

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 3, 2023

Kateryna Stepanenko, Grace Mappes, Angelica Evans,
Christina Harward, and Mason Clark

October 3, 2023, 8:40pm ET

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

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

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 2:30pm ET on October 3. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the October 4 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu celebrated an odd group of Russian armed formations operating in the western Zaporizhia Oblast direction during a conference call with Russian military leadership. Shoigu's choice of units could indicate he seeks to highlight Russian commanders who continue to follow Russian military leadership's orders for relentless counterattacks. Shoigu attributed successful Russian defensive operations around Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv) and Verbove (18km southeast of Orikhiv) to elements of the Russian 70th Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District), 56th Air Assault (VDV) Regiment (7th VDV Division), 810th Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet), and the 291st Guards Artillery Brigade (58th CAA, SMD) during a Russian military command meeting on October 3.[1] Shoigu did not highlight other formations that are routinely credited for maintaining the Robotyne-Verbove line such as the 108th VDV Regiment (7th VDV Division) or the 247th VDV Regiment (7th VDV Division).[2]

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) has routinely deliberately snubbed or amplified the achievements of certain commanders in order to achieve Shoigu or the Russian military command's political objectives.[3] While it is possible that Shoigu simply wanted to celebrate only a few formations, Shoigu may have highlighted some of these formations for political reasons. Some Russian milbloggers recently indicated that Russian commanders are increasingly facing a choice between either "wasting" their troops in counterattacks to hold tactical positions, or standing up to the Russian military command by retreating to previously prepared positions, thereby risking their careers.[4] One Russian frontline unit commander also indicated that Commander of Russian VDV Forces Colonel General Mikhail Teplinsky previously helped a degraded VDV formation avoid resuming counterattacks in the Bakhmut direction, and Shoigu could be snubbing formations who are advocating for tactical retreats to prepared defensive positions.[5]

Some of the formations Shoigu highlighted have been consistently counterattacking on the Robotyne-Verbove line to their detriment. ISW observed on September 26 that elements of the 70th Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment and other formations of the 58th CAA (likely including the 291st Guards Artillery Brigade) continued to counterattack near Novoprokopivka (13km south of Orikhiv) despite

their likely degraded state.[6] ISW also assessed that the involvement of the 70th Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment in these counterattacks suggests that the combat capabilities of active elements of the 7th VDV Division are significantly degraded and that these VDV elements can no longer conduct all counterattacks along the entire Ukrainian breach in the Orikhiv direction.[7] Military police of the 70th Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment were recently involved in an interethnic altercation with personnel of an element of the 71st Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division).[8] Ukrainian intelligence reported that the Ukrainian counteroffensive in western Zaporizhia Oblast had “completely defeated” the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade and that the brigade had been withdrawn.[9] ISW has not observed the broader Russian information space discuss the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade’s combat operations since early to mid-September.[10] A Russian milblogger that advocates for Teplinsky claimed that elements of the 56th VDV Regiment have been consistently counterattacking from their vulnerable positions in Novofedorivka (18km southeast of Orikhiv) and that the commander of the regiment was facing a decision to either counterattack or withdraw to previously prepared positions.[11]

The Russian MoD signaled its support for Chechen units fighting in Ukraine amid a recent controversy surrounding interethnic tensions in the Russian government, military, and information space. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu personally thanked Chechen Head Ramzan Kadyrov for overseeing the formation of three motorized rifle regiments and three motorized rifle battalions in Chechnya during a conference with Russian military leadership on October 3.[12] Shoigu claimed that these Chechen units have “proven themselves worthy” in the war in Ukraine and that over 14,500 Russian military personnel have undergone training at the Russian Special Forces University in Gudermes, Chechnya, before deploying to Ukraine. Kadyrov claimed on October 2 that over 30,000 Chechens have deployed to Ukraine, including over 14,000 volunteers.[13] Shoigu’s public praise of Kadyrov and Chechen units indicates the Russian MoD’s support for these units amid growing interethnic tension, as well as in the context of recent controversy in the Russian information space over statements by the Chairperson of the “Patriots of Russia” political party and the State Duma Committee of Nationalities Gennady Semigin about the superiority of Chechen “Akhmat” forces over regular Russian forces.[14]

The Kremlin also publicly indicated its support for Kadyrov’s style of rule in Chechnya following significant public outcry against Kadyrov and his son. Kadyrov stated on October 2 that he supported a proposal by Chechen Republic Prime Minister Muslim Khuchiev to appoint Kadyrov’s 24-year-old daughter, current Chechen Minister of Culture Aishat Kadyrova, as Deputy Prime Minister for Social Issues.[15] Kadyrov further stated on October 3 that he presented Kadyrova with the People’s Artist of Chechnya award and a Second Class Civilian Medal of the Order “For Merit to the Fatherland,” which Russian President Vladimir Putin conferred on Kadyrova in September.[16] Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov responded to questions about Kadyrova’s appointment, stating that regional appointments are at the “prerogative of the head of the region” and that “Kadyrov is using his prerogative.”[17] The Kremlin’s deferral to Kadyrov’s recent decisions surrounding his daughter and Chechen government affairs comes after a controversy regarding Kadyrov’s praise for his son, Adam Kadyrov, who beat a detained man accused of burning a Quran. This comes despite prominent members of the Russian Human Rights Council calling for the investigation into Adam Kadyrov for the beating.[18] Both the Kremlin and MoD’s public responses on October 3 indicate that the Russian government will likely not punish Semigin, Ramzon Kadyrov, or Adam Kadyrov.

Russian President Vladimir Putin is reportedly preparing to announce his (certain to win) presidential campaign in November 2023, and reportedly intends to discuss the war in Ukraine as little as is necessary in political messaging. Russian outlet *Kommersant* reported on October 3 that sources close to the Russian Presidential Administration stated that Putin may announce his campaign during or shortly after the opening of the “Rossiya” international exhibition and forum on November 4.[19] *Kommersant*’s sources claimed that the main ideological line of Putin’s campaign will be Russia as a “family of families” being attacked by its enemies and that Putin’s campaign will only discuss the war in Ukraine “exactly as much as necessary.” ISW has previously observed that Russian officials, particularly those affiliated with Putin’s United Russia party, appear concerned with the impacts the war will have on the electorate during local and regional elections.[20] Russian news outlet *RBK* reported that the Kremlin is compiling a list of “proxies” to campaign for Putin ahead of the March 2024 presidential elections.[21] These “proxies” must meet several criteria, including: expressing public support for Putin and the war in Ukraine; having a high level of recognition and respect in their communities; having public speaking skills and debate experience; and being involved in religion, the military, education, or other specified public spheres. Concerns within the Kremlin and United Russia over domestic support for the war and efforts to increase public support for Putin are not indications that United Russia or Putin’s dominance of Russian politics faces a legitimate threat in the upcoming presidential election.

A Reuters report published on October 3 stated that Russian forces have embedded “Storm-Z” units within conventional Russian units to conduct costly counterattacks against Ukrainian gains in key sectors of the front. *Reuters* reported that the Storm-Z units are composed of 100-150 personnel, including both civilian penal recruits and Russian soldiers under punishment, are embedded within conventional Russian military units, and deploy to the most exposed parts of the front.[22] *Reuters* estimated that Russia has currently deployed at least several hundred personnel to the front line in various “Storm-Z” units. *Reuters* interviewed multiple Russian soldiers, including fighters in “Storm-Z” units, which the Russian military command reportedly views as lesser than conventional military units. The Russian soldiers told *Reuters* that the Russian military command sends Russian soldiers to serve in the “Storm-Z” units after they commit acts of disobedience, including insubordination or drinking alcohol. *Reuters* reported that the Storm-Z units have sustained heavy losses, and one soldier embedded in the 237th Guards Air Assault Regiment (76th Airborne [VDV] Division) reportedly stated that his “Storm-Z” unit of 120 personnel lost all but 15 personnel while fighting near Bakhmut in June 2023. The Russian MoD has never formally confirmed the existence of the “Storm-Z” units, and ISW first reported on the existence of these “Storm-Z” units in April 2023.[23]

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 3. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhia Oblast) direction and offensive actions in the Bakhmut direction.[24] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued ground attacks near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) and Andriivka (10km south of Bakhmut) south of Bakhmut and on the Kopani-Robotyne-Verbove line (11-18km southwest to southeast of Orikhiv) in western Zaporizhia Oblast.[25]

Russian forces conducted a series of drone and missile strikes against Ukraine on the night of October 2 to 3. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on October 3 that Ukrainian air defenses downed 29 of 31 Shahed drones and one Iskander-M cruise missile targeting Mykolaiv and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts.[26] Russian sources, including the Russian MoD, claimed that Russian forces struck an industrial enterprise near Pavlohrad, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast.[27]

The Armenian Parliament ratified the International Criminal Court's (ICC) Rome Statute on October 3.[28] Armenia joins six other former Soviet countries in ratifying the Rome Statute: Georgia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Republic of Moldova, and Tajikistan.[29] Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov called Armenia's decision to ratify the Rome Statute an "incorrect step" from the perspective of Russo-Armenian relations.[30]

Key Takeaways:

- **Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu celebrated an odd group of Russian armed formations operating in the western Zaporizhia Oblast direction during a conference call with Russian military leadership.**
- **Shoigu's choice of units could indicate he seeks to highlight Russian commanders who continue to follow Russian military leadership's orders for relentless counterattacks.**
- **The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) signaled its support for both Chechen units in Ukraine and Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov amid a recent controversy surrounding interethnic tensions in the Russian government, military, and information space.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin is reportedly preparing to announce his (certain to win) presidential campaign in November 2023, and reportedly intends to discuss the war in Ukraine as little as is necessary in political messaging.**
- **A Reuters report published on October 3 stated that Russian forces have embedded "Storm-Z" units within conventional Russian units to conduct costly counterattacks against Ukrainian gains in key sectors of the front.**
- **Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on October 3.**
- **Russian forces conducted a series of drone and missile strikes against Ukraine on the night of October 2 to 3.**
- **The Armenian Parliament ratified the International Criminal Court's (ICC) Rome Statute on October 3.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and reportedly advanced in some areas.**
- **The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) is reportedly investigating Kursk Oblast Governor Roman Starovoit, likely in an attempt to remove government officials with connections to deceased Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin.**

- Russian opposition outlet *Verstka* revealed that almost half of all occupation officials of the senior and middle management levels in occupied Kherson, Zaporizhia, Donetsk, and Luhansk oblasts are from Russia.



We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We will continue to evaluate and report on the effects of

these criminal activities on the Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population and specifically on combat in Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn these Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict, Geneva Conventions, and humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

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

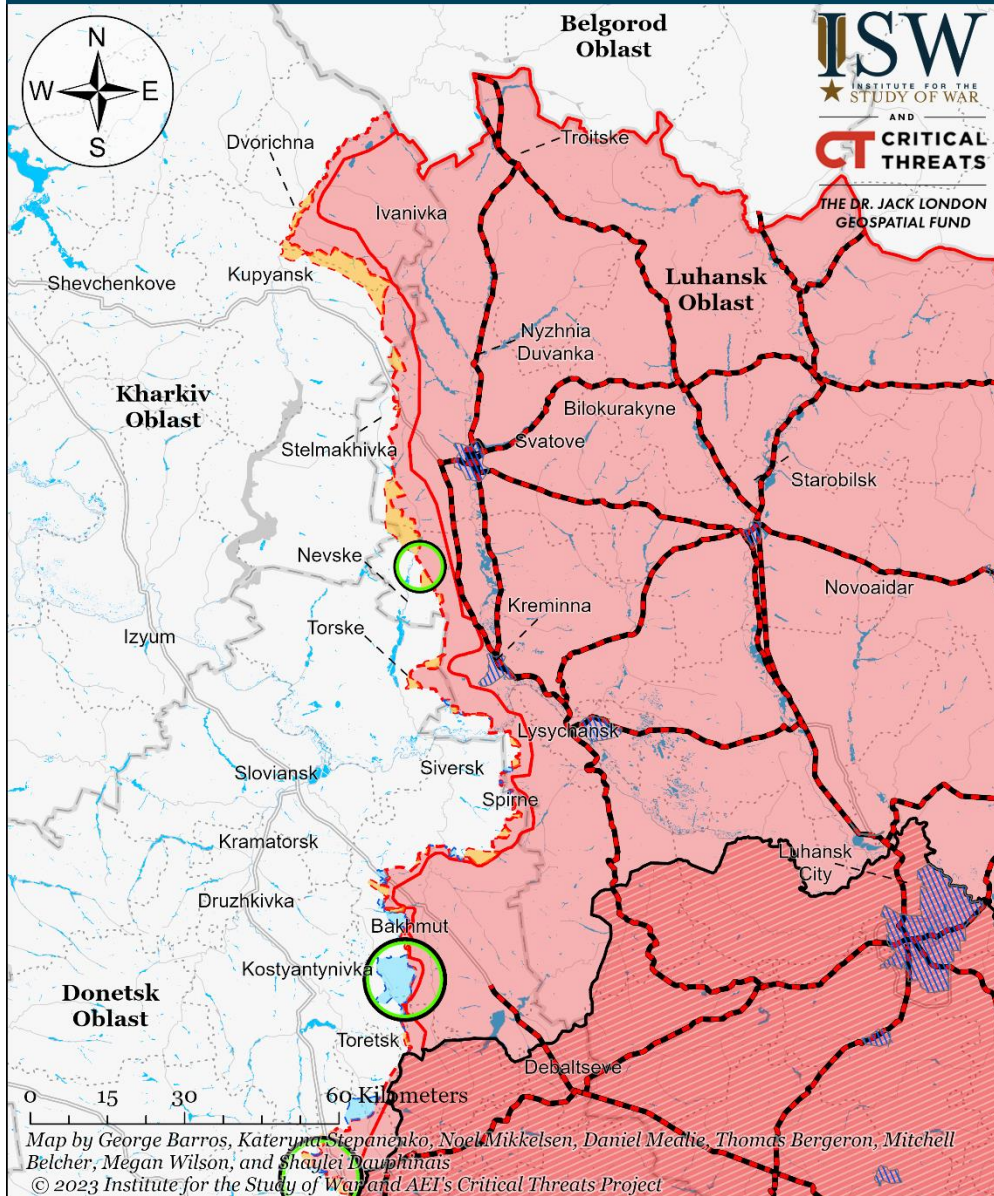
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted localized attacks on the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on October 3 but did not advance. Russian sources, including the Russian MoD, claimed that elements of the Russian Western Grouping of Forces repelled a Ukrainian attack in the Kupyansk direction, while elements of the Russian Central Grouping of Forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Torske (14km west of Kreminna) and Hryhorivka (10km south of Kreminna) and in the Serebryanske forest area.[31]

Russian forces reportedly advanced in the Kupyansk and Kreminna directions and continued offensive operations along the Svatove-Kreminna line on October 3. A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces advanced in the Kyslivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk) direction on October 2.[32] Geolocated footage published on October 3 indicated that Russian forces marginally advanced southwest of Kreminna.[33] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces did not conduct offensive operations in the Kupyansk direction and unsuccessfully attacked near Makiivka (21km southwest of Svatove).[34] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger also reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attack near Makiivka.[35] Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu highlighted elements of the Russian 55th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st Combined Arms Army, Central Military District [CMD]) and the 228th Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment (90th Guards Tank Division, CMD) as operating in the Lyman direction.[36]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of October 3, 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

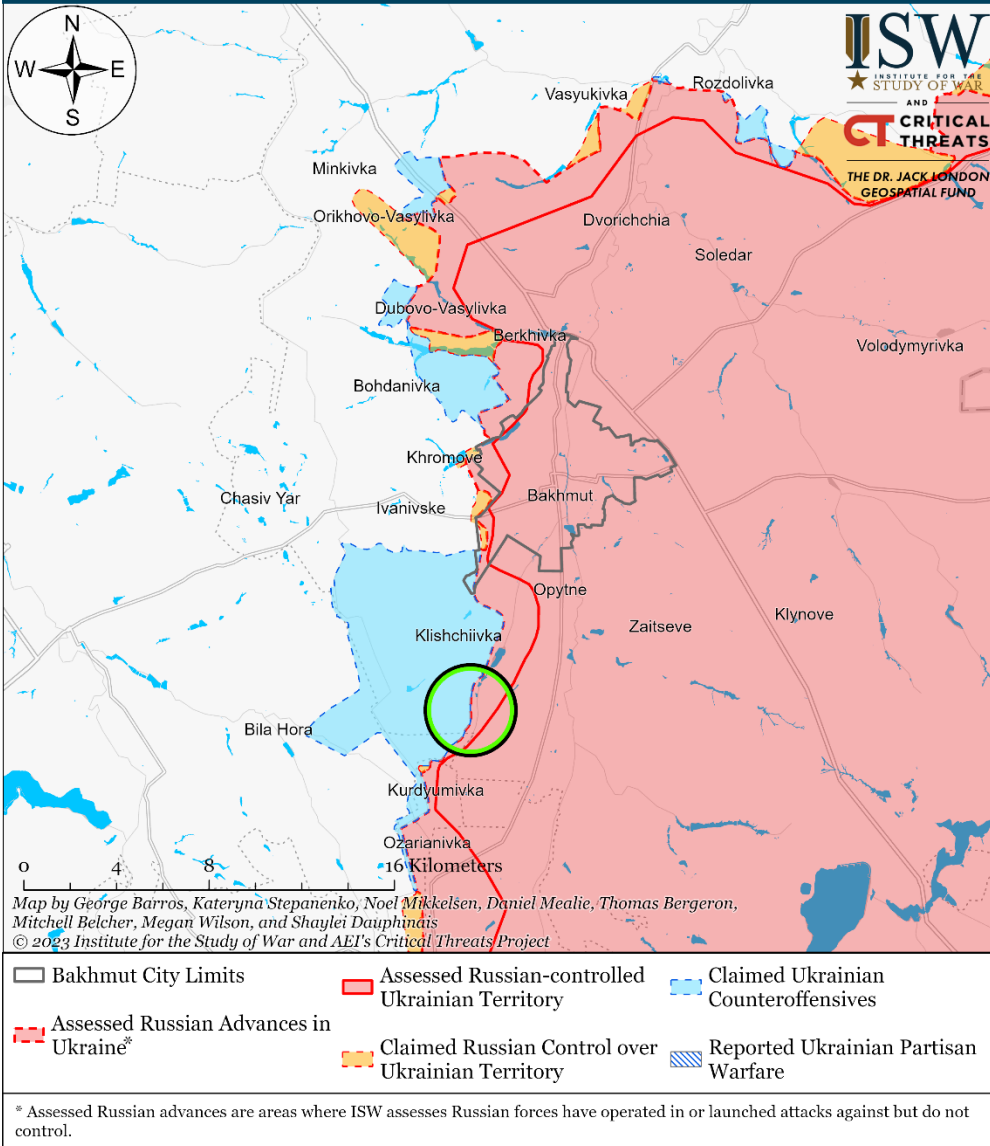
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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 forces conducted ground attacks near Bakhmut on October 3 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive actions in the Bakhmut direction.[37] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut).[38] A Russian milblogger claimed on October 2 that Ukrainian forces are gradually advancing near Klishchiivka and Andriivka (10km south of Bakhmut) in order to break through the Russian defense near the railway line.[39] A prominent Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed on October 3 that Ukrainian forces heavily shell Russian frontline positions near Klishchiivka until Russian forces withdraw, enabling Ukrainian forces to advance.[40]

Russian forces continued ground attacks near Bakhmut on October 3 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Andriivka.[41] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces counterattacked in Andriivka but did not specify an outcome.[42] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces attacked south of Andriivka on October 2.[43] Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu highlighted the Russian 4th Motorized Rifle Brigade (Luhansk People’s Republic [LNR] 2nd Army Corps), 11th Air Assault (VDV) Brigade, and 17th Artillery Brigade (likely a new unit) in a speech on October 3 as operating in the Soledar-Bakhmut direction.[44]

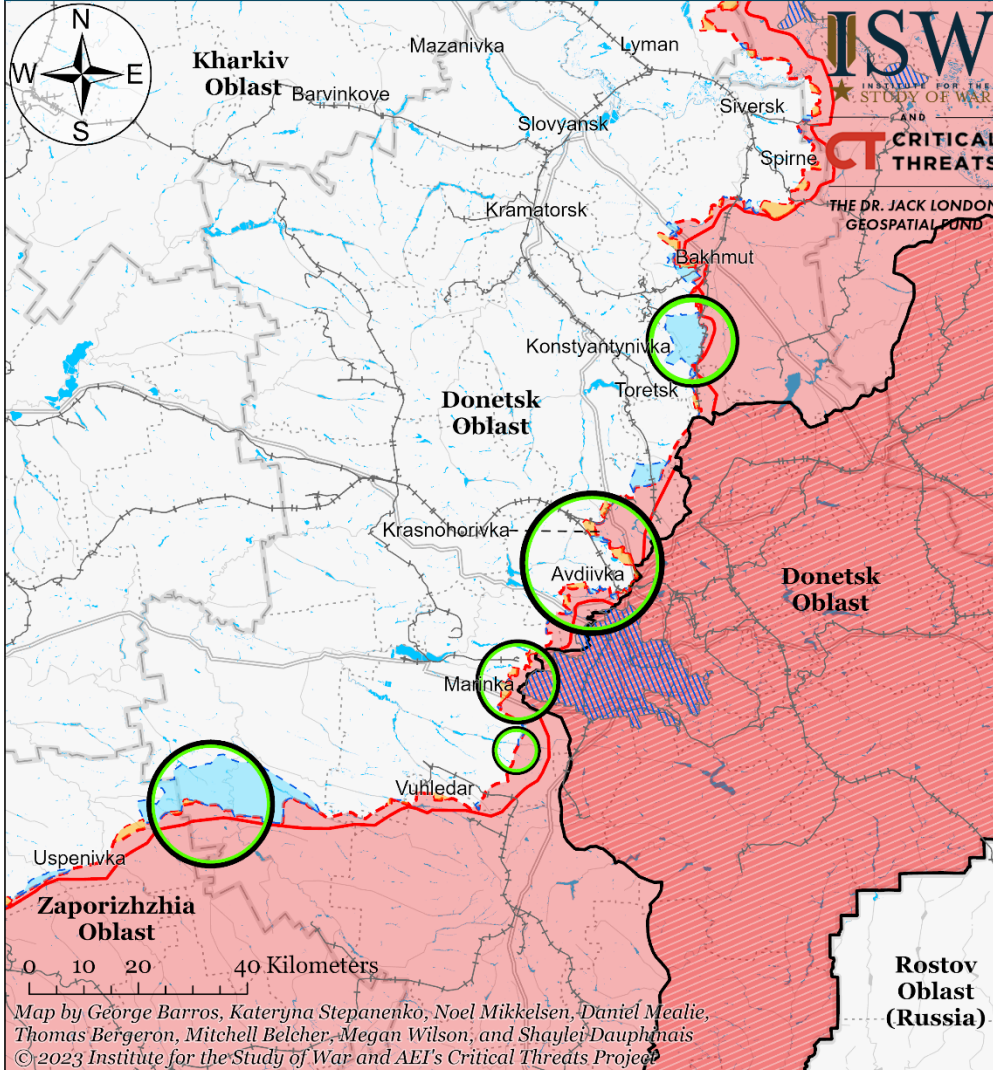
Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of October 3, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful ground attacks along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on October 3. The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Krasnohorivka (immediately west of Donetsk City) and in the Avdiivka and Marinka (on the western outskirts of Donetsk City) directions.[45] A Kremlin-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Nevelske (immediately west of Donetsk City) on October 2.[46]

Russian forces conducted ground attacks along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on October 3 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff claimed that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks east of Stepove (8km northwest of Avdiivka) and near Avdiivka, Pervomaiske (11km southwest of Avdiivka), Krasnohorivka, Marinka, and Novomykhailivka (36km southwest of Avdiivka).[47] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also unsuccessfully attacked near Novokalynove (11km northwest of Avdiivka).[48] A Russian news aggregator claimed on October 2 that Russian forces attacked in the direction of Yurivka (20km northeast of Avdiivka) and advanced near Stepove.[49] A Russian milblogger claimed on October 3 that Russian forces increased the intensity and expanded the geographic area of their offensive operations in this sector of the front, though Russian forces likely lack the ability to sustain any increased tempo and intensity of offensive operations.[50]

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



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Megan Wilson, and Shayley Dauphinais ©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 | Major Railroads |
| Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24 | Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory | Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare |
| 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.

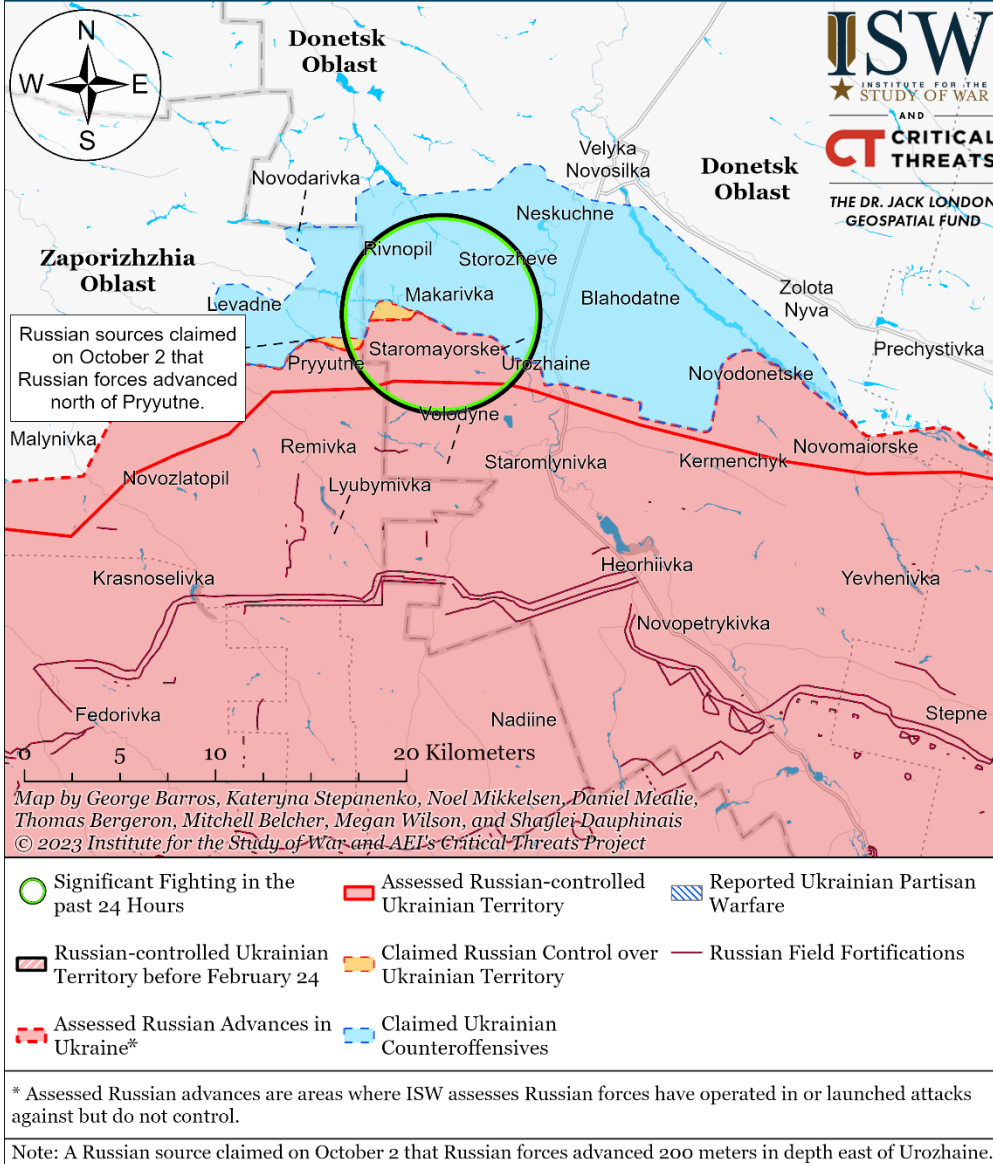
Note: A Russian source claimed on October 2 that Russian forces advanced 200 meters in depth east of Urozhaine.

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

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area but did not advance on October 3. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian ground attacks near Urozhaine (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) and Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) on October 2 and 3.[51] Russian military officials claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Pryyutne (15km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) on October 3.[52]

Russian sources claimed that Russian forces conducted a series of counterattacks and marginally advanced in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on October 2 and 3. A prominent Russian milblogger claimed on October 2 that fighting intensified along the Urozhaine-Novodonetske line (9-18km south and southeast of Velyka Novosilka), and that Russian forces advanced 200 meters in depth and cleared an unspecified forest area east of Urozhaine.[53] The milblogger also claimed that Russian forces advanced towards the Hrusheva Gully (15km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) during a counterattack after repelling a Ukrainian attack in the area.[54] Another milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked towards Staromayorske and Urozhaine from Pryyutne on October 3.[55] Another Russian milblogger claimed on October 3 that Russian forces achieved unspecified success towards Urozhaine.[56] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Staromayorske and Rivnopil (8km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[57]

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

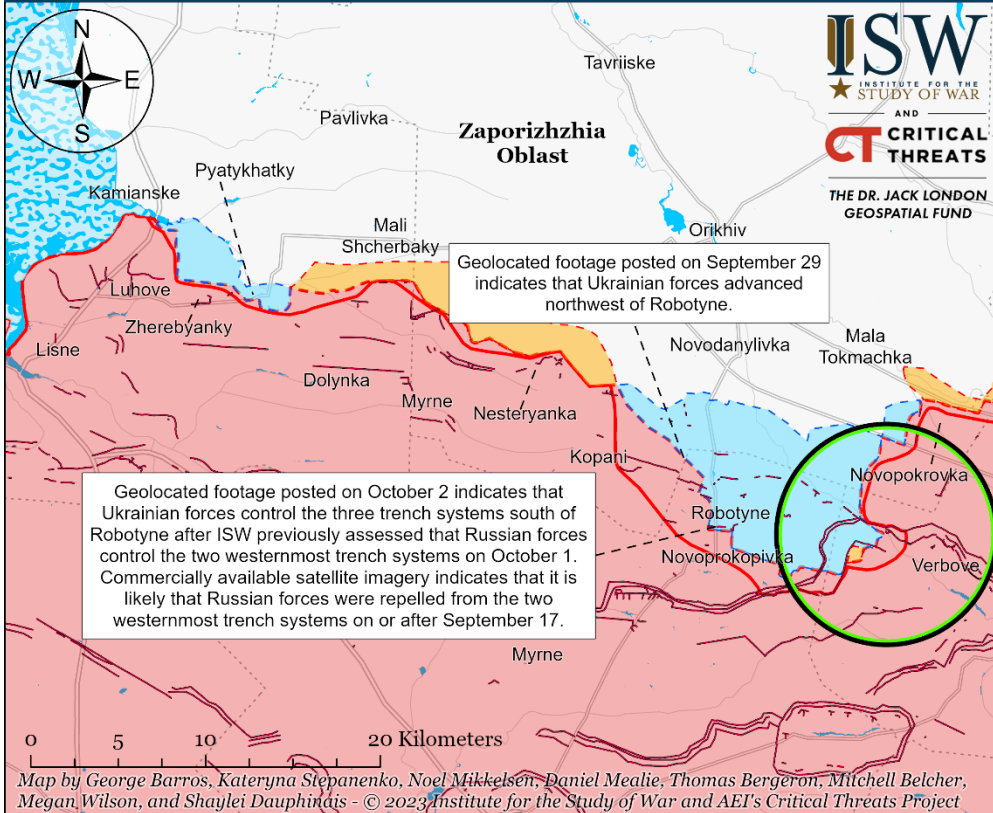


Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast but did not advance on October 3. A Russian milblogger claimed on October 3 that Ukrainian forces attacked Russian positions on the Kopani-Robotyne-Verbove line (11-18km southwest to the southeast of Orikhiv) and that heavy fighting is ongoing on this line.[58] The milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Verbove.[59] Russian sources claimed on October 2 and 3 that Ukrainian forces attacked near Novoprokopivka (13km south of Orikhiv).[60] Another Russian milblogger claimed on October 2 that Russian and Ukrainian forces engaged in meeting engagements across the front line near Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv).[61]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast and reportedly advanced on October 3. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces spoiled a Ukrainian attack near Verbove (18km southeast of Orikhiv) and instead counterattacked near Robotyne, advancing several hundred meters near Robotyne and Verbove overnight on October 2-3 and on the morning of October 3.[62] Russian sources claimed on October 2 and 3 that Russian forces conducted a counterattack near Verbove.[63] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attempted to recapture lost positions west of Verbove and southeast of Mala Tokmachka (9km southeast of Orikhiv).[64]

A Ukrainian official stated that Russian forces have established a complex trench system near Novoprokopivka. Ukrainian Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov stated that Russian forces have established a system of trenches and tunnels including two-story underground dugouts in the Novoprokopivka area.[65] Fedorov stated that Russian forces are also pouring concrete in new trench lines near Tokmak.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of October 3, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

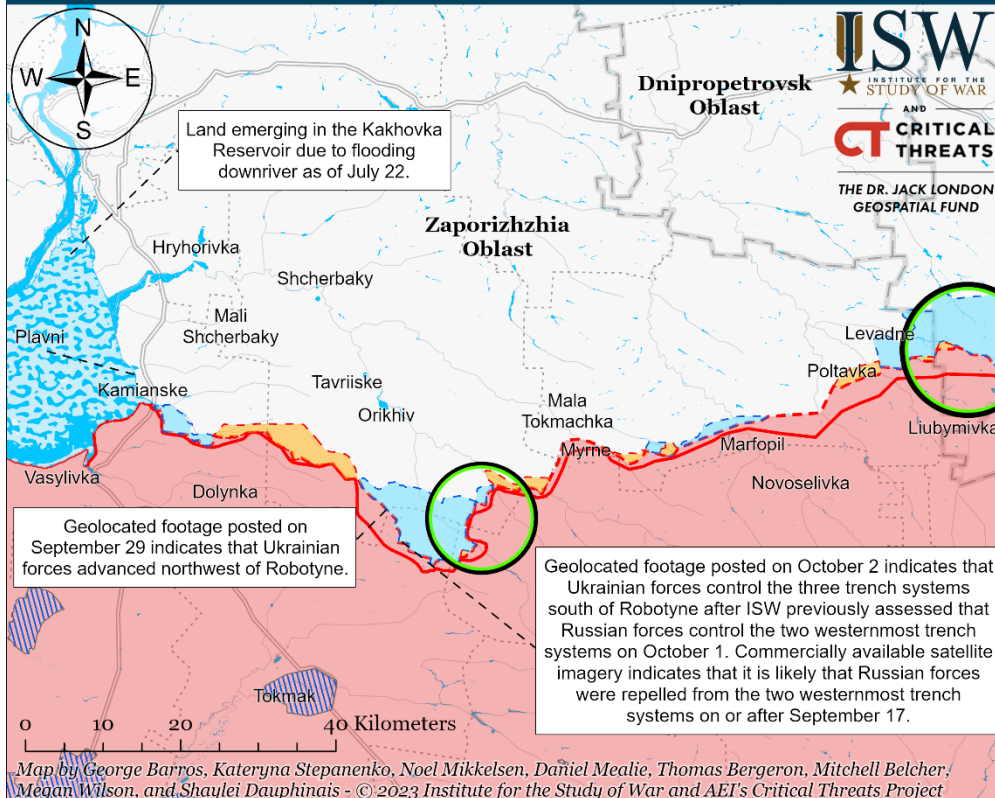


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Reported Ukrainian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

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

Note: A Russian source claimed on October 3 that Russian forces advanced several hundred meters near Robotyne and Verbove.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of October 3, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

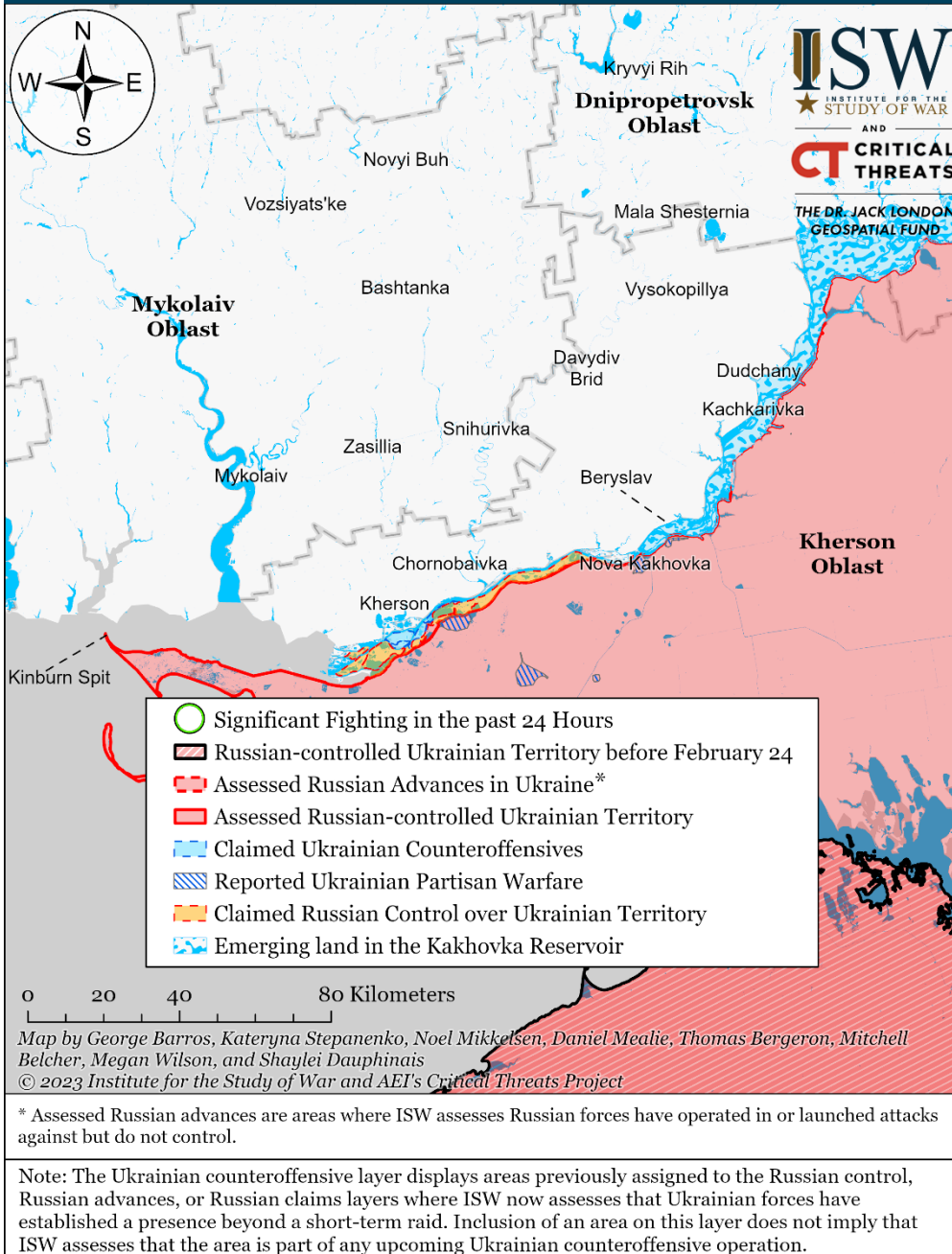
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
- Assessed Russian 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: A Russian source claimed on October 3 that Russian forces advanced several hundred meters near Robotyne and Verbove.

A Russian milblogger rejected claims of Ukrainian boats operating near Nova Kakhovka in the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast on October 2. The milblogger claimed that the Russian commander on the ground in the Nova Kakhovka area did not confirm such reports.[66] The milblogger claimed that Russian forces are reconnoitering the Nova Kakhovka area and that Ukrainian forces are not active.[67]

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



Ukrainian sources stated that occupation officials in Crimea report the detonation of explosives at higher rates than officials in other occupied areas. Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Spokesperson Andriy Yusov noted that Crimean occupation officials make announcements about the detonation of objects daily but never specify what objects the explosions dispose of, and Ukrainian news outlet *Suspilne* estimated that occupation officials reported 25 such explosions just in

September 2023.[68] *Suspilne* observed that occupation officials reported these detonations most frequently in Biyuk-Onlar (30km north of Simferopol), at the Staryi Krym training ground, in Armyansk, near Kerch, and in villages in Dzhankoi Raion.[69] There are many reasons why Russian and occupation authorities may need to conduct controlled detonations of ammunition; nevertheless, negligent Russian storage of ammunition and Ukrainian strikes in occupied Crimea have also detonated ammunition and generated explosions.[70]

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

A Ukrainian official source claimed that the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) is investigating Kursk Oblast Governor Roman Starovoi, which may be an attempt to remove government officials with connections to deceased Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin. The Ukrainian Resistance Center stated on October 3 that the FSB's Kursk Oblast service has begun to investigate Starovoi for building fake defensive fortifications valued at 10 billion rubles (about \$100,827,000) in Tetkino on the border with Ukraine.[71] The Resistance Center stated that the tensions began because Starovoi did not pay the FSB a kickback and that the Kursk FSB was threatening criminal prosecution if Starovoi did not pay the kickback.[72] If true, the FSB is likely targeting Starovoi for his prior connection to Prigozhin under the pretense of financial crimes. Wagner-affiliated instructors reportedly conducted military training classes in Kursk Oblast in November 2022; Prigozhin visited Kursk Oblast for Russia's Unity Day on November 4, 2022; Starovoi presumably greenlit Wagner's effort to train the Kursk Oblast People's Militia in the fall-winter of 2022-2023; and Prigozhin visited a training facility in Kursk Oblast in January 2023.[73] Starovoi publicly encouraged Prigozhin to stop his rebellion on June 24 but simultaneously reiterated the close cooperation between Kursk Oblast and Wagner and his respect for Wagner and its battlefield successes.[74]

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu reiterated that new conscripts will not deploy to Ukraine and praised the Russian military's successful volunteer recruitment efforts, likely to further signal his lack of intent to conduct additional mobilization in Russia. Shoigu claimed that the fall conscription cycle, which began on October 1, is proceeding according to plan and that the Russian military will conscript a total of 130,000 personnel in this cycle.[75] Shoigu reiterated that new conscripts, even those from occupied regions in Ukraine, will not deploy to the war in Ukraine. Shoigu claimed that the Russian military has no plans for additional mobilization measures as volunteer recruitment has been sufficient and that more than 50,000 citizens signed contracts with the Russian MoD in September.

The Ukrainian government continues to report on Russian efforts to force Ukrainians in occupied territory to serve in the Russian military. The Ukrainian Resistance Center stated on October 3 that Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev is supervising forces mobilization plans in occupied Ukraine and that the Russian military plans to mobilize mostly from occupied Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts and Crimea.[76]

The Russian military reportedly continues to recruit foreign volunteers to serve in relatively elite but likely degraded Russian Airborne (VDV) units. A Russian milblogger claimed on October 3 that volunteers from Nepal are serving in Russian Airborne (VDV) brigades.[77] ISW previously reported that Cuban volunteers are reportedly serving in the Russian 106th VDV Division.[78]

Russian officials are reportedly refusing to help former Wagner personnel as the Kremlin continues to send mixed messages about its relationship with the Wagner Group. Wagner personnel and their families in Izhevsk publicly complained in a video that Udmurt Republic Head Aleksandr Brechalov, Udmurt Minister of Social Policy Olga Lubnina, and the regional branch of the Defender of the Fatherland Foundation are refusing to help Wagner personnel who fought in the war in Ukraine and provide medical care for them.[79] The Wagner personnel and family claimed that the regional government is ignoring federal laws that grant equal combat veteran and disabled status to all soldiers who fought in Ukraine, including members of irregular formations. ISW previously assessed that the Kremlin's ideas about the relationship between Wagner elements and the Russian government are unclear at this time, possibly leading to regional heads' uncertainty about how to treat former Wagner personnel.[80]

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

Russian opposition outlet *Verstka* revealed that almost half of all occupation officials of the senior and middle management levels in occupied Kherson, Zaporizhia, Donetsk, and Luhansk oblasts are from Russia.[81] *Verstka* analyzed the biographies of 224 occupation officials and observed that many Russian officials assumed leadership positions in occupied Ukraine to flee criminal charges in Russia.[82] *Verstka* observed that occupied Donetsk Oblast has the highest numbers of imported Russian officials with 15 of 24 members of the occupation cabinet of ministers originating from Russia.[83] *Verstka* added that Ukrainian collaborators assume more municipal positions than imported Russian officials and that Russian occupation officials incentivize Ukrainians to collaborate with them by offering them high-ranking local government positions.

Russian occupation administrations continue to expand propaganda efforts in occupied southern Ukraine. The Kherson Oblast occupation administration announced that the "Russkiy Mir" (Russian World) telecommunications company plans to install 20,000 satellite receivers capable of receiving programming from 20 Russian state TV channels in occupied Kherson Oblast.[84]

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

Belarusian President Aleksander Lukashenko announced the creation of a Belarusian commission headed by Belarusian Ambassador to Russia Dmitry Krutoy that will reportedly deal with issues related to exports to Russia, possibly in order to help Russia evade sanctions against key Russian industries such as fertilizer and hydrocarbon products.[85] Krutoy stated that the commission will make proposals about how to fix fundamental issues facing Belarusian exports to Russia, such as logistics and railway tariff issues. Lukashenko claimed that there are shortages of mineral fertilizers and petroleum in Russia which Belarusian products can fill.

ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian military activity in Belarus as part of ongoing Kremlin efforts to increase their control over Belarus and other Russian actions in Belarus.

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

[1] <https://telegra dot ph/Vstupitelnoe-slovo-Ministra-oborony-Rossijskoj-Federacii-general-a-armii-Sergeya-SHojgu-na-tematicheskom-selektornom-sovshchanii-10-03> ;
https://t.me/mod_russia/31094 ; <https://t.me/rybar/52640> ; <https://t.me/bazabazon/21894> ;
<https://t.me/mobilizationnews/15673>

[2] <https://t.me/zvofront/997>; https://x.com/k_kumar0313/status/1701429338850414852?s=20; <https://x.com/ShevBohdan1/status/1696770415715352670?s=20>; <https://x.com/DefMon3/status/1696576782881714615?s=20>; <https://t.me/swodki/292742>; <https://tverezo dot info/post/176701>; <https://tverezo dot info/post/176654>; <https://t.me/zvizdecmanhustu/1138>; <https://t.me/zvizdecmanhustu/1133>; <https://x.com/moklasen/status/1700255907937222699?s=20>; <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/52803>; <https://x.com/foosint/status/1693221975596953669?s=20>; https://t.me/rusich_army/10470; <https://x.com/naalsio26/status/1692894229909962910?s=20>; https://t.me/lost_warinua/46507; <https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonov/27100>; <https://x.com/KilledInUkraine/status/1689992498741907456?s=20>; https://vk dot com/wall332024977_5409; <https://x.com/KilledInUkraine/status/1688861987906695168?s=20>; https://vk dot com/wall17836853_8988; https://t.me/defender_skadovsk/11056; <https://twitter.com/moklasen/status/1700255907937222699>; <https://twitter.com/moklasen/status/1700421044295651477>; <https://twitter.com/moklasen/status/1700551061080018955>; <https://t.me/dontstopwar/11059>; <https://twitter.com/moklasen/status/1700255907937222699>

[3] <https://twitter.com/MassDara/status/1633153547863826432>

[4] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-2-2023>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-september-24-2023>

[5] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-2-2023>

[6] https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Sept%2026%20Russian%20Offensive%20Campaign%20Assessment%20PDF_o.pdf ; https://twitter.com/tom_bullock_/status/1688974882787233809

[7] https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Sept%2026%20Russian%20Offensive%20Campaign%20Assessment%20PDF_o.pdf

[8] https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Sept%2026%20Russian%20Offensive%20Campaign%20Assessment%20PDF_o.pdf

[9] <https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Sept%2023%20Russian%20Offensive%20Campaign%20Assessment%20PDF.pdf>

[10] <https://t.me/razvozhaev/3872>; https://twitter.com/666_mancer/status/1703018956989050898; https://t.me/z_arhiv/24586; https://t.me/multi_XAM/778; https://t.me/dva_majors/25160

[11] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-september-24-2023>

[12] <https://telegra dot ph/Vstupitelnoe-slovo-Ministra-oborony-Rossijskoj-Federacii-general-armii-Sergeya-SHojgu-na-tematicheskome-selektornom-soveshchanii-10-03>; https://t.me/mod_russia/31094

[13] https://t.me/RKadyrov_95/3937

[14] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar100223>

[15] https://t.me/RKadyrov_95/3937

[16] https://t.me/RKadyrov_95/3939; <https://meduza dot io/news/2023/10/03/ramzan-kadyrov-prisvoil-docheri-ayshat-zvanie-narodnoy-artistki-chechni-eto-ego-prerogativa-skazali-v-kremle>

[17] <https://t.me/pdmnews/63554>; <https://meduza dot io/news/2023/10/03/ramzan-kadyrov-prisvoil-docheri-ayshat-zvanie-narodnoy-artistki-chechni-eto-ego-prerogativa-skazali-v-kremle>

[18] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar092623>

[19] <https://www.kommersant dot ru/doc/6252103>

[20] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar072823>; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar072823>; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar082223>; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar090923>

[21] <https://www.rbc dot ru/politics/03/10/2023/651ae4f49a79474793b1fafb>

[22] <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/theyre-just-meat-russia-deploys-punishment-battalions-echo-stalin-2023-10-03/>

[23] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-april-6-2023>; <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/theyre-just-meat-russia-deploys-punishment-battalions-echo-stalin-2023-10-03/>

[24] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid074862mUQngEqHeeAjz1TZ5RJqQ1AxfhVDvq6FgMZ9y63q9uYsk2idB8TmCWRhfFDl>; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0YLvYUoKRipLAmHvPysZP8WgkjfALbbwvF7XeBdEd7wjuJNs8Vs3Sk4RWxpKMF7EDl>; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02VKe7cJ4zFudpDDnDGWbZseGMwkMzFofrjWPYtHmzLJSorn6ktVDUMGxXS7MSrnJal>

[25] https://t.me/mod_russia/31100 ; https://t.me/mod_russia/31103 ; <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/54032> ; https://t.me/russkiy_opolchenec/38184 ; <https://t.me/readovkanews/67025> ; <https://t.me/wargonzo/15409>; <https://t.me/rybar/52624> ; https://t.me/vdv_ZA_teplinsky/461

[26] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbidokToNDAnvi8AqhPMYigiH9LNfJD2rXgR7jtSe7Y7pGxrFWAZjtHnepAE7Gioe6TVU1>

[27] https://t.me/mod_russia/31101 https://t.me/russkiy_opolchenec/38187 ; <https://t.me/kommunist/18699> ; <https://t.me/rybar/52624> ; <https://t.me/rybar/52624> ; <https://t.me/readovkanews/67031> ; <https://t.me/epoddubny/17594>

[28] <https://ria dot ru/20231003/statut-1900133904.html> ; [https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/armenia-ratifies-statute-accept-international-criminal-court-jurisdiction-2023-10-03/#:~:text=Oct%203%20\(Reuters\)%20%2D%20Armenia's,the%20ICC%20wants%20to%20arrest.](https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/armenia-ratifies-statute-accept-international-criminal-court-jurisdiction-2023-10-03/#:~:text=Oct%203%20(Reuters)%20%2D%20Armenia's,the%20ICC%20wants%20to%20arrest.)

[29] <https://asp.icc-cpi.int/states-parties>

[30] <https://tass dot ru/politika/18900083>

[31] https://t.me/mod_russia/31086; <https://t.me/readovkanews/67025>; <https://t.me/rybar/52624>; https://t.me/mod_russia/31100 ; https://t.me/mod_russia/31104; https://t.me/mod_russia/31092

[32] <https://t.me/readovkanews/67025>

[33] <https://t.me/duk67ombr/440>; <https://x.com/EjShahid/status/1709120920508354842?s=20>; <https://x.com/EjShahid/status/1709121227682398395?s=20> ; https://t.me/WarArchive_ua/5586

[34] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0YLvYUoKRipLAmHvPysZP8WGkjfALbbwvF7XeBdEd7wjuJNs8Vs3Sk4RWxpKMF7EDl> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02VKe7cJ4zFudpDDnDGWbZseGMwkMzForjWPyTtHmzLJSorn6ktVDUMGxXS7MSrnJal> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid074862mUQngEqHeeAjz1TZ5RJqQ1AxfhVDvq6FgMZ9y63q9uYsk2idB8TmCWRhfFDl>

[35] <https://t.me/wargonzo/15409>

[36] <https://telegra dot ph/Vstupitelnoe-slovo-Ministra-oborony-Rossijskoj-Federacii-general-armii-Sergeya-SHojgu-na-tematicheskome-selektornom-soveshchanii-10-03> ; https://t.me/mod_russia/31094

[37] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0YLvYUoKRipLAmHvPysZP8WGkjfALbbwvF7XeBdEd7wjuJNs8Vs3Sk4RWxpKMF7EDl> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02VKe7cJ4zFudpDDnDGWbZseGMwkMzForjWPyTtHmzLJSorn6ktVDUMGxXS7MSrnJal>

[38] https://t.me/mod_russia/31100 ; https://t.me/mod_russia/31103

[39] <https://t.me/RVvoenkor/54032>

[40] <https://t.me/sashakots/42564>

[41] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbidoYLvYUoKRipLAmHvPysZP8WGkjfALbbwvF7XeBdEd7wjuJNs8Vs3Sk4RWxpKMF7EDl> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbido2VKe7cJ4zFudpDDnDGWbZseGMwkMzForjWPyTtHmzLJSorn6ktVDUMGxXS7MSrnJal> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbidoYLvYUoKRipLAmHvPysZP8WGkjfALbbwvF7XeBdEd7wjuJNs8Vs3Sk4RWxpKMF7EDl> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02VKe7cJ4zFudpDDnDGWbZseGMwkMzForjWPyTtHmzLJSorn6ktVDUMGxXS7MSrnJal>

[42] <https://t.me/wargonzo/15409>

[43] <https://t.me/readovkanews/67025>

[44] https://t.me/mod_russia/31094 ; <https://telegra.ph/Vstupitelnoe-slovo-Ministra-oborony-Rossijskoj-Federacii-general-a-armii-Sergeya-SHojgu-na-tematicheskome-selektornom-soveshchanii-10-03>

[45] https://t.me/mod_russia/31100 ; https://t.me/mod_russia/31103 ; https://t.me/mod_russia/31095

[46] <https://t.me/rybar/52624>

[47] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbidoYLvYUoKRipLAmHvPysZP8WGkjfALbbwvF7XeBdEd7wjuJNs8Vs3Sk4RWxpKMF7EDl> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbido2VKe7cJ4zFudpDDnDGWbZseGMwkMzForjWPyTtHmzLJSorn6ktVDUMGxXS7MSrnJal> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid074862mUQngEqHeeAjz1TZ5RJqQ1AxfhVDvq6FgMZ9y63q9uYsk2idB8TmCWRhfFDl>

[48] <https://t.me/wargonzo/15409>

[49] <https://t.me/readovkanews/67025>

[50] <https://t.me/wargonzo/15409>

[51] <https://t.me/DnevnikDesantnika/3712> ; <https://t.me/rybar/52616> ; <https://t.me/rybar/52618>

[52] https://t.me/mod_russia/31100 ; https://t.me/mod_russia/31105 ; https://t.me/mod_russia/31098

[53] <https://t.me/rybar/52616>

[54] <https://t.me/rybar/52618>

[55] <https://t.me/wargonzo/15409>

[56] <https://t.me/DnevnikDesantnika/3712>

[57] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbidoYLvYUoKRipLAmHvPysZP8WGkjfALbbwvF7XeBdEd7wjuJNs8Vs3Sk4RWxpKMF7EDl> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbido2VKe7cJ4zFudpDDnDGWbZseGMwkMzForjWPyTtHmzLJSorn6ktVDUMGxXS7MSrnJal> ;

<https://www.facebook.com/PresscentrTavria/posts/pfbidoDffkSY6uDyt9wQP8Sxp28xALwr6kb7LsbTyVDPfBs4rYnDsxsSohqiVb5kUv8jx6l>

[58] https://t.me/russkiy_opolchenec/38184

[59] https://t.me/russkiy_opolchenec/38184

[60] <https://t.me/readovkanews/67025> ; <https://t.me/wargonzo/15409>; <https://t.me/rybar/52624>

[61] https://t.me/vdv_ZA_tepinsky/461

[62] https://t.me/russkiy_opolchenec/38184

[63] <https://t.me/readovkanews/67025>; <https://t.me/wargonzo/15409>

[64] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbidoYLvYUoKRipLAmHvPysZP8WGkjfALbbwvF7XeBdEd7wjuJNs8Vs3Sk4RWxpKMF7EDl> ;
<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbido2VKe7cJ4zFudpDDnDGWbZseGMwkMzFojrjWPyTtHmzLJSorn6ktVDUMGxXS7MSrnJal> ;
<https://www.facebook.com/PresscentrTavria/posts/pfbidoDffkSY6uDyt9wQP8Sxp28xALwr6kb7LsbTyVDPfBs4rYnDsxsSohqiVb5kUv8jx6l>

[65] https://t.me/ivan_fedorov_melitopol/3381

[66] https://t.me/rusich_army/11128

[67] https://t.me/rusich_army/11128

[68] <https://suspilne dot media/586035-sodenni-vibuhi-u-krimu-so-prihovuut-okupanti-za-utilizacieu-boepripasiv/>

[69] <https://suspilne dot media/586035-sodenni-vibuhi-u-krimu-so-prihovuut-okupanti-za-utilizacieu-boepripasiv/>

[70] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-9>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-10>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-19>; <https://understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-11>

[71] <https://sprotiv dot mod.gov.ua/sered-kerivnytstva-kurskoyi-oblasti-vynyk-konflikt-cherez-rozkradannya-byudzhetnyh-koshtiv/>

[72] <https://sprotiv.mod dot gov.ua/sered-kerivnytstva-kurskoyi-oblasti-vynyk-konflikt-cherez-rozkradannya-byudzhetnyh-koshtiv/>

[73] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-november-11> ; <https://understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Russian%20Offensive%20Campaign%20Assess>

ment%20NOV%205.pdf ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-8-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Russian%20Offensive%20Campaign%20Assessment%2C%20September%2024%2C%202023%20%28PDF%29.pdf>

[74] https://t.me/gubernator_46/3486

[75] <https://telegra dot ph/Vstupitelnoe-slovo-Ministra-oborony-Rossijskoj-Federacii-general-armii-Sergeya-SHojgu-na-tematicheskome-selektornom-soveshchanii-10-03> ; https://t.me/mod_russia/31094

[76] <https://sprotyv dot mod.gov.ua/do-kintsya-roku-rosiyany-planuyut-mobilizuvaty-130-tysyach-osib/>

[77] <https://t.me/milinfo/107432>

[78] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-september-30-2023>

[79] <https://t.me/idelrealii/31035> ; <https://t.me/udmprotivcor/4022>

[80] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-2-2023>

[81] <https://t.me/svobodnieslova/3051>

[82] <https://t.me/svobodnieslova/3051>

[83] <https://t.me/svobodnieslova/3051>

[84] https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/14410

[85] <https://www.belta dot by/president/view/lukashenko-poruchil-sozdat-komissiju-po-kontrolju-za-eksportom-v-rossiju-591660-2023/>