



Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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Note: The data cut-off for this product was 12:30pm ET on February 17. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the February 18 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

The Kremlin reiterated its demands that Ukraine cede additional territory in eastern and southern Ukraine to Russia and disband the Ukrainian military in the future while continuing to message that the Kremlin is unwilling to make territorial concessions itself in any future peace negotiations. Russian Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN) Vasily Nebenzya stated during a UN Security Council meeting on February 17 that Ukraine has "irrevocably lost" Crimea, the "Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics" (referring to occupied Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts), and Zaporizhia and Kherson oblasts.[1] Nebenzya insinuated that peace negotiations should "correct" the situation in these oblasts and that Ukraine should cede the remaining parts of the four oblasts that Ukraine currently controls. Nebenzya is calling for Ukraine to cede the roughly 30 percent of the total area in Donetsk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts that Russia does not currently occupy. (Russian forces currently occupy roughly 99 percent of Luhansk Oblast.) Nebenzya also demanded that Ukraine become a "demilitarized" neutral state in the future and that Ukraine not join any alliances or security blocs.[2] Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov dismissed on February 17 the possibility of Russia making territorial concessions during future negotiations.[3] Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed in June 2024 that Ukraine should withdraw its forces from and cede any unoccupied territory in Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts to Russia, and Nebenzya appears to be resurrecting this demand ahead of bilateral US-Russia negotiations.[4] US Special Presidential Envoy for Russia and Ukraine Keith Kellogg stated during the Munich Security Conference on February 15 that Russia must make territorial concessions during negotiations, and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio noted on February 16 that US President Donald Trump wants to see the war end in a way that "protects Ukraine's sovereignty." [5]

Lavrov and Nebenzya also categorically rejected European involvement in future peace negotiations and accused European countries of being aggressive toward Russia. Nebenzya claimed that European Union (EU) countries and the United Kingdom (UK) are "incapable" of reaching any agreement with Russia and cannot be party to any future agreements about the war in Ukraine.[6] Nebenzya accused European countries of being "blinded" by Russophobia and unrealistic about peace negotiations. Lavrov questioned why European countries should participate in negotiations and insinuated that European leaders only want to prolong the war in Ukraine in order to defeat Russia and prepare for a future war between Russia and Europe.[7] Russian authorities have previously focused their information operations against NATO, accusing the alliance of conspiring and

preparing for a future war with Russia. Russian accusations that European countries and the EU more broadly (implicitly as distinct from the US) are acting aggressively towards Russia is a notable informational inflection and likely indicates a new Kremlin effort to drive a wedge between the US and Europe taking advantage of tensions evident at the recent Munich Security Conference.[8]

The Kremlin also appears to be resurrecting Putin's previous demands and information operations aimed at delegitimizing Ukraine and its government in the eyes of the West — notably ahead of the February 18 Russia-US bilateral meeting in Saudi Arabia. Nebenzya reiterated Putin's demand that Ukraine must conduct elections before the implementation of any peace agreements, continuing the Kremlin's efforts to falsely portray the current Ukrainian government as illegitimate.[9] Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov and Kremlin-affiliated former Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada Deputy Viktor Medvedchuk have also recently repeated the Kremlin's false claims that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is "illegitimate" and implicitly that Russia thus is not obligated to honor agreements concluded with the current Ukrainian government.[10] The Kremlin's apparent unwillingness to make territorial concessions, commit to honoring any future peace agreement with Ukraine, or involve any European leaders in these negotiations calls into question Putin's supposed willingness to engage in good faith negotiations that could bring about long-term peace in Ukraine and Europe more broadly.

The Russian delegation participating in Russian-American talks in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on February 18 does not include one of the members of Russian President Vladimir Putin's innermost circle who had been reported as a likely negotiator.[11] The Russian delegation includes Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Presidential Aide Yuri Ushakov, and CEO of the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) Kirill Dmitriev. Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov claimed that the talks will focus on "restoring the entire complex of US-Russian relations" and preparing for possible future discussions about the war in Ukraine between US President Donald Trump and Putin.[12] Peskov added that Lavrov and Ushakov "will be able to send urgent reports" to Putin while in Riyadh — suggesting that the Russian delegation's purpose is to convey messages and inform the Kremlin, rather than to negotiate on Putin's behalf.[13]

Sergei Lavrov has served as the Russian foreign minister since 2004, but has reportedly been left out of previous key Kremlin decisions relating to the Russian invasions of Ukraine.[14] Sources in the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) told the *BBC* in August 2023 that the MFA had no previous knowledge of the Kremlin's ultimatums to the US and NATO in late 2021, and the *Financial Times* (FT) reported in February 2023 that Lavrov learned about the full-scale invasion a few hours before it started.[15] Russian milbloggers also claimed that the Kremlin did not notify Lavrov of Putin's June 2024 press conference at the MFA during which Putin demanded that Ukrainian forces withdraw from the remaining territories of four Ukrainian oblasts.[16]

Yuri Ushakov has served as Putin's foreign policy aide since May 2012.[17] Ushakov was Russia's ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) from 1996 to 1998,

served as the Russian Ambassador to the United States from 1999-2008, and became Deputy Head of Government Staff from 2008 to 2012.[18] Ushakov publicly dismissed US and Western intelligence about the impending Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine as "hysteria" and "absurdity" in early February 2022.[19] Ushakov reportedly participated in early ceasefire talks with Ukraine shortly after Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022.[20]

Kirill Dmitriev has been CEO of RDIF, a Russian sovereign wealth fund meant to develop foreign direct investment in Russia, since its creation in 2011 and also holds positions on the supervisory boards of the state-owned Gazprombank, Transneft, and Russian Railways.[21] Dmitriev studied economics at Stanford and Harvard universities in the 1990s and spent his early career working as a consultant at McKinsey & Company and Goldman Sachs and later ran the Ukrainian investment fund Icon Private Equity from 2007 to 2011.[22] Dmitriev enjoys close ties with Putin's family, and Dmitriev's wife, Natalia Popova, is reportedly a close friend and former classmate of Putin's daughter, Katerina Tikhonova.[23] Dmitriev has extensive experience working with Middle Eastern countries, as the RDIF's partners include the sovereign wealth funds of Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Saudi Arabia. *Bloomberg*, citing a person familiar with the exchange, reported on February 14 that Dmitriev recently played a key role in negotiations with US Special Envoy for the Middle East Steve Witkoff to free American Marc Fogel from Russia.[24] Dmitriev accompanied Putin on his visits to Abu Dhabi and Riyadh in 2023 and Beijing in May 2024.[25]

A key Putin ally will be notably absent from the meeting. *Bloomberg* reported on February 14 that sources familiar with the matter stated that Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) Head Sergei Naryshkin would participate in the Russian delegation going to Saudi Arabia – reports which ended up proving false.[26] Naryshkin is Putin's close ally who reportedly participated in Russia-Ukrainian negotiations shortly after Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022 and discussions with former CIA director William Burns in Ankara in November 2022.[27] Putin has also stated that he decided to launch Russia's initial invasion of Ukraine in 2014 after consulting with only the "leaders of [Russia's] special services and the defense ministry." [28] None of the members of the Russian delegation in Saudi Arabia appear to be among the closest inner circle that Putin would likely empower to engage in serious negotiations on his behalf, but Putin may intend to include more trusted individuals in future rounds of talks or may have more confidence in these individuals in these particular talks.

Ukrainian forces continue to conduct drone strikes against Russian energy facilities supplying the Russian military. Head of Ukraine's Center for Combatting Disinformation Lieutenant Andriy Kovalenko reported that Ukrainian forces struck the Ilsky Oil Refinery in Ilsky, Krasnodar Krai on February 17, and that the refinery has an annual refining capacity of about 6.6 million tons and specializes in producing fuel, mazut, bitumen, and gas oil.[29] Kovalenko noted that the oil refinery supplies Russian forces, particularly in southern Russia and occupied Ukraine. Kovalenko also reported that Ukrainian forces struck the Kropotkinskaya oil pumping station in Kavkazsky Raion, Krasnodar Krai on February 17, and that the station is the largest pumping station in the Caspian Pipeline Consortium.[30] The consortium confirmed that seven drones struck the Kropotkinskaya station, leading authorities to take the station out of operation.[31] Ukrainian outlet *Suspilne* reported that sources in the Ukrainian special services stated that Ukraine's Security Service

(SBU) and Special Operations Forces (SSO) conducted the drone strikes against the Ilsky Oil Refinery and Kropotkinskaya oil pumping station.[32] Krasnodar Krai Governor Veniamin Kondratyev claimed that falling drone debris damaged houses in Ilsky and Slavyansk-on-Kuban.[33] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces downed 70 drones overnight, including 24 drones over Krasnodar Krai.[34]

Russian commanders continue to give orders for Russian forces to execute Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) on the frontline. Ukrainian Ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets reported on February 17 that footage shows Russian forces executing three surrendering Ukrainian POWs in an unspecified location after a Russian commander orders the soldiers to kill two of the POWs.[35] ISW has long assessed that Russian battlefield commanders are either complicit in or enabling their subordinates to execute Ukrainian POWs.[36]

Unspecified sources told *Bloomberg* that Russia appears to be nearing a deal with the Syrian interim government to maintain a “reduced” military presence in Syria.[37]

NOTE: A version of this text also appears in *ISW-CTP's February 17 Iran Update*. The sources said that Russia is “close” to a deal that would keep at least some staff and equipment in Syria. One of the sources said that Russia hopes to keep the same air and naval bases that it used prior to the fall of Bashar al Assad's regime, likely referring to Hmeimim Airbase and the naval base at Tartus. Russia also previously held several other airbases within central and northern Syria, including a helicopter base in Qamishli, though it is unclear whether the agreement will cover these sites. Russian forces have fully evacuated all their former positions in Syria except for Hmeimim Airbase and the Port of Tartus.[38] Other forces, such as the Syrian interim government or US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), have taken many of these bases following Russian forces’ evacuation.[39]

The tone of engagement between Russia and the Syrian interim government has notably become more cooperative in recent weeks, which supports the sources’ claims that Russia may be in agreement with Syria. Syrian Interim President Ahmed al Shara emphasized Syria’s “strong strategic relationship” with Russia during a recent phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin on February 12.[40] Interim Syrian Defense Minister Marhaf Abu Qasra recently suggested that Syria could allow Russia to retain air and naval bases in Syria if there are “benefits” for Syria.[41] It is not clear what “benefits” Russia may be offering Syria in current negotiations. Russia delivered local Syrian currency to the Syrian central bank on February 12 in a gesture that likely sought to foster goodwill with the Syrian government.[42] This gesture followed Syrian officials’ demands that Russia pay its debts to the Syrian state and Putin’s offer to Shara to assist with Syria’s economy.[43]

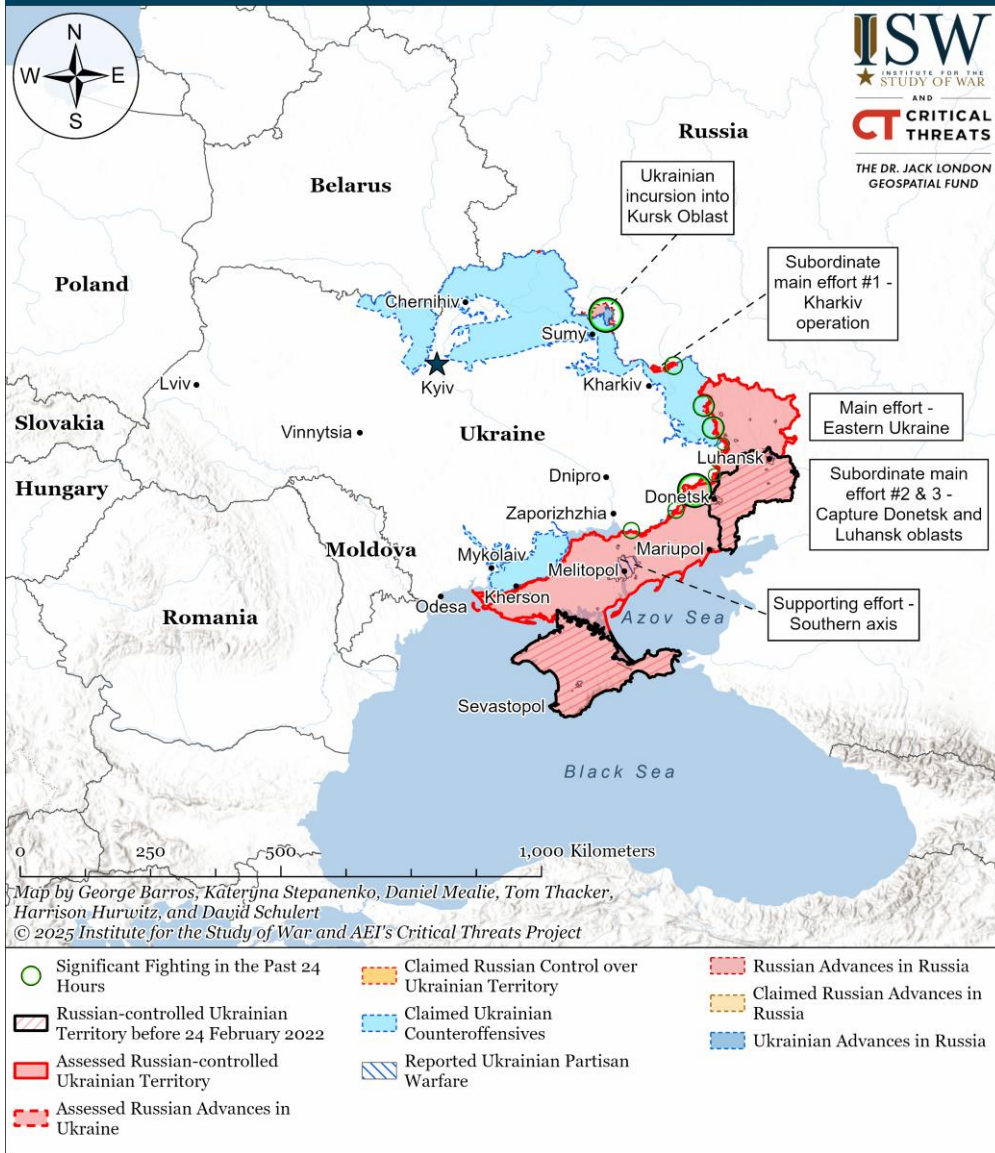
Unspecified sources also told *Bloomberg* that Russia could help with the Syrian government’s counter-ISIS efforts.[44] It is unclear based on this comment whether the Syrian interim government has discussed Russian forces re-deploying to Syria to fight against ISIS. The Syrian interim government is likely eager to obtain manpower to assist in counter-ISIS operations as the government contends with the political and material realities of forming and training the new Syrian army. Russian participation in the Assad regime campaign against ISIS failed to effectively degrade ISIS in Syria, however. Russian aircraft proved to be far more capable in targeting Syrian opposition groups on behalf of the regime

than it was targeting ISIS.[45] The scale of a future Russian deployment to Syria would impact the success of any Russian counter-ISIS operations, and it is unclear if a "reduced" military presence would be any more effective against ISIS than Russian forces were at the height of Russian deployments to Syria. US Central Command announced in July 2024 that ISIS is attempting to reconstitute in Syria following several years of decreased capability.[46] Russia would by no means provide a suitable replacement for the United States or SDF in counter-ISIS operations in the face of ISIS reconstitution efforts.

Key Takeaways:

- **The Kremlin reiterated its demands that Ukraine cede additional territory in eastern and southern Ukraine to Russia and disband the Ukrainian military in the future while continuing to message that the Kremlin is unwilling to make territorial concessions itself in any future peace negotiations.**
- **Lavrov and Nebenzya also categorically rejected European involvement in future peace negotiations and accused European countries of being aggressive toward Russia.**
- **The Kremlin also appears to be resurrecting Putin's previous demands and information operations aimed at delegitimizing Ukraine and its government in the eyes of the West – notably ahead of the February 18 Russia-US bilateral meeting in Saudi Arabia.**
- **The Russian delegation participating in Russian-American talks in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on February 18 does not include one of the members of Russian President Vladimir Putin's innermost circle who had been reported as a likely negotiator.**
- **Ukrainian forces continue to conduct drone strikes against Russian energy facilities supplying the Russian military.**
- **Russian commanders continue to give orders for Russian forces to execute Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) on the frontline.**
- **Unspecified sources told Bloomberg that Russia appears to be nearing a deal with the Syrian interim government to maintain a "reduced" military presence in Syria.**
- **Russian forces advanced near Toretsk, Pokrovsk, Kurakhove, and Velyka Novosilka.**
- **Russian occupation authorities continue to violate the Geneva Convention by conscripting civilians in occupied Ukraine to serve in the Russian military.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Russo-Ukrainian War February 17, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



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.

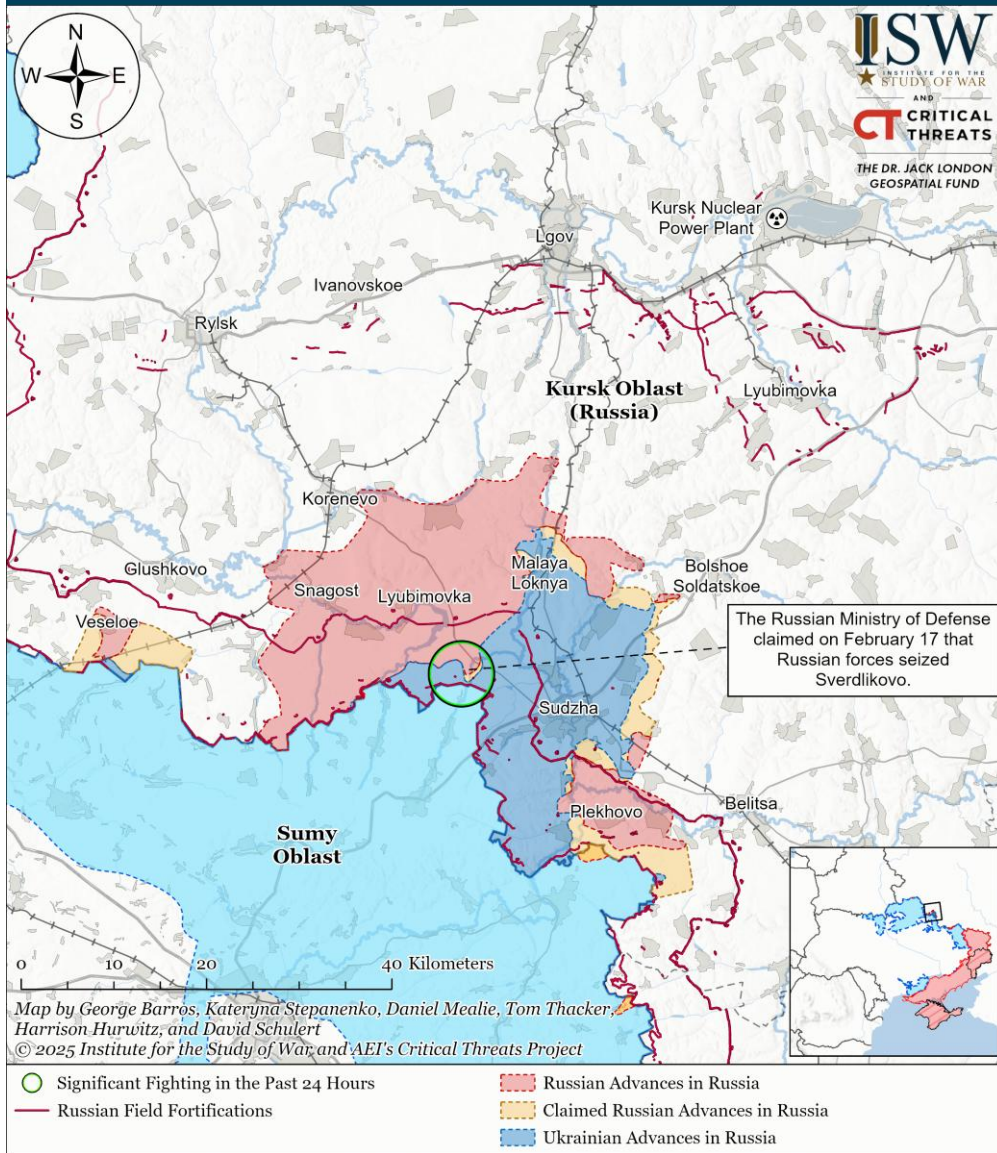
- Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of three subordinate main efforts)

- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis
- Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Russian Technological Adaptations
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas
- Significant Activity in Belarus

Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Ukrainian salient in Kursk Oblast on February 17 but did not make any confirmed advances. Fighting continued northwest of Sudzha near Nikolsky, west of Sudzha near Sverdlikovo, and south of Sudzha near Kurilovka.[47] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully counterattacked near Kurilovka.[48]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kursk Direction February 17, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



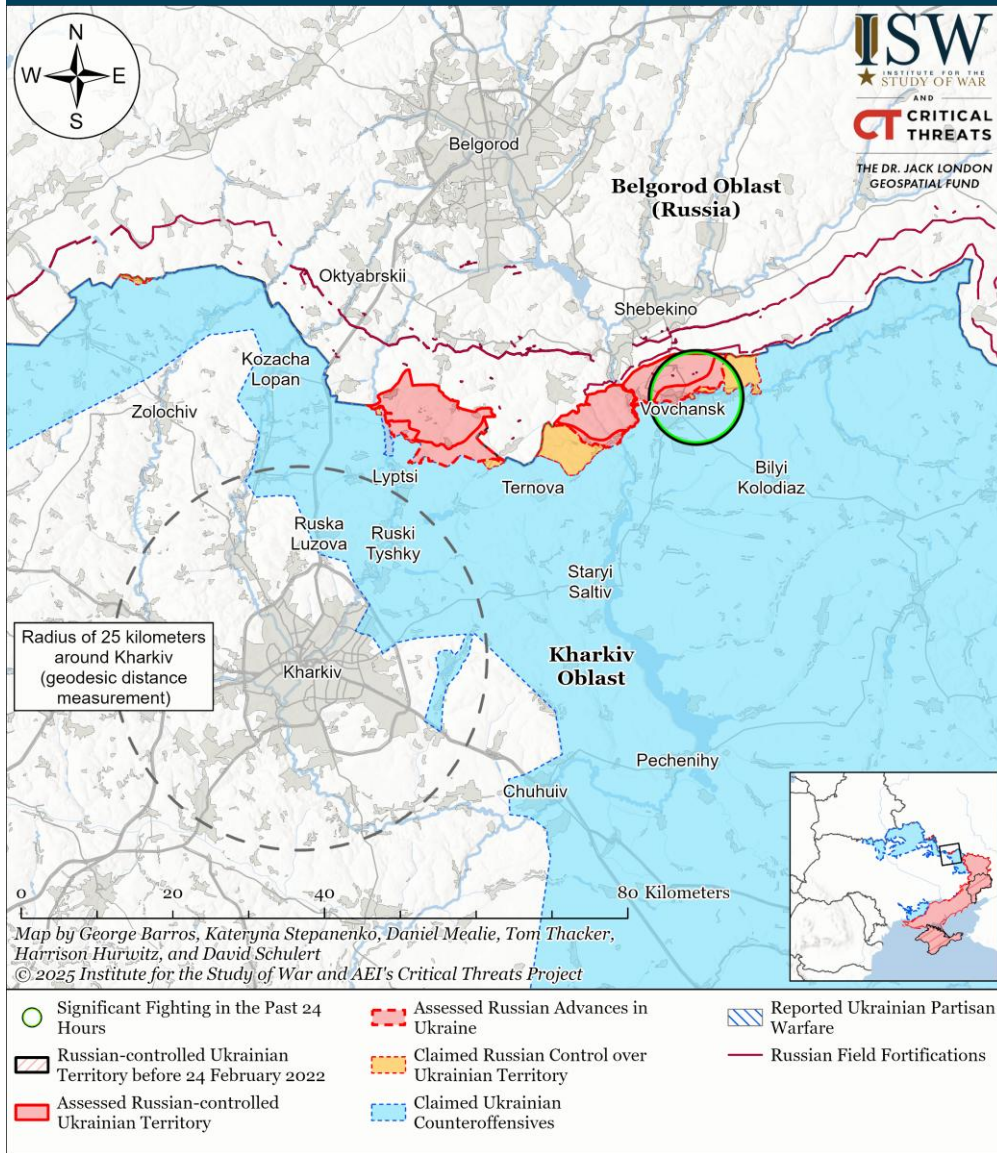
Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces seized Sverdlikovo.^[49] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces marginally advanced near Kurilovka and Kamyshevka (north of Sudzha).^[50]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 155th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) and 56th Airborne (VDV) Regiment (7th VDV Division) are reportedly operating in Kursk Oblast, and elements of the 1434th "Akhmat-Chechnya" Regiment (subordinated under the Russian MoD) are reportedly operating near Martynovka (northeast of Sudzha).^[51]

Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Kharkiv Oblast (Russian objective: Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City)

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Kharkiv direction on February 17 but did not make any confirmed advances. Russian forces conducted offensive operations north of Kharkiv City near Lyptsi and northeast of Kharkiv City near Vovchansk on February 16 and 17.^[52]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kharkiv Direction February 17, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST

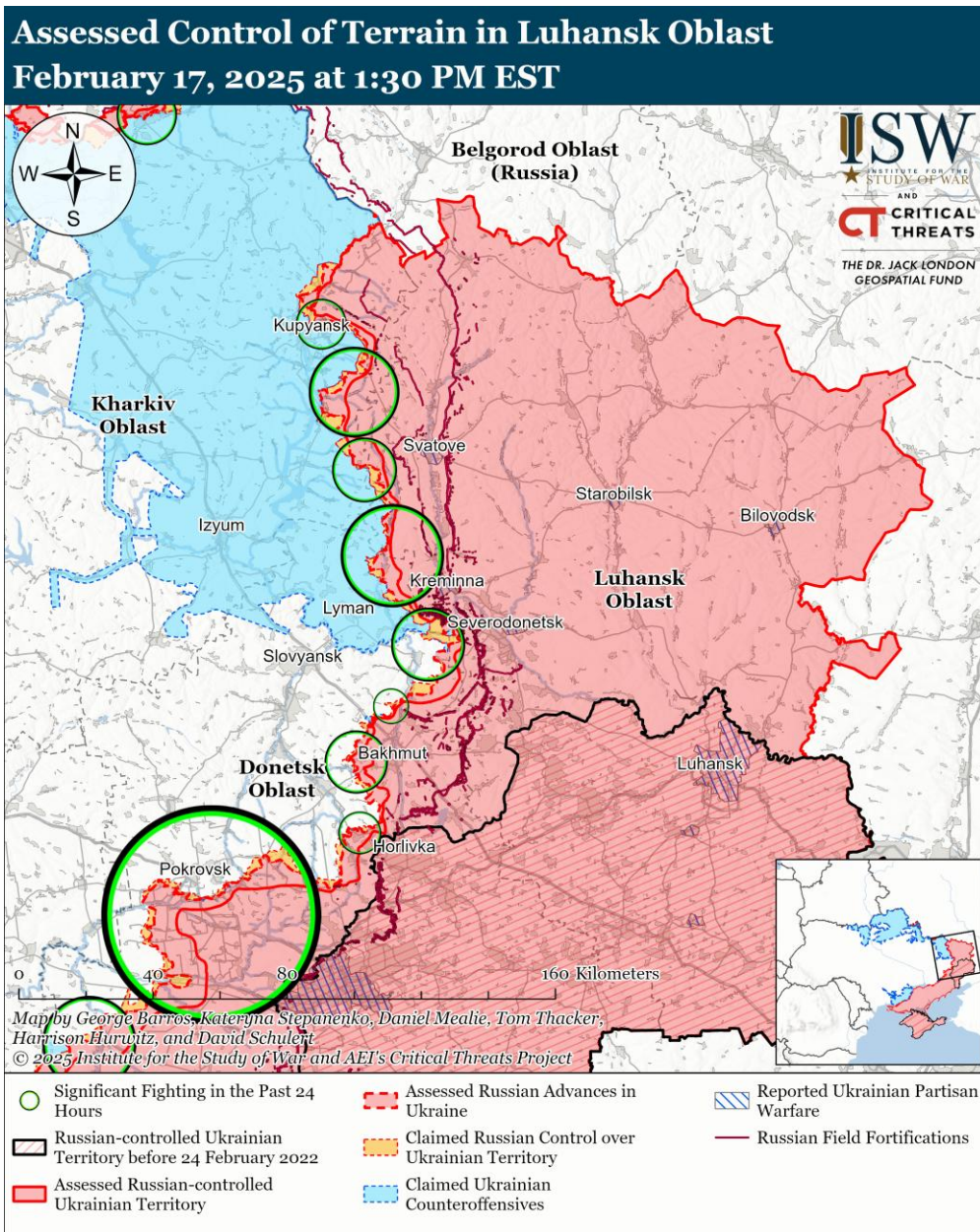


Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced east of Vovchansk.[53]

The spokesperson of a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Kharkiv direction stated that Russian forces occasionally attack in fireteams of two to three people and that Russian forces are mostly moving in golf carts, small armored vehicles, and civilian cars.[54] The spokesperson stated that Russian forces very rarely use medium-armored vehicles to transport infantry.

Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – 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 near Kupyansk on February 17 but did not make any confirmed advances. Russian forces attacked northeast of Kupyansk toward Dovhenko and Doroshivka; east of Kupyansk near Petropavlivka and Stepova Novoselivka; southeast of Kupyansk near Pishchane; and south of Kupyansk near Hlushkivka and toward Novoosynove on February 16 and 17.[55] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed on February 17 that Russian forces seized Fyholivka (north of Kupyansk), but ISW assessed that Russian forces seized the settlement as of February 6.[56]



Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that there are unconfirmed reports that Russian forces seized Topoli (north of Kupyansk near the international border) and that Russian forces seized most of Dvorichna (north of Kupyansk).[57] Other Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced north of Dvorichna, between Dvorichna and Zapadne (just southwest of Dvorichna), south of Zapadne, and west of Kalynove (north of Kupyansk).[58]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Borova direction on February 17 but did not advance. Russian forces continued attacks north of Borova toward Novoplatonivka; northeast of Borova near Zahryzove, Bohuslavka, and Nova Kruhlyakivka; and southeast of Borova near Novoserhiivka, Novoyehorivka, and Hrekivka on February 16 and 17.[59] Ukraine's Khortytsia Group of Forces reported that Ukrainian forces destroyed two Russian armored vehicles that attacked towards Bohuslavka and four armored vehicles that attacked near Nova Kruhlyakivka.[60]

The spokesperson of a Ukrainian brigade operating in Kharkiv Oblast stated on February 16 that Russian forces are using more vehicles and armored vehicles to support offensive operations but noted that Ukrainian forces are destroying many of the vehicles.[61] The spokesperson stated that Russian forces are also operating between 200 and 300 drones per day in the brigade's area of responsibility, but that Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW) systems are complicating Russian drone operations.

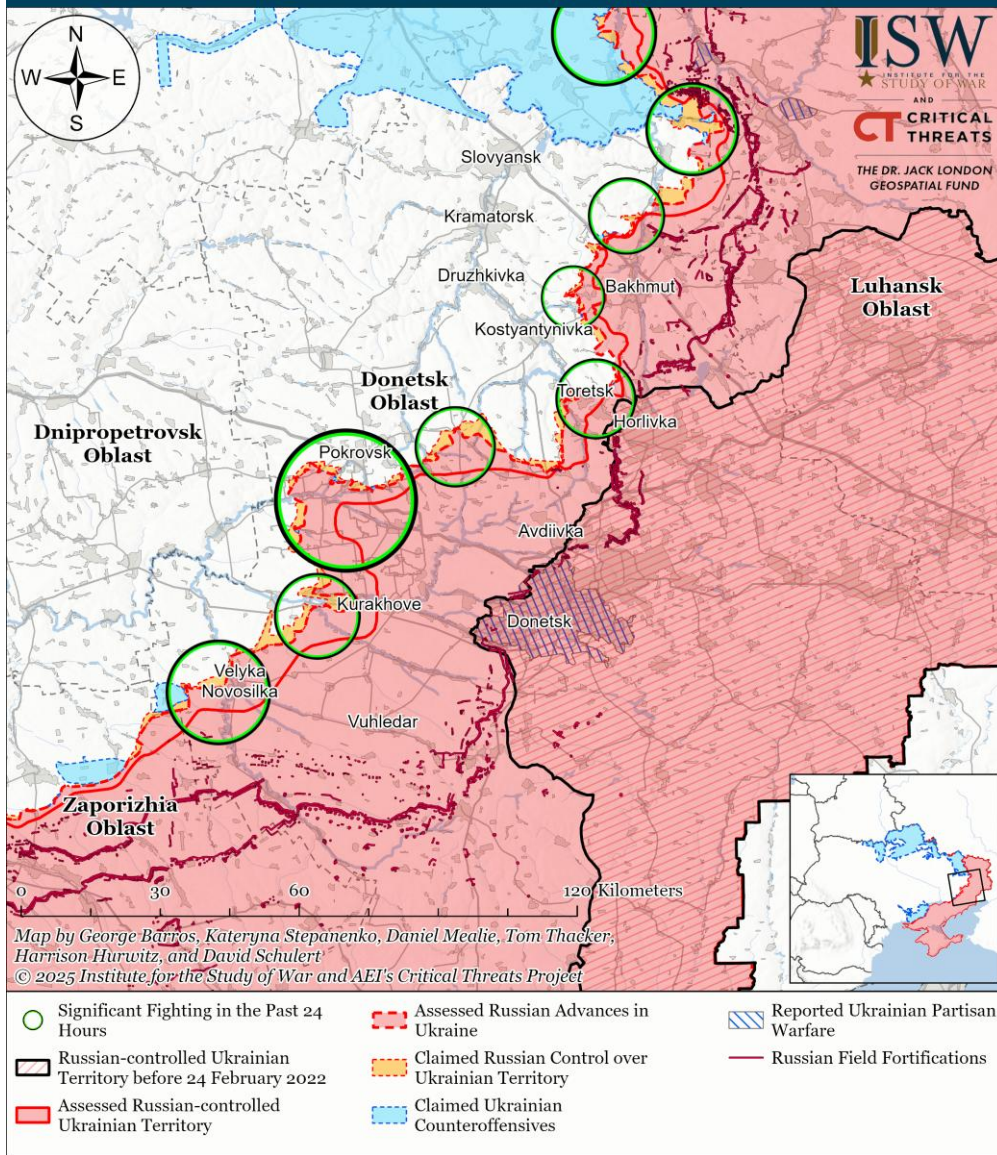
Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Lyman direction on February 17 but did not advance. Russian forces continued attacks northeast of Lyman near Novomykhailivka, Novolyubivka, Zarichne, Kolodyazi, and Yampolivka and toward Nove and east of Lyman in the Serebryanske forest area on February 16 and 17.[62]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced near Yampolivka.[63]

Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Siversk direction on February 17 but did not advance. Russian forces continued assaults north of Siversk near Hryhorivka and toward Dronivka, east of Siversk near Verkhokamyanske, and southeast of Siversk near Ivano-Darivka on February 16 and 17.[64]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Donetsk Oblast February 17, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 123rd Motorized Rifle Brigade (3rd Combined Arms Army [CAA], formerly the 2nd Luhansk People's Republic Army Corps [LNR AC], Southern Military District [SMD]) reportedly continue to operate in the Siversk direction.[65]

Russian forces continued offensive operations near Chasiv Yar on February 17 but did not make any confirmed advances. Russian forces attacked near and within Chasiv Yar itself, northeast of Chasiv Yar near Vasyukivka, and south of Chasiv Yar near Stupochky on February 16 and 17.[66] Ukraine's Khortytsia Group of Forces reported that Russian forces near Vasyukivka are using civilian vehicles and motorcycles to transport infantry and that Ukrainian forces destroyed 10

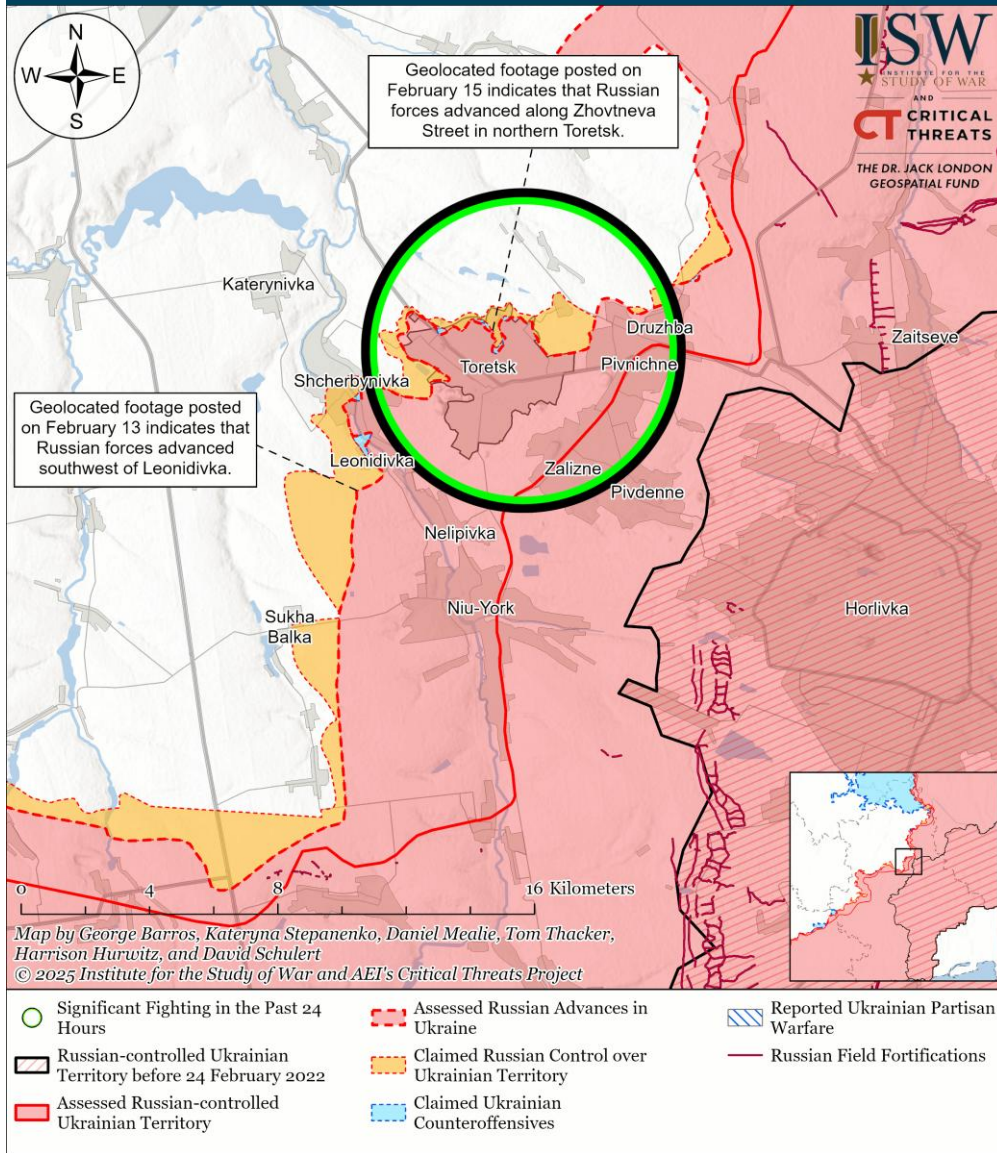
motorcycles and one civilian vehicle in the area.[67]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: Russian milbloggers claimed on February 17 that Russian forces entered Stupochky and advanced within northeastern Chasiv Yar.[68]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 299th Airborne (VDV) Regiment (98th VDV Division) are reportedly operating near Chasiv Yar, and drone elements of the 27th Artillery Regiment (6th Motorized Rifle Division, 3rd AC) are reportedly conducting reconnaissance near Bila Hora (south of Chasiv Yar).[69]

Russian forces recently advanced in the Toretsk direction. Russian forces continued attacking in Toretsk itself; north of Toretsk near Krymske and west of Toretsk near Shcherbynivka, Novospaske (formerly Petrivka), and Leonidivka on February 16 and 17.[70] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces are counterattacking near Shcherbynivka and within Toretsk.[71]

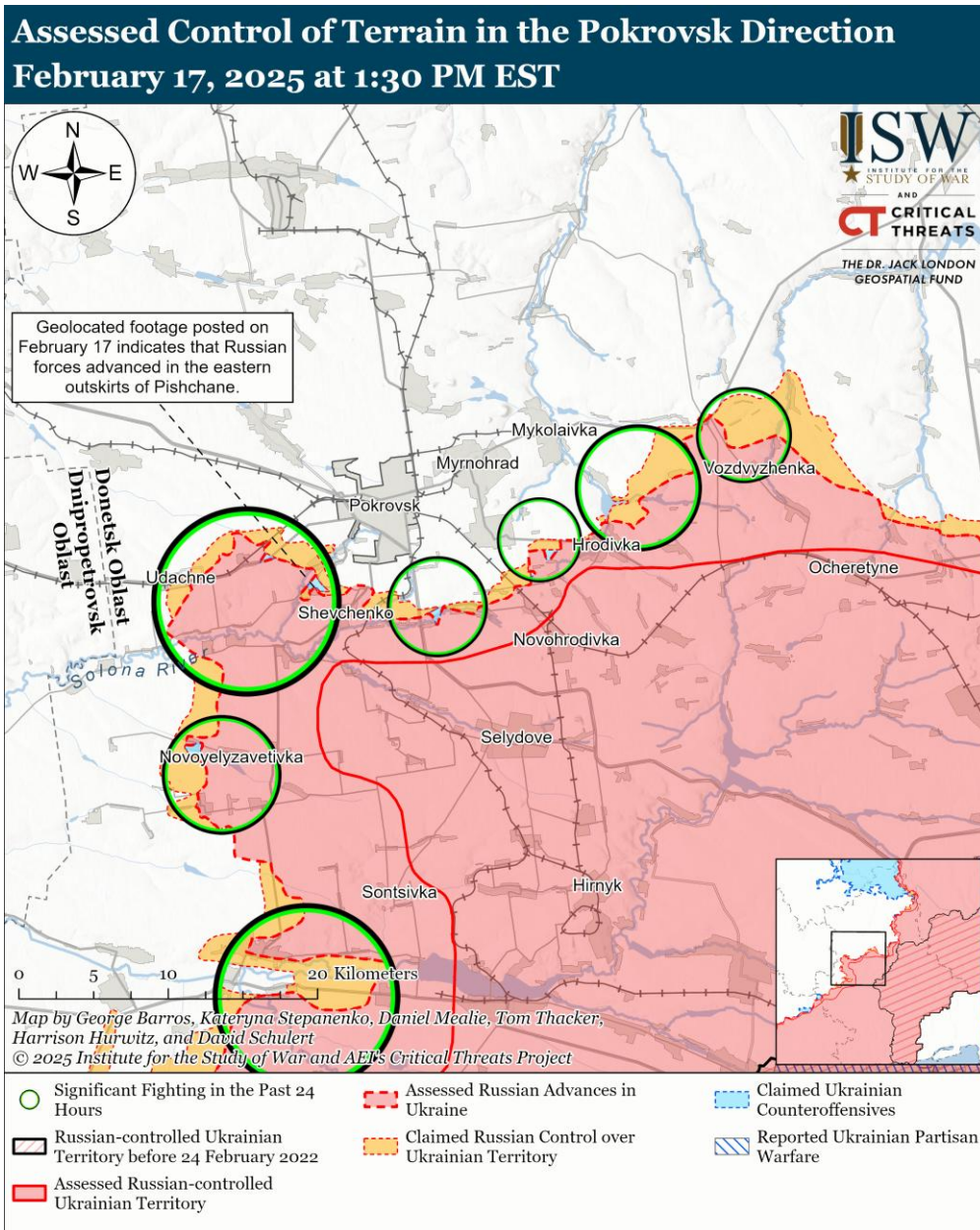
Assessed Control of Terrain in the Toretsk Direction February 17, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on February 13 and 15 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced southwest of Leonidivka and along Zhovtneva Street in northern Toretsk, respectively.^[72]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced near Shcherbynivka.^[73] Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Head Denis Pushilin claimed that Russian forces seized the Kleban-Byk Landscape Park (northwest of Toretsk), although Russian milbloggers questioned this claim given the park's size and distance from the frontline.^[74]

Russian forces recently advanced in the Pokrovsk direction. Russian forces continued ground attacks northeast of Pokrovsk near Vodyane Druhe, Tarasivka, and Malynivka; east of Pokrovsk near Myrolyubivka, Yelyzavetivka, and Promin; southeast of Pokrovsk near Lysivka; south of Pokrovsk near Novoukrainka; and southwest of Pokrovsk near Zvirove, Pishchane, Kotlyne, Udachne, Uspenivka, Nadiivka, Yasenove, and Zaporizhzhia on February 16 and 17.^[75] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked in Pishchane, near Lysivka and Kotlyne, and northeast of Shevchenko (south of Pokrovsk).^[76]



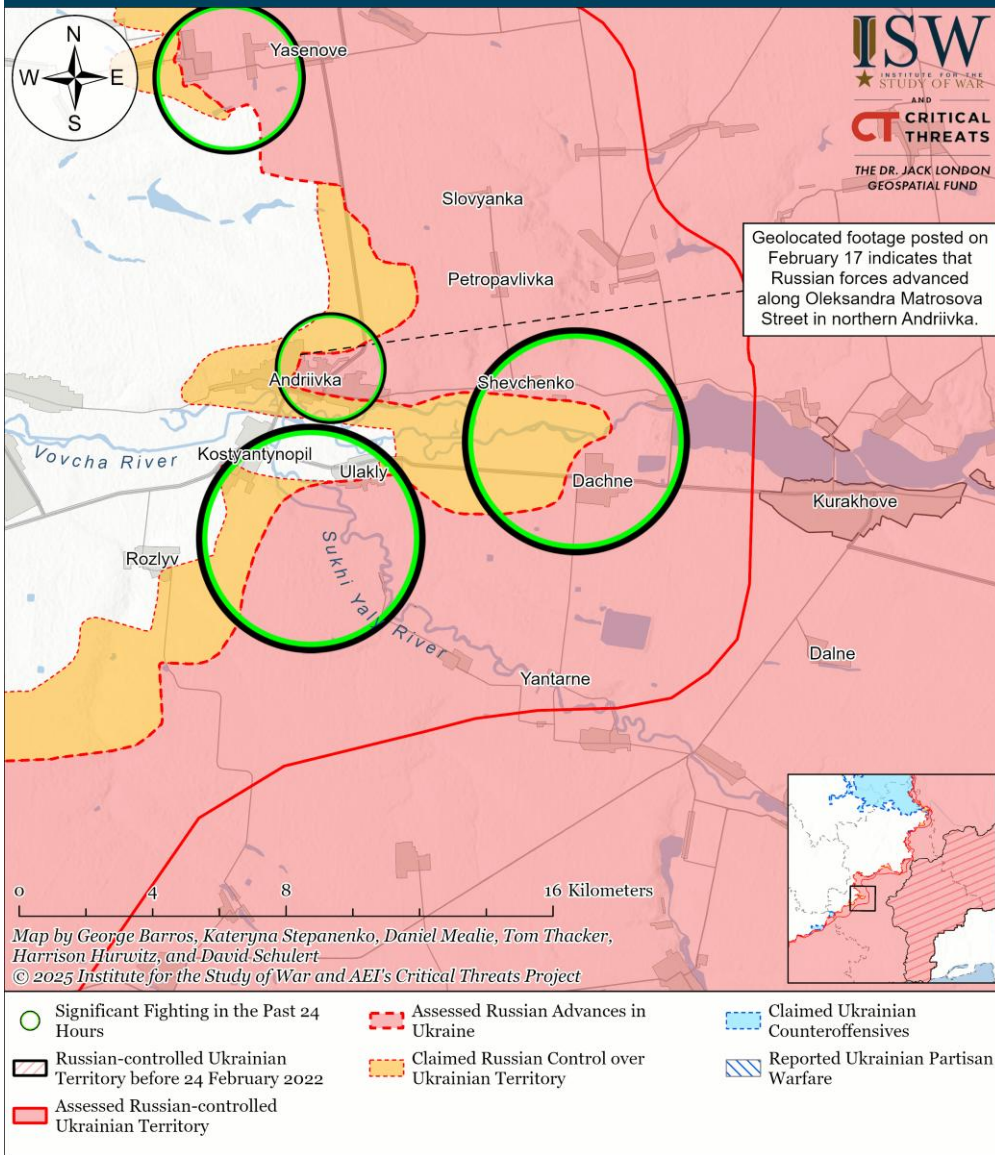
Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on february 17 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced on the eastern outskirts of Pishchane.^[77]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces seized Pishchane after attacking the settlement from the north and south.[78] One milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces maintain positions in northern Pishchane, however.[79] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces entered Preobrazhenka (southwest of Pokrovsk) and Tarasivka and advanced near Uspenivka and Udachne, in southern Kotlyne, and east of Pishchane.[80]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 30th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd CAA, Central Military District [CMD]) and 74th Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st CAA, CMD) are reportedly operating near Pishchane.[81]

Russian forces recently advanced west of Kurakhove. Russian forces continued ground attacks west of Kurakhove near Oleksiivka, Kostyantynopil, Ulakly, Andriivka, and Dachne and southwest of Kurakhove near Zelenivka on February 16 and 17 [82] A Ukrainian source reported that Russian forces conducted a roughly battalion-sized mechanized assault near Bahatyr (west of Kurakhove) and Ulakly with 40 armored vehicles and 250 personnel on February 15 and lost 39 vehicles - likely in reference to the recent Russian mechanized assault near Ulakly that ISW observed on February 16.[83] The Ukrainian source stated that Ukrainian forces repelled the assault near Bahatyr and Kostyantynopil but that Russian forces seized Zelenivka and advanced along the H-15 Kurakhove-Dachne-Kostyantynopil highway.

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kurakhove Direction February 17, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on February 17 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced in northern Andriivka.[84]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: Russian sources claimed that Russian forces advanced near Ulakly, 2.4 kilometers near Zelenivka, and in southern Andriivka.[85]

Order of Battle: Drone elements of the Russian 14th Spetsnaz Brigade (Russian General Staff's Main Directorate [GRU]) are reportedly operating near Rozlyv (southwest of Kurakhove); drone operators of the 2nd Battalion of the Russian 102nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA, SMD) are reportedly operating near Dachne; drone operators of the 68th Separate Reconnaissance Battalion of the 20th Motorized Rifle Division (8th CAA, SMD) are reportedly operating near Andriivka; and elements of the 8th Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade (5th CAA, Eastern Military District [EMD]) are reportedly operating near Kostyantynopil.[86]

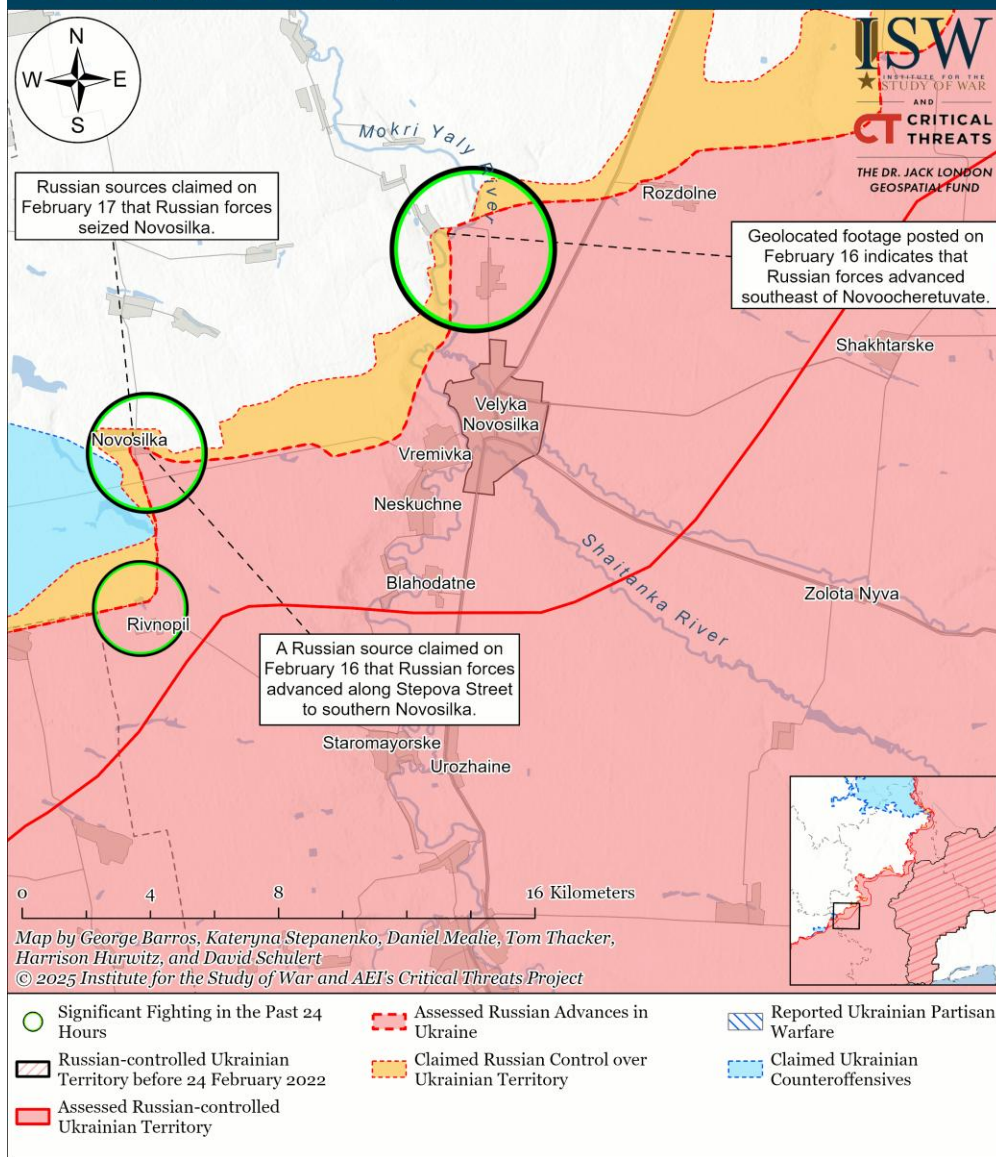
A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian advances in the Kurakhove direction are allowing the Russian military command to withdraw elements of the 8th CAA from the frontline for rest and reconstitution before deploying to other unspecified sectors of the front.[87] ISW has recently observed reports that the Russian military command redeployed elements of the 8th CAA from the Kurakhove direction to the Toretsk and eastern Pokrovsk directions.[88]

Russian forces recently advanced in the Velyka Novosilka direction. Russian forces continued assaults north of Velyka Novosilka near Novyi Komar and Novoocheretuvate, northwest of Velyka Novosilka near Burlatske, west of Velyka Novosilka near Novosilka, and southwest of Velyka Novosilka near Rivnopil on February 16 and 17.[89] Ukraine's Khortytsia Group of Forces reported on February 16 that Ukrainian forces repelled a Russian mechanized assault with "tens" of armored vehicles in several waves near Velyka Novosilka and posted footage showing Ukrainian strikes against at least nine Russian vehicles advancing in a column.[90]

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on February 16 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced to southern Novosilka during a roughly platoon-sized mechanized assault.[91] Additional geolocated footage published on February 16 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced southeast of Novoocheretuvate.[92]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces seized Novosilka and advanced east of the settlement, advanced up to two kilometers in fields west of Novyi Komar, and entered Novoocheretuvate.[93] Some milbloggers claimed that Russian forces only entered Novosilka and did not seize it, and one milblogger called claims of advance in the area premature.[94]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Velyka Novosilka Direction February 17, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST

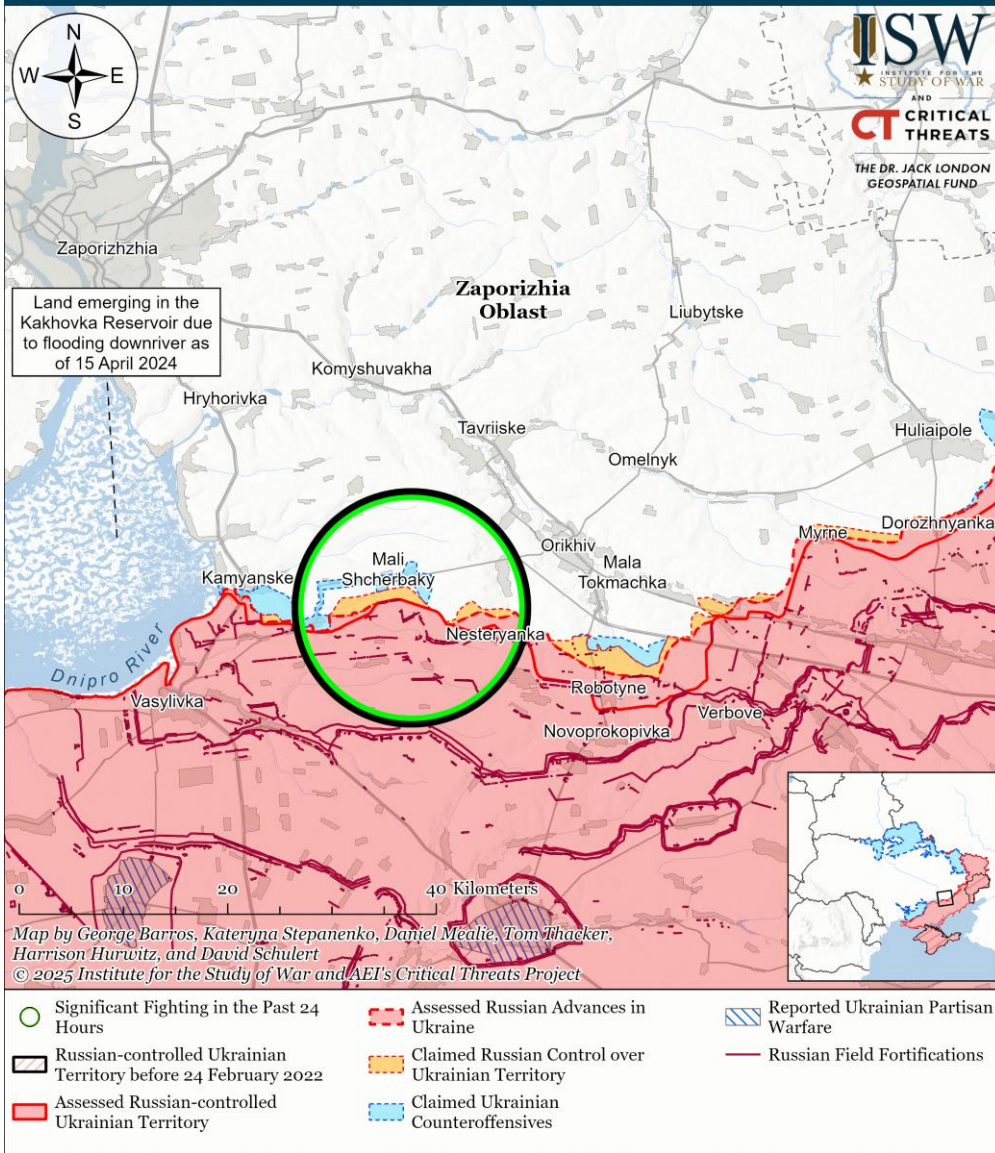


Ukraine's Khortytsia Group of Forces posted footage on February 16 and reported that Ukrainian forces destroyed a Russian S-350 "Vityaz" air defense system in an unspecified area of Donetsk Oblast.[95]

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

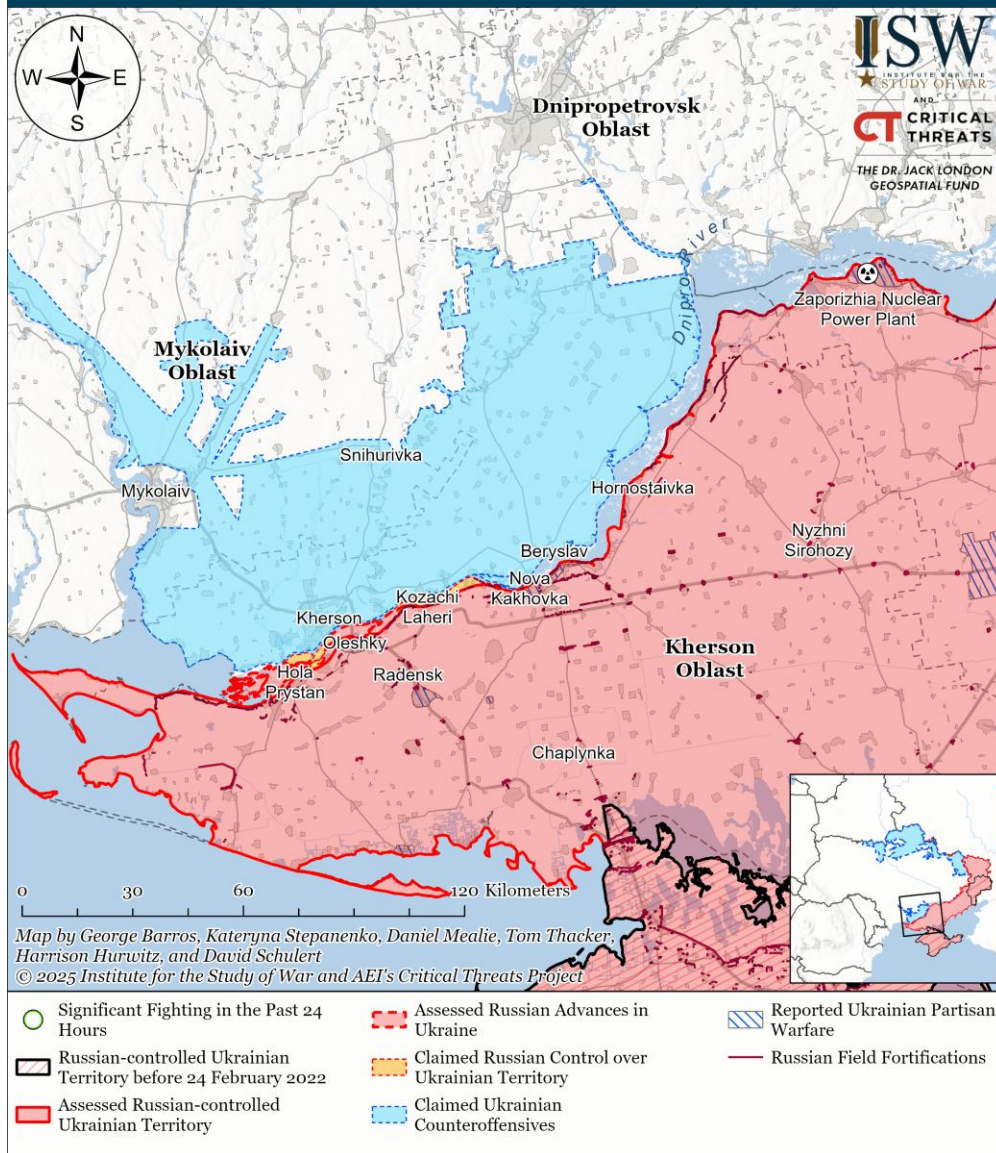
Russian forces continued limited ground attacks in western Zaporizhia Oblast on February 17 but did not advance. Russian forces conducted offensive operations northwest of Robotyne near Shcherbaky, Nesteryanka, Novoandriivka, Pyatykhatky, and Mali Shcherbaky on February 16 and 17.[96]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Zaporizhia Direction February 17, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Neither Russian nor Ukrainian sources reported ground activity in the Dnipro direction on February 17.

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kherson Direction February 17, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



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

Russian forces conducted a series of drone strikes against Ukraine on the night of February 16 to 17. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched 147 Shahed and decoy drones from Oryol, Bryansk, and Kursk oblasts; Millerovo, Rostov Oblast; Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai; and Shatalovo, Smolensk Oblast.[97] The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Ukrainian forces downed 83 drones over Kharkiv, Poltava, Sumy, Chernihiv, Cherkasy, Kyiv, Kirovohrad, Zaporizhia, Dnipropetrovsk, and Odesa oblasts and that 59 decoy drones were "lost," likely due to Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW) interference as of 0900 local time. Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces struck civilian infrastructure in Kharkiv, Kyiv, and Zaporizhia oblasts and caused power outages in Kyiv and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts.[98] Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported that two

Russian Su-30 fighters launched three Kh-31P anti-radar missiles from the Black Sea toward Odesa Oblast on the night of February 17.[99]

Ukrainian officials stated that Ukrainian authorities extinguished three fires in the shelter above the fourth power unit of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant (CNPP) as of the morning of February 17 following the February 14 Russian strike on the CNPP and that the strikes caused power supply problems to equipment in the New Safe Containment structure.[100]

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

Nothing significant to report.

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

Russian forces reportedly used a satellite-controlled "Kukushka" drone for the first time. Russian milbloggers claimed that elements of the Russian 102nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) used a satellite-controlled drone near Dachne (west of Kurakhove) and that the drone flew 16 kilometers before dropping ammunition weighing 4.5 kilograms on a Ukrainian position and returning to base.[101] Russian milbloggers claimed that the drone can carry a payload of 35 kilograms.

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 violate the Geneva Convention by conscripting civilians in occupied Ukraine to serve in the Russian military. Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Head Denis Pushilin signed on February 17 a plan to illegally conscript and train civilians in occupied Donetsk Oblast to work in military registration specialties in the Russian military.[102] The document calls for the Russian Volunteer Society for Assistance to the Army, Aviation, and Navy of Russia (DOSAAF) to help train and prepare civilians for these specialties, including through "courage lessons" with veterans of the wars in Ukraine, Chechnya, and Afghanistan. DOSAAF is a Soviet relic that funds and promotes military service for Russian youth through military-patriotic programming and military skills programs and sends representatives to military draft boards to allocate conscripts with specialized skills into specific military roles.[103] Article 51 of the Geneva Convention explicitly prevents an occupying power from compelling the population it occupies to serve in the occupying power's military.[104]

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

The Russian State Duma will consider the ratification of the Russian-Belarusian security treaty on February 18. Russian State Duma Chairperson Vyacheslav Volodin announced on February 17 that Duma deputies will discuss on February 18 the ratification of the Union State treaty on security guarantees.[105] Russian President Vladimir Putin and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko signed the treaty on December 6, 2024.[106] ISW assesses that the treaty supports the Kremlin's strategic effort to de facto annex Belarus and broaden the Russian military's presence in Belarus through the auspices of the Union State framework.[107]

Libyan National Army (LNA) Commander-in-Chief Khalifa Haftar met Belarusian State Security Committee (KGB) Head Ivan Tertel in Belarus on February 17 to discuss enhancing bilateral humanitarian and economic cooperation.[108]

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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