

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 30, 2023

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October 30, 2023, 6:45pm ET

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

Click [here](#) to 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 3:00pm ET on October 30. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 31 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russian officials announced that Russian law enforcement suppressed the antisemitic riots in Makhachkala, Republic of Dagestan on October 30. The Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) stated that employees of the MVD and other law enforcement agencies suppressed mass riots in Makhachkala and restored order at the local airport after identifying over 150 participants and detaining 60 rioters.[1] The MVD also claimed that rioters injured at least nine police officers and that searches for other rioters are ongoing. Dagestan Head Sergey Melikov claimed that he personally inspected the Makhachkala airport, which sustained minor damage, and claimed that the MVD and Rosgvardia used physical force as a last resort in hopes of calming the mob with reason.[2] Russian sources claimed that rioters threw stones at law enforcement and that officers responded by firing guns into the air.[3] Melikov stated that unspecified foreign actors, including pro-Ukrainian Telegram channels, are attempting to destabilize the region and claimed that the Telegram channel that published the rumors of the arrival of "Israeli refugees" in Dagestan was managed from Ukrainian territory.[4]

Russian President Vladimir Putin responded to the October 29 antisemitic demonstrations in Dagestan by accusing Ukraine of trying to "instigate pogroms in Russia" under Western guidance.[5] Putin claimed during a meeting with members of the Russian Security Council on October 30 that demonstrations in Makhachkala "were inspired, among other things, through social networks, from Ukraine's territory by Western intelligence services." Putin added that the West is trying to use regional conflicts to break Russia from within, and tasked regional authorities with undertaking "firm, timely and clear actions to protect the constitutional system of Russia, the rights and freedoms of [Russian] citizens, interethnic and interreligious harmony." Putin did not specify which measures Russia will undertake to resolve interreligious conflicts and antisemitism in Russia, however. Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov did not comment on the measures that could be taken against the demonstrators.[6] Kremlin officials largely reiterated similar statements prior to Putin's speech and refrained from directly condemning the

rioters, and the Kremlin's narrative about foreign involvement in the riots is likely an attempt to deflect from the international criticism of antisemitism and growing animosity towards ethnic and religious minorities in Russia.[7]

A minority of Russian officials directly condemned rioters and regional authorities for ignoring antisemitic attitudes in Dagestan. Melikov stated that rioters betrayed Russian servicemen fighting in Ukraine by “playing for the enemy” and noted that he was ashamed about the riots.[8] Russian State Duma Deputy Vasiliy Vlasov criticized Dagestani authorities for ignoring antisemitic attitudes and unrest that lasted for three days.[9] Vlasov added that unnamed regional officials should be dismissed from their positions for failing to preempt the riots in time.

The October 29 riots in Dagestan highlight the growing radicalization and factionalism of Russian society resulting from the hyper-nationalist ideologies that the war in Ukraine has empowered. Director of the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence Janis Sarts stated that events in Makhachkala represent some of the manifestations of the radicalization of the Russian society resulting from the war in Ukraine and the surrounding media environment.[10] Sarts stated that Russian media has been inciting hatred against Ukrainians, the West, and Israel and observed that many deceased Russian servicemen who had fought in Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine hailed from Dagestan. A Russian milblogger similarly implied that the Kremlin's efforts to blame the riots on foreign psychological and information operations allow Russian officials to avoid responsibility for enabling the strengthening of radical sentiments among Russian Muslim populations.[11] ISW has previously assessed that the hyper-nationalist ideologies espoused by the Kremlin as the justifications for the war are having domestic ramifications for Russia, particularly in ethnic minority communities.[12]

Unidentified Russian soldiers reportedly murdered a Ukrainian family in occupied Volnovakha, Donetsk Oblast, further highlighting a threatening environment of violence that is pervasive throughout the occupied areas of Ukraine. Ukrainian Human Rights Ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets stated on October 29 that Russian troops killed nine civilians, including two young children, in their home in Volnovakha overnight and suggested that Chechen units may have committed the murders because the family refused to shelter Chechen forces in their house.[13] Several Ukrainian sources and a prominent Russian insider source reported that forensic evidence indicates that well-prepared and well-equipped military personnel likely perpetrated the attack.[14] Attacks on civilians *hors de combat* (in rear areas far removed from active combat zones) by representatives of an occupying power constitute a clear violation of multiple international legal norms and very likely rise to the level of a war crime or crime against humanity.[15]

Several Russian commentators exploited the circumstances of the tragedy in Volnovakha to accuse Ukraine of trying to stoke interethnic tensions within the Russian information space. One Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian sources first reported that “Kadyrov's men” (in reference to Chechen troops) committed the murders and linked the issue to the October 29 riots in Dagestan.[16] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Chechen forces are not deployed anywhere near Volnovakha and accused the Ukrainian information space of trying to use Chechens as a “trigger” to further destabilize Russia.[17] The fixation on the Ukrainian accusation rather than on the atrocity itself, the need to hold the perpetrators accountable, or the unprofessionalism and indiscipline of soldiers committing such crimes suggests that these Russian

commentators are very concerned about inter-ethnic tensions in Russia and the Russian armed forces.

Ukrainian forces made confirmed advances near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 30. Geolocated footage posted on October 30 shows that Ukrainian forces have advanced northeast of Kurdyumivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).[18] Additional geolocated footage from October 29 indicates that Ukrainian forces have marginally advanced west of Robotyne in western Zaporizhia Oblast.[19] The Ukrainian General Staff reiterated that Ukrainian forces are continuing offensive actions near Bakhmut and offensive operations in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhia Oblast) direction.[20]

Russian forces continue to use “Storm-Z” assault units predominantly made up of prisoner recruits in highly attritional infantry-led frontal assaults. Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun stated on October 30 that Russian forces are preparing to conduct “meat assaults” (colloquial jargon for infantry-led frontal assaults) near Avdiivka and are training “Storm-Z” assault units for future assaults without equipment.[21] A Russian milblogger reportedly serving in the Avdiivka direction claimed that “meat assaults” are when Russian infantry forces attack without artillery support to suppress Ukrainian firing positions.[22] The milblogger claimed that when two Russian regiments conduct “meat assaults” side by side, the seam between the areas of responsibility of both regiments remains unsecured and vulnerable to Ukrainian counterattacks. Another Russian milblogger claimed that “Storm-Z” assault detachments in the Avdiivka direction and on Bakhmut’s southern flank are often destroyed after a few days of active operations and on average lose between 40-70 percent of their personnel.[23] The milblogger criticized the Russian military’s poor training of “Storm-Z” units and the unwillingness of superior officers to consider the proposals of “Storm-Z” commanders when assigning them combat missions. The milblogger stated that “Storm-Z” units are often introduced into battle before conducting reconnaissance or establishing connections with neighboring units and typically struggle to evacuate their wounded without artillery cover, leading to higher losses. Both milbloggers noted the lack of proper artillery support for Russian attacks and counterattacks.[24] One milblogger stated that these factors contribute to “Storm-Z” units being turned into “trash” before achieving any significant results.[25] ISW has frequently reported on the ineffectiveness of “Storm-Z” units.[26]

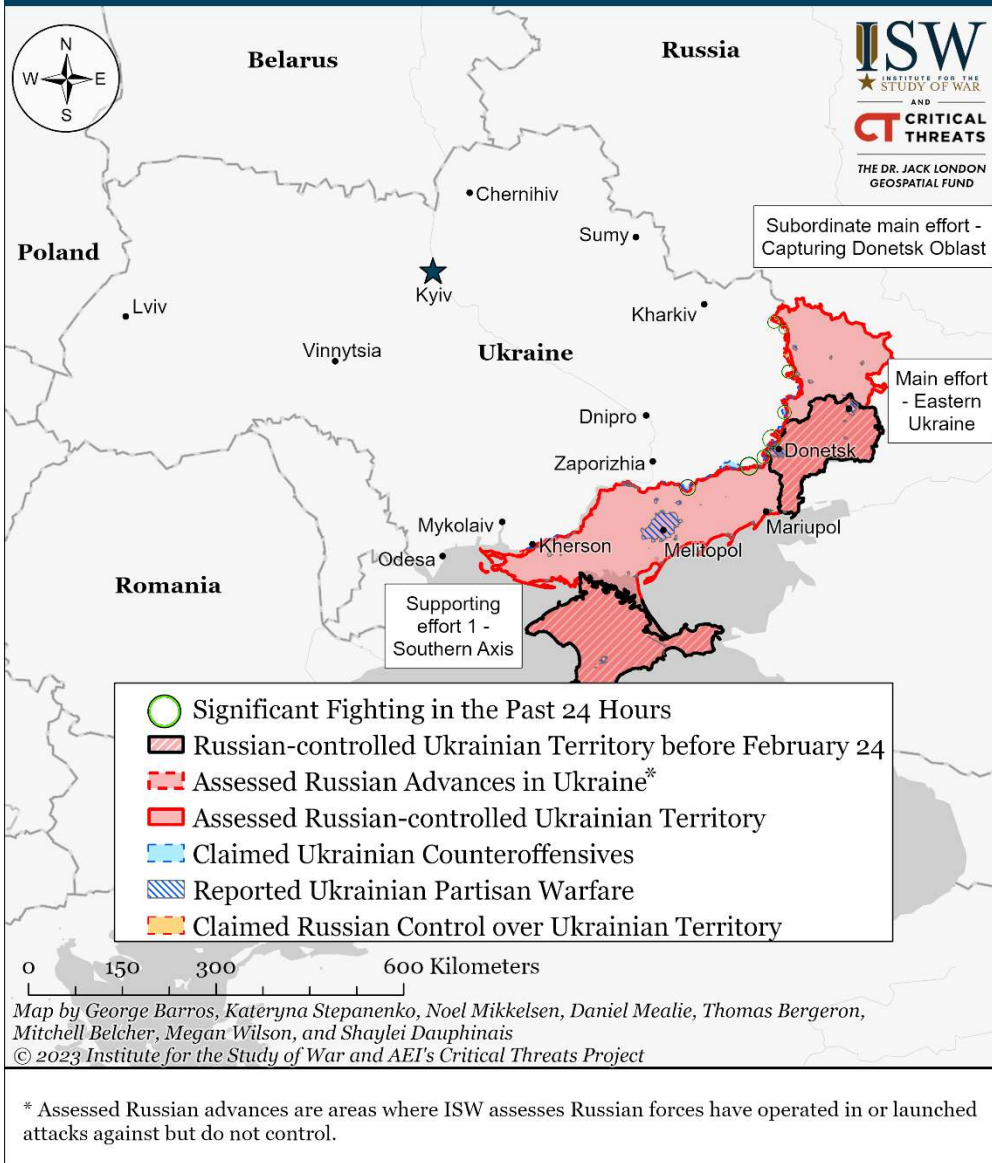
Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu highlighted the allegedly cooperative nature of the Russian-Chinese relationship at the 10th Beijing Xiangshan Forum on October 30. Shoigu labeled the Russian-Chinese relationship as a “comprehensive partnership and strategic interaction” and stated that Russia and China consider each other “priority partners.”[27] Shoigu claimed that the confidential contacts between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping play a “special role” in maintaining the “traditionally friendly relations” between the two states.[28] Shoigu highlighted Russia’s cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and noted Russia’s desire to increase military and military-technical cooperation with states in the Asian-Pacific region.[29] Despite Shoigu’s characterizations of the Russian-Chinese partnership, the majority of his speech focused not on Russia’s relationship with China, but rather on the alleged threats of the West, NATO, and the war in Ukraine, likely in an attempt to paint a picture of a world hostile to Moscow and Beijing.[30] ISW continues to assess that China has reservations concerning the Kremlin’s desired “no limits partnership” between the two states.[31]

Russian forces conducted a series of missile and drone strikes against Ukraine on the night of October 29 to 30. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on October 30 that Russian forces launched 12 Shahed 131/136 drones, two Kh-59 missiles, and four Iskander missiles against Ukraine and that Ukrainian air defenses downed all the Shahed drones and the Kh-59s.[32] The Ukrainian Southern Operational Command stated that Russian Iskander missiles struck port infrastructure in Odesa Oblast.[33] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are beginning to use several new “smart” glide bombs – the FAB-250, FAB-500, and FAB-1500.[34] The milblogger claimed that the new glide bombs have laser and satellite guidance, making the accuracy of their impact radius as small as 5 meters, compared to conventional air bombs with an accurate impact radius of 50 meters. The bombs reportedly have a strike range of 200 kilometers. The milblogger claimed that Russian FAB-250 bombs weigh 250 kilograms, hold an explosive weight of 99 kilograms, have a damage radius of 120 meters, and can destroy manpower, equipment, and light fortifications. Russian FAB-500 bombs reportedly weigh 500 kilograms, hold an explosive weight of 150 kilograms, have a damage radius of 250 meters, and can destroy headquarters, warehouses, and concrete and reinforced concrete objects. Russian FAB-1500 bombs weigh 1550 kilograms, hold an explosive weight of 675 kilograms, have a damage radius of 500 meters, and can destroy underground bunkers up to 20 meters in depth and penetrate up to 3 meters of reinforced concrete. The milblogger claimed that Russian forces can arm Su-34, Su-30, and Su-35 aircraft with the new glide bombs.

Key Takeaways:

- **Russian officials announced that Russian law enforcement suppressed antisemitic riots in Makhachkala, Republic of Dagestan on October 30. Russian President Vladimir Putin responded to the October 29 antisemitic demonstrations in Dagestan by accusing Ukraine of trying to “instigate pogroms in Russia” under Western guidance.**
- **A minority of Russian officials directly condemned rioters and regional authorities for ignoring antisemitic attitudes in Dagestan.**
- **The October 29 riots in Dagestan highlight the growing radicalization and factionalism of Russian society resulting from the hyper-nationalist ideologies that the war in Ukraine has empowered.**
- **Unidentified Russian soldiers reportedly murdered a Ukrainian family in occupied Volnovakha, Donetsk Oblast, further highlighting a threatening environment of violence that is pervasive throughout occupied areas of Ukraine. Several Russian commentators exploited the circumstances of the tragedy in Volnovakha to accuse Ukraine of trying to stoke interethnic tensions within the Russian information space.**
- **Ukrainian forces made confirmed advances near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 30.**
- **Russian forces continue to use "Storm-Z" assault units predominantly made up of prisoner recruits in highly attritional infantry-led frontal assaults.**
- **Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu highlighted the allegedly cooperative nature of the Russian-Chinese relationship at the 10th Beijing Xiangshan Forum on October 30.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, near Avdiivka, west and southwest of Donetsk City, in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 30 and advanced in some areas.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of October 30, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We will continue to evaluate and report on the effects of these criminal activities on the Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population and specifically on combat in Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn 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 Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas
- Russian Information Operations and Narratives

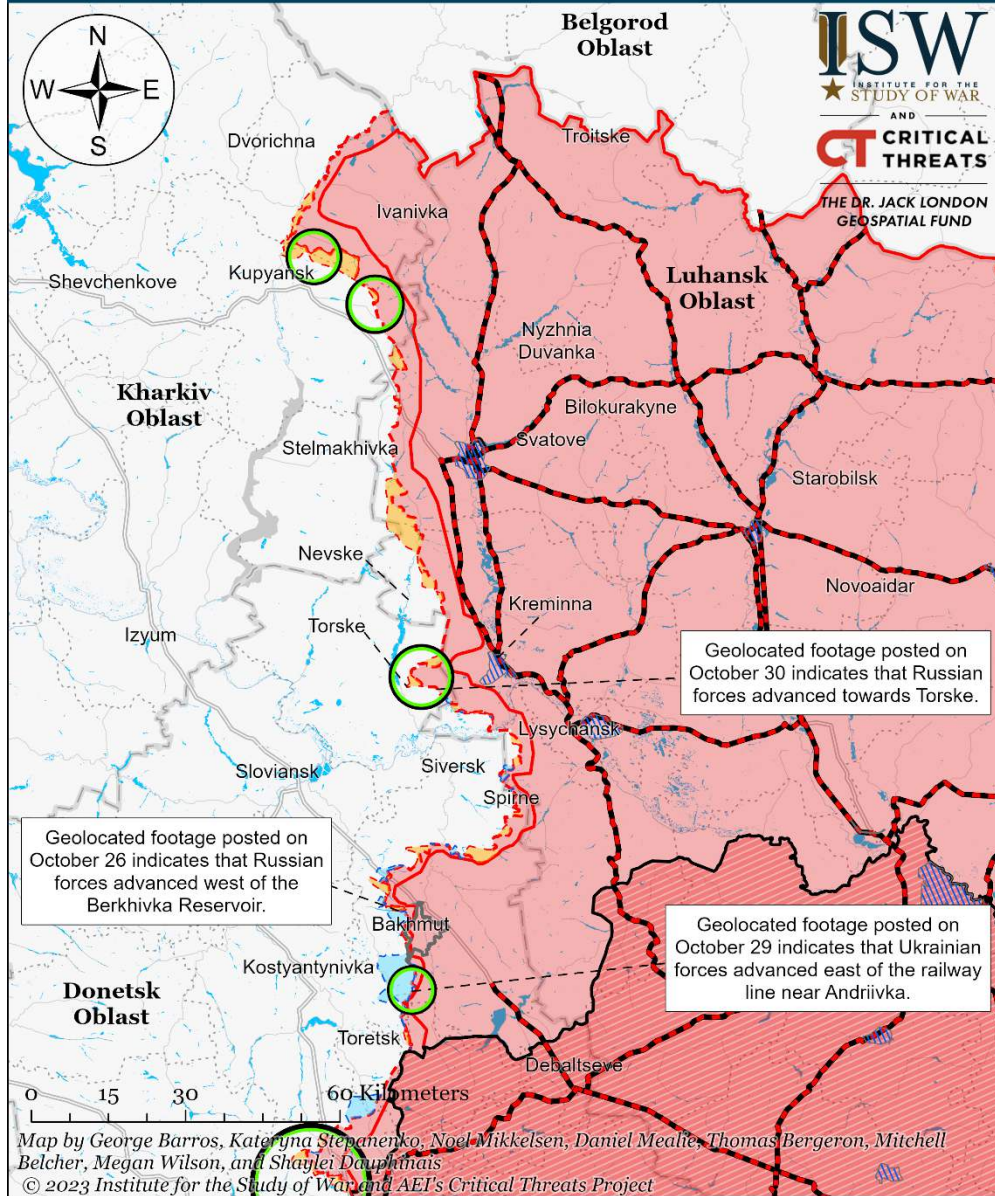
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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

Russian forces continued offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on October 30 and made a confirmed advance. Geolocated footage posted on October 30 indicates that Russian troops marginally advanced towards Torske (about 8km southwest of Kreminna).[35] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful ground attacks in the Kupyansk direction near Synkivka (7km northeast of Kupyansk) and Ivanivka (20km southwest of Kupyansk) and southeast of Terny (15km northwest of Kreminna).[36] Ukrainian "Steel Cordon" border guard assault brigade spokesperson Ivan Shevstov stated that the most active part of the Kupyansk front is near Synkivka and Ivanivka, and that Russian forces are using groups of between 10 and 30 people in attacks towards Kupyansk.[37] Shevstov noted that Russian forces continue efforts to occupy the left bank of the Oskil River.[38] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces, including airborne (VDV) elements, advanced towards Kupyansk and near Kreminna.[39] Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov posted footage purportedly of the "AMURA" group of Chechen "Akhmat" Spetsnaz striking Ukrainian positions in the Serebryanske forest area southwest of Kreminna.[40]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted counterattacks along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna area on October 30 and made limited advances. One Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked and regained several positions near Raihorodka (12km west of Svatove).[41] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled several Ukrainian attacks in the Kupyansk and Kreminna areas.[42]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of October 30, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

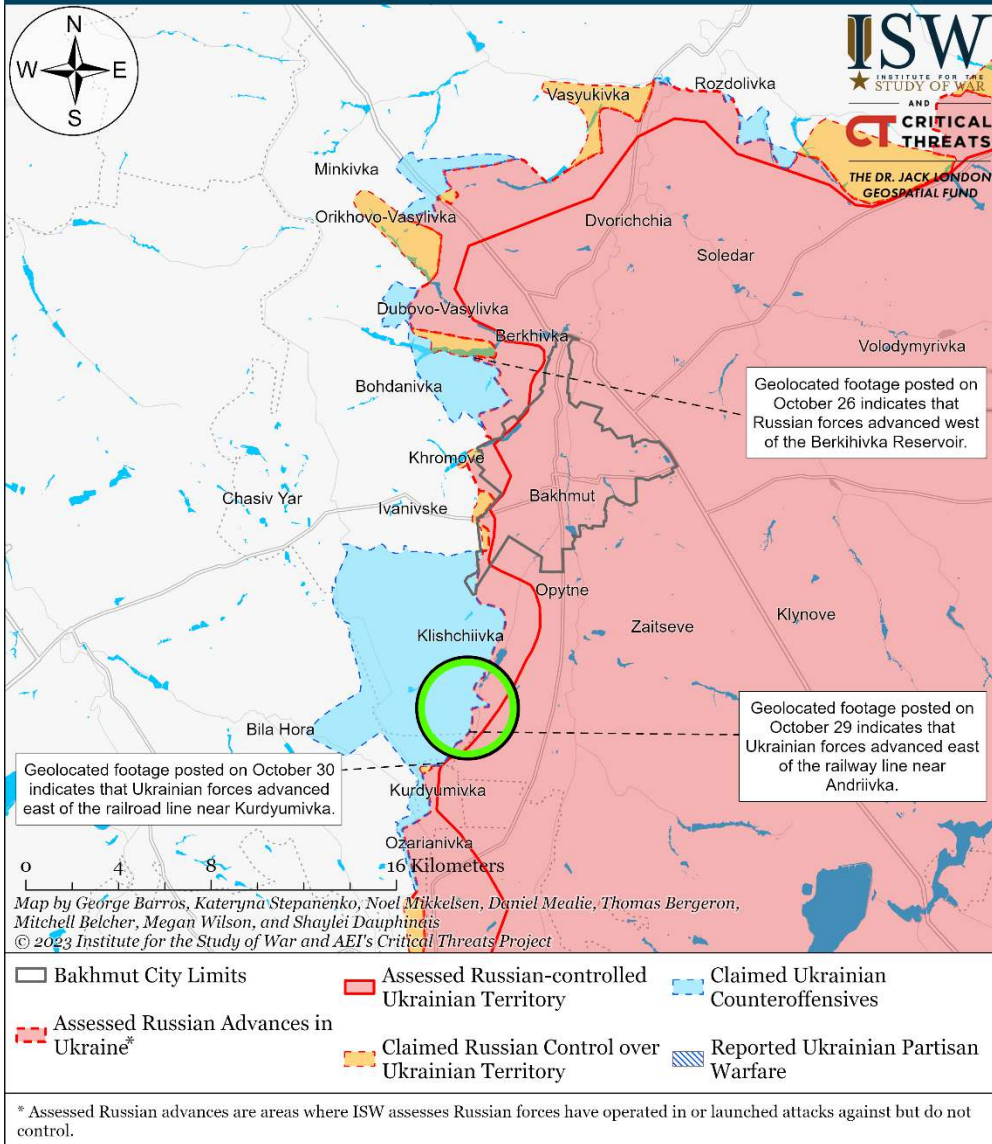
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

Ukrainian forces reportedly continued offensive operations in the Bakhmut direction on October 30 and made a confirmed advance. Geolocated footage posted on October 30 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced northeast of Kurdyumivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).[43] The Ukrainian General Staff stated that Ukrainian forces continue offensive actions south of Bakhmut and are inflicting losses on Russian troops in the area.[44] Several Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attempted to advance beyond the railway line between Klishchiivka (6km southwest of Bakhmut) and Andriivka (8km southwest of Bakhmut).[45] One milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces managed to advance beyond the railway line south of Andriivka and consolidate new positions.[46]

Russian forces continued ground attacks near Bakhmut on October 30 but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian troops unsuccessfully attempted to restore lost positions near Andriivka and Klishchiivka.[47] Ukrainian Ground Forces Commander Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi stated that Russian forces have "significantly strengthened their group" near Bakhmut and switched from defensive actions to being more "active." [48] ISW cannot independently verify a substantial change in the composition of Russian forces near Bakhmut at this time, however. Russian milbloggers claimed that positional fighting is ongoing northwest of Bakhmut near Berkhivka (on the northwestern outskirts of Bakhmut), Vasyukivka (12km north of Bakhmut), and Orikhovo-Vasylivka (10km northwest of Bakhmut).[49]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of October 30, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

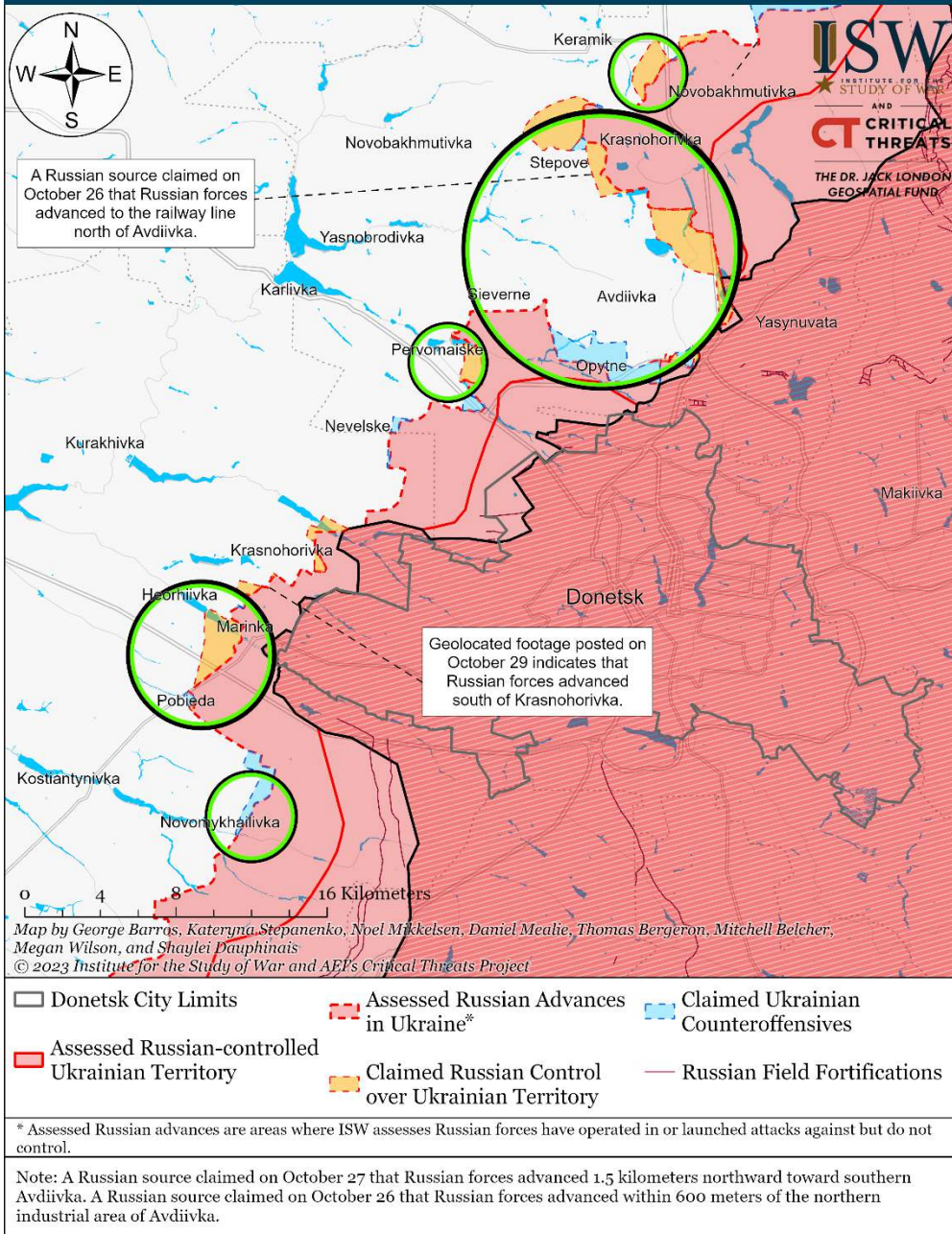


Ukrainian forces did not conduct any confirmed or claimed counterattacks near Avdiivka on October 30. Ukrainian military sources noted on October 30 that Ukrainian forces shot down another Russian Su-25 in the Avdiivka direction on October 30, making it the sixth plane shot down in this direction since October 10.[50]

Russian forces continued ground attacks near Avdiivka on October 30 and made a confirmed advance. Geolocated footage posted on October 30 shows a Russian TOS-1A thermobaric artillery system operating in Novoselivka Druha (5km northeast of Avdiivka), confirming that Russian forces occupy the settlement.[51] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced in the "Khimik" micro-district south of Avdiivka, made gains near Berdychi (7km northwest of Bakhmut), and captured a quarry near Sieverne (5km directly west of Avdiivka).[52] Ukrainian military observer

Konstantyn Mashovets reported that Russian forces are conducting a "tactical regrouping" in the Avdiivka area that will likely last less than a day before Russian forces resume attacks on the settlement.[53] Mashovets reiterated his assessment that the units involved in this grouping are mainly elements of the 1st Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Army Corps and the 41st Combined Arms Army (Central Military District).[54] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun similarly noted that Russian forces are trying to compensate for equipment losses near Avdiivka and preparing to employ heavy infantry-led frontal assaults on Ukrainian positions.[55] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled unsuccessful Russian ground attacks near Avdiivka, Novokalynove (10km northwest of Avdiivka), Tonenke (5km west of Avdiivka), Opytne (3km southwest of Avdiivka), and Pervomaiske (10km southwest of Avdiivka).[56]

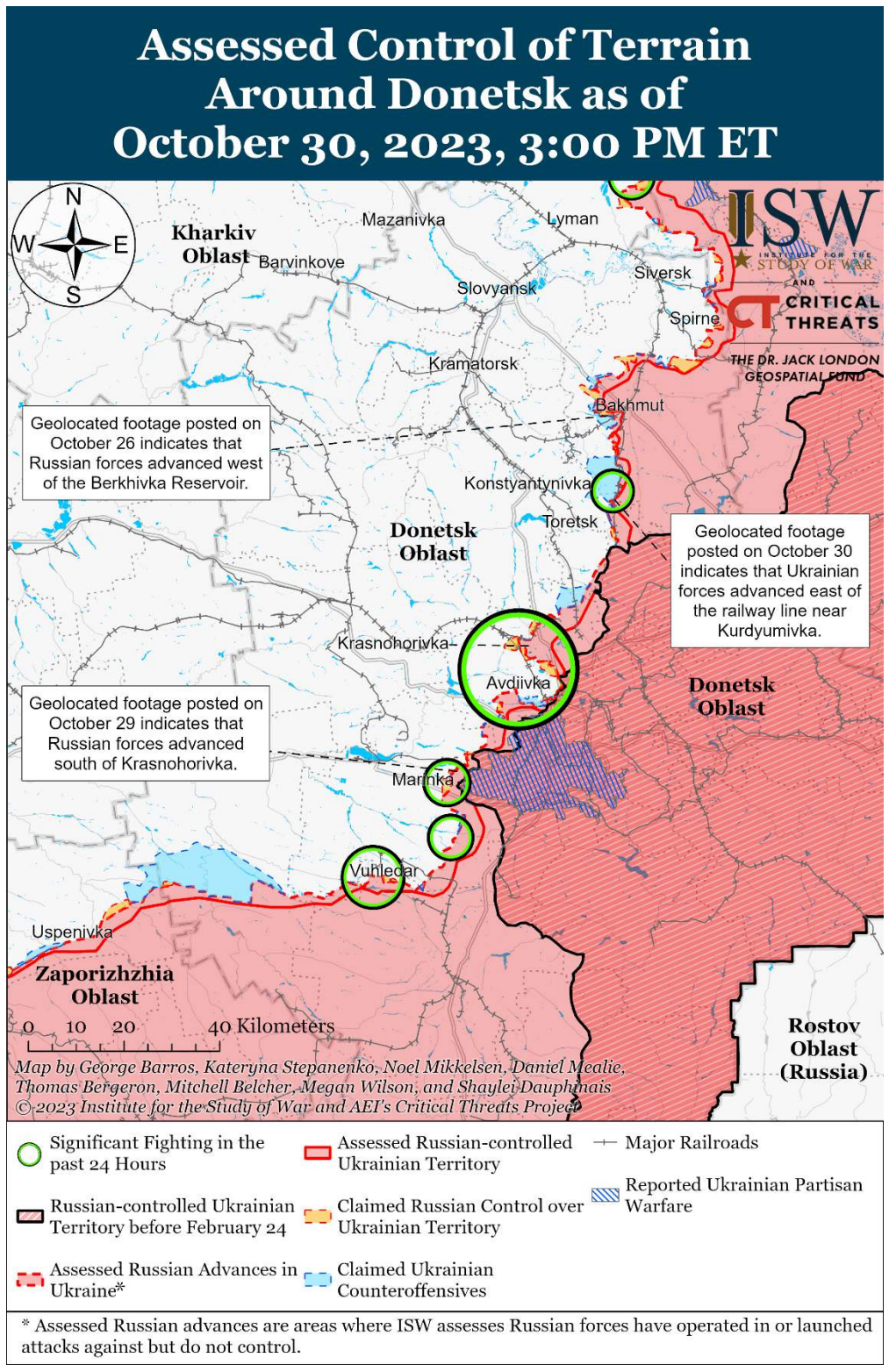
Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of October 30, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Ukrainian forces did not conduct any claimed or confirmed ground attacks west or southwest of Donetsk City on October 30.

Russian forces continued ground attacks west and southwest of Donetsk City on October 30 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported unsuccessful Russian attacks near Marinka, Novomykhailivka (20km southwest of Donetsk City), and south of Vuhledar (25km southwest of Donetsk City).[57] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces marginally

advanced near Novomykhailivka.[58] A Russian milblogger highlighted the activities of the 39th Motorized Rifle Brigade (68th Army Corps, Eastern Military District) in the Novomykhailivka area.[59]



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

Ukrainian forces did not conduct any claimed or confirmed attacks in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 30.

Russian forces conducted offensive operations in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 30 but did not make any claimed or confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka).[60] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces attacked north of Pryyutne (16km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) and near Novodonetske (12km southeast of Veylka Novosilka) and Novomayorske (18km southeast of Velyka Novosilka) on October 29.[61] A Russian milblogger claimed that fighting continued from October 27-29 for control of the Hrusheva Gully northeast of Pryyutne, following numerous claims from other Russian sources about Russian advances in the area on October 25 and 26.[62]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of October 30, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

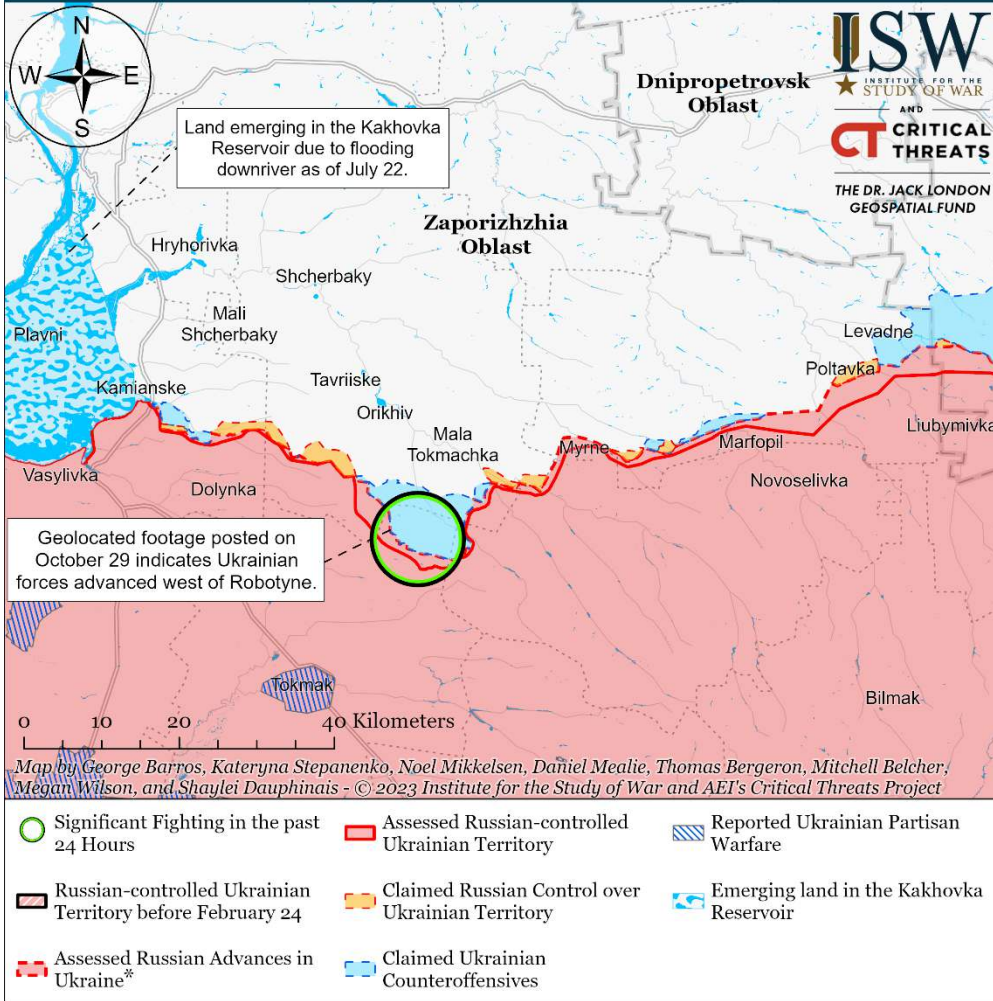


Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on October 30 and made a confirmed gain. Geolocated footage published on October 29 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced west of Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv).[63] Russian sources, including the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), claimed on October 29 and 30 that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked northwest of Verbove (9km east of Robotyne) and near Kopani (7km northwest of Robotyne), Robotyne, and Novoprokopivka (2km south of Robotyne).[64]

Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on October 30. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Robotyne.[65]



Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of October 30, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Ukrainian forces continue to hold positions in the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast. Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces control central Krynky (30km east of Kherson City and 2km from the Dniro River), and one prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces marginally expanded their zone of control west of Krynky.[66] Geolocated footage published on October 30 confirms that Russian forces hold positions in forest areas east of Krynky.[67] Multiple Russian sources, including a Wagner Group-affiliated channel, complained about Russian forces’ lack of counterbattery, electronic warfare (EW), and command and control capabilities in the Kherson direction, particularly near Krynky.[68]

Russian forces continued airstrikes against the west (right) bank of Kherson Oblast on October 30. The Ukrainian Southern Operational Command stated that Russian forces used 37 KAB guided bombs to strike the west bank of Kherson Oblast.[69]



Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted a mixed series of strikes targeting occupied Crimea on October 29-30. The Russian MoD claimed that Russian air defenses shot down eight Storm

Shadow missiles targeting Crimea.[70] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian air defenses also shot down two Neptune anti-ship missiles and three drones targeting Sevastopol.[71] The milblogger also claimed that Russian air defenses failed to shoot down two Ukrainian ATACMS missiles near Olenivka near Cape Tarkhanhut but that the missiles did not cause any damage.[72] A Russian insider source claimed that the alleged Ukrainian ATACMS strike damaged vehicles and radar systems near Olenivka and killed or wounded more than 20 Russian servicemen.[73] The insider source also claimed that Russian officials did not report on the Ukrainian ATACMS strike but chose to instead issue statements about the downing of Storm Shadow missiles and drones.[74] ISW has not observed either visual confirmation or confirmation from Ukrainian officials of the Ukrainian ATACMS strike, however.

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

The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on October 20 that Russian forces are attempting to recruit Ukrainian criminals who were convicted of crimes before 2014 to serve in the Russian military.[75] The Ukrainian Resistance Center stated that the Donetsk and Luhansk occupation administrations have created lists of criminals who were convicted before 2014 and are currently serving sentences in prisons in occupied Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts and are attempting to coerce these criminals into serving in the Russian military.

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)

Occupation authorities continued to forcibly deport Ukrainian civilians to Russia and forcibly militarize them. Luhansk Oblast occupation head Leonid Pasechnik stated on October 30 that occupation authorities have sent 270 residents of occupied Luhansk Oblast, including 169 children, to Sochi, Krasnodar Krai to “improve their health” and “temporarily forget about the war.”[76] Pasechnik stated that occupation authorities sent another group, likely including children, to Sochi on the weekend of October 28-29. The Kherson Oblast occupation administration stated on October 29 that 1,400 students from Kherson Oblast colleges and universities will visit the “sights and places of military glory” in Russia as part of the “More than a Trip” program in the near future.[77]

The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on October 30 that Russian authorities are attempting to employ demobilized Russian servicemen in occupied Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts.[78] Local occupation administrations are reportedly concerned about crime and other poor behavior committed by demobilized Russian servicemen and are creating a base of local employers willing to hire the veterans.

Russian occupation authorities announced the modernization of vehicle checkpoints along the border between Russia and occupied Ukraine. The Russian Transportation Ministry stated on October 25 that Russian and occupation authorities installed autonomous vehicle detection systems at 10 border checkpoints between Russia and occupied Ukraine.[79] The system collects information about the location and classification of vehicles at checkpoints and transmits the information to the Russian Transportation Ministry’s situation center. The system also collects information on the wait times at the various checkpoints and provides live updates to a website available to the public. The Russian Transportation Ministry advertised the new system to simplify and speed up travel through border

checkpoints, although it is also a mechanism for further control over travel between Russia and occupied Ukraine and for collecting personal data on Ukrainian civilians.

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu reiterated boilerplate Kremlin narratives about the Ukrainian counteroffensive, perceived Western aggression towards Russia, and alarmist nuclear rhetoric intended to undermine Western support for Ukraine during a speech at the Beijing Xiangshan Forum on October 30.[80] Shoigu claimed that the Ukrainian counteroffensive has suffered implausible casualties, reporting that the Ukrainian military has lost over 90,000 wounded and killed personnel, almost 600 tanks, and around 1,900 armored vehicles.[81] Shoigu claimed that NATO expansion disregarded Russia's right to ensure its own security and that the West's continued escalation with Russia could lead to a direct clash between nuclear powers.[82] Shoigu reiterated that there have been no changes to Russia's nuclear doctrine and that Russia will only use a nuclear weapon in response to an enemy nuclear strike or against an "existential threat" to Russia.[83]

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)

Belarusian Defense Minister Lieutenant General Viktor Khrenin met with Iranian Supreme Leader Military Affairs Adviser Major General Yahya Rahim Safavi on the sidelines of the Xiangshan Forum on October 30.[84] The Belarusian Ministry of Defense (MoD) announced that Khrenin and Safavi discussed issues of bilateral military cooperation.

Ukrainian Joint Forces Commander Lieutenant General Serhiy Nayev stated that Belarusian forces only have about 1,800 servicemen operating along the entire Belarusian-Ukrainian international border.[85] Nayev stated that the rest of the Belarusian units are located in the Belarusian rear.

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

[1] <https://t.me/mediamvd/23995> ; <https://t.me/idelrealii/31624> <https://t.me/bazabazon/22592>

[2] <https://t.me/agiprd/10558> ; <https://t.me/pravitelstvord/12957>

[3] <https://t.me/rybar/53737>

[4] <https://tass.dot.ru/politika/19149597>; <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/55783> ; https://t.me/prigozhin_2023_tg/4456 ; <https://t.me/melikov05/1541>

[5] <http://kremlin.dot.ru/events/president/news/72618>

[6] <https://www.rbc.dot.ru/politics/30/10/2023/653f7e4b9a79470f15eab602>

- [7] https://t.me/aleksandr_skif/2988 ; <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/6073024.html>; <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/30/10/2023/653f7e4b9a79470f15eab602>; <https://ria.ru/20231030/soveschanie-1906170125.html>; https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1912536/
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- [9] https://kapital-rus.ru/news/401193-provafilii_vse_v_gosdume_rezko_otozvalis_o_popytke_evreiskogo_pogrom/
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- [11] <https://t.me/arat/1725>
- [12] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-13-2023>
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Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

Riley Bailey, Grace Mappes, Kateryna Stepanenko, Angelica Evans, and Frederick W. Kagan

October 29, 2023, 8pm ET

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

Click [here](#) to 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 3:30pm ET on October 29. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 30 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ongoing antisemitic demonstrations in the Republic of Dagestan and elsewhere in the North Caucasus are highlighting heightened interethnic and interreligious tensions in Russia. Hundreds of demonstrators in Dagestan broke into Makhachkala airport, blocked the runway, and attempted to board a plane arriving from Israel on the evening of October 29 following the circulation of rumors that Russian authorities were planning to resettle "Israeli refugees" in Dagestan and elsewhere in the North Caucasus.¹ Hundreds of demonstrators gathered at a hotel in Khasavyurt, Dagestan on the evening of October 28 to look for suspected "Israeli refugees" based on similar rumors.² Unknown actors reportedly set fire to a Jewish cultural center under construction in Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkarian Republic on the night of October 28 to 29.³

The rumors appear to have originated with a local Dagestani Telegram channel, which claimed that "Israeli refugees" were staying at the hotel in Khasavyurt, Dagestan on October 28 and proceeded to announce plans for demonstrations that took place several hours later in the center of Makhachkala.⁴ The Telegram channel called on Makhachkala residents to demonstrate at the airport on the night of October 28 and on October 29 and posted flight tracker data for the plane from Israel ahead of its arrival on the night of October 29.⁵ Demonstrations are currently ongoing at the Makhachkala airport, where demonstrators temporarily blocked all individuals at the airport from leaving. Demonstrators also checked identification documents in search of Israeli citizens, although there are no reports of demonstrators finding any Israeli citizens.⁶ Demonstrators have chanted "death to Jews" and have also occasionally gotten physical with security personnel at the airport.⁷ Russian National Guard (Rosgvardia) elements have removed demonstrators from the premises of the airport, but crowds are still present outside of the airport.⁸ The Telegram channel that spread the rumors is currently down, which may be the first indicator that Russian authorities are actively trying to suppress the continuation of the antisemitic demonstrations.

The Kremlin has yet to respond and appears to have left regional authorities to make an official response to the demonstrations. Dagestani Republic Head Sergei Melikov, Karachay Cherkess Republic



Head Rashid Temrezov, and Kabardino-Balkarian Republic Head Kazbek Kokov called on residents of the North Caucasus earlier on October 29 to refrain from aggressive actions and to suppress attempts to incite interethnic hatred.⁹ The Coordination Center for Muslims of the North Caucasus specifically denounced antisemitic actions following the initial demonstrations on the evening of October 28.¹⁰ Dagestani Minister of National Policy Enrik Muslimov and Minister of Youth Kamil Saidov later arrived at the airport on October 29 to speak with demonstrators but appeared unable to dissuade them from breaking into the premises.¹¹ Melikov later called the demonstration a violation of the law and the Main Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) of the North Caucasus Federal District warned about the illegality of holding demonstrations without prior government approval.¹²

The Kremlin will likely struggle to reassure constituencies that the situation is under control and convince Jewish audiences that Jewish minorities are safe in Russia despite its efforts to present Russia as a religiously tolerant country. Spokesperson for Russia’s Chief Rabbinate in Dagestan Ovadya Isakov stated on October 29 that hundreds of Jewish families in Dagestan should leave Dagestan and Russia altogether because “Russia is not salvation” as “there were pogroms in Russia too.”¹³ Russian President Vladimir Putin lauded Russia as a beacon of religious harmony at a meeting with leaders of several Russian religious organizations, including Jewish and Islamic faith leaders, on October 25.¹⁴ The Kremlin likely aims to present Russia as protecting its religious minorities to curry favor with Muslim and Jewish audiences against the backdrop of the Israeli-Hamas war and to downplay tensions caused by the increasingly ultranationalist Russian Orthodox Church.¹⁵

Russian ultranationalists expressed concerns that antisemitic demonstrations will spread from Dagestan and the North Caucasus to elsewhere in Russia. Select Russian ultranationalists blamed the initial rumors on a Ukrainian information operation, but others expressed deep concerns that antisemitic activities may spread and that anti-Russian activities could begin.¹⁶ One Russian milblogger rhetorically asked if there would be “pogroms” in Moscow and claimed that the demonstrations may lead to a situation reminiscent of the murders of ethnic Russians in Tajikistan and the Republic of Chechnya in the 1990s.¹⁷ Russian ultranationalists may also begin to heavily criticize Russian authorities’ response to the demonstrations, as several Russian sources bemoaned what they described as a lax official response so far.¹⁸

Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) Head Alexander Bortnikov and Russian Investigative Committee Head Alexander Bastrykin may be attempting to capitalize on heightened ethnoreligious tensions in Russia to regain favor with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Russian milbloggers observed that Russian officials failed to implement Putin’s 2012 policies incentivizing migration to Russia to fix Russia’s demographic issues.¹⁹ The milbloggers complained that Putin’s policies, while well intended and correct, failed to increase the birth rates or reduce mortality rates to necessary levels and failed to properly integrate the migrants into Russian society and identity.²⁰ The milbloggers claimed that these policies will not change as long as older politicians from Putin’s generation remain in power. One milblogger explicitly named Bortnikov and Bastrykin as “trusted people” who must “fly into [Putin’s] orbit and personally convince him of the need to change [Russia’s] migration policy.”²¹ This mention of Bortnikov and Bastrykin implies that they have fallen from Putin’s favor and portrays them as the people whom Putin needs to solve Russia’s recent ethnoreligious tensions involving Central Asian migrants. The Kremlin is typically slow to respond to events highlighting ethnoreligious tensions, including recent complaints of migrants attacking Russian children, often unintentionally fueling a cycle involving Russian ultranationalist anger at the Russian government for inaction



that further exacerbates ethnoreligious tensions.²² Bortnikov and Bastrykin may seek to portray themselves via the Russian information space as capable of breaking this cycle.²³

Russian milbloggers claimed on October 29 that Airborne Forces (VDV) Commander Colonel General Mikhail Teplinsky replaced Colonel General Oleg Makarevich as the commander of the Russian “Dnepr” Grouping of Forces operating in the Kherson direction. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) has not announced or confirmed reports of Makarevich’s dismissal at the time of this publication and is unlikely to do so given its tendency to regularly conceal high-profile military command changes.²⁴ One Russian blogger claimed that Russian President Vladimir Putin dismissed Makarevich during his recent visit to the Southern Military District (SMD) headquarters in Rostov-on-Don on October 19.²⁵ The blogger also claimed that Teplinsky was effectively demoted from his position as deputy overall theater commander, although it is unclear if Teplinsky still held this position.²⁶ A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that rumors about Makarevich’s dismissal emerged over the last week and that his removal was “long overdue” due to his handling of the military situation in the Kherson direction.²⁷ The milblogger added that Deputy Chief of the Russian General Staff Colonel General Alexei Kim effectively commands the entire Joint Grouping of Russian Forces in Ukraine.²⁸ ISW cannot independently verify these claims.

Makarevich’s reported dismissal indicates that the Kremlin or the Russian military command may be sufficiently worried and skeptical of his ability to repel recent larger-than-usual Ukrainian ground operations in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast. The Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that a small Ukrainian “bridgehead” in Krynky (a settlement on east bank Kherson Oblast) likely triggered Makarevich’s removal.²⁹ Other Russian milbloggers reiterated similar theories, claiming that Makarevich’s negligence and extreme lack of command initiative enabled repeated Ukrainian landings on east bank Kherson Oblast.³⁰ One milblogger claimed that Ukrainian “bridgeheads” on east bank Kherson Oblast are setting a dangerous precedent and that Russian forces under Makarevich’s command were unable to adequately counter and respond to Ukrainian threats.³¹

Makarevich’s opponents, alternatively, may have been successful in convincing Russian President Vladimir Putin of Makarevich’s failure to command the Kherson direction against the backdrop of intensified Ukrainian ground attacks. A select group of Russian milbloggers previously accused Makarevich of failing to adequately command and equip Russian forces to respond to Ukrainian raids on east bank Kherson Oblast in summer 2023.³² Some of these milbloggers notably praised Teplinsky and criticized Makarevich after he reportedly replaced Teplinsky as the VDV commander in winter 2023.³³ A Wagner Group-affiliated milblogger claimed that Makarevich was removed from his position after unspecified intelligence officials notified the Russian “high command” - possibly implying Putin - about Makarevich’s failure to provide accurate information about the situation in the area of his responsibility.³⁴ One Russian blogger also claimed that Russian milbloggers who have been fighting for Makarevich’s removal should rejoice.³⁵

Ukrainian forces advanced near Bakhmut amid continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 29. Geolocated footage published on October 29 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced over the railway line south of Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).³⁶ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued assault operations south of Bakhmut and continued offensive operations in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhia Oblast) direction.³⁷ A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces established control over unspecified positions in the Zaporizhia direction (western Zaporizhia Oblast) over the past week.³⁸



The *New York Times* (NYT) reported that US officials will send Ukraine hybrid air defense systems in fall 2023.³⁹ The NYT cited US officials talking about the so-called FrankenSAM systems that merge advanced Western air defense missiles with modified Soviet launchers or other missile launchers that Ukraine already possesses.⁴⁰ The FrankenSAM combinations include modified Soviet Buk launchers and American Sea Sparrow missiles, Soviet-era radars and American Sidewinder missiles, and Cold War-era Hawk systems.⁴¹ The NYT reported that the US is testing a FrankenSAM combination of a Patriot missile and a Ukrainian domestically produced radar system.⁴² US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia, Ukraine and Eurasia Policy Laura Cooper stated that the FrankenSAMs contribute to filling critical gaps in Ukrainian air defenses.⁴³

Unspecified actors may have purposefully conspired to shut down a prominent Russian Airborne Forces (VDV)-affiliated milblogger. A Russian VDV-affiliated milblogger announced on October 28 that he was forced to shut down his Telegram channel, implying that unspecified actors abducted the raccoon that the milblogger had been using as a mascot to help gain notoriety and fundraise for Russian forces.⁴⁴ The milblogger claimed that the channel generated over 20 million rubles (\$212,000) for Russian forces within a year.⁴⁵ The raccoon gained fame when Russian forces stole it from a zoo when withdrawing from west (right) bank Kherson Oblast in November 2022.⁴⁶ The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) has increasingly targeted Russian milbloggers in censorship and self-censorship campaigns, and it is possible that MoD-affiliated actors aimed to censor this milblogger.⁴⁷ The milblogger claimed that “traitors” abducted the raccoon and left occupied Ukraine and suggested that the milblogger may have personally known who took the animal, however.⁴⁸ Ukrainian Kherson Oblast Military Administration Advisor Serhiy Khlan stated that the raccoon had previously attacked Kherson Oblast occupation head Vladimir Saldo and criticized the Russians for losing the raccoon.⁴⁹ ISW is unable independently to confirm reports of the raccoon’s whereabouts or actions.

The Russian information space continues to debate the future of the Wagner Group’s remaining personnel. Wagner-affiliated Russian milbloggers claimed on October 28 that the Wagner Group is officially a detachment of Rosgvardia and will retain its structures and commanders.⁵⁰ The milbloggers claimed that Rosgvardia is encouraging active and reserve Wagner personnel to sign contracts with Rosgvardia, including six-month contracts for service in Ukraine or nine-month contracts for service in Belarus, the Middle East, Africa, or Latin America. A smaller group of Wagner-affiliated Russian milbloggers denied recent reports that large groups of former Wagner personnel are joining Chechen “Akhmat” Spetsnaz units in Russia or the Russian Ministry of Defense’s (MoD’s) Expeditionary Force in Syria.⁵¹ Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov posted footage on October 29 claiming to show “Akhmat” Commander Apty Alaudinov and Russian State Duma Deputy Nikolai Brykin welcoming 170 former Wagner fighters to “Akhmat” units.⁵²

Key Takeaways:

- **Ongoing antisemitic demonstrations in the Republic of Dagestan and elsewhere in the North Caucasus are highlighting heightened interethnic and interreligious tensions in Russia.**
- **The Kremlin has yet to respond and appears to have left regional authorities to make an official response to the demonstrations.**
- **The Kremlin will likely struggle to reassure constituencies that the situation is under control and convince Jewish audiences that Jewish minorities are safe in Russia despite its efforts to present Russia as a religiously tolerant country.**



- Russian ultranationalists expressed concerns that antisemitic demonstrations will spread from Dagestan and the North Caucasus elsewhere in Russia.
- Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) Head Alexander Bortnikov and Russian Investigative Committee Head Alexander Bastrykin may be attempting to capitalize on heightened ethnoreligious tensions in Russia to regain favor with Russian President Vladimir Putin.
- Russian milbloggers claimed on October 29 that Airborne Forces (VDV) Commander Colonel General Mikhail Teplinsky replaced Colonel General Oleg Makarevich as the commander of the Russian “Dnepr” Grouping of Forces operating in the Kherson direction.
- Ukrainian forces advanced near Bakhmut amid continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 29.
- The *New York Times* (NYT) reported that US officials will send Ukraine hybrid air defense systems in fall 2023.
- Unspecified actors may have purposefully conspired to shut down a prominent Russian Airborne Forces (VDV)-affiliated milblogger.
- The Russian information space continues to debate the future of the Wagner Group’s remaining personnel.
- Russian forces continued offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove line, near Bakhmut, near Avdivvka, west and southwest of Donetsk City, in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and advanced west of Donetsk City.
- Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces have begun deploying a new electronic warfare (EW) data station system in Ukraine.
- Russian military personnel continue to commit violent crimes in occupied Ukraine.

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 Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas
- Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine



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

Russian forces continued offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove line on October 29 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled more than seven Russian assaults near Synkivka (9km northeast of Kupyansk) and Ivanivka (21km southeast of Kupyansk).⁵³ Ukrainian Ground Forces Command Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Volodymyr Fityo stated that Ukrainian forces also repelled assaults near Petropavlivka (7km east of Kupyansk) over the past day.⁵⁴ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces did not conduct offensive actions in the Lyman direction and continued regrouping in the area.⁵⁵ A Russian media aggregator claimed that Russian forces advanced near Makiivka (21km southwest of Svatove) on October 28, although ISW has not observed confirmation of this claim.⁵⁶ A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces made tactical gains near Stepova Novosilka (18km southeast of Kupyansk) and small gains near Dibrova (7km southwest of Kreminna) in the past week.⁵⁷

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful ground attacks along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on October 29. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that elements of the Russian Western Grouping of Forces repelled two Ukrainian assaults near Synkivka and Nadiya (14km southwest of Svatove) and that elements of the Russian Central Grouping of Forces repelled five Ukrainian assaults near Yampolivka (17km west of Kreminna) and Dibrova.⁵⁸ A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also repelled a Ukrainian assault near Hryhorivka (11km south of Kreminna).⁵⁹

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

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and made confirmed advances on October 29. Geolocated footage published on October 29 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced east of the railway line south of Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).⁶⁰ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued assaults south of Bakhmut.⁶¹ The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks in the Donetsk direction, which includes the Bakhmut area and the Avdiivka-Donetsk City area.⁶² A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut), attempting to cross the railway line near the settlement.⁶³

Russian forces attacked near Bakhmut but did not make confirmed advances on October 29. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Khromove (immediately west of Bakhmut), Klishchiivka, and Andriivka.⁶⁴ A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attempted to regain lost positions near Klishchiivka and Andriivka and pushed Ukrainian forces from positions near the Berkhivka reservoir (about 2km northwest of Bakhmut) over the past week.⁶⁵ Another Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that there were positional battles south of Bakhmut.⁶⁶

Russian forces continued offensive operations near Avdiivka but did not make confirmed advances on October 29. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Keramik (10km northwest of Avdiivka), Stepove (8km northwest of Avdiivka), Novokalynove (7km north of Avdiivka), Avdiivka, Tonenke (5km west of Avdiivka), Opytne (3km southwest of Avdiivka), and Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka).⁶⁷ A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are preparing to attack the Avdiivka Coke Plant



immediately north of Avdiivka.⁶⁸ A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces consolidated positions at the Avdiivka waste heap on October 28 and are gradually advancing south of Avdiivka and near Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka).⁶⁹ Russian milbloggers claimed that elements of the Russian 1st Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] Army Corps) are operating in the Vodyane-Sieverne-Tonenke area (7km southwest to 5km west of Avdiivka) and recently advanced north from this area.⁷⁰ The milbloggers claimed that elements of the Russian 255th Motorized Rifle Regiment (20th Guards Motorized Rifle Division, 8th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) advanced 500 meters north of the N20-E50 highway junction (approximately 2km east of Avdiivka). The milbloggers noted that the Russian command recently transferred elements of the 2nd Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) Army Corps and the 41st CAA (Central Military District) to the Avdiivka direction to reinforce the 1st DNR Army Corps and 8th CAA elements.

Russian forces appear to have concentrated a sizable portion of their combat power around Avdiivka. Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun stated on October 29 that Russia currently has 40,000 personnel in the Avdiivka direction and is transferring additional manpower to the area.⁷¹ Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets estimated on October 28 that Russian forces have elements of 12 separate motorized rifle brigades, 16 separate rifle regiments of the mobilization reserve, 22 separate rifle battalions of the mobilization reserve, 11 separate tank battalions, a separate motorized rifle battalion, and three consolidated tactical detachments at the battalion level including BARS (Russian Combat Army Reserve) and Storm Z units operating in the Avdiivka direction, theoretically totaling well over 40,000 Russian personnel.⁷² ISW has routinely assessed that Russian military units are likely generally undermanned and may be battalions, brigades, or regiments in name only with smaller personnel complements than their echelon designations would suggest.⁷³ Mashovets added that Russian forces likely have three motorized rifle regiments, seven reserve motorized rifle battalions, and two BARS units in reserve in this direction.⁷⁴

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Avdiivka on October 29 but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near the Avdiivka waste heap but do not control the waste heap.⁷⁵ A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Spartak (4km south of Avdiivka) over the past week.⁷⁶

Russian forces attacked west and southwest of Donetsk City and made a confirmed advance on October 29. Geolocated footage published on October 29 indicated that Russian forces advanced south of Krasnohorivka (directly west of Donetsk City).⁷⁷ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Marinka (directly west of Donetsk City) and Novomykhailivka (20km southwest of Donetsk City).⁷⁸ A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces achieved unspecified success near Novomykhailivka on October 28.⁷⁹ A Russian milblogger amplified footage on October 29 of elements of the Russian 33rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (20th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA, SMD) operating near Marinka.⁸⁰

Ukrainian forces did not conduct any claimed or confirmed attacks west or southwest of Donetsk City on October 29.

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

Ukrainian forces reportedly conducted limited ground attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 29 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that



Ukrainian forces attacked near Urozhaine and Staromayorske (both about 9km south of Velyka Novosilka).⁸¹ The Russian "Vostok" Battalion claimed that Ukrainian forces intensely shelled Russian positions in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area overnight on October 28-29.⁸²

Russian forces continued to counterattack in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 29 but did not advance. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults near Staromayorske and Zolota Nyva (11km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).⁸³ Russian sources claimed that Russian forces attacked near Staromayorske and west of Novodonetske (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).⁸⁴

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast but did not make any confirmed advances on October 29.⁸⁵ A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces managed to establish stable control over some unspecified Russian positions in the Zaporizhia direction and tried to expand offensive operations closer to Nesteryanka (12km northwest of Robotyne), Kopani (6km northwest of Robotyne), and in the direction of Novofedorivka (15km northeast of Robotyne) in the past week.⁸⁶ The milblogger added that Ukrainian forces also tried to advance towards Novoprokopivka (just south of Robotyne) and Verbove (9km east of Robotyne).⁸⁷ Another prominent Russian milblogger claimed that the intensity of hostilities in the Zaporizhia direction decreased but that Ukrainian forces continue efforts to break through Russian defenses on the Kopani-Robotyne line.⁸⁸ Russian milbloggers also claimed that Ukrainian forces continued to strike Russian-occupied Tokmak (43km northeast of Melitopol), Vasylivka (60km north of Melitopol), and an unspecified highway.⁸⁹

Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked Ukrainian positions in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 29. A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces counterattacked near Robotyne.⁹⁰ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks on Robotyne and west of Verbove.⁹¹

Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces maintain positions on east (left) bank Kherson Oblast and continued cross-river raids on October 29. A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully tried to advance towards Pishchanivka (14km east of Kherson City and 3km from the Dnipro River coast) and maintained a small "bridgehead" near Krynky (30km northeast of Kherson City and 2km from the Dnipro River coast).⁹² A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces do not have a stable "bridgehead," however.⁹³ The milblogger added that Russian forces intercepted a Ukrainian landing in the Dachi area (10km southwest of Kherson City). Another Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are crossing the Dnipro River in groups of 50 to 70 people in three directions.⁹⁴ Russian sources also indicated that Ukrainian forces continue to operate along the small railway bridge on the east bank of the Dnipro River.⁹⁵

Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Captain First Rank Nataliya Humenyuk reported that Russian forces used 30 KAB guided bombs to strike west (right) bank Kherson Oblast.⁹⁶

The Russian MoD claimed that Russian air defenses shot down 36 drones over the Black Sea and northwestern Crimea overnight on October 28 to 29.⁹⁷

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

Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces have begun deploying a new electronic warfare (EW) data station system in Ukraine. Russian milbloggers claimed that an unspecified French intelligence report reported



that Russian forces began the large-scale deployment of the “Bylina” EW data station system that can reportedly coordinate the operations of dozens of systems, though ISW is unable to confirm these claims.⁹⁸ A Russian milblogger claimed that the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD)’s deployment of the “Bylina” system solved a major Russian battlefield issue, but another prominent Russian milblogger criticized the first milblogger for falsely claiming to be an expert in EW capabilities.⁹⁹

A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that the Russian MoD will begin transferring Russian military personnel to the newly-recreated Leningrad and Moscow military districts in the first quarter of 2024.¹⁰⁰ The milblogger claimed that the Russian military command will begin the process of transferring units from the Northern Fleet (which is dissolving) to the new military districts on December 1, 2023. The milblogger claimed that the Northern Fleet’s ground units will become subordinate to the Leningrad Military District while the fleet’s naval assets will be subordinated directly to the Russian Naval Command and its air defense assets will be subordinated to its own command.¹⁰¹ The milblogger claimed that Russian President Vladimir Putin wants young generals who participated in the war in Ukraine to command these new military districts and assessed that Western Military District Commander Colonel General Yevgeny Nikiforov will likely become commander of the Moscow Military District.¹⁰² The milblogger also assessed that former Eastern Military District Commander Lieutenant General Alexander Chaiko or former overall commander of Russian forces in Ukraine and former Southern Military District Commander Army General Alexander Dvornikov are unlikely to take command of the new military districts.¹⁰³

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 military personnel continue to commit violent crimes in occupied Ukraine. The Russian Investigative Committee announced on October 28 that the Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) is investigating the murders of nine civilians in occupied Volnovakha, Donetsk Oblast.¹⁰⁴ Russian opposition outlets reported that the nine civilians are all members of a single family and that locals reported that a Russian soldier who had previously argued with the homeowner committed the murders.¹⁰⁵

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Nothing significant to report.

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)

Belarusian Defense Minister Lieutenant General Viktor Khrenin met with Chinese Deputy Chairman of the Central Commission Colonel General Zhang Youxia in Beijing on October 29.¹⁰⁶ Khrenin and Zhang discussed the development of bilateral military-technical cooperation and the joint training of Belarusian and Chinese servicemen.¹⁰⁷ Belarusian officials likely continue to work with Chinese officials to facilitate Russian sanctions evasion schemes by funneling Chinese aid and critical components to Russia through Belarus.¹⁰⁸



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

¹ <https://t.me/sotaproject/68586> ; <https://t.me/sotaproject/68583> ; <https://t.me/bazabazon/22567> ; <https://t.me/astrapress/41320> ; <https://t.me/astrapress/41313> ; <https://t.me/bazabazon/22572> ; https://t.me/utro_dagestan/15049 ; https://t.me/utro_dagestan/15038 ; https://t.me/utro_dagestan/15042 ; https://t.me/utro_dagestan/15035 ; https://t.me/utro_dagestan/15030 ; https://t.me/utro_dagestan/15036 ; https://t.me/utro_dagestan/15027 ; https://t.me/utro_dagestan/15028 ; https://t.me/utro_dagestan/15029 ; https://t.me/utro_dagestan/14995

² <https://meduza dot io/feature/2023/10/29/na-severnom-kavkaze-proshla-seriya-antisemitskih-aktsiy> ; <https://t.me/readovkanews/68521>

³ <https://t.me/readovkanews/68537> ; <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/51657> ; <https://t.me/astrapress/41297>

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⁵ https://t.me/utro_dagestan/15043 ; https://t.me/utro_dagestan/15038 ; https://t.me/utro_dagestan/15042 ; https://t.me/utro_dagestan/15037 ; https://t.me/utro_dagestan/15035

⁶ <https://t.me/sotaproject/68578> ; <https://t.me/bazabazon/22564>

⁷ <https://t.me/sotaproject/68578> ; <https://t.me/sotaproject/68580> ; <https://t.me/sotaproject/68576> ;

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<https://t.me/astrapress/41320> ; <https://t.me/astrapress/41313> ; <https://t.me/bazabazon/22570>

⁸ <https://t.me/vchkogpu/43296> ; <https://tass dot ru/proisshestviya/19148335>

⁹ <https://tass dot ru/politika/19146963>

¹⁰ <https://www.kavkaz-uzel dot eu/articles/393853>

¹¹ <https://t.me/bazabazon/22570> ;

¹² <https://tass dot ru/obschestvo/19148159> ; <https://tass dot ru/proisshestviya/19148525>

¹³ https://t.me/novaya_europe/25698

¹⁴ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-26-2023>

¹⁵ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-26-2023>

¹⁶ <https://t.me/readovkanews/68521> ; <https://t.me/rybar/53725> ; <https://t.me/warfakes/18402> ;

<https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonov/30466> ; <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/51655> ;

<https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/51648> ; <https://t.me/rybar/53730>

¹⁷ <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/51648> ; <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/51655>

¹⁸ <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/51648> ; <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/51657> ; <https://t.me/bazabazon/22564>

¹⁹ <https://t.me/zhivoff22/12261> ; https://t.me/dva_majors/28188 ; <https://t.me/playcivilization/1140>

²⁰ <https://t.me/zhivoff22/12261> ; https://t.me/dva_majors/28188 ; <https://t.me/playcivilization/1140>

²¹ https://t.me/dva_majors/28188

²² <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-27-2023>

²³ https://t.me/dva_majors/28188

²⁴ <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-april-30-2023>

²⁵ <https://t.me/rusbrief/169267>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-20-2023>

²⁶ <https://t.me/rusbrief/169267>

²⁷ https://t.me/grey_zone/21513

²⁸ <https://t.me/rybar/53728>

²⁹ <https://t.me/rybar/53728>

³⁰ <https://t.me/milinfo/109579>; <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/55755>

³¹ <https://t.me/milinfo/109579>

³²

<https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/June%2030%20Russian%20Offensive%20Campaign%20Assessment%20PDF.pdf>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-29-2023>

³³ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-29-2023>;

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³⁴ https://t.me/grey_zone/21513

³⁵ <https://t.me/rusbrief/169267>

³⁶ <https://x.com/moklasen/status/1718630931349586004?s=20> ; https://t.me/kollegi_po_biznesy/18

³⁷

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³⁸ <https://t.me/wargonzo/16103>

³⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/28/us/politics/air-defense-ukraine-frankensam.html> ;

<https://suspilne.media/604785-new-york-times-ukraina-ta-spoluceni-stati-stvorili-gibridni-sistemi-ppo/> ;

<https://web.archive.org/web/20231029162325/https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/28/us/politics/air-defense-ukraine-frankensam.html>

⁴⁰ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/28/us/politics/air-defense-ukraine-frankensam.html> ;

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⁴¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/28/us/politics/air-defense-ukraine-frankensam.html> ;

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⁴² <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/28/us/politics/air-defense-ukraine-frankensam.html> ;

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⁴³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/28/us/politics/air-defense-ukraine-frankensam.html> ;

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⁴⁴ <https://t.me/HersonEnot/1940>

⁴⁵ <https://t.me/HersonEnot/1940>

⁴⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHntEfzBp9o>

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<https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Oct%2012%20Russian%20Offensive%20Campaign%20Assessment%20PDF.docx> 0.pdf; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-september-29-2023>

⁴⁸ <https://t.me/HersonEnot/1948>; https://t.me/dva_majors/28173; <https://t.me/HersonEnot/1940>

⁴⁹

<https://www.facebook.com/sergey.khlan/posts/pfbid0foX7zoDFNz2m5QRP5n1ZidgPjgXG57ZDxiaGuRvZp6gKiILCvxfGwtf7TpvD8RKRI>

⁵⁰ https://t.me/otechestvo_BY/50 ; https://t.me/belarusian_silovik/24851 ;

<https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonoV/30435> ; https://t.me/prigozhin_2023_tg/4444 ;

https://t.me/grey_zone/21505

⁵¹ https://t.me/Separ13_13/21026 ; https://t.me/prigozhin_2023_tg/4435 ;

https://t.me/grey_zone/21504

⁵² https://t.me/RKadyrov_95/4061

⁵³

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⁵⁴ <https://suspilne dot media/604941-na-shidnij-dilanci-frontu-vidbulos-21-boezitknenna-fito/> ;

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⁵⁶ <https://t.me/readovkanews/68524>

⁵⁷ <https://t.me/wargonzo/16103>

⁵⁸ https://t.me/mod_russia/31924 ;

⁵⁹ https://t.me/russian_airborne/2386

⁶⁰ <https://x.com/moklasen/status/1718630931349586004?s=20> ; https://t.me/kollegi_po_biznesy/18

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⁶² https://t.me/mod_russia/31923

⁶³ <https://t.me/rybar/53724>

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<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid036aUAKmZuMGS7tVKK5iWgEcqxGyFiAQH1GMTTAqWC6ePTVpYvtCUdAjBw6xEgYgNl>;

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⁶⁵ <https://t.me/wargonzo/16103>

⁶⁶ <https://t.me/rybar/53724>

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<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid036aUAKmZuMGS7tVKK5iWgEcqxGyFiAQH1GMTTAqWC6ePTVpYvtCUdAjBw6xEgYgNl>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02MASvi8YxBF1hpwnHamkK83RDR68egJ6oc65PWM9LH2xU3nhcPJ94AxfnXTHdXUYRI> ;

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⁶⁸ <https://t.me/DnevnikDesantnika/4350>

⁶⁹ <https://t.me/readovkanews/68524>

⁷⁰ <https://t.me/beardtim/13940> ; <https://t.me/rsotmdivision/11666>

⁷¹ https://armyinform.com_dot_ua/2023/10/29/yakshho-govoryty-pro-killist-vtrat-to-avdiyivka-najbilshaporazka-rosiyan-oleksandr-shtupun/ ; https://armyinform.com_dot_com.ua/2023/10/29/na-avdiyivskomunapryamku-zaraz-okupanty-mayut-do-40-tysyach-osib-oleksandr-shtupun/

⁷² <https://t.me/zvizdecmanhustu/1355> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-28-2023>

⁷³ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-28-2023> ;

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⁷⁵ <https://t.me/DnevnikDesantnika/4350>

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⁷⁹ <https://t.me/readovkanews/68524>

⁸⁰ https://t.me/boris_rozhin/102265

⁸¹ https://t.me/mod_russia/31924

⁸² https://t.me/batalyon_vostok/235

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<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid036aUAKmZuMGS7tVKK5iWgEcqxGyFiAQH1GMTTAqWC6ePTVpYvtCUdAjBw6xEgYgNl>;

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⁸⁴ <https://t.me/wargonzo/16089>; https://t.me/vdv_ZA_teplinsky/240;

https://t.me/russian_airborne/2386; <https://t.me/readovkanews/68524>

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<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid036aUAKmZuMGS7tVKK5iWgEcqxGyFiAQH1GMTTAqWC6ePTVpYvtCUdAjBw6xEgYgNl>;

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⁸⁶ <https://t.me/wargonzo/16103>

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⁹² <https://t.me/rybar/53711>

⁹³ <https://t.me/wargonzo/16103>

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⁹⁵ https://t.me/romanov_92/41997 ; https://t.me/romanov_92/41999 ;

<https://x.com/JulianRoepcke/status/1718658652175773825?s=20>; <https://rg.dot.ru/2023/10/24/vs-rf-presekli-popytku-vsu-vysaditsia-v-rajone-zhd-mosta-v-hersonskoj-oblasti.html>

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⁹⁷ https://t.me/mod_russia/31915 ; <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/55730> ; <https://t.me/vrogov/12682>

⁹⁸ <https://t.me/infantmilitario/111466>

⁹⁹ https://t.me/Sladkov_plus/8965 ; https://t.me/Sladkov_plus/8966; https://t.me/dva_majors/28200

¹⁰⁰ <https://t.me/rybar/53720>

¹⁰¹ <https://t.me/rybar/53720>

¹⁰² <https://t.me/rybar/53720>

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¹⁰⁴ https://t.me/sledcom_press/9488



¹⁰⁵ <https://t.me/radiosvoboda/49925>; <https://t.me/severrealii/20982>

¹⁰⁶ <https://t.me/modmilby/33312> ; <https://t.me/modmilby/33311> ; <https://t.me/modmilby/33323> ;

<https://t.me/modmilby/33326> ; <https://t.me/modmilby/33335>

¹⁰⁷ <https://t.me/modmilby/33312> ; <https://t.me/modmilby/33311> ; <https://t.me/modmilby/33323> ;

<https://t.me/modmilby/33326> ; <https://t.me/modmilby/33335>

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-march-1-2023>

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 28, 2023

Angelica Evans, Kateryna Stepanenko, Christina Harward,
Grace Mappes, and Frederick W. Kagan

October 28, 2023, 7:50pm ET

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

Click [here](#) to 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 1:30pm ET on October 28. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 29 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Remnants of the Wagner Group appear to be fighting in the Avdiivka direction subordinate to Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) controlled formations. A Russian military correspondent published an interview on October 25 with the commander of the Russian “Arbat” Separate Guards Special Purpose Battalion that is serving the Avdiivka direction, who claimed that an element of the Arbat Battalion is almost entirely composed of former Wagner personnel.[1] The commander claimed that the Avdiivka direction is the Arbat Battalion’s “main direction” because the unit is part of the “Dikaya Division of Donbas” and the “Pyatnashka” Brigade — a Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) formation that is responsible for the defending Donetsk City.[2] The commander noted that the Wagner-staffed unit sends drone operators, electronic warfare (EW) specialists, and other fighters to other units in different frontline sectors as needed. The correspondent also indicated that the Arbat Battalion is part of the Russian Armed Forces, and it is likely that the brigade consists of former Wagner personnel who signed military contracts directly with the Russian MoD following Wagner financier Yevgeny Prigozhin’s rebellion and or his death.

A Ukrainian military observer also stated on October 25 that Wagner Group remnants are fighting near Avdiivka.[3] Ukrainian and Russian sources have previously stated that small groups of former Wagner personnel, possibly under Russian MoD-controlled formations, are deployed to the Bakhmut area.[4] It is too early to determine what role former Wagner personnel may play in Russian offensive operations against Avdiivka. The Arbat Battalion’s commander noted that the battalion’s situation on the front line is “good but not great” due to heavy personnel losses near Avdiivka.[5] Ukrainian military observers expressed concern about continued Russian operations in the Avdiivka direction, however.[6]

Commander of the “Akhmat” Spetsnaz forces Apty Alaudinov confirmed that Rosgvardia is recruiting former Wagner fighters into Chechen “Akhmat” Spetsnaz

units. Alaudinov stated in an interview published on October 28 that a “massive” number of Wagner soldiers have joined various detachments of the “Akhmat” forces and are operating in several unspecified sectors of the front in Ukraine.[7] Alaudinov claimed that former Wagner soldiers are following their former commanders to the “Akhmat” units. Alaudinov noted that Wagner fighters have “always spoken very respectfully about [‘Akhmat’],” likely in an attempt to stifle discussions of possible tension between the Wagner and Chechen forces after the feud between deceased Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin and Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov.[8] ISW continues to assess that former Wagner forces fragmented between the Russian MoD and Rosgvardia Chechen units across various sectors of the front are unlikely to reemerge as an effective military organization as they will lack the strength Wagner had drawn from being a unitary organization under clear and coherent leadership.[9] They may be tactical combat power multipliers for the units they embed with in some circumstances, however.

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 28. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations south of Bakhmut and in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhia Oblast) direction.[10] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked near Robotyne, Nesteryanka (12km northwest of Robotyne), Kopani (6km northwest of Robotyne), Rivne (8km west of Robotyne), Novoprokopivka (3km south of Robotyne), and Verbove (9km east of Robotyne).[11] A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed on October 27 that Ukrainian forces achieved “minor successes” during attacks near Robotyne.[12]

Russian forces conducted a series of missile strikes against Dnipropetrovsk Oblast on the night of October 27 to 28. Ukrainian military sources reported on October 28 that Ukrainian air defenses downed three of four Iskander-K cruise missiles that Russian forces launched from Crimea.[13] The fourth missile reportedly did not reach its target.[14] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces struck Ukrainian infrastructure in Kryvyi Rih and Dnipro City, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, and Izmail, Odesa Oblast.[15]

Russian forces are reportedly using a new version of the “Lancet” kamikaze drone that can autonomously identify targets. Russian sources claimed that Russian forces began using the new “Izdeliye-53” kamikaze drone as of October 21.[16] The sources claimed that the “Izdeliye-53” drone reportedly has an automatic guidance system that can distinguish types of targets and increase strike success rates.[17] Russian forces are reportedly not using the “Izdeliye-53” drones on a wide scale yet, but Russian sources claimed that Russian forces are currently testing the drones for mass synchronized swarm strikes.[18] ISW previously reported on October 24 that Russian forces also allegedly recently used the new “Italmas” (also known as “Izdeliye-54”) drones during a drone strike on Kyiv Oblast.[19] ISW also previously assessed that the Russian command may believe that a large number of strike drones will allow Russian forces to overwhelm Ukrainian air defenses, although the payload of the “Izdeliye-53” drones, which is reportedly between three and five kilograms, may not be sufficient to significantly damage most critical military targets.[20]

Russian authorities are capitalizing on domestic ethnic tensions by increasing public coercion of Central Asian migrants into Russian military service, likely to appeal to Russian ultranationalists ahead of Russian President Vladimir Putin’s expected presidential campaign announcement. The Moscow Investigative Committee announced on October 27 that it began 12 criminal investigations against naturalized migrants for evading military

service and claimed that this number rose on October 28 to 22 opened investigations with 80 migrants already sent to military service.[21] Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) and Rosgvardia agents detained 40 migrant taxi drivers during a raid at the Norilsk airport in Krasnoyarsk Krai on October 27 for allegedly failing to register with Russian military registration and enlistment offices.[22] These announcements are part of a series of recent measures and statements that highly publicize Russian intent and efforts to mobilize Central Asian migrants likely aimed to appeal to Russian President Vladimir Putin's ultranationalist constituency, which has long expressed hatred for Central Asian migrants and increasingly called for these migrants to serve in the Russian military.[23]

The Kremlin maintains a relatively measured stance on alleged migrant crimes against ethnic Russians, likely unintentionally establishing a cycle that keeps these ethnic tensions in frequent Russian ultranationalist dialogue. Russian ultranationalist milbloggers expressed anger on October 28 over criticisms of footage that shows a Russian man insulting migrant children while breaking up an alleged fight between 10 migrant children and an ethnic Russian child in Rostov-on-Don.[24] The milbloggers insulted the children and the wider migrant community, with some even claiming that the migrant children intended to kill the ethnic Russian child, but largely praised the Russian man for intervening.[25] The milbloggers claimed that such incidents are commonplace and that no one cares or steps in to mitigate the incidents.[26] Russian Investigative Committee Head Alexander Bastrykin announced an investigation into the Rostov-on-Don incident on October 27 as well as claims of separate incidents in Chelyabinsk Oblast on October 25 and Novosibirsk and Novgorod oblasts on October 28.[27]

Key Takeaways:

- **Remnants of the Wagner Group appear to be fighting in the Avdiivka direction subordinate to Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) controlled formations.**
- **Commander of the “Akhmat” Spetsnaz forces Apty Alaudinov confirmed that Rosgvardia is recruiting former Wagner fighters into Chechen “Akhmat” Spetsnaz units.**
- **Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 28.**
- **Russian forces conducted a series of missile strikes against Dnipropetrovsk Oblast on the night of October 27 to 28.**
- **Russian authorities are capitalizing on domestic ethnic tensions by increasing public coercion of Central Asian migrants into Russian military service, likely to appeal to Russian ultranationalists ahead of Russian President Vladimir Putin's expected presidential campaign announcement.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, near Avdiivka, west and southwest of Donetsk City, in western Donetsk Oblast, in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and advanced in some areas.**
- **A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that he personally heard Russian President Vladimir Putin express his decision to send Russian conscripts to serve in the Russian Border Service.**
- **Pro-Ukrainian actors reportedly conducted a cyber attack against Russian telecom operators in occupied Ukraine.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of October 28, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We will continue to evaluate and report on the effects of these criminal activities on the Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population and specifically on combat in Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn 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 Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas
- Russian Information Operations and Narratives

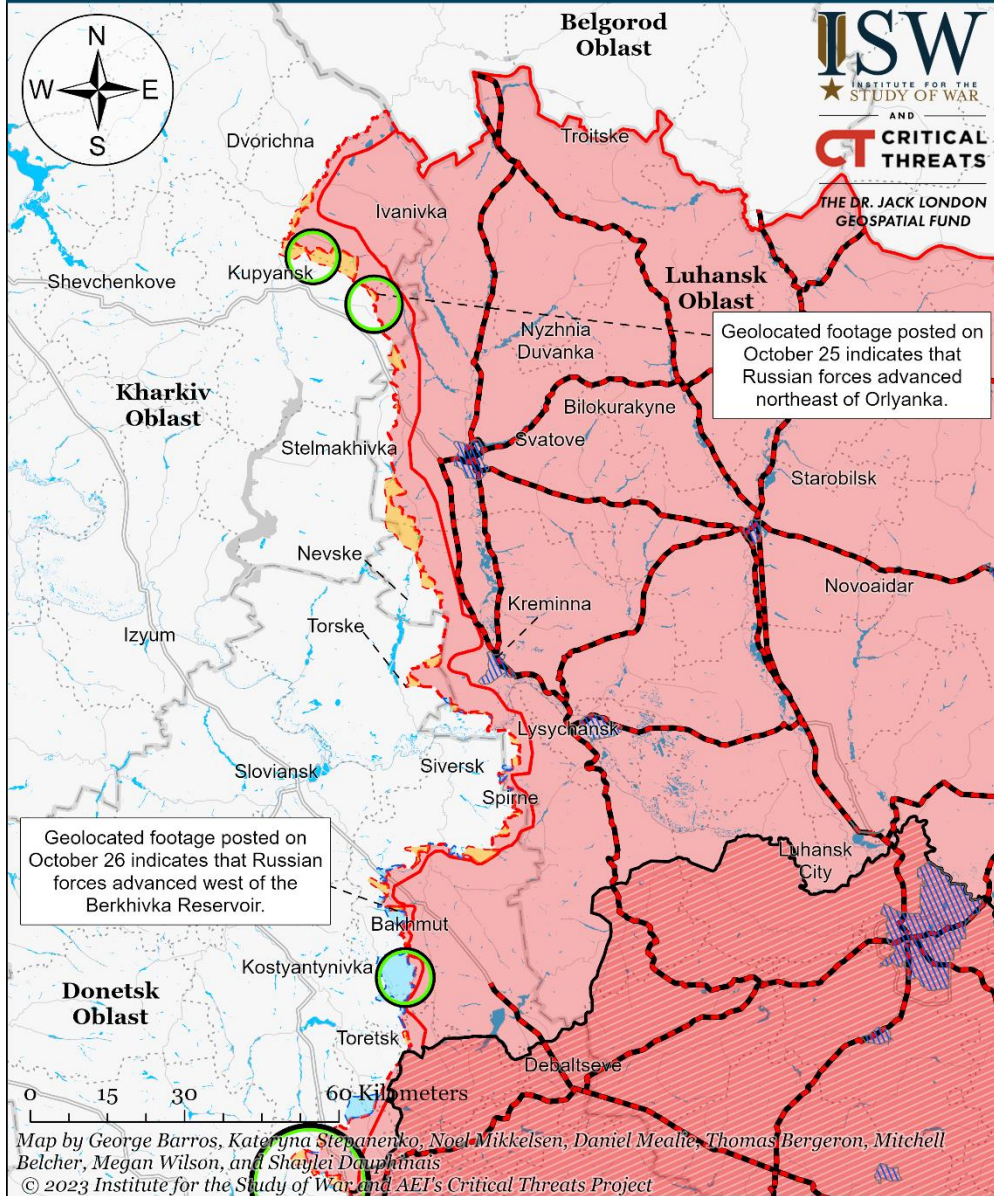
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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

Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line but did not make any confirmed advances on October 28. A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the Russian “White Wolves” Battalion successfully attacked near Kreminna.[28] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces advanced near Makiivka (22km northwest of Kreminna), and attacked near Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk) and Kyslivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk) on October 27.[29] The Ukrainian General Staff reported on October 28 that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Synkivka and Ivanivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk) and that Russian forces did not conduct offensive operations in the Lyman direction.[30] Ukrainian 15th Border Detachment Press Service Head Ivan Shevtsov stated that there are about 100,000 Russian soldiers in the Kupyansk and Lyman directions (likely implying both frontline and rear troops) and that inclement weather has recently affected the intensity of Russian operations in these directions.[31]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances on October 28. The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Synkivka, Nadiya (16km west of Svatove), Torske (15km west of Kreminna), Dibrova (7km southwest of Kreminna), and Hryhorivka (11km south of Kreminna).[32]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of October 28, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

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

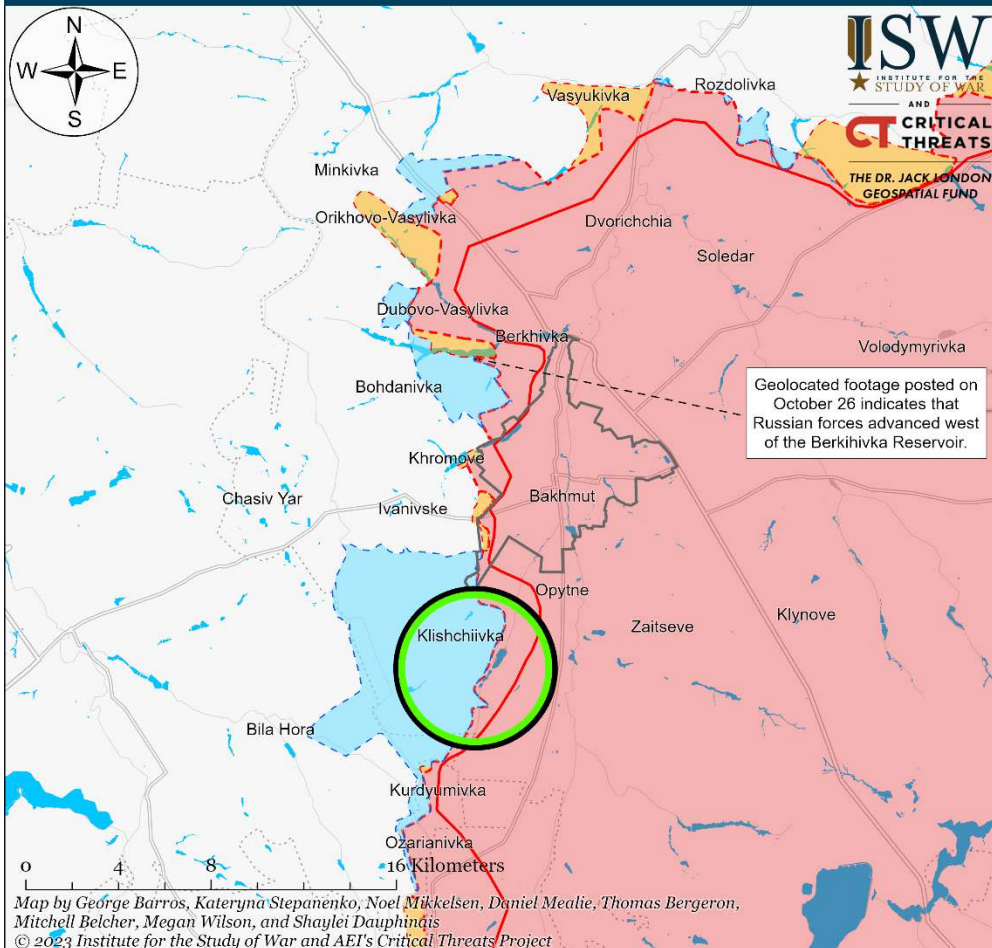
Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)

The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations south of Bakhmut on October 28.[33]

Ukrainian forces are reportedly complicating Russian artillery use on Bakhmut’s southern flank by effectively using drones. Ukrainian journalist Yuriy Butusov amplified a Russian video interview with a Russian tank company commander known under the alias “Tomsk” operating near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) who claimed that Ukrainian drone strikes are inhibiting Russian use of tanks during the day.[34] “Tomsk” added that Russian forces shell Ukrainian positions during the night to avoid Ukrainian drones, which he claimed are unable to operate at night. Butusov interpreted “Tomsk’s” statements as an indication that Russian artillery is operating far from the frontline to avoid Ukrainian kamikaze drones, which impedes Russian forces’ ability to carry out direct fire.

Russian forces continued to counterattack Ukrainian positions north and south of Bakhmut on October 28 but did not make any claimed or confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults near Klishchiivka and Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).[35] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces attacked Ukrainian forces near Dubovo-Vasylivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut), Khromove (immediately west of Bakhmut), Klishchiivka, and Andriivka on October 27.[36]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of October 28, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Megan Wilson, and Shaylei Dauphinais
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Bakhmut City Limits	Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory	Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*	Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory	Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

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

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

Russian forces continued offensive operations near Avdiivka on October 28 but did not make any confirmed territorial gains. A Russian news aggregator also claimed that Russian forces advanced near Novokalynove (7km north of Avdiivka) on October 27.[37] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed on October 28 that Russian forces advanced near Stepove (8km northwest of Avdiivka) and attacked near Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka) and on the southern approaches to Avdiivka.[38] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are fighting and shifting their attacks towards the Avdiivka Coke Plant just south of Stepove, control the waste heap near the Avdiivka Coke Plant, and are involved in fierce battles along the railway southeast of Stepove and northwest of the waste heap.[39] Butusov stated on October 26 that Russian forces have advanced

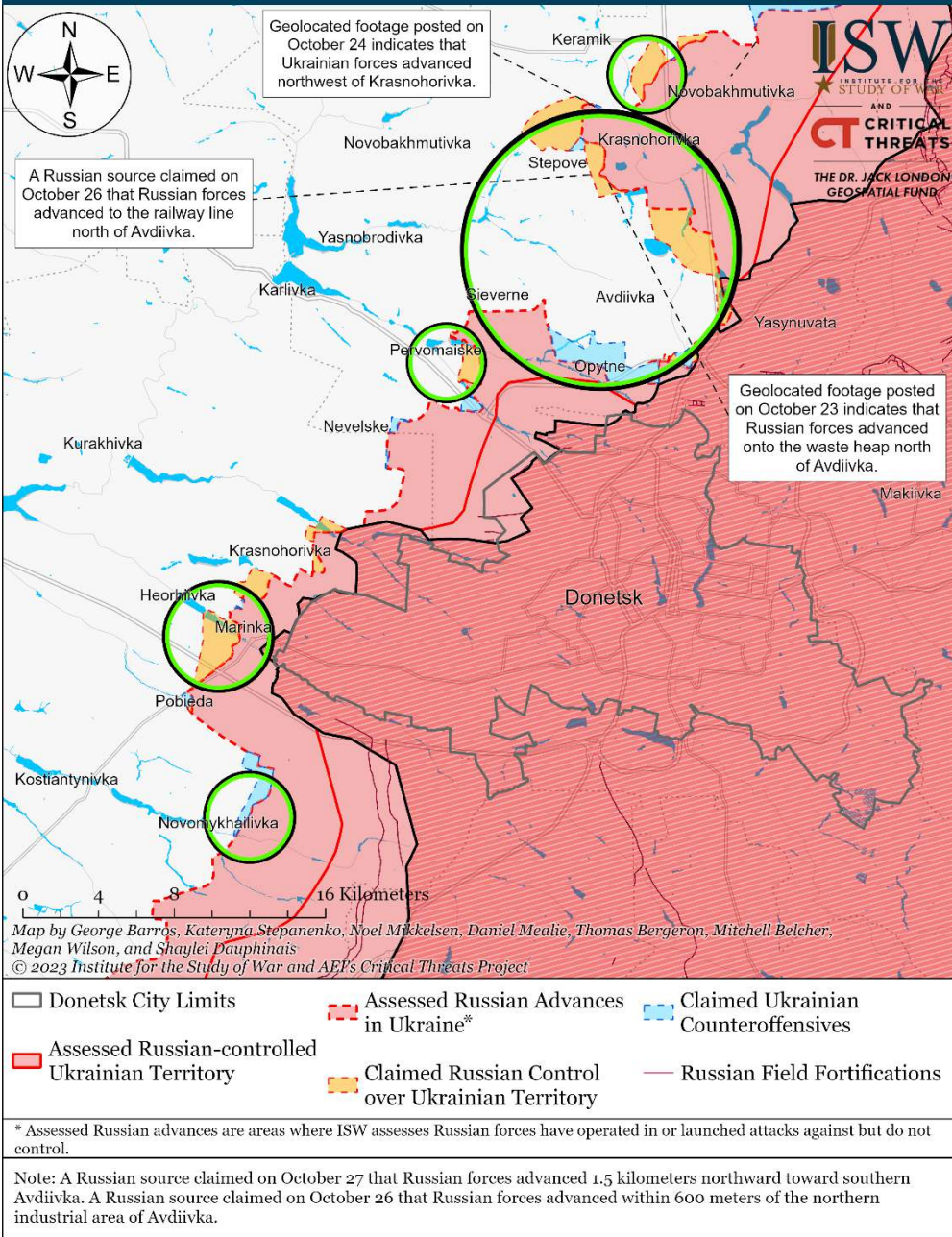
within 600 meters of the northern industrial area of Avdiivka in hopes of using the industrial area to enter the city itself.[40] A Russian source published footage on October 28 of Russian forces conducting airstrikes against Ukrainian positions at the Avdiivka Coke Plant.[41] The Ukrainian General Staff reported on October 28 that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults near Stepove, Avdiivka, Keramik (10km northwest of Avdiivka), Tonenke (5km west of Avdiivka), Opytne (3km southwest of Avdiivka), and Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka).[42]

The Russian military command appears to have committed most of the 8th Combined Arms Army (CAA) of the Southern Military District (SMD) and transferred elements of the Central Military District (CMD) for offensive operations in the Avdiivka area. Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets assessed that Russian command committed the main body of the 8th CAA, namely the elements of the Donetsk People's Republic's (DNR) 1st Army Corps, Luhansk People's Republic's (LNR) 2nd Army Corps, 20th Motorized Rifle Division, and the 150th Motorized Rifle Division.[43] Mashovets added that Russian forces also likely laterally redeployed elements of the 2nd CAA of the CMD from the Lyman direction to the Avdiivka direction, to which it has also committed at least elements of the 21st Separate Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade and 15th Separate Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade. Mashovets noted that Russian forces also redeployed elements of the 55th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st CAA, CMD) from the Kupyansk-Lyman line to positions near Vodyane (7km southwest of Avdiivka). Mashovets concluded that Russian forces in the Avdiivka direction have elements of 12 separate motorized rifle brigades, 16 separate rifle regiments of the mobilization reserve, 22 separate rifle battalions of the mobilization reserve, 11 separate tank battalions, a separate motorized rifle battalion, and three consolidated tactical detachments of the battalion level including BARS (Russian Combat Army Reserve) and Storm Z units. Mashovets added that Russian forces likely have three motorized rifle regiments, seven reserve motorized rifle battalions, and two BARS units available in reserve in the Avdiivka direction. ISW is unable to verify this reported order of battle independently. The UK Ministry of Defense (MoD), however, assessed only that Russian forces have committed elements of up to eight brigades to the Avdiivka frontline.[44] ISW has routinely assessed that Russian military units are likely generally undermanned and may be battalions, brigades, or regiments in name only with much smaller personnel complements than their echelon designations would suggest. The irregular DNR and LNR forces, which have been formally integrated into the Russian Armed Forces in 2023, may also lack conventional organizations and complements.

Western and Ukrainian sources continue to report that Russian forces are suffering significant casualties around Avdiivka. Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov told US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin that Russian losses in the Avdiivka area totaled around 4,000 servicemen in an unspecified timeframe likely in October 2023.[45] The UK MoD added that Russian forces have likely suffered some of Russia's highest casualty rates so far in 2023.[46] Ukrainian military observers, however, noted that Russian forces continue to attack and advance in the Avdiivka area despite these manpower losses.[47]

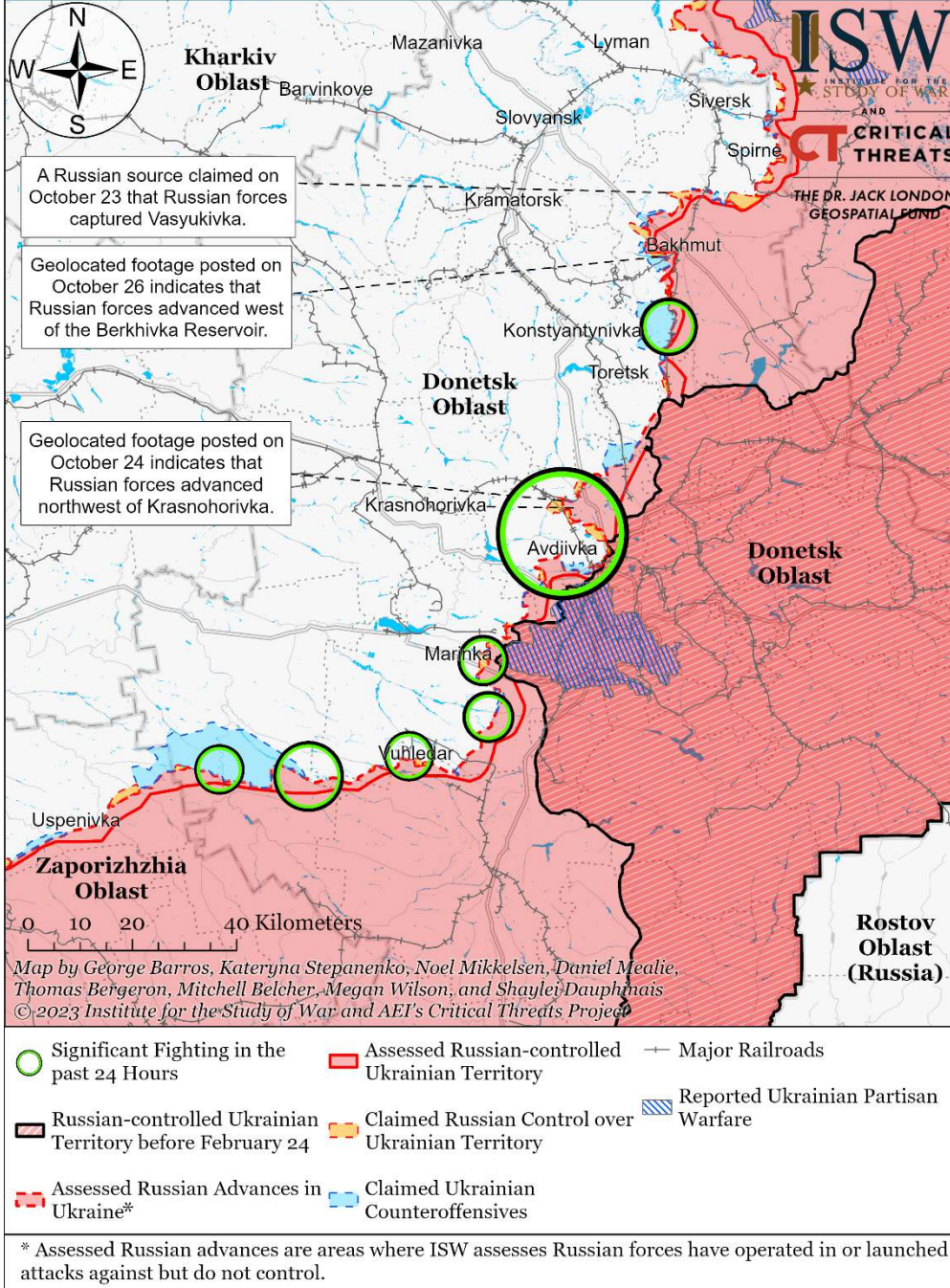
Russian forces continued localized attacks west and southwest of Donetsk City line but did not make confirmed advances on October 28. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults on Marinka (just west of Donetsk City) and Novomykhailivka (12km southwest of Avdiivka).[48] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced in a forest area near Novomykhailivka and attacked Ukrainian positions near Marinka and Krasnohorivka (3km north of Marinka).[49]

Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of October 28, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces launched limited ground attacks in western Donetsk Oblast on October 28 but did not advance. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults near Vodyane (6km northeast of Vuhledar).[50]

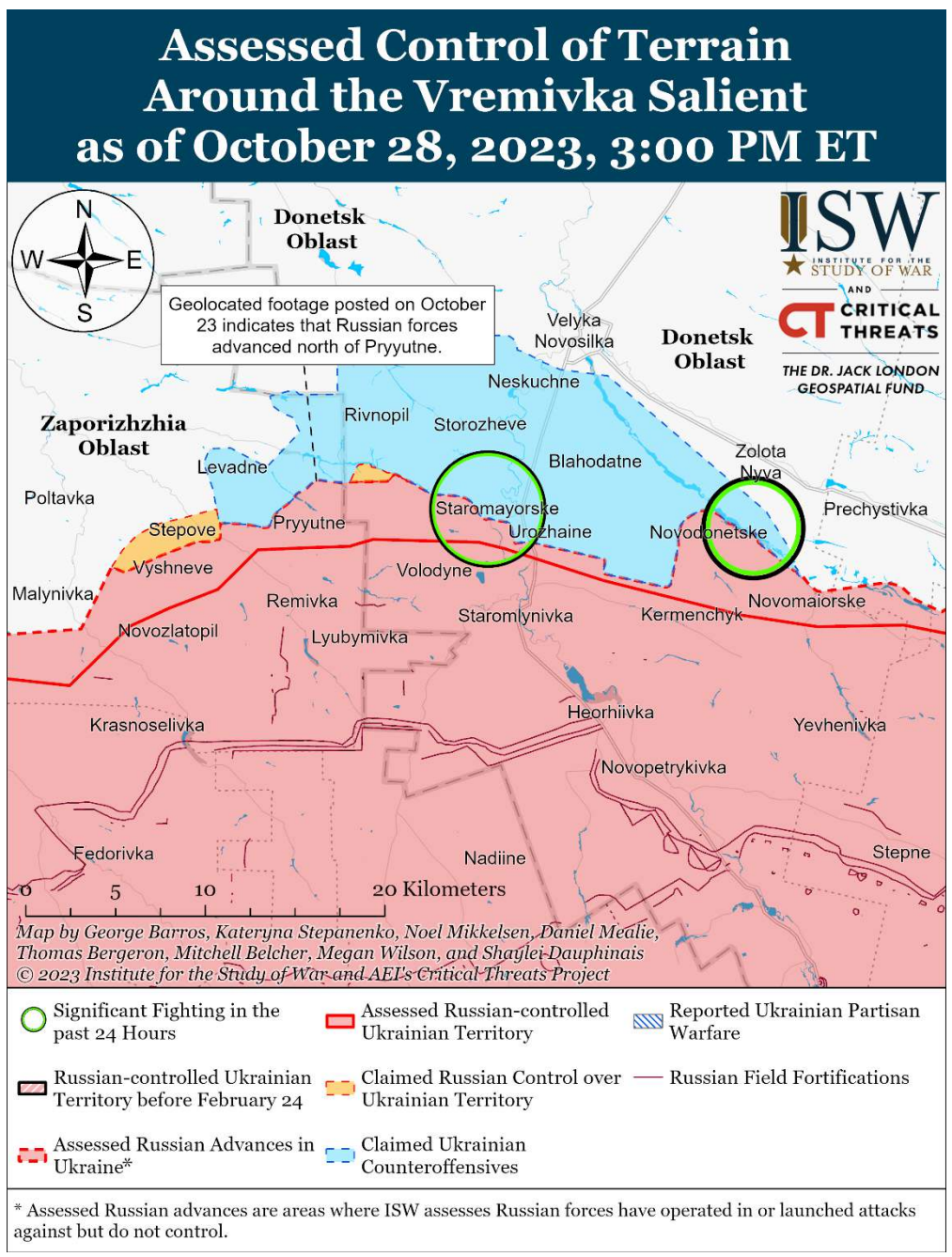
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of October 28, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

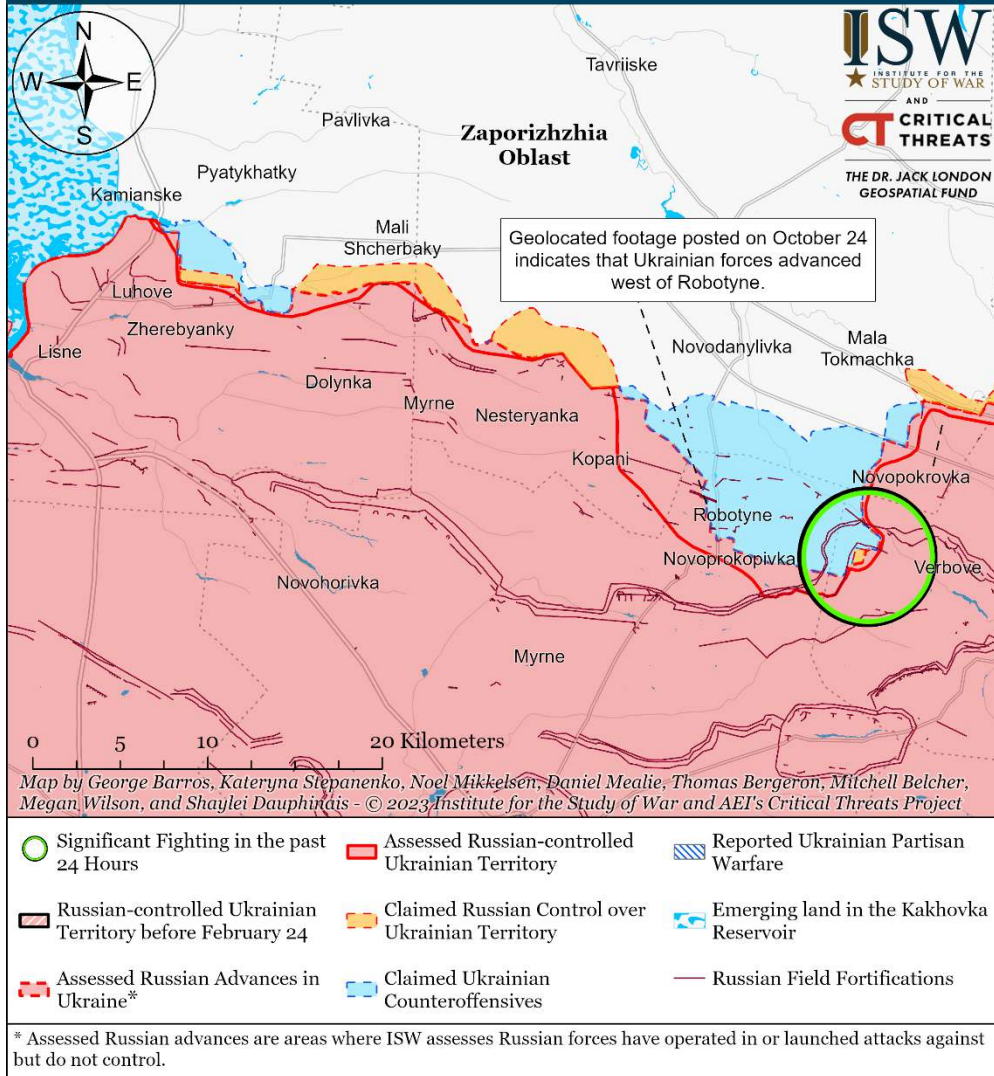
Ukrainian forces did not conduct any claimed or confirmed attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 28.

Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 28. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) and south of Zolota Nyva (11km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[51] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces counterattacked near Staromayorske and from Novodonetske (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka) on October 27.[52] A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are consolidating positions northeast of Pryyutne (16km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[53]



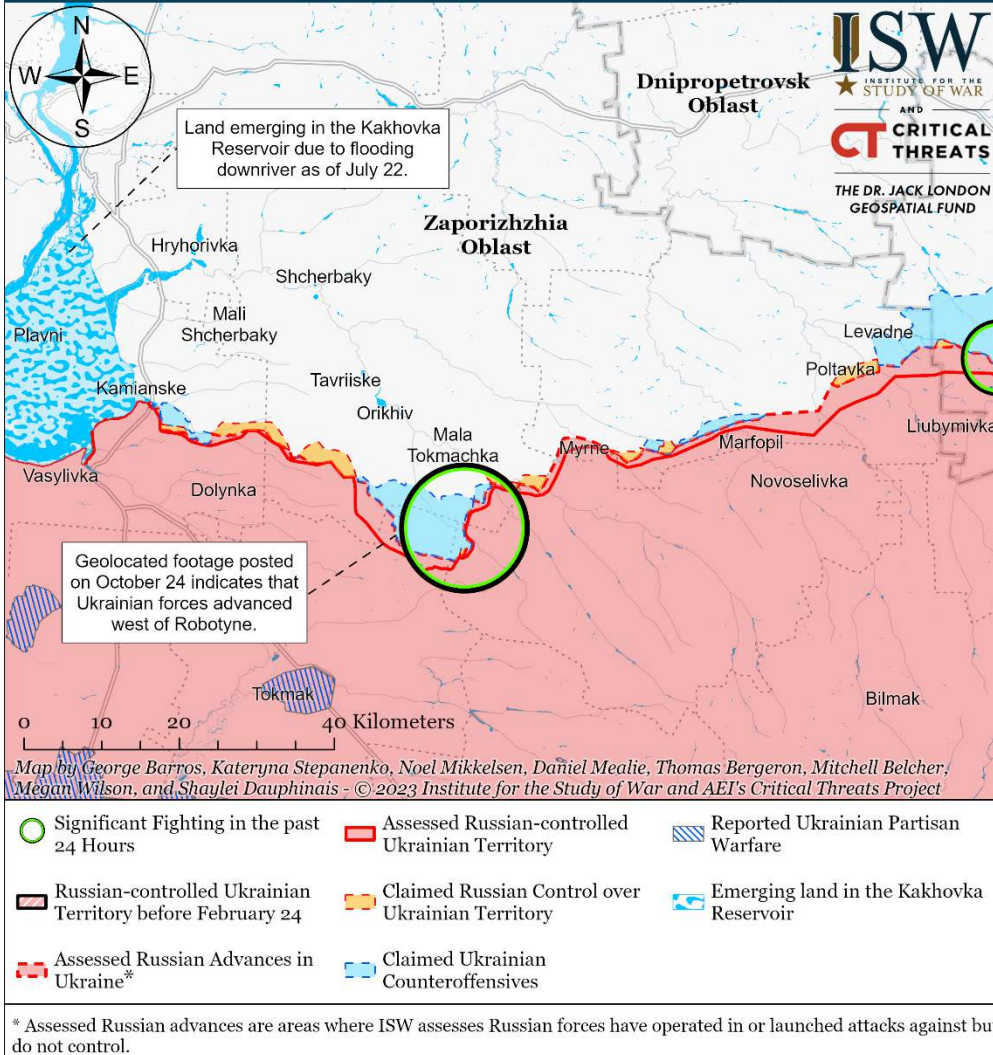
Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast but did not make any confirmed advances on October 28. A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked Nesteryanka (12km northwest of Robotyne), Kopani (6km northwest of Robotyne), and Rivne (8km west of Robotyne) and near Novoprokopivka (3km south of Robotyne) and Verbove (9km east of Robotyne).[54] A Russian source claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful armored assaults between Robotyne and Verbove.[55] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces also repelled Ukrainian attacks near Robotyne.[56] A Russian milblogger claimed that small groups of Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful armored assaults with artillery support near Robotyne.[57] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked from the Novoprokopivka direction to the west of Robotyne.[58] The milblogger claimed on October 27 that Ukrainian forces have been unsuccessfully attempting to advance west of Robotyne for five days.[59] A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces achieved "minor successes" during attacks near Robotyne, however.[60] A Russian source claimed that Russian forces repelled several Ukrainian attacks near Kopani on October 27.[61]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of October 28, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



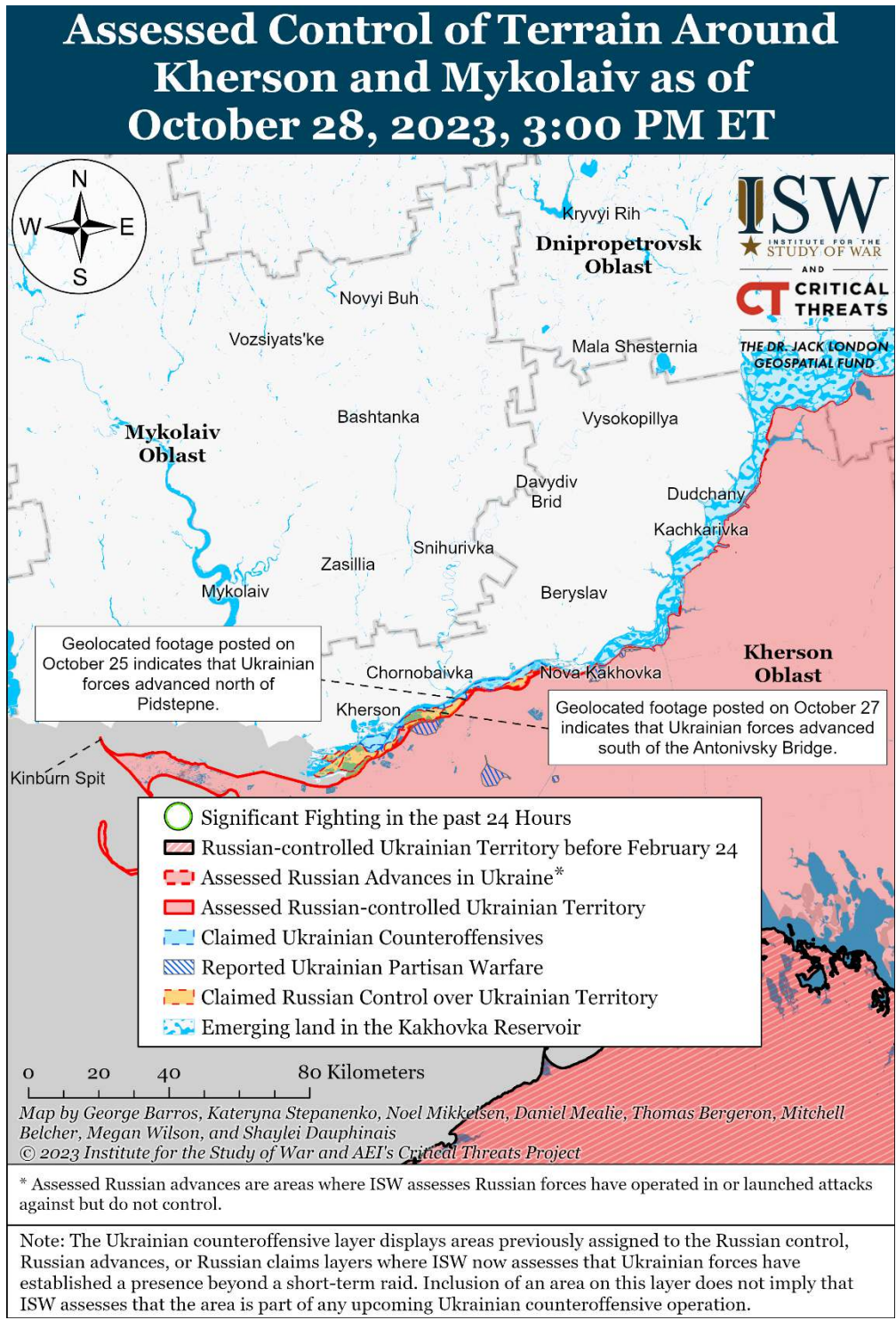
Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on October 28. The Ukrainian General Staff and Tavriisk Press Center reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attempted to regain lost positions northwest of Verbove.[62]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of October 28, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Ukrainian forces maintain positions in Krynky (30km northeast of Kherson City and 2km from the Dniro River) amid continued operations on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast on October 28. Russian milbloggers acknowledged that Ukrainian forces maintained unspecified positions in Krynky on October 27 and 28.[63] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed on October 28 that there were meeting engagements near Poyma (11km east of Kherson City and 4km from the Dniro River), Pishchanivka (14km east of Kherson City and 3km from the Dniro River), Pidstepne (16km east of Kherson City and 4km from the Dniro River), and Krynky.[64] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces attempted to advance in the direction of Pishchanivka.[65] A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed on October 27 that Ukrainian forces also unsuccessfully attacked in the direction of Pishchanivka on the evening of October 26.[66] Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Captain First Rank Nataliya Humenyuk stated on October 28 that Ukrainian forces are conducting unspecified combat operations on various “appropriate” sectors of the front in

the Kherson direction and destroying Russian positions and observation posts on the Dnipro River delta islands.[67]



Geolocated footage published on October 28 indicates that Russian forces marginally advanced east of Krynyk.[68]

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

A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that he personally heard Russian President Vladimir Putin express his decision to send Russian conscripts to serve in the Russian Border Service.[69] ISW has observed reports of Russian conscripts serving in border areas prior to the milblogger's claim, and other milbloggers have previously criticized the Russian military command for relying on inexperienced conscripts for border protection.[70]

A Russian Telegram source claimed that the Chechen Republic is recruiting volunteers for the Russian MoD and Rosgvardia.[71] The source claimed that the Chechen Republic has formed three battalions and three regiments subordinate to the MoD since the start of the war, as well as three detachments of 5,000 personnel total within Rosgvardia.[72] The source claimed that volunteers first sign contracts with the Chechen Republic before reissuing into contracts with the Russian MoD and Rosgvardia.[73] The source claimed that Chechen commander and Ministry of Emergency Situations Advisor Daniil Martynov and "Akhmat" Special Forces Commander Apti Alaudinov are also recruiting former Wagner Group fighters to Chechen "Akhmat" detachments, as discussed above.[74]

Russian milbloggers struggle to compensate for the Russian military command's failure to adequately provide for Russian soldiers fighting in Ukraine. A Russian milblogger defended other milbloggers who received criticism for raising a large sum of money for an expensive vehicle to deliver aid to frontline Russian soldiers.[75] The milblogger defended the need for such a vehicle, claiming that transporting military aid to frontline soldiers is dangerous and often requires volunteers to drive on bad roads. The milblogger added that failing to deliver the aid on time has resulted in injured Russian soldiers dying due to lack of immediate care.[76]

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)

Pro-Ukrainian actors reportedly conducted a cyber-attack against Russian telecom operators in occupied Ukraine. Ukrainian Digital Transformation Minister Mykhailo Fedorov stated that a Ukrainian "IT army" conducted a cyber-attack against major Russian telecom operators "Krymtelecom," "Miranda-media," and "MirTelecom," impairing Russian communications in occupied Crimea and occupied Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts.[77]

The Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) reportedly claimed credit for the October 27 assassination attempt against Russian-backed former separatist Ukrainian politician Oleg Tsaryov. Multiple Ukrainian newswires cited an unnamed source within the SBU on October 28 as claiming responsibility for the assassination attempt.[78] Ukrainian officials have not publicly confirmed these reports, however. Tsaryov reportedly remains in intensive care as of October 28.[79]

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

The Kremlin may be reviving its narrative falsely portraying Ukraine as an unsafe and incapable nuclear actor. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) accused Ukraine of conducting a drone strike against the Kursk Nuclear Power Plant on October 28 and damaging the walls of a nuclear waste storage area.[80] Russian officials have long accused Ukrainian forces of endangering nuclear assets in an attempt to undermine Western support for Ukraine and justify the Russian occupation of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) despite Russia's own militarization of the ZNPP, as ISW has previously reported.[81]

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)

Additional Russian instructors reportedly arrived in Belarus to begin training Belarusian drone operators. The Ukrainian Resistance Center stated on October 28 that Russian instructors arrived at the 927th UAV Training Center (military unit 92504) in Byarova, Brest Oblast, and will conduct exercises in UAV operations.[82]

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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[54] <https://t.me/wargonzo/16076>

[55] <https://t.me/vrogov/12677> ; <https://t.me/vrogov/12678>

[56] https://t.me/mod_russia/31900 ; https://t.me/mod_russia/31906

[57] <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/55706>

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[59] https://t.me/dva_majors/28109

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Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

Christina Harward, Nicole Wolkov, Grace Mappes, Riley Bailey, and Frederick W. Kagan

October 27, 2023, 5:45pm ET

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

Click [here](#) to see ISW's 3D control-of-terrain topographic map of Ukraine. The use of a computer (not a mobile device) is strongly recommended for accessing 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 12:30pm ET on October 27. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 28 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian forces marginally advanced on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast and continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast. Geolocated footage published on October 27 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced further south under the Antonivsky road bridge north of Oleshky (7km south of Kherson City and 4km from the Dnipro River).¹ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhia Oblast) direction.²

Russian forces launched a series of missile and drone strikes against Ukraine on the night of October 26 to 27. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched one Iskander-M ballistic missile from Voronezh Oblast and six Shahed-131/136 drones from the near Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai, and that Ukrainian forces destroyed five Shaheds over Kherson and Mykolaiv oblasts.³ Ukrainian Air Force Command Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat reported on October 27 that Russian forces launched over 500 Shaheds targeting critical infrastructure and military facilities in Ukraine in September 2023.⁴ Ihnat also stated that the composite materials for the fuselage of modernized Shaheds make them harder to detect and that weather conditions do not affect Russian Shahed operations.⁵

Germany and Denmark announced new military aid packages to Ukraine on October 27. The Danish Ministry of Defense (MoD) announced a package of military materiel support for Ukraine valued at 3.7 billion kroner (about \$520 million) that includes T-72 tanks, BMP-2 infantry fighting vehicles, artillery ammunition, and drones.⁶ The German government announced a military aid package valued at around 5.4 billion euros (about \$5.7 billion) that includes MARS II anti-aircraft missiles and an additional IRIS-T SLM air defense system.⁷

Unspecified actors attempted to assassinate Russian-backed former separatist Ukrainian politician Oleg Tsaryov on October 27. Tsaryov's Telegram channel reported that unspecified actors shot



Tsaryov twice at his home in occupied Yalta, Crimea.⁸ The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) opened an investigation into the assassination attempt against Tsaryov.⁹ Zaporizhia Oblast occupation official Vladimir Rogov claimed that Tsaryov is in intensive care.¹⁰ Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov stated that Kremlin did not have information on the assassination attempt against Tsaryov.¹¹

Russian authorities reportedly arrested Russian citizens who allegedly used Telegram channels, including some that identify themselves as insider sources, to extort money from Russian officials. Russian state media outlet *TASS* reported on October 27 that the Tverskoy Court of Moscow arrested Anton Safonov and detained Stanislav Daineko, both of whom work in public relations, for extorting more than 2 million rubles (about \$21,200) from Rostec Director for Special Assignments Vasily Brovko in exchange for not publishing potentially compromising information on the “Nebrekhnnya” Telegram channel.¹² The “Provisional Government” Telegram channel, which stated that it has previously published allegations about Brovko’s involvement in corruption schemes, claimed that Brovko has close ties to the well-connected Rostec Director, Sergei Chemezov.¹³ Another Russian insider source claimed on October 26 and 27 that Brovko initiated searches of the administrators of the “Nebrekhnnya” and “Provisional Government” channels, but the “Provisional Government” Telegram channel denied claims on October 27 that authorities searched and detained its own administrators.¹⁴ A Russian insider source claimed that the case concerns events from April to August 2022 that involved more than 20 Telegram channels, including some insider sources and the “Nebrekhnnya” and “Provisional Government” channels.¹⁵ Russian authorities have previously detained reported administrators of popular Telegram insider source channels that possibly used secret information to extort Russian officials.¹⁶

Russian authorities have likely coerced Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) into joining a “volunteer” formation that will fight in Ukraine, which would constitute an apparent violation of the Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War. Russian state media reported on October 27 that the “Bogdan Khmelnytsky” volunteer battalion “recruited” roughly 70 Ukrainian POWs from various Russian penal colonies, has begun training, and will deploy to an unspecified area of the front line upon completion of training.¹⁷ Coercing POWs into combat would be a violation of the Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War, which stipulates that “no prisoner of war may at any time be sent to or detained in areas where he may be exposed to the fire of the combat zone” and shall not “be employed on labor which is of an unhealthy or dangerous nature,” as ISW has previously reported.¹⁸

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian forces marginally advanced on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast and continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 27.**
- **Russian forces launched a series of missile and drone strikes against Ukraine on the night of October 26 to 27**
- **Unspecified actors attempted to assassinate Russian-backed former separatist Ukrainian politician Oleg Tsaryov on October 27.**
- **Russian authorities reportedly arrested Russian citizens who allegedly used Telegram channels, including some that identify themselves as insider sources, to extort money from Russian officials.**
- **Russian authorities have likely coerced Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) into joining a “volunteer” formation that will fight in Ukraine, which would constitute an apparent violation of the Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War.**



- **Russian forces continued offensive operations near Avdiivka on October 27 but did not make any confirmed advances. US National Security Council Spokesperson John Kirby stated on October 26 that Russian forces have suffered thousands of casualties and have lost at least 125 armored vehicles in recent offensive operations near Avdiivka.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, southwest of Donetsk City, in western Donetsk Oblast, in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia and advanced near Bakhmut.**
- **Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov announced the formation of a second Chechen volunteer formation named for a second Chechen figure who fought against imperial Russian rule.**
- **Russian occupation authorities cracked down against pro-Ukrainian Telegram channels operating in occupied Ukraine.**

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

- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas
- Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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

Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on October 27 but did not make confirmed advances. Russian milbloggers claimed on October 26 and 27 that Russian forces advanced near Ivanivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk) and captured unspecified positions south of Torske (15km west of Kreminna), although ISW has not observed confirmation of these claims.¹⁹ The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces captured unspecified positions in the Kupyansk direction over the past week.²⁰ Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces attacked near Synkivka (9km northeast of Kupyansk), Petropavlivka (6km east of Kupyansk), Ivanivka, Nadiya (15km southwest of Svatove), Makiivka (21km southwest of Svatove), and Kreminna.²¹ Ukrainian Ground Forces Command Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Volodymyr Fityo stated on October 27 that Russian forces in the Kupyansk direction have been operating



fewer loitering munitions and have decreased the rate of shelling by half due to rain.²² Geolocated footage published on October 27 shows elements of the 15th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Combined Arms Army, Central Military District) operating near Kreminna.²³

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on October 27. The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Synkivka, Tymkivka (18km east of Kupyansk), and Serhiivka (12km southwest of Svatove).²⁴ A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Petropavlivka.²⁵

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

Ukrainian forces continued limited offensive operations near Bakhmut on October 27 but did not make any confirmed or claimed gains. Ukrainian Ground Forces Command Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Volodymyr Fityo stated that Ukrainian forces are conducting an “active defense” in the Bakhmut direction and conduct offensive actions to improve their tactical positions when they have the opportunity to do so.²⁶ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Bakhmut direction.²⁷ The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that elements of the Russian Southern Grouping of Forces repelled Ukrainian assaults near Bohdanivka (5km northwest of Bakhmut), Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut), and Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut).²⁸

Russian forces continued limited offensive operations near Bakhmut on October 27 and made confirmed gains. Geolocated footage published on October 26 indicates that Russian forces advanced south of the Berkhivka reservoir (6km north of Bakhmut).²⁹ Additional geolocated footage published on October 27 indicates that Russian forces made marginal gains west of Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut).³⁰ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled five Russian assaults near Bohdanivka and Khromove (immediately west of Bakhmut) and over 10 Russian assaults near Klishchiivka and Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).³¹ Fityo stated on October 27 that 20 combat engagements occurred over the past day.³² A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked near Dubovo-Vasylivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut) and described Russian forces as trying to seize the initiative in the Bakhmut direction.³³ A Russian media aggregator claimed that Russian forces advanced at heights northeast of Khromove and recaptured positions near the railway line east of Klishchiivka on October 26.³⁴

Russian forces continued offensive operations near Avdiivka on October 27 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled more than 20 Russian assaults near Stepove (3km north of Avdiivka), Avdiivka, Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka), Tonenke (5km west of Avdiivka), and Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka).³⁵ Russian milbloggers claimed on October 26 and 27 that Russian forces advanced north from Opytne (4km south of Avdiivka) and established control over positions 1.5km southwest of Avdiivka near the T0505 (Spartak-Avdiivka) highway, although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims.³⁶ Russian milbloggers claimed on October 26 and 27 that Russian forces bypassed Ukrainian fortified positions near the “Tsarska Okhota” restaurant on Avdiivka’s southern outskirts.³⁷ Russian milbloggers claimed on October 26 and 27 that Russian forces advanced closer to the Avdiivka Coke Plant and consolidated further control over positions at the Avdiivka waste heap north of Avdiivka.³⁸ Russian sources claimed on October 26 and 27 that Russian forces continued to advance near the railway line north of Avdiivka and towards Stepove, although ISW has not seen visual confirmation of these claims.³⁹ A Ukrainian military



observer stated on October 27 that Russian forces have captured the Avdiivka waste heap and have made unspecified advances near the railway line north of Avdiivka.⁴⁰ The Ukrainian military observer stated that Russian forces are achieving unspecified successes in the Vodyane-Tonenke (7km southwest to 5km west of Avdiivka) direction, and a Russian miblogger claimed on October 26 that Russian forces advanced from Vodyane to the outskirts of Pervomaiske.⁴¹ The Ukrainian military observer claimed that the command of Russia's 8th Combined Arms Army (Southern Military District) has changed tactics in the Avdiivka area and is now instructing tactical groups on Avdiivka's northern and southern flanks to alternate assaults.⁴² Russian forces are conducting regular assaults north and south of Avdiivka but have only made some gains on Avdiivka's northern flank and only a few marginal gains on the southern flank since starting larger offensive efforts on October 10.

Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets offered new information about the deployment of Russian units and formations participating in the Russian effort to encircle Avdiivka as of October 27. Mashovets stated that elements of the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) 1st Army Corps (8th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District) are responsible for Avdiivka's southern flank and that elements of the DNR 1st Army Corps, the 6th Motorized Rifle Division (3rd Army Corps, Western Military District) and the 20th Motorized Rifle Division (8th Combined Arms Army) are responsible for the section of the front immediately south of Avdiivka.⁴³ Mashovets stated that elements of the 115th Motorized Rifle Brigade and the 110th Motorized Rifle Brigade (both of the DNR 1st Army Corps), the 1140th Territorial Defense Motorized Rifle Regiment, the 109th Motorized Rifle Regiment of the mobilization reserves, and the 277th Motorized Rifle Battalion (likely of the DNR 1st Army Corps) are operating on Avdiivka's northern flank.⁴⁴ Mashovets also added that the Russian command has deployed elements of the 21st Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd CAA, Central Military District) as an operational reserve for Russian operations south of Avdiivka and elements of the 21st Motorized Rifle Brigade and two motorized rifle regiments and a regiment of the 20th Motorized Rifle Division to act as an operational reserve for operations north of Avdiivka.⁴⁵

Western and Russian sources continue to report that Russian forces have suffered heavy losses and are experiencing pronounced morale issues near Avdiivka. US National Security Council Spokesperson John Kirby stated on October 26 that Russian forces have suffered thousands of casualties and have lost at least 125 armored vehicles in recent offensive operations near Avdiivka.⁴⁶ Kirby also stated that the US has observed Russian forces executing those who refuse to follow orders in the Avdiivka direction as well as Russian commanders threatening to shoot entire units if they retreat from Ukrainian artillery fire in the area.⁴⁷ Russian sources described Russian morale near Avdiivka as incredibly poor, with one Russian miblogger claiming that morale was a determining factor in Russian failures at the start of the renewed offensive effort near Avdiivka.⁴⁸

Ukrainian forces did not conduct any confirmed or claimed counterattacks near Avdiivka on October 27.

Russian forces continued offensive operations southwest of Donetsk City on October 27 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled over 19 Russian assaults near Marinka (immediately southwest of Donetsk City) and Novomykhailivka (10km southwest of Donetsk City).⁴⁹

The Russian MoD claimed that elements of the Russian Southern Grouping of Forces repelled Ukrainian assaults near Marinka.⁵⁰



Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks in western Donetsk Oblast on October 27 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults near Vodyane (6km northeast of Vuhledar).⁵¹ A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful assaults near Mykilske (4km southeast of Vuhledar).⁵²

The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Vuhledar between October 21 and October 27.⁵³

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

Ukrainian forces reportedly conducted limited offensive operations in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances on October 27. The Russian “Vostok” Battalion, which operates southeast of Velyka Novosilka, claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked near the battalion’s positions, possibly along the Novodonetske-Novomayorske (12km to 18m southeast of Velyka Novosilka) line.⁵⁴

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances on October 27. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) and Zolota Nyva (11km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).⁵⁵ A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces unsuccessfully counterattacked in the direction of Staromayorske and from Novodonetske (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).⁵⁶ Another Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the Russian 394th Motorized Rifle Regiment (127th Motorized Rifle Division, 5th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) are consolidating control over recently captured positions northeast of Pryyutne (16km southwest of Velyka Novosilka), although ISW has not observed visual evidence of recent Russian advances in this area.⁵⁷ The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces improved their positions in the south Donetsk direction (western Donetsk Oblast and Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area) in the past week.⁵⁸

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast but did not make any confirmed advances on October 27. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces marginally advanced in the direction of Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv).⁵⁹ A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces withdrew from positions near Nesteryanka (12 km northwest of Robotyne) following a Ukrainian counterattack in the area.⁶⁰ Russian sources claimed on October 26 and 27 that Ukrainian forces attacked northwest of Verbove (9km east of Robotyne) and near Nesteryanka, Kopani (6km northwest of Robotyne), Rivne (8km west of Robotyne), Robotyne, and Novoprokopivka (3km south of Robotyne).⁶¹ The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted 19 unsuccessful attacks near Robotyne and Verbove in the past week.⁶²

Russian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances on October 27. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked northwest of Verbove.⁶³ Another Russian milblogger claimed on October 26 that Russian forces pushed Ukrainian forces out of positions near Verbove and conducted a series of counterattacks along the Kopani-Robotyne-Novoprokopivka-Verbove line (6km northwest to 9km east of Robotyne).⁶⁴



Ukrainian forces marginally advanced on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast on October 27. Geolocated footage published on October 27 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced further south under the Antonivsky road bridge north of Oleshky (7km south of Kherson City and 4km from the Dnipro River).⁶⁵ A prominent Russian milblogger, who previously claimed on October 25 that Russian forces pushed Ukrainian forces out of Krynky (30km northeast of Kherson Oblast and 2km from the Dnipro River), claimed that Ukrainian forces maintain positions in Krynky as of October 26 despite Russian efforts to push Ukrainian forces out of the settlement.⁶⁶ The milblogger also claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Pishchanivka (14km east of Kherson City and 3km from the Dnipro River) and continue to operate along the road near Pidstepne (18km east of Kherson City and 4km from the Dnipro River) and Kozachi Laheri (22km east of Kherson City and 3km from the Dnipro River).⁶⁷ The Russian milblogger claimed that seven Ukrainian “assault groups” are operating on the east bank of Kherson Oblast but has yet to describe the size of these groups.⁶⁸

Russian forces are likely worried about future Ukrainian strikes targeting Russian airfields in Russian rear areas. Satellite imagery dated October 26 indicates that Russian forces have likely painted four outlines of MiG-31 aircraft on the flight line at Belbek airfield near occupied Sevastopol, Crimea, likely intended to draw Ukrainian targeting from the four real MiG-31 remaining at the airfield.⁶⁹ ISW previously assessed that the Ukrainian ATACMS strikes on operationally significant Russian airfields in Ukraine on October 17 will likely prompt the Russian command to disperse aviation assets and withdraw some aircraft to airfields further from the frontline.⁷⁰

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

Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov announced the formation of a second Chechen volunteer formation named after a Chechen figure who fought against imperial Russian rule. Kadyrov announced the creation of the “Baysangur Benoyevsky” volunteer battalion, named after a deputy of 19th century Chechen insurgent leader Imam Shamil.⁷¹ ISW assessed on October 24 that Kadyrov appears to be struggling to balance appealing to his Chechen Muslim constituencies while maintaining the support of the Kremlin due to the Kremlin’s support for Russian ultranationalism and Orthodoxy.⁷²

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

Russian occupation authorities cracked down against pro-Ukrainian Telegram channels operating in occupied Ukraine. The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) reported on October 27 that it arrested the administrators of two pro-Ukrainian channels that encouraged users to collect data on Russian military assets and movements in August 2023.⁷³ The FSB also claimed that the FSB killed an allegedly armed intelligence agent who resisted arrest during the detentions.⁷⁴ The FSB likely publicized these arrests now to deter further security risks in occupied Ukraine.

Russian occupation authorities continue to struggle to compensate employees of Russian state enterprises in occupied Kherson Oblast. Russian opposition outlet *Vazhnye Istorii* reported that employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in occupied Skadovsk, Kherson Oblast, the “Khersonoblenergo” State Unitary Enterprise, a kindergarten in Novotroitske, and a forestry enterprise in Hola Prystan Raion reported receiving one or no salary



payments since summer 2023.⁷⁵ *Vazhnye Istorii* reported that the Kherson Oblast occupation authorities also struggle to pay pensions and other social benefits.⁷⁶

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian President Vladimir Putin reiterated boilerplate Kremlin rhetoric about Ukrainian weapons during a Russian Security Council meeting on October 27 intended to undermine Western support for Ukraine. Putin reiterated claims that illegal weapons enter Russia through Ukraine and undermine Russian security.⁷⁷ Ukrainian and Western officials have repeatedly denied these claims, and ISW has observed no evidence supporting the Kremlin's claims.⁷⁸

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)

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko continued to indicate his unwillingness to involve the Belarusian military in the war in Ukraine. Lukashenko stated on October 26 that Belarus is committed to peace with its neighbors and does not want to fight because “it would cost [Belarus] dearly.”⁷⁹ ISW continues to assess that Belarus is a co-belligerent in the Russian war in Ukraine, is involved in the deportation of Ukrainian children, and may be facilitating sanctions evasion schemes for Russia, but is extremely unlikely to commit its own military forces to fighting Ukraine.⁸⁰

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

¹ <https://twitter.com/TwistyCB/status/1717913793022263570>;
<https://twitter.com/TwistyCB/status/1717913787603329044>; https://t.me/Juncker_ZOV/22

²

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³ <https://t.me/kpszsu/6810>

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¹⁰ <https://t.me/vrogov/12666>

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¹³ <https://t.me/oreshkins/14505>

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²⁰ https://t.me/mod_russia/31868

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³³ <https://t.me/wargonzo/16050>

³⁴ <https://t.me/readovkanews/68414>

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³⁶ <https://t.me/rybar/53655> ; <https://t.me/rybar/53648> ; https://t.me/dva_majors/28066

³⁷ <https://t.me/rybar/53643>

³⁸ <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/55610> ; https://t.me/dva_majors/28066

³⁹ <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/55610> ; <https://t.me/wargonzo/16050> ; <https://t.me/readovkanews/68414>

⁴⁰ <https://t.me/zvizdecmanhustu/1351>

⁴¹ <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/51578>

⁴² <https://t.me/zvizdecmanhustu/1350>

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<https://t.me/bazabazon/22506> ; <https://t.me/bazabazon/22162>

⁴⁹

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⁵⁰ https://t.me/mod_russia/31868

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<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02EdNtgxwvHe6XWvJ4Zc9k3i8U5jMkBCucFc7FX6vssxk1ApA97A6DjstsadXyde9ol>

⁵² <https://t.me/wargonzo/16050>

⁵³ https://t.me/mod_russia/31868

⁵⁴ https://t.me/batalyon_vostok/231

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Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 26, 2023

Riley Bailey, Christina Harward, Grace Mappes, Nicole Wolkov, Ashka Jhaveri, Annika Ganzeveld, and Frederick W. Kagan

October 26, 2023, 7:15pm ET

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

Click [here](#) to 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 12:30pm ET on October 26. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 27 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Heavy Russian equipment losses around Avdiivka will likely undermine Russian offensive capabilities over the long term. Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun stated on October 26 that Russian forces have suffered 5,000 personnel killed and wounded and 400 armored vehicles losses near Avdiivka and Marinka (southwest of Donetsk City) since October 10.[1] Satellite imagery has confirmed that the Russian military has lost at least 109 military vehicles, primarily armored fighting vehicles and tanks, near Avdivika between October 10 and 20.[2] A Ukrainian reserve officer stated that Russian forces appear to be using fewer armored vehicles near Avdiivka, although Russian forces may be regrouping for renewed large mechanized assaults as they did between the initial mechanized assaults on October 10 and a second series of large mechanized assaults on October 19 and 20.[3] The Russian command has funneled additional forces to the Avdiivka front to offset heavy manpower losses and maintain the Russian military's ability to sustain its ongoing offensive effort.[4]

The Russian command will likely struggle to offset Russian equipment losses, particularly in armored vehicles, however. Widespread Russian equipment losses and shortages in the first year of the full-scale invasion heavily restricted Russia's ability to conduct effective mechanized maneuver warfare during the Russian military's winter-spring 2023 offensive, contributing to further losses in disorderly mechanized assaults near Vuhledar, Donetsk Oblast in January and February 2023.[5] Heavy losses around Vuhledar likely prevented the Russian command from committing to sustained mechanized assaults elsewhere in Ukraine later in the winter-spring 2023 offensive.[6] Recent Russian equipment losses around Avdiivka appear to be much larger than earlier equipment losses around Vuhledar. It remains unclear if the prospect of further heavy equipment losses will deter the Russian command from launching another series of large, mechanized assaults near Avdiivka. Russia has gradually mobilized elements of its defense industrial base (DIB) to address equipment shortages but has not done so at a scale remotely sufficient to offset the cumulative

Russian equipment losses in Ukraine.[7] Recent Russian equipment losses around Avdiivka will likely lead to even more pronounced Russian equipment shortages and setbacks for any progress that the Russian military has made in addressing degraded mechanized maneuver warfare capabilities.

Ukrainian forces marginally advanced on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast and continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia

Oblast. Geolocated footage published on October 25 shows that Ukrainian forces marginally advanced north of Pidstepne (15km east of Kherson City).[8] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Bakhmut and Melitopol (western Zaporizhia Oblast) directions.[9]

Ukrainian officials denied reports that Ukraine suspended a corridor for civilian

vessels in the Black Sea on October 26. *Reuters* reported that British security firm Ambrey, Ukrainian consulting firm Barva Invest, and specialized Ukrainian news outlet *Ukrainian Ports* stated that Ukraine had temporarily suspended traffic through the corridor on October 26.[10] Barva Invest stated that the Ukrainian Sea Ports Administration announced the suspension on the evening of October 25 and that a *de facto* suspension had already been in place for two days.[11] Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Captain First Rank Nataliya Humenyuk stated that many factors, including threats from Russian forces and weather, affect the Ukrainian military's decisions to allow individual civilian vessels to pass through the corridor.[12] The Ukrainian Ministry of Reconstruction and the Ukrainian Minister for Communities, Territories, and Infrastructure Development, Oleksandr Kubrakov, later clarified that reports about the suspension are false and that civilian vessels are using all available routes established by the Ukrainian Navy.[13] Russia has continually pursued efforts to disrupt Ukrainian grain exports and curtail maritime traffic to Ukrainian ports and will likely continue escalatory posturing in the Black Sea meant to undermine confidence in the Ukrainian corridor.[14]

An amendment to the Russian citizenship law allowing for the revocation of naturalized Russian citizenship came into force on October 26, providing the Russian government with a new mechanism to coerce migrants into Russian military

service. The amendment most notably allows Russian authorities to revoke Russian citizenship from naturalized citizens who are convicted of discrediting the Russian military and of committing "certain crimes encroaching on public and personal safety" regardless of when the crime was committed, the date of sentencing, or for how long the convicted has held Russian citizenship.[15] Russian authorities have recently increased raids against migrants accused of committing crimes to deliver summonses and impress migrants into signing military contracts.[16] Russian authorities will likely use this new amendment to further recruit naturalized migrants under threat of revoking their Russian citizenship or after having done so.[17] It is unclear what procedure Russian authorities will follow once they deprive someone of their citizenship, and Russian authorities may intend to use deportation procedures to increase the number of migrants in detention centers, where Russian officials regularly try to recruit.[18] Russian authorities will also likely exploit denaturalized migrants whose labor options will become limited upon conviction of a crime and loss of their Russian citizenship and therefore more vulnerable to military recruitment efforts. The new amendment to the citizenship law also streamlines the process for allocating Russian citizenship to certain individuals, including children with at least one Russian parent, migrants currently residing in Russia, and participants in the Russian state resettlement program, by removing certain entrance requirements.[19]

The EU is reportedly behind on its artillery ammunition round provision to Ukraine. Unspecified sources told *Bloomberg* in an article published on October 25 that the EU has currently delivered only 30 percent of the promised one million shells that are expected by March 2024.[20] *Bloomberg* also reported that some unspecified countries have asked to extend the provision deadline.

The US Department of Defense (DoD) and the UK Ministry of Defense (MoD) recently announced new military aid packages to Ukraine. The UK MoD announced on October 11 a new package of military material support for Ukraine valued at over 100 million pounds (about \$121 million).[21] The US DoD announced on October 26 a new security assistance package valued at up to \$150 million in materiel.[22]

Armenia continues to distance itself from Russia amid deteriorating Armenian-Russian relations. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan stated in an interview with the *Wall Street Journal (WSJ)* published on October 25 that there are no “advantages” to the continued presence of Russian military bases in Armenia.[23] Pashinyan also stated that Armenia is in the process of diversifying its security partnerships.[24] Pashinyan previously stated on October 11 that Russian peacekeepers should return to Russia instead of the Russian bases in Armenia if they leave Nagorno-Karabakh.[25]

A senior Hamas delegation traveled to Moscow and met with Russian and Iranian officials on October 26.[26] (*NOTE: This text also appeared in the Critical Threats Project (CTP)’s October 26 Iran Update*) Hamas’ International Relation Office head and political bureau member Musa Abu Marzouk led a delegation, which also included the Health Minister of the Gaza Strip, Basem Naim.[27] The delegation held a joint meeting with Russian Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister and Special Representative for the Middle East Mikhail Bogdanov and Iranian Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Ali Bagheri Kani. Hamas leaders issued statements around the visit praising Russia’s stance toward the Israel-Hamas war. Russia has framed itself as a possible mediator between Israel and Hamas and submitted a UN resolution calling for a humanitarian ceasefire on October 16. The UN resolution failed to mention Hamas by name.[28] The Israeli Foreign Affairs Ministry condemned Russia’s invitation to Hamas on October 26.[29] CTP-ISW previously assessed that the Kremlin is already exploiting and will likely continue to exploit the Israel-Hamas war to advance several information operations intended to reduce US and Western support for and attention to Ukraine.[30] A senior Hamas delegation most recently visited Moscow in March 2023 amid strained tensions between Russia and Israel over the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Key Takeaways:

- **Heavy Russian equipment losses around Avdiivka will likely undermine Russian offensive capabilities over the long term.**
- **Ukrainian forces marginally advanced on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast and continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast.**
- **Ukrainian officials denied reports that Ukraine suspended a corridor for civilian vessels in the Black Sea on October 26.**
- **An amendment to the Russian citizenship law allowing for the revocation of naturalized Russian citizenship came into force on October 26, providing the**

Russian government with a new mechanism to coerce migrants into Russian military service.

- **A senior Hamas delegation traveled to Moscow and met with Russian and Iranian officials on October 26.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, near Avdiivka, southwest of Donetsk City, in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and advanced in some areas.**
- **Several Russian opposition outlets reported that Russian defense industrial base (DIB) companies continue to use Western components supplied through intermediaries to manufacture missiles to use against Ukraine.**
- **Russian occupation authorities continue efforts to forcibly indoctrinate Ukrainian youth into Russian culture and identity through the expansion of military-patriotic educational programs.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of October 26, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas
- Russian Information Operations and Narratives

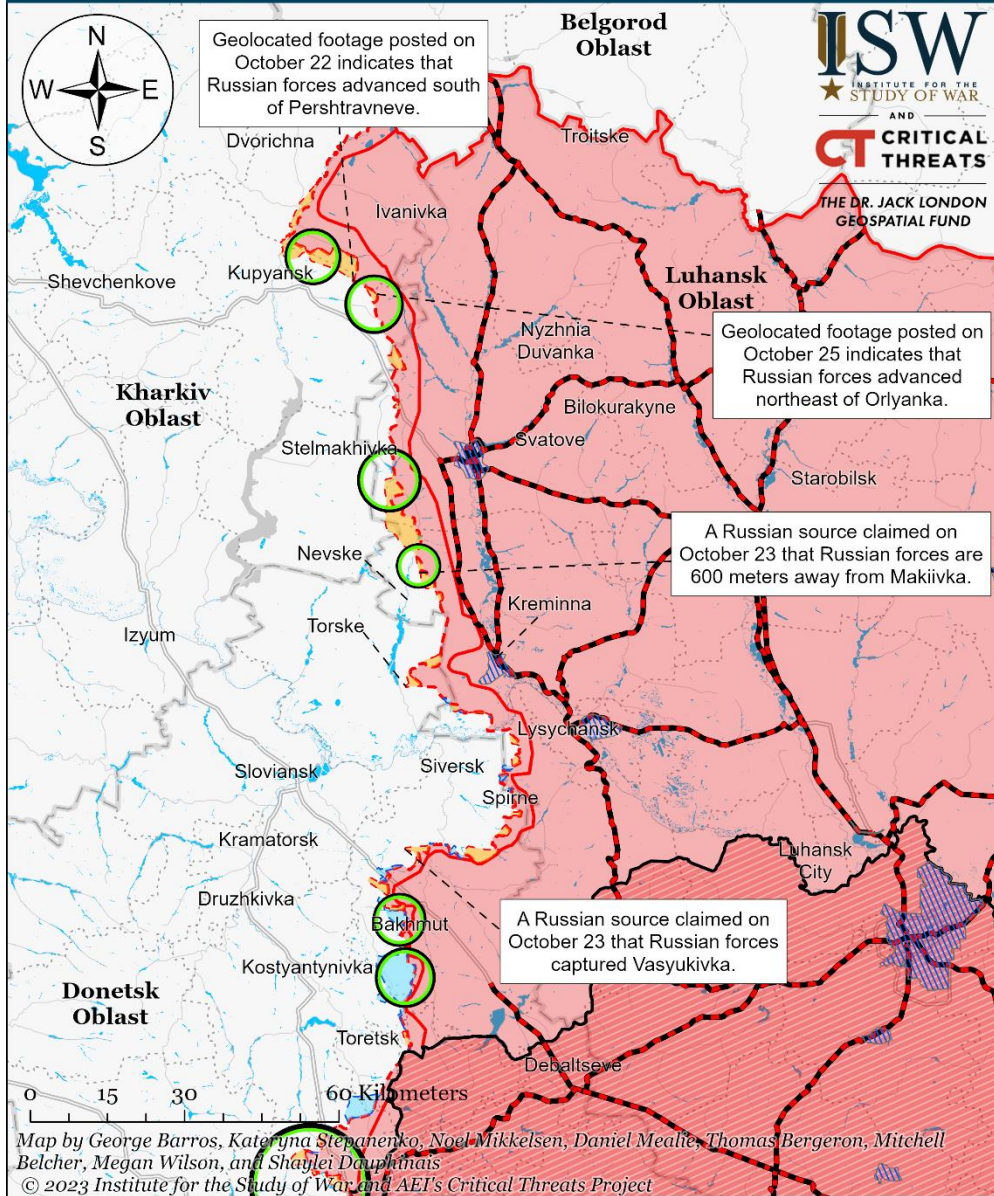
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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

Russian forces continued localized offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on October 26 and made marginal confirmed gains. Geolocated footage published on October 26 indicates that Russian forces made marginal advances southwest of Lyman Pershi (11km northeast of Kupyansk).[31] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults near Synkivka (9km northeast of Kupyansk), Petropavlivka (6km east of Kupyansk), Ivanivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk), Nadiya (15km southwest of Svatove), and Makiivka (21km southwest of Svatove).[32] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces made unspecified marginal advances west of Svatove.[33] A Russian media aggregator claimed that Russian forces advanced near Synkivka and Kyslivka (22km southeast of Kupyansk) and advanced from near Makiivka in the direction of Borova (36km west of Svatove) on October 25.[34] Ukrainian Ground Forces Command Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Volodymyr Fityo stated on October 26 that the size of the Russian force grouping in the Kupyansk and Lyman directions remains the same at roughly 100,000 personnel because Russian forces have committed additional reserves to degraded units in Ukraine.[35]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful ground attacks along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on October 26. The Russian MoD claimed that elements of the Russian Western Grouping of Forces repelled six Ukrainian assaults near Synkivka and Serhiivka (14km west of Svatove) and that elements of the Russian Central Grouping of Forces repelled Ukrainian assaults near Torske (15km west of Kreminna) and Dibrova (7km southwest of Kreminna).[36] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are conducting counterattacks west of Svatove to stabilize the frontline in the area.[37] Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR) head Leonid Pasechnik claimed that LNR forces have repelled 18 Ukrainian attacks in the Novodruzhesk (12km southeast of Kreminna), Hryhorivka (11km south of Kreminna), Vovchoyarivka (25km southeast of Kreminna), Berestove-Pereizne (up to 28km southwest of Kreminna), and Ivano-Darivka (25km south of Kreminna) areas in the past week.[38]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of October 26, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

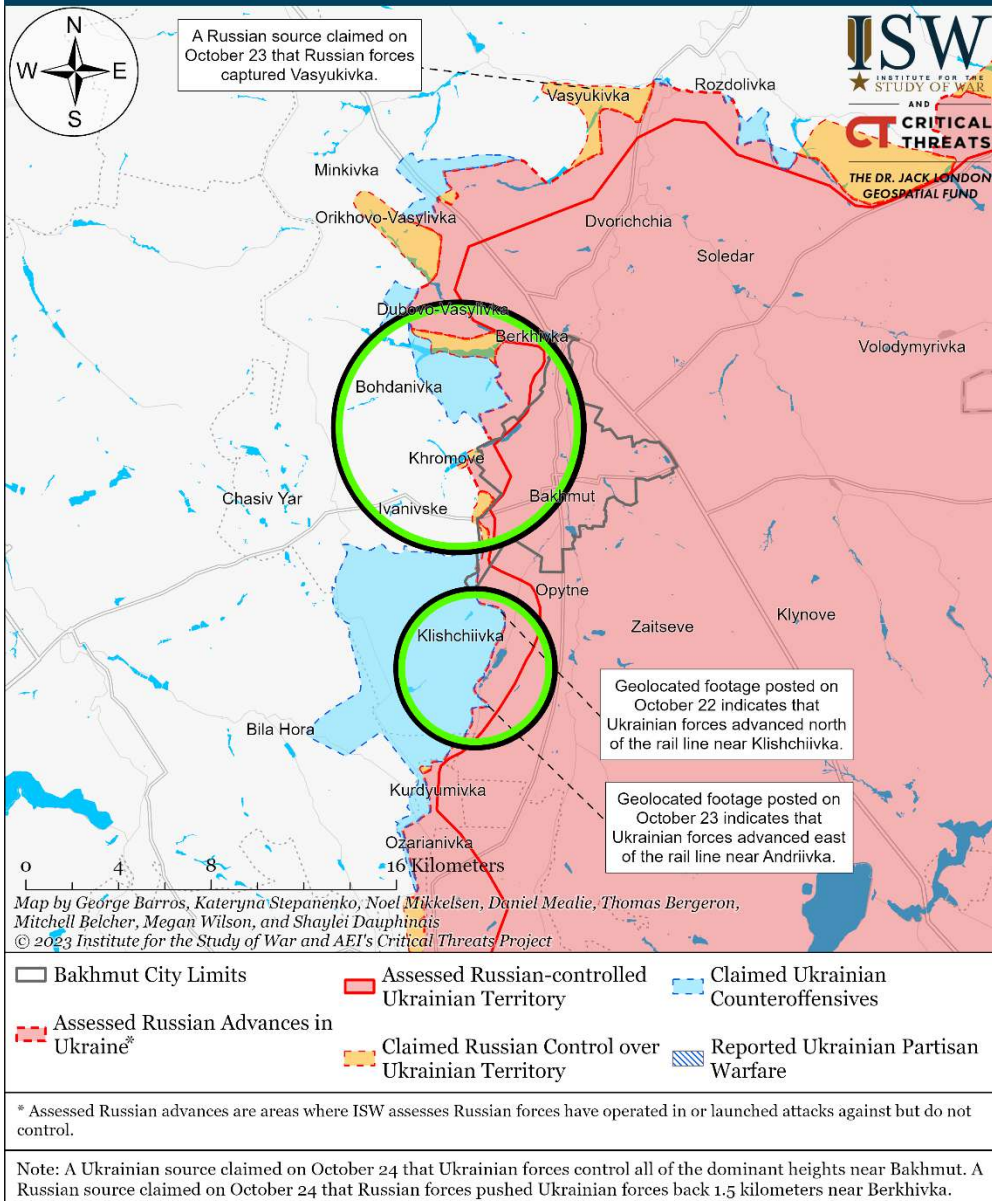
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances on October 26. The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Bohdanivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut).[39] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut), Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut), and Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut).[40]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut and made confirmed advances on October 26. Geolocated footage published on October 26 indicates that Russian forces advanced south of Ozaryanivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut).[41] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces marginally advanced near Vasyukivka (15km north of Bakhmut) in recent days but do not occupy the settlement.[42] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked and occupied the heights northeast of Khromove (immediately west of Bakhmut).[43] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Bohdanivka, Khromove, Ivanivske (6km west of Bakhmut), and Andriivka.[44] Russian sources claimed on October 25 that Russian forces continue defending their positions near the railway east of Klishchiivka and Andriivka and that heavy fighting is ongoing near the E40 (Slovyansk-Bakhmut) highway.[45]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of October 26, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

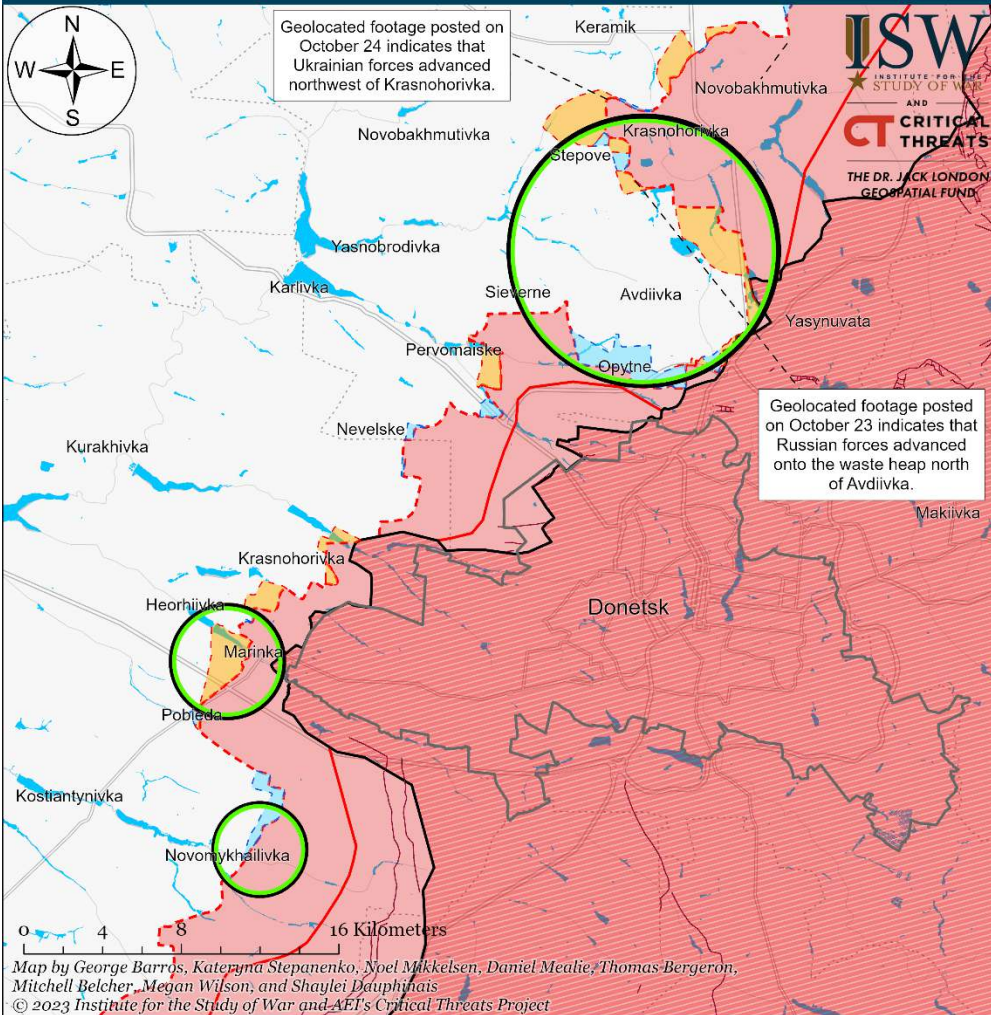


Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Avdiivka but did not make any confirmed gains on October 26. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced northeast of Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka) and advanced in the direction of Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka).[46] A Ukrainian reserve officer stated on October 25 that Russian forces have made incremental advances towards Stepove despite significant losses.[47] Russian sources claimed on October 26 that Russian forces expanded their control over the railway line near Stepove.[48] A Ukrainian military observer stated on October 25 that Russian forces captured a one-kilometer wide area along the railway.[49] Russian sources claimed on October 25 and 26 that Russian forces continue advancing near the waste heap northwest of Avdiivka and are successfully defending their positions

there.[50] The Ukrainian reserve officer stated on October 25 that Russian forces can only use these positions occasionally and temporarily and that neither Russian nor Ukrainian forces fully control the waste heap.[51] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Stepove, Avdiivka, Tonenke (5km west of Avdiivka), and Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka).[52] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun stated on October 25 and 26 that Russian forces from other directions are replacing Russian battalions that have suffered losses in the Avdiivka area and that “Storm-Z” prisoner detachments are refusing to conduct combat operations and are abandoning positions near Avdiivka.[53] A Russian milblogger claimed on October 26 that Russian forces have fire control over 90 percent of Ukrainian ground lines of communications (GLOCs) in the Avdiivka area, but ISW has not observed any indications that continuing Russian claims about Russian fire control over Ukrainian GLOCs in the Avdiivka are true.[54] The milblogger also claimed that former Wagner Group forces are fighting near Avdiivka, although ISW has also not observed evidence of this claim.[55] Another Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the Russian “Kluny” Sabotage, Assault and Reconnaissance Detachment and the “Skif” Reconnaissance Group (likely of the 1st Donetsk People’s Republic [DNR] Army Corps) are operating near Krasnohorivka (5km northwest of Avdiivka).[56] Ukrainian sources stated on October 25 that elements of the Russian 110th Mechanized Brigade (1st DNR Army Corps) are operating near Avdiivka.[57] Russian milbloggers claimed on October 26 that rainfall has led to a decrease in the intensity of hostilities near Avdiivka.[58]

A Russian source claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Avdiivka in the direction of Spartak (4km south of Avdiivka) on October 26 but did not specify an outcome.[59]

Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of October 26, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Donetsk City Limits	Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*	Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory	Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory	Russian Field Fortifications

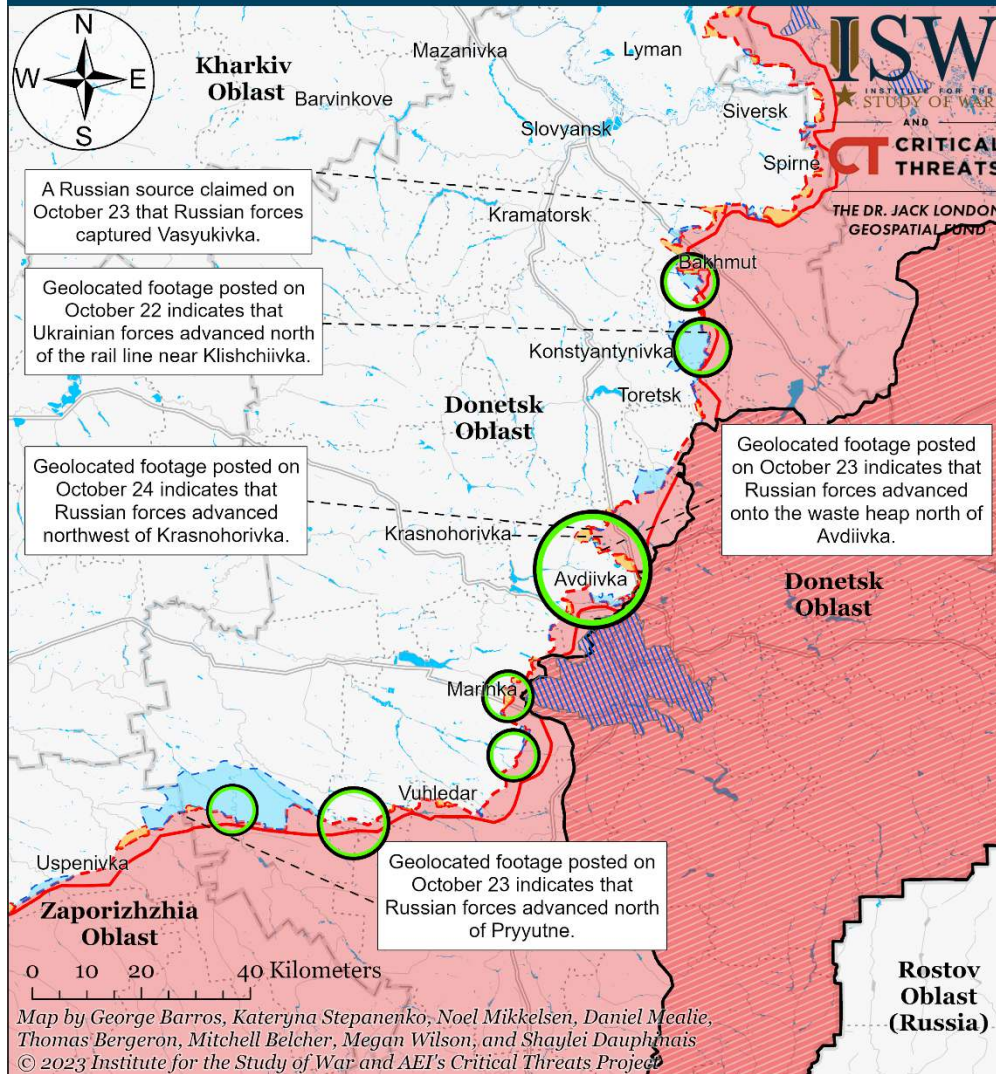
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

Russian forces conducted offensive operations southwest of Donetsk City and made confirmed advances on October 26. Geolocated footage published on October 26 indicates that Russian forces advanced southeast of Novomykhailivka (10km southwest of Donetsk City).[60] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Marinka, Novomykhailivka, and Vodyane (6km northeast of Vuhledar).[61]

Ukrainian forces did not conduct any claimed or confirmed attacks southwest of Donetsk City on October 26.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of October 26, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Megan Wilson, and Shaylei Dauphinais © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Major Railroads
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

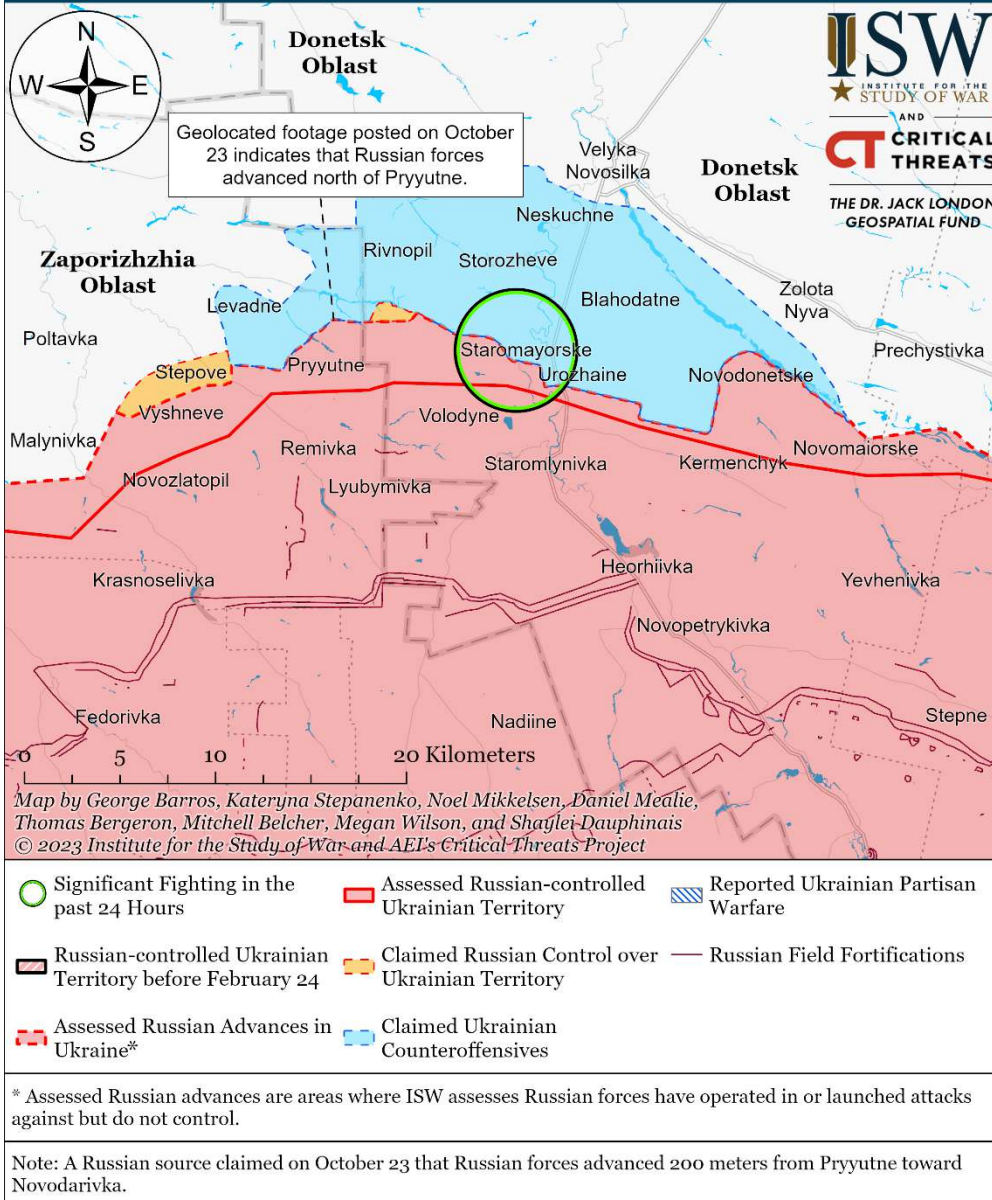
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

Ukrainian forces did not conduct any confirmed or claimed ground attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 26.

Russian forces continued limited offensive operations in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 26 and reportedly recently advanced. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Novoukrainka (18km east of Velyka Novosilka) and Staromayorske and that Russian forces are regrouping in the Shakhtarske direction (Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area).[62] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson. Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun stated that Russian forces suffered heavy losses and withdrew after attacking near Volodyne (15km south of Velyka Novosilka) on October 24.[63] Russian milbloggers claimed on October 25 and 26 that Russian forces marginally advanced north and northeast of Pryyutne (16km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[64] The Russian “Vostok” Battalion which operates southeast of Velyka Novosilka claimed that inclement weather has hindered ground operations in the area.[65] The Vostok Battalion also claimed that Russian ground forces in the Velyka Novosilka area struggle with rodent infestations in soldiers’ living spaces.[66]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of October 26, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

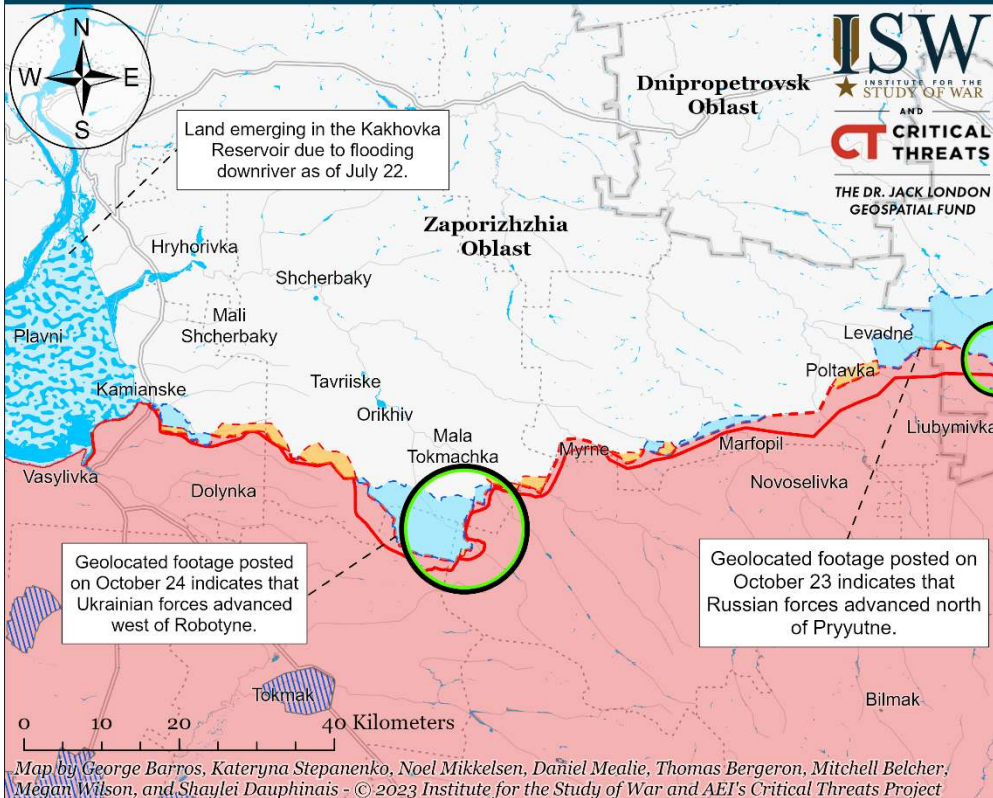


Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 26 but did not make confirmed or claimed advances. Russian sources, including the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Robotyne (12km south of Orikhiv) and Verbove (9km east of Robotyne).[67] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces have slowed the tempo of their offensive operations in western Zaporzhia Oblast due to poor weather and that neither Ukrainian nor Russian artillery are actively firing due to poor visibility.[68]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on October 26 but did not make confirmed or claimed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported in its morning situation report that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Verbove and reported in its evening situation report that Russian forces did not conduct offensive operations and continued regrouping.[69] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces counterattacked along the Kopani-Robotyne-Novoprokopivka line (12km southwest to 13km south of Orikhiv) on October 25.[70]



Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of October 26, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



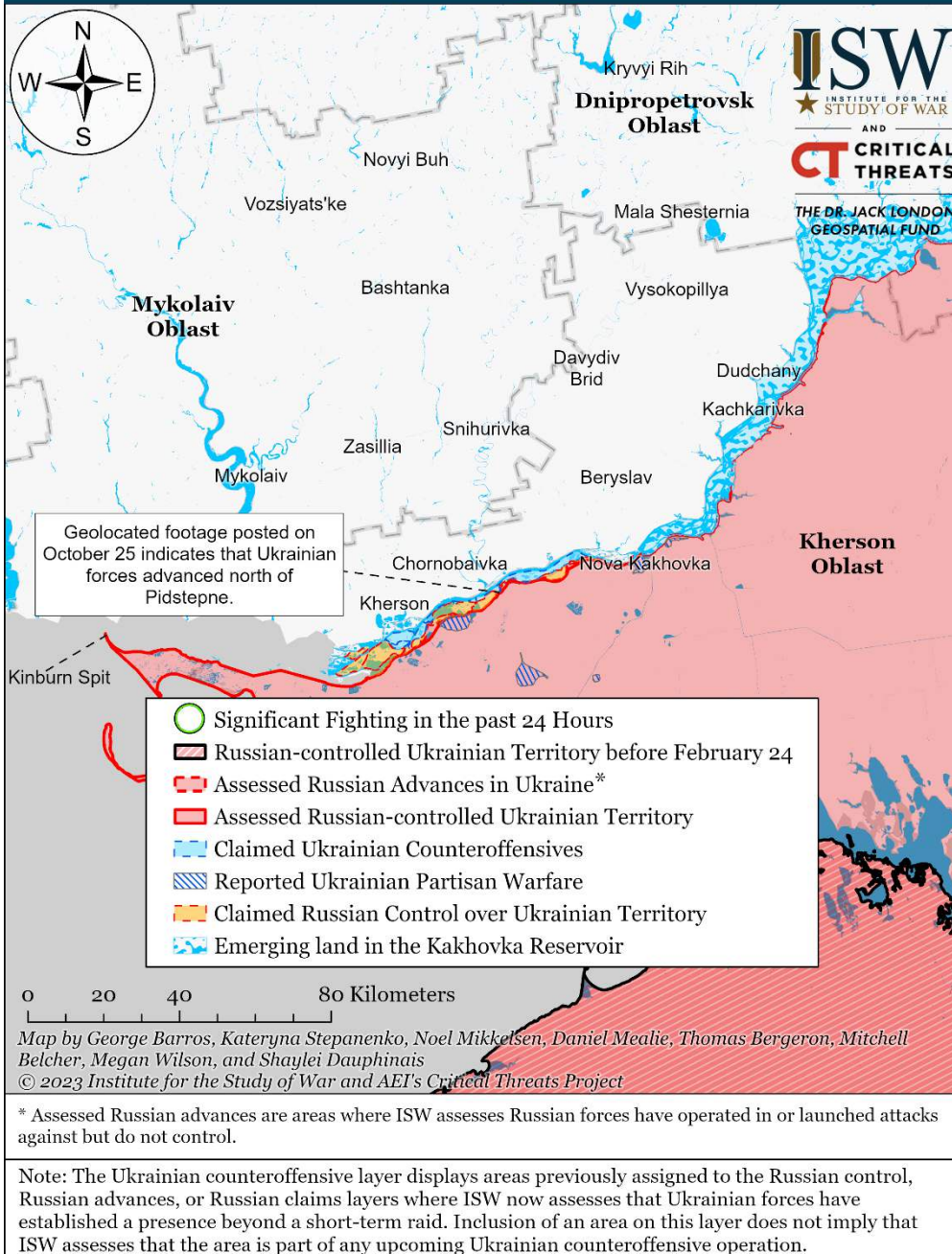
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
- Assessed Russian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

Note: A Russian source claimed on October 24 that Russian forces advanced 200 meters near Pryyutne and Novodarivka.

Ukrainian forces marginally advanced following a renewal of larger-than-usual operations on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast on October 25. Geolocated footage published on October 25 shows that Ukrainian forces marginally advanced north of Pidstepne (15km east of Kherson City).[71] Russian milbloggers continue to claim that Ukrainian forces maintain positions in Krynky (30km east of Kherson City and 2km from the Dniro River) and that Ukrainian forces continue to transfer small groups of reinforcements to the area.[72] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Pidstepne and Pishchanivka (12km east of Kherson City and 3km from the Dniro River) on October 25 and that Ukrainian forces also attacked near Poyma (11km east of Kherson City and 4km from the Dniro River) on October 26.[73]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of October 26, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

Several Russian opposition outlets reported that Russian defense industrial base (DIB) companies continue to use Western components supplied through intermediaries to manufacture missiles to use

against Ukraine. Russian opposition outlet *The Insider* reported on October 25 that Rostec-owned Mechanical Engineering Design Bureau Cooperation (KB Mashinostroyeniya), which produces Kinzhal hypersonic air-launched and Iskander missiles, receives Western microcircuits through a Chinese company.[74] Russian opposition outlet *Vazhnye Istorii (iStories)* reported on October 26 that a Russian electronic import company Inkotekh supplies Russian companies that manufacture Kalibr, Kh-35, and Kh-59 missiles with Western made electronic components through intermediary companies.[75] ISW has no independent confirmation of these assertions.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Japanese Foreign Minister Kamikawa Yoko, and South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin issued a joint statement on October 25 confirming that North Korea is supplying Russia with military equipment and ammunition.[76] The statement also reports that North Korea has completed some arms deliveries and that Russia continues attempts to obtain military equipment from North Korea.[77]

The Russian State Duma adopted the first draft of the Russian federal budget for 2024 to 2026 that would increase national defense spending by 68 percent compared to national defense spending in 2023. *Forbes Russia* reported on October 16 that the draft budget allocates 10.77 trillion rubles (about \$115 billion) to national defense, thus making national defense the most significant expenditure category in the budget for the first time.[78]

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

Russian occupation authorities continue efforts to forcibly indoctrinate Ukrainian youth into Russian culture and identity through the expansion of military-patriotic educational programs. The Kherson Oblast occupation administration announced on October 26 that the Russian Union of Veterans organization began operating in occupied Kherson and Zaporizhia oblasts.[79] The Russian Union of Veterans organization's main tasks reportedly are conducting "patriotic and moral" youth education programs and aiding veterans.[80] The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported that Russian authorities tasked Russian occupation officials with increasing the number of youth institutions – including military-patriotic education programs – in occupied Ukraine by the end of 2023.[81] The Ukrainian Resistance Center also reported that Russian authorities designated the Defenders of the Fatherland Foundation as the primary organization responsible for militarizing Ukrainian youth in occupied areas.[82]

The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported on October 26 that Ukrainian partisans attacked Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) officers in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast with an improvised explosive device (IED) on October 23. The GUR reported that Ukrainian partisans detonated an IED under the car containing four Russian FSB officers in occupied Berdyansk, killing them.[83]

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian President Vladimir Putin promoted boilerplate narratives accusing the West of fomenting international interreligious conflict and lauding Russia as a beacon of religious harmony at a meeting with the leaders of several Russian religious organizations on October 25.[84] Russian religious leaders parroted Putin's rhetoric and erroneously claimed that there has never been any conflict

between Russian Orthodox Christians, Muslims, and Jews.[85] Putin likely aims to present Russia as protecting its religious minorities to curry favor with Muslim and Jewish audiences against the backdrop of the ongoing Israeli-Hamas war. The Kremlin routinely promotes narratives stressing interreligious harmony to downplay tensions between the increasingly ultranationalist Russian Orthodox Church and Russia's religious minorities.

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)

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Volgograd Oblast Governor Andrei Bocharov in Minsk on October 26.[86] Lukashenko and Lavrov reportedly discussed Russia's 2024 presidential elections, the European Union, and Ukraine's acquisition of ATACMS long range missiles.[87] Lukashenko will likely mirror the Kremlin's rhetoric concerning these topics. Lukashenko and Bocharov reportedly discussed trade partnerships between Belarus and Volgograd Oblast, likely meant to support the Kremlin's sanctions evasion schemes.[88]

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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[64] https://t.me/boris_rozhin/102012; <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/51546>; <https://t.me/rybar/53621>; <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/55544>

[65] https://t.me/batalyon_vostok/229

[66] https://t.me/batalyon_vostok/229

[67] https://t.me/mod_russia/31834 ; https://t.me/mod_russia/31841; <https://t.me/wargonzo/16024>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/68364> ; <https://t.me/DnevnikDesantnika/4305>; <https://t.me/DnevnikDesantnika/4284>; https://t.me/boris_rozhin/102012; <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/51546>

[68] https://t.me/rusich_army/11503; https://t.me/dva_majors/28015; <https://t.me/DnevnikDesantnika/4305>; <https://t.me/batalyon15/3198>

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<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbidoirf3jMCBzoyNoSZSFbXqzHofEpx7q62oUxwquXWehQaNm6soTUC9TWnD1yq7ESPrI>

[70] <https://t.me/RVvoenkori/55537>

[71] https://t.me/creamy_caprice/2805;
https://twitter.com/clement_molin/status/1717132431419904477

[72] https://t.me/dva_majors/28026; <https://t.me/wargonzo/16024> ; <https://t.me/russiatelegram14/2757>; <https://t.me/milchronicles/2781> ; https://t.me/Sladkov_plus/8937

[73] <https://t.me/wargonzo/16024>; <https://t.me/rybar/53621>;
<https://t.me/DnevnikDesantnika/4289>

[74] <https://t.me/bbcussian/54990> ; <https://theinsdotru.com/politika/265990>
; <https://t.me/severrealii/20919>

[75] <https://storage.googleapis.com/istories/stories/2023/10/26/что-обсчего-между-ракетои-калибр-zrpk-pantsir-i-semei-vitse-spikera-soveta-federatsii/index.html>

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[77] <https://www.state.gov/u-s-japan-rok-joint-statement-condemning-dprk-russia-arms-transfers/>

[78] <https://t.me/astrapress/41138> ; <https://www.forbesdotru.com/finansy/499300-gosduma-v-pervom-ctenii-prinala-proekt-budzeta-na-2024-2026-gody>

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[81] <https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/vorog-planuye-narostyty-tempy-promyvky-mizkiv-ukrayinskym-dityam/>

[82] <https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/vorog-planuye-narostyty-tempy-promyvky-mizkiv-ukrayinskym-dityam/>

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[86] https://t.me/pul_1/10329 ; https://t.me/pul_1/10330 ; https://t.me/pul_1/10334
; https://t.me/pul_1/10320

[87] https://t.me/pul_1/10329 ; https://t.me/pul_1/10330 ; https://t.me/pul_1/10334

[88] https://t.me/pul_1/10320

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 25, 2023

Riley Bailey, Angelica Evans, Nicole Wolkov, Karolina Hird, and Frederick W. Kagan
October 25, 2023, 6:45pm ET

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

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

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 12:30pm ET on October 25. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 26 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian forces marginally advanced in western Zaporizhia Oblast and continued offensive operations near Bakhmut on October 25. Geolocated footage published on October 24 indicates that Ukrainian forces made further marginal advances west of Robotyne.[1] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces also achieved unspecified partial success west of Verbove (9km west of Robotyne).[2] Ukrainian Ground Forces Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Volodymyr Fityo stated on October 24 that Ukrainian forces are conducting offensive operations near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) and Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).[3]

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky noted that Ukrainian forces are preparing for a fall-winter Russian strike campaign against Ukraine after another series of Russian drone strikes on the night of October 24 to 25. Ukrainian military sources reported that Ukrainian air defenses destroyed a total of 11 Russian Shahed-131/136 drones over Khmelnytskyi and Mykolaiv oblasts.[4] Zelensky stated that Ukraine is preparing to defend against a Russian fall-winter strike campaign against Ukrainian energy infrastructure and suggested that Ukraine is planning for its own strikes on Russian military assets in turn.[5] Zelensky stated that the Russian military is aware of Ukraine's intentions to strike Russian military infrastructure in Crimea and Russia and is moving the Black Sea Fleet (BSF) away from Crimea and Russian aircraft further from the Russia-Ukraine border, likely in response to continued Ukrainian strikes against Russian naval and aviation assets.[6]

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu visited an Eastern Grouping of Forces command post in the south Donetsk direction (Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area) on October 25.[7] Shoigu awarded medals to the commanders of the 155th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) and 810th Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet) and claimed that these units successfully repelled Ukrainian offensive operations.[8] ISW has observed recent claims that elements of the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade are operating in the Kherson direction, however.[9]

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) confirmed that Lieutenant General Andrei Kuzmenko is the Russian Eastern Grouping of Forces Commander on October 25, likely also confirming Kuzmenko's position as Eastern Military District (EMD) commander.[10] The Russian MoD published footage on October 25 of Russian Defense Minister

Sergei Shoigu meeting with Kuzmenko at a command post in the south Donetsk direction.[11] Kuzmenko's likely appointment as EMD commander is consistent with Russian and Ukrainian sources' speculations in March 2023 that Kuzmenko would replace Colonel General Rustam Muradov as Eastern Military District (EMD) commander.[12]

The Kremlin's support for ultranationalist Russian Orthodox religion and ideology appears to be complicating Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov's ability to balance appealing to his Chechen Muslim constituencies with keeping the Kremlin's favor. Kadyrov delivered inconsistent and potentially inflammatory domestic religious messaging on October 24, suggesting that he is struggling to reconcile his enthusiastic support for Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has routinely postured himself as the true protector of the Orthodox Christian faith, and Kadyrov's own persona as a staunch representative of Chechnya's Islamic values. Kadyrov's son Adam recently ignited a notable domestic outcry in Russia against his father after Ramzan touted footage of Adam beating a detainee accused of burning the Quran.[13] Republic of Tatarstan Head Rustam Minnikhanov and Karachay-Cherkess Republic Head Rashid Temrezov awarded Adam Kadyrov for developing "interethnic and interregional unity" and strengthening traditional Islamic values on October 24, an event that Kadyrov used to praise his son further despite the blowback against Adam's actions.[14] Kadyrov likely tried to balance the potentially inflammatory effects of publicly supporting his son's violence with publicly announcing the opening of an Orthodox Church in Chechnya alongside Rosgvardia Head Viktor Zolotov on October 25.[15]

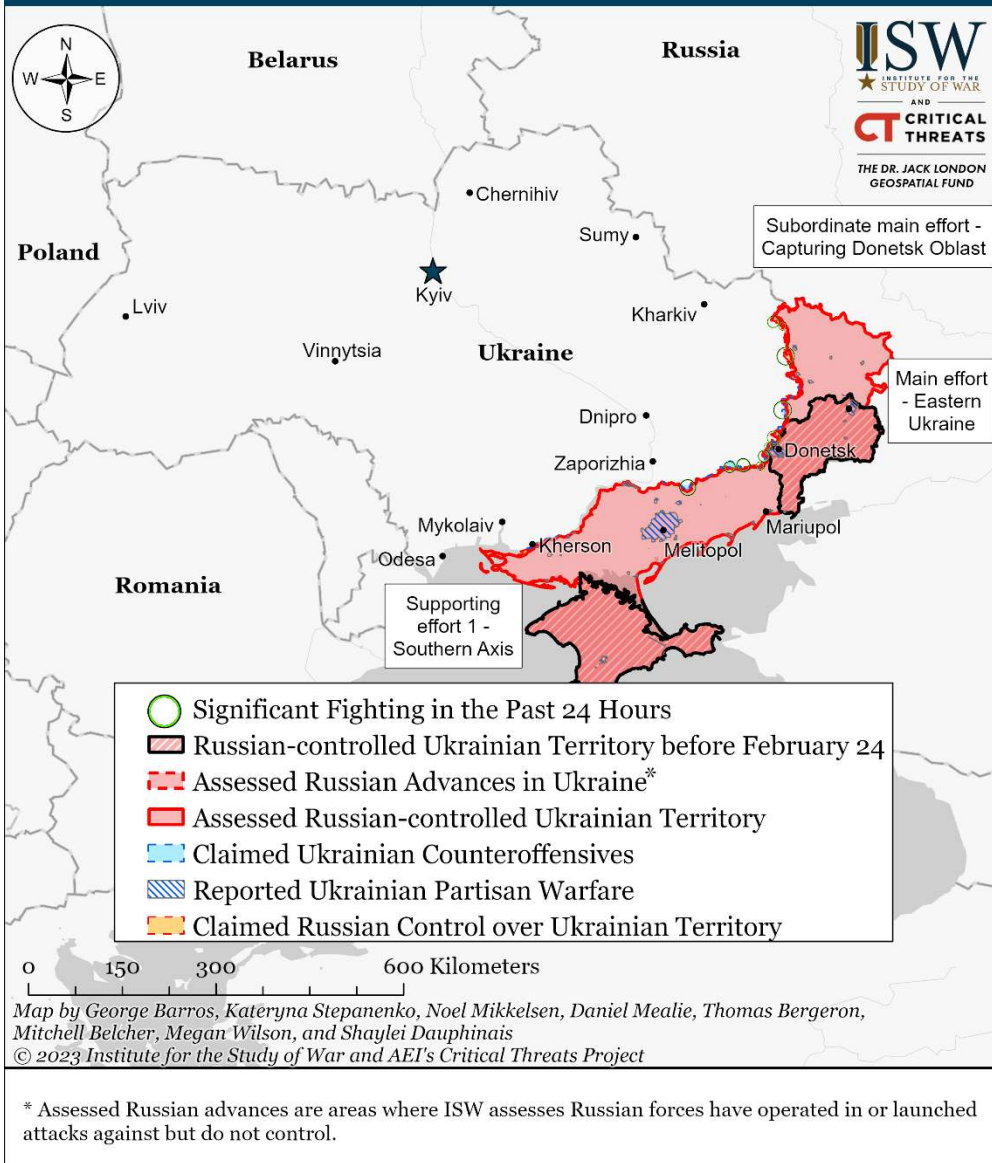
Kadyrov promptly upset whatever informational effects he may have generated in balancing his response to Adam's awards with his meeting with Zolotov by announcing the creation of the "Sheikh Mansur" volunteer battalion. This announcement generated outrage from Russian ultranationalists because "Sheikh Mansur" is also the name of a volunteer battalion comprised of Chechen and Ichkerian volunteers fighting for Ukraine.[16] Sheikh Mansur was a Chechen fighter from the 18th Century who opposed Russian imperial rule. Kadyrov will likely continue to draw the ire of Russian ultranationalists who are increasingly opposed to migrants who come from predominantly Muslim Central Asian countries and other religious minorities in Russia with his continued efforts to appeal to his core Muslim constituencies.[17]

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian forces marginally advanced in western Zaporizhia Oblast and continued offensive operations near Bakhmut on October 25.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Avdiivka on October 25 and made a confirmed advance.**
- **Russian sources claimed on October 25 that Ukrainian forces resumed larger-than-usual ground operations on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast and maintain positions in several areas on the east bank. Only a handful of Russian sources are currently claiming that Ukrainian forces have resumed larger-than-usual ground operations on the east bank, however.**
- **Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky noted that Ukrainian forces are preparing for a fall-winter Russian strike campaign against Ukraine after another series of Russian drone strikes on the night of October 24 to 25.**

- **Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu visited an Eastern Grouping of Forces command post in the south Donetsk direction (Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area) on October 25.**
- **The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) confirmed that Lieutenant General Andrei Kuzmenko is the Russian Eastern Grouping of Forces Commander on October 25, likely also confirming Kuzmenko's position as Eastern Military District (EMD) commander.**
- **The Kremlin's support for ultranationalist Russian Orthodox religion and ideology appears to be complicating Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov's ability to balance appealing to his Chechen Muslim constituencies with keeping the Kremlin's favor.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove line, near Bakhmut, southwest of Donetsk City, in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia but did not make confirmed advances.**
- **Russian National Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev claimed that nearly 385,000 people have entered service with the Russian armed forces between January 1 and October 25, 2023.**
- **Russian occupation authorities continue to use medical infrastructure to justify the deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia and to further consolidate control of occupied areas of Ukraine.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of October 25, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas
- Russian Information Operations and Narratives

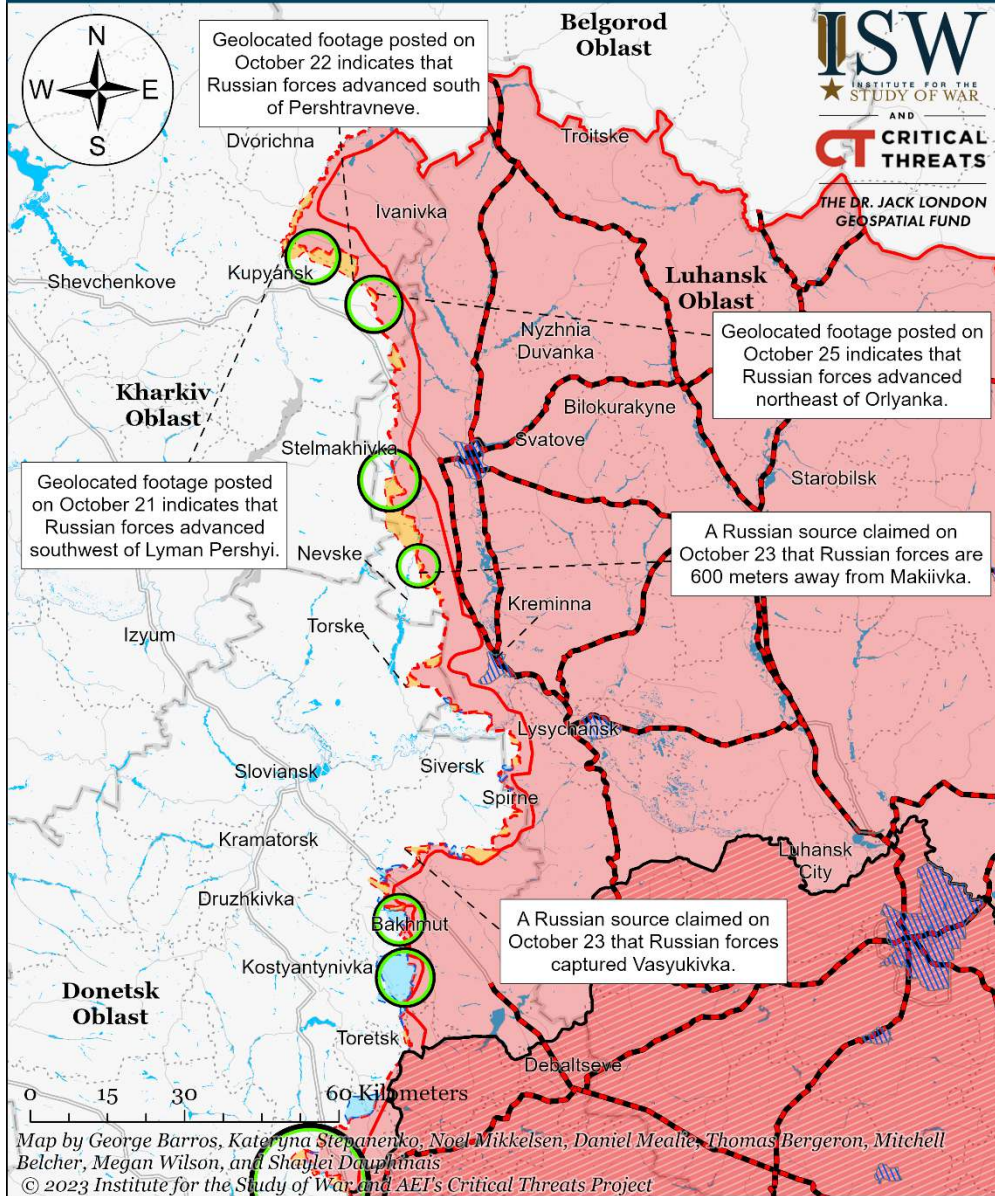
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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

Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove line on October 25 but did not make any confirmed advances. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces captured several unspecified Ukrainian positions in the Kupyansk direction, although ISW has not observed visual evidence of this claim.[18] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk), Petropavlivka (7km east of Kupyansk), Ivanivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk), Makiivka (20km southwest of Svatove), and Nadiya (15km west of Svatove).[19] A Russian media aggregator claimed that Russian forces assaulted Ukrainian positions near Kyslivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk) on the evening of October 24.[20]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on October 25. The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Synkivka, Tymkivka (18km east of Kupyansk), Ivanivka, Zahoruykivka (16km east of Kupyansk), Nadiya, Dibrova (7km southwest of Kreminna), and Hryhorivka (11km south of Kreminna).[21] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Yampolivka (17km west of Kreminna).[22]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of October 25, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Meale, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Megan Wilson, and Shaylei Dauphinais
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- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Russian Ground Lines of Communication
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

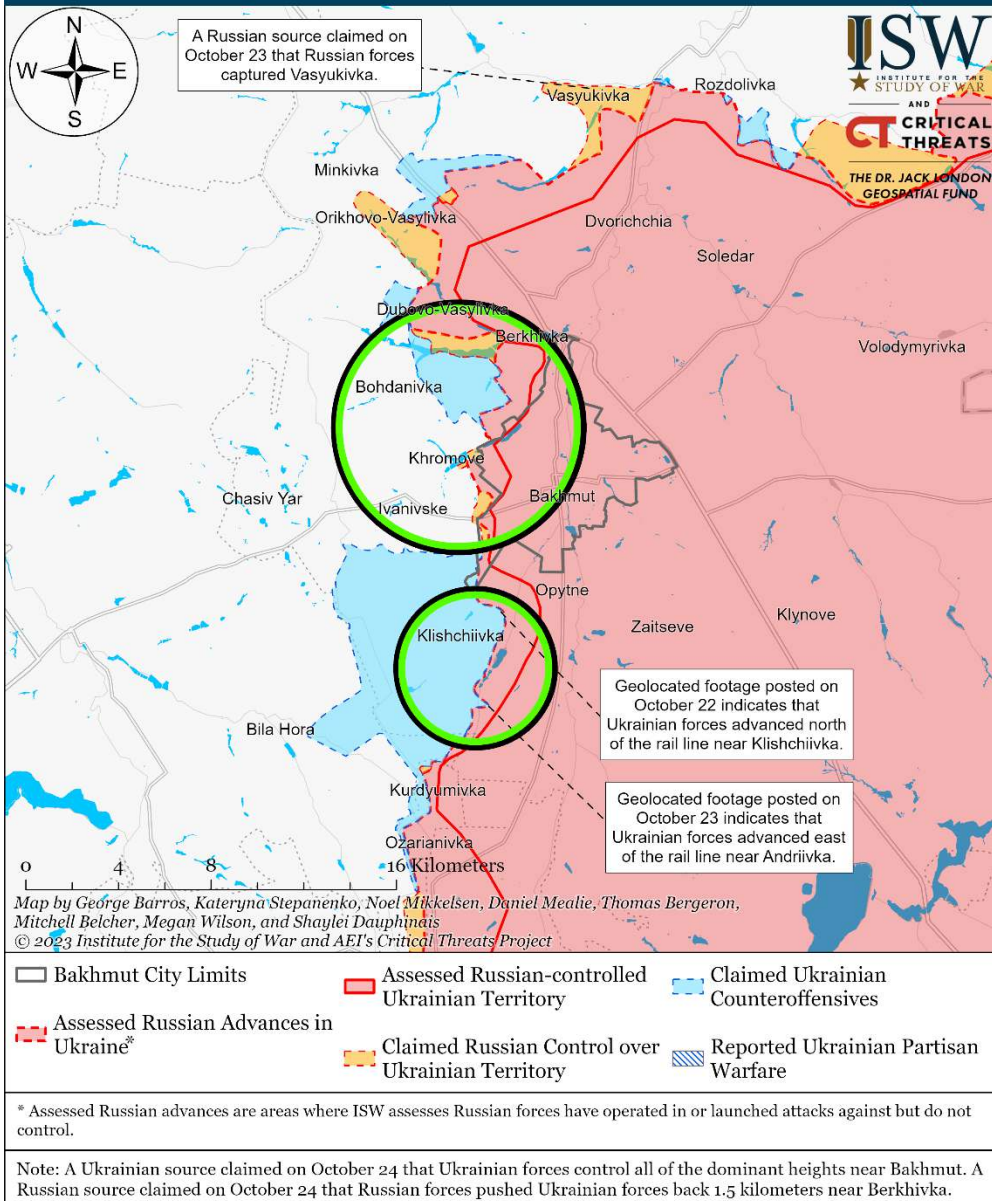
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut on October 25 but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Bakhmut direction.[23] Ukrainian Ground Forces Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Volodymyr Fityo stated on October 24 that Ukrainian forces are conducting offensive operations near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) and Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).[24] Fityo stated that fighting also occurred near Khromove (immediately west of Bakhmut).[25] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Maloyllinivka (4km north of Bakhmut), Andriivka, Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut), and Pivnichne (20km southwest of Bakhmut).[26]

Russian forces conducted unsuccessful ground attacks near Bakhmut on October 25. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Bohdanivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut), Ivanivske (6km west of Bakhmut), Klishchiivka, and Andriivka.[27] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces counterattacked near Berkhivka (4km north of Bakhmut).[28] Russian sources amplified footage on October 25 claiming to show elements of the Russian 58th Spetsnaz Brigade (1st Donetsk People’s Republic [DNR] Army Corps) operating in the Bakhmut direction.[29]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of October 25, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



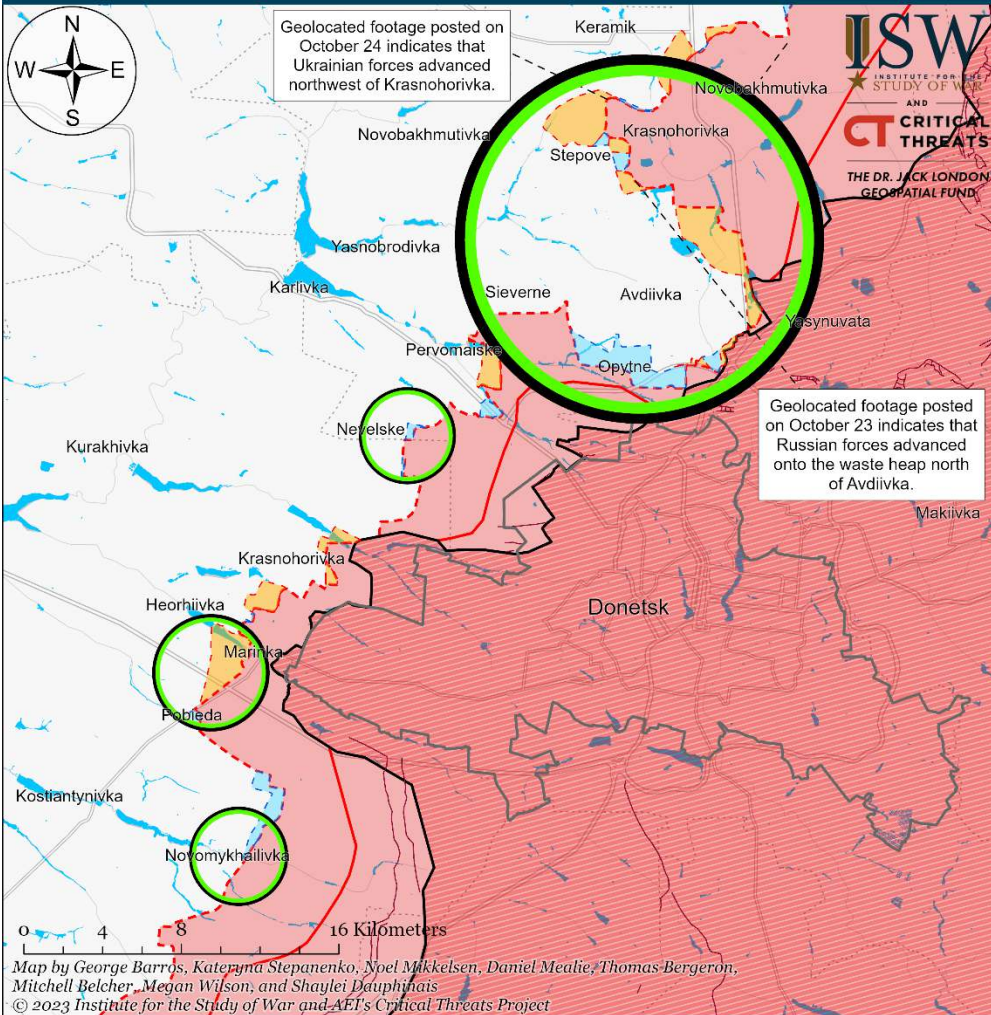
Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Avdiivka on October 25 and made a confirmed advance. Geolocated footage published on October 24 indicates that Russian forces advanced northwest of Krasnohorivka (5km northwest of Avdiivka).[30] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Stepove (3km northwest of Avdiivka), Avdiivka, Tonenke (5km west of Avdiivka), Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka), and Nevelske (13km southwest of Avdiivka).[31] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun stated on October 24 that the frequency of Russian assaults near Avdiivka has decreased.[32] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed on October 25 that Russian forces achieved “serious tactical success” on the approaches to Avdiivka and near Stepove and advanced to the railway line north of

Avdiivka.[33] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are advancing from Krasnohorivka to Novokalynove (7km north of Avdiivka).[34] Russian forces largely claimed that Russian forces controlled the Avdiivka waste heap, as did a Ukrainian military observer.[35] Ukrainian Avdiivka City Military Administration Head Vitaly Barabash denied claims that Russian forces control the Avdiivka waste heap and stated that the waste heap is a contested “gray area.”[36] Another Ukrainian military observer claimed on October 25 that Wagner Group remnants are fighting near Avdiivka, although ISW has not observed evidence of former Wagner fighters operating near Avdiivka.[37]

A Ukrainian reserve officer published satellite imagery on October 23 and confirmed that the Russian military lost over 109 military vehicles near Avdiivka between October 10 and 20.[38] The reserve officer stated that the majority of Russian losses were primarily armored fighting vehicles, such as BMP-1 and BMP-2s and MT-LBs; T-72, T-64, and T-80 tanks; BTR armored personnel carriers; and other transport vehicles. The reserve officer stated that Russian vehicle losses around Avdiivka have surpassed Russian vehicle losses during the failed Siversky Donets crossing in May 2022 and will likely surpass Russian vehicle losses in the Vuhledar area between November 2022 and April 2023. The reserve officer stated that Russian forces may have lost around a dozen additional vehicles excluded from the final count due to inconsistent imagery and noted that two unspecified independent sources estimate that Russian forces have lost around 200 military vehicles near Avdiivka.

A Russian milblogger claimed on October 24 that Ukrainian forces counterattacked and pushed Russian forces from Berdychi (10km northwest of Avdiivka).[39]

Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of October 25, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Megan Wilson, and Shaylei Datuphais
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Donetsk City Limits	Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*	Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory	Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory	Russian Field Fortifications

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

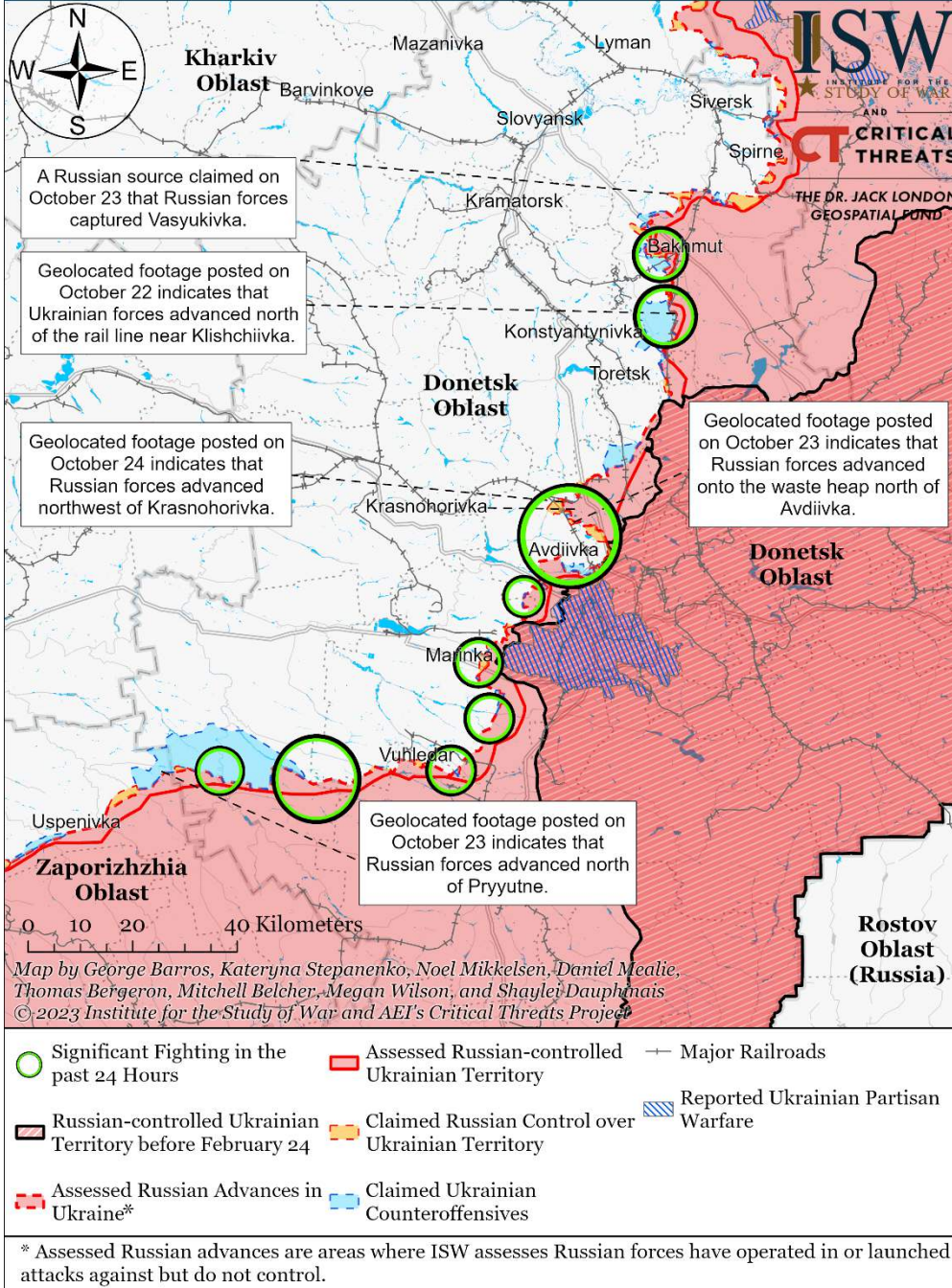
Note: A Russian source claimed on October 23 that Russian forces advanced almost 2 kilometers near Avdiivka. A Ukrainian source claimed on October 23 that Ukrainian forces pushed Russian forces back 200 meters near Opytne. A Ukrainian source claimed on October 22 that Russian forces advanced 1.5 kilometers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

Russian forces conducted ground attacks southwest of Donetsk City on October 25. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Marinka (immediately southwest of Donetsk City), Pobieda (5km southwest of Donetsk City), and Novomykhailivka (10km southwest of Donetsk City) on October 25.[40]

Ukrainian forces did not conduct any claimed or confirmed attacks southwest of Donetsk City on October 25.

The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Vodyane (5km northeast of Vuhledar) on October 25.[41]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of October 25, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

Ukrainian forces did not conduct any confirmed or claimed ground attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 25.

Russian forces continued limited ground attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 25 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Novoukrainka (18km east of Velyka Novosilka), Prechystivka (19km southeast of Velyka Novosilka), Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka), and Zolota Nyva (11km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[42] Zaporizhia Oblast occupation deputy Vladimir Rogov claimed that Russian forces successfully attacked near Pryyutne (14km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) and Novodarivka (15km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) and advanced 200 meters.[43] Russian milbloggers also claimed that Russian forces advanced north of Pryyutne, and one Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the 394th Motorized Rifle Regiment (127th Motorized Rifle Division, 5th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) occupied a Ukrainian stronghold in the area.[44] A Ukrainian military observer stated that elements of the 394th Motorized Rifle Regiment and the 60th Motorized Rifle Brigade (also of the 5th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) conducted unsuccessful offensive actions along the Pryyutne-Zavitne Bazhannya line (14km southwest to 11km south of Velyka Novosilka).[45] Rogov claimed that Russian forces also conducted successful assaults near Novodonetske (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka) and Novomayorske (18km southeast of Velyka Novosilka), although another milblogger described Russian assaults near these settlements as unsuccessful.[46]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of October 25, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



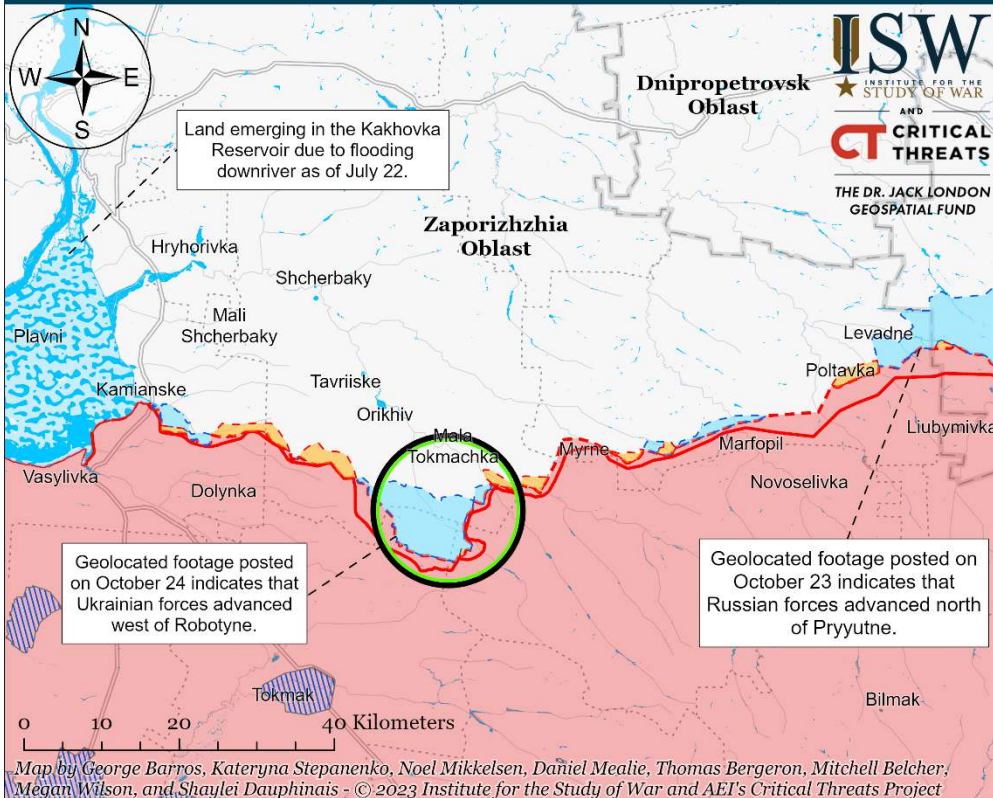
Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 25 and made confirmed gains. Geolocated footage published on October 24 indicates that Ukrainian forces made further advances west of Robotyne.[47] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhia Oblast) direction and achieved partial success west of Verbove (9km west of Robotyne).[48] A Ukrainian military observer claimed that Russian forces withdrew from the northwestern outskirts of Novopropkivka (3km south of Robotyne), although ISW has not yet seen any visual confirmation of this claim.[49] The Russian MoD and other Russian sources claimed that Russian forces repelled

small mechanized Ukrainian groups near Robotyne, Novoprokopivka, and Verbove.[50] A Russian milblogger claimed that two Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance groups reached Russian positions near Verbove on the night of October 24 to 25 before Russian forces repelled them.[51]



Russian forces counterattacked in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on October 25 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Verbove and southeast of Mala Tokmachka (10km northeast of Robotyne).[52] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces counterattacked on a Ukrainian flank near Novopokrovka (12km northeast of Robotyne) but did not specify an outcome.[53]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of October 25, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Megan Wilson, and Shaylei Dauphinais - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

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

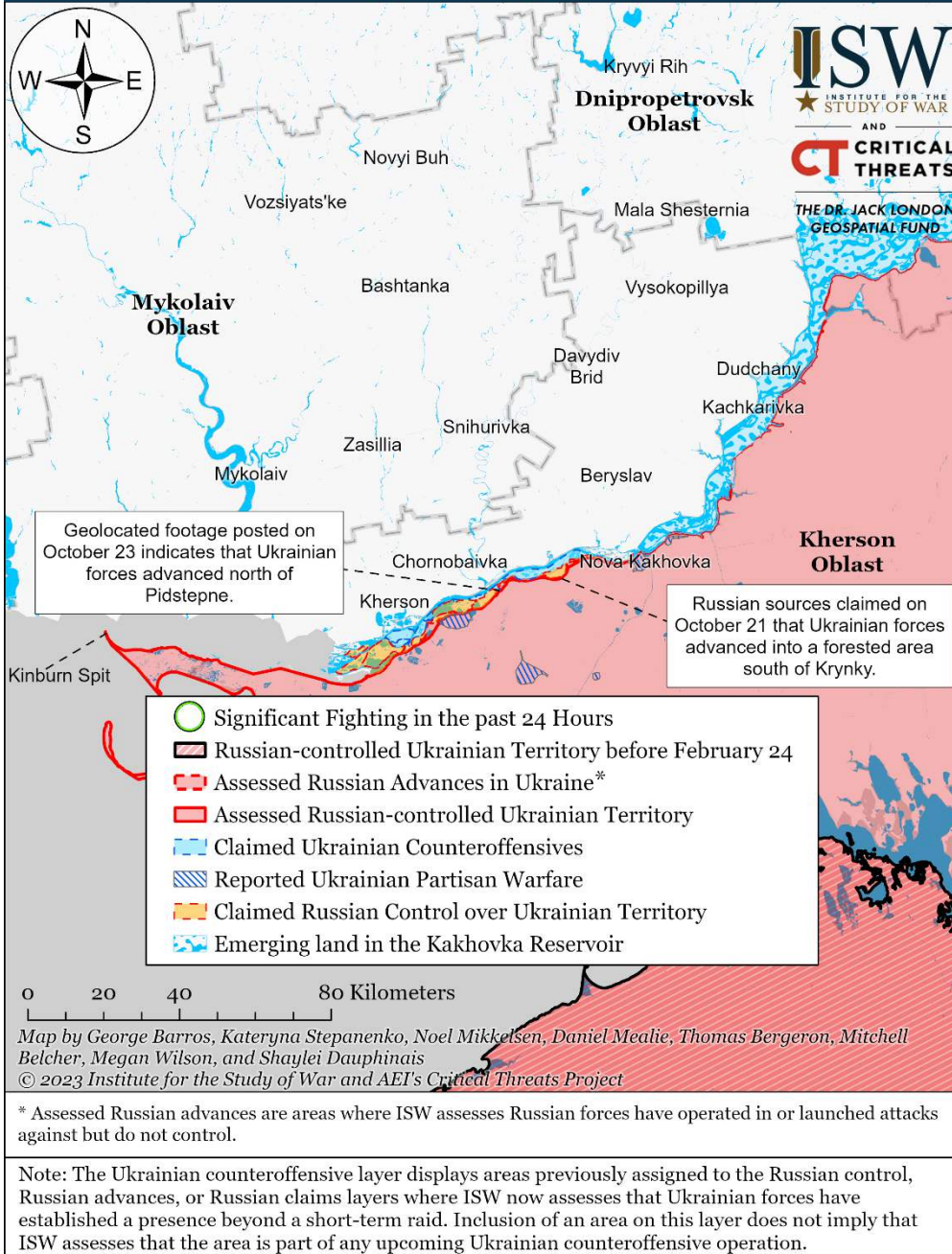
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: A Russian source claimed on October 24 that Russian forces advanced 200 meters near Pryyutne and Novodarivka.

Russian sources claimed on October 25 that Ukrainian forces renewed larger-than-usual ground operations on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast and maintain positions in several areas on the east bank. Russian sources continued to claim that Ukrainian forces maintain positions in Krynyky (30km northeast of Kherson Oblast and 2km from the Dnipro River) and near the Antonivsky railway and roadway bridges.[54] A prominent Russian milblogger who has been closely following Ukrainian activities along the Dnipro River and on the east bank claimed that elements of the Russian 810th Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet) pushed Ukrainian forces out of Krynyky and that Ukrainian forces resumed larger-than-usual ground operations from positions in the marshes north of Oleshky (7km south of Kherson City and 4km from the Dnipro River) on the night of October 24.[55] The prominent milblogger claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian “assault groups” that attempted to move towards Pishchanivka (14km east of Kherson City and 3km from the Dnipro River), Poyma

(12km east of Kherson City and 4km from the Dnipro River), and Pidstepne (18km east of Kherson City and 4km from the Dnipro River).[56] The prominent milblogger claimed that a Ukrainian assault group reached the northern part of Pishchanivka but that Russian forces pushed them out of the settlement.[57] Another milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced from the Antonivsky railway bridge closer to Pidstepne.[58] ISW has not observed any visual evidence indicating that Ukrainian forces have advanced further on the left bank and only a handful of Russian sources are currently claiming that Ukrainian forces have resumed larger-than-usual ground operations on the east bank.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of October 25, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces targeted rear Russian areas in occupied Crimea on October 24. Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces targeted occupied Sevastopol with missiles and that residents heard explosions and Russian air defenses activating in the area.[59] Sevastopol occupation governor Mikhail Razvozhayev claimed on October 24 that Russian electronic warfare (EW) complexes downed a Ukrainian drone over Crimea and that reports of explosions were connected to routine Russian military activities in the Sevastopol area.[60]

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

Russian National Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev claimed that nearly 385,000 people entered service with the Russian armed forces between January 1 and October 25, 2023.[61] Medvedev claimed that 305,000 servicemembers are contract soldiers, 80,000 are volunteers, and that over 1,600 people sign service contracts on a daily basis.[62] Medvedev also reported that Russia will form an army corps, seven motorized rifle divisions, 19 brigades, 49 regiments, and one flotilla over the course of 2024 as part of ongoing large-scale Russian military reforms.[63] The figures presented by Medvedev are likely in part reflective of these ongoing military reforms, as Russia is trying to recruit and train personnel to staff new formations up to the corps and army level.[64] It remains highly unlikely, however, that Russia will be able to fully staff these formations to their doctrinal end strength.

Russian President Vladimir Putin oversaw a training exercise involving the Russian Strategic Deterrence Forces on October 25. The Kremlin reported that Putin and the Russian National Defense Control Center supervised training and coordination of the ground, air, and sea components of Russian nuclear deterrence forces that included practical test launches of ballistic and cruise missiles.[65] Strategic Deterrence forces launched a "Yars" intercontinental ballistic missile from the Plesetsk test cosmodrome in Kamchatka Krai, a "Sineva" ballistic missile from a strategic nuclear-powered missile submarine in the Barents Sea, and various air-launched cruise missiles from Tu-95MS long-range aviation aircraft.[66] Russian Strategic Deterrence Forces conduct regular training exercises involving their ground, air, and sea components, and these components did not demonstrate any notably new capabilities.

Russian authorities continue efforts to secure additional social benefits for Russian servicemembers and their families. United Russia Party General Council Secretary Andrey Turchak, who is also the head of the Duma working group on "Special Military Operation" issues, reported on the results of the working group to Putin on October 25.[67] Turchak highlighted several social benefits that the Russian government is extending to participants in the war and their families, including free travel to medical examinations, increased social pensions for those awarded the Order of St. George award for military service, and free travel for the family of a deceased servicemember to the place of their burial, amongst others.[68] Turchak reported that 20 different types of social assistance are in place in 63 Russian federal subjects and additionally outlined several new proposals to Putin.[69]

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

Russian occupation authorities continue to use medical infrastructure to justify the deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia and to further consolidate control of occupied areas of Ukraine. Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Head Denis Pushilin claimed that 70 children from occupied Donetsk Oblast have undergone surgical procedures at the Russian Research Institute of Emergency Pediatric Surgery and Traumatology in Moscow since 2022.[70] Pushilin notably did not specify how many of the children returned to occupied Donetsk Oblast following their procedures, and ISW has observed a pattern of Russian officials deporting children to Russia under the guise of medical or psychiatric necessity and failing to return them to their homes in Ukraine.[71] Pushilin reported that Russian

doctors from the Research Institute also arrived in occupied Donetsk Oblast to train new doctors and conduct surgical procedures.[72]

Russian occupation administrations continue programs to forcibly militarize Ukrainian children living in occupied areas. The Russian Kherson Oblast occupation administration reported on October 25 that 12 schoolchildren from Skadovsk took an oath of allegiance "to strengthen the power of the Russian state" and become cadets.[73] The Kherson Oblast occupation Ministry of Education praised the resumption of the cadet movement amongst school-aged children for expanding Russian military-patriotic values.[74]

Unknown actors, potentially Ukrainian partisans, conducted an attack against a Russian soldier in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast with an improvised explosive device (IED) on October 23.[75] The Zaporizhia occupation branch of the Russian Investigative Committee stated on October 25 that it has opened a case on "committing a terrorist act" in connection with an incident wherein unspecified actors planted an IED under the car of a Russian serviceman in Berdyansk that then detonated, killing the soldier.[76]

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu claimed on October 25 that Russian forces have downed 24 Ukrainian aircraft in the past five days, likely an inflated claim that is part of an ongoing effort to portray Russian operations as successful by overstating Ukrainian losses.[77] A Russian milblogger criticized Shoigu's figure and noted that Russian forces would have destroyed the entire Ukrainian air force several times since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine began if the Russian MoD's reporting on Ukrainian aviation losses were accurate.[78]

The Russian MoD claimed on October 25 that Russian air defense systems downed two ATACMS within the past day, though ISW has not observed any reports of ATACMS strikes since the October 17 ATACMS strike on a Russian airfield in occupied Berdyansk, Donetsk Oblast.[79] Russian officials previously claimed that Russian air defense systems could intercept HIMARS rockets and Storm Shadow missiles shortly after their provision to Ukraine, though ISW has yet to observe visual confirmation of Russian forces intercepting either system.[80]

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

The Belarusian Ministry of Defense (MoD) reported on October 25 that a mechanized unit of the Belarusian 6th Separate Guards Mechanized Brigade conducted fire training at the Gozhsky training ground in Grodno Oblast.[81]

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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Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 24, 2023

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

October 24, 2023, 5:00pm ET

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

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

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 1:00pm ET on October 24. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 25 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

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

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

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

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

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

Key Takeaways:

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

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

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



We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We will continue to evaluate and report on the effects of

these criminal activities on the Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population and specifically on combat in Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn these Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict, Geneva Conventions, and humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas
- Russian Information Operations and Narratives

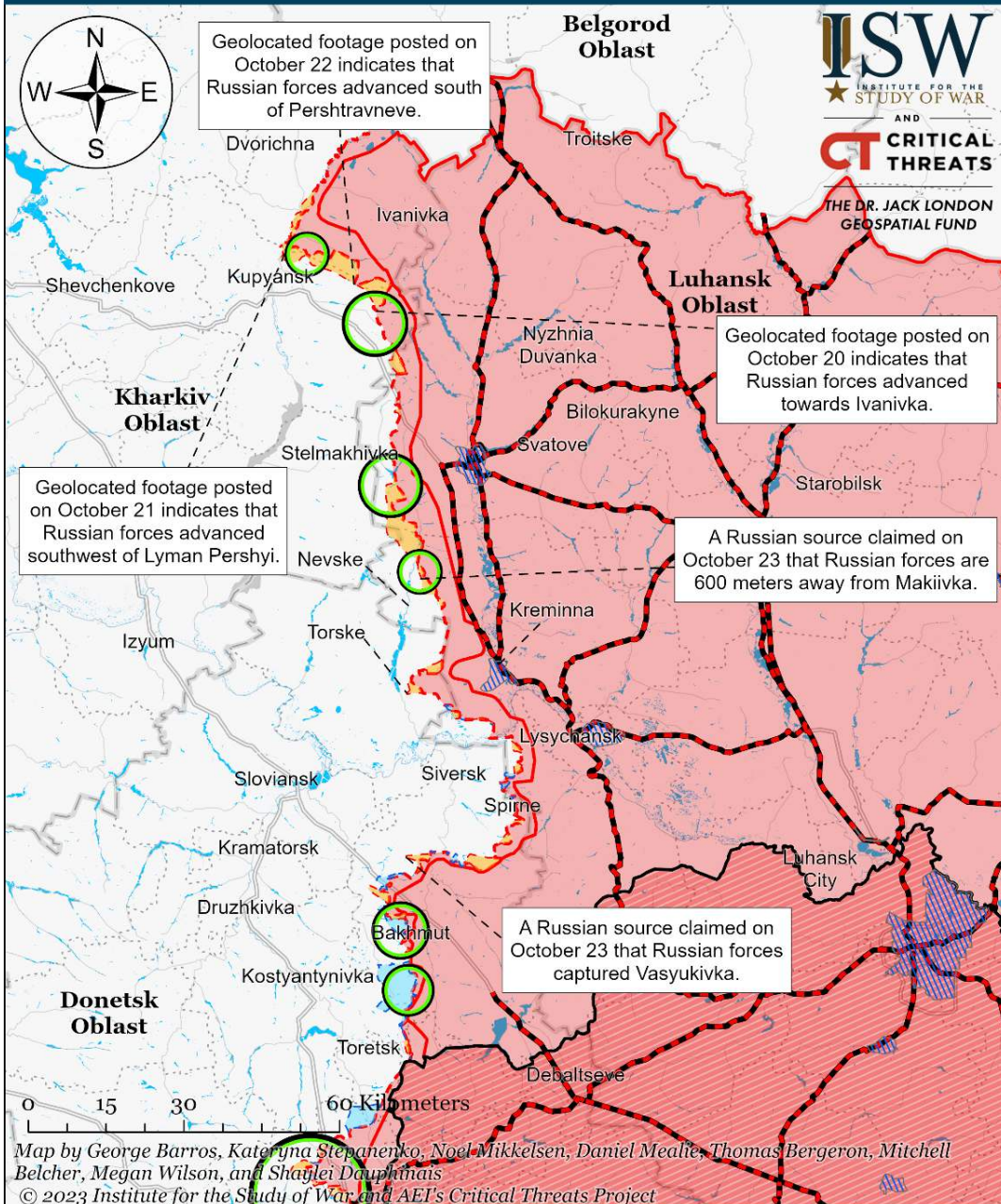
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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

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

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

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



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

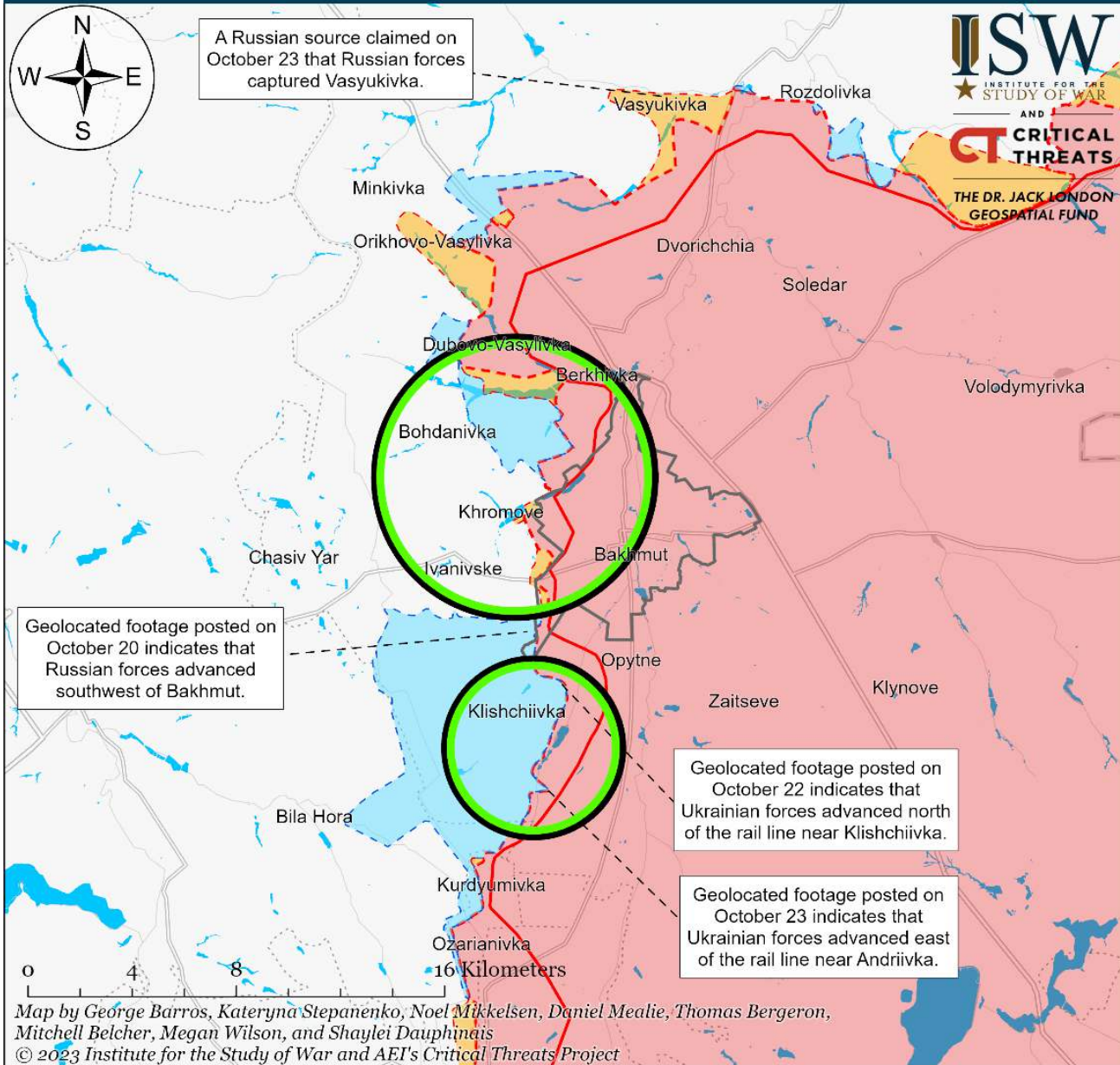
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

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

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

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of October 24, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



- Bakhmut City Limits
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

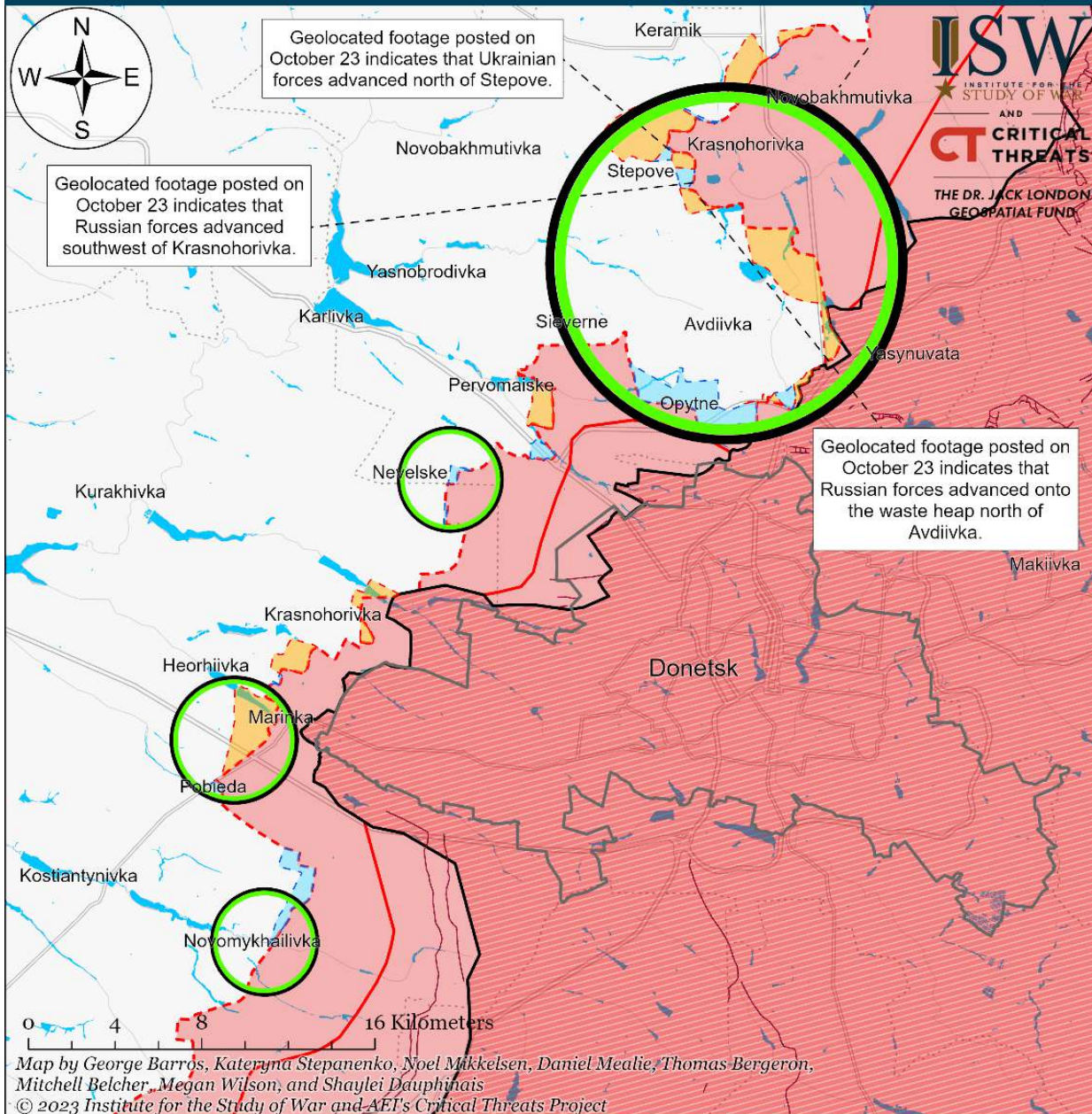
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

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

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

Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of October 24, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



- Donetsk City Limits
- ▭ Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- ▭ Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- ▭ Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- ▭ Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Russian Field Fortifications

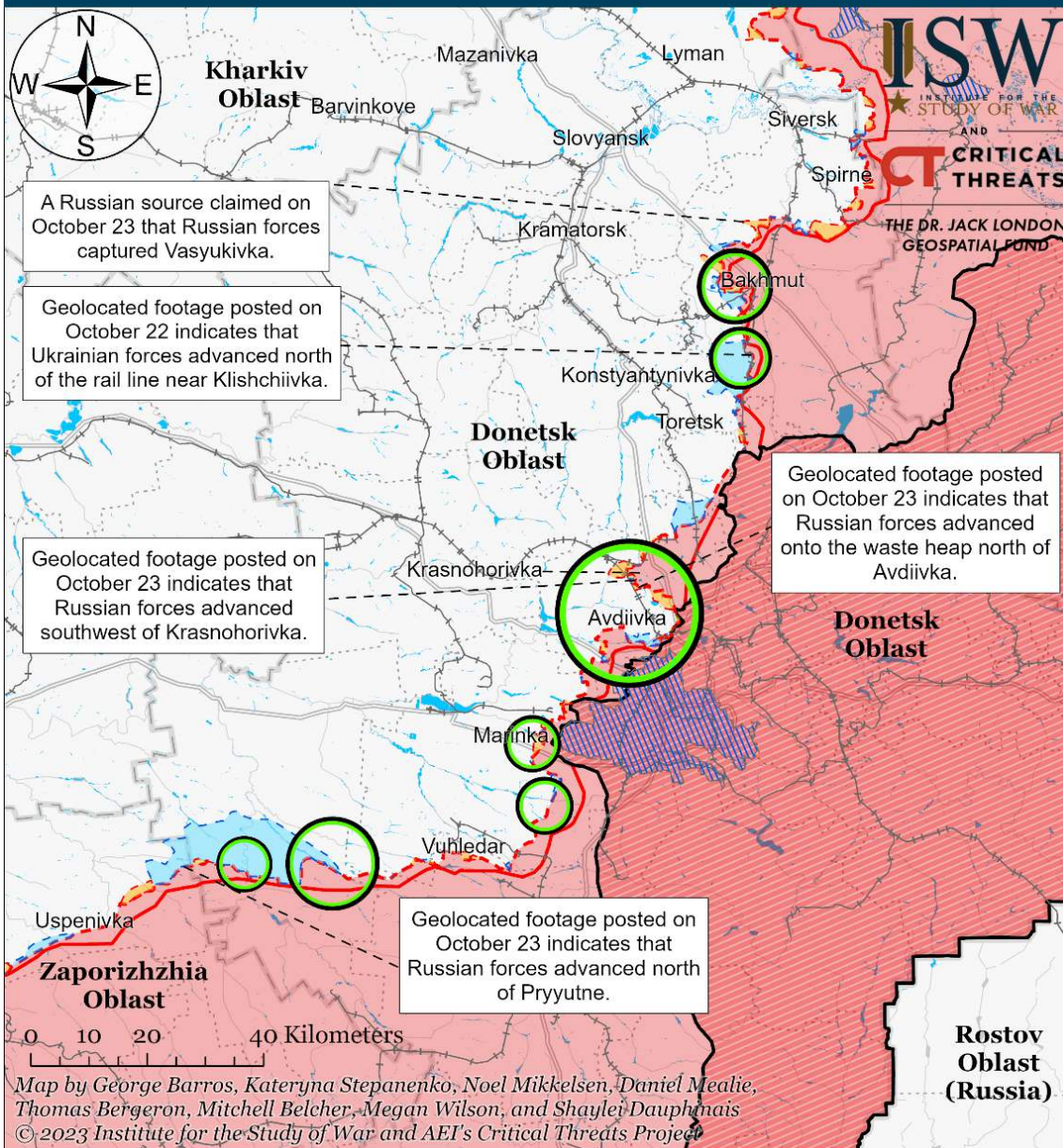
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

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

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

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



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

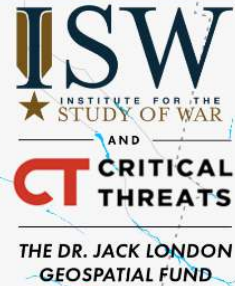
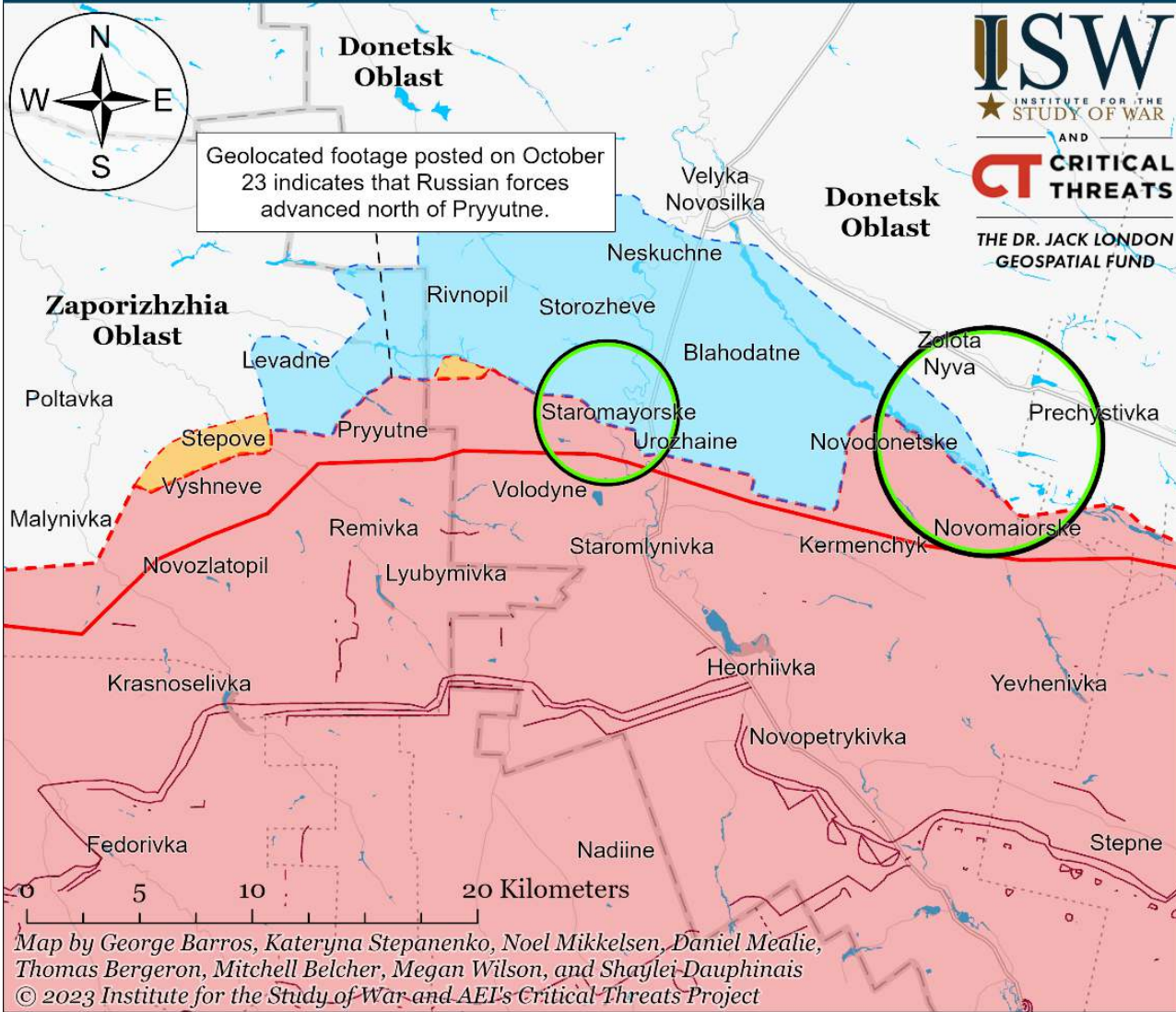
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

Ukrainian forces did not conduct any claimed or confirmed attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 24.

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

Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of October 24, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

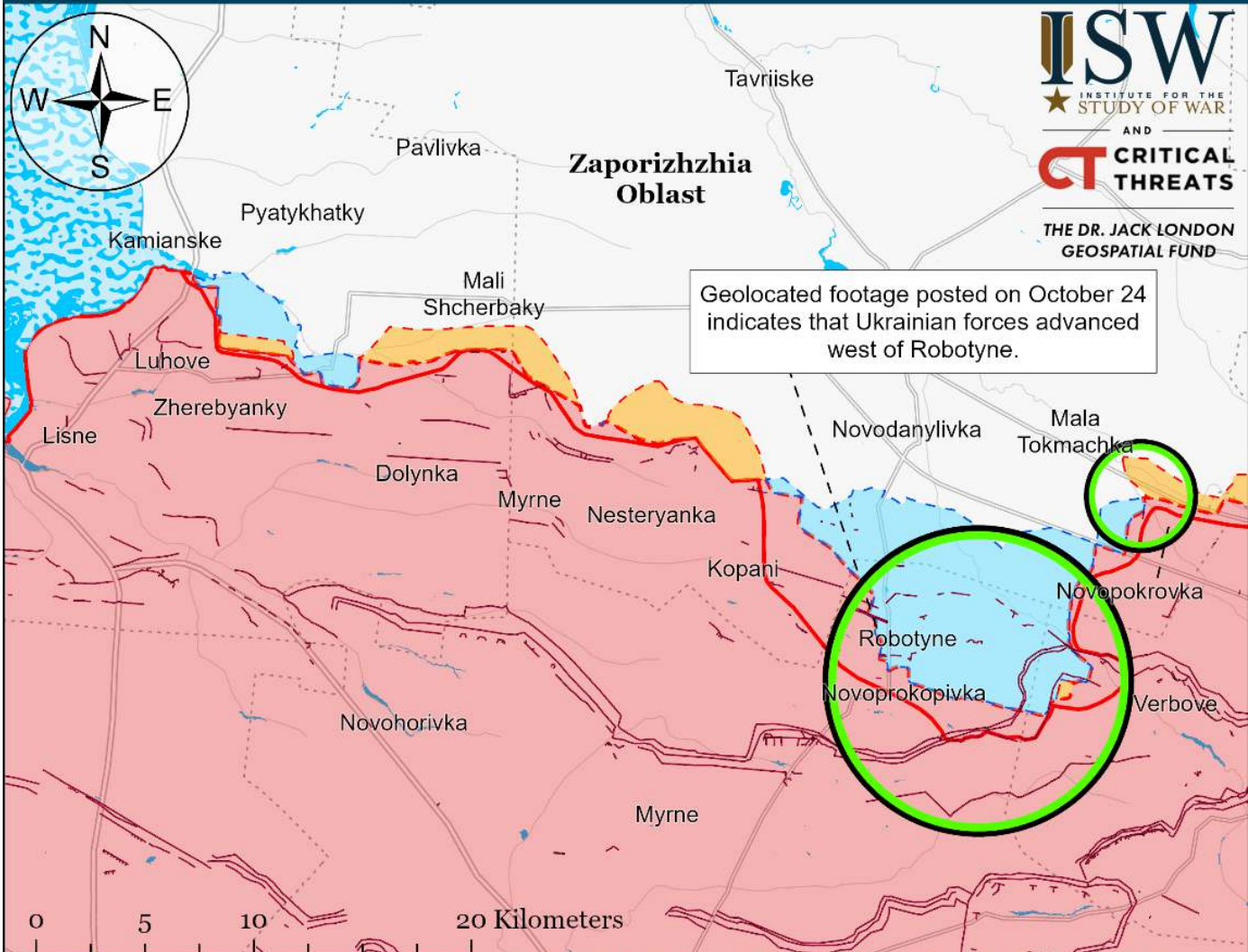
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

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

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

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



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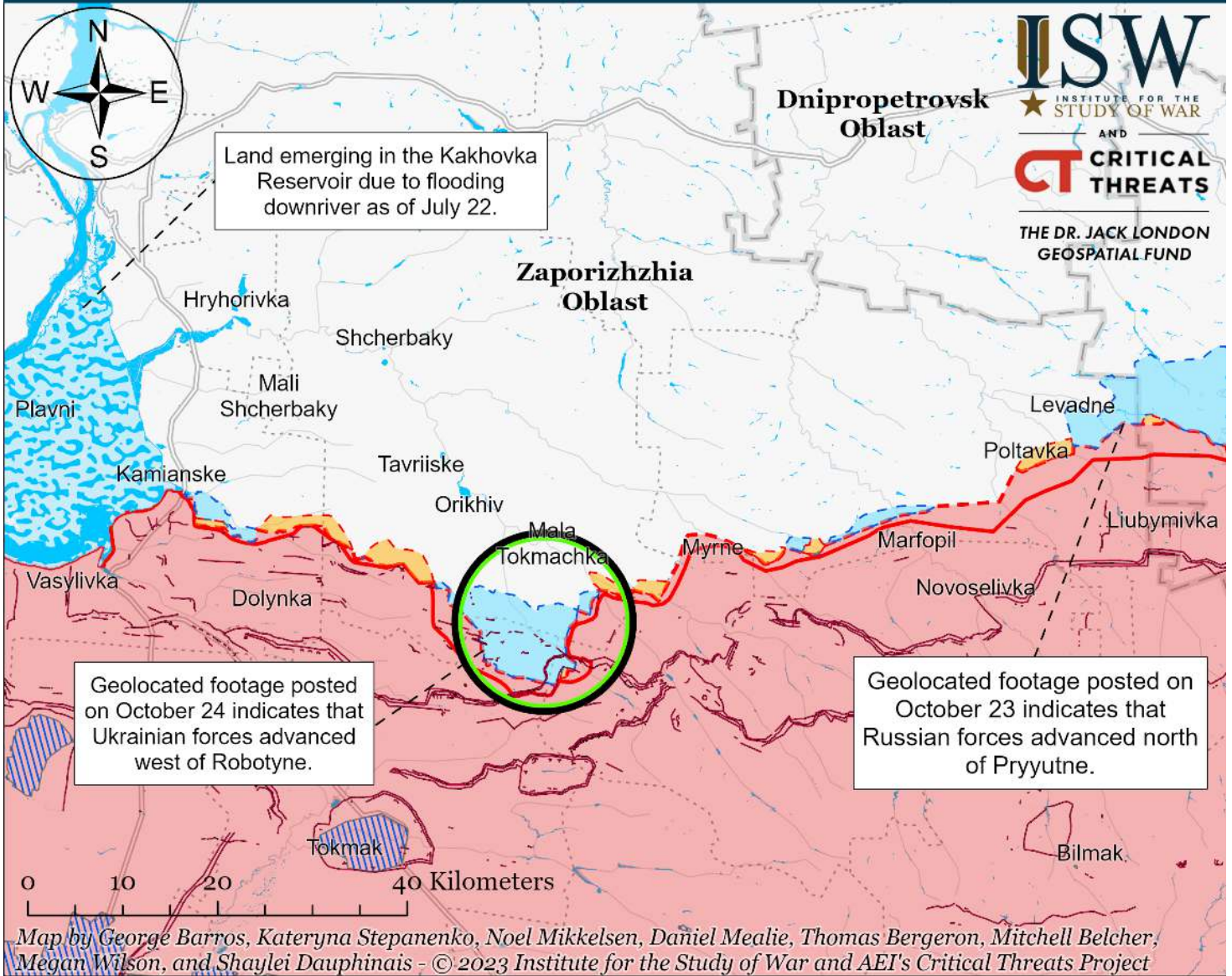
Geolocated footage posted on October 24 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced west of Robotyne.

Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Megan Wilson, and Shaylei Dauphinais - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

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

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

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



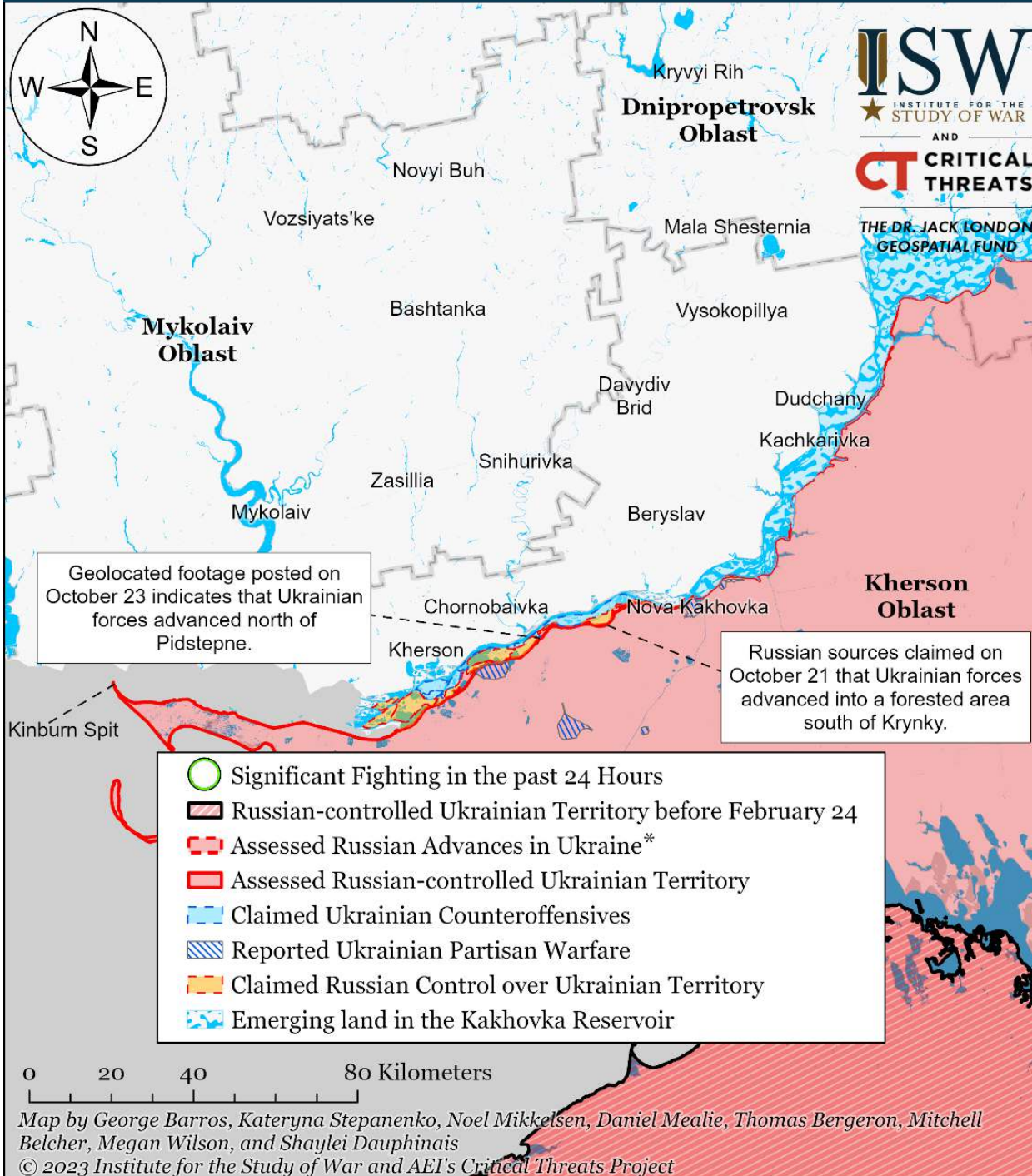
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| Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours | Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory | Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare |
| Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24 | Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory | Emerging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

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

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

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

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



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Megan Wilson, and Shaylei Dauphinais
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* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: The Ukrainian counteroffensive layer displays areas previously assigned to the Russian control, Russian advances, or Russian claims layers where ISW now assesses that Ukrainian forces have established a presence beyond a short-term raid. Inclusion of an area on this layer does not imply that ISW assesses that the area is part of any upcoming Ukrainian counteroffensive operation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

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

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

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

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

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

- [1] <https://twitter.com/moklasen/status/1716880103618326996>;
https://t.me/yuzhny_front_ZOV/1761 ; <https://x.com/giK1893/status/1716526233440108827?s=20>
- [2] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbidoGbPmW4sVRFriLckwrUts9upf85njmFsqNwYwFQWf3BcyCaJtf4kxBzNzBTfAnnTLI>;
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- [3] <https://t.me/breakingmash/48815>; https://lenta_dot_ru/news/2023/10/23/rossiya-vpervye-primenila-italmas-v-zone-svo/; https://news_dot_ru/world/stalo-izvestno-o-primenenii-vs-rf-dalnobojnyh-dronov-italmas-v-zone-svo/
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- [10] <https://t.me/vchkogpu/43131>
- [11] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-22-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-20-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-29-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-april-12-2023>
- [12] https://armyinform_dot_com.ua/2023/10/24/rosijskyj-vijskovyj-flot-postupovo-tikaye-z-krymu-cze-istorychne-dosyagnennya-prezydent/
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[16] <https://t.me/wargonzo/15985>; <https://t.me/rybar/53563>

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