



Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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

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

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

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 1:30pm ET on February 24. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the February 25 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Click [here](#) to read ISW's latest warning update on the possibility of Transnistria, a pro-Russian breakaway region of Moldova, calling for Russian annexation or taking other action to support Russian hybrid operations against Moldova.

Ukraine continues to defend against Russian aggression and the Kremlin's attempt to destroy Ukrainian statehood and identity despite growing difficulties two years after the start of Russia's full-scale invasion. Two years ago Russia launched a full-scale war of conquest to overthrow the Ukrainian government and forcibly install a pro-Russian regime firmly under Moscow's control. Russian forces drove on Kyiv from several directions and struck at Kharkiv, Kherson, Mariupol, and other Ukrainian cities. Russian President Vladimir Putin expected Ukrainians to welcome his forces or flee. Instead, Ukrainians fought for their freedom. They stopped the Russian drives on Kyiv and Kharkiv cities, stopped the Russian advance on Mykolayiv and Odesa cities, and fought Putin's troops to a standstill along the rest of the line. Then, armed with experience, courage, determination, and growing Western aid, Ukraine struck back. Ukrainian forces drove the Russians from Kyiv and away from Kharkiv and liberated large swathes of territory in northeastern Ukraine. They liberated Kherson City and forced Russian forces off the west (right) bank of the Dnipro River. They ended the threat to Ukraine's existence for the time.

But the Russians did not abandon their war aims or slacken their military operations. They remained in control of areas strategically and economically vital to Ukraine's survival and of millions of Ukrainians whom they are subjecting to brutal Russification campaigns and deportation schemes.[1] The Russians launched a missile and drone campaign against Ukraine's energy infrastructure and cities that continues to this day.[2] The Russians then ground through the eastern city of Bakhmut, taking losses so devastating that they prompted an armed rebellion against Moscow.[3] The Russians also prepared themselves for the expected Ukrainian 2023 counteroffensive. The excessive hopes for that counteroffensive were not met. The war assumed a positional character, and the expected US assistance has been held up.

The situation today is grave, but it is far from hopeless. Russian forces have regained the initiative across the theater and are attacking and making gains. Those gains thus far are very limited and extremely costly. More Russian soldiers have likely died to seize Avdiivka than died in the entire Soviet-Afghan war.[4] Ukrainians are

weary and worried that American military assistance will cease, but they continue to fight with determination, ingenuity, and skill. Ukraine's air defenders are dropping Russian planes from the sky while Ukrainian drone- and missile operators sink Russian ships.[5] And Ukrainian soldiers are fighting for their positions against Russian "meat assaults" using drones in novel ways as well as the artillery, tanks, and traditional weapons of war available to them. The Ukrainian Air Force will receive its first F-16s in the coming months, and Ukraine's European allies are racing to make good deficiencies in other war materiel.[6] American military assistance remains essential—only the United States has the resources to give Ukraine right now what Ukraine most needs.[7] If the United States, in the end, withholds that aid, then the situation can become very grave indeed.

But the war is far from over. Ukraine has not lost and there is no reason for Ukraine to lose. Russians are adapting for a long war effort in Ukraine, but they are not the Red Army hordes wrapped in the triumphant banners of World War II victories that Putin and his propagandists pretend them to be.[8] The Russian military suffers from many flaws that Ukraine has learned to exploit.[9] And the combined economic power of Ukraine's allies is many times that of Russia.

Putin remains a deadly threat to NATO as well as to Ukraine, however. The Kremlin has been setting conditions to conduct hybrid warfare operations in the Baltic States and Finland for months and is currently engaged in such operations against Moldova.[10] Putin's aims remain the destruction of NATO as an effective alliance, the breaking of the tie between the United States and Europe, and the construction of a new global order in which Russia's voice and power are dominant.[11] The interests of America, Europe, and America's allies in Asia and around the world are inextricably tied with helping Ukraine defeat Russia.[12]

Ukraine's European and Canadian partners commemorated the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion by committing additional aid to Ukraine and discussing Ukraine's integration into the European Union (EU). European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen stated that the European Commission will provide the framework for negotiations of Ukraine's EU accession in mid-March 2024.[13] Von der Leyen also stated that the EU will provide the first tranche of 4.5 billion euros (about \$4.8 billion) of unspecified aid to Ukraine in March as part of the EU's recently announced support package of 50 billion euros (about \$54 billion) for 2024-2027. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba stated that the EU plans to deliver almost 170,000 rounds of artillery ammunition to Ukraine by the end of March.[14] Kuleba stated that Spain is preparing a new military aid package for Ukraine that will include ammunition.[15] The United Kingdom (UK) announced that it will spend £245 million (about \$310 million) throughout 2024 to procure and invigorate supply chains to produce ammunition for Ukraine.[16] The UK Ministry of Defense (MoD) and UK-based Cook Defense Systems signed contracts to provide tracks for tanks and armored vehicles to aid Ukraine in restoring damaged vehicles. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Miloni signed a security cooperation agreement in which Italy stated that it will continue to provide assistance to Ukraine over 10 years.[17] Zelensky and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau also signed a 10-year security cooperation agreement in which Canada allocated three billion Canadian dollars (about \$2.2 billion) in financial and defense aid to Ukraine in 2024.[18]

Russian opposition media estimated that upwards of 75,000 Russian personnel have died in Ukraine since the start of the full-scale invasion in February 2022.[19] Russian opposition outlets *Meduza* and *Mediazona* published a joint report on February 24 wherein they compared *Mediazona's* ongoing count of confirmed Russian deaths with the Russian Register of Inheritance Cases (RND) and mortality data from the Russian Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat) to estimate the number of Russian military deaths in Ukraine.[20] *Meduza* and *Mediazona* estimated that 66,000 to 88,000 Russian personnel have died in the war between February 2022 and December 2023.[21] *Meduza* and *Mediazona* extrapolated the current monthly rate of Russian military deaths in Ukraine to January and February 2024 and estimated that roughly 83,000 Russian personnel may have died since the start of the full-scale invasion.[22] *Meduza* and *Mediazona* noted that Russian military deaths in Ukraine began to steadily increase following the start of localized Russian offensive operations in eastern Ukraine in October

2023 and added that Russian volunteers have made up the majority of the deaths since mid-2023.[23] US intelligence assessed in December 2023 that Russian forces had suffered 315,000 casualties in Ukraine since February 2022.[24] *Meduza's* and *Mediazona's* estimate is consistent with this US assessment, assuming a standard three to one wounded-to-killed casualty rate for Russian forces in Ukraine.

Russian forces are currently sustaining offensive operations in Ukraine despite these heavy losses by relying on crypto-mobilization efforts.[25] Russia is generating new forces roughly at a rate equivalent to current Russian losses, which allows Russian forces to consistently reinforce attacking units and regularly conduct operational-level rotations.[26] It is unclear if Russia would be able to sustain offensive operations in the same way at a higher operational tempo that would generate even greater losses, however.

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) continues to highlight Russian Central Grouping of Forces Commander Colonel General Andrei Mordvichev and Russia's seizure of Avdiivka. The Russian MoD published footage on February 24 of Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu meeting with Mordvichev to discuss the Russian capture of Avdiivka at a Russian Central Grouping of Forces command post in occupied Ukraine.[27] Mordvichev claimed that Russian forces pushed Ukrainian forces back by over 10 kilometers during the Russian operation to seize Avdiivka.[28] Russian President Vladimir Putin noted on the evening of February 17 that Russian forces captured Avdiivka under Mordvichev's leadership, and the Russian MoD published footage on February 21 of Russian Chief of the General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov meeting with Mordvichev to discuss plans for future Russian operations in the Avdiivka direction.[29]

Mordvichev highlighted Russian technological and tactical adaptations in the Russian seizure of Avdiivka in a likely effort to address persistent criticisms of Russian forces in Ukraine. Mordvichev told Shoigu that the effectiveness of Russian forces' reconnaissance-strike complex (RSC) and reconnaissance-fire complex (RFC) has "increased significantly." [30] A Russian RSC system is "designed for the coordinated employment of high-precision, long-range weapons linked to real-time intelligence data and precise targeting provided to a fused intelligence and fire-direction center," and the Russian RFC is the RSC's tactical equivalent using tactical fire systems such as tube artillery, tactical drones, and short-range rockets.[31] Russian forces have yet to employ an operational-level RSC system at scale in Ukraine, however, and Mordvichev is likely applying the operational concept of the RSC alongside the RFC to Russian tactical operations in Avdiivka. ISW has consistently observed reports that Russian forces combine widespread drone reconnaissance data in order to conduct artillery, aviation, and loitering munition strikes. ISW assessed that Russian forces temporarily established limited and localized air superiority during the final days of the Russian seizure of Avdiivka.[32] Mordvichev notably did not highlight Russian glide bomb strikes, although Mordvichev may consider glide bomb strikes as part of the "RSC and RFC." Shoigu emphasized the importance of drones and stated that the Russian MoD plans to equip Russian forces with drones "controlled using artificial intelligence," likely referring to lethal autonomous systems. Mordvichev likely sought to manage expectations about future Russian offensive efforts while highlighting these alleged Russian adaptations and claimed that Ukrainian forces near Avdiivka have not decreased their intensity of indirect fire.[33] Mordvichev's comment diverges from the triumphalist commentary of other Russian officials, who have seized on Ukrainian ammunition shortages to highlight Russian success in Ukraine and attempt to weaken Ukrainian morale.[34]

Senior Russian military officials likely are attempting to deflect responsibility for high-profile apparent Russian war crimes away from themselves and onto mid- and low-level Russian commanders. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) published footage of Russian Central Grouping of Forces Commander Colonel General Andrei Mordvichev reporting to Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu that Russian forces captured about 200 Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) near Avdiivka.[35] Shoigu emphasized the need for Russian forces to treat POWs humanely "as [Russian forces] have always done" to Mordvichev and other Russian officers. Shoigu, like Russian President Vladimir Putin, is likely concerned about international repercussions for his subordinates' actions regarding apparent Russian war crimes and may have explicitly addressed Ukrainian POWs given recent international attention on Russian atrocities in Ukraine.[36]

A recent Russian opinion poll indicates that Russian sentiments about the war in Ukraine have largely remained unchanged in recent months, but notably suggests that another mobilization wave would be widely unpopular.

Independent Russian opposition polling organization *Chronicles* stated on February 24 that data from a survey conducted between January 23 and 29 indicates that respondents who are “consistent” supporters of the war – Russians who expressed support for the war, do not support a withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine without Russia having achieved its war aims, and think that Russia should prioritize military spending – increased from 12 percent to 17 percent between October 2023 and January 2024.[37] *Chronicles* previously observed a significant decrease in staunch war support between its October 2023 survey and an earlier poll in February 2023 that found that 22 percent of Russians were “consistent” war supporters.[38] *Chronicles* added that the proportion of “consistent” peace supporters – Russians who expressed opposite positions on the three survey questions – has largely remained the same at 19 percent of respondents in January 2024 compared to 20 percent in February 2023.[39] *Chronicles*’ observations that staunch pro-war and anti-war sentiments comprise a minority of Russian opinion are consistent with other recent independent Russian survey data that suggest that most Russians are largely apathetic to Russia’s war in Ukraine.[40]

Chronicles’ most recent poll also shows that 29 percent of respondents support demobilizing personnel mobilized through Russian President Vladimir Putin’s September 2022 partial mobilization decree, 26 percent favor the current state of Russian force generation efforts, and 17 percent support a new mobilization wave.[41] *Chronicles* added that even the majority of “consistent” war supporters support the status quo regarding mobilization at 34 percent and that only 22 percent of these respondents support another mobilization wave.[42] Putin attempted to address concerns about a new mobilization wave during his “Direct Line” event on December 14, 2023, stressing that there is no need for a subsequent mobilization wave due to the success of ongoing Russian crypto-mobilization efforts.[43] Putin is likely aware that a second mobilization wave would be widely unpopular and likely remains concerned that such a measure would generate widespread discontent. Putin may nevertheless determine in the future that force generation requirements in Ukraine outweigh the risks of domestic discontent, and he may become less concerned about public sentiment after his assured reelection in March 2024.

Ukrainian special services conducted a drone strike on one of Russia’s largest metallurgical plants on the night of February 23-24.

Ukrainian outlet *Suspilne* reported that sources stated that the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) and the Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) organized a drone strike on the Novolipetsk Metallurgical Plant (NLMK) in Lipetsk and that damage will stop production at the plant for a long time.[44] Lipetsk Oblast Governor Igor Artamonov claimed that Russian forces intercepted two drones in Lipetsk Oblast and that the plant’s operations were not significantly affected.[45] An NLMK representative claimed that the plant does not supply products to Russian defense industrial base (DIB) enterprises, likely in an attempt to downplay the extent of NLMK’s involvement in fulfilling contracts for the Russian government and defense industrial base (DIB).[46] *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL)* reported in July 2023 that NLMK won contracts to supply steel to the Izumrud plant in Vladivostok, which the Russian Federal Agency for State Property Management controls and which produces artillery control systems, drone engines, and systems for dropping explosives from drones.[47] *RFE/RL* also reported that NLMK supplied steel to state-owned enterprises involved in the production of nuclear weapons from 2014 to at least 2019.[48] Vladimir Lisin owns NLMK and is one of Russia’s top three richest oligarchs.[49]

Ukrainian reporting indicated that the A-50 long-range radar detection aircraft shootdown on February 23 temporarily halted Russian aviation operations elsewhere in the theater.

The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported that Russian forces ordered five Su-35 fighter aircraft to terminate ongoing combat missions following the A-50’s destruction and that some of these missions included conducting airstrikes near recently captured Avdiivka, Donetsk Oblast.[50] Ukrainian media reported

that sources in Ukrainian security services also stated that Ukrainian forces shot down the aircraft with a modernized S-200 air defense system and that all 10 crewmembers of the Russian A-50 died in the crash.[51]

Russian information space actors continued responding to the February 23 A-50 shootdown and largely denied that Ukraine is responsible for the downing of any recent Russian aircraft. Russian milbloggers continued to claim on February 23 and 24 that Russian forces were responsible for shooting down the A-50, but offered many different theories about the shootdown. One prominent milblogger claimed that Russian authorities are investigating a Russian S-400 crew for shooting down the A-50 while trying to intercept Ukrainian missiles targeting the A-50.[52] Another milblogger claimed that a Russian air defense crew purposefully targeted the A-50.[53] Other milbloggers continued to claim that Ukrainian forces could not have shot down the A-50 because the aircraft was out of range of Western-provided Patriot air defense systems and complained that Russian air defenders are so systemically incompetent that they shot down five of their aircraft in February 2024.[54] A prominent Wagner Group-affiliated milblogger dissented, however, expressing disbelief that Russian air defenses are so incompetent as to have shot down so many Russian aircraft in such a short period and attributed the shootdown to Ukrainian forces instead.[55]

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukraine continues to defend against Russian aggression and the Kremlin’s attempt to destroy Ukrainian statehood and identity despite growing difficulties two years after the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion.**
- **Ukraine’s European and Canadian partners commemorated the second anniversary of Russia’s full-scale invasion by committing additional aid to Ukraine and discussing Ukraine’s integration into the European Union (EU).**
- **Russian opposition media estimated that upwards of 75,000 Russian personnel have died in Ukraine since the start of the full-scale invasion in February 2022.**
- **The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) continues to highlight Russian Central Grouping of Forces Commander Colonel General Andrei Mordvichev and Russia’s seizure of Avdiivka.**
- **Mordvichev highlighted Russian technological and tactical adaptations in the Russian seizure of Avdiivka in a likely effort to address persistent criticisms of Russian forces in Ukraine.**
- **Senior Russian military officials likely are attempting to deflect responsibility for high-profile apparent Russian war crimes away from themselves and onto mid- and low-level Russian commanders.**
- **A recent Russian opinion poll indicates that Russian sentiments about the war in Ukraine have largely remained unchanged in recent months, but notably suggests that another mobilization wave would be widely unpopular.**
- **Ukrainian special services conducted a drone strike on one of Russia’s largest metallurgical plants on the night of February 23-24.**
- **Ukrainian reporting indicated that the A-50 long-range radar detection aircraft shot down on February 23 temporarily halted Russian aviation operations elsewhere in the theater.**
- **Russian information space actors continued responding to the February 23 A-50 shootdown and largely denied that Ukraine is responsible for the downing of any recent Russian aircraft.**
- **Russian forces recently made confirmed advances near Bakhmut and Avdiivka and in western Zaporizhia Oblast amid continued positional engagements along the entire line of contact on February 24.**
- **Indian authorities have asked Russian authorities for the “early discharge” of Indian citizens fighting for Russia in Ukraine.**

- The Russian government continues efforts to support infrastructure and logistics development in occupied Ukraine likely to support the Russian defense industrial base (DIB) and solidify Russian control over occupied areas.



We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We will continue to evaluate and report on the effects of these criminal activities on the Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population and specifically on combat in

Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

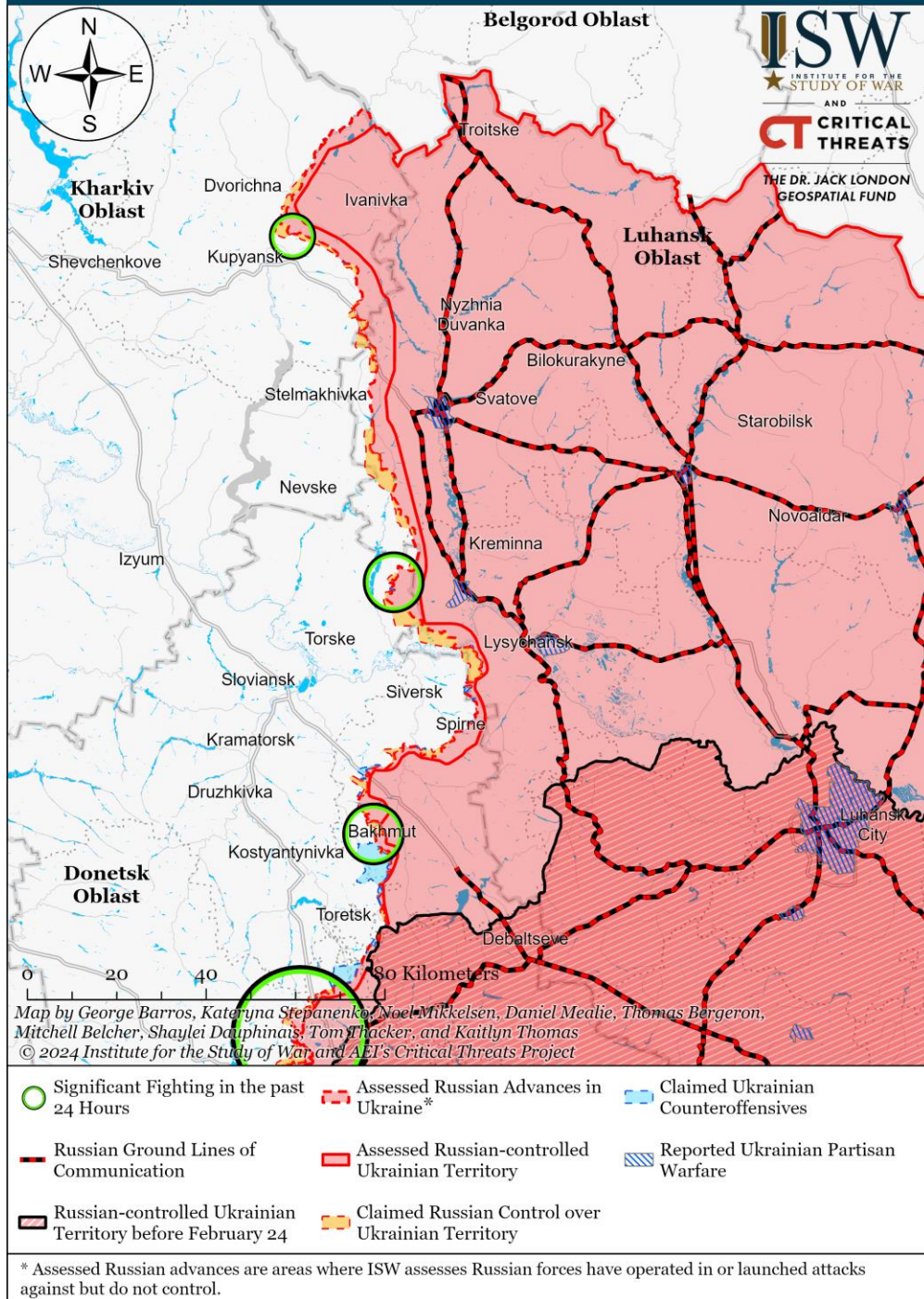
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis
- Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Russian Technological Adaptations
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas
- Ukrainian Defense Industrial Base Efforts
- Russian Information Operations and Narratives
- Significant Activity in Belarus

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)

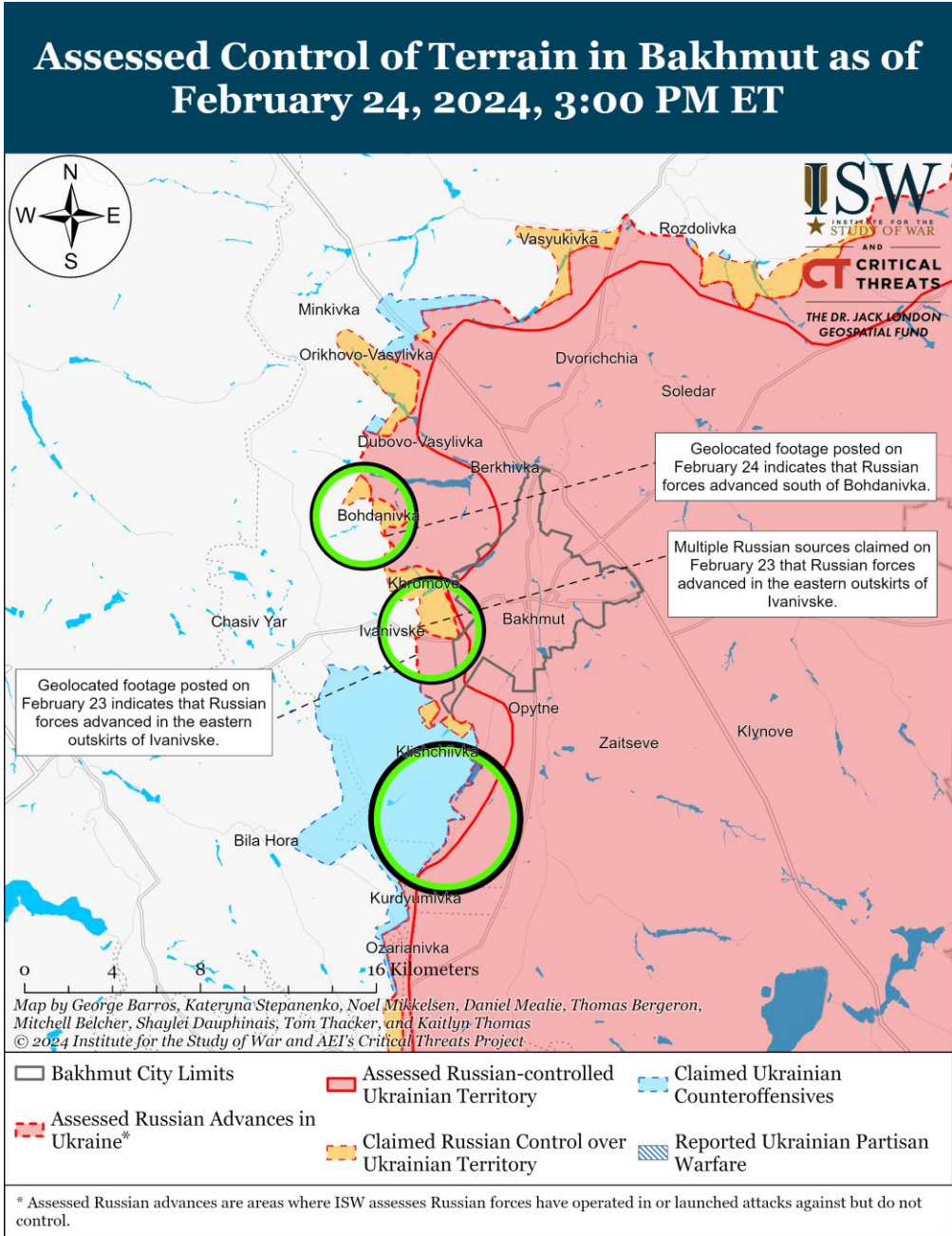
Positional engagements continued northeast of Kupyansk and near Kreminna on February 24, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Positional engagements continued northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka and Lake Lyman; northwest of Kreminna near Zhytlivka; and west of Kreminna near Terny.[56] Elements of the Russian 123rd Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People’s Republic [LNR] Army Corps [AC]) are reportedly operating south of Kreminna near Berestove.[57]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of February 24, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



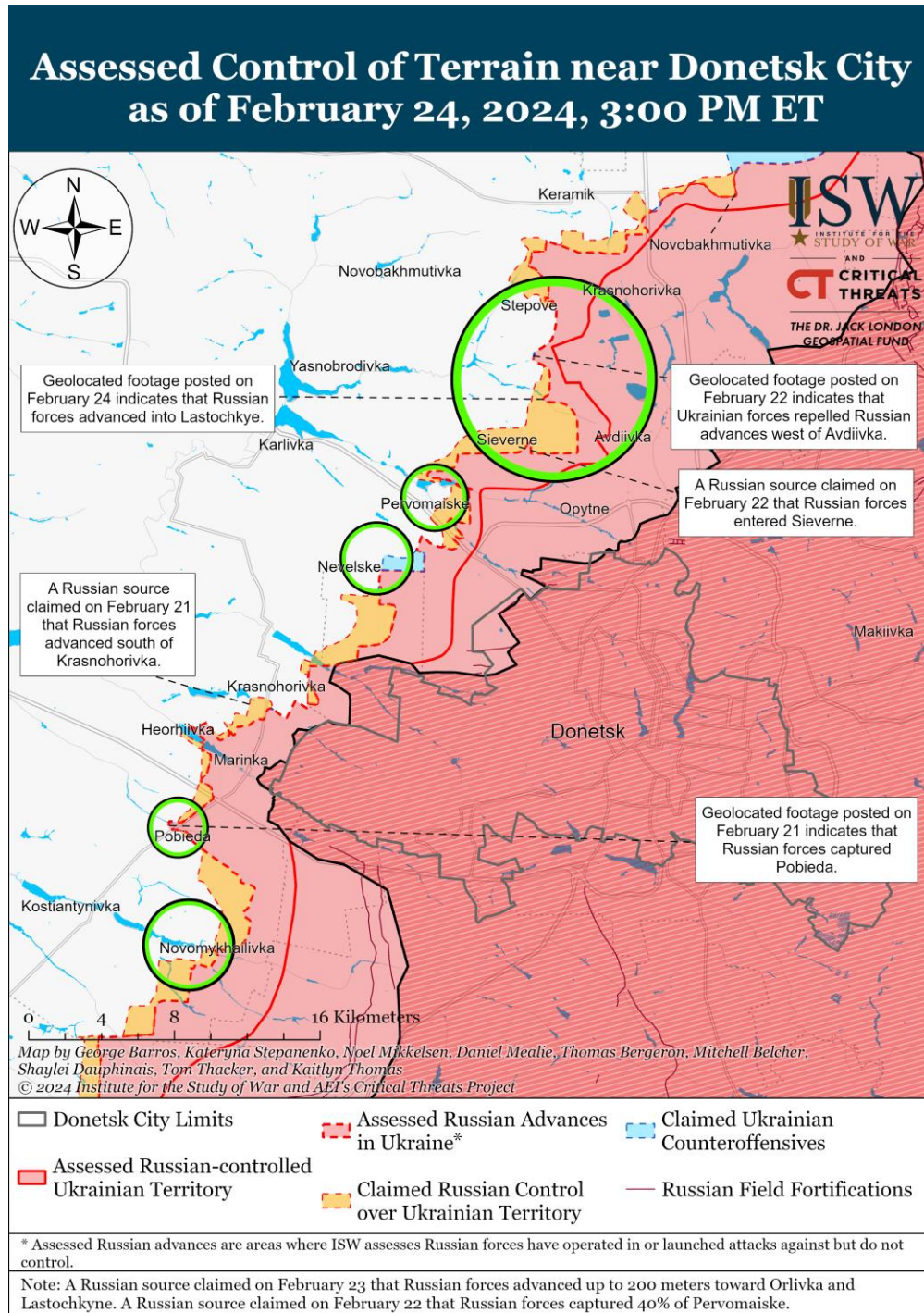
Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)

Russian forces recently advanced near Bakhmut amid continued positional fighting in the area on February 24. Geolocated footage published on February 24 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced south and southeast of Bohdanivka (northwest of Bakhmut).[58] A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the Russian 98th Airborne (VDV) Division, the 11th VDV Brigade, and the 150th Motorized Rifle Division (8th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are attacking Ukrainian positions near Ivanivske (west of Bakhmut) and made further gains in the settlement's eastern outskirts.[59] Positional fighting continued southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka and Andriivka.[60]



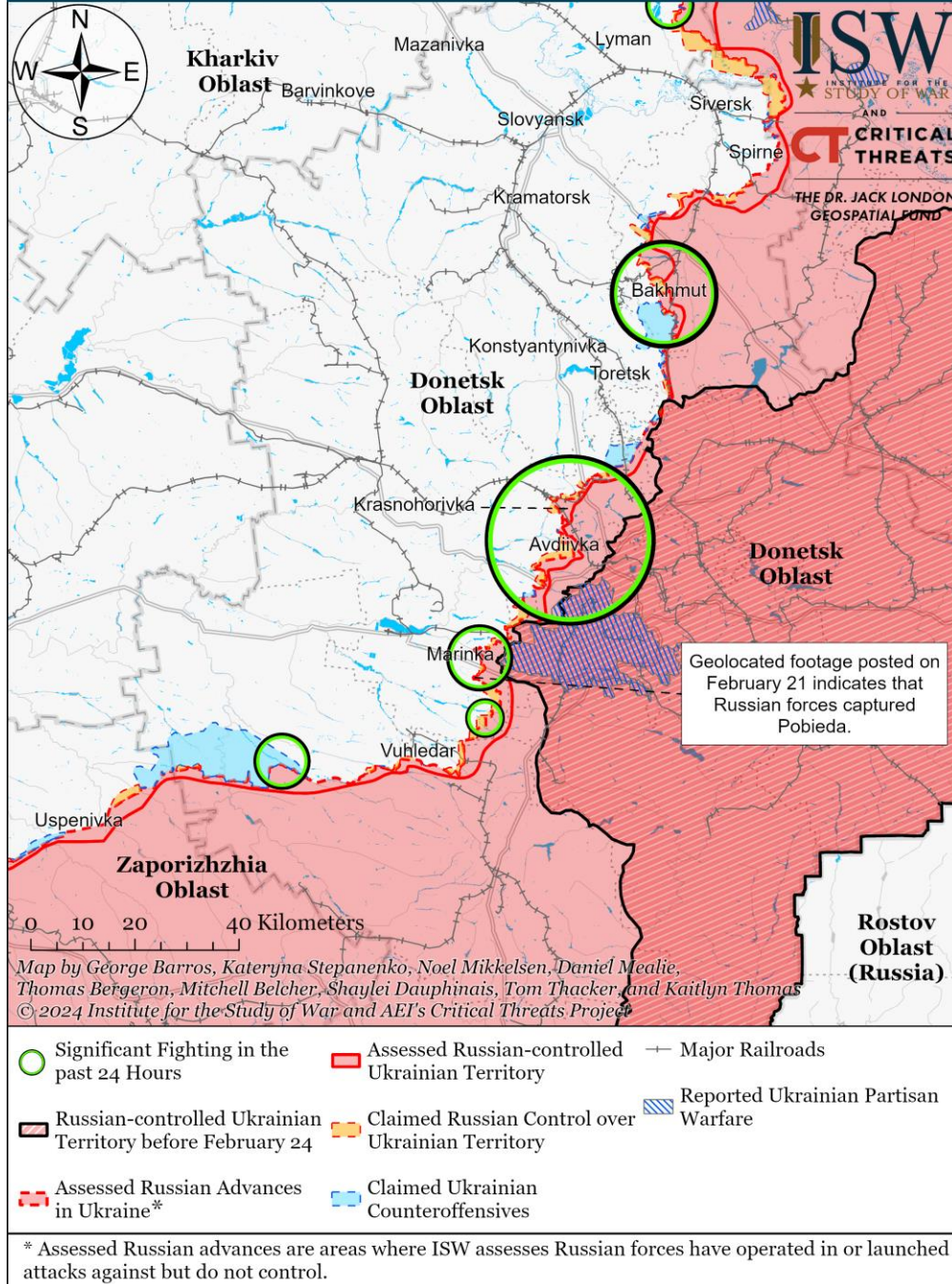
Russian forces recently advanced west of Avdiivka amid continued positional fighting in the area on February 24. Geolocated footage published on February 24 indicates that elements of the Russian 35th Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st CAA, Central Military District [CMD]) recently advanced within southeastern Lastochkyne (west

of Avdiivka).[61] Russian sources widely reiterated existing Russian claims that Russian forces have captured all of Lastochkyne, Sieverne (west of Avdiivka), and Stepove (northwest of Avdiivka).[62] ISW has not observed visual confirmation of recent Russian gains in Stepove or Sieverne. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces recently advanced up to 1.5 kilometers in the direction of Orlivka (west of Avdiivka) from the Avdiivka Coke Plant in northwestern Avdiivka.[63] Positional fighting continued west of Avdiivka near Orlivka, Lastochkyne, and Sieverne and southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske and Nevelske.[64]



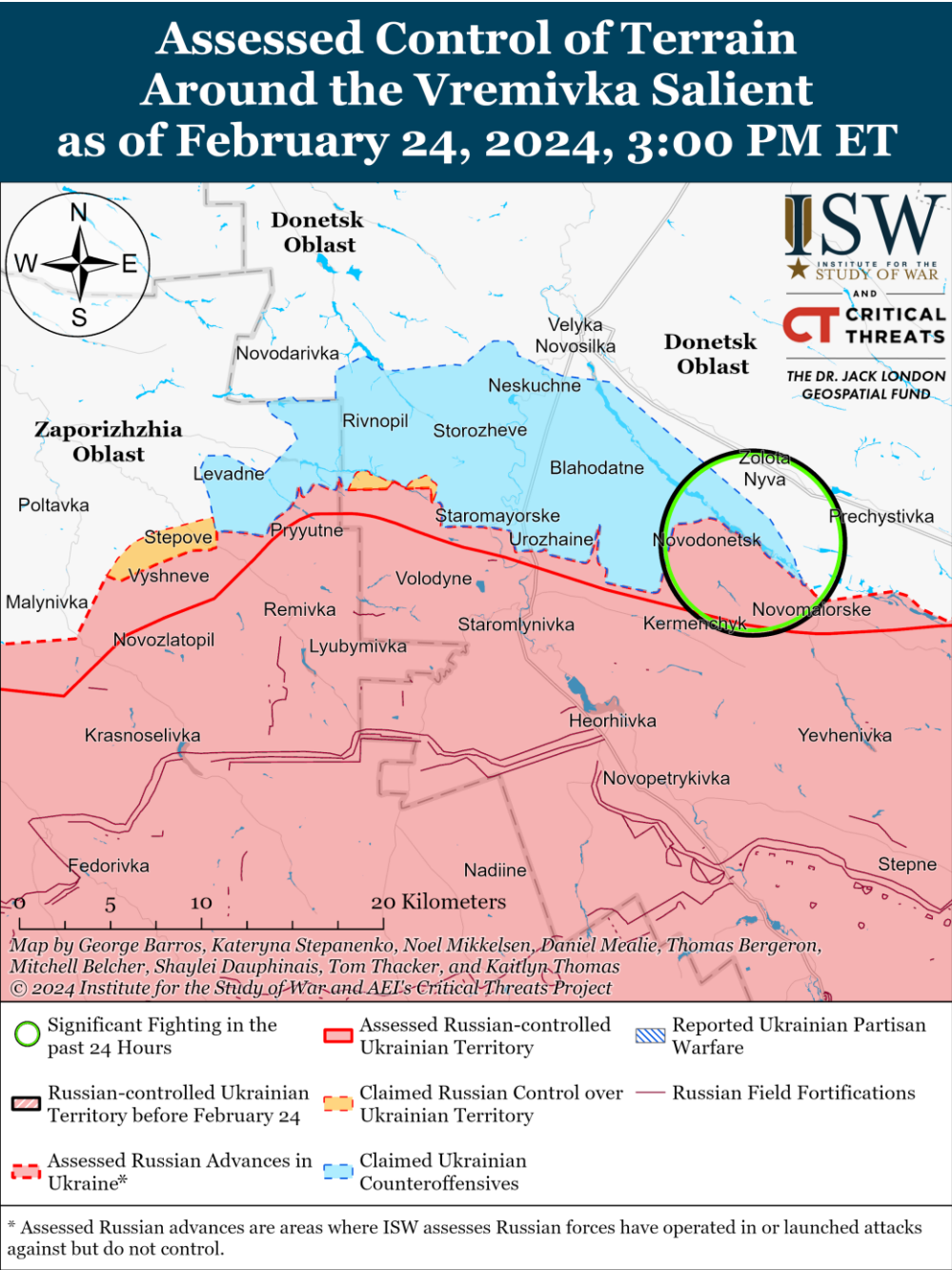
Positional fighting continued west and southwest of Donetsk City on February 24. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted a partially successful counterattack near Pobieda and expressed concern about the stability of Russian positions near the settlement.[65] Positional fighting continued west of Donetsk City near Heorhiivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Pobieda and Novomykhailivka.[66] Elements of the 255th Motorized Rifle Regiment (20th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA, SMD) are reportedly operating near Pobieda, and elements of the 155th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) are reportedly operating near Novomykhailivka.[67]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of February 24, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



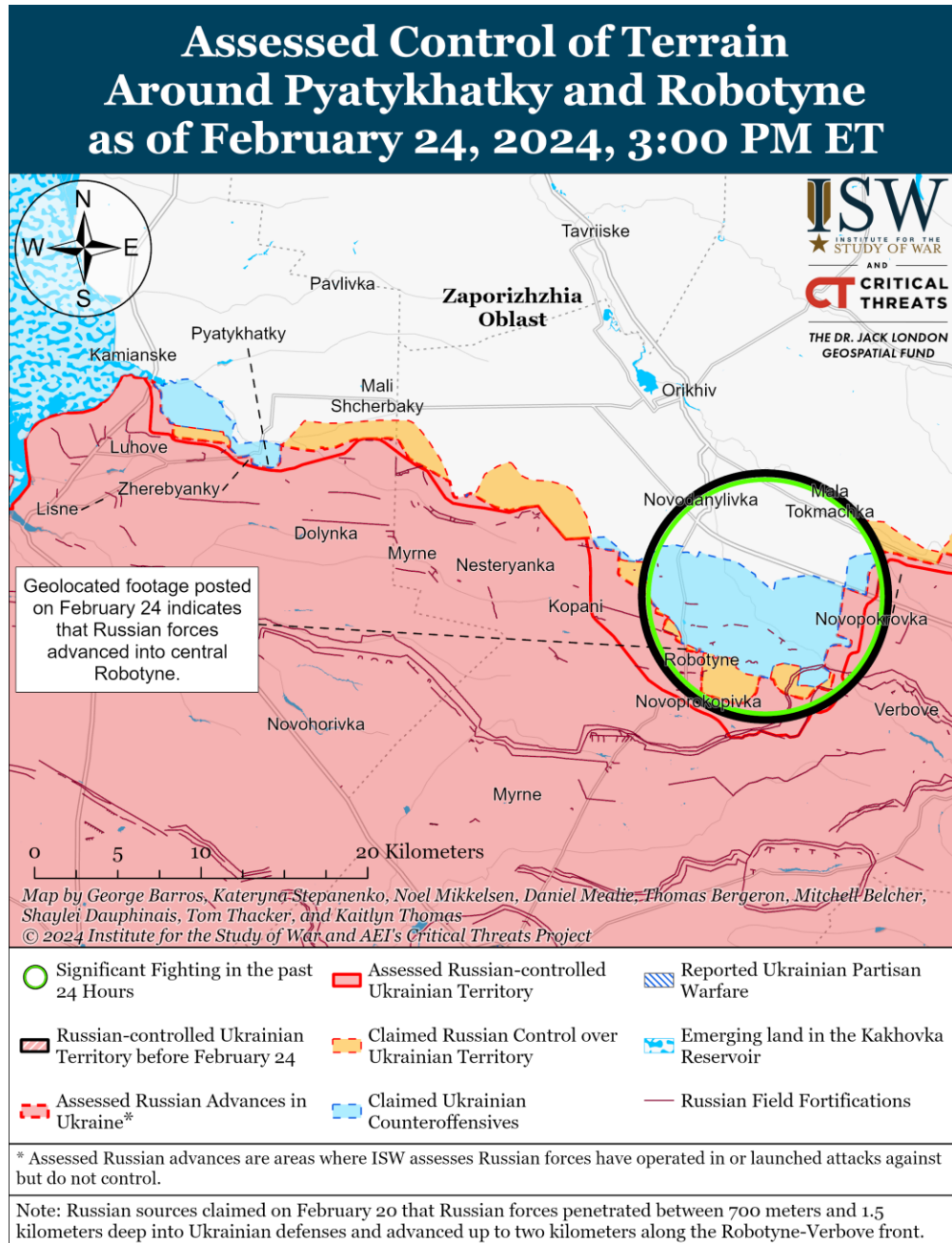
Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Positional engagements continued in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area on February 24, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional engagements continued southwest of Velyka Novosilka near Shevchenko and southeast of Velyka Novosilka near Zolota Nyva.[68] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced north of Pryyutne (southwest of Velyka Novosilka), but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim.[69] Elements of the Russian 11th Air Force and Air Defense Army (Russian Aerospace Forces [VKS] and Eastern Military District [EMD]) are reportedly operating near Malynivka (southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[70]



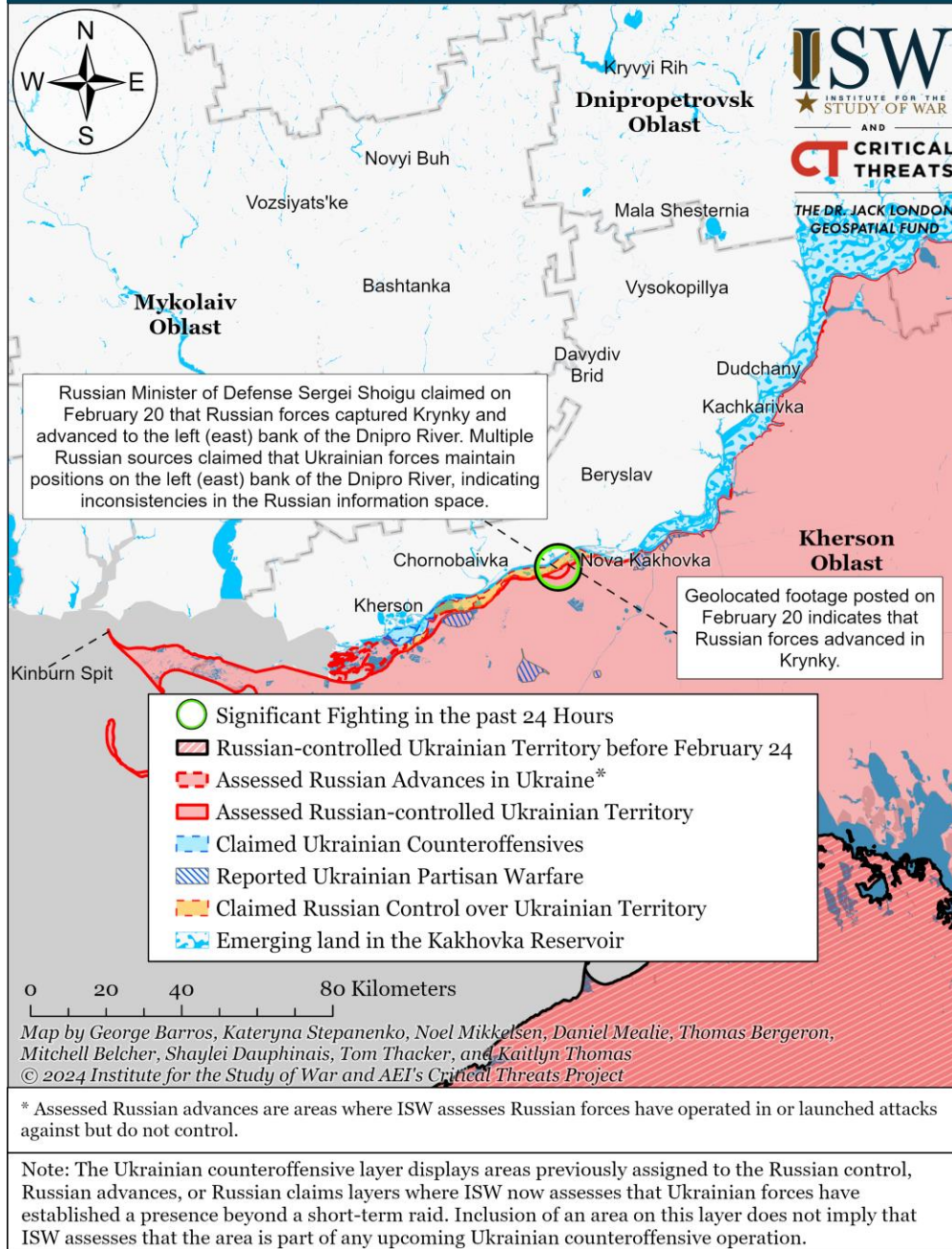
Russian forces recently made a confirmed advance in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast. Geolocated footage published on February 24 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced in central Robotyne.[71] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced further northward into central Robotyne, but ISW has not observed visual

confirmation of this claim.[72] Russian sources stated that positional engagements occurred near Verbove (east of Robotyne) and Mala Tokmachka (northeast of Robotyne and southeast of Orikhiv).[73] Elements of the Russian 71st Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly attacking near Robotyne and Verbove, and elements of the 70th Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th CAA, SMD) are reportedly operating in central Robotyne.[74]



Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional engagements continued in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast in Krynky on February 24.[75]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of February 24, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign (Russian Objective: Target Ukrainian military and civilian infrastructure in the rear and on the frontline)

The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched two Iskander-M ballistic missiles from Rostov Oblast; three Kh-59 cruise missiles from occupied Kherson Oblast; and 12 Shahed-136/131 drones from Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai and occupied Cape Chauda, Crimea on the night of February 23 to

24.[76] The Ukrainian Air Force stated that Ukrainian forces downed all 12 Shahed drones and two Kh-59 missiles over Kirovohrad, Odesa, and Mykolaiv oblasts.

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

Indian authorities have asked Russian authorities for the “early discharge” of Indian citizens serving with the Russian military. Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal stated on February 23 that the Indian MFA is aware of some Indian citizens who signed contracts for “auxiliary” roles in the Russian military and is discussing their early discharge with Russian officials.[77] Jaiswal additionally urged Indian citizens to stay away from Russia’s war in Ukraine. Indian outlet *The Hindu* reported on February 20 that Russian authorities forced Indian citizens to sign contracts to fight under false pretenses and to fight in Ukraine with minimal training and that some of these Indian citizens are now stranded.[78] *The Hindu* estimated on February 23 that roughly 100 Indian citizens began fighting with the Russian military in Ukraine within the past year.[79]

The US Department of State (DoS) reported on February 23 that North Korea has delivered more than 10,000 containers of munitions and related materials to Russia since September 2023.[80] The US DoS reported that North Korea has delivered over 7,400 containers through the Vostochnaya Stevedoring Company’s terminal at Vostochny Port in Primorsky Krai.

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

Russian news outlet *MASH* reported on February 23 that Russia has developed its first unmanned naval drones that utilize artificial intelligence (AI).[81] *MASH* reported that Russia has developed the “Alfina” surface naval one-way attack drone with a maximum speed of 60 kilometers per hour, a range of 500 kilometers, and a maximum payload of 200 kilograms. *MASH* reported that each drone will cost roughly one million rubles (about \$10,700) and that serial production will begin in summer 2023.

Ukrainian Defense Industrial Efforts (Ukrainian objective: Develop its defense industrial base to become more self-sufficient in cooperation with US, European, and international partners)

Bloomberg reported that the US Department of Defense (DoD) Inspector General opened over 50 cases investigating issues related to US aid provisions to Ukraine but has yet to substantiate any allegations.[82] US DoD Inspector General Robert Storch reported that the US DoD Inspector General is investigating issues of “procurement fraud, product substitution, theft, fraud or corruption, and diversion.” Storch stated that the US DoD Inspector General will likely open more investigations due to the “quantity and speed” of materiel provisions to Ukraine.

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 Russian government continues efforts to bolster infrastructure and logistics development in occupied Ukraine likely to support the Russian defense industrial base (DIB) and solidify Russian control over occupied areas. The Russian government introduced reduced rates for rail freight transport of coal, ferrous metals, ore, and other industrial raw materials in occupied Ukraine on February 24.[83] The new measure reduces freight rail transport rates by 48 percent for coal and 74 percent for other industrial materials.

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian officials, occupation authorities, and milbloggers used the anniversary of the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24 to promote long-standing anti-Western and anti-Ukrainian Kremlin narratives, including claims about the West’s and Ukraine’s alleged responsibility for the war.[84]

A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger attempted to downplay Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s statement on February 22 that Armenia “essentially” froze its participation in the Russia-dominated Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) as Russian-Armenian relations continue to deteriorate.[85]

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)

Nothing significant to report.

Note: ISW does not receive any classified material from any source, uses only publicly available information, and draws extensively on Russian, Ukrainian, and Western reporting and social media as well as commercially available satellite imagery and other geospatial data as the basis for these reports. References to all sources used are provided in the endnotes of each update.



[1] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/kremlins-occupation-playbook-coerced-russification-and-ethnic-cleansing-occupied>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/lands-ukraine-must-liberate>

[2] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-december-29-2023>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-december-10-2023>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-december-16>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-december-3>

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