

**Christina Harward, Davit Gasparyan, Olivia Gibson, Grace Mappes,
and Frederick W. Kagan with Nate Trotter**

February 25, 2025, 10:00pm ET

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 12:15 pm ET on February 25. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the February 26 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russian President Vladimir Putin implicitly acknowledged Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as the legitimate president of Ukraine and Russia's future negotiating partner while promoting a new information operation that aims to destabilize Ukrainian society and the Ukrainian military from within. Putin gave an interview with Kremlin journalist Pavel Zarubin on February 24 in which Putin stated that "elections in Ukraine are not held under the pretext of martial law" — Putin's first acknowledgment that Ukrainian law prohibits elections during martial law.[1] Putin claimed that Zelensky is "toxic" for Ukrainian society and the Ukrainian military and that Zelensky would lose any future presidential election to other Ukrainian political and military leaders. Putin's statements are likely aimed at Ukrainian and Russian audiences. Putin's claims that Zelensky is unpopular and harmful to Ukraine are attempts to drive a wedge between the legitimate government of Ukraine and the Ukrainian military and population. Putin has repeatedly claimed that Zelensky is not the legitimate leader of Ukraine after Ukraine did not hold elections in 2024 — in accordance with Ukrainian law — as part of Russian efforts to claim that Russia cannot negotiate with Zelensky.[2] US President Donald Trump has stated that Putin and Zelensky must engage in negotiations, and Putin is likely shifting his rhetoric in order to explain to Russian domestic audiences his decision to engage in any future negotiations with Zelensky.[3] Putin and other Kremlin officials will likely attempt to exploit any Ukrainian military setbacks or differing opinions among Ukrainian officials to intensify this information operation and sow discord in Ukraine.

Putin attempted to use new language to repackage the calls for regime change in Ukraine that he has demanded since 2021. Putin stated during the interview with Zarubin that Russia "has nothing against" the preservation of Ukrainian statehood but wants Ukraine to "turn into a friendly neighboring state" and for Ukrainian territory to "not be used as a springboard for an attack against Russia" in the future.[4] Putin's calls for Ukraine to "turn" into a "friendly" state demonstrate that Putin is still calling for the removal of the democratically elected government in Ukraine and the installation of a pro-Kremlin government. The Kremlin has previously used thinly veiled calls for "denazification" to demand regime change in Ukraine, and Putin appears to be using new language to make these same demands.[5] Putin has demanded Ukrainian regime change since Summer 2021.[6]

Putin offered to make a deal with the United States on Russian rare earth minerals as part of efforts to outbid Ukraine on this matter and to push the United States to accept Russian offers of economic measures in lieu of any actual Russian concessions on

Ukraine. Putin claimed to Zarubin on February 24 that Russia has an "order of magnitude" more rare earth materials than Ukraine and stated that Russia can cooperate with both the US government and US companies in capital investment projects for rare earth materials.[7] Putin included mineral reserves both within Russia and within occupied Ukraine in his attempts to appeal to the United States to invest in Russian rare earth minerals. Putin also offered to conclude deals with the United States on the supply of Russian aluminum. Putin held a meeting with senior Kremlin officials on February 24 specifically about the importance of further developing Russia's domestic rare earth minerals industry and identified this as a priority effort.[8]

The Kremlin is framing any future US-Russian cooperation on rare earth minerals as conditional on the conclusion of a Russian-friendly peace deal on the war in Ukraine. Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov stated on February 25 that any US-Russia cooperation on rare earth minerals can only begin after normalizing bilateral relations and achieving a peace settlement in Ukraine.[9] ISW assessed that Russian officials used the recent US-Russian talks in Saudi Arabia to start an effort to push the United States to accept economic benefits that are unrelated to the war in Ukraine in return for Ukrainian and Western concessions that are related to the war.[10] ISW continues to assess that American acceptance of these Russian-offered economic measures — without demanding any Russian concessions on Ukraine in return — would give away leverage that the United States will need to achieve Trump's stated objective of achieving a lasting and enduring peace that benefits the United States and Ukraine.

Putin attempted to claim that he supports Europe's participation in negotiations on Ukraine while continuing to show his unwillingness to make concessions and seemingly proposing Russian allies as possible future negotiating parties. Putin responded to Zarubin's question about Putin's assessment of Europeans' "demands" for the "right to vote in negotiations" about Ukraine, stating that he "does not see anything bad here." [11] Putin then claimed that "probably no one can demand anything here, especially from Russia" but they can try to make demands of someone else — signaling Russia's unwillingness to make compromises in future negotiations. Putin claimed that Moscow respects the positions of Russia's "friends" from BRICS and that "other countries have the right and can participate" in discussions about issues about the war and efforts to achieve peace. Putin specifically highlighted his recent call with People's Republic of China (PRC) President Xi Jinping and applauded PRC efforts to discuss peace in Ukraine. The PRC and Brazil — two members of BRICS — have put forth peace proposals for the war in Ukraine that heavily favored Russia, and Putin appears to be posturing these states as possible participants in future negotiations.[12]

Kremlin officials continue to exploit diplomatic engagements with Russia's allies to reinforce Moscow's narrative that Russia invaded Ukraine to protect Russian-speaking minorities in Ukraine. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov met with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in Tehran.[13] The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) stated that the delegations "touched upon" the situation in Ukraine and that Lavrov expressed gratitude to Iranian authorities for their "balanced position" and their understanding of the "root causes" of the war, including Russia's need to protect Russian-speaking minorities from alleged discrimination from the Ukrainian government.[14] Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)-affiliated *Tasnim News Agency* readout of the meeting noted that the delegations discussed Ukraine and Lavrov's statement about Iran's "balanced position" but notably did not mention discussions of the "root causes" of the war in Ukraine.[15] Kremlin officials have recently increasingly referred to Russia's alleged need for future

peace negotiations to address the "root causes" of the war in Ukraine, which Lavrov defined in December 2024 as NATO's alleged violation of commitments not to advance eastward and the Ukrainian government's alleged discrimination against Russian-speaking minorities in Ukraine.[16] Lavrov met with PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi on February 20, and the Russian MFA claimed that Wang emphasized that the PRC's approach to resolving the war in Ukraine focuses on addressing the war's "root causes," while the PRC's MFA official readout of the Wang-Lavrov meeting attributed all talk of the "root causes" of the war to Lavrov and not Wang.[17] Russia is attempting to use meetings with its allies to publicly reiterate its calls for regime change in Ukraine and posture Russia's allies as supportive of these efforts.

A delegation from North Korea's Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) arrived in Moscow on February 25 at the invitation of Russia's ruling party, United Russia, amid reports that North Korea may be shipping more material to Russia.[18] Russian and North Korean state media reported that Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Consular Department Head Andrei Klimov and North Korean Ambassador to Russia Sin Hong Chol met with a high-ranking North Korean delegation, including North Korean Politburo member Ri Hi Yong, in Moscow.[19] The Russian Embassy in Pyongyang reported on February 24 that the delegations will discuss increased cooperation between United Russia and the WPK in accordance with the Russia-North Korea comprehensive strategic partnership agreement that entered into force in December 2024.[20] South Korean media outlet *Korea JoongAng Daily* reported on February 24 that commercial satellite imagery collected by Planet Labs PBC shows a 110-meter-long vessel entering and leaving North Korea's Rason Port near the border with the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Russia.[21] The satellite imagery also shows a line of containers roughly 100 meters long on the pier at Rason Port next to the docked vessel. The vessel reportedly arrived at the inner side of Rason Port's pier on February 20 and moved to the outer side on February 21, indicating that the vessel unloaded containers on the pier's inner side and loaded new containers on the outer side before departing. ISW reported that North Korea likely used Rason Port to transfer munitions to Vladivostok, Russia in November 2023.[22]

Western officials continue to highlight the scale of European military aid to Ukraine. The *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ), citing European officials, reported on February 25 that European Union (EU) countries, the United Kingdom (UK), and Norway provided Ukraine with military assistance worth approximately \$25 billion in 2024 and that this is more than the United States sent to Ukraine in 2024.[23] An unspecified Western official also told the WSJ that Europe supplies about 25 percent of Ukraine's military hardware and that the United States supplies about 20 percent.

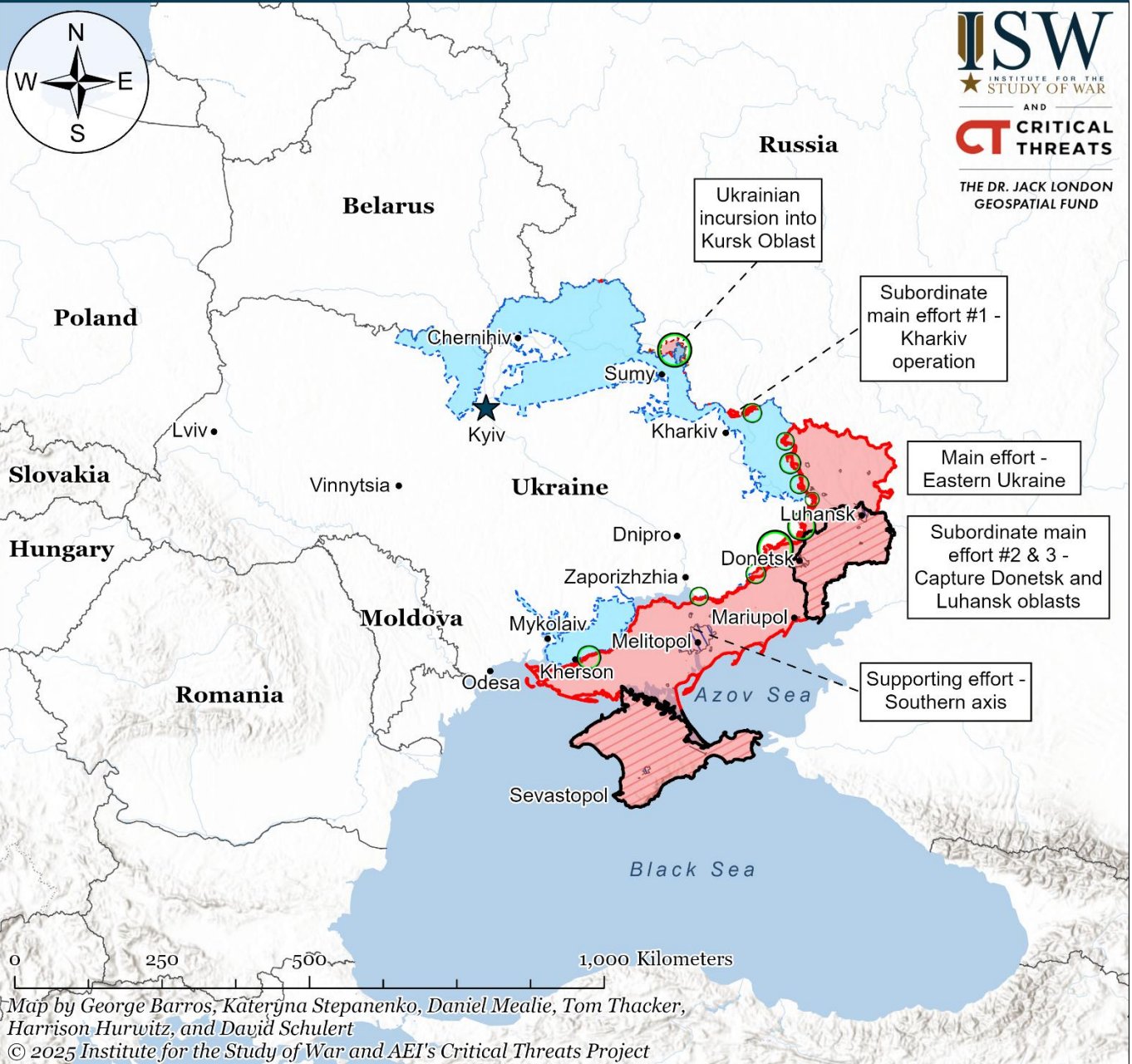
Key Takeaways:

- **Russian President Vladimir Putin implicitly acknowledged Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as the legitimate president of Ukraine and Russia's future negotiating partner while promoting a new information operation that aims to destabilize Ukrainian society and the Ukrainian military from within.**
- **Putin attempted to use new language to repackage the calls for regime change in Ukraine that he has demanded since 2021.**

- **Putin offered to make a deal with the United States on Russian rare earth minerals as part of efforts to outbid Ukraine on this matter and to push the United States to accept Russian offers of economic measures in lieu of any actual Russian concessions on Ukraine.**
- **Putin attempted to claim that he supports Europe's participation in negotiations on Ukraine while continuing to show his unwillingness to make concessions and seemingly proposing Russian allies as possible future negotiating parties.**
- **Kremlin officials continue to exploit diplomatic engagements with Russia's allies to reinforce Moscow's narrative that Russia invaded Ukraine to protect Russian-speaking minorities in Ukraine.**
- **A delegation from North Korea's Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) arrived in Moscow on February 25 at the invitation of Russia's ruling party, United Russia, amid reports that North Korea may be shipping more material to Russia.**
- **Western officials continue to highlight the scale of European military aid to Ukraine.**
- **Russian forces recently advanced in Kursk Oblast and near Kupyansk, Lyman, and Velyka Novosilka, and Ukrainian forces recently advanced near Kupyansk.**
- **Samara Oblast authorities reduced one-time payments to soldiers who sign military service contracts with the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) after temporarily increasing these payments in January 2025.**
- **The BBC Russian Service reported on February 25 that over 100 Russian government, military, and security officials accused and convicted of various corruption charges are fighting in Ukraine.**
- **The Kremlin continues efforts to use its "Time of Heroes" program, which places veterans of the war in Ukraine in government positions, to form a new Russian elite composed of loyal and ultranationalist veterans that will continue to militarize Russian society over the long term.**
- **Russia may be reopening a Soviet-era submarine base in occupied Crimea.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Russo-Ukrainian War

February 25, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Daniel Mealie, Tom Thacker, Harrison Hurwitz, and David Schulert
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- Significant Fighting in the Past 24 Hours
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before 24 February 2022
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian Advances in Russia
- Claimed Russian Advances in Russia
- Ukrainian Advances in Russia

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 recently advanced in Kursk Oblast. Fighting continued northwest of Sudzha near Pogrebki, Orlovka, Novaya Sorochina, Staraya Sorochina, and Lebedevka.[24]

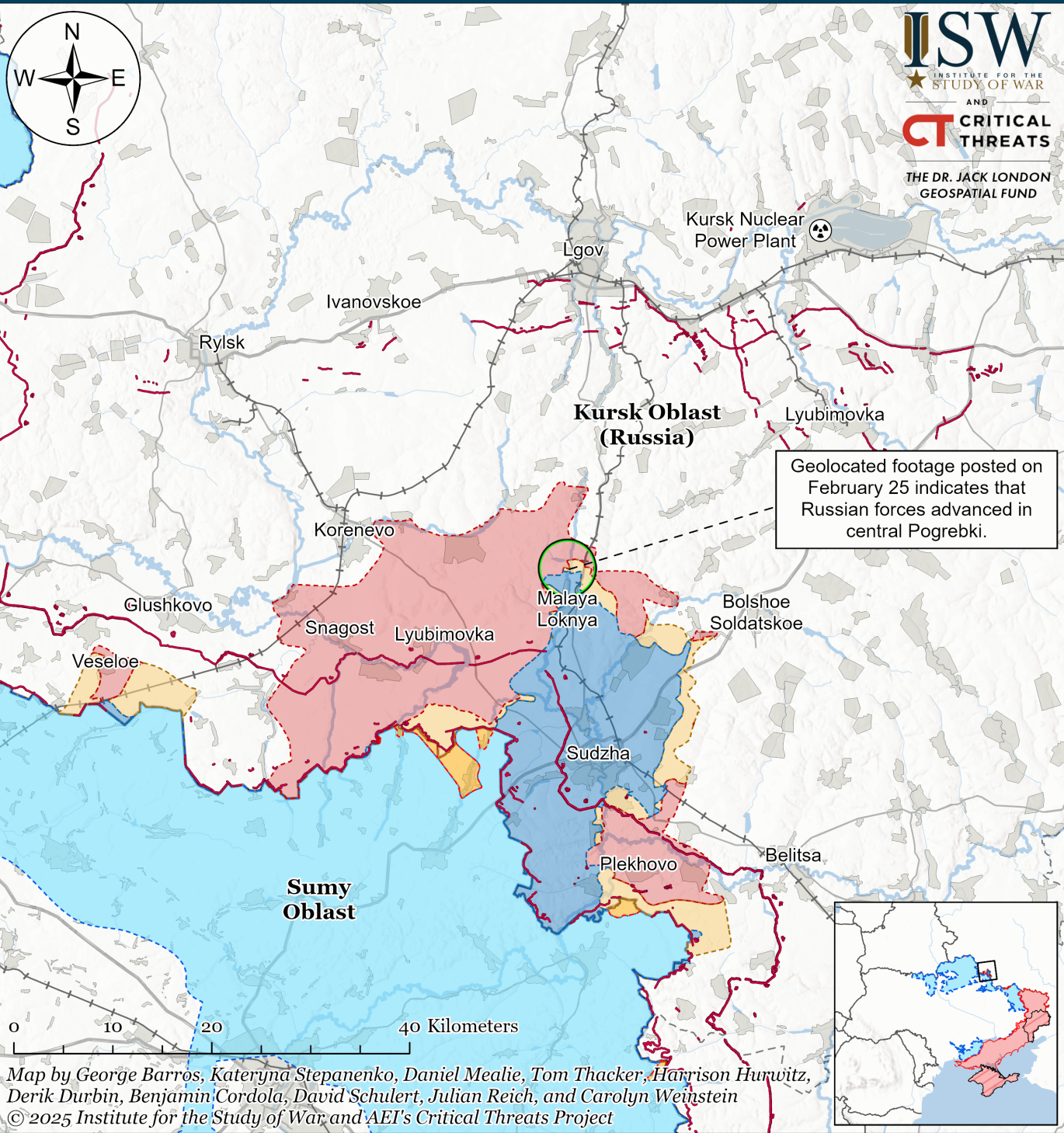
Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on February 25 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced in central Pogrebki.[25]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces seized Pogrebki, Orlovka, and Novaya Sorochina and advanced near Maryevka (just east of Pogrebki) and Kurilovka (south of Sudzha).[26]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 810th Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet) are reportedly operating in Kursk Oblast; elements of the 34th Motorized Rifle Brigade (49th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) and 9th Motorized Rifle Regiment (18th Motorized Rifle Division, 11th Army Corps [AC], Leningrad Military District [LMD]) are reportedly operating near Pogrebki; elements of the 22nd Spetsnaz Brigade (Russian General Staff Main Directorate [GRU]) are reportedly operating in Novaya Sorochina; and elements of the 119th Airborne (VDV) Regiment (106th VDV Division) are reportedly operating near Sverdlikovo (northwest of Sudzha).[27]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kursk Direction

February 25, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Daniel Mealie, Tom Thacker, Harrison Hurwitz, Derik Durbin, Benjamin Cordola, David Schulert, Julian Reich, and Carolyn Weinstein
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- Significant Fighting in the Past 24 Hours
- Russian Field Fortifications
- Russian Advances in Russia
- Claimed Russian Advances in Russia
- Ukrainian Advances in Russia

Russian forces continued offensive operations near the international border in Sumy Oblast on February 25 but did not make any confirmed advances. Fighting continued near Novenke and Basivka.[28]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: A Russian source claimed that Russian forces seized Novenke and advanced in northern Zhuravka.[29]

Russian Main Effort — Eastern Ukraine

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 25 but did not advance. Russian forces conducted offensive operations northeast of Kharkiv City near Vovchansk on February 24 and 25.[30] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully counterattacked near Lyptsi (north of Kharkiv City).[31]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces marginally advanced on the eastern outskirts of Vovchansk.[32]

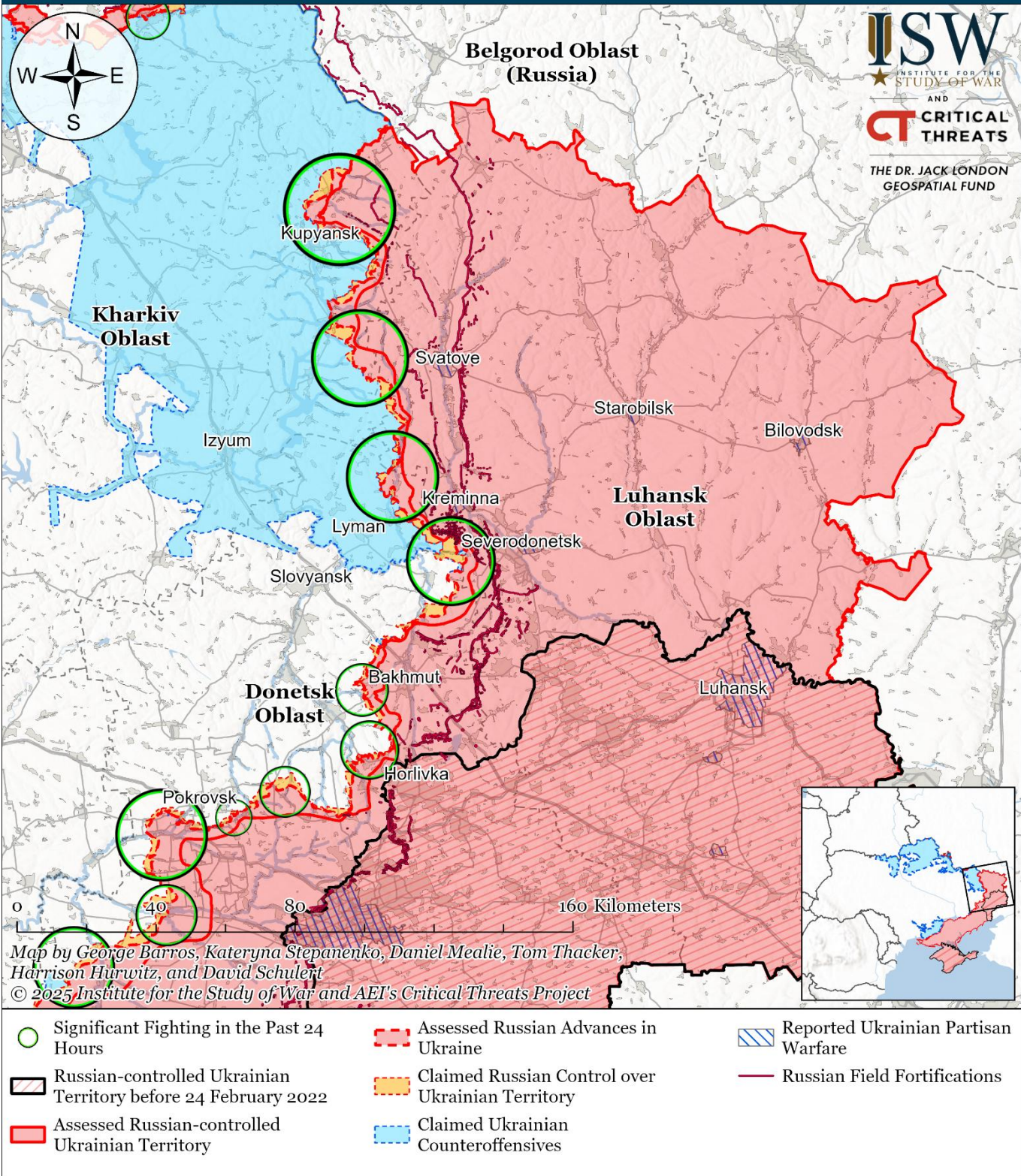
The spokesperson of a Ukrainian brigade operating near Vovchansk stated that snowy weather is complicating Russian assaults.[33]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 41st Motorized Rifle Regiment (72nd Motorized Rifle Division, 44th Army Corps [AC], Leningrad Military District {LMD}) and the "Sheikh Mansur" volunteer battalion are reportedly operating in the Kharkiv direction.[34]

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)

Assessed Control of Terrain in Luhansk Oblast

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Ukrainian and Russian forces recently advanced in the Kupyansk direction. Russian forces conducted offensive operations north of Kupyansk near Dvorichna, east of Kupyansk near Petropavlivka, and southeast of Kupyansk near Stepova Novoselivka on February 24 and 25.[35]

Assessed Ukrainian advances: Geolocated footage published on February 25 indicates that Ukrainian forces recently advanced west of the P-79 Dvorichna-Kupyansk highway northeast of Zapadne (north of Kupyansk).[36]

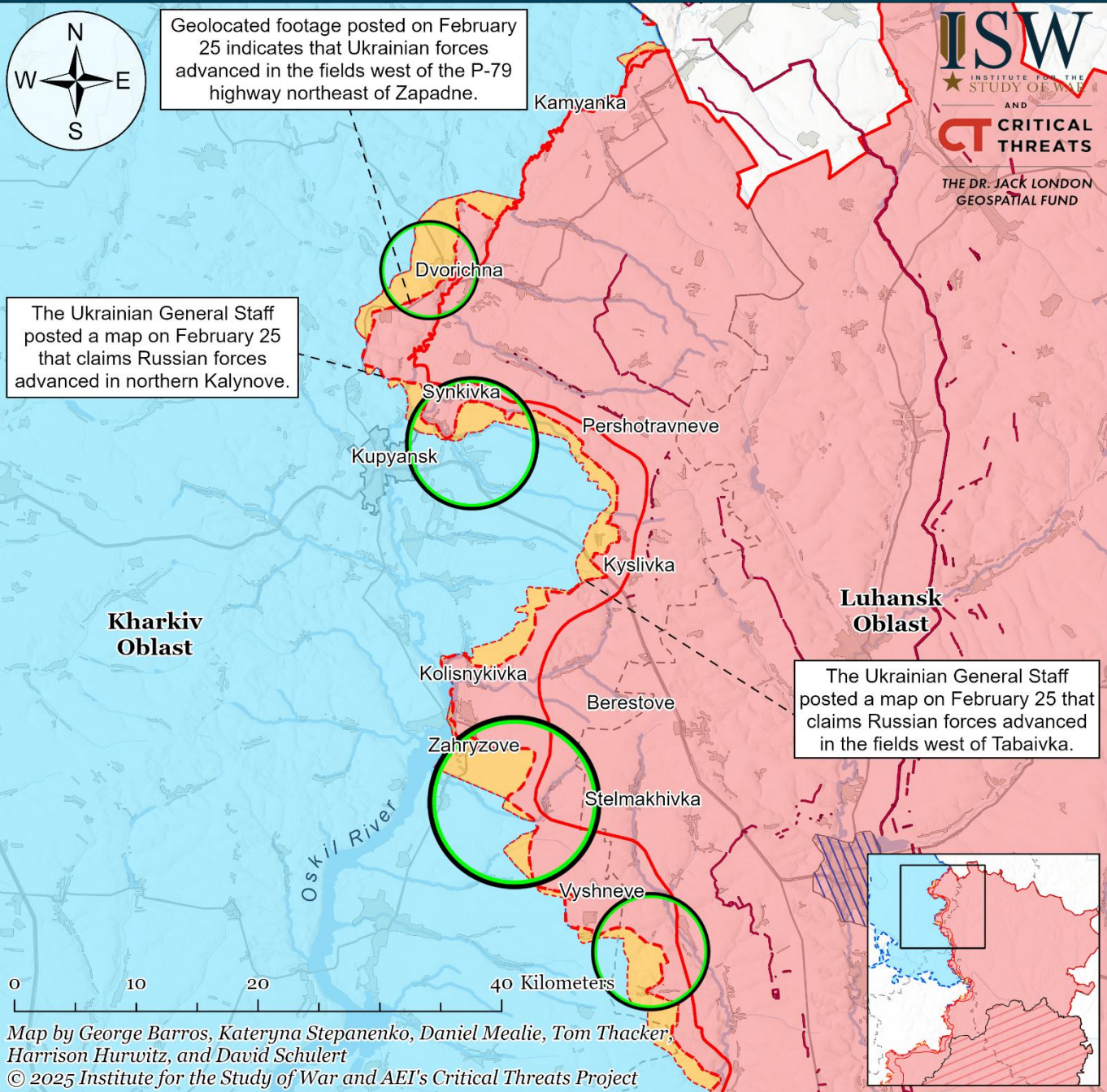
Assessed Russian advances: The Ukrainian General Staff published a map on February 25 indicating that Russian forces advanced northwest of Tabaivka (southeast of Kupyansk).[37]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced north and west of Topoli (along the international border northeast of Kupyansk), north of Kucherivka (just east of Kupyansk), northwest of Ivanivka (southeast of Kupyansk), and further northwest of Tabaivka.[38]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 153rd Tank Regiment (47th Tank Division, 1st Guards Tank Army, Moscow Military District [MMD]) are reportedly operating near Stepova Novoselivka.[39]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kupyansk Direction

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- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian Field Fortifications

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Borova direction on February 25 but did not make any confirmed advances. Russian forces conducted offensive operations northeast of Borova near Zahryzove and Nova Kruhlyakivka and toward Borivska Andriivka and east of Borova near Nadiya on February 24 and 25.[40] A Ukrainian regiment operating in the Kupyansk direction reported on February 24 that Russian forces conducted an at least reinforced platoon-sized mechanized assault on the outskirts of Lovoza (northeast of Borova) and that Ukrainian forces destroyed a tank and an armored personnel carrier and struck three more armored personnel carriers.[41]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced west of Makiivka (southeast of Borova), and Russian sources claimed that Russian forces advanced near Makiivka and Novovodyane (north of Makiivka).[42]

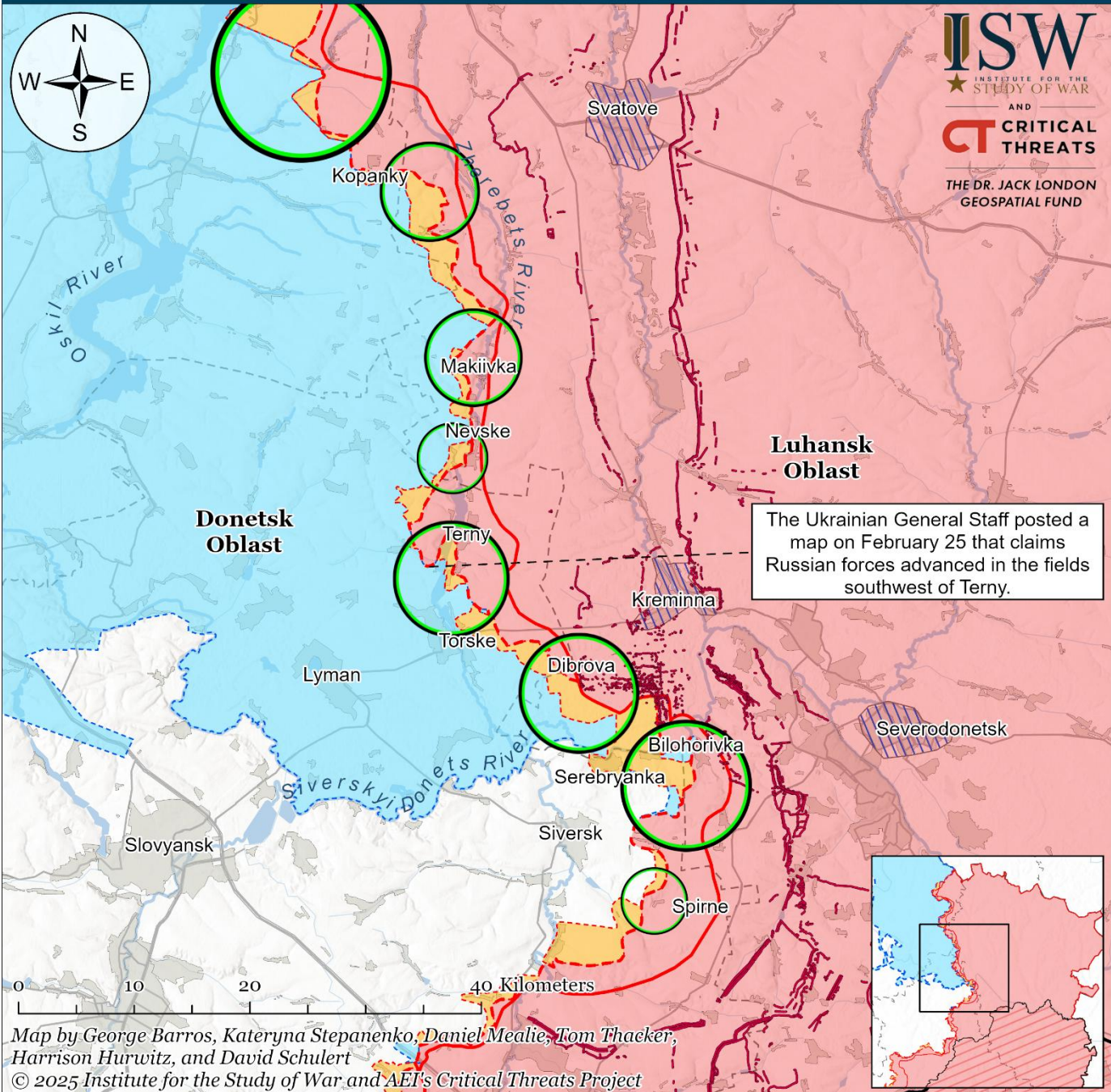
Russian forces recently advanced in the Lyman direction. Russian forces conducted offensive operations northeast of Lyman near Novolyubivka and Yampolivka and toward Zelena Dolyna, Nove, and Katerynivka and east of Lyman near Dibrova and in the Serebryanske forest area on February 24 and 25.[43]

Assessed Russian advances: The Ukrainian General Staff published a map on February 25 indicating that Russian force advanced southwest of Terny (northeast of Lyman).[44]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced toward Kolodyazi (northeast of Lyman) and Torske (east of Lyman).[45]

Order of Battle: Ukrainian military observer Yuriy Butusov stated that elements of the Russian 25th Motorized Rifle Brigade (6th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Leningrad Military District [LMD]) are operating in the Lyman direction.[46]

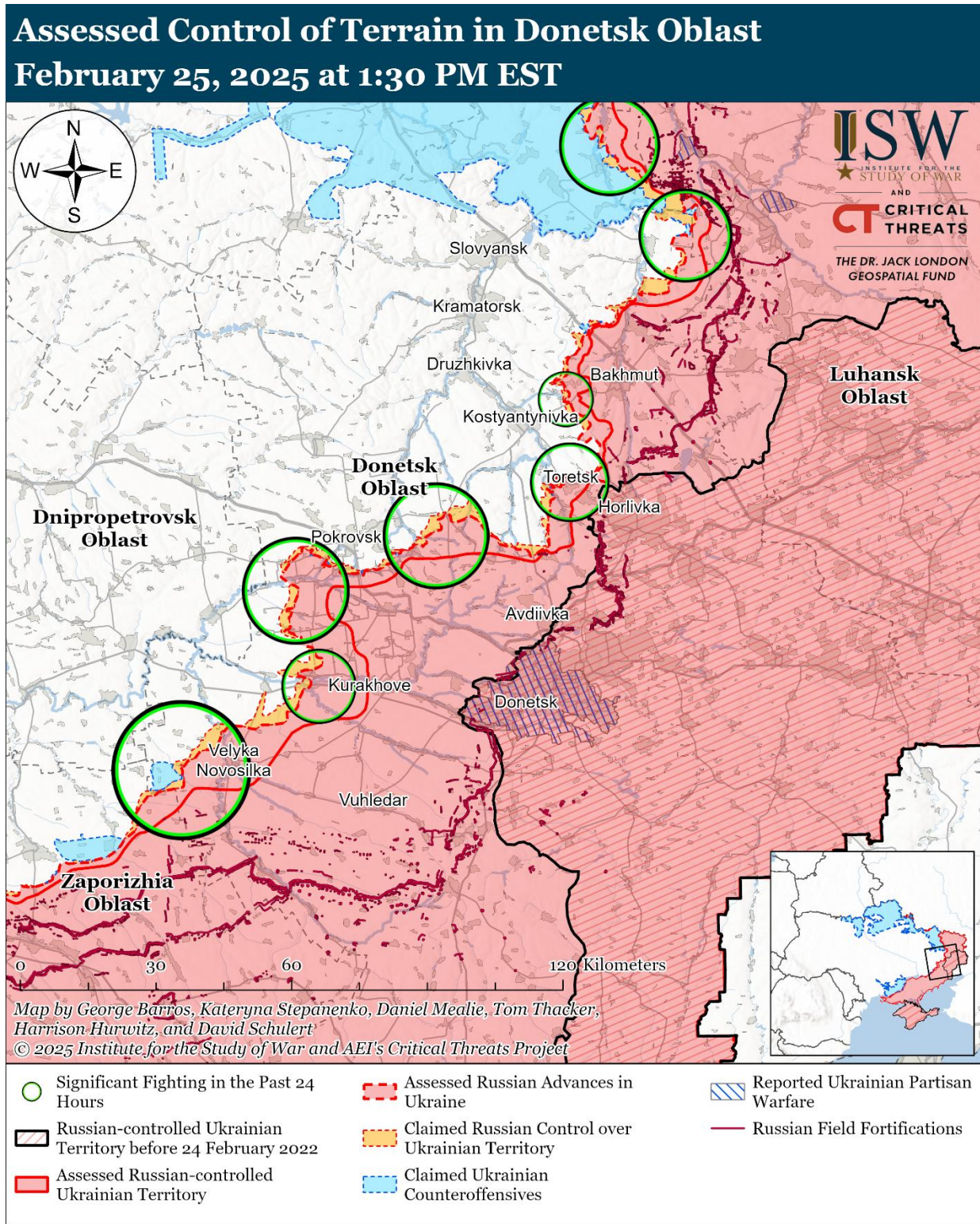
Assessed Control of Terrain in the Svatove-Kreminna Direction February 25, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Daniel Mealie, Tom Thacker, Harrison Hurwitz, and David Schulert
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|--|----------------------------------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| | Significant Fighting in the Past 24 Hours | | Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine | | Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare |
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| | Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory | | Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives | | |

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 25 but did not make any confirmed advances. Russian forces conducted offensive operations northeast of Siversk near Bilohorivka, east of Siversk near Verkhokamyanske, and southeast of Siversk near Ivano-Darivka on February 24 and 25.[47] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Bilohorivka.[48]

Russian sources claimed that Russian forces seized Bilohorivka.[49] A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces have seized most of Bilohorivka but not the entire settlement.[50] The milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces maintain positions on the outskirts of the settlement, that fighting continues in western Bilohorivka, and that northern Bilohorivka is a contested "gray zone."

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 7th Motorized Rifle Brigade (3rd Combined Arms Army [CAA], formerly 2nd Luhansk People's Republic Army Corps [LNR AC], Southern Military District [SMD]) reportedly continue to operate in Bilohorivka.[51]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Chasiv Yar direction on February 25 but did not make any confirmed advances. Russian forces conducted offensive operations in and near Chasiv Yar itself and south of Chasiv Yar near Stupochky on February 24 and 25.[52]

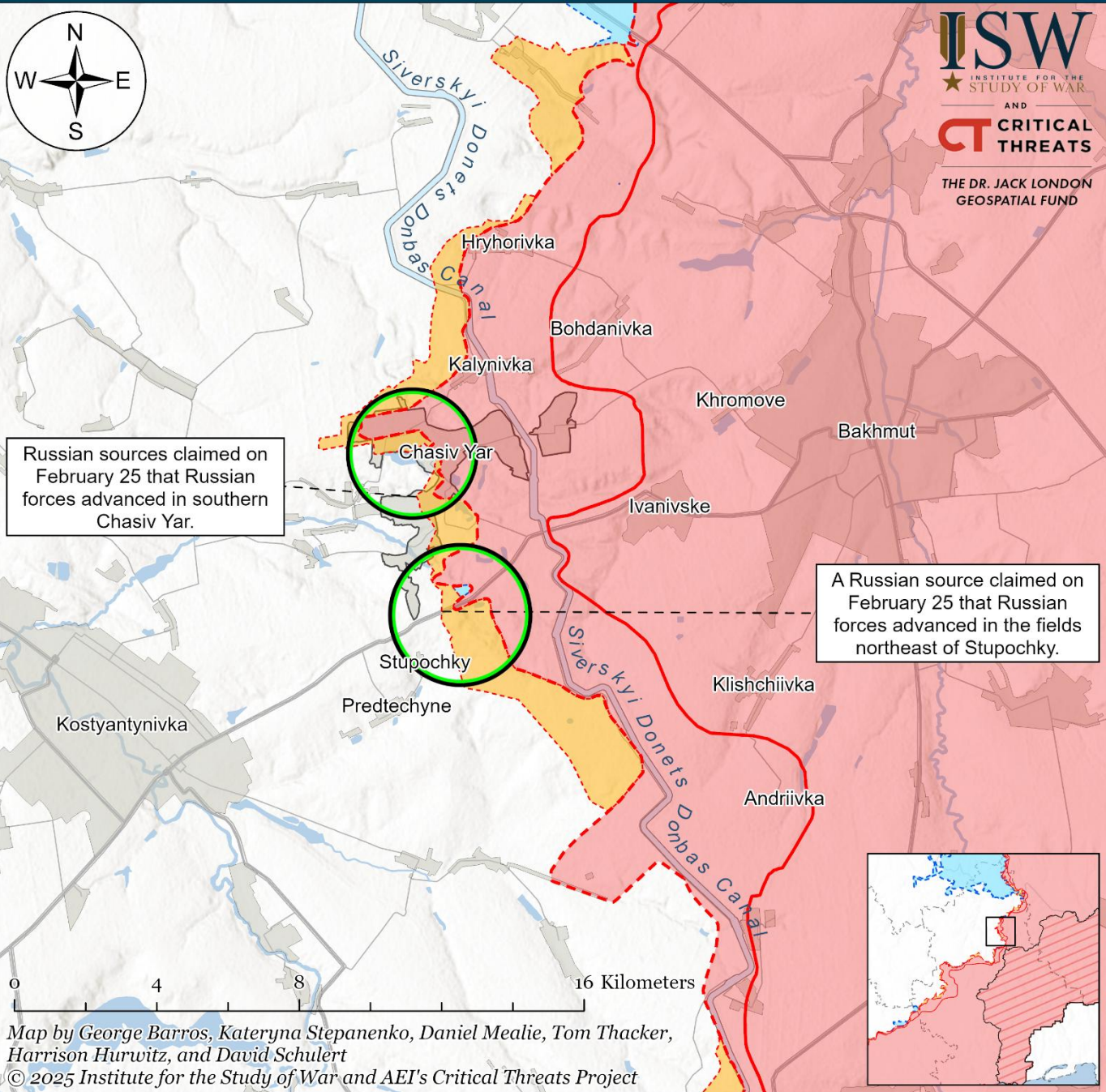
Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced in northern and southern Chasiv Yar and along the T-0504 Bakhmut-Kostyantynivka highway northeast of Stupochky.[53]

Servicemembers of a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Chasiv Yar direction reported on February 25 that Russian forces, including Storm-Z penal units, are attacking on motorcycles, buggies, and vehicles and occasionally attack with armored fighting vehicles and tanks.[54] The spokesperson of another Ukrainian brigade operating in the Chasiv Yar direction stated that Russian forces are taking advantage of their manpower advantage and conducting frontal assaults with small infantry groups.[55] The spokesperson noted that Russian forces sometimes use mechanized equipment.

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 5th Anti-Aircraft Missile Regiment and 299th and 331st airborne (VDV) regiments (all part of the 98th VDV Division) are reportedly operating in and near Chasiv Yar.[56] Elements of the 2nd Artillery Brigade (3rd Combined Arms Army [CAA], formerly 2nd Luhansk People's Republic Army Corps [LNR AC], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating near Hryhorivka (northeast of Chasiv Yar).[57]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Chasiv Yar Direction

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- Significant Fighting in the Past 24 Hours
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- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before 24 February 2022
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Toretsk direction on February 25 but did not advance. Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Toretsk itself and east of Toretsk near Krymske on February 24 and 25.[58] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully counterattacked near the Toretska mine in northern Toretsk.[59]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced in northern Toretsk.[60] A Russian source claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced in northern Toretsk.[61]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 103rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA, Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating in Toretsk.[62] A Russian milblogger claimed that the Russian military command redeployed three unspecified regiments to Toretsk.[63] ISW recently observed reports that the Russian military command redeployed elements of the 150th Motorized Rifle Division (8th CAA, SMD), including its 103rd Motorized Rifle Regiment, from the Kurakhove direction to the Toretsk direction.[64]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Pokrovsk direction on February 25 but did not advance. Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Pokrovsk itself; northeast of Pokrovsk near Tarasivka and Vodyane Druhe; east of Pokrovsk near Promin; and southwest of Pokrovsk near Nadiivka, Preobrazhenka, Zaporizhzhia, Leontovychi (formerly Pershe Travyna), Kotlyne, and Udachne and toward Molodetske and Troitske on February 24 and 25.[65]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced near Uspenivka and Nadiivka.[66] A Russian source claimed that Ukrainian forces pushed Russian forces out of Uspenivka, while another Russian source claimed that Ukrainian forces only pushed Russian forces out of central Uspenivka.[67]

The spokesperson of a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Pokrovsk direction stated that Russian forces are using donkeys to transport infantry to near the frontline and that Russian forces are only using infantry in assaults after having suffered heavy equipment losses in the first half of February 2025.[68] The spokesperson stated that Russian forces are using first-person view (FPV) drones with fiber optic cables to destroy Ukrainian heavy bomber drones.[69]

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian "Rubikon" Center for Advanced Unmanned Technologies and "Vizantiya" detachment are reportedly operating in the Pokrovsk direction.[70]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Kurakhove direction on February 25 but did not make any confirmed advances. Russian forces continued assaults west of Kurakhove near Andriivka, Kostyantynopil, Ulakly, and Oleksiivka on February 24 and 25.[71] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian counterattack near Kostyantynopil.[72]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced west of Andriivka and Rozdolne (southeast of Kurakhove) and pushed Ukrainian forces to the western outskirts of Kostyantynopil.[73]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 39th Motorized Rifle Brigade (68th AC, Eastern Military District [EMD]) are reportedly operating near Kostyantynopil; elements of the 114th Motorized Rifle Brigade (51st CAA, formerly 1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] AC, SMD) are reportedly operating

near Oleksiivka; and elements of the "Somalia" Battalion (132nd Motorized Rifle Brigade, 51st CAA) are reportedly operating near Kostyantynopil and Bohdanivka.[74] Drone operators of the Russian "Rubikon" Center for Advanced Unmanned Technologies are reportedly operating in the Vuhledar (southwest of Donetsk City) direction.[75]

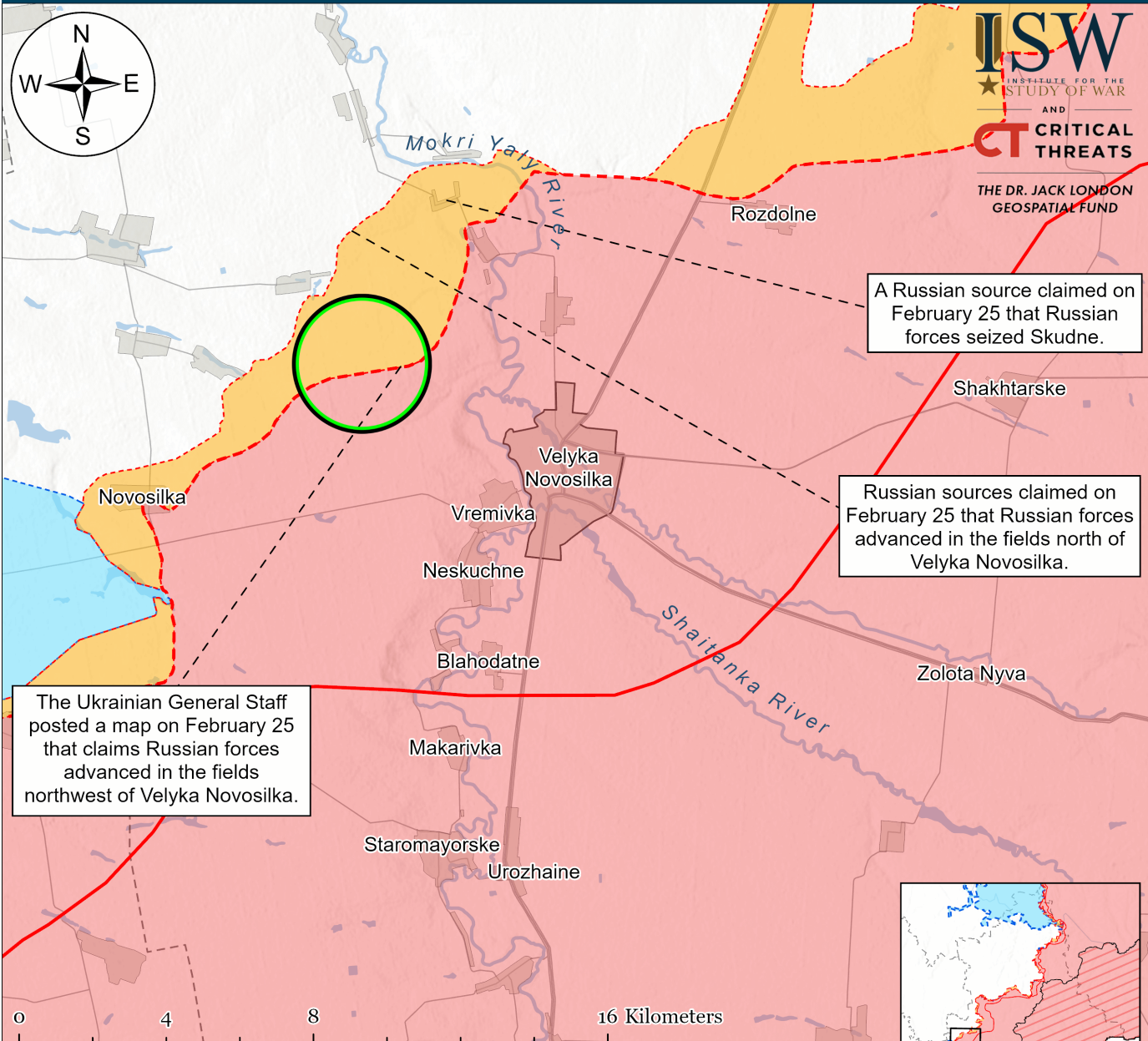
Russian forces recently advanced in the Velyka Novosilka direction. Russian forces continued ground attacks north of Velyka Novosilka near Skudne and Dniproenerhiya; northwest of Velyka Novosilka near Burlatske and Pryvilne; and west of Velyka Novosilka near Novopil on February 24 and 25.[76]

Assessed Russian advances: The Ukrainian General Staff published a map on February 25 indicating that Russian forces advanced in fields north and west of Velyka Novosilka.[77]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced further north of Velyka Novosilka and seized Skudne.[78] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces also advanced east and southwest of Burlatske, southwest of Pryvilne, and southwest of Novosilka.[79] A Russian source claimed that Russian forces have "practically" surrounded Burlatske from two sides.[80]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 60th Motorized Rifle Brigade (5th CAA, EMD) are reportedly operating between Novoocheretuvate (north of Velyka Novosilka) and Pryvilne.[81]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Velyka Novosilka Direction February 25, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



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A Russian source claimed on February 25 that Russian forces seized Skudne.

Russian sources claimed on February 25 that Russian forces advanced in the fields north of Velyka Novosilka.

The Ukrainian General Staff posted a map on February 25 that claims Russian forces advanced in the fields northwest of Velyka Novosilka.

Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Daniel Mealie, Tom Thacker, Harrison Hurwitz, Derik Durbin, Benjamin Cordola, David Schulert, Julian Reich, and Carolyn Weinstein
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- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives

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

Russian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Obast on February 25 but did not make any confirmed advances. Russian forces attacked northwest of Robotyne near Kamyanske, Mali Shcherbaky, and Pyatykhatky on February 24 and 25.[82] A Russian source claimed that Ukrainian forces are counterattacking near Lobkove and Stepove (both northwest of Robotyne).[83]

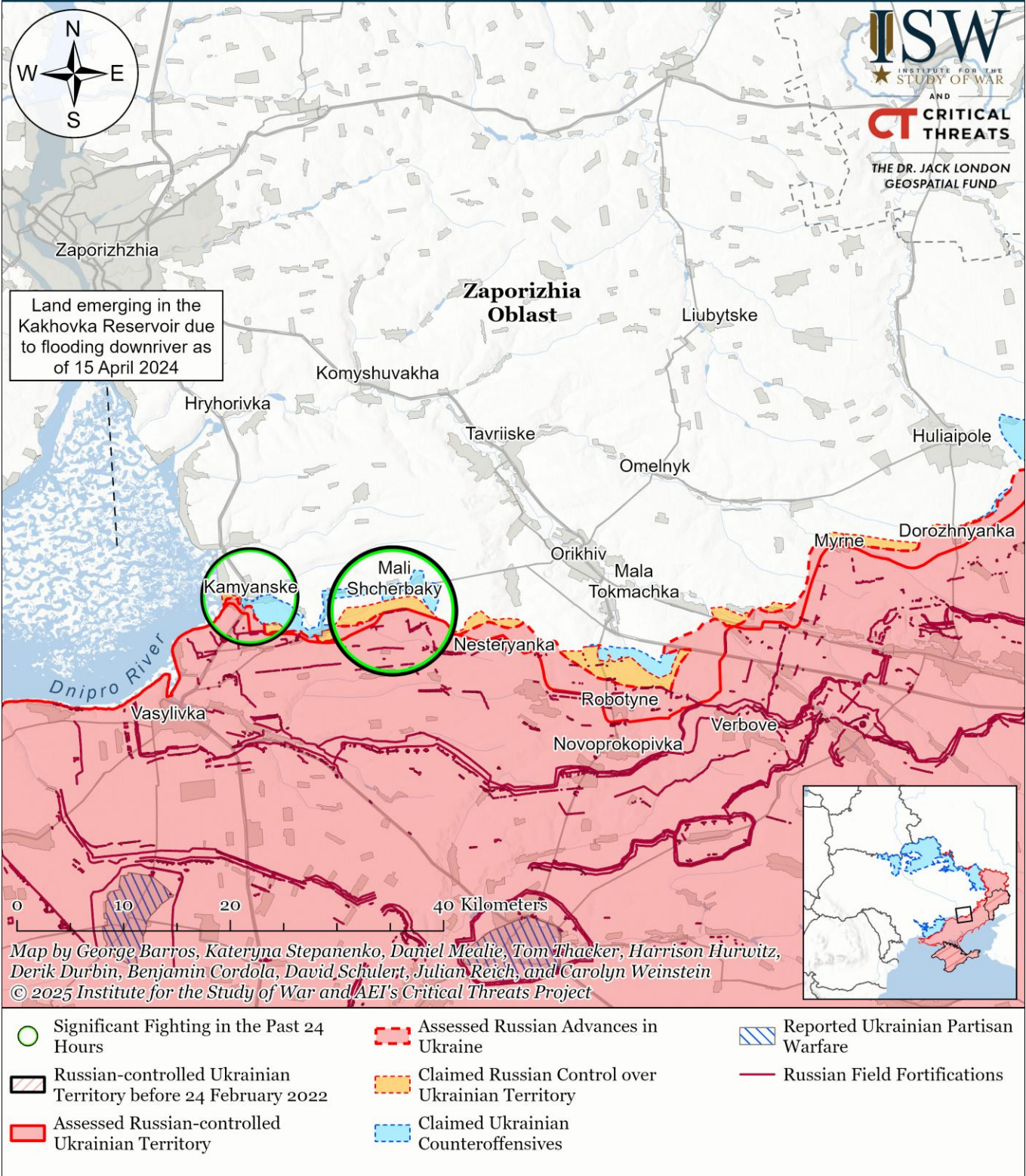
Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced in eastern Pyatykhatky, to Lobkove and Stepove, and towards Shcherbaky (northwest of Robotyne) and Mali Shcherbaky.[84] A Russian source claimed that Russian forces cleared Pyatykhatky, while another Russian source claimed that Russian forces have not seized the entire settlement.[85]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 247th Airborne (VDV) Regiment (7th VDV Division) are reportedly operating near Pyatykhatky, Lobkove, and Stepove.[86] Drone operators of the Russian “BARS-Sarmat” volunteer detachment (Russian Combat Army Reserve) reportedly continue operating in the Orikhiv direction.[87]

A Ukrainian source posted footage on February 24 showing a Ukrainian drone striking a Russian 9A82 transporter erector launcher and radar (TELAR) of an S-300V air defense system in an unspecified area in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast.[88]

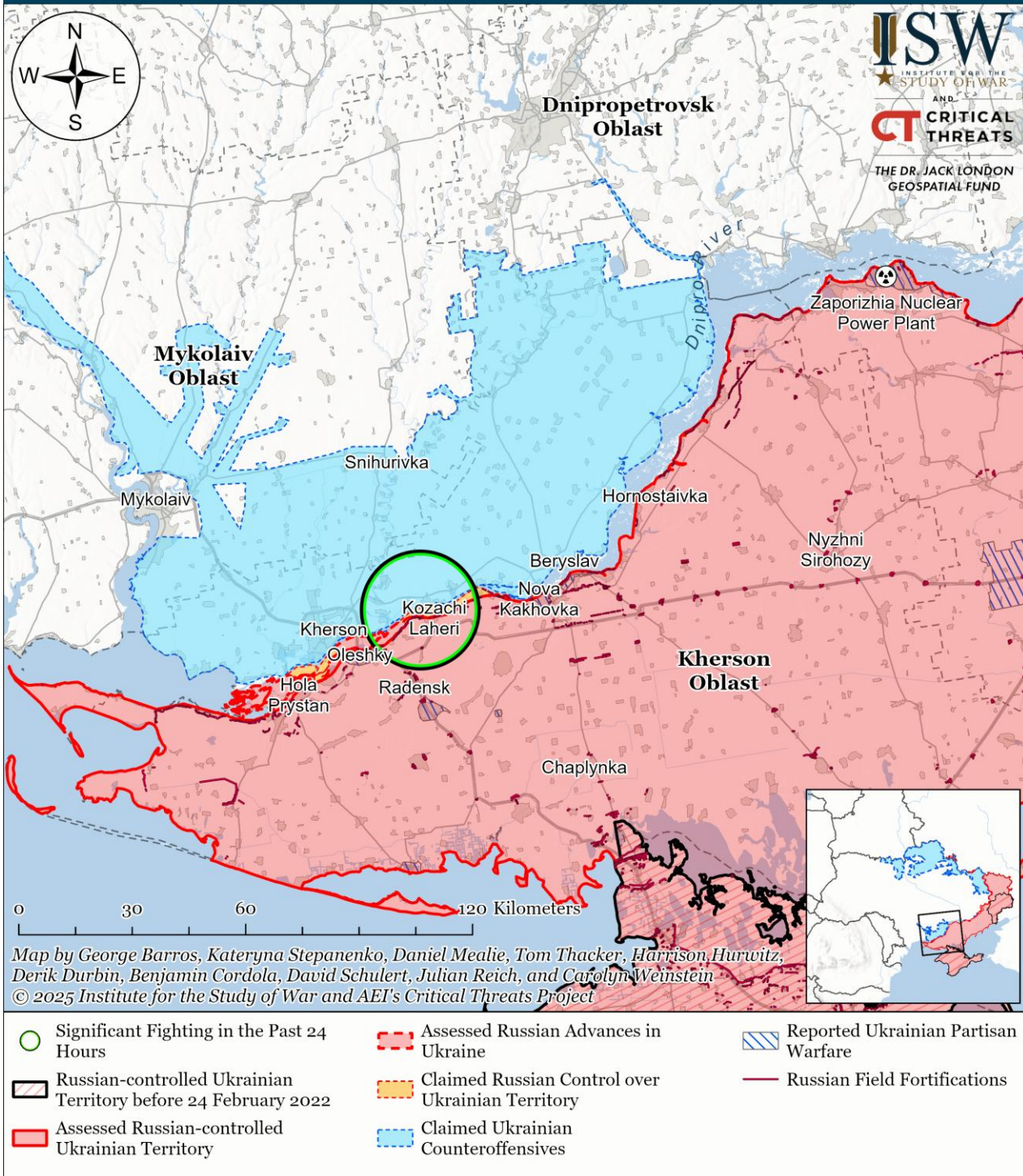
Assessed Control of Terrain in the Zaporizhia Direction

February 25, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Russian forces continued limited ground attacks in the Kherson direction on February 25 but did not advance. Russian forces attacked in the direction of Sadove (east of Kherson City on west [right] bank Kherson Oblast) on February 24 and 25.[89]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kherson Direction February 25, 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 and missile strikes against Ukraine on the night of February 24 to 25. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched 213 Shahed and decoy drones from the directions of Oryol, Bryansk, and Kursk cities and Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai.[90] The Ukrainian Air Forces reported that Russian forces also launched seven Kh-101 cruise missiles from Tu-95MS strategic bombers.[91] The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Ukrainian forces shot down 133 drones over Poltava, Sumy, Kyiv, Chernihiv, Cherkasy, Kirovohrad, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Kherson, and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts and that 79 decoy drones were "lost," likely due to Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW) interference. Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces struck Zhytomyr, Kharkiv, and Sumy oblasts.[92]

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

Samara Oblast authorities reduced one-time payments to soldiers who sign military service contracts with the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) after temporarily increasing these payments in January 2025. Samara Oblast Head Vyacheslav Fedorishchev stated on February 21 that Samara Oblast is reducing the regional one-time payments from 3.6 million rubles (about \$41,571) to 2.1 million rubles (about \$24,249) starting on February 24.[93] Samara Oblast temporarily increased one-time payments from January 1 to February 23.[94] Authorities in Kosinsky Municipal Okrug, Perm Krai announced on February 25 a 100,000-ruble (about \$1,154) one-time payment to Russian citizens and foreigners who sign contracts with the Russian MoD between March 1, 2025, and December 31, 2025.[95]

The *BBC Russian Service* reported on February 25 that over 100 Russian government, military, and security officials accused and convicted of various corruption charges are fighting in Ukraine.[96] The *BBC Russian Service* noted that the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) decides which of these officials can fight in Ukraine in lieu of serving their sentences and applies the rules arbitrarily. The *BBC Russian Service* reported that one condition of this deal is that the officials admit guilt of their crimes and that the FSB will not accept individuals facing or convicted of charges related to terrorism, extremism, treason, or certain sexual crimes. The *BBC Russian Service* reported that many officials accepted this offer believing that they will not see combat but are suffering high casualties on the front. The *BBC Russian Service* noted that Russian authorities are not granting many of these officials combat veterans status but that some of the officials return to Russia and take up new posts, including through the federal government's "Time of Heroes" veteran program.

The Kremlin continues efforts to use its "Time of Heroes" program, which places veterans of the war in Ukraine in government positions, to form a new Russian elite composed of loyal and ultranationalist veterans that will continue to militarize Russian society over the long term.[97] The Time of Heroes program announced on February 25 that its participant, Denis Didenko, became the Russian Presidential Administration's Head Advisor for Monitoring Analysis of Social Processes.[98]

Russia may be reopening a Soviet-era submarine base in occupied Crimea. Crimea-based Ukrainian partisan group "Atesh" reported on January 19 that Russian authorities began using the "825 GTS" submarine base in occupied Balaklava Bay, Crimea for military purposes and noted on February 13 that

Russian authorities installed anti-naval drone barriers in Balaklava Bay.[99] Jamestown Foundation analyst John C. K. Daly told *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* for an article published on February 25 that Russia would likely use the base for surface vessels because the submarine base is too small for Russia's Kilo-class submarines.[100]

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

Nothing significant to report.

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

ISW is not publishing coverage of activities in Russian-occupied areas today.

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

Nothing significant to report.

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

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