

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, December 10, 2023

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December 10, 2023, 6pm ET

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

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

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

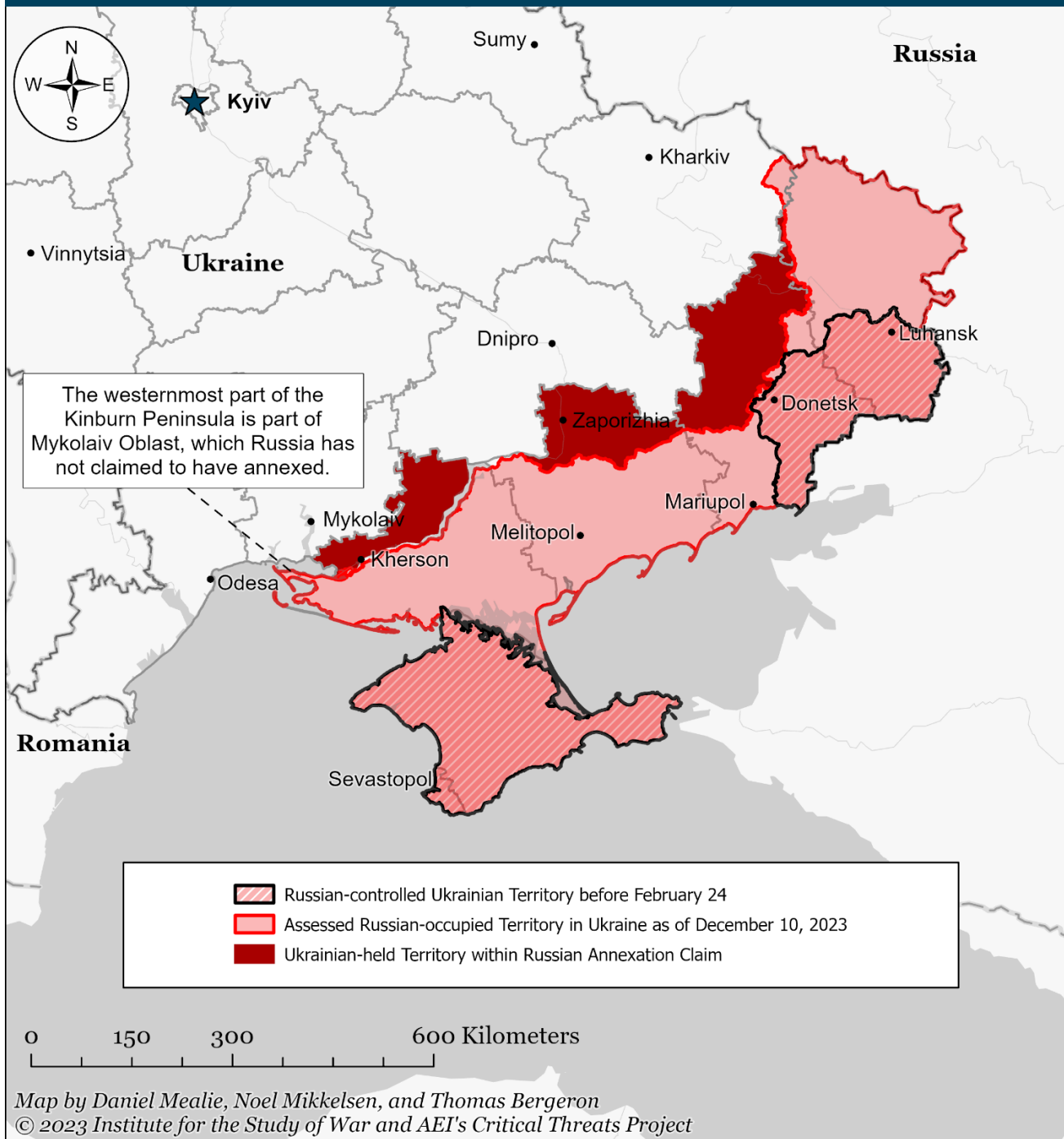
Note: The data cut-off for this product was 12:45 pm ET on December 10. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the December 11 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova emphasized that Russia's maximalist objectives in Ukraine have not changed, repeating the Kremlin's demand for full Ukrainian political capitulation and Kyiv's acceptance of Russia's military and territorial demands rather than suggesting any willingness to negotiate seriously. In a written interview with *AFP* on December 9, Zakharova claimed that a "comprehensive, sustainable, and fair resolution" in Ukraine can only happen if the West stops "pumping up the Armed Forces of Ukraine with weapons" and that Ukraine surrenders Russia's claimed Ukrainian territory and "withdraws its troops," presumably from Ukrainian territory Russia claims to have annexed.[1] Zakharova emphasized the Kremlin's longstanding claim that Russia invaded Ukraine for "de-militarization," "denazification," and to "ensure the rights of Russian-speaking citizens" in Ukraine.[2] The Kremlin has consistently used the term "denazification" as code for the removal of the elected government of Ukraine and its replacement by some government the Kremlin regards as acceptable—i.e., regime change.[3] "De-militarization" would obviously leave Ukraine permanently at Russia's mercy. Zakharova's comments clearly highlight the fact that the initial goals of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, as set out by Russian President Vladimir Putin on February 24, 2022, have not changed, and that Putin does not intend to end the war unless his maximalist objectives have been accomplished.[4] ISW continues to assess that Russia does not intend to engage in serious negotiations with Ukraine in good faith and that negotiations on Russia's terms are tantamount to full Ukrainian and Western surrender.[5]

Zakharova's demand that Ukraine withdraw its troops from "Russian territory" as a necessary prerequisite for the resolution of the war suggests that Russia's maximalist objectives include controlling the entirety of the four oblasts it has illegally annexed parts of. Russian forces currently militarily control portions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts, but Russia formally (and illegally) annexed the entirety of these oblasts in September of 2022.[6] Zakharova's suggestion that Ukrainian forces must entirely withdraw from territory that Russia has claimed through its sham annexation suggests that the Russian demands include the surrender of additional Ukrainian territory that Russian forces do not currently control up to the administrative borders of the four occupied oblasts. Calls for Ukraine's capitulation under the current circumstances of Russian control of Ukrainian territory up to the current frontline are already unacceptable from the standpoint of vital Ukrainian and Western national security interests, as ISW has previously assessed.[7] The Russian demand for an even more expansive surrender of Ukrainian-held territory that Russian forces could likely conquer only at the cost of tremendous additional blood, treasure, and time, if they can do it at all, indicates that Russia's aims far transcend keeping the territory Russian forces have already seized. It is noteworthy, in this regard, that Russian forces continue to conduct offensive operations in eastern Kharkiv Oblast, which Russia has not claimed to have annexed, suggesting that Russia's territorial aims may be even more expansive than those Zakharova laid out.

Russian Territorial Demands Exceed the Current Front Line

Based on Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Statement on December 10, 2023
(Russian demands for regime change and disarmament of Ukraine not depicted)



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

The Kremlin continues to express an increasingly anti-Israel position in the Israel– Hamas war despite feigning interest in being a neutral arbitrator in the conflict. NOTE: A version of this text appears in ISW-CTP's December 10 Iran Update. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held a telephone conversation on December 10, which reportedly lasted for 50 minutes and heavily focused on the Israel– Hamas war.[8] Putin reportedly noted that there is a “disastrous humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip” and stressed that avoiding consequences for the civilian population while countering terrorist threats is just as important as rejecting and condemning terrorism.[9] Putin’s comments are noteworthy in light of the devastation the Russian invasion of Ukraine has brought to the civilian population there and Russia’s deliberate efforts to inflict suffering on Ukrainian civilians by attacking energy infrastructure going into winter. Putin reportedly reiterated the Kremlin’s initial rhetorical position on the Israel– Hamas war by claiming that Russia is ready to alleviate civilian suffering and de-escalate the conflict.[10] Putin has increasingly shifted away from this more neutral rhetoric to a much more anti-Israel position in recent weeks, notably claiming that the war is leading to the “extermination of the civilian population in Palestine.”[11] Netanyahu reportedly expressed dissatisfaction with Russian positions towards Israel that Russian officials have articulated at the United Nations (UN) and other multilateral organizations.[12] Netanyahu also reportedly criticized Russia for its “dangerous cooperation” with Iran, notably following Putin’s meeting with Iranian President Ibrahim Raisi in Moscow on December 7.[13] Putin likely aimed to assuage Israeli concerns about Russian support for Hamas and the deepening Russian–Iranian security partnership, but Israeli and Russian rhetoric surrounding the conversation suggests that Putin likely failed to do so.[14] The Kremlin’s increasingly non-neutral framing of the Israel– Hamas war signals potential increasing support for Iranian interests in the region and increased willingness to antagonize Israel.[15]

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky traveled to Latin America on December 10 likely in order to secure Latin American support for Ukraine. Zelensky met with Paraguayan President Santiago Peña Palacios, Uruguayan President Luis Lacalle Pou, and Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa to discuss Latin America’s involvement in the Ukrainian Peace Formula and a future Ukraine–Latin America summit.[16] Zelensky thanked all the presidents for their vocal support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russia’s full-scale invasion.[17] Zelensky noted Uruguay’s prior participation in the Ukrainian Peace Formula and expressed hope that Uruguay and other Latin American countries will participate in the Peace Formula’s fourth meeting of national security and foreign policy advisors in January 2024.[18] Zelensky stated that it is important for Ukraine to have the support of Latin America during its fight for freedom and democracy.[19]

Russian military authorities in Armenia are likely attempting to maintain military power over Armenia amidst the continued deterioration of Armenian-Russian relations. The international human rights organization Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly’s Armenian branch in Vanadzor reported on December 8 that Russian military police at the 102nd Military Base in Gyumri, Armenia, detained Russian citizen Dmitri Setrakov on December 6 or 7 for desertion.[20] The Russian 519th Military Investigation Department, located in Armenia, subsequently opened a criminal case against Setrakov for unauthorized abandonment of his unit.[21] Setrakov reportedly served as a contract soldier in the Russian military before Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine but refused to participate in Russian operations in Ukraine and moved to Armenia.[22] Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly-Vanadzor Head Artur Sakunts told *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty’s* Armenian Service *Radio Azatuntyun* that Armenian law enforcement was not involved in Setrakov’s arrest and stated Russian law enforcement does not have the right to arrest people, including Russian citizens, on Armenian territory.[23] Sakunts called the arrest an “attack on the Armenian legal system and against Armenia as a sovereign state.”[24] Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly-Vanadzor called on the Armenian government, Prosecutor General’s Office, and other law enforcement agencies to protect Setrakov under Armenian law and initiate criminal proceedings against Russian military police in Armenia to prevent Setrakov’s extradition.[25] Armenian government officials have not responded to Setrakov’s arrest or Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly-Vanadzor’s statement at the time of this publication. Russian authorities’ arrest of Setrakov may generate criticism of Russia’s military presence in Armenia at the 102nd Military Base despite recent statements from Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Mnatsakan Safaryan that Armenia is not considering leaving the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) or discussing the withdrawal of Russia’s 102nd Military Base.[26] Armenia has effectively abstained from participation in the CSTO by not attending four recent high-level CSTO events and exercises.[27]

Russian forces conducted a small series of missile and drone strikes against Ukraine on December 9 and 10. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian air defenses downed a Kh-29 missile and Shahed-136 drone on December 9 and that Russian forces struck Velykyi Burluk, Kharkiv Oblast with two S-300 missiles on December 10.[28] The United Kingdom’s Ministry of Defense (UK MOD) assessed on December 10 that Russian forces likely conducted the first missile strike series of the anticipated winter strikes campaign against Ukrainian energy infrastructure on the night of December 7.[29] ISW has observed preparations for Russia’s anticipated winter strikes campaign since October 2023 and has also noted relatively larger drone and missile strikes on Ukrainian infrastructure so far in December before the night of December 7.[30] ISW is not currently prepared to forecast a start date of the anticipated winter strike campaign.

Key Takeaways:

- **Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova emphasized that Russia's maximalist objectives in Ukraine have not changed, repeating the Kremlin's demand for full Ukrainian political capitulation and Kyiv's acceptance of Russia's military and territorial demands rather than suggesting any willingness to negotiate seriously.**
- **Zakharova's demand that Ukraine withdraw its troops from "Russian territory" as a necessary prerequisite for the resolution of the war suggests that Russia's maximalist objectives include controlling the entirety of the four oblasts it has illegally annexed parts of.**
- **The Kremlin continues to express an increasingly anti-Israel position in the Israel– Hamas war despite feigning interest in being a neutral arbitrator in the conflict.**
- **Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky traveled to Latin America on December 10 likely in order to secure Latin American support for Ukraine.**
- **Russian military authorities in Armenia are likely attempting to maintain military power over Armenia amidst the continued deterioration of Armenian-Russian relations.**
- **Russian forces conducted a small series of missile and drone strikes against Ukraine on December 9 and 10.**
- **Russian forces continued offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, near Avdiivka, west of Donetsk City, in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and advanced in some areas.**
- **Russian milbloggers continue to criticize the purported Russian military ban on the use of civilian vehicles for military purposes.**
- **Russian authorities continue long-term efforts to indoctrinate Ukrainian students in occupied Ukraine by directing funding to educational institutions in occupied Ukraine.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of December 10, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

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

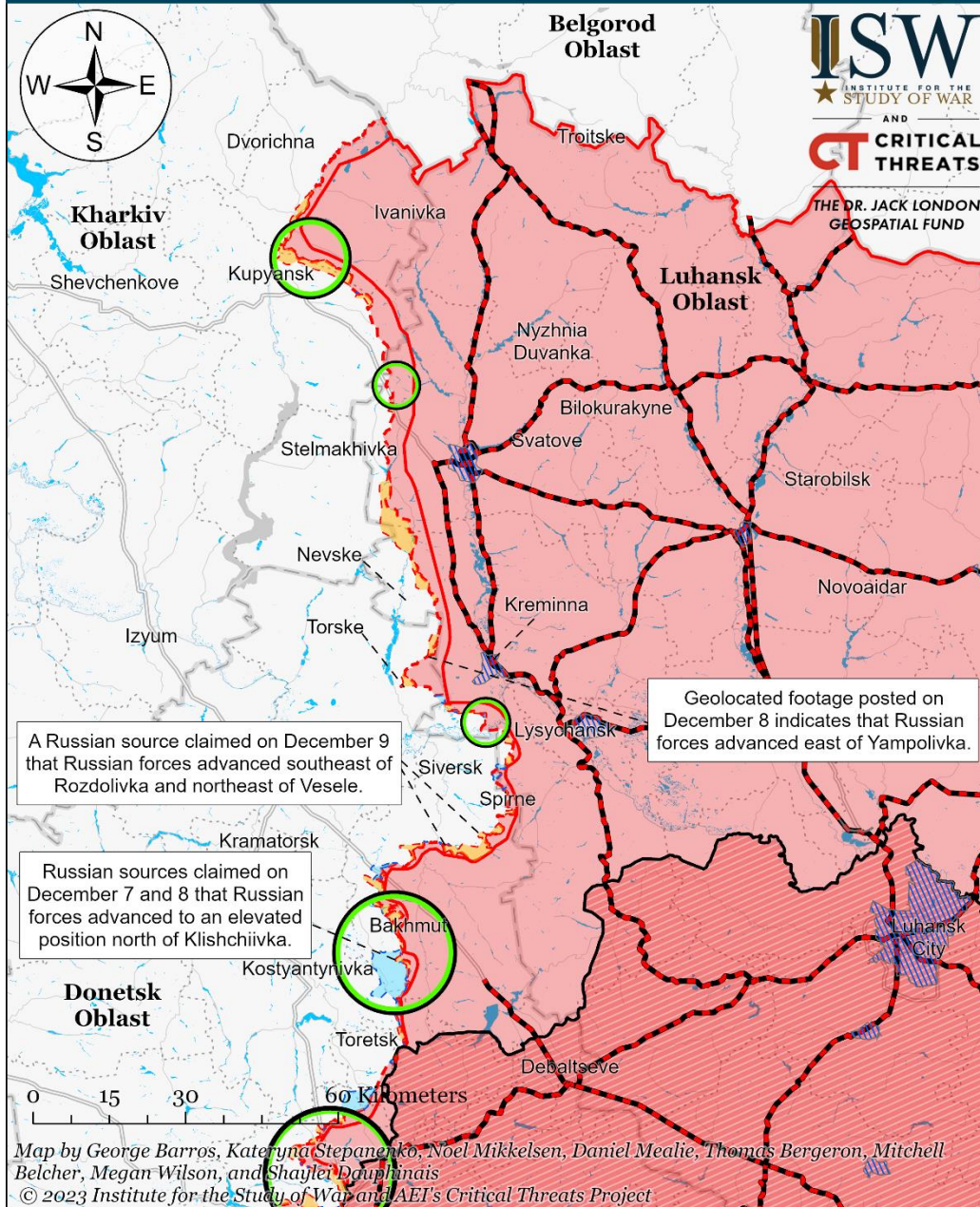
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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

Russian forces continued localized offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on December 10 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled at least seven Russian assaults in the Kupyansk direction near Synkivka (9km northeast of Kupyansk), Petropavlivka (7km east of Kupyansk) and Novoselivske (16km northwest of Svatove) and at least five Russian assaults in the Lyman direction near Makiivka (23km northwest of Kreminna), Terny (17km west of Kreminna), and the Serebryanske forest area (10km south of Kreminna).[31] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces recently advanced 1.5 kilometers near Kreminna, although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim.[32] Ukrainian Ground Forces Command Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Volodymyr Fityo stated that poor weather, including freezing rain and sub-zero temperatures, led to a decrease in Russian assaults in the Kupyansk and Lyman directions on December 9.[33] Another Russian milblogger claimed that in the past week Ukrainian forces stabilized the front line near Ivanivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk) and that Russian forces failed to break through Ukrainian defenses near Synkivka due to dense Ukrainian minefields.[34]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted ground attacks along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on December 10 and recently made gains. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces were somewhat successful in the Serebryanske forest area in the past week.[35] Russian sources, including the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian assaults near Synkivka, Torske (15km west of Kreminna), and the Serebryanske forest area on December 9 and 10.[36]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of December 10, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



A Russian source claimed on December 9 that Russian forces advanced southeast of Rozdolivka and northeast of Vesele.

Geolocated footage posted on December 8 indicates that Russian forces advanced east of Yampolivka.

Russian sources claimed on December 7 and 8 that Russian forces advanced to an elevated position north of Klishchiivka.

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

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

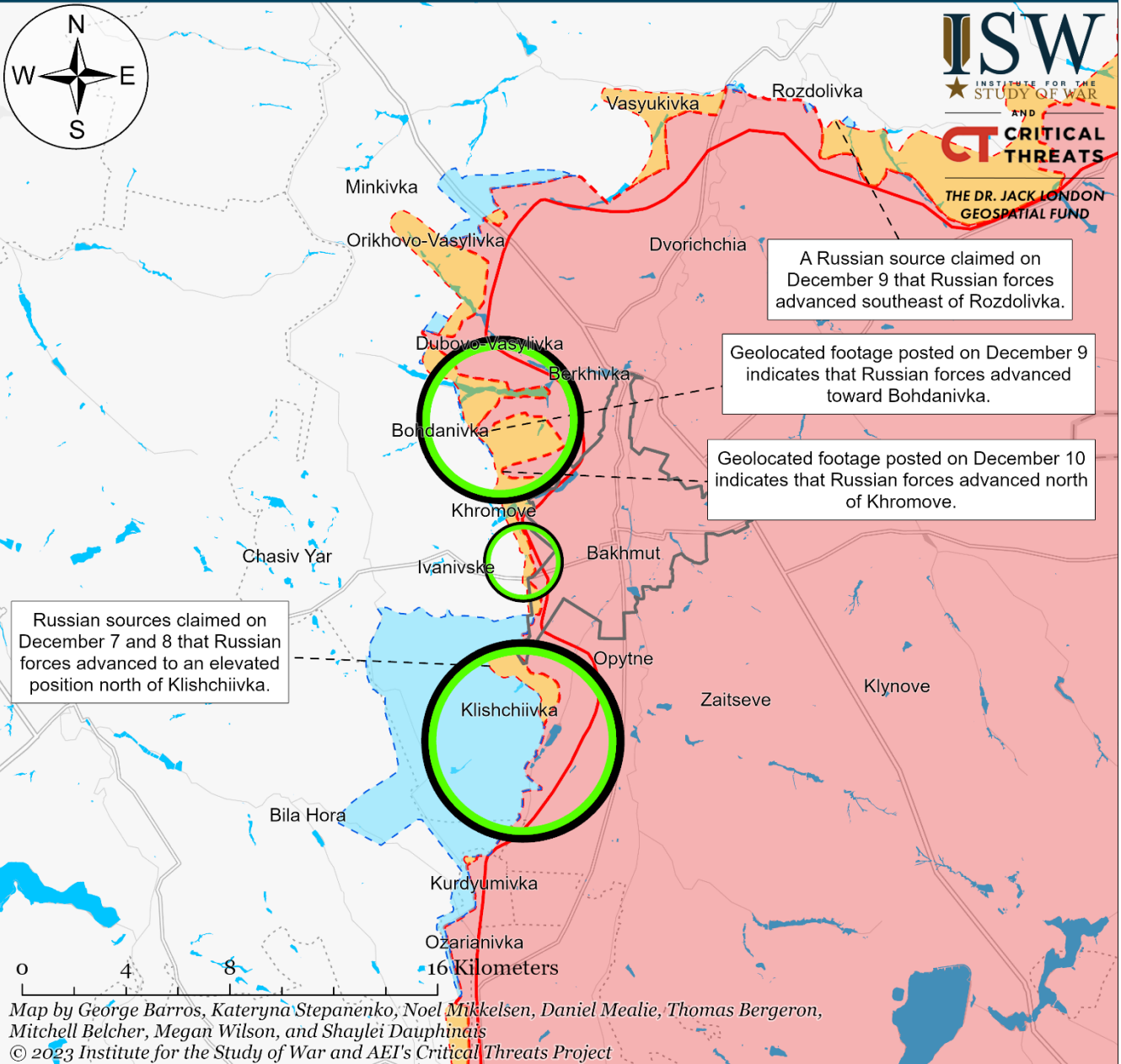
Note: A Russian source claimed on December 10 that Russian forces advanced one and a half kilometers near Kreminna. A Russian source claimed on December 9 that Russian forces advanced up to two kilometers near Terny and Yampolivka. A Russian source claimed on December 9 that Russian forces advanced three and a half kilometers near Vesele since the beginning of the Russian offensive. A Russian source claimed on December 7 that Russian forces advanced more than a half kilometer in the dacha area southwest of Bakhmut.

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 conducted ground attacks northeast of Bakhmut on December 10 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Vesele (18km northeast of Bakhmut).[37] A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the Russian 106th Guards Airborne (VDV) Division captured 10 unspecified positions and advanced up to 3.5 kilometers in depth near Vesele.[38] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed on December 9 that Russian forces advanced near Vesele and are attempting to encircle the settlement.[39]

Russian forces continued offensive actions west and south of Bakhmut on December 10 and recently made confirmed advances. Geolocated footage published on December 10 indicates that Russian forces advanced north of Khromove (immediately west of Bakhmut).[40] Additional geolocated footage published on December 9 indicates that Russian forces advanced north and southeast of Bohdanivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut).[41] A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the Russian 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade (14th Army Corps, Northern Fleet) advanced near Bohdanivka and amplified alleged reports from unspecified Ukrainian military observers that Russian forces advanced up to 580 meters northeast of Bohdanivka.[42] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced in the direction of Ivanivske (6km west of Bakhmut).[43] Russian milbloggers claimed on December 10 that Russian forces advanced onto the dominant heights northwest of Klishchiivka (9km south of Klishchiivka) and are attacking in the direction of Chasiv Yar (12km west of Bakhmut), attempting to cut off Ukrainian ground lines of communication (GLOCs) into Bakhmut.[44] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets claimed that Russian forces introduced additional manpower, including elements of the 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade and unspecified VDV units, into combat in the direction of Chasiv Yar.[45] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled at least 14 Russian attacks near Hryhorivka (9km northwest of Bakhmut), Bohdanivka, Ivanivske, Klishchiivka, and Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).[46] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Klishchiivka and Pivnichne (20km southwest of Bakhmut and just west of Horlivka).[47]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of December 10, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



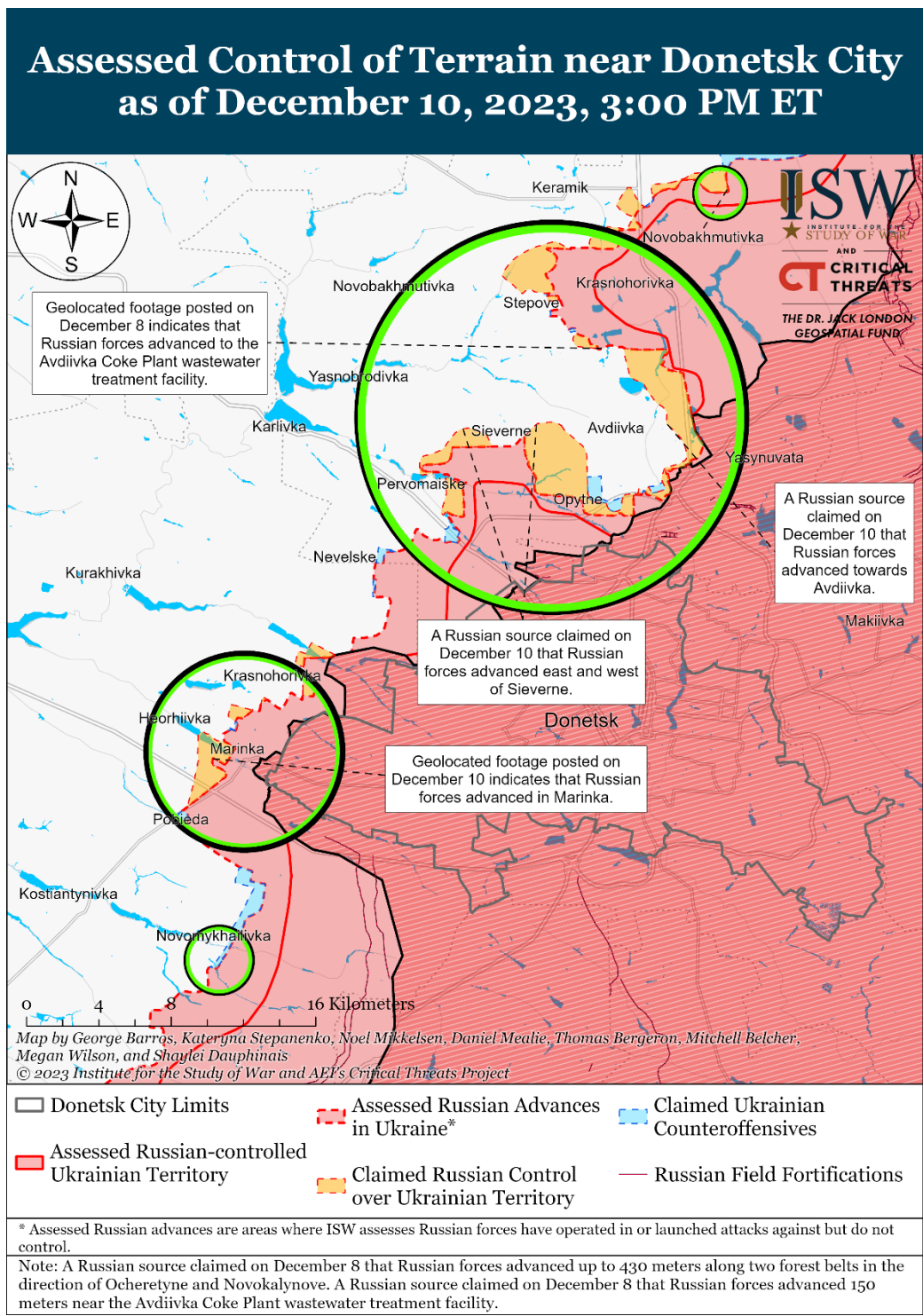
Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Megan Wilson, and Shaylei Dauphinais
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- Bakhmut City Limits
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives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

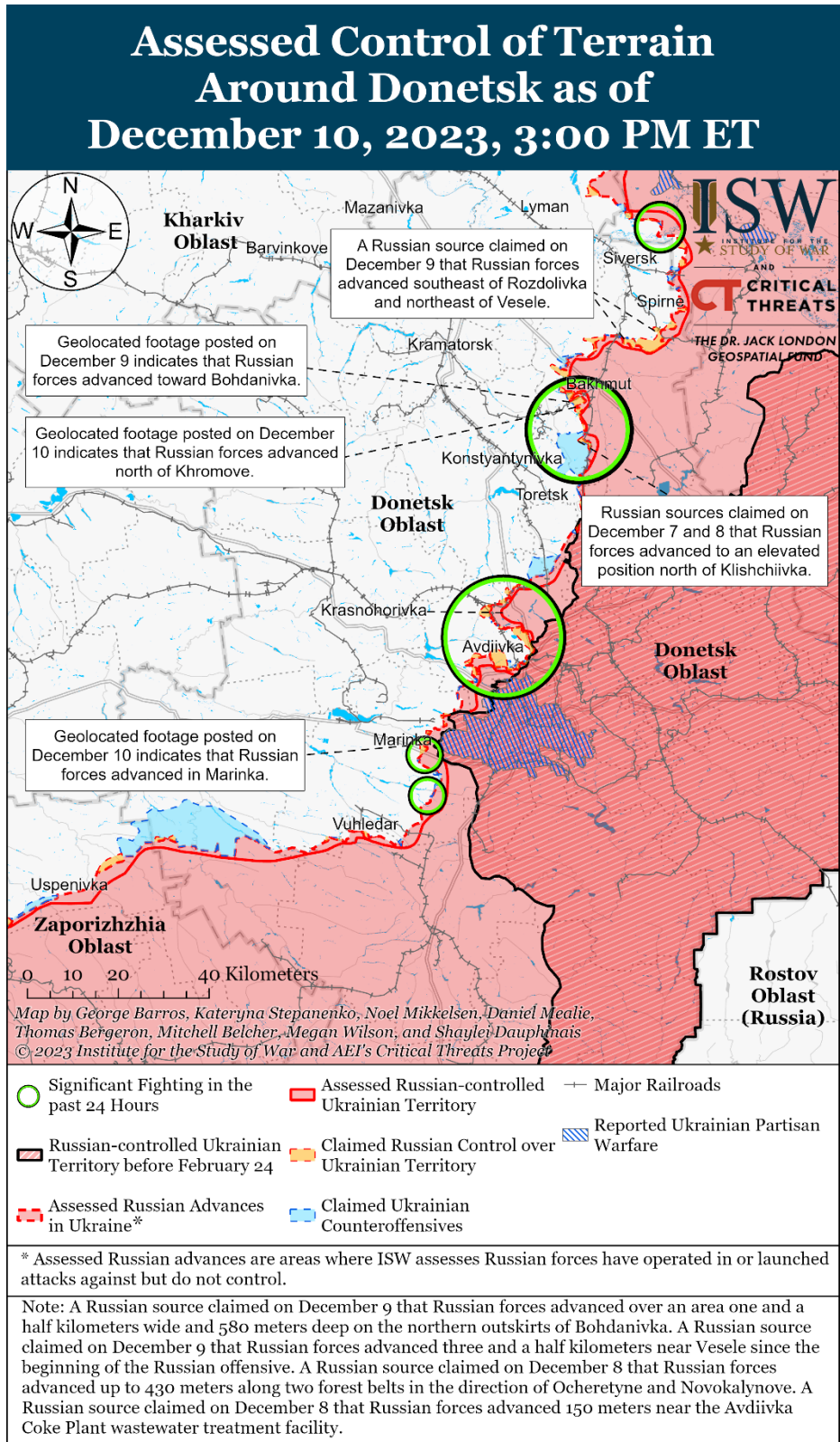
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: A Russian source claimed on December 9 that Russian forces advanced over an area one and a half kilometers wide and 580 meters deep on the northern outskirts of Bohdanivka. A Russian source claimed on December 9 that Russian forces advanced three and a half kilometers near Vesele since the beginning of the Russian offensive. A Russian source claimed on December 7 that Russian forces advanced more than a half kilometer in the dacha area southwest of Bakhmut.

Russian forces continued offensive operations near Avdiivka on December 10 and recently made a confirmed advance. Geolocated footage published on December 9 indicates that Russian forces advanced east of Stepove (3km northwest of Avdiivka).[48] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced in Stepove, north of the Avdiivka Coke Plant (on the northwestern outskirts of Avdiivka), and in the Avdiivka industrial zone southeast of the settlement and attacked in the direction of Novokalynove (13km northeast of Avdiivka).[49] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled at least 39 Russian attacks east of Novobakhmutivka (9km northwest of Avdiivka); near Stepove, Avdiivka, and Pervomaiske (10km southwest of Avdiivka); and south of Tonenke (5km west of Avdiivka) and Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka).[50] Ukrainian Avdiivka City Military Administration Head Vitaliy Barabash stated that Russian forces are constantly attacking and striking Ukrainian positions near Avdiivka regardless of the weather conditions.[51] A Russian milblogger characterized the Avdiivka front as "a lighter version of the Bakhmut meat grinder," suggesting that Russian forces are conducting attritional infantry-led frontal assaults on Ukrainian fortifications in Avdiivka at high cost.[52] A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced in unspecified forest areas near Stepove.[53]

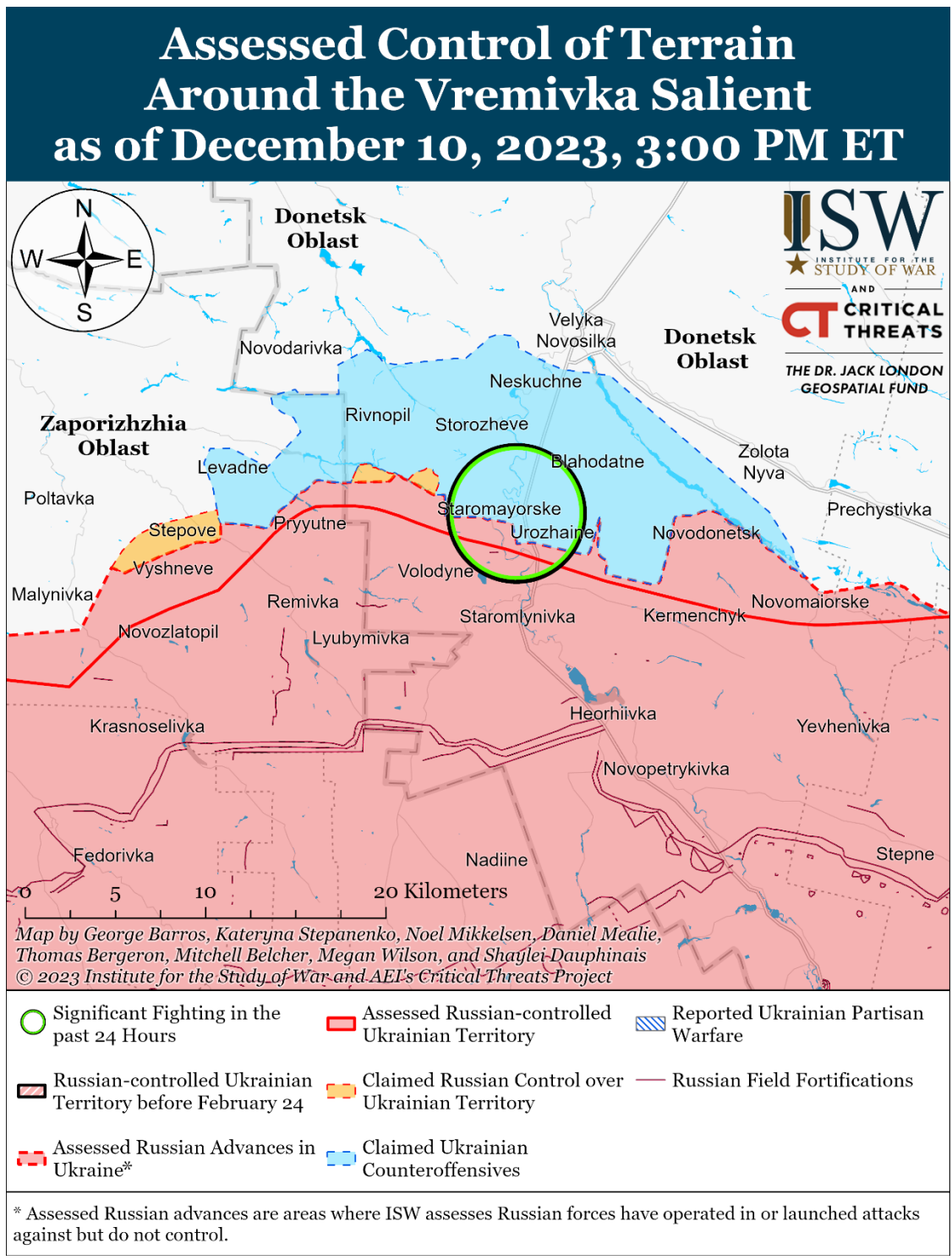


Russian forces continued assaults west and southwest of Donetsk City on December 10 and recently made a confirmed advance. Geolocated footage published on December 10 shows Russian forces planting a flag on the southwestern outskirts of Marinka (just west of Donetsk City), indicating that Russian forces marginally advanced further into Marinka.[54] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces control "almost all" of Marinka and that Ukrainian forces have withdrawn to positions west of the settlement.[55] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled at least 14 Russian attacks near Marinka, Pobieda (5km southwest of Donetsk City), Novomykhailivka (10km southwest of Donetsk City), and southeast of Vuhledar (26km southwest of Donetsk City).[56] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Marinka and Pobieda.[57]



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

Russian forces continued ground attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area on December 10 but did not make any confirmed advances. One Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces made marginal advances southwest of Staromayorske (10km south of Velyka Novosilka) in the past week, but another milblogger claimed that reports of Russian advances near Staromayorske are premature and that the frontline remains unchanged.[58] ISW has not observed any visual evidence of recent Russian advances in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on December 10 that Ukrainian forces repelled two Russian attacks near Staromayorske.[59] A Russian milblogger posted footage of the 218th Tank Regiment (127th Motorized Rifle Division, 5th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) operating north of Pryyutne (15km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[60] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian attack near Novodonetske (15km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[61]



Russian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on December 10 and reportedly made unconfirmed gains. Russian sources claimed on December 9 that Russian forces advanced one kilometer and pushed Ukrainian forces from positions between Robotyne and Novopropkivka (just south of Robotyne).[62] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces are advancing from Verbove (9km east of Robotyne) and Novofedorivka (15km northeast of Robotyne).[63] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed on December 10 that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Verbove, however.[64] Russian milbloggers claimed that poor weather conditions and ice are impeding Russian and Ukrainian ground attacks and armored vehicle movement near Verbove.[65] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled three Russian attacks west of Robotyne and near Novopokrovka (12km northeast of Robotyne).[66]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued unsuccessful offensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on December 10. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian attack north of Novopropkivka, and a prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Robotyne and Verbove.[67] Some Russian milbloggers claimed that the overall number of Ukrainian assaults in the area south of Orikhiv has recently decreased due to the recommitment of select Ukrainian troops to the Avdiivkadirection.[68] Russian sources additionally noted that the ground has mostly frozen around Verbove, and that fighting is ongoing in forest areas.[69] One milblogger stated that Ukrainian forces are still managing to operate combat helicopters along the Robotyne-Verbove line.[70]



Ukrainian forces continued ground operations on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast on December 10. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces maintain positions on the east bank of the Dnipro River and are striking Russian positions in the area.[71] Russian milbloggers claimed that fighting continues near Krynyky (30km northeast of Kherson City) and noted a sustained high tempo of Ukrainian operations in the area.[72] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces captured new positions on Velykyi Potemkin island (southwest of Kherson City), although ISW assesses that Ukrainian forces already control all of the island.[73] A Russian milblogger amplified footage purporting to show elements of the Russian 28th Motorized Rifle Regiment (70th Motorized Rifle Division, 18th Combined Arms Army) striking Ukrainian positions on islands in the Dnipro River.[74] The Russian MoD posted footage purporting to show unspecified Russian Airborne (VDV) elements conducting aerial reconnaissance of Ukrainian positions on the west (right) bank of the Dnipro River.[75]



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

Russian milbloggers continue to criticize the purported Russian military ban on the use of civilian vehicles for military purposes. A Russian milblogger claimed on December 10 that Russian Directorate of Military Representations officials attempted to seize all Ulyanovsk Automobile Plant (UAZ) off-road vehicles from an unspecified Russian naval infantry unit, but that the unit's officers convinced the officials to allow the unit to keep the vehicles.[76] The milblogger claimed that Russian volunteer efforts and soldiers purchase 99 percent of all SUVs and minibuses that Russian forces use in combat areas.[77] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian personnel personally fund their vehicle repairs and do not know how to obtain permission from the Russian military to continue to use personal vehicles.[78] Russian milbloggers previously noted that a Russian military ban on the use of civilian vehicles could impede Russian military movement, supplies and ammunition deliveries, and casualty evacuations, and therefore, ultimately demoralize military personnel.[79]

The Ukrainian Prosecutor General's Office confirmed on December 9 that the Iranian state aircraft manufacturer Iran Aircraft Manufacturing Industrial Company produces Shahed-131/136 drones.[80] Ukrainian Prosecutor General's Office stated that it has yet to conclude investigations into the production of Mohajer-6 and Italmas drones (also known as Izdeliye drones) and noted that it sent requests to nine unspecified countries for legal assistance in investigating the supply of dual-use drone components to Iran and Russia.[81]

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

A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are using drones to remotely mine areas along the frontline.[82] The milblogger claimed that Russian drones can carry both OZM, PMN, and POM anti-personnel mines and PTM-3 and PTM-4 anti-tank mines.[83]

A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are upgrading their digital communications kits in T-72B3, T-80BVM, and T-90M tanks.[84] Russian news outlet *Anna News* reported that Sotniki-BL digital communications system first entered service with the 4th Motorized Rifle Battalion (2nd Luhansk People's Republic Army Corps) in August 2023, replacing outdated R-173 and R-123 radio communication systems.[85]

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 long-term efforts to indoctrinate Ukrainian students in occupied Ukraine by directing funding to educational institutions in occupied Ukraine. The Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) Militia announced on December 10 that Russian Deputy Minister of Science and Higher Education Ayrat Gatiyatov announced that the Russian government plans to allocate at least five billion rubles (about \$54.2 million) to repair infrastructure at institutes of higher education in occupied Luhansk Oblast from 2024 to 2027.[86] Gatiyatov also stated that the Russian government has allocated over 5.5 billion rubles (about \$59.6 million) to universities in occupied Luhansk Oblast since the beginning of 2023.[87] Russian occupation authorities will likely use these renovations to increase enrollment into Russian-government controlled educational institutions.

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov made a historical appeal to past Russian and Soviet military victories during a speech to the Doha Forum on December 10 in an effort to downplay Russian losses in Ukraine and Russia's degraded military capabilities.[88] Lavrov claimed that the military action "unleashed by the US at the hands of Ukraine" has only made Russia stronger and claimed that this phenomenon is similar to alleged increased Russian strength following military victories over Napoleon in the 19th century and Hitler during the Second World War.[89] Lavrov likely invoked these false historical analogies to minimize Russia's losses in Ukraine and to assert that Russia would still be able to defeat the West in a hypothetical confrontation as the Russian empire and the Soviet Union did fighting European powers in past costly wars. Lavrov likely also referenced these false historical analogies, which were followed by periods of increased Russian and Soviet geopolitical power, to claim that the war in Ukraine will conclude with a geopolitically empowered Russia that can more widely challenge the West. The analogies are farcical because the current war began with an unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine, whereas Napoleon invaded Russia in 1812 and Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in 1941.

The Ukrainian Center for Combating Disinformation reported on December 10 that Russian actors sent false SMS messages to Ukrainian residents in Zaporizhzhia City alleging a planned mass evacuation from the city in December 2023.[90] Russian sources are increasingly promoting information operations aimed at generating Ukrainian social

discontent, and Russian actors may want to promote alleged military threats to near rear population centers, even those far outside the realistic potential for Russian advance, in an effort to promote discontent towards Ukrainian leadership.[91]

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

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko met with Equatorial Guinean President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo on December 9 and 10 and stated that Belarus will open an embassy in Malabo in the near future and that Equatorial Guinea will open an embassy in Minsk by the end of 2024.[92]

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://telegra dot ph/Intervyu-oficialnogo-predstavatelya-MID-Rossii-MVZaharovoj-francuzskomu-informagentstvu-AFP-12-09>

[2] <https://t.me/MariaVladimirovnaZakharova/6737>; <https://telegra dot ph/Intervyu-oficialnogo-predstavatelya-MID-Rossii-MVZaharovoj-francuzskomu-informagentstvu-AFP-12-09>; https://www.rbc dot ru/politics/09/12/2023/657482d09a7947a7686f57aa?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=previ ew

[3] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar122722>; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar120822>

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