

# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, July 5, 2023

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July 5, 2023, 8:25 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.

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**Note: The data cutoff for this product was 1:30pm ET on July 5. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the July 6 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.**

**Ukrainian forces reportedly conducted counteroffensive operations in five sectors of the front on July 5 and made gains in some areas.** Geolocated footage posted on July 5 shows that Ukrainian forces have advanced southwest of Berkhivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut), west of Yahidne (2km north of Bakhmut), and southwest of Bakhmut.[1] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations south and north of Bakhmut, and Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar stated that Ukrainian forces are advancing in an unspecified area on Bakhmut's southern flank.[2] Ukrainian MP Yuriy Mysyagin stated that Ukrainian forces established a new position north of Opytne (6km northwest of the outskirts of Donetsk City) along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City front.[3] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted assaults in the Lyman direction, the Bakhmut direction, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City front, on the border between Zaporizhia and Donetsk oblasts, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast.[4] Ukrainian Deputy Chief of the Main Operational Department of the General Staff General Oleksii Hromov reported on July 5 that Ukrainian forces have advanced 7.5km into Russian-controlled territory in western Zaporizhia Oblast and along the administrative border between the Zaporizhia and Donetsk oblasts.[5] Hromov stated that Ukrainian forces have liberated nine settlements and 160 square kilometers of territory since the start of the Ukrainian counteroffensive on June 4.[6]

**Ukrainian forces reportedly conducted a series of missile strikes targeting Russian rear positions along the entire front overnight and during the day on July 5.** Geolocated footage published on July 4 indicates that Ukrainian forces struck an ammunition depot in Makiivka, Donetsk Oblast (6km northeast of Donetsk City).[7] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces struck a Russian fuel and lubricants depot in Makiivka and that Ukrainian forces are regularly launching missile strikes against rear Russian targets in Ukraine.[8] Geolocated images published on July 5 also show apparent Ukrainian strikes on Russian positions near Debaltseve (52km northeast of Donetsk City).[9] Geolocated footage published on July 5 also shows the aftermath of an alleged Ukrainian strike on a railway station in Yasynuvata (6km northeast of Donetsk City).[10] Geolocated images published on July 5 shows the aftermath of an alleged HIMARS rocket strike on a Russian occupation administration building in Volnovakha, Donetsk Oblast (35km southwest of Donetsk

City).[11] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces struck Russian positions near Yakymivka (16km southwest of Melitopol) and attempted to strike Berdyansk in Zaporizhia Oblast with Storm Shadow Cruise missiles.[12] Russian sources claimed that Russian air defense systems shot down a Ukrainian missile in the vicinity of Berdyansk.[13] A local Kherson Oblast Telegram channel also claimed that Russian air defenses were activated near Skadovsk, Kherson Oblast (60km southeast of Kherson City).[14]

The footage and claims of these Ukrainian strikes suggest that Ukrainian forces launched a coordinated series of strikes aimed at degrading Russian logistics and ground lines of communication (GLOCs) throughout the theater. United Kingdom Chief of the Defense Staff Admiral Sir Antony David Radakin stated on July 4 that Ukrainian forces are conducting an operation to “starve, stretch, and strike” Russian forces to break down Russian defensive lines.[15] A widespread strike series targeting Russian GLOCs and logistics would be an appropriate element of such a strategy and is partially reminiscent of the interdiction campaign that Ukrainian forces conducted as a part of the Kherson counteroffensive.[16] ISW previously assessed that Ukrainian forces appear to be focusing on creating an asymmetrical attrition gradient that conserves Ukrainian manpower at the cost of a slower rate of territorial gains, while gradually wearing down Russian manpower and equipment.[17] A possible Ukrainian interdiction campaign supporting this effort would have cumulative effects, and its results would not be immediately evident.

**Ukrainian and Russian officials maintained their heightened rhetoric regarding the situation at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) on July 5 following significant claims of a possible attack against the plant overnight on July 4-5.[18] Russia likely continues setting informational conditions for a possible false flag attack against the ZNPP but remains unlikely to cause a radiological incident at this time.** Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar stated that Russia may attack the ZNPP to either accomplish its military goals in the area — presumably deterring any possible Ukrainian counteroffensive near the Kakhovka Reservoir — or to intimidate and blame Ukrainian forces for any attacks against the ZNPP.[19] Ukrainian Deputy Chief of the General Staff’s Main Operational Department, Oleksii Hromov stated that the situation at the ZNPP is not new and that Ukrainian forces have the necessary equipment to handle radiological incidents.[20] Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov claimed that there is a “great threat” that Ukraine may sabotage the ZNPP with “catastrophic consequences.”[21] ISW continues to assess that Russian statements accusing Ukraine of imminent sabotage against the ZNPP are likely part of a broader information operation aimed at undermining support for Ukraine ahead of the upcoming NATO summit and dissuading Ukrainian forces from counteroffensive operations in Zaporizhia Oblast.[22]

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi stated on July 5 that IAEA experts at the ZNPP have requested access to nuclear reactors no. 3 and 4 and other areas at the ZNPP following Ukrainian statements that Russian forces placed explosives on the reactors’ outer roofs.[23] Grossi’s statement on the importance of accessing certain areas of the ZNPP — along with consistent prior statements to the same effect — indicates that Russian authorities are denying the IAEA contingent access to various critical areas at the ZNPP and are unlikely to allow access in the future.[24] Russian authorities may refuse access to reactors no 3. and 4 to prevent the IAEA from investigating the Ukrainian reports on these reactors. Satellite imagery published on July 5 shows unknown objects on the roofs of one of the ZNPP reactor containment units, reportedly reactor no. 4, placed there after July 3.[25] Though the exact nature of these objects is unknown, their presence on

the reactor containment unit roof, recent Ukrainian reports, and significant alarm over the ZNPP underscore the importance of Russia's refusal to give the IAEA access to critical ZNPP areas to investigate possible threats to the plant.

**Ukrainian officials reported that Russia continues to procure Iranian-made Shahed drones and is setting conditions to manufacture these drones in Russia with Iran's assistance.** Ukrainian Deputy Chief of the Main Operational Department of the General Staff General Oleksii Hromov stated that Russia received up to 1,800 drones from Iran - of which 1,600 are of the Shahed-type and 200 of unspecified types.[26] Hromov added that Iran consistently replenishes Russian stocks of Iranian drones, and that Russia reached an agreement with Iran to produce drones in the Republic of Tatarstan. The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported that Russian and Iranian officials are planning to set up the production of Iranian Shahed drones on the territory of Yelabuga in the Republic of Tatarstan given that this settlement is the provisional headquarters of the Yelabuga Free Economic Zone.[27] Russia previously used Yelabuga Free Economic Zone exclusively for civilian industrial and economic projects before turning the project into a key focus of Russia's military industry. The Resistance Center reported that Iran will provide Russia with necessary components that will then be assembled in Russia. The Resistance Center, citing open-source intelligence, reported that Russian leadership intends to train Yelabuga specialists in Iran to assemble Shaheds and transfer the production of some Shahed components to the territory of the Yelabuga Free Economic Zone. The Resistance Center added that Russia wants to establish an automated production line.

**The Kremlin continues to show concern over the risk of a potential armed rebellion in Russia after Wagner Group's rebellion on June 24.** A pro-Kremlin online outlet reported that the Moscow Oblast police will train in urban combat tactics, light machine gun shooting, grenade throwing, and tactical medicine to improve skills in the aftermath of Wagner's armed rebellion.[28] Such training indicates that the Kremlin is attempting to improve the ability of security forces in Moscow to defend the regime against potential future threats. Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs is unlikely to adequately prepare the Moscow Oblast police for urban combat given that some police elements are already expressing disinterest with the new training plans among many other problems with this plan. The outlet stated that Moscow Oblast's female police officers are also trying to avoid the training.

**The Financial Times (FT) reported that Chinese President Xi Jinping personally warned Russian President Vladimir Putin against threatening to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine during his visit to Moscow in late March.**[29] FT reported, citing unnamed former Chinese government officials, that Xi told Putin not to use nuclear weapons and noted that China's stance against the use of nuclear weapons was included in its position paper on peace in Ukraine. FT reported that Xi's warning to Putin was likely part of China's efforts to bolster its relationships with the European Union. Western security officials also noted that Putin was disappointed after Xi's visit to Moscow did not secure any important gains for Russia such as the approval of the Power of Siberia-2 pipeline. ISW previously assessed that Xi may have played a role in pressuring the Kremlin to reduce its nuclear threats in November 2022 and that Putin was unable to secure the desired no-limits bilateral partnership with China during Xi's visit to Moscow.[30]

**Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin dismissed Sergei Mikhailov from his position as General Director of TASS state newswire and replaced him with Andrey Kondrashov.**[31] Mikhailov took over TASS in 2012 and rebranded the news agency into the modern publication it is today.[32] Kondrashov has previously made documentaries about the annexation of Crimea and Putin's life and was the press secretary for Putin's campaign headquarters in 2018.[33] Ukrainian sources suggested that Kondrashov's appointment might indicate that the Kremlin is unhappy with the media coverage of the Wagner Group's armed rebellion and highlights the continued importance of loyalty to Putin over professional achievement.[34]

### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Ukrainian forces reportedly conducted counteroffensive operations in five sectors of the front on July 5 and made gains in some areas.**
- **Ukrainian forces reportedly conducted a series of missile strikes targeting Russian rear positions along the entire front overnight and during the day on July 5.**
- **Ukrainian and Russian officials maintained their heightened rhetoric regarding the situation at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) on July 5 following significant claims of a possible attack against the plant overnight on July 4-5.[35] Russia likely continues setting informational conditions for a possible false flag attack against the ZNPP, but remains unlikely to cause a radiological incident at this time.**
- **Ukrainian officials reported that Russia continues to procure Iranian-made Shahed drones and is setting conditions to manufacture these drones in Russia with Iran's assistance.**
- **The Kremlin continues to show concern over the risk of a potential armed rebellion in Russia after Wagner Group's rebellion on June 24.**
- ***The Financial Times (FT)* reported that Chinese President Xi Jinping personally warned Russian President Vladimir Putin against threatening to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine during his visit to Moscow in late March.**
- **Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin dismissed Sergei Mikhailov from his position as General Director of TASS state newswire and replaced him with Andrey Kondrashov.**
- **Russian forces continued offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove line, and Russian and Ukrainian forces continued skirmishing around Kreminka.**
- **Ukrainian forces conducted successful offensive operations in the Bakhmut area, and Russian milbloggers reported that Ukrainian forces liberated an important height near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut).**
- **Russian and Ukrainian forces continued ground attacks along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line.**
- **Ukrainian forces continued ground attacks in the western Donetsk Oblast-eastern Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area and in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast.**
- **A Ukrainian official confirmed that Ukrainian forces maintain positions in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast.**

- Ukrainian officials reported that Russia’s hybrid cryptomobilization and contract service recruitment campaigns have failed to produce large numbers of recruits, contrary to Russian claims.
- Russian officials are setting information conditions to postpone regional elections in occupied Ukraine likely out of concerns for successful Ukrainian counteroffensives.



***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

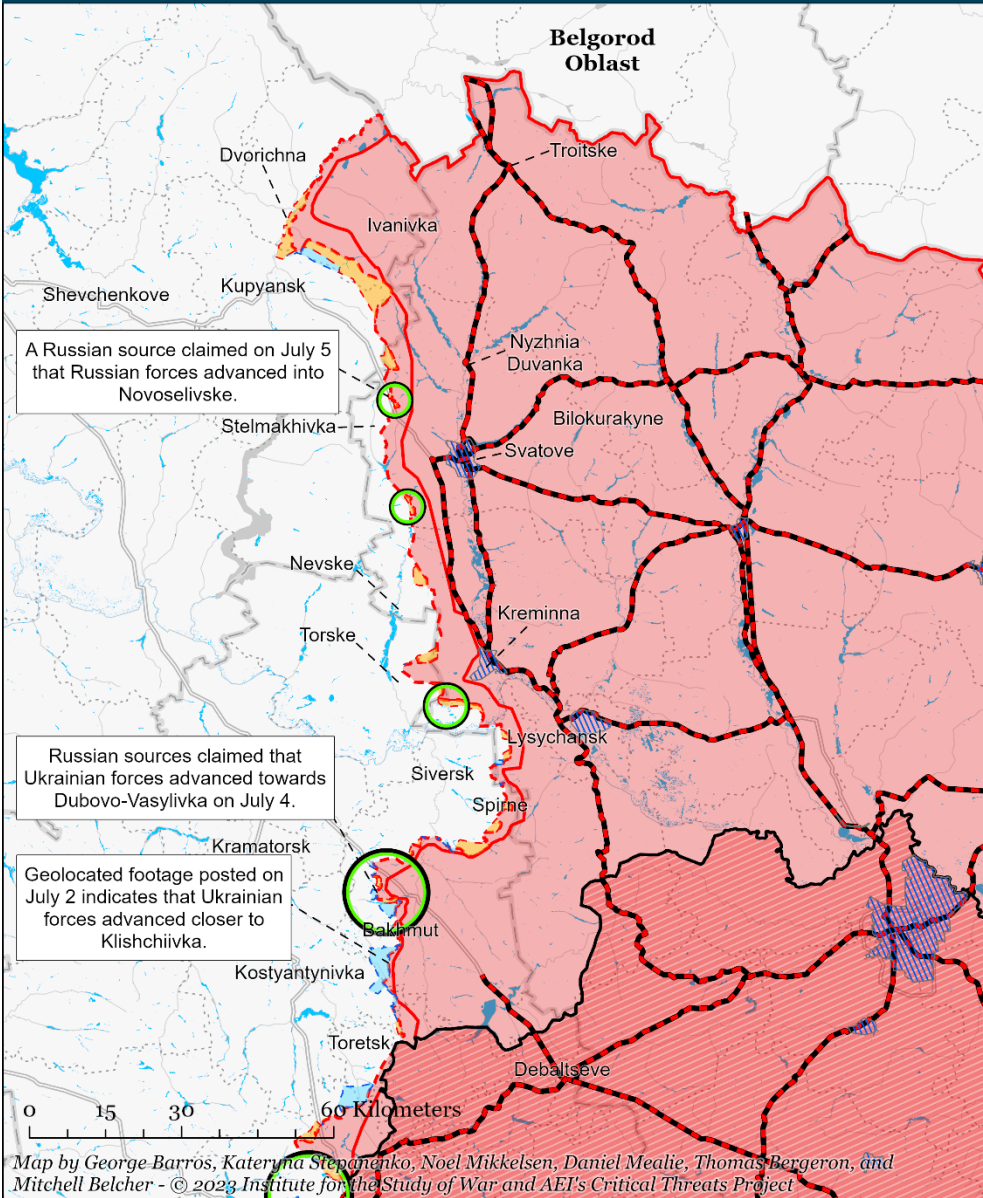
### **Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine**

#### **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 line on July 5. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults south of Novoselivske (15km northwest of Svatove), west of Novovodyane (17km southwest of Svatove), and on Novoyehorivka (16km southwest of Svatove).[36] A Kremlin-affiliated source claimed that Russian forces cleared a depot and an industrial zone in the southwestern part of Novoselivske and established positions on two unspecified streets in the settlement.[37] The source claimed that Russian forces are continuing to fight for control over Novoselivske. Geolocated footage published on July 5 shows Ukrainian forces striking Russian forces just north of Novoselivske along the N26 highway.[38] Another Kremlin-affiliated source claimed that Russian forces attacked the Novoselivske and Novovodyane areas.[39]

Russian and Ukrainian forces continued to engage in combat around Kreminna on July 5. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked Ukrainian positions south of Dibrova (4km southwest of Kreminna).[40] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that the Russian Central Group of Forces repelled Ukrainian advances on Makiivka (22km northwest of Kreminna) and Dibrova, and that Russian forces repelled two Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance groups near Serebryanka (11km southwest of Kreminna and likely referring to the Serebryanske forest area) and Torske (13km west of Kreminna).[41] A Kremlin-affiliated source claimed that Russian forces attacked the Serebryanske forest area towards Hryhorivka (10km south of Kreminna) and in the direction of Yampil (18km southwest of Kreminna).[42] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces attempted two unsuccessful breakthroughs near Makiivka and that Russian artillery units repelled a Ukrainian advance on Russian positions near Dibrova.[43] Another Russian milblogger claimed that unspecified elements of the Russian Airborne Forces repelled Ukrainian assaults on the Torske salient.[44]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of July 5, 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.

Note: Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar and Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi reported on July 4 and 5, respectively, that Ukrainian forces are advancing at an unspecified rate in the northern and southern flanks of Bakhmut. ISW is unable to confirm the geometry of the advance at this time.

## **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 successful offensive operations in the Bakhmut area on July 5. Geolocated footage posted on July 5 shows that Ukrainian forces have advanced southwest of Berkhivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut), west of Yahidne (2km north of Bakhmut), and southwest of Bakhmut.[45] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Bohdanivka (5km northwest of Bakhmut), Orikhovo-Vasylivka (11km northwest of Bakhmut), and south of Berkhivka.[46] The General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continue to conduct offensive operations to the north and south of Bakhmut City and have entrenched themselves in new positions.[47] Ukrainian Ground Forces Commander Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskiy stated that Ukrainian forces are storming Russian positions on the northern approaches of Bakhmut and have recaptured unspecified areas.[48] Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar stated that Ukrainian forces are advancing in an unspecified area on Bakhmut’s southern flank and that it is difficult for Russian forces to maneuver within Bakhmut.[49]

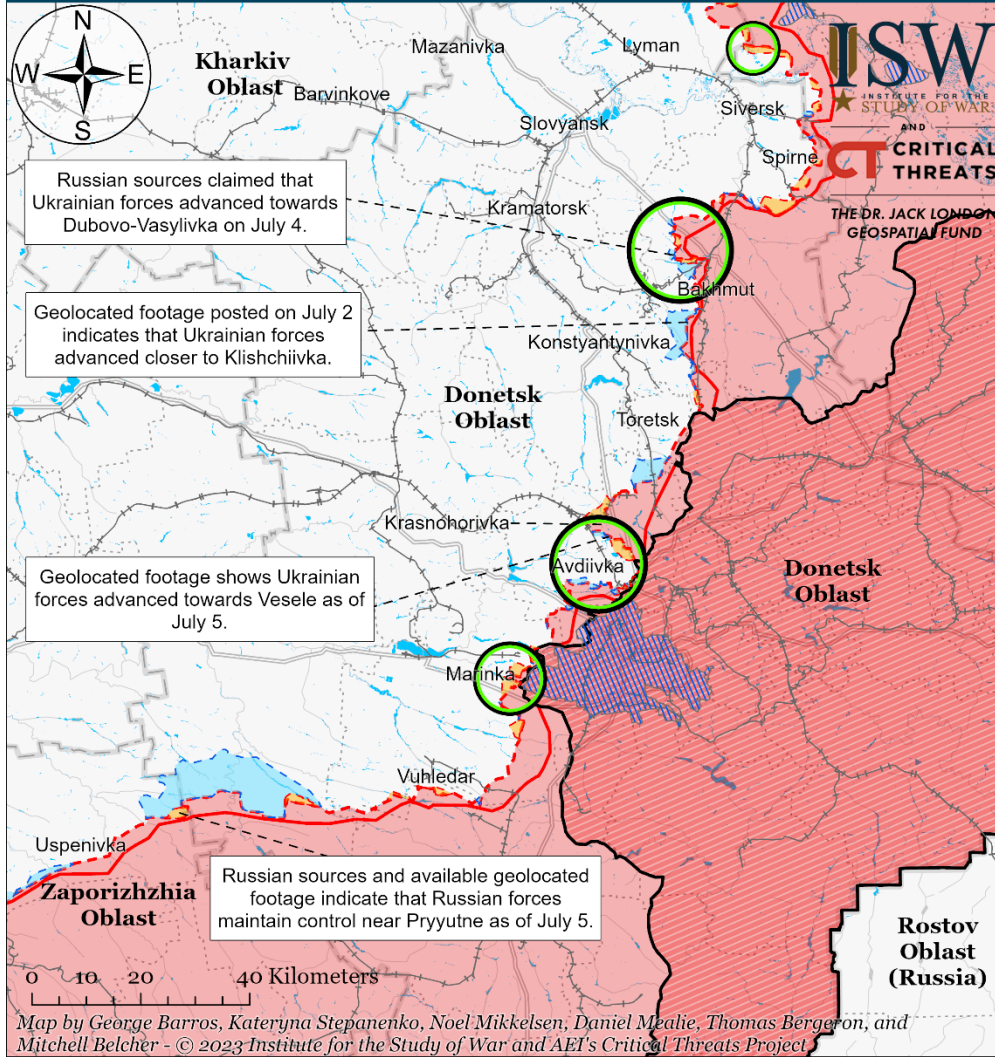
Russian milbloggers reported that Ukrainian forces liberated an important height near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) but have not liberated the settlement itself.[50] One milblogger claimed that the settlement of Klishchiivka, which is still under Russian control, is not as important as the heights in and around the settlement.[51] Another milblogger claimed that it is pointless to hold Klishchiivka and additional territory up to the Bakhmutka River without control of the heights that surround it.[52] Former Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) First Deputy Information Minister Danil Bezsonov claimed that Ukrainian forces have conducted an average of 20 unsuccessful attacks against Russian positions per day over the course of four days in the Klishchiivka area.[53] A prominent Kremlin-linked milblogger refuted another Russian report that Russian forces had withdrawn from Klishchiivka, instead claiming that some Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance groups only gained a foothold in Klishchiivka.[54] Several milbloggers claimed that elements of the Russian 72nd Motorized Rifle Brigade (3rd Army Corps) and “Storm-Z” detachments are operating in the Klishchiivka area.[55] ISW previously reported that Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin accused the 72nd Motorized Rifle Brigade of abandoning a strategic position in Bakhmut which resulted in 500 Wagner casualties and that Storm-Z detachments received a remarkably short amount of time for training before being deployed.[56]

Russian and Ukrainian forces continued ground attacks along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on July 5. Geolocated footage posted on July 5 shows that Ukrainian forces have advanced west of Vesele (6km north of Avdiivka).[57] The Ukrainian General Staff claimed that Ukrainian forces defended against Russian offensive operations in the Avdiivka and Marinka areas.[58] Malyar also stated that Russian forces attacked in the Avdiivka and Marinka directions but did not advance.[59] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Captain Valery Shershen stated that Russian forces carried out 17 unsuccessful assaults in the Marinka direction.[60] Shershen noted that Russian forces previously used “meat grinder” assaults but have recently started using small groups of 8-10 people to attack.[61] Shershen suggested that Russian forces are starting to run out of personnel to expend in larger attacks and are also trying to protect equipment.[62] Ukrainian MP Yuriy Mysyagin claimed that Ukrainian forces established a new position north of Opytne (6km northwest of the outskirts of Donetsk City) after pushing Russian forces from these positions.[63] The Russian MoD claimed that the Russian Southern Group of Forces repelled nine Ukrainian attacks near Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka), Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka), Nevelske (14km southwest of Avdiivka), and



Krasnohorivka (22km southwest of Avdiivka) in Donetsk Oblast.[64] A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the Chechen “Sever-Akhmat” Regiment (part of the 78th Special Purpose Motorized Rifle Regiment, 42nd Guards Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) are operating in Marinka.[65]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of July 5, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

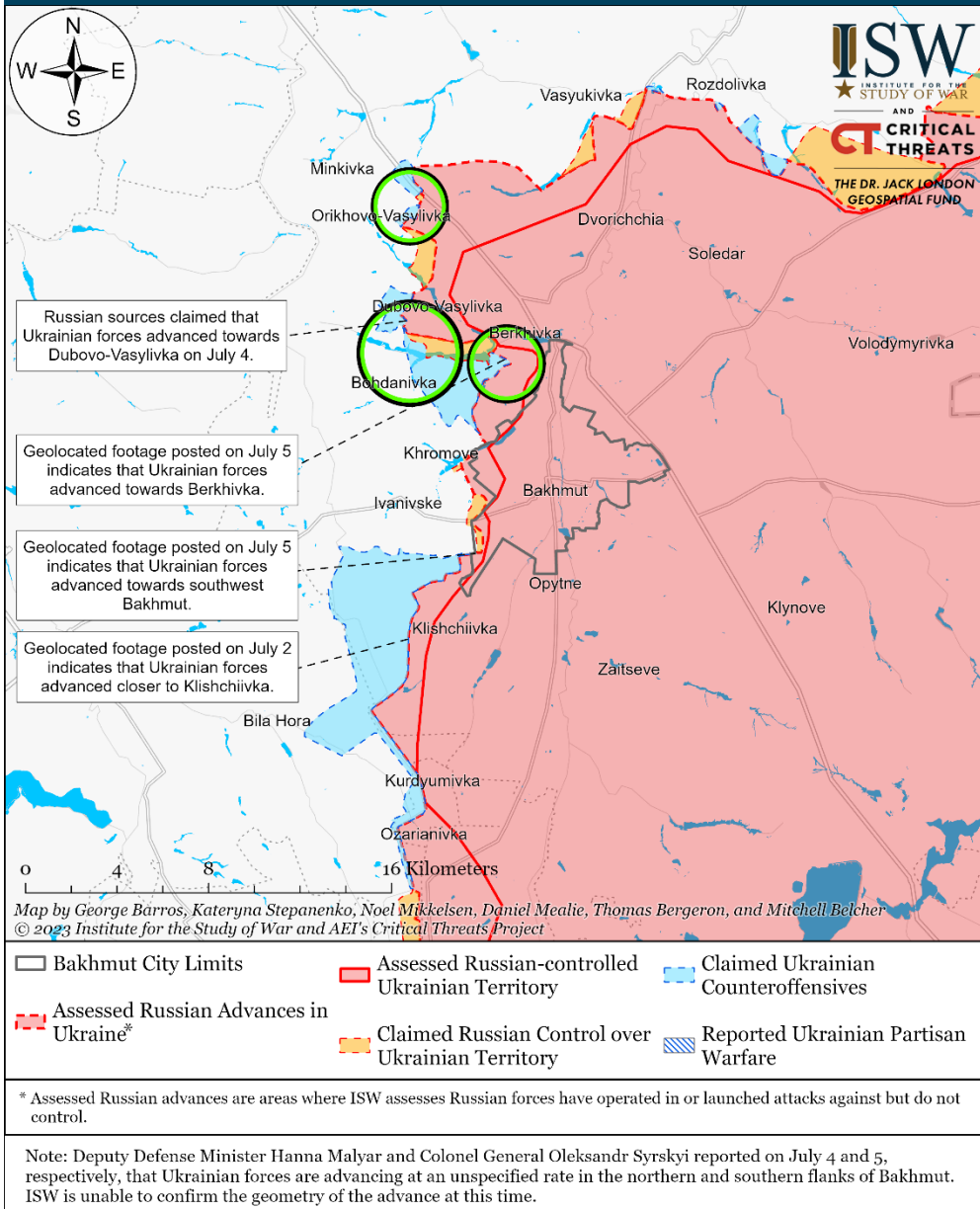


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- + Major Railroads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

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

Note: Ukrainian Deputy Chief of the Main Operational Department of the General Staff Oleksii Hromov reported on July 5 that Ukrainian forces advanced up to 7.5 kilometers deep in the Melitopol and Berdyansk directions. ISW is unable to confirm the geometry of the advance at this time.

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



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

Russian and Ukrainian forces did not conduct any confirmed ground attacks in western Donetsk Oblast on July 5. Footage posted on July 4 shows elements of the Russian 155th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) and 39th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (68th Army Corps, Eastern Military District) storming Ukrainian positions near Mykilske (3km southeast of Vuhledar).[66] ISW has

recently observed artillery elements of the 39th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade operating on the western outskirts of Donetsk City near Marinka.[67]

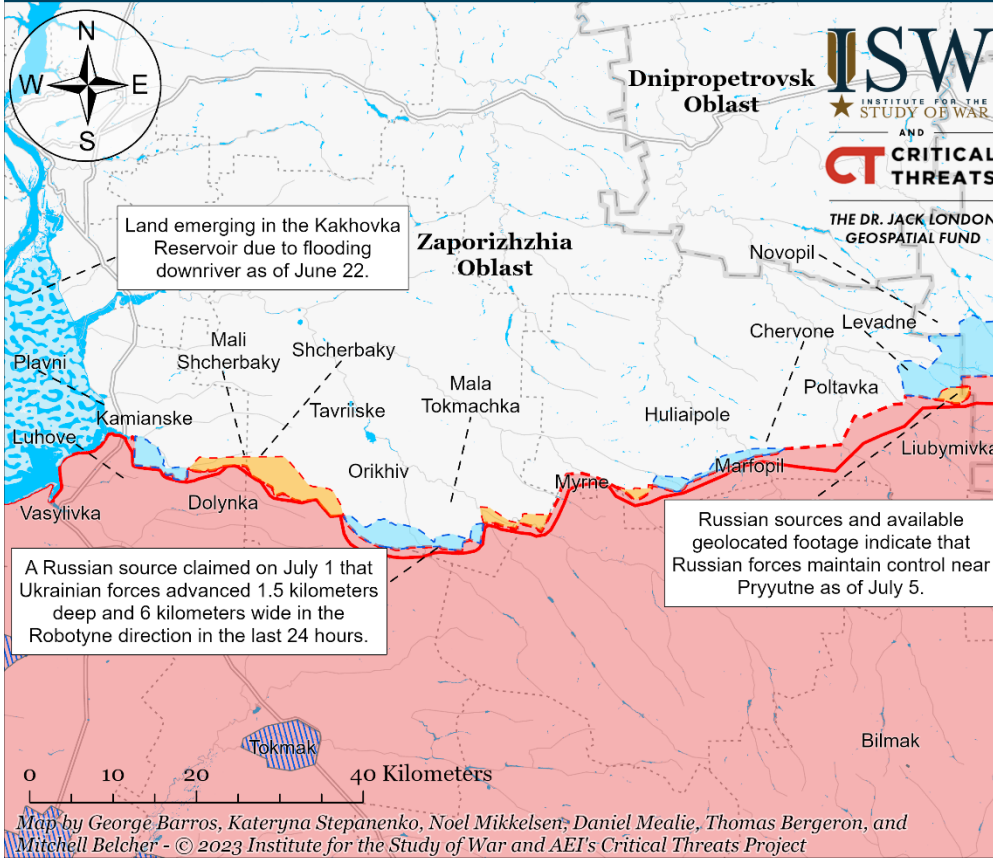
Ukrainian forces continued ground attacks in the western Donetsk Oblast-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area on July 5. The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled small Ukrainian ground attacks near Staromaiorske and Urozhaine (both about 8km south of Velyka Novosilka).[68] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces also attacked near Pryyutne (14km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) and that Russian forces attacked near Rivnopil (8km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[69] Ukrainian officials acknowledged continued Ukrainian counteroffensive operations in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia oblasts border area.[70] Geolocated footage dated July 3 shows burning Russian armor north of Pryyutne; it is unclear whether Ukrainian forces hold the village, however.[71]

Ukrainian forces continued to conduct ground attacks in western Zaporizhia Oblast on July 5. The Russian MoD claimed on July 5 that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian ground attack near Zherebyanky (26km southwest of Orikhiv).[72] Russian sources continued to claim that small Ukrainian assault groups attacked Robotyne, Nesteryanka, and Kopani (all within 7-12km south of Orikhiv).[73] Former Russian officer and ardent nationalist Igor Girkin claimed that Ukrainian forces continued attacks but did not advance in western Zaporizhia Oblast.[74] Geolocated footage shows that Russian forces have advanced to positions immediately south of Pyatykhatky (25km southwest of Orikhiv) as of July 4.[75]

A Ukrainian official confirmed that Ukrainian forces maintain positions in the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast. Ukrainian Southern Group of Forces Spokesperson Natalya Humenyuk stated that Russian forces conduct reconnaissance against existing Ukrainian positions in an unspecified area of the east bank of Kherson Oblast using small sabotage and reconnaissance groups on boats.[76] Humenyuk also stated that Russian forces recaptured former positions in the east bank of Kherson Oblast that Russian forces lost due to flooding from the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant (KHPP) dam destruction. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces continue efforts to push Ukrainian forces from their positions on the east bank near the Antonivsky Bridge.[77] The milbloggers additionally claimed that Ukrainian forces managed to transfer two small groups of reinforcements from the west (right) bank to the east bank and that Russian forces are increasingly using airstrikes against the Ukrainian positions.[78] Some milbloggers continued to criticize the Russian military command for continuing to impale Russian infantry against Ukrainian east bank positions despite sustaining high losses and despite the lack of threat to broader Russian positions in east bank Kherson Oblast posed by limited Ukrainian positions on the east bank.[79] Russian sources indicated that elements of the Russian 126th Coastal Defense Brigade (22nd Army Corps, Black Sea Fleet) and 205th Motorized Rifle Brigade (49th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) are conducting reconnaissance against and striking Ukrainian forces in the area.[80]

Russian occupation authorities claimed to have resolved the severe traffic jams to the Kerch Strait Bridge on July 5 following four days of severe issues.[81] Crimean Occupation Transportation Minister Mikhail Lukashenko claimed that there were no traffic jams at either the Kerch or Taman entrance to the Kerch Strait Bridge as of midday on July 5.[82] Russian President Vladimir Putin instructed Russian authorities on July 4 to increase the use of ferry crossings and even allocate Russian MoD resources to resolving the Kerch Strait Bridge traffic issues.[83] It is unclear to what extent the Russian occupation authorities will be able to mitigate traffic issues along this critical logistics line given the continued promotion of occupied Crimea as a tourist destination for Russian civilians.

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of July 5, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



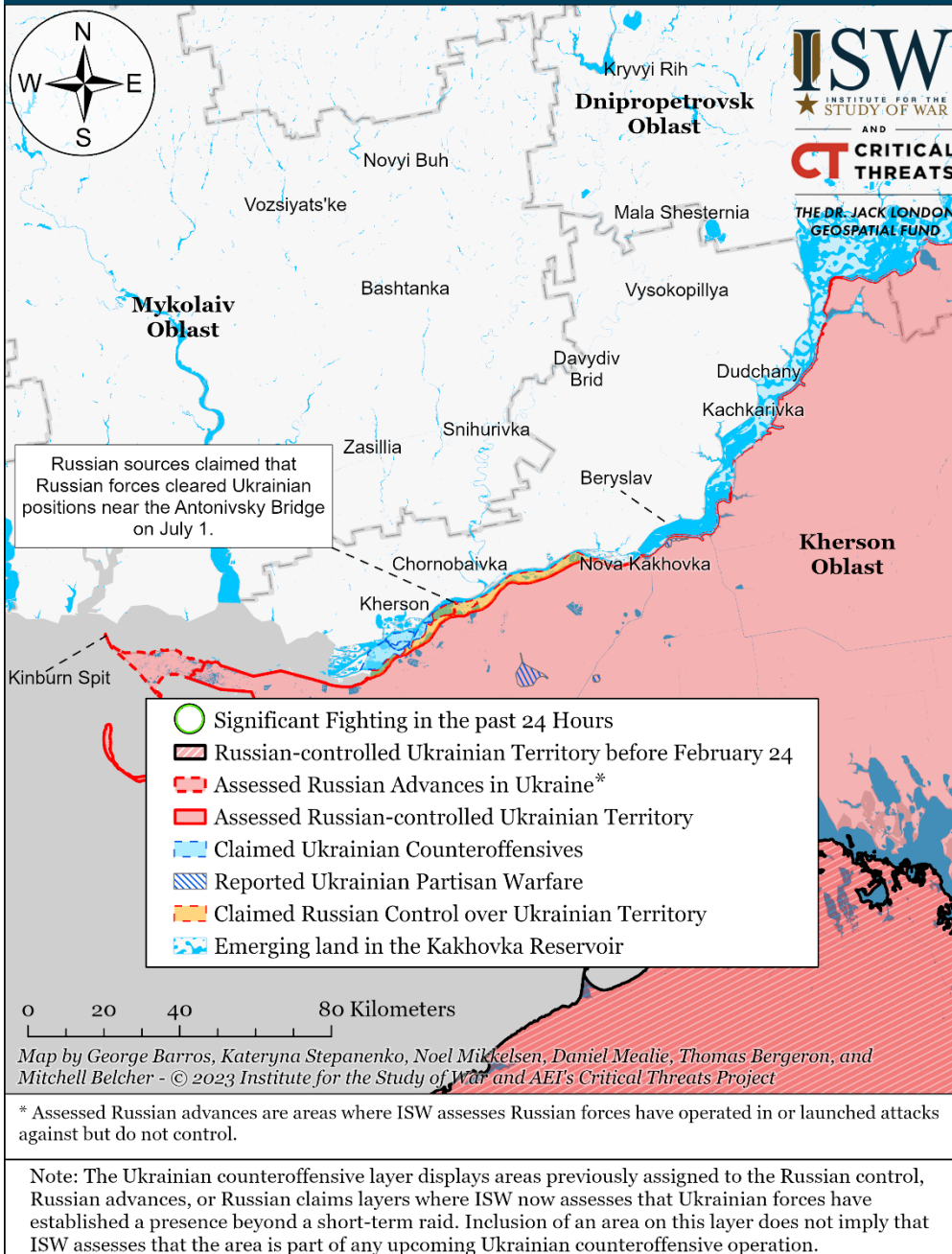
Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, and Mitchell Belcher - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

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

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

Note: Ukrainian Deputy Chief of the Main Operational Department of the General Staff Oleksii Hromov reported on July 5 that Ukrainian forces advanced up to 7.5 kilometers deep in the Melitopol and Berdyansk directions. ISW is unable to confirm the geometry of the advance at this time.

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



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

Ukrainian officials reported that Russia's hybrid crypto-mobilization and contract service recruitment campaigns have failed to produce large numbers of recruits contrary to Russian claims. Ukrainian

Deputy Chief of the Main Operational Department of the General Staff General Oleksii Hromov reported on July 5 that since the beginning of the spring conscription cycle in April 2023 Russian officials have recruited only 6,000 to 15,000 people for contract service – significantly short of a reported Russian recruitment target for 500,000 people in an unspecified time period.[84] Russian President Vladimir Putin previously claimed on June 13 that the Russian military recruited 150,000 contract servicemembers as well as over 6,000 volunteers since January 2023, although Russian Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev previously claimed on May 19 that the Russian military has recruited 117,400 contract personnel into volunteer formations since January 1, 2023.[85] It is unclear if Putin conflated the number of contract servicemen with the total number of Russian personnel who have signed contracts with the Ministry of Defense (MoD) since January given Medvedev’s and Hromov’s contrary reporting. Hromov also reported that Russian officials have yet to conduct a convict recruitment campaign on the scale that the Wagner Group did in the fall of 2022, which reportedly produced 27,000 Wagner convict recruits.[86] *Bloomberg* reported on July 4 that the MoD has recruited 15,000 convict recruits since taking over prison recruitment from the Wagner Group in February 2023, with 2,000 convict recruits currently serving in specialized “Storm-Z” assault detachments.[87] Hromov reported that Russian officials are attempting to quickly improve the results of their force generation efforts by formally integrating all Russian private military companies (PMC), which Hromov reported had an estimated strength of 40,000 personnel, into the Russian Armed Forces.[88] Hromov added that this formalized subordination of PMCs into the Russian military will not include the Wagner Group.[89]

Ukrainian officials reported that newly formed Russian formations will not be combat-ready until at least 2024 and that they may not be adhering to normal Russian echelon structures.[90] Hromov stated that Russian forces have formed the 25th Combined Arms Army of the Central Military District and the 40th Army Corps of the Southern Military District as part of Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu’s proposal to create 20 new divisions.[91] ISW previously observed residents of the Russian Far East receiving messages inviting men to join the newly formed 25th Combined Arms Army and Russian officials actively trying to staff motorized rifle battalions of the newly formed 40<sup>th</sup> Army Corps.[92] Hromov stated that the 25th Combined Arms Army will include a motorized rifle division with two motorized rifle brigades and a tank brigade and that the 40th Army Corps will include a motorized rifle division and a brigade.[93] Russian combined arms armies and corps typically adhere to a structure in which divisions have organic subordinated regiments that operate with the support of their parent division while Russian brigades are not subordinate to divisions and are structured to operate more independently. The Russian military previously formed the 3rd Army Corps (Western Military District) in the summer of 2022 mainly with volunteer units and a division of the 3rd Army Corps appeared to operate with at least one subordinated brigade.[94] Shoigu previously stated that the MoD would form a “reserve army,” likely in reference to the newly formed 25th Combined Arms Army and the 40th Army Corps, by the end of June and that five regiments of the “reserve army” were already 60 percent staffed as of June 22.[95] The lack of visibility on these formations’ force structure prevents assessing their actual adherence to Russian doctrinal echelon structures impossible at this time.

Hromov also reported that the Wagner Group is continuing to recruit personnel in Russia.[96] Hromov stated that Wagner personnel are still deploying to regular collection points and then redeploying to the Wagner training center in Molkino, Krasnodar Krai.[97] Hromov added that Russian mobilized recruits are attempting to sign contracts with Wagner instead of the

MoD.[98] Hromov also reported that Wagner will likely train some personnel in Belarus before sending them to operations abroad.[99]

Russia may be prioritizing the production of certain armaments and equipment due to constraints on Russia's defense industrial base (DIB). Hromov reported that Russia can produce 100 missiles in a month, including up to 10 Iskander missiles, 30 sea-based Kalibr missiles, and up to 60 cruise missiles.[100] Hromov stated that Russia is able to maintain this production pace for certain weapons systems thanks to intensified round-the-clock operations at military industrial enterprises and sanctions evasion schemes.[101] Hromov stated that the Kalashnikov Group's Izhevsk Mechanical Plant joint-stock company in Izhevsk, Udmurt Republic, has mass-produced 900 Lancet drones in an unspecified period of time, 850 of which Russian forces have already used in Ukraine.[102] United Kingdom Chief of the Defense Staff Admiral Sir Antony David Radakin stated on July 4 that Russia can only produce 200 tanks per year after suffering up to 2,500 tank losses in Ukraine and can produce only a million artillery shells per year after firing 10 million shells in Ukraine in 2022 alone.[103] This rate of production would allow Russia to replenish likely tank losses within roughly 12 years and allow Russian forces to fire roughly 2,700 artillery shells a day not counting existing stocks. Russian forces reportedly were firing 20,000 shells per day in late December 2022, already 40,000 fewer than during the early stages of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.[104] Russian milbloggers have once again started to claim that Russian forces are currently facing shortages of artillery ammunition in certain sectors of the front in Ukraine.[105] The Ukrainian Foreign Intelligence Service also reported that the Motovilikha Plant public joint stock company in Perm Oblast, which produces Grad, Smerch, and Tornado-G MLRS systems recently sold land and property worth 59.5 million rubles (\$650,000) as part of its ongoing bankruptcy.[106] It is unclear why Russia is able to maintain the production of more complex systems that require components more heavily targeted by Western sanctions like missiles while it struggles to produce simpler types of equipment and ammunition. Russian officials may be prioritizing the production of missiles and loitering munitions over armored vehicles and artillery shells, although such a prioritization should not immediately constrain the production of those other systems and ammunition under normal conditions. It is possible that bottlenecks or organizational or human capital constraints within Russia's DIB are forcing Russian officials to choose which systems and armaments to produce at a rate near what Russian operations in Ukraine require.

**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 officials are setting information conditions to postpone regional elections in occupied Ukraine likely out of concern for successful Ukrainian counteroffensives. The Kherson Oblast Occupation Administration announced that regional elections will take place from September 8 to September 10 in occupied Kherson Oblast and noted that the Russian Central Election Committee can postpone elections if there are "safety" threats in the region.[107]

Russia adopted a five-year development plan to construct a federal highway to occupied Ukrainian territories. Russian Deputy Prime Minister for Construction and Regional Development Marat Khusnullin announced in a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin and other Russian officials that occupation administrations signed a memorandum for the development of road networks and adopted a resolution on the creation of a network of federal highways.[108]



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

**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.**

Ukrainian officials' assessment of the number of Russian servicemen training in Belarus increased between early June and early July. Deputy Chief of the Main Operational Department of the Ukrainian General Staff, Brigadier General Oleksii Hromov, stated that 3,000 to 5,000 Russian mobilized servicemen are training at Belarusian training centers as of July 5.<sup>[109]</sup> Ukrainian officials stated that there were approximately 1,000 Russian military personnel in Belarus as of early June 2023.<sup>[110]</sup> Geolocated footage posted on July 5 shows Russian troops at the Polonka Train Station in Albinki, Brest Oblast, Belarus (within six kilometers of the Obuz-Lesnovsky Training Ground).<sup>[111]</sup>

Ukrainian officials indicated that Russia likely has not deployed tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus as of July 5. Hromov stated that Russia likely has not yet deployed tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus and noted that the construction of special hardened storage facilities necessary to store tactical nuclear weapons is a complex process.<sup>[112]</sup> Hromov presumably meant that Ukrainian officials have not yet seen evidence of the construction of the storage sites necessary to store Russian nuclear weapons in Belarus. ISW has not observed any imagery of the construction of such facilities in Belarus. Hromov's statement directly contradicts Russian President Vladimir Putin's and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko's claims that Russia already deployed some tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus in June 2023.<sup>[113]</sup> Any confirmable construction of a special hardened storage facility necessary to store tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus would be more significant than the construction of the suspected Wagner Group basecamp in Asipovichy which has received much media attention.

**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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