

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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February 12, 2024, 6:10pm 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 1:15pm ET on February 12. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the February 13 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukraine's Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported that elements of Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) are training Russian drone operators at the Shayrat Air Base in Syria.[1] The GUR stated that LH and IRGC trainers are training Russian operators how to use Shahed-136/-131, Ababil-3, and Qods Raab 85 drones and that LH commander Kamal Abu Sadiq is heading the training effort. Iranian-backed militias and Russian forces are located at Shayrat Air Base, which is the second largest Iranian air base in Syria's Homs Province after the Tiyas T-4 Air Base.[2] The IRGC and LH previously conducted training for Russian forces on Iranian-made drones at the Russian-controlled Palmyra Military Airport, also in Homs Province.[3] The Israeli Air Force notably struck Shayrat Air Base and other Syrian army Iranian-backed militia sites throughout Homs Province on February 7.[4] The GUR report suggests that Russian forces are expanding drone training to Shayrat Air Base utilizing existing Russian military infrastructure and leveraging relationships with LH and other Iranian-backed militant groups.

The Russian State Duma is considering a bill to restrict actors that the Russian government designates as "undesirable" from entering Russia, likely as part of ongoing efforts to censor opposition media outlets and dismantle ties between Russia and foreign and international non-governmental organizations. Russian State Duma Committee on Security and Anti-Corruption Head Vasily Piskarev announced on February 12 that he and other Duma deputies submitted a bill that would allow the Russian government to designate foreign organizations whose founders or participants are allegedly affiliated with foreign governments as "undesirable." [5] The bill would also prohibit foreign and stateless individuals who are involved in such "undesirable" organizations from entering Russia. [6] This bill will likely prohibit journalists from Russian opposition outlets based outside of Russia and foreign outlets with Russian-language services (such as the UK's *BBC* and Germany's *Deutsche Welle*, among others) from entering Russia, thereby restricting their ability to report on domestic Russian affairs, and will likely further block the work of international and foreign non-governmental organizations in Russia. Russian authorities can also bring criminal charges and revoke acquired Russian citizenship from individuals found guilty of participating in a designated "undesirable" organization. [7] Piskarev recently announced that the Duma is considering another bill that will ban Russian citizens and companies from advertising on platforms owned by organizations designated as "foreign agents," likely in an effort to use financial coercion to censor Russian opposition media and critical Russian ultranationalist milbloggers. [8] ISW continues to assess that the Kremlin has been attempting to consolidate control over and stifle dissent in the Russian information space ahead of the March 2024 Russian presidential election, although this bill will likely severely restrict opposition media operations in Russia for the long term.

Boris Nadezhdin, the only openly anti-war Russian presidential candidate, filed two lawsuits in the Russian Supreme Court challenging the Russian Central Election Commission's (CEC) refusal to register him as a candidate as the Kremlin continues efforts to suppress popular opposition while trying to preserve the veneer of legitimacy of Russian presidential elections. Nadezhdin filed lawsuits with the Supreme Court challenging the technicalities the CEC used to deny his registration in the presidential election. [9] Nadezhdin stated that he will likely file a third lawsuit against the CEC before February 16. [10] ISW previously assessed that the Kremlin may have reversed its decision to allow Nadezhdin to run after Nadezhdin demonstrated that he might win too many votes for the Kremlin to credibly portray Putin as winning the election by the Kremlin-desired margin, and by extension frame Putin's reelection as an overwhelming referendum on his war effort. [11] The CEC is unlikely to reverse its decision. The Russian Ministry of Justice included the Russian Election Monitor, a European non-governmental organization (NGO) that publishes expert analyses on Russian elections and observations from independent civilian election observers in Russia, on the list of "undesirable" NGOs in Russia. [12] Chairperson of the State Duma Committee on Security and Anti-Corruption Vasily Piskarev justified the "undesirable" designation, claiming that a group of unnamed Polish, French, and German

“Russophobe” politicians formed the Russian Election Monitor to “prepare foreign audiences to recognize the presidential elections in Russia as illegitimate.”[13]

The European Union (EU) is beginning to take concrete steps towards possibly using frozen Russian assets to aid Ukraine. The European Council adopted a decision and regulation stating that central securities depositaries (CSDs) holding more than one million euros (\$1.07 million) in assets from the Russian Central Bank must separate any profits generated from the primary accounts.[14] The European Council stated that this decision could allow the European Council to decide to support Ukraine’s recovery and reconstruction using these profits in the future. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba “welcomed” the European Council’s decision and called for further “ambitious” and “prompt” steps towards using revenues from frozen Russian assets to aid Ukraine.[15]

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukraine’s Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported that elements of Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) are training Russian drone operators at the Shayrat Air Base in Syria.**
- **The Russian State Duma is considering a bill to restrict actors that the Russian government designates as “undesirable” from entering Russia, likely as part of ongoing efforts to censor opposition media outlets and dismantle ties between Russia and foreign and international non-governmental organizations.**
- **Boris Nadezhdin, the only openly anti-war Russian presidential candidate, filed two lawsuits in the Russian Supreme Court challenging the Russian Central Election Commission’s (CEC) refusal to register him as a candidate as the Kremlin continues efforts to suppress popular opposition while trying to preserve the veneer of legitimacy of Russian presidential elections.**
- **The European Union (EU) is beginning to take concrete steps towards possibly using frozen Russian assets to aid Ukraine.**
- **Ukrainian forces recently made confirmed advances near Kreminna and Donetsk City and in western Zaporizhia Oblast, and Russian forces recently made confirmed advances near Kupyansk and Kreminna.**
- **South Korean news outlet *Yonhap News Agency* reported on February 12 that North Korea has developed 240mm guided multiple rocket launcher system (MLRS) mortar that North Korea may export to Russia.**
- **Russian authorities continue to use youth engagement programs to Russify Ukrainian youth.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of February 12, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Shaylei Dauphinais, Tom Thacker, and Kaitlyn Thomas.

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

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.

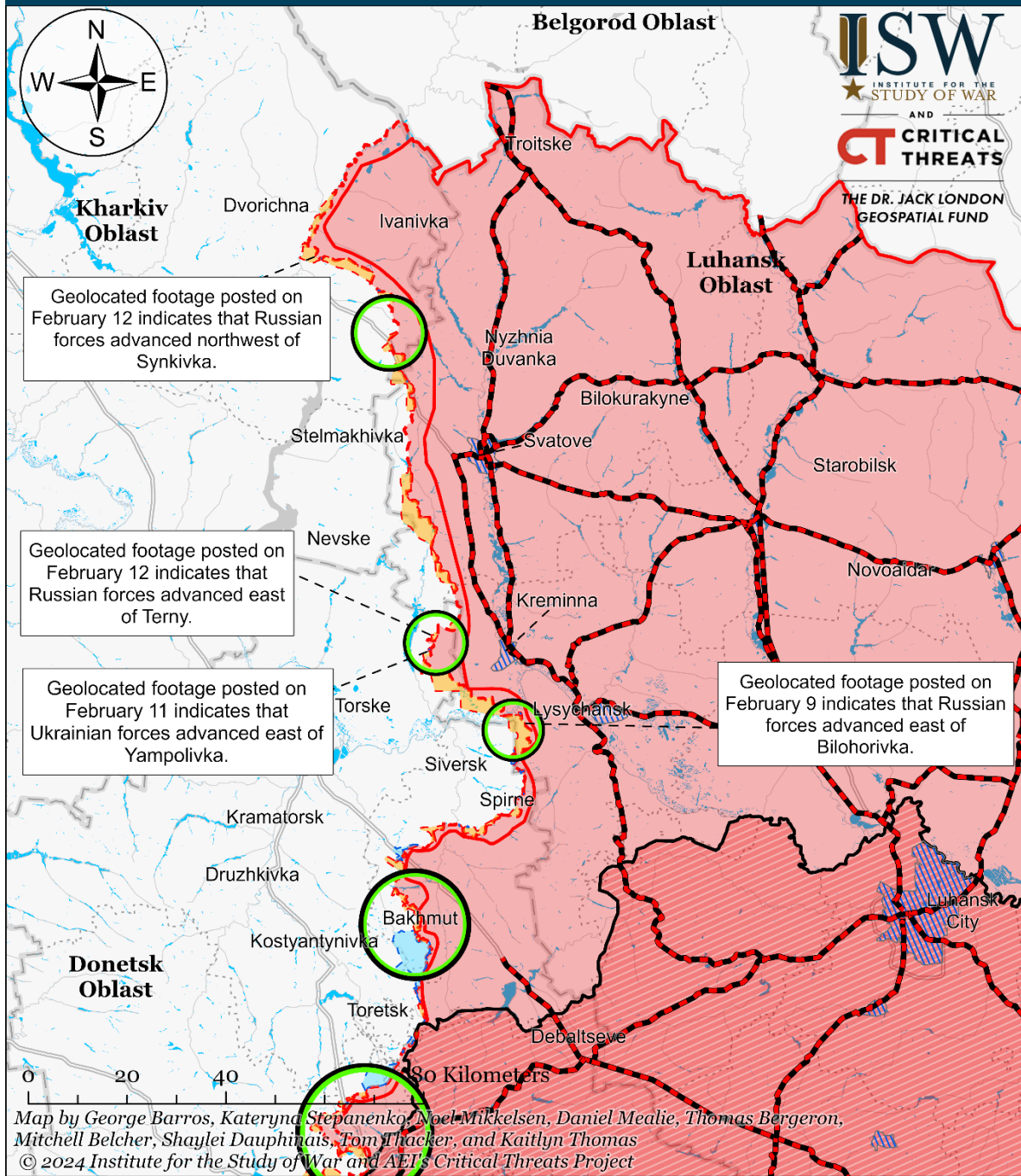
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety 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 and Ukrainian forces recently made confirmed gains along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line. Geolocated footage posted on February 12 shows that Russian forces marginally advanced northwest of the Synkivka-Lake Lyman area (northeast of Kupyansk).[16] Additional geolocated footage posted on February 12 shows that Russian forces marginally advanced east of Terny (west of Kreminna) and are now operating within two kilometers of the outskirts of Terny itself.[17] Geolocated footage posted on February 11 indicates that Ukrainian forces regained some tactical positions about three kilometers east of Yampolivka (west of Kreminna).[18] Ukrainian and Russian sources reported continued positional fighting northeast of Kupyansk near Ivanivka, Synkivka, and Lake Lyman; southeast of Kupyansk near Tabaiivka and Tymkivka; west of Kreminna near Terny and Yampolivka; southwest of Kreminna near Dibrova; and south of Kreminna near Bilohorivka.[19] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces drove Ukrainian troops out of some positions in western Bilohorivka, although ISW has not observed visual evidence of this claim.[20] Elements of the Russian 4th Guards Tank Division (1st Guards Tank Army, Western Military District) and 7th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People's Republic [LNR] Army Corps) are reportedly operating near Svatove and Bilohorivka, respectively.[21]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of February 12, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

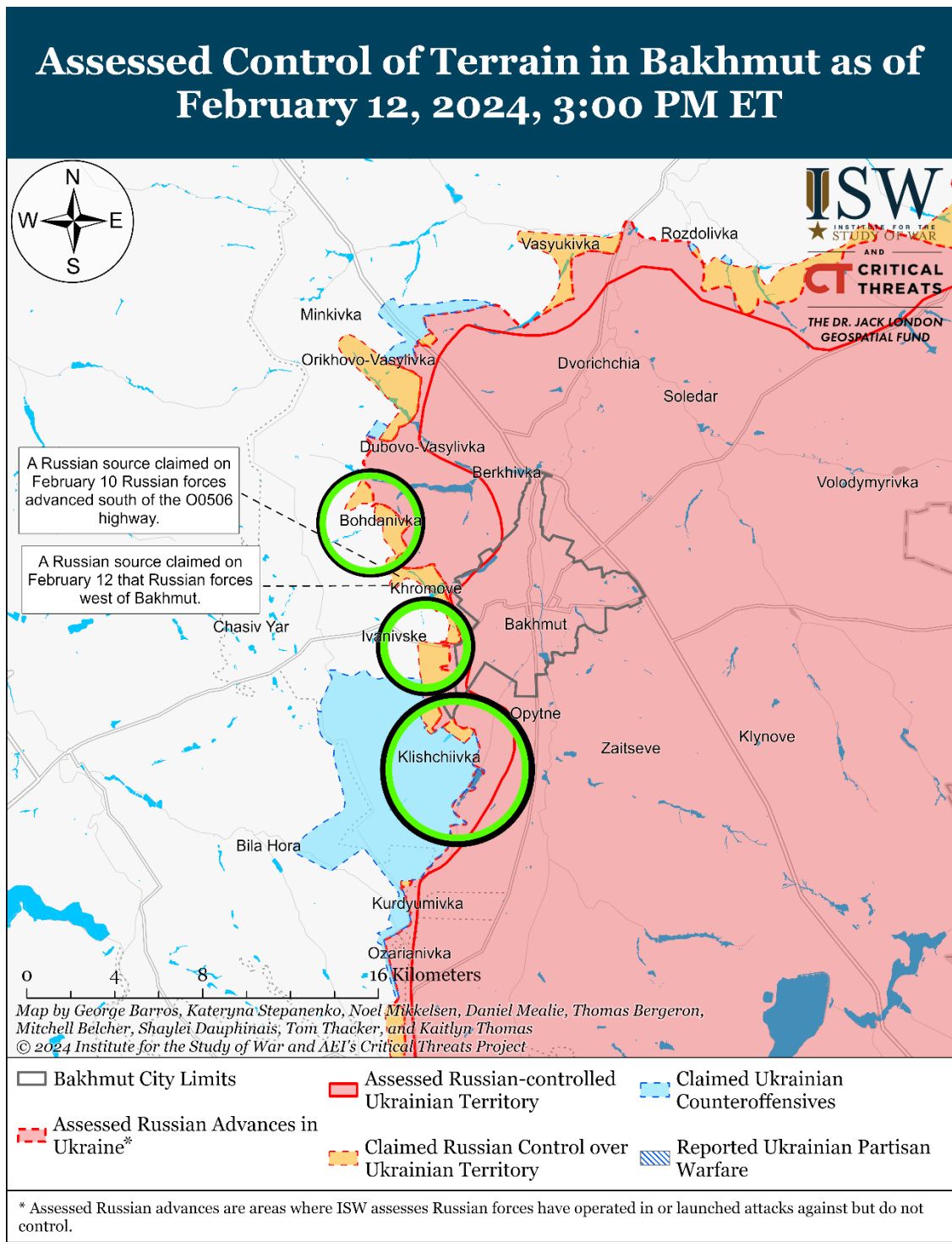


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- - - Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- ▭ Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Russian Ground Lines of Communication
- ▭ Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- ▨ Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- ▭ Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- ▭ Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory

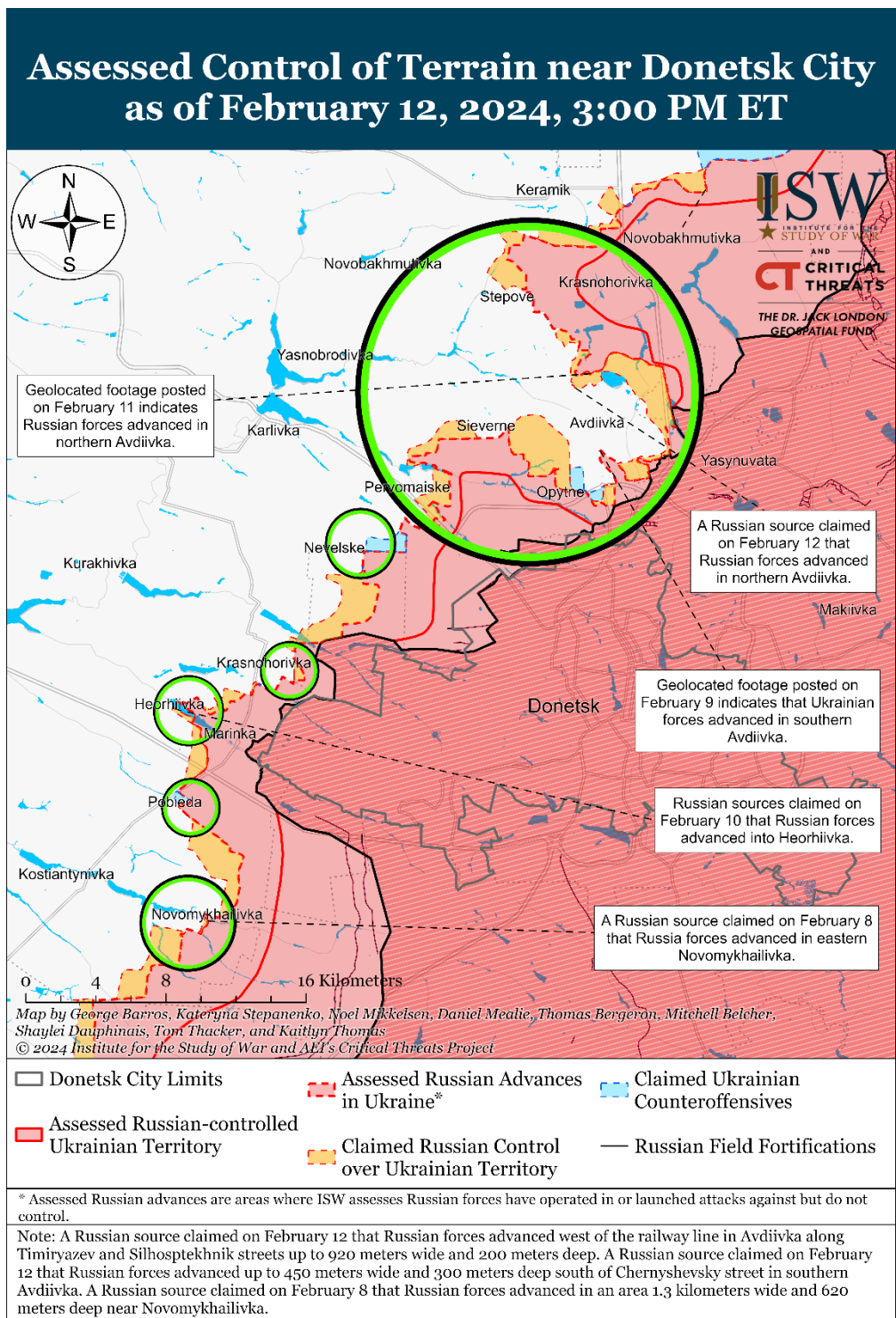
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

Russian forces reportedly advanced west of Bakhmut amid continued positional fighting in the area on February 12. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced up to one kilometer along the O0506 Bakhmut-Chasiv Yar highway towards Khromove (west of Bakhmut), into a field north of Bohdanivka (northwest of Bakhmut), and near Klishchiivka (southwest of Bakhmut).[22] ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims, however. Positional fighting continued near Bohdanivka; west of Bakhmut near Ivanivske; southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka, Andriivka, and Kurdyumivka; and south of Bakhmut near Mayorske, Pivdenne, and Niu York.[23] Elements of the 98th Airborne (VDV) Division are reportedly operating south of Bohdanivka, and the Chechen “Sever-Akhmat” detachment (78th Motorized Rifle Regiment, 42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) is reportedly operating near Klishchiivka.[24]

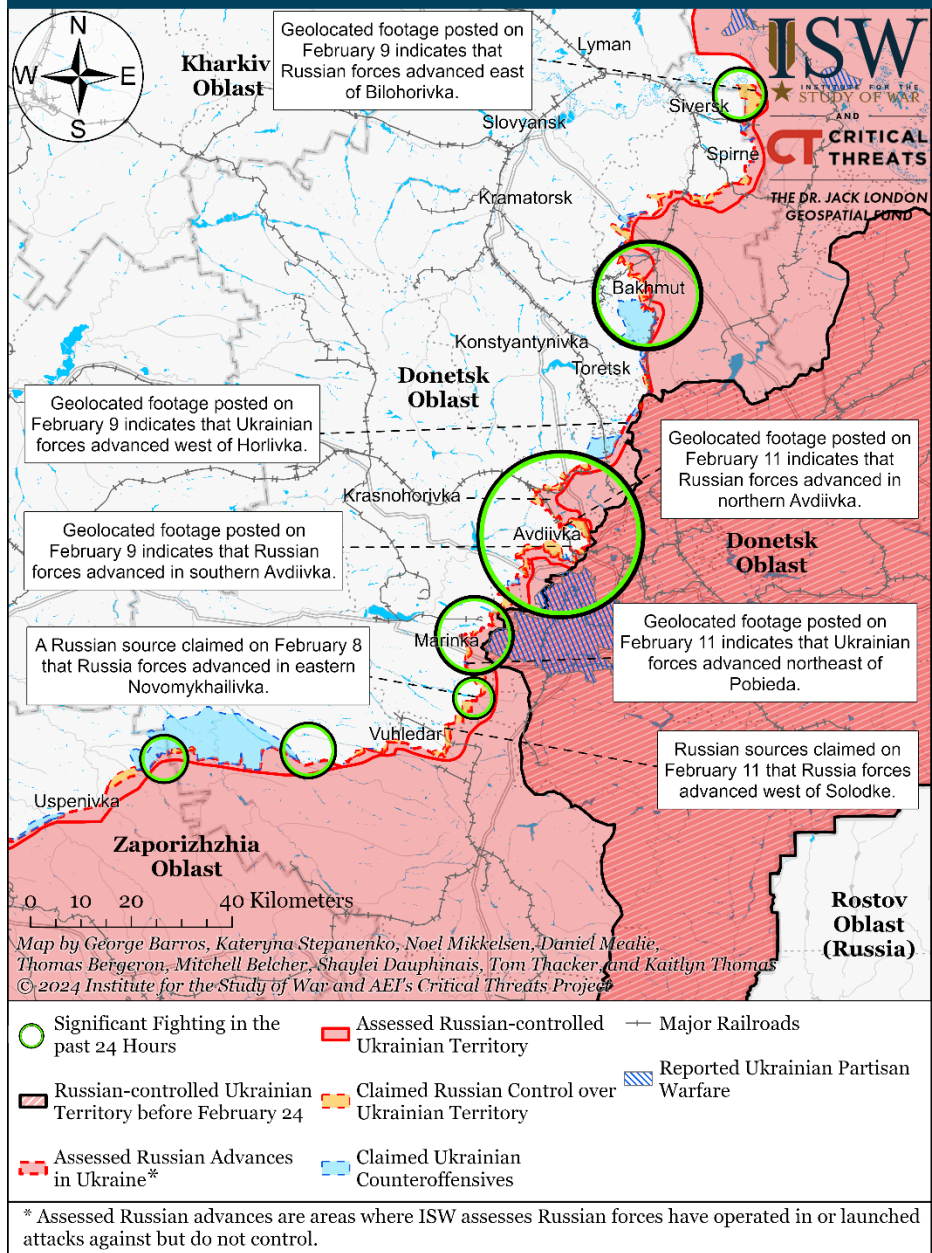


Russian forces reportedly advanced in Avdiivka amid continued positional fighting near the city on February 12. Some Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces crossed the rail line in Avdiivka and entrenched themselves in the dacha area west of the railway, but other milbloggers claimed that these reports are unconfirmed and ISW has not yet observed visual evidence of Russian forces operating west of the railway line in Avdiivka. [25] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces continued to advance along Chystyakova Street and Zaliznychnyi Lane in northern Avdiivka and advanced 300 meters deep along a 450-meter-wide front in southern Avdiivka. [26] Milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced in a forest belt east of Opytne (southwest of Avdiivka) and advanced further into Pervomaiske (southwest of Avdiivka). [27] ISW has not observed visual confirmation of any of these Russian claims. Positional fighting also continued north of Avdiivka near Novobakhmutivka; west of Avdiivka near Tonenke; and southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske and Nevelske. [28] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Dmytro Lykhovyi stated that Russian forces are using more armored vehicles, tanks, and infantry fighting vehicles in the Avdiivka direction, and a Russian milblogger attributed this increase to increased Russian control over areas in and near Avdiivka. [29]



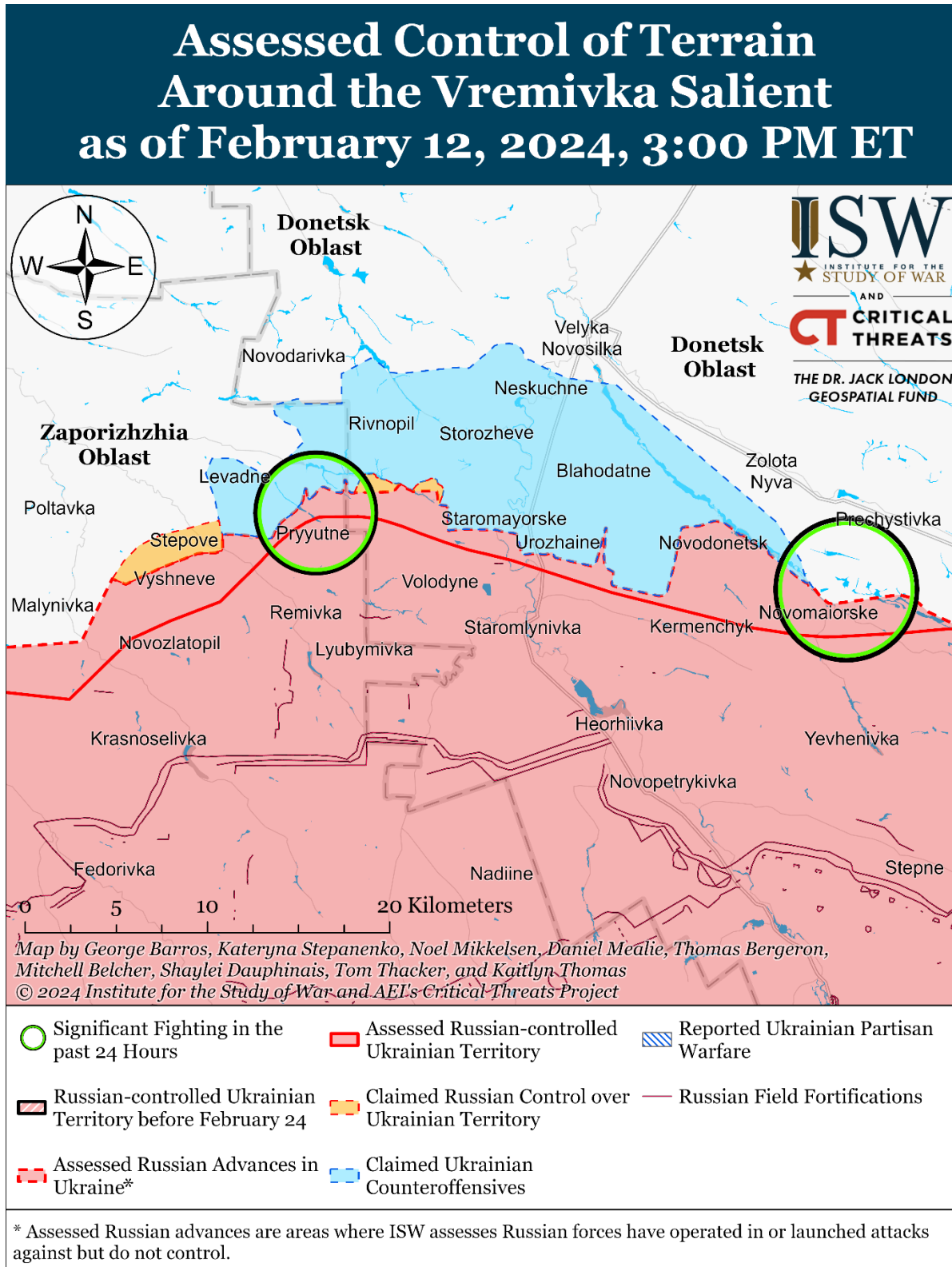
Ukrainian forces recently marginally advanced southwest of Donetsk City amid continued positional fighting to the west and southwest of the city on February 12. Geolocated footage published on February 11 shows that Ukrainian forces marginally advanced northeast of Pobieda (southwest of Donetsk City).[30] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced along the T0524 Vuhledar-Pobieda highway towards Pobieda and captured additional positions immediately south of the settlement, and another milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced on the flank of the settlement.[31] Positional fighting continued near Krasnohorivka, Heorhiivka, Pobieda, and Novomykhailivka.[32] Elements of the Russian 150th Motorized Rifle Division (8th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating in the Kurakhove direction west of Donetsk City; elements of the 5th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] Army Corps [AC]) are reportedly operating in the Krasnohorivka-Heorhiivka direction (also west of Donetsk City); elements of 255th Motorized Rifle Regiment's "Tiger" Battalion (20th Guards Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA) are reportedly operating near Pobieda and Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City); and elements of the 157th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) are reportedly operating near Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City).[33]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of February 12, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



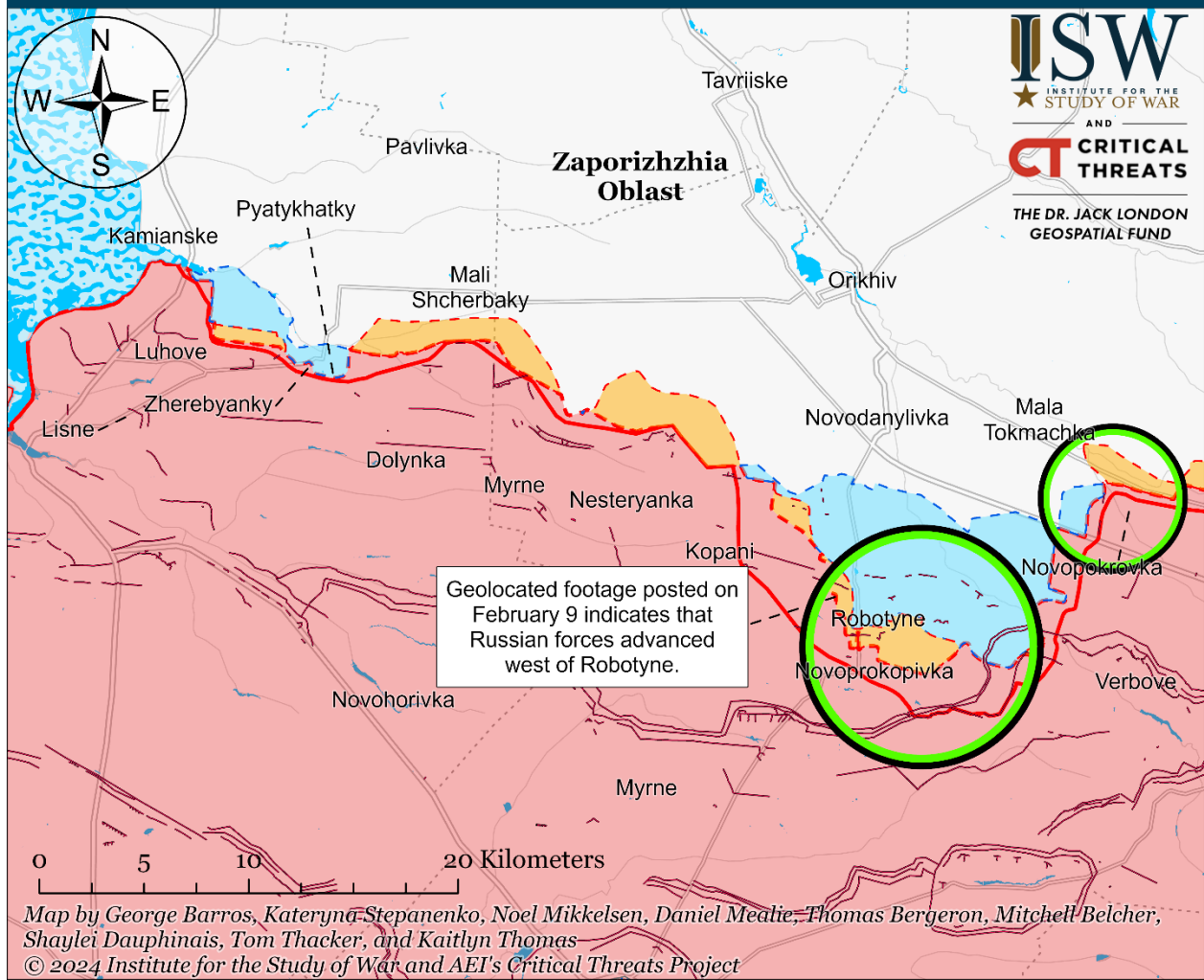
Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Positional engagements continued in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area on February 12, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced one kilometer near Vodyane (north of Vuhledar), but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim.[34] Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional engagements continued north of Vuhledar near Vodyane; southeast of Velyka Novosilka near Prechystivka; and southwest of Velyka Novosilka near Pryyutne.[35]



Ukrainian forces made a confirmed advance in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast amid continued positional fighting in the area on February 12. Geolocated footage published on February 12 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced west of Pyatykhatky (28km northwest of Robotyne) near Kamianske, though this advance was likely not recent.[36] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced near Novoprokopivka (south of Robotyne), but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim.[37] The Ukrainian General Staff stated that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Robotyne and Novopokrovka (northeast of Robotyne).[38] Elements of the Russian 42nd Motorized Rifle Division (58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating in the Zaporizhzhia direction, elements of the Russian 1152nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (58th CAA, SMD) are reportedly operating near Robotyne, and elements of the Russian 19th Motorized Rifle Division (58th CAA, SMD) are reportedly operating south of Kamianske.[39]

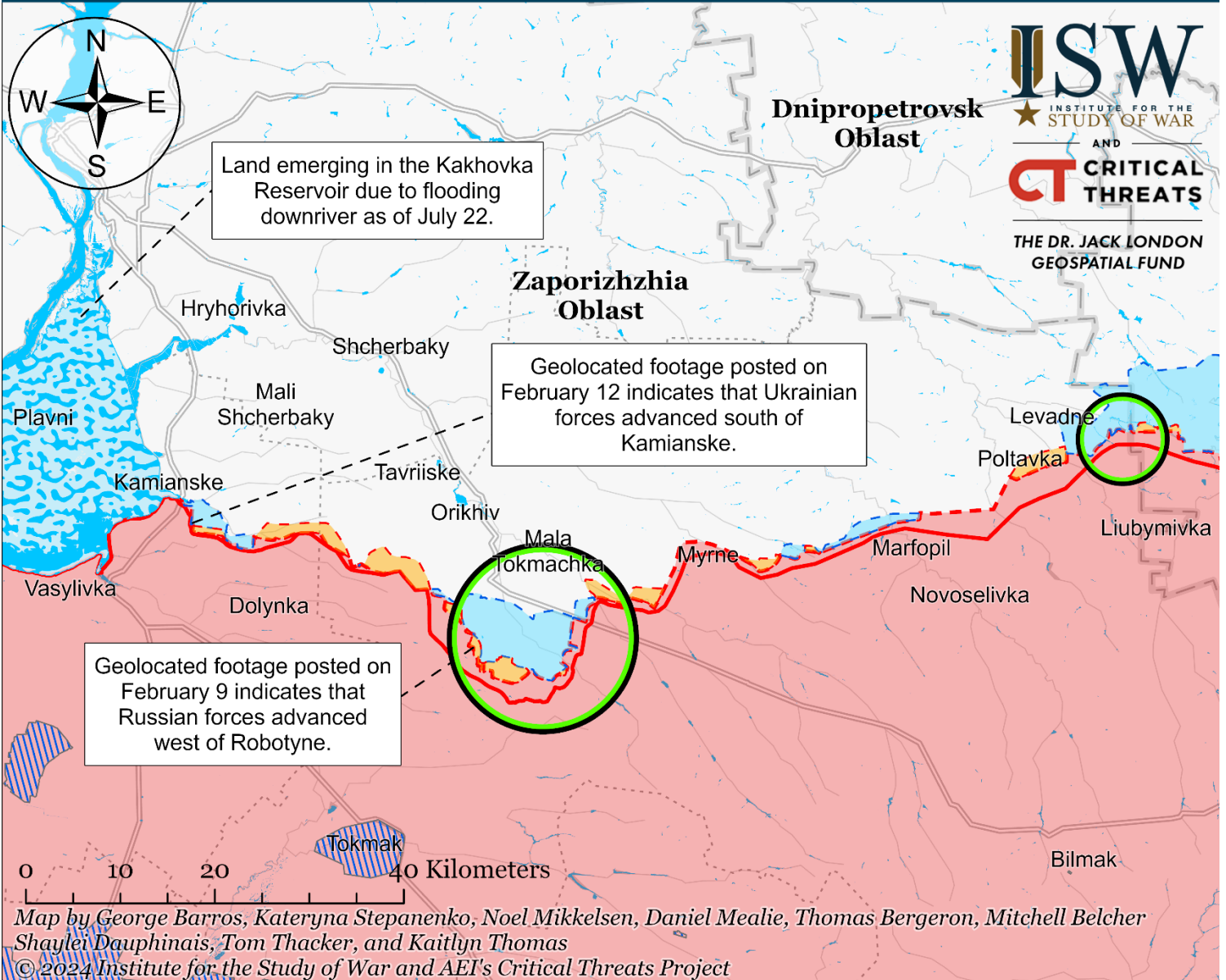
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of February 12, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24 Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine* | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir Russian Field Fortifications |
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* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of February 12, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

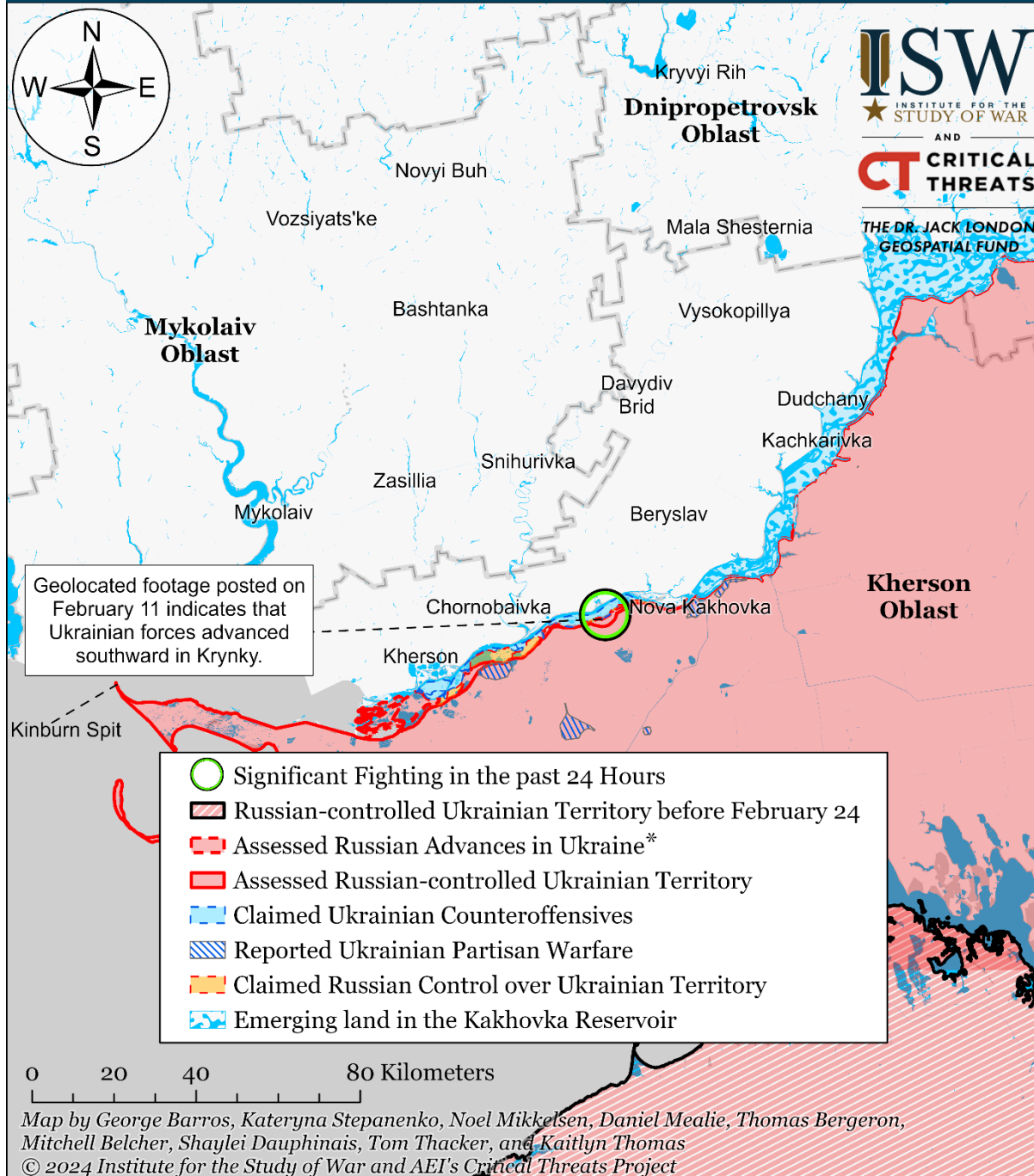


-  Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
-  Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
-  Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
-  Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
-  Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
-  Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
-  Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
-  Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives

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

The Ukrainian General Staff stated that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast near Krynky.[40]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of February 12, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Geolocated footage posted on February 11 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced southward in Krynky.

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

Note: The Ukrainian counteroffensive layer displays areas previously assigned to the Russian control, Russian advances, or Russian claims layers where ISW now assesses that Ukrainian forces have established a presence beyond a short-term raid. Inclusion of an area on this layer does not imply that ISW assesses that the area is part of any upcoming Ukrainian counteroffensive operation.

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

Russian forces launched 17 Shahed-136/-131 drones, one Kh-59 cruise missile, and an unspecified number of S-300 surface-to-air missiles at Ukrainian rear areas on the night of February 11–12.[41] Ukrainian military sources reported that Ukrainian air defenses shot down 14 Shaheds and the Kh-59 over Khmelnytskyi, Vinnytsia, Kirovohrad, Mykolaiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Zaporizhia oblasts.[42] The Ukrainian Prosecutor General's Office stated that Russian forces struck Selydove, Donetsk Oblast with three S-300 missiles, damaging residential and energy infrastructure.[43] Russian forces also struck Lyubotyn, Kharkiv Oblast with two S-300 missiles.[44] Ukrainian sources reported that Shahed strikes on energy infrastructure in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast left up to 29,000 residents without power in Pavlohrad Raion.[45]

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

South Korean news outlet *Yonhap News Agency* reported on February 12 that North Korea has developed a 240mm guided multiple rocket launcher system (MLRS) mortar that North Korea may export to Russia.[46] Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Deputy Chief Major General Vadym Skibitskyi stated that North Korea delivered one million rounds of artillery ammunition to Russia from September to November 2023, and US officials have stated that Russian forces have launched at least nine North Korean ballistic missiles against Ukraine as of February 2024.[47] ISW continues to assess that Russia is open to financial, technological, and defense cooperation with North Korea in exchange for the provision of munitions and ballistic missiles to use in Ukraine.[48]

The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported that the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) is overseeing the selection of Russian conscripts to serve in combat units in Ukraine.[49] The Ukrainian Resistance Center stated that regional FSB offices plan to select conscripts from military registration and enlistment offices and train them in combat to serve in the Russian special services. Russian military officials have repeatedly stated that Russian conscripts would not deploy to Ukraine, although Russian conscripts were aboard the Russian *Novocherkassk* and *Moskva* ships when Ukrainian forces sank them.[50] The Russian State Duma adopted a law allowing Russian conscripts to serve in the FSB Border Service on December 12, 2023, however.[51]

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

Russian software company Hardberry-Rusfaktor reportedly designed the “Naka” artificial intelligence neural network that allows drones to automatically identify and locate objects.[52] Hardberry-Rusfaktor General Director Alexei German stated that the “Naka” artificial neural network software can work on all drone types, automatically identify enemy equipment types with 85 percent accuracy, and locate targets' exact coordinates. German claimed that drones enabled by the “Naka” neural network's object-detection capability will be able to identify NATO-provided equipment such as Leopard tanks and Bradley infantry fighting vehicles.

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 expand its domestic drone production capabilities. Ukrainian Digital Transformation Minister Mykhailo Fedorov stated on February 12 that Ukraine will produce thousands of long-range drones in 2024, including various loitering munitions with a maximum range of 300-1,000 kilometers (about 185-620 miles).[53] Fedorov also reported that Ukraine intends to produce over one million first-person view (FPV) drones in 2024 and that Ukraine delivered 50 times more drones in December 2023 than in all of 2022. Fedorov stated that the Ukrainian government is “rapidly deregulating the drone market” and increasing its funding to manufacture Ukrainian drones.[54] Fedorov also stated that many Ukrainian drone companies will have at least 50 percent of their components produced domestically by the end of 2024.

German Chief of Defense General Carsten Breuer stated on February 11 that Germany will provide 100 million euros (about \$108 million) worth of additional military equipment to Ukraine.[55] German arms manufacturer Rheinmetall also began building a new factory in Lüneburg Heath in Lower Saxony to increase Germany's artillery shell production capabilities to strengthen arms provisions to Ukraine and maintain Germany's artillery ammunition stocks.[56] Rheinmetall CEO Armin Papperger stated that the new facility, once operational, will be able to produce 200,000 artillery shells per year and that Rheinmetall will deliver “several hundred thousand shells” to Ukraine in 2024.[57] This new Rheinmetall factory will reportedly become operational in 2025.[58]

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

Russian authorities continue to use youth engagement programs to Russify Ukrainian youth. Kherson Oblast occupation head Vladimir Saldo announced on February 12 that Ukrainian youth from occupied Kherson Oblast attended the “Russia” international exhibition-forum in Moscow and received grants from the Russian Federal Agency of Youth Affairs (Rosmolodezh) for projects pertaining to developing media and social networking in occupied Kherson Oblast.[59] Rosmolodezh is likely using grant money as a financial incentive for Ukrainian youth to participate in pro-Russian civic engagement programs in occupied Ukraine, thereby increasing Russian social control of occupied areas.

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian sources continued to promote Kremlin narratives aimed at driving wedges between the West and Ukraine and within Ukraine. Kremlin newswire TASS stated that the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) claimed that the West is preparing to appoint a “viceroy” in Ukraine as part of ongoing Kremlin narratives that the West controls Ukraine and Ukraine lacks independence and sovereignty.[60] Russian milbloggers attempted to use reports of protests in various European countries to promote the idea that the West should decrease support to Ukraine and to claim that European states are fabricating and exaggerating the “Russian threat” for their own interests.[61] Russian sources, including Zaporizhia Oblast occupation official Vladimir Rogov, have launched their own smear campaigns against newly-appointed Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi.[62]

Kremlin officials continued to promote the false narrative that Ukraine and the West, not Russia, are to blame for the lack of negotiations. Russian Security Council First Deputy Secretary Rashid Nurgaliev claimed that Russia has repeatedly “sincerely” sought to resolve the conflict in Ukraine with peaceful means and blamed the West for failing to implement the Minsk Agreements and starting the war in 2022.[63] Russian Permanent Representative to the EU Kirill Logvinov claimed that EU states have refused to support any political and diplomatic settlements to the war in Ukraine.[64] Russian President Vladimir Putin gave a lengthy interview on February 6 justifying why Russia invaded Ukraine and why Russia must destroy Ukraine as a nation.[65]

Russian state media alleged that the West conducted biological testing in Ukraine in the past as part of efforts to promote and legitimize Russia’s occupation of Ukraine. Russian news outlet *RIA Novosti* claimed that Ukrainian officials helped Western pharmaceutical companies conduct experiments on Ukrainian babies and children in a psychiatric ward of a hospital in Mariupol between 2008 and 2016.[66] Russian officials frequently weaponize narratives about alleged Western chemical and biological weapons testing in Ukraine to undermine the West and frame Russia as Ukraine’s savior.[67]

A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger continued efforts to set information conditions to justify future Russian aggression against Moldova, although the degree to which the Kremlin is directly involved in these efforts remains unclear. The milblogger claimed that the Moldovan government is increasingly cooperating with NATO and Ukraine and may seek to resolve the Transnistria conflict with force and that these actions are “drawing Moldova into the conflict [in Ukraine] at a new level.”[68]

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)

Belarusian Ambassador to Russia Dmitri Krutoy claimed that Russia and Belarus may cooperate on aircraft and microelectronics production, possibly as part of sanctions evasion schemes.[69] Ukrainian officials previously noted that Russian Kalibr missiles include foreign microelectronics.[70]

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

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- [1] <https://t.me/DIUkraine/3457>
- [2] <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/node/6316789>; <https://eyeofeuhrates.com/index.php/ar/news/2021/10/19/3495>; <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/syrian-air-defences-shoot-down-israeli-missiles-targeting-homs-province-state-tv-2022-11-13/>
- [3] <https://eyeofeuhrates.com/ar/news/2023/08/31/9558>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-september-1-2023>
- [4] <https://euphratespost.net/ماذا-استهدفت-الضربات-الإسرائيلية-في-ح>; <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/11/18/3035632>; <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-strike-targets-syrian-army-outposts-homs-province-state-media-2024-02-06/>; <https://www.facebook.com/mod.gov.sy/posts/pfbid02KrvxgAMJQeDjsozZhu1PDKT91wki6QkXTrMnRdKH7qTTGj3uWfXqS4hyyMSUaswZl>; <https://twitter.com/SAMSyriaO/status/1755209131596611746>; <https://twitter.com/SteeleSyAA/status/1755110099377340436>; <https://twitter.com/obretix/status/1754998379292008927>; <https://twitter.com/SAMSyriaO/status/1755008502299537580>; <https://twitter.com/leventkemaI/status/1754989500244090928>
- [5] https://t.me/tass_agency/231371 ; <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/19963701> ; https://t.me/vasilii_piskarev/1107
- [6] https://t.me/tass_agency/231374 ; <https://tass.ru/politika/19963903>
- [7] <https://t.me/severrealii/22925> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-april-18-2023>
- [8] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-10-2024>
- [9] <https://t.me/BorisNadezhdin/904> ; <https://t.me/BorisNadezhdin/906> ; <https://t.me/BorisNadezhdin/902> ; <https://t.me/BorisNadezhdin/899> ; <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/02/12/hopeful-putin-challenger-asks-top-russian-court-to-overrule-ballot-block-a84054> ; https://t.me/tass_agency/231344
- [10] <https://t.me/BorisNadezhdin/899>
- [11] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar020824>
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