

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, November 20, 2023

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November 20, 2023, 5:30pm 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 12:30pm ET on November 20. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the November 21 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russia appears to be employing a known hybrid warfare tactic to artificially create a migrant crisis on the Finnish border. Finnish authorities closed four border checkpoints on Finland's southeastern border with Russia on November 18 after the Finnish Border Guard reported that an influx of about 300 asylum seekers, mostly from Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, and Syria, had arrived at the Finnish border from Russia since September 2023.[1] Finnish Border Guards recorded 89 migrant crossings during a two-day period between November 7 and 14 — a sharp increase from the 91 crossings recorded from mid-July to November 12.[2] Four checkpoints currently remain open on Finland's northeastern border with Russia with only two open for asylum applicants.[3] *Reuters* reported on November 19 that dozens of migrants arrived at the closed Finnish Nuijamaa and Vaalimaa crossings on November 18 and gathered around a campfire in sub-zero temperatures.[4] Finnish outlet *Iltalehti* reported on November 20 that Finnish authorities are considering closing the entire border with Russia on the night of November 21.[5] Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo stated on November 14 that Russian border guards are escorting or transporting migrants to the Finnish border, and the Finnish government stated on November 16 that there are indications that “foreign authorities or other actors” have played a role in helping people illegally cross the border.[6] *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL)* reported on November 19 that Jouko Kinnunen, head of the Finnish Vartius checkpoint that currently remains open, stated that Russian border guards pushed migrants to the Finnish side of the barrier and then closed the Russian border barriers behind them.[7] It is unlikely that these migrants would continue to remain at the Finnish border in sub-zero temperatures of their own volition after Finnish border authorities denied their entrance into Finland, suggesting that Russia is likely involved in the situation in some way.

The Kremlin has denied Finland's accusations about Russia's involvement in creating an artificial influx of migrants. Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitri Peskov responded on November 17 to the announcement of the closure of the four checkpoints, stating that Finland had chosen a path of confrontation, which Peskov labeled as a “big mistake.”[8] Peskov also stated on November 20 that

Finland's possible decision to close the entire border "causes nothing but deep regret" and claimed that Finland's "Russophobic" position has harmed Finnish-Russian relations of the past.[9]

Russia's apparent hybrid warfare tactic on the Russian-Finnish border is similar to Russia's and Belarus' creation of a migrant crisis on the Polish border in 2021 and is likely similarly aimed at destabilizing NATO. ISW previously assessed that the Kremlin enabled, or possibly directly controlled, Belarus' artificial creation of a migrant crisis on its border with Poland in 2021, when Belarusian security personnel aided thousands of Middle Eastern migrants in crossing the Belarusian border to Poland.[10] The Kremlin exploited the manufactured crisis in 2021 to falsely accuse NATO of aggression against Belarus.[11] Peskov responded to Finland's accession into NATO on April 4, threatening that Russia would take any "countermeasures [deemed necessary] to ensure [Russia's] own security." [12] The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs similarly stated on April 4 that Russia will be "forced to take retaliatory measures" and that Finland's accession to NATO "cannot but have a negative impact on Russian-Finnish bilateral relations." [13] ISW previously assessed that the Kremlin may be attempting to set information space conditions to destabilize the NATO states on Russian borders and distract from the war in Ukraine.[14] ISW has also consistently assessed that one of Putin's goals in launching the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 was to break up NATO – a goal he continues to pursue.[15]

Russian milbloggers expressed continued anger at deteriorating Russian-Armenian relations as Armenia appears to distance itself further from Russia while entering further agreements with Western governments. Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Secretary General Imangali Tasmagambetov claimed in Minsk on November 20 that Armenia asked to remove provisions on assistance to Armenia from the agenda of the upcoming CSTO Summit's agenda.[16] Russian media also reported that Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Paruyr Hovhannisyanyan and the European Union (EU) Ambassador to Armenia Vassilis Maragos signed an agreement that increases "legal certainty" surrounding the EU Mission to Armenia (EUMA)'s "rights and obligations" within Armenia, and creates easier conditions for EUMA observers to operate in the country.[17] Russian milbloggers latched onto Tasmagambetov's claim and the Armenia-EU agreement, reamplifying a thus-far unsubstantiated claim from November 19 that Armenia is preparing to leave the CSTO and provide missiles and missile launchers to Ukraine.[18] The milbloggers accused Armenia of "betrayal" for growing closer to the West and distancing itself from Russia and expressed bitterness at Armenia's alleged provision of weapons to Ukraine while doing nothing "besides throwing mud" at Russian peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh.[19] ISW has observed no indications to substantiate the milblogger claim of Armenia providing missiles and missile launchers to Ukraine.[20]

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) reportedly started public recruitment for the Russian "Africa Corps" aimed at subsuming Wagner Group operations in Africa after alleged failed MoD attempts to directly recruit former Wagner personnel. A Russian milblogger posted an advertisement for contract service in the Russian "Africa Corps" on November 20.[21] The milblogger claimed that the Russian MoD decided to form the Russian "Africa Corps" in Libya after Russian Deputy Defense Minister Colonel General Yunus-Bek Yevkurov met with Libyan National Army Commander Marshal Khalifa Haftar, likely referencing their August 22 meeting.[22] The milblogger claimed that the formation of the Russian "Africa Corps" in Libya is part of wider Russian-Libyan agreements established at the Moscow International Security Conference and Army-2023 Forum.[23] The milblogger claimed that the starting salary for "Africa Corps"

personnel is 280,000 rubles (about \$3,160), significantly higher than the salaries that the Russian MoD reportedly offered former Wagner fighters and that the Wagner Group offered recruits for its operations in Africa in 2023.[24] ISW previously observed a Russian insider source's claim that the Russian MoD unsuccessfully attempted to recruit former Wagner Group personnel to Russian MoD operations in Africa.[25] The need to publicly advertise recruitment into the Russian "Africa Corps" supports the insider source's claim that the MoD's attempt to directly recruit former Wagner personnel for operations in Africa were largely unsuccessful.

The Russian Strelkov (Igor Girkin) Movement (RDS) predictably backed Girkin's November 19 formal announcement of his intent to run in the 2024 Russian presidential election. The RDS stated on November 20 that its first congress as an official political movement began in Moscow on November 18 and reiterated that its current main priority is to secure Girkin's release from prison and the dismissal of all charges against him. The RDS also emphasized that the RDS Congress fully supports Girkin's nomination and is creating an organizing committee to support Girkin's campaign.[26] The RDS reiterated its main political tenets that it first announced on June 26, which center around supporting the Russian military and veterans and pursuing military and governmental reforms.[27] Girkin's wife, Miroslava Reginskaya, has not yet acknowledged Girkin's presidential campaign or the RDS' support of the campaign as of this publication.[28]

Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov continues efforts to distinguish himself in the Russian information space, infringing on the generally accepted boundaries between Russian federal subject (region) heads and Russian President Vladimir Putin. During a video conference on the renewal of the Russian public transport fleet in the Russian regions, Kadyrov publicly invited Putin, who was also on the call, to visit Chechnya.[29] Kadyrov told Putin that Chechen elders had "scolded" Kadyrov because Putin has not visited Chechnya in a long time.[30] Putin did not directly respond to the invitation and instead thanked Kadyrov and the Chechen people for their hard work in restoring the republic. Kadyrov's public invitation to Putin, who has notably not visited Chechnya since 2011, places Putin in a difficult position, as he either ignores the invitation and risks snubbing Kadyrov, or he accepts the invitation and risks looking as though he is amenable to Kadyrov's pressure.[31] This implicit veiled challenge to Putin in a public forum is unusual and represents a clear attempt at informational posturing on the part of Kadyrov, who has recently tried to balance an apparent desire to curry favor with Putin while also appealing to his own Chechen constituency.[32]

The US Department of Defense (DoD) announced a new security assistance package to Ukraine during US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin's visit to Kyiv on November 20. Austin met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov and reiterated long-term US support for Ukraine.[33] The new DoD package contains military equipment valued at up to \$100 million, including Stinger anti-aircraft missiles; one HIMARS system and additional ammunition; Tube-Launched, Optically-Tracked, Wire-Guided (TOW) missiles; Javelin and AT-4 anti-armor systems; and artillery and small arms rounds.[34]

Key Takeaways:

- **Russia appears to be employing a known hybrid warfare tactic to artificially create a migrant crisis on the Finnish border.**

- **Russia’s apparent hybrid warfare tactic on the Russian-Finnish border is similar to Russia’s and Belarus’ creation of a migrant crisis on the Polish border in 2021 and is likely similarly aimed at destabilizing NATO.**
- **Russian milbloggers expressed continued anger at deteriorating Russian-Armenian relations as Armenia appears to distance itself further from Russia while entering further agreements with Western governments.**
- **The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) reportedly started public recruitment for the Russian “Africa Corps” aimed at subsuming Wagner Group operations in Africa after alleged failed MoD attempts to directly recruit former Wagner personnel.**
- **The Russian Strelkov (Igor Girkin) Movement (RDS) predictably backed Girkin’s November 19 formal announcement of his intent to run in the 2024 Russian presidential election.**
- **Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov continues efforts to distinguish himself in the Russian information space, infringing on the generally accepted boundaries between Russian federal subject (region) heads and Russian President Vladimir Putin.**
- **The US Department of Defense (DoD) announced a new security assistance package to Ukraine during US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin's visit to Kyiv on November 20.**
- **Russian forces conducted 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 in western Zaporizhia Oblast and marginally advanced in some areas.**
- **A Russian federal subject (region) and occupation officials are reportedly planning to work together to provide drones to Russian forces.**
- **A Ukrainian official reported that Ukraine successfully returned 45 Ukrainian children whom Russian authorities forcibly deported to Russia in the past six months.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of November 20, 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

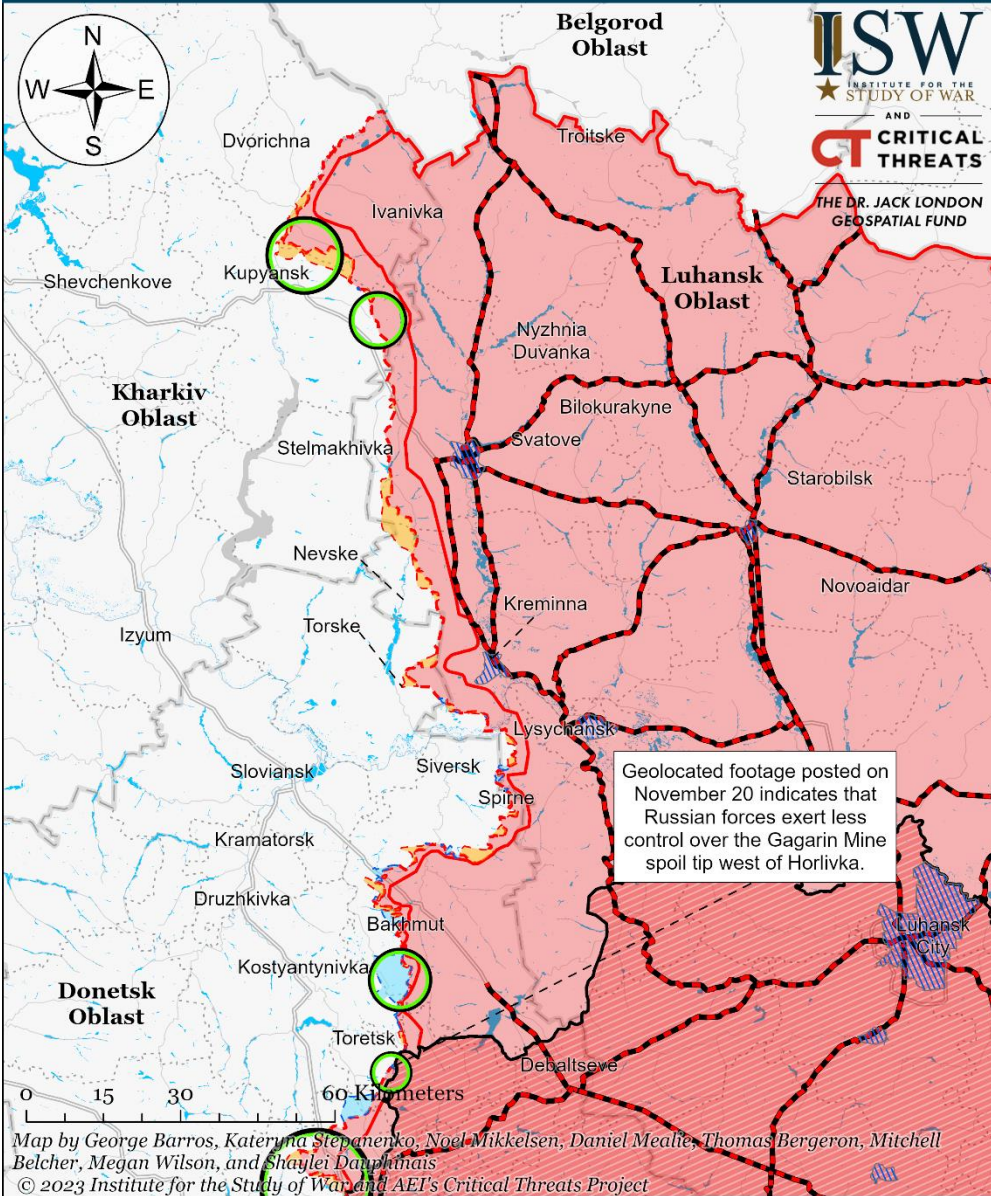
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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 on the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on November 20 and marginally advanced near Kreminna. Geolocated footage published on November 20 shows that Russian forces marginally advanced in the forest area south of Kreminna.[35] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also advanced in the Kupyansk direction across the Ivanivka-Kyslivka road (both roughly 20km east of Kupyansk) and are consolidating positions near the railway line directly east of the settlements, but ISW has observed no visual confirmation of this claim.[36] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Synkivka and Ivanivka and east of Petropalivka (7km east of Kupyansk).[37] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that while the Russian Western Grouping of Forces in the Kupyansk direction has more personnel and equipment than the Central Grouping of Forces in the Kreminna direction, the Central Grouping maintains enough combat-ready units to conduct an offensive push should the Russian military command desire such an operation.[38] ISW has not observed any indications that Russian forces are preparing for a renewed tempo of offensive operations near Kreminna, however.

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations east of Kupyansk and south of Kreminna but did not advance on November 20. The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Zahoruykivka (a village 16km east of Kupyansk that was disincorporated in 1980) and Hryhorivka (11km south of Kreminna).[39]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of November 20, 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.

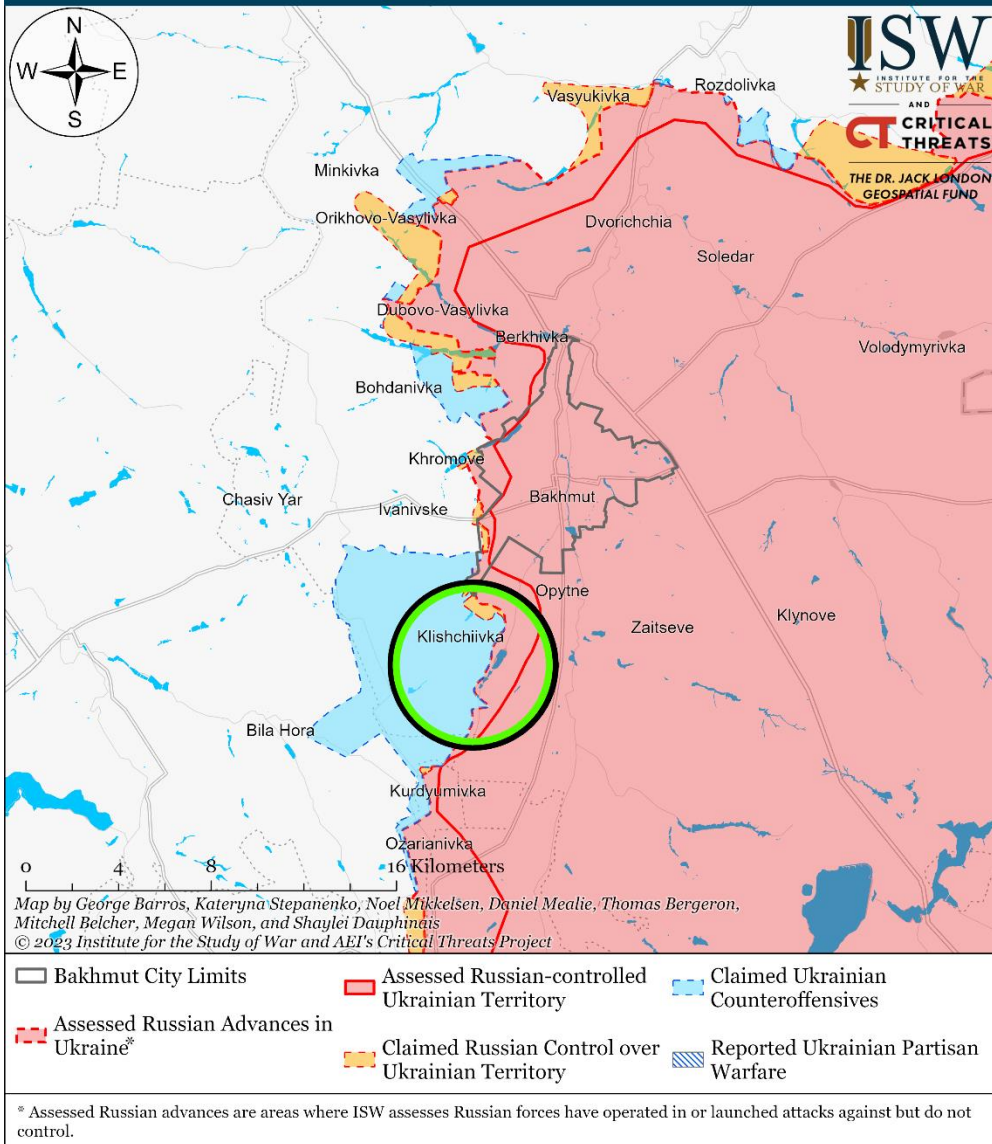
Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)

Ukrainian military sources reported on November 20 that Ukrainian forces continued successful assault actions south of Bakhmut.[40]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Bakhmut direction on November 20 and reportedly advanced southwest of Bakhmut. Russian milbloggers widely claimed that Russian forces are advancing near Klishchiivka (6km southwest of Bakhmut) and consolidating positions in nearby forest areas and the railway station.[41] One milblogger claimed that the situation around Bakhmut has recently reached a turning point and that Russian forces overcame a “positional deadlock” to shift control and regain positions between Klishchiivka and Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).[42] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets noted that Russian forces have replenished their grouping in the Bakhmut area by redeploying elements of the 98th and 106th Airborne (VDV) Divisions to the area from the Lyman direction.[43] Mashovets reported that these VDV elements are mainly attacking towards the Ukrainian rear areas north of Bakhmut, while elements of the 2nd Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) Army Corps and 3rd Army Corps (either of the Western or Central Military District) are fighting south of Bakhmut.[44] Another milblogger also claimed that elements of the Northern Fleet, particularly its 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade, are fighting around Bakhmut.[45] The Ukrainian General Staff reported unsuccessful Russian assaults near Klishchiivka, Andriivka, and east of Pivdenne (20km southwest of Bakhmut).[46]

Ukrainian forces continued counterattacks northwest of Horlivka on November 20 but did not make any confirmed advances. Geolocated footage posted on November 19 shows Russian drones striking Ukrainian forces near the waste heap northwest of Horlivka (25km south of Bakhmut) between Shumy (23km south of Bakhmut and 9km northwest of Horlivka) and Pivdenne.[47] Several Russian milbloggers claimed that in recent days Ukrainian forces attempted to enter the waste heap area towards Horlivka but claimed that Russian forces repelled the attack and pushed Ukrainian forces back to their original positions.[48] The Russian MoD claimed that elements of the Russian Southern Grouping of Forces repelled a Ukrainian attack near Shumy.[49]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of November 20, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

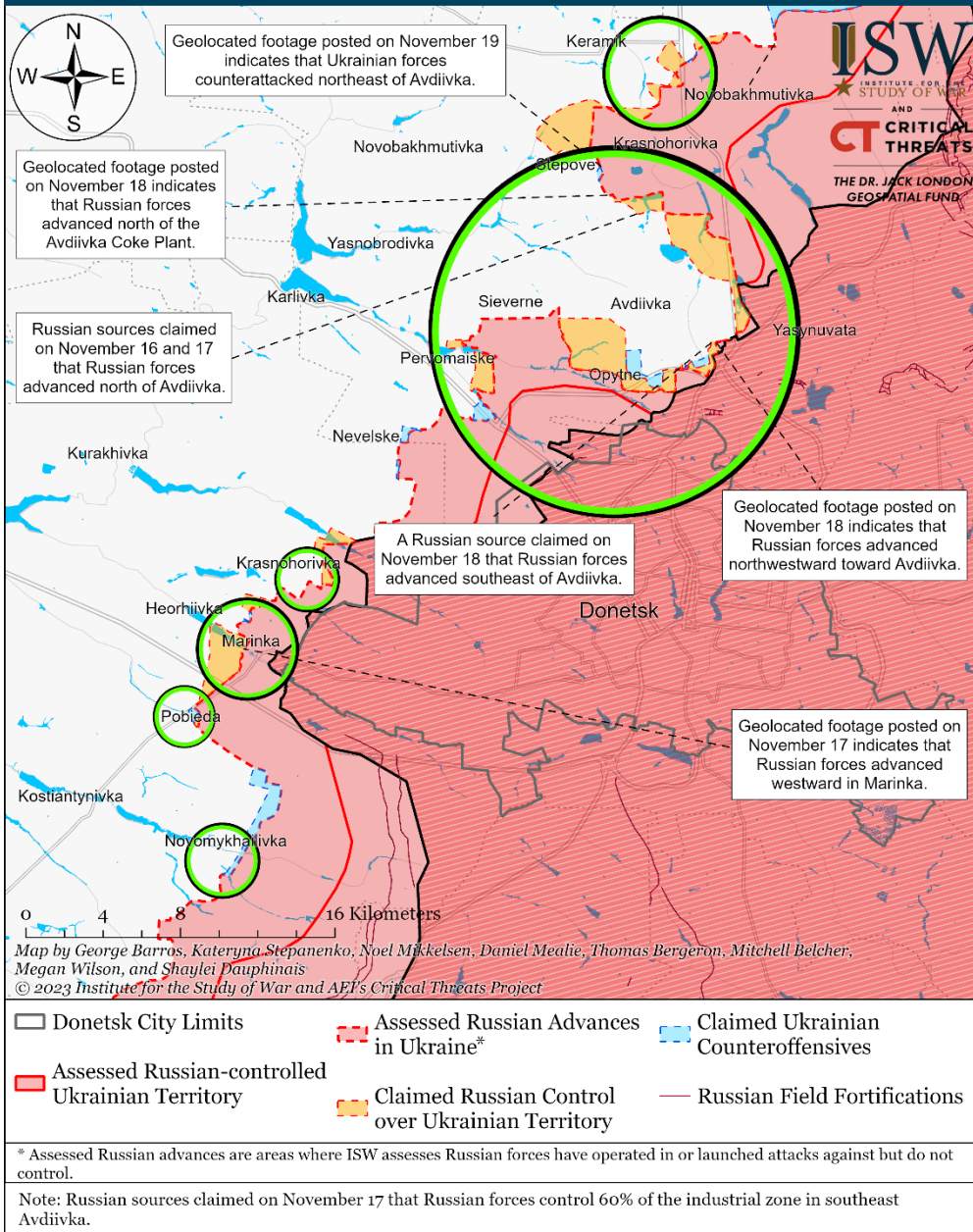


Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Avdiivka direction on November 20 and reportedly advanced. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces broke through Ukrainian defenses near the Yasynuvata-2 station near the industrial zone southeast of Avdiivka, although ISW has not yet observed visual evidence of these purported gains.[50] One prominent milblogger praised competent coordination between Russian assault groups, the Russian Aerospace (VKS) forces, and artillery for securing these claimed advances.[51] Other milbloggers claimed that fighting is ongoing northwest of Avdiivka and that Russian forces advanced near Novokalynove (10km northwest of Avdiivka) and Ocheretyne (12km northwest of Avdiivka).[52] The Ukrainian General Staff reported unsuccessful Russian assaults east of Novobakhmutivka (10km northeast of Avdiivka) and Novokalynove and near Stepove (5km northwest of Avdiivka), Sieverne (5km west of Avdiivka), and

Avdiivka itself.[53] Ukrainian 47th Mechanized Brigade Spokesperson Dmytro Lazutkin noted that recent snowfall in the Avdiivka area has impacted operations and limited visibility for both Ukrainian and Russian forces but reported that Russian forces continue efforts to break through to Avdiivka with small infantry assault groups.[54]

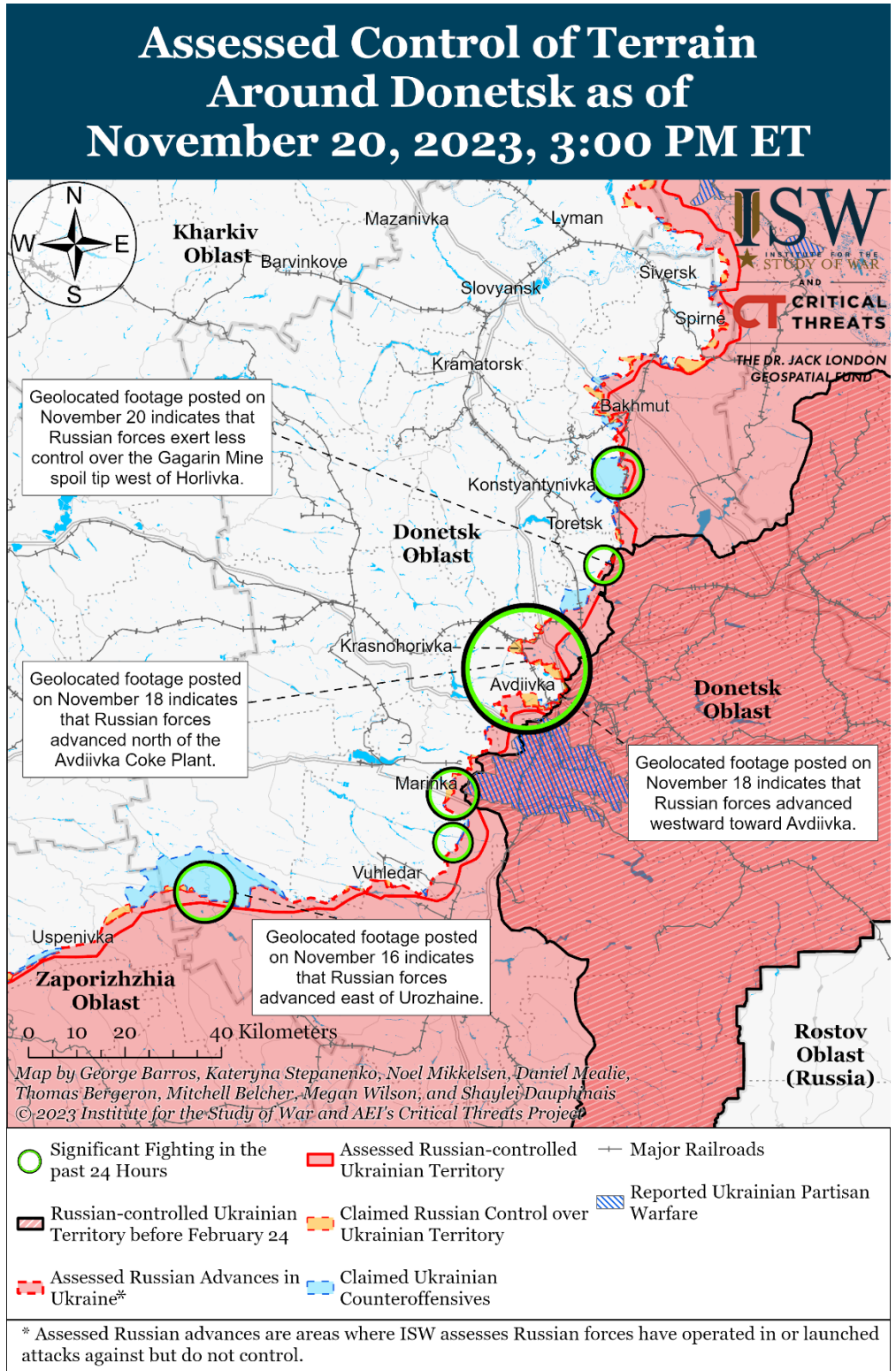
Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully counterattacked near Avdiivka on November 20. Milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces launched a small and unsuccessful counterattack on the industrial zone southeast of Avdiivka, but that Russian forces detected and repelled the attack.[55] One milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces continued counterattacks near Stepove.[56] Another milblogger noted that Ukrainian forces are particularly counterattacking south of Avdiivka and near the waste heap area north of Avdiivka.[57]

Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of November 20, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces continued offensive operations west and southwest of Donetsk City on November 20 but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Krasnohorivka and Marinka (both on the southwestern outskirts of Donetsk City), Pobieda (6km southwest of Donetsk City), and Novomykhailivka (10km south of Donetsk City).[58] Some milbloggers claimed that Russian forces have recently been successful in Marinka but reported that there are no details about purported Russian advances here yet.[59]

The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted an unsuccessful attack near Novomykhailivka.[60]

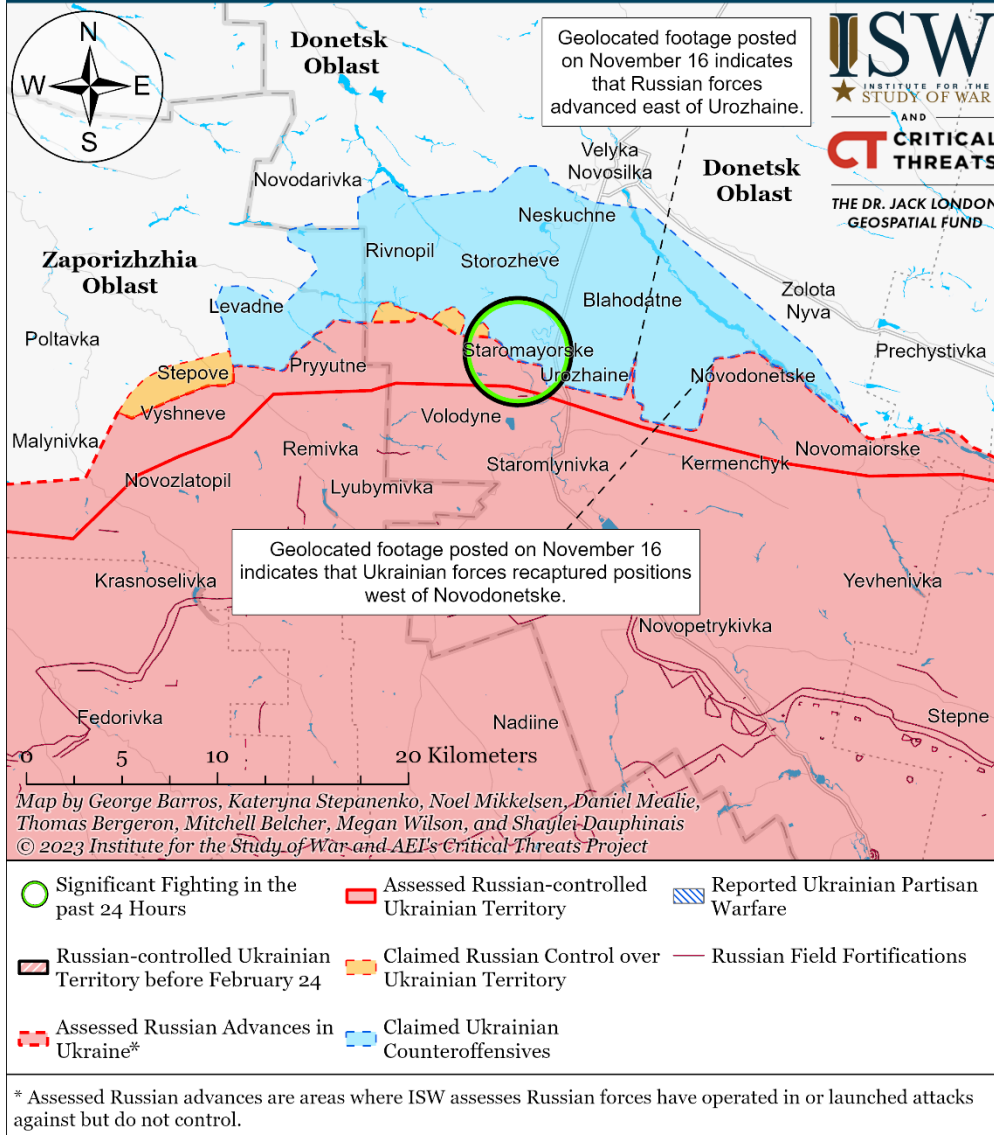


Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Neither Russian nor Ukrainian sources reported Ukrainian attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on November 22. The Russian “Vostok” Battalion, currently operating in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, claimed that poor weather conditions are limiting Russian and Ukrainian forces’ ability to operate aircraft and drones, resulting in decreased artillery fire.[61]

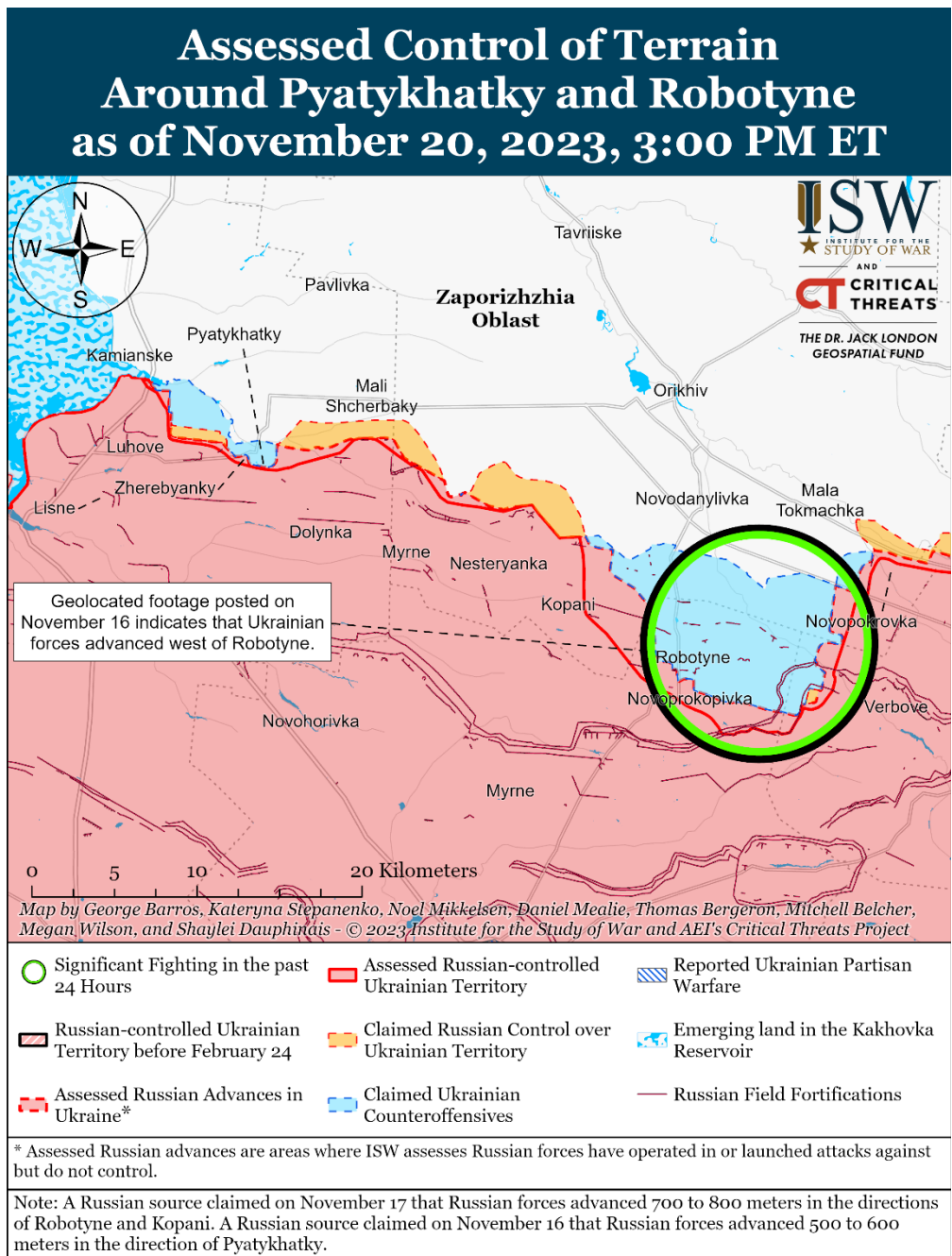
Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on November 22 and recently marginally advanced. Geolocated footage published on November 13 shows Ukrainian forces repelling an attack by elements of the Russian 37th Motorized Rifle Brigade (36th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) and indicates that Russian forces recently made limited gains west of Novodonetske (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[62] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked west of Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka).[63] A Russian media aggregator claimed that Russian forces attacked near Urozhaine (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) on the evening of November 19.[64] Footage published on November 20 purportedly shows elements of the Russian 5th Tank Brigade (36th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) operating along the Staromayorske-Urozhaine line (9km south of Velyka Novosilka).[65]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of November 20, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

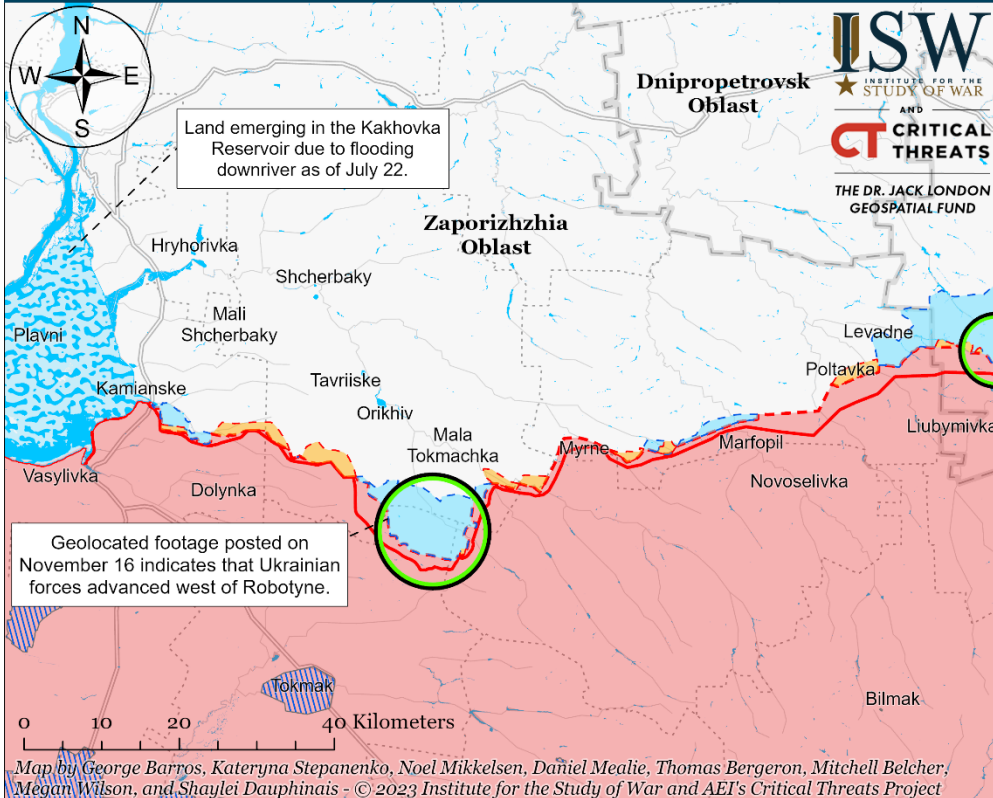


Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast on November 20 but did not make confirmed or claimed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continue offensive operations in the Melitopol direction (western Zaporizhia Oblast).[66] Zaporizhia Oblast occupation official Vladimir Rogov and Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked east of Robotyne, near Verbove (10km east of Robotyne), and toward Novoprokopivka (3km south of Robotyne).[67]

Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on November 20 and did not make confirmed advances. Rogov and a Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces captured several unspecified positions near Verbove, Robotyne, and Novofedorivka (14km northeast of Robotyne), although ISW has not observed visual evidence supporting these claims.[68] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked from Novoprokopivka and Verbove and west of Robotyne, but did not specify outcomes for any of the attacks.[69]



Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of November 20, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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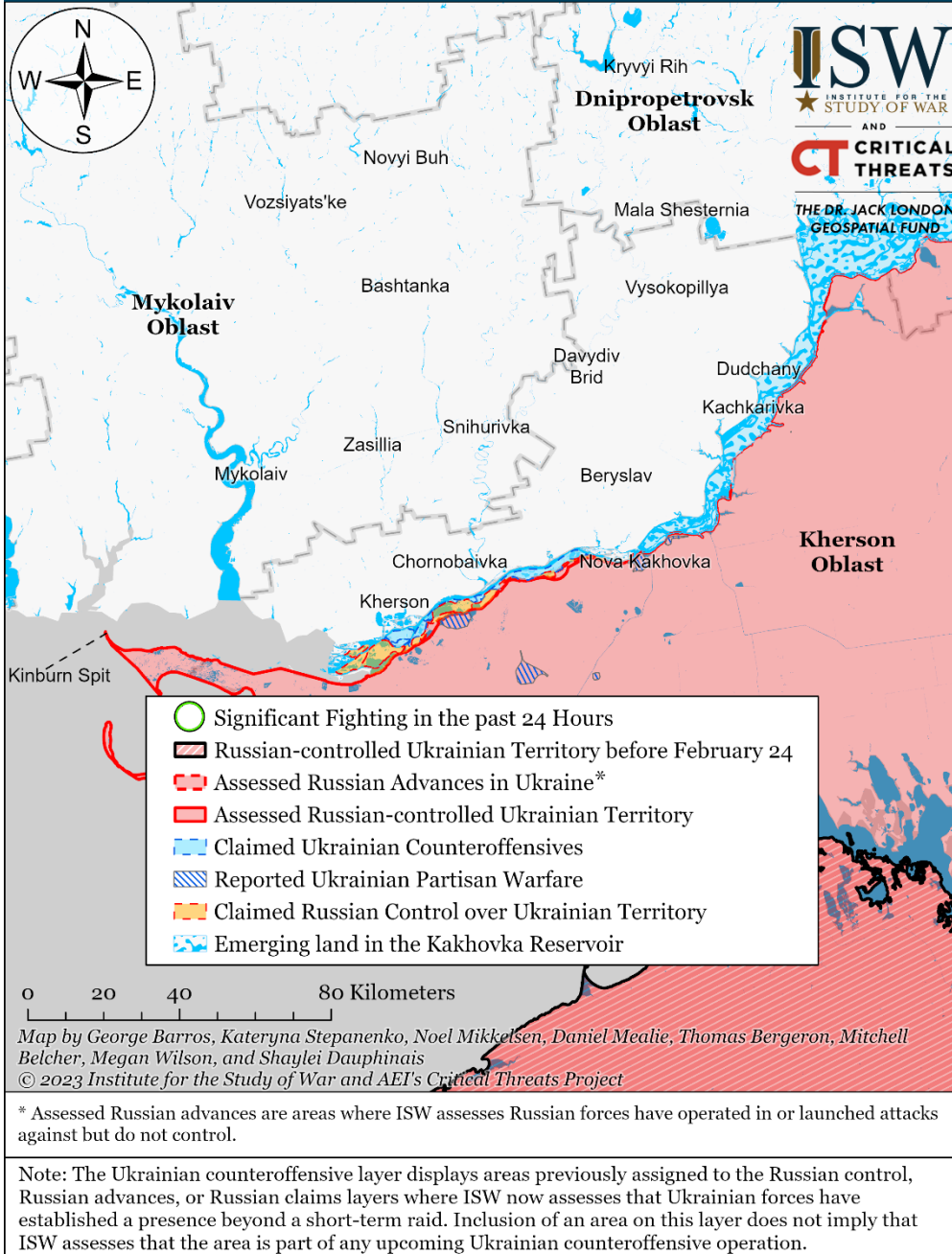
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
- Assessed Russian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

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

Note: A Russian source claimed on November 17 that Russian forces advanced 700 to 800 meters in the directions of Robotyne and Kopani. A Russian source claimed on November 16 that Russian forces advanced 500 to 600 meters in the direction of Pyatykhatky.

Ukrainian forces continued operations on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast on November 20 and reportedly advanced. Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces expanded their zone of control in the western part of Krynky (30km northeast of Kherson City and 2km from the Dnipro River) and that fighting is ongoing near the settlement.[70] Geolocated footage published on November 20 shows that Russian forces continue TOS-1A thermobaric artillery strikes on Ukrainian forces operating near Krynky.[71] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked in the direction of Poyma (12km east of Kherson City and 4km from the Dnipro River) and Pishchanivka (13km east of Kherson City and 3km from the Dnipro River).[72]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of November 20, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

A Russian federal subject (region) and occupation officials are reportedly planning to work together to provide drones to Russian forces. Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) head Leonid Pasechnik claimed

on November 20 that he met with a delegation from the Sakha Republic and discussed military cooperation, including drone development and assembly.[73]

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

Nothing significant to report.

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)

A Ukrainian official reported that Ukraine successfully returned 45 Ukrainian children whom Russian authorities forcibly deported to Russia in the past six months. Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Reintegration Iryna Vereshchuk stated that 45 Ukrainian children from occupied areas of Ukraine have returned to Ukraine in the past six months as of mid-November.[74]

Kremlin-affiliated organizations continue to establish patronage networks in areas of occupied Ukraine. The Kherson Oblast occupation administration stated on November 20 that the “People’s Program” of the Kremlin-affiliated United Russia political party is building social infrastructure facilities in occupied Skadovsk Raion, Kherson Oblast, including in Mykhailivka, Shyrokye, and Prymorske.[75]

Russian occupation authorities continue efforts to indoctrinate Ukrainian schoolchildren in occupied Ukraine with Russian national and cultural identities. Ukrainian Mariupol Mayor Advisor Petro Andryushenko reported that the Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) Ministry of Education and Science held a webinar on November 15 in conjunction with the Kremlin-funded pseudo-volunteer “Movement of the First” youth organization for heads of educational organizations and municipal education departments on the topic of “military-patriotic education of children.”[76] The webinar reportedly discussed how to increase the effectiveness of military-patriotic education and the civil-patriotic education of schoolchildren through sports and paramilitary activities.

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) Director Sergei Naryshkin reiterated Kremlin narratives on November 20 about allegations of the West’s control over Ukraine, the failures of Ukraine’s counteroffensive, and Ukrainian “Nazism.”[77]

Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Maria Zakharova reiterated Kremlin narratives on November 20 about Western-orchestrated “color revolutions” in Ukraine, the West’s control over Ukrainian policy, Ukraine’s lack of state independence, and Ukrainian repression of human rights.[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)

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko met with the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Secretary General Imangali Tasmagambetov in Minsk on November 20. Lukashenko and Tasmagambetov discussed resolving political issues within the post-Soviet space and preparations for the upcoming CSTO Council of Ministers meeting in Minsk.[79]

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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[1] <https://vnk dot fi/en/-/government-decides-to-close-the-border-in-southeast-finland> ; <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/finland-closes-russia-border-posts-after-days-asylum-inflows-2023-11-17/> ; <https://yle dot fi/a/74-20060816>

[2] <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-67420564>

[3] <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/finland-closes-russia-border-posts-after-days-asylum-inflows-2023-11-17/> ; <https://vnk dot fi/en/-/government-decides-to-close-the-border-in-southeast-finland>

[4] <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/finland-closes-russia-border-posts-after-days-asylum-inflows-2023-11-17/>

[5] <https://www.iltalehti dot fi/politiikka/a/598ca925-3dd9-4fb5-a87b-7e5051115c6c> ; <https://t.me/astrapress/42633>

[6] <https://vnk dot fi/en/-/government-decides-to-close-the-border-in-southeast-finland> ; <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-67420564>

[7] <https://www.svoboda.org/a/finskiy-nachaljnik-kpp-pogranichni-ri-vyvolknuli-migrantov-za-shlagbaum-/32691017.html>

[8] <https://tass dot ru/politika/19314451>

[9] <https://tass dot ru/politika/19329051>

[10] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russia-review-october-20-%E2%80%93-november-9-2021>

[11] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russia-review-october-20-%E2%80%93-november-9-2021>

- [12] <https://tass dot ru/politika/17444055>
- [13] https://mid dot ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1861613/
- [14] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-november-19-2023>
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