

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 28, 2023

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October 28, 2023, 7:50pm ET

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

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

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

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 1:30pm ET on October 28. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 29 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key Takeaways:

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

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



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

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

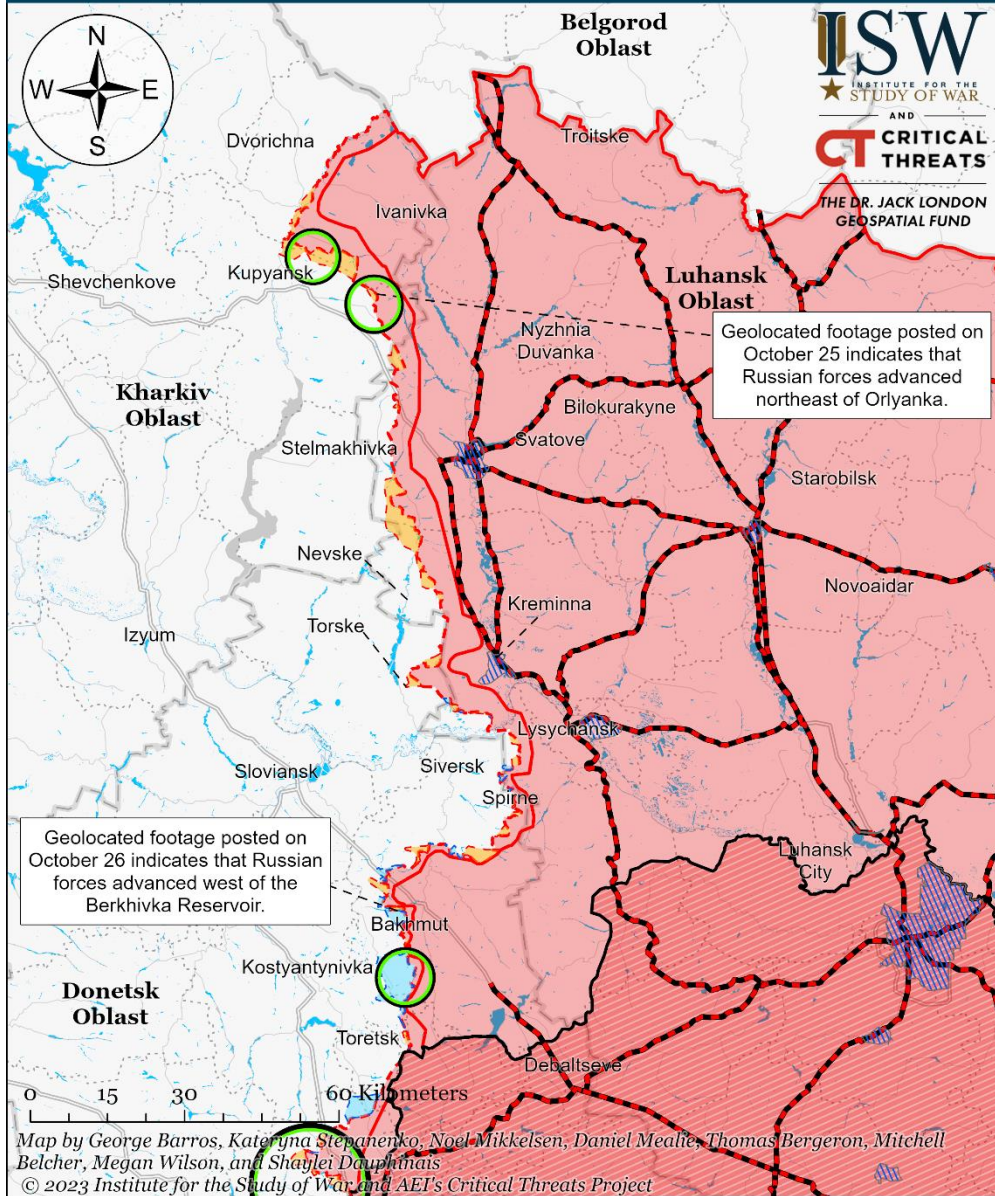
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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

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

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

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



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

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

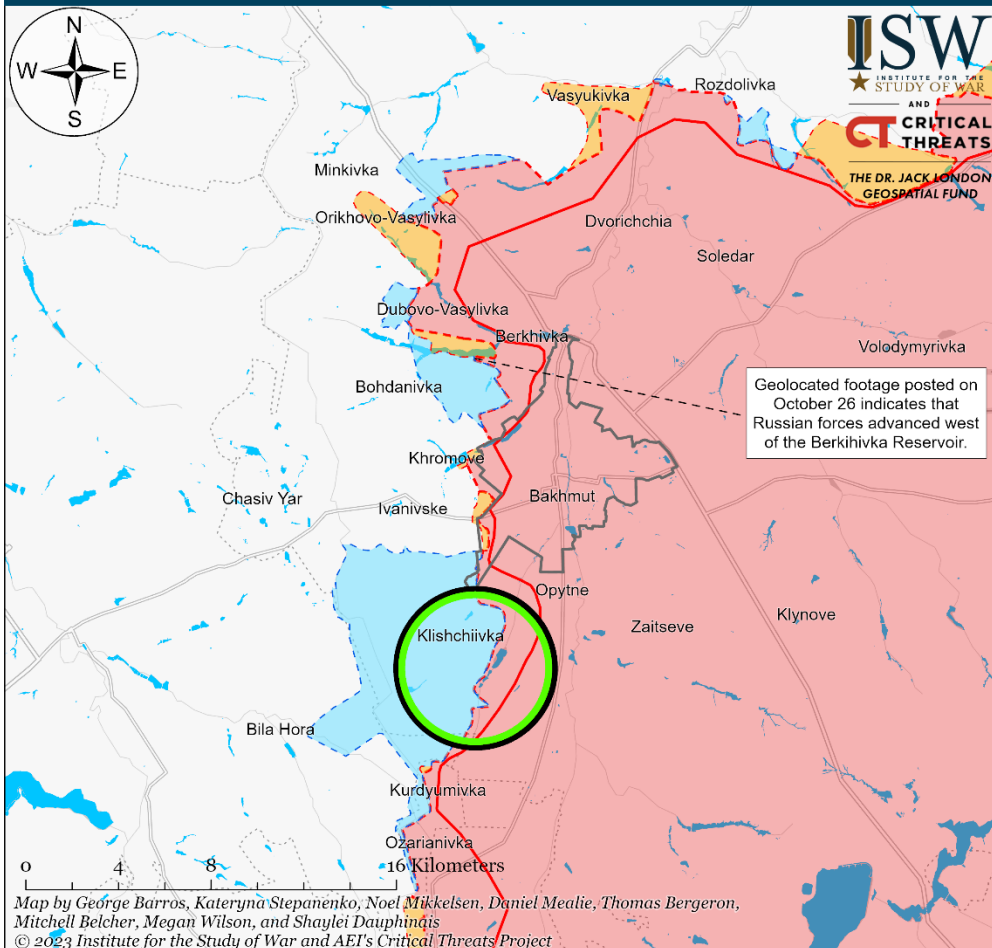
Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

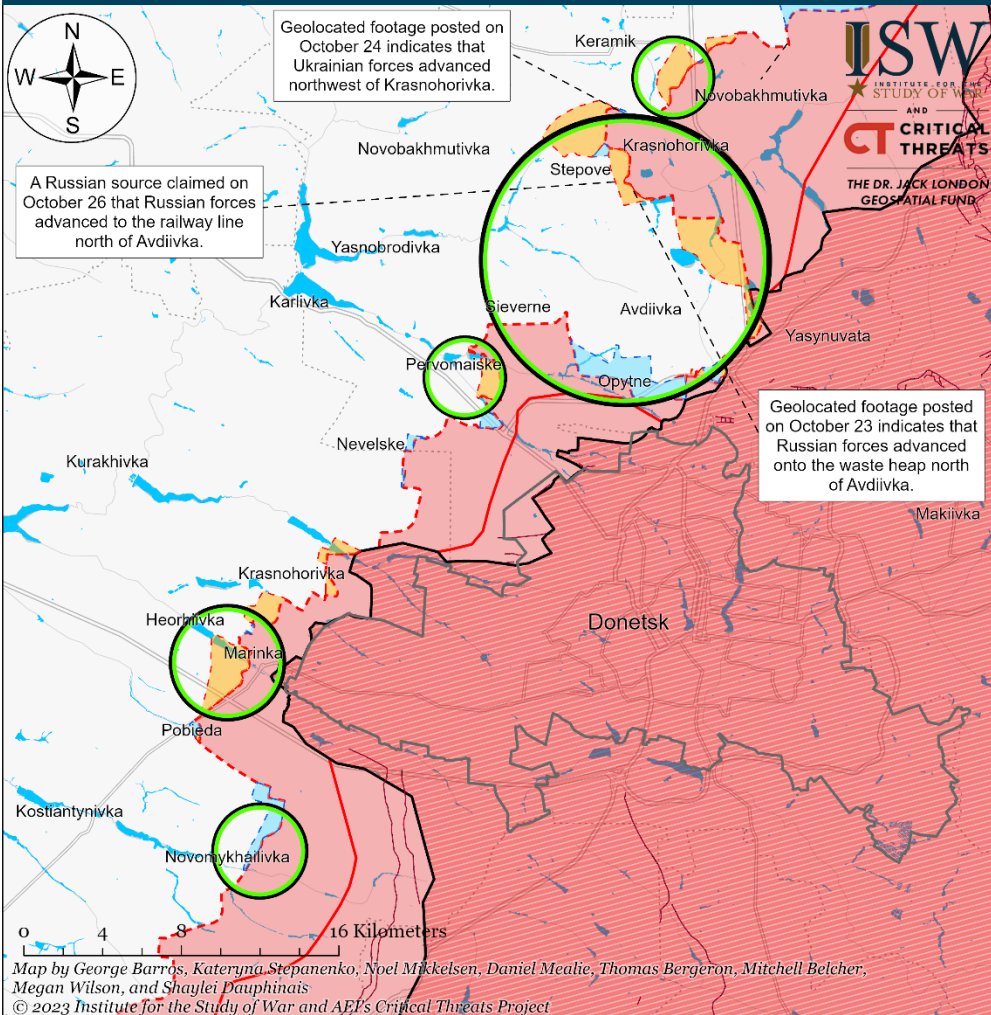
within 600 meters of the northern industrial area of Avdiivka in hopes of using the industrial area to enter the city itself.[40] A Russian source published footage on October 28 of Russian forces conducting airstrikes against Ukrainian positions at the Avdiivka Coke Plant.[41] The Ukrainian General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

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

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

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

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



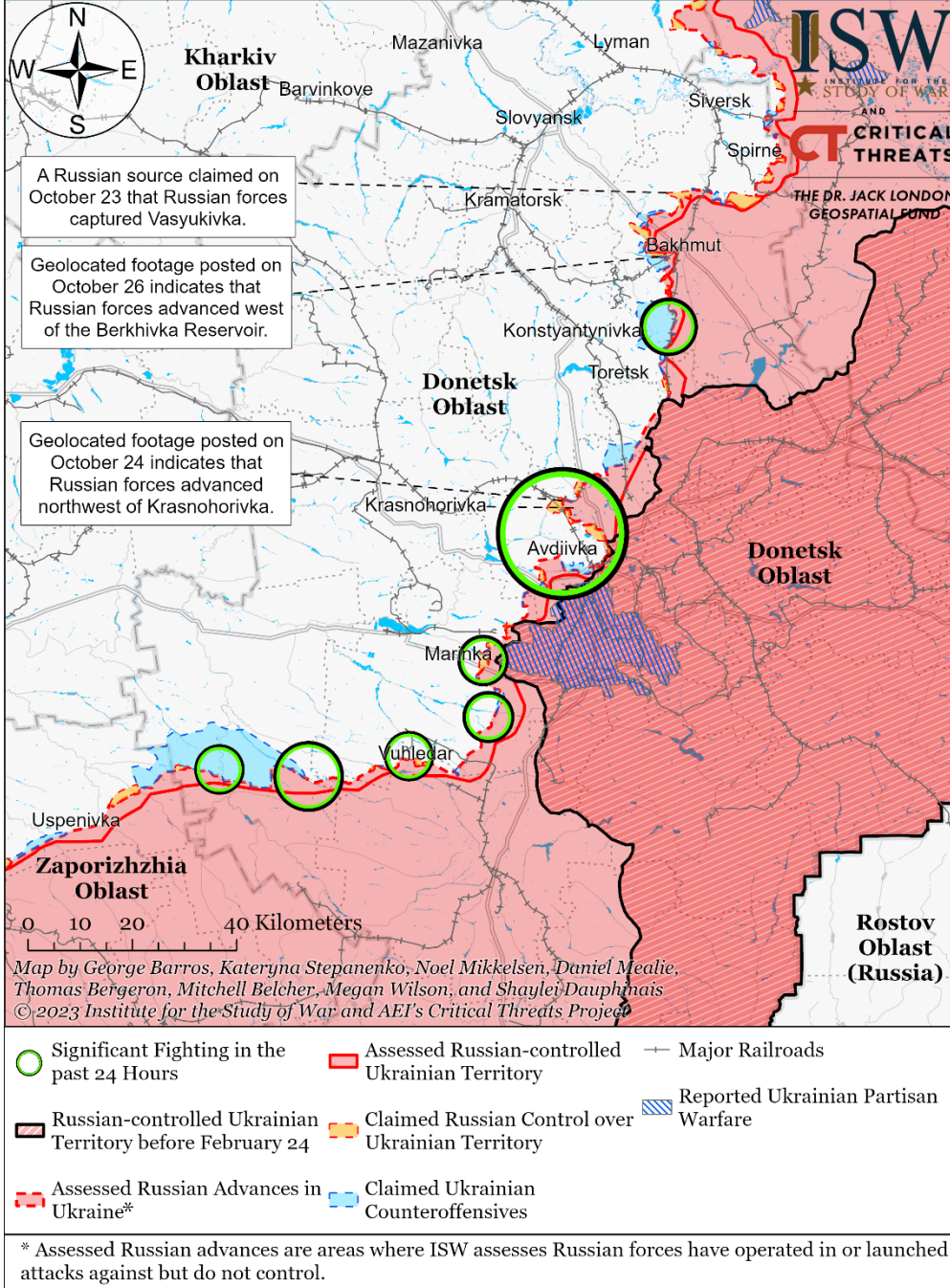
Donetsk City Limits	Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*	Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory	Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory	Russian Field Fortifications

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

Note: A Russian source claimed on October 27 that Russian forces advanced 1.5 kilometers northward toward southern Avdiivka. A Russian source claimed on October 26 that Russian forces advanced within 600 meters of the northern industrial area of Avdiivka.

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

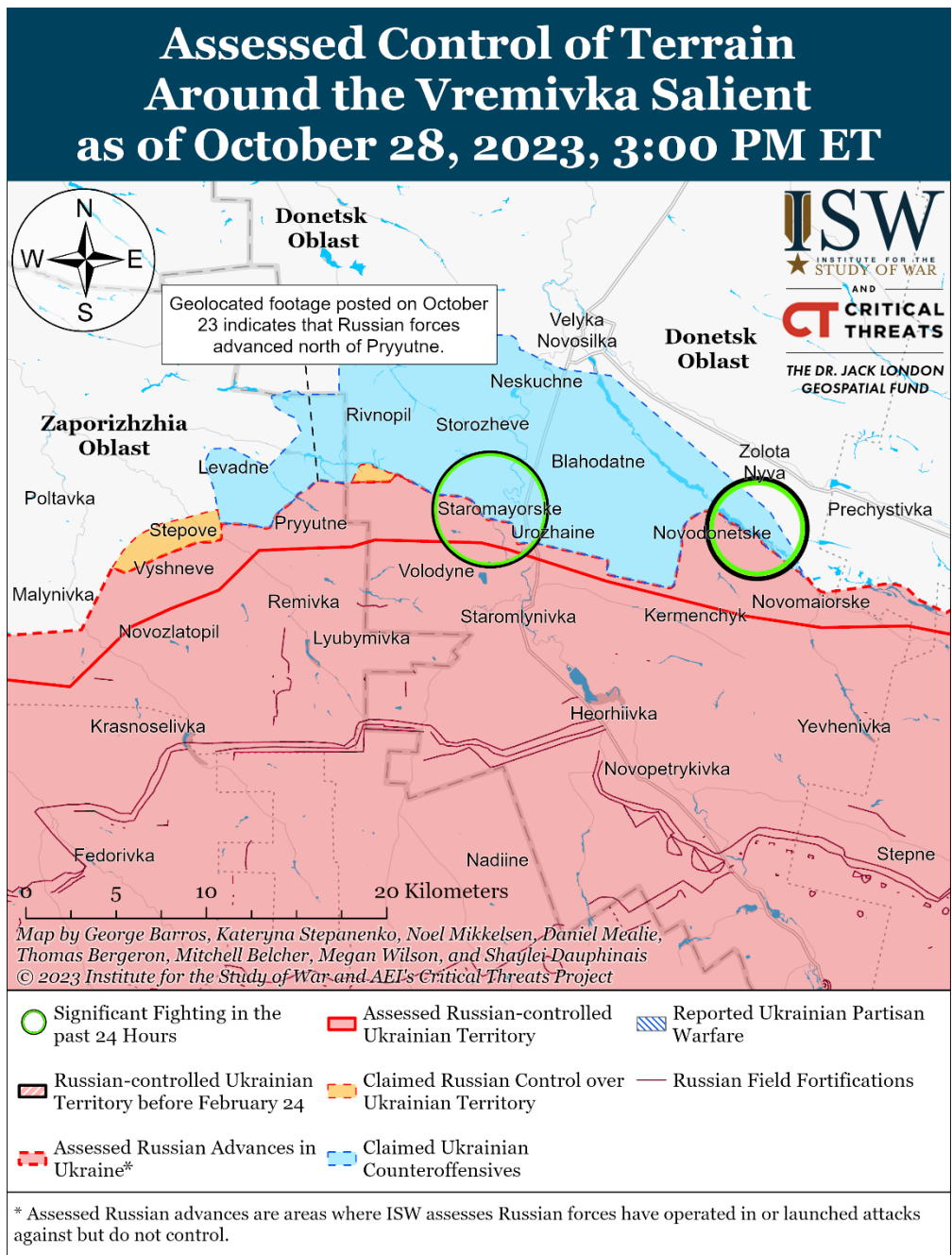
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of October 28, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

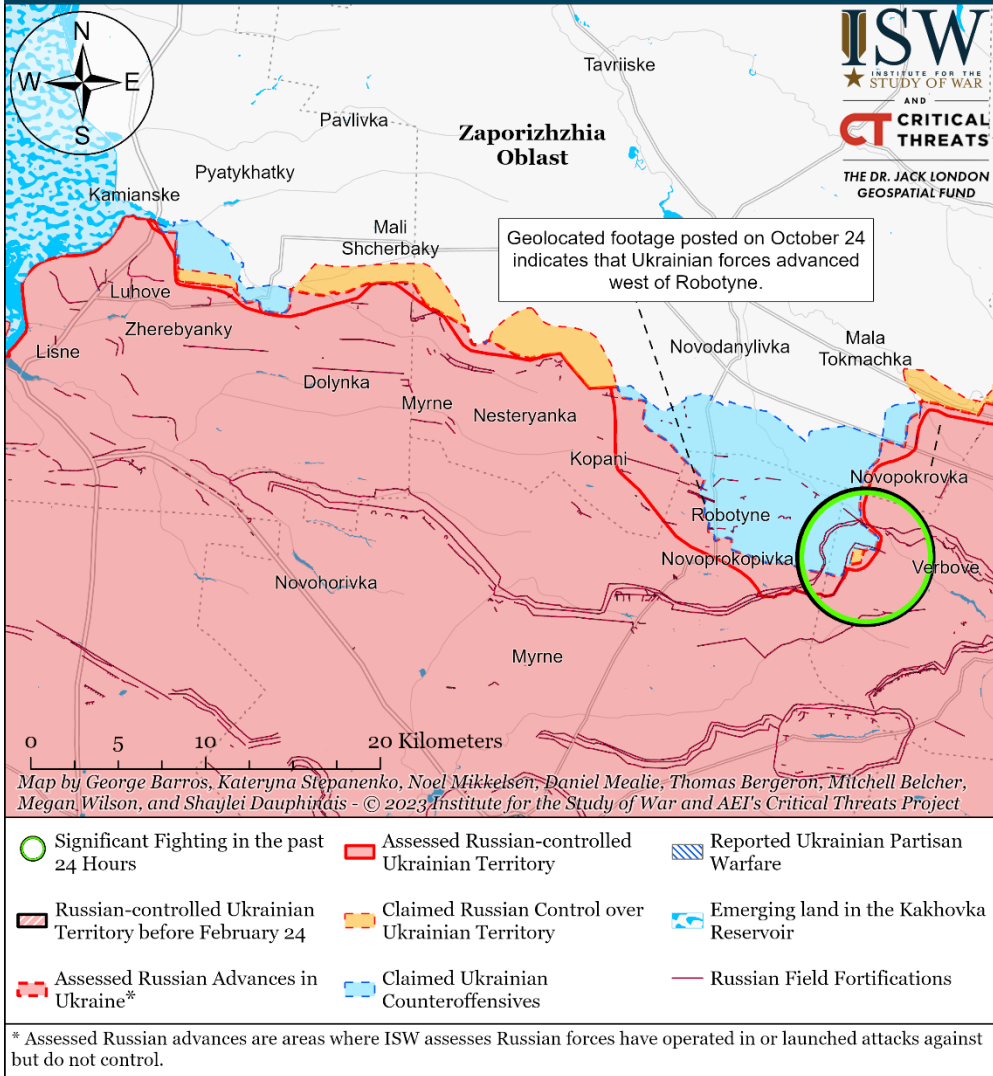
Ukrainian forces did not conduct any claimed or confirmed attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 28.

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



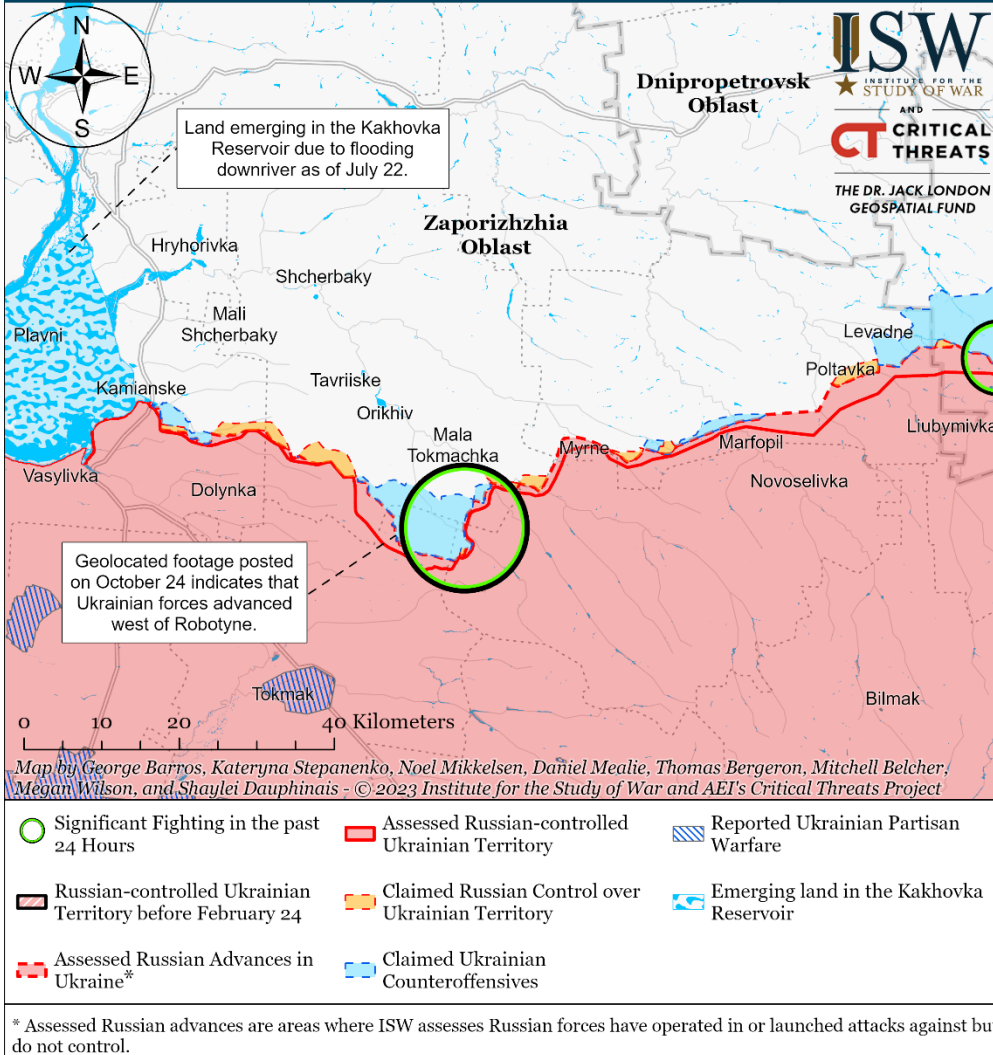
Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast but did not make any confirmed advances on October 28. A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked Nesteryanka (12km northwest of Robotyne), Kopani (6km northwest of Robotyne),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

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



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

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



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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

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

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

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

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



[1] <https://t.me/zovgrad/13922> ; <https://dnr-news dot ru/society/2023/10/25/516368.html>

[2] <https://t.me/zovgrad/13922>

[3] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-25-2023>

[4] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar092723>

[5] <https://t.me/zovgrad/13922>

[6] <https://t.me/zvizdecmanhustu/1355> ; <https://t.me/zvizdecmanhustu/1356> ; <https://www.bild dot de/politik/ausland/politik-ausland/lage-verschlechtert-sich-erheblich-verliert-die-ukraine-diese-stadt-ist-die-gege-85875434.bild.html>; <https://t.me/ButusovPlus/5818>

[7] <https://ria dot ru/20231028/akhmat-1905834455.html>

[8] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar060323> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar061023>

- [9] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar100123> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-september-27-2023> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar092723>
- [10] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid034r2nRMUmeY5yZjDX6UjLfHD1rwe6y4midXKvMRpjK2UwCQsqwm5b5LZmyrHhmS3l>
- [11] <https://t.me/wargonzo/16076> ; <https://t.me/RVvoenk0r/55706> ; https://t.me/mod_russia/31900 ; https://t.me/mod_russia/31906
- [12] <https://t.me/rybar/53678>
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