

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 8, 2023

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October 8, 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 12:30pm ET on October 8. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 9 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

NOTE: ISW has added a new section on Russian information operations and narratives to the daily Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, found at the end of the update.

Russia advanced legal mechanisms to reform the Leningrad Military District as part of ongoing large-scale military reforms. The Russian federal portal of draft regulatory legal acts published a presidential decree on October 8, prepared by the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), which proposes stripping the Northern Fleet (NF) of its status as an “interspecific strategic territorial association.”^[1] Russian state media noted that the proposal indicates that the NF will no longer be a separate military-administrative unit equal to a military district, suggesting that the NF and its four constituent regions (The Komi Republic, Arkhangelsk, and Murmansk oblasts, and the Nenets Autonomous Okrug) will be transferred to the reformed Leningrad Military District.^[2] Russian military analyst Yuri Fedorov noted that the recreation of the Leningrad Military District suggests that Russia is preparing for possible conflicts with Baltic states and NATO.^[3] The Russian military merged the Moscow and Leningrad Military Districts into the Western Military District in 2010.^[4] The MoD created the Northern Fleet in 2014 out of territory covered by the Western Military District, and Russian President Vladimir Putin made the NF a military-administrative unit equal to a military district starting January 1, 2021.^[5] Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu proposed the recreation of the Moscow and Leningrad Military Districts on the basis of the Western Military District (reversing the 2010 and 2014 changes) in December of 2022, and confirmed that these military districts were under active formation as of August 2023.^[6] The MoD’s decision to re-divide the WMD indicates Russia sees the need to restructure its forces facing NATO and likely posture on the Finnish border, although it remains unclear how Russia will be able to mobilize, train, and organize these forces into new military district-level formations.

Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations near Bakhmut and marginally advanced in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 8. Geolocated footage published on October 8 shows that Ukrainian forces made limited gains north of Novoprokopivka (14km south of Orikhiv), and a Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces also advanced near Kopani (10km southwest of Orikhiv).^[7] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces achieved partial success northeast of Andriivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut), and Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued attacks near Andriivka, and Kurdyumivka (11km southwest of Bakhmut).^[8] Russian and Ukrainian sources reported that deteriorating weather conditions are impacting both Russian and Ukrainian operations across the theater. Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel

Oleksandr Shtupun stated that Russian drone and aviation activity has decreased in the past few days due to poor weather.[9] Russian milbloggers claimed that deteriorating weather conditions in the Bakhmut and Zaporizhia directions are impacting Ukrainian offensive operations as well as Russian aerial reconnaissance operations.[10] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash reiterated that poor weather may impact drone and aviation operations but that the weather will not halt Ukraine's counteroffensive.[11]

Russian forces are intensifying mining efforts in the Robotyne-Verbove area and seek to fix Ukrainian forces on areas of the front away from western Zaporizhia Oblast. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces have begun re-mining previously cleared areas on the Robotyne-Verbove line (10km south to 18km southeast of Orikhiv) to achieve tactical surprise.[12] The milbloggers claimed that heavy Russian mining and re-mining efforts have disrupted the movement of heavy Ukrainian cargo and equipment in these areas in recent days. A prominent Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Russian forces intensified tactical offensive operations in several areas of the front beyond Zaporizhia Oblast in order to stretch Ukrainian defenses and divide Ukrainian attention.[13] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun stated that Russian forces are trying to fix Ukrainian forces in the Avdiivka and Marinka directions and prevent them from deploying reserves to the Zaporizhia direction.[14]

Russian sources are highlighting apparent fault lines between regular Russian forces and irregular formations of the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR). A Russian milblogger claiming to be a Buryat soldier fighting in the 37th Motorized Rifle Brigade [MRB] (36th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) responded on October 7 to a post published by another milblogger on August 13 that accused the 37th MRB of abandoning their positions around Novodonetske (in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia border area) during Ukrainian attacks that ultimately liberated the village, leaving only elements of the DNR "Kaskad" operational tactical combat formation to defend the area.[15] The Buryat milblogger refuted this story and claimed that "Kaskad" conducts a small part of combat activities on the front while regular Russian troops shoulder more of the offensive burden, and derided other DNR units for having positions far behind frontline areas held by regular units.[16] The milblogger also claimed that DNR units have low skill levels and that regular Russian troops distrust them.[17] The allegations made by this milblogger against DNR formations suggest that there is continued friction between DNR forces and regular Russian forces, which is likely to further complicate efforts to integrate DNR forces into the regular Russian military as part of ongoing military reforms.[18]

Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat expressed concern over an anticipated Russian Shahed 131/136 drone strike campaign against Ukraine this winter. Ihnat stated on October 8 that Russian forces have increased the intensity of Shahed strikes recently, as Ukrainian officials previously warned.[19] Ihnat stated that Russian forces used 1,000 Shahed drones during the 2023-23 heating season but used a record 500 drones during September 2023 alone, indicating that Ukraine needs to prepare seriously for Russia's 2023-24 winter drone strike campaign. Ihnat noted that Ukraine is gradually replacing Soviet air defense systems with Western-provided systems and intends to use these systems to protect Ukrainian energy facilities, port infrastructure, grain silos, and other critical infrastructure against Russian drone strikes this winter. Ihnat added that Russian authorities want to increase the production of Shahed drones domestically but cannot overcome their reliance on Iran for certain technologies and spare parts required for production.[20]

The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) observed satellite imagery showing that rail traffic between North Korea and Russia “dramatically” increased since Russian President Vladimir Putin met with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un on September 12-17.[21] CSIS’ *Beyond Parallel* project found that satellite imagery captured on October 5 showed an “unprecedented” 73 freight railcars at the North Korea’s Tumangang Rail Facility. *Beyond Parallel* noted that previous satellite images showed a maximum of approximately 20 railcars at the Tumangang facility at once over the past five years. *Beyond Parallel* also observed shipping crates/containers and equipment laid out in the open at the main warehouse area at the Tumangang facility, although the contents of the transported goods remain unclear. *Beyond Parallel* remarked that the external characteristics of the containers and equipment are different from those observed during the past five years at the facility and assessed that it is “probable that these shipments are, or include, munitions and artillery.” Russian milbloggers and sources amplified *Beyond Parallel* findings in the Russian information space without confirming or denying the possibility of North Korean arms supplies to Russia.[22] ISW previously assessed that Putin may be open to some forms of technological and defensive cooperation with North Korea in return for North Korean artillery ammunition as long as such cooperation does not trigger secondary sanctions against Russia.[23]

The Russian federal government continues to disenfranchise certain ethnic minority federal subjects (regions) while selectively empowering others. *Radio Liberty’s* Tatar-Bashkir service *Idel Realii* amplified an opinion piece written by Tatar activist Ruslan Aisin on October 8 which criticizes the implementation of a new Tatarstan state national policy as federally enforced “feudalism.”[24] Aisin noted that the new policy dropped a provision on “strengthening Tatarstan identity,” which Aisin emphasized is aimed at Russifying ethnically diverse populations living in the Russian Federation, and claimed that the Russian federal government likely prompted the provision’s removal.[25] Aisin remarked that the removal of this provision is meant to deprive ethnic minority regions of their ability to empower their own cultures, languages, and traditions but questioned why Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov is allowed to publicly promote Chechen traditions and identity.[26] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and the Kremlin have recently signaled explicit support for Kadyrov and his style of rule in Chechnya despite increased interethnic tensions within Russian society and the military.[27] The suggestion that Russian federal policy is purposefully trying to disenfranchise Tatar identity while simultaneously empowering Kadyrov indicates that the Kremlin is interested in rewarding the ethnic minority regions that are the most overtly loyal to the Kremlin and provide the Kremlin with substantial military manpower for the war in Ukraine.

Key Takeaways:

- **Russia advanced legal mechanisms to form the Leningrad Military District as part of ongoing large-scale military reforms.**
- **Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations near Bakhmut and marginally advanced in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 8.**
- **Russian forces are intensifying mining efforts in the Robotyne-Verbove area and seek to fix Ukrainian forces on areas of the front away from western Zaporizhia Oblast.**
- **Russian sources are highlighting apparent fault lines between regular Russian forces and irregular formations of the Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR).**
- **Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat expressed concern over an anticipated Russian Shahed 131/136 drone strike campaign against Ukraine this winter.**

- **The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) observed satellite imagery showing that rail traffic between North Korea and Russia “dramatically” increased since Russian President Vladimir Putin met with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un on September 12-17**
- **The Russian federal government continues to disenfranchise certain ethnic minority federal subjects (regions) while selectively empowering others.**
- **Russian forces continued offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, western Donetsk Oblast, and on the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast administrative border on October 8 and reportedly advanced in some areas.**
- **Prague-based Russian-language outlet *Current Time* reported on October 8 that the number of desertion cases within the Russian military has increased.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of October 8, 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 Information Operations and Narratives

Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

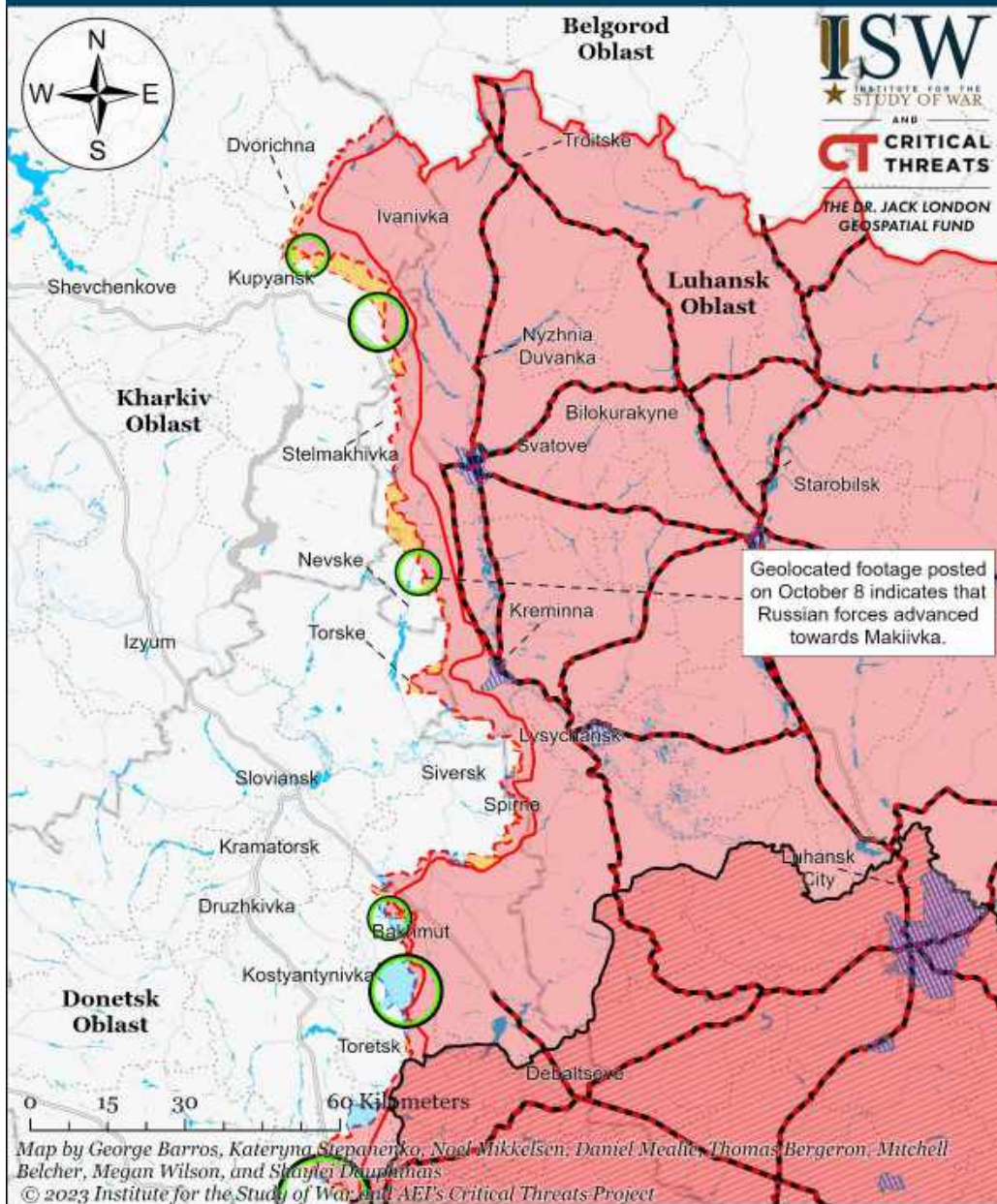
Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Kupyansk area on October 8 and reportedly recently advanced. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced near Lyman Pershyi (12km northeast of Kupyansk), the Synkivka rail station (8km northeast of Kupyansk), on the Tymkivka-Ivanivka line (18-20km east of Kupyansk), and on the Orlyanka-Yahidne line (21-22km southeast of Kupyansk) on October 7.[28] ISW has observed no confirmation of this claim, however. Other Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces attacked near Petropavlivka (7km east of Kupyansk), Synkivka, and Kyslivka (20km southeast of Kuyppyansk) on October 8.[29] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled multiple Russian attacks near Synkivka and Ivanivka (20km east of Kupyansk).[30] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash stated that Russian forces have increased their use of aviation in the Kupyansk-Lyman direction to support increased offensive operations in these areas and compensate for their lack of artillery.[31]

Russian forces continued offensive operations on the Svatove-Kreminna line on October 8 and recently marginally advanced. Geolocated footage posted on October 7 shows that Russian forces advanced along a road east of Makiivka, Luhansk Oblast (22km northwest of Kreminna) to positions just under two kilometers from the outskirts of the settlement.[32] Russian milbloggers made competing claims about Russian advances near Makiivka; one milblogger claimed that Russian forces reached the outskirts of the settlement, while another claimed that Russian forces advanced to within 600 meters of the settlement, and a third claimed that Russian forces remain just over one kilometer from the settlement – all inconsistent with ISW’s furthest observed Russian advance in the area, approximately two kilometers from the settlement.[33] Another milblogger claimed that Russian forces made unspecified advances near Makiivka and that Russian forces ultimately aim to push Ukrainian forces to the west bank of the Oskil River, an objective that Russian forces are likely too degraded to achieve in the near term.[34]

Ukrainian forces reportedly conducted unsuccessful offensive operations on the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on October 8. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Orlyanka in Kharkiv Oblast; Novoselivske (15km north of Svatove), Makiivka, and Dibrova (5km southwest of Kreminna) in Luhansk Oblast; Torske (14km west of Kreminna) in Donetsk Oblast; and in the Serebryanske forest area (11km south of Kreminna).[35] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian attack near Torske.[36]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of October 8, 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.

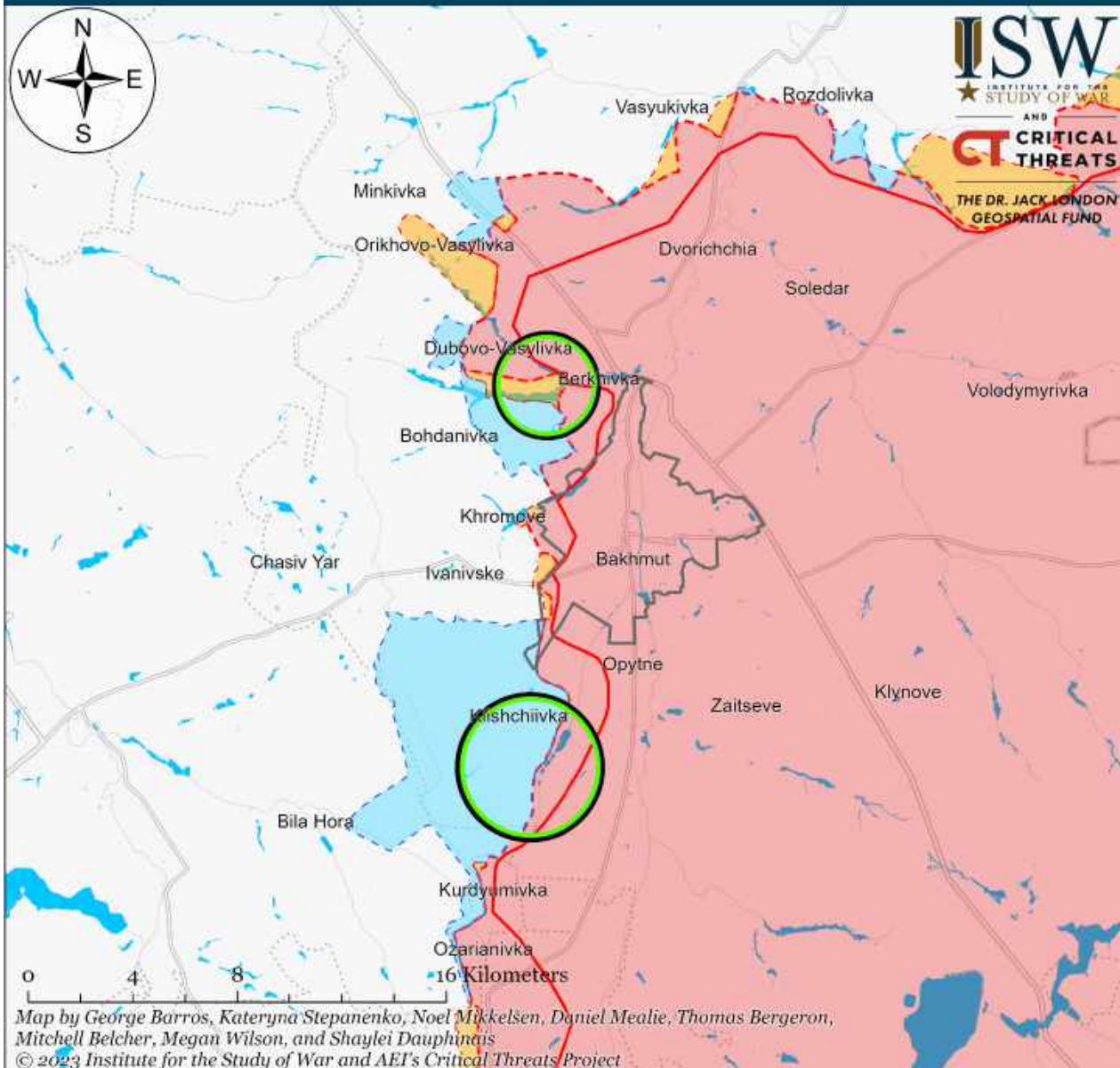
Russian milbloggers claimed on October 8 that Russian forces are entrenched 600 meters east from Makiivka. A Russian source claimed on October 6 that Russian forces advances up to 500 meters in the Kupyansk Direction.

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

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut on October 8 and reportedly advanced. The Ukrainian General Staff and other Ukrainian military sources reported that Ukrainian forces had partial success northeast of Andriivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut).[37] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that elements of the Russian Southern Grouping of Forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Andriivka.[38] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are trying to bypass Kurdyumivka (11km southwest of Bakhmut) from the northeast and attacking in the direction of Zelenopillya (12km southwest of Bakhmut) to do so.[39] The milblogger also noted that Ukrainian forces have recently shifted their efforts towards Kurdyumivka in order to capture the remaining tactical heights south of Bakhmut.[40] Another milblogger reported that there are fewer significant Ukrainian movements in this area due to deteriorating weather conditions and heavy rain, which is inhibiting the use of aerial reconnaissance.[41]

Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks to regain lost positions near Bakhmut on October 8 and reportedly made limited advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks southwest of Bakhmut near Andriivka and Klishchiivka and northwest of Bakhmut near Bohdanivka (6km northwest).[42] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are counterattacking on the northern flank of Bakhmut and pushed Ukrainian forces back near Berkhivka (directly northwest of Bakhmut) and attacked towards Dubovo-Vasylivka (5km northwest of Bakhmut) and Yakovlivka (12km northeast of Bakhmut).[43]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of October 8, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

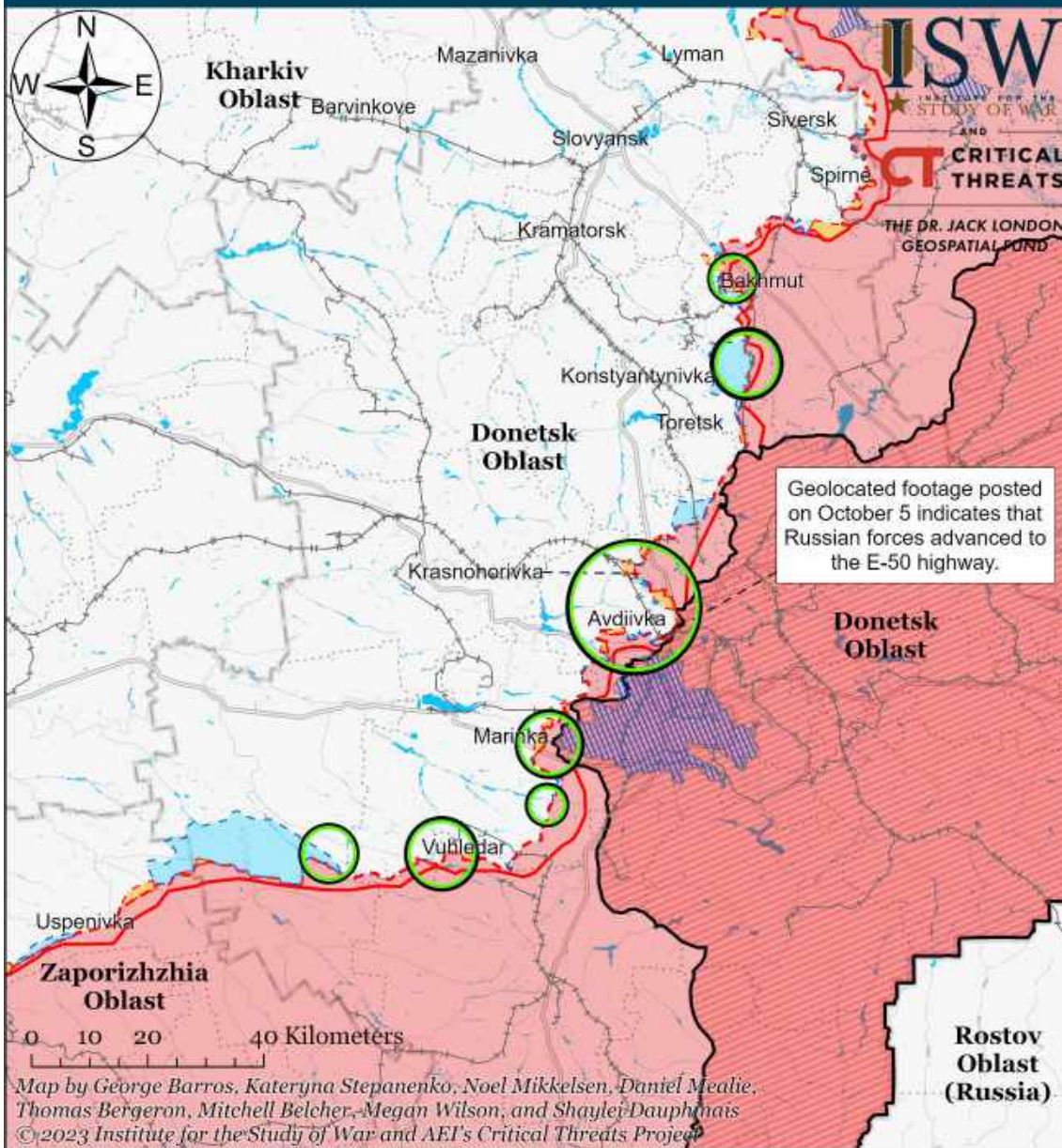
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash reported on October 7 that Ukrainian forces advanced one hundred to three hundred meters in the Bakhmut direction over the last 24 hours. Russian sources claimed on October 7 that Russian forces penetrated Ukrainian defenses and advanced up to one kilometer in the area of Yahidne.

Ukrainian forces did not conduct any claimed or confirmed ground attacks on the Donetsk City-Avdiivka line on October 8.

Russian forces continued ground attacks on the Donetsk City-Avdiivka line on October 8 and reportedly advanced. The Ukrainian General Staff and Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun reported that Ukrainian forces repelled 20 Russian attacks near Avdiivka (directly north of Donetsk City), on the northwestern outskirts of Donetsk City near Pervomaiske, and on the southwestern outskirts of Donetsk City near Marinka, Krasnohorivka, and Novomykhailivka.[44] Shtupun also noted that Russian attacks in the Avdiivka and Marinka directions are meant to distract Ukrainian forces and prevent the transfer of Ukrainian reserves to the Zaporizhia direction.[45] A Russian milblogger posted footage reportedly of Russian “Storm-Z” units training somewhere in the Avdiivka direction.[46] Other Russian sources claimed that Russian forces recently managed to occupy new positions in northern Marinka and had partial success near Krasnohorivka (the settlement north of Avdiivka).[47]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of October 8, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

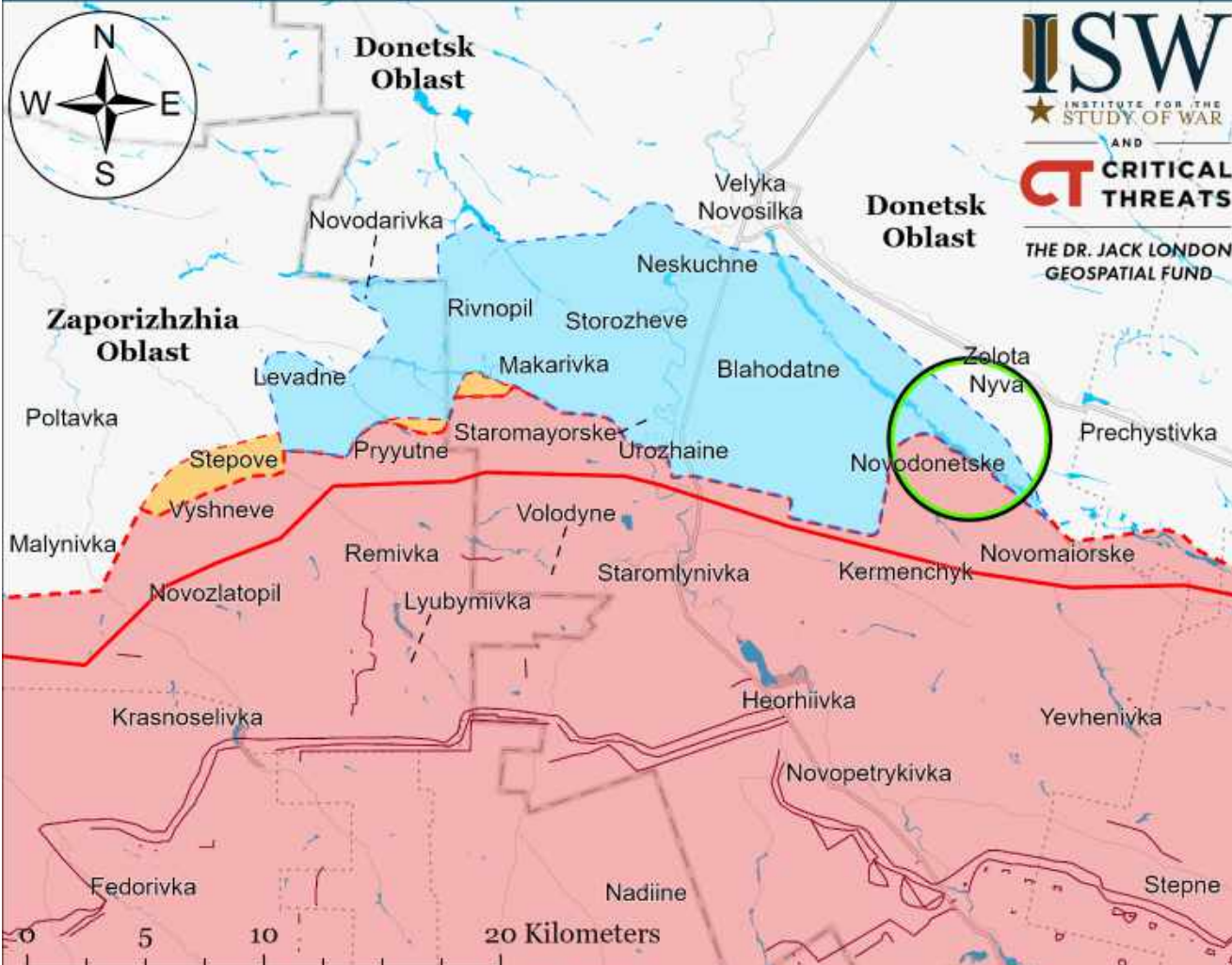
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

Ukrainian forces continued offensives in western Donetsk Oblast and in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 8 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that elements of the Russian Eastern Grouping of Forces repelled Ukrainian attacks northeast of Mykilske (4km southwest of Vuhledar and 33km southeast of Velyka Novosilka), west of Novodonetske (11km southeast of Velyka Novosilka), west of Staromayorske (8km southwest of Velyka Novosilka), and north of Pryyutne (15km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[48] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked in an unspecified forest belt likely west of Staromayorske, are trying daily to improve positions north of Pryyutne with decreasing intensity, and are attempting to regain lost positions west of Novodonetske.[49] The UK MoD assessed that the Velyka Novosilka sector of the frontline has been relatively quiet for the last four weeks and that Ukrainian forces liberated at least 125 square kilometers on this frontline.[50] ISW assesses that Ukrainian forces liberated nearly 215 square kilometers in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area since the start of the counteroffensive in June 2023. The UK MoD also observed that Ukrainian operations in the Velyka Novosilka area have successfully fixed elements of the 5th and 36th Combined Arms Armies (CAAs) of the Eastern Military District (EMD) and some unspecified airborne elements to the area.[51]

Russian forces counterattacked in western Donetsk Oblast and in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 8 but did not make any confirmed territorial gains. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian Spetsnaz and motorized rifle units have captured almost a dozen Ukrainian positions and pushed Ukrainian forces from an unspecified “strategically important settlement.”[52] The milblogger added that elements of the Russian 34th Separate Rifle Brigade (49th CAA, Southern Military District [SMD]) are operating in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area. Another milblogger claimed that elements of the 43rd Separate Special Purpose Company (29th CAA, EMD) are operating north of Mykilske.[53] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled 10 Russian assaults near Vodyane (6km northeast of Vuhledar and 34km east of Velyka Novosilka) and Zolota Nyva (10km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[54]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of October 8, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Megan Wilson, and Shaqlei-Dauphinais
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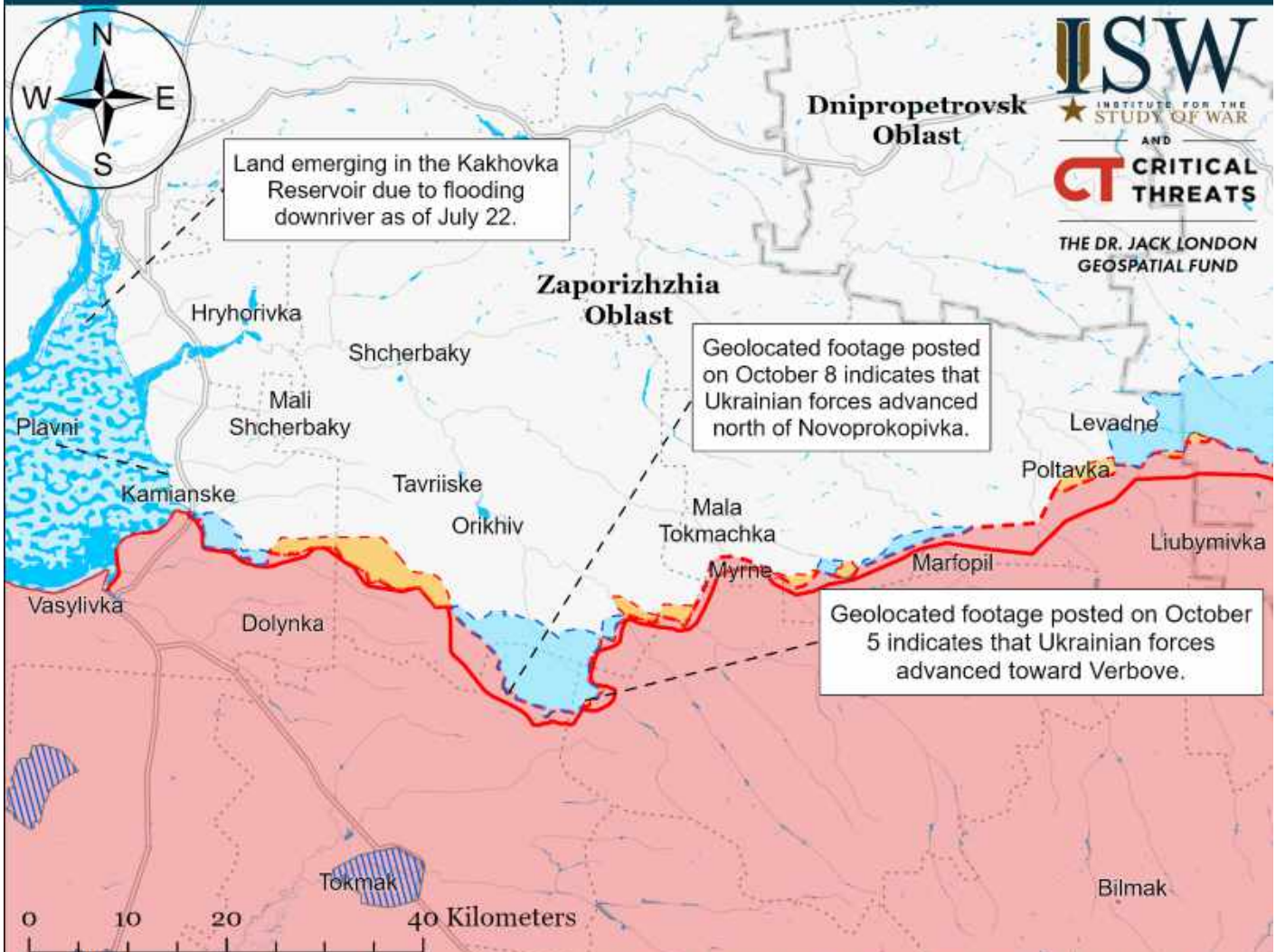
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Russian Field Fortifications
- 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 continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on October 8 and made limited territorial gains north of Novoprokopivka (14km south of Orikhiv). Geolocated footage published on October 8 indicated that Ukrainian forces made limited advances along the T-0408 highway on Novoprokopivka’s northern outskirts.[55] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces continue to attack towards Kopani (10km southwest of Orikhiv) and made some advances.[56] The milblogger added that the Russian fortified defensive line is located northeast and southeast of Kopani and that Ukrainian forces also unsuccessfully attacked Russian positions on the outskirts of Novoprokopivka and on the approaches to Verbove (16km southeast of Orikhiv).[57] The milblogger observed that Russian forces have been unsuccessful in cutting off flanks of Ukrainian forces advancing towards Novoprokopivka and Verbove throughout the week but that Ukrainian forces did not make significant advances.[58] Another Russian milblogger claimed that intense battles are ongoing on the Robotyne (11km south of Orikhiv)-Verbove line and that Russian artillery fire repelled two Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance groups northwest of Verbove.[59]



Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of October 8, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 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: Russian sources claimed on October 4 that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian forces two kilometers near Verbove.

Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun stated that Russian forces continue to strengthen their defenses around Tokmak and that the city has become a fortress surrounded by circular defensive lines.^[60]

Russian sources continued to discuss Ukrainian operations across the Dnipro River and near the Antonivsky Bridge in Kherson Oblast. A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces continued to consolidate positions on the Dnipro River delta islands on the east (left) bank of the river and are achieving partial success.^[61] The milblogger specified that Ukrainian forces do not have a serious bridgehead in the area, however. Another milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces still hold positions under Antonivsky Bridge and that Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance units occasionally venture to Oleshky (7km east of Kherson City) using the bridge as a cover.^[62]

Russian sources, including the Russian MoD, claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attempted to strike the Dzhankoi rail station with a modified S-200 missile on the evening of October 7.^[63]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of October 8, 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)

Prague-based Russian-language outlet *Current Time* reported on October 8 that the number of desertion cases within the Russian military has increased.[64] *Current Time* reported that “Go Through the Forest,” a Russian organization that helps Russian citizens avoid mobilization, has observed an increasing number of Russian servicemen deserting since May 2023. The increase in desertion cases is reportedly due to the Russian military beginning to allow contract servicemen to take vacations in late April and May, which many servicemen never returned from. *Current Time* stated that the Russian military refuses to give vacations to mobilized personnel.

The Kherson Oblast occupation military registration and enlistment office announced continued efforts to discourage draft evasion in occupied Kherson Oblast on October 7.[65] The office announced several new and increased fines related to military registration, including fines against: employers who fail to notify employees subject to conscription and send them to assembly points; employers who fail to provide the office with lists of employees liable for military service; employers who fail to update the office on the dismissal of an employee liable for military service; locals who fail to fulfill their military transport duties; and locals who violate the requirement to register for military service.

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 Resistance Center reported on October 8 that Ukrainian partisans provided information that helped Ukrainian forces conduct several successful strikes against Russian rear areas within the past week, including strikes against a Russian military headquarters in the Kherson direction, several ammunition depots, and concentrations of Russian military personnel.[66]

Occupation authorities reportedly continue to seize the property of Ukrainian civilians in occupied Ukraine to allocate to Russian military personnel. Ukrainian Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov stated on October 8 that occupation authorities in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast are evicting local Ukrainians and housing Russian servicemen in their homes.[67] Fedorov stated that occupation authorities are also distributing plots of land in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast to Russian servicemen as a reward for military service. Fedorov added that occupation authorities have reduced pension payments for locals in occupied Ukraine by several thousand rubles and stated that some government employees have not been paid or have only been paid a fraction of their salaries for the last month and a half.[68]

Russian Information Operations and Narratives:

Russian milbloggers continued to exploit Hamas’ attacks in Israel to further Russian information operations on October 8 intended to reduce US and Western support to Ukraine.[69] Russian milbloggers ludicrously claimed that Hamas is using Ukrainian-provided weaponry against Israel.[70] The Ukrainian Military Media Center quickly identified these claims as a Russian information operation and noted that Ukraine’s Western partners closely monitor weapons and military equipment supplied to Ukraine.[71]

Russian sources gloated and claimed on October 8 that increased Western attention on Israel will likely draw attention and aid away from Ukraine.[72] Russian sources increasingly focused on the Hamas attacks in Israel, continuing to impact the detail on the Russian war in Ukraine available for ISW's daily assessments.

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 Belarusian Ministry of Defense (MoD) released images on October 8 of Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) peacekeeping forces, reportedly including troops from Belarus, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, conducting military exercises at the Edelweiss training center in Kyrgyzstan as part of the "Indestructible Brotherhood-2023" exercise.[73]

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.rbc.ru/politics/08/10/2023/652296d99a79476b050c179f>; <https://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/18943037>; <https://regulation.dot.gov.ru/Regulation/Npa/PublicView?npaID=142508>

[2] <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/08/10/2023/652296d99a79476b050c179f>; <https://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/18943037>; <https://regulation.dot.gov.ru/Regulation/Npa/PublicView?npaID=142508>; <https://www.rbc.ru/rbcfreenews/5edace8a9a7947754b6f3504>

[3] <https://t.me/agentstvonews/4306>

[4] <https://www.fontanka.ru/2010/09/01/142/>

[5] <https://www.rbc.ru/rbcfreenews/5edace8a9a7947754b6f3504>

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Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 7, 2023

Kateryna Stepanenko, Karolina Hird, Angelica Evans,
Christina Harward, and Mason Clark

October 7, 2023, 5:30pm ET

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

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

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 2pm ET on October 7. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 8 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

The Kremlin is already and will likely continue to exploit the Hamas attacks in Israel to advance several information operations intended to reduce US and Western support and attention to Ukraine. The Kremlin amplified several information operations following Hamas attacks in Israel on October 7, primarily blaming the West for neglecting conflicts in the Middle East in favor of supporting Ukraine and claiming the international community will cease to pay attention to Ukraine by portraying attention to the Middle East or alternatively Ukraine as a zero-sum comparison. Deputy Chairman of the Russian Security Council Dmitry Medvedev claimed the United States and its allies should have been “busy with” working on “Palestinian-Israeli settlement” rather than “interfering” with Russia and providing Ukraine with military aid.[1] The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) accused the West of blocking efforts by a necessary “quartet” of Russia, the US, the European Union, and the United Nations, leading to an escalation in violence, implicitly blaming the West for the current fighting.[2] Prominent Russian propagandist Sergei Mardan directly stated that Russia will benefit from the escalation as the world “will take its mind off Ukraine for a while and get busy once again putting out the eternal fire in the Middle East.”[3] These Kremlin narratives target Western audiences to drive a wedge in military support for Ukraine, seek to demoralize Ukrainian society by claiming Ukraine will lose international support, and intend to reassure Russian domestic audiences that the international society will ignore Ukraine's war effort.

Several key sources within the Russian information space shifted the focus of their daily coverage to the situation in Israel on October 7, which may impact the information environment around the war in Ukraine in the coming days or weeks. Many Russian milbloggers focused largely on the Hamas attacks in Israel on October 7, and some promoted Kremlin information operations by claiming that the West's attention has shifted away from Ukraine and towards Israel.[4] This focus on Israel even prompted one Russian milblogger to urge others to not “forget” about the war in Ukraine.[5] ISW cannot forecast at this time how the source environment will change as the Hamas attacks in Israel unfold but will provide clear updates on any

impact on ISW's ability to collect from Russian milbloggers and geolocation sources, and subsequent effects on the detail available ISW can provide in these daily assessments.

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 7 and reportedly advanced in both directions. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces were partially successful east of Andriivka (8km southwest of Bakhmut).[6] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash noted that Ukrainian forces have advanced from 100 to 300 meters in different directions near Bakhmut over the past day.[7] Ukrainian military sources additionally stated that Ukrainian forces advanced in western Zaporizhia Oblast in the areas north of Kopani (5km northwest of Robotyne) and north of Novoprokopivka (2km south of Robotyne).[8]

Russian forces conducted a series of missile strikes targeting Ukrainian rear areas and port infrastructure on the night of October 6-7. Ukrainian sources, including the Ukrainian Southern Operational Command, reported that Russian forces launched Onyx cruise missiles from occupied Crimea at Chernomorsk, Odesa Oblast; and Poltava Oblast Head Dmytro Lunin stated that Russian forces conducted a missile strike on Myrhorod, Poltava Oblast.[9] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that the Russian strikes damaged a granary, residential buildings, educational buildings, and other civil infrastructure.[10]

The Russian government approved legislation temporarily restricting the border checkpoints that Ukrainian citizens can use to enter Russia from third countries, likely focused on Belarus and the Baltic States, likely in response to continued concern over the security of Russian border regions and possible Ukrainian infiltration efforts. Russian media reported on October 6 that the legislation states that Ukrainian citizens 14 years old and above can only enter Russia from third countries through the Ludonka automotive checkpoint in Pskov Oblast (bordering Latvia) and Sheremetyevo airport in Moscow Oblast beginning on October 16.[11] The legislation does not apply to Ukrainian citizens traveling from occupied Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts or Ukrainian citizens under the age of 14 traveling without a legal guardian. This decision is reportedly aimed at "ensuring the safety" of Russian citizens.

Belarusian officials are leveraging international partnerships in an attempt to legitimize Belarus' role in the illegal deportation of Ukrainian children. Russian and Belarusian media reported on October 4 that a number of diplomats who are accredited in Belarus visited a group of 44 children from Lysychansk and Severodonetsk at an accommodation point in Novopolotsk, Belarus.[12] The group of diplomats included representatives from Zimbabwe, India, Qatar, China, Cuba, Mongolia, the United Arab Emirates, Palestine, Russia, Syria, and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).[13] Russian and Belarusian media reported that Belarusian officials showed the diplomats the dormitory where the children are located and talked about the educational and medical services provided to the children. ISW has previously reported that Belarus has been closely involved in Russia's efforts to forcibly deport Ukrainian children from their homes, and the European Parliament adopted a resolution reflective of this fact on September 13 that recognizes Belarusian dictator Alexander Lukashenko as complicit in crimes involving the deportation of Ukrainian children to Belarus and the Russian Federation.[14] Belarusian authorities likely hosted the delegation in an effort to portray its actions vis a vis Ukrainian children as somehow legitimate

and legal, as many of the diplomats made positive statements about the accommodations and experiences of the children in Belarus.

Russian “Vostok” Battalion Commander Alexander Khodakovsky stated that Russian “patriotic” communities remain vulnerable to division due to Russian officials’ failure to consolidate society, particularly after Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin’s June 24 rebellion.[15] Khodakovsky argued that Russia must consolidate its society to achieve a common goal for the war – a goal that he claimed that Russian society does not have a good understanding of. Khodakovsky argued that the fact that Prigozhin remains in people’s heads despite his disappearance from the public eye after his rebellion demonstrates that Russian elites do not care much about the need to consolidate society. Khodakovsky concluded that there are and will be “provocative injections” into the Russian ultranationalist space that aim to break the patriotic environment by stirring up contradictions to slow and complicate the war effort. Khodakovsky added that these provocations also aim to make post-war Russian society unstable. Khodakovsky was likely reacting to discussions in the Russian information space following Russian President Vladimir Putin’s mention of Prigozhin at the Valdai Discussion Club on October 5, and his response likely indicates that Russian society continues to be influenced by Prigozhin despite his death on August 23.[16]

Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov awarded his son, Adam Kadyrov, the title of “Hero of the Chechen Republic” on October 7 despite recent controversy after Ramzan Kadyrov posted footage of Adam beating a detainee.[17] Russian State Duma Deputy Adam Delimkhanov, Adam Kadyrov’s godfather, praised Adam for being a “shining example” of competence and education and a purposeful young man.[18] Ramzan Kadyrov also notably appointed his daughter, Aishat Kadyrova, Chechen Deputy Prime Minister for Social Issues on October 2.[19] Both instances came after prominent members of the Russian Human Rights Council called for an investigation into Adam Kadyrov for the beating.[20]

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) highlighted the production of the Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) on October 7, supporting Russian President Vladimir Putin’s statements about successful tests of the missile on October 5 as part of a continued nuclear brinkmanship information operation. The Russian MoD published footage of Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu visiting the Krasnoyarsk Machine-Building Plant and inspecting the production process of the Sarmat ICBM.[21] Shoigu claimed that the Russian Strategic Missile Force would be re-equipped with the Sarmat missile system. ISW previously assessed that the Kremlin and Russian MoD use nuclear rhetoric to prompt the United States and its allies to pressure Ukraine to negotiate and that Russian nuclear use in Ukraine remains unlikely.[22]

Key Takeaways:

- **The Kremlin is already and will likely continue to exploit the Hamas attacks in Israel to advance several information operations intended to reduce US and Western support and attention to Ukraine.**
- **Several key sources within the Russian information space shifted the focus of their daily coverage to the situation in Israel on October 7, which may impact the information environment around the war in Ukraine in the coming days or weeks.**

- **Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 7 and reportedly advanced in both directions.**
- **Russian forces conducted a series of missile strikes targeting Ukrainian rear areas and port infrastructure on the night of October 6-7.**
- **The Russian government approved legislation temporarily restricting the border checkpoints that Ukrainian citizens can use to enter Russia from third countries, likely focused on Belarus and the Baltic States, likely in response to continued concern over the security of Russian border regions and possible Ukrainian infiltration efforts.**
- **Belarusian officials are leveraging international partnerships in an attempt to legitimize Belarus' role in the illegal deportation of Ukrainian children.**
- **Russian "Vostok" Battalion Commander Alexander Khodakovsky stated that Russian "patriotic" communities remain vulnerable to division due to Russian officials' failure to consolidate society, particularly after Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin's June 24 rebellion.**
- **The Russian MoD highlighted the production of the Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) on October 7, supporting Russian President Vladimir Putin's statements about successful tests of the missile on October 5 as part of a continued nuclear brinkmanship information operation.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, in western Donetsk Oblast, in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and reportedly advanced in some areas on October 7.**
- **Ukrainian partisan activity reportedly killed a United Russia official in occupied Kherson Oblast.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of October 7, 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)

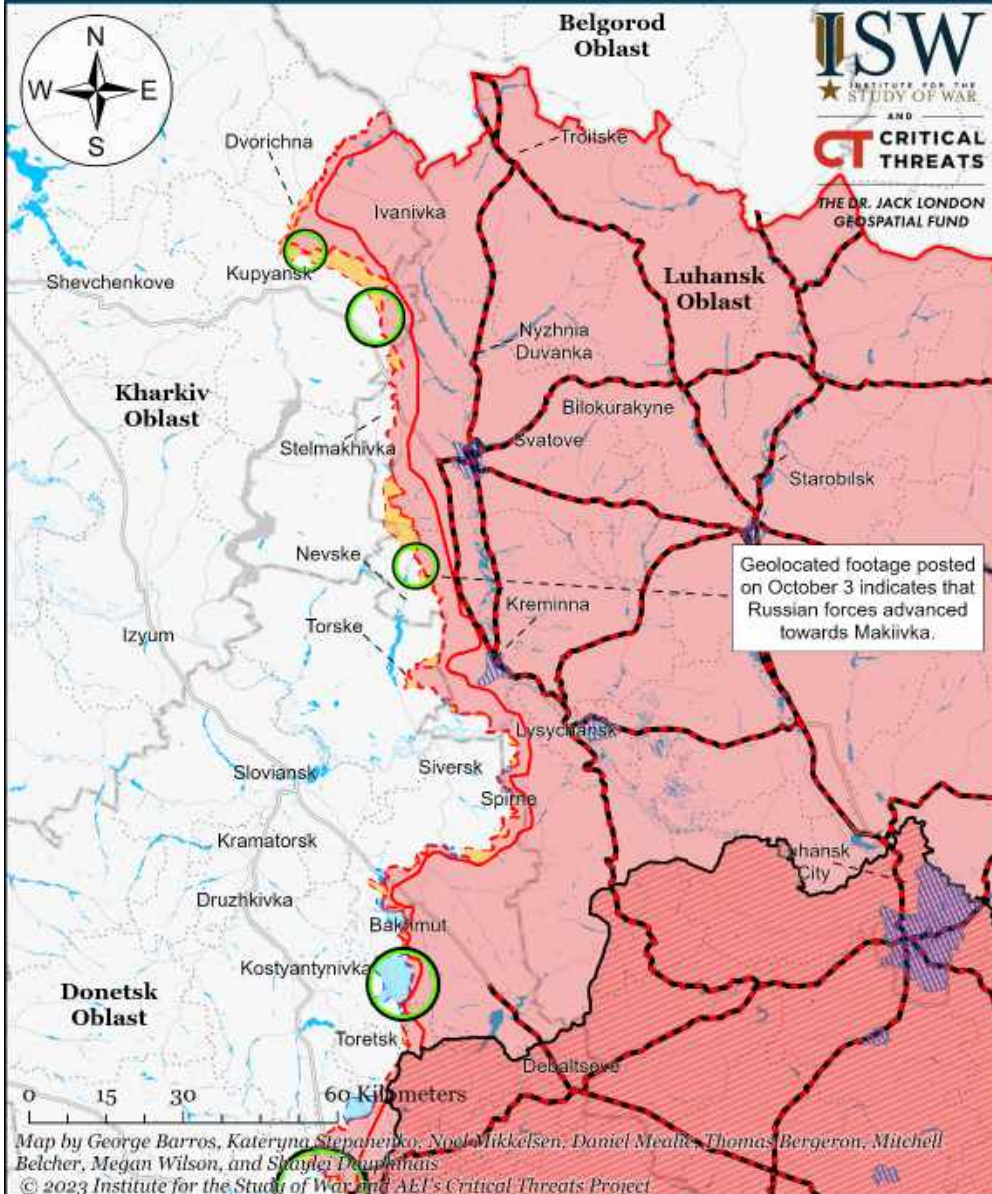
Russian forces continued offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on October 7 and reportedly advanced. A Russian milblogger amplified a claim that Russian forces advanced up to 1km near Yahidne (22km southeast of Kupyansk) on October 6.[23] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces also advanced near Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk), Ivanivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk), and Kotlyarivka (22km southeast of Kupyansk).[24] The Russian “Storm Ossetia” and “Alania” volunteer battalions claimed that Russian forces advanced up to 500m in the Kupyansk direction.[25] The Ukrainian General Staff reported on October 7 that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Synkivka and Ivanivka in Kharkiv Oblast and Makiivka in Luhansk Oblast (60km southwest of Kupyansk and about 22km northwest of Kreminna).[26] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces conducted a “massive” offensive in the Kupyansk and Lyman directions.[27] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Synkivka and Makiivka.[28] A Russian milblogger claimed on October 6 that Russian forces continue to strike crossings across the Oskil River in the Kupyansk direction.[29]

A Ukrainian military observer provided additional details on the Russian units operating in the Kupyansk direction on October 7. The observer stated that elements of the Russian 79th Motorized Rifle Regiment (18th Guards Motor Rifle Division, 11th Army Corps, Baltic Fleet) began moving closer to the front line east of Ivanivka (28km northeast of Kupyansk) and Velyky Vyselok (23km northeast of Kupyansk).[30] The observer stated that the Russian 11th Army Corps (Baltic Fleet) makes up the bulk of the Russian Western Grouping of Forces’ reserve forces in the Kupyansk direction. The observer added that Russian military command has deployed at least two unspecified combined tactical detachments with forces of up to a battalion each, which consist of “Storm-Z” companies. The observer stated that Russian forces have also concentrated elements of the Russian 448th Missile Brigade (20th Guards Combined Arms Army [CAA], Western Military District), 9th Guards Artillery Brigade (6th CAA, Western Military District), 45th High-Power Artillery Brigade (Western Military District), 244th Artillery Brigade (11th Army Corps, Baltic Fleet), 288th Artillery Brigade (1st Guards Tank Army, Western Military District), and 147th Guards Self-Propelled Artillery Regiment (2nd Guards Motor Rifle Division, 1st Guards Tank Army, Western Military District) in this direction. The observer added that elements of the Russian 138th Motorized Rifle Brigade (6th CAA, Western Military District), 1st Guards Motor Rifle Regiment (2nd Guards Motor Rifle Division, 1st Guards

Tank Army, Western Military District), and 15th Motorized Rifle Regiment (2nd Guards CAA, Central Military District) will likely participate in the next Russian attack in the direction of Kupyansk.

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on October 7. The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Lyman Pershyi (11km northeast of Kupyansk) in Kharkiv Oblast, Makiivka and Dibrova (6km southwest of Kreminna) in Luhansk Oblast, Torske (15km west of Kreminna) in Donetsk Oblast, and the Serebryanske forest area.[31] A Russian milblogger denied claims that Ukrainian forces advanced into Hryanykivka (16km northeast of Kupyansk).[32] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Yampolivka (17km west of Kreminna), Dibrova, and Kuzmyne (3km southwest of Kreminna).[33]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of October 7, 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.

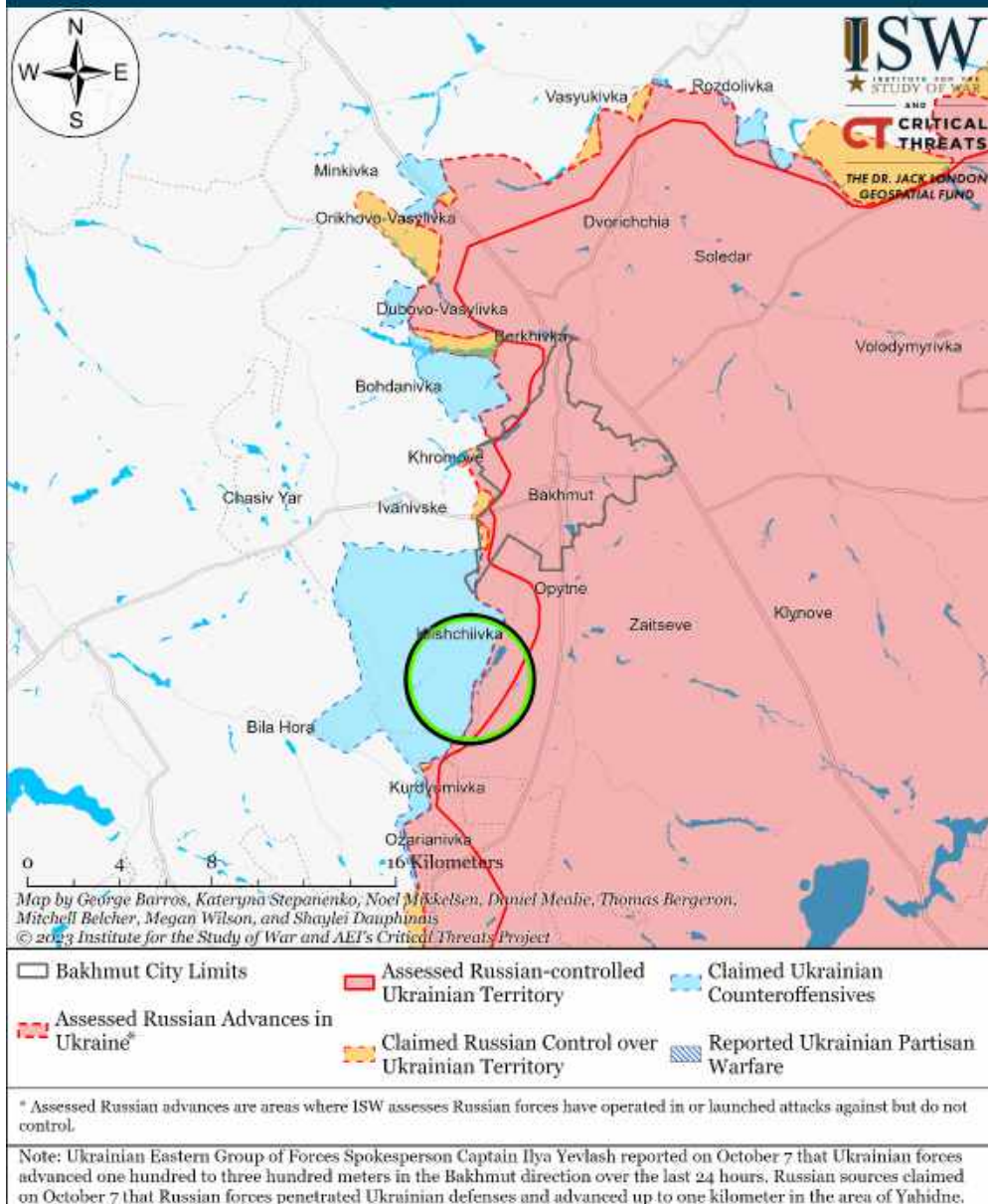
A Russian source claimed on October 6 that Russian forces advances up to 500 meters in the Kupyansk Direction.

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

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Bakhmut direction on October 7 and reportedly advanced east of Andriivka (8km southwest of Bakhmut).[34] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces achieved partial success east of Andriivka, and Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash stated that Ukrainian forces managed to advance in different directions around Bakhmut by 100 to 300 meters over the past day.[35] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces continued unsuccessful efforts to break through Russian defenses near the railway line east of Andriivka and Klishchiivka (6km southwest of Bakhmut).[36]

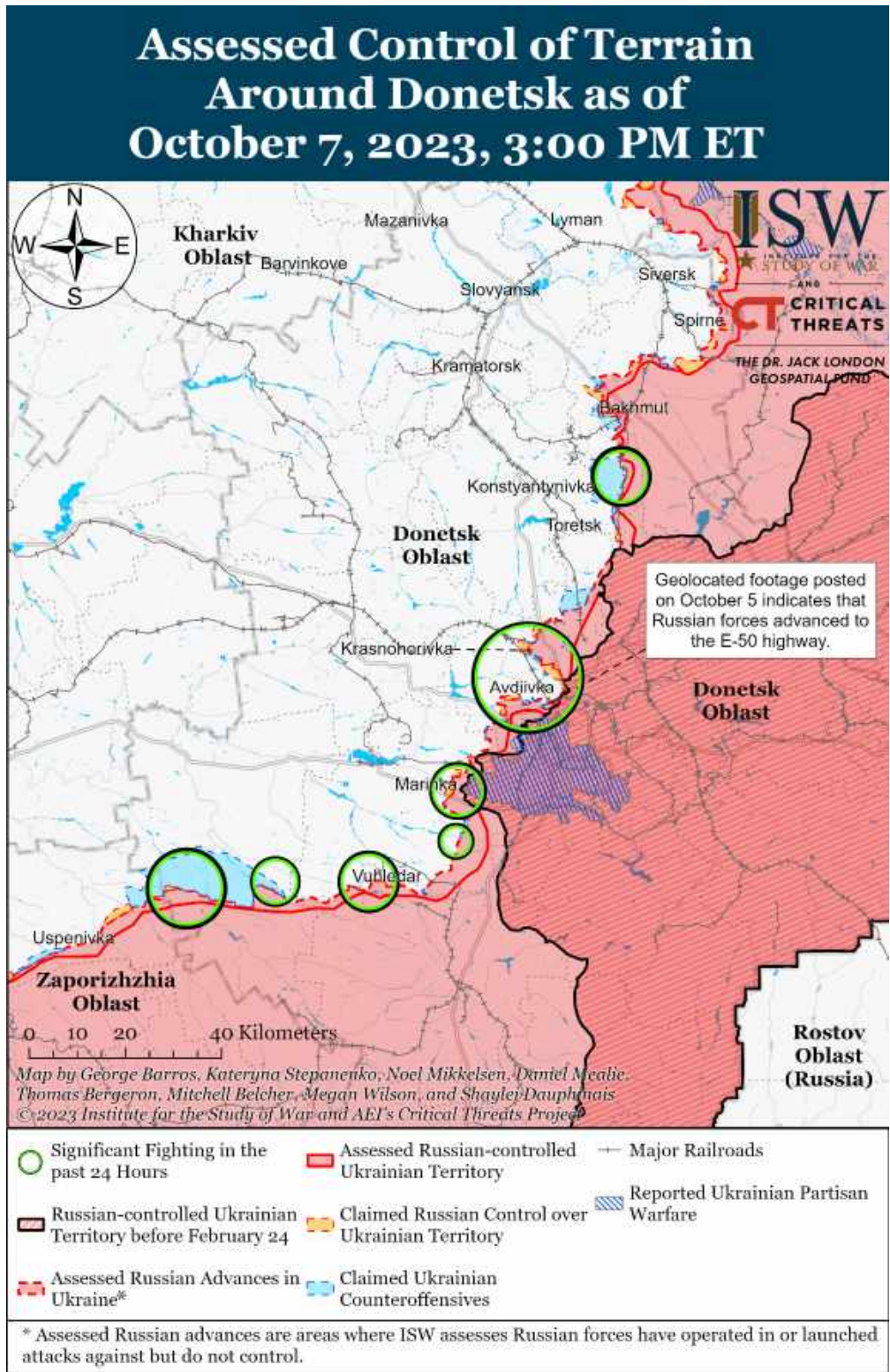
Russian forces continued to counterattack near Bakhmut on October 7, but did not make any confirmed territorial gains. Yevlash and the Ukrainian General Staff stated that Russian forces unsuccessfully attempted to regain lost positions south of Andriivka.[37] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Russian forces counterattacked near Andriivka.[38] A Russian milblogger claimed that the Russian forces that are operating on separate frontline sectors near Klishchiivka are facing difficulties due to issues with communications equipment, reinforcements, and a lack of timely reports on the realistic situation on the battlefield.[39] The milblogger added that on the contrary, some other Russian units claim that they are able to hold their defenses but are "suffering" because they have to create paper reports on spent ammunition.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of October 7, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces continued offensive operations on the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on October 7 and reportedly advanced in Marinka (on the southwestern outskirts of Donetsk City).[40] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked near Novomykhailivka (10km southwest of Donetsk City) and Marinka, and slightly advanced in Marinka after a long period of positional battles.[41] The milblogger also claimed that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked the southern approaches to Avdiivka and conducted reconnaissance-in-force near Druzhba (likely referring to a settlement 10km northwest of Horlivka, which is northeast of the Donetsk City area) to open a new area of hostilities.[42] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces resumed offensive

operations near Krasnohorivka (5km west of Donetsk City) and that fighting is ongoing on Marinka's western outskirts.[43] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults near Avdiivka, Pervomaiske (7km northwest of Donetsk City), Marinka, Krasnohorivka, and Novomykhailivka.[44]

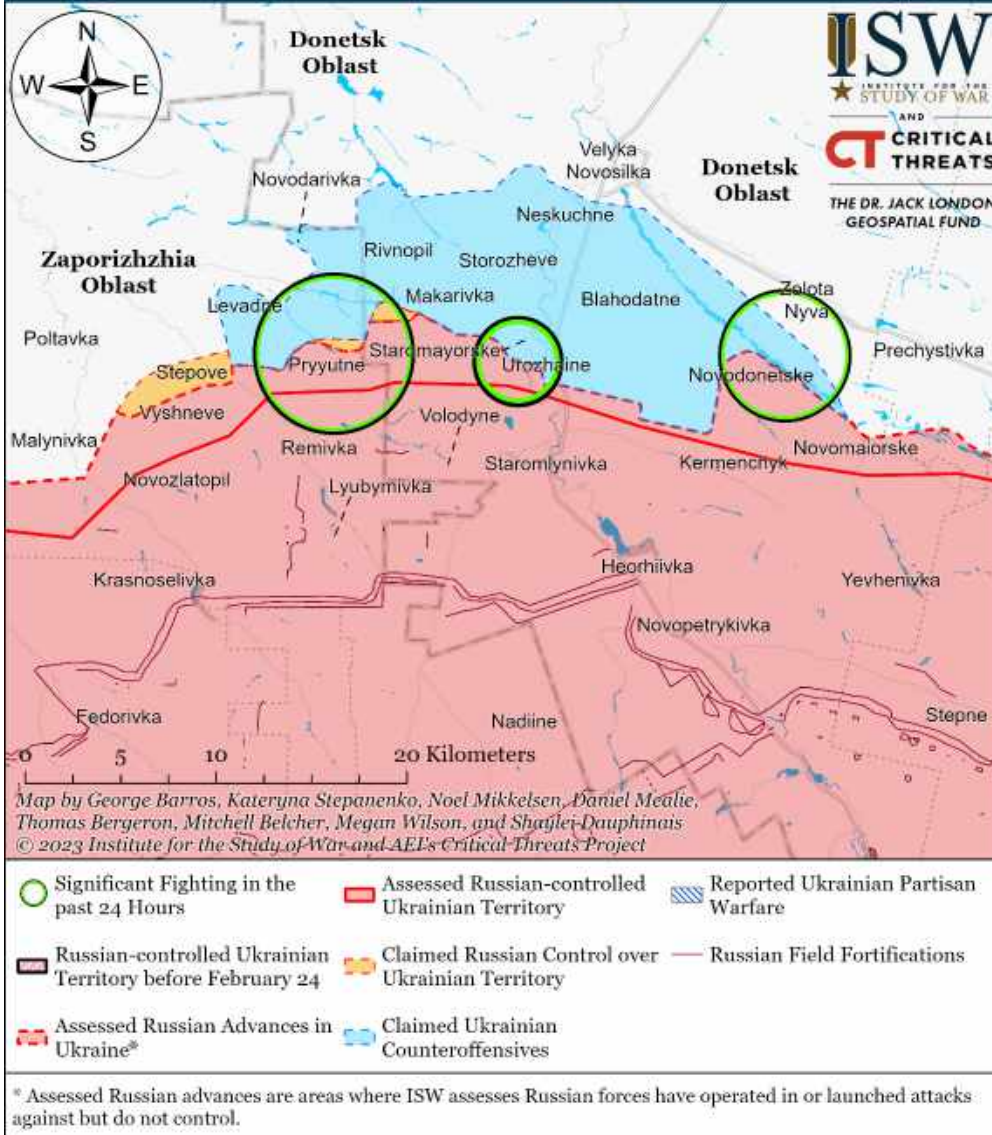


Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted ground attacks in the western Donetsk Oblast and the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 7 but did not advance. One Russian milblogger claimed that a Ukrainian infantry platoon and two infantry fighting vehicles attempted to attack north of Mykilske (3km southeast of Vuhledar and about 30km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[45] The Russian MoD claimed that elements of the Russian Eastern Grouping of Forces repelled three Ukrainian attacks near Pryyutne (15km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[46] Russian milbloggers discussed purported Ukrainian attacks and continued fighting near Urozhaine (10km south of Velyka Novosilka), west of Staromayorske (10km south of Velyka Novosilka), and west of Novodonetske (13km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[47]

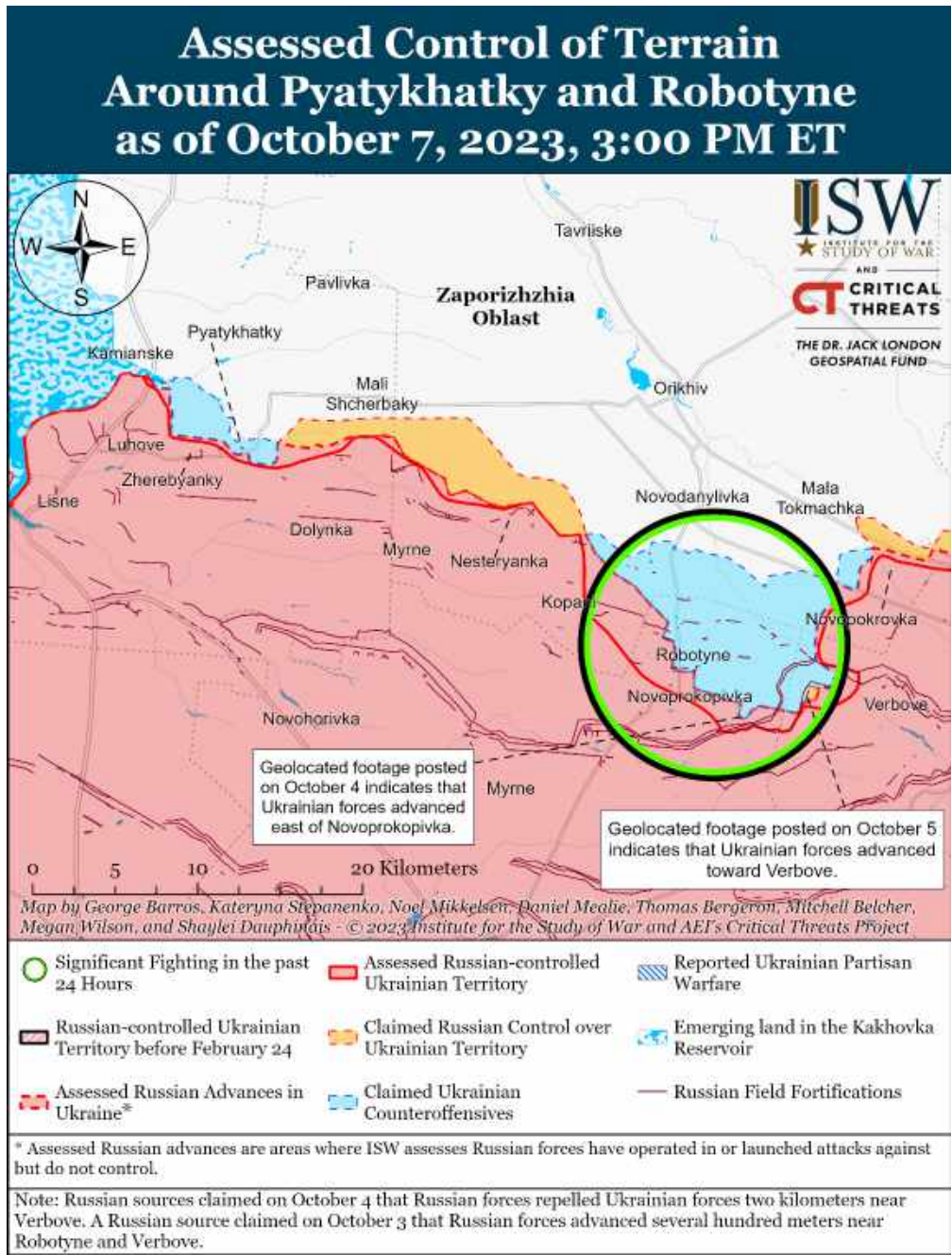
Russian forces conducted counterattacks in western Donetsk Oblast and in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 7 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks in the western Donetsk Oblast near Vuhledar and Vodyane (6km northeast of Vuhledar) and in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area near Zolota Nyva (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka), Staromayorske, and Pryyutne.[48] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces have regained the initiative in this area and counterattacked from positions in Novodonetske (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka) and Mykilske.[49] Russian sources amplified reports that the 34th Motorized Rifle Brigade (49th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) and elements of the 5th Combined Arms Army (Eastern Military District) are fighting in the area south of Velyka Novosilka.[50]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of October 7, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

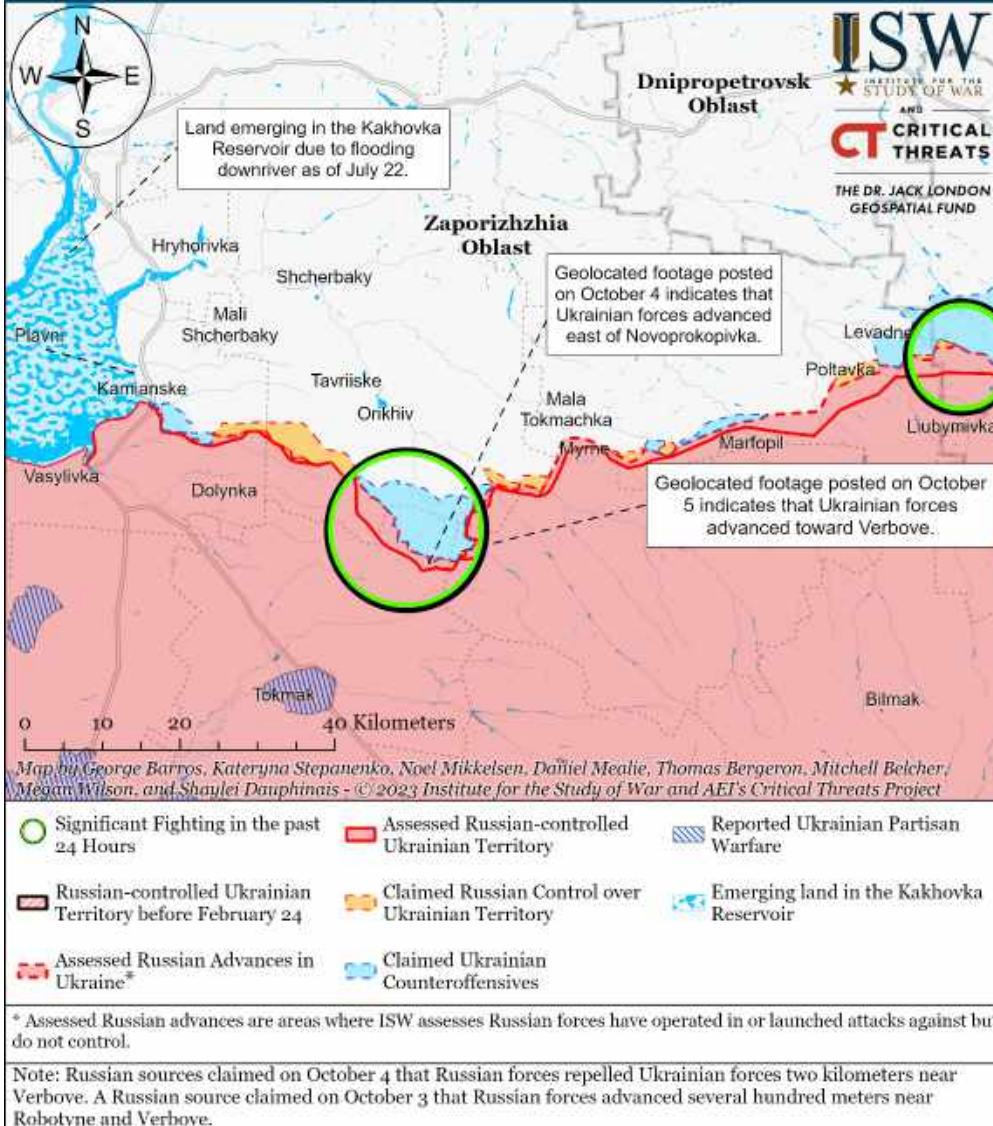


Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on October 7 and reportedly advanced. Ukrainian military sources reported that Ukrainian forces were partially successful north of Kopani (5km northwest of Robotyne) and north of Novoprokopivka (2km south of Robotyne).[51] Russian milbloggers claimed that fighting has intensified along the Robotyne-Verbove line after Ukrainian forces restarted attacks northwest of Verbove.[52] Some Russian milbloggers reported that Ukrainian forces also conducted limited attacks north of Novoprokopivka and generally classified the situation south of Orikhiv as complicated and tense.[53]

Russian forces conducted limited counterattacks in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on October 7 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces are holding back Russian attacks northeast of Novoprokopivka.[54] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces conducted several counterattacks near Verbove and west of Robotyne.[55]

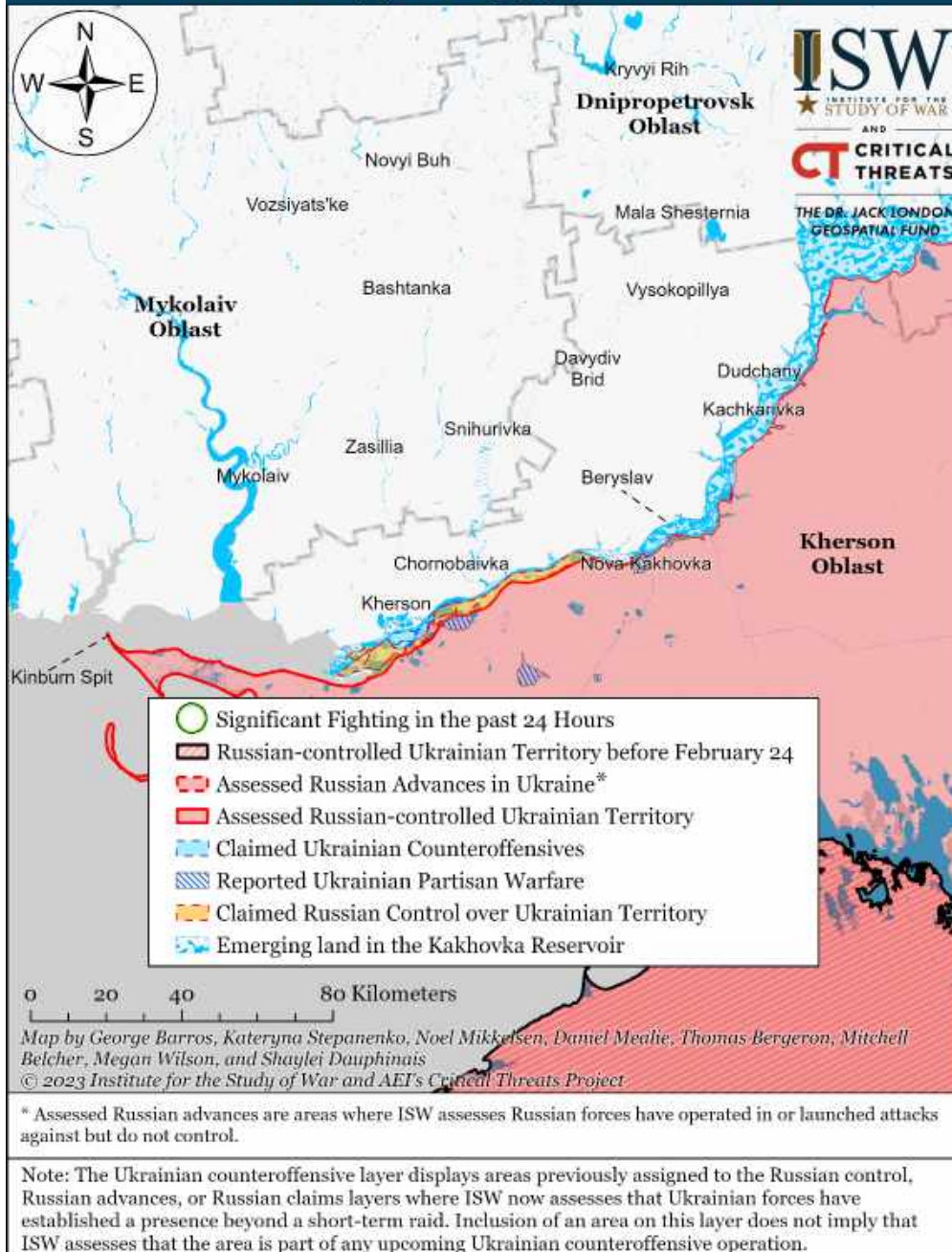


Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of October 7, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian milbloggers continued to voice concern over potential Ukrainian operations in Kherson Oblast. Several Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces are deploying naval infantry elements to the Kherson Oblast front to prepare to establish positions in the Dnipro River Delta.[56]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of October 7, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Ukraine reportedly launched a drone and missile strike against Russian infrastructure in occupied Crimea on October 6-7. The Russian MoD claimed that Russian air defenses detected and destroyed a Ukrainian drone 10km from the southwestern coast of occupied Crimea on the night of October 6.[57] The Russian MoD also claimed that Russian air defense forces downed a Ukrainian S-200 surface-to-air missile over Crimea on the evening of October 7.[58] Russian sources reported that air defenses were activated over Dzhankoi.[59] A Ukrainian military observer noted that the Russian

military command has regrouped air defense forces and assets in occupied Crimea in order to better implement comprehensive control of the air, surface, and maritime situation in the Black Sea region.[60]

Satellite imagery confirms that the Russian Black Sea Fleet (BSF) maintains a substantial presence in Sevastopol.[61] Imagery from October 6 shows that there are two Krivak-class frigates, a patrol ship, two corvettes, three Ropucha-class landing ships, one Kilo-class submarine, two intelligence ships, and two repair vessels at the dock in Sevastopol.

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

Chinese companies continue to export US-origin technologies to Russia for use in Russian weapons systems. The US Department of Commerce added 42 Chinese companies to the export control Entity List that supplied the Russian military and defense industrial bases (DIB) with US-origin integrated circuits, including microelectronics used for Russian precision guidance missile and drone systems.[62]

Russian regional governments continue to indoctrinate Russian children with patriotic education in preparation for future military recruitment efforts. Russian opposition media outlet *Idel Realii* reported that the Republic of Tatarstan plans for more than 200,000 children to participate in the “Patriotic Education” program between 2023 and 2026, which will reportedly include the distribution of “A Handbook for Conscripted Soldiers” manuals.[63] ISW has previously reported on Russia’s long-term force generation efforts that would allow the Kremlin to sustain the war in Ukraine.[64]

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)

Likely Ukrainian partisans reportedly killed a United Russia official in occupied Kherson Oblast. Secretary of the United Russia branch in Nova Kakhovka Vladimir Malov died from injuries sustained during an explosion in his car.[65] The Ukrainian Resistance Center stated that Ukrainian partisans coordinated the attack.[66]

Russian occupation officials will deny Ukrainian citizens medical care as part of continued Russian passportization efforts. Zaporizhia Oblast occupation head Yevgeny Baltisky stated in an interview with Russian state television network Rossiya-1 on October 6 that occupation authorities in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast will not provide medical care to citizens without Russian passports starting January 1, 2024.[67] ISW has previously reported that Russian authorities and occupation administrations continue to conduct forced passportization in occupied Ukraine.[68]

Russian regional and federal governments continue to develop patronage networks with occupied regions of Ukraine in order to integrate occupied territories into Russia. The Kherson Oblast occupation administration stated on October 6 that the Adygea Republic has helped construct education infrastructure in Henichesk and that the Adygea Republic has become the “chief [Russian] region” supporting occupied Kherson Oblast.[69] The Kherson Oblast occupation administration

stated that Russian First Deputy Presidential Chief of Staff Sergey Kiriyenko visited the construction site earlier. Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) Head Denis Pushilin stated on October 6 that Russian Deputy Prime Minister for Construction and Regional Development Marat Khusnullin visited education centers and energy infrastructure installments in occupied Mariupol.[70]

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 Belarusian Ministry of Defense (MoD) reported that Belarusian peacekeeping forces arrived in Kyrgyzstan on October 7 to partake in the “Indestructible Brotherhood-2023” joint exercise with the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) member states.[71]

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

Karolina Hird, Christina Harward, Grace Mappes, Nicole Wolkov, and Mason Clark

October 6, 2023, 6:30pm ET

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

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

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 2pm ET on October 6. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 7 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations near Bakhmut and advanced in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 6. Ukrainian military sources noted that Ukrainian forces continued successful offensive actions south of Bakhmut near Andriivka (8km southeast of Bakhmut).¹ Geolocated footage posted on October 5 shows that Ukrainian forces have advanced towards a tree line between Robotyne and Verbove, about 6km southeast of Robotyne.² Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash noted that Ukrainian forces are preparing for offensive operations throughout the autumn-winter period. Yevlash emphasized that while supply requirements will increase and rainy and foggy conditions may complicate the use of drones and tactical and army aviation, Ukrainian forces will continue to fight through the winter.³ Yevlash’s statement supports ISW’s longstanding assessment that weather will not prevent either side from conducting offensive operations throughout the winter of 2023-2024 if they are well-supplied and choose to do so, as they did in the winter of 2022, and that the pace of Ukrainian offensives will be in large part be metered by Western provision of appropriate small-arms and ammunition and non-lethal supplies to Ukraine - not simply winter weather conditions or any specific weapons system.⁴

Russian forces appear to have recently conducted a regimental rotation in the Orikhiv area, demonstrating an ability to sustain their defenses in this critical sector of the frontline. A Ukrainian military observer reported on October 6 that elements of the 291st Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District), which were recently “partially restored,” withdrew to positions east of Nesteryanka (about 10km northwest of Robotyne) after the Russian command previously committed them to the area.⁵ The Ukrainian observer also suggested that elements of the 71st Motorized Rifle Regiment (also of the 42nd Motorized Rifle Division) are “persistently” counterattacking on the northern outskirts of Novoprokopivka (2km south of Robotyne).⁶ ISW observed in mid-September that critical elements of the 42nd Motorized Rifle Division, particularly its 291st and 71st Motorized Rifle Regiments, withdrew behind the Russian defensive line between Verbove and Solodka Balka (about 5km south of Robotyne) due to casualties that may have rendered them combat ineffective.⁷ Following the withdrawal of elements of the 42nd Motorized Rifle Division to rear areas in western Zaporizhia Oblast, elements of the 7th and 76th Airborne (VDV) divisions laterally redeployed to the area from Kherson and Luhansk oblasts to fill in the gaps left by 42nd



Motorized Rifle Division elements.⁸ By late September, ISW observed elements of the 42nd Motorized Rifle Division apparently recommitting to the front near Novoprokopivka, suggesting that they rotated back to the front after resting and reconstituting for a short time.⁹ The Ukrainian military source's observations about the 291st and 71st Motorized Rifle Regiments, as well as increased recent Russian reporting of these regiments defending against Ukrainian attacks in the areas south and west of Robotyne, suggest that Russian forces have conducted regiment-level rotations in this sector of the front over the past month.¹⁰ **ISW previously assessed that Russian forces were likely struggling to conduct tactical to operational level rotations along the entire frontline, but is revising this assessment considering the apparent rotation of substantial elements of the 42nd Motorized Rifle Division and two VDV divisions to and from the frontline south of Orikhiv.**

Russian forces reportedly resumed an offensive effort near Kupyansk on October 6, but the majority of the Russian forces reportedly deployed to this sector of the front likely remain combat ineffective. Ukrainian military officials reported a decrease in Russian activity near Kupyansk in recent weeks, but Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash stated on October 6 that Russian forces resumed combat operations in the Kupyansk-Lyman direction.¹¹ Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces launched an offensive push near Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk) and that Russian forces are heavily shelling the N26 (Shevchenkove-Kupyansk) highway.¹² One milblogger characterized the renewed Russian offensive push towards Kupyansk as "large-scale" in a now-deleted post.¹³ Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Head Lieutenant General Kyrylo Budanov previously reported that the Russian military deployed elements of the newly formed 25th Combined Arms Army (CAA) (reportedly formed under the Eastern Military District) to the Kupyansk direction to replace elements of the 41st CAA (Central Military District).¹⁴ The resumption of Russian offensive operations near Kupyansk, possibly including elements of the 25th CAA, is likely intended to draw Ukrainian attention away from other sectors of the front in southern Ukraine. ISW previously assessed, however, that the 25th CAA was hurriedly deployed ahead of an intended deployment date of December 2023 and is likely severely understaffed, poorly trained, or both.¹⁵ ISW has also previously observed the presence of heavily degraded Western Military District (WMD) elements, particularly of the 1st Guards Tank Army and 6th Combined Arms Army, in the Kupyansk area, and ISW does not assess at this time that a grouping comprised of the newly formed 25th Combined Arms Army with degraded WMD elements will be able to sustain meaningful offensives in this area.¹⁶

Russian forces may be expanding military training infrastructure in occupied eastern Ukraine as part of ongoing efforts to increase the training and mobilization capacity of the Russian military. A Ukrainian reserve officer published satellite imagery on October 5 showing that Russian forces are expanding multiple training facilities in rear areas in occupied Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, including near Novopavlivka in occupied Luhansk Oblast.¹⁷ The Ukrainian reserve officer stated that Russian forces are likely attempting to alleviate logistical bottlenecks and improve infrastructure to support continued mobilization and training.¹⁸ Russian forces may be expanding training infrastructure in rear areas of occupied eastern Ukraine as part of the effort to establish nine reserve regiments, as well as "self-sufficient" force groupings, in occupied areas of Ukraine as part of ongoing large-scale military reforms.¹⁹ ISW assessed with low confidence that the nine reserve regiments undergoing training may be training regiments through which Russian volunteers could flow on their way to the front.²⁰ The Russian military may also be expanding bases in occupied Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts as part of ongoing efforts to integrate and formalize Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republic forces within the Russian military and to increase the self-sufficiency of Russian groupings in occupied Ukraine by establishing



forward training and C2 infrastructure in occupied Ukraine, rather than running operations in Donetsk and Luhansk from the Southern Military District itself.²¹

The Kremlin’s continued attempts to deflect blame for the crash of Wagner financier Yevgeny Prigozhin’s plane crash and disgrace Prigozhin are generating continued praise for Prigozhin and efforts to defend his legacy among select information space communities. Pro-Wagner and Wagner-affiliated channels largely lampooned Putin’s suggestion on October 5 Prigozhin’s plane crashed due to grenades detonating onboard, possibly due to the passengers using alcohol or drugs onboard.²² Some channels called Putin’s claims “laughable,” “a farce,” and disrespectful to “heroes” of Russia.²³ A Russian insider source claimed that members of the Russian Presidential Administration “provoked” Putin to deliver these statements in order to “de-heroize” Prigozhin, since Prigozhin’s previous statements questioning the reasons for the start of the war in Ukraine are apparently gaining popularity throughout Russia.²⁴ Putin’s comments do not appear to have had the intended effect and have instead pushed some elements of the Russian information space to attempt to preserve Prigozhin’s reputation and disprove Putin’s implication that Prigozhin was to blame for the plane crash by continuing to discuss Prigozhin and criticize the Kremlin’s official line on his death. However, the Kremlin’s apparent perceived need to continue to discuss Prigozhin’s death and denigrate him further is noteworthy regardless of any information space responses, indicating the Kremlin likely perceives some continuing threat from Prigozhin’s statements and stance on the war.

Former Russian military commanders who participated in the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 reportedly remain in peripheral positions of some influence within the Russian military or defense-industrial base. A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger amplified a claim by a Russian insider source on October 6 that listed the current positions of Russian military commanders whom the Russian military leadership replaced after the initial invasion of Ukraine in 2022 failed to achieve its intended goals.²⁵ The source claimed that former Western Military District (WMD) Commander Colonel General Alexander Zhuravlev and former Southern Military District (SMD) Commander Army General Alexander Dvornikov are currently advisors to High Precision Complexes (a subsidiary of Rostec, Russia’s primary state-owned defense conglomerate) and the Almaz-Antey Aerospace Defense Concern (another state-owned defense enterprise), respectively. The source claimed that Dvornikov is still in “army circles” and hopes to return to the military. The source claimed that former Central Military District Commander Colonel General Alexander Lapin is currently the Chief of Staff of the Russian Ground Forces. The source claimed that former Eastern Military District (EMD) Commander Colonel General Alexander Chaiko served in Syria and the Russian General Staff after his dismissal as EMD commander but that his current position is unknown. Former United Kingdom Secretary of State for Defense Ben Wallace stated on October 1 that the Russian military leadership had removed all commanders who led major Russian units into Ukraine in February 2022.²⁶ These insider source claims are largely consistent with ISW’s previous observations of a pattern of Russian military leadership shifting disgraced and ineffective commanders to peripheral positions far removed from Ukraine without entirely discharging them from military or security sector government positions, leaving open the option of returning to a command position.²⁷

Russian forces conducted a Shahed-131/136 drone strike targeting port, grain, and border infrastructure in southern Ukraine on the night of October 5-6. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces launched 33 Shahed drones from Cape Chauda, Crimea and that Ukrainian air defenses shot down 25 of the drones.²⁸ The Ukrainian Southern Operational Command reported that the Russian strike



damaged port infrastructure and a granary along the Danube River in Odesa Oblast, and geolocated footage published on October 6 indicates that the strike hit the Orlivka-Isaccea ferry crossing that connects Odesa Oblast and Romania.²⁹

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations near Bakhmut and advanced in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 6.**
- **Russian forces appear to have recently conducted a regimental rotation in the Orikhiv area, demonstrating an ability to sustain their defenses in this critical sector of the frontline.**
- **Russian forces reportedly resumed an offensive effort near Kupyansk on October 6, but the majority of the Russian forces reportedly deployed to this sector of the front likely remain combat ineffective.**
- **Russian forces may be expanding military training infrastructure in occupied eastern Ukraine as part of ongoing efforts to increase the training and mobilization capacity of the Russian military.**
- **The Kremlin's continued attempts to deflect blame for the crash of Wagner financier Yevgeny Prigozhin's plane crash and disgrace Prigozhin are generating continued praise for Prigozhin and efforts to defend his legacy among select information space communities.**
- **Former Russian military commanders who participated in the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 reportedly remain in peripheral positions of some influence within the Russian military or defense-industrial base.**
- **Russian forces conducted a Shahed-131/136 drone strike targeting port, grain, and border infrastructure in southern Ukraine on the night of October 5-6.**
- **Russian forces continued offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Lyman line, near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and advanced in some areas.**
- **Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut and advanced in western Zaporizhia Oblast.**
- **Russia has reportedly recruited up to several hundred Serbian nationals to fight in Ukraine.**

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 on October 6 and reportedly advanced. Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash stated that Russian forces resumed combat operations in the Kupyansk-Lyman direction.³⁰ Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces launched renewed offensive operations near Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk) while simultaneously counterattacking in unspecified areas of the Svatove sector of the front.³¹ The milbloggers claimed that Russian forces are heavily shelling the N26 (Shevchenkove-Kupyansk) highway.³² One milblogger characterized the Russian offensive push towards Kupyansk as “large-scale” in a now-deleted post.³³ Other milbloggers claimed that Russian forces made unspecified progress northeast of Kupyansk.³⁴ A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces advanced near Kyslivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk) and successfully attacked near Makiivka (22km northwest of Kreminna) on October 5.³⁵ A Russian milblogger claimed on October 6 that Russian forces attacked near Torske (15km west of Kreminna) and Makiivka but did not specify an outcome.³⁶ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Synkivka, Ivanivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk), and Makiivka.³⁷

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Kreminna on October 6. The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attempted to recapture lost positions near Yampolivka (17km west of Kreminna), Dibrova (7km southwest of Kreminna), and Kuzmyne (3km southwest of Kreminna) and that Ukrainian forces conducted four unsuccessful attacks in the Kupyansk direction in the past week.³⁸

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

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Bakhmut direction and reportedly advanced south of Bakhmut on October 6. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces were successful east of Andriivka (8km southwest of Bakhmut).³⁹ Russian milbloggers claimed that a battalion-sized Ukrainian group attacked toward the railway line between Andriivka and Klishchiivka (6km southwest of Bakhmut) but that Russian forces defended against the attack.⁴⁰

Russian forces conducted unsuccessful counterattacks near Bakhmut on October 6. The Ukrainian General Staff and Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash reported that Russian troops unsuccessfully attempted to regain lost positions east of Dyliivka (15km southwest of Bakhmut), south of



Andriivka, and near Klishchiivka.⁴¹ A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces counterattacked near Andriivka, Klishchiivka, and Hryhorivka (7km northwest of Bakhmt), but did not specify the outcome of these attacks.⁴² Russian sources, including the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), amplified footage of the 98th Guards Airborne (VDV) Division firing on Ukrainian positions in the Bakhmut direction.⁴³

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted limited ground attacks on the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on October 6.⁴⁴ Several Russian sources amplified footage that reportedly shows a group of around 17 Ukrainian soldiers surrendering near Marinka on the southwestern outskirts of Donetsk City.⁴⁵

Russian forces continued ground attacks on the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on October 6 and have recently made marginal advances. Geolocated footage posted on October 5 shows Russian positions south of Avdiivka near the E50 highway that runs along the outskirts of Donetsk City.⁴⁶ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Avdiivka, Marinka, and Novomykhailivka.⁴⁷ A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces continued offensive operations in Marinka, resumed attacks towards Krasnohorivka and Sieverne (both on the northwestern outskirts of Donetsk City), and tried to advance on the southern approaches to Avdiivka.⁴⁸

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

Ukrainian forces continued limited offensive operations in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area without advancing on October 6. Russian sources claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian attack near Pryyutne (16km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).⁴⁹

Russian forces launched a series of counterattacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 6 but did not make any confirmed or claimed gains. Russian sources claimed that Russian forces counterattacked towards the north and northeast of Rivnopil (8km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) and from Novomayorske (18km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).⁵⁰ Some Russian milbloggers characterized these attacks as Russian forces' attempts to seize the initiative in the area and force Ukrainian forces to react to the Russian attacks.⁵¹ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks north of Pryyutne and near Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) and Zolota Nyva (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).⁵² The Ukrainian General Staff also reported unsuccessful Russian ground attacks in western Donetsk Oblast near Vuhledar and Vodyane (6km northeast of Vuhledar).

A Ukrainian military observer suggested that communication issues on the command seam between headquarters of the 5th Combined Arms Army (CAA) and 36th CAA (both of the Eastern Military District) south and southeast of Velyka Novosilka is exacerbating Russian forces' inability to make gains during localized counterattacks in this area. The military observer stated that the 127th Motorized Rifle Division and 60th Motorized Rifle Brigade (both of the 5th CAA) are tasked with defending the Staromlynivka area (14km south of Velyka Novosilka) and the Novozlatopil-Staromlynivka-Novomayorske line (25km southwest to 18km southeast of Novomayorske).⁵³ The military observer stated that elements of the 60th Motorized Rifle Brigade and the 394th Motorized Rifle Regiment (127th Motorized Rifle Division) have been unsuccessfully counterattacking over the past month to push Ukrainian forces to the northern outskirts of Pryyutne and that elements of the 37th



Motorized Rifle Brigade (36th CAA) conducted failed attacks near Urozhaine (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) and west of Novodonetske (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka) to pressure Ukraine's eastern flank.

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 6 and recently marginally advanced. Geolocated footage published on October 5 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced to a tree line west of Verbove (18km southeast of Orikhiv).⁵⁴ The "Storm Ossetia" and "Alania" volunteer battalions operating in the area claimed that Ukrainian forces are gradually shifting the frontline closer to Verbove.⁵⁵ Russian sources claimed that small Ukrainian infantry groups continued attacking Russian positions on the Kopani-Robotyne line (up to 5km northwest of Robotyne) overnight on October 5-6 and on October 6.⁵⁶ Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces continued attacks near Verbove and Novopropkivka (18km southeast of Orikhiv).⁵⁷

Russian forces continued limited unsuccessful counterattacks in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 6. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked Ukrainian positions in western Robotyne.⁵⁸ Another Russian milblogger claimed that the 291st Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) has been periodically counterattacking while defending against heavy Ukrainian attacks on the Kopani-Robotyne line in the past three days.⁵⁹ A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces counterattacked from the Verbove direction on October 5.⁶⁰

Russian forces likely temporarily regained and subsequently lost the sub-tactical initiative on the Ukrainian flank near Robotyne during a series of counterattacks in the past few weeks. A Ukrainian military observer reported that elements of Russian Airborne (VDV) formations have attacked Ukrainian positions on the Kopani-Robotyne and Novofedorivka-Mala Tokmachka (9-18km southeast of Orikhiv) directions in a failed attempt to alleviate pressure on Russian forces near Novopropkivka.⁶¹ The military observer stated that the Russian 104th VDV Regiment (76th VDV Division) instead failed to reach the outskirts of Robotyne and even lost several positions near Kopani, and that the 108th VDV Regiment (7th VDV Division) tried to drive a wedge along the T0803 but failed and had to withdraw. This report is consistent with ISW's recent assessments that certain Russian units, including elements of the 7th VDV Division, 76th VDV Division, and 58th CAA have been consistently counterattacking in western Zaporizhia Oblast to their detriment.⁶² While these Russian attacks did not capture territory, the extent (or lack thereof) of their spoiling effects on Ukrainian offensive operations is unclear.

Russian sources continue to discuss Ukrainian activity in the Dnipro River delta in Kherson Oblast. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces maintain positions on a narrow section of east-bank Kherson Oblast near the Antonivsky Bridge and also on Kozatskyi Island (northwest of Nova Kakhovka).⁶³ Russian milbloggers expressed continued concern that limited Ukrainian raids across the river indicate that Ukrainian forces are preparing for a broader offensive effort.⁶⁴ The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully tried to capture footholds on the Dnipro River delta islands in the past week.⁶⁵

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

Russia has reportedly recruited up to several hundred Serbian nationals to fight in Ukraine. *BBC's* Russia service reported on October 6 that Serbian citizens have reportedly been fighting as part of the separate "Wolf" unit of the 106th Airborne (VDV) Division since the start of the war in February 2022.⁶⁶ *BBC* reported that another



group of 30 Serbian nationals signed contracts with the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and flew to Russia to join the 106th VDV Division at an unspecified date after September 15, 2023.⁶⁷ *BBC* reported that a group of Serbian nationals fought in eastern Ukraine in 2014 as a part of the Wagner Group, and ISW has observed alleged Wagner recruitment efforts in Serbia in winter and spring 2023.⁶⁸ Serbian President Alexander Vucic called on the Wagner Group to cease recruitment in Serbia in January 2023, however.⁶⁹ ISW has also observed reports of Cuban and Nepalese nationals serving in Russian VDV formations, including the 106th VDV Division.⁷⁰

The Kremlin-controlled Russian Orthodox Church's Tatarstan Metropolitanate has reportedly helped to organize aid for Russian military personnel fighting in Ukraine. *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* branch *Idel Realii* reported on October 5 that the Tatarstan Metropolitanate's main charity department "Kazan - Mercy" claimed that it raised 8 million rubles (about \$80,000) in 2022 to help "refugees" and "families of 'Special Military Operation' participants" but later noted that over a half a million rubles went to "the needs of soldiers."⁷¹ *Idel Realii* reported that local eparchies (an ecclesiastical unit in Eastern Christianity roughly equivalent to a diocese) of the Tatarstan Metropolitanate also collect funds for Russian military supplies.

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 are likely prioritizing providing medical care to Russian forces in occupied Ukraine, thereby causing medical shortages for Ukrainian civilians. Ukrainian Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov reported on October 5 that Russian occupation authorities have converted most civilian hospitals in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast to facilities for the treatment of wounded Russian personnel. Fedorov also stated that there is a shortage of doctors at remaining civilian hospitals which causes long wait times for civilians to receive medical treatment.⁷² Crimean occupation administration head Sergei Aksyonov claimed on October 6 that occupied Dzhankoi Raion and other unspecified raions in Crimea lack doctors.⁷³

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 Belarusian Ministry of Defense (MoD) stated that peacekeeping forces from the Belarusian 103rd Separate Guards Airborne Brigade, officers from the Belarusian Special Forces and Belarusian MoD commands, and elements of the internal troops of the Belarusian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) will participate in the "Indestructible Brotherhood 2023" Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) joint exercises in Kyrgyzstan from October 9 to 13.⁷⁴ The Belarusian MoD stated that the exercises are aimed at improving the skills of CSTO peacekeeping forces operating in CSTO states in Central Asia.

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

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https://t.me/prigozhin_2023_tg/3958 ; https://t.me/grey_zone/20930 ; https://t.me/grey_zone/20931 ;
<https://t.me/arat/1717> ; https://t.me/orchestra_w/9386 ; <https://t.me/RuFront/5218>

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Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 5, 2023

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

October 5, 2023, 9:15pm ET

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

Click [here](#) to 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 2pm ET on October 5. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 6 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russian President Vladimir Putin addressed the 20th Valdai Discussion Club on October 5 and promoted multiple long-standing Russian information operations. Putin reiterated the false narrative that the West initiated the conflict in Ukraine in 2014 and claimed that NATO expansion threatens Russian security.[1] Putin claimed that the war in Ukraine is not a “territorial conflict” but is about Russia establishing principles for a new multipolar world order, stating that the UN and modern international law are “outdated and subject to demolition.” ISW recently evaluated claims that Putin launched the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 because he feared NATO and instead assessed that Putin’s aims were to expand Russia’s power, eradicate Ukrainian statehood, and break up NATO – goals he still pursues.[2] Putin’s expressed goal of establishing a multipolar world order further supports ISW’s assessment that Putin’s goals in Ukraine have also exceeded responding to some supposed NATO threat or conquering limited additional territory.

Putin claimed that Russia has successfully completed testing of the nuclear-power Burevestnik cruise missile and the Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).[3] Putin spoke about the Russian doctrinal uses of nuclear weapons in either a retaliatory strike or in response to an existential threat to Russia and claimed that there is no modern situation that would threaten Russia’s existence and that no aggressor would use nuclear weapons against Russia. ISW has previously assessed that the Kremlin uses nuclear rhetoric to prompt the United States and its allies to pressure Ukraine to negotiate and that Russian nuclear use in Ukraine remains unlikely.[4] Putin also exaggerated Ukrainian personnel and equipment losses, as Russian officials often do, as part of a continued effort to paint the Ukrainian counteroffensive as a failure.[5]

Putin offered a bizarre explanation for Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin’s death during a press conference at the Valdai Discussion Club on October 5 to deflect blame from the Kremlin. Putin stated that the Russian Investigative Committee Head Alexander Bastrykin informed him that the investigation found grenade fragments in the bodies of victims onboard Prigozhin’s plane, suggesting that grenades detonated inside the aircraft.[6] The investigative committee has reported publicly only that all 10 people aboard the plane died.[7] Putin

also emphasized that the investigation ruled out external factors that may have caused the plane crash and implied that the plane crash victims may have been using alcohol or drugs onboard that could have led to the negligent handling of grenades (that were presumably on board for some unexplained reason). Putin claimed that, while the investigation did not test the bodies for alcohol and narcotics, the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) uncovered five kilograms of cocaine during their investigation into Wagner – likely referring to FSB’s televised raids into Prigozhin’s mansion in June and July 2023. Putin added that in his opinion the investigation needs to test the bodies for substances. Putin’s bizarre explanation of the plane crash is likely an attempt to blame Prigozhin for his own and his comrades’ deaths and further disgrace him among his remaining supporters.

Putin continued to deny the existence of private military companies (PMC) in Russia, indicating that the future of the Wagner Group still remains unclear. Putin reiterated the absurd claim that PMCs do not exist in Russia because “there are now laws about private military companies [in Russia]” and called the name of Wagner PMC a “journalistic name,” likely meaning that the media incorrectly labeled the Wagner Group a PMC.[8] Putin claimed that he did not object when the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) suggested that parts of the Wagner Group participate in the war in Ukraine because Wagner personnel acted voluntarily and “fought heroically,” but noted that the experience with Wagner was “clumsy because it was not based on the law.”[9] Putin also claimed that “several thousand” Wagner personnel signed contracts with the Russian MoD.[10]

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and reportedly advanced on October 5. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continue to conduct offensive operations in the Melitopol direction (western Zaporizhia Oblast) and offensive actions in the Bakhmut direction.[11] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces achieved unspecified successes east of Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut), and Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun reported that Ukrainian forces achieved partial success west of Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv).[12]

A prominent Russian milblogger justified Russian tactical retreats throughout the Ukrainian counteroffensive as part of an elastic defense. A Russian milblogger amplified a claim reportedly from a Russian frontline soldier that Russian commanders have been choosing to withdraw their forces throughout the counteroffensive period from “broken positions” in order to conduct a “maneuverable and active defense,” likely referring to an elastic defense approach.[13] Other Russian milbloggers have recently indicated that Russian commanders are increasingly needing to choose between either “wasting” their troops in counterattacks to hold tactical positions or standing up to the Russian military command by retreating to previously prepared positions against orders or pressure, thereby risking their careers.[14]

The Russian military may have redeployed elements of the 41st Combined Arms Army (CAA) and elements of the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade to the Kherson direction. A Russian milblogger claimed on October 5 that elements of the 41st CAA (Central Military District) including the 74th Motorized Rifle Brigade and the 55th Motorized Rifle Brigade, as well as unspecified Russian naval infantry elements, are regrouping in the Kherson direction.[15] The milblogger claimed that the Russian naval infantry unit is presumably the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade, which Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Head Lieutenant General Kyrylo Budanov stated on September 22 had been “completely defeated,” now indicating that the

brigade may have reconstituted or is in the process of reconstituting.[16] Budanov stated on August 31 that elements of the newly formed 25th CAA deployed to the Kupyansk direction in order to replace elements of the 41st CAA, which would begin a “slow” deployment to an unspecified area in southern Ukraine.[17] ISW previously assessed that the Russian military would laterally redeploy elements of the 41st CAA to defend against Ukrainian counteroffensive operations.[18] The milblogger’s claim, if true, would invalidate that assessment and suggests instead that Russian forces continue to be very concerned about potential future Ukrainian operations on the left (east) bank of the Dnipro River.

Russian forces conducted a missile strike on Hroza, Kharkiv Oblast that killed 51 people on October 5 following another series of drone strikes across Ukraine

overnight.[19] Ukrainian Kharkiv Oblast Administration Head Oleh Synhubov reported that all the Hroza strike victims were civilians and that Russian forces likely used an Iskander cruise missile in the strike.[20] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces launched 29 Shahed-131/136 drones on the night of October 4 to 5, and that Ukrainian forces shot down 24 of the drones.[21]

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu indicated that the Russian MoD may be establishing training regiments that can also serve as in extremis operational or strategic reserves, although this is a low confidence assessment.

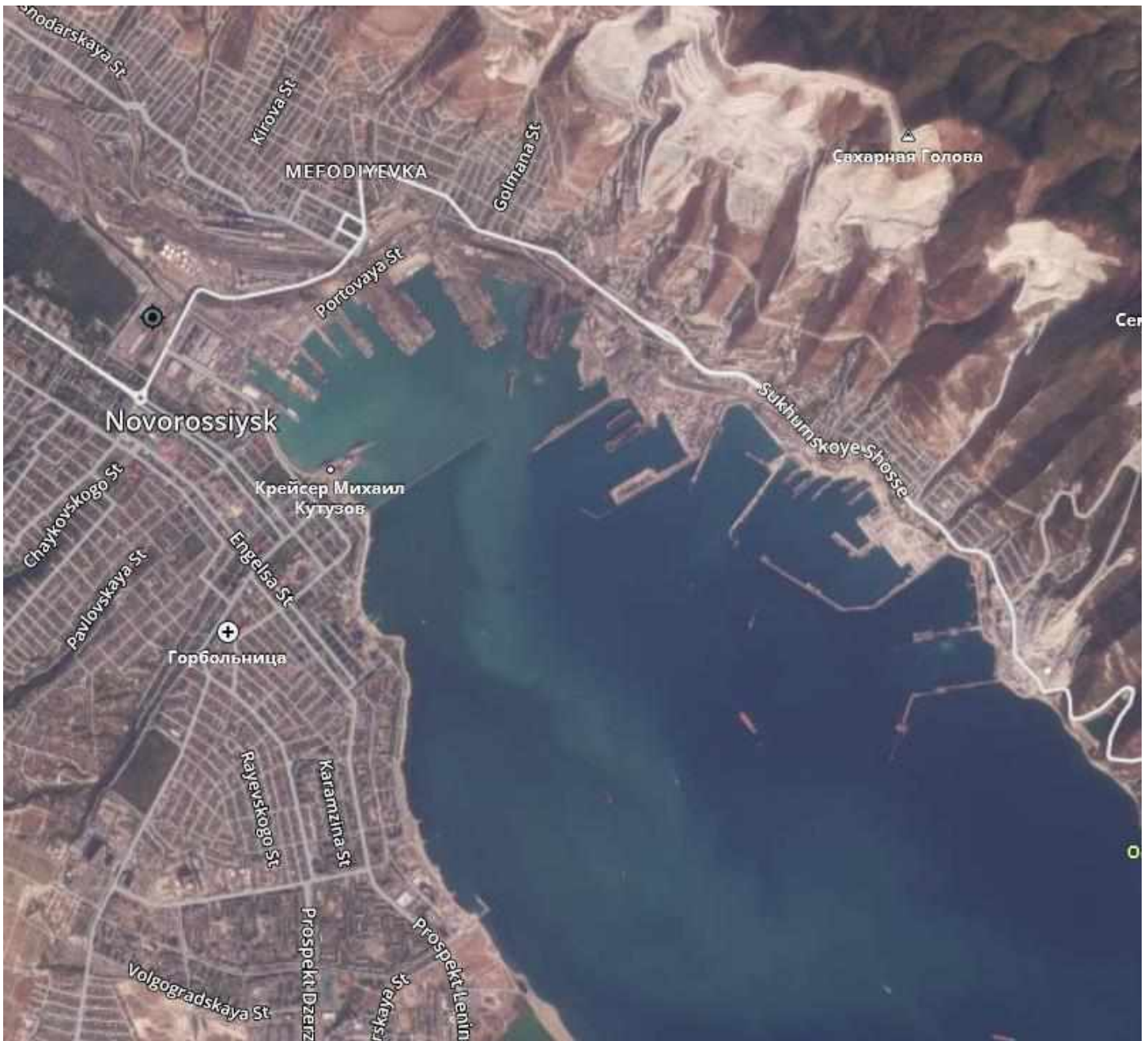
Shoigu stated that the Russian General Staff has formed “nine reserve regiments that are being trained” and that their “natural, constant replenishment is underway.”[22] The wording of Shoigu’s statement is somewhat opaque but seems to suggest that these new units are training regiments through which Russian volunteers flow on their way to the front. This approach would be an improvement over previous Russian practice that often sent individuals or small groups from training areas in Russia either directly into frontline units or to more ad hoc training areas in Ukraine before they went to the front.[23] Sending volunteers to organized training regiments will likely provide them with better preparation to fight before they go to the front. The regiments themselves could presumably also be deployed as combat units in extremis, although at the cost of disrupting part of the training pipeline for the theater as a whole. This assessment is offered with low confidence as it relies on a close reading of a brief and unclear statement. ISW has no independent evidence of this reported change in Russian training.

Shoigu also reasserted the responsibility of Russian federal subjects to form and recruit for Russian volunteer formations. Shoigu thanked Tula Oblast Governor Alexei Dyumin, Republic of Buryatia Head Alexey Tsydenov, and Republic of Sakha Aisen Nikolaev for their efforts to recruit for regional volunteer formations.[24] Shoigu’s praise of Dyumin in particular reasserts Dyumin’s subordinate position; Russian sources previously floated Dyumin as a prospective replacement for Shoigu, and Russian President Vladimir Putin and Shoigu have publicly reasserted Shoigu’s position above Dyumin in the aftermath.[25]

Russia will reportedly build a permanent naval base in Abkhazia, but it will likely remain small.

Russian-backed Abkhazian President Aslan Bzhania announced on October 5 that he had signed an agreement with Russian authorities for the construction of a permanent Russian naval base near occupied Ochamchire, Abkhazia.[26] Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov declined to comment on the alleged permanent base in Abkhazia.[27] Publicly available satellite imagery shows that existing port infrastructure near occupied Ochamchire is limited and that the surrounding coastline consists of sandy beaches — terrain largely unsuitable for the construction of naval infrastructure.[28] The existing port is unsuitable to become a primary base for the Russian Black Sea

Fleet, but the Russian military could expand existing naval infrastructure and use the Ochamchire port as a subsidiary base in the future.



Imagery of the Russian naval base in occupied Abkhazia. October 4, 2023.

Image courtesy of Planet Labs PBC.



Imagery of the Russian naval base in occupied Sevastopol, Crimea. October 1, 2023.

Image courtesy of Planet Labs PBC.

Key Takeaways:

- **Russian President Vladimir Putin addressed the 20th Valdai Discussion Club on October 5 and promoted multiple long-standing Russian information operations.**
- **Putin offered a bizarre explanation for Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin's death during a press conference at the Valdai Discussion Club on October 5 to deflect blame from the Kremlin.**
- **Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and reportedly advanced on October 5.**

- **The Russian military may have redeployed elements of the 41st Combined Arms Army (CAA) and elements of the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade to the Kherson direction.**
- **Russian forces conducted a missile strike on Hroza, Kharkiv Oblast that killed 51 people on October 5 following another series of drone strikes across Ukraine overnight.**
- **Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu indicated that the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) may be establishing training regiments that can also serve as in extremis operational or strategic reserves, although this is a low confidence assessment.**
- **Russia will reportedly build a permanent naval base in Abkhazia, but it will likely remain small.**
- **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 advance on October 5.**
- **Russia continues to use the personal data of Russian citizens for crypto-mobilization efforts.**
- **Russian occupation officials continue to advertise programs for the forcible removal and deportation of Ukrainian children.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of October 5, 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

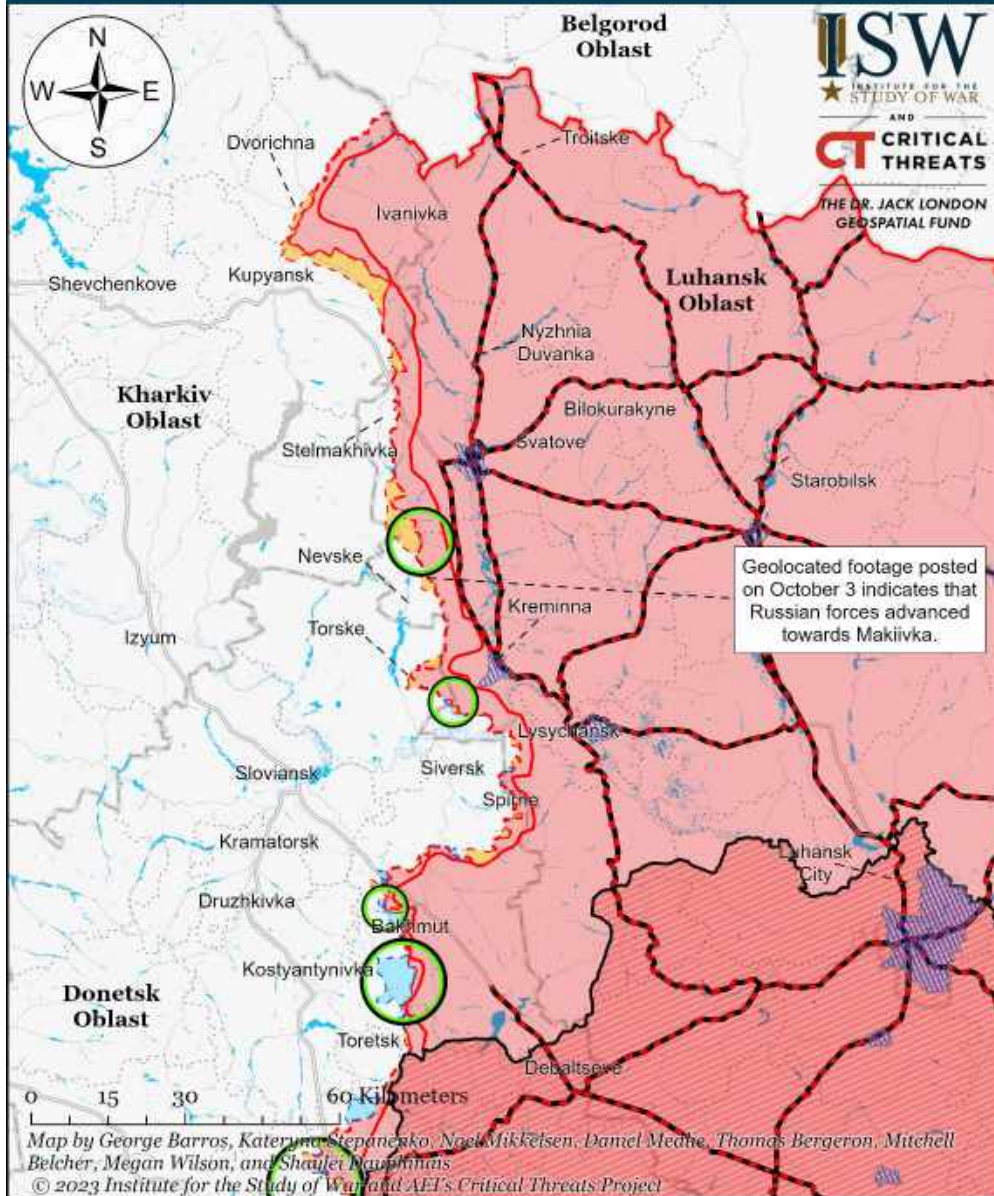
Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled a limited Russian attack north of Zybyne, Kharkiv Oblast (immediately east of Vovchansk and 3km south of the international border), likely a cross-border raid originating from Russian territory.[29]

Russian forces reportedly increased the intensity of combat operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on October 5 but did not make confirmed territorial gains. Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash stated that Russian forces intensified combat operations in the Kupyansk-Lyman direction and are focusing their efforts on offensive operations Makiivka, Luhansk Oblast (22km northwest of Kreminna), where eight combat engagements occurred in the last day.[30] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces seized new positions near Makiivka, but ISW has observed no confirmation of this claim.[31] Another Russian milblogger claimed on October 4 that Russian forces made tactical advances west of Svatove and that positional battles continue northeast of Kupyansk.[32] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks east of Makiivka and northwest of Dibrova, Luhansk Oblast (7km southwest of Kreminna).[33]

Ukrainian forces reportedly continued limited offensive operations in the Kreminna area but did not advance on October 5. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled two Ukrainian attacks near Dibrova.[34] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked Russian positions near Torske (14km west of Kreminna) on October 4 and 5.[35]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of October 5, 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

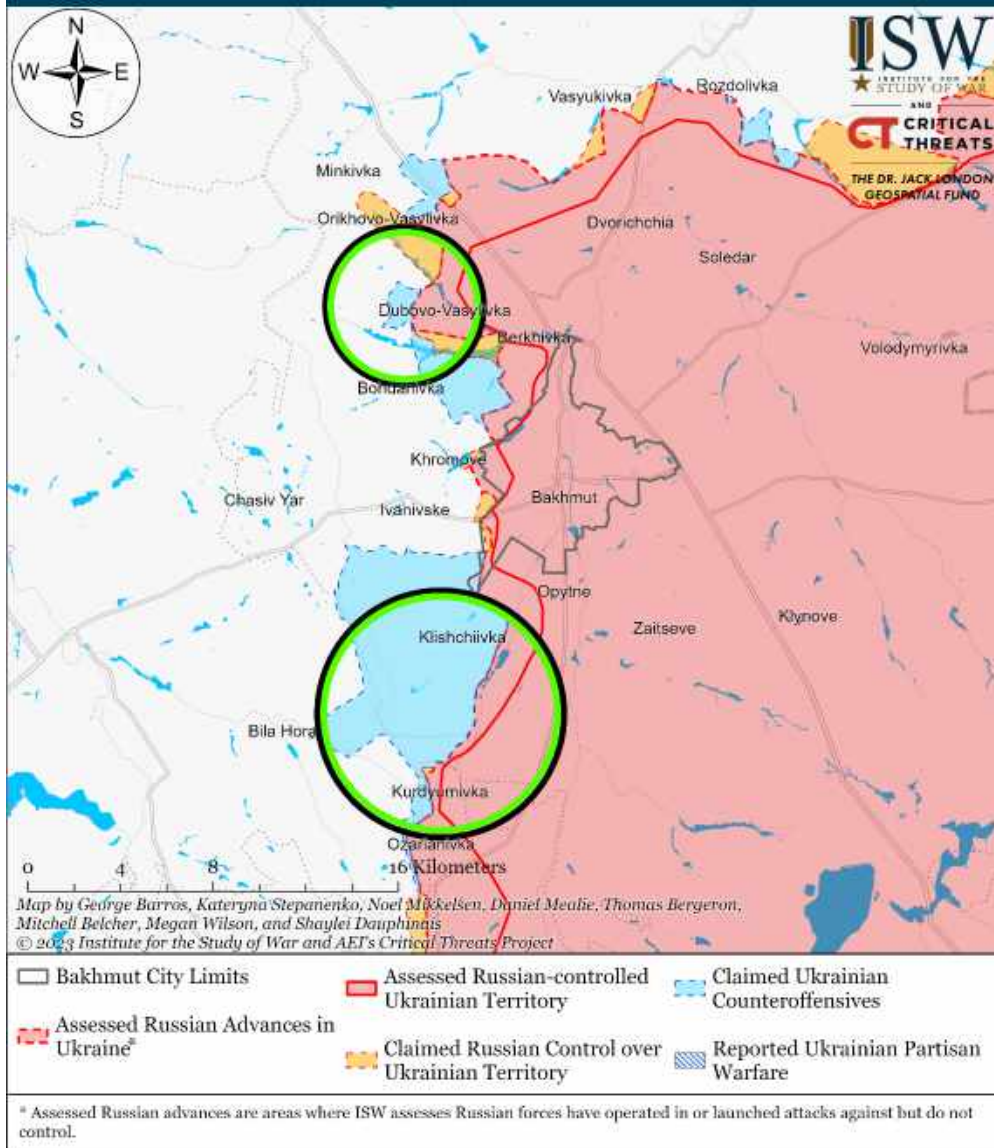
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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 and reportedly advanced on October 5. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces achieved unspecified success east of Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).[36] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are advancing towards the railway line near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut).[37] Other Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked towards the railway near Klishchiivka and Andriivka.[38] Russian sources claimed that elements of the Russian 132nd Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People’s Republic [DNR] Army Corps) repelled a Ukrainian attack in the Horlivka direction, likely referring to the area between the Bakhmut and Avdiivka directions.[39]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut but did not advance on October 5. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully tried to recapture lost positions east of Dylivka (15km southwest of Bakhmut) and near Hryhorivka (9km northwest of Bakhmut), Klishchiivka, and Andriivka.[40] Russian sources claimed on October 4 and 5 that Russian forces still hold recently captured positions near Orikhovo-Vasylivka (11km northwest of Bakhmut).[41]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of October 5, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

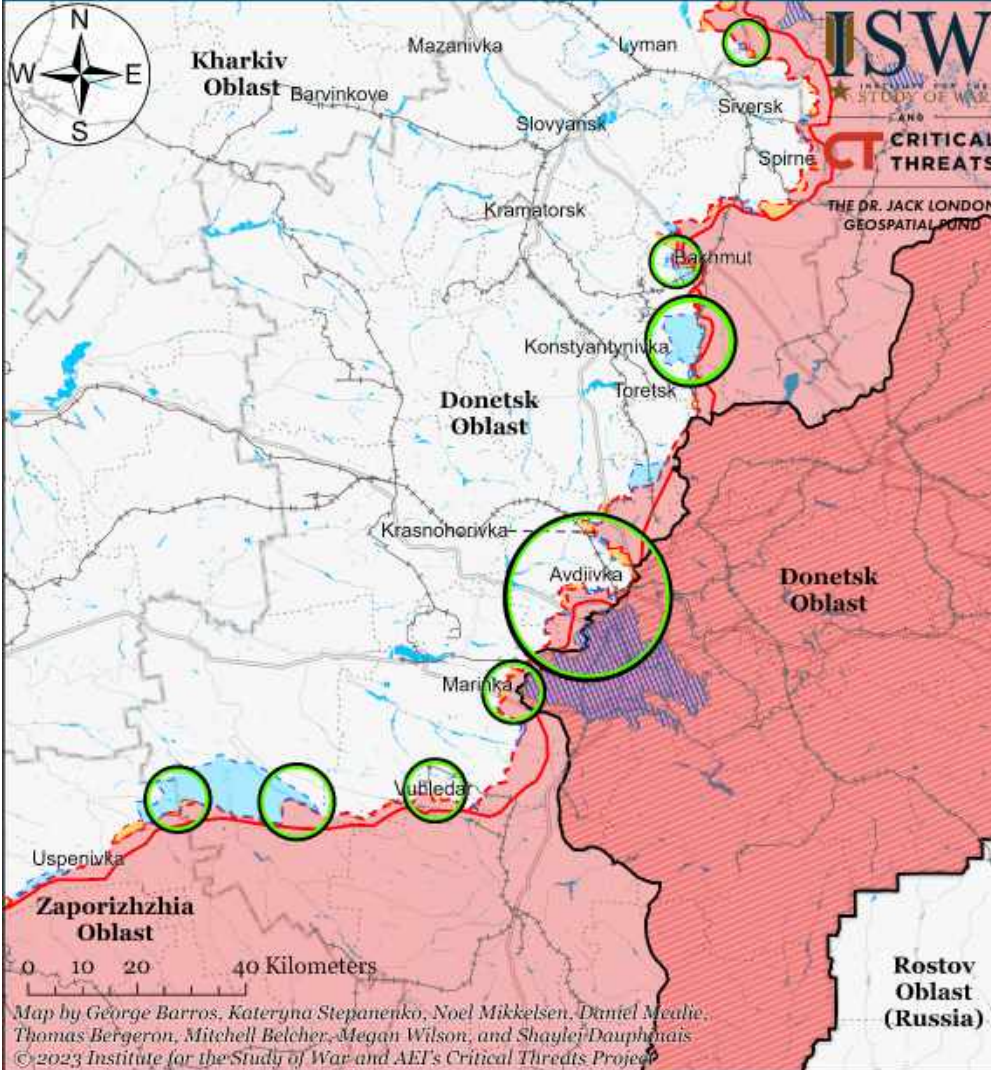


The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Krasnohorivka (either 8km northwest of Avdiivka or directly west of Donetsk City) and Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka) along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on October 5.[42]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line but did not advance on October 5. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully tried to recapture lost positions near Avdiivka and improve their tactical positions near Lastochkyne (6km west of Avdiivka).[43] The Ukrainian General Staff also reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Marinka (on the western outskirts of Donetsk City), Krasnohorivka, and Novomykhailivka (10km southwest of Donetsk City).[44] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces

Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun stated that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked up to 20 times per day in the Avdiivka and Marinka directions.[45] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces conducted assault operations in Marinka and attacked near Krasnohorivka and Pervomaiske but did not specify an outcome.[46]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of October 5, 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.

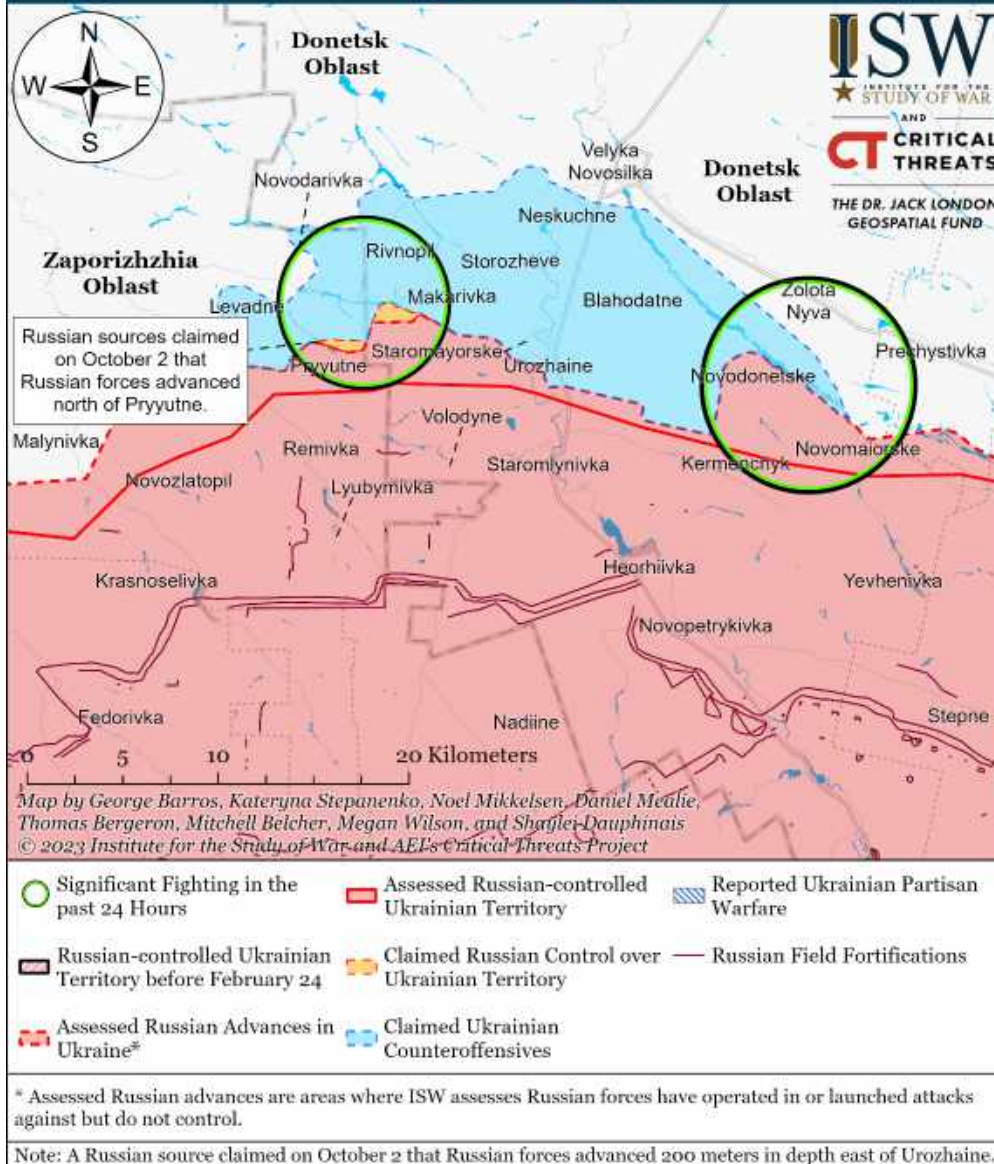
Note: A Russian source claimed on October 2 that Russian forces advanced 200 meters in depth east of Urozhaine.

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

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 5. The Russian MoD and other Russian sources claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka), Novodarivka (15km southwest of Velyka Novosilka), and Pryyutne (16km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[47] A Russian milblogger claimed on October 4 that Ukrainian forces attacked near Urozhaine (9km south of Velyka Novosilka).[48]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 5 but did not advance. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Zolota Nyva (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka) and Rivnopil (10km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[49] A Russian milblogger claimed on October 4 that Russian forces attempted to recapture lost positions near Urozhaine and Novomayorske (18km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[50]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of October 5, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

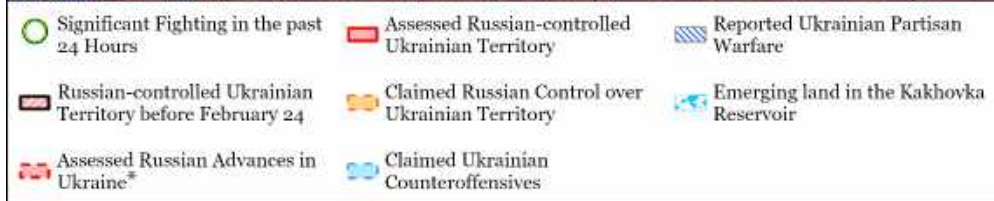
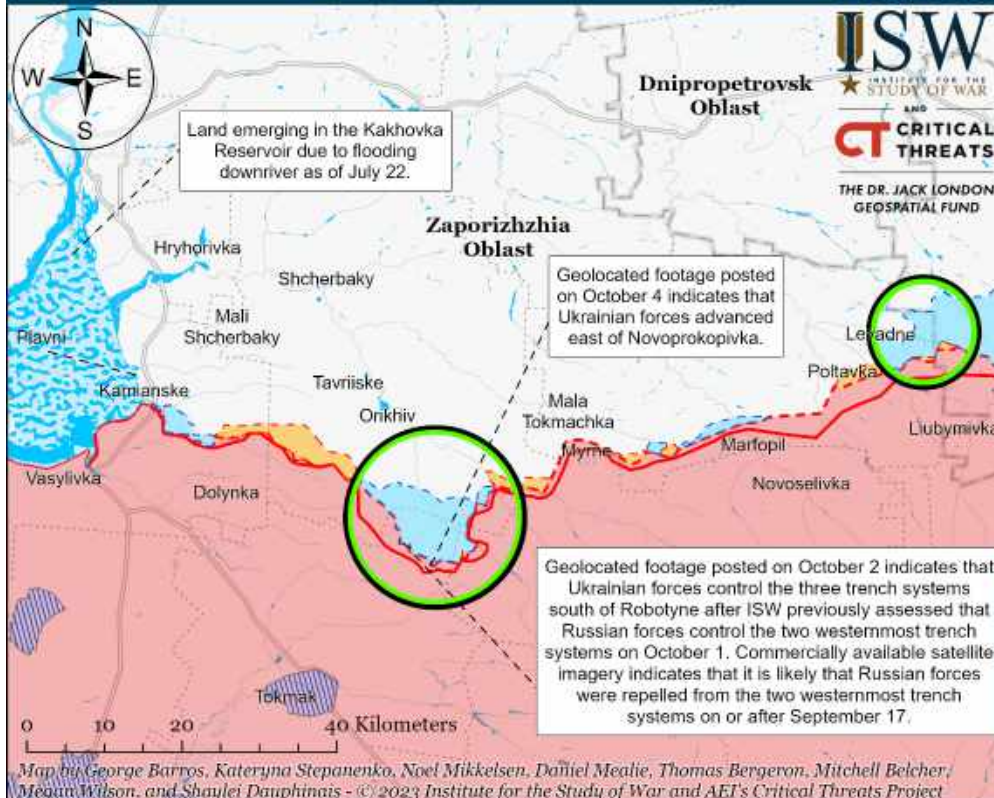


Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on October 5 and reportedly advanced. Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Oleksandr Shtupun reported that Ukrainian forces achieved partial success west of Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv).[51] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continue to conduct offensive operations in the Melitopol direction (western Zaporizhzhia Oblast).[52] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces attempted to advance along the Robotyne-Verbove line (10km south to 18km southeast of Orikhiv), in the Kopani direction (11km southwest of Orikhiv), and near Novoprokopivka (16km south of Orikhiv).[53] A Russian milblogger claimed on October 4 that Ukrainian forces made limited advances along the Kopani-Robotyne-Verbove line.[54]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on October 5 and did not make confirmed gains. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces successfully pushed Ukrainian forces out of positions near Verbove.[55] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks south of Robotyne and near Verbove (18km southeast of Orikhiv).[56] Shtupun reported that Russian forces continue attempting to regain lost positions west of Verbove and southeast of Mala Tokmachka (9km southeast of Orikhiv).[57] Footage published on October 5 purportedly shows elements of the Russian BARS-1 (Russian Combat Army Reserve) operating near Mala Tokmachka.[58]



Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of October 5, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

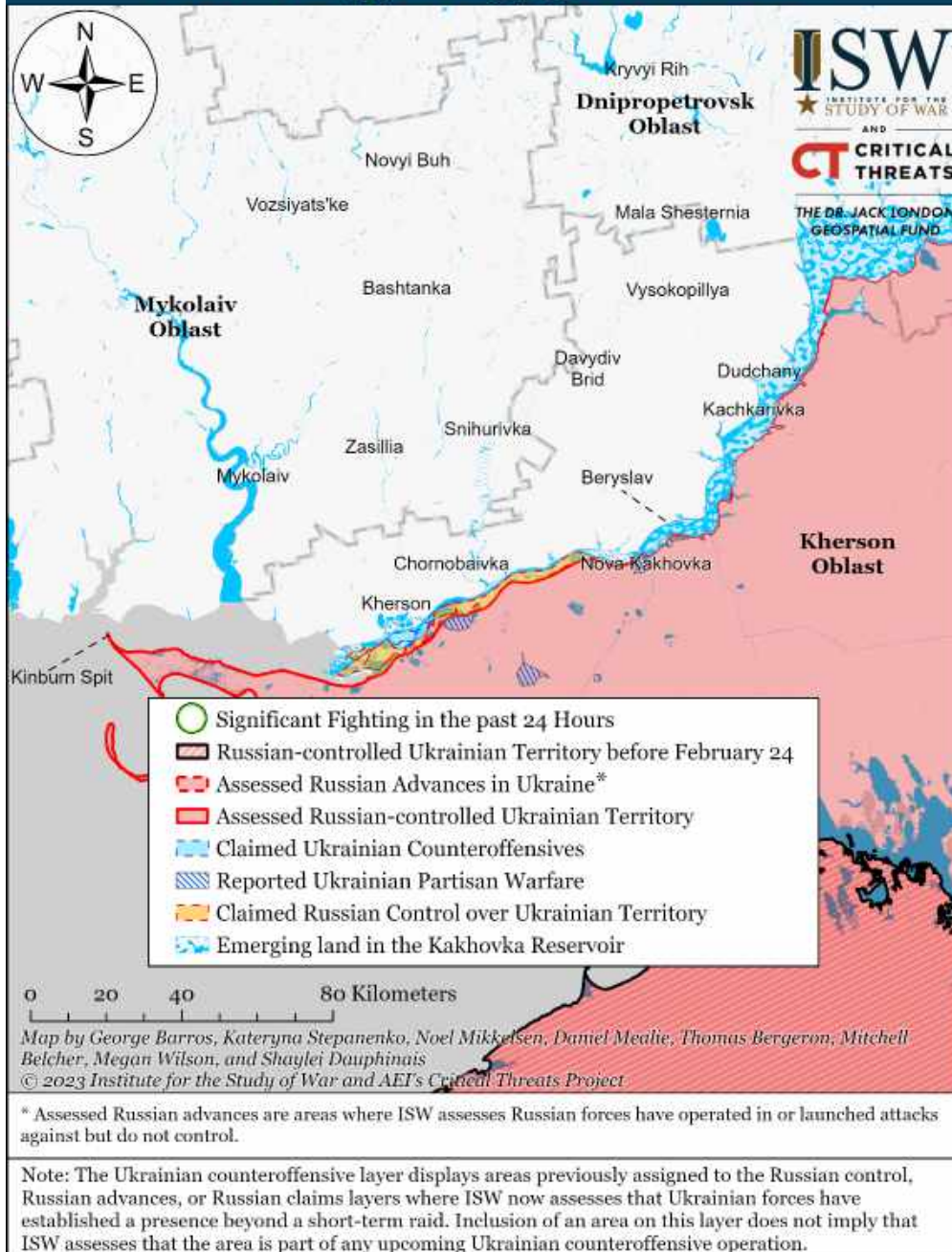


* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: Russian sources claimed on October 4 that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian forces two kilometers near Verbove. A Russian source claimed on October 3 that Russian forces advanced several hundred meters near Robotyne and Verbove.

A Russian milblogger indicated that the Russian MoD is likely trying to suppress Russian milbloggers' reporting following the purported Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) raid on occupied Crimea on October 4. A Russian milblogger denied reports that GUR special agents landed on the Crimean shore and called on milbloggers to stop lying and fearing the Russian MoD press service.[59] The Russian MoD acknowledged the raid on October 4 and claimed that Russian forces repelled the Ukrainian personnel.[60]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of October 5, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

Russia continues to use the personal data of Russian citizens for crypto-mobilization efforts. Russian State Duma Defense Committee Chairperson Andrei Kartapolov stated that Russia will require private

medical clinics to provide patient data to military registration and enlistment offices through a unified registry of conscripts.[61] Kartapolov stated that the Russian government is preparing additional initiatives that will also require the Ministry of Health, Federal Tax Service, and Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) to transmit personal data to the unified registry.

Russian soldiers continue to commit crimes outside of the combat zone in Ukraine. Russian opposition outlet *Verstka* reported that Russia has prosecuted 147 military personnel for murder outside of combat zones thus far in 2023, a sharp increase from prior years.[62] *Verstka* reported that Russia only prosecuted 15 military personnel for murder outside of a combat zone in 2022, 21 in 2021, and 14 in 2020. Russian opposition outlet *Agentstvo Novosti* reported that there are at least 20 known cases of Russian soldiers committing violent crimes killing a total of 27 people, and former Wagner personnel accounted for over half the crimes: 12 crimes with 19 victims.[63]

Ukrainian sources continue to indicate that Russia continues recruiting military personnel in occupied territories. Ukrainian Mariupol Mayor Petro Andryushchenko amplified a Russian military recruitment advertisement presumably posted in Mariupol as of September 28.[64] The posting advertises contract service with 204,000 ruble (\$2,034) monthly salaries and one-time 195,000 ruble (\$1,945) bonuses.

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 advertise programs for the forcible removal and deportation of Ukrainian children. Kherson Oblast occupation chairperson Andrei Alekseenko claimed on October 4 that over the summer, nearly 2,700 children from occupied Kherson Oblast “rested” at health camps in Crimea and the Russian Federation.[65] Alekseenko named several children’s camps in occupied Crimea, Krasnodar Krai, and the Adygea Republic and reported that children from Kherson Oblast additionally went to “resorts” in Valdai, Novgorod Oblast, Moscow Oblast, and the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic.[66] Alekseenko additionally claimed that Ukrainian children will continue to take part in “cultural” and “educational” programs in Moscow and St. Petersburg throughout the fall months.[67]

Russian officials continue to purposefully obfuscate statistics regarding the number of Ukrainian children removed from their homes and deported to Russia. Ukrainian Human Rights Commissioner Dmytro Lubinets emphasized on October 5 that Russian officials have not provided a list of Ukrainian children in Russia that Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov recently claimed to have provided to Ukrainian officials.[68] Lubinets stated that Ukrainian officials have repeatedly requested this information from the Russian government but that Russia has not provided such information either directly to the Ukrainian government or through intermediaries.[69] Lubinets stated that Russia claims that over 70,000 Ukrainian children are in Russia but that Ukraine is unable to verify this number.

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 hosted a meeting of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Council of Ministers in Grodno on October 5 to coordinate joint military training and scientific work.[70] Delegations from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan attended the meeting. The Belarusian Ministry of Defense (MoD) did not report on the presence of an Armenian delegation.[71]

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://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/weakness-lethal-why-putin-invaded-ukraine-and-how-war-must-end>

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

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; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid025zdvvuwlN9uiyVS1aR7drkgYaMjkYyJgQosV9jDKRiaNUNhEisSsjKhUSZGemCdWl> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02zcWnphePVbx2vjSSnha7GDHfW8TEaiwTAvZAdUkUxZk1gRfzQA9kj9TdBH8SHegl> ;

[57] <https://armyinform.com.ua/2023/10/04/na-tavrijskomu-napryamku-ukrayinski-pidrozdily-prosunulysya-vglyb-oborony-protyvnyka-na-vidstan-vid-100-do-600-metriv/>

[58] <https://t.me/RtrDonetsk/20707> ; <https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonoV/29794>

[59] <https://t.me/nonetutto/995>

[60] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-4-2023> ; https://t.me/mod_russia/31121

[61] <https://www.pnp.ru/social/kartapolov-rasskazal-kto-budet-peredavat-svedeniya-o-grazhdanakh-v-voenkomaty.html> ; <https://t.me/severrealii/20466>

[62] <https://t.me/svobodnieslova/3062>

[63] <https://t.me/severrealii/20447>

[64] <https://www.0629.com.ua/news/3667200/okupanti-agituut-mariupolciv-na-kontraktnu-sluzbu-v-armii-rf-fotofakt> ; <https://t.me/andriyshTime/13984>

[65] <https://t.me/aakherson/813>

[66] <https://t.me/aakherson/813>

[67] <https://t.me/aakherson/813>

[68] <https://suspilne.com/media/587835-lubinec-informacia-vid-lavrova-sodo-nadanna-spiskiv-vikradenih-rosieu-ukrainskih-ditej-nepravda/> ; https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1905984/

[69] <https://suspilne.com/media/587835-lubinec-informacia-vid-lavrova-sodo-nadanna-spiskiv-vikradenih-rosieu-ukrainskih-ditej-nepravda/>

[70] <https://t.me/modmilby/32593>

[71] <https://t.me/modmilby/32593>

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 4, 2023

Karolina Hird, Grace Mappes, Nicole Wolkov, Angelica Evans, and Frederick W. Kagan
October 4, 2023, 5:30pm ET

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

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

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 1pm ET on October 4. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 5 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

The Russian military recently transferred several Black Sea Fleet (BSF) vessels from the port in occupied Sevastopol, Crimea to the port in Novorossiysk, Krasnodar Krai, likely in an effort to protect them from continued Ukrainian strikes on Russian assets in occupied Crimea. Satellite imagery published on October 1 and 3 shows that Russian forces transferred at least 10 vessels from Sevastopol to Novorossiysk.[1] The satellite imagery reportedly shows that Russian forces recently moved the *Admiral Makarov* and *Admiral Essen* frigates, three diesel submarines, five landing ships, and several small missile ships.[2] Satellite imagery taken on October 2 shows four Russian landing ships and one Kilo-class submarine remaining in Sevastopol.[3] Satellite imagery from October 2 shows a Project 22160 patrol ship reportedly for the first time in the port of Feodosia in eastern Crimea, suggesting that Russian forces may be moving BSF elements away from Sevastopol to bases further in the Russian rear.[4] A Russian think tank, the Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, claimed on October 3 that the BSF vessels' movements from occupied Sevastopol to Novorossiysk were routine, however.[5] Russian forces may be temporarily moving some vessels to Novorossiysk following multiple strikes on BSF assets in and near Sevastopol but will likely continue to use Sevastopol's port, which remains the BSF's base. Former Norwegian Navy officer and independent OSINT analyst Thord Are Iversen observed on October 4 that Russian vessel deployments have usually intensified following Ukrainian strikes but ultimately returned to normal patterns.[6] ISW will explore the implications of Ukrainian strikes on the BSF in a forthcoming special edition.

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and marginally advanced on October 4. Ukrainian forces continued ground attacks towards the rail line between Klishchivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) and Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut), and the Ukrainian General Staff stated that Ukrainian forces achieved partial success near these settlements.[7] Geolocated footage published on October 4 indicates that Ukrainian forces marginally advanced east of Novoprokopivka (5km southeast of Robotyne) in western Zaporizhia Oblast, and the Ukrainian General Staff also reported that Ukrainian forces achieved partial success west of Robotyne.[8] Some Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced up to a Russian trench line on the Robotyne-Kopani line (5km northwest of Robotyne).[9]

Autumn and winter weather conditions will slow but not stop Ukrainian counteroffensive operations. US National Security Council Spokesperson John Kirby stated on October 3 that good weather will last for another six to eight weeks before weather will impact both Ukrainian and Russian operations.[10] ISW has previously observed that seasonal heavy rain and resulting mud in the autumn will slow ground movements on both sides, and that the autumn rain and mud are usually less intense than spring conditions.[11] Hardening ground during the winter freeze will likely enable the tempo of combat operations to increase, however, and Ukrainian officials have expressed their intent to continue counteroffensive operations into late 2023 and exploit cold weather conditions.[12] ISW has frequently assessed that offensive operations will continue through the winter season and has observed the continuation of combat activities throughout the fall mud season of 2022, winter season of 2022–2023, and spring mud season of 2023.[13]

The Kremlin is likely intensifying its use of tools of digital authoritarianism to increase domestic repression and tighten control of the information space. Russian opposition outlet *Vazhnye Istorii* reported on October 4 that the Russian Prosecutor General's Office requested that Russian social media platform VKontakte (VK) begin blocking posts from relatives of mobilized servicemen calling for their loved ones to return home.[14] *Vazhnye Istorii* noted that VK is hiding posts with several hashtags pertaining to the treatment or return of mobilized servicemen and that several posts in group chats have reportedly disappeared.[15] The Prosecutor General is likely able to impose this form of censorship under the existing law that concerns "unreliable" information about Russian operations in Ukraine.[16] The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) additionally proposed a draft resolution on October 3 that would expand the list of personal and geolocation data that "organizers of information dissemination" (ORIs) are required to store and provide to law enforcement bodies upon request.[17] The FSB's October 3 proposal notably follows its recent backing of amendments that would allow it unrestricted access to user data of Russian internet, banking, and telecom companies.[18] Some Russian opposition

outlets notably suggested that this apparent expansion of digital authoritarianism may be increasingly based on the restrictive Chinese model. One Russian opposition source, later amplified by an insider source, claimed that the Russian State Social University is developing and testing a social rating system for Russians based on the Chinese model and that the intended generated social scores will link to personal data that government entities and banks will have access to.[19] ISW has recently reported on previous instances of the Kremlin's efforts to expand digital authoritarianism to surveil the Russian information space, likely to consolidate power and increase information space oversight prior to the 2024 presidential elections.[20]

CNN reported on October 4 that the US will transfer seized Iranian weapons and ammunition rounds to Ukraine.[21] CNN cited US officials saying that the US intends to transfer “thousands” of such weapons to alleviate some equipment shortages that Ukraine is facing. US Central Command (CENTCOM) noted that the US obtained the weapons through a Department of Justice civil forfeiture claim against the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) on July 20, 2023, and that the US has already transferred one million rounds of small-arms ammunition to Ukraine as of Monday, October 2.

Russian sources continue to speculate about the current role of former Aerospace Forces (VKS) Commander and Wagner Group-affiliate Army General Sergei Surovikin after the Wagner rebellion, further highlighting his continued relevance in the Russian information space. Some Russian sources amplified footage on October 3 and 4 allegedly of Surovikin and his family outside a church near Moscow on October 3.[22] This speculation comes after prior speculation of Surovikin allegedly appearing in various African countries on behalf of the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD).[23] Russian news outlet *Novye Izvestia* claimed that Surovikin denied to comment to journalists who approached him near the church.[24]

The European Union (EU) is reportedly preparing for negotiations on Ukraine's EU accession that will take place in December. *Politico* reported on October 4, citing three unnamed diplomats, that EU leaders are preparing to begin formal talks with Kyiv on Ukraine's accession to the EU as early as December of this year.[25] Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba reported on October 4 that he and Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billstrom spoke about Ukraine's EU integration and are working bilaterally to opening talks about Ukraine's accession by the end of the year.[26]

Key Takeaways:

- **The Russian military recently transferred several Black Sea Fleet (BSF) vessels from the port in occupied Sevastopol, Crimea to the port in Novorossiysk, Krasnodar Krai, likely in an effort to protect them from continued Ukrainian strikes on Russian assets in occupied Crimea.**
- **Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and marginally advanced on October 4.**
- **Autumn and winter weather conditions will slow but not stop Ukrainian counteroffensive operations.**
- **The Kremlin is likely intensifying its use of tools of digital authoritarianism to increase domestic repression and tighten control of the information space.**
- **CNN reported on October 4 that the US will transfer seized Iranian weapons and ammunition rounds to Ukraine.**
- **Russian sources continue to speculate about the current role of former Aerospace Forces (VKS) Commander and Wagner Group-affiliate Army General Sergei Surovikin after the Wagner rebellion, further highlighting his continued relevance in the Russian information space.**
- **The European Union (EU) is reportedly preparing for negotiations on Ukraine's EU accession that will take place in December.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kremlinna line, near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and made limited gains near Kremlinna.**
- **Russian authorities continue efforts to collect information about Russian citizens for future conscription and enlistment cycles.**
- **Russian Deputy Prime Minister for Construction and Regional Development Marat Khusnullin is reportedly heavily involved in Russian infrastructure projects in occupied Ukraine.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of October 4, 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

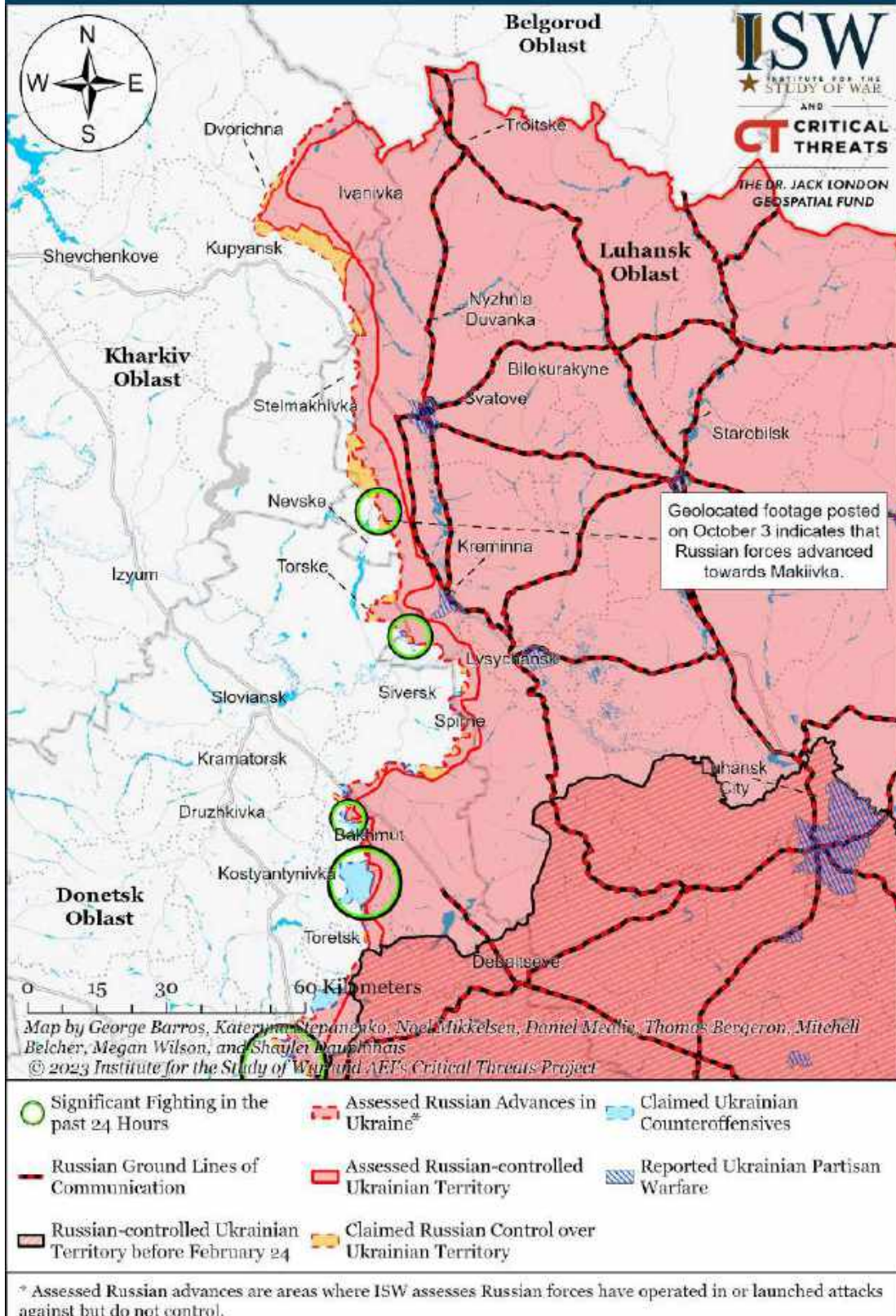
Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled a limited Russian attack north of Zybyne (3km south of the Kharkiv Oblast-Russian border) on October 4, likely in reference to a limited cross-border raid originating from Belgorod Oblast.[27]

Russian forces conducted ground attacks along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on October 4 and marginally advanced. Geolocated footage published on October 3 indicates that Russian forces marginally advanced east of Makiivka (22km northwest of Kreminna).[28] The Ukrainian General Staff reported on October 4 that Ukrainian forces repelled five Russian attacks east of Makiivka in Luhansk Oblast and northwest of Dibrova (7km southwest of Kreminna) in Donetsk Oblast.[29] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked near Makiivka but did not specify an outcome.[30] A Russian source amplified claims that Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Svatove.[31] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Russian forces conducted assaults against Ukrainian positions near Bilohorivka (10km south of Kreminna) on October 3.[32] The milblogger also claimed that Russian air strikes destroyed at least five bridges across the Oskil River in the Kupyansk area in recent weeks and impacted Ukrainian logistics.[33] Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov published footage on October 4 claiming to show the Chechen Spetsnaz “Aida” group, reportedly under the command of the deputy commander of the Chechen “Akhmat” formations, operating in the Kreminna direction.[34]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful ground attacks along the Svatove-Kreminna line on October 4. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Yampolivka (17km west of Kreminna) and the Serebryanske forest area.[35] Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR) Head Leonid Pasechnik claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian ground attacks along the Hryhorivka-Novodruzhesk (10km south to 10km southeast of Kreminna) line, Vovchovyarivka-Ivano-Darivka (23km south to 24km southeast of Kreminna) line, and the Pereizne-Berestove (30km southwest to 30km south of Kreminna) line over the past week.[36]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of October 4, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

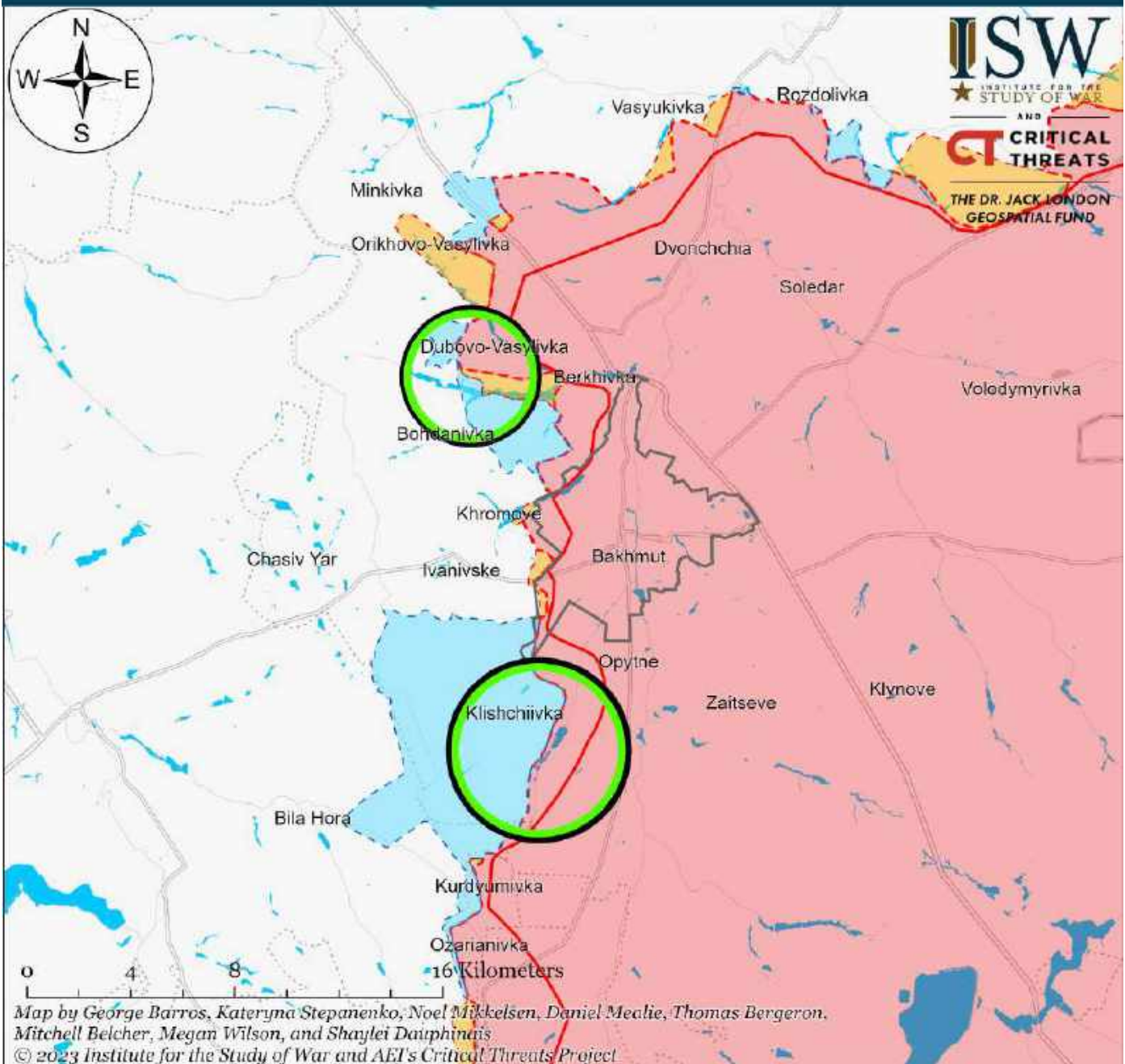


Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Bakhmut area and reportedly advanced on October 4. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued assaults south of Bakhmut and achieved partial success near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) and Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).[37] A correspondent of Kremlin-sponsored outlet *Izvestia* claimed that Ukrainian forces hold positions within 40 meters of the rail line near Klishchiivka.[38] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces resumed armored assaults near Klishchiivka and Andriivka towards the railway line and that fighting is ongoing in contested “gray zones” northeast and southwest of Andriivka.[39] Russian military officials claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Andriivka and Klishchiivka.[40] Some milbloggers claimed that Russian aviation, including helicopters, and artillery are firing on Ukrainian forces in an attempt to stymie the attacks.[41]

Russian forces continued limited counterattacks near Bakhmut but did not advance on October 4. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attempted to recapture lost positions near Hryhorivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut) and Andriivka.[42] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces counterattacked near Andriivka on October 3 and 4.[43] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) posted footage of an unspecified element of the 106th Guards Airborne (VDV) Division operating in the Soledar direction.[44]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of October 4, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Megan Wilson, and Shaylei Dauphinais
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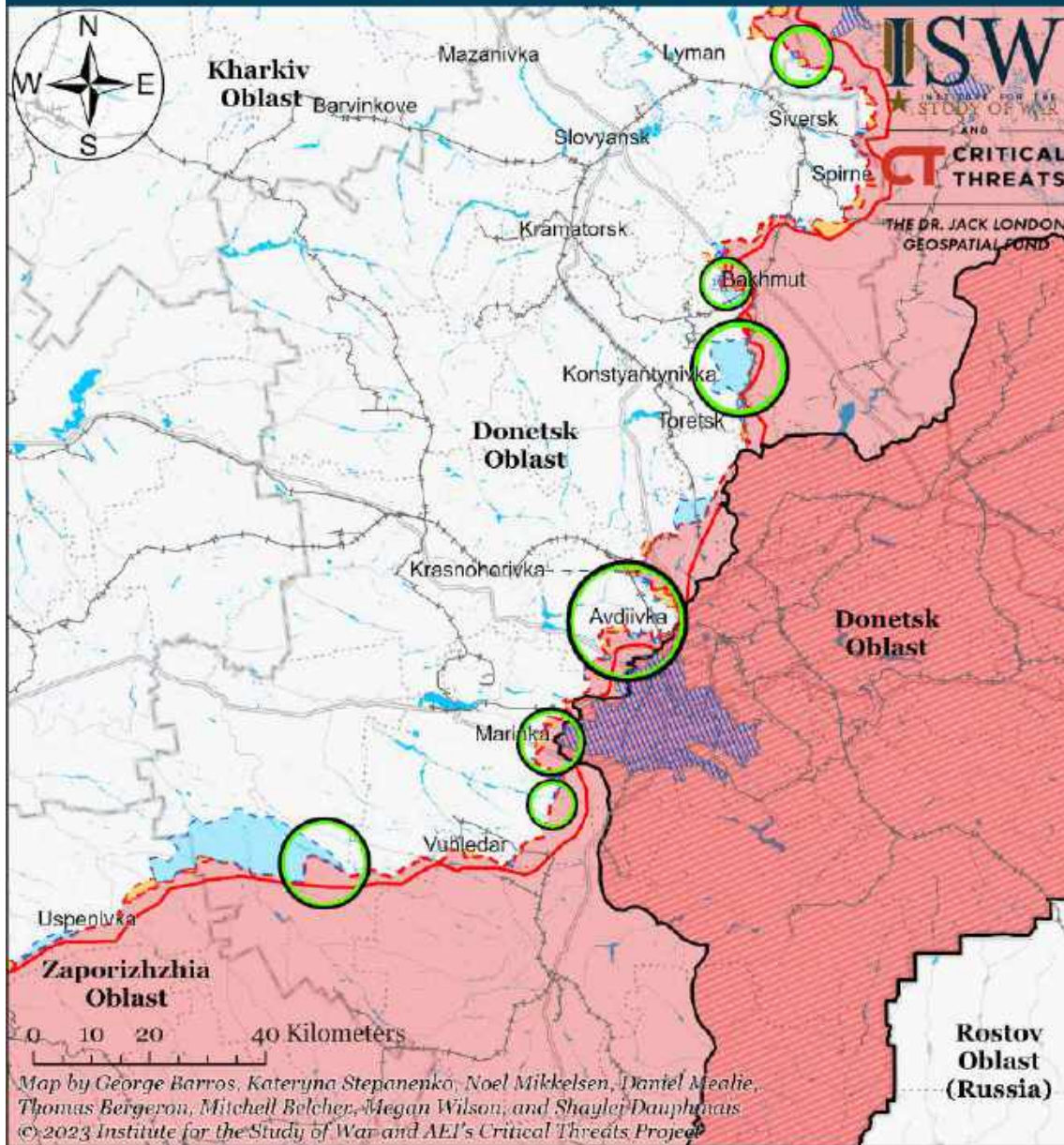
- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Bakhmut City Limits | Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory | Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives |
| Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine* | Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory | Reported 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 sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued limited offensive operations on the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line and marginally advanced on October 4. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces captured a contested “gray zone” near Nevelske (directly west of Donetsk City) and are now within 2km of a crossroads in Pisky (6km east of Nevelske).[45] Russian military officials claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Vodyane (7km southwest of Avdiivka), Nevelske, and Krasnohorivka (unclear if in reference to the Krasnohorivka 8km northwest of Avdiivka or directly west of Donetsk City).[46]

Russian forces continued offensive operations on the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line but did not advance on October 4. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Avdiivka, Lastochkyne (6km west of Avdiivka), Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka), Marinka (on the southwestern outskirts of Donetsk City), and Krasnohorivka (directly west of Donetsk City).[47] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also continued attacks near Stepne (14km south of Donetsk City) and Novomykhailivka (10km southwest of Donetsk City).[48]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of October 4, 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
- 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.

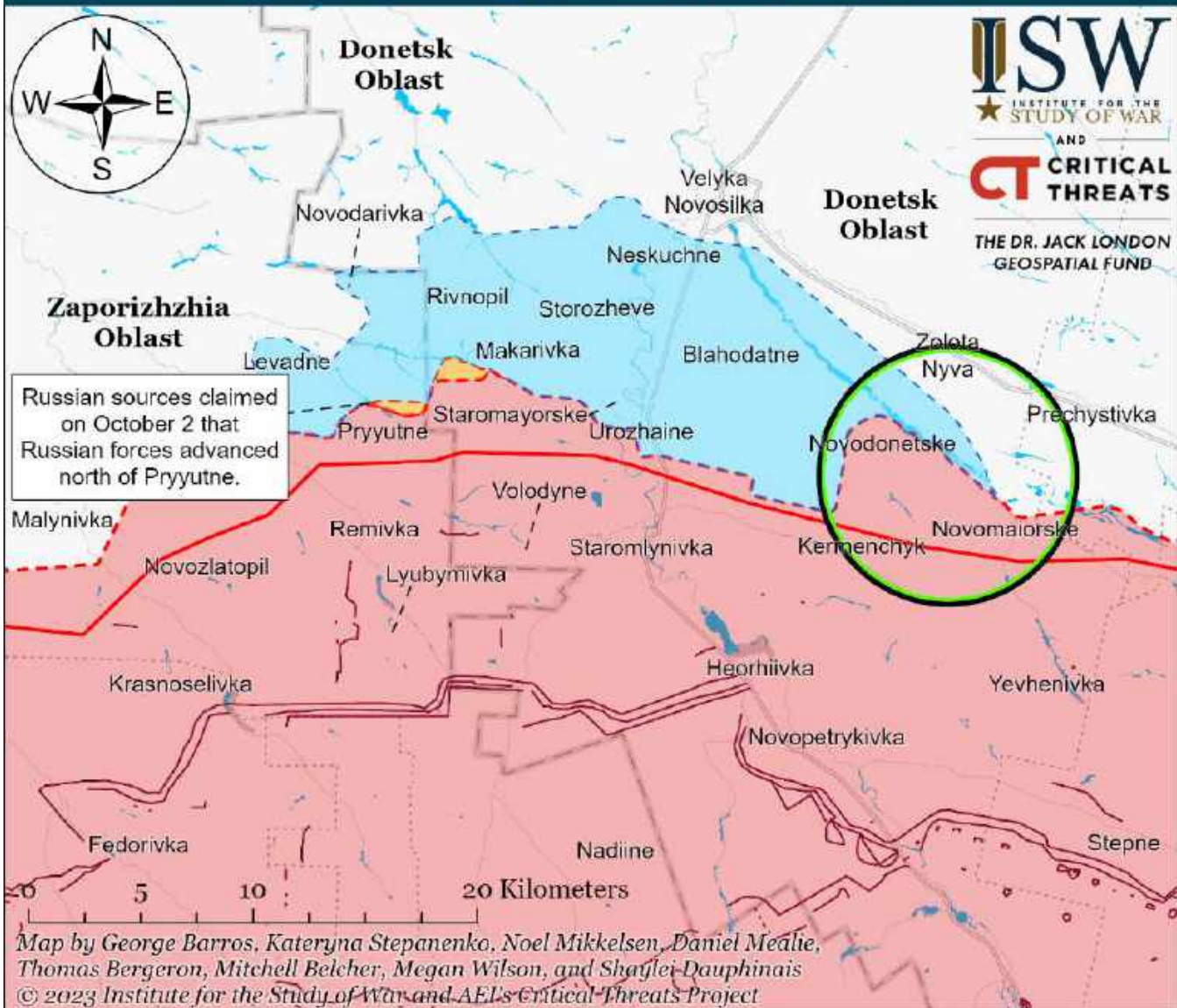
Note: A Russian source claimed on October 2 that Russian forces advanced 200 meters in depth east of Urozhaine.

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

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted limited and unsuccessful ground attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 4. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that elements of the Russian Eastern Grouping of Forces repelled a Ukrainian attack near Pryyutne (16km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[49] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces remain active in forest areas northwest of Pryyutne, where they are constantly trying to restore lost positions.[50]

Russian forces conducted limited counterattacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area and reportedly regained some positions on October 4. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian troops repelled a Russian attack near Zolota Nyva (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[51] One milblogger claimed that Russian forces have the initiative in this area of the front and are counterattacking near Pryyutne, Zavitne Bazhannia (13km south of Velyka Novosilka), and Staromayorske.[52] Another milblogger claimed that unspecified Russian Spetsnaz elements are successfully pushing Ukrainian forces back from positions near Pryyutne, and another milblogger claimed that elements of the 37th Motorized Rifle Brigade (36th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) have been advancing in forest areas east of Urozhaine (10km south of Velyka Novosilka) since the end of September.[53]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of October 4, 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
- Russian Field Fortifications
- 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: A Russian source claimed on October 2 that Russian forces advanced 200 meters in depth east of Urozhaine.

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 4 and made confirmed gains. Geolocated footage posted on October 4 indicates that Ukrainian forces have marginally advanced along a small local road east of Novoprokopivka (about 5km southeast of Robotyne).[54] Additional geolocated footage posted on October 4 confirms that Ukrainian forces hold positions near a trench system that lies along the T0408 Orikhiv-Tokmak route between Robotyne and Novoprokopivka.[55] The Ukrainian General Staff noted that Ukrainian forces were partially successful during offensive operations west of Robotyne.[56] Russian milbloggers noted that Ukrainian forces have increased the intensity of attacks along the Robotyne-Kopani line (about 5km northwest of Robotyne), and some Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced towards some Russian defensive trenches on this line over the past day.[57] Russian milbloggers additionally claimed that Ukrainian forces continued attacks near Verbove (10km east of Robotyne) and Novoprokopivka.[58]

Russian forces continued counterattacking in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 4 and reportedly regained some positions. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces attacked near Robotyne and Verbove.[59] Several Russian sources claimed that Russian airborne (VDV) elements managed to push Ukrainian forces back around 2km near Verbove on October 4.[60] A Russian milblogger posted graphic footage of a paratrooper detachment of the 7th VDV division reportedly clearing a captured Ukrainian stronghold somewhere between Robotyne and Verbove.[61]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of October 4, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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Geolocated footage posted on October 2 indicates that Ukrainian forces control the three trench systems south of Robotyne after ISW previously assessed that Russian forces control the two westernmost trench systems on October 1. Commercially available satellite imagery indicates that it is likely that Russian forces were repelled from the two westernmost trench systems on or after September 17.

Geolocated footage posted on October 4 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced east of Novopokrovka.

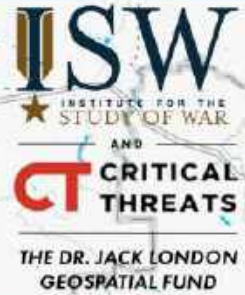
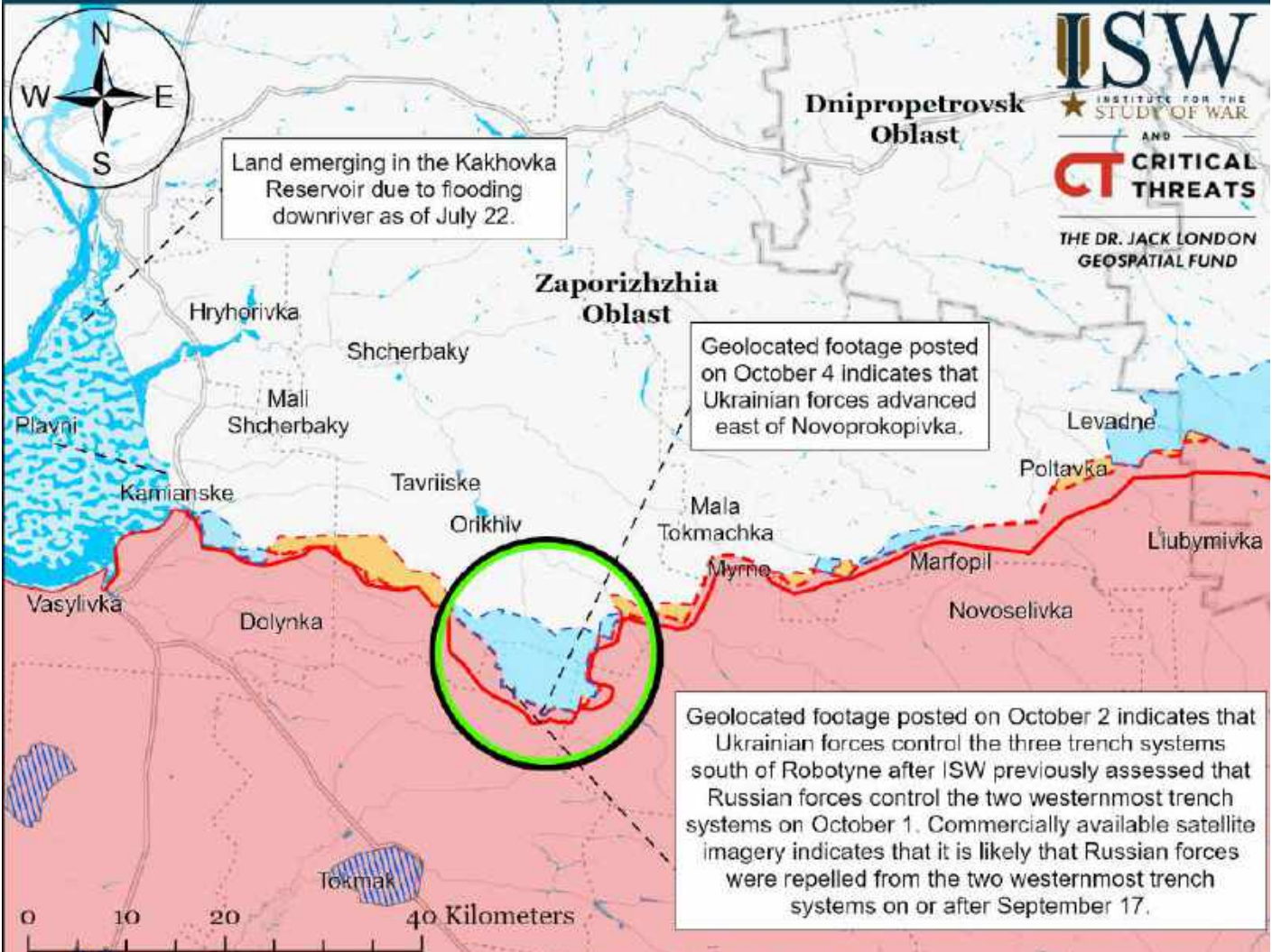
Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Megan Wilson, and Shaylei Dauphinais - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

- 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: Russian sources claimed on October 4 that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian forces two kilometers near Verbove. A Russian source claimed on October 3 that Russian forces advanced several hundred meters near Robotyne and Verbove

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of October 4, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

-  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: Russian sources claimed on October 4 that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian forces two kilometers near Verbove. A Russian source claimed on October 3 that Russian forces advanced several hundred meters near Robotyne and Verbove.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of October 4, 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.

Ukrainian special agents reportedly conducted a landing in occupied Crimea on the night of October 3-4. Ukraine's Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) posted footage on October 4 purportedly showing GUR special agents landing in an unspecified area of Crimea and inflicting fire damage on Russian forces in the area.[62] GUR Spokesperson Andriy Yusov stated that the special forces landed on Crimea, attacked Russian forces, and retreated after completing their task.[63] The Russian MoD responded to the landing and claimed that Russian Aerospace Forces (VKS) aircraft repelled a Ukrainian group that was travelling towards Cape Tarkhankut (the northwestern tip of the Crimean Peninsula) on high-speed boats and jet skis.[64] Russian milbloggers responded to the attack and claimed that Ukrainian forces suffered losses while fighting Russian troops whereas no Russian forces died.[65]

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

Russian authorities continue efforts to collect information about Russian citizens for future conscription and enlistment cycles. Russian State Duma Committee on Defense Chairman Andrei Kartapolov announced on October 4 that the Russian government will require private clinics and other organizations to provide information about Russian citizens to military registration and enlistment offices.[66] Kartapolov stated that the Russian tax service, Federal Service for the Supervision of Education and Science (Rosobrnadzor), Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), and other unspecified organizations will also be responsible for providing data to military registration and enlistment offices. Kartapolov stated that this will "remove excess burden" from military registration and enlistment offices and help avoid mistakes when sending out summonses during conscription cycles. Russian opposition outlet *Mobilization News* noted that Rosobrnadzor will collect student information from schools and universities and then submit that information to an electronic database for military registration and enlistment offices.[67]

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) will issue military service certificates of participation to former Wagner Group personnel who fought in the war in Ukraine. Russian Defenders of the Fatherland Foundation Chairwoman Anna Tsivileva announced on October 4 that the Russian MoD has formed a special commission to issue military service certificates to Wagner personnel.[68] Tsivileva stated that the Russian MoD created the commission "now that issues have finally been resolved regarding Wagner," likely in reference to ongoing efforts by the Kremlin and Russian MoD to subsume Wagner following the June 24 armed rebellion.[69] Tsivileva stated that the commission will provide the documentation to coordinators who will distribute the documents to Wagner personnel throughout Russia, so that the servicemen do not have to travel to "St. Petersburg, Moscow, or the MoD." A Wagner-affiliated source claimed that the Russian MoD has previously withheld military service certificates from personnel who served in Ukraine with irregular formations or private military companies (PMC), like Wagner.[70]

Ukrainian Mariupol City Advisor Petro Andryushchenko stated on October 4 that Russian military registration and enlistment offices in occupied Berdyansk, Zaporizhia Oblast have begun sending military summonses to local residents.[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 Deputy Prime Minister for Construction and Regional Development Marat Khusnullin is reportedly heavily involved in Russian infrastructure projects in occupied Ukraine. Russian opposition news outlet *Meduza* reported on October 4 that Khusnullin plays a key role in distributing construction contracts to build infrastructure in occupied Ukraine.[72] Unnamed sources close to the Russian presidential administration and government told *Meduza* that Khusnullin has become "one of Putin's favorite subordinates." [73] *Meduza* reported that Russian President Vladimir Putin was not interested in "peaceful affairs" or domestic Russian issues during the first months of the war but that Khusnullin began traveling to occupied areas and started Russian government projects to begin infrastructure restoration.[74] *Meduza* noted that Khusnullin has repeatedly reported "positive news" to Putin about infrastructure repairs in occupied Ukraine, accompanied Putin to occupied Mariupol, Donetsk Oblast in March 2023, and been publicly praised by Putin multiple times.[75]

Russian occupation authorities continue efforts to forcibly indoctrinate Ukrainian youth into Russian culture and identity through the establishment of military-patriotic educational facilities. Yevpatoria city administration occupation head Elena Demidova announced on October 1 that Russian occupation officials opened the new "Avangard" center for military and patriotic education in the "Gagarin" children's health camp in occupied Yevpatoria, Crimea.[76] The "Avangard" center reportedly accepted its first group of 100 ninth-through-eleventh grade students to learn basic Russian military training and participate in "patriotic leisure activities" from October 1 to 6.[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)

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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Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 3, 2023

Kateryna Stepanenko, Grace Mappes, Angelica Evans,
Christina Harward, and Mason Clark

October 3, 2023, 8:40pm 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 2:30pm ET on October 3. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 4 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu celebrated an odd group of Russian armed formations operating in the western Zaporizhia Oblast direction during a conference call with Russian military leadership. Shoigu's choice of units could indicate he seeks to highlight Russian commanders who continue to follow Russian military leadership's orders for relentless counterattacks. Shoigu attributed successful Russian defensive operations around Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv) and Verbove (18km southeast of Orikhiv) to elements of the Russian 70th Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District), 56th Air Assault (VDV) Regiment (7th VDV Division), 810th Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet), and the 291st Guards Artillery Brigade (58th CAA, SMD) during a Russian military command meeting on October 3.[1] Shoigu did not highlight other formations that are routinely credited for maintaining the Robotyne-Verbove line such as the 108th VDV Regiment (7th VDV Division) or the 247th VDV Regiment (7th VDV Division).[2]

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) has routinely deliberately snubbed or amplified the achievements of certain commanders in order to achieve Shoigu or the Russian military command's political objectives.[3] While it is possible that Shoigu simply wanted to celebrate only a few formations, Shoigu may have highlighted some of these formations for political reasons. Some Russian milbloggers recently indicated that Russian commanders are increasingly facing a choice between either "wasting" their troops in counterattacks to hold tactical positions, or standing up to the Russian military command by retreating to previously prepared positions, thereby risking their careers.[4] One Russian frontline unit commander also indicated that Commander of Russian VDV Forces Colonel General Mikhail Teplinsky previously helped a degraded VDV formation avoid resuming counterattacks in the Bakhmut direction, and Shoigu could be snubbing formations who are advocating for tactical retreats to prepared defensive positions.[5]

Some of the formations Shoigu highlighted have been consistently counterattacking on the Robotyne-Verbove line to their detriment. ISW observed on September 26 that elements of the 70th Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment and other formations of the 58th CAA (likely including the 291st Guards Artillery Brigade) continued to counterattack near Novoprokopivka (13km south of Orikhiv) despite

their likely degraded state.[6] ISW also assessed that the involvement of the 70th Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment in these counterattacks suggests that the combat capabilities of active elements of the 7th VDV Division are significantly degraded and that these VDV elements can no longer conduct all counterattacks along the entire Ukrainian breach in the Orikhiv direction.[7] Military police of the 70th Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment were recently involved in an interethnic altercation with personnel of an element of the 71st Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division).[8] Ukrainian intelligence reported that the Ukrainian counteroffensive in western Zaporizhia Oblast had “completely defeated” the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade and that the brigade had been withdrawn.[9] ISW has not observed the broader Russian information space discuss the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade’s combat operations since early to mid-September.[10] A Russian milblogger that advocates for Teplinsky claimed that elements of the 56th VDV Regiment have been consistently counterattacking from their vulnerable positions in Novofedorivka (18km southeast of Orikhiv) and that the commander of the regiment was facing a decision to either counterattack or withdraw to previously prepared positions.[11]

The Russian MoD signaled its support for Chechen units fighting in Ukraine amid a recent controversy surrounding interethnic tensions in the Russian government, military, and information space. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu personally thanked Chechen Head Ramzan Kadyrov for overseeing the formation of three motorized rifle regiments and three motorized rifle battalions in Chechnya during a conference with Russian military leadership on October 3.[12] Shoigu claimed that these Chechen units have “proven themselves worthy” in the war in Ukraine and that over 14,500 Russian military personnel have undergone training at the Russian Special Forces University in Gudermes, Chechnya, before deploying to Ukraine. Kadyrov claimed on October 2 that over 30,000 Chechens have deployed to Ukraine, including over 14,000 volunteers.[13] Shoigu’s public praise of Kadyrov and Chechen units indicates the Russian MoD’s support for these units amid growing interethnic tension, as well as in the context of recent controversy in the Russian information space over statements by the Chairperson of the “Patriots of Russia” political party and the State Duma Committee of Nationalities Gennady Semigin about the superiority of Chechen “Akhmat” forces over regular Russian forces.[14]

The Kremlin also publicly indicated its support for Kadyrov’s style of rule in Chechnya following significant public outcry against Kadyrov and his son. Kadyrov stated on October 2 that he supported a proposal by Chechen Republic Prime Minister Muslim Khuchiev to appoint Kadyrov’s 24-year-old daughter, current Chechen Minister of Culture Aishat Kadyrova, as Deputy Prime Minister for Social Issues.[15] Kadyrov further stated on October 3 that he presented Kadyrova with the People’s Artist of Chechnya award and a Second Class Civilian Medal of the Order “For Merit to the Fatherland,” which Russian President Vladimir Putin conferred on Kadyrova in September.[16] Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov responded to questions about Kadyrova’s appointment, stating that regional appointments are at the “prerogative of the head of the region” and that “Kadyrov is using his prerogative.”[17] The Kremlin’s deferral to Kadyrov’s recent decisions surrounding his daughter and Chechen government affairs comes after a controversy regarding Kadyrov’s praise for his son, Adam Kadyrov, who beat a detained man accused of burning a Quran. This comes despite prominent members of the Russian Human Rights Council calling for the investigation into Adam Kadyrov for the beating.[18] Both the Kremlin and MoD’s public responses on October 3 indicate that the Russian government will likely not punish Semigin, Ramzon Kadyrov, or Adam Kadyrov.

Russian President Vladimir Putin is reportedly preparing to announce his (certain to win) presidential campaign in November 2023, and reportedly intends to discuss the war in Ukraine as little as is necessary in political messaging. Russian outlet *Kommersant* reported on October 3 that sources close to the Russian Presidential Administration stated that Putin may announce his campaign during or shortly after the opening of the “Rossiya” international exhibition and forum on November 4.[19] *Kommersant*’s sources claimed that the main ideological line of Putin’s campaign will be Russia as a “family of families” being attacked by its enemies and that Putin’s campaign will only discuss the war in Ukraine “exactly as much as necessary.” ISW has previously observed that Russian officials, particularly those affiliated with Putin’s United Russia party, appear concerned with the impacts the war will have on the electorate during local and regional elections.[20] Russian news outlet *RBK* reported that the Kremlin is compiling a list of “proxies” to campaign for Putin ahead of the March 2024 presidential elections.[21] These “proxies” must meet several criteria, including: expressing public support for Putin and the war in Ukraine; having a high level of recognition and respect in their communities; having public speaking skills and debate experience; and being involved in religion, the military, education, or other specified public spheres. Concerns within the Kremlin and United Russia over domestic support for the war and efforts to increase public support for Putin are not indications that United Russia or Putin’s dominance of Russian politics faces a legitimate threat in the upcoming presidential election.

A Reuters report published on October 3 stated that Russian forces have embedded “Storm-Z” units within conventional Russian units to conduct costly counterattacks against Ukrainian gains in key sectors of the front. *Reuters* reported that the Storm-Z units are composed of 100-150 personnel, including both civilian penal recruits and Russian soldiers under punishment, are embedded within conventional Russian military units, and deploy to the most exposed parts of the front.[22] *Reuters* estimated that Russia has currently deployed at least several hundred personnel to the front line in various “Storm-Z” units. *Reuters* interviewed multiple Russian soldiers, including fighters in “Storm-Z” units, which the Russian military command reportedly views as lesser than conventional military units. The Russian soldiers told *Reuters* that the Russian military command sends Russian soldiers to serve in the “Storm-Z” units after they commit acts of disobedience, including insubordination or drinking alcohol. *Reuters* reported that the Storm-Z units have sustained heavy losses, and one soldier embedded in the 237th Guards Air Assault Regiment (76th Airborne [VDV] Division) reportedly stated that his “Storm-Z” unit of 120 personnel lost all but 15 personnel while fighting near Bakhmut in June 2023. The Russian MoD has never formally confirmed the existence of the “Storm-Z” units, and ISW first reported on the existence of these “Storm-Z” units in April 2023.[23]

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 3. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhia Oblast) direction and offensive actions in the Bakhmut direction.[24] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued ground attacks near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) and Andriivka (10km south of Bakhmut) south of Bakhmut and on the Kopani-Robotyne-Verbove line (11-18km southwest to southeast of Orikhiv) in western Zaporizhia Oblast.[25]

Russian forces conducted a series of drone and missile strikes against Ukraine on the night of October 2 to 3. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on October 3 that Ukrainian air defenses downed 29 of 31 Shahed drones and one Iskander-M cruise missile targeting Mykolaiv and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts.[26] Russian sources, including the Russian MoD, claimed that Russian forces struck an industrial enterprise near Pavlohrad, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast.[27]

The Armenian Parliament ratified the International Criminal Court’s (ICC) Rome Statute on October 3.[28] Armenia joins six other former Soviet countries in ratifying the Rome Statute: Georgia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Republic of Moldova, and Tajikistan.[29] Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov called Armenia’s decision to ratify the Rome Statute an “incorrect step” from the perspective of Russo-Armenian relations.[30]

Key Takeaways:

- **Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu celebrated an odd group of Russian armed formations operating in the western Zaporizhia Oblast direction during a conference call with Russian military leadership.**
- **Shoigu’s choice of units could indicate he seeks to highlight Russian commanders who continue to follow Russian military leadership’s orders for relentless counterattacks.**
- **The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) signaled its support for both Chechen units in Ukraine and Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov amid a recent controversy surrounding interethnic tensions in the Russian government, military, and information space.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin is reportedly preparing to announce his (certain to win) presidential campaign in November 2023, and reportedly intends to discuss the war in Ukraine as little as is necessary in political messaging.**
- **A Reuters report published on October 3 stated that Russian forces have embedded “Storm-Z” units within conventional Russian units to conduct costly counterattacks against Ukrainian gains in key sectors of the front.**
- **Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 3.**
- **Russian forces conducted a series of drone and missile strikes against Ukraine on the night of October 2 to 3.**
- **The Armenian Parliament ratified the International Criminal Court’s (ICC) Rome Statute on October 3.**
- **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 Oblast and reportedly advanced in some areas.**
- **The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) is reportedly investigating Kursk Oblast Governor Roman Starovoit, likely in an attempt to remove government officials with connections to deceased Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin.**

- Russian opposition outlet *Verstka* revealed that almost half of all occupation officials of the senior and middle management levels in occupied Kherson, Zaporizhia, Donetsk, and Luhansk oblasts are from Russia.



We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We will continue to evaluate and report on the effects of

these criminal activities on the Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population and specifically on combat in Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn these Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict, Geneva Conventions, and humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

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

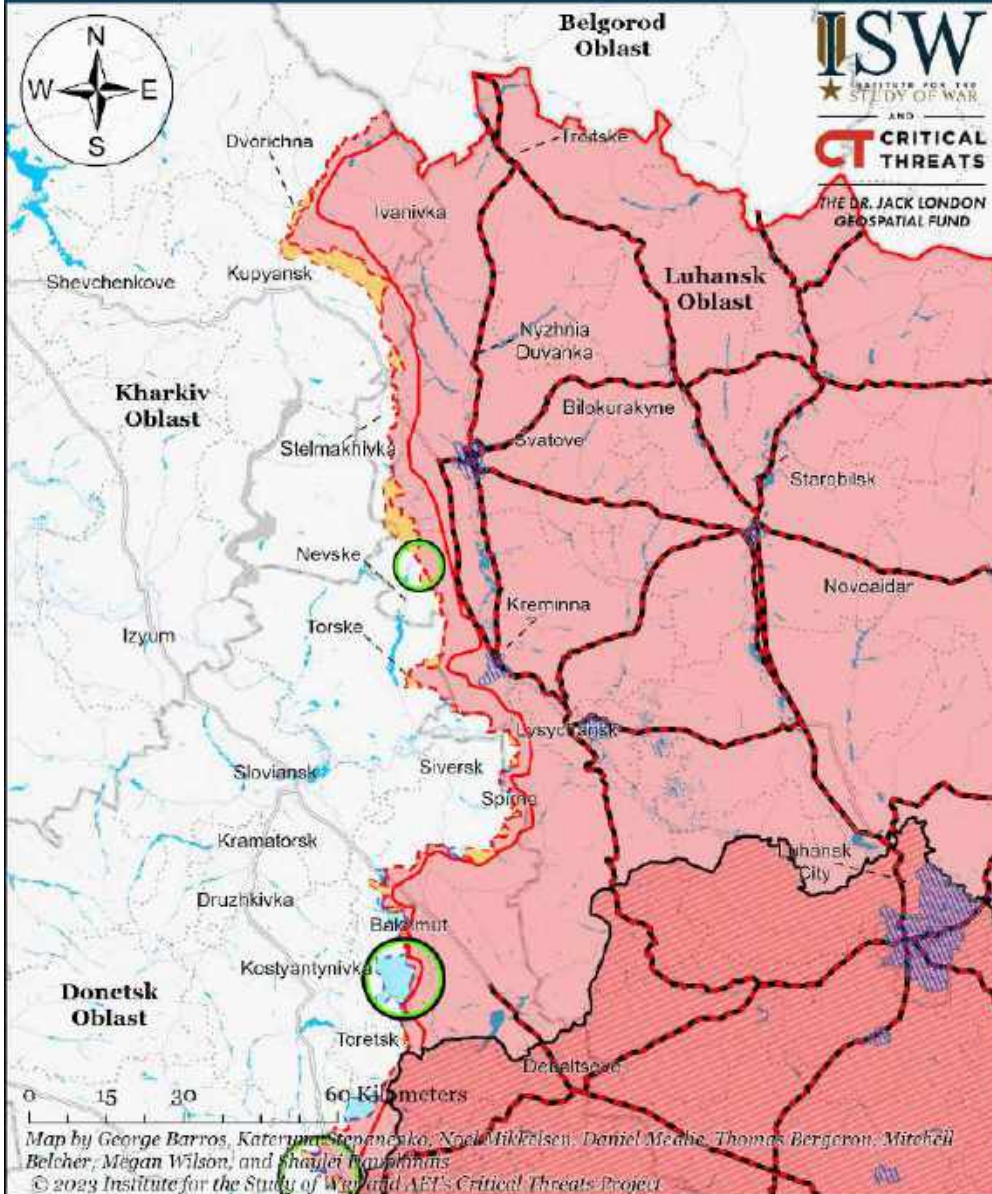
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted localized attacks on the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on October 3 but did not advance. Russian sources, including the Russian MoD, claimed that elements of the Russian Western Grouping of Forces repelled a Ukrainian attack in the Kupyansk direction, while elements of the Russian Central Grouping of Forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Torske (14km west of Kreminna) and Hryhorivka (10km south of Kreminna) and in the Serebryanske forest area.[31]

Russian forces reportedly advanced in the Kupyansk and Kreminna directions and continued offensive operations along the Svatove-Kreminna line on October 3. A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces advanced in the Kyslivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk) direction on October 2.[32] Geolocated footage published on October 3 indicated that Russian forces marginally advanced southwest of Kreminna.[33] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces did not conduct offensive operations in the Kupyansk direction and unsuccessfully attacked near Makiivka (21km southwest of Svatove).[34] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger also reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attack near Makiivka.[35] Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu highlighted elements of the Russian 55th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st Combined Arms Army, Central Military District [CMD]) and the 228th Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment (90th Guards Tank Division, CMD) as operating in the Lyman direction.[36]

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



Map by George Barros, Katerina Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Meade, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Megan Wilson, and Shaylei Wapkins
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- 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

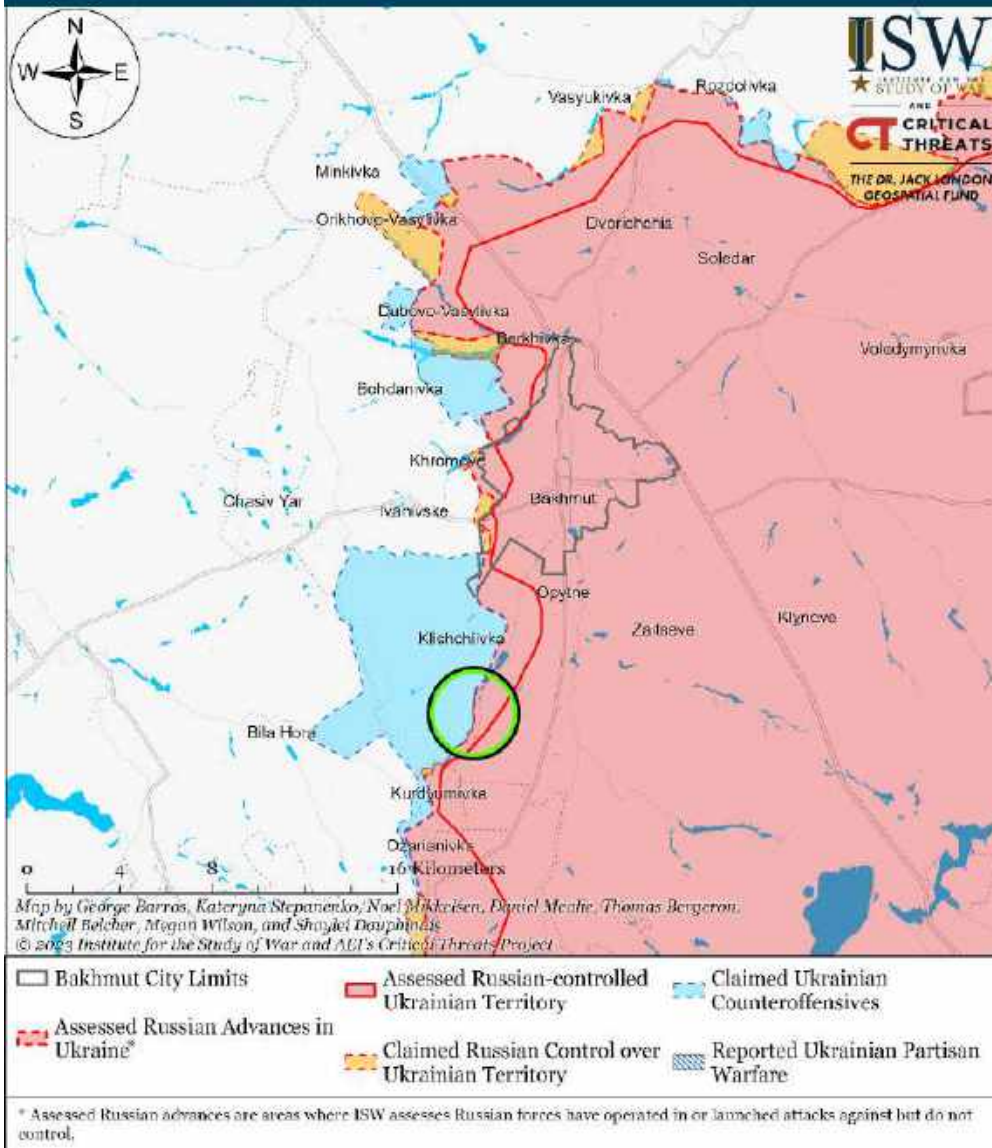
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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 ground attacks near Bakhmut on October 3 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive actions in the Bakhmut direction.[37] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut).[38] A Russian milblogger claimed on October 2 that Ukrainian forces are gradually advancing near Klishchiivka and Andriivka (10km south of Bakhmut) in order to break through the Russian defense near the railway line.[39] A prominent Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed on October 3 that Ukrainian forces heavily shell Russian frontline positions near Klishchiivka until Russian forces withdraw, enabling Ukrainian forces to advance.[40]

Russian forces continued ground attacks near Bakhmut on October 3 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Andriivka.[41] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces counterattacked in Andriivka but did not specify an outcome.[42] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces attacked south of Andriivka on October 2.[43] Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu highlighted the Russian 4th Motorized Rifle Brigade (Luhansk People’s Republic [LNR] 2nd Army Corps), 11th Air Assault (VDV) Brigade, and 17th Artillery Brigade (likely a new unit) in a speech on October 3 as operating in the Soledar-Bakhmut direction.[44]

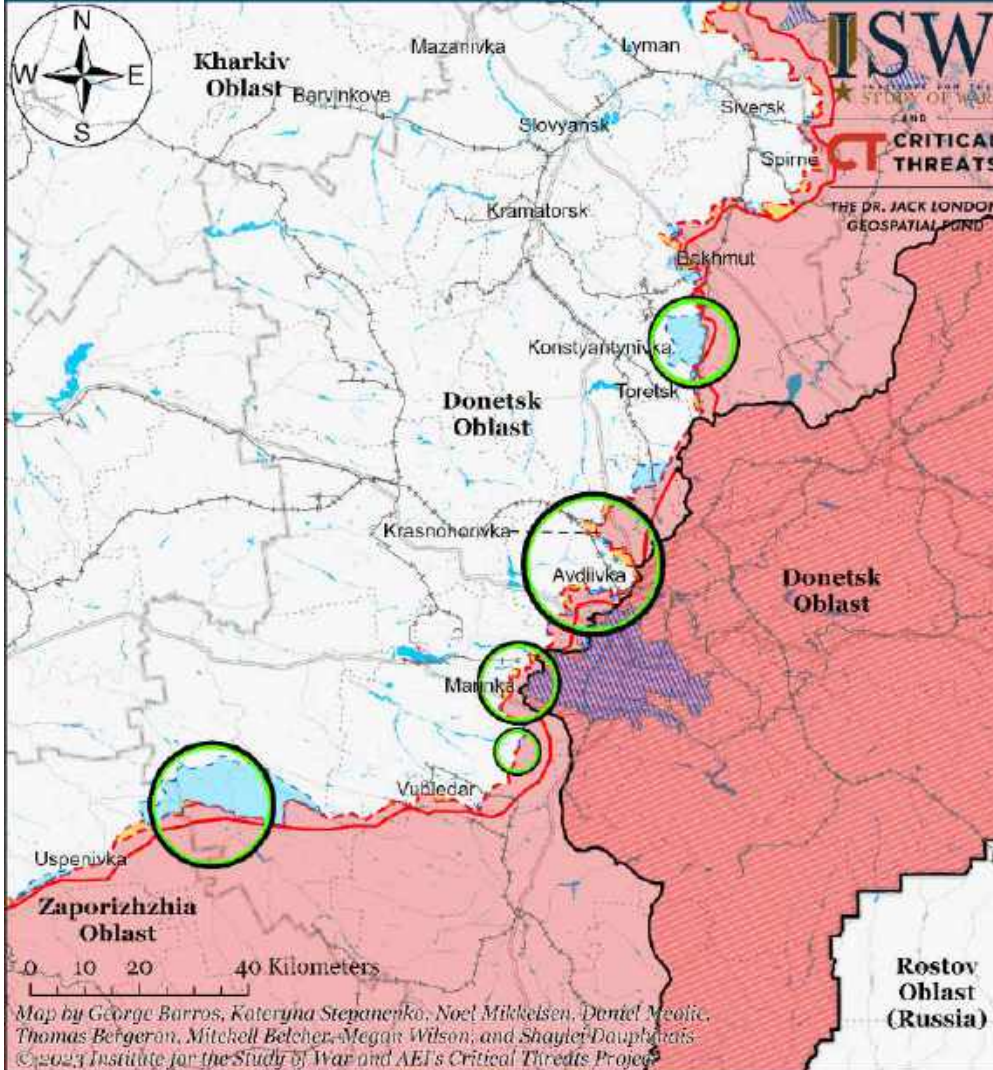
Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of October 3, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful ground attacks along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on October 3. The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Krasnohorivka (immediately west of Donetsk City) and in the Avdiivka and Marinka (on the western outskirts of Donetsk City) directions.[45] A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Nevelske (immediately west of Donetsk City) on October 2.[46]

Russian forces conducted ground attacks along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on October 3 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff claimed that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks east of Stepove (8km northwest of Avdiivka) and near Avdiivka, Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka), Krasnohorivka, Marinka, and Novomykhailivka (36km southwest of Avdiivka).[47] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also unsuccessfully attacked near Novokalynove (11km northwest of Avdiivka).[48] A Russian news aggregator claimed on October 2 that Russian forces attacked in the direction of Yurivka (20km northeast of Avdiivka) and advanced near Stepove.[49] A Russian milblogger claimed on October 3 that Russian forces increased the intensity and expanded the geographic area of their offensive operations in this sector of the front, though Russian forces likely lack the ability to sustain any increased tempo and intensity of offensive operations.[50]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of October 3, 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
- 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.

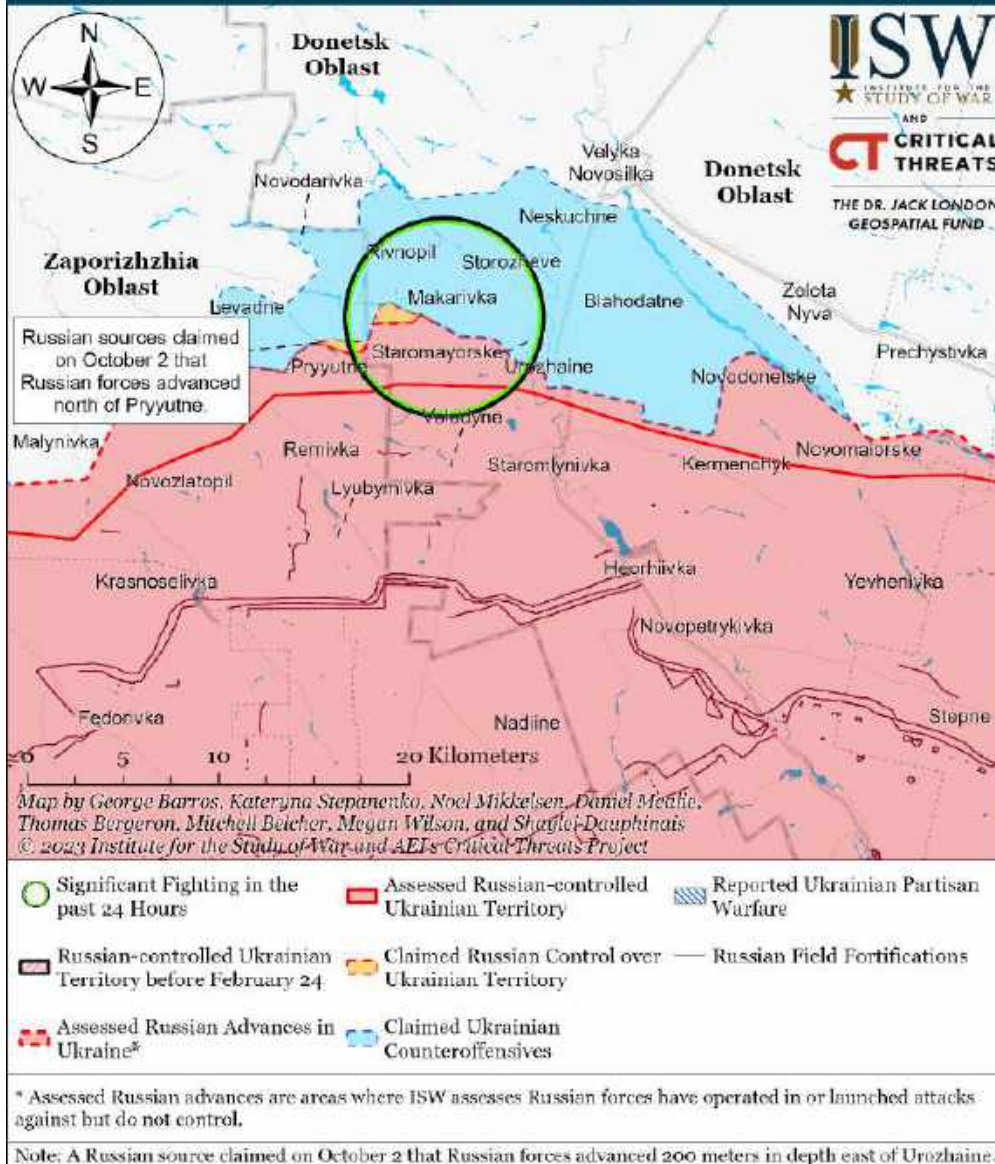
Note: A Russian source claimed on October 2 that Russian forces advanced 200 meters in depth east of Urozhaine.

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 but did not advance on October 3. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian ground attacks near Urozhaine (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) and Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) on October 2 and 3.[51] Russian military officials claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Pryyutne (15km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) on October 3.[52]

Russian sources claimed that Russian forces conducted a series of counterattacks and marginally advanced in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 2 and 3. A prominent Russian milblogger claimed on October 2 that fighting intensified along the Urozhaine-Novodonetske line (9-18km south and southeast of Velyka Novosilka), and that Russian forces advanced 200 meters in depth and cleared an unspecified forest area east of Urozhaine.[53] The milblogger also claimed that Russian forces advanced towards the Hrusheva Gully (15km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) during a counterattack after repelling a Ukrainian attack in the area.[54] Another milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked towards Staromayorske and Urozhaine from Pryyutne on October 3.[55] Another Russian milblogger claimed on October 3 that Russian forces achieved unspecified success towards Urozhaine.[56] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Staromayorske and Rivnopil (8km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[57]

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

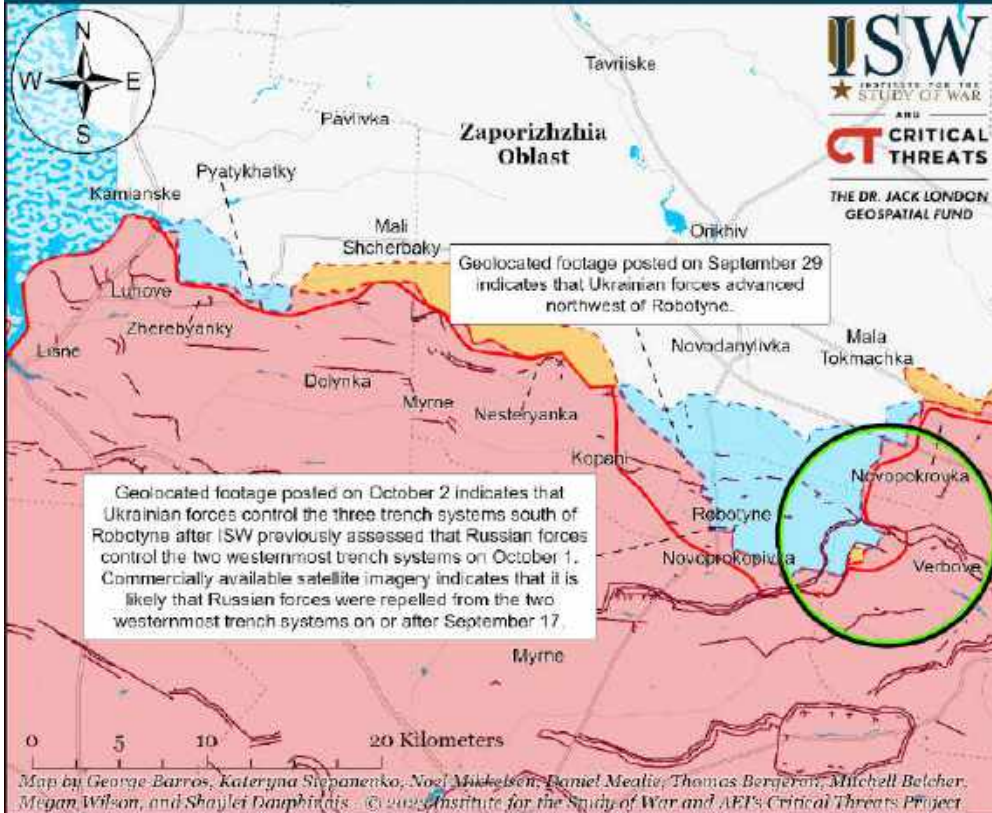


Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast but did not advance on October 3. A Russian milblogger claimed on October 3 that Ukrainian forces attacked Russian positions on the Kopani-Robotyne-Verbove line (11-18km southwest to the southeast of Orikhiv) and that heavy fighting is ongoing on this line.[58] The milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Verbove.[59] Russian sources claimed on October 2 and 3 that Ukrainian forces attacked near Novoprokopivka (13km south of Orikhiv).[60] Another Russian milblogger claimed on October 2 that Russian and Ukrainian forces engaged in meeting engagements across the front line near Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv).[61]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast and reportedly advanced on October 3. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces spoiled a Ukrainian attack near Verbove (18km southeast of Orikhiv) and instead counterattacked near Robotyne, advancing several hundred meters near Robotyne and Verbove overnight on October 2-3 and on the morning of October 3.[62] Russian sources claimed on October 2 and 3 that Russian forces conducted a counterattack near Verbove.[63] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attempted to recapture lost positions west of Verbove and southeast of Mala Tokmachka (9km southeast of Orikhiv).[64]

A Ukrainian official stated that Russian forces have established a complex trench system near Novoprokopivka. Ukrainian Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov stated that Russian forces have established a system of trenches and tunnels including two-story underground dugouts in the Novoprokopivka area.[65] Fedorov stated that Russian forces are also pouring concrete in new trench lines near Tokmak.

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



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Geolocated footage posted on September 29 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced northwest of Robotyne.

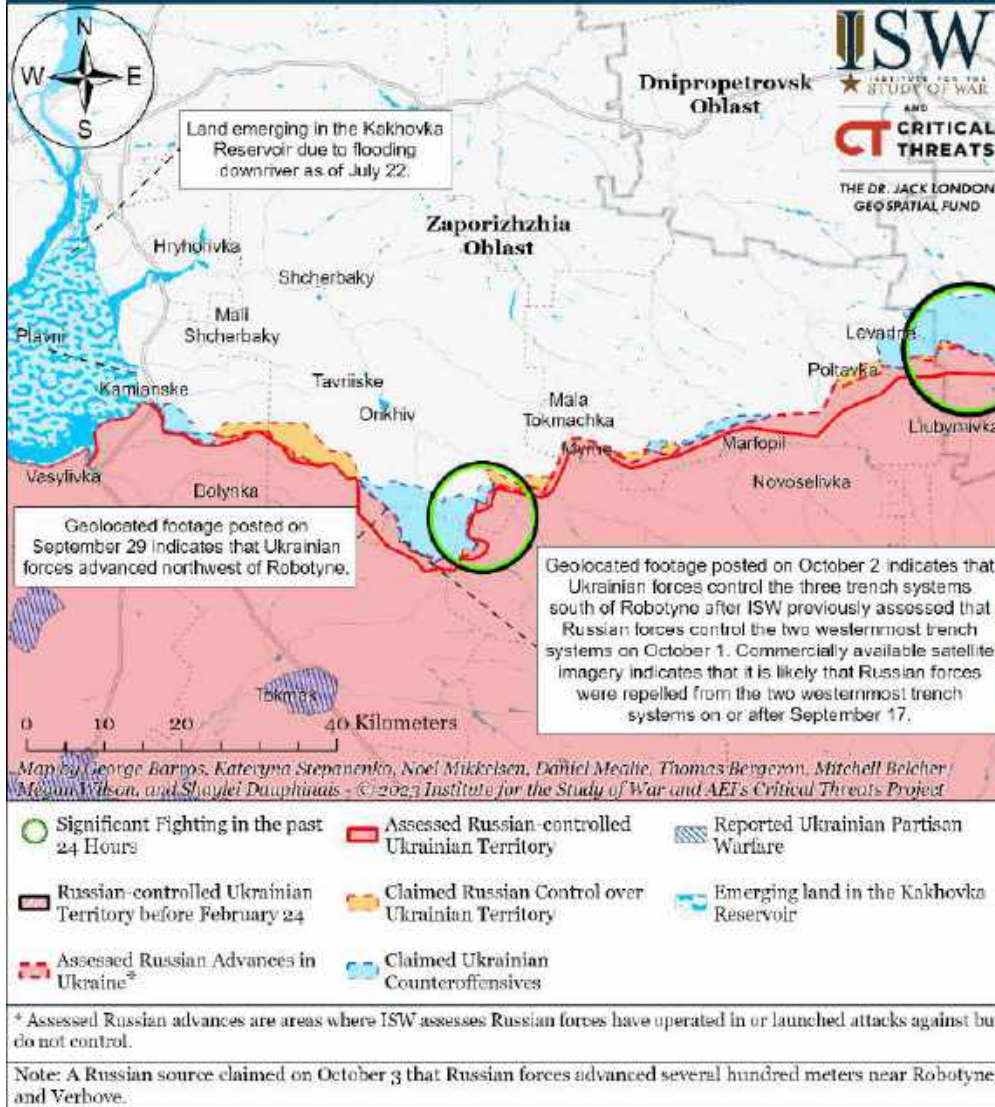
Geolocated footage posted on October 2 indicates that Ukrainian forces control the three trench systems south of Robotyne after ISW previously assessed that Russian forces control the two westernmost trench systems on October 1. Commercially available satellite imagery indicates that it is likely that Russian forces were repelled from the two westernmost trench systems on or after September 17.

- 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.

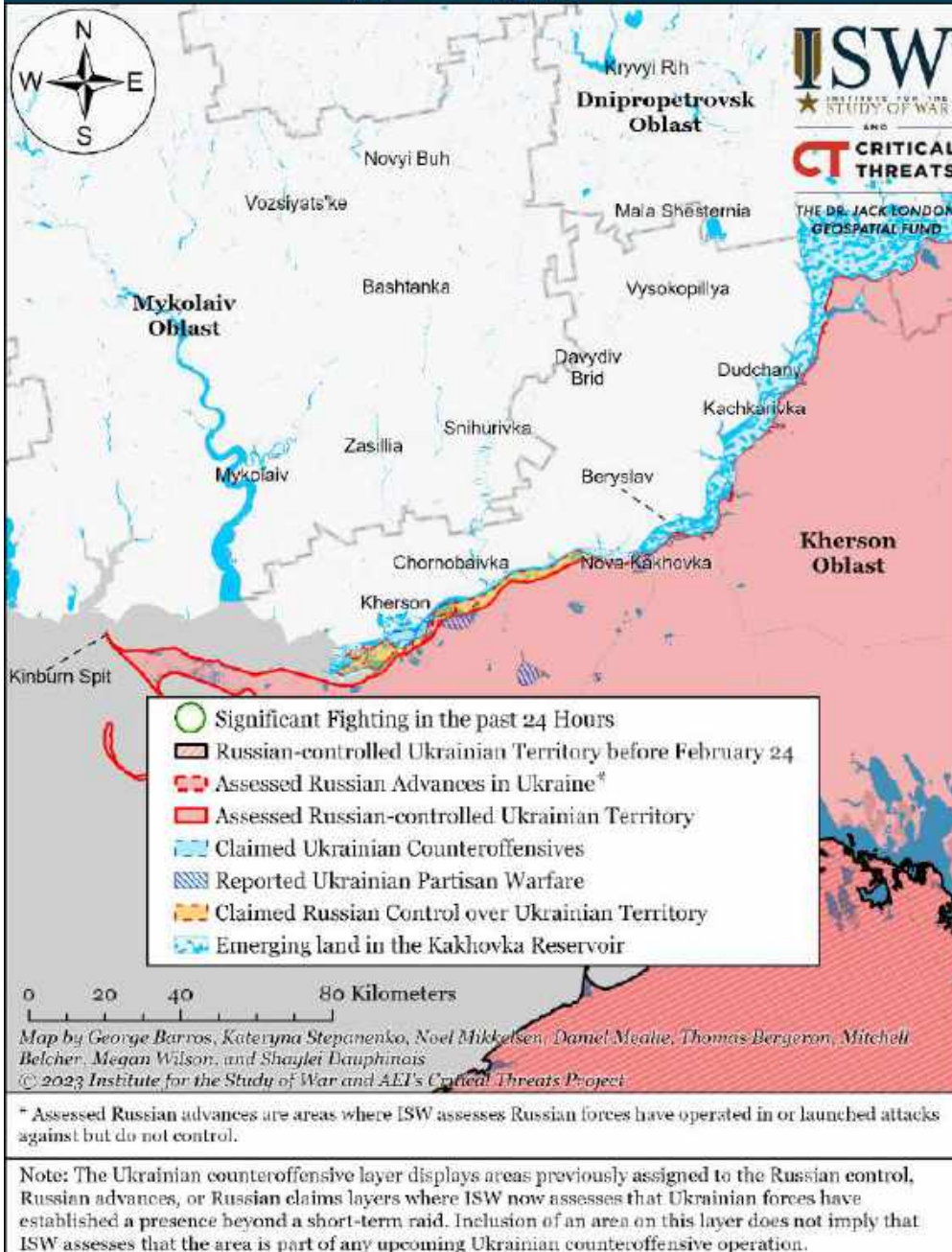
Note: A Russian source claimed on October 3 that Russian forces advanced several hundred meters near Robotyne and Verbove.

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



A Russian milblogger rejected claims of Ukrainian boats operating near Nova Kakhovka in the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast on October 2. The milblogger claimed that the Russian commander on the ground in the Nova Kakhovka area did not confirm such reports.[66] The milblogger claimed that Russian forces are reconnoitering the Nova Kakhovka area and that Ukrainian forces are not active.[67]

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



Ukrainian sources stated that occupation officials in Crimea report the detonation of explosives at higher rates than officials in other occupied areas. Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Spokesperson Andriy Yusov noted that Crimean occupation officials make announcements about the detonation of objects daily but never specify what objects the explosions dispose of, and Ukrainian news outlet *Suspilne* estimated that occupation officials reported 25 such explosions just in

September 2023.[68] *Suspilne* observed that occupation officials reported these detonations most frequently in Biyuk-Onlar (30km north of Simferopol), at the Staryi Krym training ground, in Armyansk, near Kerch, and in villages in Dzhankoi Raion.[69] There are many reasons why Russian and occupation authorities may need to conduct controlled detonations of ammunition; nevertheless, negligent Russian storage of ammunition and Ukrainian strikes in occupied Crimea have also detonated ammunition and generated explosions.[70]

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

A Ukrainian official source claimed that the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) is investigating Kursk Oblast Governor Roman Starovoi, which may be an attempt to remove government officials with connections to deceased Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin. The Ukrainian Resistance Center stated on October 3 that the FSB's Kursk Oblast service has begun to investigate Starovoi for building fake defensive fortifications valued at 10 billion rubles (about \$100,827,000) in Tetkino on the border with Ukraine.[71] The Resistance Center stated that the tensions began because Starovoi did not pay the FSB a kickback and that the Kursk FSB was threatening criminal prosecution if Starovoi did not pay the kickback.[72] If true, the FSB is likely targeting Starovoi for his prior connection to Prigozhin under the pretense of financial crimes. Wagner-affiliated instructors reportedly conducted military training classes in Kursk Oblast in November 2022; Prigozhin visited Kursk Oblast for Russia's Unity Day on November 4, 2022; Starovoi presumably greenlit Wagner's effort to train the Kursk Oblast People's Militia in the fall-winter of 2022-2023; and Prigozhin visited a training facility in Kursk Oblast in January 2023.[73] Starovoi publicly encouraged Prigozhin to stop his rebellion on June 24 but simultaneously reiterated the close cooperation between Kursk Oblast and Wagner and his respect for Wagner and its battlefield successes.[74]

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu reiterated that new conscripts will not deploy to Ukraine and praised the Russian military's successful volunteer recruitment efforts, likely to further signal his lack of intent to conduct additional mobilization in Russia. Shoigu claimed that the fall conscription cycle, which began on October 1, is proceeding according to plan and that the Russian military will conscript a total of 130,000 personnel in this cycle.[75] Shoigu reiterated that new conscripts, even those from occupied regions in Ukraine, will not deploy to the war in Ukraine. Shoigu claimed that the Russian military has no plans for additional mobilization measures as volunteer recruitment has been sufficient and that more than 50,000 citizens signed contracts with the Russian MoD in September.

The Ukrainian government continues to report on Russian efforts to force Ukrainians in occupied territory to serve in the Russian military. The Ukrainian Resistance Center stated on October 3 that Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev is supervising forces mobilization plans in occupied Ukraine and that the Russian military plans to mobilize mostly from occupied Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts and Crimea.[76]

The Russian military reportedly continues to recruit foreign volunteers to serve in relatively elite but likely degraded Russian Airborne (VDV) units. A Russian milblogger claimed on October 3 that volunteers from Nepal are serving in Russian Airborne (VDV) brigades.[77] ISW previously reported that Cuban volunteers are reportedly serving in the Russian 106th VDV Division.[78]

Russian officials are reportedly refusing to help former Wagner personnel as the Kremlin continues to send mixed messages about its relationship with the Wagner Group. Wagner personnel and their families in Izhevsk publicly complained in a video that Udmurt Republic Head Aleksandr Brechalov, Udmurt Minister of Social Policy Olga Lubnina, and the regional branch of the Defender of the Fatherland Foundation are refusing to help Wagner personnel who fought in the war in Ukraine and provide medical care for them.[79] The Wagner personnel and family claimed that the regional government is ignoring federal laws that grant equal combat veteran and disabled status to all soldiers who fought in Ukraine, including members of irregular formations. ISW previously assessed that the Kremlin's ideas about the relationship between Wagner elements and the Russian government are unclear at this time, possibly leading to regional heads' uncertainty about how to treat former Wagner personnel.[80]

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 opposition outlet *Verstka* revealed that almost half of all occupation officials of the senior and middle management levels in occupied Kherson, Zaporizhia, Donetsk, and Luhansk oblasts are from Russia.[81] *Verstka* analyzed the biographies of 224 occupation officials and observed that many Russian officials assumed leadership positions in occupied Ukraine to flee criminal charges in Russia.[82] *Verstka* observed that occupied Donetsk Oblast has the highest numbers of imported Russian officials with 15 of 24 members of the occupation cabinet of ministers originating from Russia.[83] *Verstka* added that Ukrainian collaborators assume more municipal positions than imported Russian officials and that Russian occupation officials incentivize Ukrainians to collaborate with them by offering them high-ranking local government positions.

Russian occupation administrations continue to expand propaganda efforts in occupied southern Ukraine. The Kherson Oblast occupation administration announced that the "Russkiy Mir" (Russian World) telecommunications company plans to install 20,000 satellite receivers capable of receiving programming from 20 Russian state TV channels in occupied Kherson Oblast.[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)

Belarusian President Aleksander Lukashenko announced the creation of a Belarusian commission headed by Belarusian Ambassador to Russia Dmitry Krutoy that will reportedly deal with issues related to exports to Russia, possibly in order to help Russia evade sanctions against key Russian industries such as fertilizer and hydrocarbon products.[85] Krutoy stated that the commission will make proposals about how to fix fundamental issues facing Belarusian exports to Russia, such as logistics and railway tariff issues. Lukashenko claimed that there are shortages of mineral fertilizers and petroleum in Russia which Belarusian products can fill.

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://telegra dot ph/Vstupitelnoe-slovo-Ministra-oborony-Rossijskoj-Federacii-general-a-armii-Sergeya-SHojgu-na-tematicheskom-selektornom-sovshchanii-10-03> ;
https://t.me/mod_russia/31094 ; <https://t.me/rybar/52640> ; <https://t.me/bazabazon/21894> ;
<https://t.me/mobilizationnews/15673>

[2] <https://t.me/zvofront/997>; https://x.com/k_kumar0313/status/1701429338850414852?s=20; <https://x.com/ShevBohdan1/status/1696770415715352670?s=20>; <https://x.com/DefMon3/status/1696576782881714615?s=20>; <https://t.me/swodki/292742>; <https://tverezo dot info/post/176701>; <https://tverezo dot info/post/176654>; <https://t.me/zvizdecmanhustu/1138>; <https://t.me/zvizdecmanhustu/1133>; <https://x.com/moklasen/status/1700255907937222699?s=20>; <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/52803>; <https://x.com/foosint/status/1693221975596953669?s=20>; https://t.me/rusich_army/10470; <https://x.com/naalsio26/status/1692894229909962910?s=20>; https://t.me/lost_warinua/46507; <https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonov/27100>; <https://x.com/KilledInUkraine/status/1689992498741907456?s=20>; https://vk dot com/wall332024977_5409; <https://x.com/KilledInUkraine/status/1688861987906695168?s=20>; https://vk dot com/wall17836853_8988; https://t.me/defender_skadovsk/11056; <https://twitter.com/moklasen/status/1700255907937222699>; <https://twitter.com/moklasen/status/1700421044295651477>; <https://twitter.com/moklasen/status/1700551061080018955>; <https://t.me/dontstopwar/11059>; <https://twitter.com/moklasen/status/1700255907937222699>

[3] <https://twitter.com/MassDara/status/1633153547863826432>

[4] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-2-2023>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-september-24-2023>

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

[6] https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Sept%2026%20Russian%20Offensive%20Campaign%20Assessment%20PDF_o.pdf ; https://twitter.com/tom_bullock_/status/1688974882787233809

[7] https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Sept%2026%20Russian%20Offensive%20Campaign%20Assessment%20PDF_o.pdf

[8] https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Sept%2026%20Russian%20Offensive%20Campaign%20Assessment%20PDF_o.pdf

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Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 2, 2023

Grace Mappes, Christina Harward, Angelica Evans, Kateryna Stepanenko, and
Frederick W. Kagan

October 2, 2023, 7:30pm ET

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

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

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 1:30pm ET on October 2. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 3 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

A prominent Russian milblogger and front-line unit commander claimed that Russian Airborne Forces (VDV) Commander Colonel General Mikhail Teplinsky “saved” the Russian 31st Guards VDV Brigade, which was fighting south of Bakhmut, mirroring claims made by a much smaller milblogger about VDV units in western Zaporizhia Oblast. Vostok Battalion commander Alexander Khodakovsky recalled a conversation with then-Commander of the 31st VDV Airborne Brigade Colonel Andrei Kondrashkin prior to Kondrashkin’s death around Bakhmut in mid-September, in which Kondrashkin revealed that his forces suffered personnel losses and that their motivation to fight dropped to a critical level.[1] Kondrashkin reportedly stated that the Russian military command demanded that his forces undertake “decisive actions,” while he knew that his personnel were suffering a critical lack of motivation. Khodakovsky noted that Kondrashkin refrained from raising his concerns to the military command and proceeded to blame his military failures on the lack of cohesion among Russian forces. Khodakovsky, in turn, noted that cohesion was not the problem, but rather that Kondrashkin needed to make a choice to either “waste” his troops in combat or protest the Russian military command’s order at the expense of his career. Khodakovsky observed that Kondrashkin never had a chance to make this choice because he sustained an injury in combat immediately after the conversation, and that Teplinsky “saved” the 31st VDV Brigade by taking the “remnants [of the brigade] under his wing” and giving them the opportunity to take a break from combat.

A Telegram channel that advocates for Teplinsky also amplified Khodakovsky’s account, claiming that Russian VDV forces – namely elements of the Russian 7th and 76th VDV divisions – are facing similar issues in western Zaporizhia Oblast.[2] The milblogger claimed that Teplinsky is no longer able to rescue these divisions, however, as he was quietly stripped of his responsibilities. ISW cannot confirm either Khodakovsky’s or the pro-Teplinsky milblogger’s claims, but both narratives attempt to portray Teplinsky as a commander who values the wellbeing of his forces over his career – likely to advance political goals that could support changes in the Russian military command. Khodakovsky’s account of Kondrashkin’s dilemma prior to his death also supports ISW’s prior assessment that Ukrainian counteroffensive operations south of Bakhmut may be degrading Russian units defending and counterattacking the area.[3]

A Russian “Storm Z” assault unit instructor speculated that the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) removed Lieutenant General Andrey Sychevoy from commanding in the Bakhmut direction due to his poor performance. The instructor claimed on October 1 that the Russian military command removed Sychevoy from his position for conducting unprepared and unsupported counterattacks south of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka and Andriivka.[4] Sychevoy’s current formal position within the Russian military is unknown. Sychevoy previously commanded the Russian Western Group of Forces in Kharkiv Oblast until his dismissal in early September 2022, and this claim is the first observed speculation that Sychevoy has had a role in military operations in Ukraine since September 2022.[5] Prominent Russian ultranationalist media outlet *Tsargrad* claimed in August 2023 that Sychevoy refuses all journalistic requests for comment, indicating that Sychevoy retained an official position and may have intended to keep this position concealed.[6]

Ukrainian forces marginally advanced in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area amid continued counteroffensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast and near Bakhmut on October 2. Geolocated footage published on October 2 indicates that Ukrainian forces marginally advanced northwest of Novomayorske (18km southeast of Veylka Novosilka).[7] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhia Oblast) and Bakhmut directions.[8] ISW is updating its October 1 assessment that Ukrainian forces lost positions in a trench system southwest of Robotyne (13km south of Orikhiv) to Russian counterattacks between September 13 and 30.[9] Geolocated footage published on October 2 and satellite imagery indicate that Ukrainian forces likely retook these positions sometime between September 12 and 17 and currently hold them.[10]

Prominent actors in the Russian information space continue to speculate about the possible future of the Wagner Group under Rosgvardia. A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed on October 2 that the Wagner Council of Commanders and Wagner Commander Anton Yelizarov (call sign “Lotos”) reached an agreement with Rosgvardia in which Wagner personnel must sign individual and group agreements to join Rosgvardia before January 1, 2024.[11] The milblogger claimed that the group agreements “serve as a guarantee that [Wagner] will not be ‘torn apart’” and that Wagner personnel will be able to keep their symbols and callsigns while serving under Rosgvardia. The milblogger claimed that although it is unclear where Rosgvardia will deploy its Wagner personnel in Ukraine, it will likely not be to the Bakhmut area where former Wagner personnel who signed contracts with the Russian MoD under former Wagner representative and current MoD employee Andrey Troshev are reportedly operating. The milblogger stated that the future of Wagner’s operations in Africa and the Middle East is also not clear as Rosgvardia has reportedly only approved Wagner’s use of aircraft for operations in the war in Ukraine and the new Wagner leader, Yevgeny Prigozhin’s son Pavel, is focusing only on Wagner’s business in Russia.[12] ISW continues to assess that the Kremlin’s ideas about the relationship(s) between Wagner elements and the Russian government are unclear at this time as Russian President Vladimir Putin publicly embraced Troshev and subordinated some Wagner elements to the Russian MoD on the one hand, while the Russian MoD will need to supply Rosgvardia with the equipment it lacks on the other.[13] Russian milbloggers’ continued discussion of the matter recently indicates that the relationship is likely still not fully defined or made public.

Interethnic tensions and claims about the superiority of Chechen “Akhmat” forces over regular Russian forces continue to generate controversy in the Russian information space. Chairman of the “Patriots of Russia” political party and the State Duma Committee on Nationalities Gennady Semigin reportedly published a since-deleted statement on the “Patriots of Russia” website in support of Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov’s son on September 29 after Kadyrov’s son was filmed beating a detainee accused of burning a Quran.[14] The post stated that “if the Russian soldier defended his ideals as uncompromisingly, then the [Chechen] Akhmat battalion would not have to kick the soldiers of the Russian Armed Forces onto the battlefield.”[15] Semigin’s post generated widespread criticism within the Russian information space on October 2, with one Russian official going so far as to call for Russian authorities to ban Duma members from speaking publicly about the war in Ukraine.[16] One Russian milblogger accused Semigin of attempting to incite ethnic hatred by comparing “brave Chechens with cowardly Russians.”[17] Semigin later issued a statement on Telegram claiming that unspecified actors hacked the “Patriots of Russia” website to publish the statement in protest of a bill on interethnic relations that his team was developing.[18] A milblogger also criticized Semigin’s claim of a hacker posting the message, asking why Semigin did not take down the statement sooner or how Semigin was able to access the “Patriots of Russia” website if it had been hacked.[19] ISW has long observed tensions between Chechen and non-Chechen officials and military units, and the continued emotional reaction within the Russian information suggests that these tensions are still present.[20]

Russian forces conducted a small-scale Shahed-131/136 drone strike on Ukraine on the night of October 1-2 after Russian forces conducted a record number of drone strikes targeting Ukrainian grain and port infrastructure in September 2023. Ukrainian military officials reported that Russian forces launched seven drones from the Krasnodar Krai direction and that Ukrainian air defenses shot down four drones.[21] Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat stated that even though Russian forces have launched fewer drones in the past days, the Russian strikes still target Ukrainian military and infrastructure areas and are reconnoitering Ukrainian air defenses.[22] Ukrainian military expert Aleksandr Kovalenko stated on October 1 that Russian forces launched a record number of 521 drones that mostly targeted Ukrainian port and grain infrastructure in September 2023.[23] Kovalenko stated that Russia is still dependent on Iran for drone production due to issues with domestic production and that this September increase was due to Iran’s possible increased production from 100 Shahed-136 drones per month at the end of 2022 to 150-200 per month by May 2023.

Key Takeaways:

- **A prominent Russian milblogger and front-line unit commander claimed that Russian Airborne Forces (VDV) Commander Colonel General Mikhail Teplinsky “saved” the Russian 31st Guards VDV Brigade, which was fighting south of Bakhmut, mirroring claims made by a much smaller milblogger about VDV units in western Zaporizhia Oblast.**
- **A Russian “Storm Z” assault unit instructor speculated that the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) removed Lieutenant General Andrey Sychevoy from commanding the Bakhmut direction due to his poor performance.**
- **Ukrainian forces marginally advanced in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area amid continued counteroffensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast and near Bakhmut on October 2.**

- **Prominent actors in the Russian information space continue to speculate about the possible future of the Wagner Group under Rosgvardia.**
- **Interethnic tensions and claims about the superiority of Chechen “Akhmat” forces over regular Russian forces continue to generate controversy in the Russian information space.**
- **Russian forces conducted a small-scale Shahed-131/136 drone strike on Ukraine on the night of October 1-2 after Russian forces conducted a record number of drone strikes targeting Ukrainian grain and port infrastructure in September 2023.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Kreminna, near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and reportedly advanced in some areas on October 2.**
- **The Russian “Vostok” Battalion continued to complain on October 1 that the Russian military command is not fulfilling its promises of having the unit fight as a second-echelon force and is not providing state awards.**
- **Russian occupation officials continued to transport Ukrainian children to Russia under the guise of educational trips.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of October 2, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

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

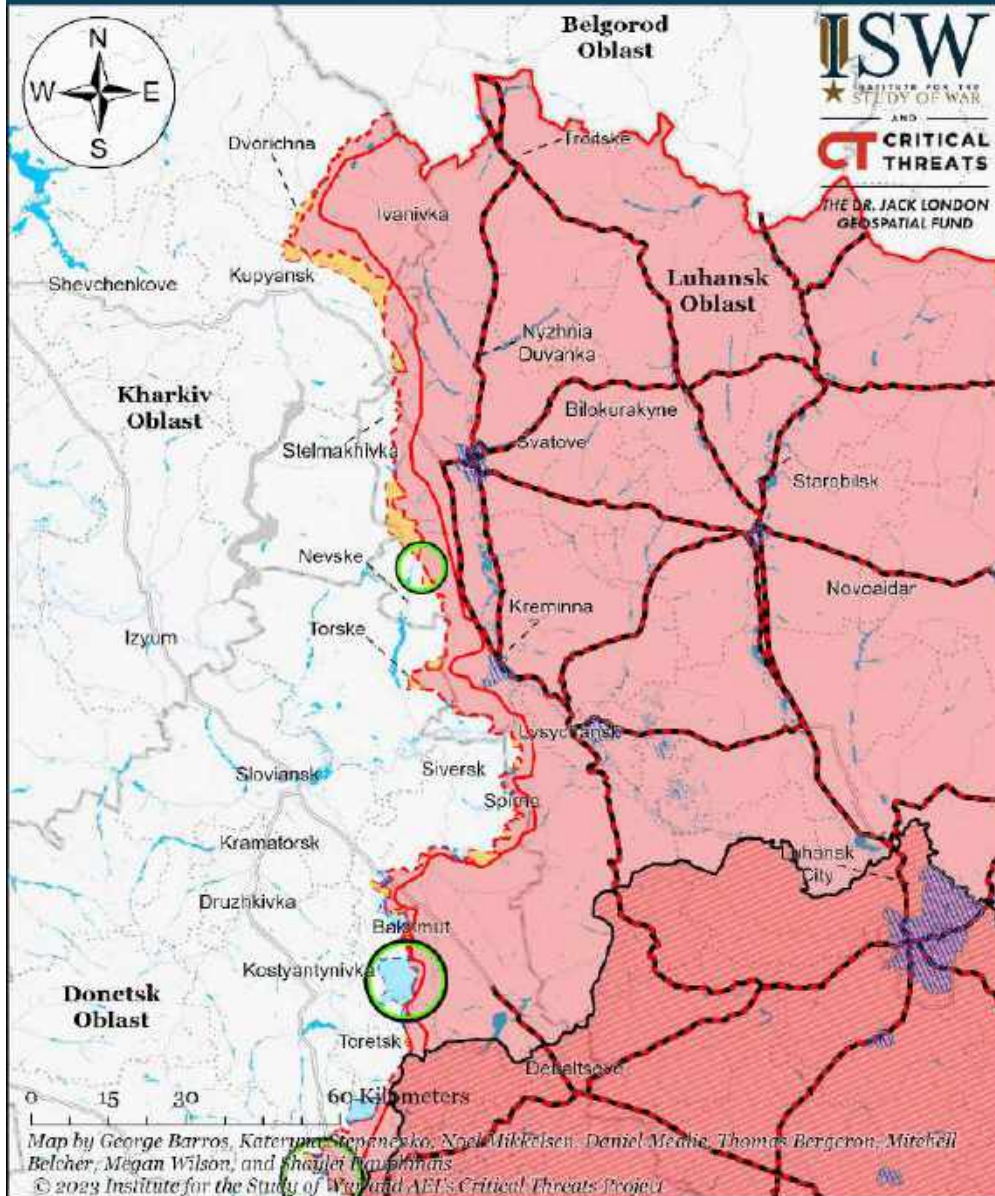
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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

Russian sources conducted unsuccessful ground attacks near Kreminna on October 2. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on October 2 that Russian forces conducted an unsuccessful attack near Makiivka (22km northwest of Kreminna).[24] Ukrainian Eastern Grouping of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash stated on October 2 that elements of the Russian 25th Combined Arms Army (CAA) replaced elements of the Russian 41st CAA (Central Military District) and the 76th Air Assault (VDV) Division, which previously took heavy losses while operating near Kreminna.[25] Yelash stated that elements of the Russian 25th CAA have taken up defensive positions in the area but that Russian forces are not using these elements at a “high intensity.”[26] A Russian milblogger claimed that the Russian 21st Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Combined Arms Army, Central Military District) is operating in the Svatove-Kreminna area.[27]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful ground attacks near Kreminna on October 2. The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled two Ukrainian attacks near Dibrova (7km southwest of Kreminna) and Bilohorivka (10km south of Kreminna) in Luhansk Oblast.[28] A Russian milblogger claimed on October 1 that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Torske (12km west of Kreminna) and the Serebryanske forest area.[29]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of October 2, 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

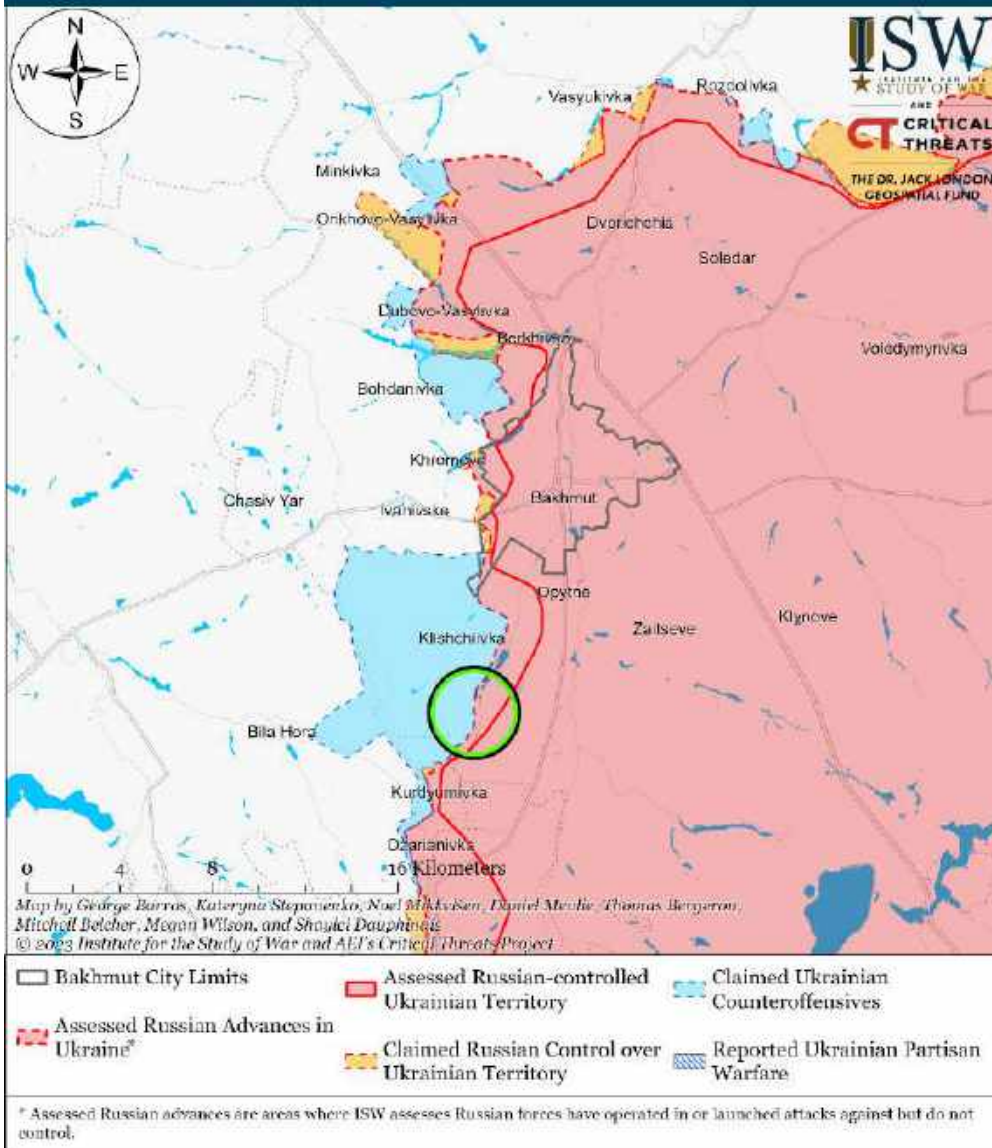
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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 offensive operations in the Bakhmut area but did not make any confirmed gains on October 2. Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Ilya Yevlash stated that heavy fighting continues south of Bakhmut near the railway line, along which runs the current Russian line of defense.[30] Yevlash stated that Russian forces aim to hold the defensive line along the railway south of Bakhmut at any cost. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces continued attempts to advance east of the railway line near Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut) and that Ukrainian forces hold unspecified "more advantageous" positions in the area.[31] A Russian source claimed that a Chechen "Akhmat" special forces detachment and the 4th Motorized Rifle Brigade's 1st Battalion (2nd Luhansk People's Republic [LNR] Army Corps) repelled a Ukrainian attack near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut).[32] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Andriivka.[33]

Russian forces continued counterattacks in the Bakhmut area but did not advance on October 2. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully tried to recapture lost positions near Andriivka.[34] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces counterattacked near Klishchiivka.[35]

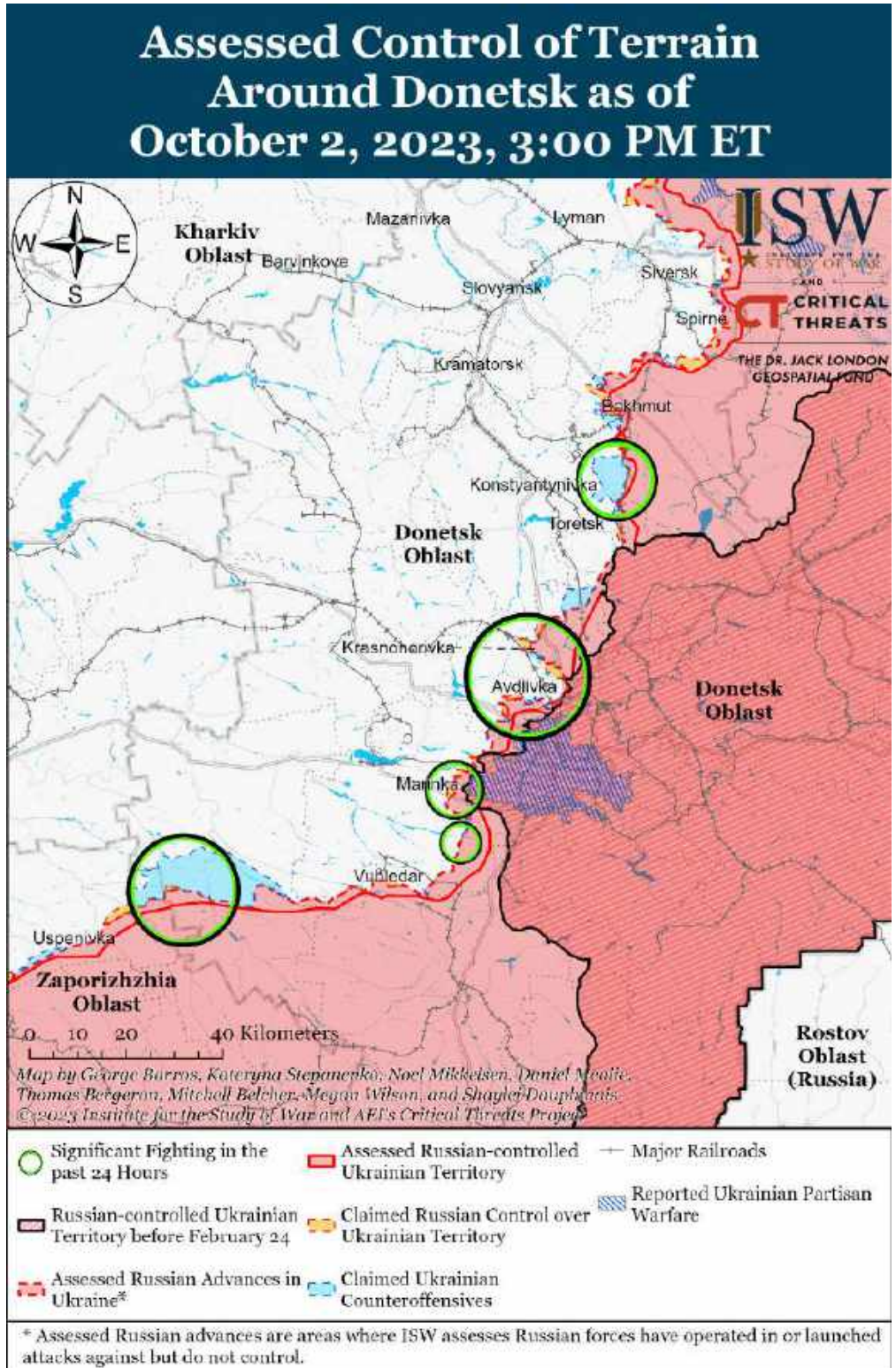
Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of October 2, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces continued offensive operations on the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on October 2 and reportedly advanced recently. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces captured several Ukrainian positions near Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka), Keramik (14km northwest of Avdiivka) and Stepove (8km northwest of Avdiivka) on October 1 and 2.[36] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks east of Stepove and near Avdiivka, Keramik, Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka), Marinka (on the western outskirts of Donetsk City), and Novomykhailivka (36km southwest of Avdiivka).[37]

Ukrainian forces reportedly counterattacked on the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on October 2 but did not advance. The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Nevelske

and Krasnohorivka (both immediately west of Donetsk City).[38] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked against Russian forces towards Vodyane (7km southwest of Avdiivka), Opytne (3km southwest of Avdiivka), Krasnohorivka, and Novokalynove (11km northwest of Avdiivka).[39]

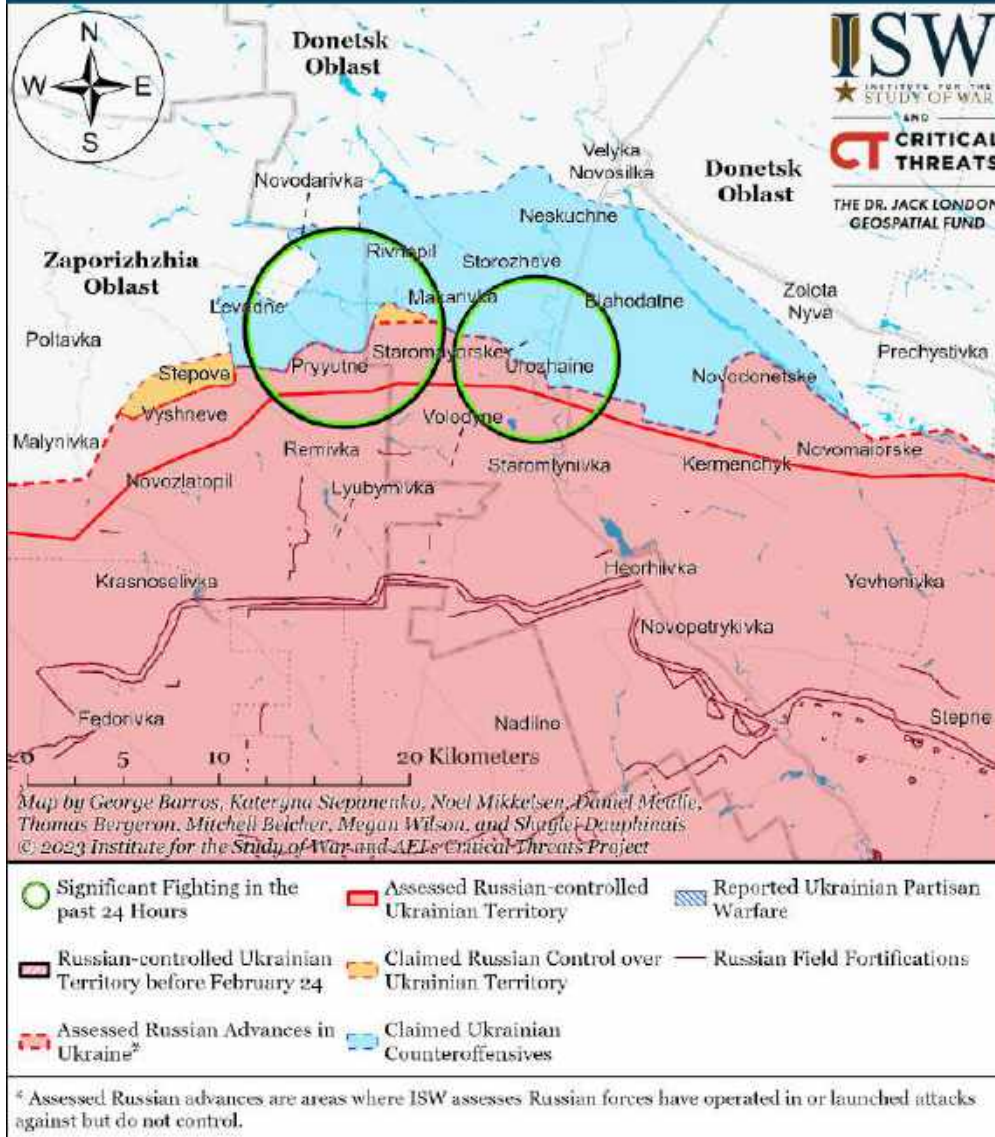


Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area and marginally advanced on October 2. Geolocated footage published on October 2 indicates that Ukrainian forces marginally advanced northwest of Novomayorske (18km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[40] The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Pryyutne (16km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[41]

Russian forces conducted offensive actions in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area but did not make any confirmed gains on October 2. A Russian milblogger claimed that there are unconfirmed reports that Russian forces advanced 100-150 meters east of Urozhaine (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) where elements of the Russian 36th Combined Arms Army (Eastern Military District) are operating.[42] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka), Rivnopil (10km southwest of Velyka Novosilka), and Novodarivka (15km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[43] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked from Pryyutne but did not specify an outcome.[44]

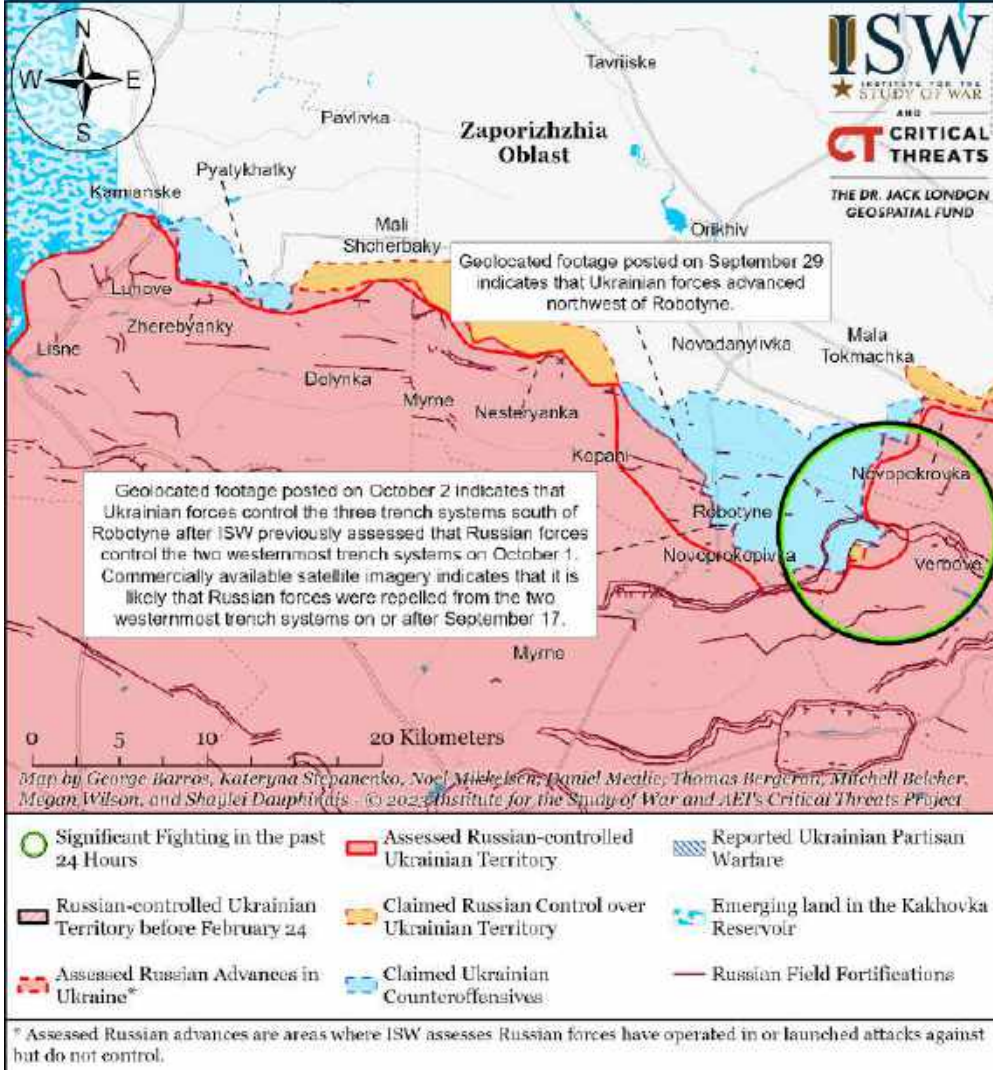
Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of October 2, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast but did not advance on October 2. Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Novoprokopivka (13km south of Orikhiv) and Robotyne.[45] A Russian source claimed that Ukrainian forces are conducting daily offensive operations northeast of Robotyne.[46]

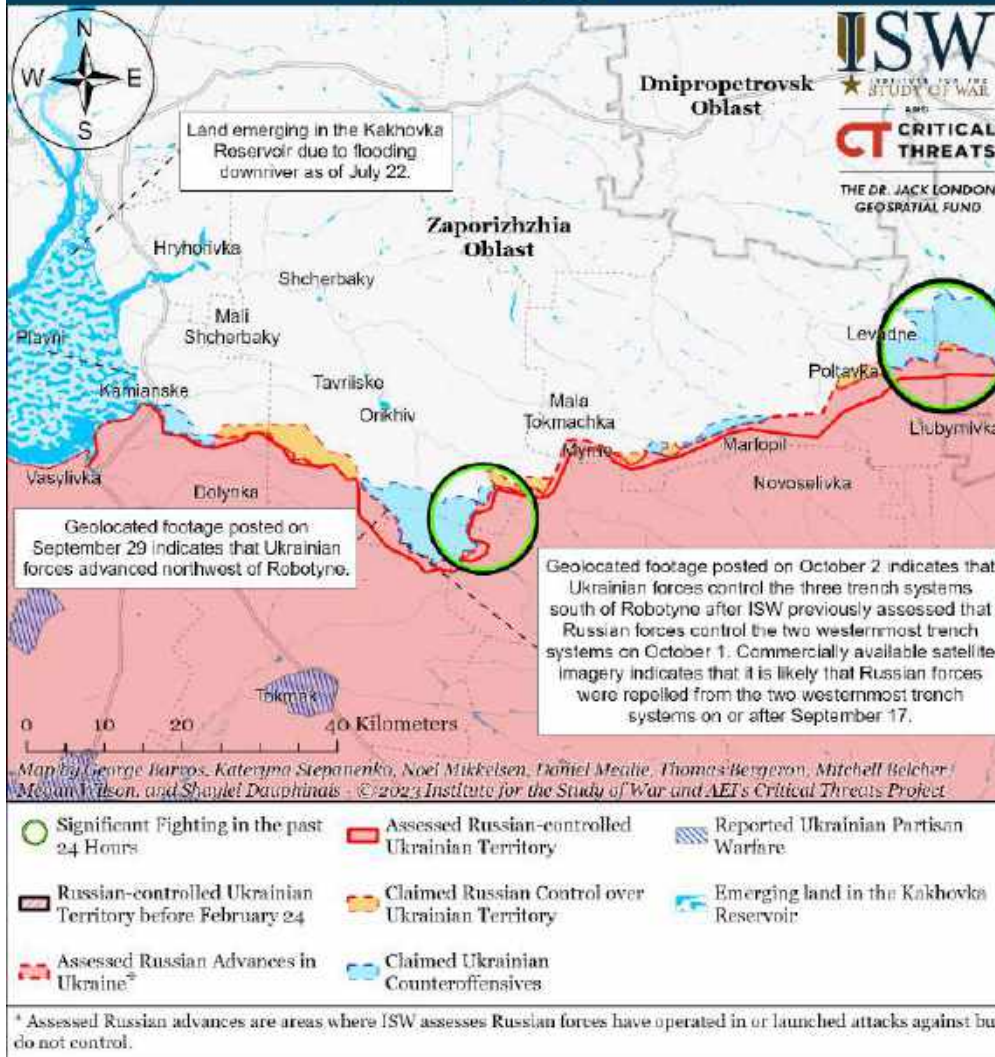
ISW assessed on October 1 that Ukrainian forces lost positions southwest of Robotyne to Russian counterattacks between September 13 and 30.[47] ISW is updating our assessment, however, based on new footage published on October 2 and satellite imagery, which indicates that Ukrainian forces still hold these positions and have held them since sometime between September 12 and 17.[48]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of October 2, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



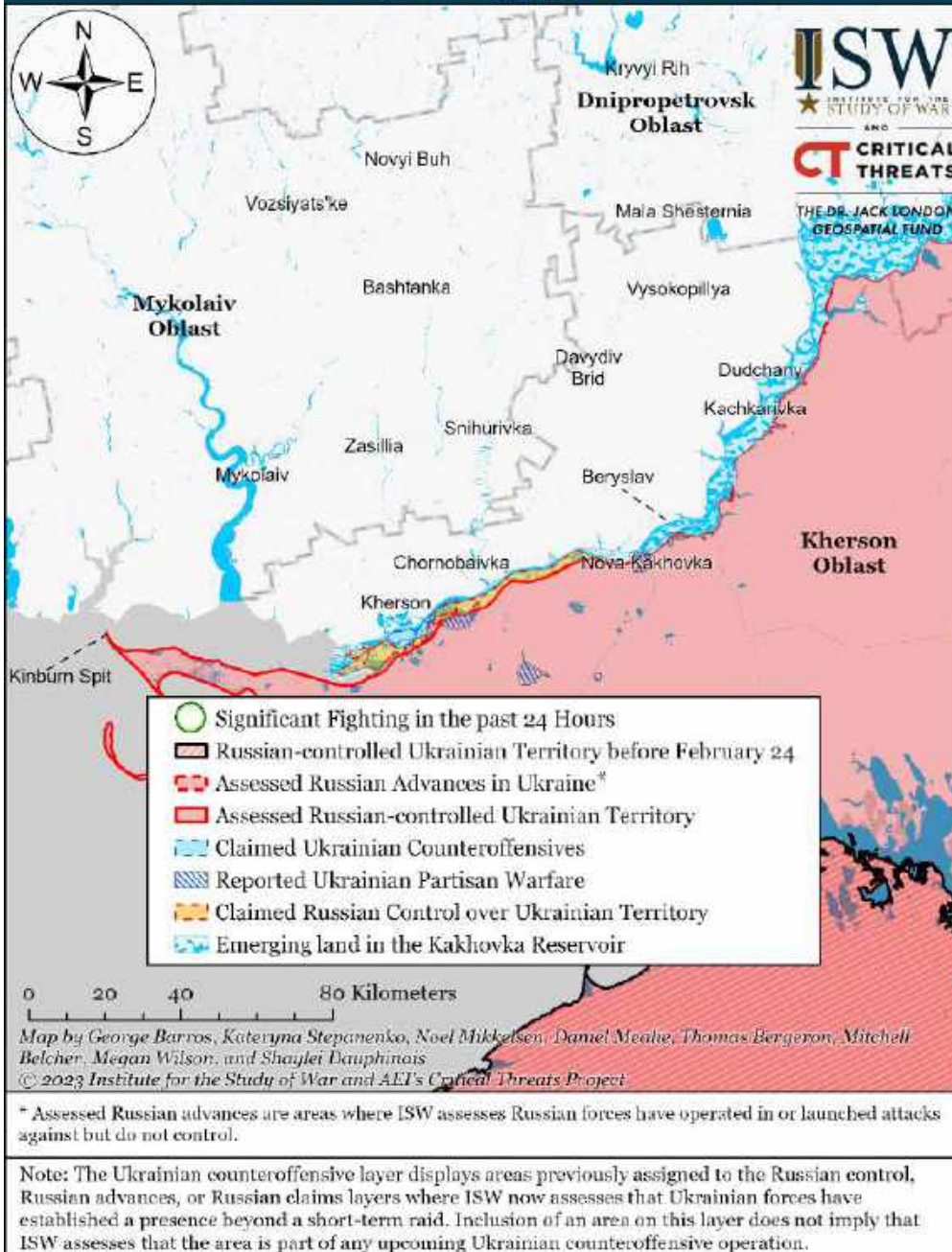
Russian forces conducted offensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast but did not advance on October 2. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked west of Verbove (18km southeast of Orikhiv).[49] Russian milbloggers also claimed that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Verbove.[50]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of October 2, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



A Ukrainian official stated that Russian forces are increasingly using aircraft to strike Kherson Oblast at night rather than during the day. Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Captain First Rank Nataliya Humenyuk stated that Russian forces only launched two KAB-500 aerial bombs at Kherson Oblast on during the day October 1 but launched 18 KAB-500 bombs that night on October 1-2.[51] Humenyuk reported that the Russian strike damaged a hospital and critical infrastructure.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of October 2, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

The Russian “Vostok” Battalion continued to complain on October 1 that the Russian military command is not fulfilling its promise of using the unit as a second-echelon force in combat and is not

providing state awards.[52] The “Vostok” Battalion claimed that since the start of the full-scale invasion, its personnel have been fighting on the frontlines instead of performing “clearing” functions after assaults.[53] The “Vostok” Battalion claimed that 31 of its personnel died in combat and 151 were wounded over the past 19 months of combat and complained that Russian military command is not sufficiently awarding the battalion for its sacrifices as part of the Russian Operational-Combat Tactical Formation “Kaskad.”

A Russian milblogger observed that Russian forces are using outdated S-60 automatic anti-aircraft guns from the 1950s in the Kupyansk direction.[54] The milblogger stated that many social media users questioned the Russian MoD footage that showed Russian forces using S-60 gun and asked about the age of these systems. The milblogger noted that while he does not doubt the effectiveness of Soviet armaments, he hopes that Russian forces will equip frontline units with new and modern equipment.

Former Wagner Group servicemen who have returned from Ukraine continue to commit crimes in Russia. A Wagner serviceman from Lipetsk Oblast reportedly killed his four-year-old stepdaughter and beat his wife months after returning from combat.[55] A pardoned convict who had served in Wagner reportedly escaped a detention center in Krasnodar Krai when serving a 10-day sentence for minor hooliganism charges.[56]

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 continued to transport Ukrainian children to Russia under the guise of educational trips. Zaporizhia Oblast occupation governor Yevgeny Balitsky stated on October 2 that the Russian Ministry of Culture transported over 300 Ukrainian schoolchildren from occupied Zaporizhia Oblast to Moscow and St. Petersburg to “educate” them about Russian culture.[57] Balitsky stated that more than 2,500 Ukrainian schoolchildren from occupied Zaporizhia Oblast in total will participate in this program.

The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported that Russian officials appointed 410 judges in occupied Ukraine from June 2023 to September 2023.[58] The Resistance Center noted that Russia intends for the expansion of occupation courts to intensify repressions in occupied areas.

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 Belarusian Ministry of Defense (MoD) stated on October 2 that Belarusian pilots conducted training exercises with Mi-35 helicopters and Iskander-M missile systems at unspecified training grounds in Belarus.[59]

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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