Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 3

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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.

Ukrainian forces continued to make substantial gains around Lyman and in Kherson Oblast in the last 48 hours. Ukrainian and Russian sources reported that Ukrainian troops made significant breakthroughs in northern Kherson Oblast between October 2 and 3.[1] Geolocated footage corroborates Russian claims that Ukrainian troops are continuing to push east of Lyman and may have broken through the Luhansk Oblast border in the direction of Kreminna.[2] As ISW has previously reported, the Russian groupings in northern Kherson Oblast and on the Lyman front were largely comprised of units that had been regarded as among Russia's premier conventional fighting forces before the war.[3] Elements of the 144th Motorized Rifle Division of the 20th Combined Arms Army reportedly withdrew from Lyman to rear positions near Kreminna before October 2.[4] Russian sources previously reported that elements of the Russian Airborne Forces (VDV), especially the 76th Guards Air Assault Division, are active in Kherson Oblast.[5] Both the 144th Motorized Rifle Division and the 76th Guards Air Assault Division were previously lauded as some of Russia's most elite forces, and their apparent failures to hold territory against major Ukrainian counter-offensive actions is consistent with ISW's previous assessment that even the most elite Russian military forces are becoming increasingly degraded as the war continues. This phenomenon was also visible in the collapse of the 4th Tank Division of the 1st Guards Tank Army earlier in the Kharkiv counter-offensive.[6]

Russian President Vladimir Putin may be continuing efforts to redirect blame for recent Russian military failures in Kharkiv Oblast. Russian outlet *PBK* (*RBK*), citing sources within the Russian regime, reported on October 3 that Lieutenant-General Roman Berdnikov has replaced Colonel-General Alexander Zhuravlev as commander of the Western Military District (WMD).[7] As ISW previously assessed, WMD units have been largely operating in northeastern Kharkiv Oblast over the last few months but without a clear commander. Zhuravlev has not been seen for some time, and Putin cycled through two commanders of the "western grouping of forces" in two weeks. Putin may be attempting to redirect the growing anger for Russian losses in Kharkiv Oblast and Lyman by assigning a new face prominently to the WMD.[8] This announcement may also be an effort to shield Colonel General Alexander Lapin, commander of the Central Military District (CMD), from widespread criticism for recent Russian failures around Lyman.[9] Putin may seek to shift the blame for future Russian losses in Kharkiv and possibly Luhansk Oblasts to Berdnikov. Criticism of Lapin in recent days has served as a catalyst for wider breakdown within the Russian nationalist information space, and Berdnikov's appointment may be intended to distract and redirect that growing dissatisfaction.

Russian officials released Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) director Ihor Murashov from detention and are likely continuing to undermine Ukrainian control of the plant. Energoatom reported that the Russian military detained Director General of the ZNPP Ihor Murashov on September 30 and released him into Ukrainian-controlled territory on October 3 following talks with International Atomic Energy Agency Director General Raphael Grossi.[10] Russian officials will likely not allow Murashov to return to his position at the ZNPP. Russian officials will likely attempt to use their physical removal of Murashov to assert further control over the nuclear power plant.

Key Takeaways

- Ukrainian forces have made substantial gains around Lyman and in northern Kherson Oblast over the last 24 hours. The Russian units defeated on these fronts were previously considered to be among Russia's premier conventional fighting forces.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin may use the appointment of Lieutenant-General Roman Berdnikov to the command of the Western Military District to redirect blame for recent or future Russian military failures in Kharkiv Oblast.
- Russian officials released the director of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, whom they
 had illegally detained, and are likely continuing to undermine Ukrainian control of the plant.
- Ukrainian forces made advances on the Oskil River-Kreminna line towards the Luhansk oblast border.
- Ukrainian forces advanced in northern Kherson Oblast.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin is introducing punitive measures to target the Russian bureaucratic institutions responsible for the execution of partial mobilization.

- Russian officials acknowledged that the Kremlin intends to invade, occupy, and illegally annex additional Ukrainian territory in the south and east and may alter the claimed borders of its occupied territories.
- The Russian State Duma approved the Kremlin's illegal accession treaties on October 3 and laid out the administrative timeline for integrating illegally annexed Ukrainian territory into the Russian Federation.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of October 3, 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 Counter-offensives—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

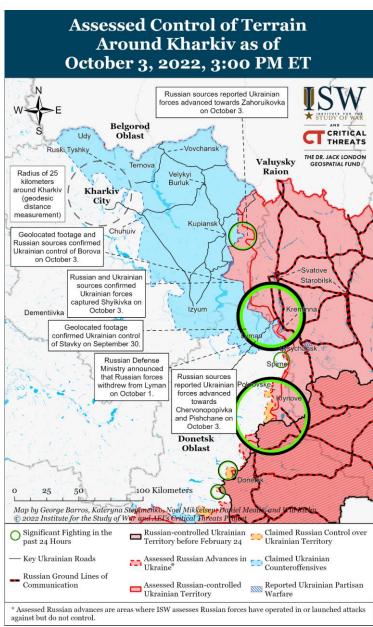
<u>Ukrainian Counter-offensives</u> (Ukrainian efforts to liberate Russian-occupied territories) <u>Eastern Ukraine:</u> (Oskil River-Kreminna Line)

Ukrainian forces continued to make gains in eastern Kharkiv Oblast in the direction of the Luhansk Oblast border on October 2 and 3. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) inadvertently confirmed that Ukrainian troops advanced east of Kupyansk on October 2 and claimed that Russian forces struck Ukrainian positions in Petropavlivka (8km east of Kupyansk) and Synkivka (10km northeast of Kupyansk).[11] A Russian milblogger reported on October 2 that Ukrainian forces are preparing for further eastward advances from the Kupyansk-Petropavlivka area and claimed on October 3 that Ukrainian troops conducted reconnaissance-in-force near Zahorukivka, 16km east of Kupyansk.[12]

Ukrainian forces additionally made gains near the Kharkiv-Luhansk Oblast border west of Svatove on October 3. Geolocated footage shows Ukrainian troops in Borova and Shyikivka, both within 35km west of Svatove, which was later confirmed by the Borova City Council and various Russian milbloggers.[13] Ukrainian sources additionally reported that Ukrainian troops retook Izyumske and Druzhelyubivka, about 25km southwest of Svatove.[14]

Ukrainian troops continued to consolidate gains around Lyman on October 2 and 3 and likely made gains in the direction of the Luhansk Oblast border. The Russian MoD stated that Russian troops struck Ukrainian positions in Yampolivka on October 2, confirming that Ukrainian troops control territory about 15km northeast of Lyman and within 10km west of the Luhansk Oblast border.[15] Russian sources also stated that Ukrainian troops took control of Terny and Torske, 15km northeast and 13km east of Lyman, respectively.[16] Ukrainian troops reportedly advanced to a segment of highway near Chervonopopivka and Pishchane, both of which lie along the Svatove-Kreminna road within 5km north of Kreminna.[17] Russian sources discussed these Ukrainian advances east of Lyman with great concern and suggested that Ukrainian troops will likely move towards the Luhansk Oblast border and attack Kreminna, 30km east of Lyman.[18] Russian troops, including elements of the BARS-13 detachment and the 20th Combined Arms Army withdrew from the Lyman area before October 2 and re-established themselves in Kreminna, where Russian sources claim the new frontline lies [10]

Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) militia representative Andrei Marochko confirmed that Ukrainian troops have crossed the Luhansk Oblast border in an unspecified area on October 3 and gained a foothold somewhere in the direction of Lysychansk.[20] Marochko claimed that Russian forces destroyed the Ukrainian column that crossed the administrative border.[21] Russian sources are seemingly increasingly concerned that Ukrainian troops will continue pushing eastward to attack vulnerable settlements in Luhansk Oblast.



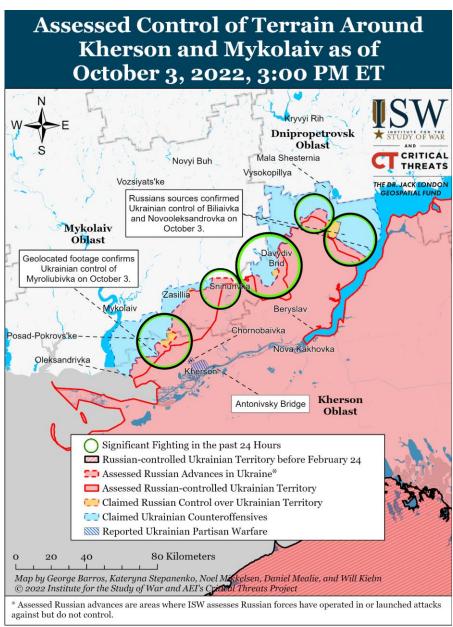
Southern Ukraine: (Kherson Oblast)

Ukrainian forces continued to advance in northwestern and northeastern Kherson Oblast between October 2 and 3. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky announced that Ukrainian forces liberated Myrolyubivka (23km northwest of Kherson City) and Arkhanhelske on the Inhulets River south of the Kherson-Dnipropetrovsk Oblast border.[22] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) acknowledged that Ukrainian forces have penetrated Russian defenses in the direction of Zolota Balka (approximately 82km northeast of Nova Kakhovka), and Russian troops withdrew to prepared defensive positions.[23] Social media footage published on October 1 also showed Ukrainian forces operating in the northern part of the To403 highway.[24] Russian milbloggers claimed that the Russians first retreated to defensive positions in Mykhailivka (about 8km south of Zolota Balka) on October 1 but likely fell further back to Dudchany (about 24km south of Zolota Balka) on October 2.[25] Ukrainian forces continued to advance south in the direction of Nova Kakhovka, and geolocated footage showed that they liberated Mykhailivka, Havrylivka, and Novooleksandrivka along the To403.[26] Social media footage and Russian milblogger discourse also indicated that Ukrainian forces made advances west of the To403 highway, liberating Khreschenivka on October 1.[27] Russian sources also reported that Ukrainian forces liberated settlements on the Lyubomyrivka-Bilaivka-Novoolesandrivka line.[28]

Ukrainian military officials maintained their operational silence regarding the progress of Ukrainian troops elsewhere in Kherson Oblast. The Russian MoD claimed to have twice repelled Ukrainian counterattacks on Davydiv Brid on the eastern bank of the Inhulets River about 53km northwest of Nova Kakhovka between October 2 and October 3.[29] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces have secured positions in the forest belt between Bilohirka and Davydiv Brid, however.[30] The Russian MoD also claimed that Ukrainian forces have entered Russian positions in Oleksandrivka (about 35km west of Kherson City) but claimed that Russian forces are continuing to fire artillery at advancing Ukrainian forces.[31]

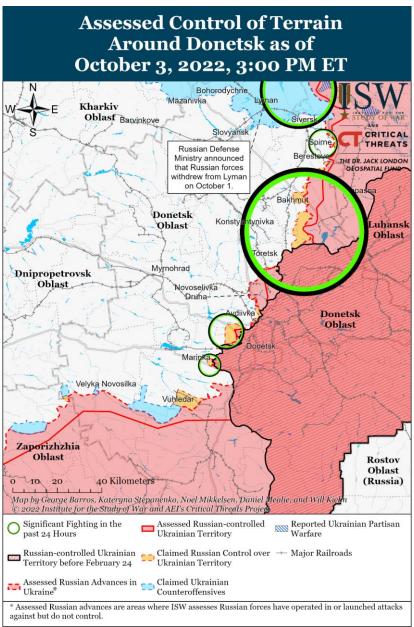
Ukrainian forces continued their interdiction campaign to assist the Ukrainian ground counter-offensive. Ukrainian military officials confirmed destroying a Russian ammunition depot in Tavriiske but did not specify if they were referring to the Tavriiske 28km southwest or the Tavriiske 53km northeast of Kherson City.[32] Ukraine's Southern Operational Command also reported that Ukrainian forces targeted Russian ammunition depots in Kherson Raion and shot down a Russian Su-25 jet in Beryslav Raion.[33] Social media and local reports indicated that Ukrainian forces continued to target Russian positions in Dariivka, Beryslav Raion, and Nova Kakhovka in central Kherson Oblast.[34] Ukrainian officials in exile also reported that Ukrainian forces destroyed Russian ammunition depots in Skadovsk in southwestern Kherson Oblast.[35]

Ukrainian successes in Kherson Oblast are triggering the already vulnerable Russian information space. Russian occupation officials are increasingly blaming NATO intelligence for exposing weaknesses in Russian defenses in Kherson Oblast and are calling for Russian forces to prepare for urban battles and develop new defensive positions.[36] Russian-appointed Kherson Oblast Occupation Administration Head Kirill Stremeousov claimed that Russian forces are in control of the situation and downplayed the scale of the Ukrainian breakthrough in northern Kherson Oblast.[37]



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

Russian forces continued to conduct unsuccessful ground assaults in Donetsk Oblast on October 2 and 3. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on October 2 and 3 that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian ground assaults on Bakhmut, to the northeast of Bakhmut near Bakhmutske (10km northeast of Bakhmut), and south of Bakhmut near Zaitseve (8km southeast of Bakhmut), Odradivka (9km south of Bakhmut), Mayorsk (20km south of Bakhmut), and Vesela Dolyna (6km southeast of Bakhmut).[38] Several Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian troops have been withdrawing from their positions near Bakhmut and that Wagner Group fighters have entrenched themselves on the outskirts of the city, although ISW cannot confirm claims of Ukrainian withdrawal.[39] The Ukrainian General Staff also noted that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian ground assaults southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske (13km southwest of Avdiivka), Nevelske (15km southwest of Avdiivka), and Pobieda (30km southwest of Avdiivka) on October 2 and 3.[40] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attempted to break through Russian positions between Optyne and the Donetsk Airport on the night of October 1-2.[41] Ukrainian sources reported that Russian forces continued routine artillery, air, and missile strikes throughout the line of contact in Donetsk Oblast on October 2 and 3.[42]



<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 Mykolaiv and Dnipropetrovsk Oblasts on October 2 and 3.[43] Ukrainian sources reported that Russian forces struck Mykolaiv City, Ochakiv, Zaporizhia City, and Nikopol on October 2 and 3.[44] Ukrainian sources reported that Russian forces also struck Dnipro City and critical energy infrastructure in the vicinity of Kryvyi Rih on October 3 and struck Odesa City on October 2.[45] Ukrainian sources reported that Ukrainian forces struck multiple Russian positions in Zaporizhia Oblast on October 2 and 3.[46]

Russian forces continued to use Iranian-made drones to attack Ukrainian positions and settlements in southern Ukraine on October 2. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted more than 70 UAV sorties on October 2.[47] Ukrainian sources reported that Russian forces conducted Shahed-136 kamikaze drone attacks in Mykolaiv Oblast and Kryvyi Rih, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast on October 2.[48] Ukraine's Southern Operational Command also reported that Ukrainian forces destroyed five Russian drones involved in attack operations in Mykolaiv Oblast on October 2.[49]

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

Russian President Vladimir Putin is introducing punitive measures against Russian bureaucratic institutions responsible for the improper execution of partial mobilization, likely in an effort to appear to be addressing mobilization problems and to punish enlistment officials who have not met his mobilization quotas. Putin increased the total staffing of the Russian Prosecutor's Office by almost 150 people, including 100 more military prosecutors, on October 3.[50] Putin had previously tasked the Russian Federation Attorney General with handling all complaints regarding mobilization during Putin's meeting with the Russian Security Council on September 29 at which Putin acknowledged that Russian officials are not conducting mobilization according to his decree for the first time.[51] The increase in the prosecutorial staff suggests that Putin may intend to prosecute officials at military recruitment centers throughout the country, which Putin and his mouthpieces have identified as the sole cause of the poor execution of mobilization and of the illegal mobilization of men not liable for this call up. Russian federal subjects have already begun to target head of military recruitment centers as of October 3, with Khabarovsk Krai Governor Mikhail Degtyarev firing the region's head military enlistment official (commissar) for wrongfully mobilizing several thousand residents.[52] A Belgorod Oblast outlet reported that the oblast administration fired the regional military commissar for alleged connections with Kyiv and wrongful mobilization.[53] The report added that the Belgorod military commissar may face "serious and harsh criminal punishment."[54]

The Russian mobilization system is suffering from severe bureaucratic challenges and limitations that could undermine Putin's efforts to generate the number of troops he needs to continue fighting in Ukraine. The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) cited one Russian military commissar's complaints about the challenges he and his colleagues are encountering in trying to administer draft notices to men who are hiding in their apartments.[55] The commissar noted that he could only deliver 16 of the required 170 mobilization notices on September 28. Former Russian Southern Military District (SMD) Deputy Commander Andrey Gurulev stated on a state-media broadcast on October 1 that Russian forces are unlikely to generate 300,000 combat-ready reservists, which, he claimed, is why Russian military recruitment centers are expanding their criteria.[56] Gurulev added that the Kremlin should simply redefine its mobilization criteria to enforce transparency throughout the process. Putin's persecution of military enlistment officers suggests that he remains determined to maintain the façade that he has ordered only a limited reserve mobilization, possibly while nevertheless covertly expanding mobilization criteria.

The partial mobilization continues to increase strains in Russian society in the short-term. Ukrainian-intercepted calls between Russian servicemen and their loved ones show a growing distrust in the correct execution of the mobilization processes.[57] The GUR noted that the Russian government is already failing in its promises to properly equip mobilized men and to pay salaries for both mobilized and contract servicemen.[58] The Russian State Duma also withdrew a draft law that offered a one-time bonus of 300,000 rubles (about \$4,970) to mobilized men alongside mortgage interest rate exemptions and other social benefits.[59] The Kremlin's failures to follow its legal guidelines for partial mobilization, combined with its systematic failures to keep other promises, will likely continue to generate resentment and alienation among Russians. The GUR claimed that the Kremlin is preparing for increasing distrust and dissatisfaction among Russians by training new units of riot police.

Some Russians continued to resist the Kremlin's mobilization practices. A Russian outlet reported that an 11th grade schoolgirl set a military recruitment center on fire in Kazan in opposition to partial mobilization and war in Ukraine.[60] An unidentified suspect also tried to commit arson at a military recruitment center in Krasnoyarsk Krai.[61] Social media users claimed that mobilized men in Alabino, Moscow Oblast prevented mobilization officials from

taking their personal belongings, resulting in a brawl.[62] There are also reported cases of deaths among newly mobilized men, with some men committing suicide.[63]

<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 officials acknowledged that the Kremlin intends to invade, occupy, and illegally annex additional Ukrainian territory in the south and east and may alter the claimed borders of its occupied territories. Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told reporters on October 3 that the Kremlin annexed the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics (DNR and LNR) to their "2014 borders." [64] It remains unclear whether Peskov is referring to the territory that the Russian proxy DNR and LNR were able to hold in 2014, or the territory they claimed in 2014 (the entirety of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts). Peskov announced that the borders of Kherson and Zaporizhia oblasts have not yet been decided, but that Russian officials "will continue to consult with people who live in [Kherson and Zaporizhia oblasts]" to determine Russia's new claimed borders. Peskov's claims seem to contradict the language of the accession bills passed by the Russian State Duma, which use similar language for each of the four illegally annexed territories: "The borders of the territory of the Donetsk People's Republic [e.g.] shall be defined as the borders of the territory of the Donetsk People's Republic that existed on the day of its formation and the day of its admission to the Russian Federation and formation as a new subject [constituent entity] within the Russian Federation." [65] Those borders are not the same, and Peskov declined to clarify them.

Senior Zaporizhia Occupation Administration official Vladimir Rogov was more explicit: he claimed on October 2 that the Soviet administrative boundaries of Zaporizhia Oblast now belong to Russia and will be administered from the regional capital, Zaporizhzhia City, which is still under Ukrainian control.[66] Rogov acknowledged that about a quarter of Zaporizhia remains "temporarily occupied" by Ukrainian forces but that "control over the entire administrative border of Zaporizhia Oblast will be returned."[67] Rogov claimed October 3 that "after liberation, a referendum will also be held [in Zaporizhzhia City] so that all residents of Zaporizhia oblast can be involved in the reunification of our region with Russia."

The Russian State Duma approved the Kremlin's illegal accession treaties on October 3 and laid out the administrative timeline for integrating illegally annexed Ukrainian territory into the Russian Federation. The draft legislation backdated all requirements to September 30, the date Putin announced Russia's annexation of Ukrainian territory. The Duma mandated the use of the Russian ruble rather than the Ukrainian hryvnia beginning on January 1, 2023, laid out a timeline to integrate the territories into the Russian budget, and declared all persons residing within Russian-annexed territory to be Russian citizens.[68] Residents must file for renunciation of Russian citizenship within 30 days if they wish to refuse it—the Kremlin likely intends that process to identify potential Ukrainian dissidents and partisans. The draft legislation also mandated the integration of the DNR and LNR's "people's militias" into the Russian military. The draft did not clarify whether civilians in newly annexed territories will be eligible for the Kremlin's "partial mobilization" order or for usual semi-annual conscription, which is set to begin on November 1. Russian officials will almost certainly forcibly conscript Ukrainian civilians between 18 and 27 years of age in that cycle. Putin will reportedly appoint heads of the new Russian oblasts within 10 days.

The Federation Council and Putin must each ratify the draft treaties before they become Russian law. However, Russia's Constitutional Court ruled on October 2 that the draft treaties will be retroactively and de facto in effect from September 30 until the legislature and the executive branch formally approve them. [69] The Kremlin has preordained the legislative approval of the illegal accession treaties: Two Russian language opposition outlets noted that more State Duma parliamentarians voted for the "unanimous" approval of the treaties than attended the vote. [70] The Duma reported zero abstentions or no votes, but four different total approval counts ranging between 409 and 413 votes. Only 408 parliamentarians attended the session. Russian State Duma speaker Vyacheslav Volodin explained the discrepancy as a result of a "technical failure" but claimed that the Duma expressed "unanimous" and "unambiguous" approval.

Russian occupation authorities also implemented a new temporary "travel permit" system on October 1, likely to prevent Ukrainian civilians from fleeing to Ukrainian-controlled territory. The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on October 2 that residents of Vasylivka, Zaporizhia Oblast had to provide occupation officials with passport data, a birth certificate, and a military ID as well as a questionnaire detailing their itinerary, the purpose of the trip, and their mode of transportation.[71] Occupation officials will take up to 10 days to reject or approve travel requests. A Ukrainian Kherson official reported that only 11 residents were able to travel from occupied Kherson Oblast to Ukrainian territory on October 1.[72] Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported on October 2 that Russian officials in Kherson require an "endless list" of documents, arrange long vehicle inspections, seize property at checkpoints, purposefully prolong wait

11

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times for the review of documents, and outright turn away residents in order to prevent them from leaving occupied territories. [73] Russian authorities have also likely retained border controls between Russian-occupied and -annexed Kherson and Russian-occupied and -annexed Crimea. [74] Russian occupation officials will likely continue to collect data on Ukrainian civilians, especially Ukrainian men, in occupied territories to set conditions to eliminate dissident speech and partisan activity and to forcibly mobilize or conscript Ukrainian civilians or both.

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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14

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