

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, December 1, 2023

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December 1, 2023, 7:15pm ET

Click [here](#) to see ISW's interactive map of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

Click [here](#) to see ISW's 3D control of terrain topographic map of Ukraine. Use of a computer (not a mobile device) is strongly recommended for using this data-heavy tool.

Click [here](#) to access ISW's archive of interactive time-lapse maps of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These maps complement the static control-of-terrain map that ISW produces daily by showing a dynamic frontline. ISW will update this time-lapse map archive monthly.

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 1pm ET on December 1. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the December 2 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief General Valerii Zaluzhnyi signaled intent to increase Ukrainian defenses and fortifications around the Ukrainian theater, but notably did not include Zaporizhia Oblast in discussions of ongoing and future defensive measures. Zelensky stated on November 30 that Ukrainian forces will strengthen their fortifications in all critical directions of the front, including the Kupyansk-Lyman line, oblasts in northern and western Ukraine, and Kherson Oblast, but particularly emphasized the Avdiivka and Marinka directions and other areas of Donetsk Oblast.[1] Zelensky additionally met with various Ukrainian operational group commanders and discussed Ukrainian defensive operations in the Avdiivka and Marinka directions.[2] Zaluzhnyi spoke with Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff General Charles Brown to discuss Russian offensive operations in the Kupyansk, Lyman, Bakhmut, Avdiivka, and Marinka directions.[3] Zelensky's and Zaluzhnyi's statements notably identified the areas of the front where Ukrainian forces are chiefly focusing on defensive operations such as the Kharkiv-Luhansk Oblast border line (between Kupyansk and Lyman), most of Donetsk Oblast (likely in reference to Bakhmut and the Avdiivka-Donetsk City axis) and Kherson Oblast, but notably did not mention the Zaporizhia Oblast axis—suggesting that Ukrainian forces have not gone over to the defensive in this area. These statements generally accord with ISW's assessment that Russian forces have been trying to regain the theater-level initiative in Ukraine since at least mid-November by conducting several simultaneous offensive operations in the areas where Ukrainian forces have transitioned to chiefly defensive actions.[4] In a separate interview with AP on December 1, Zelensky warned that in addition to the impacts that winter weather conditions are likely to have on the frontline, Russia will likely resume an intense air campaign against critical Ukrainian infrastructure.[5]

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu continues to falsely characterize Russian offensive efforts in Ukraine as part of an “active defense” in an effort to temper expectations about the Russian military's ability to achieve operationally significant

objectives. Shoigu stated on December 1 during a conference call with Russian military leadership that Russian forces are conducting an “active defense” in Ukraine and are capturing more advantageous positions in every operational direction.[6] Shoigu distinguished the 15th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Combined Arms Army, Central Military District), 114th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk Peoples Republic [DNR] Army Corps), and the 4th and 123rd Motorized Rifle Brigades (both of the 2nd Luhansk People’s Republic [LNR] Army Corps) for their service.[7] All of these elements are reportedly or likely operating in areas where Russian forces are conducting offensive operations in eastern Ukraine and not defending against Ukrainian counteroffensive operations in Zaporizhia Oblast.[8] Shoigu and Putin both previously called Russian offensive operations to capture Avdiivka an “active defense” following the failure of the first Russian mechanized push to achieve significant tactical gains in early October 2023.[9] Russian forces launched two subsequent large-scale pushes to capture Avdiivka since early October 2023 and continue a high tempo of attritional infantry assaults around the settlement.[10] Russian officials’ characterization of these offensives as being part of an “active defense” are intentionally misleading. Ukrainian forces have never conducted offensive operations at scale in the Avdiivka area since the beginning of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, and Avdiivka has been a famously static Ukrainian defensive position since 2014. Russian leadership has nevertheless continued to falsely frame operations around Avdiivka as an “active defense” likely to recontextualize the lack of any major Russian progress around Avdiivka despite over two months of large-scale Russian attacks there.[11]

The Russian military command would have to pursue an identifiable operational objective if it acknowledged the operations to capture Avdiivka as an offensive effort. The “active defense” framing, therefore, allows the Russian military leadership to declare success as long as Russian forces prevent Ukrainian forces from making any significant gains, an entirely achievable objective considering that Ukrainian forces are not conducting and never have conducted counteroffensive operations in the area. The Russian command’s “defensive” framing of the offensive effort around Avdiivka as well as localized offensive operations elsewhere in eastern Ukraine suggests that it lacks confidence in the Russian military’s ability to translate tactical gains into operationally significant advances.[12] Russian President Vladimir Putin, apparently concerned about decreasing Russian support for the war ahead of the 2024 Russian Presidential elections, has likely chosen to downplay the scale of Russian operations to the Russian public.[13] The increasing disconnect between heavy Russian losses in these offensive efforts and the Russian command’s framing of these operations may nevertheless fuel discontent in the wider Russian information space.

Ukrainian intelligence reportedly damaged another train along a section of the Baikal-Amur Railway on December 1 in an apparent effort to degrade Russian logistics in the Russian Far East. Ukrainian media reported that Ukrainian intelligence sources stated that the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) conducted a special operation that damaged another train carrying fuel as it passed over a bridge along an unspecified part of the northern bypass of the Baikal-Amur Railway.[14] The SBU reportedly planned the operation to coincide with the expected rerouting of train traffic following the November 30 explosions in the Severomuysky Tunnel that disrupted a section of the East Siberian Railway in the Republic of Buryatia and damaged a fuel train, which Ukrainian media also connected to the SBU.[15] Russian sources claimed that the explosions on December 1 also occurred in the Republic of Buryatia and that six fuel tanks were completely or partially damaged.[16] Russian outlet Baza reported that travel is still blocked through the Severomuysky tunnel.[17] Ukrainian media reported that Ukrainian intelligence observed the Russian military using the railway to transfer equipment and supplies, although there are no indications that

the December 1 explosions damaged the bridge along the Baikal-Amur Railway and will cause long-term disruptions.[18] The Baikal-Amur Railway and the Eastern Siberian Railway are the two major railways in the Russian Far East and connect Russia to China and North Korea, on which Russia is increasingly relying on for economic and military support to sustain its war effort in Ukraine.[19]

Russian President Vladimir Putin officially changed the composition of the Russian Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights (HRC) on December 1, removing several members and appointing a prominent anti-opposition media figure. Putin signed a decree on December 1 that officially removed Russian lawyers Genri Reznik and Shota Gorgadze, Novaya Gazeta journalist Leonid Nikitinsky, North Caucasus-based missing person's peacekeeping mission head Alexander Mukomolov, and Independent Expert Legal Counsel head Mara Polyakov.[20] Neither the text of the decree nor Russian media offered explanations for the removal of the aforementioned HRC members. The decree also notably nominates "public figure" Alexander Ionov to the HRC, along with several other Russian civil society figures.[21] Russian opposition media noted that Ionov has been a member of the Russian Federal Penitentiary Service since 2021 and that Ionov lodged successful appeals against Russian opposition outlets Meduza and The Bell, after which the Russian Ministry of Justice designated the outlets as "foreign agents." [22] The US Treasury has sanctioned Ionov since July 2022 for his role in supporting "the Kremlin's global negative influence operations and election interference efforts." [23] Putin last changed the composition of the HRC in November 2022, which ISW assessed was an effort to stifle domestic opposition and give prominence to figures who propagate the Kremlin's major informational lines.[24]

Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov claimed that a second group of Palestinian refugees from the Gaza Strip arrived in Chechnya on December 1, possibly partially funded by his daughter's "Children of Chechnya - Children of Palestine" organization. NOTE: A version of this text appears in ISW-CTP's December 1 Iran Update. Kadyrov published footage claiming to show 116 Palestinian refugees from the Gaza Strip, including 60 children, arriving in Chechnya and claimed that it is Chechnya's "moral duty" to help the civilians of the Gaza Strip.[25] Kadyrov claimed that his daughter and head of the Grozny City Hall Preschool Education Department, Khadizhat Kadyrova, provided the children gifts through the "Children of Chechnya - Children of Palestine" organization. Kadyrov announced Kadyrova's patronage of the organization in a Telegram post on November 11, encouraging his followers to purchase crafts made by Chechen preschoolers to fund humanitarian aid for Palestinian Muslims.[26] Regional outlet Caucasian Knot reported on November 15 that the organization raised more than 68 million rubles to purchase aid for Palestinians.[27] Caucasian Knot reported on November 16, citing unnamed Chechen government officials, that Kadyrov pressured Chechen officials to spend up to a third of their monthly salaries buying crafts from the "Children of Chechnya - Children of Palestine" organization.[28] Chechnya's Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Development stated on November 18 that fundraisers for the organization are taking place "in all corners" of Chechnya.[29] ISW cannot independently verify this footage or any of Kadyrov's claims, however. But if true, Kadyrov may be using the funds from this organization to at least partially finance the relocation of Palestinian refugees from the Gaza Strip, an effort that could help Kadyrov in his quest to balance his desire to curry favor with Russian President Vladimir Putin with the need to appeal to his own Chechen constituency.[30] Kadyrov posted footage on November 29 purportedly showing an initial group of 50 Palestinian refugees from the Gaza Strip arriving in Chechnya.[31] Kadyrov's claims and the alleged work of the "Children of Chechnya-Children of

Palestine” organization reflect the Kremlin’s shift to a much more anti-Israel positions in the Israel-Hamas war.[32]

Russian milbloggers claimed that the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD)’s disproportionate allocation of drones among frontline units and poorly-executed grassroots drone production campaigns are impacting frontline unit effectiveness.

Russian milbloggers complained on December 1 that some decentralized grassroots campaigns aimed at arming Russian frontline units with new drones are failing to design battlefield-effective drones, sometimes developing “toys” instead of weapons.[33] The milbloggers complained that Russian drone manufacturers base the development of new drones on stylized and cinematic battlefield footage of Russian kamikaze drones striking Ukrainian equipment, resulting in these ineffective “toy” drones that can produce cinematic effects but struggle to further tactical objectives. The milbloggers claimed that the strikes that such footage depict are often “pretty” but ineffective, and claimed that Russian frontline units must conduct such strikes and produce such footage for the Russian MoD and grassroots drone manufacturers to continue allocating drones to those units.[34] These complaints are indicative of the struggles that the Russian MoD and other states with a highly centralized system face when implementing and integrating technological advances onto the battlefield. ISW has observed no indications that these frontline drone struggles have significantly impacted Russian military capabilities in Ukraine. The Russian milbloggers largely appear to focus on reiterating common complaints about the MoD prioritizing idealized lies that obfuscate harsh battlefield realities at the expense of Russian military personnel.[35] One milblogger claimed that the worst impact of these ineffective drones was that their ineffectiveness threatens frontline Russian soldiers.[36]

Russian sources complained that Russian soldiers' continued use of personal electronics and messaging apps in frontline areas is jeopardizing Russian operational security (OPSEC).

A prominent pro-Russian “hactivist” released an alleged Ukrainian intelligence report on November 30 that shows Ukrainian intercepts of Russian personal communications from one day on one sector of the front.[37] The Russian source complained that this alleged report is relatively small compared to other such reports the source has obtained and complained that all WhatsApp and other messages that Russian military personnel send end up in Ukrainian interceptions, including documents, conversation screenshots, and media files.[38] One Russian milblogger responded to this post and claimed that neither warnings nor “detailed lectures” on the dangers of using WhatsApp and SMS systems in combat areas appear to affect Russian soldiers’ communication habits. The source concluded that “WhatsApp is killing” Russian personnel and that commanders need to crack down on Russian personnel’s use of these applications.[39] Another milblogger responded that Russian soldiers' use of WhatsApp informs Ukraine where Russian forces are going to attack.[40] Russian units have continually struggled with proper adherence to OPSEC principles in key frontline and rear areas throughout the war thus far, particularly pertaining to personal cellphone use in combat areas.[41] The Russian military command largely blamed Russian cellphone use for a devastating Ukrainian strike on a concentration area in Makiivka, Donetsk Oblast, on New Years Eve 2022, and it appears as though Russian command has largely failed to remedy such issues over the course of the past year.[42]

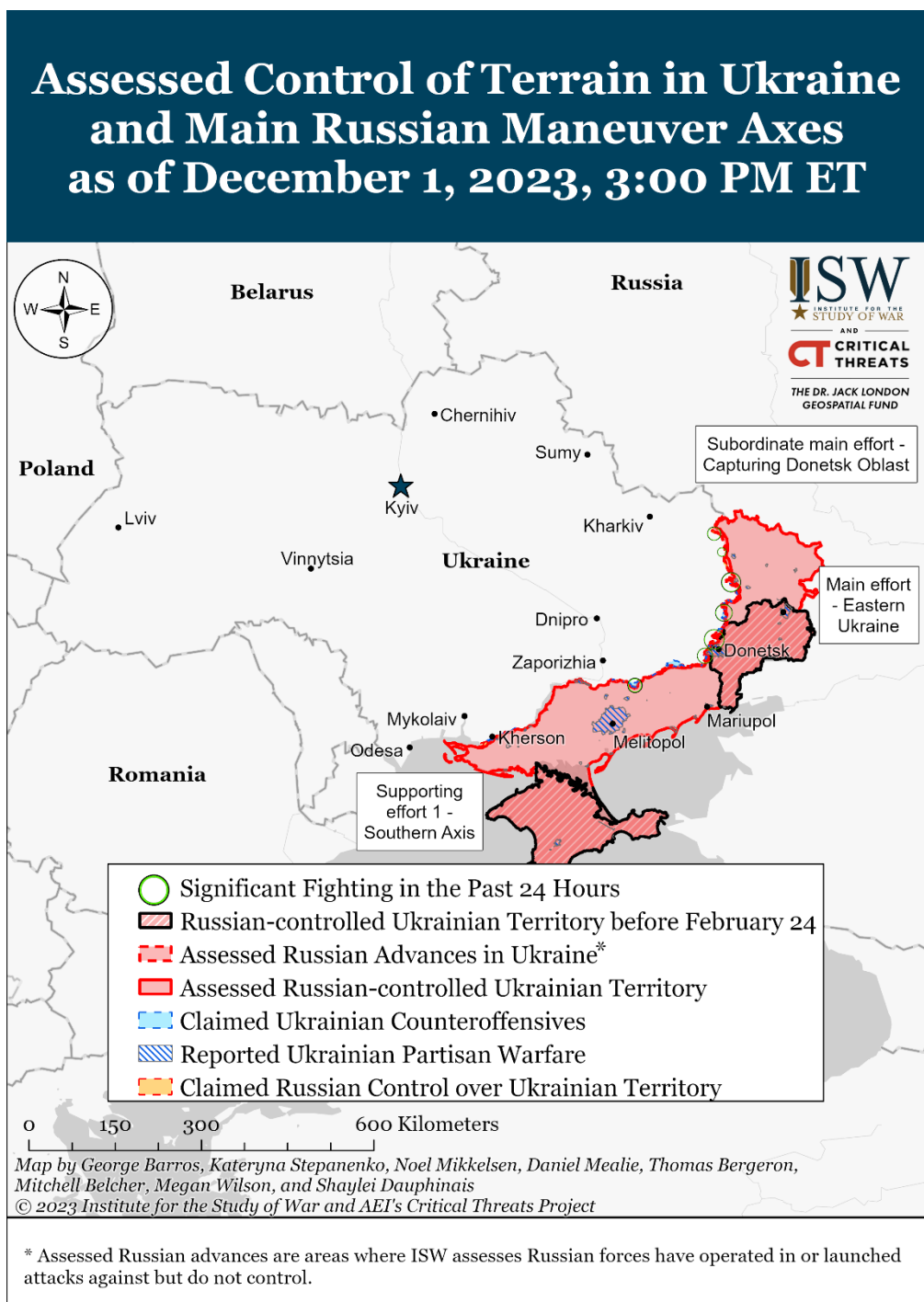
Russian forces conducted another missile and drone strike against Ukraine on the night of November 30-December 1. The Ukrainian Air Force Command reported that Russian forces launched 25 Shahed 131/136 drones and two Kh-59 missiles primarily targeting areas in

eastern and southern Ukraine and that Ukrainian forces downed 18 of the drones and one of the missiles.[43]

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief General Valerii Zaluzhnyi signaled intent to increase Ukrainian defenses and fortifications around the Ukrainian theater, but notably did not include Zaporizhia Oblast in discussions of ongoing and future defensive measures.**
- **Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu continues to falsely characterize Russian offensive efforts in Ukraine as part of an “active defense” in an effort to temper expectations about the Russian military’s ability to achieve operationally significant objectives.**
- **Ukrainian intelligence reportedly damaged another train along a section of the Baikal-Amur Railway on December 1 in an apparent effort to degrade Russian logistics in the Russian Far East.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin officially changed the composition of the Russian Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights (HRC) on December 1, removing several members and appointing a prominent anti-opposition media figure.**
- **Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov claimed that a second group of Palestinian refugees from the Gaza Strip arrived in Chechnya on December 1, possibly partially funded by his daughter’s ”Children of Chechnya - Children of Palestine” organization.**
- **Russian milbloggers claimed that the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD)’s disproportionate allocation of drones among frontline units and poorly-executed grassroots drone production campaigns are impacting frontline unit effectiveness.**
- **Russian sources complained that Russian soldiers’ continued use of personal electronics and messaging apps in frontline areas is jeopardizing Russian operational security (OPSEC).**
- **Russian forces continued offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, near Avdiivka, west and southwest of Donetsk City, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and advanced in some areas.**
- **Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev claimed on December 1 that the Russian military has recruited over 452,000 personnel between January 1 and December 1, 2023.**

- **Russian occupation officials continue to set conditions for the deportation of Ukrainians to Russia under various vacation schemes.**



We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We will continue to evaluate and report on the effects of

these criminal activities on the Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population and specifically on combat in Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

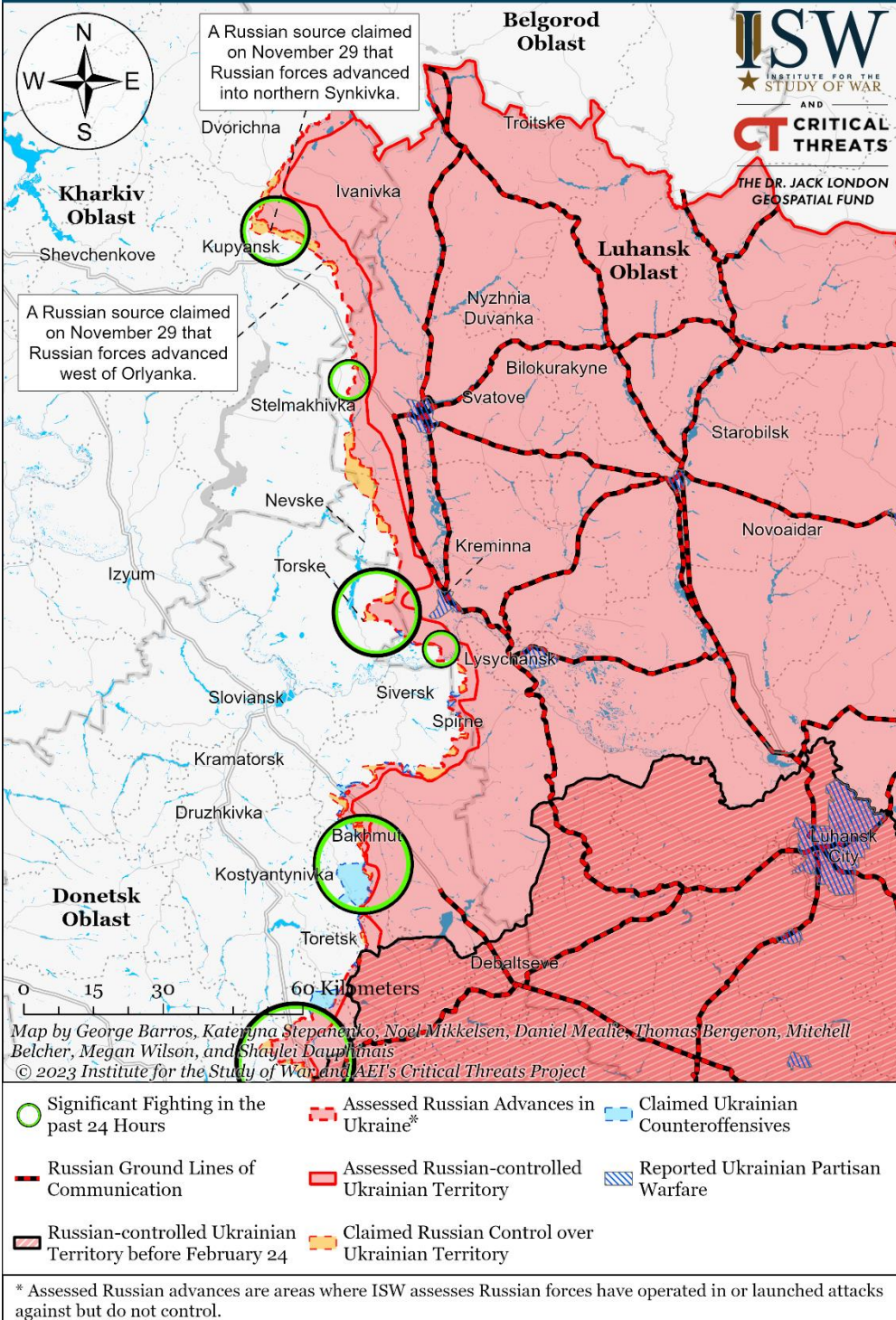
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Russian Technological Adaptations
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas
- Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

Russian forces continued offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on December 1 and recently advanced northeast of Kupyansk. Geolocated footage published on November 30 shows that Russian forces advanced southeast of Vilshana (15km northeast of Kupyansk).[44] Russian sources claimed that heavy fighting is ongoing near Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk) and that Russian forces also attacked near Lyman Pershyi (12km northeast of Kupyansk) and in the Serebryanske forest area.[45] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults near Synkivka and northeast of Petropavlivka (7km east of Kupyansk); near Stelmakhivka (15km northwest of Svatove), near Torske (14km west of Kreminna); and in the Serebryanske forest area (11km south of Kreminna).[46] Ukrainian Ground Forces Command Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Volodymyr Fityo reported that Russian forces somewhat reduced the intensity of attacks in the Kupyansk and Lyman directions and that Russian forces are regrouping in the Lyman direction.[47] Fityo added that Russian forces have a large stockpile of glide bombs and conduct strikes with these glide bombs on the Kupyansk-Lyman frontline. Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets claimed that Russian forces made tactical advances west and south of Kreminna.[48] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Synkivka, Yampolivka (16km west of Kreminna), and the Serebryanske forest area on December 1.[49]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of December 1, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

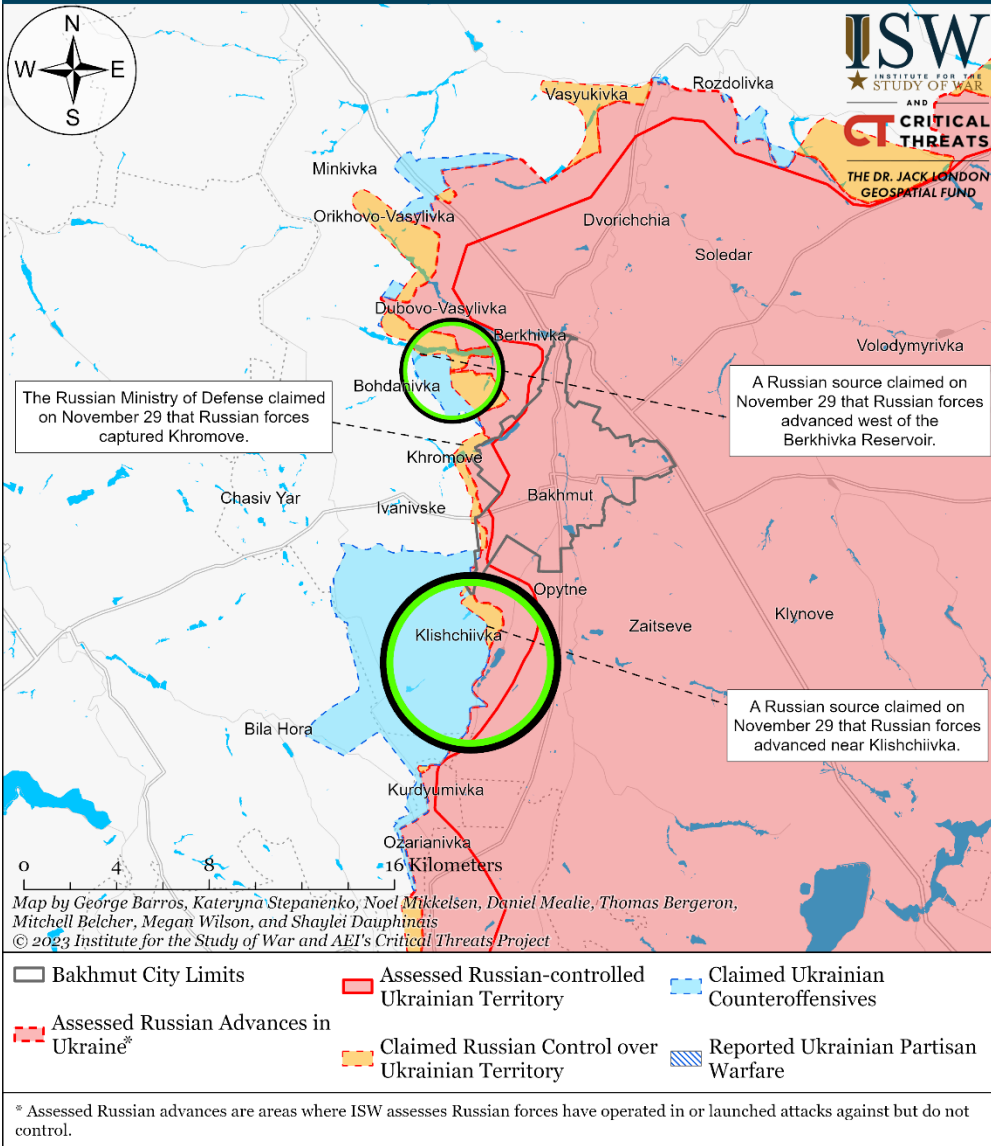


Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)

Russian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut on December 1 but did not make any confirmed advances. Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that Russian forces captured unspecified positions north of Bohdanivka (5km northwest of Bakhmut), northeast of Khromove (immediately west of Bakhmut), and north of Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut).[50] A Russian milblogger claimed on November 30 that Russian forces are advancing southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) and Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).[51] Russian sources claimed on November 30 and December 1 that Russian forces are advancing towards Bohdanivka from Khromove and Berkhivka (3km north of Bakhmut).[52] One Russian milblogger claimed on December 1 that Russian forces established footholds on the northern and southeastern outskirts of Bohdanivka.[53] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces are also fighting along the O0506 highway north of Khromove and the T0504 highway south of Khromove.[54] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Bohdanivka, Ivanivske (6km west of Bakhmut), Klishchiivka, and Andriivka.[55] Ukrainian Ground Forces Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Volodymyr Fityo stated that Russian forces have intensified operations along the entire eastern front.[56] The spokesman for a Ukrainian unit reportedly deployed in the Bakhmut direction stated on November 30 that Russian forces transferred elements of the Russian 98th and 106th Guards Airborne (VDV) Divisions from the Lyman direction to positions between Khromove and Bohdanivka to reinforce Russian forces in the area, and the Russian MoD published footage on December 1 claiming to show elements of the Russian 106th Guards VDV Division operating near Soledar.[57] The Ukrainian spokesperson stated that Russian forces are also equipping units in this area with armored vehicles. Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov posted footage claiming to show the "Shustrogo" detachment of Chechen "Akhmat" Spetsnaz and elements of the Russian 4th Motorized Rifle Brigade (Luhansk People's Republic [LNR] 2nd Army Corps) operating near Klishchiivka.[58]

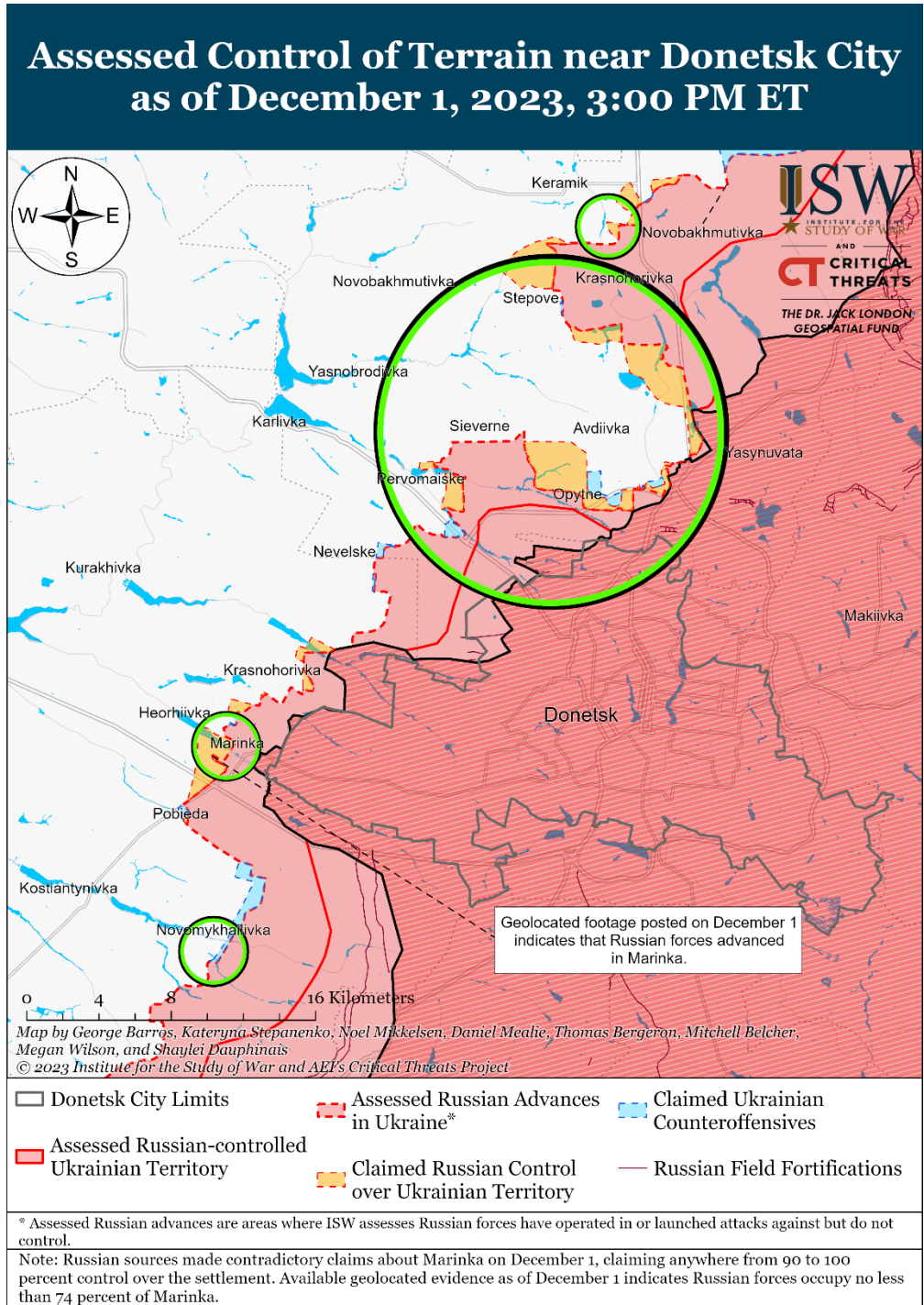
Ukrainian forces continued counterattacks near Bakhmut on December 1 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued assaults south of Bakhmut.[59] Mashovets claimed that Ukrainian forces pushed Russian forces from positions north of Khromove and east of Klishchiivka.[60]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of December 1, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



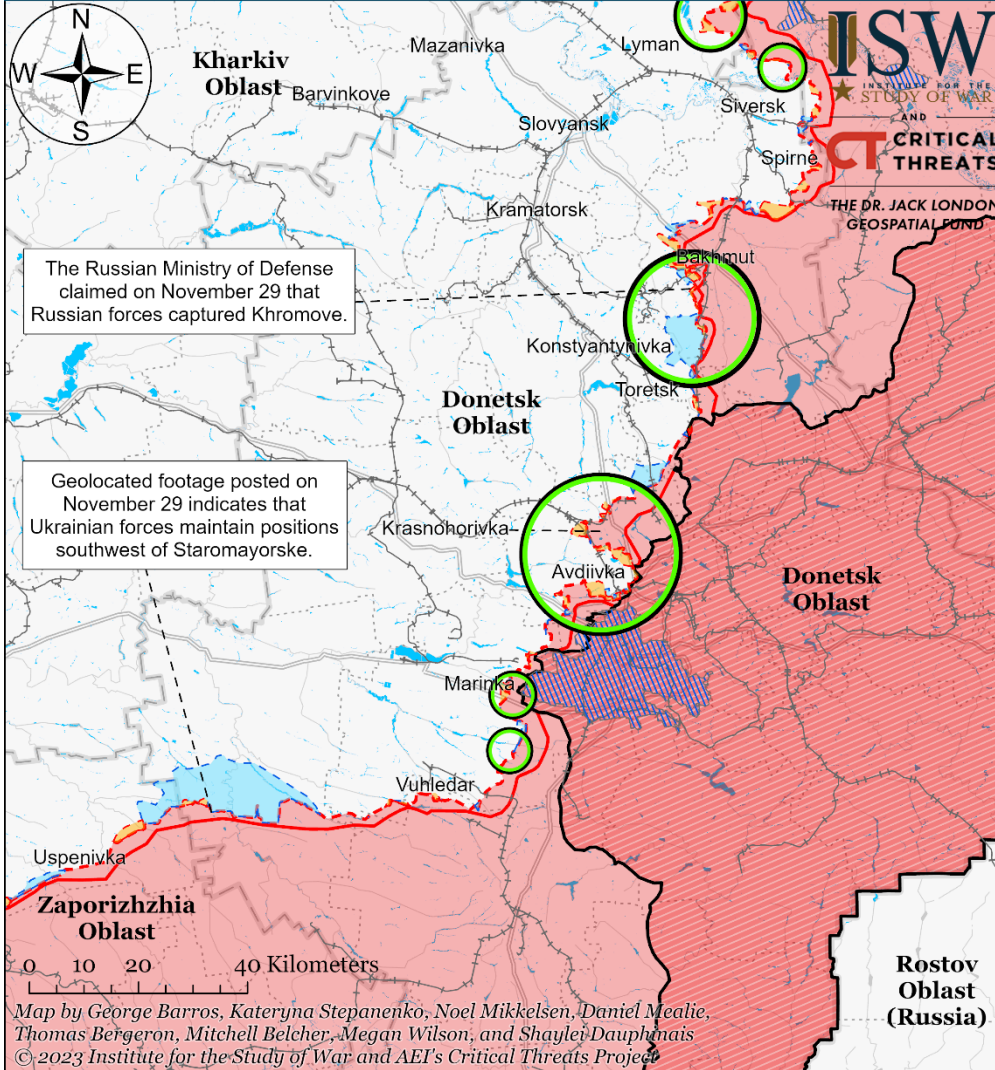
Russian forces continued offensive operations near Avdiivka on December 1 and made confirmed advances. Geolocated footage published on December 1 indicates that Russian forces advanced east and southeast of Stepove (3km northwest of Avdiivka).[61] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces gained footholds in northeastern Stepove and the settlement's southeast outskirts.[62] The milblogger also claimed that Russian forces control half of Stepove and have advanced up to 200 meters north of the settlement, although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced to positions in a forest area south of Novokalynove (7km north of Avdiivka), in the direction of Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka), and along the Vodyane-Opytne line (7km southwest to 4km south of Avdiivka).[63] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces also attacked near the Avdiivka

industrial zone southeast of Avdiivka and the Avdiivka Coke Plant northwest of Avdiivka.[64] One Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced in the Avdiivka industrial zone in recent days.[65] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful assaults south of Novokalynove and near Stepove, Avdiivka, Tonenke (7km west of Avdiivka), Sieverne, and Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka).[66] Mashovets claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked and recaptured unspecified positions near Avdiivka.[67]



Russian forces continued offensive operations west and southwest of Donetsk City on December 1 and made a confirmed advance. Geolocated footage published on December 1 indicates that Russian forces advanced further into western Marinka (immediately west of Donetsk City).[68] Several Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces completely control Marinka and amplified footage of Russian servicemen from the 103rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) also claiming that Russian forces fully control the settlement.[69] Another group of Russian milblogger called these reports "premature," claiming that that Russian forces control between 90 to 95 percent of Marinka, however.[70] Currently available geolocated evidence indicates that Russian forces control no less than 74 percent of Marinka, but Russian forces may control more as they claim. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful assaults near Marinka and Novomykhailivka (10km southwest of Donetsk City).[71] Russian Southern Grouping of Forces Spokesperson Vadim Astafeyev claimed that Russian forces repelled two Ukrainian attacks near Marinka.[72]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of December 1, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

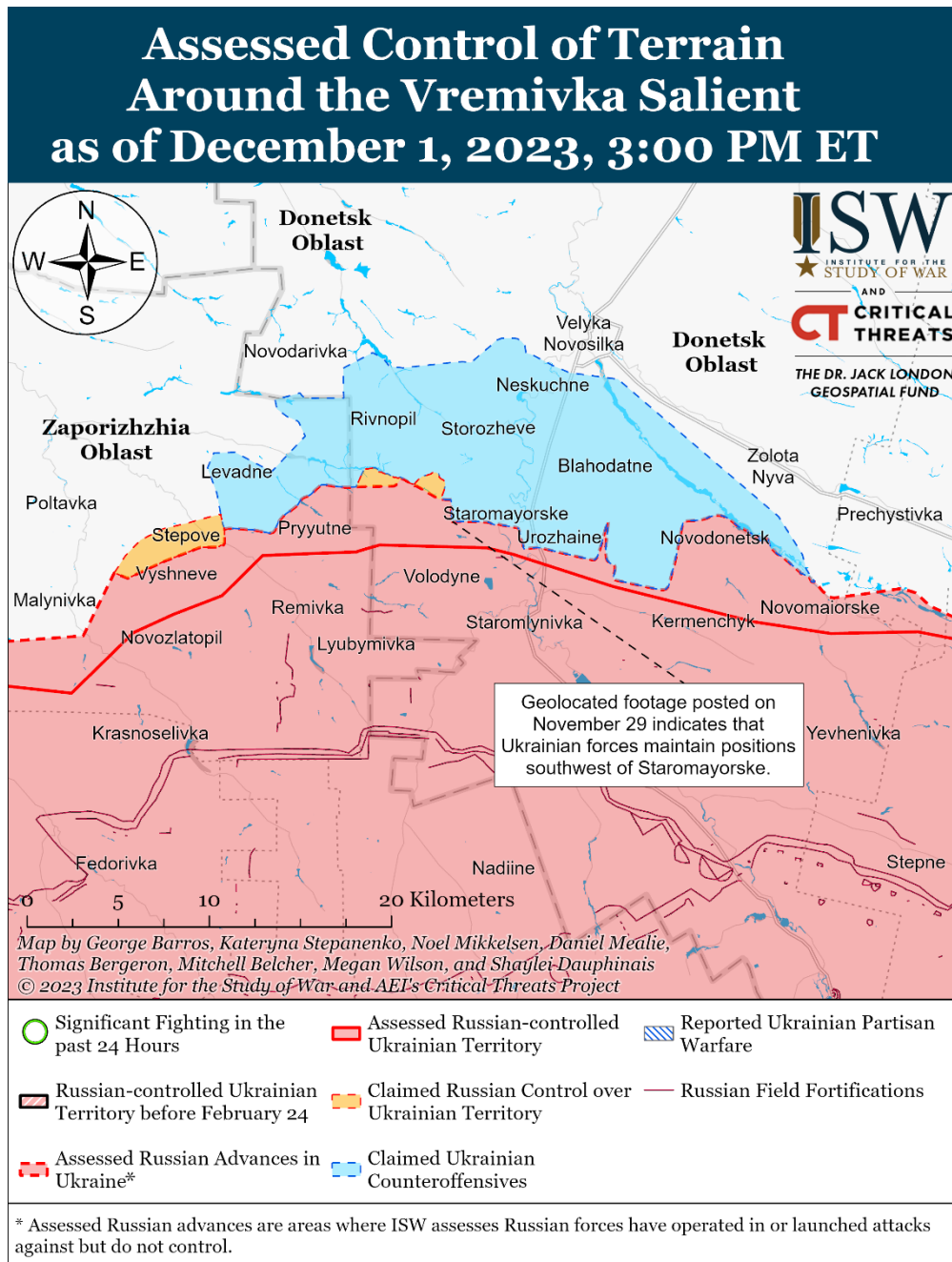


Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours	Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory	Major Railroads
Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24	Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory	Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine	Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives	

* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

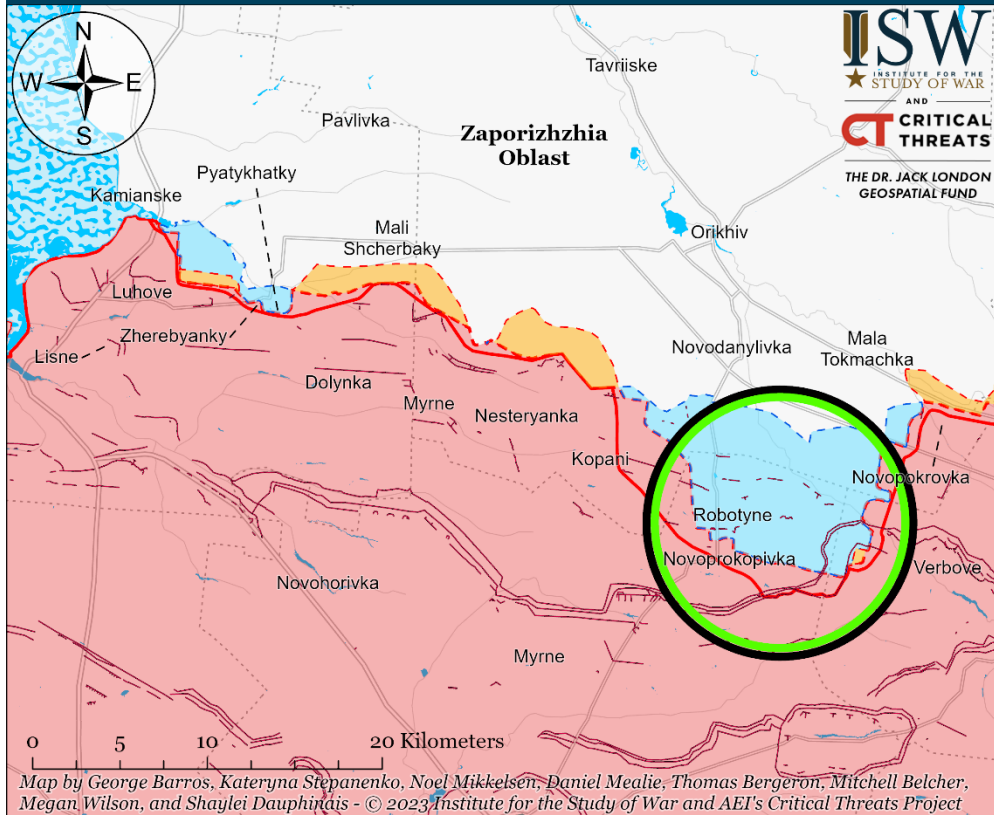
Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Russian and Ukrainian sources remarked on a general lack of activity in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on December 1. The Ukrainian General Staff did not report any Russian assaults in this direction during the day.[73] The Russian Vostok Battalion, which is reportedly deployed in the area, claimed that Ukrainian and Russian forces are conducting mutual artillery fire while waiting for the mud to freeze over so they can renew ground attacks.[74]



Russian forces conducted counterattacks in western Zaporizhia Oblast on December 1 but did not make any claimed or confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported unsuccessful Russian assaults near Robotyne and west of Verbove (10km east of Robotyne).[75] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces are increasingly pressuring Ukrainian positions on the western outskirts of Robotyne.[76] One Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are building up and conducting intense counterattacks along the entire Kopani-Robotyne-Novoprokopivka-Verbove line (5km northwest to 10km east of Robotyne), and another milblogger claimed that Russian forces captured positions in forest areas near Verbove that Ukrainian forces had held for the previous two months.[77] ISW has not yet observed visual evidence of recent Russian gains near Verbove, however. One Russian airborne (VDV)-affiliated source complained that VDV units north of Verbove are struggling to deliver ammunition and provisions to frontline VDV positions due to heavy Ukrainian artillery fire, drone use, and high winds.[78]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of December 1, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



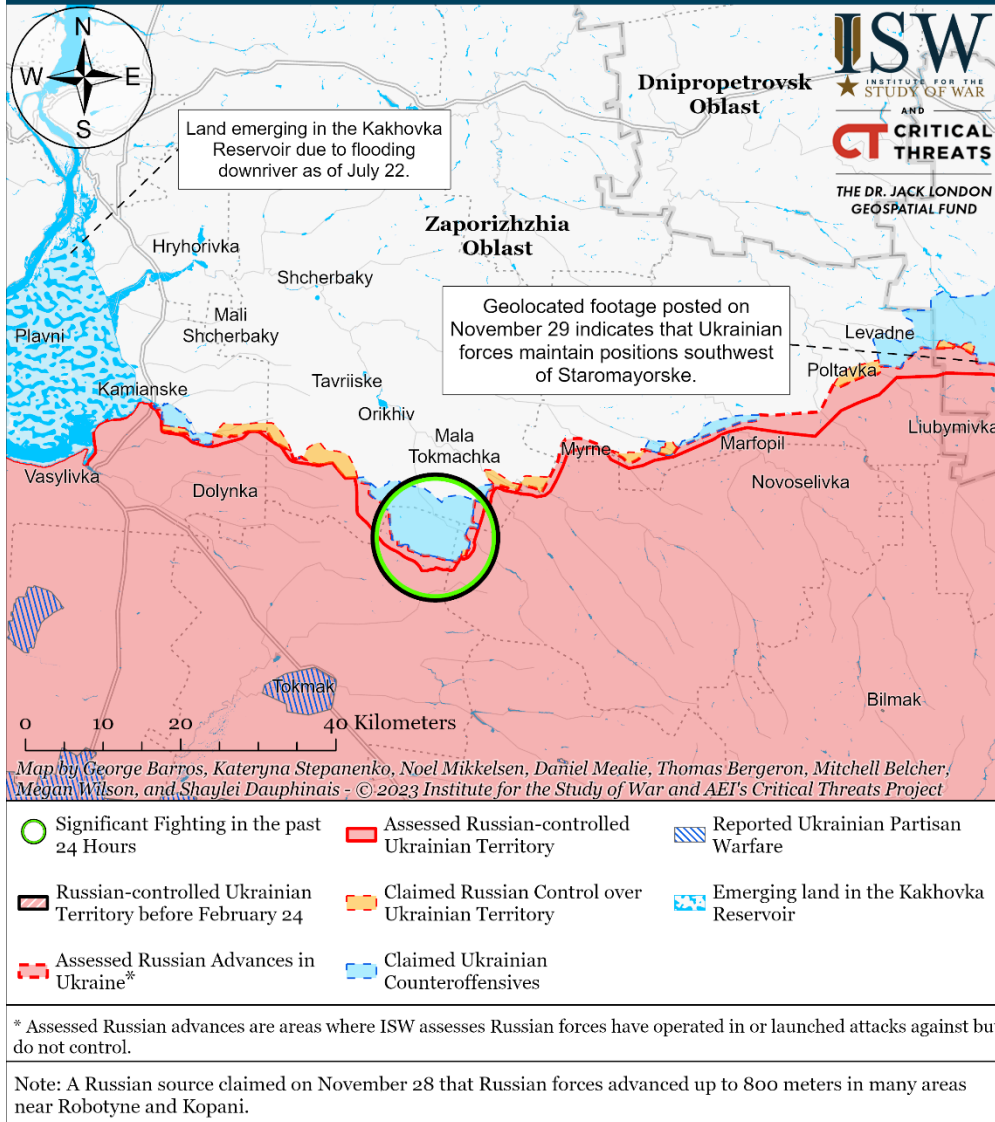
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Russian Field Fortifications

* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: A Russian source claimed on November 28 that Russian forces advanced up to 800 meters in many areas near Robotyne and Kopani.

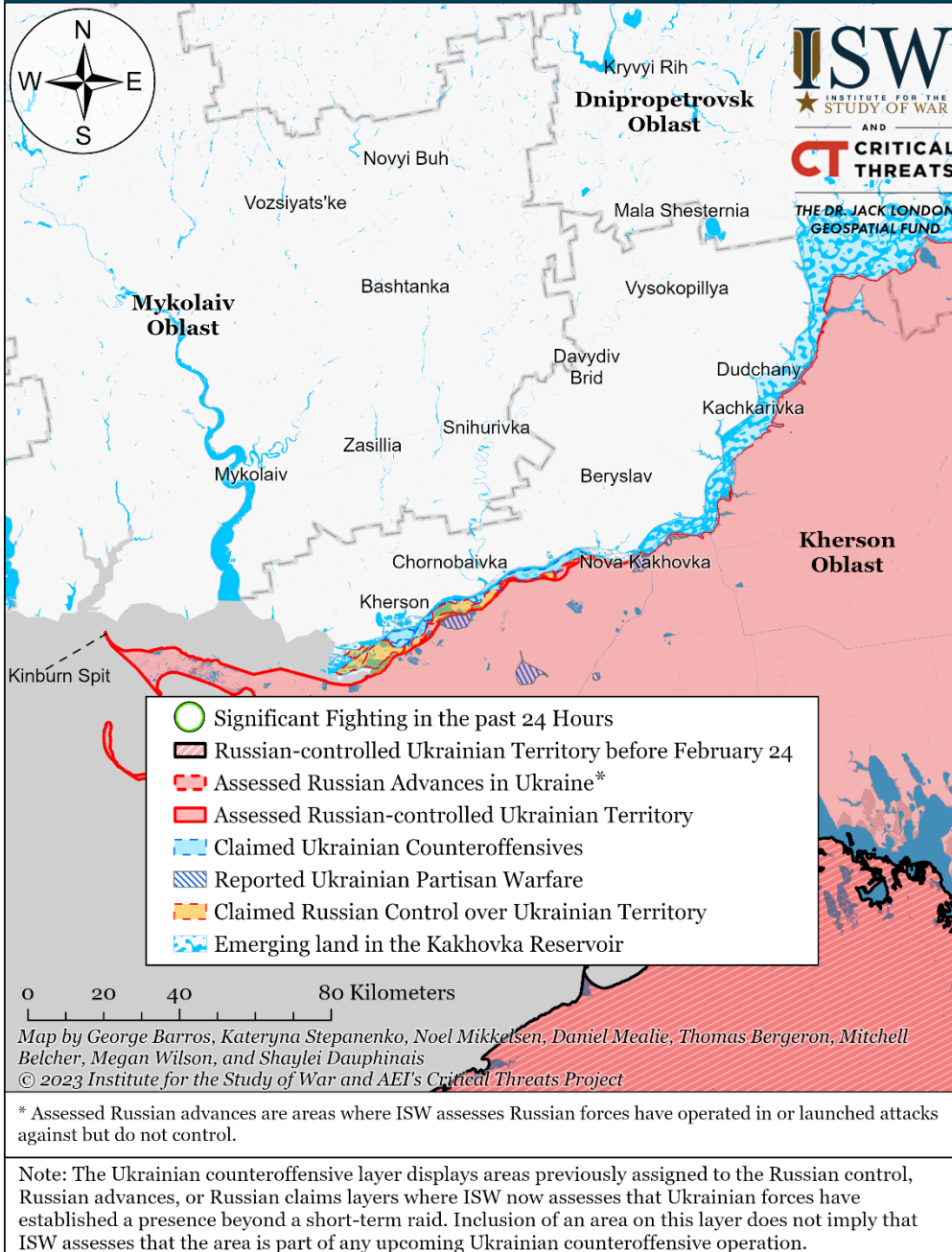
Ukrainian forces continued limited counteroffensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on December 1 but did not make any claimed or confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces are conducting an offensive operation in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhzhia Oblast) direction.[79] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled six Ukrainian attacks near Robotyne and Verbove.[80] Several Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked north and northwest of Verbove.[81] One milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces also attacked near Robotyne with up to 20 personnel, one tank, and two armored fighting vehicles, but reported that Russian forces repelled the attack.[82]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of December 1, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Ukrainian forces continued operations on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast on December 1. The Ukrainian General Staff reiterated that Ukrainian forces maintain positions on the east bank of the Dniro River.[83] One VDV-affiliated milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces attempted to transfer another group of personnel to Krynky (30km northeast of Kherson City and 2km from the Dniro River) via boat on the night of November 30 to December 1 but that Russian strikes prevented the attempt.[84] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces are trying to advance in forest areas south of Krynky.[85] One prominent milblogger claimed that Russian airstrikes on Krynky have forced Ukrainian forces to retreat to the northern part of the settlement.[86]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of December 1, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



The Russian MoD accused Ukraine of launching a naval drone at occupied Crimea on December 1.[87] The Russian MoD and other Russian sources claimed that Black Sea Fleet (BSF) aviation assets destroyed the naval drone.[88]

Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts (Russian objective: Expand combat power without conducting general mobilization)

Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev claimed on December 1 that the Russian military has recruited over 452,000 personnel between January 1 and December 1, 2023.[89] Medvedev previously claimed on November 9 that Russian forces had recruited 410,000 contract, volunteer, and conscripted military personnel since January 1, 2023, alleging that the Russian military recruited over 40,000 personnel in recent weeks.[90] ISW has previously observed that Medvedev's and other Russian officials' recruitment figures do not clearly indicate what categories of servicemen these numbers encompass.[91] Medvedev specifically highlighted the Chechen Republic's contribution to Russian force generation efforts on December 1, claiming that the Chechen Republic has sent 30,000 recruits to Ukraine in an unspecified time frame.[92] Medvedev claimed that the "Special Forces University" in Gudermes, Chechnya, a hub for Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov's irregular and parallel force generation efforts, has trained over 15,000 personnel in an unspecified time frame.[93]

Russian President Vladimir Putin formally increased the official end strength of the Russian military, although this number likely corresponds to the current size of the Russian military and does not portend a dramatic increase in its size. Putin signed a decree on December 1 increasing the official endstrength of the Russian Armed Forces from 2.039 million to 2.209 million personnel, including 1.32 million Russian combat personnel. This decree represents an increase of 170,000 combat personnel from a similar decree that Putin signed in August 2022.[94] Medvedev's recent figures suggests that this 170,000-person increase likely encompasses the net gain in Russian military personnel since August 2022 between partial mobilization, subsequent ongoing crypto-mobilization efforts, the number of Russians concluding military service, and Russian casualties in Ukraine.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu stated on December 1 that the Russian military plans to establish seven modern training grounds in the zone of the "special military operation" (likely meaning in or very near occupied Ukraine) in 2024.[95] Shoigu claimed that Russian forces have already completely established two of the training grounds but did not specify whether the established and planned training grounds are located in occupied Ukraine or in Russian oblasts bordering Ukraine.[96] These reported training grounds will likely support reconstitution efforts for heavily degraded Russian formations fighting in Ukraine. Russian forces have also committed newly created formations and units, likely understaffed and understrength, as reinforcements to Ukraine, and the Russian military command may be expanding training infrastructure to bring these elements to their intended strength.[97] The expansion of training infrastructure likely aims to support Russia's crypto-mobilization efforts, through which Russian forces appear to be committing a consistent amount of new personnel to Ukraine at a rate roughly equal to Russian losses.[98] The expansion of training infrastructure does not necessarily portend another wave of partial mobilization in Russia, but it sets conditions for potentially significant increases in Russian military end strength in the long term.

Russian officials continue to gradually mobilize the Russian defense industrial base (DIB). Russian state-owned defense conglomerate Rostec announced on November 30 that the Kalashnikov Concern's mechanical plant in Lipetsk Oblast will begin repairing Russian military equipment in the second quarter of 2024 and may become a hub for the repair of anti-aircraft missile complexes.[99]

Russian Technological Adaptations (Russian objective: Introduce technological innovations to optimize systems for use in Ukraine)

The Russian military reportedly plans to increase its use of more accurate glide bombs in Ukraine. Russian state outlet RIA Novosti claimed on December 1 that an "informed source" stated that the Russian Aerospace Forces (VKS) will begin training Su-34 pilots en masse to operate glide bombs with universal planning and correction modules (UMPC) for use in Ukraine.[100] The UMPCs reportedly have folding wings, rudders, and a control system that can automatically point bombs at targets.[101] The VKS attaches UMPCs to improve the accuracy of glide bombs with payloads of 250, 500, and 1500 kilograms, which Russian forces are increasingly using throughout the front in Ukraine.[102] RIA Novosti's source stated that the Russian military command identified the use of UMPC equipped glide bombs as an effective but low-cost approach to high-precision strikes in Ukraine.[103] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian officials are also updating the Su-34's software so that Russian pilots can launch the UMPC equipped glide bombs while conducting all types of maneuvers.[104]

Activities in Russian-occupied areas (Russian objective: Consolidate administrative control of annexed areas; forcibly integrate Ukrainian citizens into Russian sociocultural, economic, military, and governance systems)

Russian occupation officials continue to set conditions for the deportation of Ukrainians to Russia under various vacation schemes. Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Head Denis Pushilin stated on December 1 that families from occupied Donetsk Oblast can apply to travel to Moscow on December 14 for a pre-New Year's trip to a Russian cultural forum and that 2,551 people have already applied.[105] Russian and occupation officials routinely use the guise of vacations to Russia to deport residents from occupied territories.[106]

Russian occupation officials continue to sign new legislation aimed at supporting integration efforts. Kherson Oblast occupation administration head Vladimir Saldo stated on December 1 that the Kherson Oblast occupation дума adopted a new charter that formalizes existing laws on socioeconomic, political, and cultural matters, better aligning these laws with the Russian legal system.[107] Saldo and Zaporizhia Oblast occupation head Yevgeny Balitsky both stated that their respective occupation administrations adopted bills on budgets, property taxes, and transport taxes that will come into effect on January 1, 2024, likely further integrating occupation budgets and taxes into Russian budgetary and tax systems.[108]

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Nothing significant to report.

Significant activity in Belarus (Russian efforts to increase its military presence in Belarus and further integrate Belarus into Russian-favorable frameworks and Wagner Group activity in Belarus)

Belarusian forces reportedly continue to train under instructors from the Wagner Group. A Russian source affiliated with the Wagner Group posted an image on December 1 of the Belarusian "Storm" Spetsnaz unit training with Wagner instructors at the Brest Training Ground in Belarus.[109]

Note: ISW does not receive any classified material from any source, uses only publicly available information, and draws extensively on Russian, Ukrainian, and Western reporting and social media as well as commercially available satellite imagery and other geospatial data as the basis for these reports. References to all sources used are provided in the endnotes of each update.

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