

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, September 17, 2023

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September 17, 2023, 5:35pm 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.

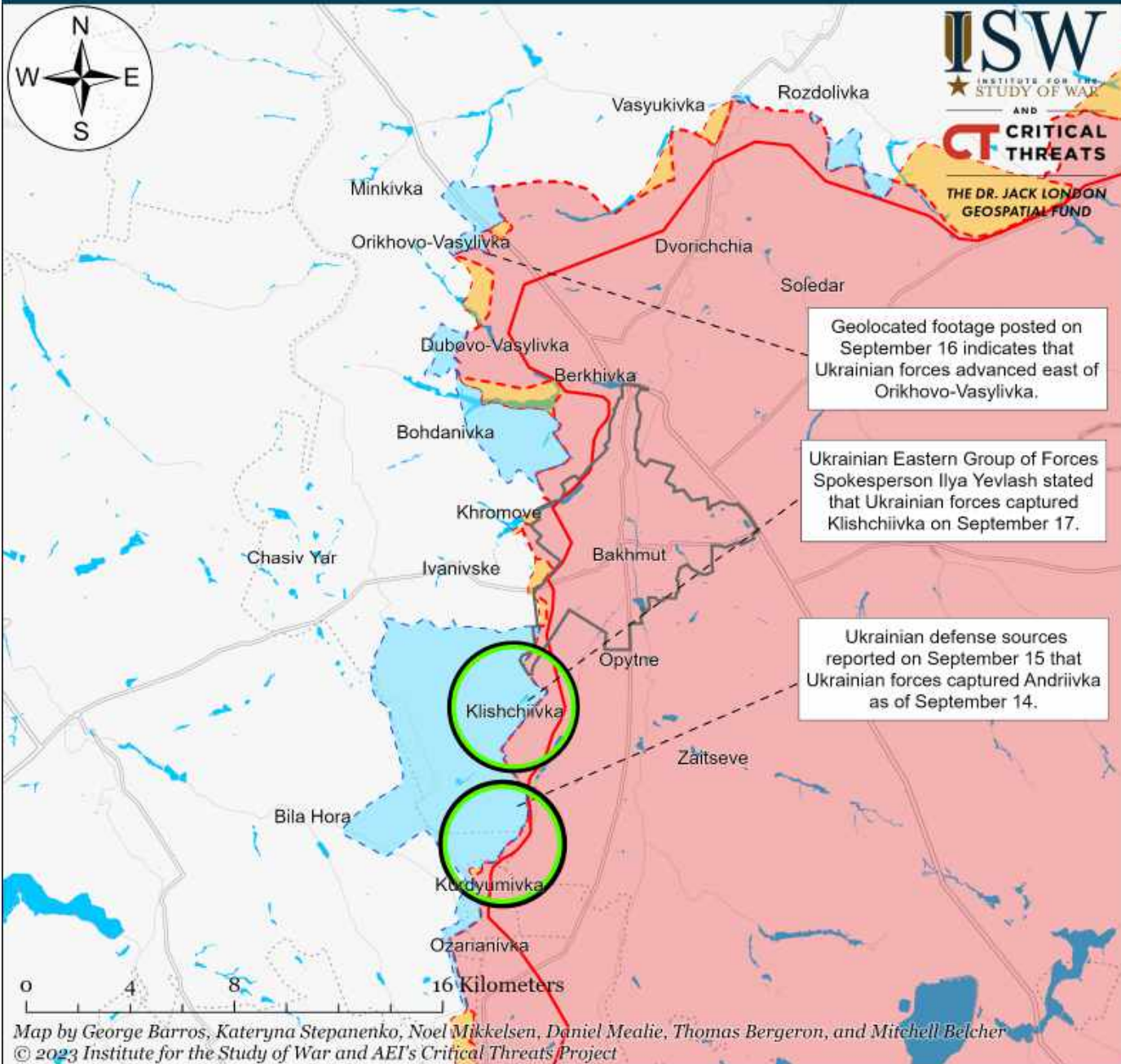
Click [here](#) to access ISW's archive of interactive time-lapse maps of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These maps complement the static control-of-terrain map that ISW produces daily by showing a dynamic frontline. ISW will update this time-lapse map archive monthly.

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 1pm ET on September 17. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the September 18 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian forces liberated Klishchiivka, south of Bakhmut, on September 17 and continued successful offensive operations elsewhere in the Bakhmut direction.

Geolocated footage posted on September 17 shows Ukrainian forces holding up flags in Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut).[1] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash later confirmed that Ukraine has liberated Klishchiivka, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky congratulated the Ukrainian 80th Air Assault Brigade, 5th Assault Brigade, 95th Air Assault Brigade, and National Police "Lyut" Assault Brigade for their role in liberating the settlement.[2] Further geolocated footage posted on September 16 shows that Ukrainian forces have captured positions east of Orikhovo-Vasylivka (10km northwest of Bakhmut).[3] The liberation of Klishchiivka, as well as continued Ukrainian tactical gains northwest of Bakhmut, are tactical gains of strategic significance because they are allowing Ukrainian forces to fix a considerable portion of Russian airborne (VDV) elements in the Bakhmut area, as ISW's Daniel Mealie discusses in the September 17, 2023 [special edition](#).

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of September 17, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, and Mitchell Belcher
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- Bakhmut City Limits
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

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

Russian forces launched another series of Shahed-131/136 drone and cruise missile strikes at southern Ukraine on the night of September 16-17. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces launched six Shahed drones from the southeastern and southern directions and 10 Kh-101/555/55 air-launched cruise missiles from nine Tu-95MS strategic bombers that took off from Engels Airbase, Saratov Oblast.[4] Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat noted that Russian forces mainly targeted grain infrastructure in southern Odesa Oblast, and Ukrainian military sources stated that Ukrainian forces shot down six Shaheds and six cruise missiles.[5] Ukraine's Southern Operational Command posted images of the aftermath of one Russian strike in an unspecified part of Odesa Oblast.[6] Russian forces additionally struck civilian enterprises in Kharkiv City with four S-300 missiles.[7]

North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un concluded his trip to Russia on September 17 and received several pieces of military technical equipment from the governor of Primorsky Krai. Kremlin newswire TASS reported that Kim visited the Far Eastern Federal University on September 17, where he met with Russian military engineers.[8] TASS and other Russian sources additionally noted that Primorsky Krai Governor Oleg Kozhemyako gifted Kim a military vest, an unspecified loitering munition, and an unspecified long-range reconnaissance drone.[9] ISW previously reported that Russia may be open to forms of technological and defensive cooperation with North Korea but is unlikely to provide physical systems due to Russian fears that providing the North Korean regime with such systems may trigger further sanctions against Russia.[10] It is therefore notable that a Russian official gifted Kim with pieces of military technology that will presumably return to North Korea with Kim. United Nations sanctions specify that "All Member States are required to prevent the direct or indirect supply, sale, or transfer to the DPRK, through their territories or by their nationals, or using their flag vessels or aircraft, and whether or not originating in their territories, of all arms and related materiel, including small arms and light weapons..."[11]

South Korean President Yoon Suuk-Yeol stated that Russian and North Korean military technical agreements may violate sanctions adopted by the UN Security Council.[12] Yoon stated that if information about these agreements is confirmed then this will be a violation of the sanctions and illegal.[13] The war in Ukraine has reportedly generated a rapid growth in South Korean arms exports as South Korea replenishes Western stocks of ammunition and systems that the West has sent to Ukraine.[14] South Korea has not yet directly supplied lethal security assistance to Ukraine.[15]

The Russian Ministry of Defense's (MoD) effort to subsume the Wagner Group is prompting Russian officials to more openly back military juntas in West Africa. A Russian military delegation, including Russian Deputy Defense Minister Yunus-Bek Yevkurov and Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GRU) General Andrei Averyanov, arrived in Bamako, Mali on September 16.[16] Yevkurov reportedly met with the Burkinabe, Nigerien, and Malian defense ministers; Malian junta head Assimi Goita; and Burkinabe junta head Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba.[17] Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso signed a security pact on September 16 promising to come to each other's aid in the case of any rebellion or external aggression.[18] The Russian military delegation's meeting with the political and military leadership of the three junta governments before the signing of the agreement likely indicates that Russian officials are prepared to more explicitly support these juntas. Russia has previously used the Wagner Group to forge relationships with the junta governments, but the Russian MoD's efforts to subsume Wagner's assets and operations in West Africa have eliminated the implausible deniability that Wagner previously afforded the Russia government. Yevkurov and Averyanov appear to be heavily involved in the efforts to subsume Wagner, and their participation in the delegation suggests that they are likely using to the seizure of

Wagner assets and operations to forge new agreements and partnerships with the junta governments.[19]

Prolonged concern about Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov's health in the Russian information space highlights Russian President Vladimir Putin's dependence on Kadyrov for continued stability in Chechnya. The Ukrainian Main Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reportedly confirmed that Kadyrov was in a coma on September 15, prompting rumors about Kadyrov's poor health among Russian milbloggers and insider sources.[20] Kadyrov denied the rumors about his health in a video posted on September 17.[21] The destabilization of Kadyrov's rule in Chechnya would be a major blow to Putin's regime, in part because of how central the establishment of stability in Chechnya through a brutal and bloody war was to Putin's early popularity in Russia. Kadyrov and other Russian officials may be concerned that continued rumors about his health will affect the long-term stability of his, and by extension Putin's, control of Chechnya.

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian forces liberated Klishchiivka, south of Bakhmut, on September 17 and continued successful offensive operations elsewhere in the Bakhmut direction.**
- **Russian forces launched another series of Shahed-131/136 drone and cruise missile strikes at southern Ukraine on the night of September 16-17.**
- **North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un concluded his trip to Russia on September 17 and received several pieces of military technical equipment from the governor of Primorsky Krai.**
- **The Russian Ministry of Defense's (MoD) effort to subsume the Wagner Group is prompting Russian officials to more openly back military juntas in West Africa.**
- **Prolonged concern about Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov's health in the Russian information space highlights Russian President Vladimir Putin's dependence on Kadyrov for continued stability in Chechnya.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, and in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast area on September 17 and advanced in some areas.**
- **Ukrainian forces also continued counteroffensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast.**
- **Recent Russian claims that small contingents of former Wagner Group personnel are returning to fight in Ukraine do not indicate that a fully reconstituted Wagner fighting force will return to Ukraine anytime soon if ever.**
- **Russian occupation administrations continue to forcibly deport Ukrainian children to Russia and erase Ukrainian cultural identity.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of September 17, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

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

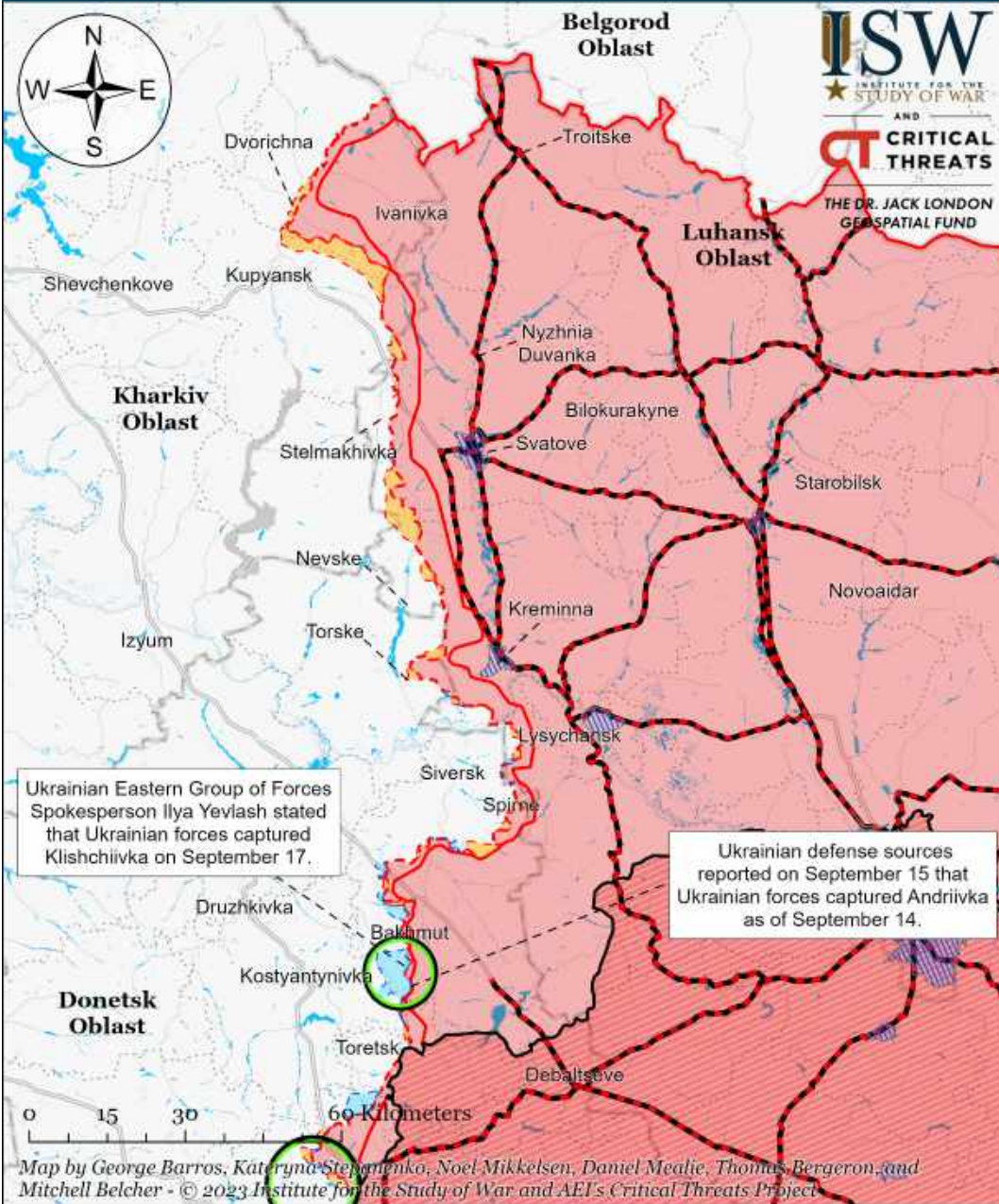
Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces are conducting diversionary activities near the international border to fix Ukrainian forces in border areas and prevent them from deploying to other directions.[22] The Ukrainian General Staff added that Russian forces are increasing the density of the mine-explosive barrier along the border in Belgorod Oblast. A Russian milblogger claimed that artillery and occasional combat engagements occur near Strilecha (25km northeast of Kharkiv City) on the international border.[23]

Russian forces continued offensive operations on the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna frontline on September 17 and made limited territorial gains southwest of Kreminna.[24] Geolocated footage published on September 17 indicated that Russian forces made slight advances south of Dibrova (5km southwest of Kreminna).[25] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash stated that Russian forces are trying to regroup along the Kupyansk-Svatove line following failures near Novoyehorivka (15km southwest of Svatove), which has led to a decrease in Russian activity on this line.[26] A Russian milblogger also claimed that Russian forces attacked near Kyslivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk).[27]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Kreminna on September 17. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian troops of the Central Grouping of Forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Dibrova, Torske (13km west of Kreminna), and in the Serebryanske forest area.[28]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of September 17, 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

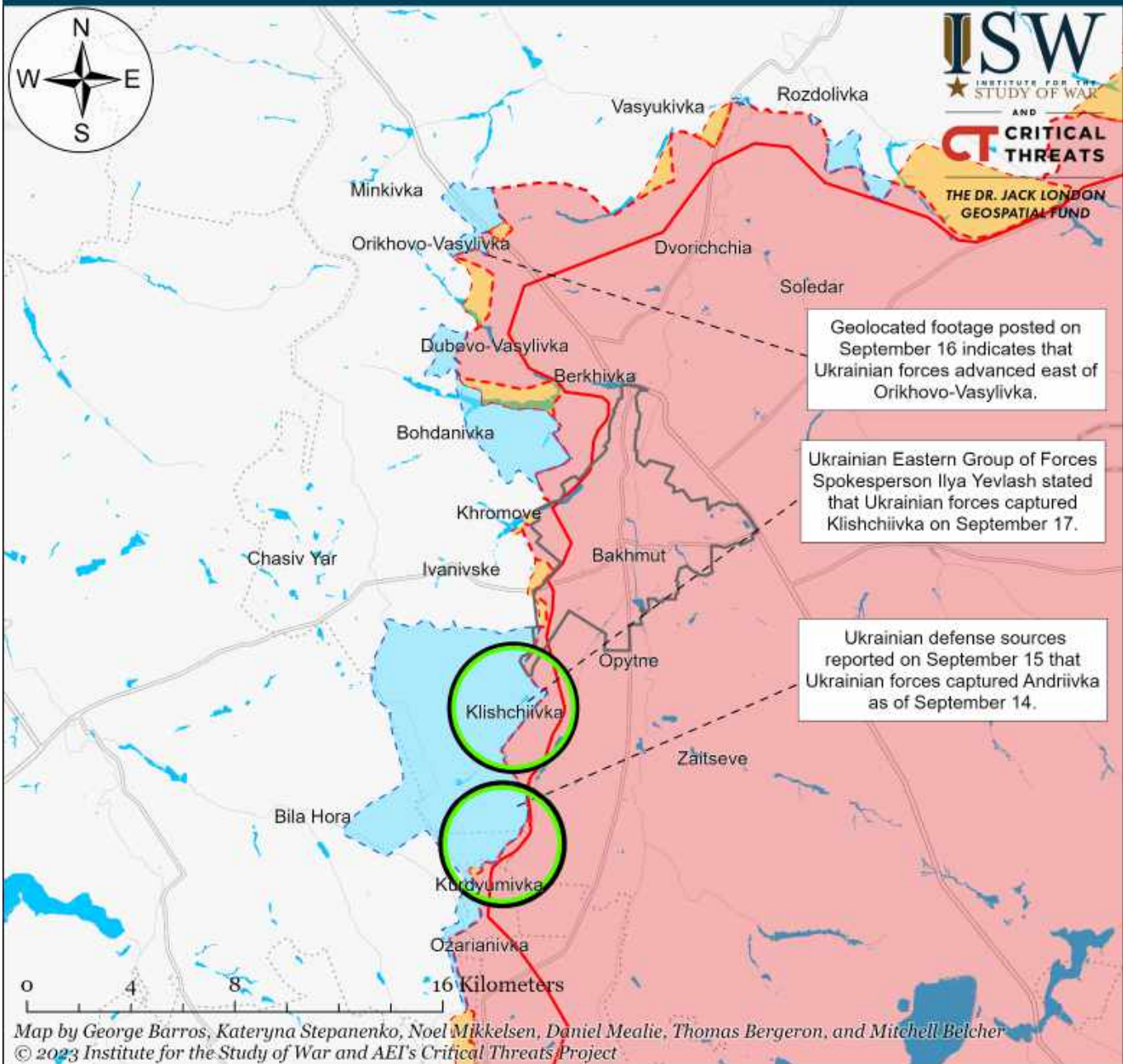
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

Ukrainian forces liberated Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) and made advances elsewhere in the Bakhmut direction on September 17. Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash stated that Ukrainian forces liberated Klishchiivka, and Ukrainian forces released several videos from Klishchiivka during the day wherein they stated that they had liberated the settlement.^[29] The Ukrainian announcements of the liberation show Ukrainian forces operating freely in the settlement.^[30] Russian milbloggers denied that Ukrainian forces liberated Klishchiivka and claimed that Ukrainian forces only control the southern and central parts of the settlement.^[31] Another milblogger acknowledged that Russian forces have entrenched themselves near the railway east and northeast of Klishchiivka but that they do not maintain positions in the settlement itself.^[32] Footage published on September 17 shows Ukrainian forces firing on Russian forces on the outskirts of Klishchiivka and forcing them to retreat.^[33] Additional geolocated footage published on September 16 indicates that Ukrainian forces made gains east of Orikhovo-Vasylivka (11km northwest of Bakhmut).^[34] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces repelled several Ukrainian assaults on Bakhmut’s northern flank, and that fighting is ongoing near Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut), which they claimed is a contested “gray zone.”^[35]

Russian forces counterattacked in the Bakhmut area on September 17 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled five Russian assaults near Klishchiivka and Bila Hora (14km southwest of Bakhmut) and repelled Russian counterattacks near Andriivka and Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut).^[36] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces are counterattacking near Klishchiivka and unsuccessfully tried to push Ukrainian forces out of positions near Bohdanivka (7km northwest of Bakhmut).^[37] Yevlash stated that Russian forces currently have 52,000 personnel deployed to the Bakhmut direction.^[38]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of September 17, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Geolocated footage posted on September 16 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced east of Orikhovo-Vasylivka.

Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Ilya Yevlash stated that Ukrainian forces captured Klishchiivka on September 17.

Ukrainian defense sources reported on September 15 that Ukrainian forces captured Andriivka as of September 14.

Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, and Mitchell Belcher
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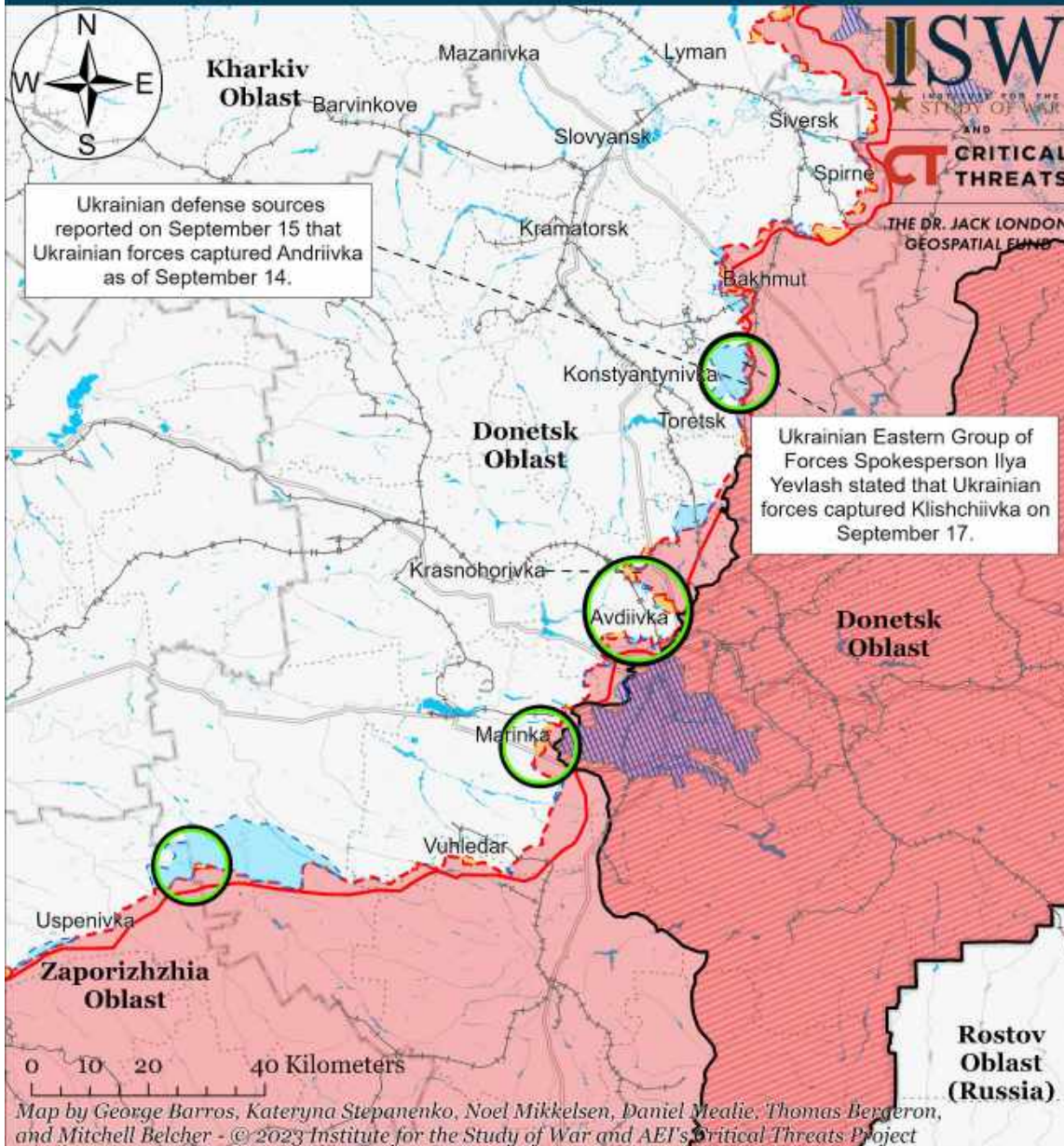
- Bakhmut City Limits
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

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

Ukrainian forces conducted limited ground attacks along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City front on September 17 and advanced. Geolocated footage published on September 16 indicates that Ukrainian forces had made further gains east of Krasnohorivka (22km southwest of Avdiivka).[39] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that elements of the Russian Southern Grouping of Forces repelled Ukrainian assaults near Marinka (27km southwest of Avdiivka).[40]

Russian forces continued limited offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City front on September 17 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive actions near Avdiivka, Sieverne (11km southwest of Avdiivka), and Marinka.[41] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun stated that Russian forces usually conduct 10 to 15 assaults near Marinka every day with motorized rifle units as well as combined "Storm" and "Storm-Z" units.[42] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces attacked south of Avdiivka and near Opytne (4km south of Avdiivka) on September 16.[43]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of September 17, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

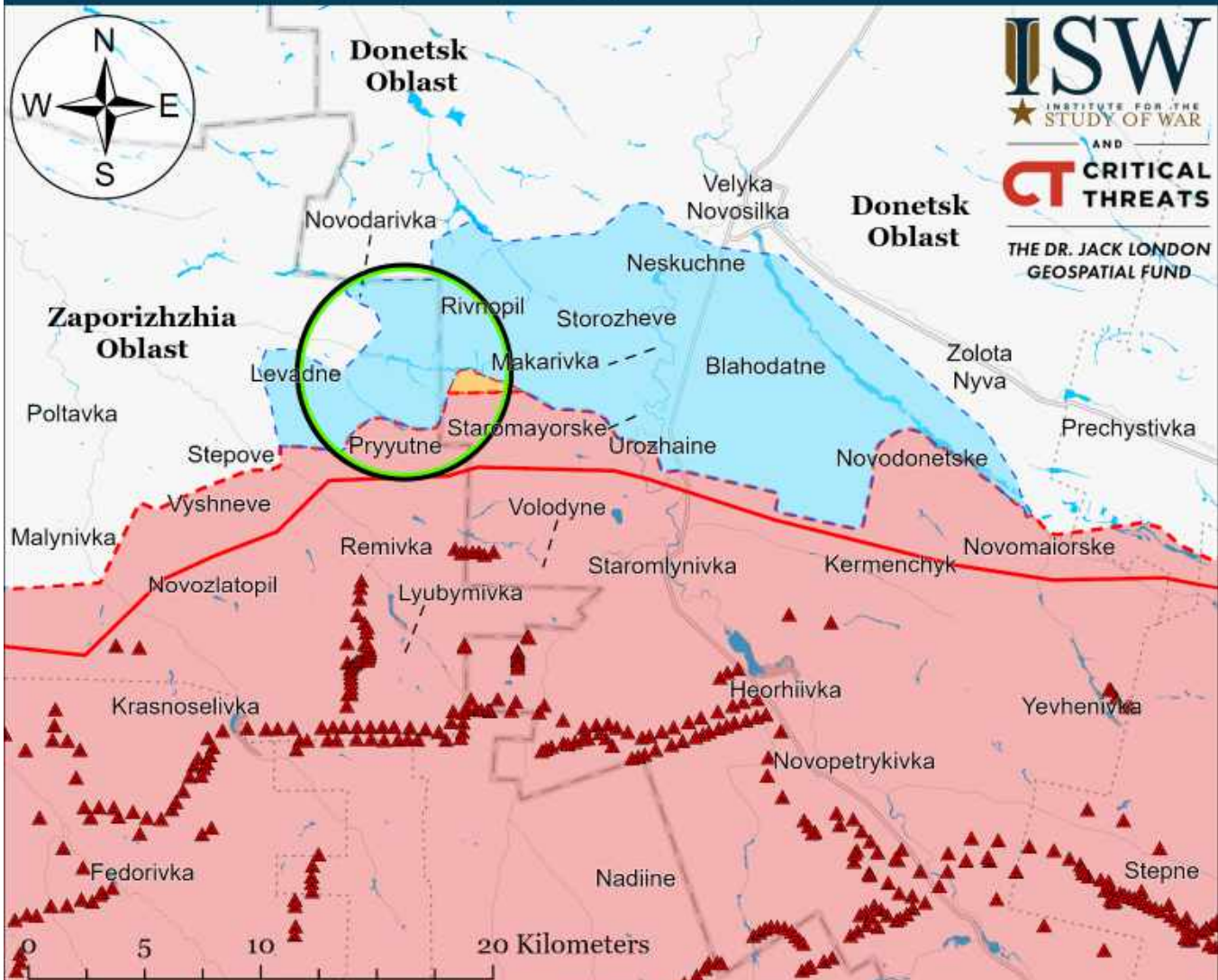
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast area on September 17 but did not advance. Russian sources, including the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), claimed that Ukrainian forces continued attacks along the Novodonetske-Novomayorske line (13-19km southeast of Velyka Novosilka), near Staromayorske (10km south of Velyka Novosilka), and near Pryyutne (15km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[44] Several Russian sources reported that fighting in this sector has largely assumed a positional nature and claimed that some Ukrainian units are rotating in this area.[45]

Russian forces conducted counterattacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast area on September 17 and reportedly advanced. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Novodarivka (15km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) and Rivnopil (10km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[46] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked towards Urozhaine (10km south of Velyka Novosilka), and another Russian source claimed that Russian forces knocked Ukrainian troops out of unspecified positions near Pryyutne.[47] One Russian milblogger noted that elements of the “Vostok” Battalion and Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) “Kaskad” formation are defending against Ukrainian attacks in this sector and inflicting high losses on Ukrainian troops.[48] Russian milbloggers claimed that elements of the 39th Motorized Rifle Brigade (68th Army Corps, Eastern Military District), Aerospace Forces (VKS), 36th Combined Arms Army (Eastern Military District), and 40th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) are engaged in the area.[49]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of September 17, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, and Mitchell Belcher - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

- 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
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Russian Field Fortifications

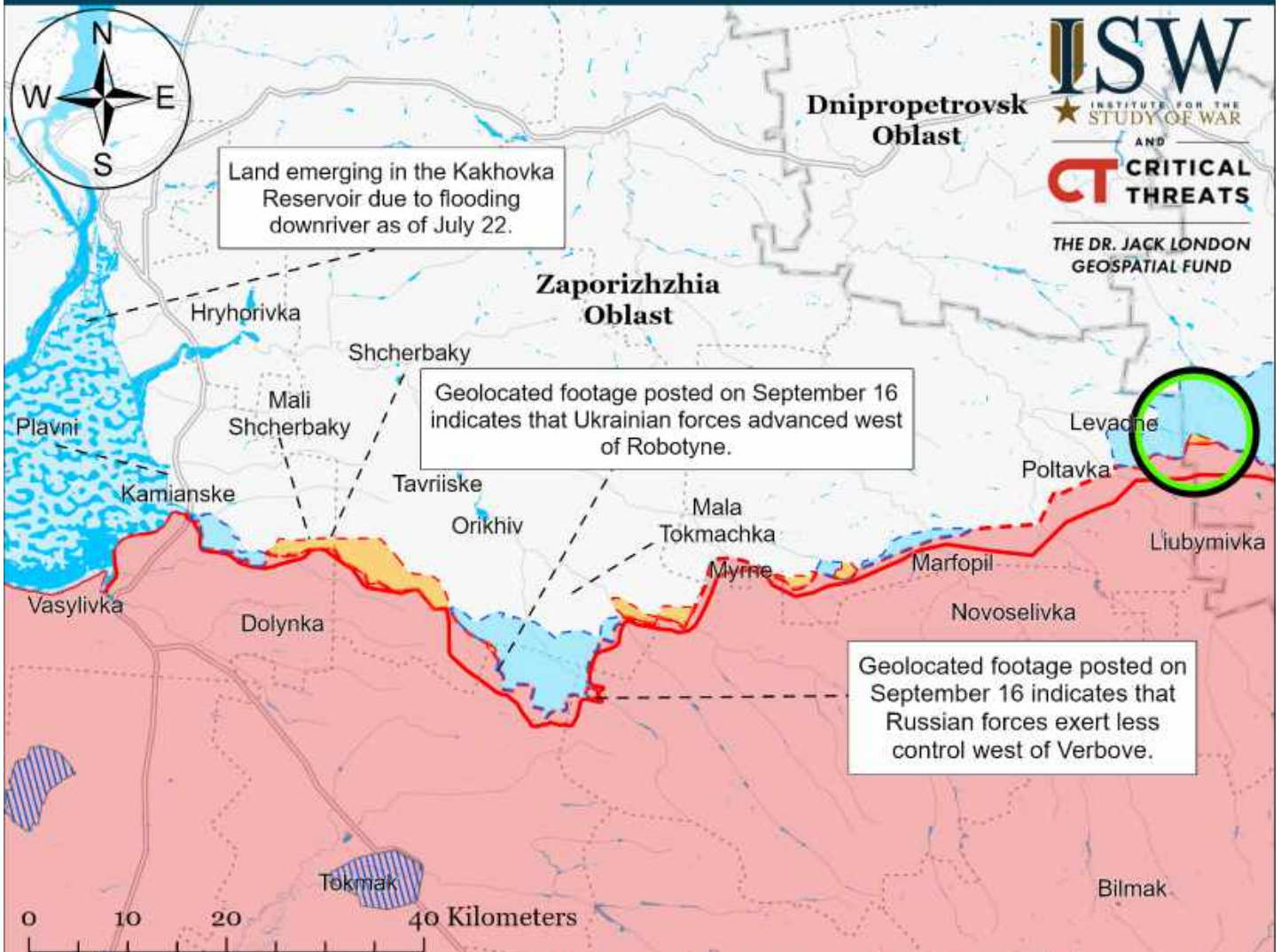
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on September 17 and did not make any confirmed gains. Ukrainian military sources reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhzhia Oblast) direction and were successful in unspecified areas.[50] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian attack near Robotyne (13km south of Orikhiv).[51] Russian milbloggers claimed that heavy fighting continued along the Robotyne-Verbove line, particularly in the direction of Novoprokopivka (just south of Robotyne).[52] One Russian source claimed that Ukrainian forces are using groups of two to three people to try and advance south of Robotyne.[53]

Russian sources claimed that Russian forces conducted limited counterattacks in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on September 17. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces are counterattacking near Robotyne and from positions near Novoprokopivka and Kopani (12km southwest of Orikhiv).[54] Russian sources claimed that elements of the 7th Guards Mountain Air Assault (VDV) Division, particularly the 247th VDV Regiment, are defending south of Orikhiv.[55]



Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of September 17, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, and Mitchell Belcher - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

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

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

Russian sources claimed that Ukraine targeted occupied Crimea with drones on September 17. The Russian MoD claimed that Russian air defenses downed four Ukrainian drones over the northwestern and eastern coasts of Crimea early in the morning on September 17.[56] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Ukraine launched a total of six drones at Crimea and that the Russian "Medvedi" (Bears) Private Military Company (PMC) detected the drones while the 31st Air Defense Division (4th Air Force and Air Defense Army, Southern Military District) shot down three drones near Portove and Cape Tarkhankut.[57] One Russian source posted an image reportedly of a downed drone near an oil depot in the area of Feodosia.[58]



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

Recent Russian claims that small contingents of former Wagner Group personnel are returning to fight in Ukraine do not indicate that a fully reconstituted Wagner fighting force will return to Ukraine anytime soon if ever. Russian milbloggers, including a Wagner-affiliated Russian milblogger, claimed on September 17 that a small number of fighters from the 3rd Platoon of Wagner's 1st Assault Detachment assembled an independent group and returned to the front in Ukraine.[59] A Russian milblogger claiming to be affiliated with Wagner claimed that the fighters likely signed contracts with the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD).[60] It is possible that a small number of Wagner personnel have signed Russian MoD contracts as part of the Russian MoD's efforts to integrate Wagner personnel into conventional Russian formations amid the continued uncertainty of Wagner's future domestically and abroad.[61] Another Russian milblogger claimed on September 16 that "Wagner veterans" are fighting near Klishchiivka in Donetsk Oblast.[62] ISW continues to assess that it is unlikely that the Kremlin will restore Wagner as a large-scale quasi-independent organization under a unified command independent of the Kremlin or Russian MoD, which is the only likely form in which Wagner personnel would present a significant threat to the Ukrainian military again.[63]

Forbes estimated on September 16 that the Russian government has spent around \$167.3 billion on the war in Ukraine from February 2022 to August 2023, based on data from the Ukrainian General Staff.[64] *Forbes* reported that the Russian government has spent \$51.3 billion on materiel for military operations, \$35.1 billion on military salaries, \$46.6 billion on compensation for the families of deceased or wounded Russian servicemen, and \$34 billion on destroyed equipment.[65] *Forbes* estimated that the Russian government spends \$300 million per day on the war in Ukraine.[66]

Russian authorities reportedly continue efforts to forcibly mobilize residents of occupied Ukraine. Ukrainian Luhansk Oblast Military Administration Head Artem Lysohor stated on September 17 that Russian authorities presented military summonses to men living in Starobilsk Raion, occupied Luhansk Oblast.[67] Lysohor stated that Russian authorities even gave summonses to men who do not have Russian passports in Pidhorivka, Starobilsk Raion.[68]

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

Russian occupation administrations continue to forcibly deport Ukrainian children to Russia and erase Ukrainian cultural identity. The Kherson Oblast occupation administration stated on September 17 that occupation officials sent schoolchildren between the ages of nine and 17 to Moscow for the "Culture Map 4+85" all-Russian cultural and education exchange program.[69] The Kherson Oblast occupation administration reportedly plans to send thousands of local children to Moscow and St. Petersburg for similar programs by the end of 2023.[70] Occupation authorities in Donetsk, Luhansk, and Zaporizhia oblasts will also send an unspecified number of local children to Russia for these programs.[71] Russian Culture Minister Olga Lyubimova reportedly stated that at least 10,000 school children from the occupied territories will take part in the "Culture Map 4+85" program in 2023 and get "acquainted with the rich cultural history of our [Russia]."[72] These programs are likely part of Russia's wider campaign to forcibly deport Ukrainian children to Russia and forcibly assimilate them into the Russian sociocultural sphere.

The Russian Republic of Mordovia continues to expand its patronage network in occupied Kherson Oblast. Kherson Oblast occupation administration head Vladimir Saldo stated on September 17 that

he met with Republic of Mordovia Head Artyom Zdunov to discuss Mordovia's recent infrastructure projects in occupied Kherson Oblast, including the renovation and construction of public infrastructure and housing.[73] Saldo claimed that Zdunov also agreed to build a resort in occupied Kherson Oblast.[74]

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 and Russian milbloggers posted footage on September 17 reportedly showing Wagner Group instructors conducting joint drills with the Belarusian Ministry of Internal Affairs.[75]

ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian 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/WarArchive_ua/5106; https://t.me/WarArchive_ua/5099

[2] <https://twitter.com/hromadske/status/1703454113223086466?s=46&t= XWt9fOA...> ; [https://suspilne dot media/571377-ukrainski-vijskovi-zvilnili-klisiivku-poblizu-bahmuta-na-doneccini/](https://suspilne.media/571377-ukrainski-vijskovi-zvilnili-klisiivku-poblizu-bahmuta-na-doneccini/); <https://twitter.com/ZelenskyyUa/status/1703474879314407676>

[3] <https://t.me/instructorRagnar/345>; <https://x.com/1zoner4/status/1703016989751418913?s=20>; <https://x.com/klinger66/status/1703209325538263519?s=20>; <https://twitter.com/PuenteUribarri/status/1703330571940765984>

[4] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0UA98NL7KKvSP35kuoJMYPZhtGmofNTCeCFkMBTPMRoV9K403fruEW3iCte7VVGewl> ; <https://t.me/kpszsu/5278>

[5] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0UA98NL7KKvSP35kuoJMYPZhtGmofNTCeCFkMBTPMRoV9K403fruEW3iCte7VVGewl> ; <https://t.me/kpszsu/5278>; https://t.me/SJTF_Odes/799; [https://armyinform.com dot ua/2023/09/17/vnochi-nashi-syly-ppo-znyshhyly-12-povitryanyh-czilej-voroga/](https://armyinform.com.ua/2023/09/17/vnochi-nashi-syly-ppo-znyshhyly-12-povitryanyh-czilej-voroga/)

[6] https://t.me/SJTF_Odes/803

[7] https://t.me/mod_russia/30551; <https://t.me/rybar/51983> ; <https://t.me/rybar/51969> <https://t.me/synergubov/7071>

[8] <https://tass dot ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/18769281>

[9] <https://tass dot ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/18769281>; <https://t.me/milinfo/106540>

[10] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar091623>

[11] [Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 \(2006\) | United Nations Security Council](#)

[12] <https://apnews.com/article/south-korea-yoon-putin-kim-russia-82472238814...>

[13] <https://apnews.com/article/south-korea-yoon-putin-kim-russia-8247223881457da191d069547e1cc762> ; <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-12522651/Inside-S-Korean-f...>

[14] <https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-war-drives-rapid-growth-in-south-ko...>

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Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, September 16, 2023

Riley Bailey, Karolina Hird, Grace Mappes,
Christina Harward, and Frederick W. Kagan

September 16, 2023, 6:25pm 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 12:15pm ET on September 16. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the September 17 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Bakhmut direction on September 16 and continued to make gains in the area. Geolocated footage posted on September 15 confirms that Ukrainian forces have advanced south of Rozdolivka (about 13km northeast of Bakhmut) and in northern Klishchiivka (about 6km southwest of Bakhmut).[1] Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar noted that fighting is ongoing near Klishchiivka and Kurdyumivka (12km southwest of Bakhmut) and stated that Ukrainian forces continue to be successful in the Klishchiivka area.[2] Ukrainian Ground Forces Commander Colonel General Oleksandr Syrsky posted footage of Ukrainian personnel in Andriivka (8km southwest of Bakhmut) following the Ukrainian liberation of the settlement on September 14.[3]

Ukrainian advances in western Zaporizhia Oblast have likely forced the Russian command to prioritize the Russian defense there and laterally redeploy elements of a relatively elite formation away from the Russian defense south of Bakhmut. North Ossetian volunteer battalions "Storm Ossetia" and "Alania," which are operating in western Zaporizhia Oblast, posted an image on September 16 purporting to show a small detachment of the Russian 83rd Separate Guards Air Assault (VDV) Brigade in Nesteryanka (on the western shoulder of the current Ukrainian breach in western Zaporizhia Oblast).[4] Elements of the 83rd Brigade deployed to defend against Ukrainian counteroffensive operations around Klishchiivka in late June and were observed in combat in the area in late August.[5] Elements of the 83rd Brigade were reportedly still operating in the Bakhmut area as of September 11, although elements of the brigade may have been split across two different sectors of the front.[6] Klishchiivka has been a focal point of fighting in the Bakhmut area in recent weeks, and the redeployment of any elements of the 83rd VDV Brigade amid Ukrainian advances near Klishchiivka suggests a deep concern about Ukrainian advances in western Zaporizhia Oblast and the Russian prioritization of the defense there.

ISW has previously assessed that Ukrainian counteroffensive operations along several lines of effort would force the Russian command to prioritize certain sectors of the front and conduct lateral redeployments that offer Ukraine opportunities for exploitation.[7] Ukrainian counteroffensive operations have fixed relatively elite units and formations to the area, including elements of the 98th

VDV Division, the 83rd VDV Brigade, the 11th VDV Brigade, the 31st VDV Brigade, the 106th VDV Division, and the 364th Spetsnaz Brigade (Russian General Staff Main Directorate).[8] Russian forces have thus far been unwilling to send these relatively elite formations to aid in the critical defensive effort in western Zaporizhia Oblast, and Ukrainian operations around Bakhmut appear to continue preventing the Russian command from doing so at scale. ISW will publish a review of the strategic significance of how Ukrainian operations have fixed Russian forces to the Bakhmut area in an upcoming special edition.

Ukrainian forces also advanced in western Zaporizhia Oblast on September 16 and continued to penetrate the Russian defensive layer that lies ahead of the current extent of Ukrainian advances. Geolocated footage published on September 16 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced along Russian defensive positions to the west of Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv).[9] Additional geolocated footage published on September 15 indicates that Ukrainian infantry advanced further along a series of Russian defensive positions immediately west of Verbove (18km southeast of Orikhiv) but likely did not maintain control of these positions.[10] The Ukrainian presence at these Russian defensive positions indicates that Russian forces do not control these positions either and that Ukrainian forces are continuing to operate past the Russian defensive layer that runs northwest of Verbove to north of Solodka Balka (20km south of Orikhiv).

Ukrainian forces have likely made a significant tactical breach along a section of the current Russian defense layer in the Robotyne area over the past several weeks that they continue to widen. Ukrainian forces have continued offensive operations past a section of the Russian defensive layer west of Verbove since penetrating it on September 4 and have widened their breach along a 2.6km section of those Russian defensive positions.[11] The continued absence of observed Ukrainian heavy equipment and vehicles past this defensive layer continues to indicate that Ukrainian forces have yet to complete a breakthrough of this defensive layer, however.[12] Ukrainian officials have indicated that the series of Russian defensive positions currently ahead of the Ukrainian advance may be less challenging than the initial Russian defensive layer that Ukrainian forces broke through to the north.[13] Russian forces had concentrated the majority of their combat power at those forward-most Russian defensive positions to defend against Ukrainian counteroffensive operations, and these Russian forces have likely suffered heavy losses and conducted fighting withdrawals to prepared positions behind the current defensive layer.[14] ISW has long assessed that Russian forces lack the manpower to man the entire multi-echeloned Russian defensive fortification systems in southern Ukraine, and the Russian forces defending the current layer of defense are likely elements of formations that have been fighting in the area without operational-level unit rotation since the start of the counteroffensive or elements of formations that laterally transferred from elsewhere along the front.[15]

Russian ultranationalists continued to complain about endemic lying within the Russian military after Russian State Duma Deputy and former Deputy Commander of the Southern Military District (SMD) Lieutenant General Andrei Gurulev voiced similar complaints on September 15. A Russian milblogger posted a statement reportedly from a subscriber on September 16 that concurred with Gurulev's assertion that the culture of lying in the Russian military is the main issue preventing a Russian victory in Ukraine.[16] Another Russian milblogger stated that the issue is a "disaster" and that lies occur at all levels of the Russian military as subordinate commanders are afraid to report the truth about the condition and needs of units and formations.[17] The milblogger stated the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Russian President

Vladimir Putin are likely receiving false reports. The milblogger added that tyranny (bad command culture), fraud, and a lack of military resourcefulness are some of the issues affecting the Russian military in Ukraine and that the main goal of the Russian military should be to minimize personnel losses. A Russian insider source compared Gurulev to deceased Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin in his role as the “front line truth teller.”[18]

A Ukrainian naval drone strike likely damaged a Russian ship in the Black Sea on September 14. Ukrainian newspaper *Ukrainska Pravda* published a photo reportedly from a source within the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) that indicates that Ukrainian naval drones struck and damaged a Russian Bora-class corvette near the entrance to Sevastopol Bay in occupied Crimea on September 14.[19] Ukrainian Digital Transformation Minister Mykhailo Fedorov stated on September 16 that Ukraine will conduct more drone attacks on Russian ships in the future.[20] Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Captain First Rank Nataliya Humenyuk stated that Russian ships do not stay at their bases but are constantly moving between naval bases in Russia and occupied Crimea to avoid strikes against them.[21] Russian forces have previously used large ships in the Black Sea to mitigate the damage that Ukrainian strikes have inflicted on other Russian ground lines of communication (GLOCs) in southern Ukraine, and Ukrainian forces are likely targeting Russian ships in the Black Sea to further damage Russia’s ability to mitigate ongoing logistics complications among other things.[22]

A Ukrainian official confirmed on September 16 that a civilian vessel used the Ukrainian corridor in the Black Sea to reach a Ukrainian port for the first time. Ukrainian Minister for Communities, Territories, and Infrastructure Oleksandr Kubrakov announced that civilian bulk carriers flying the Palau flag used the existing Ukrainian corridor to sail towards Chornomorsk, where the vessels will load over 20,000 tons of grain for export to countries in Africa and Asia.[23] The Kremlin previously escalated its posturing in the Black Sea to curtail maritime traffic to Ukraine and increase its leverage to extract maximalist concessions to rejoin the Black Sea Grain Initiative.[24] United Kingdom military aircraft are reportedly conducting patrols over the Black Sea to deter Russian forces from acting aggressively towards civilian vessels.[25] Kubrakov stated that five civilian vessels have traveled from Ukraine along the Ukrainian Black Sea corridor since August 15: *Joseph Schulte*, *Primus*, *Anna-Theresa*, *Ocean Courtesy*, and *Puma*.[26]

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un met in Vladivostok, where Kim viewed pieces of Russian weapons technology on September 16. Kim viewed Tu-22MS, Tu-95MS, and Tu-160 strategic bombers; Su25SM3, Su-30SM, and Su-34 fighter-bombers; a MiG-31I missile carrier with Kinzhal missiles; the frigate *Marshal Shaposhnikov*; a Uranus anti-ship missile system; and Kalibr cruise missiles.[27] Russian Aerospace Forces (VKS) Commander Lieutenant General Sergey Kobylash told Kim that the Tu-160 strategic bombers received new Kh-BD cruise missiles with a claimed range of over 6,500 kilometers and can carry 12 such missiles.[28] Russia is highly unlikely to provide physical systems or weapons to North Korea due to Russian President Vladimir Putin’s likely concern that this provision may trigger secondary sanctions against Russia, but Putin may be open to other forms of technological and defensive cooperation with North Korea in return for North Korean artillery ammunition.[29]

The Russian military leadership may be removing ineffective air defense officials on the pretext of corruption charges to avoid admitting the failures of Russian air defenses

against increasing drone strikes on Russian cities including Moscow. Russian outlet *Kommersant* reported on September 16 that the Tula Oblast Venesky District Court sentenced Vladislav Gukov, former head of the MoD Department of State Defense Procurement, to a nine-year prison term for corruption.[30] *Kommersant* noted that the investigation found that Gukov accepted over 15 million rubles (\$154,950) in bribes from various enterprises that were meant to supply the MoD with “urgently needed” X-ray diagnostic systems for KamAZ vehicles.[31] A Russian insider source alleged that Gukov was a close personal friend of Major General Vyacheslav Lobuzko, former commander of a division of the 3rd Separate Air Defense Army and one of the designers of the “Voronezh” cruise and ballistic missile detection system, whom Russian authorities also imprisoned for corruption in May.[32] The insider source additionally claimed that Gukov was personally responsible for signing off on the procurement of air defense systems and complexes.[33]

Gukov’s corruption charge and his role as a prominent Russian air defense official closely mirror the case of the commander of the Moscow-based 1st Special Purpose Air and Missile Defense, Army Major General Konstantin Ogienko, whom Moscow Oblast authorities arrested on similar corruption and bribery charges relating to giving state defense property to an unnamed civilian organization.[34] ISW has no reason to doubt that these air defense officials are complicit in corruption and bribery schemes, but the recent trend of arrests of prominent air defense officials on corruption charges may suggest that higher echelons of the Russian military wish to remove these air defense officials from their positions without having to admit that the Russian domestic air defense system is failing.[35]

Russian military officials continue efforts to solidify Russia’s relationship with African states amidst changing dynamics on the continent resulting from the Russian MoD’s efforts to subsume the Wagner Group. Russian milbloggers and Malian national broadcaster *ORTM* reported that Russian Deputy Defense Minister Yunus-Bek Yevkurov arrived in Bamako, Mali on September 16 and met with the Malian and Nigerien defense ministers and Malian junta head Assimi Goita.[36] Russian milbloggers speculated that Yevkurov and the Malian and Nigerien ministers discussed military-technical cooperation, the implications of the coup in Niger, and increased Russian MoD support for the Malian junta against Tuareg rebels in northern Mali.[37] One Russian source suggested that the MoD seeks to take over Wagner Group remnants in northern Mali, which is consistent with ISW’s previous observation that the Russian MoD has recently made efforts to assume control of Wagner’s operations on the African continent.[38] Yevkurov notably visited multiple African countries including Burkina Faso, Libya, and Syria in early September to replace “private military companies” with MoD elements.[39] The Ukrainian Resistance Center relatedly reported on September 16 that the Russian MoD is increasingly sending representatives to Algeria, Mali, and Sudan to convince remaining Wagner fighters to sign contracts with a structure affiliated with and supervised by the MoD.[40]

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Bakhmut direction on September 16 and continued to make gains in the area.**
- **Ukrainian advances in western Zaporizhia Oblast have likely forced the Russian command to prioritize the Russian defense there and laterally redeploy elements of a relatively elite formation away from the Russian defense south of Bakhmut.**

- **Ukrainian forces also advanced in western Zaporizhia Oblast on September 16 and continued to penetrate the Russian defensive layer that lies ahead of the current extent of Ukrainian advances.**
- **Ukrainian forces have likely made a significant tactical breach along a section of the current Russian defense layer in the Robotyne area over the past several weeks that they continue to widen.**
- **Russian ultranationalists continued to complain about endemic lying within the Russian military after Russian State Duma Deputy and former Deputy Commander of the Southern Military District (SMD) Lieutenant General Andrei Gurulev voiced similar complaints on September 15.**
- **A Ukrainian naval drone strike likely damaged a Russian ship in the Black Sea on September 14.**
- **A Ukrainian official confirmed on September 16 that a civilian vessel used the Ukrainian corridor in the Black Sea to reach a Ukrainian port for the first time.**
- **Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un met in Vladivostok, where Kim viewed pieces of Russian weapons technology on September 16.**
- **The Russian military leadership may be removing ineffective air defense officials on the pretext of corruption charges to avoid admitting the failures of Russian air defenses against increasing drone strikes on Russian cities including Moscow.**
- **Russian military officials continue efforts to solidify Russia's relationship with African states amidst changing dynamics on the continent resulting from the Russian Ministry of Defense's (MoD) efforts to subsume the Wagner Group.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia on September 16 and advanced in some areas.**
- **Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations in at least two sectors of the front on September 16 and advanced near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast.**
- **Russian milbloggers continue complaining about the role of the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) in perpetuating issues affecting Russian military personnel.**
- **Russian occupation officials continue efforts to resettle residential areas of occupied Ukraine with Russians.**

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



We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We will continue to evaluate and report on the effects of these criminal activities on the Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population and specifically on combat in Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn 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

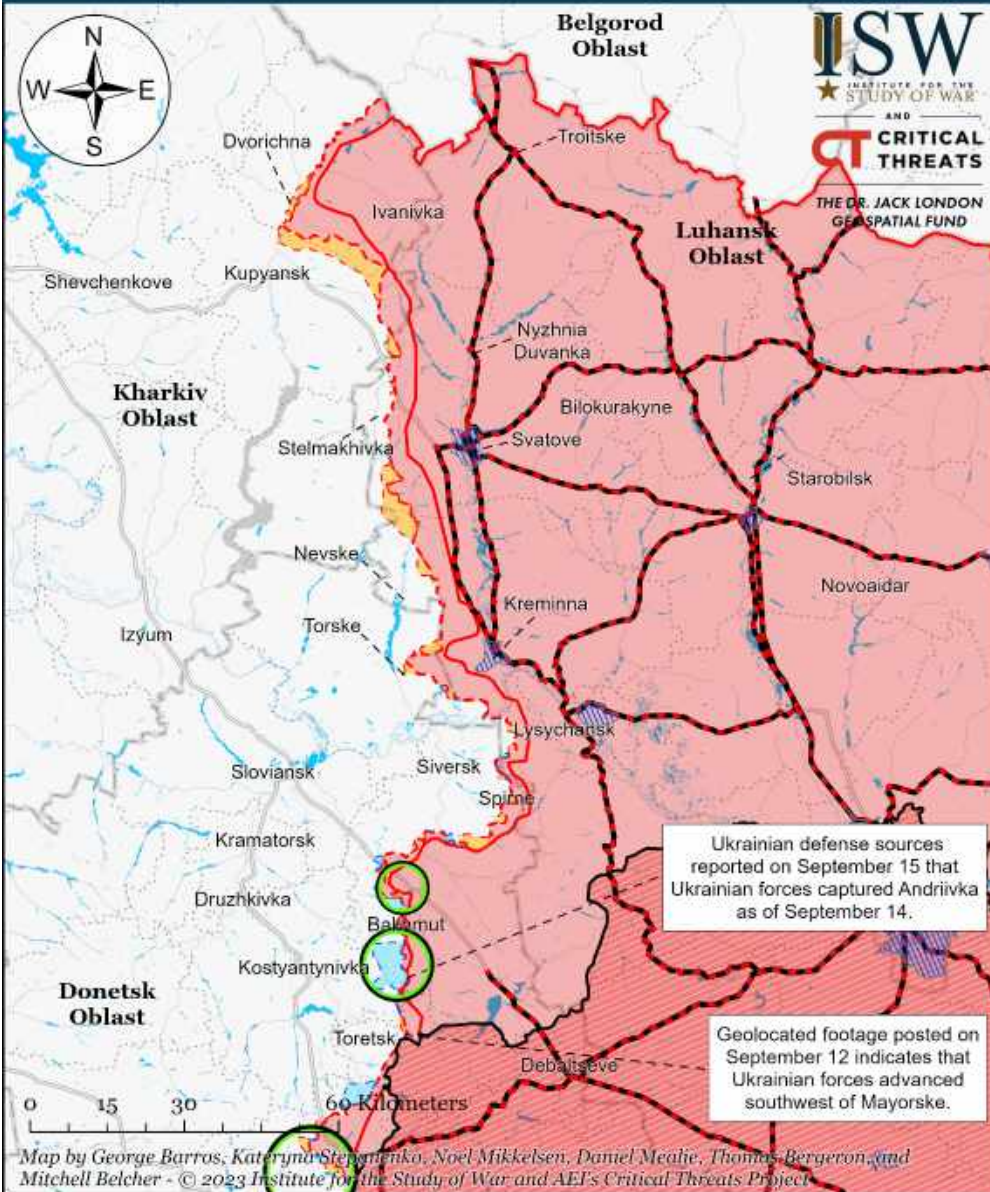
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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 forces continued fighting along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on September 16 and reportedly made marginal advances. A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces advanced south of Kreminna near Bilohorivka and Berestove (32km south of Kreminna) on September 16.[41] The Russian MoD claimed on September 16 that Russian forces improved their tactical positions in the Kupyansk direction in the past week.[42]

Ukrainian forces reportedly continued ground attacks on the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line and did not advance on September 16. Russian military officials claimed that Russian forces repelled two Ukrainian attacks in the directions of Synkivka (9km northeast of Kupyansk) and Vilshana (15km northeast of Kupyansk) and five Ukrainian attacks near Torske (14km west of Kreminna) and the Serebryanske forest area (11km south of Kreminna).[43]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of September 16, 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

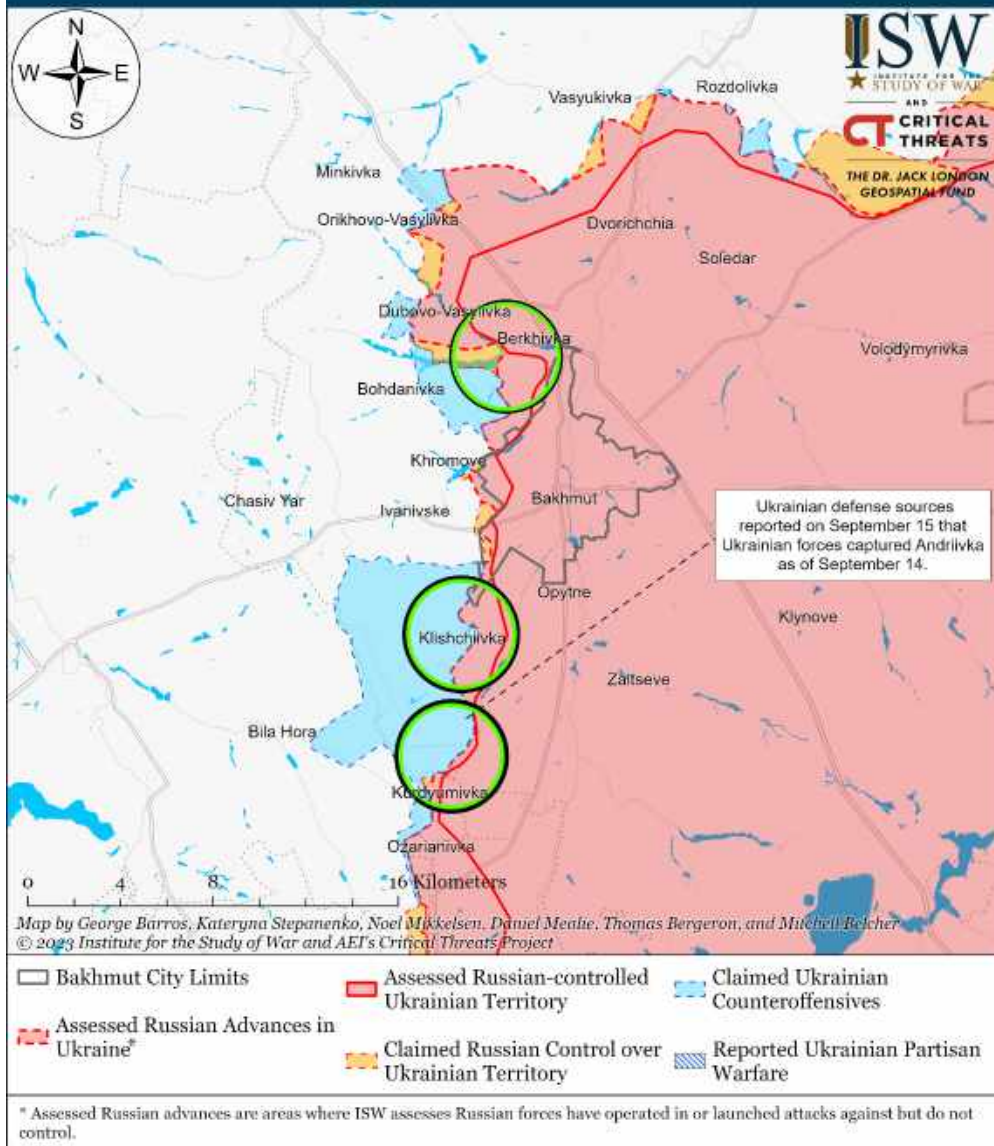
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut on September 16 and advanced. Geolocated footage published on September 15 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced southeast of Rozdolivka (17km northeast of Bakhmut) and in northern Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut).[44] The Ukrainian General Staff and Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar reported on September 16 that Ukrainian forces conducted successful assault operations near Klishchiivka and that fighting is ongoing near Klishchiivka and Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut).[45] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash reported that Ukrainian forces are gradually pushing Russian forces out of their positions and forcing them to retreat in the Bakhmut direction, and Ukrainian Ground Forces Commander Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi reported that Ukrainian forces continue to advance in the Bakhmut direction.[46] A Russian milblogger acknowledged Ukrainian control over Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut) but another Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces control only part of Andriivka and that most of the settlement is a contested "gray zone." [47] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces control southern and central Klishchiivka but a Russian news aggregator claimed on September 15 that the settlement is a contested "gray zone" and Ukrainian forces have not gained a foothold in the settlement.[48] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked on the Klishchiivka-Kurdyumivka line north of Bakhmut and that fighting is ongoing near Klishchiivka and Andriivka.[49]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut and reportedly advanced on September 16. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces successfully counterattacked in northeastern Klishchiivka and near Andriivka.[50] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces control the railway immediately east of Andriivka, northeastern Klishchiivka, and Kurdyumivka.[51] The Ukrainian General Staff and Malyar reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Yahidne (2km north of Bakhmut) and Bohdanivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut).[52] **The Ukrainian 3rd Separate Assault Brigade published footage and reported that Russian artillery fired on Russian soldiers, likely of the 72nd Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (3rd Army Corps), surrendering to Ukrainian forces in Andriivka.**[53]

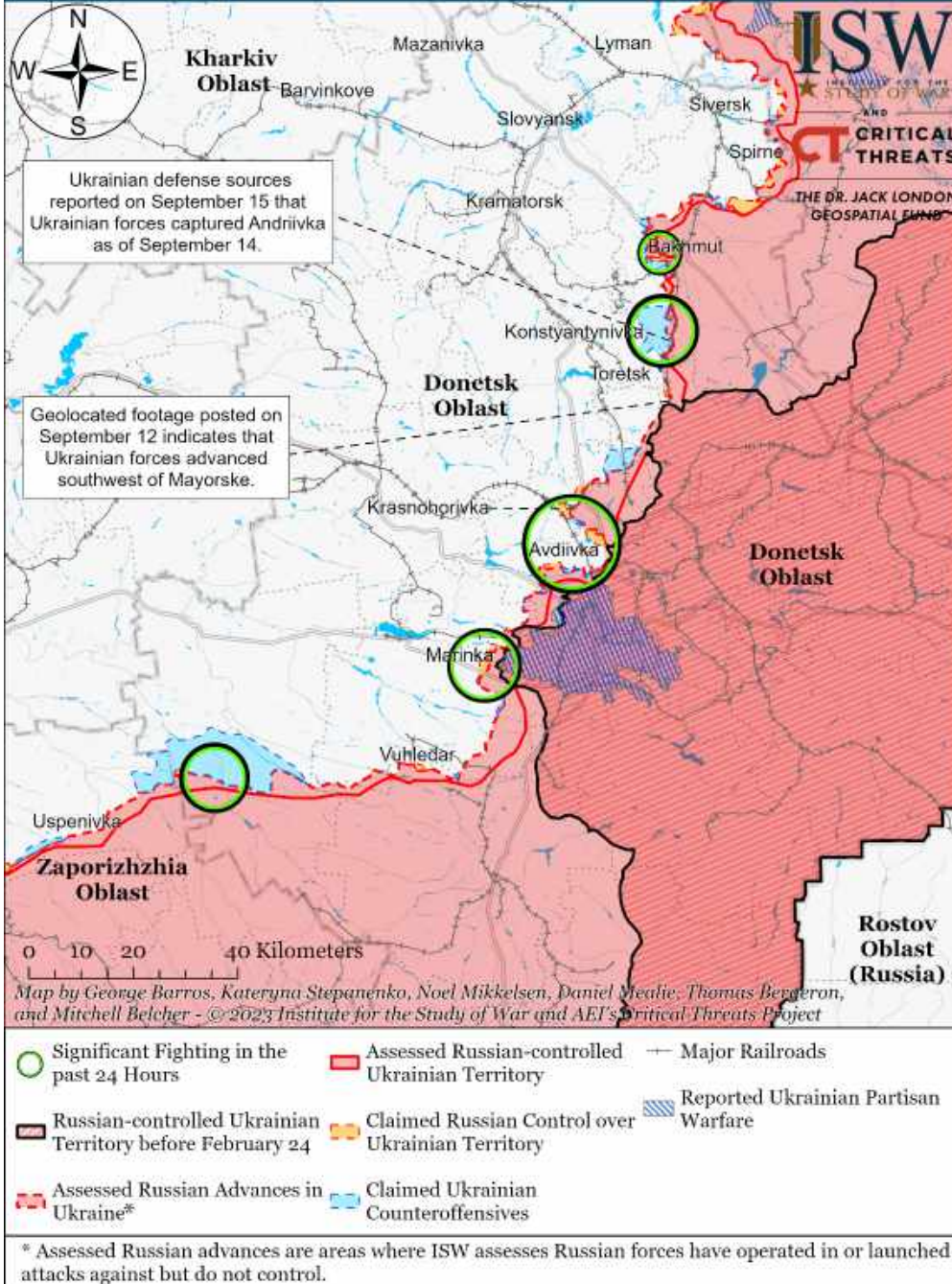
Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of September 16, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Malyar reported that Ukrainian forces along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line are holding their positions in the Avdiivka and Marinka (on the western outskirts of Donetsk City) directions.[54]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line but did not advance on September 16. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka) and Marinka.[55] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked from the direction of Opytne (3km southwest of Avdiivka) and on the southern outskirts of Avdiivka but did not specify an outcome.[56]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of September 16, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

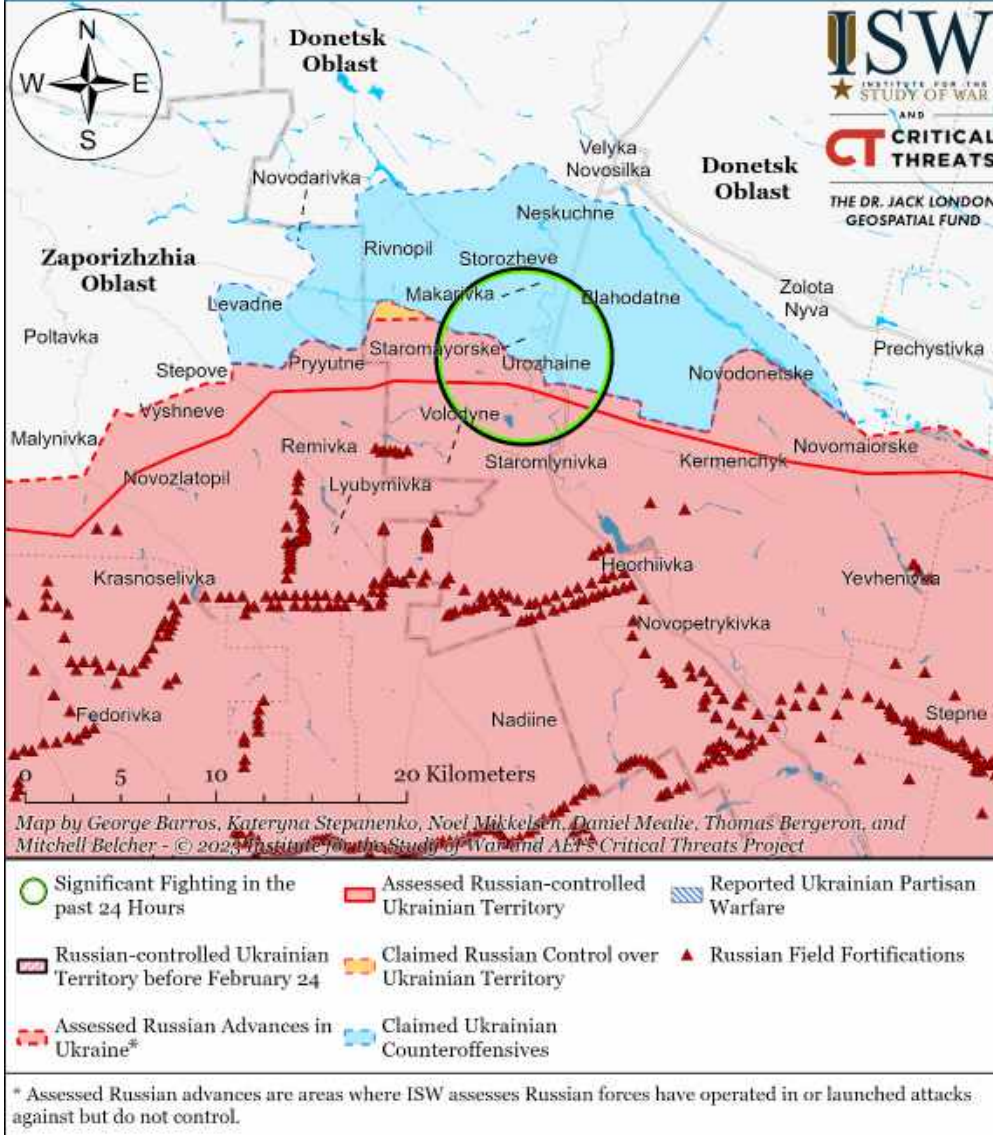


Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Ukrainian forces continued assaults along the administrative border between Donetsk and Zaporizhia oblasts on September 16 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces are conducting assaults in the Shakhtarske direction in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area.[57] The Russian “Vostok” Battalion, which operates in the area, claimed that the tempo of Ukrainian operations has declined over the past three days.[58] A Russian news aggregator claimed that elements of the Russian 37th Motorized Rifle Brigade (36th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) repelled a Ukrainian attack near Urozhaine (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) on September 15.[59] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled eight Ukrainian assaults in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area and in western Donetsk Oblast during the previous week.[60]

Russian forces counterattacked in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on September 16 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Urozhaine and suffered significant manpower and equipment losses.[61] A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the 5th Combined Arms Army (Eastern Military District) pushed Ukrainian forces out of positions north of Pryyutne (15km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) and occupied an unspecified stronghold.[62]

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



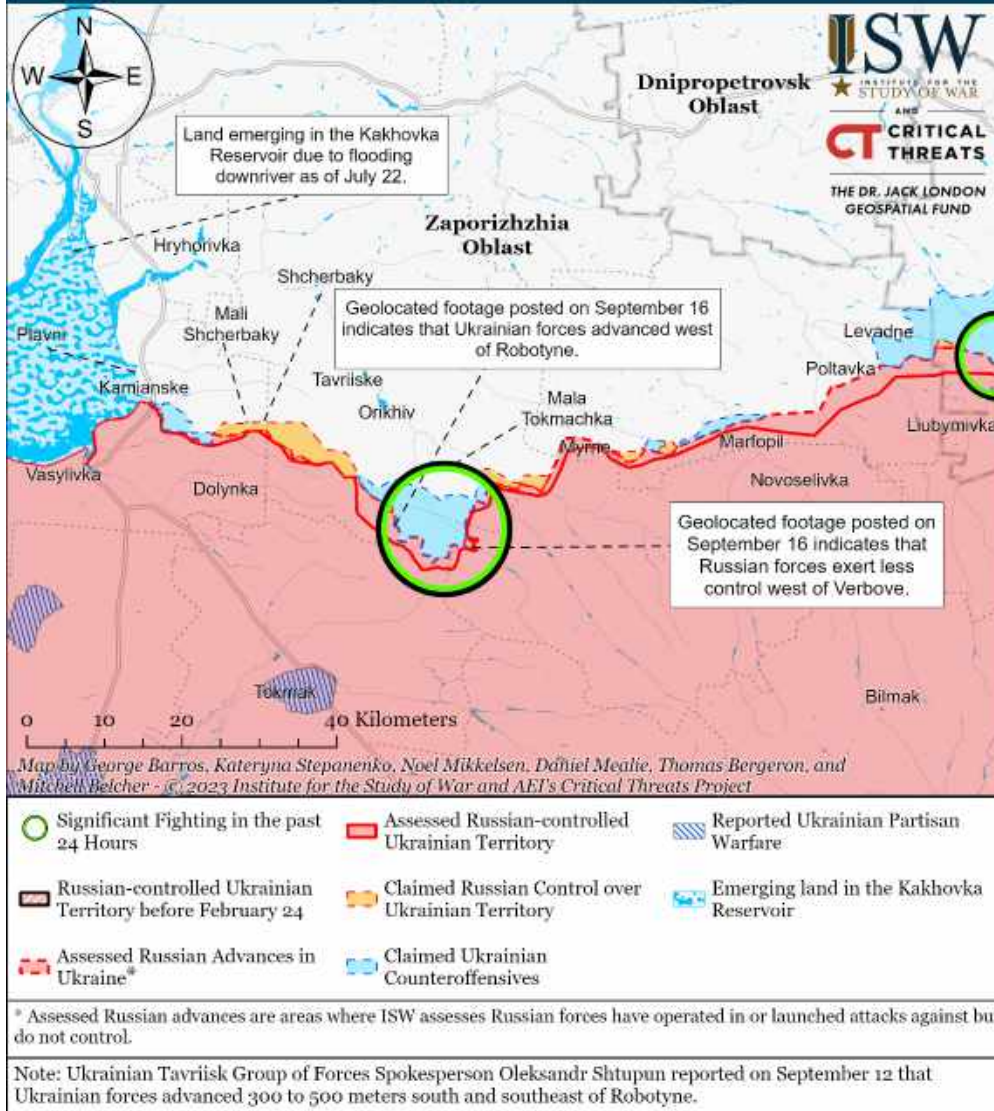
Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast and advanced on September 16. Geolocated footage published on September 16 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced along Russian defensive positions to the west of Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv).[63] Additional geolocated footage published on September 15 indicates that Ukrainian infantry advanced further along a series of Russian defensive positions immediately west of Verbove (18km southeast of Orikhiv) but likely did not maintain control of these positions.[64] The Ukrainian presence at these defensive positions suggests that Russian forces do not control these positions either. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces achieved unspecified partial success near Verbove and Novoprokopivka (13km south of Orikhiv).[65] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations towards Novoprokopivka from the

northwest, suggesting an expanded Ukrainian presence west or southwest of Robotyne.[66] Other Russian sources claimed that small Ukrainian groups conducted unsuccessful assaults without heavy equipment near Robotyne and Verbove.[67] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled 18 Ukrainian attacks near Robotyne and Verbove in the previous week.[68]



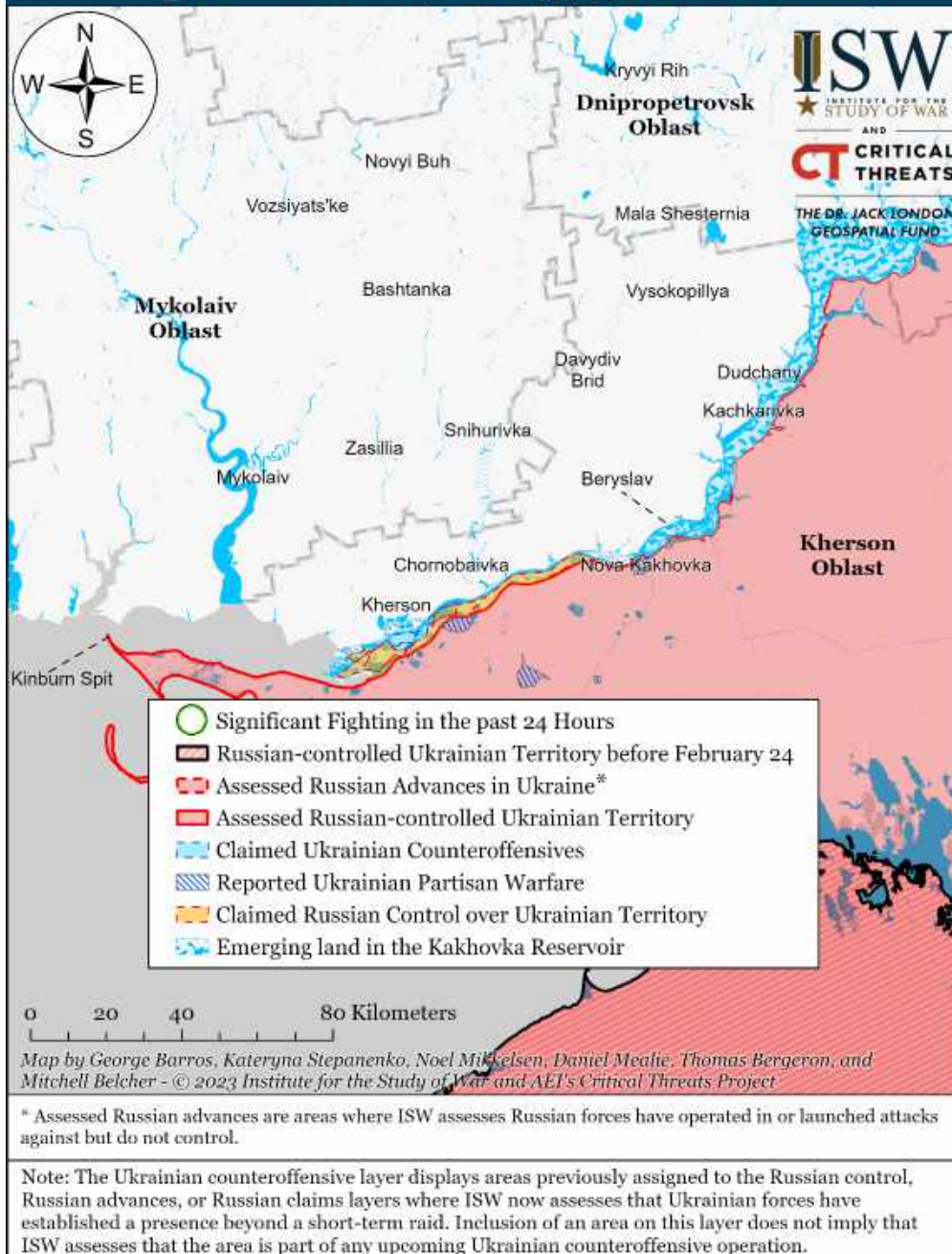
Russian forces counterattacked in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast but did not make confirmed gains on September 16. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces counterattacked from Kopani (12km southwest of Orikhiv) and Novopropkivka but did not specify an outcome.[69]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of September 16, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian sources continue to report Ukrainian activity in the Dnipro River delta. A Russian milblogger claimed on September 16 that fighting is ongoing on and near islands in the Dnipro River in Kherson Oblast.[70] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces in the Kherson direction focused on preventing Ukrainian forces from landing on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast as well as islands in the Dnipro River during the past week.[71]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of September 16, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Captain First Rank Nataliya Humenyuk reported that Russian forces in occupied Crimea are reconfiguring their air defense umbrella. Humenyuk stated on September 15 that the Ukrainian strike on a Russian S-400 “Triumpf” system near Yevpatoria, Crimea on September 14 is forcing Russian forces to rearrange the locations of their air defense systems and that Russian forces have found significant gaps in air defense coverage in Crimea.[72]

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

Russian milbloggers continue complaining about the role of the Russian MoD in perpetuating issues affecting Russian military personnel. A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger complained that the Russian MoD's June 2023 initiative to provide legal combat veteran status to Russian personnel operating in the Russian border areas and occupied Crimea has fallen short and failed to improve the situation for the military personnel.[73] The milblogger complained that these rear area personnel receive less pay and that the personnel in Crimea receive no housing allowances despite frequent Ukrainian shelling of Russian border areas and strikes against occupied Crimea. Another prominent milblogger complained on September 16 that Russian military inspectors have been detaining Russian military personnel operating on the Robotyne-Verbove line in western Zaporizhia Oblast for operating military vehicles without license plates or documents.[74] The milblogger claimed that Russian forces lost the documents for some vehicles while fighting on the front line and that these detentions prevented frontline personnel from transferring from the frontline to rear areas after completing combat missions.

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

Russian occupation officials continue efforts to resettle residential areas of occupied Ukraine with Russians. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on September 16 that Russian soldiers and occupation officials in occupied Kherson Oblast were taking private houses from local residents and settling in these homes, while forcibly resettling the Ukrainian residents and conducting filtration measures against them.[75] Ukrainian Mariupol Mayoral Advisor Petro Andryushchenko similarly noted that Russian occupation officials are forcibly evicting Mariupol residents from apartment buildings and relocating Russians into those homes.[76] The Fourth Geneva Convention holds that it is unlawful for an occupying power to transfer its own population to a territory that it occupies, and ISW continues to assess that Russia is undertaking a campaign of forcibly de-populating areas of Ukraine and resettling these spaces with Russian citizens.[77]

The Crimea-based Atesh partisan group stated that one of its agents destroyed two Russian trucks with an improvised explosive device (IED) in occupied Henichesk, Kherson Oblast, on September 15.[78]

Significant activity in Belarus (Russian efforts to increase its military presence in Belarus and further integrate Belarus into Russian-favorable frameworks and Wagner Group activity in Belarus)

Nothing significant to report.

ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian 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.

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[2] <https://t.me/annamaliar/1076>

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Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, September 15, 2023

Christina Harward, Riley Bailey, Angelica Evans, Grace Mappes, and Mason Clark
September 15, 2023, 6:20pm 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 September 15. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the September 16 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian forces liberated Andriivka in the Bakhmut area on September 14 and continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on September 15. The Ukrainian General Staff and other Ukrainian officials reported that Ukrainian forces liberated Andriivka on September 14 and achieved unspecified partial success near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) on September 15.[1] The Ukrainian 3rd Separate Assault Brigade reported that its personnel liberated Andriivka and “completely destroyed” the Russian 72nd Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (3rd Army Corps) after encircling the settlement.[2] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast and are inflicting significant losses on Russian manpower and equipment near Verbove (18km southeast of Orikhiv).[3]

Russian State Duma Deputy and former Deputy Commander of the Southern Military District (SMD) Lieutenant General Andrei Gurulev complained about lying within the Russian military and highlighted the effectiveness of Ukrainian air defenses against Russian helicopters. Gurulev published a Telegram message on September 15 largely reiterating known Russian challenges, though with several notable points. Gurulev complained that the culture of lying in the Russian military is the main issue preventing a Russian victory in Ukraine and claimed that false reports are leading to poor decision-making at many levels within the Russian military.[4] Gurulev also stated that Ukrainian air defenses at the front are effective against Russian helicopters and are preventing Russian helicopters from using previously highly effective anti-tank missiles, and he reiterated common complaints about Ukraine's ability to conduct drone strikes on Russian rear areas and insufficient Russian counterbattery capabilities.[5] Gurulev is notable for having previously leaked the audio message of former Commander of the 58th Combined Arms Army (SMD) Major General Ivan Popov's grievances over the lack of support for Russian forces on July 12, and Gurulev's likely senior ties with the SMD lend weight to his complaints.[6]

Ukrainian forces conducted naval drone strikes on Russian ships in the Black Sea on September 14.[7] Ukrainian Strategic Command reported that Ukrainian forces caused unspecified damage to two Russian “Vasily Bykov” Project 22160-class patrol ships in the southwestern Black Sea on September 14.[8] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian Black Sea Fleet forces destroyed two Ukrainian naval drones in this area.[9] Ukrainian newspaper *Ukrainskaya Pravda* reported that sources in the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) stated that a Ukrainian naval drone significantly damaged a Russian Bora-class corvette near the entrance to Sevastopol Bay on September 14 but the Russian MoD claimed that Russian Black Sea Fleet forces destroyed a Ukrainian naval drone and repelled the attack.[10] A Russian source claimed that the corvette was not visibly damaged.[11]

Russian forces conducted another series of Shahed-131/-136 drone strikes targeting Ukrainian rear areas on September 15. Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces launched 17 drones from Krasnodar Krai in the direction of Khmelnytskyi Oblast and that Ukrainian air defenses shot down all 17 drones.[12] Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Yuriy Ihnat stated that the Russian strike targeted Ukrainian aircraft.[13]

Russian State Duma Defense Committee Chairman Andrei Kartapolov explicitly stated that mobilized personnel will only demobilize at the end of Russia's “special military operation.”[14] Kartapolov added that Russian mobilized personnel will not receive rotations, but that they are entitled to leave every six months.[15] Kartapolov's explicit commentary is likely meant to dissuade Russian legislators from considering a proposed amendment that would establish terms for demobilizing personnel mobilized in autumn 2022.[16] The Kremlin continues to resist formally rescinding the partial mobilization decree in order to legally justify the continued service of mobilized personnel for an indefinite period of time.[17]

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Belarusian President Aleksander Lukashenko reiterated standing claims about negotiations and perceived grievances against the West during a meeting in Sochi on

September 15. Putin and Lukashenko reportedly also discussed economic issues, Kim Jong Un's visit to Russia, and Russian force generation efforts.[18] Putin and Lukashenko reiterated boilerplate rhetoric accusing the West of manipulating Ukraine. Putin claimed that 300,000 people have signed military service contracts with the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) - presumably within the past six to seven months, updating a figure given by Putin on September 12.[19]

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) continues efforts to assume control over the Wagner Group's operations in North Africa and may have assigned former commander of the Aerospace Forces (VKS) Sergei Surovikin to this task. Russian sources posted pictures of Army General Sergei Surovikin, the previously dismissed Wagner-affiliated former VKS commander, in Algeria on September 15.[20] Russian state news outlet *Kommersant* reported that a source close to Surovikin stated that the trip may be connected to Surovikin's possible appointment to oversee unspecified operations in Africa.[21] Russian milbloggers claimed that Surovikin's new formal position as Head of the Coordination Committee on Air Defense Issues under the Council of Defense Ministers of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is purely nominal and speculated that Surovikin may take over Wagner assets and operations in the region.[22] Surovikin may be involved in Russian efforts to subsume Wagner operations due to his affiliation with Wagner and his command experience, although it is unclear if the Russian MoD intends for Surovikin to assume direct command of these efforts. Russian Deputy Defense Minister Colonel-General Yunus-Bek Yevkurov and elements of the Main Directorate (GRU) of the General Staff have also been reportedly heavily involved in efforts to subsume Wagner's operations in the Middle East and Africa.[23] *The Wall Street Journal* reported that Russian officials, including Yevkurov, met with Khalifa Haftar, commander of the Tobruk-based Libyan National Army, in recent weeks to request access to ports in Benghazi or Tobruk for Russian warships.[24] Yevkurov reportedly visited Libya several times in the past months to replace "private military companies" (PMCs) with Russian MoD-controlled formations.[25] The Kremlin may be attempting to revive a longstanding campaign to secure access to a Mediterranean port in Libya in parallel with the effort to subsume Wagner's operations in Libya.

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian forces liberated Andriivka in the Bakhmut area on September 14 and continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on September 15.**
- **Russian State Duma Deputy and former Deputy Commander of the Southern Military District (SMD) Lieutenant General Andrei Gurulev complained about lying within the Russian military and highlighted the effectiveness of Ukrainian air defenses against Russian helicopters.**
- **Ukrainian forces conducted naval drone strikes on Russian ships in the Black Sea on September 14.**
- **Russian forces conducted another series of Shahed-131/-136 drone strikes targeting Ukrainian rear areas on September 15.**
- **Russian State Duma Defense Committee Chairman Andrei Kartapolov explicitly stated that mobilized personnel will only demobilize at the end of Russia's "special military operation."**
- **The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) continues efforts to assume control over the Wagner Group's operations in North Africa and may have assigned former commander of the Aerospace Forces (VKS) Sergei Surovikin to this task.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and advanced in some areas on September 15.**
- **Russian occupation authorities continue efforts to strengthen ground lines of communication (GLOCs) connecting occupied southern Ukraine to Russia and occupied Crimea.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of September 15, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, and Mitchell Belcher - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

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

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
-

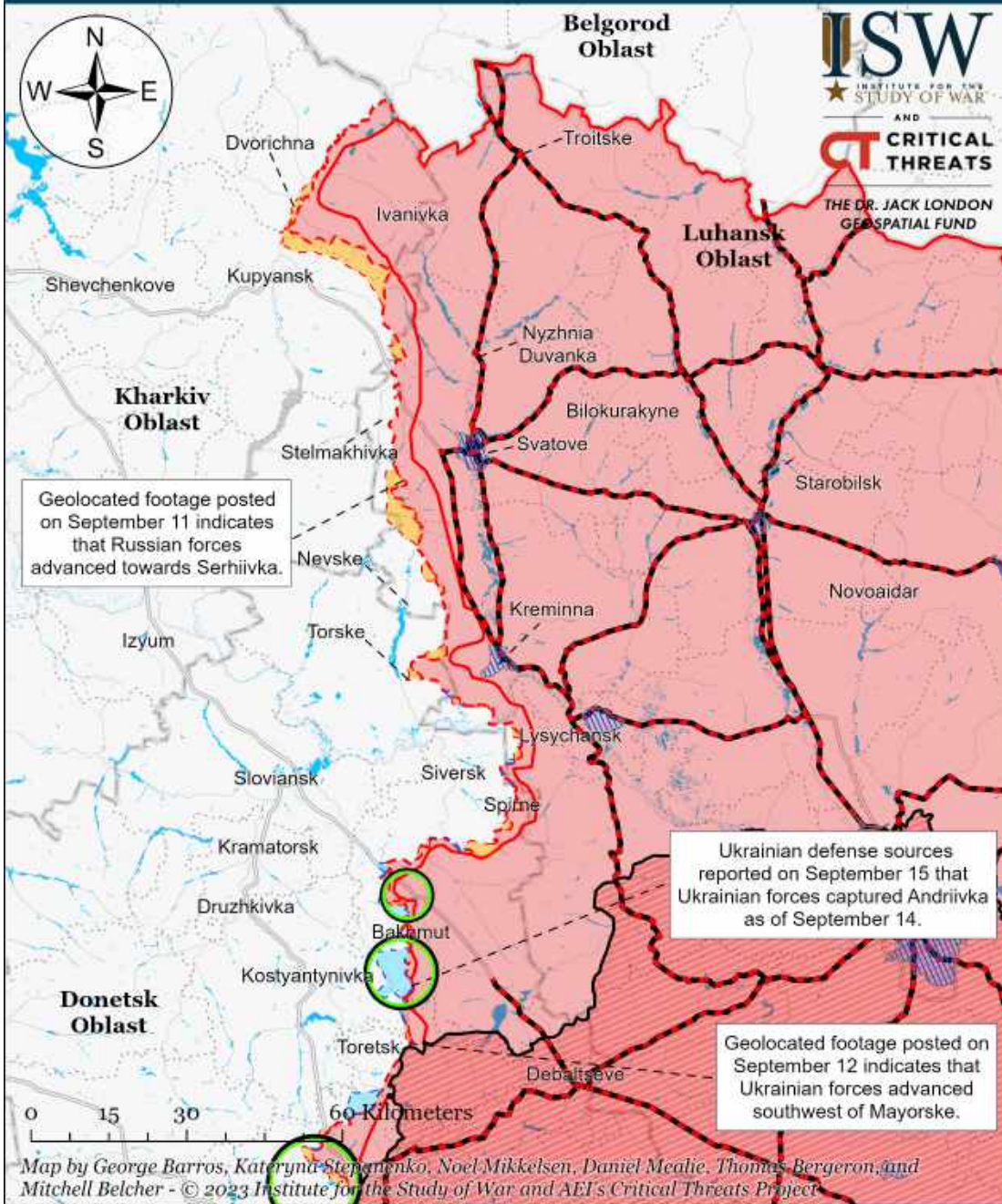
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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 forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line and advanced on September 15. Geolocated footage published on September 15 indicates that Russian forces advanced west of Raihorodka (12km west of Svatove).[26] A Russian news aggregator claimed on September 14 that Russian forces advanced near Novoyehorivka (15km southwest of Svatove).[27] A Russian milblogger claimed on September 15 that elements of the Russian 138th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (6th Combined Arms Army, Western Military District) crossed the Oskil River near Novomylnsk (20km northeast of Kupyansk) along a front almost four kilometers wide and entered Ukrainian rear areas near Dvorichna (17km northeast of Kupyansk), but another Russian milblogger denied this claim and stated that the situation in this area has not changed significantly.[28] Russian sources claimed on September 14 and 15 that Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Masyutivka (13km northeast of Kupyansk), Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk), Petropavlivka (7km east of Kupyansk), Berestove (20km northwest of Svatove), the Serebryanske forest area (10km southwest of Kreminna), and Bilohorivka (12km south of Kreminna).[29] The Ukrainian General Staff and Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces spokesperson Ilya Yevlash reported that Russian forces did not conduct offensive operations in the Kupyansk or Lyman direction on September 14 and 15.[30] Yevlash stated that elements of the Russian 25th Combined Arms Army (CAA) (reportedly under the Eastern Military District) are operating in the Kupyansk direction.[31] ISW has previously assessed that the newly formed 25th CAA is likely low quality or understrength.[32] A Russian source claimed on September 14 that elements of the Russian 123rd Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People's Republic Army Corps) are operating near Siversk (18km southwest of Kreminna).[33]

Russian military officials claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on September 15 but did not advance. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Russian Center Grouping of Forces Spokesperson Alexander Savchuyk claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Torske (15km west of Kreminna).[34]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of September 15, 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

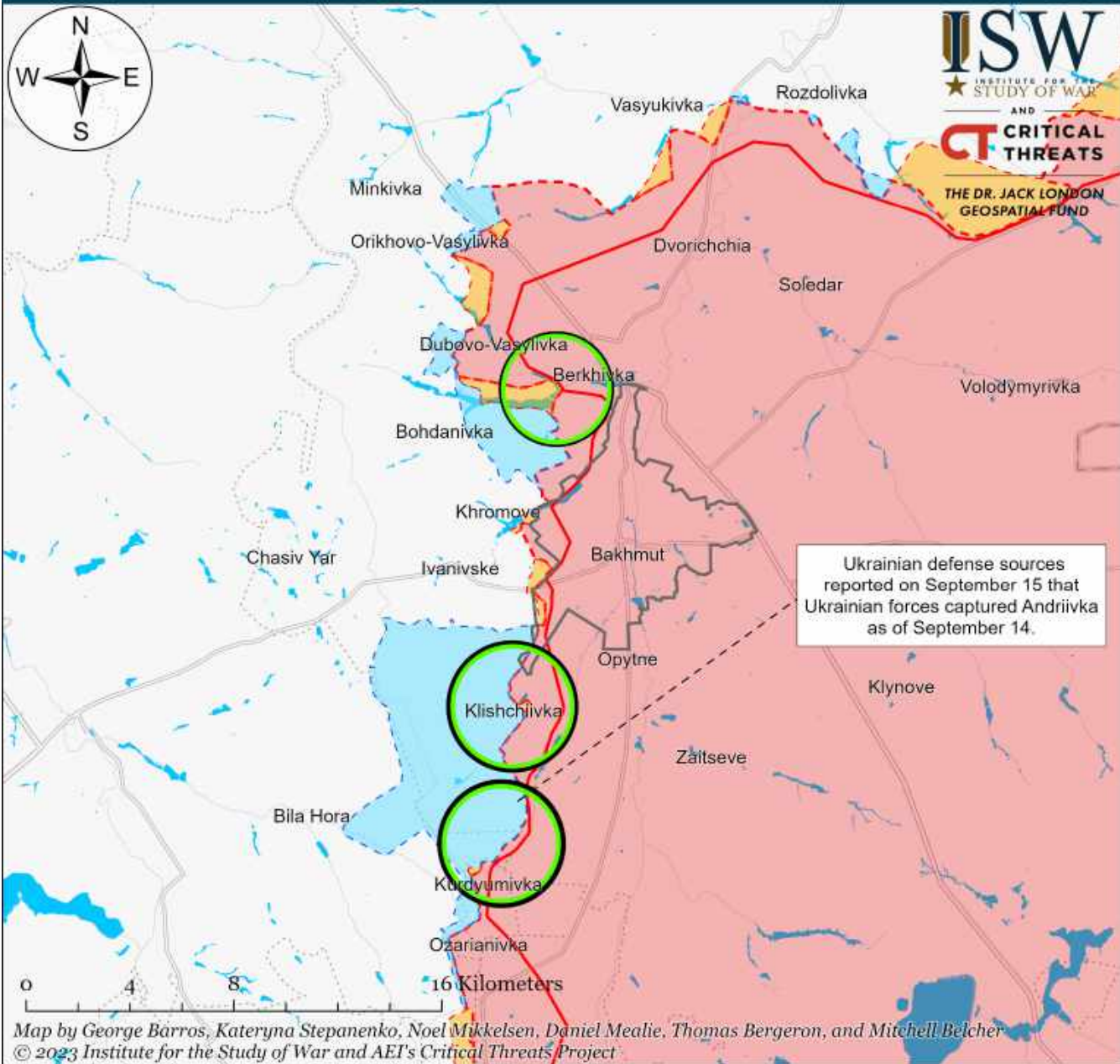
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

Ukrainian forces liberated Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut) and made further gains in the Bakhmut area on September 15. The Ukrainian General Staff and other Ukrainian officials reported that Ukrainian forces liberated Andriivka on September 14 and achieved unspecified partial success near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) on September 15.[35] The Ukrainian 3rd Separate Assault Brigade reported that its personnel liberated Andriivka and “completely destroyed” the Russian 72nd Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (3rd Army Corps) after encircling the settlement.[36] Elements of the 72nd Brigade previously suffered heavy losses during localized Ukrainian counterattacks in the Bakhmut area in May 2023 and are likely thoroughly degraded.[37] The Ukrainian 3rd Assault Brigade stated that the liberation of Andriivka presents opportunities for a breakthrough on Bakhmut’s southern flank and that fighting is ongoing in the area.[38] Many Russian sources either denied that Ukrainian forces liberated the settlement or argued that the complete destruction of the settlement during fighting makes the Ukrainian control over the settlement tactically insignificant.[39] One Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces currently control heights east of Andriivka.[40] Other select Russian milbloggers acknowledged that Russian forces’ tactical situation south of Bakhmut is deteriorating and expressed concern that Ukrainian forces may be able to threaten the Russian grouping in Bakhmut.[41] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces pushed Russian forces out of Klishchiivka and are trying to gain a foothold in the settlement, although other Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces control the settlement.[42] One milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully tried to enter Bakhmut itself from the southwest.[43] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian assault near Mayorske (21km south of Bakhmut).[44]

Russian forces counterattacked around Bakhmut but did not make any confirmed gains on September 15. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces continued unsuccessful attempts to break through Ukrainian defenses near Bohdanivka (7km northwest of Bakhmut) and tried to restore lost positions near Yahidne (2km north of Bakhmut).[45] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces counterattacked near Andriivka and recaptured several unspecified lost positions.[46]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of September 15, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



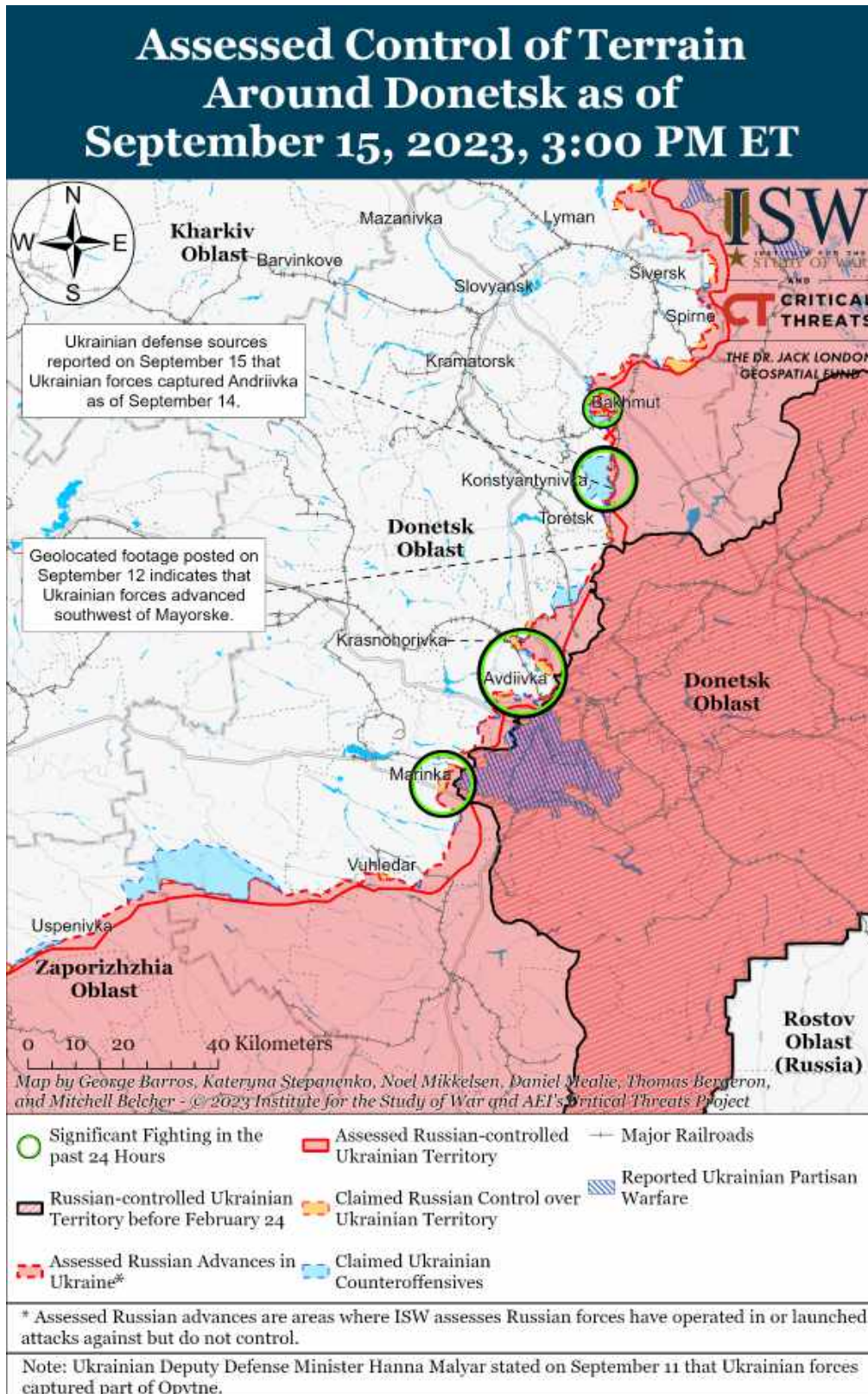
Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, and Mitchell Belcher
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Bakhmut City Limits	Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory	Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*	Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory	Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

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

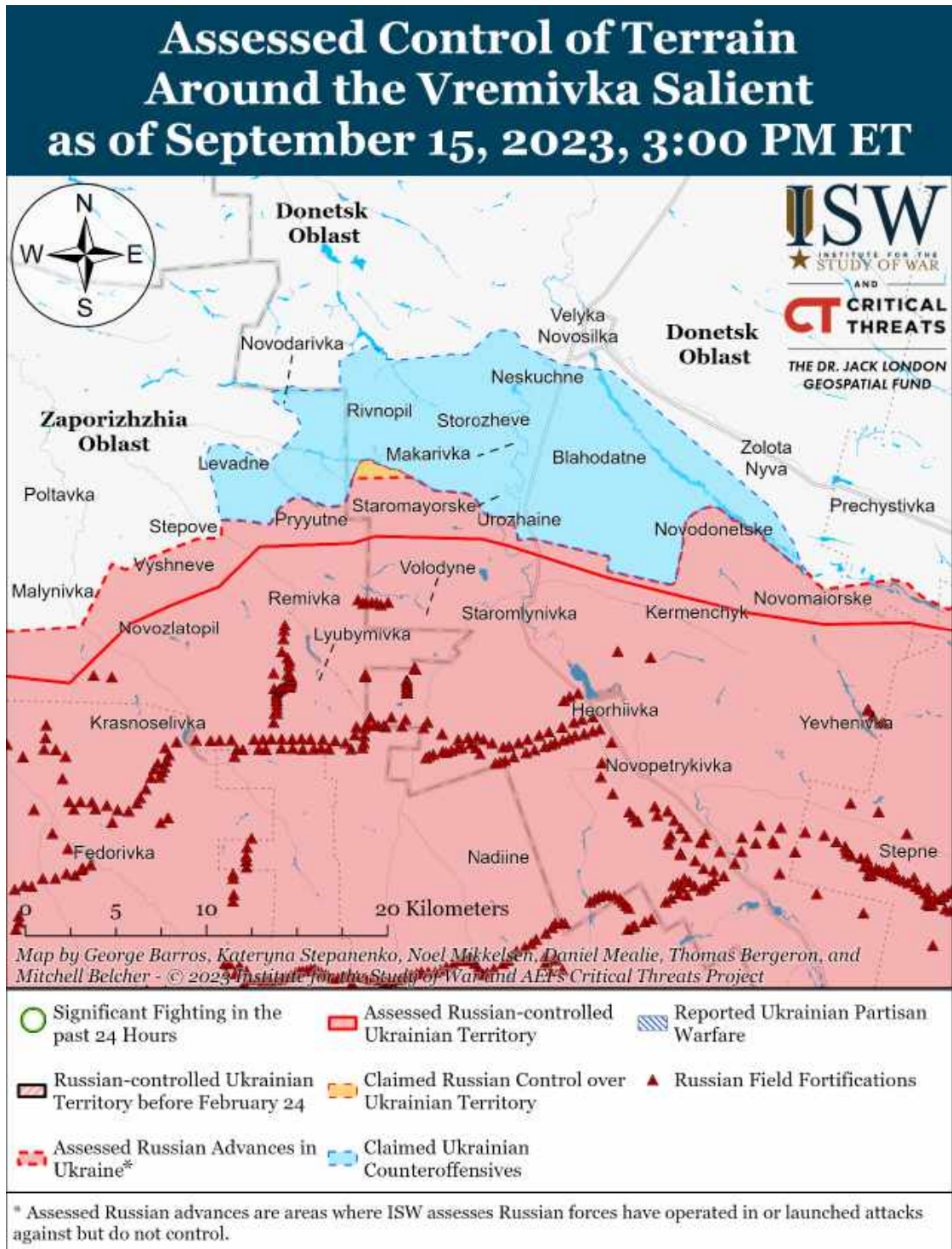
Note: Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar stated on September 11 that Ukrainian forces captured two square kilometers in the Bakhmut direction.

Russian forces continued limited offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City front on September 15 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive actions near Lastochkyne (5km northwest of Avdiivka), Avdiivka, and Marinka (27km southwest of Avdiivka).[47] A Russian milblogger claimed that fighting is ongoing north of Opytne (4km south of Avdiivka) and Nevelske (14km southwest of Avdiivka) and near Krasnohorivka (22km southwest of Avdiivka).[48] The milblogger claimed that Russian forces continue offensive operations north and south of Marinka but have not achieved any significant progress.[49]



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

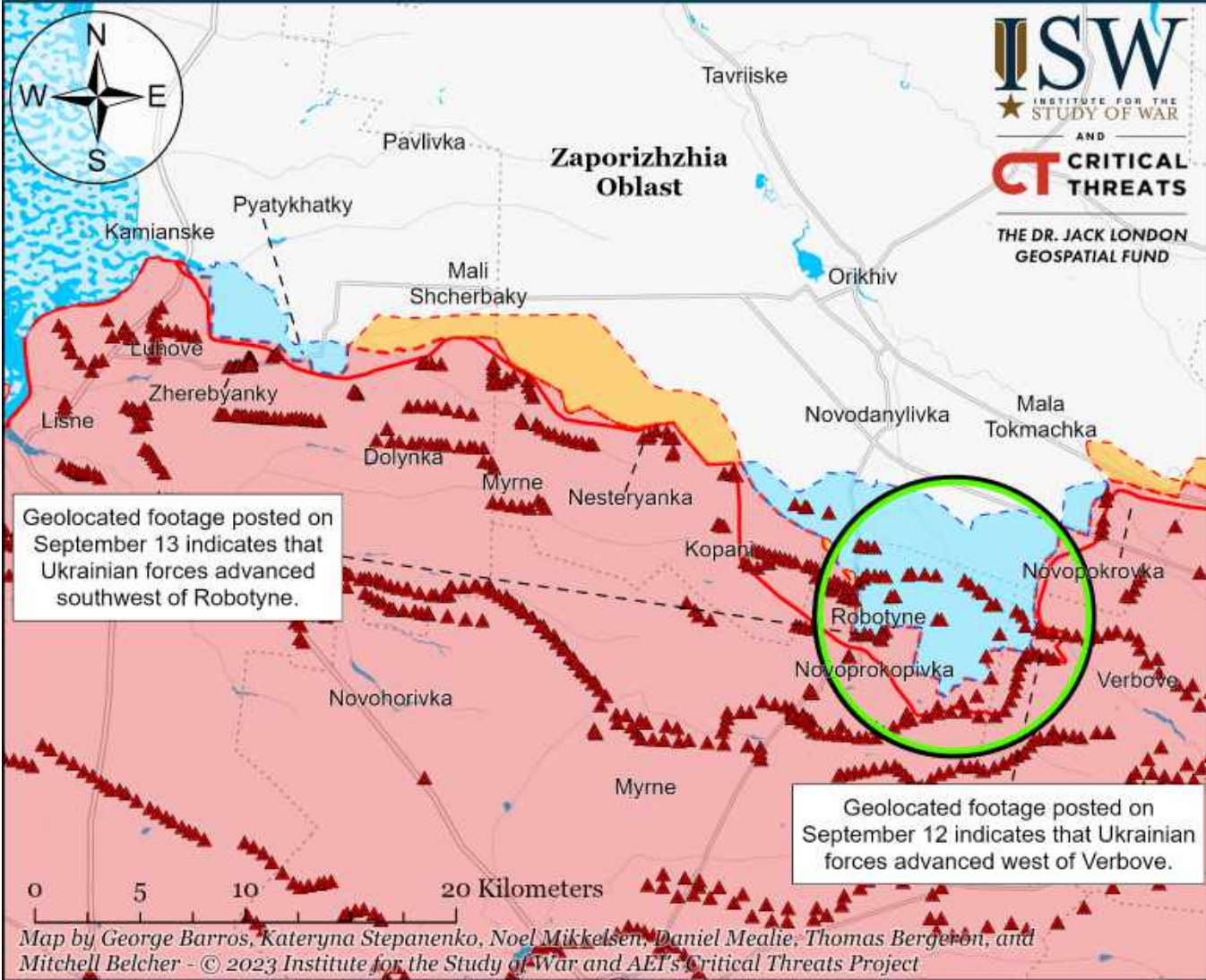
Ukrainian forces continued assaults in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area on September 15 but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued to conduct assaults in the Shakhtarske direction in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area.[50] Russian sources, including the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Pryyutne (15km southwest of Velyka Novosilka), Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka), Urozhaine (9km south of Velyka Novosilka), Novomayorske (18km southeast of Velyka Novosilka), and Novodonetske (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[51] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces have decreased the intensity of their attacks near Novomayorske.[52]



Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast on September 15 but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhia Oblast) direction and are inflicting significant losses on Russian manpower and equipment near Verbove (18km southeast of Orikhiv).[53] Russian sources, including the Russian MoD, claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful assaults near Robotyne (12km south of Orikhiv) and Verbove.[54] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces still control Verbove and that Ukrainian forces are not close to the settlement.[55] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces do not control Robotyne and retreated from the outskirts of the settlement to nearby forest areas.[56] The milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces also attacked near Novoprokopivka (18km southeast of Orikhiv).[57] A Ukrainian sapper operating in the Zaporizhia direction stated that Russian forces have so densely mined areas it can take up to a day to clear a 50-square-meter plot of land in this direction.[58]

Russian forces reportedly continued ground attacks in western Zaporizhia Oblast on September 12 but did not make any confirmed advances. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked from Luhivske (18km southeast of Orikhiv) in an effort to flank Ukrainian forces.[59] Russian milbloggers amplified footage claiming to show elements of the Russian 247th Guards VDV Regiment (7th VDV Division) operating near Verbove.[60] Another Russian milblogger amplified footage claiming to show elements of the Russian “Osman” Spetsnaz force operating in the Orikhiv direction.[61]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of September 15, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



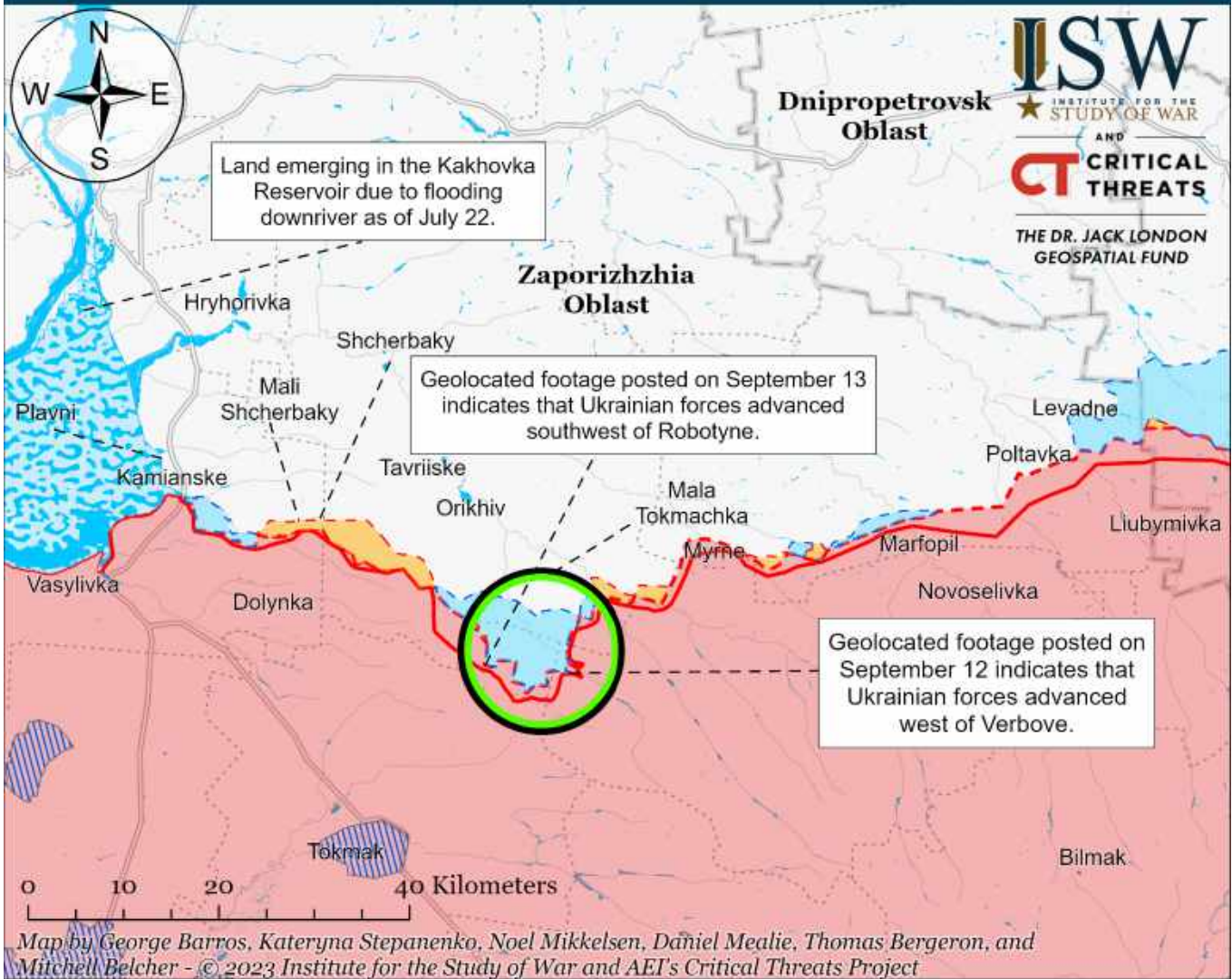
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GEOSPATIAL FUND

- 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 Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Oleksandr Shtupun reported on September 12 that Ukrainian forces advanced 300 to 500 meters south and southeast of Robotyne. Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar stated on September 11 that Ukrainian forces advanced 4.8 square kilometers over the past week and captured a total of 256.5 square kilometers since the start of the counteroffensive in the Tavriisk direction.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of September 15, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

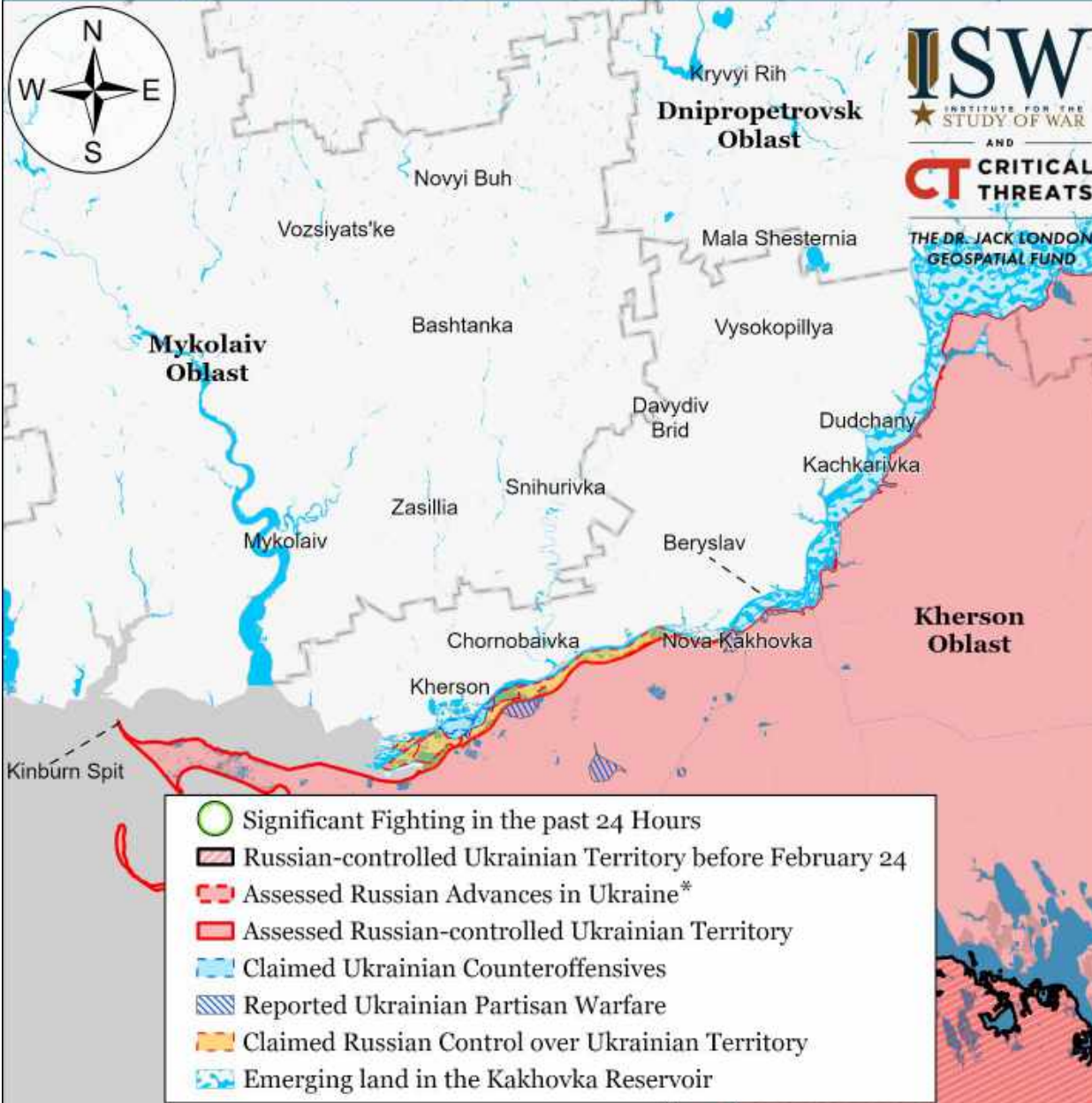
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Oleksandr Shtupun reported on September 12 that Ukrainian forces advanced 300 to 500 meters south and southeast of Robotyne. Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar stated on September 11 that Ukrainian forces advanced 4.8 square kilometers over the past week and captured a total of 256.5 square kilometers since the start of the counteroffensive in the Tavriisk direction.

Russian milbloggers continued to express concern about limited Ukrainian crossings of the Dnipro River in Kherson Oblast on September 14 and 15. Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces intensified their activity on unspecified Dnipro River delta islands near the Antonivsky Bridge in order to consolidate positions for a future attack on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast.[62] Russian forces likely do not possess the manpower necessary to defend against a significant Ukrainian attack in this sector of the front, given that Russian command transferred several elements from Kherson Oblast to Zaporizhia Oblast.[63] One Russian milblogger acknowledged that Russian forces lack the capabilities to conduct their own significant river crossing operations in the area, particularly due to a lack of shells for artillery preparations.[64]

Ukrainian and Western military sources offered more details about recent high-profile Ukrainian strikes on Russian military assets near Sevastopol and Yevpatoria in occupied Crimea. Ukrainian Air Force Commander Lieutenant General Mykola Oleschuk confirmed on September 15 that Ukrainian forces struck the Russian *Minsk* Ropucha class landing ship and the *Rostov-on-Don* Kilo class submarine in Sevastopol with Storm Shadow and SCALP (the French variant of the Storm Shadow) cruise missiles on September 13.[65] The United Kingdom Ministry of Defense (UK MoD) assessed that Ukrainian strikes against the *Minsk* functionally destroyed the vessel and strikes against the *Rostov-on-Don* inflicted catastrophic damage that will likely take years and several hundred million dollars to repair.[66] The UK MoD assessed that it will take Russian forces several months to remove the wreckage from the dry docks in Sevastopol, rendering them unusable for the time being and presenting a significant challenge to the maintenance of the Black Sea Fleet.[67] The Ukrainian Navy also confirmed reports that that Ukrainian Naval Forces destroyed a Russian S-400 “Triumf” air defense system on September 14, presumably near Yevpatoria.[68]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of September 15, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, and Mitchell Belcher - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

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

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

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

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu visited multiple defense industrial base (DIB) enterprises on September 15 likely as part of the gradual mobilization of Russia's DIB. Shoigu visited the "Zvezda" defense plant in Bolshoy Kamen, Primorsky Krai and "demanded" that the plant utilize its maximum production capacity to repair and modernize Russian Pacific Fleet submarines.[69] Shoigu also visited the "Progress" aircraft plant where he received a briefing on efforts to modernize the Ka-52M combat helicopter and ordered plant management to improve the Ka-52M's combat capabilities and pilot security.[70] Shoigu also held a meeting with Russian Pacific Fleet officials in Primorsky Krai and claimed that Russia has commissioned two new Pacific Fleet vessels thus far in 2023 and will commission 12 additional vessels by the end of the year.[71]

Ukrainian intelligence reported that North Korea has already provided artillery shells to Russia. Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Head Kyrylo Budanov stated on September 14 that North Korea began providing munitions, including 122mm and 152mm artillery ammunition, rockets for Grad MLRS, and tank rounds, for the past "month and a half." [72] Budanov stated that the Kremlin seeks millions of rounds from North Korea.

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

Russian occupation authorities continue efforts to strengthen ground lines of communication (GLOCs) connecting occupied southern Ukraine to Russia and occupied Crimea. Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Head Denis Pushilin claimed on September 14 that Russian authorities have repaired and constructed over 100 kilometers of road connecting Mariupol and other coastline areas to Donetsk City and Russian areas. Pushilin claimed that authorities also restored four bridges in and near Mariupol.[73] Zaporizhia Oblast occupation head Yevgeny Balitsky claimed on September 15 that occupation authorities restored 30 kilometers of road between occupied Berdyansk and Prymorsk in southern Zarpozhia Oblast.[74]

Russian occupation authorities continue deporting Ukrainian children to Russia. The Kherson Oblast occupation administration stated on September 14 that the administration signed an agreement to send 20 children to the "Okean" children's camp in Primorsky Krai for an unspecified period of time.[75]

Russian occupation authorities in Crimea are reportedly conducting extensive crackdowns against pro-Ukrainian sentiments. Russian opposition outlet *Verstka* reported on September 15 that Crimean occupation authorities have prosecuted 198 cases of alleged defamation of the Russian military in 2022 and 179 cases so far in 2023, the third highest prosecution rates for this law in all of Russia and occupied territories.[76] *Verstka* reported that Crimean occupation authorities prosecute people under this law for listening to or singing Ukrainian music, making private comments criticizing the war, or for wearing traditional Ukrainian dress.[77] *Verstka* reported that Crimean occupation authorities established various channels for residents of occupied Crimea to report violations of this law to authorities and reported on multiple cases of residents informing on their coworkers, neighbors, and friends to law enforcement.[78]

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)

See topline text.

ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian 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://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbidORNWTWgBZpbthtoXNCm2b6GjgJ8nSoghXcZU8zbB9xGMxt3Vgui4VmvHAnaqkV6kTl> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbidOsaPL1Cq3wL3kg9w8GeAJvQh4a2nT6ffYmvEpq1chakAH9bXeT29Y6G7Y21YEogSrl> ; <https://t.me/militarymediacenter/3156> ; <https://t.me/annamaliar/1071>

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[6] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar071523>

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[9] https://t.me/mod_russia/30494 ; https://t.me/mod_russia/30496

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[16] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-september-13-2023>

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Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, September 14, 2023

Riley Bailey, Nicole Wolkov, Grace Mappes,
Christina Harward, and Frederick W. Kagan

September 14, 2023, 7:20pm 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 12:30pm ET on September 14. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the September 15 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast and around Bakhmut and reportedly advanced south of Bakhmut on September 14. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces achieved unspecified partial successes near Bakhmut, Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut), Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut), and Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut).[1] Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar prematurely announced the Ukrainian liberation of Andriivka but later clarified that heavy fighting for the settlement is still ongoing.[2] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Ilya Yevlash stated on September 13 that Ukrainian forces pushed Russian forces out of positions near Minkivka (15km northwest of Bakhmut) and Dubovo-Vasylivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut).[3] The Ukrainian General Staff and Malyar stated that Ukrainian forces continue to gradually advance in the Melitopol direction (western Zaporizhia Oblast).[4]

Ukrainian forces struck a Russian air defense system near occupied Yevpatoria, Crimea, on September 14, suggesting that there may be systemic tactical failures with Russian air defense systems in occupied Crimea. The Department of Strategic Communications of the Ukrainian Armed Forces stated that Ukrainian forces struck the location of a Russian surface-to-air missile system near Yevpatoria (68km northwest of Sevastopol).[5] Ukrainian news outlet *Ukrainska Pravda* reported that a source affiliated with the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) stated that the SBU and the Ukrainian Navy conducted a “unique special operation” that destroyed a Russian S-400 “Triumpf” system near Yevpatoria.[6] Ukrainian forces reportedly struck the S-400 system's radar and antennas with drones and struck the launch complexes with two Neptune cruise missiles.[7] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) reported that Russian air defenses intercepted 11 Ukrainian drones over Crimea but did not mention any Ukrainian missile strikes.[8] Geolocated footage published on September 14 shows an explosion near Yevpatoria and subsequent smoke plumes in the area.[9] Additional geolocated footage shows that Russian forces had recently deployed an S-400 battery outside of Yevpatoria and that the explosion occurred in the same location where a Russian S-400 system had been deployed in August 2022.[10] The strike suggests that Russian forces were unprepared to intercept missiles with the system or were unable to do so. Ukrainian forces struck a Russian S-400 air defense system near Olenivka, Crimea (117km

northwest of Sevastopol) on August 23, and the second Ukrainian strike on a significant Russian air defense system in recent weeks indicates that such tactical failures may reflect a wider systemic issue with Russian air defenses in occupied Crimea.[11]

Russian forces conducted another series of Shahed-131/136 drone strikes targeting Ukrainian port infrastructure on September 14. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched 22 drones in the direction of Mykolaiv, Zaporizhia, Dnipropetrovsk, and Sumy oblasts and that Ukrainian air defenses shot down 17 of the drones.[12] Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat stated that Russian forces primarily targeted port infrastructure in Odesa Oblast.[13] Ukrainian Minister for Communities, Territories, and Infrastructure Development Oleksandr Kubrakov stated that Russian strikes from July 18 to September 12 have damaged or partially destroyed 105 Ukrainian port facilities and that the monthly export of Ukrainian grain has decreased by almost three million tons as a result.[14] The Russian strike campaign against Ukrainian grain and port infrastructure is likely meant to support the Kremlin's effort to leverage international desire for Russia's return to the Black Sea Grain Initiative to exact extensive concessions.[15] The Kremlin may have no intention of returning to the deal, however, and may instead aim to increase the market share and attractiveness of Russian grain by degrading Ukraine's grain export potential.[16] The Kremlin also likely intends for continued strain on Ukrainian grain export routes to intensify divisions between Ukraine and its Central European partners as Ukraine and the West continue to work on re-routing Ukrainian grain exports along land corridors.[17]

The commander of the Russian 247th Guards Air Assault (VDV) Regiment (7th VDV Division) Vasily Popov was reportedly killed in combat in Ukraine.[18] Vasily Popov likely recently replaced Pyotr Popov as commander of the 247th VDV Regiment in August or September 2023, and Vasily Popov is the second commander of the 247th Regiment to be killed in action in Ukraine after Colonel Konstantin Zizevsky died in February 2022.[19] Elements of the 247th Regiment are reportedly operating in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area.[20] ISW has previously assessed that relatively elite VDV forces are conducting limited counterattacks in critical sectors of the front, and Vasily Popov's death supports ISW's assessment that these counterattacks will likely attrit these units further.[21]

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on September 13 recognizing Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko as complicit in Russian crimes committed in Ukraine and called on the International Criminal Court (ICC) to issue an arrest warrant for him. The European Parliament's resolution stated that Belarus is complicit in the war in Ukraine and is involved in the deportation of Ukrainian children to Belarus, Russia, and occupied areas of Ukraine.[22] ISW continues to assess that Belarus is a co-belligerent in the war and is involved in the deportation of Ukrainian children.[23] ISW has also assessed that Belarus may be facilitating sanctions evasion schemes for Russia.[24] Russian President Vladimir Putin and Lukashenko will meet in Sochi, Russia on September 15.[25]

Russian State Duma and Federation Council members proposed blocking WhatsApp likely as part of the Kremlin's broader initiative to establish central control over the Russian information space. Facebook's parent company Meta announced on September 13 that WhatsApp launched a channel feature to over 150 countries, likely including Russia, that will function similarly to Telegram channels.[26] Russia designated Meta as an extremist organization in March 2022 and banned its Facebook and Instagram services in Russia.[27] Federation Council Committee

on Defense and Security Head Viktor Bondarev, State Duma Committee on Information Policy Head Alexander Khinshtein, and State Duma Deputy Anton Gorelkin said that Russia should consider blocking WhatsApp in Russia if WhatsApp launches Russian language channels.[28] Russian state media censor Roskomnadzor reported that Russia could block WhatsApp if it disseminates prohibited information.[29] Russian authorities are likely attempting to funnel the Russian information space onto a limited number of closely monitored or controlled social media platforms.

Some Russian sources suggested that ongoing tensions between the Russian MoD and the Wagner Group are diminishing Wagner’s ability to operate across the African theater. A Russian insider source claimed on September 12 that “difficult logistics” are forcing Wagner forces in Africa to “make do with local reserves” to continue operations after the rebel coalition Coordination of the Movement of Azawad (CMA) claimed to have captured Bourem, Gao Region, Mali.[30] Russian sources, including a prominent Kremlin-affiliated milblogger, claimed that the Russian MoD and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) deliberately disrupted Wagner’s logistics by preventing Wagner from using Russian airbases in Syria to reinforce the Wagner contingent in the Central African Republic (CAR) — reports consistent with ISW’s recent observations.[31] The milblogger claimed that the CMA took advantage of destabilization fueled in part by tensions resulting from the MoD’s ongoing effort to subsume Wagner.[32] The milblogger warned that other armed groups may also take advantage of the destabilization and that the MoD will have to invest resources in the region to avoid reputational fallout.[33] Wagner forces in Africa notably conduct counterterrorism operations, but these operations are often ineffective, and the current Wagner group contingent in MENA is likely insufficient to conduct counterterrorism operations at a scale that could meaningfully contain new or escalating conflicts.[34]

The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) declared two US diplomats *persona non grata* and expelled them from Russia on September 14.[35] The Russian MFA accused the US Embassy’s first and second secretaries of illegally maintaining contact with an arrested former US Consulate employee and ordered the diplomats to leave Russia within the next seven days.

Western defense sources reportedly stated that a Russian fighter jet intentionally fired at a British surveillance plane in September 2022 due to ambiguous commands rather than because of a missile malfunction as the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed at the time. The *BBC* reported that three senior Western defense sources stated that a Russian Su-27 fighter jet pilot intentionally fired a missile at a British Royal Air Force (RAF) plane but missed on September 29, 2022.[36] The Western defense sources reportedly stated that the Russian pilot believed he had permission to fire after receiving an ambiguous command from a Russian ground station and fired a second missile, which reportedly either malfunctioned or was aborted.[37] A second Russian pilot flying another Su-27 reportedly interpreted the order differently and did not fire at the British aircraft.[38] The Russian MoD claimed in October 2022 that the Su-27 jet fired the missile due to a “technical malfunction.”[39]

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast and around Bakhmut and reportedly advanced south of Bakhmut on September 14.**

- **Ukrainian forces struck a Russian air defense system near occupied Yevpatoria, Crimea, on September 14, suggesting that there may be systemic tactical failures with Russian air defense systems in occupied Crimea.**
- **Russian forces conducted another series of Shahed-131/136 drone strikes targeting Ukrainian port infrastructure on September 14.**
- **The commander of the Russian 247th Guards Air Assault (VDV) Regiment (7th VDV Division) Vasily Popov was reportedly killed in combat in Ukraine.**
- **Some Russian sources suggested that ongoing tensions between the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and the Wagner Group are diminishing Wagner's ability to operate across the African theater.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and advanced in some areas on September 14.**
- **Ukrainian forces also advanced along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line.**
- **The Kremlin is reportedly trying to censor Russian media coverage of a possible second wave of reserve mobilization in order to prevent protests and voter discontent ahead of the 2024 Russian presidential elections.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of September 14, 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

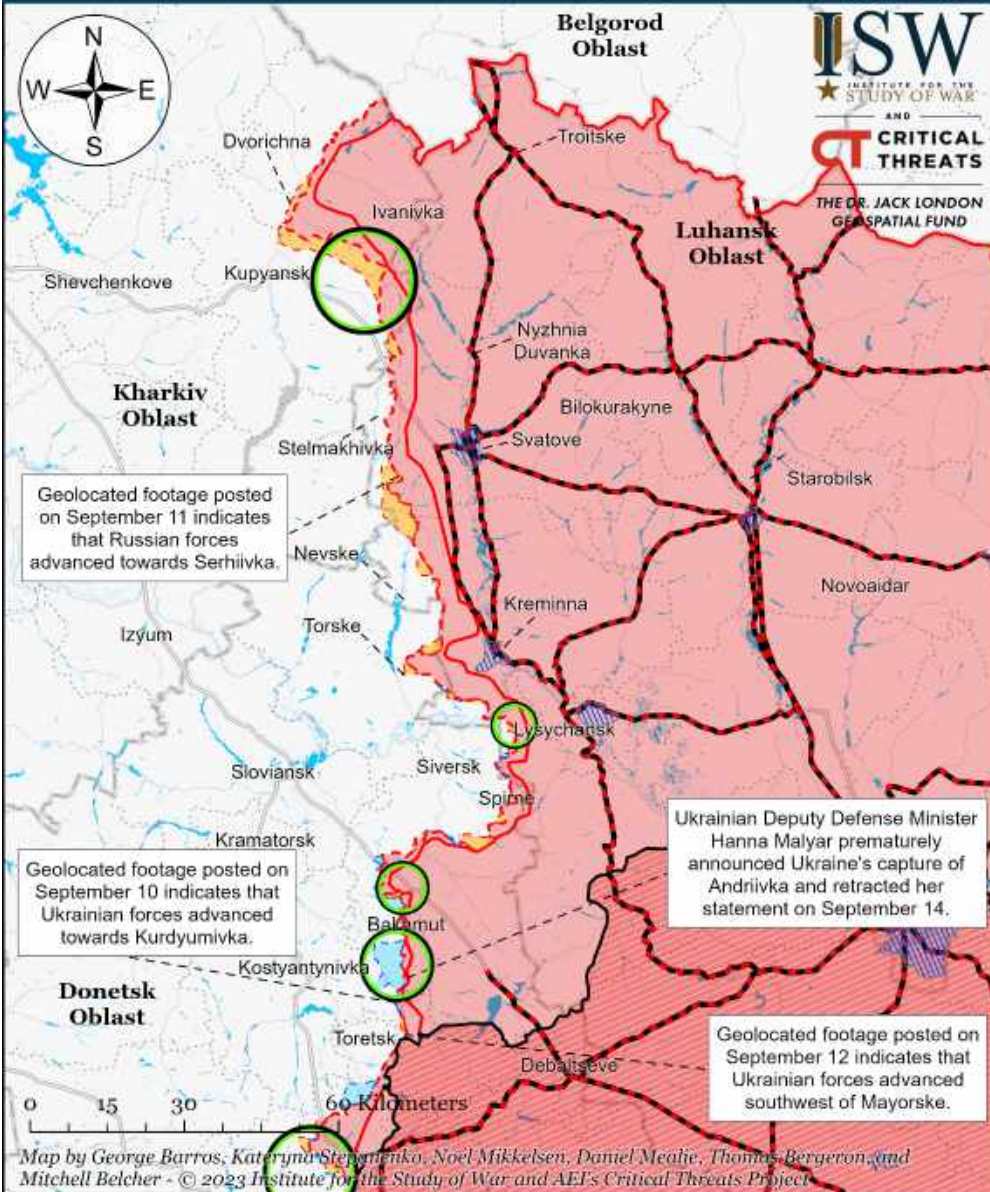
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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 forces continued offensive operations on the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on September 14 and recently advanced. Geolocated footage published on September 13 shows that Russian forces advanced west of Lyman Pershyi (12km northeast of Kupyansk) as of September 12.[40] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces made unspecified advances between Petropavlivka (7km east of Kupyansk) and Synkivka (9km northeast of Kupyansk) on September 13 and continued assaults near Synkyvka, Novoyehorivka (16km southwest of Svatove), and the Serebryanske forest area (11km south of Kreminna) on September 14.[41] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces continued offensive operations northeast of Berestove (20km northwest of Svatove) and near Bilohorivka (10km south of Kreminna).[42] Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar stated that the intensity of fighting and the number of recent combat engagements in the Kupyansk and Lyman directions has decreased because Russian forces are gathering forces presumably for further operations.[43]

Russian military officials claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Synkivka, Torske (15km west of Kreminna), and Dibrova (7km southwest of Kreminna) on the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on September 14.[44]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of September 14, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

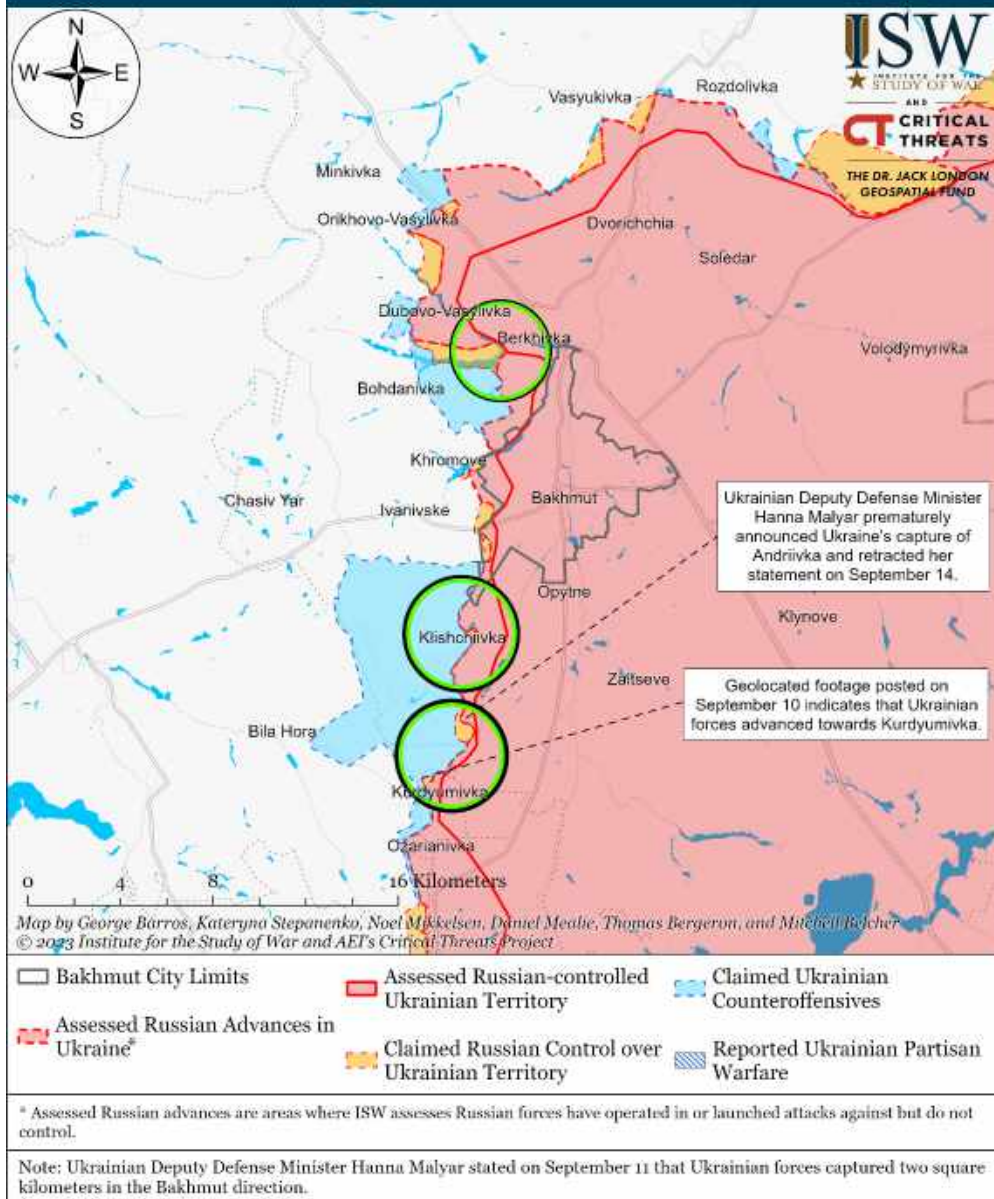
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut on September 14 and recently advanced. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces achieved unspecified partial successes near Bakhmut, Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut), Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut), and Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut).[45] Several Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces are advancing near Klishchiivka and occupying areas on the southwestern outskirts of the settlement.[46] Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar prematurely announced Ukraine’s liberation of Andriivka and swiftly retracted her statement on September 14.[47] Malyar clarified that Ukrainian forces achieved some unspecified success in Andriivka but that heavy fighting is ongoing in the settlement.[48] Several Russian milbloggers claimed that Klishchiivka and Andriivka are contested.[49] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Ilya Yevlash reported on September 13 that Ukrainian forces are forcing Russian forces to withdraw from positions near Minkivka (15km northwest of Bakhmut) and Dubovo-Vasylivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut).[50] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked elements of the 200th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (14th Army Corps, Northern Fleet) in the Bakhmut area.[51]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut on September 14 but did not make confirmed gains. Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Head Denis Pushilin denied reports that Ukrainian forces liberated Andriivka and claimed that Russian forces “improved” unspecified positions near Andriivka.[52] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Bohdanivka (7km northwest of Bakhmut).[53] Another milblogger claimed that Russian forces defending south of Bakhmut do not have enough personnel to conduct rotations.[54]

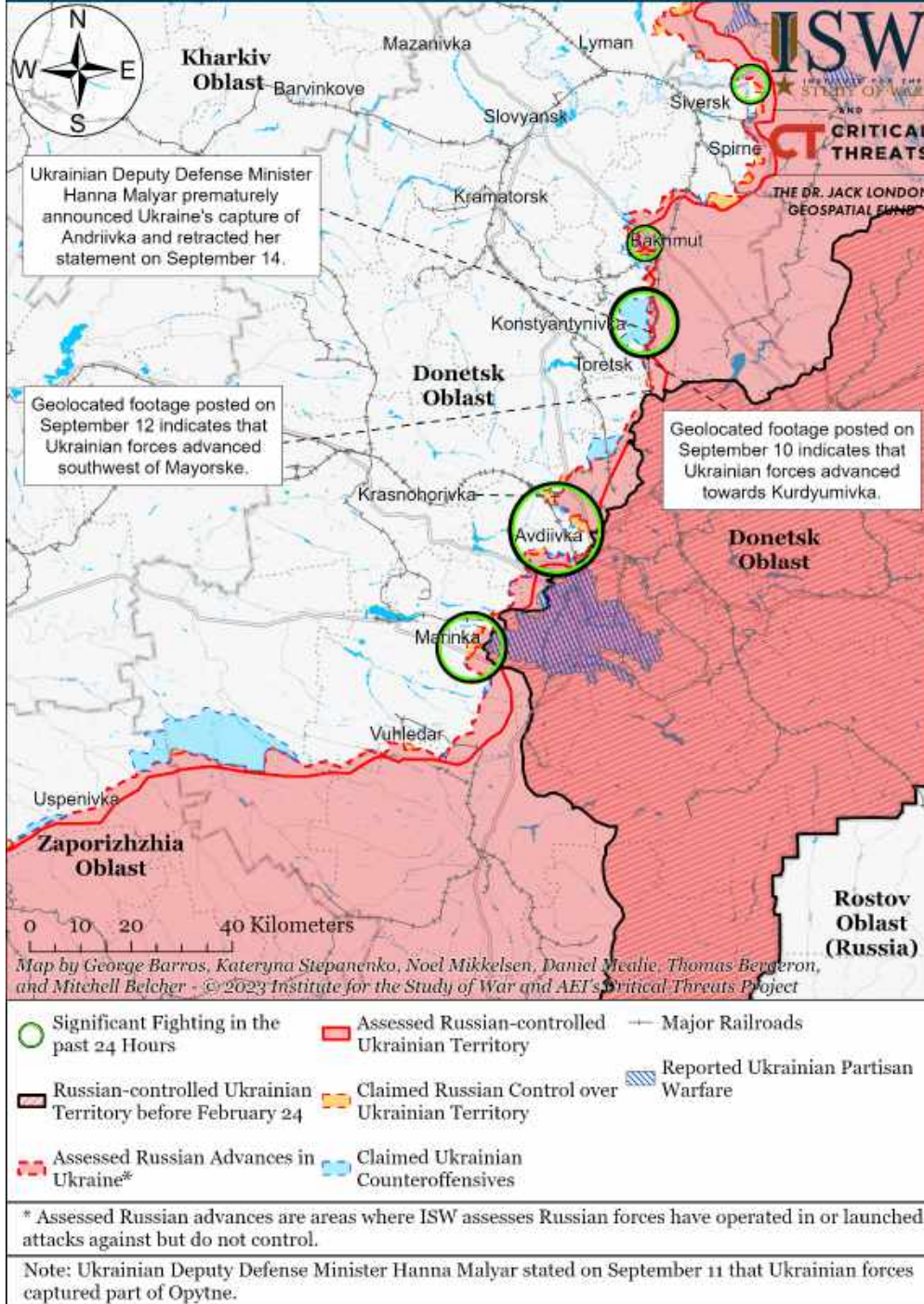
Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of September 14, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Ukrainian forces recently conducted offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City front and advanced. Geolocated footage published on September 13 shows that Ukrainian forces recently advanced east of the rail line north of Krasnohorivka (9km north of Avdiivka).[55] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted attacks near Opytne (3km southwest of Avdiivka) on September 13.[56]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on September 14 but did not advance. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Avdiivka, Lastochkyne (4km northwest of Avdiivka), and Marinka (on the southwestern outskirts of Donetsk City).[57] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted 14 unsuccessful attempts to push Ukrainian forces out of positions near Marinka.[58] Malyar reported on September 13 that Russian forces have significantly increased the number of attacks around Avdiivka and Marinka.[59]

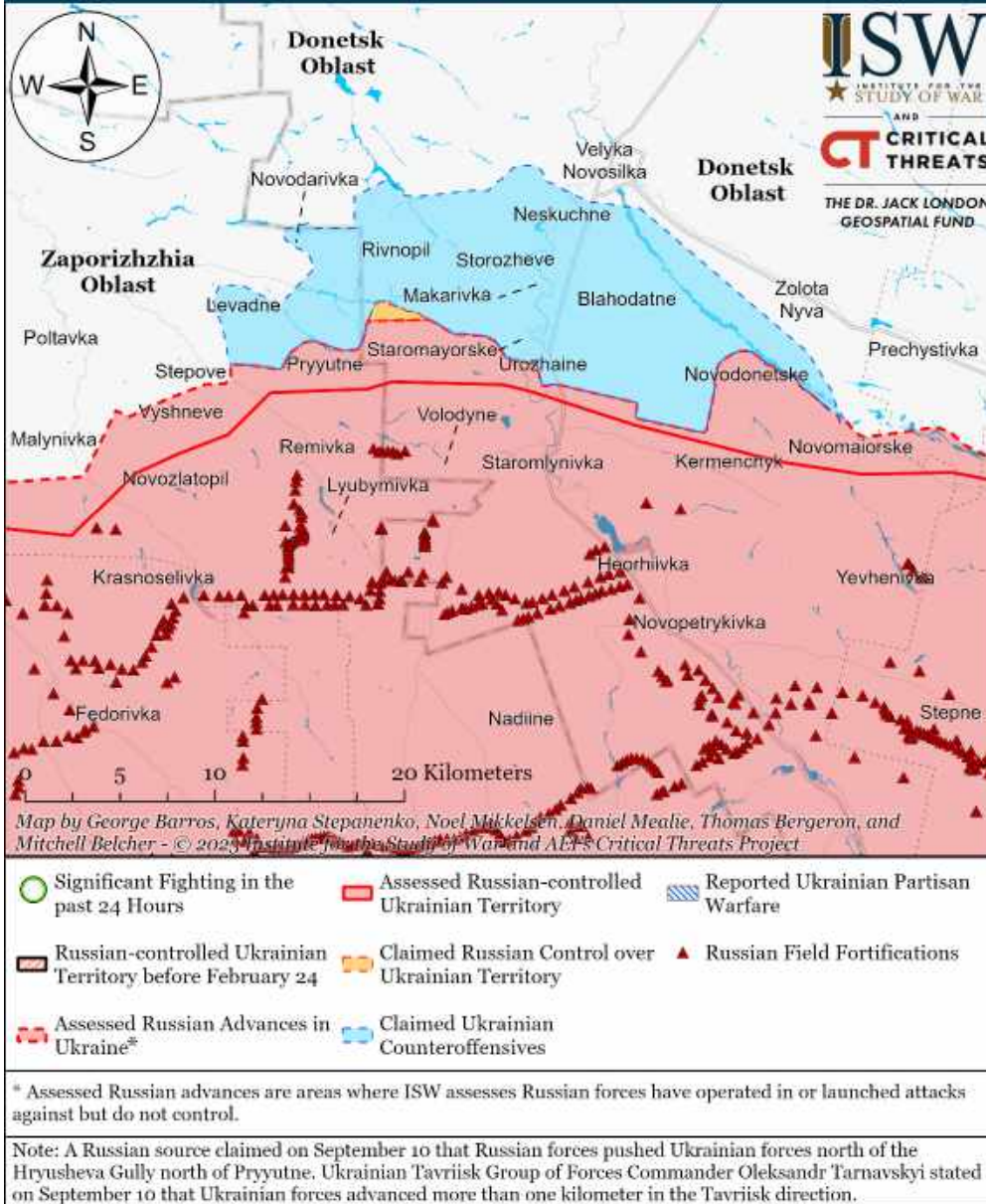
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of September 14, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

Ukrainian forces conducted assaults along the administrative border between Donetsk and Zaporizhia oblasts on September 14 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued assaults in the Shakhtarske direction in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area.[60] The Russian MoD claimed that naval infantry elements of the Russian Pacific Fleet repelled Ukrainian assaults near Novomayorske (18km southeast of Velyka Novosilka) and Novodonetske (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka) and that elements of the Russian Eastern Grouping of Forces repelled a Ukrainian attack near Pryyutne (15km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[61] Russia milbloggers claimed that elements of the 40th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) repelled a Ukrainian assault near Urozhaine (9km south of Velyka Novosilka).[62] Another Russian milblogger claimed that the arrival of unspecified Russian "reserves" in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area has stabilized the tactical situation in the area, although ISW has not yet observed the recent arrival of elements of new Russian units on this sector of the front.[63]

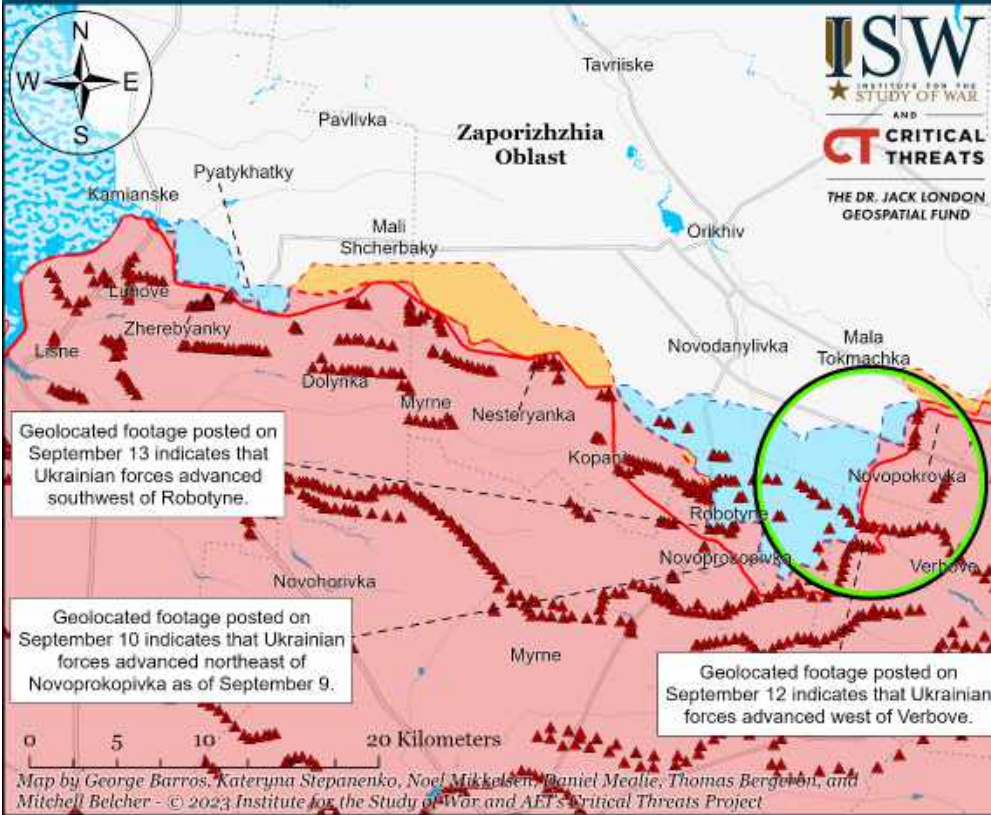
Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of September 14, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on September 14 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Melitopol direction (western Zaporizhzhia Oblast).[64] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued assaults near Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv), Novoprokopivka (13km south of Orikhiv), and Verbove (18km southeast of Orikhiv).[65] A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the 7th Guards Mountain Airborne (VDV) Division repelled a Ukrainian attack towards Novoprokopivka.[66]

Russian forces counterattacked in western Zaporizhia Oblast but did not make confirmed advances on September 14. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive actions near Mala Tokmachka (7km southeast of Orikhiv) and Verbove.[67] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces conducted a series of successful counterattacks near Verbove and Robotyne in the past three days, although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims.[68]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of September 14, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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Geolocated footage posted on September 13 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced southwest of Robotyne.

Geolocated footage posted on September 10 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced northeast of Novopokrovka as of September 9.

Geolocated footage posted on September 12 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced west of Verbove.

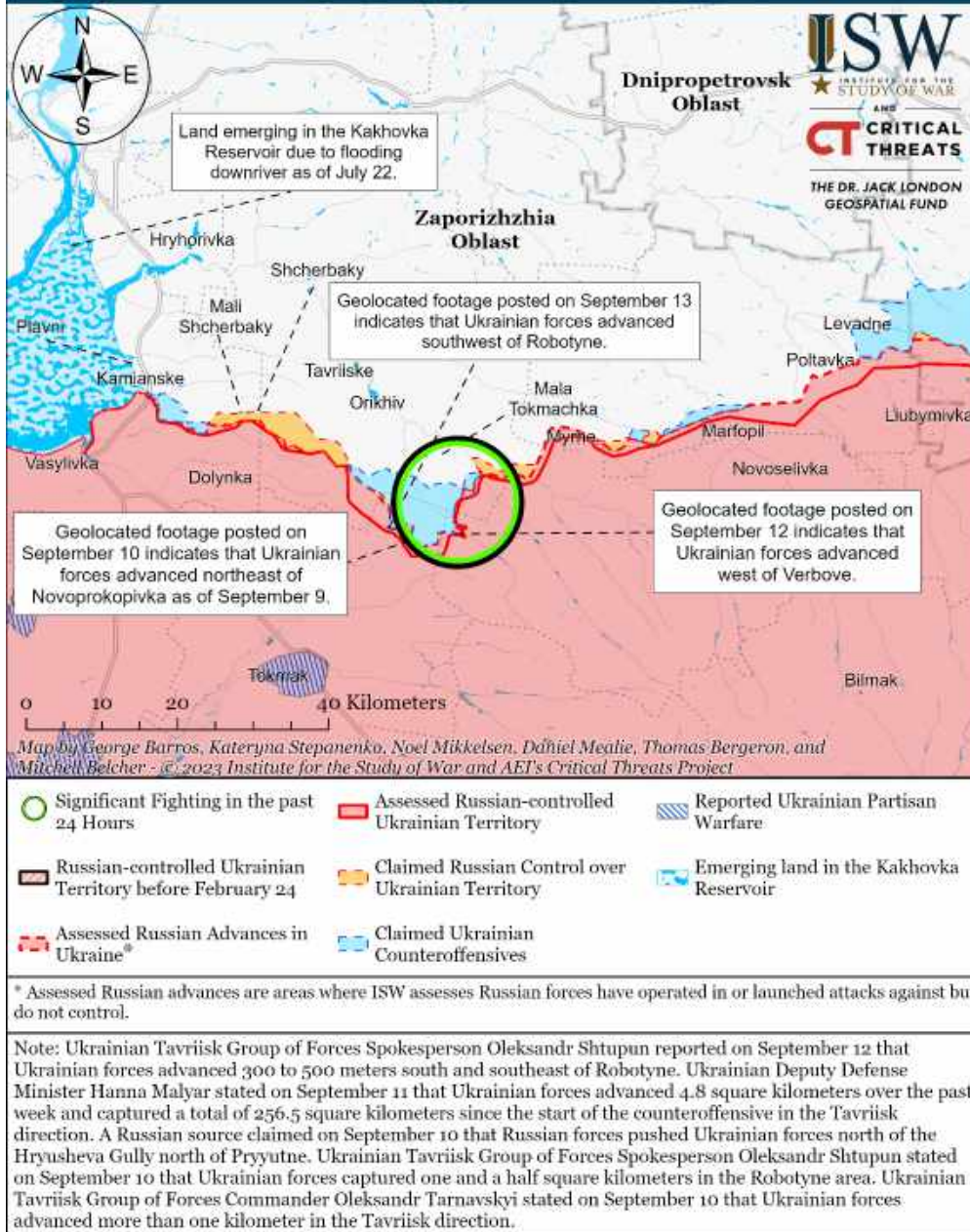
Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealle, Thomas Bergstein, and Mitchell Belcher - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

- 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.

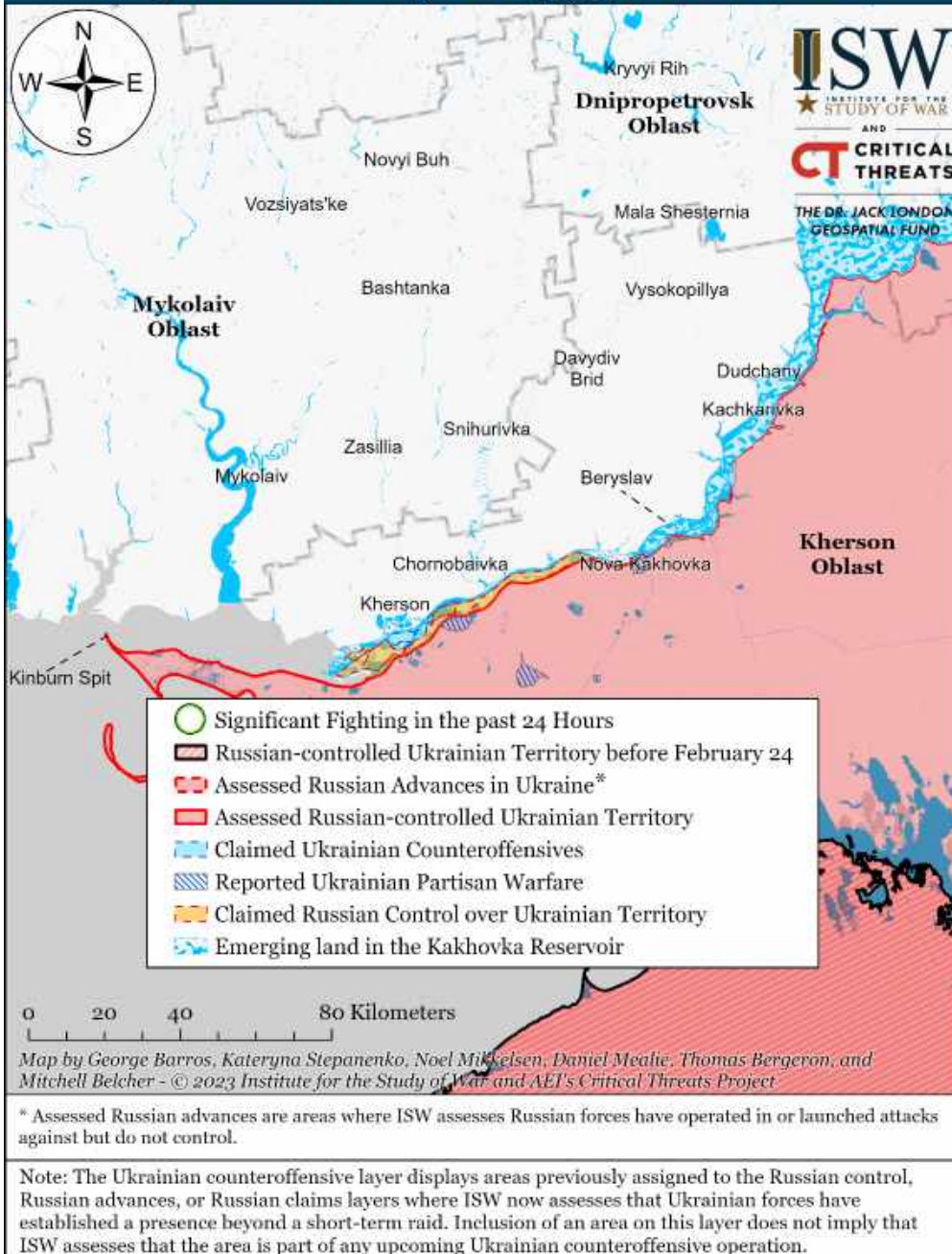
Note: Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Oleksandr Shtupun reported on September 12 that Ukrainian forces advanced 300 to 500 meters south and southeast of Robotyne. Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar stated on September 11 that Ukrainian forces advanced 4.8 square kilometers over the past week and captured a total of 256.5 square kilometers since the start of the counteroffensive in the Tavriisk direction. Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Oleksandr Shtupun stated on September 10 that Ukrainian forces captured one and a half square kilometers in the Robotyne area. Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Commander Oleksandr Tarnavskiy stated on September 10 that Ukrainian forces advanced more than one kilometer in the Tavriisk direction.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of September 14, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces continued limited activity in the left (east) bank of Kherson Oblast on September 14. The milblogger claimed that small Ukrainian landing groups unsuccessfully tried to land north of Oleshky (7km southeast of Kherson City), near Kozachi Laheri (23km east of Kherson City), and on Kozatskyi Island (west of Nova Kakhovka).[69] The milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces continue to operate on Kozatskyi Island but are not trying to advance further inland due to heavy Russian artillery fire in the area.[70]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of September 14, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



The Russian MoD claimed on September 14 that the Russian Black Sea Fleet patrol ship *Sergey Kotov* destroyed five Ukrainian naval drones targeting the ship in the Black Sea.[71]

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

The Kremlin is reportedly trying to censor Russian media coverage of a possible second reserve mobilization wave in order to prevent discontent ahead of the 2024 Russian presidential elections.[72] Russian opposition outlet *Meduza* reported that the Russian Presidential Administration issued “urgent requests” to pro-government Russian media outlets to not amplify rumors about a possible second wave of reserve mobilization or official government denials of these rumors.[73] The Kremlin reportedly told the media outlets to instead focus on the alleged success of the Russian contract recruitment campaign.[74]

Russian authorities are reportedly creating new drone production facilities across Russia. A Russian enterprise is reportedly repurposing a shopping center in Izhevsk, Udmurt Republic, into a drone research and production facility.[75] Russian enterprises also reportedly plan to open new drone development centers in Tomsk, Samara, and St. Petersburg oblasts.[76] ISW has previously assessed that Russia likely aims to develop a long-term capability to produce and use drones in the war in Ukraine.[77]

The US government imposed new sanctions on September 14 against over 150 entities for helping Russia circumvent sanctions, including five Turkish companies and one Turkish citizen.[78] *Reuters* reported that the newly-sanctioned Turkish entities helped Russia circumvent Western sanctions by helping repair sanctioned naval vessels and helping transfer dual-use goods to Russia.[79]

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

The Ukrainian Crimean-based “Atesh” partisan group claimed that it provided Ukrainian forces with information that aided the Ukrainian strike on the Russian Ropucha class landing ship and the Kilo class submarine in Sevastopol, Crimea on September 13.[80] “Atesh” claimed that its partisans from multiple different operations, including Sevastopol civilians, Russian Black Sea Fleet personnel, and employees of a maritime repair facility, gathered and delivered information on important Russian military targets in the past week.[81]

Russian authorities continue to deport Ukrainian children from occupied areas of Ukraine. Ukrainian Mariupol Mayor Advisor Petro Andryushenko stated that Russian occupation authorities removed children from frontline areas in occupied Donetsk Oblast under an evacuation scheme.[82] ISW has previously reported on Russian and occupation authorities’ usage of evacuation schemes to forcibly deport Ukrainian children to occupied Crimea and Russia.[83] The Kherson Oblast occupation administration stated that Russian authorities took 37 children from Skadovsk Raion to the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic under the guise of “health retreats.”[84]

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)

Wagner Group forces reportedly continue to train Belarusian forces as of September 13. Some Russian sources amplified footage of Wagner forces training Belarusian forces and claimed that Wagner forces continue training Belarusian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) forces.[85]

The Belarusian Ministry of Defense (MoD) held the “Voenkor-2023” military exercises to train Belarusian military correspondents to cover military operations. The Belarusian MoD announced the conclusion of the “Voenkor-2023” exercises on September 14 and stated that military correspondents practiced skills relating to military topography, basic field survival skills, and filming Belarusian soldiers conducting operations.[86]

ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian 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.

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Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, September 13, 2023

Riley Bailey, Grace Mappes, Nicole Wolkov,
Angelica Evans, and Frederick W. Kagan

September 13, 2023, 6:40pm 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 1pm ET on September 13. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the September 14 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian forces conducted missile strikes on occupied Sevastopol, Crimea, on September 13, damaging a Russian landing ship, a Kilo class submarine, and port infrastructure. The Department of Strategic Communications of the Ukrainian Armed Forces stated that Ukrainian forces successfully conducted missile strikes on Russian naval means and port infrastructure in occupied Sevastopol.[1] Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Spokesperson Andriy Yusov stated that the missiles struck the Russian state-owned ship repair facility Sevmorzavod, damaging repair facilities as well as a landing ship and a submarine, both of which he described as unrecoverable.[2] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian air defenses intercepted seven out of 10 Ukrainian cruise missiles targeting the Sevmorzavod ship repair facility but acknowledged that Ukrainian missiles struck two ships under repair.[3] Geolocated footage published on September 13 shows explosions at the dry dock in the Sevastopol port.[4] Satellite imagery published on September 12 shows one Ropucha class landing ship and one Kilo class submarine at the dry dock, and satellite imagery published on September 13 shows that the Ukrainian missile strike likely destroyed the two vessels.[5] Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Captain First Rank Nataliya Humenyuk stated that there were no Russian missile carriers present during the strike but noted that Ukrainian intelligence is still unaware of which submarine was at the dry dock.[6] The apparent destruction of the two vessels will likely render the dry dock inoperable until Russian forces can clear the debris, which may take a significant amount of time. The extent of the damage to Sevmorzavod's repair facilities beyond the dry dock is unclear, and any damage to one of the Russian Black Sea Fleet's main repair facilities in occupied Crimea will likely have reverberating impacts in the event of further Ukrainian strikes on Russian naval assets.

Russian officials largely did not address the strike, while select Russian ultranationalists responded with predictable outrage. Crimean occupation officials claimed that the strikes damaged residential buildings and injured several dozen people, although they did not say whether the injured were Russian military personnel.[7] Prominent Kremlin propagandist Vladimir Solovyov expressed deep anger at the strike and called for retaliatory strikes on Western facilities that produced the alleged missiles that Ukraine used in the strike.[8] Solovyov's call for escalation with the West is boilerplate rhetoric for his domestic audience but is not reflective of any

actual Kremlin position on the matter. Russian milbloggers expressed concerns that the Ukrainian strike portends an intensification of Ukraine's interdiction campaign targeting occupied Crimea.[9] One milblogger argued that Russian forces are unable to strike Ukrainian airfields at scale and that Russian military inaction allowed Ukrainian forces to sufficiently strengthen airfields against Russian strikes.[10]

Ukrainian forces advanced in western Zaporizhia Oblast and reportedly advanced near Bakhmut amid continued counteroffensive operations on both sectors of the front on September 13. Geolocated footage published on September 12 indicates that Ukrainian forces made limited gains south of Robotyne (12km south of Orikhiv) in western Zaporizhia Oblast.[11] The Ukrainian General Staff reported on September 13 that Ukrainian forces achieved unspecified partial successes near Robotyne as well as near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut), Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut), and Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut) in the Bakhmut direction.[12]

Russian forces conducted a series of Shahed-131/136 drone strikes targeting Sumy and Odesa oblasts on the night of September 12 to 13. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian air defenses destroyed 34 of 45 Shaheds, which mainly targeted port infrastructure in Izmail and Reni, Odesa Oblast.[13] Odesa Oblast Administration Head Oleh Kiper reported that the drone strikes damaged the port and civilian infrastructure in Izmail Raion.[14] The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched the drones from occupied Cape Chauda in Crimea, Primorsko-Akhtarsk in Krasnodar Krai, and Kursk Oblast.[15]

Russian President Vladimir Putin is likely concerned that Russia's growing relationship with North Korea may endanger Russia's existing sanctions evasion schemes. Putin met with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un at the Vostochny Cosmodrome in Amur Oblast on September 14.[16] Putin called the meeting "productive" and reported that he and Kim had a "frank exchange of views on the situation in the region and on bilateral relations." [17] Putin also stated that Russia continues to comply with restrictions on military-technical cooperation with North Korea but noted that within the "framework of the current rules, there are opportunities." [18] Putin is likely neutrally portraying his meeting with Kim in order to balance Russia's interest in acquiring North Korean artillery munitions with concerns about the risk of triggering secondary international sanctions on Russia due to potential trade with North Korea amidst increased international scrutiny of Russian sanctions evasion.

The Russian MoD reportedly temporarily disrupted a Wagner Group force rotation to Syria amid reports of the Russian MoD's ongoing efforts to subsume Wagner operations in Syria. A prominent Kremlin-affiliated milblogger amplified a claim on September 13 that the Russian MoD blocked Wagner forces from rotating personnel from Africa through the Hmeimim airbase in Latakia, Syria, prompting the Wagner forces to negotiate with the Syrian MoD to rotate through the Tiyas airbase in Homs Governorate instead.[19] The milblogger claimed that the Russian MoD used vehicles on the runway to prevent a Wagner plane from landing at the Tiyas airbase on September 12, and then deployed helicopters threatening to shoot down a Wagner plane. The milblogger claimed that the Wagner leadership in Syria contacted Russian Deputy Defense Minister Colonel General Yunus-Bek Yevkurov who allowed the plane to land.[20] Yevkurov's reported involvement in this engagement as well as his recent trips to Africa continues to suggest that Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu has likely appointed Yevkurov to oversee the MoD's effort to

subsume the remnants of the Wagner Group.[21]

This reported Russian MoD-Wagner conflict in Syria suggests that elements of the Wagner Group may still have a cohesive leadership and that the MoD has deep concerns about the semi-independence of Wagner's Syria contingent. Wagner's ability to negotiate with senior Russian and Syrian MoD officials indicates that Wagner likely retains a cohesive-enough leadership to operate semi-independently of the Russian MoD. The Russian MoD's decision to deny Wagner's use of the Hmeimim airbase and disrupt the force rotation indicates that the MoD is likely concerned about Wagner's insubordination toward the Russian military in Syria, though the precise concerns are unclear. The Wagner contingent in Syria may have better combat capabilities than Wagner contingents in other African states due to some combination of training, provisions, and organization. The MoD may also be concerned that the Syria Wagner contingent is more loyal to Prigozhin than the other Wagner arms. Syria is the only country in which the Wagner Group has a major contingent co-located with a major Russian MoD presence, and the Russian MoD detained Wagner commanders only in Syria and not elsewhere abroad following the June 24 rebellion.[22]

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian forces conducted missile strikes on occupied Sevastopol, Crimea, on September 13, damaging a Russian landing ship, a Kilo class submarine, and port infrastructure.**
- **Ukrainian forces advanced in western Zaporizhia Oblast and reportedly advanced near Bakhmut amid continued counteroffensive operations on both sectors of the front on September 13.**
- **Russian forces conducted a series of Shahed-131/136 drone strikes targeting Sumy and Odesa oblasts on the night of September 12 to 13.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin is likely concerned that Russia's growing relationship with North Korea may endanger Russia's existing sanctions evasion schemes.**
- **The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) reportedly temporarily disrupted a Wagner Group force rotation to Syria amid reports of the Russian MoD's ongoing efforts to subsume Wagner operations in Syria.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast but did not make any confirmed advances.**
- **Reports from Western and Russian independent sources indicate that Russia has circumvented some Western sanctions to increase weapons production but still struggles to produce weapons at the pace required by the war in Ukraine.**
- **The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) published footage showing GUR and Ukrainian partisans conducting a drone strike on a Russian occupation passportization office in occupied Enerhodar, Zaporizhia Oblast on September 12.**

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

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of September 13, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



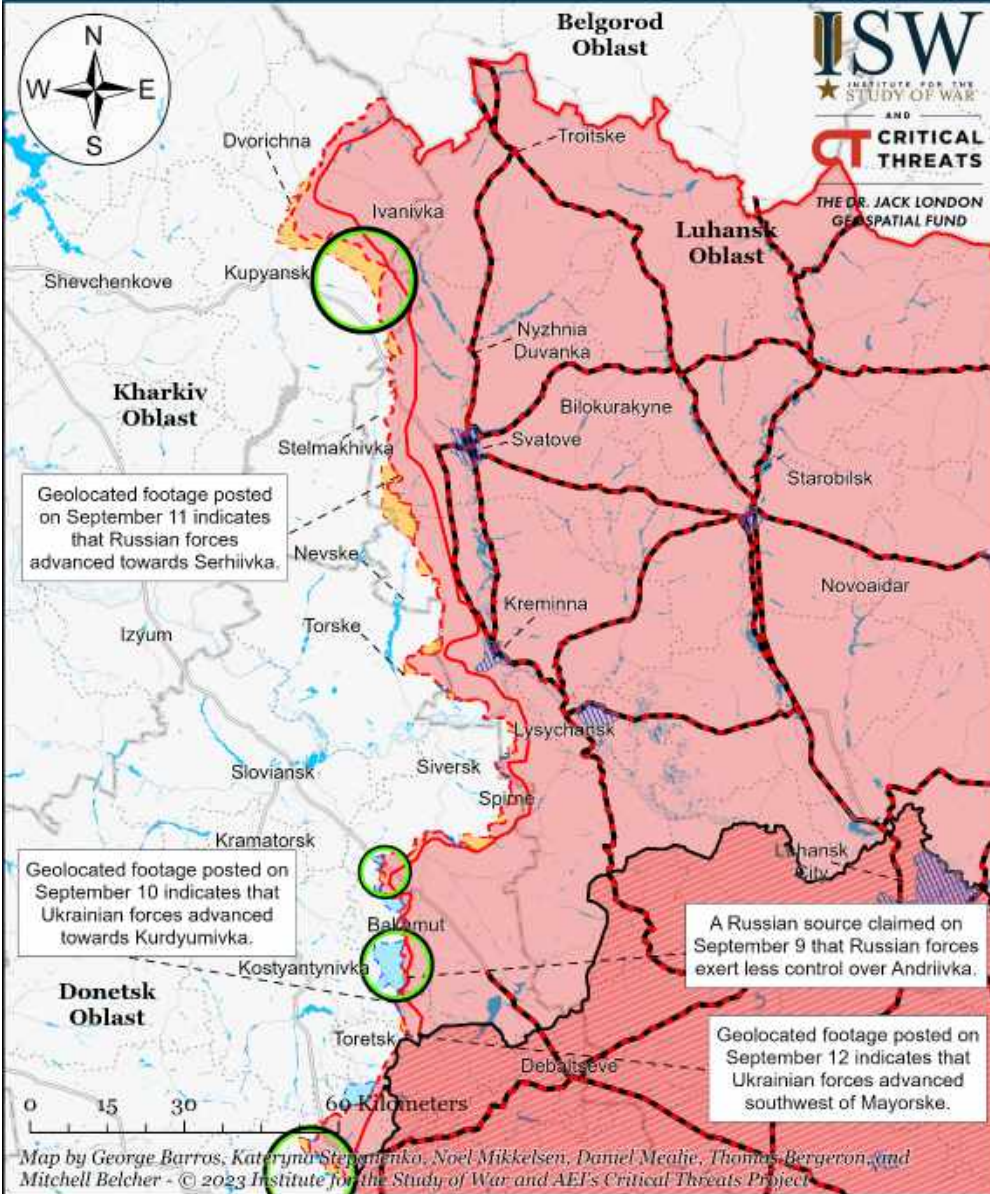
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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 forces continued offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line but did not make any confirmed or claimed gains on September 13. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted an unsuccessful attack northwest of Berestove (20km northwest of Svatove).[23] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Synkivka (9km northeast of Kupyansk) and Petropavlivka (7km east of Kupyansk) on September 12.[24] A Russian milblogger claimed on September 13 that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations west of Novoselivske (14km northwest of Svatove).[25] Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov posted footage claiming to show Chechen “Akhmat” Spetsnaz forces operating in the Serebryanske forest area (11km south of Kreminna).[26] Another Russian milblogger posted footage on September 12 claiming to show elements of the Russian 21st Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Combined Arms Army, Central Military District) striking Ukrainian forces along the Svatove-Kreminna line.[27] The United Kingdom Ministry of Defense (UK MoD) reported on September 13 that elements of the Russian 25th Combined Arms Army (CAA) (reportedly formed under the Eastern Military District) have deployed to the frontline in Luhansk Oblast, supporting ISW’s previous reporting.[28] *The Wall Street Journal (WSJ)* also reported that Russian forces are regrouping and forming new assault units with personnel from the newly created 25th CAA in the Kupyansk direction.[29] *The WSJ* reported that the Russian military deployed 50,000 troops to retake Kupyansk but has had little success.[30] Ukrainian Kharkiv Oblast Head Oleh Synehubov reportedly stated that Russian forces have not captured a single new village in the Kupyansk direction since 2022 but have only expanded the contested “gray zone” around a number of settlements.[31]

Ukrainian forces reportedly conducted ground attacks along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on September 13 but did not make any claimed or confirmed gains. A Russian milblogger claimed that fighting continues on the outskirts of Kupyansk – likely referring to the area near Synkivka and Petropavlivka - and that Ukrainian forces are counterattacking from the settlement’s flanks in order to avoid Russian encirclement.[32] ISW has not observed visual evidence of Russian advances close enough to Kupyansk to necessitate Ukrainian concerns about encirclement. Russian sources, including the Russian MoD, claimed on September 12 and 13 that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Yampolivka (17km west of Kreminna), Torske (14km west of Kreminna), Dibrova (7km southwest of Kreminna), and the Serebryanske forest area.[33]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of September 13, 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

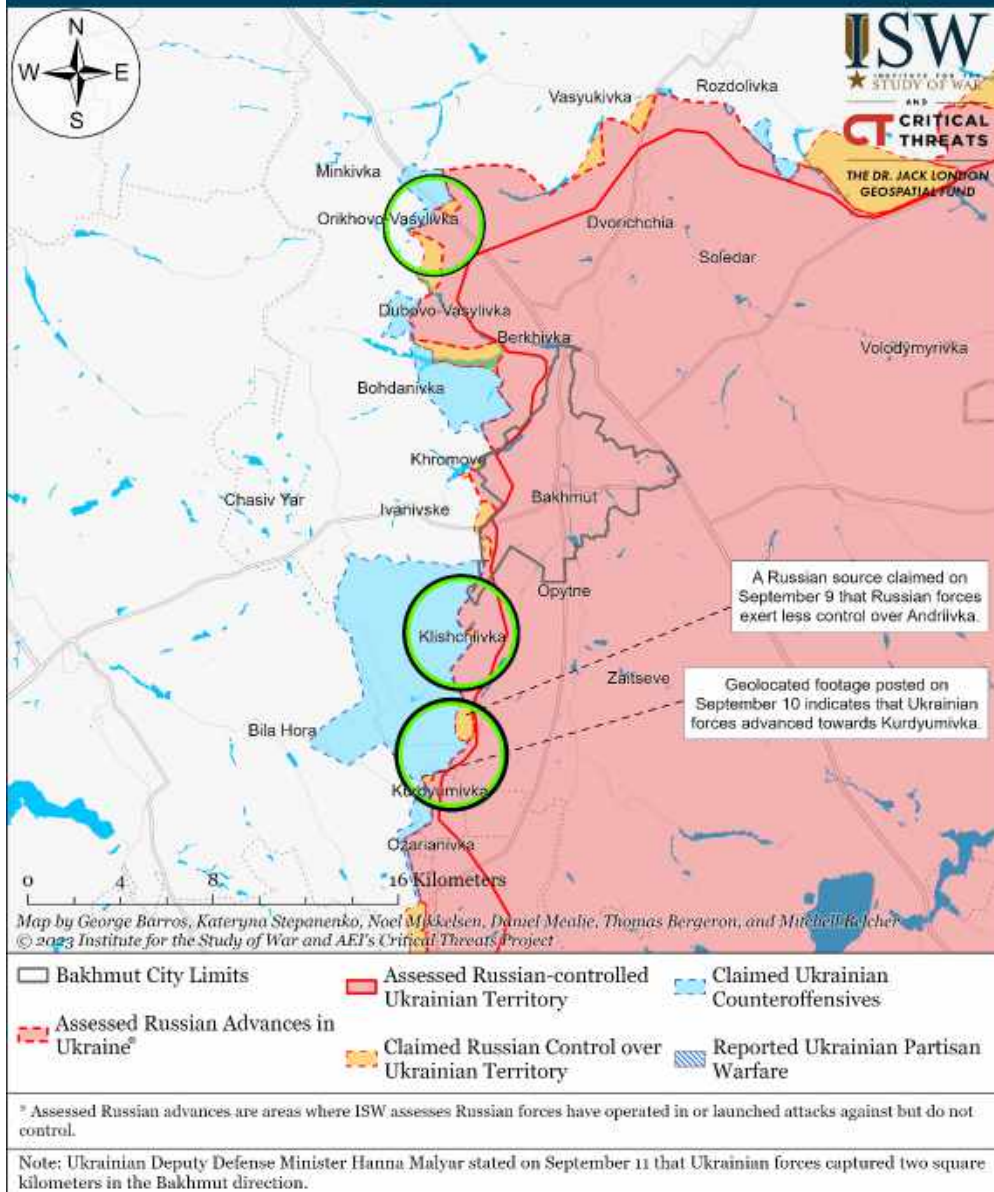
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations around Bakhmut and reportedly advanced on September 13. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Bakhmut direction and achieved unspecified partial successes near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut), Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut), and Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut).[34] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces withdrew from several unspecified positions near Klishchiivka and entrenched themselves at defensive positions behind the railway line east of the settlement.[35] Russian milbloggers claimed that fighting is ongoing in and north of Klishchiivka and that Russian forces maintain positions on the northeastern outskirts of the settlement.[36] Russian milbloggers claimed that most of Klishchiivka is currently a contested “gray zone.”[37]

Russian forces counterattacked in the Bakhmut area on September 13 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive actions near Orikhovo-Vasylivka (11km northwest of Bakhmut) and Bohdanivka (7km northwest of Bakhmut).[38] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces conducted successful counterattacks near Klishchiivka and pushed Ukrainian forces out of the settlement but that heavy Ukrainian artillery fire is preventing Russian forces from reestablishing their positions in central and southern Klishchiivka.[39] ISW has not observed visual confirmation that Ukrainian forces have left positions in Klishchiivka, however. The milblogger also claimed that there are conflicting reports that Russian forces completely recaptured Andriivka, and a Russian news aggregator claimed that the settlement is contested.[40]

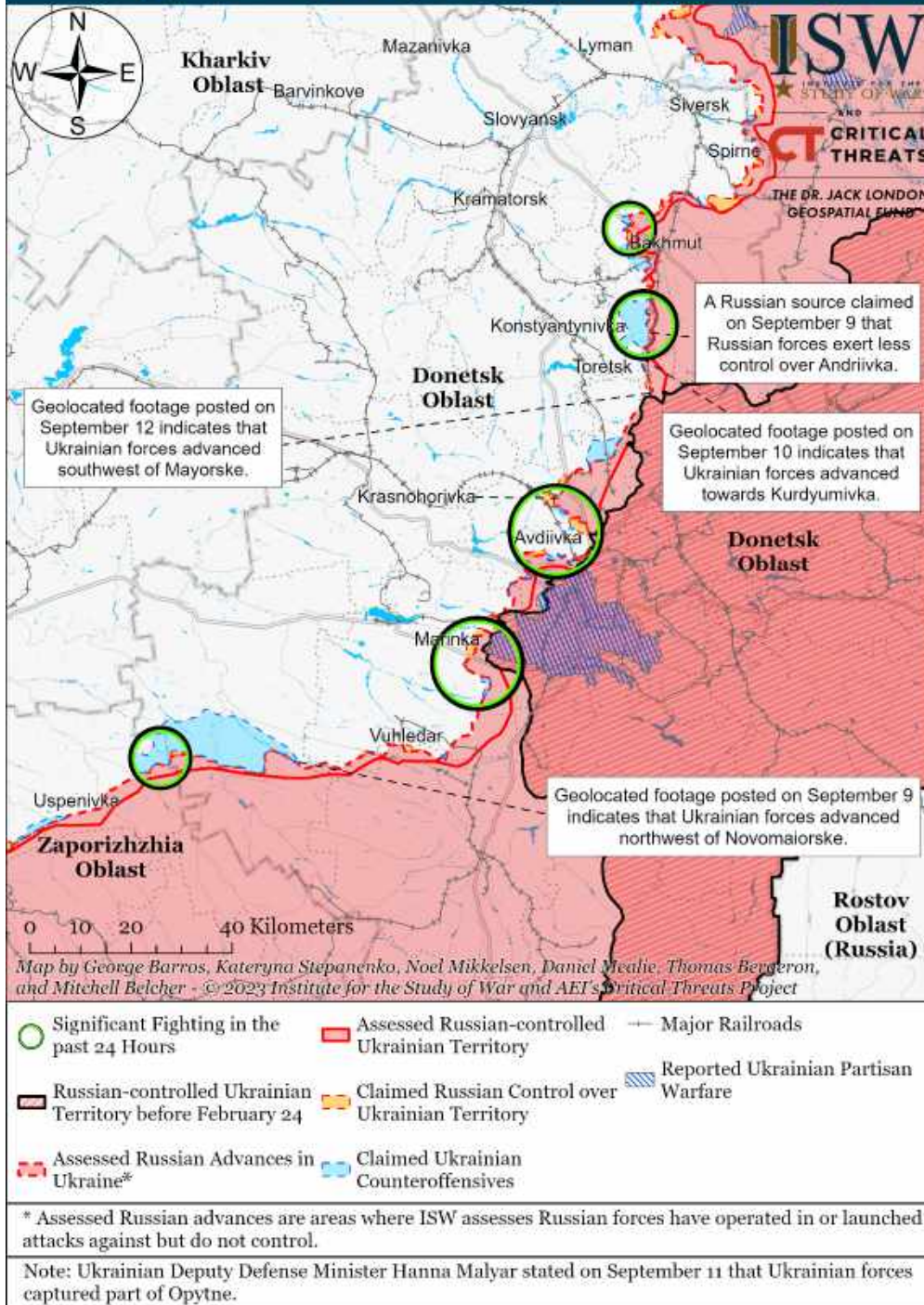
Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of September 13, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



The Russian MOD claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian assaults near Pervomaiske (12km southwest of Avdiivka) and Krasnohorivka (22km southwest of Avdiivka) along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City front on September 13.[41]

Russian forces continued limited ground attacks along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City front on September 13 but did not advance. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive actions near Avdiivka, Marinka (27km southwest of Avdiivka), and Novomykhailivka (36km southwest of Avdiivka).[42] A Russian milblogger also claimed that Russian assaults near Avdiivka were unsuccessful.[43]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of September 13, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

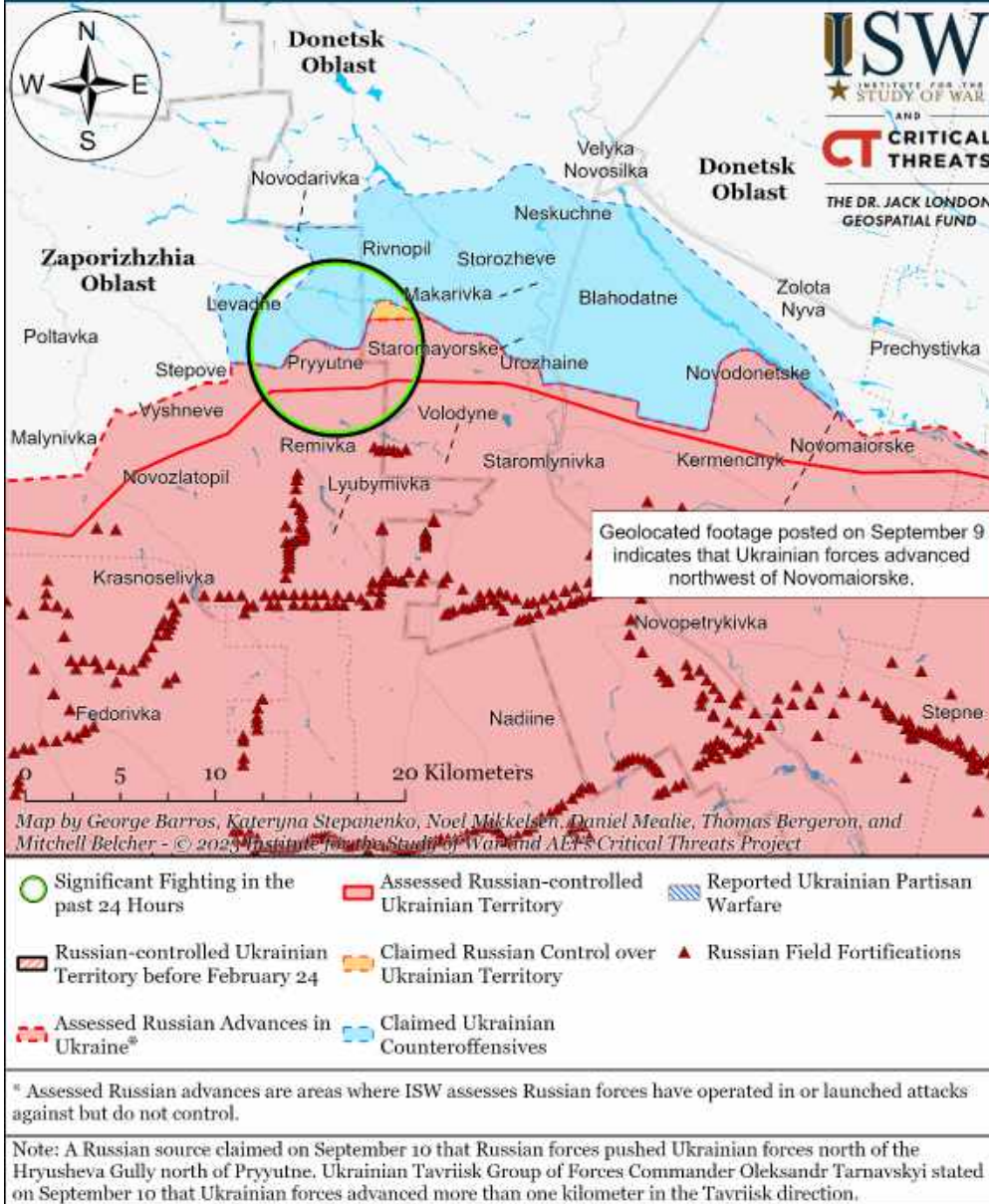


Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Ukrainian forces reportedly conducted offensive operations in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area on September 13 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Russian MoD and other Russian sources claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks along the Novodonetske-Novomayorske line (13–18km southeast of Velyka Novosilka) and near Pryyutne (16km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[44]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area on September 13 but did not advance. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked south of Novodarivka (13km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[45] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces hold recently occupied positions near Pryyutne.[46] Footage published on September 12 purportedly shows snipers of the Russian 5th Tank Brigade (36th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) operating in the Velyka Novosilka area.[47]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of September 13, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

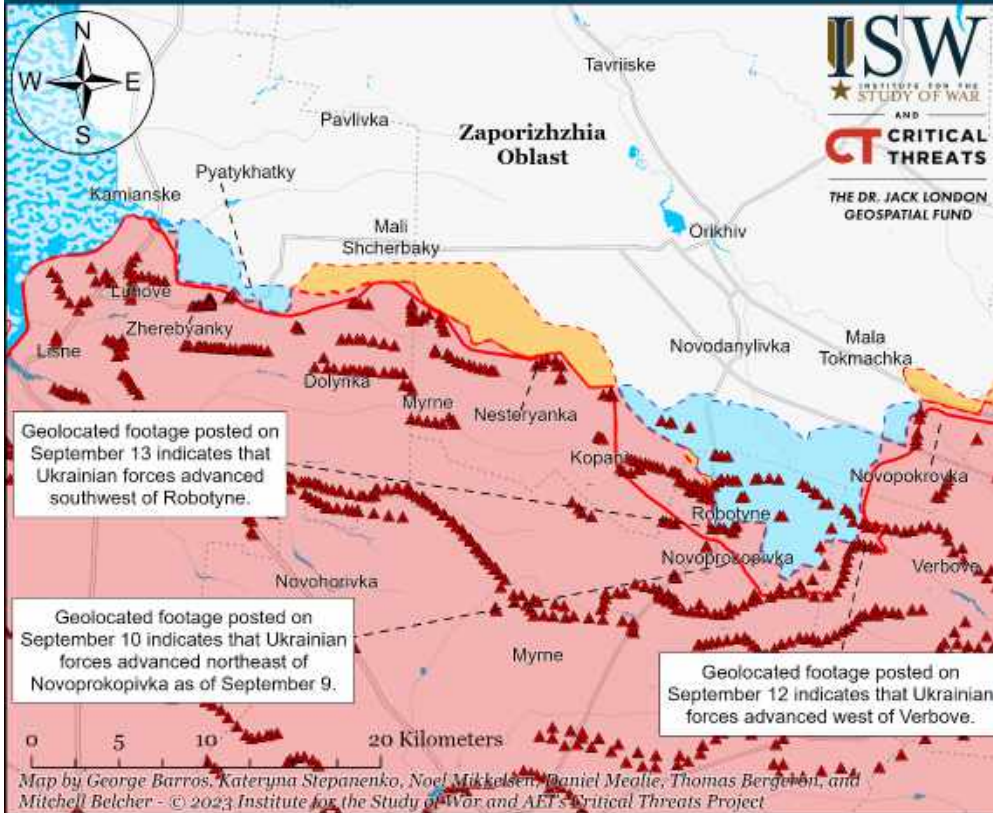


Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on September 13 and advanced. Geolocated footage published on September 12 shows that Ukrainian forces made limited gains south of Robotyne (12km south of Orikhiv).[48] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces achieved partial success near Robotyne.[49] The Russian MoD and other Russian sources claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Verbove (18km southwest of Orikhiv) and in the area between Robotyne and Verbove.[50] A Russian milblogger claimed that most of Robotyne is contested and that Russian forces maintain positions near the southern outskirts of the

settlement.[51] A Russian milblogger claimed on September 12 that Ukrainian forces attacked west of Robotyne in the direction of Kopani (12km southwest of Orikhiv).[52]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast on September 13 but did not advance. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces attacked Ukrainian positions southwest of Robotyne and that fighting is ongoing on the outskirts of Novoprokopivka (18km southeast of Orikhiv) and Verbove.[53] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces regularly counterattack in the area between Robotyne and Verbove in order to prevent Ukrainian forces from advancing.[54] Footage posted on September 13 purportedly shows elements of the Russian 7th Guards Mountain Airborne (VDV) Division operating near Verbove.[55]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of September 13, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



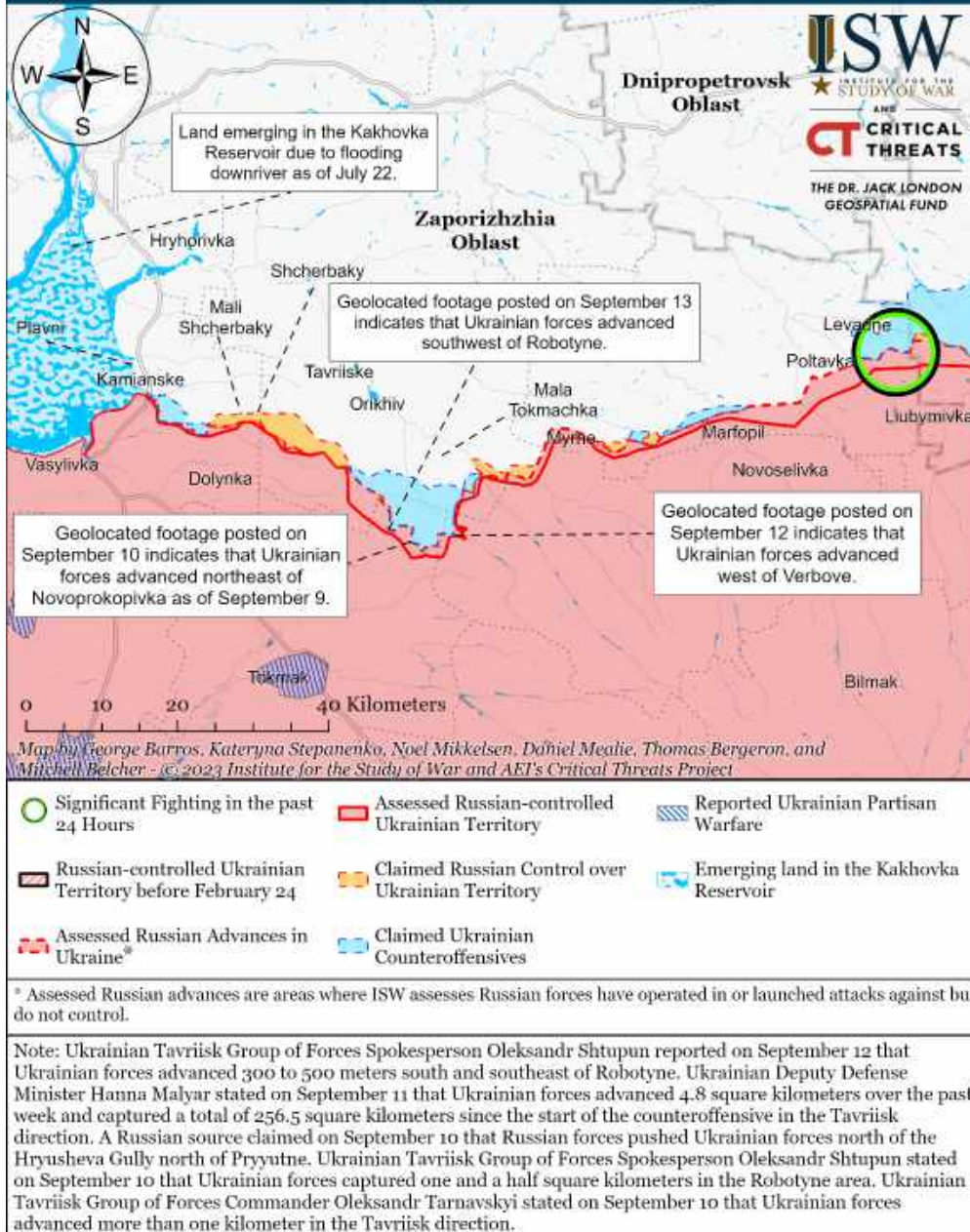
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Reported Ukrainian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

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

Note: Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Oleksandr Shtupun reported on September 12 that Ukrainian forces advanced 300 to 500 meters south and southeast of Robotyne. Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar stated on September 11 that Ukrainian forces advanced 4.8 square kilometers over the past week and captured a total of 256.5 square kilometers since the start of the counteroffensive in the Tavriisk direction. Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Oleksandr Shtupun stated on September 10 that Ukrainian forces captured one and a half square kilometers in the Robotyne area. Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Commander Oleksandr Tarnavskiy stated on September 10 that Ukrainian forces advanced more than one kilometer in the Tavriisk direction.

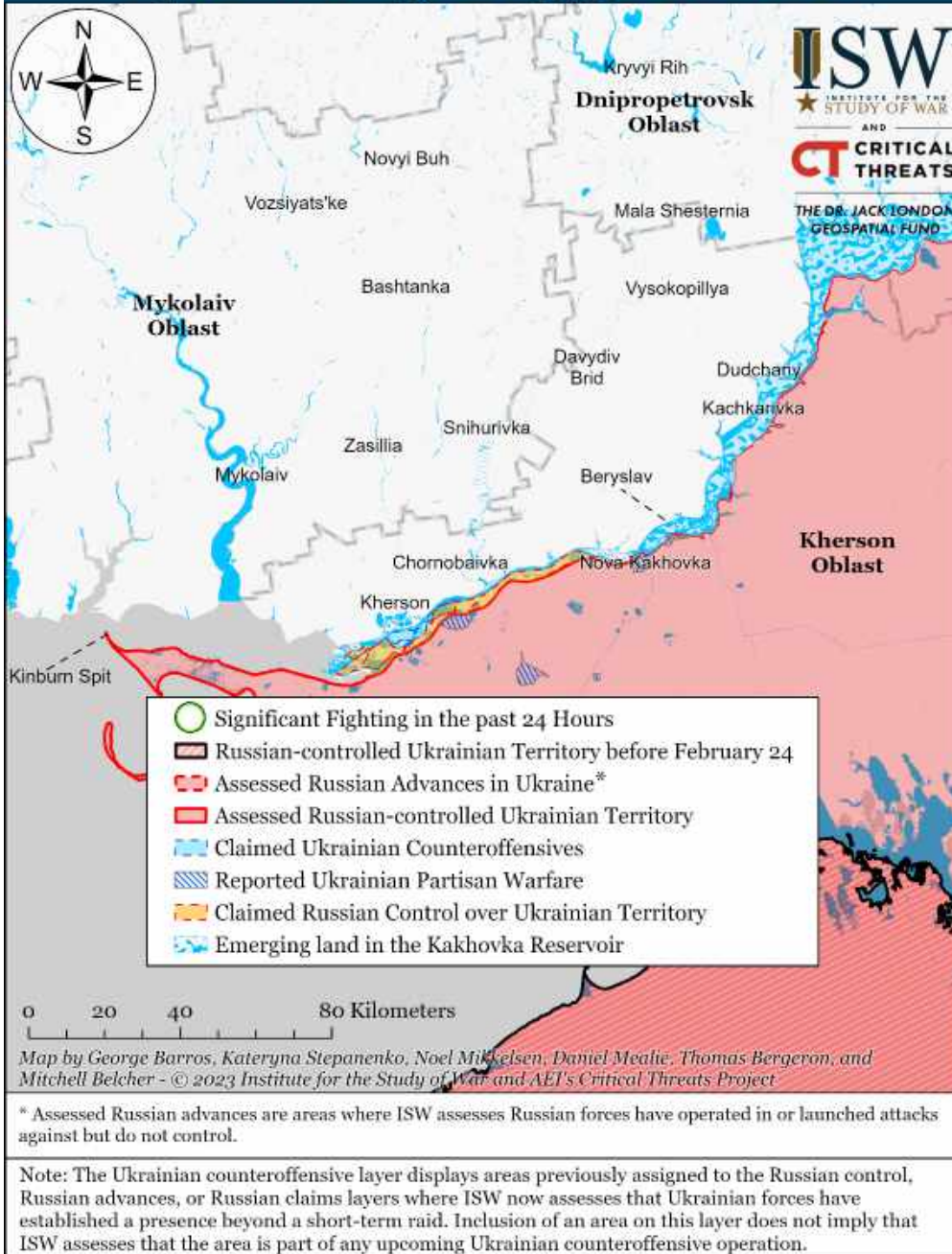
Ukrainian Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov reported on September 13 that Russian forces are strengthening defensive positions in occupied Zaporizhzhia Oblast. Fedorov stated that Russian forces are setting up new unspecified equipment and dragon's teeth anti-tank fortifications near Tokmak digging new trenches and strengthening defensive structures near the frontline in Polohivskiy Raion.[56]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of September 13, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



A Russian source claimed on September 13 that Ukrainian forces continue operations on islands in the Dnipro River delta in Kherson Oblast. A Russian milblogger claimed that battles for unspecified islands in the Dnipro River are ongoing, and that Ukrainian forces have entrenched themselves on some unspecified islands and maintain positions near the Antonivsky Bridge in the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast.[57] Footage published on September 13 purportedly shows artillery elements of the 205th Motorized Rifle Brigade (49th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) striking Ukrainian forces near Kherson City.[58]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of September 13, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

Reports from Western and Russian independent sources indicate that Russia has circumvented some Western sanctions to increase weapons production but still struggles to produce weapons at the pace

required by the war in Ukraine. The *New York Times* (NYT) cited US, European, and Ukrainian officials as stating that Russia has increased its missile and weapons production beyond its pre-war production levels despite Western sanctions.[59] The officials reportedly stated that Russia's defense industrial base (DIB) began increasing production at the end of 2022 and can now produce up to 200 tanks per year, double its prewar production of 100 tanks per year.[60] The officials also reportedly stated that Russia has cut costs in artillery ammunition production by sacrificing safety and quality.[61] Russian independent outlet *Novaya Gazeta* reported however that at least 419 Russian DIB enterprises failed to meet the parameters of the Russian state defense order resulting in over 400 criminal cases since the start of the full-scale invasion, including 79 cases on activity at the Zvezdochka ship repair center, 39 cases at the Instrument Design Bureau (KBP), 34 cases at the "Progress" Rocket-Space Center, 22 cases at the Sevmash facility, and 20 cases at Uralvagonzavod.[62] *Novaya Gazeta* also reported that the number of vacancies in Russian DIB enterprises has increased by 48 percent since September 2022.[63]

Some Russian authorities are increasingly seeking terms for demobilization and other measures supporting Russian military personnel mobilized during the autumn 2022 partial mobilization. Tatarstan Republic Council Deputy Head Eduard Sharafiev stated on September 13 that he submitted a preliminary proposal to the Russian Federation Council of Legislators to amend the Russian partial mobilization order to establish terms for demobilizing personnel mobilized in autumn 2022.[64] The Council of Legislators has reportedly sent the proposed amendment to the State Duma Defense Committee for consideration.[65] Russian State Duma Deputy Maxim Ivanov stated on September 13 that the current mechanisms for granting leave to mobilized personnel are unclear, unregulated, and strongly dependent on the situation on the front line and the decision of the commander.[66]

Russian authorities imposed new standards for Russian military recruitment and treatment of recruits likely in connection with the upcoming autumn conscription cycle. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu signed a decree on September 13 preventing Russians who are otherwise "partially fit" for military service from serving under mobilization or contracts during periods of martial law, mobilization, and wartime.[67] The decree stipulates that Russians with HIV, Hepatitis B and C, various active tuberculosis variants, malignant cancers, Type 1 diabetes, a history of strokes, vision impairments, and other medical conditions may not serve in these conditions.[68] The Russian MoD published a decree on September 13 dated September 11 that stipulates the payment of pensions to Russian mobilized and contracted personnel who received pensions prior to serving in the Russian military and began serving after the start of the war in Ukraine.[69] The decree stipulates that the MoD will pay these pensioners monthly payments beginning in October 2023 and compensate the pensioners for pensions not received after they entered military service and stopped receiving pensions.[70]

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

The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) published footage showing GUR and Ukrainian partisans conducting a drone strike on a Russian occupation passportization office in occupied Enerhodar, Zaporizhia Oblast on September 12.[71] GUR reported that the drone strike caused a fire at the passportization office and that GUR and the Ukrainian partisans also struck a Russian radio communication post in Enerhodar.[72]

Russian President Vladimir Putin submitted an amendment to the law on “the Days of Military Glory and Memorable Dates of Russia” on September 12 that will establish September 30 as the “Day of Reunification” for occupied Kherson, Zaporizhia, Donetsk, and Luhansk oblasts.[73] Russian occupation officials will likely use the holiday to amplify programs aimed at consolidating social control over occupied territories in Ukraine.

Significant activity in Belarus (Russian efforts to increase its military presence in Belarus and further integrate Belarus into Russian-favorable frameworks and Wagner Group activity in Belarus)

Nothing significant to report.

ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian 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/AFUStratCom/19963>

[2] <https://suspilne dot media/571563-raketnij-udar-po-sevmorzavodu-v-sevastopoli-poskodiv-desantnij-korabl-pidvodnij-coven-i-obladnanna-zavodu-gur/> ; <https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-ato/3760932-russian-submarine-landing-ship-hit-overnight-deemed-unrepairable-gur.html>

[3] https://t.me/mod_russia/30416

[4] https://t.me/chp_sevastopol/20627; https://x.com/bayraktar_1love/status/1701765467738644810?s=20; <https://x.com/neonhandrail/status/1701803150196593031?s=20>

[5] <https://twitter.com/visegrad24/status/1702011455787122748> ; https://x.com/MT_Anderson/status/1701778733966004400?s=20 ;

[6] <https://suspilne dot media/571731-ce-sutteva-vtrata-gumenuk-prokomentovala-poskodzenna-rosijskih-korabliv-u-sevastopoli-ukrainskimi-vijskovimi/>

[7] <https://t.me/razvozhaev/3851> ; https://t.me/russkiy_opolchenec/37982

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[9] <https://t.me/rybar/51844> ; https://t.me/basurin_e/5581 ; <https://t.me/epoddubny/17410> ; https://t.me/Sladkov_plus/8534

[10] <https://t.me/milinfo/106362>

[11] <https://twitter.com/moklasen/status/1702000252813824344>; https://t.me/dva_majors/25431;
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[12] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbido2AXVd99g3SkeySsoAi87kifFCHu1174z8DBxMBQMKyNEM4KF1D22F5sJqLtL5oKG1> ;
<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbido2VWSXm1WxVq6K52ciRGaNbhUpuFbe76qsU9k1huZdgFsWwytT1VxGYEznJonm1Ty5l>

[13] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbido2AXVd99g3SkeySsoAi87kifFCHu1174z8DBxMBQMKyNEM4KF1D22F5sJqLtL5oKG1>

[14] <https://t.me/odeskaODA/2595>

[15] <https://t.me/kpszs/5162>

[16] <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/72265>

[17] <https://tass.ru/politika/18740883>

[18] <https://ria.ru/20230913/sotrudnichestvo-1896093710.html>

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; <https://t.me/rybar/51839> ; https://t.me/grey_zone/20557

[20] <https://t.me/rybar/51866>

[21] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-september-1-2023>

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[24] <https://t.me/readovkanews/65895>

[25] <https://t.me/wargonzo/15010>

[26] https://t.me/RKadyrov_95/3891

[27] https://t.me/dva_majors/25412

[28] <https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1701834290508566971?s=20> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar090323> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar090123>

[29] <https://www.wsj.com/world/russia-stalls-in-offensive-to-reverse-ukraines-gains-in-east-a2d5fea8>

[30] <https://www.wsj.com/world/russia-stalls-in-offensive-to-reverse-ukraines-gains-in-east-a2d5fea8>

[31] <https://www.wsj.com/world/russia-stalls-in-offensive-to-reverse-ukraines-gains-in-east-a2d5fea8>

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Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, September 12, 2023

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

September 12, 2023, 5pm 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 1pm ET on September 12. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the September 13 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russian insider sources claimed that the Kremlin's inner circle is again actively disagreeing about the necessity of and preparations for a second wave of reserve mobilization ahead of the semi-annual fall conscription cycle, which starts on October 1. A Russian Telegram channel with alleged connections to Russian security sources claimed that select Russian officials are "seriously" preparing for a second wave of reserve mobilization and are hoping to conduct another reserve mobilization wave in the fall.[1] It is important to distinguish between Russia's normal semi-annual conscription callup, a large-scale reserve mobilization like the one that brought more than 300,000 reservists into the Russian armed forces in Fall 2022, crypto-mobilizations that bring reservists into the force at lower numbers over a long period of time, and various efforts to encourage or coerce Russians to sign ostensibly voluntary contracts with the Russian military. The channel claimed that Russian officials want to mobilize between 170,000 to 175,000 reservists and move the fall conscription date from October 1 to November 1 to accommodate a reserve mobilization processes, while simultaneously conducting "contract mobilization" to recruit an additional 130,000 personnel for contract service using coercive measures.[2] The channel claimed that a powerful group of "*siloviki* hawks" is also proposing stricter reserve mobilization measures such as restricting certain individuals from obtaining mobilization deferrals, which has sparked major disagreements with officials in the Russian Presidential Administration. The channel claimed that the Presidential Administration fears a response to such measures from other Russian officials and broader Russian society.

These plans, proposals, and disagreements are not new and do not indicate that Russian President Vladimir Putin has ultimately decided to conduct a second reserve mobilization wave in the near term. ISW previously observed an increase in discussions about reserve mobilization preparations and speculations in the lead-up to the spring conscription cycle earlier in 2023.[3] Select Russian officials have also proposed more dramatic mobilization measures that have not materialized.[4] Putin also emphasized Russian contract service recruitment rates when responding to the question about the potential second reserve mobilization wave at the Eastern Economic Forum on September 12.[5] Putin's response does not necessarily set information conditions to prepare Russian society for involuntary mobilization and instead may suggest his commitment to ongoing crypto mobilization practices. Any new reserve mobilization wave depends on Putin.[6]

Putin also reamplified several boilerplate information operations falsely framing the Ukrainian counteroffensive as a failed endeavor and accused Ukraine of being unwilling to negotiate during his address at the Eastern Economic Forum. Putin claimed that the Ukrainian counteroffensive has failed to produce concrete results and presented likely very inflated numbers of claimed Ukrainian personnel and equipment losses.[7] Putin also accused Ukraine of being unwilling to negotiate and claimed that Russia cannot pursue an end to hostilities as long as Ukraine is pursuing a counteroffensive, thereby furthering a longstanding Russian information operation that seeks to accuse Ukraine as being the party disinterested in negotiations in order to undermine Ukrainian battlefield successes and reduce international support for Ukraine, as ISW has previously reported.[8]

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in Donetsk and Zaporizhia oblasts on September 12 and have reportedly advanced south of Bakhmut and Robotyne. Ukrainian military sources stated that Ukrainian forces are conducting active offensive operations near Klishchiivka (6km southwest of Bakhmut).[9] The Ukrainian General Staff also stated that Ukrainian forces were additionally successful south and southeast of Robotyne (about 13km south of Orikhiv).[10] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun clarified that Ukrainian forces have advanced between 300-500 meters south and southeast of Robotyne.[11] The Ukrainian Military Media Center noted that Russian forces are increasingly pulling reserves from deep within Russian territory to the frontline in Ukraine out of fear of a Ukrainian breakthrough.[12]

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un arrived in Primorsky Krai on September 12 and will meet with Putin in the coming days, likely to discuss the provision of North Korean artillery munitions to Russia. Kim met with Russian Minister of Natural Resources and Ecology Alexander Kozlov and Primorsky Krai Governor Oleg Kozhemyako upon arriving in Russia.[13] Kim's trip to Russia is his first known trip outside of North Korea since the COVID-19 pandemic.[14] ISW will continue to follow developments in the lead-up to the meeting and will report on the content of the meeting once it becomes available.

Russian authorities have reportedly adjusted air defense systems around Moscow in light of recent increased drone strikes on the city, likely in part to assuage complaints in the Russian information space about the ineffectiveness of air defenses around the capital. The United Kingdom Ministry of Defense (UK MoD) stated that Russian authorities have moved short and medium-range air defense systems, including Pantsir-S1 systems, to elevated positions around Moscow City to target drones.[15] The UK MoD noted that these adjustments are also likely meant to visibly demonstrate to the population that Russian authorities are taking steps to combat increasingly frequent drone strikes in the Russian rear, particularly in Moscow Oblast.[16] ISW has previously reported that Russian sources have complained about Moscow air defenses' inability to stop such drone strikes, with some blaming Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin and his administration directly.[17]

A car killed a Russian milblogger in occupied Donetsk City on September 11. Russian milblogger Gennady Dubovoy died after a car struck him as he crossed the road, and some other Russian milbloggers mourned Dubovoy's death.[18] Dubovoy's death comes amid an ongoing Kremlin and Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) campaign to censor Russian ultranationalist milbloggers whose narratives and complaints deviate too far from accepted official narratives.[19] Dubovoy has recently levied criticisms against the Russian government for its treatment of Russian combat veterans and former Wagner Group fighters, and recently stated that he took a step back from the ultranationalist information space due to demands to report on the "confirmation of your [referring to Russian officials]

delusions.”[20] Dubovoy recently indicated that he is not a supporter of imprisoned ultranationalist and former Russian officer Igor Girkin, whose supporters have recently been the targets of official and public censorship.[21]

Key Takeaways:

- **Russian insider sources claimed that the Kremlin’s inner circle is again actively disagreeing about the necessity of and preparations for a second wave of reserve mobilization ahead of the semi-annual fall conscription cycle, which starts on October 1.**
- **These plans, proposals, and disagreements are not new and do not indicate that Russian President Vladimir Putin has ultimately decided to conduct a second reserve mobilization wave in the near term.**
- **Putin also reamplified several boilerplate information operations falsely framing the Ukrainian counteroffensive as a failed endeavor and accused Ukraine of being unwilling to negotiate during his address at the Eastern Economic Forum.**
- **North Korean leader Kim Jong Un arrived in Primorsky Krai on September 12 and will meet with Putin in the coming days, likely to discuss the provision of North Korean artillery munitions to Russia.**
- **Russian authorities have reportedly adjusted air defense systems around Moscow in light of recent increased drone strikes on the city, likely in part to assuage complaints in the Russian information space about the ineffectiveness of air defenses around the capital.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, along the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia and advanced in some areas on September 12.**
- **Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations in at least two sectors of the front on September 12 and advanced near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast.**
- **Russian officials introduced a bill to the Russian State Duma that would punish Russian servicemen fighting within volunteer armed formations for losing or deliberately destroying military equipment or supplies.**
- **Russian occupation officials continue to deport children from occupied areas of Ukraine to Russia under the guise of recreational programs.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of September 12, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

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

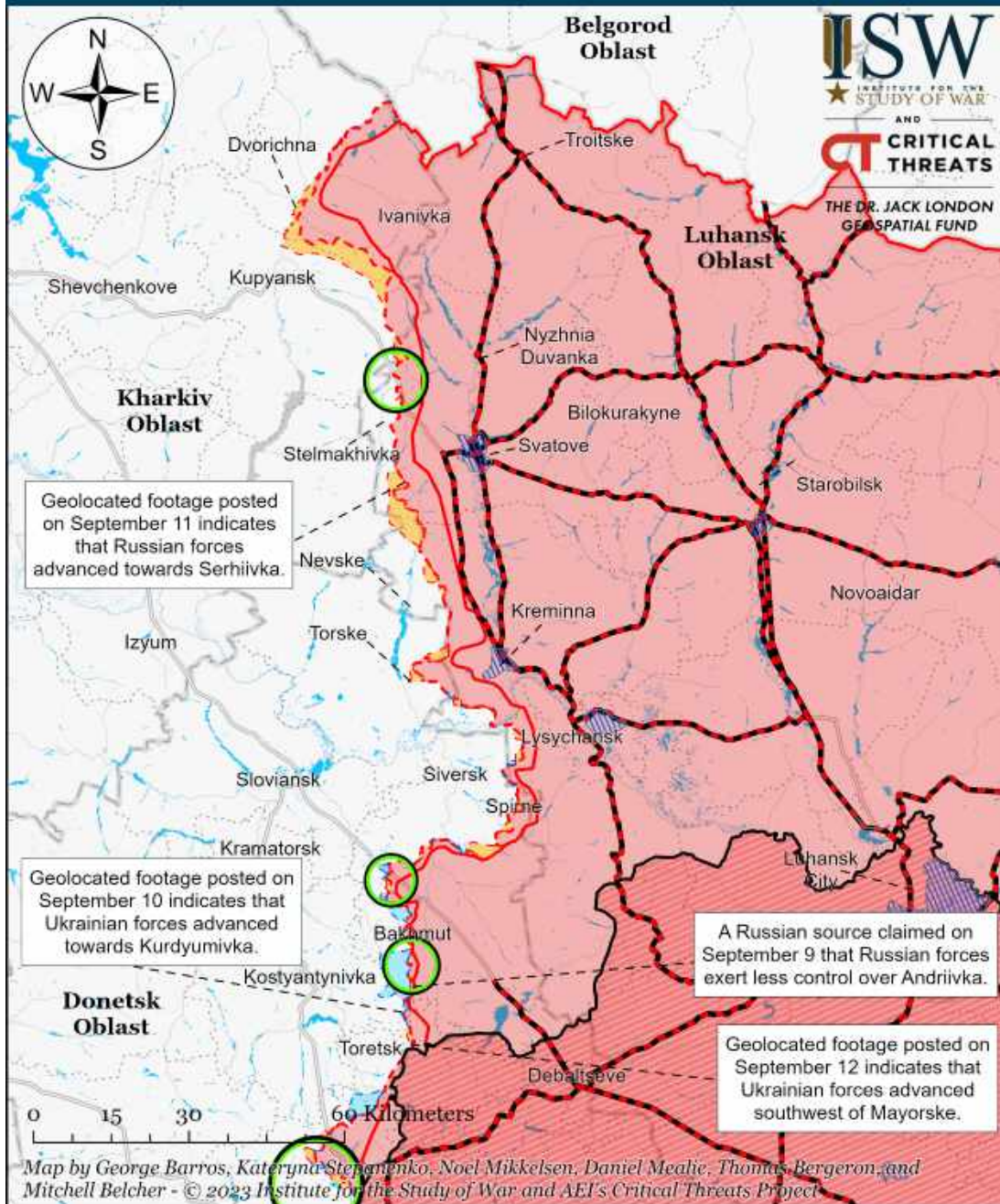
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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)

Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line but did not advance on September 12. Russian sources, including the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked in the direction of Berestove (20km northwest of Svatove), south of Kuzmyne (3km southwest of Kreminna), near Torske (15km west of Kreminna) and in the Serebryanske forest area (10km southwest of Kreminna) and reported that fighting is ongoing near Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk) and in the directions of Petropavlivka (7km east of Kupyansk) and Kyslivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk).[22] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces regularly attack in the forest area west of Kreminna.[23]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on September 12 and advanced. Geolocated footage published on September 11 indicates that Russian forces advanced north of Serhiivka (12km southwest of Svatove).[24] A Russian news aggregator claimed on September 11 that Russian forces also advanced near Synkivka and Petropavlivka.[25] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces continued offensive operations east of the Oskil River (west of and parallel to the Svatove-Kreminna line) and advanced slightly in unspecified areas.[26] The Ukrainian General Staff reported on September 12 that Russian forces continue attempts to break through Ukrainian defenses near Novoselivske (14km northwest of Svatove).[27]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of September 12, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

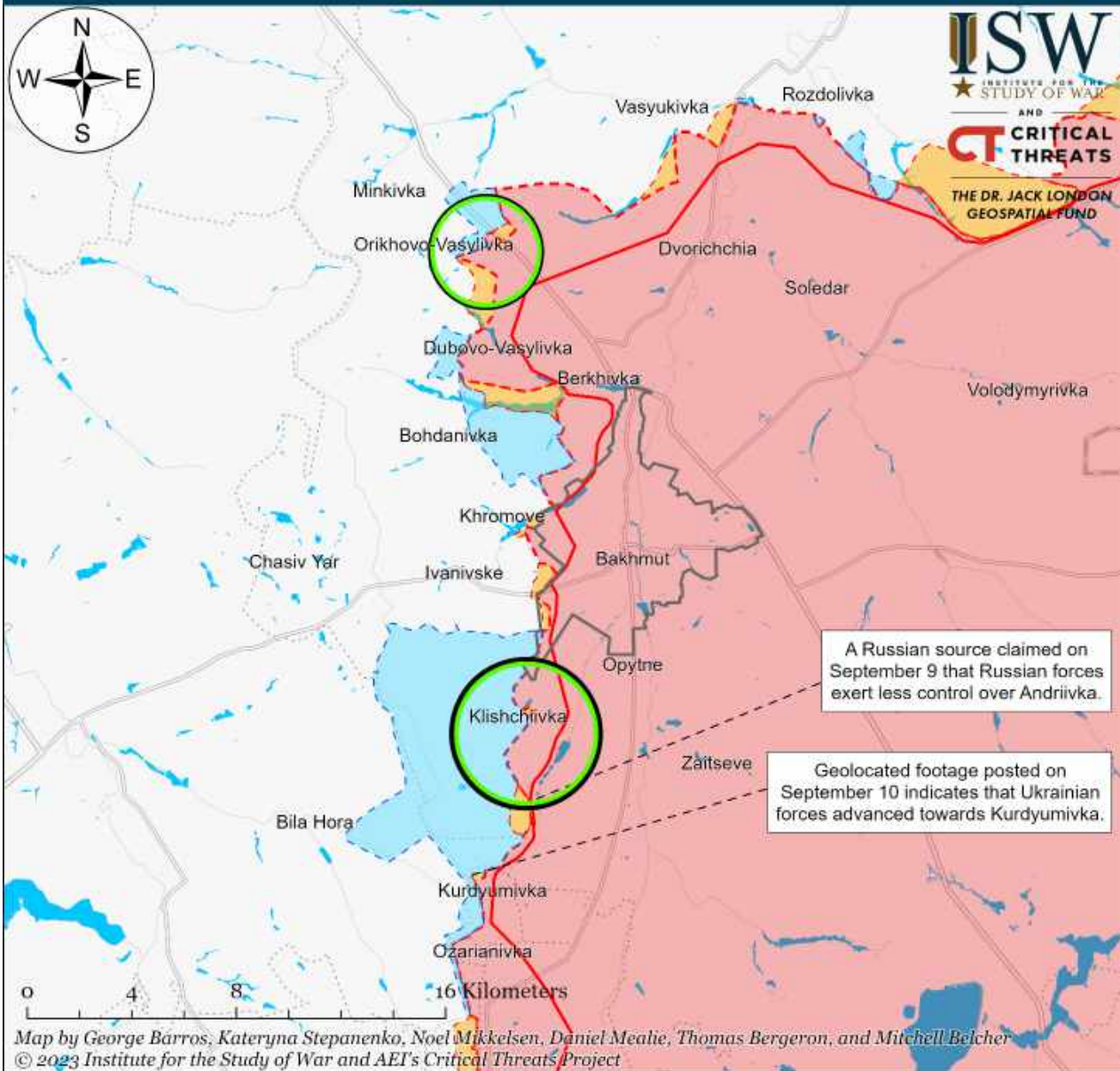
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut on September 12 and recently advanced. Geolocated footage published on September 11 and 12 shows that Ukrainian forces made limited gains north of Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut) and southwest of Mayorsk (21km southwest of Bakhmut).[28] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces are continuing offensive operations and advancing south of Bakhmut.[29] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are operating in the center of Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) where unspecified Chechen "Akhmat" units previously held positions.[30] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Mayorsk and west of Andriivka (9km southwest of Bakhmut).[31] A Russian news aggregator claimed on September 11 that Ukrainian forces entered Andriivka but that Russian forces maintain positions in the settlement.[32]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut on September 12 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful operations near Orikhovo-Vasylivka (11km northwest of Bakhmut) and Klishchiivka.[33] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked near Kurdyumivka.[34] Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov claimed that Chechen "Akhmat" Spetsnaz units are defending near Kurdyumivka and noted that the Russian defense of Klishchiivka and Kurdyumivka is necessary in order to prevent Ukrainian forces from capturing Bakhmut.[35] Kremlin newswire *RIA Novosti* claimed in an article published on September 12 that the "St. George" sabotage and reconnaissance volunteer brigade is defending along the Klishchiivka-Kurdyumivka-Andriivka line (7-13km southwest of Bakhmut).[36] Footage shot on September 11 purportedly shows elements of the 137th Airborne (VDV) Regiment of the 106th VDV Division operating near Rozdolivka (15km northeast of Bakhmut).[37]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of September 12, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, and Mitchell Belcher
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Bakhmut City Limits	Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory	Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*	Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory	Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

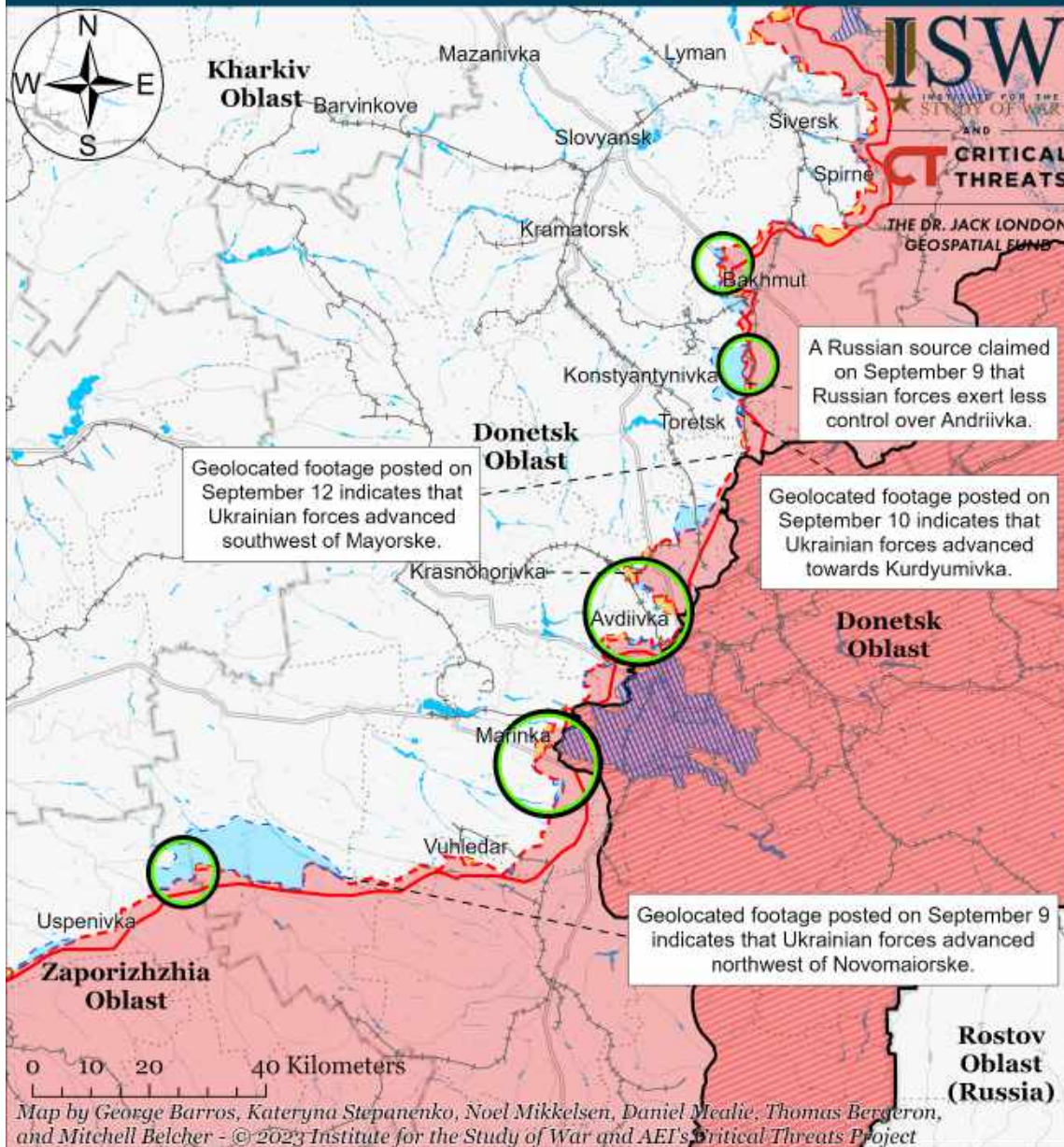
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar stated on September 11 that Ukrainian forces captured two square kilometers in the Bakhmut direction. Russian sources claimed on September 8 that Ukrainian forces captured most of Klishchiivka and Andriivka.

Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on September 12 and reportedly advanced. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked near Opytne (3km southwest of Avdiivka) and Spartak and recaptured unspecified positions that Ukrainian forces had captured on September 11.[38] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Avdiivka, Marinka (on the southwestern outskirts of Donetsk City), and Novomykhailivka (10km southwest of Donetsk City).[39] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces repelled a Russian attack near Novokalynove (11km northwest of Avdiivka).[40] Geolocated footage published on September 12 shows elements of the 1st Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) “Slavic” Brigade (1st DNR Army Corps) defending north of Opytne.[41]

Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on September 12 and did not make any confirmed advances. Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar confirmed that Ukrainian forces entered Opytne and that fighting is ongoing in the settlement.[42] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces control Opytne and that fighting is ongoing north of the settlement where Ukrainian forces control unspecified positions.[43] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Avdiivka.[44]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of September 12, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- + Major Railroads
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

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

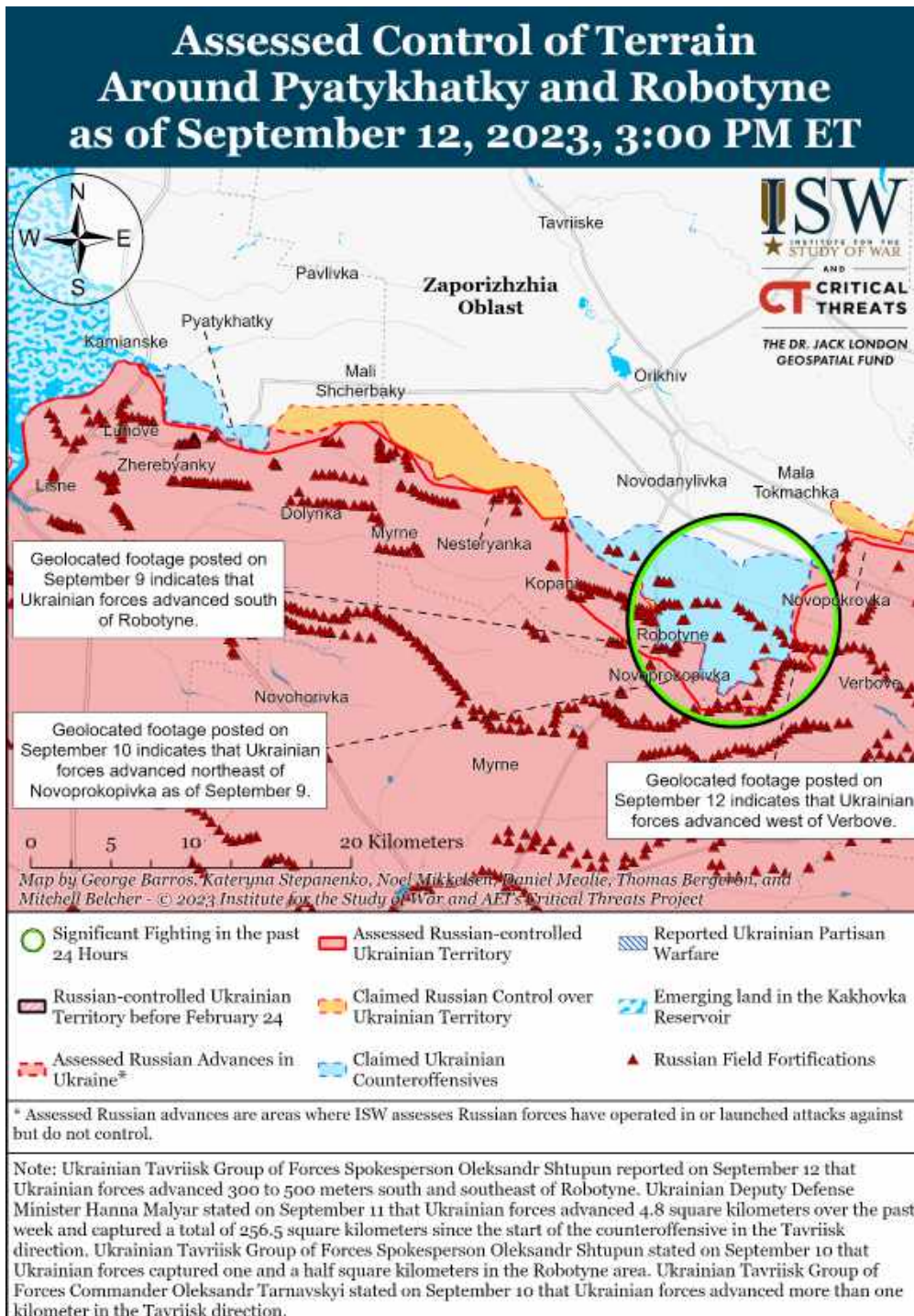
Note: Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar stated on September 11 that Ukrainian forces captured part of Opytne.

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

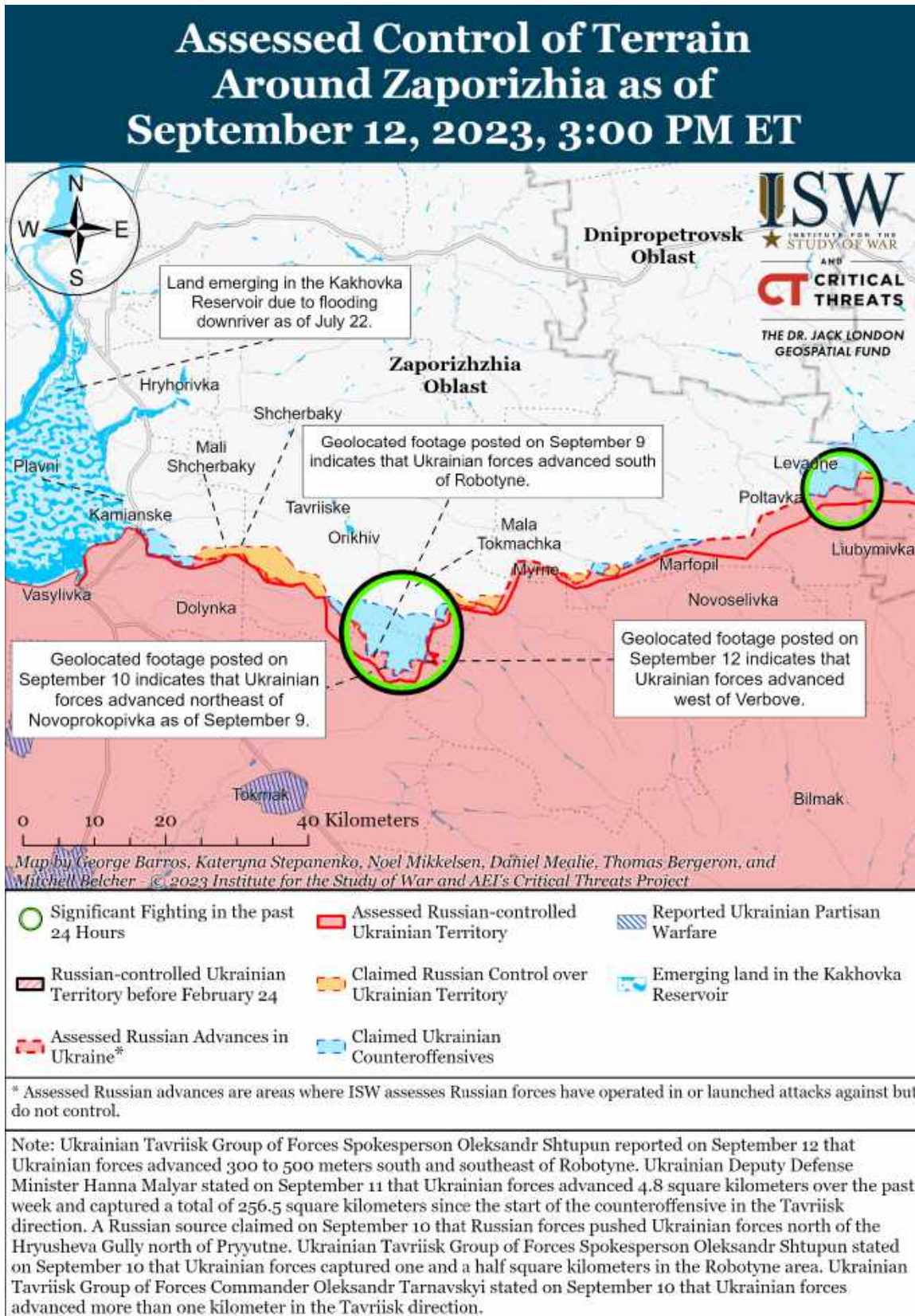
Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area and did not make confirmed advances on September 12. Russian sources claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian attack on the northwestern outskirts of Novomayorske (18km southeast of Velyka Novosilka) on the morning of September 12.[45] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces also conducted unsuccessful attacks on the Urozhaine-Staromayorske line (9km south of Velyka Novosilka).[46] Russian Eastern Grouping of Forces Spokesperson Oleg Chekov claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian infantry attack north of Pryutne (16km southwest of Velyka Novosilka), and a Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces went on the defensive in the area.[47]

Russian forces conducted limited counterattacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area and did not make any claimed or confirmed advances on September 12. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks south of Novodarivka (13km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[48] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces counterattacked near Staromayorske but did not specify an outcome.[49]

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast and reportedly advanced on September 12. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces achieved unspecified successes south and southeast of Robotyne (12km south of Orikhiv).[50] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Oleksandr Shtupun stated that Ukrainian forces advanced 300-500 meters south and southeast of Robotyne and near Novodanylivka (4km south of Orikhiv).[51] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Robotyne, Verbove (18km southeast of Orikhiv), and Novoprokopivka (13km south of Orikhiv).[52] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that the number of daily Ukrainian attacks on the Robotyne-Verbove line decreased as of September 11.[53]



Russian forces continued limited counterattacks in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast and did not advance on September 12. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled multiple Russian attacks near Robotyne.[54]



Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of September 12, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

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

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

Russian officials introduced a bill to the Russian State Duma that would punish Russian servicemen fighting within volunteer armed formations for losing or deliberately destroying military equipment or supplies.[55] Chairperson of the Duma Defense Committee Andrei Kartapalov and other deputies submitted the bill, which stipulates that volunteers do not currently bear financial responsibility for the loss or deliberate destruction of military property unlike Russian regular military personnel, despite receiving military equipment from the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD). The bill is likely a part of the ongoing Russian effort to integrate Russian irregular armed formations into the Russian Armed Forces.

A Russian insider source claimed that deceased Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin used to participate in the release of wealthy inmates and crime bosses from prison under the pretext that they would go fight in Ukraine.[56] The source claimed that wealthy and influential prisoners could purchase parole in return for claiming to participate in combat in Ukraine. The sources claimed that the market for parole purchases has seemingly shut down following Prigozhin's death.

NOTE: Flightradar24 incorrectly reported that a Pouya Air aircraft flew to Russian-occupied Crimea on September 7.[57] This announcement changes ISW's September 8 assessment that the aircraft was possibly transferring military materials and/or personnel to Russian positions in Crimea. Iran continues to supply Russia with military equipment via other routes, such as the Caspian Sea route, however.[58]

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

Russian occupation officials continue to deport children from occupied areas of Ukraine to Russia under the guise of recreational programs. A source affiliated with the Kherson Oblast occupation administration announced on September 12 that 37 children from the Skadovsk Raion of occupied Kherson Oblast went on a 21-day "recreational vacation" to the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic and will receive medical and psychological assistance at the "Rainbow" rehabilitation center.[59] The occupation source posted footage of the children accompanied by an individual in military uniform, suggesting that Russian security forces are overseeing such "trips." ISW continues to assess that any removals of children from their homeland during the course of military conflicts by the occupying power is inherently coercive, and therefore inherently deportation and a violation of international law.[60]

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)

Belarus appears to continue efforts to leverage the Wagner Group. The Belarusian Ministry of Defense (MoD) reported on September 12 that representatives of the Wagner Group taught tactical medicine classes as part of the ongoing "Voenkor-2023" special tactical exercises.[61] The Ukrainian Resistance Center additionally reported that former Wagner fighters who have recently joined the Belarusian "GardService" private military company (PMC) are signing contracts to deploy to an unspecified central African country to guard facilities and train local soldiers.[62]

ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian 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/vchkogpu/41728>

[2] <https://t.me/vchkogpu/41728>

[3] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign...> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign...>

[4] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-15-2023>

[5] <https://www.vedomosti.ru/society/news/2023/09/12/994706-putin-nazval-chislo-prinyatih-na-sluzhbu-po-kontraktu> ; <https://ria.ru/20230912/kontrakt-1895788231.html> ; <https://meduza.io/feature/2023/09/12/anatoliy-chubays-eto-kakoy-to-moshe-izrailevich-arkadiyu-volozhu-pust-tam-horosh-zhivetsya-a-deyatelyam-kultury-luchshe-uehat-i-ne-kapat-na-mozgi>

[6] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign...>

[7] <https://tass.ru/politika/18727055> ; <https://tass.ru/politika/18727031> ; <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/72259> ; <https://meduza.io/feature/2023/09/12/anatoliy-chubays-eto-kakoy-to-moshe-izrailevich-arkadiyu-volozhu-pust-tam-horosh-zhivetsya-a-deyatelyam-kultury-luchshe-uehat-i-ne-kapat-na-mozgi>

[8] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar073023>; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar053023>

[9] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02jzbzDzcxxEHKZC2ckKnRgt4BM5dEupt9J3poFgVgV3NAeurP73gaSoLwFoUf9kewCl>; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02P7EcAag8vkggdjmln7Pkw9wCav3ccuNQOV4HY4xdq4ReXNxc4TBL8Vb6RkoighpQl>; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02yv6Nh6htmVSKBV2vLKtkhXKfMpmjmvJepYzLmzSAm9VxWPny16tiWS9cB2t8qgBE7l>; <https://t.me/militarymediacenter/3124>

[10] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02jzbzDzcxxEHKZC2ckKnRgt4BM5dEupt9J3poFgVgV3NAeurP73gaSoLwFoUf9kewCl>; <https://t.me/militarymediacenter/3123>; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02P7EcAag8vkggdjmln7...>

[11] <https://armyinform.com.ua/2023/09/12/oleksandr-shtupun-okupanty-bezuspishno-namagayutsya-prorvaty-oboronu-v-rajoni-avdiyivky-ta-maryinky/>

[12] <https://t.me/militarymediacenter/3127>

[13] <https://ria.ru/20230912/vstrecha-1895861006.html>

[14] <https://meduza.io/feature/2023/09/12/kim-chen-yn-priehal-v-rossiyu-kak-obychno-na-bronepoezde-i-v-obstanovke-absolyutnoy-sekretnosti>
; <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/north-korea-kim-jong-un-russia-vladim...>

[15] <https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1701472683198685515?s=20>

[16] <https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1701472683198685515?s=20>

[17] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-2-2023> ; <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-1-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-september-7-2023> ; https://t.me/skurlatovlive/10937%C2%A0;%C2%A0https://twitter.com/666_mancer/status/1686239088720936960?s=20 ;

[18] <https://t.me/wargonzo/14985> ; <https://ria.ru/20230911/dtp-1895678659.html>
; <https://t.me/vrogov/12039> ; <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/50443>

[19] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-31-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Aug%2018%20Russian%20Offensive%20Campaign%20Assessment%20PDF.pdf>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Aug%2030%20Russian%20Offensive%20Campaign%20Assessment%20PDF.pdf>

[20] <https://t.me/dubovoykorr/9860>; <https://t.me/dubovoykorr/9864>

[21] <https://t.me/dubovoykorr/9856>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign...>

[22] https://t.me/boris_rozhin/97246 ; <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/50445>; https://t.me/mod_russia/30381 ; https://t.me/mod_russia/30388 ; https://t.me/mod_russia/30394 ; https://t.me/mod_russia/30383 ; https://t.me/dva_majors/25367

[23] https://t.me/boris_rozhin/97246 ; <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/50445> ; <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/52948>

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<https://twitter.com/PauliusZaleckas/status/1701534859695403063>

[25] <https://t.me/readovkanews/65821>

[26] https://t.me/boris_rozhin/97246 ; <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/50445>

- [27] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbido2jbzDzcxxEHKZC2ckKnRgt4BM5dEuPt9J3poFgVgV3NAeurP73gaSoLwFoUf9kewCl> ; <https://armyinform.com.ua/2023/09/12/nashidnomu-napryamku-protyvnyk-prodovzhuye-atakuvaty-pozycziyi-ukrayinskyh-zahysnykiv-illyayevlash/>
- [28] https://t.me/z_arhiv/24759; https://t.me/sudoplatov_official/469 ; <https://twitter.com/GermanObserver1/status/1701620196836860289>; https://t.me/sudoplatov_official/475; <https://twitter.com/GermanObserver1/status/1701620199923786099>
- [29] <https://t.me/militarymediacenter/3124> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbido2P7EcAag8vkggdjmln7PkW9wCav3ccuNQOV4HY4xdq4ReXNxc4TBL8Vb6RkoighpQl>
- [30] https://t.me/prigozhin_2023_tg/3503
- [31] https://t.me/mod_russia/30388 ; https://t.me/mod_russia/30391
- [32] <https://t.me/readovkanews/65821>
- [33] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbido2jbzDzcxxEHKZC2ckKnRgt4BM5dEuPt9J3poFgVgV3NAeurP73gaSoLwFoUf9kewCl> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbido2yv6Nh6htmVSKBV2vLK...> ; <https://t.me/militarymediacenter/3124>
- [34] <https://t.me/wargonzo/14988>
- [35] https://t.me/RKadyrov_95/3888 ; https://t.me/boris_rozhin/97285
- [36] <https://ria.ru/20230912/svo-1895547515.html> ; <https://t.me/sashakots/42149>
- [37] https://t.me/z_arhiv/24751
- [38] <https://t.me/wargonzo/14988> ; <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/52943> ; https://t.me/boris_rozhin/97246 ; <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/50445> ; <https://t.me/readovkanews/65821>
- [39] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbido2yv6Nh6htmVSKBV2vLKtkhXKfMpiMvJepYzLmzSAm9VxWPny16tiWS9cB2t8qgBE7l> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbido2jbzDzcxxEHKZC2ckKn...>
- [40] <https://t.me/wargonzo/14988>
- [41] https://t.me/nm_dnr/10955; <https://x.com/EjShahid/status/170152071755923891?s=20>; <https://x.com/EjShahid/status/1701521746799497658?s=20>
- [42] <https://t.me/annamaliar/1065>
- [43] https://t.me/boris_rozhin/97282 ; https://t.me/boris_rozhin/97246 ; <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/50445>
- [44] https://t.me/mod_russia/30388 ; https://t.me/mod_russia/30391

[45] <https://t.me/wargonzo/14988> ; <https://t.me/readovkanews/65821>; https://t.me/mod_russia/30387; https://t.me/boris_rozhin/97246 ; <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/50445>; https://t.me/batalyon_vostok/179 ; https://t.me/batalyon_vostok/180

[46] <https://t.me/wargonzo/14988>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/65821>; https://t.me/boris_rozhin/97246 ; <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/50445>

[47] https://t.me/mod_russia/30387

[48] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02yv6Nh6htmVSKBV2vLK...>

[49] <https://t.me/wargonzo/14988>

[50] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02jbzDzcxxEHKZC2ckKn...> <https://t.me/militarymediacenter/3123> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02P7EcAag8vkggdjmLn7...>

[51] https://armyinform_dot_com.ua/2023/09/12/oleksandr-shtupun-okupanty-bezuspishno-namagayutsya-prorvaty-oboronu-v-rajoni-avdiyivky-ta-maryinky/

[52] https://t.me/dva_majors/25367; <https://t.me/readovkanews/65821>; https://t.me/mod_russia/30388 ; https://t.me/mod_russia/30393; <https://t.me/wargonzo/14988>

[53] https://t.me/boris_rozhin/97246 ; <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/50445>

[54] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02jbzDzcxxEHKZC2ckKn...> <https://t.me/militarymediacenter/3123>

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[56] <https://t.me/vchkogpu/41716>

[57] <https://twitter.com/RZimmt/status/1701257401242906759?s=20>

[58] <https://apnews.com/article/russia-iran-drone-factory-ukraine-war-dfd46...>

[59] https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/13782

[60] <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v2/rule129>; <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/RS-Eng.pdf>

[61] <https://t.me/modmilby/31868>

[62] https://sprotyv.mod_dot_gov.ua/vagnerivtsi-yaki-pidpysaly-kontrakt-z-biloruskoyu-pvk-vidpravlyayut-v-afryku/

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, September 11, 2023

Karolina Hird, Nicole Wolkov, Christina Harward, Angelica Evans, and Mason Clark

September 11, 2023, 4:15pm ET

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

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

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 12:30pm ET on September 11. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the September 12 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in Donetsk and Zaporizhia oblasts on September 11 and have reportedly advanced near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast. Ukrainian military officials announced on September 11 that Ukrainian forces have liberated 2 square kilometers of territory in the Bakhmut direction over the past week and have made gains near Klishchiivka (6km southwest of Bakhmut) and Andriiivka (9km southwest of Bakhmut).[1] Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar also stated that Ukrainian forces have gained a total of 4.8 square kilometers in the Tavriisk (Zaporizhia) operational direction over the past week, particularly south of Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv) and west of Verbove (20km southeast of Orikhiv).[2]

The Rosgvardia may be recruiting previously imprisoned former Wagner Group fighters, likely to further subsume Wagner remnants while bolstering Russia's domestic security apparatus. Russian opposition outlet *iStories* reported on September 11 that relatives of previously imprisoned former Wagner fighters revealed that some of their relatives received invitations to serve in the Rosgvardia following a series of tests and certifications.[3] *iStories* noted that the Rosgvardia is asking former Wagner fighters to pass a security check and provide documentation of official pardons of their prison sentences, as well as documentation of the conclusion of their contracts with Wagner. *iStories* also amplified the claims of a Rosgvardia servicemember from the 2nd Battalion of an unidentified Moscow-based Rosgvardia unit that ex-Wagner fighters are serving in his unit, including those without any conventional military experience. Another Rosgvardia servicemember from Rostov-on-Don alleged that his unit has sent ex-Wagner fighters to guard "strategic objects" in occupied Ukraine. The Rosgvardia's possible active recruitment of former Wagner fighters is noteworthy in the wake of recent efforts by the Russian leadership to strengthen the Rosgvardia's role as a domestic security organ following Wagner's June 24 armed rebellion.[4] ISW has previously reported on the transfer of "Grom" units (elite anti-drug special units of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs) and heavy weaponry to the Rosgvardia following the rebellion.[5] The Rosgvardia may be recruiting former Wagner fighters to maximize its force generation pool, or potentially to exert more direct control over former Wagner elements in the hopes of consolidating domestic security following the rebellion.

Russian border guards expressed similar grievances about limited capabilities and equipment to those voiced by Russian troops serving in Ukraine and continued to express concern over potential Ukrainian raids into Russia. A Russian milblogger who serves on the Kremlin’s human rights council amplified complaints that the Russian had authorities poorly equip border guard units and failed to supply them with sufficient digital communications systems, reconnaissance and strike drones, mobile transport, and medical supplies.[6] The milblogger noted that these grievances come from almost all border service departments within the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB).[7] The milblogger noted that border service units formed task forces to participate in the Soviet war in Afghanistan and were equipped with artillery, aviation, and armored vehicles, implying modern FSB border guard units need similar capabilities.[8] The milblogger claimed that border guard units only receive anti-tank missiles and mortars from personal connections with Russian military units, and advocated for Russian authorities to provide better equipment — including self-propelled artillery systems and electronic warfare systems — to current border guards, especially those in Bryansk, Kursk, and Belgorod oblasts, which border Ukraine.[9] The milblogger’s reference to the Soviet border guards’ participation in the war in Afghanistan and call for the provision of more complex systems suggest that Russian border guards continue to be concerned about the threat of possible Ukrainian cross-border raids into Russia and Ukrainian drone attacks on Russian territory.

Russian forces conducted a series of Shahed-131/136 drone strikes targeting southern Ukraine on the night of September 10 to 11. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces shot down 12 Shaheds over Zaporizhia, Dnipropetrovsk, and Mykolaiv oblasts and another unspecified drone.[10] Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Head Kyrylo Budanov stated on September 11 that Russian forces are changing tactics and using drones “en masse.”[11] The Ukrainian General Staff also reported that Russian forces launched 10 missiles, including Kh-31P anti-radar missiles and Ka-59 guided cruise missiles, at Dnipropetrovsk Oblast.[12]

The Kremlin’s ruling United Russia party unsurprisingly achieved most of its desired results in highly fraudulent local elections in Russia and occupied Ukraine. The Russian Central Election Commission (CEC) claimed that United Russia won gubernatorial elections in 13 regions and is leading in six regions where votes are still being counted.[13] United Russia gubernatorial candidates won over 72 percent of the vote in 13 out of 20 regions in Central Russia, the Russian Far East, and Siberia.[14] All three of the candidates that Russian President Vladimir Putin publicly endorsed — Nizhny Novgorod Governor Gleb Nitkin, Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin, and Smolensk Governor Vasily Anokhin — won or are leading by major margins.[15] United Russia reportedly received 83 percent of the vote in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast in Ukraine, 78 percent in Donetsk Oblast, 74 percent in Luhansk Oblast, and 74.8 percent in Kherson Oblast.[16] Non-United Russia gubernatorial candidates won in only two regions, Khakassia and Oryol oblasts, where Communist Party incumbents were re-elected.[17] ISW has previously reported on the Kremlin’s extensive preparations to intimidate voters and directly falsify results to ensure a United Russia victory throughout Russia and in highly fraudulent “elections” in occupied Ukraine.[18]

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Russian President Vladimir Putin will meet in Vladivostok in the coming days, likely to discuss bilateral relations and North Korea’s supplies of artillery munitions to Russia.[19] The Kremlin announced on September 11 that Kim will meet with Putin in the coming days, and Kim has reportedly left Pyongyang and is traveling to Russia.[20] ISW will continue to follow developments in the lead-up to the meeting.

US and Armenian forces began joint military exercises in Armenia on September 11. The Armenian Ministry of Defense stated that the joint US-Armenian “Eagle Partner 2023” exercises will prepare Armenian forces to take part in international peacekeeping missions and will last until September 20.[21] 85 US personnel and 175 Armenian personnel are participating in exercises at the Zar and Armavir training grounds near Yerevan.[22] “Eagle Partner 2023” will occur against the backdrop of increasingly tense relations between Moscow and Yerevan, as well as heightened tensions between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces in Nagorno-Karabakh.[23]

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in Donetsk and Zaporizhia oblasts on September 11 and have reportedly advanced near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast.**
- **The Rosgvardia may be recruiting previously imprisoned former Wagner Group fighters, likely to further subsume Wagner remnants while bolstering Russia’s domestic security apparatus.**
- **Russian border guards expressed similar grievances about limited capabilities and equipment to those voiced by Russian troops serving in Ukraine and continued to express concern over potential Ukrainian raids into Russia.**
- **The Kremlin’s ruling United Russia party unsurprisingly achieved most of its desired results in highly fraudulent local elections in Russia and occupied Ukraine.**
- **North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Russian President Vladimir Putin will meet in Vladivostok in the coming days, likely to discuss bilateral relations and North Korea’s supplies of artillery munitions to Russia.**
- **US and Armenian forces began joint military exercises in Armenia on September 11.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and advanced in some areas on September 11.**
- **Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations in at least one sector of the front on September 11 and advanced near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast.**
- **Russian Central Election Committee Head Alexander Sidyakin unsurprisingly claimed that United Russia received the majority of votes in occupied Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts.**
- **Ukrainian and United Kingdom military officials reported on September 11 that the Russian military intends to mobilize over 400,000 personnel by the end of 2023.**

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

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of September 11, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



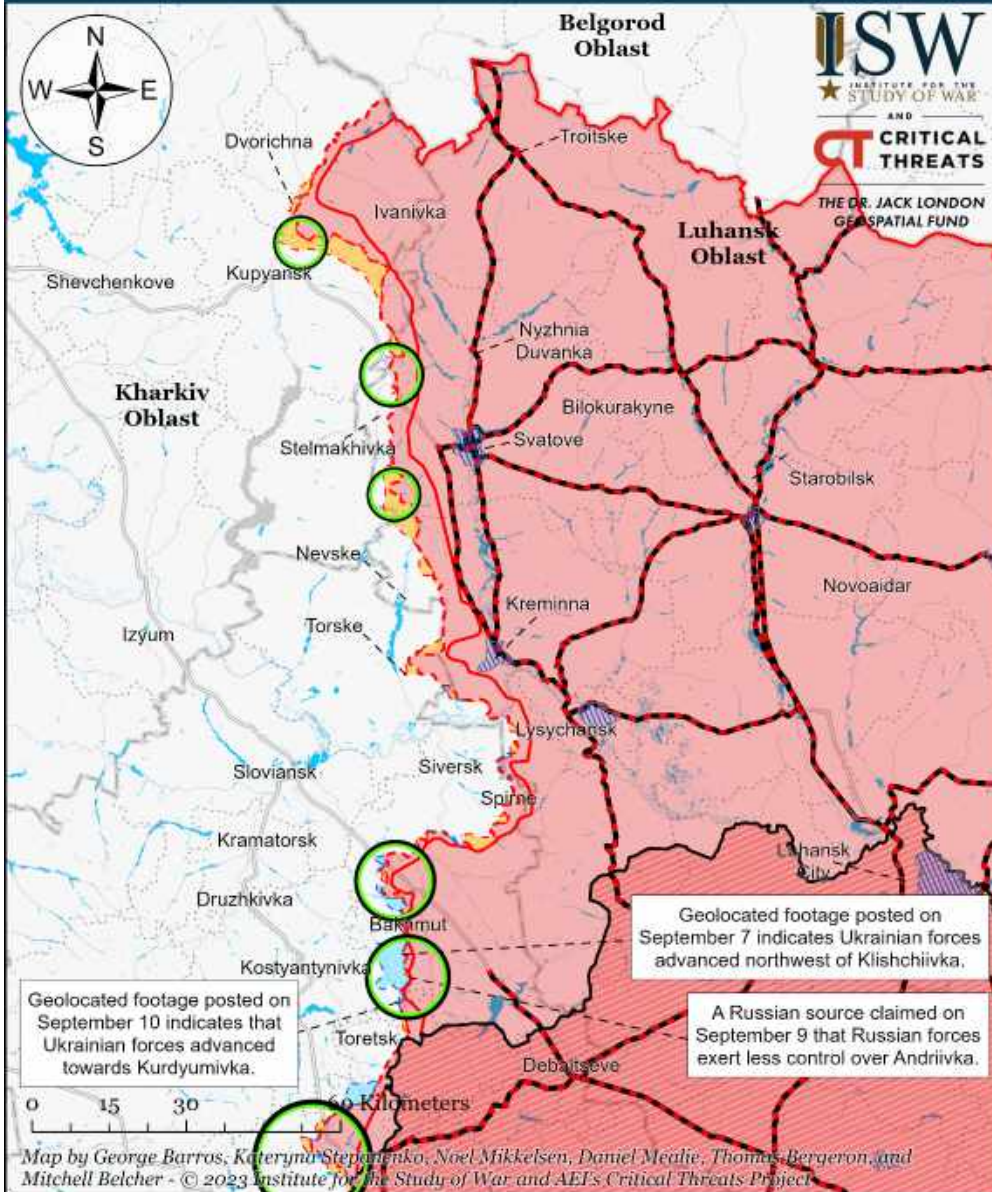
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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 forces continued offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on September 11 and advanced in the Kupyansk direction. Geolocated footage posted on September 11 shows that Russian forces have made gains near the forest belt northeast of Synkivka (10km northeast of Kupyansk).[24] Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar reported ongoing heavy fighting in the Kupyansk direction and that Ukrainian forces are repelling Russian attacks near Synkivka.[25] Malyar also stated that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations along the Svatove-Kreminna line near Berestove (20km northwest of Svatove), Novoselivske (14km northwest of Svatove), and Novoyehorivka (15km southwest of Svatove).[26] A Russian source claimed that Russian forces have advanced up to half a kilometer near Novoyehorivka.[27] A Russian milblogger posted combat footage of the 488th Motorized Rifle Regiment (144th Motorized Rifle Division, 20th Combined Arms Army, Western Military District) fighting near Kreminna.[28] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Ilya Yevlash noted that Russian forces are conducting intense artillery fire along this line.[29]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful ground attacks near Kreminna on September 11. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled three Ukrainian assault groups west of Dibrova (5km southwest of Kreminna).[30] Several Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces are focusing on attacks in the Serebryanske forest area near Torske (15km west of Kreminna).[31]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of September 11, 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

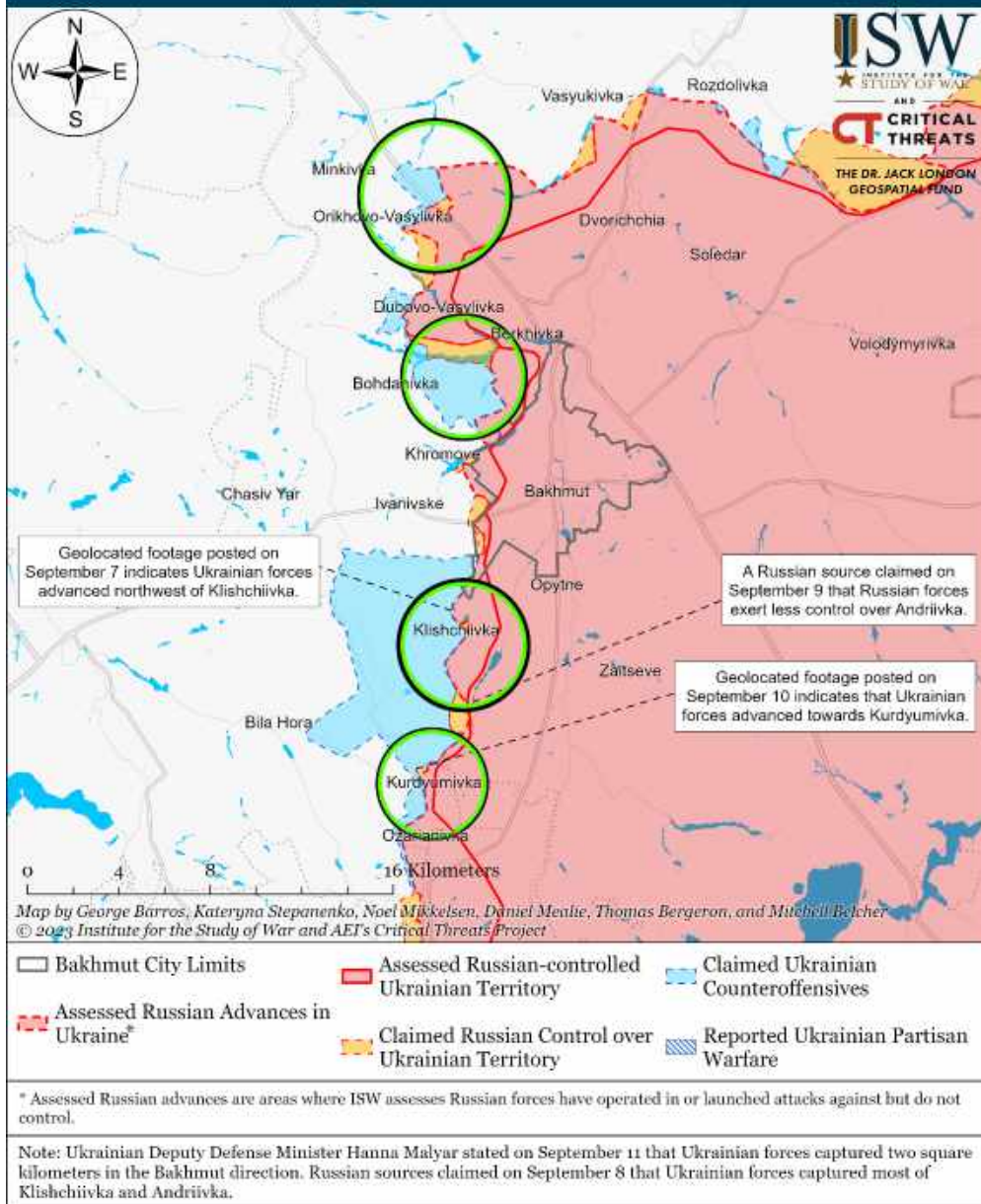
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut and reportedly advanced on September 11. The Ukrainian General Staff and Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar reported that Ukrainian forces advanced near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) and Andriivka (9km southwest of Bakhmut).[32] A Russian milblogger also claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced into Andriivka.[33] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Ilya Yevlash stated that Ukrainian forces are achieving unspecified success near Klishchiivka, Predtechyne (16km southwest of Bakhmut), Andriivka, Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut), and Dachne (19km southwest of Bakhmut).[34] The Russian MoD claimed that elements of the Russian Southern Grouping of Forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Kurdyumivka.[35] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces continue to counterattack in the Klishchiivka-Andriivka-Kurdyumivka area but have not advanced in this area.[36] The milblogger claimed that Russian forces still control Andriivka and Kurdyumivka.[37] Malyar stated that Ukrainian forces have liberated two square kilometers in the Bakhmut direction over the past week.[38]

Russian forces continued ground attacks near Bakhmut but did not make any confirmed advances on September 11. The Ukrainian General Staff and Malyar reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Zaliznyanske (13km north of Bakhmut), Orikhovo-Vasylivka (11km northwest of Bakhmut), Bohdanivka (5km northwest of Bakhmut), Klishchiivka, and Kurdyumivka.[39] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces conducted assaults near Orikhovo-Vasylivka, Berkhivka (6km north of Bakhmut), and Klishchiivka but did not specify an outcome.[40] A Russian news aggregator claimed on September 10 that Russian forces conducted assaults near Dubovo-Vasylivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut) and Andriivka.[41] Another Russian milblogger claimed on September 11 that Russian forces rotated units of the Russian 106th Airborne (VDV) Assault Brigade on Bakhmut’s northern flank, likely referring to a tactical rotation-in-place by elements of the 106th Brigade, as Russian forces have done in western Zaporizhia Oblast.[42] Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov claimed that Chechen “Akhmat” Spetsnaz forces alongside the Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR) 2nd Army Corps and Russian 346th Spetsnaz Brigade (Russian General Staff Main Directorate [GRU]) are operating on the western outskirts of Klishchiivka.[43] A Russian milblogger also amplified footage claiming to show elements of the “Yenisei” detachment of the “Sibir” Cossack Brigade of the Volunteer Assault Corps operating near Bakhmut.[44]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of September 11, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

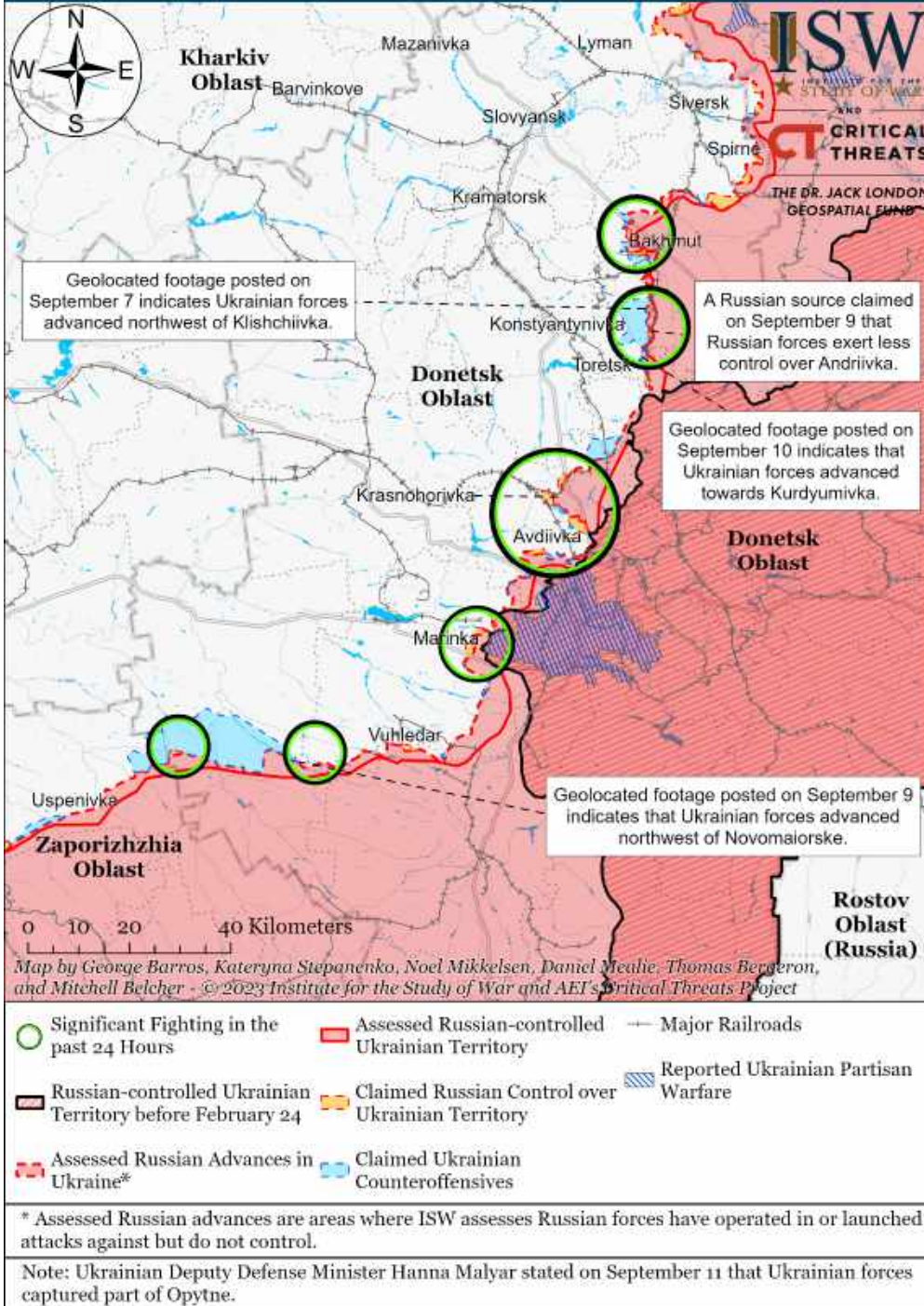


Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line and reportedly advanced on September 11. Malyar stated that Ukrainian forces control part of Opytne (3km southwest of Avdiivka) but noted that the situation is fluid and fighting continues.[45] One Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced near Opytne and in the direction of Spartak (4km south of Avdiivka).[46] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces lack manpower, competent commanders, quality assault tactics, and counterbattery capabilities in this area of the front.[47] Other Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced to the outskirts of Opytne but Russian forces immediately pushed them back and retained full control of the settlement,

however.[48] The Russian MoD claimed on September 11 that elements of the Russian Southern Grouping of Forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Avdiivka and Krasnohorivka (directly west of Donetsk City).[49]

Russian forces conducted ground attacks along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on September 11 but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff and Malyar reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Keramik (14km northwest of Avdiivka), Avdiivka, Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka), Marinka (on the southwestern outskirts of Donetsk City), and Novomykhailivka (10km southwest of Donetsk City).[50] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked in Marinka.[51] A Russian news aggregator claimed on September 10 that Russian forces attacked the southern outskirts of Avdiivka, near Krasnohorivka, and on the western outskirts of Marinka.[52]

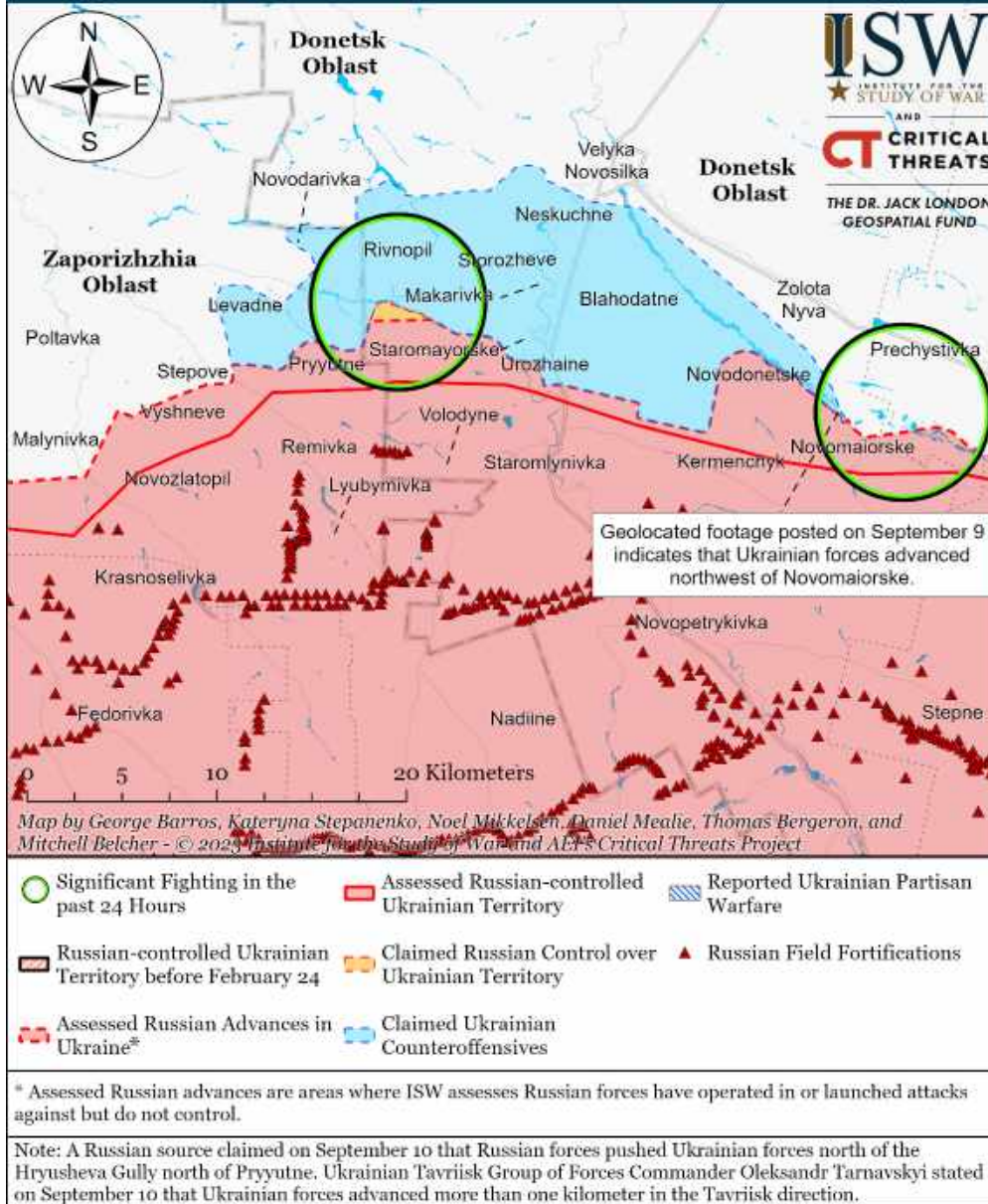
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of September 11, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area and reportedly advanced on September 11. Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar stated that Ukrainian forces have achieved unspecified successes near Novomayorske (18km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[53] Russian sources, including the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), claimed on September 10 and 11 that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked northwest of Novomayorske, near Novodonetske (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka), and north of Pryutne (16km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[54]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of September 11, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

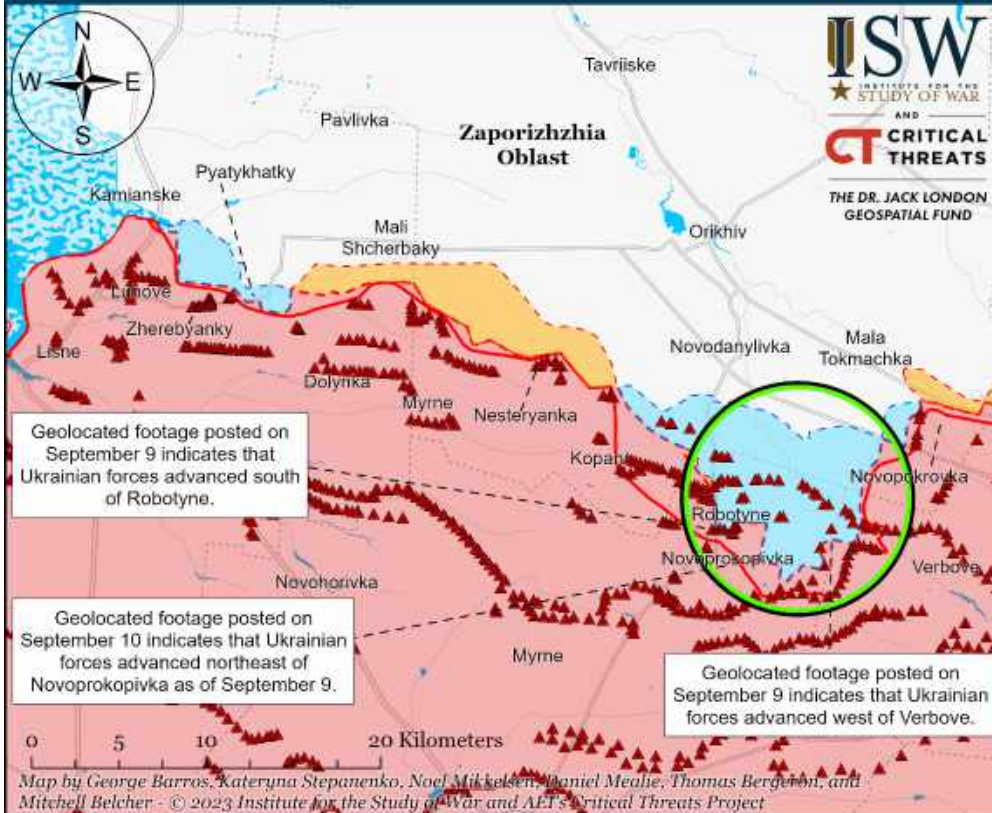


Russian sources claimed that Russian forces conducted offensive operations in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area on September 11 and reportedly advanced. A Russian milblogger claimed on September 10 that Russian forces recaptured lost positions north of Pryyutne near the Hrusheva Gully.[55] A Russian media aggregator claimed on September 10 that Russian forces counterattacked near Novomaiorske.[56] A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the Russian 40th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) are operating near Novomaiorske.[57]

Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast on September 11 and reportedly advanced. Malyar stated that Ukrainian forces have advanced 4.8 square kilometers in the past week in the Tavriisk (Zaporizhia) direction and that Ukrainian forces achieved unspecified successes south of Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv) and west of Verbove (18km southeast of Orikhiv).[58] Russian sources, including the Russian MoD, claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Robotyne and in the forested area east of the settlement.[59] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked along the Robotyne-Verbove line.[60] A Russian news aggregator claimed on September 10 that Ukrainian forces attempted to advance towards Novoprokopivka (13km south of Orikhiv).[61]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast and reportedly advanced on September 11. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Novodanylivka (6km south of Orikhiv) and Robotyne.[62] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces successfully counterattacked near Novofedorivka (21km southeast of Orikhiv).[63] Russian sources also claimed on September 10 and 11 that Russian forces regained lost positions east of Robotyne and near Verbove.[64]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of September 11, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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Geolocated footage posted on September 9 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced south of Robotyne.

Geolocated footage posted on September 10 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced northeast of Novopropkivka as of September 9.

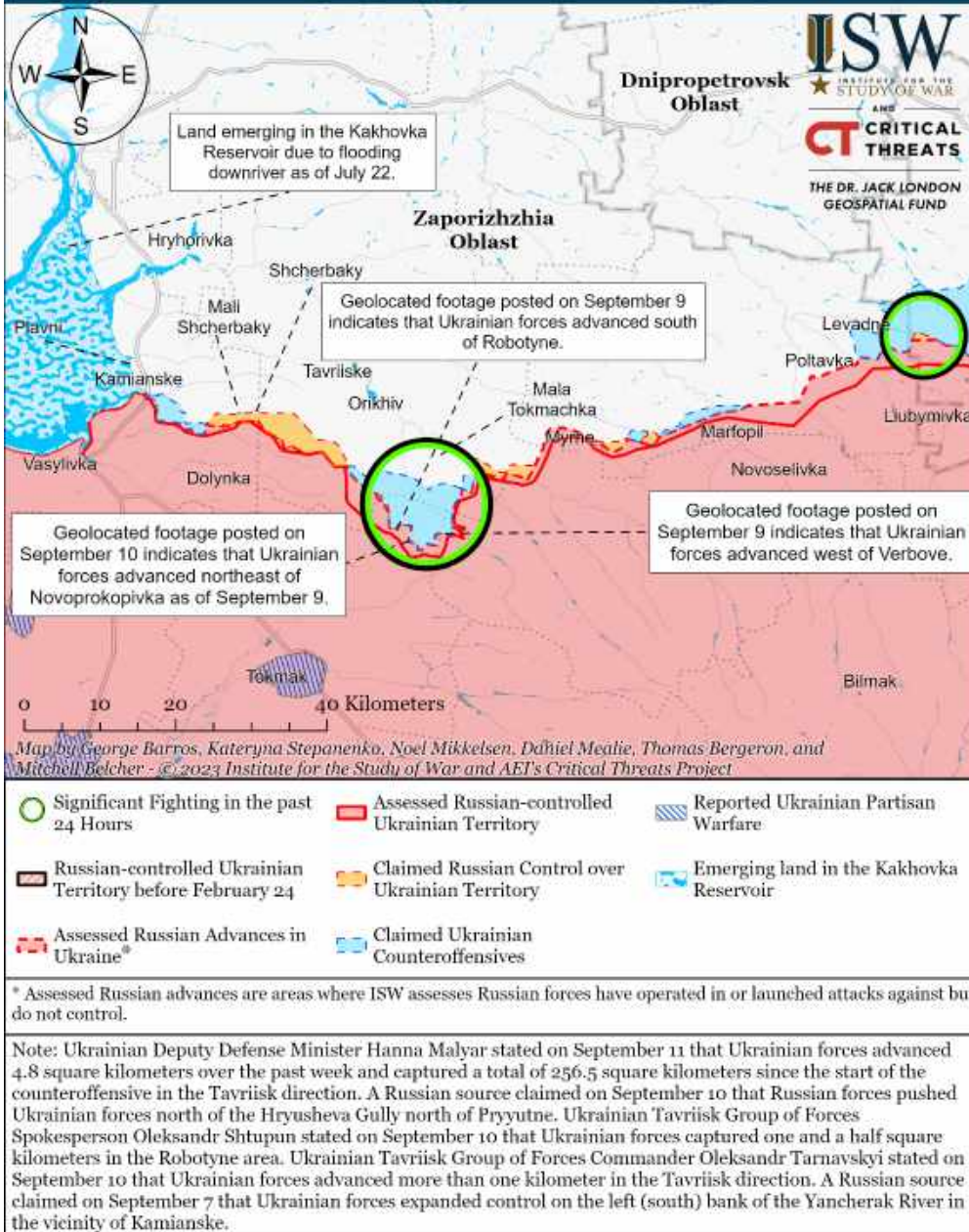
Geolocated footage posted on September 9 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced west of Verbove.

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

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

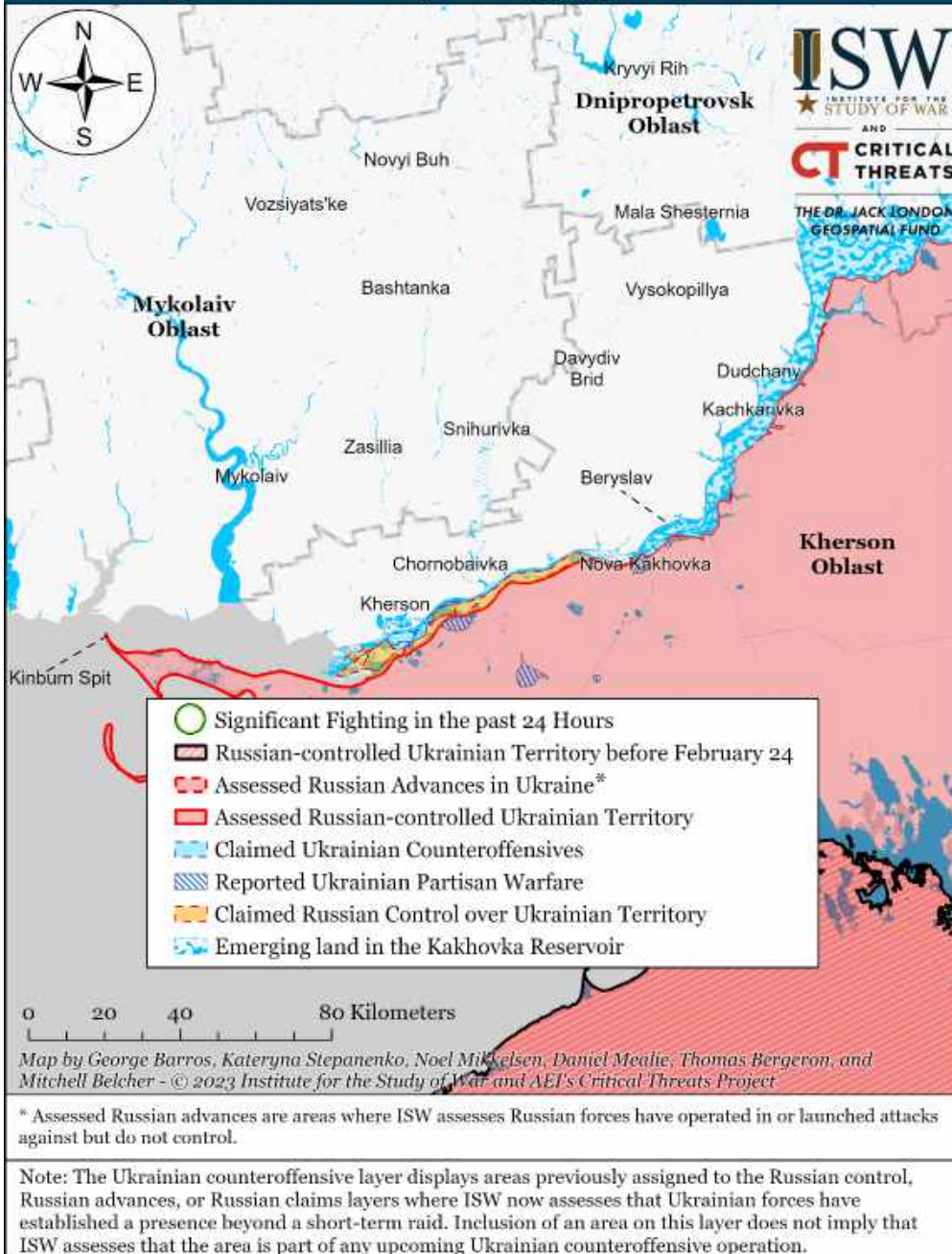
Note: Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar stated on September 11 that Ukrainian forces advanced 4.8 square kilometers over the past week and captured a total of 256.5 square kilometers since the start of the counteroffensive in the Tavriisk direction. Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Oleksandr Shtupun stated on September 10 that Ukrainian forces captured one and a half square kilometers in the Robotyne area. Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Commander Oleksandr Tarnavskiy stated on September 10 that Ukrainian forces advanced more than one kilometer in the Tavriisk direction. A Russian source claimed on September 7 that Ukrainian forces expanded control on the left (south) bank of the Yancherak River in the vicinity of Kamianske.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of September 11, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) stated on September 11 that GUR units restored Ukrainian control over the Boyko Towers gas production drilling platforms off the coast of Crimea in the Black Sea on an unspecified date.[65] Russian forces controlled the drilling platforms since 2015.[66]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of September 11, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

Ukrainian and United Kingdom military officials reported on September 11 that the Russian military intends to mobilize over 400,000 personnel by the end of 2023. The United Kingdom Ministry of

Defense (UK MoD) reported that the Russian military intends to recruit 420,000 contract personnel by the end of 2023.[67] ISW has previously assessed that this number likely includes many volunteers who are already fighting in Ukraine, and who were forced to sign contracts with the Russian MoD by July 1, 2023.[68] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that the Russian military will conduct mass forced mobilization of about 400,000 to 700,000 people in Russia and occupied Ukraine in the “near future.”[69] It is unclear if these figures include personnel already serving in volunteer and irregular formations in Ukraine, and it is unlikely that these numbers refer to total combat power. The Ukrainian General Staff also reported that Russian authorities plan to call up about 40,000 Chechen residents to serve in “blocking units,” likely referencing Chechen units that served as “barrier forces” policing Russian military deserters in occupied Kherson Oblast.[70]

Israeli National Intelligence Agency (Mossad) Director David Barnea stated on September 10 that Iran previously intended to provide Russia with short- and long-range missiles, but that unspecified actors “foiled these plans.”[71]

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

Russian Central Election Committee (CEC) Head Alexander Sidyakin unsurprisingly claimed that United Russia received the majority of votes in occupied Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts.[72] Sidyakin also claimed that voter turnout ranged from 74.4 percent to over 80 percent in these occupied areas. ISW has previously reported that Russian occupation authorities likely attempted to inflate voter turnout numbers prior to the election through coercive measures and conducting door-to-door voting.[73] The supposedly high rate of voter turnout in occupied Ukraine is also likely a reflection of recent massive demographic changes as a result of Russia’s occupation of Ukraine. Russian independent outlet *Mozhem Obyasnit (We Can Explain)* reported that occupied almost 10 percent of Zaporizhia Oblast’s adult population left during Russia’s occupation.[74] This figure likely comprises both segments of the population that were able to leave freely and those that Russian authorities have forcibly removed to other occupied areas of Ukraine or deported to the Russian Federation.

UN Special Rapporteur Alice Jill Edwards reported that Russian authorities likely torture Ukrainian civilians and prisoners of war (POWs) as part of a “state policy.”[75] Edwards reported on September 10 that Russian authorities likely continue to torture Ukrainian civilians and POWs and that acts of torture seem “orchestrated as part of a State policy to intimidate, instill fear, punish, or extract information and confessions.”[76] Edwards also stated that these acts of torture and violent punishment would violate international human rights and humanitarian law.[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)

The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on September 11 that Belarus plans to create its own private military company (PMC) out of Wagner Group fighters who remained in Belarus.[78] The Resistance Center stated that Wagner fighters in Belarus who chose not to sign contracts with the Russian MoD have the option to join Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko’s “HardService”

PMC, which has existed since 2019. The Resistance Center noted that “HardService” will train in Minsk Oblast and that Lukashenko hopes to use them in protest suppression.

ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian 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://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02FEC1hBUDruzbkcR6AALvqHtNB6FZ9yRjiKncd3iGuCsf9innCTRQBeYSAX4fTdgl>; <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-tavriyskyy-napryamok-front-zvlnennya-viyna-malyar/32587510.html> ; <https://t.me/annamaliar/1064>; <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/32587251.html>; https://suspilne.media/569757-sili-oboroni-zajnali-castinu-opitnogo-rosijski-vijska-obstrilali-masinu-inozemnih-volonteriv-565-den-vijni-onlajn-2/?anchor=live_1694444238&utm_source=copypink&utm_medium=ps

[2] <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-tavriyskyy-napryamok-front-zvlnennya-viyna-malyar/32587510.html> ; <https://t.me/annamaliar/1064>

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[14] <https://meduza dot io/feature/2023/09/11/sobyanin-snova-vseh-pobedil-kak-proshli-vybory-na-anneksirovannyh-territoriyah-i-chem-zakonchilas-kampaniya-v-hakasii> ;

[15] <https://meduza dot io/news/2023/09/11/vo-vseh-regionah-rossii-gde-proschli-vybory-gubernatorov-lidiruyut-deystvuyuschie-rukovoditeli-bolshinstvo-iz-nih-edinorossy> ; http://www.cikrf dot ru/analog/ediny-den-golosovaniya-2023/p_itogi/vibori-visshih.php ; https://smolensk-i dot ru/authority/vasilij-anohin-s-ogromnym-otryvom-lidiruet-na-vyborah-gubernatora-smolenskoj-oblasti_510956 ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar090923>

[16] <https://meduza dot io/feature/2023/09/11/sobyanin-snova-vseh-pobedil-kak-proshli-vybory-na-anneksirovannyh-territoriyah-i-chem-zakonchilas-kampaniya-v-hakasii>

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[18] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-22-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-september-10-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-september-9-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-september-1-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-25-2023>

[19] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/ukraine-conflict-updates> ; https://t.me/boris_rozhin/97216 ; https://t.me/prigozhin_2023_tg/3475

[20] <http://www.kremlin dot ru/events/president/news/7224> ; <https://www.forbes dot ru/society/496200-uznokorejskie-smi-soobsili-ob-ot-ezde-kim-cen-yna-v-rossiu-dla-vstreci-s-putinyam> ; <https://t.me/rybar/51778> ; <https://t.me/rusbrief/153815>

[21] <https://www.azatutyun dot am/a/32587100.html> ; <https://www.rferl dot org/a/armenia-military-exercises-us-russian-opposition/32587572.html> ; <https://www.barrons.com/news/armenia->

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[23] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar091023>; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar090723>;
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[27] <https://t.me/readovkanews/65773>

[28] https://t.me/boris_rozhin/97202

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