

# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, February 3, 2024

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February 3, 2024, 7:50pm ET

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

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

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

**Note:** The data cut-off for this product was 3:00pm ET on February 3. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the February 4 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

**The Kremlin is doubling down on its support for Iran as the US conducts strikes to preempt attacks by Iranian-back proxies in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen against American and other targets.** The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) condemned the US retaliatory strikes against Iranian-backed militia positions in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen on February 3.[1] The US launched a series of retaliatory airstrikes against targets in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen on February 2 and 3 following a January 28 drone strike by an Iranian-backed Iraqi militia that killed three US servicemembers in northeastern Jordan.[2] Russian MFA Spokesperson Maria Zakharova condemned the strikes as a “blatant act of American-British aggression” and claimed that they demonstrate US policy’s “aggressive nature” and “complete disregard for international law.”[3] Zakharova claimed that the US airstrikes are “specifically designed” to further inflame the conflict in the Middle East.[4] Zakharova criticized the United Kingdom (UK) for participating in the strike and claimed that the UK “has yet to answer” for its “zeal” in supporting provocative US policy.[5] Russian state media reported extensively on the strike’s aftermath and amplified Iranian, Iraqi, and Syrian state reporting and condemnations of the strike.[6] Russia requested a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) meeting in connection with the US strikes, which is scheduled for February 5.[7] Russia frequently weaponizes its invocation of international law to undermine legitimate US activities in the Middle East.

**The Kremlin censored a protest by wives of mobilized soldiers in Moscow on February 3 likely to suppress any possible resurgence of a broader social movement in support of Russian soldiers and against the regime.** Members of the Russian “Way Home” social movement laid flowers at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Moscow before holding a protest at the nearby Manezhnaya Square to commemorate the 500th day since Russian President Vladimir Putin began partial mobilization in September 2022.[8] Russian state media outlets largely did not cover the protest but did report that the Moscow Prosecutor’s Office warned against attending an unspecified protest in Moscow on February 3, very likely referring to the Way Home

protest.[9] Russian opposition media outlets covered the protest in detail, however, estimating that roughly 200 people attended, and reported that Moscow police detained 27 individuals, most of whom were Russian and foreign journalists.[10] The opposition outlets reported that authorities later released the detained individuals without charges and that some of the Way Home members protested outside of the police station for the release of all detained individuals.[11] Russian police allowed Way Home protestors to later go to Putin's campaign headquarters and handwrite appeals to Putin to bring mobilized personnel home, but the headquarters only allowed small groups of demonstrators inside and severely limited media access. Russian law enforcement likely deliberately detained journalists rather than protestors to limit reporting of the event while depriving the Way Home organization of a platform on which to martyr itself in the information space over the arrests of its members.

**In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Soviet leadership experienced first-hand the influence that social movements of relatives of Russian soldiers wielded, and the Kremlin likely aims to preemptively censor and discredit similar movements before they could garner similar influence.** Kremlin propagandist Vladimir Solovyov criticized the Way Home protests on February 3, accusing the wives of lacking the authority to advocate on behalf of frontline Russian soldiers because they are wives of soldiers, not mothers of soldiers, and asked to hear from the “husbands” instead.[12] (One of the main concerns of relatives is that mobilized Russian soldiers consistently lack the ability to communicate with relatives back home and go missing).[13] Solovyov asked whether the “husbands” authorized their wives to advocate on their behalf and asked whether this movement was “another Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers.”[14] The Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers (later renamed the Union of Committees of Soldiers’ Mothers) was founded in 1989 and advocated for better treatment of Soviet conscripts who were enduring poor living standards and violence — most notably suffering from *dedovshchina*, the ritual hazing of conscripts using physical and sexual violence — during peacetime in the late 1980s and early 1990s.[15] The Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers also called for greater transparency within the Soviet military, particularly regarding deaths in the Afghanistan and Chechen wars as well as in peacetime, whereas the Soviet government desired to censor both the deaths and mothers’ movement.[16] The mothers’ movement leveraged public displays of grief and other tactics to pressure Soviet officials into disclosing the number of peacetime military deaths, which exceeded the number of Soviet casualties in Afghanistan in the 1980s.[17] The Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers was so effective that it forced the Soviet military to make sweeping changes in the 1990s, including removing and prosecuting corrupt military commanders and officials in the military prosecutor’s office.[18] The legacy of the Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers represents the societal destabilization possible from a failed Soviet attempt at complete censorship, and Solovyov’s evocation of this specific organization indicates the depth of the Kremlin’s fear of similar movements only a few decades later.[19]

**Putin may have learned from the Soviet Union’s prior failure to completely censor soldiers’ relatives and changed tactics, instead using limited censorship and discreditation to keep these movements from building momentum.** The Kremlin has censored other relatives’ movements in support of Russian mobilized personnel since September 2022 and has more recently targeted the Way Home movement in December 2023 and January 2024.[20] Russian authorities compelled the Council of Wives and Mothers, founded in September 2022, to stop operating after designating it as a foreign agent in May 2023 after likely threatening criminal prosecution against its founder in December 2022.[21] Russian opposition outlets reported in late January 2024 that Russian authorities attempted to hack the social media accounts of Way

Home members and that Russian law enforcement harassed members at prior demonstrations, both likely to discourage members from continuing their activism.[22] Other Russian sources, including ultranationalist milbloggers, have spread claims that Ukrainian special agents run the Way Home movement or that its leadership is otherwise corrupt.[23] While the degree of social influence that the Way Home movement or other similar Russian movements may hold is unclear, the extent and complexity of the Kremlin's efforts to limit the rise of relatives' movements in support of Russian soldiers underscores the Kremlin's desperation to shut down these movements, particularly ahead of the March 2024 Russian presidential elections and as it prepares for a long-term war effort.

**Russian milbloggers continued to fixate on a recent unsuccessful Russian mechanized assault near Novomykhailivka, Donetsk Oblast and highlight divisions it caused within the Russian information space, which are indicative of wider issues with the Russian military's ability to adapt in Ukraine.** A Russian milblogger claimed on February 3 that "true patriots" responded to the January 30 footage of the unsuccessful assault with criticism and disappointment.[24] The milblogger criticized "traitors and sellouts," including experts who frequent Kremlin propagandist Vladimir Solovyov's TV show, who responded to the footage by falsely claiming that Russian forces have adequate supplies of electronic warfare (EW) systems and radios to repel Ukrainian first-person vision (FPV) drones.[25] The milblogger, citing personal conversations with frontline Russian personnel, claimed that such propagandists' claims are not true and that Russian frontline commanders consider donated radio stations more valuable than state-provided tanks and infantry fighting vehicles due to radio equipment shortages.[26] Several milbloggers lamented that the Russian "high office" (likely the Russian high command) is unlikely to read milbloggers' concerns about Ukrainian drone use and warned that many Russian personnel will die because of Ukrainian drone superiority on the frontline, calling the issue "one of [Russia's] biggest problems at the moment." [27] Russian milbloggers' willingness to continually fixate on this particular event is notable, as the milbloggers' concern over Russian forces' failure to adapt is apparently greater than their concern for their own personal safety given the arrests of several critical information space voices and milbloggers in 2023.[28]

Moscow Duma Deputy Andrei Medvedev praised Russian President Vladimir Putin's February 2 comment about drones being the Russian forces' "Achilles' heel" and claimed that Putin's comment shows Putin's awareness of what is happening on the front and that he has an understanding of modern warfare.[29] Medvedev claimed that Putin's acknowledgment of Ukrainian drone superiority proves that Putin is not afraid to discuss Russia's "problems" and "mistakes" and that Putin does not believe that constructive criticism of Russian operations in Ukraine is wrong or will prevent a Russian victory of Ukraine.[30] Several Russian milbloggers have seized on the discourse surrounding the January 30 footage of the unsuccessful Russian assault on Novomykhailivka to argue that Russian sources should not have to censor constructive criticism of the Russian military.[31] Putin's February 2 statement appears supportive of the milbloggers' argument against self-censorship. Putin has previously signaled his sensitivity to concern about Russian operations in Ukraine among Russian milbloggers, including during his "Direct Line" forum on December 14 when Putin singled out the tactical and operational situation in Krynky in the east bank of Kherson Oblast, an area of the front that Russian milbloggers have previously fixated on.[32] Putin's statement suggests that there may be concern within the Russian military and political leadership about the Russian military's ability to adapt and restore maneuver to the battlefield.

**Ukrainian actors conducted a drone strike against the Lukoil oil refinery in Volgograd Oblast on February 3.** Ukrainian outlet *Suspilne* and *BBC Russia Service* cited internal sources in the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) who claimed that the SBU conducted the strike.[33] A source in Kyiv told *Reuters* that Ukraine used two attack drones to execute the strike.[34] A fire resulting from the strike apparently spread up to 300 square meters at the Lukoil refinery, which Russian emergency services extinguished.[35] Lukoil's Volgograd refinery is one of the largest in Russia and the largest in the Russian Southern Federal District.[36] Russian officials obliquely reported on the strike, claiming that "falling debris" from a drone strike that Russian air defense repelled fell on the refinery and caused the fire.[37] A Russian milblogger criticized Russian authorities for not admitting that Ukrainian drones struck the refinery and called for massive retaliatory strikes against Ukrainian critical infrastructure to damage Ukraine's battlefield prospects and dissuade Western investment in Ukrainian critical industries.[38]

**Ukrainian strikes reportedly temporarily slowed Russia's production of Lancet loitering munitions.** *Forbes*, citing Ukraine-based OSINT group *Molfar*, reported on February 1 that a "well-targeted" Ukrainian strike may have hit the Zagorsk Optical-Mechanical Plant (ZOMZ) near Moscow in August 2023.[39] *Forbes* noted that Russian state media denied that explosions at ZOMZ were the result of a drone strike, despite eyewitness reports to the contrary. Ukrainian military analyst Dmytro Snehlyev assessed that ZOMZ may have been producing camera lenses or optical devices for ZALA Aerospace's Lancet loitering munitions.[40] *Forbes* stated that following the August 2023 incident at ZOMZ, Lancet production was "slashed," which is noteworthy because Lancets use several imported components that should in theory be unaffected by explosions at ZOMZ. The *Forbes* investigation concluded that Ukraine may have conducted the strike against ZOMZ, impacting the factory's ability to produce unique domestic components for Lancets, thereby leading to a temporary decrease in Lancet production, which is now on the rise again as of January 2024.

**Russian state media confirmed the appointment of two new officials to senior positions in military-adjacent civilian organizations.** The Russian Volunteer Society for Assistance to the Army, Aviation, and Navy of Russia (DOSAAF) confirmed on February 2 that it unanimously elected Army General Alexander Dvornikov (former Southern Military District commander and failed Russian theater commander in Ukraine from April-May 2022) as DOSAAF's new chairperson.[41] DOSAAF also noted that it determined its new strategic goals, defined as increasing the number of trained conscripts and developing a training system for drone operators and other specialists.[42] ISW previously reported rumors of Dvornikov's appointment on January 30.[43] DOSAAF is a Soviet relic that funds and promotes military service for Russian youth through military-patriotic programming and military skills programs and sends representatives to military draft boards to allocate conscripts with specific skills into specific military roles.[44] Dvornikov's selection to head DOSAAF suggests that the Russian military leadership may be setting conditions to reconstitute a conscript recruitment pipeline using DOSAAF's educational and recruitment infrastructure. Kremlin newswire *TASS* also reported on February 3 that Russian President Vladimir Putin replaced Russian Minister of Labor and Social Protection Anton Kotyakov with Russian Federal Financial Monitoring Service Head Yuriy Chikhanchin as head of the Kremlin-run "Defenders of the Fatherland" Foundation.[45] The "Defenders of the Fatherland" foundation provides government support to Russian veterans and helps provide rehabilitation and social support to wounded veterans and their families.[46]

**In accordance with its policy against speculating about future Ukrainian actions, ISW is not covering reported leaks concerning possible changes in the Ukrainian command structure. ISW will continue to report official statements by Ukrainian government officials and organizations as they are made.**

**Key Takeaways:**

- **The Kremlin is doubling down on its support for Iran as the US conducts strikes to preempt attacks by Iranian-back proxies in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen against American and other targets.**
- **The Kremlin censored a protest by wives of mobilized soldiers in Moscow on February 3 likely to suppress any possible resurgence of a broader social movement in support of Russian soldiers and against the regime.**
- **Soviet leadership experienced first-hand the influence that social movements of relatives of Russian soldiers wielded in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and the Kremlin likely aims to preemptively censor and discredit similar movements before they can garner similar influence.**
- **Putin may have learned from the Soviet Union's prior failure to completely censor soldiers' relatives and changed tactics, instead using limited censorship and discreditation to keep these movements from building momentum.**
- **Russian milbloggers continued to fixate on a recent unsuccessful Russian mechanized assault near Novomykhailivka, Donetsk Oblast and highlight divisions it caused within the Russian information space, which are indicative of wider issues with the Russian military's ability to adapt in Ukraine.**
- **Ukrainian actors conducted a drone strike against the Lukoil oil refinery in Volgograd Oblast on February 3.**
- **Ukrainian strikes reportedly temporarily slowed Russia's production of Lancet loitering munitions.**
- **Russian state media confirmed the appointment of two new officials to senior positions in military-adjacent civilian organizations.**
- **Russian forces made confirm advances near Bakhmut amid continued positional engagements along the frontline.**
- **Russian soldiers imprisoned for refusing to fight in Ukraine are reportedly dying in Russian detention.**
- **Russian authorities continue efforts to militarize Ukrainian youth through the school system.**

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



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

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

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

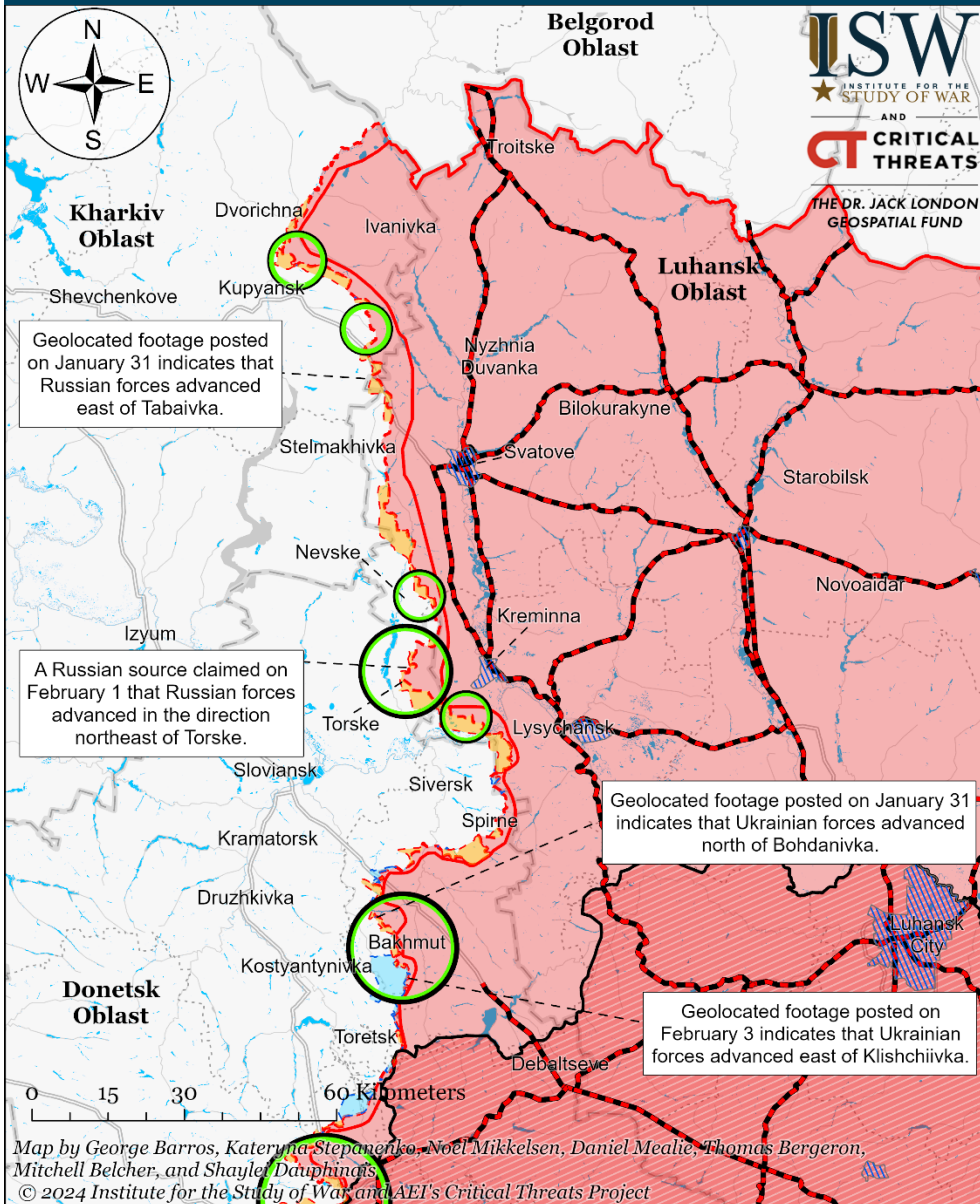
#### **Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)**

Positional fighting continued along the Kupyansk-Kreminna line on February 3. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated that positional engagements continued northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka and Lake Lyman; southeast of Kupyansk near Ivanivka, Krokmalne, Tabaivka, and Novoselivske; northwest of Kreminna near Terny and Nevske; west of Kreminna near Yampolivka; and southwest of Kreminna near the Serebryanske forest area.[47] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces are conducting an increased number of air strikes in the Kupyansk direction and claimed that Russian forces dropped over 10 FAB-1500 glide bombs on Ukrainian positions near Ivanivka and Kyslivka on February 2.[48] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash stated on February 2 that Russian forces have almost halved their daily rate of artillery fire in the Kupyansk and Lyman directions due to poor weather conditions and other unspecified issues.[49] Elements of Chechen “Akhmat” Spetsnaz forces are reportedly operating near Bilohorivka, Luhansk Oblast (10km south of Kreminna).[50]

Russian sources claimed on February 3 that Ukrainian forces conducted a HIMARS strike against a bakery in occupied Lysychansk, Luhansk Oblast.[51]



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



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

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

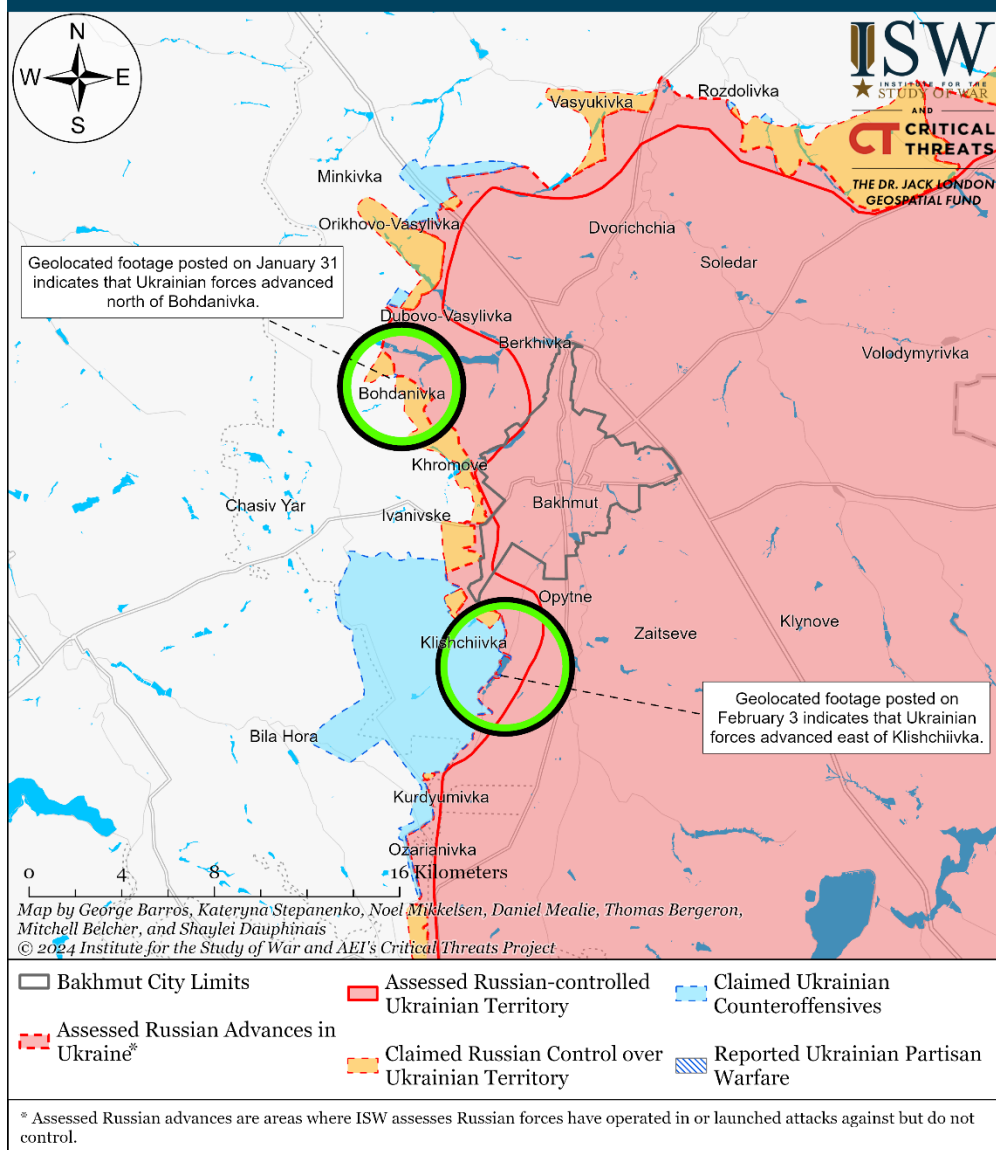
Note: Russian sources claimed on February 2 that Russian forces advanced two kilometers toward Terny. Ukrainian and Russian sources claimed on February 1 that Russian forces advanced along a 3.45 kilometer wide and 2.15 kilometer deep frontline near Yampolivka.



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

Ukrainian forces recently marginally advanced southwest of Bakhmut. Geolocated footage published on February 3 shows elements of the 85th Separate Motorized Brigade (2nd Luhansk People’s Republic [LNR] Army Corps [AC]) striking Ukrainian forces operating in a forested area east of Klishchiivka (southwest of Bakhmut) that ISW previously assessed was under Russian control, suggesting that Ukrainian forces recently regained ground in this area.[52] A Russian source claimed that Russian forces advanced along an unspecified road in the direction of Ivanivske (west of Bakhmut) and captured new heights north and northwest of Klishchiivka, and that Ukrainian forces recaptured several positions north of Bohdanivka (northwest of Bakhmut).[53] ISW has not observed visual evidence to confirm these claims. Positional engagements continued near Bohdanivka and Klishchiivka, and in the Ivanivske direction.[54] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash reported that the Russian military command is transferring reserves to the Bakhmut direction in an effort to break through Ukrainian defensive lines west of Bakhmut towards Chasiv Yar.[55] A Russian source claimed that elements of the Russian Cossack “Sibir” Brigade are operating near Soledar (northeast of Bakhmut).[56]

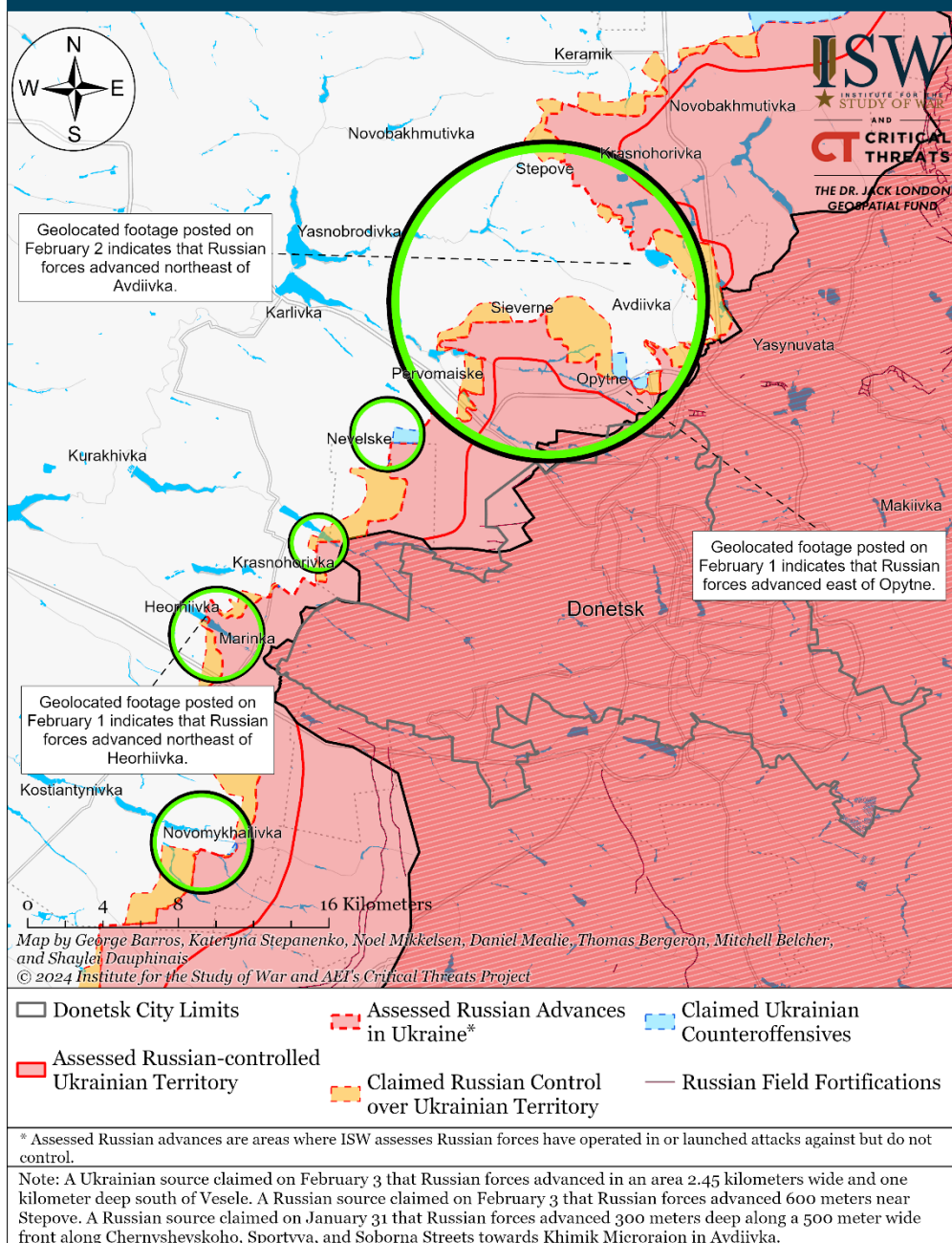
## Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of February 3, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian sources claimed on February 2 and February 3 that Russian forces advanced north, south, and southwest of Avdiivka but ISW has not observed visual evidence of these purported gains. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced 1.5 kilometers along the sand quarry on Avdiivka's northern outskirts and one kilometer near Opytne (southwest of Avdiivka).[57] Russian sources also claimed that Russian forces advanced east of the "Tsarska Okhota" restaurant (south of Avdiivka) and up to 600 meters near Stepove (northwest of Avdiivka).[58] Positional engagements continued near Stepove and in the gardening community north of Avdiivka; southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske and Nevelske; and on Avdiivka's southeastern outskirts.[59] Ukrainian journalist Yuriy Butusov observed that the Russian grouping of forces around Avdiivka consists of six Russian brigades, seven regiments, and three special purpose and Spetsnaz units.[60] Butusov specified that

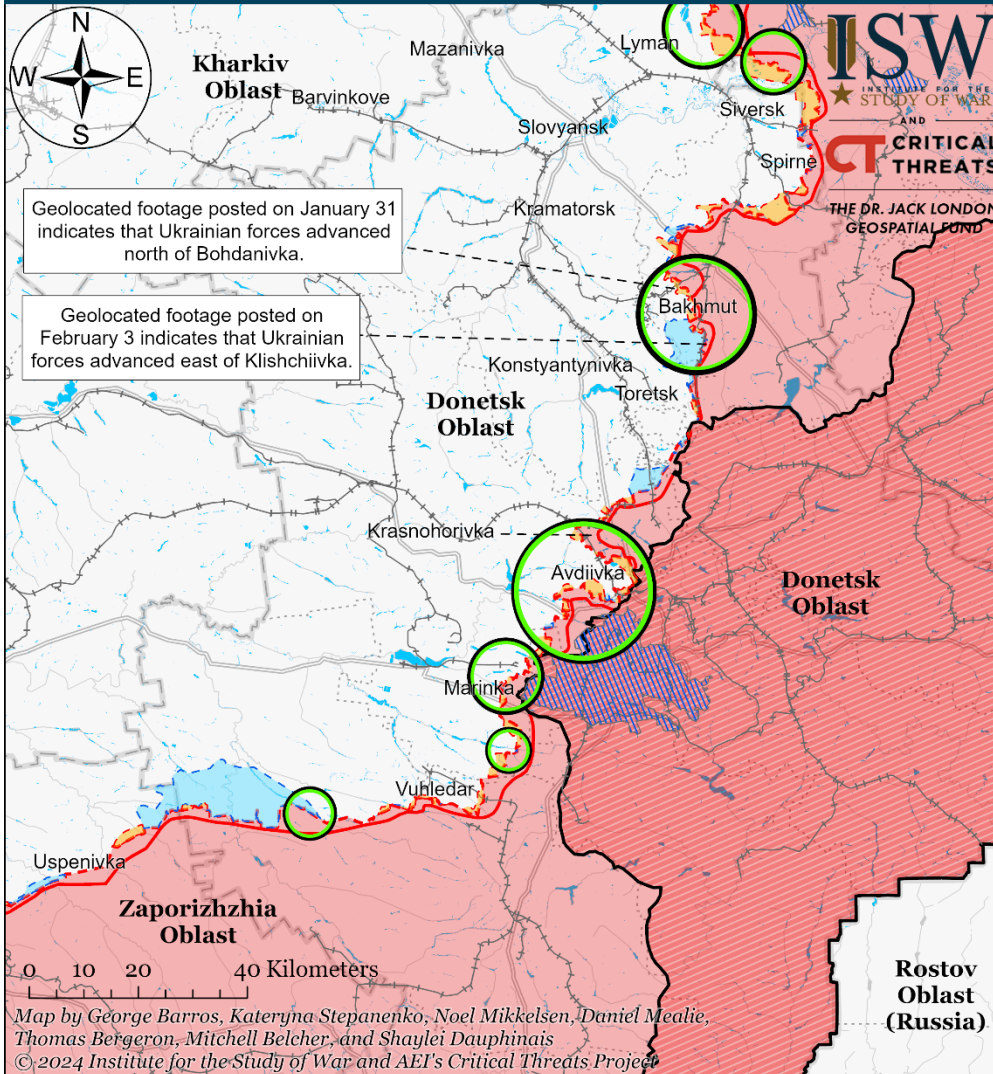
elements of the following Russian brigades are fighting near Avdiivka: 1st “Slavic” Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People’s Republic’s [DNR] AC); 15th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Combined Arms Army [CAA], Central Military District [CMD]); 21st Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd CAA, CMD), 74th Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st CAA, CMD); 114th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st DNR AC); and the 155th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet). Butusov identified that elements of two Spetsnaz brigades and the 80th “Sparta” Separate Reconnaissance Battalion (1st DNR AC) are also operating in the Avdiivka area.

## Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of February 3, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Positional engagements continued west and southwest of Donetsk City on February 3, but there were no confirmed changes on the frontline. Positional engagements continued west of Donetsk City near Krasnohorivka and Heorhiivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Novomykhailivka.[61] Russian sources claimed that elements of the Russian 33rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (20th Guards Motorized Rifle Division, Southern Military District [SMD]) captured a Ukrainian position near Novomykhailivka, although ISW has not observed visual evidence of this purported Russian gain.[62]

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



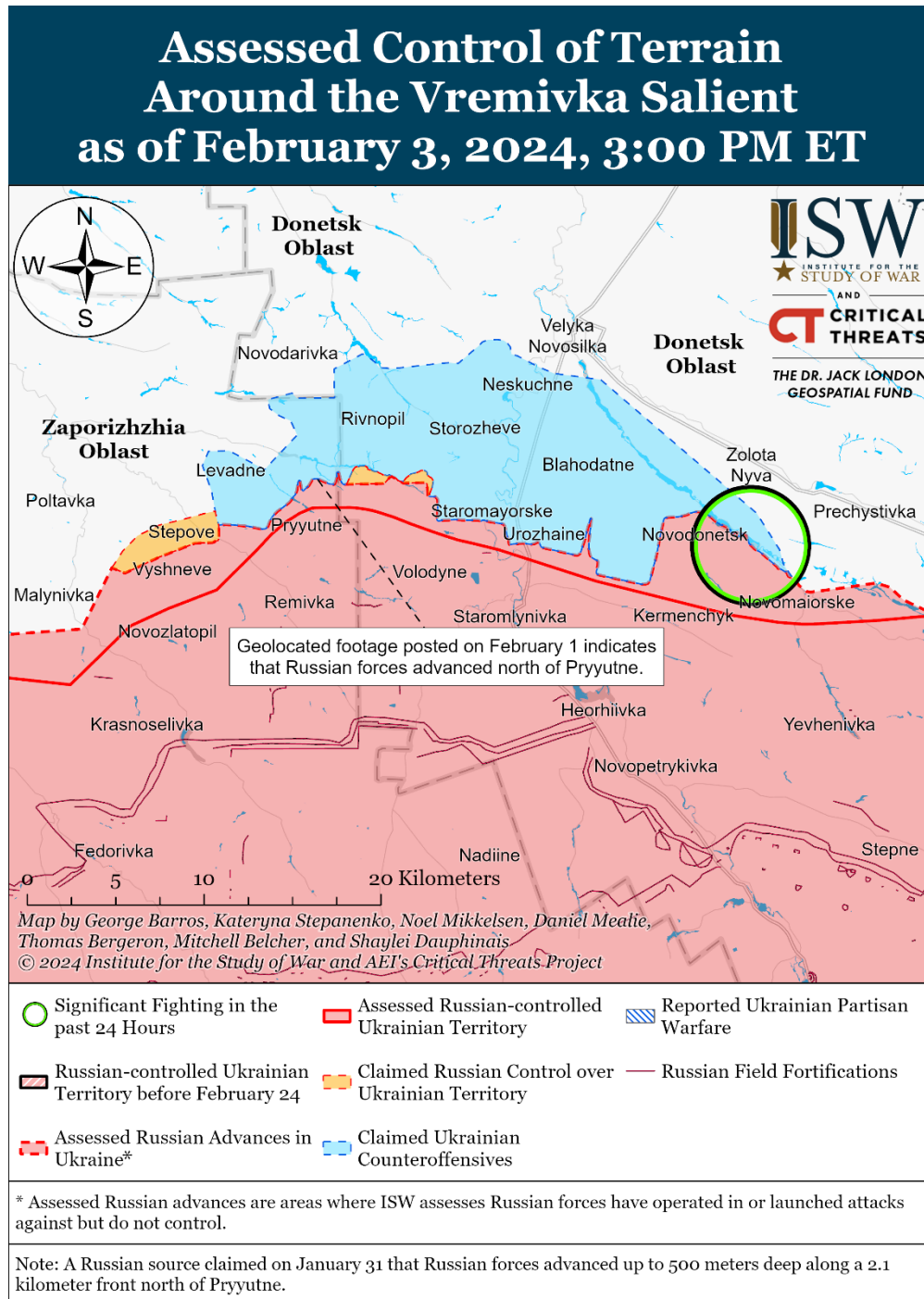
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- ▨ Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Claimed Ukrainian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

\* 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)



Limited positional engagements continued in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area on February 3. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks south of Zolota Nyva (southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[63] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces made a marginal advance from Pryyutne towards Novodarivka (both southwest of Velyka Novosilka), although ISW has not observed visual evidence of such a Russian advance.[64] Elements of the Russian 14th Spetsnaz Brigade (Spetsnaz of the Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces) are reportedly operating near Novodonetske (southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[65]



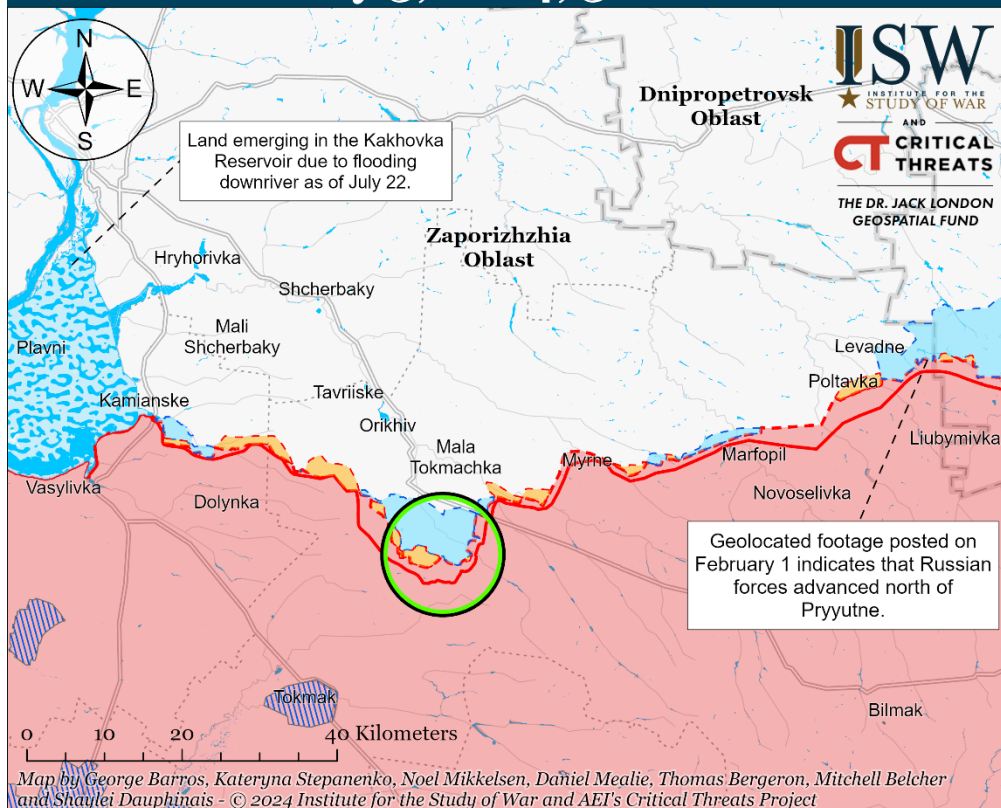
## Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of February 3, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Limited positional engagements continued in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on February 3. Ukrainian and Russian sources reported fighting near Robotyne, Verbove (east of Robotyne), and Luhivske (northeast of Robotyne).[66] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are intensively using first person view (FPV) drones along the Ocheretuvate-Polohy road that runs southeast of the Robotyne area and inhibits Russian movement along the route.[67] Several Russian milbloggers suggested that Russian forces in this area have insufficient electronic warfare (EW) capabilities to effectively counter Ukrainian drone use.[68] Elements of the Russian 136th Motorized Rifle Brigade (58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) and 71st Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th CAA, SMD) are reportedly operating in the Zaporizhzhia direction.[69]



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



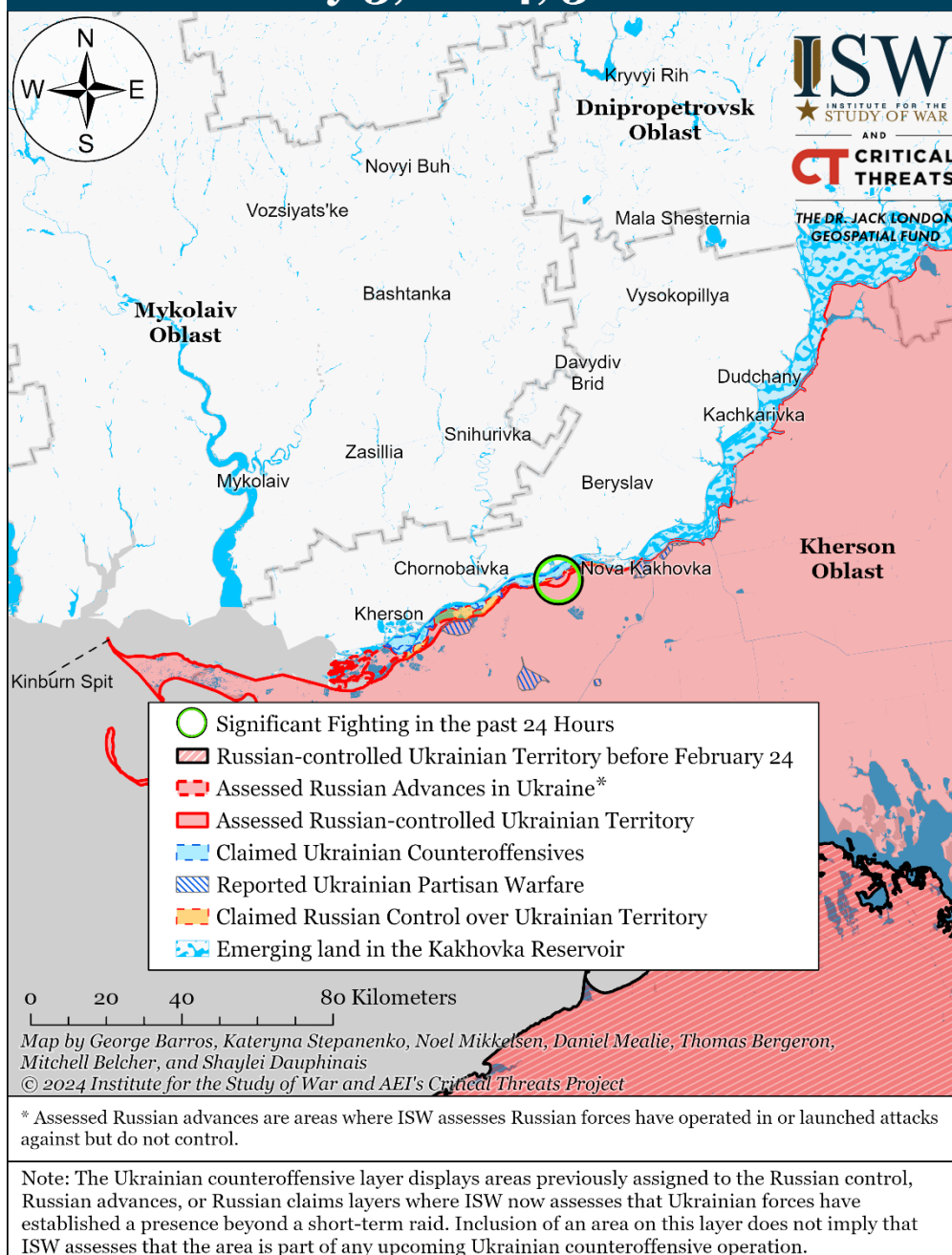
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- ▨ Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
- ▬ Assessed Russian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

\* 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 January 31 that Russian forces advanced up to 500 meters deep along a 2.1 kilometer front north of Pryutne.

Ukrainian forces maintained positions in the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast amid continued positional engagements in the area on February 3.[70] A prominent Russian milblogger amplified statements made by a subscriber who is reportedly deployed near Krynky and claimed that Russian forces are struggling to conduct assaults in Krynky because Ukrainian forces fully control the airspace with drones.[71] The subscriber claimed that constant tactical redeployment and shifting of Russian units near Krynky is making inter-unit communication very difficult and claimed that Russian troops largely do not understand commanders' intent or their missions in the area.

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of February 3, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

Russian forces conducted a Shahed-136/131 drone strike against Ukraine on the night of February 2-3, mainly targeting energy infrastructure in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast.[72] Ukrainian military sources reported that Russian forces launched 14 Shahed drones at Ukraine from Primorsko-Akhtarsk,

Krasnodar Krai, and Cape Chauda, occupied Crimea and that Ukrainian forces shot down nine Shaheds over Odesa, Mykolaiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Zhytomyr oblasts.[73] The Ukrainian Air Force noted that Russian forces also launched two Kh-59 missiles at Ukraine from Belgorod Oblast.[74]

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

Russian soldiers imprisoned for refusing to fight in Ukraine are reportedly dying in Russian detention. Russian opposition outlet *Astra* reported on February 3 that at least one of three soldiers transferred to a military prison camp in occupied Rozsypne, Luhansk Oblast (on the Russian-Ukrainian international border) died while in Russian detention.[75] *Astra* noted that one of the soldiers (who may have since died) claimed overnight on December 24-25, 2023 that his group transferred to the Russian 25th Brigade (likely referring to the 25th Motorized Rifle Brigade of the 6th Combined Arms Army fighting in the Kupyansk direction) and that there were prior reported deaths at the Rozsypne prison camp.[76] Russian opposition outlet *Mobilization News* reported that a Russian soldier detained in a basement prison for soldiers refusing to fight died of blunt force trauma in November 2023.[77]

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

Nothing significant to report.

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

Ukraine's international partners continue to provide Ukraine with weapons and military equipment through deals and assistance packages. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky announced in his February 2 evening address that an unspecified international partner delivered two unspecified air defense systems to Ukraine and described the systems as able to "bring everything down." [78] Estonian Defense Minister Hanno Pevkur stated on February 3 that an Estonian military assistance package including Javelins, machine guns, small arms ammunition, land and water vehicles, and driving equipment has also arrived in Ukraine.[79] Bulgarian Defense Minister Todor Tagarev announced that Bulgaria began transferring some of the 100 total armored personnel carriers (APCs) to Ukraine in accordance with a July 2023 agreement.[80]

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

Russian authorities continue efforts to militarize Ukrainian youth through the school system. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) posted footage on February 3 of Russian military engineers teaching classes for high school students and members of the Yunarmia youth organization at a school in occupied Mariupol, Donetsk Oblast.[81] Russian military engineers with previous combat experience reportedly taught students about mines and other explosive devices and what students should do if they encounter such devices.[82] Ukrainian Luhansk Oblast Head Artem Lysohor also reported on February 3 that Russian occupation authorities have begun offering several military cadet

training classes in schools in occupied Dovzhansk, Luhansk Oblast, and are teaching Ukrainian youth military skills instead of providing them with the education needed to enter higher education institutions.[83] Ukrainian Regional Center for Human Rights (RCHR) lawyer Kateryna Rashevskaya noted that Russian officials are also militarizing and teaching deported Ukrainian youth to hate their homeland in higher education institutions in Russia.[84]

Russian-controlled youth engagement organizations continue to spread Russian influence in occupied Ukraine. Kherson and Zaporizhzhia Oblast occupation heads Vladimir Saldo and Yevgeny Balitsky announced on February 3 that the all-Russian “Movement of the First” youth organization is holding a grant competition to support “socially significant” projects in occupied Kherson and Zaporizhzhia oblasts.[85] The “Movement of the First” is based on “traditional Russian spiritual and moral goals” and seeks to indoctrinate Ukraine youth with pro-Russian sentiment and encourage participation in Russian civil society in occupied areas, as ISW has previously reported.[86]

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

Russian officials continue to hint at Russia’s interference in Western elections despite Russian President Vladimir Putin’s previous denials. Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev claimed on February 3 that the West funds Russian opposition politicians in Russia and that Russia should support isolationist and anti-US political parties and politicians during elections in the West.[87] Deceased Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin sarcastically admitted to his involvement in Russian election interference in November 2022, claiming, “We interfered, we interfere, and we will interfere.”[88] Putin has previously denied Western investigations that suggest that Russia meddled in the American 2016 presidential election.[89]

Russia appears to be struggling to mend its relationship with South Korea while attempting to rhetorically cater to North Korea. The South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned Russian Ambassador to South Korea Georgy Zinoviev on February 3 following claims by Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Maria Zakharova that “the United States and its allies” are the main reason for growing tension on the Korean peninsula.[90] Zinoviev, in turn, criticized South Korean media’s reporting about Russia’s ongoing invasion of Ukraine.[91] Zinoviev stated on January 18 that Russia would “welcome” South Korea into Russia’s circle of “friendly countries.”[92] Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov recently met with North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son-hui amid Ukrainian and Western reporting on Russia’s increased reliance on North Korea for ammunition.[93]

### **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 milblogger who shares insider information about former Wagner Group personnel published footage on February 3 of Wagner instructors training Belarusian personnel.[94]

**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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