

# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 18, 2023

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October 18, 2023, 5:45pm 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 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.

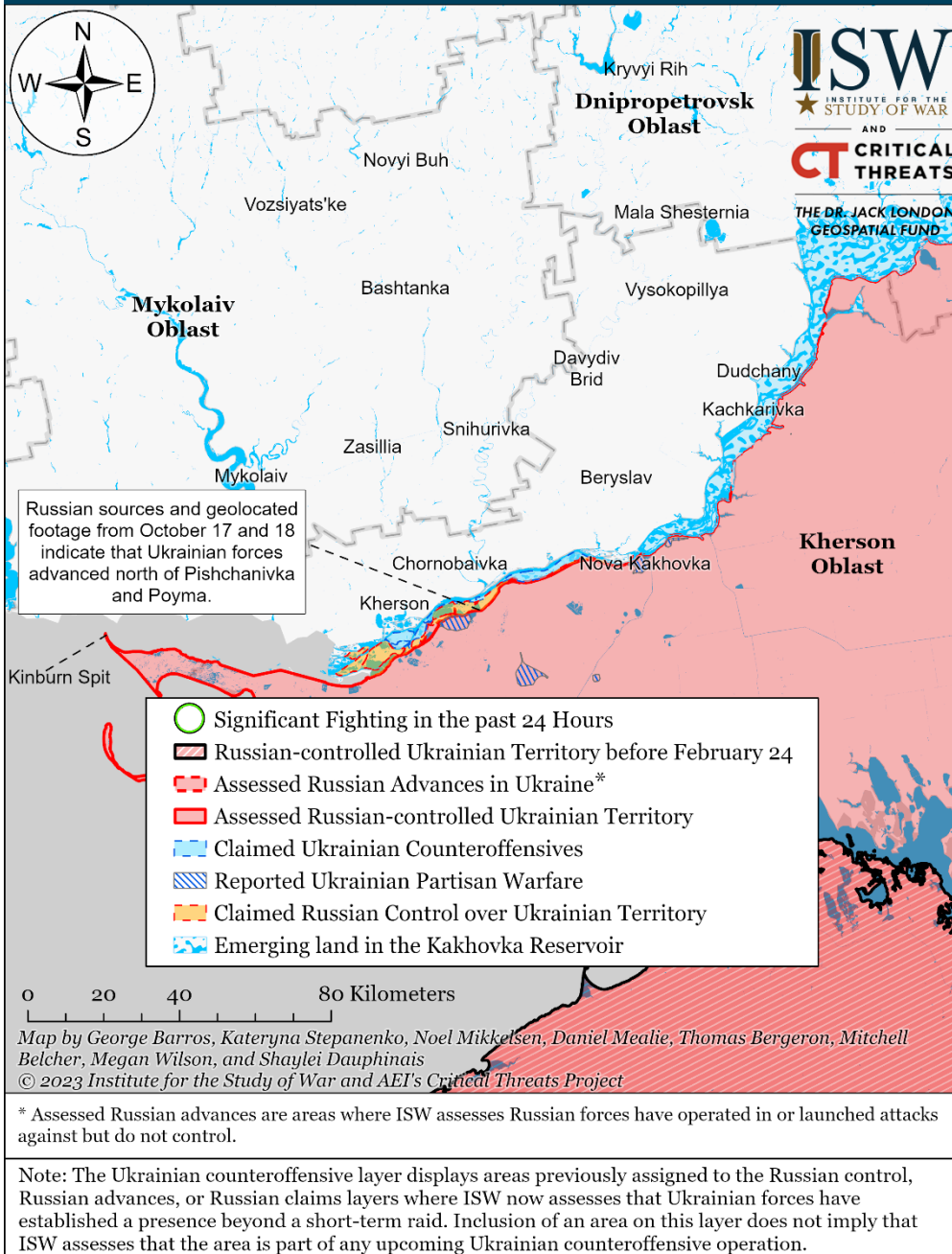
**Note: The data cut-off for this product was 1pm ET on October 18. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 19 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment. Russian sources claimed that likely company-sized elements of two Ukrainian naval infantry brigades conducted an assault across the Dnipro River onto the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast on October 17-18.** Geolocated footage published on October 18 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced north of Pishchanivka (14km east of Kherson City and 3km from the Dnipro River) and into Poyma (11km east of Kherson City and 4km from the Dnipro River).[1] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that two Ukrainian “assault groups” landed on the east bank of the Dnipro River and broke through initial Russian defenses, temporarily occupying all of Poyma and positions on the northern outskirts of Pishchanivka on the afternoon of October 17.[2] The milblogger later claimed that Russian forces pushed Ukrainian forces back from these positions towards the Dnipro River.[3] The milblogger claimed that a Ukrainian sabotage group is still operating in Pishchanivka as of the afternoon of October 18. The milblogger, however, suggested that Russian forces only maintain positions on the southern outskirts of the settlement. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) also acknowledged the Ukrainian operations, claiming that Russian forces stopped four Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance groups near Pidstepne (16km east of Kherson City) and Poyma.[4] Another prominent Russian milblogger also claimed that Ukrainian forces occupied Poyma on the night of October 17 to 18.[5]

**Russian sources expressed pronounced concern about ongoing Ukrainian activity on the east bank of Kherson Oblast and framed these activities as part of a potential larger Ukrainian operation.** The majority of Russian claims about developments on the east bank are largely single-sourced to one prominent Russian milblogger who has recently heavily focused his reporting on this section of the front.[6] Russian sources characterized the reported assaults as a Ukrainian effort to expand a “bridgehead” on the east bank and the initial stages of a larger offensive operation across the Dnipro River.[7] Russian President Vladimir Putin similarly described Ukrainian activity in Kherson Oblast as the “next counteroffensive” and continued his typical rhetorical line by painting all Ukrainian offensive operations as a failure.[8] The prominent Russian milblogger who is the basis for many of these claims has expressed concern about a Ukrainian offensive across the Dnipro River on and off throughout 2023 and escalated his warnings in late September 2023. The milblogger reacted to the reported assault on the night of October 17 to 18 by accusing the Russian MoD of not taking the threat of a Ukrainian crossing seriously.[9]

Russian concerns about the ability of Russian forces to repel a potential Ukrainian offensive operation across the Dnipro River may be partially connected to the condition of the Russian grouping of forces on the left bank. The Russian command has drawn relatively more elite units from the Kherson direction to support defensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast in recent months due to likely viewing Kherson as a quiet sector, and the current force composition in the area is likely relatively less combat effective.[10] Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Captain First Rank Nataliya Humenyuk stated on October 17 that Russian forces were still redeploying trained units from the Kherson direction to the Zaporizhia and eastern directions.[11] The Russian military may have recently redeployed elements of the 41st Combined Arms Army (Central Military District) and the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet) to the Kherson direction, however, but it is unclear where in Kherson Oblast elements of the 41st Combined Arms Army are currently deployed.[12] Ukrainian counteroffensive operations reportedly previously rendered the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade combat ineffective as of September 22.[13]

**ISW will not speculate on the scope and prospects of ongoing Ukrainian activity on the east bank of Kherson Oblast but does not assess that Ukrainian forces have created a bridgehead on the east bank of Kherson Oblast suitable for the further maneuver of sizeable mechanized forces at this time. However, it is noteworthy that prominent and generally reliable Russian sources are discussing Ukrainian activities on the east bank as occurring at a larger scale than previously documented tactical cross-river raids by Ukrainian forces. ISW will continue to monitor the area closely and assess control of terrain changes and Russian responses, in line with its standing policy of not forecasting Ukrainian actions.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of October 18, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



**Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in eastern and southern Ukraine and reportedly advanced near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast.** The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive actions south of Bakhmut and had partial success south of Robotyne.[14] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced near Klishchiivka, 5km southwest of Bakhmut.[15]

**Western media reported that the United States has thus far provided Ukraine with a limited number of ATACMS missiles.** *The Associated Press* reported on October 17 that an unnamed US official stated that the United States provided Ukraine with “fewer than a dozen” missiles “within the last few days.”[16] *The New York Times (NYT)* reported on October 18 that two unspecified Western officials stated that the United States sent “about 20” ATACMS to Ukraine.[17] Russian President Vladimir Putin stated at a press conference in Beijing on October 18 that the ATACMS are “fundamentally incapable of changing the situation on the frontline.”[18] The Kremlin does not view the provision of ATACMS to Ukraine as an escalatory step, and the United States has not crossed a Russian “red line” by providing Ukraine with these missiles. Ukraine will need additional ATACMS to sustain the operational effects of their use on the arrayment of Russian aviation assets and logistics.[19]

**Satellite imagery from October 17 suggests that the Ukrainian ATACMS strike on the Berdyansk airfield likely substantially damaged Russian aircraft and airfield infrastructure, but ISW cannot yet confirm the extent of the damage.** Several open-source intelligence analysts amplified satellite imagery of the Berdyansk airfield and suggested that it shows at least seven burned-out areas where satellite imagery previously showed various Russian helicopters, and additionally noted that many helicopters have since moved.[20] A Ukrainian reserve officer stated that prior to the strike, Russian forces had Mi-28, Mi-24, and Ka-52 helicopters at the airfield, and suggested that the extent of the damage is likely more widespread than depicted in preliminary satellite imagery.[21] Ukrainian military sources previously reported that the Ukrainian strike destroyed nine helicopters, one anti-aircraft missile launcher, special equipment, ammunition depots, and runway infrastructure, but ISW cannot fully confirm these Russian losses with available imagery at this time.[22]

**Russian President Vladimir Putin indicated his desire to deepen Russian-Chinese economic and political ties but did not announce any practical changes at the One Belt One Road International Forum in Beijing, China on October 18.** Putin stated that close Russian and Chinese foreign policy coordination is especially necessary in “current difficult conditions” and emphasized Russian and Chinese cooperation through multilateral formats including the One Belt One Road Initiative, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).[23] Putin claimed that economic cooperation between Russia and China is integral to strengthening Russian economic, technological, and financial sovereignty.[24] Putin notably did not emphasize Russian-Chinese security cooperation, possibly due to China’s reticence at the no-limits partnership that Russia wants to establish, as ISW has previously reported.[25] Putin also held bilateral talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping, and available Kremlin readouts of the meeting similarly stressed economic ties between Russia and China.[26] Putin’s visit to China and meeting with Xi does not appear to have resulted in any substantial change in the Chinese reticence to establish the Kremlin’s desired level of bilateral relationship or any breakthroughs in the degree of Chinese military support to Russia. Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov notably claimed on October 18 that almost all of Russia’s dual-use civilian drones come from China and stated that the Russian government aims to increase domestic civilian drone production to 41 percent by 2025.[27] ISW has previously observed reports that China often exports dual-use equipment to Russia, including civilian drones, which Russian forces can employ on the battlefield in Ukraine.[28]

## **Key Takeaways:**

- **Russian sources claimed that likely company-sized elements of two Ukrainian naval infantry brigades conducted an assault across the Dnipro River onto the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast on October 17-18.**
- **Russian sources expressed pronounced concern about ongoing Ukrainian activity on the east bank of Kherson Oblast and framed these activities as part of a potential larger Ukrainian operation.**
- **ISW will not speculate on the scope and prospects of ongoing Ukrainian activity on the east bank of Kherson Oblast but does not assess that Ukrainian forces have created a bridgehead on the east bank of Kherson Oblast suitable for the further maneuver of sizeable mechanized forces at this time.**
- **Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in eastern and southern Ukraine and reportedly advanced near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast.**
- **Western media reported that the US has thus far provided Ukraine with a limited number of ATACMS missiles, and the Kremlin issued a muted response to the provision of these systems**
- **Satellite imagery from October 17 suggests that the Ukrainian ATACMS strike on the Berdyansk airfield likely substantially damaged Russian aircraft and airfield infrastructure, but ISW cannot yet confirm the extent of the damage.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin indicated his desire to deepen Russian-Chinese economic and political ties but did not announce any practical changes at the One Belt One Road International Forum in Beijing, China on October 18.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, in the Avdiivka direction, southwest of Donetsk City, in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and advanced south of Avdiivka.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of October 18, 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 these Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict, Geneva Conventions, and 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
- 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 near Kupyansk on October 18 but did not make any confirmed advances. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced near Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk) on the night of October 17, although ISW has not observed evidence of this claim.[29] The Ukrainian General Staff reported on October 18 that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Synkivka, Ivanivka (19km southeast of Kupyansk), and Kyslivka (21km southeast of Kupyansk).[30] The United Kingdom Ministry of Defense (UK MoD) reported on October 18 that Russian offensive activity in the Kupyansk-Lyman direction has significantly increased in the past two weeks and that elements of the 6th Combined Arms Army and 1st Guards Tank Army (both of the Western Military District) and the newly-created 25th Combined Arms Army have been attacking with limited success on this front, consistent with ISW’s observations.[31]

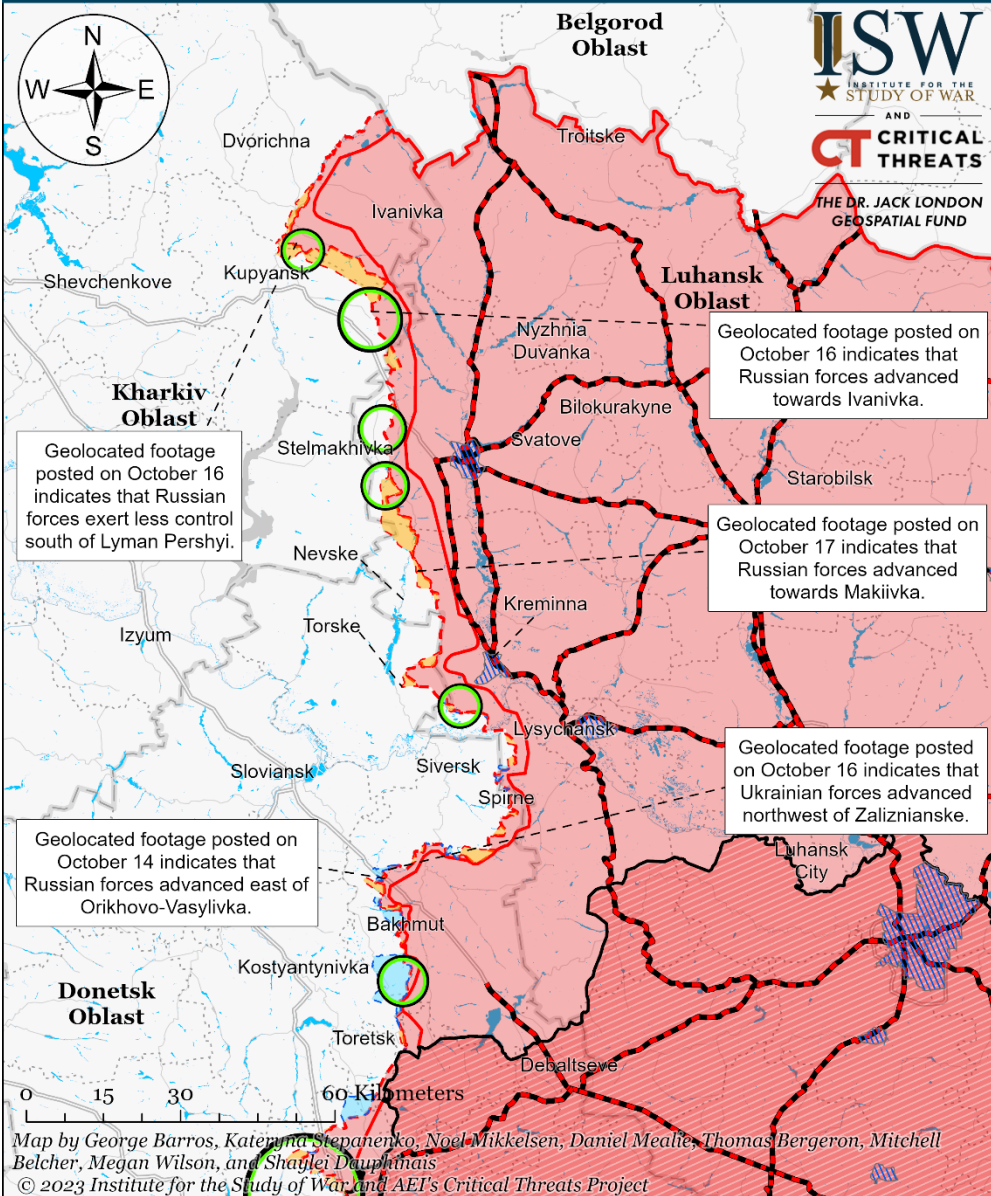
Russian sources claimed on October 18 that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful counterattacks near Kupyansk. The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Synkivka, Ivanivka, Pershotravneve (21km northeast of Kupyansk), and Orlyanka (22km east of Kupyansk).[32] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Tymkivka (18km east of Kupyansk).[33]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Svatove-Kreminna line on October 18 but did not make any confirmed advances. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced in the direction of Makiivka (20km southwest of Svatove) on the night of October 17, though ISW has not observed evidence of this claim.[34] A Russian news aggregator claimed on the night of October 17 that fighting was ongoing near Torske (14km west of Kreminna).[35] The Ukrainian General Staff reported on October 18 that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Makiivka.[36] Footage published on October 18 purportedly shows elements of the 88th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People's Republic Army Corps) operating near Spirne (25km south of Kreminna).[37] Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov posted footage on October 18 purportedly showing the Chechen “Amur” Group of the “Hunters” Akhmat Spetsnaz Detachment operating near the Serebryanske forest area (10km southwest of Kreminna).[38]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks along the Svatove-Kreminna line on October 18. The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Serhiivka (14km southwest of Svatove), and Dibrova (7km southwest of Kreminna).[39] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Nadiya (15km southwest of Svatove), Kuzmyne (3km southwest of Kreminna), and Shepylove (8km south of Kreminna).[40]



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of October 18, 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
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

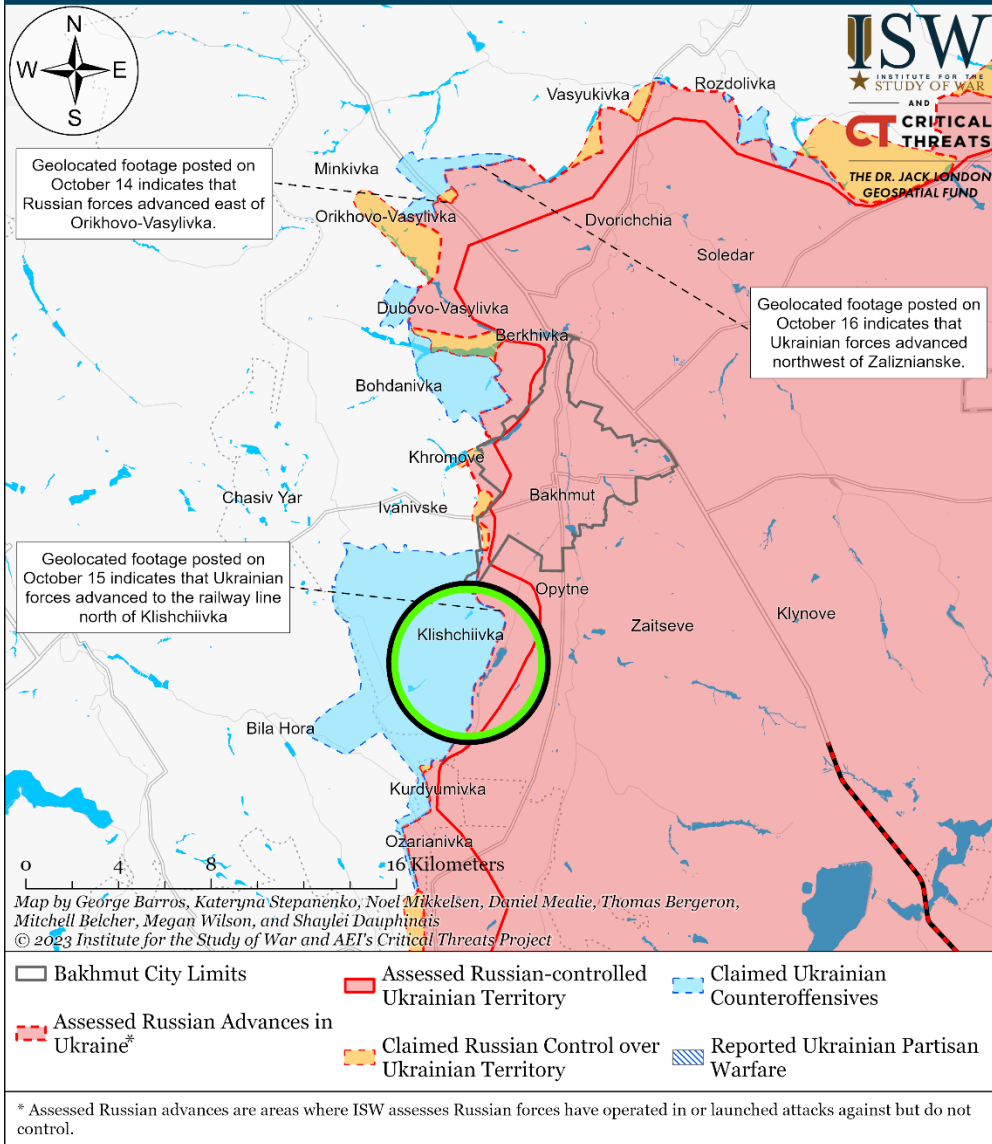
\* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

**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 ground attacks near Bakhmut on October 18 and reportedly advanced south of the city. Several Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces continued attacks toward the railway line near Klishchiivka (5km southwest of Bakhmut).[41] One milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces managed to advance northeast of Klishchiivka, and another milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces crossed the railway near a waste heap in the Klishchiivka area.[42] A Russian media aggregator seemingly refuted claims that Ukrainian forces advanced past the railway line, however, and reported that Russian forces are reliably defending the railway between Klishchiivka and Andriivka (8km southwest of Bakhmut).[43]

Russian forces continued limited and unsuccessful counterattacks near Bakhmut on October 18. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian troops repelled Russian attacks near Klishchiivka.[44] A Russian milblogger posted footage reportedly of the 83rd Air Assault (VDV) Brigade and Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR) 85th Motorized Rifle Brigade destroying Ukrainian equipment in the Bakhmut direction.[45]

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of October 18, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



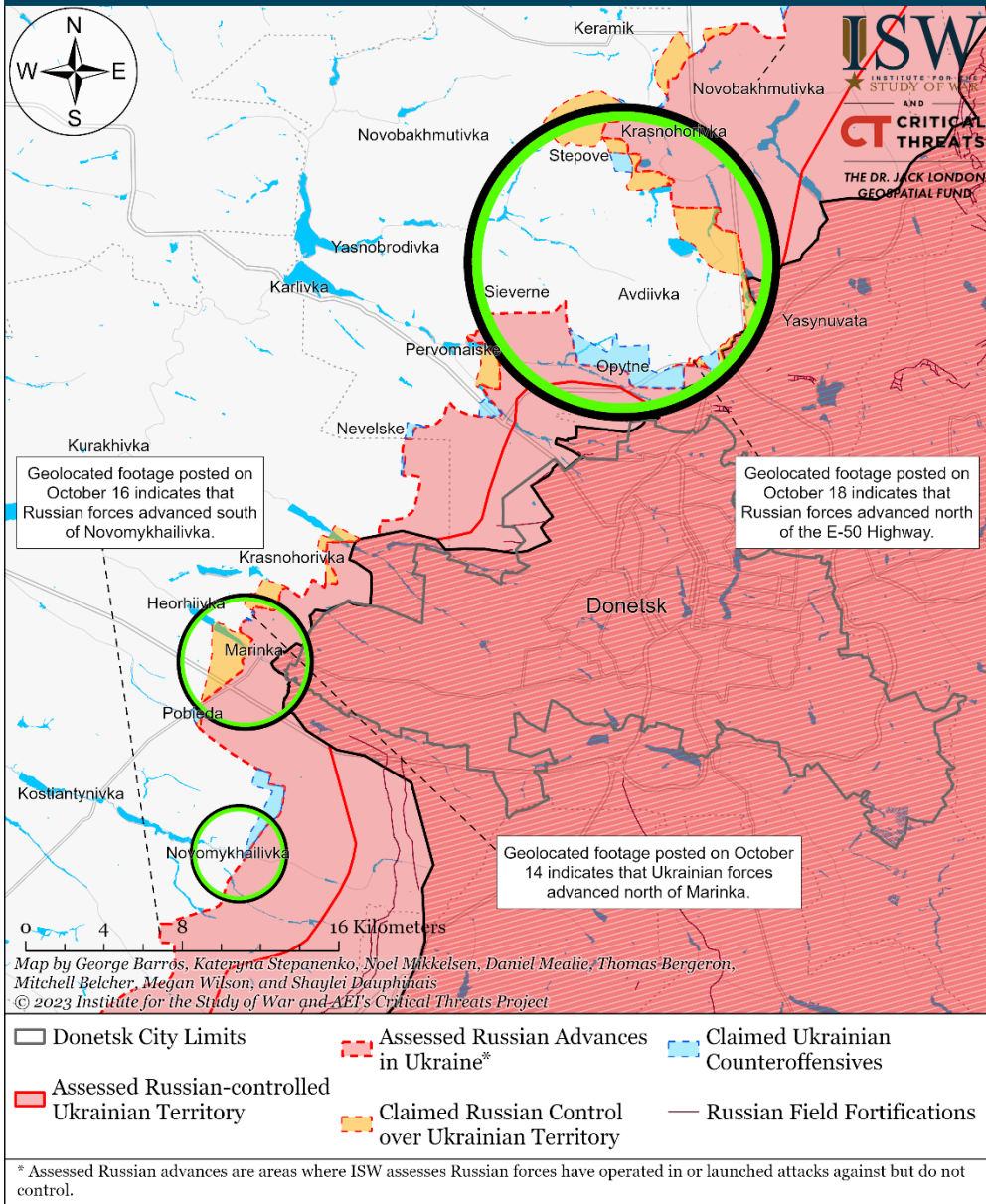
Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Avdiivka direction on October 18 and made confirmed advances. Geolocated footage from October 17 shows that Russian forces counterattacked Ukrainian positions just north of the E50 highway south of Avdiivka and advanced along the local Soborna street towards the “Tsarska Okhota” restaurant on the southern outskirts of Avdiivka.[46] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are trying to consolidate their positions on the southern outskirts of Avdiivka before launching attacks on the “Tsarska Okhota,” which the milblogger claimed is a highly fortified position.[47] Other Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces continued attacking southwest, south, and north of Avdiivka, and one milblogger remarked that Russian forces expanded their zone of control near Pervomaiske (10km southwest of Avdiivka), Stepove (5km northwest of Avdiivka), and Sieverne (5km west of Avdiivka).[48] Avdiivka City Head

Vitaly Barabash noted that Russian forces appear to be regrouping near Avdiivka, and warned that there will likely be a new stage of fighting in coming days.[49] The Ukrainian General Staff and Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Oleksandr Shtupun reported that Russian forces are regrouping near Avdiivka and have not given up efforts to surround the city.[50]

Russian sources are increasingly complaining about the poor conditions facing Russian forces fighting near Avdiivka. One Russian correspondent who is purportedly fighting near Avdiivka and who notably presented an optimistic overview of the situation in the first days of the Russian assault claimed that the situation is now unchanged and remarked that the poor performance of Russian counterbattery fire is the “number one problem across the board” in this area.[51] Another Russian Telegram user amplified screenshots of messages sent by a Russian soldier near Avdiivka in which the soldier complains about foul sanitary conditions within Russian trenches and reports that Ukrainian artillery and helicopter fire are preventing Russian forces from moving out of trenches.[52]

Ukrainian forces conducted limited counterattacks near Avdiivka on October 18 but did not make any confirmed gains. Geolocated footage posted on October 17 indicates that Ukrainian forces may have conducted a limited counterattack just north of the E50 highway south of Avdiivka, but subsequent footage of the same positions suggests that Russian forces subsequently counterattacked and advanced beyond the Ukrainian positions towards the southern outskirt of Avdiivka.[53] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces improved their positions near Vodyane and occupied new positions in the adjacent forest area.[54]

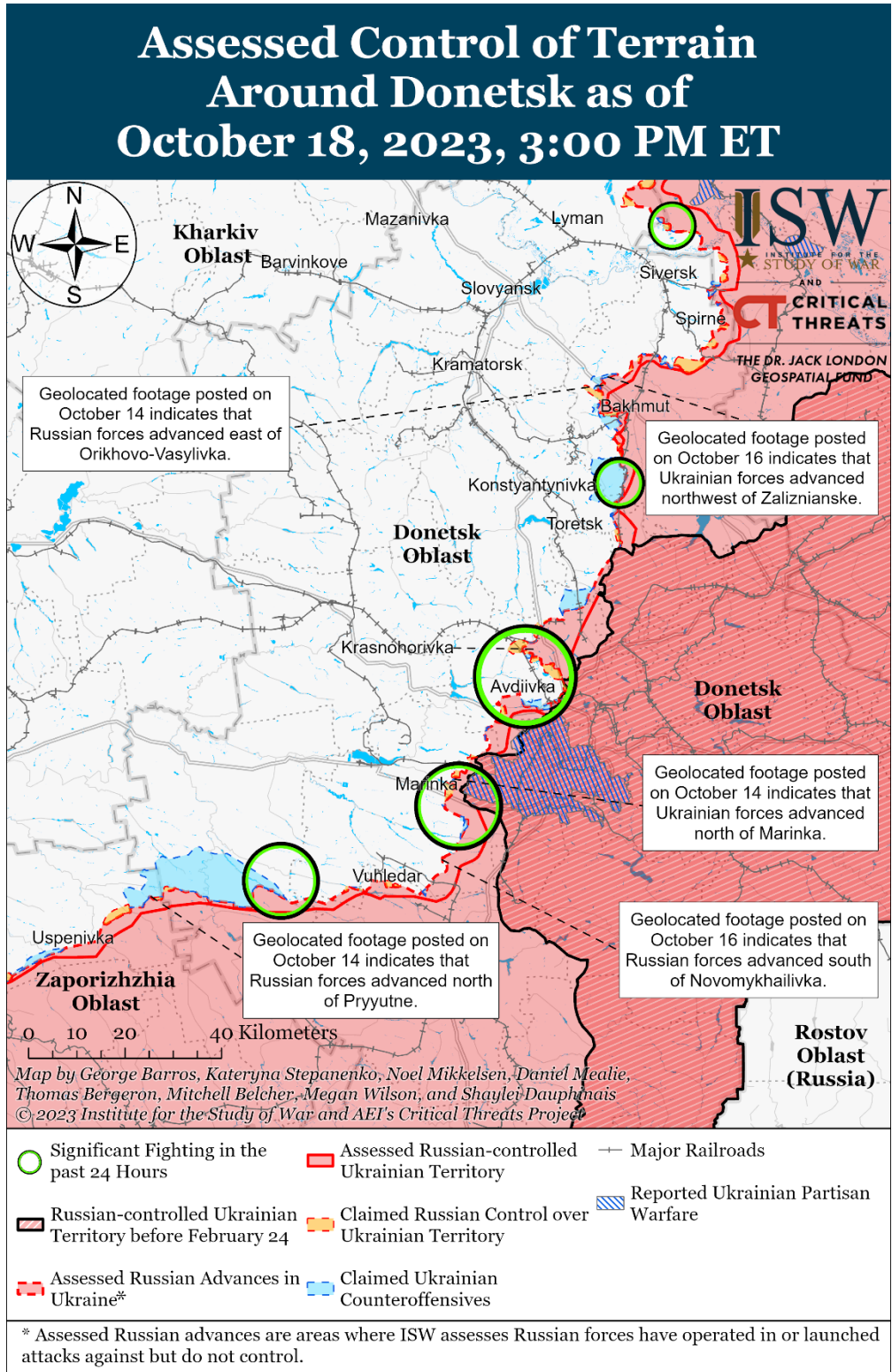
# Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of October 18, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces continued ground attacks southwest of Donetsk City on October 18 and did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled upwards of 20 Russian attacks near Marinka (on the southwest outskirts of Donetsk City) and Novomykhailivka (10km southwest of Donetsk City).[55] Ukrainian 79th Separate Airborne Assault Brigade Spokesperson Yaroslav Chepurnyi noted on October 18 that Russian forces have intensified artillery, drone, and guided aerial bomb strikes on Marinka in recent weeks and reported that Russian forces typically storm multiple Ukrainian positions within Marinka at the same time.[56] A Russian media aggregator claimed that Russian forces are continuing to advance within Marinka.[57]



Ukrainian forces did not conduct any claimed or confirmed ground attacks southwest of Donetsk City on October 18.



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

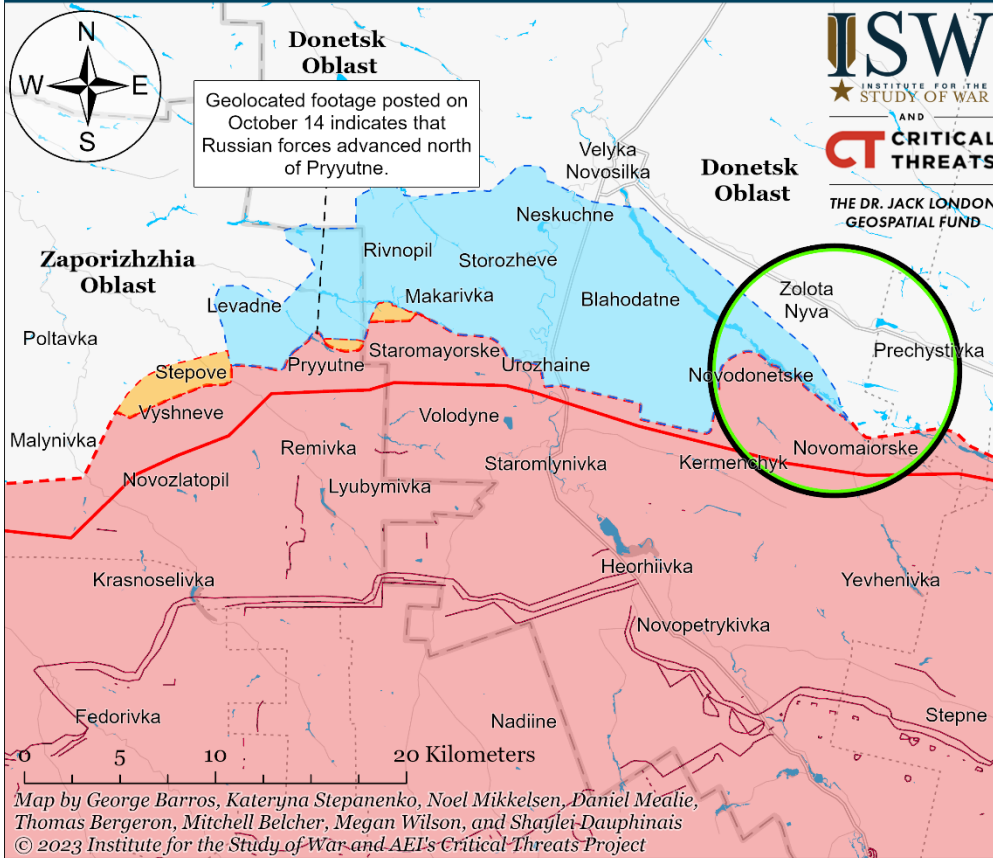
The Russian “Vostok” Battalion, reportedly active in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked an unspecified section of this frontline on the night of October 17 to 18.[58]

Russian forces conducted ground attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 18 but did not make any claimed or confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on October 18 that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Novomayorske (18km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) and south of Zolota Nyva (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka) and Prechystivka (17km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[59] A Russian milblogger posted footage claiming to show elements of the Russian 36th Motorized Rifle Brigade (29th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) operating near Mykilske (4km southeast of Vuhledar).[60]

The Russian MoD claimed on October 18 that elements of the Russian Eastern Grouping of Forces repelled a Ukrainian attack near Chervone (9km east of Hulyaipole).[61]

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 18 and reportedly advanced. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces achieved unspecified partial success south of Robotyne.[62] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian attack near Verbove (10km east of Robotyne).[63] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations along the Kopani-Robotyne-Novoprokopivka-Verbove line (5km northwest to 10km east of Robotyne).[64] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian infantry groups conducted a “large-scale” attack on Verbove and Novoprokopivka (2km south of Robotyne) with four or five units of equipment and groups of 20 people each.[65] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked near Kopani (5km northwest of Robotyne) on October 17.[66]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of October 18, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

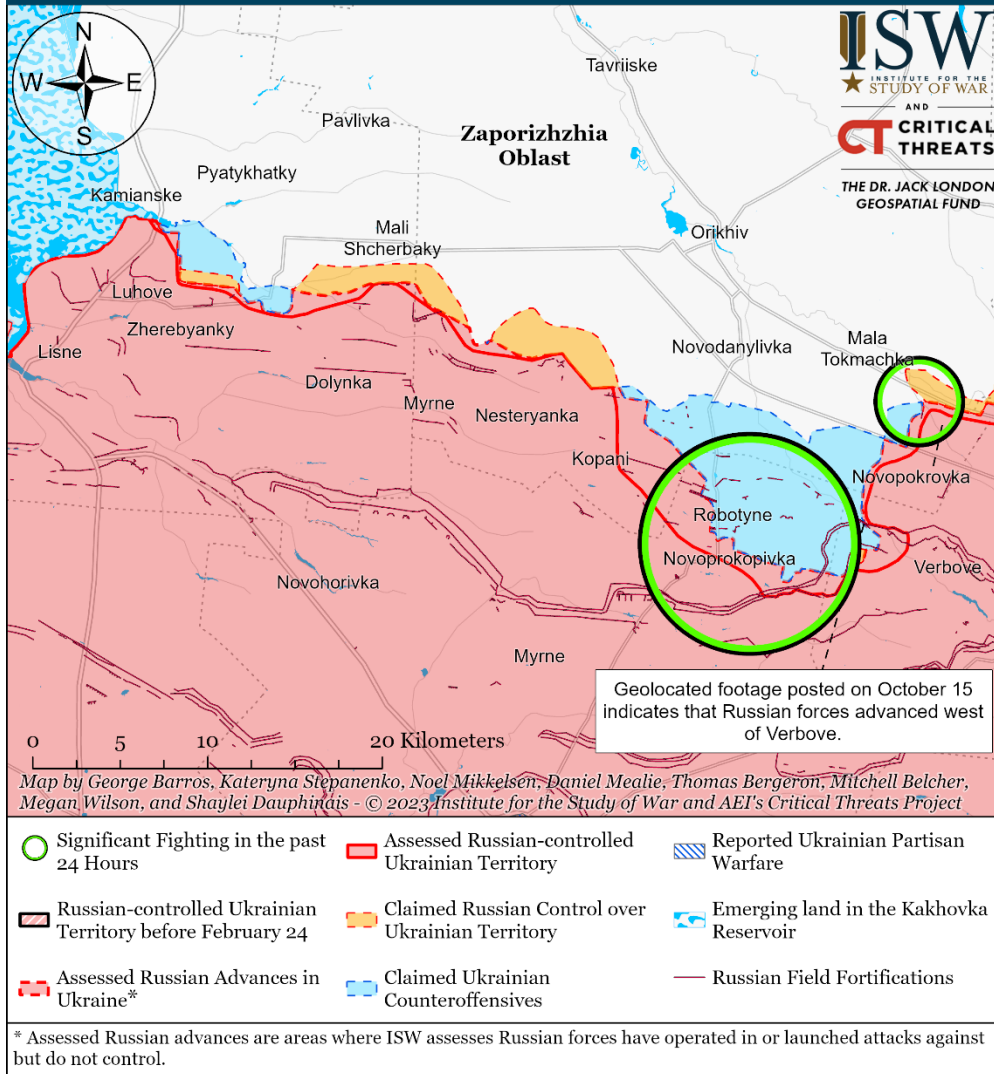


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Russian Field Fortifications
- Assessed Russian Advances 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.

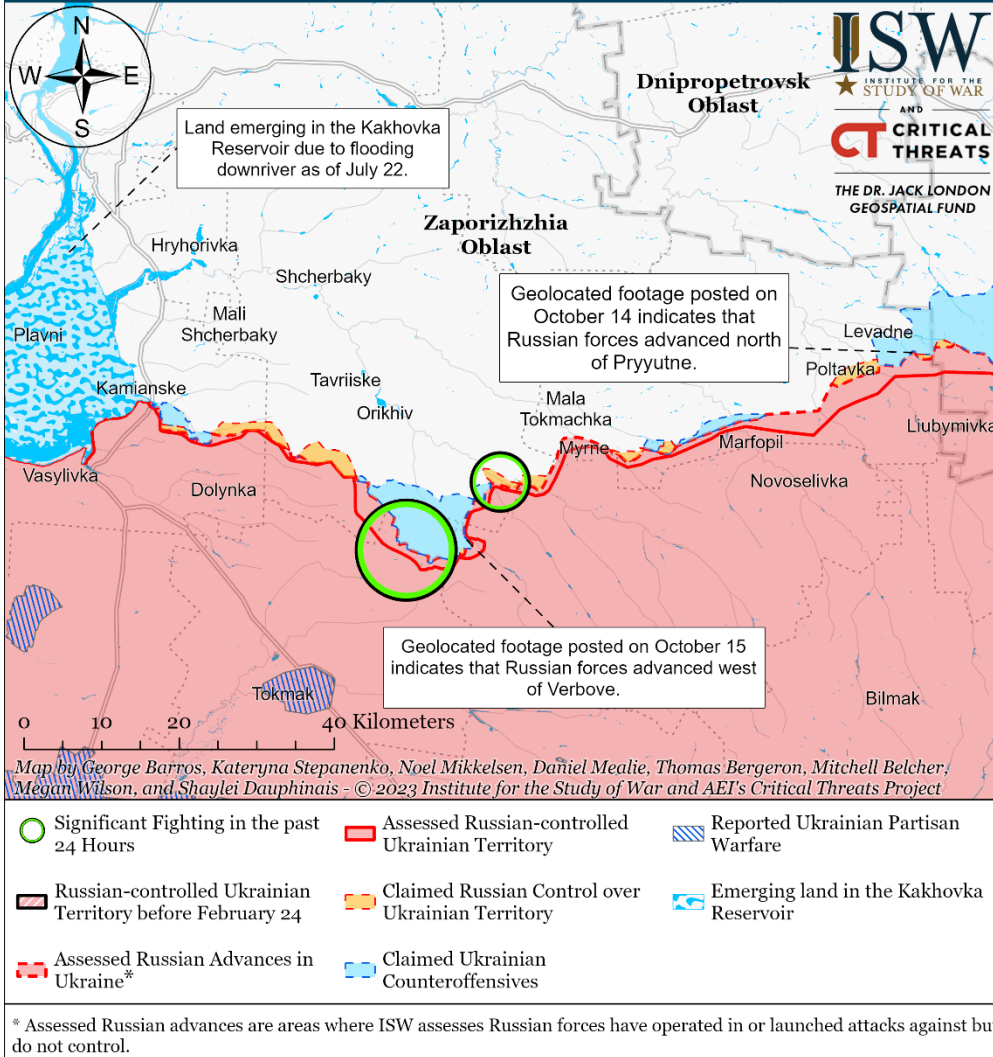


# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of October 18, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces continued counterattacks in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on October 18 but did not make any claimed or confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attempted to restore lost positions east of Mala Tokmachka (7km southeast of Orikhiv) and southwest of Robotyne.[67] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun stated that Russian forces are constantly probing Ukrainian defenses and attempting to regain lost positions southwest of Robotyne.[68] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces counterattacked from Kopani to Novodanylivka (6km north of Robotyne), southwest of Robotyne, and near Verbove.[69] Russian milbloggers amplified footage claiming to show elements of the Russian “Osman” Spetsnaz unit, the 136th Motorized Rifle Brigade (58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]), and the 42nd Motorized Rifle Division (58th CAA, SMD) operating in the Orikhiv direction.[70]

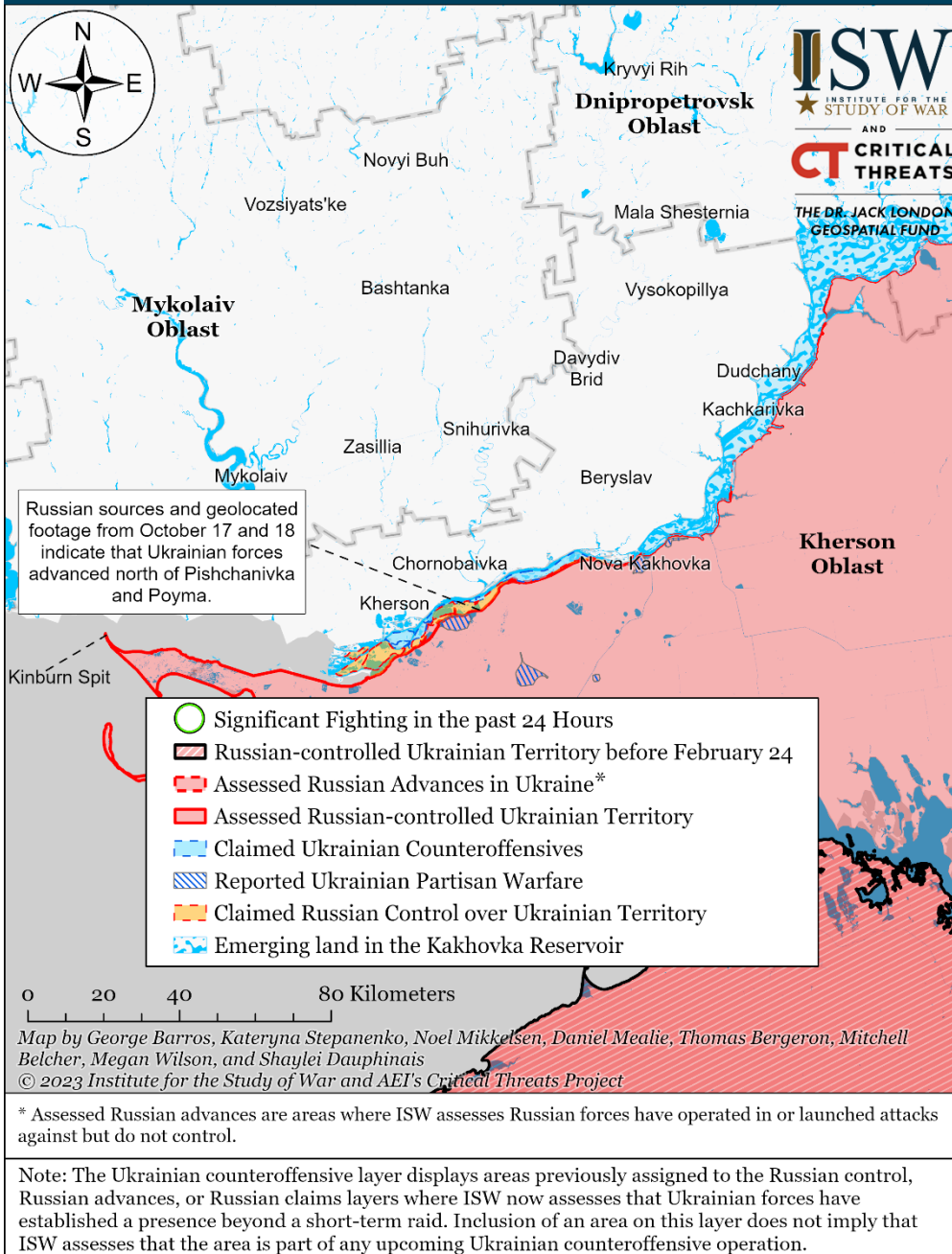
# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of October 18, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



The Russian MoD reported that Russian Black Sea Fleet naval aviation destroyed a Ukrainian naval drone in the Black Sea on the night of October 17.[71] A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces destroyed two Ukrainian naval drones west of Cape Tarkhankut.[72]

Russian President Vladimir Putin stated during a press conference in Beijing on October 18 that Russian Aerospace (VKS) forces are beginning to patrol the airspace over the Black Sea with MiG-31 aircraft armed with Kh-47M2 Kinzhal hypersonic air-launched ballistic missile systems.[73] Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Yuri Ihnat stated that Putin’s threat does not fundamentally change the situation for Ukraine and the flights are possibly intended to pose a threat to NATO countries (such as Romania) within the range of Kinzhal missiles.[74]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of October 18, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

Russian opposition outlet *Mediazona* reported on October 17 that the number of convictions against Russian military personnel for serious crimes has increased to a record level in the first half of

2023.[75] Russian courts sentenced 32 Russian military personnel for homicide in the first half of 2023, in comparison with an average of 20 homicide sentences per year in previous years.[76] Notably more Russian military personnel also received sentences for causing grievous bodily harm and sexual assault in the first six months of 2023 than in previous years.[77]

The Russian State Duma proposed two laws on October 18 that will grant mobilization deferments to student workers who are sponsored by their employers, as well as Russian teachers and doctors in rural areas.[78] The Kremlin continues to codify mobilization deferments likely to assuage discontent over continued crypto-mobilization efforts and address persistent human capital shortages.

Russian authorities reportedly opened a missile manufacturing plant in Nekrasovka Raion, Moscow that will produce air defense missiles.[79] Russian sources reported that high-ranking Russian military officials and Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu visited the plant in May 2023 and that Russian authorities constructed the facility in eight and a half months.[80] Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin stated that the missile plant should begin producing missiles within a year.[81]

### **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)**

Nothing significant to report.

### **Russian Information Operations and Narratives**

Russian President Vladimir Putin reiterated a standard Russian information operation aimed at portraying Ukraine and the West as prolonging the war by refusing to negotiate. Putin claimed at a press conference in Beijing on October 18 that a peace settlement would be possible if Ukraine stopped “theatrical gestures” and the West “took concrete steps” toward negotiations.[82] The Kremlin has not taken any meaningful steps towards opening negotiations beyond calling for, effectively, a complete Ukrainian surrender and the achievement of the Kremlin’s war goals, as ISW has previously documented.[83]

The Russian government has reportedly fined Russian citizens almost 200 million rubles (about \$2 million) since the start of the war under the law against “discrediting” the Russian military. Russian opposition outlet *Mediazona* reported on October 18 that Russian courts have fined Russians about 194 million rubles (about \$1.9 million) in administrative cases for discrediting the Russian military since the law came into force in March 2022.[84]

### **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)**

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Belarusian Defense Minister Lieutenant General Viktor Khrenin held a joint board meeting of the Russian and Belarusian ministries of defense in Moscow on October 18.[85] Shoigu and Khrenin both delivered boilerplate rhetoric about Russian-Belarusian military integration efforts and reiterated claims about alleged NATO aggression against the Union State.[86] Khrenin stated that Russian and Belarusian authorities are currently negotiating an agreement that will include measures for Russian defense industrial base (DIB) facilities to repair

Belarusian equipment.[87] It is unclear why the Belarusian military would need to rely upon Russian DIB facilities to repair equipment, however, especially considering the current constraints placed on the Russian DIB by Russian operations in Ukraine.

**ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian military activity in Belarus as part of ongoing Kremlin efforts to increase their control over Belarus and other Russian actions in Belarus.**

**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://t.me/z\\_arhiv/25343](https://t.me/z_arhiv/25343); [https://t.me/z\\_arhiv/25343?single](https://t.me/z_arhiv/25343?single) ; [https://t.me/z\\_arhiv/25347](https://t.me/z_arhiv/25347) [https://t.me/kiber\\_boroshno/4684](https://t.me/kiber_boroshno/4684)

[2] <https://t.me/rybar/53351> ; <https://t.me/rybar/53354>

[3] <https://t.me/rybar/53368>

[4] [https://t.me/mod\\_russia/31608](https://t.me/mod_russia/31608)

[5] [https://t.me/dva\\_majors/27599](https://t.me/dva_majors/27599)

[6] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-17-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-15-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-14-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-13-2023>

[7] <https://t.me/rybar/53368> ; [https://t.me/dva\\_majors/27599](https://t.me/dva_majors/27599) ; [https://t.me/dva\\_majors/27611](https://t.me/dva_majors/27611) ; [https://t.me/smotri\\_z/21351](https://t.me/smotri_z/21351) ; <https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonoV/30138> ; <https://t.me/vysokygovorit/13189> ; <https://t.me/rybar/53370>

[8] <http://kremlin dot ru/events/president/news/72532>

[9] <https://t.me/rybar/53351>

[10] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar100623> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar081123>

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