

How Delays in Western Aid Gave Russia the Initiative: From the Ukrainian Counteroffensive to Kharkiv

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Ukraine and the West have defeated a months-long Russian effort to persuade the West to abandon Ukraine and set conditions to collapse Ukrainian defenses. Russian forces have conducted offensive operations since Fall 2023 that aimed to convince the West to abandon its commitment to Ukraine, and prolonged US debates about security assistance likely convinced the Kremlin that its efforts had partially succeeded. The effects of continued delays in US and Western security assistance set conditions for Russian forces to make more significant gains on the battlefield than they had previously been able to make, and the Russian military command likely concluded that Russian forces would be able to collapse the Ukrainian frontline at some point in the near to medium term. Ukrainian forces nevertheless prevented Russian forces from making operationally significant advances and limited the areas where Russian forces managed to make tactically significant gains even as Western supplies dwindled. The US decision to resume aid in late April 2024 and Europe's increasing efforts to mobilize support for Ukraine marked the failure of Russia's effort to convince the West to accept Russian victory. The course of operations over the past seven months has likely convinced Russian President Vladimir Putin and the Russian military command that continuous Russian offensive operations will let Russia gradually subsume Ukraine and destroy Ukrainian statehood piece by piece, however. Putin has likely concluded that weakening Western support for Ukraine over time is a valid theory of victory for him and will likely continue efforts to convince the West to surrender and allow Russia to destroy Ukrainian statehood. Putin and the Russian military also appear to have concluded that Ukraine will be unable to regain territories the Russians can seize and that creeping Russian advances even at high cost will therefore ultimately lead to overall Russian success. These apparent Russian assessments will encourage Putin to continue the war in pursuit of ultimate total victory.

Russian forces have been conducting offensive operations in Ukraine since October 2023 that aim to demoralize Ukraine and the West and have expanded their goals to pursue operationally significant breakthroughs as Ukrainian materiel constraints worsened in winter and spring 2024. Russian forces launched a series of localized offensive operations in eastern Ukraine in Fall 2023 to seize the theater-wide initiative and to demoralize Ukraine and convince the West that

Ukraine could not win the war. Western debates about support for Ukraine intensified in late fall into winter, likely convincing the Kremlin that it had succeeded in weakening Western support for Ukraine. The onset of pronounced Ukrainian materiel constraints due to delays in Western security assistance likely convinced the Kremlin that more operationally significant gains were possible. Russian forces subsequently intensified efforts throughout eastern Ukraine in mid-winter that aimed to achieve their existing operational objectives and more operationally significant advances. As Ukrainian material constraints became more dire and Russian forces started to make tactical gains, the Russian military command likely began to assess that Russian forces could eventually collapse the Ukrainian defensive line. The Russian military therefore began preparations for a summer offensive effort to exploit the destabilization of Ukrainian defenses that Russian forces have continued to pursue in Spring 2024. Russian forces now have a limited window to pursue tactical gains before the arrival of resumed US security assistance at scale allows Ukrainian forces to blunt Russian advances, however. The Kremlin likely did not assess that the United States would resume security assistance to Ukraine and will likely have to reassess many of its assumptions before conducting the expected summer offensive effort. Russian forces have nevertheless leveraged their possession of the theater-wide initiative and the recent months of Ukrainian material constraints to address longstanding issues with their campaign in Ukraine and to expand operational, tactical, and technological adaptations among Russian forces fighting in Ukraine. Well-provisioned Ukrainian forces will likely be able to prevent Russian forces from making operationally significant gains this summer, however.

October and November 2023: Russia fails to seize Avdiivka but does seize the theater-wide initiative

Russian forces launched localized offensive operations throughout eastern Ukraine in the Fall of 2023 in an effort to seize the theater-wide initiative and convince the West that the war was "stalemated" and that continued support for Ukraine was futile. Russian forces had successfully defended against the Summer 2023 Ukrainian counteroffensive in western Zaporizhia Oblast and began localized offensive operations in October shortly after the tempo of the Ukrainian counteroffensive had begun to slow in September.[1] Russian forces likely aimed for their desired quick seizure of the theater-wide initiative to intensify Western questions about Ukraine's ability to liberate territory following the unmet expectations of the Summer 2023 counteroffensive.[2] Putin likely also wanted Russian forces to retain the theater-wide initiative and make tactical gains in the lead up to the March 2024 Russian Presidential election to convince the Russian public that the war effort was going well, although beginning offensive efforts later in winter 2023-2024 would have provided Putin with similar informational effects.[3] Russian forces launched localized offensive operations in eastern Ukraine during the most challenging weather of the fall-winter season when muddy ground conditions made mechanized maneuver unfavorable.[4] Instead of taking months to prepare for a wider offensive effort during more favorable conditions in the winter, Russian forces began a localized offensive operation almost immediately in hopes that it would quicken the culmination of Ukrainian counteroffensive operations and allow Russian forces to demonstratively seize the theater-wide initiative on their terms. The US intelligence community reportedly shared a declassified intelligence assessment with

Congress on December 12 that Russian offensive operations in eastern Ukraine in Fall 2023 and through the upcoming winter aimed to weaken Western support for Ukraine instead of achieving any immediate operational objectives.[5]

Russian forces initially sought to conduct a rapid operational encirclement of Avdiivka in October 2023 to demoralize the West and quickly force Ukraine to cede the theater-wide initiative but failed to do so. Russian forces conducted mass mechanized assaults in the Avdiivka area from October 10 to October 16, shortly after the tempo of the Ukrainian counteroffensive in western Zaporizhia Oblast had begun to slow in September.[6] Russian forces redeployed relatively fresh elements of the 2nd Combined Arms Army (Central Military District [CMD]) from the Lyman direction, where there had been comparatively little fighting during Summer 2023, to the Avdiivka area to conduct some of the largest mechanized assaults of the war to date.[7] The Russian military command likely chose Avdiivka because Russian forces had already created favorable conditions to encircle the settlement during a previous failed effort to seize Avdiivka as part of the Russian Winter-Spring 2023 offensive operation.[8] The Avdiivka-Donetsk City front was also relatively less active during the Ukrainian Summer 2023 counteroffensive, and the Russian military command likely assessed that Ukrainian operational attention on other sectors of the frontline would give Russian forces a better chance to achieve operational surprise in the Avdiivka area.[9] Russian forces attempted to advance rapidly northwest, south, and southwest of Avdiivka to encircle Avdiivka, aiming to seize a settlement for which Russian forces had been fighting since 2014 while also attempting to destroy the Ukrainian force grouping in the area.[10] Ukrainian forces were prepared for the mechanized assaults, however, and inflicted serious armored vehicle losses on Russian forces while repelling assaults between October 10 and 16.[11] Russian forces regrouped for several days and then launched a larger second wave of mass mechanized assaults in the Avdiivka area on October 19 and 20 that failed to make significant tactical gains and resulted in even greater armored vehicle losses.[12] Russian forces lost at least 109 military vehicles, primarily armored fighting vehicles and tanks, near Avdiivka between October 10 and 20, and the scale of these losses forced the Russian military command to abandon attempts to conduct an offensive operation based solely on rapid mechanized maneuver.[13]

Failed mass mechanized assaults around Avdiivka prompted the Russian military to switch to consistent infantry assaults along the frontline in eastern Ukraine in November 2023, and constant Russian offensive pressure allowed Russian forces to seize the theater-wide initiative by December. Russian forces began consistently attacking along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City front in November, sustaining a higher operational tempo with small infantry assault groups with minimal to no armored vehicle support.[14] Russian forces continued an opportunistic localized offensive operation that they had begun northeast of Kupyansk in October into November and launched localized offensive operations in the Bakhmut area in early November.[15] Russian forces likely hoped that several simultaneous offensive operations would force Ukrainian forces to divert manpower and materiel from areas where Ukrainian forces were still maintaining limited counteroffensive pressure to

defensive operations along a wide front in eastern Ukraine.[16] These localized offensive operations had limited tactical goals, and there were no indications that Russian forces intended for these operations to pursue operationally significant objectives at that time. Russian forces renewed mechanized assaults near Avdiivka in late November, albeit at a smaller scale than their mechanized assaults in October, illustrating that the limited tactical objective of seizing Avdiivka remained the Russian military command's foremost priority and that Russian forces were not considering more operationally significant objectives at that time.[17]

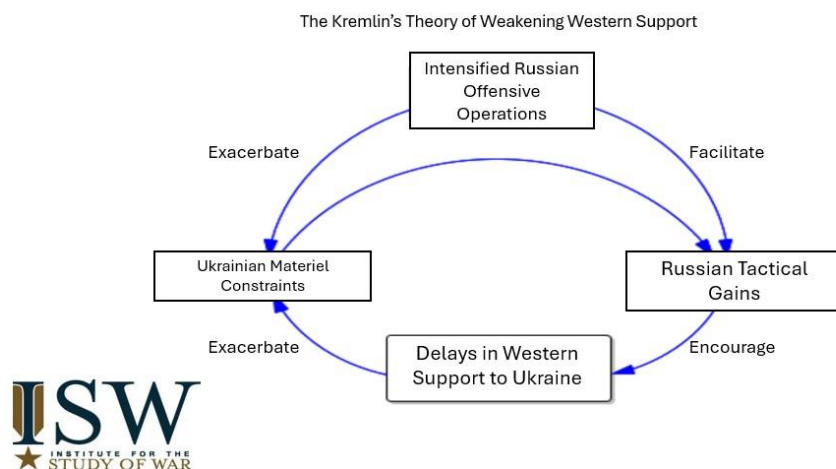
Ukrainian counteroffensive operations largely ended in November, and Russian offensive operations likely contributed to their culmination despite Russia's failure to achieve even notable tactical gains.[18] These Russian offensive operations also likely contributed to an emerging debate in the West and the United States about continued support to Ukraine, as limited offensive operations and discussions about positional warfare generated a perception that operationally significant advances in Ukraine were impossible and that the war was in a "stalemate." [19] With the theater-wide initiative, Russian forces were now able to determine the time, location, and scale of fighting in Ukraine, an advantage that Russian forces would leverage to continue efforts to demoralize Ukraine and the West. Russian forces also could determine the resources that Ukraine would have to commit to fighting and aimed to prevent Ukrainian forces from accumulating materiel needed to contest the initiative in the near term.

December 2023: An increasingly confident Kremlin

The Kremlin likely became convinced by mid-winter that it had succeeded in weakening Western support for Ukraine. Putin and the Kremlin had cautiously discussed the war in public for much of the full-scale invasion and only briefly touched on their strategic goals for the war.[20] Putin and the Kremlin notably shifted their public rhetoric in December, however, reengaging with expansionist rhetoric from the beginning of the full-scale invasion and expressing increasing confidence in Russia's prospects in Ukraine.[21] Some of this rhetoric may have intended to bolster information operations aimed at demoralizing Ukraine and further convincing the West that Ukrainian victory was impossible, but the significant shift in rhetoric in the lead up to the Russian presidential election suggests that Putin and the Kremlin believed that Russian prospects in Ukraine were improving.[22] As it became clear that the resumption of US aid to Ukraine was a matter of debate and not procedure and as the European Union (EU) prolonged discussions on its own support package, the future of Western security assistance to Ukraine became increasingly uncertain. The West had previously debated the type, amount, and regularity of security assistance to Ukraine, but ending security assistance altogether had not hitherto gained significant traction. This inflection likely convinced the Kremlin that there were limits to Western support for Ukraine and that the Russian seizure of the theater-wide initiative had succeeded in convincing the West that facilitating Ukrainian victory was not a feasible course of action. The US Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) reported in its 2024 Annual Threat Assessment that Putin "probably believes" that Russian forces have blunted Ukrainian efforts to retake significant territory and that US and Western support to Ukraine is "finite," an

assessment that Putin and his advisors likely started to coalesce around in Winter 2023-2024.[23]

The Russian military command likely began reassessing the scope of its localized offensive operations based on the assessment that Ukrainian materiel shortages would facilitate significant Russian advances on the battlefield. It was increasingly clear by mid-December that a combination of artillery ammunition shortages and delays in the provision of Western security assistance was causing Ukrainian forces to husband materiel and constraining Ukrainian defensive capabilities.[24] Russian forces were fielding an up to ten-to-one artillery advantage in certain sectors of the front by January, although Ukrainian forces were already trying to offset some of their artillery constraints with first person view drones (FPV).[25] Russian forces seized Marinka, a small tactically insignificant settlement west of Donetsk City that had been under Russian attack since the start of the full-scale invasion, on December 25.[26] Russian forces also recaptured some limited positions in western Zaporizhia Oblast in late December that Ukrainian forces had taken during the Summer 2023 counteroffensive.[27] Limited tactical gains that had previously eluded Russian forces likely bolstered Russian confidence, and forecasts about the consequences of continued delays in Western aid likely added to Russian perceptions that Russian forces would be conducting offensive operations against increasingly less well provisioned Ukrainian forces. The Russian military command likely believed that intensified Russian offensive operations could generate a reinforcing feedback loop wherein Russian offensive operations against less well provisioned Ukrainian forces could achieve tactically significant gains that in return would demoralize the West and prolong debates about resuming security assistance to Ukraine at scale, causing delays that would further worsen Ukrainian material constraints and set conditions for even greater Russian tactical gains.



Russian forces began preparations for intensified offensive efforts in Ukraine in December 2023 and early January 2024 that indicated that the Russian military command likely assessed that tactically and operationally significant gains were possible. Russian sources claimed in early January that

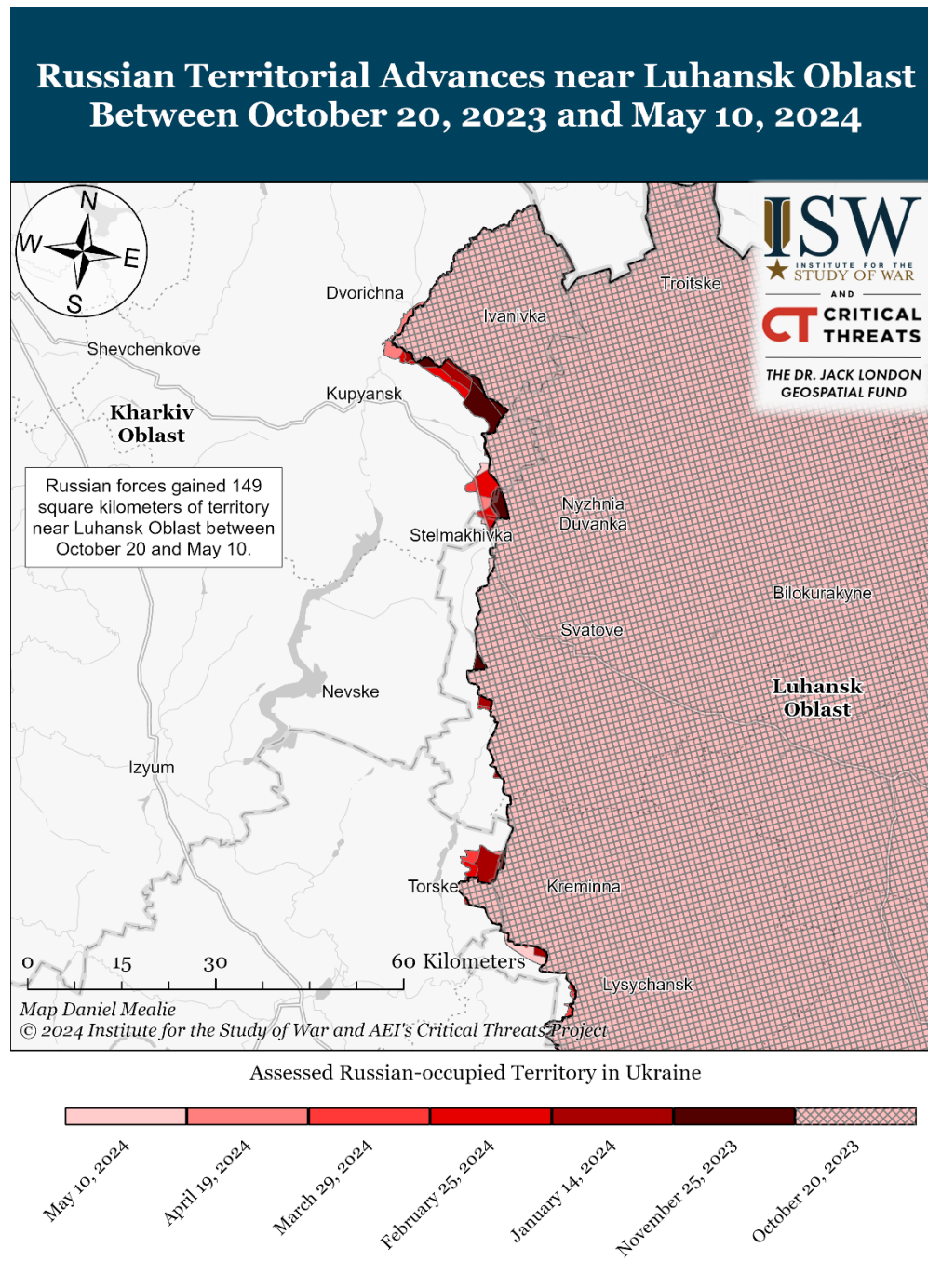
Russian forces were preparing to launch a new offensive effort once the ground froze in eastern Ukraine, and Russian forces likely began establishing limited operational reserves for use later in the winter throughout late fall and into December.[28] Russian forces redeployed remaining CMD elements from the Lyman direction to the Central Grouping of Forces in the Avdiivka area by January while also establishing coherent areas of responsibility for elements of the Western Military District (now Leningrad and Moscow military districts [LMD/MMD]) along the entire Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line.[29] The Russian military command established two different relatively coherent force groupings in these areas to pursue intensified offensive operations – the Central Grouping of Forces concentrated on a relatively narrow sector of the front for an intensified effort to seize Avdiivka, and the Western Grouping of Forces attacked along four mutually supporting directions of advance on the Kharkiv-Luhansk axis to push Ukrainian forces off the east bank of the Oskil River in Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast.[30] Avdiivka remained a tactical objective likely meant to provide Putin with a battlefield victory for his reelection in March, but the effort to reach the Oskil River pursued an operationally significant objective that suggests that the Russian military command assessed that Russian forces could achieve gains that were considerably more significant than any that Russian forces had recently been able to make.[31]

Russian forces also resumed large scale missile and drone strikes against Ukraine in late December, likely hoping to reapply pressure on Ukrainian air defense assets and fix and draw Ukrainian air defense systems away from the front in order to intensify glide bomb strikes.[32] Russian forces began to significantly intensify glide bomb strikes in early December 2023 throughout the theater, and the Russian command likely hoped that sparse Ukrainian air defense coverage along the front would permit Russian fixed-wing aircraft to intensify glide bomb strikes in January and February in support of intensified offensive ground operations safely.[33] Russian forces launched 250 glide bombs against Avdiivka alone in the first half of January 2024, compared to 149 glide bombs in all of 2023.[34] Russian forces also may have imagined that large scale missile and drone strikes would exhaust Ukraine's air defense umbrella suffering from the lack of replenishment as Western aid debates continued, and that completely degraded Ukrainian air defense capabilities several months down the line could allow Russian forces to conduct widespread aviation operations at scale to bomb rear Ukrainian logistics and population centers to devastating effect.[35]

January and February 2024: Russian forces intensify offensive efforts and pursue more operationally significant gains

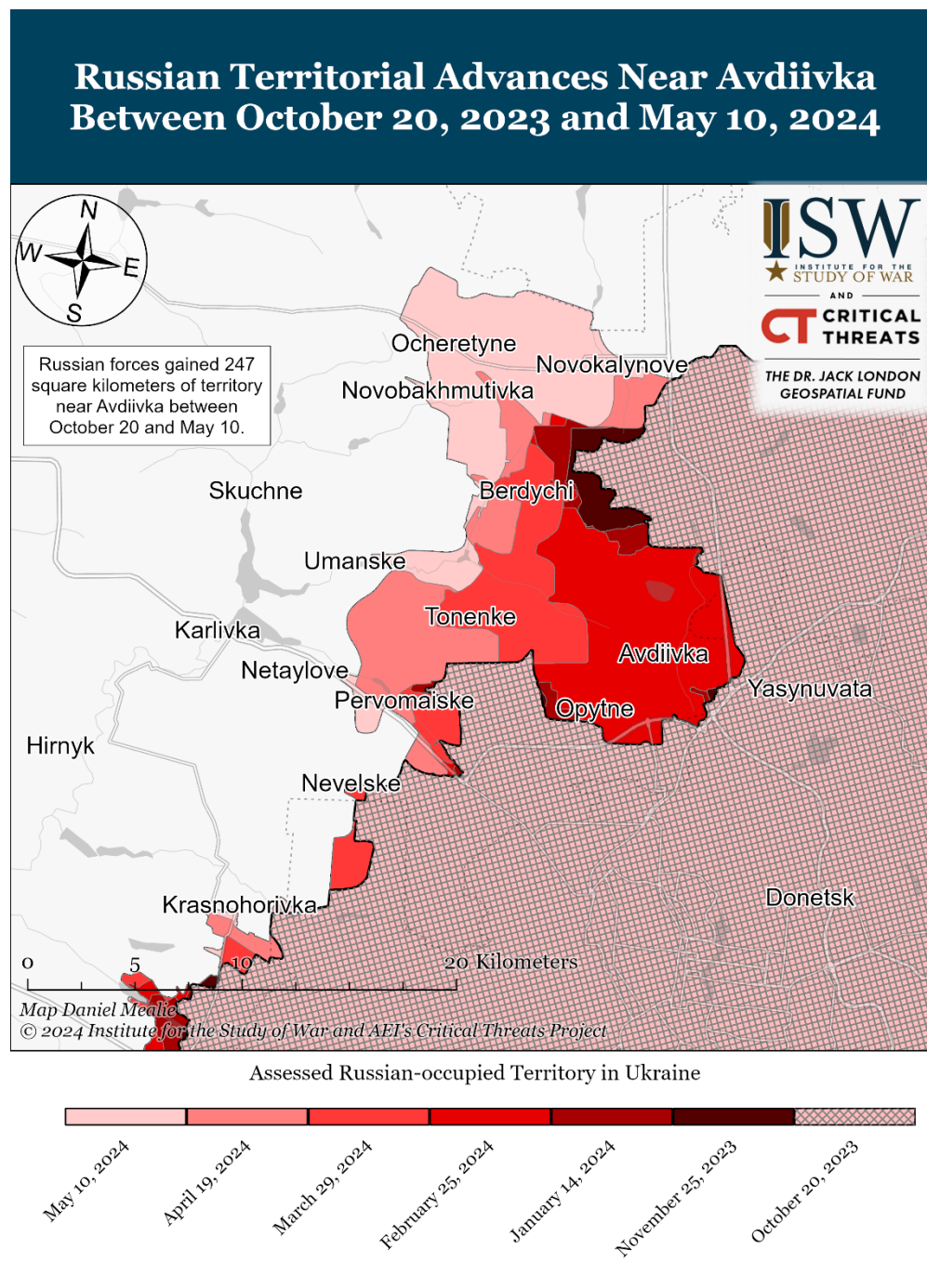
Russian forces significantly intensified offensive operations around Avdiivka and launched their Winter-Spring 2024 offensive operation on the Kharkiv-Luhansk axis roughly at the same time in mid-January. Russian forces intensified their use of armored vehicles to transport infantry to the frontline near Avdiivka on January 16 and reportedly entered Avdiivka as of January 19.[36] Elements of the 1st Guards Tank Army (MMD, formerly WMD) meanwhile intensified offensive operations northwest of Svatove on January 19, and elements of the 20th CAA (MMD, formerly WMD) conducted a likely battalion sized mechanized assault west of Kreminna on January 21.[37] Russian forces began advancing into Ukrainian strongholds in

southern Avdiivka on January 21 and by January 25 it was evident that Russian forces intended to focus a large amount of materiel and manpower on fighting through the settlement instead of continuing attempts at an operational encirclement in the area.[38] Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Head Lieutenant General Kyrylo Budanov stated on January 30 that the Russian Winter-Spring 2024 offensive effort on the Kharkiv-Luhansk axes was underway.[39] The near simultaneous intensification of Russian offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line and near Avdiivka likely aimed to pressure Ukrainian forces on two separate fronts and prevent Ukraine from transferring manpower and increasingly scarce materiel to another sector should Russian forces start making progress. Russian forces did not make significant tactical progress in continued intensified assaults on the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line in February and into March, however, likely because advances in the area require successful mechanized maneuver that Russian forces have routinely struggled to conduct.[40] Russian forces were able to make a tactical penetration into Avdiivka that allowed Russian infantry to mass on the settlement for urban combat, in contrast.[41]



Russian forces concentrated significant manpower and materiel on their effort to seize Avdiivka in mid-February and achieved their tactical objective in the area at high cost. Russian forces made tactical gains in northern Avdiivka between February 2 and 8 that allowed Russian forces subsequently to launch a turning movement through the settlement on February 15 that would threaten Ukrainian forces in Avdiivka with tactical encirclement.[42] Ukrainian forces began withdrawing from Avdiivka on February 16 and Russian forces seized Avdiivka on February 17.[43] The Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Press Service reported that Ukrainian forces inflicted

losses of 20,018 personnel, 199 tanks, and 481 armored combat vehicles in the Tavriisk direction (from Avdiivka through western Zaporizhia Oblast) between January 1 and February 15, with the majority of those losses inflicted near Avdiivka.[44] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Commander Brigadier General Oleksandr Tarnavskiy stated on February 18 that during the four month long Russian offensive effort to seize Avdiivka, Russian forces lost over 47,000 personnel, 364 tanks, 248 artillery systems, 748 armored fighting vehicles, and five aircraft.[45] A Russian milblogger, who later reportedly committed suicide over the uproar about his reporting about Avdiivka, claimed that 16,000 Russian personnel died during the four-month effort to seize Avdiivka.[46] The seizure of Avdiivka in itself was not operationally significant as the settlement provided limited avenues for further advances.[47] The seizure of the settlement did, however, provide the Kremlin with its desired battlefield victory, a salient tactical gain to demoralize Ukrainians and convince the West that Russian forces could advance on the battlefield, and tactical opportunities to destabilize Ukrainian defensive positions further west of Avdiivka.[48]



Russian officials aimed to use these intensified offensive operations to further dissuade the West from supporting Ukraine as Western discussions about security assistance progressed. The US Senate unveiled its proposed supplemental appropriations bill for security assistance for Ukraine, Taiwan, and Israel on February 4 and passed the bill on February 13.[49] Russian forces made their important tactical penetration into northern Avdiivka by February 8 and launched their turning movement through the settlement on February 18, mere days after important milestones with the US supplemental aid bill.[50] The timing was most likely

coincidental, but Russian officials were highly attuned at the time to generating effects on Western audiences about the war in Ukraine. Putin notably gave an interview to American media personality Tucker Carlson released on February 8 that Putin attempted to use to present to an American audience a long-standing Kremlin information operation that falsely asserts that Russia is interested in a negotiated end to its war in Ukraine.[51] The Kremlin likely intended for this information operation to disrupt American progress on the supplemental debate and hoped that Russian battlefield gains at the time would generate US discussions about the feasibility of Ukrainian victory and the need for a negotiated settlement instead of resumed military assistance. Russian forces also engaged in limited offensive operations to achieve informational effects that intended to further demoralize Ukrainians following the seizure of Avdiivka, notably intensifying efforts to seize Robotyne in mid-February in an attempt to regain territory lost during the Summer 2023 Ukrainian counteroffensive.[52] Former Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu prematurely claimed that Russian forces had seized Krynky, where Ukrainian forces established a limited tactical bridgehead in mid-fall 2023, to posture the Russian military as nullifying the effects of the Summer 2023 Ukrainian counteroffensive.[53]

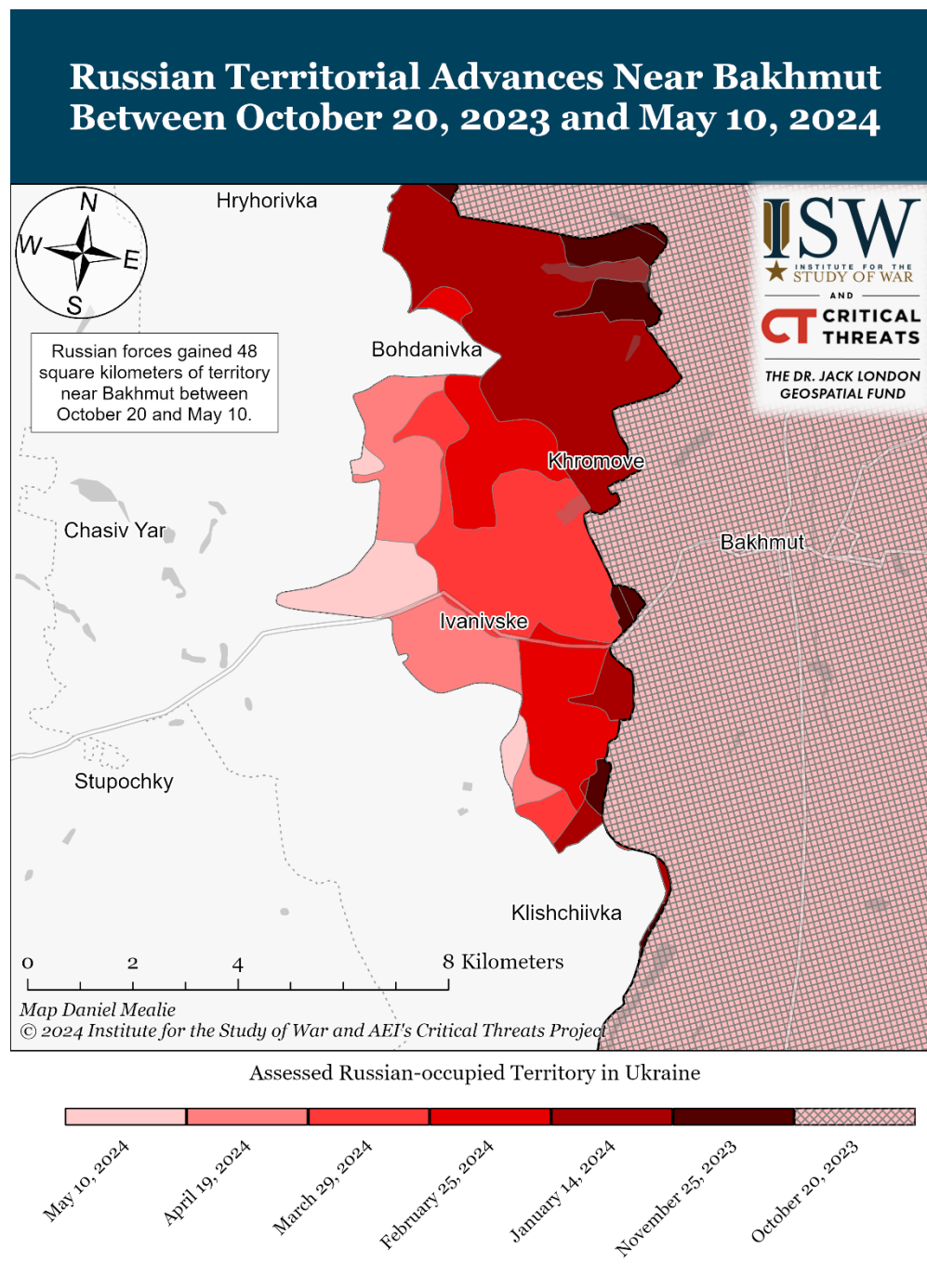
March and April 2024: Russia sees opportunities for the destabilization and collapse of the Ukrainian defense

The Russian seizure of Avdiivka prominently highlighted the way in which Ukrainian materiel constraints were facilitating Russian advances, and the Russian military command likely saw prospects for destabilizing Ukrainian defenses on a larger scale following the seizure of Avdiivka. Russian forces conducted upwards of 100 glide bomb strikes against Avdiivka per day in the final weeks of the offensive effort to seize the settlement, and Russian forces leveraged these strikes to destroy prepared Ukrainian positions over a wide area to facilitate the advance of Russian infantry on the ground.[54] The successful Russian use of glide bomb strikes to tactical effect in Avdiivka likely convinced the Russian military command that the further degradation of Ukrainian air defense capabilities due to delays in US security assistance would allow Russian forces to replicate and possibly conduct the aviation operations they conducted around Avdiivka at scale along the front.[55] Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces had a roughly six-to-one artillery advantage on average throughout the front in mid-February, although it was likely much greater during the Russian seizure of Avdiivka.[56] Ukrainian artillery constraints, even in the most active sectors of the front such as Avdiivka, allowed Russian forces to stage offensive operations under less pressure from Ukrainian counterbattery fire, generating an operational flexibility that Russian forces likely hoped would facilitate similar tactical gains elsewhere on the front.[57] The relatively rapid seizure of Avdiivka after months of costly gradual progress likely illustrated to the Russian military that such gains would become more feasible as Ukrainian materiel constraints worsened, and the Russian military may have determined that sustaining the tempo of offensive operations in eastern Ukraine would accelerate critical Ukrainian shortages.

Russian forces sustained a high tempo of offensive operations following the seizure of Avdiivka in order to push as far west as possible before Ukrainian forces established more cohesive and harder-to-penetrate defensive lines in

the area.[58] Russian forces briefly slowed their offensive tempo in the week following their seizure of Avdiivka but had no intentions of allowing the offensive operation in the area to culminate. The Russian command transferred elements of the CMD, notably its 90th Tank Division, to the rear for rest and reconstitution to establish available reserves in the area while immediately committing other CMD elements that had participated in the seizure of Avdiivka to offensive operations west of Avdiivka.[59] Ukrainian forces had relatively less well-prepared defensive positions in the area, and Russian forces sought to gain as much ground as possible before Ukrainian forces could establish themselves at a cohesive defensive line.[60] Ukrainian forces managed to settle on a defensive line several kilometers west of Avdiivka and subsequently slowed Russian advances by mid-March, but these relatively rapid gains likely created an impression that the Ukrainian defense west of Avdiivka was unstable.[61] The Russian military command decided at this time to codify the CMD's responsibility for the small section of the front west of Avdiivka and establish CMD elements as an operational maneuver force that would exploit any envisioned penetrations in the area.[62]

Russian forces also began approaching the outskirts of Chasiv Yar in March, setting conditions to pursue an operationally significant objective west of Bakhmut. Russia's localized offensive operation in the Bakhmut area had been relatively less active than those along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna and Avdiivka-Donetsk City fronts, but nevertheless had made marginal tactical progress that brought Russian forces close to the outskirts of Chasiv Yar by late March.[63] The ongoing offensive effort to seize Chasiv Yar offers Russian forces the most immediate prospects for operationally significant advances as the seizure of the town would likely allow Russian forces to launch subsequent offensive operations against Kostyantynivka and Druzhkivka, cities that form the southern part of a significant Ukrainian defensive belt in Donetsk Oblast.[64] Select Russian sources described the limited localized offensive operations in the Bakhmut area between November 2023 and March 2024 as conditions setting for an intensified offensive operation to encircle and seize Chasiv Yar.[65] Russian forces have concentrated elements of several airborne (VDV) divisions and brigades, the Luhansk People's Republic [LNR] 2nd Army Corps (AC), the 3rd AC, and the 8th Combined Arms Army [CAA] (Southern Military District [SMD]) in the Chasiv Yar area, although many of these elements had already been in the area since the Summer 2023 Ukrainian counteroffensive.[66] Ukrainian and Russian sources reported that Russian forces planned to transfer forces to the Chasiv Yar area from the Avdiivka direction following the seizure of Avdiivka in mid-February, but that the opportunity to exploit tactical Ukrainian vulnerabilities immediately west of Avdiivka persuaded the Russian command not to do so.[67] The seizure of Avdiivka and worsening Ukrainian materiel shortages may also have convinced the Russian military that the existing force grouping in the Chasiv Yar area was more or less sufficient to begin intensified offensive operations to seize Chasiv Yar.



Russian forces intensified mechanized assaults throughout eastern Ukraine in late March and early April and increased their general offensive tempo into April in order to destabilize the Ukrainian defense further. Reserve elements of the 90th Tank Division conducted a battalion-sized mechanized assault near Avdiivka on March 30 – the first battalion-sized mechanized assault in the area since Russian forces began the campaign to seize Avdiivka in Fall 2023.[68] From late March to early April, Russian forces increased the number and size of mechanized ground assaults throughout eastern Ukraine. Russian forces conducted a roughly reinforced

company-sized mechanized assault towards Chasiv Yar on April 4 and advanced up to the eastern outskirts of the settlement.[69] Russian forces intensified the overall tempo of their offensive operations in the Lyman, Chasiv Yar, Avdiivka, and Donetsk City areas to place pressure on Ukrainian forces all along the frontline and achieve a penetration wherever possible in eastern Ukraine.[70] Ukrainian forces prevented Russian forces from penetrating Ukrainian defenses, but Russian forces did make tactical gains during these mechanized assaults.[71] These mechanized advances were not reflective of a change in Russian offensive capability but rather resulted from critical Ukrainian artillery shortages, as Ukrainian forces had previously extensively leveraged artillery in their reconnaissance fire complex (RFC) to repel Russian mechanized assaults.[72] Ukrainian forces had to rely on FPV drones to defend against these Russian mechanized assaults, a partial mitigation since FPV drones cannot destroy armored vehicles rapidly and in large numbers as artillery can.[73] Russian forces have made most their tactical gains in the past year and a half mainly through infantry assaults, and the partial successes of these mechanized advances may have prompted the Russian military command to consider that restoring maneuver to the battlefield was possible in the near term.[74]

Russian forces substantially decreased the tempo of offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove line throughout March into April, however, likely viewing fewer chances for a breakthrough in the area due to failed offensive operations in the area in January and February.[75] Russian forces also began to transfer elements of the 44th AC, 11th AC (LMD), and 6th CAA (all LMD) from the Kupyansk direction to Belgorod, Kursk, and Bryansk oblasts in March and April in preparation for limited offensive operations that Russian forces would launch into northern Kharkiv Oblast in early May.[76] The Russian military command expanded the MMD's area of responsibility along the entire Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, temporarily pausing the larger Kharkiv-Luhansk offensive effort so that the MMD could adjust to assuming responsibility for the effort.[77]

Russian forces also resumed efforts to collapse Ukraine's energy grid in late March, likely viewing degrading Ukrainian air defense capabilities as an opportunity to cause significant long-term damage to Ukrainian war fighting capabilities and set conditions for significant gains on the battlefield.[78] The Russian military command likely sought to reapply pressure on Ukraine' air defense umbrella to continue fixing degraded Ukrainian air defenses to the rear as Russian aviation supported ongoing intensified offensive operations in eastern Ukraine and started to intensify strikes in Kharkiv Oblast ahead of the planned offensive operation in northern Kharkiv Oblast.[79] The Russian military command may have assessed that another set of large-scale missile and drone strikes could almost completely deplete Ukrainian air defense missile stocks amid continued delays in US security assistance, setting conditions for large-scale Russian aviation operations in support of the expected Russian Summer 2024 offensive operation. Spring 2024 also offered the best chance that Russian forces have had to collapse the Ukrainian energy grid in over a year due to the delays in Western air defense provisions, and Russian forces exploited this opportunity to try to cause long term damage to Ukrainian defense industrial and overall economic capacity that would take substantial time to repair.[80]

Ukrainian officials were issuing increasingly dire forecasts in March and April about the consequences of the continued lack of Western security assistance, likely bolstering the Russian military command's belief in a possible breakthrough. Ukrainian officials reportedly started to increasingly express concerns in private in March about significant Russian advances in the summer in the event of continued delays in Western security assistance.[81] By April Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was publicly indicating that delays in American security assistance would continue to force Ukraine to cede the battlefield initiative and that these delays were critically threatening Ukraine's defensive capabilities.[82] Zelensky reportedly told US Speaker of the House Mike Johnson in December 2023 that Ukrainian forces would be able to "hold out" until March or April 2024 without additional US security assistance, and as Ukrainian forces passed this threshold the Russian military's belief in the potential for an operational breakthrough likely became an entrenched aspect of its operational planning.[83]

The Russian military command likely assessed that continued Russian offensive operations in Spring 2024 would prevent Ukrainian forces from stabilizing the frontline and that a large-scale Russian offensive effort in the summer would exploit this instability and even greater Ukrainian materiel constraints. Russian forces initially sought to maintain the tempo of their offensive operations this spring in order to force Ukraine to expend materiel it could otherwise accumulate for defensive efforts this summer. Russian forces aimed to compel Ukrainian forces to prioritize limited resources to critical sectors of the front, increasing the risk of a Russian breakthrough in other less-well-provisioned sectors and making the frontline overall more fragile.[84] Ukrainian officials increasingly began to warn of a large-scale Russian offensive operation in late May or June and identified the Pokrovsk direction (west of Avdiivka) and the Chasiv Yar area as the likely areas of Russian focus.[85] Ukrainian officials also warned about the potential for a Russian offensive operation in Kharkiv and Sumy oblasts, an operation that likely aims to stretch Ukraine's limited resources and worsen Ukrainian manpower constraints by forcing Ukraine to respond to ongoing Russian offensive operations across a wider swath of territory in eastern and northeastern Ukraine.[86] Russian forces likely aimed to prevent Ukrainian forces from stabilizing the defensive line so that Russian forces could quickly penetrate and exploit weaker sectors of the front to achieve an operationally significant breakthrough with their planned summer offensive effort. Russian forces have been attempting to establish operational- and strategic-level reserves in recent months for this summer offensive effort, but have likely not trained or equipped these reserves to act as coherent penetration or exploitation forces.[87] The Russian military command likely assessed that it could use these reserves to replenish existing units committed to the frontline and that even poorly trained Russian forces would be able to advance against Ukrainian forces suffering from the materiel shortages forecasted for the summer.[88] The Russian military likely viewed Russian offensive operations in late April as conditions setting for a larger offensive effort in the near term that had a chance to collapse the frontline.[89]

May 2024 and Beyond: A closing window for Russian tactical gains and the approaching Russian summer offensive effort

The resumption of US security assistance to Ukraine at the end of April was a critical turning point in the war and created a limited window for Russian forces to pursue tactically significant gains. It will still take several weeks for US security assistance to arrive to Ukrainian forces at the front at scale, and Russian forces have intensified offensive operations in certain sectors and maintained their offensive tempo in others to take advantage of the limited window before the large-scale arrival of new US aid at the front.[90] Ukrainian forces have continued to face ongoing shortages of artillery ammunition and air defense interceptors in early May, although the Ukrainian command likely has more latitude to take short-term risks with dwindling supplies to prevent significant Russian advances.[91] Russian forces have continued missile and drone strikes to take advantage of degraded Ukrainian air defense capabilities and have increasingly targeted transportation infrastructure in a bid to interdict Ukrainian ground lines of communications (GLOCs) and disrupt the flow of US aid to the frontline.[92] The resumption of US security assistance has removed the operational inflection point that Russian forces likely thought they were approaching — a critical threshold of Ukrainian materiel constraints that would have facilitated the collapse of the frontline. Russian offensive operations since October 2023 have steadily convinced the Russian military command that an operationally significant breakthrough was possible, and the resumption of US security assistance has very likely ended that possibility, whether the Russian military command has acknowledged that fact or not.

Russian forces focused on exploiting a tactical penetration northwest of Avdiivka while continuing to push near Chasiv Yar and resumed offensive operations along the wider Kharkiv-Luhansk axis. Russian forces seized on a reportedly disorderly Ukrainian rotation in the Ocheretyne area northwest of Avdiivka and made a tactical penetration in the area by April 18.[93] This penetration was almost certainly not tied to the impending vote on the US supplemental aid bill but instead resulted from the Central Grouping of Forces' existing operational task to penetrate Ukrainian defensive lines so that CMD elements could pursue a wider exploitation and from the perception of a tactical opportunity.[94] Russian forces had quickly redeployed elements of four CMD brigades to the tactical penetration near Ocheretyne by April 20 and by April 28 Russian forces had stabilized their salient northwest of Avdiivka, prompting Ukrainian forces to withdraw from other limited tactical positions along the frontline west of Avdiivka.[95] Russian forces have since made further significant tactical gains in the area but remain far from any operationally significant objectives.[96] Russian forces have committed additional reserves to what is in effect an opportunistic tactical penetration, which may consume manpower that Russian forces could have used to make operationally significant gains in the Chasiv Yar area or intended to use in the summer of 2024.[97] Russian forces will likely continue to make tactically significant gains in the Avdiivka area in the coming weeks as Ukrainian forces wait for US aid to relieve materiel constraints, however.

Russian forces have continued offensive operations near Chasiv Yar.[98] Russian forces momentarily regrouped in the Chasiv Yar area in mid-April before significantly intensifying offensive operations in the area from April 30 onward, and Ukrainian officials began publicly assessing in early May that it would “probably be a matter of time” before Russian forces seized the town.[99] Russian forces intensified mechanized assaults near Chasiv Yar in mid-May to exploit how the resumed Russian offensive operations in northern Kharkiv Oblast and ongoing offensive operations throughout eastern Ukraine have generated greater theater-wide pressure on Ukrainian forces.[100] ISW assesses that Russian forces may take Chasiv Yar but will be very unlikely to seize nearby major Ukrainian cities in Donetsk Oblast in subsequent offensive operations this summer.[101]

Russian forces resumed offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove line in late April and began to make limited tactical gains in the area.[102] The resumption of Russian offensive operations in the area likely sought to achieve tactical gains ahead of the arrival of US aid while also placing pressure on Ukrainian forces in eastern Kharkiv Oblast ahead of the imminent start of the new Russian offensive operation in northern Kharkiv Oblast. The Russian military most certainly retains its significant operational objective of pushing Ukrainian forces off the east bank of the Oskil River, although it remains unclear if the MMD intends to pursue the four-pronged offensive effort that the WMD initially sought to conduct in the area over the winter.[103] Russian forces may intend to gradually advance towards the Oskil River well after the summer 2024 Russian offensive effort ends.

Russian forces launched limited offensive operations along the Russian-Ukrainian border in northern Kharkiv Oblast on May 10 and may have started the operation earlier than intended due to the resumption of US security assistance. Russian forces committed limited manpower from the 11th and 44th ACs and the 6th CAA (LMD) to heavy infantry assaults north and northeast of Kharkiv city and initially made tactically significant gains in reportedly less defended border areas.[104] The pace of Russian offensive operations in northern Kharkiv Oblast began to slow as of May 14, and Russian forces appear to be prioritizing the creation of a “buffer zone” in the international border area over pursuing a deeper penetration into Kharkiv Oblast.[105] Russian offensive operations along the Kharkiv international border likely have the strategic objective of drawing and fixing Ukrainian forces to this axis to enable Russian advances in other areas of eastern Ukraine.[106] Russian forces also likely aim to advance to within effective tube artillery range of Kharkiv City so that they can conduct routine indirect fire against the city to set conditions for a larger offensive effort against Kharkiv City at a later date.[107] Russian forces reportedly launched offensive operations along the Russian-Ukrainian border in northern Kharkiv Oblast before they had completed bringing the Northern Grouping of Forces up to its reported planned end strength and have so far only committed a limited amount of combat power to offensive operations in the area.[108] The reported sizes of the Russian elements committed to these limited operations and of the Russian force grouping deployed along the border in northeastern Ukraine indicate that Russian forces are not pursuing a large-scale operation to envelop, encircle, or seize Kharkiv City at this time.[109] Ukrainian officials had previously indicated that Russian forces would likely begin offensive operations in

the Kharkiv direction in late May or June, but the Russian military command may have started the effort several weeks ahead of schedule due to concerns that well provisioned Ukrainian forces with US security assistance could prevent limited Russian forces from establishing a tactical foothold within northern Kharkiv Oblast.

The Kremlin likely did not believe that the US would resume security assistance to Ukraine and will likely have to reassess many of its operational planning assumptions for the summer offensive effort. Many of the Kremlin's assumptions for the expected summer offensive effort were likely based on the idea that Ukrainian forces would be facing critical materiel shortages by June, and the continuation of Russian offensive operations through the spring suggests that the Russian military command did not believe that it needed to accumulate significantly more manpower and materiel in case Ukrainian forces would be better provisioned by summer. Putin's belief in a "finite" level of US support for Ukraine likely led him to view the continued delays on the US supplemental bill as a reflection of serious US opposition to supporting Ukraine. The Kremlin promoted longstanding information operations aimed at prompting the West into self-deterrence in early April, possibly due to concerns about US progress on security assistance, but only significantly intensified this effort after the US resumed security assistance.[110]

The Russian military command likely envisioned that simultaneous offensive efforts towards Kharkiv City and along the current frontline in eastern Ukraine would stretch and overwhelm poorly-provisioned and undermanned Ukrainian forces and allow Russian forces to achieve a major breakthrough in at least one sector of the frontline. The Ukrainian forces that will likely hold the frontline in June 2024 will undermine this operational intent and likely have sufficient materiel to respond to these simultaneous Russian offensive operations. The Russian operational intent to stretch Ukrainian forces across a wider front will likely generate constraints on available Ukrainian manpower, however. Russian forces likely assumed that their poorly trained and equipped operational-level reserves would still be able to make tactical gains against constrained Ukrainian forces and likely planned to rely on these elements to sustain gradual tactical gains.[111] The Russian military command's likely belief in restoring maneuver to the battlefield and conducting relatively successful mechanized assaults was predicated on the experience of Russian forces benefitting from Ukrainian artillery shortages in the spring. However, Russia's past inability to conduct successful mechanized maneuver suggests that Russian forces will not be able to conduct successful assaults against well-provisioned Ukrainian forces. Improved Ukrainian air defense capabilities may allow Ukrainian forces to redeploy limited air defense assets to select sectors of the front to constrain Russian tactical aviation operations, as Ukrainian forces have temporarily achieved several times throughout the war, although the re-opening of the Kharkiv axis will likely draw Ukrainian air defenses there first according to Ukrainian official comments.[112] Russian forces are using glide bombs because they allow Russian fixed-wing aircraft to operate safely at further distances from the frontline, and even limited Ukrainian air defense coverage on sectors of the frontline is unlikely to fundamentally change how Russian forces are leveraging these strikes to facilitate ground operations.[113] Improved Ukrainian air defense coverage will reduce Russia's ability to conduct large-scale aviation operations at scale, however. Russian forces have been

leveraging static artillery firing positions and relatively uncontested staging areas during recent months to prepare for and launch offensive operations, but improved Ukrainian counterbattery and strike capabilities will likely allow Ukrainian forces to reduce some of the operational flexibility that Russian forces have recently enjoyed in Ukraine.[114] Delays in Western security assistance have limited Ukrainian interdiction efforts, and it is likely that Russian forces had fewer concerns about protecting GLOCs and logistics hubs when planning their summer offensive effort.[115]

The Russian military command will likely have to consider if the intended areas and objectives of its summer offensive effort are now feasible and if the current means that Russian forces have been concentrating and preparing are sufficient to conduct planned offensive operations considering the resumption of US security assistance to Ukraine. Russian forces may launch offensive operations as planned regardless of the resumption of US security assistance, however. Russian forces launched limited offensive operations in northern Kharkiv Oblast with limited manpower, likely predicated on the fact that limited objectives in northern Kharkiv Oblast would require fewer personnel due to degraded Ukrainian defensive capabilities. Russian forces have limited time to address operational planning assumptions and many of these assumptions will likely go unaddressed by the time that Russia starts the summer offensive effort.

Ukrainian forces will be better provisioned by the time Russia launches its summer offensive effort and will likely be able to prevent Russian forces from making operationally significant gains. Ukrainian forces will likely start fielding US security assistance at scale by June and will be able to leverage this materiel to blunt Russian efforts to pursue operationally significant advances this summer.[116] Well provisioned Ukrainian forces have proven adept at preventing Russian forces from making even marginal tactical gains during previous large-scale offensive operations, and Russian forces have not significantly changed their offensive capabilities in a way that would preclude Ukrainian forces from successfully defending against intensified Russian offensive operations.[117] Ukrainian forces will have to address persisting manpower challenges to restore their robust defensive capabilities, and Ukrainian officials are currently pursuing efforts to stand up new brigades and rotate frontline units for rest and reconstitution.[118] It will take time for these Ukrainian efforts to generate large-scale effects, and Ukrainian forces may be relatively undermanned on select sectors of the front this summer.[119] Ukraine will nevertheless likely be in a significantly improved operational position by June 2024 regardless of potential delays in the arrival of US security assistance to the frontline and persisting manpower challenges.[120]

The lasting impressions of Fall 2023-Spring 2024 on the war in Ukraine

Russian forces have leveraged the theater-wide initiative in Ukraine and the recent months of Ukrainian constraints to address longstanding issues and implement operational, tactical, and technological adaptations throughout the theater. Russian forces have notably established a more sustainable force generation apparatus for ongoing offensive operations for the time being and have intensified efforts to establish operational- and strategic-level reserves.[121] The Russian

campaign in Ukraine had previously been plagued by serious manpower constraints, with Russian forces conducting offensive operations that consumed far more personnel than Russian crypto-mobilization efforts could generate.[122] Russian forces lacked significant operational reserves for at least the first year and a half of the war in Ukraine, often forcing Russian forces to use degraded units until they became combat ineffective.[123] These major manpower constraints were a large contributing factor to the culmination of several Russian offensive operations in Ukraine and posed significant vulnerabilities for defending against Ukrainian counteroffensive operations.[124] Russian forces leveraged their possession of the theater-wide initiative to determine a tempo of fighting in Ukraine that would generate casualties roughly equal to or slightly less than the rate of newly generated forces.[125] This has allowed Russian forces to sustain consistent offensive pressure along the front by immediately replenishing losses and keeping force groupings at roughly their same size.[126] Additional newly generated forces not committed as reinforcements allowed Russian forces to start establishing operational reserves, permitting Russian forces to conduct rotations for degraded units on the frontline by January 2024.[127] Russian forces had previously struggled in the past year and a half to conduct rotations for frontline units, and this apparent theater-wide capability has likely allowed Russian forces to launch and maintain more sustainable offensive efforts in Ukraine.[128]

The ceiling of Russian crypto-mobilization efforts is unclear, and this careful balance between Russian casualties and newly generated forces requires that Russian forces not significantly intensify offensive operations for a prolonged period of time.[129] This approach to sustaining Russian offensive efforts in part has led to a "pulsing" of Russian offensive operations along the front, wherein Russian forces alternate between intensified assaults and a lower operational tempo to replenish losses.[130] Russian forces typically stagger areas of the front where they are intensifying operations and areas where there is a lower operational tempo, leading to a dynamically alternating operational situation along the entire frontline.[131] This pattern will likely generally hold as long as Russian forces pursue consistent Russian offensive operations throughout the frontline.

Russian forces have notably used the past seven months of offensive operations in Ukraine to improve their operational-level planning and are generally conducting offensive operations that are mutually supporting or that intend to generate theater-wide pressures on Ukrainian forces.[132] The prolonged period of Russian initiative in Ukraine has relieved pressures on Russian forces that were contributing to poor operational campaign design, and the Russian military command appears to be learning from its past operational planning mistakes. Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Deputy Chief Major General Vadym Skibitskyi notably stated on May 2 that the Russian military is now operating as a "single body, with a clear plan, under a single command." [133] The Russian military command has not become immune to poor campaign design, however, and select recent improvements in operational planning may appear more significant than they are because Ukrainian forces lacked the capabilities to respond effectively.

Russian forces have exploited the theater-wide initiative and Ukrainian materiel constraints to expand technological and tactical innovations and adaptations. Being able to determine the place, time, and scale of fighting for months on end has allowed Russian forces to experiment with different sized assault groups in different tactical situations with different levels of armored vehicle support.[134] Russian forces have expanded their use of first-person view (FPV) drones and electronic warfare (EW) systems in recent months in an offense-defense race with Ukrainian forces and have heavily integrated these systems into their reconnaissance fire complex (RFC).[135] Degraded Ukrainian counterbattery capabilities and limited Ukrainian interdiction efforts likely allowed Russian forces to more freely reconfigure and expand elements of their RFC for more effective fire along the front.[136] Degraded Ukrainian air defense capabilities have reportedly also allowed Russian forces to improve reconnaissance capabilities in the Ukrainian rear and have likely facilitated ongoing experimentation in Russia's reconnaissance-strike complex (RSC) and Russia's mixed missile and drone strike packages.[137] Limited Ukrainian air defense coverage also offered Russian forces ample flexibility to test how best to conduct glide bomb strikes to facilitate ground maneuver and how to scale Russian aviation operations to conduct intensified glide bomb strikes.[138] Russian forces still suffer from widespread tactical failures, however, and Ukrainian forces will still be able to exploit those failures as long as the Russian military command continues to struggle with internalizing and disseminating adaptations at the tactical level.[139] Fighting in Ukraine has degraded the Russian military and has largely stripped once elite formations of their elite capabilities, but Russian forces have leveraged the past seven months of theater-wide initiative to innovate and adapt in ways that increasingly pressure Ukrainian forces and exploit Ukrainian vulnerabilities.[140]

The past seven months of fighting have likely solidified Putin's calculus that he can continue gradual creeping advances in Ukraine without the threat of a significant Ukrainian counteroffensive operation. Ukrainian forces have not regained tactically significant territory from Russian forces since Russian forces resumed offensive operations in October 2023, and Ukrainian tactical counterattacks have largely only staved off further Russian gains. Delays in security assistance have forced Ukrainian forces to go on the strategic defense for all of 2024 thus far, and Ukrainian forces will likely not be able to launch a large-scale counteroffensive operation until late 2024 or 2025, depending on the level and timing of Western support.[141] The lack of significant tactical counterattacks and the prolonged pause in large-scale Ukrainian counteroffensive operations has likely generated a perception among the Russian military command and Putin that Ukraine cannot and will not be able to liberate territory seized by Russian forces.[142] This belief likely has led the Russian military command to assess that Russian forces will be able to hold any territory that Russian forces seize indefinitely, impacting how Putin and the Russian military command may be evaluating the risks, prospects, and timeline of offensive operations in Ukraine. Russian forces can make tactical gains over a longer period of time in pursuit of operationally significant goals and eschew achieving operationally significant gains through effective rapid maneuver if there is never a serious threat of Ukrainian forces making operationally significant advances of their own. Rapid operationally significant gains aim to disadvantage one's enemy and deprive them of favorable conditions to launch effective offensive operations while improving one's own operational position. The absence of major Ukrainian counteroffensive operations makes

less significant gains in consistent creeping offensive operations a more assured approach to making gains on the battlefield if the Russian military command is willing to pursue offensives over longer periods of time. The past seven months of Russian offensive operations in Ukraine suggests that the Russian military is willing to commit to such creeping advances.

This operational calculus may incentivize Putin to pursue creeping offensive operations indefinitely if operations that lead to rapid decisive results and victory look unattainable. Putin and the Russian military have shown that they are willing to incur significant casualties for minor tactical gains, and there is no indication that there is a level of Russian losses that would disincentivize Russia's pursuit of further territorial gains. The Kremlin is currently preparing the Russian military, economy, and society for a long war effort in Ukraine, and the Russian military command would likely be happy to achieve operational objectives over the span of years if it believes that the gains will be locked in. This approach requires that Russian forces never lose the theater-wide initiative, however, and the Russian military will likely increasingly view retaining the initiative as a strategic imperative and pursue constant offensive operations that force Ukraine on the defense as a result. It is imperative for Ukrainian forces to disrupt any such Russian calculations as soon as possible through both limited and large-scale counteroffensive operations that liberate Russian-occupied territory as soon as conditions permit. The West must proactively provide Ukrainian forces with the necessary equipment and weapons at the scale, timing, and regularity that Ukrainian forces require for operations that liberate significant swaths of occupied Ukraine and challenge Putin's belief that he can gradually subsume Ukraine should rapid total victory appear unreachable.

Russian efforts to convince the West to abandon Ukraine are not over. Recent months have proven to Russia that morale is Ukraine's and the West's center of gravity in this war. While Ukrainian morale has held firm, the weakening of Western morale and support for Ukraine quickly began to express itself on the battlefield and created conditions that convinced Russia that operationally significant gains were possible. The past seven months have offered a framework to Russia for how to demoralize the West and prompt it to abandon Ukraine to certain defeat. Putin and the Russian military command likely believe that they can outlast the level of aid that the West has committed to giving Ukraine in the near to medium term and that continuous Russian offensive operations will eventually convince the West that Ukrainian victory is hopeless. The West must not surrender to Russia's strategic effort to destroy Western commitment to Ukrainian survival and must remember that Ukrainian victory has always been possible as long as the West remains committed to that goal.



[1] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-10-2023> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101223> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar101323> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101423> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar101523> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101623>

[2] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-december-12-2023>

[3] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar120923> ;

[4] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar120923> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar111923> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar112123> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar120223>

[5] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-december-12-2023>

[6] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-10-2023> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101223> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101323> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101423> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101523> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101623>

[7] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-10-2023> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101223> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar101323> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101423> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar101523> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101623>

[8] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-10-2023> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101223> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar101323> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101423> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar101523> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101623>

[9] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-10-2023> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101223> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar101323> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101423> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar101523> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101623>

[10] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-10-2023> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101223> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar101323> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101423> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar101523> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101623>

[11] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-10-2023> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101223> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar101323> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101423> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar101523> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar101623>

[12] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar102023> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar102123>

[13] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar102623> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar102223>

[14] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar110123> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar110623> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar111323> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar111423>

[15] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar110123> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar110623> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar111323> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar111423> ;
<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-6-2023>

[16] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar111423>

[17] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar112423>

[18] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar111723> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar120923> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar111423> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar110723>

[19] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar110123> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar120923>

[20] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar121423> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar12312022%C2%AO;%C2%AOhttps://isw.pub/UkrWar041423%C2%AO>;

[21] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar112823> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar120123> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar120823> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar121023> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar121323> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar121423> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar121723> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar121923> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar010224> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar012724>

[22] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar112823> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar120123> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar120823> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar121023> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar121323> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar121423> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar121723> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar121923> ;
<https://isw.pub/UkrWar010224> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar012724>

[23] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar031224>

[24] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar121823>

[25] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar011824> ;
<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-8-2024>

[26] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar122623>

[27] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar122723>

[28] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-14-2024> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar011124>

[29] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-winter-spring-2024-offensive-operation-kharkiv-luhansk-axis>

[30] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-winter-spring-2024-offensive-operation-kharkiv-luhansk-axis> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021724>

[31] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-winter-spring-2024-offensive-operation-kharkiv-luhansk-axis>

[32] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-december-29-2023>

[33] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-december-29-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-december-3-2023> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021324> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-17-2024>

[34] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-17-2024>

[35] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-december-29-2023> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar032824>

[36] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-16-2024> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-17-2024> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-18-2024> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-19-2024>

[37] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar011924> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-winter-spring-2024-offensive-operation-kharkiv-luhansk-axis>

[38] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-21-2024> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-25-2024>

[39] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-30-2024>

[40] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-winter-spring-2024-offensive-operation-kharkiv-luhansk-axis>

[41] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-8-2024> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-2-2024> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021524>

[42] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-8-2024> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-2-2024> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021524>

[43] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021624> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021724>

[44] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021724>

[45] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021824>

[46] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar022124>

[47] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021624> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021524> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021724> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar022724>

[48] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021624> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021524> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021724> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar022724>

[49] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-5-2024> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021324>

[50] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-8-2024> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-2-2024> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021524>

[51] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-8-2024>

[52] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-19-2024>

[53] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-20-2024>

[54] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021724> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021624> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021524>

[55] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021724> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021624> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021524> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021024> ;

[56] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar022524>

[57] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar020224> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-march-14-2024> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar021324>

[58] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar022724>

[59] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar022724> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar031324>

[60] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar022724>

[61] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar031324>

[62] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar022724> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar031324>

[63] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar032424>

[64] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar041324>

[65] <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounders/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-march-24-2024>

[66] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar041324>

[67] <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounders/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-march-24-2024>

[68] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-march-31-2024>

[69] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar040324> ;
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