

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, December 6, 2023

Riley Bailey, Angelica Evans, Nicole Wolkov, Karolina Hird, and Frederick W. Kagan

December 6, 2023, 6:50pm 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 6. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the December 7 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov credited Western security assistance for empowering Ukrainian forces to liberate half of the territory that Russia occupied since February 24, 2022.[1] Umerov credited Western security assistance for previous Ukrainian counteroffensive success during an interview with *Fox News* on December 5 and stated that the Ukrainian forces have a plan for 2024.[2] Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated on November 8 that the Ukrainian forces have planned for several paths of future advance in 2024 to liberate more of the occupied territories.[3] ISW continues to assess that Ukraine must liberate strategically vital areas still under Russian occupation to ensure Ukraine's long-term security and economic viability.[4] Umerov also stated that Ukraine plans to conduct all calculations for procurement, acquisition, planning, and operations according to NATO standards and that the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense's (MoD) first priority is Ukraine's accession to NATO.[5] The adoption of NATO standards throughout the Ukrainian military and defense establishment will facilitate NATO oversight of current and future Western security assistance to Ukraine.

Maximum Extent of Liberated Ukrainian Territory between February 24, 2022 and December 6, 2023



Russian forces conducted a notably large series of drone strikes against Ukraine on the night of December 5 to 6. Ukrainian military officials reported that Russian forces launched 50 Shahed-131/136 from Kursk Oblast and Cape Chauda in occupied Crimea and that Ukrainian air defenses downed 41 Shaheds.[6] Ukrainian officials reported that Ukrainian air defenses shot down Russian drones in Odesa, Mykolaiv, Kherson, Khmelnytskyi, Kirovohrad, and Zhytomyr oblasts.[7]

Russian President Vladimir Putin traveled to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia to meet with UAE President Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman in a series of bilateral meetings on December 6. Putin and Al Nahyan discussed Russia's role in OPEC+, the construction of a Russian school in the UAE, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Israel-Hamas war, and other bilateral issues during a meeting in the UAE.[8] Putin stated during his meeting with Mohammed bin Salman in Saudi Arabia that Russian-Saudi relations reached a new level over the past seven years under the guidance of Mohammed bin Salman and his father.[9] Putin noted the "very good" political and economic relations between the two countries and the need to "exchange information and assessments" about what is happening in the region, likely referring to the Israel-Hamas War. Kremlin newswire *TASS* reported that Putin and Mohammed bin Salman met for three hours and paid particular attention to the North-South transport corridor and energy issues.[10] Putin's meetings in the UAE and Saudi Arabia and upcoming meeting with Iranian President Ibrahim Raisi on December 7 are likely focused on strengthening Russia's position with the Gulf States while continuing to solidify the deepening Russian-Iranian security partnership.

Russian oil revenues continue to increase due to a concerted Russian effort to skirt the G7 price cap on Russian crude oil and petroleum products. *Bloomberg* reported on December 6 that Russia made \$11.3 billion in revenue from the sale of crude oil and petroleum products in October 2023, the highest level of Russian oil and petroleum revenue since May 2022 and above the monthly Russian oil and petroleum revenues in the year before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.[11] The October 2023 oil and petroleum revenues reportedly represented 31 percent of revenues in the Russian federal budget for the month.[12] The G7 and the EU introduced a \$60 price cap on Russian crude oil and price caps for other Russian petroleum products in December 2022, and the Center for Research on Energy and Clean Air reported on December 5, 2023, that this cap immediately led to a 45 percent decrease in Russian oil and petroleum revenues in January 2023.[13] Russian officials undid the impacts of the G7 price cap in 2023 by increasingly relying on aging oil tankers with obscure ownership and insurance from unknown or non-Western sources in order to build a "shadow fleet" to transfer and sell crude oil and petroleum products above the price cap.[14] *Bloomberg* reported that Russia's domestic oil tanker fleet and "shadow fleet" transferred over 70 percent of Russian oil cargoes in the first nine months of 2023, allowing Russian officials to exert more control over oil exports and progressively increase prices.[15] The Kremlin likely hopes that engagement with OPEC+ on agreed upon output cuts can allow Russian officials to further increase oil prices and continue to buoy federal budget revenues in an effort to manage the increasing Russian federal deficit associated with the war in Ukraine.[16]

Bloomberg added that ships with Greek ownership have transferred roughly 20 percent of Russian oil shipments in 2023, but did so under the G7 price cap.[17] Greek officials reportedly lobbied the EU to water down measures that would have resulted in more stringent restrictions on shipping companies' ability to trade with Russia.[18] Three major Greek shipping firms stopped transporting Russian oil in November 2023 following the initial imposition of US sanctions on third party shipping firms helping Russia to skirt the G7 price cap in October 2023.[19]

Russian society appears interested in discussing the outcome of the war in Ukraine despite the Kremlin's increasing aversion to more in-depth public discussions of the war. Independent Russian polling organization Levada Center released a poll on December 5 detailing the questions Russians want to ask Russian President Vladimir Putin during the upcoming

“Direct Line” forum on December 14. The Levada Center found that 21 percent of all questions in the open-ended poll pertained to the end and outcome of the war in Ukraine.[20] Levada Center reported that questions in this category included questions about the timeframe for an end to the war, the end of mobilization, and the possibility of peace or a Russian victory.[21] Levada Center noted that the second and third most frequent questions asked, accounting for 8 percent of responses each, pertained to pensions and social programs.[22] The poll indicates that the Russian public continues to have questions about the end and outcome of the war despite the Russian government’s attempts to silence anti-war rhetoric and protests to mobilization. The Russian public’s continued questions about the timeline for an end to the war and mobilization and the prospects for peace are consistent with recent independent Russian polling indicating that Russians increasingly support a withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine and showing that over half of Russian respondents believe that Russia should begin peace negotiations with Ukraine.[23] Putin will reportedly center his presidential campaign on Russia’s alleged domestic stability and increased criticism of the West instead of focusing on the war, so it is unclear if Putin intends to address questions about the war during the “Direct Line” event, which will likely serve as the launch of Putin’s 2024 presidential campaign.[24] The Kremlin also appears to be increasingly implementing measures to ensure that Putin’s actual electoral success does not depend on battlefield successes and domestic force generation efforts.[25]

Unspecified actors killed former pro-Russian Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada deputy Ilya Kiva in Moscow Oblast on December 6. The Russian Main Investigative Directorate for Moscow Oblast stated on December 6 that unspecified actors killed Kiva in Suponevo, Odintsovo urban raion, Moscow Oblast.[26] Ukrainian outlet *Suspilne* reported on December 6 that its sources in Ukrainian law enforcement agencies stated that the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) conducted the operation that killed Kiva.[27] Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Spokesperson Andriy Yusov confirmed Kiva’s death and stated that “a similar fate will befall other traitors to Ukraine and henchmen of the Putin regime.”[28] Kiva, who defected to Russia at the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, likely aided a Kremlin-backed COVID-19 disinformation campaign in Ukraine in 2020.[29] A Russian milblogger criticized Russian intelligence services for not preventing alleged SBU personnel from assassinating someone in Russia.[30]

Moscow’s 2nd Western Military District Court convicted two Russian air defense officers for negligence for failing to prevent a Ukrainian strike on Russian territory in April 2022, likely to set an example to improve discipline across the Russian military. Russian outlet *Kommersant* reported on December 5 that the court sentenced Russian Lieutenant Colonel Anatoly Bondarev and Major Dmitry Dmitrakov to four years in prison for violating article 340 of the Russian Criminal Code (violation of the rules of combat duty to repel a surprise attack on the territory of the Russian Federation).[31] Violations of the Russian rules of combat duty include unauthorized abandonment of a combat post or transfer of such post to anyone; performing combat duties without the permission of the commander on duty; reducing the readiness of military equipment and weapons; and consuming alcohol on duty.[32] The court tried the servicemen in connection with a Ukrainian Tochka-U strike against a Russian ammunition depot in Belgorod Oblast in April 2022, a relatively obscure strike that the Russian command may have chosen to litigate to avoid recalling attention to more high-profile Ukrainian strikes on Russian targets in occupied Ukraine and Russia.[33] Ukrainian forces conducted several drone strikes on Moscow City in July and August 2023, which likely resulted in the detention of the commander of the 1st Special Purpose Air and Missile Defense Army on corruption and bribery charges instead of dereliction of

duty charges.[34] *Kommersant*, citing unspecified sources, reported that Russian authorities are conducting large-scale investigations into every successful Ukrainian strike on Russian territory since 2014 and any negligence on the part of the Russian servicemen involved in defending against these strikes.[35] The Russian military command likely intends for the case to set a precedent across the Russian military, and not just for Russian air defenders, to improve discipline among the Russian forces in Ukraine.

Russian officials are reportedly attempting to funnel migrants who have ended up in Russia due to Russia's failed hybrid war tactics on the Russian-Finnish border into ongoing force generation efforts. *BBC Russia Service* reported on December 6 that Russian military officials are attempting to recruit migrants from the Middle East and Africa whom Russian authorities detained *en masse* along the Russian-Finnish border in mid-November following the closure of Russian-Finnish border crossings.[36] Russian officials are reportedly offering to stay deportations for these migrants if the migrants fight in Ukraine.[37] One migrant reportedly stated that Russian officials immediately transferred migrants who signed military contracts to the Russian-Ukrainian border.[38] Russia artificially created a migrant crisis on the Finnish border as a hybrid warfare tactic meant to destabilize NATO and the EU, but the Finnish response quickly caused the effort to fail.[39] Russian officials appear to be trying to salvage some benefit from the failed effort by recruiting migrants as a part of the widespread crypto-mobilization effort targeting migrants in Russia.[40]

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov credited Western security assistance for empowering Ukrainian forces to liberate half of the territory that Russia occupied since February 24, 2022.**
- **Russian forces conducted a notably large series of drone strikes against Ukraine on the night of December 5 to 6.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin traveled to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia to meet with UAE President Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman in a series of bilateral meetings on December 6.**
- **Russian oil revenues continue to increase due to a concerted Russian effort to skirt the G7 price cap on Russian crude oil and petroleum products.**
- **Russian society appears interested in discussing the outcome of the war in Ukraine despite the Kremlin's increasing aversion to more in-depth public discussions of the war.**
- **Unspecified actors killed former pro-Russian Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada deputy Ilya Kiva in Moscow Oblast on December 6.**
- **Moscow's 2nd Western Military District Court convicted two Russian air defense officers for negligence for failing to prevent a Ukrainian strike on Russian territory in April 2022, likely to set an example to improve discipline across the Russian military.**
- **Russian officials are reportedly attempting to funnel migrants who have ended up in Russia due to Russia's failed hybrid war tactics on the Russian-Finnish border into ongoing force generation efforts.**

- **Russian forces continued offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, near Avdiivka, west and southwest of Donetsk City, in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and western Zaporizhia Oblast and advanced near Avdiivka.**
- **The Russian State Duma will reportedly consider a bill allowing Russian conscripts to serve in the Federal Security Service's (FSB) Border Service.**
- **Ukrainian partisans may have conducted an attack in occupied Luhansk City on December 6 that killed Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) People's Council Deputy Oleg Popov.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of December 6, 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

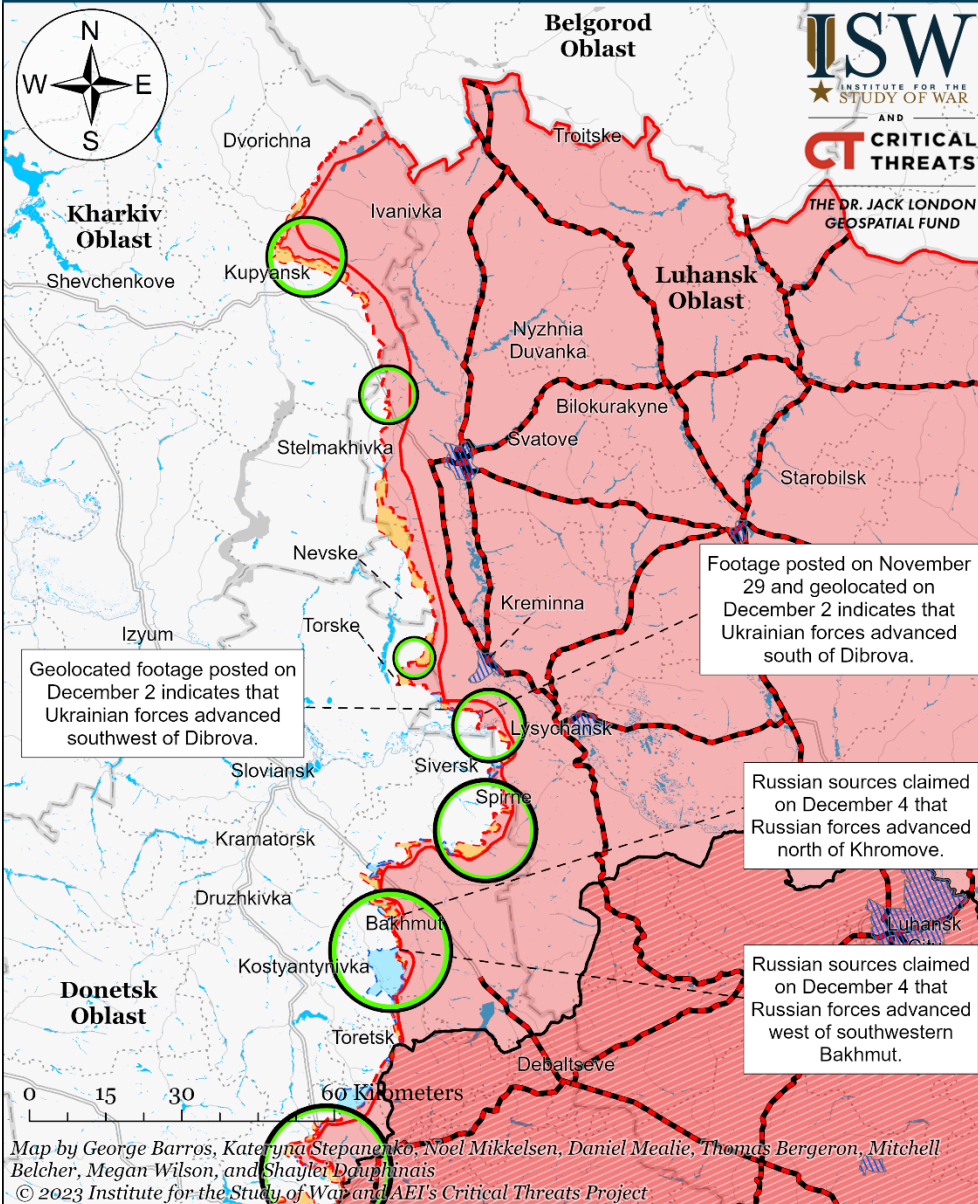
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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 offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on December 6 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled at least eight Russian attacks in the Kupyansk direction near Synkivka (9km northeast of Kupyansk) and Novoselivske (14km northwest of Svatove), and at least 26 Russian attacks in the Lyman direction near Terny (17km west of Kreminna), the Serebryanske forest area (10km south of Kreminna), Bilohorivka (12km south of Kreminna), Spirne (25km south of Kreminna), Vesele (31km south of Kreminna), and Rozdolivka (30km south of Kreminna).[41] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced near Synkivka and controlled up to half of the settlement, although ISW has not observed visual evidence to confirm that Russian forces control half of Synkivka.[42] Russian milbloggers claimed that there was fighting near Petropavlivka (7km east of Kupyansk).[43] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced towards Terny and Yampolivka (17km west of Kreminna) after repelling several Ukrainian counterattacks.[44] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced up to two kilometers in an unspecified area of the Bilohorivka-Spirne-Berestove-Yakovlivka line (12km to 35km south of Kreminna).[45] Russian milbloggers claimed on December 5 that Russian forces advanced in forest areas near Kreminna and Torske (15km west of Kreminna).[46] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces intensified assault operations north of Soledar (38km southwest of Kreminna) and advanced along the railway line east of Vesele (31km south of Kreminna).[47] Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov posted footage claiming to show the “Aida” detachment of Chechen “Akhmat” Spetsnaz operating in the Kreminna direction.[48]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful counterattacks along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on December 6. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks in the Kupyansk direction near Synkivka, Ivanivka (20km southwest of Kupyansk), and Lake Lyman (northwest of Synkivka), and in the Lyman direction near Bilohorivka, Luhansk Oblast and Hryhorivka (11km south of Kreminna), Donetsk Oblast.[49] Russian milbloggers claimed on December 5 that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Kreminna and Torske.[50]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of December 6, 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.

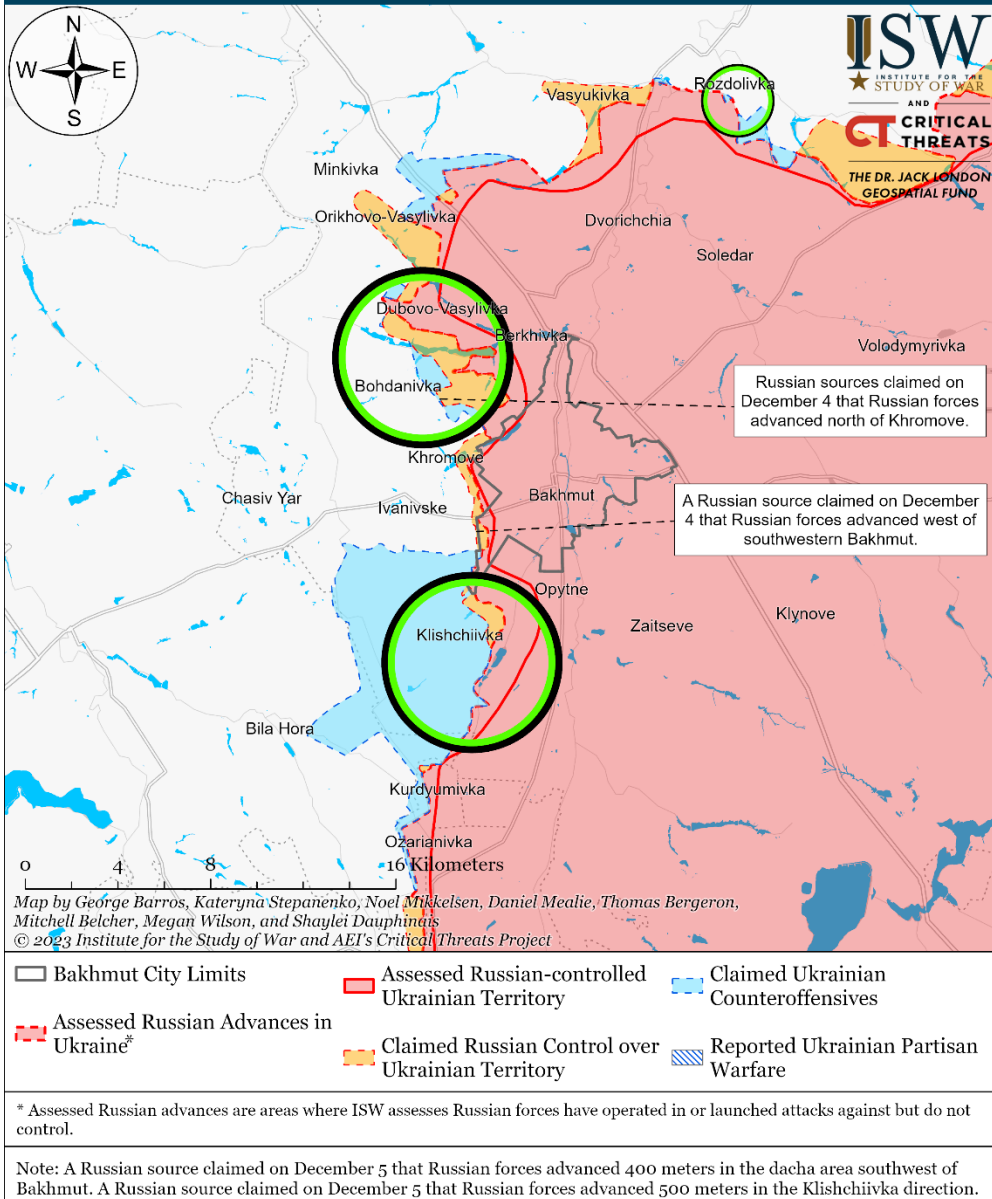
Note: A Russian source claimed on December 5 that Russian forces advanced 400 meters in the dacha area southwest of Bakhmut. A Russian source claimed on December 5 that Russian forces advanced 500 meters in the Klishchiivka direction.

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 ground attacks near Bakhmut on December 6 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled at least 10 Russian attacks near Bohdanivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut), Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut), and Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).[51] Russian milbloggers claimed on December 5 and 6 that Russian forces made unspecified gains near Khromove (immediately west of Bakhmut), advanced up to 400 meters on the southwestern outskirts of Bakhmut, and advanced up to 500 meters near Klishchiivka, capturing an unspecified tactical height.[52] ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces attacked near the Berkhivka Reservoir (2km northwest of Bakhmut) and between Bohdanivka and Hryhorivka (9km northwest of Bakhmut). [53]

The Russian MoD and a prominent Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces in the Bakhmut area repelled Ukrainian attacks near Bohdanivka, Klishchiivka, and Toretsk (21km south of Bakhmut and 12km northwest of Horlivka) on December 6.[54]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of December 6, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

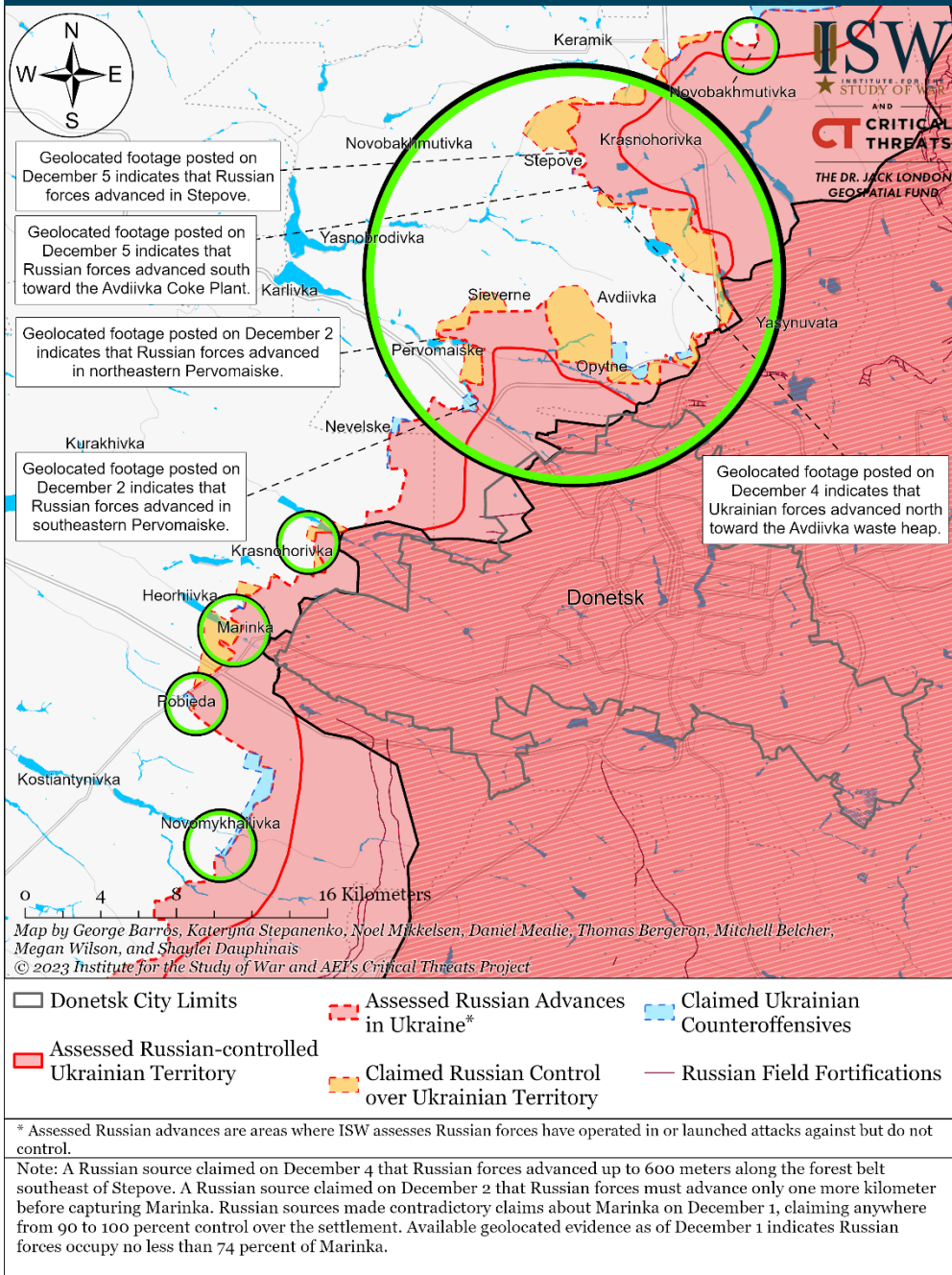


Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Avdiivka on December 6 and made a confirmed advance. Geolocated footage published on December 6 shows that Russian forces marginally advanced in the industrial zone southeast of Avdiivka.[55] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled at least 25 attacks east of Novobakhmutivka (7km northwest of Avdiivka), northeast of Berdychi (4km north of Avdiivka), and near Avdiivka, Stepove (3km north of Avdiivka), Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka), Tonenke (5km west of Avdiivka), and Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka).[56] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced south of the Avdiivka waste heap (just northeast of Avdiivka), near the Avdiivka Coke Plant (northwest of Avdiivka), near Pervomaiske, and east of Avdiivka, although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these

claims.[57] Footage published on December 5 purportedly shows elements of the Russian 87th and 1487th Regiments (1st Donetsk People's Republic Army Corps), 10th Tank Regiment (3rd Army Corps, Western Military District), and "Veterans" Sabotage and Assault Brigade operating in the industrial zone southeast of Avdiivka.[58]

Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Avdiivka on December 6 and recently made a confirmed advance. Geolocated footage published on December 5 shows that Ukrainian forces advanced in Stepove.[59] A Russian milblogger claimed on December 6 that Ukrainian forces maintain positions in the center of Stepove despite Russian attacks.[60]

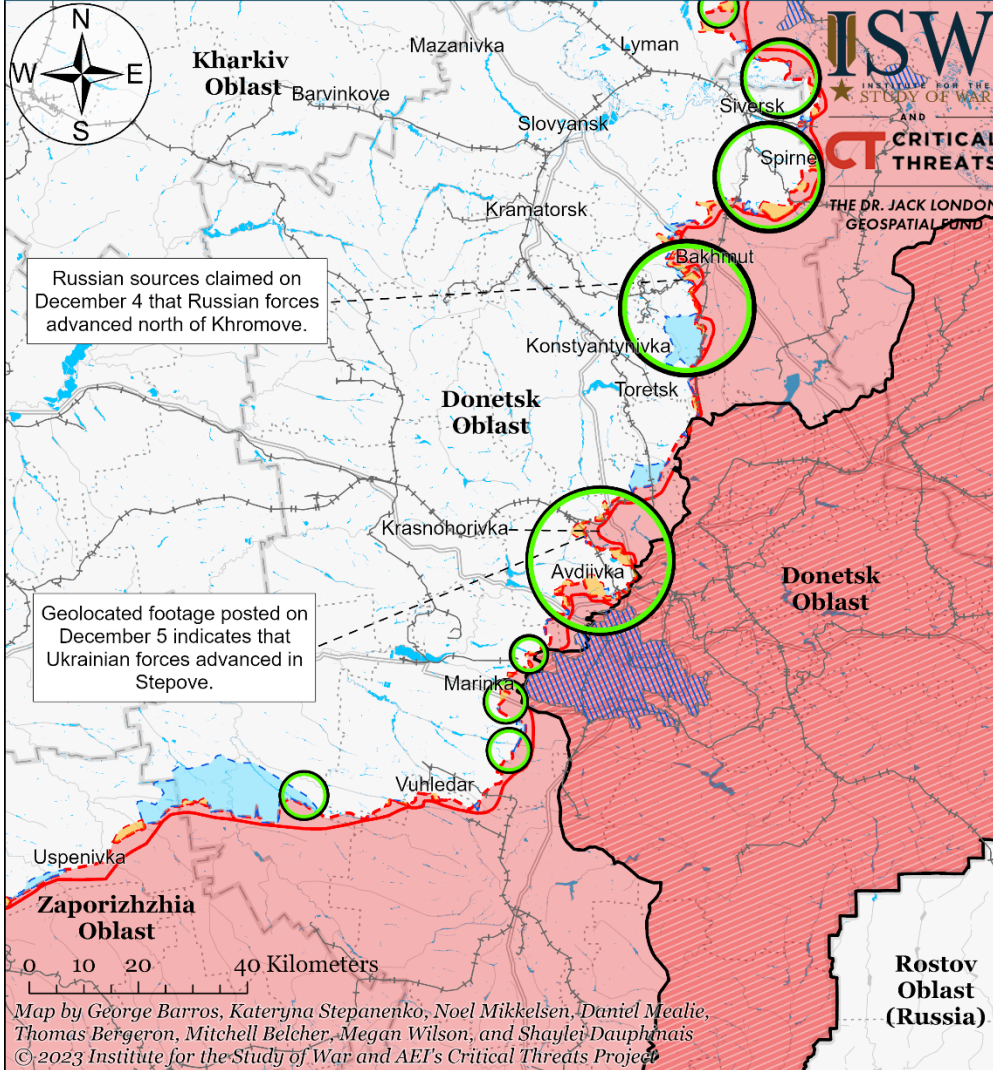
Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of December 6, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces conducted ground attacks west and southwest of Donetsk City on December 6 but did not make confirmed or claimed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Krasnohorivka and Marinka (directly west of Donetsk City), Pobjeda (5km southwest of Donetsk City), and Novomykhailivka (11km southwest of Donetsk City).[61] Lieutenant Colonel Yaroslav Cherepurnyi, a spokesperson for a Ukrainian brigade operating

in the Marinka direction, stated that Russian forces control most of Marinka but that Ukrainian forces control a small part of the settlement.[62]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of December 6, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



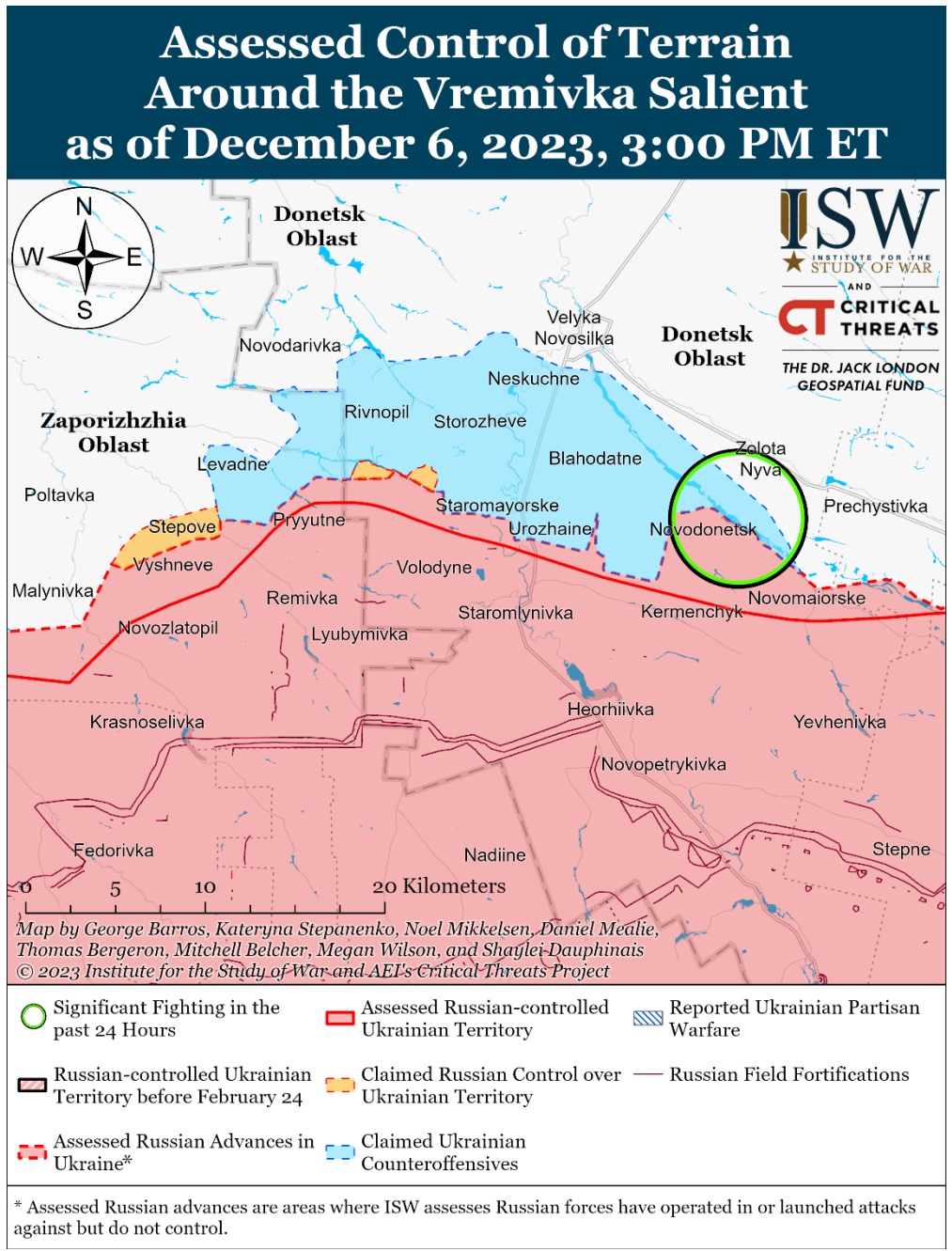
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- +— Major Railroads
- 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 December 5 that Russian forces advanced 400 meters in the dacha area southwest of Bakhmut. A Russian source claimed on December 2 that Russian forces must advance only one more kilometer before capturing Marinka.

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

Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on December 6 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults near Novodonetske (15km southeast of Velyka Novosilka) and south of Zolota Nyva (11km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[63] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also attacked near Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) but did not specify an outcome.[64]

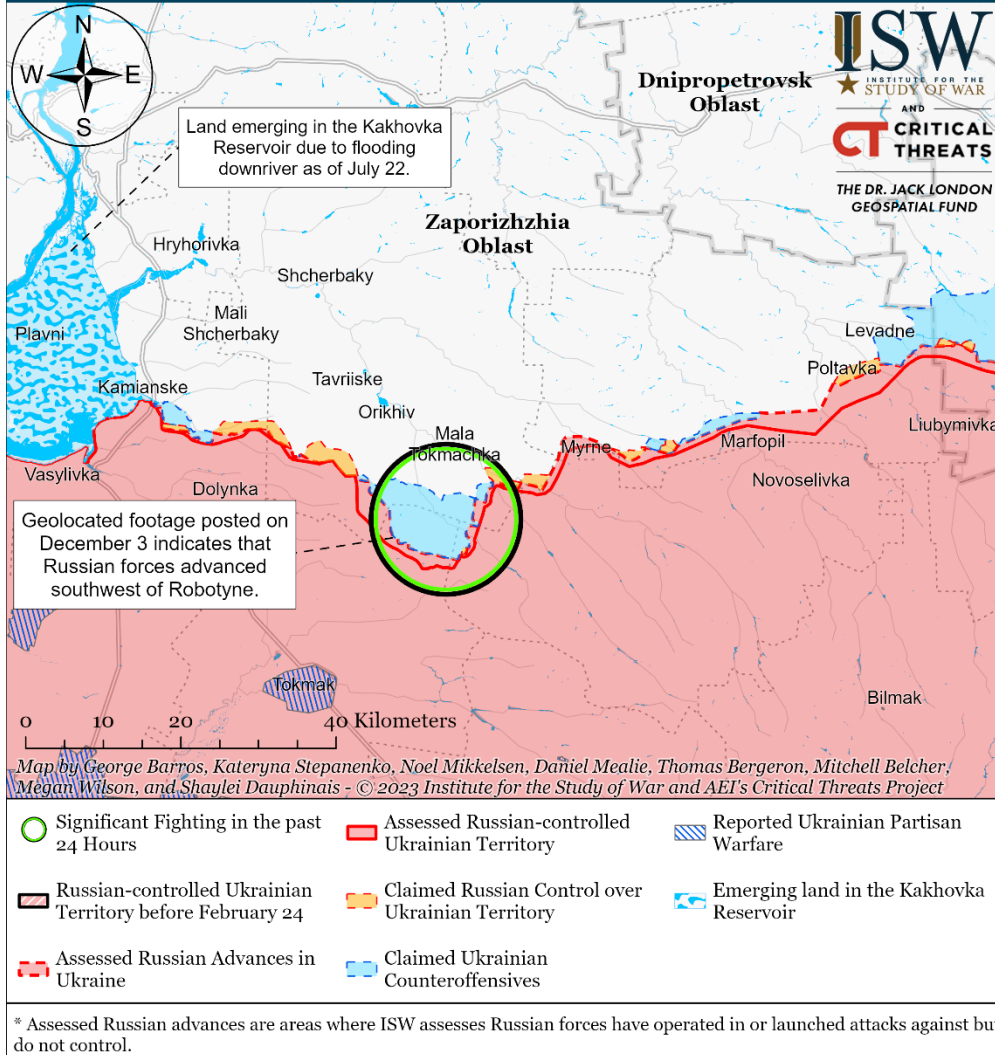


Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on December 6 but did not make any confirmed advances. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian assaults west of Robotyne and north of Verbove (9km east of Robotyne) on December 5 and 6.[65] A Russian milblogger claimed that meeting engagements occurred west of Novofedorivka (14km northeast of Robotyne) on December 6.[66]

Russian forces continued counterattacks in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on December 6 and reportedly recently advanced. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced up to a kilometer in depth near Verbove on December 5.[67] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled at least five Russian assaults west of Verbove and Robotyne on December 6.[68] A Russian milblogger claimed on December 5 that muddy conditions in the Robotyne area are constraining Russian and Ukrainian movement.[69]

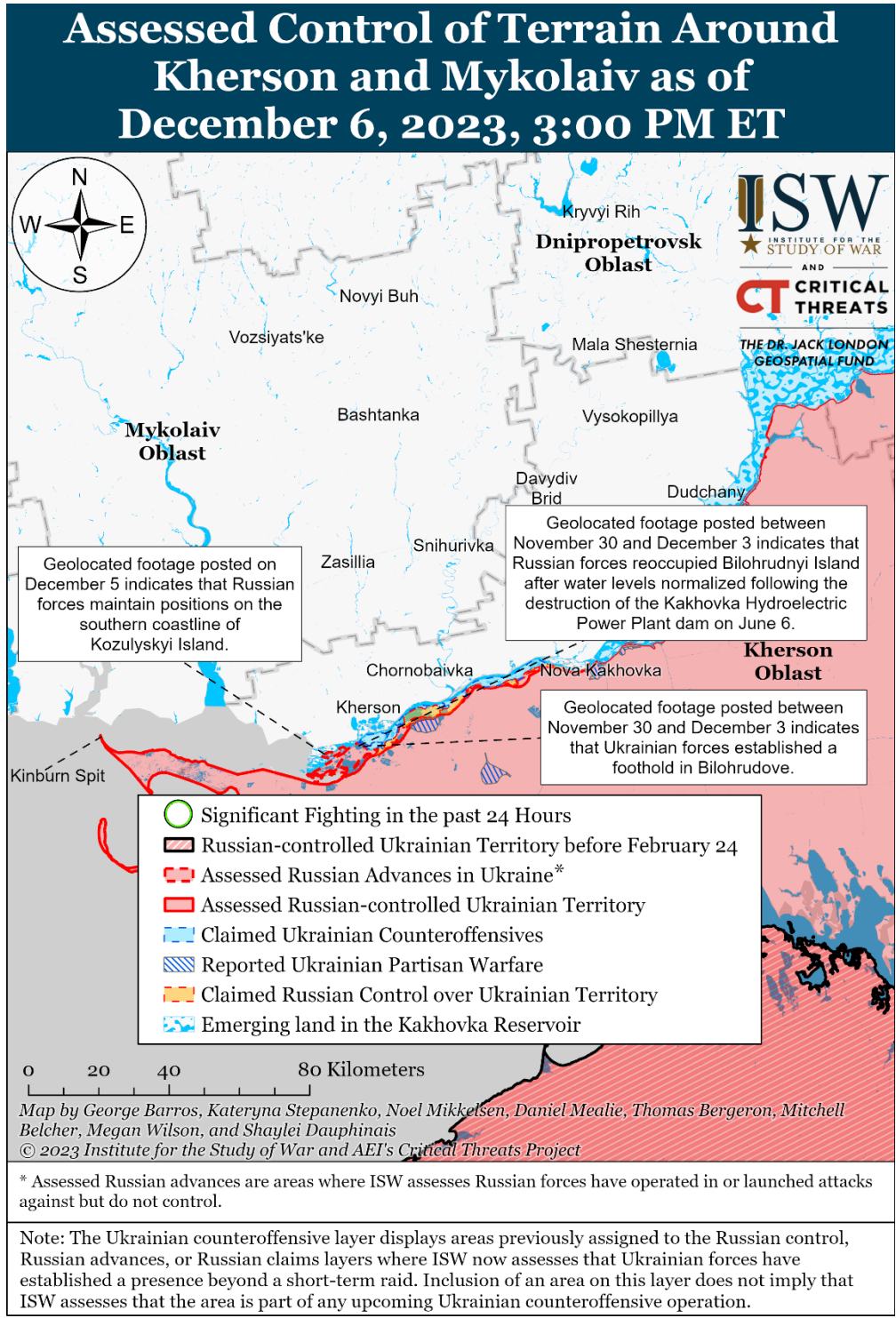


Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of December 6, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Ukrainian forces continued ground operations on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast on December 6 but did not make any confirmed gains. Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian assault groups attempted to advance several times south of Krynyky (30km northeast of Kherson City and 2km from the Dniro River) and fortified a foothold southeast of the settlement.[70] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces continue to strengthen their grouping within Krynyky itself.[71] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces maintain positions near the Antonivsky roadway bridge and near Kozachi Laheri (25km northeast of Kherson City and 3km from the Dniro River) and effectively control forest areas, islands, and the coastline along the Konka River.[72] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces launched more than 100 glide bombs at Ukrainian targets in the direction of Krynyky in the past 24 hours.[73]

Geolocated footage published on December 5 confirms that Russian forces maintain positions on islands in the Dnipro River south of Veletenske, Kherson Oblast (15km southwest of Kherson City).[74] This footage does not suggest that Russian forces recently advanced in the area, however, and they have likely held these positions for some time.



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

The Russian State Duma will reportedly consider a bill allowing Russian conscripts to serve in the Federal Security Service's (FSB) Border Service. Kremlin newswire *TASS* reported on December 6 that the Russian State Duma will consider a bill allowing Russian conscripts to fulfill their military service in unspecified positions in the FSB on December 7.[75] The bill excludes conscripts if they have foreign citizenship or a residency permit in another country, are recognized by the Russian Ministry of Justice as foreign agents, use recreational drugs and other substances, or have a criminal record, even an expunged record. Russian outlet *RBK* reported that Russian State Duma deputies Vasily Piskarev and Alexander Khinshtein stated that the bill is aimed at allowing conscripts to serve in the FSB's Border Service.[76] *TASS* reported that the Russian State Duma Security and Anti-Corruption Committee supports the bill and that the Russian State Duma could pass the bill as early as next week. A prominent Russian milblogger claimed on October 28 that he personally overheard Russian President Vladimir Putin express his decision to send Russian conscripts to service in the FSB's Border Service.[77] ISW has previously observed Russian milbloggers complaining about how poorly equipped Russian border guard units are and criticizing the Russian military command for relying on inexperienced conscripts for border production.[78]

A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are struggling to evacuate large numbers of deceased Russian servicemen from the battlefield in an unspecified sector of the front, negatively affecting Russian morale and offensive capabilities.[79] The milblogger claimed on December 6 that decomposing Russian bodies "weigh" on the minds of Russian servicemen and sometimes obstruct Russian combat positions and assaults.[80] The milblogger claimed that the Russian forces do not have the means to evacuate bodies.[81] The milblogger implied on December 3 that the Russian military command is to blame for the Russian military's failure to evacuate the bodies.[82] ISW reported on December 5 that a relative of a mobilized Russian servicemen told Russian opposition outlet *Vazhnyye Istorii* that servicemen of military unit 95411 (Western Military District) are "walking over corpses" in the Avdiivka direction.[83] It is not always possible to retrieve bodies from the battlefield under challenging battlefield conditions, of course, but reports that there are enough unrecovered Russian corpses to interfere with Russian offensive operations give color to the kinds of massed infantry attacks Russian forces are reportedly using in this area. Ukrainian officials routinely report that Russian forces are conducting "meat assaults" (colloquial jargon for attritional infantry-led frontal assaults) in the Avdiivka direction, assaults that could result in the level of casualties that Russian sources are detailing in these complaints.[84]

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

Kremlin newswire *TASS* reported on November 23 that Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev and Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin opened the Shared Use Center of the Federal Center for Unmanned Aircraft Systems in the Rudnevo industrial park, which will design, manufacture, assemble Russian drone parts.[85] Russian milbloggers claimed on December 5 and 6 that Russia unveiled its new "Termite" unmanned attack helicopter during Medvedev's visit.[86] The milbloggers claimed that this helicopter can use artificial intelligence to search and strike targets independently in "free hunt" mode.[87] The milbloggers claimed that Russian authorities equipped the helicopter with three precision-guided laser-targeted S-8L missiles.[88] The S-8L missile features

a semi-active homing warhead with a fragmentation-explosive payload and a range of up to six kilometers, allowing the operator to designate and track targets with a laser.[89]

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)

Likely Ukrainian partisans may have conducted an attack in occupied Luhansk City on December 6 that killed Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR) People’s Council Deputy Oleg Popov. Russian sources claimed that Popov’s car exploded near the Avanhrad stadium in Luhansk Oblast, killing Popov.[90] The LNR Investigation Department of the Russian Investigative Committee announced that it opened a criminal case under the article of a “terrorist act” in connection to the explosion that killed Popov.[91]

Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada Human Rights Ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets stated on December 6 that eight Ukrainian children whom Russian authorities deported to Russia or removed further into Russian-occupied territories returned to Ukrainian-held territory.[92] Lubinets stated that Ukrainian officials negotiated the return of the children through joint work with Qatar.[93]

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Ukraine’s Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported on December 6 that Russian security officials are preparing to use foreign journalists with experience working in Russia to promote a disinformation campaign discrediting Ukrainian leadership in English-language foreign media.[94] The GUR reported that the ultimate goal of the disinformation campaign is to divide Ukrainian society.[95] This disinformation campaign is consistent with a pattern of pro-Kremlin actors increasingly amplifying reports of Ukrainian social and governmental division to discredit Ukrainian leadership and weaken Western support for Ukraine.[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 Belarusian Ministry of Defense (MoD) reported that the joint Russian-Belarusian “Youth for the Union State” Media Forum aimed at strengthening cooperation youth patriotic education, science, sports, and art occurred in Minsk and Moscow on December 6.[97]

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.

POWERED BY:



BABELSTREET

[1] <https://www.mil.gov.ua/news/2023/12/06/mi-na-100-vpevneni-shho-razom-iz-ssha-zahishhaemo-naczionalni-interesi-oboh-nashih-krain-%E2%80%93rustem-umerov-v-intervyu-fox-news/> ; <https://www.foxnews.com/video/6342426831112>

[2] <https://www.mil.gov.ua/news/2023/12/06/mi-na-100-vpevneni-shho-razom-iz-ssha-zahishhaemo-naczionalni-interesi-oboh-nashih-krain-%E2%80%93rustem-umerov-v-intervyu-fox-news/> ; <https://www.foxnews.com/video/6342426831112>

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