

# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 15, 2023

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October 15, 2023, 5:30pm 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 12pm ET on October 15. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 16 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.**

**Russian President Vladimir Putin may be trying to temper expectations of significant Russian advances around Avdiivka in Donetsk Oblast.** Putin claimed in an interview on Russian state television on October 15 that Russian forces are conducting an “active defense” in the Avdiivka, Kupyansk, and Zaporizhia directions.[1] Putin’s characterization of Russian offensive operations near Avdiivka as an “active defense,” instead of “active combat operations” as Russian UN Ambassador Vasily Nebenzya claimed on October 13, or discussing Russian operations as an “offensive” as some milbloggers have, may be an attempt to temper expectations of significant Russian advances.[2] Russian operations including intensive artillery and airstrikes are likely intended to degrade Ukrainian forces around Avdiivka.[3] Russian forces are unlikely to make significant breakthroughs or cut off Ukrainian forces in the settlement in the near term, and potential advances at scale would likely require a significant and protracted commitment of personnel and materiel.[4]

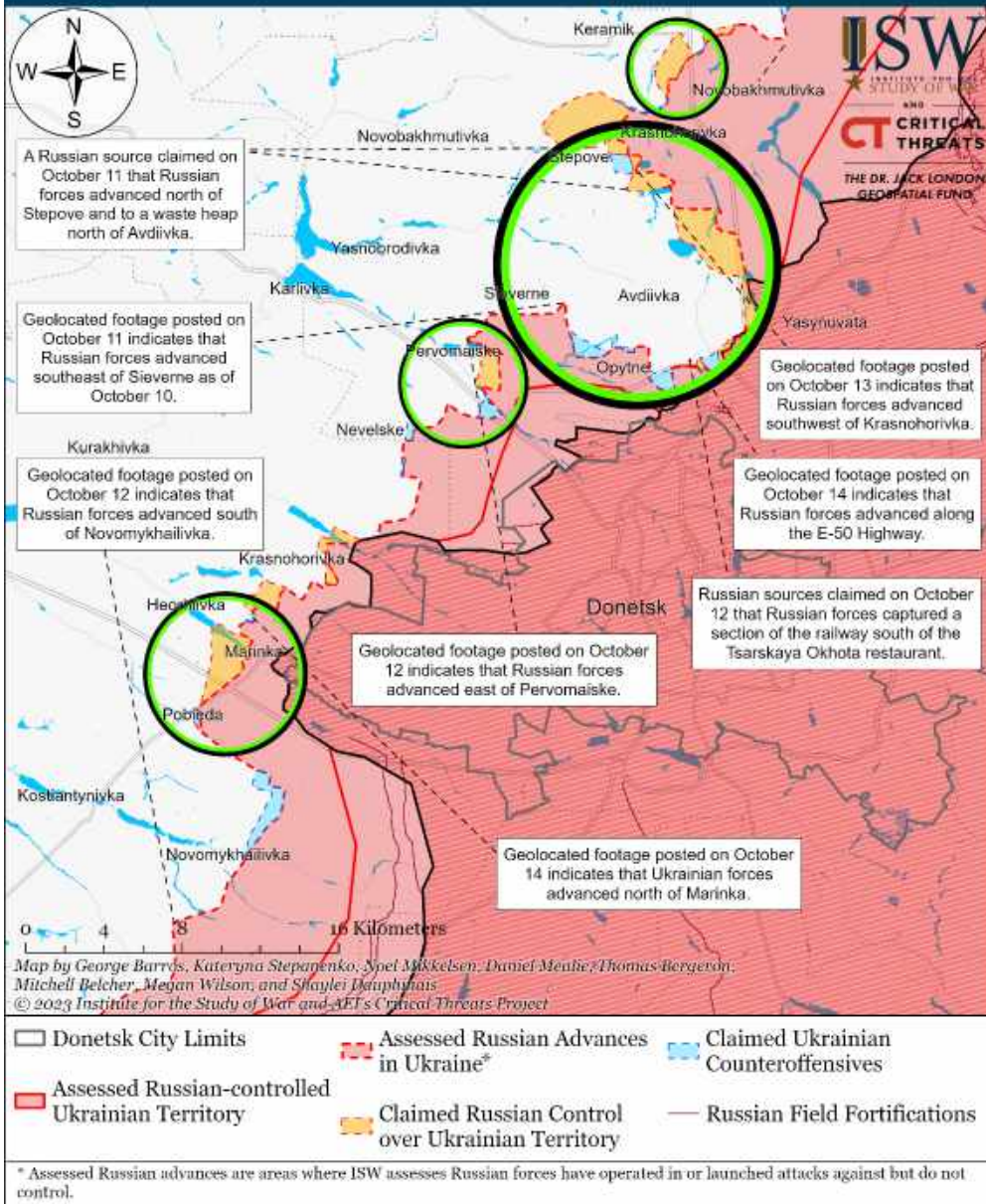
**The Russian information space writ large is also metering its initial optimism about the prospects of Russian offensive operations around Avdiivka.** Russian milbloggers initially reported maximalist and unverifiable claims of Russian advances over 10km, likely exaggerated the degree of Russian successes near Avdiivka during initial offensive operations, and expressed optimism for rapid Russian advances.[5] Some Russian milbloggers have since acknowledged difficulties in the Russian advance near Avdiivka and noted that Russian forces decreased their pace of offensive operations around the settlement.[6] Russian milbloggers have also begun to claim that intense and attritional fighting is ongoing around Avdiivka.[7] Many Russian milbloggers also continue to self-censor by limiting reports of Russian tactical actions and problems specific to individual sectors of the frontline.[8] A Russian milblogger claimed that unspecified actors, possibly the Russian military leadership and some subset of milbloggers, agreed to stop reporting on the Avdiivka operations, but reiterated complaints about general problems in the Russian military not specific to any sector of the front.[9]

**Russian forces continued offensive operations aimed at encircling Avdiivka on October 15 but have yet to make further gains amid a likely decreasing tempo of Russian operations in the area.** The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled more

than 15 Russian assaults near Avdiivka, as well as northwest and southwest of the settlement.[10] ISW has not yet observed visual confirmation of previous claims of Russian advances in the area or geolocated footage of any other Russian gains. Russian sources claimed notably fewer Russian advances in the area on October 15 compared to previous days and described these new alleged advances as marginal.[11] A Russian milblogger acknowledged that Ukrainian forces still maintain a presence at the Avdiivka Coke Plant following conflicting Russian claims about Russian control of the plant.[12]

Both Ukrainian military observers and Russian sources stated that Russian forces did not achieve their desired immediate breakthrough, and Russian forces faced initial high losses and a likely slower than anticipated rate of advance.[13] Avdiivka City Military Administration Head Vitaliy Barabash stated on October 12 that Russian forces conducted assaults with air support in 10 to 12 directions around the settlement, whereas the Ukrainian General Staff reported on October 15 that fighting occurred near only six settlements.[14] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun stated on October 14 that the pace of Russian offensive operations near Avdiivka declined and that Russian forces have lost more than 300 pieces of military equipment and 3000 personnel since intensifying offensive operations in the area on October 9.[15]

## Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of October 15, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



**Russian forces will likely continue offensive operations at this decreased tempo in the near term, however, and will remain a threat to Ukrainian forces in the area despite being unlikely to achieve a decisive breakthrough or encircle Avdiivka at this time.** Any decrease in the tempo of Russian offensive operations may be the result of a temporary adjustment to the tactical situation, and Russian forces may intensify their attempts to encircle Avdiivka in the coming days. A Ukrainian military observer noted that Russian forces have penetrated Ukrainian flanks around Avdiivka and pose a significant threat to Ukrainian positions despite being unlikely to encircle Avdiivka in the near term.[16] Ukrainian military observers indicated that Russian forces had concentrated a significant grouping of forces consisting of elements of 15 motorized rifle regiments

and 11 rifle regiments to the Avdiivka-Donetsk City front and have already executed regiment-size offensive operations in the area (meaning three or more battalions conducting cohesive assaults, a scale beyond that of most Russian or Ukrainian attacks at this stage in the war).[17] This reported Russian grouping will likely be able to sustain offensive operations aimed at encircling Avdiivka if Russian commanders are willing to sustain relatively high losses, despite being insufficient for an immediate breakthrough.

**A prominent Russian milblogger and frontline unit commander complained that the Russian military leadership is uninterested in battalion level problems, supplementing other Russian milblogger complaints about general problems in the Russian military.**[18] Russian “Vostok” Battalion Commander Alexander Khodakovsky, who has previously complained about problems affecting Russian forces’ ability to conduct effective combat operations, claimed on October 15 that Russian infantry on the front in Ukraine face problems with insufficient counterbattery capabilities, commander competency, medical support, rotations, and supplies.[19] Khodakovsky claimed that a lack of communication between Russian battalions and headquarters is common, so much so that (in an undated and unspecific anecdote) when Ukrainian forces struck a Russian headquarters building, a Russian battalion did not realize that the headquarters had been disabled and continued conducting operations independently. Another Russian milblogger, who said on October 14 that he concurred with the “agreement” to stop any commentary about Russian operations in Avdiivka, complained a few hours later that Russian forces, in general, are experiencing ammunition shortages and continued issues combating Ukrainian drones.[20] These complaints indicate that a wider disdain for the Russian military command persists despite likely top-down attempts to censor discussion about certain areas of the front.

**Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 15 and slightly advanced south of Bakhmut.** Geolocated footage published on October 15 shows that Ukrainian forces marginally advanced towards the railway line north of Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut), and Russian sources reported continued Ukrainian ground attacks south of Bakhmut on the Klishchiivka-Kurdyumivka-Andriivka line (7-13km southwest of Bakhmut).[21] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that Ukrainian forces took advantage of recent Russian counterattacks in western Zaporizhia Oblast to gradually advance near Kopani (5km northwest of Robotyne), east of Nesteryanka (10km northwest of Robotyne), and near Verbove (18km southeast of Orikhiv).[22] Ukrainian officials have not yet commented on any recent Ukrainian advances along the Robotyne-Novoprokopivka-Verbove line (20km southwest to 18km southeast of Orikhiv), however. Russian sources reported continued Ukrainian attacks on the Robotyne-Novoprokopivka-Verbove line on October 15.[23]

#### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Russian President Vladimir Putin may be trying to temper expectations of significant Russian advances around Avdiivka in Donetsk Oblast.**
- **The Russian information space writ large is also metering its initial optimism about the prospects of Russian offensive operations around Avdiivka.**
- **Russian forces continued offensive operations aimed at encircling Avdiivka on October 15 but have yet to make further gains amid a likely decreasing tempo of Russian operations in the area.**
- **Russian forces will likely continue offensive operations at this decreased tempo in the near term, however, and will remain a threat to Ukrainian forces**

**in the area despite being unlikely to achieve a decisive breakthrough or encircle Avdiivka at this time.**

- **A prominent Russian milblogger and frontline unit commander complained that Russian military leadership is uninterested in battalion level problems, supplementing other Russian milblogger complaints about general problems in the Russian military.**
- **Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 15 and slightly advanced south of Bakhmut.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 15 and advanced in some areas.**
- **A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces have “significant” reserves comprised of new divisions currently located in rear areas, though these formations are highly unlikely to be fully staffed at this time.**
- **The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) is sending a reportedly Kremlin-affiliated priest to Crimea, likely as part of continued Russian efforts to persecute religious communities in occupied Ukraine.**



# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of October 15, 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)**

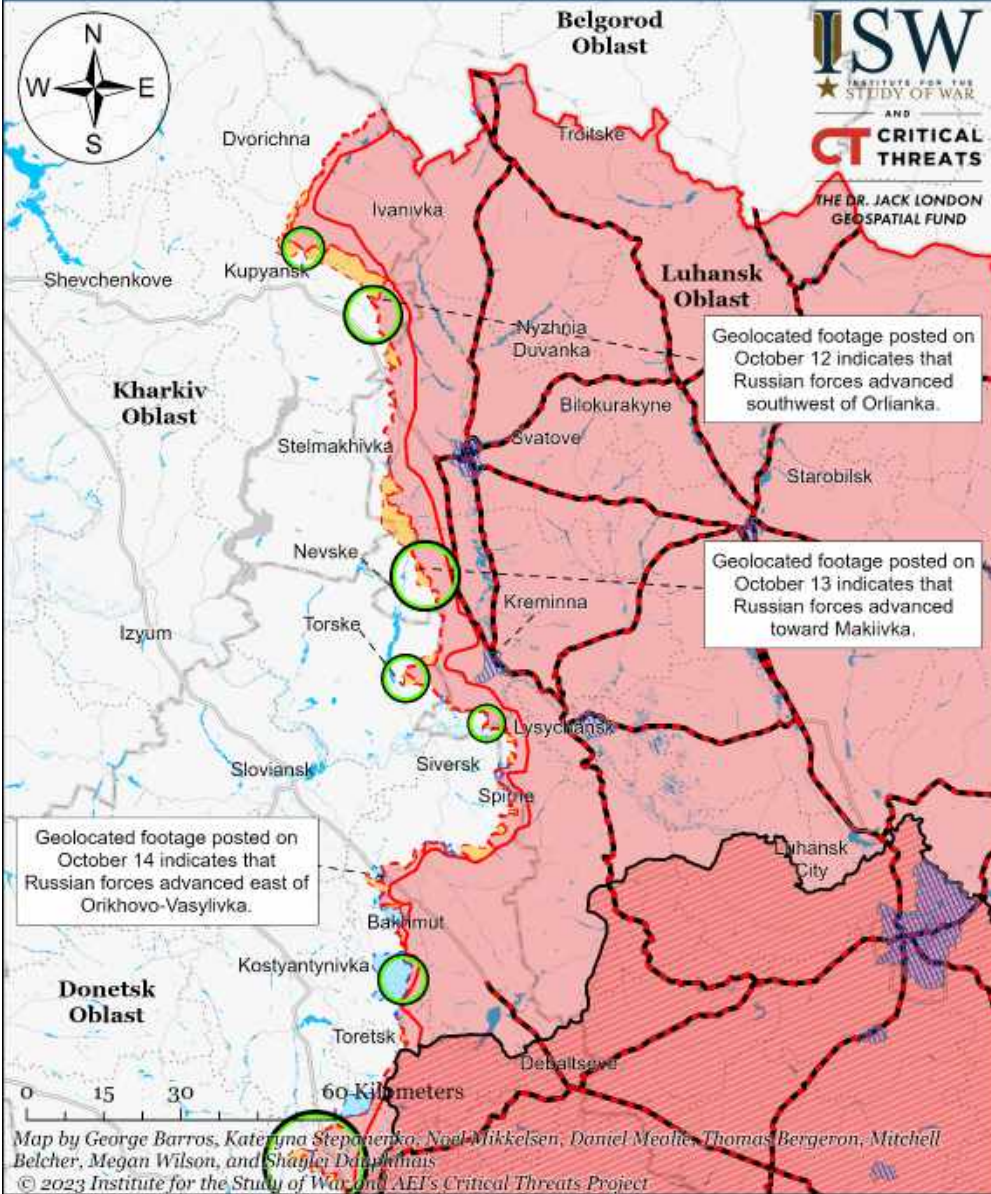
Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Kupyansk on October 15 but did not make any confirmed advances. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced in an unspecified area near Orlyanka (22km southeast of Kupyansk) and pushed Ukrainian forces out of several unspecified positions near Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk), Lyman Pershyi (12km northeast of Kupyansk), and Stepova Novosilka (17km southeast of Kupyansk).[24] ISW has not observed evidence to support these claims, however. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Synkivka and Ivanivka (19km southeast of Kupyansk).[25] A Russian milblogger claimed that Synkivka is contested, despite some Russian claims that Russian forces captured the settlement.[26] Another prominent milblogger claimed that Russian forces unsuccessfully tried to enter Synkivka, but ISW has observed no indication that Russian forces have entered the settlement.[27]

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed on October 15 that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Synkivka in the Kupyansk direction.[28]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Svatove-Kreminna line on October 15 but did not make any confirmed advances. A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the newly formed 25th Combined Arms Army advanced up to “several” kilometers in an unspecified area along the Svatove-Kreminna line, though ISW has not observed evidence to support this claim.[29] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Makiivka (20km southwest of Svatove), the Serebryanske forest area (11km south of Kreminna), and Torske (14km west of Kreminna).[30] Footage published on October 15 purportedly shows elements of the 7th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People’s Republic Army Corps) operating in the Bilohorivka direction (10km south of Kreminna).[31]

The Russian MoD claimed on October 15 that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Novoyehorivka (16km southwest of Svatove), Makiivka, Dibrova (7km southwest of Kreminna), the Serebryanske forest area, and Yampolivka (17km west of Kreminna) on the Svatove-Kreminne line.[32]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of October 15, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

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

Note: A Russian source claimed on October 13 that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian attack near Klishchiivka and were able to penetrate up to half a kilometer into Ukrainian defenses. A Russian source claimed on October 11 that Russian forces advanced approximately 1.5 kilometers in the Ivaniivka and Kyslivka directions.

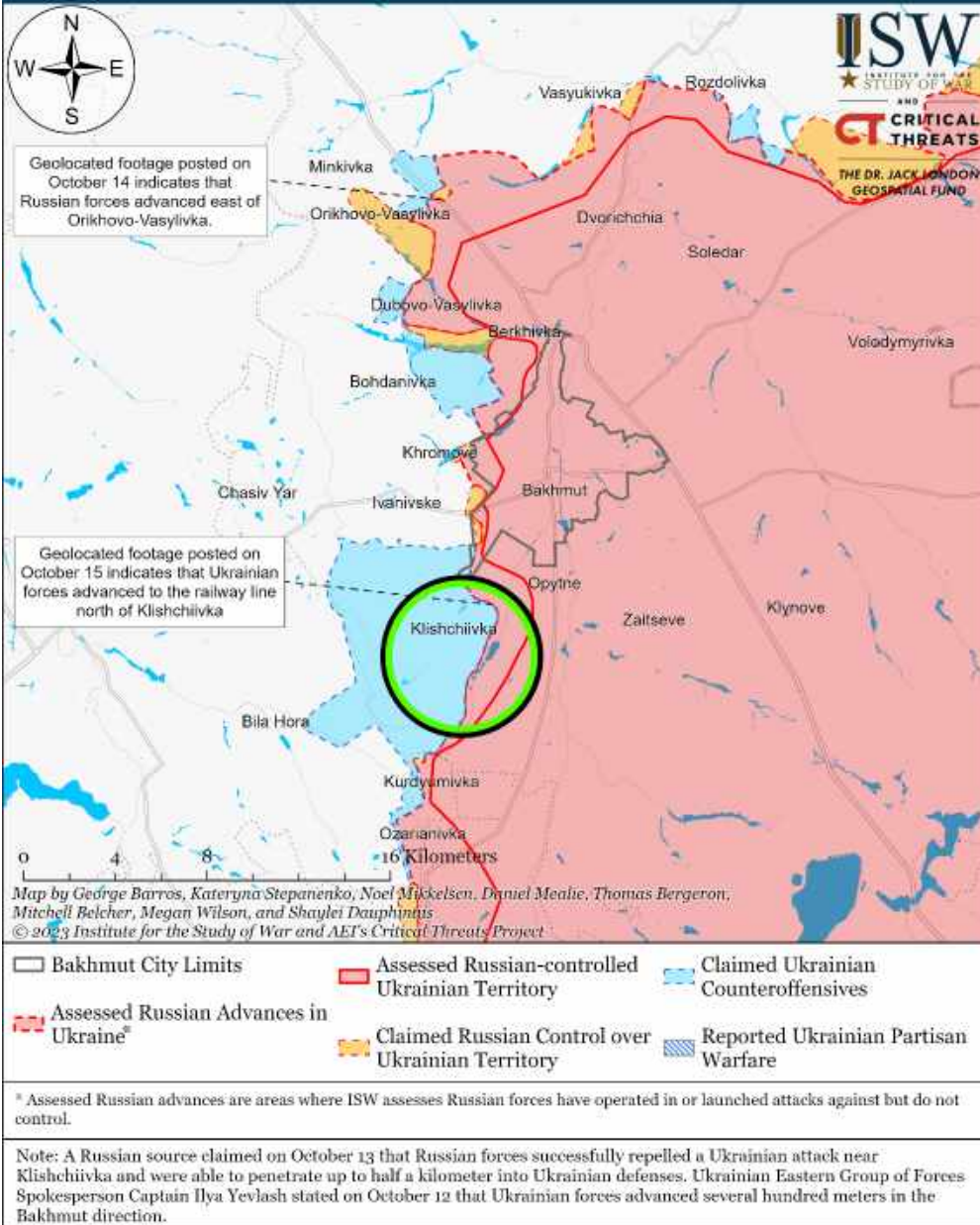


**Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)**

Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations around Bakhmut on October 15 and made marginal gains. Geolocated footage published on October 15 shows elements of the 4th Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR) Brigade (2nd Army Corps, Southern Military District) striking Ukrainian positions at the railway line north of Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut), indicating marginal Ukrainian gains in the area.[33] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Ukrainian forces made unspecified advances towards the railway line near Klishchiivka and Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut) on October 14.[34] The Russian MoD claimed on October 15 that elements of the Russian Southern Grouping of Forces repelled Ukrainian assaults near Klishchiivka, Dubovo-Vasylivka (8km northwest of Bakhmut), and Orikhovo-Vasylivka (11km northwest of Bakhmut).[35] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked near Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut) but did not specify an outcome.[36] The milblogger claimed that fighting also occurred near Klishchiivka and Andriivka.[37] A Russian milblogger posted footage on October 15 purporting to show elements of the Russian 150th Motorized Rifle Division (8th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) operating in the Bakhmut area.[38]

The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled four Russian assaults south of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka and Andriivka on October 15.[39]

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of October 15, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



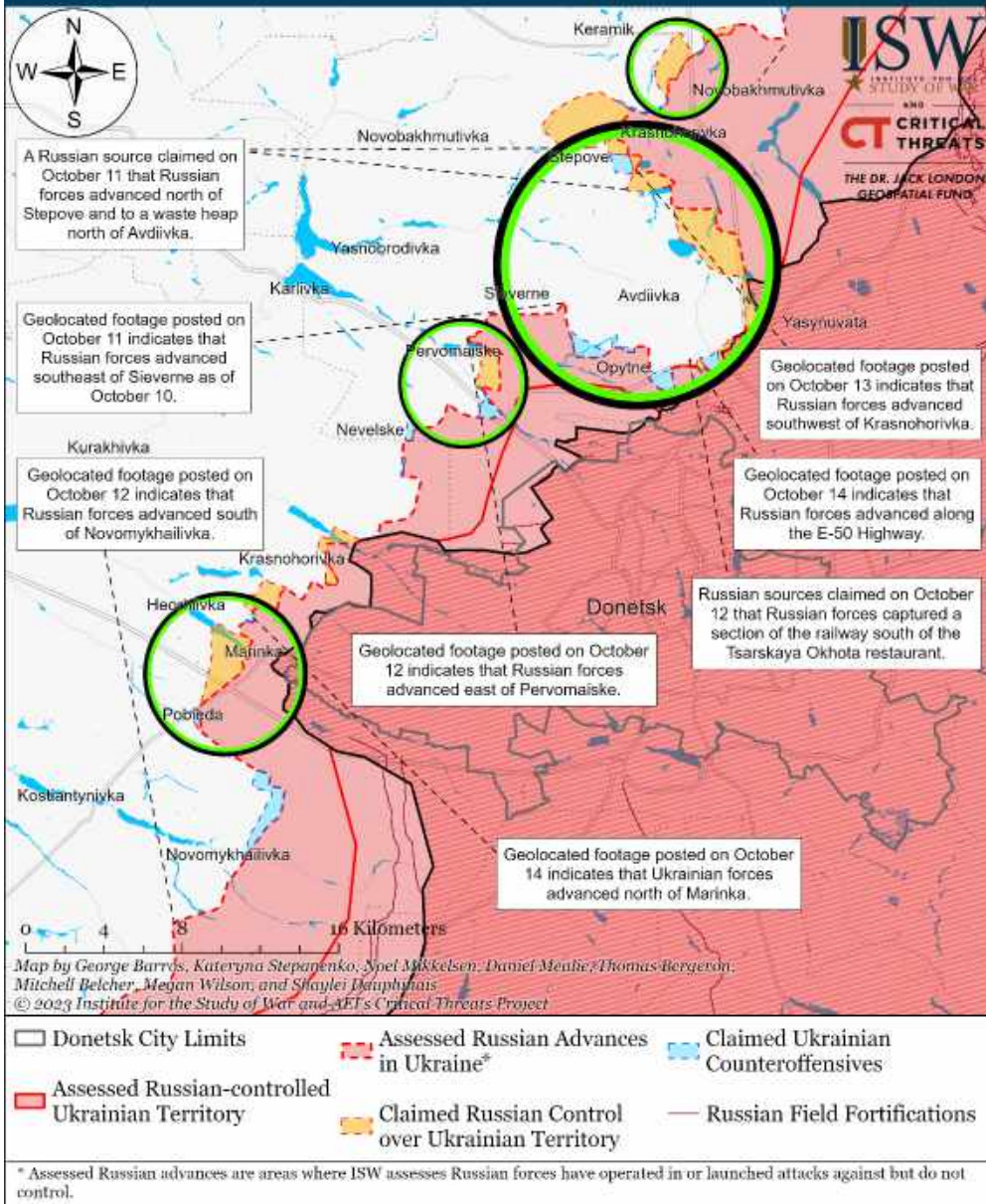
Russian forces continued offensive operations around Avdiivka on October 15 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled more than 15 Russian assaults near Avdiivka; north of Avdiivka near Stepove and Keramik (up to 13km northwest of Avdiivka); and southwest of Avdiivka near Tonenke, Sieverne, and Pervomaiske (up to 11km southwest of Avdiivka).[40] Russian milbloggers claimed on October 14 and 15 that Russian forces advanced near Novokalynove (13km north of Avdiivka) and that Ukrainian forces retreated from unspecified strongholds in the Avdiivka area.[41] One Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are focusing on securing positions near Avdiivka that are least vulnerable to Ukrainian artillery fire to

set conditions for further offensive operations.[42] Russian sources widely claimed that Russian forces are now able to interdict all Ukrainian ground lines of communications (GLOCs) into Avdiivka, although a prominent Russian milblogger stated that these claims are premature.[43] Russian milbloggers previously claimed in July and August 2023 that elements of the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) "Pyatnashka" International Brigade established fire control over Ukrainian GLOCs in the Avdiivka area.[44] ISW has not observed any indications that these persistent Russian claims about Russian fire control over Ukrainian GLOCs in the Avdiivka area are true, however.

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces successfully counterattacked near Avdiivka and made marginal gains on October 15. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces recaptured unspecified positions near Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdivika) and Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka).[45] Russian sources, including the Russian MoD, claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful counterattacks near Pervomaiske and on the northeastern outskirts of Avdiivka near the Avdiivka Coke Plant.[46] One Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces conduct counterattacks in the Avdiivka area with small assault groups of up to 15 personnel.[47]

Russian forces continued offensive operations near Donetsk City on October 15 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled over 15 Russian assaults near Marinka (just west of Donetsk City).[48] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced near Novomykhailivka (10km south of Marinka) and recaptured positions near Solodke (17km south of Marinka) that Russian forces lost during the summer of 2023.[49] ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims.

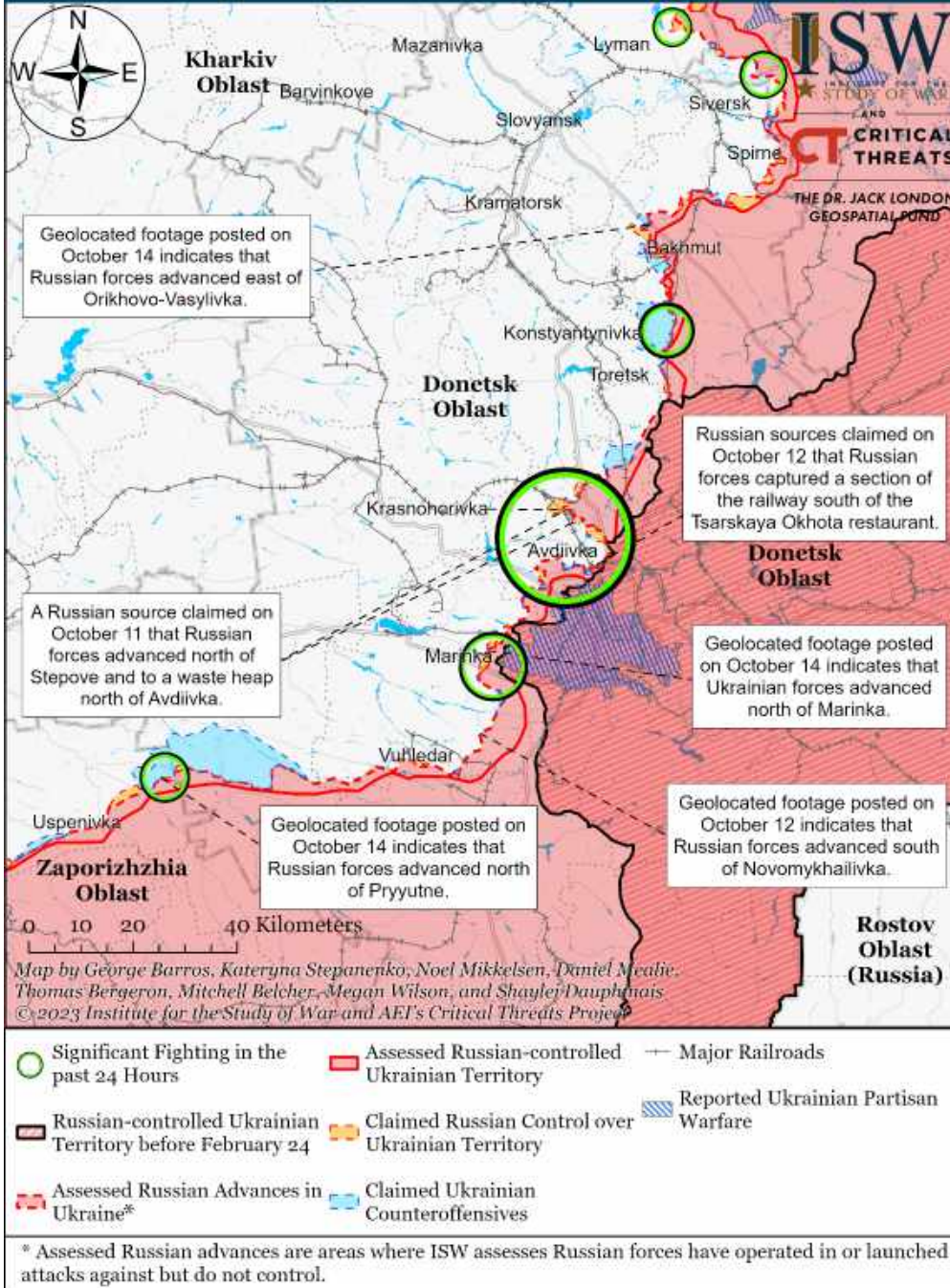
## Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of October 15, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



A Ukrainian military observer stated that Russian forces may be preparing for attacks near Vuhledar to push Ukrainian forces out of firing distance of a rail line that Russia seeks to restore to support logistics in southern Ukraine.[50] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets also stated that elements of the Russian 39th Motorized Rifle Brigade (68th Army Corps, Eastern Military District) tried to push Ukrainian forces back from Novomykhailivka (10km south of Marinka and 19km northeast of Vuhledar) by attacking from Solodke (6km south of Novomykhailivka) and Slavne (5km southeast of Novomykhailivka) but only captured a few footholds near Solodke.[51]



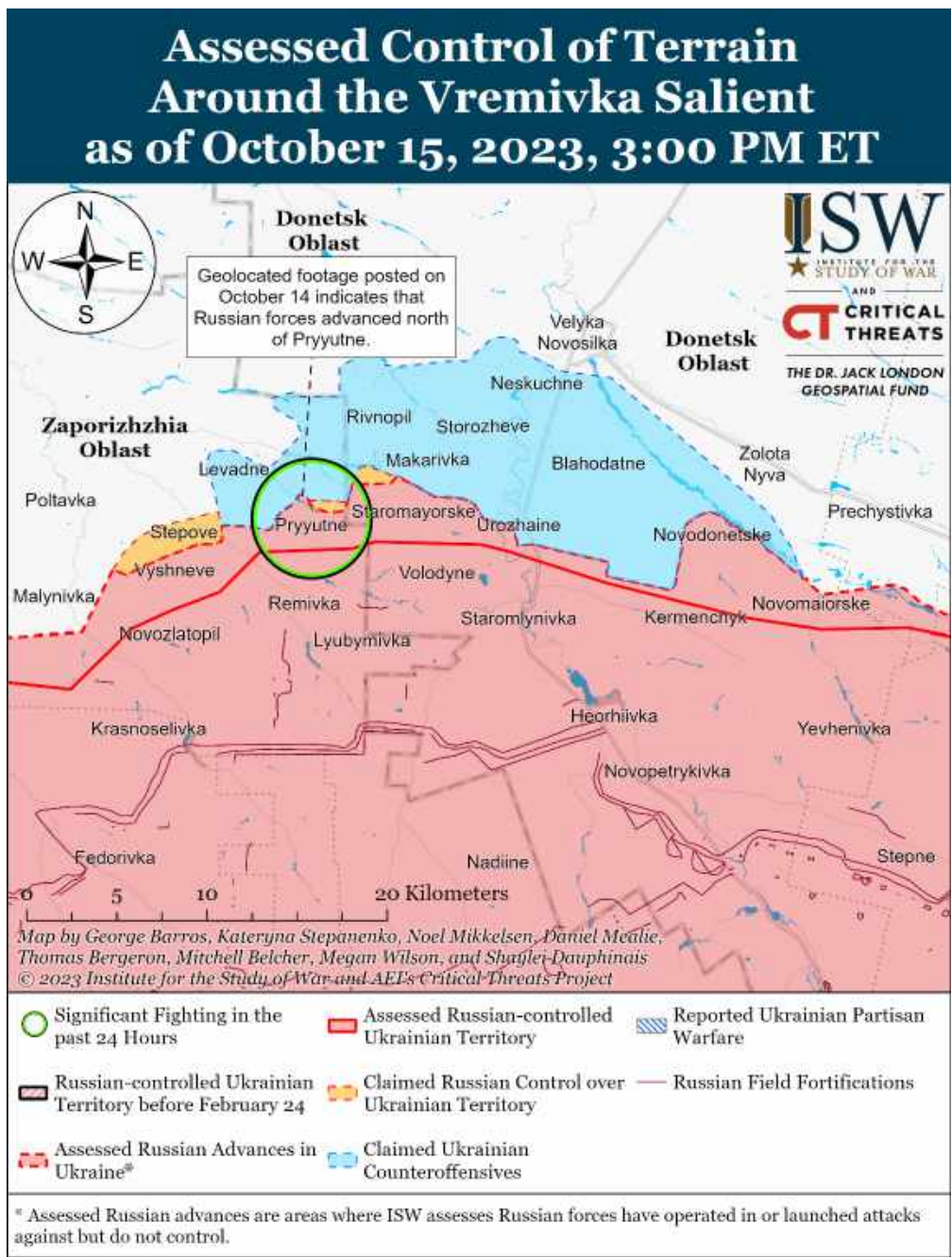
# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of October 15, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

Ukrainian forces continued limited offensive operations in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area on October 15 but did not advance. Russian sources claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) on October 14 and 15.[52]

Russian forces continued limited offensive operations in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area on October 15 and recently advanced. Geolocated footage published on October 14 shows elements of the Russian 34th Motorized Rifle Brigade (49th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) capturing a Ukrainian position northwest of Pryyutne (16km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[53] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled a Russian attack north of Pryyutne.[54]



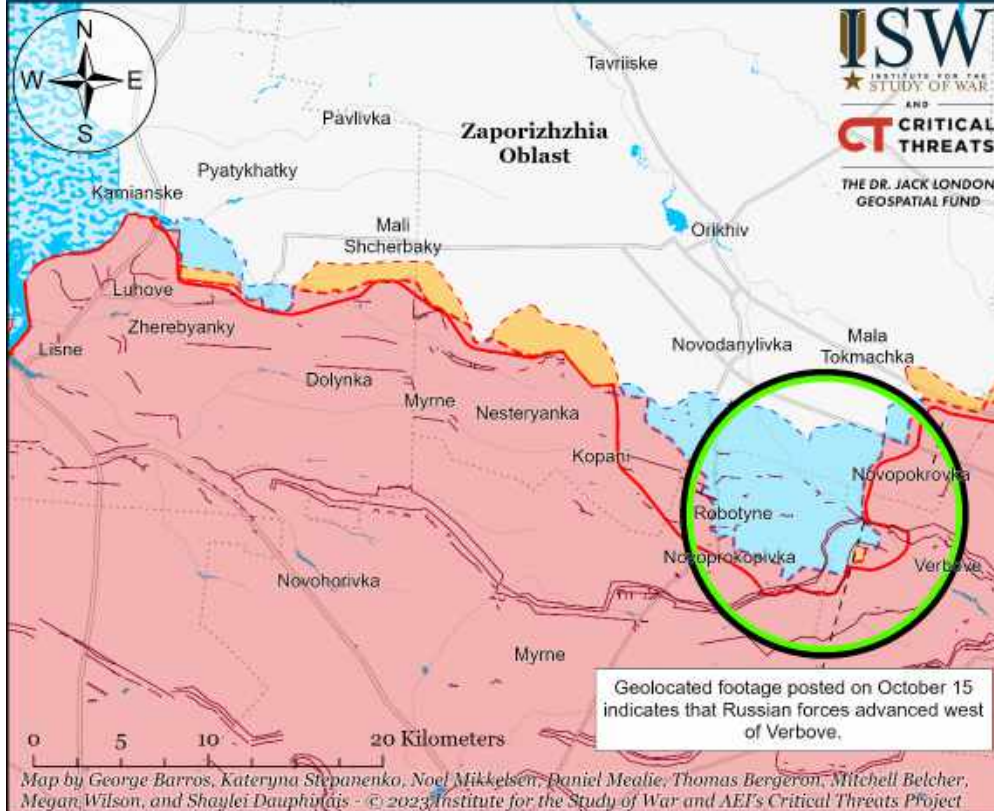
Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 15 and reportedly recently advanced. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhia Oblast) direction.[55] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks along the Robotyne-Novoprokopivka-Verbove line (10km south to 18km southeast of Orikhiv).[56] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed on October 14 that Ukrainian forces slightly advanced west of Kopani (5km northwest of Robotyne) but retreated to positions northwest of Kopani after Russian forces shelled the advancing Ukrainian forces.[57]

Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that Ukrainian forces are taking advantage of recent Russian counterattacks to advance in western Zaporizhia Oblast. Mashovets stated that Ukrainian forces likely advanced towards Verbove after Russian counterattacks in the area in recent days.[58] Mashovets also stated that Ukrainian forces began gradually advancing near Kopani and east of Nesteryanka (10km northwest of Robotyne) from the north after elements of the Russian 104th Airborne (VDV) Regiment (76th VDV Division) counterattacked from these areas. Mashovets also stated that elements of the Russian 71st Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th CAA, SMD) withdrew from northern to central Novoprokopivka (16km south of Orikhiv) following counterattacks and that northern Novoprokopivka is now a contested “gray zone.”

Russian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 14 and recently marginally advanced. Geolocated footage published on October 14 and 15 shows elements of the 247th VDV Regiment (7th VDV Division) capturing Ukrainian positions west of Verbove on the northern tree line of the Robotyne-Verbove road.[59] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces pushed Ukrainian forces from several positions along the Robotyne-Verbove line on October 14.[60] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces counterattacked along the Kopani-Robotyne-Novoprokopivka-Verbove line and surrounded several Ukrainian positions near Verbove on October 14 and continued counterattacks on October 15.[61]



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of October 15, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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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

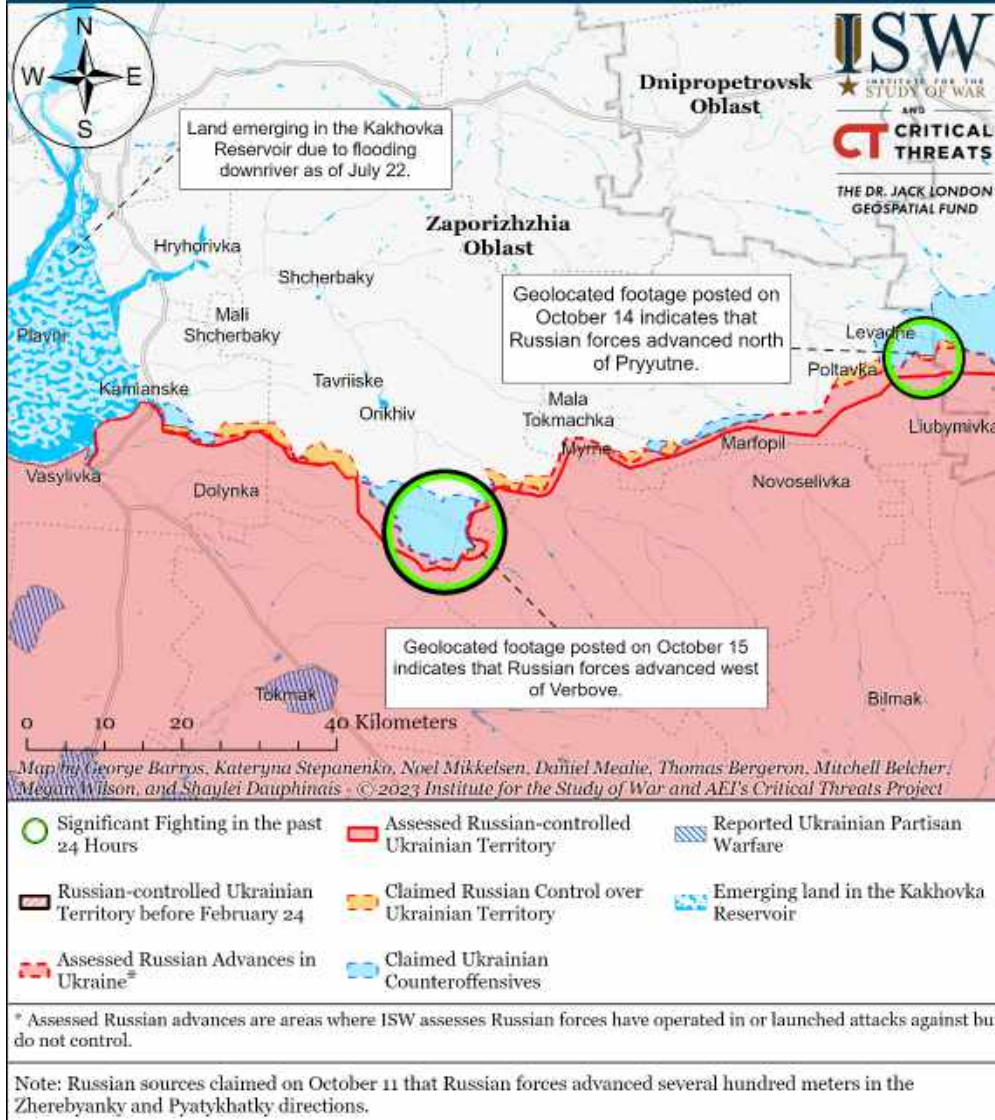
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
- 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: Russian sources claimed on October 11 that Russian forces advanced several hundred meters in the Zherebyanky and Pyatykhatky directions.

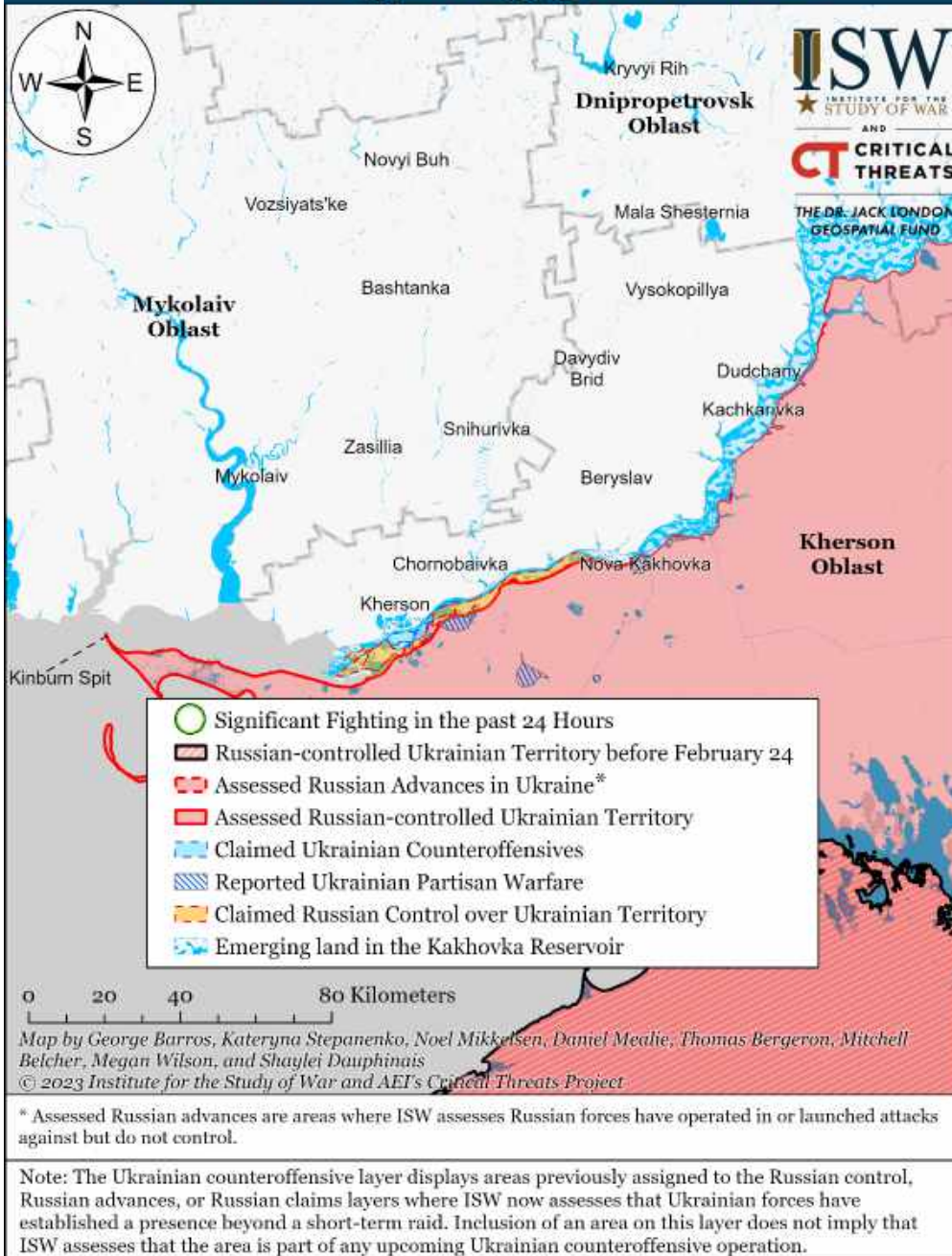


# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of October 15, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian sources continued to discuss Ukrainian activity on the Dnipro River delta islands in Kherson Oblast. Russian sources claimed that Russian forces pushed Ukrainian forces from unspecified islands in the Dnipro River delta.[62] Russian milbloggers continued to express concern about a potential future Ukrainian operation into the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast.[63]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of October 15, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



A Ukrainian official indicated that Russian forces may be altering their force posture in the Black Sea as a result of Ukrainian strikes against Black Sea Fleet assets. Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Captain First Rank Nataliya Humenyuk stated that Russian naval vessels are no longer trying to block Ukrainian ports but that Russian tactical aviation is constantly active in the Black Sea and is disrupting sea transport routes near Snake Island.[64] Humenyuk stated that the

Russian naval group currently in the Black Sea consists of 12 vessels and that Russian vessels withdrawn to Novorossiysk are still able to strike Ukraine with long range missiles and drones.

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

A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces have “significant” reserves comprised of new divisions currently located in rear areas, though these formations are highly unlikely to be fully staffed at this time.[65] The milblogger claimed that these new divisions are partly composed of expendable personnel but that the senior officers have “extensive” combat and leadership experience. The milblogger also claimed that more than half of the new formations are equipped with the “latest technology.” ISW previously assessed that the Russian MoD’s recently announced nine training regiments can possibly also serve as in extremis operational or strategic reserves, and it is possible these regiments are part of the “significant” reserves the Russian milblogger was referencing.[66] The reported existence of Russian reserves in the rear does not indicate that these reserves are operating at scale or combat ready, however. ISW previously assessed that the newly-formed 25th Combined Arms Army was hurriedly deployed ahead of its intended deployment date and is therefore likely understaffed, poorly trained, or both.[67] It is conceivable that the Russian MoD has already stood up the administrative and command backbones of several on-paper divisions as part of Defense Minister Shoigu’s announced force restructuring goals in January 2023, but these formations are highly unlikely to be fully staffed or combat ready.

A Russian insider source claimed on October 15 that Rosgvardia has been negotiating with the Wagner Group since Wagner’s June 24 rebellion to increase Rosgvardia’s power inside Russia.[68] The insider source claimed that negotiations between Rosgvardia Head Viktor Zolotov and the now-deceased Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin began immediately after the rebellion but fell through as Zolotov was not prepared to fund Wagner. The insider source claimed that negotiations resumed with Prigozhin’s son, Pavel, after Prigozhin’s death. The insider source also claimed on October 13 that Rosgvardia was interested in using Wagner personnel in the war in Ukraine in order to avoid having to commit Rosgvardia personnel to combat.[69] The insider source claimed that Russian President Vladimir Putin is allowing Zolotov to pursue these objectives in order to create a system of “checks and balances” between political elites after Prigozhin’s death left Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu’s influence unchecked. ISW is unable to verify any of these insider sources’ claims, although they are consistent with continued Russian information space speculation about the future of the Wagner Group following Prigozhin’s death.

A Russian Governor indicated that Russian regional governments continue to struggle to support the material needs of the war in Ukraine. The Governor of Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug-Yugra, Natalya Komarova, responded to a local resident’s complaint about the lack of equipment for soldiers in Ukraine on October 14, saying that “we as a whole did not prepare for this war, we do not need it.”[70] Komarova stated that there are “certainly...some inconsistencies and unresolved issues.” A member of the Obereg Center for Public Control, Yuri Ryabtsev, sent a statement to the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs accusing Komarov of “discrediting” the Russian military and demanding criminal charges be brought against her.[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)**

The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) is sending a reportedly closely Kremlin-affiliated priest to Crimea, likely as part of continued Russian efforts to persecute religious communities in occupied Ukraine. Russian opposition media outlet *Meduza* reported on October 15 that the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church appointed Pskov Metropolitan Tikhon (Georgii Shevkunov) as the head of the Crimean Metropolitanate.[72] *Meduza* reported in 2015 that Shevkunov is allegedly Putin’s personal confessor and reportedly has ties with Russian government officials.[73] Shevkunov compared his relocation to Crimea to historical exiles of religious figures to Kolyma in the Russian Far East.[74] ISW previously reported that Russian authorities are reportedly installing ROC representatives in independent Orthodox of the Church of Ukraine (OCU) communities in occupied Ukraine in order to collect information on non-ROC parishioners and clergy members and provide information to Russian special services.[75] ISW has long assessed that Russian authorities have conducted systemic religious persecution against OCU dioceses and religious minorities in occupied Ukraine since the start of the war.[76]

**Russian Information Operations and Narratives:**

Russian President Vladimir Putin restated boilerplate rhetoric threatening military escalation with the West, likely in an attempt to deter Western support for Ukraine. Putin claimed during an interview on Russian state television on October 15 that a “hot” conflict between the West and Russia would be a “completely different war” and not limited to the framework of the “special military operation.”[77]

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

Nothing significant to report.

**ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian military activity in Belarus as part of ongoing Kremlin efforts to increase their control over Belarus and other Russian actions in Belarus.**

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



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[1] <https://ria dot ru/20231015/ukraina-1902867872.html> ; <https://www.interfax dot ru/russia/925939> ; <https://tass dot ru/politika/19017079>

[2] <https://tass dot ru/politika/19008301> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-13-2023>

[3] [https://t.me/vdv\\_ZA\\_teplinsky/146](https://t.me/vdv_ZA_teplinsky/146) ; <https://t.me/frontbird/4025> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-11-2023>

[4] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-12-2023>

[5] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-12-2023>

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# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

Angelica Evans, Nicole Wolkov, Grace Mappes, Christina Harward, Kateryna Stepanenko, and Mason Clark

October 14, 2023, 4:25pm 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.

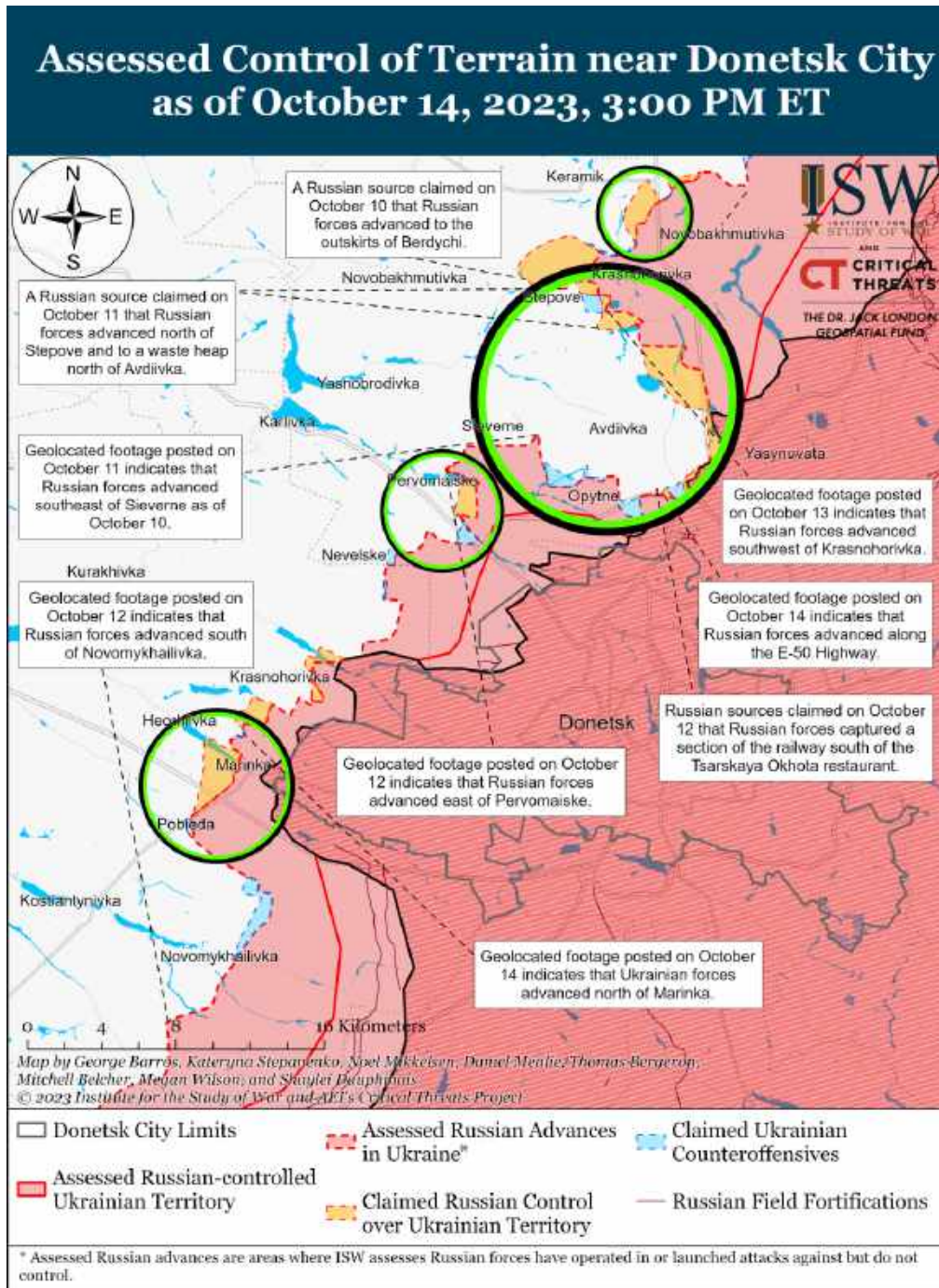
Click [here](#) to access ISW’s archive of interactive time-lapse maps of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These maps complement the static control-of-terrain map that ISW produces daily by showing a dynamic frontline. ISW will update this time-lapse map archive monthly.

**Note: The data cut-off for this product was 12:30pm ET on October 14. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 15 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.**

**US and Ukrainian officials reported on October 12 and 13 that they anticipated the Russian offensive operations around Avdiivka and expressed confidence in Ukrainian defenses.** US National Security Council Spokesperson John Kirby reported on October 13 that the new Russian offensive operations near Lyman and Avdiivka “did not come as a surprise.”<sup>1</sup> Kirby stated that the US is confident that Ukrainian forces will repel these Russian attacks.<sup>2</sup> Kirby also reported that Russian forces appear to be using human wave tactics, wherein the Russian military uses masses of poorly trained and equipped Russian soldiers to attempt to advance - the same practice Russian forces used during their failed winter offensive in winter 2023.<sup>3</sup> ISW has additionally observed Russian forces using higher than usual numbers of armored vehicles in ongoing operations.<sup>4</sup> Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Representative Andriy Yusov similarly reported on October 12 that Ukrainian forces knew about and prepared for the Russian attack near Avdiivka and that Russian forces did not form sufficient reserves to attack along the entire frontline, but only in certain sectors.<sup>5</sup> Several Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian mines are slowing Russian advances near Avdiivka, indicating Ukrainian prior preparations for the attack.<sup>6</sup>

**The Russian information space remains divided on the prospects of Russian successes near Avdiivka and on current Ukrainian capabilities.** Geolocated footage published on October 13 indicates that Russian forces marginally advanced north of the waste heap north of Avdiivka.<sup>7</sup> Additional geolocated footage published on October 14 indicates that Russian forces also advanced south of Avdiivka.<sup>8</sup> Some Russian sources claimed on October 13 and 14 that Ukrainian defensive fortifications pose a significant challenge to Russian advances around Avdiivka.<sup>9</sup> Some Russian sources indicated that Russian problems with medical support are also impeding Russian advances in the Avdiivka area. One Russian source claimed on October 12 that there is a shortage of surgeons in occupied Horlivka and Donetsk City near Avdiivka and called on Russian doctors to travel to the front to help treat wounded Russian soldiers.<sup>10</sup> Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun similarly stated on October 14 that the majority of Russian casualties in the Avdiivka direction are due to low-quality medical treatment and local hospitals reaching capacity.<sup>11</sup>

Other Russian milbloggers continued to praise Russian offensive efforts on October 13 and 14 and reiterated the Kremlin’s desired narrative that the Ukrainian counteroffensive is over.<sup>12</sup> One Russian milblogger warned that Russian officials and sources have likely dismissed the Ukrainian counteroffensive too quickly and noted that it is too early to determine if the Russian attacks near Avdiivka will develop into an organized offensive operation.<sup>13</sup>





**Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in eastern and southern Ukraine on October 14 and advanced west of Donetsk City.** Geolocated footage published on October 14 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced north of Marinka (just west of Donetsk City).<sup>14</sup> Ukrainian and Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued to attack Russian positions on Bakhmut’s southern flank.<sup>15</sup> A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces marginally advanced west of Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv) towards Rivne (24km southwest of Orikhiv) in western Zaporizhia Oblast.<sup>16</sup>

**The Russian Black Sea Fleet (BSF) will maintain some vessels at its main Sevastopol naval base amid Ukrainian strikes on Russian vessels, as the Russian Navy’s main drydock on the Black Sea is in Sevastopol.** Ukrainian Naval Spokesperson Captain Third Rank Dmytro Pletenchuk reported on October 14 that Ukrainian forces struck the Russian *Professor Nikolai Muru* tugboat and the *Pavel Derzhavin* patrol ship on October 13 and stated that the BSF has redeployed vessels from Sevastopol to Kerch, Feodosia, and Novorossiysk (in mainland Russia).<sup>17</sup> Pletenchuk noted that Russian forces continue to use the Sevastopol base because there are not enough piers to accommodate vessels at other ports, however.<sup>18</sup> The BSF’s headquarters and main facilities including a dry dock are located in Sevastopol, and the Russian navy therefore must send some vessels for repairs within range of Ukrainian strikes.<sup>19</sup> The UK Ministry of Defense (UK MoD) reported on October 14 that the BSF has likely increased its defensive and reactive posture after multiple Ukrainian strikes on BSF assets in August and September 2023.<sup>20</sup>

**Armenia ratified the International Criminal Court’s (ICC) Rome Statute on October 14, obliging Armenia to arrest Russian President Vladimir Putin if he enters Armenia due to the ICC’s outstanding arrest warrant, directly after Putin’s efforts on October 13 to claim that the Russia-Armenia relationship is not deteriorating.**<sup>21</sup> Armenian President Vahagn Khachaturyan signed the corresponding decree as well as a statement recognizing the ICC’s jurisdiction on October 14 following the Armenian parliament’s vote to ratify the statute on October 3.<sup>22</sup> Ratifying the Rome Statute notably legally obliges Armenia to arrest Putin on behalf of the ICC, which issued a warrant for Putin’s arrest on March 17, 2023, for illegally deporting Ukrainian children from occupied Ukraine to Russia.<sup>23</sup> Armenia’s ratification of the Rome Statute comes one day after Putin boasted about the strength of Russia-Armenia relations during the meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Member States.<sup>24</sup>

**Ukrainian forces will reportedly begin training on F-16 fighter jets in the US next week.** *Politico* reported on October 13 that anonymous US officials stated that a “small number” of Ukrainian pilots will begin F-16 fighter jet training next week at Morris Air National Guard Base in Arizona after having completed English language training at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas.<sup>25</sup> One US official reportedly stated that the training may be accelerated due to Ukrainian forces’ urgent need for F-16 fighter jets.

#### **Key Takeaways:**

- **US and Ukrainian officials reported on October 12 and 13 that they anticipated the Russian offensive operations around Avdiivka and expressed confidence in Ukrainian defenses.**
- **The Russian information space remains divided on the prospects of Russian successes near Avdiivka and on current Ukrainian capabilities.**
- **Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in eastern and southern Ukraine on October 14 and advanced west of Donetsk City.**





- **The Russian Black Sea Fleet (BSF) will maintain some vessels at its main Sevastopol naval base amid Ukrainian strikes on Russian vessels, as the Russian Navy’s main dry dock on the Black Sea is in Sevastopol.**
- **Armenia ratified the International Criminal Court’s (ICC) Rome Statute on October 14, obliging Armenia to arrest Russian President Vladimir Putin if he enters Armenia due to the ICC’s outstanding arrest warrant, directly after Putin’s efforts on October 13 to claim that the Russia-Armenia relationship is not deteriorating.**
- **Ukrainian forces will reportedly begin training on F-16 fighter jets in the US next week.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and advanced in some areas.**
- **Relatives of Russian mobilized men and recruited prisoners continue to complain that the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and the Russian military command are mistreating troops on the frontlines – especially on the Kupyansk-Svatove line.**
- **Russian officials and occupation authorities continue to establish patronage programs between Russian federal subjects and occupied areas in order to integrate occupied territories into Russia.**

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

Ukrainian Ground Forces Commander Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi stated on October 14 that Russian forces have intensified their offensive operations in the Kupyansk-Lyman direction in recent days but that



Ukrainian forces were prepared and are defending.<sup>26</sup> Syrskyi stated that Russian forces had previously suffered losses and spent two months resting and reconstituting before first resuming offensive operations near Makiivka, Luhansk Oblast (20km southwest of Svatove) then later attacking in the Kupyansk direction. Syrskyi stated that Russian forces ultimately aim to encircle Kupyansk and cross the Oskil River.

Russian forces continued offensive operations on the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on October 14 and marginally advanced southwest of Svatove. Geolocated footage published on October 13 shows that Russian forces marginally advanced along a road east of Makiivka, Luhansk Oblast.<sup>27</sup> Some Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced over one kilometer into Ukrainian-held territory and captured 10 Ukrainian positions on the Lyman Pershyi-Orlyanka line (12km northeast to 20km east of Kupyansk) in the past few days.<sup>28</sup> The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk), Ivanivka (19km southeast of Kupyansk), and Kyslivka (21km southeast of Kupyansk) in Kharkiv Oblast and near Makiivka and Torske (14km west of Kreminna) in Luhansk Oblast.<sup>29</sup> Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets reported that elements of the 252nd Motorized Rifle Regiment and 237th Tank Regiment (both of 3rd Motorized Rifle Division, 20th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Western Military District [WMD]) are trying to break through Ukrainian positions on the Nevske-Novovodyane (18km northwest to 16km southwest of Svatove) and Ploshchanka-Makiivka (16km northwest to 20km southwest of Kreminna) lines.<sup>30</sup> Mashovets also reported that the Russian 164th Motorized Rifle Brigade (25th CAA, Eastern Military District [EMD]) and the 331st Airborne Regiment (98th Airborne [VDV] Division) are operating in the Serebryanske forest area (11km south of Kreminna).

Ukrainian sources indicated that the Russian military command is committing elements of all three WMD armies to offensive operations on the Kupyansk-Lyman line. Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash stated that elements of the Russian 1st Guards Tank Army, 6th CAA, and 20th CAA are conducting offensive operations on the Kupyansk-Lyman line.<sup>31</sup> The presence of all three army-level formations subordinate to the WMD on this frontline indicates that Russian forces are conducting these offensive operations under a relatively cohesive and doctrinally sound command structure. The Russian military command is also continuing to replace some Central Military District (CMD) elements with elements of the newly formed 25th CAA. Mashovets assessed that the 25th CAA will likely replace elements of the 2nd CAA (CMD).<sup>32</sup> ISW previously assessed that the 25th CAA will likely replace elements of the 41st CAA (CMD) but that the 25th CAA is likely combat ineffective due to its rushed deployment.<sup>33</sup> Mashovets assessed that Russia will likely use elements of the 35th and 55th Motorized Rifle brigades (both of the 41st CAA) and possibly elements of the 74th Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st CAA, CMD), 90th Tank Division, and 67th Motorized Rifle Division (25th CAA) to attack near Nevske (18km northwest of Kreminna), Terny (17km west of Kreminna), and Yampolivka (17km west of Kreminna).<sup>34</sup>

Ukrainian forces reportedly continued offensive operations on the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line and did not advance on October 14. Russian military officials claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Ivanivka, Synkivka, Tymkivka (18km east of Kupyansk), and Yampolivka; north of Serebryanka 12km southwest of Kreminna); and in the Serebryanske forest area.<sup>35</sup>

### **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 assaults near Bakhmut on October 14 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued assaults south of Bakhmut.<sup>36</sup> A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces gained a foothold along the rail line near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) and Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).<sup>37</sup> Another Russian milblogger claimed on October 13 that the intensity of fighting has slightly decreased along the Klishchiivka-Andriivka-Kurdyumivka (7-13km southwest of Bakhmut) line.<sup>38</sup>

Russian forces continued assaults near Bakhmut on October 14 and advanced. Geolocated footage published on October 14 indicates that Russian forces advanced east of Orikhovo-Vasylivka (10km northwest of Bakhmut).<sup>39</sup> A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces have taken up positions east of an unspecified highway, potentially the T0513 highway, near Klishchiivka and Andriivka.<sup>40</sup> Ukrainian Ground Forces Commander Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi stated that Russian forces are regularly conducting assaults at night in the Bakhmut direction.<sup>41</sup>

Russian forces continued offensive actions near Avdiivka on October 14 and advanced. Geolocated footage published on October 13 indicates that Russian forces marginally advanced north of a waste heap two kilometers northwest of Avdiivka.<sup>42</sup> Several Russian milbloggers, including a Kremlin-affiliated milblogger, claimed that Russian forces abandoned previously occupied positions on the waste heap for an unspecified reason on October 13.<sup>43</sup> Additional geolocated footage published on October 14 indicates that Russian forces also advanced south of Avdiivka.<sup>44</sup> Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced near Berdychi (9km northwest of Avdiivka), Kamianka (5km northeast of Avdiivka), Sieverne (5km west of Avdiivka), and in the Vodyane (6km west of Avdiivka) direction and attempted to advance along the route to Keramik (10km north of Avdiivka).<sup>45</sup> ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims as of this report. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on October 14 that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Tonenke (5km northwest of Avdiivka), Avdiivka, Sieverne, Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka), and Netaylove (14km southwest of Avdiivka).<sup>46</sup> Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces also attacked near Kamianka, Stepove (8km northwest of Avdiivka), in the direction of Opytne (3km southwest of Avdiivka).<sup>47</sup> One Russian milblogger compared the challenge that Ukrainian minefields pose to Russian forces near Avdiivka as comparable to the challenge Russian minefields posed for Ukrainian forces in western Zaporizhia Oblast.<sup>48</sup> A Russian milblogger posted footage on October 13 claiming to show elements of the Russian 114th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] Army Corps) operating near Avdiivka.<sup>49</sup>

Geolocated footage published on October 14 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced north of Marinka (just west of Donetsk City).<sup>50</sup>

Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Marinka on October 14. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Marinka.<sup>51</sup> A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces attacked near Novomykhailivka (12km southwest of Donetsk City) on October 13.<sup>52</sup> A Russian milblogger posted footage on October 14 claiming to show elements of the Russian 5th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st DNR Army Corps) operating in the Marinka direction.<sup>53</sup>

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



Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area but did not advance on October 14. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked west of Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) and east of Urozhaine (9km south of Velka Novosilka).<sup>54</sup> The Russian milblogger also claimed that positional battles are ongoing along the Hrusheva Gully north of Pryyutne (16km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).<sup>55</sup>

Russian forces conducted offensive operations in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area and reportedly advanced on October 14. A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the Russian 37th Motorized Rifle Brigade (36th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) marginally advanced east of Urozhaine (9km south of Velyka Novosilka).<sup>56</sup> Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces counterattacked near Staromayorske.<sup>57</sup> The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful assault operations near Staromayorske.<sup>58</sup>

Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast and reportedly made limited advances on October 14. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces marginally advanced west of Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv) towards Rivne (24km southwest of Orikhiv).<sup>59</sup> Russian sources, including the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Verbove (18km southeast of Orikhiv), Robotyne, and Novoprokopivka (13km south of Orikhiv).<sup>60</sup> Russian sources claimed that fighting is ongoing on the western outskirts of Verbove.<sup>61</sup>

Russian forces conducted offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attempted to recapture lost positions near Robotyne.<sup>62</sup> Russian sources claimed on October 13 and 14 that Russian forces counterattacked near Verbove.<sup>63</sup> A Russian milblogger claimed on October 14 that Russian forces counterattacked and pushed Ukrainian forces back along the Kopani-Robotyne-Novoprokopivka-Verbove line (20km southwest to 18km southeast of Orikhiv) but that fighting continues in the area.<sup>64</sup>

A Ukrainian military official reported that Russian forces conducted airstrikes against Kherson Oblast and Snake Island. Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Captain First Rank Nataliya Humenyuk stated on October 14 that Russian forces launched 30 guided aerial bombs mostly at Kherson Oblast and in the direction of Snake Island in the past day and targeted residential and agricultural areas.<sup>65</sup> Humenyuk stated that Russian forces are only conducting air strikes at night.

A Russian milblogger claimed on October 14 that Ukrainian forces attempted to land on islands in the Dnipro River. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces prevented four Ukrainian boats from landing on islands in the Dnipro River near Kozachi Laheri (23km east of Kherson City).<sup>66</sup> Russian sources claimed on October 14 that Ukrainian forces increased their maritime activity in the Dnipro River.<sup>67</sup>

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces attempted to conduct a drone strike on the eastern coast of the Black Sea in Russia. Russian sources, including the Russian MoD, claimed that Russian air defenses shot down two Ukrainian drones near Sochi on the coast of Krasnodar Krai.<sup>68</sup>

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





Relatives of Russian mobilized men and recruited prisoners continue to complain that the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and the Russian military command are mistreating troops on the frontlines – especially on the Kupyansk-Svatove line. Relatives of Russian servicemen from the Republic of Tatarstan issued a complaint claiming that the Russian military command is committing Russian mobilized personnel from the 2nd Battalion of the 1234th Regiment to assault operations, likely in the Svatove direction.<sup>69</sup> The relatives claimed that the battalion has been fighting in the Svatove direction for their second year and are suffering significant losses. The relatives demanded that elements of the battalion resume defensive tasks instead of engaging in offensive operations. Wives of mobilized servicemen of the 12th Guards Tank Regiment (4th Guards Tank Division, 1st Guards Tank Army, Western Military District) claimed that the Russian military command placed 42 mobilized personnel into a basement on October 7 after their unit suffered 300 casualties during a failed assault in the Kupyansk direction.<sup>70</sup> *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's* northwestern Russia service *Sever Realii* reported that relatives of Russian prisoners who had joined Russian "Storm Z" detachments complained that the Russian MoD is not returning the bodies of deceased "Storm-Z" personnel and are refusing to provide any documents that would grant these personnel veteran status.<sup>71</sup>

A Russian milblogger amplified an alleged letter from an unidentified Russian serviceman who had claimed that the Russian military command had not resolved long-standing problems on the Kherson frontline.<sup>72</sup> The milblogger notably redacted the name of the serviceman's unit and precise location in the letter, likely in an effort to self-censor and protect the servicemen or unit from punishment. The serviceman stated that his unit replaced motorized rifle elements from the Russian "24th" unit (the precise unit is likely intentionally unclear) and noted that commanders know about persistent issues in this direction. The serviceman noted that Russian forces struggle to provide each other coverage from Ukrainian FPV drones and struggle with a lack of normal communication with the Russian headquarters to direct artillery fire against Ukrainian targets. The serviceman added that his unit's logistics routes are near the logistics routes of neighboring Russian units, which reveals Russian positions to Ukrainian forces. The servicemen noted that Russian forces in the Kherson direction are suffering significant losses due to these issues.

**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 officials and occupation authorities continue to establish patronage programs between Russian federal subjects and occupied areas of Ukraine in order to integrate occupied territories into Russia. Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) Head Leonid Pasechnik claimed on October 13 that the Republic of Tatarstan government is helping to repair heating infrastructure and communication systems in occupied Lysychansk and Rubizhne, Luhansk Oblast before winter.<sup>73</sup> Republic of Tatarstan Head Rustam Minnikhanov visited occupied Lysychansk on October 13 to inspect the ongoing repairs.<sup>74</sup> Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Head Denis Pushilin claimed on October 12 that the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug government is helping to rebuild a school, hospital, residential buildings, and other infrastructure in occupied Volnovakha, Donetsk Oblast.<sup>75</sup>

Russian occupation authorities continue efforts to forcibly depopulate occupied Mariupol, Donetsk Oblast of Ukrainians and replace them with Russians. Ukrainian Mariupol Mayoral Advisor Petro Andryushchenko reported on October 14 that Russian occupation authorities are renovating a quarter of central Mariupol for Russian citizens to occupy starting in spring 2024.<sup>76</sup> Andryushchenko stated that Russian forces evicted or killed



some of these residents and that other residents evacuated from Mariupol.<sup>77</sup> The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported that Russian authorities brought over 25,000 construction workers from Russia and Central Asian countries to occupied Mariupol.<sup>78</sup>

### **Russian Information Operations and Narratives:**

***NOTE: ISW continues to assess that the Kremlin has and will continue to exploit the Israel-Hamas war to advance several Russian information operations about Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. However, ISW has notably not observed any evidence – and does not assess – that the Kremlin supported, directed, or is involved in the Israel-Hamas war.***

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)**

A Ukrainian intelligence official reported that Belarus continues to resist Russian efforts to draw Belarusian forces into the war in Ukraine. Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Representative Andriy Yusov reported on October 12 that the Kremlin continues to attempt to involve Belarusian forces in a “full-fledged ground operation against Ukraine.”<sup>79</sup> Yusov stated that Belarusian authorities are aware of Russian efforts to involve Belarusian forces in the war and understand that Belarusian involvement is not in Belarus’ national interest.<sup>80</sup> ISW has observed no indications that Belarusian forces are preparing to enter the Russian war in Ukraine.

### **ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian military activity in Belarus as part of ongoing Kremlin efforts to increase their control over Belarus and other Russian actions in Belarus.**

**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 13, 2023

Nicole Wolkov, Christina Harward, Grace Mappes, Angelica Evans, Kateryna Stepanenko, and Mason Clark

October 13, 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 1:30pm ET on October 13. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 14 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

**NOTE:** *ISW has added a new section on Russian information operations and narratives to the daily Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, found at the end of the update.*

**Ongoing Russian offensive operations throughout the Avdiivka, Donetsk Oblast area on October 13 reportedly faced setbacks around the city.** Russian sources claimed that Russian forces continued to attack areas north and south of Avdiivka, and geolocated footage published on October 12 and 13 indicates that Russian forces advanced south of Krasnohorivka (5km north of Avdiivka) and southeast of Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka).[1] Russian sources also published conflicting reports about previous claims by Russian sources of Russian control of the Avdiivka Coke Plant, and ISW has not observed any evidence to confirm that Russian forces control the plant as of publication.[2] Ukrainian military officials reported that Ukrainian forces continue to repel Russian attacks around Avdiivka.[3] A Russian milblogger noted that Ukrainian forces are using minefields to slow down Russian advances in the Avdiivka direction.[4] A Russian volunteer in the 4th Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR) Brigade (2nd Army Corps, Southern Military District) claimed that worn out barrels are reducing the accuracy of Russian artillery near Avdiivka, a complaint about Russian artillery that ISW has previously observed from Russian sources.[5] The volunteer assessed that Russian forces can “compress the [Ukrainian] perimeter” by capturing less fortified Ukrainian-held territory near Avdiivka, but expressed concern that Russian generals will misinterpret these limited advances and try to speed up offensive efforts towards Avdiivka. The volunteer noted that such a misinterpretation may lead Russian forces to “beat on concrete” fortifications until these forces run out.

**The Russian military command appears to be restricting discussion of the Russian offensive operations around Avdiivka in the Russian information space, likely in an attempt to adapt to previous information shocks and control any narratives that emerge in the Russian information space around these operations.** A prominent Russian milblogger claimed on October 12 that the Russian military command was “dispensing information [about Russian offensive operations] in doses,” but then claimed on October 13 that the Russian military command was “minimizing the release of information into the public domain” as the Russian military does not want “media hype” surrounding operations near Avdiivka.[6] Another Russian milblogger also claimed on October 13 that unspecified actors, likely Russian military leadership, instructed milbloggers to not discuss the details of the fighting near Avdiivka.[7] A Russian source stated that he supported the

Russian military's decision and urged milbloggers to discuss only information that does not affect Russian military operational security, whereas other Russian milbloggers noted that this is the time to figure out which of the Russian milbloggers are lying about the situation on the frontlines.[8] The Russian military command likely seeks to adjust for previous major offensives in which it lost control of perceptions of Russian actions in the Russian information space. Some milbloggers are following (and will likely continue to follow) the MoD-imposed narrative line, but this attempt at centralized control may provoke a backlash from select milbloggers.

**The Kremlin is likely attempting to frame Russian offensive operations around Avdiivka and other localized efforts as Russian forces seizing the operational initiative in Ukraine.**

Russian UN Ambassador Vasily Nebenzya claimed on October 13 that Ukrainian counteroffensive operations are "formally over" because Russian forces have switched to "active combat operations along almost the entire frontline." [9] The Kremlin is likely attempting to use Russian offensive operations around Avdiivka as well as localized efforts in other areas of the front to shift the Russian and international narratives to focus on Russian offensive operations and military capabilities. Ukraine is highly unlikely to have concluded its ongoing counteroffensive as Nebenzya claims, and as ISW has previously noted Ukrainian counteroffensive operations will likely continue into the winter months, though likely at a reduced pace and scale.[10]

**Ukrainian forces conducted counteroffensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 13.**

The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhia Oblast) direction and the Bakhmut direction.[11] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued unsuccessful attacks along the Klishchiivka-Andriivka-Kurdyumivka line (7-13km southwest of Bakhmut) and along the Robotyne-Verbove line (10km south to 18km southeast of Orikhiv).[12]

**Russian forces continue to target Ukrainian critical infrastructure facilities with drone and missile strikes, as well as localized cross-border raids.**

Spokesperson of the United Press Center of the Northern Direction Ukrainian Defense Forces, Colonel Yuriy Povh, reported on October 12 that Ukrainian forces repelled a Russian sabotage and reconnaissance group attempting to cross into Sumy Oblast and stated that these Russian forces likely aimed to reach a Ukrainian critical infrastructure facility.[13] Povh stated that Russian sabotage and reconnaissance groups have unsuccessfully attempted to cross the international border between Russia and Ukraine 10 times in the past two months.[14] Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Deputy Chief Major General Vadym Skibitskyi reported on October 13 that Russian forces are attempting to increase weapons production during the fall and winter in order to strike Ukrainian energy and other critical infrastructure.[15] Skibitskyi stated that Russian forces have decreased their use of air-launched missiles and more frequently use cruise missiles and Iskander ballistic missiles.[16] Skibitskyi also reported that Russia has resumed the production of Kalibr and Kh-101 cruise missiles but faces challenges in increasing the volume of production.[17]

**Russian authorities arrested four lawyers who represent prominent opposition figures on extremism charges on October 13, likely to set conditions for the upcoming 2024 Russian presidential elections.**

Russian authorities arrested three of imprisoned Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny's lawyers – Vadim Kobzev, Igor Sergunin, and Alexei Liptser – for allegedly participating in an extremist community.[18] Russian authorities also charged and fined Alexei Ladin, who represents many Crimean Tatars and Ukrainian citizens accused of terrorism, espionage, and participating in banned groups, for allegedly discrediting the Russian military and distributing extremist symbols.[19] Lawyer Alexander Molokhov, who represents imprisoned ardent nationalist and former Russian officer Igor Girkin, called on the Russian Federal Chamber of Lawyers

to conduct a one-day strike in solidarity with Kobzev, Sergunin, and Liptser and criticized the Russian government for prosecuting these lawyers for “connecting Navalny with the outside world.”<sup>[20]</sup>

### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Ongoing Russian offensive operations throughout the Avdiivka, Donetsk Oblast area on October 13 reportedly faced setbacks around the city.**
- **The Russian military command appears to be restricting discussion of the Russian offensive operations around Avdiivka in the Russian information space, likely in an attempt to adapt to previous information shocks and control any narratives that emerge in the Russian information space around these operations.**
- **The Kremlin is likely attempting to frame Russian offensive operations around Avdiivka and other localized efforts as Russian forces seizing the operational initiative in Ukraine.**
- **Ukrainian forces conducted counteroffensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 13.**
- **Russian forces continue to target Ukrainian critical infrastructure facilities with drone and missile strikes, as well as localized cross-border raids.**
- **Russian authorities arrested four lawyers who represent prominent opposition figures on extremism charges on October 13, likely to set conditions for the upcoming 2024 Russian presidential elections.**
- **Russian forces continued offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, Avdiivka, and Donetsk City, and in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area and western Zaporizhia Oblast and advanced in various sectors of the front.**
- **A Ukrainian military intelligence official reported that Russian forces are struggling to equip newly-formed military formations.**
- **Ukrainian partisans reportedly targeted Russian military assets in rear areas in southern Ukraine on October 12 and 13.**



# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of October 13, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

***We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We will continue to evaluate and report on the effects of these criminal activities on the Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population and specifically on combat in Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn 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 in the Kupyansk direction on October 13 and reportedly advanced. The North Ossetian “Storm Ossetia” and “Alania” Russian volunteer battalions claimed that Russian forces made “serious advances” in the Kupyansk direction but did not provide any evidence for this claim.[21] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces advanced towards Krokhmalne (24km southeast of Kupyansk) but did not specify the scope of the advance.[22] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces seized a few Ukrainian positions near Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk) and Petropavlivka (6km east of Kupyansk) but noted that it is too early to speculate on Russian advances on this front.[23] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Synkivka, Ivanivka (19km southeast of Kupyansk), and Kyslivka (21km southeast of Kupyansk).[24]

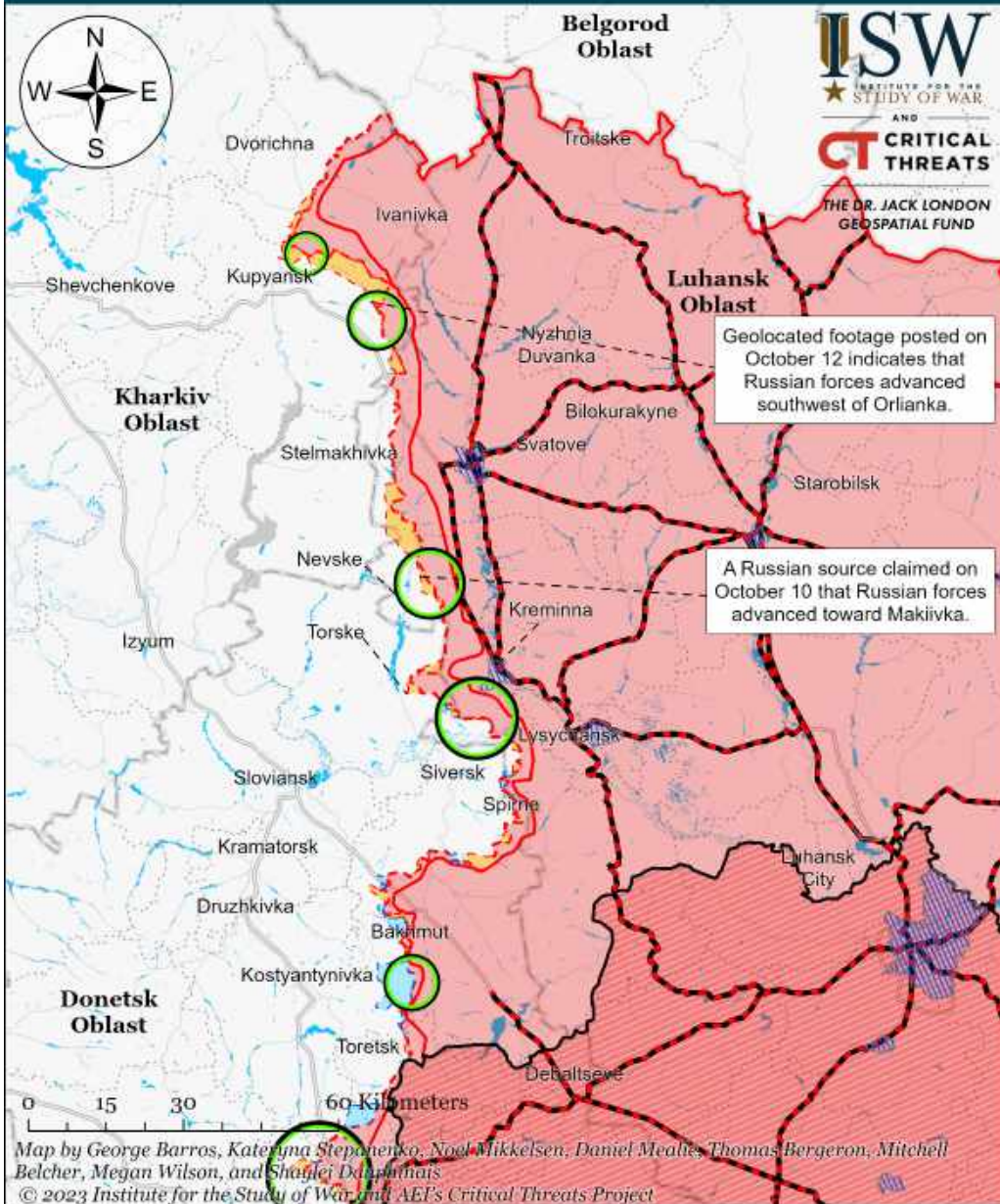
Russian forces continued offensive operations along the Svatove-Kreminna line on October 13 but did not make any confirmed territorial gains. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces seized several Ukrainian positions west of Svatove but did not provide additional information on the claimed advance.[25] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults near Makiivka (20km southwest of Svatove), southwest of Kreminna, and in the Serebryanske forest area south of Kreminna.[26] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked towards Serebryanka (12km southwest of Kreminna) from the Kuzmyne (3km southwest of Kreminna) direction in an effort to break through Ukrainian defenses and reach the Siverskyi Donets River.[27] The milblogger added that Russian forces attacked near Torske (14km west of Kreminna) in an effort to cut off the Ukrainian supply route over the Oskil River. Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov indicated that the Chechen “Amur” group of “Akhmat” Spetsnaz forces is operating in the Serebryanske forest area.[28]

A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the newly-formed Russian 25th Combined Arms Army (CAA) face organization problems that are slowing down Russian offensive operations on the Svatove-Kreminna line, confirming ISW’s prior assessments.[29] The milblogger claimed that elements of the

25th CAA, which recently deployed to the Kreminna area, are conducting a "crawling offensive" due to their lack of combat experience and organizational errors that affect their ability to execute orders from above.<sup>[30]</sup> ISW previously assessed that the 25th CAA is likely largely combat ineffective due to its rushed deployment to the frontlines.<sup>[31]</sup>

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Ivanivka, Synkivka, Dibrova (3km southwest of Kreminna), Yampolivka (16km west of Kreminna), Torske salient, and Serebryanske forest area.<sup>[32]</sup>

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of October 13, 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.

Note: A Russian source claimed on October 13 that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian attack near Klishchiivka and were able to penetrate up to half a kilometer into Ukrainian defenses. A Russian source claimed on October 11 that Russian forces advanced approximately 1.5 kilometers in the Ivanivka and Kyslivka directions. A Russian source claimed on October 9 that Russian forces advanced up to one kilometer near Makiivka.

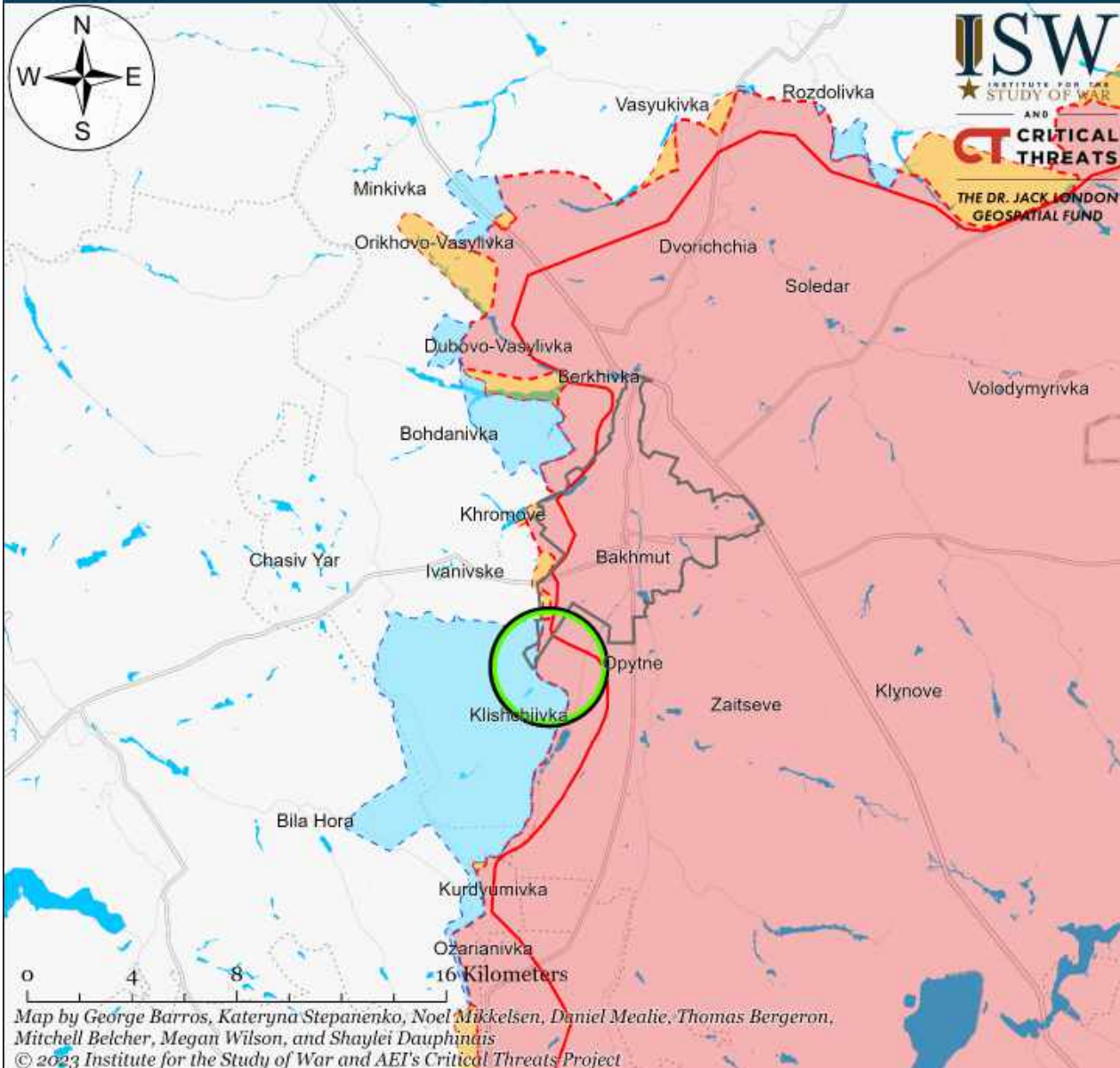


**Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)**

Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut on October 13 and did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued assault operations south of Bakhmut.[33] Russian milbloggers claimed that fighting is ongoing near Orikhovo-Vasylivka (10km northwest of Bakhmut) and along the Klishchiivka-Andriivka-Kurdyumivka line (7-13km southwest of Bakhmut).[34]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut on October 13 and made limited gains. Geolocated footage published on October 13 indicates that Russian forces made limited gains southwest of Zaliznyanske (13km north of Bakhmut).[35] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced up to half of a kilometer near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut), though ISW has not observed evidence of this claim.[36] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces counterattacked near Andriivka.[37]

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of October 13, 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.

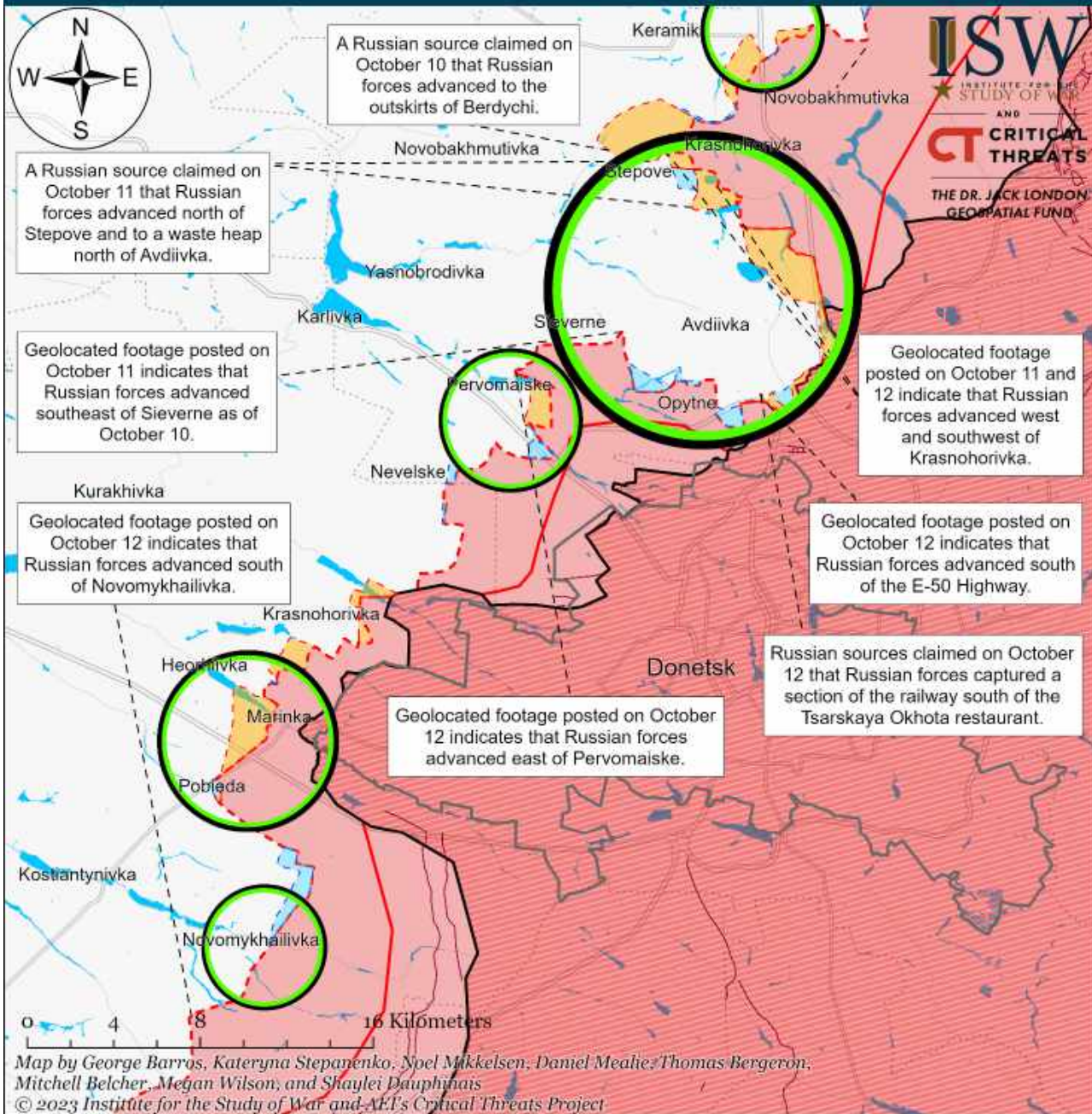
Note: A Russian source claimed on October 13 that Russian forces successfully repelled a Ukrainian attack near Klishchiivka and were able to penetrate up to half a kilometer into Ukrainian defenses. Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash stated on October 12 that Ukrainian forces advanced several hundred meters in the Bakhmut direction.

Russian forces conducted offensive operations around Avdiivka on October 13 and advanced north and southwest of the city. Geolocated footage posted on October 12 and 13 indicates that Russian forces advanced south of Krasnohorivka (5km north of Avdiivka) and southeast of Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka).[38] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces are advancing from Vodyane (6km west of Avdiivka) and Opytne (3km southwest of Avdiivka) and in unspecified areas near Avdiivka.[39] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Avdiivka, Tonenke (5km northwest of Avdiivka), Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka), Lastochkyne (6km west of Avdiivka), Pervomaiske, Keramik (14km northwest of Avdiivka), Netaylove (14km southwest of Avdiivka), and Nevelske (14km southwest of Avdiivka).[40] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces attacked near Berdychi (9km northwest of Avdiivka) and near the railway line immediately northeast of Stepove.[41] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces are clearing the area northeast of the Avdiivka Coke Plant, and another Russian source claimed that Russian forces have not captured the Avdiivka Coke Plant itself.[42] A Ukrainian commander operating near Avdiivka told the *Washington Post* in an article published on October 12 that Russian forces “concentrated up to three fresh brigades” in the Avdiivka direction.[43] Footage published on October 13 purportedly shows elements of the 114th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People’s Republic Army Corps) operating south of Krasnohorivka.[44]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Donetsk City on October 13 but did not make any confirmed advances. A Russian milblogger claimed that a Russian armored assault group captured several unspecified Ukrainian positions south of Novomykhailivka, though ISW has not observed evidence to support this claim.[45] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Marinka (on the southwestern outskirts of Donetsk City), Pobieda (5km southwest of Donetsk City), and Novomykhailivka (12km southwest of Donetsk City).[46]



# Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of October 13, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

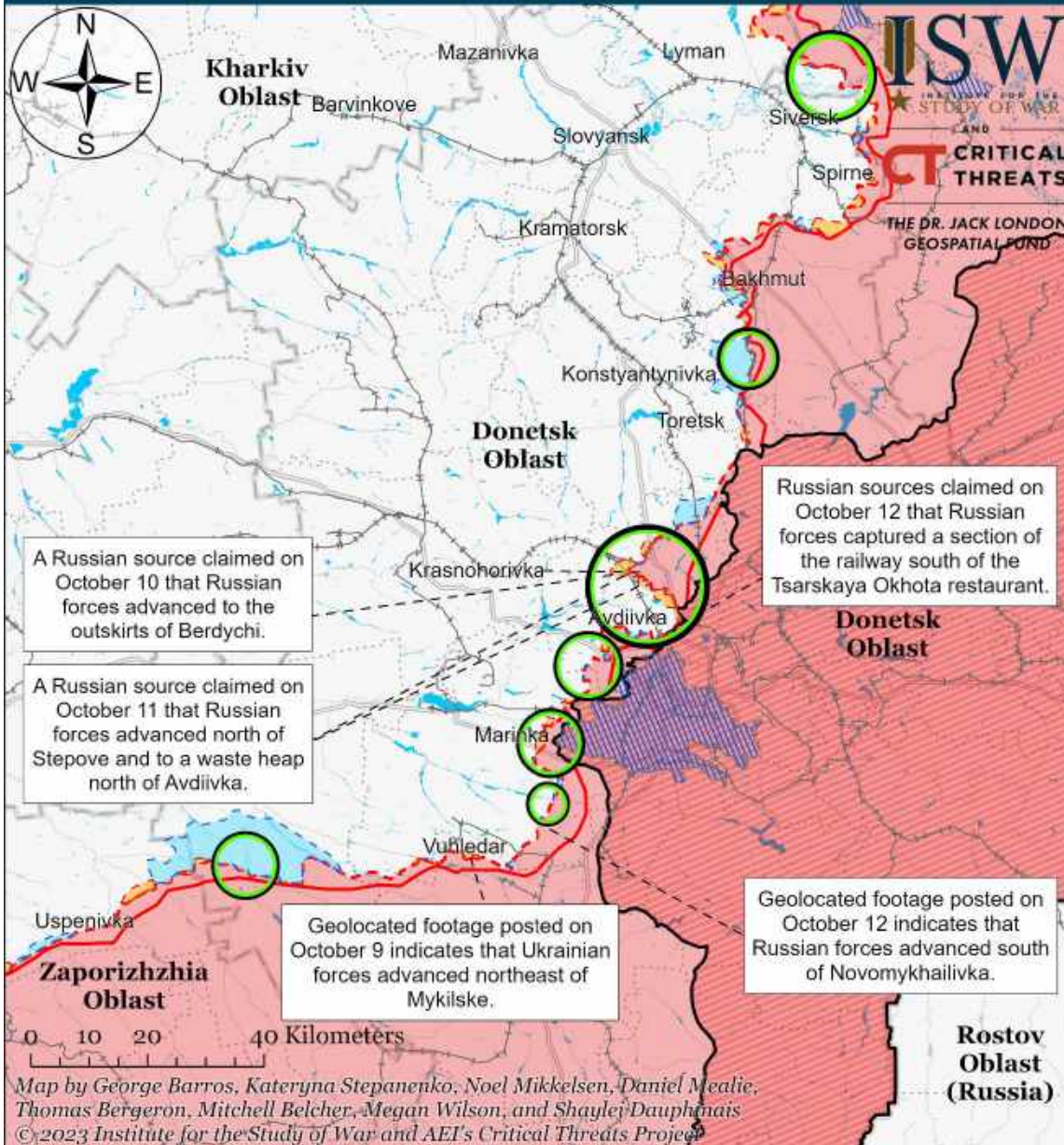


- Donetsk City Limits
- ▬ Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- ▬ Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- ▬ Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- ▬ Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- ▬ Russian Field Fortifications

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



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of October 13, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- 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.

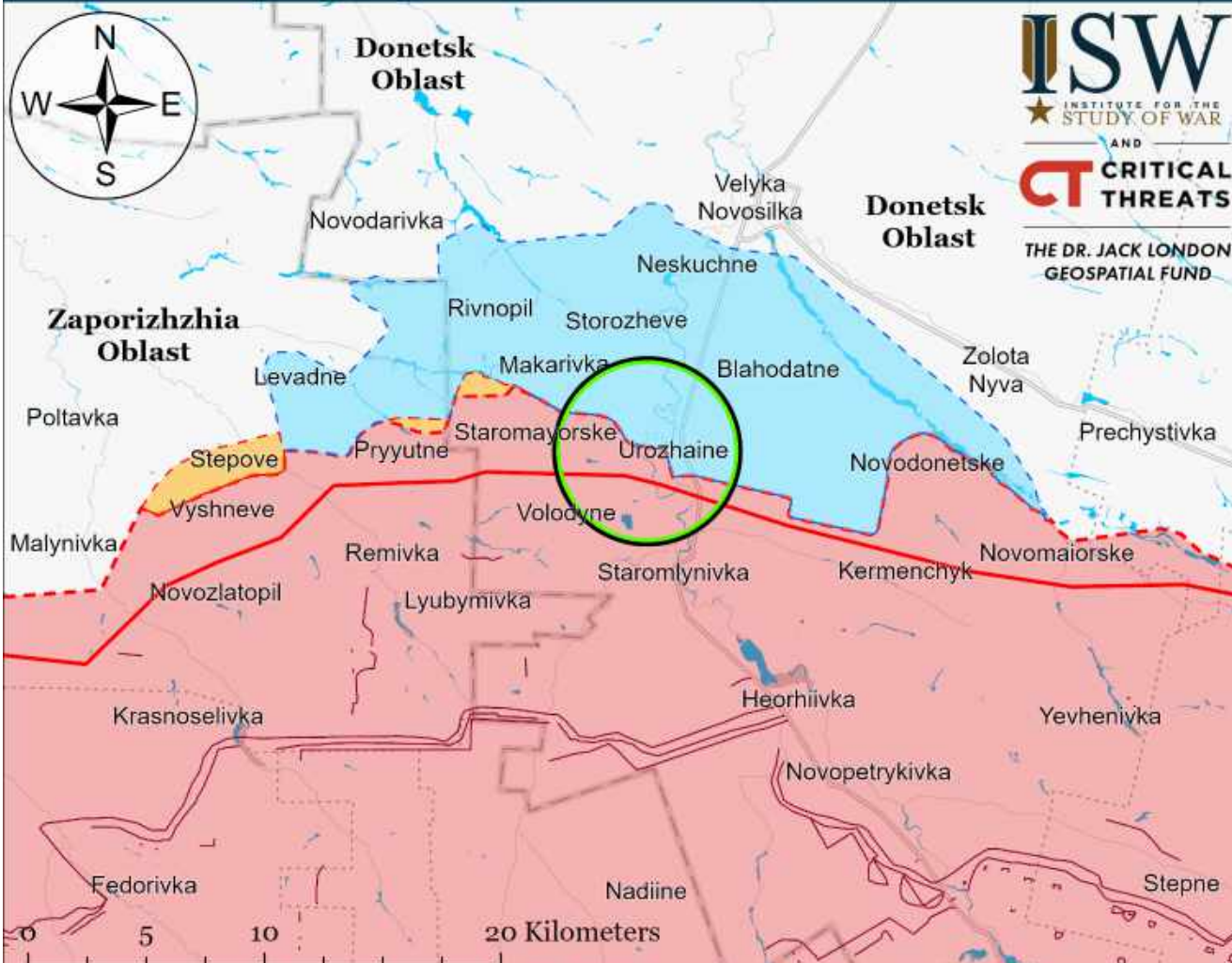
## **Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)**

Ukrainian forces reportedly did not conduct any offensive actions in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 13. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces did not conduct any assaults north of Pryyutne (14km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) over the past day.[47] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked near Pryyutne on October 12.[48] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled eight Ukrainian attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area during the past week.[49]

Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 13 and did not advance. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on October 13 that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka).[50] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces counterattacked near Novodonetske (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka) on October 12.[51] A Russian milblogger published footage on October 13 claiming to show elements of the Russian 36th Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade (29th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) operating near Mykilske (33km southeast of Velyka Novosilka and 4km southwest of Vuhledar).[52]



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of October 13, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

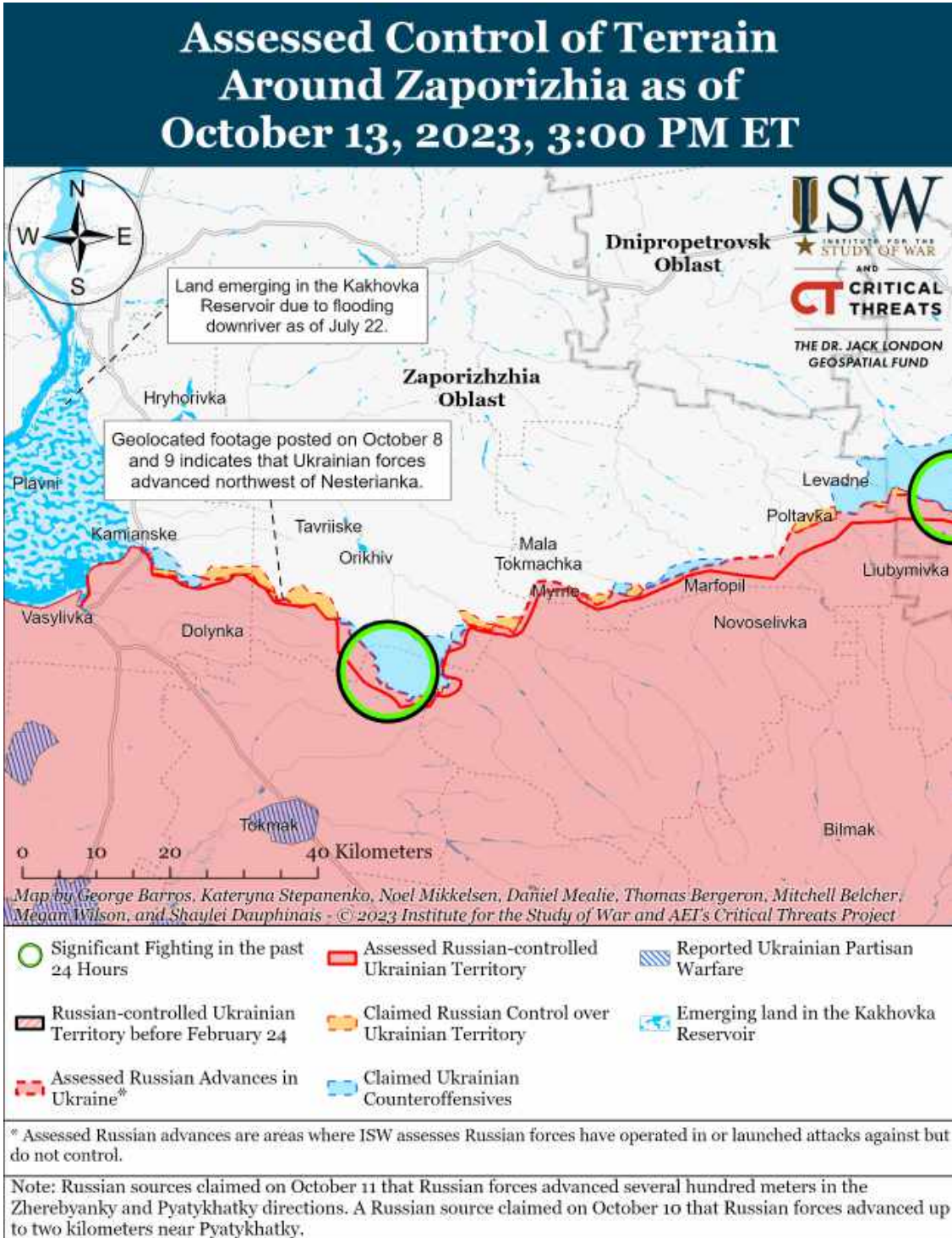


Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Megan Wilson, and Shaylei Dauphinais  
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- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported 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.

Ukrainian forces reportedly conducted unsuccessful attacks in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on October 13. Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces continued unsuccessful attacks along the Robotyne-Verbove line (10km south to 18km southeast of Orikhiv) on October 12 and 13.[53] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Ukrainian forces also unsuccessfully attacked Russian positions in Novoprokopivka (13km south of Orikhiv and 2km south of Robotyne) on October 12.[54] The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Verbove and Robotyne over the past week.[55]





Russian forces conducted assaults in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 13 and marginally advanced. Geolocated footage published on October 13 indicates that Russian forces marginally advanced north of Kopani (11km southwest of Orikhiv and 5km northwest of Robotyne).[56] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Robotyne.[57] A Russian milblogger claimed on October 12 that Russian forces recently improved their positions near Pyatykhatky (25km southwest of Orikhiv and 29km northwest of Robotyne).[58] A Russian milblogger published footage on October 13 claiming to show elements of the Russian 108th Air Assault (VDV) Regiment (7th VDV Division) operating near Verbove.[59]



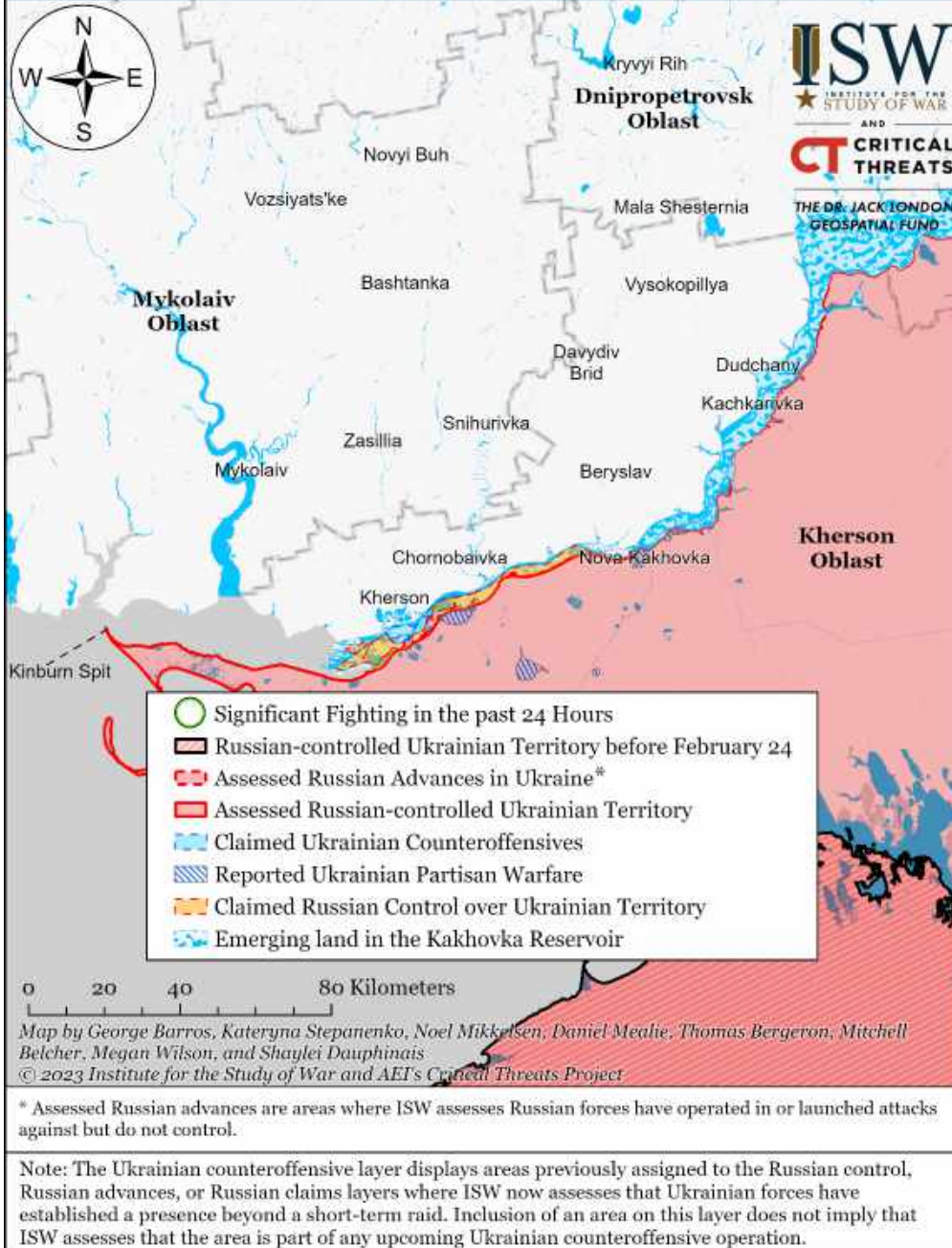
Russian forces are reportedly conducting defensive preparations in occupied Kherson Oblast and Crimea amid continued concern over a possible future Ukrainian attempt to cross the Dnipro River. Russian sources, including the Russian MoD, claimed on October 13 that Ukrainian forces continued efforts to establish long-term positions on the Dnipro River islands and east (left) bank Kherson Oblast.[60] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that Russian forces are actively equipping forward positions, laying mines, and engineering fortifications on the east (left) bank of the Dnipro River.[61] Mashovets reported that Russian forces have laid at least three minefields near Kakhovka (65km northeast of Kherson City) and Malokakhovka (61km northeast of Kherson City) and are quickly restoring the Kerch Strait Bridge in order to support Russian military logistics in southern Ukraine in the winter.

Mashovets also stated on October 13 that the Russian military command is adjusting its posture in the Kherson and Crimea directions in response to concerns about the possibility of a large-scale Ukrainian crossing of the Dnipro River and the development of Ukrainian offensive operations targeting Crimea.[62] Mashovets stated that Russian command reinforced the “Dnepr” Grouping of Forces and the Crimean Civil Defense Guards, the main forces defending in this area of the front, with elements of the Russian 70th Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) and unspecified Russian units based in Crimea. Mashovets reported that the Russian “Dnepr” Grouping of Forces and Crimean Civil Defense Guards consist of elements of the 49th CAA (SMD), recently formed 18th CAA (SMD), and 2nd Army Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR) Army Corps. Mashovets stated that the total number of Russian forces defending in this area is just over 75,000 personnel, including mobilized Ukrainians from occupied Crimea, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts.

Mashovets stated that the Russian “Dnepr” Grouping of Forces consists of: eight motorized rifle, naval infantry, and coastal defense brigades and consolidated tactical groups; 17 motorized rifle, tank, air assault, and naval infantry regiments; three consolidated tactical detachments, including BARS (Russian Combat Army Reserve); and one reserve motorized rifle regiment.[63] Mashovets stated that the Russian “Dnepr” Grouping of Forces is only 60 to 75 percent staffed but noted that this grouping has largely avoided combat operations and that the Russian military command plans to further reinforce the grouping with personnel and equip it with equipment.[64] Mashovets stated that the Crimean Civil Defense Guards consists of: seven motorized rifle, rifle, VDV, and naval infantry battalions with two tank companies as reinforcement; seven motorized rifle, airborne, and infantry brigades; nine motorized rifle battalions, and seven VDV battalions.[65] Mashovets added that Russian military command is forming new units comprised of mobilized personnel in the Crimea direction, including the 126th Separate Coastal Defense Brigade (22nd Army Corps, 18th CAA), the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet), and an additional unspecified motorized rifle battalion. Mashovets stated that Russian military command is also forming new units subordinate to the Russian 47th Motorized Rifle Division (40th Army Corps, 18th CAA) and the 70th Motorized Rifle Division in occupied Crimea and Rostov Oblast.

Russian and Ukrainian sources confirmed recent Ukrainian strikes on Russian ships in the Black Sea. Russian sources, including a Kremlin-affiliated milblogger, confirmed reports that the Russian patrol ship *Pavel Derzhavin* sustained minor damage due to a Ukrainian strike near occupied Sevastopol in the Black Sea on October 11.[66] Ukrainian outlet *Ukrainskaya Pravda* reported on October 13 that sources in the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) confirmed that Ukrainian forces conducted a naval drone strike on the *Pavel Derzhavin* on October 11 and another naval drone strike on the Russian *Buyan* missile carrier on October 13.[67]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of October 13, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

A Ukrainian military intelligence official reported that Russian forces are struggling to equip newly-formed military formations. Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Deputy Chief Major General Vadym Skibitskyi stated that Russia specifically aims to equip the 104th Airborne (VDV) Division and continues forming the 25th Combined Arms Army (CAA) but is struggling to equip these formations.[68] Skibitskyi stated that Russia aims to produce 2.1 million rounds of ammunition



annually by 2024 but will need assistance from other countries to achieve this goal. Skibitskyi also stated that Russia is actively removing heavy equipment and artillery systems from storage and restoring them to equip these new formations.

US National Security Council Spokesperson John Kirby stated on October 13 that North Korea has delivered over 1,000 containers of military equipment and munitions for Russia to use in its war in Ukraine.[69] The White House released satellite images depicting shipping containers moving from Najin, North Korea to Dunay, Russia between September 7 and October 1, 2023. Kirby's statement confirms a recent Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) report stating that rail traffic between North Korea and Russia significantly increased in mid to late September and assessing that the shipments include munitions.[70]

A claimed Wagner serviceman alleged that Russia has given former Wagner Group fighters immunity from the prosecution of crimes for one year after service.[71] ISW has frequently reported on former Wagner personnel accused of committing violent crimes since returning to Russia from Ukraine.[72] The Wagner fighter also claimed that Wagner fighters cannot travel abroad for one year after service.[73] The official Wagner Group Telegram account claimed that this statement is false, however.[74]

### **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)**

Ukrainian partisans reportedly targeted Russian military assets in rear areas in southern Ukraine on October 12 and 13. Ukrainian Mariupol Mayoral Advisor Petro Andryushchenko reported on October 12 that Ukrainian partisans burned down a warehouse storing Russian combat engineering equipment and supplies for constructing fortifications near Mariupol.[75] The Ukrainian Special Operations Forces Command reported that a Ukrainian special forces resistance unit successfully blew up a section of a railway track, which Russian forces use to supply ammunition and fuel to troops operating in the Zaporizhia direction (western Zaporizhia Oblast) on October 13.[76] The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported that the attack damaged 150 meters of railway tracks and a train that transported logistics and looted goods between Melitopol and occupied Crimea daily.[77]

### **Russian Information Operations and Narratives:**

***NOTE: ISW continues to assess that the Kremlin has and will continue to exploit the Israel-Hamas war to advance several Russian information operations about Russia's invasion of Ukraine. However, ISW has notably not observed any evidence – and does not assess – that the Kremlin supported, directed, or is involved in the Israel-Hamas war.***

Russian President Vladimir Putin reiterated multiple standard Kremlin narratives against the West at a meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Member States on October 13. Putin repeated the false narrative that the West and Ukraine initiated the conflict in Ukraine in 2014.[78] Putin also claimed that the West's policies caused the Israel-Hamas war and offered Russia as a mediator in the conflict. Putin did not present any new or noteworthy narratives during his speech.

Putin attempted to allay claims that the Russian-Armenian relationship is deteriorating. Putin claimed that he has “constantly” been in contact with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and that



Armenia is not leaving the CIS.[79] Putin also claimed that the Armenian and Russian governments continue to work together and that he invited Pashinyan to Russia. ISW previously reported that Armenia has been ostensibly distancing itself from Russia after a decades-long security relationship.[80]

Putin seemingly clarified the Kremlin's stance on the return to Russia of Russian citizens who left the country after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, possibly in response to recent contradictory statements from Russian government officials about the matter.[81] Putin claimed that Russians who wish to return have the right to choose where they live, but that the "overwhelming majority of [Russian] citizens" may treat returnees who "behaved immorally towards Russia" differently upon their return, implying returning citizens will not face legal action but threatening them with pariah status.[82]

### **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 that elements of the Belarusian 120th Separate Guards Mechanized Brigade conducted battalion tactical exercises at the 227th Combined Arms Training Ground on October 12.[83]

**ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian military activity in Belarus as part of ongoing Kremlin efforts to increase their control over Belarus and other Russian actions in Belarus.**

**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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[72] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-20-2023>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-march-30-2023>; [https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Aug%2023%20Russian%20Offensive%20Ca mpaign%20Assessment%20PDF\\_o.pdf](https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Aug%2023%20Russian%20Offensive%20Ca mpaign%20Assessment%20PDF_o.pdf); [https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Oct%205%20Russian%20Offensive%20Camp aign%20Assessment%20PDF\\_o.pdf](https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Oct%205%20Russian%20Offensive%20Camp aign%20Assessment%20PDF_o.pdf)

[73] [https://eanews dot ru/news/chitano-650-tysyach-v-mesyats-vagneram-predlozhili-voyevat-za-palestinu\\_13-10-2023](https://eanews dot ru/news/chitano-650-tysyach-v-mesyats-vagneram-predlozhili-voyevat-za-palestinu_13-10-2023); <https://t.me/rusbrief/164396>; <https://t.me/rusbrief/164340>; <https://t.me/EanNews/16784>

[74] [https://t.me/VAGNER\\_svodki/159](https://t.me/VAGNER_svodki/159)

[75] <https://t.me/andriyshTime/14209>

[76] <https://armyinform dot com.ua/2023/10/13/na-zaporizkomu-napryamku-speczpryznachenci-vidrizaly-okupantiv-vid-postachannya-boyeprypasiv-i-palyva/> ; <https://www.facebook.com/usofcom/posts/pfbido2HhAUdSW6is8E8dU8co5w6rVAoF...>

[77] <https://sprotyv.mod dot gov.ua/melitopolski-partyzany-pidirvaly-zaliznychnyj-potyag-okupantiv/>

[78] <http://kremlin dot ru/events/president/transcripts/72500>

[79] <http://kremlin dot ru/events/president/news/72502>

[80] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101123>

[81] <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-ass...>

[82] <http://kremlin dot ru/events/president/news/72502>

[83] <https://t.me/modmilby/32801>

# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 12, 2023

Kateryna Stepanenko, Grace Mappes, Angelica Evans,  
Nicole Wolkov, and Mason Clark

October 12, 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.

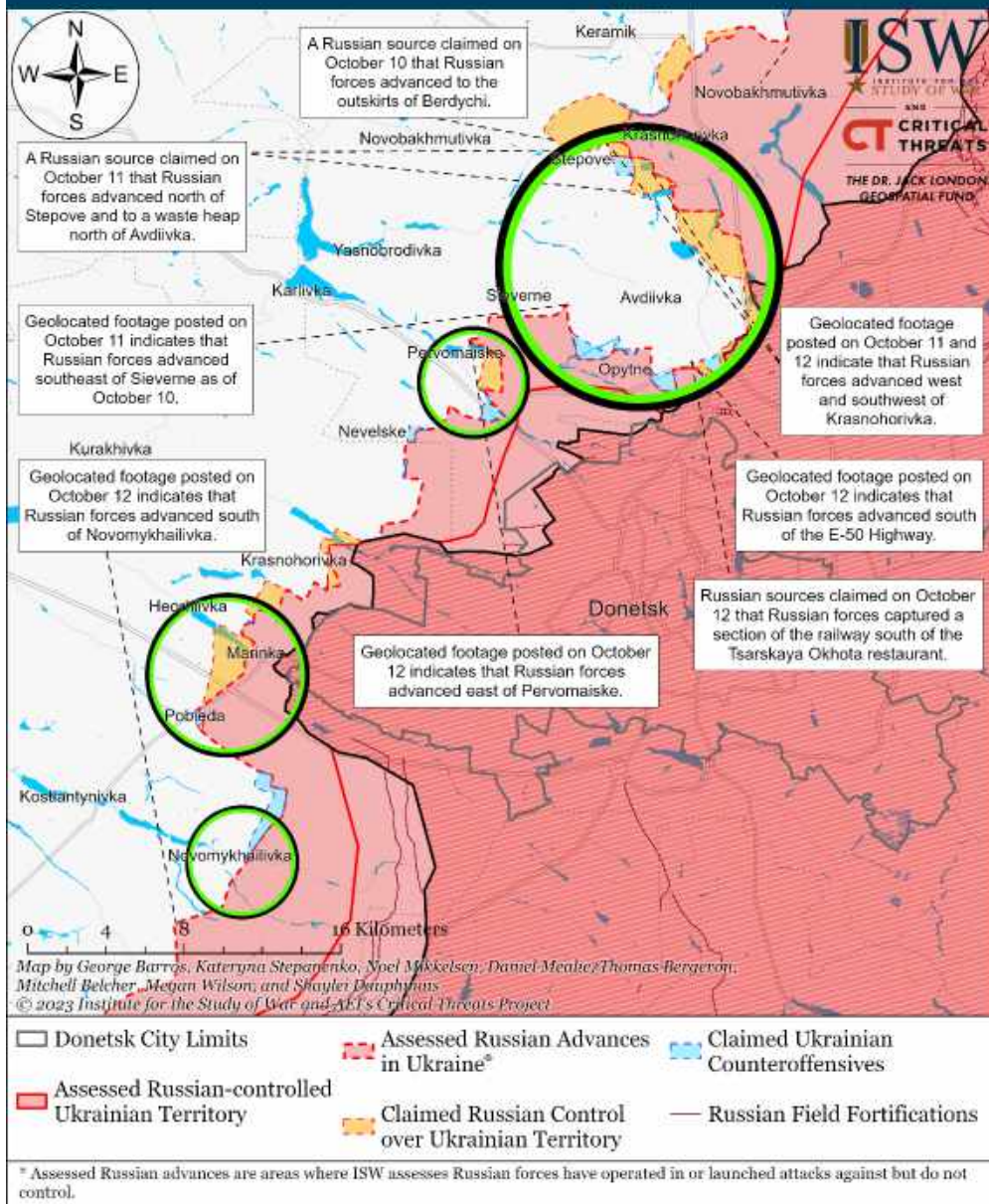
Click [here](#) to access ISW’s archive of interactive time-lapse maps of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These maps complement the static control-of-terrain map that ISW produces daily by showing a dynamic frontline. ISW will update this time-lapse map archive monthly.

**Note:** The data cut-off for this product was 2:30pm ET on October 12. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 13 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

**NOTE:** *ISW has added a new section on Russian information operations and narratives to the daily Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, found at the end of the update.*

**Russian forces likely launched a significant and ongoing offensive effort around Avdiivka, Donetsk Oblast on October 10.** ISW observed Russian forces simultaneously attacking northwest, west, and south of Avdiivka using armored assault groups, rotary wing aircraft, and concentrated artillery starting on October 10.[1] Avdiivka City Military Administration Head Vitaliy Barabash indicated that Russian forces are carrying out assaults with air support in 10 to 12 directions around the settlement.[2] Ukrainian military observers framed Russian offensive operations against Avdiivka as a “major attack” and noted that Russian forces used an unusually high number of armored vehicles in combat.[3] Russian forces’ increased use of armored vehicles and aviation – alongside persistent simultaneous ground attacks – indicates that Russian forces are conducting an offensive effort more significant in scope and intent than ISW previously assessed on October 10 and October 11.[4] **ISW is revising its assessment that Russian attacks around Avdiivka are local efforts intended solely to fix Ukrainian forces but is not prepared to assess the exact objectives and likely outcome of Russian efforts in the Avdiivka direction at this time.**

## Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of October 12, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



**Russian forces have not secured any major breakthroughs near Avdiivka as of October 12 and are unlikely to immediately cut off Ukrainian forces in the city.** ISW estimates that Russian forces have captured 4.52 square kilometers of territory from different directions around Avdiivka since October 10 and that Russian forces are 3.32km away from a Ukrainian ground line of communication (GLOC) along the O0562 highway from the south and 5.25km from the north of Avdiivka, and Russian claims of advances beyond these distances are likely overstated. Russian sources claimed that Russian forces are attempting to create a cauldron around Ukrainian forces in Avdiivka, but quickly acknowledged that current advances are slow.[5] Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) Head Denis Pushilin claimed that it is too early to discuss a “full-scale [Ukrainian] exodus



from the city” despite some Russian advances in the area.[6] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces have already advanced 12km in the Avdiivka direction despite geolocated footage indicating only that Russian forces made limited advances north west, south, and west of Avdiivka as of October 12 and did not immediately threaten Ukrainian forces with encirclement.[7] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces gained additional ground on a waste heap on Avdiivka’s northern flank near the Avdiivka Coke Plant; seized a section of a railroad south of Avdiivka; and advanced around the city, but ISW cannot confirm these claims at the time.[8] Russian sources also claimed that Russian forces destroyed the Ocheretyne railway station (13km northwest of Avdiivka), which they claimed supports Ukrainian logistics to Avdiivka.[9]

**Geolocated footage indicates that Russian forces have likely lost at least a battalion tactical group’s (BTG’s) worth of armored vehicles in offensive operations around Avdiivka.** A reliable X (Twitter) user observed on October 12 that Ukrainian forces destroyed 33 Russian armored vehicles and 15 tanks since October 10 near Avdiivka.[10] A Ukrainian reserve officer stated that conservative estimates suggest Ukrainian forces have destroyed a minimum of 36 Russian armored vehicles including tanks, armored personnel carriers, and transport vehicles.[11] A milblogger also claimed that both sides are suffering “significant losses” in operations around Avdiivka.[12] Footage published on October 11 purportedly shows a Russian armored vehicle in a column near Avdiivka falling into a body of water, and geolocated footage published on October 11 and 12 shows Ukrainian forces striking Russian vehicle columns around Avdiivka.[13] This footage indicates that Russian armored forces may not be applying lessons learned from previous offensive operations near Vuhledar in February 2023 or around Kyiv in March 2022, when Ukrainian forces destroyed a disorderly advancing column of Russian armored vehicles.[14] ISW previously reported that Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces operating around Avdiivka were effectively incorporating lessons learned from Russian defensive operations in southern Ukraine.[15] While Russian implementation of lessons learned will vary and Russian forces have achieved some advances in the Avdiivka area which were likely enabled by more effective units, ISW’s October 11 assessment was likely overstated.

**Defending Ukrainian forces are inflicting relatively heavy losses and suppressing Russian logistics near Avdiivka, likely slowing down the Russian pace of advance.** A Russian milblogger claimed that the pace of Russian advance had slowed down and Russian forces are now focusing on “quality” attacks after Russian forces endured initial high equipment losses.[16] Geolocated footage published on October 12 shows that Ukrainian forces destroyed a bridge northeast of Avdiivka between Yasynuvata and Horlivka.[17] A Russian milblogger claimed that the bridge’s destruction will negatively impact Russian logistics in the Avdiivka area and that Russian forces will likely face difficulties attempting to repair the bridge due to its proximity to the frontline.[18]

**The Russian information space is likely exaggerating the degree of Russian successes on the Avdiivka front and will continue to do so despite military failures or a slow pace of advance.** Russian sources are celebrating Russian offensive operations but are largely not reacting to the significant vehicle losses sustained in just a few days of fighting. This muted response is largely inconsistent with prior outcry when Russian forces lost a whole armored vehicle column as the Russian offensive against Vuhledar culminated in February 2023.[19] The milbloggers are likely engaging in self-censorship following the recent arrests of prominent critical information space voices. Many prominent Russian milbloggers also have strong connections to formations in the

Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) People's Militia, many of which are fighting in the Avdiivka area, further providing incentive for milbloggers to censor defeats and exaggerate claimed victories.[20] One prominent milblogger praised the Russian military command for providing information about claimed successes and noted that "this is the first operation in a long time where the [Russian] command tried to create an information cap."[21]

**Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and reportedly advanced in both sectors of the front on October 12.** The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces achieved some unspecified successes east of Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) and east of Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).[22] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash stated that Ukrainian forces are continuing offensives in the Bakhmut direction and have advanced several hundred meters in unspecified areas.[23] The Ukrainian General Staff and Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun reported that Ukrainian forces improved their tactical positions west of Robotyne.[24]

**Russian "Vostok" Battalion Commander Alexander Khodakovsky advocated for Russian forces to freeze the frontlines in Ukraine in order to replace exhausted mobilized personnel with fresh contract servicemen and launch a renewed offensive effort.** Khodakovsky stated on October 12 that Russian forces could conduct a "deliberate final phase" to end the war after replacing tired units with contract servicemen, which aligns with ISW's longstanding assessment that Russian forces will almost certainly take advantage of any short or long-term freeze to refresh their forces and restart fighting at a later date.[25] Khodakovsky also noted that Russian forces will likely face effective Ukrainian defenses and resistance as Russian forces attempt to advance further west into Ukraine. Imprisoned former Russian officer and ardent nationalist Igor Girkin has consistently claimed that a specific faction of the Russian leadership, which Khodakovsky appears to be a member of, has long advocated for freezing the current frontline in Ukraine.[26] Girkin claimed on October 9 that Russian forces will continue to conduct a strategic defense to freeze the frontlines ahead of the Russian presidential elections in March 2024.[27]

**Russian forces conducted a series of drone strikes across Ukraine, targeting port infrastructure in southern Ukraine and critical infrastructure in Kharkiv Oblast on the night of October 11 to 12.** Ukrainian official military sources reported that Ukrainian air defenses shot down 28 of the 33 Shahed-131/136 drones.[28] Ukrainian Southern Operational Command reported that an unspecified number of Russian drones struck the port area in Odesa Oblast.[29] Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence (GUR) Head Lieutenant General Kyrylo Budanov stated on October 12 that the Russian military is stockpiling weapons intended for strikes against Ukrainian energy facilities and the oil and gas sector.[30] Ukrainian Kharkiv Oblast Administration Head Oleh Synhubov stated that a Russian drone partially damaged a critical infrastructure facility in Kharkiv Oblast and noted that Russian forces will increasingly target the Ukrainian energy sector in the fall and winter.[31] Ukrainian Minister of Energy Herman Halushchenko reported that Ukrainian power engineers are undergoing training in case of massive power outages but noted that it is difficult to predict the scale and impact of Russian attacks on the power system.[32]

**The Russian Presidential Administration continues preparations to manage and falsify the March 2024 presidential elections.** Russian opposition outlet *Meduza* reported on October 12 that the Russian Presidential Administration may install electronic voting terminals with passport

scanners at polling stations in certain regions of Russia ahead of the presidential election in March 2024.[33] The electronic voting terminals will reportedly allow Russian authorities to collect data about Russian citizens in an electronic database, including data regarding mobilization eligibility and voting habits. *Meduza* noted that Russian authorities first used electronic voting terminals during the Moscow mayoral elections in September 2023. ISW has previously observed the Kremlin manipulate national election results using electronic voting after the September 2021 State Duma elections.[34] Ural Regional State newswire *URA.ru* reported that its sources close to the Russian government claimed that the Russian federal government is closely monitoring the social media accounts of almost 90 current and former Kurgan Oblast politicians who expressed support for deceased Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin's armed rebellion in June 2023.[35] Russian authorities have reportedly advised politicians to consider their social media posts carefully ahead of the presidential elections, likely an attempt to encourage self-censorship among politicians.

### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Russian forces likely launched a significant and ongoing offensive effort around Avdiivka, Donetsk Oblast on October 10, and ISW is revising its initial assessment these attacks are a limited effort to fix Ukrainian forces.**
- **Russian forces have not secured any major breakthroughs near Avdiivka as of October 12 and are unlikely to immediately cut off Ukrainian forces in the city.**
- **Geolocated footage indicates that Russian forces have likely lost at least a battalion tactical group's (BTG's) worth of armored vehicles in offensive operations around Avdiivka.**
- **The Russian information space is likely exaggerating the degree of Russian successes on the Avdiivka front and will continue to do so despite military failures or a slow pace of advance.**
- **Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and reportedly advanced in both sectors of the front on October 12.**
- **Russian "Vostok" Battalion Commander Alexander Khodakovsky advocated for Russian forces to freeze the frontlines in Ukraine in order to replace exhausted mobilized personnel with fresh contract servicemen and launch a renewed offensive effort.**
- **Russian forces conducted a series of drone strikes across Ukraine, targeting port infrastructure in southern Ukraine and critical infrastructure in Kharkiv Oblast on the night of October 11 to 12.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Kupyansk, along the Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, near Avdiivka, around Donetsk City, in the Donetsk-Zaporizha Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and advanced in some areas.**
- **Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev stated on October 12 that the Russian military has recruited more than 357,000 contract, volunteer, and conscripted military personnel since January 1, 2023.**
- **Russian authorities continue to persecute religious communities in occupied Ukraine as part of ongoing Russian efforts to destroy the Ukrainian identity.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of October 12, 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 near Kupyansk on October 12 and made limited gains. Geolocated footage published on October 12 indicates that Russian forces made limited gains southwest of Orlyanka (22km east of Kupyansk).[36] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces advanced to Krokhmalne (25km southeast of Kupyansk), near Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk), and captured several unspecified positions near Lyman Pershyi (12km northeast of Kupyansk).[37] ISW has not observed evidence of these claims, however. A Ukrainian military observer stated that elements of the Russian 138th Motorized Rifle Brigade (6th Combined Arms Army, Western Military District) made limited advances from the Lyman Pershyi direction towards Synkivka, though Ukrainian officials have not confirmed this report.[38] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Synkivka and Ivanivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk).[39] The Ukrainian military observer reported that elements of the Russian 26th Tank Regiment (47th Tank Division, 1st Guards Tank Army) unsuccessfully attacked along the Yahidne-Ivanivka line (20-22km southeast of Kupyansk).[40] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked near Kyslivka.[41] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash stated that Russian forces are concentrating offensive operations in the Synkivka and Ivanivka directions and are transferring artillery and personnel to the Kupyansk-Lyman direction.[42]

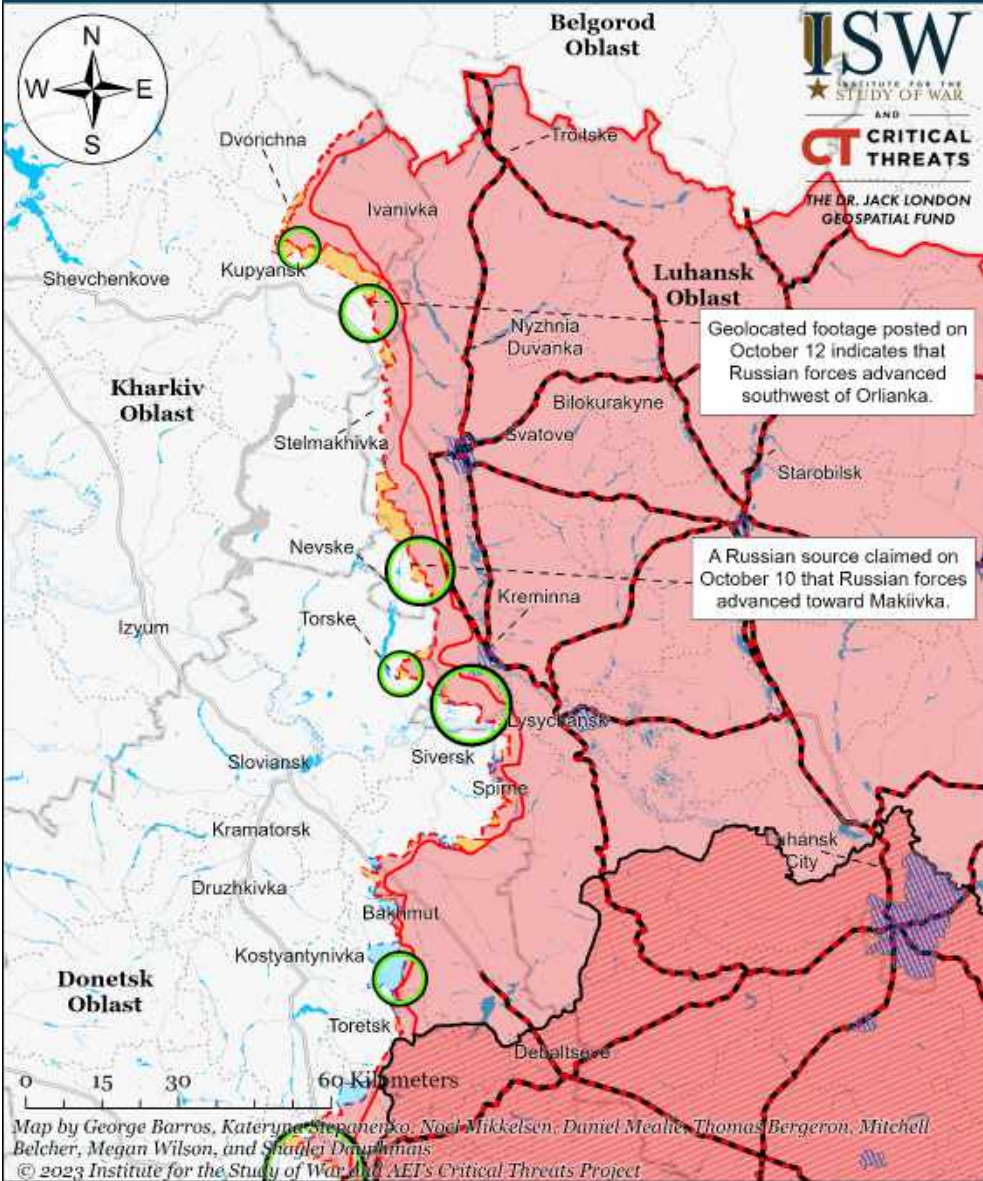
The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed on October 12 that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Synkivka and Ivanivka.[43]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Svatove-Kreminna line on October 12 but did not make any confirmed or claimed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Makiivka (22km northwest of Kreminna), Torske (14km west of Kreminna), and the Serebryanske forest area (10km southwest of Kreminna).[44] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked from Dibrova (7km southwest of Kreminna).[45] Yevlash stated that the Russian military has concentrated forces in the Makiivka direction and is also focusing offensive operations near Nevske (18km northwest of Kreminna) and the Serebryanske forest area.[46] Ukrainian Luhansk Oblast Administration Head Artem Lysohor reported that Russian forces have intensified ground operations in the Serebryanske forest area.[47] The Ukrainian military observer stated that elements of the Russian 237th Tank Regiment

and 252nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (both of the 3rd Motorized Rifle Division, 20th Combined Arms Army, Western Military District) are operating near Makiivka and that elements of the 228th Motorized Rifle Regiment (90th Tank Division, Central Military District) have become more active in the Serebryanske forest area.[48]

The Russian MoD claimed on October 12 that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Makiivka, Yampolivka (17km west of Kreminna), Dibrova, Torske, and the Serebryanske forest area.[49]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of October 12, 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.

Note: A Russian source claimed on October 11 that Russian forces advanced approximately 1.5 kilometers in the Ivanivka and Kyslivka directions. A Russian source claimed on October 9 that Russian forces advanced up to one kilometer near Makiivka. Russian milbloggers claimed on October 8 that Russian forces are entrenched 600 meters east from Makiivka.

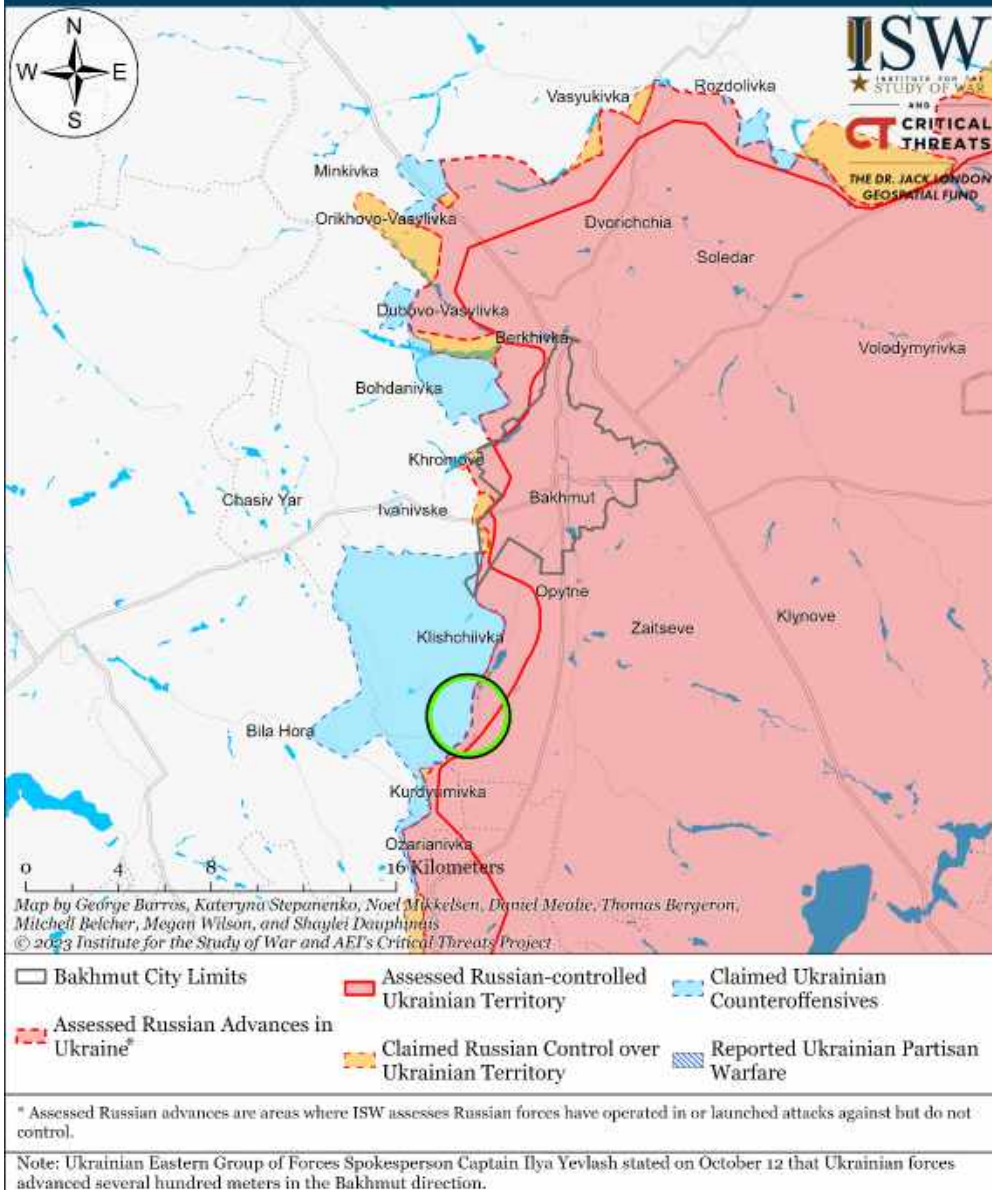
## **Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)**

Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in the Bakhmut direction on October 12 and reportedly advanced. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces achieved some unspecified successes east of Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) and east of Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).[50] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash stated that Ukrainian forces continue offensive operations in the Bakhmut direction and have advanced several hundred meters in unspecified areas.[51] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled three Ukrainian attacks near Klishchiivka, and Russian milbloggers reported that Russian forces also repelled Ukrainian attacks near Andriivka and Ozaryanivka (12km southwest of Bakhmut).[52]

Russian forces continued to counterattack Ukrainian positions around Bakhmut on October 12 but did not make confirmed territorial gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks in the Andriivka area.[53] A Russian moblogger claimed that a “Storm” detachment of airborne (VDV) elements seized an unspecified Ukrainian position in the Bakhmut direction.[54]



## Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of October 12, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces continued attacking Ukrainian positions near Avdiivka on October 12 and made limited advances. Geolocated footage published on October 11 and October 12 indicates that Russian forces advanced west and south of Krasnohorivka (about 5km north of Avdiivka), just south of the E-50 highway (1.5km south of Avdiivka's southernmost outskirts), and east of Pervomaiske (9km northwest from Donetsk City).[55] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces seized a dominant height located at a waste heap on Avdiivka's northern flank near the Avdiivka Coke Plant, entered Stepove (about 5km northwest of Avdiivka), and captured a section of a railway immediately south of Avdiivka.[56] Russian milbloggers claimed that fighting is ongoing in Stepove, near the northeastern outskirts of Berdychi (9km northwest of Avdiivka), and on Avdiivka's southern

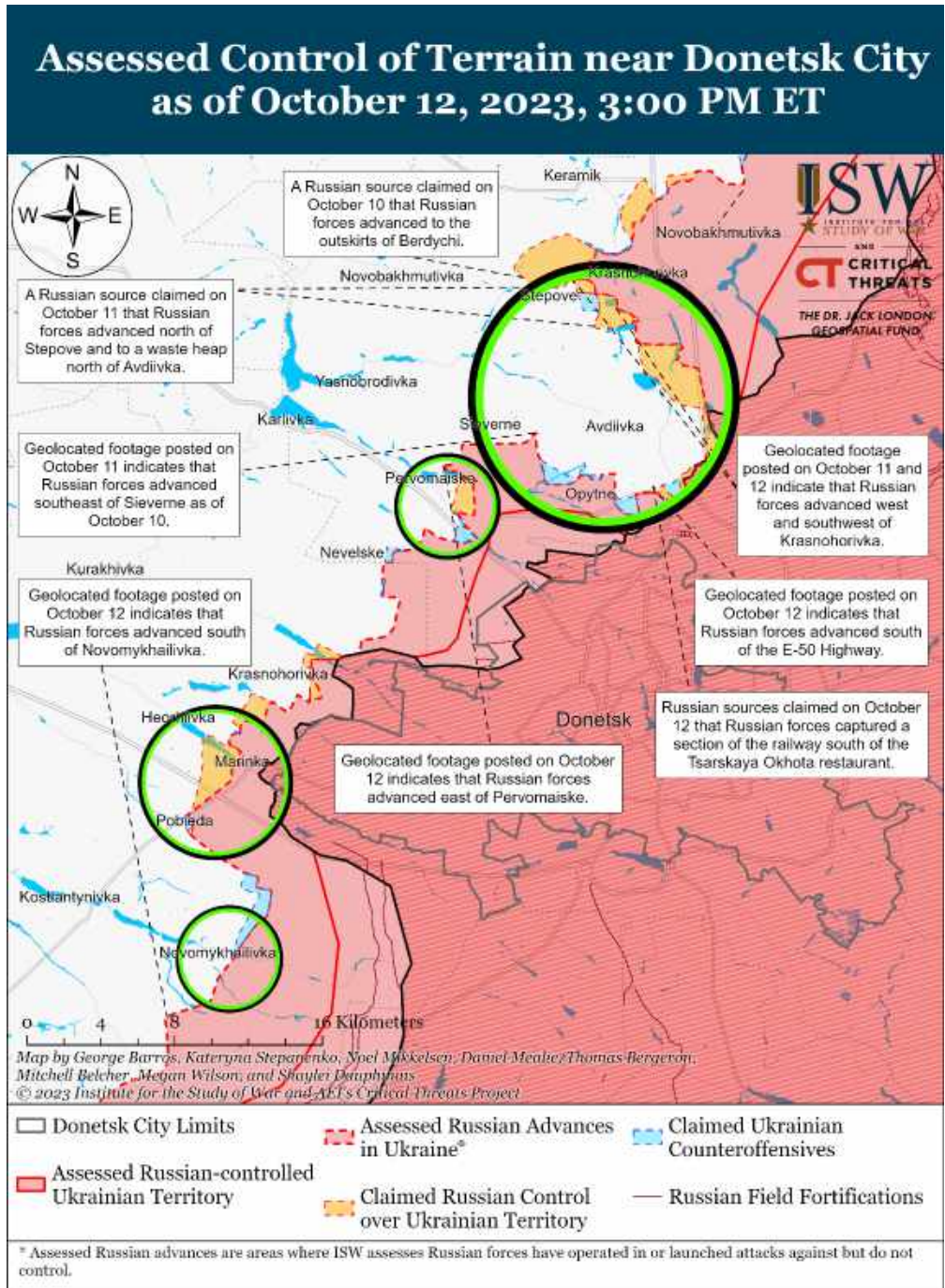
outskirts.[57] A Russian milblogger claimed that a Russian armored assault group broke through Ukrainian defenses southeast of Sieverne (5km west of Avdiivka) and that battles are ongoing west of Vesele (5km north of Avdiivka) where Russian forces made unspecified progress.[58] The milblogger added that Russian forces are also attacking north of Vodyane (6km west of Avdiivka). Another milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced near Sieverne, attempted to advance towards Keramik (10km north of Avdiivka), and carried out offensive operations near Stepove.[59] Ukrainian military officials reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks on Avdiivka; near Stepove, Lastochkyne (4km northwest of Avdiivka), Tonenke (5km northwest of Avdiivka), and Nevelske (14km southwest of Avdiivka); southeast of Sieverne; and south of Pervomaiske.[60]

Russian and Ukrainian forces exchanged strikes on logistics routes near Avdiivka. Russian sources also claimed that Russian forces destroyed the Ocheretyne railway station (13km northwest of Avdiivka).[61] Ukrainian forces heavily damaged a bridge between Russian-occupied Horlivka and Yasynuvata, which likely supports Russian logistics towards Avdiivka.[62] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian occupation officials may struggle to repair the bridge due to its proximity to the frontline.[63]

Russian forces continued assaults west and southwest of Donetsk City on October 12 and made marginal advances. Geolocated footage published on October 12 indicates that Russian forces made limited advances south of Novomykhailivka (12km southwest of Donetsk City).[64] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled more than 10 Russian attacks near Marinka (just west of Donetsk City), Pobieda (5km southwest of Donetsk City), and Novomykhailivka.[65]

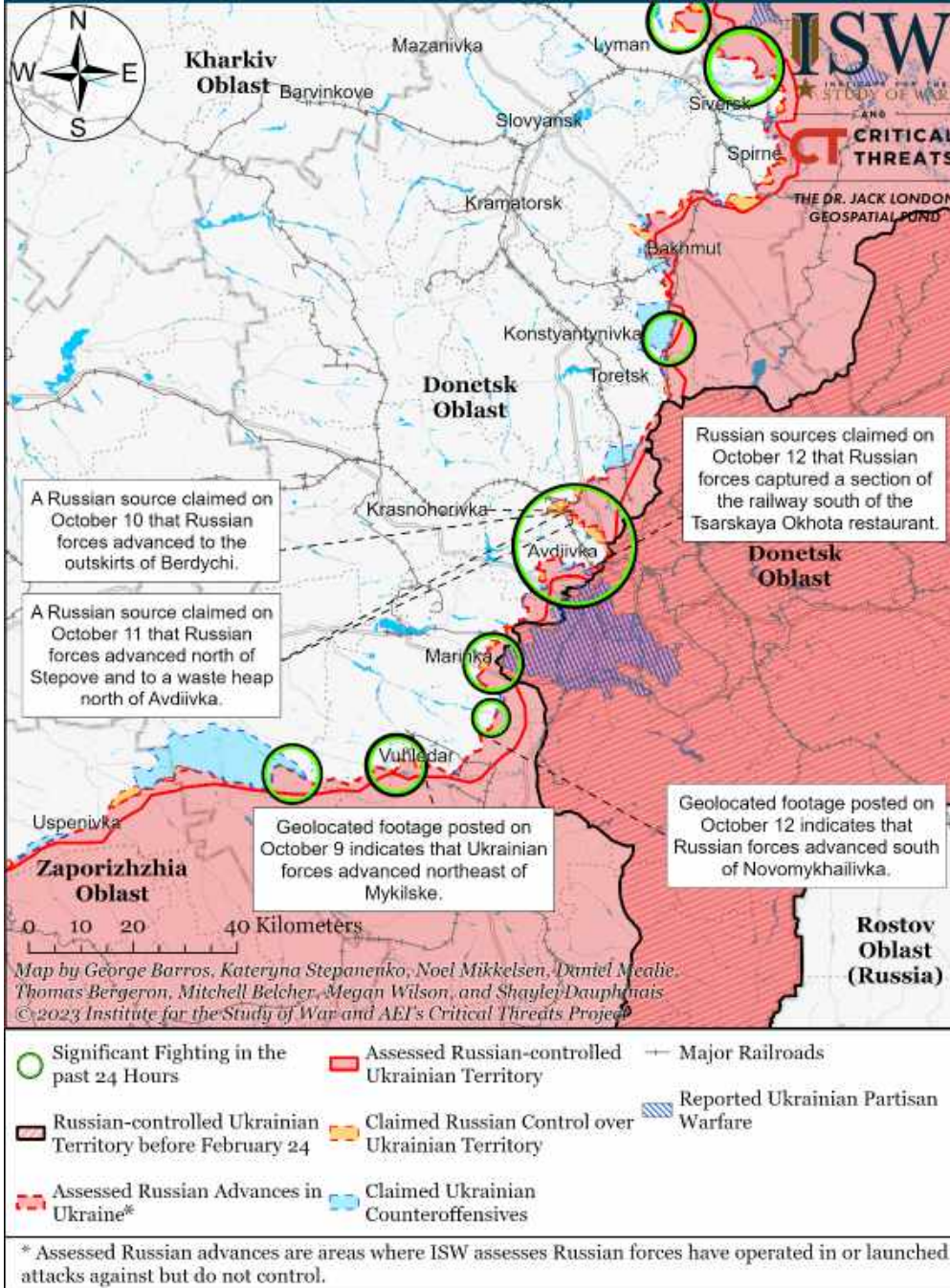
Ukrainian military observer Konstyantyn Mashovets reported on October 12 that Russian military command has committed elements of the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) 1st Army Corps, 8th Combined Arms Army (CAA) of the Southern Military District (SMD), and 68th Army Corps (Eastern Military District [EMD]) to the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line.[66] Mashovets stated that Russian military command deployed the main forces of the 1st DNR Army Corps and significant elements of the 8th CAA to the Avdiivka direction and that Russian forces will likely further expand efforts to advance near and south of Avdiivka. Mashovets stated that Russia is concentrating forces of the 68th Army Corps in the direction of Marinka and Kurakhove (38km southwest of Avdiivka). Mashovets stated that the Russian 114th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st DNR Army Corps) unsuccessfully attacked along the Krasnohorivka-Novokalynove (8-11km northwest of Avdiivka) line, from Kamyanka (5km northeast of Avdiivka) towards Avdiivka's northern outskirts, and from Kruta Balka (4km northeast of Avdiivka) to Avdiivka's eastern outskirts and successfully attacked along the Krasnohorivka-Stepove (8km northwest of Avdiivka) line. Mashovets reported that the Russian 1st Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st DNR Army Corps) unsuccessfully attacked from Spartak (4km south of Avdiivka) towards the southern outskirts of Avdiivka and towards Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka). Mashovets stated that the Russian 9th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st DNR Army Corps) advanced in the Vodyane-Sieverne (7km southwest to 6km west of Avdiivka) direction and in the Pisky-Pervomaiske (8-11km southwest of Avdiivka) direction. Mashovets noted that the Russian 5th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st DNR Army Corps) unsuccessfully attacked from Staromykhailivka (19km southwest of Avdiivka or immediately west of Donetsk City) to Krasnohorivka (22km southwest of Avdiivka). Mashovets stated that the Russian 33rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (20th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA, SMD) unsuccessfully attacked in the Oleksandrivka-Novomykhailivka (immediately southwest of Donetsk City to 10km southwest of Donetsk City) direction. Mashovets added that the Russian 255th Motorized Rifle Regiment (20th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA,

SMD) unsuccessfully attacked in the direction of Oleksandrivka (immediately south of Donetsk City) and Pobieda. Mashovets noted that the Russian 5th Motorized Rifle Brigade and the 103rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA) unsuccessfully attacked Marinka. Mashovets stated that the Russian 39th Motorized Rifle Brigade (68th Army Corps) advanced in the Slavne-Novomykhailivka (10km southwest of Donetsk City) direction.





# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of October 12, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

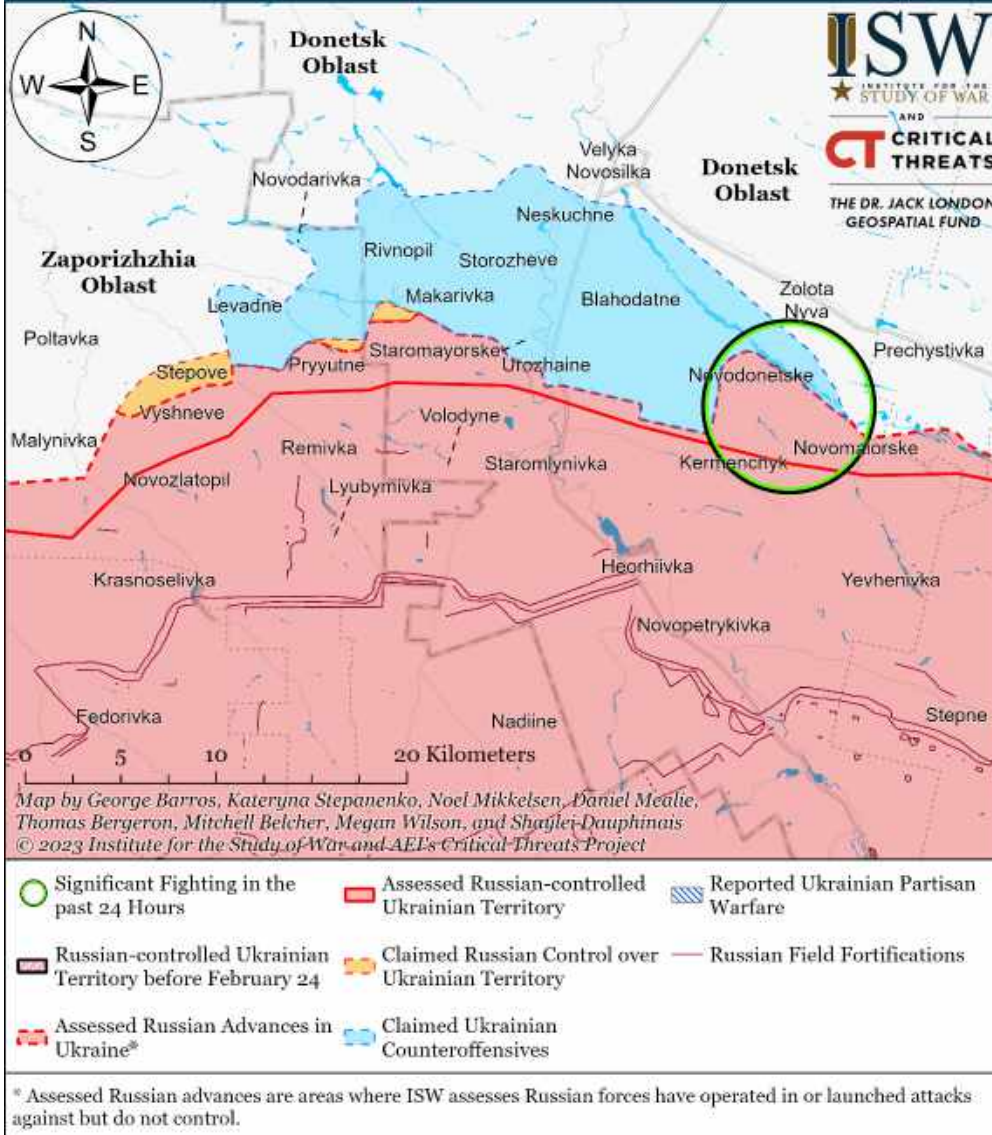


The Ukrainian General Staff and Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks southeast of Vuhledar in western Donetsk Oblast on October 12.[67]

Ukrainian forces continued limited offensive operations along the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 12 and did not advance. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Pryyutne 15km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[68] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces reduced their offensive activity in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area over the past day.[69]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border and reportedly marginally advanced on October 12. A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the 36th Combined Arms Army (Eastern Military District) slightly advanced near Urozhaine (9km south of Velyka Novosilka).[70] Another milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked Ukrainian positions near Novodonetske (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[71]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of October 12, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Ukrainian forces reportedly marginally advanced in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on October 12. The Ukrainian General Staff and Shtupun reported that Ukrainian forces improved their tactical positions west of Robotyne.[72] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked near Novoprokopivka (13km south of Orikhiv) and Novokarlivka (18km southeast of Orikhiv).[73] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks on the Robotyne-Kopani line (5km northwest of Robotyne) and near Verbove (18km southeast of Orikhiv).[74] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces reduced their tempo of offensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast.[75]

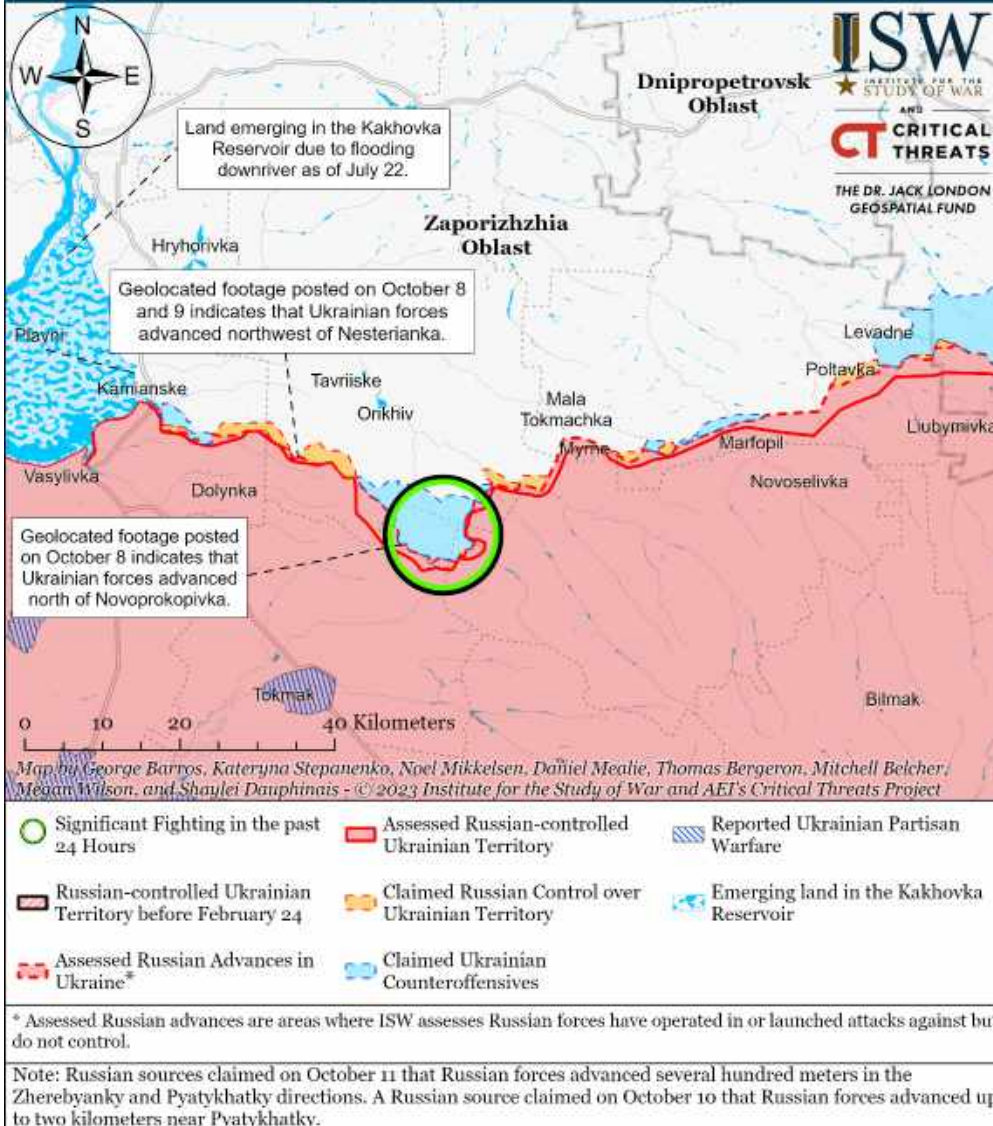
# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of October 12, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces conducted limited unsuccessful offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 12. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful ground attacks near Robotyne and Verbove.[76] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces counterattacked near Verbove.[77]



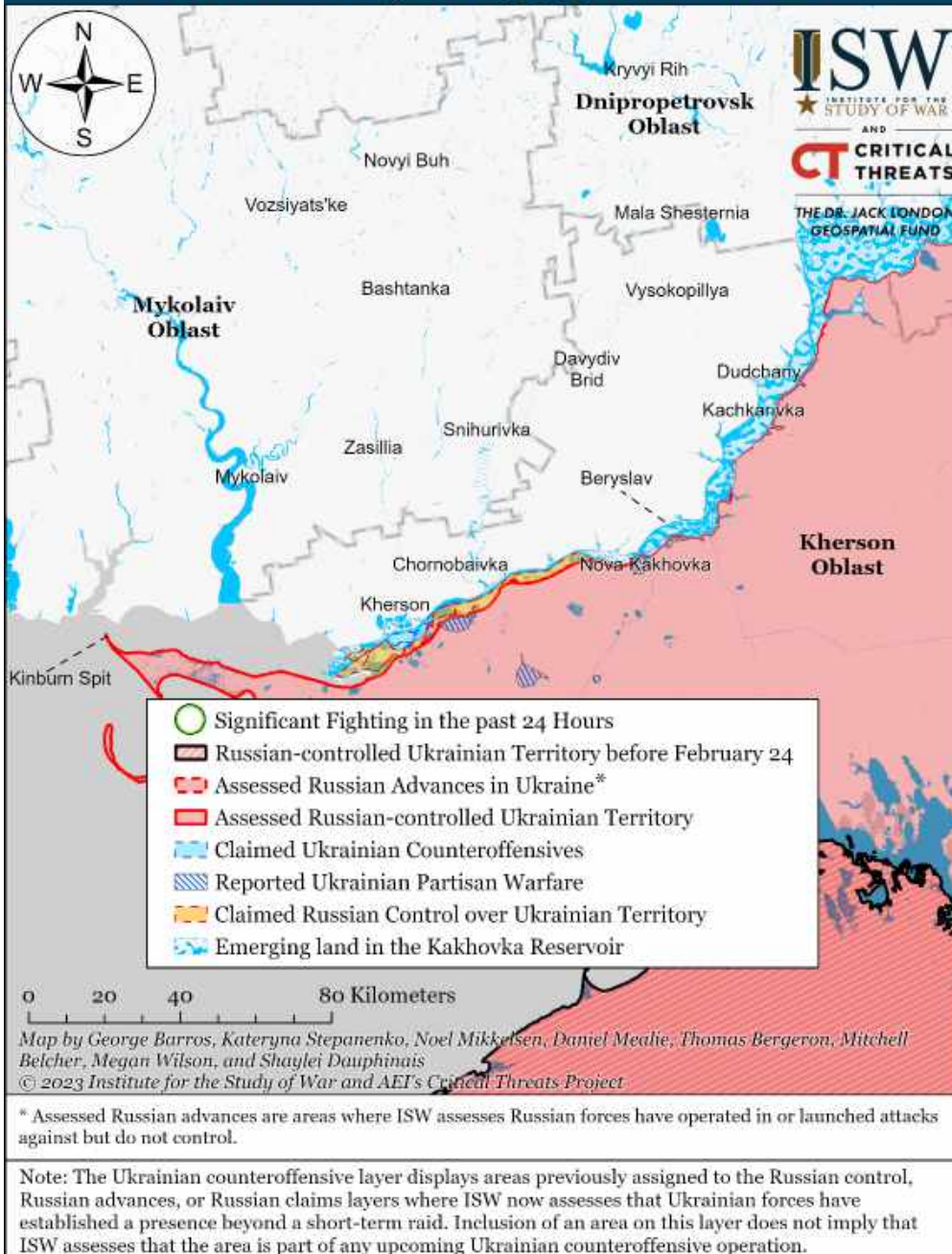
# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of October 12, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian milbloggers continue to discuss Ukrainian operations across the Dnipro River in Kherson Oblast. A Russian milblogger claimed that artillery fire by the Russian “Dnepr” Grouping of Forces repelled a Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance group attempting to land on Velykyi Potemkin island south of Kherson City.[78] Another milblogger expressed continued concern that Ukrainian forces are preparing for a broader offensive operation in the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast.[79]



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of October 12, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Some Russian sources denied reports that the Russian patrol ship *Pavel Derzhavin* sustained damage near occupied Sevastopol in the Black Sea on October 11.[80] Ukrainian Naval Forces Press Secretary Captain Third Rank Dmytro Pletenchuk stated on October 12 that *Pavel Derzhavin* sustained damage on October 11, but that Pletenchuk could not discuss the circumstances of the damage.[ 81]

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

Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev stated on October 12 that the Russian military has recruited more than 357,000 contract, volunteer, and conscripted military personnel in total since January 1, 2023.[82] Medvedev expressed hope that Russian authorities will be able to maintain this recruitment pace. It is unclear exactly what categories of servicemen this number encompasses, despite Medvedev's attempt to clarify. Medvedev notably claimed on September 26 that Russia had recruited over 325,000 contract personnel since January 1, updating Russian President Vladimir Putin's prior claims of 300,000 personnel on September 15 and 280,000 personnel on September 12.[83]

Occupation authorities reportedly continue attempts to mobilize Ukrainian citizens in occupied Ukraine. The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on October 12 that occupation authorities are considering mobilizing 2,500 eligible residents in occupied Crimea by the end of 2023.[84] The Ukrainian Resistance Center claimed that the "Department of Training and Conscription of Citizens for Military Service of the Military Recruitment Center of the Republic of Crimea" is developing a mobilization plan for future use.

Russian authorities continue to highlight and celebrate the claimed accomplishments of Russian defense industrial base (DIB) enterprises. Russian DIB enterprise Uralvagonzavod provided another batch of armored vehicles to the Russian MoD on October 11, including new T-90M tanks and T-72B3M tanks with additional armor.[85] Russian Deputy Prime Minister for Industry and Trade Denis Manturov praised Uralvagonzavod for producing reportedly modern, reliable, and high-quality armored vehicles.

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

Russian authorities continue to persecute religious communities in occupied Ukraine as part of ongoing Russian efforts to destroy the Ukrainian identity. The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on October 12 that Russian authorities are forcing dioceses of the Kremlin-affiliated Ukrainian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate (UOC MP) to join the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and are replacing UOC MP priests who refuse to cooperate with ROC priests.[86] ISW has repeatedly observed the ROC forcibly integrating UOC MP dioceses, despite the fact that UOC MP is not an independent religious organization but an extension of the ROC and the Kremlin.[87] The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported that Russian authorities have also installed ROC representatives in other religious communities in occupied Ukraine, particularly independent Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) communities in Mariupol, occupied Donetsk Oblast.[88] These representatives are reportedly collecting information on non-ROC parishioners and clergy members and providing that information to Russian special services. Russian authorities have conducted systemic religious persecution against OCU dioceses and religious minorities in occupied Ukraine since the start of the war.[89]

Ukrainian Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov stated that occupation authorities continue to indoctrinate Ukrainian minors into Russian political-military structures in occupied Ukraine. Fedorov stated that occupation authorities are teaching Ukrainian high school students how to operate drones and weapons in schools.[90] Fedorov stated that occupation authorities have started a branch of the

Russian youth political-patriotic education program “Yunarmia” for local high school students in occupied Melitopol, Donetsk Oblast, and Fedorov stated that Russian forces will prepare and transport students in Yunarmia to serve on the front with Russian forces. ISW has previously assessed that new Yunarmia formations are unlikely to enter combat for some time as the organization recruits volunteers ages eight to eighteen, however.[91]

### **Russian Information Operations and Narratives:**

***NOTE: ISW continues to assess that the Kremlin has and will continue to exploit the Hamas attacks in Israel to advance several Russian information operations about Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. However, ISW has notably not observed any evidence – and does not assess – that the Kremlin supported, directed, or is involved in the Hamas attacks.***

Russia continues defensive posturing in Central Asia amid the war in Ukraine. Russian President Vladimir Putin visited the Russian military airbase in Kant, Kyrgyzstan on October 12 to mark the 20th anniversary of its establishment.[92] Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov announced on October 12 that the Kyrgyz parliament ratified an agreement with Russia to create a unified air defense system on October 11.[93] *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty’s* Kyrgyz service *Radio Azattyk* reported that Putin’s visit to Kyrgyzstan is his first trip abroad since the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued a warrant for his arrest on March 17, 2023.[94] Kyrgyzstan signed the ICC’s Rome Statute in 1998 but has not ratified or acceded it.[95]

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

Nothing significant to report.

**ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian military activity in Belarus as part of ongoing Kremlin efforts to increase their control over Belarus and other Russian actions in Belarus.**

**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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[62] <https://twitter.com/GirkinGirkin/status/1712336136427683908>; <https://twitter.com/GirkinGirkin/status/1712342188636467704>; <https://twitter.com/GirkinGirkin/status/1712358615116349894>; [https://t.me/boris\\_rozhin/100508](https://t.me/boris_rozhin/100508); [https://t.me/basurin\\_e/6212](https://t.me/basurin_e/6212)

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[66] <https://t.me/zvizdecmanhustu/1303>

[67] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid032AciZ24MxJz21pdKTgBXjeuc4cMpdfVbPEMCUvfvXmeDtmahZShJeW3Xn9iqp5QPl> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02M2nzLmeWikjnXPB6ebte4tmT7yMvtjqZvTY2fnxH9FzazvW988MyCAuQ1rsKiSZ9l>; <https://armyinform dot com.ua/2023/10/12/za-dobu-vorog-vtratyv-na-tavrijskomu-napryamku-ponad-sotnyu-odynycz-tehniky-oleksandr-shtupun/>

[68] <https://t.me/wargonzo/15705> ; [https://t.me/vdv\\_ZA\\_teplinsky/115](https://t.me/vdv_ZA_teplinsky/115)

[69] [https://t.me/batalyon\\_vostok/213](https://t.me/batalyon_vostok/213); [https://t.me/voin\\_dv/5433](https://t.me/voin_dv/5433)

[70] [https://t.me/voin\\_dv/5433](https://t.me/voin_dv/5433)

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<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid032AciZ24MxJz21pdKTgBXjeuc4cMpdfVbPEMCUvfvXmeDtmahZShJeW3Xn9iqp5QPl> ;  
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[74] <https://t.me/RVvoenkori/54741>; <https://t.me/wargonzo/15705> ; [https://t.me/vdv\\_ZA\\_teplinsky/115](https://t.me/vdv_ZA_teplinsky/115); [https://t.me/dva\\_majors/27299](https://t.me/dva_majors/27299);  
<https://t.me/frontbird/3983>;  
<https://t.me/polk1430/1364>; <https://twitter.com/GirkinGirkin/status/1712464201023926671>; <https://t.me/DnevnikDesantnika/3941>; <https://t.me/vrogov/12453>; [https://t.me/boris\\_rozhin/100490](https://t.me/boris_rozhin/100490)

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; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar052923> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar071523>
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# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 11, 2023

Karolina Hird, Angelica Evans, Christina Harward,  
Nicole Wolkov, and Mason Clark

October 11, 2023, 6:15pm 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 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 11. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 12 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

**NOTE:** ISW has added a new section on Russian information operations and narratives to the daily Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, found at the end of the update.

**Ongoing localized Russian offensive operations near Avdiivka likely demonstrate the ability of Russian forces to learn and apply tactical battlefield lessons in Ukraine.** Russian forces launched localized attacks towards Avdiivka after intensive artillery preparation of the battlefield in the early hours of October 10, and geolocated footage from October 10 and 11 confirms that Russian troops advanced southwest of Avdiivka near Sieverne and northwest of Avdiivka near Stepove and Krasnohorivka.[1] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that a grouping of up to three Russian battalions with tank and armored vehicle support intensified offensive operations near Avdiivka.[2] Ukrainian General Staff Spokesperson Andrii Kovavlev clarified that these battalions are part of three motorized rifle brigades of the Southern Military District’s 8th Combined Arms Army.[3]

Russian sources celebrated Russian advances in this area and outlined several adaptations that suggest that Russian forces are applying lessons learned from operations in southern Ukraine to other sectors of the front.[4] A Russian artillery battalion commander who is reportedly fighting in the area claimed that Russian forces are paying significant attention to counterbattery combat.[5] Another source who also claimed to be fighting in the area reported that Russian forces are using electronic warfare (EW) systems, conducting sound artillery preparation of the battlefield, and are demonstrating “clear interaction” between command headquarters, assault groups, aerial reconnaissance, and artillery elements.[6] The milblogger noted that Russian forces are not employing human wave-style “meat” assaults, and several Russian sources amplified footage of Russian armored vehicles leading a breakthrough along roadways towards Ukrainian positions, followed by infantry columns.[7]

The suggestion that Russian forces are effectively employing EW, counterbattery, artillery preparation, aerial reconnaissance, and inter/intra-unit communication is noteworthy, as Russian sources previously emphasized these tactical adaptations as the strengths of Russia's defense against Ukrainian counteroffensive operations in southern Ukraine, particularly in June and July.[8] Furthermore, the majority of Russian forces currently fighting in the Avdiivka area are likely elements of the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) 1st Army Corps, which the Russian 8th Combined Arms Army predominantly controls.[9] ISW has not observed any 8th Combined Arms Army elements not from DNR formations involved in ongoing attacks, and ISW assesses current Russian offensive efforts in the Avdiivka area are likely primarily comprised of DNR forces. DNR elements have suffered from pervasive issues with abusive command culture, poor discipline, and minimal training; all of which have been exacerbated by wider issues with the integration of the DNR's more irregular force structure into Russia's regular military, as ISW has previously reported.[10] Reports by Russian milbloggers that units in this area are displaying effective communication may suggest that DNR forces have somewhat eased their integration into regular Russian forces and have learned lessons from previous ineffective and failed attacks in the Avdiivka area.

**These tactical-level adaptations and successes, however, are unlikely to translate into wider operational and strategic gains for Russian forces.** Geolocated footage shows that Russian gains around Avdiivka are concentrated to the southwest of Avdiivka, and Russian forces have not completed an operational encirclement of the settlement and will likely struggle to do so if that is their intent. Avdiivka is also a notoriously well-fortified and defended Ukrainian stronghold, which will likely complicate Russian forces' ability to closely approach or fully capture the settlement. Russian forces additionally already control segments of the critical N20 Donetsk City-Kostyantynivka-Kramatorsk-Slovyansk highway and other routes that run near Avdiivka, so the hypothetical capture of Avdiivka will not open new routes of advance to the rest of Donetsk Oblast. As ISW previously assessed, Russian forces likely intend attacks in the Avdiivka area to fix Ukrainian forces and prevent them from redeploying to other areas of the front. However, Ukrainian officials have already identified the Avdiivka push as a Russian fixing operation, and they are unlikely to unduly commit Ukrainian manpower to this axis.[11]

**Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and reportedly advanced in both sectors of the front on October 11.** The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces were successful east of Klis'hchiivka and Andriivka near Bakhmut.[12] The Ukrainian General Staff and Tavriisk Group Commander Brigadier General Oleksandr Tarnavskyy reported that Ukrainian forces improved their tactical positions west of Robotyne.[13]

**A large number of NATO member states recently announced aid packages to Ukraine against the backdrop of the 16th Ukraine Defense Group Contact Group meeting in Brussels, Belgium on October 11.** Military and government officials from almost 50 countries met in Brussels, Belgium on October 11 for the beginning of the Contact Group on Defense of Ukraine, and multiple NATO states pledged aid and support to Ukraine.[14] US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin notably announced a new \$200 million aid package on October 11, which includes AIM-9 missiles for a surface-to-air defense system that the United States will soon deliver to Ukraine. He stated that "the United States will stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes." [15] German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius also announced a €20 million aid package on October 10 that includes 10 Leopard tanks.[16]



**Russia’s Federation Council Defense and Security Committee voted to replace Senator Viktor Bondarev with Senator Vladimir Bulavin as Federation Council Defense and Security Committee Head on October 10.** Russian Senator Vyacheslav Timchenko claimed on October 10 that Bondarev is resigning as part of the chairperson’s standard rotation and will remain the first deputy chairman of the Defense and Security Committee.[17] Timchenko claimed that he expects the Federation Council to approve Bulavin’s new appointment.[18] Russian insider sources noted Bondarev’s ties to the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), as he previously served as Commander of the Russian Aerospace Forces (VKS) and speculated that his replacement indicates that the Russian MoD is losing influence in the “most important committee.”[19] The insider sources noted Bulavin’s previous positions in the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) and claimed that he has ties to both Russian Security Council Secretary and former FSB Director Nikolai Patrushev and First Deputy Presidential Chief of Staff Sergey Kiriyenko.[20] If the Russian insider sources’ claims are true, Bondarev’s replacement with Bulavin could suggest that the FSB has increased its influence over the Federation Council Defense and Security Committee compared to the Russian MoD.

**Russian military command continues to celebrate the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet) for its service in Ukraine, despite claims that the brigade was defeated and reportedly transferred to the Kherson direction.** Russian Black Sea Fleet (BSF) Deputy Commander Rear Admiral Ildar Akhmerov presented awards to servicemen of the Russian 810th Naval Infantry Brigade on October 11 for repelling Ukrainian attacks in an unspecified sector of the front a week after Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu partially attributed the successful Russian defensive operations around Robotyne to the brigade.[21] Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Head Lieutenant General Kyrylo Budanov stated on September 22 that Ukrainian forces “completely defeated” the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade and that Russian command withdrew the brigade from western Zaporizhia Oblast.[22] A Russian milblogger claimed on October 5 that elements of the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade were transferred to the Kherson direction, indicating that the brigade may have been reconstituted or is in the process of reconstituting.[23] ISW has not observed the broader Russian information space discuss the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade’s combat operations since early to mid-September.[24] The Russian MoD is likely interested in amplifying reports of well-known units to create the image of Russian success in the information space.

**Armenia continues to ostensibly distance itself from Russia after a decades-long security relationship.** Armenian forces are not participating in the week-long Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) “Indestructible Brotherhood-2023” exercises in Kyrgyzstan that started on October 6.[25] The Kyrgyz Presidential administration reported on October 10 that Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan told Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov that he is unable to attend the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan on October 13.[26] Pashinyan also stated on October 11 that Russian peacekeepers should return to Russia instead of Russian bases in Armenia if they leave Nagorno-Karabakh.[27]

### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Ongoing localized Russian offensive operations near Avdiivka likely demonstrate the ability of Russian forces ability to learn and apply tactical battlefield lessons in Ukraine. These tactical-level adaptations and successes,**

however, are unlikely to necessarily translate into wider operational and strategic gains for Russian forces.

- **Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and reportedly advanced in both sectors of the front on October 11.**
- **A large number of NATO member states recently announced aid packages to Ukraine against the backdrop of the 16th Ukraine Defense Group Contact Group meeting in Brussels, Belgium on October 11.**
- **Russia's Federation Council Defense and Security Committee voted to replace Senator Viktor Bondarev with Senator Vladimir Bulavin as Federation Council Defense and Security Committee Head on October 10.**
- **Russian military command continues to celebrate the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet) for its service in Ukraine, despite claims that the brigade was defeated and reportedly transferred to the Kherson direction.**
- **Armenia continues to ostensibly distance itself from Russia after a decades-long security relationship.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, in western Donetsk Oblast, in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and advanced in some areas on October 11.**
- **Russian opposition outlet *Sever Reali* reported on October 11 that Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) representatives may have recruited over 1,000 convicts to serve in the Russian MoD-affiliated Redut private military company (PMC).**
- **Russian occupation authorities are suffering staff shortages at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP).**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of October 11, 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 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)**

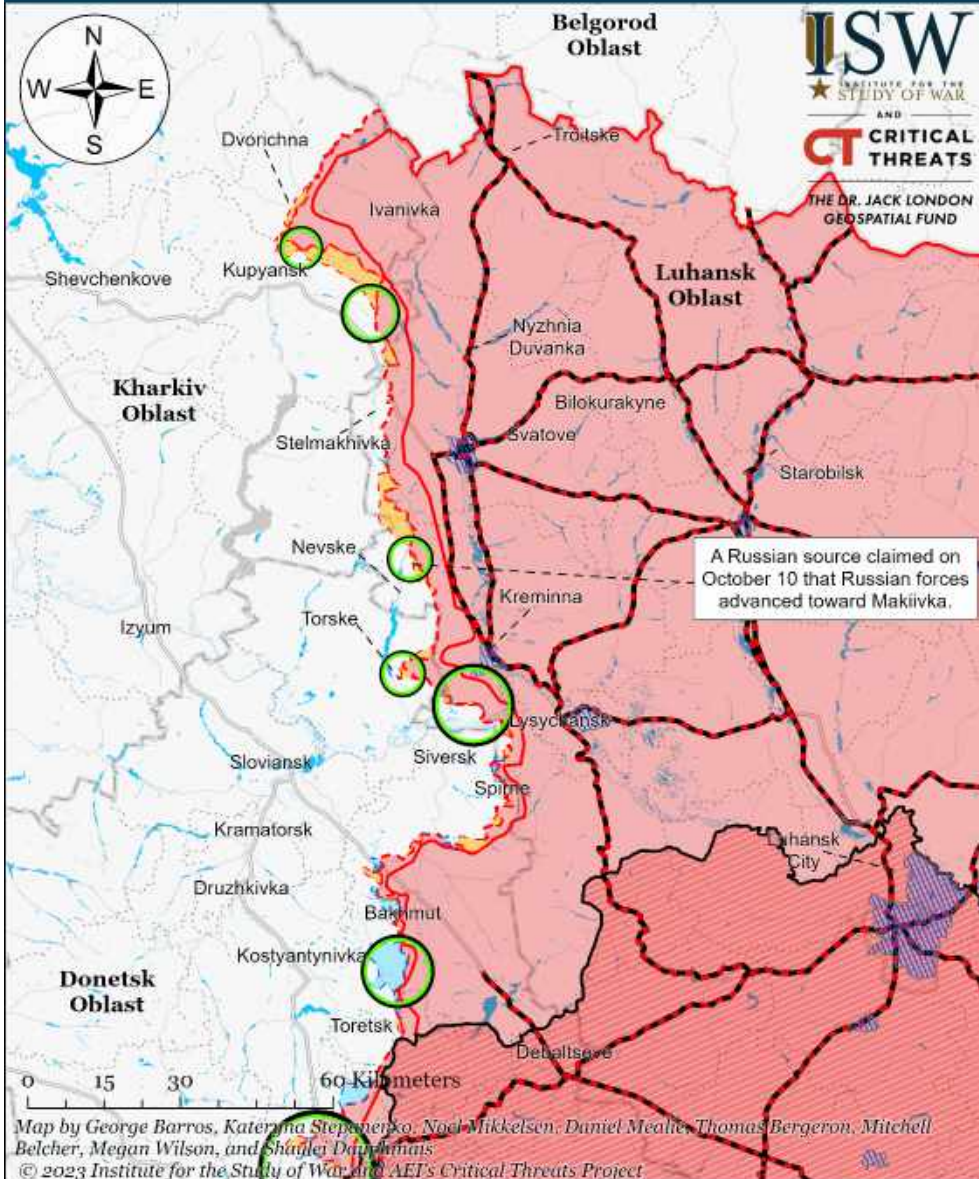
Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Kupyansk and reportedly advanced on October 11. Russian sources claimed that Russian forces, including elements of the Russian 6th Combined Arms Army (CAA) and 1st Tank Army (both of the Western Military District), attacked near Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk), Ivanivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk), and Kyslivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk) and advanced near Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk).[28] One prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked along the railway line from Lyman Pershyi (12km northeast of Kupyansk) and advanced one kilometer towards Synkivka.[29] The milblogger also claimed that Russian forces advanced about 1.5 kilometers in the direction of Ivanivka and Kyslivka and that Russian assaults in these areas are proving difficult due to dense Ukrainian mines.[30] A Ukrainian military observer stated that elements of the Russian 25th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (6th CAA, Western Military District) attacked near Synkivka and that elements of the Russian 47th Tank Division (Western Military District) attacked in the direction of Yahidne (23km southeast of Kupyansk) and Ivanivka.[31] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Synkivka and Ivanivka.[32] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash stated that Russian forces conducted 30 attacks in the Kupyansk and Lyman directions on October 11, are transferring large concentrations of personnel and equipment to the Synkivka and Ivanivka areas, and are attempting to capture Kupyansk and open a land corridor to the Oskil River.[33]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Svatove-Kreminna line on October 11 and reportedly advanced. Russian sources claimed that Russian forces, including elements of the newly formed Russian 25th CAA, advanced near Makiivka (22km northwest of Kreminna) and Nevske (18km northwest of Kreminna).[34] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continue to hold Russian forces back near Makiivka and Dibrova (7km southwest of Kreminna).[35]

The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line near Synkivka, Ivanivka, Makiivka, and the Serebryanske forest area (10km southwest of Kreminna) on October 11.[36]



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of October 11, 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.

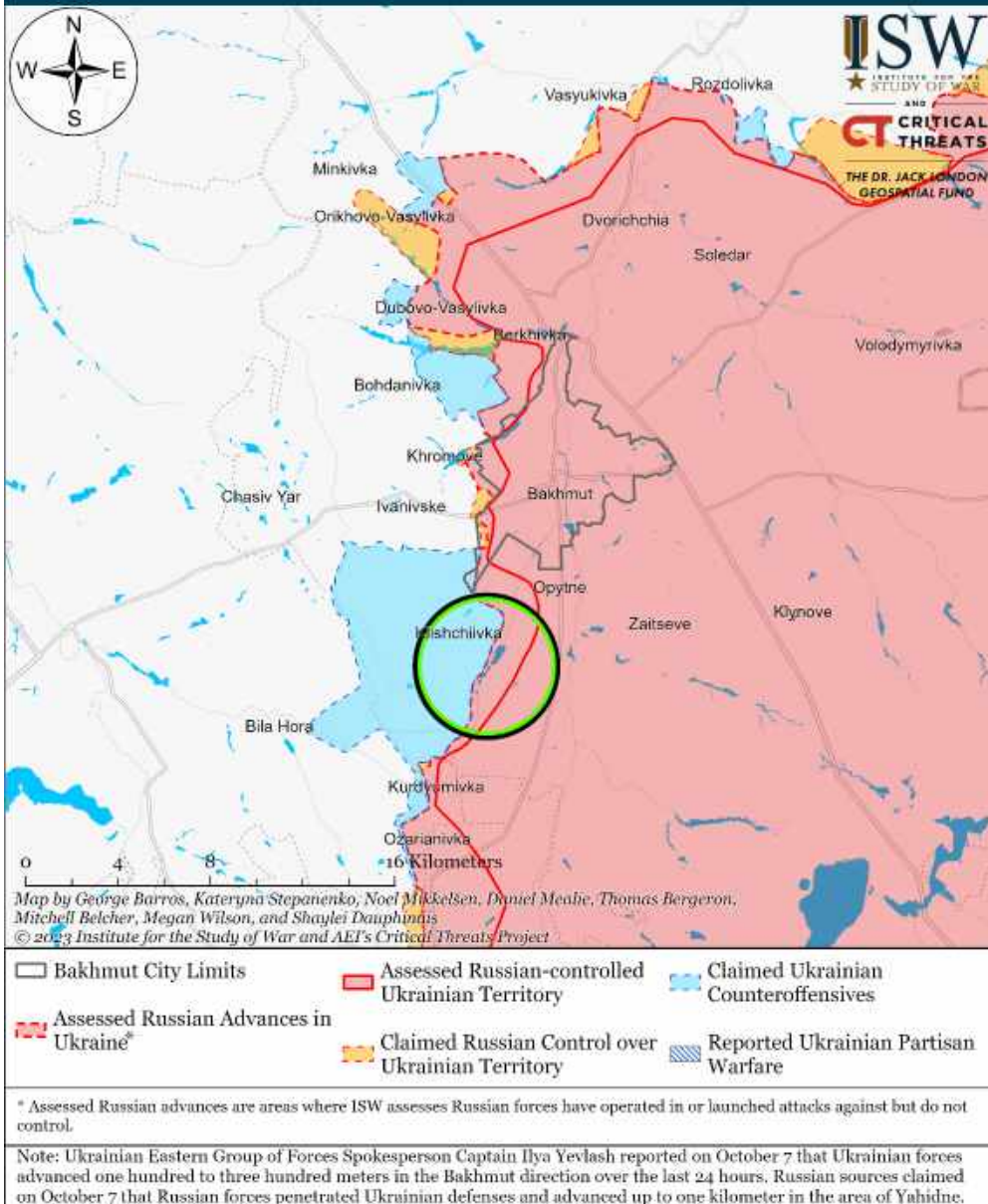
Note: A Russian source claimed on October 11 that Russian forces advanced approximately 1.5 kilometers in the Ivanivka and Kyslivka directions. A Russian source claimed on October 9 that Russian forces advanced up to one kilometer near Makiivka. Russian milbloggers claimed on October 8 that Russian forces are entrenched 600 meters east from Makiivka.

**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 11 and reportedly advanced. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces achieved unspecified success east of Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) and Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).[37] A Russian milblogger claimed that fighting continues near Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut) and claimed that Ukrainian forces continued attempts to gain a foothold on the railway line east of Andriivka.[38]

Russian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut on October 11 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Andriivka and Klishchiivka.[39] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces counterattacked near Klishchiivka.[40] A Russian milblogger claimed on October 10 in a since-deleted post that Russian forces counterattacked on Bakhmut’s northern and southern flanks and that Russian forces have the initiative in the Bakhmut direction.[41]

## Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of October 11, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Ukrainian forces did not conduct any claimed or confirmed offensive actions along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on October 11.

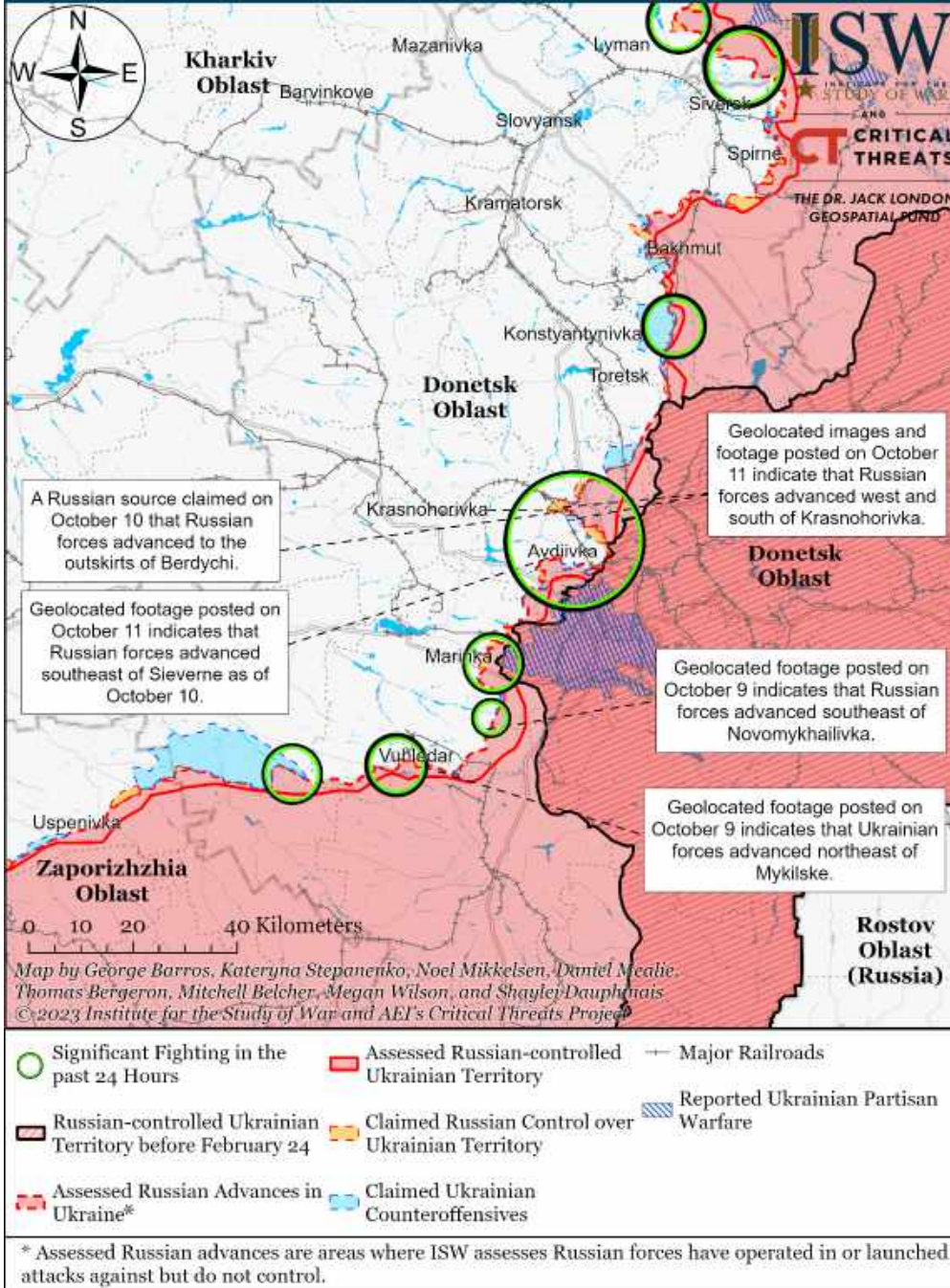
Russian forces made confirmed advances near Avdiivka on October 11. Geolocated footage published on October 11 indicates that Russian forces advanced south and west of Krasnohorivka (8km northwest of Avdiivka).[42] Additional geolocated footage indicates that Russian forces advanced southeast of Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka).[43] A Ukrainian source stated that Russian forces attacked from Novoselivka Druha (9km northeast of Avdiivka), Vesele (6km north of Avdiivka), Vodyane (on the northwestern outskirts of Donetsk City), Pisky (8km southwest of Avdiivka), and

Krasnohorivka (directly west of Donetsk City) and captured several unspecified positions while taking heavy losses.[44] Russian sources, including the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), claimed on October 10 and 11 that Russian forces advanced near Berdyachi (10km northwest of Avdiivka), Avdiivka, Sieverne, Vodiane, and Stepne (14km south of Donetsk City) and are attacking near Spartak (4km south of Avdiivka).[45] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Russian forces broke through the Ukrainian defense southwest of Krasnohorivka.[46] The milblogger claimed that Russian forces have not yet reached the outskirts of Sieverne or Tonenke (7km northwest of Avdiivka).[47] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun stated that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Ochertyne (15km northwest of Avdiivka), Keramik (14km northwest of Avdiivka), Berdychi, Stepove (8km northwest of Avdiivka), Tonenke (7km northwest of Avdiivka), Avdiivka, Lastochkyne (6km west of Avdiivka), and Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka).[48] A Russian source claimed that Russian forces mainly attacked north of Avdiivka near Krasnohorivka and south of Avdiivka from Opytne (3km southwest of Avdiivka) towards Sieverne.[49] Other Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces have fire control of the road leading to Avdiivka, cutting off the supply route for Ukrainian forces in the settlement.[50]

Russian forces reportedly conducted unsuccessful attacks near Marinka on October 11. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on October 11 that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Marinka, Pobieda (4km southwest of Marinka), and Novomykhailivka (10km south of Marinka).[51] Russian milbloggers also claimed that Russian forces attacked near Marinka and Novomykhailivka.[52]



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of October 11, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

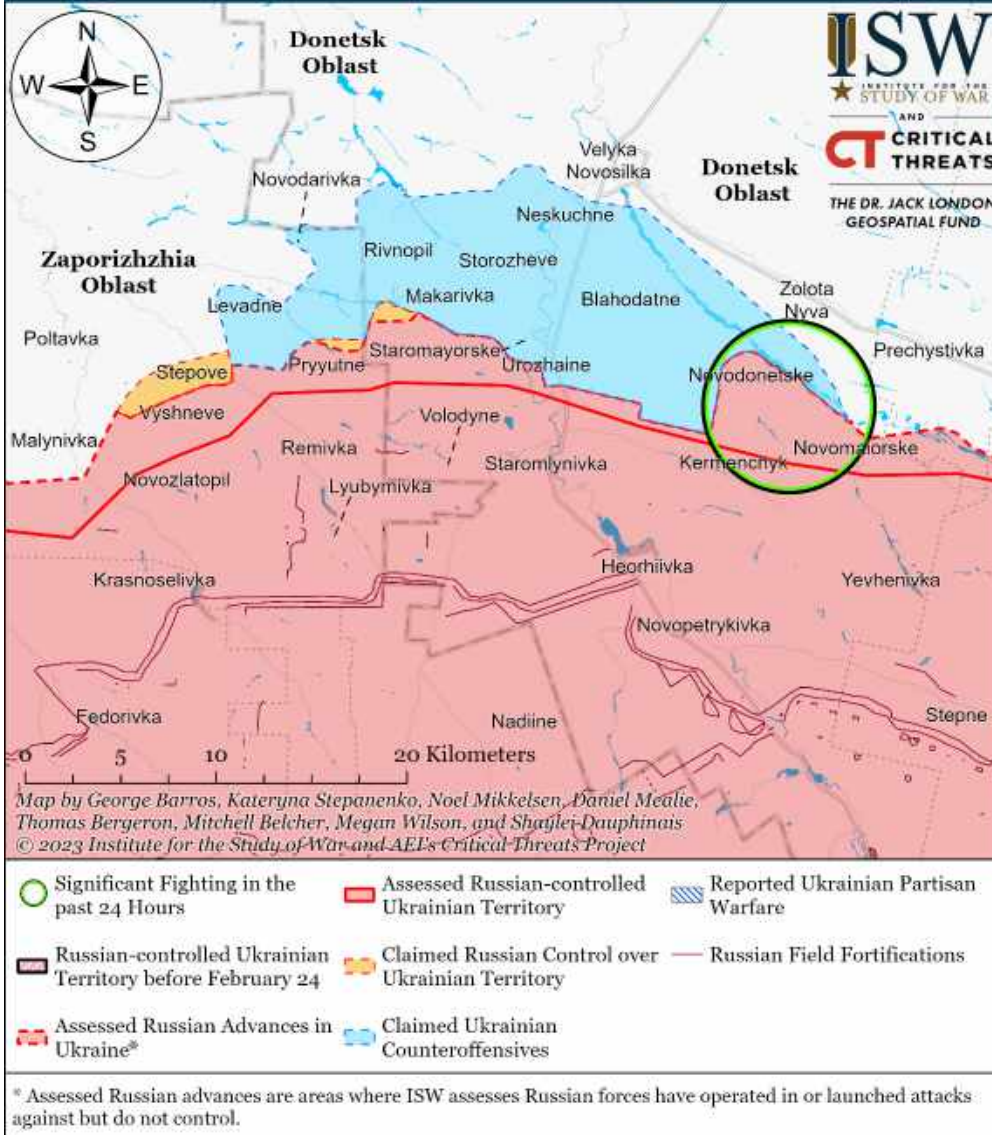


## Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful ground attacks in the western Donetsk Oblast and the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 11. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks south of Novomykhailivka (between Donetsk City and Vuhledar and about 50km east of Velyka Novosilka) and northwest of Pryyutne (15km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[53] A Russian milblogger claimed that there are ongoing meeting engagements near Novodonetske (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[54]

Russian forces conducted counterattacks in western Donetsk Oblast and the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 11 and reportedly advanced in some areas. The Ukrainian General Staff stated that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks southeast of Vuhledar (30km southeast of Velyka Novosilka), near Zolota Nyva (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka), and near Volodyne (about 15km south of Velyka Novosilka).[55] A Ukrainian military observer reported that elements of the 68th Army Corps (Eastern Military District) are committed in the area between Donetsk City and east of Velyka Novosilka.[56] The military observer reported that elements of the 5th and 49th Combined Arms Armies were partially successful along the Pryyutne-Zavitne Bazhannia line (about 13km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) and pushed Ukrainian forces further back from Pryyutne, but then failed to secure further advances to even the frontline and could not advance towards Rivnopil (10km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) and Staromayorske (10km south of Velyka Novosilka).[57] Russian sources, including Zaporizhia Oblast occupation deputy Vladimir Rogov, claimed that Russian forces counterattacked from Pryyutne towards Levadne (4km northwest of Pryyutne and 18km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[58]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of October 11, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on October 11 and reportedly advanced. The Ukrainian General Staff and Tavriisk Group Commander Brigadier General Oleksandr Tarnavskiy reported that Ukrainian forces improved their tactical positions west of Robotyne.[59] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces continued attacks near Robotyne, Novoprokopivka (just south of Robotyne), and Verbove (10km east of Robotyne).[60] Russian sources also claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked from Robotyne towards Kopani (4km northwest of Robotyne).[61]



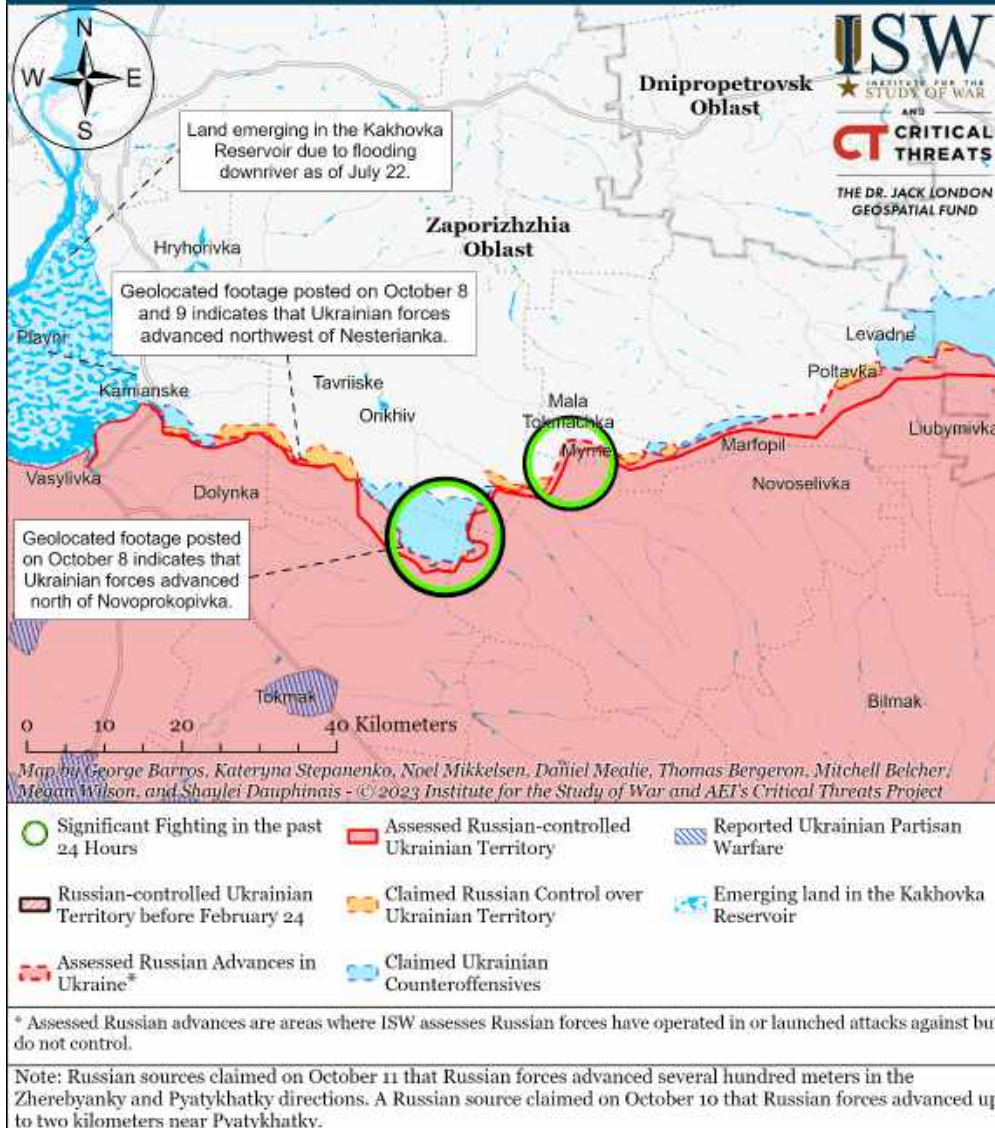
# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of October 11, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces counterattacked in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on October 11 and reportedly made limited gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces attacked near Inzhenerne (about 23km east of Robotyne) and Verbove.[62] Several Russian sources claimed that Russian forces counterattacked near Kopani and forced Ukrainian troops to retreat back towards the Verbove area.[63] One milblogger claimed that the renewal of Russian attacks in the Zherybyanka-Pyatykhatky sector (about 25km northwest of Robotyne) took Ukrainian forces by surprise and that Russian forces managed to advance “several hundred” meters in this direction over the course of October 10 to 11.[64]

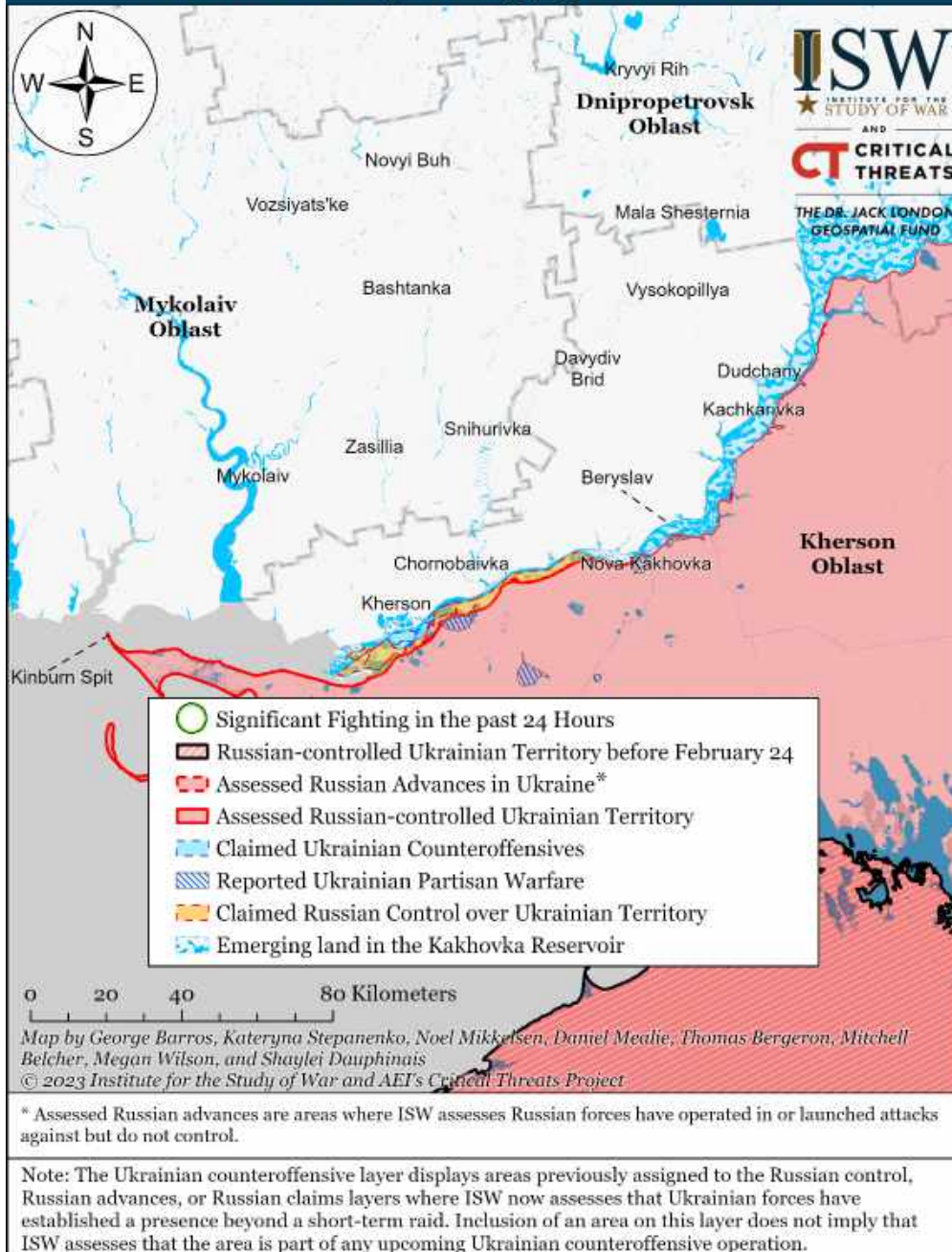


# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of October 11, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian milbloggers continued to voice concern over the potential for Ukrainian counteroffensive operations across the Dnipro River in Kherson Oblast.[65] One prominent Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are preparing for these purported operations by intensifying strikes against Russian rear areas of Kherson Oblast.[66]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of October 11, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

Russian opposition outlet *Sever Realii* reported on October 11 that Russian MoD representatives may have recruited over 1,000 convicts to serve in the Russian MoD-affiliated Redut private military

company (PMC).[67] *Sever Realii* reported that most of the convicts serve in Redut’s “Veterans,” “Lynx,” “Tiger,” “Wolves,” and “North” detachments. Russian MoD representatives reportedly promise convicts amnesty from their crimes after six months of military service but in exchange force them to sign a one-year contract with the MoD. A Russian human rights activist told *Sever Realii* that the recruitment of prisoners may be more of a burden for Redut than it was for the Wagner Group because most Redut personnel do not understand how to behave around prisoners. The activist also noted that Wagner was able to recruit directly from prisons, while Redut does not have direct access to prisons and is forced to accept the convicts that Russian MoD representatives recruit.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu visited the Russian United Aircraft Corporation’s Il-Aviastar enterprise on October 11 and inspected the production process of the Il-76MD-90A aircraft and the repair and maintenance of the An-124-100 aircraft.[68] Shoigu stated that the Russian military must maintain its aircraft and increase its fleet capacity and capabilities, noting that the Russian military is currently using military transport aviation more than twice as much as during the “most intense times” of the Soviet period.

### **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 are suffering staff shortages at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP). Ukrainian Enerhodar Mayor Dmytro Orlov stated in an article published on October 11 that only about 2,000 of the 11,000 total staff who worked at the ZNPP prior to Russia’s occupation of Enerhodar continue to work there.[69] Orlov stated that Russian occupation authorities bring “dozens” of Russian NPP specialists to the ZNPP for up to six months but that the Russian workers want to return to Russia.[70] Orlov also reported that up to 1,000 Russian military personnel are stationed at the ZNPP and that Russian forces placed a “large number” of explosives at the ZNPP.[71] Orlov stated that Russian authorities continue attempts to coerce Ukrainian ZNPP staff into signing contracts with Russian nuclear energy operator Rosatom and acquiring Russian passports.[72] ISW has previously observed reports of Russian occupation authorities forcing Ukrainian ZNPP employees to obtain Russian passports.[73]

The Ukrainian Center for Combatting Disinformation reported on October 10 that Russian occupation officials plan to hold a briefing for foreign journalists in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast on October 16 in an attempt to justify the forced deportation of Ukrainian children from occupied Ukraine.[74]

### **Russian Information Operations and Narratives:**

***NOTE: ISW continues to assess that the Kremlin has and will continue to exploit the Hamas attacks in Israel to advance several Russian information operations about Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. However, ISW has notably not observed any evidence – and does not assess – that the Kremlin supported, directed, or is involved in the Hamas attacks.***

The Russian government likely has not coordinated its rhetorical stance on the return of Russian citizens who left Russia after its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Russian State Duma Chairperson Vyacheslav Volodin stated on October 10 that Russians who left because of the war in Ukraine and

supported Ukraine are not welcome to return to Russia.[75] Volodin added that “Magadan is guaranteed” to those who chose to return to Russia, referencing the large system of gulags in Magadan Oblast in the Soviet era. Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov clarified Volodin’s statement on October 11 and claimed that Volodin was only referring to Russians who assumed an “anti-Russian” position and supported Ukraine from abroad.[76] Magadan Oblast Governor Sergei Nosov responded to Volodin’s statements claiming that “Kolyma (a geographic area in Russia’s northeast and home to some of the Soviet Union’s most notorious gulags) does not accept traitors” and accused Volodin of amplifying outdated stereotypes of Magadan Oblast.[77] Russian State Duma Deputy Roza Chemeris published footage on October 11 showing Volodin recanting his statement and instead suggesting the prosecution of returning Russians who voiced support for Ukraine on treason charges.[78] Russian Deputy Prime Minister and Presidential Envoy to the Far Eastern Federal District Yury Trutnev responded to Volodin’s comments claiming that Russians who left Russia after the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine should return “quietly” and immediately support Russia’s war effort.[79]

Russian security service officials continue to make unfounded claims that Ukrainian forces are threatening nuclear power plants (NPPs) in Russia. Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) Director Alexander Bortnikov claimed on October 11 at a meeting of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) intelligence service heads that Russian authorities shut down the second power unit of the Kursk NPP in August 2022 due to threats from “Ukrainian saboteurs.”[80] Bortnikov claimed that the FSB detained personnel of a Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance group who planned to sabotage the Smolensk and Kursk NPPs in August 2023.[81] Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) Director Sergei Naryshkin reiterated boilerplate rhetoric that Western intelligence services are training Ukrainian forces to attack Russian nuclear facilities.[82]

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

Nothing significant to report.

**ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian military activity in Belarus as part of ongoing Kremlin efforts to increase their control over Belarus and other Russian actions in Belarus.**

**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://www.facebook.com/watch/?mibextid=rS4oaB7S9Ucbxw6v&v=298928019599988>; [https://t.me/WarArchive\\_ua/5994](https://t.me/WarArchive_ua/5994); <https://x.com/EjShahid/status/1712114541629264209?s=20>; [https://x.com/bayraktar\\_1love/status/1712101958373212223?s=20](https://x.com/bayraktar_1love/status/1712101958373212223?s=20); <https://www.facebook.com/brygada.TrO.Poltava/videos/298928019599988/>; <https://twitter.com/EjShahid/status/1712114541629264209>; [https://twitter.com/I\\_LikeMcDonalds/status/1712079818320126177](https://twitter.com/I_LikeMcDonalds/status/1712079818320126177); <https://twitter.com/Militarylandnet/status/1712030054576709787>; [https://twitter.com/99Dominik\\_/status/1712096931722203485](https://twitter.com/99Dominik_/status/1712096931722203485); <https://t.me/ukrbavovna/11055>; [https://twitter.com/99Dominik\\_/status/1712097059291930651](https://twitter.com/99Dominik_/status/1712097059291930651); [https://t.me/WarArchive\\_ua/5992](https://t.me/WarArchive_ua/5992)

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[45] <https://t.me/rybar/53090> ; [https://t.me/dva\\_majors/27170](https://t.me/dva_majors/27170) ; <https://t.me/russiatelegram14/2692> ; [https://t.me/dva\\_majors/27191](https://t.me/dva_majors/27191) ; <https://t.me/dolgarevaanna/4546>; <https://twitter.com/GirkinGirkin/status/1711815943146336513> ; [https://t.me/batalyon\\_vostok/212](https://t.me/batalyon_vostok/212) ; <https://t.me/wargonzo/15669> ; [https://t.me/smotri\\_z/20998](https://t.me/smotri_z/20998); <https://t.me/sashakots/42706> ; [https://t.me/mod\\_russia/31367](https://t.me/mod_russia/31367) ; [https://t.me/mod\\_russia/31372](https://t.me/mod_russia/31372) ; <https://t.me/DnevnikDesantnika/3930> ; [https://t.me/batalyon\\_vostok/212](https://t.me/batalyon_vostok/212) ; [https://t.me/aleksandr\\_skif/2947](https://t.me/aleksandr_skif/2947); <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/54616> ; <https://t.me/sashakots/42704>; <https://t.me/sashakots/42702> ; [https://t.me/boris\\_rozhin/100395](https://t.me/boris_rozhin/100395) ; [https://t.me/kiber\\_boroshno/4519](https://t.me/kiber_boroshno/4519)



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# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 9, 2023

Grace Mappes, Karolina Hird, Nicole Wolkov, Christina Harward, and Mason Clark

October 9, 2023, 5:15pm 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 access ISW's archive of interactive time-lapse maps of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These maps complement the static control-of-terrain map that ISW produces daily by showing a dynamic frontline. ISW will update this time-lapse map archive monthly.

**Note:** The data cut-off for this product was 1pm ET on October 9. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 10 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

**NOTE:** ISW has added a new section on Russian information operations and narratives to the daily Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, found at the end of the update.

**The Kremlin remains focused on promoting the purported legality and legitimacy of Russian internal politics despite Kremlin officials' admissions to the contrary.** Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov responded on October 9 to Chechen Head Ramzan Kadyrov's October 7 proposal to cancel the upcoming 2024 presidential election and instead hold a unanimous vote for Russian President Vladimir Putin, remarking that this will not happen because Putin has "emphasized the need to comply with all of the requirements of democracy, the constitution, and accordingly, to hold these elections." [1] Peskov then claimed that Russian society has consolidated behind Putin with unprecedented unanimity and suggested that Putin is "a politician with whom it is unlikely that anyone, even theoretically, can compete in any way electorally." [2] Peskov's statements indicate that while the Kremlin is invested in creating the guise that the 2024 elections will be free and fair by encouraging Russians to at least nominally participate in the practices of democracy, the Russian government does not intend for any alternative political candidate to pose an actual threat to Putin's re-election. Russian opposition outlet *Meduza* similarly noted in July that its internal sources claimed that the Kremlin has already decided that Putin will win over 80 percent of the vote in the upcoming presidential elections. [3]

**Peskov's strong comments also indicate the Kremlin's desire to posture confidence and steadfastness against the backdrop of Kremlin concerns over Russian opinions on and support for Putin's invasion of Ukraine.** Peskov's suggestion that Russia intends to hold regular elections has the effect of emphasizing that Russia is still a functioning and confident state despite the war, and the insinuation that Putin will win the elections unanimously also frames him as an effective and capable war-time leader with the total support of his society. ISW has recently reported on several instances of the Kremlin strengthening efforts to control the information space and seeking to dispel concerns over another mobilization wave prior to 2024, enabling the Kremlin to consolidate its narratives within the Russian information space. [4] ISW has also consistently observed several indicators that the Kremlin is concerned about the impact of the war on domestic Russian support for



Putin and his regime, including refusing to conduct additional mobilization or otherwise move Russian society to a full wartime footing.[5]

**Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations and reportedly advanced in western Zaporizhia Oblast and near Bakhmut on October 9 amid reports of deteriorating weather conditions in Ukraine.** The Ukrainian General Staff and Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun reported that Ukrainian forces achieved partial success west of Verbove (18km southeast of Orikhiv), and near Klishchiivka (5km southwest of Bakhmut) and Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).[6] Russian milbloggers claimed that rainfall has worsened visibility in southern Ukraine, hindering Russian and Ukrainian reconnaissance drone operations.[7] One Russian milblogger claimed that the ground has become muddy and obstructs tracked vehicle movement, though another milblogger claimed that the ground has not yet become muddy enough to inhibit vehicle movement.[8] Exact conditions likely vary along the frontline, though weather conditions are generally worsening. Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash reported that Russian forces are relying less heavily on aviation and drone activity in the Kupyansk-Lyman direction due to heavy rainfall.[9]

**Russian forces reportedly launched localized offensive operations south of Hulyaipole and may have reorganized the Southern Grouping of Forces, likely in an attempt to further defend against Ukrainian counteroffensive operations.** A Russian milblogger and a Ukrainian military observer both independently reported that elements of the Russian 64th Motorized Rifle Brigade (35th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) advanced several hundred meters in a contested "gray zone" in the Marfopil-Chervone (6km southeast of Hulyaipole) direction on October 9.[10] Russian forces reportedly attacked at the battalion level or less, indicating that these operations are likely tactical and aim to draw and pin Ukrainian forces south of Hulyaipole rather than further west in Zaporizhia Oblast.[11] The Ukrainian military observer reported that the Russian military command recently reorganized the Southern Grouping of Forces to operate in two directions: the Mariupol direction in the western Donetsk Oblast; and the Berdyansk direction in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area, where Russian forces have concentrated the most and highest quality forces.[12] The observer reported that this grouping contains mostly motorized rifle units; the Eastern Military District's (EMD) "most powerful" army, the 5th Combined Arms Army (CAA); the EMD's two "least powerful" armies, the 29th and 36th CAAs; the Black Sea Fleet's 40th and 155th Naval Infantry brigades; and the Pacific Fleet's 336th Naval Infantry Brigade.[13] The military observer reported that the Russian military command has prioritized allocating additional new forces and means to the Southern Grouping of Forces over other force groupings in the theater.[14]

**Imprisoned former Russian officer and ardent nationalist Igor Girkin reiterated his previous claims that the Russian military will continue to conduct a strategic defense to freeze the frontlines before the Russian presidential elections in March 2024.** Girkin's wife published a letter on October 9 which Girkin reportedly wrote on September 29 in which Girkin discussed the current state of the war and his forecast of Russian actions. Girkin has continually claimed that a specific faction within the Russian leadership has advocated for freezing the current frontline in Ukraine and has opposed another faction that advocates for continued Russian offensive operations and domestically improving the war effort.[15] Girkin claimed he is "99 percent" certain that the Kremlin will decide to "freeze the frontline" until after the Russian presidential elections in March 2024.[16] Girkin claimed that Russian forces will likely continue conducting a strategic

defense on the existing frontlines and focus on preventing Ukrainian breakthroughs or “sensitive operational successes.”[17] Girkin further claimed that any Russian government actions to strengthen the Russian military before the 2024 presidential elections would likely aggravate the Russian social, economic, and internal political situations.[18] Girkin also claimed that the Russian government would likely gradually increase domestic repressions ahead of the elections.[19]

**The Russian government is moving toward revoking Russia’s ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.** *Reuters* reported on October 9 that Russian State Duma leaders gave the Duma International Affairs Committee until October 18 to discuss the process of revoking Russia’s ratification of the treaty.[20] Russian President Vladimir Putin first commented on the possibility of Russia revoking Russia’s ratification of the treaty on October 5.[21] ISW has previously assessed that the Kremlin uses nuclear rhetoric to prompt the United States and its allies to pressure Ukraine to negotiate and that Russian nuclear use in Ukraine remains unlikely.[22]

### **Key Takeaways:**

- **The Kremlin remains focused on promoting the purported legality and legitimacy of Russian internal politics despite Kremlin officials’ admissions to the contrary.**
- **Peskov’s strong comments also indicate the Kremlin’s desire to posture confidence and steadfastness against the backdrop of Kremlin concerns over Russian opinions on and support for Putin’s invasion of Ukraine.**
- **Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations and reportedly advanced in western Zaporizhia Oblast and near Bakhmut on October 9 amid reports of deteriorating weather conditions in Ukraine.**
- **Russian forces reportedly launched localized offensive operations south of Hulyaipole and may have reorganized the Southern Grouping of Forces, likely in an attempt to further defend against Ukrainian counteroffensive operations.**
- **Imprisoned former Russian officer and ardent nationalist Igor Girkin reiterated his previous claims that the Russian military will continue to conduct a strategic defense to freeze the frontlines before the Russian presidential elections in March 2024.**
- **The Russian government is moving toward revoking Russia’s ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, in western Donetsk Oblast, in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and advanced in some areas on October 9.**
- **Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut, in western Donetsk Oblast, and western Zaporizhia Oblast, and reportedly advanced in some areas.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of October 9, 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 near Kupyansk on October 9 but did not make confirmed advances. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces captured unspecified positions near Ivanivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk) and northeast of Kupyansk.[23] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk) and Ivanivka.[24] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash reported that Russian operations near Synkivka and Ivanivka have escalated despite a decrease in aviation and drone activity in the Kupyansk-Lyman direction due to heavy rainfall.[25]

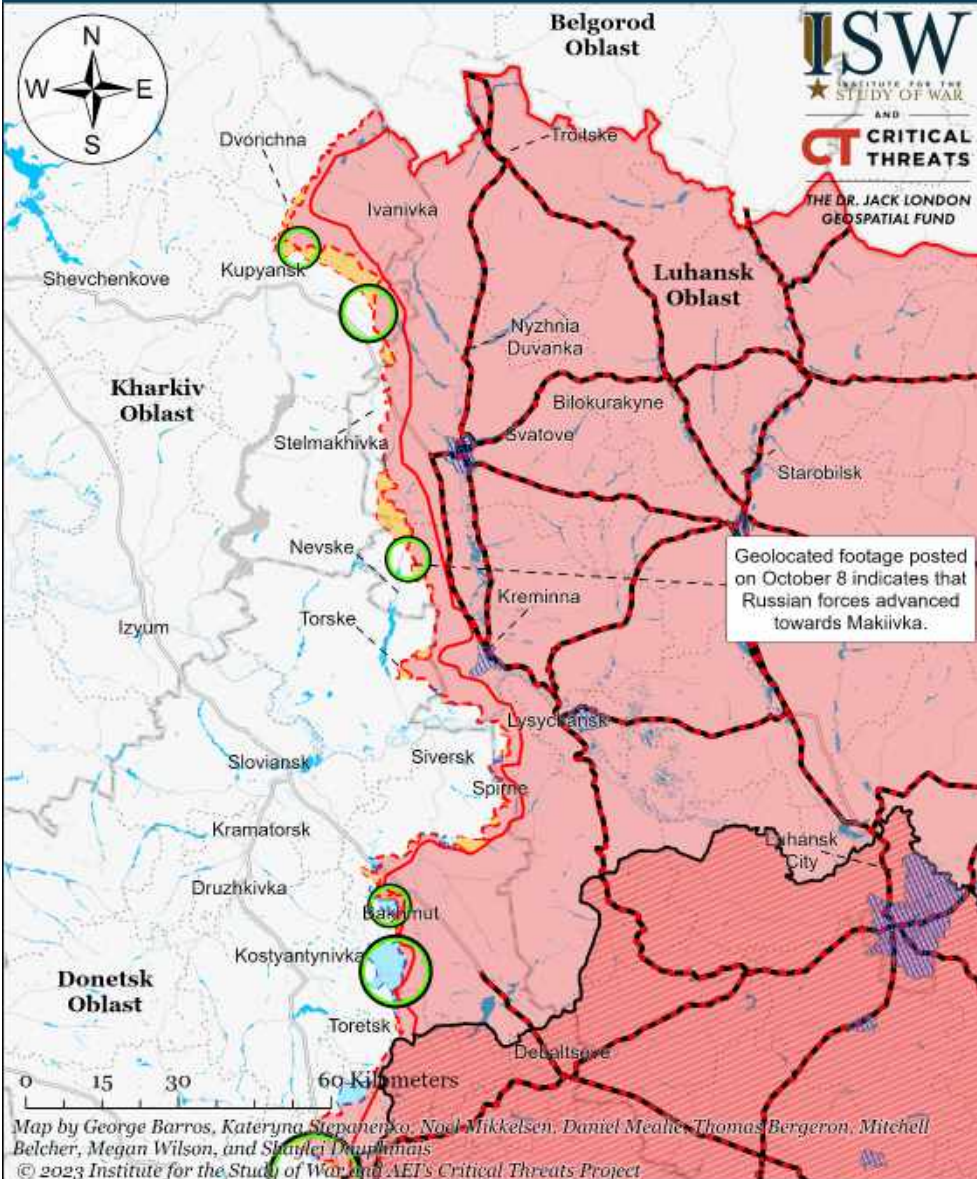
The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed on October 9 that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Synkivka and Orlyanka (22km east of Kupyansk).[26]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Svatove-Kreminna line on October 9 and did not make confirmed gains. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced up to 1km near Makiivka (22km northwest of Kreminna) and captured unspecified positions near Nevske (18km northwest of Kreminna), though ISW has not observed visual evidence to confirm this claim.[27] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Makiivka.[28] Footage published on October 9 purportedly shows elements of the 88th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People's Republic Army Corps) operating near Berestove (30km south of Kreminna).[29]

The Russian MoD claimed on October 9 that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Makiivka, Dibrova (7km southwest of Kreminna), Torske (15km west of Kreminna), and the Serebryanske forest area (11km south of Kreminna).[30]



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of October 9, 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.

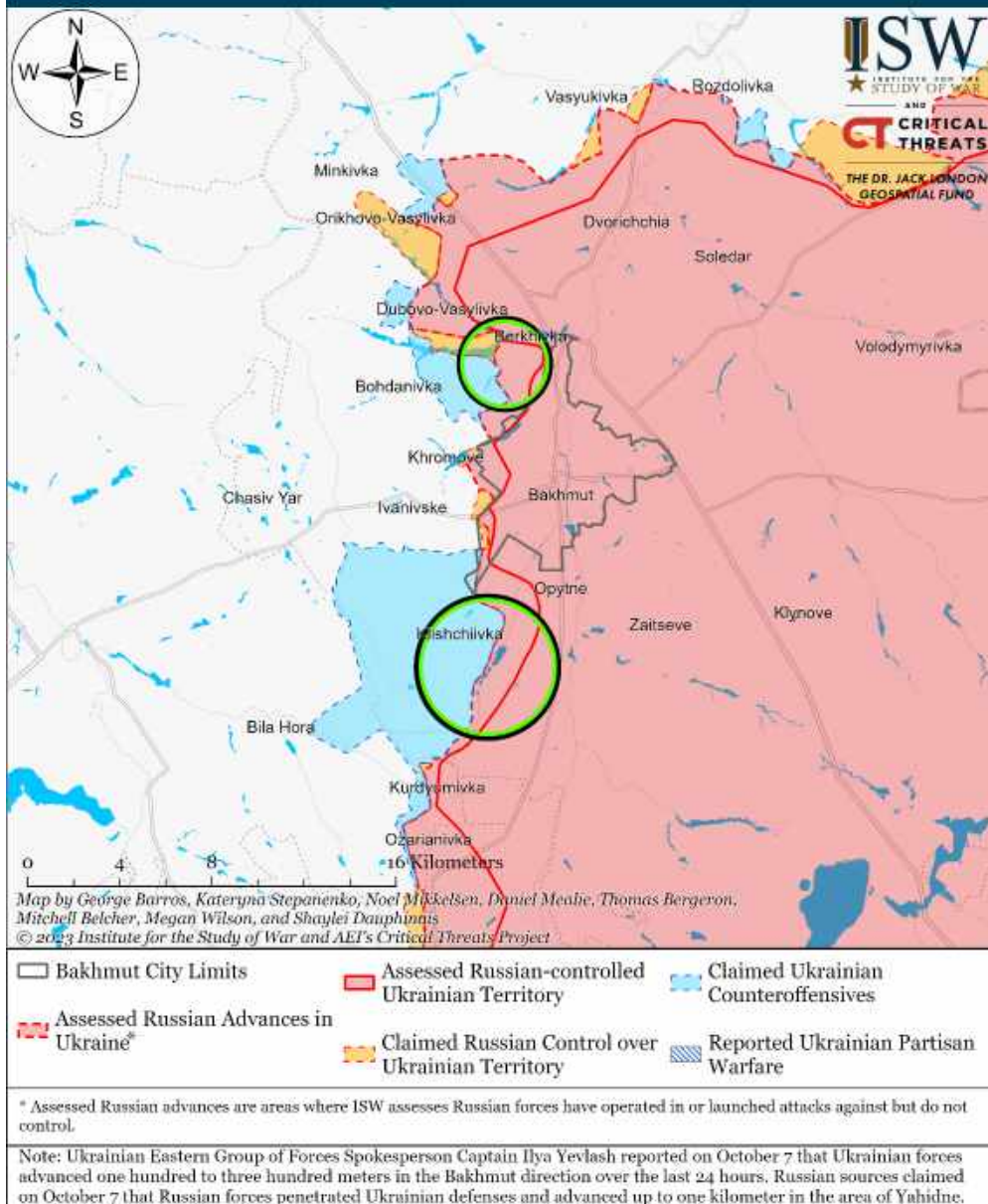
Note: A Russian source claimed on October 9 that Russian forces advanced up to one kilometer near Makiivka. Russian milbloggers claimed on October 8 that Russian forces are entrenched 600 meters east from Makiivka. A Russian source claimed on October 6 that Russian forces advances up to 500 meters in the Kupyansk direction.

## **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 in the Bakhmut direction on October 9 and reportedly advanced. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces achieved partial success southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka (5km southwest) and Andriivka (10km southwest).[31] Russian milbloggers claimed that heavy fighting is ongoing for tactical heights near the railway line between Klishchiivka and Andriivka.[32]

Russian forces continued counterattacks in the Bakhmut direction on October 9 but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff stated that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks north of Bohdanivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut), Klishchiivka, and Andriivka.[33] Ukrainian “Rubizh” Rapid Response Brigade Spokesperson Pavlo Storozhuk noted that Russian forces have changed their tactics in the Bakhmut direction and are increasingly using small groups of four to eight people to bypass Ukrainian forces by “maneuvering competently” instead of throwing large waves of infantry at Ukrainian positions.[34] The Ukrainian 3rd Separate Assault Brigade reported that its fighters captured the commander of the “Alga” volunteer battalion of the 72nd Motorized Rifle Brigade (3rd Army Corps, Western Military District).[35] A Russian obituary posted on October 8 confirms that elements of the 331st Guards Airborne (VDV) Regiment (98th VDV Division) are fighting in the Andriivka area.[36]

## Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of October 9, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



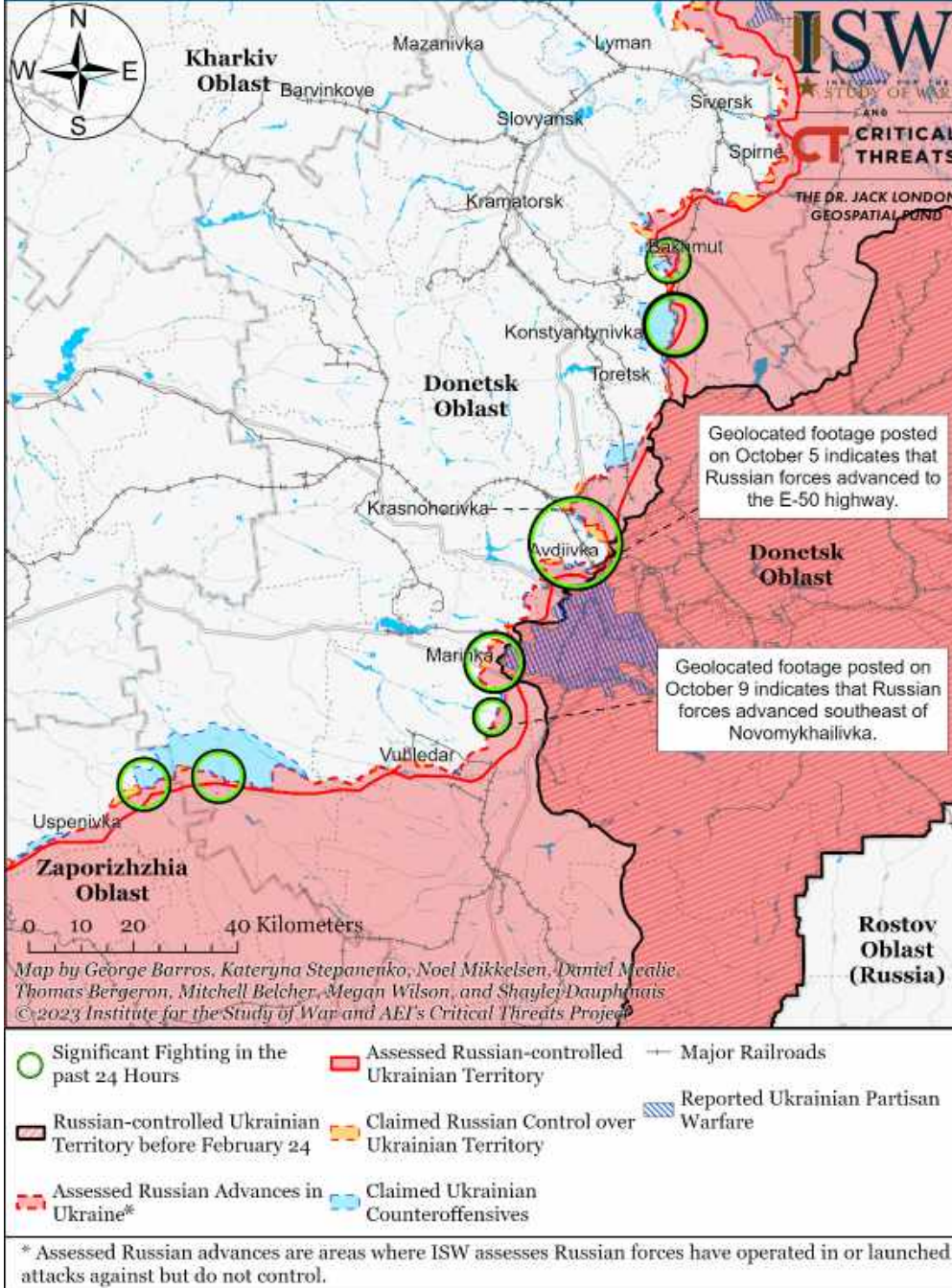
Ukrainian forces did not conduct any claimed or confirmed ground attacks on the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on October 9.

Russian forces continued ground attacks along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on October 9 and made marginal advances south of Donetsk City. Geolocated footage posted on October 9 shows that Russian forces have advanced southeast of Novomykhailivka (about 12km southwest of Donetsk City).[37] Ukrainian military sources stated that Russian forces conducted nearly 15 unsuccessful attacks north of Donetsk City near Avdiivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Marinka and Novomykhailivka.[38] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces are continuing ground attacks

along the entire Avdiivka-Donetsk City frontline.[39] One milblogger noted that “Storm-Z” assault units and elements of the 39th Motorized Rifle Brigade (68th Army Corps, Eastern Military District) advanced south of Novomykhailivka.[40] One milblogger characterized the pace of operations near Novomykhailivka as “creeping” and noted that Russian forces have failed to take the settlement and open avenues for further attacks into western Donetsk Oblast.[41]



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of October 9, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

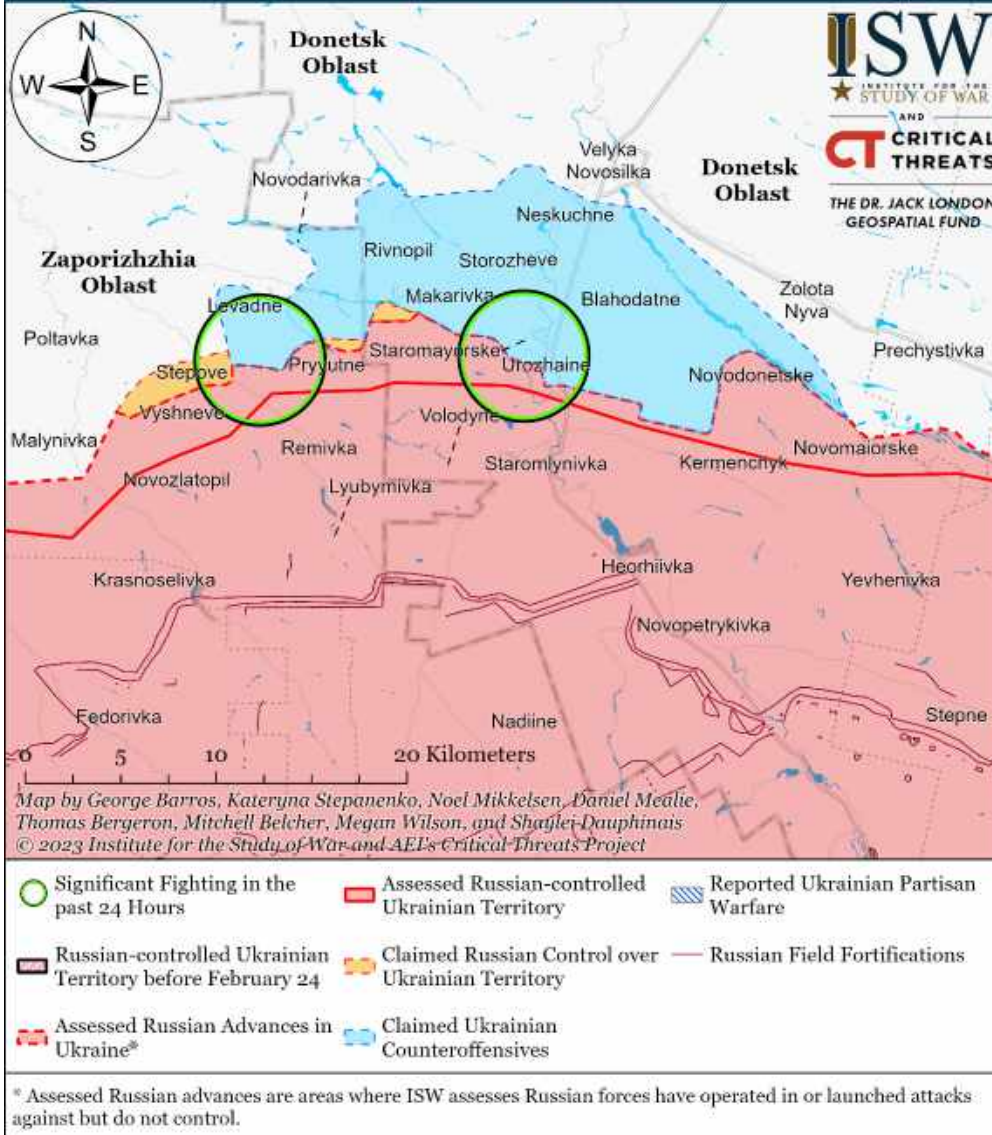


## Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations in western Donetsk Oblast and in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area but did not make any confirmed advances on October 9. Russian sources claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Pryyutne (16km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) and Mykilske (3km southeast of Vuhledar and about 30km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[42] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces continue attempts to seize the tactical battlefield initiative near Pryyutne.[43]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations in western Donetsk Oblast and in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area but did not advance on October 9. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) and Levadne (18km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[44] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Mykilske and Novodonetske (13km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[45]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of October 9, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

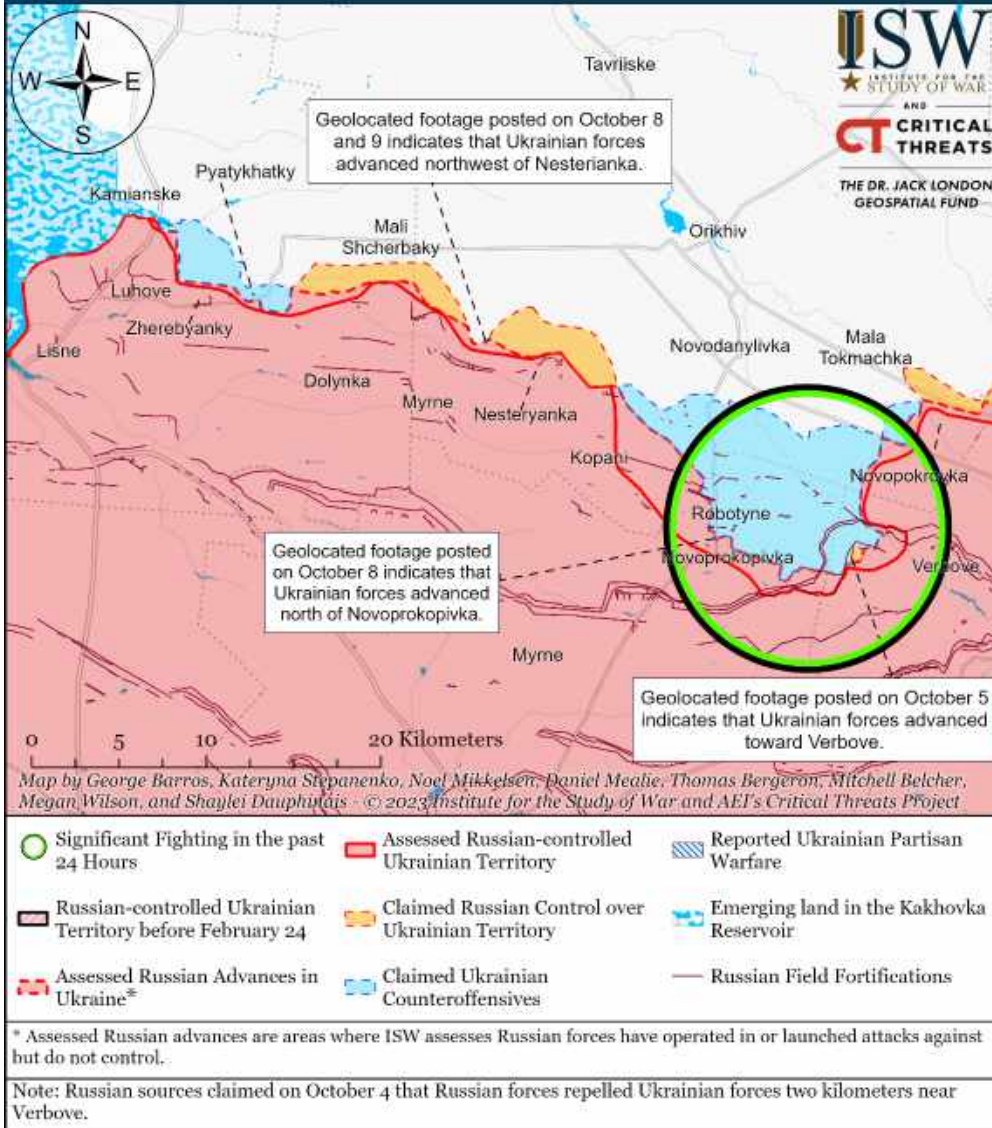


Some Russian and Ukrainian sources indicated that Russian forces conducted localized offensive operations south of Hulyaipole and made tactical territorial gains on October 9. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian and Ukrainian forces are fighting meeting engagements near Marfopil (9km south of Hulyaipole), and the milblogger claimed that Russian forces have gained the tactical initiative in the area.[46] A Ukrainian military observer reported that elements of the Russian 64th Motorized Rifle Brigade (35th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) advanced several hundred meters in a contested “gray zone” in the Marfopil-Chervone (6km southeast of Hulyaipole) direction.[47] The observer stated that these attacks are only tactical as Russian forces are attacking at the scale of a battalion or less.

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast and reportedly advanced on October 9. The Ukrainian General Staff and Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun reported that Ukrainian forces achieved partial success west of Verbove (18km southeast of Orikhiv).[48] Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces marginally advanced towards Kopani (10km southwest of Orikhiv) and between Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv) and Novodanylivka (4km south of Orikhiv).[49] A Russian milblogger claimed that a small Ukrainian group entered the outskirts of Novoprokopivka (14km south of Orikhiv) but that elements of the 42nd Motorized Rifle Division (58th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) ultimately repelled the group.[50] Geolocated footage published on October 8 shows elements of the 42nd Motorized Rifle Division conducting clearing operations in the northern outskirts of Novoprokopivka, suggesting that Ukrainian forces may have temporarily advanced here.[51] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Novoprokopivka.[52] Russian milbloggers claimed that heavy fighting continues on the Robotyne-Verbove line and that Ukrainian forces did not advance.[53]

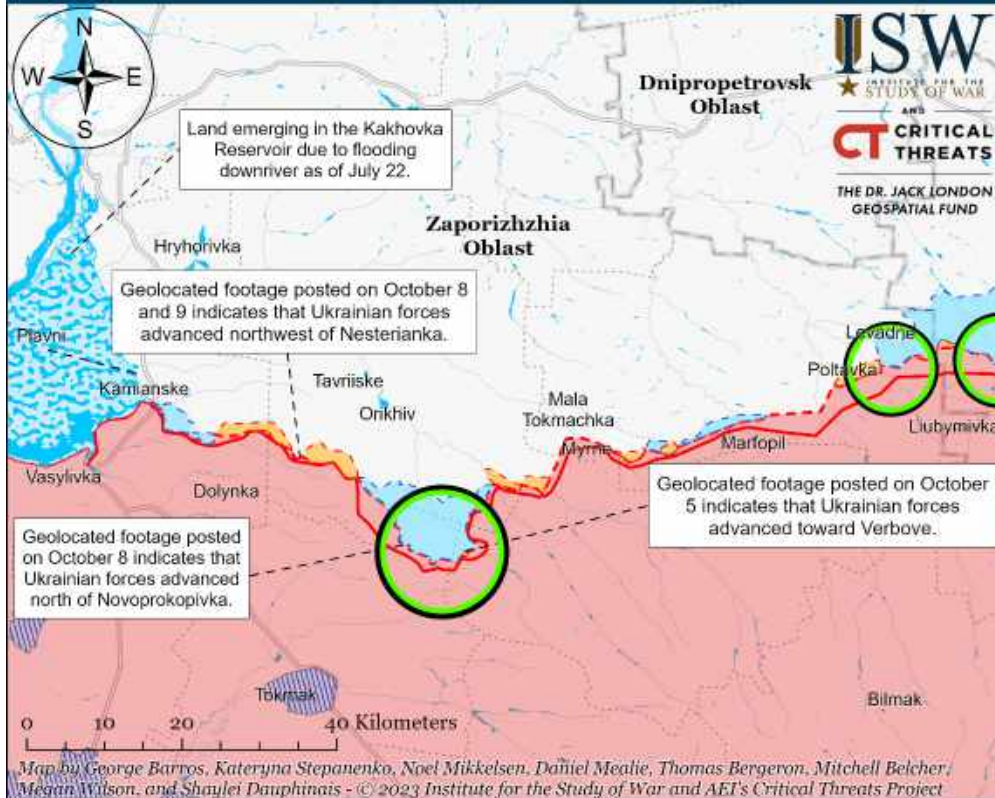


# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of October 9, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces conducted a limited unsuccessful offensive operation in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 9. The Ukrainian General Staff and Shtupun reported that Ukrainian forces repelled a Russian attack north of Novopokrovka.[54] A Ukrainian military observer reported that the Russian 1152nd and 1441st Motorized Rifle regiments replaced the 1429th and 1430th Motorized Rifle regiments defending the Novopokrovka-Verbove line after the 1429th and 1430th regiments rotated from the front after intense fighting degraded their combat capabilities.[55] The military observer reported that fighting on the Novopokrovka-Verbove line is for control of a tactical height that elements of the 71st and likely 291st Motorized Rifle regiments (both of the 42nd Motorized Rifle Division) reinforced by the Russian Combat Army Reserve (BARS)-3 unit are defending.

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of October 9, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



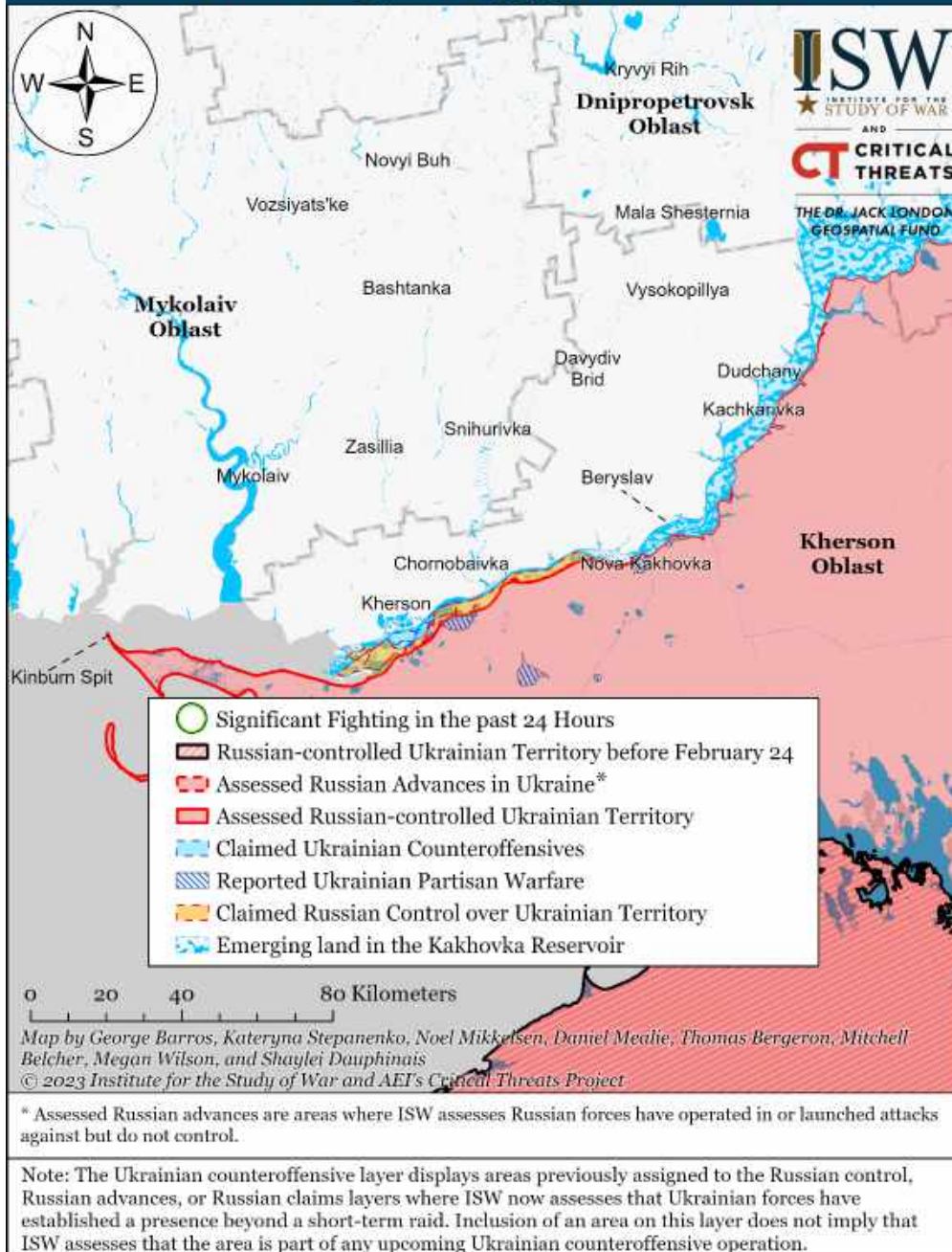
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
- Assessed Russian 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: Russian sources claimed on October 4 that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian forces two kilometers near Verbove.



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of October 9, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Ukrainian forces reportedly attempted a limited raid across the Dniester River in Kherson Oblast overnight on October 8-9. A Russian milblogger claimed that several boats of Ukrainian forces attempted to conduct a reconnaissance-in-force near the Antonivsky Bridge but that Russian forces repelled the landing attempt.[56] Russian milbloggers expressed continued concern that Ukrainian forces in the west (right) Kherson Oblast are preparing for an offensive operation across the Dniester River on the east (left) bank.[57]

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

The Russian military continues to suffer from tensions between Russian military personnel of different ethnicities and between regular and irregular Russian military formations. Ukrainian Mariupol Mayor Advisor Petro Andryushenko stated on October 9 that a conflict broke out between Russian military personnel and Chechen “Kadyrovites” in central Mariupol.[58] ISW previously reported that interethnic tensions have increased recently in the Russian military, government, and information space and that efforts to integrate irregular forces into the regular Russian military are likely complicated by rifts between regular Russian forces and irregular formations.[59]

Russian companies continue to use intermediaries to import Chinese military supplies for the war in Ukraine. Russian opposition media outlet *Vazhnye Istorii* reported on October 9 that the Russian company Sts Technology LLC imported body armor, armored helmets, and protective glasses worth about 10 billion rubles (about \$100,249,000) from the Chinese Xinxing Guangzhou Import and Export company via Turkish intermediaries from March 2022 to October 2023.[60] *Vazhnye Istorii* cited customs data as indicating that Sts Technology openly marked the imports as “for the ‘special military operation’” and “for military service and combat tasks.” *Vazhnye Istorii* reported that the owner of Sts Technology claimed to have no knowledge of the imports as unspecified “bandits” confiscated the company from him three years ago - a practice the owner claimed is common.

## **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)**

The Kremlin continues to direct efforts to impose a Russian cultural identity on Ukrainians in occupied areas. Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Russian Culture Minister Olga Lyubimova on October 9 to discuss the development of “cultural institutions” such as cinemas, libraries, children’s centers, art schools, and museums in occupied Ukraine.[61] Lyubimova stated that the Russian Ministry of Culture is especially focusing on developing children’s centers in Russian-run museums in occupied areas and reported that a group from the “Fanagoria” museum in Krasnodar Krai arrived in Henichesk, occupied Kherson Oblast, to set up such a children’s center.[62] A Kherson Oblast occupation administration-affiliated news agency posted footage of children at the center and claimed that they were learning about ancient Russian history.[63] These efforts to impose Russian culture and history on residents of occupied Ukraine, especially young children, are likely in support of the Kremlin’s wider aims of eradicating Ukrainian identity and forcibly Russifying occupied territories.

The Russian government continues to promote tourism in occupied Crimea even though it is an active war zone. Crimean occupation head Sergei Aksyonov stated that the Russian government has allocated 2.2 billion rubles (about \$22,055,000) towards subsidies meant to stimulate the tourism industry in occupied Crimea.[64] Aksyonov stated that the Crimean occupation government began distributing these subsidies to local businesses in the tourism industry on October 9. ISW previously reported that an influx of tourists to Crimea generated serious traffic jams along major Russian ground lines of communications (GLOCs) and that these pervasive civilian and transport issues in



Crimea are partially due to the Russian government’s refusal to fully mobilize Russian society onto a wartime footing.[65]

### **Russian Information Operations and Narratives:**

***NOTE: ISW continues to assess that the Kremlin has and will continue to exploit the Hamas attacks in Israel to advance several Russian information operations about Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. However, ISW has notably not observed any evidence – and does not assess – that the Kremlin supported, directed, or is involved in the Hamas attacks.***

The Kremlin appears to be promoting two parallel narratives regarding the impact of the Hamas attacks on Israel on the Russian war in Ukraine. Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov claimed on October 9 that US naval support of Israel “causes deep concern” and that “there is a high risk of third forces being involved” in the conflict following the initial Hamas attacks in Israel.”[66] Peskov also reiterated the ongoing Russian narrative claiming that Western support to Ukraine will decline as the West provides resources to Israel.[67] Peskov also answered a journalist’s question about whether the Hamas attacks in Israel will affect the war in Ukraine by stating that “the situation in Israel is an entirely different event” and that the war in Ukraine is going according to Putin’s “instructions” and plans.[68] Peskov’s statements indicate that the Kremlin is promoting two parallel narratives regarding the Hamas attacks: Western support for and attention to Ukraine will decline, but any future Russian activity in Ukraine will be independent of larger geopolitical events and will occur due to the competent actions of the Russian leadership and military.

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

Nothing significant to report.

**ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian military activity in Belarus as part of ongoing Kremlin efforts to increase their control over Belarus and other Russian actions in Belarus.**

**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://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbido2hUbV6Q11bnaSDb7y2B2FkUss3m7hAU66EBRreyzhapyJdW4YjBgVQdbjmfNn3oDI>; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbido2EjhgT5NRywCQ3WAuGiTqY19AnbNPkH47i3tuVX82XZVLCqxrDiFDWMXHY2ddevEsl>;  
<https://armyinform.com.ua/2023/10/09/nashi-vijska-mayut-uspil-zahidnishe-verbovogo-oleksandr-shtupun/>;

[55] <https://t.me/zvizdecmanhustu/1294>

[56] <https://t.me/frontbird/3922>; [https://t.me/dva\\_majors/27054](https://t.me/dva_majors/27054) ;  
<https://t.me/DnevnikDesantnika/3859>

[57] [https://t.me/romanov\\_92/41851](https://t.me/romanov_92/41851); [https://t.me/dva\\_majors/27043](https://t.me/dva_majors/27043)

[58] <https://t.me/andriyshTime/14080>

[59] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar100323> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar100223> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-8-2023>

[60] [https://t.me/istories\\_media/3914](https://t.me/istories_media/3914)

[61] <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/72461>; <https://iz.ru/1586486/2023-10-09/liubimova-rasskazala-putinu-o-razvitii-obektov-kultury-v-novykh-regionakh>

[62] <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/72461>; <https://iz.ru/1586486/2023-10-09/liubimova-rasskazala-putinu-o-razvitii-obektov-kultury-v-novykh-regionakh>

[63] <https://t.me/xonewsru/2787>; [https://t.me/VGA\\_Kherson/14577](https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/14577)

[64] <https://t.me/Aksenov82/3269>

[65] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-july-4-2023>

[66] <https://www.interfax-russia dot ru/rossiya-i-mir/peskov-situaciya-v-izraile-razvivaetsya-po-puti-eskalacii-est-risk-vovlecheniya-treth-sil>

[67] <https://www.interfax-russia dot ru/specoperaciya-na-ukraine/peskov-process-nakachivaniya-ukrainy-oruzhiem-neizbezhno-pereydet-k-tendencii-na-snizhenie>

[68] <https://www.interfax-russia dot ru/specoperaciya-na-ukraine/peskov-process-nakachivaniya-ukrainy-oruzhiem-neizbezhno-pereydet-k-tendencii-na-snizhenie>

# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 10, 2023

Christina Harward, Grace Mappes, Karolina Hird, Nicole Wolkov, and Mason Clark  
October 10, 2023, 5:30pm 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 1pm ET on October 10. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 11 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

**NOTE:** ISW has added a new section on Russian information operations and narratives to the daily Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, found at the end of the update.

**Russian forces launched localized offensive operations in the Avdiivka area of Donetsk Oblast and southwest of Orikhiv in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 9, which are likely intended to fix Ukrainian forces away from the Robotyne area.** Russian forces intensified offensive operations northwest of Avdiivka near Ocheretyne, Tonenke, and Berdychi and southwest of Avdiivka on the Vodyane-Opytne line.[1] Russian forces also attacked southwest of Orikhiv on the Pyatykhatky-Zherebyanky line, and Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced up two kilometers in the area.[2] The Ukrainian General Staff confirmed up to three Russian battalions conducted an attack and ISW has observed footage of fighting in the area, but ISW has not observed any confirmation of these claimed Russian advances as of this writing.[3] Russian milbloggers are largely portraying the Avdiivka-area operations as a significant offensive effort aimed at encircling the Ukrainian force grouping in Avdiivka and capturing the city.[4] A successful encirclement of Avdiivka, one of the most heavily fortified areas of the Donetsk Oblast front line, would very likely require more forces than Russia has currently dedicated to the Avdiivka-Donetsk City effort. Russian forces have largely deployed irregular forces along this frontline, primarily elements of the 1st Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Army Corps and additional volunteer formations that have largely suffered from poor and abusive command culture and tensions with regular Russian units.[5] ISW has observed no recent Russian deployments to this line. Russian forces have also conducted grinding offensive operations for relatively minimal territorial gains near Avdiivka for the past year and a half of the war, and the Russian military command is likely aware that an effort to capture Avdiivka would require more and higher-quality units than those currently deployed in the area.[6]

The increased Russian offensive operations in the Avdiivka and Zherebyanky areas coincide with other localized offensive efforts in Luhansk Oblast and eastern Zaporizhia Oblast, all likely aimed at fixing Ukrainian forces and preventing Ukrainian command from transferring reserves to critical areas of the front in western Zaporizhia Oblast.[7] Ukrainian officials have made a number of statements within the past few weeks to this effect, particularly noting that Russian attacks along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line are meant to prevent Ukrainians from transferring forces to Zaporizhia Oblast.[8]

**Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and made confirmed advances in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area.** Geolocated footage published on October 9 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced northeast of Mykilske (3km southeast of Vuhledar and about 30km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[9] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces achieved partial success near Andriivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut).[10] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced west of Novofedorivka (15km northeast of Robotyne and 6km northeast of Verbove).[11]

**Russian military leadership may have once again replaced the commander of the 58th Combined Arms Army (CAA), suggesting ongoing pervasive Russian command and control issues in western Zaporizhia Oblast.** A Russian insider source claimed on October 9 that the Russian command removed Lieutenant General Denis Lyamin from command of the 58th CAA, after Lyamin replaced former commander Major General Ivan Popov on July 13.[12] The insider source claimed that during Lyamin's three-month tenure, the Russian General Staff went to great lengths to conceal the true nature of the situation within units of the 58th CAA, which are currently defending against Ukrainian counteroffensives in western Zaporizhia Oblast, and claimed that this is in large part because Lyamin is a close associate of Chief of the General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov. The insider source suggested that Gerasimov removed Lyamin from command of the 58th CAA and re-assigned him the position of Chief of Staff of the Central Military District to shield him from criticism over Russian operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast. While ISW cannot independently confirm Lyamin's alleged re-appointment, the suggestion that the 58th CAA has undergone two major command changes in a short

period possibly indicates command-and-control challenges, and at minimum concern among Russian command over the conduct of operations in this key sector of the front.

**Russian forces conducted a series of drone strikes targeting southern Ukraine on the night of October 9 to 10.** The Ukrainian General Staff and Air Force reported that Ukrainian air defenses downed 27 of the 36 Shahed-131/-136 launched from occupied Cape Chauda, Crimea towards Odesa, Mykolaiv, and Kherson oblasts.[13] Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Captain First Rank Nataliya Humenyuk reported on October 10 that Russian forces are likely conducting strikes using only Shahed drones because the Russian military is attempting to conserve missiles since Russian missile production has slowed due to sanctions.[14] Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat stated that Ukrainian air defense systems will continue to operate as usual during the winter and that Ukrainian forces will strengthen their defense of energy and fuel facilities.[15]

**Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky announced plans to open a new corridor through Moldova and Romania for the export of Ukrainian grain.**[16] Zelensky announced that the overland grain corridor will open soon during a press conference with Romanian President Klaus Iohannis in Bucharest on October 10.[17]

**NATO adopted several resolutions aimed at increasing aid to Ukraine on October 9.** The NATO Parliamentary Assembly adopted six resolutions related to the war in Ukraine and called for NATO countries to increase and expedite political, military, intelligence, financial, training, and humanitarian support to Ukraine and to “sustain this support for as long as it takes for Ukraine to prevail.”[18] The resolutions also called for the increased and rapid delivery of military equipment to Ukraine, including air defense systems, missiles, and fighter aircraft.

#### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Russian forces launched localized offensive operations in the Avdiivka area of Donetsk Oblast and southwest of Orikhiv in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 9, which are likely intended to fix Ukrainian forces away from the Robotyne area.**
- **The Ukrainian General Staff confirmed up to three Russian battalions conducted an attack and ISW has observed footage of fighting in the area, but ISW has not observed any confirmation of these claimed Russian advances as of writing.**
- **Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and made confirmed advances in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area.**
- **Russian military leadership may have once again replaced the commander of the 58th Combined Arms Army (CAA), suggesting ongoing pervasive Russian command and control issues in western Zaporizhia Oblast.**
- **Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky announced plans to open a new corridor through Moldova and Romania for the export of Ukrainian grain.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, in western Donetsk Oblast, in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and advanced in some areas on October 10.**
- **The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported that Luhansk Oblast occupation authorities are cracking down against Ukrainian underground communication networks.**



# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of October 10, 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.

***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

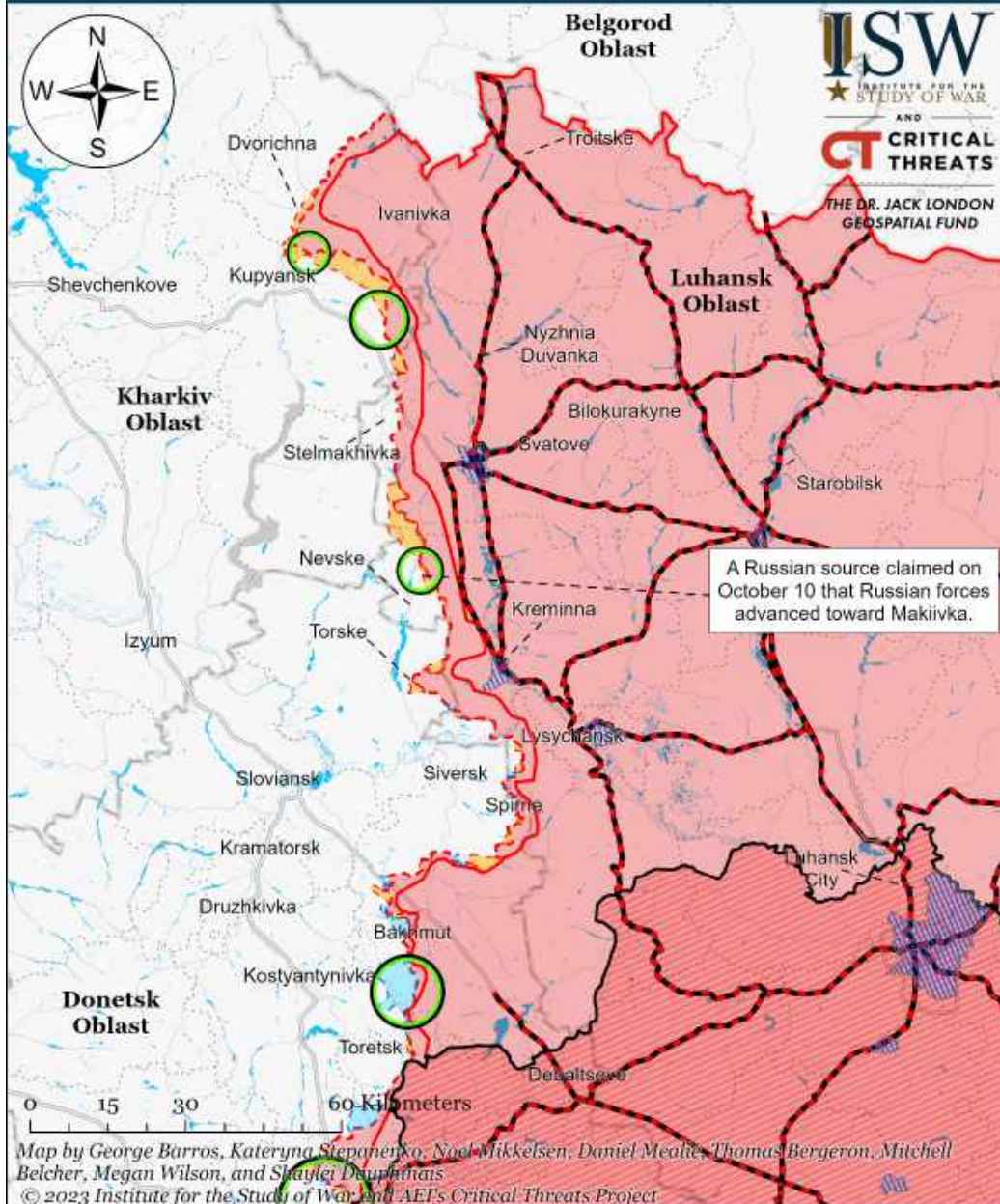
### **Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine**

#### **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 ground attacks along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on October 10 and reportedly advanced in some areas. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks in the Kupyansk direction near Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk) and Ivanivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk) and southwest of Svatove near Makiivka (20km southwest).[19] One Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces deployed “powerful armored groups” to launch large-scale offensive operations near Synkivka, Ivanivka, and Makiivka, and another milblogger claimed that Russian forces captured several Ukrainian positions near Synkivka.[20] Russian sources claimed that elements of the 6th Combined Arms Army (Western Military District) are deployed in the Kupyansk direction, while elements of the newly formed 25th Combined Arms Army are attacking Ukrainian positions near Makiivka.[21] Another prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces have nearly reached the eastern outskirts of Makiivka and advanced along the entire Novovodyane-Ploshchanka line (about 20km northwest of Kreminna).[22] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash noted that Russian forces have increasingly deployed motorized rifle units, tank battalions, and “Storm-Z” assault companies to the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line and are using poorly trained “Storm-Z” elements for reconnaissance and mine-detection purposes.[23]

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Kupyansk and Kreminna on October 10.[24]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of October 10, 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.

Note: A Russian source claimed on October 9 that Russian forces advanced up to one kilometer near Makiivka. Russian milbloggers claimed on October 8 that Russian forces are entrenched 600 meters east from Makiivka. A Russian source claimed on October 6 that Russian forces advances up to 500 meters in the Kupyansk direction.

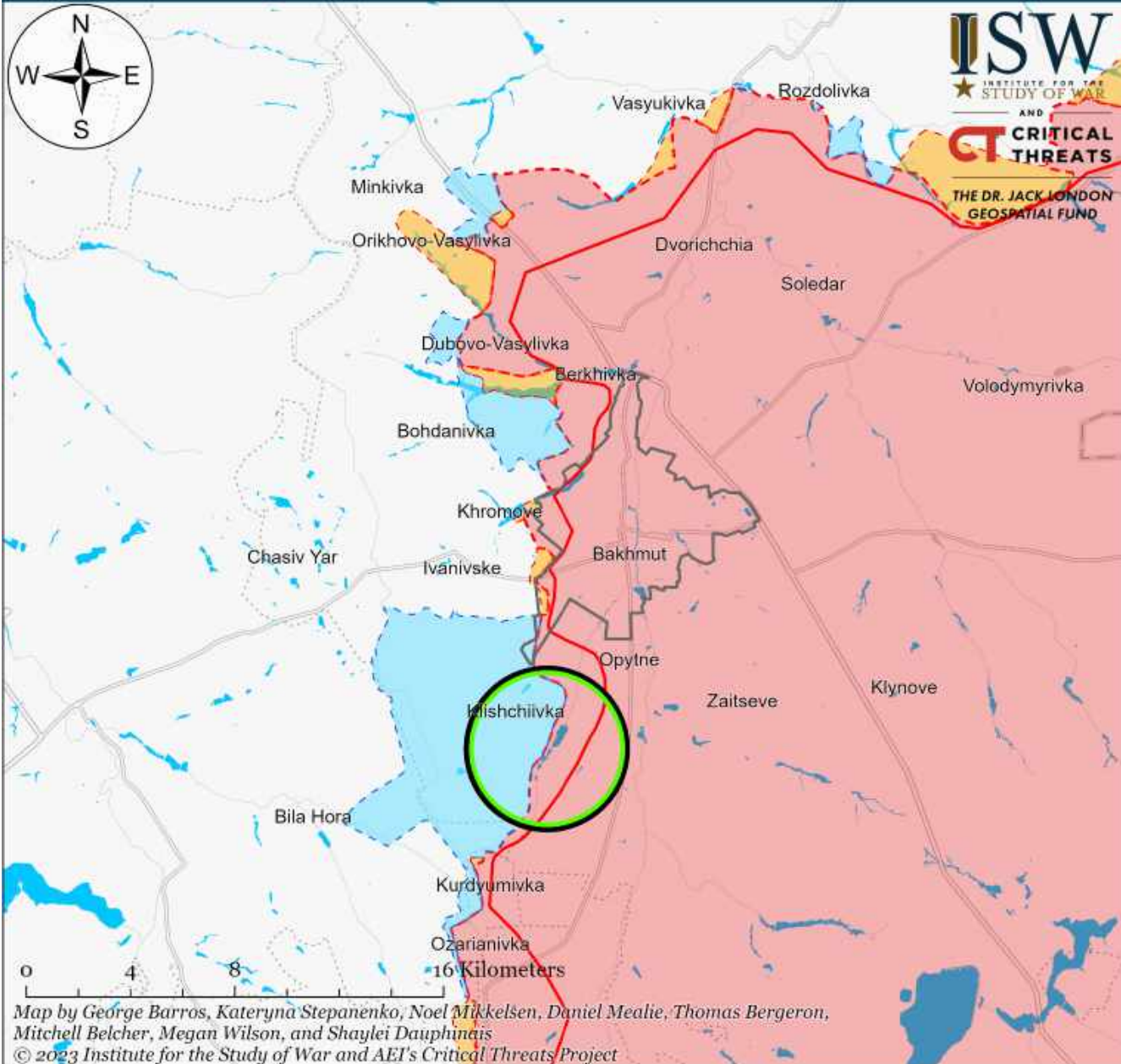


**Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)**

Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut on October 9 and reportedly advanced. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continue offensive operations south of Bakhmut and achieved partial success near Andriivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut).[25] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Klishchiivka (5km southwest of Bakhmut) and Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut).[26] A Russian milblogger claimed that fighting is ongoing near the railway line near Andriivka and Klishchiivka.[27]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut on October 9 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks towards Chasiv Yar (5km west of Bakhmut), Klishchiivka, and Andriivka.[28] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked from Dubovo-Vasylivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut) toward Bohdanivka (5km northwest of Bakhmut).[29] A Ukrainian military observer stated on October 10 that as of October 6 a Russian operational-tactical group consisting of regular forces, BARS (Russian Army Combat Reserve), 1st Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) Army Corps, 2nd Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR) Army Corps, Territorial Defense, and “Storm-Z” assault units are operating in the Bakhmut direction.[30] The military observer also reported that this operational-tactical group has 60 to 65 percent of all arms and military equipment in the Russian Southern Grouping of Forces (which is committed throughout Donetsk Oblast) but that over half of the operational-tactical group’s brigade and regiment level units have personnel shortages of 30 to 35 percent and about 10 to 15 percent of brigade and regiment level units have a personnel shortage of up to 55 to 60 percent.[31]

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of October 10, 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
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

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

Note: Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash reported on October 7 that Ukrainian forces advanced one hundred to three hundred meters in the Bakhmut direction over the last 24 hours. Russian sources claimed on October 7 that Russian forces penetrated Ukrainian defenses and advanced up to one kilometer in the area of Yahidne.

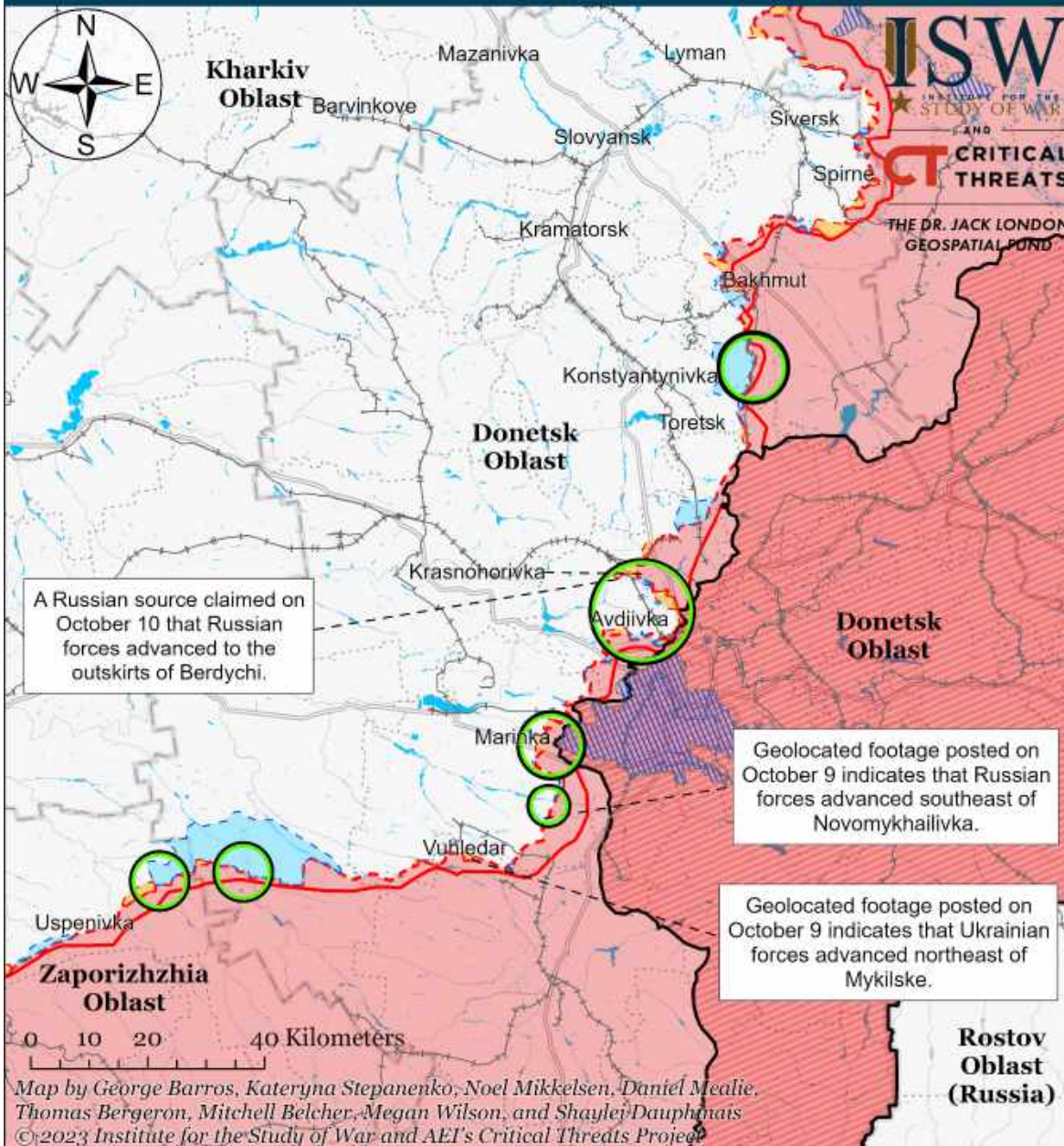


Russian forces intensified offensive operations near Avdiivka on October 9 but did not make confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported up to three Russian battalions with tank and armored vehicle support intensified offensive operations near Avdiivka, Tonenke (7km northwest of Avdiivka), Keramik (14km northwest of Avdiivka), and Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka).[32] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces attacked from Krasnohorivka (8km northwest of Avdiivka) toward Berdychi (10km northwest of Avdiivka), along the Opytne-Vodyane line (3-7km southwest of Avdiivka), and near Tonenke and Pervomaiske after intense artillery preparation.[33] A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces reached the outskirts of Berdychi but denied other Russian reports that Russian forces captured the settlement.[34] Russian sources also claimed that fighting is ongoing near Ocheretyne (15km northwest of Avdiivka).[35] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces captured unspecified positions near Avdiivka and Krasnohorivka.[36] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces intend to cut off Ukrainian ground lines of communication (GLOCs) that supply Ukrainian forces in Avdiivka and encircle them, though Russian forces are likely conducting fixing operations intended to pin Ukrainian forces near Avdiivka rather than attempting to complete a full operational encirclement of the settlement.[37] Russian milbloggers noted that Ukrainian forces have built extensive fortifications in Avdiivka since 2014, making it difficult for Russian forces to break through Ukrainian defenses.[38]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Marinka on October 9 but did not make confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Marinka and Novomykhailivka (10km south of Marinka).[39] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked Novomykhailivka and conducted a “powerful” assault on Marinka.[40] Footage published on October 9 purportedly shows elements of the 150th Motorized Rifle Division (8th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) operating in Marinka.[41]

The Russian MoD claimed on October 10 that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks on Vodyane (7km southwest of Avdiivka).[42]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of October 10, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- 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.

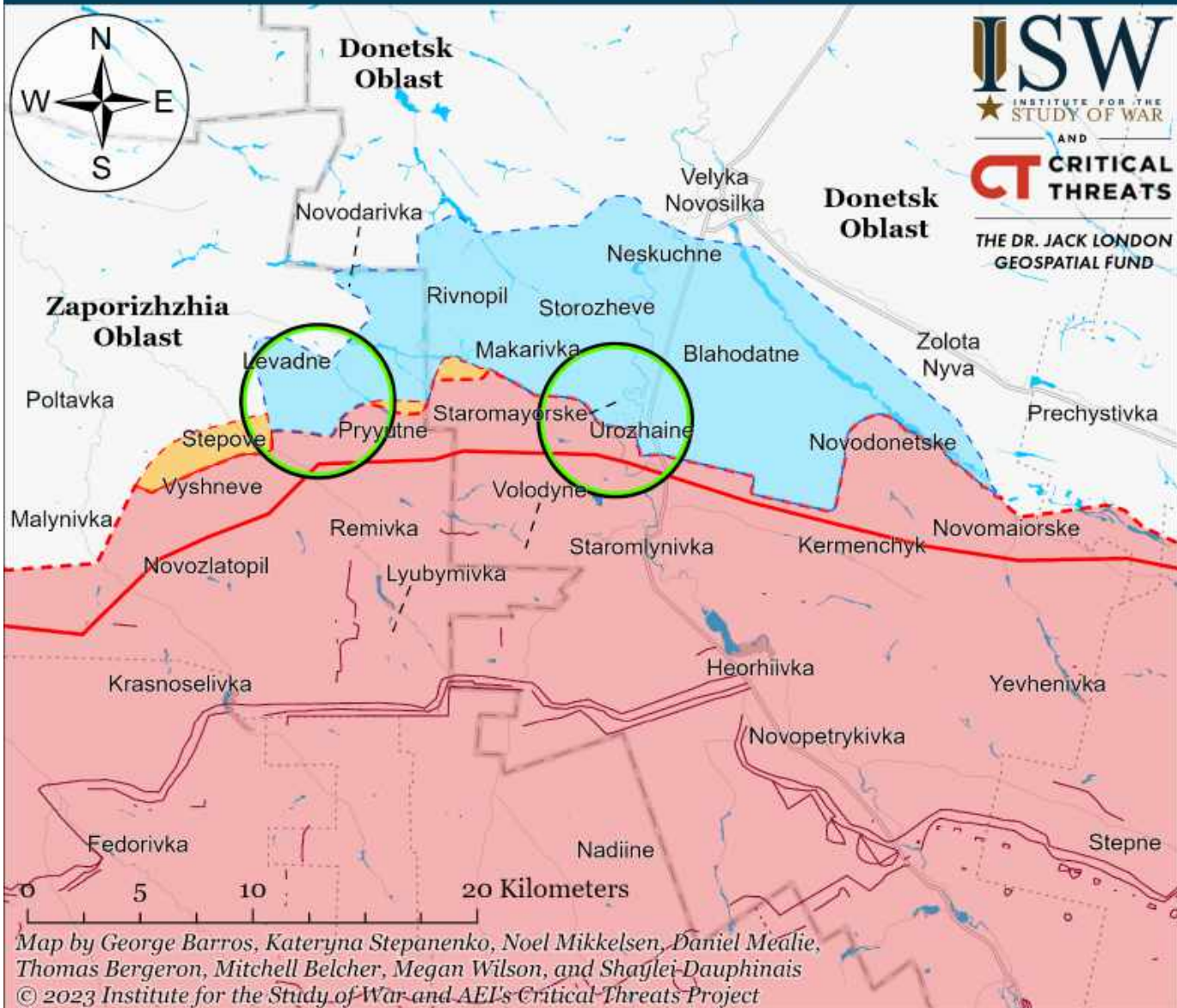
**Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)**

Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations in western Donetsk Oblast and in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 10 and made confirmed marginal advances. Geolocated footage published on October 9 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced northeast of Mykilske (3km southeast of Vuhledar and about 30km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[43] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Pryutne (16km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) and west of Novodonetske (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[44] A Russian milblogger claimed on October 10 that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Mykilske and northwest of Novomayorske (18km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[45]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations in western Donetsk and in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area and reportedly advanced on October 10. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) and that Ukrainian forces are holding Russian forces back near Levadne (18km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[46] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces captured up to 10 strongholds in unspecified areas on the left flank in the Vremivka direction, but ISW has not observed visual evidence of this claim.[47] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Pryutne on October 9.[48] A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the Russian 155th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) are operating near Mykilske and that elements of the Russian 40th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) are operating north and northwest of Novomayorske.[49]



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of October 10, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Russian Field Fortifications
- 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.

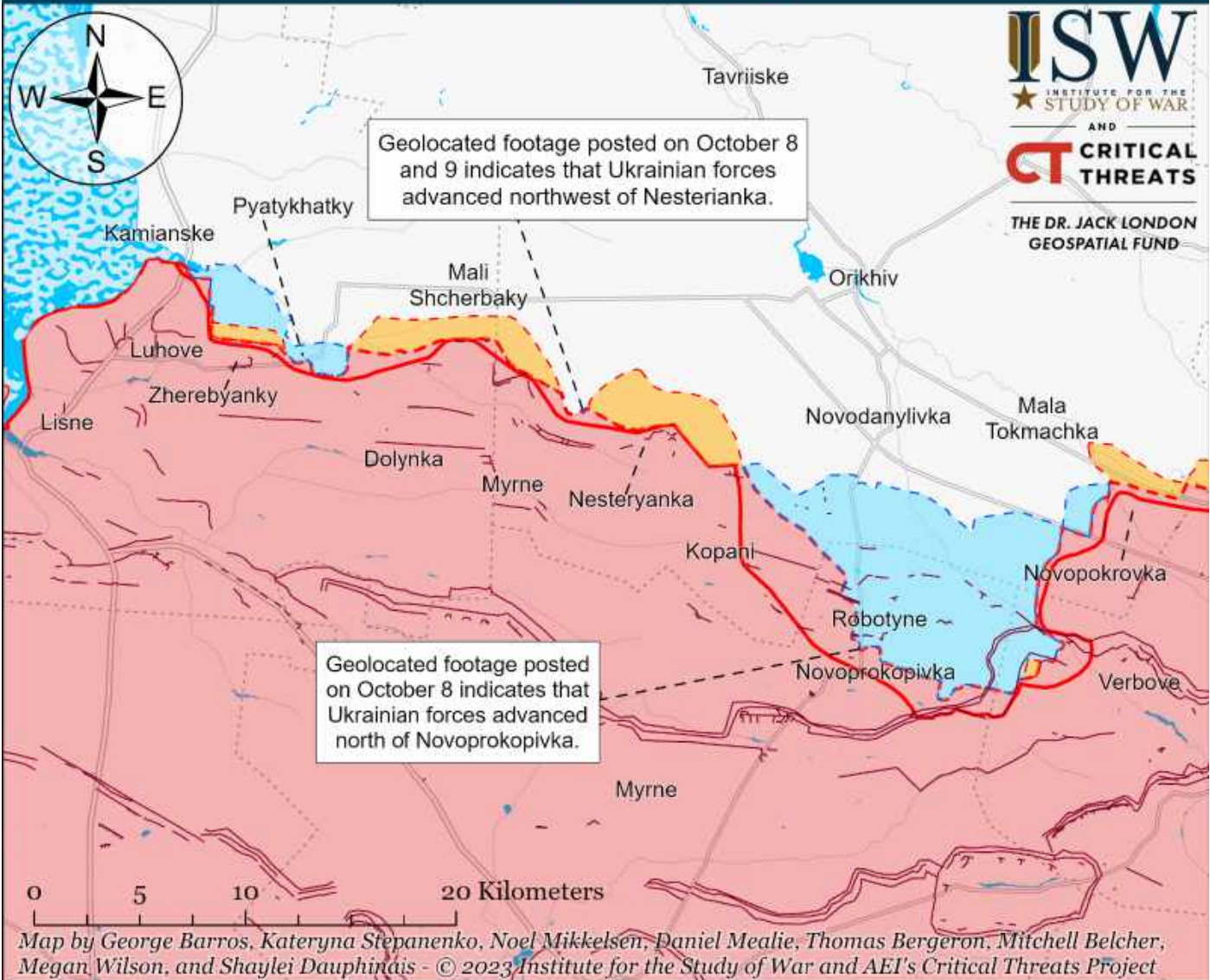


Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast and reportedly advanced on October 10. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced west of Novofedorivka (15km northeast of Robotyne and 6km northeast of Verbove) but unsuccessfully attacked Novofedorivka itself.[50] Another milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked Novoprokopivka (2km south of Robotyne).[51]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations in the Orikhiv sector of western Zaporizhia Oblast but did not make any confirmed advances on October 10. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Verbove (11km southeast of Robotyne) and in the area of Inzhenerne (23km east of Robotyne).[52] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces counterattacked near Novoprokopivka and northwest of Verbove.[53]

Russian sources claimed that Russian forces initiated a renewed offensive effort west of Orikhiv in western Zaporizhia Oblast and reportedly advanced in this area on October 10. Several Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Zherybyanky (30 km northwest of Robotyne and 26km southwest of Orikhiv).[54] Russian sources made several different claims of the specifics of Russian advances in this area. A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced north of Zherybyanky.[55] A Russian source claimed that Russian forces advanced up to 2km into Ukrainian defenses near Zherybyanky and Pyatykhatky (29km northwest of Robotyne and 25km southwest of Orikhiv) line, whereas another Russian source claimed that Russian forces advanced several hundred meters in this area.[56]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of October 10, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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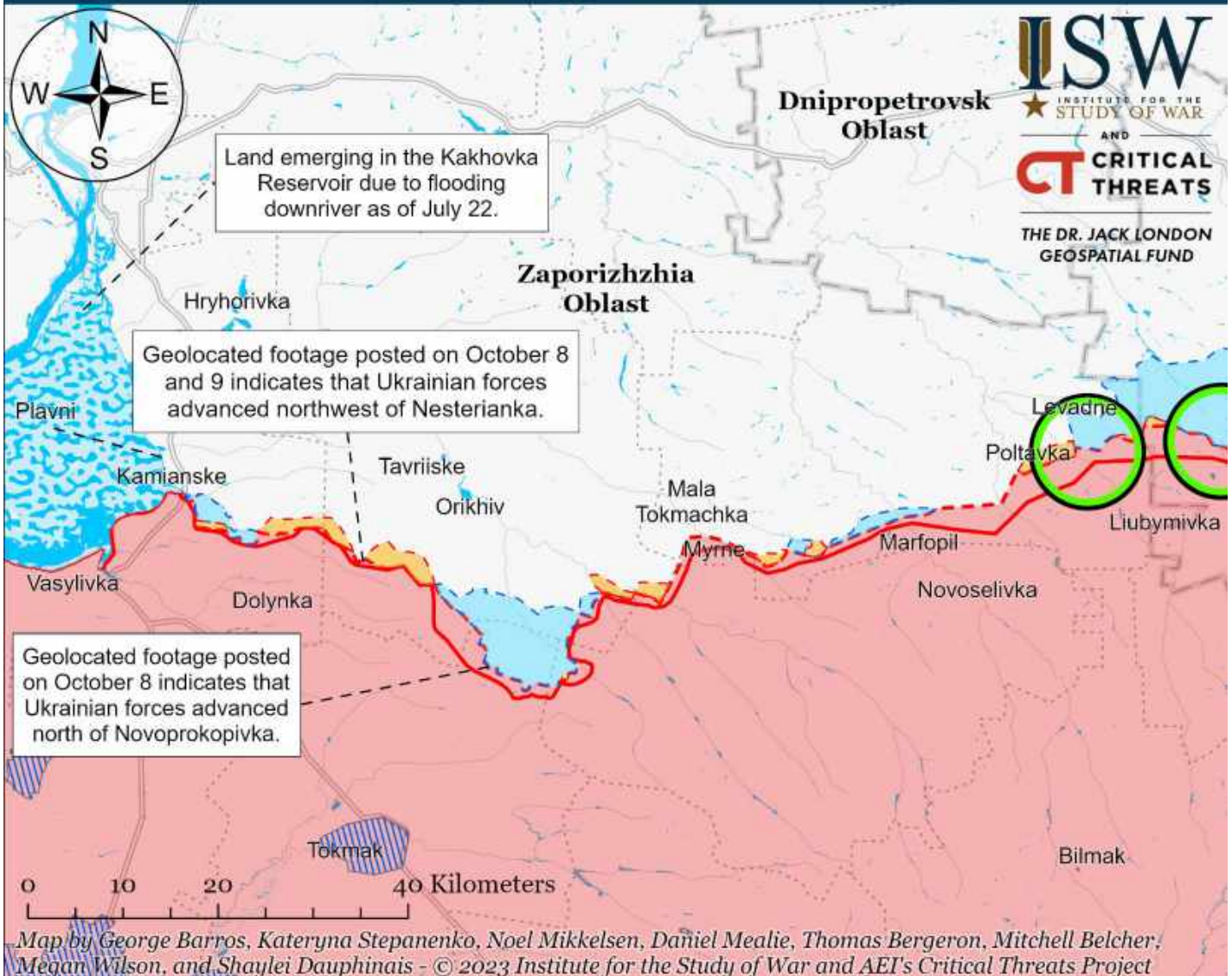
- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours                 | Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory  | Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare     |
| Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24 | Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory | Emerging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

Note: A Russian source claimed on October 10 that Russian forces advanced up to two kilometers near Pyatykhatky.



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of October 10, 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 10 that Russian forces advanced up to two kilometers near Pyatykhatky.

Russian sources continued to discuss Ukrainian operations in the Dnipro River Delta. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attempted to land on unspecified islands in the Dnipro River.[57] Another Russian milblogger claimed that fighting is ongoing on the Dnipro islands.[58] A Russian source claimed that Ukrainian activity on the Dnipro islands has decreased due to worsening weather conditions.[59]





A Ukrainian official stated that Russian ground lines of communications (GLOCs) in occupied Crimea and southern Ukraine are unable to operate at full capacity. Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Captain First Rank Nataliya Humenyuk stated that the Henichesk, Chonhar, and Kerch Strait bridges in occupied Crimea are not fully open, leading the Russian military to increasingly use the M17 (Kherson City-Dzhankoy-Feodosia-Kerch) highway that connects occupied Ukraine to Russia.[60]

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

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) continues efforts to portray itself as effectively mobilizing the Russian defense industrial base (DIB). Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu visited the Almaz-Antey Aerospace Defense Concern's Ulyanovsk Mechanical Plant and inspected the production of Buk-M3 medium-range anti-aircraft missile systems on October 10.[61] Ulyanovsk Mechanical Plant General Director Sergei Churin stated that the plant shipped one division's worth of Buk-M3 systems to the MoD already in September 2023 and will ship another division's worth in October.[62]

Russian authorities are expanding drone production and drone training facilities to occupied areas of Ukraine. Zaporizhia Oblast occupation head Yevgeny Balitsky announced on October 9 that a drone production base for assembling attack drones, reconnaissance drones, and loitering munitions and for training drone operators has begun operating in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast.[63] Balitsky stated that this production base will support both the occupation administration's "Sudoplatov" volunteer battalion and other Russian forces operating in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast.

### **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)**

The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported that Luhansk Oblast occupation authorities are cracking down on Ukrainian underground communication networks.[64] The Resistance Center reported that occupation authorities installed wired internet that users can only access with identification and that authorities will question users who log on through a VPN on these networks.[65] The Resistance Center stated that authorities have not created restrictions to monitor traffic yet due to technical constraints but announced their intent to do so to discourage Ukrainians from providing information to the Ukrainian military.[66]

### **Russian Information Operations and Narratives**

***NOTE: ISW continues to assess that the Kremlin has and will continue to exploit the Hamas attacks in Israel to advance several Russian information operations about Russia's invasion of Ukraine. However, ISW has notably not observed any evidence — and does not assess — that the Kremlin supported, directed, or is involved in the Hamas attacks.***

The Kremlin continues efforts to maintain Russia's influence in the Middle East against the backdrop of the ongoing war in Israel. Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed al-Sudani at the Kremlin on October 10, marking the first meeting between the two since al-Sudani took office in October 2022.[67] Russian media reported that the meeting had already been planned before Hamas attacks in Israel began on October 7, but Putin and al-Sudani nevertheless reportedly discussed the situation in Israel, as well as the development of "multifaceted" Russo-Iraqi cooperation.[68] Putin told al-Sudani that he believes that the war in Israel is the result of US foreign policy failures and called for the creation of an independent Palestinian state.[69] Putin's remarks to al-Sudani do not necessarily represent an inflection in Russia's posturing vis-a-vis the wider Middle East. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky emphasized on October 9 that Russia benefits from conflict and instability in the Middle East, which is consistent with ISW's running assessment that the Kremlin has and will continue to exploit the war in Israel to advance information operations and bolster Russia's geopolitical reputation.[70]

The Russian Investigative Committee announced on October 10 that it has completed its investigation into the April 2 attack that killed prominent Russian milblogger Maxim Fomin (Vladlen Tatarsky).[71] The Investigative Committee reported that it transferred the case to the Russian prosecutor's office after closing its investigations into Daria Trepova, who Russian authorities accused of planning and carrying out the attack, and Dmitry Kasintsev, who authorities charged with harboring Trepova after the attack.[72] ISW previously reported that Russian authorities accused Ukraine of staging the assassination through Trepova.[73]

Russian officials continue to invoke Russia's potential revocation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to further a running nuclear brinkmanship information operation. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov claimed on

October 10 that Russia has “no choice” but to withdraw from the treaty in order to balance its status with the US and emphasized that Russia will resume nuclear tests if the US also does so.[74] Ryabkov then went on to make baseless claims that Russia has evidence to suggest that the US either has recently or is currently preparing for nuclear tests in Nevada.[75] Ryabkov likely made this claim to further set conditions for the revocation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by accusing the US of essentially forcing Russia’s hand.

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

Nothing significant to report.

**ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian military activity in Belarus as part of ongoing Kremlin efforts to increase their control over Belarus and other Russian actions in Belarus.**

**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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[74] <https://ria dot ru/20231010/ispytaniya-1901736408.html>

[75] <https://ria dot ru/20231010/nevada-1901709494.html>