Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, November 16, 2023

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November 16, 2023, 8:45pm ET

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

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

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

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 1:30pm ET on November 16. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the November 17 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russian forces conducted a series of missile and drone strikes against Ukraine on the night of November 15 to 16. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces launched 18 Shahed-131/136 drones of which Ukrainian forces destroyed 16.[1] The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched S-300 missiles targeting Kharkiv Oblast and that Ukrainian forces destroyed a Kh-59 cruise missile over Poltava Oblast on the evening of November 15.[2] Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat reported on November 16 that Russian forces changed the timing of the November 16 drone attack from their normal strike pattern by conducting the drone strikes until around 9:30am local time, as opposed to conducting the attacks at their usual time from around 10:00pm to 3:00-4:00am.[3] Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Captain First Rank Nataliya Humenyuk stated that the Russian military has concentrated over 800 missiles, including Kalibr and Onyx missiles, in occupied Crimea and intends to use all of them against Ukrainian energy infrastructure in winter 2023.[4]

Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev announced on November 16 that Russian authorities are strengthening Russian air defense over Russia's Central Federal Okrug, likely in response to Ukraine's recently implied intent to conduct an interdiction campaign against Russian supply routes in rear areas during the winter.

Patrushev also announced that Russian authorities have organized patrols to protect critical infrastructure facilities to prevent attacks and that the Russian government is funding the creation of "territorial defense lines" for oblasts bordering Ukraine. [5] Patrushev added that Russian authorities are updating a list of all critical infrastructure facilities – including fuel and energy facilities and important transportation objects – that require protection from unspecified threats. [6] The Central Federal Okrug consists of 18 federal subjects including Bryansk, Kursk, and Belgorod oblasts, which border Ukraine. [7] Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk stated on November 13 that Ukraine needs additional air defense systems and long-range missiles to strike Russian rear areas. [8] Ukrainian Ground Forces Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Volodymyr Fityo stated on November 12 that Ukrainian forces' current main task is to disrupt Russian ground lines of communications

Russian milbloggers continued to criticize actors in the Russian information space for distorting the reality of the Russian war effort, highlighting an emerging cyclical dynamic in the Russian information space in which the majority of Russian sources coalesce around a particular predominant narrative and, in turn, a subset of different sources coalesces to criticize the majority's prevailing opinion. A prominent Russian milblogger claimed on November 16 that Russian state media may have falsely convinced the Russian people that "everything is fine" in Russia's war in Ukraine.[10] The milblogger claimed that he does not understand why Russian state media devotes so much time to promoting narratives about the "imminent collapse of Ukraine" and portrays the Russian war effort so positively that Russian viewers think that signing a military service contract is unnecessary. Another Russian milblogger who previously served throughout the front in Ukraine and correctly assessed Russia's foundational problems in Kharkiv Oblast in spring 2022 criticized several unnamed Russian milbloggers for their recent overly positive reporting about Russian counterattacks on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast.[11] The milblogger claimed that the other milbloggers preemptively claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks on the east bank and criticized them for setting unrealistic expectations for Russian forces. The milblogger noted that such overoptimistic claims are forcing Russian servicemen to "catch up" to these Russian politicians' and commanders' unrealistic expectations of Russian battlefield successes. The milblogger's complaint suggests that the situation in Kherson Oblast remains very ambiguous and is dynamic. The milblogger's complaint mirrors recent reports that the Russian General Staff uses battlefield maps that differ from tactical reality and that local Russian commanders order Russian forces to conduct routine assaults to make gains that align with the Russian General Staff's inaccurate maps.[12] Disjointed Kremlin efforts to consolidate control over the Russian information space and report overly optimistic news are likely creating these cycles of coalescence and backlash among Russian sources. The Russian information space may grow increasingly volatile as the rift between the Kremlin optimists and their critics expands.

Russian President Vladimir Putin awarded a prominent Russian milblogger who was previously critical of Russia's military performance during its full-scale invasion with a prestigious state honor, continuing the Kremlin's long-standing effort to coopt milbloggers and make them loyal to the Kremlin. Putin awarded founder of *Rybar* Telegram channel, Mikhail Zvinchuk, the Russian Order of Merit of the Fatherland Second Class for his efforts supporting the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine on November 16.[13] Other Russian milbloggers congratulated Zvinchuk and praised him for launching the first awarded Telegram channel in Russia.[14] Putin had previously engaged Zvinchuk by recruiting him to join the Kremlin working group on mobilization problems on December 20, 2022, which ISW assessed was Putin's first concerted attempt to regain control over the segment of Russia's domestic audience that turned to the Telegram information space for war coverage independent of Russian state media.[15]

Zvinchuk's *Rybar* project amassed an audience of over 1.2 million followers by covering Russian military operations in Ukraine and is frequently cited by Russian and Western media alike (including ISW). Russian investigative outlet *The Bell* reported that *Rybar* was originally a personal blog from its creation in 2018 until Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin reportedly began sponsoring the

channel from 2019 to 2021. [16] The Bell observed that Rybar frequently published posts that may have advanced Prigozhin's business interests in Syria during their partnership. Rybar frequently published contradictory posts since the start of the Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Rybar's posts and tone used to loudly criticize the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) only to then defend disgraced Russian Colonel General Aleksandr Lapin against attacks on his command from Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov and Prigozhin. [17] The Bell also found that Rybar amplified numerous videos that supported the Russian MoD's information operation efforts to present partial mobilization in Russia in a more favorable light. Rybar claims to sustain its four million ruble (\$44,800) monthly production cost via donations, although the channel also profits from showing advertisements for companies associated with First Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration Sergei Kiriyenko and Russian state media. [18]

ISW had observed a significant shift in the style and focus of *Rybar's* war coverage since the Ukrainian counteroffensives in Kharkiv and Kherson oblasts in fall 2022 during which Russian state propagandists were unable to explain away Russia's military failures and a deeply unpopular mobilization of 300,000 reservists. [19] Zvinchuk began appearing on Russian state television and the Russian state media began heavily relying on Zvinchuk's content at this time. *Rybar's* coverage since fall 2022 has significantly reduced its criticism of the Russian MoD. This observed content and tonal shift is significant and is likely the result of Putin's efforts to coopt prominent Russian milbloggers to reestablish Kremlin dominance over the Russian language online information space, carry out information operations against Western audiences, and prevent other influential Russian officials from buying milbloggers' loyalties. Zvinchuk's award also likely serves as an effort to incentivize other milbloggers to offer their loyalty to the regime in exchange for accolades and Kremlin recognition.

Ukraine stated that the continued Russian occupation of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) has resulted in equipment and maintenance failures that threaten the plant's security. Ukrainian nuclear energy operator Energoatom reported on November 16 that Russian ZNPP authorities transferred reactor no. 5 to a hot shutdown state from a cold shutdown state in violation of Ukraine's nuclear regulatory orders, resulting in a leak of a boric acid solution that entered all the reactor's steam generators.[20] Energoatom reported that Russian ZNPP authorities' "incompetence" in bringing reactors from cold shutdowns to hot shutdowns has resulted in a radioactive coolant leak from the first to second circuit of reactor no. 4 and a similar situation involving reactor no. 6.[21] Energoatom also reported that unspecified "incompetent" Russian actions resulted in reactor no. 6 experiencing a temporary blackout on November 14, forcing the reactor to rely on emergency diesel generators.[22] Energoatom stated that equipment at the ZNPP is constantly degrading and that the frequency of such dangerous instances are increasing.[23]

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has not yet commented on these incidents but expressed concern on November 13 over the extent and effectiveness of maintenance on ZNPP safety systems and its own ability to monitor ZNPP operations. [24] The IAEA reported that these maintenance issues became apparent in July and August 2023 when the steam generator of reactor no. 4 experienced a leak that contaminated the reactor's safety systems that had to be recleaned. The IAEA reported that ZNPP operators have not granted its contingent at the ZNPP access to all six reactor turbine halls to assess their safety and that operators restricted IAEA access during recent

walkthroughs of the halls in October and on November 10. The IAEA reported that the ZNPP planned maintenance of transformers of reactors no. 4, 5, and 6 after recently completing maintenance of transformers of reactors no. 1, 2, and 3 and noted that reactors no. 4 and 5 are in hot shutdown mode in violation of the Ukrainian regulatory agency's orders.

The Ukrainian and IAEA reports indicate that Russia's presence and exclusive control over the ZNPP is increasing, suggesting that similar failures may escalate under continued Russian occupation. The IAEA announced on November 13 that its staff visited a Russian training center for the ZNPP on November 7 and that Russian nuclear regulatory agency Rostekhnadzor is establishing a permanent presence at the ZNPP.[25] This announcement indicates the normalization of the Russian occupation of the ZNPP despite Russian forces' documented reckless conduct near the plant.[26] In addition to the recent equipment and mechanical failures, Russian forces deployed military equipment on and inside ZNPP facilities in summer-fall 2022 to protect these assets from Ukrainian strikes, while setting conditions to blame Ukrainian forces for any incidents at the ZNPP.[27] The ZNPP has completely lost access to external power sources seven times during its service history – all seven incidents occurring while under Russian occupation.[28]

Cyprus has reportedly been complicit in helping Russian elites, sanctioned for supporting the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014 and 2022, launder money. The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) reported on November 14 that Russians who have been under Western sanctions since 2014 owned or controlled almost 800 companies and trusts secretly registered in various countries and territories including Cyprus, Lichtenstein, the British Virgin Islands, and Hong Kong.[29] The ICIJ also stated that Cypriot professional services firms have worked on behalf of 25 Russians sanctioned after Russia's 2014 invasion of Ukraine and on behalf of an additional 71 Russians sanctioned after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.[30] The ICIJ found that the Cypriot branch of an international professional service firm helped a Russian billionaire transfer a \$1.4 billion in investments out of his name to evade European Union (EU) sanctions.[31] The ICIJ cited figures from the Center for the Study of Democracy in Sofia, Bulgaria, reporting that Russian businessmen have "invested" over \$200 million in Cyprus as of 2020, comprising half of all Russian investments in Europe, and that about 300 Russian-owned companies constituted 80 percent of Cyprus' wealth at one point in time.[32]

Gazprom Media Holdings, a subsidiary of Russian state-owned energy company Gazprom, announced on November 16 that it acquired the majority share of a large Russian blogger agency, likely in an effort to expand its already extensive control over the Russian media space. Gazprom Media Holdings announced that it bought 51 percent of shares in Insight People, reportedly the largest blogging agency in Russia. [33] Gazprom Media Holdings already owns Russian video streaming platform RuTube, Russian social media network VKontakte, and several prominent Russian TV channels and radio stations. [34] Gazprom Media is headed by Alexander Zharov who previously served as the head of Russian state censor Roskomnadzor from 2012 to 2020. [35] Long-time Gazprom Head Alexei Miller notably has associates throughout various power structures, and Gazprom Media's recent media acquisitions indicates a possible rise in Miller's influence. Miller is a long-time associate of Russian President Vladimir Putin and likely has ties to former Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) Head and Security Council Secretary Nikolai

Russian authorities discovered former Russian 6th Air Force and Air Defense Army Commander Lieutenant General Vladimir Sviridov dead in his home in Stavropol Krai on November 15. Russian sources reported that authorities found Sviridov dead with a woman, likely his wife, and suggested that the couple likely died around November 9. Russian sources reported that Russian authorities have not yet determined Sviridov's and the woman's cause of death but have ruled out carbon monoxide poisoning and "violent" deaths.[37] Sviridov reportedly resigned from his position as commander of the 6th Air Force and Air Defense Army in 2009.[38]

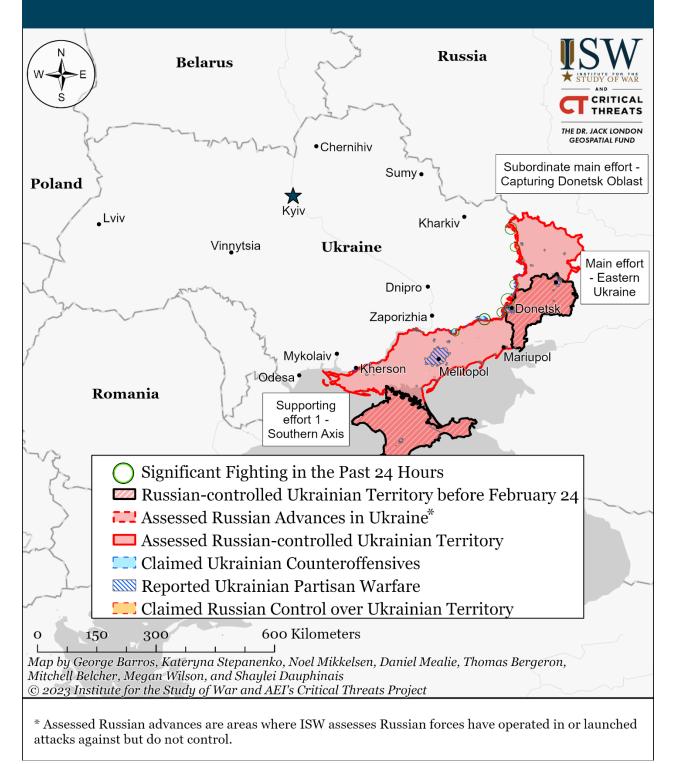
Key Takeaways:

- Russian forces conducted a series of missile and drone strikes against Ukraine on the night of October 15 to 16.
- Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev announced on November 16 that Russian authorities are strengthening Russian air defense over Russia's Central Federal Okrug, likely in response to Ukraine's recently implied intent to conduct an interdiction campaign against Russian supply routes in rear areas during the winter.
- Russian milbloggers continued to criticize actors in the Russian information space for distorting the reality of the Russian war effort, highlighting an emerging cyclical dynamic in the Russian information space in which the majority of Russian sources coalesce around a particular predominant narrative and, in turn, a subset of different sources coalesces to criticize the majority's prevailing opinion.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin awarded a prominent Russian milblogger who
 was previously critical of Russia's military performance during its full-scale
 invasion with a prestigious state honor, continuing the Kremlin's long-standing
 effort to coopt milbloggers and make them loyal to the Kremlin.
- Ukraine stated that the continued Russian occupation of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) has resulted in equipment and maintenance failures that threaten the plant's security.
- The Ukrainian and IAEA reports indicate that Russia's presence and exclusive control over the ZNPP is increasing, suggesting that similar failures may escalate under continued Russian occupation.
- Cyprus has reportedly been complicit in helping Russian elites, sanctioned for supporting the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014 and 2022, launder money.
- Gazprom Media Holdings, a subsidiary of Russian state-owned energy company Gazprom, announced on November 16 that it acquired the majority share of a

large Russian blogger agency, likely in an effort to expand its already extensive control over the Russian media space.

- Russian authorities discovered former Russian 6th Air Force and Air Defense Army Commander Lieutenant General Vladimir Sviridov dead in his home in Stavropol Krai on November 15.
- Russian forces continued offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, near Avdiivka, west and southwest of Donetsk City, in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, near Robotyne, and northeast of Vasylivka and advanced near Avdiivka.
- The Russian Ministry of Education issued a draft order establishing a course called "Fundamentals of Security and Defense of the Motherland" for Russian middle and high school students starting in September 2024.
- The Russian government and Russian occupation authorities continue to forcibly deport children in occupied Ukraine to Russia under the rubric of educational programs.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of November 16, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

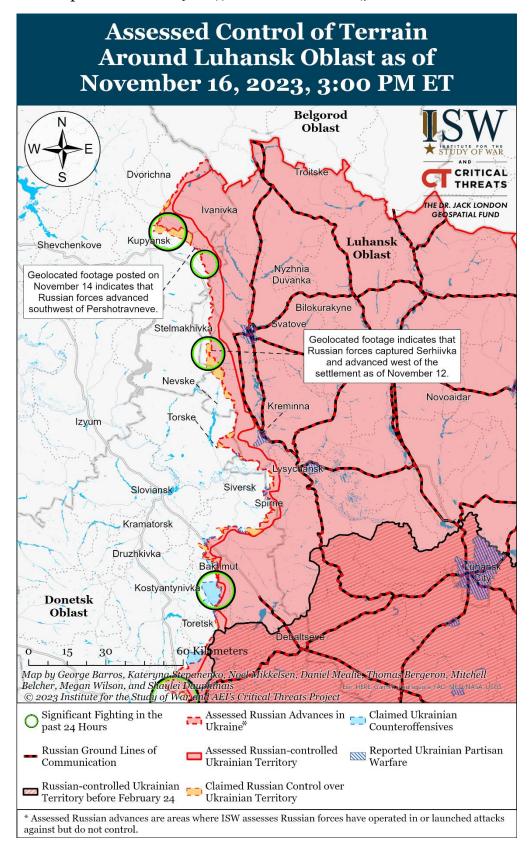
- Russian Main Effort Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort Southern Axis
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- 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 force conducted limited ground attacks along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on November 16 and did not make confirmed advances. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces seized unspecified positions near Ivanivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk) and that elements of the Russian 6th Cossack Motorized Rifle Brigade captured unspecified Ukrainian positions in the Siverskdirection (19km south of Kreminna), although ISW has not observed visual evidence supporting either claim.[39] Footage published on November 15 purportedly shows assault elements of the Russian 1st Guards Tank Army (Western Military District) storming Ukrainian positions near Ivanivka.[40] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Synkivka (9km northeast of Kupyansk), Petropavlivka (7km east of Kupyansk), Ivanivka, and Nadiya (16km west of Svatove).[41] A Russian milblogger claimed that fighting is ongoing near Tymkivka (19km east of Kupyansk).[42] Ukrainian Luhansk Oblast Head Artem Lysohor stated on November 16 that the Russian military deployed units originally from the Russian far east to near Svatove, likely referring to elements of the newly created 25th Combined Arms Army (either of the Central Military District or Eastern Military District).[43] Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov posted footage on November 16 purportedly showing the "Amura" group of Chechen "Akhmat" Spetsnaz operating drones in the Serebryanske forest area southwest of Kreminna.[44]

The Russian Ministry of Defense claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Synkivka, the former settlement of Zahoruykivka (a settlement 16km east of Kupyansk that was disincorporated in the 1980s), and near Dibrova (7km southwest of Kreminna).[45]

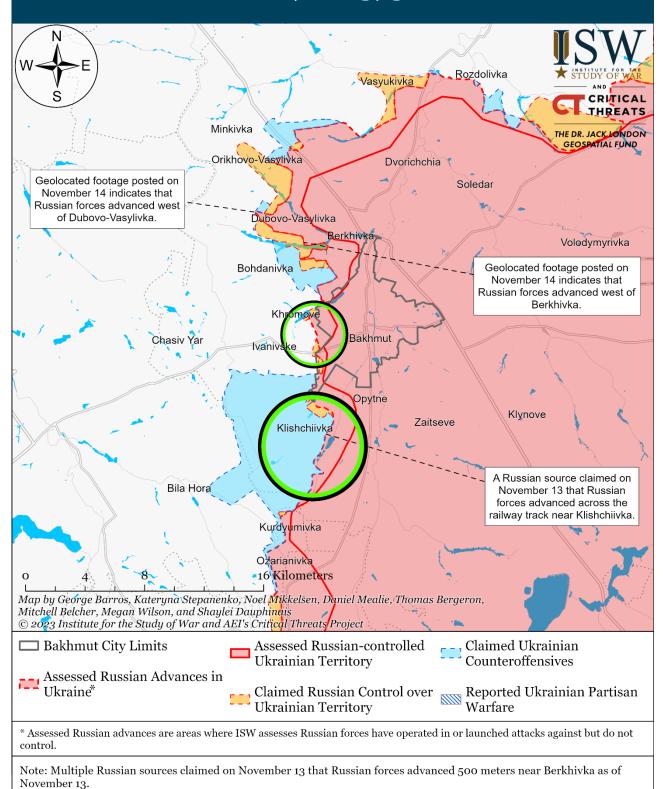


Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia's proxies in Donbas)

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations south of Bakhmut on November 16 but did not make confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued assault operations south of Bakhmut. [46] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that elements of the Russian Southern Grouping of Forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Bakhmut and Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut). [47] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian and Russian forces continue battles for the heights near Klishchiivka. [48] One Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced southeast of Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut). [49] Russian milbloggers claimed on November 15 that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked southwest of the ruins of the Mayorske concrete plant (21km south of Bakhmut and just west of Horlivka). [50]

Russian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut on November 16 but did not make confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled 24 Russian attacks near Ivanivske (6km west of Bakhmut), Klishchiivka, and Andriivka. [51] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces are advancing "meter by meter" from the Berkhivka Reservoir (5km northwest of Bakhmut) in the direction of Bohdanivka (5km west of Bakhmut). [52] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces seized previously lost positions along the railway line near Andriivka and Klishchiiivka on November 15. [53]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of November 16, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



11

Russian forces continued offensive operations near Avdiivka on November 16 and made a confirmed advance on an unspecified recent date. Geolocated footage published on November 16 indicates that Russian forces marginally advanced north of the Avdiivka Coke Plant northwest of Avdiivka.[54] Russian milbloggers claimed on November 15 and 16 that Russian forces seized several positions near the Avdiivka Coke Plant and waste heap, and that Stepove (8km northwest of Avdiivka) is a contested "gray zone."[55] Russian milbloggers claimed on November 16 that Russian forces also advanced northwest of Krasnohorivka (5km north of Avdiivka) in the direction of Berdychi (5km northwest of Avdiivka).[56] One Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are attempting to avoid personnel losses during their attacks near Krasnohorivka.[57] Russian sources also claimed that Russian forces are advancing into Avdiivka's southeastern industrial zone along the Yasynuvata road and have captured at least half of Avdiivka's industrial zone.[58] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Novokalynove (7km north of Avdiivka) and Avdiivka and east of Stepove and Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka).[59] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also attacked near Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka).[60]

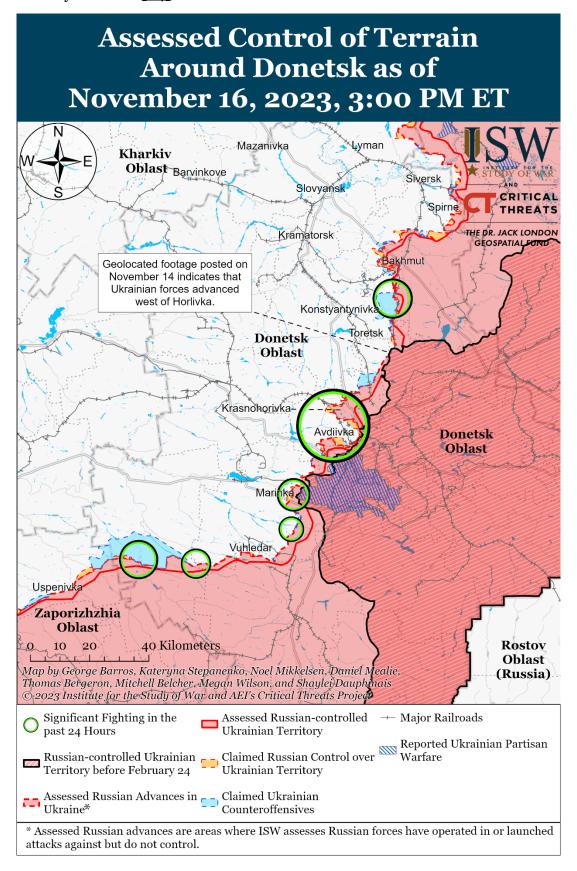
The Russian MoD claimed on November 16 that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Heorhiivka (30km southwest of Avdiivka).[61]

Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked west and southwest of Donetsk City on November 16. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Marinka (on the western outskirts of Donetsk City) and Novomykhailivka (10km southwest of Donetsk City). [62] A Russian source posted footage on November 16 claiming to show elements of the Russian 5th Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] Army Corps) operating in the Marinka direction. [63]

Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of November 16, 2023, 3:00 PM ET Keramik Krasnohorivka Novobakhmutivka Geolocated footage posted Stepove THE DR. JACK LONDON on November 16 indicates that Russian forces advanced north of the Yasnobrodivka Avdiivka Coke Plant. verne Avdiivka vomaisk Nevelske Kurakhivka A Russian source claimed on Geolocated footage posted on November 15 that Russian forces November 14 indicates that advances southeast of Avdiivka. Russian forces advanced Krasnohorivka northwestward toward Avdiivka. Heorhiiv Donetsk Pobieda Kostiantynivka 16 Kilømeters Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Megan Wilson, and Shaylei Dauphinais © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine* Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives ☐ Donetsk City Limits Assessed Russian-controlled Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory **Ukrainian Territory** Russian Field Fortifications * Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not Note: Russian sources claimed on November 15 and 16 that Russian forces control more than 50% of the industrial zone in southeast Avdiivka.

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The Russian MoD claimed on November 16 that Russian forces also repelled Ukrainian attacks near Novomykhailivka.[64]

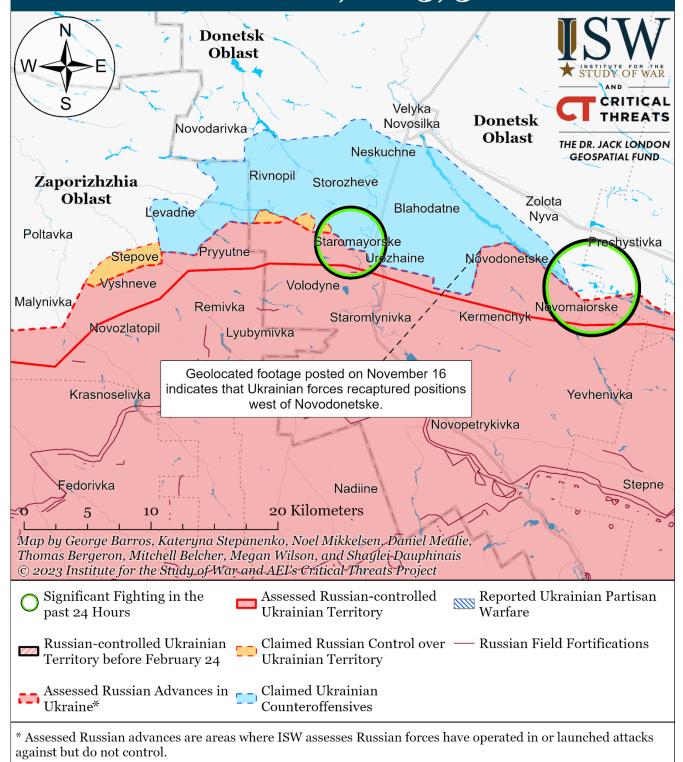


Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Ukrainian forces launched assaults in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on November 16 and made confirmed advances on an unspecified date. Geolocated footage published on November 16 shows Ukrainian forces repelling Russian attacks west of Novodonetske (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka) and confirming that Ukrainian forces recaptured some positions in the area on an unspecified but likely recent date. [65]

Russian forces continued to attack along the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border on November 16 but did not make claimed or confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces launched unsuccessful assaults near Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka), Prechystivka (18km southwest of Velyka Novosilka), and Novodarivka (15km southwest of Velyka Novosilka). [66] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Staromayorske. [67] The Russian "Vostok" Battalion claimed that there are localized infantry combat engagements on the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border. [68] A Russian milblogger indicated that elements of the Russian 336th Naval Infantry Brigade (Baltic Sea Fleet) are operating in the area between Hulyaipole and Velyka Novosilka. [69]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of November 16, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast on November 16 and made confirmed territorial gains near Robotyne on November 15. A Russian milblogger published and geolocated footage dated November 15 showing Russian forces striking Ukrainian positions immediately west of Robotyne, indicating a marginal Ukrainian advance. [70] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully tried to advance near Kopani (5km northwest of Robotyne), Rivne (9km west of Robotyne), Novoprokopivka (immediately south of Robotyne), Verbove (8km east of Robotyne), and in the direction of Novofedorivka (14km northeast of Robotyne). [71] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets assessed that Ukrainian forces likely achieved some successes in the direction of Novopokrovka (12km northeast of Robotyne) and are only separated by one forest belt from the settlement defended by the Russian 108th Guards Air Assault (VDV) Regiment (7th Guards VDV Division). [72] Mashovets added that Ukrainian forces appear to have marginally repelled elements of the Russian 136th Separate Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade (58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) in the Kopani direction a few days ago and advanced closer to Nesteryanka (10km northwest of Robotyne). [73]

Russian forces launched assaults on Ukrainian positions near Robotyne on November 16 but did not make confirmed territorial gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Robotyne and west of Verbove (8km east of Robotyne).[74] Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 247th Guards VDV Regiment (7th Guards VDV Division) apparently lost control over heights northwest of Verbove, which is complicating the Russian defense of the settlement's northwestern outskirts.[75] Mashovets noted that elements of the Russian 503rd Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment (19th Motorized Division, 58th CAA), 104th VDV Regiment, and 234th VDV Regiment (both part of the 76th Guards VDV Division) are engaged in intense battles on the Nesteryanka-Kopani line.[76] Mashovets claimed that the command of the Russian 19th Motorized Division and 76th Guards VDV Division have strict orders to hold Nesteryanka-Kopani line "under any circumstances" but ISW cannot independently verify this claim.

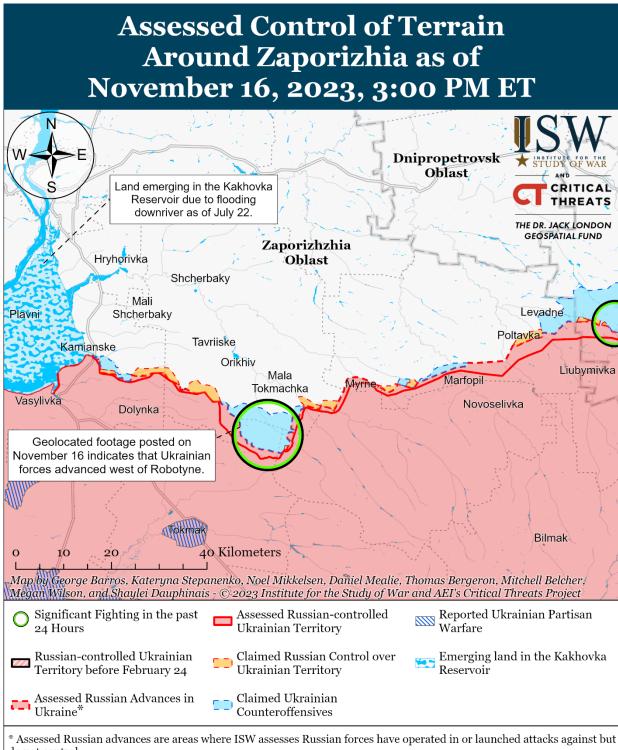
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of November 16, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



but do not control.

Note: A Russian source claimed on November 16 that Russian forces advanced 500 to 600 meters in the direction of Pyatykhatky.

Russian sources claimed that Russian forces marginally advanced northeast of Vasylivka in western Zaporizhia Oblast on November 16. Zaporizhia Oblast occupation official Vladimir Rogov claimed on November 16 that Russian forces advanced by 500 to 600 meters near Pyatykhatky (13km northeast of Vasylivka and 25km southwest of Orikhiv).[77] Russian milbloggers also claimed that fighting is ongoing near Pyatykhatky and that Russian forces seized several unspecified positions in the area. [78]



do not control.

Note: A Russian source claimed on November 16 that Russian forces advanced 500 to 600 meters in the direction of Pyatykhatky.

Ukrainian forces continued larger-than-usual operations on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast on November 16 and appear to have advanced near Kynky (30km northeast of Kherson City, 2km from the Dnipro River, and about 4km north of the E-58 highway). Geolocated footage published on November 15 shows Russian forces striking Ukrainian positions in northeastern part of Krynky, which indicates that Ukrainian forces likely advanced in the area. [79] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that battles are ongoing near Poyma (11km east of Kherson City and 4km from the Dnipro River), Pishchanivka (15km east of Kherson City and 3km from the Dnipro River), and Krynky. [80] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces launched an unsuccessful landing attempt in the areas of the Antonivsky Road Bridge and the small railway bridge six kilometers east of the Antonivsky Bridge. [81]

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated on November 16 that Ukrainian forces seized the initiative in the Black Sea area of operations and set conditions that force Russia to conceal their warships.[82]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of November 16, 2023, 3:00 PM ET ryvyi Rih Dnipropetrovsk **Oblast** Novyi Buh THREATS Vozsiyats'ke HE DR. JACK LONDON Mala Shesternia GEOSPATIAL FUND Bashtanka Vysokopillya Mykolaiv **Oblast** Davydiv Dudchany Brid Kachkarivka Snihurivka Zasillia Mykolaiv Beryslav Kherson Chornobaiyka Vova Kakhovka **Oblast** Geolocated footage posted on Kherson November 15 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced southwestward in Krynky. Kinburn Spit Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24 💶 Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine* Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir 80 Kilometers 40 0 20 Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell

Belcher, Megan Wilson, and Shaylei Dauphinais

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Note: The Ukrainian counteroffensive layer displays areas previously assigned to the Russian control, Russian advances, or Russian claims layers where ISW now assesses that Ukrainian forces have established a presence beyond a short-term raid. Inclusion of an area on this layer does not imply that ISW assesses that the area is part of any upcoming Ukrainian counteroffensive operation.

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

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

The Russian Ministry of Education issued a draft order establishing a course called "Fundamentals of Security and Defense of the Motherland" for Russian middle and high school students starting in September 2024.[83] The draft order states that students will undergo combat, tactical, fire, engineering, military medical, and technical training as well as learn general military regulations.[84]

The Russian State Duma will likely consider a bill that would ease firearms restrictions for Russian combat veterans despite continued reports of Russian combat veterans committing violent crimes. The State Duma deputies from the Kremlin's ruling United Russia Party are preparing a bill that would allow Russian combat veterans to purchase firearms without demonstrating prior weapons experience or undergoing training as current Russian laws on civilian firearm ownership require.[85] United Russia Duma Deputy Anatoly Vyborny noted that Russia already has exceptions to some to some firearm ownership requirements for active-duty military personnel, security forces, and representatives within agencies linked with Russia's Ministry of Justice.[86] ISW previously reported that Russian veterans are increasingly committing violent crimes upon returning from the war in Ukraine, including a combat veteran who was detained for attacking his neighbors in Atkharsk, Saratov Oblast, less than a week after returning from Ukraine on November 13.[87]

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)

The Russian government and Russian occupation authorities continue to forcibly deport children in occupied Ukraine to Russia under the rubric of educational programs. The Kherson Oblast occupation administration announced on November 16 that the Main Central Office of the Russian Movement of Children and Youth organized a four-day trip for children from occupied Skadovsk, Kherson Oblast, to attend the International Exhibition and Forum in Moscow.[88]

The Russian government and occupation authorities continue efforts to indoctrinate students in occupied Ukraine. The Kherson Oblast occupation administration announced on November 16 that the Russian Ministry of Digital Development is offering discounts on public transit, concerts, museums and other cultural events to students enrolled in institutions of higher education though an online portal, likely in an effort to incentivize enrollment into Russian higher education institutions. [89] The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on November 16 that Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) personnel and members of the newly created Kherson Oblast occupation commission on parental rights are "checking the living conditions" of children living in occupied

Kherson Oblast to ensure that children are enrolled in schools run by the Russian occupation administration and are not participating in Ukrainian remote learning.[90]

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) continues to posture as an effective security partner to Asian-Pacific states. Russian Deputy Defense Minister Colonel General Alexander Fomin spoke at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Plus meeting in Jakarta, Indonesia, on November 16, where he met with ASEAN member state officials to discuss bilateral military cooperation and multilateral security cooperation on regional issues.[91]

Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov continues messaging about the Russian war in Ukraine to appeal to his Chechen constituency. Kadyrov again framed the Russian war in Ukraine as a "holy jihad" for Muslims during a conference on spiritual and moral values in Grozny, Chechen Republic, on November 16.[92] Kadyrov has been attempting to balance appeals to both his domestic Chechen constituency and Russian ultranationalists in recent weeks.

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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