

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, July 6, 2023

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July 6, 2023, 8:25pm ET

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

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

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

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko stated that Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin and Wagner forces are not in Belarus as of July 6, indicating that Prigozhin may be failing to uphold the deal Lukashenko mediated between Prigozhin and Russian President Vladimir Putin following Wagner's armed rebellion on June 24. Lukashenko and the Kremlin previously announced that Prigozhin, Putin, and Lukashenko reached an agreement that offered Prigozhin and the Wagner forces that participated in the rebellion unspecified security guarantees in Belarus.[1] The full contents of this agreement have not been revealed, but it appears that Wagner is not fulfilling its end of the deal. Lukashenko stated on July 6 that Wagner forces are currently at their permanent camps (either in Russia or in Ukraine) to which they withdrew following the Battle for Bakhmut.[2] Lukashenko added that Prigozhin is in St. Petersburg or may have even flown to Moscow on the morning of July 6. Lukashenko denied the reports that Belarus is constructing new training camps for Wagner forces and noted that Belarus offered Wagner several former Soviet military camps including some near Asipovichy, Mogilev Oblast.[3] Lukashenko implied that Wagner had not yet agreed to deploy to these bases and that Wagner "has a different vision for [their] deployment," the details of which Lukashenko refused to share.[4] Lukashenko, however, denied that the deal has been terminated and noted that the question of Wagner forces' transfer and setup "has not been decided" at the moment.[5]

Russian sources also indicated that Prigozhin is in Russia, although ISW cannot confirm Prigozhin's whereabouts at this time. A Russian opposition outlet reported that Prigozhin's plane landed in Rostov Oblast after flying from Moscow Oblast on the morning of July 6.[6] A St. Petersburg outlet reported on July 5 that Prigozhin personally picked up several small arms seized by the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) from the FSB building in St. Petersburg on July 4.[7] The outlet also reported that Prigozhin was in Moscow over the weekend on July 1 and July 2.[8] ISW had not observed any visual confirmations in the open source that Wagner personnel deployed to Belarus at this time. Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov also claimed that the Kremlin does not follow Prigozhin's movements, noting that the Kremlin cannot and does not want to follow Prigozhin.[9] Peskov's statement is absurd given that the Kremlin and Russian security forces have

the ability to detain Prigozhin or restrict his movements in Russia. It is particularly absurd if Prigozhin was actually able to collect his weapons from an FSB facility.

Lukashenko appears to be distancing himself from the deal he reportedly mediated while continuing to tout his ability to mediate between Putin and a formerly loyal lieutenant in the first place, thus still highlighting Putin’s weakness. Lukashenko demonstratively stated that Wagner and Prigozhin are Russian, and the questions about their whereabouts should not be directed to him. Lukashenko appears to be distancing himself from Wagner, and his rhetoric may suggest that he is pinning the responsibility on the Kremlin to enforce the deal. Lukashenko also continued to boast about his skillful negotiations with Prigozhin after stating that Putin’s authority was not weakened during the armed rebellion in response to a journalist’s question.

Prigozhin’s ability to freely operate in Russia suggests that Prigozhin is still protected by some security guarantees and/or that the Kremlin continues to prioritize undermining his reputation in Russia over targeting Prigozhin physically or legally. Lukashenko noted that neither he nor Russian President Vladimir Putin wanted to assassinate Prigozhin, and dismissed suggestions that Putin might attempt to kill Prigozhin in the future.[10] ISW assessed on June 27 that Putin has likely decided that he cannot directly eliminate Prigozhin without making him a martyr for causes concerning the Russian Ministry of Defense’s (MoD) mishandling of the invasion.[11] ISW also observed on June 27 that the Kremlin launched an information operation aimed at presenting Prigozhin as corrupt and a liar, and Russian state outlets have maintained this narrative since. Russian propaganda networks are extensively covering FSB’s raids of Prigozhin’s mansion and his wealth, and one journalist sarcastically called Prigozhin’s house a “palace belonging to the fighter against corruption” on Russian state TV channel *Rossiya 1*. [12]

Select Russian ultranationalists criticized Russian state propaganda for attempting to villainize Prigozhin, however, suggesting that the Kremlin’s attempt to alienate the ultranationalist community from Prigozhin is not succeeding. A Wagner-affiliated Telegram channel accused the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs of deliberately leaking footage of the FSB raids to the media in order to portray Prigozhin as a traitor who is only interested in a lavish lifestyle.[13] Another Wagner-affiliated Telegram channel attempted to disprove *Rossiya 1*’s suggestion that the FSB may have found narcotics at Prigozhin’s mansion.[14] It is not necessarily surprising that Wagner-affiliated milbloggers are attacking Kremlin efforts to blackguard Prigozhi, but a Kremlin-affiliated milblogger also condemned the Russian media’s efforts to portray Prigozhin as a corrupt individual, noting that Prigozhin’s home is consistent with that of a wealthy individual and that Prigozhin appears to showcase his military awards throughout his mansion.[15] Another milblogger noted that Prigozhin’s house did not appear that lavish when compared to other Russian billionaires.[16]

Ukrainian forces conducted counteroffensive operations on at least three sectors of the front on July 6 and are continuing efforts to gradually degrade Russian manpower and logistics assets. Ukrainian military officials reported that Ukrainian forces are conducting counteroffensive activities in the Bakhmut, western Donetsk, and western Zaporizhia directions.[17] Geolocated footage posted on July 6 shows that Ukrainian troops have advanced towards the western outskirts of Klishchiivka, about 5km southwest of Bakhmut.[18] Russian and Ukrainian sources continued to discuss Ukrainian counteroffensive operations in western Donetsk Oblast south of Velyka Novosilka and in the Orikhiv area in western Zaporizhia Oblast.[19] Ukrainian

President Volodymyr Zelensky acknowledged the generally slower pace of Ukrainian counteroffensive gains in an interview with CNN on July 5 and stated that Ukrainian operations have “slowed down” against entrenched Russian defensive positions, remarking that he believes Ukraine still needs certain Western weapons systems before launching new attacks along the front.[20] Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar emphasized that the Ukrainian efforts to strike Russian concentration areas are imperative for the wider counteroffensive and contribute to the slower rate of ground attacks across the theater. Malyar noted that Ukrainian forces destroyed six Russian ammunition depots in the Tavriisk (Zaporizhia) direction alone in the past day and confirmed that the July 4 strike on Makiivka was an effective example of the destruction of Russian artillery and equipment assets.[21]

Ukrainian and Russian officials largely de-escalated their rhetoric regarding the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) on July 6. Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Head Kyrylo Budanov stated on July 6 that the danger of a man-made disaster at the ZNPP is “gradually decreasing,” following warnings by various Ukrainian officials on July 4 that Russian forces may have placed objects resembling explosive devices on the roofs of two of the ZNPP’s reactor buildings.[22] First Deputy Chief of Staff of the Russian Presidential Administration Sergey Kiriienko and Zaporizhia Oblast occupation head Yevgeny Balitsky also notably visited the ZNPP on July 6 and posted images reportedly near the plant’s dry nuclear waste storage facility.[23] Kiriienko and Balitsky noted that the plant continues to “operate normally” under Russian control, thus downplaying previous Russian claims that Ukrainian actions were imminently threatening the safety of the ZNPP.[24] Kiriienko and Balitsky may have visited the plant to portray Russia as a capable custodian of the ZNPP, and their rhetorical posturing during the visit suggests that Russian officials may be stepping back from harsh warnings of imminent disaster at the plant. ISW continues to assess that Russian rhetoric surrounding the ZNPP is meant to discourage Western support for Ukraine by accusing Ukraine of nuclear irresponsibility, as well as to dissuade Ukrainian forces from conducting counteroffensive operations into occupied Zaporizhia Oblast.[25]

Russian political actors continue attempts to court or control Russian milbloggers, indicating that many view the milblogger community as a critical constituency. Russian Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR) head Leonid Slutsky met with select milbloggers on July 5 to discuss a series of proposals to grant benefits and protections to military correspondents and bloggers covering the war in Ukraine.[26] Slutsky stated that the LDPR will aim to pass legislation that will grant military correspondents the status of combat veterans and provide state guarantees and payments in cases of injury or death.[27] Slutsky claimed that the LDPR sent relevant proposals about Russian military correspondents and bloggers to the Russian MoD and the Ministry of Digital Development.[28] Slutsky added the LDPR and select milbloggers will launch an educational program to teach youth about the “informational realities” of the war in Ukraine.[29] Russian pundits on the Kremlin-affiliated show Solovyov Live recently discussed milbloggers’ potential violation of operational security in Ukraine and urged them to engage in some degree of self-censorship.[30] The Kremlin has routinely sought to appeal to select Russian milbloggers in a bid to win the favor of the community and leverage their connections to the wider Russian ultranationalist community, although the Russian MoD has recently indicated that it once again seeks to curb select milblogger activity.[31] It is unclear what backing the LDPR proposals have from the Kremlin, although the Kremlin could use such measures to exert control over milbloggers and determine who qualifies as a recognized milblogger.

The growing prominence of the milblogger community within the Russian information space and in certain accepted Russian civil society movements is likely creating a competition amongst various political actors vying for control over what is viewed as a critical constituency, either through winning their favor or by establishing authority over their activities. These political actors, both those firmly within the Kremlin's orbit and those further outside of it, likely believe that it has yet to be decided who will control the political influence of this constituency. Milbloggers, with their own diverging interests and allegiances, have yet to indicate how the overall community will respond to this growing competition for their influence.

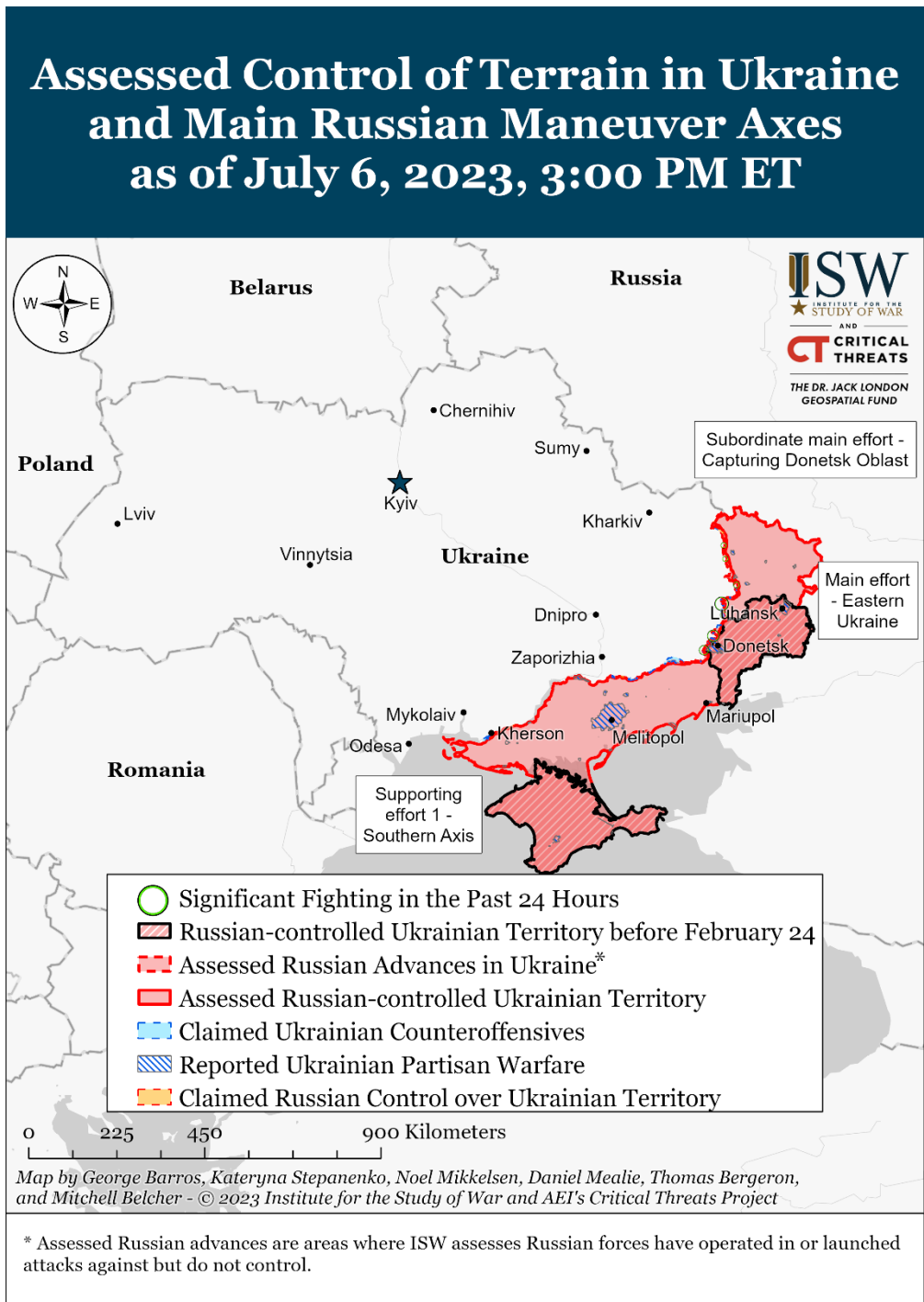
Russian opposition media outlet *Vertska* reported that Russian forces and occupation authorities are conducting a campaign of systematic religious persecution in occupied Ukraine. *Vertska* found that Russian forces and occupation authorities have committed at least 109 acts of religious persecution and destroyed nearly 600 places of worship in Ukraine since February 24, 2022.[32] *Vertska* uncovered the stories of people whom Russian forces and occupation authorities kidnapped, arrested, captured, tortured, and killed over their faith.[33] The investigation found that Orthodox and Protestant Christians are the most repressed group in the occupied territories, but that Catholics, Muslims, and Jehovah's Witnesses have also been persecuted.[34] *Vertska* cited at least 43 cases in which clergymen were targeted for their faith, including eight who were kidnapped and five who were killed.[35] *Vertska* reported that at least 66 places of worship have been confiscated or destroyed by Russian forces and turned into warehouses, police departments, National Guard offices, or 'United Russia' offices.[36] *Vertska* noted that the primary purposes of religious oppression in the occupied territories are to suppress the Ukrainian language, which services are commonly conducted, to discourage or punish congregants who refuse to support occupation authorities, and to pressure congregations and priests into supporting the Russian Orthodox Church.[37] ISW previously reported that Russian occupation authorities were likely conducting a campaign of religious persecution in occupied Ukraine to systematically eradicate "undesirable" religious organizations and promote the Moscow Patriarchate.[38] ISW previously assessed that Russian forces would likely intensify their campaign and that Russian authorities are conducting religious persecution in a way that is entirely at odds with efforts to frame Russian President Vladimir Putin as the true protector of the Christian faith.[39]

Russian milbloggers claimed that aspects of Russian defensive operations in southern Ukraine have severe limitations and may not be as effective as Russian sources have previously portrayed them. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian mobilized service members operating in Zaporizhia Oblast have been on the frontlines since October 2022 without any rotations.[40] The milblogger stated that Russian forces have not been able to rotate these mobilized personnel out of these positions because there are no available personnel to replace them with.[41] The milblogger's description of acute rotation issues supports ISW's previous assessment that Russian forces likely lack combat-ready reserves.[42] The failure to conduct any rotations will likely result in a quicker rate of degradation for Russian formations defending against Ukrainian counteroffensives in southern Ukraine. Other Russian milbloggers accused Russian attack helicopters of striking already destroyed Ukrainian military equipment and suggested that the Russian MoD may be using these repeated hits to report inflated Ukrainian losses.[43] The Kremlin has previously used reports of wildly inflated Ukrainian armored vehicle losses to portray Russian defensive operations as extremely effective.[44]

Key Takeaways:

- **Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko stated that Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin and Wagner forces are not in Belarus as of July 6, indicating that Prigozhin may be failing to uphold the deal Lukashenko mediated between Prigozhin and Russian President Vladimir Putin following Wagner's armed rebellion on June 24.**
- **Russian sources also indicated that Prigozhin is in Russia, although ISW cannot confirm Prigozhin's whereabouts at this time.**
- **Lukashenko appears to be distancing himself from the deal he reportedly mediated while continuing to tout his ability to mediate between Putin and a formerly loyal lieutenant in the first place, thus still highlighting Putin's weakness.**
- **Prigozhin's ability to freely operate in Russia suggests that Prigozhin is still protected by some security guarantees and/or that the Kremlin continues to prioritize undermining his reputation in Russia over targeting Prigozhin physically or legally.**
- **Select Russian ultranationalists criticized Russian state propaganda for attempting to villainize Prigozhin, however, suggesting that the Kremlin's attempt to alienate the ultranationalist community from Prigozhin is not succeeding.**
- **Ukrainian forces conducted counteroffensive operations on at least three sectors of the front on July 6 and are continuing efforts to gradually degrade Russian manpower and logistics assets.**
- **Ukrainian and Russian officials largely de-escalated their rhetoric regarding the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) on July 6.**
- **Russian political actors continue attempts to court or control Russian milbloggers, indicating that many view the milblogger community as a critical constituency.**
- **Russian opposition media outlet *Vertska* reported that Russian forces and occupation authorities are conducting a campaign of systematic religious persecution in occupied Ukraine.**
- **Russian milbloggers claimed that aspects of Russian defensive operations in southern Ukraine have severe limitations and may not be as effective as Russian sources have previously portrayed them.**
- **Russian and Ukrainian forces conducted ground attacks along the Svatove-Kreminna line.**
- **Visual evidence confirms that Ukrainian forces have advanced southwest of Bakhmut as of July 6.**
- **Russian forces continued ground attacks in the Bakhmut and Avdiivka-Donetsk City areas.**
- **Ukrainian forces conducted counteroffensive operations along the administrative border between Zaporizhzhia and Donetsk oblasts and in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast.**
- **Russian officials continue efforts to create territorial defense units in Russian border oblasts.**

- Occupation officials continue efforts to forcibly assimilate Ukrainian legal and cultural traditions into the Russian system in occupied territories.
- Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko claimed on July 6 that Russia will transfer all planned tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus by the end of 2023, if not earlier.



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

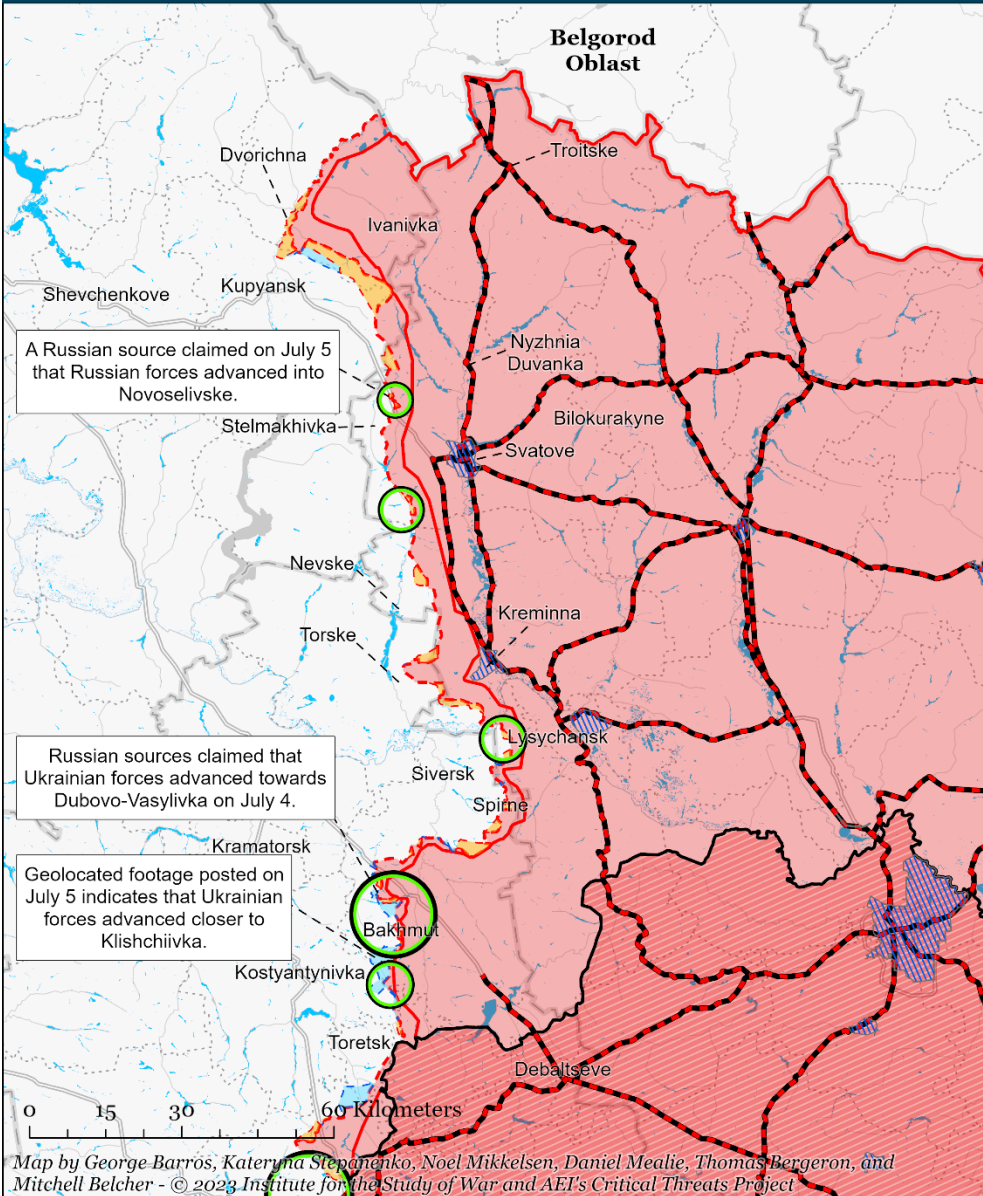
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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 Svatove-Kreminna line and south of Kreminna on July 6. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian troops attempted to advance near Novoselivske (15km northwest of Svatove), Novoyehorivka (15km southwest of Svatove), Karmazynivka (12km southwest of Svatove), and Bilohorivka (10km south of Kreminna).[45] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces continued attacks near Novoselivske and in the Serebryanske forest area south of Kreminna.[46] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces spokesperson Colonel Serhiy Cherevaty noted that Russian forces are actively trying to break through Ukrainian defensive lines along the Kupyansk-Lyman front using “Storm-Z” assault units staffed with former convicts.[47] Cherevaty also stated that elements of BARS (Russian Combat Reserve of the Country) and unspecified private military companies (PMCs) are active in this area.[48] A Russian milblogger posted footage reportedly showing Central Military District (CMD) in the Kreminna area.[49] Another Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the 3rd Guards Separate Special Purpose Brigade are striking Ukrainian fortifications near Kreminna.[50]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted several counterattacks along the Svatove-Kreminna line on July 6. Russian Western Group of Forces spokesperson Sergei Zybinsky claimed that elements of the 7th Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment (11th Army Corps, Baltic Fleet) and 1st Guards Tank Army (Western Military District) repelled Ukrainian attacks near Novoselivske.[51] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that elements of the Central Grouping of Forces repelled Ukrainian attacks about 16km west of Kreminna near Yampolivka and Torske.[52]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of July 6, 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: 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.

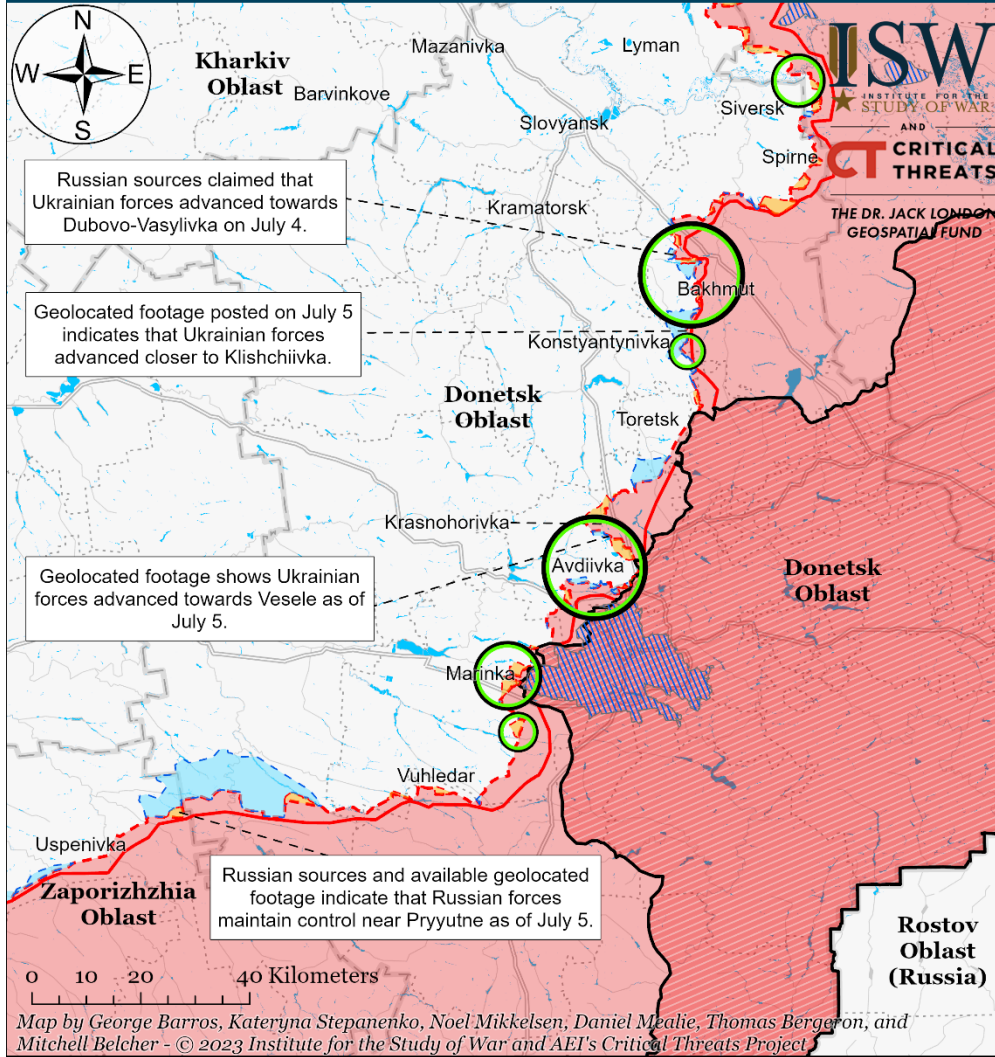
Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian Objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)

Visual evidence confirms that Ukrainian forces have advanced southwest of Bakhmut as of July 6. Geolocated combat footage posted on July 6 shows Russian artillery striking a Ukrainian infantry fighting vehicle on the western outskirts of Klishchiivka (about 5km southwest of Bakhmut), indicating that Ukrainian forces have made gains in the area.[53] A Russian milblogger reported that Ukrainian troops captured several forested areas west of Klishchiivka and are increasing pressure on Russian positions southwest of Bakhmut.[54] Russian sources claimed that Klishchiivka itself remains under Russian control, and milbloggers circulated footage wherein several Russian soldiers claim they control the settlement, and that heavy fighting is ongoing on the outskirts.[55] The Ukrainian General Staff additionally reported that Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations south and north of Bakhmut and took up new positions.[56] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Serhiy Cherevaty noted that Ukrainian troops maintain the initiative around Bakhmut and are pushing Russian forces back on Bakhmut’s northern and southern flanks.[57]

Russian forces continued ground attacks around Bakhmut on July 6. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian troops repelled Russian attacks southwest of Bakhmut near Ivanivske (5km southwest) and Bila Hora (14km southwest) and northwest of Bakhmut near Berkhivka (1km northwest) and Bohdanivka (5km northwest).[58] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked along the Dubovo-Vasylivka–Bohdanivka line and towards Orikhovo-Vasylivka.[59] Russian sources reported that elements of the 331st Guards Airborne (VDV) Regiment and 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade (14th Army Corps, Northern Fleet) are fighting in this area.[60]

Russian forces continued ground attacks along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on July 7. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful ground attacks near Avdiivka, Pervomaiske (on the northwestern outskirts of Donetsk City), Marinka (on the southwestern outskirts of Donetsk City), and Novomykhailivka (just southwest of Donetsk City).[61] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces unsuccessfully tried to attack the southwestern approaches of Avdiivka and within Marinka.[62] The Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) People’s Militia posted footage of the 103rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, Southern Military District) striking Ukrainian positions near Marinka.[63]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of July 6, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

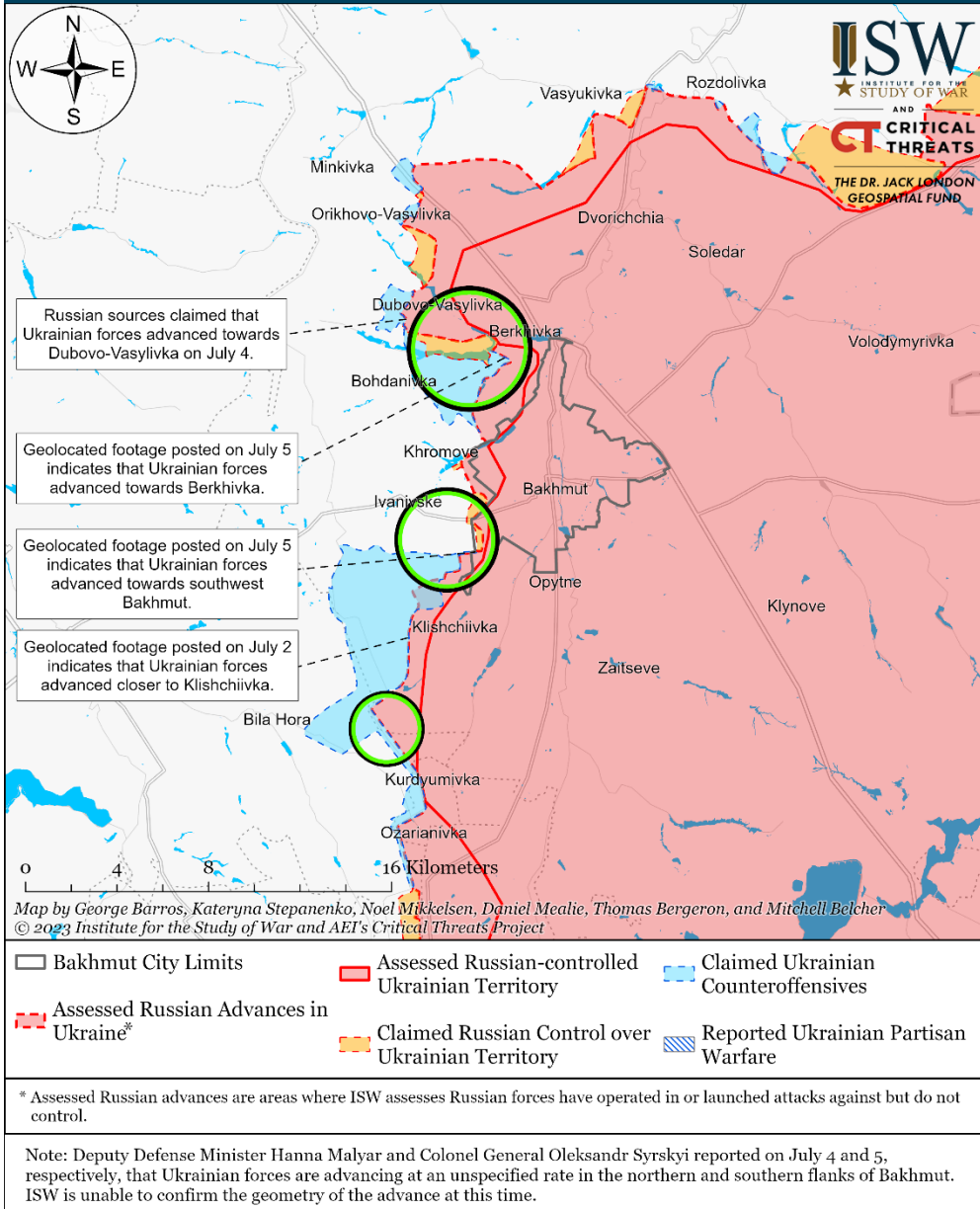


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- + Major Railroads
- 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 6, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

Ukrainian forces conducted counteroffensive operations along the administrative border between Zaporizhia and Donetsk oblasts on July 6. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces conducted offensives in the Zaporizhia Oblast-Donetsk Oblast border area and consolidated control of their new positions.[64] Russian Eastern Grouping of Forces Spokesperson Oleg Chekhov claimed that Russian elements of the Eastern Grouping of Forces repelled Ukrainian assaults south of Velyka

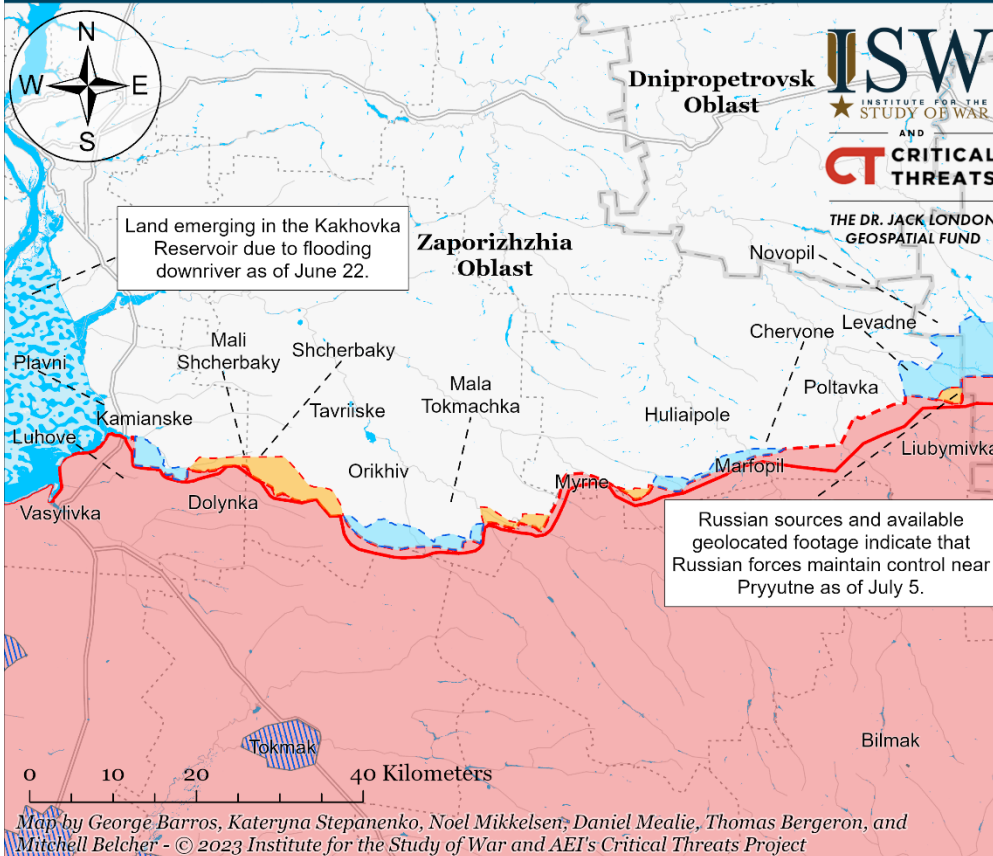
Novosilka.[65] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked Russian positions near Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) and Pryyutne (16km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) on July 5 and 6.[66] Geolocated footage published on July 5 indicates that Russian forces still maintain positions near Pryyutne and are likely in control of the settlement.[67]

Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast on July 6. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces conducted offensives in the Melitopol direction (western Zaporizhia Oblast) and consolidated control of new positions.[68] Russian Eastern Grouping of Forces Spokesperson Oleg Chekhov claimed that Russian elements of the Eastern Grouping of Forces repelled a Ukrainian attack near Pyatykhakty (25km southwest of Orikhiv).[69] Russian milbloggers notably continue to give diverging accounts of the nature of Ukrainian counteroffensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast. One Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces attempted to advance from Pyatykhakty towards Zherebyanky (27km southwest of Orikhiv) in two small groups with 15 personnel each.[70] Other milbloggers claimed that larger Ukrainian groups conducted waves of unsuccessful assaults towards Zherebyanky with groups of up to 50 personnel.[71] One milblogger criticized other milbloggers for intentionally downplaying the Ukrainian presence in Pyatykhakty and stated that Ukrainian forces have been entrenched in the settlement since June 17 despite repeated Russian claims that Russians forces have cleared the settlement or prevented Ukrainian forces from reaching it.[72] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces also conducted assaults in the direction of Robotyne (12km south of Orikhiv) and made unspecified gains in the direction of Verbove (18km southeast of Orikhiv).[73] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian did not conduct active operations in the Zaporizhia direction at all outside of the Pyatykhakty area.[74] Russian milbloggers also claimed that Russian forces conducted counterattacks in western Zaporizhia Oblast and captured previously lost positions near Robotyne.[75] Russian milbloggers who have reported smaller Ukrainian counteroffensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast in previous days tend to be those who claim to be in contact with Russian forces operating in the area.

Russian forces continue to target Ukrainian positions near the Antonivsky bridge in Kherson Oblast on July 6. A BARS-13 (Russian Combat Reserve of the Country) affiliated source claimed that Russian aviation conducted strikes on Ukrainian concentration areas near the bridge on the west (right) bank of the Dnipro River.[76] Russian First Deputy of the Presidential Administration Sergei Kiriienko visited occupied Kherson Oblast on July 6 and congratulated the 387th Regiment of the 7th Guards Airborne (VDV) Assault Division for reportedly clearing Ukrainian from the east (left) bank near the Antonivsky bridge.[77] A prominent Russian milblogger recently claimed that Russian forces transferred elements of the 7th VDV Division to an unspecified location in the Zaporizhia direction, although it is possible that separate elements of the division are now deployed to diverging axes.[78]

Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces are continuing to return to previously flooded positions on the left bank of Kherson Oblast. Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Natalya Humenyuk reported on July 5 that Russian forces are returning to these positions, with some of these previously flooded positions located up to 15km away from the Dnipro River.[79] Humenyuk added that flooding destroyed the Russian first lines of defense and that Russian forces are increasing artillery fire in the area.[80]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of July 6, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

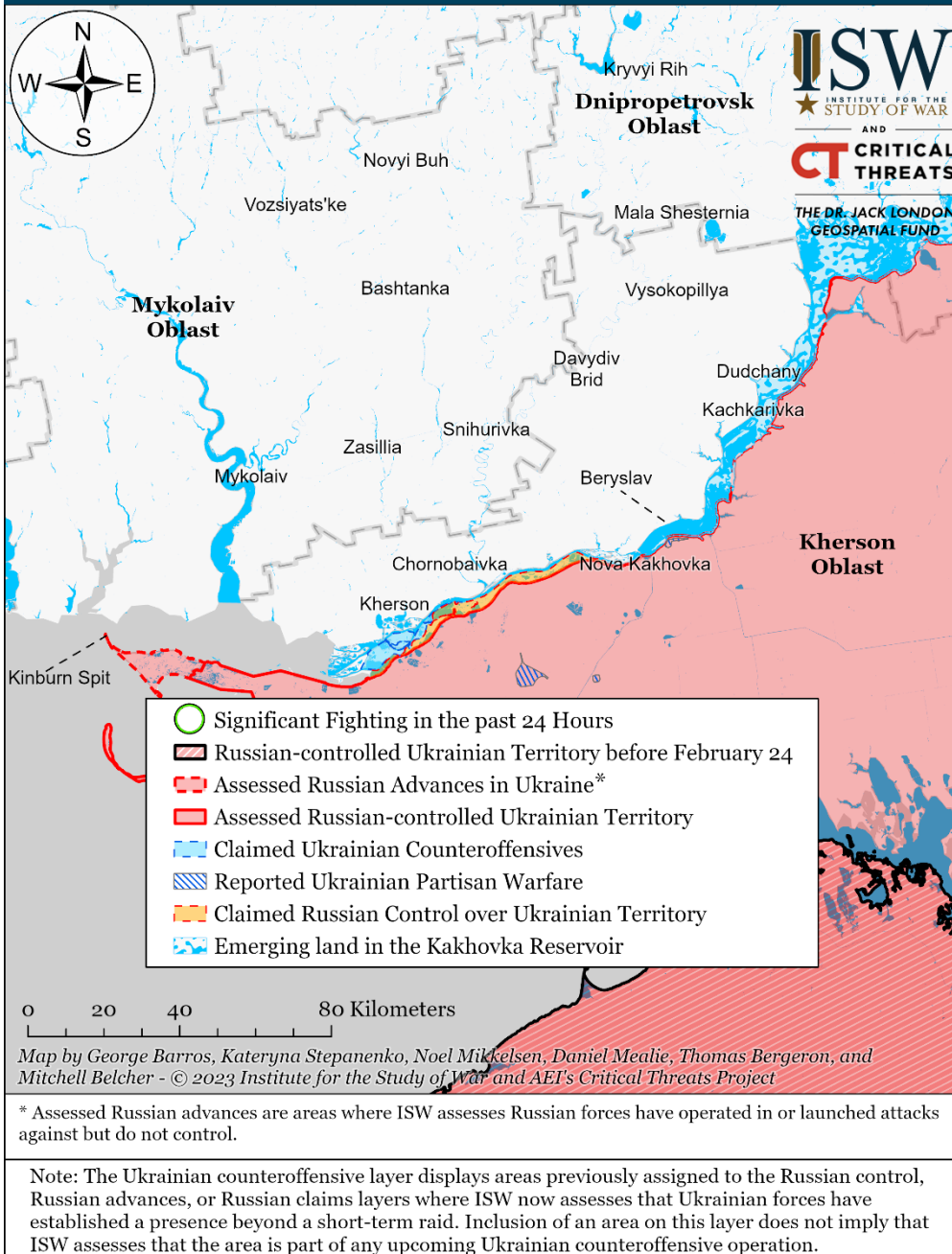


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
- Assessed Russian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

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

Note: Ukrainian 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 6, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

Russian officials continue efforts to create territorial defense units in Russian border oblasts. Belgorod Oblast Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov stated during a live broadcast on July 6 that the Belgorod Oblast Territorial Defense will form a second regiment with 3000 personnel.[81] Gladkov stated that a previously formed territorial defense regiment will be partially armed with weapons within the next week.[82] Gladkov stated that battalions stationed near the border will be fully armed during their rotations but that it is not possible to issue weapons to all 3000 members of the existing regiment.[83]

Russian officials continue measures to punish Russian draft dodgers. Russian head of traffic police Mikhail Chernikov claimed that the Russian government will not provide draft dodgers with certain public services, such as applications for driver's licenses or registration for their cars.[84] The Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs approved procedures for restricting the licenses of mobilization evaders on July 4 based on a law signed on April 14, 2023, by Russian President Vladimir Putin intended to further crack down on mobilization evasion.[85]

A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that Russian defense industrial base (DIB) producers have made efforts to speed up military equipment production during the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The milblogger claimed that the Uralvanzavod Research and Production Corporation in Nizhny Tagil, Sverdlovsk Oblast has sped up the production of wheeled and tracked vehicles during Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.[86] The milblogger also claimed that the employees of Uralvanzavod switched to a three-shift schedule in the fall of 2022 to increase tank production.[87] This increased effort has not apparently translated into a significant increase in tank production if United Kingdom Chief of the Defense Staff Admiral Sir Antony David Radakin's estimate that Russia can produce only 200 tanks per year is correct.[88]

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)

Occupation officials continue efforts to forcibly assimilate Ukrainian legal and cultural traditions into the Russian system in occupied territories. Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Head Denis Pushilin met with Chairman of the Association of Lawyers of Russia Sergey Stepashyn and discussed the acceleration of the integration of DNR legislation with Russian legal traditions, the improvement of DNR legal culture, and the creation of bodies to oversee the integration process.[89] Pushilin claimed that representatives of the Association will help develop DNR legal regulations and train DNR legal personnel.[90] ISW recently reported on issues with the streamlining of DNR and Russian law in the context of criminal trials of Ukrainian prisoners of war, and it appears as though Russian officials are interested in remedying these issues.[91] Kherson Oblast occupation head Volodymyr Saldo also claimed that Russian President Vladimir Putin has ordered Ukrainian cultural objects in the occupied territories to be "raised to the all-Russian level," likely meaning that Russian occupation authorities will begin the process of registering Ukrainian cultural heritage under Russian legislative standards.[92] Saldo claimed that the Kherson Occupation Administration has begun the "restoration" of regional and district cultural organizations, such as theaters, concert halls, and museums, and has received assistance from the Russian government.[93]

Russian forces continued to use civilians and civilian infrastructure as human shields to shelter military assets. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces continue to use children's institutions to accommodate Russian troops and leverage civilians as "human shields."^[94] The Ukrainian General Staff stated that Russian forces set up a military base of over 800 personnel at the Vesna children's sanatorium in Novopetrivka in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast and converted a recreation center into a military base in Chumakivka in occupied Kherson Oblast.^[95] Customary international humanitarian and Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions define the use of human shields as "utilizing the presence of a civilian or other protected person to render certain points, areas, or military forces immune from military operations," which is prohibited under international humanitarian law.^[96] ISW has not observed evidence to confirm or deny that Russian forces have removed all civilians from these facilities.

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.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko claimed on July 6 that Russia will transfer all planned tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus by the end of 2023, if not earlier.^[97] Lukashenko claimed that all hardened storage areas for Russian tactical nuclear weapons have been fully completed as of a month ago and that a large portion of the promised tactical nuclear warheads is currently located in Belarus.^[98] Lukashenko also responded to a Western journalist's question about the unnoticed transfer of tactical nuclear weapons, stating that the West has not noticed transfers of tactical nuclear weapons and that Belarus has not used railways to transfer warheads.^[99] Lukashenko did not exclude the possibility that Belarus might use railways to transport tactical nuclear weapons in the future.^[100] ISW has not observed any imagery of the construction of special hardened storage facilities necessary to store tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, and Ukrainian officials indicated that Russia likely has not deployed tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus as of July 5.^[101] ISW continues to assess that any confirmed construction of a special hardened storage facility would be a notable indicator of preparations for such transfers.

Satellite imagery shows that the three largest Russian tent camps for mobilized Russian personnel at Belarusian training grounds were dismantled around July 3. *Radio Liberty's* Belarusian service observed that tents disappeared from Obuz-Lesnovsky Training Ground near Baranavichy, Brest Oblast no earlier than June 30 after being stationed in the region since October 2022.^[102] *Radio Liberty* noted that there were 150 tents that could house about 3,000 servicemen at Obuz-Lesnovsky Training Ground as of June 6 and noted that a small number of tents were removed in early March following a rotation of mobilized personnel. A Russian tent camp of 75 tents (which could house 1,500 people) at the Lepelsky Training Ground in Vitebsk Oblast was dismantled sometime between July 4 and July 6 despite elements of the Russian 272nd Motorized Rifle Regiment appearing in Lepel on July 3. Satellite imagery captured between July 2 and July 4 also showed the dismantling of 30 tents (which could house 600 servicemen) at the Repishcha Training Ground near Asipovichy, Mogliev Oblast on July 3. *Radio Liberty* observed that Belarus began building a tent camp in Tsel, Asipovichy Raion with more than 300 tents in late June.^[103] It is unclear if Russian forces moved to a different location or have dismantled the camps after another rotation of mobilized personnel. The Ukrainian

General Staff reported on July 6 that Russian forces are transferring military personnel back to Russia from Belarus.^[104]

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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