

# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 23, 2023

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October 23, 2023, 5:15pm 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 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 1:30pm ET on October 23. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 24 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.**

**Russia's domestic production of artillery shells, supplemented by increased ammunition imports from North Korea, will likely allow Russian forces to sustain sufficient rates of artillery fire in Ukraine in 2024, albeit at a relatively lower level than during 2022.** Estonian Defense Forces Intelligence Center Head Colonel Ants Kiviselg stated on October 20 that Russia still has around four million artillery shells remaining, which Russian forces can use for "low intensity" warfare for an additional year.[1] Kiviselg noted that there are reports that North Korea has shipped up to 1,000 containers of ammunition to Russia, each containing between 300-500 pieces of artillery ammunition.[2] Kiviselg estimated that North Korea may have therefore provided between 300,000-500,000 pieces of ammunition to Russia, which can last up to one month at the current daily rate of consumption of around 10,000 shells a day.[3] Ukrainian military analyst Colonel Petro Chernyk reported on October 23 that Russian forces are currently firing between 10,000-15,000 shells a day, significantly lower than rates of fire in summer 2022 of 45,000-80,000 shells per day.[4] However, Western sources and satellite imagery have confirmed that North Korean deliveries, likely mostly comprised of artillery shells, have drastically increased since Russian and North Korean authorities likely began more official military-technical cooperation in September, as ISW previously reported, and North Korea is likely to provide further deliveries.[5] Based on Western estimates of Russian artillery production capacity and continued North Korean artillery exports, Russia will likely be able to maintain generally sufficient rates of fire in the foreseeable future. While an overall decrease in Russian fire rates could impede the ability of Russian forces to conduct large scale offensive operations, Russian forces are unlikely to face widespread shortages which would chronically undermine defensive operations, and the drop in the rate of fire will not inherently provide Ukrainian forces an advantage. The degree to which Ukraine's international partners sustain Ukraine's ability to sustain an effective weight of fire relative to Russian forces will be a key determiner of respective capabilities in 2024.

**Russian forces conducted another series of missile and drone strikes against Ukraine on the night of October 22 to 23.** The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched 13 Shahed-131/136 drones, one unspecified drone, and one Kh-59 cruise missile and that Ukrainian forces destroyed all targets.[6] Ukrainian Southern Operational Command reported that Russian forces conducted nine airstrikes using an unspecified number of Kh-31 anti-radar air-to-

surface missiles.[7] Ukrainian Southern Operational Command also reported that Ukrainian forces shot down nine Shahed drones that Russian forces aimed at port infrastructure in Odesa Oblast.[8] Russian forces have routinely targeted port and grain infrastructure in Odesa Oblast, and Ukrainian officials reported that Russia will likely renew strikes against Ukrainian critical infrastructure in the fall and winter.[9] Russia will likely continue to target Ukrainian port and grain infrastructure in an attempt to disrupt Ukrainian grain exports as Russia tries to expand its own grain exports, most recently through a 2.7 trillion-ruble (about \$26.5 billion) grain contract with China signed on October 17.[10]

### **Ukrainian forces advanced south of Bakhmut on October 23 amid continued counteroffensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia**

**Oblast.** Geolocated footage published on October 22 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced across the railway line north of Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut), confirming prior statements by the Ukrainian General Staff and Russian milbloggers.[11] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhia Oblast) direction.[12]

**The Russian government appears to be emphasizing defense spending over social programs in the 2024 federal budget despite contrary messaging intended to reassure the Russian populace.** The United Kingdom Ministry of Defense (UK MoD) reported on October 23 that the Russian government’s proposed 2024 budget includes a 68 percent increase in planned defense spending compared to 2023, increasing defense spending to six percent of Russian GDP.[13] The UK MoD noted that the Russian government will likely spend more money on payments and healthcare costs for wounded servicemen, a large portion of whom will likely require lifelong medical care, and for families of Russian servicemen killed in combat. The UK MoD stated that consistently heightened military spending will likely contribute to greater inflation within Russia. The UK MoD added that the Russian government has not proposed increased civilian education or healthcare spending in the 2024 budget, effectively cutting those budgets considering inflation rates. Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov notably claimed on October 16 that the Russian 2024-2026 draft budget is “not a military budget” during a State Duma Budget and Tax Committee meeting.[14] Siluanov added that the fulfillment of social obligations is one of the highest priority areas of the Russian federal budget, 30.5 percent of which is allocated to social issues. Siluanov’s statement indicates that Russian authorities still feel the need to downplay increased defense spending ahead of the March 2024 Russian presidential elections due to concerns about how the Russian population views this issue and the war in Ukraine as a whole. ISW previously reported that Russian President Vladimir Putin reportedly intends to discuss the war in Ukraine as little as possible in political messaging leading up to the presidential election.[15] Russian authorities may increasingly highlight social spending over defense spending as the presidential election draws closer, despite the reality of increased defense spending.

**Ukrainian Air Force Command Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat stated on October 22 that the first group of Ukrainian pilots will begin training with instructors on F-16 fighter jets “in the near future.”**[16] The pilots are currently training on F-16 simulators. *Politico* reported on October 13 that an unnamed US official stated that the pilots’ training may be accelerated due to Ukrainian forces’ urgent need for fighter jets.[17]

### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Russia's domestic production of artillery shells, supplemented by increased ammunition imports from North Korea, will likely allow Russian forces to sustain sufficient rates of artillery fire in Ukraine in 2024, albeit at a relatively lower level than during 2022.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Avdiivka and made confirmed advances northeast of Avdiivka.**
- **Russian sources claimed that Russian forces pushed Ukrainian forces back from some newly captured positions on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast but noted that Ukrainian forces maintain a presence on the east bank.**
- **Russian forces conducted another series of missile and drone strikes against Ukraine on the night of October 22 to 23.**
- **Ukrainian forces advanced south of Bakhmut on October 23 amid continued counteroffensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast.**
- **The Russian government appears to be emphasizing defense spending over social programs in the 2024 federal budget despite contrary messaging intended to reassure the Russian populace.**
- **Ukrainian Air Force Command Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat stated on October 22 that the first group of Ukrainian pilots will begin training with instructors on F-16 fighter jets “in the near future.”**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Kupyansk, along the Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, south of Donetsk City, in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and made confirmed gains in some areas.**
- **Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu met with Russian Federation Council Speaker Valentina Matvienko and the Federation Committee on Defense and Security on October 23.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of October 23, 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)**

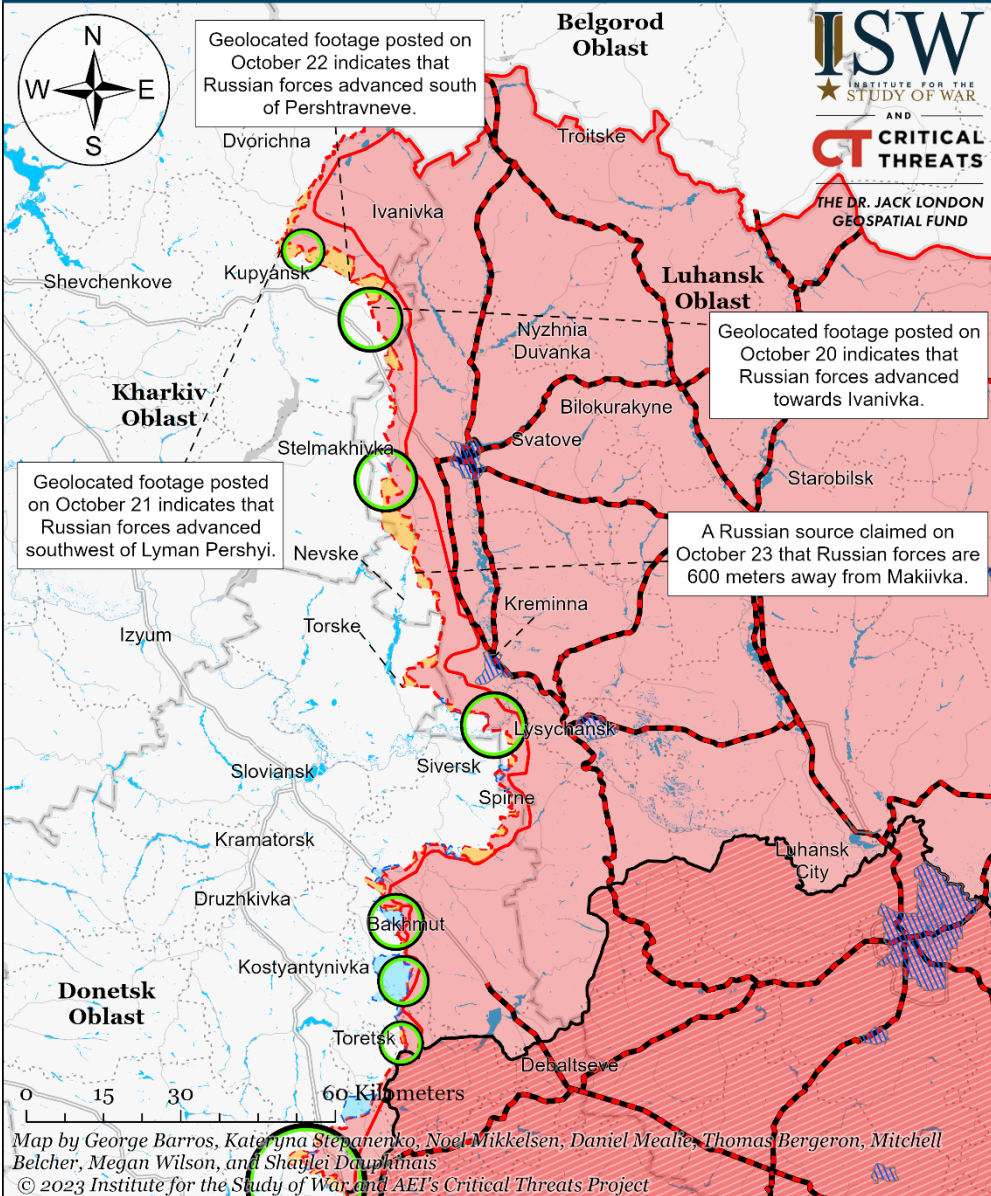
Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Kupyansk on October 23 and made a limited confirmed advance. Geolocated footage published on October 22 indicates that Russian forces marginally advanced southeast of Ivanivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk).[18] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are slowly advancing toward Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk) and Petropavlivka (7km east of Kupyansk).[19] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Synkivka and Ivanivka.[20] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that elements of the 15th Motorized Rifle Regiment (2nd Motorized Rifle Division) and 26th Tank Regiment (47th Tank Division) both of the 1st Guards Tank Army attacked near Ivanivka and Kyslivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk).[21] Mashovets stated that elements of the 138th and 25th Motorized Rifle Brigades (both of the 6th Combined Arms Army, Western Military District) unsuccessfully attacked near Synkivka.[22] Ukrainian “Steel Cordon” Border Guards Assault Brigade Spokesperson Ivan Shevtsov stated that Russian forces have changed their tactics and are conducting assaults with groups of up to 30 personnel without equipment in the Kupyansk direction, while Russian forces attack with 30 to 50 personnel using heavy equipment in the Lyman direction.[23]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Kupyansk on October 23. The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Synkivka and Ivanivka.[24] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Petropavlivka.[25]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Svatove-Kreminna line on October 23 but did not make confirmed advances. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are 600 meters away from Makiivka (20km southwest of Svatove), although ISW can only confirm that Russian forces hold positions within 2km from Svatove at their closest point.[26] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces made limited advances in the Serebryanske forest area (11km south of Kreminna) in the past week.[27] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Nadiya (15km west of Svatove) and the Serebryanske forest area.[28] A Russian milblogger claimed that fighting is ongoing in the Siversk direction (19km south of Kreminna).[29]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked along the Svatove-Kreminna line on October 23. The Russian MoD and other Russian sources claimed that Russian forces repelled attacks near Nadiya, Novoyehorivka (16km southwest of Svatove), Hryhorivka (11km south of Kreminna), Dibrova (7km southwest of Kreminna) and in the Svyato-Pokrovske direction (23km southwest of Kreminna).[30]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of October 23, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



- 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.

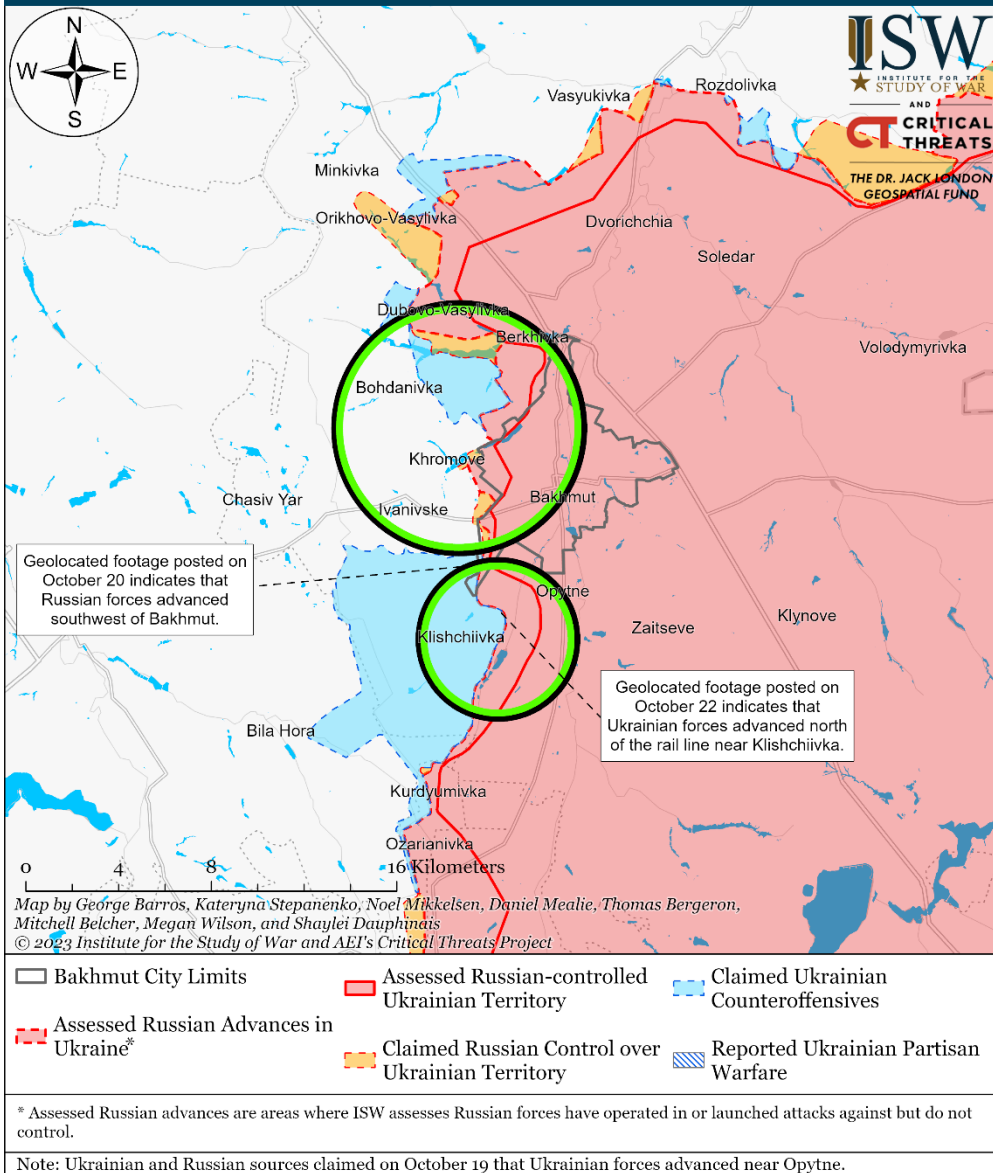
## **Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)**

Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut on October 23 and made confirmed advances. Geolocated footage published on October 22 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced across the railway northeast of Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut), confirming prior statements made by both the Ukrainian General Staff and Russian milbloggers since October 18.[31] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive actions south of Bakhmut.[32] Russian sources continued to contest the fact that Ukrainian forces crossed the railway line and claimed on October 22 and 23 that Ukrainian unsuccessfully attempted to cross the railway near Klishchiivka, whereas other Russian milbloggers claimed on October 23 that Russian forces pushed Ukrainian forces away from the railway near Klishchiivka and Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).[33] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces successfully counterattacked near Khromove (immediately west of Bakhmut) and in the direction of Bohdanivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut).[34] The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Bohdanivka.[35] The Russian MoD also claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks and struck Ukrainian personnel and equipment concentration areas near the Berkhivka reservoir (about 2km northwest of Bakhmut) and Klishchiivka and in the Soledar direction northeast of Bakhmut.[36]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Bohdanivka, Khromove, Ivanivske (6km west of Bakhmut), Klishchiivka, Andriivka, and Druzhba (18km southwest of Bakhmut).[37] Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that Russian forces attacked east of Klishchiivka, near Andriivka and Khromove, and in the direction of Bohdanivka.[38] A Russian milblogger claimed on October 22 that Russian forces persistently attacked near Klishchiivka and Andriivka in the past week but struggled to push Ukrainian forces back from the railway due to Ukrainian control of the heights in the area.[39] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated on October 23 that elements of the Russian 1428th Territorial Defense Motorized Rifle Regiment, 83rd Guards Air Assault (VDV) Brigade, and 4th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People's Republic [LNR] Army Corps) are operating near Klishchiivka and Andriivka.[40] Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov claimed that elements of the Russian 346th Spetsnaz Brigade (Russian General Staff Main Directorate [GRU]), 4th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade of the 2nd LNR Army Corps, and Chechen “Akhmat” Spetsnaz forces are operating near Andriivka and that elements of the Russian 57th Motorized Rifle Regiment (6th Motorized Rifle Division, 3rd Army Corps, Western Military District) and Chechen “Akhmat” Spetsnaz forces are operating in the Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut) direction.[41] A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the Russian 98th VDV Division are operating east of Khromove.[42]



# Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of October 23, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

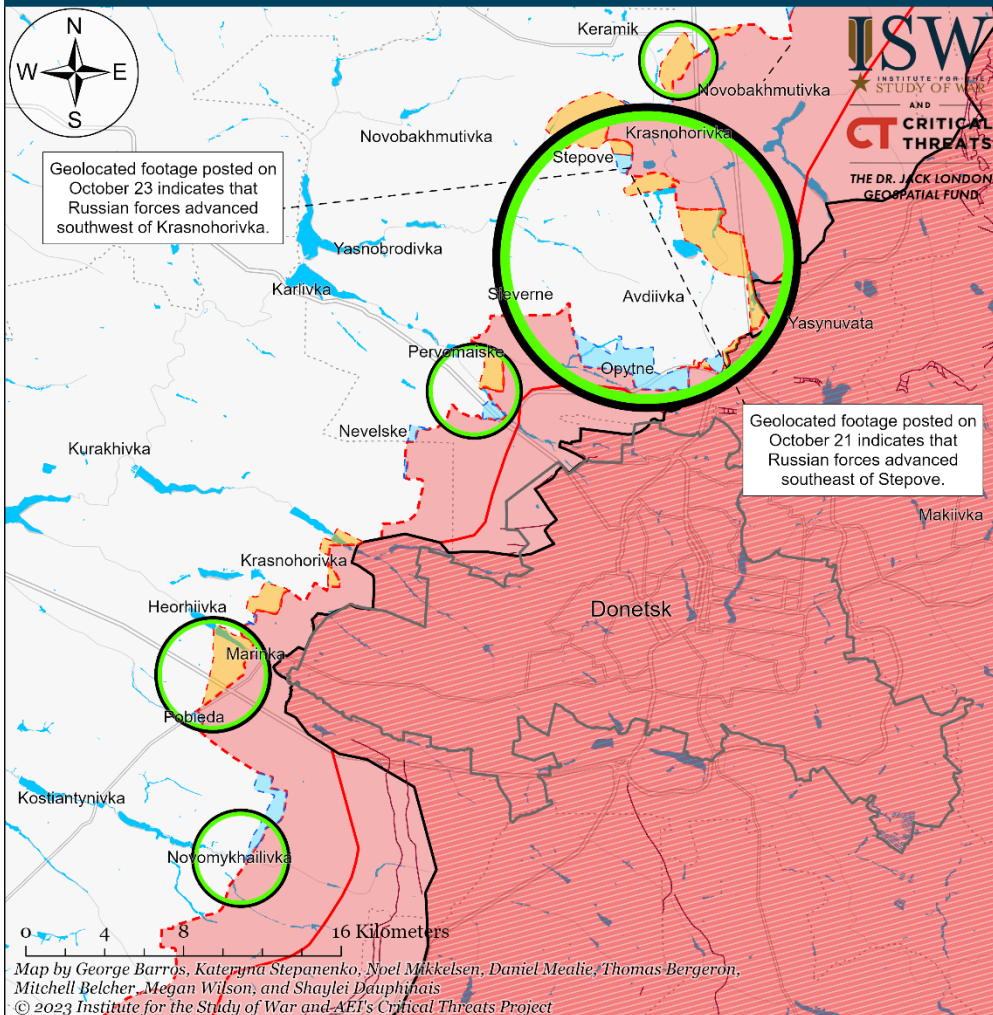


Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Avdiivka and made confirmed advances on October 23. Geolocated footage published on October 23 indicates that Russian forces advanced southwest of Krasnohorivka (5km northeast of Avdiivka).[43] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces have advanced almost two kilometers in the Avdiivka area in the past few days.[44] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced near Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka) and to the railway line north of the waste heap area northwest of Avdiivka.[45] A Ukrainian source stated that the waste heap is a contested “gray zone,” and a Russian milblogger claimed on October 22 that Russian forces are unable to take control of the waste heap due to heavy Ukrainian artillery fire.[46] Another Russian milblogger claimed on October 22 that Russian forces broke through to the waste heap and railway near Stepove (8km northwest of Avdiivka) and pushed Ukrainian forces back

near Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka) and Spartak (4km south of Avdiivka) in the past week.[47] A Ukrainian source stated on October 23 that Russian forces, including elements of the Russian 9th Motorized Rifle Brigade (Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] 1st Army Corps), 110th Motorized Rifle Brigade (DNR 1st Army Corps), and 55th Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st Combined Arms Army, Central Military District), advanced near Optyne (4km south of Avdiivka) and Vodyane (7km southwest of Avdiivka).[48] Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 1st Motorized Rifle Brigade and 9th Motorized Rifle Brigade (both of the DNR 1st Army Corps) pushed Ukrainian forces 200 meters back near Opytne (4km south of Avdiivka) and that elements of the 114th Motorized Rifle Brigade (DNR 1st Army Corps) gained a foothold west of Krasnohorivka.[49] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked near Stepove, Novokalynove (7km north of Avdiivka), Sieverne, and south of Avdiivka.[50] Ukrainian sources, including the Ukrainian General Staff, reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Keramik (10km northwest of Avdiivka), Stepove, Tonenke (5km west of Avdiivka), Avdiivka, Opytne, Pervomaiske, and south of the Tsarska Okhota restaurant south of Avdiivka.[51] A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the Russian MoD-controlled "Redut" private military company (PMC) are operating in the Avdiivka area.[52] A Ukrainian source stated that Russian forces are forming assault groups, including elements of the Russian 106th VDV Division and the 1st Army Corps.[53] Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 21st Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Combined Arms Army) were also redeployed from the Lyman direction to the Avdiivka area.[54]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Avdiivka on October 23 but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances. Russian sources claimed on October 22 and 23 that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near the waste heap northwest of Avdiivka, Pisky (8km southwest of Donetsk City), Vodyane, Opytne, and Pervomaiske.[55] A Russian milblogger continued to deny claims of Ukrainian advances near Pisky and Opytne on October 23.[56] Another Russian milblogger claimed on October 22 that Ukrainian forces advanced near Pisky in the past week.[57]

# Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of October 23, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



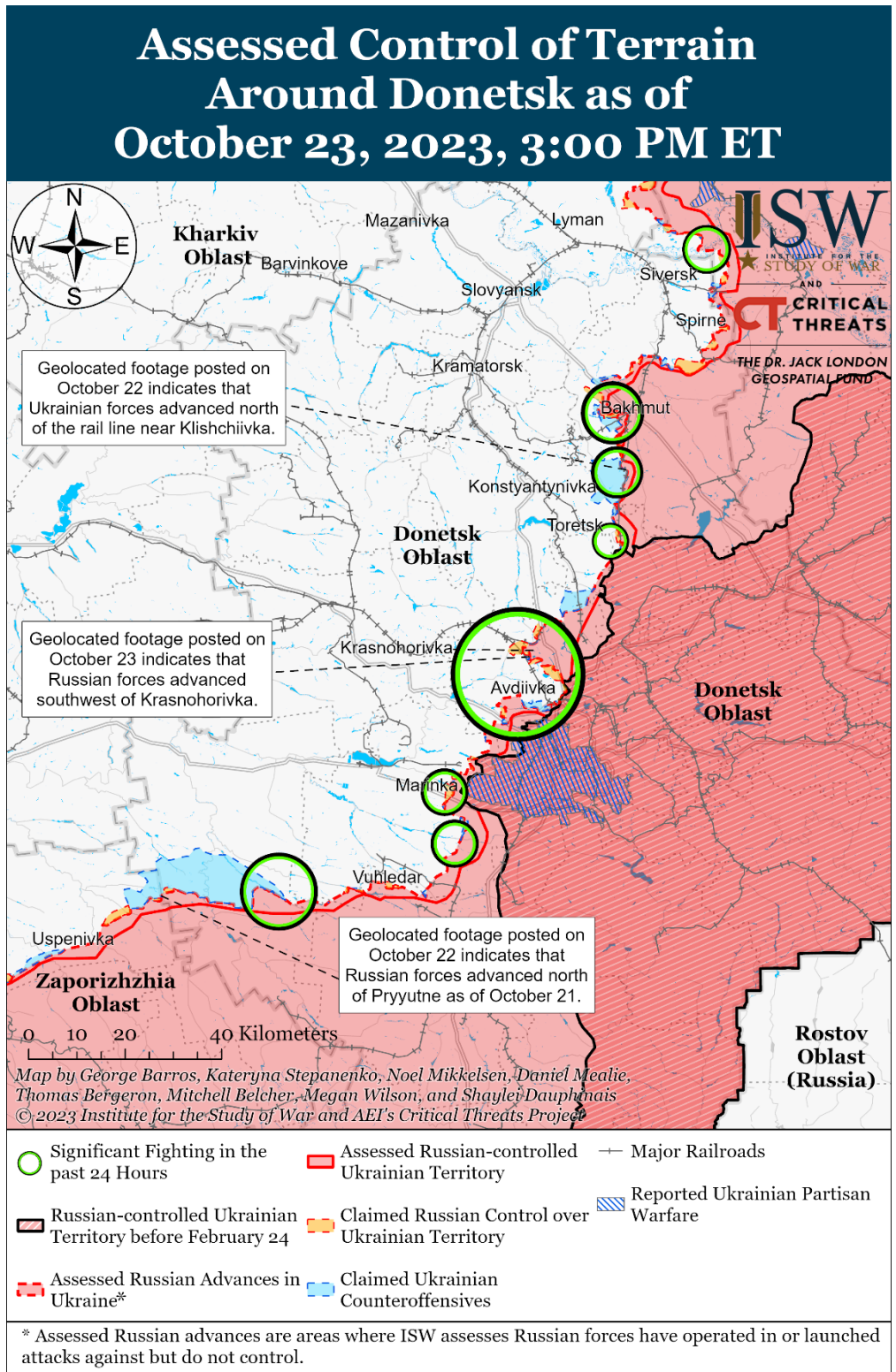
Donetsk City Limits	Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*	Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory	Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory	Russian Field Fortifications

\* 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 23 that Russian forces advanced almost 2 kilometers near Avdiivka. A Ukrainian source claimed on October 22 that Russian forces advanced 1.5 kilometers in depth along a one kilometer wide front north of Avdiivka. A Ukrainian source claimed on October 23 that Ukrainian forces pushed Russian forces back 200 meters near Opytne.

Russian forces conducted offensive operations southwest of Donetsk City on October 23 but did not make any confirmed advances. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced near Nevelske (directly west of Donetsk City) and attacked near Novomykhailivka (10km southwest of Donetsk City) and in Marinka.[58] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Marinka, Nevelske, Pobieda (5km southwest of Donetsk City), and Novomykhailivka.[59] A Russian milblogger claimed that positional battles are ongoing near Marinka, Novomykhailivka, and Vuhledar (30km southwest of Donetsk City).[60]

Ukrainian forces did not conduct any claimed or confirmed ground attacks southwest of Donetsk City on October 23.



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

Russian forces continued ground attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast area on October 23 and made confirmed gains. Geolocated footage posted on October 22 shows that Russian forces have marginally advanced north of Pryytne (15km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[61] Several Russian sources claimed that Russian forces counterattacked and advanced nearly 3 kilometers near Pryytne, although the available geolocated footage only confirms that Russian forces have advanced less than a kilometer in the area.[62] Russian milbloggers also claimed that Russian forces attempted to improve their tactical positions near Novodonetske (11km southeast of Velyka Novosilka), Novomayorske (18km southeast of Velyka Novosilka), and Urozhaine (10km south of Velyka Novosilka).[63] A Russian milblogger posted footage purportedly of the Russian 40th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) operating near Novomayorske.[64] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks southeast of Velyka Novosilka near Zolota Nyva and Prechystivka, 11km and 18km southeast of Velyka Novosilka respectively.[65]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of October 23, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted ground attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area on October 23 and reportedly made a limited advance. One milblogger claimed that Ukrainian attacks forced Russian troops out of some positions near Novodonetske.[66] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces stopped a Ukrainian troop rotation near Novomayorske.[67]

Russian forces conducted counterattacks in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on October 23 and reportedly restored some lost positions. The Ukrainian General Staff stated that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful ground attacks near Robotyne, Verbove (10km east of Robotyne), and southeast of Mala Tokmachka (10km northeast of Robotyne).[68] Zaporizhzhia Oblast occupation deputy Vladimir Rogov claimed that Russian forces launched a counterattack near Verbove and retook several strongholds.[69] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces counterattacked northwest of Robotyne and near Verbove.[70] The Russian MoD posted footage of the 7th Guards Mountain Air Assault Division operating a TOS-1A thermobaric artillery system near Verbove.[71]



Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on October 23 but did not make any claimed or confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian troops are continuing offensive operations in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhzhia) direction.[72] The

Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian attack near Robotyne.[73] Several Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces launched attacks on the Robotyne-Verbove line and northwest of Robotyne towards Kopani (5km northwest of Robotyne), but that Russian forces repelled the attacks.[74] A Russian milblogger claimed that localized and positional attacks are ongoing west of Robotyne in the Zhrebryanky-Pyatykhatky sector of the front.[75]

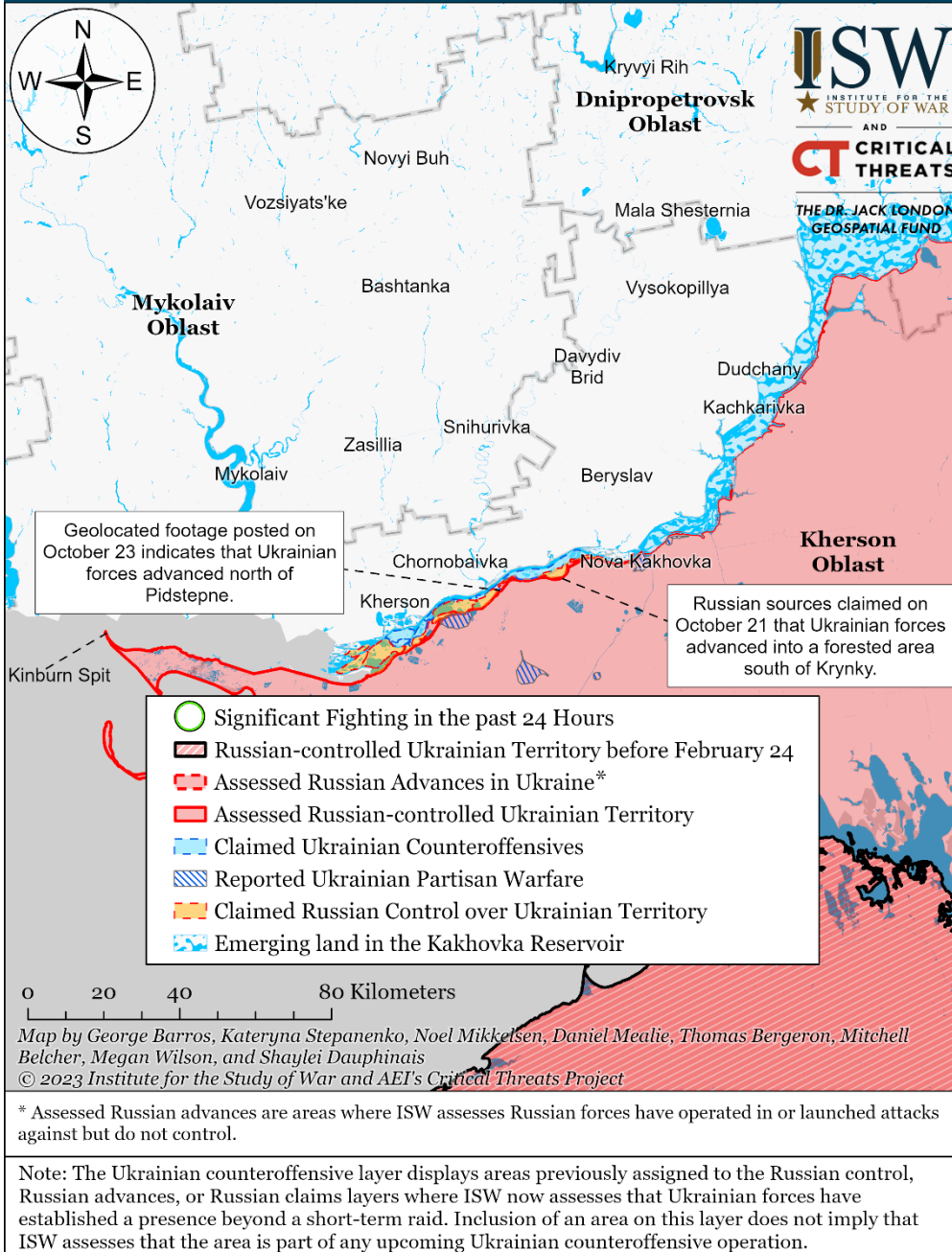


Russian sources claimed that Russian forces pushed Ukrainian forces back from some newly captured Ukrainian positions on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast but noted that Ukrainian forces still maintain a presence on the east bank. Two prominent Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces counterattacked and pushed Ukrainian troops back from positions in Krynyky (30km east of Kherson City and 2km from the Dnipro River).[76] Geolocated footage posted on October 23 confirms that Ukrainian forces advanced to positions north of Pidstepne (20km east of Kherson City and 3km



from the Dnipro River).[77] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continue to operate on the east bank between Krynky and Pidstepne and warned that Ukrainian troops hope to break through the Pidstepne-Pishchanivka line towards Oleshky (5km directly southeast of Kherson City).[78] Ukrainian military observer Konstantyn Mashovets noted that Russian forces appear to be constructing a "mobile tactical reserve" group comprised of motorized rifle units and battalions of various private military companies (PMCs) in the Oleshky area to quickly deploy small groups into contested areas on the east bank.[79] Mashovets also reported that Russia is laterally redeploying elements of the 58th Combined Arms Army (Southern Military District) away from the western Zaporizhia direction to Kherson Oblast, indicating that the Russian command sees Ukrainian actions on the east bank as a substantial threat.[80]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of October 23, 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 met with Russian Federation Council Speaker Valentina Matvienko and the Federation Committee on Defense and Security on October 23.[81] Shoigu and the

senators discussed the “most pressing issues of supporting” the war in Ukraine, including fulfilling budgetary targets weapons and equipment supply, supporting Russian servicemen and their families, and other unspecified legislative initiatives. Shoigu emphasized the importance of Russian defense-industrial base (DIB) enterprises in meeting the needs of the Russian military.

Ukrainian Luhansk Oblast Military Administration Head Artem Lysohor stated on October 23 that occupation authorities are mobilizing full-time university students in occupied Luhansk Oblast.[82] Lysohor stated that occupation authorities forced students from the Donbas State Technical University in occupied Alchevsk, Luhansk Oblast to take academic leave to serve with the Russian military.

The Ukrainian General Staff reported on October 23 that occupation police are searching occupied Nova Kakhovka, Kherson Oblast for up to 60 Russian servicemen who reportedly deserted their posts.[83]

### **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)**

The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on October 23 that occupation collaborators, university administrators, and members of pro-Kremlin organizations are forcing civilians to donate blood in occupied Donetsk Oblast, likely to transfuse into wounded Russian servicemen fighting near Avdiivka.[84]

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

Russian authorities are increasing the number of convictions and intensifying punishments for individuals found guilty of spreading "false information" about or "discrediting" the Russian military. Russian news outlet *Kommersant* reported on October 23 that Russian courts convicted 21 people of spreading false information about the Russian military in the first six months of 2023 in comparison to 14 total convictions in 2022.[85] *Kommersant* also noted that Russian courts imprisoned eight people in 2023 for spreading false information about the Russian military, whereas Russian courts only imprisoned two people on the same charge in 2022.[86] *Kommersant* reported that Russian courts fined and convicted three people of discrediting the Russian military in 2022, whereas Russian courts have convicted 15 people on the same charge and sentenced two of them to imprisonment in 2023.[87]

### **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 Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on October 23 that Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) officers accused the Belarusian defense-industrial base (DIB) of disrupting the supply of equipment to the Russian military.[88] Russian authorities are reportedly concerned that Belarus is prioritizing supplying materiel to other countries, such as Iran, and are demanding Belarusian DIB companies prioritize Russia.

**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://news.err dot ee/1609139906/edf-colonel-russia-still-has-four-million-artillery-shells-left>

[2] <https://news.err dot ee/1609139906/edf-colonel-russia-still-has-four-million-artillery-shells-left>

[3] <https://news.err dot ee/1609139906/edf-colonel-russia-still-has-four-million-artillery-shells-left> ; <https://twitter.com/RALee85/status/1715836719071686908> ; <https://twitter.com/shashj/status/1715817353760366746>

[4] <https://armyinform.com dot ua/2023/10/23/snaryady-shho-kndr-nadala-rosiyi-ne-vplynut-na-perebig-vijny-petro-chernyk/>

[5] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar100823> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar091723> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar091623> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar091223> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar091123> ; <https://beyondparallel.csis.org/dramatic-increase-in-dprk-russia-border-rail-traffic-after-kim-putin-summit/> ; <https://twitter.com/jseldin/status/1712868618864558298?s=20>

[6] <https://t.me/kpszsu/6655>

[7] [https://t.me/SJTF\\_Odes/1826](https://t.me/SJTF_Odes/1826)

[8] [https://t.me/SJTF\\_Odes/1824](https://t.me/SJTF_Odes/1824) ; <https://www.facebook.com/OperationalCommandSouth/posts/pfbid02w9gnrQQAXm1KnRZY5cBKkWdFVsPZiVPcK7sJAKR14AXEtwvWrXs7taF1jKExEueWl>

[9] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar100223> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar091723> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar090723> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar082323> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101323> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar100823>

[10] <https://iz dot ru/1591553/sofia-smirnova/zernyshko-k-zernyshku-rossiia-i-kitai-dogovorilis-o-krupneishei-postavke-zernovykh>

[11] <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/55405> ; <https://x.com/moklasen/status/1716194918782144574?s=20>

[12] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbidOrHP1Cxx1y4H74Rh5cQcxtfuDqPfWbZbYfyFquqRD8m2pzT38KfsB1MZvr5h5fPzjl>

- [13] <https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1716331191895212156>
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