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February 3, 2025, 7:20pm ET

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 12pm ET on February 3. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the February 4 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russian forces continued to suffer high losses in January 2025 despite a slower rate of advance as compared with previous months in late 2024. The Ukrainian Ministry of Defense (MoD) reported on February 3 that Russian forces suffered 48,240 casualties – over three Russian motorized rifle divisions worth of personnel – in January 2025, making January the second highest month of losses since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.[1] ISW has observed geolocated evidence to assess that Russian forces gained roughly 498 square kilometers in January in Ukraine and Kursk Oblast, or roughly 16.1 square kilometers per day. The available figures suggest Russian forces suffered roughly 96 casualties per square kilometer of territory seized. The Ukrainian MoD reported that Russian forces suffered 48,670 casualties in December 2024 – their highest monthly casualty rate since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion – and ISW assessed that Russian forces gained a total of 593 square kilometers in December 2024. The roughly 100-square-kilometer decrease in seized territory between December 2024 and January 2025, coupled with a similar monthly casualty rate, indicates that Russian forces are taking the same high level of losses despite achieving fewer territorial advances in the near term. ISW previously observed that Russian advances slowed from November 2024 to December 2024.[2] ISW previously assessed that the Russian military command likely tolerated record levels of personnel casualties from September 2024 through November 2024 to facilitate larger territorial gains, but it remains unclear if the Russian military command will be willing to sustain such casualties if Russian forces' rate of advance continues to decline as Russian forces are advancing on more heavily defended settlements such as Pokrovsk.[3]

Ukrainian forces reportedly conducted drone strikes against Russian oil and gas infrastructure in Volgograd and Astrakhan oblasts on the night of February 2 to 3. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that elements of the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU), Special Operations Forces (SSO), and other Ukrainian forces struck Lukoil's Volgograd Oil Refinery in Volgograd City and the Astrakhan Gas Processing Plant near Astrakhan City.[4] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that the strike damaged the primary processing units at the Volgograd refinery and that a fire started at the Astrakhan plant. Ukrainian Center for Countering Disinformation Head Lieutenant Andriy Kovalenko noted that the Volgograd Oil Refinery is one of the top ten refineries in Russia and that the Astrakhan Gas Processing Plant processes gas condensate and produces gas and diesel fuel.[5] A source in the SBU told *Radio Liberty* that the Volgograd Oil Refinery processes almost six percent of all Russian oil and that the Astrakhan Gas Processing Plant processes 12 billion cubic meters of gas condensate per year.[6] Russian opposition outlet *Astra* reported that an employee at the Astrakhan plant stated that the strike damaged a gas condensate processing plant.[7] Volgograd Oblast Governor

Andrey Bocharov claimed that Russian forces repelled a massive Ukrainian drone strike against the oblast overnight and intercepted and neutralized "most" of the drones.[8] Bocharov claimed that falling drone debris caused a fire at an oil refinery and short-term power outages. Astrakhan Oblast Governor Igor Babushkin claimed that Ukrainian forces attempted to conduct a drone strike against fuel and energy facilities and that a fire started after a drone fell.[9] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces destroyed 25 drones over Volgograd Oblast and seven over Astrakhan Oblast.[10] Ukrainian forces previously struck the Lukoil refinery in Volgograd City on the night of January 30 to 31.[11]

Ukrainian forces continue to innovate with drone operations to maintain their technological advantage over Russia and bring about battlefield effects. Commander of the Ukrainian Unmanned Systems Forces Colonel Vadym Sukharevskyi stated in an interview with *Radio Liberty* published on February 3 that Ukrainian forces are working on developing new technologies but are not disclosing them for as long as possible in order to maintain the technological initiative and prevent Russian forces from making their own analogues.[12] Sukharevskyi reported that the Unmanned Systems Forces conducted over 220 strikes against Russian territory in 2024 using over 3,500 weapons. Sukharevskyi noted that Ukrainian forces have struck over 15 "Buk-M3" and "Tor" air defense systems in December 2024 and January 2025 and noted that Ukrainian forces struck a "Buk-M3" 57 kilometers from the frontline in mid-January 2025. Sukharevskyi reported that Ukrainian forces' use of first-person view (FPV) drones to hunt Russian reconnaissance drones has led to a tenfold decrease in Russian reconnaissance drone usage. Sukharevskyi highlighted Ukraine's production of first-person view (FPV) and other drones made entirely of Ukrainian-made components and stated that Ukraine is working to develop a way to counter Russian forces' fiber optic cable FPV drones and to produce its own fiber optic cable drones. Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief General Oleksandr Syrskyi stated on February 3 that the Ukrainian military continues to increase the number of unmanned systems in formations and units of the Ground Forces, Airborne Assault Forces, Naval Infantry Corps, and Unmanned Systems Forces.[13] ISW continues to assess that Russian and Ukrainian forces are engaged in a technological offense-defense race to adapt and innovate their strike and anti-drone capabilities and that Ukraine's ability to field technological adaptations at scale ahead of Russian adaptations is crucial for Ukraine's ability to offset Russia's quantitative materiel advantages.[14]

The United Nations (UN) Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU) expressed concern about the "sharp rise" in reports of Russian forces executing Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs). The UN HRMMU reported that it has observed Russian forces execute 79 Ukrainian POWs in 24 separate incidents since late August 2024 and that Russian forces perform many of the executions as Ukrainian soldiers surrender to Russian forces.[15] UN HRMMU Head Danielle Belle reported that the Russian executions "did not arise out of nowhere" as Russian officials have "openly called for the ill treatment and even execution" of Ukrainian POWs, and the UN HRMMU recorded at least three incidents of Russian officials making such calls. The UN HRMMU reported that statements to "give no quarter" are violations of humanitarian law and a war crime, and Belle emphasized that military commanders and political leaders "must issue clear and unambiguous orders to ensure the protection and humane treatment" of all POWs and individuals no longer participating in combat. ISW has previously assessed that Russian battlefield commanders are either complicit in or enabling their subordinates to execute Ukrainian POWs.[16] Ukrainian Commissioner for Missing Persons in Special Circumstances Artur Dobroserdov stated on February 3

that Ukrainian authorities are investigating images purportedly showing a beheaded Ukrainian serviceman.[17]

Ukraine's Commander-in-Chief General Oleksandr Syrskyi stated on February 3 that Ukraine has started implementing organizational reforms to transition the Ukrainian Armed Forces into a "corps structure."[18] Using corps structures is not entirely new for the Ukrainian Armed Forces as the Ukrainian Armed Forces have been using corps since 2023. Ukraine formed the 9th and 10th army corps and restructured its Reserve Corps to the 11th Army Corps in 2023, and Ukraine is currently forming the 4th Army Corps.[19] Further restructuring to systematically form an echelon between Ukraine's numerous separate brigades and Ukraine's various operational groups of forces, and the creation of appropriate command staff headquarters at this new intermediary echelon, would likely improve command and control for Ukrainian brigades and help facilitate more effective operations.

Unspecified actors assassinated Armen Sargsyan, the founder of the "Arbat" Special Purpose Battalion, who has been involved in Russia's hybrid activities and invasions of Ukraine since 2014. Armen Sargsyan, the founder of the "Arbat" (Armenian Battalion) Special Purpose Battalion (Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] "Pyatnashka" International Volunteer Brigade) that is currently operating in Kursk Oblast, died on February 3 after an explosive attack at his apartment building in Moscow City.[20] Sargsyan founded the Arbat Battalion, reportedly on instructions from Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB), in September 2022, and the battalion signed a contract with the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) in July 2023.[21] Sargsyan is wanted in Ukraine for organizing violence against protestors in the 2014 pro-Western Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine, and the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) reported that Sargsyan was a member of former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich's inner circle.[22] The SBU used explosives to assassinate Russian Nuclear, Biological, Chemical Defense Forces (NBC) Head Lieutenant General Igor Kirillov and his assistant, Major Ilya Polikarpov, in Moscow in December 2024.[23] Ukrainian officials have not commented on Sargsyan's death, and ISW cannot independently confirm the responsible actor.

The far-right Russian paramilitary unit "Rusich" Sabotage Assault Reconnaissance Group reacted to Sargsyan's assassination, claiming that "the Motherland will lose nothing from one dead bandit" and that Sargsyan and his "ethnic mafia" only caused problems for Russia.[24] "Rusich" Group leader Alexei Milchakov — who is a self-declared Nazi — and Chechen Akhmat Spetsnaz commander Apty Alaudinov notably met in January 2025 following Rusich's repeated criticisms of Akhmat forces.[25] Alaudinov and Milchakov expressed their support for each other and promote a message about Russia's ethnic diversity and harmony. Rusich's response to Sargsyan's death, however, highlights the group's continued xenophobic and ultranationalist sentiments and calls into question the sincerity of Milchakov's reconciliation with Alaudinov.

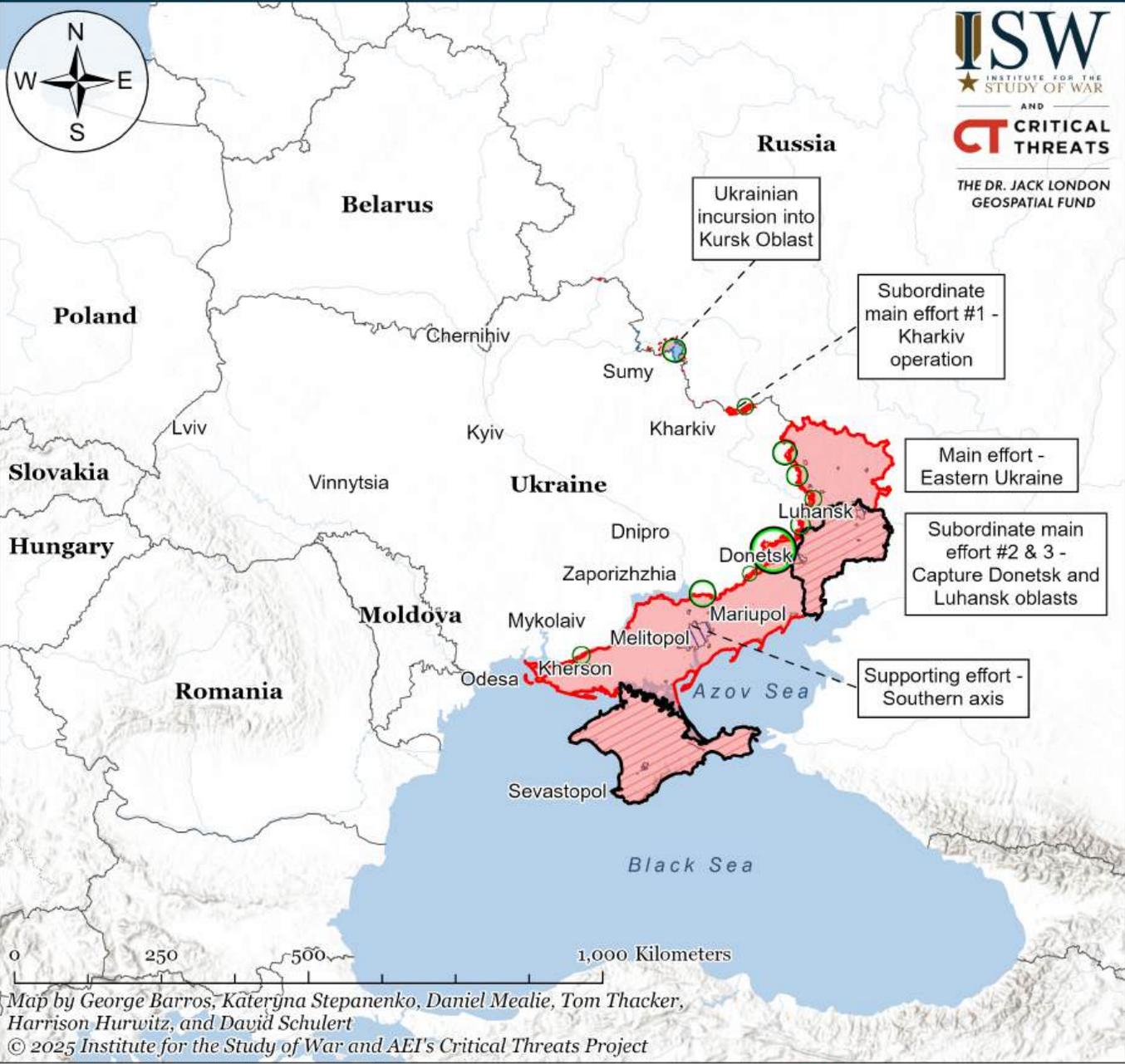
Key Takeaways:

- **Russian forces continued to suffer high losses in January 2025 despite a slower rate of advance as compared with previous months in late 2024.**
- **Ukrainian forces reportedly conducted drone strikes against Russian oil and gas infrastructure in Volgograd and Astrakhan oblasts on the night of February 2 to 3.**

- **Ukrainian forces continue to innovate with drone operations to maintain their technological advantage over Russia and bring about battlefield effects.**
- **The United Nations (UN) Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU) expressed concern about the "sharp rise" in reports of Russian forces executing Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs).**
- **Ukraine's Commander-in-Chief General Oleksandr Syrskyi stated on February 3 that Ukraine has started implementing organizational reforms to transition the Ukrainian Armed Forces into a "corps structure."**
- **Unspecified actors assassinated Armen Sargsyan, the founder of the "Arbat" Special Purpose Battalion, who has been involved in Russia's hybrid activities and invasions of Ukraine since 2014.**
- **Ukrainian forces recently advanced near Borova, and Russian forces recently advanced near Kupyansk, Borova, Lyman, Chasiv Yar, Toretsk, Pokrovsk, Kurakhove, and in the Dnipro direction.**
- **The Russian government is expanding the federal "Time of Heroes" program, which aims to install Kremlin-selected veterans into government positions, to occupied Ukraine as part of long-term efforts to integrate occupied Ukraine into Russia.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Russo-Ukrainian War

February 3, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



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Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Daniel Mealie, Tom Thacker, Harrison Hurwitz, and David Schulert
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- Significant Fighting in the Past 24 Hours
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before 24 February 2022
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian Advances in Russia
- Claimed Russian Advances in Russia
- Ukrainian Advances in Russia

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.

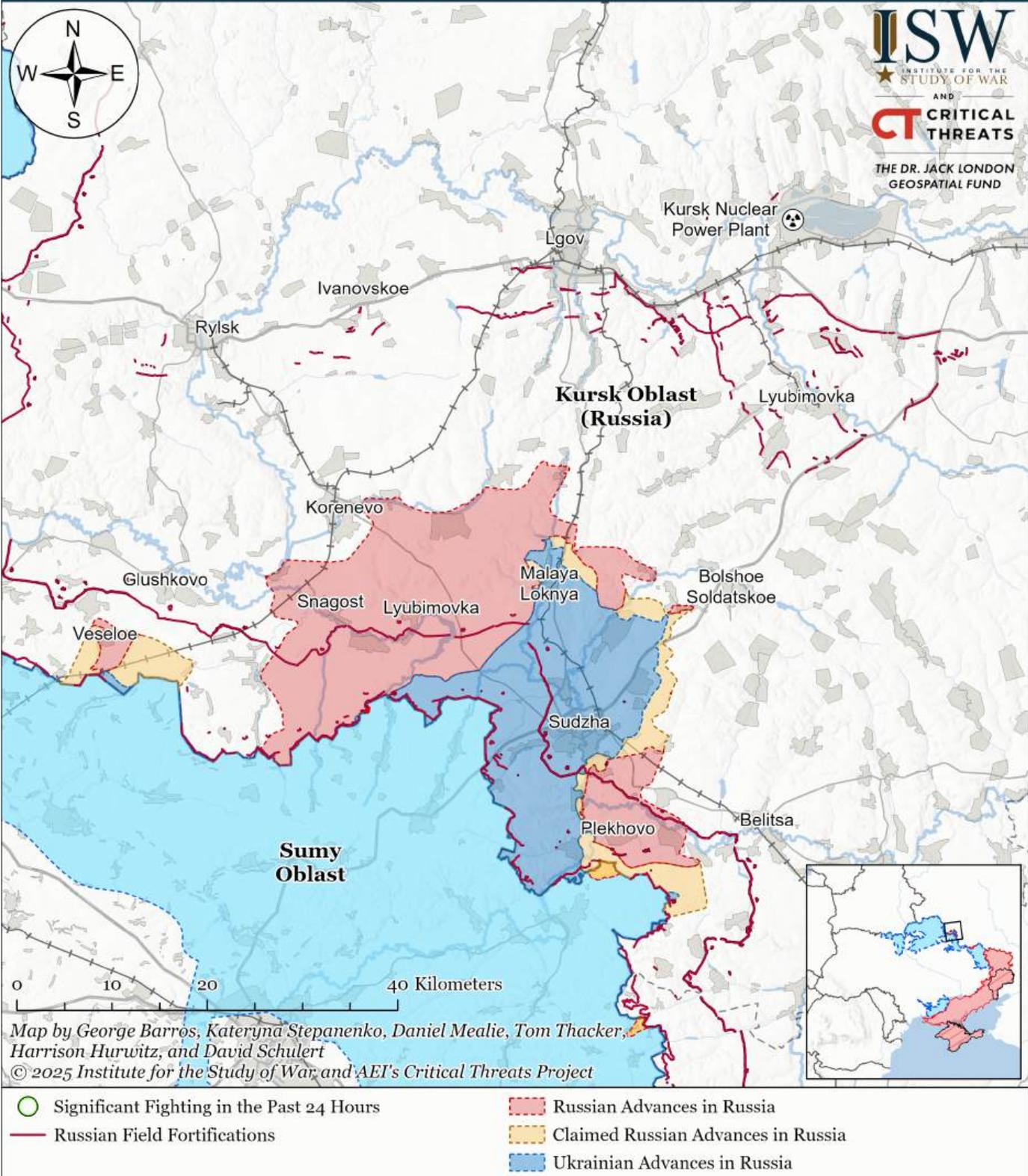
- Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of three subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv 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 3 but did not make any confirmed advances. Russian sources claimed that fighting continued near Sverdlikovo, Maryevka, Pogrebki (all northwest of Sudzha), and Lebedevka (southeast of Korenevo).[26]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kursk Direction

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Russian-claimed advances: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced near Pogrebki and Sverdlikovo, but ISW has not observed confirmation of these claims.[27]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 106th Airborne (VDV) Division and drone specialists from the Russian Rubicon Center for Advanced Unmanned Technologies are reportedly operating in Kursk Oblast.[28] Elements of the Russian 34th Motorized Rifle Brigade (49th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating near Pogrebki.[29]

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated on February 2 that the January 31 Ukrainian strike against a Russian command post in Rylsk (northwest of Sudzha) killed dozens of Russian and North Korean officers.[30]

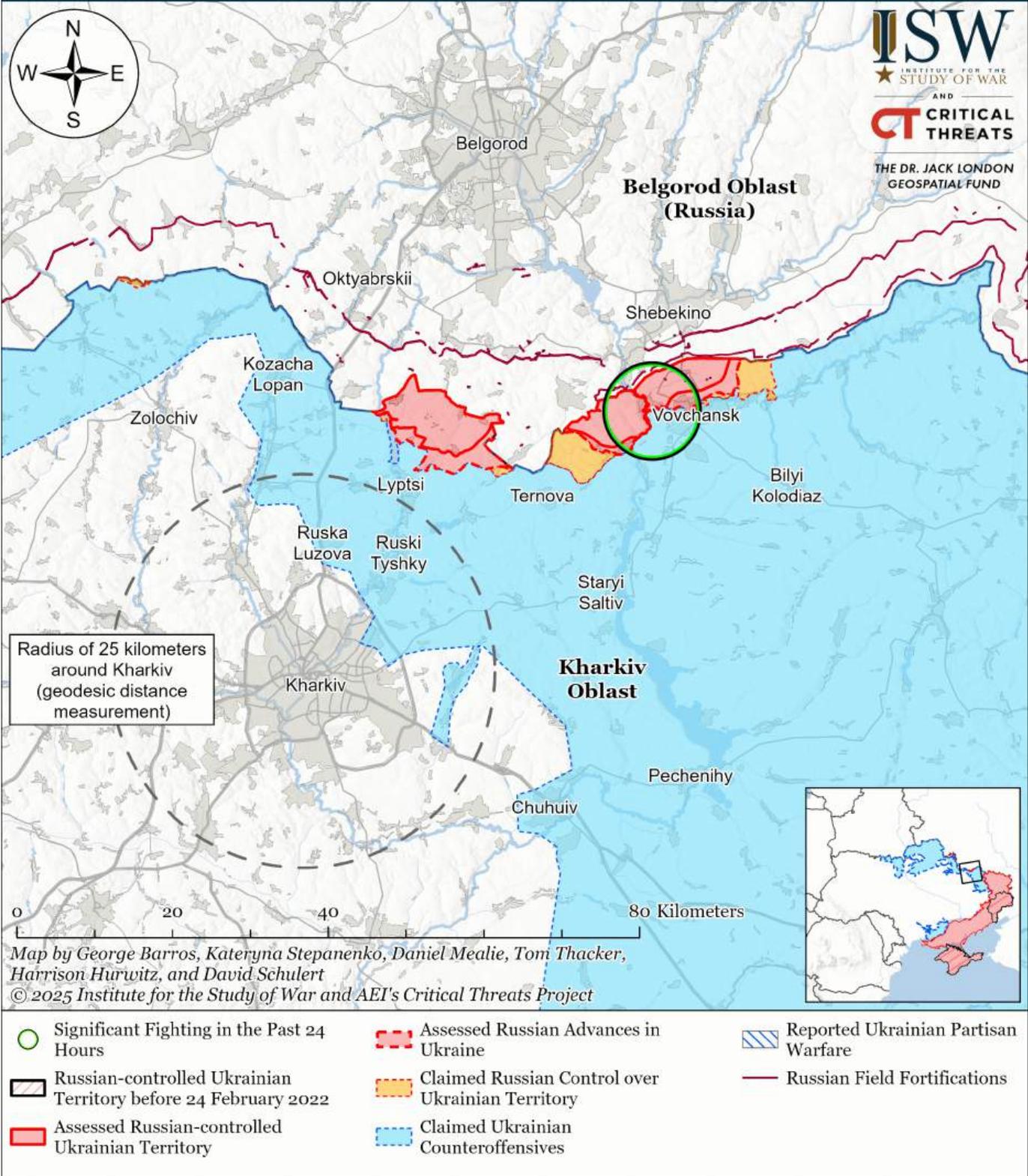
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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 limited ground attacks northeast of Kharkiv City near Vovchansk and Hatyshche on February 2 and 3 but did not advance.[31] A Russian milblogger claimed on February 2 that Ukrainian forces counterattacked in Vovchansk and near Hlyboke (north of Kharkiv City).[32]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kharkiv Direction

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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 in the Kupyansk direction on February 3 and made marginal advances. Russian forces also continued ground attacks east of Kupyansk near Petropavlivka, Pishchane and Stepova Novoselivka on February 2 and 3.[33]

Assessed Russian advances: The Ukrainian General Staff published maps on February 3 indicating that Russian forces likely advanced in fields west of Pershotravneve (east of Kupyansk).[34]

Russian-claimed advances: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced northeast of Kupyansk up to a kilometer deep near Topoli (along the international border); north, northeast, and south of Zapadne; and 500 meters in depth near Synkivka.[35] ISW has not observed confirmation of these claims, however.

Ukraine's Khortytsia Group of Forces reported that Russian forces in the Kupyansk direction are currently regrouping before resuming offensive operations.[36] The commander of a Ukrainian unmanned systems regiment operating in the Kupyansk direction stated that Russian forces are constantly conducting reconnaissance-in-force missions to detect Ukrainian positions and will fire on Ukrainian forces at the expense of Russian ground forces.[37] The commander stated that Russian forces occasionally field armor to increase the speed of offensive operations in the Kupyansk direction. The commander reported that Russian tanks with mine trawls lead mechanized columns followed by light armored vehicles carrying infantry in order to transport the infantry to the frontline as fast as possible. The commander reported that Ukrainian forces repelled five Russian mechanized assaults in late January 2025 and that Ukrainian forces destroyed roughly 90 percent of the Russian armored vehicles.

Russian and Ukrainian forces recently advanced in the Borova direction amid continued Russian offensive operations on February 3. Russian forces conducted ground attacks northeast of Borova near Zahryzove, Bohuslavka, and Lozova; east of Borova near Novoyehorivka; and southeast of Borova near Makiivka and Novolyubivka on February 2 and 3.[38]

Assessed Ukrainian advances: Geolocated footage published on February 2 and 3 indicates that Ukrainian forces recently advanced in central Zahryzove.[39]

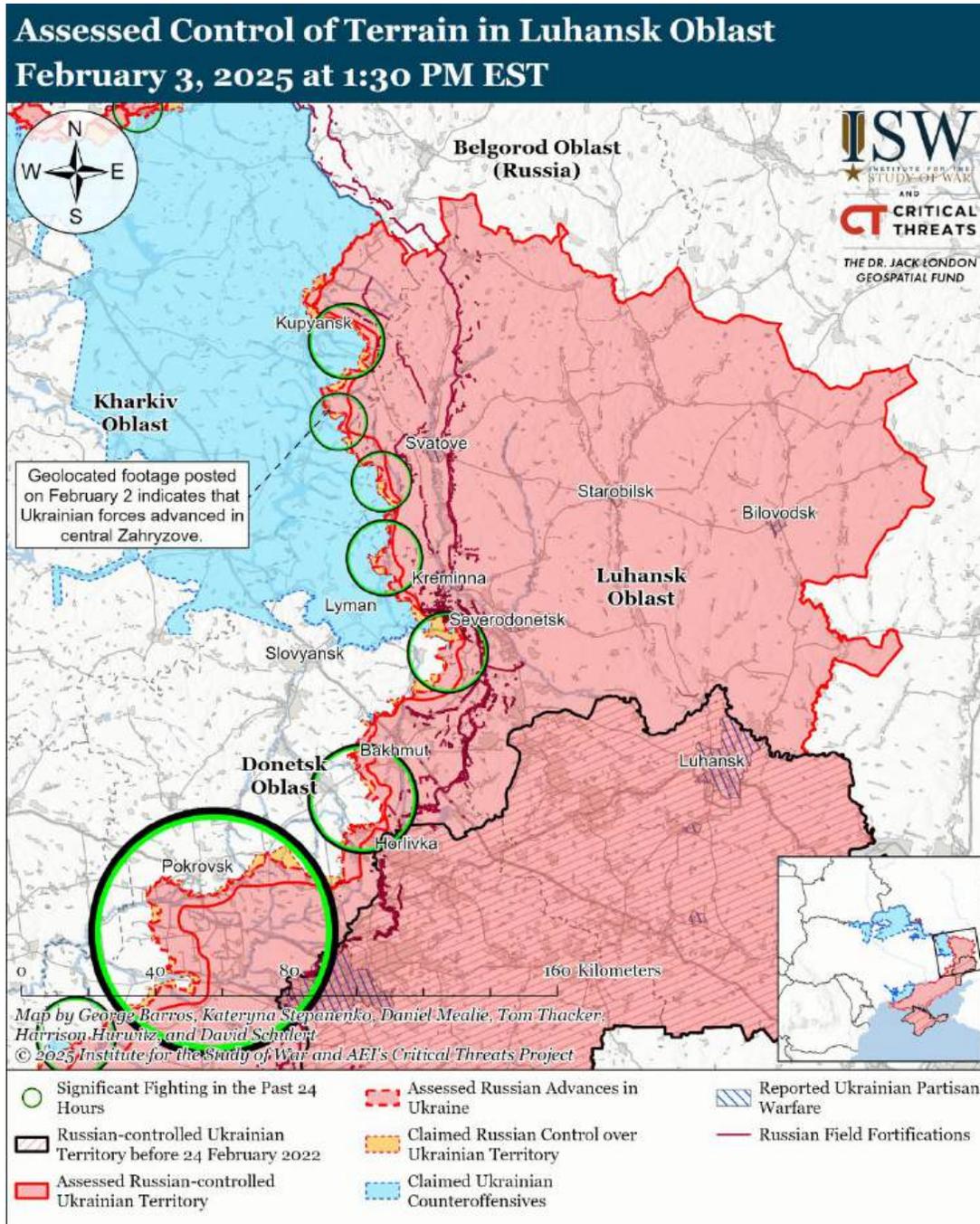
Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on February 3 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced in eastern Zahryzove.[40] The Ukrainian General Staff published a map on February 3 indicating that Russian forces advanced in fields southwest of Nadiya (east of Borova), in fields west of Karmazynivka (southeast of Borova), and in fields southwest of Makiivka.[41]

Russian-claimed advances: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced in fields north and further west of Makiivka.[42] ISW has not observed confirmation of this claim, however.

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian "Fever" Drone Group of the 1st Tank Regiment (1st Guards Tank Army [GTA], Moscow Military District [MMD]) are reportedly striking Ukrainian positions near Zahryzove.[43]

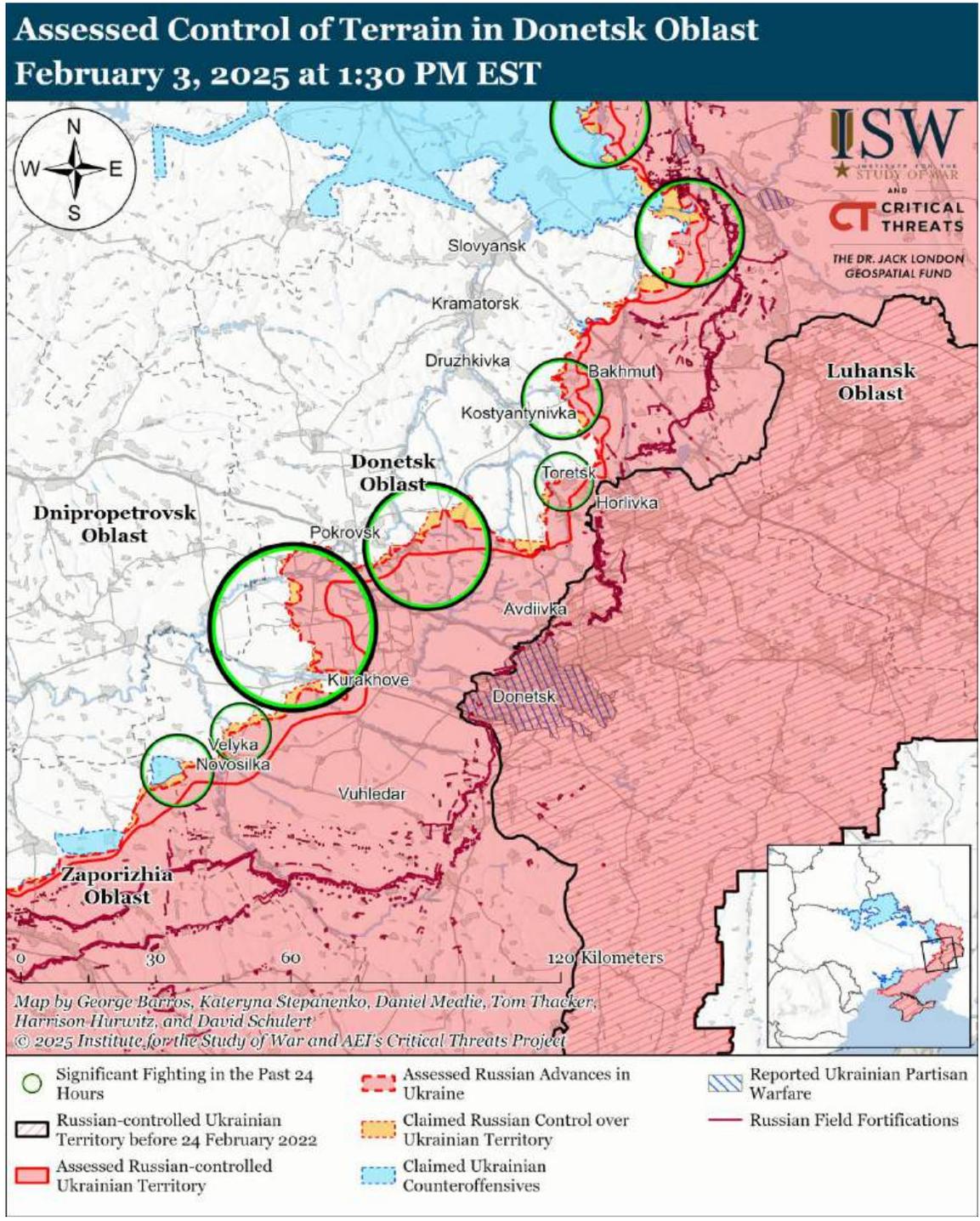
Russian forces recently advanced northeast of Lyman amid continued offensive operations in the area on February 3. Russian forces continued ground attacks northeast of Lyman near Yampolivka and Terny and southeast of Lyman in the direction of Serebryanka and in the Serebryanske forest area on February 2 and 3.[44]

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on February 2 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced in fields north of Kolodyazi (northeast of Lyman).[45] The Ukrainian General Staff published a map on February 3 indicating that Russian forces likely advanced in fields southwest of Dibrova (east of Lyman).[46]



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 3 but did not make confirmed advances. Russian forces continued attacking northeast of Siversk near Bilohorivka, east of Siversk near Verkhokamyanske and Zolotarivka, and southeast of Siversk near Ivano-Darivka on February 2 and 3.[47]



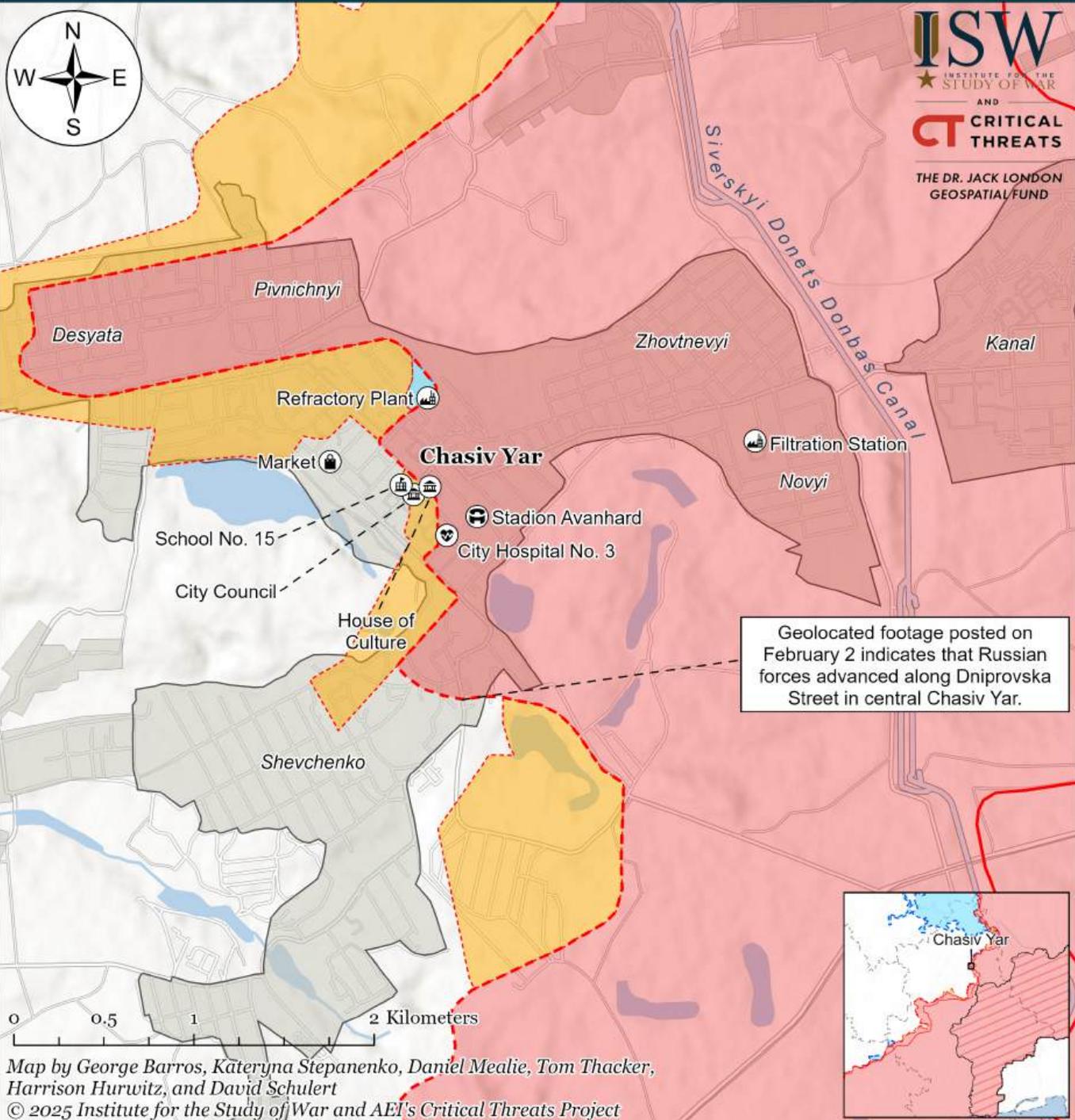
Russian forces recently advanced in the Chasiv Yar direction amid continued offensive operations in the area on February 3. Russian forces continued attacking within and near Chasiv Yar and south of Chasiv Yar near Predtechyne on February 2 and 3.[48]

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on February 2 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced along Dniprovska Street in central Chasiv Yar.[49] The Ukrainian General Staff published a map on February 3 indicating that Russian forces recently advanced up to southern outskirts of Bila Hora and west of Kurdyumivka (both south of Chasiv Yar).[50]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 215th Reconnaissance Battalion and 299th Airborne (VDV) Regiment (both of the 98th VDV Division) reportedly continue operating near Chasiv Yar.[51] Elements of the Russian 27th Artillery Regiment (6th Motorized Rifle Division, 3rd Army Corps [AC]) reportedly continue operating near Stupochky (south of Chasiv Yar).[52]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Chasiv Yar

February 3, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Daniel Mealie, Tom Thacker, Harrison Hurwitz, and David Schulert
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| Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before 24 February 2022 | Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine | Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives |
| Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory | Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory | Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare |

Russian forces recently advanced in the Toretsk direction amid continued offensive operations in the area on February 3. Russian forces continued attacking near Toretsk itself, northeast of Toretsk near Krymske, and west of Toretsk near Shcherbynivka on February 2 and 3.[53]

Assessed Russian advances: The Ukrainian General Staff published a map on February 3 indicating that Russian forces recently advanced west of Niu York (southwest of Toretsk).[54]

Russian-claimed advances: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced in northeastern Toretsk and north and northwest of Toretsk.[55] ISW has not observed confirmation of these claims, however.

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 9th and 132nd motorized rifle brigades (both of the 51st Combined Arms Army [CAA], formerly 1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] AC, Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating near Toretsk.[56]

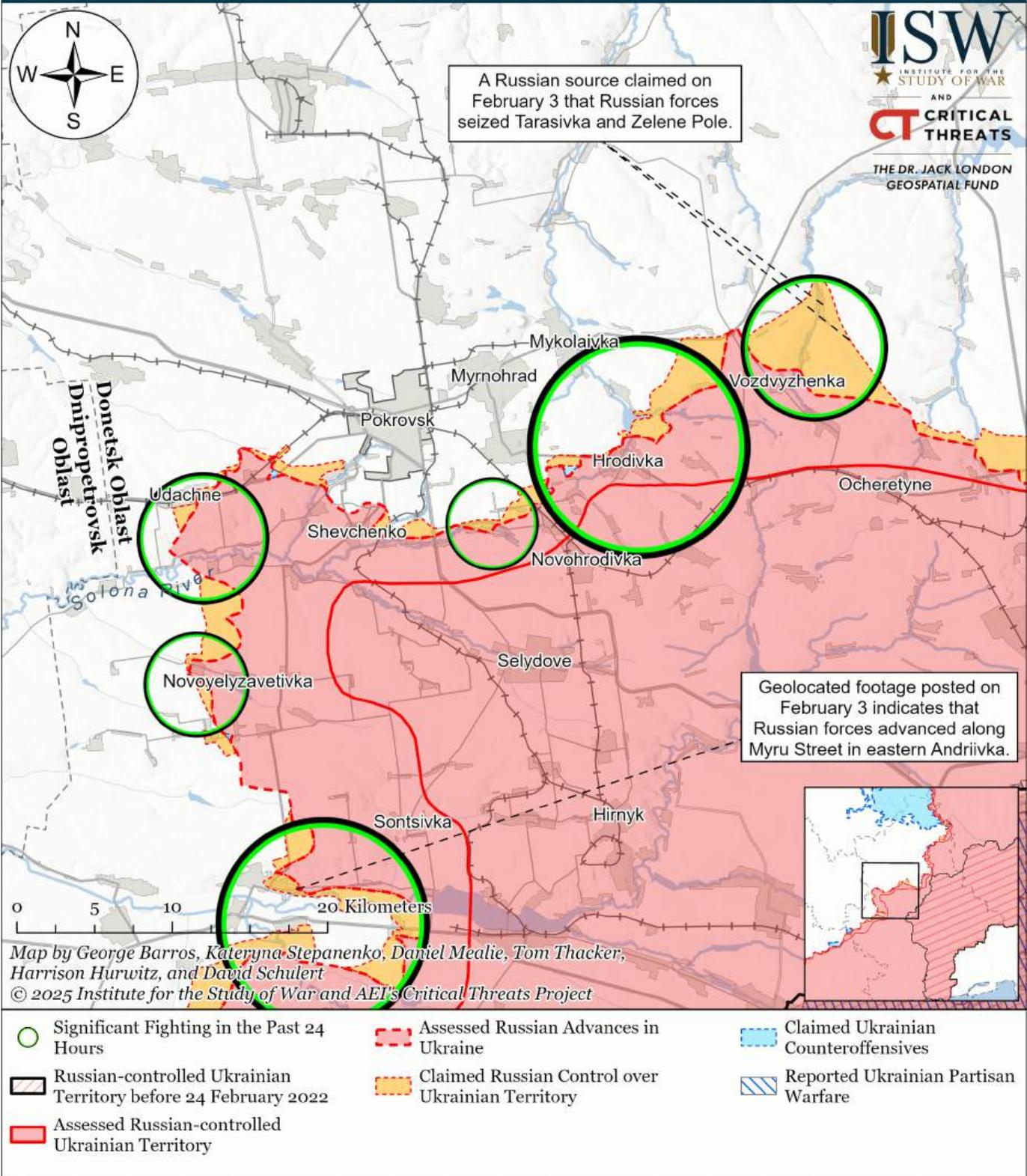
Russian forces recently advanced in the Pokrovsk direction amid continued offensive operations in the area on February 3. Russian forces continued attacking east of Pokrovsk near Zelene Pole, Vodyane Druhe, Tarasivka, Myrolyubivka, Malynivka, and Promin; southeast of Pokrovsk near Lysivka; and southwest of Pokrovsk near Kotlyarivka, Yelyzavetivka, Udachne, Uspenivka, Novooleksandrivka, and Sribne on February 2 and 3.[57]

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on February 3 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced southeast of Nadiivka (southwest of Pokrovsk).[58]

Russian-claimed advances: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces seized Zelene Pole, Tarasivka (both east of Pokrovsk), and Sribne (southwest of Pokrovsk).[59] ISW has not observed confirmation of these claims, however.

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Pokrovsk Direction

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Ukraine's Khortytsia Group of Forces Spokesperson Major Viktor Trehubov stated on February 3 that the tempo of Russian offensive operations in the Pokrovsk direction recently decreased and that Russian forces do not have a large enough materiel or personnel advantage that would allow them to intensify offensive operations to seize Pokrovsk.[60] ISW previously observed Russian forces redeploying elements of the 51st CAA from the Kurakhove direction to the Pokrovsk direction and continues to assess that Russian forces may redeploy elements from the Kurakhove direction to the Pokrovsk direction should Russian forces successfully close the Kurakhove pocket.[61] A Russian milblogger claimed that both Russian and Ukrainian forces have deployed skilled drone operators to the Pokrovsk direction and that the success of the fighting in the area depends on drone operators' skills.[62]

Order of Battle: The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) credited elements of the Russian 80th Tank Regiment (90th Tank Division, 41st CAA, Central Military District [CMD]) with the seizure of Novoyelyzavetivka (southwest of Pokrovsk), which ISW assesses that Russian forces seized as of January 14.[63] Elements of the Russian "Grom" Battalion of the 35th Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st CAA) are reportedly operating in the Pokrovsk direction.[64]

Russian forces recently advanced in the Kurakhove direction amid continued offensive operations in the area on February 3. Russian forces continued attacking northwest of Kurakhove near Shevchenko and west of Kurakhove near Dachne, Andriivka, Oleksiivka, Ulakly, and Kostyantynopil on February 2 and 3.[65]

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on February 3 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced in eastern Andriivka.[66]

Russian-claimed advances: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced along the T-0515 Pokrovsk-Andriivka-Kostyantynopil highway north of Andriivka.[67] ISW has not observed confirmation of this claim, however.

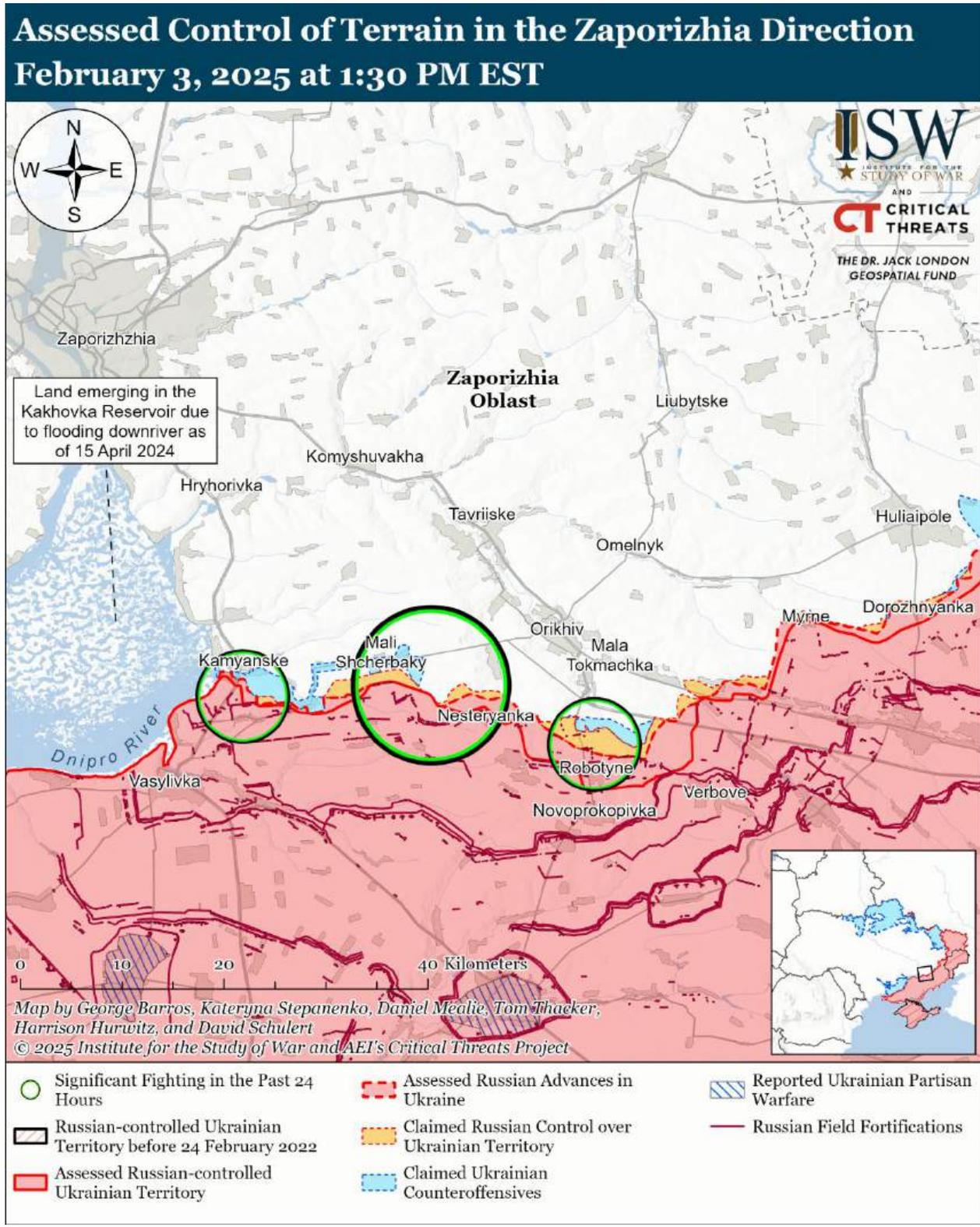
Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 68th Tank Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA, SMD) are reportedly operating near Dachne.[68]

Russian forces continued offensive operations near Velyka Novosilka on February 3 but did not advance. Russian forces conducted offensive operations west of Velyka Novosilka near Novosilka and north of Velyka Novosilka near Novyi Komar on February 2 and 3.[69] Ukrainian military observer Yuriy Butusov posted footage on February 2 of Russian forces conducting a reduced company-sized mechanized assault in two waves near Velyka Novosilka, and Ukrainian sources stated that Ukrainian forces destroyed seven vehicles.[70]

Order of Battle: A Ukrainian brigade operating in the Velyka Novosilka direction reported on February 3 that it conducted a drone strike that killed the commander of the Russian 3rd Motorized Rifle Battalion of the 394th Motorized Rifle Regiment (127th Motorized Rifle Division, 5th CAA, Eastern Military District [EMD]).[71]

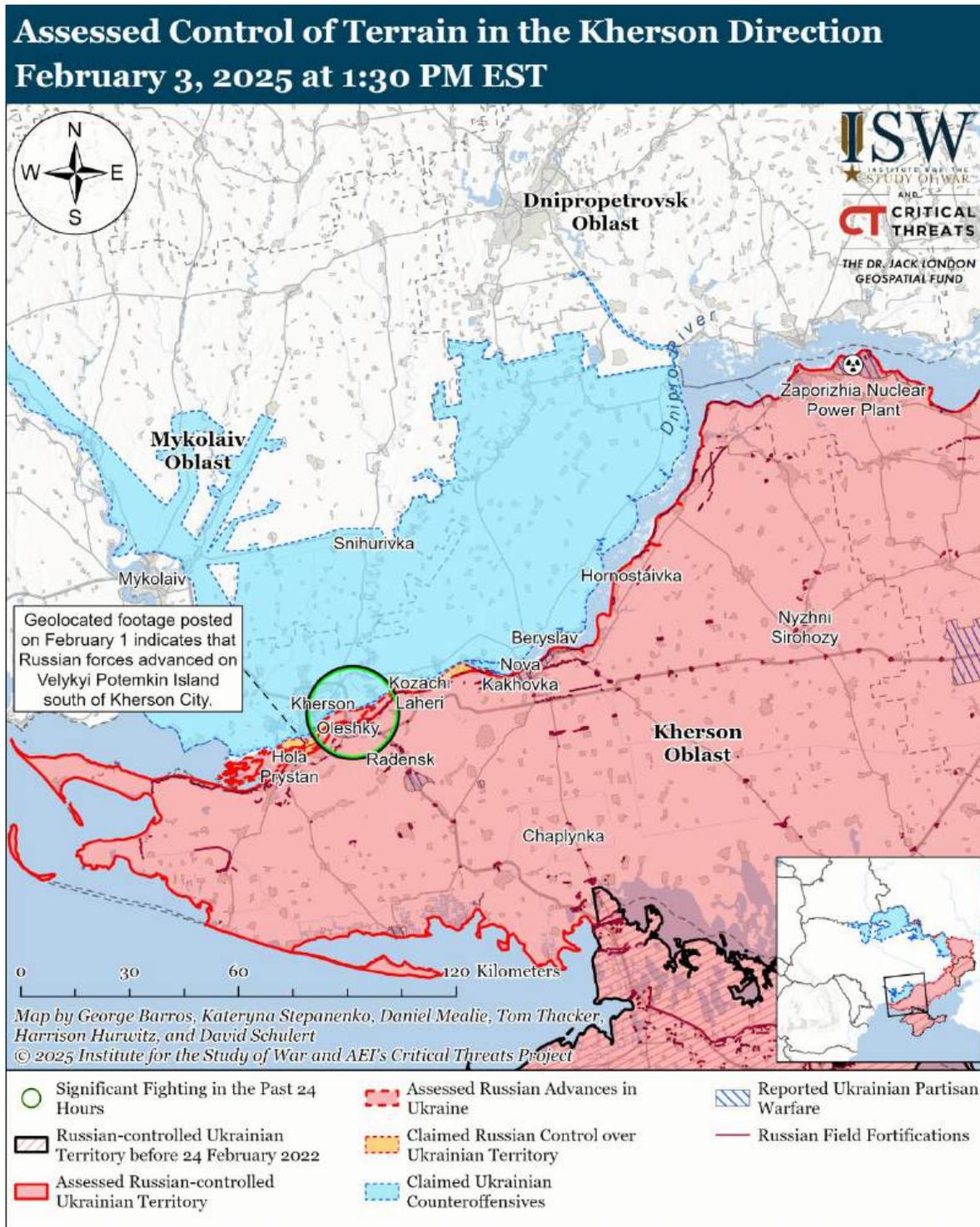
Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast near Novodanylivka (north of Robotyne), Shcherbynivka, and Kamyanske (both northwest of Robotyne) on February 2 and 3 but did not advance.[72]



Russian forces recently advanced on the islands of the Dniro River Delta amid continued ground attacks in the area on February 3. Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks immediately east of Kherson City near Antonivka and Prydniprovskye.[73]

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on February 1 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced on the eastern part of Velykyi Potemkin Island (southwest of Kherson City).[74]



Ukraine's Southern Defense Forces reported on February 3 that Ukrainian forces destroyed a Russian Buk-M3 air defense system, three electronic warfare (EW) systems, and one Starlink terminal in southern Ukraine in the past day.[75]

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 2 to 3. The Ukrainian Air Force stated that Russian forces launched 71 Shahed and decoy drones from Oryol, Kursk, and Bryansk oblasts; Millerovo, Rostov Oblast; Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai; and occupied Crimea.[76] The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Ukrainian forces shot down 38 drones over Kharkiv, Poltava, Sumy, Kyiv, Chernihiv, Cherkasy, Zaporizhia, Dnipropetrovsk, Vinnytsia, and Khmelnytskyi oblasts; and that 25 decoy drones were "lost," likely due to Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW) interference. Ukrainian officials stated that Russian drones caused damage in Sumy, Kharkiv, and Cherkasy oblasts.[77]

Russian forces continue to modernize their strike weapons to overwhelm Ukrainian air defenses and cause more damage. Ihor Chernyak, the head of the explosives department at the Ukrainian National Police's Sumy Oblast branch stated on February 3 that Russian forces use Shahed drones made of carbon or hydrocarbon fiber and "Gerber" drones made of foam plastic.[78] Chernyak noted that Russian forces use the Gerber drones, which are light and cheap to produce, to overwhelm Ukrainian air defenses and have started equipping the Gerber drones with high-explosive fragmentation warheads weighing up to three kilograms. Shahed drone warheads weigh between 50 and 90 kilograms, but Chernyak noted that the Gerber drones are still able to cause significant damage. Chernyak reported that Russian forces are also launching modified missiles, including Iskander missiles and Kh-59 cruise missiles with cluster warheads. Ukrainian military expert Serhiy Flesh reported on February 2 that Russian forces have started to equip Gerber drones with warheads, including high-explosive fragmentation warheads, weighing three to five kilograms.[79]

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

The Russian government is expanding the federal "Time of Heroes" program, which aims to install Kremlin-selected veterans into government positions, to occupied Ukraine as part of long-term efforts to integrate occupied Ukraine into Russia. Kherson Oblast occupation governor Vladimir Saldo announced on February 3 the "Heroes of Kherson Oblast" program.[80] Saldo welcomed Kherson Oblast residents who are fighting or fought with the Russian military in Ukraine as well as veterans from Russian regions to participate in the program. Zaporizhia Oblast occupation governor Yevgeny Balitsky similarly announced on February 3 the "Zaporizhia Heroes" program.[81]

The Russian government is increasing its role in managing the Russian Volunteer Society for Assistance to the Army, Aviation, and Navy of Russia (DOSAAF) possibly in order to create a conscript recruitment pipeline using the organization's education and recruitment infrastructure. Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree on February 3 stipulating that representatives of the Russian government, including from the Russian ministries of defense, sports, education, finance, and economic development, participate in the governing bodies of DOSAAF.[82] The decree calls for these measures

in order to increase the effectiveness of preparing citizens for military service, develop military-patriotic education, bolster patriotism, and increase the prestige of military service. The decree also calls for DOSAAF to amend its charter to allow Russian citizens who are 14 years old to join the organization. The Russian government submitted a bill in August 2024 to lower the DOSAAF admission age to 14 from 18.[83] DOSAAF is a Soviet relic that funds and promotes military service for Russian youth through military-patriotic programming and military skills programs and sends representatives to military draft boards to allocate conscripts with specialized skills into specific military roles.[84]

Russian milbloggers complained about the insufficient quantity and quality of Russian commanders. A Russian milblogger complained that the Russian military is "catastrophically" short of talented operational-level commanders and that the Russian military needs to learn to conduct attacks at the regiment and brigade level.[85] Another Russian milblogger and former Storm-Z instructor responded, claiming that the Russian military is "catastrophically" short of talented commanders starting from even the tactical level.[86] The milblogger claimed that Russian commanders at the regiment and brigade level often personally control small tactical units and that problems with micromanagement began to emerge in the Russian military in 2022. The milblogger claimed that there were "serious" losses among junior command staff and "considerable" losses among mid-level command staff already by June 2022. The milblogger claimed that the Russian command staff is "incompetent" and is overloaded with administrative issues at headquarters, negatively impacting their combat planning and command and control (C2) abilities.

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

The Russian defense industrial base (DIB) continues efforts to protect facilities in the Russian rear from Ukrainian strikes. The Kalashnikov Concern, a subsidiary of Russian state-owned defense conglomerate Rostec, stated on February 3 that it presented its new "Krona-E" air defense system that is designed to protect government facilities, infrastructure facilities, cargo areas, and strategic communications systems from air strikes, particularly those with medium-range drones.[87] The Krona-E is reportedly equipped with 9M340 and 9M333 guided air defense missiles.

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 efforts to militarize and promote pro-Russian ideologies among Ukrainian youth as part of Russia's long-term occupation efforts. Ukrainian Ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets reported on February 3 that open-source data indicates that Russian occupation authorities recruited about 1,000 Ukrainian children in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast in 2024 for "Yunarmiya," a military-patriotic movement that instills pro-Russian and militarized ideals in youth in Russia and occupied Ukraine.[88] Lubinets noted that Russian authorities are expanding the movement in occupied Ukraine, having created 23 new "cells" in 2024 alone.

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

The Belarusian Central Election Commission (CEC) asserted on February 3 that Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko won the recent presidential election with about 5.13 million votes.[89] The Belarusian CEC claimed that voter turnout was 86.82 percent. The January 26 presidential election was neither free nor fair.[90]

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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