

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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February 26, 2024, 8pm ET

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

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

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

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 2:30pm ET on February 26. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the February 27 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Note: An expert analyst called our attention to the fact that we have not been using the doctrinal expression “Close Air Support” (CAS) in connection with Russian air operations around Avdiivka accurately. The analyst rightly pointed out that CAS requires close coordination with the maneuvering ground units, which ISW has not observed, and does not assess has occurred. We used the expression (incorrectly) because the glide-bomb attacks were clearly meant to shape and support tactical actions, which is one of the purposes of CAS. But Russian air operations around Avdiivka were not properly CAS, and we were mistaken to use that expression. ISW apologizes for this mistake.

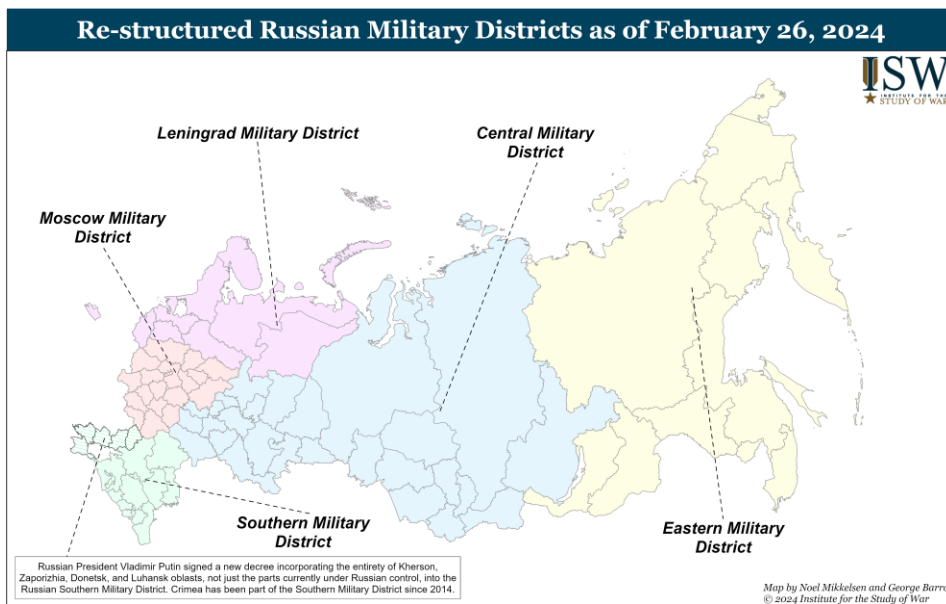
Sweden will join NATO following Hungary’s formal approval of Sweden’s accession bid on February 26.[1] Hungary was the final NATO member that needed to approve Sweden’s bid, but Sweden’s accession to the alliance has been a major sticking point for the Hungarian Parliament and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban.[2] Sweden will now become NATO’s 32nd member upon completing official accession procedures.

Russian President Vladimir Putin signed two decrees on February 26 that officially re-establish the Moscow and Leningrad Military Districts, codifying major Russian military restructuring and reform efforts. Putin signed one decree that deprives Russia’s Northern Fleet (NF) of its status as an “interservice strategic territorial organization” (a joint headquarters in Western military parlance) and transfers the land of the Northwestern Federal Okrug previously under the NF’s command to the newly formed Leningrad Military District (LMD).[3] Putin signed a second decree that formally re-establishes the LMD and the Moscow Military District (MMD) — with the LMD taking over most of the territory previously under the NF and the MMD taking over most of the territory previously under the Western Military District (WMD).[4] The second decree also incorporates occupied Ukraine into the Southern Military District (SMD), notably including all of Kherson, Zaporizhia, Donetsk, and Luhansk oblasts (as well as Crimea, which has been part of the SMD since 2014), not just the parts currently under Russian occupation. The inclusion of both the occupied and un-occupied parts of

Ukrainian territory further suggests that Russia maintains maximalist objectives in Ukraine and seeks to fully absorb all five of these Ukrainian territories into the Russian Federation.

The formal transfer of regions previously under the responsibility of the Northern Fleet is likely part of a wider Russian effort to re-establish military district commands as the primary headquarters for the Russian ground forces while reassigning naval assets to the Russian Navy, as ISW previously reported.[5] Russian state media reported in November 2023 that naval assets of all five of Russia's fleets — the Northern, Pacific, Baltic, and Black Sea fleets and the Caspian Flotilla — may return to direct subordination to the Russian Navy, while the ground, aviation, and air defense assets of the fleets will be allocated to military district commands. This information is still unconfirmed, but it appears that the Russian military is trying to reconsolidate ground forces and assets under military districts while consolidating naval forces and assets under the Russian naval chain of command.[6]

The re-creation of the MMD and LMD supports the parallel objectives of consolidating control over Russian operations in Ukraine in the short-to-medium term and preparing for a potential future large-scale conventional war against NATO in the long term.[7] The February 26 decree officially disbands the WMD, which the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) formed in 2010 by merging the MMD and LMD.[8] The WMD previously covered the Russian border with northeastern Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic States, which stretched the WMD's strategic focus between overseeing Russian operations in Ukraine following the 2022 full-scale invasion and posturing against NATO.[9] The re-separation of the WMD into the MMD and LMD, therefore, is a direct remedy to this issue. The LMD will now run along NATO's northeastern border, and the MMD will border northeastern Ukraine and Poland, which will allow Russia to simultaneously posture against NATO and streamline command and control (C2) for the war in Ukraine. Putin previously claimed that it was necessary to create the LMD after Finland joined NATO in 2023, signaling the Kremlin's clear intent to use the LMD to posture against NATO.[10]



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated on February 25 that Russia is preparing a new offensive that will start in late May or summer 2024, consistent with ISW's

assessment that Russian forces have regained the theater-wide initiative and will be able to pursue offensive operations when and where they choose as long as they hold the initiative.[11] Zelensky also stated that the Ukrainian military has a clear plan to counter Russian forces. ISW continues to assess that Russian forces regained the initiative across the theater following Ukraine’s summer 2023 counteroffensive and that Russia will likely be able to determine the time, location, and scale of future offensive operations in Ukraine if Ukraine conducts an active defense throughout the theater in 2024, thereby ceding the strategic initiative to Russia. Russian forces will have the ability to maneuver reserve concentrations and determine how and where to allocate resources while forcing Ukraine to respond defensively as long as Russia maintains the strategic initiative. Ukrainian forces could deny Russia these opportunities if Ukrainian forces have enough means to challenge the Russian initiative and pursue their own offensive operations in 2024.

Chief of the Russian General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov is continuing a recent campaign to engage with Russian military personnel following the Russian capture of Avdiivka, Donetsk Oblast and reportedly visited a command post of the 58th Combined Arms Army (CAA) in Ukraine. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) posted footage on February 26 claiming to show Gerasimov visiting a 58th CAA command post in Ukraine, hearing reports about the operational situation, and presenting medals to Russian servicemen.[12] The 58th CAA is currently pursuing offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast, so the MoD video suggests that Gerasimov visited a command post somewhere in the Zaporizhia Oblast direction. The Russian MoD published footage showing Gerasimov awarding Russian soldiers after the capture of Avdiivka on February 21, which is notably the first public depiction of Gerasimov serving his command duties since December 29.[13] Gerasimov fired former 58th CAA Commander Major General Ivan Popov in July 2023 following reports that Popov bypassed Gerasimov’s command and directly appealed to the Kremlin to complain about Gerasimov’s refusal to rotate 58th CAA troops away from the frontline for rest and reconstitution while they were defending against Ukraine’s summer 2023 counteroffensive push in Zaporizhia Oblast.[14] Gerasimov likely visited the 58th CAA command post in part to rebuild his relationship with 58th CAA lower-level commanders and servicemembers following Popov’s firing and the criticism it generated of Gerasimov.[15] Gerasimov also appears to be engaged in a campaign to present himself as an effective and interested chief of the General Staff, and his recent public appearances on areas of the front where Russian forces are making tactical gains are likely part of this effort to bolster his public image.

Over 20 heads of state, including 15 European Union (EU) leaders met in Paris on February 26 to discuss ramping up ammunition supplies to Ukraine.[16] French President Emmanuel Macron organized the conference and announced the creation of a new coalition to supply Ukraine with longer-range missiles and munitions.[17] Macron also stated that France “will do whatever it takes to ensure that Russia cannot win this war” and that European states should prepare for possible Russian escalations in the coming years.[18] Estonian Prime Minister Kaya Kallas stated that Estonia is providing long-term military aid to Ukraine worth 0.25 percent of Estonia’s GDP through 2028 and called on Ukraine’s other supporters to make similar commitments.[19]

Germany announced a new military aid package to Ukraine on February 26. The new military aid package includes 14,000 155mm artillery shells, 10 Vector recon drones, four WISENT-1 mine-clearing machines, and other equipment.[20] German outlet *Der Spiegel* reported on February 26 that the Bundeswehr’s Ukraine Situation Center Head, Major General Christian Freuding, stated that Germany is looking “all over the world” for artillery ammunition to provide to

Ukraine.[21] Unspecified insider sources told *Der Spiegel* that Germany is engaged in “discreet negotiations” to obtain Indian artillery rounds through intermediaries and that “similar negotiations” may be possible with Arab countries.

Transnistrian sources reportedly told Russian independent outlet *Verstka* that Transnistria, a pro-Russian breakaway region of Moldova, is not planning to ask to join Russia during the Congress of Deputies in Tiraspol on February 28. Two unnamed sources close to Transnistrian authorities told *Verstka* that the Congress of Deputies will not discuss integration with Russia and instead focus on discussing economic pressure from Moldova, without taking any “sudden steps.”[22] A source involved in preparing for Russian presidential elections in Transnistria claimed that Transnistria did not receive any tasks from the Kremlin aside from preparations for presidential elections. *Verstka* observed that Transnistrian foreign policy department head Vitaly Ignatiev “cooled off” many speculations about Transnistria’s possible request to join Russia after claiming on a local TV broadcast that the purpose of the congress is to bring to attention Moldova’s latest “economic pressure” on Transnistria. The Moldovan Bureau for Reintegration stated on February 22 that “there is no reason to believe that the situation in [Transnistria] could deteriorate” in response to public discourse regarding the Congress of Deputies in Tiraspol.[23] Ukrainian officials similarly stated that the possibility of a Russian ground attack on Ukraine from Transnistria is low.[24] ISW issued a warning forecast on February 22 and assessed that Transnistrian officials may call for a referendum on annexation to Russia to support Russian hybrid operations intent on politically and socially destabilizing Moldova.[25] It remains noteworthy that Transnistrian authorities have suddenly ordered the convening of the Congress of Deputies for the first time since that body authorized referenda on joining Moldova (that failed) and on seeking Russian annexation (that passed) in 2006. ISW amends its warning in light of these reports, however, and will continue to monitor the situation in Transnistria closely.

Key Takeaways:

- **Sweden will join NATO following Hungary’s formal approval of Sweden’s accession bid on February 26.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin signed two decrees on February 26 that officially re-establish the Moscow and Leningrad Military Districts, codifying major Russian military restructuring and reform efforts.**
- **The formal transfer of regions previously under the responsibility of the Northern Fleet is likely part of a wider Russian effort to re-establish military district commands as the primary headquarters for the Russian ground forces while reassigning naval assets to the Russian Navy, as ISW previously reported.**
- **The re-creation of the MMD and LMD supports the parallel objectives of consolidating control over Russian operations in Ukraine in the short-to-medium term and preparing for a potential future large-scale conventional war against NATO in the long term.**
- **Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated on February 25 that Russia is preparing a new offensive that will start in late May or summer 2024, consistent with ISW’s assessment that Russian forces have regained the theater-wide**

initiative and will be able to pursue offensive operations when and where they choose as long as they hold the initiative.

- **Chief of the Russian General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov is continuing a recent campaign to engage with Russian military personnel following the Russian capture of Avdiivka, Donetsk Oblast and reportedly visited a command post of the 58th Combined Arms Army (CAA) in Ukraine.**
- **Over 20 heads of state, including 15 European Union (EU) leaders met in Paris on February 26 to discuss ramping up ammunition supplies to Ukraine.**
- **Germany announced a new military aid package to Ukraine on February 26.**
- **Transnistrian sources reportedly told Russian independent outlet Verstka that Transnistria, a pro-Russian breakaway region of Moldova, is not planning to ask to join Russia during the Congress of Deputies in Tiraspol on February 28.**
- **Russian forces recently made confirmed gains near Kreminna, Bakhmut, and Avdiivka amid continued positional engagements along the entire frontline.**
- **Russia reportedly imported almost 450 million euros (about \$488 million) worth of sanctioned “sensitive” European goods, including weapons technology, between January and September 2023.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of February 26, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We will continue to evaluate and report on the effects of these criminal activities on the Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population and specifically on combat in Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)

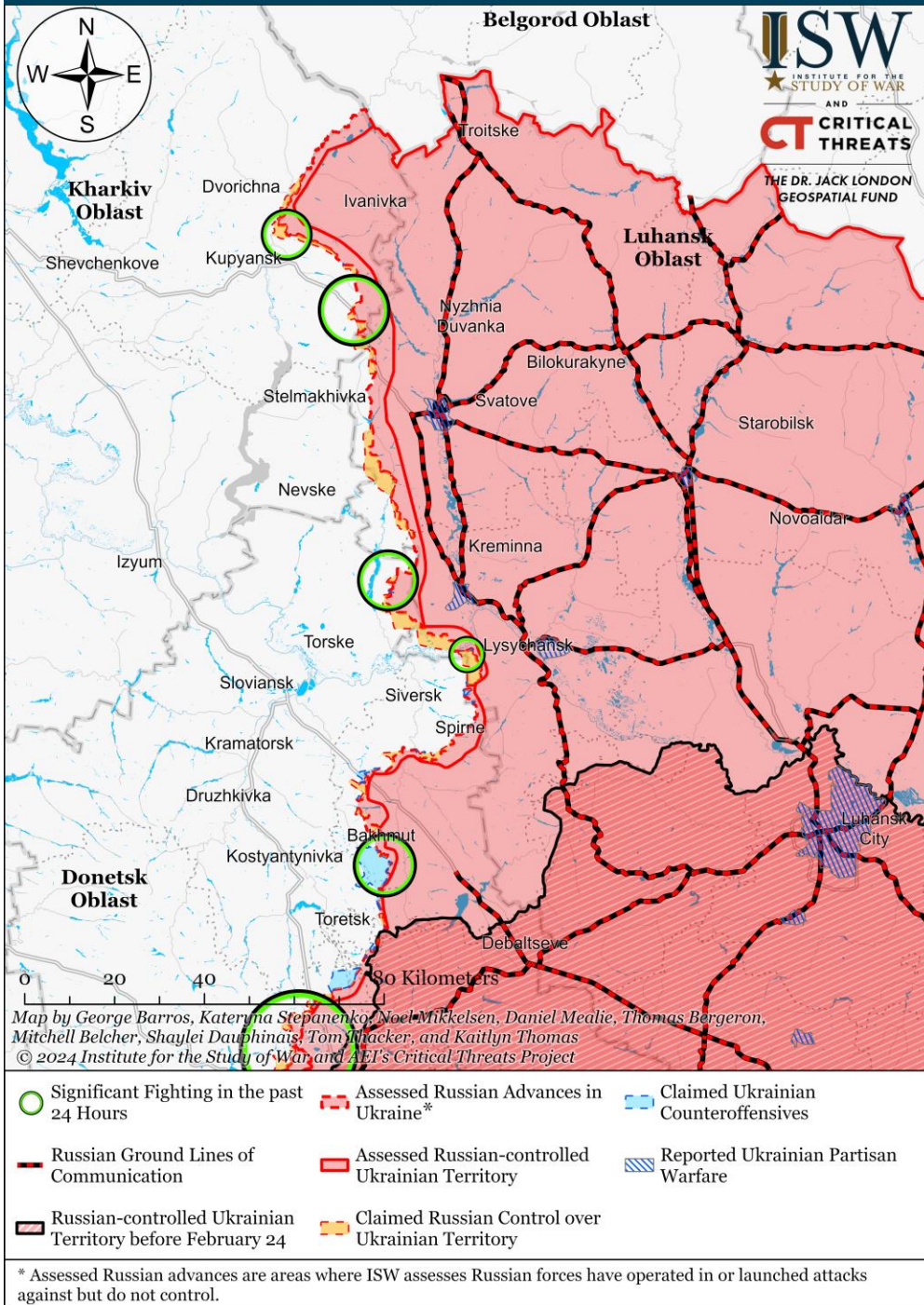
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis
- Russian Air, Missile, 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)

Russian forces recently advanced south of Kreminna amid continued positional engagements along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on February 26. Geolocated footage published on February 26 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced east of Bilohorivka (south of Kreminna).[26] Positional engagements continued northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka and Ivanivka; southeast of Kupyansk near Tabaiivka; west of Kreminna near Terny; and south of Kreminna near Bilohorivka.[27] Ukrainian Luhansk Oblast Administration Head Artem Lysohor reported that Russian forces have had “over 10 times” more artillery ammunition than Ukrainian forces have had in the Kupyansk direction for the past month.[28] Elements of the Russian 16th Spetsnaz Brigade (Russian General Staff Main Directorate [GRU]) reportedly continue operating in the Kupyansk direction.[29]

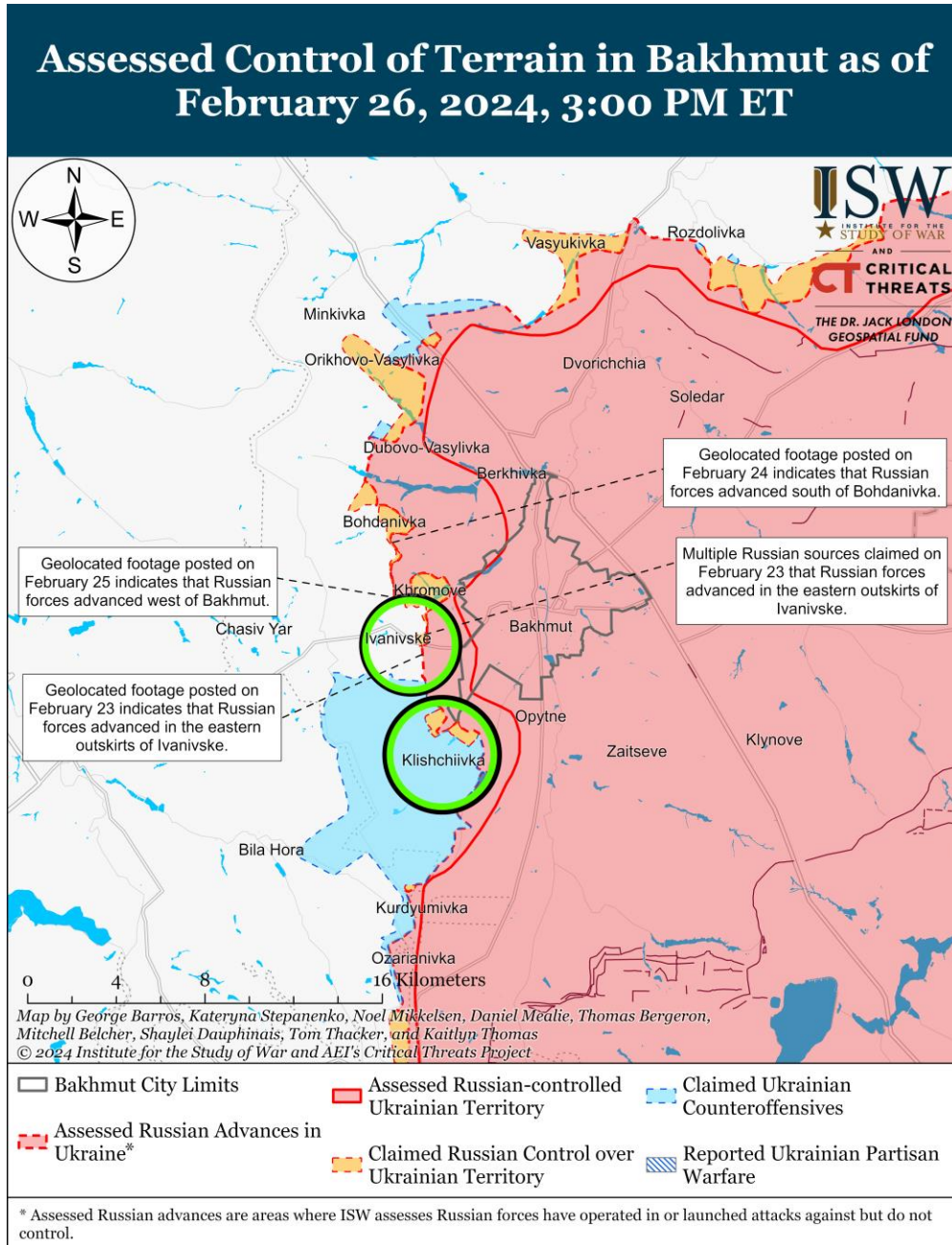
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of February 26, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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 marginally advanced west of Bakhmut amid continued positional fighting in the area on February 26. Geolocated footage published on February 25 shows that Russian forces

marginally advanced northeast of Ivanivske (west of Bakhmut).[30] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces are advancing towards central Ivanivske from the east and continue fighting on the settlement's northern outskirts.[31] A Russian milblogger also claimed that elements of the Russian 98th Airborne (VDV) Division pushed Ukrainian forces from their positions in a forest area northwest of Ivanivske.[32] Positional fighting also continued southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka and Andriivka and south of Bakhmut near Pivdenne.[33]

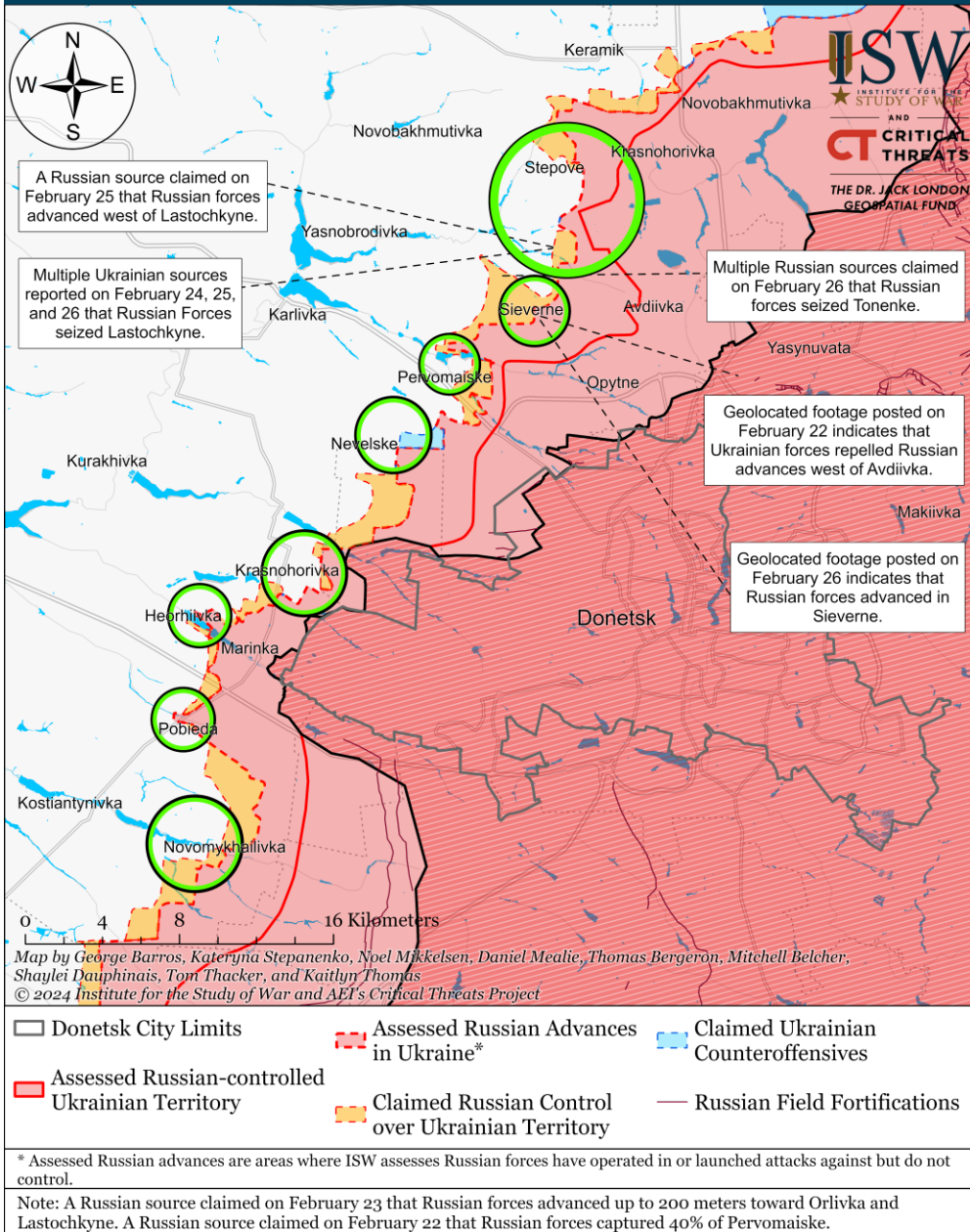


Russian forces captured Lastochkyne, a settlement west of Avdiivka, as of February 26 after Ukrainian troops withdrew from the area.[34] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Dmytro Lykhoviy stated on February 26 that Ukrainian forces withdrew from Lastochkyne and established defensive positions on the Orlivka-Tonenke-Berdychi line (northwest to southwest of Avdiivka).[35] Geolocated footage published on February 26 shows that Russian forces entered the

southeastern part of Sieverne (west of Avdiivka).[36] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces completely captured Sieverne and Tonenke (northwest of Sieverne) and also entered the eastern outskirts of Orlivka, but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims.[37] Positional fighting continued northwest of Avdiivka near Novobakhmutivka, Stepove, and Berdychi, and southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske and Nevelske.[38] The Russian “Black Hussars” aerial reconnaissance detachment of the 15th Motorized Rifle Brigade’s (2nd Combined Arms Army [CAA], Central Military District [CMD]) and elements of the 114th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People’s Republic [DNR] Army Corps) are operating northwest of Avdiivka, and elements of the Russian 1st “Slavic” Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st DNR Army Corps) are operating near Stepove.[39]

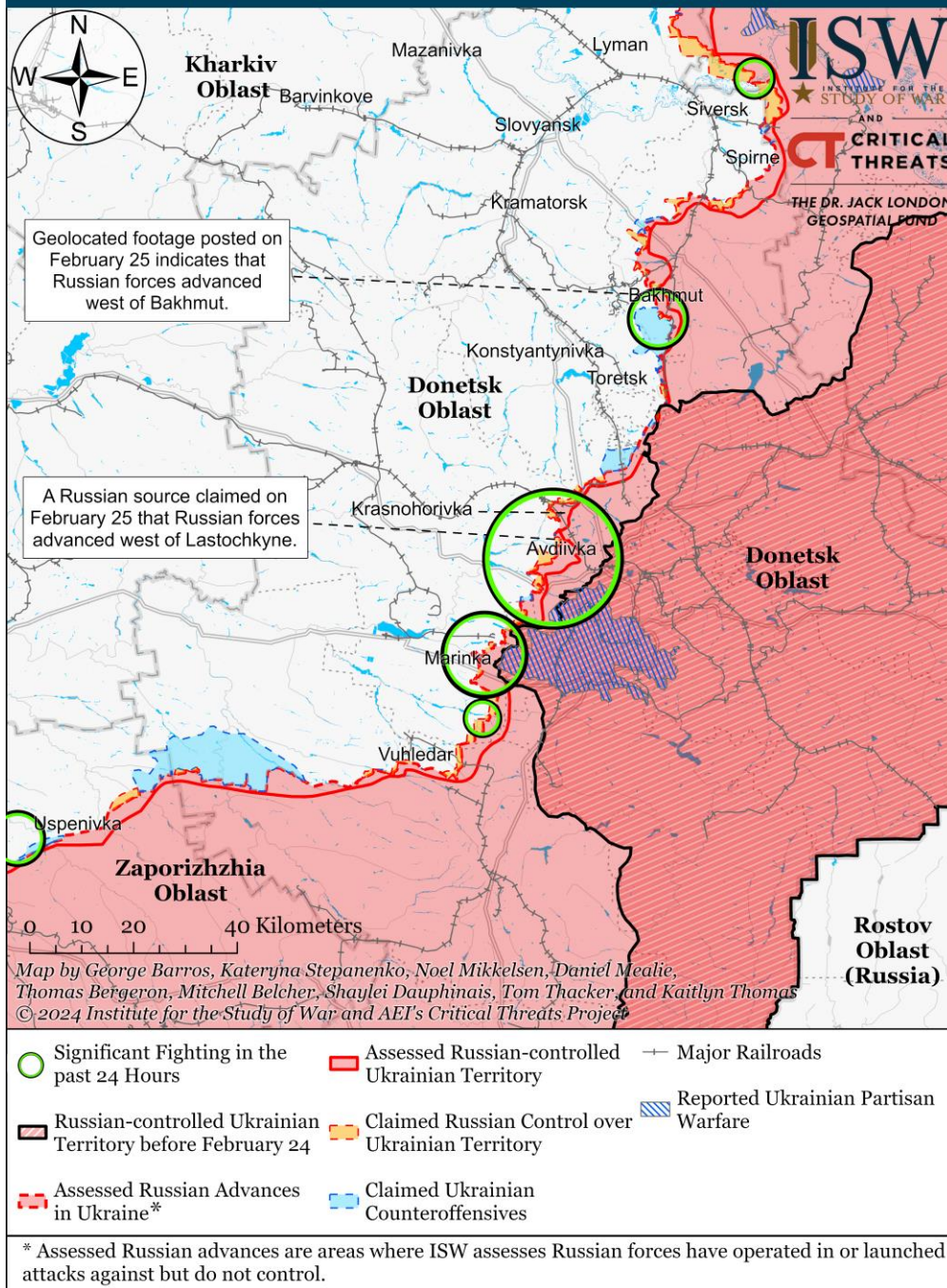
Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets argued that Russian forces were able to concentrate a tactically decisive number of forces in the Avdiivka direction during offensive efforts to capture the settlement by gradually transferring elements of formations from the Lyman direction towards Avdiivka, using separate motorized rifle brigades and by reconstituting forces already operating near Avdiivka.[40] Avdiivka is within 10 kilometers of Donetsk City, a major city held by Russian forces since 2014, which likely helped Russian forces move manpower and materiel to Avdiivka via Donetsk City without offering attractive targets for Ukrainian strikes against logistics elements or force concentrations. Mashovets also noted that Russian forces ran a failed disinformation campaign aimed at hiding the Russian redeployments near Avdiivka by claiming that these forces were redeploying to southern Ukraine.[41] Mashovets stated that while Russian forces were able to eventually deploy enough forces and means to capture Avdiivka, Russian forces failed to achieve operational surprise, resulting in their initial failure to capture Avdiivka in October and November 2023.[42]

Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of February 26, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Positional fighting continued west and southwest of Donetsk City on February 26, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Positional fighting continued west of Donetsk City near Krasnohorivka and Heorhiivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Pobieda and Novomykhailivka.[43] Elements of the Russian 255th Motorized Rifle Regiment (20th Guards Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA, Southern Military District [SMD]) are operating near Pobieda, and elements of the Russian 238th Artillery Brigade (8th CAA, SMD) are operating near Krasnohorivka.[44]

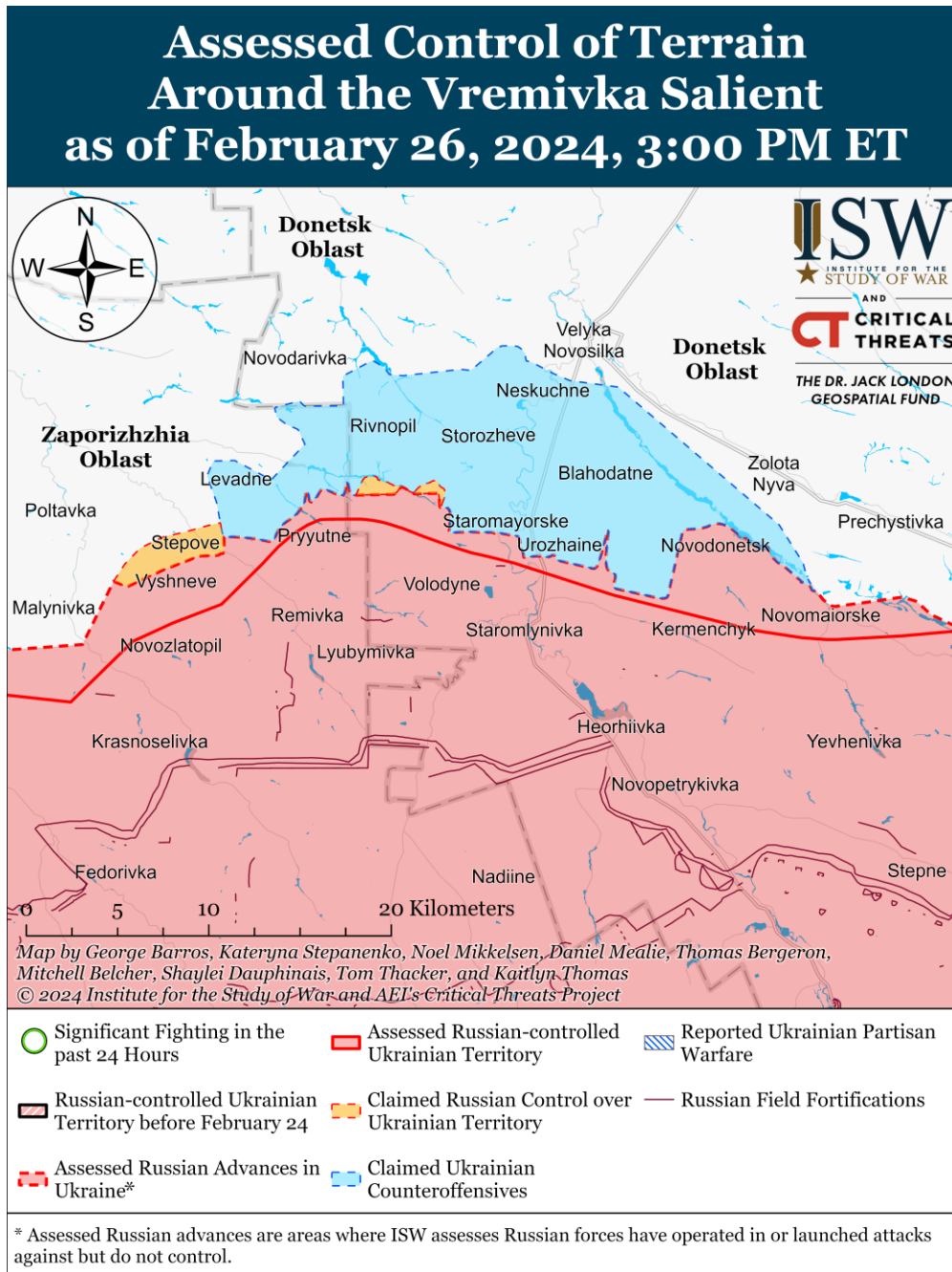
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of February 26, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

Positional engagements continued in western Donetsk and eastern Zaporizhzhia oblasts on February 26 but did not result in any battlefield changes. Positional battles occurred near Zolota Nyva (southeast of Velyka Novosilka), Hulyaipole, and Marfopil (immediately southeast of Hulyaipole).[45] Elements of

the Russian 34th Motorized Rifle Brigade (49th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating in the southern Donetsk Oblast direction.[46]



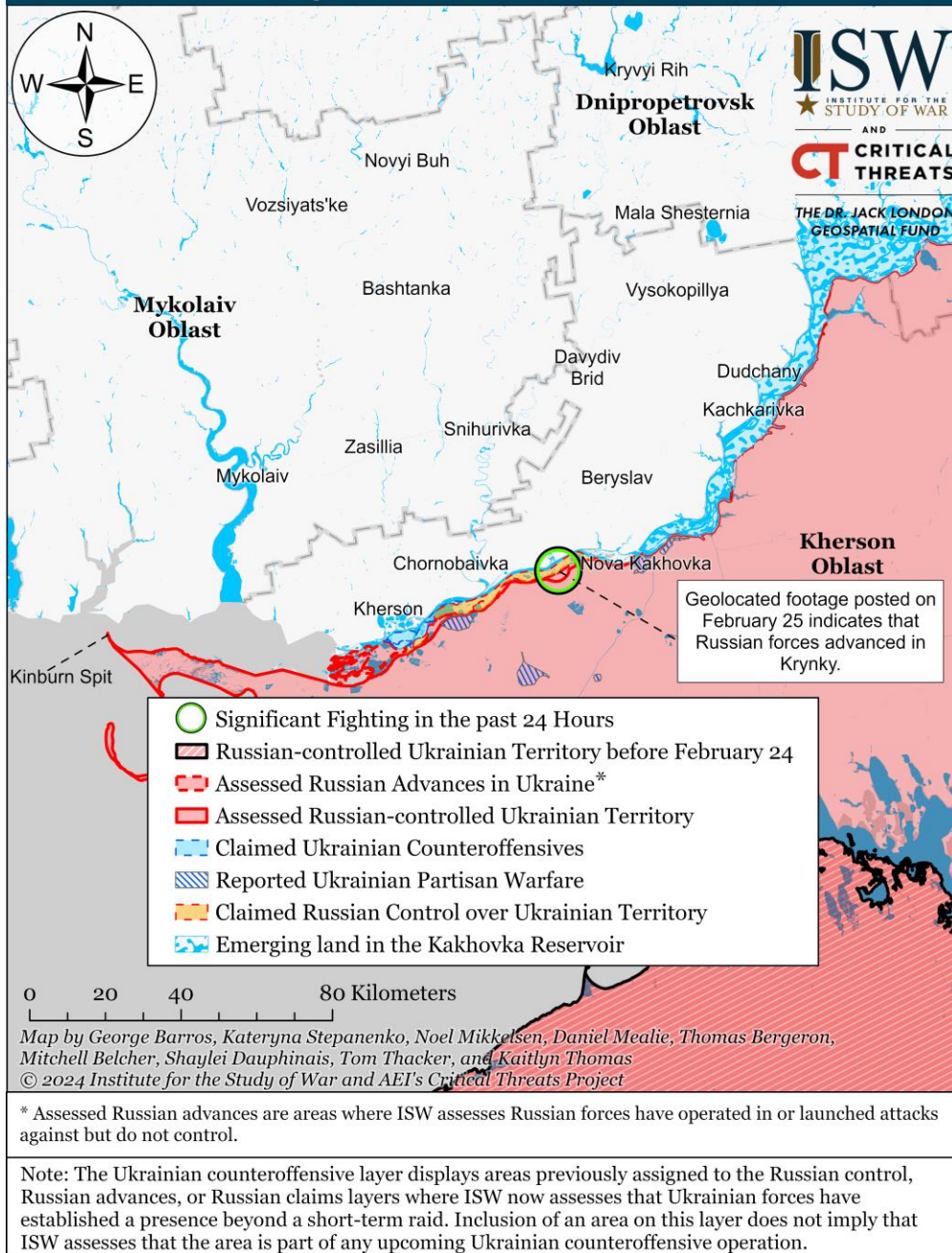
Positional engagements continued near Robotyne in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on February 26, but there were no changes on the frontline.[47] A Russian milblogger claimed that the situation near Verbove (east of Robotyne) is calm because the main fighting shifted to the Robotyne area, where Russian forces are struggling due to their lack of artillery and electronic warfare (EW) support.[48] Elements of the Russian 71st Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th CAA, SMD) continue to operate near Robotyne.[49]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of February 26, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Positional battles continued in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast, particularly near Krynyky, on February 26.[50] Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Colonel Nataliya Humenyuk reported that Russian forces intensified their use of reconnaissance drones in southern Ukraine to compensate for their loss of reconnaissance capabilities due to Ukraine's downing of an A-50 long-range radar detection aircraft on February 23.[51] Humenyuk added that Russian forces are flying tactical aviation at a greater distance from the frontline over the Black Sea and used over 100 drones on February 25.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of February 26, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Ukrainian Navy Spokesperson Captain Third Rank Dmytro Pletenchuk reported on February 26 that successful Ukrainian strikes against Russian Black Sea Fleet assets are inhibiting Russia's use of Kalibr cruise missile carriers in the western Black Sea.[52] Pletenchuk reported that Russian on average has around 10 combat-ready cruise missile carriers, of which only one is in Sevastopol and the rest are in Novorossiysk, Krasnodar Krai. Pletenchuk added that Russian forces keep one cruise missile carrier in Sevastopol to defend Sevastopol Bay from Ukrainian air attacks. Pletenchuk observed that Russian forces have not launched missile strikes from submarines in nearly three months and only launched four Kalibrs in mid-February 2024.

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

Russian forces launched a mid-sized combined drone and missile strike against Ukraine on the night of February 25 to 26. Ukrainian military sources reported that Russian forces launched an Iskander-M ballistic missile from occupied Crimea, two S-300 surface-to-air missiles from Belgorod Oblast, three Kh-59 cruise missiles and a Kh-31P anti-radar missile from occupied Zaporizhia Oblast, and 14 Shahed-136/-131 drones from Kursk Oblast.[53] Ukrainian forces destroyed all three Kh-59s and nine Shahed drones.[54] Ukrainian sources noted that at least one S-300 missile struck and destroyed an agricultural enterprise in PISOCHYN, Kharkiv Oblast.[55] Russian sources claimed that the strike targeted Ukrainian military assets deep in the Ukrainian rear for the third night in a row.[56]

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated on February 26 that Russian forces dropped 3,203 glide bombs against Ukrainian cities and frontline positions between January 1 and February 24, 2024.[57] ISW previously assessed that Russian forces have increased their use of glide bomb strikes and were able to do so particularly effectively at scale to provide air support to ground troops in Avdiivka, Donetsk Oblast, facilitating the Russian capture of the settlement.[58]

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

Russia reportedly imported almost 450 million euros (about \$488 million) worth of sanctioned “sensitive” European goods, including weapons technology, between January and September 2023. *Bloomberg* reported on February 26 that Russia imported a quarter of the sanctioned goods directly from the European Union (EU) and imported the rest through intermediary countries such as Turkey, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Serbia, China, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia.[59] Ukraine-based open-source intelligence organization Frontelligence Insight reported that the Russian drone production company “Special Technology Center” acquires US- and Taiwanese-made dual-use technologies through international intermediaries and former representatives of Western companies in Russia.[60] Frontelligence Insight reported that the “Special Technology Center,” which is under US sanctions, specializes in producing Orlan-10 reconnaissance drones and Leer-3 drone-based electronic warfare (EW) systems for the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD).

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

Russia has reportedly developed a comprehensive electronic warfare (EW) system intended to combat enemy drones. Russian drone manufacturer “Stupor” LLC Development Director Vladislav Kustarev stated on February 26 that the Stupor LLC has developed a drone detection and suppression system that includes a radar station, radio frequency scanner, optical drone recognition station, and jamming equipment to help protect certain objects from drone attacks.[61] Kustarev stated that its comprehensive system combines the “Storm” and “Shtil” systems, which both have a range of over five kilometers, as well as the “Pars” system which has a range of up to two kilometers, to better protect against drones operating on different frequencies.

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

Ukraine continues to innovate and expand domestic drone production. Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Spokesperson Andriy Yusov reported that Ukrainian forces are using the Ukrainian-made “Sych” strike-reconnaissance drone, which had already damaged and destroyed \$100 million worth of Russian military equipment.[62] Yusov specified that the “Sych” drone has a range of 50 kilometers and is resistant to Russian electronic warfare (EW) systems. Ukrainian Minister of Strategic Industries Oleksandr Kamyshin also stated on February 26 that Ukraine has caught up to Russia in one-way attack drone production.[63] Kamyshin added that Ukraine is already producing drones similar to Iranian Shahed-136/131 drones.

Ukraine’s Defense Procurement Agency of the Ministry of Defense (MoD) signed the first direct contract with a Swedish manufacturing enterprise on February 26, which will allow Ukraine to directly purchase materiel from the enterprise.[64] The Ukrainian MoD reported that Ukraine signed this contract within the framework of the cooperation agreement it signed with Swedish Defense Materials Administration (FMV) during the July 2023 NATO Summit in Vilnius.

Activities in Russian-occupied areas (Russian objective: Consolidate administrative control of annexed areas; forcibly integrate Ukrainian citizens into Russian sociocultural, economic, military, and governance systems)

Nothing significant to report.

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian actors are pursuing information and cyber operations targeting Ukrainian military personnel. The Ukrainian Ministry of Defense (MoD) reported on February 26 that unspecified Russian actors tried to spread false information about a supposed Russian hack of Ukraine’s “Delta” NATO-standard network-centric situational awareness system.[65] The Ukrainian MoD noted that unspecified individuals hacked Ukraine’s New Voice (NV) outlet and posted false information alleging that Russian hackers used Delta to track the movements of Ukrainians, particularly uniformed military and law enforcement personnel.[66] The Ukrainian State Service of Special Communications and Information Protection also issued a warning on February 26 that unspecified actors conducted a new cyber-attack against Ukrainian servicemembers using malware spread via the Signal messaging app.[67] The Ukrainian Government Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-UA) identified and neutralized the cyber-attack and urged the Ukrainian defense forces to install protective software on all associated devices to protect against future attacks.[68] Such informational manipulations and cyber-attacks are likely meant to destabilize Ukrainian military systems, spread dissatisfaction amongst Ukrainian servicemembers, and foment discontent towards the Ukrainian military command.

Russian officials and propagandists used the Second Congress of the International Russophile Movement and the Forum on Multipolarity on February 26 to amplify several long-standing Russian information operations.[69] Russian Chairperson of the Federation Council Committee on International Affairs Grigory Karasin claimed that the event demonstrates the world’s interest in joining a coalition with Russia meant to counter the hegemony of the collective West — reiterating a commonplace Kremlin narrative that poses the collective West as a destructive imperialistic hegemon that only a Russia-led multipolar world order can counterbalance.[70]

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 Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is conducting an information operation falsely alleging that the US and West attempted to interfere in the February 25 Belarusian parliamentary election.[71] Russian officials will likely intensify and extend this information operation to the Belarusian presidential election in 2025.

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.

POWERED BY:



BABEL STREET

[1] <https://twitter.com/SwedishPM/status/1762142835963257250>;
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-68405893>

[2] <https://meduza dot io/news/2024/02/26/parlament-vengrii-odobril-vstuplenie-shvetsii-v-nato>

[3] <https://tass dot ru/armiya-i-opk/20086009>; <http://publication.pravo dot gov.ru/document/0001202402260031> ; https://t.me/mod_russia/36053

[4] <https://tass dot ru/armiya-i-opk/20085959>; <http://publication.pravo dot gov.ru/document/0001202402260031>; https://t.me/tass_agency/233521 ; <https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonov/33528> <https://t.me/severrealii/23292>; https://t.me/SALDO_VGA/2299; https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/18861; <https://t.me/severrealii/23292>; <http://publication dot pravo dot gov dot ru/document/0001202402260031>; <https://t.me/bbcrossian/61248>; <https://t.me/astrapress/49345>

[5] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar110123>

[6] <https://tass dot ru/armiya-i-opk/19160889>

[7] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russia%E2%80%99s-military-restructuring-and-expansion-hindered-ukraine-war>

[8] <https://www.fontanka dot ru/2010/09/01/142/>; https://www.rbc dot ru/spb_sz/21/09/2010/559298c79a794719538c0143; https://www.rbc dot ru/spb_sz/09/09/2010/559298bd9a794719538c004f?from=materials_on_subject

[9] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russia%E2%80%99s-military-restructuring-and-expansion-hindered-ukraine-war>

[10] <https://t.me/zarubinreporter/2145>

[11] <https://www.reuters.com/world/ukraine-has-plan-new-offensive-against-russia-says-zelenskiy-2024-02-25/>

[12] https://t.me/mod_russia/36038

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