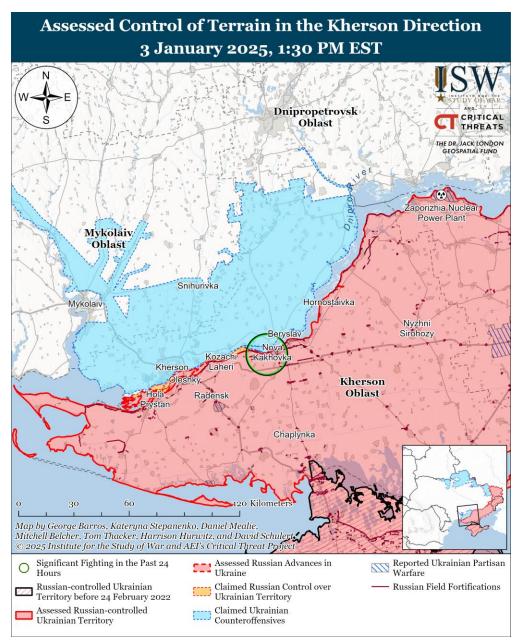


## <u>Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis</u> (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Russian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast but did not make any confirmed advances on January 3. Russian forces conducted offensive operations northeast of Robotyne near Bilohirya and northwest of Robotyne near Novoandriivka on January 2 and 3.[53] Geolocated footage published on January 3 reportedly shows drone operators of the Russian 70th Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) striking Ukrainian forces in eastern Bilohirya.[54] Drone operators of the Russian 247th Airborne (VDV) Regiment (7th VDV Division) are reportedly operating in the Orikhiv direction (north of Robotyne).[55]



Russian forces continued attacks in the Dnipro direction including near Kozatskyi Island (east of Kherson City) on January 2 and 3.[56] Drone operators of the Russian 80th Arctic Motorized Rifle Brigade (14th Army Corps [AC], Leningrad Military District [LMD]) reportedly continue operating in the Kherson direction.[57]



<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 strikes against Ukraine on the night of January 2 to 3. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched 93 Shahed and other strike and decoy drones from Millerovo, Rostov Oblast and Bryansk and Oryol oblasts.[58] The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Ukrainian forces downed 60 Shahed and other drones over Poltava, Sumy, Kharkiv,

Kyiv, Chernihiv, Cherkasy, Zhytomyr, Donetsk, and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts; that Ukrainian countermeasures caused 26 decoy drones to become "locally lost" and that one drone remained in Ukrainian airspace as of 0900 local time. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian drones struck several private enterprises and residential complexes in Donetsk and Chernihiv oblasts and that debris from downed drones damaged residential homes and civilian vehicles in Kyiv Oblast. Ukrainian officials stated that Russian strikes also damaged residential areas on the outskirts of Chernihiv City and the private sector of Sumy City.[59] Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada Speaker Ruslan Stefanchuk reported that the Russian strike against Kyiv City on January 1 damaged administrative buildings of the Verkhovna Rada.[60]

The Hajun Project, an independent Belarusian monitoring group, reported on January 3 that a total of 395 Russian drones entered Belarusian airspace in 2024.[61] The Hajun Project stated that 145 Russian drones entered Belarusian airspace during December 2024 alone, of which 36 returned to Ukrainian and Russian airspace and 109 went missing. The Hajun Project added that air defenses downed 10 Shahed drones over Latvian and Belarusian airspace in 2024.

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

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) continues to support its official "Glaz/Groza" reconnaissance and strike unit coordination software package despite Russian soldiers' continued reliance on other ad hoc communications systems. Russian MoD-run television network *TV Zvezda* broadcasted Russian soldiers at the Mikhailovsky Military Artillery Academy in St. Petersburg training on the "Glaz/Groza" combat operations coordination software, which provides organized command and control (C2) functions to Russian units on the frontline.[62] Russian forces have largely relied on ad hoc communications systems to coordinate combat operations in Ukraine via social media messaging applications, and a former Russian Storm-Z instructor and milblogger previously claimed that the Russian MoD has not introduced its official "Glaz/Groza" application at a wide enough scale for Russian forces to adopt.[63]

Russian soldiers continue to complain that Russian military commanders are abusing soldiers and hiding high casualty rates. Russian opposition outlets *Astra* and *Mobilization News* reported on January 3 that Russian officers of military unit 29593 (either the 1440th Motorized Rifle Regiment or the 1194th Motorized Rifle Regiment [reportedly of the 6th Motorized Rifle Division, 3rd Army Corps]) are confiscating the personal phones of soldiers and forcing injured soldiers to pay their platoon commanders 20,000 to 50,000 rubles (about \$181 to \$452) in order to receive treatment at hospitals.[64] The opposition outlets reported that the Russian command of the unit may have transferred injured soldiers to "unit 44744" – which may be a fake unit – in order to hide the high casualty rates of unit 29593.[65] ISW has observed prior reports of Russian officers physically abusing subordinates and extorting them for money, likely due to poor command training and discipline.[66]

### <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 reporting on 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.



- [1] https://suspilne dot media/916671-pro-trampa-mir-nato-ta-es-golovni-tezi-zelenskogo-v-intervu-telemarafonu/; https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-2-2025
- [2] https://suspilne dot media/916671-pro-trampa-mir-nato-ta-es-golovni-tezi-zelenskogo-v-intervu-telemarafonu/; https://www.rferl dot org/a/russia-ukraine-peace-deal-putin-draft-treaty/33183664.html; https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/06/15/world/europe/ukraine-russia-ceasefire-deal.html
- [3] https://isw.pub/UkrWar123024; https://isw.pub/UkrWar122924; https://isw.pub/UkrWar122624; https://isw.pub/UkrWar122424; https://isw.pub/UkrWar121924
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- [11] https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-december-12-2024
- [12] https://t.me/dva\_majors/61753
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