

# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

Angelica Evans, Grace Mappes, Christina Harward, Riley Bailey, and George Barros  
March 7, 2024, 6:25pm 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 12:00pm ET on March 7. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the March 8 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.**

**Lithuanian intelligence assessed that Russia has the capability to continue sustaining the current tempo of its war in Ukraine and will likely have the capability to gradually expand its military capabilities in the near term.**[1] Lithuanian intelligence published its 2024 national threat assessment on March 7 wherein it assessed that Russia has the manpower, material, and financial resources to sustain its war effort in Ukraine in the near term. Lithuanian intelligence noted that Russia reconstituted and increased its deployed manpower in Ukraine in 2023 despite suffering heavy losses but continues to prioritize quantity of manpower and materiel over quality of forces. Lithuanian intelligence also assessed that Russia's defense industrial base (DIB) has become a driving force within the Russian economy at the expense of other economic sectors and that Russia had allocated at least 10.8 trillion rubles (about \$119 billion) to military spending in 2023. The Lithuanian intelligence assessment stated that Russia's economy is doing better than expected due to high oil prices and Russia's ability to offset Western sanctions. Lithuanian intelligence caveated that short-term factors are driving Russia's economic growth and that Russian structural problems, which impose limits on Russia's short-term capacity, are only likely to deepen in the long term. Lithuanian intelligence also assessed that the Kremlin views Russia's upcoming March 2024 presidential election as a significant event to legitimize Russian President Vladimir Putin and that Putin will be more likely to make unpopular decisions (potentially such as mobilization) after the election, which could allow the Kremlin to address some potential constraints on its long-term war effort.

**Lithuanian intelligence also assessed that Russia is unlikely to abandon its long-term objectives of subjugating Ukraine even if Russia fails to achieve these objectives through military means.** Lithuanian intelligence assessed that "Russia shows no intention of de-escalating" its war against Ukraine and that Russia is unlikely to abandon its operational objectives in the long term, even if Russia suffers a military defeat in Ukraine.[2] Lithuanian intelligence stated that Russia will continue to pursue its goal of completely undermining Ukrainian statehood and sovereignty, enforcing Ukraine's neutral status, and destroying Ukraine's military potential in the long term, regardless of the outcome of the war in Ukraine. Lithuanian intelligence assessed that Russia will also continue efforts to expand the Russian state's administrative control to the administrative borders of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts in the short term. Recent Russian official statements underscore that the Kremlin's maximalist objectives in Ukraine have remained unchanged since the beginning months of the full-scale invasion and likely will not change, despite Russian information operations that aim to persuade Western audiences and leaders that Russia has limited objectives in Ukraine to seduce the West to support negotiations that favor Russia.[3]

**Lithuanian intelligence assessed that Russia is preparing for confrontation with NATO in the long term while also waging its war in Ukraine.** Lithuanian intelligence assessed that Russia has allocated substantial resources to the war in Ukraine but maintains the means to prepare for a long-term confrontation with NATO in the Baltic Sea region.[4] Lithuanian intelligence stated that Russia has deployed forces and assets from its western border areas to Ukraine and has thus had to increasingly rely on air and naval capabilities for security and deterrence purposes on NATO's eastern flank. Lithuanian intelligence reported that Russia deployed Kalibr missile carrier ships on combat duty in Lake Ladoga near St. Petersburg for the first time in 2023, likely in response to Finland's accession to NATO, and increased the number of Tu-22M3 heavy bomber flights over the Baltic Sea from none in 2022 to five in 2023. The Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service (VLA) also recently assessed that the Russian military is forming the Leningrad Military District (LMD) and Moscow Military District (MMD) in part to posture against Finland and NATO.[5]

Russian military thinkers are openly discussing how Russia can go to war against NATO in the near future. Russian General Staff Military Academy Head Colonel Vladimir Zarudnitsky claimed in a recent article in the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) journal *Military Thought* that the war in Ukraine could escalate into a large-scale war in Europe and that the end of hostilities in Ukraine will not lead to the end of confrontation between the West and Russia.[6]

**Sweden formally joined NATO on March 7, becoming the 32nd member of the alliance.** The US State Department announced that Sweden fulfilled the conditions of NATO membership and formally entered the alliance.[7] **The governor of the pro-Russian Moldovan autonomous region Gagauzia, Yevgenia Gutsul, met with Russian Presidential Administration Deputy Head Sergei Kiriyenko in Russia on March 7 as Moldovan authorities announced that a criminal case against Gutsul will soon go to court.** Gutsul met with Kiriyenko at the World Youth Festival in Sochi and reportedly discussed “the support that Russia can provide to Gagauzia” and the “political situation” in Moldova.[8] Gutsul asked Kiriyenko to help Gagauz people open Russian bank accounts “for social projects,” to lift the Russian embargo on imports from Gagauzia, and to help negotiate with Russian state-owned energy company Gazprom on the supply of gas to Gagauzia at a preferential price. Kiriyenko is reportedly in charge of multiple Kremlin committees that run information operations and hybrid operations against the West, including Moldova.[9] Moldovan Acting Prosecutor General Ion Munteanu stated on March 7 that Moldovan authorities have enough evidence to demonstrate Gutsul’s involvement in unspecified criminal acts, are finalizing a criminal case against Gutsul and will soon take the criminal charges to court.[10] Moldovan authorities opened a criminal case against Gutsul for illegal financing and bribing voters during her electoral campaign in 2023.[11] Gutsul previously ran as a candidate of the now-outlawed Shor Party led by US-sanctioned pro-Kremlin Moldovan politician Ilan Shor.[12] Shor denied on March 7 that he illegally financed Moldovan political parties and claimed that Moldovan authorities will arrest Gutsul upon her return to Moldova.[13] Gutsul claimed on March 7 that she will return to Moldova soon and that she will “speak in detail at a briefing” in Chisinau on an unspecified date.[14] Gutsul met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Sochi on March 6 where Putin reportedly “promised to support Gagauzia and the Gagauz people in defending [their] legitimate rights, powers, and positions in the international arena.”[15] The Kremlin’s intensified focus on relations with Gagauzia after a recent rhetorical focus on Moldova’s other pro-Russian region, the breakaway republic of Transnistria, continues to indicate that the Kremlin hopes to use both these regions to justify hybrid operations aimed at destabilizing and further polarizing Moldova ahead of Moldova’s EU accession negotiations and the Moldovan presidential election later in 2024.[16]

**Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi reiterated Chinese calls for peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine on March 7; Russia will likely continue to use such calls to promote long-standing information operations aimed at prompting Western concessions.**[17] Wang stated that China maintains an objective and impartial position on the war in Ukraine, rhetoric that is part of China’s long-standing efforts to cast itself as an independent mediator in an envisioned aspirational negotiations process.[18] Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Galuzin and Chinese Special Representative for Eurasian Affairs Li Hui met in Moscow on March 2 to discuss China’s desire to facilitate peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine.[19] China has not publicly expounded upon the specifics of a vague 12-point peace plan that it released in early 2023, and Russian officials will likely continue to engage with Chinese calls for negotiations to promote Kremlin information operations about peace negotiations.[20] Galuzin and Li noted that it is “impossible” to discuss a settlement in Ukraine without Russia’s participation and without “taking into account [Russia’s] interests in the security sphere,” claims that the Kremlin routinely uses to place the onus for negotiations on the West.[21] **The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) announced on March 7 that it neutralized an Islamic State (IS) terrorist cell that had been preparing an attack on synagogues in Moscow.**[22] The FSB stated that it neutralized the IS cell in Kaluga Oblast but did not specify its size.[23] The Russian Anti-Terrorism Committee (NAK) announced on March 3 that the FSB conducted a localized counter-terrorism operation against alleged IS militants in Karabulak, Republic of Ingushetia.[24] Russian law enforcement has routinely attributed terrorist activity in Russia, and specifically the north Caucasus, to the Islamic State when militants may be affiliated with IS or a different terrorist organization.[25]

#### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Lithuanian intelligence assessed that Russia has the capability to continue sustaining the current tempo of its war in Ukraine and will likely have the capability to gradually expand its military capabilities in the near term.**
- **Lithuanian intelligence also assessed that Russia is unlikely to abandon its long-term objectives of subjugating Ukraine even if Russia fails to achieve these objectives through military means.**
- **Lithuanian intelligence assessed that Russia is preparing for confrontation with NATO in the long term while also waging its war in Ukraine.**
- **Sweden formally joined NATO on March 7, becoming the 32nd member of the alliance.**
- **The governor of the pro-Russian Moldovan autonomous region Gagauzia, Yevgenia Gutsul, met with Russian Presidential Administration Deputy Head Sergei Kiriyenko in Russia on March 7 as Moldovan authorities announced that a criminal case against Gutsul will soon go to court.**
- **Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi reiterated Chinese calls for peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine on March 7; Russia will likely continue to use such calls to promote long-standing information operations aimed at prompting Western concessions.**

- The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) announced on March 7 that it neutralized an Islamic State (IS) terrorist cell that had been preparing an attack on synagogues in Moscow.
- Russian forces recently made confirmed advances near Kupyansk and Donetsk City amid continued positional engagements along the entire line of contact on March 7.
- Russian intelligence services likely continue to source and operate sanctioned precision machine tools and dual-use components to produce Russian military equipment.

## Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of March 7, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Shaylei Dauphinais, Tom Thacker, and Kaitlyn Thomas.  
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\* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

***We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We will continue to evaluate and report on the effects of these criminal activities on the Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population and specifically on combat in Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.***

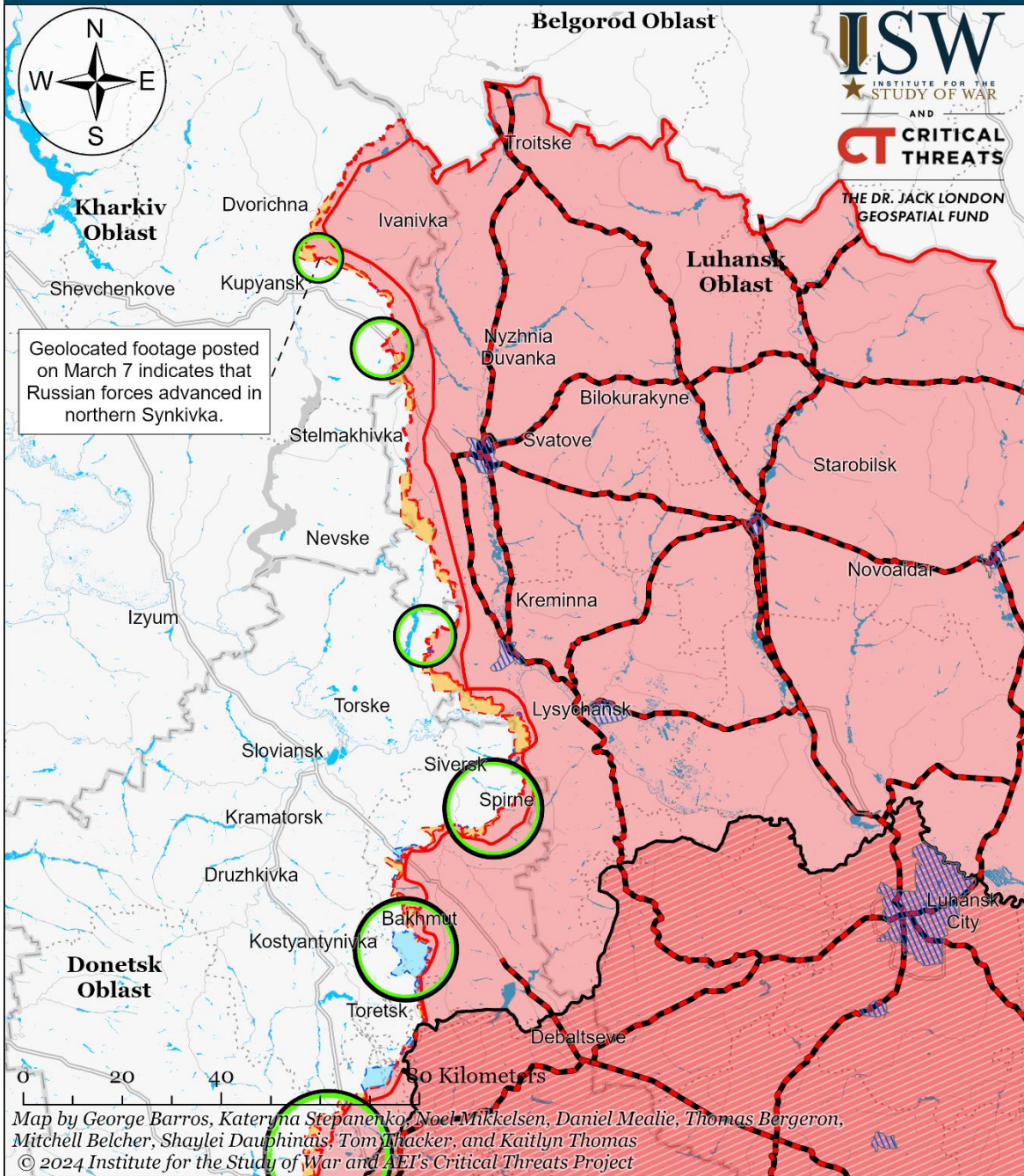
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis
- Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Russian Technological Adaptations
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas
- Ukrainian Defense Industrial Base Efforts
- Russian Information Operations and Narratives
- Significant Activity in Belarus

### **Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine**

#### **Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)**

Russian forces recently marginally advanced northeast of Kupyansk amid continued positional fighting on the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on March 7. Geolocated footage published on March 7 shows that Russian forces recently marginally advanced in the northern outskirts of Synkivka (northeast of Kupyansk).[26] Positional fighting continued southeast of Kupyansk near Tabaiivka; west of Kreminna near Terny and Yampolivka; and south of Kreminna near Bilohorivka.[27] Elements of the Russian 123rd Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People's Republic [LNR] Army Corps [AC]) continue operating in the Bilohorivka area.[28]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of March 7 2024, 3:00 PM ET



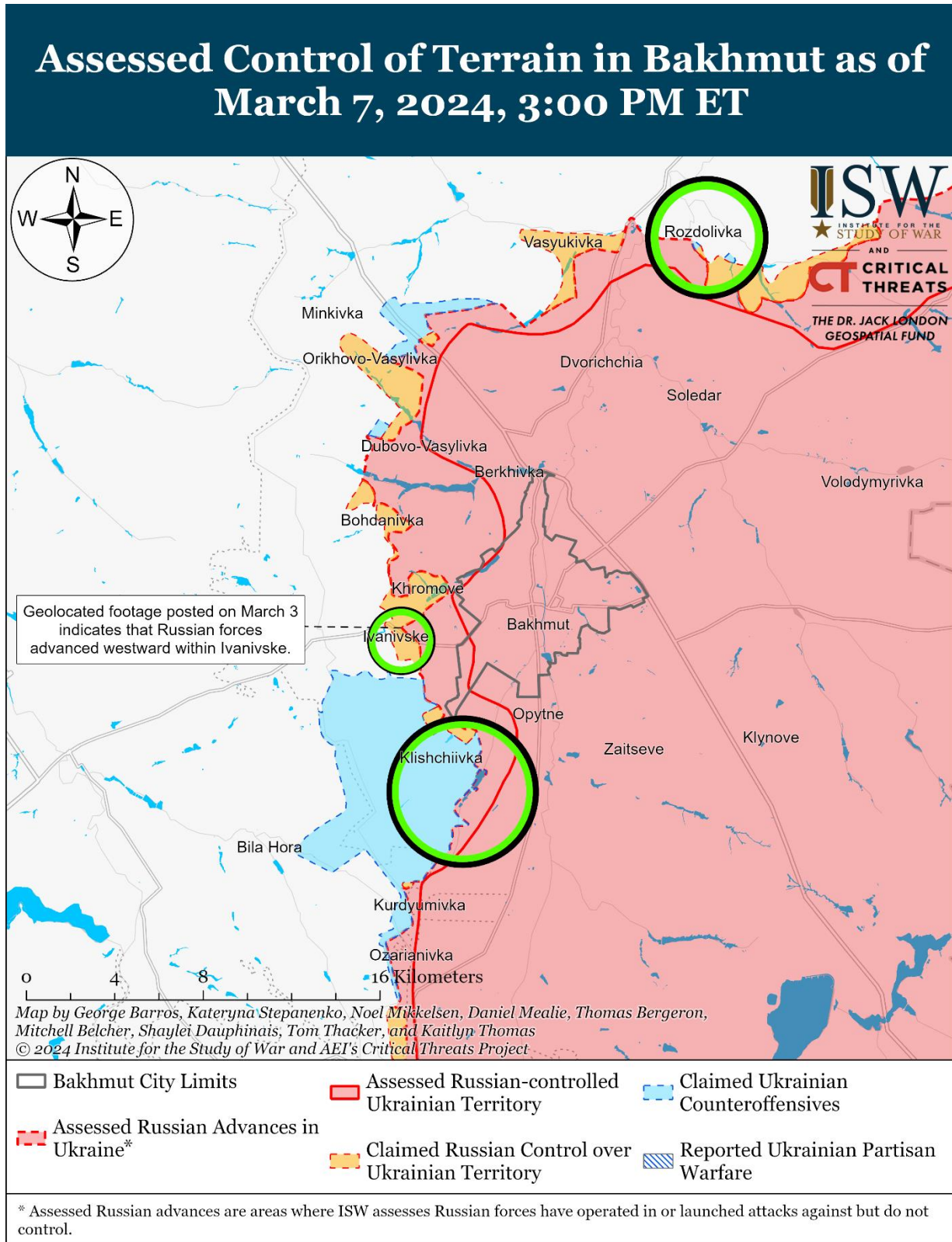
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Russian Ground Lines of Communication
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February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

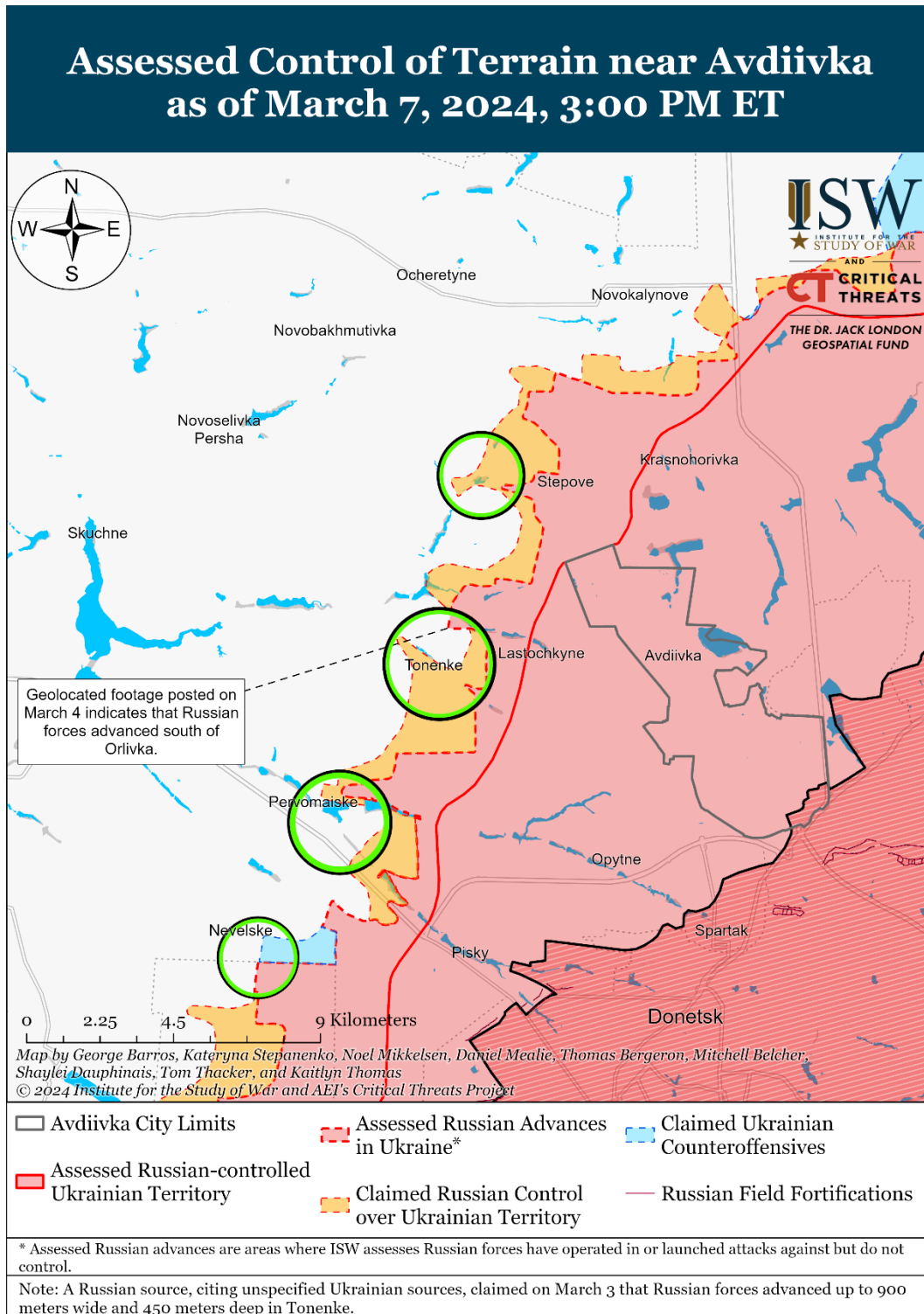
Note: A Russian source claimed on March 3 that Russian forces advanced 200 meters north of Synkivka.

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

Positional fighting continued in the Bakhmut area on March 7. Ukrainian sources stated that Ukrainian forces advanced near Bohdanivka (northwest of Bakhmut), although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of recent Ukrainian advances in the area.[29] Positional fighting continued west of Bakhmut near Ivanivske; southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka and Andriivka; and south of Bakhmut near Pivdenne and Niu York.[30] Elements of the Russian 106th Airborne (VDV) Division are reportedly operating near Soledar (northeast of Bakhmut).[31]



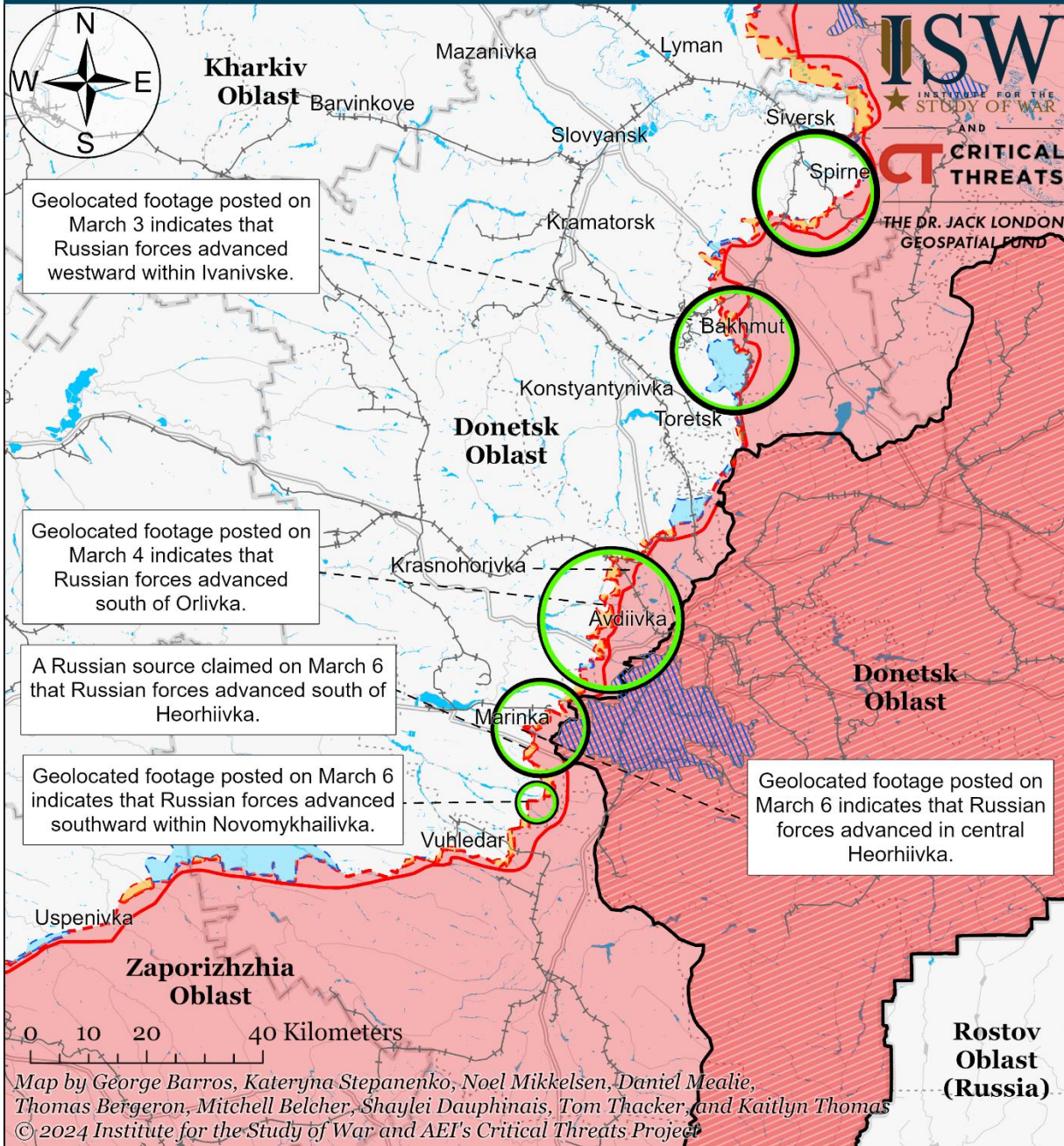
Positional fighting continued in the Avdiivka area on March 7. Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces successfully counterattacked near Berdychi (northwest of Avdiivka) and pushed Russian forces out of unspecified positions, although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim.[32] Positional fighting continued northwest of Avdiivka near Stepove and Berdychi; west of Avdiivka near Tonenke and Orlivka; and southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske and Nevelske.[33] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Dmytro Lykhovyi stated that Russian forces are particularly focusing their offensive operations in the direction of Tonenke.[34] Elements of the Russian 25th and 30th motorized rifle brigades (both of the 2nd Combined Arms Army [CAA], Central Military District [CMD]) are reportedly operating near Stepove and Berdychi, elements of the 114th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] Army Corps [AC]) and the 55th Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st CAA, CMD) are reportedly operating near Tonenke, and elements of the 1st Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st DNR AC) and 35th Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st CAA, CMD) are reportedly operating between Tonenke and Vodyane (southwest of Avdiivka).[35]



Russian forces recently advanced west and southwest of Donetsk City amid continued positional fighting in the area on March 7. Geolocated footage published on March 6 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced in southern Heorhiivka (west of Donetsk City) and in southwestern Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City).[36] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced further along Pishchana Street in Heorhiivka and that Russian forces with armored vehicles support advanced up to the westernmost point in Novomykahilivka.[37] A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the Russian 102nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA, Southern Military District [SMD]) pushed Ukrainian forces from positions north of Novomykhailivka along the O05131 Marinka-Vuhledar highway. ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these Russian claims. The Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Press Service published footage on March 7 of Ukrainian forces repelling mechanized assaults near Novomykhailivka on March 6 and reported that Ukrainian forces destroyed 12 Russian armored vehicles in the area.[38] Positional fighting continued west of Donetsk City near Pobieda and Krasnohorivka on March 7.[39] Elements of the Russian 20th Motorized Rifle Division (8th CAA, SMD) and 39th Motorized Rifle Brigade (68th AC, Eastern Military District [EMD]) are reportedly operating near Novomykhailivka, and elements of the 163rd Tank Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA, SMD), the 33rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (8th CAA, SMD), and the 155th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) are reportedly operating southwest of Donetsk City along the Slavne-Novomykhailivka and Solodke-Vodyane lines.[40]



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of March 7, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

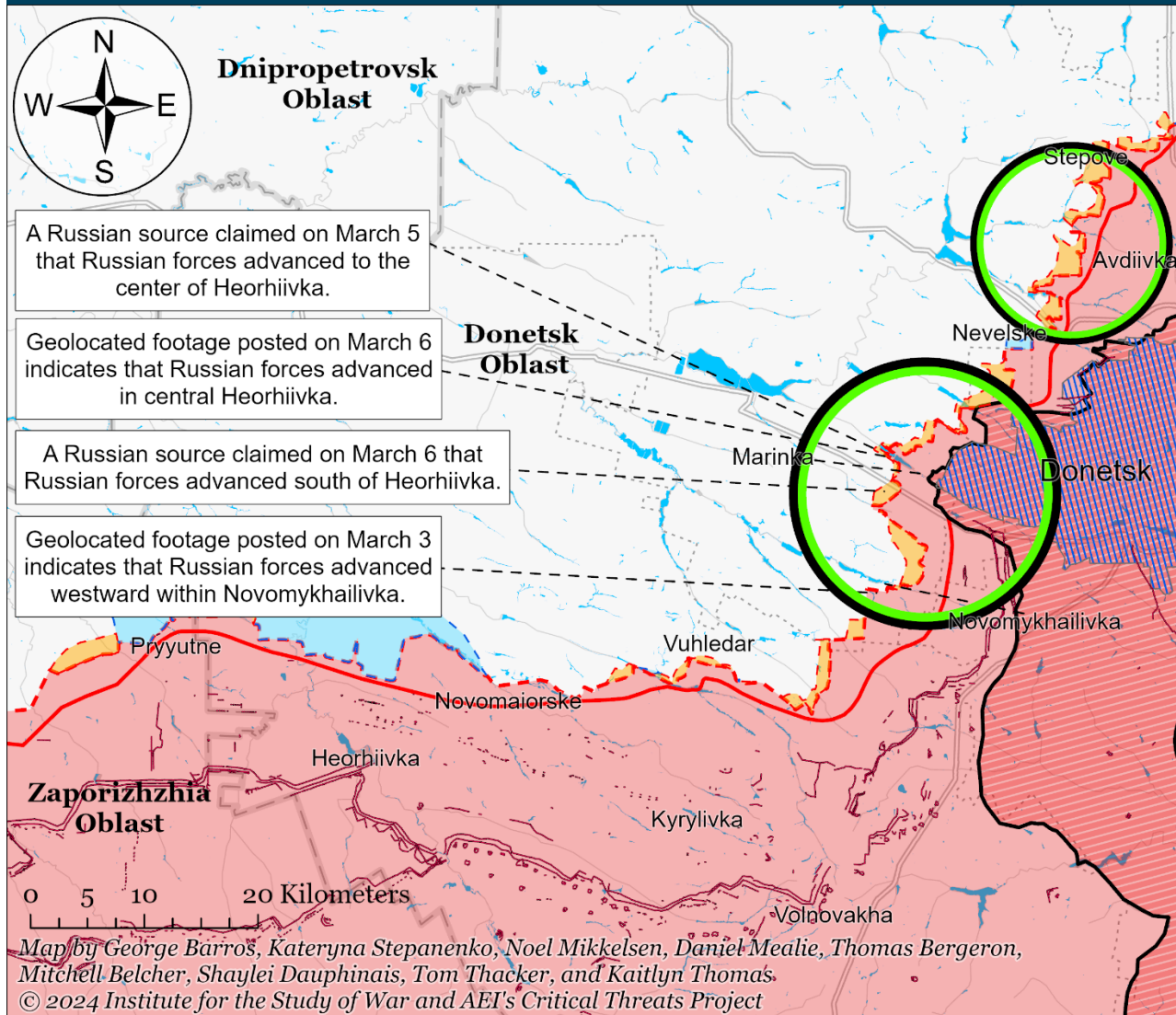


- |   |  |                                     |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours                 | Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory  | Major Railroads                     |
| Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February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

Positional fighting occurred near Vodyane (east of Velyka Novosilka) in western Donetsk Oblast on March 7.[41] Elements of the 36th CAA (EMD) are reportedly operating near Novoukrainka (east of Velyka Novosilka).[42]

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Western Donetsk Oblast as of March 7, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



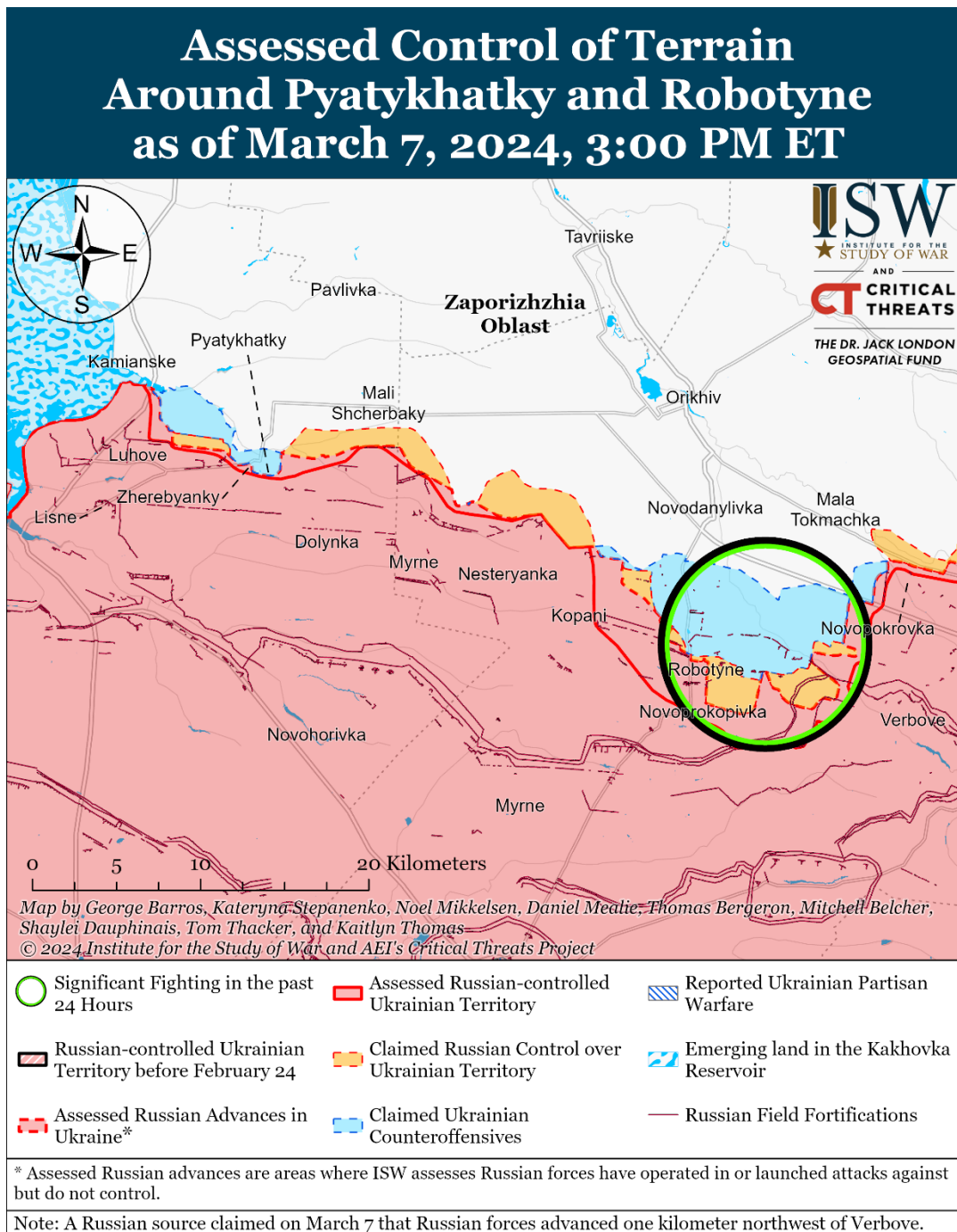
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Claimed Ukrainian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

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

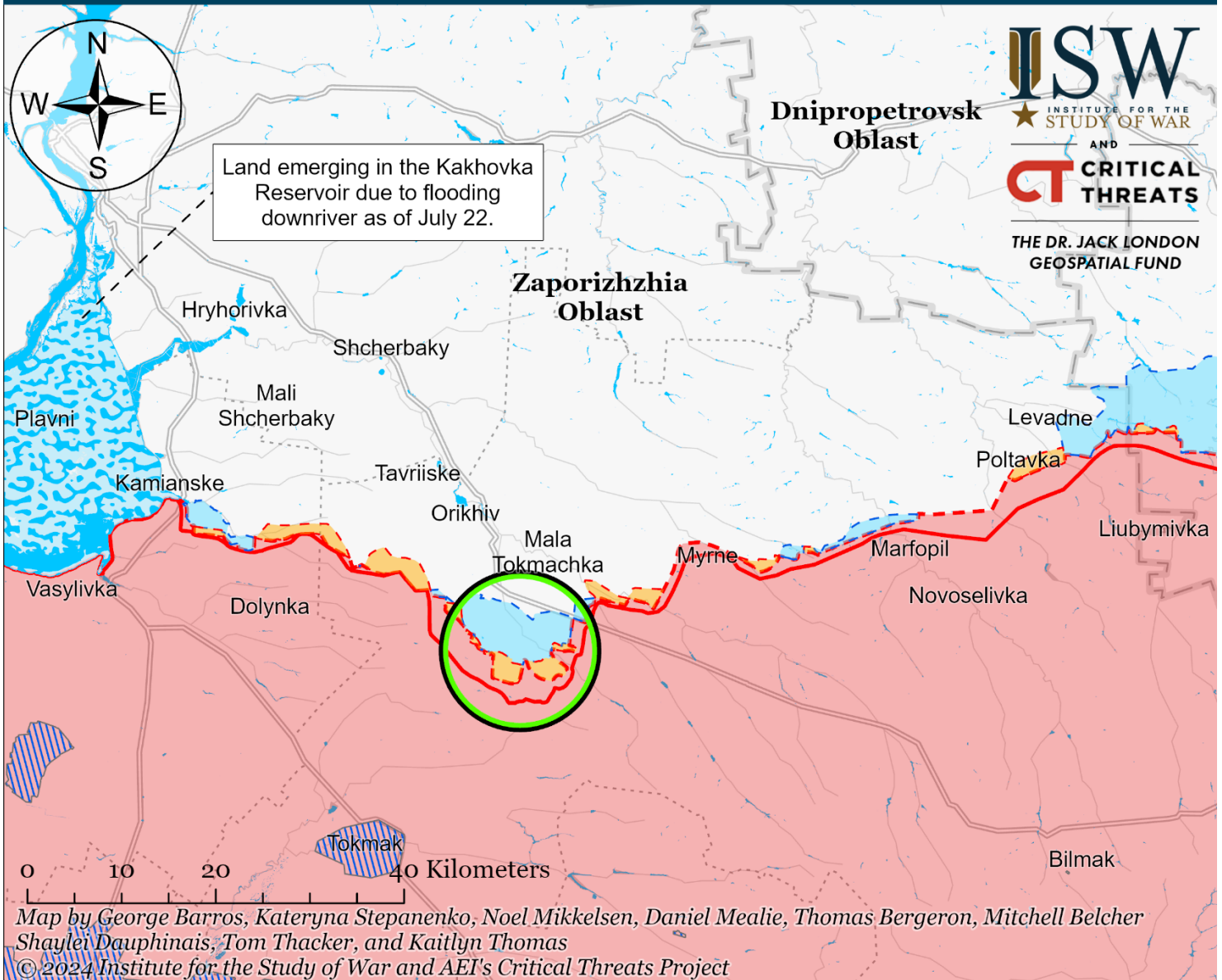
A Russian source claimed on March 5 that Russian forces advanced along a 420 meter wide and 320 meter deep frontline in Heorhiivka

**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 March 7, 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).[43] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces advanced up to one kilometer near Verbove, but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim.[44] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW) systems are complicating Russian forces’ usage of drones in the Zaporizhzhia direction.[45] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Dmytro Lykhovyi stated that Russian forces have increased their use of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) to transport infantry, especially over minefields, in the Zaporizhzhia direction.[46] Elements of the Russian 503rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (19th Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) and elements of the 291st Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th CAA, SMD) are reportedly operating in the Zaporizhzhia direction; elements of the 70th Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th CAA, SMD) are reportedly operating near Robotyne; and elements of the 247th Airborne (VDV) Regiment (7th VDV Division) are reportedly operating near Verbove.[47]



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of March 7, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

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

Note: A Russian source claimed on March 7 that Russian forces advanced one kilometer northwest of Verbove.

Positional engagements continued in left (east) bank Kherson Oblast near Krynky on March 7.[48] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces maintain positions in the dacha area near the Antonivsky roadway bridge.[49]



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

The Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs stated on March 7 that Ukrainian forces shot down a Kh-59 missile over Poltava Oblast on the night of March 6-7.[50] Ukrainian officials stated on March 7 that Russian forces struck civilian infrastructure in Sumy City with unspecified missiles and a Ukrainian State Emergency Service training ground in Kharkiv Oblast with drones.[51] Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Colonel Nataliya Humenyuk stated on March 7 that Russian forces launched a Kh-31P anti-radar missile towards Odesa Oblast but that the missile malfunctioned before hitting its intended target.[52]

Ukrainian Navy Commander Vice Admiral Oleksiy Neizhpapa stated on March 6 that Russian forces have launched 880 drones and 179 missiles at port infrastructure in Odesa Oblast since July 2023.[53]

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

Russian intelligence services likely continue to source and operate sanctioned precision machine tools and dual-use components to produce Russian military equipment. Lithuanian intelligence reported on March 7 that Russian intelligence services are importing such sanctioned goods and equipment into Russia.[54] Russian defense industrial base (DIB) companies reportedly provide Russian intelligence with “shopping lists” of Western equipment or components to acquire via sanctions loopholes or third-country intermediaries. Lithuanian intelligence reported that Russia will likely increase efforts to procure Western equipment as sanctions increasingly target Russia’s DIB. Russian opposition outlet *Vazhnye Istorii* reported on March 7 that the sanctioned “Kurganmashzavod” enterprise, a subsidiary of Russian state defense conglomerate Rostec, recently published footage showing its workers operating Japanese precision machinery to produce Russian infantry fighting vehicles, tanks, and other military equipment.[55] *Vazhnye Istorii* noted that Kurganmashzavod is the only enterprise in Russia that specializes in producing infantry fighting vehicles. *Vazhnye Istorii* also reported that Russian DIB enterprises purchased 360 million rubles’ (\$3.97 million) worth of UK-produced machine tools, mainly from third party actors, in 2023.[56]

Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov claimed on March 7 that 38,529 Russian servicemen, including 16,430 Chechens, have trained at that Russian Spetsnaz University in Gudermes, Chechnya since the start of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.[57] Kadyrov also claimed that over 8,000 servicemen from Chechnya are currently fighting in Ukraine.

Kadyrov also denied recent Western reporting that Chechen units are purchasing Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) on a “black market” to conduct their own POW exchange with Ukraine.[58] Kadyrov claimed that there are no “black markets” for exchanging POWs in Russia or Chechnya and called Western reporting on the issue a “fake story.”

## **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.**

*ISW is not publishing coverage of Ukrainian defense industrial efforts today.*

## **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 President Vladimir Putin reiterated a longstanding Russian information operation denying Ukrainian identity and sovereignty.[59] Putin claimed on March 6 that the “spiritual reunification” of Russia and Ukraine will occur “sooner or later” and that Russia must eradicate “disgusting manifestations of nationalism” for this reunification to occur.[60] Putin’s statements are in line with boilerplate Kremlin rhetoric that rejects all notions of an independent Ukrainian national identity or state sovereignty independent of Russia.

Senior Russian officials continue efforts to portray the West as an existential threat to Russia to justify Russia’s long term war effort and to deter further Western military aid provisions to Ukraine. Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev accused the West and NATO of preparing for direct military confrontations with Russia and of sowing internal instability in Russia, particularly in the Northern Caucasus Federal Okrug.[61] The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and State Duma Committee to Investigate Foreign Interference Chairperson Vitaly Piskarev accused US Ambassador to Russia Lynne Tracy of supporting entities hostile to Russia and of attempting to interfere in the upcoming March 2024 Russian presidential election.[62]

## **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)**

Lithuanian intelligence reported on March 7 that Belarusian intelligence to increase activities in Lithuania and that Russian military support to Belarus has increased Belarusian military potential.[63] Lithuanian intelligence emphasized that Belarusian intelligence is particularly focused on Lithuania due to a growing Lithuania-based Belarusian opposition movement that Minsk perceives as a threat to its own regime and because Lithuania has a significant Belarusian diaspora from which Belarusian intelligence can recruit agents. Lithuanian intelligence reported that Belarusian intelligence also interrogates people traveling from Lithuania to Belarus to collect information and identify potential recruitable agents. Lithuanian intelligence reported that Russia’s transfer of Iskander-M ballistic missile systems, armored personnel carriers, S-400 anti-aircraft missile systems, and Mi-35M attack helicopters to Belarus have augmented Belarus’ military potential. These deliveries likely increase Belarusian forces’ interoperability with Russian forces in joint activities and increase Belarusian forces’ ability to train Russian forces that deploy to Belarus.

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

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[1] <https://www.vsd dot lt/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/GR-2024-02-15-EN-1.pdf>

[2] <https://www.vsd dot lt/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/GR-2024-02-15-EN-1.pdf>

[3] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar030424> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar022224> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar022924> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-20-2024> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021524> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-5-2024>

[4] <https://www.vsd dot lt/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/GR-2024-02-15-EN-1.pdf>

[5] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021424>

[6] <https://www.kommersant dot ru/doc/6560190> ; <https://t.me/bbcrussian/61793>

- [7] <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/NATO-Sweden-Accession-Protocol-Notification-of-Entry-Into-Force-March-7-2024.pdf> ; <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/03/07/the-white-house-announces-guest-list-for-the-first-ladys-box-for-the-2024-state-of-the-union-address/>
- [8] <https://t.me/evgheniagutul/2441>
- [9] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-20-2024> ; <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-18-2024> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar123023> ; <https://static.rusi.org/SR-Russian-Unconventional-Weapons-final-web.pdf> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar112723>
- [10] <https://newsmaker dot md/ro/video-procurorul-general-interimar-sunt-suficiente-probe-pentru-a-demonstra-implicarea-evgheniei-gutul-in-fapte-infracionale/>
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