

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of February 23, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

Grace Mappes, Angelica Evans, Riley Bailey, Nicole Wolkov, and Frederick W. Kagan
February 23, 2024, 6:30pm 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 see ISW's 3D control of terrain topographic map of Ukraine. Use of a computer (not a mobile device) is strongly recommended for using this data-heavy tool.

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

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 1:00pm ET on February 23. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the February 24 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Click [here](#) to read ISW's latest warning update on the possibility of Transnistria, a pro-Russian breakaway region of Moldova, calling for Russian annexation or taking other action to support Russian hybrid operations against Moldova.

Ukrainian officials reported that Ukrainian forces shot down a Russian A-50 long-range radar detection aircraft on the night of February 23 – the second such aircraft shot down in 2024. Ukrainian Air Force Commander Lieutenant General Mykola Oleshchuk and the Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported that Ukrainian forces shot down a Russian A-50 near Yeysk, Krasnodar Krai over the Sea of Azov Coast.[1] Footage posted on February 23 shows a fixed-winged aircraft falling, and geolocated footage shows a significant fire with secondary detonations near the Trudovaya Farm northwest of Staroderevyankovskaya, Kanevskoy Raion in northern Krasnodar Krai (northeast of Primorsko-Akhtarsk).[2] Additional footage posted on February 23 shows mangled aircraft parts, and it is very unlikely that Russian forces will be able to repair the A-50 or that the crew survived the crash.[3] Krasnodar Krai authorities reported that an unspecified Russian aircraft crashed near the Trudovaya Farm but did not specify a cause.[4] Ukrainian officials have previously reported that Russian forces use the A-50 aircraft to coordinate Russian air and air defense activity.[5] The destruction of the Russian A-50 aircraft in mid-January led to a temporary reduction in tactical Russian aviation activity over the Sea of Azov.[6]

Russian ultranationalists are increasingly attributing the shootdown of Russian aircraft to Russian rather than Ukrainian air defenses. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces mistakenly shot down their own A-50 aircraft and accused the Russian military of systemic issues that it must fix to avoid further friendly fire incidents.[7] One milblogger noted that A-50 aircraft and its highly specialized crew are scarce resources for Russia that it cannot easily replace.[8] The milbloggers specifically denied Ukrainian and Russian reporting that Ukrainian forces shot down the A-50 on February 23 and connected this shootdown to their prior denials that Ukrainian forces were responsible

for the A-50 and Il-22 shootdowns on January 15.[9] The milbloggers have also attributed recent Ukrainian downings of Russian Su-34 and Su-35 fighter jets to friendly air defense fire and criticized reports attributing them to Ukraine.[10] Russian milbloggers may be refusing to attribute any successes to Ukrainian forces as part of wider efforts in the Russian information space to demoralize Ukrainians and convince Russians that victory is assured. Recent Kremlin rhetoric has focused on portraying Russia as able to outlast Ukraine's willingness and ability to fight, including outlasting Western military support for Ukraine, and Russian milbloggers' consistent claims of ineffective Ukrainian air defenses and other battlefield capabilities are congruent with this disinformation campaign.[11] Ukrainian shootdowns of Russian strategic-level aircraft, especially twice within mere weeks of each other, severely undermine this Russian narrative. The milbloggers' enthusiasm for attributing staggering incompetence to Russia's own air defenders—the only possible explanation for multiple instances of friendly fire taking down the aircraft helping coordinate the air defenders themselves—is odd.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated that Ukrainian forces are planning future counteroffensive operations, although delays in Western security assistance will likely continue to generate uncertainty and constraints on these operations. Zelensky stated in an interview with *Fox News* published on February 22 that Ukrainian forces will prepare for new counteroffensive operations in 2024 but that their primary objective is to continue defending Ukrainian territory.[12] Zelensky acknowledged that materiel shortages are complicating ongoing Ukrainian operations, particularly in eastern Ukraine.[13] *ABC News* reported on February 22 that US officials assess that Ukrainian forces will begin to face critical shortages of ammunition and air defense missiles in late March 2024 and that these shortages will become increasingly significant through the spring and summer of 2024.[14] Materiel shortages are likely forcing Ukrainian forces to husband materiel, and delays in Western security assistance will likely continue to create uncertainty in Ukrainian operational plans and restrictions on preparations for future counteroffensive operations.[15] ISW continues to assess that it would be problematic for Ukraine to cede the theater-wide initiative to Russia for longer than is necessary, however, as Ukraine would risk consuming resources it had hoped to conserve for counteroffensive operations on efforts to stop continued Russian attacks.[16] Continued delays in security assistance and persisting materiel shortages may force Ukrainian forces to make tough decisions about how to allocate resources between potential operationally significant counteroffensive operations and ongoing efforts to hold ground, however.

Ukraine-based open-source organization Frontelligence Insight reported on February 22 that Russian forces are storing missiles and ammunition in previously abandoned facilities near the Russo-Ukrainian border and in occupied Ukraine to shorten and bolster Russian logistics lines.[17] Frontelligence Insight reported that satellite imagery shows that Russian forces began storing S-300 missiles, artillery shells, and possibly multiple launch rocket system (MLRS) ammunition at a previously abandoned farm in Voronezh Oblast in late July 2023. Frontelligence Insight stated that the facility is roughly 50 kilometers from the Russo-Ukrainian border and likely serves as a supply facility for Russian air defense units operating in the area. Frontelligence Insight reported that Russian forces have been actively repurposing facilities near the border and in occupied Ukraine since 2022 in order to create more robust and decentralized logistics lines and that improved Russian logistics will support Russian efforts to counter large Ukrainian offensive operations in 2025. Ukrainian forces have previously used Western-provided HIMARS to strike Russian ammunition depots and interdict Russian ground lines of communications (GLOCs) in occupied Ukraine to set favorable conditions for the Kharkiv counteroffensive in September 2022 and force Russian forces to withdraw from west (right) bank Kherson Oblast in November 2022.[18] These

Ukrainian strikes forced Russian forces to array their logistics assets further from the frontline to the detriment of frontline forces, and Ukrainian forces would likely be able to achieve a similar effect with sufficient quantities of weapons systems capable of striking military assets deeper in occupied Ukraine and Russia.[19] Ukrainian officials have repeatedly promised to abide by Western governments' wishes that Ukraine not use Western-provided systems against military targets in Russia's internationally-recognized territory.[20]

Ukrainian officials stated that the probability of a Russian ground attack on Ukraine from Transnistria, a pro-Russian breakaway region of Moldova, is low following reports that Transnistrian authorities may call for or organize a referendum on annexation to Russia on February 28. Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Colonel Nataliya Humenyuk stated on February 23 that claims that Transnistrian authorities will call for Russian annexation are intended to “shake up” the information space and create socio-political tension.[21] Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Spokesperson Andriy Yusov stated on February 22 that information that Transnistrian authorities will call for Russian annexation is “unconfirmed.”[22] Humenyuk stated that Russian forces conducted missile strikes against Odesa City on the night of February 22 to 23 to place additional pressure on the region and the ongoing “stormy situation” in Moldova and that Ukrainian forces have not observed any military activity in Transnistria that could threaten Ukraine.[23] ISW has not observed any indications suggesting that the limited Russian force grouping in Transnistria may attempt to conduct ground operations that could threaten Ukraine, and ISW does not assess that that force grouping is capable of launching a meaningful ground operation against Ukraine. ISW issued a warning forecast on February 22 and assessed that Transnistrian officials may call for a referendum on annexation to Russia to support Russian hybrid operations intent on politically and socially destabilizing Moldova.[24] ISW's warning reflects threats to Moldova's stability rather than Ukraine's military situation.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan stated that Armenia “essentially” froze its participation in the Russia-dominated Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) against the backdrop of deteriorating Russian-Armenian relations. Pashinyan stated in a February 22 interview with French outlet *France 24* that Armenia “essentially” froze its participation in the CSTO because the CSTO “failed to fulfill its obligations in the field of security” to Armenia, particularly in 2021 and 2022.[25] ISW previously observed that Armenia appeared to be effectively abstaining from participation in the CSTO after Pashinyan and Armenian representatives did not attend several consecutive CSTO events in mid to late 2023.[26] Pashinyan reiterated the importance of the 1991 Alma-Ata Declaration that founded the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and recognized the territorial integrity of its 11 signatories, including Russia and Ukraine. Pashinyan stated that “what is happening in Ukraine is a violation of the Alma-Ata Declaration” and that Armenia is “seriously concerned.” Pashinyan responded to reports of Russian military police at the 102nd Military Base in Gyumri, Armenia detaining a Russian citizen for desertion in December 2023.[27] Pashinyan stated that Armenian authorities are investigating the incident and that Armenia “cannot tolerate illegal actions on [its] territory.” Kremlin newswire *TASS* claimed that Pashinyan “suspended” Armenia's membership in the CSTO, despite Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov's statement that Armenia had not sent an official notification of its suspension of CSTO membership.[28] The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) rejected Pashinyan's statement that the CSTO has failed to fulfill its obligations to Armenia and criticized Armenia for inviting observers from the European Union (EU) instead of the CSTO to Armenia, likely referencing the recent increase in EU observers on the Armenian side of the

Armenian-Azerbaijan border.[29] Several Russian milbloggers criticized Pashinyan's policies and blamed him for deteriorating Armenian-Russian relations.[30]

The US, United Kingdom (UK), Canada, and the European Union (EU) announced new sanctions packages aimed at constraining Russia's war effort in Ukraine. The US Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) announced that it is sanctioning almost 300 individuals and entities and 500 targets to mark the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.[31] OFAC placed sanctions on Russian financial infrastructure supporting the Russian war effort and on Iran's Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces (MODAF) for its role in supplying components for the Russian drone production facility in Alabuga, Republic of Tatarstan.[32] OFAC also placed sanctions on 26 third-country entities and individuals in 11 countries, including China, Serbia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).[33] The UK announced 50 new sanctions measures against elements of Russia's defense industrial base (DIB), Russian importers and manufacturers of machine tools, and oil traders and shipping management firms that have facilitated the transfer of Russian oil below the G7's price cap.[34] Canada announced sanctions against 10 individuals and 153 entities primarily associated with Russia's DIB.[35]

The EU adopted its 13th sanctions package that includes sanctions designations against 106 individuals and 88 entities also primarily from Russia's DIB.[36] The 13th EU sanctions package against Russia places sanctions on 10 Russian entities and individuals involved in the shipping of armaments from North Korea to Russia, a Russian individual and entity heavily involved in sanctions evasion, and 15 individuals and two entities involved in the forced transfer, deportation, and military indoctrination of Ukrainian children.[37] The EU is also placing sanctions on third-country companies that have assisted Russia's DIB, including four Chinese companies and one company each from Kazakhstan, India, Serbia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Turkey.[38]

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian officials reported that Ukrainian forces shot down a Russian A-50 long-range radar detection aircraft on the night of February 23 – the second such aircraft shot down in 2024.**
- **Russian ultranationalists are increasingly attributing the shootdown of Russian aircraft to Russian rather than Ukrainian air defenses.**
- **Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated that Ukrainian forces are planning future counteroffensive operations, although delays in Western security assistance will likely continue to generate uncertainty and constraints on these operations.**
- **Ukraine-based open-source organization Frontelligence Insight reported on February 22 that Russian forces are storing missiles and ammunition in previously abandoned facilities near the Russo-Ukrainian border and in occupied Ukraine to shorten and bolster Russian logistics lines.**
- **Ukrainian officials stated that the probability of a Russian ground attack on Ukraine from Transnistria, a pro-Russian breakaway region of Moldova, is low following reports that Transnistrian authorities may call for or organize a referendum on annexation to Russia on February 28.**
- **Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan stated that Armenia “essentially” froze its participation in the Russia-dominated Collective Security Treaty**

Organization (CSTO) against the backdrop of deteriorating Russian-Armenian relations.

- **The US, United Kingdom (UK), Canada, and the European Union (EU) announced new sanctions packages aimed at constraining Russia's war effort in Ukraine.**
- **Ukrainian forces made confirmed advances near Kreminna, and Russian forces made confirmed advances near Kreminna, Bakhmut, and Donetsk City.**
- **Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Deputy Chief Major General Vadym Skibitskyi stated on February 23 that international sanctions are degrading the quality of Russian missiles amid continued Russian efforts to increase missile production.**
- **Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) provided additional details on February 22 about the forced deportation of Ukrainian children from Ukraine to Belarus.**

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

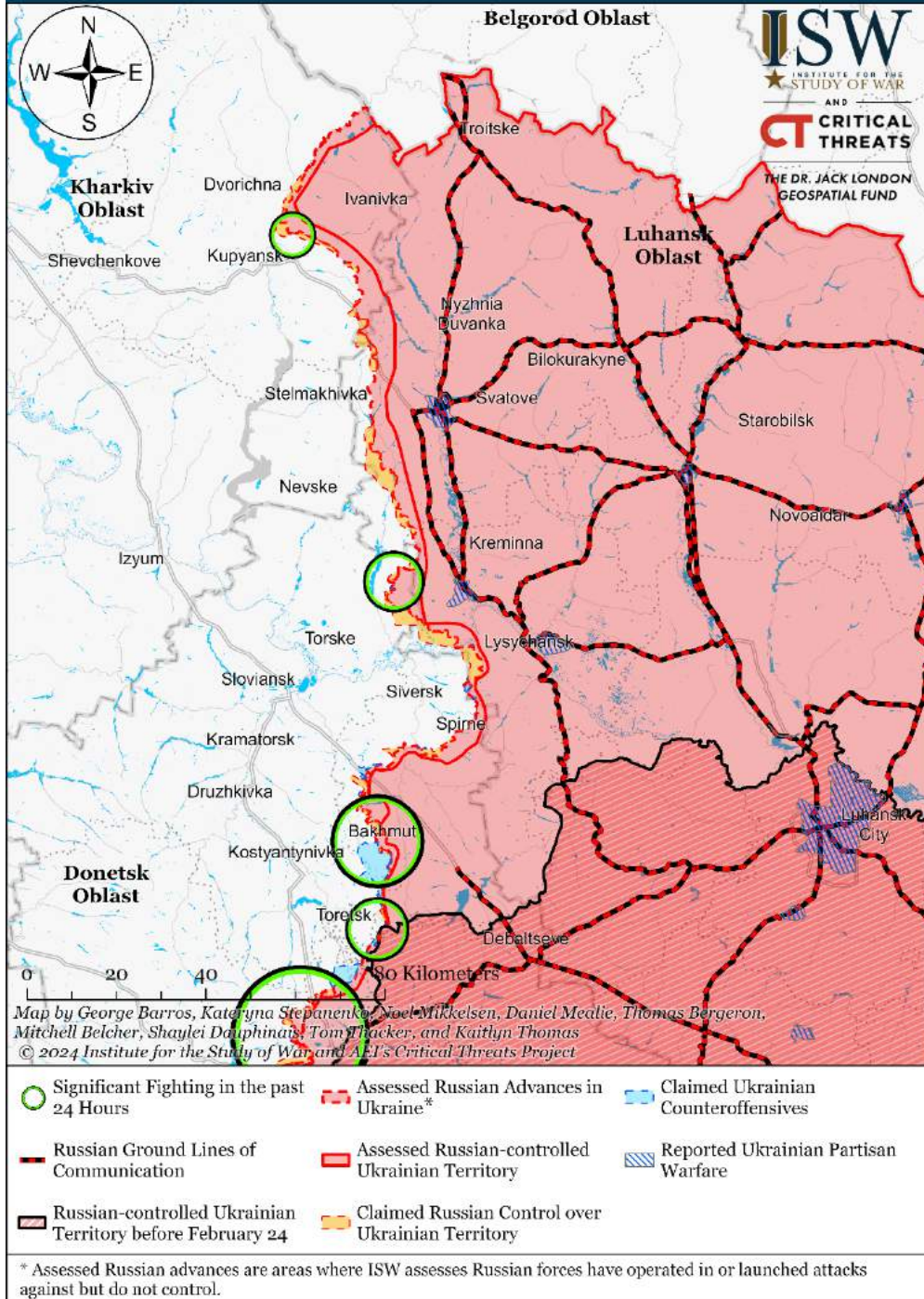
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety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

Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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

Russian and Ukrainian forces recently made gains west of Kreminna amid continued positional fighting along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on February 23. Geolocated footage published on February 22 indicates that Ukrainian forces recently regained ground east of Yampolivka (west of Kreminna).[39] Additional geolocated footage posted on February 23 indicates that Russian forces recently made marginal gains near Terny (west of Kreminna).[40] Positional fighting continued northwest of Kupyansk near Synkivka and west of Kreminna near Terny and Yampolivka.[41] Ukrainian Khortytsia Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash stated that Russian forces near Terny will typically replenish an attacking battalion with convict recruits from Storm-Z and Storm-V units after two or three days of assaults.[42] Yevlash added that Russian assault detachments on average lose 60 percent of their equipment in assaults near Terny.[43]

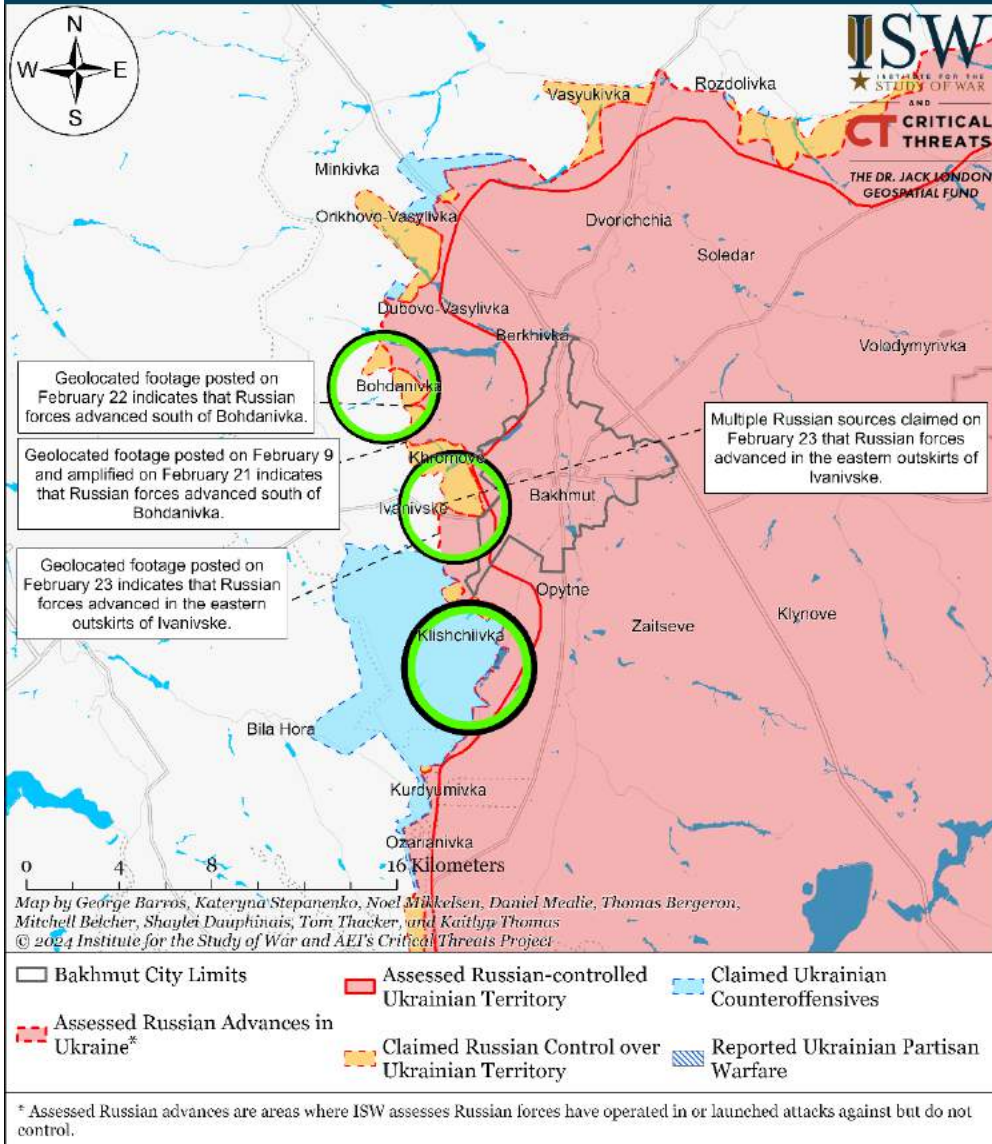
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of February 23, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

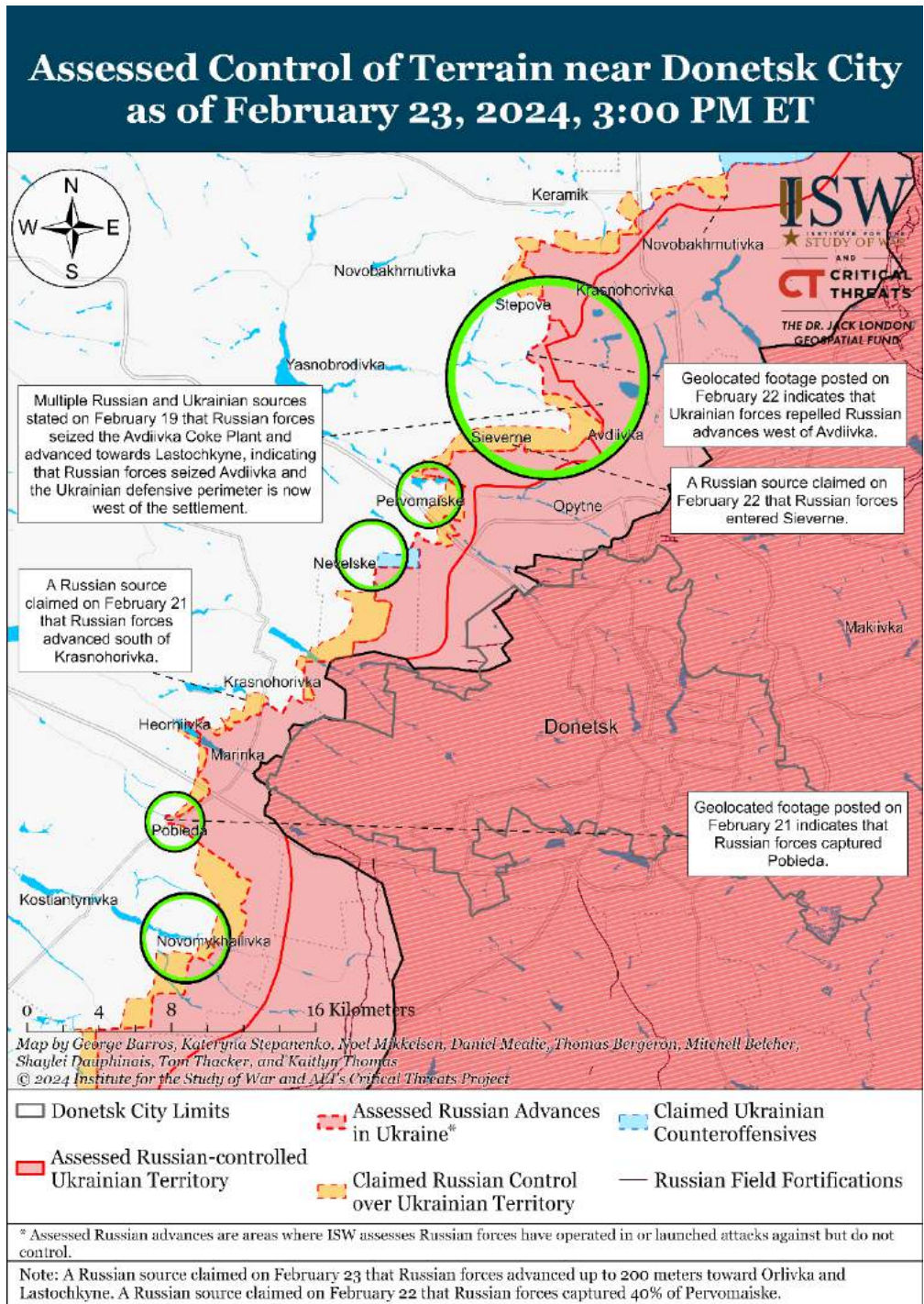
Russian forces recently advanced west of Bakhmut amid continued fighting in the Bakhmut area on February 23. Geolocated footage published on February 23 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced to the eastern outskirts of Ivanivske (west of Bakhmut).[44] Russian milbloggers also claimed that elements of the Russian 98th Airborne (VDV) Division with armored vehicle support advanced in the area.[45] Some Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced to Sadova Street in eastern Ivanivske, although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim.[46] Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional fighting continued northwest of Bakhmut near Bohdanivka and southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka, Andriivka, Niu York, and Toretsk.[47] Elements of the Russian 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade (Northern Fleet) are reportedly operating near Bohdanivka, and elements of the 27th Artillery Regiment (possibly a reconstituted Soviet-era unit) are operating near Bakhmut.[48]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of February 23, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces reportedly advanced northwest of Avdiivka on February 23, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Several Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced in the eastern outskirts of Sieverne (northwest of Avdiivka), and other milbloggers claimed that Russian forces captured Stepove (northwest of Avdiivka).[49] Russian milbloggers also claimed that Russian forces advanced up to 200 meters deep in the direction of Orlivka and Lastochkyne (northwest of Avdiivka) and that Russian forces advanced west from the Khimik microraiion in Avdiivka and northwest of Opytne (southwest of Avdiivka).[50] ISW has not observed visual evidence of these claims. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional fighting also continued northwest of Avdiivka near Berdychi and southwest of Avdiivka near Vodyane, Pervomaiske, and Nevelske.[51] Elements of the Russian 55th Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st Combined Arms Army [CAA], Central Military District

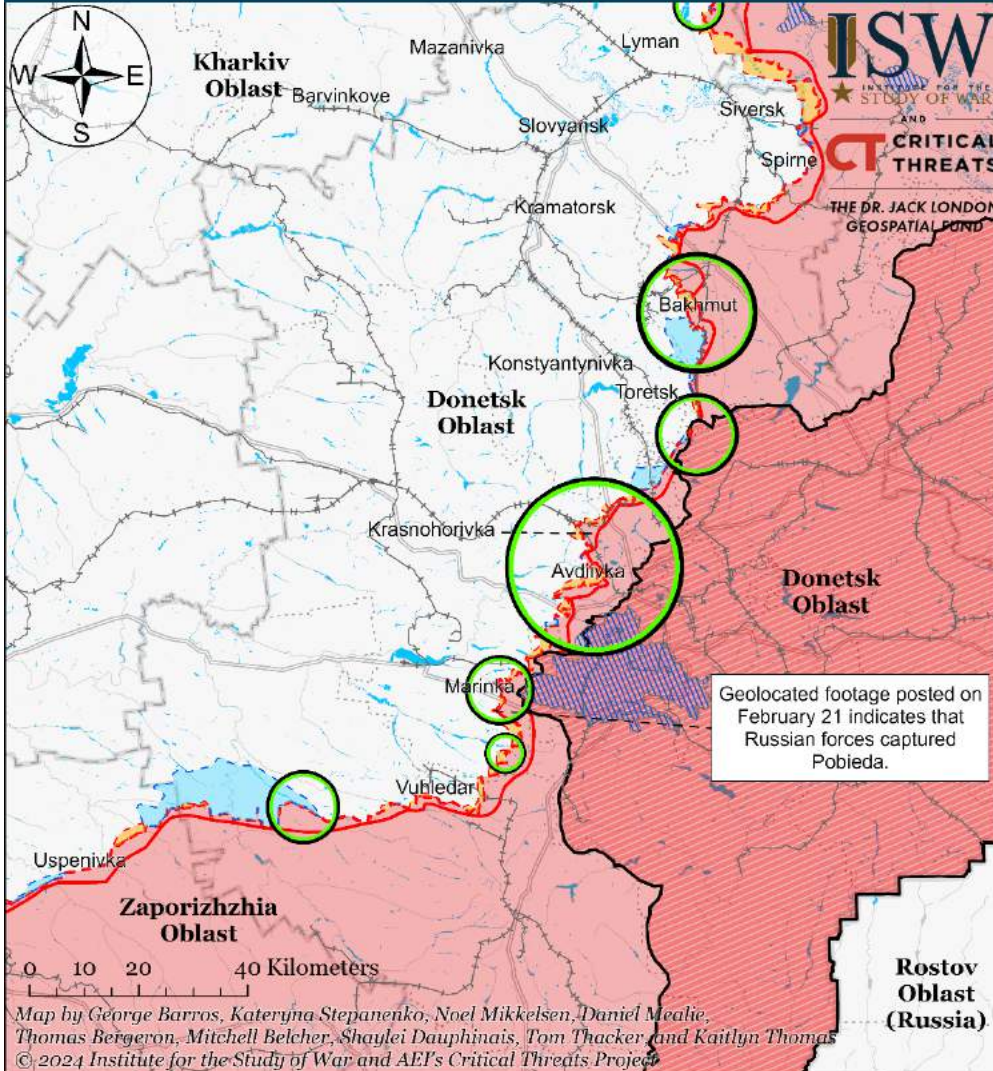
[CMD]) and the 21st Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd CAA, CMD) are reportedly operating near Avdiivka.[52] Elements of the Russian 1st Slavic Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] Army Corps) are reportedly operating near Sieverne, and the 110th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st DNR Army Corps) are reportedly operating near Nevelske and Pervomaiske.[53]



Russian forces recently marginally advanced southwest of Donetsk City amid continued positional fighting west and southwest of Donetsk City on February 23. Geolocated footage published on February

23 indicates that Russian forces recently marginally advanced south of Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City).[54] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces also captured positions on the southern outskirts of Krasnohorivka (west of Donetsk City), although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim.[55] Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional fighting continues west of Donetsk City near Heorhiivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Novomykhailivka and Pobieda.[56] Elements of the Russian 255th Motorized Rifle Regiment (20th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA, Southern Military District) are reportedly operating in Pobieda, and elements of the 14th Spetsnaz Brigade (Russian General Staff's Main Directorate [GRU]) are reportedly operating near Novomykhailivka.[57]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of February 23, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



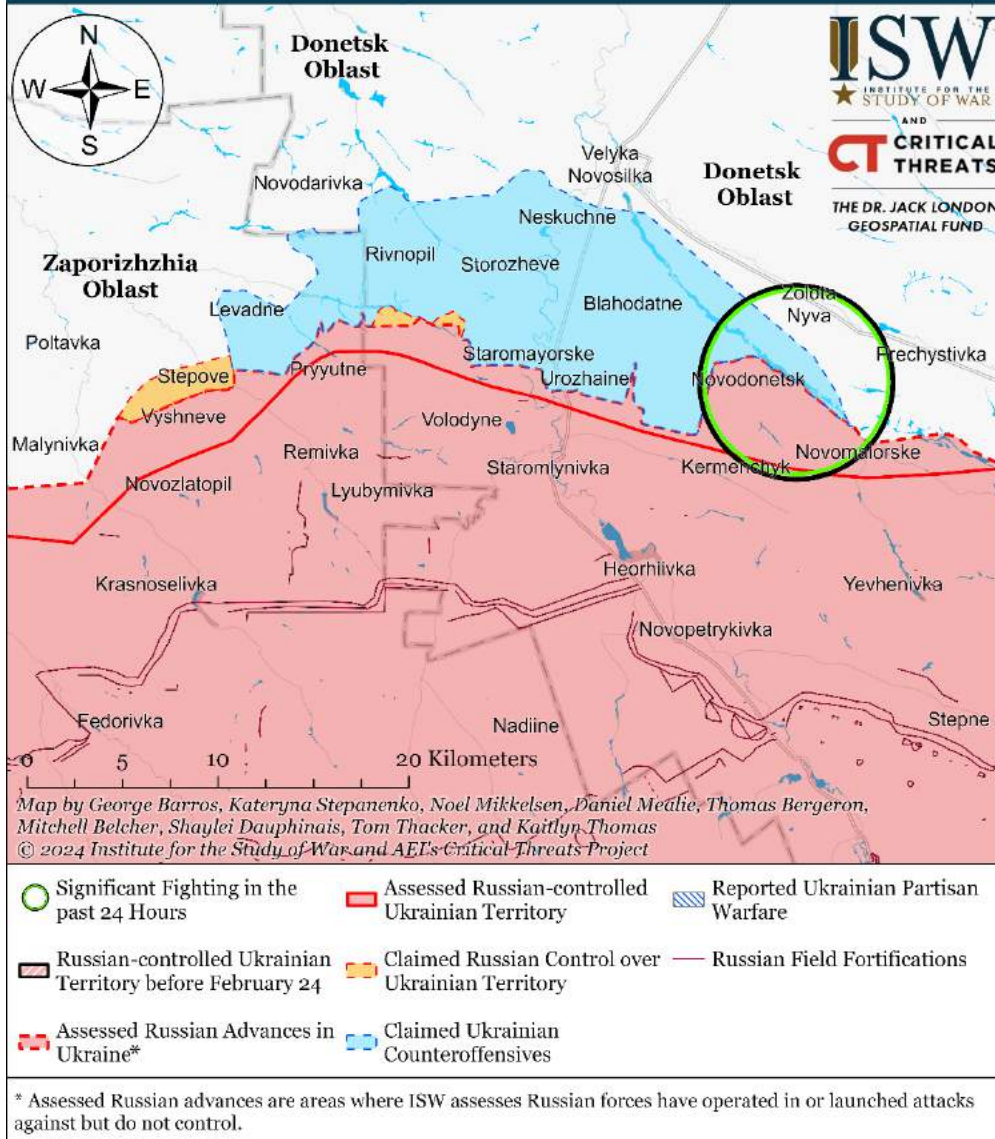
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- + Major Railroads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

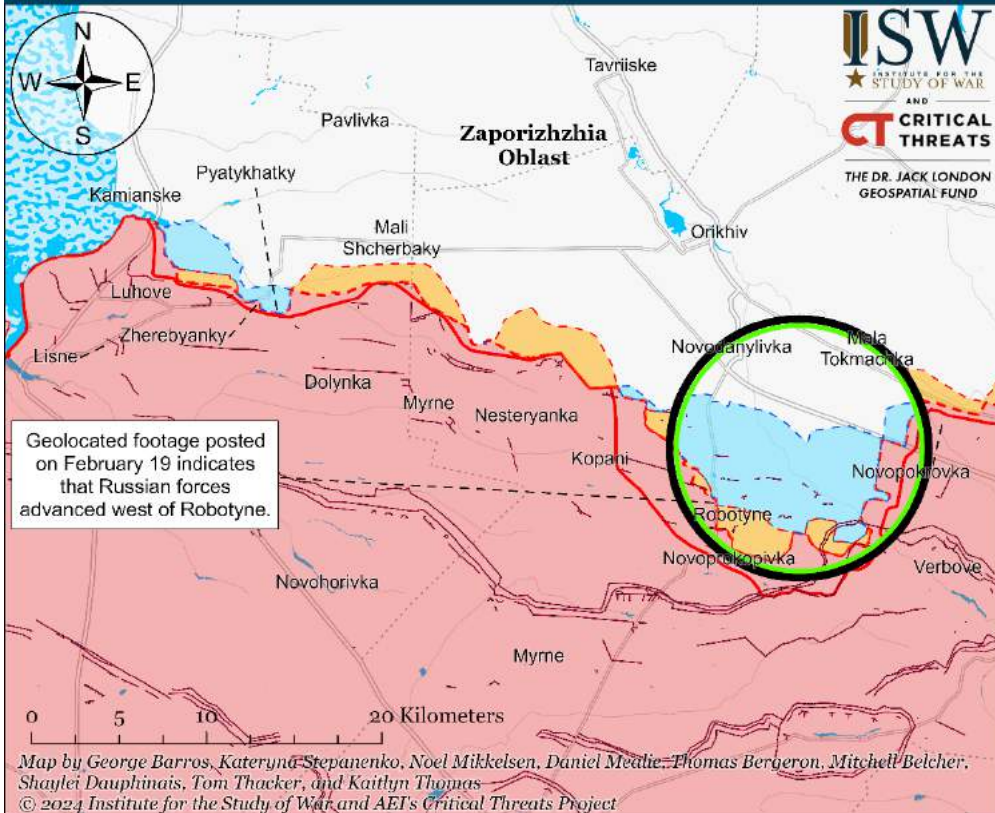
Positional fighting continued in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on February 23. Russian and Ukrainian sources reported that positional fighting occurred southeast of Velyka Novosilka near Zolota Nyva and Novodonetske, south of Velyka Novosilka near Staromayorske, and southwest of Velyka Novosilka near Shevchenko.[58] Elements of the Russian 1466th Motorized Rifle Regiment (Territorial Troops [TRV]) are reportedly operating near Staromayorske, elements of the 30th Artillery Brigade (36th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Eastern Military District [EMD]) are reportedly operating near Urozhaine (south of Velyka Novosilka), and elements of the 218th Tank Regiment (127th Motorized Rifle Division, 5th CAA, EMD) are reportedly operating near Pryyutne (southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[59]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of February 23, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Positional fighting continued in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast near Robotyne and Verbove (east of Robotyne) on February 23.[60] Russian milbloggers claimed that fighting continued in the center of Robotyne on February 22 and 23.[61] Elements of the Russian 429th Motorized Rifle Regiment (19th Motorized Rifle Division, 58th CAA, Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating near Kamyanske (west of Robotyne).[62]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of February 23, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

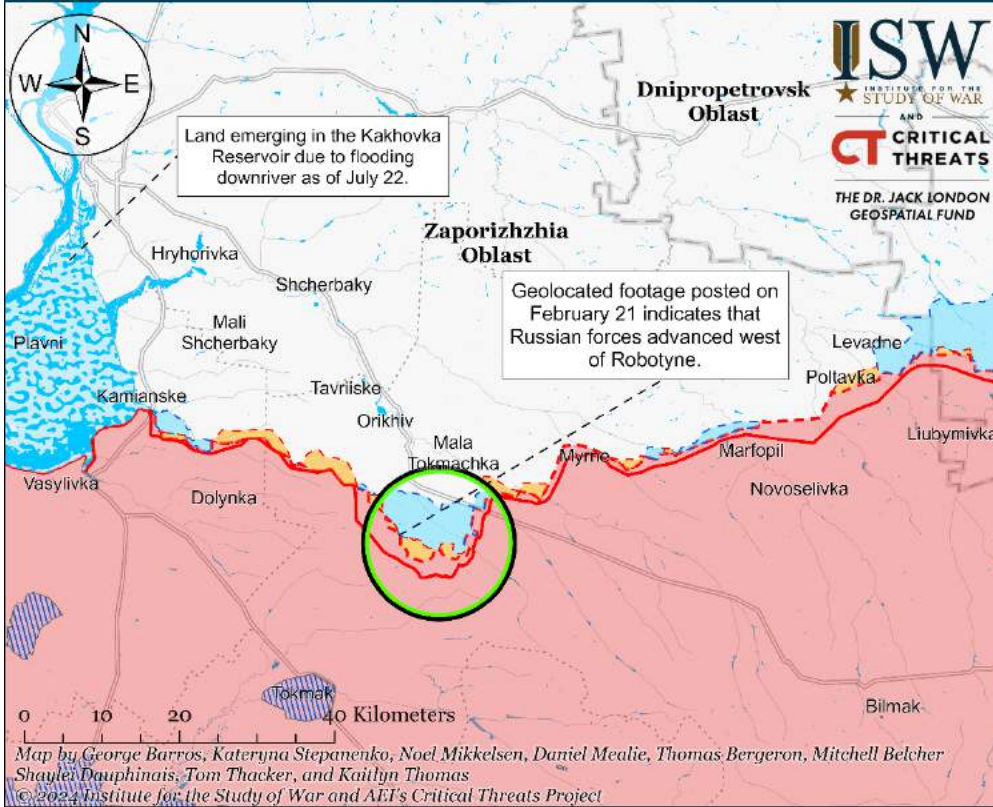


Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours	Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory	Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24	Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory	Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*	Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives	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 February 20 that Russian forces penetrated between 700 meters and 1.5 kilometers deep into Ukrainian defenses and advanced up to two kilometers along the Robotyne-Verbove front. A Russian source claimed on February 19 that Russian forces advanced in an area 1.42 kilometers wide and 1.15 kilometers deep west of Verbove. Multiple Russian sourced claimed on February 19 that Russian forces advanced 500 meters near Robotyne.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of February 23, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



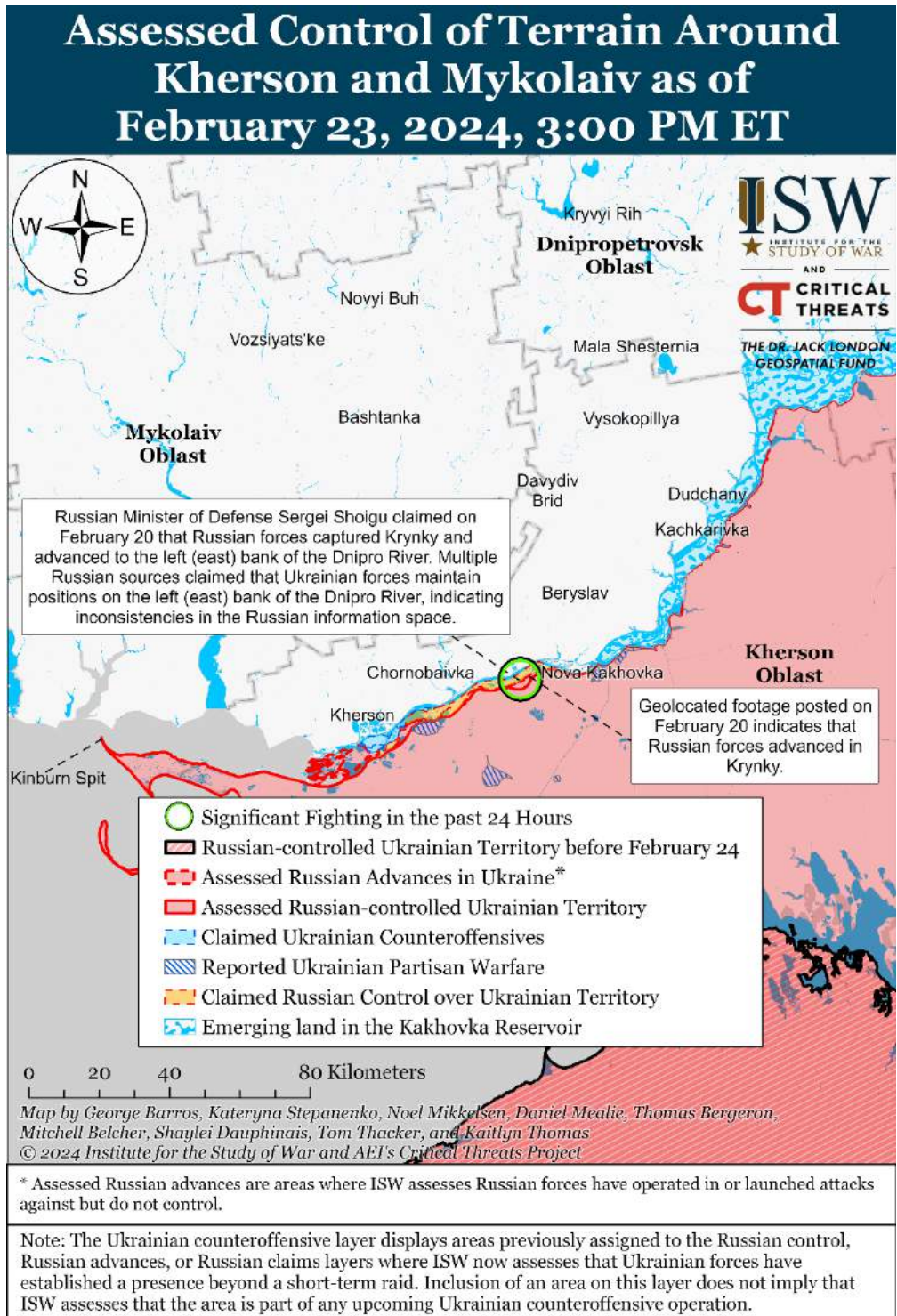
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Reported Ukrainian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

* 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 February 19 that Russian forces advanced in an area 1.42 kilometers wide and 1.15 kilometers deep west of Verbove. Multiple Russian sourced claimed on February 19 that Russian forces advanced 500 meters near Robotyne.

Russian and Ukrainian sources continue to disagree about the status of the Ukrainian bridgehead in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast as of February 23. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) reiterated on February 23 Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu's February 20 claim that Russian forces completely seized Krynky in east bank Kherson Oblast.[63] A Russian milblogger posted footage on February 22 of himself visiting the outskirts of Krynky as alleged proof of the Russian seizure of the settlement but was unable to enter the settlement due to heavy Ukrainian indirect fire in the area.[64] A Ukrainian soldier operating near Krynky refuted these Russian claims in an interview published on February 23 and stated that Russian forces failed to establish a foothold at the limited Ukrainian bridgehead in Krynky during intensified Russian assaults on February 19.[65] ISW has not yet observed visual confirmation of any significant recent Russian gains in Krynky. The Ukrainian General Staff and

a Russian milblogger stated that positional fighting continued in east bank Kherson Oblast, including near Krynky, on February 23.[66] The Ukrainian soldier added that Ukrainian forces continue to supply positions on the east bank of the Dnipro River despite consistent Russian efforts to disrupt Ukrainian logistics in the area.[67]



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

Russian forces launched another series of drone and missile strikes against Ukraine overnight on February 22 to 23. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched 31 Shahed-136/131 drones from Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai and occupied Cape Chauda, Crimea; three S-300 missiles from occupied Donetsk Oblast; and a Kh-31P anti-radar missile and two Kh-22 cruise missiles from the Black Sea.[68] Ukrainian officials reported that Ukrainian forces intercepted 23 Shahed drones over the Odesa, Mykolaiv, Poltava, Dnipropetrovsk and Kharkiv oblasts.[69] The Ukrainian Southern Operational Command reported that one drone struck port infrastructure in Odesa City.[70] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces struck a civilian airfield in Kharkiv Oblast and defense enterprises in Odesa and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts.[71]

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

Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Deputy Chief Major General Vadym Skibitskyi stated on February 23 that international sanctions are degrading the quality of Russian missiles amid continued Russian efforts to increase missile production. Skibitskyi stated that Russia planned to produce 130 missiles in February 2024, including Iskander ballistic, Kinzhal ballistic, Kalibr cruise, Kh-101 cruise, and Kh-32 cruise missiles.[72] Skibitskyi reported that Russian officials created a center to develop domestic Russian analogues of foreign components for missiles, particularly electronics, but that the domestically produced components are worse in quality than imported ones. Skibitskyi stated that Russian forces have used missiles produced in the fourth quarter of 2023 in recent strikes against Ukraine. Skibitskyi stated that Russian forces have infrequently included Kalibrs in strike packages in January and February 2024 despite frequently using them in strike packages in September 2023. Skibitskyi stated that Russia plans to produce a "large" number of Kalibrs to replenish its strategic reserves and equip frigates and submarines.

Skibitskyi stated that North Korea continues to provide missiles and artillery ammunition to Russia, likely in exchange for missile and submarine technology.[73] Skibitskyi stated that Russia has imported 1.5 million rounds of ammunition to Russia, although half of the rounds are defective, and the rest require restoration and inspection before use. Skibitskyi reported that Russian forces continue to launch North Korean KN-23 (Hwasong-11 Ga) missiles against Ukraine which have ballistic characteristics similar to Iskander missiles. Skibitskyi stated that it is difficult for Ukrainian forces to shoot down ballistic missiles and that Ukraine requires Western air defense systems, such as Patriot missile defense systems, to intercept ballistic missiles.

Skibitskyi stated that the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) is forming a volunteer corps of 18,000 personnel which includes former Wagner Group personnel.[74] Skibitskyi stated that the Volunteer Corps is currently operating near Avdiivka and that elements of the Volunteer Corps conduct assault operations using similar tactics to infantry-led frontal assaults that the Wagner Group used in Bakhmut in 2023. The Russian MoD credited the "Veterany" Assault Brigade of the Volunteer Corps for aiding in the Russian capture of Avdiivka after Russian milbloggers criticized the Russian MoD for failing to recognize the Volunteer Corps' and Donetsk People's Republic Army Corps' contributions to the Russian seizure of Avdiivka.[75]

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

Russian President Vladimir Putin stated on February 23 that Russia began serial production of new Zircon hypersonic missiles and that Russia started testing another unspecified strike system.[76] Kremlin newswire *TASS* reported in January 2024 that Russia will increase its production of hypersonic Zircon and Kinzhal missiles in 2024.[77] Putin also stated that the Russian military recently received four Tu-160M (NATO reporting name Blackjack) strategic bombers.

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

Ukraine continues to jointly produce and receive weapons and military equipment. Ukrainian state industrial firm Ukroboronprom announced on February 23 that it will manufacture the Czech NATO caliber CZ BREN 2 assault rifle in Ukraine as part of a licensing agreement with Czech firearms manufacturer Ceska Zbrojovka.[78] Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov stated on February 22 that Ukraine recently received a shipment of "dozens" of sanitized M113 armored personnel carriers and expects to receive "hundreds" more in the future.[79]

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)

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) provided additional details on February 22 about the forced deportation of Ukrainian children from Ukraine to Belarus.[80] *RFE/RL* reported that Russian and Belarusian authorities deported at least 2,442 Ukrainian children from mainly occupied Mariupol and Lysychansk to 13 different camps in Belarus as of November 2023.[81] Belarusian authorities at these camps reportedly indoctrinate the children into pro-Russian ideology and eradicate their Ukrainian identities.[82] *RFE/RL* reported that the Belarusian UNICEF has been directly involved in these forced deportations since 2022 and implicated the Belarusian Red Cross Head Dmytro Shevtsov and the Talay Foundation in the deportations.[83] *RFE/RL* reported that Belarusian authorities use the camps to expose Ukrainian children to pro-Soviet propaganda and arrange meetings between the children and Belarusian security, police, and military forces.[84]

Russian and occupation authorities are already integrating recently captured Avdiivka, Donetsk Oblast into Russian governance of occupied areas. Chelyabinsk Oblast Head Alexei Teksler stated on February 23 that Chelyabinsk Oblast will sponsor occupied Avdiivka after occupation authorities officially integrate Avdiivka into occupation structures.[85] Head of occupied Yasynuvata Raion, Donetsk Oblast Dmitry Shevchenko claimed on February 23 that residents of occupied Avdiivka are already receiving Russian passports.[86]

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Nothing significant to report.

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

Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Deputy Chief Major General Vadym Skibitskyi stated during an interview on February 23 that Belarus is working to restore its ammunition production after Russian forces “removed” all of Belarus’ ammunition for use in Ukraine.[87] Skibitskyi stated that Belarusian ammunition production volumes are “not as high as one would expect” and added that Russia does not currently have a large grouping of forces or reserves in Belarus that could threaten Ukraine.

The Belarusian *Hajun Project* reported on February 23 that the Belarusian army is modernizing an unspecified number of Uragan multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS) combat vehicles with improved engines, communications equipment, and topographical reference systems.[88] Belarusian forces transported the MLRS vehicles from the 111th Artillery Brigade near Brest, Belarus to an unspecified location for modernization and repairs.

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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