

Breaking: “Second Russia Offensive” (SRO): Vladimir Sharpens the Cleaver; Volodymyr Fattens the Calf

The Second Russian Offensive to the imminent Fall of Bakhmut

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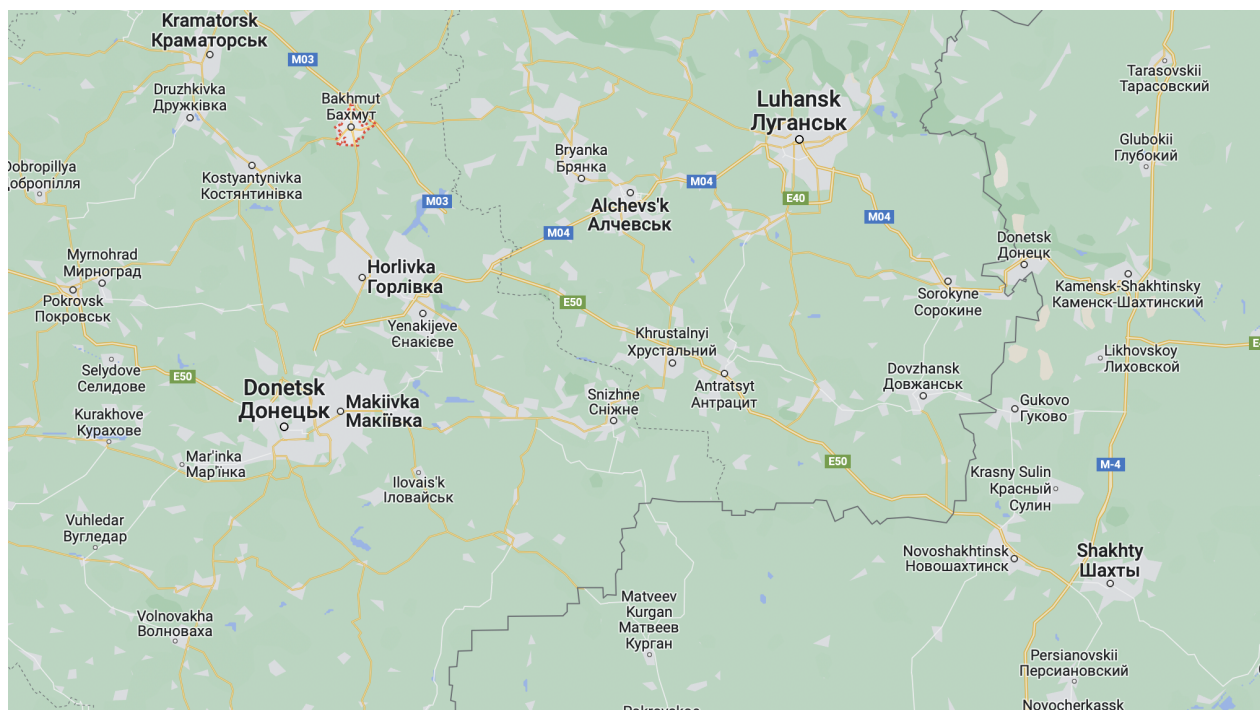
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NATO prophesied a Second Russian Offensive (SRO) on the muddy heels of rasputitsa [Spring]. Then when queried, on February 13, about upcoming festivities, Secretary-General Stoltenberg imparted: “we are seeing the start already.” The SRO crept imperceptibly. April Fools’ came early.

The Russo-Ukrainian War’s 800-kilometer front bisects the Donbass with a 240-kilometer incision. The SRO engages a segment of Donbass-situated line, with the Russian-held city, Donetsk, at its strategic core. The SRO’s operational theatre contiguously connects 5 small Ukrainian-held cities: (north-to-south) Bakhmut, Chavis Yar, Avdiivka, Marinka and Vuhledar

As missiles fly, Bakhmut sits 120 kilometers northeast of Vuhledar. Curves add length to lines; as do flanks of advancing Russian salients. From the salient northwest of Bakhmut to the southwestern environs of Vuhledar – the SRO’s battleline extends 160 kilometers; a third laying within or along urban terrain.



Source: Google Map

SRO attacks occur along this Bakhmut-Vuhledar front-segment. (Exceptions being the thermobaric-assisted Tsentr Group raids north of Kreminka.)

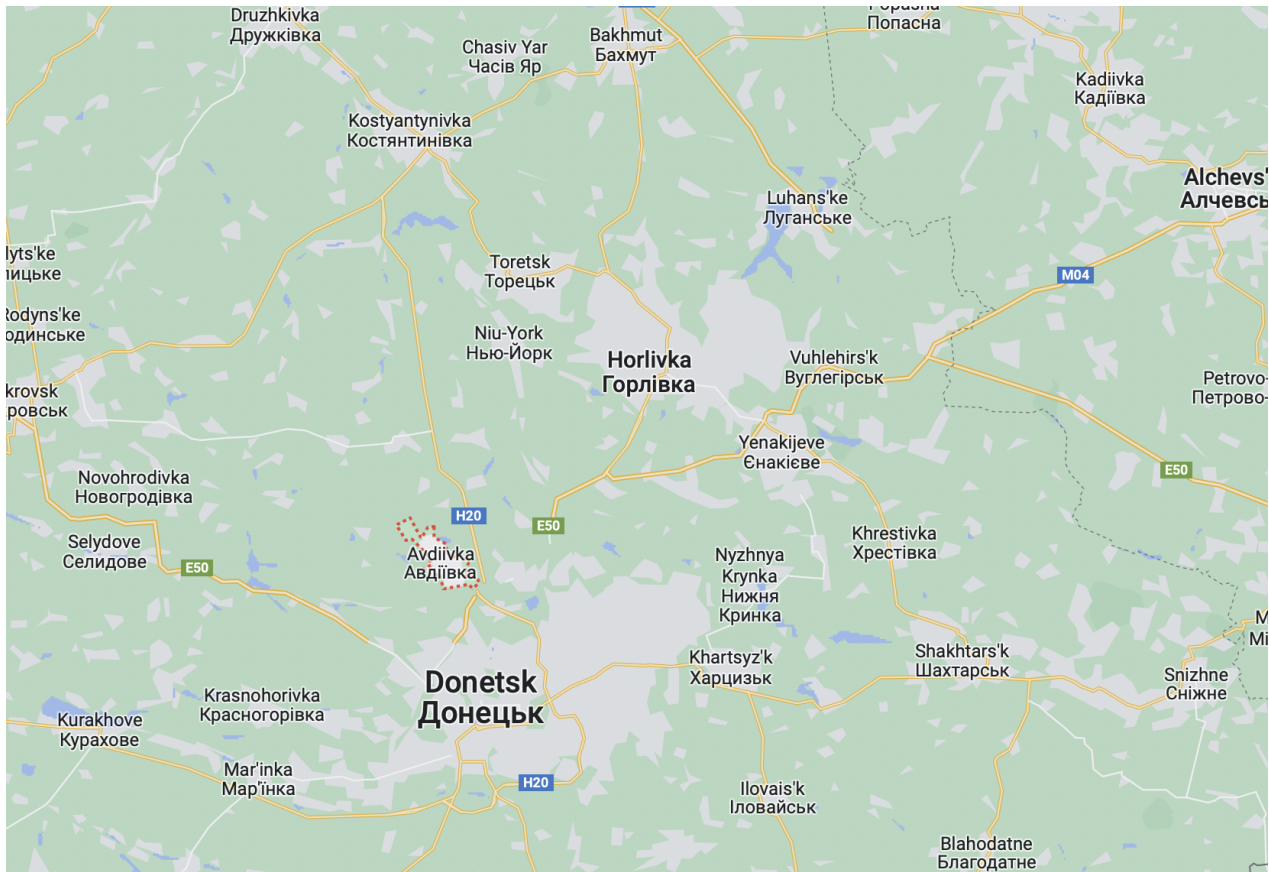
Digging beneath these 5 cities for years, Ukrainians built warrens impervious to light artillery. Javelins checked Russian armour. Stingers repelled ground-support airstrikes. Therefore, the SRO deigns to overrun these cities with infantry.

On February 22 Ukraine's Defense Ministry began providing daily tallies of SRO ground assaults. By March, 10,000 Russian infantry charged fortified Ukrainian positions – *daily*. Hundred-strong companies, accompanied by armoured vehicles, attack freshly shelled targets along the Bakhmut-Vuhledar front. Ukraine reports up to 170 such attacks – *daily*.

The frontline separates Donetsk (pop 1.1 million) from 2 satellite cities, Avdiivka (prewar pop, 32,000) and Marinka (prewar pop, 10,000). Donetsk's and Avdiivka's downtowns were once a 10-minute spin away. Avdiivka's abandoned. Every building's been hit. Marinka got moonscaped. Ukrainians shell Donetsk from the Avdiivka-Marinka area, *the capture of which is the SRO's supreme mission*.

Combatants near Avdiivka are never more than 200 meters apart. They're often closer. They throw hand-grenades. Russian salients annexed a dozen square kilometers on either side of Avdiivka. They're now 7.5 kilometers apart. Encirclement looms. More urgently, Russians are breeching Avdiivka's perimeter 3 to 4 times daily. Incursions penetrate hundreds of meters deep and kill hundreds of Ukrainians.

Russians have taken 3 square kilometers southeast of Marinka. They broke into west Marinka, March 8.



Source: Google Map

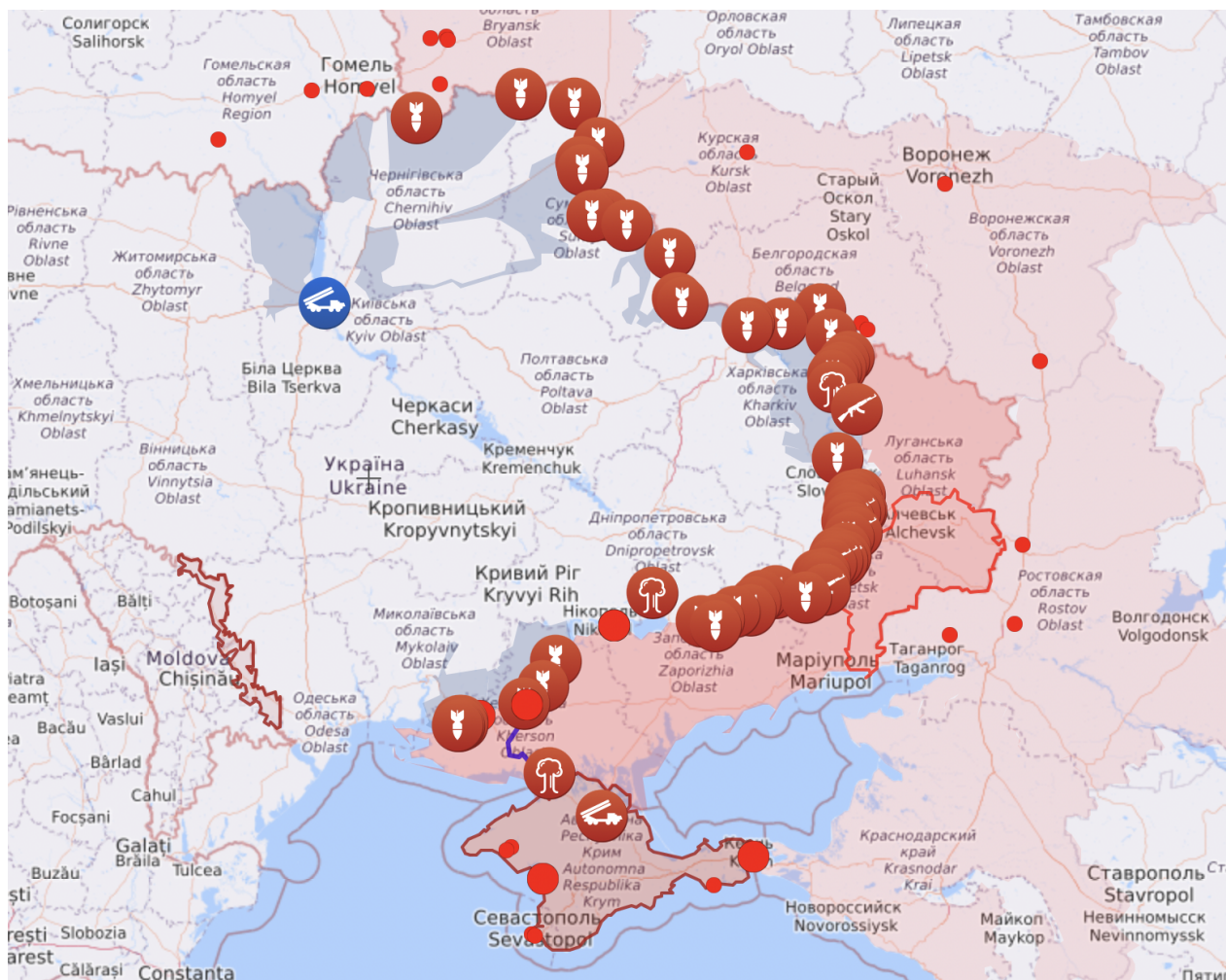
Twenty kilometers south and 20 west of Marinka one finds Vuhledar (pre-war pop, 14,000), [See first map above] the hub nearest the *axis mundi* where the frontline turns 90-degrees westward. So far, the SRO has captured 70 square kilometers south of Vuhledar. Raids on Vuhledar's southern outskirts prep an armoured push.

Forty kilometers *north* of Avdiivka one arrives at Chavis Yar (prewar pop, 15,000). Chavis Yar, being 13 kilometers west-by-southwest of Bakhmut, serves as Bakhmut's storage/supply nucleus. Bakhmut (pre-war pop, 80,000) spans 42-square-k.

Of the 5 cities targeted by the SRO, Bakhmut possesses the *least* strategic value. Chavis Yar is command and logistics center for the Avdiivka-Bakhmut line. If Chavis Yar falls the Russians will:

- encircle Bakhmut;
- disrupt 40 kilometers of critical frontline; and,
- imperil supplies to Avdiivka, Marinka and Vuhledar.

[See Live Map of Ukraine Ministry of Defense](#)



Nevertheless, in mid-2022 Kyiv sent 8 elite brigades (32,000 troops) to Bakhmut. These soldiers endured artillery hammerings while Russians glacially pushed two salients a few kilometers deep – north and south of Bakhmut. Fearing encirclement, NATO recommended a retreat before Russia’s offensive. AFP, DW, BBC, CBC and the US networks badgered Zelensky for clinging to this “*merely symbolic*” and “*strategically irrelevant*” town.

Zelensky, heeding other angels, eulogised Bakhmut as Ukraine’s “*fortress*” and fashioned “*Hold Bakhmut*” into a patriotic war-cry.

The SRO yarded NATO’s dreads ashore. Salients astride Bakhmut oozed toward Chavis Yar. The southern one is 4 kilometers from city limits; 150 meters from the Chavis Yar-Bakhmut railway. An arc of the northern salient, 2 kilometers from Chavis Yar, seeps southward 300 meters per day.

Zelensky vacillated for weeks, then flip-flopped, then on March 7 addressed the planet via CNN to pitch “*Hold Bakhmut.*” Simultaneously, Bakhmut’s frontline collapsed!

This tragicomedy played-out because by February, 70% of the troops Ukraine sent to Bakhmut were statistics. Untrained, ill-equipped conscripts replaced them. During February, the SRO lashed thousands more casualties upon them. Bakhmut line life expectancy became measured in days.

In early March, this line stretched along 10 kilometers of eastern Bakhmut’s eastern

outskirts. (The Bakhmutka River divides Bakhmut into 25-square-k western, and 17-square-k eastern, sections.)

Standard operating procedure for full-on frontal, brigade-size infantry assaults on fixed positions dictates that a 1,000-strong commando battalion of snipers, sappers and rocket-grenadiers blitz the line... amidst 3,500 target-dummies with minimal training and equipment.

In early March, Wagner Group began flinging brigade-size assaults at Bakhmut's frontline. While 20,000 felon-soldiers got machine-gunned, tactical teams knifed through; ensconcing themselves several blocks behind enemy lines wherefrom they wrought havoc. Ukrainians fled en masse across the Bakhmutka. Subsequent fighting has seen:

- a third of *western* Bakhmut fall;
- protracted battles in the central business district; and,
- the entrapment of thousands of Ukrainians.

Bakhmut's grander battleground is a 3-sided box open at the west by mercy of the winnowing gap between the Russian salients approaching Chavis Yar. Its eastern front consists of 5 kilometers of blasted Bakhmutka beachfront. To behold this vista conscripts slog a 9-kilometer gauntlet from the burning suburbs of Chavis Yar. No mud-puddle in this box is further than 3 kilometers from Russian snipers or mortar-squads.

Drones bespeckle the sky. As Russia readies annihilating barrages, Ukraine rushes in more soldiers!

Vladimir sharpens the cleaver. Volodymyr fattens the calf.

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William Walter Kay is a regular contributor to Global Research.

Sources

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<https://sputniknews.com/20230320/russias-special-military-operation-in-ukraine-and-how-it-is-progressing-1105665248.html> (Russian Ministry of Defense)

These regularly updated maps identify the locations where the main action was occurring. Russian names for these locales were searched in: RIA Novosti, RT, TASS and Sputnik News etc. Ukrainian names were used when searching: AFP, AP, BBC, CBC, DW, Reuters etc.

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