

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, June 26, 2023

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June 26, 2023, 10pm ET

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

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

Note: The data cutoff for this product was 4pm ET on June 2. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the June 27 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russian President Vladimir Putin gave a speech on June 26 seeking to persuade as many Wagner fighters and leaders as possible to join the Russian military and continue fighting against Ukraine and to cause individuals most loyal to Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin to self-identify. Putin continued to denounce the organizers of the armed rebellion as traitors.[1] Putin thanked Russian society and the Russian security forces for defending Russia’s sovereignty and expressed gratitude to Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko for brokering negotiations with the perpetrators of the rebellion. Putin did not name Prigozhin specifically, but Putin’s speech leaves little room for any rapprochement with Prigozhin.

Putin stated that Russia’s true enemy is Ukraine and distinguished between the Wagner Group fighters and the armed rebellion’s organizers, presumably Prigozhin and Prigozhin loyalists, and offered Wagner Group fighters three choices. Putin gave the Wagner Group commanders and fighters space to distance themselves from Prigozhin’s armed rebellion, stating that “we know that the overwhelming majority of Wagner Group fighters and commanders are also Russian patriots, devoted to their people and state.”[2] Putin stated that Wagner fighters who seek to continue “serving Russia” can sign a contract with the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) or other Russian security services, retire and go home, or go to Belarus (presumably to be with Prigozhin).[3] Putin praised the work of Wagner Group commanders likely in an effort to retain them as the Wagner Group integrates into the MoD. The MoD’s ability to retain as many of Wagner’s current commanders as possible during the integration and subordination process is likely critical to maintaining the Wagner Group’s combat effectiveness and moral.

The Kremlin indicated that Russia aims to retain Wagner forces in order to sustain its operations in Ukraine and other international engagements. Putin could have arrested the Wagner commanders for treason, but instead offered to forgive and integrate Wagner forces – which indicates his need for trained and effective manpower. Putin is also likely attempting to finalize the Russian MoD-initiated formalization effort. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov reassured his foreign counterparts on June 26 that Wagner will continue operations in Mali and the Central African Republic.[4] Putin’s and Lavrov’s rhetoric support an ongoing domestic information campaign in

Russia to forgive and retain Wagner fighters.[5] Local Russian sources also reported that Wagner employees continue to recruit personnel in St. Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk, and Tyumen.[6]

Some Wagner Group forces may follow Prigozhin to Belarus. Russian opposition outlet *Verstka* reported on June 26 that Belarusian authorities are constructing several new camps to house the Wagner Group fighters in Belarus and that the construction of a 24,000 square kilometer base for 8,000 Wagner Group fighters is already underway in Asipovichy, Mogilev Oblast.[7] The location of a Wagner Group base in Asipovichy does not pose an immediate threat against Ukraine; Asipovichy is about 200 kilometers from Belarus' international border with Ukraine, and the establishment of new Wagner Group bases in Gomel or Brest oblasts on the border with Ukraine would be much more alarming. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko may seek to use the Prigozhin and Wagner Group fighters to balance against a longstanding Russian effort to establish a permanent military presence in Belarus, though the extent to which Lukashenko can successfully co-opt Prigozhin or refuse a potential Russian extradition demand for Prigozhin or Wagner fighters in Belarus remains unclear. Prigozhin's personal whereabouts remain unclear as of June 26, though some unconfirmed reports suggest that he is in the "Green City Hotel" in western Minsk City.[8]

Belarus will not offer Prigozhin or Wagner fighters a true haven if the Kremlin pressures Belarus, however. Putin may be presenting Belarus as a haven for Wagner fighters as a trap. The Kremlin will likely regard the Wagner Group personnel who follow Prigozhin to Belarus as traitors whether or not it takes immediate action against them. Putin notably stated in his June 26 speech that Wagner Group fighters are permitted to go to Belarus and that Putin will keep his unspecified "promise" about Wagner fighters who choose to do so.[9] Putin's acknowledgement that he made a personal promise, presumably that Wagner personnel who went to Belarus would be safe there, was remarkable. The long-term value of that promise, Putin's speech notwithstanding, is questionable. Wagner Group personnel in Belarus are unlikely to remain safe from Russian extradition orders if Putin reneges and charges them with treason. Lukashenko previously turned over 33 Belarusian-detained Wagner personnel to Moscow after using them as leverage against the Kremlin in 2020, and there is no apparent reason why he would not do so again.[10]

Prigozhin attempted to downplay his armed rebellion on June 26 in his first statement since the rebellion failed, likely in an attempt to shield himself from accusations of attempting a coup against Putin. Prigozhin stated that Wagner forces did not intend to overthrow the government, but instead attempted to raise awareness about the Russian MoD's efforts to destroy Wagner forces.[11] Prigozhin accused the Russian MoD of first attempting to dissolve the Wagner PMC on July 1 via its formalization order and then of striking Wagner's rear areas on June 23. Prigozhin claimed that the Wagner PMC sought to demonstratively turn in their military equipment to the Russian Southern Military District (SMD) on June 30 to appease the Russian MoD's inventorization requirements until the Russian MoD struck a Wagner camp. Prigozhin reiterated that the Wagner PMC decided to stop its advance 200 kilometers south of Moscow because Wagner realized that advancing further would result in casualties among Wagner and Russian security forces. Prigozhin acknowledged that Lukashenko extended his assistance to help the Wagner PMC legally continue operating as Wagner forces and decided to return to their training camps.

Prigozhin's efforts to convince Putin of his loyalty clearly failed as Putin characterized the armed rebellion as a blackmail attempt and denounced its organizers as traitors following Prigozhin's statement.[12] Putin stated that Russian society showed that “any blackmail, any attempt to stage domestic turmoil is doomed to fail.” Putin’s use of the word “blackmail” indicates that Putin perceived that Prigozhin was attempting to coerce him into accepting Prigozhin’s demands rather than intending to directly attack the Kremlin. ISW previously assessed that Prigozhin likely sought to blackmail Putin into firing Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Chief of the General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov rather than intending to stage a coup in Moscow.[13] Both Putin and Prigozhin sought to reject the framing of the rebellion as a coup, with Putin attempting to preserve the image of the solidity of his regime. Putin also stated that “organizers of the armed rebellion” deliberately staged the rebellion and misled Wagner forces into criminal action. Putin emphasized that Russian forces and officials conducted all necessary measures to avoid bloodshed under his “direct orders,” which undermines Prigozhin’s claims that Wagner decided to deescalate the situation. Putin added that the armed rebellion could have benefited Ukraine and the West, and Lavrov earlier announced that Russia is investigating whether Western intelligence were involved in the rebellion.[14] The Kremlin may be setting information conditions to try Prigozhin and his loyal subordinates as traitors conspiring with external enemies, and such criminal charges would force Lukashenko to surrender Prigozhin and Wagner forces regardless of these Lukashenko-brokered negotiations.

The Kremlin is likely attempting to signal that Shoigu will maintain his position for now and that Putin will not give into Prigozhin's blackmail attempt. The Russian MoD reported that Shoigu visited an unspecified forward command post of the Russian Western Group of Forces in Ukraine on June 26 – his first public appearance since Prigozhin’s drive on Rostov-on-Don and Moscow.[15] The Russian MoD previously identified that the Western Group of Forces operates on the Kupyansk-Svatove line in Kharkiv and Luhansk oblasts. Shoigu reportedly met with Western Group of Forces commander Colonel General Yevgeny Nikiforov and tasked the grouping with preventing Ukrainian advances on the frontline. Shoigu notably did not visit the SMD headquarters in Rostov-on-Don after Wagner’s occupation of the city ended and or otherwise connect with SMD forces in southern Ukraine after the armed rebellion concluded. It is currently unclear if the Kremlin will replace Shoigu and Gerasimov, but it is unlikely that the Kremlin would make such drastic command changes immediately since doing so would seem to be conceding to Prigozhin’s demands. ISW has previously assessed that Putin values loyalty, and Shoigu and Gerasimov have demonstrated their allegiance to Putin.[16]

Russian sources, however, continued to speculate about Russian military command changes following Prigozhin's armed rebellion. Russian milbloggers began a campaign promoting Tula Oblast Governor Alexei Dyumin to replace Shoigu as Russian defense minister by amplifying a video in which Dyumin visited a Tula volunteer battalion on June 25.[17] Other milbloggers claimed that the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) is currently investigating Dyumin’s connection to Prigozhin and Wagner’s reported access to Pantsir missile systems.[18] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger suggested that the Kremlin may reshuffle Head of the Russian General Staff’s Main Operational Directorate Colonel General Sergei Rudskoy, Chief of the Russian Armed Forces’ Main Combat Training Directorate Lieutenant General Ivan Buvaltsev, and Head of the General Staff’s Main Organizational and Mobilization Directorate Colonel General Yevgeny Burdinsky soon.[19] The milblogger claimed that the Kremlin may replace Burdinsky for his inability to account for convicts within “Storm Z” units who were then recruited by other armed formations, and could

replace Rudskoy for failing to implement a Kharkiv operational plan – the objectives of which are unknown.

The future of the Wagner Group is unclear, but it will likely not include Yevgeny Prigozhin and may not continue to exist as a distinct or unitary entity. Putin’s appeal to Wagner commanders and servicemen indicates that the Kremlin aims to lure Wagner forces to the Russian MoD, but it is unclear how the Kremlin will organize Wagner into its military structure. The Kremlin may break up Wagner forces operating in Ukraine to reinforce existing military formations, or get Wagner forces to sign up for Russian MoD-affiliated PMCs.[20] The Russian MoD has previously lied to volunteers about keeping their formations together to ensure that recruits sign military contracts, after which the Russian military command dissolved the units.[21] The Kremlin may choose to keep the Wagner entity solely to sustain operations in Africa or the Middle East and break up Wagner’s group of forces in Ukraine. Such scenarios may impact Wagner forces’ morale and combat effectiveness. Prigozhin claimed that Wagner commanders and personnel categorically opposed Wagner’s subordination under the Russian MoD and noted that the Russian military command would misuse experienced Wagner fighters as cannon fodder.[22] Wagner forces, who had previously enjoyed their autonomy, will likely face hostility from Russian military commanders in retaliation for Wagner’s efforts to undermine regular forces. *The Telegraph*, citing British special services, reported that Russian special forces threatened to harm the families of Wagner commanders during the armed rebellion, which may further trigger tensions and low morale.[23]

Putin’s June 26 speech likely signaled a decisive break between Prigozhin and Putin, and it is likely that the Kremlin will attempt to replace the Wagner leader to distance the PMC from Prigozhin’s betrayal – if the Kremlin decides to keep Wagner as a distinct entity. The Kremlin has not yet made any announcements regarding Wagner’s fate at the time of this publication. Some Russian sources began to mention Wagner founder Dmitry Utkin even though Utkin has remained out of the public eye throughout Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine.[24] Commander of the Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) “Vostok” Battalion Alexander Khodakovsky, for example, recalled a time when Utkin saved a Wagner employee from Prigozhin and his henchmen’s beatings.[25]

Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations and advanced on at least two sectors of the front as of June 26. Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Commander Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskiy stated that Ukrainian forces cleared a Russian bridgehead across the Siverskyi-Donets Donbas canal in the Bakhmut direction, and Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced southwest of Bakhmut.[26] Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar, other Ukrainian officials, and geolocated footage confirmed that Ukrainian forces captured Rivnopil near the administrative border between Donetsk and Zaporizhia oblasts as of June 26.[27] Russian sources additionally confirmed that Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in the Donetsk and Zaporizhia oblast administrative border area.[28] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian ground attacks near Robotyne, south of Orikhiv in western Zaporizhia Oblast.[29] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Valeriy Shershen stated that Ukrainian forces advanced one and a half kilometers in an unspecified area of the Tavriisk (Zaporizhia) direction.[30] Malyar stated that Ukrainian forces have recaptured 130 square kilometers of territory in southern Ukraine since the start of the Ukrainian counteroffensive.[31] The UK MoD indicated on June 26 that Russian forces likely lack operational-level reserves that could reinforce against simultaneous Ukrainian threats on multiple areas of the front hundreds of kilometers from each other, chiefly Bakhmut and southern Ukraine.[32]

Russian forces conducted a missile and drone strike on Ukraine on the night of June 25 to 26. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces shot down two of three Russian Kalibr cruise missiles and seven of eight Shahed 131 or 136 drones.[33] Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported that one missile struck a storage facility in Odesa Oblast.[34] Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Natalia Humenyuk reported that strong storms over the Black Sea made it difficult for Ukrainian air defenses to intercept targets.[35]

Key Takeaways

- **Russian President Vladimir Putin gave a speech on June 26 seeking to persuade as many Wagner fighters and leaders as possible to join the Russian military and continue fighting against Ukraine and to cause individuals most loyal to Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin to self-identify.**
- **The Kremlin indicated that Russia aims to retain Wagner forces to sustain its operations in Ukraine and other international engagements.**
- **Prigozhin attempted to downplay his armed rebellion on June 26 in his first statement since the rebellion failed, likely in an attempt to shield himself from accusations of attempting a coup against Putin.**
- **Prigozhin's efforts to convince Putin of his loyalty clearly failed as Putin characterized the armed rebellion as a blackmail attempt and denounced its organizers as traitors following Prigozhin's statement.**
- **The Kremlin is likely attempting to signal that Shoigu will maintain his position for now and that Putin will not give into Prigozhin's blackmail attempt.**
- **The future of the Wagner Group is unclear, but it will likely not include Yevgeny Prigozhin and may not continue to exist as a distinct or unitary entity.**
- **Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations and advanced on at least two sectors of the front as of June 26.**
- **Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks northwest of Svatove and south of Kreminna.**
- **Ukrainian and Russian forces continued ground attacks around Bakhmut, and Ukrainian forces reportedly advanced as of June 26.**
- **Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line.**
- **Ukrainian and Russian forces continued to skirmish in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia oblasts administrative border area and Ukrainian forces made gains as of June 26.**
- **Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued limited ground attacks in western Zaporizhia Oblast.**
- **Geolocated footage confirmed that Ukrainian forces maintain positions near the Antonivsky Bridge in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast as of June 26.**
- **The Russian State Duma passed a law prohibiting private military companies (PMCs) from recruiting prisoners.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of June 26, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

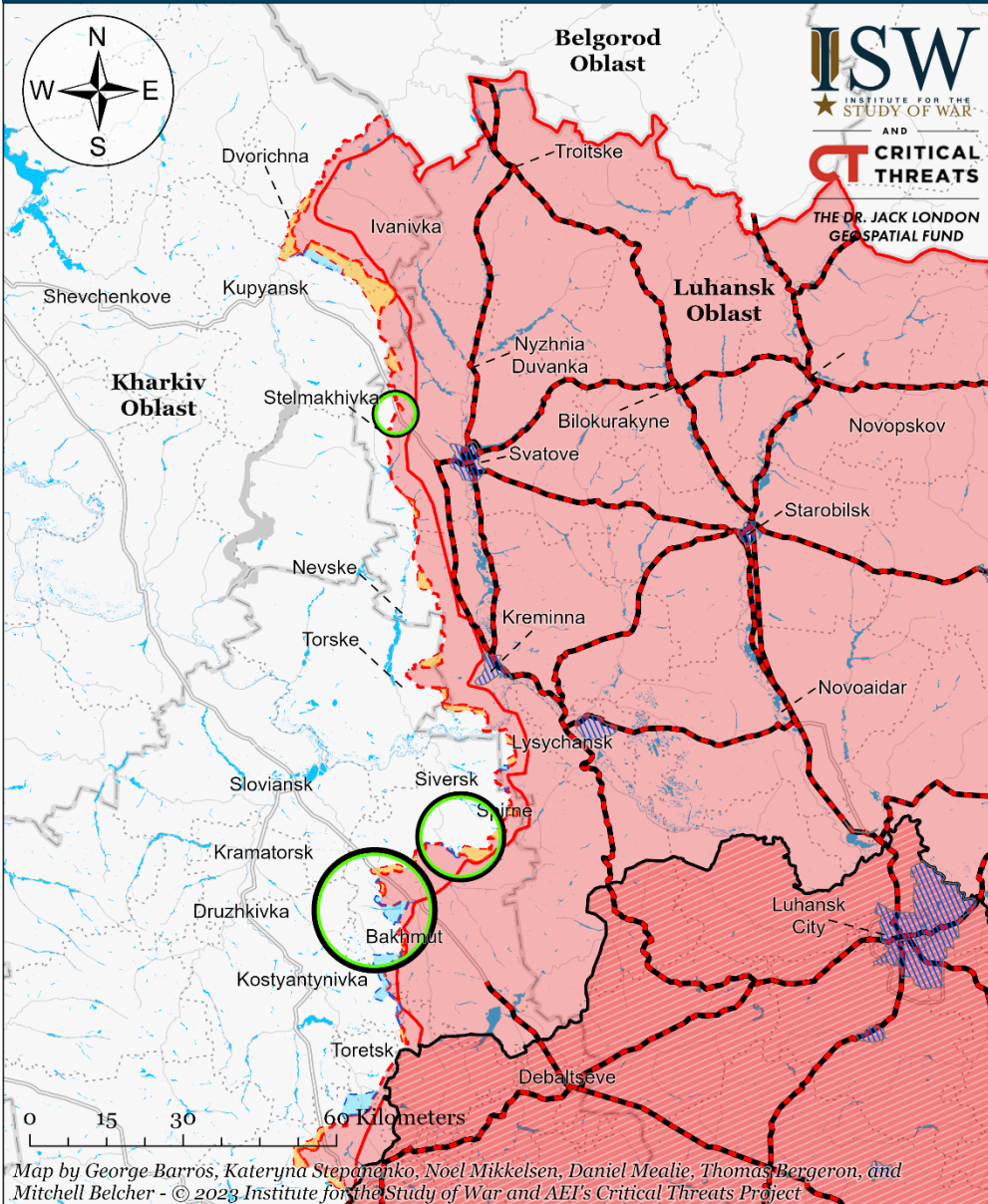
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety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

Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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

Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks northwest of Svatove and south of Kreminna on June 26. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Stelmakhivka (15km northwest of Svatove), Kryvoshyvka (10km northwest of Svatove), Rozdolivka (32km southwest of Kreminna), and Vesele (32km southwest of Kreminna).[36] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces attempted to advance toward Berestove (20km northwest of Svatove) and conducted attacks near Kreminna.[37] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled two Ukrainian attacks near Spirne (25km south of Kreminna).[38]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of June 26, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

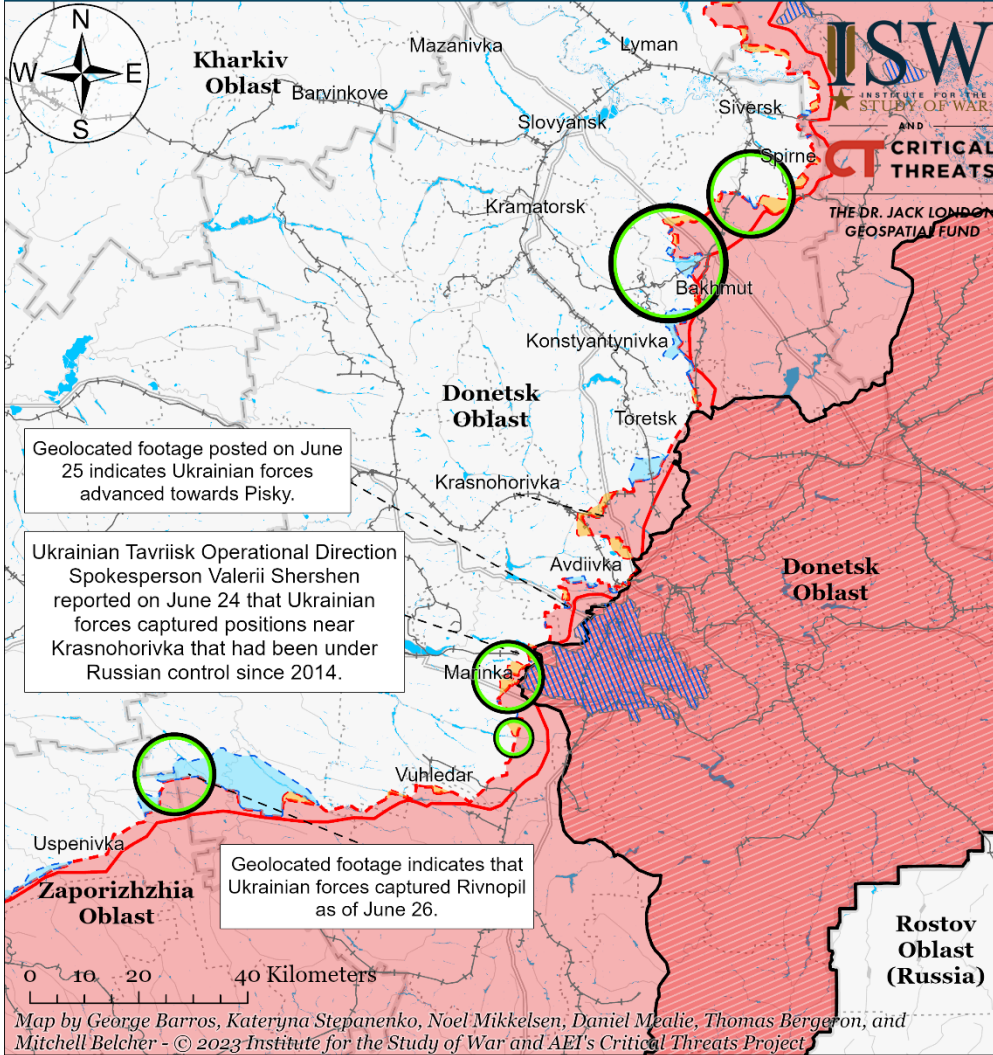
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

Ukrainian and Russian forces continued ground attacks around Bakhmut, and Ukrainian forces reportedly advanced as of June 26. Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Commander Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskiy stated that Ukrainian forces cleared a Russian bridgehead across the Siverskyi-Donets Donbas canal in the Bakhmut direction, possibly referring to an area southwest of Bakhmut.[39] Official Ukrainian footage published on June 26 shows Ukrainian forces attacking positions of the 3rd Battalion of the 57th Motorized Rifle Brigade (5th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) in the Bakhmut direction, and Russian forces withdrawing across a waterway.[40] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) and Kurdyumivka (12km southwest of Bakhmut).[41] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Serhiy Cherevaty stated on June 25 that Ukrainian forces advanced 600 to 1,000 meters in the Bakhmut direction.[42] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Mynkivka (13km northwest of Bakhmut), Hryhorivka (10km northwest of Bakhmut), and Bohdanivka (5km northwest of Bakhmut).[43] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Ivanivske (6km west of Bakhmut).[44] Cherevaty stated that Russian forces are transferring airborne (VDV) units, infantry, BARS (Russian Combat Reserve), territorial troops, Storm-Z units, and units of the private military companies (PMCs) “Patriot,” “Fakel,” and “Veterany” to Bakhmut in an effort maintain control over the city.[45] Russian milbloggers previously claimed that Russian state-owned energy company Gazprom created PMC “Fakel,” which reportedly operated in Bakhmut as of April 26.[46]

Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on June 26. Geolocated footage published on June 25 shows that Russian forces recently made limited gains in Marinka.[47] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka), Marinka (on the southwestern outskirts of Donetsk City), and Novomykhailivka (10km south of Marinka).[48] Footage published on June 26 purportedly shows elements of the Russian 9th Brigade (1st Donetsk People’s Republic Army Corps) operating near Pervomaiske and elements of the 14th Brigade, formerly the “Kalmius” Artillery Brigade, (1st Donetsk People’s Republic Army Corps) operating in the Avdiivka direction.[49]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of June 26, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

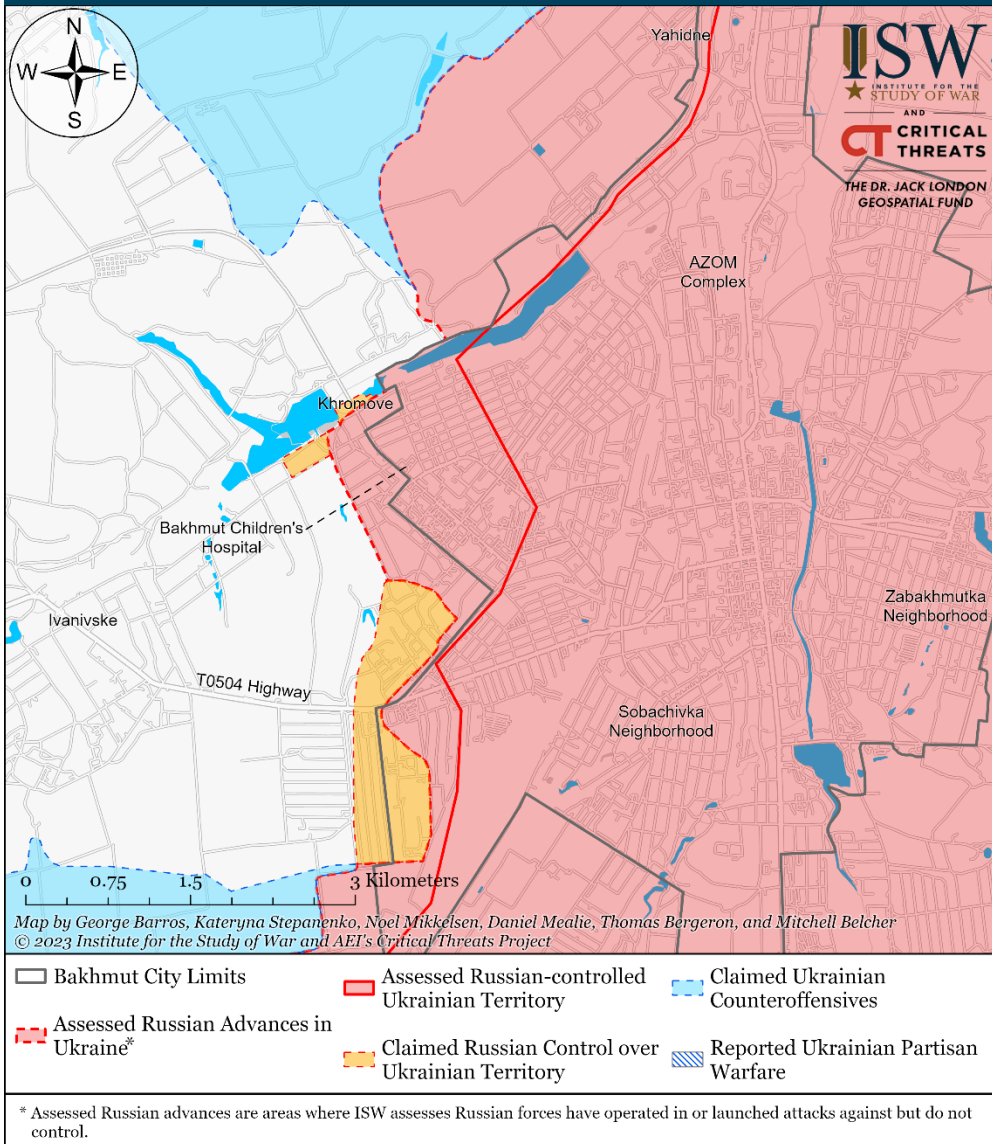


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- + Major Railroads
- 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 Tavriisk Operational Direction Spokesperson Valerii Shershen reported on June 24 that Ukrainian forces captured positions near Krasnohorivka that had been under Russian control since 2014. ISW cannot assess the exact areas of advances at this time due to a lack of sufficient evidence.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of June 26, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

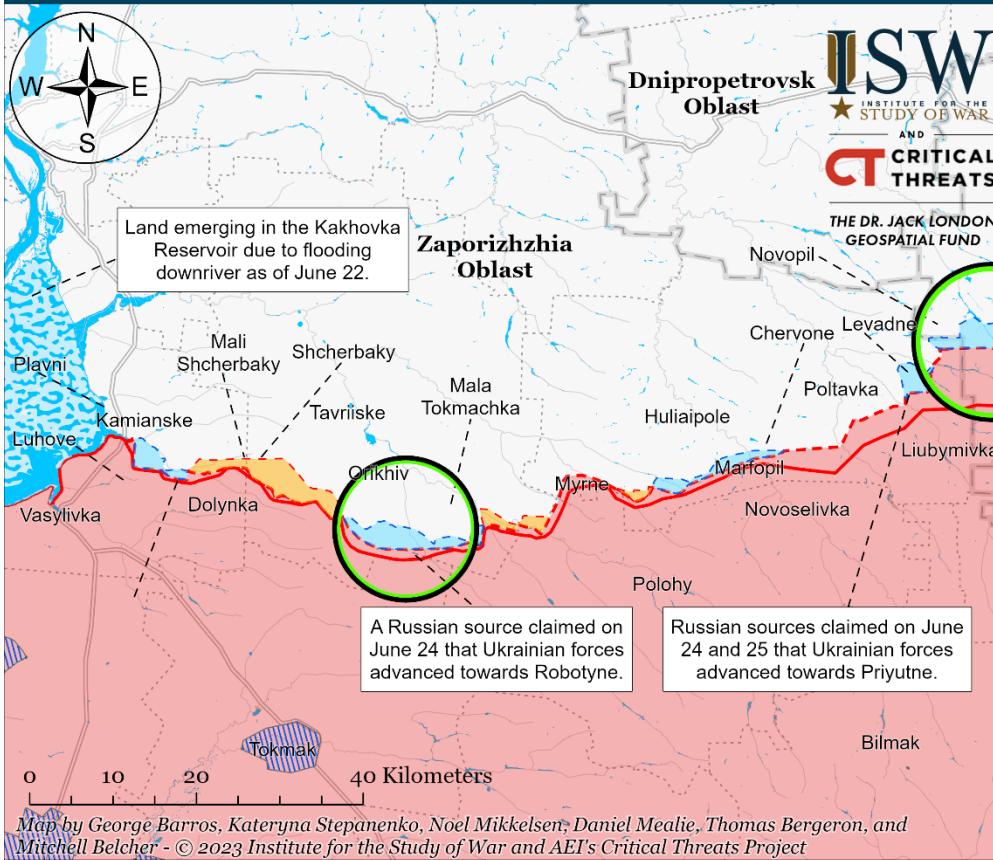
Ukrainian and Russian forces continued to skirmish in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia oblasts administrative border area, and Ukrainian forces made gains as of June 26. Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar, other Ukrainian officials, and geolocated footage confirmed that Ukrainian forces captured Rivnopil (9km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) on June 26.[50] The Russian MoD and a Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces repelled four Ukrainian attacks near Rivnopil.[51] Other Russian sources acknowledged that Ukrainian forces entered Rivnopil but claimed that Russian forces still maintain positions in part of the settlement.[52] Russian milbloggers

claimed that Ukrainian forces also attacked along the Levadne-Rivnopil-Makarivka line (5-17km southwest of Velyka Novosilka), the Priyutne-Staromaiorske line (8-14km southwest of Velyka Novosilka), and near Novodonetske (11km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[53] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Novodarivka (14km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) in order to recapture positions in the area.[54] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces did retake territory in the area, however.[55] Russian milbloggers claimed that the Russian 60th Motorized Rifle Brigade (5th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) or an element of the 136th Motorized Rifle Brigade (58th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) is operating in the Makarivka area (5km south of Velyka Novosilka).[56]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued limited ground attacks in western Zaporizhia Oblast on June 26. The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian attack near Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv).[57] Some Russian milbloggers indicated that Pyatykhatky (23km southwest of Orikhiv) is contested and that Russian artillery fire prevents Ukrainian forces from reentering the settlement, but ISW is unable to confirm these claims.[58]

Geolocated footage confirmed that Ukrainian forces maintain positions near the Antonivsky Bridge in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast as of June 26. Geolocated footage posted on June 25 shows Russian forces firing on Ukrainian positions near the Antonivsky Bridge as well as Russian infantry retreating from the bridge area.[59] Russian milbloggers continued to claim that Russian forces fired on Ukrainian positions near the bridge on the east bank on June 26.[60] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces control the dacha area near Oleshky (7km southeast of Kherson City) and that the shoreline near Hola Prystan (8km south of Kherson City) is a contested area.[61] Some Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces attempted to push Ukrainian forces off the riverbank, but that Ukrainian forces have entrenched in their positions near the Antonivsky Bridge.[62] Russian milbloggers indicated that the Russian 205th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (49th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) and 108th Air Assault Regiment (7th Guards Mountain Air Assault Division).[63]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of June 26, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

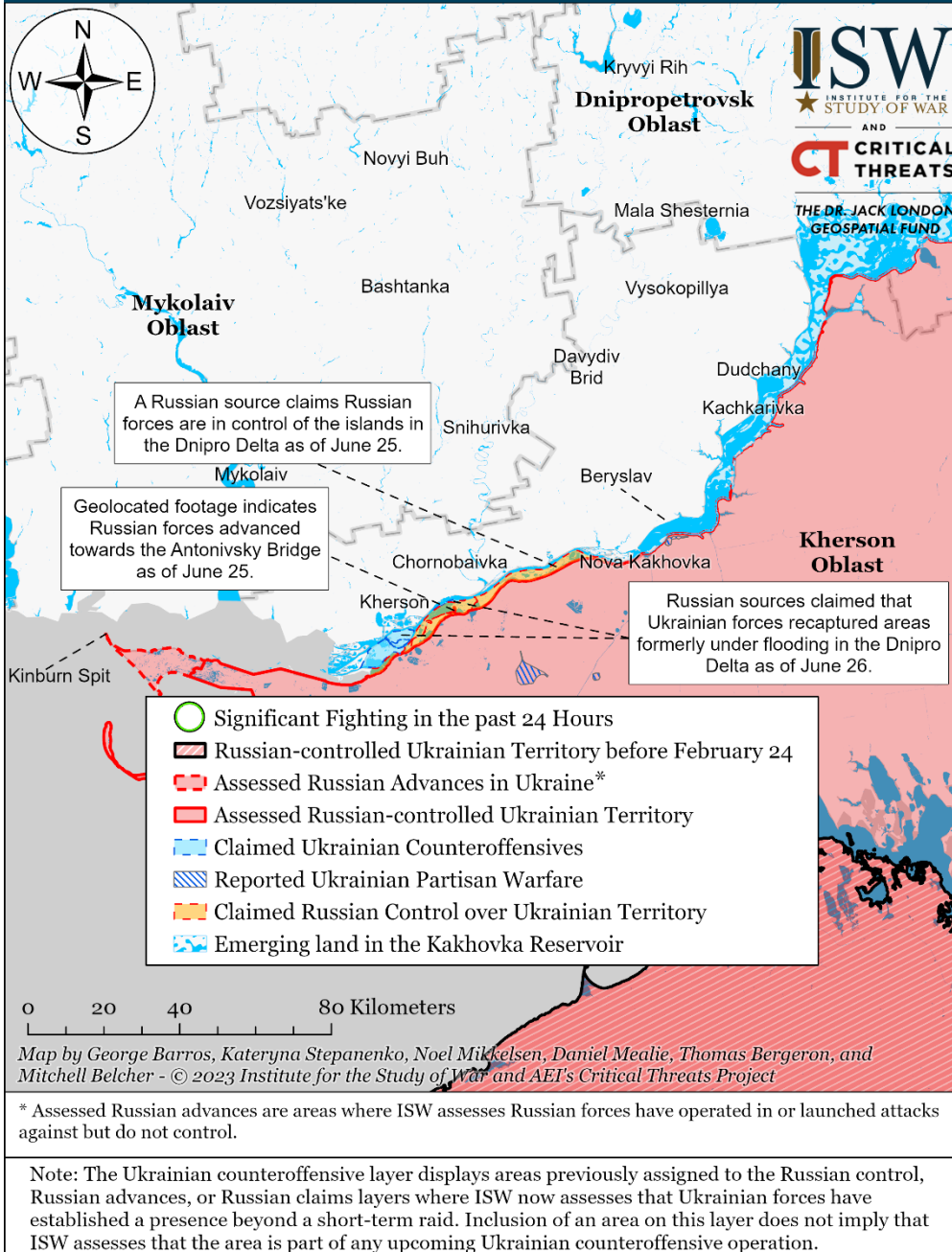


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*

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

Note: Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar claimed on June 26 that Ukrainian forces recaptured 17 square kilometers in the past week and 130 square kilometers since the start of the counteroffensive.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of June 26, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

The Russian State Duma passed a law prohibiting private military companies (PMCs) from recruiting prisoners on June 24. The head of the Russian State Duma Committee on Legislation and State

Construction, Pavel Krasheninnikov, announced on June 26 that the Russian State Duma passed a law prohibiting prisoners from signing contracts with PMCs, only allowing them to sign contracts with the Russian MoD.[64] ISW previously assessed that the Russian MoD blocked Wagner from recruiting prisoners in Winter 2023 as the Russian MoD sought to reassert its primacy over all Russian forces and operations in Ukraine.[65]

The Republic of Bashkortostan continues to form new regional volunteer formations. Bashkortostan Head Radiy Khabirov announced that Bashkortostan formed the main elements of the “Bashkortostan” volunteer regiment, which will receive its combat banner on June 29.[66] Bashkortostan authorities claimed in April that over 600 people signed up for the new “Northern Amurs” and “Vatan” volunteer battalions.[67] Bashkortostan has also deployed newly created “Sergei Zorin” tank and “Vatan” volunteer battalions to Ukraine in April and May.[68]

Russian military personnel and their families continue to voice grievances over poor treatment in the Russian military. A Russian milblogger posted a letter claiming that volunteers of the 31st Guards Air Assault (VDV) Brigade have not received their promised pay.[69] The letter claimed that Russian authorities promised higher compensation to those who already fought in Ukraine but have only paid these personnel their basic salaries, while new recruits are not paid at all. The letter also claimed that the Russian MoD denied one volunteer the promised one-time 195,000-ruble (about \$2,310) payment for signing an 11-month contract and told him that he would need to sign another year-long contract to receive the money. Footage published on June 26 shows relatives of mobilized personnel from Stavropol Krai appealing to krai governor Vladimir Vladimirov for better treatment of their relatives. The relatives claimed that Russian military commanders send mobilized personnel into battle without ammunition and threaten to kill them if they refuse to conduct attacks.[70] ISW has previously reported on appeals from Russian military personnel and their families to Russian leadership for better treatment.[71]

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)

A Ukrainian official reported that Russian forces continue to forcibly remove Ukrainian children from occupied areas under vacation schemes. Ukrainian Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov reported on June 26 that Russian occupation authorities sent Ukrainian children from occupied Melitopol, Zaporizhia Oblast to “summer camps” in Crimea on June 24 and 25.[72] Fedorov stated that Russian occupation authorities shut down the Chonhar, Crimea checkpoint due to recent Ukrainian strikes against the bridge, so the Ukrainian children suffered in hot busses waiting to enter Crimea at the Armyansk, Crimea checkpoint.

A Ukrainian official indicated that Russian forces continue to appropriate civilian medical facilities in occupied territories for military use. Ukrainian Luhansk Oblast Head Artem Lysohor stated that Russian forces expropriated a medical facility in Luhansk City to treat Russian soldiers.[73]

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.

See topline text.

Note: ISW does not receive any classified material from any source, uses only publicly available information, and draws extensively on Russian, Ukrainian, and Western reporting and social media as well as commercially available satellite imagery and other geospatial data as the basis for these reports. References to all sources used are provided in the endnotes of each update.

[1] <http://en.kremlin dot ru/events/president/news/71528>

[2] <http://kremlin dot ru/events/president/news/71528>

[3] <http://kremlin dot ru/events/president/news/71528>

[4] <https://www.themoscowtimes dot com/2023/06/26/wagner-will-continue-mali-c-africa-operations-lavrov-a81648>

[5] <https://t.me/severrealii/17972>

[6] <https://t.me/RU66RU/43661>; <https://meduza dot io/news/2023/06/26/v-novosibirsk-vozobnovil-rabotu-tsentra-verbavki-v-chvk-vagnera>; <https://tass dot ru/obschestvo/18119635>; <https://tass dot ru/obschestvo/18119055>; <https://t.me/rotondamedia/4720>

[7] <https://verstka dot media/v-belarusi-stroyat-lagerya-dlya-vagnera>

[8] <https://t.me/rusbrief/130446>; <https://charter97 dot org/ru/news/2023/6/26/553497/>

[9] <http://kremlin dot ru/events/president/news/71528>

[10] <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/uk-and-europe/2021/11/17/inside-wagnergate-ukraines-brazen-sting-operation-to-snare-russian-mercenaries/>

[11] https://t.me/concordgroup_official/1304

[12] <http://en.kremlin dot ru/events/president/news/71528>

[13] <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-june-24-2023>

[14] <https://russian.rt dot com/world/article/1166794-lavrov-intervyu-rt>; https://t.me/miroshnik_r/11934; https://t.me/miroshnik_r/11935

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