STUDENT HANDOUT

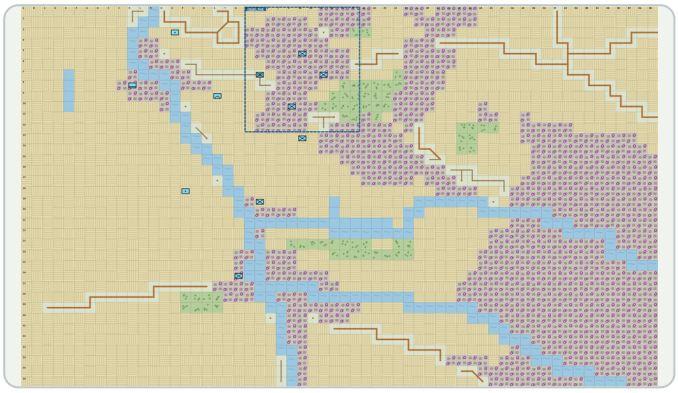
Toretsk: A Year of Urban Fighting

Toretsk and New York, Donetsk Oblast, Ukraine · 18 June 2024 to 7 August 2025

Information as of October 2026



Scenario illustration · AI generated



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

Learning objectives

- Locate Toretsk and its surrounding settlements.
- Follow three dated stages of the battle.
- Compare claims of control with later reporting.

Run time and a good result

Default run clock: 6 minutes 30 seconds at 1×, excluding pauses, briefing and discussion. Time controls change elapsed play time.

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

Toretsk: A Year of Urban Fighting: Delay the capture of the marked Toretsk area until the episode ends. Ukraine did not retain the city 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 390 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

Claims of capture can precede the end of fighting.

Drone technology changed during this long battle.

Control of a ruined city does not describe the lives lost or displaced.

Civilian harm

Donetsk governor Vadym Filashkin reported three civilians killed and three injured in a Russian attack on Toretsk.

Ukrainska Pravda journalist Olha Kyrylenko documented burning and collapsing homes in Toretsk and civilians being evacuated from Toretsk and New York.

Evidence for learning objectives

The authored hold objective covers the marked area until the episode ends; it is not a claim that Ukraine retained Toretsk.

The model explicitly treats early quad and FPV assignments as assumptions where local detail is thin.

Ukrainska Pravda attributed at least three civilian deaths and three injuries on 29 July 2024 to governor Filashkin's initial report; this is one incident.

Timings

For 60 minutes, brief for 15, run with pauses for 25 and review for 20. For 90 minutes, compare both sides. For 180 minutes, compare the phases and source accounts.

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 source accounts.

fires
Record simulated effects and civilian exposure.

droneOps
Compare observation and attack roles.

Opposing staff objective

Capture the marked Toretsk area. Russian forces eventually took the city after prolonged fighting.

Decision points

- Opening: where does the fighting begin?
- Middle phase: how has the front changed?
- Final phase: what does the limited delay goal require?

Before and after questions

1. **What would meeting Ukraine's Toretsk objective establish within this model?**
   A. Ukraine retained the city throughout the historical battle.
   B. Ukraine recovered every settlement shown on the city map.
   C. Ukraine preserved its recorded force inventory in full.
   D. Ukraine delayed capture of the marked area to episode end.

2. **How should the report of at least three deaths and three injuries in Toretsk be labelled?**

   A. Initial civilian figures for the attack of 29 July 2024.
   B. Final civilian figures for all fighting in the city.
   C. Combined military figures for the entire Toretsk sector.
   D. Displacement figures for the same late-July incident.

3. **What is the appropriate reading of Toretsk's three dated model phases?**

   A. They reconstruct every daily change in territorial control.
   B. They compress a changing front into selected dated stages.
   C. They certify exact formation strengths at each phase opening.
   D. They date each drone flight depicted by the available hands.

4. **Which limitation applies to early quad and FPV assignments at Toretsk?**

   A. They document exact local aircraft types and flight totals.
   B. They establish unchanged drone equipment across all phases.
   C. They are assumptions where case-specific detail is limited.
   D. They verify the strengths of the accompanying MANPADS groups.

5. **What does Kyrylenko's July photo report add to a map of Toretsk's control?**

   A. An exact total of civilians killed during the full battle.
   B. A verified inventory of units defending every city district.
   C. A dated count of residents who returned after the battle.
   D. Kyrylenko observed burning and collapsing housing and reported evacuation experiences beyond the territorial-control picture

Discussion

- Why did fighting continue after the February capture claim?
- How does the long duration affect the equipment represented?
- What do civilian accounts add to a map of control?

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. Ukrainska Pravda, Olha Kyrylenko: Photo report from New York and Toretsk, 1 July 2024
2. OSW, Andrzej Wilk and Piotr Zochowski: Tactical advances in several directions, 23 July 2024
3. Ukrainska Pravda, Alona Mazurenko: Three civilians killed in Toretsk, 29 July 2024

Complete source list

Wikipedia: Battle of Toretsk, accessed 4 October 2026
Ukrainska Pravda, Olha Kyrylenko: Photo report from New York and Toretsk, 1 July 2024
OSW, Andrzej Wilk and Piotr Zochowski: Tactical advances in several directions, 23 July 2024
Ukrainska Pravda, Alona Mazurenko: Three civilians killed in Toretsk, 29 July 2024
Militarnyi, Vadim Kushnikov: 53rd and 93rd brigades with 28th Brigade drones in Toretsk, 26 March 2025
The War Zone, Howard Altman: Interview with Azov drone commander Yas, 28 May 2025
OSW: Another attack on Kyiv and front report, 5 August 2025
ZN.ua: ISW assesses the completion of the seizure of Toretsk, 8 August 2025
OSW: Production and use of Ukrainian battlefield drones, 14 October 2025