

# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment,

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February 27, 2024, 9:15pm 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.

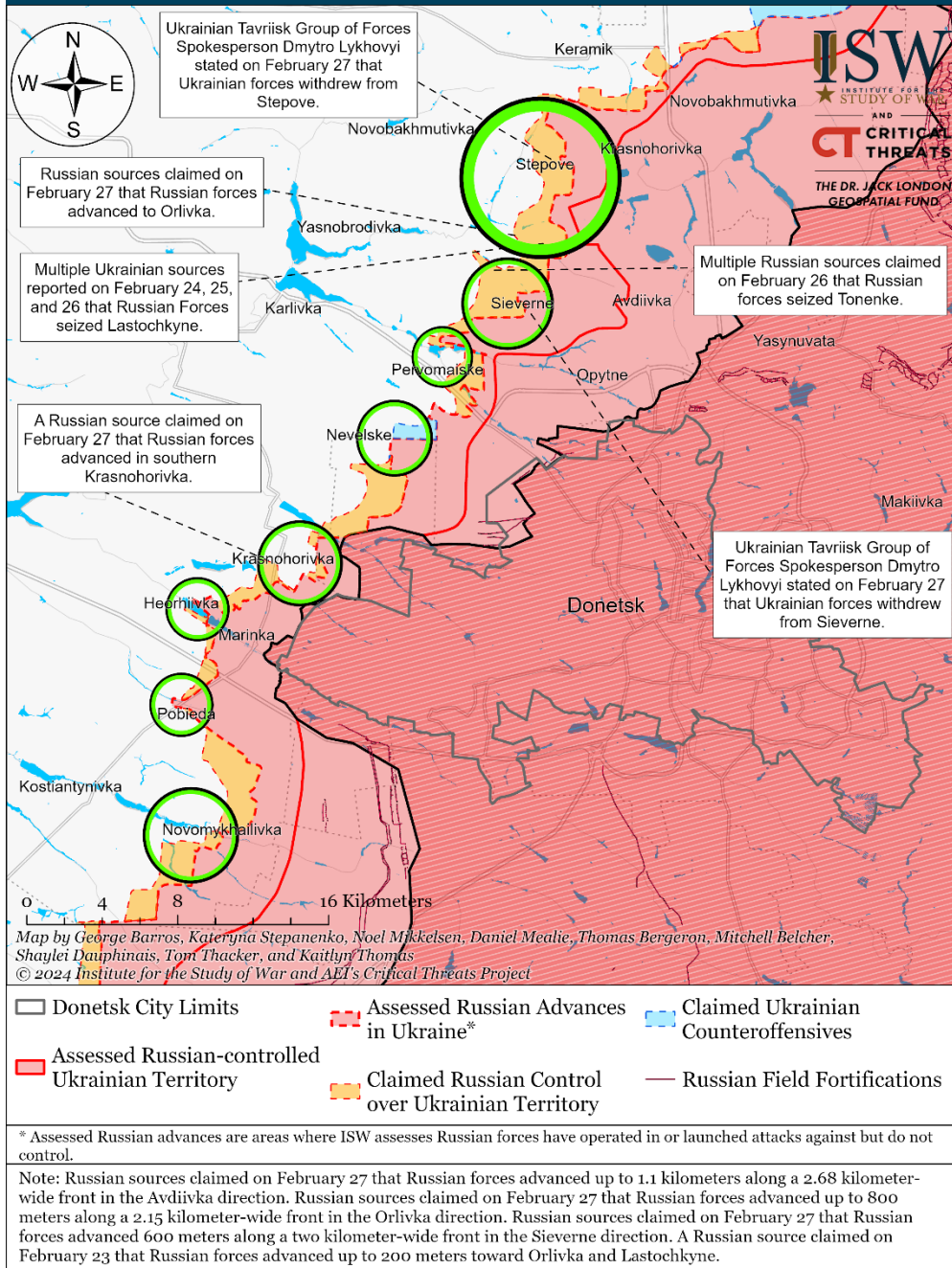
**Note: The data cut-off for this product was 1:30pm ET on February 27. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the February 28 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.**

**Russian forces are attempting to exploit tactical opportunities offered by the Russian seizure of Avdiivka and appear to be maintaining a relatively high tempo of offensive operations aimed at pushing as far as possible in the Avdiivka area before Ukrainian forces establish more cohesive and harder-to-penetrate defensive lines in the area.** Russian forces temporarily decreased their tempo of operations as they cleared Avdiivka following the Russian seizure of the settlement on February 17, but have since resumed a relatively high tempo of assaults further west and northwest of Avdiivka.[1] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Dmytro Lykhovyi stated on February 27 that Russian forces have recently increased the size of their assault groups in the Tavriisk direction (Avdiivka through western Zaporizhia Oblast) from small squad-sized groups to platoon-sized and even company-sized groups.[2] Russian forces are currently focusing assaults west of Avdiivka in the direction of Berdychi, Orlivka, and Tonenke, where Ukrainian forces established immediate defensive positions to cover their withdrawal from Avdiivka and to receive oncoming Russian offensive operations.[3] Lykhovyi and Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Commander Oleksandr Tarnavskiy stated that Ukrainian forces have stabilized their defensive lines along the Tonenke-Orlivka-Berdychi line as of February 27.[4] Ukrainian military observers characterized Ukrainian fortifications west of Avdiivka as “disappointing” and “problematic,” however.[5] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces are struggling to hold defensive positions immediately west of Avdiivka and forecasted that Ukrainian forces will concentrate on a defensive line further west that Ukrainian forces began constructing in November 2023.[6]

Russian forces are likely continuing attempts to advance in order to deprive Ukrainian forces of the respite that would allow Ukraine to establish a more cohesive and harder-to-penetrate defensive line in the immediate vicinity of Avdiivka. The seizure of Avdiivka has allowed Russian forces to press on positions that Ukrainian forces have manned for a shorter period than Ukrainian positions in Avdiivka

or further west, and Russian forces are likely sustaining a high operational tempo to try to exploit this tactical opportunity. Russian forces may be able to seize settlements immediately west and northwest of Avdiivka in the coming weeks, but terrain and water features further west of Avdiivka, particularly the body of water that runs between Berdychi-Semenivka-Orlivka, will likely slow the already relatively slow rate of Russian advances in the area. This difficult terrain will likely constrain further Russian tactical gains and allow Ukrainian forces to establish prepared defensive positions that will likely prompt the eventual culmination of the current Russian offensive effort in the area at least until or unless the Russians reinforce their attacking elements.[7]

# Assessed Control of Terrain near Donetsk City as of February 27, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



**Russian forces are likely attempting to create an operational maneuver force for the exploitation of recent Russian advances in the Avdiivka direction.** Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated on February 27 that Russian forces have formally transferred responsibility for the Donetsk City-Avdiivka axis to the Russian Central Grouping of Forces and formally transferred the Central Grouping of Forces' previous area of responsibility (AOR) in the Lyman direction to Russia's Western Grouping of Forces.[8] Russia's Western Grouping of Forces (likely

comprised almost entirely of elements of the Western Military District [WMD]) assumed responsibility for at least a portion of the Lyman direction in late fall and early winter 2023 after the Russian command transferred the bulk of the committed formations of the Central Grouping of Forces (primarily comprised of elements of the Central Military District [CMD]) to the offensive effort to seize Avdiivka in October 2023.[9] Russian officials have recently praised the Central Grouping of Forces for the seizure of Avdiivka and have notably highlighted CMD Commander Colonel General Andrei Mordvichev and increasingly identified the Avdiivka direction as the AOR of the Central Grouping of Forces.[10] The Russian command may have decided to codify the *de facto* command structure that has existed in the Avdiivka area since late Fall 2023 to explicitly establish a maneuver force intended to exploit recent Russian advances in the area. The Avdiivka-Donetsk axis is a relatively narrower AOR compared to the AORs of other Russian force groupings in Ukraine, and this focused responsibility suggests that the Russian military command likely intends for CMD elements to continue offensive efforts in the Avdiivka area in the near and medium term.

**The Russian command likely hopes that the reorganization of command structures will establish more cohesive Russian grouping of forces throughout the theater in Ukraine.**

Russian forces recently reorganized the command structure of the Russian grouping of forces in southern Ukraine, abolishing an unnamed grouping of forces that defended against the Ukrainian summer 2023 counteroffensive and distributing its elements between the Russian “Dnepr” Grouping of Forces (AOR in Kherson Oblast and western Zaporizhia Oblast) and the Russian Eastern Grouping of Forces (AOR in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area and western Donetsk Oblast).[11] The Russian Western Grouping of Forces has launched an ongoing multi-axis offensive operation along the Kharkiv-Luhansk Oblast border and has designed elements of that operation based on its control over a cohesive force grouping along a wide AOR.[12] Mashovets noted that the transfer of the Avdiivka-Donetsk City axis to the Central Grouping of Forces bisects the Russian Southern Grouping of Forces, which previously had responsibility for the frontline from the Bakhmut direction through the Marinka direction.[13] It is unclear if this bisection will generate further command and control (C2) difficulties for Russian forces near Bakhmut and west and southwest of Donetsk City beyond the pervasive C2 issues that Russian forces already face writ large in Ukraine.[14] This apparent Russian reorganization effort suggests that the Russian command may be attempting to implement lessons it has learned about organizing command structures in areas in which it intends to prioritize offensive efforts as the more cohesive Russian groupings of forces are engaged in more concerted or broader offensive efforts.

**Recent developments in Transnistria, the pro-Russian breakaway region of Moldova, are unlikely to pose a military threat to Ukraine and will more likely impact Moldova’s European Union (EU) integration prospects.**

Ukrainian officials stated that Russian drones flew into Moldovan airspace on the night of February 26-27 during a Russian strike series targeting Ukrainian rear areas.[15] The Moldovan Ministry of Defense (MoD), however, denied that any drones flew over Moldova.[16] ISW continues to assess that the Russian forces currently in Transnistria are not capable of posing a meaningful military threat to Ukraine without reinforcements, which Russia has no likely way of bringing to Transnistria rapidly or at scale, and ISW has not observed any clear indications of Russian military preparations to intervene in Transnistria or Moldova more generally.[17] The flight of a drone over Moldovan airspace has more direct implications for Moldovan sovereignty than for Ukrainian security.

**ISW is amending its warning forecast in light of continued Transnistrian officials’ statements that the upcoming Congress of Transnistrian Deputies will discuss Moldovan**

**economic policies, likely related to changes to Moldova’s Customs Code that went into effect on January 1, 2024.**<sup>[18]</sup> ISW issued a warning forecast on February 22 and assessed that Transnistrian officials may call for a referendum on annexation to Russia during the Congress of Transnistrian Deputies on February 28 to support Russian hybrid operations intent on politically and socially destabilizing Moldova.<sup>[19]</sup> The last Congress of Transnistrian Deputies was convened in March 2006, at which Transnistrian deputies decided to hold a referendum on Transnistria’s independence and future subsequent annexation into Russia.<sup>[20]</sup> The 2006 congress similarly occurred a few weeks after Ukraine imposed new customs regulations on Transnistria.<sup>[21]</sup> While the referendum received overwhelming popular support in 2006, neither Russia nor Transnistria advanced legal mechanisms for annexation at that time.

Moldova’s path towards EU membership required Moldova to change to its Customs Code to align with EU regulations.<sup>[22]</sup> Moldova had previously exempted Transnistrian businesses from paying duties to the Moldovan government for Transnistrian imports from and exports to the EU and instead allowed Transnistrian businesses to pay duties to the Transnistrian government.<sup>[23]</sup> Transnistria responded to the January 2024 changes requiring that Transnistrian businesses pay required duties to the Moldovan government by increasing taxes on about 2,000 Moldovan businesses in Transnistria, but Transnistrian President Vadim Krasnoselsky stated on February 24 that customs payments to the Transnistrian budget still decreased by 18 percent since the start of 2024.<sup>[24]</sup>

Major actors in Transnistria have varying economic and political interests. The American Enterprise Institute’s Critical Threats Project (CTP) previously assessed that Transnistria is a mafia state run by Viktor Gushan, whose company Sheriff Enterprises controls a majority of the Transnistrian economy and receives large portions of Transnistria’s government spending.<sup>[25]</sup> Gushan’s businesses have been heavily oriented towards the EU after Moldova signed a trade deal with the EU in 2014 that guaranteed tariff-free access to EU markets. Gushan’s businesses would also benefit from the reestablishment of good Ukrainian-Transnistrian relations, as Transnistria imported and exported most of its goods through Ukraine until Ukraine closed those borders in 2022 due to Russia’s full-scale invasion — facts that would give Gushan good reason to oppose Transnistrian annexation into Russia for economic reasons. EU officials have indicated that Moldova could join the EU without Transnistria.<sup>[26]</sup> Gushan may prefer a Western-oriented Moldova in which Transnistria enjoys special tax exceptions over annexation into Russia or Moldovan EU membership without Transnistria. Moldova, however, is unlikely to reverse its customs code changes given its current commitment to joining the EU. Gushan’s calculus, therefore, is complex, and his preferences are unclear at this time. ISW will provide an update following the Congress of Deputies on February 28.

Russia may also hope to exploit a hybrid play in Transnistria taking advantage of recent developments. Gushan likely competes with the Transnistrian Ministry of State Security (MGB), reportedly a “department” of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) that takes orders from the Kremlin.<sup>[27]</sup> Citizens of both Russian-influenced regions of Moldova — Transnistria and Gagauzia — notably recently protested Moldova’s new Customs Code.<sup>[28]</sup> Russia may attempt to exploit domestic opposition to Moldovan policies to sow instability in Moldova and delay Moldova’s accession to the EU.

**Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu continues to highlight recent Russian tactical successes in Ukraine as substantial battlefield victories for political purposes ahead of the upcoming Russian presidential election.** Shoigu addressed the Russian Ministry of Defense

(MoD) board on February 27 and reported that Russian forces are continuing efforts to improve their positions in the Donetsk (Avdiivka) and Kupyansk (Kharkiv-Luhansk Oblast border area) directions.[29] Shoigu reported that Russian forces have pushed Ukrainian forces out of Lastochkyne and Sieverne (both west of Avdiivka) and Pobieda (southwest of Donetsk City) and claimed that Russian forces have captured about 327 square kilometers of territory since the beginning of 2024. ISW currently assesses that Russian forces have captured closer to 205 square kilometers since January 1, 2024, and Shoigu likely deliberately overstated Russian territorial gains. Shoigu's promotion of the Russian capture of very small settlements of limited tactical significance suggests that the Russian MoD is trying to emphasize even such small gains to present an image of a constantly advancing Russian military. All three of the settlements that Shoigu chose to prominently highlight are comprised of small semi-urban areas spanning a few blocks, so Russian forces' capture of these settlements was a very tactical endeavor. ISW recently assessed that the Russian MoD is likely trying to play up recent tactical gains to generate positive informational effects before the March 2024 presidential election.[30]

**Shoigu additionally highlighted Russia's Central and Eastern Military Districts (CMD and EMD) to posture against supposed anti-Russian activity in Central Asia and the Indo-Pacific.[31]** Shoigu discussed security challenges emanating from Central Asia, specifically highlighting threats from Afghanistan, a purported increase in the number of Islamic State fighters in the region, and the spread of "radical ideology and subversive activities" targeted at the southern borders of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Shoigu claimed that the CMD will focus efforts on responding to various "crisis situations" in the Central Asian region through military exercises with CSTO member states. Shoigu also emphasized that the CMD is equipped with Iskander-M ballistic missiles and Tornado-G MLRS systems. Iskander-M and Tornado-Gs are not weapons systems particularly appropriate for responding to terrorist threats. Shoigu was more likely highlighting the capabilities of the CMD in this region to posture and project the impression of Russian military power and tacitly to threaten retaliation in the case of any perceived anti-Russian activities in this region. Shoigu also accused the US of fomenting tensions in the Indo-Pacific region and claimed that the EMD is increasing its combat capabilities in response to rising tensions on the Korean Peninsula and around Taiwan. Shoigu also likely intended to project the image of Russian military might into the Indo-Pacific and tacitly threaten the US for its own efforts in this region while also supporting efforts to portray itself as an equal Indo-Pacific security partner for China. The bulk of CMD and EMD personnel, commanders, and military district-level assets are currently heavily committed in Ukraine, and the Russian military command may feel this vulnerability in Russia's ability to protect its southern and eastern flanks or play the role that the Kremlin desires to play in the geopolitics of both regions.

**Ukrainian forces have reportedly shot down two Russian Su-34s on February 27, the tenth downed Russian military aircraft within roughly as many days.** The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces downed two Russian Su-34 fighter jets on February 27, at least one of which was downed in eastern Ukraine.[32] Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat stated on February 21 that Ukrainian forces have downed seven Russian Su-34 and Su-35 fighter jets since February 16.[33] The February 27 Su-34 shoot-downs are likely connected with Russian glide bomb strikes in Donetsk Oblast, particularly near Avdiivka as Russian forces use heavy glide bomb strikes in an attempt to exploit gains in the Avdiivka area. Ukraine's downing of a Russian A-50 long-range radar detection aircraft on February 23 has likely constrained Russian strategic reconnaissance

capabilities. Ihnat stated that Russian forces have not deployed another A-50 over the Sea of Azov since the downing and have increased their use of aerial reconnaissance drones across the theater to compensate.[34]

**Ukraine’s Security Service (SBU) reported on February 27 that the ongoing Russian information campaign to demoralize Ukrainian society will intensify between March and May 2024.[35]** The SBU reported that the information campaign, which they call “Maidan-3,” intends to sow panic and discontent among the Ukrainian population and drive a wedge between civilians and military and political leadership. The Ukrainian Presidential Intelligence Committee reported that Russia has spent a total of \$1.5 billion on this information campaign (including \$250 million on information operations on the Telegram messaging app alone) and noted that this spending is on par with Russia’s spending on conventional military activities. The SBU noted that the information campaign will intensify from March to May 20, 2024 to exploit the Ukrainian political situation and foment distrust in and discontent with the Ukrainian government. The March to May timeline is significant—if Russia had not illegally invaded Ukraine, the Ukrainian presidential election would have been scheduled to occur on March 31, 2024 and May 20, 2024 is the fifth anniversary of Zelensky’s inauguration.[36] Russia appears to be pursuing this extremely costly information campaign to undermine trust in Ukrainian leadership and spread discontent with the aim of weakening Ukrainian society.

**Russia likely tested an element of its Sovereign Internet on February 27, likely in an effort to strengthen control over individual aspects of the Russian information space.** Russian sources reported several widespread outages of prominent social media platforms on February 27, including Telegram, YouTube, VKontakte (VK), Viber, WhatsApp, and Zoom, and later reported that service has since been restored.[37] Russian sources also reported that Russians were able to access some blocked social media platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, during the outage.[38] Russian State Duma Committee on Information Policy Deputy Head Anton Tkachev stated that Russian federal censor Roskomnadzor caused the outage while testing and reconfiguring gateways to identify and close “bottlenecks” to prohibited content.[39] *BBC Russian Service* quoted Russian organization “Network Freedoms” as saying that Roskomnadzor may have been adjusting settings related to “technical means of countering threats” (TSPU), a set of tools that Russian federal law obligates Russian telecom providers to possess.[40] “Network Freedoms” told *BBC Russian Service* that Roskomnadzor is developing procedures and training specialists to use TSPU to centrally manage the Russian internet and develop a service on state-affiliated social media network VK to better censor content on the site.[41] Russia is likely attempting to expand this centralization to other social media sites that are active in Russia given the Kremlin’s tensions with other social media platforms. Russia has declared Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp parent company Meta as a “terrorist” organization, and Telegram has refused to comply with some of the Kremlin’s more extensive censorship measures.[42]

### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Russian forces are attempting to exploit tactical opportunities offered by the Russian seizure of Avdiivka and appear to be maintaining a relatively high tempo**

of offensive operations aimed at pushing as far as possible in the Avdiivka area before Ukrainian forces establish more cohesive and harder-to-penetrate defensive lines in the area.

- **Russian forces are likely attempting to create an operational maneuver force for the exploitation of recent Russian advances in the Avdiivka direction.**
- **The Russian command likely hopes that the reorganization of command structures will establish more cohesive Russian grouping of forces throughout the theater in Ukraine.**
- **Recent developments in Transnistria, the pro-Russian breakaway region of Moldova, are unlikely to pose a military threat to Ukraine and will more likely impact Moldova's European Union (EU) integration prospects. ISW is amending its warning forecast in light of continued Transnistrian officials' statements that the upcoming Congress of Transnistrian Deputies will discuss Moldovan economic policies, likely related to changes to Moldova's Customs Code that went into effect on January 1, 2024.**
- **Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu continues to highlight recent Russian tactical successes in Ukraine as substantial battlefield victories for political purposes ahead of the upcoming Russian presidential election. Shoigu additionally highlighted Russia's Central and Eastern Military Districts (CMD and EMD) to posture against supposed anti-Russian activity in Central Asia and the Indo-Pacific.**
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- **Russia likely tested an element of its Sovereign Internet on February 27, likely in an effort to strengthen control over individual aspects of the Russian information space.**
- **Russian forces advanced west of Avdiivka amid continued positional engagements across the theater.**
- **A Ukrainian official warned that Russia seeks to ramp up force generation efforts in occupied Ukraine following the formal integration of occupied and claimed Ukrainian territories into the Russian Southern Military District (SMD).**
- **Russian authorities are reportedly systematizing the adoption of deported Ukrainian children in Russia.**



# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of February 27, 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

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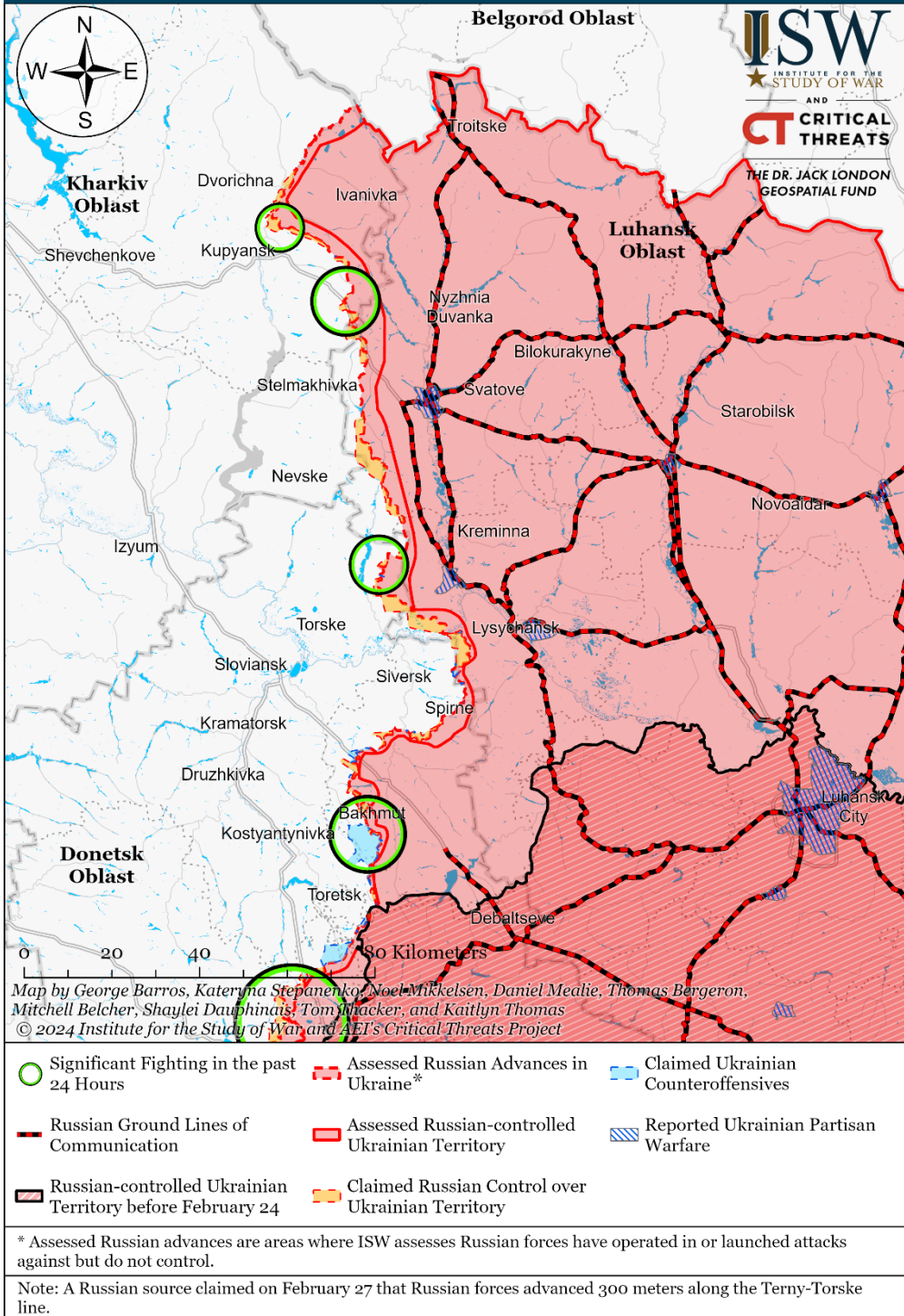
**Russian                      Main                      Effort                      –                      Eastern                      Ukraine**

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**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 fighting continued along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on February 27, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this the area. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced up to 500 meters deep north of Synkivka (northeast of Kupyansk) and 300 meters deep west of Kreminna near Terny and Torske, although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims.[43] Positional fighting continued northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka; northwest of Svatove near Ivanivka, Kyslivka, and Tabaivka; and west of Kreminna near Terny.[44] Ukrainian Khortytsia Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash stated that Russian forces in the Kupyansk and Lyman directions are conducting glide bombs strikes on Ukrainian artillery positions and tank crews and are using Shahed-136/131 drones to strike Ukrainian frontline positions.[45] The spokesperson for a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Kupyansk direction stated that Russian forces continue to conduct offensive operations towards Kupyansk with an alternating intensity, wherein Russian forces initially attack for a period, then decrease the tempo of their offensive operations after suffering losses to regroup and replenish, and then later intensify assaults once again.[46] ISW has previously assessed that Russian forces likely intend to alternate the intensity of operations along the entire Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line in a staggered manner in order to allow Russian forces to periodically regroup and prepare for future assaults.[47] Elements of the 144th Motorized Rifle Division’s 283rd and 388th motorized rifle regiments (20th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Western Military District [WMD]) and elements of the 25th CAA’s 31st and 37th motorized rifle regiments and 19th Tank Regiment reportedly continue to operate west of Kreminna near Yampolivka and Terny.[48]

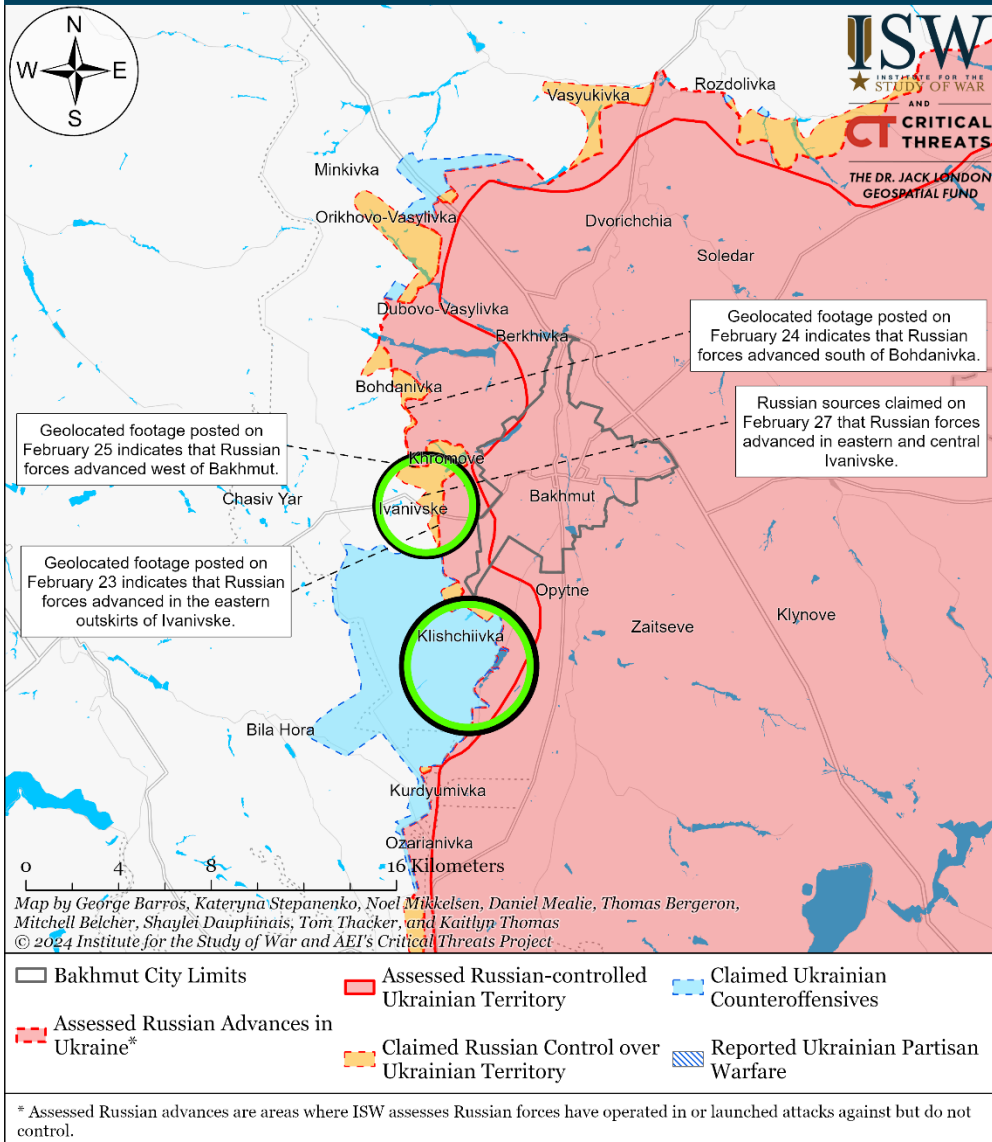
# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of February 27, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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

Russian forces reportedly advanced west of Bakhmut amid continued positional engagements in the Bakhmut direction on February 27. Several Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced on the northern and southeastern outskirts of Ivanivske (directly west of Bakhmut) and are moving towards the center of the village.[49] Ukrainian Khortytsia Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash noted that Chechen Akhmat units are attacking southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka and Kurdyumivka in an attempt to break through to Chasiv Yar (west of Bakhmut).[50] Ukrainian and Russian sources noted that heavy fighting is ongoing northwest of Bakhmut near Bohdanivka; west of Bakhmut near Ivanivske; and southwest of Bakhmut near Andriivka, Klishchiivka, and Kurdyumivka.[51] Elements of the Russian 331st Guards Airborne (VDV) Regiment (98th VDV Division) continue to operate northwest of Bakhmut between Bohdanivka and Ivanivske.[52] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets reported that elements of the 102nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) recently arrived in the Bakhmut direction and advanced northeast of Ivanivske.[53]

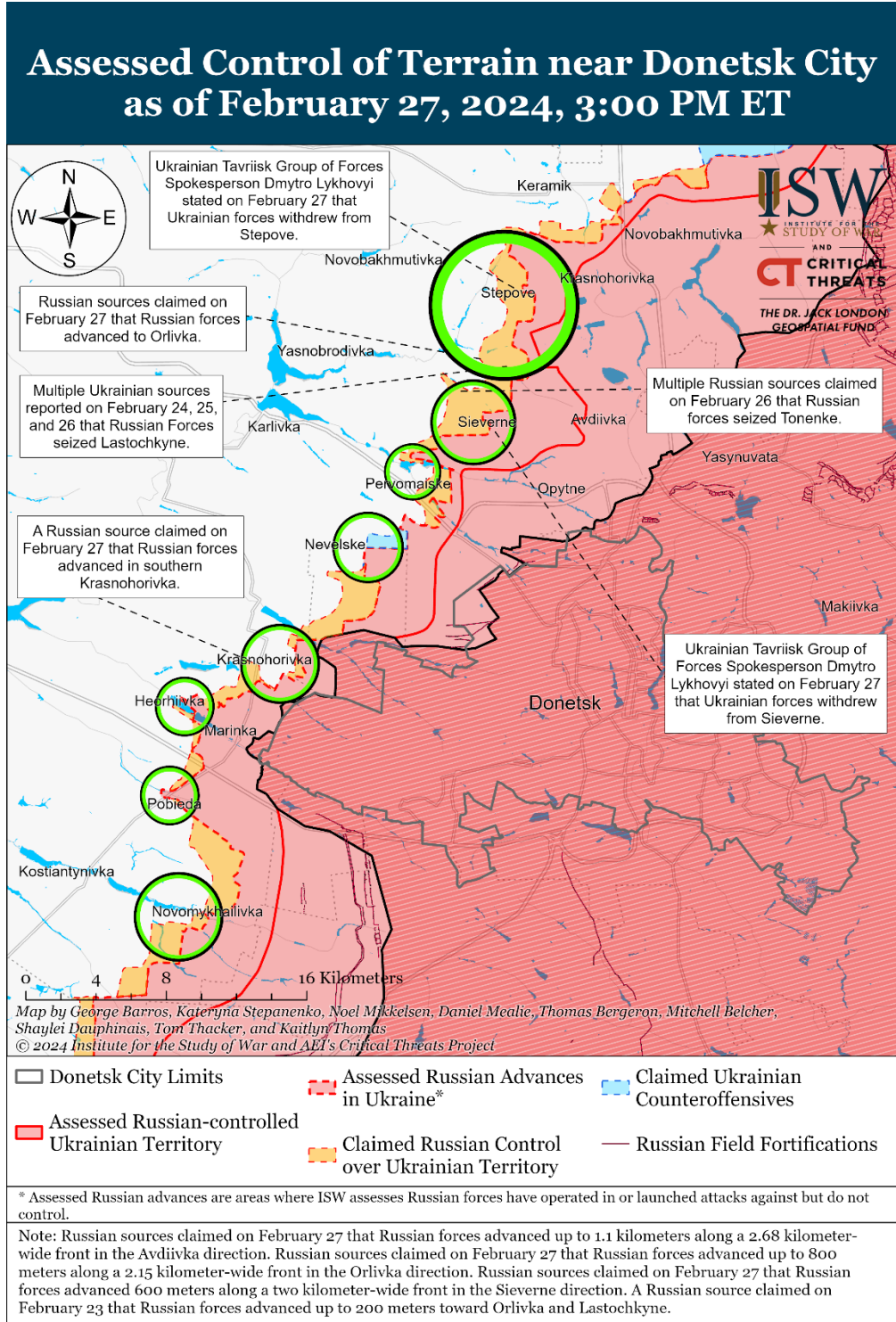
# Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of February 27, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces advanced west of Avdiivka following Ukrainian forces' withdrawal from two settlements in the area on February 27. Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Dmytro Lykhoviy stated on February 27 that Ukrainian forces withdrew from Sieverne (west of Avdiivka) and Stepove (northwest of Avdiivka) after fierce battles overnight on February 26-27.[54] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) subsequently claimed that Russian forces completely captured Sieverne.[55] Lykhoviy also reported that Ukrainian forces stabilized their defenses along the Tonenke-Orlivka-Berdychi line that runs just west of the Sieverne-Stepove area.[56] Geolocated footage posted on February 27 shows a Russian soldier of the 15th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd CAA, Central Military District [CMD]) in western Stepove, confirming that Russian forces have captured the settlement.[57] Additional geolocated footage posted on February 27 shows that Russian forces advanced along a windbreak northwest of Avdiivka.[58] Russian sources also claimed that Russian forces advanced into northeastern Orlivka (about 3km west of Avdiivka) and east and southeast of Berdychi (about 4km



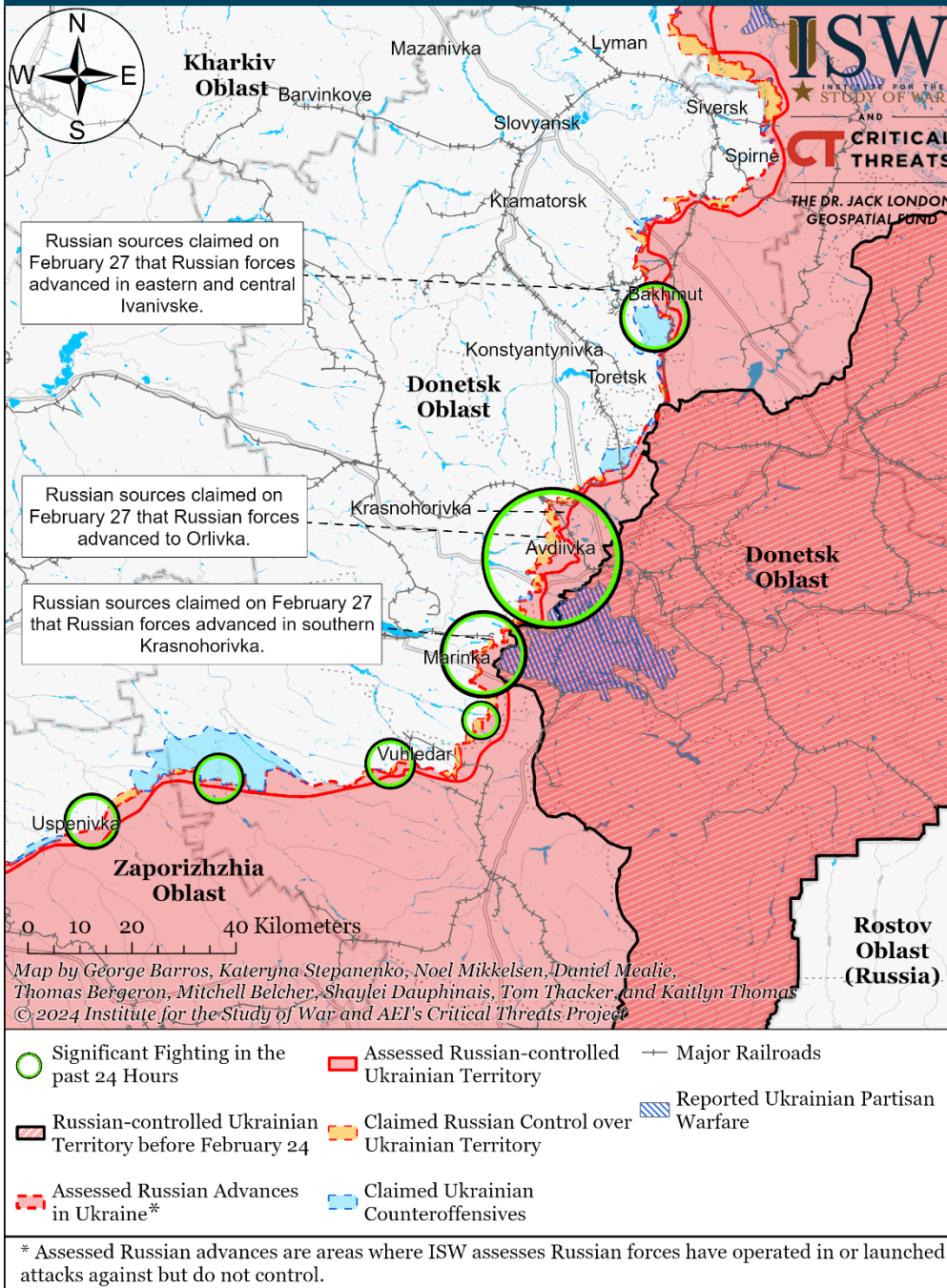
northwest of Avdiivka), although ISW has not yet observed visual confirmation of Russian advances on the outskirts of these two small settlements.[59] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced about 2.68km wide and 1.1km deep in the general Avdiivka direction on February 27.[60] Elements of the Russian 15th and 21st Motorized Rifle Brigades (both 2nd CAA, CMD), 35th and 55th Motorized Rifle Brigades (both 41st CAA, CMD), and various 1st Donetsk People’s Republic Army Corps (DNR AC) elements continue to fight in the Avdiivka direction.[61]



Russian forces reportedly advanced west and southwest of Donetsk City on February 27, although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of changes to the frontline in this area. A Russian milblogger

claimed that Russian forces advanced in southern Krasnohorivka and northwest of Marinka (both west of Donetsk City).[62] Milbloggers additionally claimed that Russian forces advanced within eastern Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City), although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of recent Russian advances in Novomykhailivka.[63] Ukrainian and Russian sources reported continued positional engagements west of Donetsk City near Krasnohorivka and Heorhiivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Novomykhailivka and Pobieda.[64]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of February 27, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

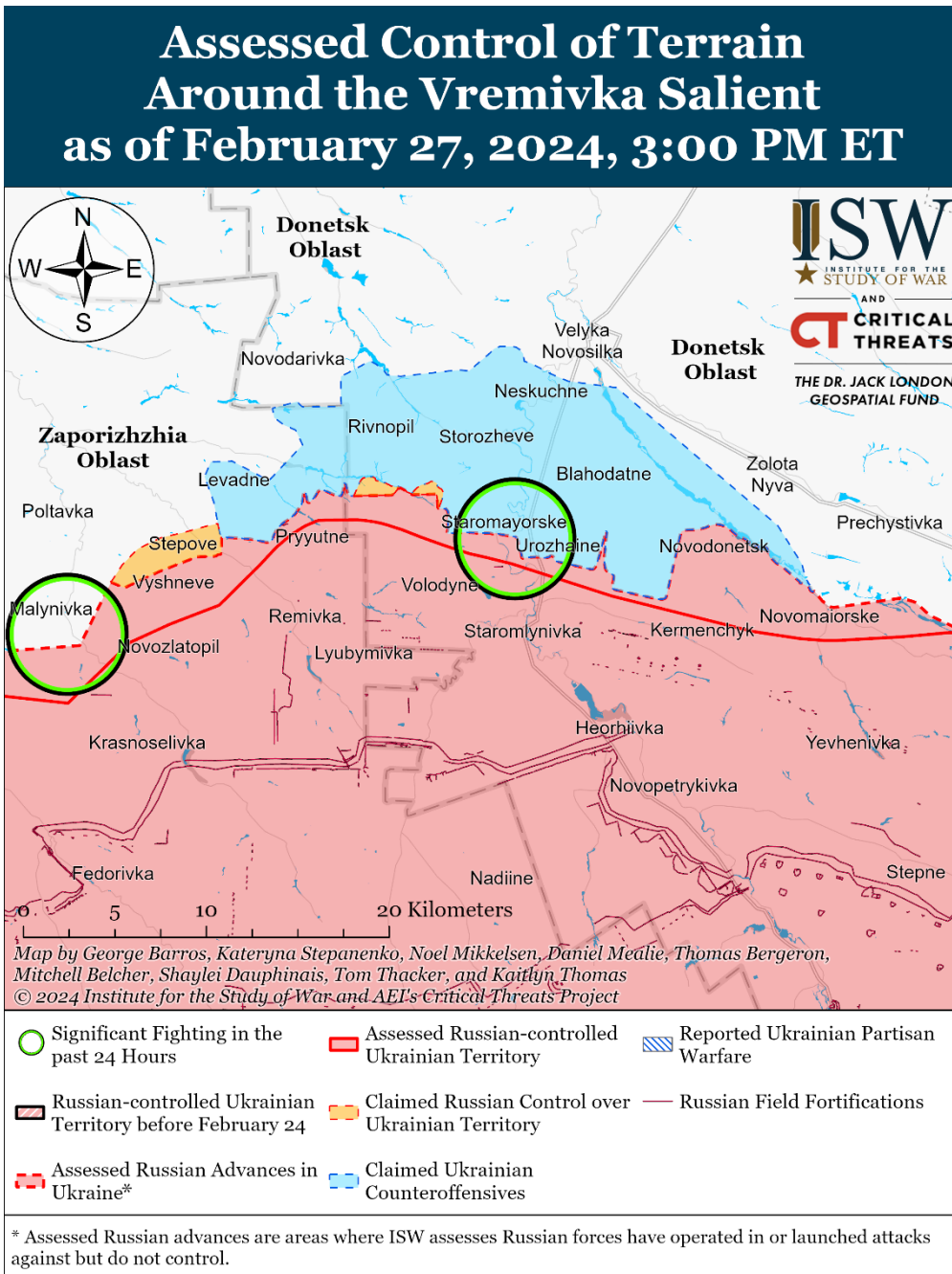


## **Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)**

Positional engagements continued in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area on February 27, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional

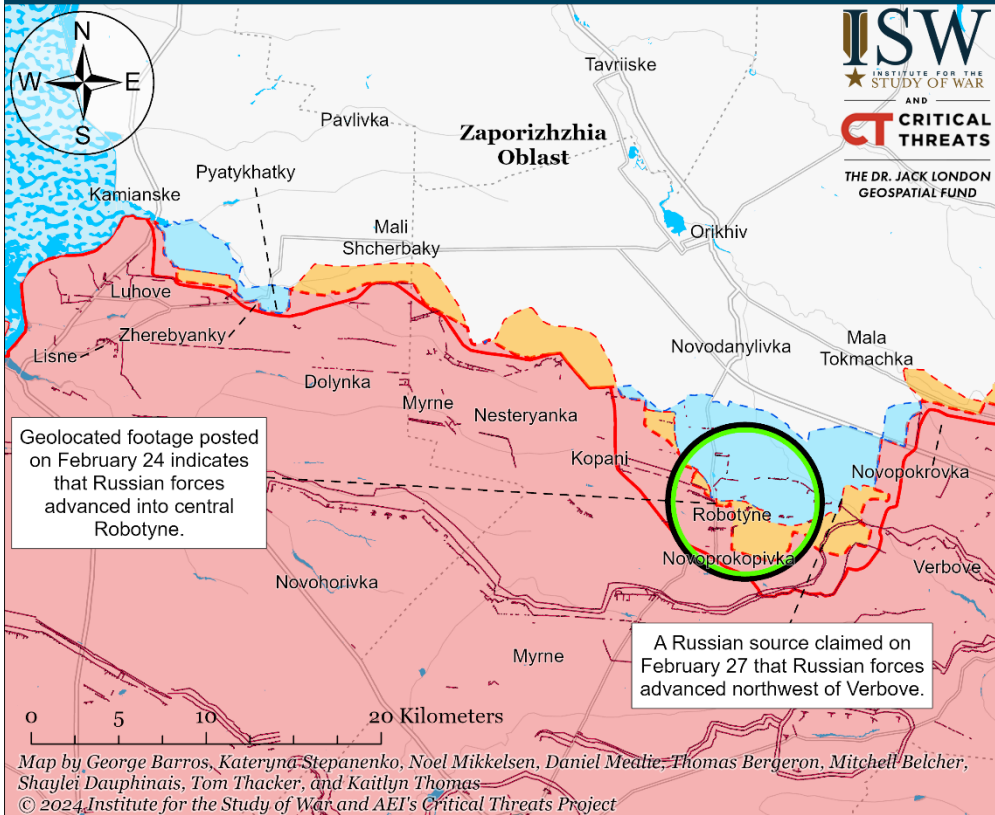


engagements continued near Vuhledar; south of Velyka Novosilka near Staromayorske and Urozhaine; southwest of Velyka Novosilka near Malynivka; and southeast of Hulyaipole near Marfopil.[65]



Positional engagements continued in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on February 27, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Ukrainian and Russian forces stated that positional engagements continued near Robotyne and Verbove (east of Robotyne).[66] One Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces may have seized Robotyne but noted that this information is still unconfirmed.[67] Other milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces still maintain positions in Robotyne, and ISW has not observed visual evidence showing that Russian forces have completely captured the settlement.[68] Elements of the Chechen "Vostok" Akhmat Battalion are reportedly operating near Robotyne.[69]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of February 27, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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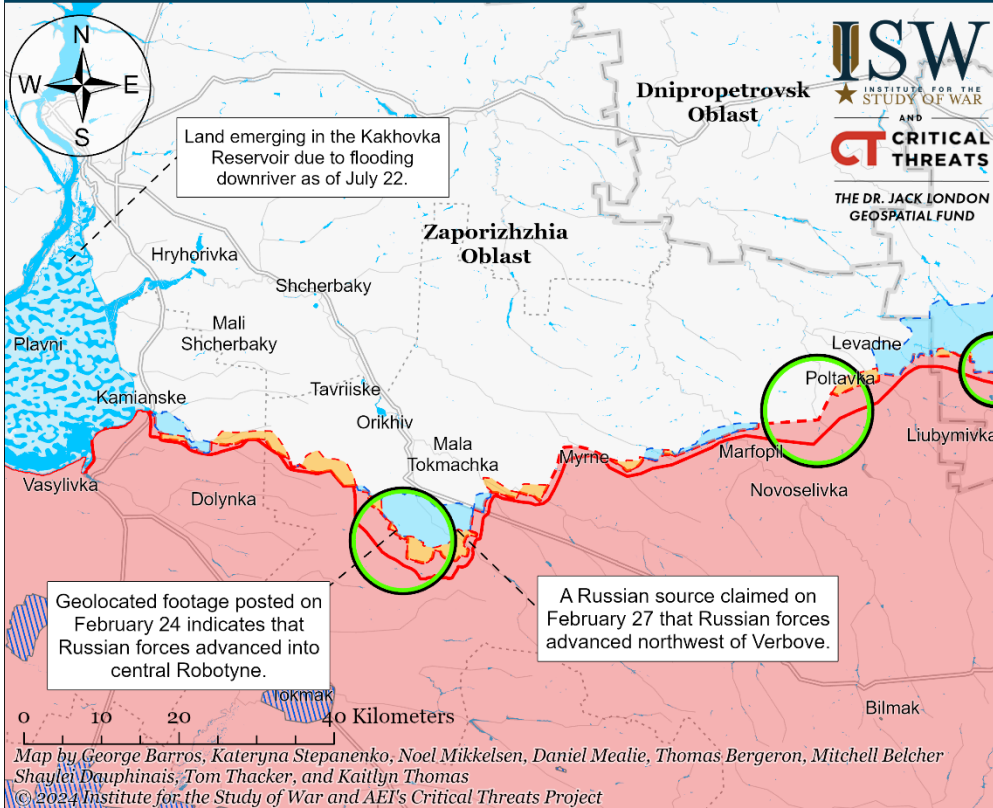
Geolocated footage posted on February 24 indicates that Russian forces advanced into central Robotyne.

A Russian source claimed on February 27 that Russian forces advanced northwest of Verbove.

- 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
- Russian Field Fortifications

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

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of February 27, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

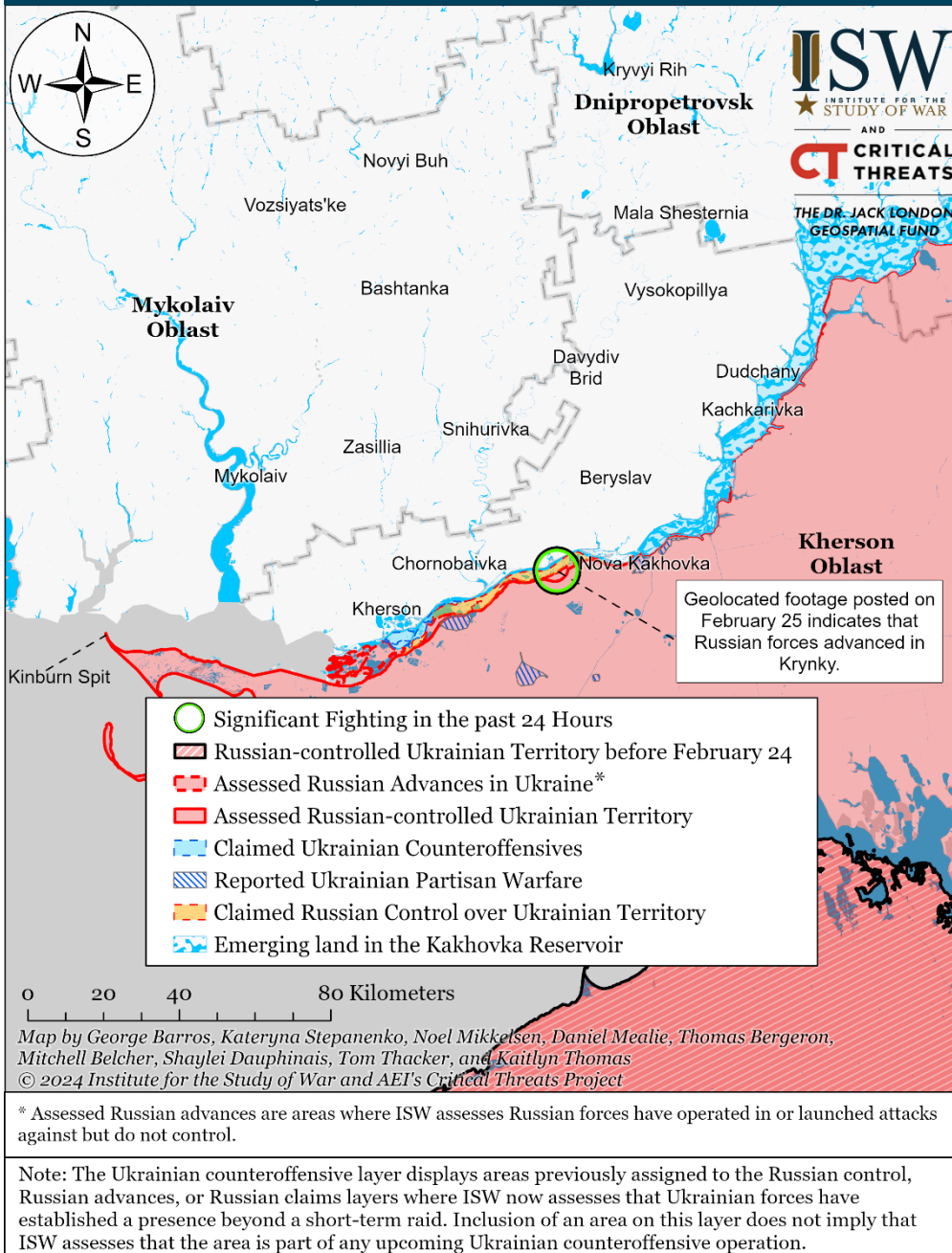


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
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Positional engagements continued in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast near Krynky on February 27.[70]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of February 27, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Ukrainian officials continued to highlight the structural inferiority of the Black Sea Fleet (BSF) base in Novorossiysk, Krasnodar Krai. Ukrainian Navy Spokesperson Captain Third Rank Dmytro Pletenchuk stated on February 27 that Russian forces are still loading Kalibr missile systems on ships and submarines at the Russian naval base in occupied Sevastopol, Crimea because the base in Novorossiysk lacks the capacity to handle such missiles.[71] Pletenchuk also stated that the Novorossiysk base has less space for ships to dock and lacks the infrastructure to house Russian personnel and their families.

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

The Ukrainian Air Force stated that Russian forces launched an unspecified number of Iskander-M ballistic missiles and North Korean-provided Kn-23 missiles, four Kh-59 cruise missiles, one Kh-31P anti-radar missile, and 13 Shahed-136/131 drones on the night of February 26 to 27 and that Ukrainian forces shot down two Kh-59s and 11 Shaheds over Kharkiv, Sumy, Dnipropetrovsk, Khmelnytskyi, and Kirovohrad oblasts.[72] A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces have used a “qualitatively different approach” in the strikes over the past few days and are targeting Ukrainian aviation infrastructure.[73] ISW has observed Russian forces employing various strike packages against Ukrainian infrastructure over the past several days.

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

A Ukrainian official warned that Russia seeks to ramp up forcible mobilization efforts in occupied Ukraine following the formal integration of occupied Ukrainian territories into the Russian Southern Military District (SMD). Ukrainian Berdyansk Military Administration Head Viktoriya Halitsyna reported on February 27 that Russian President Vladimir Putin’s decree incorporating occupied Ukraine into the SMD enters into force on March 1, after which Russia will formally conduct mobilization and conscription in occupied Ukraine until April 1.[74] These efforts, if confirmed, likely aim to bolster Russia’s ongoing crypto-mobilization efforts in Russia and occupied Ukraine and do not likely reflect a broader Russian willingness to conduct another wave of mobilization. Russia’s forcible mobilization of a population it occupies is likely a violation of international law.[75]

South Korean Defense Minister Shin Won-sik reportedly stated on February 27 that North Korea munitions factories are operating at full capacity to supply munitions to Russia.[76] South Korean news agency *Yonhap News Agency* cited Shin as estimating that North Korea has shipped 6,700 containers of munitions and equipment to Russia since September 2023, enough to hold up to three million 152mm artillery rounds or 500,000 122mm artillery rounds. Shin reportedly stated that North Korea’s weapons factories, unlike its munitions factories, are only operating at 30 percent capacity due to supply shortages. Shin reportedly stated that Russia appears to be supplying North Korea with food, raw materials and parts for weapons manufacturing, and likely satellite-related technology in exchange for the weapons deliveries.

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

Nothing significant to report.

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

Ukraine’s European partners continue efforts to source and finance artillery shells for Ukraine. Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala stated that 15 European states are involved in the Czech Republic’s initiative to source weapons for Ukraine from outside of EU member states.[77] Dutch Prime Minister Mark

Rutte stated that the composition of this coalition is classified information but that the Netherlands has allocated more than 100 million euros (about \$108 million) to this initiative.[78] French President Emmanuel Macron stated that he also supports this initiative.[79]

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

Russian authorities are reportedly systematizing the adoption of deported Ukrainian children in Russia. Russian opposition outlet *Verstka* reported on February 27 that Russian authorities in Moscow Oblast created “training programs” for people potentially considering adopting illegally deported Ukrainian children in Russia.[80] The program reportedly falsely conflates Ukrainian and Russian culture. The program reportedly tells participants that their main objective is to create a “second homeland” for Ukrainian children in Russia and that they will need to overcome “difficulties in international differences.” Participants of the training program must undergo interviews in which Russian authorities ask if they have Ukrainian friends and relatives. ISW continues to assess that the forced deportation and adoption of Ukrainian children likely amounts to a violation of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

The Russian Red Cross (RRC) is reportedly functioning as a Kremlin propaganda tool in occupied Ukraine and does not have the proper mandate to operate in war zones like the International Committee of the Red Cross.[81] A group of Russian and European media outlets published an investigation into the RRC based on leaked Russian Presidential Administration documents. The RRC has reportedly worked with and awarded organizations under sanctions for raising funds for or providing weapons to the Russian military. RRC employees have also reportedly issued pro-Russian statements publicly. The investigation stated that the RRC set up organizations under its name, including the “Donetsk Red Cross” and “Luhansk Red Cross,” in order to portray Russia’s occupation of Ukraine in a more positive light. The RRC also reportedly had access to Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) and refugees, whom RCC workers insulted and abused.

Ukrainian sources stated that Ukrainian partisans reportedly detonated explosive devices at the office of the United Russia party in occupied Nova Kakhovka, Kherson Oblast that will also operate as polling stations in the upcoming Russian presidential election.[82]

**Russian Information Operations and Narratives**

Russian officials accused Ukrainian special forces of using a “chemical warfare agent” in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast on February 27, likely to deflect from Ukrainian reports about widespread Russian use of chemical weapons along the frontline.[83] Russian officials did not identify the specific “chemical warfare agent” that they accused Ukrainian forces of using. Ukrainian officials have repeatedly reported that Russian forces are increasing their use of illegal chemical weapons in Ukraine in an apparent violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), to which Russia is a signatory.[84] The Russian 810th Naval Infantry Brigade recently acknowledged in a now-deleted post that elements of the brigade



deliberately used K-51 grenades with riot control agents (RCAs) prohibited by the CWC on Ukrainian positions in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast.[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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<https://t.me/wargonzo/18442>

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[62] <https://t.me/rybar/57613>; <https://t.me/rybar/57616>

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