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with Nate Trotter and William Runkel**

February 16, 2025, 8:30pm ET

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 12pm ET on February 16. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the February 17 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov held a telephone call on February 16 to "open a channel of communication" for future talks about the war in Ukraine. US State Department Spokesperson Tammy Bruce stated that Rubio spoke with Lavrov as a follow up to US President Donald Trump's recent call with Russian President Vladimir Putin and that Rubio reaffirmed Trump's commitment to ending the war in Ukraine.[1] The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) claimed that Rubio and Lavrov agreed to maintain a channel of communication to resolve issues in the US-Russian relationship; to remove barriers to trade, economic, and investment cooperation; to work together on ending the war in Ukraine and solving issues in the Middle East; and to organize future meetings to improve the work of foreign missions in the United States and Russia.[2] The Russian MFA claimed that Rubio and Lavrov agreed to work to restore "mutually respectful" interstate dialogue and to hold regular contacts, including a Russian-American summit in the future. Rubio stated on *CBS* on February 16 that his phone call with Lavrov was meant to establish communications for future efforts aimed at reaching a peace agreement in Ukraine.[3] Rubio noted that he discussed issues surrounding the operation of American and Russian embassies because it will be difficult to communicate with Russia if the embassies are not functioning.

US, Russian, and Ukrainian delegations are reportedly gathering in Saudi Arabia ahead of bilateral US-Russia and US-Ukraine negotiations in the coming weeks. US Special Presidential Envoy for the Middle East Steve Witkoff stated on February 16 that he, National Security Advisor Mike Waltz, and other unnamed US officials will travel to Saudi Arabia for bilateral negotiations with Russia.[4] US Secretary of State Marco Rubio told *CBS* that he will also travel to Saudi Arabia this week and will take advantage of "any opportunity" to further US President Donald Trump's goal of ending the war in Ukraine.[5] It remains unclear who will represent Russia during the meeting, although a Russian insider source claimed on February 16 that Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov will arrive in Saudi Arabia in February 18.[6] Ukrainian Economic Minister Yulia Svyrydenko stated that a Ukrainian delegation has also arrived in Saudi Arabia on a working visit.[7] It is unclear if US and Ukrainian officials will meet in Saudi Arabia, as US Special Presidential Envoy for Russia and Ukraine Keith Kellogg will arrive in Ukraine in the coming days to meet with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.[8]

US officials continue to outline their expectations for the peace negotiations. Witkoff noted that his initial meeting with Russian officials is about "trust building" and expressed hope that he will make

progress during these initial meetings.[9] Kellogg stated during the Munich Security Conference on February 15 that Russia must make territorial concessions during the negotiations and that Russia could also promise to not use force against Ukraine in the future or commit to "downsizing" the Russian military.[10] Rubio stated during his interview with *CBS* that European officials must be involved in the peace negotiations in some capacity, but did not provide additional details.[11] The People's Republic of China (PRC) and Brazil also released a statement on February 16 calling for major world powers to work together to promote peace in Ukraine.[12]

Ukraine's European partners reiterated their support for Ukraine's war effort and domestic defense industry at the Munich Security Conference. Zelensky met with Head of the German arms manufacturer Rheinmetall Armin Papperger on February 15 to discuss the development of joint projects between the Ukrainian and German defense industries, particularly regarding 155mm ammunition production, and broader cooperation in maintenance and repair efforts.[13] Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky met with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and emphasized strengthening Ukraine's front-line positions, improving air defenses, and bolstering Ukrainian production of long-range drones and missiles.[14] Zelensky met separately with Finnish President Alexander Stubb and Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof and discussed increased defense assistance to Ukraine, direct investments in Ukraine's production of long-range weapons, and strengthening sanctions on Russia's shadow tanker fleet.[15] Zelensky met with Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store to discuss Ukrainian weapons production, including long-range missile and drone production.[16] Zelensky met with Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson to discuss increasing sanctions pressure on Russia and strengthening defense cooperation.[17] Ukrainian Presidential Office Head Andriy Yermak met with former NATO Secretary General (from 2009-2014) Anders Fogh Rasmussen and discussed strengthening Europe's own defense and establishing a task force to develop the concept of a "security guarantee mechanism" for Ukraine, inspired by the International Task Force on Security and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Ukraine.[18] Yermak and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiha met with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and reiterated their commitment to future peace negotiations to end the war in Ukraine.[19]

Czech President Petr Pavel announced the continuation of the Czech-led Initiative to provide Ukraine with large-caliber ammunition on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference and stated that Czechia secured funding to meet Ukraine's artillery needs until April 2025.[20] *Reuters* reported that an unnamed Czech government official reported that by the end of 2024 the Czech Initiative had already provided Ukraine with roughly 500,000 155mm artillery rounds and an estimated one million shells over 100mm caliber.

Ukrainian officials also met with US officials to discuss continued support for Ukraine. Yermak met with the US Presidential Envoy for Special Missions Richard Grenell to discuss preparations for upcoming high-level meetings.[21] Grenell emphasized that support for Ukraine is an investment in global stability and security. Zelensky met with a bipartisan delegation of US congressmen to discuss continued US defense assistance to Ukraine and the provision of reliable security guarantees.[22]

The Kremlin officially reiterated its claim that Ukraine has no sovereignty, setting conditions for Moscow to claim that Ukraine has no standing to negotiate with Russia or

that any agreements reached with Ukraine in the future are invalid. Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov claimed on February 16 that Russia has adjusted its approach to potential talks with Ukraine because Ukraine allegedly has a "deficit" of sovereignty.[23] Peskov claimed that Ukraine's decision to not sign the peace agreement that Russia and Ukraine were discussing in Spring 2022 in Istanbul shows that Russia cannot trust Ukraine's word. Ukraine and Russia had not finalized a peace deal in Istanbul in 2022.[24] Kremlin officials have repeatedly claimed that the West forced Ukraine to walk away from the Istanbul deal and that Ukraine thus lacks sovereignty. Peskov also continued longstanding Kremlin efforts to place the blame for Russia's full-scale invasion on Ukraine, claiming that Ukraine would "be intact," that the Ukrainian government would not have "abused" Russians in eastern Ukraine, that there would have been no "civil war," and that Russians in eastern Ukraine would have had "no desire...to separate from Ukraine" had Ukraine fulfilled the terms of the Minsk agreements.[25] The Minsk agreements were notably extremely favorable to Russia, placing no obligations on Moscow, yet Russian proxies continually violated the accords with Russian support.[26] Kremlin-controlled state media used a February 15 interview with Kremlin-affiliated former Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada Deputy Viktor Medvedchuk to reiterate the Kremlin's false narrative about Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's illegitimacy.[27]

Medvedchuk's interview and Peskov's February 16 statements continue to cast doubt on Moscow's willingness to negotiate in good faith about a settlement of the war and set informational conditions for Russia to violate any agreement reached on the grounds that the Ukrainian government had no legal right to conclude it.[28] US President Donald Trump recently reiterated that Ukraine will be part of any talks with Russia about ending the war.[29] US Secretary of State Marco Rubio stated on February 16 that Putin expressed his desire to end the war to Trump in their recent phone call but noted that Putin must follow up his statement with action in the coming days and weeks to show if he is serious.[30]

The Kremlin extended an open invitation to US President Donald Trump to attend the May 9 Victory Day parade in Moscow as part of efforts to posture Russia's strength and global power status. Peskov stated in response to a question about whether the Kremlin is considering hosting Trump at the May 9 Victory Day parade in Moscow that Russian President Vladimir Putin would be "happy to welcome" any head of state to the parade.[31] The May 9 parade highlights the Soviet Union's role in defeating Nazi Germany during the Second World War. Putin has often used his May 9 speeches to emphasize the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany while minimizing the contributions of the other Western Allies.[32] Putin has even previously claimed that the Soviet Union acted "alone" in the Second World War.[33] The 2025 Victory Day parade will notably celebrate the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, and Putin has named 2025 the "Year of the Defender of the Fatherland." [34] ISW continues to note that Putin is trying to present himself as equal to Trump and to present Russia as a global power comparable to the United States and as an heir to the Soviet Union's "superpower" status.[35]

Western reporting suggests that the United States intends to ease sanctions on Belarus. Russia uses Belarus as a staging ground for its military against Ukraine and NATO and as a critical tool in its sanctions evasion schemes. US Deputy Assistance Secretary of State Christopher Smith told *CNN* on February 12 that he led a US delegation to Minsk and met with "Belarusian counterparts" to secure the release of several political prisoners.[36] Smith stated that

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko "didn't get anything for this" release and that the release was a "unilateral gesture" by Belarus. Belarusian journalist Igar Tur claimed on February 13 that Smith and unspecified US officials may have met with Lukashenko during the visit.[37] The *New York Times* (NYT), citing sources familiar with Smith's trip, reported on February 15 that Smith met with Lukashenko and Belarusian State Security Committee (KGB) Head Ivan Tertel in Minsk on February 12.[38] NYT, citing individuals who attended Smith's briefing after the trip, reported that Smith later announced that the US is considering a bilateral agreement in which Lukashenko would release an unspecified number of political prisoners in exchange for the US easing sanctions on Belarusian banks and exports of potash, a key ingredient for fertilizer and major Belarusian export. ISW assesses that any sort of sanctions relief directed toward Belarus would have a positive effect on the Russian economy, as Russia has spent decades integrating Belarus into the Russian economy as part of the Union State project as ISW's George Barros has recently reported in detail.[39] Belarus is a key tool for Russia in its sanctions evasion scheme and the Russian and Belarusian economies are integrated to a degree that Russia's war effort would directly benefit from the easing of US sanctions on Belarus.[40]

The Russian military command reportedly redeployed additional elements of the Southern Military District's (SMD) 8th Combined Arms Army (CAA) to the Toretsk and eastern Pokrovsk directions, further indicating that the Russian military command intends to prioritize putting pressure on Kostyantynivka – the southernmost point of Ukraine's "fortress belt" – in 2025. Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated on February 16 that the Russian military command redeployed elements of the 20th Motorized Rifle Division's 242nd, 255th, and 33rd motorized rifle regiments and the 150th Motorized Rifle Division's 102nd and 103rd motorized rifle regiments and 163rd Tank Regiment from the Kurakhove direction to the Toretsk and eastern Pokrovsk directions.[41] Mashovets stated that elements of the 150th Motorized Rifle Division recently arrived in Toretsk and will attempt to advance along the T-0516 Toretskhighway towards Pleshchiivka and Kostyantynivka (both northwest of Toretsk) with the support of the 9th and 132nd motorized rifle brigades (51st CAA, formerly 1st Donetsk People's Republic Army Corps [DNR AC], SMD). Mashovets stated that elements of the 20th Motorized Rifle Division arrived near Vozdvyzhenka (east of Pokrovsk and southwest of Toretsk) and will attempt to advance along the T-0504 Pokrovsk-Kostyantynivka highway with support from the 5th Motorized Rifle Brigade (51st CAA). Mashovets stated that the Russian military command recently reconstituted the 20th and 150th motorized rifle divisions with new personnel and equipment and estimated that the Russian military command redeployed 7,000 to 8,000 troops from each division to the Toretsk and eastern Pokrovsk directions. A Ukrainian source recently amplified footage of a Russian servicemember claiming that the Russian military command redeployed the 150th Motorized Rifle Division to the Toretsk direction, and Mashovets' report supports this claim.[42] ISW has not observed additional reports of the 20th or 150th motorized rifle divisions engaged in combat in the Toretsk or eastern Pokrovsk directions as of this report, however.

Mashovets assessed that Russian forces intend to eliminate the Ukrainian pocket around Stara Mykolaivka and along the H-20 Avdiivka-Kostyantynivka highway before advancing on Kostyantynivka from the south and southwest, which is consistent with ISW's assessment that Russian forces may want to eliminate the Ukrainian pocket southwest of Toretsk in order to firm up their southern flank ahead of a push on Kostyantynivka.[43] Russian forces likely intend to leverage advances southwest of Toretsk and northeast of Pokrovsk to force Ukrainian forces to withdraw from this pocket under threat of

envelopment in the coming months. Mashovets suggested that the Russian military command may redeploy elements of the 110th and 114th motorized rifle brigades (51st CAA) to the Toretsk-Vozdvyzhenka area to reinforce this effort after these elements complete the seizure of Andriivka (west of Kurakhove) and level the frontline west of Kurakhove.[44] ISW assesses that Russian forces operating east of Pokrovsk near Vozdvyzhenka are roughly 22 kilometers south of Kostyantynivka at their closest point of advance and that Russian forces operating in Toretsk are roughly 11 kilometers from Kostyantynivka at their closest point of advance as of February 16. Russian forces could possibly reach the southern outskirts of Kostyantynivka in May 2025 should Russian forces be able to replicate their recent rate of advance south of Pokrovsk, but this is unlikely given the likely more significant Ukrainian defenses that Russian forces will face on the road to Kostyantynivka and the degradation of the Russian units involved.

The Russian military appears to be committing to a multi-year-long effort to seize Ukraine's "fortress belt" in Donetsk Oblast, further underscoring Russia's Putin's apparent disinterest in a lasting and enduring peace in Ukraine. Mashovets stated that the Russian military command also redeployed the 10th Tank Regiment (20th Motorized Rifle Division) and 68th Tank Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division) to the 3rd CAA's area of responsibility in the Siversk and Chasiv Yar directions.[45] ISW has not recently observed reports of Russia reinforcing the Siversk or Chasiv Yar directions, but Mashovets' report suggests that the Russian military command may be reprioritizing those efforts. ISW has recently observed an intensification in Russian activity in the Lyman and Chasiv Yar directions and consistent activity in the Siversk direction.[46] Russian forces may intend to leverage advances in these areas to pressure Slovyansk and Kramatorsk from the north and east as Russian forces attempt to advance on Kostyantynivka from the south.

Ukraine's "fortress belt" is a 50-kilometer-long line of four major cities (Slovyansk, Kramatorsk, Druzhkivka, and Kostyantynivka) that forms the backbone of Ukraine's defenses in Donetsk Oblast, and Russia has long aspired to seize these cities.[47] Russian forces are currently between 25 and 30 kilometers from Slovyansk's eastern outskirts, roughly 20 kilometers from Kramatorsk's eastern outskirts, and nine kilometers from Kostyantynivka's northeastern outskirts at their closest points along the frontline in Donetsk Oblast. Russian forces in the Lyman and Siversk directions will have to seize Lyman and Siversk (likely months-long efforts themselves) and advance through numerous fields and small settlements before they can begin to threaten Slovyansk. Russian forces have spent most of the last 10 months slowly grinding through the urban areas of Chasiv Yar and Toretsk but have yet to completely seize these towns. Russian forces may intend to advance southwest of Kostyantynivka and attempt to cut the settlement off from the rest of the fortress belt to the west, but such advances would not collapse the entire fortress belt. Russian advances east and south Kostyantynivka would pressure the fortress belt, but Russian forces are unlikely to completely collapse and seize the fortress belt in 2025 or even 2026.

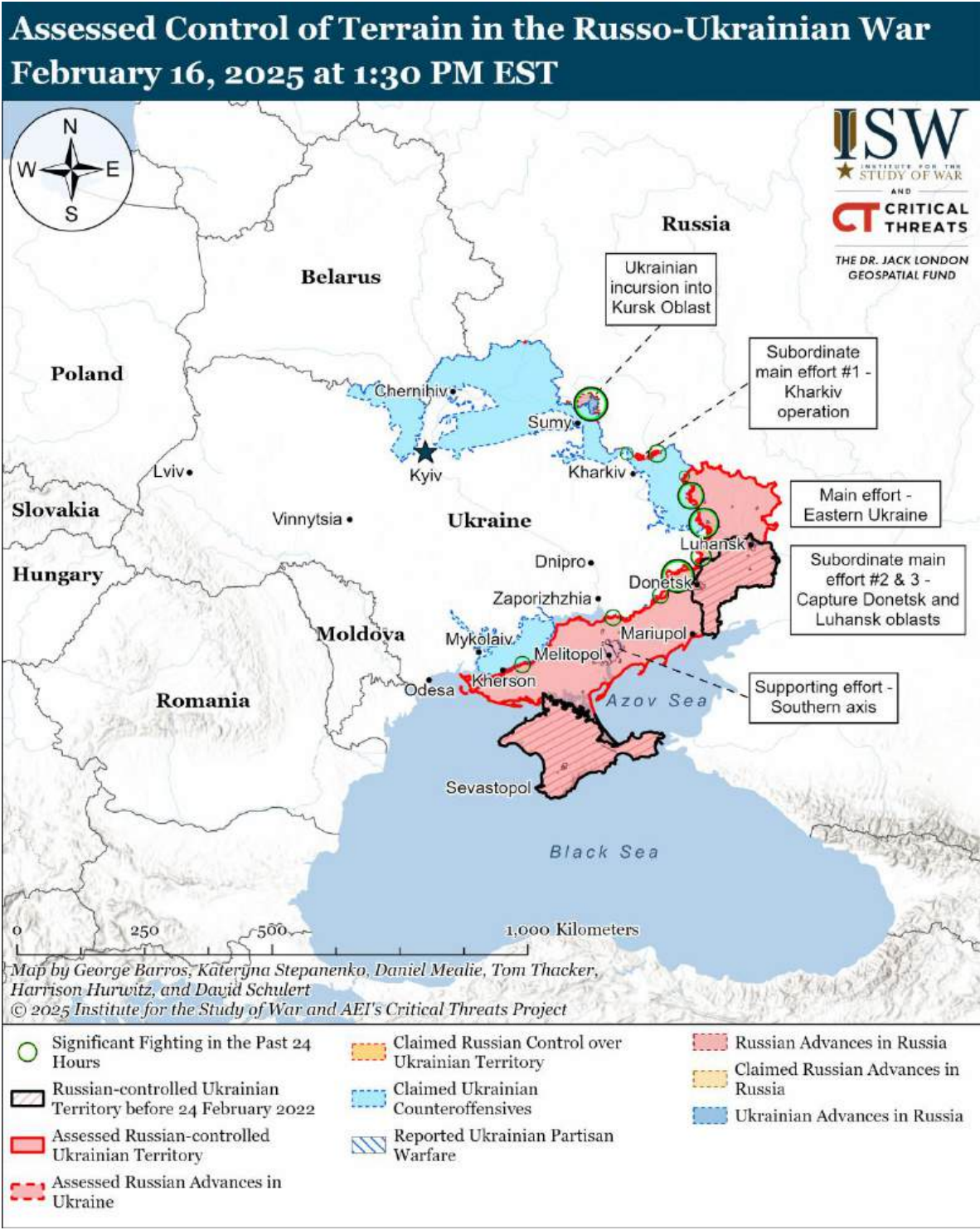
It is unlikely that the Russian military can sustain a multi-year and multi-axis campaign against Ukraine's fortress belt alongside its other offensive operations in Ukraine. ISW has extensively reported on Russia's mounting personnel and equipment losses in Ukraine and continues to assess that such losses are unsustainable in the medium- to long-term given Russia's current force generation and defense industrial capabilities.[48] A multi-year campaign against a series of significant Ukrainian defensive positions will almost certainly require more forces and materiel than

previous Russian efforts in less operationally significant frontline areas. Russian forces have yet to face significant and sufficiently built-up Ukrainian defenses since their campaign against Bakhmut in Spring 2023 and Avdiivka in Winter 2023-2024, and Russian forces' current method of advancing using its current manpower advantage to conduct costly infantry assaults is unlikely to achieve the same results in the face of significant Ukrainian defenses.[49] ISW previously noted that the Russian military command has demonstrated its willingness to commit to operations that could take months or even years to conclude as Russian President Vladimir Putin continues to hold a theory of victory that assumes that Russia is able to continue the war until Russia militarily defeats Ukraine.[50] Putin's willingness to begin a likely years-long campaign against Ukraine's fortress belt in Donetsk Oblast further supports this assessment and calls into question Russia's interest and intent in sitting down for bilateral negotiations with the United States.

Key Takeaways:

- **US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov held a telephone call on February 16 to "open a channel of communication" for future talks about the war in Ukraine.**
- **US, Russian, and Ukrainian delegations are reportedly gathering in Saudi Arabia ahead of bilateral US-Russia and US-Ukraine negotiations in the coming weeks.**
- **Ukraine's European partners reiterated their support for Ukraine's war effort and domestic defense industry at the Munich Security Conference.**
- **The Kremlin officially reiterated its claim that Ukraine has no sovereignty, setting conditions for Moscow to claim that Ukraine has no standing to negotiate with Russia or that any agreements reached with Ukraine in the future are invalid.**
- **Medvedchuk's interview and Peskov's February 16 statements continue to cast doubt on Moscow's willingness to negotiate in good faith about a settlement of the war and set informational conditions for Russia to violate any agreement reached on the grounds that the Ukrainian government had no legal right to conclude it.**
- **The Kremlin extended an open invitation to US President Donald Trump to attend the May 9 Victory Day parade in Moscow as part of efforts to posture Russia's strength and global power status.**
- **Western reporting suggests that the United States intends to ease sanctions on Belarus. Russia uses Belarus as a staging ground for its military against Ukraine and NATO and as a critical tool in its sanctions evasion schemes.**
- **The Russian military command reportedly redeployed additional elements of the Southern Military District's (SMD) 8th Combined Arms Army (CAA) to the Toretsk and eastern Pokrovsk directions, further indicating that the Russian military command intends to prioritize putting pressure on Kostyantynivka – the southernmost point of Ukraine's "fortress belt" – in 2025.**

- The Russian military appears to be committing to a multi-year-long effort to seize Ukraine's "fortress belt" in Donetsk Oblast, further underscoring Russia's Putin's apparent disinterest in a lasting and enduring peace in Ukraine.
- Ukrainian forces recently advanced near Toretsk, and Russian forces recently advanced in Kursk Oblast and near Kupyansk, Siversk, and Kurakhove.



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.

- Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of three subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis
- Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Russian Technological Adaptations
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas
- Significant Activity in Belarus

Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation

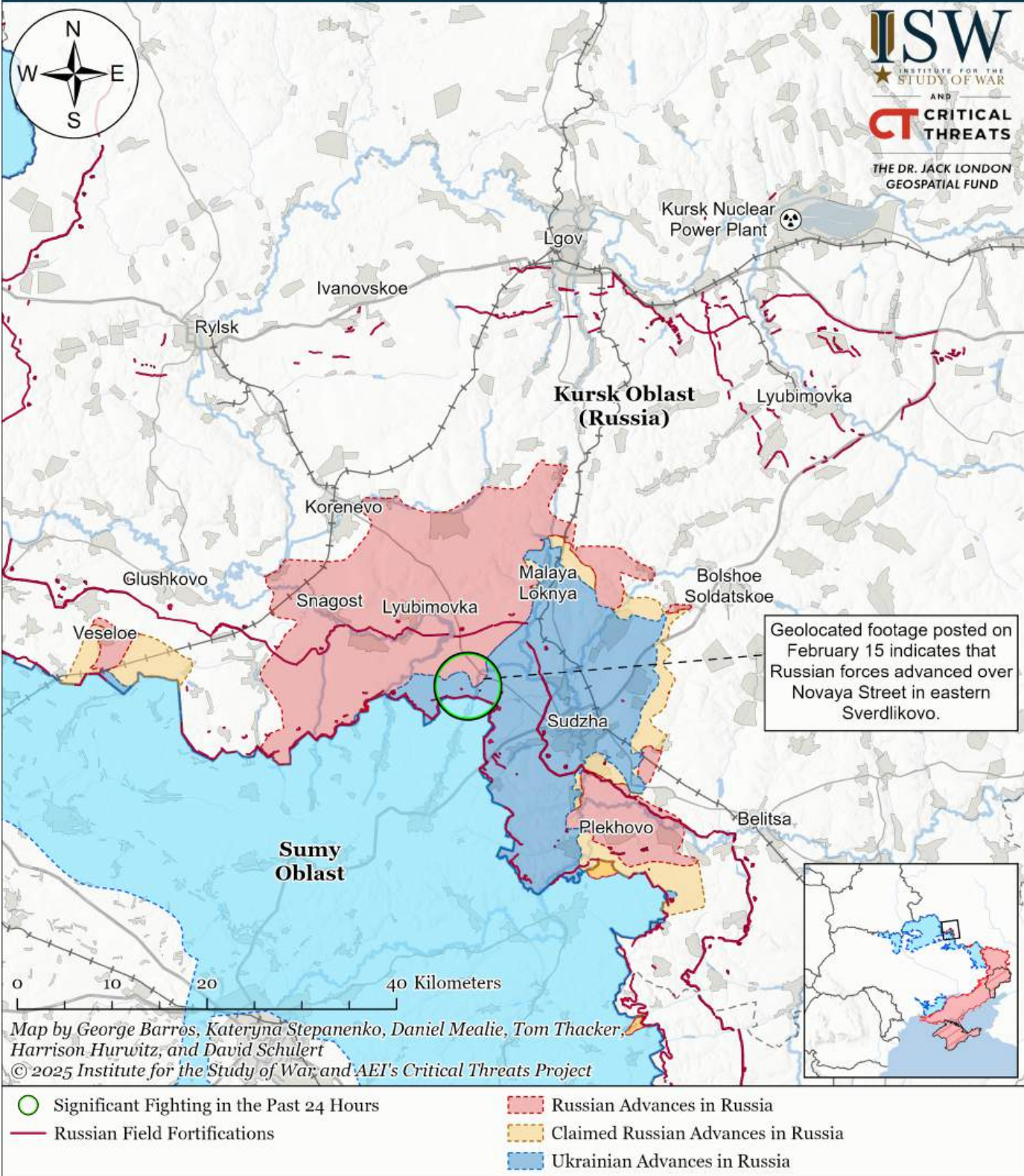
Russian forces recently advanced in the Ukrainian salient in Kursk Oblast. Fighting continued west of Sudzha near Sverdlikovo, northwest of Sudzha near Pogrebki and Malaya Loknya, north of Sudzha near Cherkasskoye Porechnoye, and south of Sudzha near Guyevo.[51] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful counterattacks near Sverdlikovo, Russkaya Konopelka (east of Sudzha), and Kurilovka (south of Sudzha).[52] A Ukrainian brigade operating in Kursk Oblast reported on February 16 that elements of the Russian 155th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) conducted an unsuccessful mechanized assault consisting of more than a dozen tanks in Kursk Oblast.[53]

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on February 15 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced in southeastern Sverdlikovo.[54]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces seized Sverdlikovo and advanced near Pogrebki, in Fanaseyevka (southeast of Sudzha), and northwest and south of Guyevo.[55] A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces have not seized the entirety of Sverdlikovo, however.[56]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kursk Direction

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The deputy commander of a Ukrainian battalion operating in Kursk Oblast reported that Russian forces recently resumed using armored vehicles during assaults and unsuccessfully attacked with roughly seven armored vehicles in an unspecified area on February 16.[57] The deputy commander stated that North Korean soldiers recently resumed assaults in groups of 10 to 15 personnel and that the groups are attacking in more spread out formations as part of efforts to complicate Ukrainian efforts to strike the attacking forces. North Korean forces reportedly recently withdrew from active combat operations in Kursk Oblast after suffering heavy casualties in large part from Ukrainian drone strikes, and reports that North Korean have adjusted their tactics on the battlefield to counter Ukrainian drone strikes indicates that North Korean forces may be learning lessons and gaining valuable combat experience.[58]

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 40th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) and 11th Airborne (VDV) Brigade are reportedly using fiber-optic first-person view (FPV) drones in Kursk Oblast; elements of the Russian "Anvar Spetsnaz" detachment (possibly referring to the BARS-25 "Anvar" volunteer detachment) are reportedly operating near Sudzha; elements of the 106th VDV Division are reportedly operating in Sverdlikovo and near Darino (southeast of Korenevo); and elements of the 83rd VDV Brigade are reportedly operating in Sverdlikovo, Darino, and Nikolayev-Darino (west of Sudzha).[59]

Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Kharkiv Oblast (Russian objective: Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City)

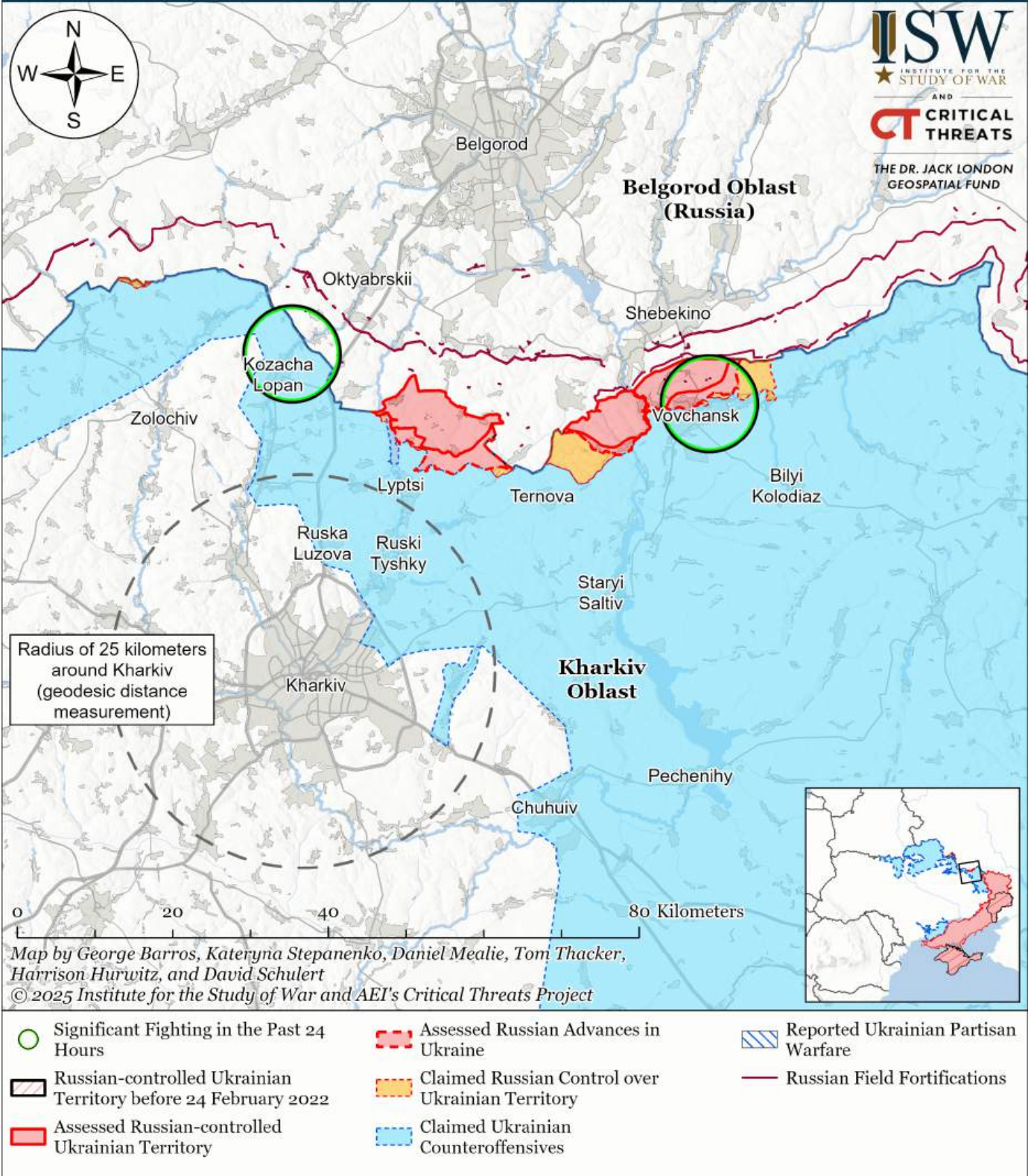
Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Kharkiv direction on February 16 but did not advance. Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the international border north of Kharkiv City toward Kozacha Lopan and northeast of Kharkiv City near Vovchansk and Tykhe on February 15 and 16.[60]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: A Russian milblogger claimed on February 15 that Russian forces marginally advanced in eastern Vovchansk.[61]

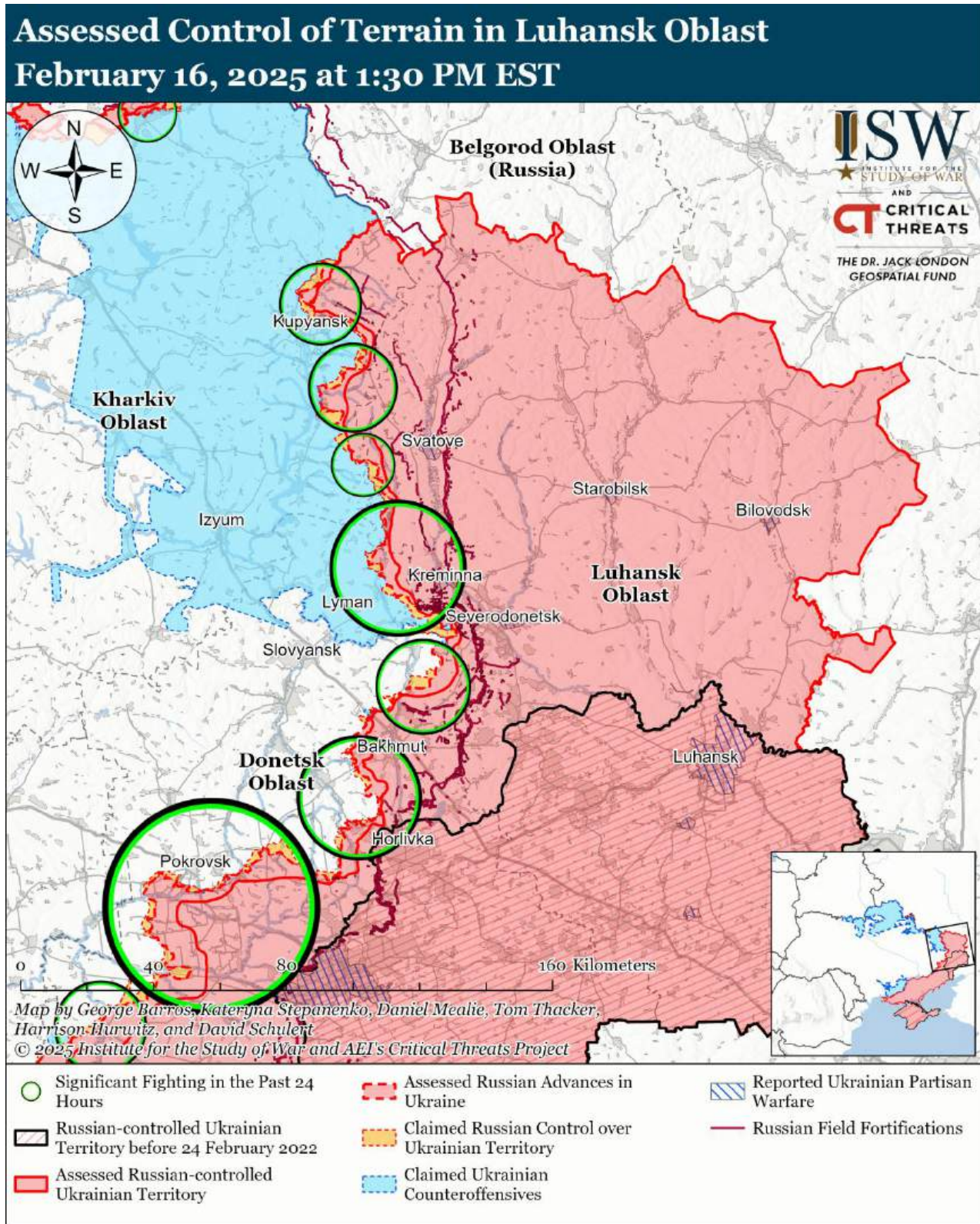
Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Chechen 204th "Akhmat" Spetsnaz Regiment reportedly are striking Ukrainian positions in the Kharkiv direction.[62]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kharkiv Direction

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Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)



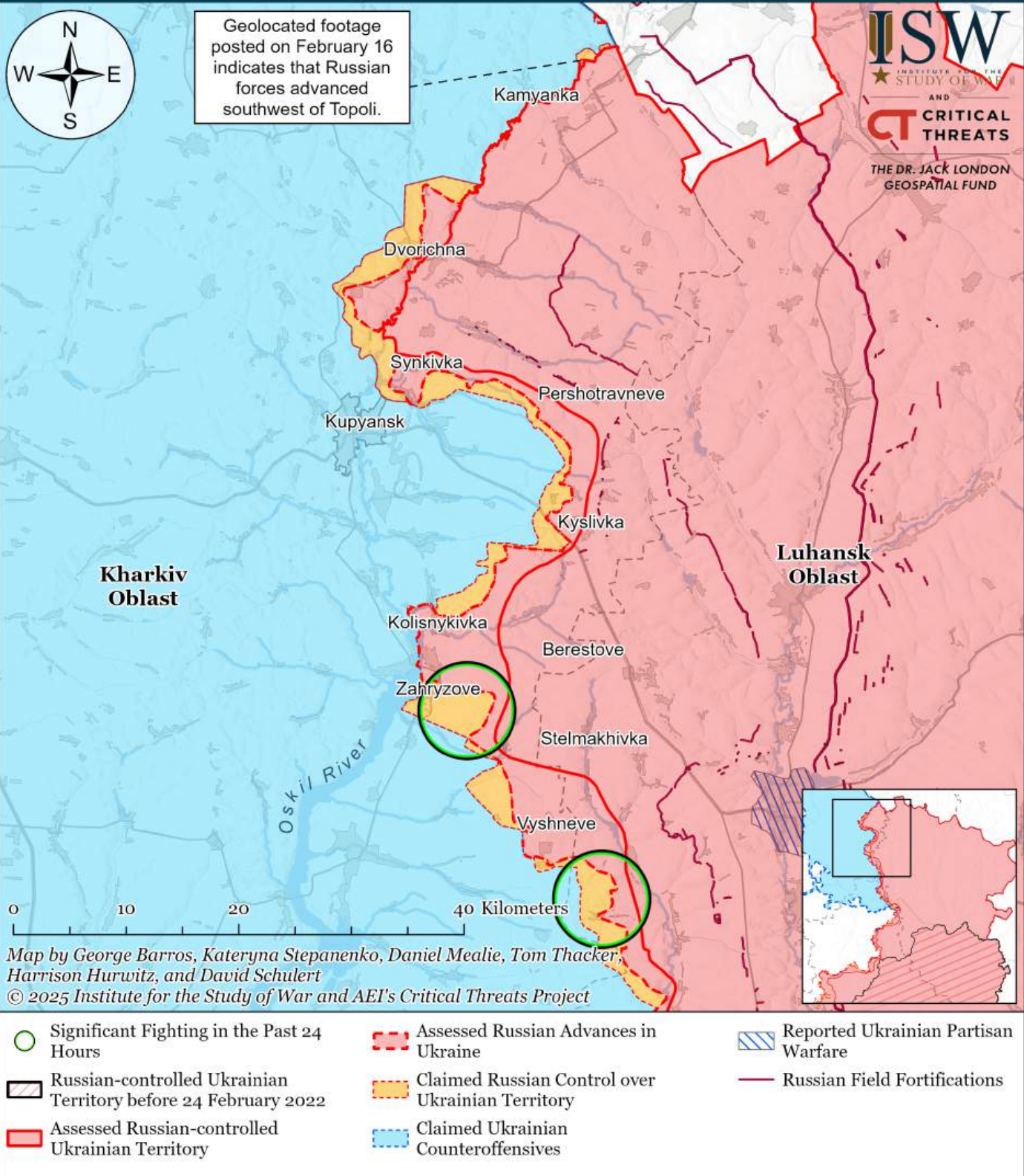
Russian forces recently advanced in the Kupyansk direction. Russian forces attacked north of Kupyansk near Dovhenke, Zapadne, Doroshivka, and Kindrashivka; northeast of Kupyansk near Dvorichna and Fyholivka; east of Kupyansk near Petropavlivka and Stepova Novoselivka; and southeast of Kupyansk near Pishchane and toward Novoosynove on February 15 and 16.[63]

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on February 16 indicates that Russian forces recently crossed the Oskil River and advanced in the fields southwest of Topoli (northeast of Kupyansk).[64]

Ukraine's Khortytsia Group of Forces Spokesperson Major Viktor Trehubov reported on February 16 that Russian forces have intensified their assaults in the Kupyansk direction in order to cross the Oskil River and create a bridgehead on the west (right) bank of the river.[65] Trehubov reported that Russian forces continue to cross the river in small groups, accumulate on the opposite bank, and then conduct attacks. Trehubov noted that Russian forces have increased their activity since the freezing ground has facilitated the movement of equipment across the river.

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 25th Motorized Rifle Brigade (6th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Leningrad Military District [LMD]) are reportedly operating near Dvorichna.[66]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kupyansk Direction February 16, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Borova direction on February 16 but did not advance. Russian forces attacked north of Borova toward Novoplatonivka; northeast of Borova near Kolisnykivka, Lozova, and Nova Kruhlyakivka; east of Borova near Zeleny Hai; and southeast of Borova near Novoserhiivka, Novoyehorivka, and Hrekivka on February 15 and 16.[67]

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 16th Spetsnaz Brigade (Russian General Staff's Main Directorate [GRU]) are reportedly operating near Cherneshchyna (southeast of Borova).[68]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Lyman direction on February 16 but did not advance. Russian forces attacked north of Lyman toward Nove; northeast of Lyman near Novolyubivka, Novomykhailivka, Yampolivka, Kolodyazi, and Terny; and east of Lyman near Torske and Dibrova and in the Serebryanske forest area on February 15 and 16.[69]

The spokesperson of a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Lyman direction reported on February 16 that Russian forces continue to deploy small groups of two to four soldiers without armored vehicle support but with first-person view (FPV) drone support to attack in the area.[70]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 144th Motorized Rifle Division (20th CAA, Moscow Military District [MMD]) reportedly continue to operate in the Lyman direction, and drone operators of the 16th Spetsnaz Brigade (GRU) are reportedly operating near Kolodyazi.[71]

Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia's proxies in Donbas)

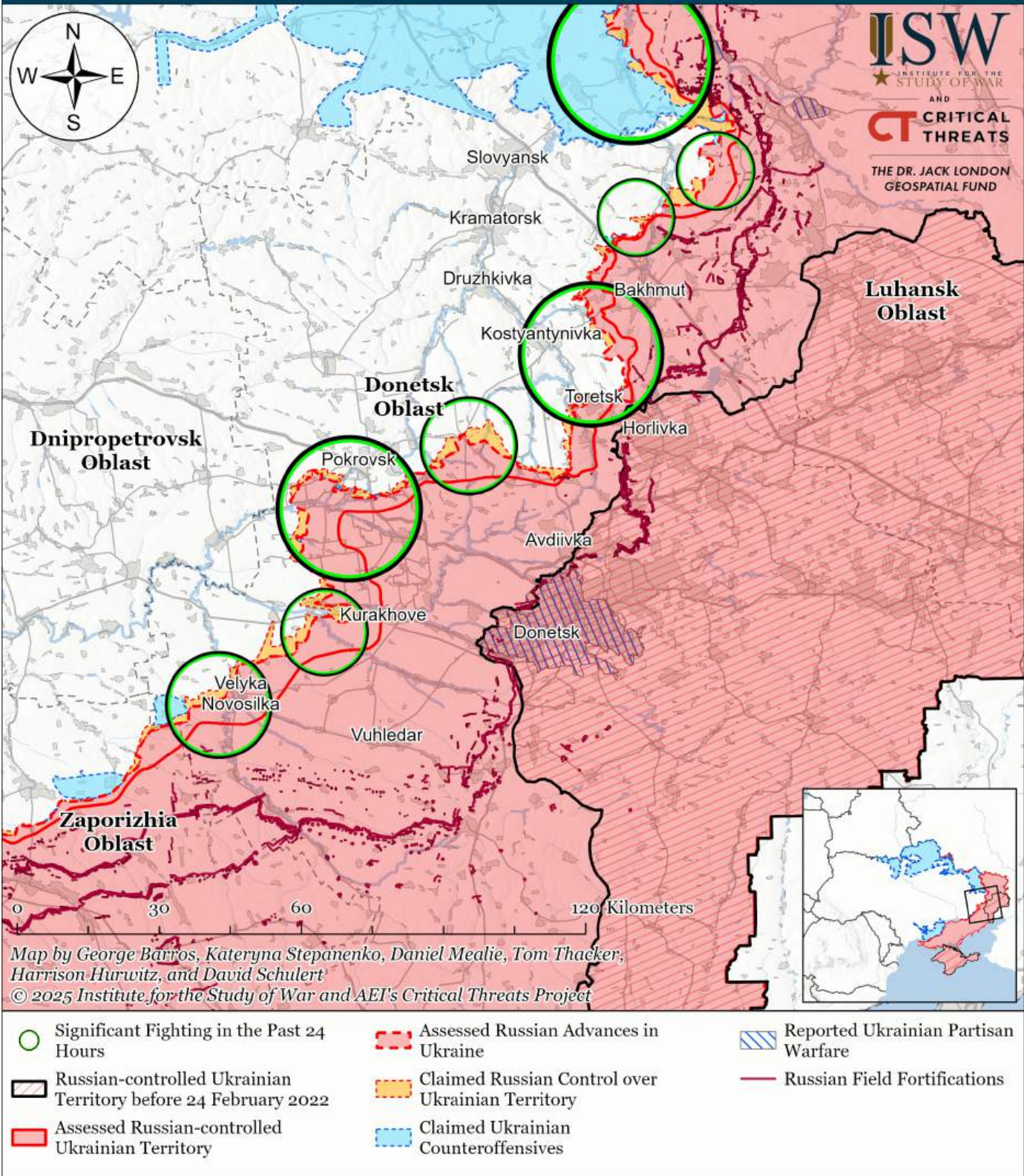
Russian forces recently advanced near Siversk. Russian forces continued assaults north of Siversk toward Dronivka, east of Siversk near Verkhokamyanske, and southeast of Siversk near Ivano-Darivka on February 15 and 16.[72]

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on February 16 indicates that Russian forces recently marginally advanced in northern Bilohorivka (northeast of Siversk).[73]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 123rd Motorized Rifle Brigade (3rd Combined Arms Army [CAA], formerly the 2nd Luhansk People's Republic Army Corps [LNR AC], Southern Military District [SMD]) reportedly continue to operate in the Siversk direction.[74]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Donetsk Oblast

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Russian forces continued offensive operations near Chasiv Yar on February 16 but did not advance. Russian forces attacked near and within Chasiv Yar itself, northeast of Chasiv Yar near Vasyukivka, and south of Chasiv Yar near Stupochky, Predtechyne, and Bila Hora on February 15 and 16.[75]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: Russian milbloggers claimed that elements of the Russian 1442nd and 1008th motorized rifle regiments (both of the 6th Motorized Rifle Division, 3rd AC) advanced east of Stupochky and seized tactical heights east of the settlement and that Russian forces are operating on the outskirts of the settlement.[76]

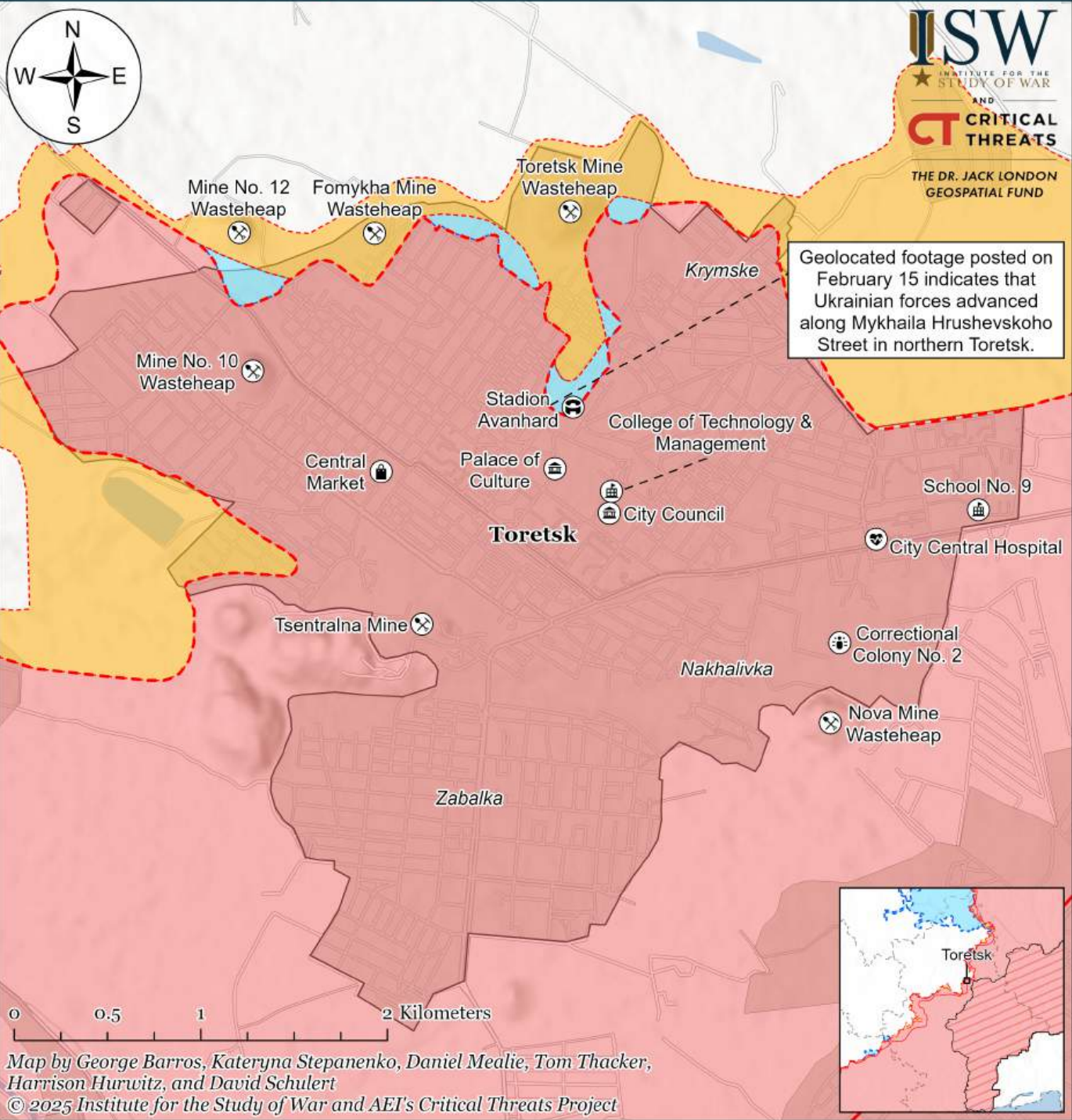
Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 85th Motorized Rifle Brigade (3rd CAA) are reportedly operating near Chasiv Yar.[77]

Ukrainian forces recently advanced near Toretsk. Russian forces continued attacking in Toretsk itself and north of Toretsk near Dyliivka and Krymske on February 15 and 16.[78]

Assessed Ukrainian advances: Geolocated footage published on February 15 indicates that Ukrainian forces recently marginally advanced in northern Toretsk.[79]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Toretsk

February 16, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Daniel Mealie, Tom Thacker, Harrison Hurwitz, and David Schulert
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|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before 24 February 2022 | Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine | Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives |
| Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory | Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory | Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare |

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Pokrovsk direction on February 16 but did not make any confirmed advances. Russian forces conducted offensive operations northeast of Pokrovsk near Tarasivka and Malynivka; east of Pokrovsk near Vodyane Druhe, Yelyzavetivka, Promin, Zelene Pole, and Myrolyubivka; southeast of Pokrovsk near Lysivka; south of Pokrovsk near Shevchenko and Dachenske; and southwest of Pokrovsk near Kotlyne, Pishchane, Udachne, Uspenivka, Nadivka, and Zaporizhzhia on February 15 and 16.[80] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Pishchane and north of Shevchenko and maintain positions between Dachenske and Lysivka.[81]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces seized Berezivka (northeast of Pokrovsk) and advanced west of Tarasivka, up to the southeastern outskirts of Malynivka (northeast of Pokrovsk), within and on the eastern outskirts of Pishchane, in Udachne, and in Zaporizhzhia (southwest of Pokrovsk).[82]

Ukraine's Khortytsia Group of Forces Spokesperson Major Viktor Trehubov stated on February 16 that Ukrainian forces recently pushed Russian forces out of Pishchane in part due to effective interaction between Ukrainian drone and ground assault elements.[83] Ukrainian military observer Yuriy Butusov stated that Ukrainian forces pushed elements of the Russian 74th Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st CAA, Central Military District [CMD]) out of Pishchane in early February.[84] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces occupy all or most of the industrial zone in Pishchane and that Ukrainian forces currently only occupy a small part of the residential sector.[85]

A Russian milblogger and former Storm-Z instructor claimed that Russian forces in the Pokrovsk direction have an insufficient quantity of small transport vehicles and that Ukrainian drone and artillery strikes are complicating Russian logistics and preventing Russian advances.[86] The milblogger complained that the Russian military command has not created separate strike drone brigades to support Russian efforts to break through Ukrainian defenses, as Russian artillery is insufficient, and Russian forces are not able to sufficiently concentrate airstrikes against a single frontline area to facilitate advances.

Russian forces recently advanced in the Kurakhove direction. Russian forces conducted offensive operations west of Kurakhove near Kostyantynopil, Oleksiivka, Andriivka, Dachne, and Ulakly and southwest of Kurakhove near Zelenivka and Rozlyv on February 15 and 16.[87] A source reportedly affiliated with Ukrainian military intelligence reported that Russian forces used between 20 and 37 units of equipment to attack towards Kostyantynopil and between eight and 10 armored vehicles to attack towards Ulakly on February 15.[88] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Kostyantynopil and Ulakly.[89]

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on February 16 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced southeast of Ulakly.[90] Additional geolocated footage published on February 16 shows Russian forces conducting a roughly platoon-sized mechanized assault on the southern outskirts of Ulakly and southwest of the settlement, indicating that Russian forces recently advanced in the area.[91]

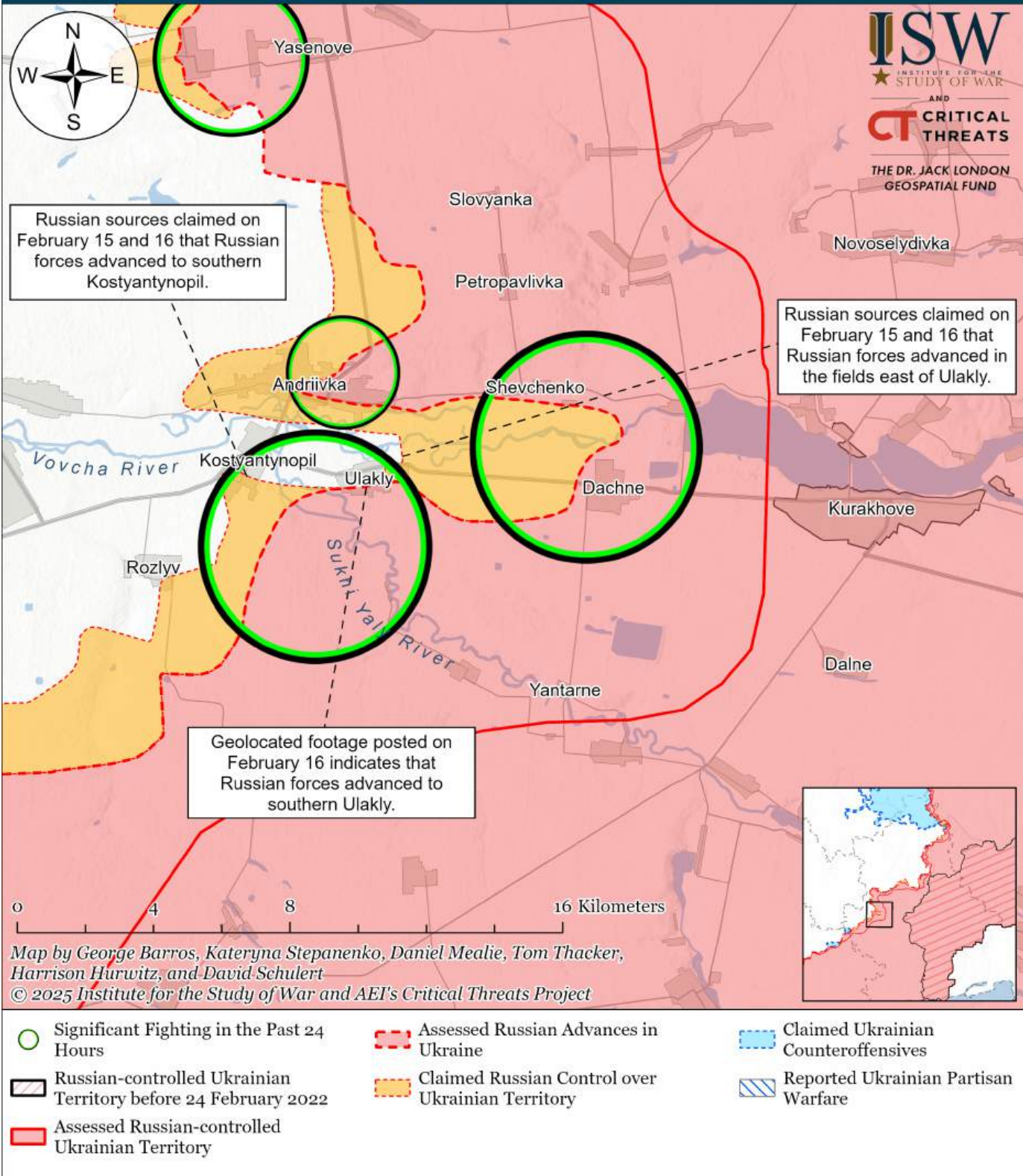
Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced along the H-15 highway between Dachne and Ulakly, into Ulakly, east of Ulakly, up to southern

Kostyantynopil, and to southern Bahatyr (west of Kurakhove) - clearing the Ukrainian pocket east of Ulakly.[92] A Russian source claimed that some Ukrainian forces remain in the pocket, however.[93]

A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces took advantage of poor weather conditions to advance near Ulakly.[94]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 39th Motorized Rifle Brigade (68th AC, Eastern Military District [EMD]) are reportedly operating near Ulakly; elements of the 102nd Motorized Rifle Regiment and 68th Tank Regiment (both of the 150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA, SMD) are reportedly operating in Dachne; elements of the 114th Motorized Rifle Brigade (51st CAA, formerly 1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] AC, SMD) are reportedly operating in Andriivka; and elements of the 14th Spetsnaz Brigade (Russian General Staff's Main Directorate [GRU]) are reportedly operating near Rozlyv.[95]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kurakhove Direction February 16, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST

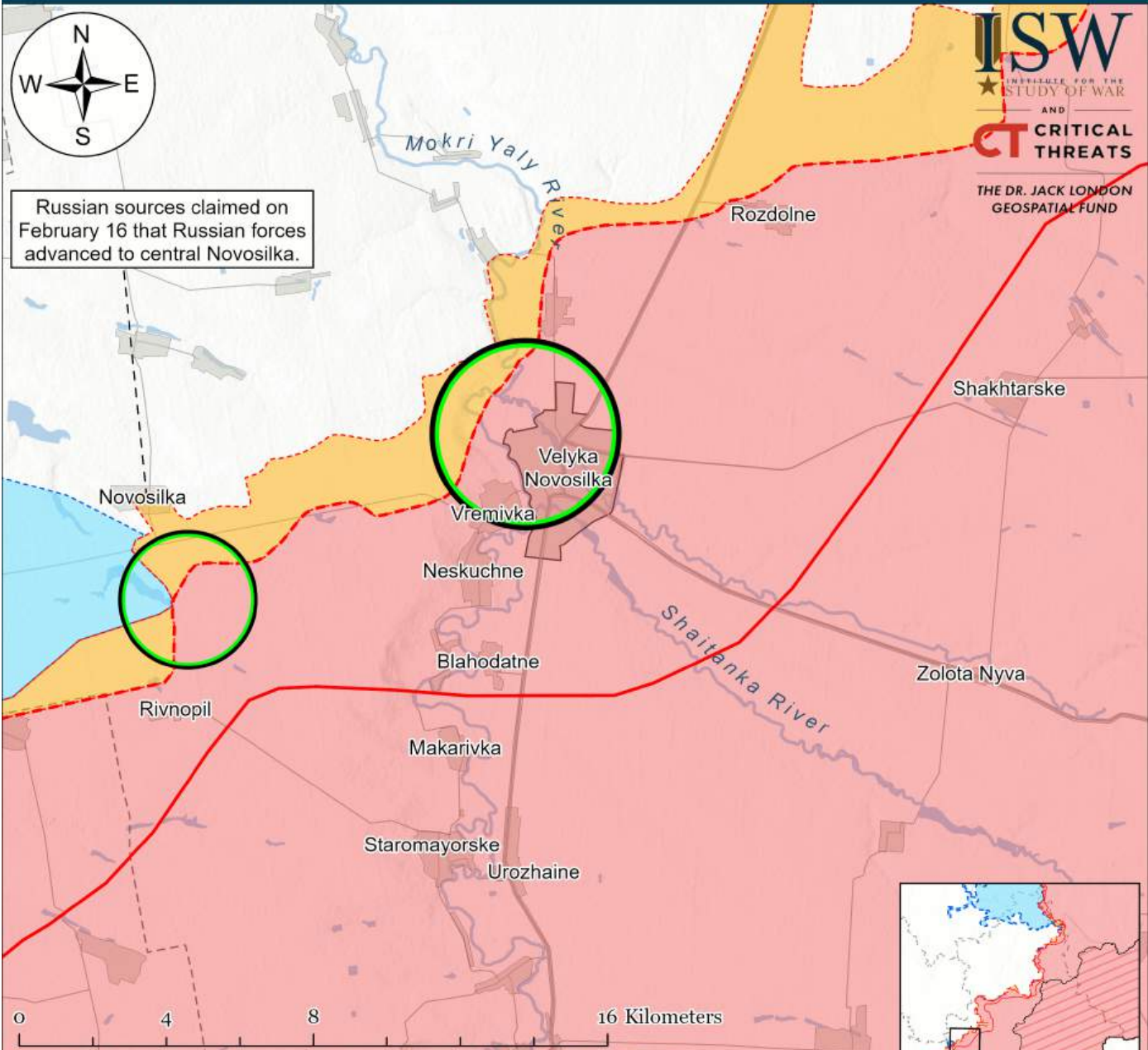


Russian forces continued offensive operations near Velyka Novosilka on February 16 but did not make any confirmed advances. Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Velyka Novosilka itself, north of Velyka Novosilka near Novyi Komar, northwest of Velyka Novosilka toward Burlatske, and west of Velyka Novosilka near Novosilka on February 15 and 16.[96] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces conducted a mechanized assault of an unspecified echelon using vehicles equipped with electronic warfare (EW) systems towards Novosilka.[97]

Unconfirmed Russian-claimed advances: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced to central Novosilka, in Novoocheretuvate (north of Velyka Novosilka), and towards Dniproenerhiia (north of Novoocheretuvate).[98]








Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 5th Tank Brigade (36th CAA, EMD) are reportedly operating near Novoocheretuvate; elements of the 40th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) are reportedly operating near Dniproenerhiia; and elements of the 60th Motorized Rifle Brigade (5th CAA, EMD) are reportedly operating near Velyka Novosilka.[99]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Velyka Novosilka Direction February 16, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



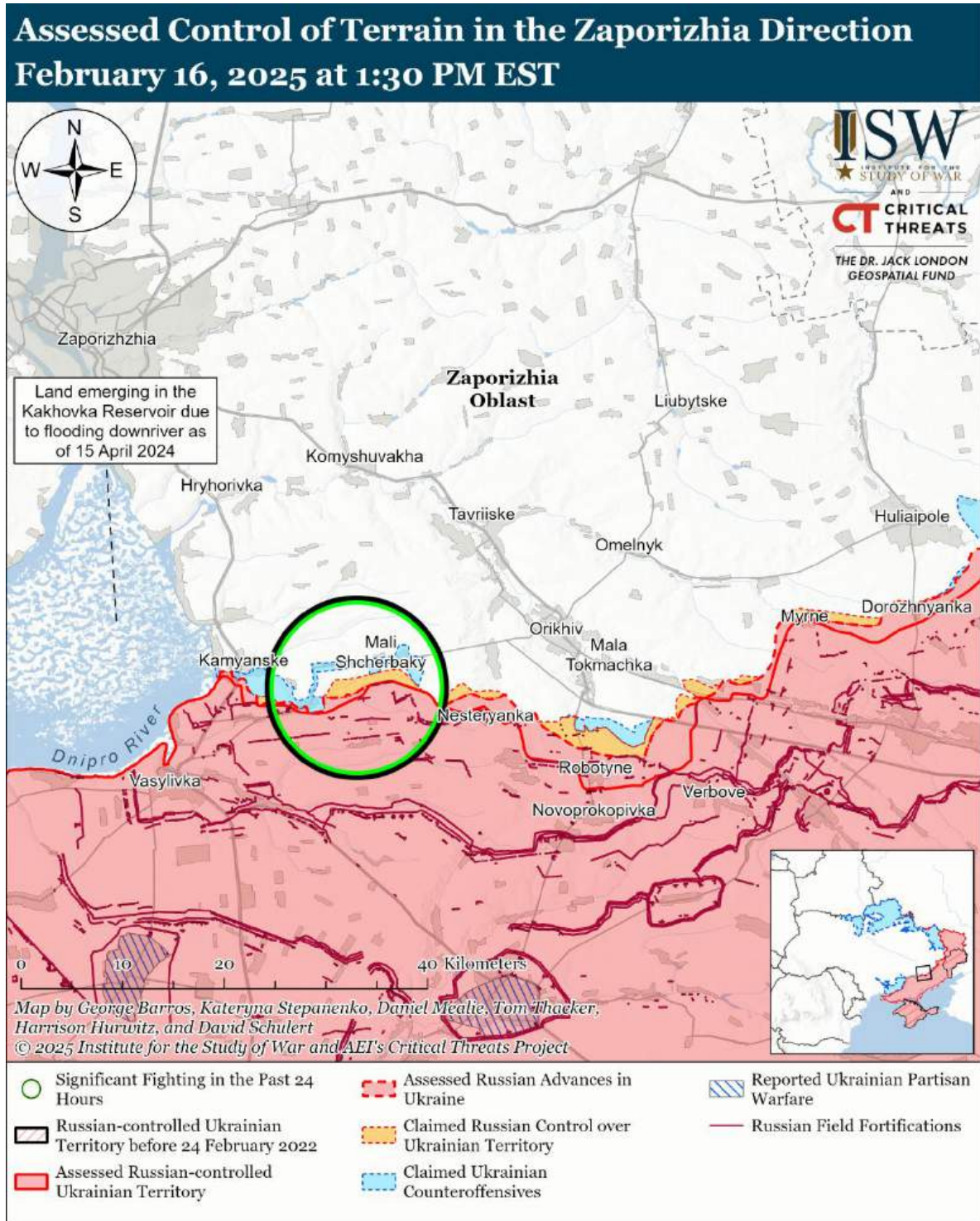
Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Daniel Mealie, Tom Thacker, Harrison Hurwitz, and David Schulert

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- | | | |
|--|--|---|
|  Significant Fighting in the Past 24 Hours |  Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine |  Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare |
|  Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before 24 February 2022 |  Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory |  Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives |
|  Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory | | |

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

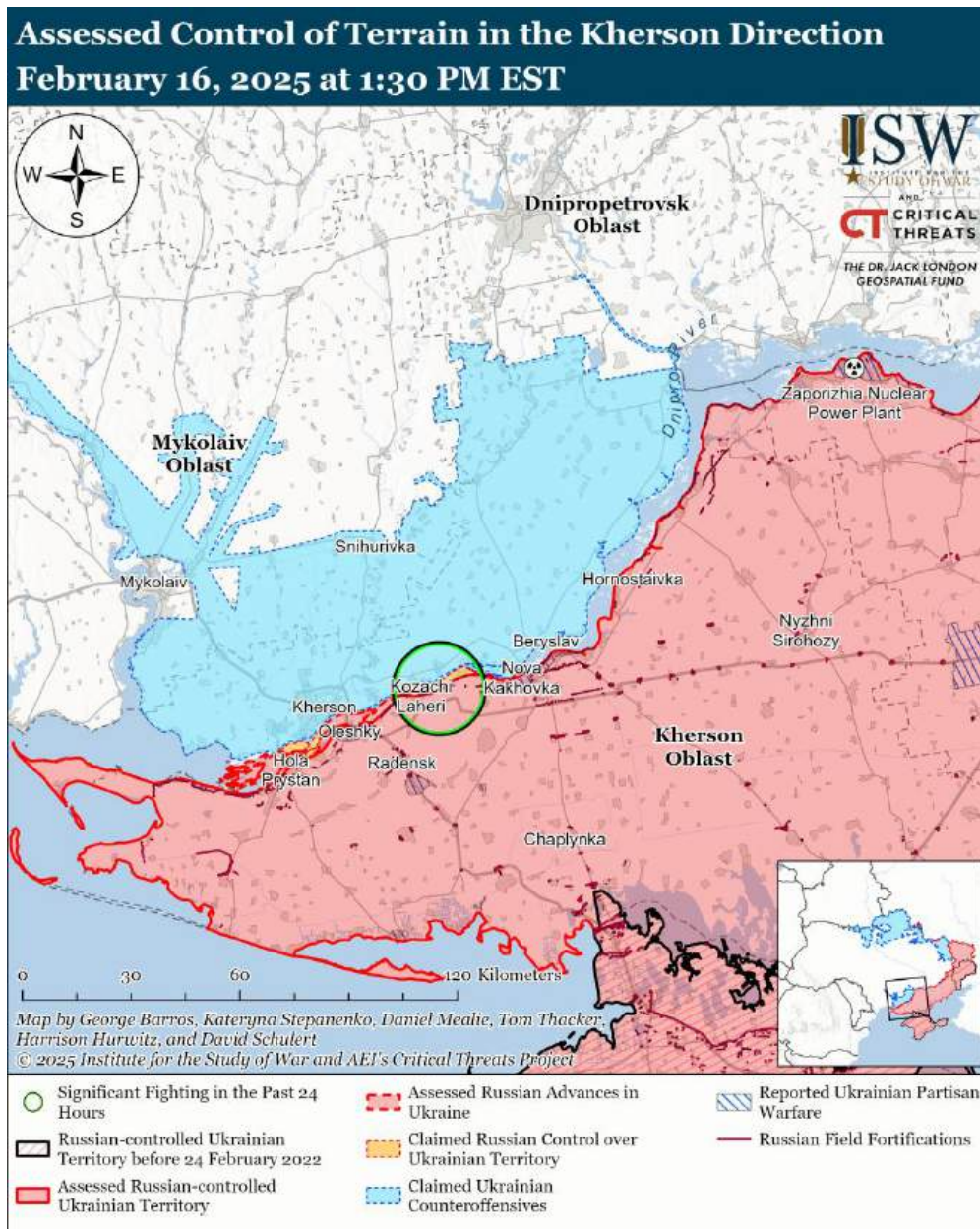
Russian forces continued limited ground attacks in western Zaporizhia Oblast on February 16 but did not advance. Russian forces attacked northwest of Robotyne near Novoandriivka, Shcherbaky, Mali Shcherbaky, and Pyatykhatky on February 15 and 16.[100]



Russian operations continue to disrupt the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) at the Russian-occupied Zaporizhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP). Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Spokesperson Heorhyi Tykhyi stated on February 16 that Russian forces prevented IAEA experts from leaving the ZNPP following two similar rotation disruptions in January 2025 and earlier in February 2025.[101]

Russian forces continued limited ground attacks in the Dnipro direction and on the islands in the Dnipro River Delta on February 15 and 16 but did not advance.[102]

Russian milbloggers complained about insufficient quantities of boats in the Dnipro direction as Russian forces are using Soviet-era fishing boats to deliver cargo and personnel to frontline positions.[103]



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 series of missile and drone strikes against Ukraine targeting critical infrastructure on the night of February 15 to 16. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched 143 Shahed and decoy drones from Oryol and Bryansk oblasts and Shatalovo, Smolensk Oblast and two ballistic missiles targeting Odesa Oblast from occupied Crimea.[104] The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Ukrainian forces shot down 95 drones over Kharkiv, Poltava, Sumy, Chernihiv, Cherkasy, Kyiv, Zhytomyr, Khmelnytskyi, Dnipropetrovsk, and Mykolaiv oblasts and that 46 decoy drones were "lost," likely due to Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW) interference. Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces struck Kyiv, Sumy, Mykolaiv, and Odesa oblasts.[105] Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shymhal stated that Russian drones damaged the Mykolaiv Thermal Power Plant (TPP) in Mykolaiv City, disrupting heat supply to Ukrainian civilians.[106]

The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Ukrainian forces downed six Iskander-M and Kh-23 ballistic missiles; one Kh-101 cruise missile, and 479 Shahed drones from February 10 to 16.[107]

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported on February 15 that Ukrainian authorities are still working to extinguish fires following the February 14 Russian strike on the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant (NPP).[108] The IAEA confirmed that the Russian strike breached the outer and inner cladding of the New Safe Confinement (NSC) and damaged equipment and electrical cables.

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

Nothing significant to report.

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

Nothing significant to report.

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)

ISW is not publishing coverage of activities in Russian-occupied areas today.

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

Nothing significant to report.

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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