

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, August 21, 2023

Kateryna Stepanenko, Grace Mappes, Nicole Wolkov,
Christina Harward, and Frederick W. Kagan

August 21, 2023, 8:30pm 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 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 1:00pm ET on August 21. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the August 22 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment. Ukrainian forces made tactically significant gains in and east of Robotyne in western Zaporizhia Oblast on August 20-21 while continuing counteroffensive operations on the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast administrative border and in eastern Ukraine. Geolocated footage published on August 20 and August 21 indicates that Ukrainian forces reached the central part of Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv) and broke through some Russian defenses south of Mala Tokmachka (9km southeast of Orikhiv).[1] Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar reported that Ukrainian forces succeeded in the direction southeast of Robotyne and south of Mala Tokmachka, and that Russian forces unsuccessfully counterattacked east of Robotyne.[2] Malyar and Russian sources stated that fighting is ongoing in Robotyne.[3] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces captured some positions in a part of the Russian forward defensive lines after intensifying attacks on the Robotyne-Verbove (21km southeast of Orikhiv) line.[4] Some Russian sources reported that Russian forces retreated from some positions near Verbove as part of their elastic defense, likely in response to a Ukrainian advance south of Mala Tokmachka.[5] ISW previously assessed that Ukrainian attacks on Robotyne are tactically significant because a Ukrainian advance in the area may allow Ukrainian forces to begin operating past the densest Russian minefields.[6] Ukrainian advances across fields in this area likely confirm this assessment. Persistent Ukrainian advances in the Robotyne area also likely aim to degrade Russian forces that have committed significant effort, resources, and personnel to hold positions around Robotyne.

Ukrainian forces also reportedly advanced in the Bakhmut and Kreminna directions over the past week and continue counteroffensive operations south and southeast of Velyka Novosilka in western Donetsk and eastern Zaporizhia oblasts.[7] Malyar stated that Ukrainian forces recaptured three square kilometers around Bakhmut over the past week and 43 square kilometers in total since Wagner Group forces captured Bakhmut in May 2023.[8] Ukrainian Severodonetsk City Administration Head Andriy Vlasenko reported that Ukrainian forces achieved some unspecified successes south of Kreminna while conducting active mobile defenses in the area.[9]

Russian milbloggers continue to indicate that Russian forces lack equipment and suffer from low morale along the entire frontline. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces – especially the 20th Combined Arms Army (Western Military District) and 2nd Combined Arms

Army (Central Military District), both operating in eastern Ukraine – lack light transportation vehicles, which inhibits them from using equipment and operating effectively and reduces their morale.[10] The milblogger claimed that Russian personnel must register their privately-owned vehicles with the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), after which their vehicles disappear or get transferred elsewhere.[11] The milblogger claimed that Russian commanders regularly punish servicemen who keep their vehicles for minor administrative violations and that Russian personnel feel that they are “at war” with their commanders.[12] A Russian milblogger claimed on August 21 that Russian authorities have not provided Russian forces operating in the Kherson direction with boats and have ignored milbloggers’ ongoing appeals since July 2.[13] “Vostok” Battalion commander Alexander Khodakovsky claimed that Russian forces continue to face problems with counterbattery operations after Russian forces began experiencing artillery systems shortages and claimed that Russian forces began to receive “outdated” D-20 towed gun-howitzers.[14] Khodakovsky claimed that the “outdated” D-20 howitzers are not suitable for counterbattery combat, possibly referring to barrel wear from constant use that makes tube artillery less accurate over time.[15] Multiple milbloggers have claimed that Russian forces lack adequate counterbattery capabilities, especially since Commander of the 58th Combined Arms Army Major General Ivan Popov’s dismissal in early July.[16] Another Russian milblogger, however, claimed that Russian forces are improving artillery tactics and that artillery units have become far more accurate than they were a year ago.[17] The milblogger may be suggesting that mobilized personnel who did not have prior military experience have learned to accurately strike targets. Ongoing complaints from Russian personnel suggest that the Russian MoD is unwilling or unable to address persistent equipment shortages and problems with low morale. Russian forces may be improving tactics and learning from previous mistakes as the war continues, however. The protraction of the conflict resulting in part from delays in the provision of Western aid to Ukraine gives Russian forces time to improve and to learn from their mistakes.

The Russian MoD is creating new military formations possibly to allow more combat effective units currently defending in Kherson Oblast to redeploy to more critical sectors of the front. The United Kingdom Ministry of Defense (UK MoD) reported on August 21 that the Russian military is highly likely forming the new 18th Combined Arms Army (CAA) from other units currently operating in Kherson Oblast, including the 22nd Army Corps.[18] The UK MoD reported that the new army will consist mostly of mobilized personnel and will focus on defensive operations in southern Ukraine.[19] Russian authorities in Dalnegorsk, Primorsky Krai stated on June 5 that the newly created 25th CAA (Southern Military District), for which the Russian MoD has been recruiting volunteers from the Russian Far East since mid-May, will deploy to Zaporizhia and Kherson oblasts in December 2023.[20] The Russian MoD previously formed the 3rd Army Corps (Western Military District) in the summer of 2022 from mostly volunteer battalions which were then largely destroyed in Kharkiv Oblast and Bakhmut.[21] The formation and reported future deployment of the new 18th and 25th CAAs to southern Ukraine are likely meant to allow more effective standing formations such as the 49th CAA (Southern Military District) currently operating in Kherson Oblast to redeploy to more critical sectors of the front possibly to reinforce combat-weary Russian forces degraded defensive lines.[22]

Russian insider sources indicated that Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Chief of the General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov may have decisively won Russian President Vladimir’s Putin favor following the June 24 Wagner Group rebellion. A Russian insider source claimed that Putin postponed a meeting with Alexey Dyumin, former Putin bodyguard and current Tula Oblast governor, and forced Dyumin to publicly escort

Shoigu at the recent Army-2023 Forum in Moscow.[23] The insider source claimed that the Kremlin wants to portray Shoigu and Dyumin as having positive relations and to gauge public reactions.[24] The Kremlin, however, likely aimed to publicly subordinate Dyumin to Shoigu. Dyumin and Shoigu have notably had a tense relationship, and Russian milbloggers recently floated Dyumin as a replacement for Shoigu immediately after the Wagner Group's rebellion on June 24.[25] A Wagner-affiliated source claimed that the Russian General Staff now has "carte blanche" and has purged all proteges of Army General Sergey Surovikin, a former deputy theater commander and Wagner affiliate who was reportedly ousted and placed under house arrest.[26] The source also claimed that unspecified aspects of the Putin-Wagner deal collapsed for unknown reasons, which could indicate increased Putin favor for Shoigu and Gerasimov if true. Putin also recently publicly met with Gerasimov in Rostov-on-Don for the first time since the Wagner rebellion, which further indicates that Putin has fully aligned himself with Shoigu and Gerasimov despite their military failure and inability to stop the rebellion.[27]

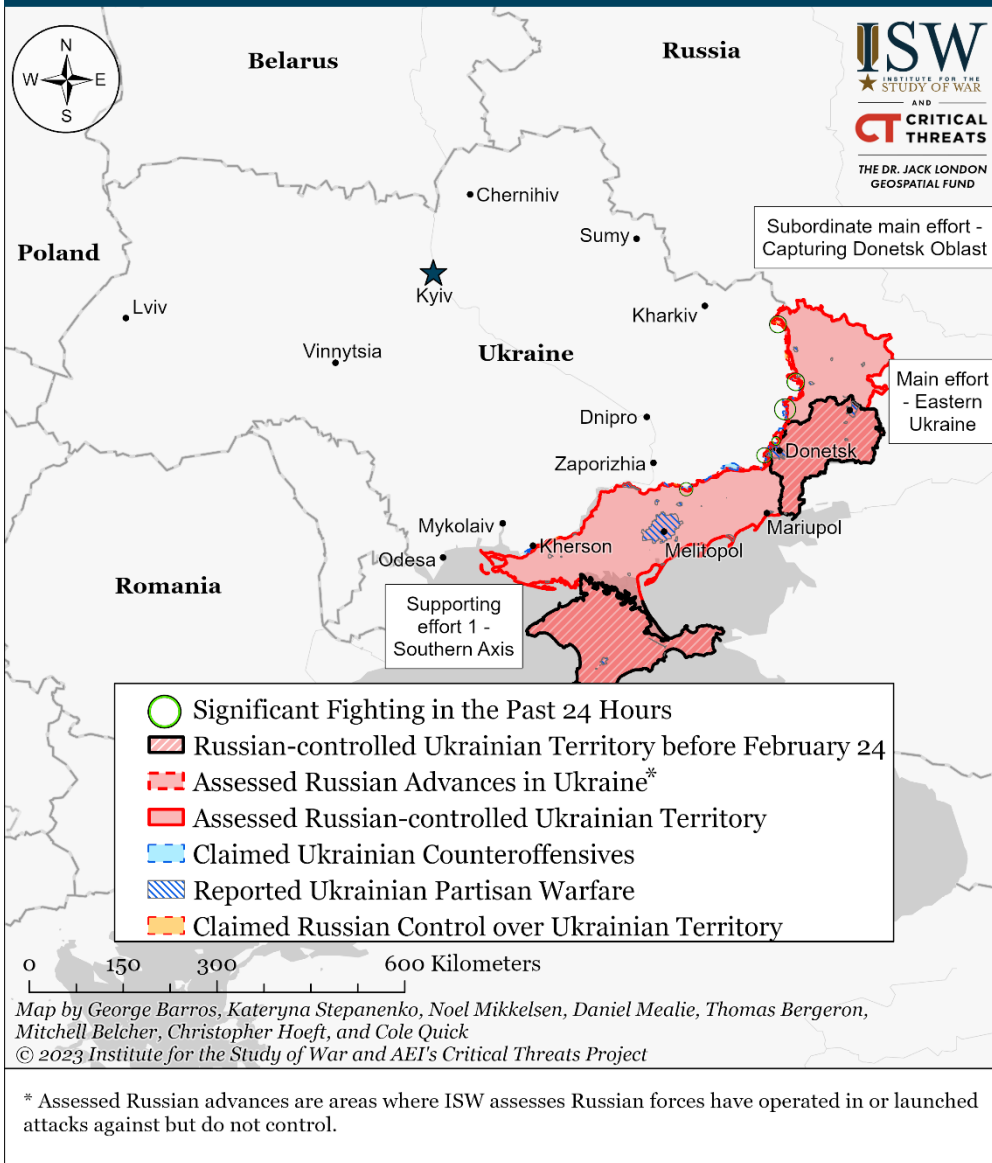
Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin may be attempting to re-establish Wagner in Africa, and some Russian sources are portraying this reported effort as necessary for Wagner's survival. A Wagner-affiliated source claimed that Wagner representatives and possibly Prigozhin himself arrived in Mali on August 19 possibly to discuss the regional security situation or cooperation with Niger.[28] Another prominent Wagner-affiliated source published footage of Prigozhin on August 21 in which Prigozhin claims to be in Africa and claims that Wagner is increasing its presence in Africa.[29] A Russian insider source claimed that Prigozhin began a media campaign to portray Nigeriens as begging for Wagner's intervention in order to help Wagner secure a contract with Niger and thereby save Wagner.[30] The source claimed that Wagner has struggled with significant personnel and financial issues from funding cuts following the June 24 rebellion and the recent claimed (but unconfirmed) withdrawal from Belarus.[31] Wagner likely has thousands of personnel to dedicate to operations in Africa if Wagner is able to both secure a contract and deploy personnel from Russia and Belarus, actions that Prigozhin may see as Wagner's final option to maintain its independence from the Russian MoD.

Some Russian sources are likely running an information operation to exaggerate the degree to which Wagner is struggling to survive, possibly in support of the Russian MoD effort to destroy Prigozhin's reputation and the whole Wagner Group. Russian insider sources are increasingly portraying Shoigu and Gerasimov as having Putin's full support and ousting insubordinate commanders while painting Wagner as a private military company increasingly struggling to survive.[32] ISW has observed indicators that the Wagner Group is struggling to maintain coherence, including recent reports of conflict within the Wagner high-level representatives.[33] These Russian sources may be exaggerating the degree to which Wagner is struggling, however, especially if reports of Prigozhin's travel to Africa are accurate and his reported efforts to secure contracts for Wagner are successful. Shoigu likely seeks to deal a final blow to Wagner but may struggle to make that blow decisive. A Russian milblogger noted that the Russian MoD may struggle to replace Wagner in Africa as Russian forces need time to train before deploying, have not established the connections with locals that Wagner has, and may destabilize conflicts rather than quell them.[34] If Wagner is able to secure contracts in Africa and deploy its personnel before the Russian MoD can deploy personnel, then Prigozhin and Wagner may retain at least some ability to operate independently in Africa contrary to the MoD's efforts to eliminate Wagner.

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian forces made tactically significant gains in and east of Robotyne in western Zaporizhia Oblast on August 20-21 while continuing counteroffensive operations on the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast administrative border and in eastern Ukraine.**
- **Russian milbloggers continue to indicate that Russian forces lack equipment and suffer from low morale along the entire frontline.**
- **The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) is creating new military formations possibly to allow more combat effective units currently defending in Kherson Oblast to redeploy to more critical sectors of the front.**
- **Russian insider sources indicated that Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Chief of the General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov may have decisively won Russian President Vladimir's Putin favor following the June 24 Wagner Group rebellion.**
- **Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin may be attempting to re-establish Wagner in Africa, and some Russian sources are portraying this reported effort as necessary for Wagner's survival.**
- **Some Russian sources are likely running an information operation to exaggerate the degree to which Wagner is struggling to survive, possibly in support of the Russian MoD effort to destroy Prigozhin's reputation and the whole Wagner Group.**
- **Russian sources made and walked back claims about significant Russian advances in the Kupyansk direction amid continued offensive actions on August 21.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Kreminna, Bakhmut, and along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line and advanced near Bakhmut.**
- **The Russian government continues to introduce mandatory nationalistic and militaristic courses into high school curriculum to promote military service among Russian youth.**
- **Belarusian authorities reportedly exposed forcibly deported Ukrainian children to pro-Kremlin propaganda in Belarus.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of August 21, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main effort #2 – Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas

Russian Main Effort—Eastern Ukraine

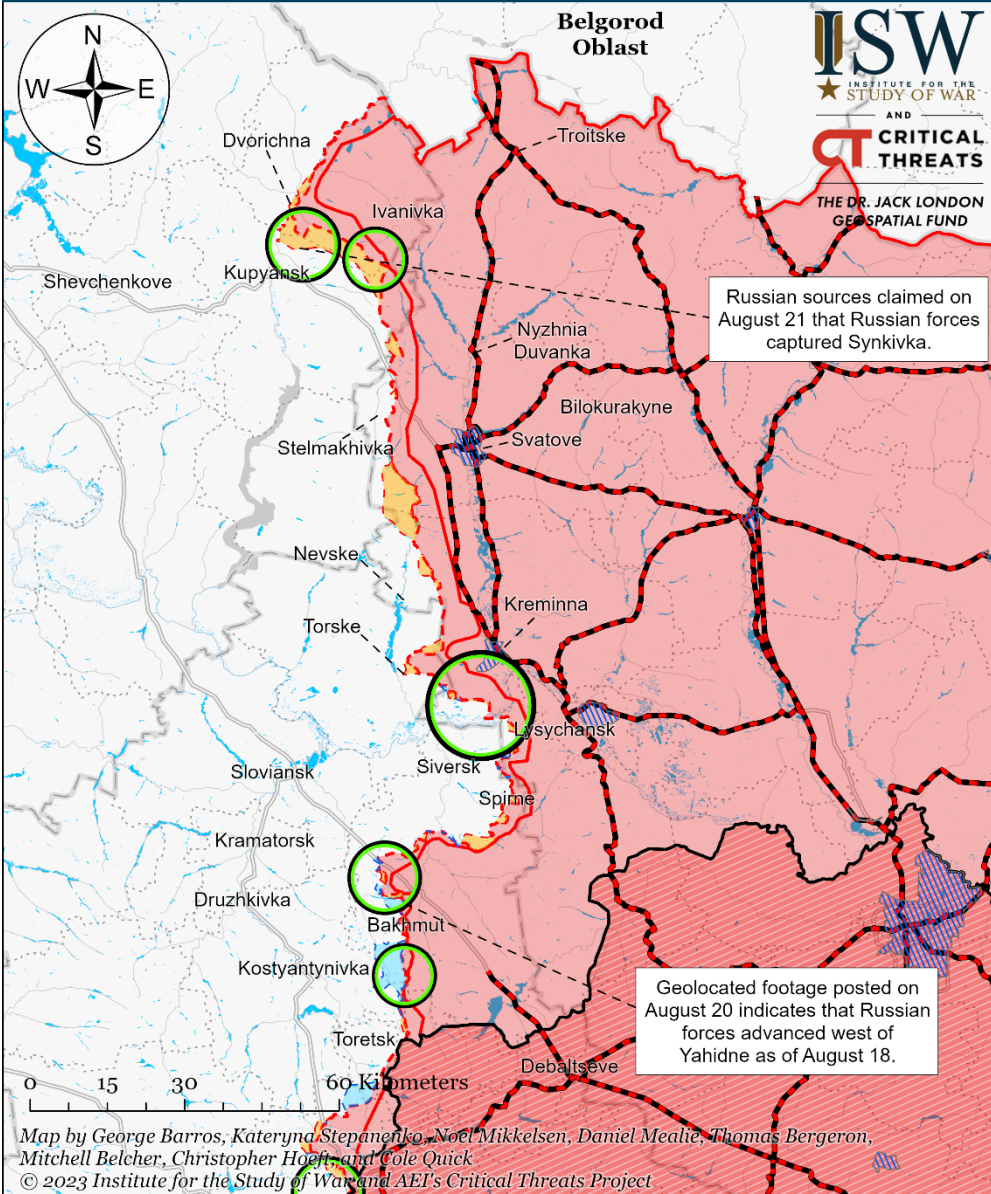
Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

Russian sources made and walked back claims about significant Russian advances in the Kupyansk direction amid continued offensive actions on August 21. Kharkiv Oblast occupation head Vitaly Ganchev claimed that Russian forces have seized Synkivka (9km northeast of Kupyansk), and Russian milbloggers widely amplified this claim by circulating footage of Russian forces allegedly operating in the center of Synkivka.[35] The milbloggers later denounced the footage as “fake” and walked back these claims, stating that Ukrainian forces still control Synkivka and are fiercely defending the area.[36] Some Russian milbloggers claimed that some parts of Synkivka remain contested, however.[37] Russian milbloggers also amplified footage of an explosion at an unspecified bridge across the Oskil River and initially claimed that Ukrainian forces mined the bridge, but later concluded that Russian forces conducted an airstrike against the bridge instead.[38] Prior to the clarification, one milblogger claimed that the footage indicated that Ukrainian forces do not intend to defend areas on the east bank of the Oskil River.[39] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces captured unspecified heights in the Kupyansk direction, near Synkivka, and near Petropavlivka (6km east of Kupyansk).[40]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Kreminna area and reportedly advanced on August 21. Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Kreminna, Bilohorivka (12km southwest of Kreminna), and the Serebrianske forest area (11km south of Kreminna).[41]

Ukrainian forces reportedly continued offensive operations on the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on August 21 and reportedly made minor advances. Ukrainian Severodonetsk City Administration Head Roman Vlasenko stated that Ukrainian forces had unspecified successes in the Kreminna area.[42] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces made tactical gains near Novoselivske (16km northwest of Svatove) and in the Serebrianske forest area near Dibrova (7km southwest of Kreminna).[43] Russian officials claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Dibrova, Torske, and the Serebrianske forest area.[44]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of August 21, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- - - Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Russian Ground Lines of Communication
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- ▨ Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory

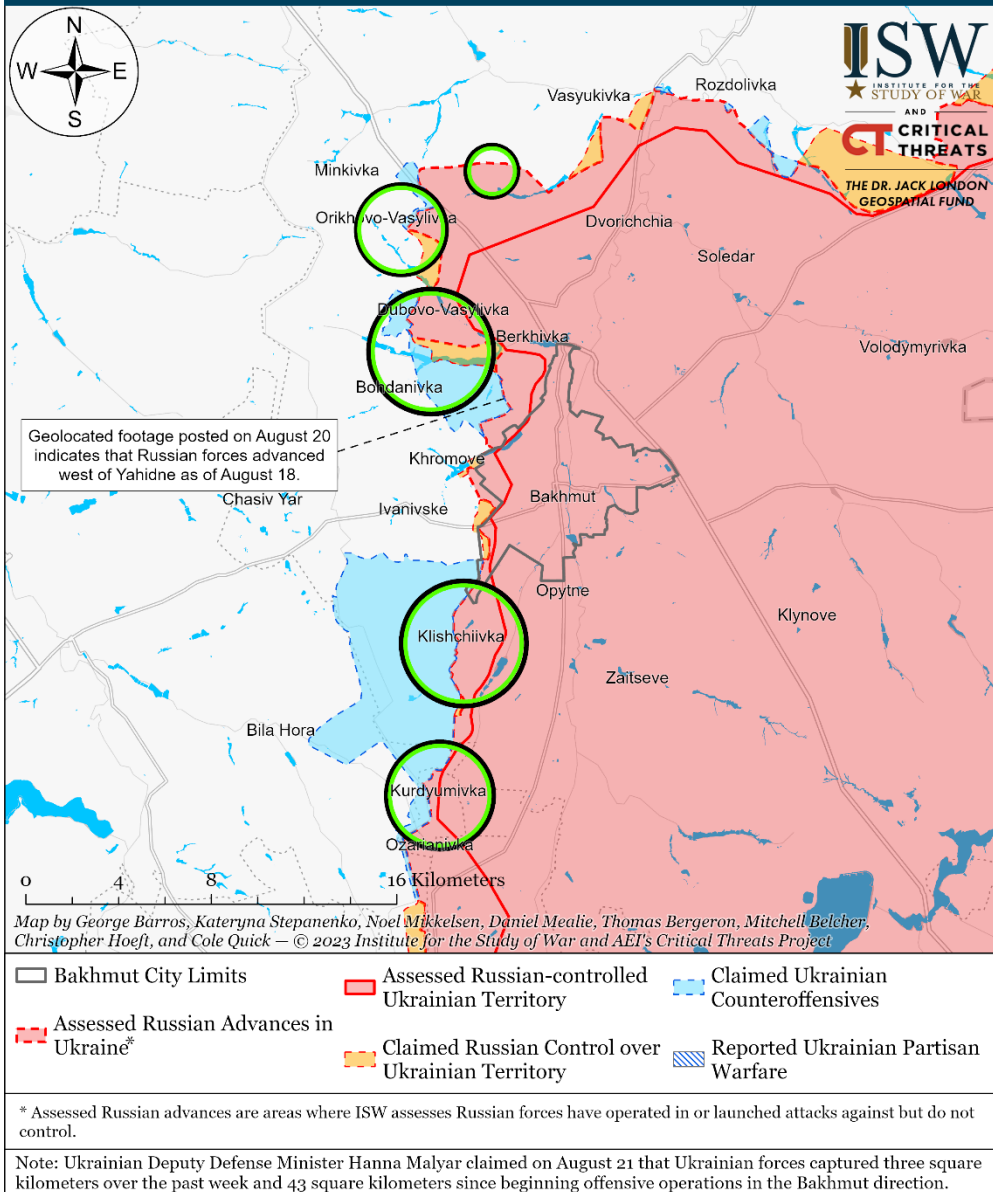
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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 conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut on August 21 and advanced on Bakhmut’s southern flank. Geolocated footage published on August 20 indicates that Russian forces advanced northwest of Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut).[45] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Klishchiivka and Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut).[46] Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar reported that Russian forces are attempting to restore lost positions on Bakhmut’s northern flank near Zaliznyanske (12km north of Bakhmut), Vasylivka (20km northwest of Bakhmut), and Bohdanivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut) and that fighting continues on Bakhmut’s southern flank in central Klishchiivka, north and west of Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut), and north of Kurdyumivka.[47] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces maintain their positions northwest of Bakhmut and along the Klishchiivka-Andriivka-Kurdyumivka line (up to 13km southwest of Bakhmut) and that Russian forces control Klishchiivka.[48] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Klishchiivka and Berkhivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut).[49]

Ukrainian forces reportedly made limited territorial gains near Bakhmut over the past week. Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar reported that Ukrainian forces have liberated three square kilometers in the Bakhmut direction in the past week and that Ukrainian forces hold the dominant heights on the northern flank of Bakhmut, trapping Russian forces.[50]

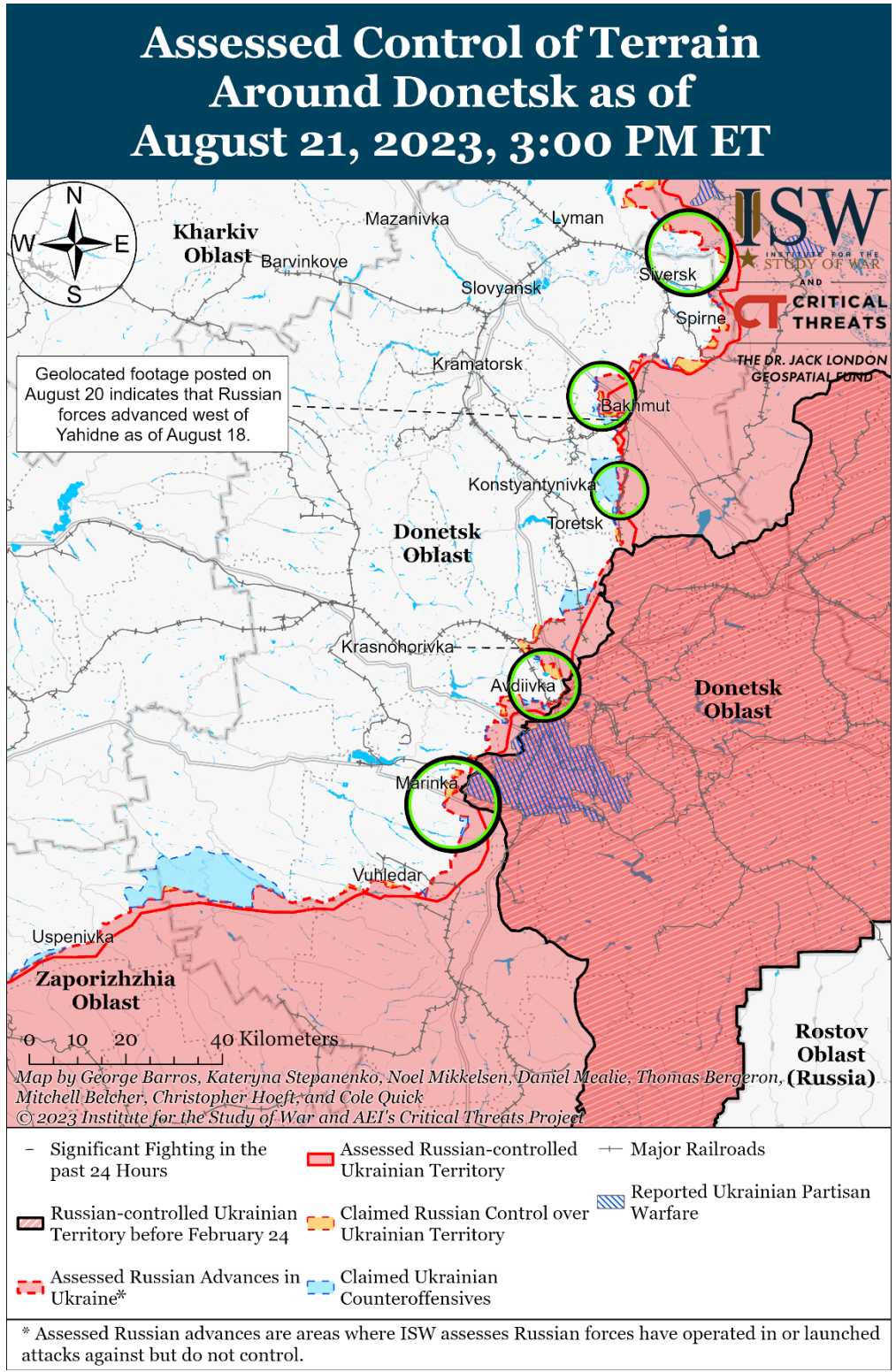
Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of August 21, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances on August 21. Malyar and the Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attempted to advance in the Avdiivka direction as well as near Marinka (on the western outskirts of Donetsk City) and Novomykhailivka (10km southwest of Donetsk City).[51] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces probed Ukrainian positions in the Avdiivka direction from Kruta Balka (4km northwest of Avdiivka) and did not advance.[52]

The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on August 21. The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully

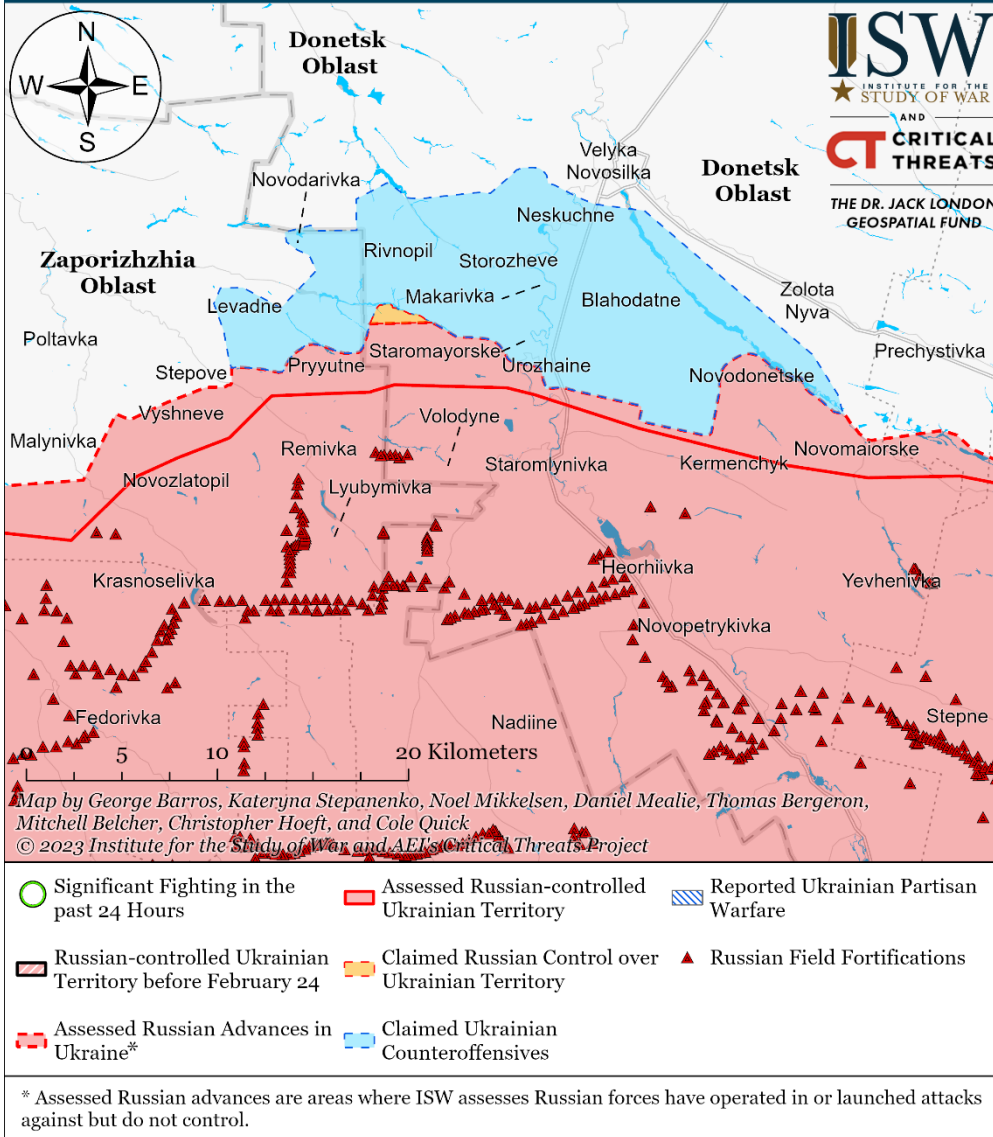
attacked near Krasnohorivka (either directly west of Donetsk City or 8km northwest of Avdiivka) and Nevelske (14km southwest of Avdiivka).[53]



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

Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in western Donetsk and eastern Zaporizhia oblasts but did not advance on August 21. The Russian MoD claimed that Russian artillery and air units repelled a Ukrainian attack in the Urozhaine (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) direction and that Russian forces stopped two Ukrainian reconnaissance groups south of Chervone (14km southeast of Hulyaipole).[54] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces are continuing reconnaissance operations in the direction of Zavitne Bazhnyia (12km south of Velyka Novosilka).[55] The Russian “Vostok” Battalion claimed that Ukrainian forces are continuing to attack Russian positions east of Urozhaine.[56]

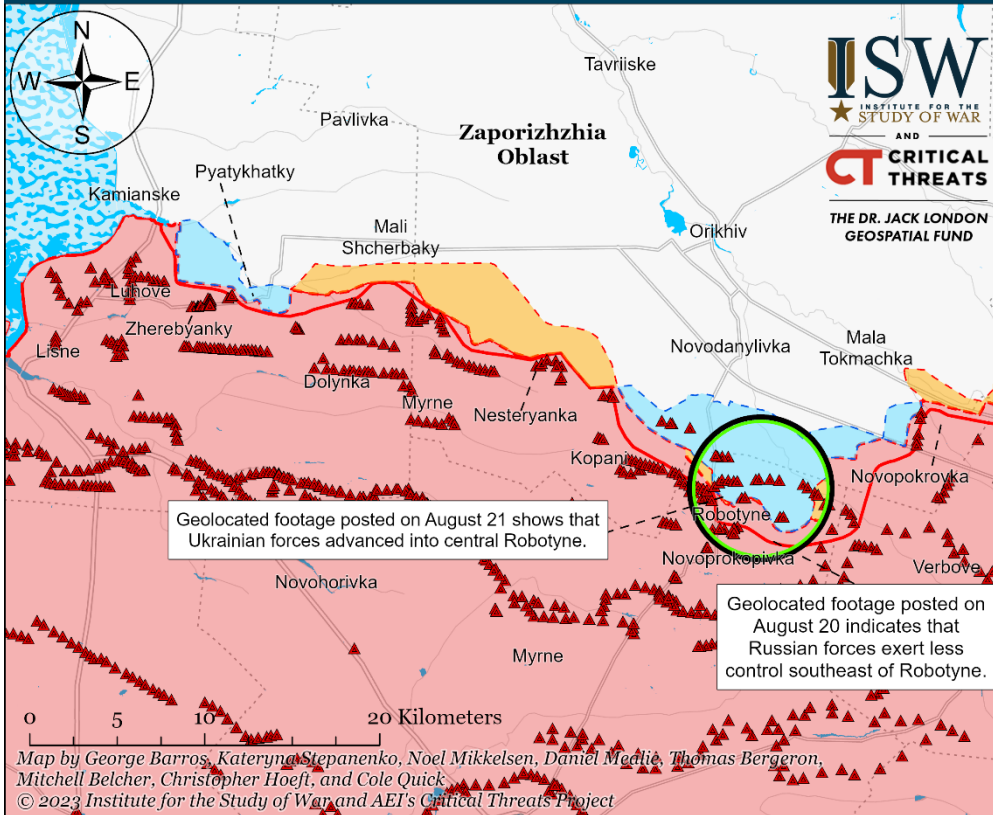
Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of August 21, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Ukrainian forces advanced to central Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv) and east of the settlement in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on August 21. Geolocated footage posted on August 21 showed Ukrainian forces operating in central Robotyne, while other geolocated footage posted on August 20 showed that Ukrainian forces made another advance about three kilometers east of Robotyne (south of Mala Tokmachka).[57] The advances in and east of Robotyne likely indicate that Ukrainian forces overcame Russian fortifications in the area. Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar reported that Ukrainian forces conducted successful operations in the direction southeast of Robotyne and south of Mala Tokmachka.[58] Malyar added that Russian forces unsuccessfully attempted to regain lost positions east of Robotyne and that combat operations are ongoing in Robotyne. Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces intensified attacks on the Robotyne-Verbove (21km southeast of

Orikhiv) line and are engaged in heavy battles in central Robotyne with elements of the Russian 810th Guards Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet) and 503rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (19th Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District [SMD]).^[59] The 503rd MRR had been stationed in Nesteryanka (12km northwest of Robotyne) and elements of it likely redeployed to Robotyne relatively recently to reinforce failing Russian defenses in the area.^[60] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced on the Robotyne-Verbove line and control part of the Russian forward defensive lines.^[61] Some Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces left several positions in the Verbove area as part of the elastic defense, although it is not clear how abandoning positions around Verbove would be part of an elastic defense unless Ukrainian forces are further forward than ISW currently assesses them to be.^[62] Zaporizhia Oblast occupation head Yevgeny Balitsky claimed that three Ukrainian assault groups tried to break through Russian defenses near Verbove but were unsuccessful.^[63]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of August 21, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



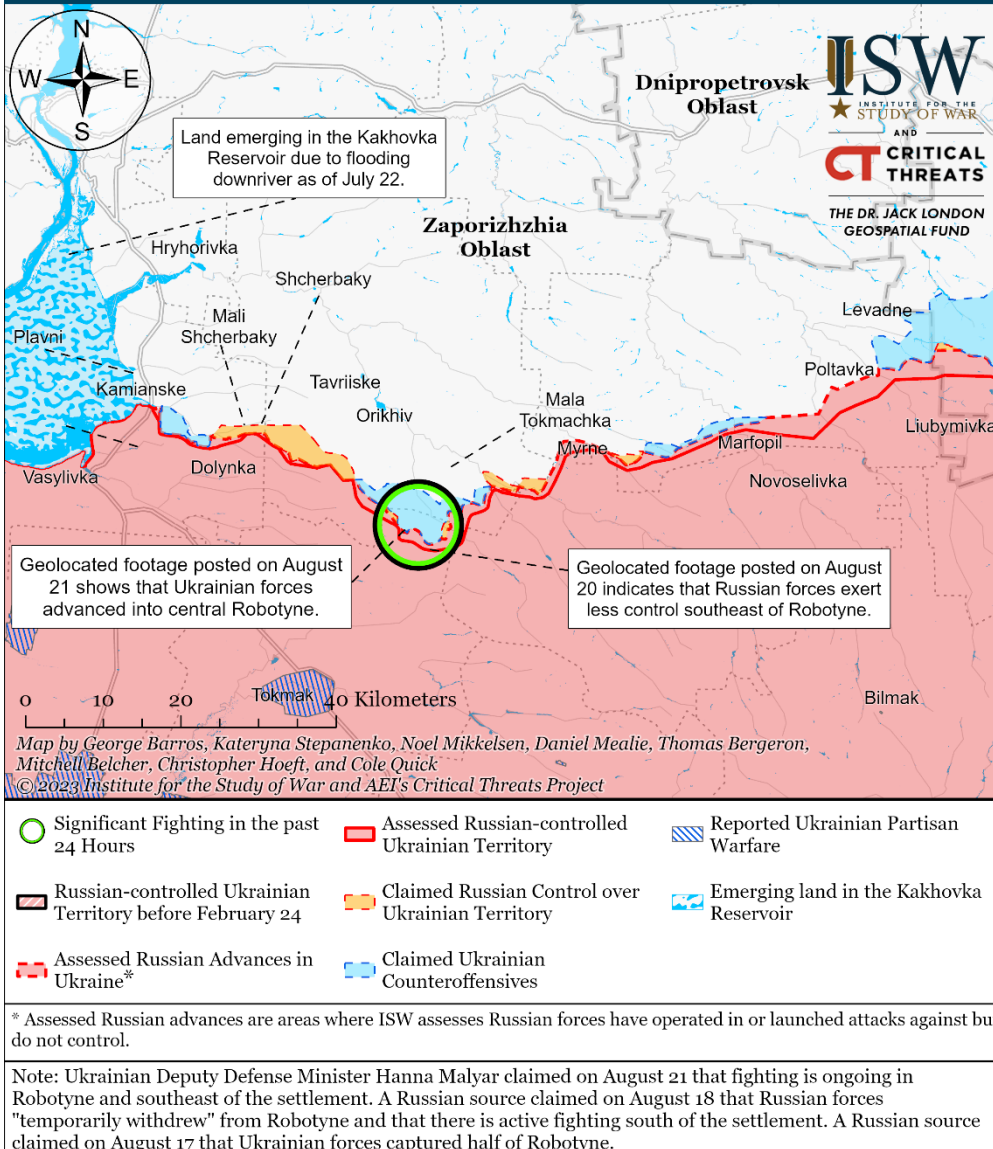
ISW
INSTITUTE FOR THE
STUDY OF WAR
AND
CT CRITICAL
THREATS
THE DR. JACK LONDON
GEOSPATIAL FUND

- 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.

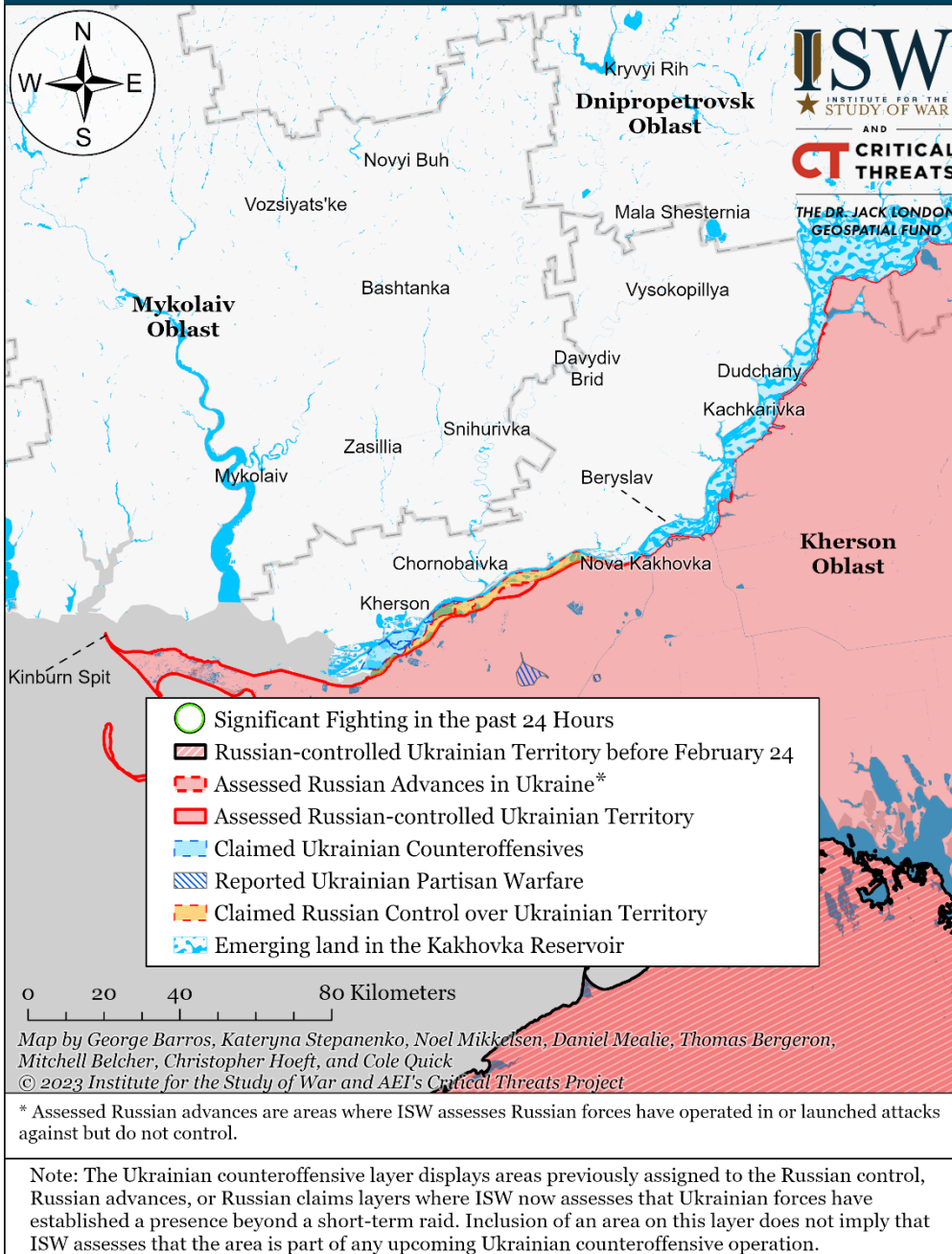
Note: Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar claimed on August 21 that fighting is ongoing in Robotyne and southeast of the settlement. A Russian source claimed on August 18 that Russian forces "temporarily withdrew" from Robotyne and that there is active fighting south of the settlement. A Russian source claimed on August 17 that Ukrainian forces captured half of Robotyne.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of August 21, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued to carry out raids on the islands in the Dnipro River delta and on the east (left) bank Kherson Oblast.[64] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian assault groups engaged in small arms combat with Ukrainian forces near the Antonivsky Bridge.[65]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of August 21, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces continue to face challenges with logistics, and Russian officials are intensifying security measures in Crimea that are likely slowing Russian logistics in southern Ukraine. Ukrainian-Crimean partisan movement “Atesh” reported that Crimean railway stations such as the Simferopol-Hruzove train station are holding many trains carrying fuel and lubricants likely intended for Russian military equipment operating in Ukraine.[66] “Atesh” noted that these trains are not scheduled to

depart in the near future due to logistics problems outside of Crimea. Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Captain First Rank Nataliya Humenyuk reported that Russian forces strengthened security measures near the Kerch Strait Bridge and created a buffer zone to inspect ships.[67] Humenyuk stated that there are currently 30 to 40 ships awaiting inspection in the buffer zone and noted that Russian Black Sea Fleet and Border Guards Service vessels maneuver alongside civilian vessels.

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

The Russian government continues to introduce mandatory nationalistic and militaristic courses into high school curricula to promote military service among the Russian youth. The Russian Ministry of Education approved a new high school military training curriculum for grades 10 and 11 that includes reconnaissance drone operations.[68] The curriculum also includes training in tactics, small arms fire, battlefield first aid, engineering, and other topics. The Russian Ministry of Education and Ministry of Defense announced in June that military training for students in 10th grade would be mandatory.[69] The Russian government may be promoting reconnaissance drone operation training among high school students in order to advertise drone operation positions in the Russian military among other purposes.

Russian Commander-in-Chief of the Ground Forces Oleg Salyukov and Iranian Artesh Ground Forces Commander Brigadier General Kiomars Heydari met in Moscow on August 21 to discuss Russian-Iranian military cooperation.[70] Information about this meeting can be found in the August 21 Iran Update.

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)

Belarusian authorities reportedly exposed forcibly deported Ukrainian children to pro-Kremlin propaganda in Belarus. The *Wall Street Journal (WSJ)* reported on August 21, citing public Belarusian government documents and leaked documents from Russian Railways and Belarusian company Belaruskali, that Belarusian authorities have forcibly removed over 2,000 children from occupied Ukraine to Belarus.[71] Footage and images from the camp reportedly show children training with small arms, meeting with Russian Orthodox priests, and watching shows glorifying Russian President Vladimir Putin.[72] The *WSJ* reported that Belaruskali has spent millions of dollars to bring seven groups of 310 children each to the “Dubrava” children’s camp since spring of 2022.[73]

Russian National Monitoring Center for Assistance to Missing and Injured Children Head Elena Milskaya has reportedly been involved with the forced deportation of Ukrainian children from occupied Ukraine to Russia since 2018. Russian opposition news outlets reported on August 21 that the National Monitoring Center for Assistance to Missing and Injured Children helped facilitate the forced removal of children from occupied Kherson Oblast to Crimea and then to Krasnodar Krai in October 2022.[74] A Russian opposition news outlet *Proekt* reported that Milskaya served as the Director of the St. Vasily the Great Foundation from 2018 to 2019, which Ukraine sanctioned for deporting children from Simferopol in occupied Crimea to Moscow in 2018.[75]

Russian occupation authorities continue to forcibly deport Ukrainian civilians in occupied Ukraine to Russia under the guise of medical treatment. The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported that Russian doctors in occupied Ukraine conduct forced examinations of Ukrainian locals and then send them to Russia for “treatment.”^[76] The Ukrainian Resistance Center also reported that doctors from Kabardino-Balkaria Republic recently arrived in Skadovsk in occupied Kherson Oblast and that Russian authorities incentivize Russian doctors to go to Ukraine by offering them higher salaries for traveling to Ukraine than their salaries in Russia.^[77]

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).

Belarusian maneuver elements continue conducting exercises in Belarus. The Belarusian Ministry of Defense (MoD) stated that elements of the 103rd Vitebsk Separate Guards Airborne Brigade conducted parachute jump training at the Kukovyachino airfield in Belarus.^[78]

ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarussian military activity in Belarus, as part of ongoing Kremlin efforts to increase their control over Belarus and other Russian actions in Belarus.

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.

[1] <https://t.me/BOBRMORF/188>; <https://twitter.com/neonhandrail/status/1693436410739761315?s=20>; <https://twitter.com/neonhandrail/status/1693437039960899850?s=20>; <https://twitter.com/neonhandrail/status/1693438340450939149?s=20> ; <https://www.dot.kyivpost.com/post/20768> ; https://t.me/kiber_boroshno/3418; <https://twitter.com/YWNReporter/status/1693602607133045031?s=20> ; https://t.me/WarArchive_ua/4175

[2] <https://t.me/annamaliar/1031> ; https://t.me/ivan_fedorov_melitopol/2950

[3] <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/51685> ; https://t.me/russkiy_opolchenec/37718; <https://t.me/rybar/50974> ; https://t.me/rusich_army/10485 ; <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/51685>; <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/51699> ; <https://t.me/sashakots/41793>; https://t.me/rusich_army/10475 ; https://t.me/dva_majors/23950 ; <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/49967> ; https://t.me/dva_majors/23996; https://t.me/dva_majors/23997

[4] <https://t.me/wargonzo/14490>

[5] https://t.me/russkiy_opolchenec/37718; https://t.me/dva_majors/23961

- [6] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-17-2023>
- [7] https://t.me/mod_russia/29642 ;
https://t.me/boris_rozhin/95491; <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/49977> ; https://t.me/batalyon_vostok/138
- [8] <https://t.me/annamaliar/1031>
- [9] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kAQHTFtaCKA>
- [10] <https://t.me/akashevarova/6597>
- [11] <https://t.me/akashevarova/6597>
- [12] <https://t.me/akashevarova/6597>
- [13] https://t.me/dva_majors/23967; https://t.me/Mestb_Dobroj_Voli/7692
- [14] https://t.me/aleksandr_skif/2854
- [15] https://t.me/aleksandr_skif/2854
- [16] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-july-11-2023>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-july-13-2023>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-july-16-2023>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-20-2023>;
- [17] https://t.me/notes_veterans/11676
- [18] <https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1693498113212699085?s=20>; <https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1693498819634139327?s=20>; <https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1693499049347793323?s=20>; <https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1693499641604497427?s=20>; <https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1693499773569892641?s=20>
- [19] <https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1693498113212699085?s=20>; <https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1693498819634139327?s=20>; <https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1693499049347793323?s=20>; <https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1693499641604497427?s=20>; <https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1693499773569892641?s=20>
- [20] <https://amalantra dot ru/25-armiya-rossii/>
; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-june-5-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-june-15-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-june-22-2023>

- [21] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-may-10-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-july-4-2023>
- [22] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-june-26-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-july-7-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-june-11-2023>
- [23] <https://t.me/vchkogpu/40810>; <https://t.me/vchkogpu/40825?single>
- [24] <https://t.me/vchkogpu/40810>; <https://t.me/vchkogpu/40825?single>
- [25] <https://t.me/logikamarkova/7077>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-june-26-2023>
- [26] https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Aug%2016%20Russian%20Offensive%20Campaign%20Assessment%20PDF_o.pdf ; https://t.me/belarusian_silovik/20099;
https://t.me/dva_majors/23954
- [27] https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Aug%2019%20Russian%20Offensive%20Campaign%20Assessment%20PDF_o.pdf
- [28] https://t.me/prigozhin_2023_tg/2911
- [29] https://t.me/grey_zone/20134
- [30] <https://t.me/vchkogpu/41043>
- [31] <https://t.me/vchkogpu/41043>
- [32] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-10-2023>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-9-2023>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-9-2023>;
https://t.me/belarusian_silovik/20099; https://t.me/dva_majors/23954; <https://t.me/vchkogpu/40810>;
- [33] <https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Russian%20Offensive%20Campaign%20Assessment%20C%20August%2020%2C%202023%20%28PDF%29.pdf>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-10-2023>; <https://understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-july-31-2023>;
- [34] https://t.me/multi_XAM/712
- [35] https://t.me/kiber_boroshno/3407;
<https://twitter.com/DefMon3/status/1693580141220311161?s=20>;
<https://twitter.com/GirkinGirkin/status/1693591402465157358>; ; https://t.me/grey_zone/20121 ;

https://t.me/grey_zone/20122 ; https://t.me/grey_zone/20123 ; https://t.me/grey_zone/20124 ;
https://t.me/russkiy_opolchenec/37724
; <https://t.me/milinfo/105336>; <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/51687>; <https://t.me/batalyon15/2655>; https://t.me/miroshnik_r/12368; https://t.me/basurin_e/4979;

[36] https://t.me/rusich_army/10487 ; <https://t.me/natoptishh/1825>;
<https://t.me/sashakots/41786> ; <https://t.me/moscowcalling/29648>;
https://t.me/notes_veterans/11677; https://t.me/dva_majors/23999; https://t.me/boris_rozhin/95503; https://t.me/notes_veterans/11677; <https://t.me/brussin/6451>

[37] https://t.me/boris_rozhin/95503; https://t.me/boris_rozhin/95486

[38] <https://t.me/rybar/50975> ; <https://t.me/milinfo/105334>; <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/51689>;
<https://t.me/swodki/294686>; <https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonov/28688> ;
<https://t.me/vysokygovorit/12570> ; https://t.me/grey_zone/20120 ;
<https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/49979> ;

[39] https://t.me/multi_XAM/715

[40] https://t.me/notes_veterans/11673; https://t.me/notes_veterans/11671 ;
https://t.me/notes_veterans/11670; https://t.me/notes_veterans/11669;
<https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/49977>

[41] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kAQHTFtaCKA>; <https://t.me/annamaliar/1031>

[42] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kAQHTFtaCKA>

[43] <https://t.me/wargonzo/14490>.

[44] https://t.me/mod_russia/29644; https://t.me/mod_russia/29640

[45] https://t.me/kiber_boroshno/3397;
https://t.me/stanislaw_osman/3255; https://t.me/WarArchive_ua/415;
<https://twitter.com/MilitaryLabb/status/1693400704663408816?s=20> ;
<https://twitter.com/GloOuD/status/1693351098826809400>; https://twitter.com/666_mancer/status/1693495273660493877

[46] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbido2xt1sy3h2f1UGFmdB8qbss2K4tgUDDCfRJ2GEJb48tH7YwXUkg2VugWDS1HawvEM4l> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbidoYY3DijywMctQE4RUvqwJkf89sgXar19cvYpzBkZqc8a88xXup6EeotPecAAh4VCEl>

[47] <https://t.me/annamaliar/1031> ; https://armyinform.com_dot_ua/2023/08/21/u-bahmuti-vorogu-pastczy-protyvnyk-ne-mozhe-vyjty-z-mista-i-ne-mozhe-prosuvatys-dali/

[48] https://t.me/boris_rozhin/95491 ; <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/49977>

[49] <https://t.me/wargonzo/14490>

[50] <https://t.me/annamaliar/1031> ; <https://armyinform.com dot ua/2023/08/21/u-bahmuti-vorog-u-pastczi-protyvnyk-ne-mozhe-vyjty-z-mista-i-ne-mozhe-prosuvatys-dali/>

[51] <https://t.me/annamaliar/1031> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbido2xt1sy3h2f1UGFmdB8qbss2K4tgUDdCfRJ2GEJb48tH7YwXUkg2VugWDS1HawvEM4l> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbidoYY3DijywMctQE4RUvqwJkf89sgXar19cvYpzBkZqc8a88xXup6EeotPecAAh4VCEl>

[52] <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/49974>

[53] https://t.me/mod_russia/29643

[54] https://t.me/mod_russia/29642

[55] https://t.me/boris_rozhin/95491; <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/49977>

[56] https://t.me/batalyon_vostok/138

[57] <https://t.me/BOBRMORF/188>; <https://twitter.com/neonhandrail/status/1693436410739761315?s=20>; <https://twitter.com/neonhandrail/status/1693437039960899850?s=20>; <https://twitter.com/neonhandrail/status/1693438340450939149?s=20> ; <https://www dot kyivpost.com/post/20768> ; https://t.me/kiber_boroshno/3418; <https://twitter.com/YWNReporter/status/1693602607133045031?s=20> ; https://t.me/WarArchive_ua/4175

[58] <https://t.me/annamaliar/1031> ; https://t.me/ivan_fedorov_melitopol/2950

[59] <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/51685> ; https://t.me/russkiy_opolchenec/37718; <https://t.me/rybar/50974> ; https://t.me/rusich_army/10485 ; <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/51685>; <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/51699> ; <https://t.me/sashakots/41793>; https://t.me/rusich_army/10475 ; https://t.me/dva_majors/23950 ; <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/49967> ; https://t.me/dva_majors/23996; https://t.me/dva_majors/23997

[60] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-may-10-2023>; https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Russian%20Offensive%20Campaign%20Assessment%20April%2023%202023%20%28compressed%29_o.pdf ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Russian%20Offensive%20Campaign%20Assessment%2C%20May%2021%2C%202023%20PDF.pdf>

[61] <https://t.me/wargonzo/14490>

[62] https://t.me/russkiy_opolchenec/37718; https://t.me/dva_majors/23961

[63] <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/51685>

[64] https://t.me/dva_majors/23967; https://t.me/Mestb_Dobroj_Voli/7692 https://t.me/russkiy_opolchenec/37718; <https://t.me/vysokygovorit/12572> ; <https://t.me/voenacher/50703> ; <https://t.me/brussin/6453>

[65] https://t.me/dva_majors/23967; https://t.me/Mestb_Dobroj_Voli/7692 https://t.me/russkiy_opolchenec/37718

[66] https://t.me/atesh_ua/1578

[67] https://armyinform.com_dot_ua/2023/08/20/poblyzu-kerchenskogo-mostu-rosiyany-zatrymuyut-korabli-nibyto-z-metoyu-oglyadu-nataliya-gumenyuk/

[68] https://ria_dot_ru/20230821/bespilotniki-1891291992.html

[69] <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/03/world/europe/russia-schools-military-war.html>

[70] https://t.me/mod_russia/29647; https://www.interfax_dot_ru/russia/917118

[71] <https://www.wsj.com/world/europe/ukrainian-children-brought-to-camps-in-belarus-exposed-to-pro-kremlin-propaganda-26be126?mod=e2tw>

[72] <https://www.wsj.com/world/europe/ukrainian-children-brought-to-camps-in-belarus-exposed-to-pro-kremlin-propaganda-26be126?mod=e2tw>

[73] <https://www.wsj.com/world/europe/ukrainian-children-brought-to-camps-in-belarus-exposed-to-pro-kremlin-propaganda-26be126?mod=e2tw>

[74] <https://t.me/severrealii/19349>; https://www.severreal_dot_org/a/proekt-zhena-glavy-mchs-prichastna-k-vyvozu-ukrainskih-detey-v-rossiyu/32557113.html; https://www.proekt_dot_media/guide/milskaya-kurenkov/

[75] https://www.proekt_dot_media/guide/milskaya-kurenkov/

[76] https://sprotyv_dot_mod.gov.ua/okupanty-provely-chergovu-rotatsiyu-likariv-na-hersonshhyny/

[77] https://sprotyv_dot_mod.gov.ua/okupanty-provely-chergovu-rotatsiyu-likariv-na-hersonshhyny/

[78] <https://t.me/modmilby/30976>