Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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February 6, 2024, 9:30pm ET

Click <u>here</u> 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 <u>here</u> to see ISW's 3D control of terrain topographic map of Ukraine. Use of a computer (not a mobile device) is strongly recommended for using this data-heavy tool.

Click <u>here</u> to access ISW's archive of interactive time-lapse maps of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These maps complement the static control-of-terrain map that ISW produces daily by showing a dynamic frontline. ISW will update this time-lapse map archive monthly.

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 1:30pm ET on February 6. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the February 7 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Correction: This article was updated on February 7, 2024, to correct the statement regarding US monthly production numbers of 155mm artillery shells. We erroneously reported that US production would reach 60,000 shells per month in October 2024 only if the proposed congressional supplemental appropriations bill passes, whereas the US will reach 60,000 shells per month in October 2024 with or without additional funding and is on track to increase production to 80,000 shells per month using current funding. Additional funding, however, would be needed to reach the target production rate of 100,000 shells per month by October 2025. We apologize for the error.

America's European and Asian allies have significantly ramped up their efforts to support Ukraine. European Council President Charles Michel stated on February 6 that the European Council and Parliament reached a provisional agreement on the creation of a new single dedicated instrument – the Ukraine Facility – to pool the EU's recently announced support package of 50 billion euros (about \$54 billion) for Ukraine for 2024-2027.[1] European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen stated that the EU aims to start payments to the Ukraine Facility in March 2024.[2] German arms manufacturer Rheinmetall stated on February 5 that it plans to send tens of thousands of 155mm artillery shells, dozens of Marder infantry fighting vehicles, 25 Leopard 1A5 tanks, and an unspecified number of Skynex air defense systems to Ukraine in 2024.[3] South Korea's Defense Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA) stated on February 6 that it plans to sign a contract with ammunition producer Poongsan in 2024 to mass produce 155mm shells that have an extended range of 60 kilometers.[4] South Korea reportedly began indirectly supplying artillery shells to Ukraine in early 2023, and these shells may go to European allies for indirect transfer to Ukraine.[5]

The EU and its member states have made available 138 billion euros (about \$148.5 billion) - including its recently announced support package of 50 billion euros (about \$54 billion) - to Ukraine since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022.[6] In comparison, the US has appropriated \$113 billion to Ukraine since the full-scale invasion, of which over \$75 billion was directly allocated to Ukraine for humanitarian, financial, and military support.[7] The US government allocated the other \$38 billion to

security assistance-related funding, which the US government spent largely in the US and on US companies or personnel.[8]

As European partners continue to increase their support for Ukraine, US aid provision in the near to medium-term remains vital to help Ukraine build its defense industrial base (DIB). ISW continues to assess that the US will not need to send large security assistance packages to Ukraine indefinitely if Ukraine successfully continues to actively pursue measures aimed at domestically producing its own weapons, building bilateral and international defense industrial partnerships, and creating industrial joint ventures with Western enterprises aimed at co-producing defense materials.[9] The US will need to continue supporting Ukraine for several years as Ukraine builds its own DIB, but Ukraine's international security requirements will decrease in the long run as it builds out its own capabilities to become self-sufficient. The ultimate success of Ukraine's efforts to build its DIB, however, depends on Ukraine's ability to liberate strategically vital areas currently occupied by Russian forces. **US and partner military aid to Ukraine in the near term therefore continues to be crucial as the US remains the main source of sufficiently large quantities of essential military equipment, such as M1 Abrams tanks, armored personnel carriers, advanced air defense systems such as Patriots, and long-range strike systems equipment which previous US aid packages prioritized.[10]**

The US Army plans to significantly increase US domestic production of 155mm artillery shells and shell components for Ukraine in 2024 and 2025, and more so should the proposed congressional supplemental appropriations bill pass. US Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology Doug Bush stated on February 5 that the US Army aims to double the US monthly production of 155mm artillery shells from 28,000 shells per month in October 2023 to about 60,000 shells per month in October 2024.[11] Bush stated that the US Army is on track to increase production capacity to 80,000 shells per month using current funding but that additional funding must be appropriated by Congress for it to reach the target production rate of 100,000 shells per month by October 2025. Bush stated that the construction of a new factory in Texas, which will "have an entirely new way" of using technology to make artillery shells, will contribute to the Army's increased production goals. Bush noted that US shell production in part depends on US domestic production of explosive materials. Bush stated that the proposed supplemental bill includes \$600 million for increasing the production of explosives at the Holsten Army Ammunition Plant in Tennessee from five million pounds of explosives a year to 13 million pounds.[12] The proposed bill would also include \$93 million to reestablish the production of M6 propellant (used to fire artillery shells but no longer in production in the US) at the Radford Army Ammunition Plant in Virginia, and \$650 million would go to constructing a facility (likely also at the Radford Army Ammunition Plant) to domestically produce TNT, which the US currently does not produce. Bush stated that the proposed bill also includes \$14 million to construct and recommission a black powder explosive production line in Louisiana. Such investments in US manufacturing are necessary to help support US strategic readiness by rebuilding America's atrophied defense industrial base, separate and apart from the need to support Ukraine in its fight against Russia.

Russian authorities are reportedly paying Iran roughly \$4.5 billion per year to import Iranian Shahed drones to use in Ukraine. A group of hackers from a hacking organization called the Prana Network claimed to have hacked into the servers of purported Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) front company Sahara Thunder on February 4 and published the costs per drone that Russia purchases from Iran.[13] The leaked documents suggest that Russia pays \$193,000 per Shahed-

136 drone in batches of 6,000 drones, which would total about \$1.1 billion for all 6,000 Shahed-136 drones.[14] Russia reportedly pays \$1.4 million per unit for one type of Shahed-238 drone and plans to purchase 677 of these upgraded Shahed drones per year, which would total about \$947 million.[15] Another type of Shahed-238 reportedly cost about \$900,000 per drone, and Russia reportedly plans to purchase 2,310 per year for just under \$2.1 billion.[16] The documents claimed that the reconnaissance and attack Shahed-107 drones cost \$460,000 each and that Russia plans to purchase 2,310, which would total about \$1.5 billion.[17] A Russian milblogger justified the high cost due to the risk that Iran assumes by selling these drones to Russia and noted that the documents indicate that Russia plans to further localize production of Shaheds in Russia, which will reduce acquisition costs over time.[18] ISW is unable to confirm the authenticity of the purported leaked documents, but a milblogger's claim that the documents refer to Iran as a "friendly country" and refer to the Shahed drones in code as "boats" is consistent with previously observed language about Iran and Iranian drone production in Russia.[19] Russian forces routinely use Shahed drones, which serve as both loitering munitions and as decoys to distract Ukrainian air defenses, and the massive expenditure on such systems is noteworthy.

Russia is reportedly unfreezing North Korean assets and helping North Korea evade international sanctions in exchange for missiles and artillery ammunition for Russia to use in Ukraine. The New York Times (NYT) reported on February 6 that unnamed "US-allied" intelligence officials told the NYT that Russia unfroze \$9 million of \$30 million worth of North Korean assets in an unspecified Russian financial institution, which the intelligence officials assess North Korea will use to buy crude oil.[20] The intelligence official stated that a North Korean front company recently opened a new account at a Russian bank in Russian-occupied South Ossetia that North Korea may use to evade UN sanctions. An unnamed senior US government official told the NYT that Russia is likely unfreezing North Korean assets and helping North Korea evade international sanctions in exchange for North Korean weapons transfers to Russia. Russian President Vladimir Putin met with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un in Russia in September 2023 and met with North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son-hui in January 2024.[21] Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Deputy Chief Major General Vadym Skibitskyi stated that North Korea delivered one million rounds of artillery ammunition to Russia from September to November 2023, and US officials have stated that Russian forces have launched at least nine North Korean ballistic missiles against Ukraine.[22] ISW continues to assess that Russia may be open to financial, technological, and defense cooperation with North Korea in return for the provision of artillery ammunition and ballistic missiles to use in Ukraine.[23] North Korea would also benefit from this cooperation by collecting technical data from its weapons' performance in Ukraine to use in North Korean research and development among other things.

Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev emphasized on February 6 that Russia needs to protect its strategic facilities as Russian authorities continue to voice concerns about external and internal threats to Russian infrastructure.[24] Patrushev held a meeting on Russian national security issues in the Ural Federal Okrug on February 6 and emphasized that Russia needs to increase efforts to prevent and respond to natural and man-made emergencies in the okrug, including strengthening counterterrorism protections of "critical and potentially dangerous facilities" and "hazardous production facilities," both of which very likely include Russian defense industrial base (DIB) enterprises, non-defense industrial enterprises, ports, and other logistics objects. Patrushev emphasized increasing onsite security, Russia's investigative capacity, and awareness of threats to these facilities.[25] Patrushev stated that Russian authorities prevented 23 "terrorist attacks" against objects in the Urals in 2023 but that criminals conducted nine Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project 2024

attacks.[26] Patrushev claimed that Ukrainian actors increasingly seek to recruit saboteurs in Russia to conduct these attacks.[27] Other Russian authorities continued to warn of prospective Ukrainian attacks against Russian infrastructure; the Russian Administration of Baltic Sea Ports announced on February 6 that it has introduced a high alert regime for Vyborg, Primorsk, Ust-Luga, and Vysotsk in Leningrad Oblast due to the threat of Ukrainian drone strikes against port infrastructure.[28]

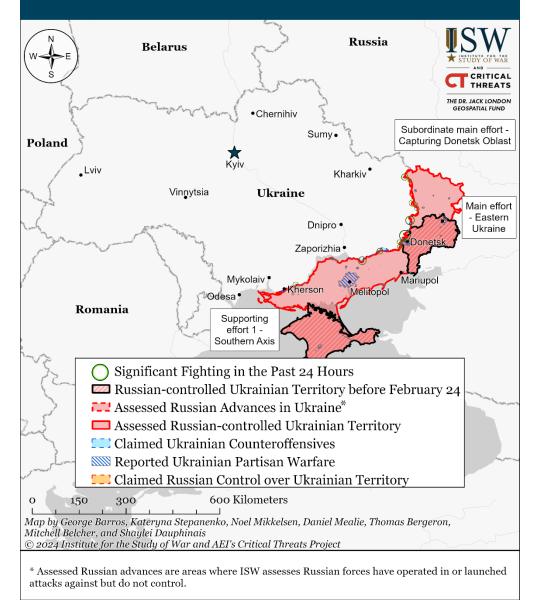
The Kremlin continues to set informational conditions for possible hybrid provocations against the Baltic states and Georgia. The Russian Foreign Ministry summoned the Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian charges d'affaires to Moscow on February 6 due to an alleged "lack of a proper response" to repeated Russian requests for Baltic authorities to "provide security" to Russian nationals voting in the upcoming March 2024 Russian presidential election from abroad in Baltic capitals.[29] Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova emphasized that any disruptions at Russian polling stations in Baltic nations will cause "serious protest among Russians" living in Baltic countries because such disruptions would violate the constitutional rights of Russian nationals to vote in Russian elections. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov similarly claimed on February 5 that Western governments have launched "Russophobic" influence campaigns aimed at Russian embassies, consulates, and similar assets abroad and warned that Western provocations abroad increase when polling stations open for Russians to vote in foreign countries.[30] Lavrov's and Zakharova's statements are likely aimed at setting informational conditions to frame essentially any action on the part of foreign authorities, including Baltic states, regarding the Russian presidential election as a direct attack on Russian nationals living in Baltic states. The Kremlin frequently invokes the concept of "compatriots abroad" to claim special privileges for Russian nationals living outside of Russia and to set informational conditions for provocations in the countries where Russian "compatriots" live.[31] The weaponization of the Russian presidential election will allow the Kremlin to stage informational provocations against Baltic governments, which fits into the Kremlin's wider hybrid influence playbook. Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili also stated on February 6 that Russia has launched a "new hybrid war against Georgia, for which it is using all forms and weapons," referencing Russian naval basing projects in the port of Ochamchire, Russian-occupied Abkhazia, and other provocations in the Georgian territories that Russia has occupied since 2008.[32] Hybrid influence campaigns such as information operations surrounding Russian elections in the Baltics and provocations in occupied regions of Georgia destabilize Russia's neighbors.

Russian-Israeli relations are likely to continue to decline against the backdrop of Russia's increasingly anti-Israel stance on the Israel-Hamas war. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) publicly criticized and summoned new Israeli Ambassador to Russia Simona Halperin over an interview she gave with Russian outlet Kommersant published on February that 4.[33] Halperin stated it took Russia "some time" to publicly condemn the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, expressed her dissatisfaction at Russian government officials meeting with Hamas officials in January 2024 and questioned why Russia has not included Hamas on its list of terrorist organizations banned in Russia.[34] The Russian MFA claimed that Halperin gave "distorted interpretations and unacceptable assessments" of Russian foreign and domestic policy.[35] The Russian MFA's public criticism and subsequent summoning of Halperin are indicative of the continued deterioration of Russian-Israeli relations, amid Russia's increasingly anti-Israel position on the Israel-Hamas war.[36]

Key Takeaways:

- America's European and Asian allies have significantly ramped up their efforts to support Ukraine. As European partners continue to increase their support for Ukraine, US aid provision in the near to medium-term remains vital to help Ukraine build its defense industrial base (DIB).
- The US Army plans to significantly increase US domestic production of 155mm artillery shells and shell components for Ukraine in 2024 and 2025, should the proposed Congressional supplemental appropriations bill pass.
- Russian authorities are reportedly paying Iran roughly \$4.5 billion per year to import Iranian Shahed drones to use in Ukraine.
- Russia is reportedly unfreezing North Korean assets and helping North Korea evade international sanctions in exchange for missiles and artillery ammunition for Russia to use in Ukraine.
- Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev emphasized on February 6 that Russia needs to protect its strategic facilities as Russian authorities continue to voice concerns about external and internal threats to Russian infrastructure.
- The Kremlin continues to set informational conditions for possible hybrid provocations against the Baltic states and Georgia.
- Russian-Israeli relations are likely continuing to decline against the backdrop of Russia's increasingly anti-Israel stance on the Israel-Hamas war.
- Russian forces recently made confirmed advances near Bakhmut, Avdiivka, and southwest of Donetsk City amid continued positional engagements along the entire frontline.
- Russian authorities are reportedly paying roughly \$4.5 billion per year to import Iranian Shahed drones to use in Ukraine.
- The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) continues efforts to integrate occupied Ukraine into Russia and to seek international recognition of Russia's illegal occupation of Ukraine.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of February 6, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because these activities are wellcovered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We will continue to evaluate and report on the effects of these criminal activities on the Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population and specifically on combat in Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

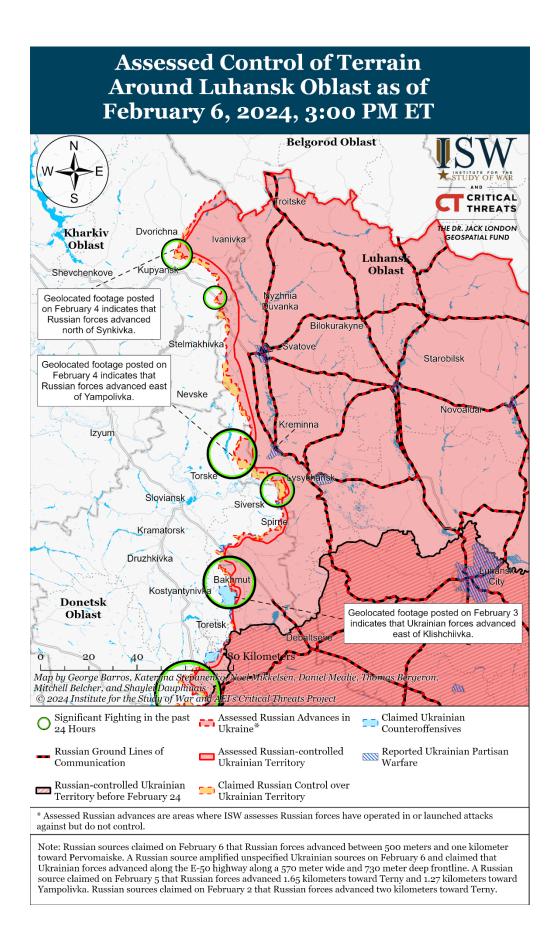
- Russian Main Effort Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort Southern Axis
- Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Russian Technological Adaptations
- Ukrainian Defense Industrial Base Efforts
- Activities in Russian-Occupied Areas
- Russian Information Operations and Narratives
- Significant Activity in Belarus

<u> Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine</u>

<u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Luhansk Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

Positional engagements continued along the Kupyansk-Svatove line on February 6, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced near Synkivka, but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim.[37] Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional engagements continued northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka and southeast of Kupyansk near Tabaivka.[38]

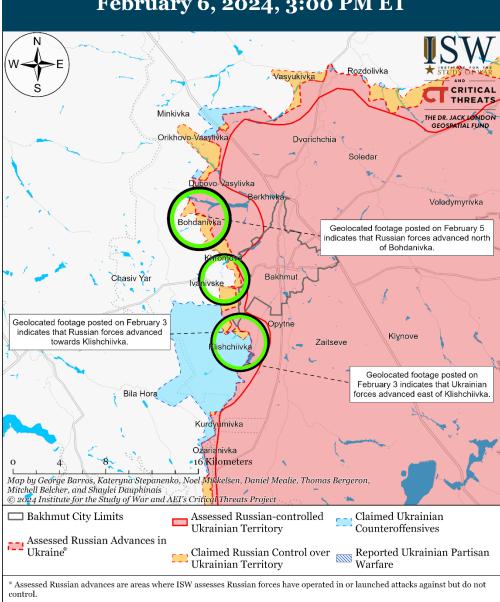
Russian forces reportedly recently advanced near Kreminna, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area on February 6. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced east of Terny and Yampolivka.[39] Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional engagements continued west of Kreminna near Terny, Torske, and Yampolivka and south of Kreminna near the Serebryanske forest area, Bilohorivka, and Hryhorivka.[40] Elements of the Russian 7th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People's Republic [LNR] Army Corps) reportedly continue to operate near Bilohorivka, Luhansk Oblast.[41]



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

Russian forces recently made a confirmed advance north of Bakhmut. Geolocated footage published on February 3 confirms that Russian forces captured Vesele (northwest of Bakhmut).[42] Russian sources, including the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), claimed on January 18 that Russian forces captured Vesele, and this is the first time ISW has observed visual confirmation of these Russian claims.[43] Elements of the Russian 106th Airborne (VDV) Division are reportedly operating near Vesele.[44]

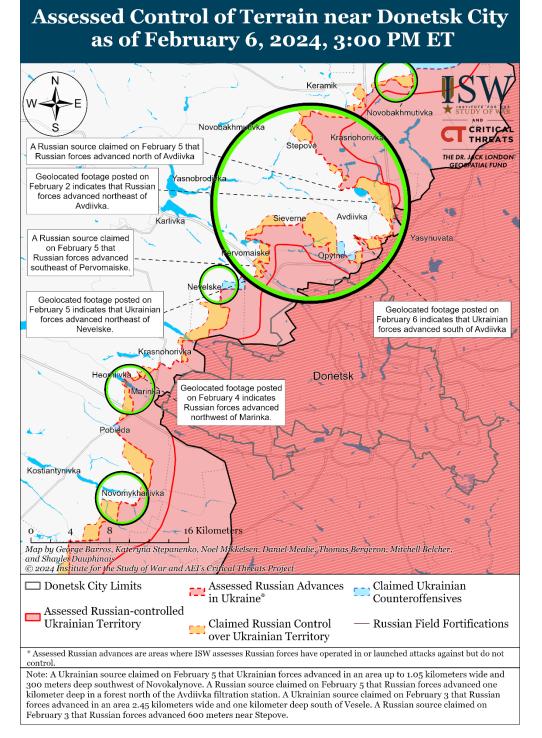
Positional engagements continued near Bakhmut on February 6, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Russian forces made small advances towards Bohdanivka (northwest of Bakhmut) and Ivanivske (west of Bakhmut), although ISW has not observed visual evidence of Russian advances in either of these areas.[45] Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional engagements continued near Bohdanivka, Ivanivske, and southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka.[46] Elements of the Russian 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade (14th Army Corps, Northern Fleet) and the "Sever-V" Volunteer Brigade (Russian Volunteer Corps) are reportedly operating near Bohdanivka; elements of the Russian 58th Spetsnaz Battalion (1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] Army Corps) are reportedly operating near Bakhmut; and elements of the Russian 88th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People's Republic [LNR] Army Corps) are reportedly operating near Klishchiivka.[47]



Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of February 6, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

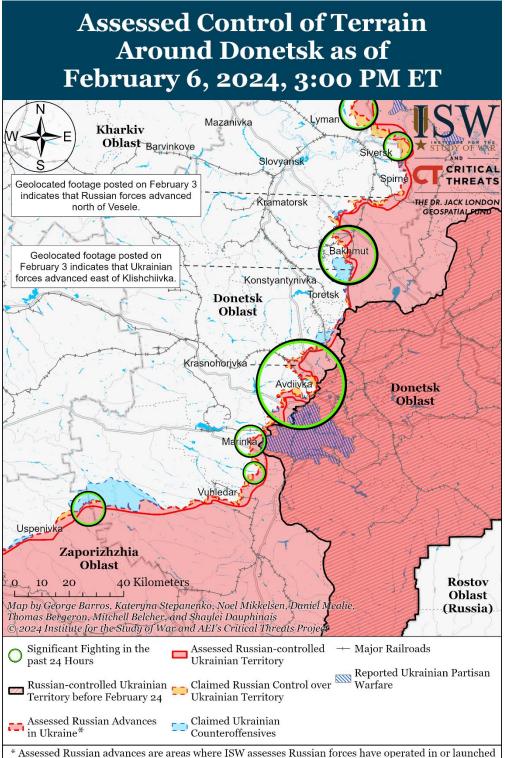
Russian and Ukrainian forces recently made confirmed advances near Avdiivka amid continued positional fighting in the area on February 6. Geolocated footage published on February 5 indicates that Ukrainian forces recently regained limited tactical positions in a residential area in southern Avdiivka.[48] Additional geolocated footage published on February 6 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced in northern Avdiivka.[49] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced in northwestern Avdiivka along Sapronov and Lesya Ukrainka streets, nearby where geolocated footage indicates a Russian advance in northern Avdiivka, and in the quarry area on the northern outskirts of Avdiivka.[50] Several Russian milbloggers also claimed that Russian forces advanced up to one kilometer towards Pervomaiske (southwest of Avdiivka), and reached the southeastern outskirts of the settlement, although ISW has not yet observed visual evidence to confirm these claims.[51] Avdiivka Military Administration Head Vitaly Barabash noted that Ukrainian forces are clashing with small Russian sabotage and reconnaissance groups within Avdiivka, but emphasized that there are still no

large-scale urban street battles ongoing.[52] Barabash and the spokesperson for a Ukrainian brigade operating in Avdiivka both emphasized that the situation in the area is very difficult and that Russian forces are trying to capture the town for political and informational reasons before the Russian presidential elections in March 2024.[53] The Ukrainian brigade spokesperson also stated that Russian forces are equipping their armored vehicles with electronic warfare (EW) systems to protect against Ukrainian drones.[54] ISW recently observed Russian milbloggers repeatedly criticize Russian authorities for failing to equip Russian forces with EW systems after a recent unsuccessful Russian mechanized assault near Novomykhailivka, Donetsk Oblast, so Russian forces near Avdiivka may be trying to apply lessons learned to improve Russian force protection.[55] Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional engagements continued northwest of Avdiivka near Novobakhmutikva; near Avdiivka itself; south of Avdiivka near Vesele; and southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske, Tonenke, Stepove, and Nevelske.[56] Elements of the Russian 21st Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Combined Arms Army, Central Military District) reportedly continue to operate near Avdiivka.[57]



Geolocated footage further confirms that Russian forces advanced southwest of Donetsk City during an ultimately failed mechanized assault in the area in late January. Geolocated footage published on February 3 confirms that Russian forces advanced east and south of Novomykhailivka during recent renewed mechanized attacks south of the settlement.^[58] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced up to the eastern outskirts of Novomykhailivka - claims consistent with available geolocated evidence.^[59]Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional engagements continued west of Donetsk City near Pobieda and southwest of Donetsk City near Heorhiivka and Novomykhailivka.^[60]A Russian milblogger claimed that prepared Ukrainian defenses near Heorhiivka, 12 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project 2024

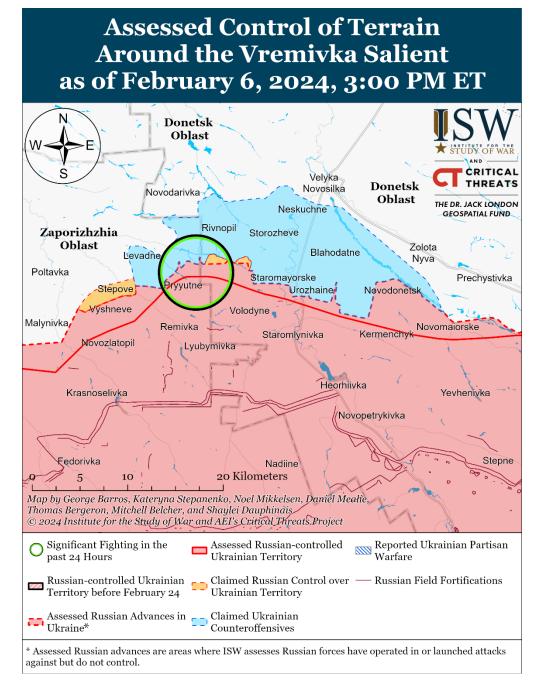
the lowland comprising Heorhiivka, and nearby Ukrainian artillery firing positions will complicate any Russian advances through the settlement towards Kurakhove (13km west of Marinka).[61]



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

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

Positional engagements continued in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on February 6, but there were no confirmed changes in this area of the frontline. Russian sources claimed that Russian forces made marginal advances near Pryyutne (southwest of Velyka Novosilka), although ISW has not observed visual evidence of this claim.[62] Russian sources claimed that positional engagements continued near Urozhaine and Staromayorske (both south of Velyka Novosilka).[63] A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger complained that Ukrainian mines and drones hinder Russian armored vehicle operations so that Russian forces can only conduct infantry attacks with artillery and drone support.[64] Elements of the Russian 14th Spetsnaz Brigade (Russian General Staff's Main Directorate [GRU]) are reportedly operating near Urozhaine.[65]

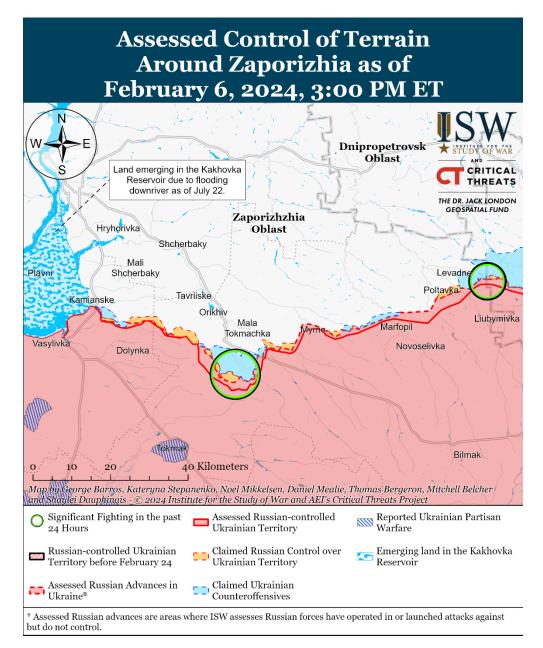


Positional engagements continued in western Zaporizhia Oblast on February 6, but there were no confirmed changes in this area of the frontline. Positional engagements continued near Robotyne and 14 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project 2024

west of Verbove (east of Robotyne).[66] Elements of the Russian 247th Airborne (VDV) Regiment (7th VDV Division) reportedly continue to operate near Verbove.[67] Elements of the Russian 70th Motorized Rifle Regiment and 291st Motorized Rifle Regiment (both of the 42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) reportedly continue to operate in the Zaporizhia direction.[68]



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



Positional engagements continued in the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast near Krynky on February 6.[69] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces operating in the Kherson direction are prioritizing locating and striking Ukrainian drone operators, which is consistent with routine Russian milblogger claims that Ukranian first-person view (FPV) drones pose a significant threat to Russian forces in east bank Kherson Oblast.[70]



Ukrainian Special Operations Forces (SOF) reported on February 6 that Ukrainian SOF units successfully detonated explosives on a Black Sea gas or oil rig that Russian forces illegally seized and used to stage attacks with Iranian-provided Mohajer-6 reconnaissance drones and guide Shahed drone strikes.[71] Ukrainian SOF reported that Russian forces also deployed a "Neva-B" object detection radar system on the rig, which allowed Russian forces to better surveil the northwestern part of the Black Sea. Ukrainian SOF reported that Russian forces also used the mining platform as a radar station to monitor surface vessels in the northwestern part of the Black Sea.

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

Nothing significant to report.

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

The Kremlin continues expanding higher military education in Russia in support of medium-term force generation efforts. The Russian MoD announced on February 6 that it is building a new branch of the Suvorov Military School in Ulyanovsk and that the school will begin accepting students as soon as September 2024.[72] The Russian Higher School of Economics announced on February 2 that it is creating the Institute of Military Economics and Strategy and that retired Admiral Sergei Avakyants, who commanded the Pacific Fleet from 2010 to April 2023, will lead the institute.[73] The Kremlin demoted Avakyants in April 2023 amid a surprise readiness check, possibly due to the poor performance of Pacific Fleet naval infantry in Ukraine.[74]

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

See topline text.

<u>Ukrainian Defense Industrial Efforts</u> (Ukrainian objective: Develop its defense industrial base to become more self-sufficient in cooperation with US, European, and international partners)

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky signed a decree on February 6 ordering the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers and General Staff of the Armed Forces to develop a separate branch of unmanned systems forces within the Ukrainian military and submit relevant proposals to the Ukrainian National Security and Defense Council.[75]

Reuters reported on February 6 that Turkey's leading drone maker Baykar started building a drone factory near Kyiv that will manufacture Bayraktar-TB2 or TB3 model drones.[76] Baykar CEO Haluk Bayraktar told *Reuters* that the factory's construction will take about 12 months after which Baykar will install internal machinery and equipment. Bayraktar stated that the factory would employ about 500 people and produce about 120 drones per year. Baykar announced that it would open a drone production facility and service center in Ukraine in September 2023.[77]

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

The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) continues efforts to integrate occupied Ukraine into Russia and to seek international recognition of Russia's illegal occupation of Ukraine. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Russian Center Elections Committee (CEC) Chairperson Ella Pamfilova, Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Head Denis Pushilin, Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) Head Leonid Pasechnik, and representatives from occupied Kherson Oblast, Zaporizhia Oblast, and Crimea met on February 6 to discuss the establishment of Russian MFA representative offices in occupied Ukraine.[78] The Russian MFA also emphasized its role in facilitating the work of international observers in occupied Ukraine during the March 2024 presidential election.[79] Russian authorities likely intend to frame the presence of international observers at polling stations in occupied Ukraine as international legitimization of Russia's illegal occupation of Ukraine.

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

A Russian official escalated claims of the alleged use of pro-Nazi rhetoric against Lithuania likely to further set information conditions for possible future campaigns against the Baltic states. Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Spokesperson Maria Zakharova accused Lithuania of the "glorification of Nazi collaborators" in relation to an ongoing Russian complaint that Lithuania and other Baltic states are removing or relocating Soviet-era monuments within their territories.[80] Russian Ambassador to Bulgaria Mitrofanova made a similar accusation that Bulgaria is trying to "erase everything positive about Russia" in Bulgaria by taking down Soviet-era monuments and editing textbooks, allegedly at the behest of the West.[81]

Russian officials continue efforts to accuse the West of being escalatory and conflict-seeking in order to justify Russia's continued war against Ukraine and deter further military assistance to Ukraine. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov attempted to portray the United States and the collective West as refusing to deescalate perceived aggression against Russia in order to develop Western defense industrial base (DIB) capacities in support of Ukraine's defense.[82] Russian Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva Gennady Gatilov falsely equated current Western efforts to mobilize DIB capabilities with nuclear escalation and the deterioration of global security.[83] Russian officials have routinely attempted to spoil US and other Western policy discussions about the provision of additional military aid to Ukraine to achieve Russia's goal of wearing Ukrainian forces down until Ukraine capitulates.

<u>Significant Activity in Belarus</u> (Russian efforts to increase its military presence in Belarus and further integrate Belarus into Russian-favorable frameworks and Wagner Group activity in Belarus)

Belarusian Ambassador to Russia Dmitry Krutoy stated on February 6 that Belarusian and Russian interior ministers have discussed the creation of a unified list of "extremists" and "extremist sources."[84] Krutoy stated that he believes that Belarus and Russia will create a unified list in the near future.

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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[1] https://www.consilium.dot europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/02/06/ukraine-facilitycouncil-and-parliament-agree-on-new-support-mechanism-for-ukraine/

[2] https://twitter.com/vonderleyen/status/1754759839031455791

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[3] https://www.rheinmetall dot com/en/media/stories/2023/rheinmetall-a-powerful-partner-atukraine-side

[4] https://en.yna.co dot kr/view/AEN20240206002400315?section=news

[5] https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/12/04/ukraine-counteroffensive-us-planning-russia-war/

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