

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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Click [here](#) to see ISW's interactive map of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

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

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 1pm ET on February 8. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the February 9 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russian President Vladimir Putin attempted to use an interview with American media personality Tucker Carlson published on February 8 to present to a wider Western audience a long-standing Kremlin information operation that falsely asserts that Russia is interested in a negotiated end to its war in Ukraine.[1] Putin illustrated throughout the interview that Russia has no interest in meaningful or legitimate negotiations, however, and that Putin still seeks to destroy Ukraine as a state. Putin also displayed his overarching hostility towards the West and falsely accused the West of forcing Russia to attack Ukraine. Putin repeatedly stressed that Russia is open to negotiations in order to falsely frame Russia as a reasonable actor and “Western ruling elites” as the main obstruction to a negotiation.[2] Putin also repeatedly reiterated a Russian information operation alleging that Western officials coerced Ukraine to reject an agreement favorable to Russia during negotiations between Ukraine and Russia in Istanbul in March 2022.[3] Western leaders, in fact, offered to help President Volodymyr Zelensky escape Kyiv in the days immediately following the invasion, and Zelensky responded that he needed “ammunition, not a ride.”[4]

The Kremlin routinely frames the West as the only meaningful negotiating party in Ukraine as part of its effort to gain Western acceptance of its premise that Ukraine has no independent agency in order to secure concessions from the West on Ukraine's behalf that undermine Ukraine's sovereignty and destroy Ukraine's territorial integrity.[5] The Kremlin has periodically intensified this information operation feigning interest in negotiations to seize on actual Western interest in a negotiated settlement to undermine Western support for Ukraine and degrade Western efforts to send more security assistance to Ukraine.[6] Putin and the Kremlin have intensified rhetoric in recent weeks indicating that Russia continues to pursue maximalist objectives in Ukraine that ISW assesses would amount to full Ukrainian and Western capitulation.[7] ISW continues to assess that Putin's negotiating position has not changed: He still seeks the destruction of Ukraine and seeks to use an armistice to set favorable condition for the Russian military to launch a subsequent more successful war against Ukraine.

Putin also attempted to use the interview to absurdly reframe Russia as the wronged party and not the initiator of Russia's unprovoked war of conquest against Ukraine. Putin falsely claimed that Ukrainian “neo-Nazis” started the war in Ukraine in 2014 and that Russia's full-scale invasion is an attempt to bring that war to an end.[8] Putin repeated tired Russian rhetoric presenting Russia's annexation of Crimea and intervention in Donbas in 2014 and its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 as a defensive campaign aimed at protecting Russian people and the Russia nation. This ongoing information operation is meant to obfuscate the obvious fact that Russia launched a war of aggression against its neighbor in 2022 in order to confuse Western memories of what actually happened. Putin's revisionism also aims to bolster long-standing Kremlin narratives justifying his maximalist goals in Ukraine.

Putin continued attempts to justify Russia's invasions of Ukraine in 2014 and 2022 as responses to Ukraine's and the West's actions in order to defend his long-standing calls for regime change in Kyiv and Ukraine's “demilitarization,” “denazification,” and “neutrality.” Putin falsely claimed that a US-backed “coup” in Ukraine in 2014 forced Russia to invade Crimea and begin military operations in Donbas in 2014.[9] Putin falsely claimed that Ukraine initiated a military operation in the Donbas starting in 2014 and that Ukraine failed to implement the Minsk Agreements establishing the armistice that Putin broke in February 2022. Putin accused NATO of exploiting Ukraine in order to build military bases in Ukraine under the guise of training the Ukrainian military. There have not been and still are no NATO military bases in Ukraine. These narratives are aimed at buttressing Putin's long-standing calls for Ukraine's “demilitarization,” which are likely aimed at stripping Ukraine of the means to defend itself and allowing Russia to impose its will upon Ukraine through force whenever the Kremlin so chooses. Putin also reiterated that one of Russia's war aims is

to “denazify” Ukraine. Putin defined “denazification” as the prohibition of all neo-Nazi movements in Ukraine and the removal of people who support Nazi ideology. Putin specifically highlighted Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as an alleged supporter of Nazi ideology, further indication that Putin’s calls for Ukraine’s “denazification” are in fact demands for the removal of the current elected Ukrainian government and its replacement with one acceptable to the Kremlin, as ISW has long assessed.[10] Putin continued to call for Ukrainian “neutrality” and argued that Russia cannot trust any NATO statements about the alliance not allowing Ukraine to become a member.[11] Putin continued to claim that NATO’s 2008 Bucharest Declaration, which promised Ukraine and Georgia paths to membership but took no concrete steps towards opening such paths, violated Ukraine’s 1991 Declaration of Independence that declared that Ukraine is a neutral state. The Russian Federation, however, had committed “to respect the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine,” which include Crimea and Donbas, in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum in exchange for Ukraine’s return of the Soviet Union’s nuclear weapons on its territory to Russia.[12] The Budapest Memorandum guarantees Ukraine all sovereign rights, which include the right for Ukraine to choose its own alignment.

Putin continued to propagate pseudo-history in an effort to deny Ukrainian statehood and nationhood. Putin reiterated long-standing Russian information operations to deny the existence of Ukrainian statehood and identity. Putin claimed that Ukrainians fundamentally do not exist as a nation and that Ukrainians are truly Russians whom various political actors reinvented as Ukrainians to erode Russia’s ability to control Russia’s borderlands with other Eastern and Central European powers. Putin rewrote centuries of history to this effect. Putin has routinely denied Ukrainian sovereignty, statehood, and identity in order to frame Russia’s full-scale invasion as an attempt to return historically Russian lands to Russia and as a humanitarian effort to protect ethnic Russians and Russian speakers whom Russia calls “compatriots abroad.”[13] Putin has also regularly and intentionally misused the definition of “ethnic Russian” to erroneously include Ukrainians in order to promote the larger concept of the wider Russian World (*Russkiy Mir*) to justify Russia’s maximalist claims over Ukraine and its people and its larger imperialist ambitions.[14] **None of Putin’s rewriting of history justifies Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The borders of every state in the world have changed over time. International law, which Putin claims to seek to uphold, requires the recognition by all states of each other’s sovereign rights in their territories as recognized by other sovereign states. The Russian Federation has explicitly recognized Ukraine’s sovereignty over its current international borders twice—in 1991 and in 1994. Accepting Putin’s argument for Russia’s right to redesign Ukraine’s borders to his liking by force is an invitation to all powerful states with historical grievances to attack and seize the lands of their neighbors that they covet.**

Putin also reiterated a quasi-realist world view that defines weakening the West and dismantling NATO as pre-requisites for the Russian-led multipolar world he desires to create. Putin consistently framed NATO’s expansion and existence as threatening to Russia and any future Russian- and Chinese-led global order.[15] Putin claimed that world affairs develop according to “inherent laws” that have not changed throughout history wherein a country grows and becomes large and powerful before leaving the international stage without the prestige it once had. Putin implicitly analogized the current Western-led world order with the Mongol and Roman empires, which he presented as examples of hegemonic powers that were eventually conquered by other rising powers. Putin stated that while it took several hundreds of years for the Roman Empire to fall apart, current processes of change are happening at a faster rate. Putin is increasingly invoking a purposefully broad, vague, and pseudo-realist conception of Russian sovereignty to normalize wars of conquest and justify Russian goals to impose Putin’s will in Ukraine and beyond.[16] Putin has long made demands of NATO that would recreate the alliance into a structure that could not resist future Russian military aggression, whether that be campaigns of conquest or efforts to establish Russian control over countries the Kremlin deems to be within Russia’s sphere of influence.[17]

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky replaced General Valerii Zaluzhnyi with Ukrainian Ground Forces Commander Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi as Ukraine’s Commander-in-Chief on February 8, as part of wider military leadership changes.[18] Such changes are normal for states engaged in a protracted war. Zelensky stated that he is also considering Ukrainian Brigadier General Andrii Hnatov (current Chief of Staff and Deputy Commander of the Southern Operational Command), Brigadier General Mykhailo Drapchay (former commander of the Kherson Group of Forces), Brigadier General Ihor Skybiuk (current deputy commander of the Airborne Assault Forces), Colonel Pavlo Palisa (current commander of the 93rd Mechanized Brigade) and Colonel Vadym Sukharevskiy (current commander of the 59th Motorized Infantry Brigade) for leadership positions in the Ukrainian military.[19] Zelensky, Zaluzhnyi, and Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov all acknowledged that the war has dramatically changed between 2022 and 2024 and that new approaches and strategies are necessary.[20] Zelensky stated that he offered Zaluzhnyi an unspecified position on the “management team” for the Ukrainian Armed Forces but did not clarify if Zaluzhnyi accepted.[21] Advisor to the Head of the Ukrainian President’s Office Mykhaylo Podolyak stated that Zelensky decided to conduct a “systemic renewal of the leadership” of the Ukrainian military, including the commander-in-chief, in order to review the Ukrainian military’s actions in the past year, prevent stagnation on the front, find new functional and technological solutions that will allow Ukraine to maintain and develop the battlefield initiative, and begin the process

of reforming the management of the Ukrainian military.[22] Command changes are normal for a state fighting a war over several years.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping held a routine phone call on February 8 that underscored China’s hesitance to support Russia’s desired bilateral Russo–Sino relationship while Russia forges deeper partnerships with Iran and North Korea. Putin and Xi exchanged views on the geopolitical situations surrounding Ukraine, Taiwan, and the Middle East and reiterated their commitments to further bilateral trade and foreign policy cooperation.[23] Putin and Xi also reportedly criticized US interference in the internal affairs of other countries and US policies aimed at containing Russia and China.[24] Russian media coverage of the conversation continued efforts to portray Russian-Chinese relations as steadfast and at their “best period in history” despite recent Chinese attempts to avoid fully committing to a “no limits” partnership with Russia in the face of Western sanctions.[25] *Bloomberg* reported on January 16 that at least two state-owned Chinese banks ordered reviews of their business with Russian clients and will sever ties with sanctioned Russian entities and entities with ties to the Russian defense industry after the US authorized secondary sanctions against financial institutions in December 2023.[26] The Kremlin has recently signaled increased rhetorical support for and economic cooperation with Iran and North Korea as its dependence on both countries for drones, missiles, and ammunition grows.[27] Iran has consistently supplied Russian forces with Shahed-136/-131 drones throughout the course of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and North Korea recently began supplying Russia with domestically produced ballistic missiles and artillery ammunition.[28]

Ukrainian and Russian forces conducted a one-to-one prisoner of war (POW) exchange on February 8. Ukrainian and Russian military officials stated that Russia and Ukraine exchanged 100 Ukrainian POWs for 100 Russian POWs.[29] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) helped to facilitate the POW exchange.[30]

The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported that it recently conducted a cyberattack against the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) preventing Russian forces from automatically operating an unspecified number of likely first-person view (FPV) drones. The GUR reported on February 8 that GUR hackers disabled Russian MoD servers that allowed Russian forces to automatically and remotely control Chinese-brand drones, forcing Russian forces to operate the drones manually.[31] The GUR did not specify the number of drones that the GUR cyberattack affected. ISW has recently observed an increase in reported Ukrainian cyberattacks against Russian targets but has not yet observed Russian sources discussing the aftermath and effects of these attacks.[32]

The Russian Central Election Committee (CEC) refused to register Boris Nadezhdin, the only anti-war Russian presidential candidate, for the March 2024 presidential election likely due to his larger-than-anticipated popularity.[33] The CEC stated that it refused to register Nadezhdin due to the high percentage of alleged fraudulent signatures that he collected in his bid to register as a presidential candidate.[34] ISW previously assessed that the Kremlin could have chosen to allow Nadezhdin to run so that Putin could turn his assured reelection into a quasi-referendum on Russia’s war in Ukraine, but the Kremlin may have reversed course on letting Nadezhdin participate after Nadezhdin demonstrated that he might gain too many votes.[35] The Kremlin likely waited to use the CEC’s valid-signature requirement to end Nadezhdin’s campaign in order to continue promoting the masquerade that Russia conducts free and fair elections.

The CEC has approved four presidential candidates to run in the March 2024 election, and CEC Chairperson Ella Pamfilova stated on February 8 that they would be the only four candidates on the ballot.[36] Russians will nominally have a choice to vote for Putin or other controlled opposition candidates: Russian Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR) leader Leonid Slutsky, Communist Party member Nikolai Kharitonov, and New People Party member Vladislav Davankov.[37] Putin’s controlled reelection is certain and will likely occur by a predetermined large margin.

Some Russian and Ukrainian sources claimed that Russian forces are using Starlink in occupied Ukraine.[38] A Ukrainian-language source claimed that Russian forces purchased Starlink access via Dubai, United Arab Emirates.[39] ISW cannot independently confirm any of these claims. Starlink stated that its operator aerospace company SpaceX does not do business of any kind with the Russian government or Russian military and has never shipped, marketed, or sold Starlink’s services or equipment to Russia.[40] Starlink stated that it does not operate in Dubai and “has not authorized any third-party intermediaries, resellers or distributors of any kind to sell Starlink in Dubai.”[41]

Key Takeaways:

- Russian President Vladimir Putin attempted to use an interview with American media personality Tucker Carlson published on February 8 to present to a wider Western audience a long-standing Kremlin information operation that falsely asserts that Russia is interested in a negotiated end to its war in Ukraine. Putin illustrated throughout the interview that Russia has no interest in meaningful or legitimate negotiations, however, and that Putin still seeks to destroy Ukraine as a state. Putin also displayed his overarching hostility towards the West and falsely accused the West of forcing Russia to attack Ukraine.
- Putin also attempted to use the interview to absurdly reframe Russia as the wronged party and not the initiator of Russia's unprovoked war of conquest against Ukraine.
- Putin continued attempts to justify Russia's invasions of Ukraine in 2014 and 2022 as responses to Ukraine's and the West's actions in order to defend his long-standing calls for regime change in Kyiv and Ukraine's "demilitarization" "denazification," and "neutrality."
- Putin continued to propagate pseudo-history in an effort to deny Ukrainian statehood and nationhood.
- Putin also reiterated a quasi-realist world view that defines weakening the West and dismantling NATO as pre-requisites for the Russian-led multipolar world he desires to create.
- Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky replaced General Valerii Zaluzhnyi with Ukrainian Ground Forces Commander Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi as Ukraine's Commander-in-Chief on February 8, as part of wider military leadership changes. Such changes are normal for states engaged in a protracted war.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping held a routine phone call on February 8 that underscored China's hesitance to support Russia's desired bilateral Russo-Sino relationship while Russia forges deeper partnerships with Iran and North Korea.
- Ukrainian and Russian forces conducted a one-to-one prisoner of war (POW) exchange on February 8.
- The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported that it recently conducted a cyberattack against the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) preventing Russian forces from automatically operating an unspecified number of likely first-person view (FPV) drones.
- The Russian Central Election Committee (CEC) refused to register Boris Nadezhdin, the only anti-war Russian presidential candidate, for the March 2024 presidential election likely due to his larger-than-anticipated popularity.
- Some Russian and Ukrainian sources claimed that Russian forces are using Starlink in occupied Ukraine.
- Ukrainian forces recently made confirmed advances near Kreminna and Russian forces recently made confirmed advances near Kreminna, Avdiivka, and Donetsk City amid continued positional fighting along the entire line of contact on February 8.
- The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) proposed a draft bill on February 8 to establish a single maximum age for contract service personnel (*kontraktniki*) during a period of partial mobilization, martial law, or wartime.
- Russian authorities are likely setting conditions to falsify voting results in occupied Ukraine in the March 2024 presidential election.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of February 8, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

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.

- 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

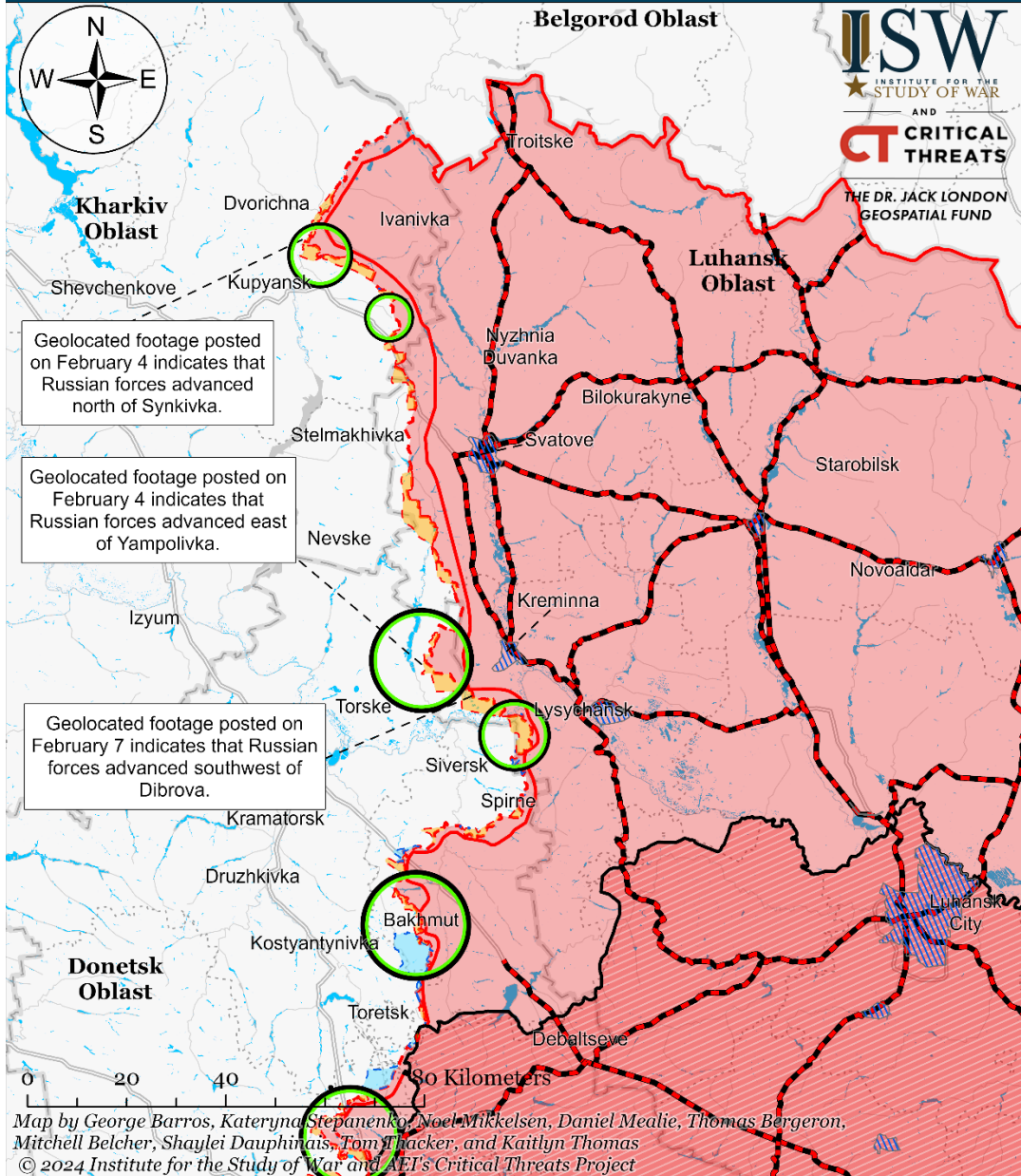
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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

Positional engagements continued along the Kupyansk-Svatove line on February 8, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in the area. Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional engagements continued northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka and northwest of Svatove near Ivanivka, Krokmalne, and Tabaivka.[42] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced near Synkivka, but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim.[43] Ukrainian Khortytsia Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash stated that Russian forces in the Kupyansk direction are focusing their efforts on capturing Synkivka in order to establish control points, warehouses, and temporary deployment points in the captured settlement.[44] Yevlash stated that Russian forces are moving reserves to the Synkivka area. Elements of the Russian 1st Guards Tank Army (Western Military District) are reportedly operating in the Kupyansk direction.[45]

Ukrainian and Russian forces recently made confirmed advances near Kreminna amid continued positional fighting in the area on February 8. Geolocated footage published on February 8 indicates that Ukrainian forces recently advanced north of Bilohorivka (12km south of Kreminna).[46] Additional geolocated footage published on February 8 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced southwest of Dibrova (southwest of Kreminna).[47] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced near Bilohorivka and that Ukrainian forces advanced near Terny and Yampolivka.[48] ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these Russian claims, however. Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional engagements continued west of Kreminna near Terny and Yampolivka; southwest of Kreminna near the Serebryanske forest area; and south of Kreminna near Bilohorivka.[49]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of February 8, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



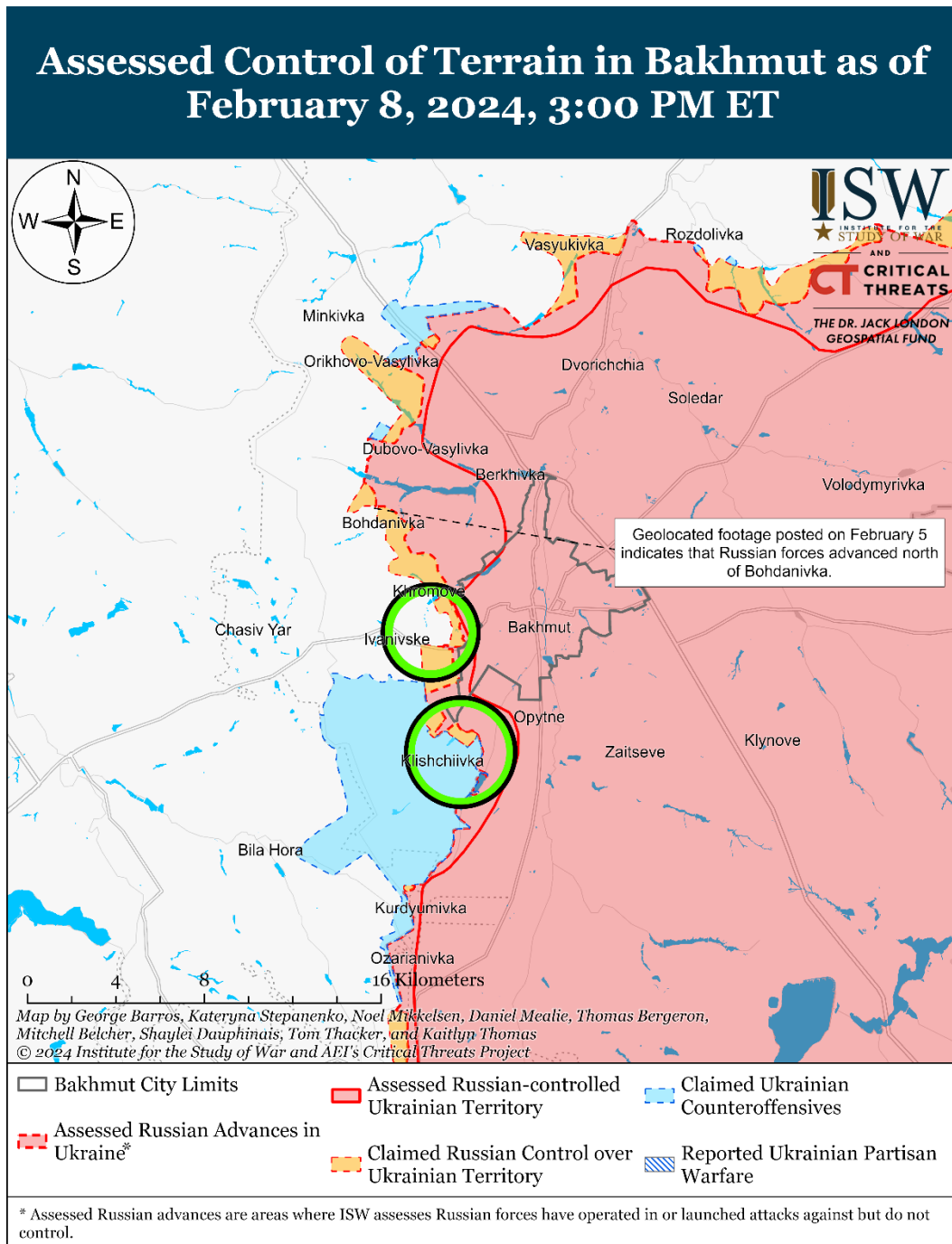
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Russian Ground Lines of Communication
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian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

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

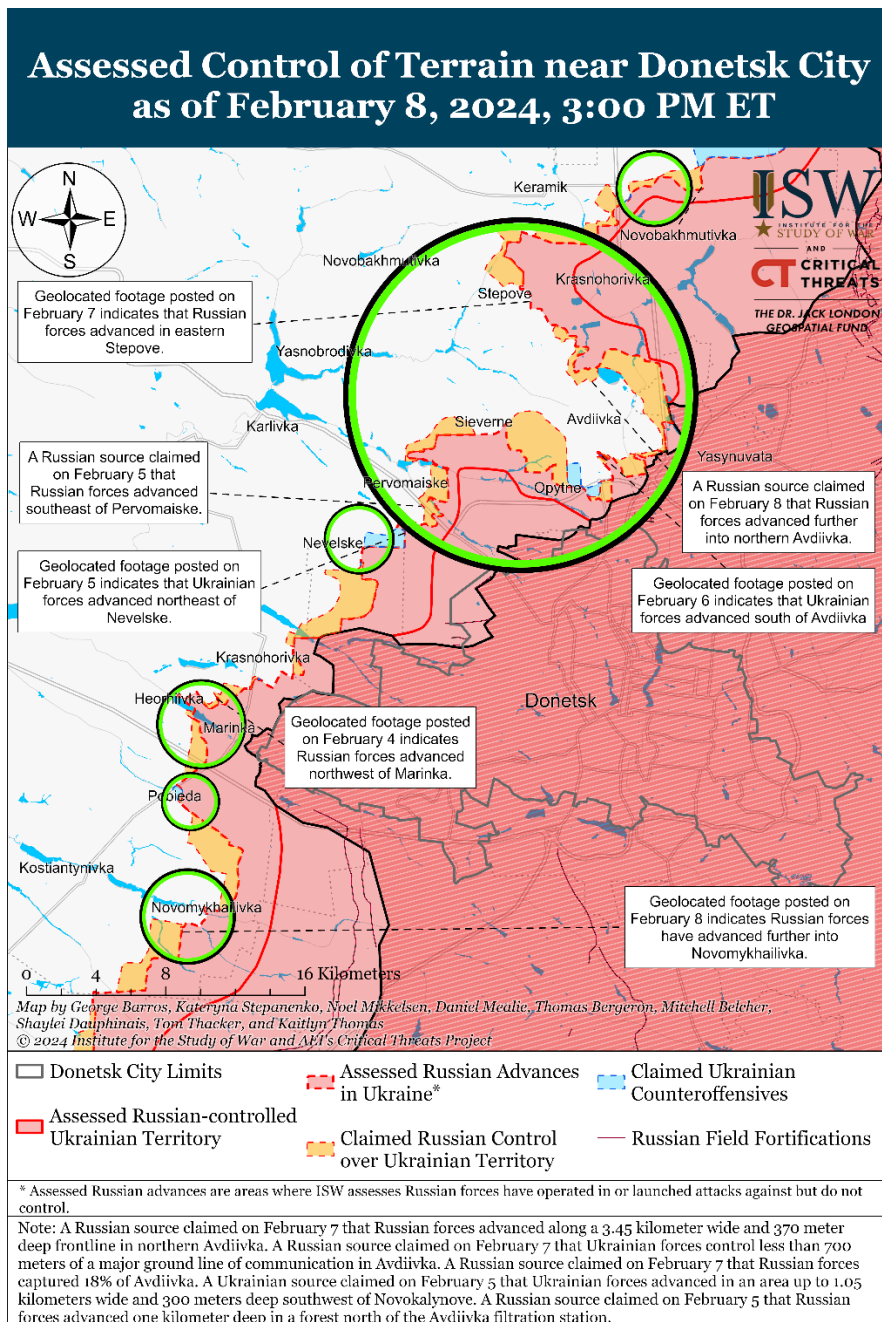
Note: Russian sources claimed on February 6 that Russian forces advanced between 500 meters and one kilometer toward Pervomaiske. A Russian source amplified unspecified Ukrainian sources on February 6 and claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced along the E-50 highway along a 570 meter wide and 730 meter deep frontline. A Russian source claimed on February 5 that Russian forces advanced 1.65 kilometers toward Terny and 1.27 kilometers toward Yampolivka.

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

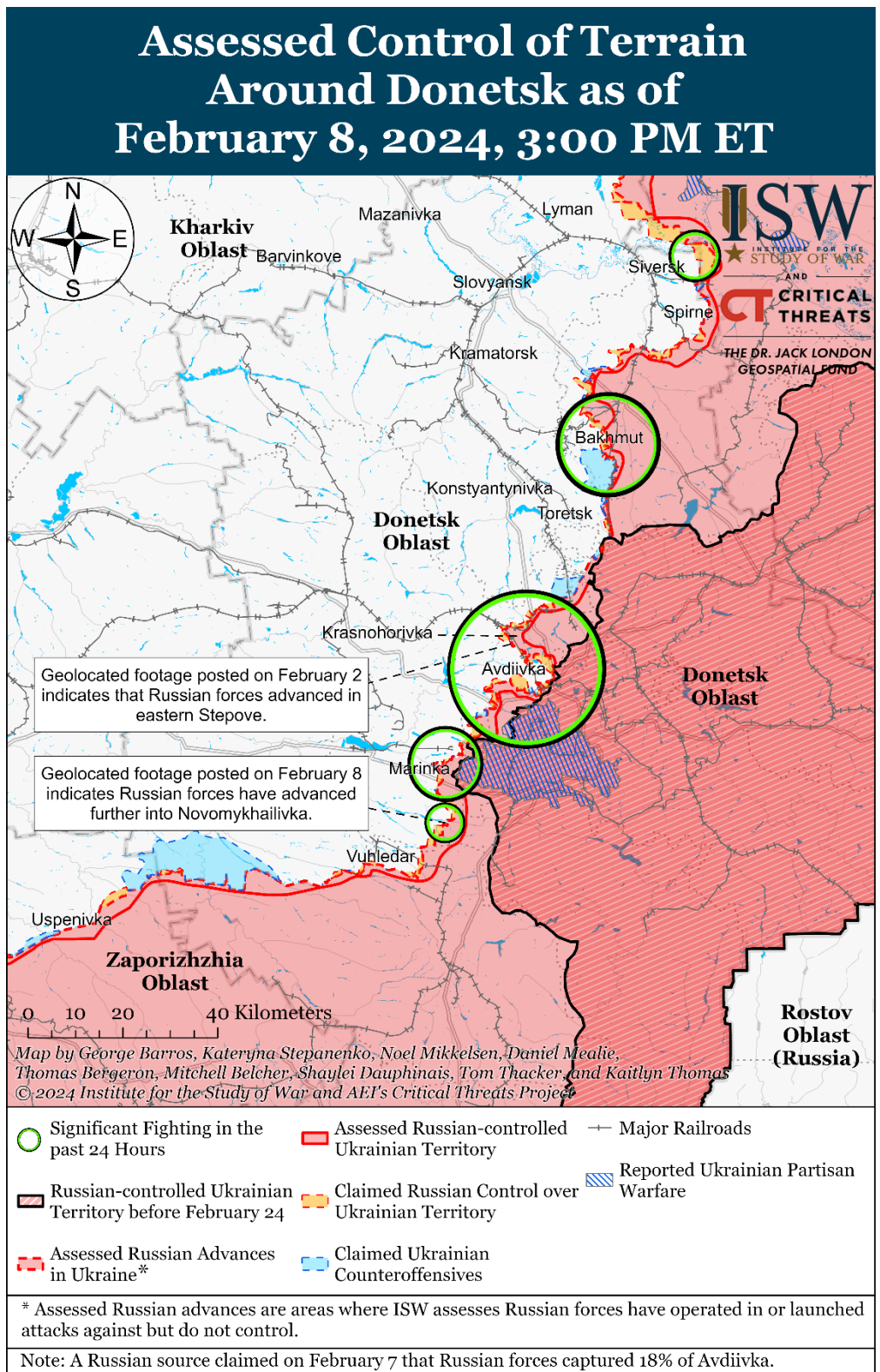
Positional engagements continued near Bakhmut on February 8 but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional engagements continued northwest of Bakhmut near Bohdanivka, in the direction Ivanivske and Chasiv Yar (west of Bakhmut), and southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka.[50] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that elements of the Russian 331st Airborne (VDV) Regiment (98th VDV Division) continue operating northwest of Bakhmut.[51] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 217th, 299th, and 331st VDV regiments (all three VDV regiments of the 98th VDV Division) are respectively advancing near Hryhorivka, Bohdanivka, and Ivanivske, although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of the purported advances.[52] Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian “St. George” Volunteer Reconnaissance and Assault Brigade are operating east of Bohdanivka; elements of the Russian 1307th Motorized Rifle Regiment (Russian Territorial Troops [TRV]) are operating north and northwest of Klishchiivka; and elements of the Russian 88th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People’s Republic [LNR] Army Corps [AC]) are operating east of Klishchiivka.



Russian forces recently advanced near Avdiivka amid continued positional fighting in this area of the frontline on February 8. Geolocated footage published on February 7 indicates that Russian forces marginally advanced in eastern Stepove (northwest of Avdiivka), although likely not within the past day.[53] Russian milbloggers claimed that elements of the Russian 114th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] AC) and 30th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Combined Arms Army, Central Military District [CMD]) advanced in northern Avdiivka up to Shestakova Street and captured a nearby section of the railway line, although ISW has not observed visual evidence of these claims.[54] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced near the quarry northeast of Avdiivka, although ISW has not observed visual evidence of this claim.[55] Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional fighting continued northwest of Avdiivka near Novobakhmutivka and Berdychi and in the direction of Ocheretyne; on the outskirts of Avdiivka itself; south of Avdiivka near Opytne; west of Avdiivka in the direction of Lastochkyne; and southwest of Avdiivka near Nevelske and Pervomaiske [56] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces are focused on interdicting Hrushevskoho Street - Ukrainian forces' alleged main ground line of communication (GLOC) in Avdiivka.[57] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian aviation intensified FAB glide bomb strikes against Ukrainian positions in Avdiivka.[58] Avdiivka Military Administration Head Vitaliy Barabash stated on February 8 that Russian forces have conducted 800 airstrikes on Avdiivka since January 1, 2024.[59]

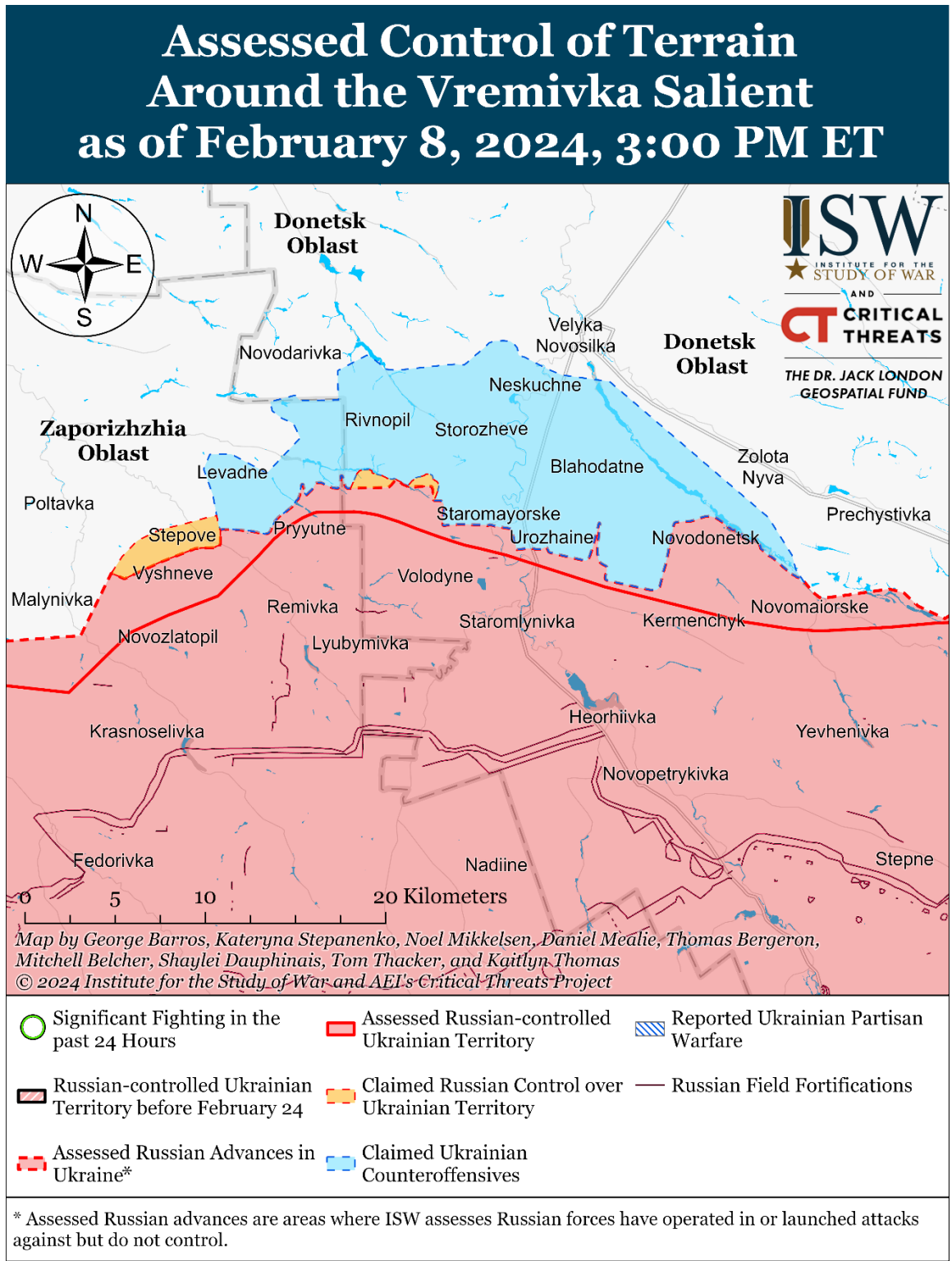


Russian forces recently advanced south of Donetsk City amid continued positional fighting in the area on February 8. Geolocated footage published on February 8 indicates that Russian elements of the 155th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) recently advanced into eastern Novomykhailivka (south of Donetsk City).[60] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces advanced in Heorhiivka, although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim.[61] Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional engagements continued near Krasnohorivka, Heorhiivka (both west of Donetsk City), Pobieda (southwest of Donetsk City) and Novomykhailivka.[62] Elements of the Russian 238th Artillery Brigade (8th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) are reportedly operating near Krasnohorivka.[63]

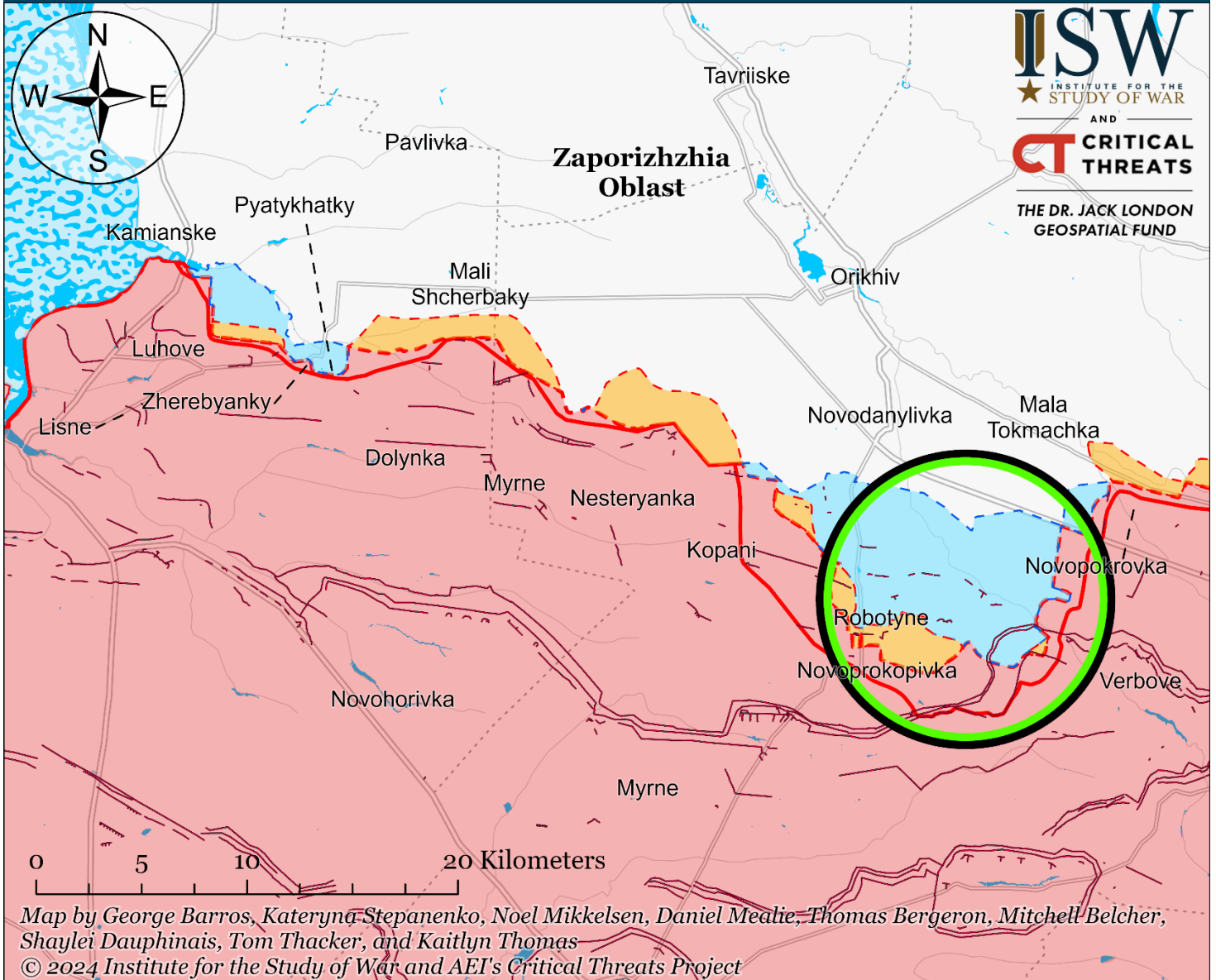


Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Positional engagements continued in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on February 8 but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional fighting continued near Verbove (east of Robotyne), Novoprokopivka (south of Robotyne), and Robotyne.[64] Elements of the Russian 70th and 71st motorized rifle regiments (both of the 42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating south of Robotyne, and elements of the 291st Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division) and 392nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (likely a mobilized unit) are also operating in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast.[65]



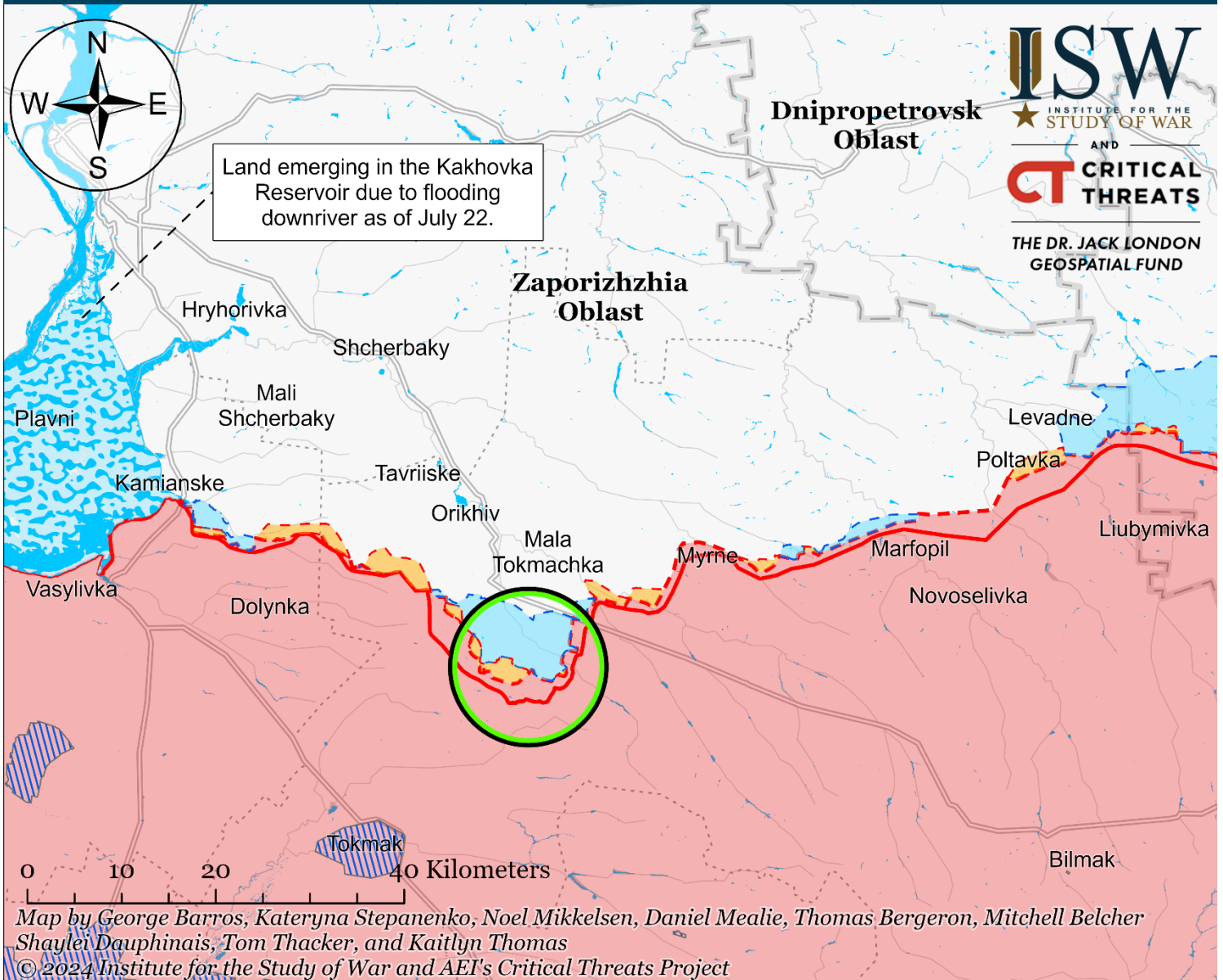
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of February 8, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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|---|--|---|
|  Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours |  Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory |  Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare |
|  Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24 |  Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory |  Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir |
|  Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine* |  Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives |  Russian Field Fortifications |

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

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of February 8, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives

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

Positional fighting continued in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast, including in Krynyky, on February 8.[66] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces conducted partially successful assaults in central and western Krynyky, although ISW has not seen any confirmation of a recent Russian advance in the area.[67] Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Colonel Nataliya Humenyuk stated that Russian forces are not using armored vehicles in assaults on the east bank of the Dnipro River and suggested that the Russian command has prohibited Russian forces in the area from doing so.[68] Elements of the 337th and 328th airborne assault (VDV) regiments (both of the 104th VDV Division), elements of the 26th Motorized Rifle Regiment (70th Motorized Rifle Division, 18th CAA), and elements of the 144th Motorized Rifle Brigade (18th CAA) are reportedly operating near Krynyky.[69]



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 drones strikes targeting rear areas of Ukraine on February 8. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched 17 Shahed-136/131 drones from Cape Chauda, occupied Crimea, and that Ukrainian air defenses shot down 11 of the drones within Mykolaiv, Odesa, Vinnytsia, and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts.[70] The Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs reported that Russian forces launched eight North Korean KN-23 and S-300 missiles at Selydove, Donetsk Oblast.[71] Ukraine's Eastern Air Command reported that Ukrainian air defenses intercepted a Russian Kh-59 cruise missile over Dnipropetrovsk Oblast.[72] Ukrainian officials reported that Russian drone strikes damaged residential buildings in Odesa and Mykolaiv cities and that drone debris damaged an infrastructure facility in Vinnytsia City.[73]

Russian forces reportedly also used ballistic missiles acquired from North Korea in strikes against Ukraine on February 7. The Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs reported on February 8 that Russian forces used two North Korean KN-23 missiles in a series of eight missile strikes on Kharkiv City on February 7.[74]

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

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) proposed a draft bill on February 8 to establish a single maximum age for contract service personnel (*kontraktniki*) during a period of partial mobilization, martial law, or wartime.[75] The draft bill proposes an increased 70-year age limit for senior officers and 65-year age limit for all other Russian personnel and will apply these limits to those who entered military service before July 24, 2023.[76] The draft bill likely aims to retroactively apply a law that Putin signed on July 24, 2023 that raised the age limits for *kontraktniki* in the same way.[77] Mobilized personnel who joined the Russian military during Russia's Fall 2022 partial mobilization previously could conclude military service at the age of 51.[78] The Kremlin likely aims for these measures to open additional avenues for crypto-mobilization efforts while also retaining a wider group of current personnel in military service. The higher age limits for senior officers likely aim to avoid placing further constraints on available command personnel against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine.

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

Nothing significant to report.

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

Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal met with Bulgarian People's Assembly Chairperson Rosen Zhelyazkov on February 7 and discussed the possibility of joint production of unspecified equipment and the training of Ukrainian military personnel.[79]

Ukrainian outlet *Ukrinform* reported on February 8 that Ukraine concluded the first state-level contracts for the mass domestic production of the "ShaBlya" robotic turret in January 2024.[80]

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 authorities are likely setting conditions to falsify voting results and voter turnout in occupied Ukraine in the March 2024 presidential election. Russian outlet *Kommersant* stated on February 7 that voters in occupied Ukraine, including local residents, Russian military personnel, and visiting Russian workers, will be able to vote early and that local occupation election commissions will determine when to open up voting.[81] *Kommersant* stated that voters in occupied Ukraine will also be able to vote from home as Russian occupation election commissions conduct door-to-door visits during the voting period.

Russian authorities continue to target youth in occupied Ukraine as part of Russia's long-term force generation and propaganda efforts. Russian Presidential Administration First Deputy Head Sergei Kiriyenko and Zaporizhia Oblast occupation governor Yevgeny Balitsky visited the construction site of the "Voin" center for military sports training and patriotic education at the "Iskra" children's health camp in occupied Berdyansk, Zaporizhia Oblast on February 8. The Ukrainian Resistance Center stated that Ukrainian teenagers will undergo weapons and military engineering training and attend lectures about the war in Ukraine at the "Voin" center.[82] Ukrainian Luhansk Oblast Military Administration Head Artem Lysyohor stated on February 8 that Russian authorities opened a center in occupied Luhansk to train Ukrainians aged 14 to 22 to become "bloggers" in the Russian information space.[83]

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian officials continue to blame the West for increasing geopolitical tensions in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Rudenko claimed on February 7 that the US presence in the Asia-Pacific region makes it “impossible” for Russia and Japan to negotiate a peace treaty and that the US is “dragging” NATO into the region.[84] Additional Russian officials, including Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov, claimed that Russia’s bilateral relations with Germany and the United Kingdom (UK) are “experiencing a crisis” due to poor communication and criticized France for supporting Ukraine.[85]

Kremlin mouthpieces claimed that Moldova’s efforts to distance itself from Russia are antithetical to Moldova’s national interests. Russian Ambassador to Moldova Oleg Vasnetsov and Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksander Pankin claimed on February 8 that Moldovan authorities are attempting to curtail Moldova’s involvement in the Russia-led Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and that this effort is against the interests of the Moldovan people.[86] Vasnetsov also claimed that Moldova has “no alternative” to Russian-mediated peace negotiations with Transnistria.[87] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Moldovan authorities’ decisions to require Russian citizens to vote at the Russian embassy in Chisinau and to not allow polling stations in Transnistria will “obstruct” the Russian presidential election in March 2024.[88] Kremlin officials and mouthpieces have recently engaged in rhetorical efforts to sow political instability and division in Moldova and set informational conditions to justify future Russian aggression against Moldova.[89]

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

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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