

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 22, 2023

Karolina Hird, Angelica Evans, Christina Harward, Riley Bailey, and Mason Clark

October 22, 2023, 4:45pm 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.

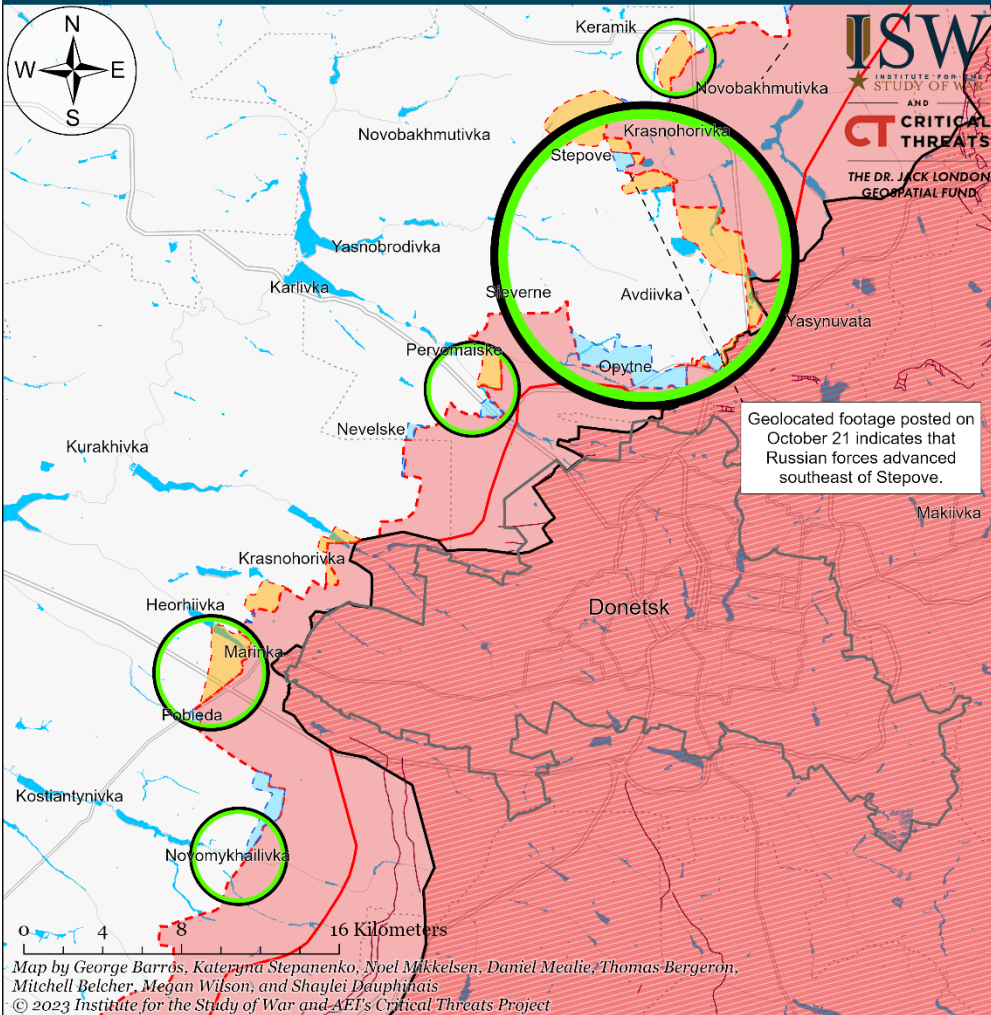
Note: The data cut-off for this product was 12:30pm ET on October 22. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 23 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russian forces are funneling additional forces to the Avdiivka front despite ongoing challenges with frontal mechanized assaults and the failure of a renewed push on October 19-20. Several Russian milbloggers claimed that there were no significant changes along the front in the Avdiivka direction on October 22.[1] Russian forces are likely once again pausing following a failed major push which suffered heavy losses. A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces “unexpectedly” counterattacked in the direction of Pisky (8km southwest of Donetsk City) and pushed Russian forces from positions in the area. Another milblogger stated that claims of Ukrainian advances near Pisky and Opytne (4km south of Avdiivka) are false.[2] Another Russian source allegedly serving in the Avdiivka direction claimed that Ukrainian forces did not conduct counterattacks in his unspecified sector of the front.[3] Geolocated footage published on October 21 indicates that Russian forces recently made marginal advances southeast of Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka).[4] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces have not completely cleared the Avdiivka waste heap area and that the area is currently a contested “gray zone.”[5]

A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger discussed difficulties that may be contributing to a “positional deadlock” for Russian offensive operations in the Avdiivka direction as of October 22.[6] The milblogger claimed that it is difficult to conduct maneuver warfare on a static front line with a large number of personnel and fortified areas on both sides. The milblogger noted that Ukrainian drones and other precision weapons have made armored vehicles increasingly vulnerable and have made ground attacks increasingly difficult. The milblogger also noted that Russian forces are facing difficulties in overcoming Ukrainian minefields near Avdiivka and are unable to completely destroy Ukrainian logistics, allowing the Ukrainian command to quickly transfer personnel to critical areas. Russian sources have previously claimed that Ukrainian defensive fortifications pose a significant challenge to Russian advances around Avdiivka.[7] These challenges are highly similar to those faced by Ukrainian forces in southern Ukraine in the initial weeks of the ongoing Ukrainian counteroffensive in June 2023. However, it remains to be seen if Russian forces have the capabilities and flexibility to adapt in some manner, as Ukrainian forces did following early setbacks in June 2023.

Ukrainian sources stated that Russian forces continue to transfer personnel to the Avdiivka direction to support offensive efforts despite heavy losses. Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun stated that the Russian military is deploying personnel from Russian territory directly to the Avdiivka direction to replace personnel losses.[8] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that the Russian military command has recently transferred several Russian regiments comprised of mobilized personnel to the Avdiivka direction, indicating that Russia likely does not plan to abandon operations in this direction.[9] Mashovets noted that the Russian military also transferred elements of the 57th Motorized Rifle Regiment (6th Motorized Rifle Division, 3rd Army Corps, Western Military District) to the Spartak-Yakolivka-Minerale-Kashtanove area (4km south to 5km southeast of Avdiivka).

Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of October 22, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barrós, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Megan Wilson, and Shaylei Datuphais
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|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| Donetsk City Limits | Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine* | Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives |
| Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory | Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory | Russian Field Fortifications |

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

Note: A Russian source claimed on October 19 that Russian forces advanced one kilometer in depth in the Stepove and Berdychi directions. A Russian source claimed on October 18 that Russian forces advanced approximately two kilometers in the areas around Avdiivka.

Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 22. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian troops continue offensive actions south of Bakhmut and in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhia Oblast) directions.[10] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun noted that Ukrainian forces maintained offensive pressure in western Zaporizhia Oblast despite active Russian hostilities in the Avdiivka direction.[11]

Russian forces conducted a series of missile and drone strikes against Ukraine on October 22. Ukrainian military officials reported that Russian forces launched eight S-300 missiles, a Kh-59 missile, three Shahed-131/136 drones, and two drones of an unspecified type at targets in Ukraine and that Ukrainian air defenses destroyed the three Shahed drones and the Kh-59 missile.[12] Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces struck the “Nova Poshta” terminal near Kharkiv City as well as Kostyantynivka, Donetsk Oblast with S-300 missiles.[13] Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat specified that reports about drones of an unspecified type refer to makeshift Russian drones constructed from simple materials, which include engines acquired from AliExpress.[14]

The nationalist pro-war Russian information space is reckoning with the possibility of a major demographic decline by weaponizing anti-migrant rhetoric. The Russian Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat) published a new demographic forecast for the Russian Federation on October 20 that predicts that Russia's population will decrease to 138.77 million people by January 1, 2046.[15] Rosstat estimated that the rate of natural population decline will exceed 600,000 people per year between 2024-2032 but will slow to 400,000 people per year from 2032-2046.[16] Several Russian commentators seized on these statistics and warned that they portend “demographic catastrophe” if restorative measures are not undertaken immediately.[17] One Russian source blamed Russia’s declining population on migrants and called for ethnic Russians to immediately increase the national birthrate, as well as to automate many production systems to replace migrant labor.[18] ISW has previously reported on instances of vocal Russian nationalist enclaves within the pro-war information space amplifying anti-migrant rhetoric to explain away and try to remedy reports of Russian demographic transitions.[19] Such rhetoric is particularly noteworthy as the Russian force generation apparatus is increasingly exploiting migrant and other ethnic minority communities as a mobilization resource, which ISW outlines in the force generation section of today’s update.[20]

A prominent Russian milblogger and frontline commander criticized Russian top-down censorship campaigns. Russian “Vostok” Battalion Commander Alexander Khodakovsky claimed on October 22 that many Russians are dissatisfied with official reports and summaries about the war in Ukraine and urged Russian officials to report honestly about the frontline to garner wider public support.[21] Khodakovsky, who has consistently complained about problems affecting Russian combat operations, claimed that all of his statements are “inspected with increased scrutiny” given his official status.[22] Khodakovsky argued that one can “install filters on the central media” but cannot make people think a certain way.[23] Khodakovsky claimed that unspecified actors who are “embarrassed” by his statements are pushing Rosgvardia to take action against him for his criticisms.[24] Khodakovsky was appointed the deputy head of the Main Directorate of Rosgvardia in occupied Donetsk Oblast in February 2023 and commands Rosgvardia’s special rapid response and riot police (OMON and SOBR) in occupied Donetsk Oblast.[25] Khodakovsky’s claim, if true, indicates that some actors may be trying to leverage Rosgvardia’s likely concern about potential repercussions for Khodakovsky’s increasingly vocal criticisms, which have become more conspicuous as other Russian milbloggers engage in greater self-censorship over fears of running afoul of Russian authorities.[26]

Deceased Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin's ideological and rhetorical campaign against the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) has largely become decoupled from the issue of the Wagner Group and appears to have outlived Prigozhin

himself. Russian lawyer Kirill Kachur, whom the Russian Investigative Committee charged in absentia for embezzlement and bribery in 2022, claimed on October 22 that Prigozhin filed applications to the Russian Investigative Committee to initiate a criminal case against Russian Defense Minister Army General Sergei Shoigu and Chief of the General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov for the “genocide of the Russian people, the murder to tens of thousands of Russian citizens, and the transfer of Russian territories to the enemy” before Wagner’s June 24 armed rebellion.[27] Kachur appealed to Investigative Committee Head Alexander Bastrykin to publicly address what has happened to these applications since Prigozhin’s death and concluded that Russians who support Prigozhin and his message should coalesce around the ideological principles Prigozhin espoused and push for the restoration of justice in Russian society.[28] Kachur’s invocation of Prigozhin’s ideological opposition to the Russian MoD suggests that the intense dislike for and disapproval of the MoD has outlived Prigozhin, even as the Wagner Group has disbanded as a centralized entity. A select camp within the Russian information space that aligns itself with Prigozhin’s hyper-nationalist pro-war, yet anti-MoD ideology will likely continue to launch informational critiques on the MoD and the Russian military command as the war continues.

Key Takeaways:

- **Russian forces are funneling additional forces to the Avdiivka front despite ongoing challenges with frontal mechanized assaults and the failure of a renewed push on October 19-20.**
- **Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 22.**
- **Russian forces conducted a series of missile and drone strikes against Ukraine on October 22.**
- **The nationalist pro-war Russian information space is reckoning with the possibility of a major demographic decline by weaponizing anti-migrant rhetoric.**
- **A prominent Russian milblogger and frontline commander criticized Russian top-down censorship campaigns.**
- **Deceased Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin's ideological and rhetorical campaign against the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) has largely become decoupled from the issue of the Wagner Group and appears to have outlived Prigozhin himself.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and advanced in some areas on October 22.**
- **Russian authorities are intensifying mobilization efforts targeting Central Asian migrant communities.**
- **Russian occupation authorities continue to use cultural and education programs to forcibly Russify Ukrainian children.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of October 22, 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

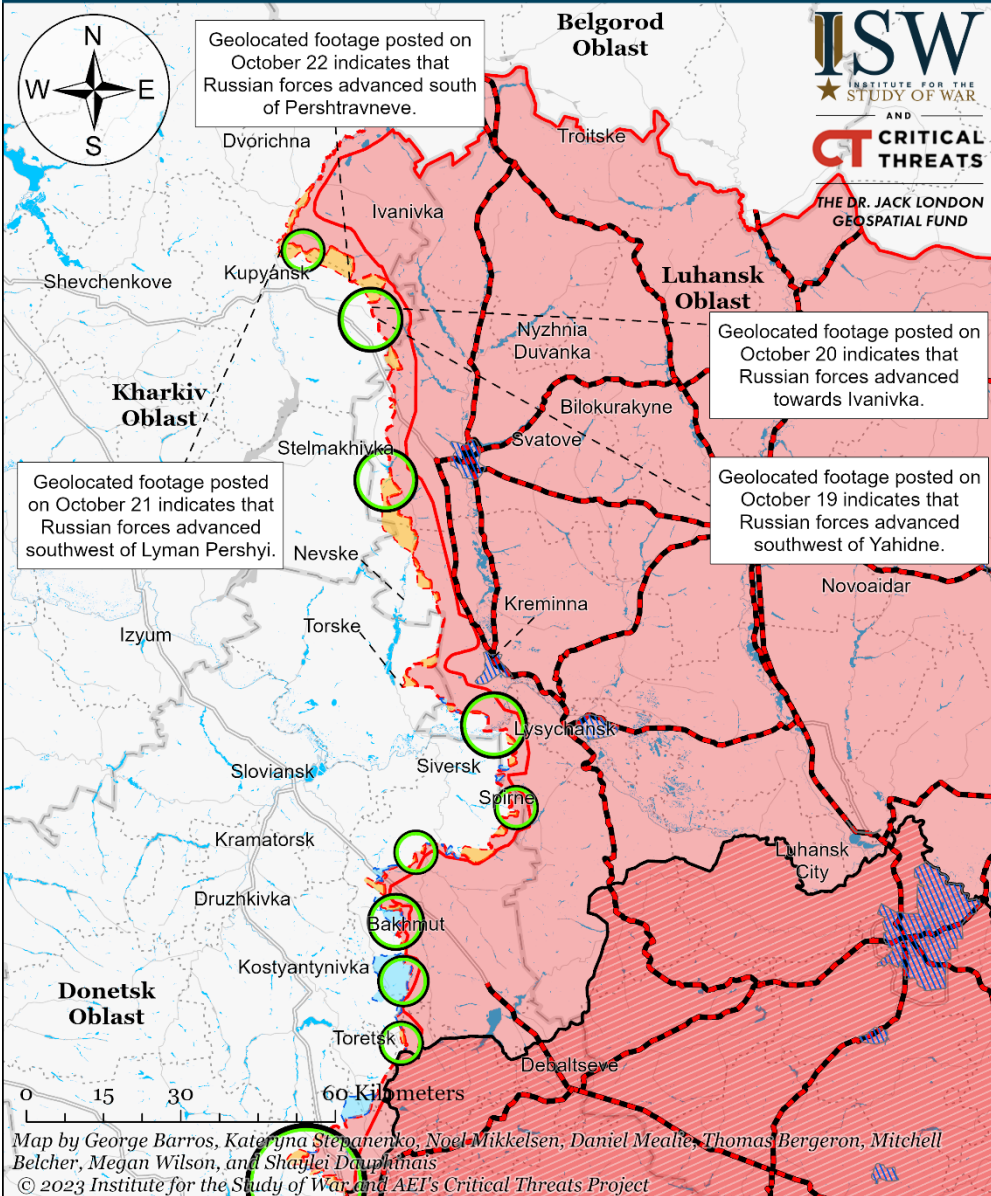
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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 along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kremlinna line and made confirmed advances. Geolocated footage posted on October 22 indicates that Russian forces advanced southwest of Pershotravneve (21km northeast of Kupyansk), southwest of Yahidne (22km southeast of Kupyansk), and east of Terny (17km west of Kremlinna).[29] A Russian news aggregator claimed on October 21 that Russian forces achieved unspecified success in the Serebryanske forest area (10km southwest of Kremlinna).[30] The Ukrainian General Staff reported on October 22 that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk), Ivanivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk), Nadiya (15km west of Svatove), Bilohorivka (12km south of Kremlinna), the Serebryanske forest area (10km southwest of Kremlinna), and Spirne (25km south of Kremlinna).[31] A Russian milblogger claimed that the Russian MoD recently implied that Russian forces have gone on the defensive in the Kupyansk direction and near Torske (15km west of Kremlinna), although ISW has not observed evidence of this claim.[32] Ukrainian military observer Konstantyn Mashovets reported that Russian forces temporarily halted offensive operations near Ivanivka in order to respond to reported Ukrainian advances towards Orlyanka (22km east of Kupyansk).[33] Mashovets reported that elements of the Russian 2nd Motorized Rifle Division (1st Tank Army, Western Military District) have reinforced Russian forces in the Kupyansk direction, and a Russian milblogger also claimed that elements of the Russian 1st Tank Army are repelling Ukrainian counterattacks in this direction.[34] Ukrainian Ground Forces Command Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Volodymyr Fityo stated that Russian forces are transferring reserves consisting mostly of Storm-Z convict recruits to the Kupyansk and Lyman directions.[35]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kremlinna line but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances. The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Synkivka, Ivanivka, Nadiya, Torske, the Serebryanske forest area, and Dibrova (7km southwest of Kremlinna).[36] A Russian news aggregator claimed on October 21 that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Synkivka and Makiivka (22km northwest of Kremlinna).[37]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of October 22, 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

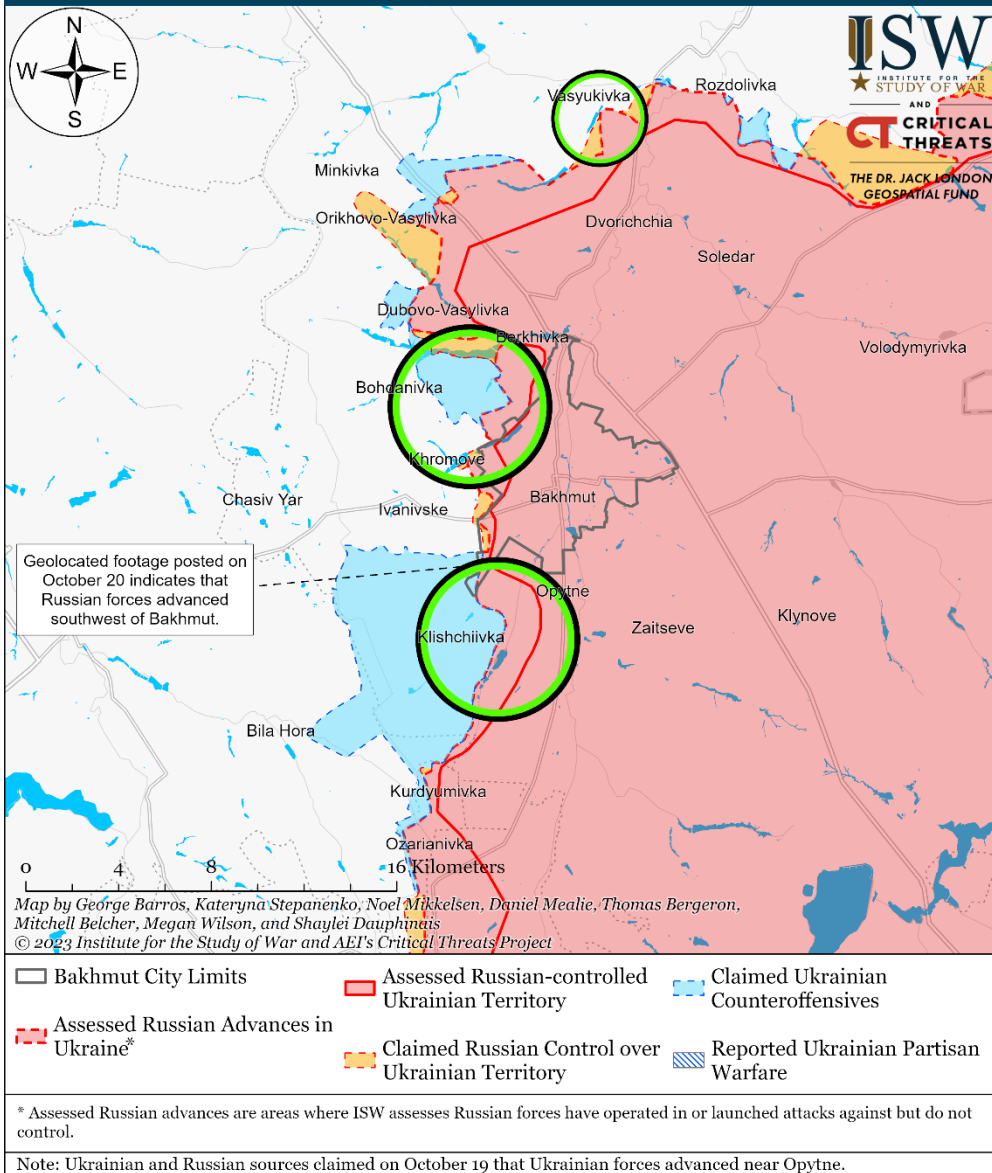
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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 forces continued ground attacks near Bakhmut on October 22 and reportedly advanced. Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that Ukrainian forces are intensifying their operations along the Bakhmut-Horlivka railway line and claimed that Ukrainian forces crossed the railway line north of Zelonopillya (12km southwest of Bakhmut).[38] The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Bohdanivka (5km northwest of Bakhmut) and Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut).[39] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces continued attempts to cross the railway along the Klishchiivka-Andriivka (7-10km southwest of Bakhmut) line on October 21 and 22.[40]

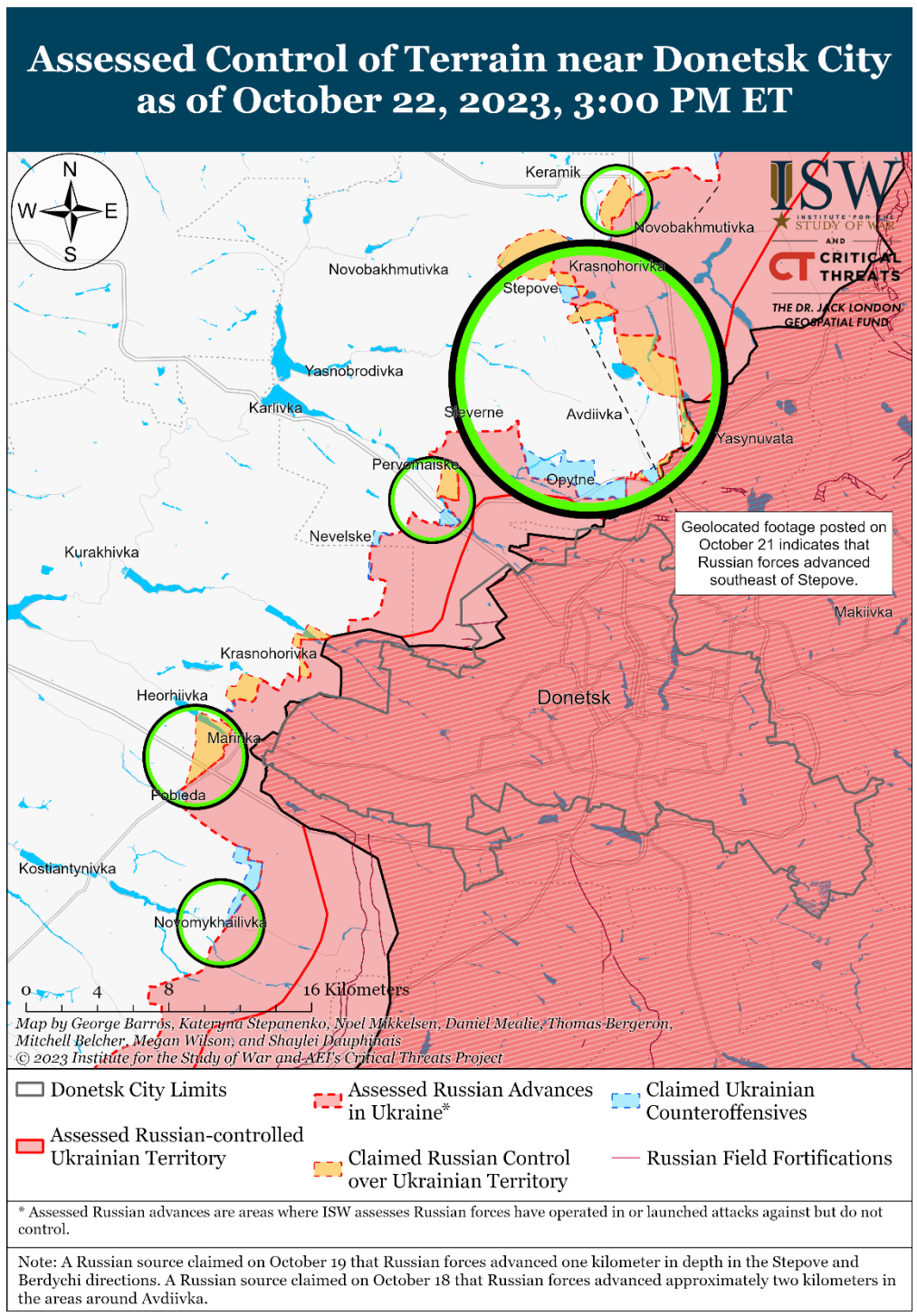
Russian forces continued ground attacks near Bakhmut on October 22 but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Vasyukivka (16km north of Bakhmut), Bohdanivka, Khromove (immediately west of Bakhmut), Andriivka, and Druzhba (18km southwest of Bakhmut).[41] Ukrainian Ground Forces Command Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Volodymyr Fityo stated that Russian forces also attacked near Klishchiivka.[42] Mashovets stated that Russian forces, particularly elements of the 200th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (14th Army Corps, Northern Fleet) and the 331st Guards Airborne (VDV) Regiment (98th VDV Division), intensified activity in the direction of Bohdanivka, Yahidne (directly north of Bakhmut), and Khromove over the last few days.[43] Mashovets added that elements of the Russian 4th Motorized Rifle Brigade (Luhansk People’s Republic [LNR] 2nd Army Corps) and 83rd Guards Air Assault (VDV) Brigade are counterattacking near Klishchiivka and Zaitseve (6km southeast of Bakhmut).[44] The Russian MoD published footage on October 22 claiming to show elements of the Russian 98th VDV Division operating on the northwestern outskirts of Bakhmut.[45]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of October 22, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces continued ground attacks near Avdiivka on October 22 and made a confirmed marginal advance south of Avdiivka. Geolocated footage published on October 21 indicates that Russian forces marginally advanced southeast of Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka).[46] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Keramik (10km northwest of Avdiivka), Stepove (3km northwest of Avdiivka), Avdiivka, Tonenke (5km west of Avdiivka), Opytne (3km southwest of Avdiivka), Nevelske, and Pervomaiske.[47] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also attacked near Novokalynove (7km north of Avdiivka) and advanced near Stepove.[48] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that elements of the 9th Motorized Rifle Brigade and 110th Motorized Rifle Brigade (both units of the Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] 1st Army Corps) unsuccessfully attacked in the Vodyane-Tonenke

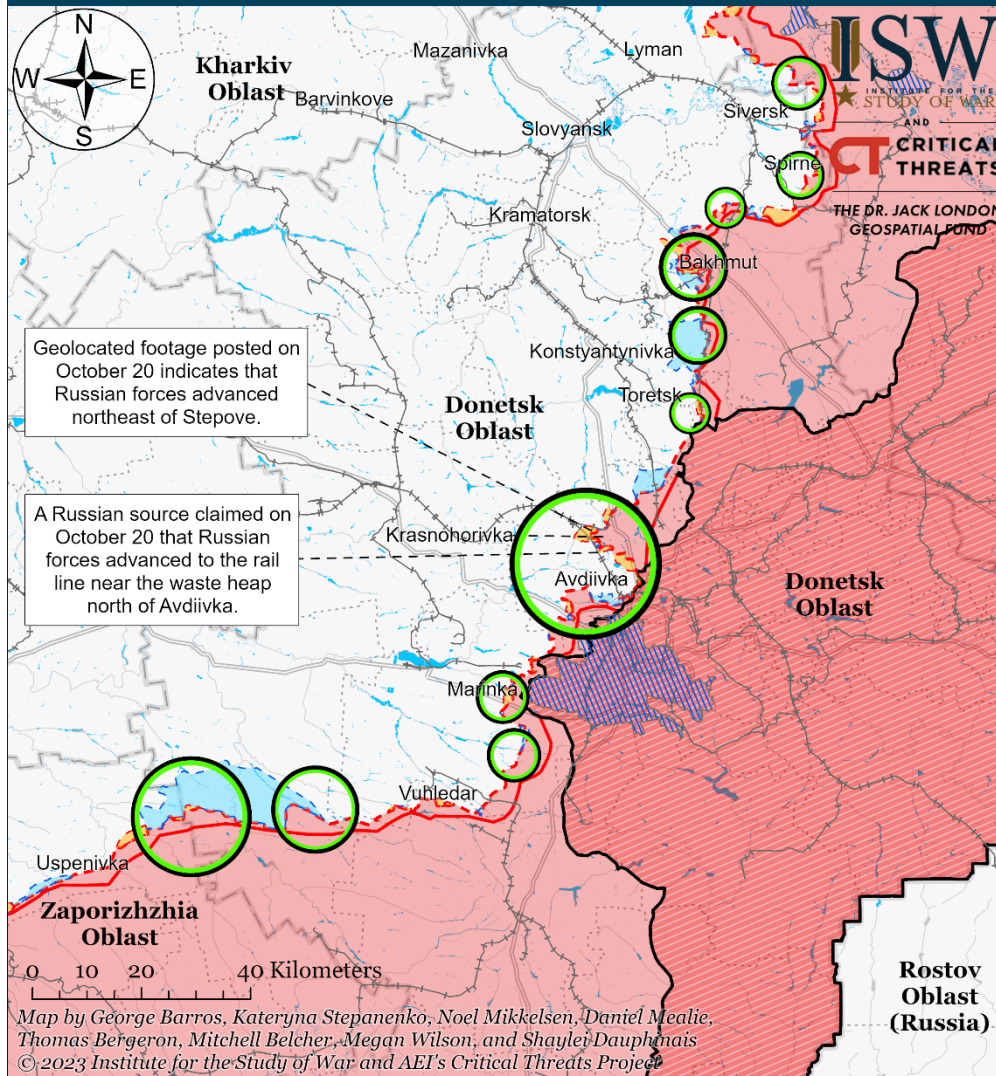
(5-7km southwest of Avdiivka), Vodyane-Netaylove (5-14km southwest of Avdiivka), and Pisky-Pervomaiske (8-11km southwest of Avdiivka) directions.[49]



Russian forces continued ground attacks southwest of Donetsk City on October 22 but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled over 20 Russian attacks near Marinka, Krasnohorivka, and Pobieda (all on the southwestern outskirts of Donetsk City), Nevelske (directly west of Donetsk City), and Novomykhailivka (25km

southwest of Donetsk City).[50] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Marinka and Novomykhailivka.[51]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of October 22, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



- 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.

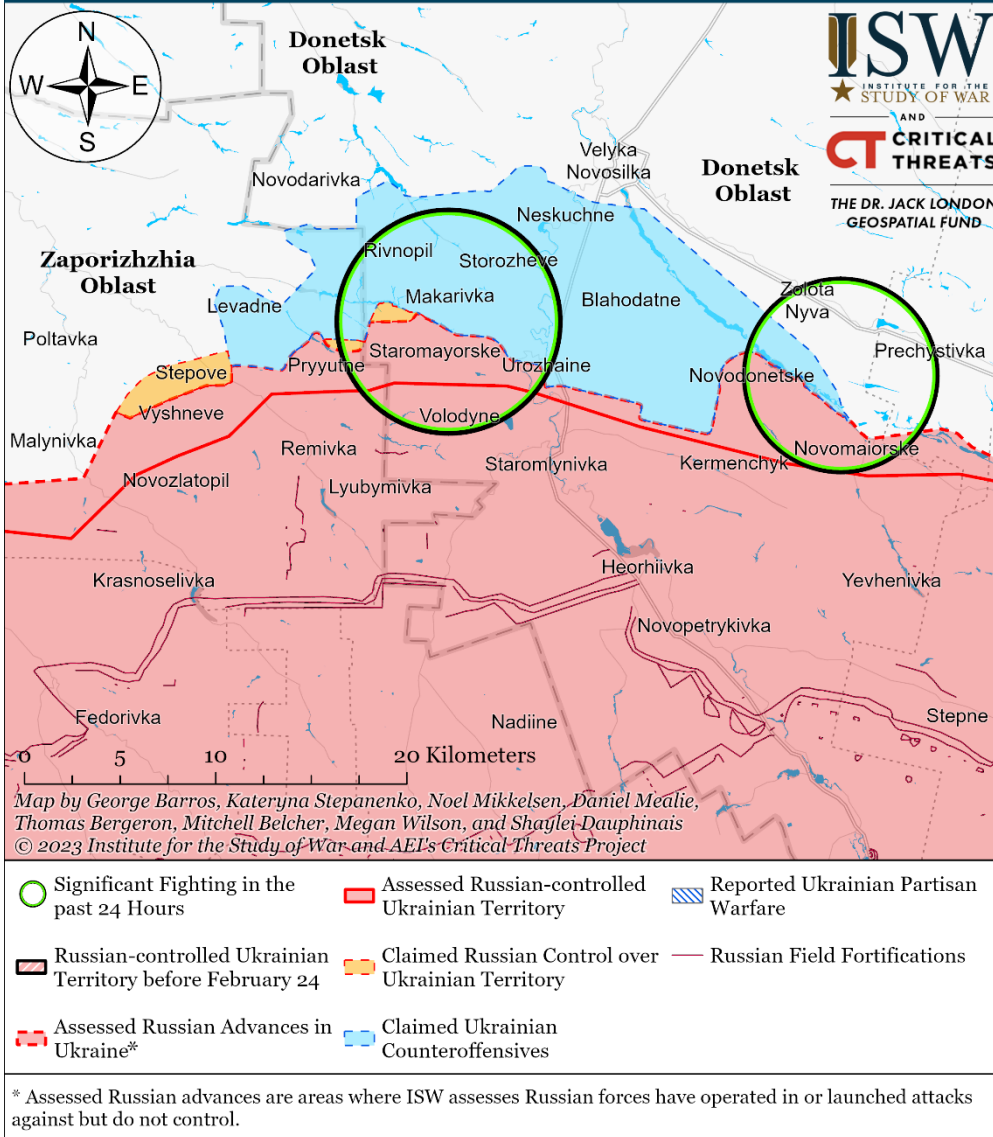
Ukrainian forces did not conduct any claimed or confirmed ground attacks southwest of Donetsk City on October 22.

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

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted limited ground attacks along the administrative border between Donetsk and Zaporizhia oblasts on October 22 and advanced. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces made marginal advances near Novodonetske (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[52] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces continued attempts to occupy heights between Pryyutne (14km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) and Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) but did not specify an outcome.[53]

Russian forces conducted ground attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 22 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Prechystivka (17km southeast of Velyka Novosilka), Zolota Nyva (11km southeast of Velyka Novosilka), Staromayorske, and Pryyutne.[54] Russian sources claimed on October 21 and 22 that Russian forces advanced near Pryyutne.[55] A Russian milblogger claimed on October 22 that Russian forces also counterattacked near Poltavka (28km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) and characterized the area as a new direction for Russian offensive actions.[56]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of October 22, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

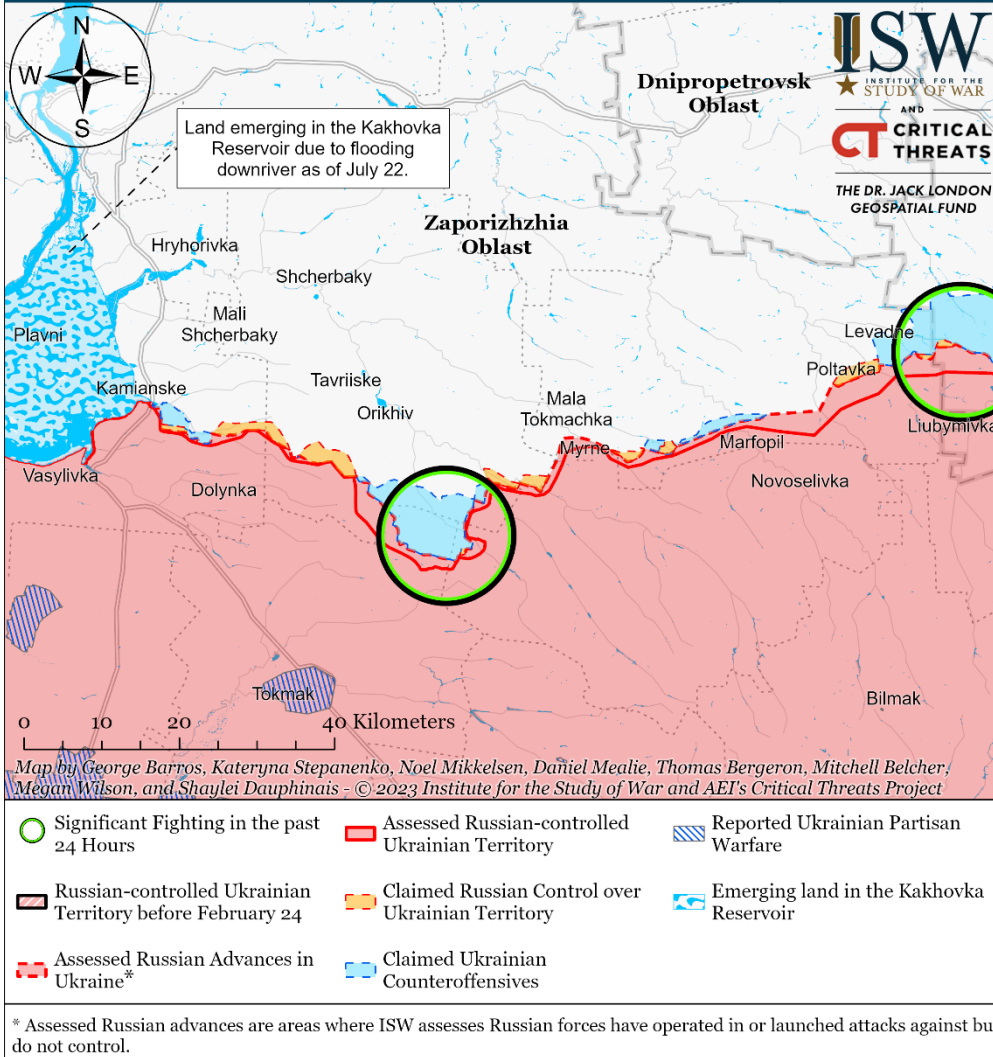


Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on October 22 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhzhia Oblast) direction.[57] Russian sources, including the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian assaults near Robotyne, Novoprokopivka (3km south of Robotyne), and Verbove (9km west of Robotyne).[58] A Russian milblogger claimed that small Ukrainian groups are conducting reconnaissance-in-force operations near Verbove.[59]

Russian forces counterattacked in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on October 22 but did not make any confirmed or claimed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults near Robotyne and Verbove.[60] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian Airborne (VDV) elements conducted successful counterattacks in an unspecified location in the Robotyne area.[61] A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the 83rd Guards VDV Brigade is operating along the Myrne-Nesteryanka line (up to 12km northwest of Robotyne).[62]



Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of October 22, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

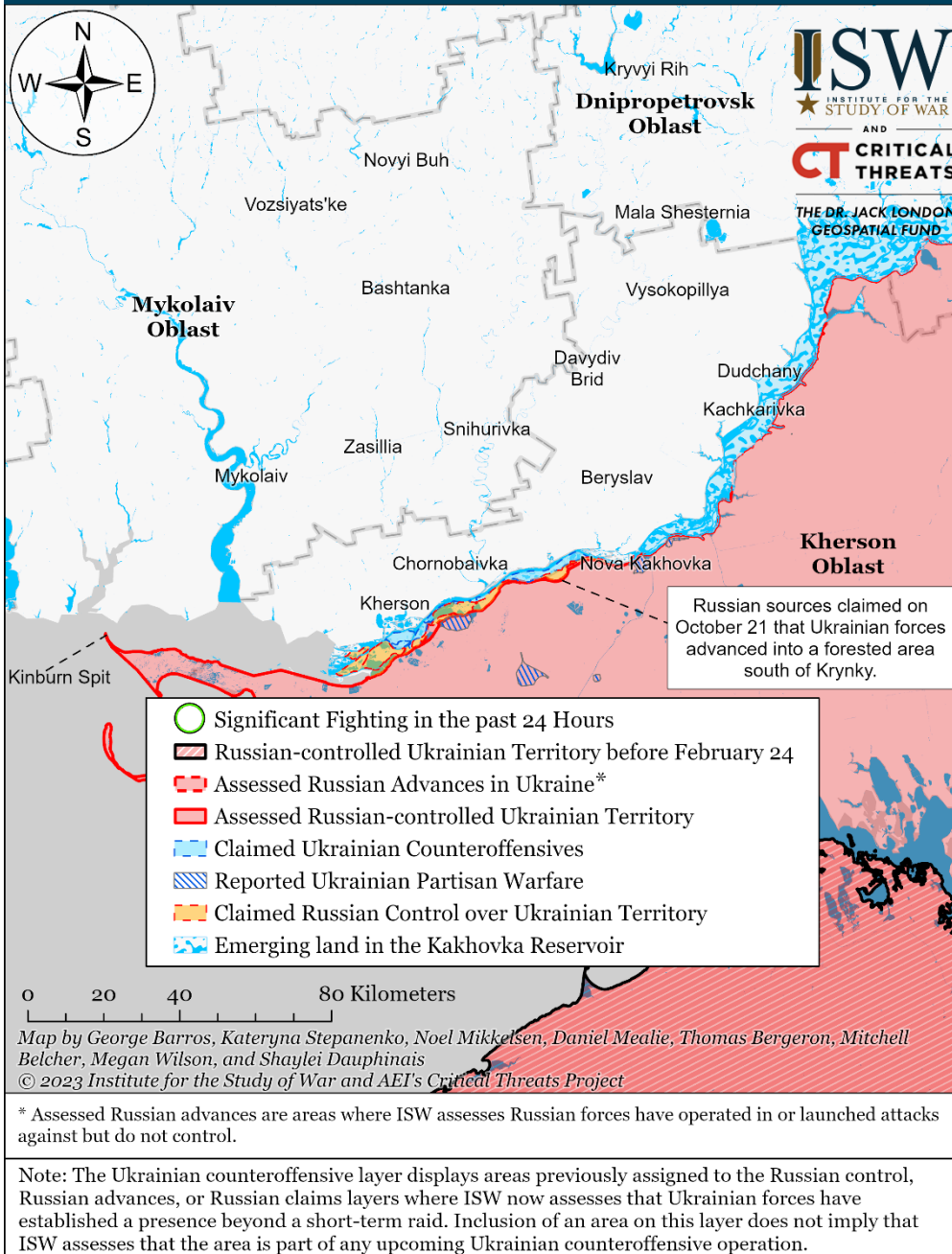


Ukrainian forces reportedly maintain positions on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast as of October 22. Russian sources continue to claim that Ukrainian forces are operating in Krynyky (30km northeast of Kherson City and 2km from the Dnipro River) and that fighting is ongoing near the settlement.[63] One Russian milblogger claimed that fighting is ongoing near Pishchanivka (13km southeast of Kherson City and 3km from the Dnipro River), although no other Russian source has made claims about fighting near Pishchanivka since October 19.[64] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that Ukrainian forces expanded their presence on the east bank and control positions from the Dnipro shoreline to the upper Konka River, although available visual evidence so far indicates that Ukrainian forces have a smaller presence on the east bank.[65] A Russian source claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced up to 5km between Oleshky (7km south of Kherson City and 4km from the Dnipro River) and Kozachi Laheri (22km east of Kherson City and 3km from the Dnipro River) after launching a larger-than-usual ground activity on the east bank on

the night of October 17 to 18 but that Russian forces later pushed Ukrainian forces out of these positions.[66] The Russian MoD claimed on October 22 that Russian forces prevented Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance groups from crossing the Dnipro River near Prydniprovsk (8km east of Kherson City), Tyahinka (30km east of Kherson City), and Krynky.[67] A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the Russian 70th Motorized Rifle Division (reportedly of the 18th Combined Arms Army), 810th Separate Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet), 177th Separate Naval Infantry Regiment (Caspian Flotilla), 126th Separate Coast Guard Brigade (22nd Army Corps, Black Sea Fleet), 8th Artillery Regiment (22nd Army Corps, Black Sea Fleet), and 127th Separate Reconnaissance Brigade (22nd Army Corps, Black Sea Fleet) are currently defending on the east bank.[68]

Russian forces continue to conduct a high number of airstrikes against targets on the west (right) bank of Kherson Oblast as of October 22. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian aviation conducted airstrikes near Olhivka, Lviv, Tyahinka, Tokarivka, Ponyativka, and Barvinok in Kherson Oblast.[69] Kherson Oblast Military Administration head Oleksandr Prokudin reported that Russian aviation launched 12 glide bombs against settlements on the west bank on October 22.[70] Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Captain First Rank Nataliya Humenyuk stated that Russian forces launched 36 glide bombs over the past day.[71]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of October 22, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces launched an unspecified number of S-200 missiles at occupied Sevastopol on October 22.[72] Other Russian sources did not comment on the reported launches, but Russian *Radio Liberty's* Tatar-Bashkir service *Idel Realii* reported that Russian authorities temporarily closed the Kerch Strait Bridge to traffic.[73] Occupied Sevastopol

governor Mikhail Razvozhayev amplified air alert sirens for Sevastopol but did not comment on what activity the sirens were connected to.[74]

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

Russian authorities are intensifying mobilization efforts targeting Central Asian migrant communities. Russian opposition outlets reported on October 22 that Russian riot police conducted a raid on a mosque in Kotelniki, Moscow Oblast on October 20, detained several dozen worshippers, took them on buses to military registration and enlistment offices, and forced them to sign military service contracts.[75] Russian singer and TV show finalist Mamut Useinov stated that he was among the detainees and reported that Russian authorities threatened him and other detainees with imprisonment if they did not sign one-year military service contracts.[76] Useinov stated that authorities told the detainees that they would fight in Ukraine but did not specify a timeline for their deployment.[77] A Russian insider source relatedly claimed on October 22 that the Russian command sent an order to all departments of the Main Directorate of the Investigative Committee to “identify naturalized citizens of the Russian Federation who arrived from Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries and are evading military service” and demanded that the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) provide lists of the names and addresses of naturalized citizens from CIS states.[78] The insider source noted that the Investigative Committee and police are raiding hostels, apartments, catering units, and mosques using these lists and taking detainees straight to military registration offices.[79] Several Russian sources praised the raid, underlining intense xenophobic sentiment towards Central Asian migrants, and claimed that naturalized migrants have a duty to serve Russia.[80] Investigative Committee Head Alexander Bastrykin has notably pushed for the targeted mobilization of migrants from Central Asia and the Caucasus, claiming that migrants have a “constitutional responsibility to protect the country that received them.”[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)

Russian occupation authorities continue to use cultural and education programs to forcibly Russify Ukrainian children. Zaporizhia occupation head Yevgeny Balitsky stated on October 22 that 200 children from occupied Zaporizhia Oblast returned from a trip to Moscow and St. Petersburg with the “Cultural Map 4+85” program.[82] Balitsky claimed that over 2,500 children from occupied Zaporizhia Oblast will have participated in such cultural-educational programming by the end of 2023.[83] The “Cultural Map 4+85” program began in August of 2023 and operates under the auspices of the Russian Ministry of Culture, which claimed that up to 10,000 children from occupied Zaporizhia, Kherson, Donetsk, and Luhansk oblasts will take part in the program and visit Russian cultural sites.[84] Such programs appear to target school-aged children and teenagers and likely intend to Russify them while actively distancing them from their Ukrainian identities.

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Nothing significant to report.

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)

Satellite imagery indicates that Russian forces are expanding facilities in Belarus to store previously reported nuclear weapon deployments to Belarus. The *Wall Street Journal* published satellite imagery on October 18 showing the construction of a hangar near Asipovichy meant to house Iskander cruise missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads.[85] The *Wall Street Journal* also reported that satellite imagery from the area shows the construction of facilities typical for Russian nuclear weapons warehouses.[86] ISW has repeatedly assessed and continues to assess that the forward deployment of these nuclear weapons will not critically change the Russian threat to NATO, and any Russian use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine remains extremely unlikely.[87]

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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