Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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March 4, 2024, 6:15pm ET

Click here to see ISW's interactive map of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

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

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

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 12:30pm ET on March 4. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the March 5 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev promoted Russia's extensive territorial objectives that expand deep into Ukraine's territory. Medvedev gave a lecture on March 4 called "Geographical and Strategic Borders" at the Russian World Youth Festival, a Kremlin-organized event that includes attendees from more than 100 foreign countries, during which he claimed that "Ukraine is, of course, Russia."[1] Russian forces currently occupy the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast, but Medvedev defined all the territories on the left bank of the Dnipro River and many territories on the right bank of the Dnipro River as "integral" to Russia's "strategic historical borders."[2] Russian forces currently do not occupy any territory in right-bank Ukraine. Medvedev spoke against the backdrop of a hypothetical English-language map of Eastern Europe that he originally posted on his Telegram channel in July 2022.[3] The map depicts parts of western Ukraine under Hungarian, Polish, and Romanian control — furthering the recently reignited Kremlin narrative that eastern European states have "territorial disputes" in western Ukraine that is aimed at spoiling Ukraine's relationships with its western neighbors.[4] The map shows Ukraine existing as a rump state only within the borders of Kyiv Oblast and the rest of modern-day Ukraine as part of Russia — well beyond the areas that Russian forces currently occupy, and the four oblasts Russia has illegally annexed.[5] The fact that Medvedev reused a map from 2022 underscores that the Kremlin's maximalist territorial objectives have remained unchanged since the beginning months of the war.

Medvedev argued that the influence of sovereign great powers, like Russia, extends beyond their geographic borders, catering to a wider maximalist ideological interpretation of the "Russian World" (Russkiy Mir). Medvedev repeated Russian President Vladimir Putin's previous statement that "Russia's borders do not end anywhere."[6] Medvedev alleged that a state's strategic borders, which he differentiated from a state's geographical borders, directly depend on "how strong and sovereign" the state and its authorities are.[7] Medvedev claimed that the more "powerful" a state is, the "further its strategic frontiers extend beyond its state borders" and the larger the state's sphere of "economic, political, and socio-cultural influence."[8] Putin made similar remarks recently that suggested that he views weaker states that are unable to unilaterally impose their will upon others, such as Ukraine, as having a truncated sovereignty.[9] Medvedev claimed on February 22 that Russia "probably" must seize and occupy Kyiv City, which he labelled an historically "Russian" city, at some point in the future.[10] Medvedev's February 22 and March 4 statements suggest that the existence of a Ukrainian rump state in Kyiv Oblast — even after a hypothetical Russian-led negotiated settlement to the war in Ukraine — may be temporary and subject to future Russian attacks.[11] Medvedev also did not specify to where Russia's "strategic" borders would extend should Russia's "geographic" borders expand as shown in the hypothetical map he presented. The map is notably a conservative depiction of possible Russian territorial claims, given Putin's recent geographic definition of Russkiy Mir encompassing the former Russian Empire, which includes parts of Poland, Romania, Finland, and Moldova.[12]

Ukrainian Territory that Russian Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev Claimed are an "Integral Part of Russia's Strategic Historical Borders" on March 4, 2024

Regions of left-bank and right-bank Ukraine that Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev described as Russian on March 4.

■ Ukrainian Territory Claimed by Dmitry Medvedev as Russian Territory
■ Ukrainian Territory Claimed by Dmitry Medvedev as not Russian Territory

0   150   300   600 Kilometers

Map by Shaylei Dauphinais and Noel Mikkelsen
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Note: This is a basic recreation of a map shared by Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev on March 4, 2024 showing Ukrainian territory that Medvedev claimed are an "integral part of Russia's strategic historical borders." The original map also depicts parts of western Ukraine as partitioned by Romania, Hungary, and Poland. This simple recreation map does not depict that partition to highlight how much of Ukraine Medvedev falsely claimed is Russian.

Medvedev indicated that Russia is more interested in subjugating Ukraine's people than taking its territory. Medvedev claimed that Russia's "enemies constantly insist that Russia's main goal is to seize Ukrainian lands" but, as the "riches" of Ukraine's lands, such as wheat, steel, gas, and coal are "almost absent," the main value that Russia seeks from its occupation of Ukraine is through controlling its people.[13] Medvedev also claimed that the concept of a sovereign Ukrainian state and the concept of a Ukrainian national identity that is not Russian must "disappear forever."[14] ISW continues to document how Russian authorities are repeatedly engaging in large-scale and deliberate ethnic cleansing campaigns and systematically working to eliminate Ukrainian language, culture, history, and ethnicity in areas of Ukraine that Russia occupies.[15]

The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported that unknown actors detonated explosives and severely damaged a Russian railway bridge over the Chapaevka River near Chapaevsk, Samara Oblast on March 4. The GUR reported that Russia uses the railway to transport military cargo, particularly ammunition produced at a joint-stock company in Chapaevsk.[16] Kremlin newswire *TASS* reported that the explosion delayed five trains and that Russian authorities suspended traffic across the bridge, but later opened one railway track.[17] The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) stated that it opened a criminal investigation into the explosion but did not speculate on the actor responsible for the explosion.[18] Some Russian milbloggers blamed Ukrainian forces for the explosion on the railway bridge.[19]

Russian President Vladimir Putin reportedly awarded a Russian Airborne Forces (VDV) and Spetsnaz-affiliated Russian milblogger, likely as part of the Kremlin's longstanding efforts to co-opt milbloggers and make them loyal to the Kremlin. Russian milblogger channel *Rusich Army* (also known as *Archangel Spetsnaza)* claimed on March 4 that Putin awarded the channel's anonymous head the Russian Order of Merit of the Fatherland Second Class for his efforts in supporting the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine.[20] *Rusich* is the second Russian milblogger that has received a federal award for his activities as such (Putin awarded *Rybar* founder Mikhail Zvinchuk with the same award on November 16, 2023, likely after co-opting him).[21] The *Rusich* Telegram channel has over one million followers as of March 4 and is well connected among other prominent Russian ultranationalist voices, including the *Rybar* Telegram channel and Russian state TV propagandist Vladimir Solovyov.[22] ISW previously assessed that *Rybar'*s public award was designed to incentivize other Russian milbloggers to offer their loyalty to the Kremlin in exchange for awards and accolades.[23] *Rusich*'s award demonstrates to other milbloggers that the Kremlin is actively willing to publicly praise milbloggers who embrace Kremlin messaging — and suppress negative reporting about Russia's military performance in Ukraine — as the Kremlin continues to encourage self-censorship efforts in the Russian information space.

Kremlin-awarded milbloggers remain a minority in the Russian information space, however, and some milbloggers actively clash with state propagandists despite the Kremlin's consolidation of the information space. Pro–Wagner Group Russian milbloggers strongly criticized Russian state propagandist and Solovyov-affiliate Boris Yakemenko on March 4 for disparaging deceased Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin and for accusing Russian milbloggers of failing to contribute to the Kremlin's war effort in late February 2024.[24] Other Russian milbloggers, including deceased milblogger Andrei "Murz" Morozov, who lost faith in the Russian command due to its censorship efforts, regularly clashed with Solovyov and other information-space voices whom these milbloggers deemed as liars or otherwise unreliable.[25] The Kremlin will likely continue to tighten control over some milbloggers by coercing some critical milbloggers into self-censorship and awarding those who are loyal to the Kremlin as it seeks to consolidate control over the Russian information space.

The Russian government reportedly hid data on recipients of social support services in 2022, likely to obfuscate casualties suffered in the first year of the war in Ukraine or to cover up the government's inability to pay promised social support to vulnerable populations. Russian opposition outlet *Verstka* investigated the Russian Unified State Information System for Social Security (EGISSO) and reported on March 4 that EGISSO has hidden the data on recipients of social benefits in 2022.[26] *Verstka* noted that that some of the hidden data contain information that could reveal the scale of losses in Ukraine, such as indicators about "widows of military personnel who died during military service" and "citizens who were wounded, concussed, injured, and mutilated while performing military duties." The EGISSO may have hidden this information to prevent social discontent arising around reports of Russian casualties in Ukraine and decided only to share this information in 2023 and 2024 when the Kremlin line on Russian losses has consolidated somewhat to eliminate social shocks. The Kremlin may have also hidden 2022 social services data to cover its issues in providing promised social support measures to various individuals, particularly those impacted by the first year of the war.

The Kremlin is continuing efforts to ensure high voter turnout in the upcoming presidential election to present the guise of legitimacy and widespread popular support among Russian President Vladimir Putin's domestic electorate. Russian opposition outlet *Meduza* reported on March 4 that the Russian presidential administration is concerned about meeting its intended 70 to 80 percent voter turnout mark in March 2024 because there is a widespread sentiment in Russia that the election has already been decided and that Russians have generally accepted

that Putin has already won again.[27] *Meduza* stated that the Kremlin hopes to obtain this voter turnout by mobilizing the domestic electorate affiliated with the Russian government, particularly employees of the public sector, state corporations, and companies loyal to the Russian government, as well as their families. United Russia employees, for example, are required to bring at least 10 people (family members, friends, and acquaintances) to polling stations. *Meduza* noted that the requirements of these employees decrease proportionately to their proximity to the Kremlin; for example, employees of large corporations only have to bring two people to polling stations. *Meduza* reported that there is no enforcement mechanism for the requirements but that the Kremlin is trying to encourage voting using electronic voting methods and QR codes to make voting more convenient. ISW has long assessed that the Kremlin's election preparations are intended to cast the election as completely legitimate and widely popular with strong voter turnout.

Russian authorities continue to exploit the leaked recording of German military officers discussing the theoretical provision of Taurus missiles to Ukraine to deter Western military aid provisions to Ukraine. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) summoned the German Ambassador to Moscow on March 4 in response to the leaked recording.[28] German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius stated on March 3 that the leaked recording is part of the "information war" that that Russian President Vladimir Putin is waging against the West in order to undermine Western unity and resolve in supporting Ukraine.[29]

Key Takeaways:

- **Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev promoted Russia's extensive territorial objectives that expand deep into Ukraine's territory.**
- **The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported that unknown actors detonated explosives and severely damaged a Russian railway bridge over the Chapaevka River near Chapaevsk, Samara Oblast on March 4.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin reportedly awarded a Russian Airborne Forces (VDV) and Spetsnaz-affiliated Russian milblogger, likely as part of the Kremlin's longstanding efforts to co-opt milbloggers and make them loyal to the Kremlin.**
- **The Russian government reportedly hid data on recipients of social support services in 2022, likely to obfuscate casualties suffered in the first year of the war in Ukraine or to cover up the government's inability to pay promised social support to vulnerable populations.**
- **The Kremlin is continuing efforts to ensure high voter turnout in the upcoming presidential election to present the guise of legitimacy and widespread popular support among Russian President Vladimir Putin's domestic electorate.**
- **Russian authorities continue to exploit the leaked recording of German military officers discussing the theoretical provision of Taurus missiles to Ukraine to deter Western military aid provisions to Ukraine.**
- **Russian forces recently made confirmed advances near Bakhmut, Avdiivka, and Donetsk City amid continued positional engagements along the entire frontline.**
- **A Russian news aggregator claimed on March 4 that Russian forces replaced Storm-Z convict units with Storm-V units, a mechanism for distributing convicts into the regular Russian military as opposed to keeping them siloed within convict-only units, as was the case with Storm-Z formations.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of March 4, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

Subordinate main effort - Capturing Donetsk Oblast

Main effort - Eastern Ukraine

Supporting effort 1 - Southern Axis

Legend:
- ⬤ Significant Fighting in the Past 24 Hours
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory

0   150   300   600 Kilometers

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.

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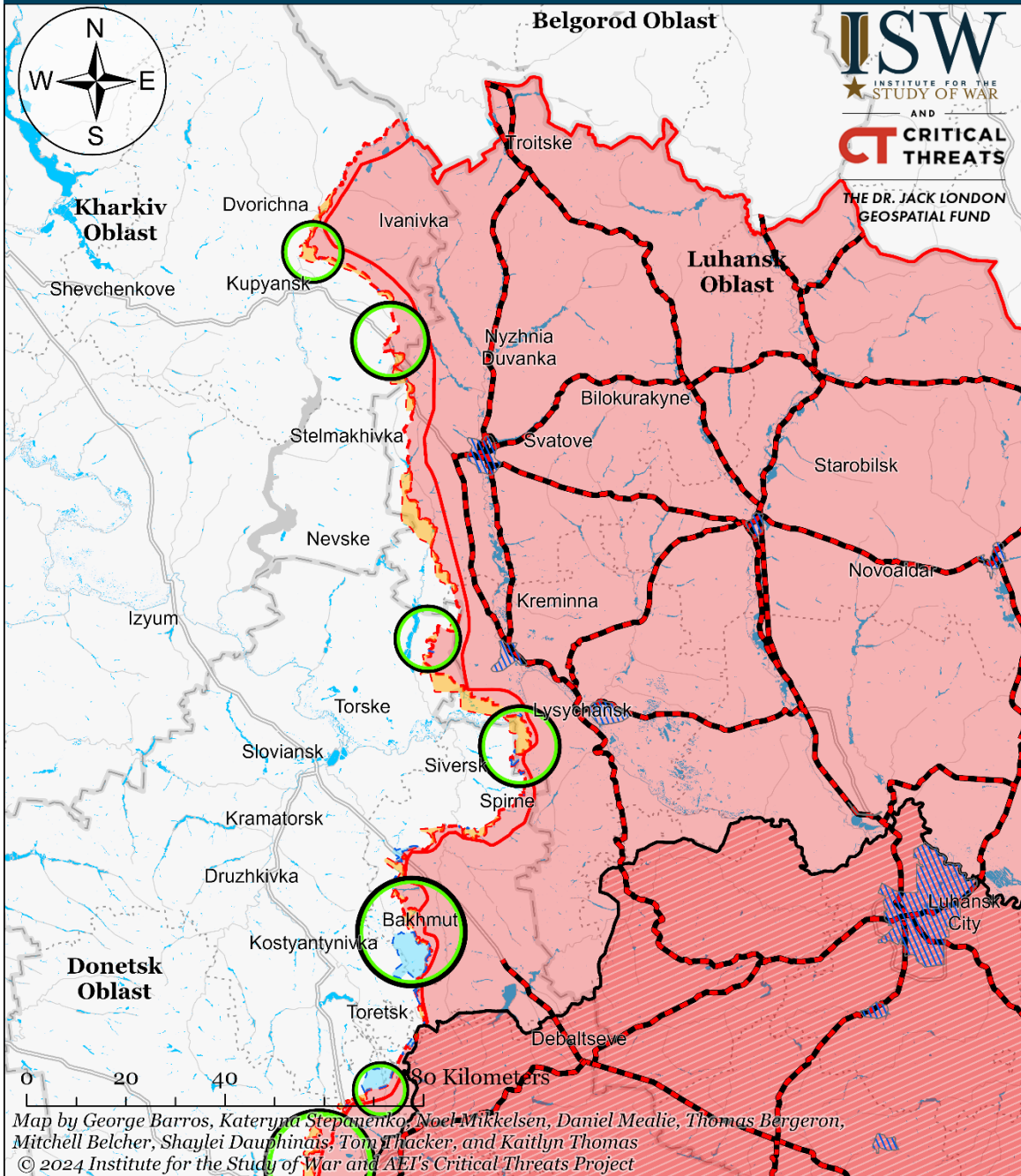
- Russian Main Effort — Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 — Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 — Capture the entirety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

Limited positional engagements continued along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on March 4, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Ukrainian and Russian sources reported continued fighting northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka; southeast of Kupyansk near Tabaivka; west of Kreminna near Terny; and south of Kreminna near Bilohorivka and Verkhnokamyanske.[30] One milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced near Yampolivka (west of Kreminna) and Terny, but noted that while Russian forces hold the initiative in this direction, they are unable to translate small tactical gains into serious operational successes.[31] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian Su-34 bombers are conducting FAB-500 glide bomb strikes against Ukrainian positions in the Lyman direction using universal planning and correction modules (UMPC) on FAB bombs.[32] Elements of the Russian 7th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People's Republic Army Corps [LNR AC]), the "GORB" detachment, and the "Sever-V" volunteer brigade (Russian Volunteer Corps) are operating south of Kreminna.[33]

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Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of March 4, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

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Legend:
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Russian Ground Lines of Communication
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- 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.

Note: A Russian source claimed on March 3 that Russian forces advanced 200 meters north of Synkivka.

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

Russian forces recently advanced west of Bakhmut amid continued positional fighting in the area on March 4. Geolocated footage published on March 3 shows that Russian forces advanced into central Ivanivske (west of Bakhmut).[34] Russian milbloggers claimed that fighting is ongoing in western Ivanivske and that Russian forces are attempting to cut Ukrainian logistics lines that run into Ivanivske from the north.[35] Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional fighting continued northwest of Bakhmut near Bohdanivka; southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka and Andriivka; and south of Bakhmut near Niu York and Novoselivka.[36] Ukrainian Khortytsia Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash stated that Russian forces are attempting to transfer unspecified elements of motorized rifle regiments, Airborne Forces (VDV), and Russian Combat Army Reserve (BARS) formations to the Bohdanivka area.[37]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of March 4, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

A Russian source claimed on March 2 that Russian forces advanced in Ivanivske.

Geolocated footage posted on March 3 indicates that Russian forces advanced westward within Ivanivske.

Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Shaylei Dauphinais, Tom Thacker, and Kaitlyn Thomas
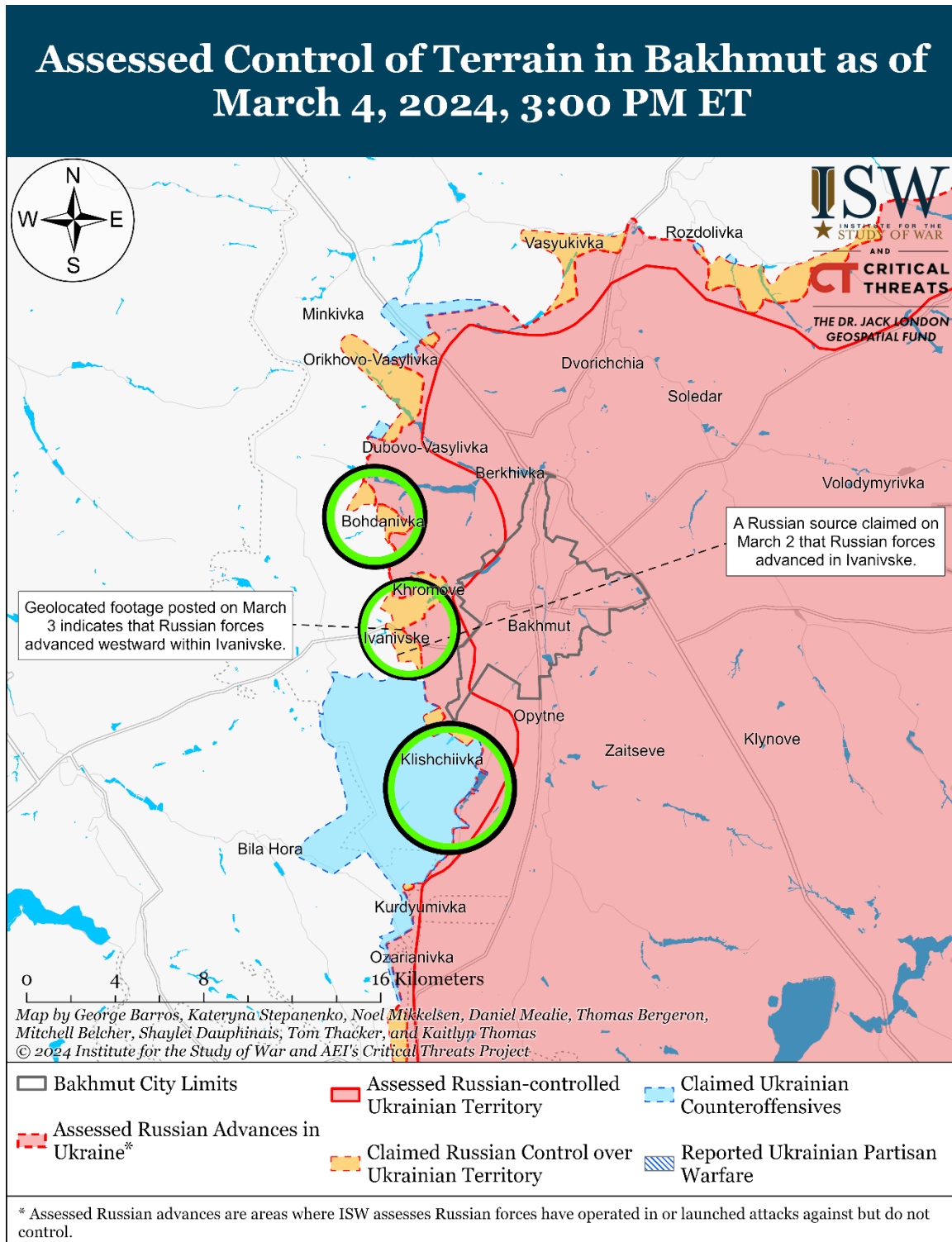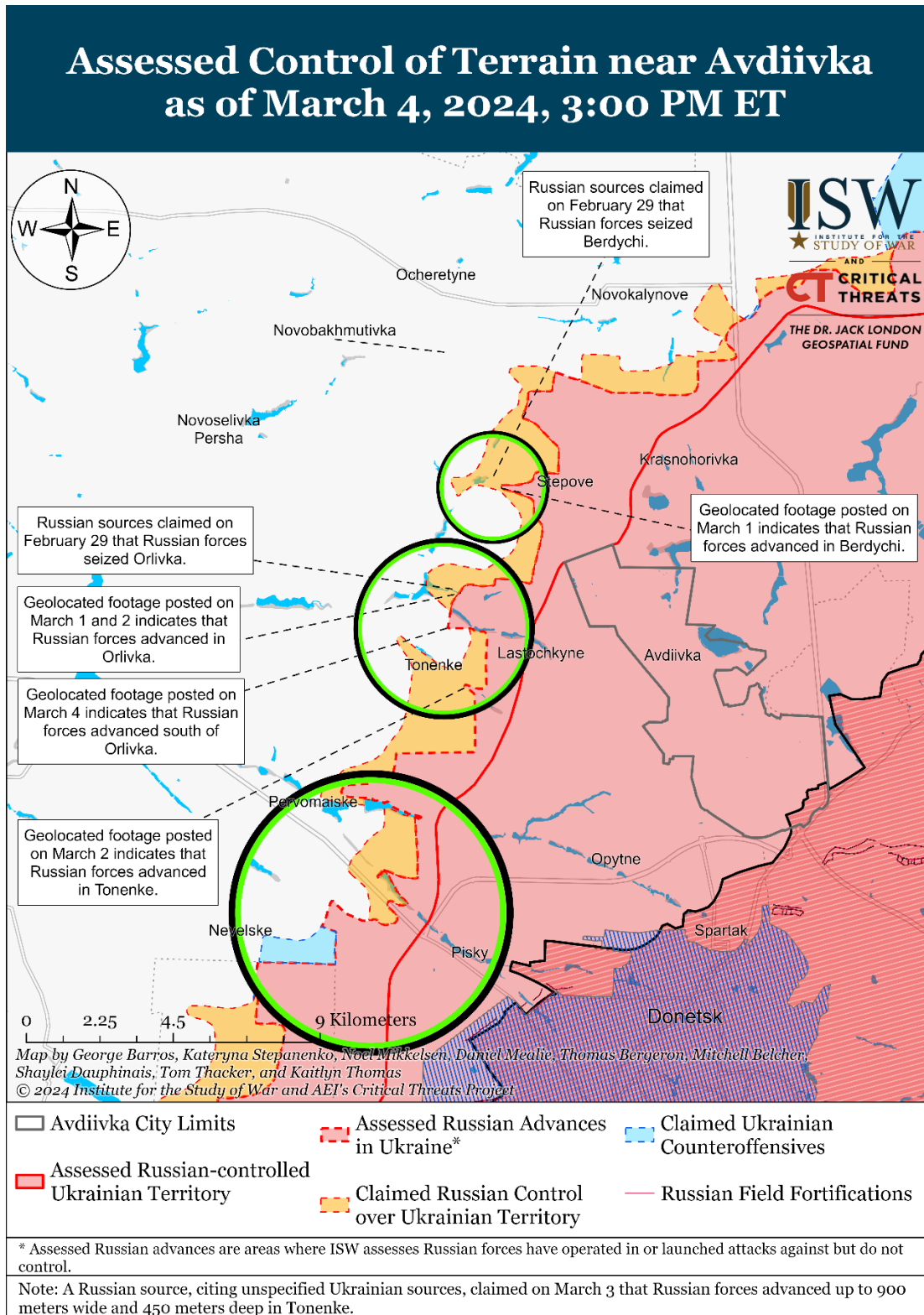© 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

Bakhmut City Limits

Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*

Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory

Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory

Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives

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.
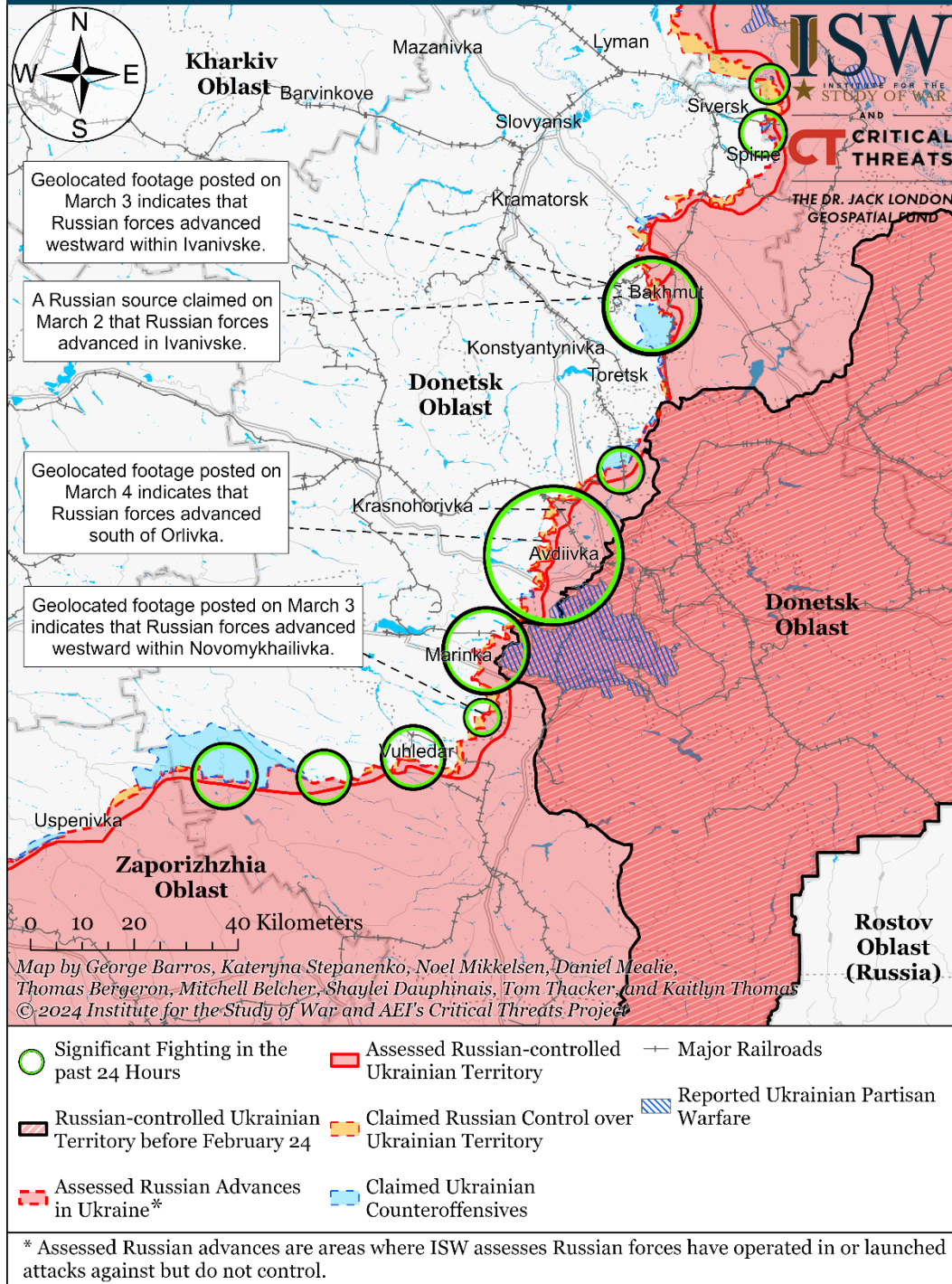
Russian forces advanced west of Avdiivka amid continued fighting in the area on March 4. Geolocated footage published on March 4 shows that Russian forces advanced in a windbreak south of Orlivka (west of Avdiivka) near the Orlivka-Tonenke road (west of Avdiivka).[38] A Russian milblogger claimed on March 3 that Russian forces advanced up to 450 meters deep along a 900-meter-wide front in the direction of Tonenke, and another milblogger claimed that Russian forces have captured most of the settlement but that Ukrainian forces still maintain positions in northwestern Tonenke.[39] ISW has not observed visual confirmation of the claimed Russian advances in Tonenke. Positional fighting continued west of Avdiivka near Berdychi, Orlivka, and Tonenke and southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske and Nevelske.[40] Elements of the Russian 30th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Combined Arms Army [CAA], Central Military District [CMD]) are reportedly fighting near Berdychi.[41]

Assessed Control of Terrain near Avdiivka as of March 4, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

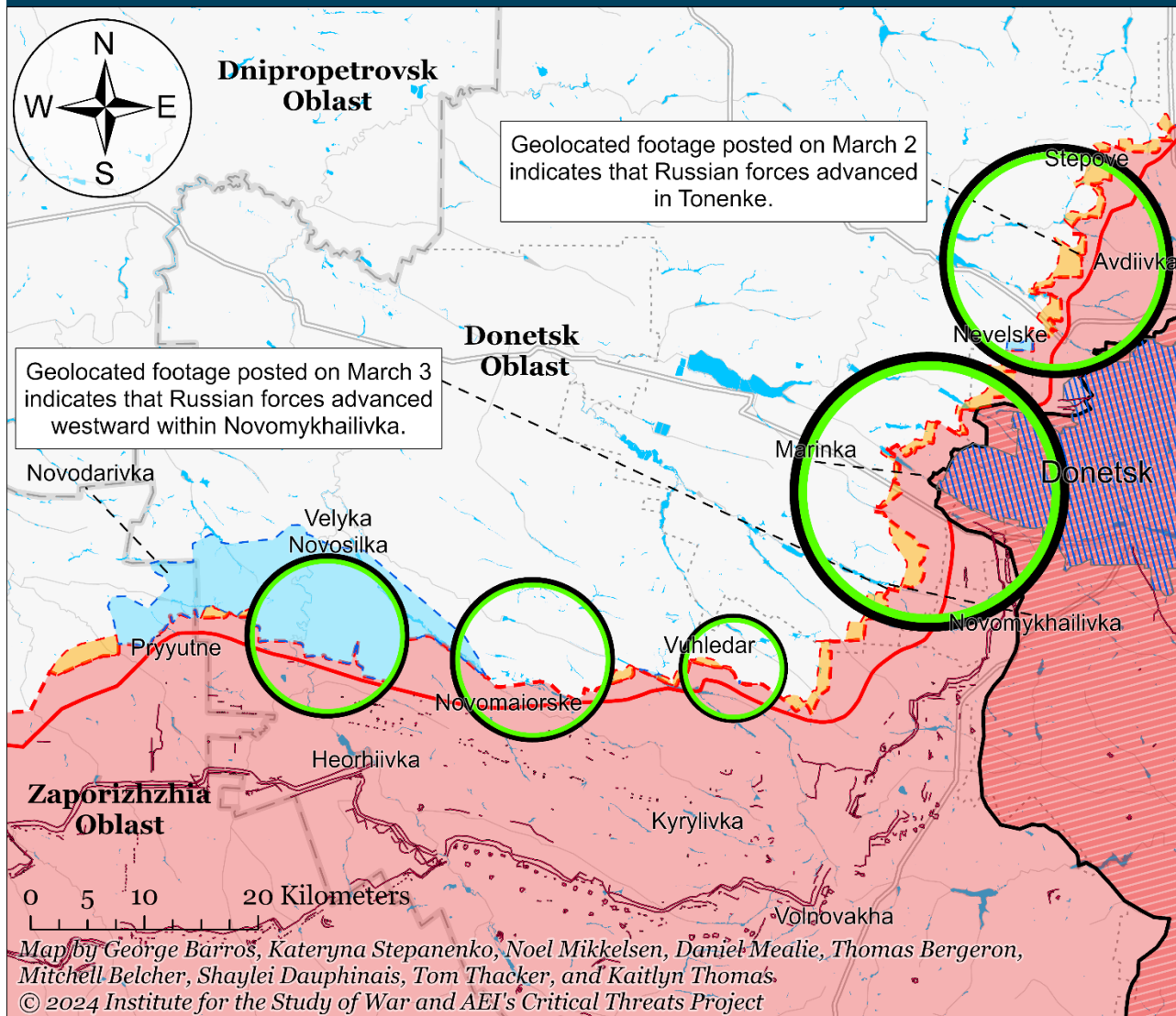Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project 2024

Russian forces recently advanced southwest of Donetsk City amid continued positional fighting west and southwest of the city on March 4. Geolocated footage published on March 4 shows that elements of the Russian 155th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) advanced into central Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City).[42] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces only maintain positions in western Novomykhailivka and that fighting continues in the area.[43] Positional fighting continued west of Donetsk City near Krasnohorivka and Heorhiivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Pobieda.[44] Elements of the 238th Artillery Brigade (8th CAA, Southern Military District [SMD]) continue to operate near Krasnohorivka.[45]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of March 4, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

Geolocated footage posted on March 3 indicates that Russian forces advanced westward within Ivanivske.

A Russian source claimed on March 2 that Russian forces advanced in Ivanivske.

Geolocated footage posted on March 4 indicates that Russian forces advanced south of Orlivka.

Geolocated footage posted on March 3 indicates that Russian forces advanced westward within Novomykhailivka.

Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Shaylei Dauphinais, Tom Thacker, and Kaitlyn Thomas © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

○ Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
━ Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
┼ Major Railroads
▨ Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
▢ Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
▦ Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
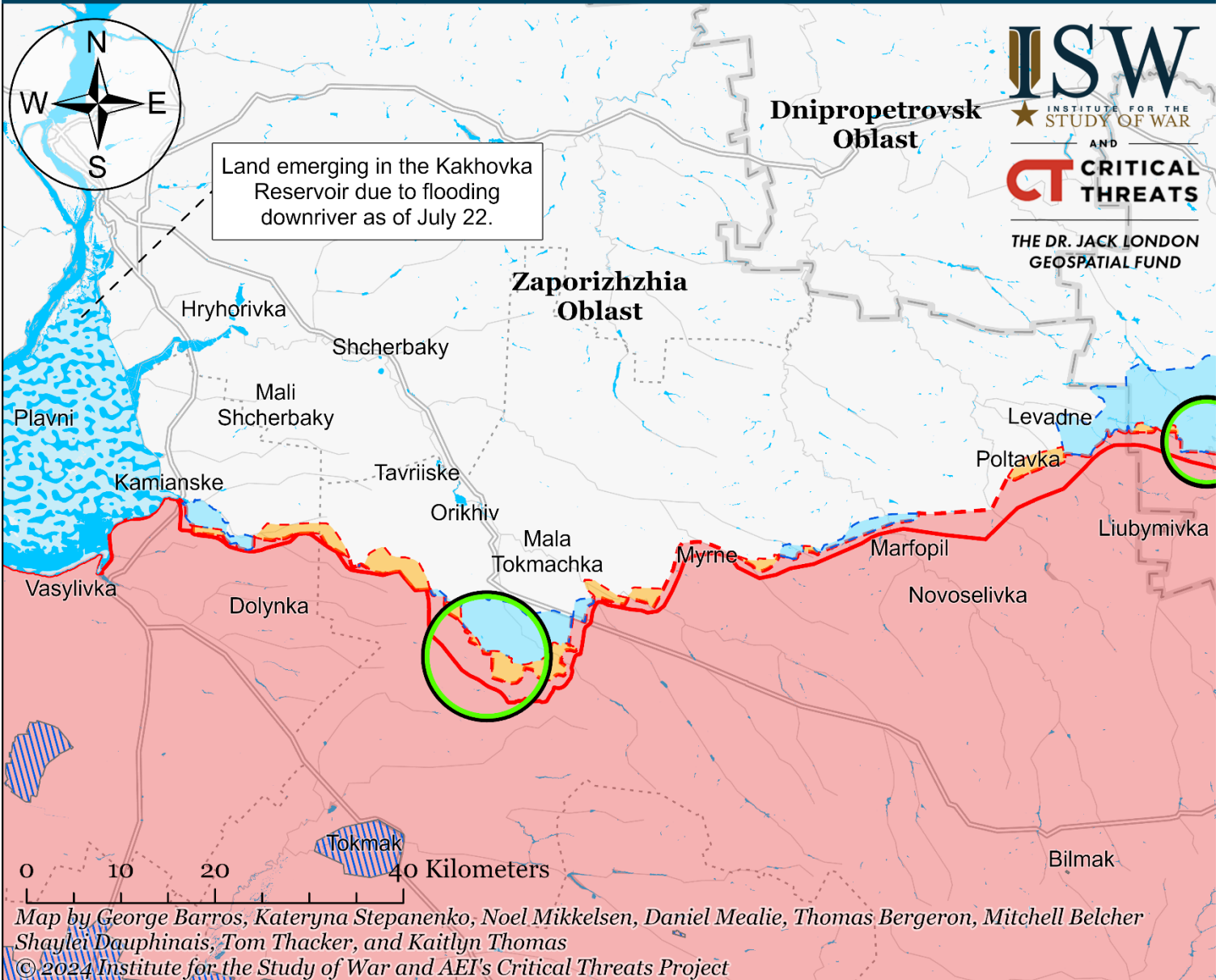▥ Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
▨ Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives

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

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Positional fighting continued in western Donetsk Oblast and in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on March 4, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in these areas. Ukrainian and Russian sources reported continued positional engagements in western Donetsk Oblast near Vodyane (northeast of Vuhledar) and in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area near Prechystivka (southeast of Velyka Novosilka) and Urozhaine (south of Velyka Novosilka).[46]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Western Donetsk Oblast as of March 4, 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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Russian Supporting Effort — Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Positional engagements continued in western Zaporizhia Oblast on March 4, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional engagements continued near Robotyne and Verbove (east of Robotyne).[47] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces are struggling to clear seized Ukrainian trenches due to Ukrainian mines.[48]Elements of the Russian 38th Motorized Rifle Brigade (35th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Eastern Military District [EMD]) and the South Ossetian "Alania" volunteer battalion are reportedly operating in the Zaporizhia direction.[49] Elements of the Russian 70th Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th CAA, Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating near Robotyne.[50]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of March 4, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of March 4, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

Land emerging in the Kakhovka Reservoir due to flooding downriver as of July 22.

Dnipropetrovsk Oblast

Zaporizhzhia Oblast

Hryhorivka

Shcherbaky

Mali Shcherbaky

Plavni

Kamianske

Tavriiske

Orikhiv

Mala Tokmachka

Levadne

Poltavka

Liubymivka

Myrne

Marfopil

Vasylivka

Dolynka

Novoselivka

Tokmak

Bilmak

0   10   20   40 Kilometers

Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher Shayler Dauphinais, Tom Thacker, and Kaitlyn Thomas
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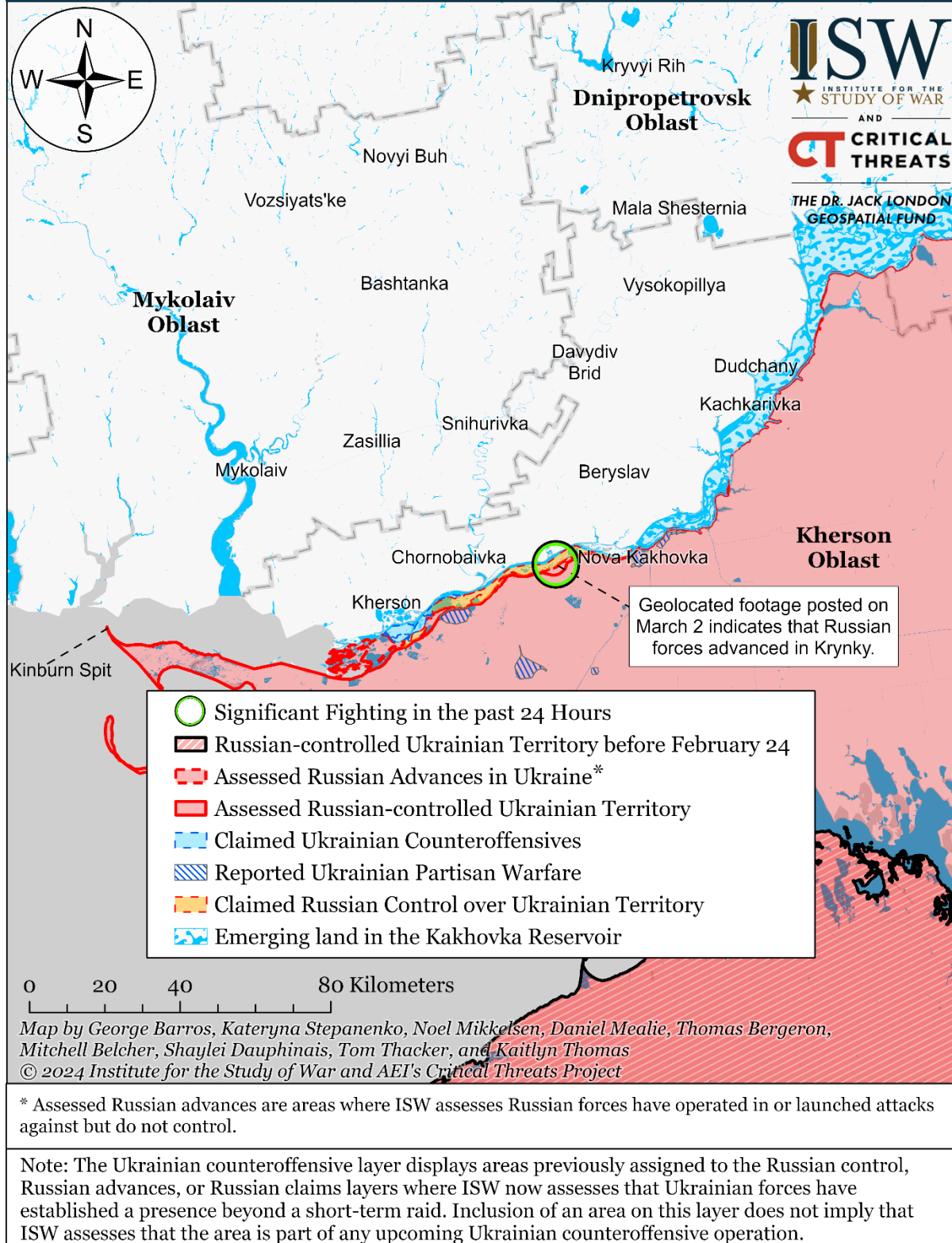| Legend		
⬤ Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours	▭ Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory	▨ Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
▭ Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24	▭ Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory	◄ Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
▭ Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*	▭ Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives	

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

The Ukrainian General Staff stated on March 4 that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast near Krynky.[51]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of March 4, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

Geolocated footage posted on March 2 indicates that Russian forces advanced in Krynky.

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

0   20   40   80 Kilometers

Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Shaylei Dauphinais, Tom Thacker, and Kaitlyn Thomas © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

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

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

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

Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Colonel Nataliya Humenyuk stated on March 4 that Russian forces are using Kh-31P anti-radar missiles more frequently in strike series to search for Ukrainian air defense systems and radar systems and detect vulnerabilities in Ukrainian air defense pathways.[52] Humenyuk stated that Russian forces have somewhat increased their use of Kh-31P missiles after Ukraine's downing of a Russian A-50 long-range radar detection aircraft on February 23 and Russian forces are suffering from an increased inability to conduct glide bomb strikes in southern Ukraine due to Ukraine's increased shoot-downs of Russian bombers. Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat stated on March 4 that Russian forces have not used any A-50 aircraft in Rostov Oblast or over the Sea of Azov for the seventh day in a row out of fear of losing another high-value aerial asset.[53]

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

A Russian news aggregator claimed on March 4 that Russian forces replaced the Storm-Z project — a project that generated specialized "Storm-Z" convict units — with the Storm-V project — a new mechanism for distributing convicts into existing units within the regular Russian military.[54] The news aggregator claimed that the Storm-V project eliminates the legal grey areas that Storm-Z convicts had to navigate to receive official pardons for their crimes. The news aggregator also implied that convicts serving in the Russian military through the Storm-V project are expected to serve in the military for longer than six months — the original service duration for a Storm-Z convict — in order to receive a pardon. The news aggregator claimed that the dissolution of Storm-Z convict units, which the Russian military used to conduct "high risk" assault operations, means that regular Russian units staffed with mobilized personnel and contract servicemen (*kontraktniki*) will now conduct similar assault operations.

Russian opposition outlet *Vazhnye Istorii* reported that Russian Railways Security Service Head Viktor Shendrik funds the "Hispaniola" private military company (PMC).[55] *Vazhnye Istorii* reported that the "Hispaniola" PMC, composed of "football hooligan" sports fans and extremists, is subordinate to the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD)-controlled "Redut" PMC. *Vazhnye Istorii* reported that Russian oligarchs Arkady and Boris Rotenberg, whose businesses contract with Russian Railways, are interested in forming their own PMCs modeled after the "Hispaniola" PMC.

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)

Note: ISW will be publishing its coverage of Ukrainian defense industrial efforts on a weekly basis in the Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment. ISW will continue to track developments in Ukrainian defense industrial efforts daily and will refer to these efforts in assessments within the daily Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment and other ISW products when necessary.

Ukraine continues efforts to build out its domestic defense industrial base (DIB) by increasing investments in technology and joint weapons production. Ukrainian Digital Transformation Minister Mykhailo Fedorov stated on March 3 that the Ukrainian defense innovation platform Brave1 has funded 173 grants totaling over $3 million to Ukrainian technology developers working on robotic platforms and drone developments.[56] Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal announced on March 4 that the Ukrainian government has allocated 40 billion hryvnia ($1 billion) for the purchase of drones to support Ukraine's goal of producing one million drones in 2024.[57] Shmyhal noted that Ukraine intends to spend 50 percent of funds on the domestic purchase of weapons, specifically focusing on electronic warfare (EW) systems.[58] Shmyhal additionally stated that Ukraine has concluded five agreements with Western arms manufacturers on the joint production of weapons and intends to pursue "dozens" of such contracts throughout the year.[59]

Argentina reportedly transferred two Mi-171E helicopters to Ukraine. The *Financial Times* (FT) reported on March 1 that Argentinian president Javier Milei donated "two Russian-built military helicopters" to Ukraine.[60] Argentina first considered transferring the helicopters, specified as Mi-171E helicopters, to Ukraine in mid-December 2023.[61] Milei plans to organize a summit on "Latin America support" for Ukraine in 2024.[62]

Ukraine's European partners continue efforts to provide Ukraine with military support. Czech Director General for Defense Policy and Strategy told *Bloomberg* on March 1 that the Czech Republic's initiative to source weapons for Ukraine from outside the EU could send the first batch of artillery shells acquired through the initiative to Ukraine "within

weeks."[63] French Defense Minister Sebastien Lecornu stated on February 29 that France has ordered 100 loitering munitions for Ukraine from the Delair drone manufacturer.[64] The French Armed Forces Ministry also reported on March 4 that France has delivered over 2.6 billion euros ($2.8 billion) in military aid to Ukraine and trained over 10,000 Ukrainian soldiers between February 24, 2022 and December 31, 2023.[65] Belgium is also reportedly prepared to use 1.7 billion euros ($1.8 billion) in frozen Russian assets to finance Ukraine's defensive needs.[66]

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)

Note: ISW will be publishing coverage of activities in Russian-occupied areas twice a week in the Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment. ISW will continue to track activities in Russian-occupied areas daily and will refer to these activities in assessments within the daily Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment and other ISW products when necessary.

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

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian officials continued to misrepresent NATO Steadfast Defender 2024 exercises as threatening to Russia, despite the exercises' defensive nature in response to Russian aggression against Ukraine and overt threats to NATO members. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko claimed that Russia is monitoring the Nordic Response 24 exercise (part of the Steadfast Defender 2024 exercise) in northern Finland, Sweden, and Norway, because NATO is conducting the exercises near Russia's border.[67]

A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger criticized Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan for his recent comments about "essentially" freezing Armenia's participation in the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).[68] The milblogger claimed that Pashinyan is provoking Russia, which could lead to "dire consequences."

A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger continues to highlight Russia and India's defense cooperation, likely in response to recent reports that India seeks to distance itself from Russia.[69]

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

Belarusian companies likely continue to assist Russian businesses in sanctions evasions schemes likely in support of the Russian defense industrial base (DIB). Belarusian Ambassador to Russia Dmitry Krutoy stated on March 4 that the Belarusian enterprises, such as the Belarusian Metallurgical Plant and Minsk Motor Plant, are sending products to large enterprises in Vladimir Oblast allegedly for import substitution projects following Western sanctions on Russia.[70]

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

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