

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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March 3, 2024, 5:15pm 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 12:30pm ET on March 3. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the March 4 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

China and Turkey continue to pursue their own negotiation platforms for a settlement in Ukraine, which the Kremlin is exploiting to further its own information operations aimed at discouraging continued international support for Ukraine. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Galuzin and Chinese Special Representative for Eurasian Affairs Li Hui met in Moscow on March 2 to discuss China’s desire to facilitate peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine.[1] Galuzin and Li noted that it is “impossible” to discuss a settlement in Ukraine without Russia’s participation and without “taking into account [Russia’s] interests in the security sphere.” Galuzin and Li added that Western and Ukrainian “ultimatums” and “dialogue formats” only “harm the prospects for a settlement and cannot serve as [the settlement’s] basis.” Li is expected to visit Ukraine and unspecified EU states following his meetings in Russia.[2] Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan stated during the Antalya Diplomatic Forum on March 3 that Turkey hopes talks for a ceasefire in Ukraine will “start soon” and that Turkey believes that “both sides have reached the limits” of what they can achieve through military means.[3] Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan recently announced that Turkey is prepared to provide another negotiation platform for Russia and Ukraine, which Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov publicly rejected on March 1.[4]

Russian officials continue to falsely blame Ukraine and the West for the lack of peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, despite numerous public Russian statements suggesting or explicitly stating that Russia is not interested in good faith peace negotiations with Ukraine.[5] Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov claimed during a panel at the Antalya Diplomatic Forum on March 2 that Ukraine lacks the “goodwill” to negotiate with Russia, insinuating that the lack of substantive negotiations is Ukraine’s fault and not Russia’s fault.[6] Lavrov claimed that people who misunderstand which party is at fault “lack understanding” about the reality of the situation. Russian Permanent Representative to the UN Vasily Nebenzya claimed during an interview with Russian TV channel

Rossiia 24 on March 3 that Russia has never refused negotiations, but that Ukraine refuses to talk to Russia.[7] Nebenzya stated that there are currently no negotiation efforts with Ukraine directly or through intermediaries. **ISW continues to assess that any Russian statements suggesting that Russia is or always has been interested in peace negotiations are very likely efforts to feign interest to prompt preemptive Western concessions regarding Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity and place the onus for negotiations on Ukraine and the West.**[8]

Recent relatively high Russian aviation losses appear to be prompting a significant decrease in Russian aviation activity in eastern Ukraine, although it is unclear how long this decrease in activity will last. Ukrainian Air Force Commander Lieutenant General Mykola Oleshchuk stated on March 2 that Russian aviation activity completely stopped in eastern Ukraine around 19:00 local time following the Ukrainian downing of two Russian Su-34 aircraft.[9] Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat stated that the decrease in Russian aviation activity continued on March 3 and that Russian forces have continued not to fly A-50 long-range radar detection aircraft following the destruction of an A-50 aircraft on February 23.[10] Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces have lost 15 aircraft since February 17, which is not negligible for the Russian military given that Russia likely has about 300 various Sukhoi fighter aircraft.[11] Previous Russian aircraft losses have prompted Russian forces to temporarily decrease aviation activity throughout Ukraine for significant periods of time, although it remains unclear how long this current period of temporarily decreased Russian aviation activity will last.[12] Russian forces appeared to tolerate an increased rate of aviation losses in recent weeks in order to conduct glide bomb strikes in support of ongoing Russian offensive operations in eastern Ukraine, and the Russian command may decide in the future to assume the risk of continued aviation losses in pursuit of further tactical gains.[13]

Delays in Western security assistance will likely make Ukraine's energy infrastructure more vulnerable to Russian strikes. The *Financial Times* published an interview on March 3 with Maksym Timchenko, the executive of Ukraine's largest private energy company DTEK, in which Timchenko warned that delays in security assistance have weakened Ukraine's ability to counter Russian attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure.[14] Timchenko stated that Ukraine was initially prepared to protect energy infrastructure at the beginning of Winter 2023-2024 but that in recent weeks more Russian drones and missiles have reached their targets.[15] Timchenko stated that Russian forces have targeted Ukrainian energy infrastructure 160 times in 2024 and that more than one million households and businesses have suffered from blackouts.[16] Russian forces launched several massive strike series against Ukraine in December 2023 and January and February 2024, likely forcing Ukrainian forces to expend a significant number of interceptors.[17] Ukrainian officials have stressed that Ukraine is facing a "critical shortage" of air defense missiles, and US officials have reportedly assessed that this shortage will become increasingly significant through spring and summer 2024 without further security assistance to Ukraine.[18] Timchenko noted that Ukraine's economy depends on the stability of its energy grid, and major malfunctions in the energy grid would likely significantly disrupt ongoing Ukrainian efforts to expand its defense industrial base (DIB).[19] Limited effective air defense systems, dwindling air defense missile stocks, and continued Russian missile and drone strikes are likely forcing Ukraine to make difficult choices about air defense coverage.[20]

Russian forces operating around Avdiivka appear to be adapting to conducting offensive ground operations with trained and untrained personnel. The *Washington Post* published interviews on March 2 with seven Ukrainian servicemen from the 3rd Assault Brigade who discussed overwhelming Russian wave attacks in Avdiivka in the lead-up to Russia’s capture of the settlement in mid-February. Several interviewed Ukrainian servicemen described Russian forces involved in later direct assaults on Ukrainian positions as well-prepared. One Ukrainian soldier told the *Washington Post* that about three-quarters of Russian personnel his unit engaged with near Avdiivka appeared to have “decent” military training and the rest were “just confused.”^[21] One Ukrainian serviceman recalled that a group of well-trained Russian soldiers used rocket-propelled grenades to enter their positions, while another serviceman recalled that inexperienced Russian servicemen avoided attacking his position after he was able to shoot eight soldiers in one day. The serviceman stated that the Russian military sent inexperienced personnel who appeared to be 40 to 50 years old to attack in waves each morning, afternoon, and evening without protective vests or helmets near Avdiivka. Another Ukrainian serviceman observed that the Russian skill levels were not “really consistent” and that some servicemen had more advanced equipment than their counterparts who only had basic rifles. The reports about inconsistencies in the nature of Russian attacks and in the quality of attacking personnel indicate that Russian forces may be conducting layered ground attacks alternating between groups of trained forces and untrained forces, likely consisting of mobilized personnel or Russian “Storm” units composed of recruited convicts.^[22] Commander of the 2nd Assault Battalion of the 3rd Brigade Mykola Zynkevych similarly recalled in an interview with a Ukrainian publication that Russian forces used 20 to 30 people to attack one position — a lot more than Russian forces used in similar attacks during the effort to seize Bakhmut.^[23] Russian forces likely used poorly trained personnel to carry out mass daily attacks on Ukrainian positions and employed trained personnel with better equipment to assault specific positions after exhausting Ukrainian forces. Russian forces are likely attempting to adapt ground attacks to sustain a higher tempo of offensive operations near Avdiivka with personnel of varying levels of training and to prevent rapid attrition of better-trained units and formations.

German officials confirmed that the Kremlin is conducting an information operation aimed at deterring Western states, particularly Germany, from sending additional military aid to Ukraine. German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius stated on March 3 that a leaked recording of German military officers discussing the theoretical provision of Taurus missiles to Ukraine is part of the “information war” that Russian President Vladimir Putin is waging against the West.^[24] Pistorius stated that the Kremlin is conducting a “hybrid attack aimed at disinformation, division, [and] undermining [the West’s] resolve [and] unity.” Kremlin newswire *TASS* and veteran Russian propagandist and *RT* editor-in-chief Margarita Simonyan amplified the audio recording on March 1, in which German military personnel discuss how much training and preparation the German military would need to provide should Germany decide to supply Ukraine with Taurus missiles, and should Ukraine decide to conduct a complicated long-range precision strike against Russian targets such as the Kerch Strait Bridge.^[25] Kremlin officials and Russian milbloggers seized on the audio to accuse Germany of planning a strike on the Kerch Strait Bridge and to accuse NATO of escalatory actions.^[26] Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev accused Germany of “preparing for war with Russia” and claimed that any effort to present the audio as an innocent “game of rockets and tanks” is “false.”^[27] Russian officials have previously intensified their efforts to portray the provision of certain Western systems to Ukraine as significant escalations when those systems are subjects of

The Russian Anti-Terrorism Committee (NAK) announced on March 3 that the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) conducted a localized counter-terrorism operation in Karabulak, Republic of Ingushetia. Kremlin newswire *TASS* reported that Russian FSB officers conducted the counter-terrorism operation on four streets in Karabulak and killed six militants who were reportedly members of the Islamic State, were on the Russian federal wanted list, and had committed previous crimes.[29] Russian law enforcement has routinely attributed terrorist operations in the north Caucasus to the Islamic State when militants may be affiliated with the Islamic State or a different terrorist organization.[30] Russian milbloggers claimed that the militants wounded several Russian law enforcement personnel, while a Russian outlet reported that a man walking by was killed in a shootout.[31]

Key Takeaways:

- **China and Turkey continue to pursue their own negotiation platforms for a settlement in Ukraine, which the Kremlin is exploiting to further its own information operations aimed at discouraging continued international support for Ukraine.**
- **Recent relatively high Russian aviation losses appear to be prompting a significant decrease in Russian aviation activity in eastern Ukraine, although it is unclear how long this decrease in activity will last.**
- **Delays in Western security assistance will likely make Ukraine's energy infrastructure more vulnerable to Russian strikes.**
- **Russian forces operating around Avdiivka appear to be adapting to conducting offensive ground operations with trained and untrained personnel.**
- **German officials confirmed that the Kremlin is conducting an information operation aimed at deterring Western states, particularly Germany, from sending additional military aid to Ukraine.**
- **The Russian Anti-Terrorism Committee (NAK) announced on March 3 that the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) conducted a localized counter-terrorism operation in Karabulak, Republic of Ingushetia.**
- **Positional engagements continued throughout the theater on March 3.**
- **Russian regional administrations continue efforts to expand the aperture of ongoing crypto-mobilization efforts.**

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



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

- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)

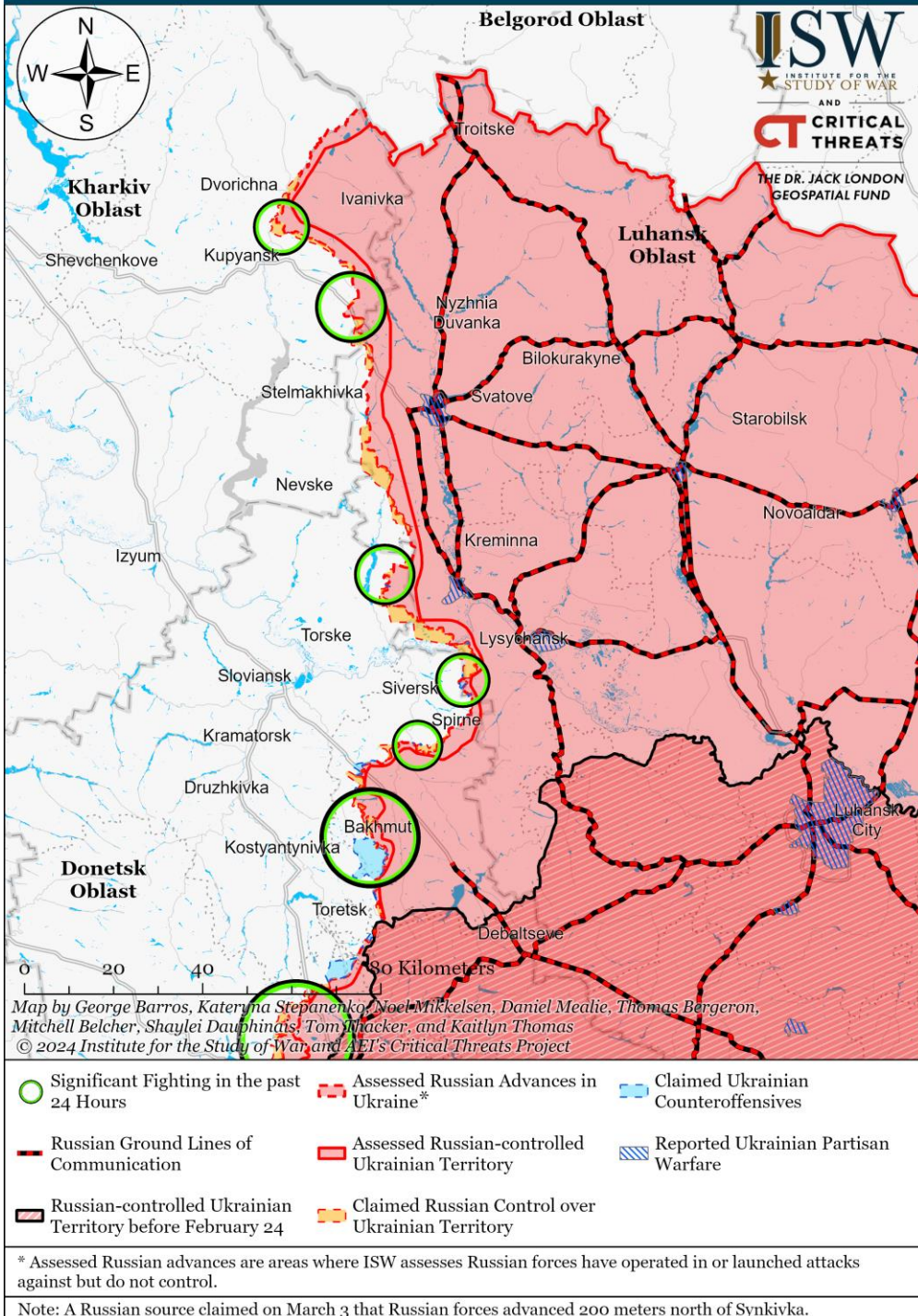
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis
- Russian Air, Missile,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

Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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

Positional engagements continued along the Kupyansk-Kreminna line on March 3. A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces captured several unspecified positions near Tabaivka (southeast of Kupyansk).[32] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced 200 meters on the northern outskirts of Synkivka (northeast of Kupyansk).[33] ISW has not observed visual evidence of these claims. Positional fighting continued near Synkivka, southeast of Kupyansk near Tabaivka, west of Kreminna near Terny and Yampolivka, and south of Kreminna near Bilohorivka and Verkhokamyanske.[34] Ukrainian Khortytsia Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash stated that Russian forces have slightly reduced the intensity of their offensive operations and are consolidating new positions in the Kupyansk direction.[35] Yevlash added that Russian forces are regrouping and preparing assault groups in the Lyman direction and are transferring forces to the Terny and Yampolivka areas. Elements of the Russian 7th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People’s Republic [LNR] Army Corps) and the Chechen Akhmat Spetsnaz “Aida” detachment are reportedly operating near Bilohorivka.[36]

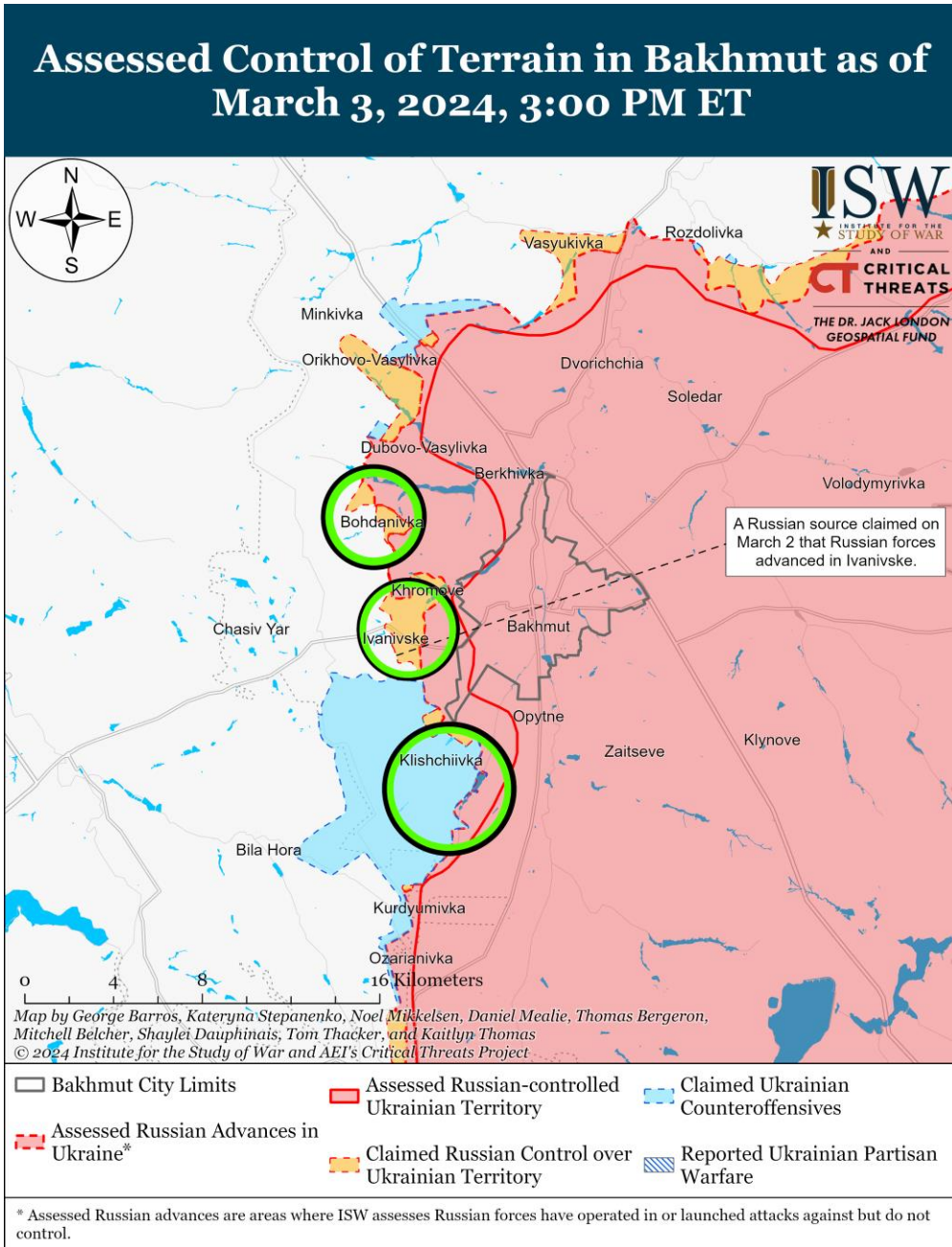
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of March 3, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

Positional engagements continued near Bakhmut on March 3, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Positional engagements continued northwest of Bakhmut near Bohdanivka; west of

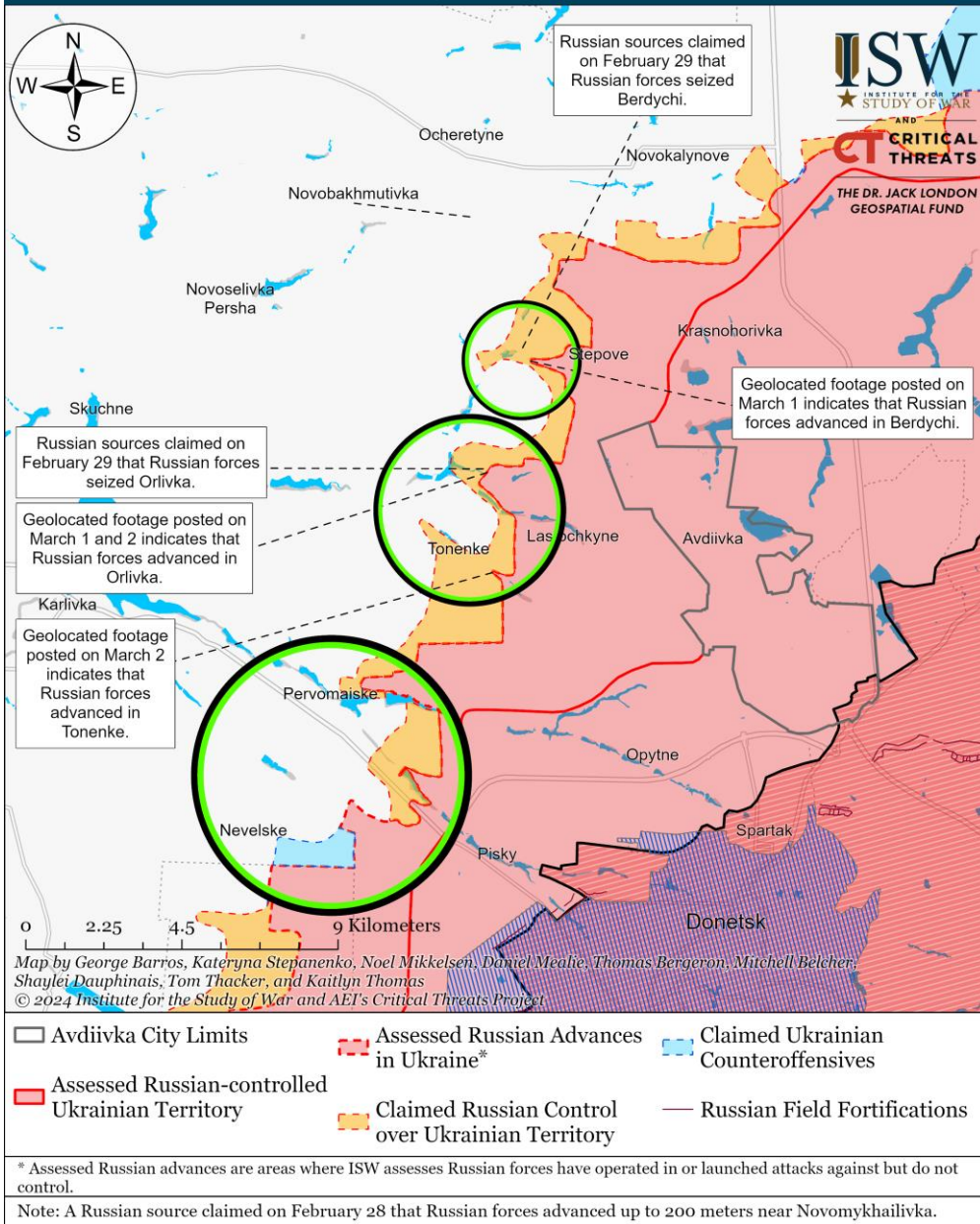
Bakhmut near Ivanivske; and south and southwest of Bakhmut near Klischiivka, Andriivka, Pivdenne, and Niu York.[37] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian Aerospace Forces (VKS) intensified airstrikes on Ukrainian positions in eastern Chasiv Yar (west of Bakhmut).[38] Elements of the Russian 98th Airborne (VDV) Division are reportedly operating northwest of Ivanivske, and elements of the 83rd VDV Brigade are reportedly operating near Klischiivka.[39]



Positional engagements continued near Avdiivka on March 3, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Positional engagements continued northwest of Avdiivka near Berdychi, Stepove, and Orlivka; west of Avdiivka near Tonenke; and southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske and Nevelske.[40] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Dmytro Lykhovyi stated that the operational situation in Berdychi, Orlivka, and Tonenke is stabilizing and that Ukrainian forces are repelling Russian attacks in these settlements.[41] Lykhovyi added that Russian forces have not

captured Berdychi, Orlivka, or Tonenke, but have had some localized successes in the Avdiivka direction. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are successfully defending against Russian attacks west of Avdiivka by exploiting Russian military shortcomings. The milblogger claimed that some Russian motorized rifle units lack the grenade launchers needed to defeat Ukrainian armored vehicles and that the Russian command continues to use inaccurate maps that overestimate Russian terrain control.^[42] Elements of the Russian 30th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Combined Arms Army [CAA], Central Military District [CMD]) are reportedly operating near Berdychi; elements of the 110th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic Army Corps [DNR AC]) are reportedly operating near Nevelske; and elements of the 14th "Kalmius" Artillery Brigade (1st DNR AC) are reportedly operating near Avdiivka.^[43]

Assessed Control of Terrain near Avdiivka as of March 3, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



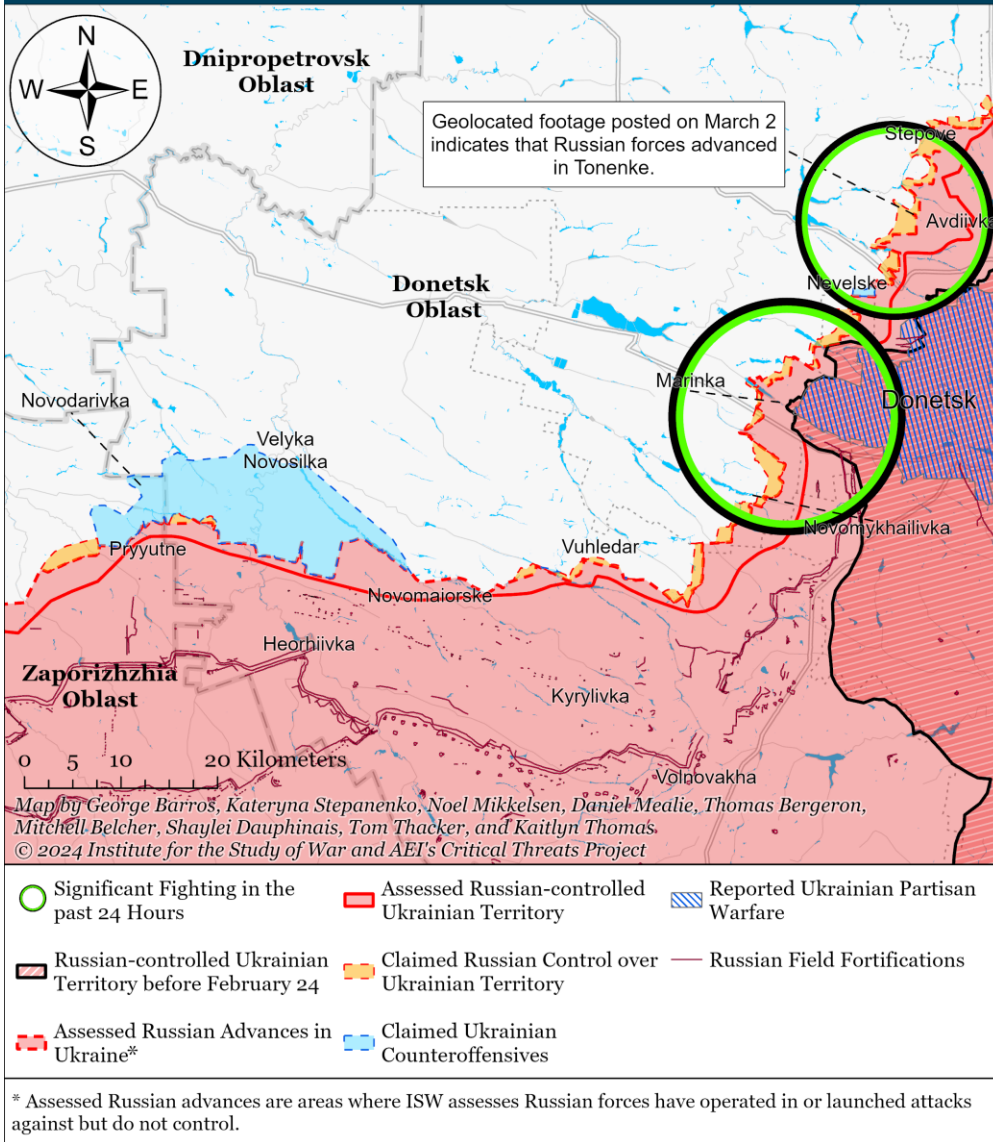
Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Commander Brigadier General Oleksandr Tarnavskiy stated on March 3 that Russian forces dropped nine munitions with chemical substances from drones on Ukrainian positions in the Tavriisk direction (Avdiivka through western Zaporizhia Oblast) — an apparent violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.[44]

Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that Russian forces have committed several elements of the Russian Central Grouping of Forces to the Avdiivka direction. Mashovets stated that the Russian military committed from the CMD elements of the 2nd CAA; the 41st CAA, and the main

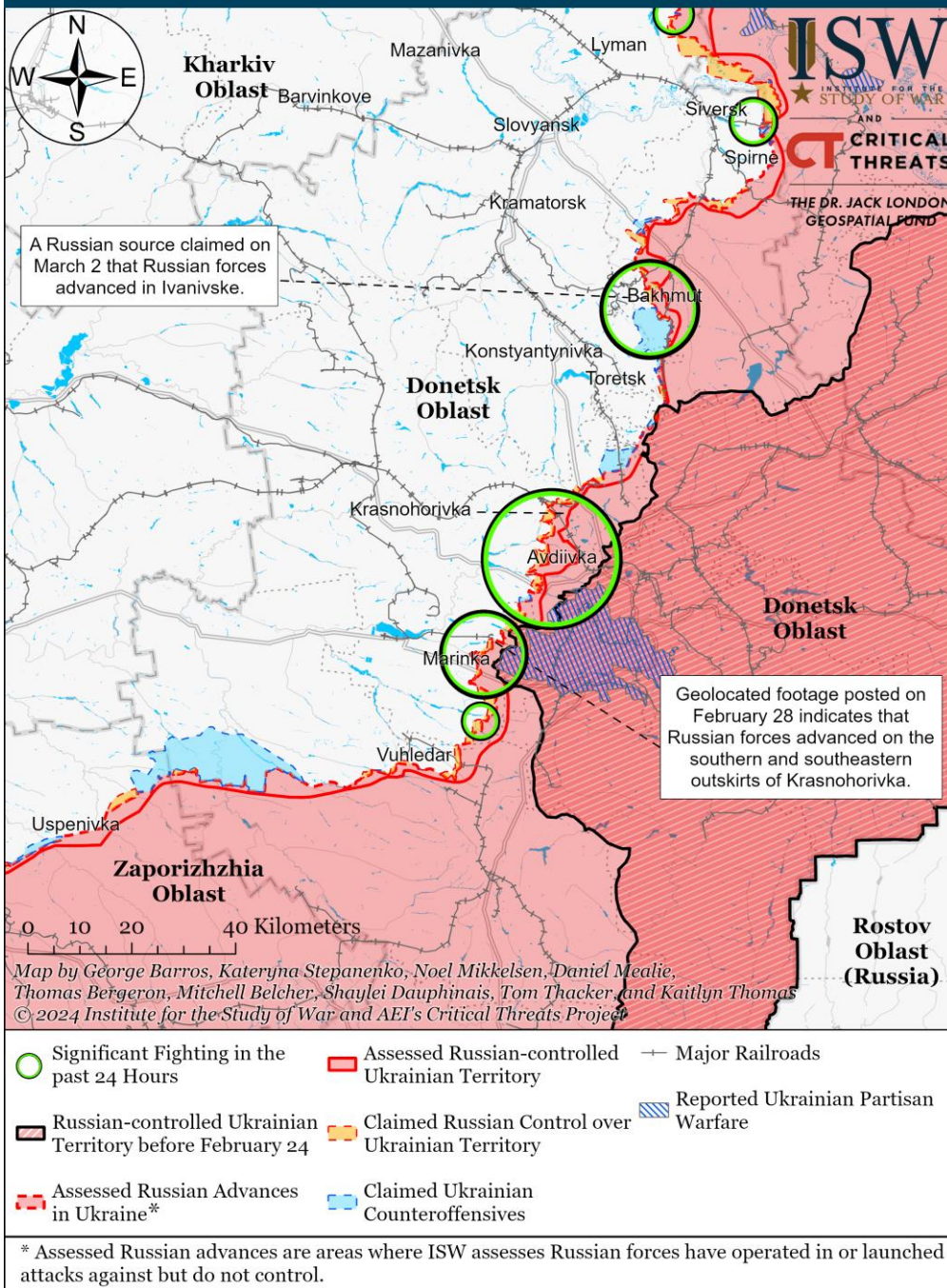
forces of its 90th Tank Division; from the Southern Military District (SMD) elements of the 8th CAA, including the main forces of its 20th and 15th motorized rifle divisions; and the 1st DNR AC at almost full strength.^[45] Mashovets stated that Russian grouping of forces in southwestern Ukraine, likely referring to Avdiivka through western Donetsk Oblast, consists of about 86,332 personnel.^[46] Mashovets stated that the Russian “Dnepr” Grouping of Forces, which is operating in Kherson and Zaporizhia oblasts, consists of slightly fewer personnel.^[47]

Positional engagements continued west and southwest of Donetsk City on March 3, although there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Positional engagements continued west of Donetsk City near Krasnohorivka and Heorhiivka, and southwest of Donetsk City near Pobieda and Novomykhailivka.^[48] Elements of the Russian 305th Artillery Brigade (5th CAA, Eastern Military District [EMD]) are reportedly operating near Novomykhailivka.^[49]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Western Donetsk Oblast as of March 3, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

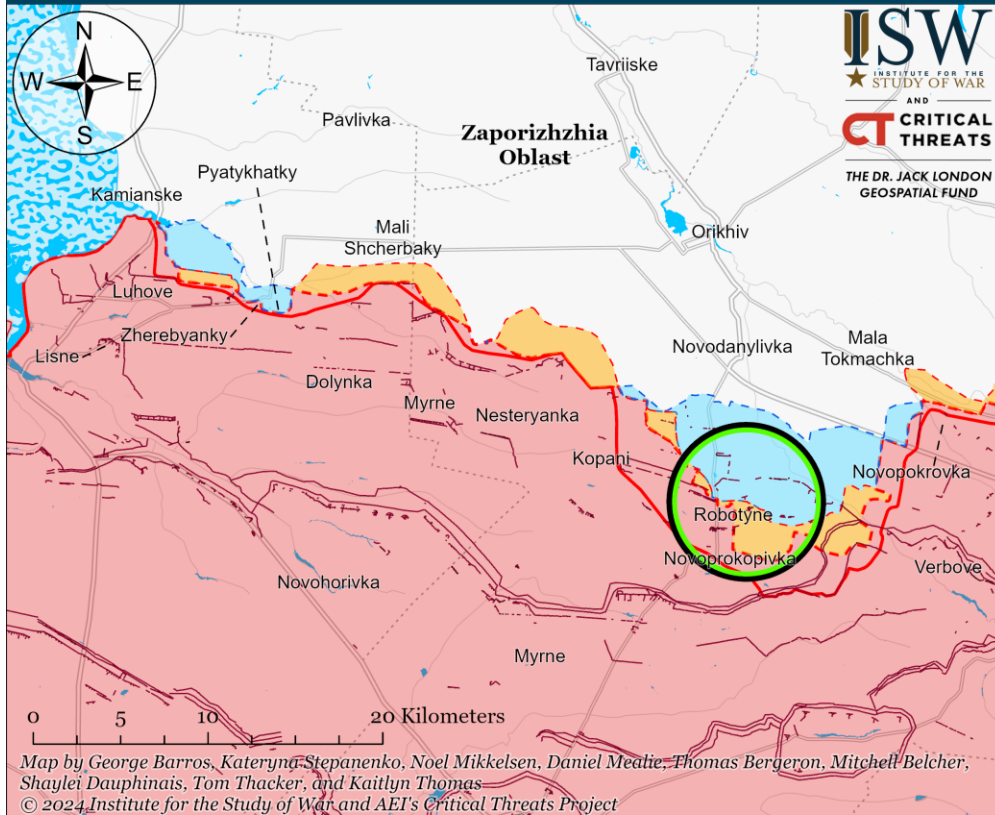


A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area on March 3. The milblogger claimed that Russian forces successfully attacked south of Velyka Novosilka near Staromayorske and southwest of Velyka Novosilka near Zolota Nyva.[50] Elements of the Russian 394th Motorized Rifle Regiment (127th Motorized Rifle Division, 5th CAA, EMD) are reportedly operating near Staromayorske; and elements of the 35th Radiological, Chemical, and Biological Defense Regiment (35th CAA, EMD) are reportedly operating near Dorozhnyanka (south

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

Positional engagements continued near Robotyne in western Zaporizhia Oblast but did not result in any changes on the frontline as of March 3. Positional battles occurred near Robotyne and west of Novoprokopivka (south of Robotyne).[52] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are conducting a maneuver defense in Robotyne, and another milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are remotely mining the area to slow Russian advances.[53] The milblogger observed that Russian forces are advancing more slowly near Verbove (east of Robotyne) than near Robotyne and that Russian forces have intensified artillery fire in the area in recent months.[54] The milblogger added that elements of the Russian 7th Guards Airborne (VDV) Division advanced near Verbove, but ISW has not observed confirmation of this claim.[55] Elements of the Russian 4th Guards Anti-Aircraft Missile Regiment (76th Guards VDV Division) are reportedly operating in the Verbove-Robotyne area, elements of the Russian 42nd Motorized Rifle Division (58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating near Robotyne, and drone operators of the “Russiye Yastreby” (Russian Hawks) detachment of the 503rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (19th Motorized Rifle Division, 58th CAA, SMD) are operating in the Zaporizhia direction.[56]

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

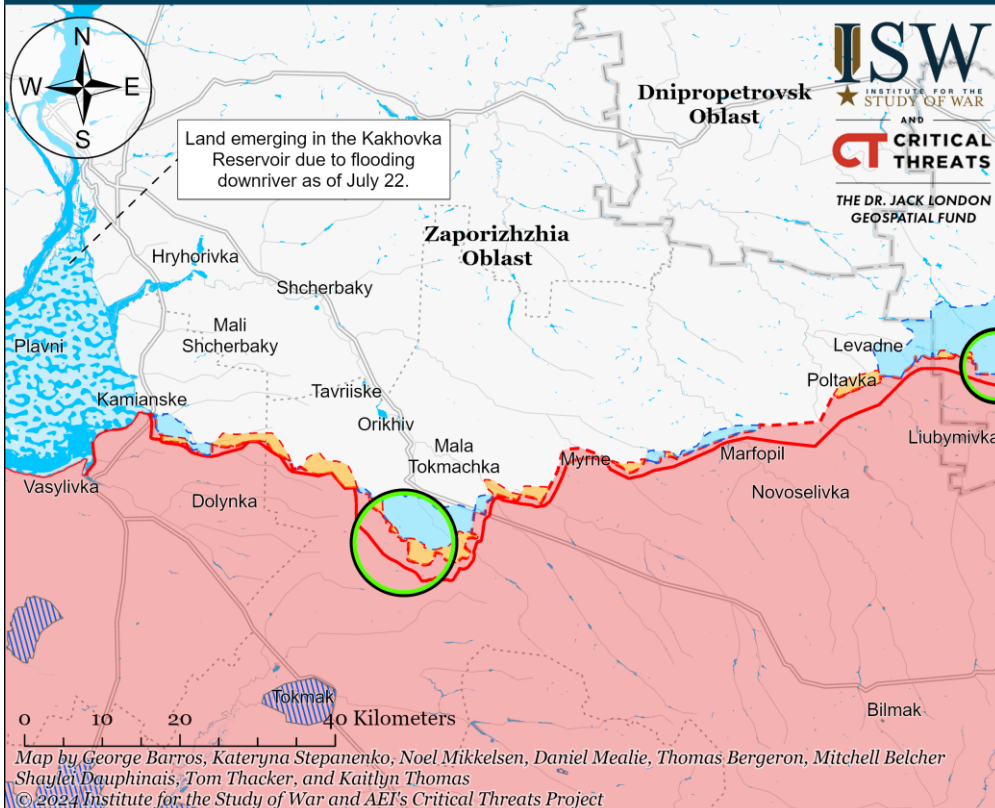


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
- 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 February 28 that Russian forces advanced 500 meters between Robotyne and Verbove.

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



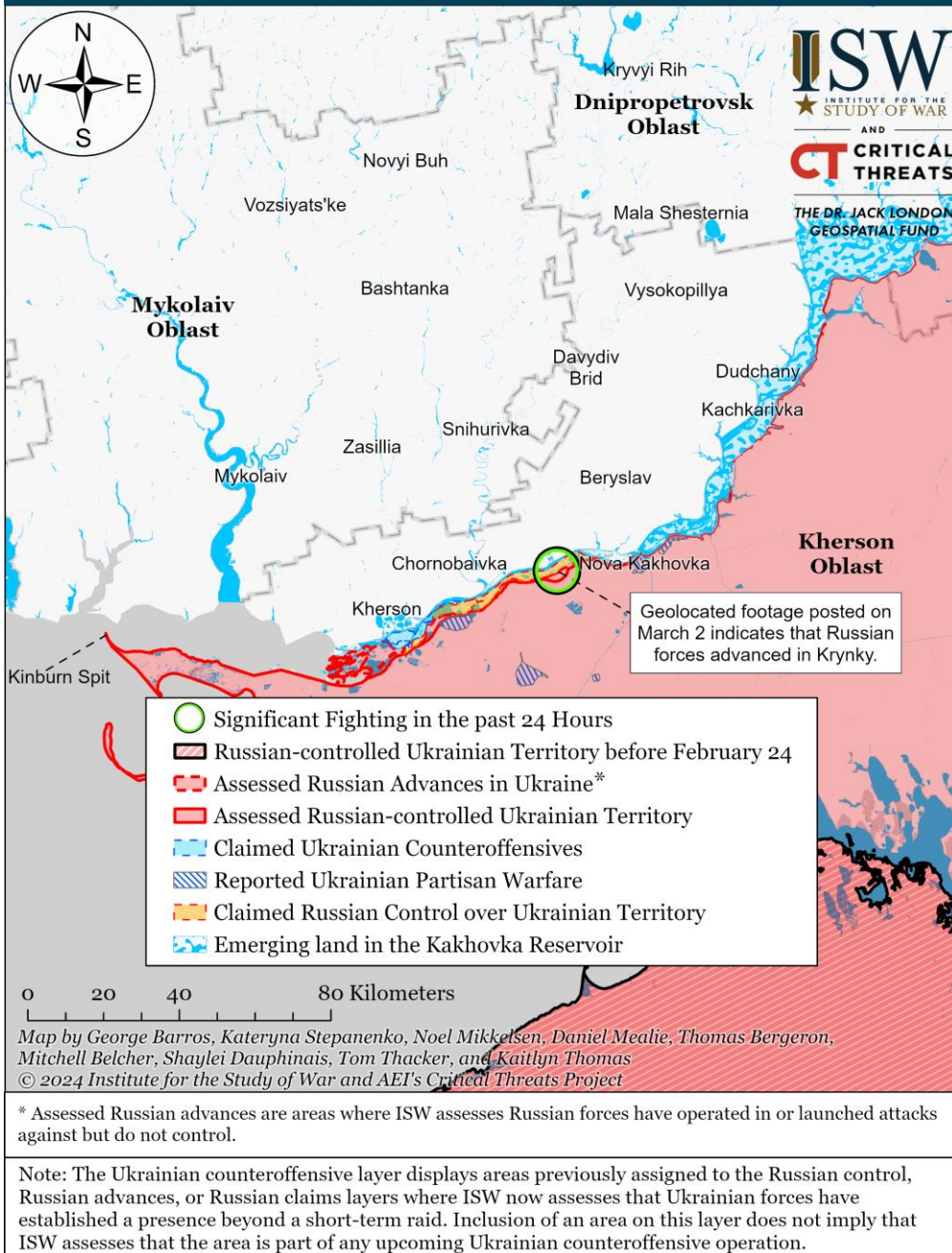
Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours	Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory	Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24	Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory	Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
Assessed Russian Advances in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

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

Note: A Russian source claimed on February 28 that Russian forces advanced 500 meters between Robotyne and Verbove.

Positional engagements continued near Krynky and the Antonivsky roadway bridge in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast on March 3.^[57] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Russian lower-level commanders are continuing to make false reports to Russian military commanders about successful and accurate Russian strikes on Ukrainian positions with TOS multiple rocket launchers (MLRS).^[58] A Russian opposition outlet published a video in which Russian servicemen complained about waiting for two days to be evacuated from a trench in Krynky.^[59]

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



Ukrainian forces launched a mass drone strike on an oil depot in occupied Feodosia, Crimea overnight on March 2 and March 3.[60] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces shot down all 38 drones that Ukrainian forces launched at targets in Crimea, but a Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Russian forces shot down 36 out of 38 drones.[61] The milblogger claimed that one drone struck and insignificantly damaged an oil pipeline at the oil depot, while another drone fell onto the Tavrida Highway near Feodosia.[62] Ukrainian Crimean-based partisan group “Atesh” also reported that a Ukrainian drone destroyed the oil pipeline, and Russian sources amplified footage and

reports of explosions near the oil depot.[63]

Ukrainian strikes in the Black Sea are continuing to prevent the Russian Black Sea Fleet (BSF) from assuming a greater role in the war effort. Ukrainian Navy Spokesperson Captain Third Rank Dmytro Pletenchuk observed that Russian vessels are unable to freely operate in the western and southwestern Black Sea and rarely appear south of Crimea.[64] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that the Russian BSF command is considering including the Ukrainian naval landing vessel *Konstantin Olshansky*, which Russia seized in 2014, into its combat composition due to recent naval vessel losses. Mashovets added that the Russian BSF command also encountered certain difficulties when attempting to commission newly built ships. Mashovets stated that Project 22800 small missile ship *Amur*, which the BSF command planned to include in the 41st Brigade of Missile Boats (BSF), malfunctioned during tests in Novorossiysk, Krasnodar Krai.

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

The Ukrainian Southern Operational Command reported on March 3 that Russian forces launched a Kh-31P missile at Odesa Oblast, but the missile failed and fell over the Black Sea.[65] Ukrainian Dnipropetrovsk Oblast Military Administration Head Serhiy Lysak stated that Russian forces struck Dnipro City with an unspecified missile and targeted Nikopol with a drone.[66] Ukrainian Pokrovsk City Military Administration reported that unspecified Russian missiles also struck residential buildings in Pokrovsk, Donetsk Oblast.[67]

A Russian milblogger claimed on March 3 that Russian forces conducted glide bomb strikes in a “troika” (trio) of Su-24, Su-34, and Su-35 fighter aircraft.[68] The milblogger claimed that Russian forces recently began conducting more glide bomb strikes because Russia has modernized a large number of standard FAB-250 and FAB-500 bombs and Su-24s and Su-34s with Universal Gliding and Correction Modules (UMPCs), which sharply increased the number of aircraft able to use glide bombs. The milblogger claimed that the “troika” is well equipped to defend against Ukrainian air defense systems, despite recent Ukrainian reporting suggesting that Russian forces have lost 15 Sukhoi aircraft since February 17.[69]

Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated on March 3 that the Russian military command deployed up to four Su-34 fighter aircraft from Lipetsk airbase to conduct air strikes in the Mariupol and Avdiivka directions on February 29, following the loss of three Russian S-34s in southern and eastern Ukraine.[70] Mashovets reported that Russian forces conduct an average of 60-65 KAB glide bomb strikes per day and an estimated 120-130 KAB strikes per day in certain sectors of the front, possibly referring to the Avdiivka direction. Mashovets stated that the Russian military command has not abandoned its commitment to conducting large-scale air strike campaigns against Ukrainian forces.

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

Russian regional administrations continue efforts to expand the aperture of ongoing cryptomobilization efforts. Russian opposition outlet *Mobilization News* reported on March 3 that Novosibirsk Mayor Anatoly Lokot signed a decree ordering local public utility companies to hand over data on debtors to local military registration and recruitment offices.[71] Russian authorities are likely trying to collect specific information on Russians facing economic hardships in order to focus recruitment efforts on individuals more likely to be swayed by economic incentives for signing a contract for military service.

A Russian ultranationalist complained that the Russian military command did not properly recognize the involvement of Russian mobilized personnel in the Russian seizure of Avdiivka. Russian milblogger and serviceman Mikhail Polynkov claimed on March 3 that the Russian command has not yet awarded the 87th Separate Rifle Regiment (formerly the 119th regiment of the Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] People's Militia) for its participation in the seizure of Avdiivka.[72] Polynkov claimed that elements of the 87th Separate Rifle Regiment, mainly comprised of mobilized personnel from occupied Donetsk Oblast, have been participating in Russian offensive operations in the Avdiivka direction since December 2022, although ISW has not observed elements of the 87th Separate Rifle Regiment participating in the Russian offensive operation to seize Avdiivka that began in October 2023.[73] Polynkov claimed that the Russian command previously removed the commander of the 87th Separate Rifle Regiment but argued that this does not excuse the lack of recognition of the contributions of the regiment.[74] These complaints are indicative of persisting concerns among DNR and mobilized personnel about improper and unequal treatment within the Russian military.

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

A Russian milblogger claimed on March 2 that the Russian “Vostok” Design Bureau in Barnaul, Altai Krai plans to start mass producing the “Scalpel” multi-purpose drones in the coming months.[75] “Vostok” Design Bureau announced that it began testing the “Scalpel” drones in September 2023 and planned to start mass production in October 2023.[76] Russian sources claimed in November 2023 that Russian forces were already using the “Scalpel” drones as loitering munitions in Ukraine, although it is unclear at what scale Russian forces have been using the drones since then.[77] The “Vostok” Design Bureau is reportedly affiliated with the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) “Vostok” Battalion, which stated on March 1 that the battalion is still conducting tests of the “Scalpel” drones.[78]

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

Note: ISW will be publishing its coverage of Ukrainian defense industrial efforts on a weekly basis in the Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment. ISW will continue to track developments in Ukrainian defense industrial efforts daily and will refer to these efforts in assessments within the daily Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment and other ISW products when necessary.

ISW is not publishing coverage of Ukrainian defense industrial efforts today.

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)

Note: ISW will be publishing coverage of activities in Russian-occupied areas twice a week in the Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment. ISW will continue to track activities in Russian-occupied areas daily and will refer to these activities in assessments within the daily Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment and other ISW products when necessary.

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

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Ukrainian officials are reportedly preparing for intensified Russian information operations aiming to discredit Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. *Bloomberg* reported on March 3 that sources familiar with the matter stated that Ukrainian officials are preparing for a Russian disinformation campaign that will seek to spread doubts about Zelensky’s legitimacy as president, specifically among Ukrainian military personnel.[79] Ukrainian intelligence previously reported that the Kremlin has spent \$1.5 billion on an information operation titled “Maidan-3” that intends to sow panic and discontent among the Ukrainian population and drive a wedge between civilians and military and political leadership.[80] Ukraine’s Security Service (SBU) reported that Russian actors are likely to intensify the effort from March through May — a significant timeline since Ukraine would have held its presidential election on March 31 and would have begun a new presidential term on May 20 if Russia had not illegally invaded Ukraine.[81] *Bloomberg* reported that a central aspect of the Kremlin’s disinformation campaign will focus on the end of Zelensky’s five-year term in the absence of the presidential election.[82]

Russian actors are reportedly trying to spread panic amongst Ukrainians living in rear areas along relatively inactive sectors of the frontline. The Ukrainian Center for Countering Disinformation reported on March 3 that Russian actors are conducting a disinformation campaign alleging that Ukrainian civil servants are evacuating from Kherson City ahead of an alleged Russian offensive operation in order to cause panic.[83] A prominent Russian milblogger made similar claims about evacuations from Kharkiv City.[84] Russian offensive operations across the Dnipro River to west (right) bank Kherson Oblast and across the international border to Kharkiv City are massive undertakings for which ISW has not observed preparations and that ISW continues to assess remain highly unlikely at this time.[85]

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)

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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