

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, August 28, 2023

Riley Bailey, Kateryna Stepanenko, Nicole Wolkov,
Christina Harward, and Mason Clark

August 28, 2023, time 7:10pm 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 August 28. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the August 29 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian officials formally acknowledged that Ukrainian forces had liberated Robotyne amid continued Ukrainian advances in western Zaporizhia Oblast and near Bakhmut. Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar reported on August 28 that Ukrainian forces have liberated Robotyne, achieved unspecified successes southeast of Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv) and south of Mala Tokmachka (7km southeast of Orikhiv), and are advancing in the directions of Novodanylivka (4km south of Orikhiv), Novopokropivka (15km south of Orikhiv), Mala Tokmachka, and Ocheretuvate (25km southwest of Orikhiv).[1] Heat anomalies from NASA FIRMS/VIIRS sensors and Russian claims of Ukrainian advances likely indicate that Ukrainian forces advanced near Verbove.[2] Malyar also stated that Ukrainian forces pushed Russian forces out of positions east of Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) and in the center of the settlement and have made unspecified progress near Orikhovo-Vasylivka (11km northwest of Bakhmut).[3]

Malyar reported that Ukrainian forces continue offensive operations in the southern direction, which she specified is the main direction of Ukrainian offensive operations.[4] Malyar's statement is consistent with the scale of Ukrainian offensive operations that ISW has observed in southern and eastern Ukraine. Ukrainian forces are currently conducting two operational efforts in southern Ukraine in western Zaporizhia Oblast and in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and Malyar did not indicate one effort as the main offensive direction.

The Russian military command continues to expend relatively elite Russian airborne forces by deploying these troops to defend vulnerable positions against Ukrainian counteroffensives. Geolocated footage published on August 27 indicates that the Russian military command deployed elements of the Russian 76th Guards Air Assault (VDV) Division to reinforce Russian positions near Robotyne likely from the Kreminna area in Luhansk Oblast.[5] ISW had previously observed that elements of almost all Russian VDV formations are operating in areas where Ukrainian forces are conducting counteroffensive operations, and this lateral redeployment further suggests that Russian forces may be using relatively elite units to reinforce critical sectors of the frontline.[6] Russian forces previously redeployed the 7th Guards Mountain VDV Division from Kherson Oblast to support Russian defenses in eastern and western Zaporizhia Oblast and have

transferred other VDV forces from Luhansk Oblast to defend against Ukrainian counteroffensives on Bakhmut's flanks.[7] The Russian military command has consistently relied on VDV formations as both an offensive and a defensive force and they are likely degraded from their high operational tempo. The degradation of these forces will likely weaken Russia's ability to sustain complex defensive operations and almost certainly disrupt any Russian intent to resume offensive operations at scale, which have predominantly relied on relatively elite infantry that Russia now lacks.

Russian forces conducted a missile strike on the rear areas of Ukraine on August

28. Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces launched four Kalibr cruise missiles from the Black Sea and two Kh-59 cruise missiles from the airspace above occupied Kherson Oblast in the direction of Kryvyi Rih on the night of August 28 and that Ukrainian air defenses intercepted all but two Kalibr missiles.[8] The Ukrainian Air Force reported that the Russian missiles struck a civilian industrial facility in Poltava Oblast.[9]

A Ukrainian intelligence official indicated that Russian forces may have marginally replenished their stocks of high-precision missiles through conservation in the summer of 2023.

Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Spokesperson Vadym Skibitskyi stated on August 28 that Russian forces have a total of 585 missiles left in their stocks that have a range of more than 500km.[10] Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov last provided official Ukrainian figures on Russian missile stocks in early January 2023 in the closing months of the Russian strike campaign that targeted critical infrastructure from roughly October 2022 to March 2023.[11] Skibitskyi offered new figures for Russian missile stocks, compared with Reznikov's January 2023 figures as follows:

- 270 Iskander ballistic and cruise missiles (+126 from January)
- 140 sea-based Kalibr cruise missiles (+81 from January)
- Roughly 100 Kh-101/Kh-55/Kh-555 cruise missiles (-18 from January)
- Roughly 75 Kinzhal ballistic missiles (+22 from January)
- 150 Kh-22/32 missiles (-12 from January).[12]

It is unclear if these figures are estimates or exact amounts, but they nevertheless suggest that Ukrainian intelligence assesses that Russian forces have been able to marginally replenish their stocks of high precision missiles since the end of the larger Russian air campaign in the fall and winter of 2022. Russian forces launched a new air campaign in May 2023 focused on maintaining a more regular pace of strikes against Ukraine with fewer missiles, and Skibitskyi suggested that this allowed Russian forces to replenish their stocks.[13] Ukrainian officials have previously reported that Russia is able to produce roughly a hundred missiles across various types per month, and this has likely allowed Russian forces to either maintain or marginally replenish their stocks during the summer air campaign.[14] Skibitskyi stated that Russian defense enterprises are struggling to produce several dozens of specific types of missiles a month due to foreign component shortages.[15]

Ukrainian officials stated that Russian forces may intend to resume a wider campaign against Ukrainian critical infrastructure in the fall of 2023, but assessed Russia likely has not replenished its missile stocks to sustain a campaign on the scale of the winter 2022-2023 strikes.

Skibitskyi stated that Russian forces are conducting reconnaissance on Ukrainian infrastructure facilities and may begin a massive strike series with missiles and drones at the end of September or in October.[16] Russian forces conducted strikes with up to 100 missiles in a

single strike series during the air campaign in the fall and winter of 2022, and the marginal replenishment of their missile stocks will likely prevent them from conducting an air campaign at anywhere near that scale.[17] Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat stated that Russia is increasing its missile production but not enough to maintain the same intensity of strikes as the fall and winter of 2022.[18]

Ukrainian officials assessed that any upcoming Russian strike campaign may employ new tactics that use fewer missiles and more drones. Skibitskyi stated that Russian forces are improving their targeting and decision-making speed, are more carefully selecting targets, and are meticulously searching for flight routes that can bypass Ukrainian air defense systems.[19] ISW has previously reported on Russian forces' ability to innovate and learn over the course of the war.[20] Skibitskyi stated that possible upcoming large-scale Russian strikes may use only about 10 to 30 missiles but will be accompanied by a much larger number of Iranian Shahed-131/136 drones.[21] Skibitskyi and Ihnat stated that a larger number of drones would allow Russian forces to further bypass Ukrainian air defenses, allowing other projectiles to reach their targets.[22] Ihnat stated that drones will likely be used in strikes on Ukrainian energy infrastructure, and Skibitskyi noted that Russian forces have previously used Shahed drones to widely damage Ukrainian electrical substations.[23] Russia has reportedly begun domestically producing modified versions of Shahed-131/136 drones but is reportedly struggling to produce them at the pace and quality it desires.[24] ISW previously assessed that the Russian command may believe that a large number of strike drones will allow Russian forces to overwhelm Ukrainian air defenses, although Shahed drones remain Russia's high precision weapon system most vulnerable to Ukrainian air defenses.[25]

Ukrainian strikes reportedly damaged Russian aircraft and equipment at an airfield in Kursk Oblast on August 27. *RBK-Ukraine* cited Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) sources that SBU military counterintelligence conducted a drone strike on an airfield near Kursk City on the night of August 27, damaging four Russian Su-30 fighter aircraft, one MiG-29 fighter aircraft, and radars for a S-300 missile system and two Pantsir missile systems.[26] Kursk Oblast Governor Roman Starovoyt claimed that Ukrainian drones damaged an apartment building, and Russian milbloggers claimed on August 28 that satellite imagery of the airfield showed no visible damage to Russian military equipment.[27] ISW cannot independently confirm the results of the Ukrainian strikes.

Russian milbloggers continued to criticize the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) for ignoring ultranationalists' complaints over the mistreatment of a Southern Military District (SMD) brigade operating in the Kherson direction. Russian milbloggers continued to claim that the Russian military command chose to ignore and silence reports about elements of the 205th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (49th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) suffering significant losses with inadequate artillery support and poor leadership in the Kherson direction.[28] One milblogger claimed that the Russian MoD continues to face bureaucratic problems that prevent the Russian military from ingesting criticism and undergoing reforms.[29] The milblogger claimed that Russian ultranationalists were hopeful that the Russian military command would improve its management of the war effort after Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin's armed rebellion that sought to change Russia's military command – but such hopes did not materialize.[30] The milblogger claimed that the outrage over the treatment of the 205th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade divided the Russian information space into milbloggers who are loyal to the Russian MoD and those who oppose the Russian MoD. Another milblogger claimed that he refrains from sharing 90 percent of his information on Russian military failures, noting that Russian officials

perceive the limited amount of criticism as a personal attack on them instead of thinking on how to improve conditions for Russian servicemen.[31]

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian officials formally acknowledged that Ukrainian forces liberated Robotyne amid continued Ukrainian advances in western Zaporizhia Oblast and near Bakhmut.**
- **The Russian military command continues to expend relatively elite Russian airborne forces by deploying these troops to defend vulnerable positions against Ukrainian counteroffensives.**
- **A Ukrainian intelligence official indicated that Russian forces may have marginally replenished their stocks of high-precision missiles through conservation in the summer of 2023.**
- **Ukrainian officials stated that Russian forces may intend to resume a wider campaign against Ukrainian critical infrastructure in the fall of 2023, but assessed Russia likely has not replenished its missile stocks to sustain a campaign on the scale of the winter 2022-2023 strikes.**
- **Ukrainian officials assessed that any upcoming Russian strike campaign may employ new tactics that use fewer missiles and more drones.**
- **Russian milbloggers continued to criticize the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) for ignoring ultranationalists' complaints over the mistreatment of a Southern Military District (SMD) brigade operating in the Kherson direction.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations on the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, and in western Donetsk, and did not make any confirmed advances.**
- **Russian lawmakers and the Russian information space expressed varied opinions about a proposed Russian State Duma bill that would deprive individuals of their acquired Russian citizenship for evading military registration and mobilization.**
- **The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported on August 28 that partisans created an explosion at the barracks of a Chechen "Akhmat-1" Rosgvardia riot police (OMON) unit in Enerhodar in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of August 28, 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)

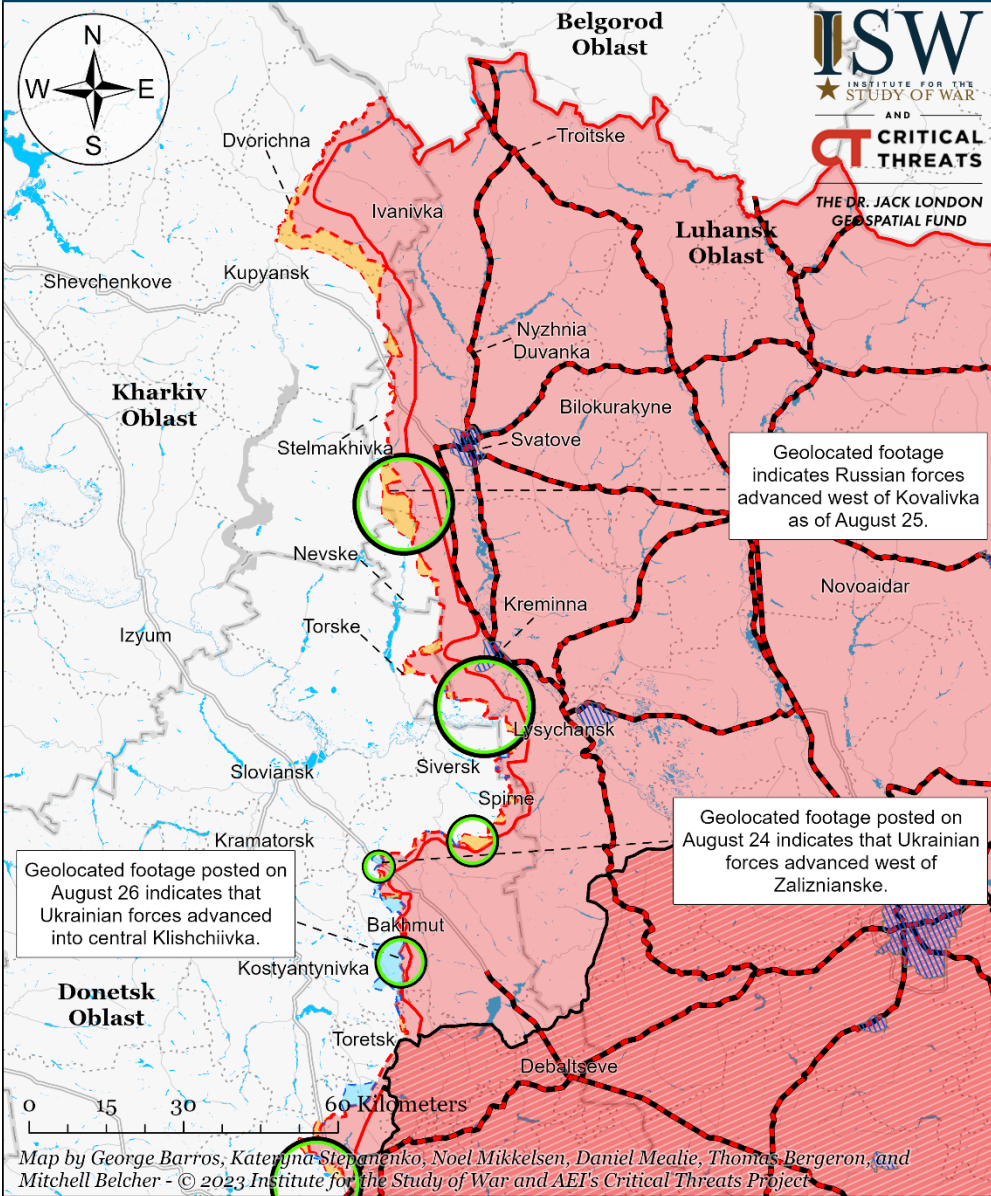
Russian forces attacked Ukrainian positions on the Kupyansk-Svatove line on August 28, and reportedly made limited localized advances on the frontline. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces seized two Ukrainian positions in the Synkivka-Petropavlivka area (9km northeast and 6km east of Kupyansk, respectively).[32] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces are continuing to clear positions near Synkivka and Petropavlivka, and are advancing in the Kupyansk direction.[33] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) similarly claimed that elements of the Russian Western Grouping of Forces seized an unspecified Ukrainian position in the Kupyansk direction.[34] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Russian forces are exerting pressure on Ukrainian forces near Synkivka and Petropavlivka, but observed that Russian forces are unlikely to break through Ukrainian defenses in the near term.[35] The milblogger added that swampy terrain and continuous minefields in the Kupyansk direction create serious problems for Russian advances in this area.[36] Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar reported that Russian forces are mining positions along Belgorod Oblast's border with Ukraine and are continuing to look for weak spots in Ukrainian defenses.[37] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Ilya Yevlash stated that 45,000 Russian personnel are currently operating in the Kupyansk direction.[38]

Russian forces continued to concentrate their offensive efforts on the Svatove-Kreminna line on August 28 but did not make any advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled a Russian attack on Novoyehorivka (15km southwest of Svatove).[39] Malyar noted that Russian forces are continuing unsuccessful offensive operations southwest of Kreminna, near Bilohorivka (13km south of Kreminna), in the Serebryanske forest area (south of Kreminna), and near Vesele (31km southwest of Kreminna).[40] Russian sources also claimed that Russian forces attacked near Bilohorivka, Novoyehorivka, and the Serebryanske forest area – with one Kremlin-affiliated milblogger specifying that Russian forces did not advance near Novoyehorivka.[41] The Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Russian forces are attacking Novoyehorivka and Bilohorivka to sever Ukrainian ground lines of communication (GLOCs) in Borova (35km west of Svatove) and Siversk (18km southwest of Kreminna), respectively.[42] Malyar stated that Russian forces are preparing to regroup forces in the Lyman direction (west of Kreminna) and are trying to use the most professional Russian Airborne (VDV) Assault units on the Luhansk Oblast frontline in order to draw Ukrainian forces from the Bakhmut direction.[43] Yevlash stated that 48,000 Russian personnel are currently operating in the Lyman direction, and Russian milbloggers reiterated Yevlash's report noting that there are 110,000 Russian troops along the entire Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna

frontline.[44] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger also indicated that elements of the BARS-12 (Russian Combat Reserve) unit are operating south of Kreminna in the Siversk salient.[45]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued counterattacks on the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on August 28, but did not regain new territory. The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Synkivka, Novoselivske (15km northwest of Svatove), and Kuzmyne (less than 3km southwest of Kreminna).[46]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of August 28, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- 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

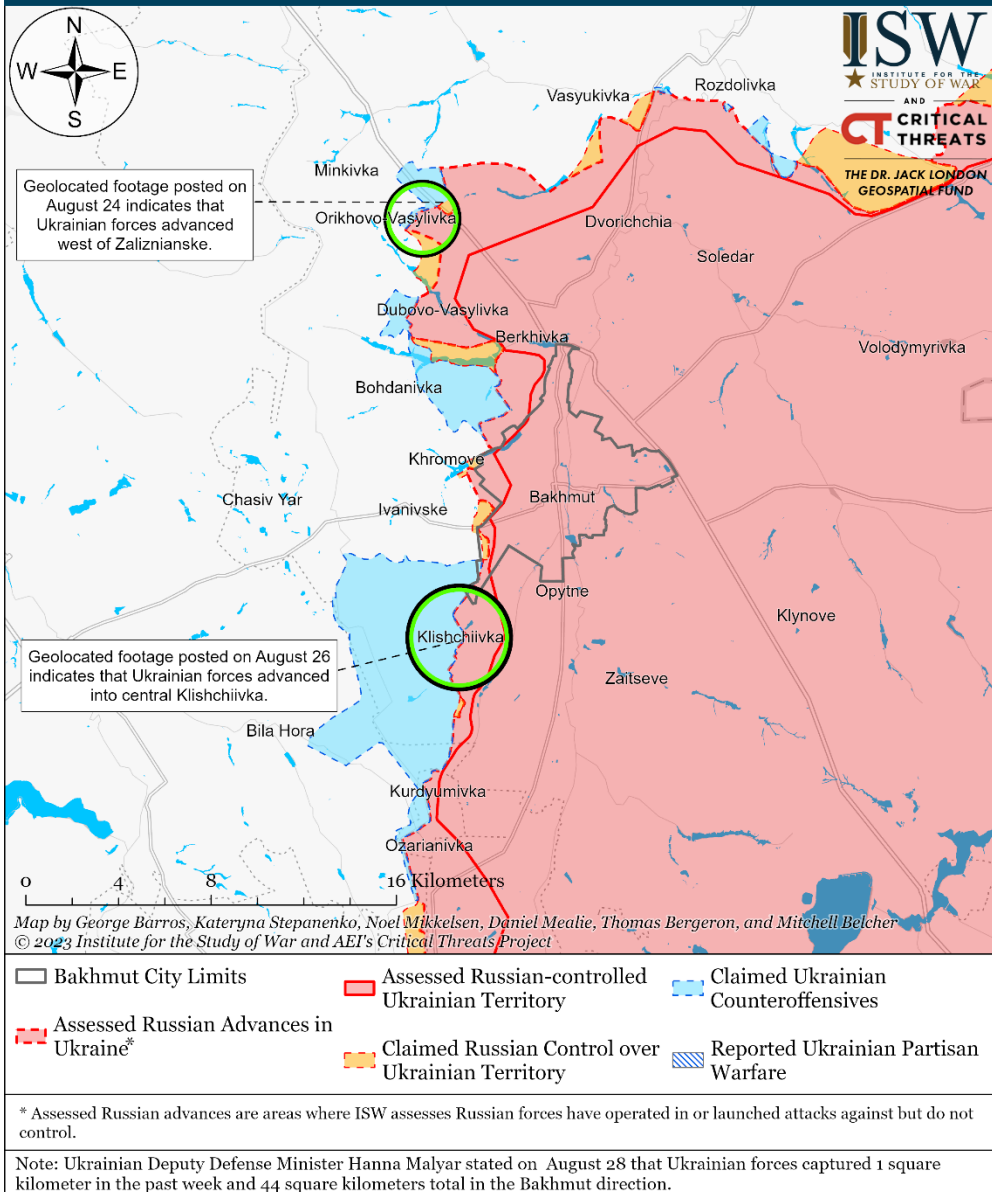
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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 advanced on August 28. Malyar reported that Ukrainian forces pushed Russian forces out of positions east of Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) and in the center of the settlement and are continuing to advance along Bakhmut’s southern flank.[47] Malyar also reported that Ukrainian forces are making unspecified progress near Orikhovo-Vasylivka (11km northwest of Bakhmut).[48] Malyar reported that Ukrainian forces have liberated a total of 44 square kilometers in the Bakhmut direction, including 1 square kilometer in the last week.[49] Russian sources, including the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Klishchiivka.[50] A Russian milblogger claimed on August 27 that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut), Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut), and Klishchiivka.[51]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut on August 28 and reportedly advanced. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Klishchiivka.[52] Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attempted to restore lost positions near Orikhovo-Vasylivka and Klishchiivka.[53] A Russian milblogger claimed on August 27 that Russian forces made unspecified gains near Berkhivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut) over the past week.[54] Russian sources claimed on August 27 and 28 that Russian forces counterattacked near Klishchiivka and conducted offensive operations near Orikhovo-Vasylivka.[55] A Russian source claimed that Russian forces attacked near Dubovo-Vasylivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut) and Ivanivske (6km west of Bakhmut).[56] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Ilya Yevlash reported that Russian forces are trying to restore lost positions in the Bakhmut direction, especially on the southern flank.[57] Yevlash stated that Russian forces are committing reserves without proper training to the Bakhmut area.[58] Yevlash added that Russian forces first commit convict personnel from various unspecified private military companies (PMCs) to conduct assaults without artillery support or heavy equipment, followed by better trained personnel with protection.[59]

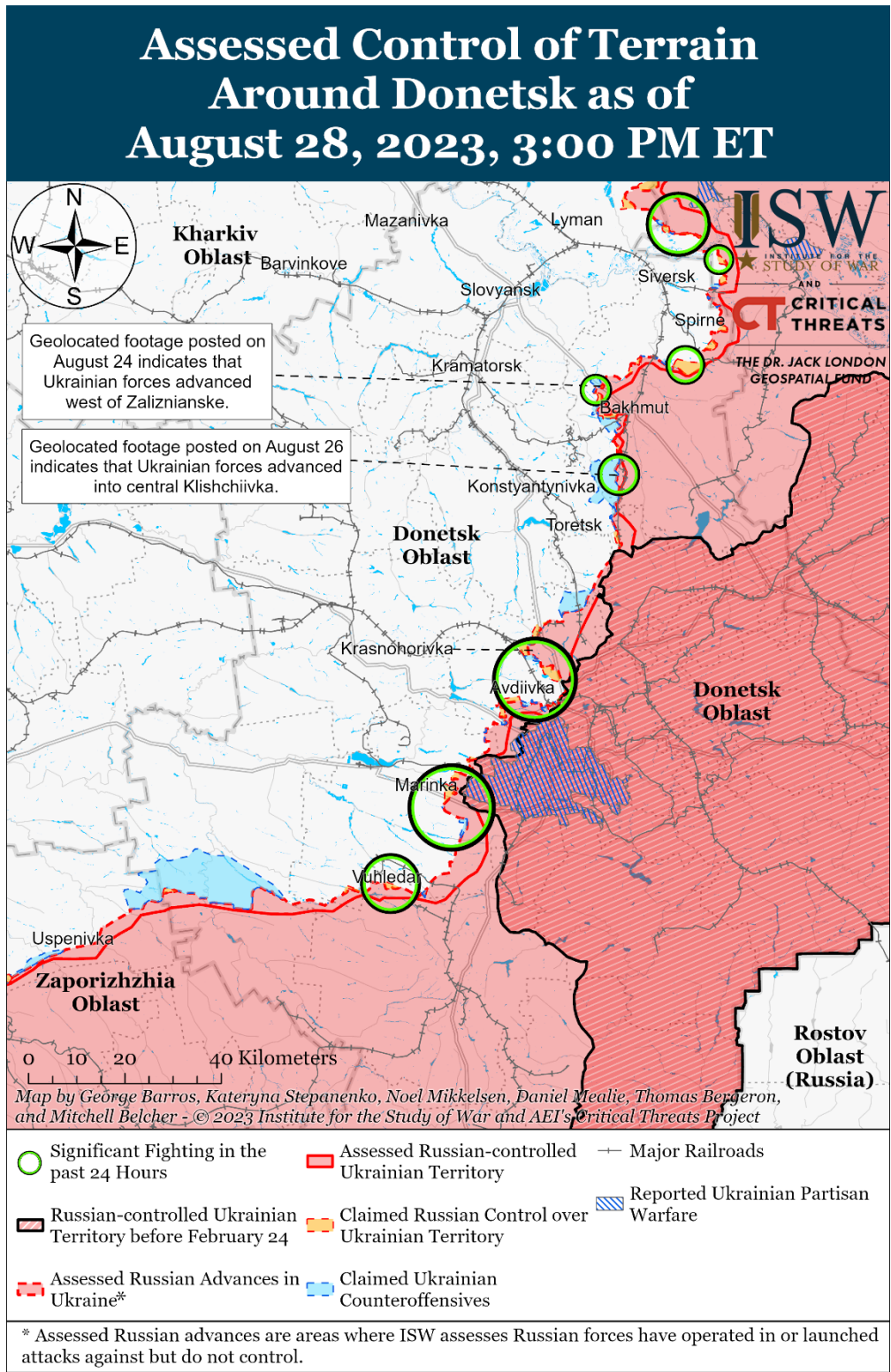
Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of August 28, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line near Krasnohorivka (either 8km northwest of Avdiivka or directly west of Donetsk City).[60]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line but did not make any claimed or confirmed gains on August 28. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Marinka (directly west of Donetsk City).[61] Malyar reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Stepove (8km northwest of Avdiivka), Avdiivka, Marinka, and Novomykhailivka (10km southwest of Donetsk City).[62] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces attacked in Marinka and near Stepove.[63] A Russian

milblogger claimed on August 27 that Russian forces are periodically attacking near Novomykhailivka and Avdiivka, but not nearly as intensely as a few months ago.[64]



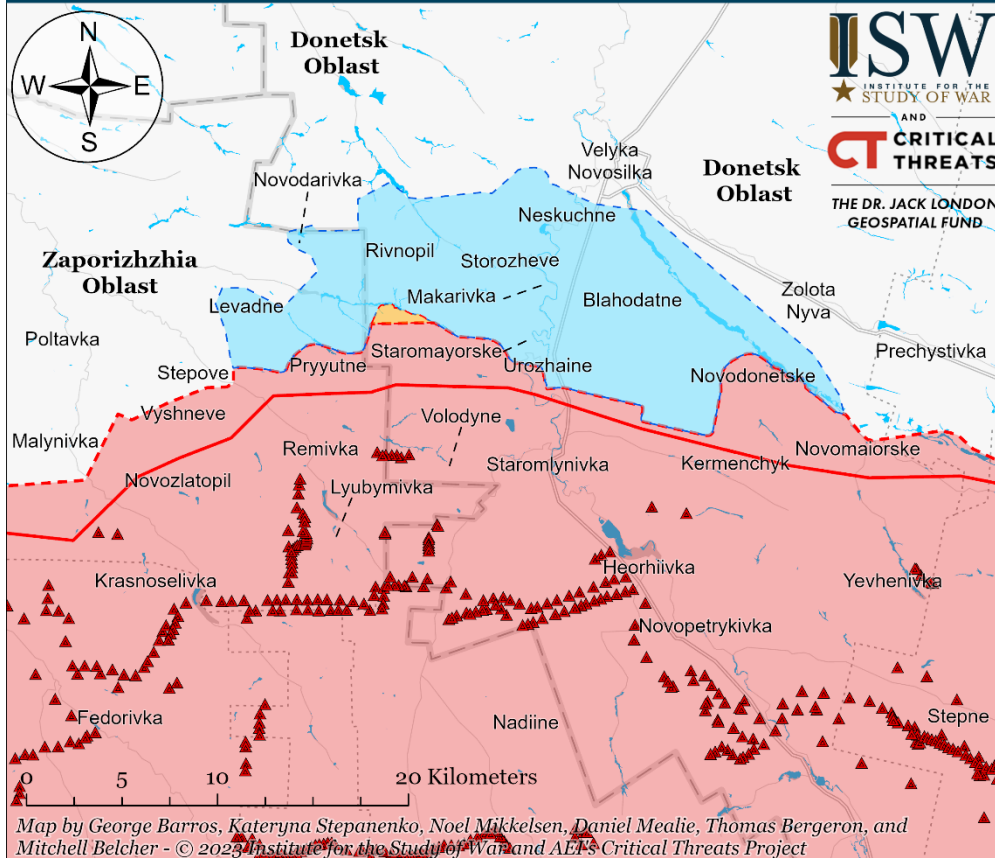
Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Geolocated footage published on August 27 indicates that Ukrainian forces recently made marginal gains north of Shevchenko (40km southwest of Donetsk City) in western Donetsk Oblast.[65]

Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar reported on August 28 that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Vuhledar (30km southwest of Donetsk City) in western Donetsk Oblast.[66]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued limited unsuccessful offensive operations along the administrative border between Donetsk and Zaporizhia oblasts on August 28. The Russian MoD claimed that elements of the Russian Eastern Grouping of Forces repelled two Ukrainian assaults near Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka).[67] Russian milbloggers claimed that the tempo of Ukrainian offensive operations in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area continues to decline.[68] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attempted to advance towards Pryyutne (15km southwest of Velyka Novosilka), Staromlynivka (14km south of Velyka Novosilka), and Kermenchyk (15km southeast of Velyka Novosilka) in the past week.[69] The milblogger expressed concern about the possibility of Ukrainian forces capturing positions near Kermenchyk, which he claimed serve an important role in the Russian defensive layer in the area.[70] Russian forces amplified footage showing elements of the Russian 394th Motorized Rifle Regiment (127th Motorized Rifle Division, 5th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) operating southwest of Velyka Novosilka.[71]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of August 28, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

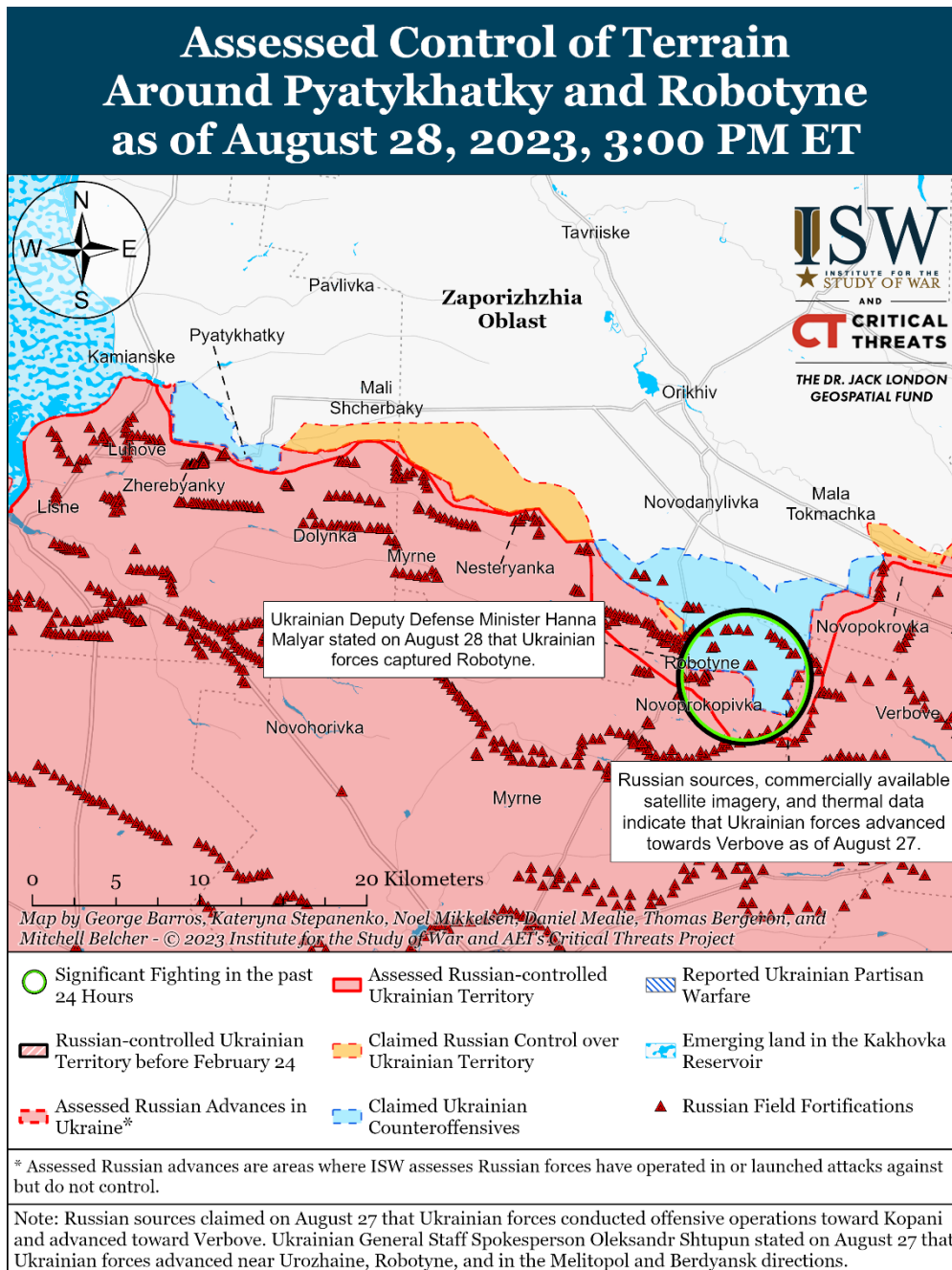
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
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- ▭ Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- ▭ Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- ▲ Russian Field Fortifications
- ▭ Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- ▭ Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives

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

Note: Ukrainian General Staff Spokesperson Oleksandr Shtupun stated on August 27 that Ukrainian forces advanced near Urozhaine, Robotyne, and in the Melitopol and Berdyansk directions.

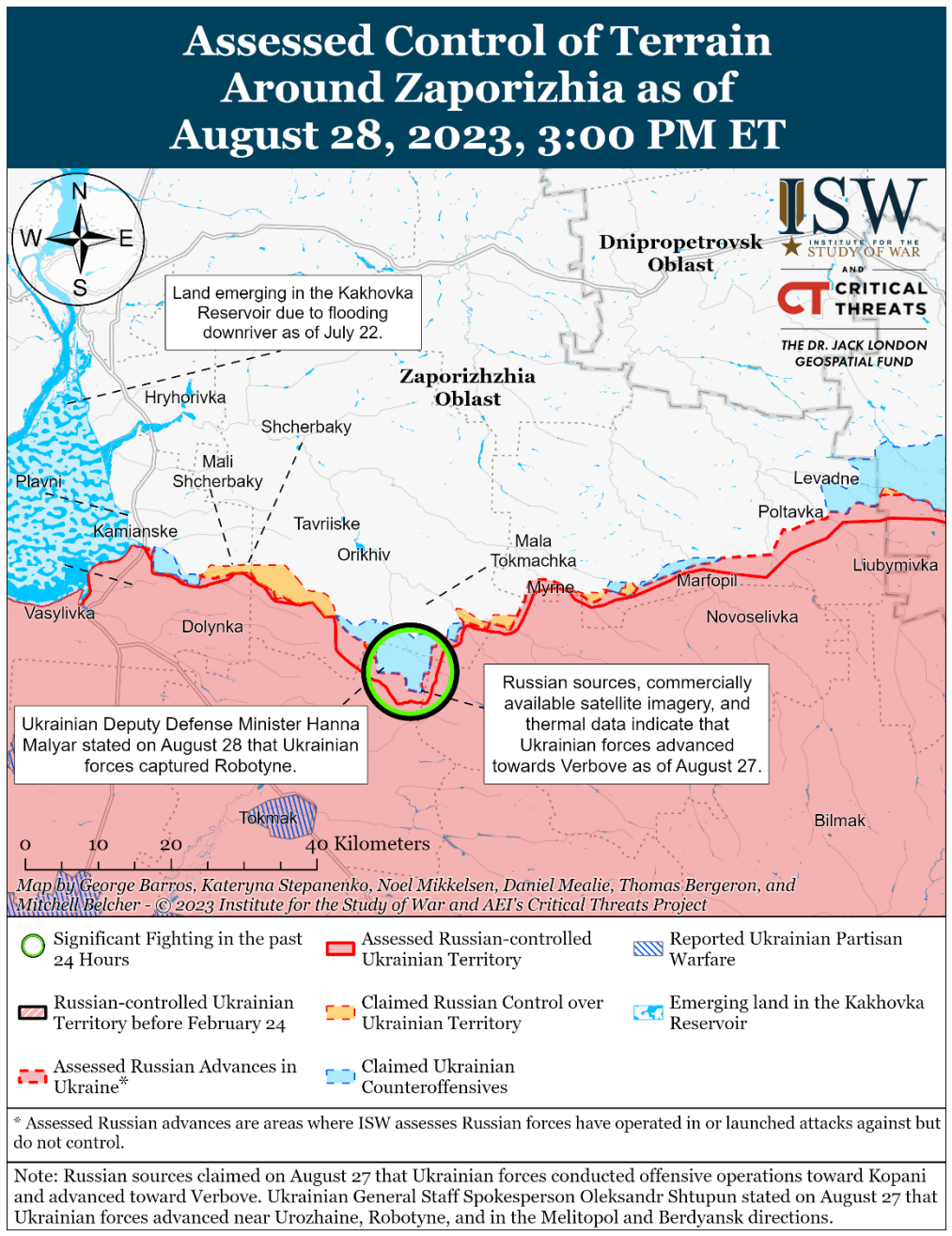
Malyar announced on August 28 that Ukrainian forces have liberated Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv) in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast.[72] Malyar stated that Ukrainian forces had liberated the settlement as a matter of fact during a television broadcast and not as a formal announcement, which Ukrainian officials have typically issued for previously liberated settlements.[73] Ukrainian officials may have meant for a video of Ukrainian forces raising a flag in Robotyne on August 23 to act as an announcement of the settlement's liberation.[74] Russian sources denied Malyar's announcement and continue to claim that Russian forces maintain positions on the southern outskirts of Robotyne.[75] Russian milbloggers claimed that fighting continues in Robotyne itself and in the

surrounding areas.[76]



Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on August 28 and likely made further advances. Malyar reported that Ukrainian forces achieved unspecified success in the direction southeast of Robotyne and south of Mala Tokmachka (7km southeast of Orikhiv) and are advancing in the direction of Novodanylivka (4km south of Orikhiv), Novopokropivka (15km south of Orikhiv), Mala Tokmachka, and Ocheretuvate (25km southwest of Orikhiv).[77] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced in the direction of Verbove (18km southwest of Orikhiv), with one milblogger claiming that the frontline is less than four kilometers away from the settlement in an unspecified area west of Verbove.[78] NASA's FIRMS/VIIRS sensors show a large number of heat

anomalies next to a segment of Russian anti-tank trenches to the west of Verbove on August 27, suggesting that Ukrainian forces may be attempting to breach the Russian defensive positions there.[79] The heat anomalies and Russian reports of Ukrainian advances likely indicate that Russian forces do not control territory west of this segment of anti-tank ditches. A Russian milblogger expressed concern about the vulnerability of Russian positions along the Robotyne-Verbove line in the event of further Ukrainian advances through Russian defensive positions near Verbove.[80] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that reports of Ukrainian breakthroughs closer to Novoprokopivka are false.[81]



The Russian MoD and Crimean occupation head Sergei Aksyonov claimed on August 28 that Russian

air defense shot down two Ukrainian drones over Crimea.[82] The Russian MoD and other Russian sources also claimed that Russian air defense shot down a Ukrainian cruise missile off the coast of Crimea.[83]



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

Russian lawmakers and the Russian information space expressed varied opinions about a proposed Russian State Duma bill that would deprive individuals of their acquired Russian citizenship for evading military registration and mobilization. State Duma Deputy Mikhail Matveev announced on August 28 that he submitted the bill, and Russian opposition outlet *Verstka* observed that none of Matveev's individually authored bills have ever reached a second reading.[84] An unnamed source in the State Duma told *Verstka* that neither the State Duma leadership nor the Russian Federation Council supported the bill. A source in the Federation Council called revoking acquired citizenship a "too serious threat" to Russian citizens with acquired citizenship because it could deter people from wanting Russian citizenship and because citizenship is "sacred." [85] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that stricter administrative measures would not solve all the problems of migration to Russia and advocated for migrants to join construction formations to build barracks and training grounds, lay roads, and construct dragon's teeth fortifications.[86] The milblogger claimed that the Russian military is already ineffective in properly integrating convicts into its combat elements and that adding migrants into Russian armed formations would further complicate unit cohesion.[87]

A Russian BARS (Russian Combat Reserve) political officer stated that BARS units lack specialists and young personnel. A political officer for the BARS-13 detachment claimed in an interview published on August 26 that the average age of BARS personnel is 45 years old and that about 30 percent of BARS personnel do not have any prior military experience.[88]

Military registration and enlistment offices are unlikely to complete the previously announced intended digitization of military registers by the next conscription cycle in October. *Verstka* reported that many military registration and enlistment offices continue to use paper documents and have not yet configured new computers or installed new software on existing computers to facilitate the digitalization process.[89]

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

The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported on August 28 that Ukrainian partisans caused an explosion at the barracks of a Chechen "Akhmat-1" Rosgvardia riot police (OMON) unit in Enerhodar, occupied Zaporizhia Oblast.[90] The GUR reported that the explosion injured Rosgvardia personnel and damaged vehicles.[91] Russian sources claimed that a Ukrainian drone struck a building of the Enerhodar civil-military occupation administration.[92]

Russian occupation authorities are likely attempting to boost voter turnout in the September regional elections by allowing residents of Russian-occupied Zaporizhia, Kherson, Donetsk, and Luhansk oblasts to vote at polling stations in occupied Crimea. The Kherson Oblast occupation administration announced on August 28 the establishment of 15 extraterritorial polling stations in occupied Crimea.[93]

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 United Kingdom Ministry of Defense (UK MoD) reported that Russia has likely canceled the “Zapad-2023” joint strategic exercise scheduled for September.[94] The UK MoD stated that Russia likely canceled the exercise because the Russian military lacks equipment and troops due to their use in the war in Ukraine and because the Kremlin is concerned about domestic criticism of military exercises during wartime.[95] Russia may still conduct exercises under the “Zapad-2023” title but at a much smaller scale. Ukrainian intelligence previously reported in winter 2023 that Russia and Belarus were planning to conduct major joint strategic exercises Zapad-2023 and Union Shield-2023 with Belarusian forces and that Russia would deploy personnel to Belarus for these exercises.[96]

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://armyinform.com dot ua/2023/08/28/nashi-vijska-prosuvayutsya-na-pivdni-ganna-malyar/> ; <https://armyinform.com dot ua/2023/08/28/zsu-zvilnyly-robotyne-na-pivdennomu-fronti-ganna-malyar/>; <https://t.me/militarymediacenter/2973> ; <https://t.me/annamaliar/1042>

[2] <https://twitter.com/georgewbarros/status/1696222619224129977>; <https://t.me/wargonzo/14641> ; <https://t.me/rybar/51240> ; <https://t.me/rybar/51224>

[3] <https://t.me/annamaliar/1042>

[4] <https://armyinform.com dot ua/2023/08/28/nashi-vijska-prosuvayutsya-na-pivdni-ganna-malyar/>

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