

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 24, 2023

Angelica Evans, Nicole Wolkov, Karolina Hird, and Frederick W. Kagan

October 24, 2023, 5:00pm 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 1:00pm ET on October 24. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 25 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in eastern and southern Ukraine on October 24 and advanced south of Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast. Geolocated footage published on October 23 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced east of Andriivka (10 km southwest of Bakhmut), and geolocated footage published on October 24 indicates that Ukrainian forces marginally advanced west of Robotyne.[1] The Ukrainian General Staff also reported on October 24 that Ukrainian forces continued offensive actions south of Bakhmut and achieved partial success near Robotyne.[2]

Russia appears to be increasingly supplementing the use of Shahed-131/136 drones with cheaper and lighter domestically produced drone variants during strikes on Ukrainian infrastructure. Russian media speculated on October 23 that Russian forces used new long-range "Italmas" drones and Italmas variants for the first time in Ukraine during a drone attack on Kyiv Oblast.[3] Russian sources noted that Italmas drones are lighter than Shaheds and are harder to detect and shoot down. Russian milbloggers noted that Italmas drones are cheaper than Shaheds, which means that they can be more widely manufactured and used, but that they deliver lighter payloads, which restricts their usefulness in isolation.[4] Russian sources noted, therefore, that Russian forces will likely use the Italmas drones in tandem with Shaheds.[5] ISW previously assessed that Russia is likely trying to expand and diversify its arsenal of drones, missiles, and guided bombs for strikes against Ukrainian critical infrastructure in advance of the fall-winter season, and increased use of Italmas drones is likely part of the wider munitions diversification effort.[6]

Russian authorities are intensifying mobilization efforts targeting Central Asian migrant communities in Russia. Russian Internal Affairs (MVD) Minister Vladimir Kolokoltsev met with the MVD board to discuss "migration problems" and "ethnic crime" and insinuated that migrants commit crimes at a higher rate than natural born Russian citizens.[7] Kolokoltsev defended recent Russian law enforcement mobilization raids on migrant communities and claimed that Russian law enforcement is enforcing standard legal norms.[8] A Russian insider source claimed that the Russian Investigative Committee is conducting investigations into naturalized migrants with Russian citizenship and is reopening previously terminated and canceled criminal cases in order to mobilize migrants to fight in Ukraine.[9] The insider source also claimed that the Russian Investigative Committee will now investigate migrants for committing any offense, even minor ones, and will expand that individual's investigation to include their friends and family. The insider source claimed

that unspecified actors, possibly the MVD or MVD Head Alexander Bastrykin, ordered Russian state media to increase reporting about ethnic crime in Russia, likely to set informational conditions for further mobilization raids on migrant communities.[10] Bastrykin has continually advocated for the targeted mobilization of migrants with Russian citizenship, in line with Russian law enforcement's recent expansion of its efforts to detain and forcibly register migrants with Russian citizenship for military service.[11]

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky highlighted diminishing Russian control over the Black Sea and Ukraine's temporary grain corridors during a speech at the Crimean Platform summit on October 24. Zelensky stated that Russia attempted to create the illusion that Russian dominance of the Black Sea was insurmountable but said that this illusion is fading as the Russia Black Sea Fleet (BSF) gradually "flees" Crimea and increasingly struggles to operate in the western Black Sea.[12] Zelensky stated that the Russian authorities recently announced the creation of a new naval base for BSF assets in occupied Ochamchire, Abkhazia, far from the reach of long-range Ukrainian missiles and naval drones. ISW has previously reported on the impact of Ukraine's strike campaign against Crimea and BSF assets and the construction of a permanent Russian naval base in Abkhazia.[13] Zelensky added that Russian forces no longer have a completely reliable logistical route between Crimea and mainland Russia. Zelensky noted that Ukraine has launched new temporary export routes from the Danube port in Odesa Oblast through the Black Sea and the overland "Solidarity Lanes" through Europe.[14]

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in eastern and southern Ukraine on October 24 and advanced south of Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast.**
- **Russia appears to be increasingly supplementing the use of Shahed-131/136 drones with cheaper and lighter domestically produced drone variants during strikes on Ukrainian infrastructure.**
- **Russian authorities are intensifying mobilization efforts targeting Central Asian migrant communities in Russia.**
- **Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky highlighted diminishing Russian control over the Black Sea and Ukraine's temporary grain corridors during a speech at the Crimean Platform summit on October 24.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Avdiivka on October 24 and made confirmed advances northeast of Avdiivka.**
- **Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces maintain some positions in Krynyky (30km east of Kherson City and 2km from the Dnipro River) and continued limited attacks on the east (left) bank of the Dnipro River.**
- **The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD)-affiliated "Redut" private military company (PMC) is reportedly trying to recruit women into combat roles.**

- **Russian occupation authorities continue to establish programs to forcibly deport Ukrainian children to Russia.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of October 24, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

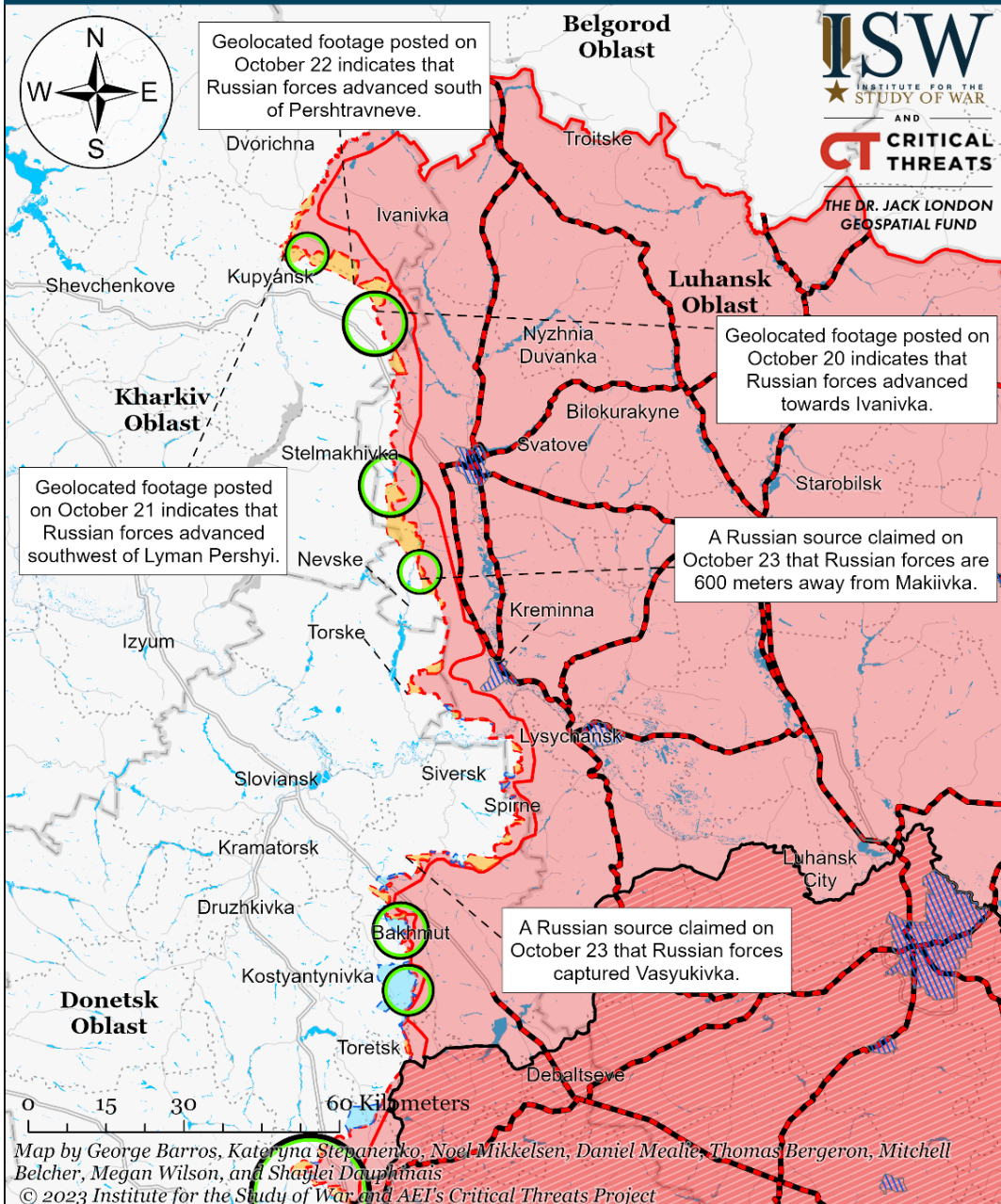
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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 along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on October 24 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled unsuccessful Russian attacks in the Kupyansk area near Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk) and Ivanivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk) and in the Svatove area near Makiivka (20km southwest of Svatove) and Nadiya (15km west of Svatove).[15] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces continued offensive operations in the direction of Kupyansk, and one milblogger reported that there is fighting near Stepova Novoselivka (18km southeast of Kupyansk).[16] One Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces went on the offensive near Kreminna and captured a Ukrainian stronghold in an unspecified location near Kreminna.[17] Another milblogger claimed that there are meeting engagements in the Serebryanske forest area near Dibrova (5km southwest of Kreminna).[18]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on October 24 and marginally advanced. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Synkivka, Ivanivka, and Serhiivka (12km southwest of Svatove), as well as west of Kreminna near Yampolivka and Dibrova.[19] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Raihorodka (12km west of Svatove) and pushed Russian forces out of some positions that have now become a contested "grey zone." [20]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of October 24, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

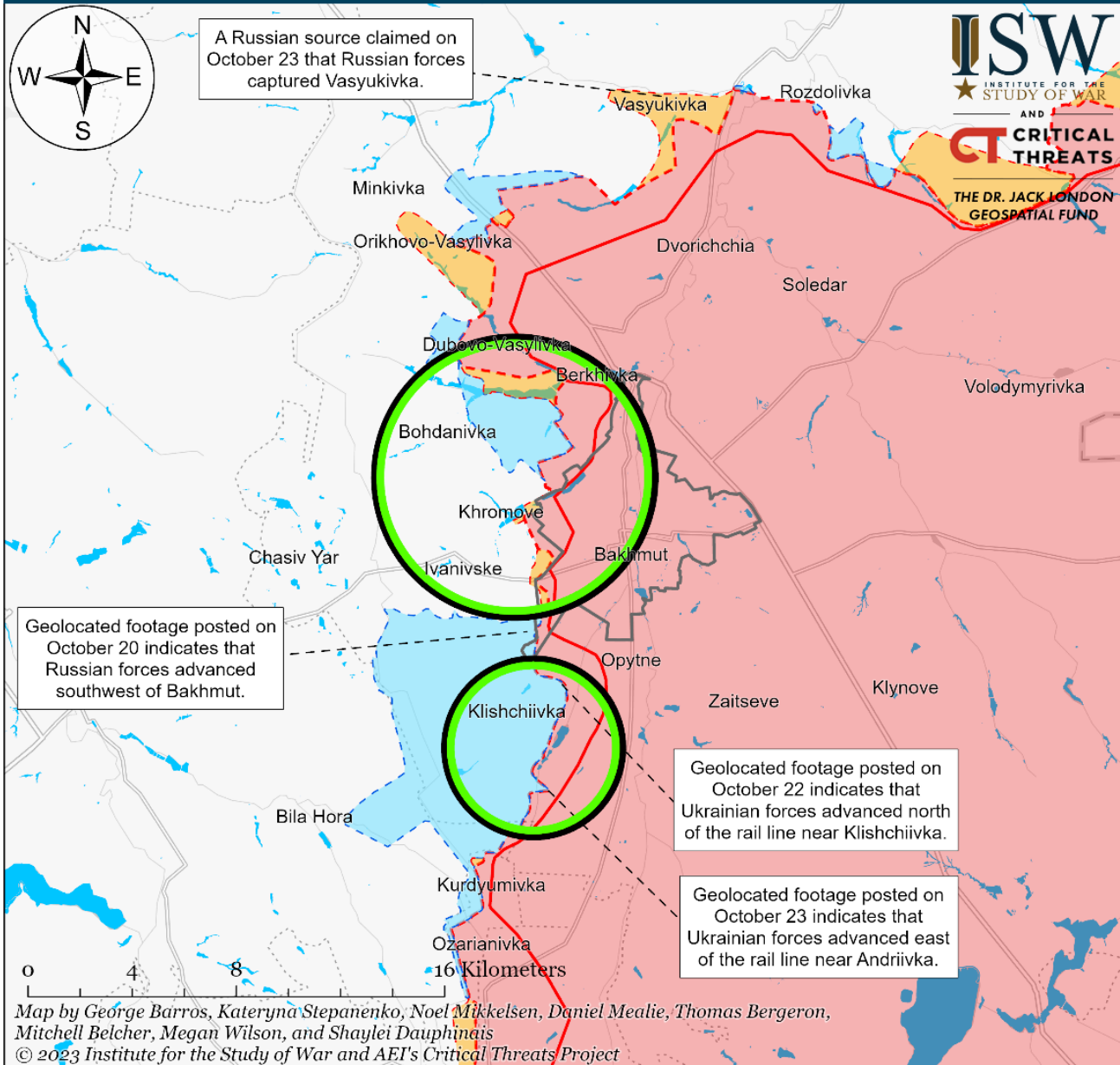
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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 24 and made confirmed advances. Geolocated footage published on October 23 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced east of Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut) beyond the railway line.^[21] A Russian source claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced slightly east of Andriivka and that Ukrainian forces are near Odrativka (7km south of Bakhmut).^[22] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian attack and struck Ukrainian forces near Bohdanivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut) and Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut).^[23] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian attack near Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut).^[24] Ukrainian military analyst Colonel Petro Chernyk stated that Ukrainian forces hold positions on all the dominant heights near Bakhmut.^[25]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut on October 24 and did not make confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Bohdanivka, Khromove (immediately west of Bakhmut), Klishchiivka, and Andriivka.^[26] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked from Berkhivka (4km north of Bakhmut) and forced Ukrainian forces to retreat up to 1.5km, though ISW has not observed visual evidence confirming this claim.^[27] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces captured Vasyukivka (16km north of Bakhmut), though ISW can only confirm that Russian forces hold positions within 1km of Vasyukivka at the closest point.^[28] Footage published on October 23 purportedly shows units of the “Lynx” Spetsnaz Detachment and elements of the 1st “Wolves” Airborne (VDV) Infantry Brigade repelling a Ukrainian attack in an unspecified area along the E40 Slovyansk-Bakhmut highway and elements of the 106th VDV Division operating near Vasyukivka.^[29] Footage published on October 24 purportedly shows drone operators of the BARS-13 Battalion (Russian Combat Reserve) operating south of Bakhmut.^[30]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of October 24, 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

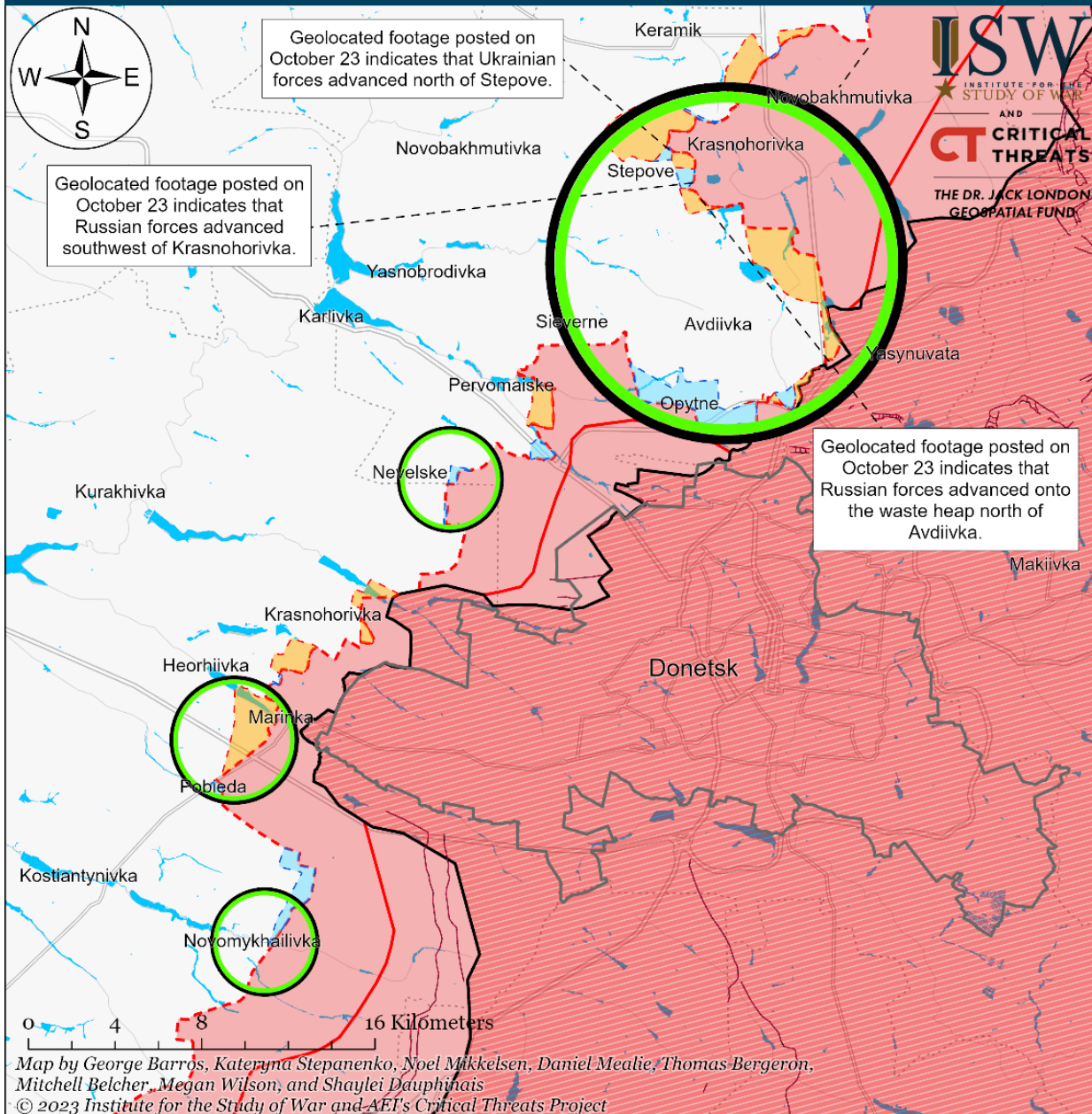
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: A Ukrainian source claimed on October 24 that Ukrainian forces control all of the dominant heights near Bakhmut. A Russian source claimed on October 24 that Russian forces pushed Ukrainian forces back 1.5 kilometers near Berkhivka.

Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Avdiivka on October 24 and made confirmed advances. Geolocated footage published on October 23 and 24 indicates that elements of the 114th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] Army Corps) advanced to part of the waste heap (northeast of Avdiivka) and that Russian forces advanced southwest of Krasnohorivka (5km northeast of Avdiivka) and north of the railway line near Krasnohorivka.[31] Some Russian sources claimed that Russian forces completely captured the waste heap, though geolocated footage only confirms that Russian forces have advanced to the northwestern area of the waste heap.[32] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Avdiivka, Stepove (8km northwest of Avdiivka), Keramik (10km northwest of Avdiivka), Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka), and Tonenke (5km west of Avdiivka).[33] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces reached the railway line west of Krasnohorivka and made limited advances near Vodyane (7km southwest of Avdiivka) and Opytne (4km south of Avdiivka).[34] Chernyk and Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets reported that elements of the 15th, 21st, and 30th Motorized Rifle Brigades (all of the 2nd Combined Arms Army [CAA], Central Military District) are deployed near Avdiivka and that the Russian military may deploy additional elements of the 2nd Combined Arms Army to the Avdiivka direction.[35] Mashovets suggested that the Russian military may also deploy additional Central Military District units to the Avdiivka direction, including elements of the 41st Combined Arms Army.[36] ISW previously observed elements of the 41st CAA operating in the Kupyansk-Lyman direction and has assessed that elements of the 41st CAA may have deployed to the Kherson direction but has not yet observed visual confirmation of the 41st CAA operating near Avdiivka.[37]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully counterattacked near Avdiivka on October 24. Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Pisky (9km southwest of Avdiivka), Opytne, and Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka).[38]

Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of October 24, 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

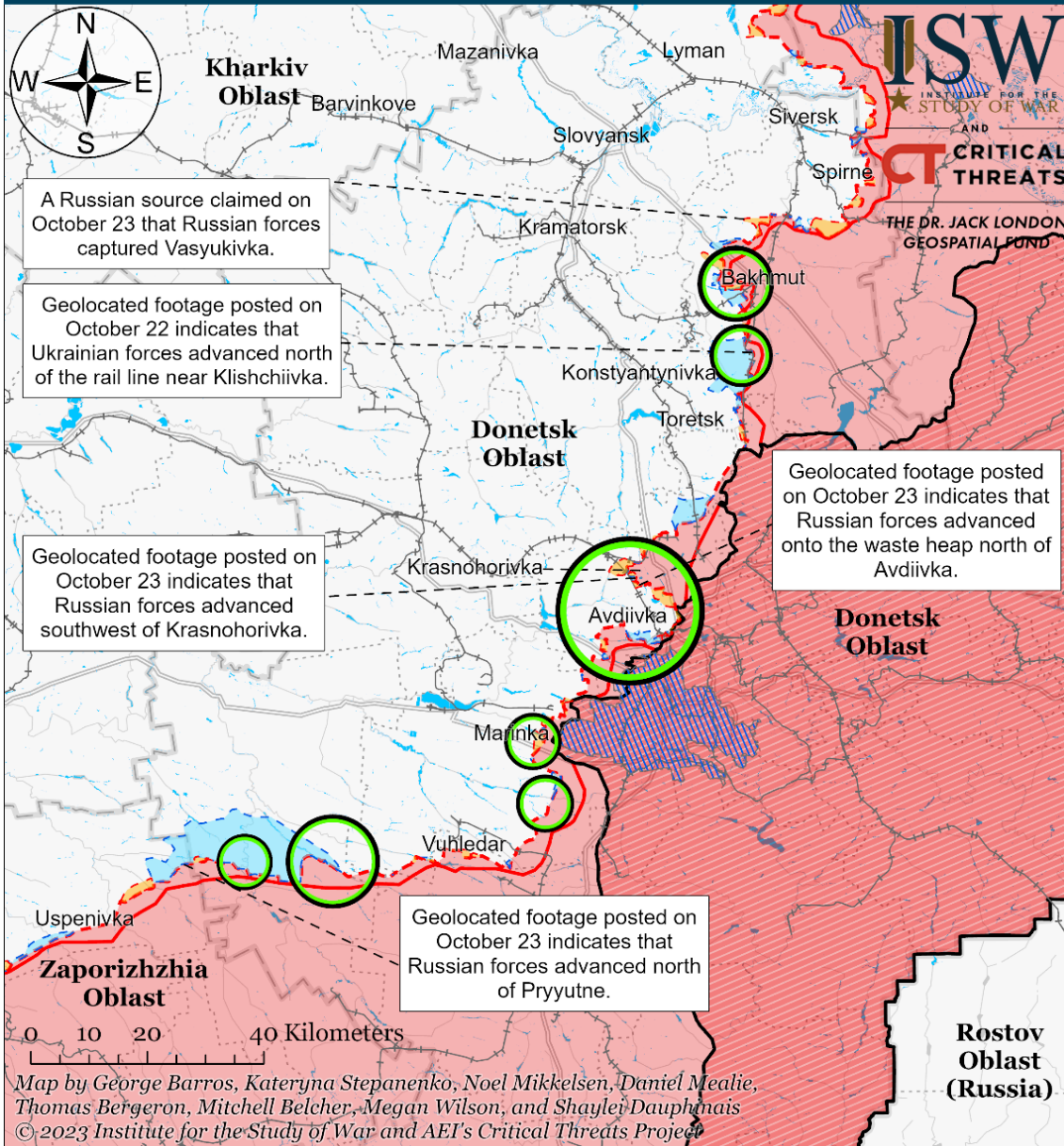
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: A Russian source claimed on October 23 that Russian forces advanced almost 2 kilometers near Avdiivka. A Ukrainian source claimed on October 23 that Ukrainian forces pushed Russian forces back 200 meters near Opytne. A Ukrainian source claimed on October 22 that Russian forces advanced 1.5 kilometers in depth along a one kilometer wide front north of Avdiivka.

Russian forces conducted offensive operations west and southwest of Donetsk City on October 24 but did not make claimed or confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Nevelske (directly west of Donetsk City), Marinka (on the southwestern outskirts of Donetsk City), Pobieda (5km southwest of Donetsk City), and Novomykhailivka (10km southwest of Donetsk City).[39] Footage published on October 24 purportedly shows elements of the 5th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st DNR Army Corps) operating in the Marinka direction.[40]

Neither Ukrainian nor Russian sources reported Ukrainian attacks southwest of Donetsk City on October 24.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of October 24, 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	

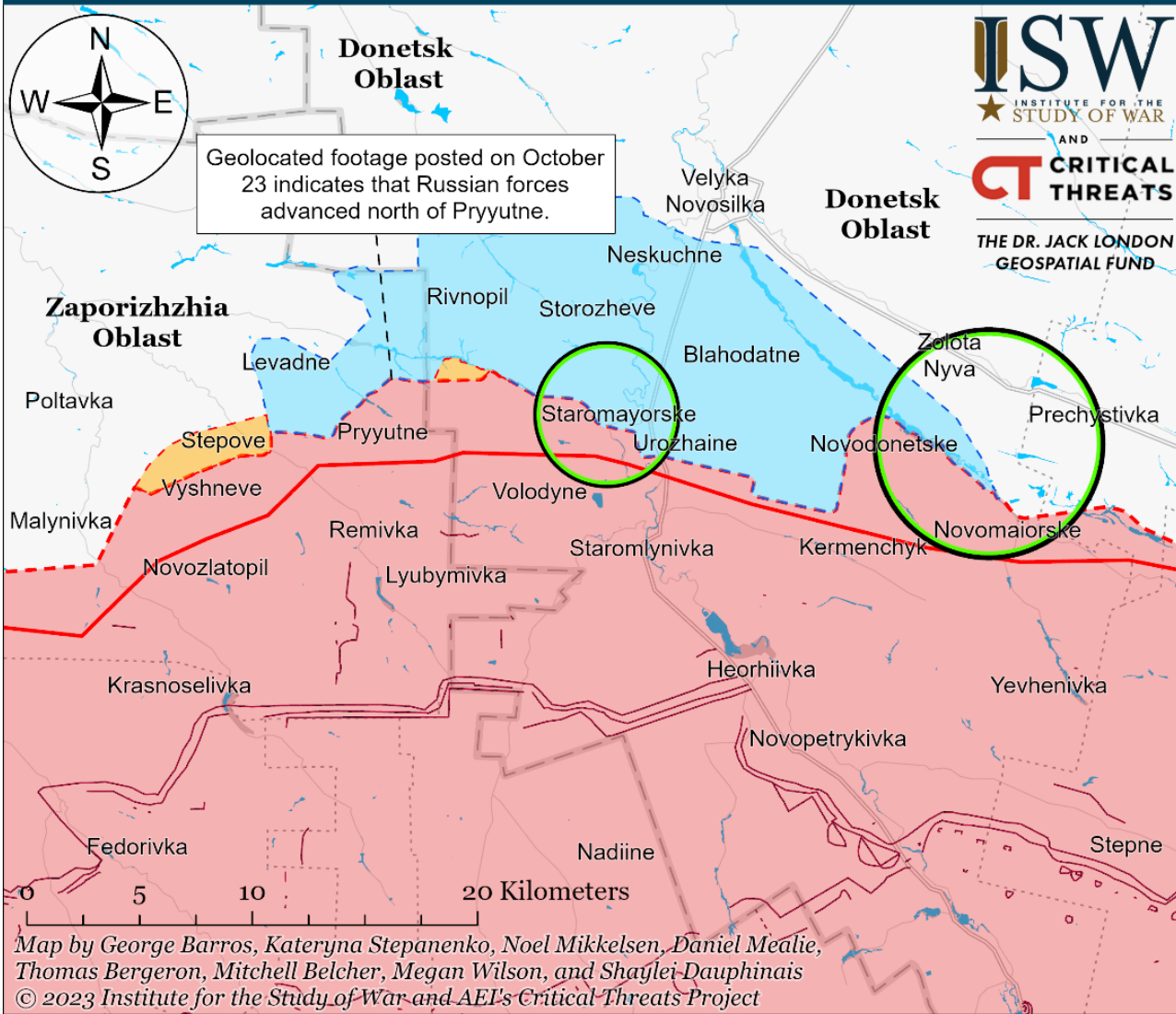
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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 attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 24.

Russian forces continued ground attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 24 and made a confirmed advance. Geolocated footage published on October 23 indicates that Russian forces advanced north of Pryyutne (16km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[41] A Russian milblogger claimed on October 24 that Russian forces advanced 200 meters from Pryyutne towards Novodarivka (15km south of Velyka Novosilka).[42] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) and Prechystivka (17km southeast of Velyka Novosilka) and south of Zolota Nyva (11km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[43] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces attacked near Novodonetske (11km southeast of Velyka Novosilka) and Novomayorske (18km southeast of Velyka Novosilka) on October 23.[44] A Russian milblogger published footage on October 24 claiming to show elements of the Russian 14th Guards Spetsnaz Brigade operating in the Vuhledar direction, about 35km southeast of Velyka Novosilka.[45]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of October 24, 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
- Russian Field Fortifications
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives

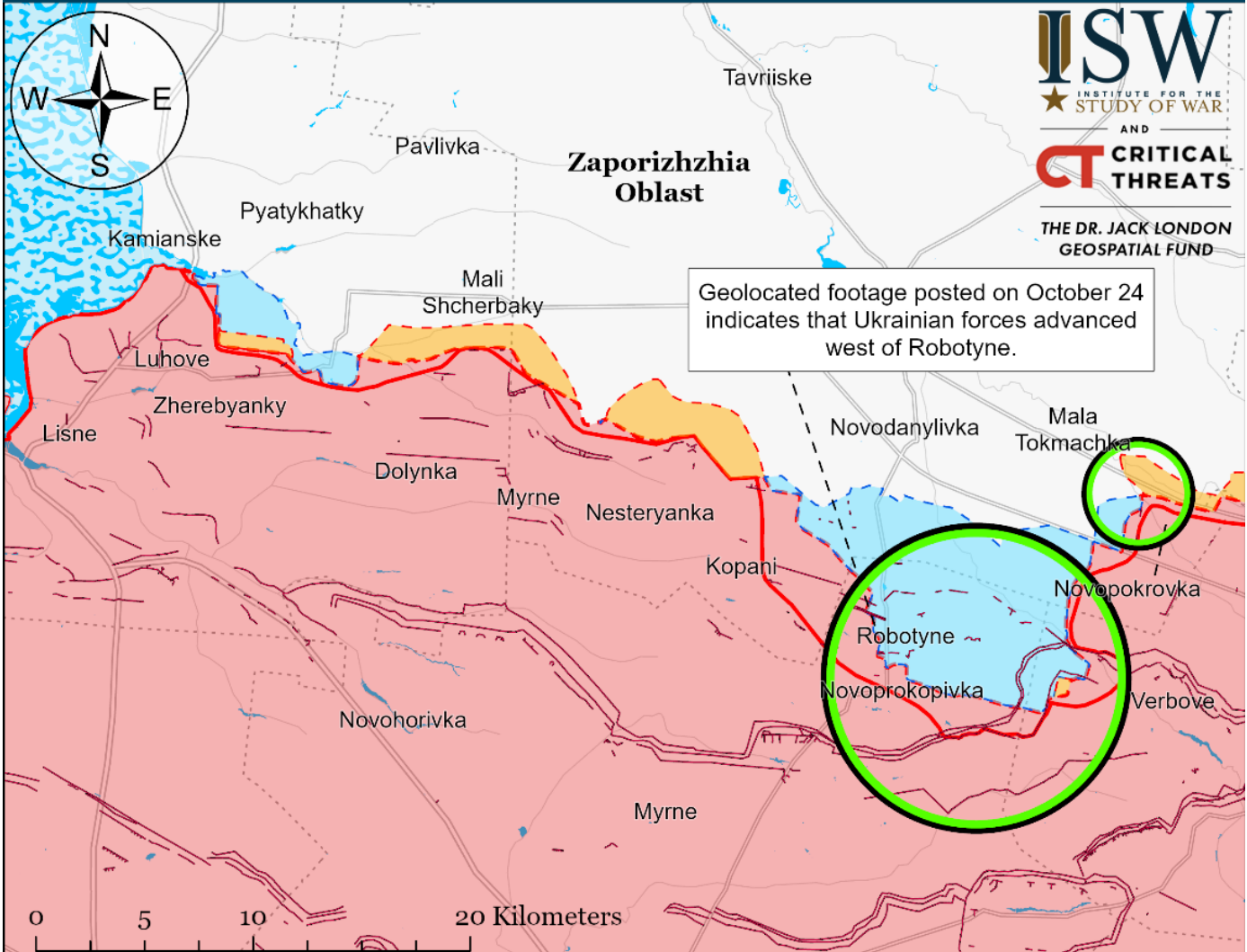
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: A Russian source claimed on October 23 that Russian forces advanced 200 meters from Pryyutne toward Novodarivka.

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 24 and made a confirmed advance. Geolocated footage published on October 24 indicates that Ukrainian forces marginally advanced west of Robotyne.[46] The Ukrainian General Staff also reported that Ukrainian forces achieved unspecified partial success south of Robotyne.[47] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked near Kopani (5km northwest of Robotyne) and Novoprokopivka (2km south of Robotyne).[48] Another Russian source noted that Ukrainian forces have increased the intensity of their attacks towards both Kopani and Novoprokopivka but claimed that Ukrainian forces have not advanced in the area.[49] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces launched several unsuccessful mechanized assaults near Robotyne and Novoprokopivka.[50] A Russian milblogger claimed that fighting continues near Verbove (9km west of Robotyne).[51]

Russian forces counterattacked in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 24 but did not make confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks southeast of Mala Tokmachka (9km southeast of Orikhiv).[52] A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the Russian 56th Guards Air Assault (VDV) Regiment (7th VDV Division) advanced southwest of Verbove.[53] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces counterattacked northwest of Robotyne and near Verbove on October 23.[54] Russian milbloggers published footage on October 24 claiming to show elements of the 71st Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) operating near Verbove.[55]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of October 24, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



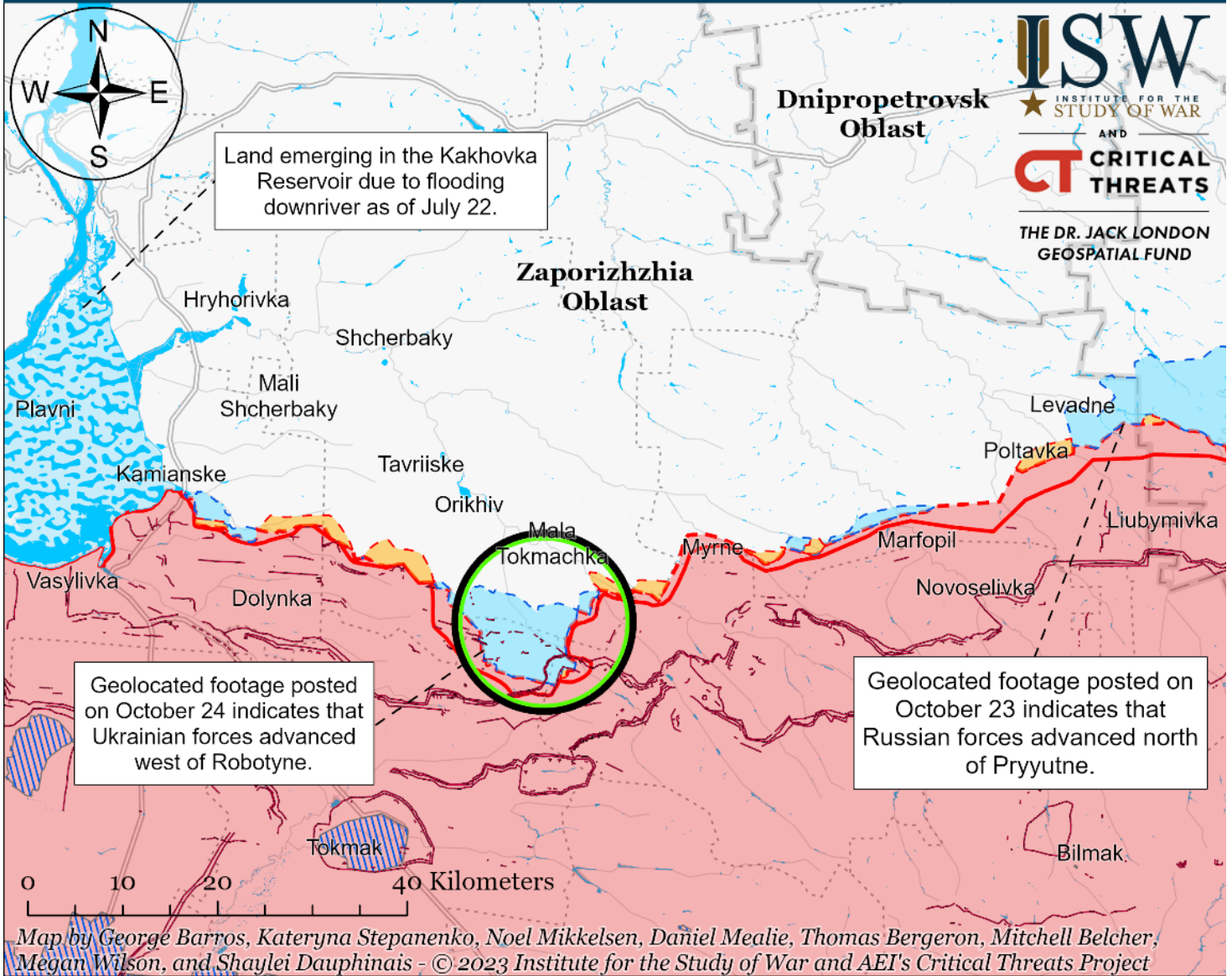
Geolocated footage posted on October 24 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced west of Robotyne.

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.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of October 24, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



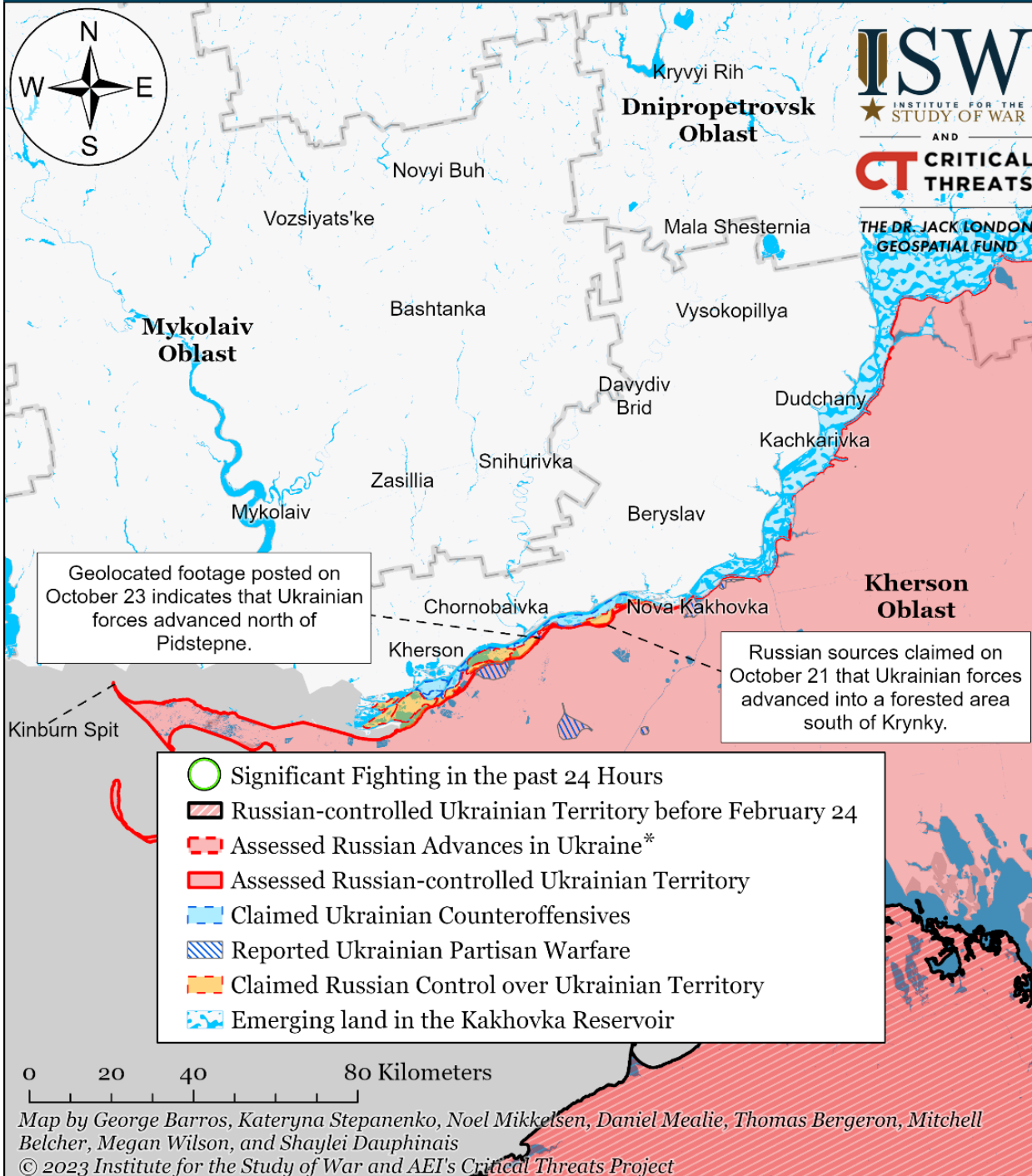
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| Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours | Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory | Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare |
| Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24 | Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory | Emerging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

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces maintain some positions in Krynyky (30km east of Kherson City and 2km from the Dnipro River) and continued limited attacks on the east (left) bank of the Dnipro River. Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces still control part of Krynyky and maintain positions near the Antonivsky road and railway bridges.[56] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces regularly attack near the Antonivsky road and railway bridges.[57] The milblogger claimed that a Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance group landed near Pidstepne (20km east of Kherson City and 3km from the Dnipro River) and captured a section of the road connecting Poyma, Kozachi Laheri, and Krynyky (10km southeast of Kherson City to 30km east of Kherson City and 3-4km from the Dnipro River).[58] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces have transferred reserves to the islands in the Dnipro River delta and are attempting to break through to Poyma (10k southeast of Kherson City and 4km from the Dnipro River) and Pishchanivka (14km east of Kherson City and 3km from the Dnipro River).[59] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces continue transporting small groups of personnel across the Dnipro River in boats at various points.[60] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attempted to capture positions on the east bank of the Dnipro River.[61]

Russian sources, including the Russian MoD, claimed that Russian Black Sea Fleet (BSF) assets repelled an attack by Ukrainian underwater sabotage forces and naval drones on Sevastopol on the night of October 23-24.[62]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of October 24, 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)

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD)-affiliated "Redut" private military company (PMC) is reportedly trying to recruit women into combat roles. An investigation by Russian opposition outlet *Vazhnye Istorii* found on October 23 that Redut's "Borz" Battalion began to advertise recruitment for women for combat roles such as snipers and drone operators.[63] *Vazhnye Istorii* noted that the majority of women currently serving in the Russian armed forces are operating in combat support roles, including predominantly as medics and cooks, so the appearance of more women in combat roles that are traditionally held by men is noteworthy.[64] Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu announced in March 2023 that around 1,100 female personnel were serving the combat zone in Ukraine, and it appears that the Russian MoD has intensified recruitment efforts targeting women in recent months.[65]

Russian military commanders are trying to guard against disobedience amongst low-quality Russian troops through threats of violence and detention. *Vazhnye Istorii* and the independent investigative outlet *Conflict Intelligence Team (CIT)* reported on October 24 that Russian commanders at training grounds in Russia have dug "pits" for the detention of soldiers who refuse to perform training tasks or to go fight in Ukraine.[66] The investigation examined satellite imagery that reportedly shows such pits near the parade grounds at the Prudboy training ground in Volgograd Oblast and the Totsky training ground in Orenburg Oblast.[67] *Vazhnye Istorii* reported that commanders will throw soldiers in the pits and detain them there for extended periods of time for disobedience or refusal to fight in Ukraine, particularly as Russia mobilizes greater numbers of low-quality and poorly-disciplined convict recruits.[68] Russian opposition outlet *ASTRA* relatedly reported on October 24 that Russian commanders have placed at least 173 soldiers in illegal detention areas throughout Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts for refusing to participate in costly infantry assaults with little to no preparation and without proper equipment.[69] *ASTRA* related the story of one soldier who refused to participate in attacks on Makiivka, Luhansk Oblast and whom Russian commanders detained in a basement in Zaitseve, Luhansk Oblast.[70] *ASTRA* reported that all the men detained in Zaitseve will soon be forced into Russian operations near Avdiivka, Donetsk Oblast, as punishment.[71]

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)

Russian occupation authorities continue to establish programs to forcibly deport Ukrainian children to Russia. Kherson Oblast occupation head Vladimir Saldo reported that 1,400 children from occupied Kherson Oblast will participate in the Russian Federal Agency for Youth Affairs (Rosmolodezh) "More Than A Trip" program before the end of 2023 and claimed that as part of this program, children will visit various locations in Russia and participate in educational activities.[72]

The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) continues to consolidate its influence in occupied Ukraine. Crimean occupation head Sergei Aksyonov met with Metropolitan Kirill (Leonid Pokrovsky) of Stavropol and Nevinnomyssk and Chairman of the ROC Synodal Department for Cooperation with the Russian Armed Forces and Law Enforcement Agencies on October 24.[73] Aksyonov claimed that he and Metropolitan Kirill discussed support for the Russian military and strengthening cooperation

between the Crimean occupation administration and the ROC.[74] ISW has previously observed reports that ROC representatives collect information on civilians to provide to Russian special services and has long assessed that the ROC is involved in persecution against religious communities in occupied Ukraine.[75]

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Prominent Russian cultural and political figures amplified several long-standing lines of Kremlin rhetoric during a meeting of the "All-Russian Ideological Forum of the World Russian People's Council on October 23-24. Russian businessman and *Tsargrad* outlet board member Konstantin Malofeev claimed that the event was dedicated to the "Holy War" that Russia is "forced to wage against the West." [76] Forum participants discussed Russian ideology, the concept of "the Russian world," the ideologies of Russian foreign policy, and "the ideological foundations of demographic and family policy," particularly emphasizing the importance of military-patriotic education of Russian youth.[77] The forum particularly emphasized the Kremlin's ideological justifications for Russia's war in Ukraine and amplified narratives that pose Ukraine and the collective West as antithetical to Russian sovereignty and patriotism.[78]

Russia continues efforts to institute Kremlin-approved revisionist history in the Russian school system. Russian outlet *RBC* reported on October 23 that the Russian Ministry of Education sent the Congress of the Karachay People (from the Karachay-Cherkassia Republic) a rewritten paragraph of a 10th grade history book that officially removes the names of specific ethnic minority groups that suffered forced deportations under Stalin's regime, including Karachays, Kalmyks, Chechens, the Ingush, Balkars, and Crimean Tatars, and simply states that Stalinist deportations were carried out "under conditions of proximity to the front and military operations" but that "justice was gradually restored in 1957-2014." [79]

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 announced on October 24 that the Belarusian military command staff, including Belarusian Defense Minister Lieutenant General Viktor Khrenin, met to plan the training and organization of Belarusian forces.[80]

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://twitter.com/moklasen/status/1716880103618326996>;
https://t.me/yuzhny_front_ZOV/1761 ; <https://x.com/giK1893/status/1716526233440108827?s=20>
- [2] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbidOGbPmW4sVRFriLckwrUts9upf85njmFsqNwYwFQWf3BcyCaJtf4kxBzNzBTfAnnTLI>;
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- [3] <https://t.me/breakingmash/48815>; https://lenta_dot_ru/news/2023/10/23/rossiya-vpervye-primenila-italmas-v-zone-svo/; https://news_dot_ru/world/stalo-izvestno-o-primenenii-vs-rf-dalnobojnyh-dronov-italmas-v-zone-svo/
- [4] https://t.me/Topaz_Penetrator/7013
- [5] https://t.me/Topaz_Penetrator/7013; <https://t.me/vysokygovorit/13240>
- [6] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar102123>
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