

# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, November 7, 2023

Christina Harward, Riley Bailey, Angelica Evans, Karolina Hird, and Frederick W. Kagan  
November 7, 2023, 5:40pm 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 November 7. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the November 8 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.**

**Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces transferred a limited number of armored vehicles to the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast and are continuing larger-than-usual ground operations on the east bank with a light infantry grouping of roughly battalion size.** Russian milbloggers amplified a picture on November 6 purporting to show a Ukrainian tracked amphibious transport (PTS) vehicle carrying an infantry fighting vehicle onto the east bank near Krynky (30km northeast of Kherson City and 2km from the Dnipro River).[1] Other milbloggers claimed on November 7 that a Ukrainian amphibious infantry fighting vehicle crossed the Dnipro River on its own near Krynky and amplified separate footage on November 7 purporting to show a destroyed Western amphibious armored personnel carrier in an unspecified location on the east bank.[2] Select Russian milbloggers claimed that either one or two Ukrainian PTS vehicles crossed the Dnipro near Krynky, while other milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces transferred several unspecified armored vehicles to the area.[3] Russian milbloggers claimed that more than 300 Ukrainian personnel (about a battalion's worth) are operating on the east bank in the Krynky area and continue to claim that Ukrainian forces maintain positions in central Krynky and nearby areas.[4] One milblogger claimed that several hundred Ukrainian personnel are operating throughout east bank Kherson Oblast.[5] Russian milbloggers claimed that combat engagements continued near Krynky, as well as near Poyma (12km east of Kherson City and 4km from the Dnipro River), Pishchanivka (13km east of Kherson City and 3km from the Dnipro River), and Pidstepne (17km east of Kherson City and 4km from the Dnipro River), but did not claim that Ukrainian attempts to advance on November 6 and 7 were particularly larger than in previous days.[6]

Ukrainian forces likely conducted initial company-sized assaults across the Dnipro River onto the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast on October 17 and 18.[7] The reported battalion-size Ukrainian force grouping on the east bank suggests that heavy Russian interdiction efforts along the Dnipro River have not prevented Ukrainian forces from transferring additional personnel and materiel to positions on the east bank. **ISW will not speculate on the prospects of ongoing Ukrainian activity on the east bank of Kherson Oblast.**

**Ukrainian forces conducted counteroffensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on November 7.** The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Bakhmut and Melitopol (western Zaporizhia Oblast) directions.[8] A Russian milblogger claimed on November 6 that Ukrainian forces crossed the railway near Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).[9] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are entrenched in forest areas near Verbove (9km east of Robotyne) and that a lack of Russian control of the airspace in the area is complicating Russian artillery fire on these positions.[10]

**A prominent pro-war Russian milblogger who is typically optimistic about Russian capabilities expressed a relatively pessimistic assessment of the war and emphasized the need for the Kremlin to fully mobilize the Russian economy and defense industrial base (DIB) to a wartime footing to win.** The milblogger claimed on November 7 that Ukraine is committed to an "exhausting war" against Russia and that Russian needs "enormous combat potential" and an "accurate calculation" of its capabilities to beat Ukraine.[11] Another Russian milblogger expressed surprise that a milblogger who was previously so positive in his assessments of the Russian offensive campaign in Ukraine would openly admit to the need for a wider mobilization of the Russian economy in the face of a long war.[12] The Kremlin has largely appeared unwilling to conduct wider economic mobilization, and the milblogger's call to change this line is noteworthy.[13] Yet another Russian milblogger claimed that Russia is "paying terribly" for the Kremlin's unwillingness to fully commit to the war.[14] The milbloggers' suggestion to further mobilize the Russian economy appears to be part of recent discussions in the Russian information space about operational changes that could help Russian forces overcome challenges in Ukraine, likely in response to Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief General Valerii Zaluzhnyi's recent essay on the

subject of “positional warfare.”[15] Zaluzhnyi’s essay appears to have prompted even the most positive Russian milbloggers to make more straight and honest assessments about the Russian war effort.

**Russian authorities detained Republic of Dagestan's deputy Minister of Internal Affairs on the pretext of corruption charges, likely in an effort to demonstrate that the federal government is taking action in Dagestan without drawing further attention to the interethnic and interreligious tensions and the propensity for destabilization in the region.** Russian state media outlet *TASS* stated on November 7 that Russian security forces detained Dagestani Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Rufat Ismailov and are currently conducting searches of his home and office.[16] Russian state media outlet *RIA Novosti* further reported that a source within the Russian security forces stated that Ismailov is preliminarily suspected of bribery.[17] A Russian insider source claimed that Ismailov is believed to have received a 100-million-ruble (about \$1,085,770) bribe from an insurance company.[18] The insider source and a Russian milblogger claimed that Russian authorities transferred Ismailov to Moscow, and the milblogger claimed that this indicates that there are risks of high-level officials at the federal subject level “escaping responsibility.”[19] Russian opposition media outlet *SOTA* reported that Russian authorities, including the Federal Security Service (FSB), are also investigating the deputy head of the investigative department of the Dagestani Ministry of Internal Affairs, Dalgat Abdulgapurov.[20] Russian authorities previously removed multiple ineffective air defense officials in charge of the defense of Moscow on the pretext of corruption charges after increasing drone strikes on rear Russian cities, showing that there is a recent pattern of Russian authorities using corruption charges to circumvent publicly disciplining Russian officials for not performing their duties well and thereby admitting to their ineptitude.[21] Although ISW has no reason to doubt the charges against Ismailov his detention suggests that Russian authorities are attempting to create a semblance of federal government control over the situation in Dagestan while avoiding highlighting the recent antisemitic riots. ISW similarly assessed that the Russian leadership likely avoided meting out more severe punishments for more serious charges for participants of the antisemitic riots out of concerns that they will inflame discontent towards the Kremlin.[22]

**The Ukrainian strike on a Russian shipyard in Kerch, occupied Crimea on November 4 significantly damaged a Russian Black Sea Fleet (BSF) naval vessel.** Russian and Ukrainian sources posted photos on November 7 showing significant damage to the *Askold* Project 22800 Karakurt-class Kalibr missile carrier corvette that will likely render it inoperable for the foreseeable future.[23] ISW assesses that Ukrainian forces have conducted an interdiction campaign against Russian military infrastructure in occupied Crimea, primarily BSF assets, since June 2023 to degrade the Russian military's ability to use Crimea as a staging and rear area for Russian operations in southern Ukraine.[24]

#### Key Takeaways:

- **Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces transferred a limited number of armored vehicles to the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast and are continuing larger-than-usual ground operations on the east bank with a light infantry grouping of roughly battalion size.**
- **Ukrainian forces conducted counteroffensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on November 7.**
- **A prominent pro-war Russian milblogger who is typically optimistic about Russian capabilities expressed a relatively pessimistic assessment of the war and emphasized the need for the Kremlin to fully mobilize the Russian economy and defense industrial base (DIB) to a wartime footing to win.**
- **Russian authorities detained Republic of Dagestan's deputy Minister of Internal Affairs on the pretext of corruption charges, likely in an effort to demonstrate that the federal government is taking action in Dagestan without drawing further attention to the interethnic and interreligious tensions and the propensity for destabilization in the region.**
- **The Ukrainian strike on a Russian shipyard in Kerch, occupied Crimea on November 4 significantly damaged a Russian Black Sea Fleet (BSF) naval vessel.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kremlinna line, near Bakhmut, near Avdiivka, west and southwest of Donetsk City, in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, in eastern Zaporizhia Oblast, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and reportedly advanced in some areas.**
- **A Russian battalion comprised of Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) will likely deploy to Ukraine in the near future in an apparent violation of the Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War.**
- **Kremlin-appointed Commissioner on Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova advertised several benefit schemes targeting children in occupied Ukraine as part of the "A Country for Children" strategic program.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of November 7, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



\* 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 Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas
- Russian Information Operations and Narratives

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

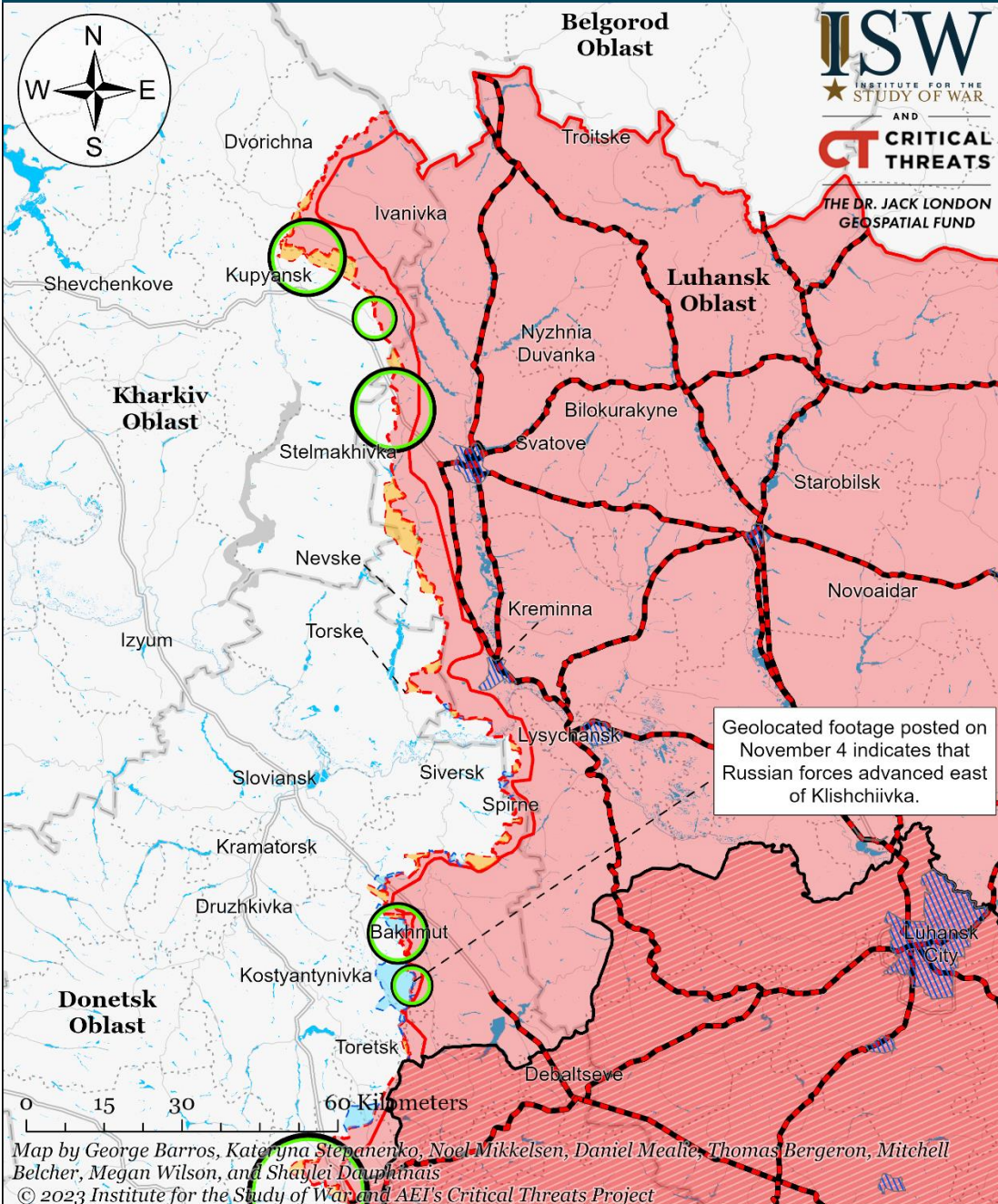
#### **Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)**

Russian forces continued offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove line on November 7 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Synkivka (9km northeast of Kupyansk), Ivanivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk), Berestove (20km northwest of Svatove), and Stelmakhivka (15km northwest of Svatove) and that Russian forces did not conduct any offensive actions in the Lyman direction.[25] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked near Synkivka and Petropavlivka (7km east of Kupyansk) and captured new positions in the area.[26] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that Russian forces will likely renew offensive actions towards Petropavlivka from the north, attempt to advance to the N26 Kupyansk-Svatove road from Pershotravneve (24km east of Kupyansk), and attempt to break through Ukrainian defenses in the Stepova Novoselivka-Pishchane direction (18-20km southeast of Kupyansk) in the near future.[27] Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 25th Motorized Rifle Brigade (6th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Western Military District [WMD]) and the 138th Motorized Rifle Brigade (6th CAA, WMD) attempted to advance towards Petropavlivka from Lyman Pershyi (11km northeast of Kupyansk). Mashovets also stated that elements of the 15th Motorized Rifle Regiment (2nd Motorized Rifle Division, 1st Guards Tank Army, WMD) attacked southwest of Pershotravneve and achieved unspecified partial success. Mashovets added that elements of the 272nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (47th Tank Division, 1st Guards Tank Army, WMD) attempted to advance to Stelmakhivka (15km northwest of Svatove). The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed to be issuing cash prizes to Russian Western Grouping of Forces servicemen for destroying Western-provided equipment in the Kupyansk direction.[28] Mashovets stated that the Russian Central Grouping of Forces command introduced the 137th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (reportedly the former “Ural” volunteer battalion that the Russian MoD formalized in October 2023) into combat in the Lyman direction and noted that this brigade is likely operating below its doctrinal end strength.

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks along the Kupyansk-Kreminna line on November 7. Russian Western Grouping of Forces Spokesperson Sergei Zybinsky claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian assaults near Zahoruykivka (15km east of Kupyansk).[29] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian attack near Dibrova (7km southwest of Kreminna).[30]



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of November 7, 2023, 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.

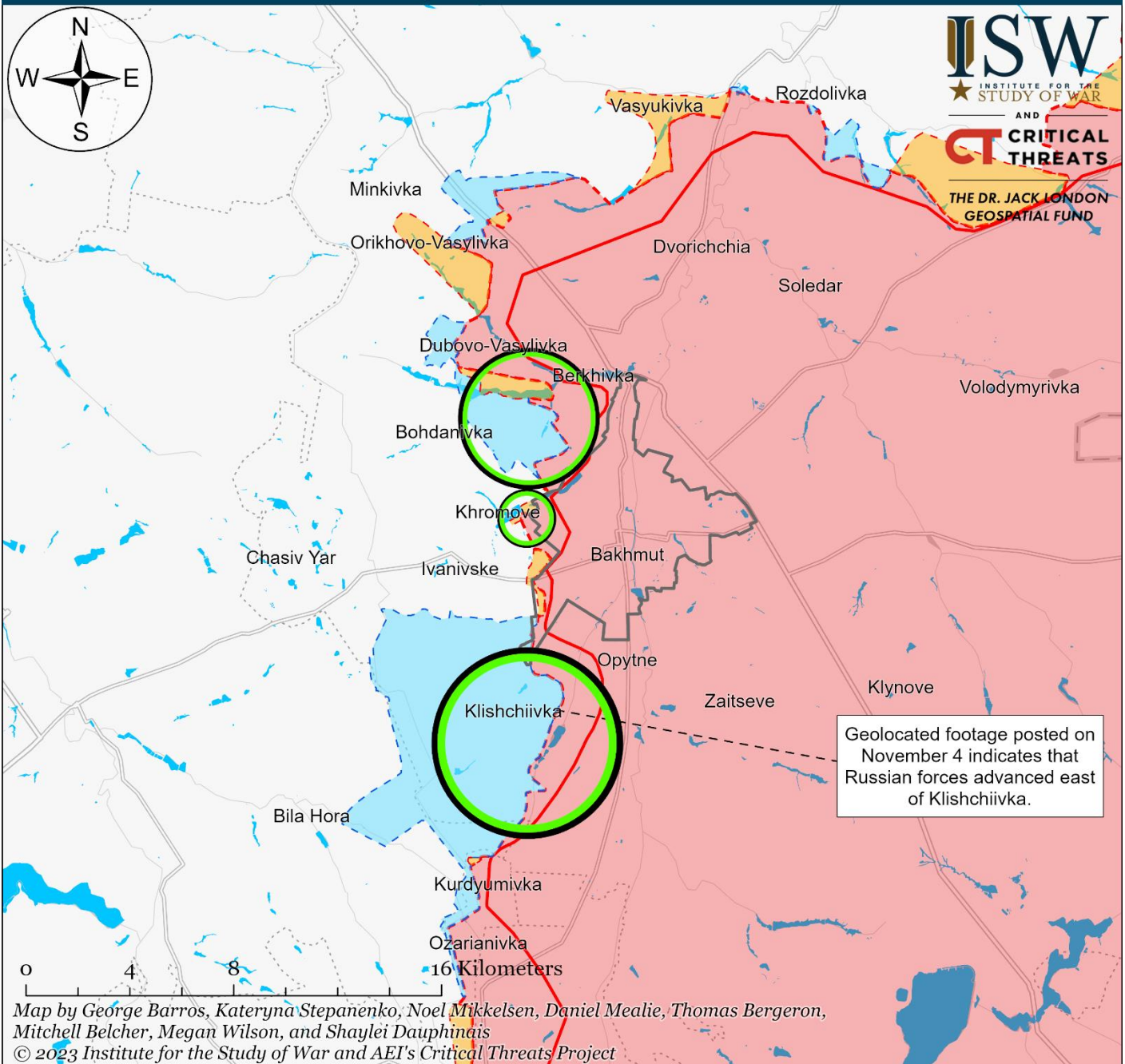
**Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)**

Ukrainian forces continued offensive actions near Bakhmut on November 7 and reportedly advanced. A Russian milblogger claimed on November 6 that Ukrainian forces crossed the railway near Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).[31] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed on November 7 that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Rozdolivka (18km north of Bakhmut), Minkivka (15km northwest of Bakhmut), and Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut).[32] A Russian milblogger claimed that there are positional battles in the Soledar direction north of Bakhmut.[33]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut but did not make any confirmed gains on November 7. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces marginally advanced near Klishchiivka and “significantly” advanced from Berkhivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut) to Bohdanivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut).[34] Another Russian milblogger claimed on November 6 and 7 that Russian forces regained lost positions in the direction of Zelenopillia (4km northeast of Bakhmut) and advanced to Vasyukivka and Sakko i Vantsetti (both 16km north of Bakhmut) and near Klishchiivka.[35] ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claimed Russian advances. A Russian milblogger claimed on November 6 that Russian forces counterattacked north of Klishchiivka and south of Andriivka, and a Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces pushed Ukrainian troops back from a section of the railway line between Klishchiivka and Andriivka on November 6.[36] The Ukrainian General Staff reported on November 7 that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Bohdanivka, Khromove (immediately west of Bakhmut), Andriivka, and Klishchiivka.[37] The Russian MoD reported that elements of the Russian 98th Guards Airborne (VDV) Division are operating north of Bakhmut.[38]



# Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of November 7, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

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

Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Avdiivka on November 7 and reportedly advanced. Russian sources claimed on November 6 and 7 that Russian forces marginally advanced along the railway line near Stepove (3km northwest of Avdiivka).[39] Russian milbloggers claimed on November 7 that Russian forces advanced near Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka) but did not enter the settlement itself.[40] The milbloggers also claimed that Russian forces advanced along the river from Vodyane in the direction of Pervomaiske (10km southwest of Avdiivka) and that Russian forces control the waste heap north of Avdiivka but that Ukrainian artillery is preventing Russian forces from consolidating their positions there.[41] Russian sources claimed on November 6 and 7 that Russian forces attacked near Pervomaiske and Stepove, north of Spartak (4km south of Avdiivka), in the direction of Sieverne, and on the southern and eastern approaches to Avdiivka.[42] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Stepove, Avdiivka, Tonenke (5km west of Avdiivka), and Pervomaiske.[43] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces have switched to a “creeping offensive” in the Avdiivka direction after Russian forces conducted a “heavy onslaught” in the first days of attacks, suggesting that the pace of Russian offensive operations in this area has slowed.[44] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are suffering from a shortage of electronic warfare (EW) complexes in the Avdiivka direction, which is allowing Ukrainian forces to establish control of the air in the area.[45]

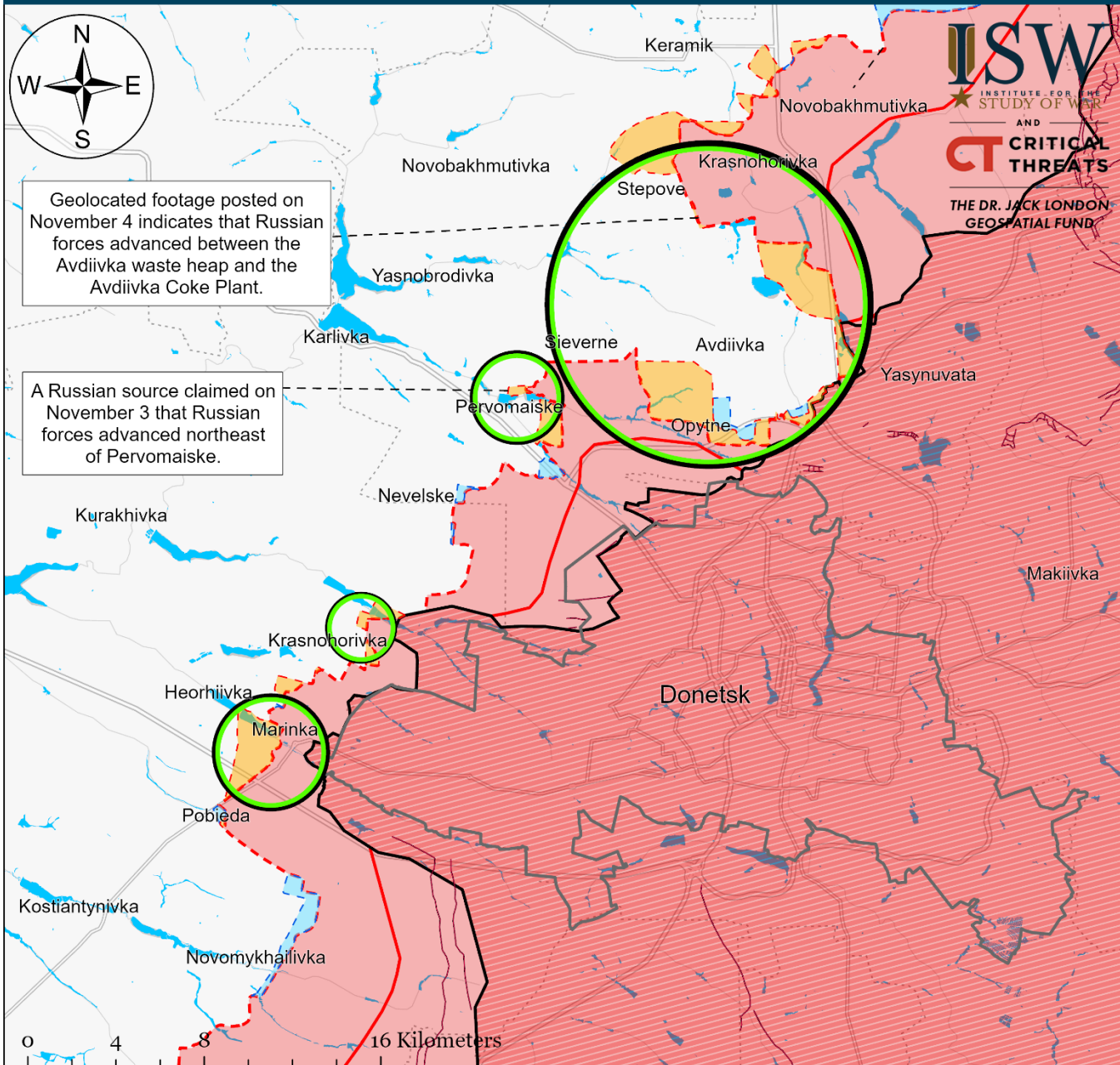
Ukrainian forces did not conduct any claimed or confirmed offensive operations near Avdiivka on November 7.

Russian forces conducted offensive operations west and southwest of Donetsk City but did not make any confirmed advances on November 7. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced near Mykilske (3km southeast of Vuhledar) and attacked in Marinka (on the western outskirts of Donetsk City).[46] Another Russian milblogger claimed on November 6 that Russian forces pushed Ukrainian forces out of unspecified positions near Novomykhailivka (10km southwest of Donetsk City).[47] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Marinka and Krasnohorivka (directly west of Donetsk City).[48] A Russian news aggregator claimed that there were positional battles in Marinka and meeting engagements on the western outskirts of Marinka and Novomykhailivka on November 6.[49]

Ukrainian forces did not conduct any claimed or confirmed offensive operations west or southwest of Donetsk City on November 7.



# Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of November 7, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Geolocated footage posted on November 4 indicates that Russian forces advanced between the Avdiivka waste heap and the Avdiivka Coke Plant.

A Russian source claimed on November 3 that Russian forces advanced northeast of Pervomaiske.

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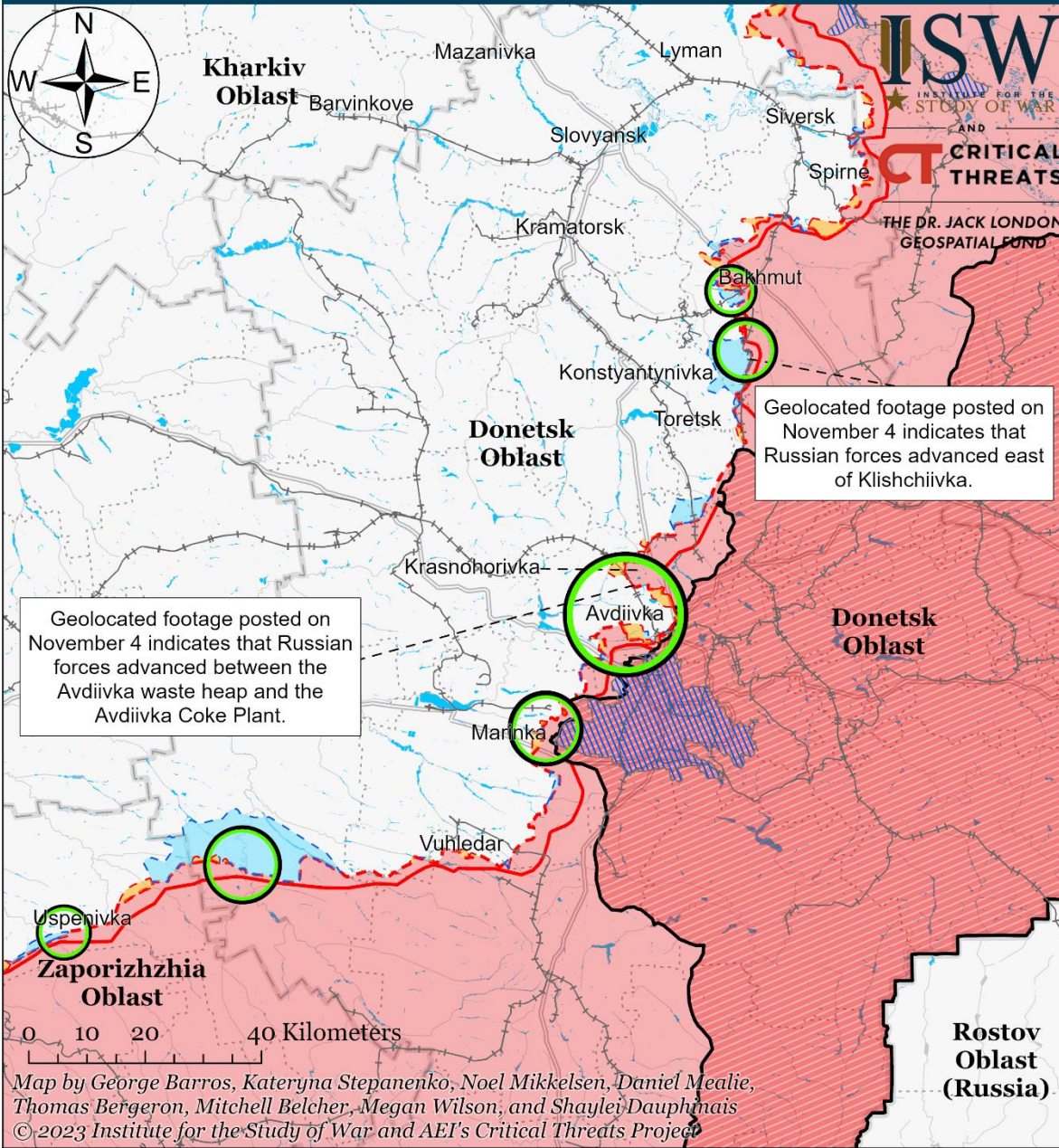
Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Megan Wilson, and Shaylei Dauphinais  
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- Donetsk City Limits
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Russian Field Fortifications

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



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of November 7, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Megan Wilson, and Shaylei Dauphinais  
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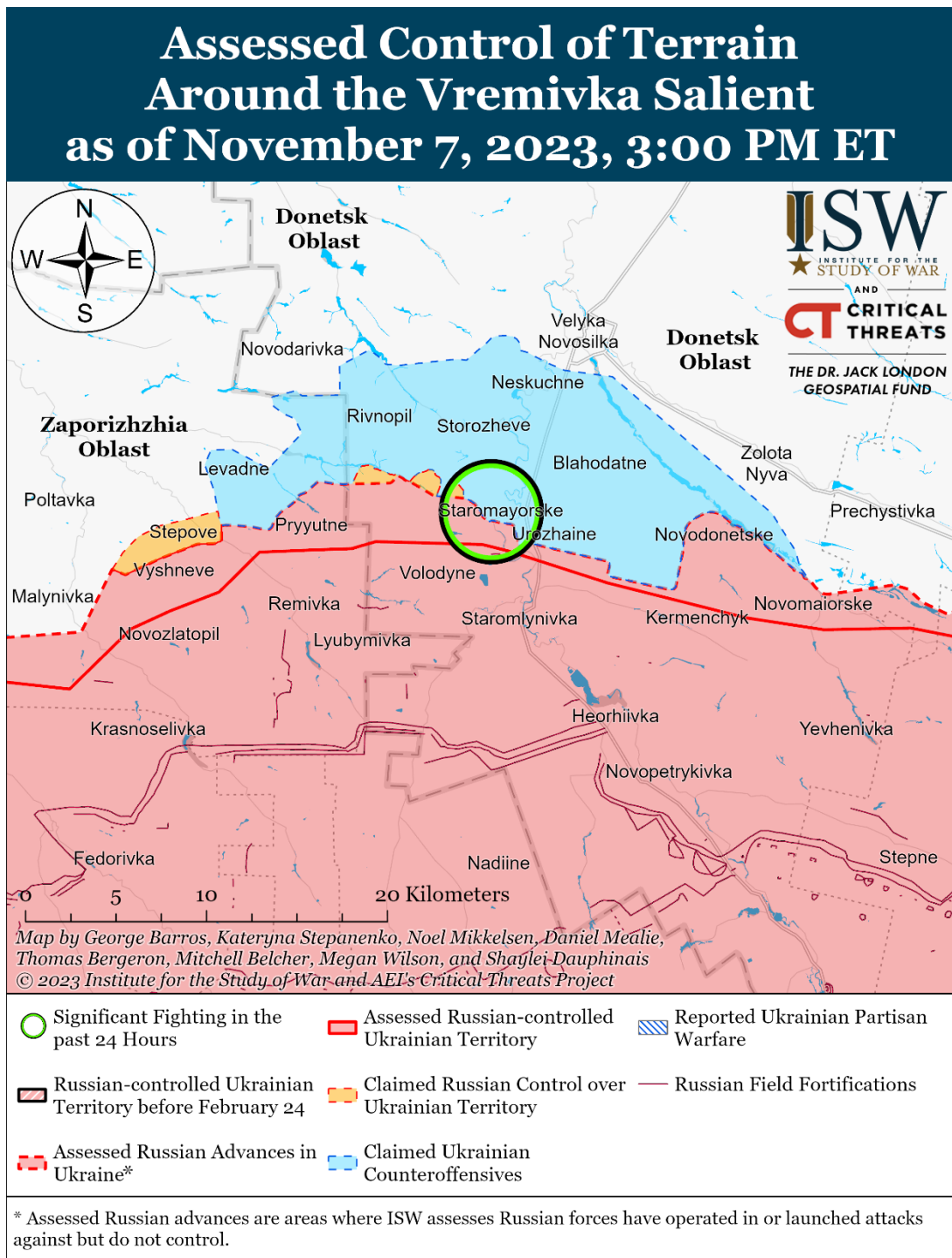
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Major Railroads

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

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

Ukrainian forces did not conduct any confirmed or claimed ground attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on November 7.

Russian forces continued limited offensive operations in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on November 7 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults near Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka).[50] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces also repelled Russian assaults near Pryyutne (14km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[51] A Russian media aggregator claimed that Russian forces made unspecified gains near Staromayorske on November 6, although ISW has not seen visual confirmation of this claim.[52]





Russian forces conducted ground attacks in eastern Zaporizhzhia Oblast on November 7 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful assaults near Chervone (6km east of Hulyaipole).[53]

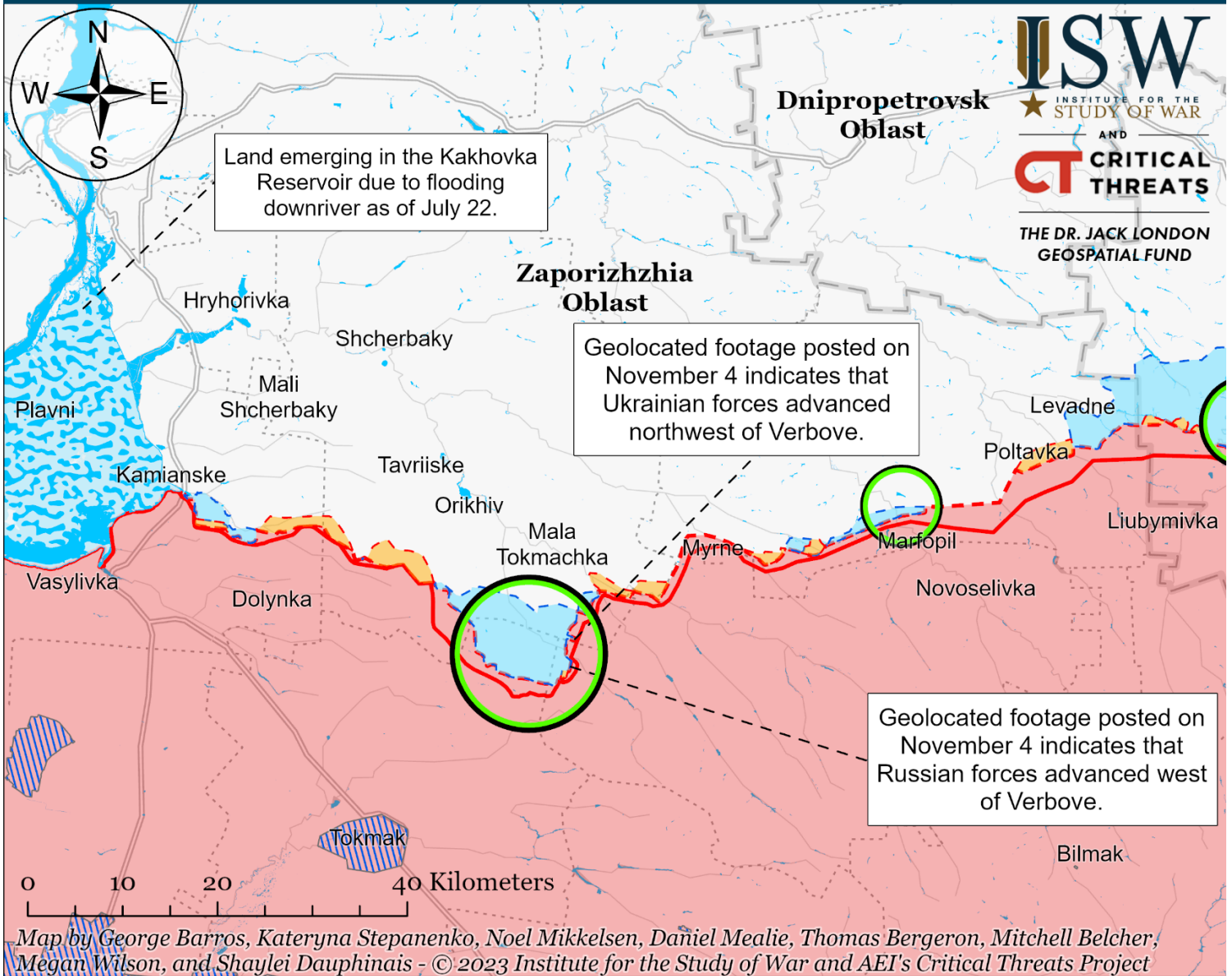
Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on November 7 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhzhia Oblast) direction.[54] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian assaults west of Robotyne and near Verbove (9km east of Robotyne).[55] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are entrenched in unspecified forest areas near Verbove and that a lack of Russian control of the air in the area is complicating Russian artillery fire on these positions.[56] The milblogger claimed that a Ukrainian reconnaissance group approached western Verbove and that a small-arms engagement is ongoing in the area.[57]

Russian forces counterattacked in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on November 7 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults near Robotyne and northwest of Verbove.[58] A Russian media aggregator claimed that Russian forces counterattacked near Kopani (6km northwest of Robotyne) on November 6 but did not specify the outcome of the counterattacks.[59] The media aggregator also claimed that fighting resumed near Pyatykhatky (26km northwest of Robotyne) on November 6, although other Russian sources who regularly comment on the situation near the settlement have not yet made similar claims.[60]





# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of November 7, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Megan Wilson, and Shaylei Dauphinais - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

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

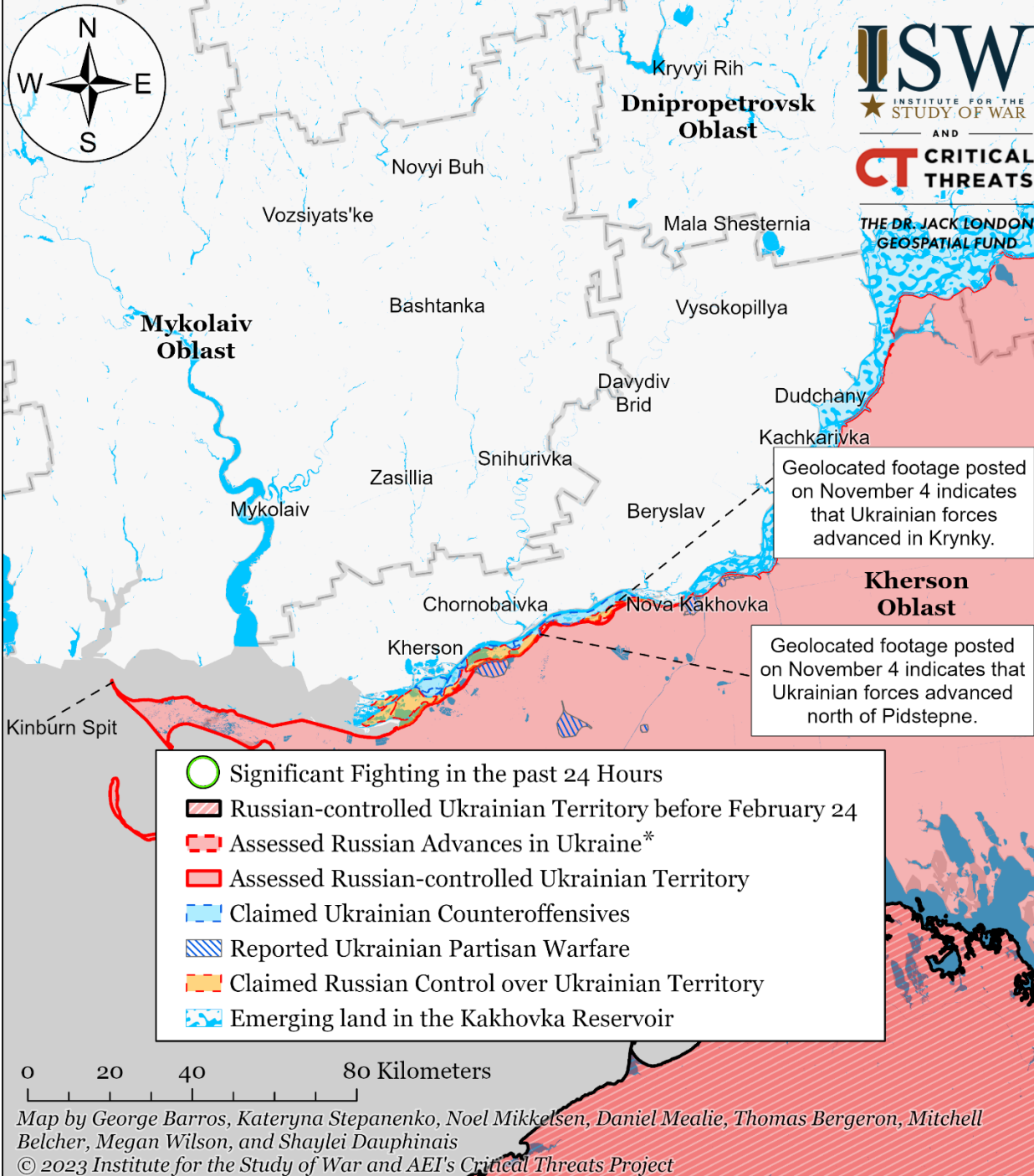
\* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

*For details on Kherson Oblast see topline text.*

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian air defenses intercepted 17 Ukrainian drones over the Black Sea and occupied Crimea on the morning of November 7.[61]

Ukrainian military observer Konstantyn Mashovets stated on November 7 that the Russian Aerospace (VSK) forces conducted two patrols of the Black Sea between October 28 and November 3 with MiG-31 attack aircraft.[62] Russian forces recently transferred at least four MiG-31 attack aircraft to the Belbek airfield in occupied Crimea after Russian President Vladimir Putin announced on October 18 that the Russian VKS would begin to patrol the airspace over the Black Sea with MiG-31 aircraft.[63] Mashovets notably added that the MiG-31 aircraft that have patrolled the Black Sea took off from the Mozdok airfield in the North Ossetia-Alania Republic and the Savasleyka airfield in Nizhny Novgorod Oblast instead of the Belbek airfield in occupied Crimea.[64]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of November 7, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Megan Wilson, and Shaylei Dauphinais  
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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.

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.

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

A Russian battalion comprised of Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) will likely deploy to Ukraine in the near future in an apparent violation of the Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War.[65] Russian news outlet *RIA Novosti* reported on November 7 that Ukrainian soldiers of the "Bogdan Khmelnytsky" battalion, the first unit consisting of former Ukrainian POWs, swore an oath of allegiance to Russia and will soon deploy to Ukraine.[66] *RIA Novosti* reported that the battalion is operating under the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) "Kaskad" formation, which suggests that the POWs will deploy to the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, where Kaskad is reportedly active.[67] Russian sources claimed that the Russian command will treat the POWs the same as Russian soldiers and that they will receive comparable salaries and benefits.[68] As ISW previously reported, Russian state media claimed that Russian forces "recruited" up to 70 Ukrainian POWs from various Russian penal colonies to serve in the "Bogdan Khmelnytsky" battalion.[69] The Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War prohibits the use of POWs in military activities on the side of the power that has captured them, stating that "no prisoner of war may at any time be sent to or detained in areas where he may be exposed to the fire of the combat zone" and shall not "be employed on labor which is of an unhealthy or dangerous nature."[70]

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

The Russian military continues efforts to increase and optimize the use of FPV drones. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) announced on November 7 the creation of a training school for FPV drone operators as part of the Sudoplatov volunteer battalion, which is affiliated with the Zaporizhia Oblast occupation administration.[71] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian servicemembers are learning how to operate the FPV drones and use 3D printers to produce drone components at the training schools.[72] A Russian milblogger praised the increased use of small and high-speed FPV drones by Russian forces in Ukraine over the course of 2023 and claimed that they are a "real technical revolution."[73]

Kremlin press wire *TASS* reported on November 7 that Russian forces in Ukraine used a S-400 anti-aircraft missile system to launch anti-aircraft guided missiles with active homing heads for the first time.[74] *TASS*, citing an unidentified Russian MoD source, claimed that Russian forces used the S-400 in tandem with an A-50 long-range radar detection aircraft to ensure success against Ukrainian aviation.[75]

## **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)**

Kremlin-appointed Commissioner on Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova advertised several benefit schemes targeting children in occupied Ukraine as part of the "A Country for Children" strategic program.[76] Lvova-Belova reported that under the "A Country for Children" program, Russian occupation authorities have opened five "humanitarian" headquarters in occupied Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhia oblasts that are meant to fulfill requests of residents. Such clearly Kremlin-affiliated humanitarian headquarters are likely aimed at generating dependency on the occupation administration by monopolizing the provision of basic social benefits. Lvova-Belova also reported that a woman from Nizhny Novgorod Oblast is raising 14 foster children, including children from occupied Donetsk Oblast, further confirming that certain Russian families are engaged in an ostensibly Kremlin-approved process of adopting Ukrainian children to forcibly Russify them.[77] Lvova-Belova also confirmed that Russian authorities have deported at least 50 children from occupied Zaporizhia Oblast to a sanatorium-resort for "treatment" in Krasnodar Krai.[78]

## **Russian Information Operations and Narratives**

Russia continues efforts to posture itself as the leader of a coalition of states that are aligned against the West. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu held separate meetings on November 7 with Nicaraguan Army Commander-in-Chief Julio Aviles Castillo and Burkinabe Minister of Defense and Veteran Affairs Brigadier General Kassoum Coulibaly to discuss bilateral military cooperation.[79] Shoigu remarked that Russia and Nicaragua both "reject the dictates and political pressure from Western states, led by the US" and that Russia, Nicaragua, and that a coalition of "like-minded" states are counterbalancing Western "hegemony."[80] Shoigu frequently uses such bilateral defense meetings to posture Russia as a viable partner and further several Russian narratives regarding the US and the West.

The Russian information space continues to respond negatively to reports of deepening US-Armenian relations. A prominent Kremlin-affiliated milblogger responded to a November 3 meeting between Chief of the Armenian General Staff Edvard Asryan and US Deputy European Command (EUCOM) commander Lieutenant General Steven Basham and claimed that this interaction is another Armenian snub to Russia.[81] The milblogger voiced concern that growing US-Armenian



cooperation will threaten Russia's ability to maintain the 102nd Military Base in Gyumri, Armenia, thereby further weakening Russia's presence in the region.[82] ISW has recently assessed that Yerevan is distancing itself from Moscow as bilateral relations between the two deteriorate.[83]

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

Nothing significant to report.

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

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