

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, December 2, 2023

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December 2, 2023, 7:30pm 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 1:45pm ET on December 2. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the December 3 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Poor weather conditions continue to slow the pace of Ukrainian and Russian combat operations across the entire frontline but have not completely halted them. Ukrainian Ground Forces Command Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Volodymyr Fityo stated that Russian forces actively use aviation in the Bakhmut direction when the weather permits it.[1] Fityo added that weather does not significantly affect Russian artillery fire in the Bakhmut direction. Russian milbloggers, claimed on December 1 that strong winds near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast prevented Russian forces from using drones and artillery over the past two days, however.[2] A Russian milblogger claimed that although light rain allows Russian forces to conduct aerial reconnaissance near Verbove (9km east of Robotyne) the muddy terrain makes it challenging for infantry and wheeled vehicles to advance in western Zaporizhia Oblast.[3] The milblogger added that Russian forces can only move on tracked vehicles and that Ukrainian forces continue intense artillery fire despite the poor weather conditions in western Zaporizhia Oblast. Zaporizhia Oblast occupation official Vladimir Rogov amplified footage on December 2 that shows muddy roads on the Robotyne-Novoprokopivka-Verbove line in western Zaporizhia Oblast and claimed that these conditions have practically immobilized Ukrainian wheeled vehicles, forcing Ukrainian troops to conduct infantry-only attacks.[4] Rogov amplified additional footage showing an infestation of rats and mice in a Ukrainian trench in Zaporizhia Oblast, which he claimed was the result of the cold weather in the region.[5]

Russian forces launched another series of Shahed 136/131 drone and missile strikes targeting southern Ukraine overnight on December 1-2. Ukrainian military officials reported that Russian forces launched 11 Shahed drones from Cape Chauda in occupied Crimea and a Kh-59 cruise missile from the airspace over occupied Zaporizhia Oblast.[6] The Ukrainian military officials reported that Ukrainian forces shot down 10 Shahed drones over Odesa Oblast and the Kh-59 cruise missile over Dnipropetrovsk Oblast.[7] Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported that a Russian Shahed drone struck an unspecified infrastructure object in Odesa Oblast.[8] A Russian

milblogger claimed that Russian Shahed drones targeted the Chornomorsk and Kiliya ports in Odesa Oblast.[9] The milblogger added that Russian forces also conducted missile strikes, including at least one Iskander ballistic missile strike, in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhia oblasts. ISW cannot verify the milblogger's claims.

Ukrainian and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) officials reported that the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) completely disconnected from all external power sources for five and a half hours on the night of December 1 to 2, marking the plant's eighth complete black out — all under Russian occupation. The Ukrainian Energy Ministry and the IAEA reported on December 2 that the ZNPP lost connection with both of its operable external power lines from 0230 to around 0800 local time on December 2. The ZNPP, during the black out, automatically switched to diesel generators to cool its reactors and power essential functions.[10] The IAEA reported that the power loss disrupted the coolant pumps of reactor no. 4 and that the ZNPP is currently bringing the reactor back to a hot shutdown state to continue generating steam for ZNPP operations and provide heat for Enerhodar. Ukrainian nuclear energy operator Energoatom President Petro Kotin stated that Russia is not interested in the safety of the ZNPP, as evidenced by Russian authorities' failure to follow the norms and rules of nuclear and radiation safety.[11] The IAEA stated that an external grid failure far away from the ZNPP caused the power failure.[12] IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi stated that this most recent power outage is “yet another reminder” about the plant's precarious nuclear safety and security situation.[13]

The ZNPP's complete power outage occurred as Russia continued longstanding efforts to compel the IAEA and the international community to normalize Russia's occupation of the ZNPP.[14] Russian state nuclear energy company Rosatom claimed on December 2 that Rosatom Head Alexey Likhachev and Grossi agreed on the sidelines of the United Nations (UN) Climate Conference to hold full-scale consultations about the safety and security of the ZNPP in early 2024.[15] Neither the IAEA nor Grossi have confirmed Rosatom's claim of future consultations as of this publication.

The US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned three third party entities involved in the transport of Russian crude oil above the G7 price cap. OFAC announced on December 1 that it imposed sanctions on two United Arab Emirates-based and one Liberian-based shipping companies that own vessels that carried Russian crude oil above \$70 barrel after the G7's \$60 price cap took effect in December 2022.[16] Russia relies on a “shadow fleet” of oil tankers without insurance from Western countries to skirt the G7's price cap on Russian crude oil and petroleum products.[17]

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) signaled that it likely intends to continue relying on crypto-mobilization recruitment schemes for any potential increase in the size of the Russian military. The Russian MoD responded to Russian President Vladimir Putin's December 1 decree increasing the size of the Russian military and stated that the Russian military is implementing the increase in stages “on account of citizens who express a desire to perform military service under a contract.”[18] This language may refer to volunteers, whom the MoD has courted through a widespread crypto-mobilization effort in Russia, and suggests that the MoD may use volunteer recruitment for long-term force generation.[19] The MoD clarified that Putin's decree does not portend a significant increase in the number of conscripted Russians nor a second wave of mobilization.[20] Putin's decree, which formally increased the size of the Russian military from 2.039 million personnel to 2.209 million personnel and total Russian combat personnel from 1.15 million to

1.32 million, is likely an official acknowledgment of the actual end strength of the Russian military and not an order for an immediate increase.[21] Partial mobilization, ongoing widespread crypto-mobilization efforts, the number of Russian personnel concluding military service, and Russian casualties in Ukraine can plausibly account for the net gain of 170,000 Russian combat personnel between the August 22 decree on the size of the Russian military and the December 1 decree.

The Kremlin's policy towards the role of migrants in bolstering Russia's industrial capacity continues to be inconsistent. Kremlin newswire *TASS* reported on December 2 that the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) is preparing a bill that will require Russian authorities to fingerprint and identify foreigners immediately upon entry to Russia and again upon exit.[22] Russian MVD Migration Affairs Head Valentina Kazakova previously stated that Russian officials will begin a trial run of fingerprinting and photographing migrants arriving at Moscow airports.[23] Russia already fingerprints and photographs migrants, although not immediately upon entry.[24] These new measures are not unusual immigration and travel policies but are notable in this case because they are likely a part of a wider set of anti-migration policies.[25] A Russian economic news aggregator claimed on December 2 that the Russian government has set a quota of 155,900 visa permits for skilled migrant workers in 2024, a 32,000 increase from 2023.[26] The economic news aggregator claimed that the Russian government is sending invitations and work permits to migrant workers, primarily those working in mining and construction.[27] This reported increase in migrant workers is at odds with a series of federal and regional policies in Russia that restrict migrants' prospects for work.[28] The Kremlin increasingly appears to be pursuing mutually exclusive goals of relying on migrants to strengthen Russia's strained industrial capacity while also pursuing force generation efforts and politically motivated anti-migration policies that reduce migrants' ability to augment Russia's labor force.[29]

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov's November 30 threat against Moldova may have emboldened certain pro-Russian actors to attempt to sow political instability and division in Moldova.[30] The pro-Russian head of Moldova's Gagauzia region, Yevgenia Gutsul, claimed on December 1 that Moldovan state energy company Moldovagaz blocked Gagauzia from receiving gas from a Turkish supplier that the pro-Russian Gagauzia regional government had negotiated outside of state contracts.[31] Gutsul claimed that Moldovagaz sells gas at a higher price per cubic meter than the Turkish partner and accused Moldova of ignoring Gagauzia's calls to provide its residents with cheap gas for the upcoming winter. Moldovan President Maia Sandu notably denied Gutsul's request for a spot in her cabinet on November 13 because Gutsul is a member of the banned Shor political party, which Russia used to promote pro-Russian interests and political instability in Moldova until the Moldovan Constitutional Court banned the party in June 2023.[32] Shor Party head Ilhan Shor used the party to spark protests in September 2022-June 2023 ultimately aimed at toppling the current Moldovan government.[33] Moldovagaz Head Vadim Ceban stated that Moldovagaz does not have the physical or legal ability to block gas supplies at the Gagauzia border and that Moldovagaz has not received the necessary documentation to switch Gagauzia's natural gas suppliers.[34] Sandu stripped Moldovan Party of Regions head Alexander Kalinin of his Moldovan citizenship on November 27 due to his extensive support of the Russian war in Ukraine, and Kalinin announced efforts on December 1 to recruit Moldovan volunteers to fight alongside the Russian military in Ukraine.[35] Russia conducted a likely campaign to destabilize Moldova in early 2023, and Russia may seek to revamp these efforts to distract international attention from the war in Ukraine.[36]

Key Takeaways:

- **Poor weather conditions continue to slow the pace of Ukrainian and Russian combat operations across the entire frontline but have not completely halted them.**
- **Russian forces launched another series of Shahed 136/131 drone and missile strikes targeting southern Ukraine overnight on December 1-2.**
- **Ukrainian and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) officials reported that the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) completely disconnected from all external power sources for five and a half hours on the night of December 1 to 2, marking the plant's eighth complete black out - all under Russian occupation.**
- **The US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned three third party entities involved in the transport of Russian crude oil above the G7 price cap.**
- **The Russia Ministry of Defense (MoD) signaled that it likely intends to continue relying on crypto-mobilization recruitment schemes for any potential increase in the size of the Russian military.**
- **The Kremlin's policy towards the role of migrants in bolstering Russia's industrial capacity continues to be inconsistent.**
- **Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov's November 30 threat against Moldova may have emboldened certain pro-Russian actors to attempt to sow political instability and division in Moldova.**
- **Russian forces continued offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, near Avdiivka, west of Donetsk City, in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast and advanced near Avdiivka.**
- ***Radio Svoboda's "Schemes" and "Systems" investigative projects published a joint investigation on December 1 detailing how the Main Directorate of the Russian General Staff (GRU) created the "Redut" private military company (PMC) to recruit thousands of Russians for irregular combat service in Ukraine.***
- **Ukrainian partisans reportedly conducted a partisan attack against Russian military personnel in occupied Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, on December 1.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of December 2, 2023, 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 Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Russian Technological Adaptations
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas
- Russian Information Operations and Narratives

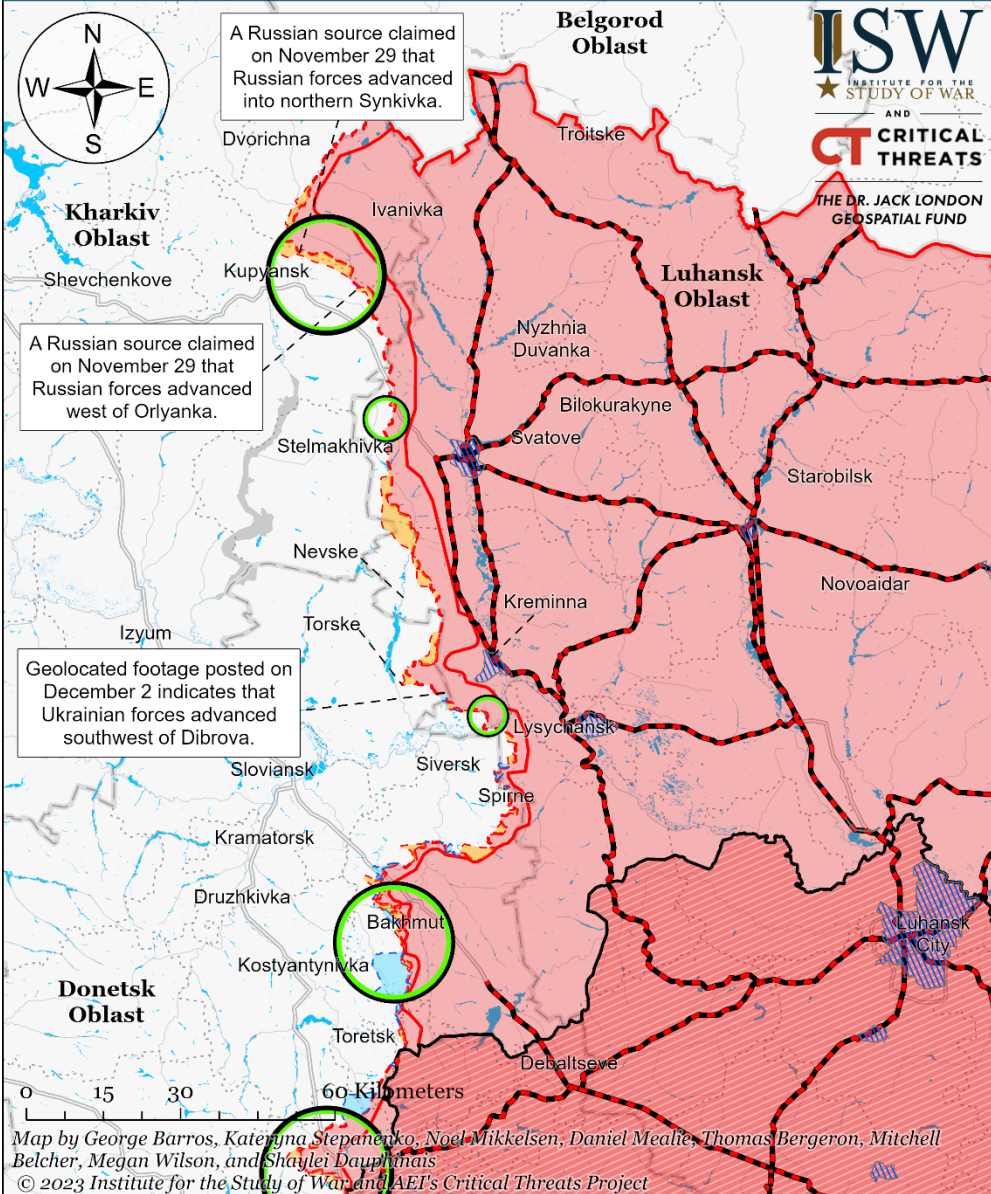
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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 localized offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on December 2 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults near Synkivka (9km northeast of Kupyansk), Petropavlivka (7km east of Kupyansk), Ivanivka (20km southwest of Kupyansk), Stelmakhikva (15km northwest of Svatove), and the Serebryanske forest area (10km south of Kreminna).[37] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced east of Terny (18km west of Kreminna), although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim.[38] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also attacked near Torske (17km west of Kreminna).[39]

Ukrainian forces advanced near Kreminna on December 2 and recently continued localized attacks in the Kupyansk and Lyman directions. Geolocated footage published on December 2 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced west of Dibrova (6km southwest of Kreminna).[40] The Russian MoD claimed that unspecified elements of the Russian Western Grouping of Forces repelled 18 Ukrainian assaults in the Kupyansk direction and that unspecified elements of the Russian Central Grouping of Forces repelled 13 Ukrainian assaults in the Lyman direction between November 25 and December 2.[41] Kharkiv Oblast Military Administration Head Oleh Synehubov stated that Ukrainian forces are expanding their fortifications throughout Kharkiv Oblast, particularly in the directions of Kupyansk and Borova (35km west of Svatove).[42] Synehubov stated that Ukrainian forces are constructing fortifications several kilometers away from Russian positions in some areas.[43]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of December 2, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

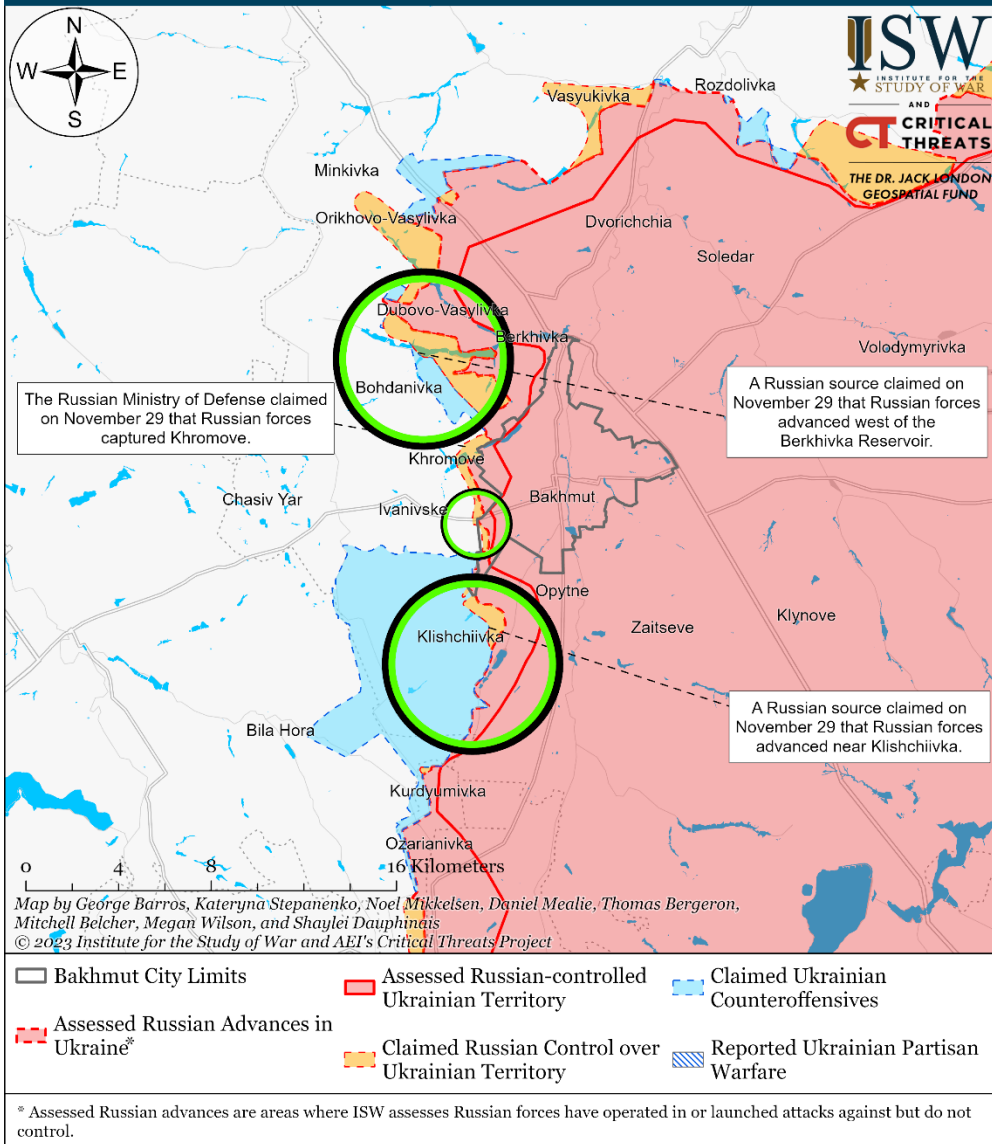
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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 2 and reportedly advanced. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces continued assault operations north of Bakhmut near Bohdanivka (5km northwest of Bakhmut) and south of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut), and one milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces retreated from unspecified positions near Bohdanivka.[44] Another milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced into fields east of Bohdanivka.[45] A Ukrainian source claimed that Russian forces captured several Ukrainian positions near Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut) and attributed recent claimed Russian gains to the arrival of fresh brigades.[46] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Hryhorivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut), Bohdanivka, Ivanivske (6km west of Bakhmut), Klishchiivka, and Andriivka.[47]

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut on December 2 but did not advance. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued assault actions south of Bakhmut on December 2.[48] Ukrainian Ground Forces Command Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Volodymyr Fityo stated that Ukrainian forces are conducting an active defense near Bakhmut and conduct assaults whenever the opportunity arises.[49] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled 15 Ukrainian attacks near Bakhmut between November 25 and December 2.[50]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of December 2, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

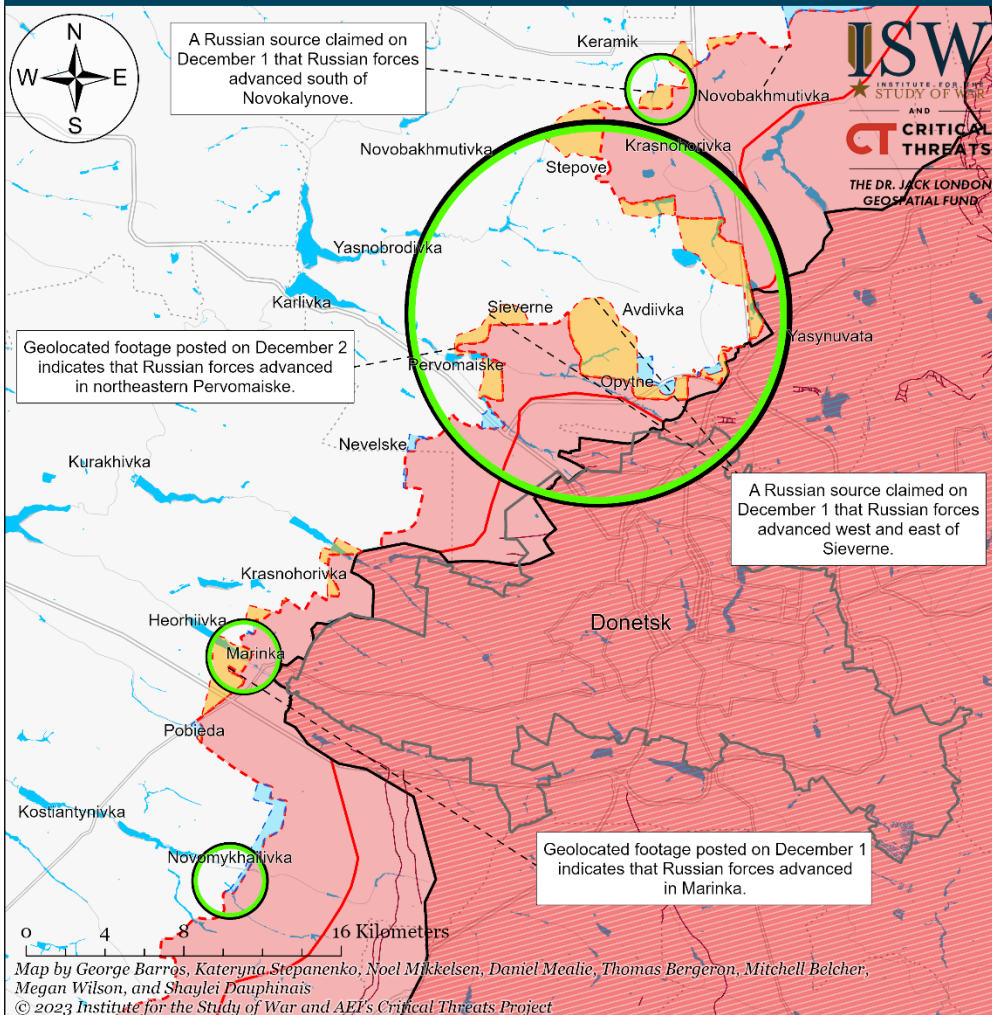


Russian forces continued offensive operations near Avdiivka on December 2 and made a confirmed advance. Geolocated footage published on December 2 shows that Russian forces marginally advanced south of Stepove (3km northwest of Avdiivka).[51] Russian milbloggers claimed on December 1 and 2 that Russian forces advanced near Stepove, southeast of Novokalynove (7km north of Avdiivka), and both west and east of Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka).[52] Russian milbloggers also claimed on December 1 and 2 that Russian forces consolidated positions in the industrial zone southeast of Avdiivka.[53] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets reported on December 2 that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks along multiple axes north, northeast, south, southwest, and southeast of Avdiivka in recent days.[54] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks south of Novokalynove; east of Novobakhmutivka (9km

northwest of Avdiivka); near Stepove, Avdiivka, Sieverne, and Pervomaiske (10km southwest of Avdiivka); and south of Tonenke (7km west of Avdiivka).[55] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun stated that Russian forces have reduced the intensity of their attacks near Avdiivka by a factor of one-and-a-half since November 30 due to significant casualties. Shtupun noted that Russian forces continue attacks and are regrouping in the area.[56]

Ukrainian forces reportedly made some recent advances during counterattacks near Avdiivka as of December 2. A Russian milblogger claimed on December 1 that Ukrainian forces recently captured positions on the outskirts of Stepove before Russian forces recaptured the positions.[57] Mashovets stated on December 2 that Ukrainian forces captured positions south of Stepove and south of Novokalynove.[58]

Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of December 2, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Donetsk City Limits	Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*	Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory	Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory	Russian Field Fortifications

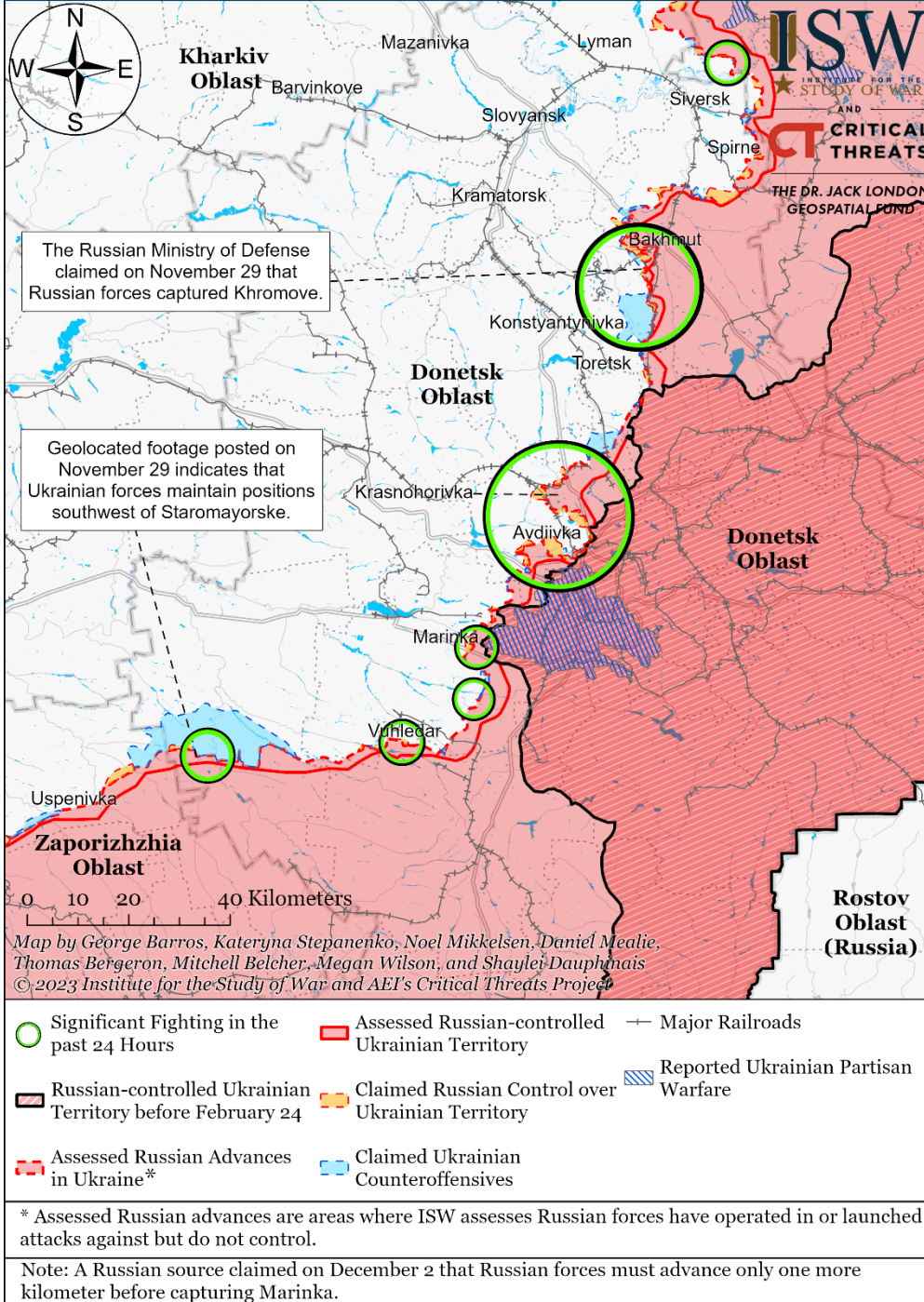
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: A Russian source claimed on December 2 that Russian forces must advance only one more kilometer before capturing Marinka. Russian sources made contradictory claims about Marinka on December 1, claiming anywhere from 90 to 100 percent control over the settlement. Available geolocated evidence as of December 1 indicates Russian forces occupy no less than 74 percent of Marinka.

Russian forces reportedly advanced west of Donetsk City on December 2, and many Russian sources claimed that Russian forces had not yet completed the capture of Marinka (immediately west of Donetsk City). Russian milbloggers continued to claim that Ukrainian forces maintain some positions on the outskirts of Marinka following December 1 claims that Russian forces completed the capture of the settlement.[59] One milblogger claimed on December 2 that Russian forces significantly advanced in Marinka.[60] Another milblogger complained that Russian forces still needed to advance one

kilometer before reaching the administrative boundaries of Marinka and that Russian forces struggled to consolidate captured positions in the settlement due to heavy Ukrainian artillery fire, making further advances more difficult.[61] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Marinka and Novomykhailivka (10km southwest of Donetsk City).[62]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of December 2, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

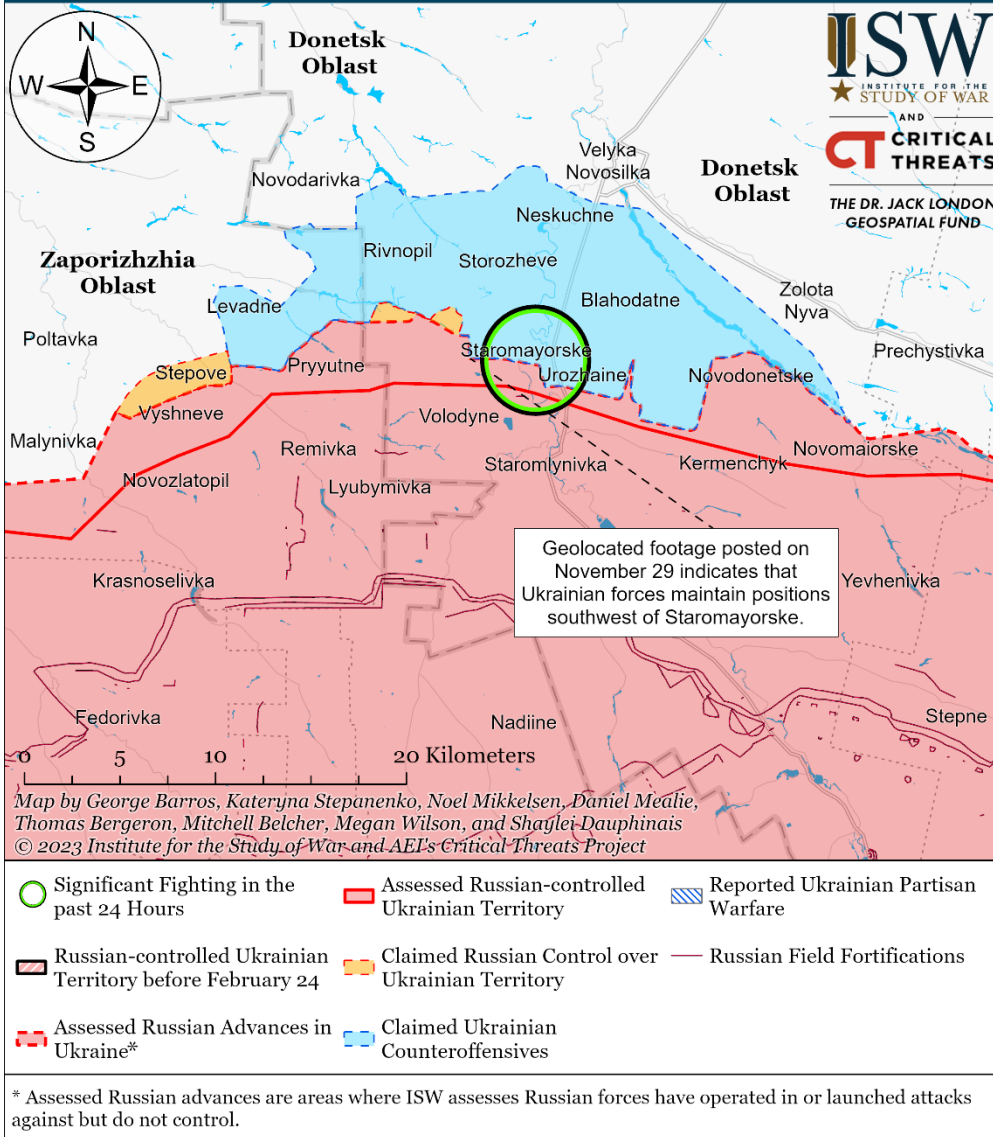


Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

The Russian MoD claimed on December 2 that Ukrainian forces launched three unsuccessful attacks in the southern Donetsk Oblast direction, likely referring to the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast administrative border area, between November 25 and December 2.[63]

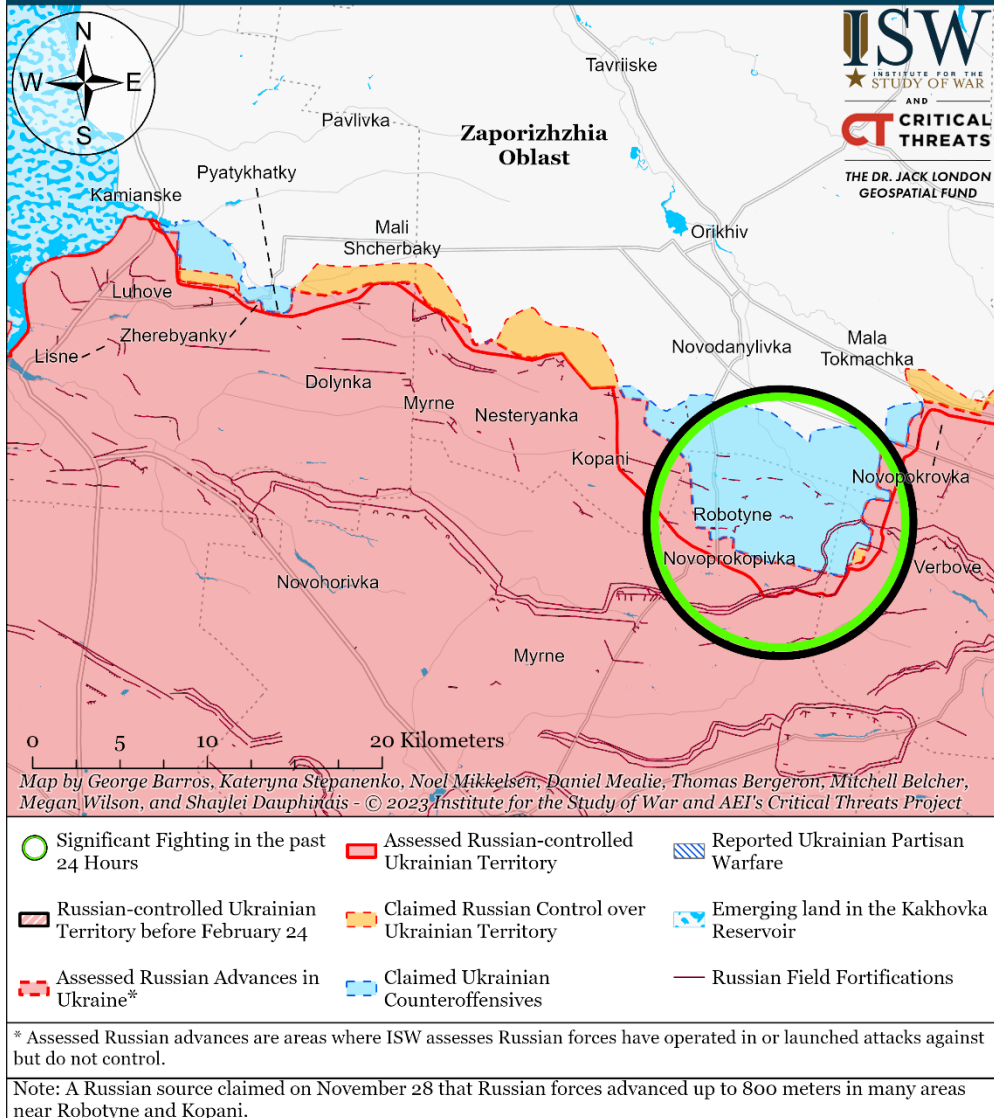
Russian sources claimed that Russian forces made unconfirmed advances along the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast administrative border on December 2. The North Ossetian volunteer battalions “Storm Ossetia” and “Alania” claimed that infantry groups of the Russian 5th Combined Arms Army (Eastern Military District) attacked Ukrainian positions in forest areas near Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) and made unspecified advances in the area.[64] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful assaults west of Staromayorske.[65]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of December 2, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on December 2 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhzhia Oblast) direction.[66] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks south of Robotyne, north of Verbove (9km east of Robotyne), and near Novoprokopivka (2km south of Robotyne).[67] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled 14 Ukrainian attacks near Robotyne and Verbove between November 25 and December 2.[68]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of December 2, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces continued to counterattack Ukrainian positions in western Zaporzhia Oblast on December 2 and reportedly made an unconfirmed advance near Robotyne. A Russian news aggregator claimed on December 1 that Russian forces recaptured unspecified positions near Robotyne.[69] A Russian milblogger claimed that battles are ongoing north of Verbove and that Russian airborne (VDV) elements are attacking unspecified Ukrainian positions.[70] The “Storm Ossetia” and “Alania” battalions claimed that there have been no recent active combat engagements in the Pyatykhatky-Zherebyanky area (26km-30 km northwest of Robotyne).[71]

Ukrainian Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov reported that residents heard unspecified explosions in the northern part of occupied Melitopol, western Zaporizhzhia Oblast.[72]

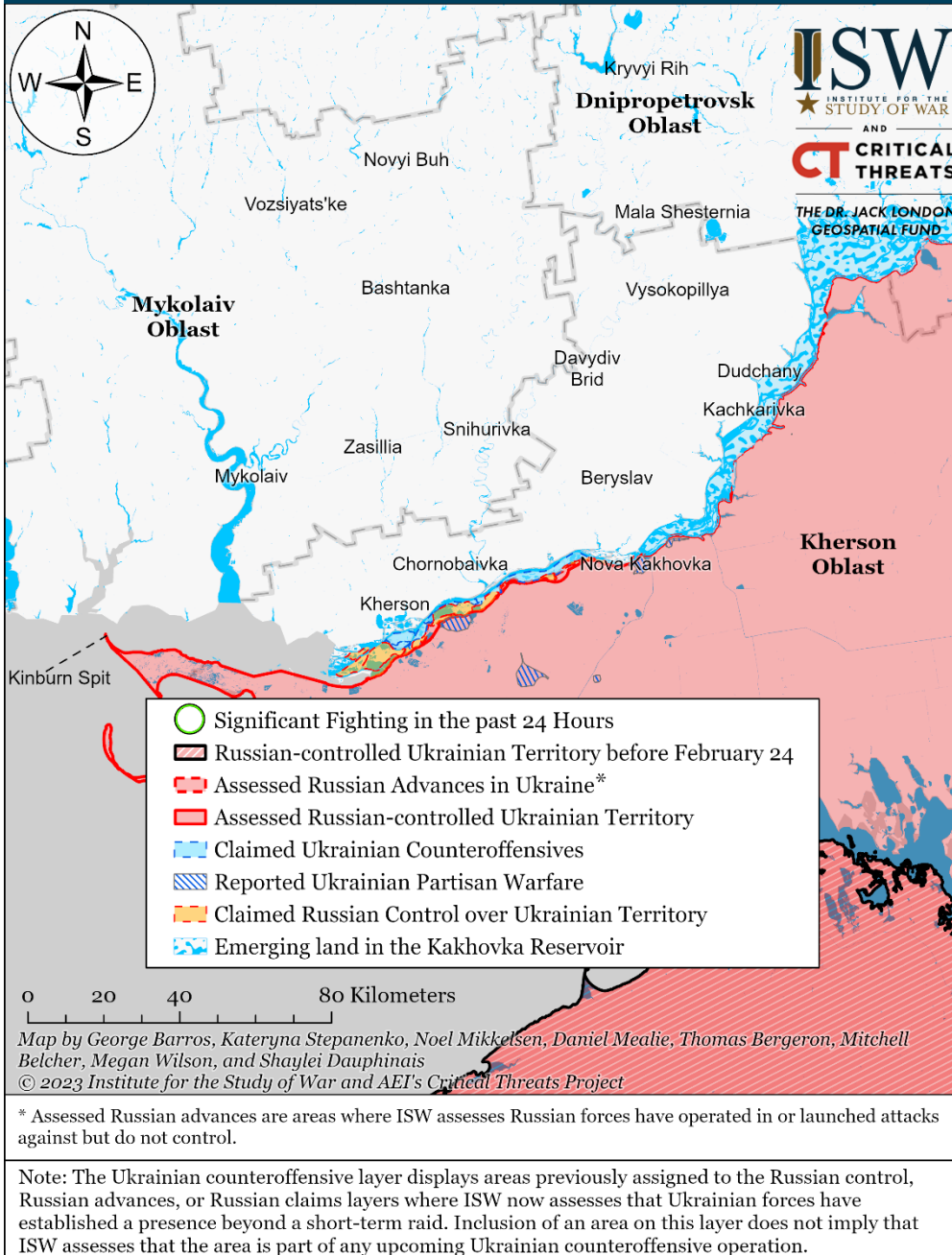


Ukrainian forces maintained their positions and continued operations in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast on December 2. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continue to hold positions on the east bank of the Dnipro River and are conducting counter-battery fire.[73] Russian milbloggers claimed that meeting engagements are ongoing in Krynky (30km northeast of Kherson City and 2km from the Dnipro River) and claimed that the situation in the settlement has not changed.[74] Another milblogger claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian advance in a forest area near Krynky.[75] A Russian milblogger also complained that Ukrainian forces are continuing to effectively use drones and artillery to disrupt Russian logistics in the area, criticizing the Russian

military command for failing to supply Russian forces with functional electronic warfare (EW) systems.[76]

A Ukrainian military observer claimed that the Russian “Dnepr” Grouping of Forces is attempting to improve the Russian frontline situation in the east bank of Kherson Oblast by transferring additional VDV elements to the region. Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets claimed that Russia unsuccessfully attempted to push Ukrainian forces from the Krynky area with elements of an unspecified battalion of the 810th Guards Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet) and forward units of the 328th VDV Regiment (104th VDV Division).[77] Mashovets added that according to unspecified information, the Russian “Dnepr” Grouping of Forces is planning to gather elements of the 328th VDV Regiment and 337th VDV Regiment (104th VDV Division) in the area of Krynky, and replace elements of the Russian 177th Naval Infantry Regiment (Caspian Flotilla) with the 337th VDV Regiment. Mashovets assessed that Russian forces may be trying to improve the command-and-control and means of the “Dnepr” Grouping of Forces, given numerous instances of friendly fire, Russian forces detonating their own mines, and inconsistencies in offensive actions. Mashovets noted that elements of the 337th VDV Regiment have almost all transferred to occupied Crimea and may have already committed at least two battalions to combat operations in the Krynky direction.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of December 2, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



The Ukrainian Crimean-based “Atesh” partisan group reported on November 30 that Ukrainian partisans in Crimea reconnoitered the headquarters of the Russian 810th Guards Naval Infantry Brigade in Sevastopol.[78] Atesh observed a high rate of Russian activity in the headquarters and near the base, and that Russian forces accumulated a large amount of military equipment and numerous vehicles, including armored vehicles. Atesh, citing its unnamed sources, reported that the 810th Guards Naval Infantry Brigade suffered significant manpower losses as a result of Ukrainian attacks

in the east bank of Kherson Oblast and that the brigade's command cannot keep up with finding additional personnel to carry out rotations.

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

Radio Svoboda's "Schemes" and "Systems" investigative projects published a joint investigation on December 1 detailing how the Main Directorate of the Russian General Staff (GRU) created the "Redut" private military company (PMC) to recruit thousands of Russians for irregular combat service in Ukraine.[79] *Schemes* and *Systems* obtained details about Redut service contracts and payment mechanisms from the data of Redut personnel's phones, private documents, interviews, and social media. *Schemes* and *Systems* reported that Redut is an amalgamation of at least 20 irregular Russian units and that recruitment requirements and training conditions vary widely between the various units. *Schemes* and *Systems* added that Redut personnel often do not know whom to contact about unpaid salaries and cannot request military service documentation because Russian law prohibits the operations of PMCs in Russia. *Schemes* and *Systems* concluded that Russian authorities are likely interested in cryptomobilization mechanisms like Redut to address Russia's force generation issues and to obscure the stresses that the war has placed on Russian society.

Russian state-owned defense conglomerate Rostec announced on December 2 that Rostec subsidiary United Aircraft Corporation (UAC) transferred new Su-30SM2 fight aircraft and Yak-130 combat trainer aircraft to the Russian MoD.[80] UAC equipped the new Su-30 aircraft with improved avionics, increasing the aircraft's ability to detect and identify air targets. The Russian MoD will use the new Yak-130 aircraft to train Russian pilots with specialized flight simulators, integrated objective control systems, and educational computer classes.

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

Russian milbloggers amplified footage on December 2 purporting to show the Russian Aerospace Forces (VKS) testing modernized Ka-52M combat helicopters at the Progress Arsenyev Aviation Company in Arsenyev, Primorskiy Krai.[81] The milbloggers claimed that the modernized version of the Ka-52M is equipped with modernized turrets with a GOES-451M optical-electronic designation station, an updated BKS-50M onboard communication system, and an SUO-806PM weapons control system.[82] Russian milbloggers claimed that the modernized Ka-52M will be able to launch light multipurpose guided rockets (LMURs) at a range of up to 14.5km.[83] Russian forces relied on Ka-52 helicopters to help repel large-scale mechanized Ukrainian assaults at the start of the Ukrainian counteroffensive in western Zaporizhia Oblast in June 2023.[84]

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)

Ukrainian partisans reportedly conducted a partisan attack against Russian military personnel in occupied Melitopol, Zaporizhia Oblast, on December 1. The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported that Ukrainian partisans conducted a successful attack that killed several Russian personnel, disabled military equipment, and damaged a Russian military refueling station in

Melitopol.[85] The GUR reported that local occupation administration officials are trying to hide the consequences of the partisan attack out of fear of Russian special services.[86]

Russian occupation officials continue to use military patriotic education programs to indoctrinate Ukrainian children and set conditions for their deportation to Russia. A Russian milblogger amplified footage on December 2 of Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) First Deputy Information Minister Daniil Bezsonov participating in the "We are Russia" youth forum in Moscow Oblast and delivering a presentation on survival skills and tactical medicine to children, including those from occupied Ukraine.[87] The milblogger claimed that 500 children, some of whom arrived from occupied Ukraine, attended the forum in Moscow Oblast.[88] Moscow Oblast Governor Andrey Vorobyov reportedly organized the forum.[89]

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated in an interview with the *Associated Press* published on December 2 that Ukrainian and Russian forces conduct limited localized prisoner of war (POW) exchanges on the battlefield.[90] Ukrainian Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War Representative Petro Yatsenko stated on November 17 and 27 that Russian officials have frozen POW exchanges since the summer of 2023 and are not considering Ukrainian proposals for POW exchanges.[91]

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian President Vladimir Putin appears increasingly committed to seizing control over even the most minute actors in the Russian information space, as evidenced by the Kremlin's appointment of the Bolshoi Theater's new general director. Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin signed a decree on December 1 appointing the artistic director of the Mariinsky Theater, Valery Gergiev, general director of the Bolshoi Theater for the next five years.[92] The *Guardian* reported that Gergiev has been close to Putin since the early 1990s, when former Russian President Boris Yeltsin appointed Gergiev to his position at the Mariinsky Theater, and that Gergiev has publicly supported Putin throughout his political career and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.[93] The *Guardian*, citing Russian music specialist Simon Morrison, reported that Gergiev's dual roles at the Mariinsky and Bolshoi theaters are a return to Imperial Russia's "director of the Imperial Theater," a single director who oversaw every Russian ballet, opera, and theater company during the 19th century and furthered the tsar's ideology.[94] Morrison told the *Guardian* that Gergiev will likely use the Bolshoi's productions and platform to further Putin's conceptions of nationalism, imperialism, and conservatism domestically and abroad.

Russian media intentionally misrepresented comments that Ukrainian First Lady Olena Zelenska made in an interview with the *Economist* published on December 1, likely in an effort to portray Ukrainian war weariness. Zelenska stated in the interview that she does not want her husband, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, to seek another term following Ukraine's military victory over Russia.[95] Russian media omitted Zelenska's caveat about the Ukrainian victory to portray Zelenska as wishing for a more immediate end to Zelensky's tenure as Ukrainian President.[96]

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)

The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) suspended Belarus' membership on December 1 in connection with Belarus' involvement in the deportation of Ukrainian children to Belarus.[97] The IFRC Board of Directors made the decision due to Belarus' refusal to dismiss Belarusian Red Cross Secretary General Dimitry Shevtsov by a November 30, 2023 deadline, as stipulated in an October 3, 2023 IFRC resolution.[98] The IFRC called for Shevtsov's dismissal for his statements on the deployment of Russian tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus and the deportation of Ukrainian children to Belarus, as well as for his visits to occupied Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts.[99] Shevtsov previously stated in July 2023 that the Belarusian Red Cross "has taken, is taking, and will be taking" Ukrainian children from Ukraine to Belarus.[100] The IFRC's suspension will prevent any new funding to the Belarusian Red Cross as well as Belarus' participation in the IFRC's General Assembly.[101]

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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