FACILITATOR PACK

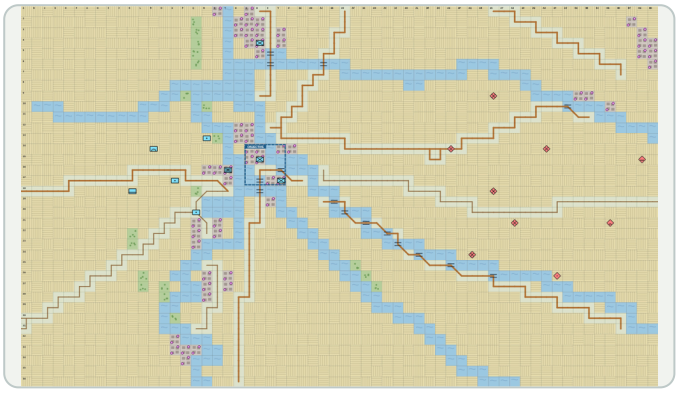
Velyka Novosilka: The River Town

Velyka Novosilka and its river approaches, Donetsk Oblast, Ukraine · 20 November 2024 to 28 January 2025

Information as of October 2026



Scenario illustration · AI generated



Facilitator map · both sides · Simulation situation map · reconstructed terrain and estimated deployments; not verified historical positions.

Learning objectives

- Locate the town and its three named rivers.
- Follow the changing front through three dated phases.
- Distinguish the historical result from a limited delay goal.

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 the capture of the marked town centre until the episode ends. Ukraine did not retain Velyka Novosilka historically; this is a limited delay mission.

Velyka Novosilka: The River Town: Delay the capture of the marked town centre until the episode ends. Ukraine did not retain Velyka Novosilka 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

Drone and artillery support did not replace the infantry needed to hold the town.

A river can complicate movement for both sides.

A limited delay mission differs from reversing the historical outcome.

Civilian harm

Ukrainska Pravda reports a Donetsk administration decision to evacuate children and their families from 16 settlements, including Velyka Novosilka. The regional figures are not a separate town casualty total.

Evidence for learning objectives

On 22 January 2025, Ukrainska Pravda reported the brigade's claim of sufficient artillery and drones but an infantry shortage; this is an attributed account.

The brigade's 26 January account described Mokri Yaly as a supply difficulty and later an obstacle to Russian advance; the model does not reconstruct bridge conditions or changing weather.

The authored civilian record leaves deaths and injuries unspecified for this episode; those empty totals do not mean that no civilians were harmed.

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 surrounding campaigns.

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 and attributed accounts.

fires
Record simulated effects and civilian exposure.

droneOps
Compare observation and attack roles.

Opposing staff objective

Capture the marked Velyka Novosilka centre. Russian forces took the town after advances around its approaches.

Decision points

- Opening: where are the town and surrounding villages?
- Middle phase: how has the area of fighting changed?
- Final phase: which limited goal remains achievable?

Before and after questions

1. **What limitation did the 110th Brigade report at Velyka Novosilka on 22 January?**

   A. Too little artillery and too few drones, despite enough infantry.
   B. Too few infantry, despite sufficient artillery and drone support.
   C. Too few drones, despite sufficient artillery and infantry forces.
   D. Too little artillery, despite enough drones and infantry forces.

   > **Answer B:** Ukrainska Pravda attributed the account to the brigade: artillery and drones were sufficient, but infantry personnel were critically short. It is not a verified inventory.

2. **How did the brigade's 26 January account describe the Mokri Yaly River?**

   A. As a barrier affecting Russian advance alone throughout the episode.
   B. As a supply corridor without any reported movement difficulties.
   C. As a Ukrainian supply difficulty and an obstacle to Russian advance.
   D. As a barrier affecting Ukrainian supply alone throughout the episode.

   > **Answer C:** The brigade said Mokri Yaly had complicated Ukrainian supply and had then become an obstacle to Russian advance. These are attributed claims, not a reconstruction of every crossing.

3. **What is the scope of Ukraine's Velyka Novosilka objective in the model?**

   A. Retain the whole sector throughout the historical campaign.
   B. Recapture all surrounding villages before the episode ends.
   C. Preserve every defending unit until the historical withdrawal.
   D. Delay capture of the marked centre until the episode ends.

   > **Answer D:** The authored objective is a hold goal for the marked town centre until episode end. It explicitly describes a limited delay, not a reversal of the historical result.

4. **Which detail is not reconstructed by Velyka Novosilka's three-phase model?**

   A. Bridge conditions and changing weather during the episode.
   B. A marked town-centre area for the limited hold objective.
   C. A 400-metre grid scale covering the surrounding approaches.
   D. Three dated stages compressing the represented battle period.

   > **Answer A:** The accuracy notes explicitly omit bridge conditions and changing weather. The marked centre, 400-metre scale and three dated phases are model features.

5. **What do unspecified civilian deaths and injuries mean in this episode's record?**

   A. The episode's records establish that no civilians were harmed.
   B. A separate civilian casualty total is not asserted for the episode.
   C. Displaced residents are counted instead as injured civilians.
   D. Military casualty figures provide the missing civilian totals.

> **Answer B:** The civilian record leaves killed and injured unset and says no separate total is asserted. Missing totals are not zero; displacement and military losses are different categories.

Discussion

- Why did reported drone and artillery availability not ensure that the town could be held?
- What difficulties did the rivers create?
- Why do the reports describe the last days differently?

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.

Facilitator notes

Assess historical source analysis through the cited readings, answers and discussion. Run metrics describe the simulated run; they do not verify historical claims or demonstrate that a source-analysis objective has been met.

Published readings

1. OSW: Commander of the Land Forces of Ukraine returns to the front, 28 January 2025
2. OSW: Britain pledges a century of support for Ukraine, 21 January 2025
3. Ukrainska Pravda, Anastasia Prots: 110th Brigade on Velyka Novosilka, 22 January 2025

Complete source list

Wikipedia: Velyka Novosilka offensive, accessed 4 October 2026
OSW: Commander of the Land Forces of Ukraine returns to the front, 28 January 2025
OSW: Britain pledges a century of support for Ukraine, 21 January 2025
Ukrainska Pravda, Anastasia Prots: 110th Brigade on Velyka Novosilka, 22 January 2025
Ukrainska Pravda, Roman Petrenko: Ukrainian brigade account of Velyka Novosilka, 26 January 2025
Associated Press: Russia says its troops have captured a strategic town, 26 January 2025
Ukrainska Pravda, Ivan Diakonov: Children and parents evacuated from Donetsk settlements (14 November 2024)
Ukrainska Pravda, Alona Mazurenko: Situation on Vremivka front is challenging, 23 December 2024