

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, August 22, 2023

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August 22, 2023, 7:45pm 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 12:45pm ET on August 22. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the August 23 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian forces continued to make advances in and around Robotyne in western Zaporizhia Oblast as of August 22 amid indications that Russian forces likely have a limited presence in the settlement. Geolocated footage published on August 21 and 22 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced in southeastern Robotyne and east of the settlement near Novopokrovka (13km southeast of Orikhiv).[1] The Ukrainian 47th Mechanized Brigade published a video on August 22 showing its personnel successfully evacuating civilians from Robotyne while accompanied by Ukrainian journalists.[2] The 47th Mechanized Brigade stated that its personnel broke through multi-echelon Russian defensive lines near Robotyne and have entered the settlement.[3] The evacuations and the presence of Ukrainian journalists suggests that areas of Robotyne may be relatively secure due to diminished Russian positions in the settlement itself and the nearby area. Russian maximalist claims that Ukrainian forces only maintain positions on the very northern outskirts of the settlement are likely false given the footage and reporting from the 47th Brigade. Most Russian milbloggers continue to acknowledge that Ukrainian forces hold positions in much of northern Robotyne and that Russian forces likely control at most positions on the southern outskirts of the settlement at this time.[4]

Russian forces appear to be concentrating their limited available reinforcements from elsewhere in the theater in the Orikhiv direction in western Zaporizhia Oblast. Ukrainian military journalist Konstantin Mashovets reported that elements of the 108th Air Assault (VDV) Regiment (7th VDV Division) deployed near Robotyne as of August 16 and near Novopokrovka as of August 20.[5] Elements of the 108th were deployed near the Antonivsky Bridge as of July 29, and the "Sokol" Volunteer Battalion of the 108th VDV Regiment was reportedly operating near Staromayorske and Urozhaine in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area as of August 14.[6] Elements of the 7th VDV Division's 56th Regiment have likely been engaged in fighting in the immediate vicinity of Robotyne since early August.[7] Elements of the 7th VDV Division's 247th Regiment appear to be still operating south of Velyka Novosilka in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, although a prominent Russian milblogger suggested that some elements may be operating in the Robotyne area.[8] Elements of the 7th VDV Division's air assault regiments may be deployed across two axis as separate battalions and platoons, however. ISW previously assessed that the lateral redeployment of elements of the 7th VDV Division to the Robotyne area suggested that Ukrainian forces had severely degraded Russian forces in the area, and the possible commitment of elements of all three of its air assault regiments may suggest the further deterioration of the Russian situation in the area.

Ukrainian offensive operations in other sectors of the front remain important because they can fix Russian units in place and prevent further lateral reinforcements. Criticisms of continued Ukrainian efforts in other sectors and calls for Ukraine to concentrate all available reserves on a single axis are thus problematic. Ukrainian offensive operations around Bakhmut have fixed elements of multiple Russian airborne divisions and separate brigades in that area, as ISW has previously noted, rendering them likely unavailable to stiffen Russian resistance in the south.[9] Ukrainian offensive operations south of Velyka Novosilka proceeding in parallel with operations toward Melitopol present Russian defenders with multiple dilemmas and the need to choose which axis to reinforce. Sound campaign design requires balancing between weighting a decisive main effort and avoiding allowing the enemy to concentrate all reserves on stopping a single obvious thrust.

The Ukrainian advance in the Robotyne area brings Ukrainian forces closer to launching operations against second lines of defense that may be relatively weaker than the first Russian defensive line in the area. ISW has not observed any new Russian formations or units arrive in western Zaporizhia Oblast beyond the lateral transfer of the elements of the 7th VDV Division and the arrival of "Akhmat-Yug" Battalion elements in August.[10] Elements of the 503rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (19th Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) previously operating near Nesteryanka (12km northwest of Robotyne) have reportedly arrived in the immediate vicinity of Robotyne, likely to reinforce failing Russian defenses in the area.[11] Russian forces deployed

to the wider western Zaporizhzhia Oblast operational direction have been defending against Ukrainian counteroffensives since the start of the counteroffensive without rotation.[12] Russian forces do not appear to have uncommitted regular units in Zaporizhzhia Oblast. All elements of the Russian grouping in Zaporizhzhia Oblast that ISW observed in the area in the months leading up to the counteroffensive have since been engaged in defensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast or in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area.[13] ISW has since observed additional Russian elements that were likely already in the area only after they started defending against Ukrainian counteroffensive operations, however, and it remains possible that some yet unobserved and uncommitted elements may occupy positions at secondary lines of defense.[14]

The lack of observed Russian formations and units at secondary lines of defense in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast may suggest that elements of units and formations already engaged in fighting may occupy these positions. Russian tactical reporting about counterattacks in the Robotyne area suggests that the 22nd and 45th Spetsnaz Brigades occupy positions behind the first line of defense and possibly at the second.[15] Elements of the 22nd and 45th Spetsnaz Brigades appear to be responsible for launching counterattacks against significant Ukrainian advances in the area and therefore are likely degraded.[16] The likely lack of Russian operational reserves, together with the limited lateral transfers to western Zaporizhzhia Oblast and observed separate uncommitted units at second lines of defense, suggests that second lines of Russian defense may be significantly less heavily defended. The Russian formations and units currently occupying secondary lines of defense are largely unknown at this time, however, and ISW offers this assessment with low confidence.

Russian forces appear concerned about recent Ukrainian advances in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area and in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast. Satellite imagery from November 2022, December 2022, and August 2023 shows that Russian forces have notably sped up the expansion of defensive fortifications near Chervonoselivka (38km southwest of Velyka Novosilka and 27km from the current frontline) in Zaporizhzhia Oblast over the last month.[17] Ukrainian Colonel Petro Chernyk stated that all conditions are set for Ukrainian forces to enter the Northern Azov region and “demolish” Russian positions in southern Ukraine and occupied Crimea.[18] Chernyk stated that Russian forces are strengthening their positions on the Perekop Isthmus (around 160km north of Sevastopol) and are building three lines of defense in the area.[19] Chernyk suggested that Russian forces would not have built additional defenses if they were sure they could hold their positions on the Perekop Isthmus.[20] Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Head Major General Kyrylo Budanov stated that Russian forces have created four unspecified “groups” in Crimea in preparation for a Ukrainian counteroffensive and noted that this has never happened before.[21] The construction of additional defensive fortifications in Zaporizhzhia Oblast and on the Perekop Isthmus and the creation of four unspecified “groups” in Crimea may indicate that Russian forces are growing increasingly concerned about recent Ukrainian advances along the southern front.

Russian President Vladimir Putin reiterated Russia’s unwillingness to renegotiate the Black Sea Grain Initiative until all of Russia’s extensive terms are met during the BRICS Business Forum in South Africa on August 22. Putin claimed that the West ignored obligations to Russia for the export of grain and fertilizer abroad and that the West prevented Russia from transferring free mineral fertilizers to unspecified countries.[22] Putin claimed that Russia has refused to extend the grain deal since July 18 and will continue to refuse until all Russia’s conditions are met.[23] Putin, nevertheless, reiterated Russia’s promise to send six African countries 25,000 to 50,000 tons of grain for free.[24] Putin’s promotion of Russian agricultural exports to Africa is likely aimed at mitigating dissatisfaction from African countries at Russia’s withdrawal from the grain deal and Russia’s destruction of about 180,000 tons of Ukrainian grain, some of which was likely intended for Africa.[25] Putin delivered the remarks via teleconference as Russian and South African concerns about South Africa’s status as a signatory to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and Putin’s ICC arrest warrant have shadowed the BRICS forum in the past months.[26]

Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin may be trying to increase Wagner’s presence in Africa as part of an effort to maintain Wagner as a cohesive and independent organization. A Wagner recruitment Telegram channel announced on July 30 that Wagner stopped all recruitment and that all Russian regional recruitment centers suspended work indefinitely before advertising new jobs on August 21.[27] An OSINT monitoring group, “All Eyes on Wagner,” reported on August 22 that Wagner sources have been advertising jobs in the Middle East and Africa following Prigozhin’s August 21 claim that Wagner is expanding its presence in Africa.[28] The advertisement reportedly offers a monthly salary of 150,000 rubles (about \$1,500) for jobs in the Middle East and 195,000 to 250,000 rubles (about \$2,050 to \$2,640) for jobs in Africa.[29] A Wagner recruitment Telegram channel consistently advertised the monthly salary for Wagner positions in Ukraine as 240,000 rubles (about \$2,530) since the start of 2023.[30] The significant decrease in salary is consistent with recent reports that Wagner is financially struggling and may be losing personnel due to salary cuts.[31] ISW continues to assess that Wagner’s new recruitment effort may indicate that Prigozhin is attempting to secure a contract in Africa and deploy existing and new personnel from Russia and Belarus, actions that Prigozhin may see as Wagner’s final option to maintain its independence from the Russian MoD.[32]

A Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) delegation arrived in Libya on August 22, likely as part of the Russian MoD’s efforts to set conditions to possibly replace the Wagner Group with MoD-affiliated private military

companies (PMCs). Libyan National Army Commander Marshal Khalifa Haftar invited the Russian MoD delegation, led by Deputy Defense Minister Colonel General Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, to Libya to discuss bilateral cooperation in combating international terrorism and other issues.[33] ISW has observed evidence indicating that Wagner forces continue to operate in Mali, Libya, and the Central African Republic.[34] The arrival of a Russian MoD delegation in Libya indicates that Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu likely maintains his reported objectives of taking over Russia's relationships with African countries and replacing Wagner with MoD-affiliated PMCs.[35]

Claims that the Russian MoD formally dismissed nominal Russian deputy theater commander in Ukraine Army General Sergei Surovikin as commander of the Russian Aerospace Forces (VKS) generated a muted response among Russian milbloggers. Russian opposition journalist Alexey Venidiktov claimed on August 22 that the Russian MoD issued a decree dismissing Surovikin as the commander of the VKS.[36] Russian media figure Ksenia Sobchak claimed that the Russian MoD issued a closed decree dismissing Surovikin on August 18.[37] Several Russian milbloggers claimed that news of Surovikin's alleged dismissal is not new and does not change anything because Russian authorities removed Surovikin from power immediately after Prigozhin's June 24 rebellion.[38]

The Kremlin is reportedly planning to cancel gubernatorial elections in the Republic of Khakassia in order to prevent a Russian veteran's loss and ensure a United Russia victory, likely demonstrating the Kremlin's concern over domestic support for the war and the fragility of its veneer of electoral legitimacy. Russian opposition media outlet *Meduza* reported on August 21 that the United Russia candidate in the gubernatorial race in the Republic of Khakassia, State Duma deputy and veteran of the war in Ukraine Sergei Sokol, is likely to lose to incumbent Valentin Konovalov of the Communist Party.[39] Kremlin-backed United Russia leadership reportedly realized that primarily promoting Sokol as a veteran of the war in Ukraine was causing voters to question his qualifications to head a regional government and is reportedly now presenting Sokol as an "effective lobbyist" who will be able to garner more support for Khakassia from the federal government. *Meduza* reported that the Kremlin, in preparation for Sokol's loss, is planning to cancel the election citing "allegations of falsifications." [40] The Central Election Commission has already criticized the local election commission for misusing administrative resources in July.[41] The Kremlin will reportedly give Sokol a "compensatory post" in the regional or federal government and conduct new elections with a new United Russia candidate.[42] The Kremlin will reportedly only cancel the elections if the results are close; if Konovalov wins by a significant margin, the Kremlin, according to a *Meduza* source close to the Presidential Administration, may recognize the results "in order not to inflame the situation." [43] ISW previously reported that United Russia electoral campaigns are not highlighting the war in Ukraine out of concerns about voter support for the war.[44] ISW also previously reported that the Kremlin likely fears its electoral legitimacy in upcoming elections may weaken, possibly presenting United Russia with a greater need to falsify and manipulate election results.[45]

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian forces continued to make advances in and around Robotyne in western Zaporizhia Oblast as of August 22 amid indications that Russian forces likely have a limited presence in the settlement.**
- **Russian forces appear to be concentrating their limited available reinforcements from elsewhere in the theater in the Orikhiv direction in western Zaporizhia Oblast.**
- **Ukrainian offensive operations in other sectors of the front remain important because they can fix Russian units in place and prevent further lateral reinforcements. Criticisms of continued Ukrainian efforts in other sectors and calls for Ukraine to concentrate all available reserves on a single axis are thus problematic.**
- **The Ukrainian advance in the Robotyne area brings Ukrainian forces closer to launching operations against second lines of defense that may be relatively weaker than the first Russian defensive line in the area.**
- **Russian forces appear concerned about recent Ukrainian advances in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area and in western Zaporizhia Oblast.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin reiterated Russia's unwillingness to renegotiate the Black Sea Grain Initiative until all of Russia's extensive terms are met during the BRICS Business Forum in South Africa on August 22.**
- **Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin may be trying to increase Wagner's presence in Africa as part of an effort to maintain Wagner as a cohesive and independent organization.**
- **A Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) delegation arrived in Libya on August 22, likely as part of the Russian MoD's efforts to set conditions to possibly replace the Wagner Group with MoD-affiliated private military companies (PMCs).**
- **The Kremlin is reportedly planning to cancel gubernatorial elections in the Republic of Khakassia in order to prevent a Russian veteran's loss and ensure a United Russia victory,**

likely demonstrating the Kremlin's concern over domestic support for the war and the fragility of its veneer of electoral legitimacy.

- Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia on August 22 and advanced in certain areas.
- Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations on at least two sectors of the front on August 22 and made advances near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast.
- Russian authorities continue their campaign of religious persecution in occupied Ukraine.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of August 22, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Christopher Hoelt, and Cole Quick
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* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

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

Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

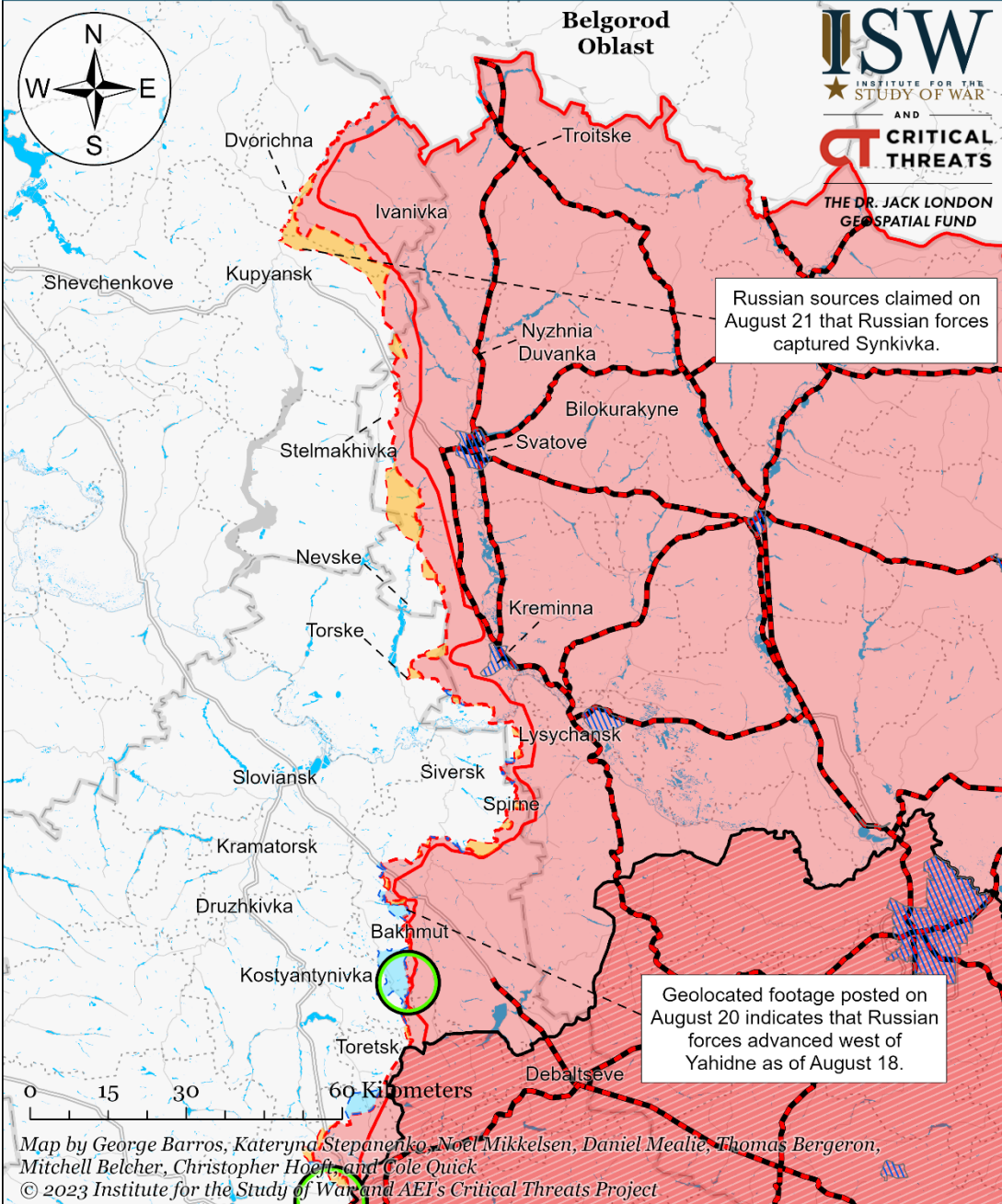
Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on August 22 and advanced. Geolocated footage posted on August 22 indicates that Russian forces have advanced southwest of Vilshana (15km northeast of Kupyansk).[46] Russian Western Grouping of Forces Press Officer Yaroslav Yakimkin claimed that Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Vilshana.[47] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced near Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk) but have not captured the settlement.[48] A Russian source claimed that Russian forces are advancing on a broad front along the Synkivka-Vilshana-Kyslivka line (up to 20km southeast of Kupyansk).[49] The Russian source claimed that Russian forces have advanced from the Serebryanske forest area (10km southwest of Kreminna) towards the Siverskyi Donets River and are beginning operations to cross the river.[50] The source also claimed that Russian forces are continuing to advance from Dibrova (7km southwest of Kreminna) into the Serebryanske forest area towards Serebrianka (10km southwest of Kreminna), have entered Torske (15km west of Kreminna) where fighting is ongoing in the settlement itself, and are near the outskirts of Yampolivka (17km west of Kreminna). Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Ilya Yevlash reported that Russian forces have deployed more than 45,000 troops, 500 tanks, 500 infantry fighting vehicles, 300 artillery systems, and 150 multiple launch rocket systems in the Kupyansk and Lyman directions.[51]

Russian sources claimed that Russian strikes targeted Ukrainian ground lines of communication (GLOCs) in rear areas along the Kupyansk-Svatove line on August 22. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces destroyed or severely damaged major crossings over the Oskil River in the Kupyansk area, including a road bridge in Kupyansk, a rail bridge near Kivsharivka (9km southeast of Kupyansk), and crossings near Senkove (20km southeast of Kupyansk) and Borova (30km west of Svatove).[52]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line but did not advance on August 22. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Petropavlivka (7km east of Kupyansk), Synkivka, Novoselivske (14km northwest of Svatove), Raihorodka (12km west of Svatove), Torske, the Serebryanske forest area, and south of Dibrova.[53] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Novoselivske, Kreminna, the Serebryanske forest area, Torske, and the Yampolivka-Torske line.[54]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of August 22, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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Russian sources claimed on August 21 that Russian forces captured Synkivka.

Geolocated footage posted on August 20 indicates that Russian forces advanced west of Yahidne as of August 18.

Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Christopher Hocht, and Cole Quick
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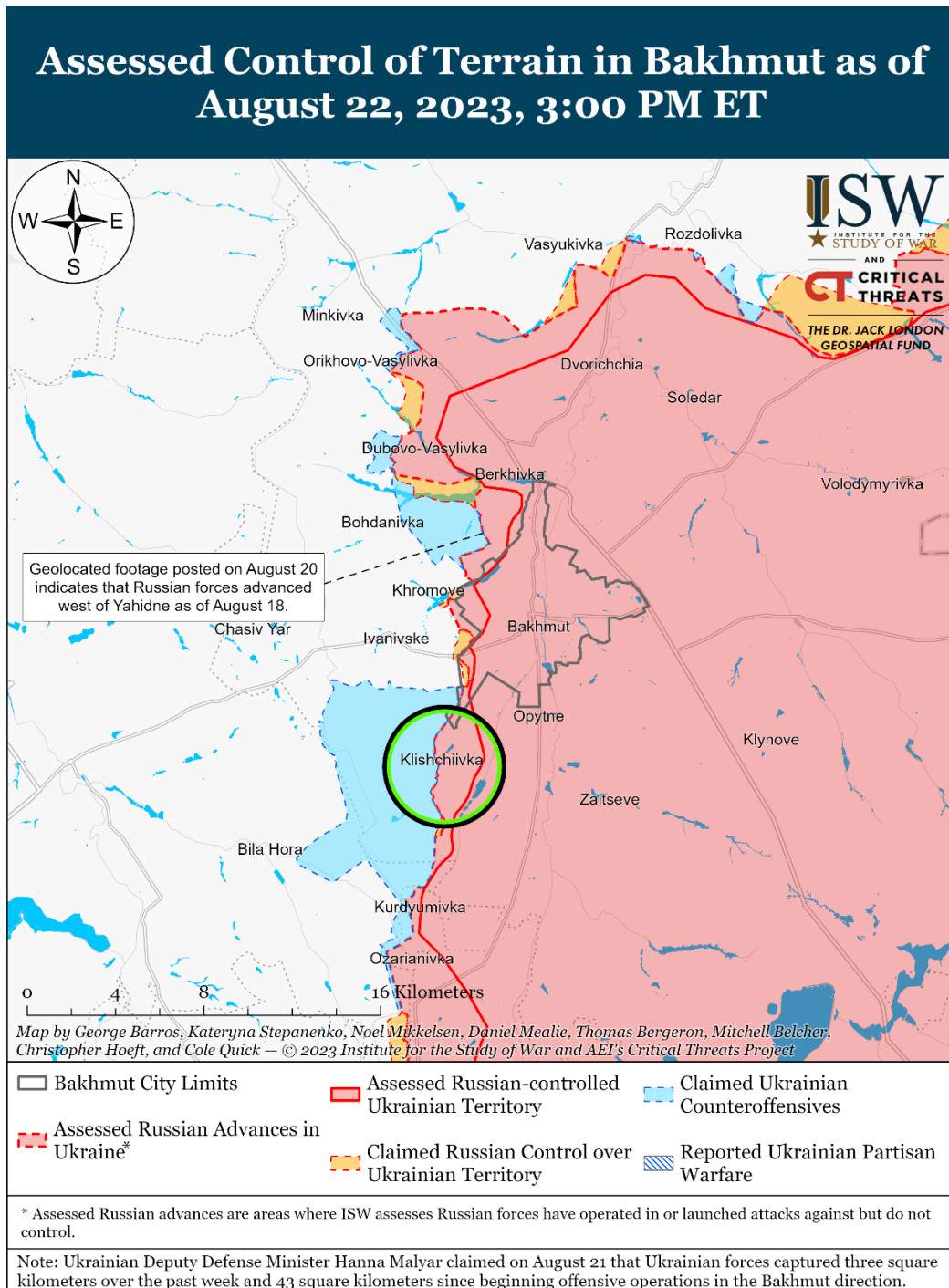
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Russian Ground Lines of Communication
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 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)

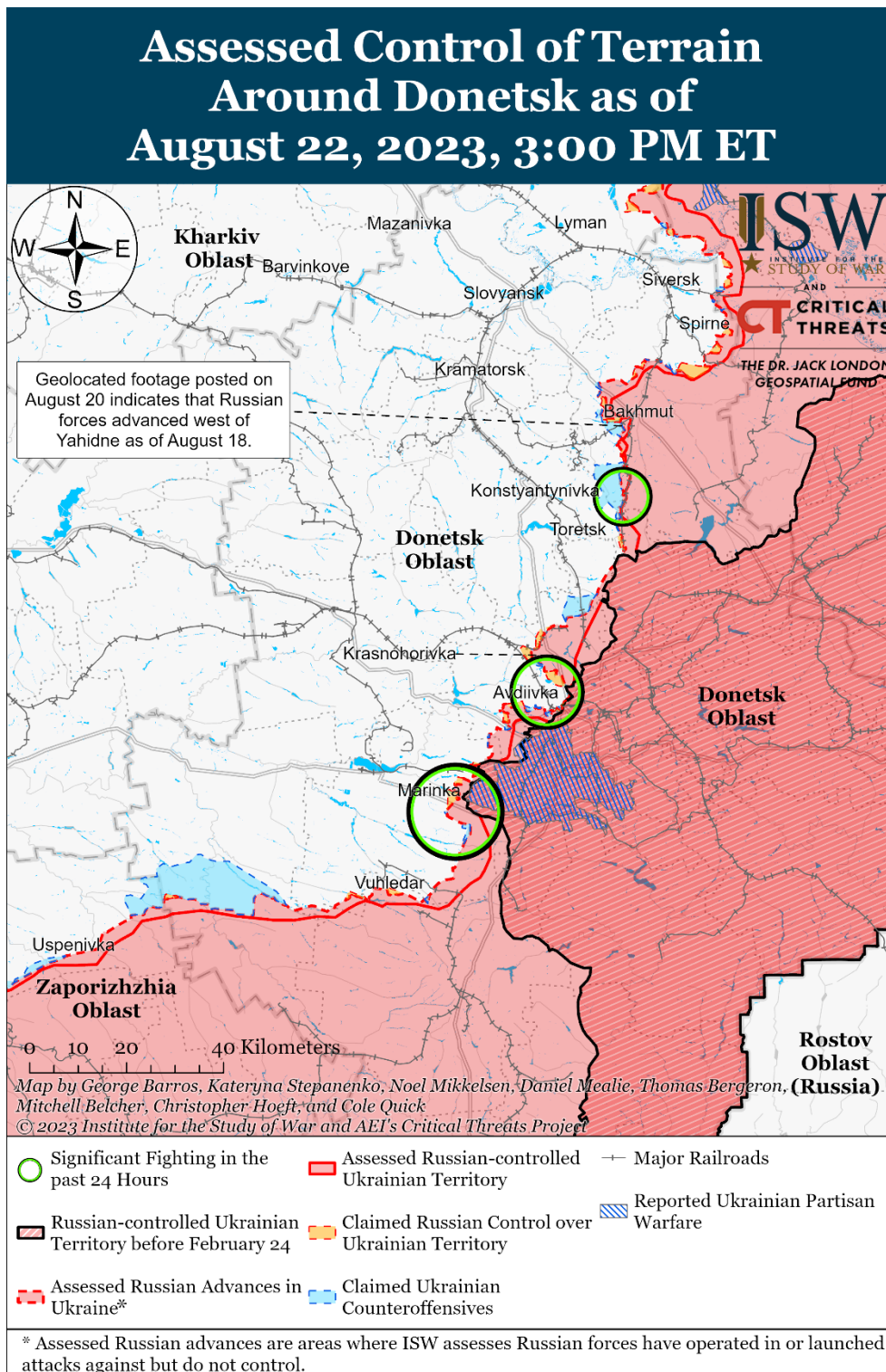
Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations around Bakhmut on August 22 and reportedly advanced. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continue to conduct offensive operations in the Bakhmut direction.[55] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces made limited gains near Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).[56] Another Russian milblogger claimed on the evening of August 21 that Ukrainian forces attacked in the Berkhivka area (6km northwest of Bakhmut).[57]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations around Bakhmut on August 22, but did not make any confirmed or claimed advances. The Ukrainian General staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut).[58] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces unsuccessfully counterattacked near Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut).[59]



Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on August 22, but did not make any confirmed or claimed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Avdiivka, Marinka (on the western outskirts of Donetsk-City), and Novomykhailivka (10km south of Marinka).[60] Footage published on August 22 purportedly shows elements of the 103rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) operating near Marinka.[61]

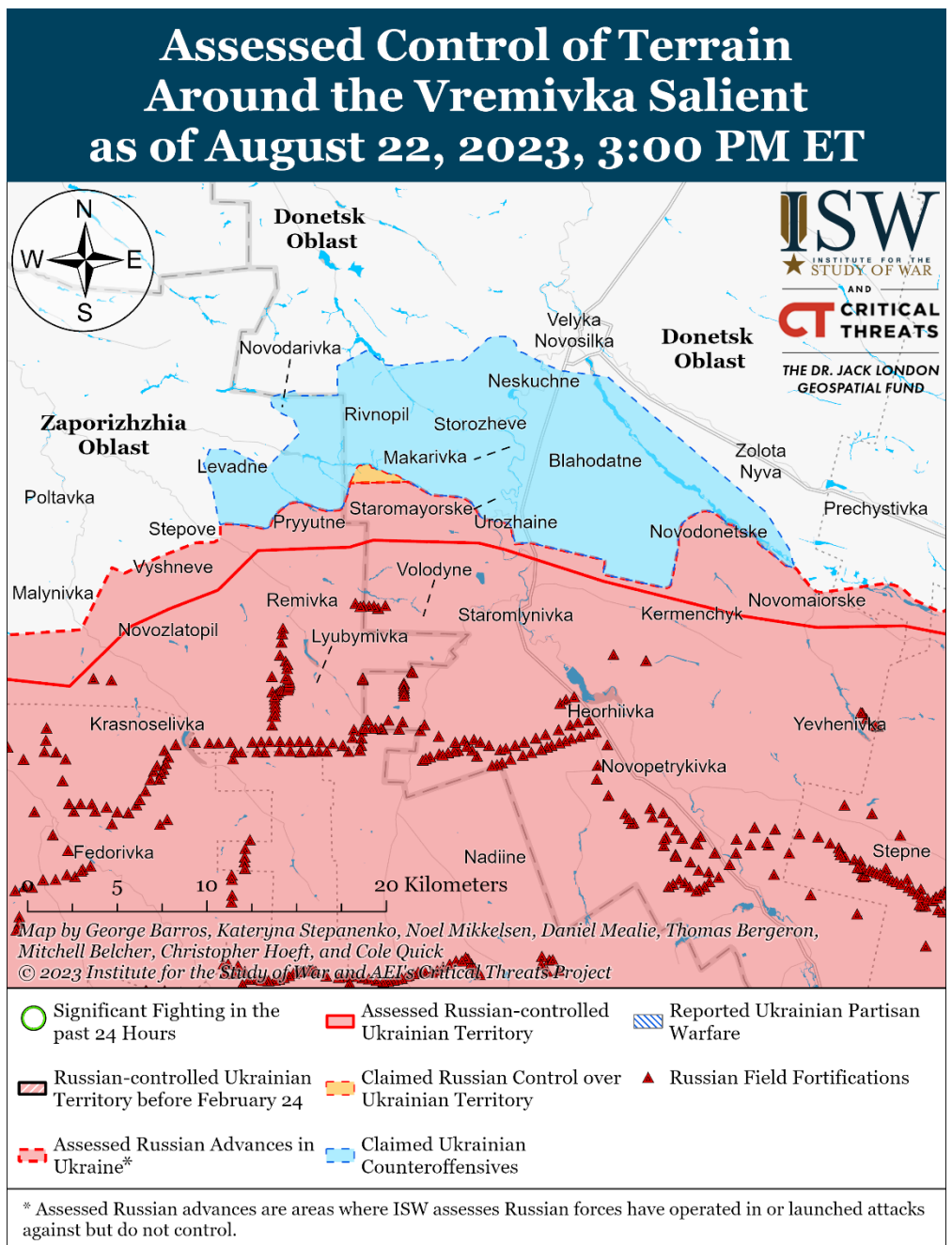
The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful ground attacks along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on August 22. The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Avdiivka and Novomykhailivka.[62]



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

A Russian source claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted limited ground attacks in western Donetsk Oblast on August 22 but did not advance. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are conducting ongoing assaults near Pavlivka (30km southwest of Donetsk City) and Mykilske (27km southwest of Donetsk City).[63]

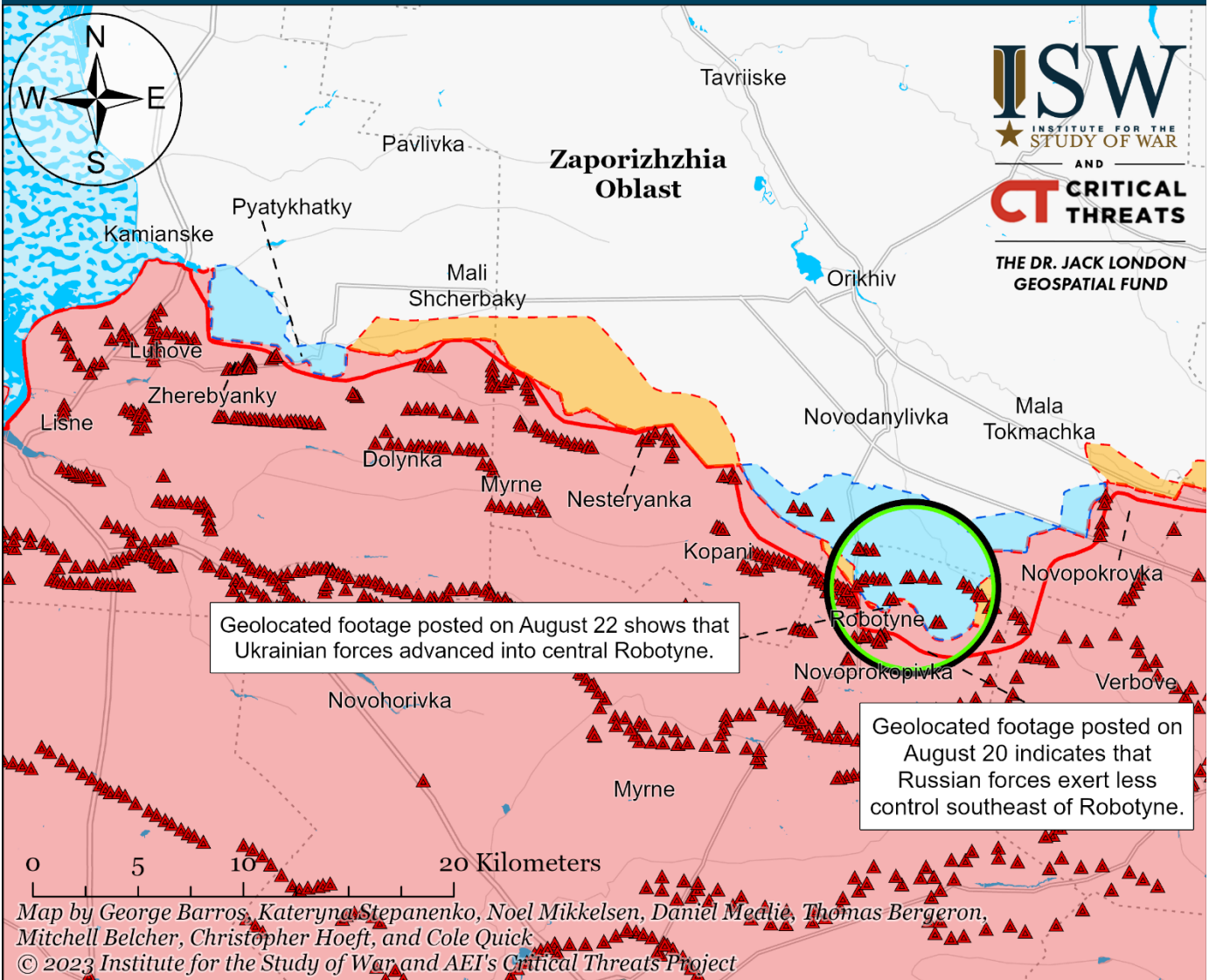
Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations along the administrative border between Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts on August 22 but did not advance. The Ukrainian General Staff did not report Ukrainian offensive activity in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area, although Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces continued unsuccessful assaults near Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) and Urozhaine (9km south of Velyka Novosilka).[64] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are currently trying to encircle a group of Russian forces holding a salient near Pryyutne (15km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[65] The Russian "Vostok" Battalion, which is currently fighting near Urozhaine, claimed that Ukrainian forces are intensifying strikes against Russian transport vehicles along country roads five to seven kilometers from the front in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area.[66]



Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast on August 22 and made further marginal gains. Geolocated footage published on August 22 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced further into southeastern Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv).[67] Geolocated footage published on August 21 indicates that Ukrainian forces made marginal advances west of Novopokrovka (13km southwest of Orikhiv).[68] The Ukrainian 47th Mechanized Brigade published a video on August 22 showing its personnel successfully evacuating civilians from Robotyne.[69] The 47th Mechanized Brigade stated that its personnel broke through multi-echelon Russian defensive lines near Robotyne and have entered the settlement.[70] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhia Oblast) direction.[71] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian assaults near the Balka Uspenivka area (11km southeast of Orikhiv) and Robotyne.[72] Russian milbloggers continued to claim that Ukrainian forces have entrenched themselves in the northern outskirts of Robotyne and that much of the settlement is currently contested.[73] One Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces currently control at least half of Robotyne and that elements of the 42nd Motorized Rifle Division (58th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District), the 7th Guards Airborne (VDV) Division, the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet), and the 1430th Motorized Rifle Regiment of Territorial Troops (TRV) are actively repelling Ukrainian assaults in the area.[74] Other Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces continue to repel occasional Ukrainian assaults on Russian positions in southern Robotyne and that Ukrainian forces made unspecified advances in the direction of Verbove (18km southeast of Orikhiv).[75]

Russian sources claimed that Russian forces successfully counterattacked in western Zaporizhia Oblast on August 22. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces counterattacked Ukrainian forces in central Robotyne on the night of August 21 to 22 and recaptured positions.[76] One milblogger claimed that Russian forces continued pushing Ukrainian forces from the center of Robotyne back into the northern outskirts of the settlement on August 22.[77] ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims, however.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of August 22, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

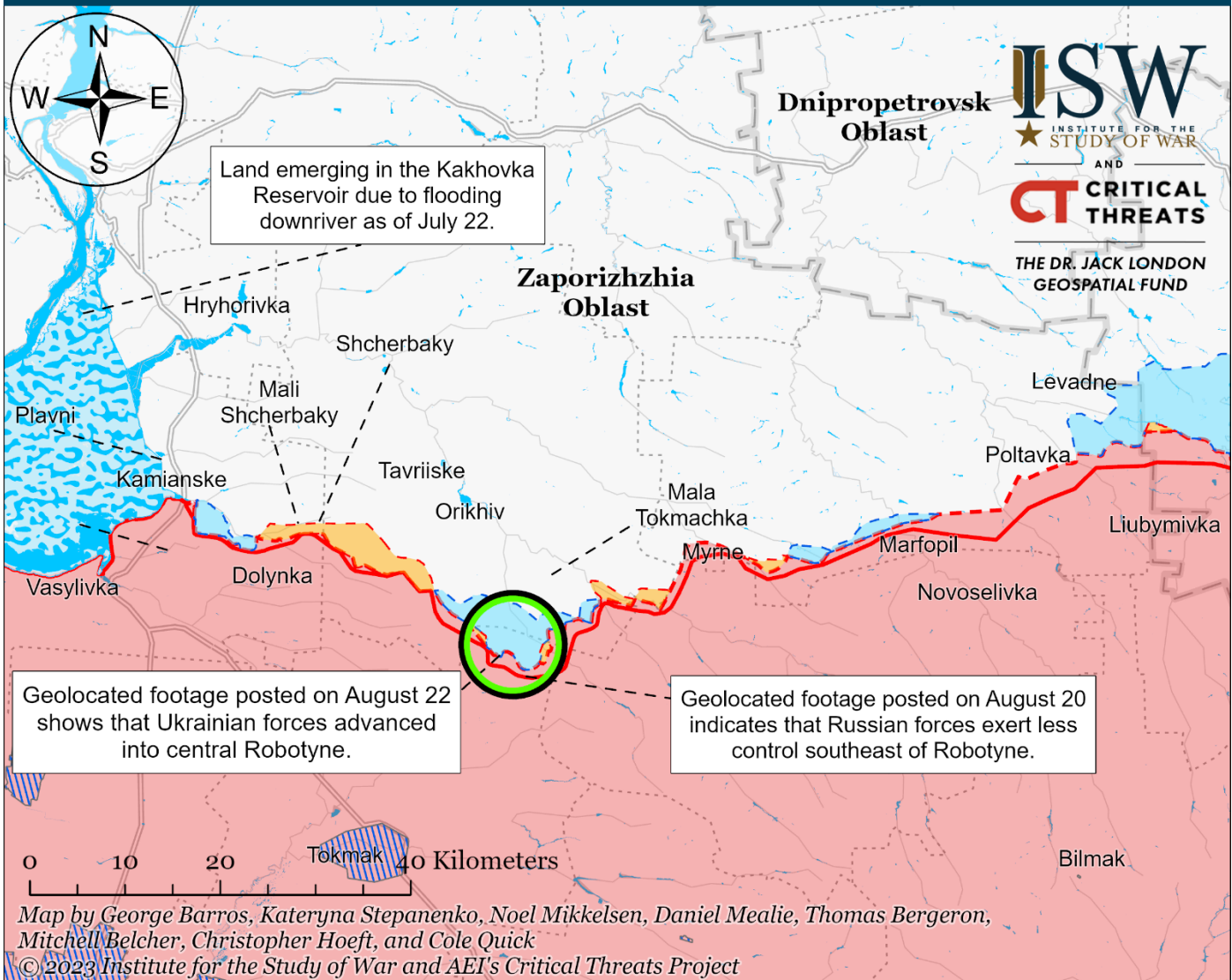


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- 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: Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar claimed on August 21 that fighting is ongoing in Robotyne and southeast of the settlement. A Russian source claimed on August 18 that Russian forces "temporarily withdrew" from Robotyne and that there is active fighting south of the settlement.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of August 22, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



-  Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
-  Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
-  Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
-  Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
-  Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
-  Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
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Note: Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar claimed on August 21 that fighting is ongoing in Robotyne and southeast of the settlement. A Russian source claimed on August 18 that Russian forces "temporarily withdrew" from Robotyne and that there is active fighting south of the settlement.

A Russian milblogger claimed on August 22 that Ukrainian landing groups continue to operate near and on islands in the Dnipro River delta.[78] The milblogger claimed that Russian forces destroyed one Ukrainian boat and repelled another that attempted to land on Bilohrudy Island (22km southwest of Kherson City).[79] The milblogger claimed that a Ukrainian grouping landed on Melyky Island southwest of Kherson City and established an observation post.[80]



The Russian MoD claimed that Russian electronic warfare units downed two Ukrainian drones attempting to strike unspecified targets in Crimea on the night of August 21.[81]

The Russian MoD claimed that Russian aircraft destroyed two Ukrainian watercraft near Snake Island, Odesa Oblast and elsewhere in the Black Sea. The Russian MoD posted footage purporting to show Russian aircraft destroying a high-speed Ukrainian boat east of Snake Island on August 22.[82] The Russian MoD also claimed that Russian aircraft destroyed a Ukrainian reconnaissance boat near an unspecified Russian gas production facility in the Black Sea on the night of August 21–22.[83]

Ukrainian intelligence reported that Russian officials intend to construct water barriers near the Kerch Strait Bridge and possibly further constrain maritime traffic through the Kerch Strait. The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported on August 22 that Russian officials intend to sink at least six ferries near the Kerch Strait Bridge and install barriers between the sunken vessels to create a protective line in front of the bridge.[84] Rostov-on-Don, Rostov Oblast is a critical maritime logistics hub for Russia forces, particularly for operations in Syria, and further restrictions in the Kerch Strait may complicate Russian maritime logistics. Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Captain First Rank Nataliya Humenyuk reported on August 20 that Russian inspections of civilian vessels caused 30 to 40 ships to form a queue at the Kerch Strait.[85] The construction of water barriers would likely increase delays to civilian maritime traffic to Russia through the Kerch Strait.

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

Russian milbloggers continue to discuss the problems that the lack of light transportation vehicles generates along the frontline. A Russian milblogger claimed on August 21 that the lack of light transportation vehicles to transport servicemen and supplies along the front line is indicative of Russian commanders being more focused on their personal interests and humiliating their subordinates than winning the war in Ukraine.[86] Another Russian milblogger claimed on August 22 that Russian authorities do not consistently enforce the rules for using privately owned vehicles, which confuses servicemen.[87] Both milbloggers notably promoted the Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) 2nd Army Corps and Chechen Akhmat forces as overcoming this issue.[88]

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 authorities continue their campaign of religious persecution in occupied Ukraine. Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada Commissioner for Human Rights Dmytro Lubinets reported on August 21 that Russian security services searched the homes of an unspecified number of Jehovah's Witnesses in Armyansk (165km north of Sevastopol), Simferopol (54km northeast of Sevastopol), Saky (59km north of Sevastopol), and Dzhankoi (141km northeast of Sevastopol) in occupied Crimea.[89] Lubinets reported that Russian forces have initiated more than 100 criminal cases based on religious discrimination and persecution against citizens in occupied Crimea, including 17 criminal cases against Jehovah's Witnesses to date.[90]

Russian authorities continue efforts to eradicate the Ukrainian national identity. Russian First Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration Sergey Kiriyenko visited the construction site of a "Russia – My History" museum in Melitopol in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast.[91] The museum will reportedly include several floors dedicated to the history of Russia and one floor dedicated to the history of Zaporizhia Oblast. "Russia – My History" is a Russian organization with 23 locations throughout Russia that presents Russian narratives of history through multimedia exhibits such as videos and interactive displays.[92] Kiriyenko reportedly stressed the need for Russian authorities to open museums like this in "every new oblast." [93]

Russian forces continue efforts to militarize youth in occupied Ukraine. Ukrainian Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov stated that Russian occupation authorities plan to open "cadet classes" in Melitopol Raion, Zaporizhia Oblast to train Ukrainian children for future employment in the Russian National Guard (Rosgvardia).[94]

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 Alexander Lukashenko appointed Colonel Dmitry Streshinsky as Head of the Territorial Defense Department and Deputy Head of the General Staff on August 22.[95] Lukashenko reportedly promoted Major General Andrey Matyevich, who had previously held the position, to First Deputy Chief of the General Staff.[96]

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.

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