

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, November 21, 2023

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November 21, 2023, 7:15pm ET

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

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

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

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 2:30pm ET on November 21. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the November 22 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian and Russian forces continue to conduct offensive operations in eastern and southern Ukraine despite rainy and snowy weather conditions. Ukrainian Kherson Oblast Military Administration Advisor Serhiy Khlan stated on November 20 that Russian shelling of the west (right) bank of Kherson Oblast had decreased due to poor weather conditions.[1] Ukrainian 14th Mechanized Brigade Spokesperson Nadiya Zamryha stated on November 21 that Russian forces continue to conduct assaults in the Kupyansk direction despite the snow and frost.[2] Zamryha added that the number of Russian attacks will likely decrease due to weather conditions but that Russian forces will not stop offensive operations completely. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky emphasized the need to strengthen Ukrainian capabilities before the winter period during a meeting with US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin on November 20.[3] Russian milbloggers claimed on November 20 and 21 that both Russian and Ukrainian forces are struggling to operate drones, including for artillery fire adjustment, in the poor weather conditions throughout the front.[4] Russian milbloggers also claimed that muddy conditions are complicating vehicle movements but that both Ukrainian and Russian forces continue to maneuver and operate in all directions.[5] ISW continues to assess that freezing weather conditions during the winter will likely prompt the resumption of more active combat operations, and ongoing rainy weather is unlikely to halt Ukrainian or Russian attacks.

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Russian officials are struggling to subdue Russian hysteria around Ukrainian operations in the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu addressed the Russian MoD Collegium on November 21 and claimed that Russian forces prevented all Ukrainian attempts to conduct successful "amphibious operations in the Kherson direction." [6] Shoigu further claimed that Russian forces are inflicting "colossal" losses on Ukrainian forces.[7] Shoigu's statement is likely an attempt to downplay some Russian milbloggers' concerns over Russia's inability to decisively repel Ukrainian attacks on

the east bank of the Dnipro River but is unlikely to calm the ever-growing complaints in the Russian information space.

Russian milbloggers continue to acknowledge a Ukrainian presence in the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast and complain that Russian forces are unable to suppress Ukrainian operations in the area.[8] A Russian milblogger claimed on November 21 that Ukrainian forces killed an entire Russian assault group near Krynky (30km northeast of Kherson City and 2km from the Dnipro River).[9] A Russian insider source claimed on November 17 that a Ukrainian strike killed 76 Russian personnel in the 1st Battalion of the 35th Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st Combined Arms Army, Central Military District) attempting to conduct a “distraction maneuver” in Skadovskyi Raion, east bank Kherson Oblast on November 10.[10] A Russian soldier reportedly in the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet) operating near Krynky claimed in a video amplified on November 21 that the Russian military is forcing personnel who are still recovering from wounds to conduct assaults and that there are three Ukrainian drones for each Russian soldier operating in the Krynky area.[11] A Russian milblogger published a letter purportedly from a Russian soldier operating near Krynky on November 21 who claimed that Russian forces in the Krynky area lack reconnaissance drones, slowing their movements and putting them at risk of Ukrainian attacks.[12] The purported Russian soldier claimed that Russian forces in the Krynky area also lacked fire support because artillery and mortar units quickly changed locations after firing “a few shots” in order to evade counterbattery fire.[13] The Russian soldier claimed that his unit has practically no interaction with other Russian units operating nearby and that the Russian command headquarters in the Kherson direction devises unsuccessful plans because the headquarters receives incorrect and delayed information.[14] The Russian soldier also claimed that the Russian command in the Kherson direction had failed to implement changes resulting in increased Ukrainian attacks.[15] A milblogger claimed that some Russian Telegram channels are unsuccessfully attempting to focus criticism of Russian operations in the Kherson direction toward Russian “Dnepr” Grouping of Forces Commander Colonel General Mikhail Teplinsky.[16] The milbloggers do not appear to be responding to Shoigu’s claims nor has ISW observed any significant changes in Kherson Oblast that would prompt these milblogger complaints.

Russian forces conducted a series of missile and drone strikes overnight on November 20-21 and on November 21 targeting port and civilian infrastructure, including a hospital in Donetsk Oblast. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched 10 Shahed-131/136 drones from Primorsko-Akhtarsk; one Iskander-K ballistic missile from Dzhankoi, occupied Crimea; and four S-300 missiles in the Donetsk direction on the night of November 20-21.[17] Ukrainian forces shot down nine Shahed drones and the Iskander missile.[18] Ukrainian officials reported that the overnight Russian strike hit the civilian Central City Hospital in Selydove, Donetsk Oblast; the Kotlyarevska mine in Novohrodivka, Donetsk Oblast; and other civil infrastructure.[19] Ukrainian military officials also reported that Russian forces also launched an unspecified number of Kh-31P medium-range supersonic anti-radiation missiles on November 21, which struck port infrastructure and administrative buildings in Odesa City and Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi Raion, Odesa Oblast.[20]

US National Security Council Spokesperson John Kirby reported on November 21 that the Wagner Group is preparing to provide an air defense system to either Iranian-backed Lebanese Hezbollah or Iran.[21] Kirby stated that the Wagner Group would provide the system to either Lebanese Hezbollah or Iran under the Russian government’s direction but did not specify the origin or type of system.[22] ISW previously observed Russian claims that the Russian

MoD is using the Syrian government's agreements to supply weapons to Lebanese Hezbollah to subsume the remnants of the Wagner Group in Syria and seize their air defense systems.[23]

Imprisoned ardent nationalist and former Russian officer Igor Girkin's presidential campaign announcement has generated some discourse in the Russian information space, but most Russian milbloggers refrained from discussing Girkin's campaign likely due to self-censorship. A Russian milblogger who previously amplified praise of Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) Head Alexander Bortnikov and Foreign Intelligence Service (FSB) Head Alexander Bastrykin praised Girkin's decision to run in the 2024 Russian presidential campaign.[24] The milblogger claimed that Girkin will not become president but that he may become a "[bright energetic figure] in the Russian political arena" who at best could galvanize a new healthy political opposition within Russia, but that Girkin's decision to run is at minimum interesting.[25] Another milblogger who has been critical of the Russian conduct of the war amplified Girkin's campaign announcement.[26] Mainstream Russian milbloggers have largely not acknowledged Girkin since the arrest of Girkin and Andrei Kurshin, the "Moscow Calling" Telegram channel administrator who frequently amplified Girkin's complaints, on July 21 and August 31 respectively, and are likely self-censoring to avoid a similar fate.[27] Girkin's presidential platform may provide him a chance to reenter the broader Russian information space. Girkin's wife, Miroslava Reginskaya, also acknowledged Girkin's presidential campaign announcement on November 21 and stated that she supports Girkin as his wife but that she has her own goals, including freeing Girkin from prison and supporting Russian frontline soldiers in Donbas.[28] Reginskaya's response likely reflects the risk associated with opposing Russian President Vladimir Putin and danger to her ability to secure Girkin's release if she maintains a strong association with this opposition.

Washington, D.C.-based analytics company Gallup found that Russian society's confidence in the Russian military has marginally decreased in 2023. *Gallup* observed that 75 percent of Russians interviewed in the summer of 2023 expressed confidence in the Russian military compared to 80 percent of Russians who expressed a similar opinion in the early months of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine.[29] *Gallup* added that Russians' confidence in the police, financial institutions, and the judicial system has increased, however – making confidence in the Russian military the only observed decline in public trust among all surveyed age, gender, and financial status groups. *Gallup* concluded that the root of Russians' waning faith may be a result of the growing disconnect between the perception of the Russian military and the political leadership, noting that confidence in the Russian military remained at around 90 percent among Russians who approve of their political leadership but decreased to 40 percent among Russians who disapprove of the Russian political leadership – the lowest approval rate since 2006. *Gallup* noted that overall approval of leadership in Russia remained high and stable at 68 percent, which is on par with the 66 percent approval rate in 2022. *Gallup* stated that the survey indicates that support for the Russian military is still high despite the five percent decline. ISW has observed some Russian milbloggers and ultranationalists express low confidence in Russian military leadership throughout the full-scale invasion, which may have impacted how certain Russians who closely monitor the progress of the war feel about trusting the Russian military.

German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius announced a new military aid package to Ukraine during a visit to Kyiv on November 21. Pistorius announced that the package valued at 1.3 billion euros includes four IRIS-T SLM air defense systems; 20,000 155mm artillery shells, and anti-tank mines.[30]

The Armenian Ministry of Defense (MoD) denied Russian allegations that Armenia is planning to supply Ukraine with weapons. Russian sources have recently alleged that Armenia is planning to provide Ukraine with missiles and missile launchers, and Armenian MoD Spokesperson Aram Torosyan officially denied these claims on November 21.[31]

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev accused the West of destabilizing the South Caucasus region by supplying weapons to Armenia. Aliyev claimed at the “Decolonization: Women’s Empowerment and Development” international conference in Baku on November 21 that France is arming Armenia and that this is destabilizing the South Caucasus, “encourag[ing] revanchist forces in Armenia,” and “prepar[ing] the ground for the start of new wars in [the] region.”[32] Russian sources have also recently alleged that France supplied Armenia with ACMAT Bastion armored personnel carriers, which Ukraine had rejected due to the vehicles’ deficiencies.[33] Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan previously stated on November 18 that he believes that Azerbaijan’s rhetoric indicates that Azerbaijan is organizing a new round of military activity against Armenia.[34]

A former Russian Investigative Committee departmental head who was serving sentences for accepting bribes from the Russian mafia died in prison on the night of November 20-21, allegedly by suicide. *BBC Russia* reported on November 21 that Russian authorities found the former head of the Department of Interdepartmental Cooperation and Internal Security of the Russian Investigative Committee, Mikhail Maksimenko, dead in a prison colony.[35] A Russian law enforcement source told Russian state outlet *TASS* that authorities found Maksimenko’s body in a storage room in Correctional Colony 11 in Bor, Nizhny Novgorod Oblast.[36] Russian state outlet *RBK* reported that a source close to the Russian Federal Penitentiary Service stated that Maksimenko committed suicide on the night of November 20-21 in the psychiatric hospital in which he was receiving treatment following a previous suicide attempt.[37] Russian authorities sentenced Maksimenko to 13 years in prison in April 2018 for accepting a \$500,000 bribe in return for his assistance in the release of Andrei Kochuykov, an assistant to Russian mafia boss Zakhary Kalashov.[38] Russian authorities also sentenced Maksimenko to 14 years in prison in March 2020 for accepting a one million dollar bribe from Russian businessman Dmitry Smychkovsky, who was also working to release Kochuykov.[39] A member of Russia’s Presidential Human Rights Council, Yeva Merkachyova, stated that Maksimenko’s death was “strange” and that Maksimenko had previously told her that he would not commit suicide under any circumstances.[40] A Russian insider source claimed that Maksimenko had recently filed a petition to serve the remainder of his sentence in a correctional labor camp but that the decision-making commission instead issued a penalty on November 20 that would deny his request.[41]

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian and Russian forces continue to conduct offensive operations in eastern and southern Ukraine despite rainy and snowy weather conditions.**
- **The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Russian officials are struggling to subdue Russian hysteria around Ukrainian operations in the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast.**

- **Russian forces conducted a series of missile and drone strikes overnight on November 20-21 and on November 21 targeting port and civilian infrastructure, including a hospital in Donetsk Oblast.**
- **US National Security Council Spokesperson John Kirby reported on November 21 that the Wagner Group is preparing to provide an air defense system to either Iranian-backed Lebanese Hezbollah or Iran.**
- **Imprisoned ardent nationalist and former Russian officer Igor Girkin's presidential campaign announcement has generated some discourse in the Russian information space, but most Russian milbloggers refrained from discussing Girkin's campaign likely due to self-censorship.**
- **Washington, D.C.-based analytics company Gallup found that Russian society's confidence in the Russian military has marginally decreased in 2023.**
- **German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius announced a new military aid package to Ukraine during a visit to Kyiv on November 21.**
- **The Armenian Ministry of Defense (MoD) denied Russian allegations that Armenia is planning to supply Ukraine with weapons.**
- **Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev accused the West of destabilizing the South Caucasus region by supplying weapons to Armenia.**
- **A former Russian Investigative Committee departmental head who was serving sentences for accepting bribes from the Russian mafia died in prison on the night of November 20-21, allegedly by suicide.**
- **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 on November 21 and advanced in some areas.**
- **Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu addressed the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) Collegium on November 21 and announced that the Russian MoD is increasing its military training efforts across Russia.**
- **US Department of State Spokesperson Matthew Miller commented on November 20 about a report that found that Russian officials in collaborations with Belarusian officials transported more than 2,400 Ukrainian children between ages six and 17 to Belarus.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of November 21, 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

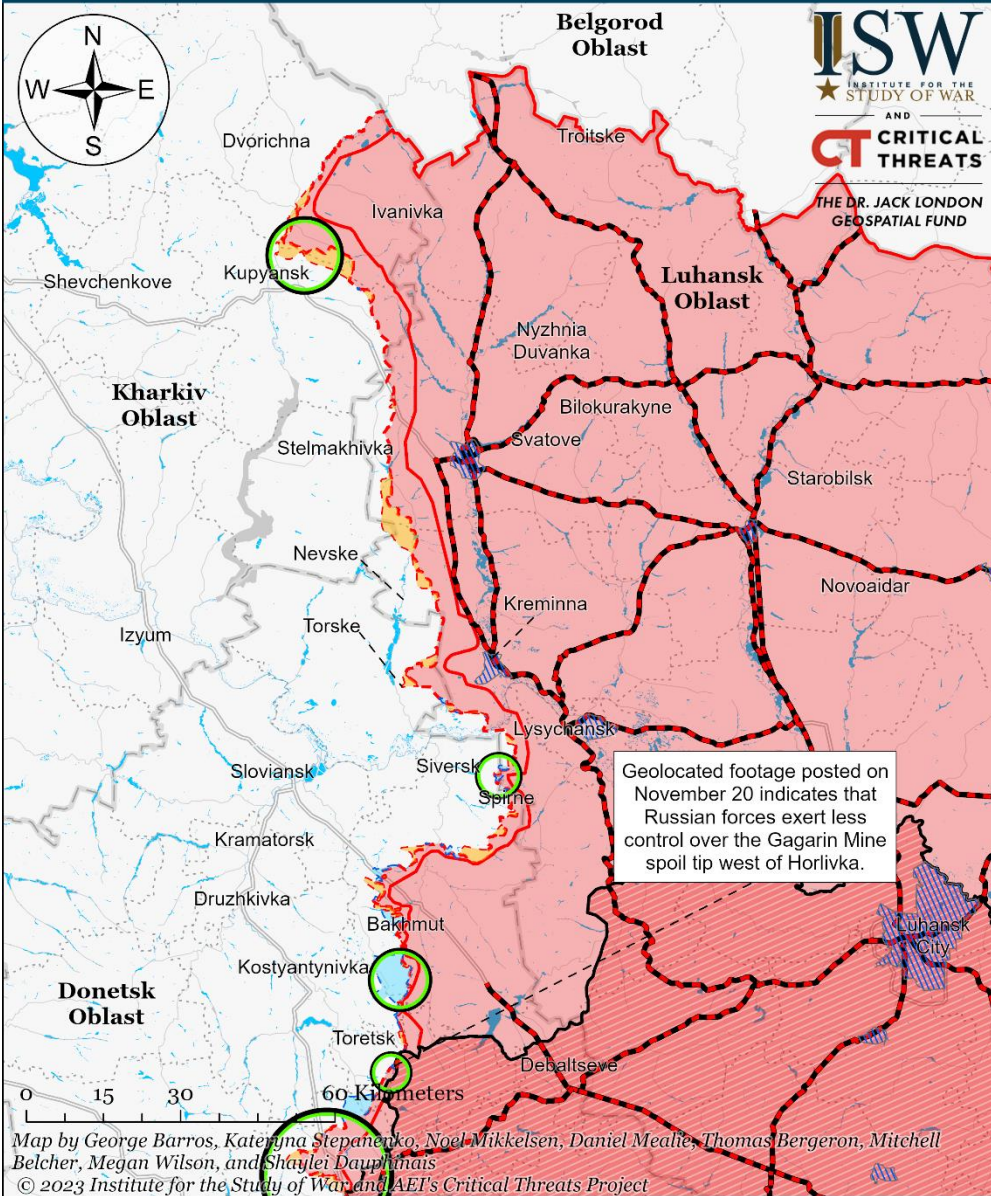
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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 conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances on November 21. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked in the Kupyansk direction near Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk) and east of Petropavlivka (7km east of Kupaynsk), and in the Lyman direction near Siversk (18km southwest of Kreminna).[42] Russian sources claimed that elements of the Chechen “Akhmat” Spetsnaz forces are operating in the forest area near Kreminna and elsewhere in the Lyman direction.[43] Ukrainian Ground Forces Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Volodymyr Fityo stated on November 20 that Russian forces are increasingly launching glide bombs in the Lyman direction.[44] Ukrainian Ground Forces Commander Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi and Ukrainian 14th Mechanized Brigade Spokesperson Nadiya Zamryha stated on November 20 and 21 that Russian forces continue to use “Storm-Z” and “Storm-V” units consisting of convict recruits and punished Russian servicemen in the Kupyansk direction and other directions in Ukraine.[45] Syrskyi also stated on November 20 that Russian forces are deploying reserves and regrouping in the Lyman direction in preparation for the continuation of offensive activities.[46] Russian milbloggers also claimed that Russian forces are accumulating strength and are intensifying offensive operations in the Kupyansk direction.[47]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on November 21. The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked in the Kupayansk direction near Zahoruykivka (a settlement 16km east of Kupyansk that was disincorporated in the 1980s) and in the Lyman direction near Kreminna and Kuzmyne (3km southwest of Kreminna).[48] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near the Serebryanske forest area (10km southwest of Kreminna), where another Russian milblogger claimed there are ongoing local engagements.[49]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of November 21, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Meale, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Megan Wilson, and Shaylei Dauphinais
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- 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)

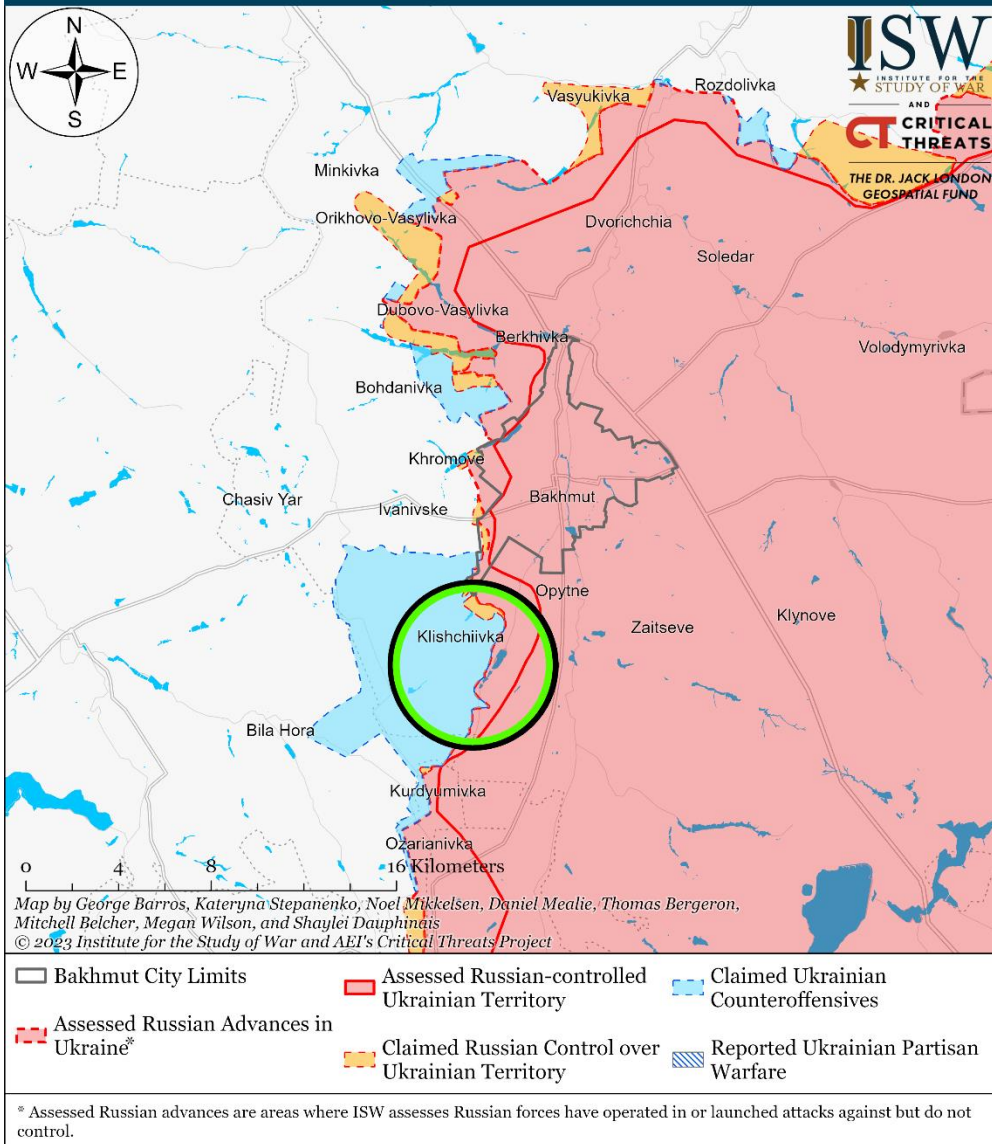
Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut on November 21 and did not make any claimed or confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued assault actions south of Bakhmut.[50] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) and Kurdyumivka (12km southwest of Bakhmut).[51]

Russian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut on November 21 and reportedly recently advanced. A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces advanced near the Berkhivka Reservoir (just north of Bakhmut) and in Klishchiivka on November 20.[52] The Ukrainian General Staff reported on November 21 that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Klishchiivka and Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).[53] Ukrainian Ground Forces Commander Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskiy stated on November 21 that Russian forces continue efforts to push Ukrainian forces from positions near Klishchiivka.[54]

Ukrainian forces did not conduct any confirmed or claimed ground attacks northwest of Horlivka on November 21. A Russian milblogger claimed that the Russian 132nd Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People’s Republic [DNR] Army Corps) and 238th Artillery Brigade (8th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) defended against recent Ukrainian attacks in the area.[55]

Russian forces conducted limited offensive operations northwest of Horlivka on November 21 but did not advance. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks east of Pivdenne (immediately northwest of Horlivka and 24km southwest of Bakhmut).[56]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of November 21, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

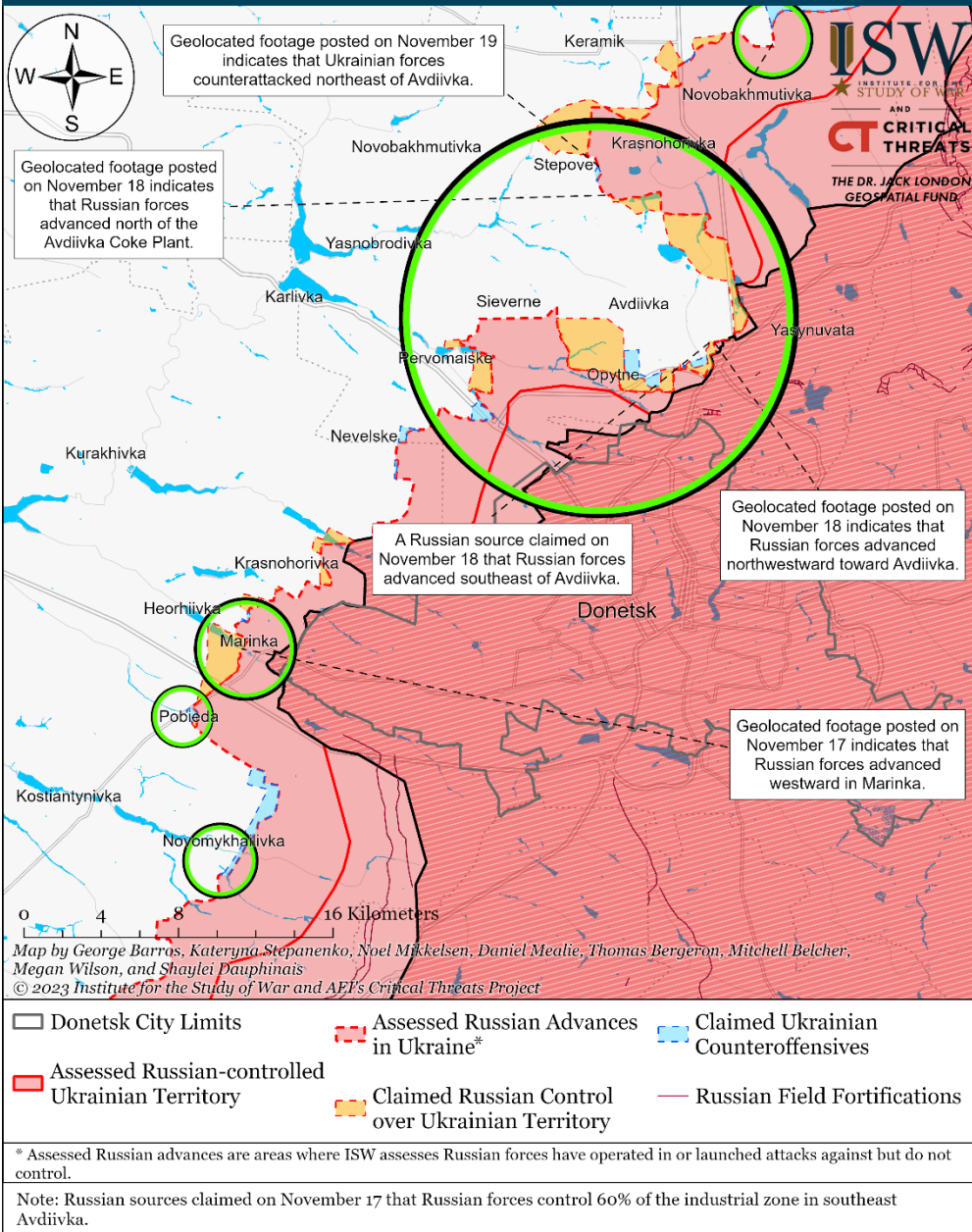


Russian forces continued offensive operations near Avdiivka on November 21 and reportedly advanced. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced north of Krasnohorivka (5km north of Avdiivka) and in Stepove (5km northwest of Avdiivka) and reiterated recent claims that Ukrainian forces largely withdrew from Stepove, though ISW has still not observed visual confirmation of these claims.[57] Russian milbloggers also claimed that Russian forces advanced in the industrial zone southeast of Avdiivka and that fighting is ongoing near the Avdiivka Coke Plant to the northeast.[58] Another Russian milblogger claimed that fighting is ongoing near Novokalynove (10km northwest of Avdiivka).[59] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks east of Novobakhmutivka (10km northeast of Avdiivka) and near Stepove, Avdiivka, Sieverne (5km west of Avdiivka), and Pervomaiske (11km southwest of

Avdiivka).[60] Avdiivka Military Administration Head Vitaliy Barabash stated that Russian forces have increasingly been using vehicles to conduct assaults southeast of Avdiivka, where there is asphalt, while continuing to use infantry to attack on the flanks of Avdiivka, where there is soil.[61] Barabash noted that Russian forces are still attacking with considerably more infantry than vehicles in the area.

Ukrainian forces reportedly conducted offensive operations near Avdiivka but did not advance on November 21. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted an unsuccessful counterattack near the Yasynuvata-2 train station near the industrial zone southeast of Avdiivka.[62]

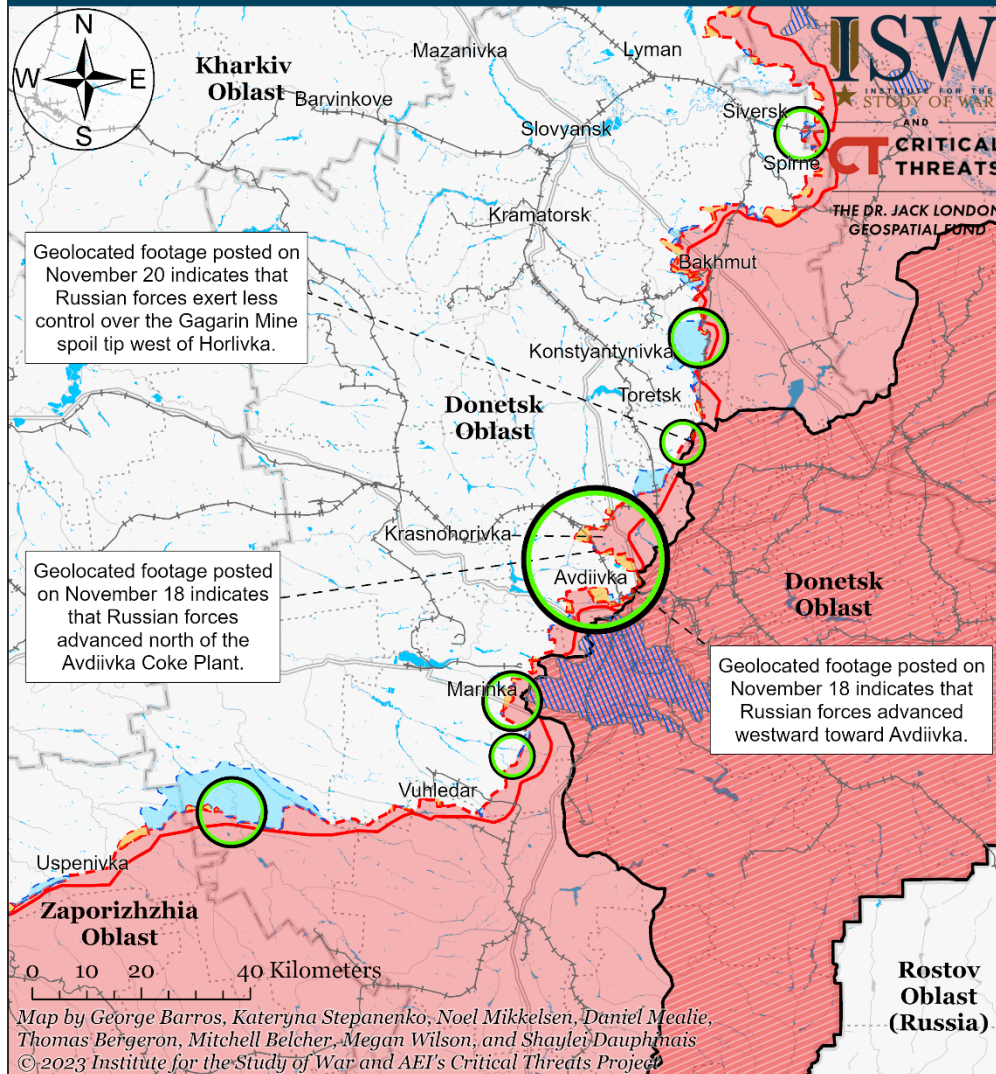
Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of November 21, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces continued offensive operations west and southwest of Donetsk City on November 21 but did not advance. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful ground attacks near Marinka (immediately west of Donetsk City), Pobieda (5km southwest of Donetsk City), and Novomykhailivka (25km southwest of Donetsk City).[63]

Ukrainian forces did not conduct any confirmed or claimed ground attacks west or southwest of Donetsk City on November 21.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of November 21, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Megan Wilson, and Shayley Dauphinais © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

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

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

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

The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area northwest of Pryyutne (16km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) on November 21.[64]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances on November 21. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked west of Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka).[65] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces attacked west of Staromayorske, north of Pryyutne, and near Urozhaine (9km south of Velyka Novosilka).[66] A Russian milblogger claimed that positional battles are ongoing near Staromayorske and Urozhaine.[67]

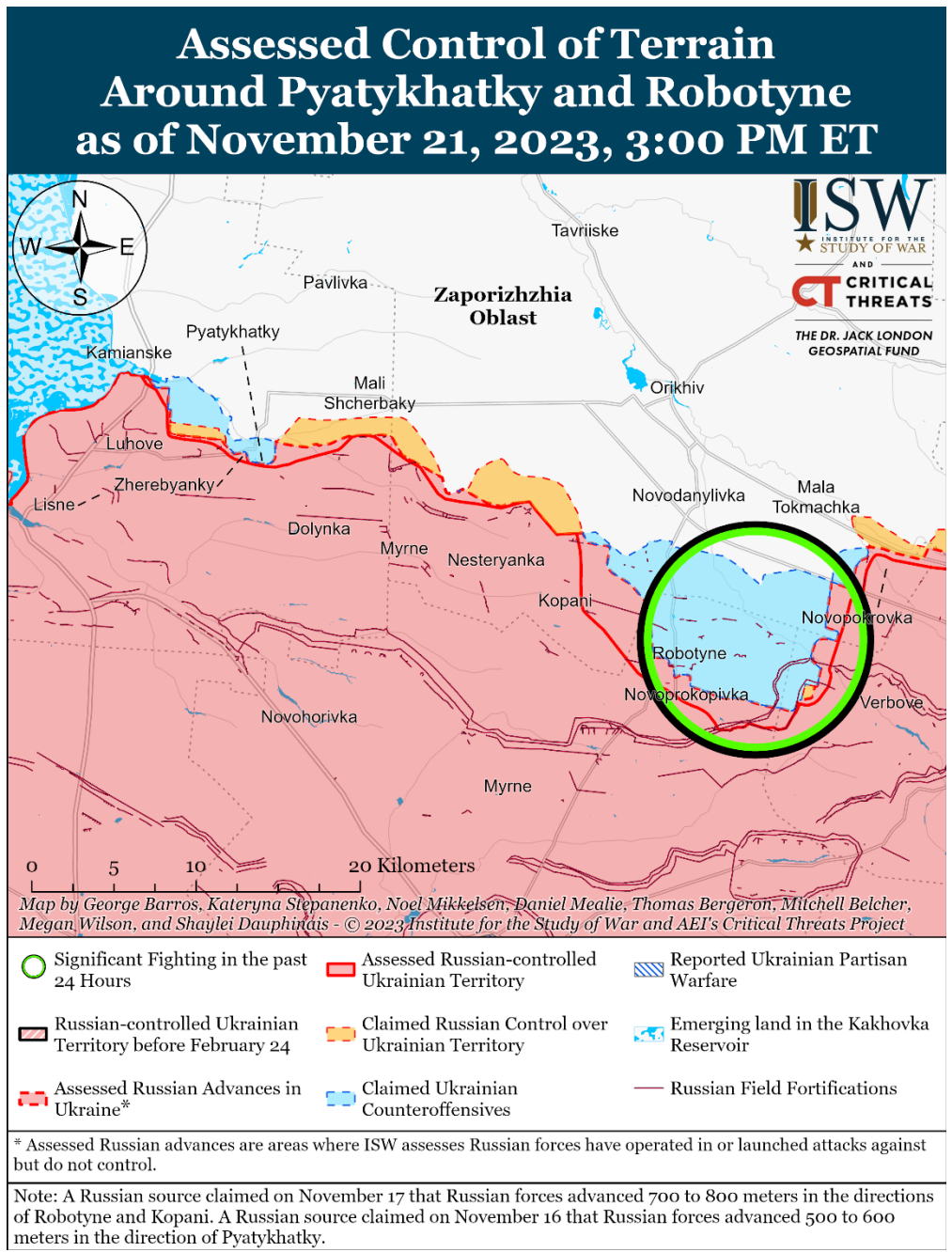
Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of November 21, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



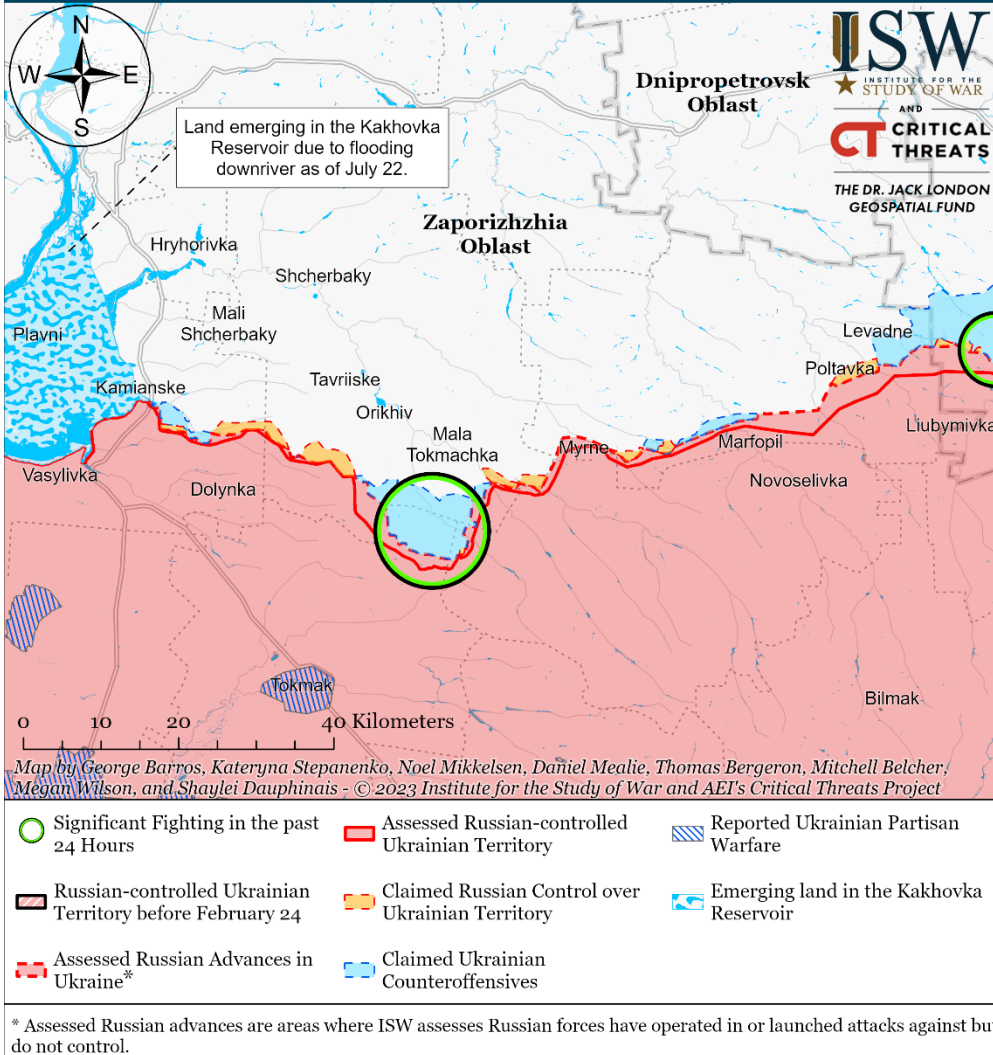
Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on November 21. Russian milbloggers claimed on November 20 and 21 that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked east of Robotyne and near Verbove (9km east of Robotyne) and Novoprokopivka (2km south of Robotyne).[68]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast but did not make any confirmed gains on November 21. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Robotyne and Kamianske (36km northwest of Robotyne) and northwest of Verbove.[69] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces advanced in the direction of Novofedorivka (15km northeast of Robotyne) and near Robotyne, Novoprokopivka, and

Verbove.[70] A Russian milblogger claimed on November 20 that elements of the Russian 70th Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) repelled Ukrainian attacks near Robotyne and Novoprokopivka.[71]



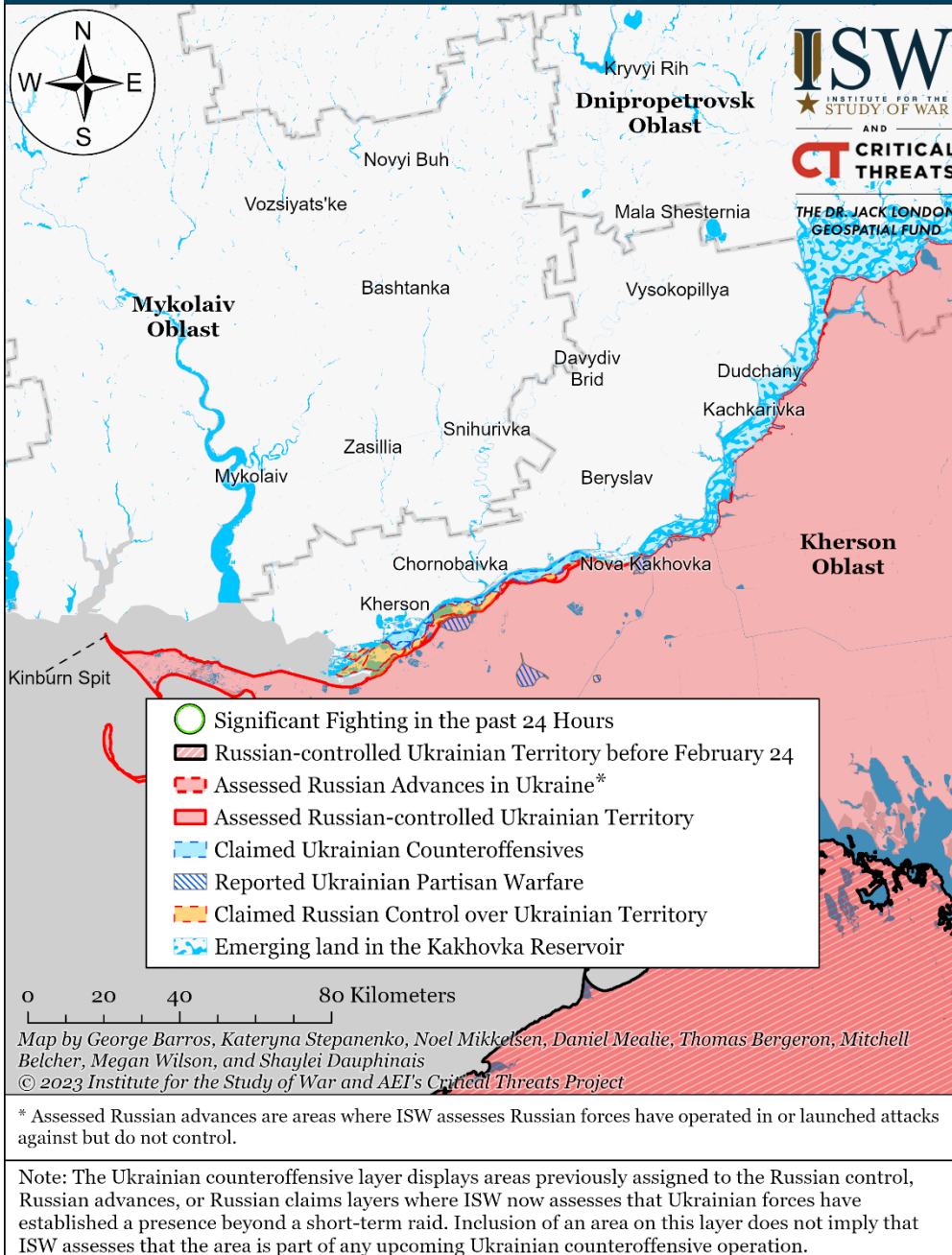
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of November 21, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Ukrainian forces continued operations on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast and reportedly advanced on November 21. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked from Krynky (30km northeast of Kherson Oblast and 2km from the Dnipro River) and entered the forest area near the settlement.[72] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continue to hold positions in Krynky and near the Antonivsky Road Bridge and the small railway bridge six kilometers east of the Antonivsky Bridge.[73]

Geolocated footage published on November 21 indicates that Russian forces advanced northeast of Krynky.[74] The Russian MoD reported that elements of the Russian 810th Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet) are operating in the Kherson direction.[75]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of November 21, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu addressed the Russian MoD Collegium on November 21 and announced that the Russian MoD is increasing its military training efforts across Russia. Shoigu

stated that military training centers will open in all Russian federal subjects (regions).[76] Shoigu claimed that nine Russian higher education institutions intend to open new military training centers, including one in occupied Luhansk Oblast, totaling 137 military training centers in Russia and occupied Ukraine.[77]

Shoigu also announced on November 21 that the Russian military intends to expand and modernize its naval capabilities. Shoigu claimed that the Russian military intends to equip the *Admiral Golovko* Admiral Gorshkov-class frigate with Zircon hypersonic cruise missile systems and equip three multi-purpose ships with Kalibr cruise missile systems.[78] Shoigu also announced that the Russian military will have over 40 carriers of long-range precision weapons by the end of 2023. Shoigu also claimed that the Russian military added two multi-purpose corvettes and a small missile ship to its navy and that Russia intends to construct three more small missile ships and one mine countermeasures vessel by the end of 2023.[79]

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

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu claimed at the Russian MoD Collegium on November 21 that the Russian defense industrial base (DIB) has increased its materiel deliveries to the Russian military. Shoigu claimed that Russian DIB increased its supply of missile and artillery armaments by 4.9 times, its supply of armored weapons by over three times, and its supply of drones by 16 times since the beginning of 2022.[80] Shoigu also claimed that the overall Russian supply of weapons increased by 12 times including the supply of high-precision long-range missiles increasing by five times in 2023.[81] Shoigu also claimed that the Russian military would increase the volume of weapons and equipment purchasing and repairs in accordance with an increased budget allocation in 2024.[82]

The Russian government is creating a register for all Russian companies involved in drone design and production.[83] Russian opposition outlet *SOTA* noted on November 21 the Russian government's announcement to create a register of all companies involved in drone design and production follows more reports of the Russian government investing more funds into domestic Shahed drone production.[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)

US Department of State Spokesperson Matthew Miller commented on November 20 about a report that found that Russian officials in collaboration with Belarusian officials transported more than 2,400 Ukrainian children between ages six and 17 to Belarus.[85] Miller added that Belarus is complicit in Russia's aggression against Ukraine and is not a "disinterested third country providing a safe haven for children in conflict." Miller stated that these transfers of Ukrainian children have disproportionately targeted vulnerable children, including purported orphans, children with disabilities, children from low-income families, and children who are family members of Ukrainian military personnel. Miller noted that the US has limited information on whether the children who are deported to Russia or Belarus are being exploited further but that the children remain highly vulnerable to human trafficking.

Russian officials continue to deport medically vulnerable Ukrainian children from occupied Ukrainian territories to Russia under the guise of medical treatment and rehabilitation. Kremlin-appointed Children’s Rights Commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova claimed that another group of 50 Ukrainian children from occupied Zaporizhia Oblast with respiratory, musculoskeletal, or gastrointestinal issues were transferred to a sanatorium resort in an unnamed children’s center in Krasnodar Krai, Russia.[86]

The United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (UNHRM) confirmed on November 21 that the Russian war in Ukraine has killed at least 10,000 civilians, over 560 of whom were children, since the start of the full-scale invasion in February 2022.[87] The UNHRM added that the war has injured over 18,500 civilians during the full-scale invasion. The UNHRM warned that the true number of civilian deaths could be “much higher.”

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu inflated Ukrainian losses in an attempt to portray Ukrainian forces as incompetent and Russian operations as effective. Shoigu claimed at the Russian MoD Collegium on November 21 that Ukrainian forces have lost over 13,700 personnel and about 1,800 weapons and equipment since the beginning of November 2023.[88] Russian officials have repeatedly inflated Ukrainian battlefield losses in order to portray Ukrainian military operations as ineffective.[89]

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 on November 21 that Kazakhstan’s Defense Minister Colonel General Ruslan Zhaksylykov arrived in Belarus to meet with Belarusian Defense Minister Lieutenant General Viktor Khrenin and signed a plan for military cooperation between Kazakhstan and Belarus for 2024.[90]

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.



[1] <https://www.facebook.com/sergey.khlan/posts/pfbid02i4FpoDvLPdvJQJGsdEA5mp1ssTbcR2awppJMj3WtyjxXrMCMbcEuJgRb31fizTVul>

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