Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 5

Karolina Hird, Katherine Lawlor, Riley Bailey, Grace Mappes, George Barros, and Frederick W. Kagan October 5, 8:00 pm ET

Click <u>here</u> 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.

Ukraine's northern Kharkiv counteroffensive has not yet culminated after one month of successful operations and is now advancing into western Luhansk Oblast. Ukrainian forces captured Hrekivka and Makiivka in western Luhansk Oblast (approximately 20 km southwest of Svatove) on October 5.¹ Luhansk Oblast Head Serhiy Haidai reported that Ukrainian forces have begun liberating unspecified villages in Luhansk Oblast on October 5.² Ukrainian forces began the maneuver phase of their counteroffensive in Kharkiv Oblast— which has now reached Luhansk Oblast—on September 6.³ Russian forces have failed to hold the banks of the Oskil and Siverskyi Donets rivers and leverage them as natural boundaries to prevent Ukrainian forces from projecting into vulnerable sections of Russian-occupied northeast Ukraine. The terrain in western Luhansk is suitable for the kind of rapid maneuver warfare that Ukrainian forces used effectively in eastern Kharkiv Oblast in early September, and there are no indications from open sources that the Russian military has substantially reinforced western Luhansk Oblast. Ukraine's ongoing northern and southern counteroffensives are likely forcing the Kremlin to prioritize the defense of one area of operations at the expense of another, potentially increasing the likelihood of Ukrainian success in both.

Russian forces conducted a Shahed-136 drone strike against Bila Tserkva, Kyiv Oblast, on October 5, the first Russian strike in Kyiv Oblast since June.⁴ Footage from the aftermath of the strike shows apparent damage to residential structures.⁵ Russian milbloggers lauded the destructive capability of the Shahed-136 drones but questioned why Russian forces are using such technology to target areas deep in the Ukrainian rear and far removed from active combat zones. That decision fits into the larger pattern of Russian forces expending high-precision technology on areas of Ukraine that hold limited operational significance.⁶

Russian President Vladimir Putin took measures to assert full Russian control over the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP). Putin issued a decree transferring control of the ZNPP to Russian state company Rosenergoatom on October 5.7 The ZNPP's current Ukrainian operator Energoatom announced that its president assumed the position of General Director of the ZNPP on October 5.8 The Ukrainian General Staff also reported that Russian officials are coercing ZNPP workers into obtaining Russian passports and signing employment contracts with Rosenergoatom.9 International Atomic Energy Agency General Director Rafael Grossi plans to meet with both Ukrainian and Russian officials this week in Kyiv and Moscow to discuss the creation of a "protective zone" around the ZNPP. Russian officials will likely attempt to coerce the IAEA in upcoming discussions and negotiations into recognizing Rosenergoatom's official control of the ZNPP, and by implication Russia's illegal annexation of Zaporizhia Oblast.

The head of the Chechen Republic, Ramzan Kadyrov, announced that Putin awarded him the rank of colonel general on October 5.11 This promotion is particularly noteworthy in the context of the recent controversy surrounding Kadyrov and his direct criticism of Central Military District (CMD) Colonel General Aleksander Lapin, which ISW has previously analyzed.12 Although ISW

has not found official confirmation of Kadyrov's promotion, Putin may have made the decision to elevate Kadyrov's rank in order to maintain the support of Kadyrov and Chechen forces while simultaneously pushing back on the Russian Ministry of Defense and Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, from whom Putin seems to be rhetorically distancing himself. Kadyrov's new rank may be a sign that Putin is willing to appease the more radical and vocal calls of the *siloviki* base at the expense of the conventional military establishment.

Increasing domestic critiques of Russia's "partial mobilization" are likely driving Putin to scapegoat the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and specifically Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. Putin deferred mobilization for all students, including part-time and masters students, via a decree on October 5.13 Putin told Russian outlets that because "the Ministry of Defense did not make timely changes to the legal framework on the list of those who are not subject to mobilization, adjustments have to be made."14 That direct critique of the MoD is also an implicit critique of Shoigu, whom Putin appears to be setting up to take the fall for the failures of Putin's invasion of Ukraine. The chairperson of the Russian State Duma Defense Committee, Colonel General (Ret.) Andrey Kartapolov, also criticized the MoD on Russian state television on October 5. Kartapolov said that all Russians know the MoD is lying and must stop, but that message is not reaching "individual leaders," another jab at Shoigu.¹⁵ One Russian milblogger claimed that Kartapolov's comments demonstrate that Shoigu will soon be "demolished" and "recognized as the main culprit" of Russia's military failures. The milblogger reminded his readers that it was the Russian MoD and its head that made an "invaluable and huge contribution to the fact that we are now on the verge of a militarypolitical catastrophe."16 Another milblogger defended Wagner financier Yevgeny Prigozhin and Chechen head Ramzan Kadyrov for criticizing the MoD, applauding them for driving necessary change.¹⁷ Kadyrov's announcement that Putin awarded him the rank of Colonel-General is similarly indicative that Putin is willing to appease the *siloviki* base that has taken continued rhetorical swings at the MoD establishment.

Putin will likely hold off on firing Shoigu for as long as he feels he can in order to continue to blame Shoigu for ongoing military failures and to build up support among other factions. Shoigu's replacement will need to take responsibility for failures that occur after his tenure begins. Putin is already working to improve his support among the nationalist milbloggers and the *siloviki* such as Prigozhin and Kadyrov. Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov old reporters on October 5 that Prigozhin "makes a great contribution within his capabilities" to efforts in Russia and Ukraine and declined to answer questions surrounding Prigozhin's critiques of government officials. A milblogger emphasized on October 5 that Putin "regularly hosts military correspondents, carefully reads their reports, asks the right questions, and receives objective answers," implicitly contrasting that relationship with the dishonest way in which milbloggers believe the MoD interacts with Putin. 19

Russian authorities detained the manager of several milblogger telegram channels on October 5, indicating that the Kremlin is likely setting limits on what criticism is allowed in the domestic Russian information space. Alexander Khunshtein, the deputy secretary of the General Council of Putin's political party, United Russia, published footage on October 5 showing Russian authorities detaining Alexei Slobodenyuk.²⁰ Slobodenyuk is an employee of Wagner financier Yevgeny Prigozhin's Patriot media group and the manager of several milblogger telegrams, the most prominent of which are "Release Z Kraken" and "Skaner." The telegram channel "Skaner" has featured criticism of major state officials and military personnel, the most prominent of whom are Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, State Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin, and Kremlin Spokesperson

Dmitry Peskov. Russian authorities detained Slobodenyuk on accusations of fraud. His detention suggests that the Kremlin is attempting to set boundaries for which criticism is allowed in the information space and on which high-ranking officials milbloggers and journalists can criticize—Defense Minister Shoigu, Putin's likely scapegoat-in-waiting, now appears to be fair game, whereas officials close to Putin such as Lavrov and Putin's spokesperson are off-limits.

Key Takeaways

- The Ukrainian counteroffensive that began in Kharkiv Oblast has not yet culminated and is actively pushing into Luhansk Oblast.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin took measures to assert full Russian control over the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP).
- Russian forces conducted the first strike on Kyiv Oblast since June with a Shahed-136 drone.
- The Head of the Chechen Republic, Ramzan Kadyrov, announced that Putin awarded him the rank of Colonel-General.
- Increasing domestic critiques of Russia's "partial mobilization" are likely driving Putin to scapegoat the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and specifically Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu.
- Ukrainian troops likely consolidated positions and regrouped in northern Kherson Oblast after making major gains over in the last 48 hours.
- Russian sources reported Ukrainian offensive preparations northwest, west, and northeast of Kherson City.
- Russian forces continued ground attacks in Donetsk Oblast on October 5.
- Russian milbloggers continued to criticize the implementation of the Russian "partial mobilization" on October 5.
- Russian citizens who are economically disadvantaged and ethnic minority
 Russian communities continue to bear a disproportionate burden in mobilization
 rates and casualty rates according to investigative reports, suggesting that
 Russian authorities may be deliberately placing poor and minority Russian
 citizens in more dangerous positions than well-off or ethnic Russians.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin completed the final formality in the process for illegally annexing Russian-occupied Ukrainian territories on October 5.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of October 5, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because those 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 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.

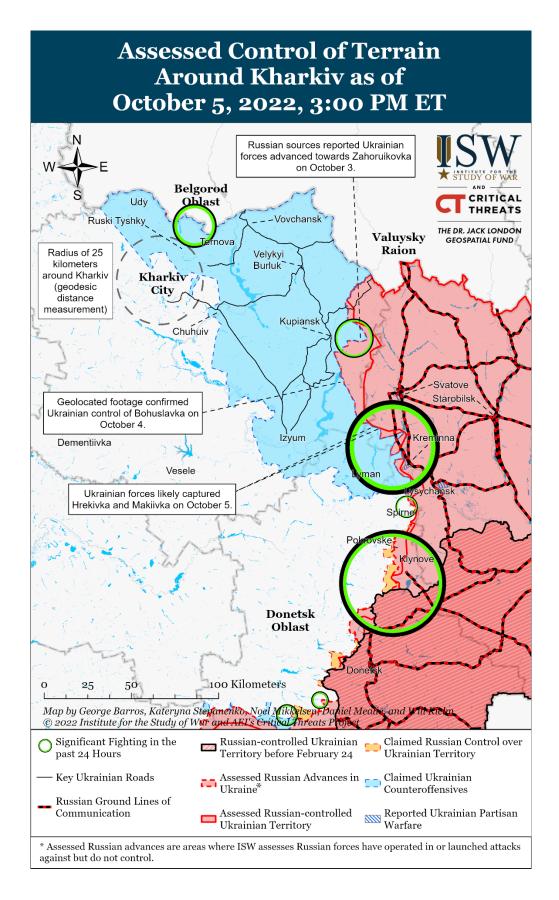
- Ukrainian Counteroffensives—Southern and Eastern Ukraine
- Russian Main Effort—Eastern Ukraine (comprised of one subordinate and two supporting efforts);
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort—Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort—Southern Axis
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Activities in Russian-occupied Areas

<u>Ukrainian Counteroffensives</u> (Ukrainian efforts to liberate Russian-occupied territories)

Eastern Ukraine: (Oskil River-Kreminna Line)

Ukrainian forces made gains in northwestern Luhansk Oblast near Svatove on October 5. Social media imagery shows Ukrainian troops in Hrekivka and Makiivka, two settlements in Luhansk Oblast 20km southwest of Svatove. Russian sources continued to discuss Ukrainian attacks along the R66 (Svatove Kreminna) highway with concern and stated that Russian troops, reportedly including elements of the 3rd Motorized Rifle Division, are preparing defenses in Svatove, Kreminna, and along the R66. Russian forces are likely focusing on the defense of the Svatove-Kreminna frontline because they are increasingly concerned that Ukrainian penetration of this line will allow Ukrainian troops to threaten Starobilsk, a key Russian logistics hub about 50km east of Svatove, through which run many ground lines of communication (GLOCs) that are essential to Russian operations in Luhansk Oblast. Access to the R66 will likely also allow Ukrainian troops to push south from Svatove to Kreminna, Rubizhne, Severodonetsk, and Lysychansk, which would likely have substantial informational effects considering the protracted and costly Russian campaign to capture Severodonetsk in June.

Ukrainian troops also likely continued advances in northeastern Kharkiv Oblast near the Kupyansk area on October 5. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced in the direction of Orlianka (8km east of Petropavlivka) through a "grey zone" between Petropavlivka and Vilshana.²³ The milblogger claimed that Ukrainian troops are reinforcing the Kupyansk area to prepare for further eastward advances.²⁴

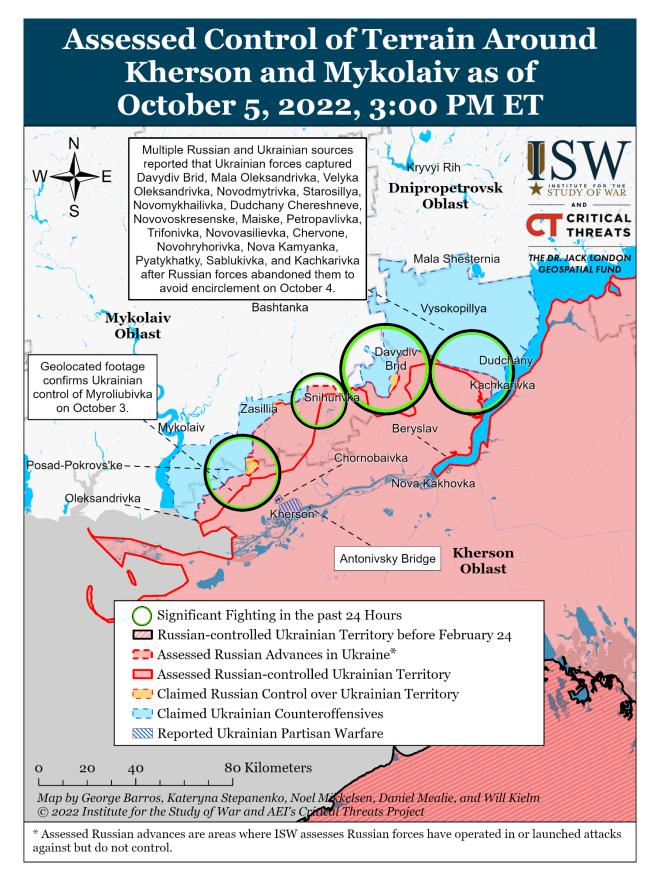


Southern Ukraine: (Kherson Oblast)

Ukrainian forces likely consolidated positions in northern Kherson Oblast and regrouped on October 5 as Russian troops attempted to recover from recent Ukrainian advances. Ukraine's Southern Operational Command confirmed on October 4 that Ukrainian troops liberated Lyubimivka, Khreshchenivka, Zolta Balka, Bilyaivka, Ukrainka, Velyka Oleksandrivka, Mala Oleksandrivka and Davydiv Brid as ISW assessed on October 4.25 The Ukrainian General Staff noted that recent Ukrainian success are forcing Russian troops to evacuate the wounded to crossings on the Dnipro River and that Russian forces moved over 150 wounded servicemen to Vesele, located across the Dnipro from Nova Kakhkovka.26 Ukraine's Southern Operational Command also claimed that Russian forces are destroying their own ammunition reserves during withdrawal, likely to prevent Ukrainian forces from capturing ammunition and equipment as they advance.27 Russian milbloggers previously criticized poorly conducted Russian withdrawals and routs in Kharkiv Oblast in early September that saw much Russian equipment and supplies abandoned and lost to Ukrainian forces.

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian troops are preparing for offensive operations northwest of Kherson City on October 5. Several milbloggers reported that Ukrainian troops are building up their grouping around Posad Pokrovske (25km northwest of Kherson City), Oleksandrivka (35km west of Kherson City) and Ternovi Pody (25km northwest of Kherson City). Several sources also reported fighting near Snihurivka (45km northeast of Kherson City). Social media users amplified claims that Russian troops have entirely withdrawn from Snihurivka, which were refuted by Mykolaiv Oblast Head Vitaly Kim, who noted that Russian army officers left the city but that Russian troops remain. Based on these conflicting reports, it is highly likely that Russian command may be withdrawing from Snihurivka in anticipation of Ukrainian attacks but that the core Russian contingent remains within the city. Russian sources are evidently focused on Ukrainian activity northwest of Kherson City due to concerns that Ukrainian forces are setting conditions for advances directly towards Kherson City. Russian forces' loss of Snihurivka would be a significant development given the city's position on the western side of the Inhulets River. Russian forces' loss of control over the Inhulets River would further isolate Kherson City from the east and increase the city's vulnerability to a Ukrainian encirclement.

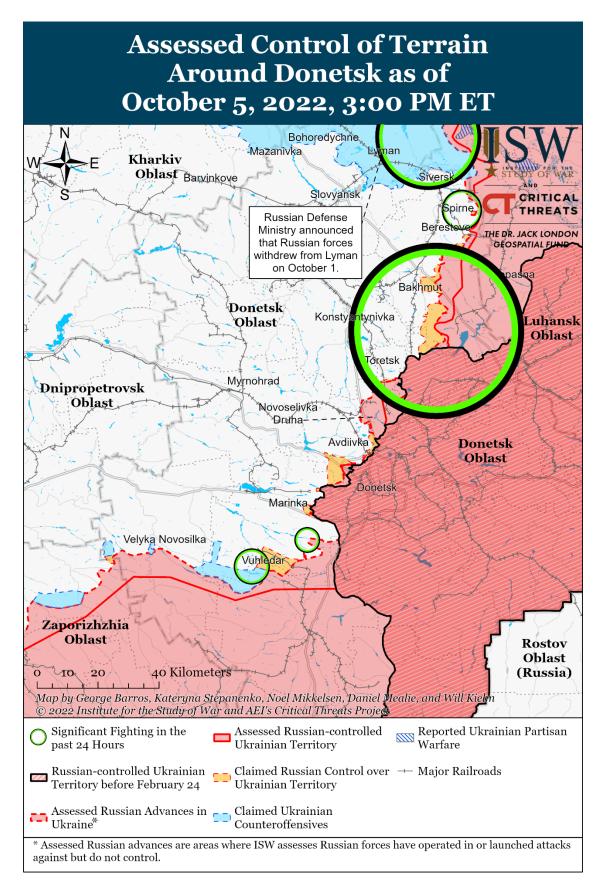
Ukrainian troops continued the interdiction campaign in Kherson Oblast on October 5 to support ongoing ground offensives. Ukrainian sources reiterated that Ukrainian strikes targeted Russian logistics, transportation, and command assets and concentration areas throughout Kherson Oblast.³¹ Geolocated footage shows the aftermath of a Ukrainian strike on a hotel in Kherson City that reportedly housed Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) officers.³² Social media users additionally reported Ukrainian strikes near the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant in Nova Kakhkovka, about 60km east of Kherson City.³³



Russian Main Effort-Eastern Ukraine

<u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort—Donetsk Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia's proxies in Donbas)

Russian forces continued ground attacks in Donetsk Oblast on October 5. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults southeast of Siversk near Vyimka (8km southeast of Siversk) and Spirne (13km southeast of Siversk); on and south of Bakhmut near Zaitseve (8km southeast of Bakhmut), Mayorsk (20km south of Bakhmut), and Kurdiumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut); and north of Bakhmut near Bakhmutske (10km northeast of Bakhmut).³⁴ The Head of the Donetsk People's Republic Denis Pushilin made continued claims that Ukrainian forces are retreating from positions in Bakhmut, although ISW cannot independently verify Russian claims of Ukrainian withdrawals.³⁵ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian ground assaults south of Avdiivka near Novomykhailivka (36km southwest of Avdiivka).³⁶ Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces pushed through Ukrainian defensive positions near Donetsk City and are attempting to advance on Pervomaiske and Vodiane.³⁷ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces also repelled Russian ground attacks near Vuhledar.³⁸ The Ukrainian General staff reported that Russian forces continued routine indirect fire along the line of contact in Donetsk Oblast on October 5.³⁹



<u>Supporting Effort—Southern Axis</u> (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Russian forces continued to conduct artillery, air, and missile strikes west of Hulyaipole and in Dnipropetrovsk and Mykolaiv Oblasts on October 5.40 Ukrainian sources reported that Russian forces struck infrastructure in Zaporizhzhia City with Iskander missiles.41 The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces struck a Ukrainian military hangar at the Voznesensk Airfield in Mykolaiv Oblast.42 Ukrainian Mykolaiv Regional State Administration Head Vitaly Kim reported that Russian forces continued to target unspecified areas in Mykolaiv Oblast with Shahed-136 kamikaze drones.43 Ukrainian sources reported that Russian forces continued to target port infrastructure in Ochakiv, Mykolaiv Oblast.44 Russian and Ukrainian sources reported that Russian forces conducted artillery and MLRS strikes against settlements on the northern bank of the Dnipro River in Nikopol, Marhanets, and Chervonohryhorivka, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast.45 The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces destroyed a Russian S-300 system in Tokmak, Zaporizhia Oblast.46 The Russian MoD and occupation authorities claimed that Ukrainian forces shelled the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) and the Zaporizhzhia Thermal Power Plant, and occupation official Vladimir Rogov claimed that the shelling damaged a tower at the Zaporizhzhia Thermal Power Plant.47

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

Russian milbloggers continued to criticize the implementation of the Russian "partial mobilization" on October 5. One milblogger criticized the MoD's "blatant negligence" regarding mobilized personnel across the country, including in Omsk, Novosibirsk, and Voronezh oblasts and in Khabarovsk Krai.⁴⁸ The milblogger reported that three mobilized personnel in the Yelanksy, Sverdlovsk Oblast garrison have already died, implying that poor living conditions and general lawlessness among mobilized personnel killed them.⁴⁹ Social media users circulated videos of Russian personnel in an unspecified location claiming that they are living on the streets in the cold without a commander, tents, or food.⁵⁰ One milblogger reported that mobilized personnel in Omsk Oblast are trained in terrible conditions at overcrowded training grounds and are quartered in hangars without electricity or heat despite below-freezing temperatures.⁵¹ Another milblogger shared a statement from a mobilized Moscow man who said that more than half of his unit has the coronavirus or another respiratory disease and that they went to southern Russia, spent several days there, and then were shipped back north.⁵² The Russian MoD attempted to defend itself from these accusations and stated on October 5 that mobilized personnel from Amur Oblast began their training with "experienced instructors...who have experience in participating in modern armed conflicts."⁵³

Russian forces reportedly continued to rush newly-mobilized men to the frontlines on October 4 and 5. Ukraine's Center for Strategic Communications reported on October 4 that a mobilized Russian man from Orsk joined the 15th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade to fight near Olhivka, possibly the village near Beryslav in Kherson, within five days of receiving his mobilization notice. The soldier reportedly surrendered to Ukrainian forces using Ukraine's "I Want to Live" hotline.⁵⁴ The Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) People's Militia posted footage of mobilized Russian personnel training in an unspecified part of Russian-occupied Kherson Oblast on October 5 but did not clarify whether the mobilized personnel are originally from Kherson Oblast, other Russian-occupied Ukrainian territories like the DNR, or Russia itself.⁵⁵

Russian citizens who are economically disadvantaged and ethnic minority Russian communities continue to bear a disproportionate burden in mobilization rates and casualty rates according to investigative reports, suggesting that Russian authorities may be deliberately placing poor and minority Russian citizens in more dangerous positions than well-off or ethnic Russians. The Georgia-based Conflict Intelligence Team (CIT) and the Russian language outlet Important Stories released a study of mobilization numbers and mortality rate increases by Russian region on October 5, citing local officials and public media.56 They calculated that Russian authorities have mobilized at least 213,000 men across 53 regions but were unable to find data for an additional 32 regions, suggesting that many more men have already been mobilized in the two weeks since September 21, when Russian President Vladimir Putin announced his "partial mobilization." Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu claimed on October 4 that 200,000 men have already been mobilized.⁵⁷ CIT noted that the regions that are reporting disproportionate shares of mobilization are consistently the poorest and most majorityminority parts of Russia. Moscow and St Petersburg showed the lowest mortality rate increases since the war began, with a 0% and 3% increase respectively, whereas the Republic of Dagestan had the highest reported increase in the male mortality rate: 105%. CIT analysts suggested that the Kremlin is targeting regions that are less likely to protest disproportionate mobilization rates to generate additional manpower without increasing domestic instability.

Russian civilians and non-governmental organizations are continuing to fundraise to provide basic supplies for mobilized Russian servicemembers. The governor of Kaluga Oblast reportedly canceled the oblast's New Year's celebration (a major holiday in Russia) after a public petition called on him to divert New Year's funds to mobilized residents instead.⁵⁸ A Russian outlet reported that other petitions are circulating across the country, but other celebrations have not yet been canceled. A Russian milblogger shared a video on October 5 purporting to show equipment purchased through a crowdfunding initiative of the Interregional Public Organization.⁵⁹ The milblogger added that the organization intends to buy winter clothes, generators, blankets, drones, communications equipment, and camouflage nets for Russian forces and the Russian proxy Luhansk People's Militia.

Russian officials are attempting to publicize support to the families of forcibly-mobilized men, likely to improve the narrative surrounding mobilization and to reduce resistance from mobilized men with families. Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin signed a decree on October 5 ordering the Moscow City government to provide support to the families of mobilized men. That support includes vocational training and assistance, free meals, free daycare, and additional social services for elderly and disabled family members.

Russian defense officials are continuing to recruit Russian prisoners to replenish depleted Russian forces in Ukraine. Ukraine's General Staff reported on October 5 that over 650 prisoners from the strict-regime correctional colonies of the Stavropol region agreed to take part in combat operations in Ukraine.⁶¹

<u>Activity in Russian-occupied Areas</u> (Russian objective: consolidate administrative control of occupied and annexed areas; forcibly integrate Ukrainian civilians into Russian sociocultural, economic, military, and governance systems)

Russian President Vladimir Putin completed the final formality in the process of illegally annexing Russian-occupied Ukrainian territories on October 5. Putin signed four federal laws ratifying the treaties on the entry of the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR), Luhansk People's Republic (LNR), Zaporizhia Oblast, and Kherson Oblast into the Russian Federation.⁶² The laws created new legal entities for the Russian-occupied territories and granted the current occupation administration heads the status of acting head or governor for their respective territories.⁶³

Russian and occupation administration officials formalized administrative measures to clarify the border procedures between Russian-occupied Ukrainian territories and Russia on October 5. Russian sources reported that Russian officials now recognize the borders between the Russian-occupied Ukrainian territories and the Russian Federation as internal administrative borders, as opposed to international borders. Russian sources also reported that Russian and occupation administration officials eliminated customs controls between the Russian Federation and Russian-occupied territories. However, Russian sources reported that Russian authorities will continue to operate checkpoints along these borders for security purposes.

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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³ https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-september-6

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⁸ https://t.me/energoatom_ua/9972

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¹⁰ <u>https://t.me/rybar/39793</u>; <u>https://t.me/stranaua/67859</u>;

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