

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, November 9, 2023

Riley Bailey, Karolina Hird, Grace Mappes, Angelica Evans, Amin Soltani, and Frederick W. Kagan

November 9, 2023, 6:55pm 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 1:30pm ET on November 9. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the November 10 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

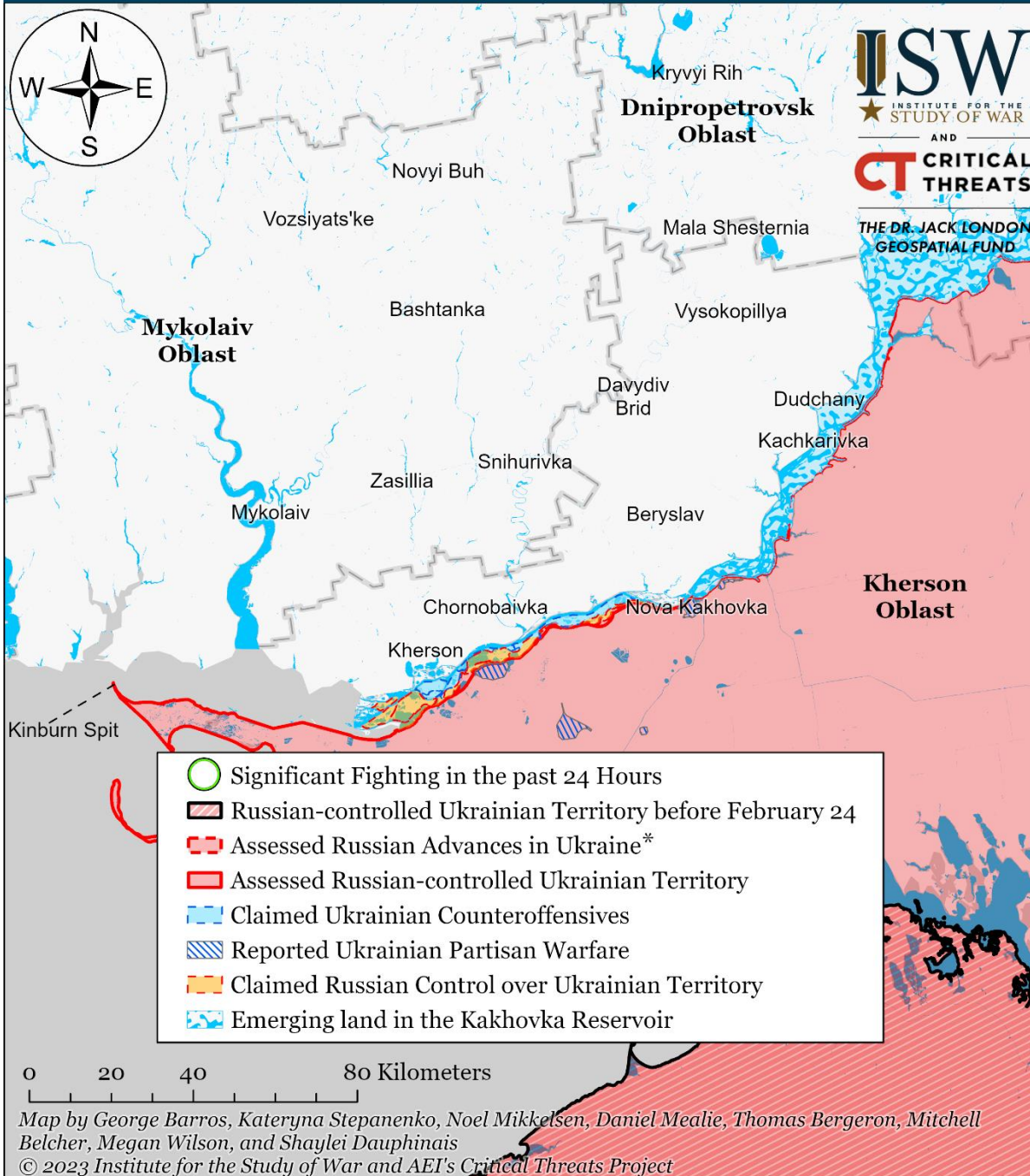
The Russian military command will likely struggle to redeploy combat effective reinforcements to respond to ongoing Ukrainian operations in eastern Kherson Oblast while conducting defensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast and sustaining other offensive efforts in eastern Ukraine. Russian milbloggers claimed on November 9 that Ukrainian forces established control over new positions in Krynky (30km northeast of Kherson City and 2km from the Dnipro River) and conducted assaults towards Russian positions south and southwest of the settlement.[1] A Russian milblogger claimed that there are reports that Ukrainian forces advanced to forest areas south of Krynky.[2] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces also attacked 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) and are trying to establish positions between Pidstepne and Kozachi Laheri (23km northeast of Kherson City and 2km from the Dnipro River).[3] Ukrainian military observer Konstyantyn Mashovets stated that Ukrainian forces have established continuous control of positions from the Antonivsky railway bridge north of Poyma to the Antonivsky roadway bridge north of Oleshky (7km south of Kherson and 4km from the Dnipro River) as of November 9 and have cut the Oleshky-Nova Kakhovka (53km northeast of Kherson City) road in at least two areas.[4]

Elements of the Russian 18th Combined Arms Army's (CAA) 22nd Army Corps (formerly of the Black Sea Fleet) and 70th Motorized Rifle Division as well as the 177th Naval Infantry Regiment (Caspian Flotilla) appear to be the main Russian forces responding to Ukrainian ground operations on the east bank of Kherson Oblast.[5] The Russian military reportedly formed the 18th CAA from other units previously operating in the Kherson direction, and it is unlikely that new units of the 18th CAA are comprised of fresh forces or staffed to doctrinal end strength.[6] Elements of the 177th Naval Infantry Regiment previously defended positions in western Zaporizhia Oblast for almost the entirety of the Ukrainian counteroffensive and have likely suffered significant casualties.[7] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) stated on November 5 that unspecified elements of the 7th Guards Airborne (VDV)

Division are operating in the Kherson direction, although the bulk of the 7th VDV Division appears to be committed to defensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast.[8] Mashovets claimed on November 2 and 9 that elements of the 7th VDV Division's 171st Air Assault Battalion (97th VDV Regiment) are operating near Pishchanivka and Poyma, but it is unclear if these reported elements have been present in the Kherson direction since the start of the counteroffensive or recently redeployed to the area.[9] Elements of the 49th CAA (Southern Military District) have reportedly been operating in the Kherson direction since the Ukrainian liberation of Kherson City in November 2022, but some Russian and Ukrainian sources claim that the Russian command has since redeployed elements of at least one its brigades to the Zaporizhia-Donetsk Oblast border area.[10] Mashovets claimed that elements of the 49th CAA still comprise the Russian “Dnepr” Grouping of Forces in the Kherson direction, and elements of the 49th CAA’s 205th Motorized Rifle Brigade appeared to be operating on the left bank as of late August 2023.[11]

The Russian command will likely face significant challenges in redeploying units from other sectors of the front should relatively combat ineffective Russian formations and currently uncommitted Russian forces in the Kherson direction prove insufficient to respond to the Ukrainian operations on the east bank of the Dnipro. Redeployments of considerable elements of the 7th VDV Division or other VDV formations and units in western Zaporizhia Oblast would likely disrupt Russian defensive operations there. Russian forces reportedly continue to accumulate forces for sustaining the Russian offensive effort near Avdiivka and localized offensive operations in Kharkiv and Luhansk oblasts.[12] Any potential Russian redeployment to the Kherson direction will likely degrade the Russian ability to sustain these other operations and efforts.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of November 9, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



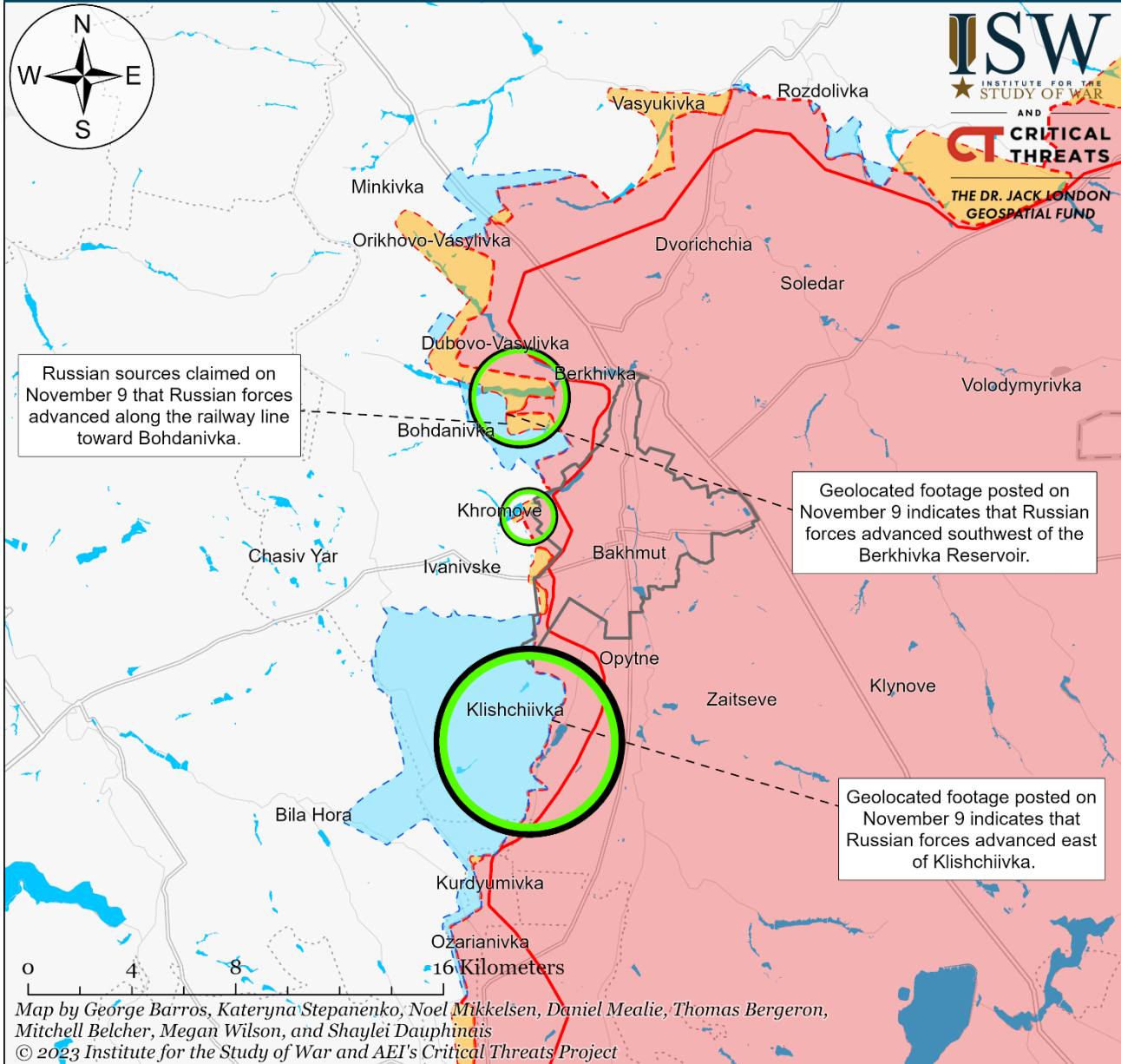
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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 forces have likely launched opportunistic localized offensive operations in the Bakhmut direction and intensified ground attacks near Bakhmut in recent days. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted nearly 30 attacks northwest and southwest of Bakhmut between November 8 and November 9, which is notably a higher number of attacks than the Ukrainian General Staff typically reports for the Bakhmut area.[13] Russian milbloggers widely claimed that Russian forces entered Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) and pushed Ukrainian troops back from the railway that runs northeast and east of the settlement.[14] Geolocated footage published on November 9 indicates that Russian forces have advanced towards Klishchiivka and hold positions just east of the settlement and west of the railway line.[15] Some Russian sources claimed that Russian forces also drove Ukrainian forces out of positions in and around Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut), but ISW has not observed visual evidence to substantiate these claims.[16] Several Russian milbloggers additionally claimed that Russian forces advanced northwest of Bakhmut in the Berkhivka-Bohdanivka direction (directly northwest of Bakhmut to 5km northwest of Bakhmut) south of the Berkhivka Reservoir towards the Vilyanova plant nursery.[17] Geolocated footage from around November 7 shows that Russian forces have advanced south of the Berkhivka Reservoir, about 3km northwest of Bakhmut.[18]

These localized offensive operations northwest and southwest of Bakhmut are likely opportunistic tactical ground attacks intended to take advantage of the reported reallocation of Ukrainian resources away from Bakhmut. Several milbloggers noted that the pace of Ukrainian artillery fire and ground activity in the Bakhmut direction has decreased in recent days, with some Russian sources remarking that this is partially because Ukrainian forces have redeployed to other areas of the front.[19] Russian forces are likely taking advantage of a decrease in Ukrainian activity on this sector of the front to launch localized and successful attacks. Russian forces are unlikely to be able to translate offensive efforts near Bakhmut into wider and more meaningful offensive operations, as the Russian force grouping around Bakhmut is weak and disorganized because Russian forces have been committing more manpower and materiel to deliberate and larger-scale offensive operations near Avdiivka and on the Kharkiv-Luhansk Oblast border.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of November 9, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



- Bakhmut City Limits
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- 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.

Note: Multiple Russian sources claimed on November 9 that Russian forces advanced 1.5 kilometers near Berkhivka as of November 8.

Russian forces struck a civilian ship near Odesa City on November 8. Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported that a Russian Kh-31P missile struck a civilian ship flying the flag of Liberia in a port near Odesa City, Odesa Oblast, injuring several people and killing the ship's pilot.[20] Russian milbloggers claimed on November 8 and 9 in an attempt to justify the strike that the ship was carrying military cargo.[21] Russia has continually pursued efforts to disrupt Ukrainian exports and curtail maritime traffic to Ukrainian ports and will likely continue escalatory posturing in the Black Sea meant to undermine confidence in the Ukrainian corridor.[22]

Kremlin Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov stated that Russian President Vladimir Putin's annual live "Direct Line" forum and annual press conference will occur in tandem on an unspecified date by the end of the year, potentially to set conditions to cancel the events as the Kremlin sees fit.[23] The Kremlin canceled Putin's annual press conference in December 2022, which ISW assessed was likely in order to preempt the informational risks of Putin addressing difficult questions about the war and international situation live.[24] Similarly, in early June of 2023, Putin postponed the "Direct Line" until November or December 2023.[25] The vagueness with which Peskov announced the two live events suggests that the Kremlin may desire to have the flexibility to cancel them if they deem the informational risks of holding them to be too great. The Kremlin may hope for a wider operational victory in Ukraine to frame both the "Direct Line" and the press conference in a positive light and is likely trying to leave itself room to mitigate if Russian forces cannot secure meaningful battlefield success in Ukraine in the coming month.

Russia may seek to provide gas to Iran through Kazakhstan. Russian President Vladimir Putin emphasized during a meeting with Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev at the 19th Russian-Kazakh Regional Cooperation Forum in Ankara that Russia currently transports gas to Uzbekistan through Kazakhstan and seeks to further develop this transport.[26] Russia began exporting natural gas to Uzbekistan for the first time in October 2023, and Uzbekistan notably still exports its own domestically produced natural gas, including to Russia as recently as 2021, despite suffering domestic shortages in recent years.[27] Uzbekistan's continued export of gas while importing Russian gas for the first time suggests that Uzbekistan may not be the final destination for all its Russian gas imports. Uzbekistan is capable of providing Iran with direct access to other Central Asian as well as Russian and Chinese markets, as ISW-CTP previously reported.[28] Senior Iranian officials, including Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and President Ebrahim Raisi, discussed reviving Iranian-Uzbek economic relations and signed agreements to increase bilateral trade with Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in Tehran on June 18, 2023.[29] Iran has also increased its economic diplomacy efforts, including on gas supplies, with other countries in Central Asia. Raisi discussed increasing the volume of gas swaps with Turkmenistan during a meeting with Turkmenistan People's Council Chairman Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov in Tehran on May 30.[30] Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji separately announced on May 30 that Iran and Turkmenistan will soon sign an agreement for Iran to import 10 million cubic meters of natural gas from Turkmenistan each day, which will allow Iran to use some of the gas it imports from Turkmenistan to supply electricity and heat to its northern provinces.[31] Iran has consistently struggled with natural gas shortages in winter and summer 2023, and Russia may seek to provide gas to Iran through Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to secure further military cooperation with Iran.[32]

Unspecified actors appear to be targeting Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov as he continues to heap honors on his children. A Russian insider source claimed that Moscow

authorities are investigating and charging members of the inner circle of an unspecified nephew of Kadyrov for various crimes including kidnapping, extortion, and organizing a criminal community in both Moscow and Chechnya.[33] The insider source claimed that two high-ranking Chechen security officials lead this inner circle, and that its other members include Chechen police officers and bureaucratic officials.[34] The source claimed that Russian authorities allowed this circle to commit these crimes for “quite a long time” but that “apparently, something is starting to change.”[35] It is possible that Russian authorities are targeting Chechen organized crime activities. This insider source’s specific reference to Kadyrov, however, suggests either that some Russian authorities may seek to target Kadyrov’s affiliates through criminal charges or that some actors may seek to target Kadyrov informationally by using this insider source to discredit him and his family. Kadyrov has notably awarded his children, many of whom are underage, with prominent Chechen governmental positions and awards in recent weeks following the Kremlin’s refusal to become involved when his 15-year-old son Adam was filmed beating a detained man in September 2023, sparking domestic outrage.[36]

Key Takeaways:

- **The Russian military command will likely struggle to redeploy combat effective reinforcements to respond to ongoing Ukrainian operations in eastern Kherson Oblast while conducting defensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast and sustaining other offensive efforts in eastern Ukraine.**
- **Russian forces have likely launched opportunistic localized offensive operations in the Bakhmut direction and intensified ground attacks near Bakhmut in recent days.**
- **Russian forces struck a civilian ship near Odesa City on November 8.**
- **Kremlin Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov stated that Russian President Vladimir Putin's annual live "Direct Line" forum and annual press conference will occur in tandem on an unspecified date by the end of the year, potentially to set conditions to cancel the events as the Kremlin sees fit.**
- **Russia may seek to provide gas to Iran through Kazakhstan.**
- **Unspecified actors appear to be targeting Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov as he continues to heap honors on his children.**
- **Russian forces continued offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, in the Avdiivka direction, west and southwest of Donetsk City, in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and advanced near Kupyansk.**
- **Russian authorities appear to be increasingly reliant on private security companies to protect domestic energy infrastructure from Ukrainian drone strikes on Russian far rear areas.**
- **Occupation authorities reportedly continued efforts to militarize Ukrainian youth.**

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

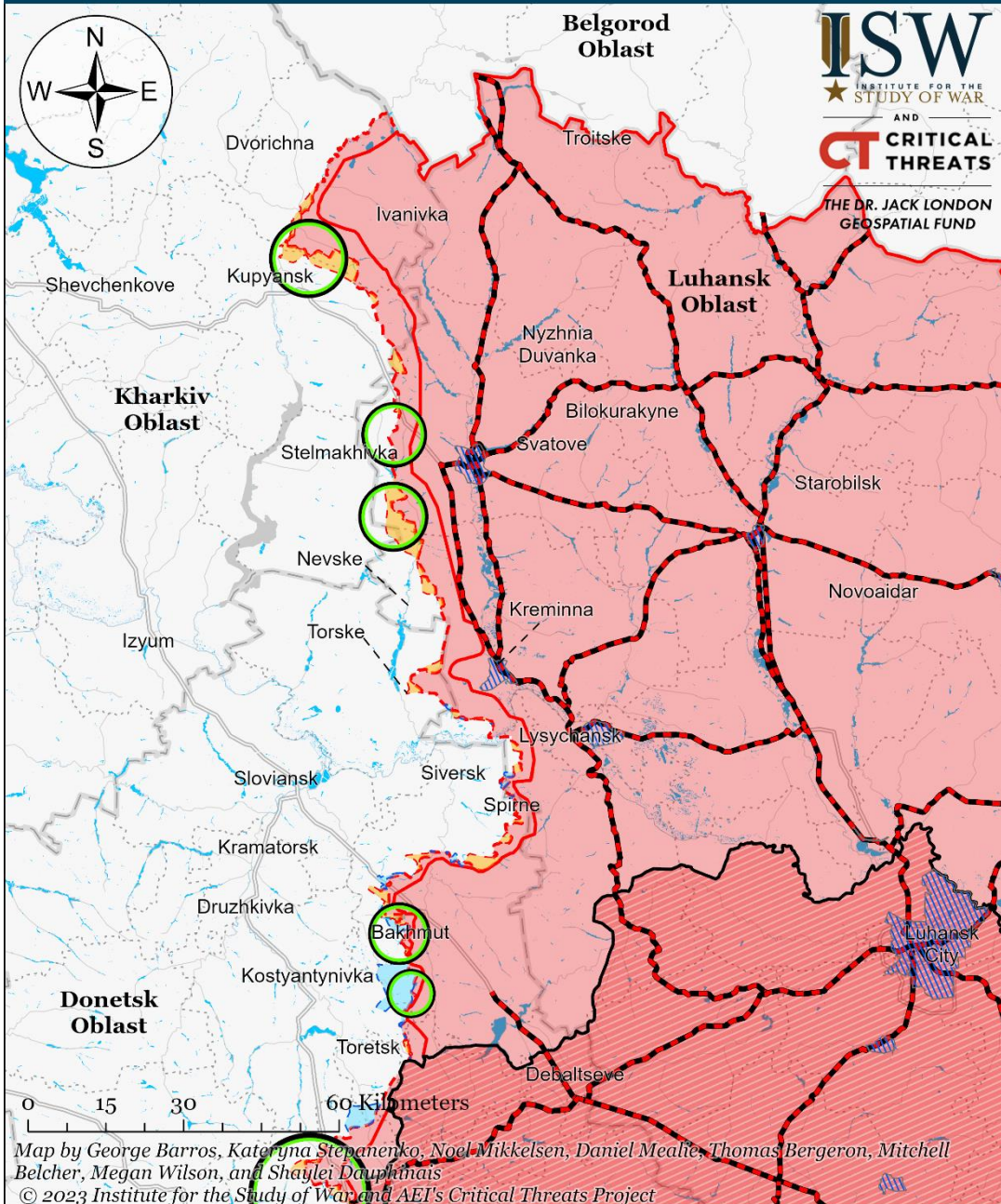
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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-Kreminna line on November 9 and made a confirmed advance. Geolocated footage published on November 9 indicates that Russian forces recently marginally advanced south of Pershotravneve (24km east of Kupyansk).[37] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Synkivka (9km northeast of Kupyansk), Kharkiv Oblast and Stelmakhivka (15km northwest of Svatove) and Novoyehorivka (16km southwest of Svatove) in Luhansk Oblast.[38] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also attacked near Petropavlivka (7km east of Kupyansk) and achieved unspecified "tactical success" near Synkivka.[39] Russian milbloggers claimed that there was also fighting near Kyslivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk).[40] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked near the Serebryanske forest area and captured several unspecified positions.[41] The milblogger claimed that there are also positional battles near Torske (15km west of Kreminna).

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful assaults along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on November 9. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Tymkivka (18km east of Kupyansk) and Synkivka, Kharkiv Oblast and Kreminna, Luhansk Oblast.[42] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked with Western-provided armored vehicle support northeast of Kupyansk and west of Svatove.[43] Russian milbloggers claimed that there is also fighting near Dibrova (7km southwest of Kreminna).[44]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of November 9, 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 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.

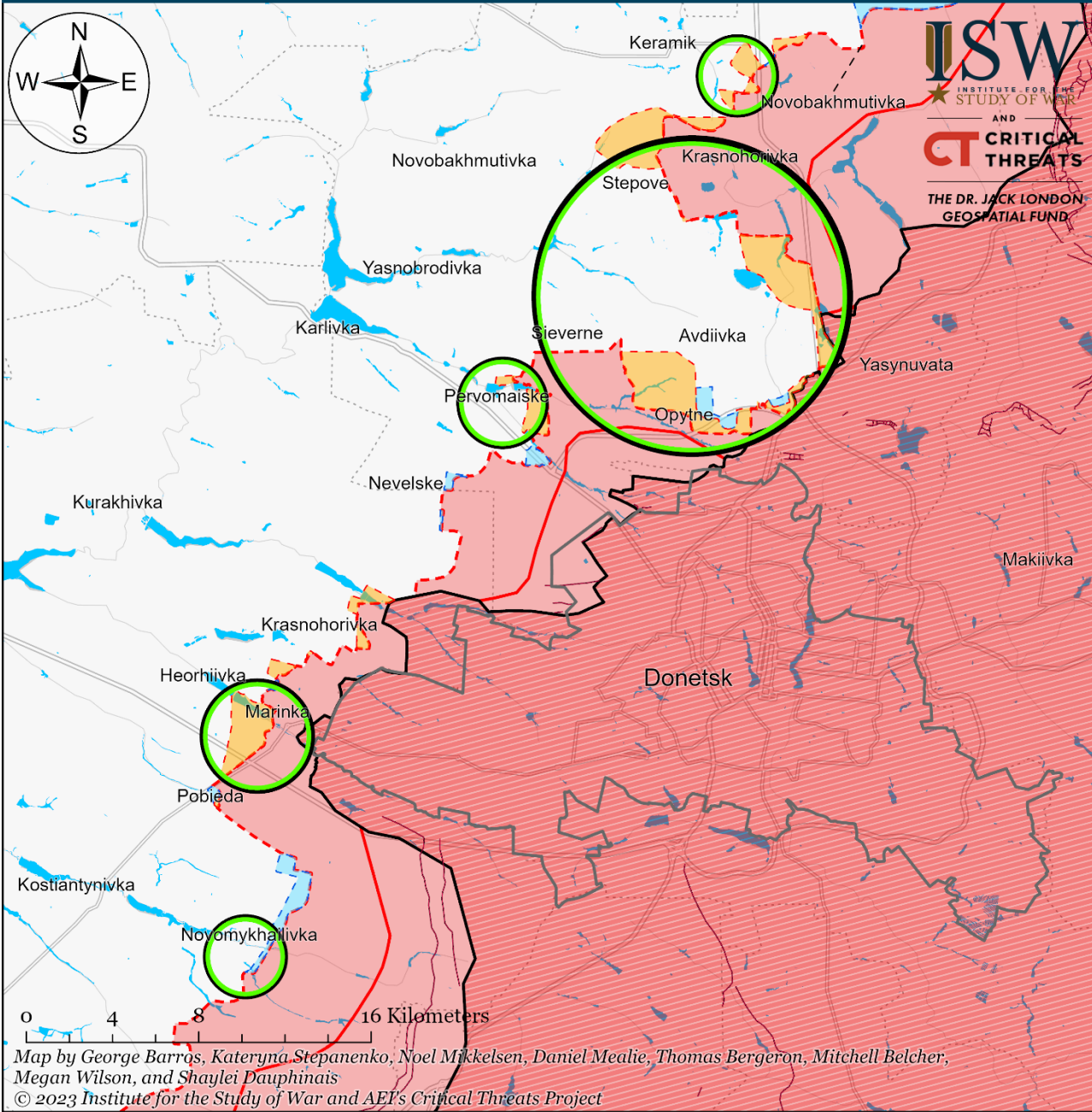
Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)

See topline text for updates on Bakhmut.

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Avdiivka direction on November 9 and reportedly advanced. Several Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces made gains near Stepove (6km northwest of Avdiivka) and are consolidating new positions near the settlement.[45] Russian sources additionally claimed that Russian forces advanced up to 1km beyond the railway line about 3km away from Berdychi (4km northwest of Avdiivka).[46] One milblogger claimed that Russian forces now hold positions within 500 meters of Avdiivka itself.[47] Russian sources additionally claimed that Russian forces are trying to break through Ukrainian lines southwest of Avdiivka near Vodyane.[48] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun noted that Russian forces have increased their use of aviation in the Avdiivka direction over the past few days and are using Ka-52 and Mi-8 helicopters and Su-25 attack aircraft.[49] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces with aviation support conducted unsuccessful attacks southeast of Novokalynove (10km northwest of Avdiivka), and near Avdiivka, Keramik (10km northwest of Avdiivka), Stepove, Sieverne (5km west of Avdiivka), and Pervomaiske (10km southwest of Avdiivka).[50]

Ukrainian forces did not conduct any claimed or confirmed ground attacks in the Avdiivka direction on November 9.

Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of November 9, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

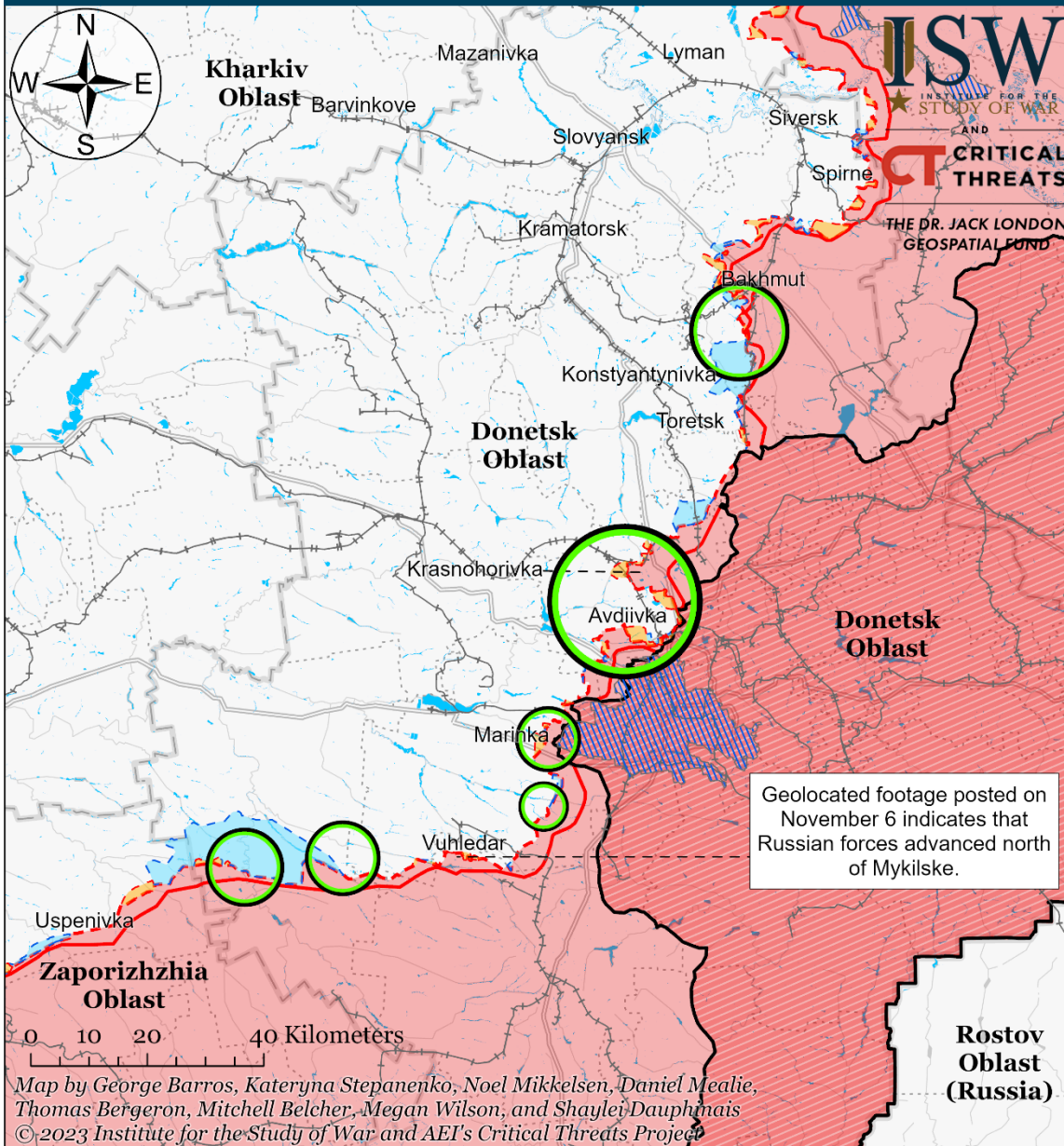
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: A Russian source claimed on November 8 that Russian forces advanced to positions 400 meters south of Avdiivka.

Russian forces continued offensive operations west and southwest of Donetsk City on November 9 but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances. Shtupun noted that Russian forces in the Marinka direction (on the southwest outskirts of Donetsk City) are concentrating offensive efforts near Marinka and Novomykhailivka (10km south of Donetsk City), and the Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted 23 unsuccessful attacks near these two settlements over the course of the day.^[51] One milblogger claimed that Russian forces have stopped active advances towards Novomykhailivka and are instead focusing on consolidating their new positions.^[52] A Russian news aggregator claimed that the situation in Marinka remains unchanged and that there is fighting on the western outskirts of the settlement.^[53] Russian sources also claimed that localized fighting is ongoing near Vuhledar (30km southwest of Donetsk City), particularly east of Vuhledar near Mykilske (3km southeast of Vuhledar).^[54]

Ukrainian forces did not conduct any claimed or confirmed ground attacks west or southwest of Donetsk City on November 9.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of November 9, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



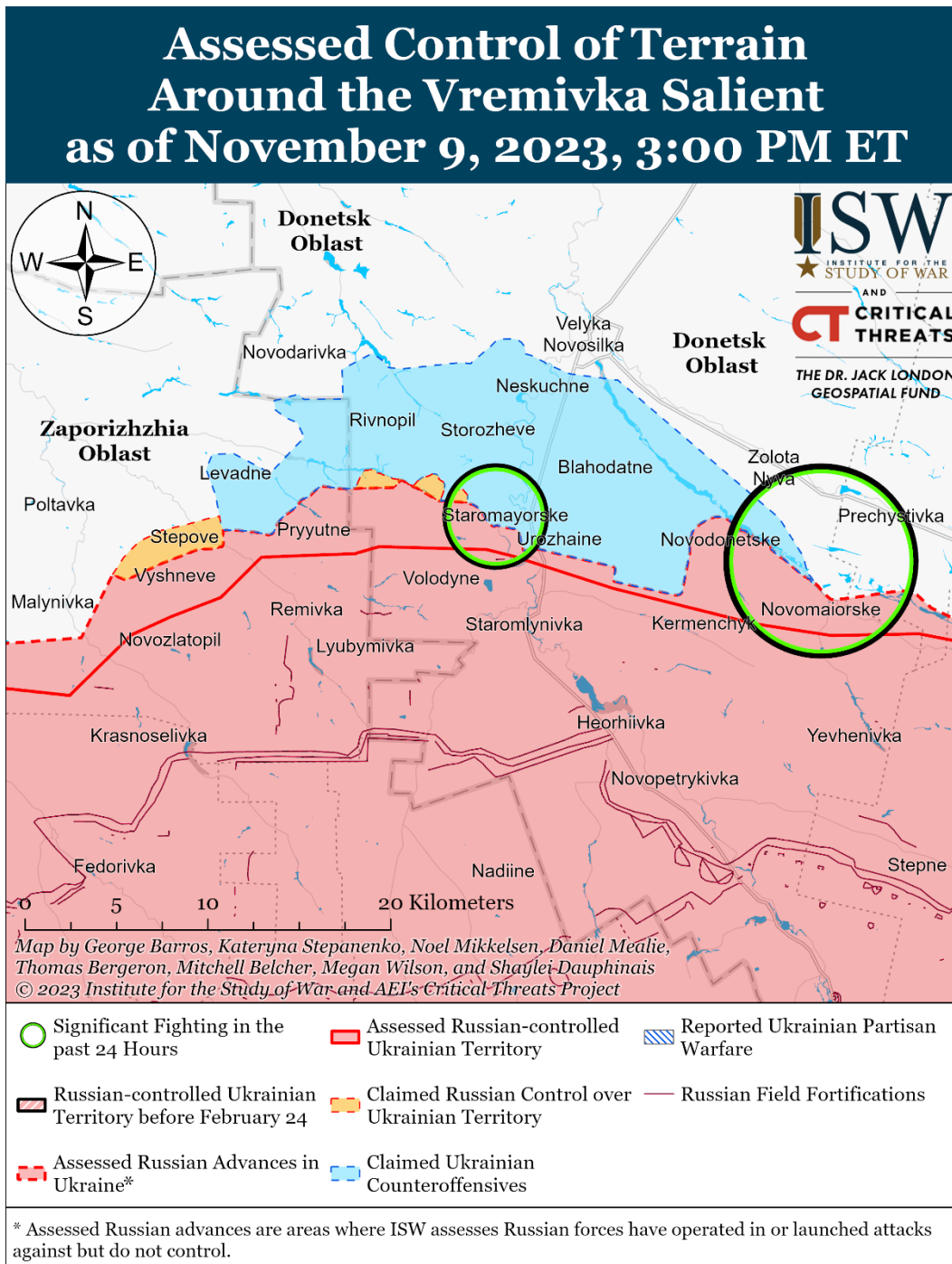
Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours	Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory	Major Railroads
Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24	Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory	Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*	Claimed Ukrainian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

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

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

Ukrainian forces did not conduct any claimed or confirmed ground attacks on the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on November 9.

Russian forces continued limited ground attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on November 9 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) and south of Prechystivka (18km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[55]



Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast on November 9 and recently made confirmed advances. Geolocated footage published on November 8 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced northwest of Verbove (9km east of Robotyne).[56] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhia Oblast) direction.[57] Russian sources, including the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful assaults near Robotyne, Novoprokopivka (immediately south of Robotyne), and Verbove.[58]

Russian forces conducted limited counterattacks in western Zaporizhia Oblast on November 9 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful assaults near Verbove and Robotyne.[59] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun stated that Russian forces did not conduct any assaults in the Zaporizhia direction on November 8.[60] A Russian media aggregator claimed that Russian forces counterattacked near Verbove on November 8 but did not specify an outcome.[61]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of November 9, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

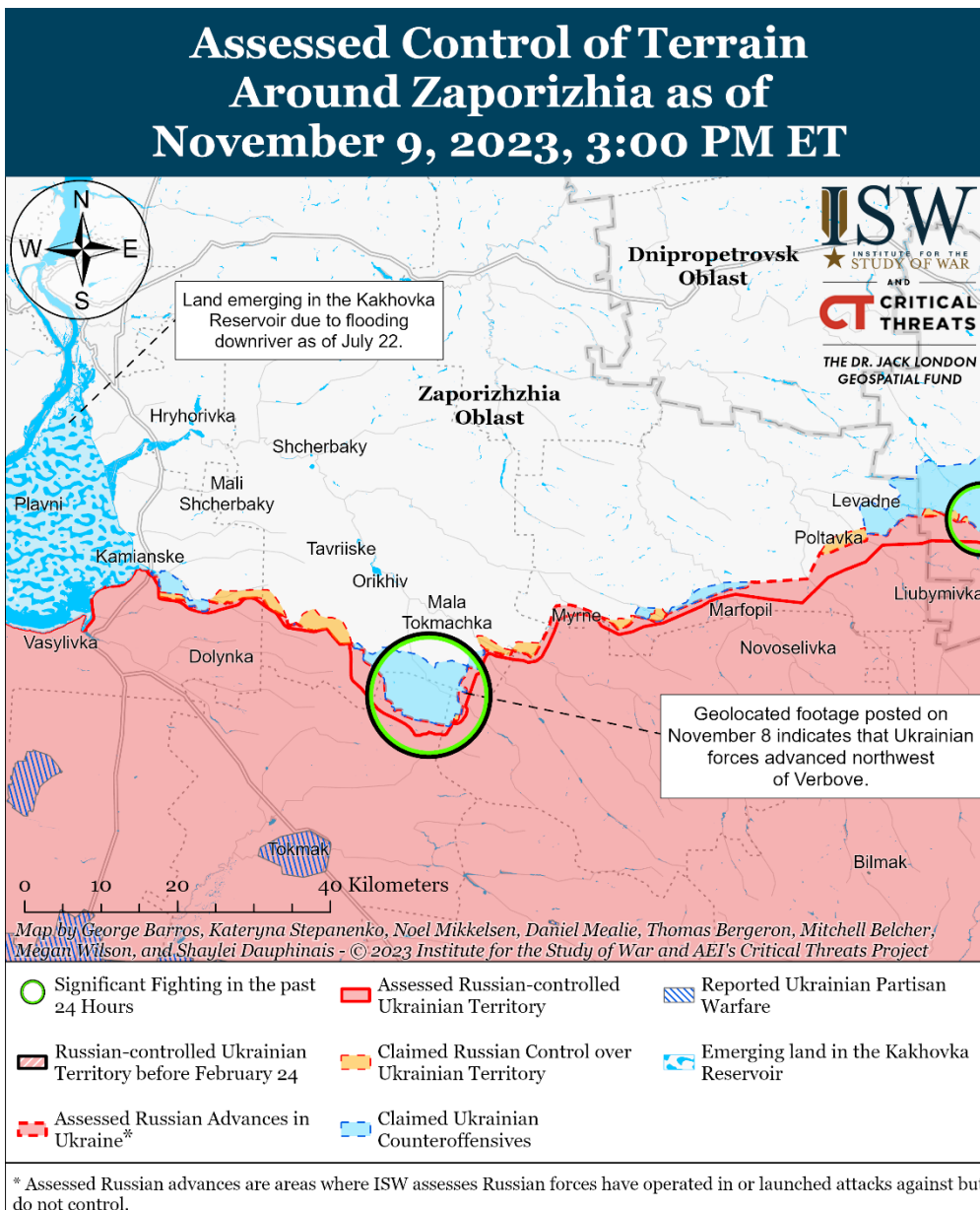


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
- Assessed Russian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

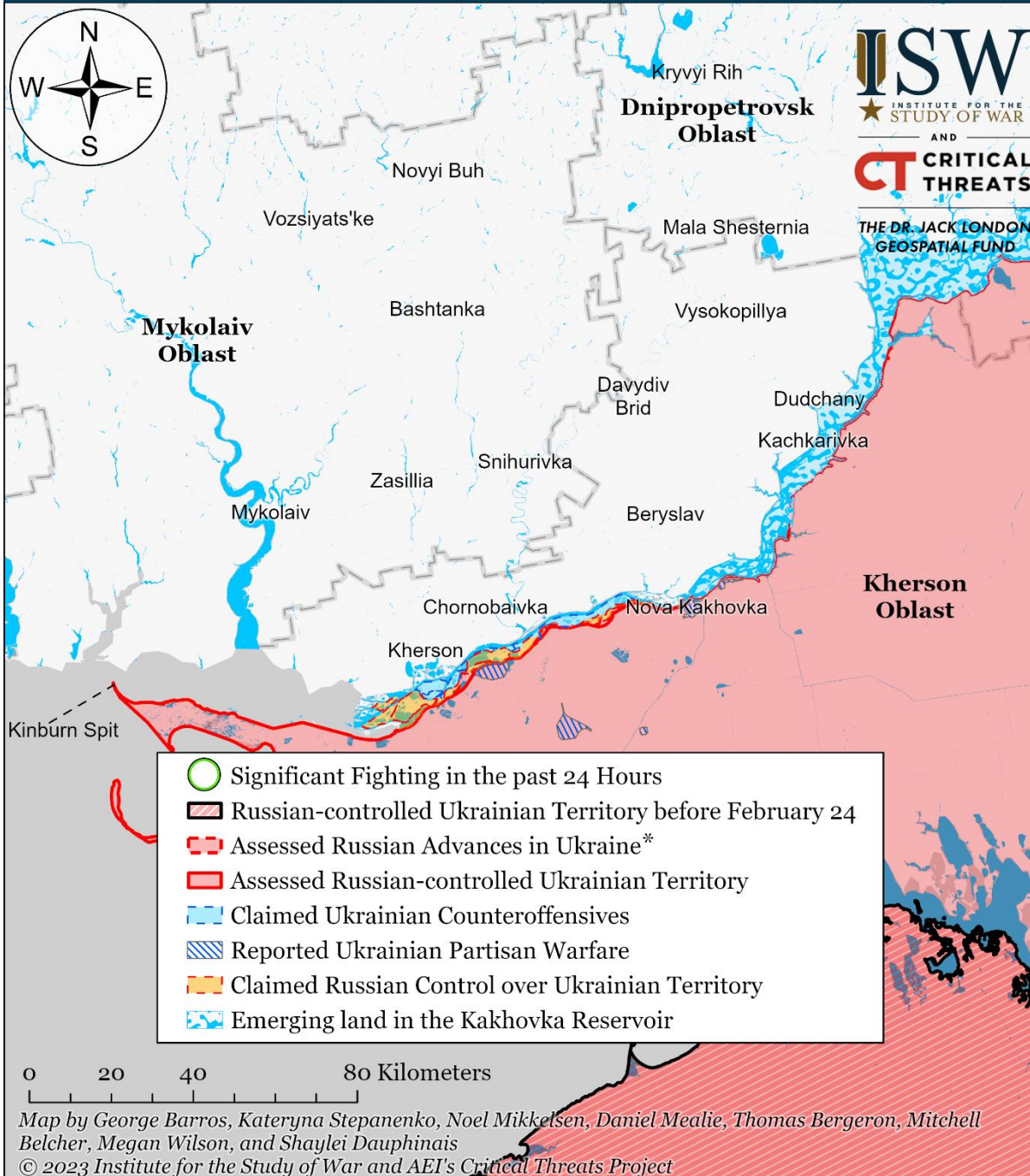
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

For details on Kherson Oblast see topline text.

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces struck a Russian rear area in southern Ukraine and targeted occupied Crimea on November 9. Kherson Oblast occupation head Vladimir Saldo claimed that Ukrainian forces launched two missiles at Skadovsk, Kherson Oblast and that Russian air defenses only intercepted one of the missiles.[62] Russian sources claimed that the Ukrainian forces struck civilian infrastructure in Skadovsk.[63] A Ukrainian news outlet and a Ukrainian military observer stated that Ukrainian forces struck a hotel in Skadovsk that Russian forces used to quarter Russian officers.[64] Ukrainian Mariupol Mayoral Advisor Petro Andryushchenko stated that Russian forces used the hotel as a command post.[65] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian air defenses intercepted a Ukrainian Neptune anti-ship missile off the coast of Crimea on November 9.[66] Russian sources amplified imagery purporting to show smoke clouds near Sevastopol following the interception.[67]



Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of November 9, 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.

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)

Russian authorities appear to be increasingly reliant on private security companies to protect domestic energy infrastructure from Ukrainian drone strikes on Russian far rear areas. Russian State Duma “Special Military Operation” Working Group Chairperson Andrei Turchak stated that the group submitted a bill for Duma consideration that will allow private security forces at Russian fuel and energy facilities to shoot down drones.[68] Turchak noted that only Russian law enforcement, security agencies, and certain private security companies with anti-terrorism specialties can legally shoot down drones.[69]

Russian National Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev claimed that roughly 410,000 people entered service with the Russian military between January 1 and November 9, 2023.[70] Medvedev previously stated that 385,000 people entered service as of October 25; 357,000 as of October 12; 325,000 as of September 26; and 280,000 as of September 3.[71] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russia will likely have recruited 450,000-460,000 personnel by the end of 2023 based on Medvedev’s statements.[72]

Russian federal subjects continue efforts to incentivize contract service with Russian volunteer formations. Lipetsk Oblast Head Igor Artamonov proposed on November 8 that Lipetsk Oblast should eliminate the requirement that volunteers recruited into Lipetsk Oblast regional volunteer formations need to be residents of Lipetsk Oblast.[73] Artamonov also proposed raising the one-time recruitment bonus for contract personnel from 50,000 rubles (\$542) to 250,000 rubles (\$2,712).[74] Chuvashia Republic Head Oleg Nikolaev announced on November 8 that the government approved a draft law that will award free plots of land for personal housing or farming for distinguished participants from Chuvashia in the war in Ukraine.[75] Nikolaev also stated that the government supported a proposal providing two free meals a day to schoolchildren of Russian personnel who are fighting or who have died in Ukraine.[76]

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

Nothing significant to report.

Activities in Russian-occupied areas (Russian objective: Consolidate administrative control of annexed areas; forcibly integrate Ukrainian citizens into Russian sociocultural, economic, military, and governance systems)

Occupation authorities reportedly continued efforts to militarize Ukrainian youth. Ukrainian Mariupol City Advisor Petro Andryushchenko stated on November 8 that occupation authorities created a new “professional military orientation” program for students in educational institutions in occupied Donetsk Oblast.[77] Andryushchenko stated that the program encourages students to serve and die for Russia. Andryushchenko also published photos of Russian military personnel and authorities training and indoctrinating students at a school in occupied Demianivka, Donetsk Oblast.[78]

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev met in Ankara for the 19th Russian-Kazakh Regional Cooperation Forum on November 9, where they reiterated boilerplate rhetoric portraying Russia as a valuable ally to Central Asian states.[79] Putin stated that Russia and Kazakhstan have begun constructing a joint production plant for butadiene, a necessary component of rubber, and have agreed to construct a plant to produce polyethylene.[80] Putin also stated that Russia and Kazakhstan agreed to develop logistics routes through Kazakhstan to Central Asia and towards China, including constructing a total of 1,300 kilometers of railway in the next three years.[81] Putin promoted military cooperation with Kazakhstan and stated that Russian forces help train Kazakhstan personnel and that Russia has licensed the production and servicing of Russian military equipment on Kazakh territory.[82] Putin and Tokayev also emphasized Russia and Kazakhstan's joint commitment to their states' strategic partnership and signed numerous bilateral agreements on infrastructure, agricultural, technological, and cultural cooperation at the forum.[83]

Some elements of the Russian ultranationalist information space are unsatisfied with the Kremlin's overly optimistic domestic portrayals of the war in Ukraine and failure to mobilize Russian society to a war-time footing. A prominent Russian milblogger criticized Russian media and television for falsely portraying the war as effectively won even though Ukrainian forces continue counteroffensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast and larger-than-usual ground operations in Kherson Oblast.[84] The milblogger warned that this framing of the war may provoke shock and fear in the Russian information space if Ukrainian forces achieve a great victory because Russian media has not prepared its consumers for such reports. The milblogger also criticized the Russian government for failing to mobilize the production capacity of the Russian defense industrial base (DIB), particularly of naval assets to replace Russian Black Sea Fleet (BSF) losses and regain dominance in the Black Sea.

Russia continues defensive posturing in Central Asia amid the war in Ukraine. The agreement between Russia and Kyrgyzstan creating a joint regional air defense network as part of the unified Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) air defense network came into force on November 9.[85] Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov announced during Putin's visit to the Russian military airbase in Kant, Kyrgyzstan on October 12 that the Kyrgyz parliament ratified this agreement on October 11.[86]

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)

The Belarusian Ministry of Defense (MoD) announced on November 9 that Belarusian missile and artillery forces will conduct management and combat trainings from November 9 to 11.[87]

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.



[1] https://t.me/dva_majors/28737 ; <https://t.me/wargonzo/16342> ;
<https://t.me/DnevnikDesantnika/4614> ; <https://t.me/DnevnikDesantnika/4628>

[2] https://t.me/dva_majors/28778

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