



MALCONTENT NEWS RUSSIA-UKRAINE SITUATION REPORT

December 15, 2023



Malcontent News

Russia-Ukraine War SITREP

12/15/23 23:59* PST

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SUMMARY – DAY 6593

DAILY ASSESSMENT 10

TODAY'S WAR IN UKRAINE MAP 12

WEATHER 13

 SOIL SATURATION AND TRACTABILITY..... 13

 SNOW DEPTH14

 WEATHER FORECAST..... 16

KHARKIV AND LUHANSK 18

DONBAS REGION.....22

 NORTHEAST DONETSK.....23

 SOUTHWESTERN DONETSK26

ZAPORIZHZHIA34

KHERSON.....38

BLACK SEA, CRIMEA, MYKOLAIV, AND ODESA REGION 41

WESTERN AND CENTRAL UKRAINE43

NORTHERN AND NORTHEASTERN UKRAINE46

RUSSIAN FRONT47

THEATERWIDE49

RUSSIA VS. UKRAINE HEAVY EQUIPMENT LOSSES.....58

RUSSIAN MOBIKS, MOBILIZATION, AND MIR.....59

PUTIN'S PURGE.....65

WAR CRIMES AND HUMAN RIGHTS 71

GEOPOLITICS.....74

ECONOMICS.....75

RUMORS76

SUMMARY – DAY 659

It has been 3,609 days since Russia occupied the Crimea Peninsula on January 27, 2014, and one year and 294 days since Russia expanded its war against Ukraine.

Editor's Note: Today's SITREP discusses suicide and contains detailed information about sexual violence. If you find these topics distressing, we recommend skipping the Western and Central Ukraine and War Crimes and Human Rights section.

[Jump to the Action Report.](#)

Summary:

- Severe weather and the Kyivstar cyberattack earlier in the week are limiting the number of videos, pictures, and reports from the LOC
- There are map updates
- There are minor assessment updates
- There are rumor updates
- Russian forces suffered catastrophic losses for the second day in a row north of Synkivka
- Fighting continued in the Kreminna AO

- Russian forces were unable to advance on Bohdanivka
- Fighting continued in the dachas and community gardens in the southwestern tip of Bakhmut
- Fighting continued in the Klishchiivka AO
- Russian forces continued their attempts to advance from the Krasnohorivka Plateau on the north flank of the Avdiivka AO
- Russian forces continue to suffer catastrophic losses east of Stepove
- Russian forces have reached the railroad siding north of the Avdiivka Coke Plant but can't maintain their positions
- Russian forces pushed through the industrial zone in southeastern Avdiivka, but it is unclear if they were able to establish new positions
- Subordinate attacks continued on the south flank of Avdiivka
- Ukrainian forces suffered significant losses while making marginal gains in northwest Marinka
- Fighting continued south and east of Novomykhailivka
- Russian forces attempted to advance on Staromaiorske
- Ukrainian forces attacked a fuel depot in occupied Donetsk
- Occupied Donetsk has suffered catastrophic damage to its electrical grid after five days of ice storms
- Russian state media provided an OPSEC violating BDA of the Ukrainian missile attack on Mariupol

- Fighting continued on the Orikhiv AO
- Insurgents in occupied Melitopol sabotaged a fuel and ammunition train
- The IAEA provided an update on the status of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant
- Russian forces continue to suffer heavy losses at Krynky on the left bank of the Konka River
- A Russian soldier made a big mistake with an antitank weapon, and Robert Magyar Brovdi recorded it
- The Chongar checkpoint was closed after a drone attack on occupied Kherson and Crimea
- Russia claims air defenses shot down 32 Ukrainian drones over occupied Crimea
- The United States Congress passed the Black Sea Security Act
- Bulgaria accused Russia of having “imperial ambitions”
- A Russian Kh-59 guided missile was shot down over the Kirovohrad oblast
- A deputy of the Keretsky Village Council threw three grenades into the meeting chamber, wounding 26 and himself
- Kyiv was attacked for the sixth time since December 1
- A security guard in Kyiv is facing up to 2 years in prison for blocking two children from entering a bomb shelter because they had a dog

- Russia claims they shot down four drones over Kursk, Russia
- The Freedom of Russia Legion took responsibility for the refinery sabotage in Voronezh, Russia
- Moscow is experiencing the snowiest start to December in almost 150 years
- Central Russia is being buried by the heaviest snowfall ever recorded while experiencing near-record-cold
- Kyivstar reported its cellular and Internet network has been mostly restored
- Ukrhydroenergo reported that within six months, they will add another 1,000 megawatts of capacity online
- The GUR estimates there are 473,000 Russian troops in Ukraine
- Moscow reveals that Russia and the U.S. are using the deconfliction line again
- U.S. Ambassador to China says that China is not providing military aid to Russia but is not a neutral party
- Military analyst Mike Kofman reported that over the summer, Ukraine held a 2:1 artillery advantage
- **SPECIAL ASSESSMENT:** Why that's potentially good news, and why Europe and its allies need to prepare for a continental war against Russia that **could** happen
- Poland protesters backed by the pro-Russian Confederate Party used a loophole in the law to blockade the Ukraine border

- Slovakia ended the blockade on the Ukraine border
- The U.S. 2024 NDAA did not extend the Lend-Lease Act of 2023
- The World Bank authorized the release of \$1.34 billion in economic support to support Ukraine
- The E.U. authorized 1.5 billion euros in economic aid to Ukraine
- Lithuania announces a new military aid package for Ukraine
- South Korea is providing Ukraine with ten uncrewed demining machines
- Germany sent a 6.1 million euro tranche of humanitarian aid
- The European Union believes it has a workaround to release 50 billion in aid to Ukraine that Hungary can't veto
- The first Leopard 2 tanks repaired by Lithuania are ready to be returned to Ukraine
- Investigative journalists have identified almost 40,000 Russian soldiers who have died since February 24, 2022, using OSINT
- President Putin held a tightly controlled and orchestrated question-and-answer session on state media
- Family members of mobiks criticized Putin for not answering questions about troop rotation

- Two recently naturalized citizens of Russia had their citizenship stripped after evading military duty
- Russia almost shot down its own Su-25 with a Grad rocket
- In Omsk, Russia, a school director refused to put up a memorial plaque for a fallen soldier
- Russia's demographic crisis is expected to get worse in the next 25 years – much worse
- Political prisoner and Putin-lite Alexey Navalny is officially missing
- Scientist Vladislav Galkin was arrested for treason
- Nine people were convicted in Moscow for stealing Mig-29 parts
- Human rights activist Nadezhda Nizovkina is facing charges for participation in the activities an undesirable organization
- In a closed-court hearing, Igor 'Girkin' Strelkov pled not guilty to the charge of extremism
- **ASSESSMENT:** Strelkov belongs in a prison cell for the rest of his life, but the Kremlin has a second agenda
- Oleg Orlov had his case for repeatedly discrediting the Russian Federation Armed Forces returned to the prosecutor for a stiffer sentence
- A rape committed by a Kadyrovite in occupied Mariupol was recorded by the neighbor of the victim
- A civilian was extrajudicially executed in occupied Oleshky

- A Russian APC intentionally ran over a car in occupied Donetsk
- The co-founder of the Rusich Group admitted his direct involvement in the anti-Maidan
- The other co-founder of the Rusich Group, Jan Petrovsky, isn't leaving Finland in the near future as a war crime investigation is opened
- Five more Ukrainian children are repatriated
- Finland closed two border crossings with Russia less than 48 hours after they opened them due to the influx of undocumented migrants
- U.S. Congress approved a law that prevents the President from unilaterally withdrawing from the NATO Alliance
- Russia raised its prime lending rate to 16%
- Russia reported inflation was at 7.5%, but other signals from the Kremlin suggest it's much higher
- Ukraine cut its prime lending rate to 15%

DAILY ASSESSMENT

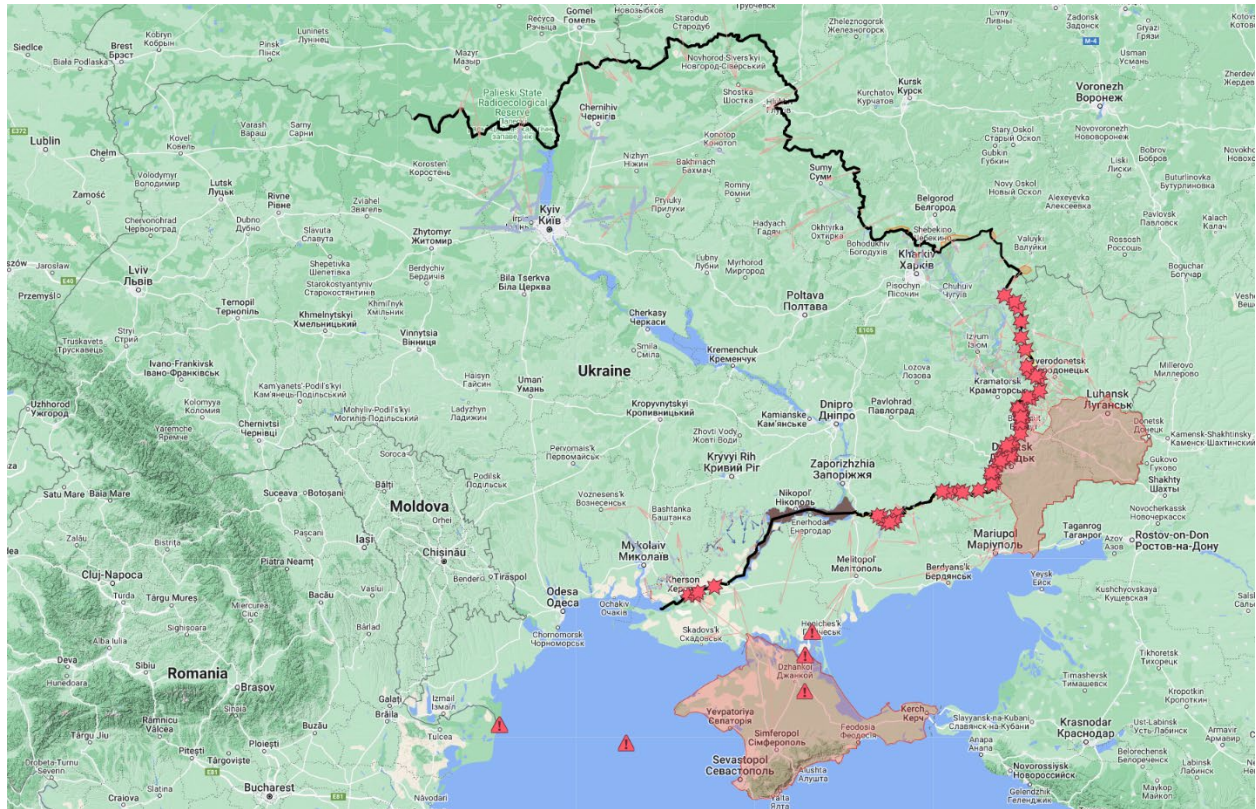
We assess the following:

1. The political weakness shown by the United States on December 12 contributed to the largest drone attack on Danube River ports in Ukraine since September 2022 and additional aggressive statements by the Russian Federation about control of the Black Sea. Continued appeasement increases the risk of a significant incident along the border of Ukraine, which could lead to a wider and more dangerous conflict.
2. The Armed Forces of Ukraine are facing ammunition shortages that are directly impacting the ability to maintain existing defensive lines, forcing fighting withdrawals in multiple areas of operation (AO).
3. Ukrainian forces no longer have the combat potential to engage in offensive operations **beyond point attacks**, and Russian troops are capable of additional tactical success and achieving limited operational goals.
4. We maintain that the reduction in Ukrainian combat potential is a direct result of blocked aid from the United States and European Union and uncertainty that aid will continue in 2024.

5. Russian forces have established an operational objective to capture Chasiv Yar, west of Bakhmut.
6. Russian commanders have put mission objectives over all other considerations and remain committed to capturing the Avdiivka salient regardless of the cost.
7. Attritional warfare that more closely resembles World War I versus 21st-century combined arms maneuver warfare will likely continue through meteorological winter, which ends on February 29, 2024.
8. In our assessment, severe weather in Donetsk, Luhansk, and Kharkiv that has persisted for a week is impacting Russian offensive operations.
9. We no longer believe that Russia has been stockpiling Kh-101/102, Kh-55/555, and Kalibr cruise missiles to be used for large-scale attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure. This is the last day for this entry.
10. While the possibility of an intentional nuclear accident caused by Russian occupiers at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant remains low, the threat should be taken seriously. We are increasingly troubled by additional reports of technical failures from the International Atomic Energy Agency and the lack of international attention.



TODAY'S WAR IN UKRAINE MAP

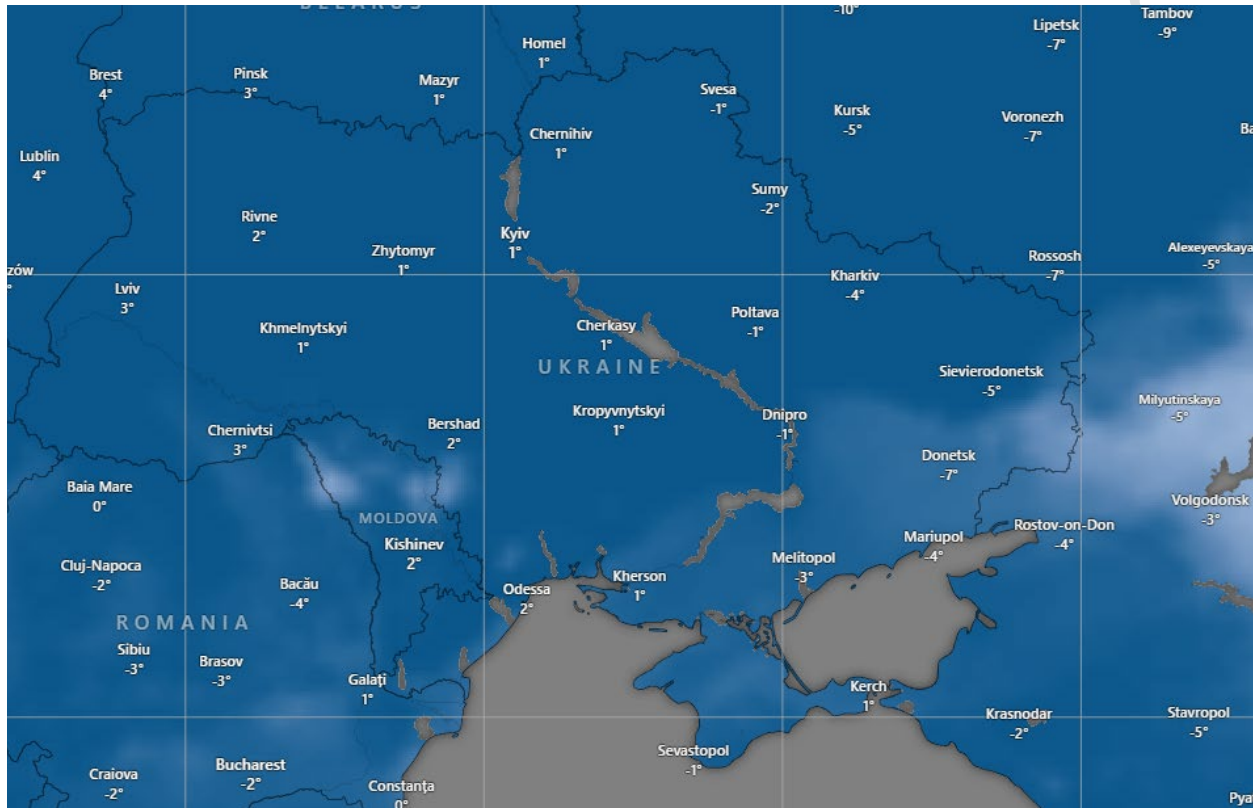


About the maps: Red triangles are sites of significant events unrelated to missile attacks, insurgencies, or ground combat, such as the sinking of the Moskva and the explosion at the Saky Naval airbase. Gray circles indicate an area where fighting has ended with no change in the line of conflict. The archived offensive layer is turned off by default, but you can toggle it on/off in the Map Legend. Purple territory is Ukrainian advances into areas that were illegally occupied by Russian forces between 2014 and 2016. If you see a settlement name highlighted [like this](#), it is a link to our war map that will take you to the location explained in the Situation Report.

[Russia-Ukraine War Report Map](#)

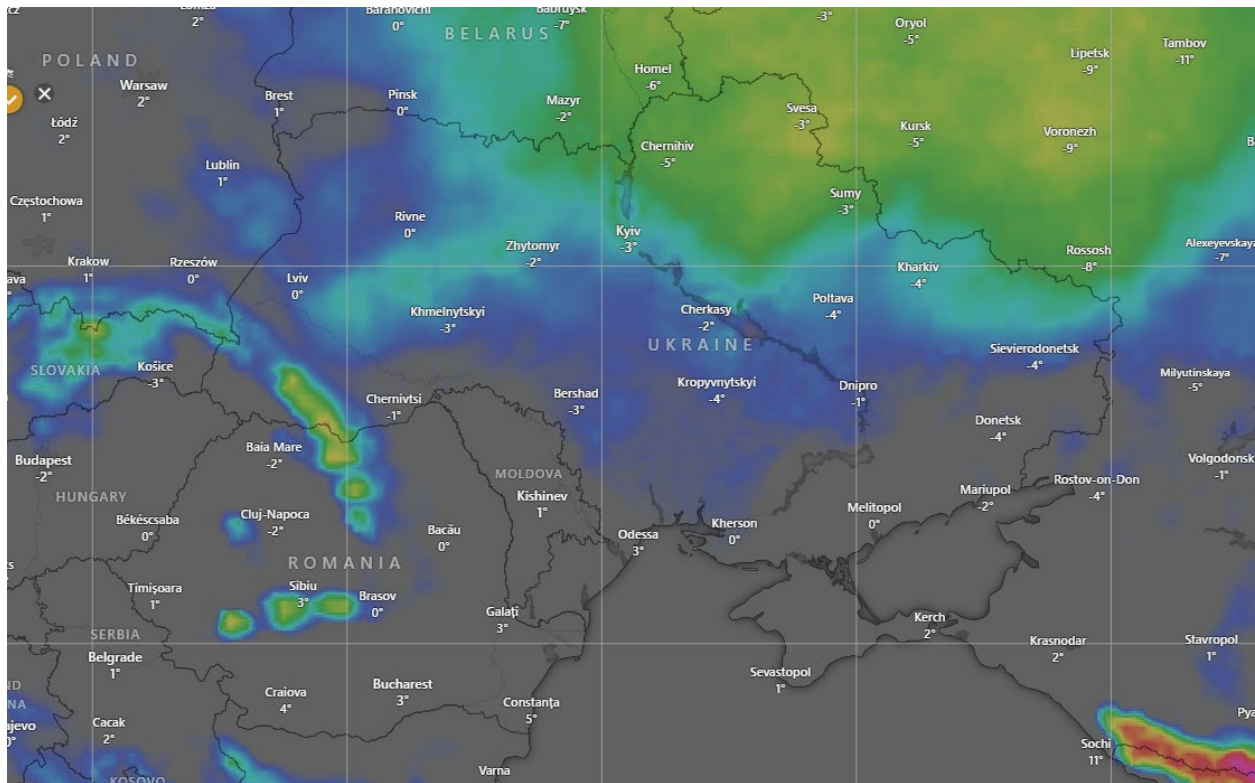
WEATHER

SOIL SATURATION AND TRACTABILITY



Almost all of Ukraine is at 100% soil saturation to 40 centimeters depth, and central and eastern Ukraine is at 70% to 100% to 100 centimeters. Weather models indicate worsening conditions to 100 centimeters through December 23.

SNOW DEPTH





Today's snowpack map does not reflect the snow that moved through Donetsk, with precipitation continuing through December 16.¹ Freezing rain moved through [Kharkiv](#) and Luhansk and continued for a fifth day in [Donetsk](#), causing additional damage to electrical infrastructure.² ³ The biggest impact continues to be in occupied Donetsk, where freezing rain mixed with snow has

¹ <https://t.me/itsdonetsk/121691>

² <https://t.me/synegubov/7747>

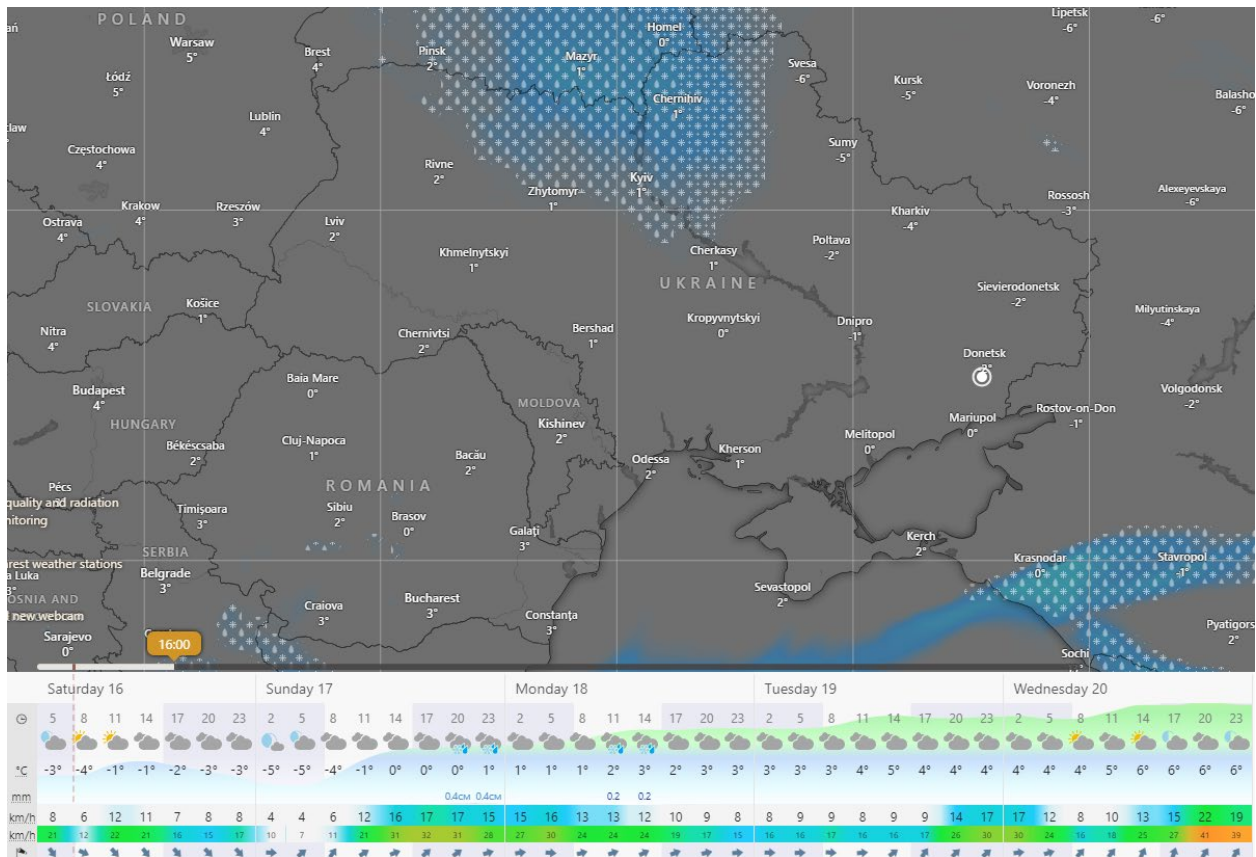
³ <https://t.me/itsdonetsk/121704>

caused  [catastrophic damage to the electrical grid](#).⁴
Russian military units are reporting ice build up is impacting and damaging electronic warfare systems, radars, and  [communication equipment](#).⁵

⁴ <https://t.me/itsdonetsk/121653>
⁵ https://t.me/dva_majors/30872



WEATHER FORECAST



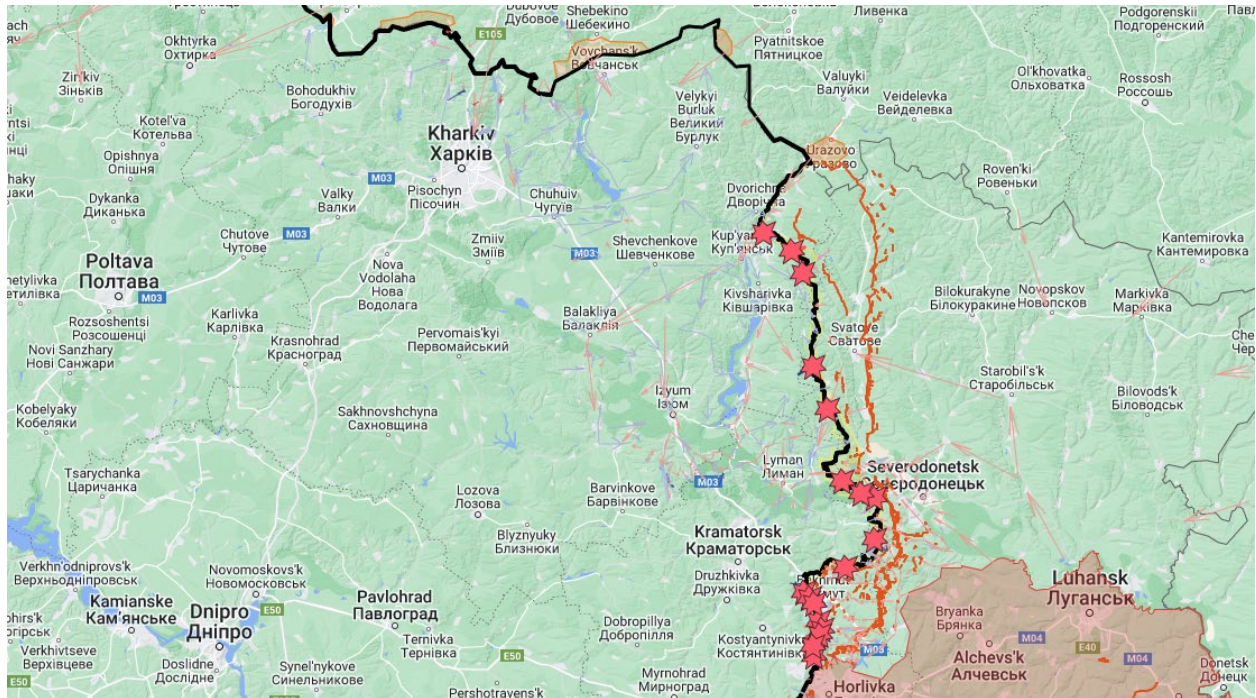
Another mostly cloudy and seasonably cold week lies ahead, according to the Euro composite model. High temperatures will be -9° to +8° Celcius, with a gradual warm-up through December 20. A weather system on December 17 and 18 will bring snow to most of Ukraine, with rain on the coast. Occupied Donetsk could see another round of freezing rain, but not as severe as the last five days. Another weaker system will arrive on December 18 – 19, with light snow in the north and a rain/snow mix east of occupied Melitopol. December 19 and 20 will see another



system pass through northern Ukraine, where it will snow, while mostly cloudy weather will persist in the south. Weather will continue to impact both combatants.

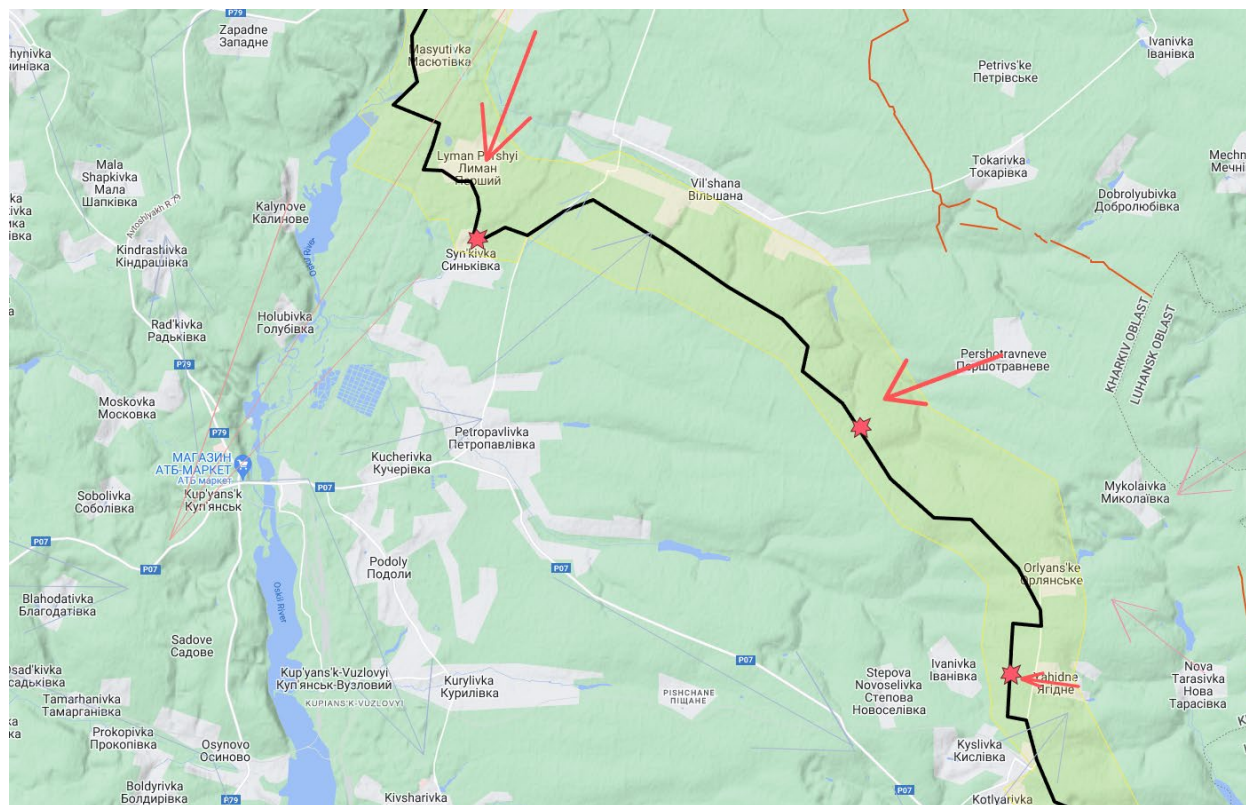
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KHARKIV AND LUHANSK




Russian Objective: By March 13, 2024, Recapture all territory from Kupyansk to Pisky Radkivski and push Ukrainian forces from the right bank of the Oskil River, recapture all of the Luhansk Oblast, maximize casualties, and terrorize Ukrainian civilians near the line of conflict

Ukrainian Objective: Hold and harden defensive lines in the Kupyansk, Svatove, Kreminna, and Lysychansk Operational Areas and protect civilians and civilian infrastructure



In the Kupyansk Area of Operation (AO) in Kharkiv, Russian forces attempted a light infantry advance on the northern edge of [Synkivka](#) after  [being routed on December 14](#).^{6 7}

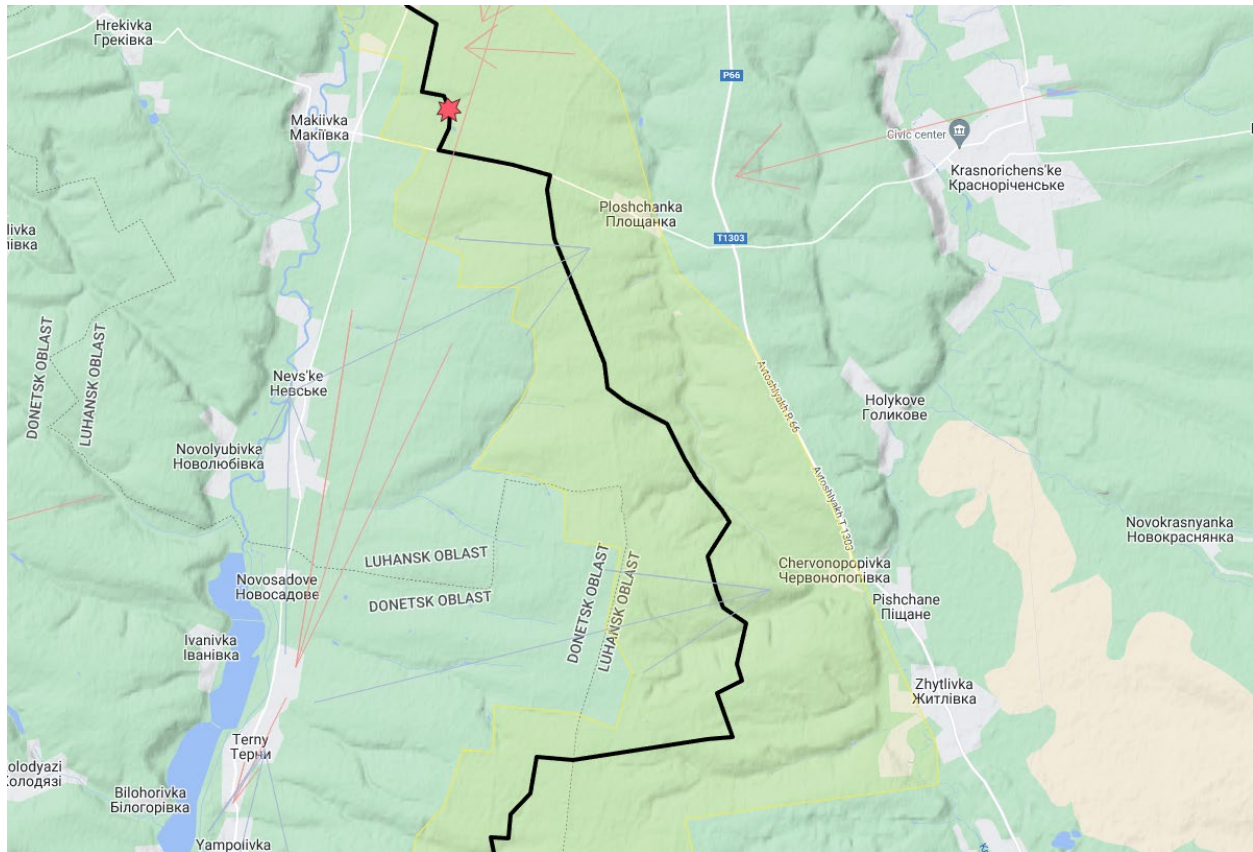
⁸ Russian units dismounted and moved parallel to the northern edge of the village, and  [suffered catastrophic losses](#).⁹ We made a small adjust to the line of conflict and gray area on the war map.

⁶ <https://t.me/operativnoZSU/127388>

⁷ <https://t.me/landforcesofukraine/14253>

⁸ <https://t.me/wargonzo/17053>

⁹ https://twitter.com/Maks_NAFO_FELLA/status/1735670160625660026

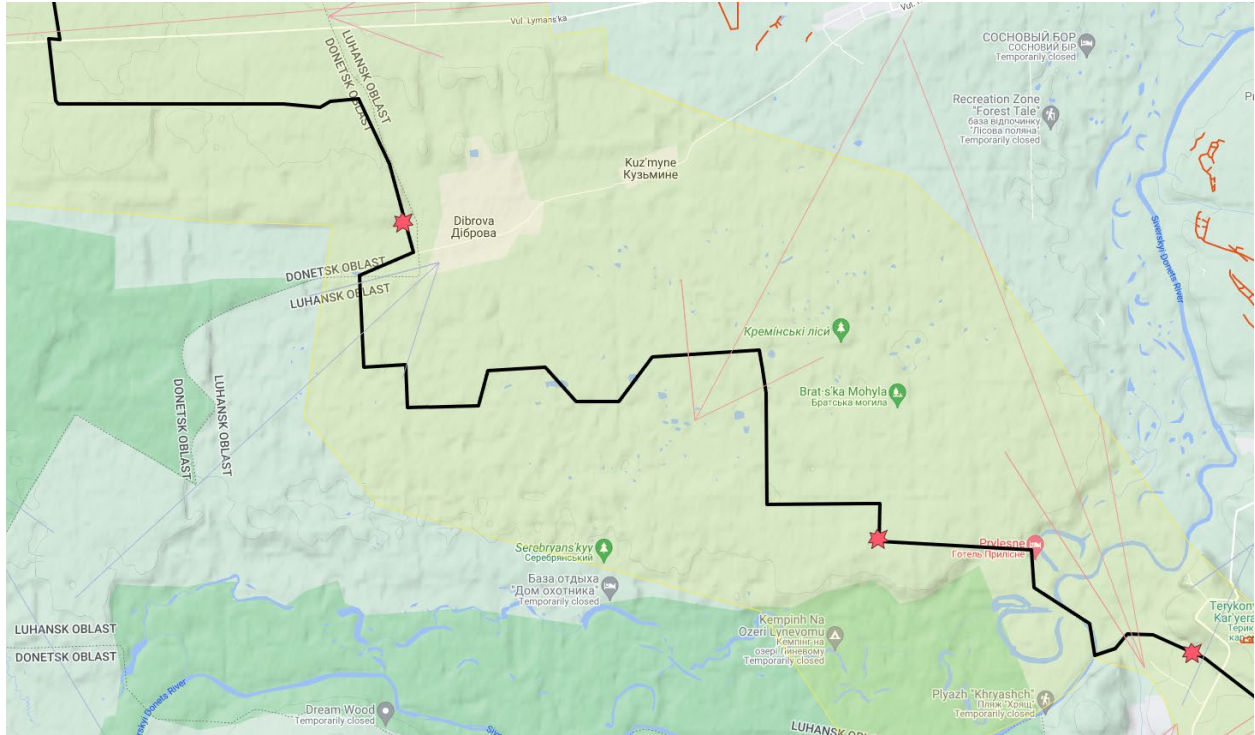


In Luhansk, fighting continued in the Kreminna AO. Russian forces made another attempt to advance on [Makiivka](#), suffered losses, and retreated to their previous defensive positions.¹⁰ Further south, Russian forces continued their attempts to advance in the direction of [Terny](#) and [Yampolivka](#) [Donetsk] from the Luhansk-Donetsk administrative border without success.¹¹ ¹²

¹⁰ <https://t.me/landforcesofukraine/14253>

¹¹ <https://t.me/landforcesofukraine/14253>

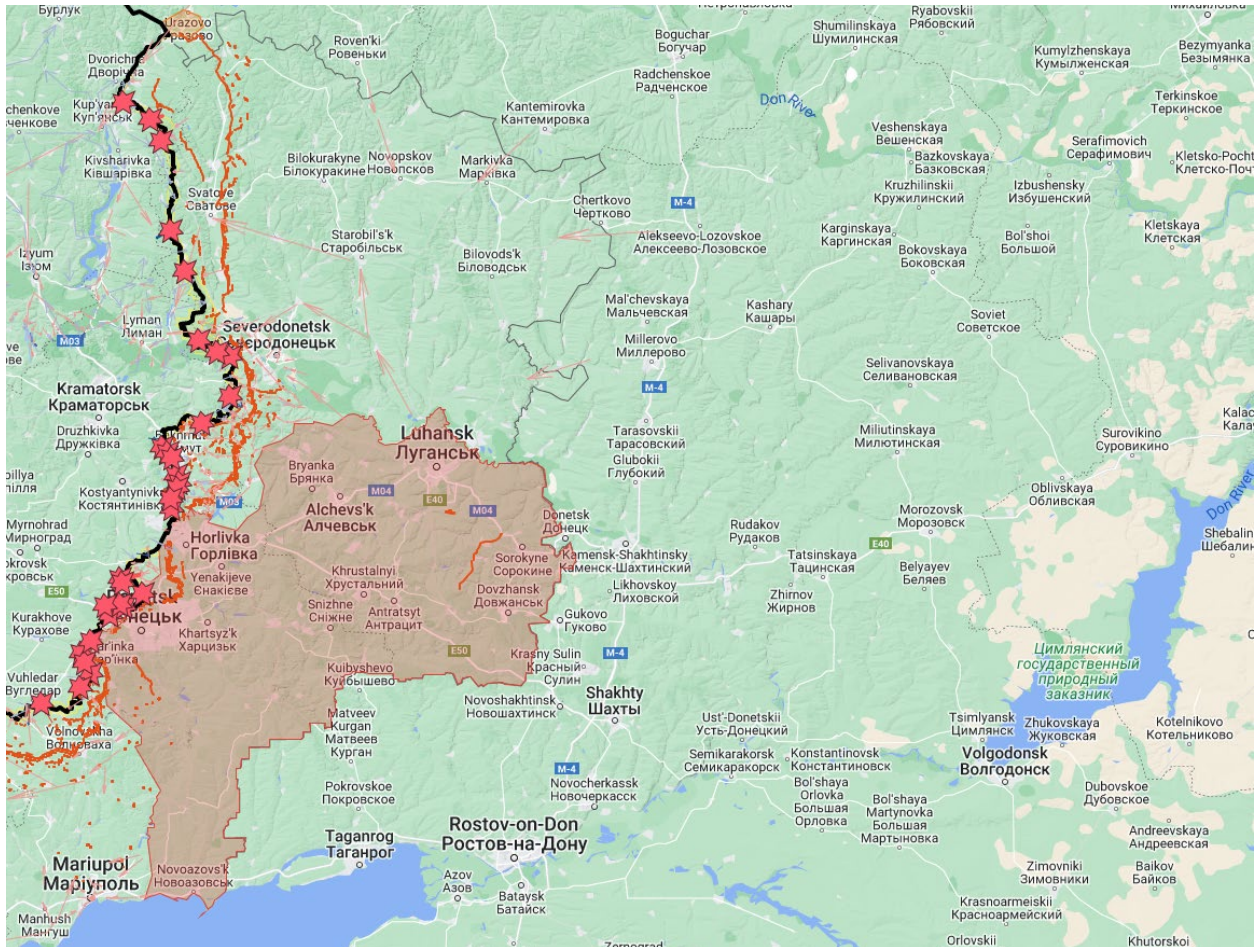
¹² <https://t.me/wargonzo/17053>



Further south, a prominent Russian milblogger reported fighting continued southeast of [Dibrova](#).¹³

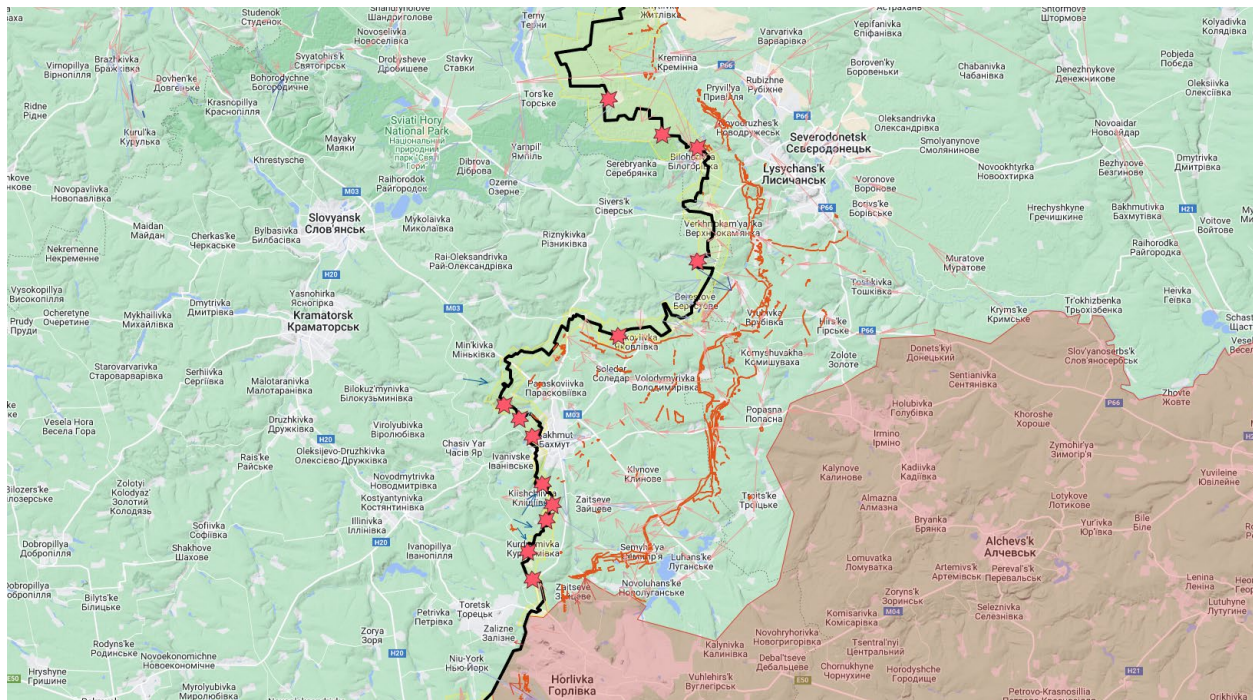
¹³ <https://t.me/wargonzo/17053>

DONBAS REGION



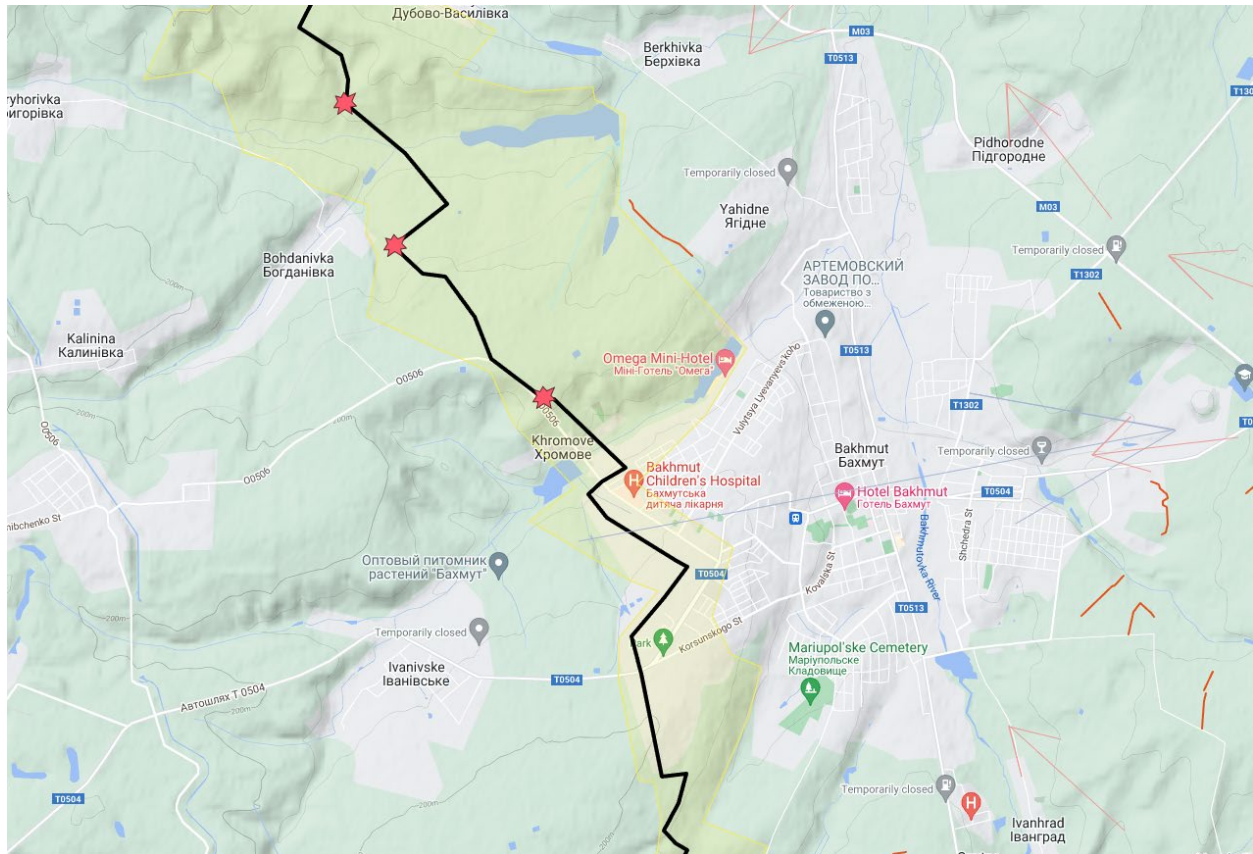


NORTHEAST DONETSK



Russian Objective: Capture Chasiv Yar and Kostyantynivka, set conditions to attack Kramatorsk, Slovyansk, and Siversk, and terrorize Ukrainian civilians

Ukrainian Objective: Defend Siversk, Chasiv Yar, and Kostyantynivka, stabilize more advantageous defensive lines on the north flank of Bakhmut for winter, harden existing defensive lines, and minimize civilian casualties



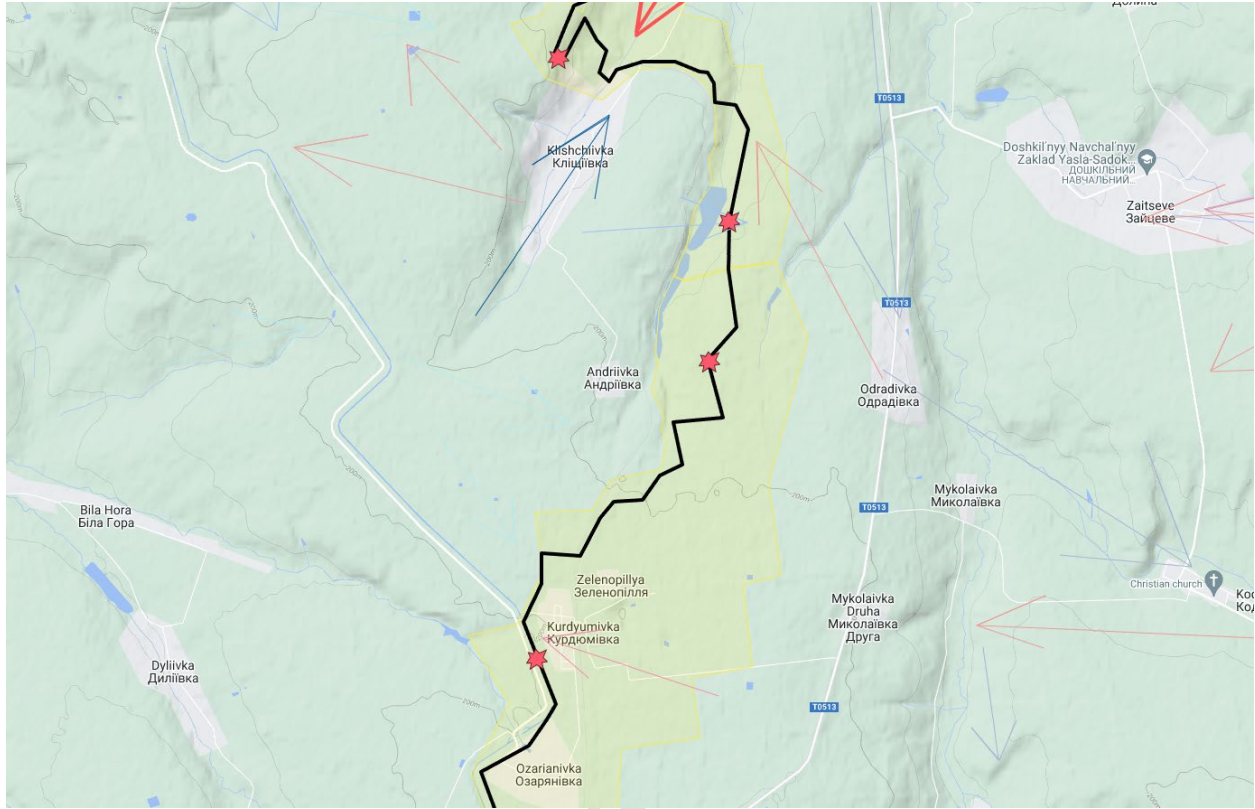
In the Bakhmut AO, fighting continued north of [Bohdanivka](#) with no change in the situation.^{14 15} Intense fighting was ongoing east of [Ivanivske](#) in the [dachas and community garden area](#) on the southwestern tip of Bakhmut, with no change in the situation.^{16 17}

¹⁴ <https://t.me/landforcesofukraine/14253>

¹⁵ <https://t.me/wargonzo/17053>

¹⁶ <https://t.me/landforcesofukraine/14253>

¹⁷ https://t.me/dva_majors/30920



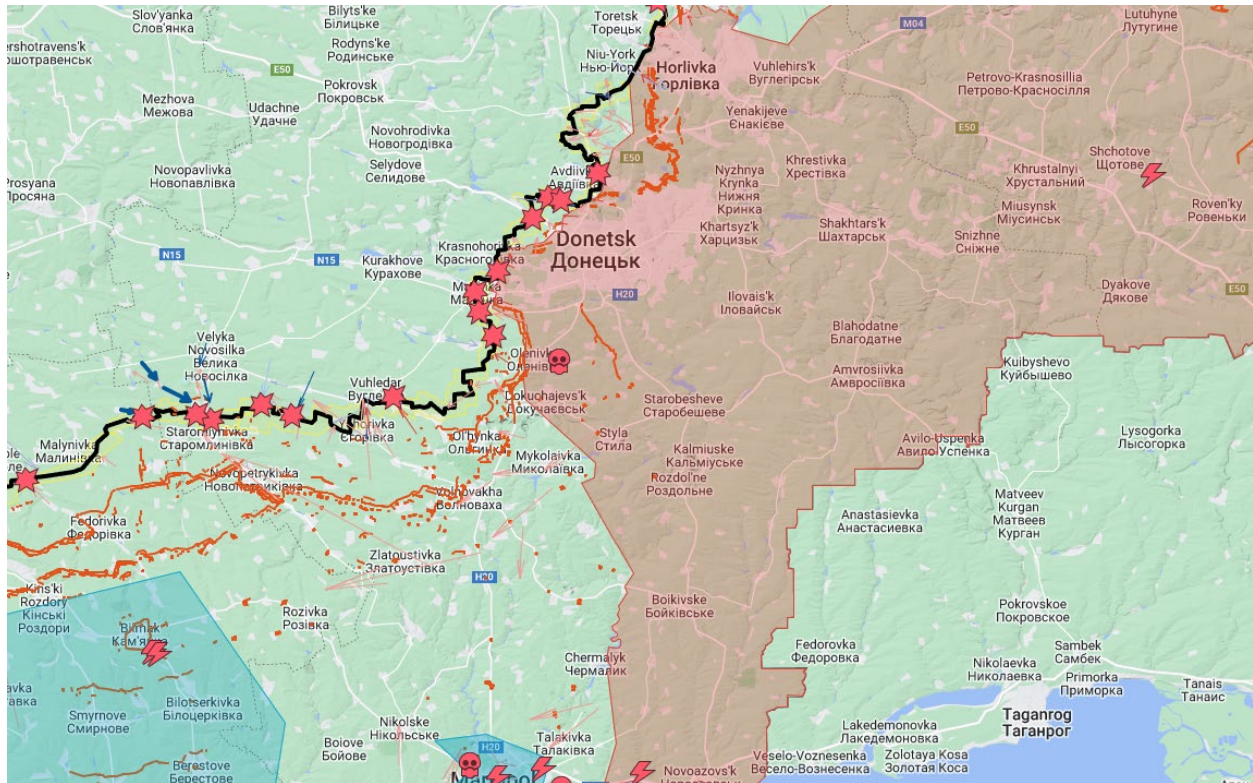
In the Klishchiivka AO, "constant high-paced fighting" continued near the 215-meter heights northwest of [Klishchiivka](#) and east of [Andriivka](#) with no change in the situation.^{18 19 20}

¹⁸ <https://t.me/landforcesofukraine/14253>

¹⁹ <https://t.me/The3rdForceUA/21736>

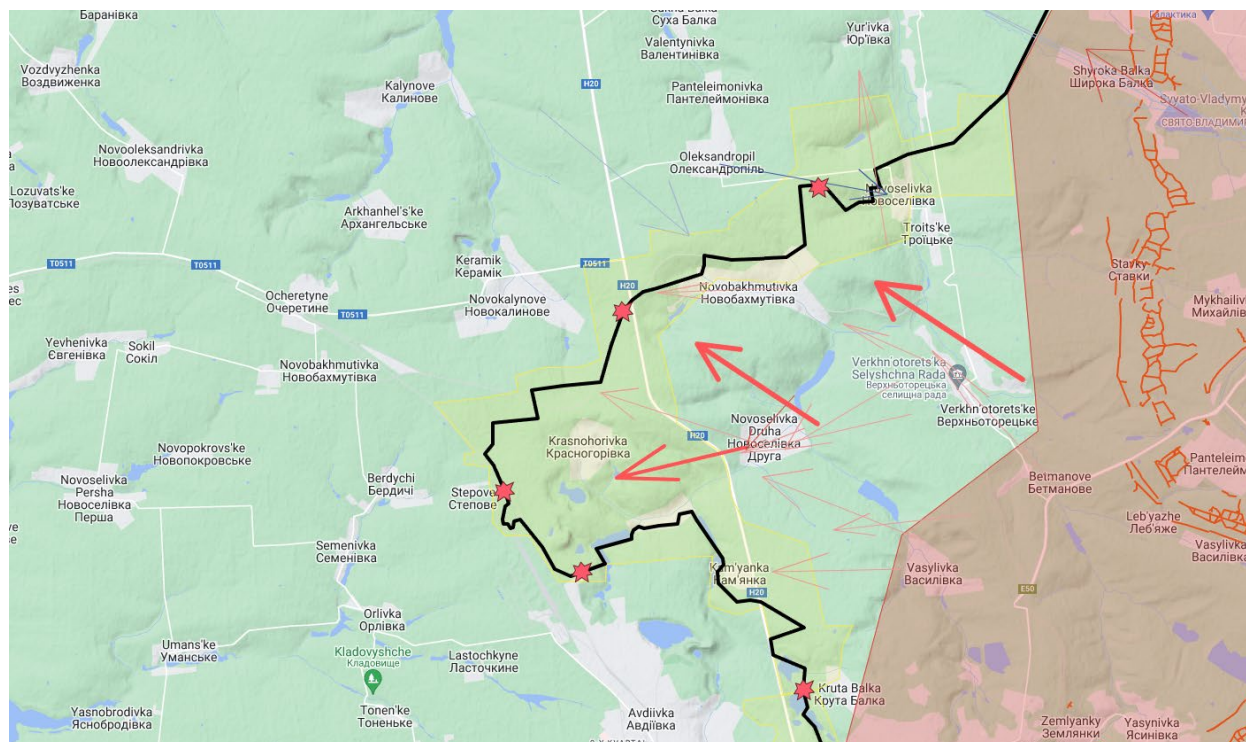
²⁰ <https://t.me/wargonzo/17053>

SOUTHWESTERN DONETSK




Russian Objective: Capture the Avdiivka AO by March 13, 2024, capture the remainder of the Donetsk Oblast, and terrorize Ukrainian civilians

Ukrainian Objective: Hold and harden existing defensive lines, prevent the capture of Avdiivka, protect civilian lives



The most intense fighting continues to be in the Avdiivka AO. The commander of the operational-strategic group of troops Tavria, Ukrainian Brigadier General Alexander Tarnavskiy, reported, "The occupiers do not reduce the number of combat clashes...Three days in a row – about 80 assaults per day. The vast majority is in [the] Donetsk region. Assault groups are mostly up to 20 people. They operate, in particular, with the support of armored vehicles. Yesterday, there was an increase in the number of airstrikes again. The enemy is using aerial [glide] bombs."²¹

²¹ <https://t.me/otarnavskiy/384>

Russian forces were attempting to advance along the railroad grade northwest of the Krasnohorivka Plateau in the direction of [Ocheretyne](#) and [Berdychi](#).²² ²³ Fighting is intense, and the gray area was expanded on the war map. Russian troops continued their efforts to advance on [Stepove](#), suffering catastrophic losses along the railroad grade east of the village.²⁴ ²⁵ Fighting continued on the northeast edge of the [Avdiivka Coke Plant compound](#) along the  [fence line of the railroad siding](#).²⁶ Bradley infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs) of the Ukrainian 47th Motor Infantry Brigade continue to operate with near impunity against Russian armored personnel carriers (APCs), IFVs, and dismounted light infantry.

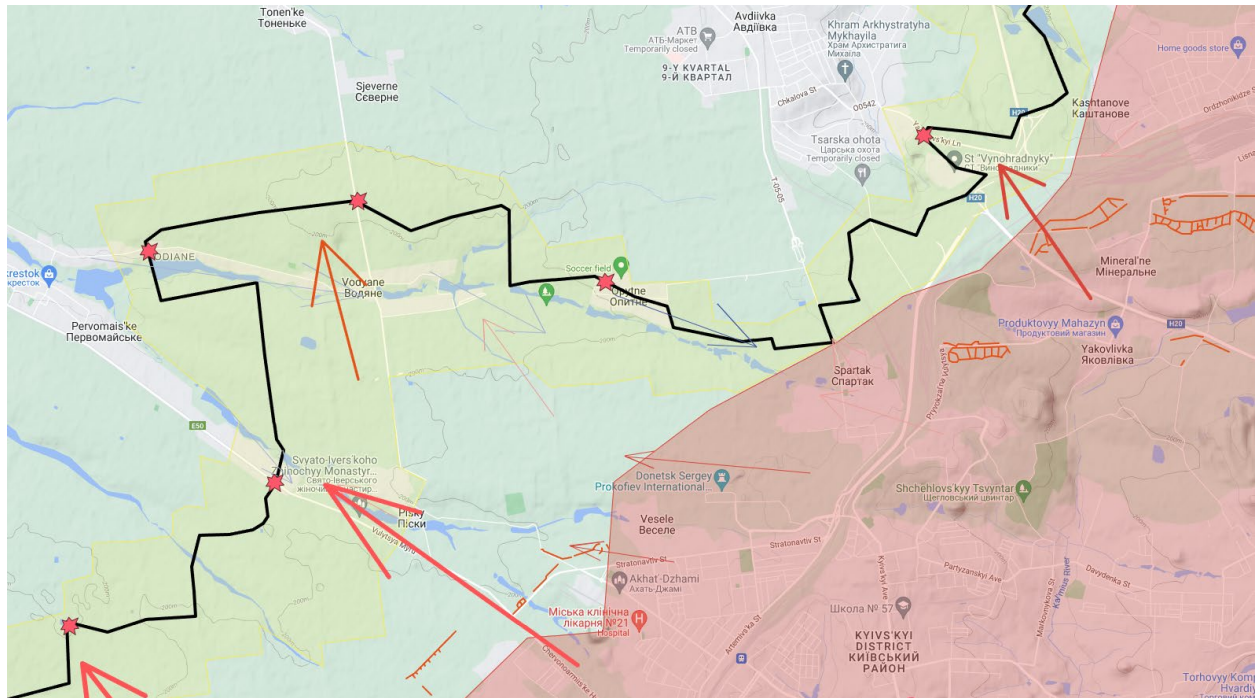
²² <https://t.me/landforcesofukraine/14253>

²³ <https://t.me/wargonzo/17053>

²⁴ <https://t.me/DeepStateUA/18333>

²⁵ <https://t.me/landforcesofukraine/14253>

²⁶ <https://t.me/landforcesofukraine/14256>



Russian forces appear to have pushed through the [industrial zone](#) in southeast Avdiivka, with videos showing Ukrainian positions in the forests east of [Kolossova Street](#) under attack.^{27 28 29} The map was adjusted based on the geolocated open-source intelligence (OSINT).

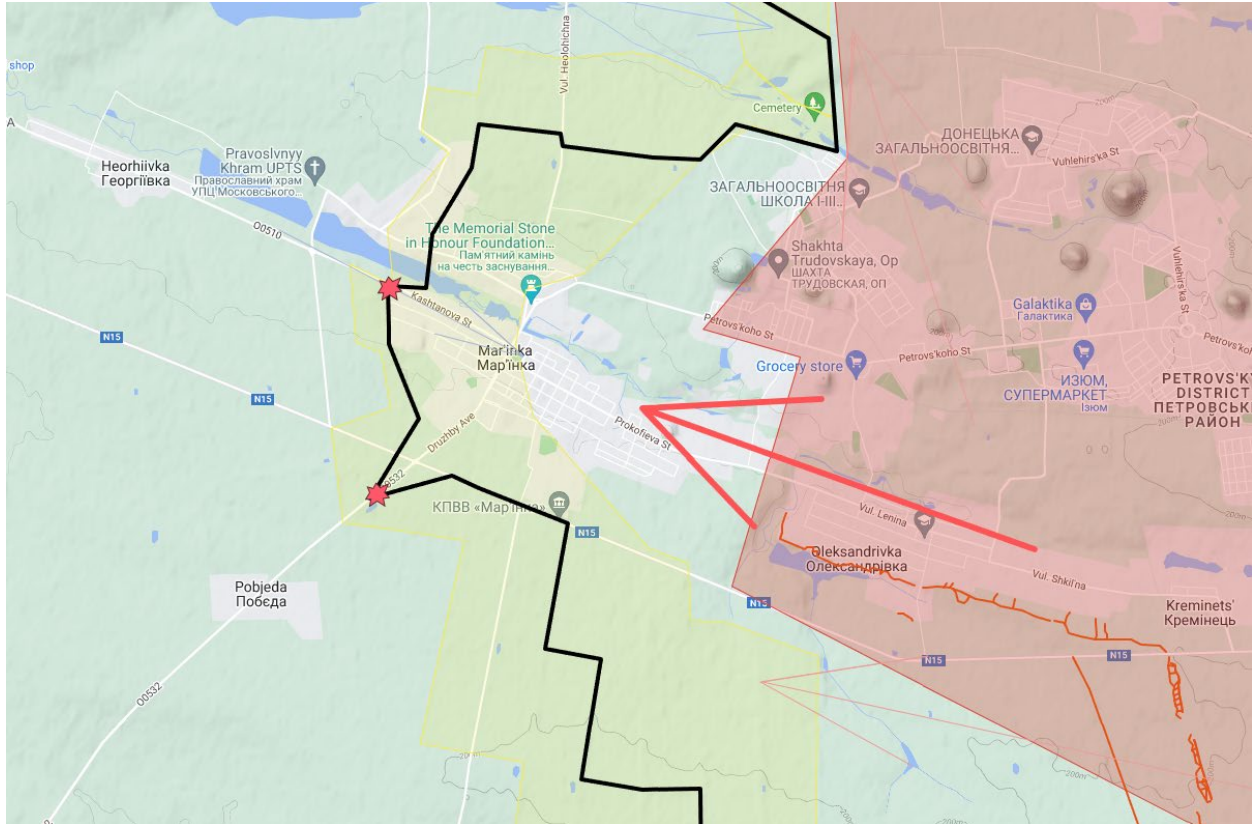
On the southern flank, Russian subordinate attacks continued in the no man's land between [Vodyane, Tonenke, and Sieverne](#) and near [Pervomaiske](#).³⁰

²⁷ <https://t.me/DeepStateUA/18336>

²⁸ <https://t.me/landforcesofukraine/14253>

²⁹ <https://t.me/wargonzo/17053>

³⁰ <https://t.me/landforcesofukraine/14253>



In the Marinka AO, Ukrainian forces still hold a portion of [northwestern Marinka](#) and appear to have launched a limited counterattack.^{31 32} Despite suffering significant losses, marginal gains were achieved.³³ The Defense Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Defense of the United Kingdom reported that “heavy fighting continues for control of the destroyed town of Marinka.”³⁴

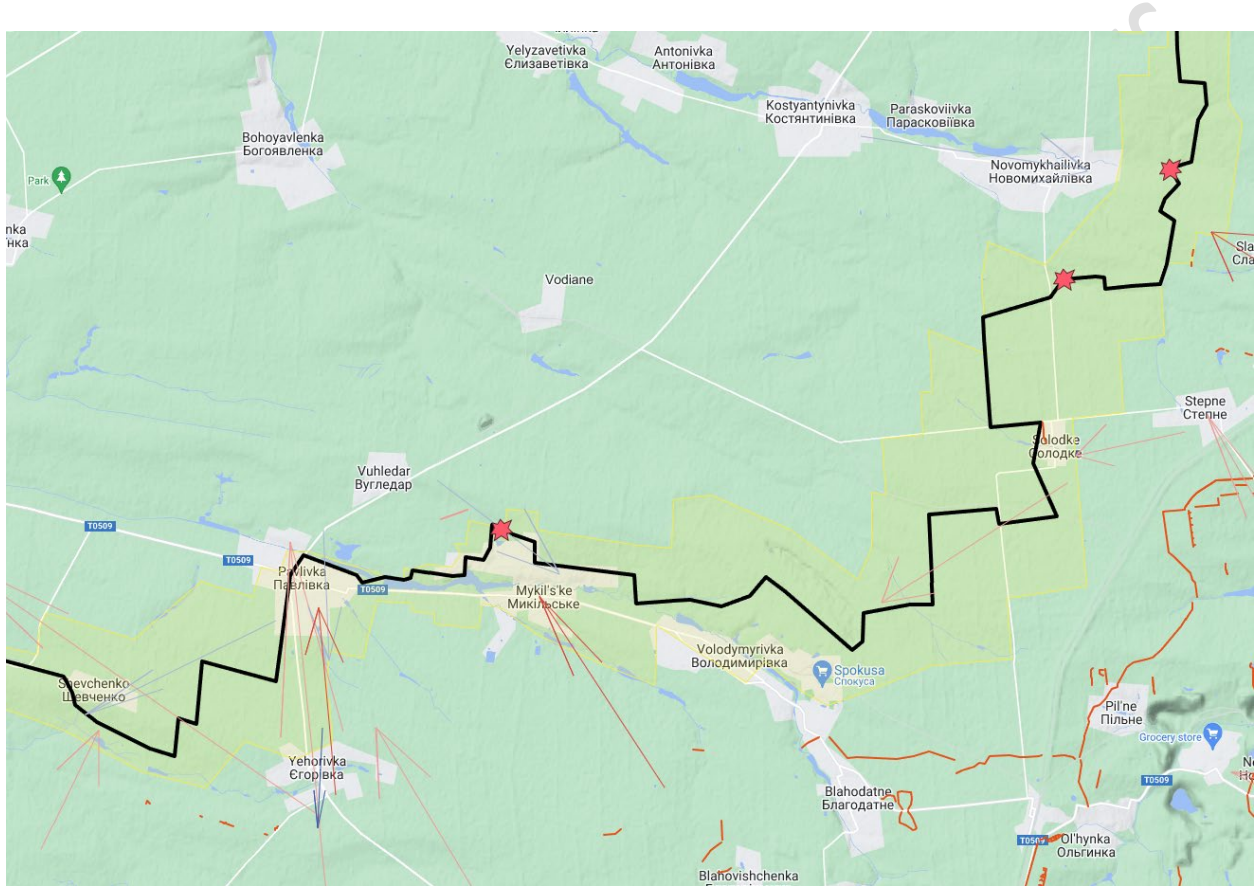
³¹ <https://t.me/landforcesofukraine/14253>

³² <https://t.me/wargonzo/17053>

³³ https://t.me/nm_dnr/11427

³⁴ <https://x.com/DefenceHQ/status/1735638403029279155?s=20>

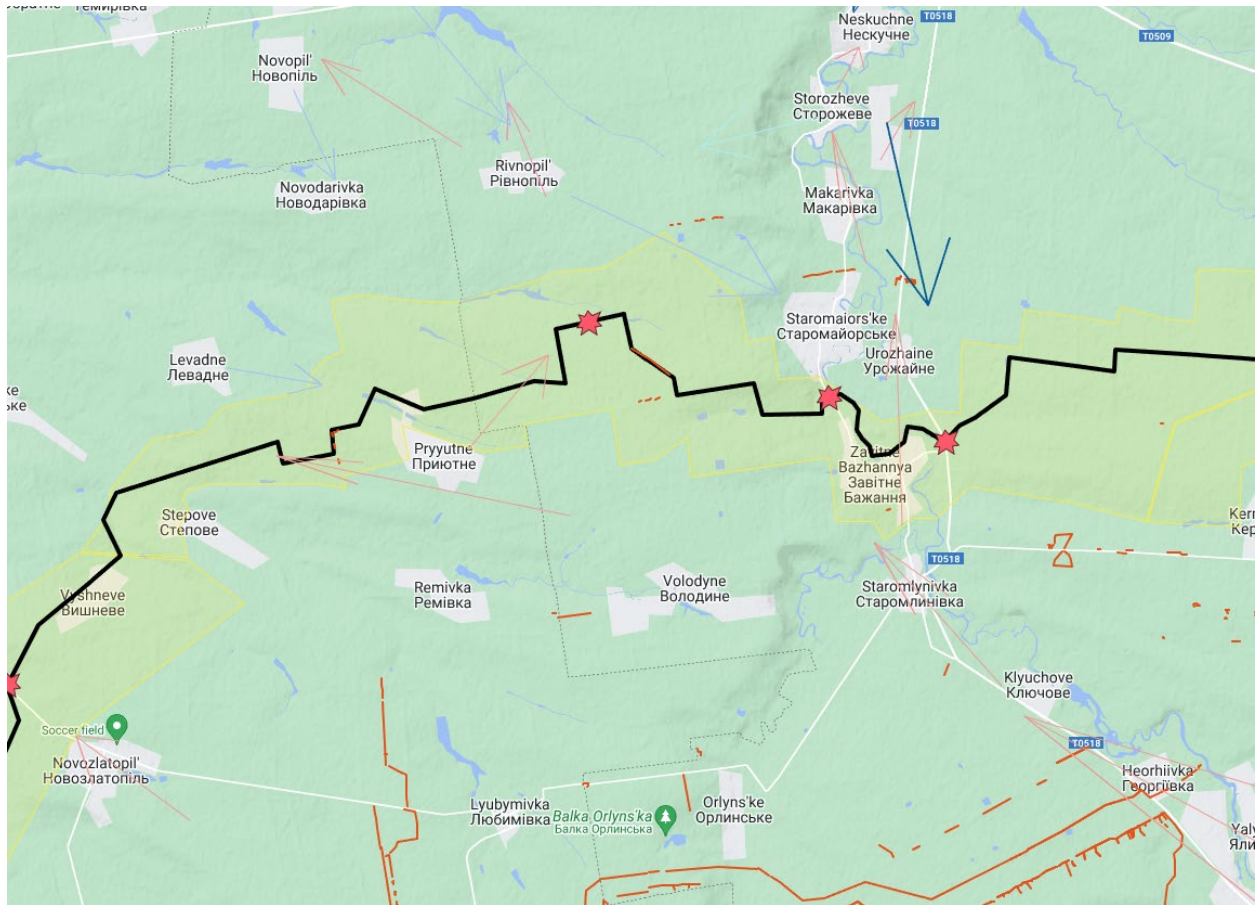
ASSESSMENT: We maintain that a Ukrainian withdrawal from Marinka is inevitable.




In the Vuhledar AO, Ukrainian forces repulsed Russian attacks on [Novomykhailivka](#) from the east and south.^{35 36}

³⁵ <https://t.me/landforcesofukraine/14253>

³⁶ <https://t.me/wargonzo/17053>





In the Staromlynivka AO, Russian forces attacked Staromaiorske from the southwest, suffered losses, and retreated to their established defensive positions.³⁷

In occupied Donetsk, the fuel depot in Budonivskyi District was hit for a second time in less than two weeks,  destroying at least two more fuel storage tanks.³⁸ Russian claims that it was a Grad rocket strike fired by multiple

³⁷ <https://t.me/landforcesofukraine/14253>

³⁸ <https://t.me/operativnoZSU/127482>

launch rocket systems (MLRS) are impossible, with the attack likely executed using rockets fired by HIMARS.

Russian sources and Russian state media broke operational security (OPSEC), sharing videos and  [pictures that provided a detailed battle damage assessment](#) (BDA) after a Ukrainian missile hit a complex of temporary housing for Russian troops and contractors.³⁹ The  [adjacent concrete factory](#) was also damaged.⁴⁰ Insurgents report that between the strike at the port complex in the southwestern part of occupied Mariupol and the concrete factory area, there were more than 70 casualties.⁴¹ They also reported that ten pieces of military hardware at the port were damaged. We cannot independently verify the claims.

On December 15, Russian forces reported that air defenses were active in Mariupol for the second time in 24 hours.⁴²

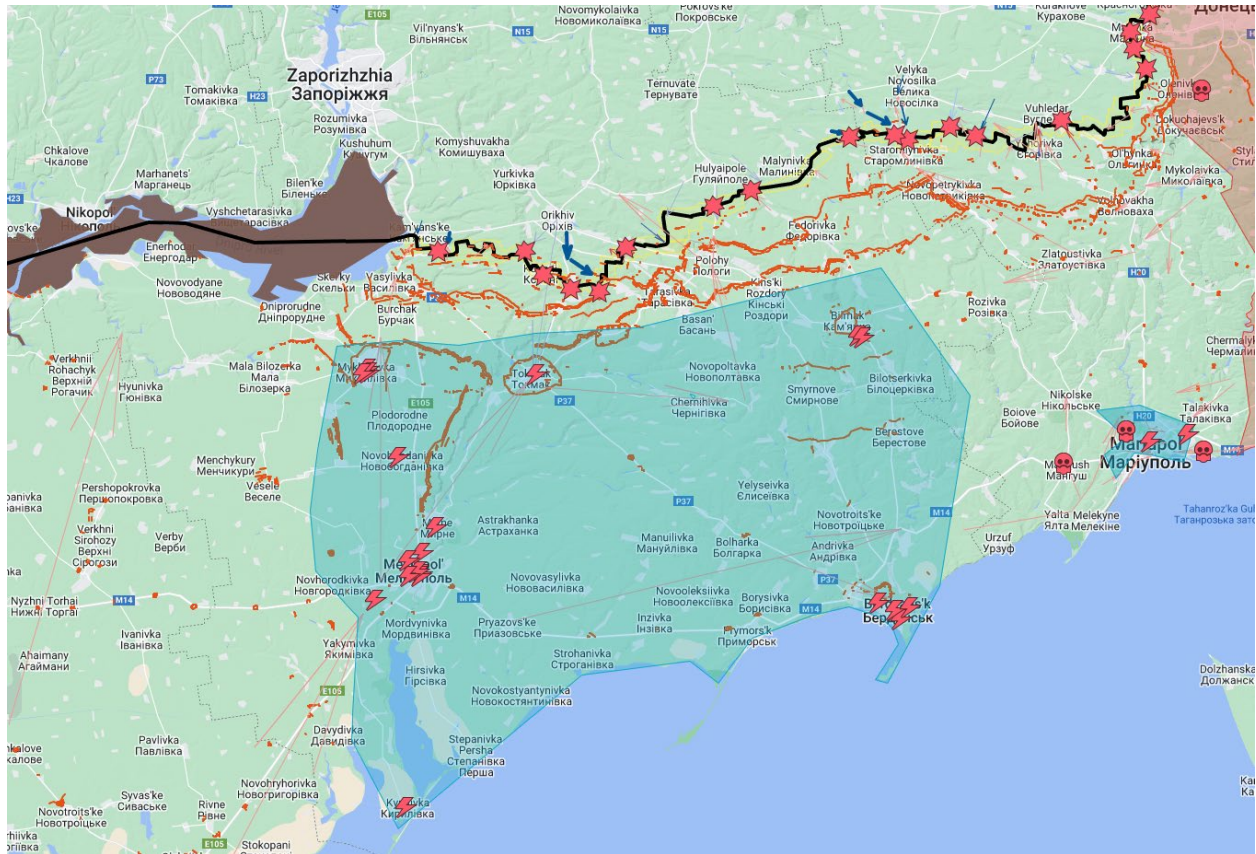
³⁹ <https://t.me/itsdonetsk/121670>

⁴⁰ <https://t.me/itsdonetsk/121649>

⁴¹ <https://t.me/operativnoZSU/127420>

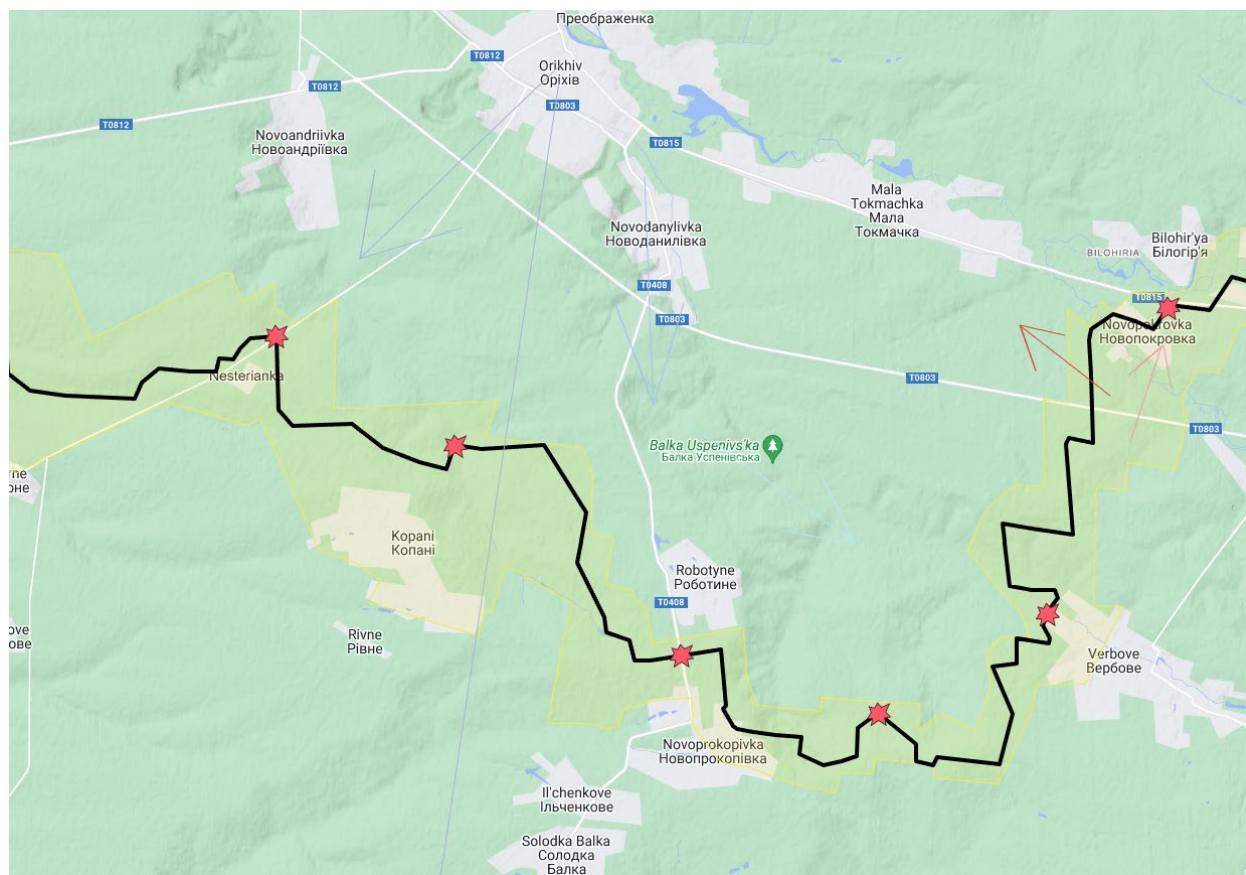
⁴² https://t.me/dva_majors/30915

ZAPORIZHZHIA



Russian Objective: Retake positions lost over the summer and terrorize Ukrainian civilians

Ukrainian Objective: Hold existing defensive positions, build an echelon defense of static fortifications, minimize civilian casualties



In Zaporizhzhia, Russian forces maintained offensive pressure in their attempts to retake lost territory in the Orikhiv AO. Russian troops tried to advance west of [Novopokrovka](#) and [Verbove](#) and south and west of [Robotyne](#).^{43 44} There was no change in the situation.

In occupied Melitopol, insurgents blew up a train carrying ammunition and fuel from Crimea.⁴⁵ This was the 11th

⁴³ <https://t.me/landforcesofukraine/14253>

⁴⁴ <https://t.me/wargonzo/17053>

⁴⁵ <https://t.me/operativnoZSU/127414>

attack on a Russian train on the Chongar-Melitpol-Dniprorudne in 2023. The explosion damaged the railroad tracks, the locomotive, and several railroad cars.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) issued an update about the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP).⁴⁶ ZNPP continues to have only one external power connection to the 750 kilovolt (kV) line. The 330 kV connection to the Zaporizhzhia Thermal Power Plant (ZTPP) switchyard remains disabled. The IAEA inspectors made a new request to Rosatom operators to inspect the switchyard to understand what repairs are needed, which was denied.

The IAEA reported that there continue to be explosions “relatively close to the plant.” Inspectors were able to do an uninterrupted walk-through of the main control rooms of Reactors 1 through 6, and Rosatom indicated that next week, they would be allowed on the roofs of Reactors 1, 5, and 6.

Boron has now been detected in the secondary cooling systems of all six reactors, with Rosatom telling the IAEA

⁴⁶ [International Atomic Energy Agency](#)

that the levels are “within the established limits and that no further action would be taken at this time.” Boron in the secondary cooling system indicates there are leaks in one or more of the primary cooling loops.

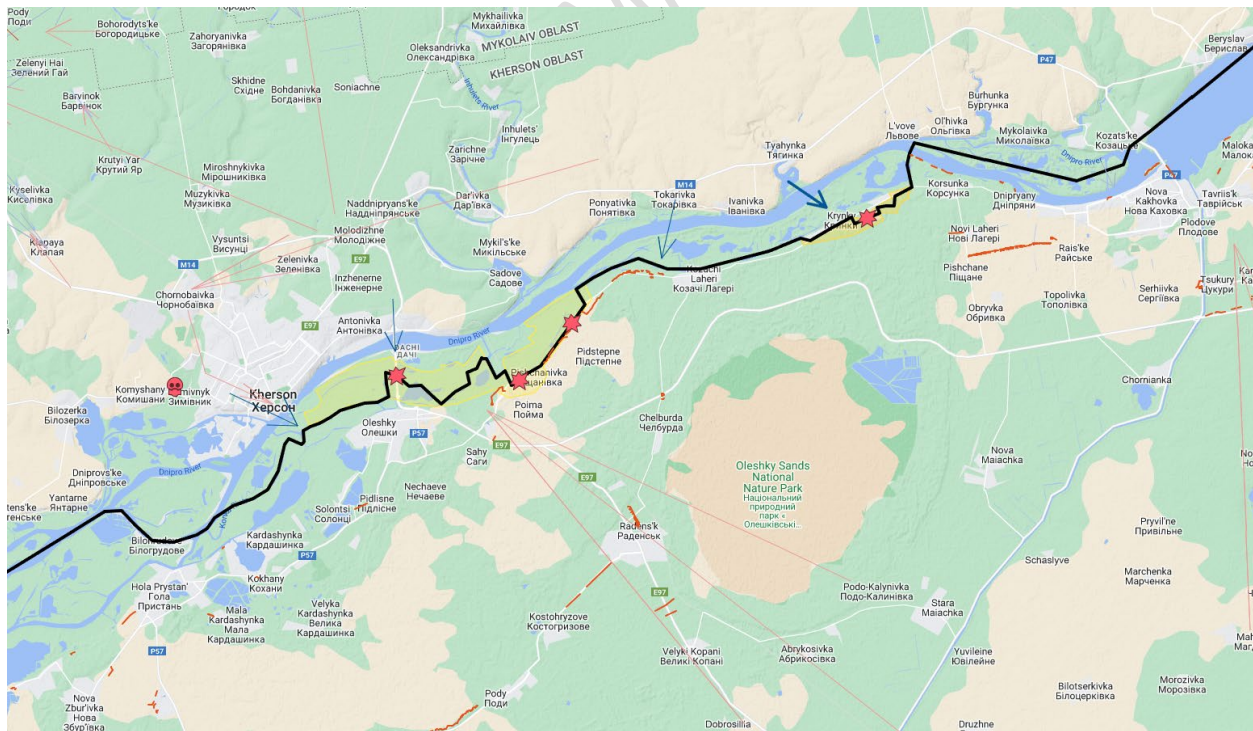
Reactor four remains in hot shutdown to produce steam for plant operations and heat for Enerhodar. Additional heat is provided by mobile diesel boilers located in the ZNPP complex and Enerhodar.


Rosatom continues to refuse to connect the radiation monitoring equipment to the Internet. IAEA inspectors take readings twice a day manually using a portal system in a backpack, and Russian occupation officials manually upload the data. Water levels in the cooling ponds remain adequate, and radiation levels inside and outside the plant are normal.

KHERSON

Russian Objective: Prevent Ukrainian forces from reaching the T-2206 Highway south of the Konka River, terrorize the civilian population in free Kherson, and maintain GLOCs to Zaporizhzhia

Ukrainian Objective: Maintain the existing bridgeheads on the left bank of the Dnipro and Konka Rivers, lock Russian troops and reserves in place, and minimize civilian casualties



In Kherson AO, fighting continued in the forests south of [Krynky](#) and on the edge of the settlement, with Russian forces  [continuing to suffer significant losses](#).^{47 48} Robert Magyar Brovdi shared a video of a Russian soldier in a destroyed home in Krynky, attempting to fire an antitank weapon. The soldier held the launcher backward, firing the antitank round into the building, killing himself. The video also showed dead Russian troops around a destroyed lying around an IFV. At 33 seconds, the video is NSFW, not for children, and many will find it disturbing. You can watch the video by [clicking here](#).⁴⁹

There may be more to the December 14 claim made by Russian President Vladimir Putin becoming more involved in the tactical decision-making at Krynky. According to the Defense Intelligence Directorate of the U.K., the newly created 104th Guards Airborne (VDV) Division, under the command of the Russian Dnipro Group of Forces Commander Colonel General Mikhail Teplinsky, has suffered "exceptionally heavy losses" after being sent to the left bank of the Dnipro River.⁵⁰ Teplinsky has been used as a fixer in other AOs, including taking temporary command of Russian defenses south of Orikhiv and stopping the


⁴⁷ <https://t.me/DeepStateUA/18330>


⁴⁸ <https://t.me/landforcesofukraine/14254>

⁴⁹ <https://twitter.com/PStyleOne1/status/1735742508804514236>

⁵⁰ <https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1735224074391998689>

Ukrainian advance in September. The Kremlin likely feels humiliated by Teplinsky, with the 104th becoming combat destroyed by a much smaller force that received NATO training from the British Royal Marines.

At least six  [Shahed-136 one-way drones flew over the city of Kherson](#) on December 15, with none targeting the city.⁵¹ Area air defense attempted to shoot down the UAVs.

In occupied Kherson, the Chongar-Peredminstne Bridge  [checkpoint was closed due](#) to a Ukrainian drone attack in the Henichesk area.⁵² At the time of publication, Google Maps suggested the Chongar Bridge was still closed.

⁵¹ https://t.me/kherson_non_fake/12185

⁵² <https://t.me/genichua/1622>

BLACK SEA, CRIMEA, MYKOLAIV, AND ODESA REGION

The United States and NATO are quietly planning to expand their military footprint in the Black Sea region as part of the recently approved United States National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2024.⁵³ The Black Sea Security Act, which was rolled into the NDAA, recognizes the Black Sea region as an area of Russian aggression, and it is in the interest of the U.S. to prevent the armed conflict from spreading. It adds that Russia's attempt to expand its territory and control access to the Mediterranean through the Black Sea presents a national security threat to the U.S. and NATO nations, and it is in the interest of the U.S. to expand economic ties with the Black Sea states.

Within the next 180 days, the U.S. National Security Council, the Department of State, the Department of Defense, and other relevant federal departments and agencies are required to prepare an interagency Black Sea Security and Development Strategy. After the creation of the plan, the U.S. will consider placing a military headquarters in the Black Sea region, which will be responsible for planning, maintaining combat readiness,

⁵³ <https://www.newgeopolitics.org/2023/09/10/the-usa-adopts-the-law-on-black-sea-security/>

conducting joint military exercises, and coordinating military activity in the Black Sea. Funding for an expanded military footprint in the region can be requested in the 2024, 2025, and 2026 fiscal years.

In occupied Crimea, the Kerch Strait ferry continued to have intermittent closures.

Russia claims that they shot down all 32 one-way drones launched by Ukraine at targets in occupied Crimea.^{54 55}

The Prime Minister of Bulgaria, Mykola Denkov, accused Russian President Putin of having “imperial ambitions” after claiming “the entire Black Sea coast used to be Russian” during a curated question and answer session on state-controlled media.⁵⁶ “Putin nurtures imperial ambitions at the expense of several countries that are currently part of the E.U. This should alarm Europe.”

⁵⁴ https://t.me/mod_russia/33591

⁵⁵ https://t.me/mod_russia/33593

⁵⁶ https://t.me/our_odessa/58604

WESTERN AND CENTRAL UKRAINE

Russian Objective: Launch terror attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure to break morale

Ukrainian Objective: Deter attacks and protect civilian lives

In the Kirovohrad Oblast, a Russian Kh-59 guided air-to-ground missile was shot down in the Kropyvnytskyi district.⁵⁷



In Zakarpattia Oblast (also known as Transcarpathia), 54-year-old deputy Serhiy Batryn of the Keretsky Village Council dropped three grenades, potentially Soviet-era RDG-5s, in the council chambers, wounding 27, seven critically, including Batryn.^{58 59} Miraculously, the attack didn't kill anyone. Witnesses said Batryn had argued with council deputies over the 2023 and 2024 budget. It is reported that they were going to give the village head a 50% bonus and double their salary for 2024.⁶⁰ He left the council meeting and returned two minutes later with his

⁵⁷ <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2023/12/15/7433268/>

⁵⁸ <https://t.me/operativnoZSU/127399>

⁵⁹ <https://t.me/operativnoZSU/127394>

⁶⁰ <https://t.me/uniannet/120026>

hands in his pockets. Nineteen seconds later, he pulled out two grenades and appeared to have been ignored. Five seconds later, he tossed the two grenades he was holding and then dropped a third one on the floor.⁶¹ The second half of the incident was captured on video. The video is NSFW, and some find it disturbing. You can watch the video by   [clicking here](#).⁶²

Ukrainian officials called the incident a terrorist attack, and if Batryn survives, he faces up to ten years in prison.⁶³ He was never in the military, and it is unclear where he got the grenades. It is also unclear what weapon was used.

In breaking news, Ukrainian journalist Vitaliy Glagola reported that investigators found a suicide note in Batryn's home.⁶⁴

SIDEBAR: Mental illness and suicide are sensitive topics, and their discussion can trigger strong feelings. If you are having suicidal thoughts or you're despondent, there is help available.

⁶¹ <https://t.me/uniannet/119998>

⁶² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1rlWyBTu7E>

⁶³ <https://t.me/uniannet/119997>

⁶⁴ [UNN - Ukraine](#)



- United States: 988 or 800-273-8255 - you can text 741741 – veterans can text 838255
- Canada: 833-456-4566 or text 45645 (text from 4 PM to Midnight EDT)
- United Kingdom: 0800-689-5652 or 999
- Ireland: Freephone 116-123 (Ireland and Northern Ireland) or text 50808 (Ireland only)
- Australia: 13-11-14 or 000 or text 0477-13-11-14
- New Zealand: 0508-828-865 or 111
- Ukraine: 7333 (supports Ukrainian and Russian)

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NORTHERN AND NORTHEASTERN UKRAINE

Russian Objective: Lock Ukrainian military resources into place and launch terror attacks on civilians in an attempt to break morale

Ukrainian Objective: Maintain the integrity of the international border, deter attacks, and protect civilian lives

Iranian-sourced Shahed-136 one-way drones attacked the Kyiv region, the sixth air raid this month. The head of the Kyiv Military Administration (KMVA), Serhiy Popko, reported that all of the UAVs were intercepted. There wasn't any significant damage or injuries reported.⁶⁵

A security guard in Kyiv is facing up to two years in prison after denying access to two children, 11 and 12, into a bomb shelter on the night of December 14 – 15.⁶⁶ ⁶⁷ The brother and sister were walking the family dog when the air raid started. They ran to the nearest shelter, but the security guard refused to let the children enter because they had a

⁶⁵ https://t.me/VA_Kyiv/3840

⁶⁶ <https://t.me/uniannet/120024>


⁶⁷ <https://t.me/uniannet/119982>

dog. The guard told them they could leave the dog outside, which they refused. The children went to another shelter.

RUSSIAN FRONT

Russian Objective: Tighten government control and civil order, prevent renewed insurrections, repel Russian partisan attacks, secure the state border

Ukrainian-Backed Russian Partisan Objective: Motivate other Russians to fight against the Putin regime, accelerate the downfall of the Russian government, foment civil unrest


The Freedom of Russia Legion  [took responsibility for the December 12 explosion](#) and fire that destroyed a storage tank at the Rosneft oil depot in Voronezh.⁶⁸

“To destroy the enemy's fuel at the front, you need to conduct reconnaissance over several days, spend a certain amount of shells, and attract artillerymen and UAV

⁶⁸ <https://t.me/operativnoZSU/127318>

operators. To destroy fuel in the rear, you need a match and one sleepless night."⁶⁹

In the Kursk region, Russian officials claim that  [air defenses intercepted four Ukrainian drones](#).^{70 71}

Russian officials are reporting that December in Moscow has had the snowiest first 15 days going back 150 years.⁷² On the night of December 14 – 15, the region received the equivalent of two weeks of snow. The severe weather is snarling traffic and  [impacting logistics](#).⁷³ During the first two weeks of December, some areas in central Russia have received the most snow in recorded history and have been blasted by near record cold.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ <https://t.me/legionoffreedom/1033>

⁷⁰ <https://t.me/operativnoZSU/127445>

⁷¹ https://t.me/mod_russia/33587

⁷² <https://t.me/astrapress/44061>

⁷³ <https://t.me/bazabazon/23759>

⁷⁴ <https://t.me/izvestia/155432>

THEATERWIDE

It has been eight days since Russia last launched Kh-101/Kh-55/Kh-555 cruise missiles at Ukraine and 78 days since the last Kalibr cruise missile launch. Russia launched 32 Shahed-136 one-way drones, with 31 shot down by the Air Force and air defenses and one shot down by the Navy.^{75 76}

Kyivstar reported that 4G mobile internet service had been restored across free Ukraine, with 95% of mobile communication base stations operational.^{77 78} A company spokesperson said, "The service may work at a reduced speed, but as the network stabilizes, its quality will improve." Roaming services were also restored.

The CEO of Ukrhydroenergo, Ihor Syrota, said during Marathon that 1,500 megawatts of hydropower capacity lost since February 24, 2022, had been restored, and another 1,000 megawatts will be back online within the next six months.⁷⁹ Syrota said that there had been more than 50 missile strikes against Ukrhydroenergo facilities

⁷⁵ <https://t.me/operativnoZSU/127542>

⁷⁶ <https://t.me/operativnoZSU/127545>

⁷⁷ https://t.me/couch_iu/48324

⁷⁸ https://t.me/couch_iu/48283

⁷⁹ <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2023/12/15/7433286/>

since Russia expanded its war of aggression against Ukraine.

The Main Defense Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine (GUR) estimated that Russia has 443,000 soldiers in Ukraine and an additional 30,000 members of the Rosgvardiya in the rear of the occupied territories.⁸⁰ This is lower than the claim made by President Putin, who said there were 617,000 Russian troops in Ukraine.

It's been a long time since Washington or Moscow have provided an update on the deconfliction line between the two nuclear powers. The Russian commander of the Strategic Missile Forces (RVSN), Colonel General Sergei Karakaev, told Russian state media agency Krasnaya Zvezda, "The Russian Federation informs the American side at least 24 hours in advance about any planned launch of ICBMs and SLBMs. The United States of America also provides similar information."⁸¹

U.S. Ambassador to China, Nicholas Burns, said there was no evidence that Beijing was providing lethal military aid to

⁸⁰ <https://t.me/Crimeanwind/50193>

⁸¹ <https://t.me/rusbrief/183122>

Moscow to support its war of aggression.⁸² "We didn't see this happening. We monitor this every day, but we haven't seen it." Burns noted that China and Russia are engaged in increased cooperation and called it an "important development," and accused Beijing of having a "strong leaning toward Russia."

In a reversal from an earlier assessment over the summer, Senior Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment and Defense Analysis Michael Kofman, a preeminent expert on the Ukrainian military, wrote that over the summer, Ukraine held a 2:1 artillery advantage over Russia.⁸³ Previously, Kofman and his associate, Rob Lee, dismissed claims that Ukraine held an artillery advantage.

SPECIAL ASSESSMENT: In our analysis, this change in position is good news if Ukraine can fill the ammunition gap and achieve 2023 supply levels. Over the summer, we compared fire mission reports from the Russian Ministry of Defense and General Tarnavskiy of the Tavria Group in the Zaporizhzhia oblast. We found that Ukraine was executing 1.5 to 2 fire missions for each one performed by Russia, and on days both combatants shared data, we published that information in the SITREP. The critical data point we didn't

⁸² <https://t.me/rusbrief/183115>

⁸³ <https://twitter.com/KofmanMichael/status/1735636910079373608>

have is how many rounds were being fired in each fire mission. Was it two, or was it ten? Russian artillery is less precise, so logically, their batteries will have to assign more rounds to a fire mission to be successful. This updated information from Kofman suggests that while Ukraine is now facing a critical ammunition shortage of 1:4 to 1:5, Ukraine and its allies are capable of out-producing Russia and Iran combined.

Kofman did add a sobering fact, "Last fall, folks opined that it was not just the U.S. stockpile and output that mattered. Notionally, Europe could make a lot more. Back then, and now (a year later), it is mostly the US providing Ukraine its supply of main caliber artillery ammunition."⁸⁴

That's the \$61 billion question hanging in the U.S. Senate next week.

In our final assessment, European nations need to realize that Russia presents a clear threat if Ukraine falls, and at least for the next 14 months, United States support in a broader conflict may not be as guaranteed as some nations believe.

⁸⁴ <https://twitter.com/KofmanMichael/status/1735639014865007089>

To answer the question, "What changed from 12 months ago when everyone, including your team, was declaring Russia was almost finished?"

We looked at 21st-century Western military doctrine and 21st-century society. We wrongly believed that a country with a population of 146 million, already in a male demographic crisis, and not experiencing an existential threat of existence, would absorb 300,000 to 365,000 casualties in 20 months and not press for peace. This is the equivalent of the United States suffering 696,000 to 846,800 casualties in the same period, which, on the high end, starts approaching all U.S. casualties during World War II.⁸⁵

It has become apparent that President Putin and the leaders in the Kremlin will continue to fight using World War II-style tactics of masses of light infantry, supported by barrel and tubed artillery, and quantity over quality for armor. Additionally, the Russia-Ukraine War raises significant questions about the use of air power and standoff weapons to overwhelm a peer or near-peer combatant. Air defense systems in the 21st century will

⁸⁵ [United States National World War II Museum](#)

make establishing air superiority, a foundation of Western military doctrine, very challenging in a war that doesn't end in weeks against Russia.

In our assessment, if the West abandons Ukraine, the possibility of continental war in Europe in the next 3 to 7 years will increase significantly. Even if Russia is defeated, Moscow will not order the dismantling of their expanded military-industrial capacity, and Russian leadership won't agree to arms limitations. Not only is Europe unprepared for a continental conflict, they are not preparing to counter how Russia fights war.

Polish trucker drivers backed by the pro-Russian Confederate Party appealed the refusal of a protest permit in the Lublin District Court, which lifted the moratorium. The court decision can be appealed after 24 hours, but by waiting until Friday, government officials can't address the court until Monday. Truck drivers will blockade the Yahodyn-Dorohusk border crossing over the weekend and plan to end their protest on Monday.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ <https://t.me/uniannet/120033>

The Ukrainian Border Guard Service and the Western Regional Administration of the State Police of Slovakia confirmed that the blockade of the Vysne Nemecke-Uzhhorod border checkpoint has ended.⁸⁷ Currently, 1,065 trucks are in the queue.⁸⁸

The approved U.S. NDAA Department of Defense budget for 2024 removed language that would have extended the Lend-Lease Act of 2023 for another year. The Biden Administration did not use the program.⁸⁹

The World Bank announced that another \$1.34 billion has been allocated to Ukraine to support the payment of pensions, teachers, and other public services and employees.⁹⁰

The European Commission approved the final 2023 macro-financing tranche to Ukraine. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, at a press conference after the E.U. Summit, told reporters, "In the coming days, we will transfer 1.5 billion euros."⁹¹ The next

⁸⁷ <https://t.me/suspilnenews/26950>


⁸⁸ <https://t.me/DPSUkr/16813>

⁸⁹ <https://t.me/ShrikeNews/11532>

⁹⁰ <https://t.me/suspilnenews/26949>

⁹¹ <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2023/12/15/7433254/>

payment is subject to certain approval conditions by the International Monetary Fund.

Lithuania announced another it was providing Ukraine with another military aid package, including "several million" rounds of ammunition for small arms and thousands of short-range antitank rounds for grenade launchers.⁹² Additionally, the first Germany Leopard 2 main battle tanks (MBT) sent to Lithuania for repairs and service  [are ready to be returned to Ukraine](#).⁹³

South Korea donated ten Croatian DOK-ING uncrewed mine-clearing machines to Ukraine.⁹⁴

Germany sent 6.1 million euros of humanitarian aid to Ukraine.⁹⁵ Minister of Foreign Affairs Annalena Berbock said, "With the help of the winter protective umbrella that we placed over Ukraine, we help people survive the harsh and cold season. Not only in the form of air defense systems but also generators, blankets, tents, and batteries."

⁹² <https://t.me/DPSUkr/16823>

⁹³ <https://t.me/informnapalm/19825>

⁹⁴ <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2023/12/15/7433255/>

⁹⁵ https://t.me/couch_iu/48304

The E.U. has decided “in principle” to provide Ukraine with another 50 billion euros in aid over the next four years.⁹⁶ Searching for a way to bypass the veto power held by Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Orban, it is reported a path has been discovered and will be discussed in January.

The table for equipment losses was **updated on December 5, 2023**, and includes the losses suffered during the Prigozhin Insurrection of June 23 – 24. The latest data does not include the Su-24M shot down on December 5.

⁹⁶ <https://t.me/suspilnenews/26958>

RUSSIA VS. UKRAINE HEAVY EQUIPMENT LOSSES

Russian and Ukrainian visually confirmed heavy equipment losses sourced from the [Oryx Database](#) from February 24, 2022, to December 5, 2023.

13,293 Russian (including [Chef's Rebellion](#)) vs. 4,725 Ukrainian

Equipment	Russian Losses	Ukrainian Losses	Ratio	Change
Main Battle Tanks	2341	314	7.46:1	↑
Medium Duty Tanks	172	381	0.45:1	—
Armored fighting Vehicles	1076	336	3.20:1	↑
Infantry Fighting Vehicles	3073	787	3.90:1	—
Armored Personnel Carriers	376	377	1.00:1	—
MRAPs	49	186	0.26:1	—
Infantry Mobility Vehicles	229	395	0.58:1	—
Command and Communications Vehicles	260	18	14.44:1	↑
Engineering Vehicles	367	100	3.67:1	—
Towed Artillery	331*	170	1.95:1	—
Self-Propelled Howitzers/Mortars	609	254	2.40:1	↓
MLRS	318	52	6.12:1	↓
SAMs	201	130	1.55:1	↑
Mobile Radars	49	87	0.56:1	↓
EW/ECW	64	5	12.80:1	↓
Winged Aircraft	95	78	1.22:1	—
Helicopters	139	36	3.86:1	—
Naval Vessels and Submarines	19	27	0.70:1	↑

RUSSIAN MOBIKS, MOBILIZATION, AND MIR

Journalists with Mediazona and the BBC have identified 39,424 Russian soldiers who were killed in action since February 24, 2022.⁹⁷ Searching Russian social media, state-controlled media news agencies, and government announcements, the deaths were verified using OSINT. The actual number is much higher, as many deaths go unreported in the public domain. Since December 1, over 1,100 new names were added to the list, likely due to the intense fighting in the Avdiivka AO.

On December 14, Russian President Putin held a nearly five-hour highly curated and tightly controlled question and answer session with the Russian people. Over 650,000 questions were asked in advance, with a little more than 1,000 selected by the Presidential Administration and the Public Popular Front.⁹⁸

Highlights from the session include:

⁹⁷ <https://t.me/astrapress/44094>

⁹⁸ <https://t.me/bazabazon/23717>

- A volunteer soldier with the 1st Army Corps in the so-called Donetsk People's Republic (DNR), Yulia Bereza, complained to President Putin that because she joined the 1st Army Corps before the Donetsk oblast was (illegally) annexed, her mother, who lives in the Samara region of Russia cannot receive any of the military social benefits.^{99 100 101} Putin promised that the work to integrate the Russian soldiers from the DNR and the Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) would continue, and they should have equal rights to their peers from Russia. The original pre-2014 Russia, Russia. But the people from the DNR and LNR are Russian. But they aren't. But they were Russian as far back as 2014, which means Russian soldiers were fighting against Ukraine at the start of the Maidan. You know, not Russian. Russian.
- Former Private Military Company (PMC) Wagner Group mercenary Sergei Sobolev told Putin he still has not obtained his veteran status.^{102 103} Putin said the Russian Ministry of Defense had created a gap in benefits, adding, "Among my relatives, there are those who fought as part of this PMC. Some have passed away. And their rights must be restored."

⁹⁹ https://t.me/shot_shot/60453

¹⁰⁰ <https://t.me/itsdonetsk/121463>

¹⁰¹ https://t.me/shot_shot/60453

¹⁰² https://t.me/shot_shot/60451

¹⁰³ <https://t.me/astrapress/44007>

- **ASSESSMENT:** The issue of veteran recognition and benefits for soldiers from the DNR and LNR was supposed to have been addressed a year ago. Additionally, benefits issues for former PMC Wagner mercenaries were supposed to be on a path to resolution. Putin told viewers that over 4,000 soldiers in the DNR and LNR have received veteran status, a fraction of the number of people that have passed through the ranks of the 1st and 2nd Army Corps.
- Putin said that there was no need for a second wave of partial mobilization in 2024 and that the Russian Ministry of Defense was adequately staffed.¹⁰⁴ ¹⁰⁵ He claimed 300,000 were mobilized last year (286,000 but close enough), with 244,000 in the “special military operation” zone. Putin added that since January 1, 486,000 volunteers have joined the Russian Federation Armed Forces, and another 1,500 sign up each day. He went on to say there are currently 617,000 troops in the occupied territories.¹⁰⁶
- When asked when and how the “special military operation will end,” Putin said that the goals are unchanged but didn’t clarify if that was the February 2022 goals or the May 2022 goals.

¹⁰⁴ https://t.me/shot_shot/60425

¹⁰⁵ v

¹⁰⁶ <https://t.me/operativnoZSU/127252>

- Russian military correspondent Dmitry Kulko got into a tense exchange with Putin, after asking what the Kremlin was doing to improve the supply of drones, saying that military commanders are telling him that they remain in short supply at the front.¹⁰⁷ Putin pushed back, saying, "You can't help but see that the situation is improving. Is it true? Tell me it's true." Kulko replied, "It's improving, yes."
- ***Editor's Note:*** *Tell the analyst team to track Dmitry Kulko, who may experience a sudden and sad accident somewhere in the occupied territories in the near future.*

While over 1,000 questions made it to the potential queue, many went unanswered. However, they were displayed on screens during the broadcast.

"Why does your reality differ from our reality?"

"When will the mobilized be released? Why should 300 thousand people serve for the whole country?"

¹⁰⁷ <https://t.me/bazabazon/23725>


After the broadcast, relatives of mobilized in Novosibirsk said their appeals on the broadcast were ignored.¹⁰⁸ "The direct line with the president became a spit in the soul of the wives and mothers of the mobilized. All we asked for was pain, a cry, an open wound that was simply poked with a stick. They laughed at us. This deafness is really scary. We are not at all concerned about eggs or unemployment; all other issues seemed to us to be somehow petty and non-existent, because there is one huge misfortune that has befallen us and our relatives. [Our] guys who have been on the front line for more than a year."


A significant amount of time was spent on the issue of inflation and the job market, which Russia officially claims is the best in history with 2.9% unemployment. One issue not discussed was the upcoming March 2024 presidential elections.

The Central Court of Chelyabinsk stripped Russian citizenship from two men who "evaded military duty," representing the first case to move through Russian courts against newly naturalized citizens. The Ministry of Internal Affairs accused the two brothers of "knowingly providing false information in order not to bear military duty."

¹⁰⁸ <https://t.me/rusbrief/182997>

Among those 486,000...volunteers...President Putin talked about, are newly minted citizens who are taken... voluntarily...to the commissariat and military enlistment offices to... voluntarily...join the Russian Federation Armed Forces.¹⁰⁹ In April, President Putin signed into law the ability to deprive people of their Russian citizenship for various crimes, including spreading fake news about the armed forces, avoiding military service, preparing a mutiny, or causing "mass unrest."

A video showed that a Russian tubed artillery battery almost shot down a Russian Su-25 ground attack airplane. The aircraft was doing a low flyover  [just as a BM-21 MLRS started firing](#) 122 mm Grad rockets.¹¹⁰

The director of a school in the Omsk region  [refused to install a memorial plaque](#) to a graduate of the school who died in Ukraine.¹¹¹ The director, arguing with the people who wanted to hang the memorial, said, "If we hang everyone, there aren't enough walls. This is not a cemetery for you."

¹⁰⁹ <https://t.me/svobodnieslova/3569>

¹¹⁰ <https://t.me/The3rdForceUA/21715>

¹¹¹ https://t.me/ukrarmed_forces/7458

Rosstat released a sobering report about the demographic crisis gripping Russia. The natural population decline is accelerating, and the birth rate is expected to continue to drop each year through 2027. By 2046, Rosstat estimates the Russian Federation population will be 138 million, a decline of eight million people in the next 22 years.¹¹²

PUTIN'S PURGE

During a court hearing in Moscow about Alexey Navalny, the court read into the record a certificate dated December 12 from the Federal Penitentiary Service for the Vladimir Region, which states that Navalny "...left PKU IK-6 in the Vladimir Region to a correctional institution located outside the Vladimir Region, in accordance with the entry into legal force by the verdict of the Moscow City Court of August 4, 2023. Navalny's arrival will be notified within the framework of current legislation."¹¹³

The court hearing about Navalny, who has reportedly been missing for two weeks, was moved to December 18.¹¹⁴

¹¹² <https://t.me/rusbrief/183084>

¹¹³ <https://t.me/rusbrief/183004>

¹¹⁴ <https://t.me/astrapress/44059>

In Novosibirsk, scientist Vladislav Galkin was arrested under suspicion of treason.¹¹⁵ Galkin is an associate professor at Tomsk Polytechnic University and worked with Valery Zvegintsev, who is also under arrest for treason. The last joint document published by Galkin and Zvegintsev appeared in the Iranian Journal of Applied and Computational Mechanics. It proposed a method for designing high-speed axisymmetric air intakes using flow reversal, which drew the attention of investigators as the work could be used to design air intakes for supersonic aircraft. The duo were among the engineering teams that developed the Kinzhal, Zircon, Avangard, and Sarmat missiles. So far, 16 people from the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences have been arrested.

The Tushinsky District Court of Moscow found nine people guilty of smuggling parts and aircraft engines for the Mig-29 to third-party nations. Each person was sentenced to 17 years in prison. The thefts allegedly totaled \$550,000, and the nation or nations involved were unnamed.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ <https://t.me/rusbrief/183104>

¹¹⁶ <https://t.me/rusbrief/183069>

Charges were filed against human rights activist Nadezhda Nizovkina for working with an “undesirable” organization.¹¹⁷ During the seventh international forum, “Post-Russia,” in Tokyo, Nizovkina called for the “Buryatia to secede from Russia” and negotiate a peace agreement with Ukraine.

On December 14, in a closed-door hearing in a Moscow court, Igor ‘Girkin’ Strelkov pleaded not guilty to charges of extremism. The usually defiant Strelkov stood during the proceedings, looked exhausted, and was wearing an undersized shirt.¹¹⁸

After the hearing, Stelkov’s lawyer issued a long statement outlining the Internet post that has landed the former FSB Colonel and convicted war criminal in pre-trial detention at Lefortovo Prison.¹¹⁹ *“[On] May 25, 2022, on the website of E.E. Mikhailov, he [Strelkov – Ed.] read a message that the military personnel of the DNR people's militia...called up as part of mobilization on the eve of the start of the special military operation until the end of May, were not provided with monetary allowances in accordance with the norms of the Russian armed forces, checked this information*

¹¹⁷ <https://t.me/astrapress/44085>

¹¹⁸ <https://t.me/operativnoZSU/127267>

¹¹⁹ <https://t.me/strelkovii/6545>

through his channels, found out that...there were no legal efforts to eliminate this ugly phenomenon at that time, after which Strelkov posted [messages] on his pages on social networks with a link to Mikhailov's message, providing them with the author's emotional commentary."

"At the same time, Igor Ivanovich [Strelkov's patronymic – Ed.] emphasized that he supports the [special military operation] and believes that the military operation in Ukraine should have started back in 2014, and his critical remarks in this particular case relate exclusively to the specific culprits of the current situation with the non-payment of monetary allowances to the mobilized and members of their families. Strelkov never opposed the policy of the Russian Federation towards the so-called Ukraine after the start of the [special military operation]; he did not have and does not have any criminal intent aimed at encouraging an unlimited number of people from among Internet users to carry out extremist activities; when placing his publication, he was guided by motives for promptly encouraging the military authorities and the authorities of the DNR to solve the problem with payments and attracting the attention of law enforcement agencies to the incident he mentioned."

Strelkov's trial is considered a state secret, with the next closed-door hearing on December 20.¹²⁰

ASSESSMENT: Igor 'Girkin' Strelkov belongs in prison for the rest of his life, but if you read the question asked to Putin by Yulia Bereza, who is a member of the 1st Army Corps of the so-called DNR, it has been 19 months since Strelkov shared Mikhailov's accurate complaint and almost nothing has been done. The Kremlin could have charged Strelkov with a laundry list of crimes that would have had far more legitimacy. Convicting him for this act serves a second purpose. It delegitimizes the complaints of thousands of Russian soldiers who fought in the 1st and 2nd Army Corps who were underpaid or never paid and haven't received their veteran and medical benefits. The conviction for this specific post is a message to any Russian soldier who didn't get paid according to their contract. Don't spread fakes about the Russian Federation Armed Forces. You might be an extremist.

The trial for Strelkov, who is a presidential candidate, is expected to be fast-tracked so it ends before March 2024.¹²¹

¹²⁰ <https://t.me/strelkovii/6545>

¹²¹ <https://t.me/rusbrief/183056>




The Moscow City Court overturned the sentence of Oleg Orlov, who was convicted for “repeatedly discrediting the army.” His case was returned to the prosecutor's office. Previously, Orlov was sentenced to pay a fine, but the court plans to issue a stricter sentence.¹²²

¹²² <https://t.me/astrapress/43998>



WAR CRIMES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Today's SITREP contains information about sexual assault and links to a very disturbing video. If the description and discussion of gender-based violence are troubling, we recommend you skip this section.

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In occupied Mariupol, a neighbor recorded a Chechen Rosgvardiya Special Purpose Mobility Unit (OMON) soldier raping her neighbor. The recording captures the voice of a woman screaming and crying while she is assaulted. It is reported that the victim was either dating or befriended the soldier in hopes of getting access to better goods and services. The audio is extremely disturbing. It should only be listened to using headphones and is not for children. We made the editorial decision to share the clip because gender-based violence as a weapon of war is an important topic in the public domain. If you still want to listen, you can    [click here](#).¹²³

In the occupied territories, it is reported that Russian soldiers committed a war crime by extrajudicially executing a civilian in the Kherson settlement of Oleshky.¹²⁴ The unnamed victim is reportedly 30 years old and was reportedly ordered executed by the unit's military commander.

Dashcam video from December 1 captured a Russian MT-LB APC   [intentionally running over a passenger car](#) in occupied Donetsk after it pulled over to let the vehicle

¹²³ <https://t.me/andriyshTime/16115>

¹²⁴ https://t.me/kherson_non_fake/12177

pass.¹²⁵ The car's lane was blocked by a disabled fuel truck, and the status of the occupants is unknown.

In an interview, an avowed Neo-Nazi, wanted war criminal, and co-founder of the Rusich Group, Alexey Milchakov, joined a growing list of Russian's admitted they participated in the anti-Madian as little green men.¹²⁶ Milchakov said the Berkut was complicit in the anti-Maidan, and he was the go-between that provided live ammunition to their snipers.

Milchakov's associated, avowed Neo-Nazi, wanted war criminal, and the other co-founder of the Rusich Group, Jan Petrovsky, is under investigation in Finland.¹²⁷ The Finnish General Prosecutor's Office has initiated a preliminary investigation into possible war crimes after refusing to extradite Petrovsky to Ukraine. Finish news agency Yle said the investigation will examine the potential mistreatment of wounded and captured Ukrainian soldiers. Finland can investigate crimes committed in Ukraine under the principle of universal jurisdiction.

Deep breathe.

¹²⁵ <https://t.me/informnapalm/19810>

¹²⁶ <https://t.me/informnapalm/19813>


¹²⁷ <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2023/12/15/7433258/>

Five more children from Kherson were repatriated to free Ukraine, including two who were reunited with their families.¹²⁸

GEOPOLITICS

After opening two border crossing with Russia on December 13, Finland closed them less than 48 hours later.¹²⁹

According to border guards, just hours after the crossings were opened, 24 undocumented migrants from Arab nations requested asylum.¹³⁰ ¹³¹ According to the Minister of Internal Affairs of Estonia, Russia is deliberately sending refugees from Syria, Morocco, and Iraq in order to fuel anti-immigration and anti-Muslim sentiment and destabilize Europe.

While the two checkpoints were still open,  [long queues formed, with discarded bikes](#) piled in the snow.¹³² The North-West Customs Administration of Finland reported that almost 3,000 people in 1,435 cars, 28 buses, and 111

¹²⁸ https://t.me/couch_iu/48202

¹²⁹ <https://t.me/uniannet/119932>

¹³⁰ <https://t.me/astrapress/44027>

¹³¹ <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2023/12/15/7433294/>

¹³² <https://t.me/izvestia/155429>

trucks crossed the border between Russia and Finland during the brief opening.¹³³

The U.S. House and Senate passed a bill that prevents the President of the United States from unilaterally withdrawing from the NATO Alliance.¹³⁴

ECONOMICS

The Central Bank of Russia raised the prime lending rate another 100 basis points to 16% as inflation continues to bedevil the Russian Federation.¹³⁵ Economic leaders in Russia said that rate increases will end when inflation falls below 4% and that the rate will "remain high for as long as necessary." The bankers added that they believed that they were close to no longer needing additional rate hikes, which caused the rouble to fall.¹³⁶

Annualized inflation got worse in 2023, with the official rate published at 7.5%.¹³⁷ Putin announced that Russia's minimum wage would increase by 18.5% in 2024, after

¹³³ <https://t.me/rusbrief/182890>

¹³⁴ https://t.me/couch_iu/48273

¹³⁵ https://t.me/couch_iu/48307

¹³⁶ <https://t.me/rusbrief/182987>

¹³⁷ <https://t.me/rusbrief/183110>

raising military salaries by 10.5% in October. Both moves suggest that real inflation is much higher. The price of new cars has increased by 40% since February 24, 2022, and the cost of new homes has increased by 42%, fueling a housing crisis. For example, the cheapest new construction one-bedroom apartment in the occupied city of Mariupol is 5.6 million roubles.

The Central Bank of Ukraine issued another rate cut, dropping the prime lending rate 100 basis points to 15%.¹³⁸ The move was made based on rapidly rising GDP and declining inflation.

RUMORS

Many messages and e-mails we receive ask why we didn't cover a certain story or whether we are aware of a report and what we think. The rumor section is a list of claims or stories we are aware of but not reporting on because there isn't enough information to support or discover the truth.

- Did Alexey Navalny commit suicide on December 6?
Unlikely

¹³⁸ <https://t.me/ShrikeNews/11538>

- Is it true that Russia is creating White Guard units made of poor quality and insubordinate military officers? Undetermined - there is an officer shortage already, but it would align with the ongoing purge of perceived state enemies.
- Will Ukraine receive Saab JAS Gripen fighter planes from Sweden? Rumor until all parties confirm it.
- Has Russia ordered the civilian evacuation of Nova Kakhovka in occupied Kherson – this has been claimed repeatedly since November 2022 and has not been true.


Notes on Sourcing Information


Malcontent News uses a wide range of sources to create our daily Situation Report, the foundation for the Russian-Ukraine War Report Podcast. There are some notable sources that we frequently use and others that we don't. The most common sources currently, or in the past, we have used for the Theater of War section of the Situation Report include the following.


⚠ Russian Ministry of Defense Morning Report: We use the RMOD Morning Report to identify combat reports, shelling locations, and territorial control change claims. We do not consider claims of Ukrainian troops killed, equipment destroyed, or military resources destroyed valid without videos and pictures that can be confirmed by date, time, weather, and geolocation, or third-party confirmation from recognized Western news outlets or trusted Ukrainian sources.


🛡 Rybar: We consider Rybar a mercenary organization because they are staffed by former Russian Ministry of Defense public relations officers who actively provide target information to the Russian military. Their operational budget is \$20,000 a month, while they claim they receive no government funding. We only use their reports to identify combat locations. We no longer consider their territorial control changes due to a three-month pattern from June to August 2023 of repeated publication of blatant disinformation and a years-long pattern of denying all Russian war crimes.


⚠ War Gonzo: We consider War Gonzo a mercenary organization because their employees have recorded themselves actively engaging in direct combat, specifically in Marinka. Recently, War Gonzo admitted in their daily report to leveraging the information from the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. They intermix combat reports with their own on a 24-hour delay. We use their reports for **unique claims** about combat, territorial control change claims, and troop movement reports. Although the War Gonzo daily reports are moderately accurate, they occasionally engage in blatant disinformation and misinformation.

 **Readovka:** We consider Readovka to be a Kremlin-aligned propagandist organization. Their daily reports are a word-for-word repeat of the RMOD Morning Report and provide no value to our analysis. They occasionally provide credible information through videos and pictures that can be confirmed by date, time, weather, and geolocation. This is by no means a complete list of the sources we monitor.

 **Igor "Girkin" Strelkov:** We consider Strelkov to be a convicted war criminal who is highly informed, specifically about the situation in the Donbas. We use his combat reports, territorial control change claims, and troop movement information. In the Donbas, we consider his reports to be highly accurate. The fidelity of information he provides in Zaporizhia, Kherson, and Kharkiv appears to come from other social media channels with a history of spreading misinformation and is of lower quality. Reports he shares outside of the Donbas provided by Russian Federation 1st Army Corps units have greater fidelity.

 **Andrei Morozov:** Morozov is a pro-Russian milblogger and a radio communications and logistics specialist with the Russian 2nd Army Corps. We consider him a provider of high-quality information, especially within his fields of specialty. In the fall of 2022, Morozov was detained by OMON for up to three weeks due to his content and has had his online material censored by the Kremlin several times over the last 11 months.

 **Private Military Company Wagner Group Social Media:** We consider reports from PMC Wagner of Russian victories as overstating gains and reports of Russian failures, particularly among the Russian Ministry of Defense and the 1st and 2nd Army Corps of the Russian Army, as overstating problems. We do not consider claims of territorial control changes from Wagner as authentic without pictures, videos, or **unique** Russian State Media reports that include a video that can be geolocated.

 **Luhansk People's Republic Joint Center for Control and Coordination:** The organization has not posted any update since June 9, 2023, and we have ceased monitoring.

⊖ **Leonid Pasechnik:** We do not use any combat, territorial control changes, troop movements, casualty claims, or equipment destroyed claims from the illegitimate leader of the so-called Luhansk People's Republic.

⚠ **Donetsk People's Republic People's Militia:** We only use their reports for videos and pictures that can be confirmed by date, time, weather, and geolocation.

⊖ **Donetsk People's Republic Territorial Defense:** We do not use combat, territorial control changes, troop movements, casualty claims, or equipment destroyed claims from their public relations and social media channels. They have repeatedly engaged in misinformation and disinformation.

⊖ **Denis Pushilin:** We do not use any combat, territorial control changes, troop movements, casualty claims, or equipment destroyed claims from the illegitimate leader of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic.

⚠ **Ramzan Kadyrov:** The contribution and impact of Chechen forces in Ukraine have become minimal, and Akhmat no longer produces large volumes of video content that can be geolocated. We continue to monitor his channels.

✅ **General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine:** We consider the morning and evening reports, specifically combat reports, territorial control changes, and troop movements, from GSAFU to be high quality. The Ukrainian General Staff uses clever wording to create plausible deniability of battlefield failures. Combat reports start with "repelled attacks of the occupant forces in the vicinities of," which negates reporting fighting in areas where territory was lost. Instead of misinformation or disinformation, GSAFU engages in omission. Reports about problems within the Russian military are given more weight if the SBU or GUR reinforces them or if there is added confirmation in the Russian milblogger information space.

✅ **DeepState:** We use the Daily Report from DeepState for combat reports and territorial control changes. They frequently support their claims with geolocated, time, date, and weather-confirmed pictures and videos, making them a high-quality Ukrainian-based source. They occasionally overstate Russian territorial control claims but never present disinformation or

misinformation. Combined with the reports from GSAFU, gaps in combat reports are filled. We support DeepState through their Patreon at \$10 a month.

✔ **Institute for the Study of War:** We occasionally leverage the map and territorial control change information produced by the ISW when there is conflicting data. Their presentation of Russian-assessed, Ukrainian-assessed, and Russian-claimed information is helpful when our analysts have to make a judgment call due to the absence of verifiable information. We do not copy from their map but take their territorial control information as an additional data point when assessing our own changes.

⚠ **Ivan Fedorov:** We use information about insurgent activity and HIMARS strikes in Zaporizhia provided by Fedorov, the exiled mayor of Melitiopol.

✔ **Vitaly Kim:** When there are reports of potential air raids in Ukraine, we monitor Kim, the Mykolaiv Oblast Administrative and Military Governor, for realtime reports. Kim is consistently one of the first, if not the first, Ukrainian government officials to confirm kamikaze drones or missiles have been launched toward Ukraine.

⊖ **Oleksiy Arestovych:** We no longer use the information provided by Arestovych after being fired from his role as the Chief Advisor to the President of Ukraine. Before being terminated, Arestovych had developed a reputation for providing exaggerated, unverified, and false claims for Ukrainian successes and failures.