STUDENT HANDOUT

Huliaipole: Across the Haichur

Huliaipole and the Haichur valley, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, Ukraine · 1 December 2025 to 20 January 2026

Information as of October 2026

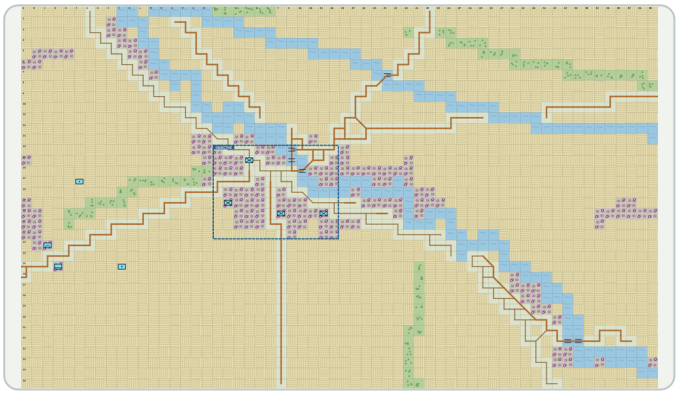
Review provenance

AI reviewed: sources, guide, assessment and model controls. Source attribution and reconstruction limitations remain.

No named human subject-matter reviewer or external validation is recorded. Material completeness is not certification. Instructors should check factual claims, sensitive content, age suitability and local context before use.



Scenario illustration · AI generated



Student map · own side only · Simulation situation map · reconstructed terrain and estimated deployments; not verified historical positions.

Learning objectives

- Locate Huliaipole and the Haichur valley.
- Follow the December and January phases.
- Compare a limited delay goal with the historical result.

Run time and a good result

Default run clock: 6 minutes 0 seconds at 1×, excluding pauses, briefing and discussion. Time controls change elapsed play time.

Objective: Delay capture of the marked main town area until the episode ends. Ukraine did not retain Huliaipole historically; this is a limited delay mission.

Huliaipole: Across the Haichur: Delay capture of the marked main town area until the episode ends. Ukraine did not retain Huliaipole historically; this is a limited delay mission. Prevent an unopposed enemy occupation of the marked zone lasting 8 continuous simulation seconds; retain a fighting force until the episode ends. The authored limit is 360 simulation seconds across 3 stages. Compare objective progress, time, losses, drone expenditure and recorded civilian harm with a second run. A strong classroom result also explains the source evidence and reconstruction estimates; it does not verify a historical casualty count.

Atrocity notice

The UN Commission found war crimes by Russian authorities, including killings, torture and sexual violence, and a small number of violations by Ukrainian forces. Its March 2023 findings are context, including for later scenarios.

These reports describe the wider conflict. They do not establish that every crime occurred in this modeled battle.

Studying or commanding a side does not endorse its conduct. Drone Front never lets players target civilians, hospitals, schools or places of worship. Civilian harm from simulated strikes is counted and shown in the debrief, including nonzero harm. Civilian massacres are never playable operations. Designated terrorist forces and Wagner remain computer controlled; Gaza war events remain excluded from play.

▼ Dated reports and findings

- 2023-03-16 · UN Commission of Inquiry: war crimes in Ukraine

Learn more: the laws of war

- ICRC: Geneva Conventions and commentaries
- ICRC: Customary IHL database
- UN: Genocide Convention (9 December 1948)
- UN: Rome Statute (17 July 1998), articles 6–8

Historical source notes

Early claims of full control did not describe the whole course of the battle.

Drone observation did not replace infantry holding the town.

The town and its river valley remained civilian places as the fighting approached.

Civilian harm

Reuters reporter Sergiy Chalyi documented residents fleeing Huliaipole amid drone danger and damaged homes. This evacuation preceded the December episode.

Evidence for learning objectives

OSW reported incomplete Russian control on 5 January and control of the entire Huliaipole area on 20 January 2026.

Fog and compressed quad, FPV and fibre roles are authored model settings; exact local drone models and flight totals are not established.

Reuters documented Huliaipole residents evacuating on 12 November 2025; that report predates the selected battle and is not its civilian death total.

Timings

For 60 minutes, brief for 15, run with pauses for 25 and discuss for 20. For 90 minutes, compare both sides. For 180 minutes, compare the wider campaign.

Session	Plan
45 minutes	Brief: 10 min; Run: 15 min; Collect: 5 min; Review: 15 min
60 minutes	Before questions: 5 min; Brief: 10 min; Run: 20 min; Collect: 5 min; Debrief and after questions: 15 min; Discussion: 5 min
90 minutes	Before questions: 5 min; Brief: 10 min; Run 1: with drones: 20 min; Run 2: without drones: 15 min; Collect: 5 min; Compare and discuss: 25 min; After questions: 10 min
180 minutes	Before questions: 10 min; Brief and staff roles: 15 min; Run 1: with drones: 25 min; Run 2: without drones: 20 min; Break: 10 min; Run 3: syndicates: 30 min; Collect: 10 min; Seminar replay and debrief: 40 min; After questions: 10 min; Close: 10 min

Staff roles

commander
Track capture and delay goals.

intelligence
Compare dated accounts and claims.

fires
Record simulated effects and civilian exposure.

droneOps
Compare observation and attack roles.

Opposing staff objective

Capture the marked main town area. OSW reported Russian control of the Huliaipole area on 20 January.

Decision points

- Opening: how does the town sit across the river?
- Middle phase: what do the competing control claims describe?
- Final phase: what does the delay goal preserve?

Before and after questions

1. **What changed between OSW's 5 and 20 January 2026 Huliaipole assessments?**

   A. Both reports assessed full control, with only the fighting intensity changing.
   B. The first assessed Russian control; the second assessed Ukraine's return.
   C. Both reports assessed contested control, with only the river position changing.
   D. The first denied full control; the second assessed Russian area control.

2. **Why did OSW's 5 January report not equate a river bridgehead with full town control?**

   A. The same OSW assessment also described Ukrainian counterattacks reaching the centre while denying full Russian control
   B. It treated movement west of the river as proof of every district's capture.
   C. It treated all reported counterattacks as events before the town battle.
   D. It described Russian bridgeheads only in farmland far outside the town.

3. **What does fog in the Huliaipole simulation establish about winter visibility?**

   A. It verifies the visibility measured during each historical counterattack.
   B. It supplies a winter assumption, not a verified daily weather record.
   C. It reproduces a documented loss of observation throughout the whole battle.
   D. It identifies the exact dates on which drone flights stopped over the town.

4. **What can Reuters' 12 November 2025 Huliaipole evacuation report support?**

   A. A final count of civilian deaths during the December–January town battle.
   B. A final count of injured residents during the January loss of the town.
   C. An account of residents leaving before the selected battle episode began.
   D. An account of all civilian movements after the town changed hands in January.

5. **How should a successful Ukrainian hold in this Huliaipole run be described?**

   A. As evidence that OSW's later control assessment concerned another town.
   B. As verification that the historical town remained Ukrainian in January.
   C. As confirmation that simulated equipment losses measure civilian harm.
   D. As a model delay result, compared with OSW's dated Russian-control finding.

Discussion

- Why can forces from both sides be present in the same town?
- What can drone observation establish about control?
- What did evacuation mean for residents?

Debrief rubric

Strong
Meets the objective or explains why it was not met; uses the published sources and run evidence, separates known facts from assumptions, compares both sides' losses and cost exchange, and evaluates precautions against civilian harm.

Adequate
Describes the objective and main decisions, identifies at least one source and model limitation, reports losses and harm, and gives a reasoned change for a second run.

Weak
Reports only victory or points, treats teaching settings as real performance, gives unsupported historical claims, or omits uncertainty and civilian harm.

Published readings

1. OSW: Devastating Russian attacks on the capital energy infrastructure, 20 January 2026
2. OSW: New Year slowdown on the front, 5 January 2026
3. The Guardian, Dan Sabbagh: East of Zaporizhzhia Ukraine drone crews face endless battle to hold the line, 17 December 2025

Complete source list

Wikipedia: Huliaipole offensive, accessed 5 October 2026
OSW: Devastating Russian attacks on the capital energy infrastructure, 20 January 2026
OSW: New Year slowdown on the front, 5 January 2026
The Guardian, Dan Sabbagh: East of Zaporizhzhia Ukraine drone crews face endless battle to hold the line, 17 December 2025
Reuters, Sergiy Chalyi: Ukrainians flee southeastern front as fighting worsens, 12 November 2025
Reuters: Putin says Russia will achieve its Ukraine aims by force, 27 December 2025, updated 28 December
Ukrainska Pravda, Valentyna Romanenko and Olha Kyrylenko: Investigation of command post video, 25 December 2025
Ukrainska Pravda, Kateryna Tyshchenko: Situation in Huliaipole difficult but Russia does not have full control, 28 December 2025
Ukrainska Pravda, Valentyna Romanenko: DeepState on situation in Huliaipole, 29 December 2025