



UNCLASSIFIED//AOR EUCOM, UKRAINE, RUSSIA

Ukraine Counter-Offensive Gains Over 400 Square Kilometers Since January

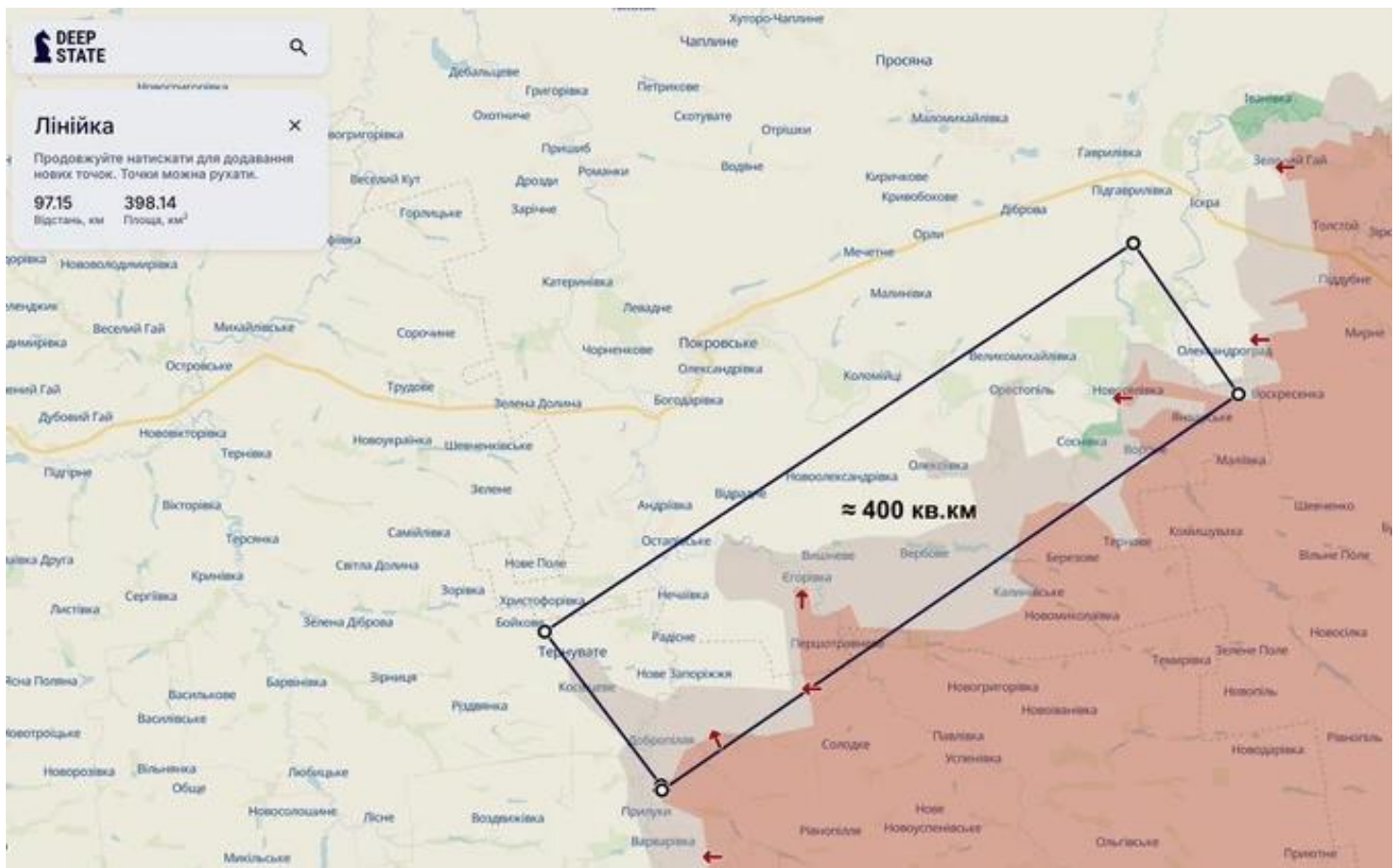
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Ukrainian forces have achieved significant territorial gains in the Zaporizhzhia region, recapturing approximately 400 square kilometers (km²) since late January 2026, outpacing Russian advances for the first time since summer 2024. This breakthrough demonstrates Kyiv's improved operational capabilities through innovative drone usage and targeted assaults, exposing vulnerabilities in Russian defenses amid reported manpower shortages and slower offensive tempos. These developments could signal a shifting momentum on the southern front, potentially enabling further Ukrainian counterattacks while complicating Moscow's strategic objectives in the region.

- Ukraine's Commander-in-Chief Oleksandr Syrskyi announced that airborne assault forces and adjacent units liberated 400 km² and eight settlements in the Oleksandrivka sector, located at the junction of Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts. This marks a reversal of territorial losses, with Ukrainian gains exceeding Russian captures over the past month.



- Independent analysis noted Russia's slowest monthly territorial gains (123 km²) since April 2024, while Ukraine achieved multiple localized breakthroughs exceeding 50 km² each in mid-February. This reflects diminished Russian momentum due to logistical strains and effective Ukrainian countermeasures.
- Ukrainian troops have retaken nine settlements in Zaporizhzhia since late January, pressing forward along the southeastern frontline, as confirmed by the general staff. This progress contrasts with Russia's reduced captures of 126 square kilometers in February, a 20-month low, highlighting Kyiv's tactical edge.



Russian Forces Vulnerable to Communication Disruptions

Ukraine's success has primarily from critical disruptions to Russian military communications, including the cutoff of illegally used Starlink terminals and Telegram service interruptions, which have hampered Moscow's coordination and offensive capabilities. These vulnerabilities have allowed Ukrainian forces to launch effective localized counterattacks, leveraging innovative drone tactics and Western-supplied equipment to exploit Russian logistical strains and manpower shortages. This shift marks a potential turning point, potentially delaying Moscow's planned spring offensives and bolstering Ukraine's defensive posture amid ongoing peace negotiations.

- Ukraine successfully disconnected Russian Starlink terminals and disrupted Kremlin-imposed Telegram disruptions, both essential to Russian frontline communications, enabling Kyiv to conduct counterattacks that reclaimed territory and disrupted Russian preparations. These factors have thrown Russian spring offensive plans off balance, with Ukrainian forces capitalizing on reduced enemy coordination.
- Russian forces experienced sweeping Starlink outages, leading to communication breakdowns that constrained their capabilities and created opportunities for Ukrainian advances, resulting in the recapture of about 77 km² in the southeast. This has been compounded by Russia's slowest territorial gains since 2024, highlighting broader operational weaknesses.

- The gains represent a notable shift, with Ukrainian forces regaining more territory than lost for the first time in months, amid reports of Russia deploying nuclear guards to frontline positions due to troop shortages. This innovation in Ukrainian tactics, such as jam-proof drones, has been key

Conclusion

These territorial gains by Ukrainian forces in early 2026 reflect a combination of strategic innovation, international support, and Russian operational weaknesses, offering Kyiv a window to consolidate positions and potentially expand counteroffensives. However, the sustainability of this momentum hinges on continued aid and resource management amid protracted conflict dynamics.



Tal Shiar was founded by Nadeem Iqbal, a national security expert who served over 16 years as an intelligence officer for the Department of Defense from 2006-2022. His career began as a counter-insurgency analyst on the Afghanistan-Pakistan Task Force (2006–2013), followed by 9 years as a military analyst in the Syria Branch (2013–2022). He deployed five times in support of combat operations (3× Afghanistan, 2× Iraq), including two rotations with

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