

Kharkov Battles: On the Fall of Avdiivka

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Updated Month Day, Year.



1. On February 16th, 2024, the *Wall Street Journal* reported in its Saturday newspaper that “[outgunned] Ukrainian forces have withdrawn from the beleaguered eastern city of Avdiivka.” [1] The former eastern Ukrainian city, Avdiivka, became Avdeevka, a Russian controlled territory in a wide belt of contested areas spanning the width of a series of battles for ultimate control over the geopolitically significant Kharkov direction.
2. The Kharkov direction, whose history as a centre for the manufacture of Soviet tanks pre-dates the outbreak of World War II, stands as a gateway for advancing in either direction in Ukraine. In the east the road to Moscow is paved through Kharkov, in the west to Kiev.
3. The current belt of contested areas extends beyond Avdiivka[2b, 2c], to Vuhledar[2a], Kupiyansk and and Synrivka [2d]. There are reports of progress [2i, 2ii, 2iii, 2iv, 2v] throughout the lines in the Donetsk direction but these are far from a control over the Kharkov region.
4. A general tally of losses from the Russian news information agency (i.e., *PIA Hovocmu*) claimed that in the month of January alone Ukrainian armed forces lost more than 3,000 units of armor.[2v] If so, the loss is a staggering amount, especially given Ukraine’s dependency on Western nations for weapons, equipment or armor. In at least one video broadcast online, the charred remains of one of Ukraine’s S-300 anti-air defense system, Russian technology, is visible. In another video broadcast online, the Russian Ministry of Defense depicts the destruction of an M777 howitzer, one of the units of artillery Ukraine received from the West that relies upon a continuous flow of Western 155mm artillery shells, a calibre altogether foreign to Ukraine’s extremely limited post-Soviet arms manufacturing industry.

The Shell Argument

5. On Saturday, February 17th, 2024, the first time the *Wall Street Journal* addressed the eastern front since reporting on Synrivka, published an article entitled, “Russia Tightens Grip on East Ukraine City.”

- Throughout the article, the authors attempt to attribute Ukraine's lack of success in Avdiivka to a lack of artillery ammunition. The newspaper quotes, National Security Council spokesman, John Kirby, for instance. "National Security Council spokesman John Kirby on Wednesday said a lack of shells was in large part to blame for the situation in Avdiivka." [1]
6. Earlier in the article, the authors sought "to hold Kirby's line," stating the following: "The Russian army's push into the city came rapidly in recent days, as Ukraine's lack of artillery ammunition thwarted efforts to hold the invaders back." [1] Towards the end of the article, the authors write: "[on] the ground in Avdiivka, Ukrainian soldiers said they were suffering from acute shortages of ammunition."
7. "For every five to seven artillery shells fired by Russia, Ukraine can only respond with one, [unnamed] officials say. Soldiers sometimes hold fire even when Russian soldiers are in their sights, to preserve ammunition." [1]
8. It is being reported with increasing regularity that Ukraine operates at a severe disadvantage in terms of artillery. In some cases the disparity is described as a "decisive fire advantage" for the Russians; in other cases, the lack of parity is attributed to a lack of

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munitions.[Howitzer1, Howitzer2] Others have complained that the problem is not necessarily munitions but a lack of funding for Ukraine, with which more munitions could be purchased.

9. Two challenges complicate claims that Ukraine's deficiency in artillery shells is the reason why Ukraine is unable to secure its defenses in the Donbas, especially Avdiivka.
10. One of the challenges is that recent audits demonstrate that Ukraine has exhausted its artillery pieces, many of which are beginning to disintegrate with critical parts such as barrels, breech chambers, or breeches wearing out from being fired excessively. The English version of the pro-Houthi Lebanese daily, *Al-Mayadeen*, which occasionally reports objectively on the Ukraine war, published an article on report the Pentagon's Special Inspector General completed on weapons the US had prepositioned in Europe for transfer to Ukrainian armed forces.
11. "The report detailed that 'In February 2023, the DoD OIG

determined that some of the weapons and equipment that the DoD had prepositioned in Europe items it was transferring to the UAF -were not functional due to improper maintenance and poor conditions at Army warehouses." [7] In contrast, RT reports that "Moscow's military has more soldiers now and can quickly replenish equipment losses, a Lithuanian official believes."

12. One of the other challenges, however, is a more fundamental issue facing Ukraine's war economy, which is dependent upon donations together with a monetary contribution "on the margins" of the defense budgets of supporting nations. The issue is that the rate of production for artillery shells in the United

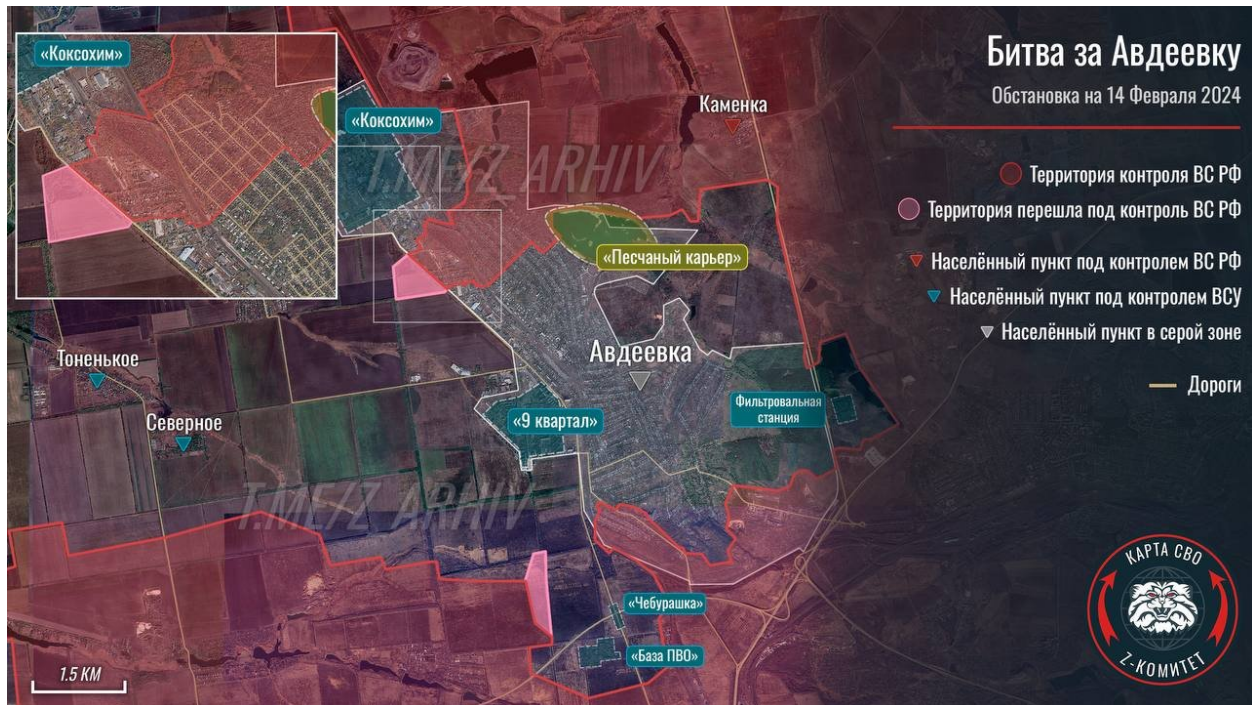
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Russian army stronger than before Ukraine conflict – EU state

Moscow's military has more soldiers now and can quickly replenish equipment losses, a Lithuanian official believes

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States, which is the leading supporter of Ukraine, appears to be no more than 14,000 shells a month according to statistics on the papers from the *New York Times* last year.

13. Described as “America's Looming Munitions Crisis” in *Foreign Affairs*, the current level of America’s capacity to produce 155-millimeter shells is at 14,000. By the end of 2023, the United States’ Army would like to reach no less than 30, 000. “Overall, the U.S. Army hopes to increase production of artillery shells by 500 percent within two years to replenish stockpiles sent to Ukraine—the

largest production expansion since the Korean War.”

14. These two challenges thus undermine the ‘shell’ argument. What is the problem? Is the problem the pieces of artillery? Is the problem America’s incapacity for shell production? These two challenges undermine the shell argument, since Ukrainian armed forces cannot be expected to fire an increased rate of fire from faulty pieces of artillery under circumstances in which the United States or NATO allies are incapable of producing more than 14,000 155mm artillery shells a month. The shell argument thus imposes an unrealistic outcome on the

remedy for Ukraine's lack of artillery shells. An increased number of 155mm artillery shells does not equate immediately to an increased rate of power, tipping the scales against Russia's 'decisive fire advantage' in artillery.

Syrsky's 'Pocket Resistance'

15. The author accurately predicted the imminent fall of the city on February 10th, 2024. In a post published to Twitter, the author noted how Avdiivka, one of the last remaining strongholds on the outskirts of the southwestern Donets Basin, began to fall as Russians advanced on the Great Bend at the Dnopr. The author noted how after the Russians split the city in two, creating a huge pocket with no line of communication, Aleksandr Syrsky, the new commander of Russian armed forces, a Russian educated general, ordered the 3rd Assault Brigade to engage in 'pocket resistance' just like Bakhmut-Artemovsk, contravening the wisdom relayed by Franz Holder in his account on *Operations of Encircled Forces: German Experiences in Russia* (i.e., CMH Pub 104-5). Avdiivka's

fall confirms the author's analysis.

16. On Thursday, February 15th, 2024, *Reuters* published a story entitled, "Ukraine withdraws units from parts of Avdiivka," noting that the Syrsky, the recent replacement for the neo-Nazi Banderite, Valery Zaluzhny, ordered one of Ukraine's elite, 'crack,' brigades to engage in pocket resistance, which quickly dissolved into a bloodbath.[3] These reports were followed by reports in Arabic by the British based news agency, Sky News. [4] The so-called 'crack' bridge is the Ukrainian 3rd Assault Brigade.

17. The panic within the commanding heights of the Ukrainian armed forces really began in earnest after the Russians reached the so-called "Beach," a sandy area near a small lake in Avdiivka. Russians' capture of the "Avdiivka Chemical Plant" followed closely. Russia's *Sputnik* reported that "Ukrainian forces officials confirmed their retreat from the Zenit fortified area south of Avdeevka," indicating that Ukrainians became surrounded from the north to the

south. Already under threat as early as February 14th, 2024, [4a, 4b, 4c, 4d] the Russians closed ranks in the north east on the last asphalt line of communication, the so-called, “Road of Life,” the Ukrainians continued to keep clear for food stuffs, medical supplies, or munitions. With the “Road of Life” closed, the attempt to engage in ‘pocket resistance’ centered on an extremely unreliable muck stretching from Lastochkyne to the centre of the encircled troops. Many videos uploaded to Twitter demonstrate the how the famous *распутница* severely encumbered attempts to secure a new line.

18. It was reported that on February 16th, 2024, which appeared to witness developments faster than any previous day, the Russian armed forces carried out more than 30 attacks, 20 airstrikes, 150 artillery barrages, placing more than 20 of Avdiivka’s districts under artillery or mortar fire, among which were Novobakhmutovka, Berdychi, Lastochkino, Nevelskoye.
19. A Ukrainian source, DeepState_UA, reporting on the same day, reported with a pig



- emoji that “Противник зайняв Авдіївську залізничну лікарню і міський парк. Також, ворог має просування на територію Авдіївського заводу металевих конструкцій, в районі Ласточкиного та Невельського.” These Ukrainian reports confirm the Russian reports. It appears that on February 14th, 2024, Valentine’s Day, Андрій Іскра, an Azov commander, lost his life in the attempt to save Avdiivka, according to a post his wife, Тетянка Шарапова, posted on Instagram.
20. The Russian armed forces executed a classic double envelopment, attacking Ukrainian forces with rapidly advancing armor under closed air support (i.e., priority II missions). The *Journal* noted without any detail how Russian forces pressing deeper into Avdiivka “[pounded] it with guided aerial bombs after cutting



a key supply road.”[1] The bombs the Russians utilized for closed air support in its recent operations over Avdiivka were so-called FAB 500 bombs.

21. Syrsky should have identified the ever weakening lines in the Avdiivka direction during January. Syrsky, however, appears to have begun to expand preparations for his ‘pocket resistance’ precipitating an event that saw Ukrainians meet with an extremely unfortunate demise in the eastern city of Selidove. It

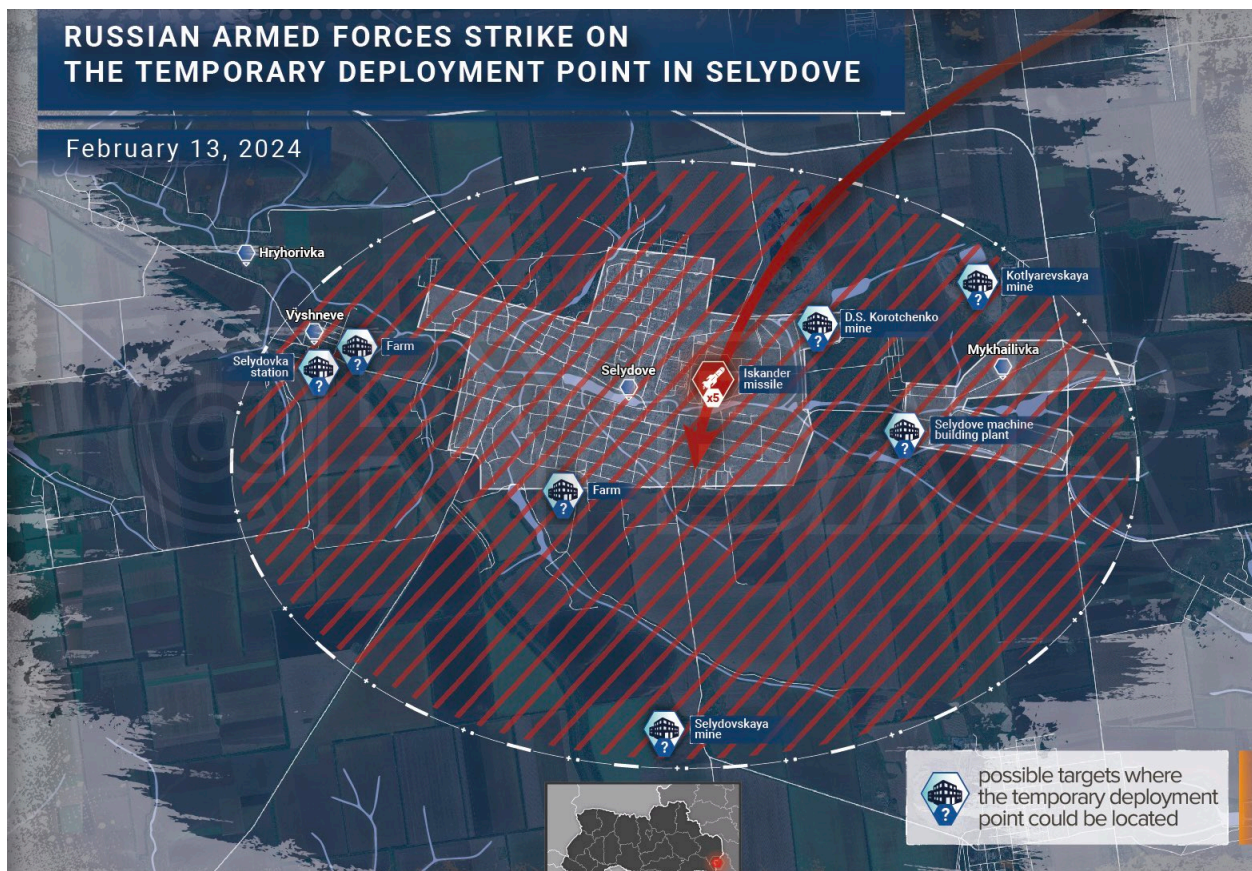
appears as though a mass casualty event, which barely received reporting on Twitter, occurred. Having become aware of Syrsky’s preparations for ‘pocket resistance’ in Selidove, Russian armed forces bombed a barracks, causing, as reports vary, 600 to 1,500 deaths. If true, the mass casualty event in the eastern city of Selidove is one of the most horrific in the history of the Ukraine war. It is comparatively speaking similar to that of the one Ukraine

committed against Russians on January 1st, 2024.

22. Rob Lee, who is often quoted together with Michael Kofman, stated: “This is a critical moment. Given Russia's manpower and resource advantages, Ukrainian units being encircled or taking heavy losses in a withdrawal could have a significant effect on the war. The relative resources expended in this battle will likely be the most important factor.”
23. Syrsky's decision to order 'pocket resistance' without a plan in the rear for a tactical withdrawal to a more fortified

front outside of Russia's expanding fire line shows just how unprepared Ukraine truly is for battlefield dynamics.

24. National Security Council spokesman, John Kirby, mentions how Ukraine needs artillery shells but in all reality a recent audit demonstrated that most M777s are disintegrated from over fire. The call for armor, weapons, munitions really suggests a fundamental lack of understanding about the Eastern Front.
25. Immediately following Russia's tactical withdrawal from Kherson in November 2022, the Russians immediately went to



work on fortifications, deploying the infamous BTM-3 to create defenses the Russians anticipated the Ukrainians would seek to overcome in a coming counter-offensive. Why hasn't Ukraine? It stands to mention that Surovikin's strategy with its vast Surovikin lines developed with the BTM-3 succeeded against the failed Ukrainian "summer" counteroffensive. Has there been a more significant outcome on the Eastern Front yet?

26. In a widely circulated review of an article from *The Hill*, Russian news agencies (i.e., РИА Новости, Силовой блок, Комсомольска Правда) reported that the West must acknowledge the impossibility of Ukraine's victory. [6a, 6b, 6c, 6d] In one of the articles, the Russian news information agency reported the following: "Вооруженных сил сообщил, что потери украинских войск в январе превысили 23 тысячи человек." The Russian translate as follows: "The armed forces reports that Ukrainians loses in manpower amounted to no less than 23,000 people in January."

The Significance of Avdiivka

27. The privately funded neo-conservative think-tank, *Institute for the Study of War*, recently opined on the city's significance. In a report posted on Friday, February 16th, 2024, the authors noted that "[the] potential Russian capture of Avdiivka would not be operationally significant and would likely only offer the Kremlin immediate informational and political victories."
28. Under that line of reasoning, the significance of Avdiivka, an east Ukraine city, is like that of Bakhmut-Artemovsk, an eastern Ukrainian city. The opinion the *Institute for the Study of War* expressed in its assessment thus recommends comparison with of that of the *Times* in its reporting on the Bakhmut-Artemovsk from last year.
29. In an article published at the outset of the battle, on January 26th, 2023, "Tank Deal Pulls U.S. and Germany Out of a Diplomatic Quagmire," the *New York Times* explicitly describes the city of Bakhmut-Artemovsk as "strategic." It stated: "A military spokesman acknowledged that Ukraine's

withdrawal there brings Russian forces closer to encircling and perhaps capturing **the strategic eastern city of [Bakhmut-Artemovsk].**”

30. No sooner than five months later the *Times* described Bakhmut-Artemovsk in an entirely different way. On A1 with a caption entitled, “Small Advance Kindles Hopes For Kyiv Forces,” the *New York Times*, stated on May 18th, 2023, three days before the city fell to the Russians, “Ukraine’s staunch defense of Bakhmut, *a small city of limited strategic value*, has come at a high cost, with some of its most experienced soldiers killed in action there over the past year.”

31. These accounts, which occurred during a period of time separating the end of the first anniversary of Ukraine’s death agony to the beginning of its second year of death agony, barely take into account the significance the city holds for the actual soldiers fighting on the front lines, many of whom have, in some cases, been fighting for more than 10 years. In the words of one Russian blogger, who describes how his

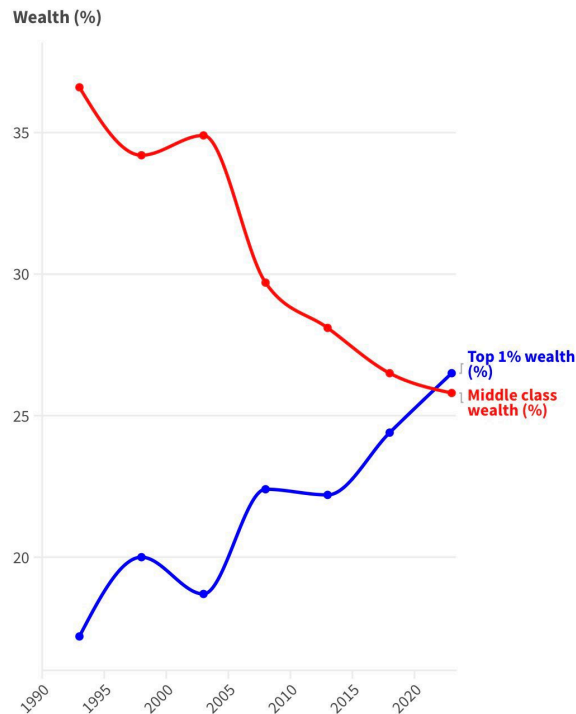
father fell during the battle of Avdiivka, he wrote the following: “Для меня это личная, долгожданная радость, как и у многих, смешанная с личной болью и горем. В боях под Авдеевкой погиб мой отец. Там погибли многие мои друзья. Каждый метр там полит кровью наших ребят.” The Russian translation is as follows: “For me this is personally, a long awaited joy, just as it is for many, if even mixed with personal pain and dismay. In the fighting in Avdeevka my father died. Many of my friends died there. Our brothers bled for every meter.”

32. Many people in Western countries or America can hardly imagine losing a father, uncle, brother, or brother in-law in combat. It is incomprehensible to think that a city could become the sight of so much loss.

33. The fact that the Western press, which views the battles on the Eastern Front, almost entirely from Brzezinski’s point of view on the *Grand Chessboard*, if a neo-conservative, through the dollar signs of the military industrial complex, if nationalist, or through the ‘potential’ for

Top 1% of U.S. earners now have more wealth than the middle class

Share of all household wealth by year, Q2, 1993-2023



Artificial Intelligence, if a social ‘experimentalist’ [5], hardly mentions these highly personalized accounts throughout the press is a startling wakeup call for American workers. The perspective the American ruling elite seeks to advance covers the actual people in the fight least of all. In America where the top 1% of U.S. earners now have more wealth than the middle class, the ultimate motivation for these disparities are not merely in terms of reporting, not merely a

matter of words, but may be derived from the real differences actual household wealth [Q2, 1993—2023].

34. In that respect, the death agony in Avdiivka recalls the words of the general who made Georgia howl, Tecumseh Sherman: “You cannot qualify war in harsher terms than I will. War is cruelty.”
35. With the collapse of the Ukraine’s most powerfully fortified positions in Avdiivka for over a decade, a key stepping stone on the way to the geopolitically strategic Kharkov region—the most contested territory in the Ukraine war, the risk that leaders of Ukraine’s proxy force in NATO may escalate sharply against Russian forces rises, elevating obscenely the possibility that the cruelty of war in eastern Ukraine may expand beyond the contested areas in the Kharkov direction to the European mainland.
36. The deepening crisis of the capitalist system, whose contradictions world leaders throughout the globe are seeking to resolve through military force, is driving the world asunder with catastrophic consequences for

European working people. With defense spending exceeding 4% of the Poland's Gross Domestic Product, European powers are preparing for war with Russia.

STOP THE WAR IN UKRAINE!

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[1] - [Russia Tightens Grip on East Ukraine City, *Wall Street Journal*, February 17th, 2024]

[2a] - ["Russian Forces, Repeating Strategic Errors, Lose Epic Tank Battle," *New York Times*, March 2nd, 2023"]

[2b] - ["Russian Attacks Yield Little but Casualties in Wide Arc of Ukraine's East," *New York Times*, March 14th, 2023.]

[2c] - ["Kyiv Seeking to Evacuate a Town It Controls," *New York Times*, March 13th, 2023"]

[2d] - ["Well-Laid Defenses Bolster Ukraine in War," *Wall Street Journal*, January 30th, 2024]

[2i] - [МО: бронегруппа ЗВО сорвала ротацию подразделения

ВСУ на Купянском направлении, *РИА Новости*, 12.15.23]

[2ii] - ["Генерал Кривонос заявил, что у ВСУ серьезные проблемы на Купянском направлении," *Газета.Ru*, 12.23.23]

[2iii] - ["Бойцы группировки «Запад» уничтожили группу пехоты ВСУ под Купянском," *RT на русском*, 1.2.24]

[2iv] - ["«Запад» отразили на Купянском направлении атаку ВСУ," *РИА Новости*, 1.29.24]

[2v] - ["Шойгу: ВС России в январе уничтожили более трех тысяч единиц техники ВСУ," *РИА Новости*, 2.1.24]

[3] - [Ukraine withdraws units from parts of Avdiivka, sends in crack, *Reuters*, February 15th, 2024]

[4] - [ضربة جديدة شرقا... الجيش الأوكراني] ينسحب من أفدييفكا، سكاي، ٠٢.١٦.٢٠٢٤

[4a] - [Вооруженные силы Украины (ВСУ) могут потерять контроль над единственной асфальтированной дорогой, которая ведет в Авдеевку со стороны подконтрольных Украине территорий. *Газета.Ru*, 02.14.2024]

[4b] - [Лиховой добавил, что в Авдеевке уже несколько дней идут уличные бои, ВСУ пытаются удерживать город. *РИА Новости*, 02.14.2024]

[4c] - [В конце января начальник Главного управления разведки украинского минобороны Кирилл Буданов признавал успехи ВС РФ под Авдеевкой. *Octagon.Media*, 02.14.2024]

[4d] - [В среду новый главком ВСУ Александр Сырский признал "чрезвычайно сложной" обстановку под Авдеевкой. *РИА Новости*, 02.14.2024]

[5] - [The War Lab, *Time*, Volume 203. NOS. 5—6, February 26th, 2024]

[6a] - [В начале февраля министр обороны Сергей Шойгу на селекторном совещании с руководящим составом Вооруженных сил сообщил, что потери украинских войск в январе превысили 23 тысячи человек. *РИА Новости*, 02.16.24]

[6b] - [Лэтэм отметил, что Россия имеет преимущество перед Украиной по всем ключевым аспектам, поскольку российская армия успешно приспособилась к

боевым действиям в зоне СВО. *Комсомольская правда*, 02.16.24]

[6c] - [«Те наблюдатели, которые изначально придерживались тезиса «Украина победит» продолжают пребывать в иллюзии, еще более маниакальной, чем ранее, что существует путь к полной победе Киева. *Силовой блок*, 02.16.24]

[6d] - [Западным политикам необходимо открыто признать, что победа Украины в конфликте с Россией невозможна, пишет профессор международных отношений Эндрю Лэтэм в статье для американского издания *The Hill*. *РИА Новости*, 02.16.24]

[7] - [US pre-positioned arms for Ukraine dysfunctional, poorly maintained, *Al Mayadeen*, February 15th, 2024]

[Howitzer1] - [“Well-Laid Defenses Bolster Ukraine in War,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 30th, 2024]

[Howitzer2] - [Howitzer Use Soars, Parts Run Low, *WSJ*, January 5th, 2024]