

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 13, 2023

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October 13, 2023, 6:45pm 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 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 October 13. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 14 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

NOTE: *ISW has added a new section on Russian information operations and narratives to the daily Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, found at the end of the update.*

Ongoing Russian offensive operations throughout the Avdiivka, Donetsk Oblast area on October 13 reportedly faced setbacks around the city. Russian sources claimed that Russian forces continued to attack areas north and south of Avdiivka, and geolocated footage published on October 12 and 13 indicates that Russian forces advanced south of Krasnohorivka (5km north of Avdiivka) and southeast of Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka).[1] Russian sources also published conflicting reports about previous claims by Russian sources of Russian control of the Avdiivka Coke Plant, and ISW has not observed any evidence to confirm that Russian forces control the plant as of publication.[2] Ukrainian military officials reported that Ukrainian forces continue to repel Russian attacks around Avdiivka.[3] A Russian milblogger noted that Ukrainian forces are using minefields to slow down Russian advances in the Avdiivka direction.[4] A Russian volunteer in the 4th Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR) Brigade (2nd Army Corps, Southern Military District) claimed that worn out barrels are reducing the accuracy of Russian artillery near Avdiivka, a complaint about Russian artillery that ISW has previously observed from Russian sources.[5] The volunteer assessed that Russian forces can “compress the [Ukrainian] perimeter” by capturing less fortified Ukrainian-held territory near Avdiivka, but expressed concern that Russian generals will misinterpret these limited advances and try to speed up offensive efforts towards Avdiivka. The volunteer noted that such a misinterpretation may lead Russian forces to “beat on concrete” fortifications until these forces run out.

The Russian military command appears to be restricting discussion of the Russian offensive operations around Avdiivka in the Russian information space, likely in an attempt to adapt to previous information shocks and control any narratives that emerge in the Russian information space around these operations. A prominent Russian milblogger claimed on October 12 that the Russian military command was “dispensing information [about Russian offensive operations] in doses,” but then claimed on October 13 that the Russian military command was “minimizing the release of information into the public domain” as the Russian military does not want “media hype” surrounding operations near Avdiivka.[6] Another Russian milblogger also claimed on October 13 that unspecified actors, likely Russian military leadership, instructed milbloggers to not discuss the details of the fighting near Avdiivka.[7] A Russian source stated that he supported the

Russian military's decision and urged milbloggers to discuss only information that does not affect Russian military operational security, whereas other Russian milbloggers noted that this is the time to figure out which of the Russian milbloggers are lying about the situation on the frontlines.[8] The Russian military command likely seeks to adjust for previous major offensives in which it lost control of perceptions of Russian actions in the Russian information space. Some milbloggers are following (and will likely continue to follow) the MoD-imposed narrative line, but this attempt at centralized control may provoke a backlash from select milbloggers.

The Kremlin is likely attempting to frame Russian offensive operations around Avdiivka and other localized efforts as Russian forces seizing the operational initiative in Ukraine.

Russian UN Ambassador Vasily Nebenzya claimed on October 13 that Ukrainian counteroffensive operations are "formally over" because Russian forces have switched to "active combat operations along almost the entire frontline." [9] The Kremlin is likely attempting to use Russian offensive operations around Avdiivka as well as localized efforts in other areas of the front to shift the Russian and international narratives to focus on Russian offensive operations and military capabilities. Ukraine is highly unlikely to have concluded its ongoing counteroffensive as Nebenzya claims, and as ISW has previously noted Ukrainian counteroffensive operations will likely continue into the winter months, though likely at a reduced pace and scale.[10]

Ukrainian forces conducted counteroffensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 13.

The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhia Oblast) direction and the Bakhmut direction.[11] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued unsuccessful attacks along the Klishchiivka-Andriivka-Kurdyumivka line (7-13km southwest of Bakhmut) and along the Robotyne-Verbove line (10km south to 18km southeast of Orikhiv).[12]

Russian forces continue to target Ukrainian critical infrastructure facilities with drone and missile strikes, as well as localized cross-border raids.

Spokesperson of the United Press Center of the Northern Direction Ukrainian Defense Forces, Colonel Yuriy Povh, reported on October 12 that Ukrainian forces repelled a Russian sabotage and reconnaissance group attempting to cross into Sumy Oblast and stated that these Russian forces likely aimed to reach a Ukrainian critical infrastructure facility.[13] Povh stated that Russian sabotage and reconnaissance groups have unsuccessfully attempted to cross the international border between Russia and Ukraine 10 times in the past two months.[14] Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Deputy Chief Major General Vadym Skibitskyi reported on October 13 that Russian forces are attempting to increase weapons production during the fall and winter in order to strike Ukrainian energy and other critical infrastructure.[15] Skibitskyi stated that Russian forces have decreased their use of air-launched missiles and more frequently use cruise missiles and Iskander ballistic missiles.[16] Skibitskyi also reported that Russia has resumed the production of Kalibr and Kh-101 cruise missiles but faces challenges in increasing the volume of production.[17]

Russian authorities arrested four lawyers who represent prominent opposition figures on extremism charges on October 13, likely to set conditions for the upcoming 2024 Russian presidential elections.

Russian authorities arrested three of imprisoned Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny's lawyers – Vadim Kobzev, Igor Sergunin, and Alexei Liptser – for allegedly participating in an extremist community.[18] Russian authorities also charged and fined Alexei Ladin, who represents many Crimean Tatars and Ukrainian citizens accused of terrorism, espionage, and participating in banned groups, for allegedly discrediting the Russian military and distributing extremist symbols.[19] Lawyer Alexander Molokhov, who represents imprisoned ardent nationalist and former Russian officer Igor Girkin, called on the Russian Federal Chamber of Lawyers

to conduct a one-day strike in solidarity with Kobzev, Sergunin, and Liptser and criticized the Russian government for prosecuting these lawyers for “connecting Navalny with the outside world.”^[20]

Key Takeaways:

- **Ongoing Russian offensive operations throughout the Avdiivka, Donetsk Oblast area on October 13 reportedly faced setbacks around the city.**
- **The Russian military command appears to be restricting discussion of the Russian offensive operations around Avdiivka in the Russian information space, likely in an attempt to adapt to previous information shocks and control any narratives that emerge in the Russian information space around these operations.**
- **The Kremlin is likely attempting to frame Russian offensive operations around Avdiivka and other localized efforts as Russian forces seizing the operational initiative in Ukraine.**
- **Ukrainian forces conducted counteroffensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 13.**
- **Russian forces continue to target Ukrainian critical infrastructure facilities with drone and missile strikes, as well as localized cross-border raids.**
- **Russian authorities arrested four lawyers who represent prominent opposition figures on extremism charges on October 13, likely to set conditions for the upcoming 2024 Russian presidential elections.**
- **Russian forces continued offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, Avdiivka, and Donetsk City, and in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area and western Zaporizhia Oblast and advanced in various sectors of the front.**
- **A Ukrainian military intelligence official reported that Russian forces are struggling to equip newly-formed military formations.**
- **Ukrainian partisans reportedly targeted Russian military assets in rear areas in southern Ukraine on October 12 and 13.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of October 13, 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.

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 these Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict, Geneva Conventions, and 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 in the Kupyansk direction on October 13 and reportedly advanced. The North Ossetian “Storm Ossetia” and “Alania” Russian volunteer battalions claimed that Russian forces made “serious advances” in the Kupyansk direction but did not provide any evidence for this claim.[21] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces advanced towards Krokhmalne (24km southeast of Kupyansk) but did not specify the scope of the advance.[22] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces seized a few Ukrainian positions near Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk) and Petropavlivka (6km east of Kupyansk) but noted that it is too early to speculate on Russian advances on this front.[23] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Synkivka, Ivanivka (19km southeast of Kupyansk), and Kyslivka (21km southeast of Kupyansk).[24]

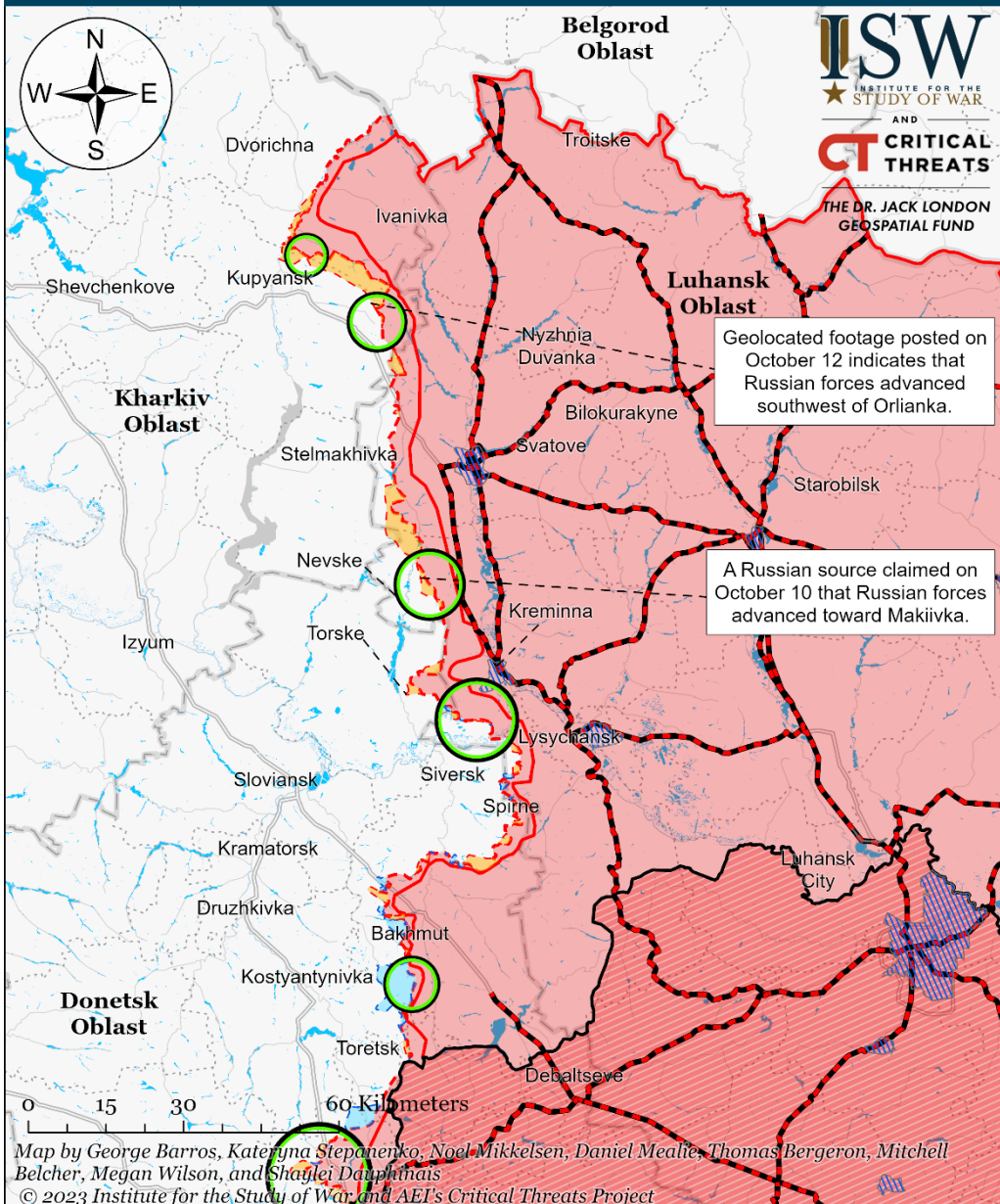
Russian forces continued offensive operations along the Svatove-Kreminna line on October 13 but did not make any confirmed territorial gains. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces seized several Ukrainian positions west of Svatove but did not provide additional information on the claimed advance.[25] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults near Makiivka (20km southwest of Svatove), southwest of Kreminna, and in the Serebryanske forest area south of Kreminna.[26] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked towards Serebryanka (12km southwest of Kreminna) from the Kuzmyne (3km southwest of Kreminna) direction in an effort to break through Ukrainian defenses and reach the Siverskyi Donets River.[27] The milblogger added that Russian forces attacked near Torske (14km west of Kreminna) in an effort to cut off the Ukrainian supply route over the Oskil River. Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov indicated that the Chechen “Amur” group of “Akhmat” Spetsnaz forces is operating in the Serebryanske forest area.[28]

A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the newly-formed Russian 25th Combined Arms Army (CAA) face organization problems that are slowing down Russian offensive operations on the Svatove-Kreminna line, confirming ISW’s prior assessments.[29] The milblogger claimed that elements of the

25th CAA, which recently deployed to the Kreminna area, are conducting a "crawling offensive" due to their lack of combat experience and organizational errors that affect their ability to execute orders from above.^[30] ISW previously assessed that the 25th CAA is likely largely combat ineffective due to its rushed deployment to the frontlines.^[31]

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Ivanivka, Synkivka, Dibrova (3km southwest of Kreminna), Yampolivka (16km west of Kreminna), Torske salient, and Serebryanske forest area.^[32]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of October 13, 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.

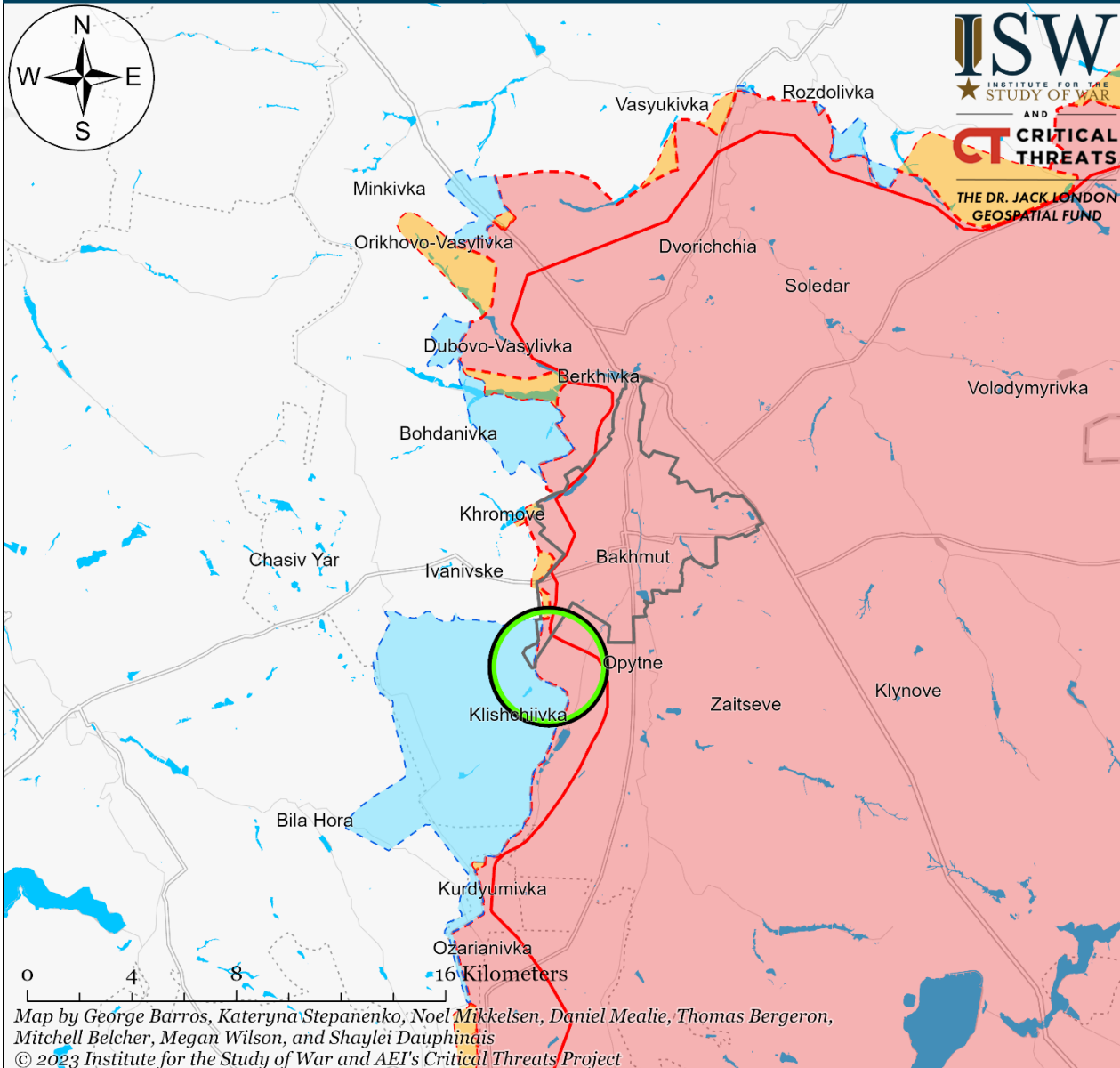
Note: A Russian source claimed on October 13 that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian attack near Klishchiivka and were able to penetrate up to half a kilometer into Ukrainian defenses. A Russian source claimed on October 11 that Russian forces advanced approximately 1.5 kilometers in the Ivanivka and Kyslivka directions. A Russian source claimed on October 9 that Russian forces advanced up to one kilometer near Makiivka.

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 conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut on October 13 and did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued assault operations south of Bakhmut.[33] Russian milbloggers claimed that fighting is ongoing near Orikhovo-Vasylivka (10km northwest of Bakhmut) and along the Klishchiivka-Andriivka-Kurdyumivka line (7-13km southwest of Bakhmut).[34]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut on October 13 and made limited gains. Geolocated footage published on October 13 indicates that Russian forces made limited gains southwest of Zaliznyanske (13km north of Bakhmut).[35] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced up to half of a kilometer near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut), though ISW has not observed evidence of this claim.[36] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces counterattacked near Andriivka.[37]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of October 13, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



- 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

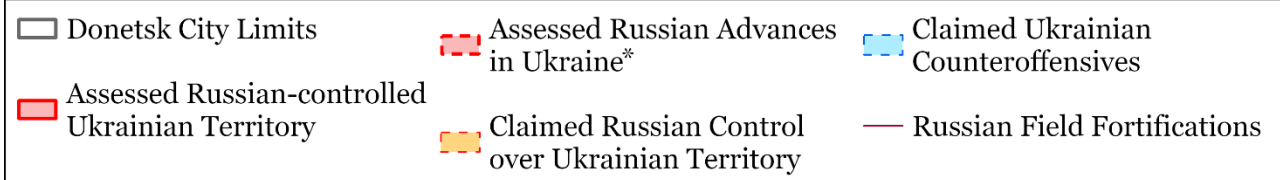
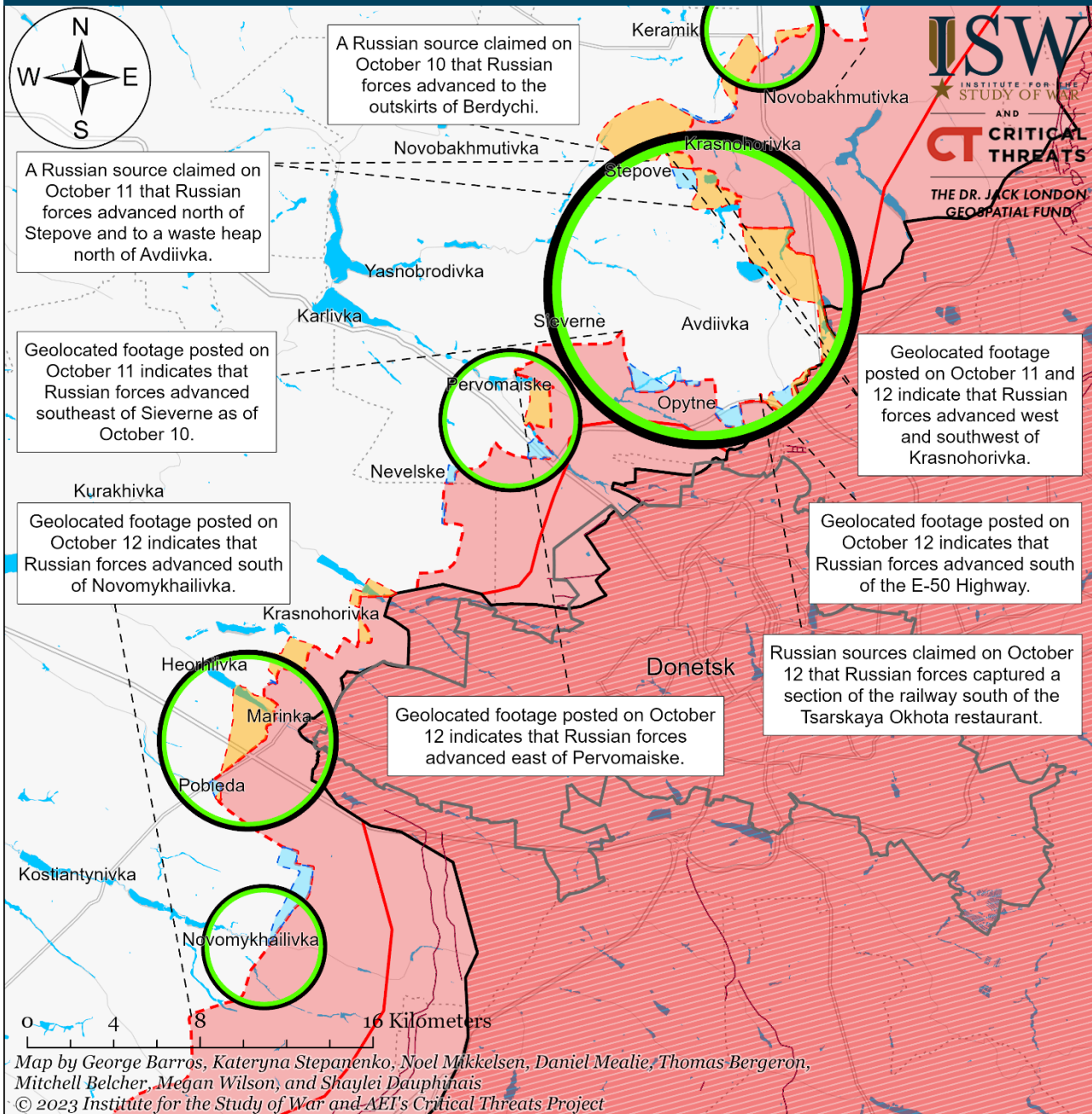
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: A Russian source claimed on October 13 that Russian forces successfully repelled a Ukrainian attack near Klishechiivka and were able to penetrate up to half a kilometer into Ukrainian defenses. Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash stated on October 12 that Ukrainian forces advanced several hundred meters in the Bakhmut direction.

Russian forces conducted offensive operations around Avdiivka on October 13 and advanced north and southwest of the city. Geolocated footage posted on October 12 and 13 indicates that Russian forces advanced south of Krasnohorivka (5km north of Avdiivka) and southeast of Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka).[38] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces are advancing from Vodyane (6km west of Avdiivka) and Opytne (3km southwest of Avdiivka) and in unspecified areas near Avdiivka.[39] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Avdiivka, Tonenke (5km northwest of Avdiivka), Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka), Lastochkyne (6km west of Avdiivka), Pervomaiske, Keramik (14km northwest of Avdiivka), Netaylove (14km southwest of Avdiivka), and Nevelske (14km southwest of Avdiivka).[40] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces attacked near Berdychi (9km northwest of Avdiivka) and near the railway line immediately northeast of Stepove.[41] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces are clearing the area northeast of the Avdiivka Coke Plant, and another Russian source claimed that Russian forces have not captured the Avdiivka Coke Plant itself.[42] A Ukrainian commander operating near Avdiivka told the *Washington Post* in an article published on October 12 that Russian forces “concentrated up to three fresh brigades” in the Avdiivka direction.[43] Footage published on October 13 purportedly shows elements of the 114th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People’s Republic Army Corps) operating south of Krasnohorivka.[44]

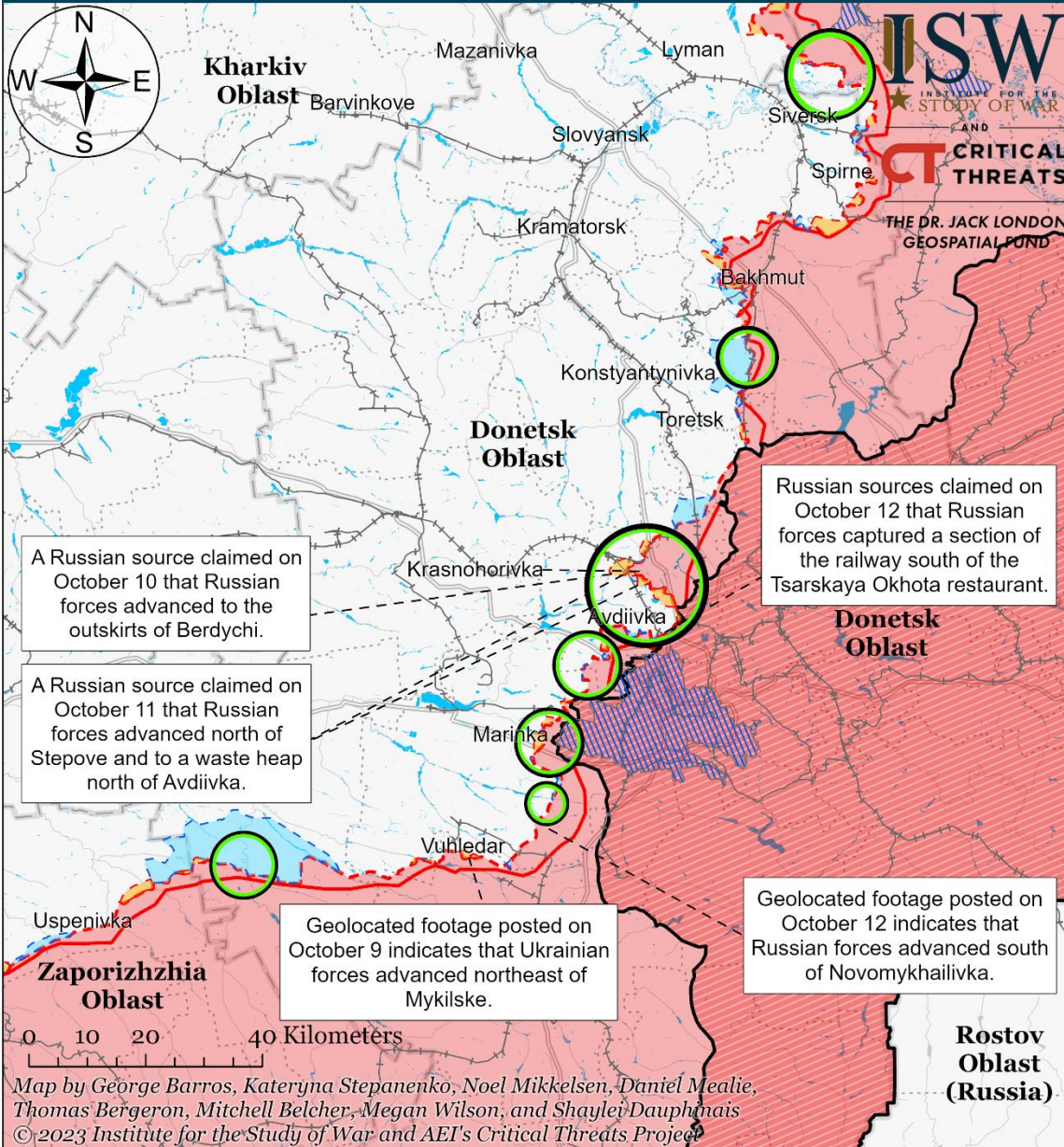
Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Donetsk City on October 13 but did not make any confirmed advances. A Russian milblogger claimed that a Russian armored assault group captured several unspecified Ukrainian positions south of Novomykhailivka, though ISW has not observed evidence to support this claim.[45] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Marinka (on the southwestern outskirts of Donetsk City), Pobieda (5km southwest of Donetsk City), and Novomykhailivka (12km southwest of Donetsk City).[46]

Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of October 13, 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.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of October 13, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



A Russian source claimed on October 10 that Russian forces advanced to the outskirts of Berdychi.

A Russian source claimed on October 11 that Russian forces advanced north of Stepove and to a waste heap north of Avdiivka.

Russian sources claimed on October 12 that Russian forces captured a section of the railway south of the Tsarskaya Okhota restaurant.

Geolocated footage posted on October 9 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced northeast of Mykilske.

Geolocated footage posted on October 12 indicates that Russian forces advanced south of Novomykhailivka.

- 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 reportedly did not conduct any offensive actions in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 13. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces did not conduct any assaults north of Pryyutne (14km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) over the past day.[47] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked near Pryyutne on October 12.[48] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled eight Ukrainian attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area during the past week.[49]

Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 13 and did not advance. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on October 13 that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka).[50] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces counterattacked near Novodonetske (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka) on October 12.[51] A Russian milblogger published footage on October 13 claiming to show elements of the Russian 36th Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade (29th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) operating near Mykilske (33km southeast of Velyka Novosilka and 4km southwest of Vuhledar).[52]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of October 13, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



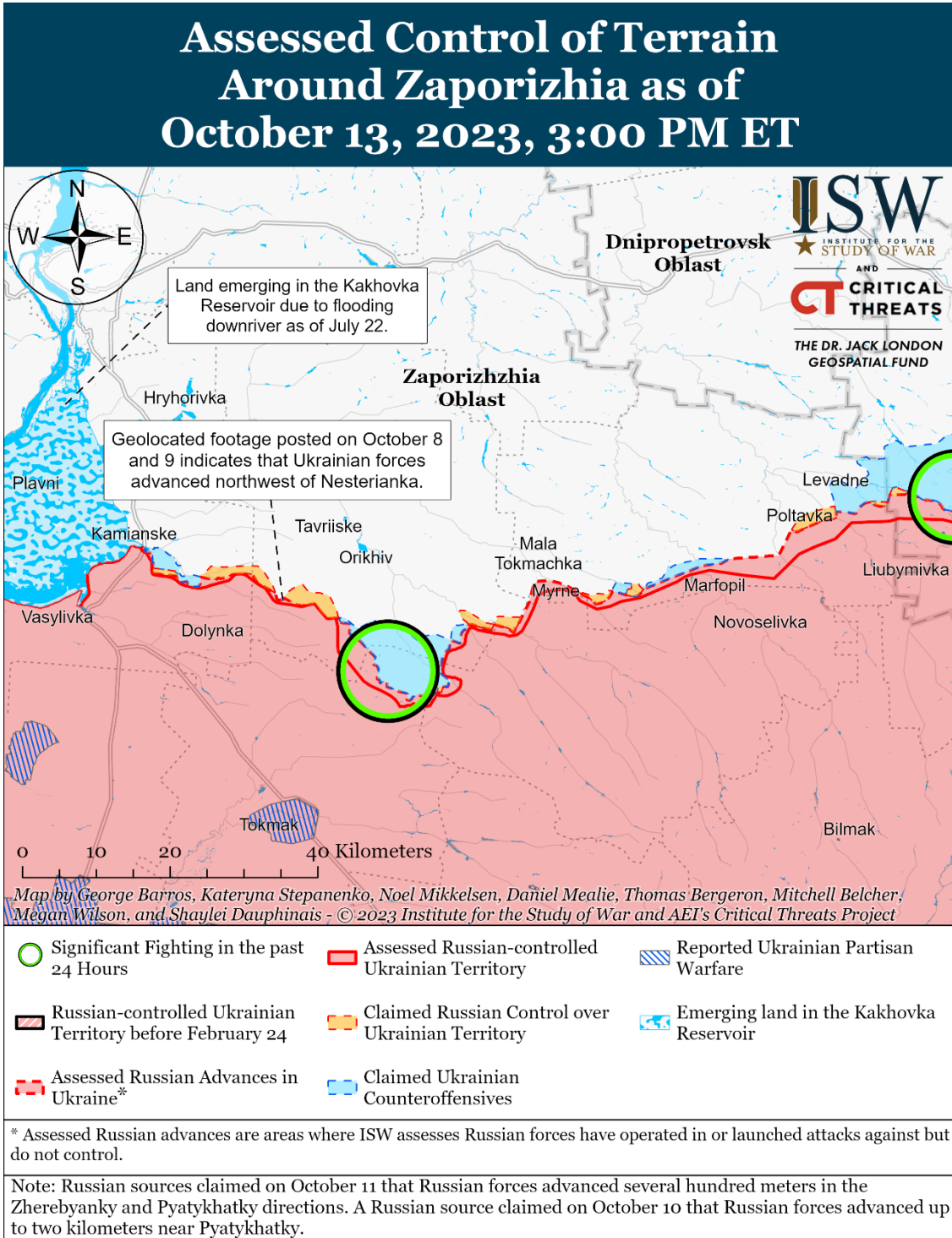
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Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Megan Wilson, and Shaylei Dauphinais
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- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed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

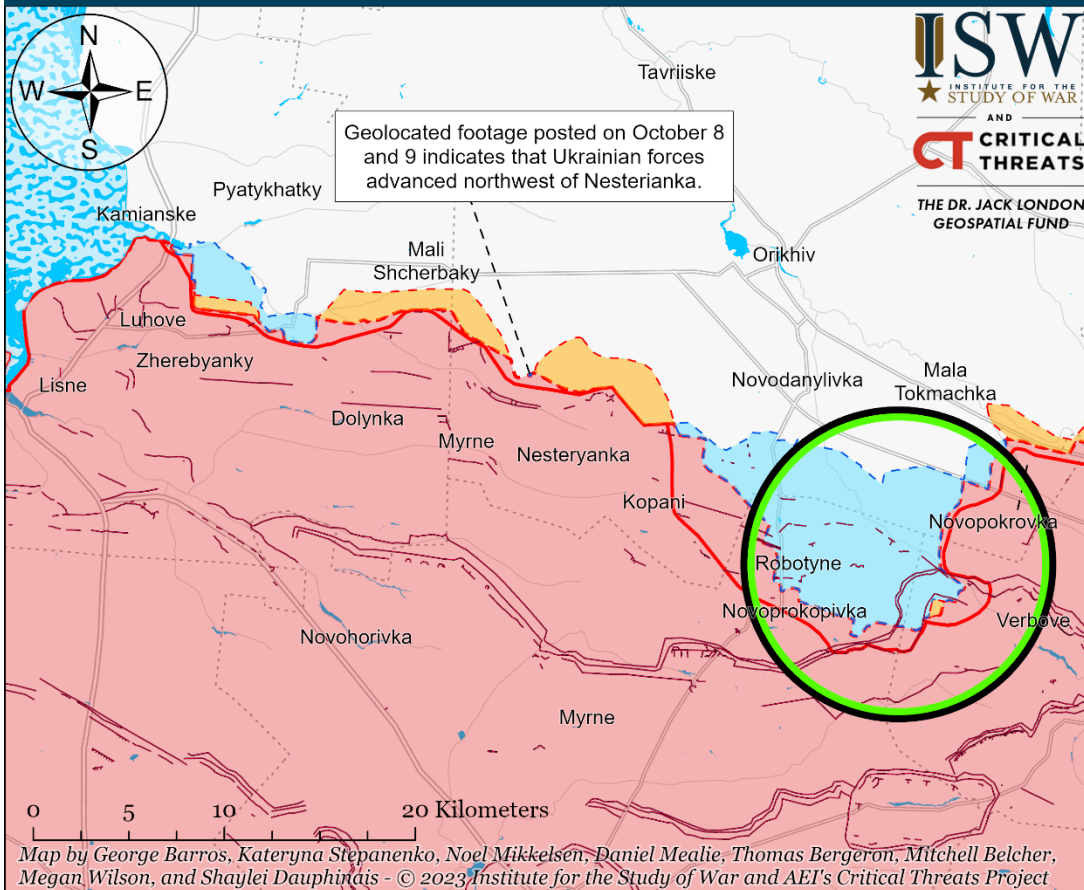
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Ukrainian forces reportedly conducted unsuccessful attacks in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on October 13. Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces continued unsuccessful attacks along the Robotyne-Verbove line (10km south to 18km southeast of Orikhiv) on October 12 and 13.[53] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Ukrainian forces also unsuccessfully attacked Russian positions in Novoprokopivka (13km south of Orikhiv and 2km south of Robotyne) on October 12.[54] The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Verbove and Robotyne over the past week.[55]



Russian forces conducted assaults in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 13 and marginally advanced. Geolocated footage published on October 13 indicates that Russian forces marginally advanced north of Kopani (11km southwest of Orikhiv and 5km northwest of Robotyne).[56] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Robotyne.[57] A Russian milblogger claimed on October 12 that Russian forces recently improved their positions near Pyatykhatky (25km southwest of Orikhiv and 29km northwest of Robotyne).[58] A Russian milblogger published footage on October 13 claiming to show elements of the Russian 108th Air Assault (VDV) Regiment (7th VDV Division) operating near Verbove.[59]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of October 13, 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
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.

Note: Russian sources claimed on October 11 that Russian forces advanced several hundred meters in the Zherebyanky and Pyatykhatky directions. A Russian source claimed on October 10 that Russian forces advanced up to two kilometers near Pyatykhatky.

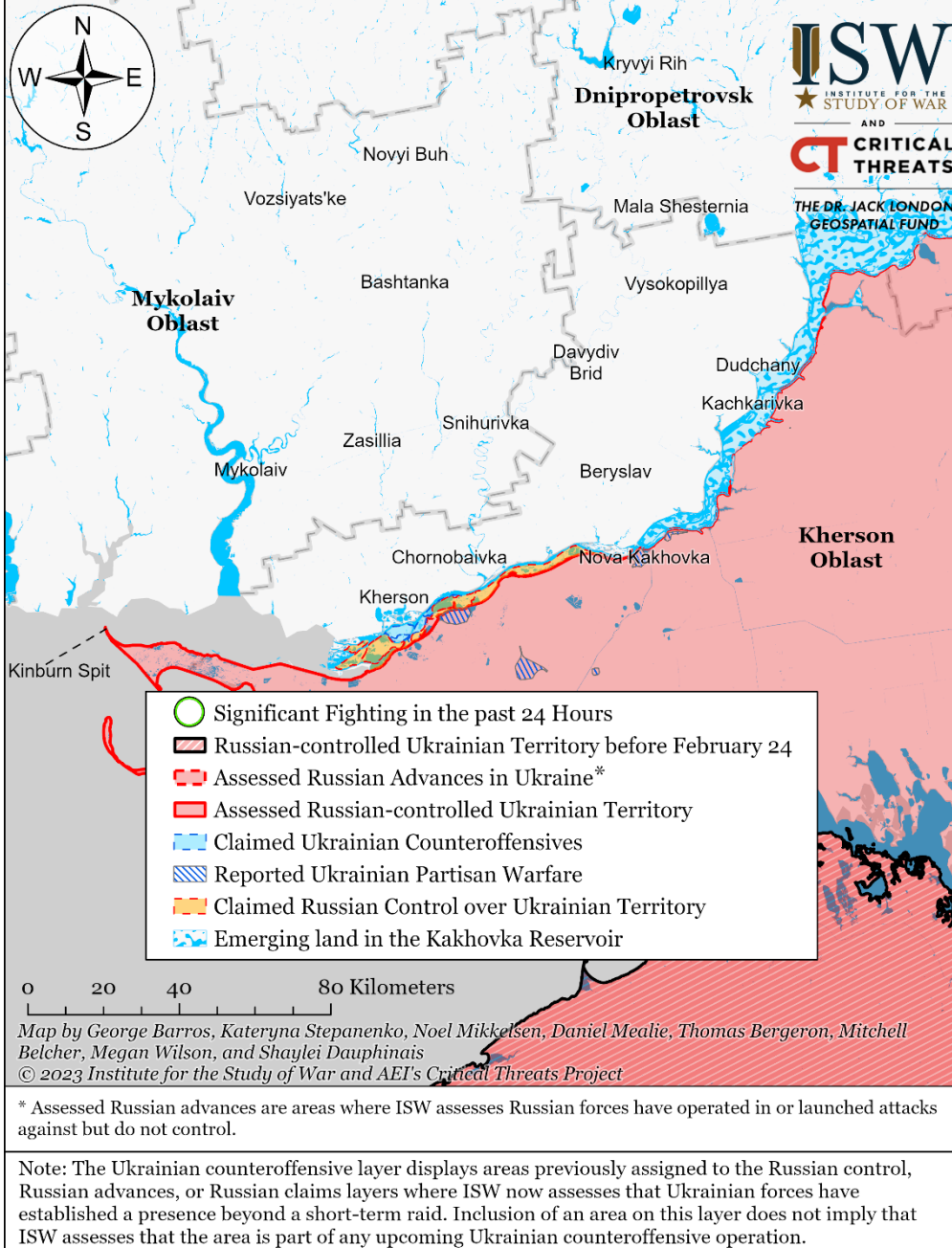
Russian forces are reportedly conducting defensive preparations in occupied Kherson Oblast and Crimea amid continued concern over a possible future Ukrainian attempt to cross the Dnipro River. Russian sources, including the Russian MoD, claimed on October 13 that Ukrainian forces continued efforts to establish long-term positions on the Dnipro River islands and east (left) bank Kherson Oblast.[60] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that Russian forces are actively equipping forward positions, laying mines, and engineering fortifications on the east (left) bank of the Dnipro River.[61] Mashovets reported that Russian forces have laid at least three minefields near Kakhovka (65km northeast of Kherson City) and Malokakhovka (61km northeast of Kherson City) and are quickly restoring the Kerch Strait Bridge in order to support Russian military logistics in southern Ukraine in the winter.

Mashovets also stated on October 13 that the Russian military command is adjusting its posture in the Kherson and Crimea directions in response to concerns about the possibility of a large-scale Ukrainian crossing of the Dnipro River and the development of Ukrainian offensive operations targeting Crimea.[62] Mashovets stated that Russian command reinforced the “Dnepr” Grouping of Forces and the Crimean Civil Defense Guards, the main forces defending in this area of the front, with elements of the Russian 70th Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) and unspecified Russian units based in Crimea. Mashovets reported that the Russian “Dnepr” Grouping of Forces and Crimean Civil Defense Guards consist of elements of the 49th CAA (SMD), recently formed 18th CAA (SMD), and 2nd Army Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR) Army Corps. Mashovets stated that the total number of Russian forces defending in this area is just over 75,000 personnel, including mobilized Ukrainians from occupied Crimea, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts.

Mashovets stated that the Russian “Dnepr” Grouping of Forces consists of: eight motorized rifle, naval infantry, and coastal defense brigades and consolidated tactical groups; 17 motorized rifle, tank, air assault, and naval infantry regiments; three consolidated tactical detachments, including BARS (Russian Combat Army Reserve); and one reserve motorized rifle regiment.[63] Mashovets stated that the Russian “Dnepr” Grouping of Forces is only 60 to 75 percent staffed but noted that this grouping has largely avoided combat operations and that the Russian military command plans to further reinforce the grouping with personnel and equip it with equipment.[64] Mashovets stated that the Crimean Civil Defense Guards consists of: seven motorized rifle, rifle, VDV, and naval infantry battalions with two tank companies as reinforcement; seven motorized rifle, airborne, and infantry brigades; nine motorized rifle battalions, and seven VDV battalions.[65] Mashovets added that Russian military command is forming new units comprised of mobilized personnel in the Crimea direction, including the 126th Separate Coastal Defense Brigade (22nd Army Corps, 18th CAA), the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet), and an additional unspecified motorized rifle battalion. Mashovets stated that Russian military command is also forming new units subordinate to the Russian 47th Motorized Rifle Division (40th Army Corps, 18th CAA) and the 70th Motorized Rifle Division in occupied Crimea and Rostov Oblast.

Russian and Ukrainian sources confirmed recent Ukrainian strikes on Russian ships in the Black Sea. Russian sources, including a Kremlin-affiliated milblogger, confirmed reports that the Russian patrol ship *Pavel Derzhavin* sustained minor damage due to a Ukrainian strike near occupied Sevastopol in the Black Sea on October 11.[66] Ukrainian outlet *Ukrainskaya Pravda* reported on October 13 that sources in the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) confirmed that Ukrainian forces conducted a naval drone strike on the *Pavel Derzhavin* on October 11 and another naval drone strike on the Russian *Buyan* missile carrier on October 13.[67]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of October 13, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

A Ukrainian military intelligence official reported that Russian forces are struggling to equip newly-formed military formations. Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Deputy Chief Major General Vadym Skibitskyi stated that Russia specifically aims to equip the 104th Airborne (VDV) Division and continues forming the 25th Combined Arms Army (CAA) but is struggling to equip these formations.[68] Skibitskyi stated that Russia aims to produce 2.1 million rounds of ammunition

annually by 2024 but will need assistance from other countries to achieve this goal. Skibitskyi also stated that Russia is actively removing heavy equipment and artillery systems from storage and restoring them to equip these new formations.

US National Security Council Spokesperson John Kirby stated on October 13 that North Korea has delivered over 1,000 containers of military equipment and munitions for Russia to use in its war in Ukraine.[69] The White House released satellite images depicting shipping containers moving from Najin, North Korea to Dunay, Russia between September 7 and October 1, 2023. Kirby's statement confirms a recent Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) report stating that rail traffic between North Korea and Russia significantly increased in mid to late September and assessing that the shipments include munitions.[70]

A claimed Wagner serviceman alleged that Russia has given former Wagner Group fighters immunity from the prosecution of crimes for one year after service.[71] ISW has frequently reported on former Wagner personnel accused of committing violent crimes since returning to Russia from Ukraine.[72] The Wagner fighter also claimed that Wagner fighters cannot travel abroad for one year after service.[73] The official Wagner Group Telegram account claimed that this statement is false, however.[74]

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)

Ukrainian partisans reportedly targeted Russian military assets in rear areas in southern Ukraine on October 12 and 13. Ukrainian Mariupol Mayoral Advisor Petro Andryushchenko reported on October 12 that Ukrainian partisans burned down a warehouse storing Russian combat engineering equipment and supplies for constructing fortifications near Mariupol.[75] The Ukrainian Special Operations Forces Command reported that a Ukrainian special forces resistance unit successfully blew up a section of a railway track, which Russian forces use to supply ammunition and fuel to troops operating in the Zaporizhia direction (western Zaporizhia Oblast) on October 13.[76] The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported that the attack damaged 150 meters of railway tracks and a train that transported logistics and looted goods between Melitopol and occupied Crimea daily.[77]

Russian Information Operations and Narratives:

NOTE: ISW continues to assess that the Kremlin has and will continue to exploit the Israel-Hamas war to advance several Russian information operations about Russia's invasion of Ukraine. However, ISW has notably not observed any evidence – and does not assess – that the Kremlin supported, directed, or is involved in the Israel-Hamas war.

Russian President Vladimir Putin reiterated multiple standard Kremlin narratives against the West at a meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Member States on October 13. Putin repeated the false narrative that the West and Ukraine initiated the conflict in Ukraine in 2014.[78] Putin also claimed that the West's policies caused the Israel-Hamas war and offered Russia as a mediator in the conflict. Putin did not present any new or noteworthy narratives during his speech.

Putin attempted to allay claims that the Russian-Armenian relationship is deteriorating. Putin claimed that he has “constantly” been in contact with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and that

Armenia is not leaving the CIS.[79] Putin also claimed that the Armenian and Russian governments continue to work together and that he invited Pashinyan to Russia. ISW previously reported that Armenia has been ostensibly distancing itself from Russia after a decades-long security relationship.[80]

Putin seemingly clarified the Kremlin's stance on the return to Russia of Russian citizens who left the country after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, possibly in response to recent contradictory statements from Russian government officials about the matter.[81] Putin claimed that Russians who wish to return have the right to choose where they live, but that the "overwhelming majority of [Russian] citizens" may treat returnees who "behaved immorally towards Russia" differently upon their return, implying returning citizens will not face legal action but threatening them with pariah status.[82]

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) reported that elements of the Belarusian 120th Separate Guards Mechanized Brigade conducted battalion tactical exercises at the 227th Combined Arms Training Ground on October 12.[83]

ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian military activity in Belarus as part of ongoing Kremlin efforts to increase their control over Belarus and other Russian actions in 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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