

# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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**Note: The data cut-off for this product was 1:30pm ET on February 29. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the March 1 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.**

**Ukrainian officials are reportedly concerned about the possibility of significant Russian territorial gains in summer 2024 in the event of continued delays in Western security assistance.** *Bloomberg* reported that internal Ukrainian assessments state that Russian advances along the frontline could gain significant momentum by summer 2024 unless Ukraine's partners increase provisions of artillery ammunition.[1] *Bloomberg* reported that sources close to Ukrainian leadership stated that Ukraine expects Russian forces to decide between continuing their current focus on gradual tactical advances and preparing for a larger breakthrough attempt in summer 2024 depending on the results of current Russian offensive operations.[2] Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated on February 25 that Russian forces are preparing for a new offensive effort that will start in late May or summer 2024.[3] Russian forces are currently trying to exploit tactical opportunities offered by the Russian seizure of Avdiivka and are attempting to push as far as possible in the area before Ukrainian forces establish harder-to-penetrate defensive lines.[4] Russian forces may determine to adjust future offensive operations based on the level of success they have in attacking subsequent Ukrainian defensive lines west and northwest of Avdiivka, and Ukrainian defenses in the Avdiivka area may impact Russian perceptions of the wider state of Ukraine's defense along the frontline. Russian forces are also conducting a multi-axis offensive operation along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line but have not made any recent significant gains in the area, and the relative success or failure of that effort could similarly influence how the Russian military command views Russian prospects for operationally significant advances.[5] The Russian ability to make operationally significant advances is still largely dependent on the level of Western support for Ukraine, however, as well-provisioned Ukrainian forces have proven that they can prevent Russian forces from making even marginal gains during large-scale Russian offensive efforts.[6]

*Bloomberg* also reported that Ukrainian intelligence assessments stated that Russian Vladimir Putin has not given up his original goal of seizing major Ukrainian cities such as Kyiv and Odesa.[7] Putin has recently falsely claimed that Odesa is a "Russian city" and other Russian officials have also applied that expression to Dnipro, Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, and Kyiv cities.[8] The Kremlin has resumed expansionist rhetoric in recent months that explicitly calls for the occupation and annexation of additional Ukrainian territory.[9] The Kremlin has intentionally framed this rhetoric to avoid setting limits for further Russian expansion in Ukraine, and this rhetoric may aim to allow Putin to introduce new objectives for conquest in Ukraine when he sees fit.[10]

**Russian President Vladimir Putin used his February 29 address to the Federal Assembly to attempt to convince the Russian public that his next term as president will be defined by Russian military success in Ukraine but not at the expense of stagnating or decreased social and economic welfare.** Putin stated that Russian combat capabilities have increased "many times over" and that Russian forces "firmly hold the initiative, confidently advance in a number of operational areas" and capture "more territory." [11] Putin's characterization of Russian offensive operations in Ukraine is notably more confident than his December 14, 2023, Direct Line statement that Russian forces were in "the active stage of action." [12] Putin's willingness to publicly portray his apparent confidence in Russian offensive operations likely stems from Russia's recent seizure of Avdiivka and prolonged US debates about military aid to Ukraine. Putin spent most of the speech not focusing on the war but instead detailing the specifics of economic policies and social programs he plans to launch. [13] Russia has increased defense spending to record levels in 2024, and Putin is likely stressing his plans for economic and social policies to assuage persisting domestic concerns about the ramifications of Putin's war in Ukraine for ordinary Russians. [14] Putin attempted to further address these concerns by claiming that the West is attempting to draw Russia into an arms race as the West successfully did with the Soviet Union in the 1980s to the detriment of the Soviet Union's economy. Putin emphasized, however, that the Russian government is taking measures to develop the Russian defense industrial base (DIB) while increasing social and economic spending, likely in an effort to demonstrate to the Russian public that Russia has measures in place to avoid ballooned defense spending reminiscent of the Soviet Union before its collapse. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitri Peskov stated that Putin's Federal Assembly speech was largely his election program for the March 2024 presidential elections. [15] Putin's apparent growing confidence in discussing the war publicly has not generated any notable inflections in his overall framing of the war in Ukraine, and Putin continues to issue the same justifications and maximalist goals for his full-scale invasion of Ukraine as he has offered all along.

**Putin used tired rhetoric about negotiations and nuclear saber rattling during his Federal Assembly speech, likely to seize on Western attention to the speech to promote ongoing Kremlin information operations.** Putin reiterated his feigned readiness for dialogue with the United States on issues of "strategic stability" and continued to place the onus for a lack of negotiations on the United States. [16] Putin asserted that if the United States wants to discuss important issues of security, then it is necessary to consider Russia's national interests. [17] Putin continues to pursue maximalist objectives in Ukraine that amount to full Ukrainian capitulation and aims to weaken and dismantle

NATO, objectives that he most certainly views as integral parts of Russian national interests.[18] The Kremlin is currently conducting an information operation feigning interest in negotiations to prompt preemptive Western concessions regarding Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.[19] Putin also emphasized that Russia possesses weapons that can strike Western countries and claimed that Western escalation is threatening a possible nuclear conflict that could destroy civilization.[20] Putin and Russian officials frequently invoke nuclear threats to instill fear in Western audiences and weaken Western support for Ukraine.[21] The Kremlin has not engaged in any significant escalations in response to the provision of new Western systems to Ukraine, and ISW continues to assess that Russian nuclear use in Ukraine and beyond is highly unlikely.[22]

**Putin emphasized the Kremlin's domestic focus on 2024 as the "Year of the Family" to address Russia's ongoing demographic crisis during his Federal Assembly address.** Putin claimed that the main purpose of a family is to have children, a more overt acknowledgement of Russia's ongoing demographic crisis than he made in his December 31, 2023, New Year's address.[23] Putin stated on February 29 that all levels of Russian government, civil society, and religious leaders should contribute to the societal, economic, cultural, and educational efforts to promote Russian birth rates. Putin announced a new Russian government project called "Family" to provide social support to families with children and increase the Russian birth rate. The initiatives include expanding and increasing existing social benefits, including providing maternity capital payments to mothers, giving preferential mortgage rates to families with children, and giving tax deductions to children to families with more than one child. The Kremlin's focus on 2024 as the "Year of the Family" is likely meant to provide an ideological basis for efforts aimed at increasing Russian birth rates and remedying Russian demographic issues through appeals to Russian "traditional values." ISW continues to assess that Russia's war in Ukraine has impacted some aspects of Russian demographics, although Russia has been experiencing a demographic crisis for decades.[24]

**Putin did not respond to the February 28 request from the Congress of Deputies from pro-Russian Moldovan breakaway region Transnistria, but this lack of response still affords the Kremlin several possible courses of action (COA) at a later time.** The Transnistrian Congress of Deputies adopted seven decisions that provide the Kremlin with justifications for a large range of possible escalatory actions against Moldova that the Kremlin can choose to pursue in the near or long term, and many of these possible COAs are not mutually exclusive.[25] Putin's lack of response during his February 29 address is either consistent with or does not rule out all five possible Russian COAs that ISW outlined in its February 28 assessment, including the assessed most likely COA (MLCOA) of intensifying hybrid operations to destabilize Moldova and the assessed most dangerous COA (MDCOA) of formally annexing Transnistria in the future to justify military action against Moldova in the long term.[26]

**Ukrainian forces downed three more Su-34 fighter aircraft in eastern Ukraine on February 28 and 29.** Ukrainian Ground Forces Commander Lieutenant General Oleksandr Pavlyuk reported on February 29 that Ukrainian forces destroyed two Su-34 aircraft on the night of February 28 to 29 and another Su-34 on the morning of February 29 in the Mariupol and Avdiivka directions.[27] Pavlyuk noted that the aircraft were conducting glide bomb strikes against Ukrainian infantry in eastern Ukraine when Ukrainian forces downed the aircraft.[28] Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat stated that Russian forces have deployed an unspecified large number of aircraft to conduct glide bomb strikes in the Avdiivka direction.[29] The Ukrainian Ministry of Defense (MoD) reported that Ukrainian forces have downed 13 Russian aircraft since February 17.[30] The International Institute for Strategic Studies previously estimated that Russia has roughly 300 various Sukhoi fighter aircraft, suggesting that the impact of losing 13 aircraft in almost as many days, and possibly some of their highly trained pilots, is not negligible for the Russian military.[31] Ukrainian forces have also downed two A-50 long-range radar detection aircraft in 2024 so far.[32]

**The Kremlin continues to assert its self-arrogated right to enforce Russian federal law on citizens of NATO member and former Soviet states over actions taken within the territory of their own countries.** The Russian Investigative Committee announced on February 28 that a Russian court convicted a Latvian citizen in absentia for fighting as a volunteer with the Ukrainian military against Russia and for desecrating a Soviet memorial in Latvia.[33] The Investigative Committee claimed that the Latvian citizen acted out of "political and ideological hatred of Russia," and the court sentenced the man to 10 years in prison in absentia.[34] The Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) previously placed several dozen government officials from NATO countries on Russia's wanted list because of alleged violations of Russian federal law committed outside the jurisdiction of the Russian Federation.[35] Russia, however, does not have the legal authority to prosecute foreign citizens for allegedly violating Russian laws in foreign states. ISW previously assessed that Russian criminal accusations against European officials and citizens may be part of an ongoing Russian effort to set informational conditions justifying possible Russian escalations against NATO states in the future.[36]

Russian officials and Kremlin mouthpieces also accused Latvian authorities of "intimidating" Russian citizens voting in the Russian presidential election in Latvia on February 29. Latvian Minister of Justice Inese Libina-Egnere stated on February 27 that Latvian authorities cannot prevent Russian citizens from voting at the Russian embassy, but noted that Latvia's Criminal Code considers the "justification of war" (in this case Russia's war in Ukraine) to be criminally liable.[37] Russian

sources seized on Libina-Egnere's statements on February 29 and falsely claimed that Latvian authorities may criminally prosecute Russian citizens for voting in the presidential election.[38]

**Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan stated that Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is a threat to Armenian security as Russian officials refused to acknowledge Armenia's reduced participation in the CSTO.** Pashinyan stated on February 28 that the CSTO is creating security problems instead of fulfilling its obligations to Armenia and that the CSTO's "lack of an answer" regarding its responsibilities to Armenia "creates a threat" to Armenia's "security and territorial integrity." [39] Pashinyan previously stated that Armenia has "essentially" frozen its participation in the CSTO because the organization "failed to fulfill its obligations in the field of security" to Armenia, particularly in 2021 and 2022. [40] Pashinyan noted on February 28 that Armenia has not had a permanent representative to the CSTO in the past year and that Armenian officials and forces have not participated in CSTO events and exercises in "a long time." [41] ISW previously observed that Armenia appeared to be effectively abstaining from participation in the CSTO after Pashinyan and other Armenian representatives did not attend several consecutive CSTO events in mid to late 2023. [42] Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Spokesperson Maria Zakharova stated on February 28 that Russia "does not accept" Armenia's non-compliance with the CSTO agreement. [43]

**The Kremlin has reportedly established high-level positions in all federal bodies to promote patriotism and history within each body, likely aimed at strengthening informational and ideological control over federal employees.** Russian opposition outlet *Meduza* reported on February 29 that leaked Russian government documents indicate that Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree in February 2023 establishing a "deputy head of social and political work" in each Russian federal body and that the presidential administration must approve each appointment for the position. [44] *Meduza* reported that the Russian Environmental Management Agency has published guidelines for conducting socio-political work including strengthening Russian patriotism and civic identity and ensuring understanding and support for Russia's domestic and international policies. [45] The Russian Environmental Management Agency identified methods to educate federal employees about the military and political situations both in Russia and in the world as well as Russian history, including the development stages of Russian international policy, the history of wars and military conflicts, and the formation of Russian statehood. *Meduza* reported that the leaked documents indicate that these measures are considered necessary to counter the "deliberately distorted ideological intervention" from media allegedly funded by unfriendly states and that the Russian Ministry of Education has outlined similar proposals to tighten control over Russian universities. [46] These measures are likely part of a longstanding Kremlin effort to consolidate control over the broader Russian informational and cultural sphere beginning with employees in federal governmental bodies. Russian news outlet *Kommersant* reported in April 2022 that the Kremlin began considering the idea of creating these deputy heads of information and political work sometime in 2021 and began moving forward on the effort in 2022 after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine prompted the Kremlin to prioritize the effort. [47]

#### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Ukrainian officials are reportedly concerned about the possibility of significant Russian territorial gains in Summer 2024 in the event of continued delays in Western security assistance.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin used his February 29 address to the Federal Assembly to attempt to convince the Russian public that his next term as president will be defined by Russian military success in Ukraine but not at the expense of stagnating or decreased social and economic welfare.**
- **Putin used tired rhetoric about negotiations and nuclear saber rattling during his Federal Assembly speech likely to seize on Western attention to the speech to promote ongoing Kremlin information operations.**
- **Putin emphasized the Kremlin's domestic focus on 2024 as the "Year of the Family" to address Russia's ongoing demographic crisis during his Federal Assembly address.**
- **Putin did not respond to the February 28 request from the Congress of Deputies from pro-Russian Moldovan breakaway region Transnistria, but this lack of response still affords the Kremlin several possible courses of action (COA) at a later time.**
- **Ukrainian forces downed three more Su-34 fighter aircraft in eastern Ukraine on February 28 and 29.**
- **The Kremlin continues to assert its self-arrogated right to enforce Russian federal law on citizens of NATO member and former Soviet states over actions taken within the territory of their own countries.**
- **Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan stated that Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is a threat to Armenian security as Russian officials refused to acknowledge Armenia's reduced participation in the CSTO.**

- **The Kremlin has reportedly established high-level positions in all federal bodies to promote patriotism and history within each body, likely aimed at strengthening informational and ideological control over federal employees.**
- **Russian forces made confirmed advances near Avdiivka amid continued positional engagements along the frontline on February 29.**
- **Russian state-owned defense conglomerate Rostec Head Sergei Chemezov stated on February 29 that Rostec plans to produce A-50 long-range radar detection aircraft on an unspecified schedule because Russian forces require more A-50 aircraft.**
- **Occupation officials continue to support Kremlin efforts to gain further control over religious groups in occupied Ukraine.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of February 29, 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.***

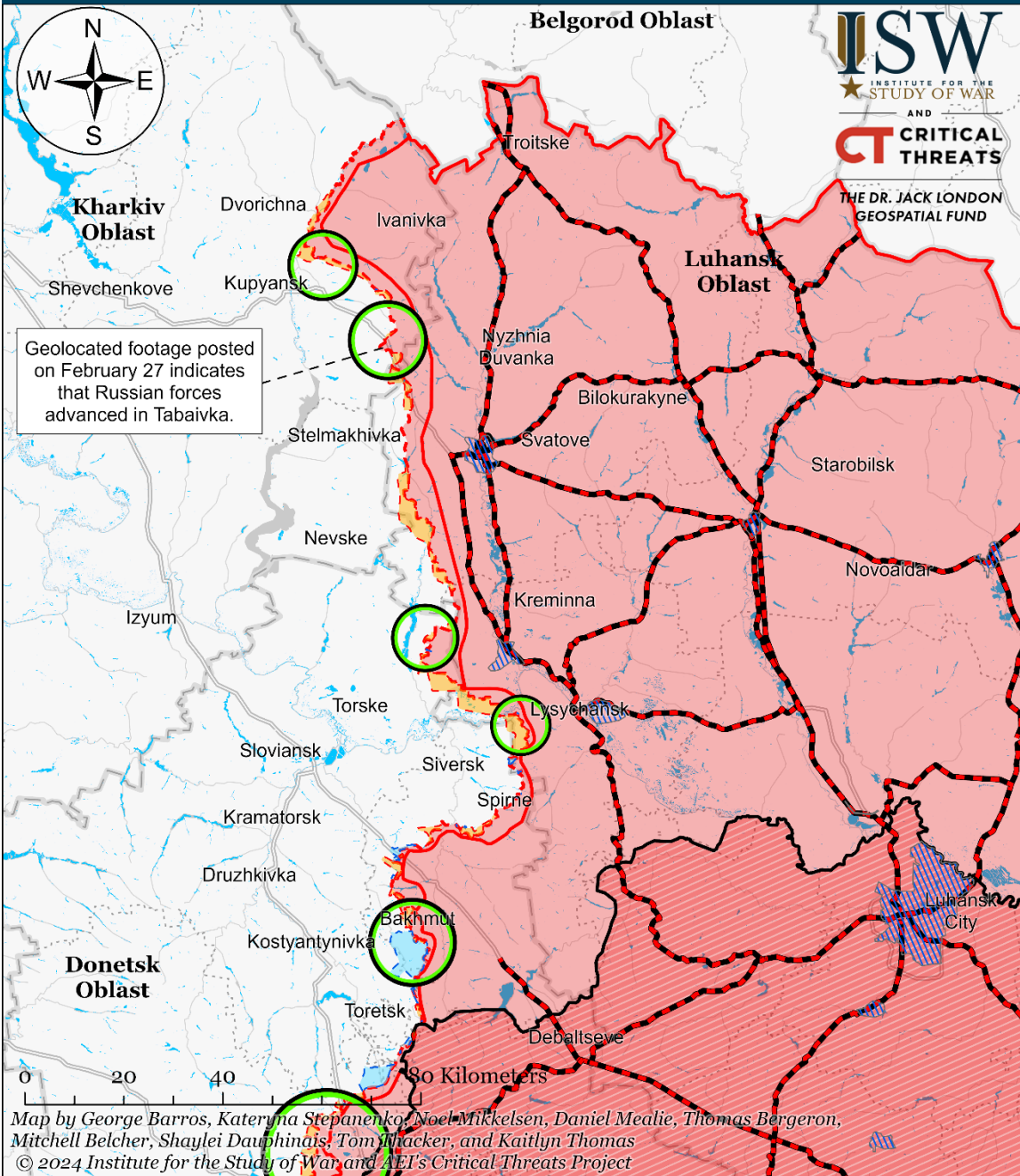
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety 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)**

Positional engagements continued along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on February 29, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Positional engagements continued northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka and Petropavlivka; southeast of Kupyansk near Tabaivka; west of Kreminna near Terny and Yampolivka; and south of Kreminna near Bilohorivka.[48] Ukrainian Khortytsia Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash stated that Russian forces began to use light mobile vehicles to transport personnel in the Kupyansk direction to traverse swamp-like terrain and avoid Ukrainian drone strikes.[49] Yevlash stated that Russian forces are heavily committing artillery and reserves to the Terny area and are constantly conducting assaults with aviation and artillery support.[50] The spokesperson for a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Kupyansk and Lyman directions stated that Russian forces have been conducting 10 to 15 glide bomb strikes per day for the past several months. Elements of the Russian 7th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People's Republic [LNR] Army Corps) reportedly continue operating near Bilohorivka.[51]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of February 29, 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.

Note: A Russian source claimed on February 27 that Russian forces advanced 300 meters along the Terny-Torske line.

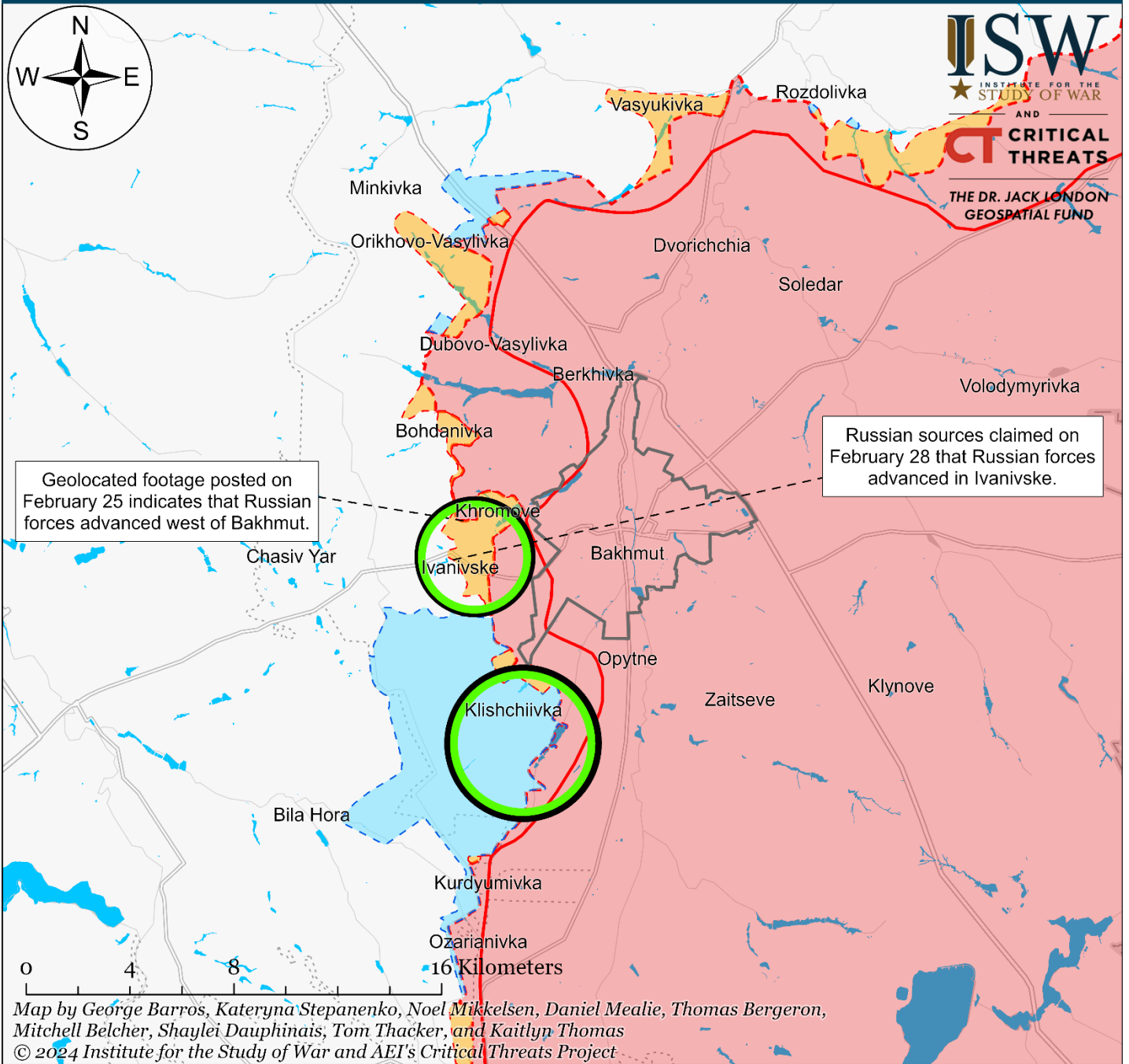
**Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)**

***Note: ISW is restructuring its coverage of the Donetsk Oblast axis to include activity in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area. During the 2023 Ukrainian counteroffensive, ISW assessed that Ukrainian activity in the border area was a supporting and related effort to Ukrainian activity in the south. As Russian forces have seized the battlefield initiative following the end of the counteroffensive, Russian troops appear to be trying to drive southwest of Donetsk City while simultaneously driving northeast from the Velyka Novosilka area on the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border. This Russian effort appears to include settlements along the O0532 Marinka-Pobieda-Vuhledar route. ISW will further restructure the Donetsk Oblast axis if Russian operational objectives in this area appear to change in the future.***

Russian forces reportedly advanced west of Bakhmut amid continued positional fighting in the area on February 29. Ukrainian Khortytsia Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash stated on February 29 that fighting is ongoing within both Bohdanivka (northwest of Bakhmut) and Ivanivske (west of Bakhmut).[52] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced further in Ivanivske and now control half or most of the settlement, but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims.[53] Another milblogger initially claimed that Russian forces had completely captured Ivanivske but later walked back the claim as false reporting.[54] Positional fighting continued northeast of Bakhmut near Berestove; southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka, Andriivka, and Kurdyumivka; and south of Bakhmut near Pivdenne and Niu York.[55] Elements of the Russian 11th Airborne (VDV) Brigade and of the 68th Tank Regiment and 102nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (both of the 150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly fighting in Ivanivske.[56]



# Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of February 29, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



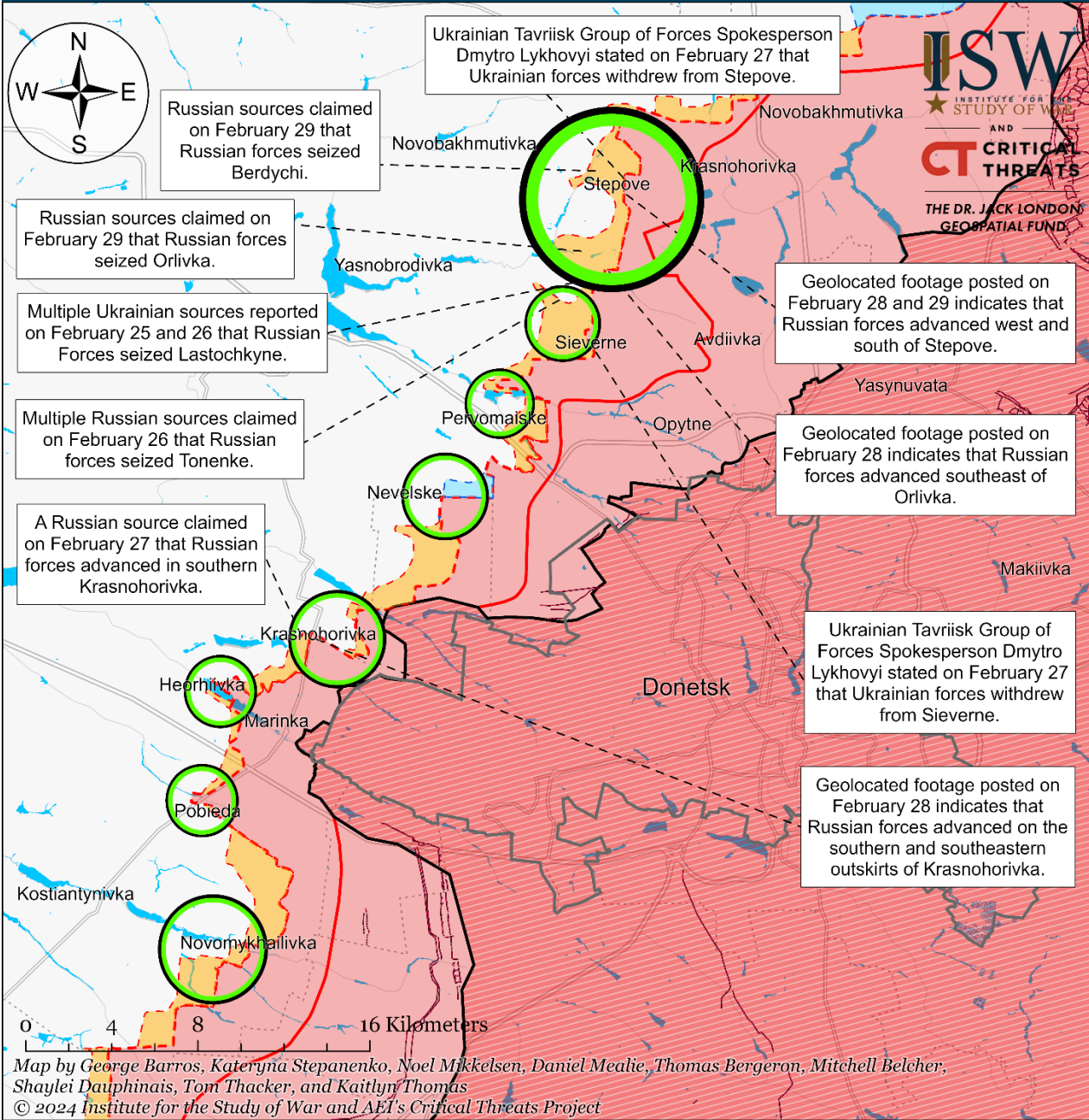
Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Shaylei Dauphinais, Tom Thacker, and Kaitlyn Thomas  
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- Bakhmut City Limits
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

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

Russian forces advanced west of Avdiivka and reportedly captured several settlements in the area on February 29. Geolocated footage published on February 28 and 29 shows that Russian forces advanced into fields south and southwest of Stepove (northwest of Avdiivka) as well as northwest of Lastochkyne (west of Avdiivka).[57] Russian milbloggers largely claimed on February 29 that Russian forces captured Berdychi (northwest of Avdiivka) and Tonenke (west of Avdiivka) on February 28 and most or all of Orlivka (west of Avdiivka) amid continued heavy fighting on February 29, though ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these Russian claims.[58] Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi acknowledged that Russian forces briefly gained a foothold on the outskirts of Orlivka before Ukrainian forces ousted Russian forces from the settlement, and Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Dmytro Lykhovyi denied reports that Russian forces captured Berdychi.[59] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also advanced southwest of Avdiivka near Nevelske.[60] Positional fighting also continued northwest of Avdiivka near Novobakhmutivka and southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske.[61] Elements of the 15th Guards and 21st Guards motorized rifle brigades (both of the 2nd CAA, Central Military District [CMD]) are reportedly fighting near Berdychi, and elements of the 110th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] Army Corps) reportedly operate near Nevelske.[62] Lykhovyi stated that Russian forces are generally attacking in waves using groups of one to one and a half companies of infantry and sometimes up to a battalion tactical group.[63] Lykhovyi indicated that Russian forces are still significantly limiting the number of armored vehicles fielded in these attacks, however.

# Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of February 29, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



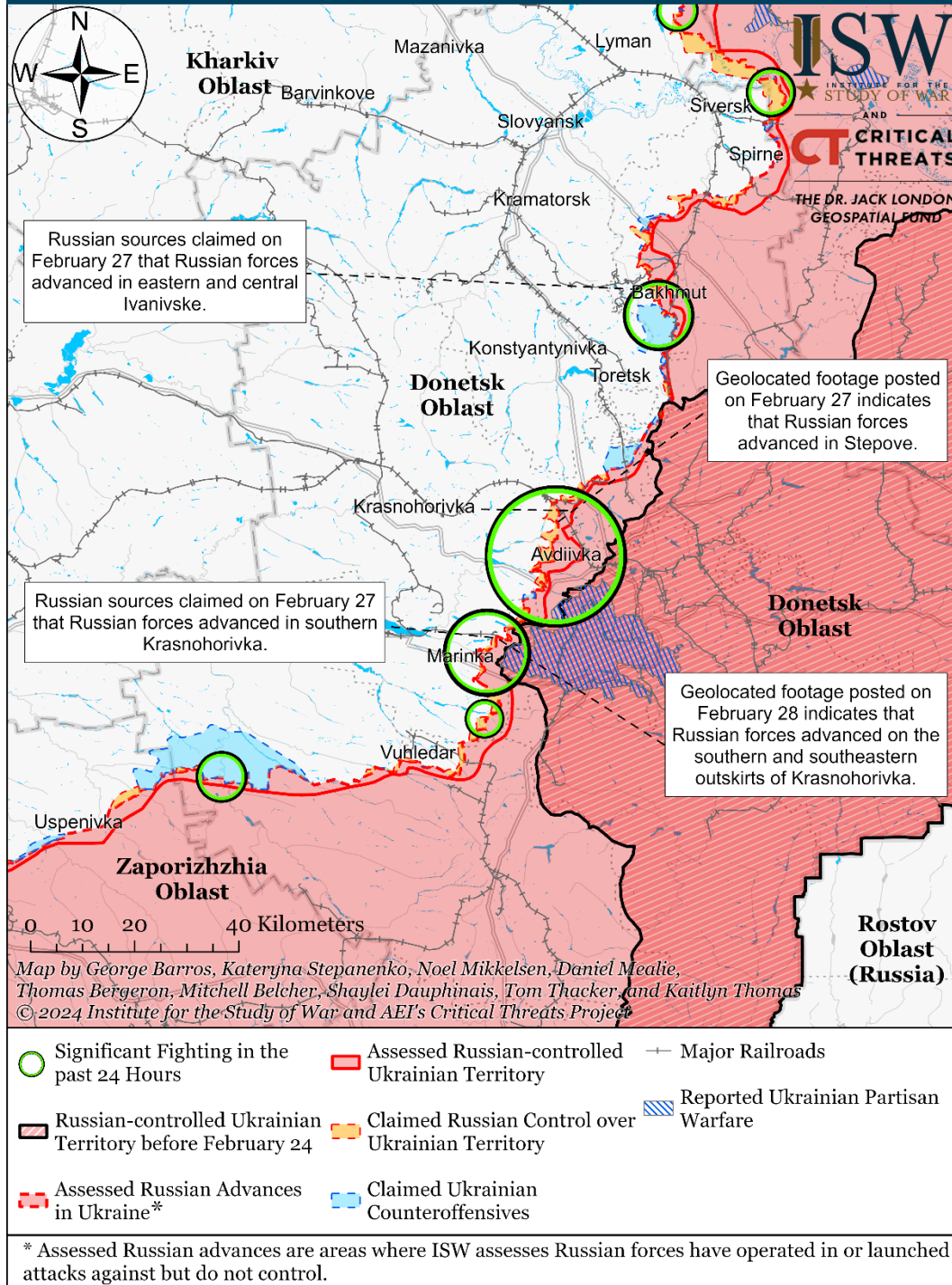
- Donetsk City Limits
- ▬ Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- ▬ Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- ▬ Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- ▬ Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- ▬ Russian Field Fortifications

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

Note: A Russian source claimed on February 28 that Russian forces advanced up to 200 meters near Novomykhailivka. Russian sources claimed on February 27 that Russian forces advanced up to 1.1 kilometers along a 2.68 kilometer-wide front in the Avdiivka direction. Russian sources claimed on February 27 that Russian forces advanced up to 800 meters along a 2.15 kilometer-wide front in the Orlivka direction. Russian sources claimed on February 27 that Russian forces advanced 600 meters along a two kilometer-wide front in the Sieverne direction.

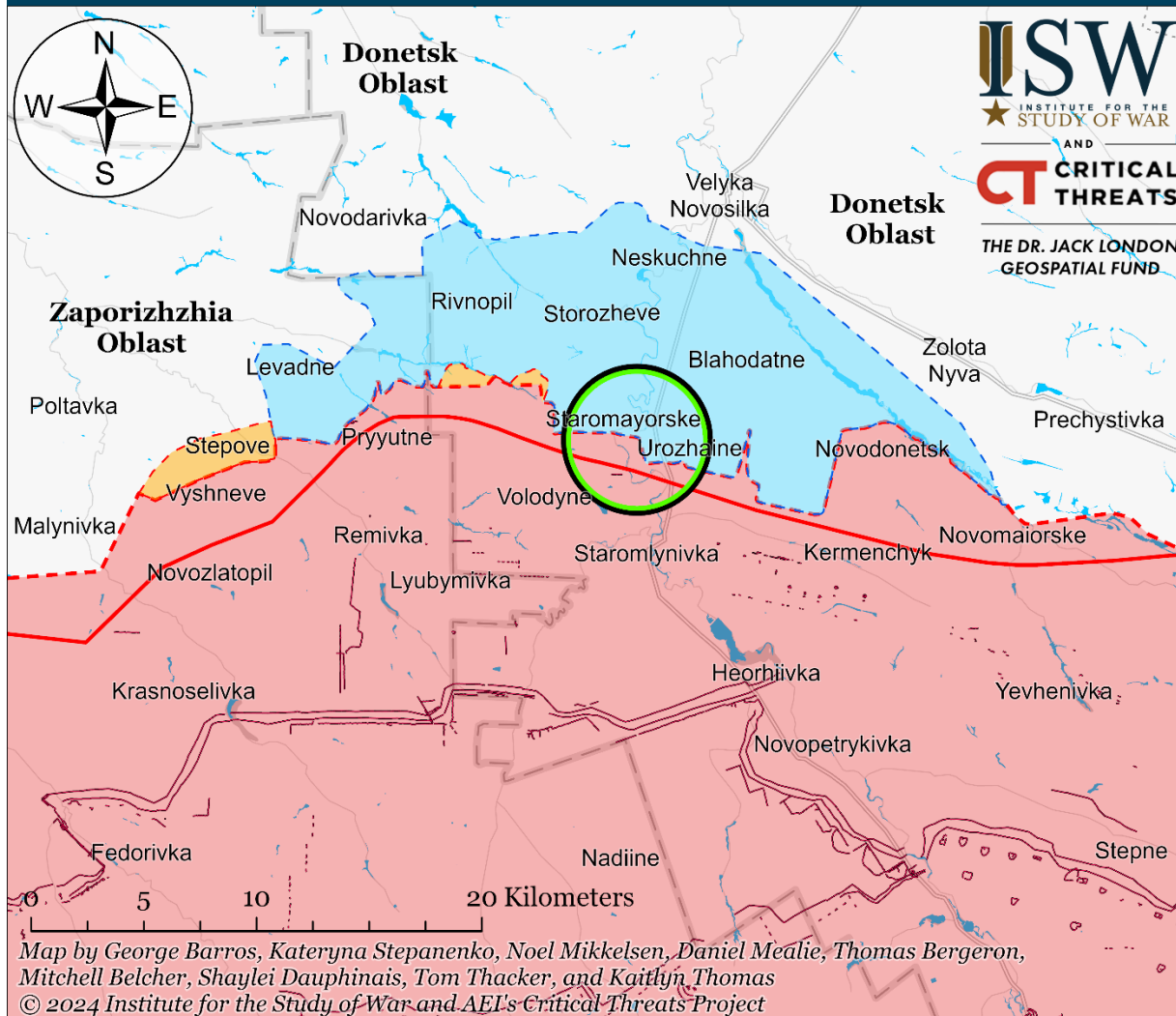
Russian forces reportedly advanced west of Donetsk City amid continued positional fighting west and southwest of Donetsk City on February 29. Russian milbloggers claimed on February 28 and 29 that Russian forces advanced into Krasnohorivka (west of Donetsk City), but a Ukrainian brigade operating in the area reported on February 28 that Ukrainian forces pushed Russian forces from Krasnohorivka several hours after entering the settlement.[64] Positional fighting continued west of Donetsk City near Krasnohorivka and Heorhiivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Novomykhailivka and Pobieda.[65] Elements of the Russian 155th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) reportedly continue operating near Novomykhailivka.[66]

## Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of February 29, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Positional fighting continued in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area on February 29, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Positional fighting continued southwest of Velyka Novosilka near Pryyutne and south of Velyka Novosilka near Urozhaine.[67] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets reported that elements of the Russian 394th Motorized Rifle Regiment (127th Motorized Rifle Division, 5th CAA, Eastern Military District [EMD]), 1461st Motorized Rifle Regiment (reportedly assigned to the 36th CAA, EMD), and 14th Spetsnaz Brigade (Russian General Staff Main Directorate [GRU]) are operating near Staromayorske, and elements of the 114th Motorized Rifle Regiment (127th Motorized Rifle Division) are operating near Stepanivka.[68]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of February 29, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

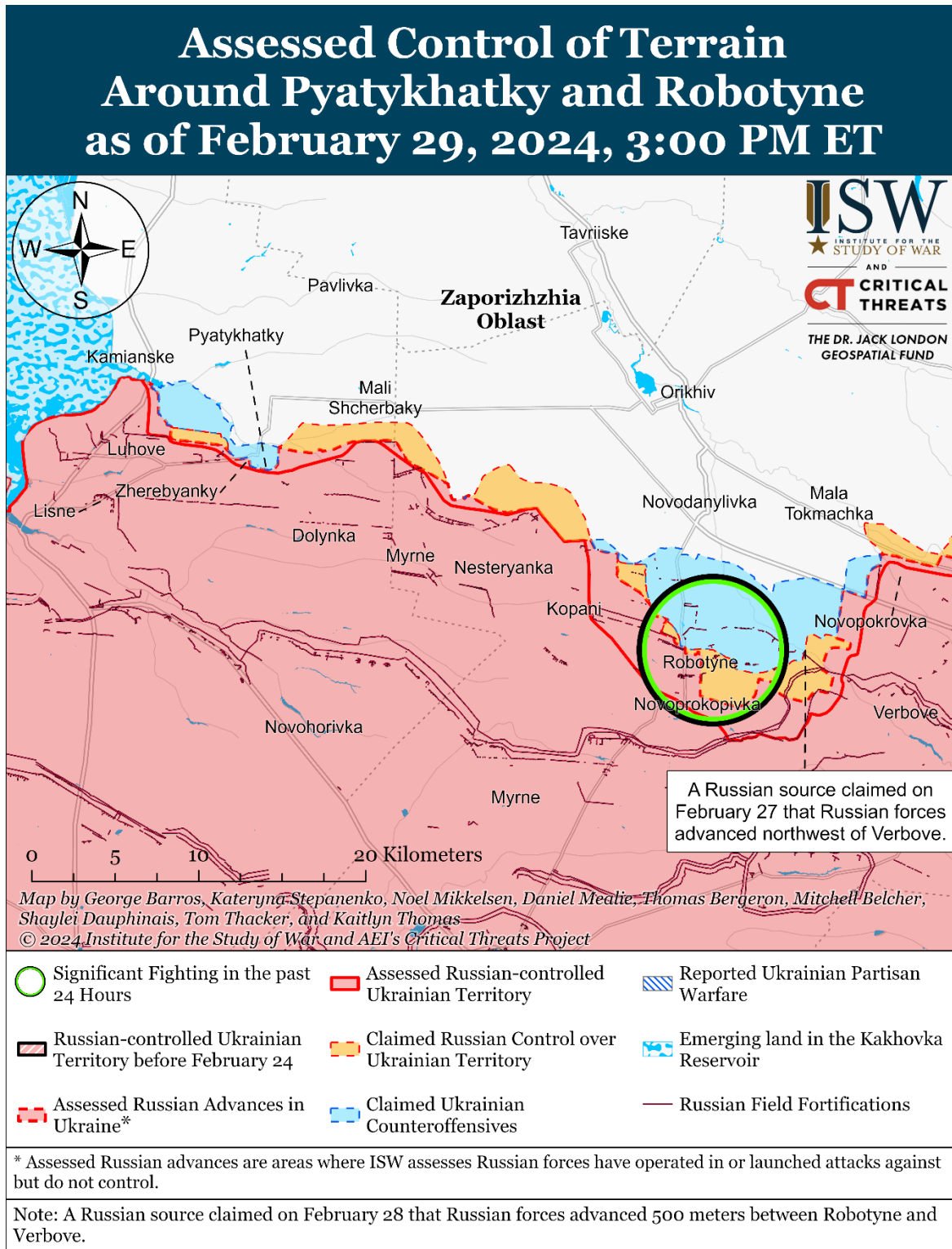


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Russian Field Fortifications
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives

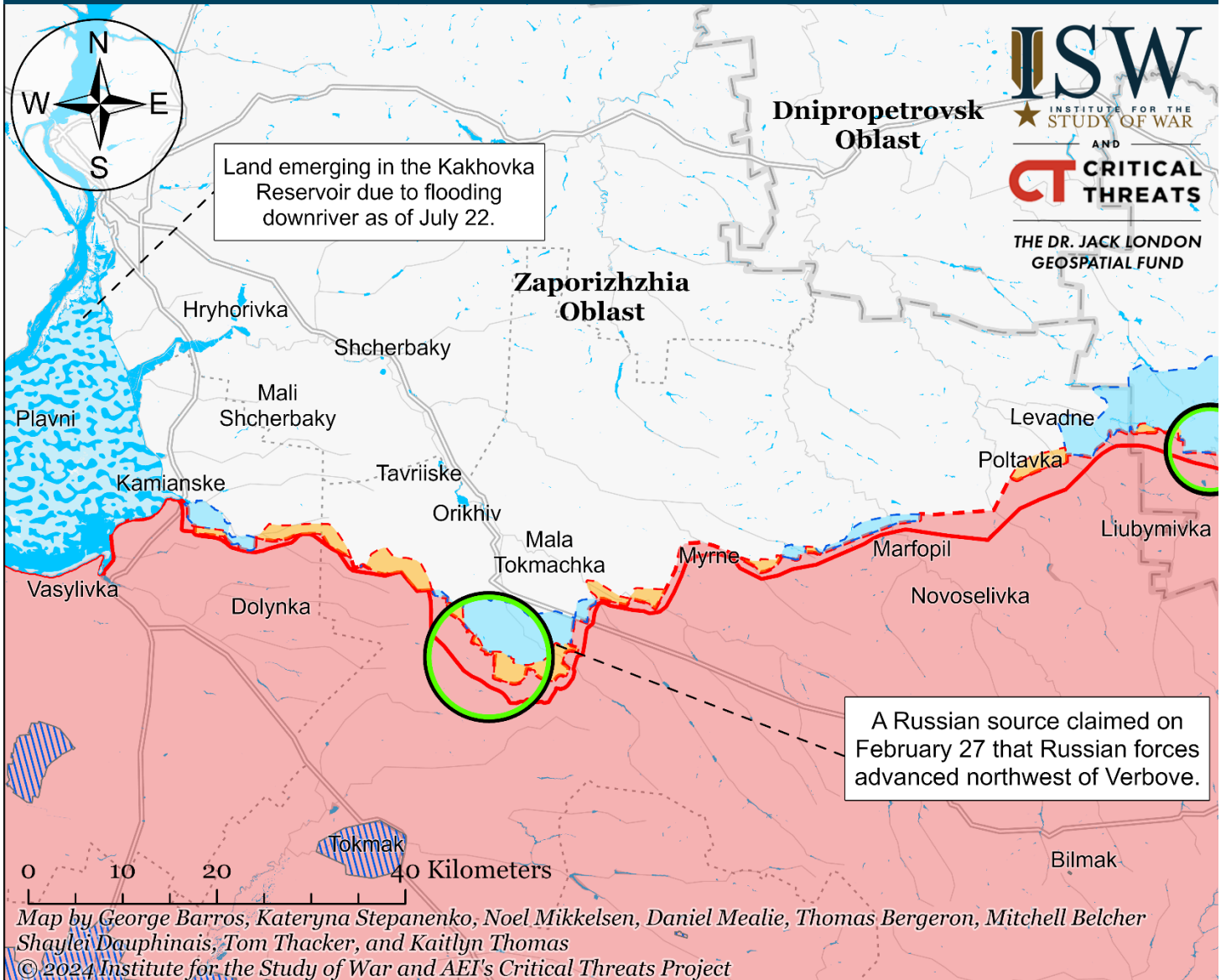
\* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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









Positional engagements continued in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on February 29. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces seized several unspecified Ukrainian positions near Robotyne.[69] Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional fighting continued near Robotyne and northwest of Verbove (east of Robotyne).[70] Elements of the Russian 70th and 71st motorized rifle regiments (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating south and west of Robotyne, and elements of the Russian “Osman” Spetsnaz formation are reportedly operating near Robotyne.[71] Elements of the 247th Airborne (VDV) Regiment (7th VDV Division) and the 104th VDV Regiment (76th VDV Division) are reportedly operating west of Verbove.[72]



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of February 29, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



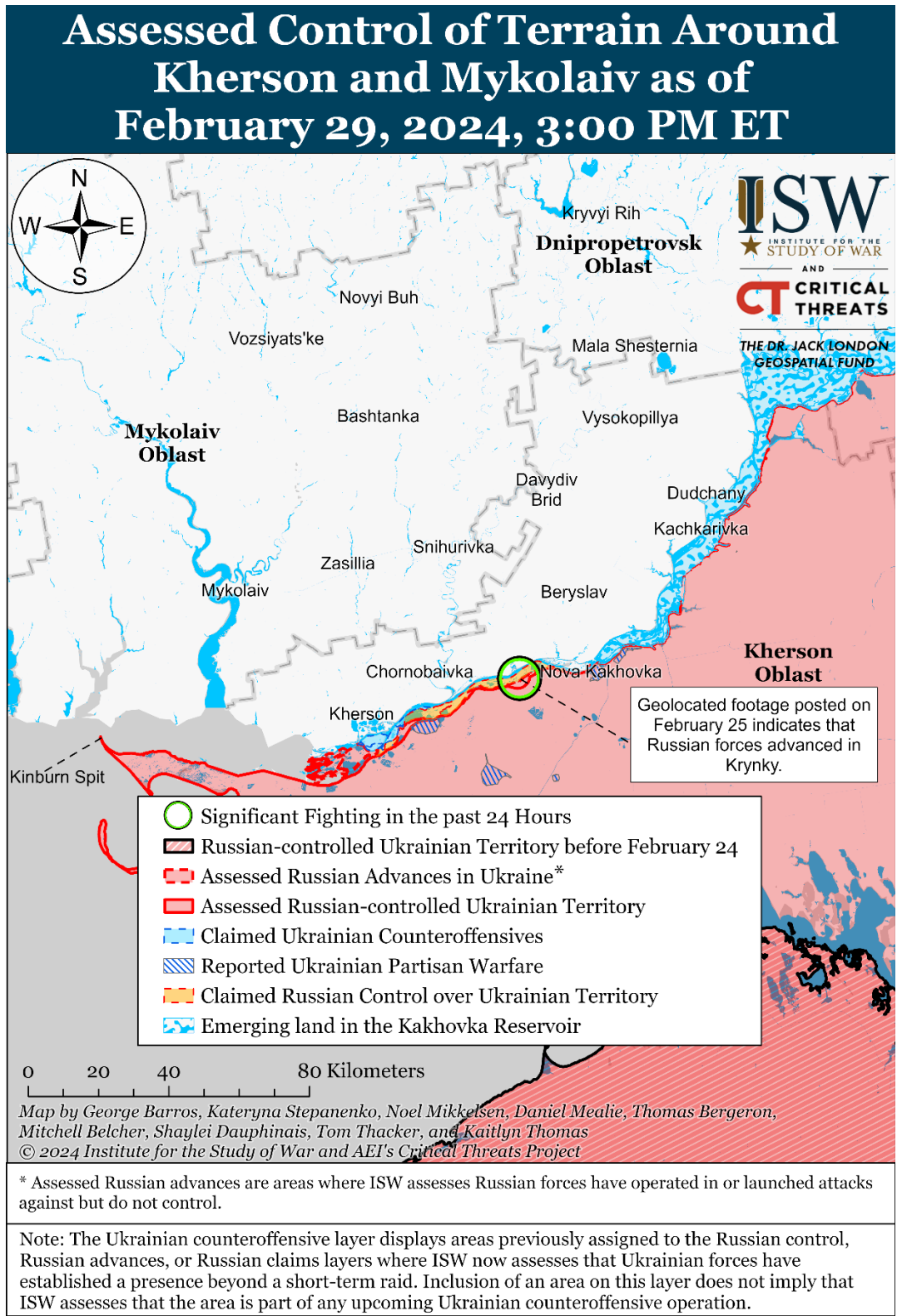
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-  Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
-  Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
-  Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
-  Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
-  Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
-  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.

Note: A Russian source claimed on February 28 that Russian forces advanced 500 meters between Robotyne and Verbove.

Ukrainian forces continue to maintain limited positions in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast amid continued positional fighting in the area on February 29. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional engagements continued near Krynky and in the dacha area near the Antonivsky roadway bridge.[73] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 26th Motorized Rifle Regiment (70th Motorized Rifle Division, 18th CAA, SMD) recently attacked Ukrainian positions in Krynky.[74] Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 18th CAA, the 104th VDV Division, and the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet) continue to operate between Kozachi Laheri and Korsunka along the left bank.[75] Ukrainian and Russian sources, including the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), acknowledged that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian attempt to land on the Tendrivska Spit, a thin sandbar just south of the Kinburn Peninsula.[76]





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

Nothing significant to report.

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

Russian state-owned defense conglomerate Rostec Head Sergei Chemezov stated on February 29 that Rostec plans to produce A-50 long-range radar detection aircraft on an unspecified schedule because Russian forces require more A-50 aircraft.[77] Ukrainian forces have shot down two Russian A-50 aircraft so far in 2024, and Ukrainian officials have reported that Russian forces only have six A-50 aircraft remaining.[78] Russia's defense industrial base (DIB) will not be able to produce new A-50 aircraft quickly since many of the A-50's component parts are not readily available.[79]

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

Nothing significant to report.

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

Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Lieutenant General Ivan Havrylyuk stated on February 29 that 46 weapons and equipment samples produced by Ukrainian manufacturers have entered service with Ukrainian forces since the beginning of 2024. Havrylyuk stated that Ukrainian manufacturers continue to produce new types of drones, electronic warfare (EW) systems, and small arms weapons.[80]

A Russian source amplified footage on February 29 of Ukrainian forces using new first-person view (FPV) drones against Russian forces in an undisclosed location in Ukraine.[81] The footage purportedly shows the Ukrainian FPV drones detonating overhead of Russian infantry and spreading shrapnel over a wide radius.[82]

### **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)**

Occupation officials continue to support Kremlin efforts to gain further control over religious groups in occupied Ukraine. Occupation Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Crimea and Sevastopol (DUMKS) executive secretary Ayder Adzhimambetov stated on February 29 that Russian law requires local Muslim communities in occupied Kherson and Zaporizhia oblasts to re-register under the authority of the DUMKS.[83]

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

Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Spokesperson Andriy Yusov stated Russia is purchasing and creating Telegram channels at a "mass-scale" to support the ongoing Russian information campaign to demoralize Ukrainian society called "Maidan-3." [84] Yusov stated that Russia is purchasing Telegram channels and other social network pages and attempting to attract unspecified influential individuals to spread information that delegitimizes Ukrainian government decisions. Ukraine's Security Service (SBU) reported on February 27 that Russia has already spent a total of \$1.5 billion on this information campaign (including \$250 million on information operations on the Telegram messaging app alone) and noted that this spending is on par with Russia's spending on conventional military activities.[85]

The Kremlin is reportedly conducting an information campaign in Latin America attempting to frame Latin American support for Russia as a fight against US hegemony. A Russian insider source claimed that Russian First Deputy Presidential Chief of Staff Sergei Kiriienko's team plans to create non-profit organizations in Latin America aimed at working with media and holding events to promote pro-Russian narratives.[86] The purported plan also intends to recruit Latin American news correspondents to cover the war in Ukraine from a pro-Russian perspective. The Russian information campaign reportedly emphasizes targeting Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina.[87]

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

Nothing significant to report.

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

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