

# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, August 4, 2023

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August 4, 2023, 6:05 pm 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 cutoff for this product was 1:00pm ET on August 4. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the August 5 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

**Ukrainian forces conducted a series of aerial and naval drone strikes against Russian logistics and port infrastructure in occupied Crimea and Krasnodar Krai (a key Russian naval base) on the night of August 3 to 4.** The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian air defenses and electronic warfare units downed up to 13 Ukrainian drones targeting Crimea.[1] Geolocated footage published on August 4 shows Ukrainian drones striking areas near an oil depot in Feodosia, Crimea, although it is unclear whether the drone strikes damaged Russian targets.[2] Geolocated footage published on August 3 and 4 shows Russian forces firing on Ukrainian naval drones near a Russian naval base in Novorossiysk, Krasnodar Krai, and one of the naval drones striking the Russian *Olenegorsky Gornyyak* Ropucha-class landing ship.[3] The Russian MoD stated that Russian naval artillery fire destroyed two Ukrainian naval drones near the base in Novorossiysk.[4] Geolocated footage posted later on August 4 shows the *Olenegorsky Gornyyak* listing and a Russian support vessel towing the landing ship to the Novorossiysk port.[5] Geolocated footage does not indicate the full extent of the damage to the *Olenegorsky Gornyyak*, and Russian sources claimed that the damage was not critical and that the ship would be operational after an unspecified time of repair.[6] Russian sources claimed that the Russian navy used the landing ship to transport civilian vehicles across the Kerch Strait amidst widespread disruptions to traffic across the Kerch Strait bridge.[7]

**Russian milbloggers characteristically lambasted the Russian MoD for lying about the naval drone strikes and called on the Russian military to escalate activities in the Black Sea.** Russian milbloggers criticized the Russian MoD for originally claiming that the Russian forces had intercepted all drone strikes instead of admitting that the strikes damaged the *Olenegorsky Gornyyak* landing ship.[8] Russian milbloggers criticized the MoD for previously lying about destroying the Ukrainian drone assembly facilities and claimed that Russian forces must cut Ukraine's access to the Black Sea in order to prevent naval drone attacks from civilian ships.[9] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russia needs to create a full-fledged monitoring system for the Black Sea to detect Ukrainian boats, as other tactics like striking Ukrainian port infrastructure have not prevented attacks in the sea.[10] Some Russian milbloggers argued that the Russian MoD lacks a

cohesive information policy, which creates conditions for public outcry in the Russian information space after every Russian military failure.[11]

**Ukrainian forces conducted counteroffensive operations on at least three sectors of the front on August 4.** The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Berdyansk (Zaporizhia-Donetsk Oblast border area) and Melitopol (western Zaporizhia Oblast) directions.[12] Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar stated that Ukrainian forces continue to advance on the southern flank of Bakhmut.[13] Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Spokesperson Vadym Skibitskyi stated that the most important elements of the Ukrainian counteroffensive are unexpectedness and accuracy, not speed.[14] Skibitskyi noted that Ukrainian actions are aimed at cutting off Russian supply routes, destroying Russian stores of weapons and military equipment, and winning counterbattery battles.[15] Pentagon Press Secretary Air Force Brigadier General Pat Ryder stated that Ukraine independently decides when and where to employ its significant combat capabilities.[16]

**The Kremlin continues to express its unwillingness to return to the Black Sea Grain Initiative in the absence of extensive concessions from the West.** The Kremlin released a joint statement on August 4 following Russian President Vladimir Putin’s July 28 meeting with African leaders regarding their newly formally named African Peace Initiative.[17] The document stated that the African leaders called for concrete steps to remove obstacles to the export of Russian grain and fertilizers, and the release and delivery of 200,000 tons of Russian fertilizer stuck in European ports to African countries. These calls suggest that the African leaders support Russia’s conditions for revitalizing the Black Sea Grain Initiative.[18] US Secretary of State Antony Blinken stated on August 4 that the United States would continue to do “whatever is necessary” to ensure that Russia can freely export food on the global market if Russia would be willing to revive the Black Sea Grain Initiative and allow Ukraine to export grain safely through the Black Sea.[19] Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov responded to Blinken’s statement by claiming that as soon as the United States fulfills Russia’s conditions, “the deal will immediately be resumed.”[20] These statements give no clear indication that Russia intends to rejoin the Black Sea Grain Initiative and seeks to coerce the West to end limitations on its own exports.

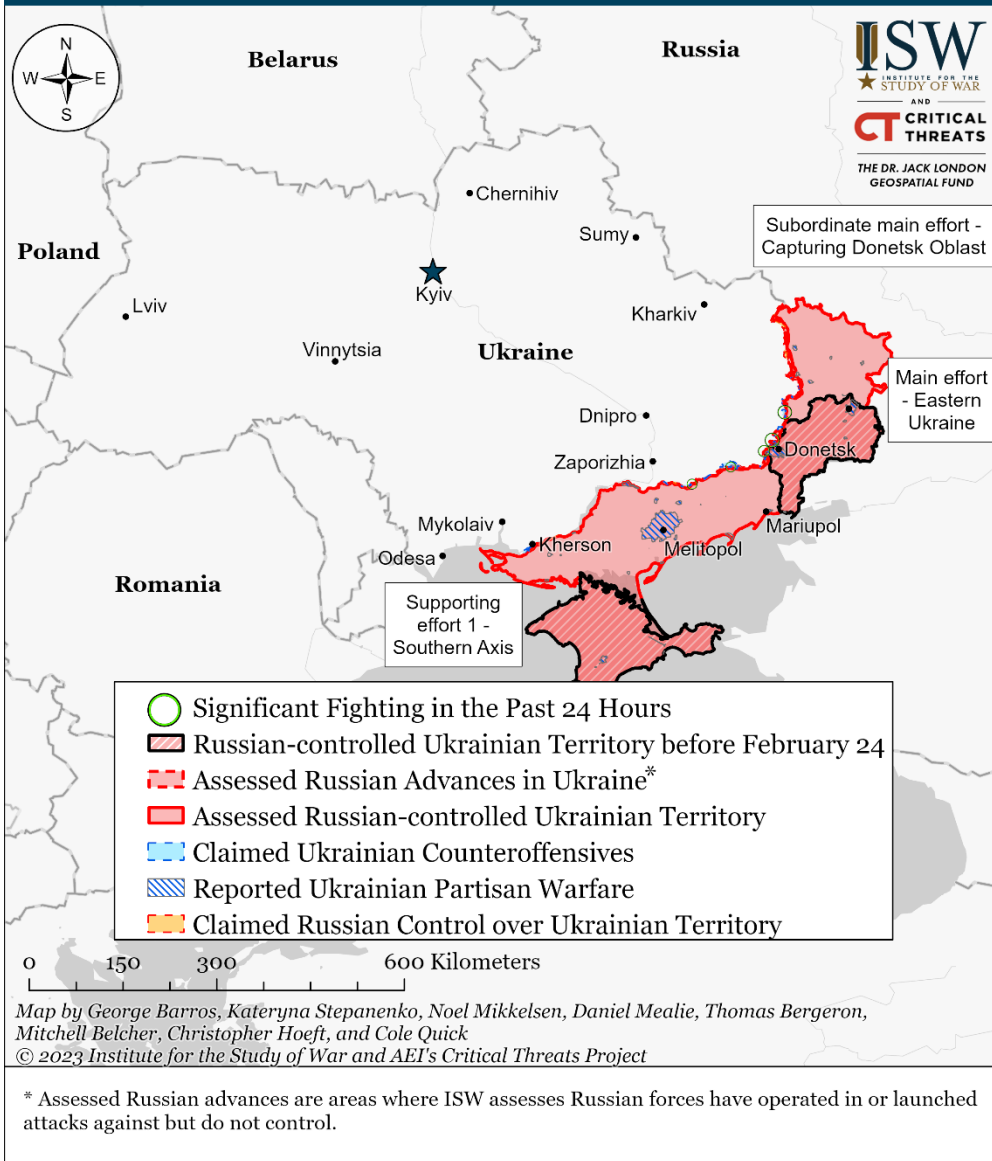
**Tula Oblast Governor Alexei Dyumin reportedly facilitated the reinstatement of the commander of the Russian 106th Guards Airborne (VDV) Division, Major General Vladimir Seliverstov, after meeting Putin’s Chief of Staff Anton Vaino on July 21.**[21] Russian sources previously claimed on July 14 that the Russian military command dismissed Seliverstov for unknown reasons, but speculated that his removal could have been due to his reputation for speaking up on behalf of his forces.[22] ISW assessed on July 15 that Seliverstov’s claimed dismissal may have been a part of an ongoing purge of insubordinate commanders.[23] An unnamed source told a Russian Telegram channel (reportedly affiliated with the Russian security forces) that Dyumin bypassed the Russian MoD to reinstate Seliverstov via Vaino and the Russian Presidential Administration.[24] The source added that Dyumin’s decision to bypass the military chain of command has already sparked conflicts between the Russian Presidential Administration and Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu, and that Dyumin is attempting to displace Shoigu from his position. Dyumin reportedly attempted to intervene in Seliverstov’s firing during his visit to Moscow on July 14 but was unsuccessful in reversing the dismissal at that time.[25]

While ISW cannot independently confirm these reports, if true, Dyumin likely advocated for Seliverstov in opposition to Shoigu or Chief of the Russian General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov or may have simply supported Seliverstov because the 106th VDV Division is headquartered in Tula Oblast. Vaino holds one of the most influential positions within Russian President Vladimir Putin's circle and has reportedly served as an intermediary between Putin and figures such as Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin.[26] Dyumin's successful meeting with Vaino, if true, indicates that select members of the Russian Presidential Administration are able to overrule and undermine decisions made by the MoD. ISW continues to assess that the Kremlin's chronic disregard for the Russian chain of command is likely hindering Shoigu and Gerasimov in their attempts to suppress insubordination and establish full control over the Russian military in Ukraine.[27]

### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Ukrainian forces conducted a series of aerial and naval drone strikes against Russian logistics and port infrastructure in occupied Crimea and Krasnodar Krai (a key Russian naval base) on the night of August 3 to 4.**
- **Russian milbloggers characteristically lambasted the Russian MoD for lying about the naval drone strikes and called on the Russian military to escalate activities in the Black Sea.**
- **Ukrainian forces conducted counteroffensive operations on at least three sectors of front on August 4.**
- **The Kremlin continues to express its unwillingness to return to the Black Sea Grain Initiative in the absence of extensive concessions from the West.**
- **Tula Oblast Governor Alexei Dyumin reportedly facilitated the reinstatement of the commander of the Russian 106th Guards Airborne (VDV) Division, Major General Vladimir Seliverstov, after meeting Putin's Chief of Staff Anton Vaino on July 21.**
- **Ukrainian forces conducted counteroffensive operations on at least three sectors of front on August 4.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, in the Zaporizhia-Donetsk Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on August 4 and made advances in certain areas.**
- **A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that China's "temporary" export restrictions on drones may severely impact the ability of Russian volunteers to supply drones to Russian servicemen fighting in Ukraine.**
- **Russian authorities are continuing to deport Ukrainian children to Russia under the guise of summer camps.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of August 4, 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 claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove line but did not advance on August 4. The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked Russian forces near Novoselivske (14km northwest of Svatove) and Novovodyane (15km south of Svatove).[28] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked Russian forces in the direction of Karmazynivka (13km southwest of Svatove) on August 3.[29]

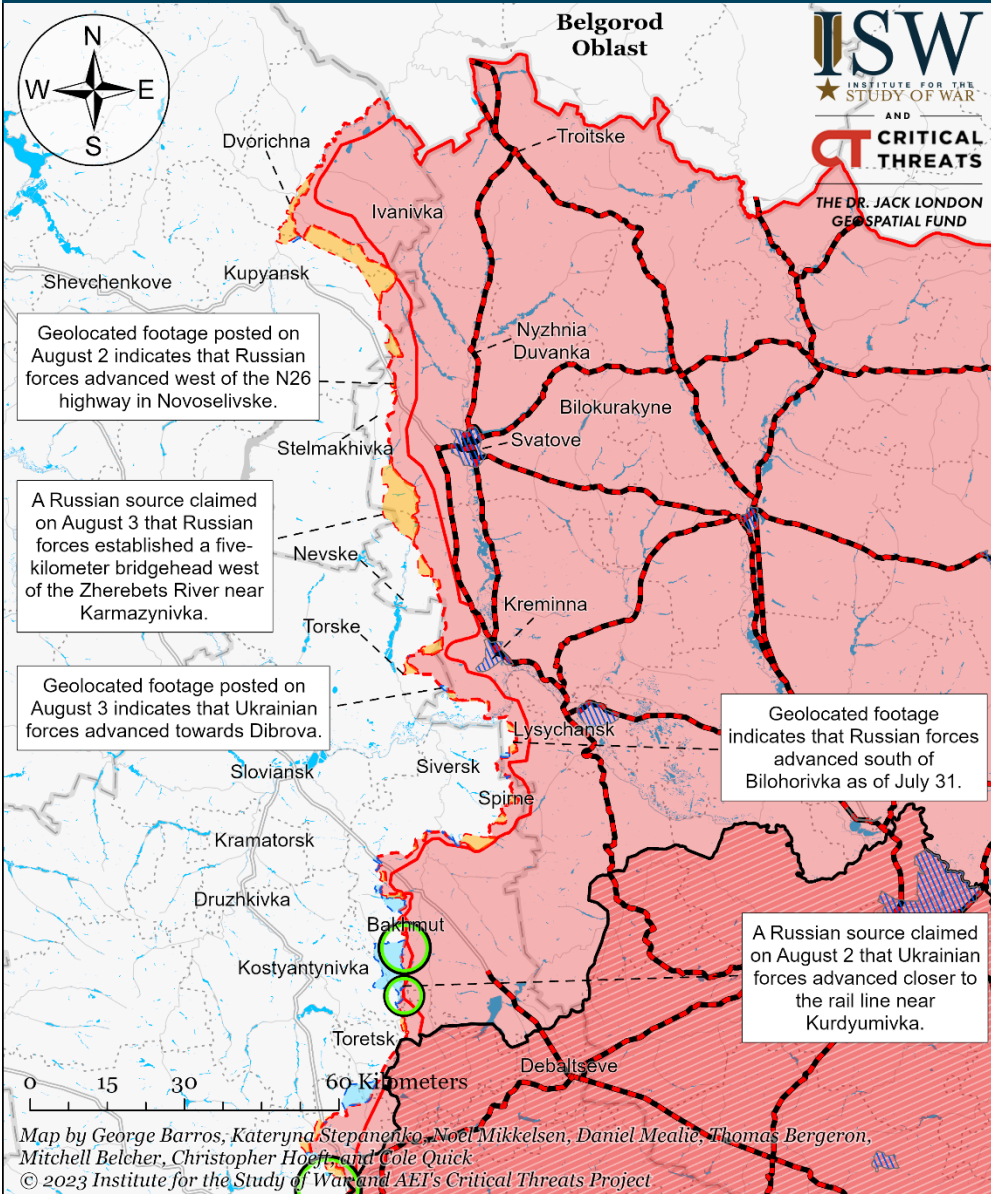
Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove line on August 4 and reportedly advanced. Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar reported that Russian forces have intensified offensive operations in the Kupyansk, Lyman, and Svatove directions and that Ukrainian forces have repelled all Russian attacks in these areas.[30] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced near Novoselivske along the N-26 (Svatove-Kupyansk) highway.[31] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces continue to advance north of Kupyansk and towards the Oskil River, which runs west of Svatove, on August 3.[32] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian assault detachments of the Western Grouping of Forces conducted offensive operations in the Kupyansk direction on August 4.[33] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces conducted offensive operations in the forest area near Novoselivske and that Russian assault detachments broke through Ukrainian defensive lines north of the settlement on August 3.[34]

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations near Kreminna but did not advance on August 4. A Russian military official claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near the Serebryanske forest area (10km southwest of Kreminna).[35] The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked Russian forces near Bilohorivka (12km southwest of Kreminna), Spirne (25km south of Kreminna), and Vesele (30km southwest of Kreminna) and that Russian elements of the Central Grouping of Forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Kreminna.[36]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Kreminna on August 4 and reportedly advanced. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced and reached the eastern outskirts of Bilohorivka, Luhansk Oblast, and the Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces took more advantageous positions near the settlement.[37] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces conducted offensive operations south and southeast of Dibrova (5km southwest of Kreminna) on August 3.[38] Another milblogger claimed that Russian forces conducted offensive operations in forest areas near Kreminna and advanced in the forested area south of Dibrova on August 3.[39]

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu visited the forward command post of the Russian Central Grouping of Forces in the Lyman direction on August 4.<sup>[40]</sup> Shoigu met with Central Military District (CMD) Commander Lieutenant General Andrey Mordvichev, who also commands the Central Grouping of Forces.<sup>[41]</sup> Russian President Vladimir Putin praised Mordvichev for his successes in Ukraine during a press conference on July 29, likely referring to recent unverified Russian claims of extensive Russian advances southwest of Svatove.<sup>[42]</sup> Shoigu likely visited the forward command post to portray himself as an involved manager of the Russian war effort in Ukraine. The recent public promotions of Mordvichev as a successful commander may indicate that the CMD commander has a greater portion of the Russian military leadership's favor than other military district commanders.

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of August 4, 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.

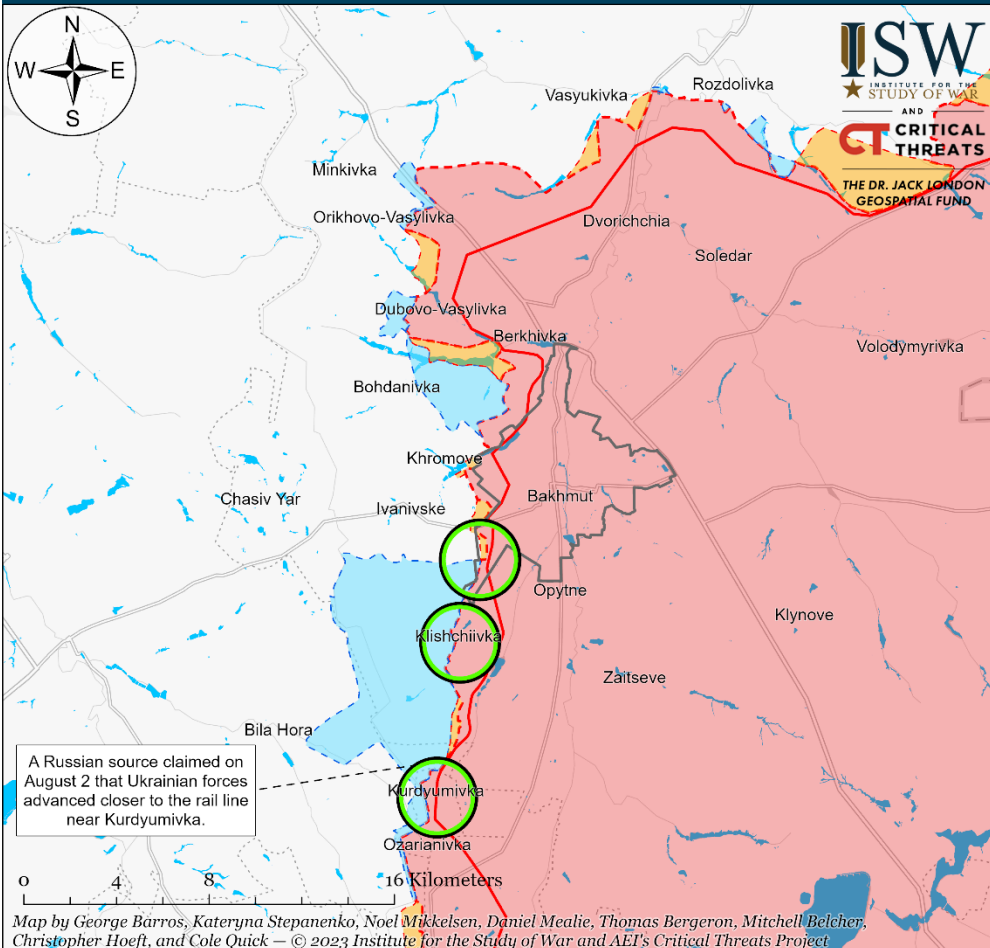
Note: A Russian source claimed on July 31 that Russian forces advanced to the shoreline of the Oskil River.

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

Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations around Bakhmut but have not made confirmed territorial gains as of August 4. Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar stated that Ukrainian forces are continuing to advance on Bakhmut’s southern flank through dense Russian artillery fire and mining.[43] Russian milbloggers claimed that the situation on the Bakhmut frontline did not change as of August 4 and that fighting is ongoing near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) and the Berkhivka reservoir (6km northwest of Bakhmut).[44] One Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces advance by 20 meters per day near Klishchivka during constant assaults and that the southern part of the settlement is under Ukrainian control.[45] Another Russian milblogger claimed that small Ukrainian groups hold positions on the outskirts of Klishchiivka and are not attacking Russian positions in the area.[46] The milblogger claimed that Russian forces repelled minor Ukrainian attacks on the frontline near Kurdyumivka (12km southwest of Bakhmut) and that Russian forces maintain their control over Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut). A Russian source also claimed that the situation in Bakhmut is “more dangerous than it seems” for Russian forces due to Ukrainian strategies and advances on Bakhmut’s northern and southern flanks.[47]



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



A Russian source claimed on August 2 that Ukrainian forces advanced closer to the rail line near Kurdyumivka.

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

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

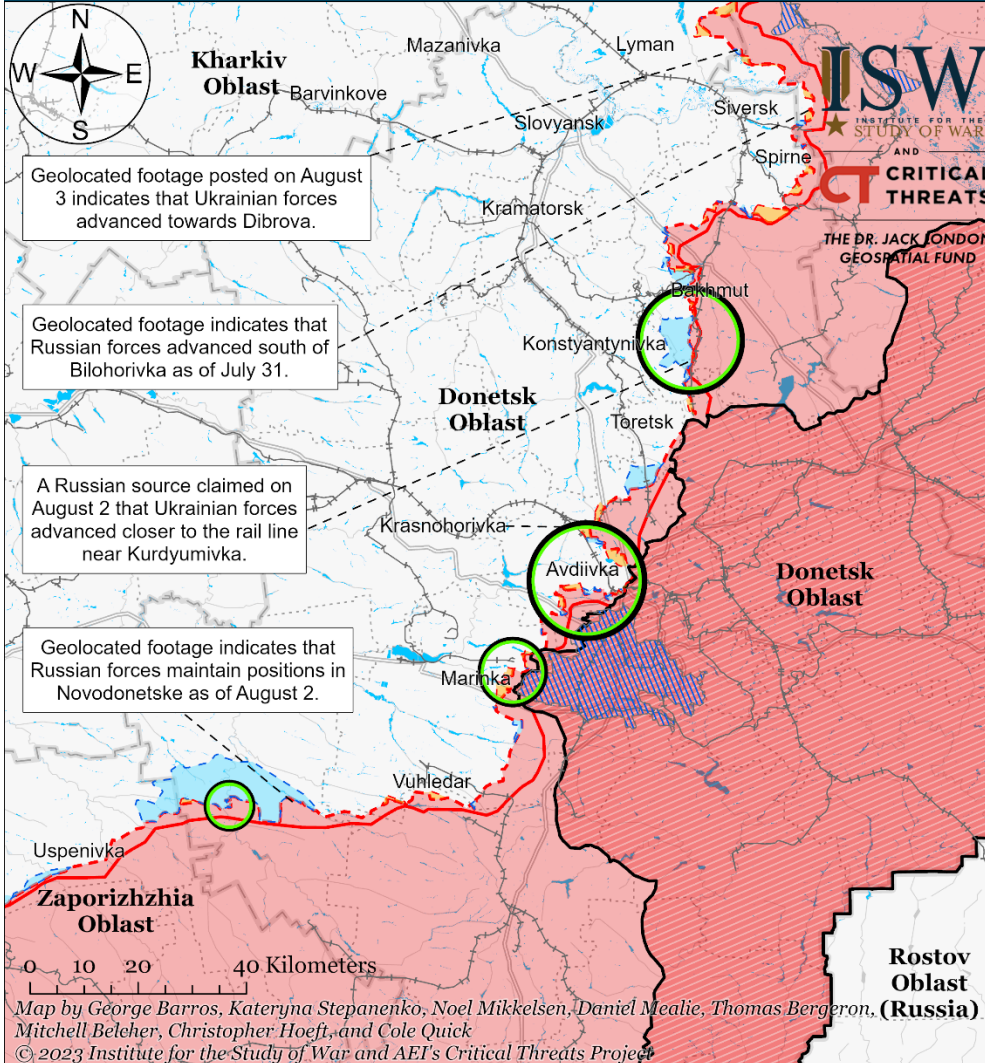
\* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: A Russian source claimed on August 4 that Ukrainian forces advance 20 meters daily near Klishchiivka. Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Serhiy Cherevaty stated on August 3 that Ukrainian forces advance over 100 meters daily on Bakhmut's southern flank. Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar reported on August 1 that Ukrainian forces captured two square kilometers over the past week in the Bakhmut direction for a total of 37 square kilometers.

Russian forces continued to counterattack but did not seize new or previously lost positions around Bakhmut on August 4. Malyar stated that Russian forces are unsuccessfully counterattacking Ukrainian positions on Bakhmut's northern flank in hopes of regaining lost positions in the area.[48] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces restrained Russian forces from advancing south and southeast of Ivanivske (5km southwest of Bakhmut), and near Klishchiivka and Kurdyumivka.[49] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Russian forces counterattacked near Kurdyumivka, Andriivka, and Klishchiivka.[50] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian

forces maintained their previously occupied positions northwest and southwest of Bakhmut.<sup>[51]</sup> A milblogger claimed that artillery and drone elements of the 150th Motorized Rifle Division (8th Guards Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) targeted Ukrainian forces as part of the battles near Bakhmut.<sup>[52]</sup> ISW has previously observed elements of the 150th Motorized Rifle Division largely operating on the Donetsk City line, but it is not clear if some elements deployed to or are operating in the Bakhmut direction.<sup>[53]</sup>

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of August 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
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- + Major Railroads
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

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

Note: A Russian source claimed on August 4 that Ukrainian forces advance 20 meters daily near Klishchiivka. Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Serhiy Cherevaty stated on August 3 that Ukrainian forces advance over 100 meters daily on Bakhmut's southern flank. Russian sources claimed on August 1 and 2 that Russian forces control the surrounding heights of Staromayorske. Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar reported on August 1 that Ukrainian forces captured two square kilometers over the past week in the Bakhmut direction for a total of 37 square kilometers.

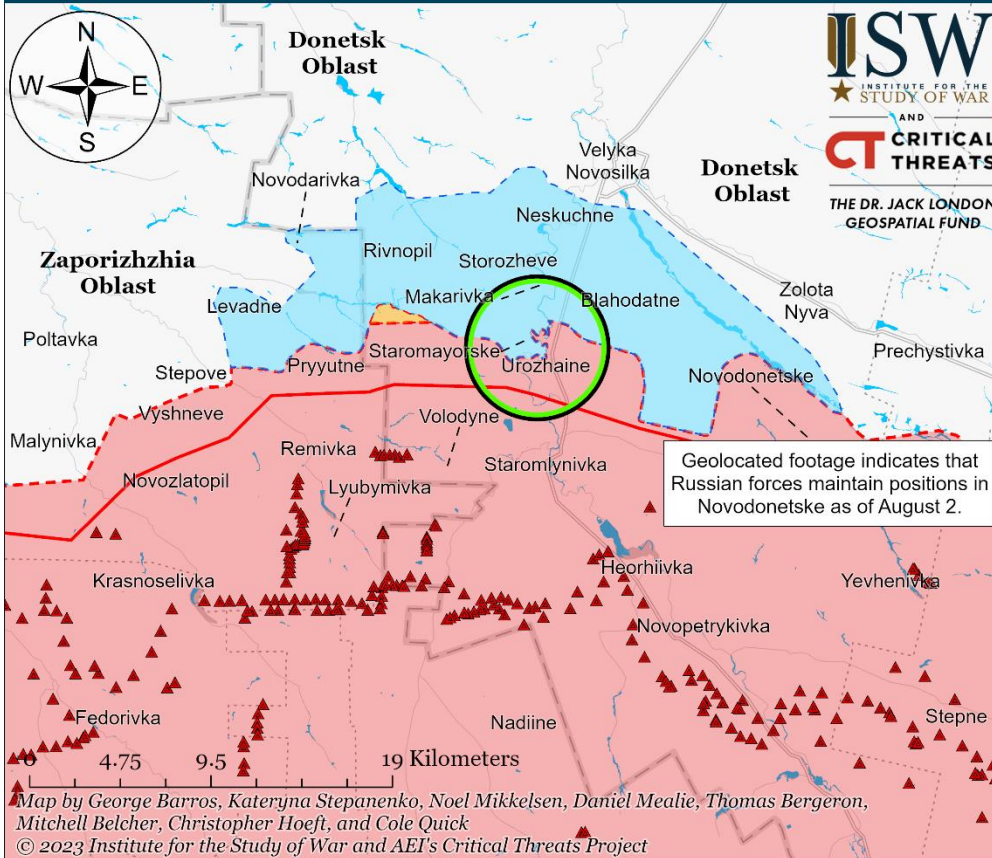
Russian forces continued to unsuccessfully attack Ukrainian positions on the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line but have not advanced as of August 4. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks north and southeast of Avdiivka, southeast of Pervomaiske (10km west of Avdiivka), and near Marinka (22km southwest of Donetsk City).[54]

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

A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted limited ground attacks in western Donetsk Oblast on August 4 and did not advance. The milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked Russian positions near Mykilske (27km southwest of Donetsk City) but that Russian forces held their positions.[55]

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations along the administrative border between Zaporizhia and Donetsk oblasts on August 4 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continue offensive operations in the Berdyansk (Zaporizhia-Donetsk Oblast border area) direction.[56] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful assaults near Urozhaine (9km south of Velyka Novosilka).[57] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are not present in Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka), although another milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced further into the settlement on August 3.[58] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian units near Staromayorske retreated to a fortified area near Staromlynivka (15km south of Velyka Novosilka) due to Ukrainian counteroffensive operations.[59] Russian sources reported that Ukrainian forces are consistently targeting Russian rear areas along the administrative border between Zaporizhia and Donetsk oblasts, and a Russian milblogger added that Ukrainian artillery and MLRS fire is complicating Russian logistics in the area.[60]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of August 4, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



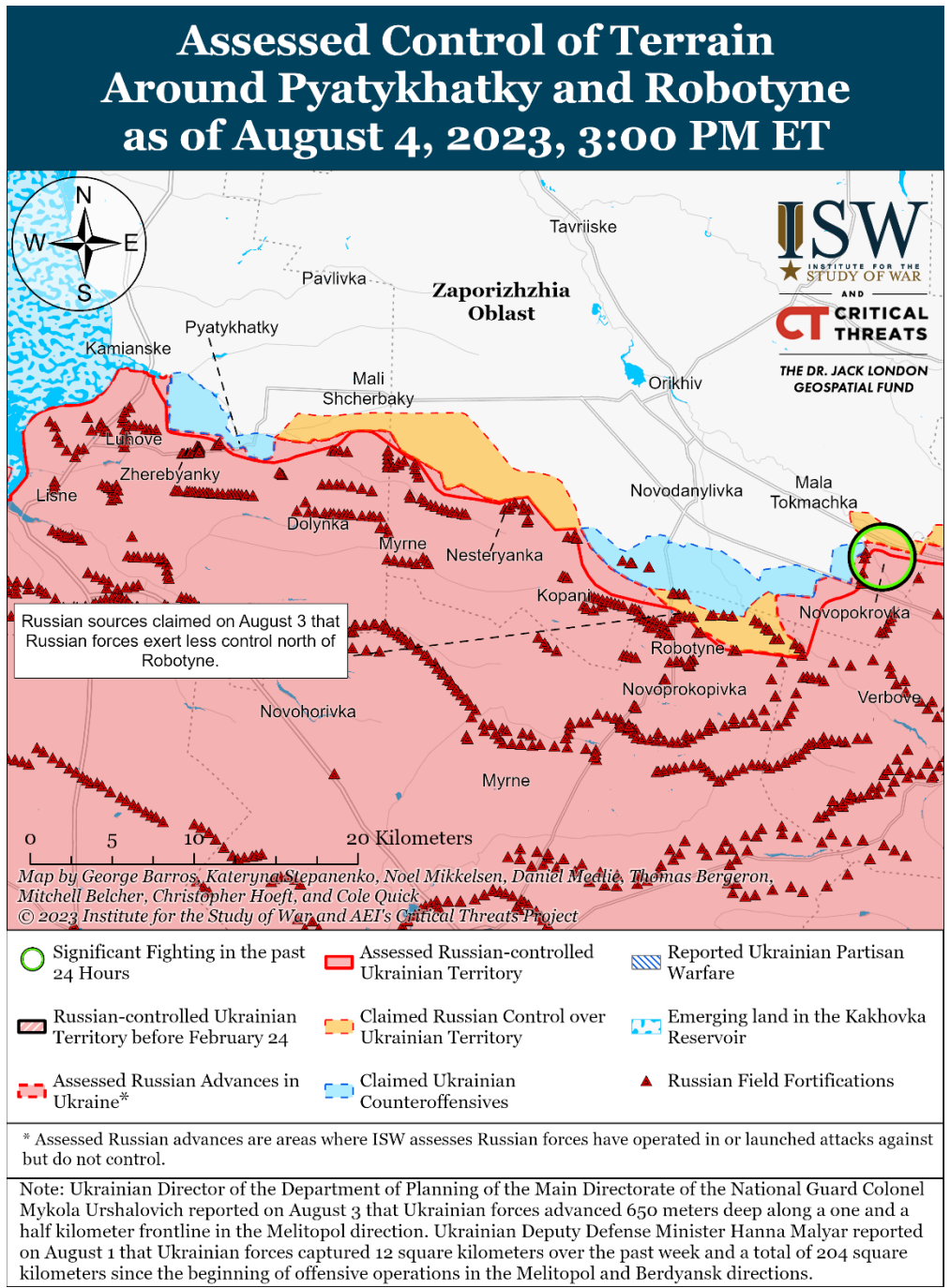
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- ▲ Russian Field Fortifications
- Assessed Russian Advances 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: Russian sources claimed on August 1 and 2 that Russian forces control the surrounding heights of Staromayorske. Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar reported on August 1 that Ukrainian forces captured 12 square kilometers over the past week for a total of 204 square kilometers since the start of Ukrainian offensive operations in southern Ukraine.

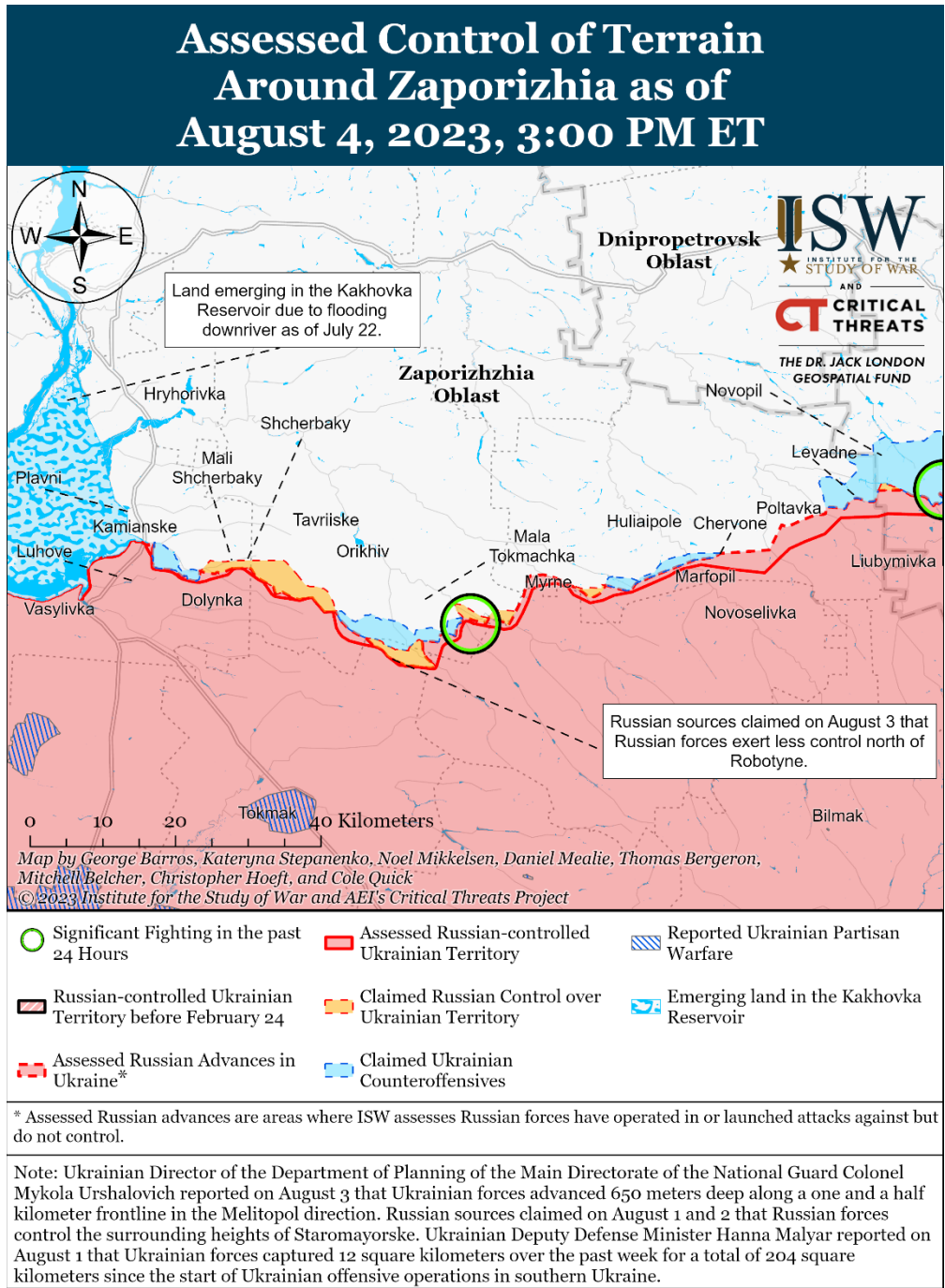
Russian forces conducted limited unsuccessful counterattacks in the Zaporizhzhia-Donetsk Oblast border area on August 4. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attempts to regain lost positions west of Staromayorske, east of Urozhaine, and in the direction of Blahodatne (4km south of Velyka Novosilka).[61] The Russian MoD claimed that elements of the Russian Eastern Grouping of Forces continued offensive operations near Staromayorske and improved their tactical positions in the area.[62] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are conducting rotations in the Zaporizhzhia-Donetsk Oblast border area, although

Russian forces are likely conducting a tactical rotation in place with another unit of the same formation rather than rotating fresh units into the area due to the lack of Russian reserves.[63]



Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on August 4 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continue offensive operations in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhzhia Oblast) direction.[64] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian assault near Robotyne (12km south of Orikhiv).[65] Russian milbloggers described Ukrainian offensive activity near Robotyne as limited

and claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted assaults without armored vehicle support.[66] Russian sources noted that the tempo of Ukrainian counteroffensive operations in the Orikhiv direction continued to decline for the third day in a row.[67] One milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced east of Robotyne in the direction of Verbove (18km southeast of Orikhiv) on August 3, although ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim.[68]



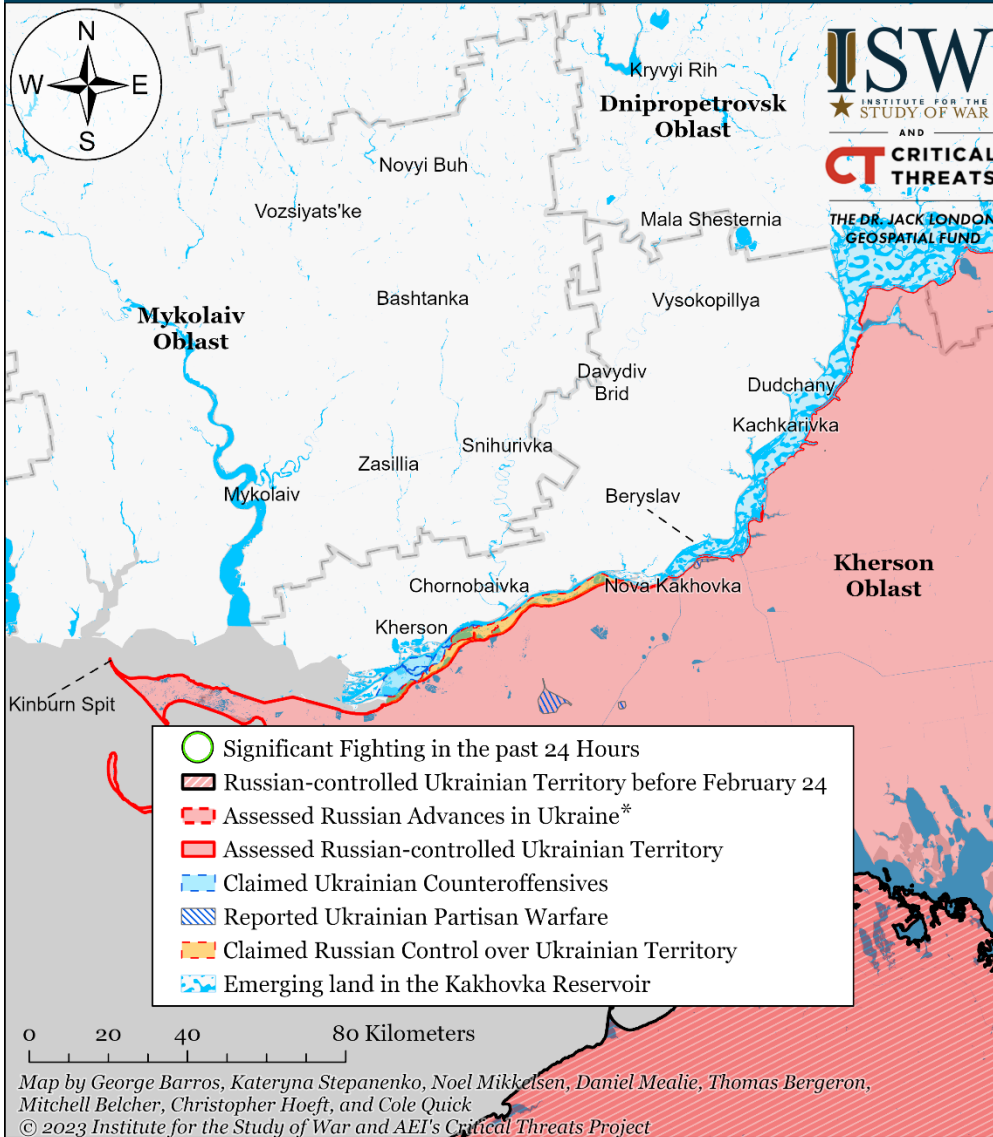
Russian forces counterattacked in western Zaporizhia Oblast on August 4 but did not advance. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful assaults near Novopokrovka (13km southeast of Orikhiv).[69]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued to target rear Russian areas in Zaporizhia Oblast on August 4. Zaporizhia Oblast occupation officials claimed that Russian air defenses shot down up to five Ukrainian drones near Berdyansk.[70]

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director Rafael Grossi stated on August 4 that IAEA experts found no mines on the roofs of two reactor buildings at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP).[71] Ukrainian officials previously stated that Russian forces placed explosives on the outer roofs of reactor buildings three and four, but Russian officials prevented IAEA officials from accessing the roofs for several weeks.[72]



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of August 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.

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

A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that China’s “temporary” export restrictions on drones may severely impact the ability of Russian volunteers to supply drones to Russian servicemen fighting in Ukraine.[73] Chinese authorities announced on July 31 that “temporary” export restrictions primarily regulating drones and drone-related equipment with ‘dual-use” capabilities will take effect on September 1.[74]

The Russian government has reportedly doubled its defense budget for 2023, due to the increasing costs of the war in Ukraine. *Reuters* reportedly obtained a Russian government document showing that Russia’s original 2023 defense budget was 4.98 trillion rubles (\$54 billion) and that the Russian government has recently doubled its 2023 defense budget to 9.54 trillion rubles (\$100 billion).[75] *Reuters* reported that the Russian government spent 5.59 trillion rubles (\$58.4 billion) during the first six months of 2023, almost 600 billion rubles (\$6.27 billion) more than it originally budgeted for the entire year.[76]

Chairman of the Russian State Duma Defense Committee Andrey Kartapolov stated that the Duma will consider a law proposing punishments for mobilization evasion in the fall of 2023. The law reportedly proposes for Russian officials to charge mobilization evaders with up to five years in prison or a fine of up to 500,000 rubles (\$5,200).[77] Kartapolov stated that the law was drafted when partial mobilization was underway in 2022 and that the Russian government is not planning another mobilization wave.[78]

Russian President Vladimir Putin signed three laws related to force generation and mobilization on August 4. Putin signed laws that raise the maximum conscription age to 30, prohibit conscripts who have been served conscription notices from leaving Russia, and allow Rosgvardia to use heavy military equipment.[79] ISW has previously reported on these laws and their potential ramifications.[80]

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

Russian authorities are continuing to deport Ukrainian children to Russia under the guise of summer camps. The Kherson Oblast Occupation Administration announced that the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology sent a group of children from Kherson Oblast to the “Zasechnaya Druzhyna” camp in Kaluga Oblast, Russia.[81] ISW has previously reported on similar deportation schemes.[82]

Russian authorities are continuing passportization efforts in occupied territories of Ukraine. The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported that Russian authorities are stopping, searching, and interrogating non-Russian passport holders at checkpoints in occupied territories of Ukraine.[83] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces at the ZNPP are forcing employees to obtain Russian passports and are destroying their Ukrainian passports.[84]

Russian occupation authorities continue to develop patronage systems with Russian federal subjects to build infrastructure in occupied areas. The Kherson Oblast Occupation Administration stated that the Russian Republic of Mordovia helped fund the construction of social infrastructure in the

occupied territories of Kherson Oblast.[85] A representative of the Republic of Mordovia visited a construction site in occupied Kherson Oblast on August 3.[86]

**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).**

**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.**

Nothing significant to report.

**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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[1] [https://t.me/mod\\_russia/28934](https://t.me/mod_russia/28934)

[2] <https://twitter.com/Tendar/status/1687317193984520192?s=20>; <https://twitter.com/neonhandrail/status/1687348905451905025?s=20> ;  
<https://twitter.com/neonhandrail/status/1687350247448883201?s=20>;  
<https://twitter.com/Misfit4Ukr68491/status/1687288143991693312?s=20>;  
<https://t.me/operativnoZSU/108501>

[3] <https://twitter.com/Dmojavensis/status/1687372380174422016?s=20>; <https://twitter.com/mhmck/status/1687365686597709824?s=20> ; <https://twitter.com/neonhandrail/status/1687336862443241472?s=20>; <https://t.me/feodosiyachat/58768>; <https://t.me/astrapress/34335>

[4] [https://t.me/mod\\_russia/28933](https://t.me/mod_russia/28933)

[5] <https://twitter.com/praisethesteph/status/1687352288250052608?s=20>;  
<https://twitter.com/praisethesteph/status/1687352288250052608?s=20>;  
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