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February 18, 2025, 9:00 pm 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 interactive map of Ukraine's offensive in Kursk Oblast.

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 1:30 pm ET on February 18 ISW will cover subsequent reports in the February 19 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russian and American officials met in Saudi Arabia for bilateral talks about the war in Ukraine on February 18, but Russia continues to display no indications that it is prepared to make any meaningful concessions on Ukraine as assessed by Western intelligence and US officials in line with ISW's longstanding assessment. *NBC* reported on February 18 that four Western intelligence officials and two US congressional officials stated that intelligence from the United States and unspecified close American allies shows that Russian President Vladimir Putin still wants to control all of Ukraine and that his goals "remain maximalist."^[1] One congressional official stated that there is "zero" intelligence showing that Putin is interested in a "real peace deal right now." Intelligence officials stated that Putin has no plans to withdraw troops from Ukraine or to pull any personnel or equipment from western Russia. The six officials stated that Putin may agree to a ceasefire and peace deal in order to give the Russian military time to rest and reconstitute, and there is an idea among Western officials that Putin may "go through the motions" of negotiations in order to see what concessions he can get and to reintegrate Russia back into the global community. The two congressional officials and a former senior US administration official noted that Putin's "broad ambitions" have remained unchanged from the end of the Biden administration into the new Trump administration.

Western intelligence assessments suggest that Putin has not changed his theory of victory in Ukraine and still believes that Russia's military superiority is such that Russia can outlast the West and Ukraine on the battlefield. The six official sources told *NBC* that Putin still thinks that he can "wait out" Ukraine and Europe to eventually control all of Ukraine.^[2] A Western intelligence official noted that Putin

"thinks he is winning" and does not feel pressure to stop hostilities due to Russian battlefield losses. Putin claimed in June 2024 that Russian forces aim to "squeeze" Ukrainian forces out "of those territories that should be under Russian control" and that Russia did not need to conduct another partial involuntary reserve call up similar to that in September 2022 because Russia is not trying to achieve its military objectives in Ukraine rapidly.[3] Putin's theory of victory assumes that the Russian military can sustain slow, creeping advances on the battlefield longer than Ukrainian forces can defend and longer than the West is willing to support Ukraine.

Many recent Russian statements show that the Kremlin remains uninterested in engaging in good faith negotiations and retains his objective of destroying the Ukrainian state while the Kremlin has offered no public indication that it would materially compromise. Kremlin officials have repeatedly denied Ukraine's sovereignty over its internationally recognized 1991 borders and the legitimacy of the Ukrainian government.[4] Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov most recently claimed on February 16.[5] Kremlin officials, including Putin, have promoted false narratives that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is "illegitimate" as part of efforts to claim that Zelensky does not have the authority to negotiate with Russia or that Russia does not have to honor any agreements that Zelensky may sign in the future.[6] Putin and other Russian officials have also demanded that Ukraine cede additional territory in eastern and southern Ukraine to Russia, while denying that Russia will make any territorial concessions of its own[7]

Russia attempted to posture itself as on equal terms with the United States during the February 18 Russian-American talks in Saudi Arabia, focusing its official public rhetoric about the meeting on US-Russian relations and not the war in Ukraine.[8] The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) published a boilerplate readout of the meeting, during which Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Presidential Aide Yuriy Ushakov met with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, National Security Adviser Michael Waltz, and Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff.[9] Russian officials, including Peskov, Lavrov, and Ushakov, broadly stated that the talks went well, claiming that the discussions were the start of a long process and that Russia and the United States will continue dialogue on these issues.[10] Lavrov claimed that the meeting was "useful" and that Russia and the United States began to "hear each other" and share a "determination to move forward." [11] The Russian MFA's readout emphasized the Russian-American bilateral aspects of the talks, including normalizing bilateral relations, establishing a dialogue for future economic and energy cooperation, and resuming communications on international issues. The Russian MFA's readout also emphasized that Russia and the United States have a "special responsibility" as nuclear powers and members of the UN Security Council to resume communicating on international issues. ISW continues to note that Putin is trying to present himself as equal to US President Donald Trump and to present Russia as a global power comparable to the United States and as the heir to the Soviet Union's "superpower" status.[12] The Russian MFA readout only briefly mentioned Ukraine, claiming that the delegations "exchanged views" on the situation "around Ukraine" and mutually committed to resolving the war.[13]

Russian officials at the bilateral meeting continued to signal the Kremlin's unwillingness to negotiate on the war in Ukraine and determination to achieve its maximalist objectives in Ukraine. Lavrov claimed that authorities in Romania and other unspecified EU states are discussing laying claim to Ukrainian territory.[14] Lavrov's claim is part of a wider Kremlin information operation that claims that Ukrainian territory is actually the historical territory of other states such that

only a rump state in western Ukraine might be left independent after Russia and Ukraine's other neighbors had absorbed most Ukrainian territory.[15] The Russian MFA stated that the Russian delegation in Saudi Arabia reiterated the need to eliminate the "root causes" of the war in Ukraine.[16] Kremlin officials have defined these root causes as NATO's alleged violation of obligations not to expand eastward and the Ukrainian government's alleged discrimination against ethnic Russians and Russian language, media, and culture in Ukraine.[17] Kremlin officials have frequently referred back to Russia's alleged need to address these "root causes" in recent weeks, including during Putin's February 12 call with Trump. Claims about the "root causes" of the war are in direct reference to Putin's late 2021 and early 2022 demands of the US and Ukraine, include demands that would force Ukraine to become a permanently neutral state that could never join NATO, impose severe limitations on the size of the Ukrainian military, and remove the Ukrainian government.[18] Moscow's presentation of the "root causes" of the war is intended to place the blame for Russia's full-scale invasion on Ukraine and present the start of this war of conquest as something Russia was compelled to undertake rather than the unprovoked aggression it actually was. This presentation denies the realities that Zelensky ran and took office on a platform of ending the ongoing conflict and sought to negotiate with Putin early in his term and that Putin refused to curtail his proxies' continuous violations of the terms of the Minsk II agreement.[19]

Lavrov also denied Russia's culpability for its deliberate and years' long strike campaigns against Ukrainian energy infrastructure. Lavrov claimed that Russian forces did not intend to damage Ukrainian energy infrastructure despite ample evidence that Russian forces have consistently waged strike campaigns using high-precision weaponry to specifically target Ukraine's energy infrastructure.[20] Russian forces have also repeatedly experimented with different strike packages that aim to ensure that high-precision weapons are able to bypass Ukrainian air defense and reach their intended energy infrastructure targets.[21] Lavrov claimed that US officials at the bilateral meeting proposed a moratorium on strikes against Russian and Ukrainian energy facilities, and Lavrov responded that Russian forces only strike facilities that "directly support" the Ukrainian military. Lavrov is deliberately downplaying the Russian strike campaigns against Ukrainian energy infrastructure that Russian forces have waged every winter of Russia's full-scale invasion.[22]

Zelensky, in contrast to Kremlin officials, continues to demonstrate Ukraine's willingness to compromise to bring about an enduring end to the war. Zelensky has repeatedly demonstrated Ukraine's commitment to engaging in good faith negotiations that require compromises with Russia.[23] Zelensky recently expressed his willingness to negotiate directly with Putin.[24] Zelensky stated on February 11 that Ukraine is willing to commit to a territorial exchange with Russia as a condition for peace — a proposal that Russian officials rejected.[25] Ukraine hosted an international Summit on Peace in Switzerland in June 2024 to establish high-level dialogue before potential future peace talks with Russia, and Ukrainian officials announced in December 2024 that Ukraine was preparing another global peace summit.[26] Ukraine previously expressed its willingness to invite Russian representatives to any future peace summits.[27]

Russian officials in Saudi Arabia began what will likely be an ongoing effort to push the United States into accepting Russian offers of economic and investment measures in lieu of any actual Russian concessions on Ukraine. CEO of the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) Kirill Dmitriev, who was part of the Russian delegation in Saudi Arabia, told *CNN* on February

17 that he had already met with several unspecified members from the US delegation in Riyadh prior to the official talks on February 18.[28] Dmitriev denied that Moscow primarily sought to lift sanctions against Russia, claiming instead that both the United States and Russia would benefit from economic cooperation. Dmitriev stated on February 18 that he would present the US delegation in Saudi Arabia with an estimate that US companies lost an alleged \$300 billion by leaving the Russian market.[29] Dmitriev stated that major US oil companies "have had very successful business in Russia" and that the companies will return to Russia "at some point," reasoning that the companies would not "forego" the opportunities Russia offers in terms of access to Russian natural resources. Dmitriev claimed that the Russian delegation put forward a number of unspecified economic proposals that the United States is considering and that he thinks there could be progress on these areas in the next two to three months.[30] Dmitriev also called on Russia and the US to establish joint projects in the Arctic, and Minister-Counselor of the Russian Embassy in Canada Vladimir Proskuryakov, who is reportedly an Arctic specialist, notably attended the February 18 bilateral meeting.[31] The Kremlin appears to be engaging in an effort to push the United States to accept economic terms that are unrelated to the war in Ukraine, possibly in return for Ukrainian and Western concessions that *are* related to the war. **American acceptance of these Russian-offered economic measures — without demanding any Russian concessions on Ukraine in return — would give away leverage that the United States will need to achieve Trump's stated objective of achieving a lasting and enduring peace that benefits the United States and Ukraine.**

Dmitriev attempted to frame Russian-offered economic incentives as more beneficial for the United States than for Russia, but in reality Russia needs economic relief as soon as possible to stave off looming crises in 2025 and 2026. Dmitriev claimed that previous US economic policies "undermined confidence in the dollar" and threatened the US economy.[32] Dmitriev claimed that sanctions have actually helped Russia become "more independent" while damaging the US dollar and American companies.[33] The Kremlin has been engaged in an information operation in recent months that aims to posture the Russian economy as strong and stable to international audiences, and Dmitriev's attempts to frame the United States as needing economic cooperation with Russia more than Russia needs such cooperation is a continuation of these efforts.[34] Russia, however, is facing a series of economic and military challenges and weaknesses, including rising inflation, decreases in the liquidity portion of Russia's sovereign wealth fund, and growing expenditures on the Russian military, that are forecasted to worsen in the next 12 to 18 months should current trends continue – as ISW's Christina Harward will outline in a forthcoming essay. Russia's strained economy and military would benefit from sanctions relief, the return of US companies to the Russian market, and US investment in Russian natural resources projects much more than the enormously larger US economy.

US officials continue to meet with European leaders about support for Ukraine. US Special Presidential Envoy for Russia and Ukraine Keith Kellogg met bilaterally with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa on February 18 to discuss support to Ukraine.[35] Von der Leyen emphasized that the United States and Europe must collaborate to achieve a just peace in Ukraine and reaffirmed the EU's commitment to strengthening military support for Ukraine. Costa similarly stated that the EU remains ready to work with the United States to ensure lasting peace and security.

Key Takeaways:

- **Russian and American officials met in Saudi Arabia for bilateral talks about the war in Ukraine on February 18, but Russia continues to display no indications that it is prepared to make any meaningful concessions on Ukraine as assessed by Western intelligence and US officials in line with ISW's longstanding assessment.**
- **Many recent Russian statements show that the Kremlin remains uninterested in engaging in good faith negotiations and retains his objective of destroying the Ukrainian state while the Kremlin has offered no public indication that it would materially compromise.**
- **Russia attempted to posture itself as on equal terms with the United States during the February 18 Russian-American talks in Saudi Arabia, focusing its official public rhetoric about the meeting on US-Russian relations and not the war in Ukraine.**
- **Russian officials at the bilateral meeting continued to signal the Kremlin's unwillingness to negotiate on the war in Ukraine and determination to achieve its maximalist objectives in Ukraine.**
- **Zelensky, in contrast to Kremlin officials, continues to demonstrate Ukraine's willingness to compromise to bring about an enduring end to the war.**
- **Russian officials in Saudi Arabia began what will likely be an ongoing effort to push the United States into accepting Russian offers of economic and investment measures in lieu of any actual Russian concessions on Ukraine.**
- **Dmitriev attempted to frame Russian-offered economic incentives as more beneficial for the US than for Russia, but in reality Russia needs economic relief as soon as possible to stave off looming crises in 2025 and 2026.**
- **US officials continue to meet with European leaders about support for Ukraine.**
- **Russian forces recently advanced near Borova, Toretsk, and Velyka Novosilka.**
- **A Russian milblogger and former Storm-Z instructor continued to complain that the Russian military command's lack of response to systemic issues is limiting Russian advances near Pokrovsk.**
- **Russian opposition outlet *SOTA* reported on February 18 that Republic of Mordovia Head Artyom Zdunov announced that regional authorities are raising one-time payments for recruits who sign a contract with the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) from 400,000 rubles (\$4,369) to 1.1 million rubles (\$12,015).**
- **Russian forces continue to deploy wounded and medically unfit soldiers to the frontline in an effort to address personnel shortages.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Russo-Ukrainian War February 18, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



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.

- Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of three subordinate main efforts)

- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – 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
- Significant Activity in Belarus

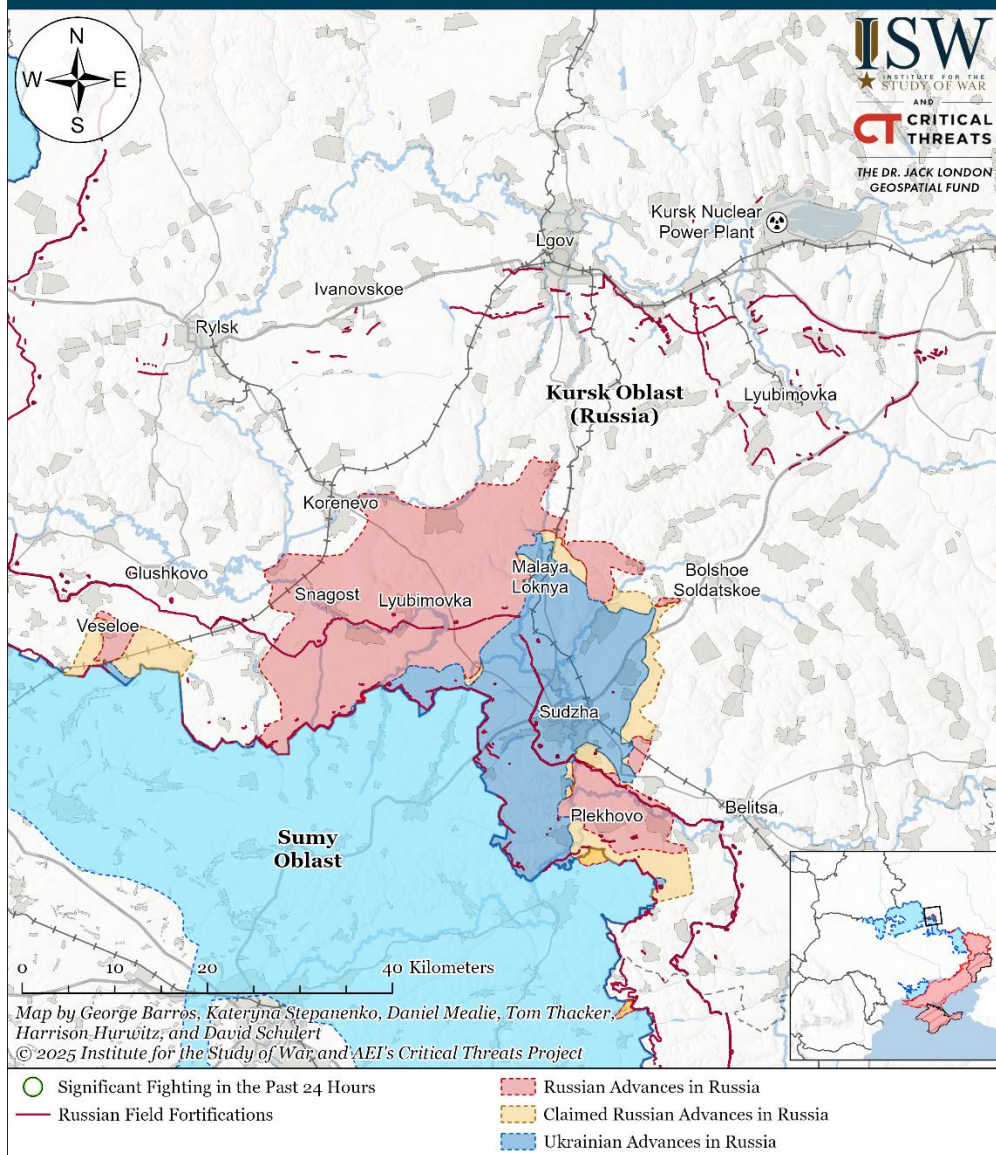
Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Ukrainian salient in Kursk Oblast on February 18 but did not make any confirmed advances. Russian forces continued ground attacks northwest of Sudzha near Sverdlikovo and Pogrebki, east of Sudzha near Cherkasskaya Konopelka, and south of Sudzha near Kurilovka.[36] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued counterattacks in Kursk Oblast.[37]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced east of Sverdlikovo, southeast of Cherkasskaya Konopelka, and north of Fanaseyevka (southeast of Sudzha).[38]

Order of Battle: Elements of the 1st Assault Company of the Russian 34th Motorized Rifle Brigade (49th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) reportedly continue operating near Pogrebki, elements of the 11th Airborne (VDV) Brigade reportedly continue operating near Cherkasskaya Konopelka, and elements of the 51st VDV Regiment (106th VDV Division) and 56th VDV Regiment (7th VDV Division) reportedly continue operating near Sverdlikovo.[40] Drone elements of the Russian "Rubikon" Center for Advanced Unmanned Technologies and Russian Smuglyanka Detachment reportedly continue operating in Kursk Oblast.[41]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kursk Direction February 18, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST

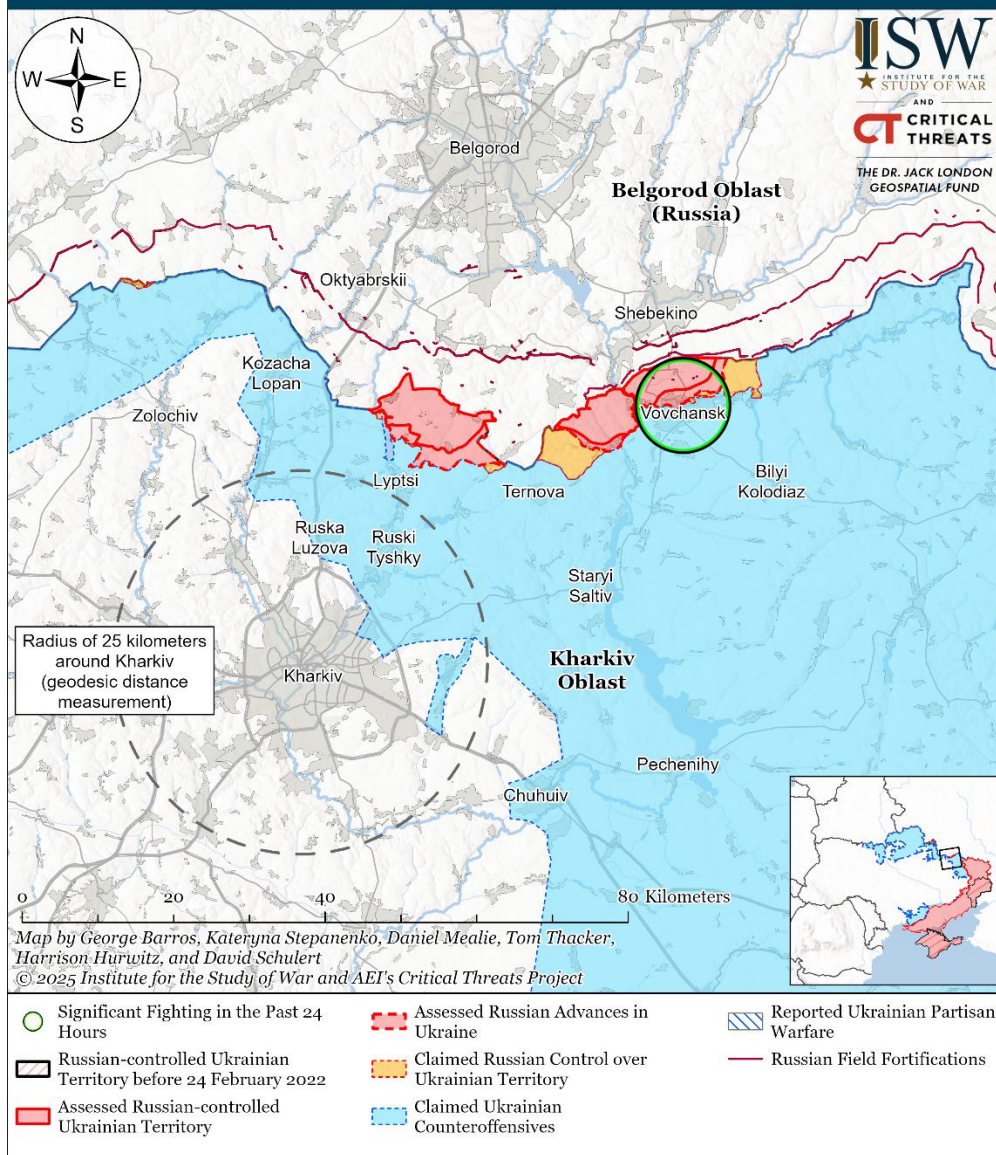


Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Kharkiv Oblast (Russian objective: Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City)

Russian forces continued ground attacks in the Kharkiv direction on February 18 but did not advance. Russian forces conducted offensive operations northeast of Kharkiv City near Vovchansk on February 17 and 18.[42] Ukraine's Kharkiv and Khortytsia groups of forces reported on February 18 that Ukrainian forces repelled a roughly platoon-sized Russian mechanized assault near Vovchansk.[43]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kharkiv Direction February 18, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

Russian forces continued offensive operations near Kupyansk on February 18 but did not make any confirmed advances. Russian forces attacked north of Kupyansk along the international border near Topoli, east of Kupyansk near Petropavlivka, and southeast of Kupyansk near Stepova Novoselivka and Hluskhivka and towards Novoosynove on February 17 and 18.[44] Ukraine's Khortytsia Group of Forces published footage on February 17 showing Russian forces conducting a mechanized assault in the Kupyansk direction and reported that Ukrainian drones destroyed one armored personnel carrier and damaged three others.[45]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced southwest and northwest of Dvorichna (north of Kupyansk), east of Dovhenke (northeast of Kupyansk).[46] Kharkiv Oblast occupation governor Vitaly Ganchev claimed that Russian forces expanded their bridgehead on the west bank of the Oskil River, seizing an unspecified settlement north of Dvorichna.[47]

Russian forces recently advanced in the Borova direction. Russian forces attacked northeast of Borova near Zahryzove, Nova Kruhlyakivka, and Lozova; east of Borova near Kopanky; and southeast of Borova near Makiivka and Hrekivka on February 17 and 18.[48]

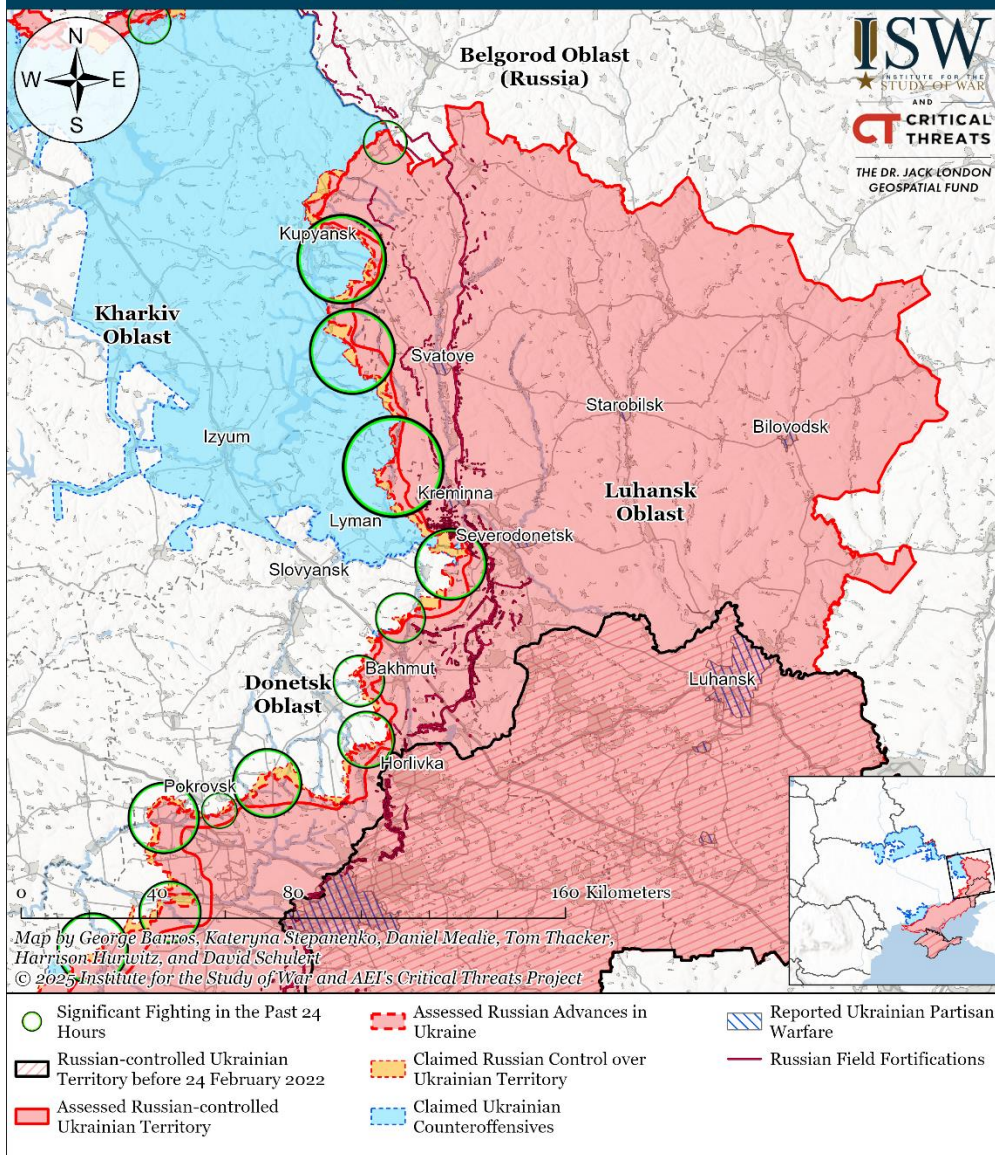
Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on February 18 shows Russian forces conducting a platoon-sized mechanized assault southwest of Lozova, indicating that Russian forces recently advanced in the area.[49]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Lyman direction on February 18 but did not make any confirmed advances. Russian forces attacked northeast of Lyman near Novolyubivka, Yampolivka, and Kolodyazi and east of Lyman near Zarichne and Torske on February 17 and 18.[50]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed on February 18 that Russian forces seized Yampolivka.[51] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced near Terny (northeast of Lyman) and south of Yampolivka.[52]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 488th Motorized Rifle Regiment (144th Motorized Rifle Division, 20th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Moscow Military District [MMD]) and the 31st and 37th motorized rifle regiments (67th Motorized Rifle Division, 25th CAA, Central Military District [CMD]) are reportedly operating near Yampolivka.[53]

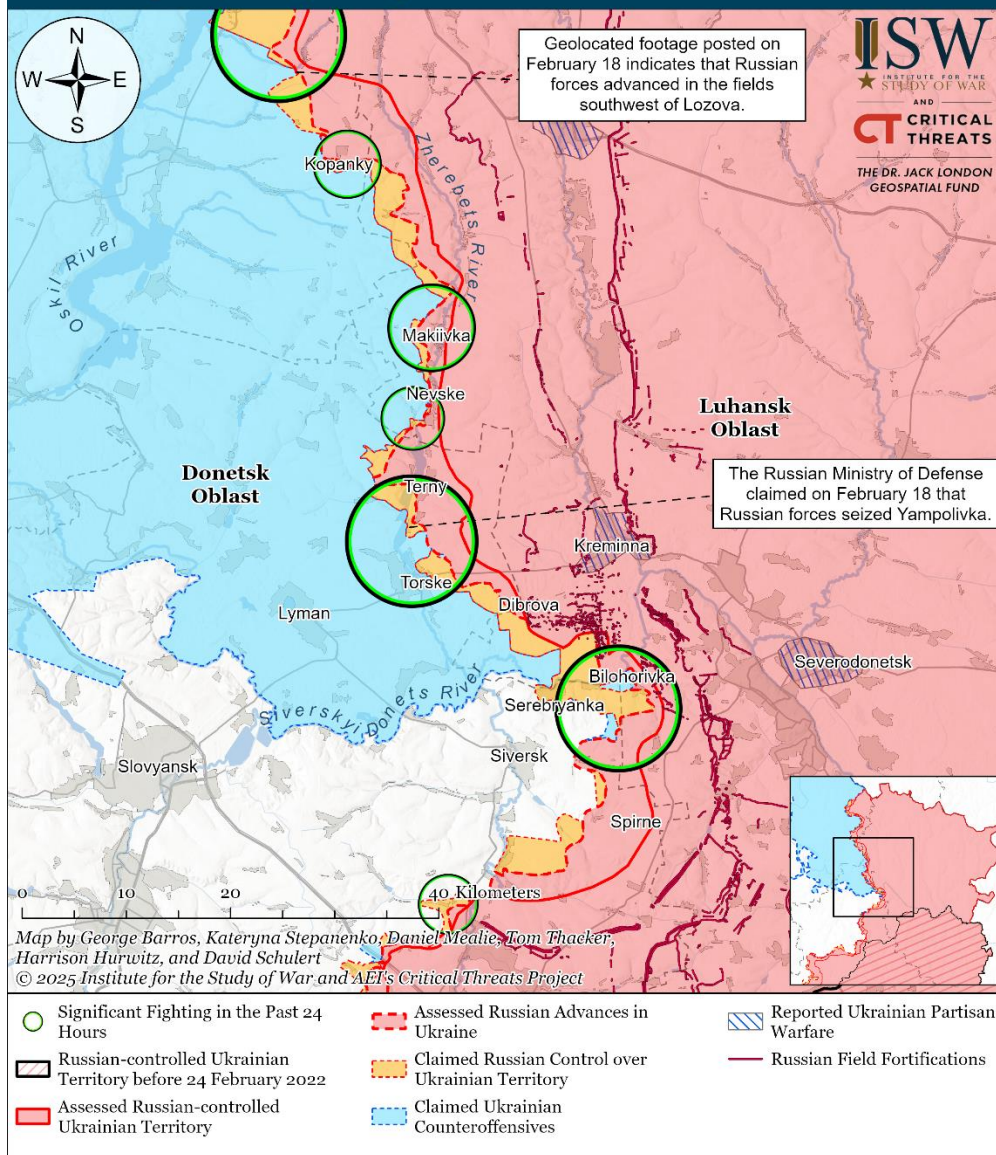
Assessed Control of Terrain in Luhansk Oblast February 18, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Siversk direction on February 18 but did not advance. Russian forces attacked northeast of Siversk near Bilohorivka and east of Siversk near Verkhokamyanske on February 17 and 18.[54]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Svatove-Kreminna Direction February 18, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Chasiv Yar direction on February 18 but did not advance. Russian forces attacked near Chasiv Yar itself, northeast of Chasiv Yar near Vasyukivka, and south of Chasiv Yar toward Oleksandro-Shulytne on February 17 and 18.[55] A Russian milblogger claimed on February 17 that Ukrainian forces conducted counterattacks south of Chasiv Yar near Stuopochky.[56]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: A Russian milblogger claimed on February 18 that Russian forces advanced near Stupochky.[57]

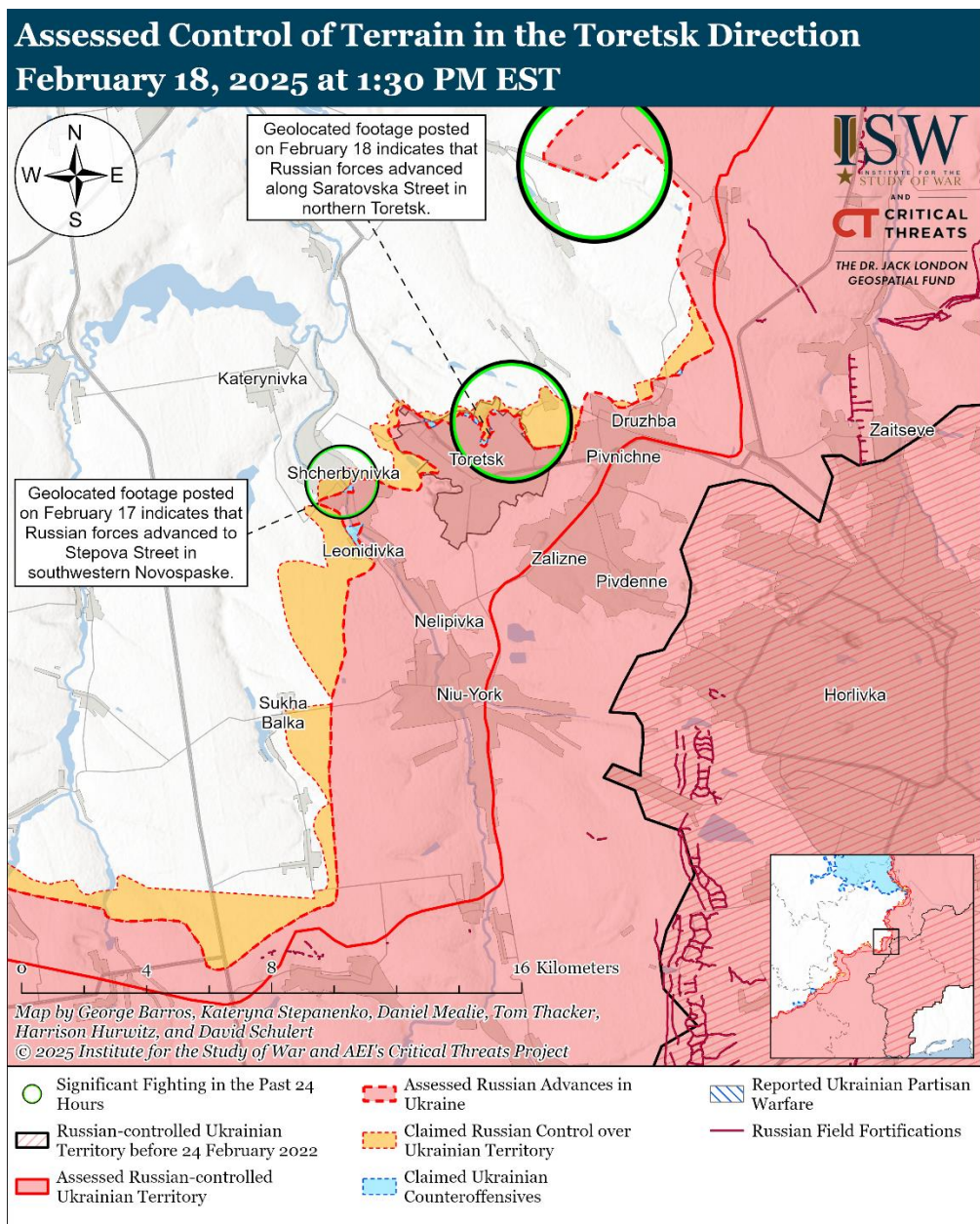
The spokesperson for a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Chasiv Yar direction reported on February 18 that Russian forces are attempting to create passages through the Siverskyi-Donets Donbas Canal

for Russian equipment and that Russian forces are trying to leverage rainy or foggy weather conditions when Ukrainian drone usage is limited in order to advance.[58]

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade (14th Army Corps [AC], Leningrad Military District [LMD]) are reportedly striking Ukrainian positions near Virolyubivka (west of Chasiv Yar).[59]

Russian forces recently advanced in the Toretsk direction. Russian forces attacked near Toretsk itself, north of Toretsk near Krymske and Dyliivka, and west of Toretsk near Scherbynivka on February 17 and 18.[60]

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on February 17 and 18 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced in northern Toretsk and southwestern Novospaske (west of Toretsk).[61]



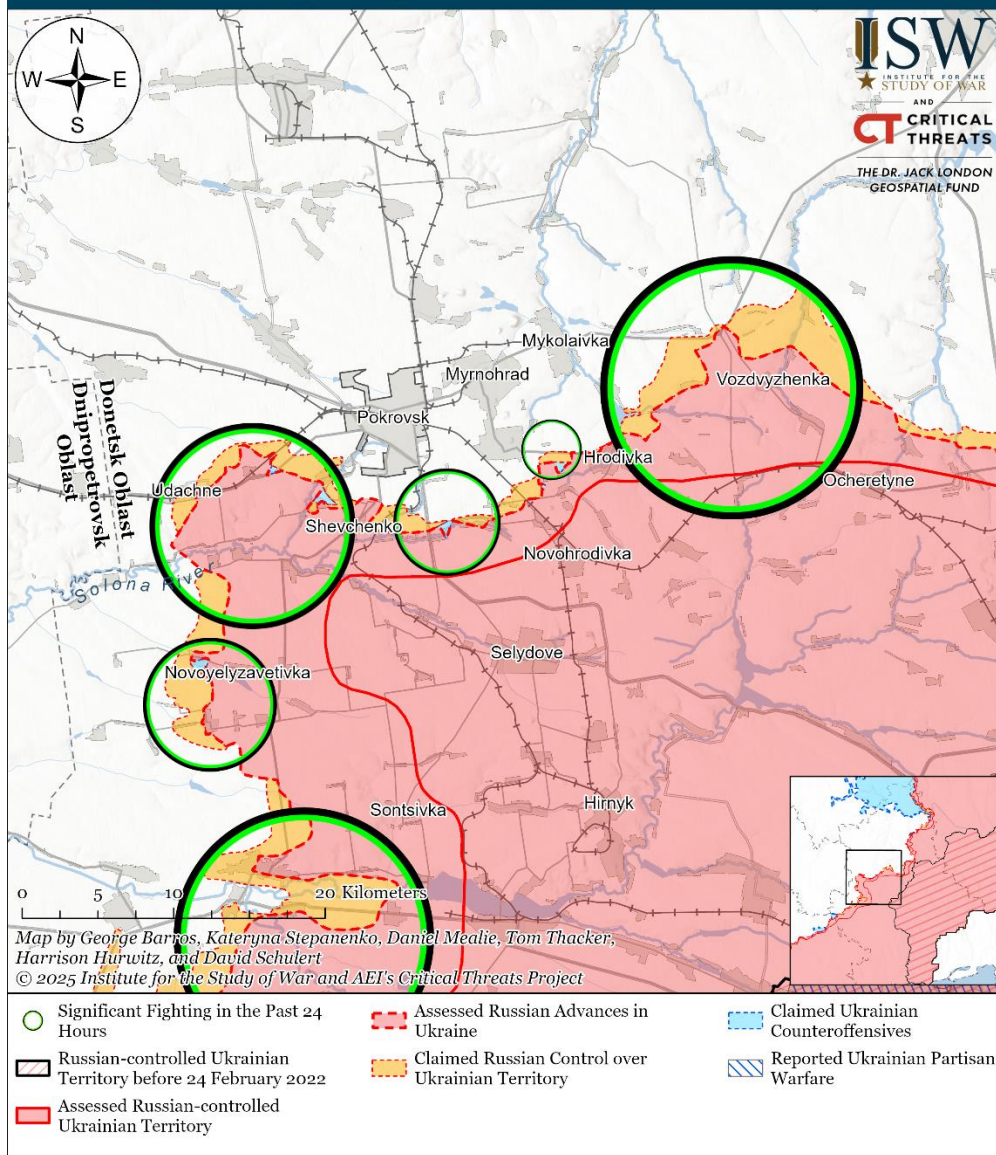
Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Pokrovsk direction February 18 but did not make any confirmed advances. Russian forces conducted offensive operations northeast of Pokrovsk near Vodyane Druhe, Malynivka, and Tarasivka; east of Pokrovsk near Myrolyubivka, Yelyzavetivka, and Promin; southeast of Pokrovsk near Lysivka; south of Pokrovsk near Novoukrainka; and southwest of Pokrovsk near Pishchane, Kotlyne, Udachne, Uspenivka, Nadiivka, Yasenove, Novooleksandrivka, Kotlyarivka, Preobrazhenka, and Zaporizhzhia on February 17 and 18.[62] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Yelyzavetivka, Lysivka, Dachenske (south of Pokrovsk), Kotlyne, and Sribne (southwest of Pokrovsk).[63] A Russian source claimed that Russian forces struck a bridge along the T-0515 Pokrovsk-Andriivka highway in Pershe Travnja (just southwest of Pokrovsk).[64]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced north of Zaporizhzhia, southwest of Sribne, and northeast of Pishchane.[65] Russian sources claimed that information about Russian forces seizing all of Uspenivka is untrue.[66]

Ukraine's Khortytsia Group of Forces Spokesperson Major Viktor Trehubov stated that Russian forces in the Pokrovsk direction are losing "momentum" and becoming exhausted.[67] Trehubov stated that Russian forces are losing an unspecified "record" number of armored vehicles and have suffered 14,000 to 15,000 casualties in the past month in the area, with 7,000 killed in action (KIA). A Ukrainian brigade operating in the Pokrovsk direction stated on February 17 that Russian forces are taking advantage of blizzard conditions to intensify offensive actions, having increased the size of their infantry assault groups to five to seven people.[68] The spokesperson of another Ukrainian brigade operating in the Pokrovsk direction stated that Russian forces are attacking with infantry and almost never with armored vehicles.[69] The spokesperson stated that Russian forces are accumulating troops and replenishing reserves. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian drone operations are complicating Russian advances near Lysivka.[70]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 506th Motorized Rifle Regiment (27th Motorized Rifle Division, 2nd CAA, Central Military District [CMD]) are reportedly operating near Uspenivka.[71]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Pokrovsk Direction February 18, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST

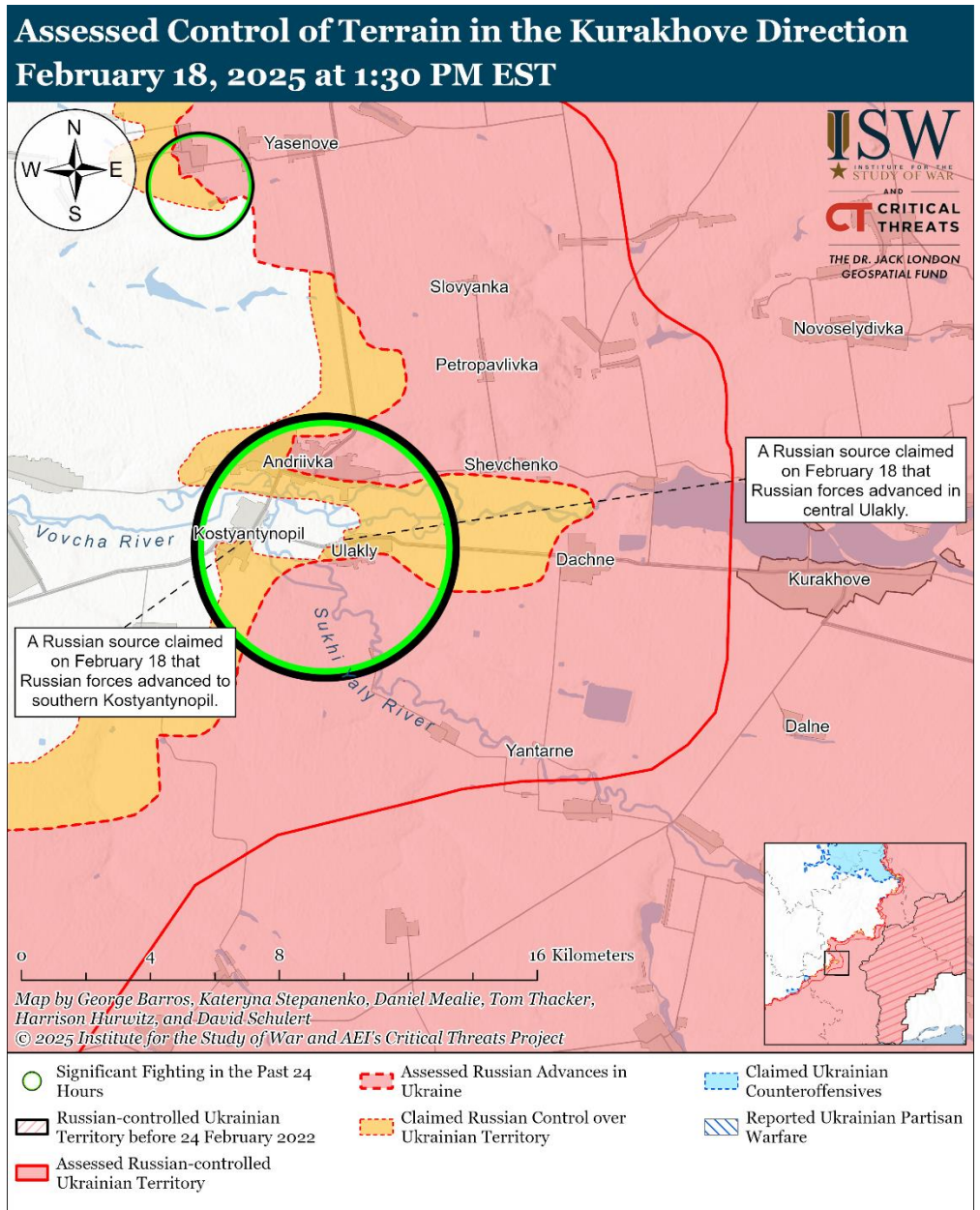


Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Kurakhove direction on February 18 but did not make any confirmed advances. Russian forces conducted offensive operations west of Kurakhove near Kostyantynopil, Oleksiivka, Shevchenko, Ulakly, Andriivka, and Dachne and southwest of Kurakhove near Rozdolne on February 17 and 18.[72] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked north of Andriivka and maintain positions west of Dachne.[73]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced 2.5 kilometers southeast of Ulakly, in central and western Ulakly, in southern and central Kostyantynopil, north and south of Andriivka.[74]

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 140th Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade (29th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Eastern Military District [EMD]) and 14th Spetsnaz Brigade (Russian General Staff's

Main Directorate [GRU]) are reportedly operating near Kostyantynopil.[75] Elements of the 39th Motorized Rifle Brigade (68th AC, EMD) are reportedly operating near Ulakly, and elements of the 68th Tank Regiment and 102nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (both of the 150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA, Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating near Dachne.[76]

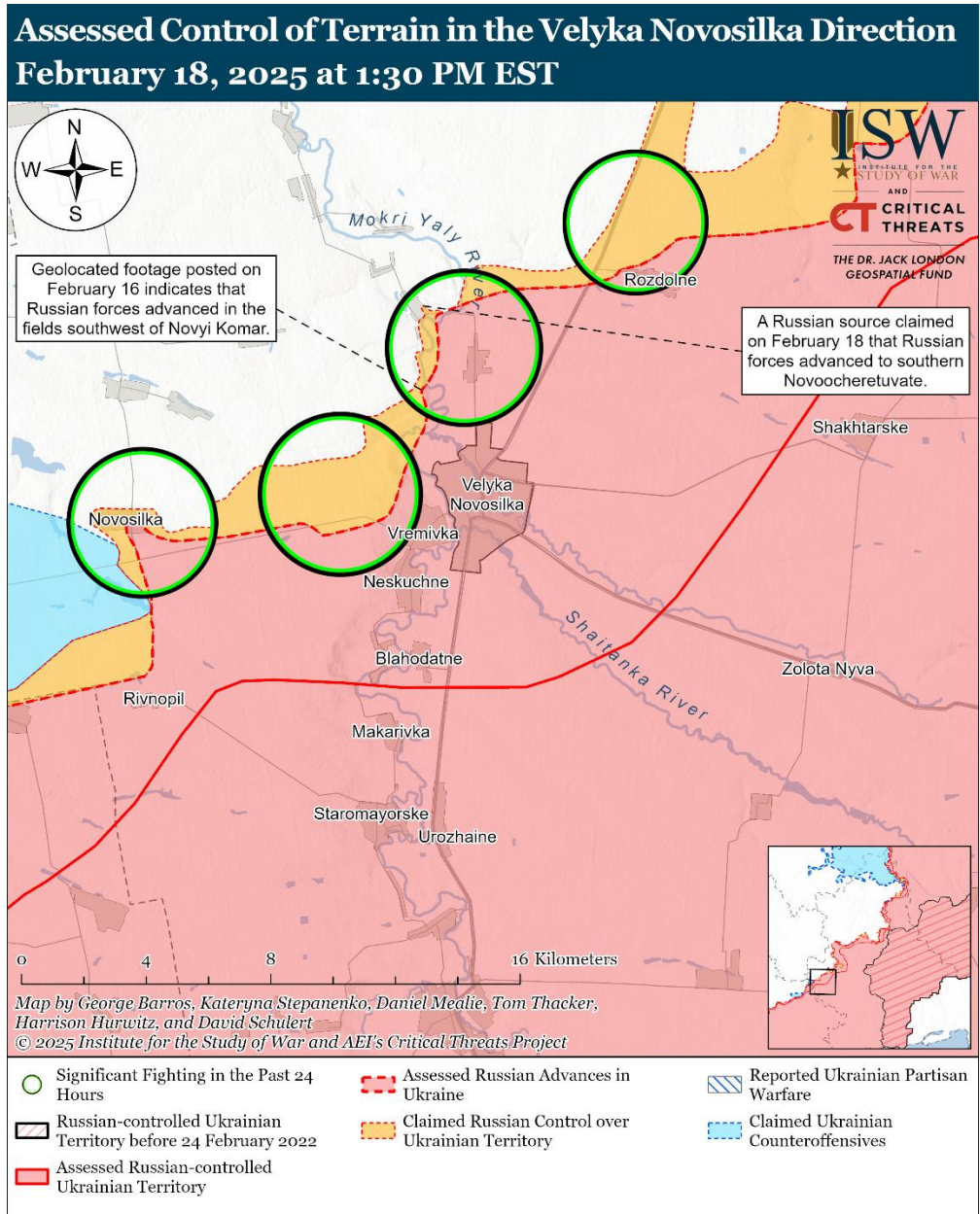


Russian forces recently advanced in the Velyka Novosilka direction. Russian forces continued assaults north of Velyka Novosilka near Novyi Komar and Novoocheretuvate, northwest of Velyka Novosilka toward Burlatske, west of Velyka Novosilka near Novosilka and Novopil, and southwest of Velyka Novosilka near Rivnopil on February 17 and 18.[77]

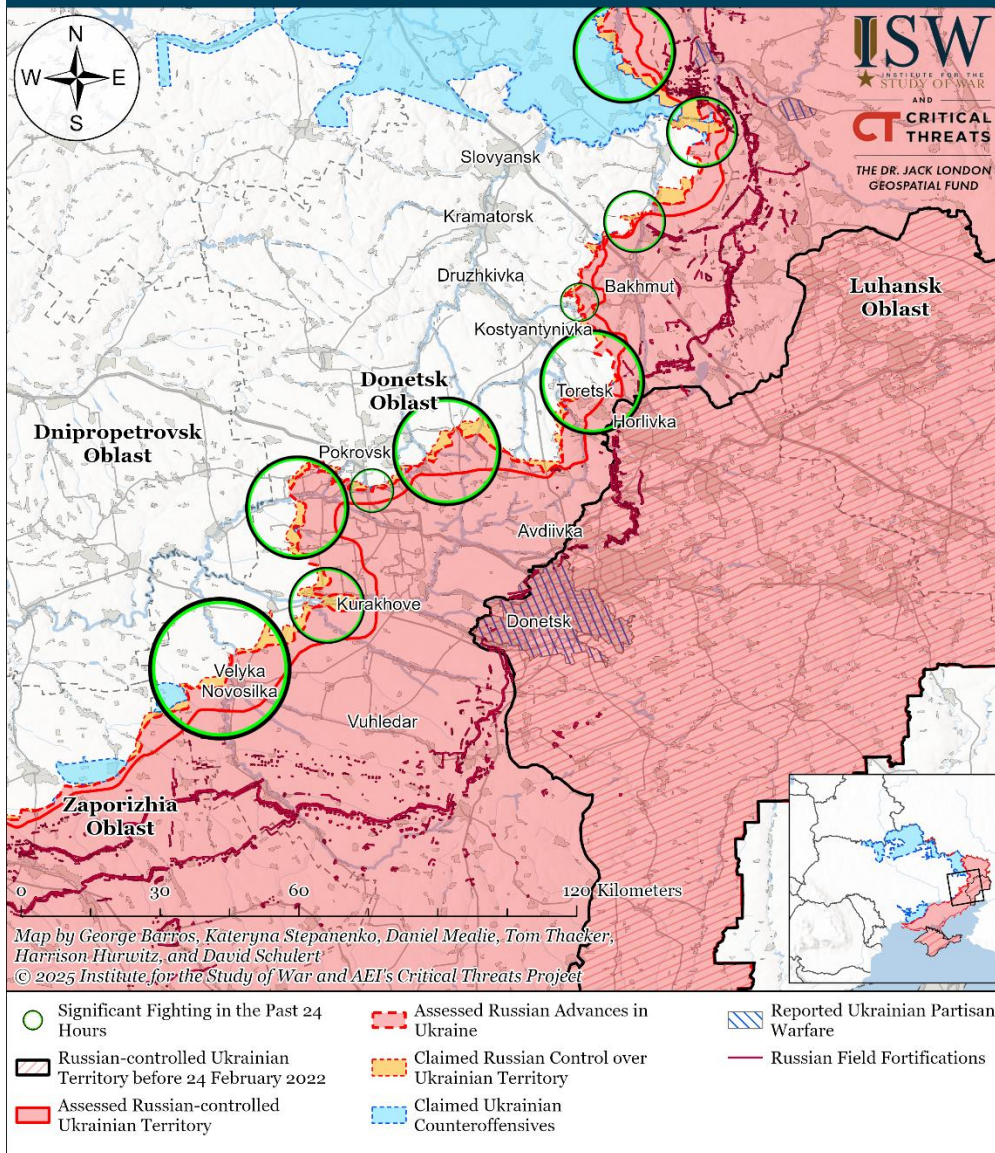
Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on February 16 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced southwest of Novyi Komar.[78]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced to southern Novoocheretuvate, one kilometer toward Burlatske, and east of Novosilka.[79]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 394th Motorized Rifle Regiment (127th Motorized Rifle Division, 5th CAA, EMD) are reportedly operating near Vremivka (west of Velyka Novosilka), and elements of the 60th Motorized Rifle Brigade (5th CAA, EMD) are reportedly operating near Novosilka.[80]



Assessed Control of Terrain in Donetsk Oblast February 18, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST

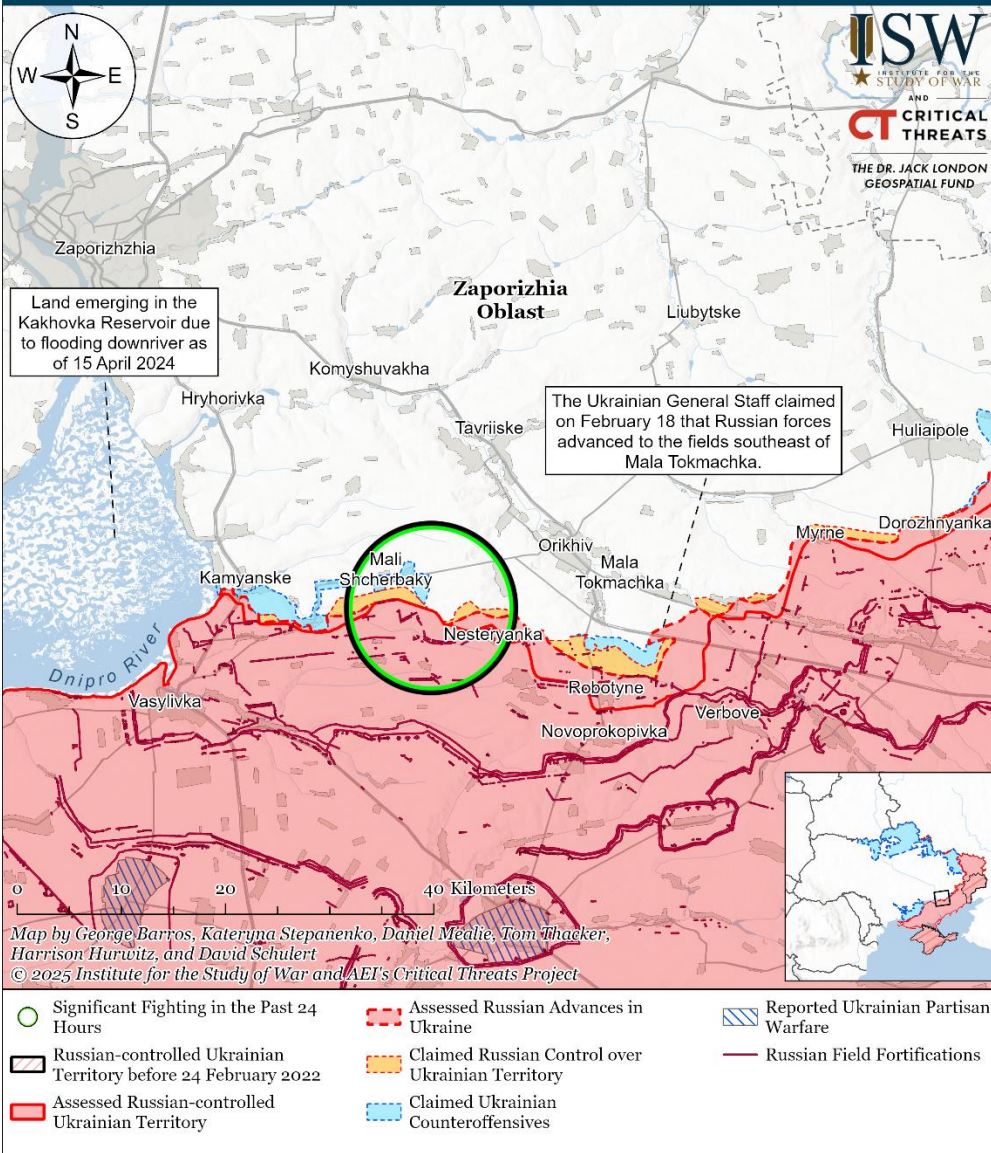


Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Russian forces recently advanced in western Zaporizhia Oblast. Russian forces conducted offensive operations northwest of Robotyne near Mali Shcherbaky, Shcherbaky, and Nesteryanka on February 17 and 18.[81]

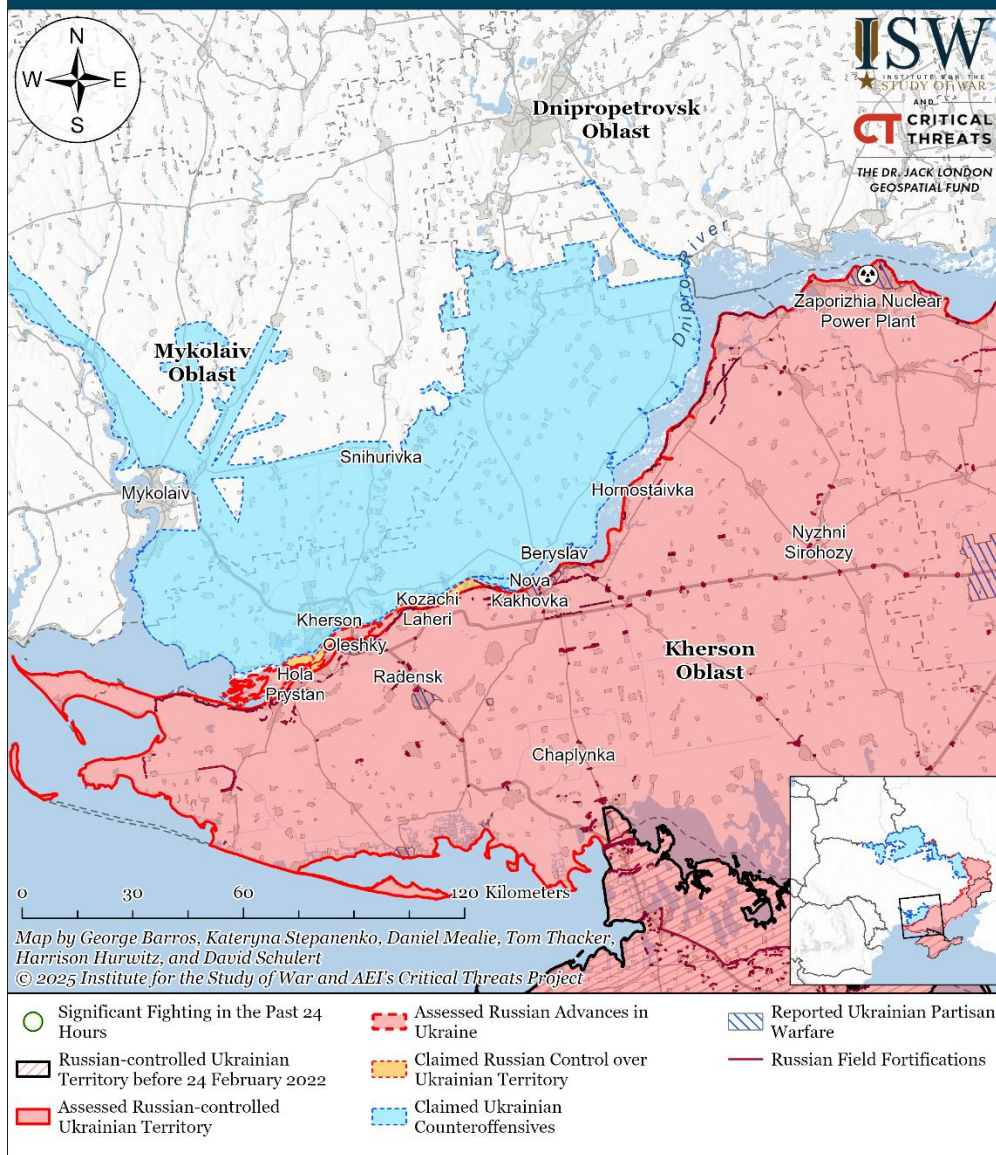
Assessed Russian advances: The Ukrainian General Staff published a map on February 18 indicating that Russian forces recently advanced southeast of Mala Tokmachka (northeast of Robotyne).[82]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Zaporizhia Direction February 18, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Neither Russian nor Ukrainian sources reported ground attacks in the Kherson direction on February 18.

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kherson Direction February 18, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



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

Russian forces conducted a series of drone strikes against Ukraine on the night of February 17 to 18. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched 176 Shahed and decoy drones from Millerovo, Rostov Oblast; Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai; Shatalovo, Smolensk Oblast; occupied Crimea; and Oryol, Bryansk, and Kursk oblasts.[83] The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Ukrainian forces downed 103 drones over Kharkiv, Poltava, Sumy, Chernihiv, Cherkasy, Kyiv, Kirovohrad, Vinnytsia, Zhytomyr, Mykolaiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Kherson oblasts and that 67 drones were "lost," likely due to Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW) interference, as of 0900 local time. Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces struck civilian infrastructure in Cherkasy, Kyiv, and Kirovohrad oblasts.[84]

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

A Russian milblogger and former Storm-Z instructor continued to complain that the Russian military command's lack of response to systemic issues is limiting Russian advances near Pokrovsk. The milblogger claimed on February 17 that the Russian military command's continued prioritization of reports exaggerating Russian battlefield successes may be hiding crucial vulnerabilities in Russian forces' capabilities near Pokrovsk.[85] The milblogger claimed that the Russian military command is prioritizing its image over addressing systemic issues. The milblogger claimed that lower-ranking soldiers are afraid to report the battlefield realities to their commanders. The milblogger claimed that the senior military command has likely placed high pressure on Russian Central Grouping of Forces Commander Colonel General Andrei Mordvichev to report Russian successes near Pokrovsk and insinuated that this pressure is contributing to the false reports. The milblogger claimed that Russian forces near Pokrovsk are under-provisioned because too few Russian strike means are spread over too large an area and that this stretching of resources both inhibits Russian advances and leaves Russian forces vulnerable to Ukrainian counterattacks. The milblogger called for Russian forces to integrate glide bomb strikes with ground attacks in order to seize Pokrovsk as Russian forces did with the seizure of Avdiivka in February 2024. The milblogger claimed that Russian infantry, drones, and artillery will not be enough to seize Pokrovsk given Russian forces' current capabilities.

Russian opposition outlet *SOTA* reported on February 18 that Republic of Mordovia Head Artyom Zdunov announced that regional authorities are raising one-time payments for recruits who sign a contract with the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) from 400,000 rubles (\$4,369) to 1.1 million rubles (\$12,015).[86] ISW has reported at length on recent Russian efforts to incentivize voluntary recruitment by increasing one-time signing bonuses and assesses that these efforts are increasing strain on Russia's wartime economy.[87]

Russian forces continue to deploy wounded and medically unfit soldiers to the frontline in an effort to address personnel shortages. Russian opposition outlet *Mobilization News* reported on February 18 that the Russian military command deployed about 40 wounded soldiers of the Russian 136th Motorized Rifle Brigade (58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]), who were temporarily deemed medically unfit for service due to injuries and hepatitis diagnoses, to combat operations.[88] *Mobilization News* noted that the Russian military command led the soldiers to believe they were going to a military hospital in Kursk Oblast for medical examinations, treatment, and dismissal from service but that the Russian command assigned the soldiers to be reservists in the "150th Regiment" of the 136th Motorized Rifle Brigade. *Mobilization News* reported that 136th Motorized Rifle Brigade's Chief of Staff Colonel "Graf" Egrafov made the decision to send the soldiers back to the front.

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

Russia is reportedly working to modernize its Pantsir air defense system. Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov announced on the sidelines of the 2025 International Defense Exhibition (IDEX) in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE) on February 17 that Russia will mount an

unspecified laser system on Pantsir air defense systems and recently developed "mini-missiles" for the systems to fire at drones.[89]

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) announced on February 18 the "Voentekh" project as part of efforts to accelerate the MoD's implementation of technological innovations and to train specialists to introduce new products into the Russian military.[90] The MoD and state-backed "People's Front" military assistance initiative are reportedly developing the project and will adapt the MoD's technology advisory council to work with Russian forces and industry representatives to test samples of new products on the battlefield.

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)

ISW is not publishing coverage of activities in Russian-occupied areas today.

Significant activity in Belarus (Russian efforts to increase its military presence in Belarus and further integrate Belarus into Russian-favorable frameworks)

Belarus continues to strengthen economic and military cooperation with international partners. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko met with Libyan National Army (LNA) Commander-in-Chief Khalifa Haftar in Minsk on February 18 and discussed economic cooperation and strengthening bilateral relations.[91] Haftar met with Belarusian State Security Committee (KGB) Head Ivan Tertel in Belarus on February 17.[92] Belarusian State Military Industrial Committee Head Dmitry Pantus met with Azerbaijani Defense Minister Zakir Hasanov on February 18 and discussed military-technical cooperation.[93]

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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