

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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February 9, 2024, 6:40pm 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 2pm ET on February 9. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the February 10 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

The Russian online community noted that Russian President Vladimir Putin did not offer any new information in his interview with American media personality Tucker Carlson and simply repeated longstanding Kremlin talking points about Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine for American audiences. Prominent Russian milbloggers claimed that Putin did not say anything new and framed the interview as a Russian attempt to infiltrate Western mainstream media rather than to make any fundamentally new arguments or to address Russian audiences.[1] One milblogger claimed that Putin's interview aimed to promote Russian foreign policy to Americans who are actively engaged on social media and explained Putin's repetition of tired Kremlin talking points as a summary of Russia's justifications for its invasion of Ukraine for American voters.[2] Sources close to the Russian Presidential Administration similarly told Russian opposition outlet *Meduza* that Putin's interview was not designed for a Russian audience and that the Kremlin intended to generate informational effects and hysteria in the West.[3] One of *Meduza's* interlocutors added that the interview's secondary objective was to show Russian domestic audiences that Putin can still shape global discourse based on the popularity of the interview but did not offer an assessment of Putin's success in this regard.

Kremlin sources focused on presenting the interview as a massively successful and popular Russian effort to shape the information environment in the West and claimed that the interview demonstrated that Putin is an influential world leader. Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov claimed that American interest in Putin's interview was "undeniable" and that the Kremlin is interested in the reaction to the interview abroad as it continues to prioritize observing the domestic response to the interview.[4] Russian occupation officials celebrated a claim that the interview surpassed 60 million views and claimed that the world is increasingly interested in Putin's opinion and his "truths." [5]

Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev noted that Putin told the Western world in the most thorough and detailed way why Ukraine did not exist, does not exist, and will not exist.[6] Medvedev's description of Putin's interview further demonstrates that Russia has not abandoned its maximalist goals of eradicating Ukrainian statehood and that Putin does not intend to negotiate with Ukraine on any terms short of these goals.

Delays in Western aid appear to be exacerbating Ukraine's current artillery shortages and could impact Ukraine's long-term war effort. The *Financial Times (FT)* reported on February 9 that Ukraine is struggling with artillery shortages amid delayed US aid and Europe's anticipated failure to meet its March 2024 deadline of providing one million artillery shells to Ukraine.[7] An unnamed senior US military official told *FT* that delayed US aid risks creating an "air bubble" or a "gap in the hose" of Western aid to Ukraine and leaving Ukraine without Western aid for an unspecified period of time.[8] The official stated that the Pentagon is particularly concerned about Ukraine's ability to maintain its air defense systems and ammunition supplies, and a senior European diplomat warned that it will be difficult for Ukraine to even maintain its current positions without Western materiel.[9] **ISW continues to assess that the collapse of Western aid to Ukraine would likely lead to the eventual collapse of Ukraine's ability to defend itself and hold off the Russian military and could allow Russian forces to push all the way to western Ukraine closer to the borders of NATO member states.**[10] Another European official expressed concern over Europe's ability to substitute the volume of assistance that the US previously provided to Ukraine.[11] Ukrainian Ambassador to the US Oksana Markarova told *Bloomberg* on February 8 that Ukraine is facing a "critical shortage" in military equipment, particularly missiles and interceptors.[12] Ukrainian military officials recently warned that Ukraine is rationing air defense equipment and ammunition while attempting to adapt and respond to large-scale Russian drone and missile strikes.[13]

Newly appointed Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi identified several of his goals as commander of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Syrskyi stated that his primary agenda is to set clear and detailed plans for the Ukrainian command as well as to facilitate the quick distribution and delivery of necessary materiel to combat units deployed throughout the theater.[14] Syrskyi stated that he intends to balance between having Ukrainian forces conduct combat missions and building Ukraine's combat power by restoring and training Ukrainian units.[15] Syrskyi added that the introduction of new technical solutions and the implementation of lessons learned from successful modern combat experience, specifically with drones and electronic warfare (EW) systems, is a path towards Ukrainian victory, echoing themes from former Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief General Valerii Zaluzhnyi's recent focus on using technological innovation and adaptation to offset Russian forces' numerical advantages.[16] Syrskyi further discussed these goals at a meeting with Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov on February 9 in which the two discussed plans for improving logistics and the quality of training for Ukrainian forces in 2024.[17]

Ukrainian actors reportedly conducted a successful drone strike against two oil refineries in Krasnodar Krai on February 9. Ukrainian outlet *Suspilne*, citing its internal sources in the Ukrainian security service (SBU), reported that SBU drones struck the Ilsky and Afipsky oil refineries in Krasnodar Krai on February 9.[18] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Ukraine launched two drones at Krasnodar Krai, but claimed that Russian air defense intercepted the drones, despite footage showing a fire at the Ilsky oil refinery following apparent drone impacts.[19] SBU sources additionally reported that the SBU conducted a drone strike against the

Lukoil refinery in Volgograd Oblast on February 3.[20] Russian outlet *Kommersant* reported on February 6 that Russian refineries had to marginally reduce their output due to damage caused by Ukrainian drone strikes, and the *Kommersant* investigation found that Russian refinery output reduced by 4 percent in January 2024 compared to January 2023 and by 1.4 percent in January 2024 compared to December 2023.[21] While the reduction in refinery percentage is not large, it is noteworthy that Ukraine is able to achieve such asymmetrical effects against infrastructure that supports the Russian war effort using a few drones per strike on such high-value targets.

Ukrainian military officials reported that Russian forces are increasing their use of illegal chemical weapons in Ukraine, in an apparent violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), to which Russia is a signatory.[22] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that the Ukrainian military has recorded 815 Russian attacks with ammunition equipped with toxic chemicals since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, 229 of which occurred in January 2024 alone.[23] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group Commander Brigadier General Oleksandr Tarnavskiy noted that Russian forces are increasingly conducting chemical attacks in the Tavriisk operational direction (from Avdiivka through western Zaporizhia Oblast).[24] Ukrainian military officials stated that Russian forces most often use K-51 grenades, RGR 60mm irritant hand grenades, and RGO Soviet-era defensive fragmentation hand grenades, likely filled with either chlorobenzylidenemalononitrile (CS) gas or chloropicrin (PS).[25] Both CS gas and PS are considered riot control agents (RCAs), or irritant chemical compounds that are not necessarily lethal but have extremely irritating and harmful effects, especially when inhaled.[26] The CWC - which Russia ratified in 1997 - bans the use of RCAs in warfare.[27] The Russian 810th Naval Infantry Brigade recently acknowledged in a now-deleted post that elements of the brigade deliberately used K-51 grenades with CS gas on Ukrainian positions near Krynky in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast.[28]

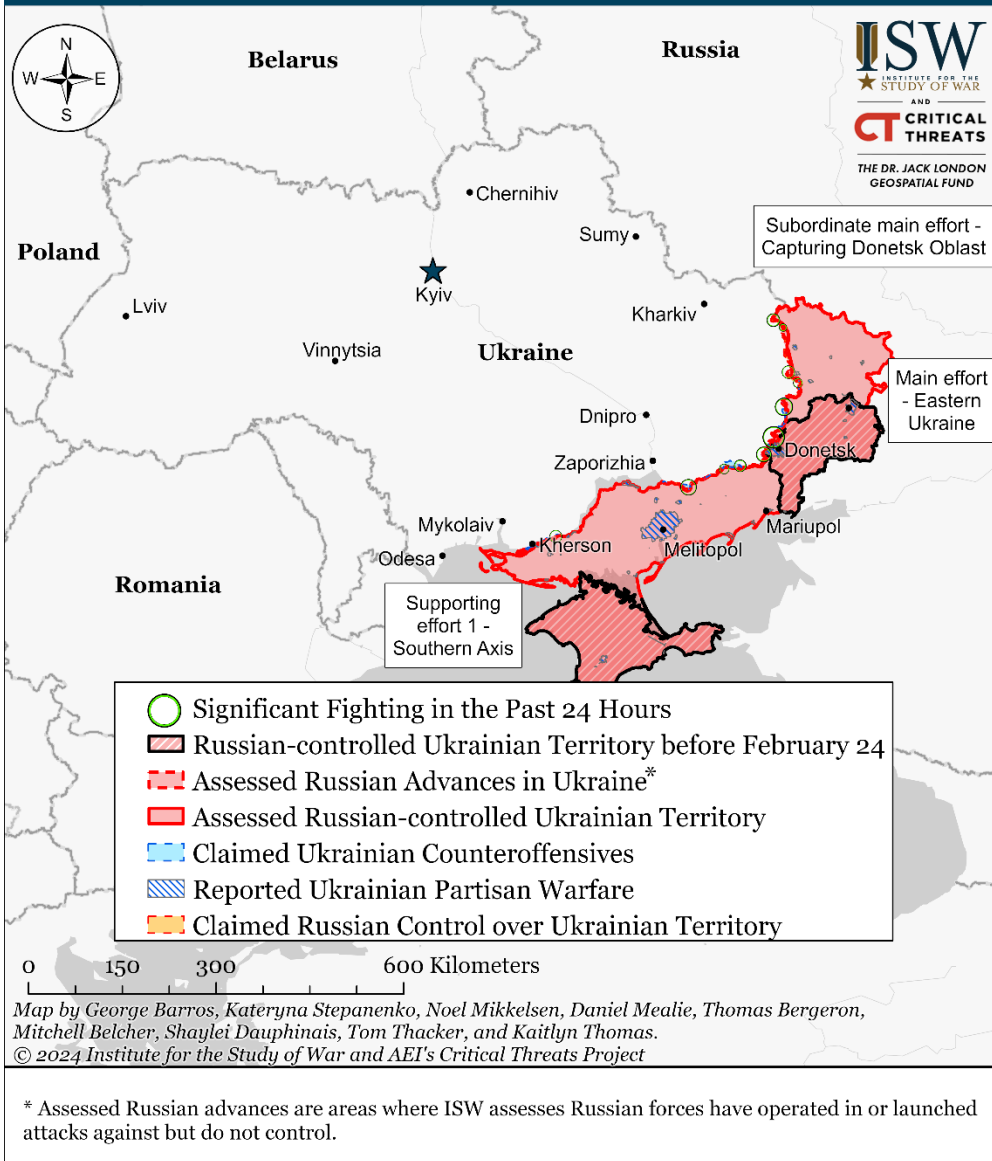
Bloomberg reported on February 9 that Ukraine is considering economic reforms in order to secure funding from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the event that the US Congress continues to block crucial aid.[29] *Bloomberg* reported that Ukrainian officials will propose a plan to IMF officials in Kyiv next week to expand Ukraine's domestic bond sales, raise taxes, and cut federal spending. Ukrainian officials hope to assure the IMF that Ukraine can pay back its \$15.6 billion IMF loan without additional Western aid.

Key Takeaways:

- **The Russian online community noted that Russian President Vladimir Putin did not offer any new information in his interview with American media personality Tucker Carlson and simply repeated longstanding Kremlin talking points about Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine for American audiences.**
- **Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev noted that Putin told the Western world in the most thorough and detailed way why Ukraine did not exist, does not exist, and will not exist.**
- **Delays in Western aid appear to be exacerbating Ukraine's current artillery shortages and could impact Ukraine's long-term war effort.**
- **Newly appointed Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi identified several of his goals as commander of the Ukrainian Armed Forces.**

- **Ukrainian actors reportedly conducted a successful drone strike against two oil refineries in Krasnodar Krai on February 9.**
- **Ukrainian military officials reported that Russian forces are increasing their use of illegal chemical weapons in Ukraine, in an apparent violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), to which Russia is a signatory.**
- ***Bloomberg* reported on February 9 that Ukraine is considering economic reforms in order to secure funding from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the event that the US Congress continues to block crucial aid.**
- **Russian forces advanced near Kreminna, Bakhmut, and Avdiivka amid continued positional engagements along the frontline.**
- **Russian paramilitary organization Novorossiia Aid Coordination Center (KCPN) is training drone operators in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast near Krynky.**
- **Russian occupation authorities continue to prepare for the upcoming Russian presidential elections by creating the appearance of popular support for Russian Vladimir Putin in occupied areas of Ukraine.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of February 9, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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 Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Russian Technological Adaptations
- Ukrainian Defense Industrial Base Efforts
- Activities in Russian-Occupied Areas
- Russian Information Operations and Narratives
- Significant Activity in Belarus

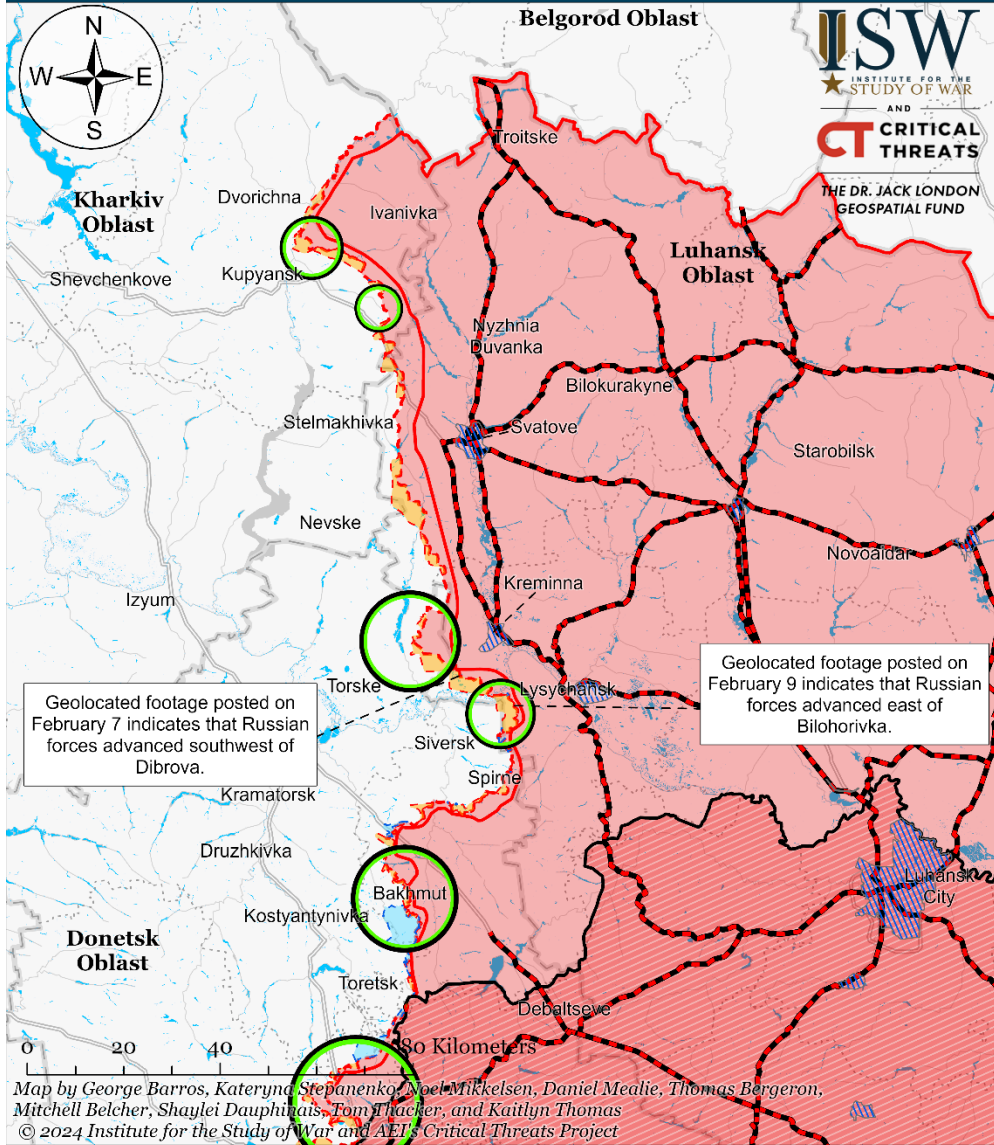
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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)

Positional fighting continued along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on February 9. Geolocated footage published on February 9 indicates that Russian forces marginally advanced east of Bilohorivka (12km south of Kreminna).[30] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces made further advances near Bilohorivka and captured the industrial zone and chalk plant east of the settlement, although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims.[31] Russian milbloggers claimed on February 8 and 9 that Russian forces advanced near Synkivka (northeast of Kupyansk) and in the direction of Pishchane (southeast of Kupyansk) but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims either.[32] Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that there were positional engagements northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka; southeast of Kupyansk near Ivanivka; west of Kreminna near Terny, Yampolivka, and Dibrova; southwest of Kreminna near Hryhorivka; and south of Kreminna near Bilohorivka.[33]

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu visited a Russian Western Grouping of Forces command post, likely in the Kupyansk or Lyman direction, and received reports from Russian commanders on the situation on the frontline.[34] Shoigu visited an Eastern Grouping of Forces command post in the south Donetsk direction (Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area) in October 2023 shortly after Russian forces launched a localized offensive operation around Avdiivka.[35] Shoigu's visit could indicate that the Western Grouping of Forces is reassessing aspects of its ongoing offensive operation along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line after intensified Russian assaults in January resulted in only marginal tactical gains in the area. Shoigu's visit could also indicate that the Russian military command is prioritizing offensive operations on the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of February 9, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Russian Ground Lines of Communication
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory

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

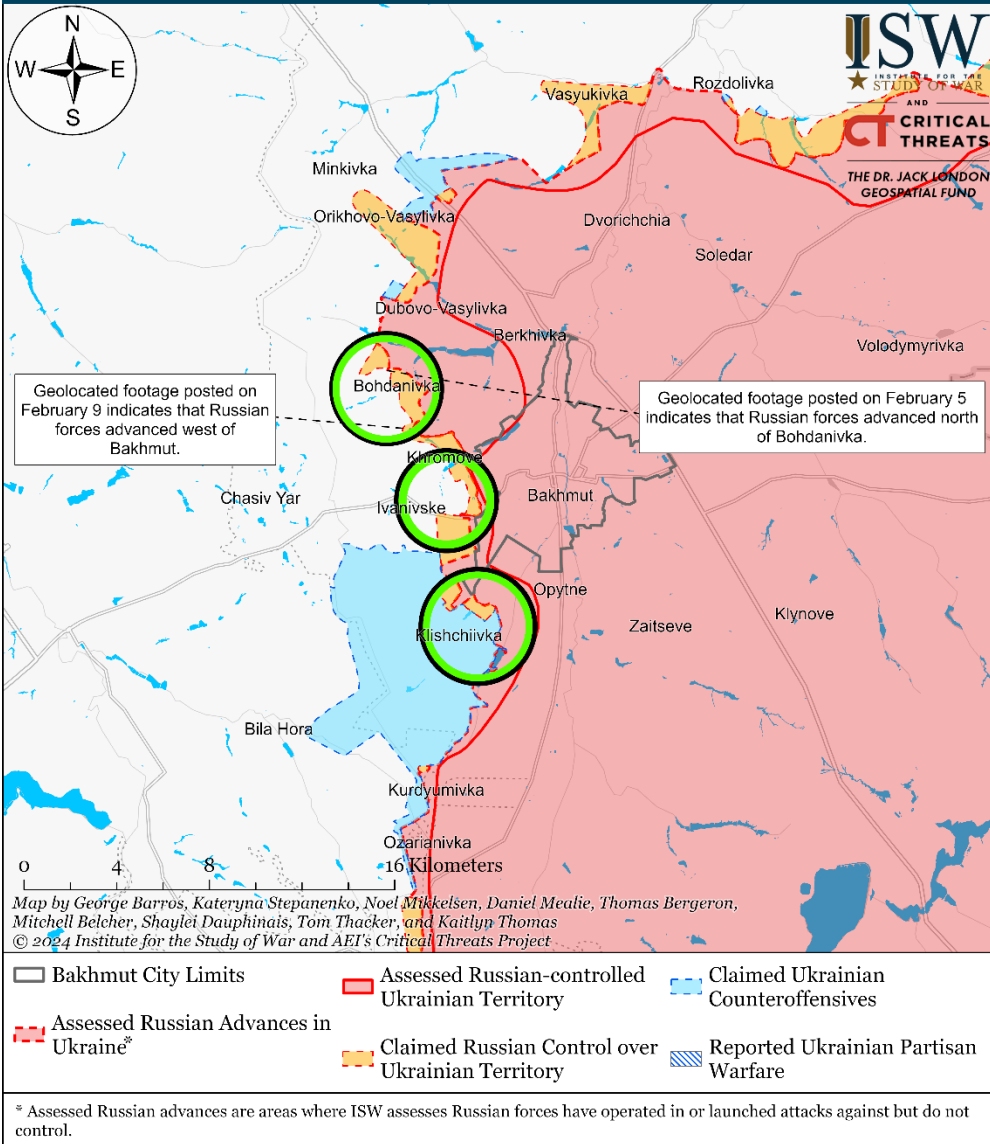
Note: Russian sources claimed on February 6 that Russian forces advanced between 500 meters and one kilometer toward Pervomaiske. A Russian source amplified unspecified Ukrainian sources on February 6 and claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced along the E-50 highway along a 570 meter wide and 730 meter deep frontline. A Russian source claimed on February 5 that Russian forces advanced 1.65 kilometers toward Terny and 1.27 kilometers toward Yampolivka.

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

Limited positional fighting continued northeast of Bakhmut on February 9. Russian milbloggers claimed that elements of the Russian 106th Airborne (VDV) Division captured several unspecified positions near Vesele (northeast of Bakhmut), although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims.[36]

Russian forces recently made marginal gains west of Bakhmut, and Ukrainian forces recently advanced southwest of Bakhmut. Geolocated footage published on February 9 shows elements of the Russian 98th VDV Division recently advancing in fields west of Bakhmut.[37] Additional geolocated footage published on February 9 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced west of Horlivka (southwest of Bakhmut).[38] Russian sources claimed that elements of the 98th VDV Division captured several other unspecified positions west of Bakhmut and continued advancing along the O0506 (Khromove-Chasiv Yar) highway, although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of further Russian gains in the area.[39] Positional fighting continued northwest of Bakhmut near Bohdanivka, west of Bakhmut near Ivanivske, and southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka.[40]

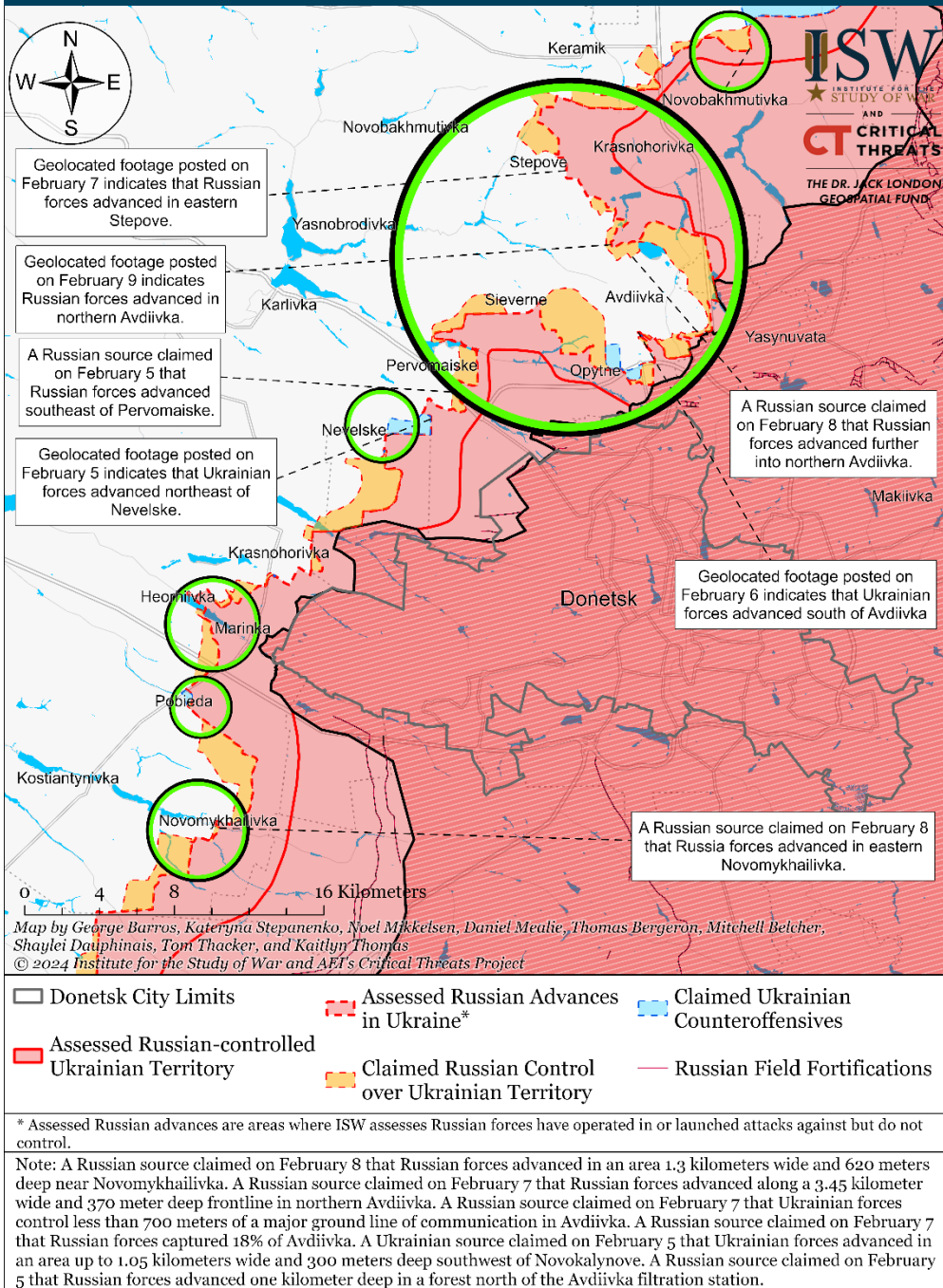
Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of February 9, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces recently advanced in northern Avdiivka and continued positional engagements with Ukrainian forces in the area on February 9. Geolocated footage published on February 9 indicates that Russian forces advanced close to the railway bridge along Chystiakova Street in northern Avdiivka.[41] Russian milbloggers claimed on February 8 and 9 that Russian forces continued to advance in residential areas in northern and northeastern Avdiivka as well as near the Avdiivka Coke Plant in northwestern Avdiivka, although ISW has yet to observe confirmation of further Russian gains within the settlement.[42] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Dmytro Lykhoviy acknowledged on February 8 that combat clashes are occurring in residential areas in northern Avdiivka and stated that Russian forces are focusing assaults on northern Avdiivka.[43] Lykhoviy and Avdiivka City Military Administration Head Vitaliy Barabash stated that Russian forces aim to cut off

Ukrainian forces in the Avdiivka Coke Plant and cut the Ukrainian main ground line of communication (GLOC) leading into Avdiivka in order to encircle the settlement.[44] Positional fighting continued northwest of Avdiivka near Novobakhmutivka, on Avdiivka's southeastern outskirts, south of Avdiivka near Opytne, and southwest of Avdiivka near Nevelske and Pervomaiske.[45] Elements of the Russian 1st "Slavic" Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk Peoples Republic [DNR] Army Corps [AC]) are operating on Avdiivka's outskirts.[46]

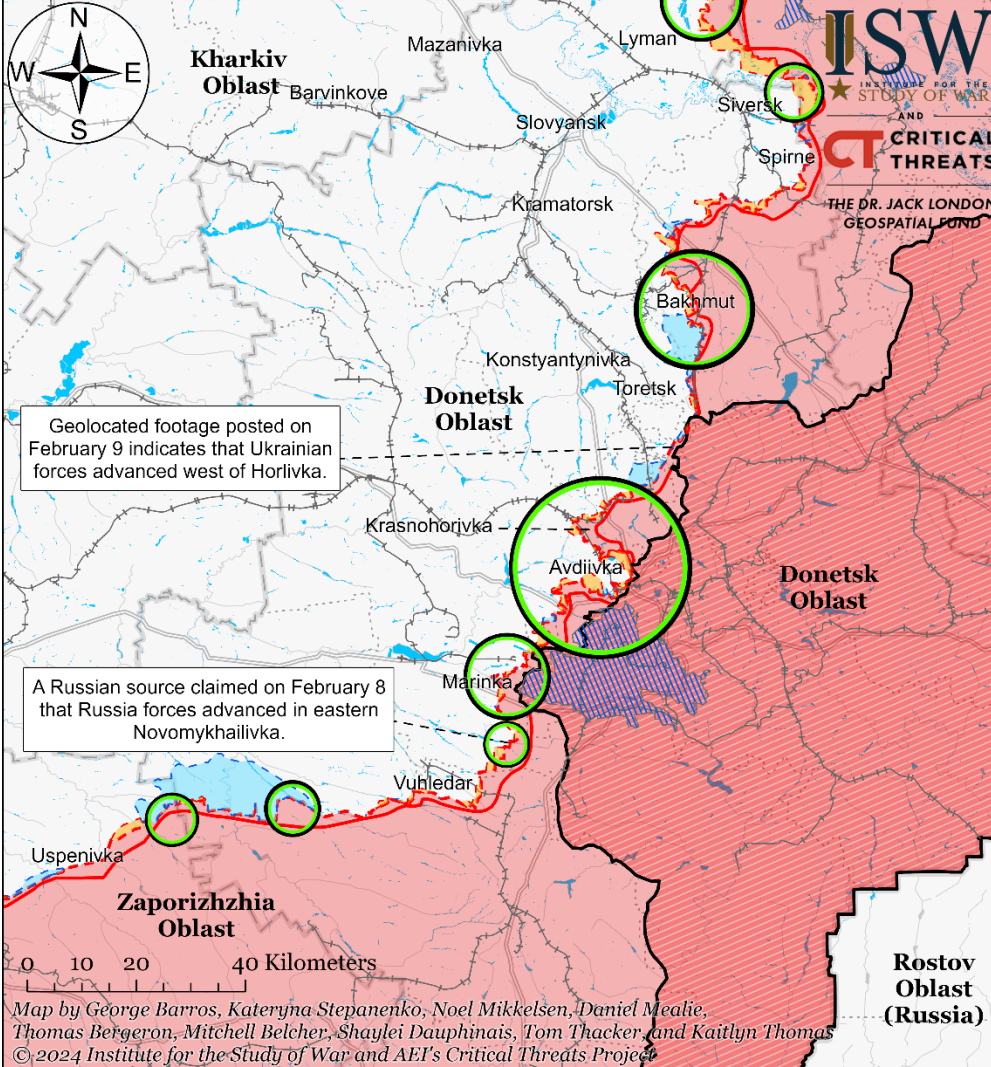
Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of February 9, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces reportedly advanced further in Novomykhailivka amid continued positional fighting west and southwest of Donetsk City on February 9. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced up to Tsentralna Street in eastern Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City), although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim.[47] Positional fighting continued west of Donetsk City near Heorhiivka and Krasnohorivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Pobieda and

Novomykhailivka.[48] Elements of the Russian 255th Motorized Rifle Regiment (20th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating near Marinka (west of Donetsk City), and elements of the “Russkiye Yastreby” (Russian Hawks) detachment (33rd Motorized Rifle Regiment, 1st DNR AC) are reportedly operating near Novomykhailivka.[49] Geolocated footage published on February 8 shows Ukrainian forces striking a Russian tank with a first-person view (FPV) drone near Staromykhailivka at least six kilometers from the current frontline, suggesting that some Ukrainian FPV drones have an effective range beyond five kilometers.[50]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of February 9, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



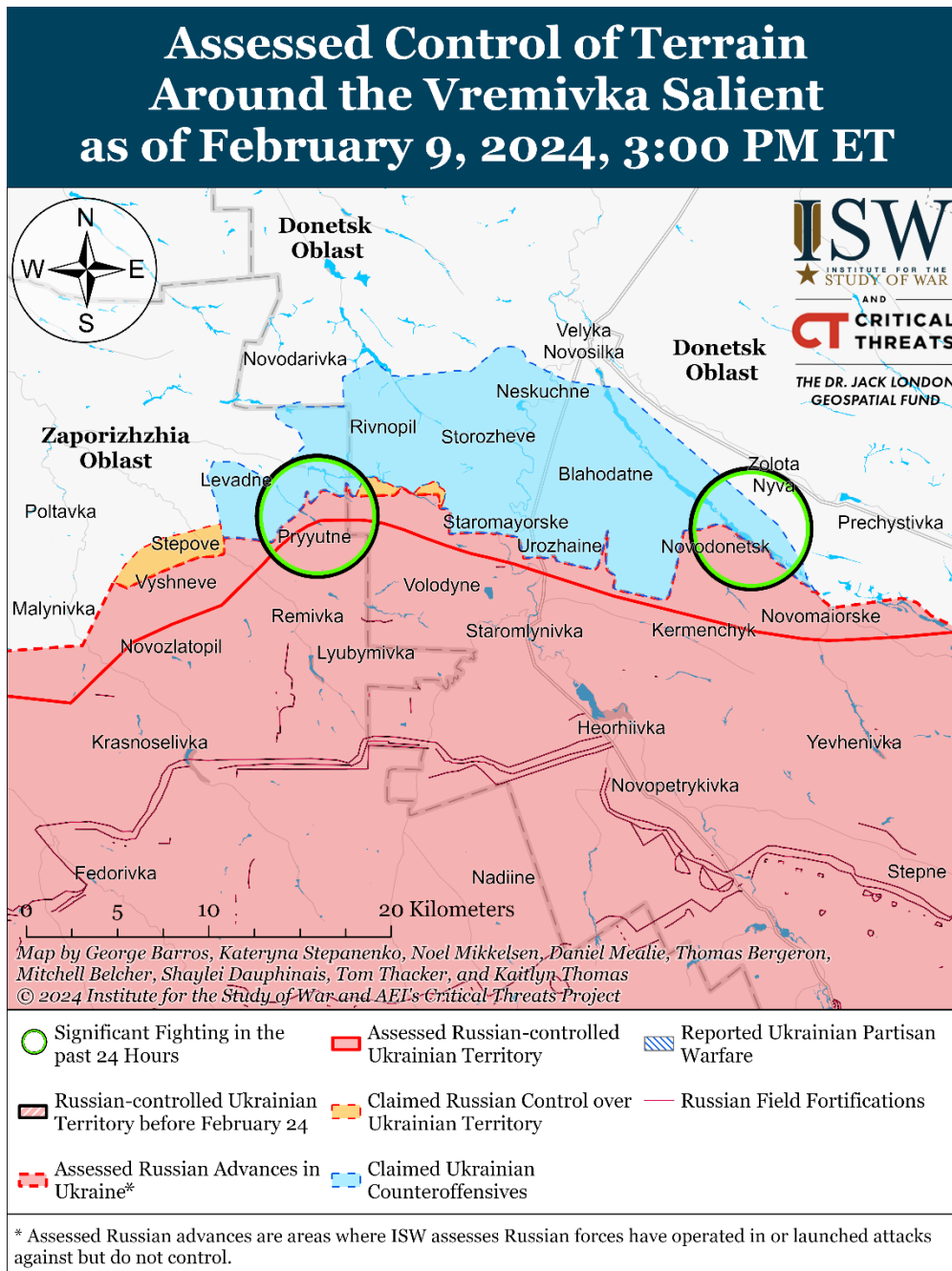
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- + Major Railroads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

* 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 February 7 that Russian forces captured 18% of Avdiivka.

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

The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks south of Zolota Nyva (southeast of Velyka Novosilka) and north of Pryyutne (southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[51] Elements of the Russian 29th and 35th Combined Arms Armies (both of the Eastern Military District [EMD]) are operating in western Donetsk Oblast and in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area.[52]

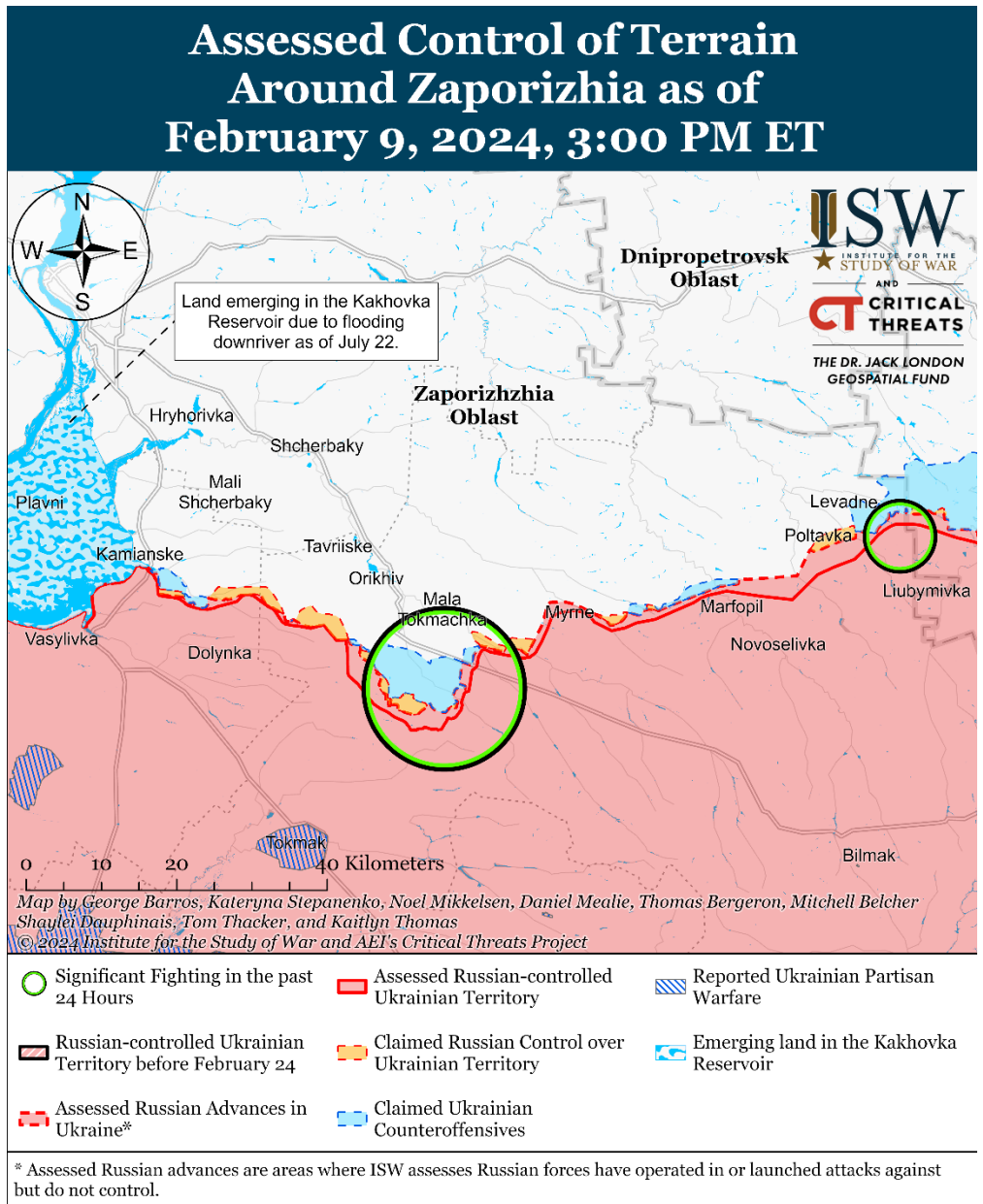


Positional engagements continued in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on February 9, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Ukrainian and Russian sources reported positional fighting near Robotyne, west of Verbove (east of Robotyne), west of Novopokrovka (northeast of Robotyne), and near Novoprokopivka (south of Robotyne).[53] Several Russian milbloggers complained that Ukrainian forces in the area are intensifying drone use and that Russian forces lack the counterbattery and electronic warfare (EW) capabilities to respond, which is complicating Russian abilities to rotate and evacuate troops on this sector of the front.[54] Elements of the Russian 291st and 70th motorized rifle regiments (both of the 42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating in this area.[55]



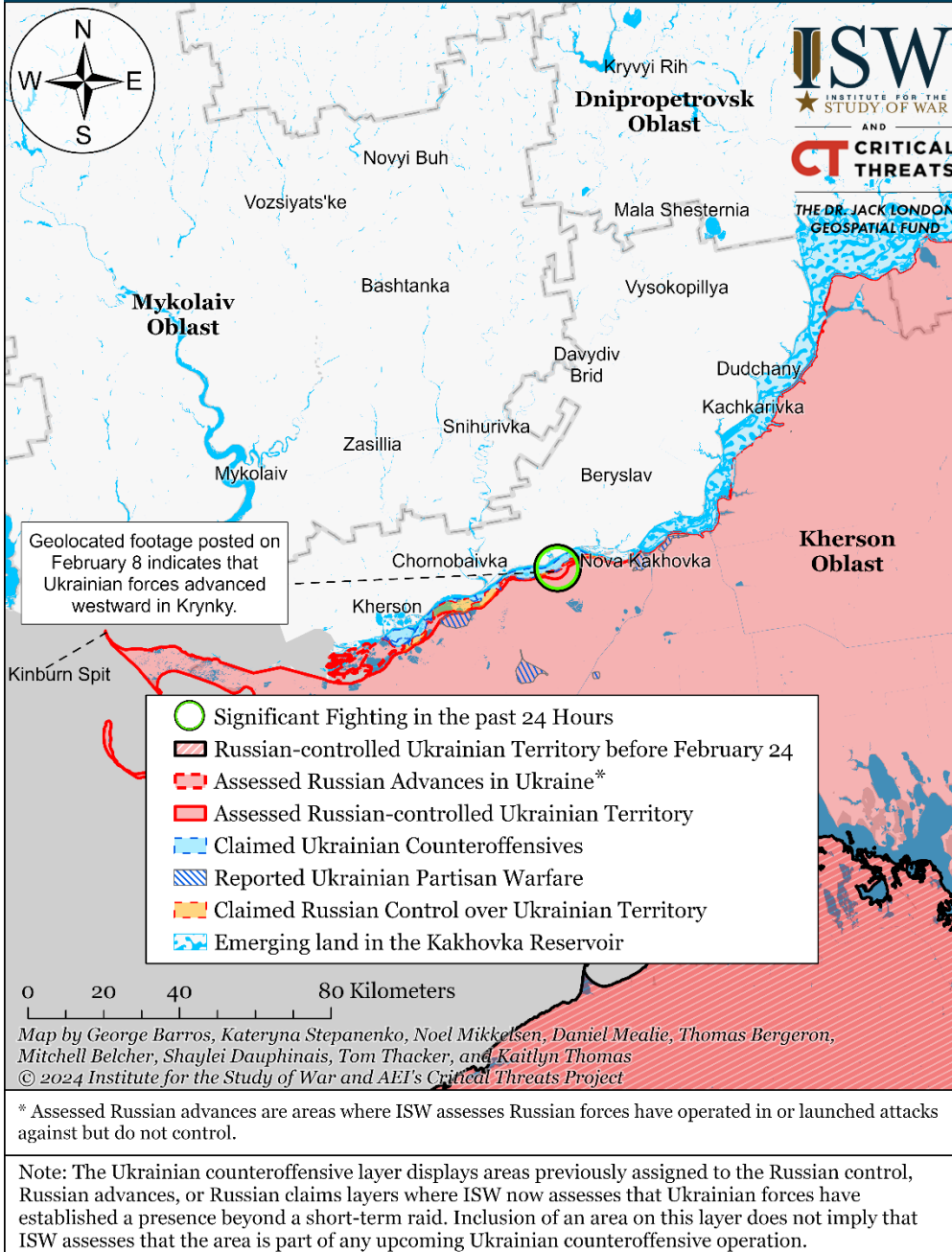
Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted HIMARS strikes against Russian rear areas in occupied Zaporizhzhia Oblast on February 9.[56] Zaporizhzhia Oblast occupation head Yevgeny Balitsky

claimed that Ukrainian forces targeted Vasylivka, Tokmak, and Bohdanivka—all settlements along the P37 Tomak-Berdyansk highway.[57]



Geolocated footage published on February 8 shows that Ukrainian forces recently made a marginal confirmed gain in Krynyky in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast.[58] Positional engagements reportedly continued in east bank Kherson Oblast on February 9.[59] Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Colonel Nataliya Humenyuk stated that Russian forces have decreased the intensity of assaults against Ukrainian positions in east bank Kherson Oblast and are increasingly conducting assaults without armored vehicle support due to significant armored vehicle losses.[60]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of February 9, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign (Russian Objective: Target Ukrainian military and civilian infrastructure in the rear and on the frontline)

The Ukrainian Air Force reported on February 9 that Russian forces launched 16 Shahed-136/131 drones from occupied Cape Chauda, Crimea, and Kursk Oblast on the night of February 8 to 9 and that Ukrainian air defenses downed 10 Shahed drones over Mykolaiv, Kherson, and Kharkiv

oblasts.[61] Ukrainian Kharkiv Oblast Administration Head Oleh Synehubov reported that at least five Russian Shaheds struck civilian infrastructure in Zmiiv, Kharkiv Oblast.[62]

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

Russian paramilitary organization Novorossiia Aid Coordination Center (KCPN) is training drone operators in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast near Krynky.[63] A Russian volunteer and prominent milblogger claimed that the KCPN trained a small group of military personnel near the frontline in Krynky, challenging the drone operators to learn to operate drones in areas within range of Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW) without GPS navigation or drone stabilization.[64] The KCPN is linked to the Russian Imperial Legion (RIL) paramilitary organization, which has been instrumental in supporting Russian forces in Donbas since 2014.[65]

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

Nothing significant to report.

Ukrainian Defense Industrial Efforts (Ukrainian objective: Develop its defense industrial base to become more self-sufficient in cooperation with US, European, and international partners)

Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal stated on February 9 that Ukraine has officially created an Industrial and Defense Committee to coordinate the work of the Ukrainian Ministry of Strategic Industries, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Innovation, Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Ukrainian Security Service (SBU).[66] Shmyhal emphasized that the Committee aims to further expand the Ukrainian defense industrial base (DIB), form a unique support system for manufacturers, and strengthen interactions among Ukrainian and international defense enterprises.

Ukraine's partners continue efforts to provide Ukraine with military and humanitarian aid. The Finnish Ministry of Defense (MoD) announced on February 9 that it will provide its 22nd tranche of defense materiel to Ukraine in a €190 million (\$205 million) aid package.[67] The Finnish MoD also noted that Finland has joined the artillery and demining coalitions as part of the Ukraine Defense Contract Group.[68] Armenia and Lithuania also announced additional humanitarian and medical aid packages for Ukraine on February 9.[69] The Norwegian government announced that it has proposed an additional order of NASAMS rocket launchers for Ukraine valued at 3.45 billion Norwegian kroner (about \$327 million).[70]

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 authorities continue to prepare for the upcoming Russian presidential elections by creating the appearance of popular support for Russian Vladimir Putin in occupied Ukrainian territories. The Kherson Oblast occupation election commission claimed that over 468,000 people have registered as Russian voters in occupied Kherson Oblast.[71] Russian occupation authorities frequently intimidate and coerce residents of occupied areas into registering to vote, however, as ISW and

Ukrainian sources have previously reported.[72] The Kherson Oblast occupation election commission also reported that the "InformUIK" Program is training volunteers (likely local collaborators or imported Russian officials) on how to prepare residents for elections through door-to-door canvassing.[73]

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

The Russian Foreign Ministry (MFA) continued to threaten Finland and accuse its leadership of pursuing "unfriendly" and "anti-Russian" policies. Russian Ambassador to Finland Pavel Kuznetsov told Russian state news agency *Ria Novosti* that the entirety of Finnish foreign policy is based on opposition to Russia accompanied by anti-Russian rhetoric.[74] Kuznetsov claimed that foreign actors are now determining Finland's foreign policy, implying that the US began to dictate Finland's foreign policy trajectory after Finland became a NATO member in 2023. Kuznetsov added that Russia "will firmly and decisively respond to all [Finland's] unfriendly steps" and claimed that Finland's "anti-Russian psychosis" in the information space has a "painful effect on [Russian] compatriots, of whom there are almost 100,000."

A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger continued to promote Kremlin narratives that Moldova's efforts to distance itself from Russia are antithetical to Moldova's national interests and that Chisinau is pursuing an "aggressive" campaign to bring Transnistria back into Moldova's legal system. The milblogger claimed that unidentified perpetrators threw a Molotov Cocktail at the NATO Informational Center in Chisinau and that Moldovan President Maia Sandu's efforts to promote Moldova's EU and NATO integration are bound to spark radical opposition.[75] The milblogger similarly accused Sandu of staging information conditions to integrate Transnistria into the Moldovan legal system, imposing additional taxes on Transnistrian entrepreneurs, and refusing to recognize illegitimate Transnistrian passports.[76] The milblogger claimed that the social situation in Moldova is "deteriorating." [77] Kremlin officials and mouthpieces have recently engaged in efforts to sow political instability and division in Moldova and set informational conditions to justify future Russian aggression against Moldova.[78]

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)

Nothing significant to report.

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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- [13] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar010924>
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