

# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, August 27

Karolina Hird, Grace Mappes, George Barros, and Frederick W. Kagan  
August 27, 7:30ET

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.

**The volunteer battalions constituting Russia's 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps will likely deploy to Ukraine in ad hoc combined arms units to renew offensive operations, possibly on the Donetsk City axis and the Southern Axis.** The volunteer battalions Russia has been forming have been divided into two general groups, as ISW has previously reported. Some battalions are deploying to the front lines as soon as they have completed their abbreviated initial training. Others have been coalescing into a new 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps.<sup>1</sup> An analysis by Janes Intelligence Group of new images from combat training for elements of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps at the Mulino Training Ground in Nizhny Novgorod found 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps troops training with more modern Russian equipment such as BMP-3 infantry fighting vehicles, T-80BVM and T-90M tanks, and the latest AK-12 assault rifle variants.<sup>2</sup> The other Russian volunteer battalions that have fought in Ukraine, such as the North Ossetian "Alania" Battalion, have entered combat with older equipment. The fact that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps units are training on better gear and apparently being held back to deploy in more coherent combined arms groups suggests that the Russian military intends to commit them to offensive operations and hopes to regain momentum somewhere along the front line. Elements of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps are reportedly already deploying from Nizhny Novgorod closer towards Russia's border with Ukraine. The Georgia-based Conflict Intelligence Team (CIT) observed T-80BV and T-90M tanks that were in Mulino likely of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps deploy to Rostov Oblast on August 27.<sup>3</sup> If this report is correct, it could suggest that the Russian military intends to commit the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps to reinforce offensive operations near Donetsk City, where drives around Mariinka, Pisky, and Avdiivka have been stalling after making some gains. Elements of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps may also deploy to the Southern Axis. A Russian Local media outlet reported that the Khabarovsk Krai "Baron Korf" signals battalion will support the deployment of Russian field posts in Kherson Oblast and provide command and control to the new Russian 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps, indicating the Kremlin will likely deploy 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps elements to Kherson and Ukraine's south.<sup>4</sup>**3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps elements are unlikely to generate effective combat power, however.** Better equipment does not necessarily make more effective forces when the personnel are not well-trained or disciplined, as many members of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps' volunteer units are not. Previous military experience is not required for many of 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps' volunteer elements.<sup>5</sup> Images of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corp elements have shown the volunteers to be physically unfit and old.<sup>6</sup> Analysts have also noted that Russia's lack of experienced non-commissioned officers (NCOs) will hurt the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps effectiveness.<sup>7</sup> ISW has previously commented on reports of indiscipline among the personnel of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps as well.<sup>8</sup>

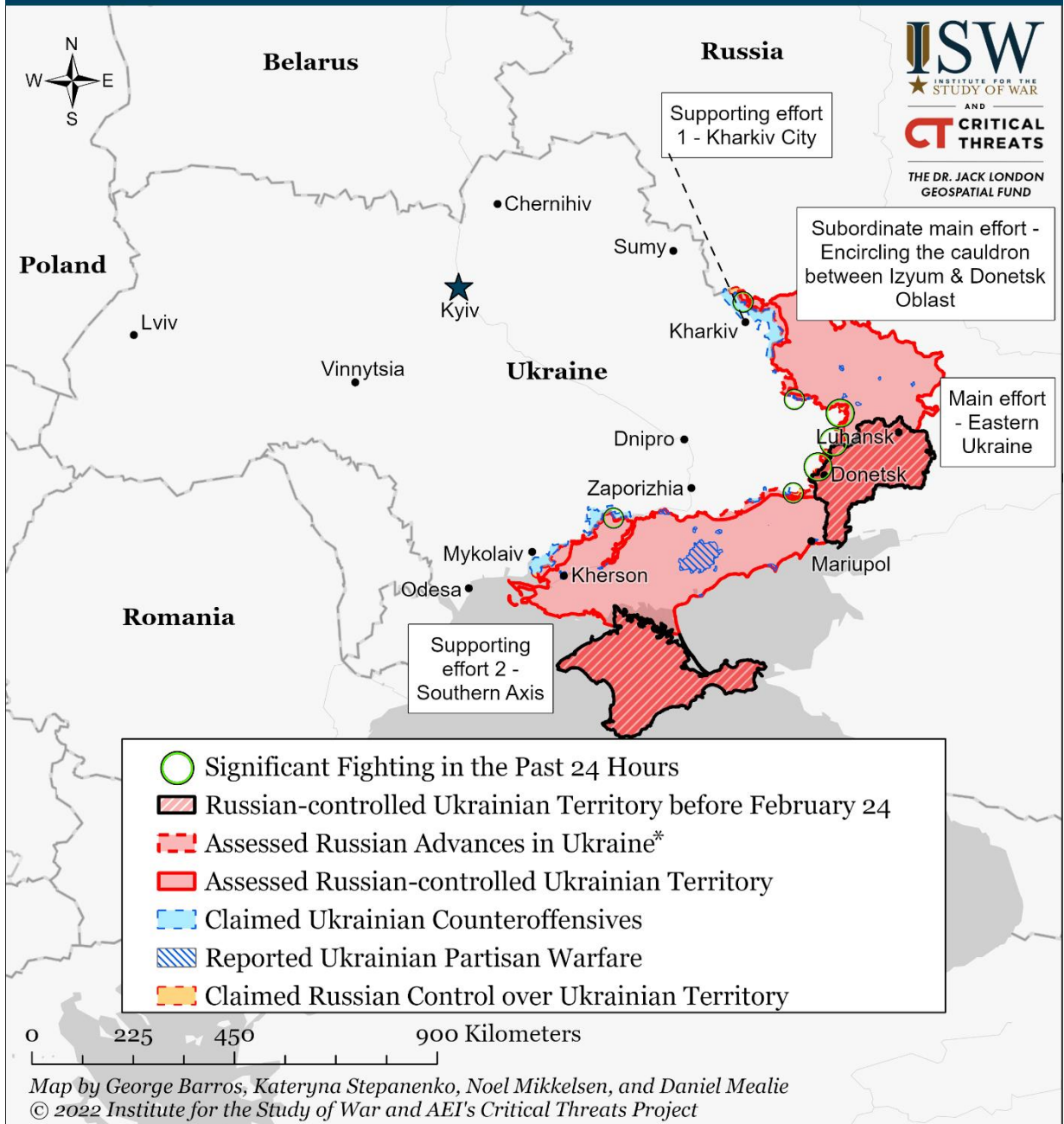
**Ukraine's Southern Operational Command stated that a 10-person Russian sabotage and reconnaissance group attempted assault operations in Kherson Oblast on August 27, suggesting that Russian offensive capabilities in Kherson Oblast have degraded even further.**<sup>9</sup> A 10-person group amounts to a squad, which is too small to act effectively as a maneuver unit. If the Southern Operational Command correctly reported the size and mission of this unit, it would indicate that Russian ground forces in Ukraine have degraded to the point that they are attempting to conduct offensive operations and echelons too low to make meaningful gains. ISW has no independent

confirmation of the current size of Russian assault echelons attempting ground attacks in Ukraine, but this report is consistent with the Ukrainian campaign to degrade Russian logistics capabilities in western Kherson Oblast and ISW's prior assessments of diminished Russian military morale in Ukraine.<sup>10</sup>

### **Key Takeaways**

- **Volunteer battalions that comprise Russia's 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps are likely being prepared to attempt offensive combined arms operations but will likely lack sufficient combat power to make a material difference on the battlefield.**
- **Ukraine's Southern Operational Command stated that a 10-person Russian sabotage and reconnaissance group attempted assault operations in Kherson Oblast, indicating that Russian offensive capabilities in Kherson Oblast have degraded further.**
- **Russian forces conducted a limited ground attack north of Kharkiv City.**
- **Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks southwest of Izyum, northeast of Siversk, northeast and south of Bakhmut, and west and southwest of Donetsk City.**
- **Ukrainian forces targeted Russian airborne command-and-control elements in western Kherson Oblast.**
- **Russian and Ukrainian sources traded accusations of shelling the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant.**
- **Russian military leadership may be shifting to a new phase of mobilization in central Russia and have likely exhausted pools of potential recruits in more peripheral and disenfranchised regions.**
- **Russian authorities are intensifying law enforcement operations in occupied areas.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of August 27, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



\* 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 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.***

- Main Effort—Eastern Ukraine (comprised of one subordinate and two supporting efforts);
- Subordinate Main Effort—Encirclement of Ukrainian Troops in the Cauldron between Izyum and Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts
- Supporting Effort 1—Kharkiv City
- Supporting Effort 2—Southern Axis
- Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Activities in Russian-occupied Areas

### **Main Effort—Eastern Ukraine**

**Subordinate Main Effort—Southern Kharkiv, Donetsk, Luhansk Oblasts (Russian objective: Encircle Ukrainian forces in Eastern Ukraine and capture the entirety of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)**

Russian forces conducted a limited ground attack southwest of Izyum on August 27. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian troops attempted to advance in the direction of Brazhkyvka, about 15km southwest of Izyum.<sup>11</sup> Russian forces additionally continued artillery strikes and aerial reconnaissance along the Izyum-Slovyansk line and conducted a rocket strike directly on Slovyansk.<sup>12</sup>

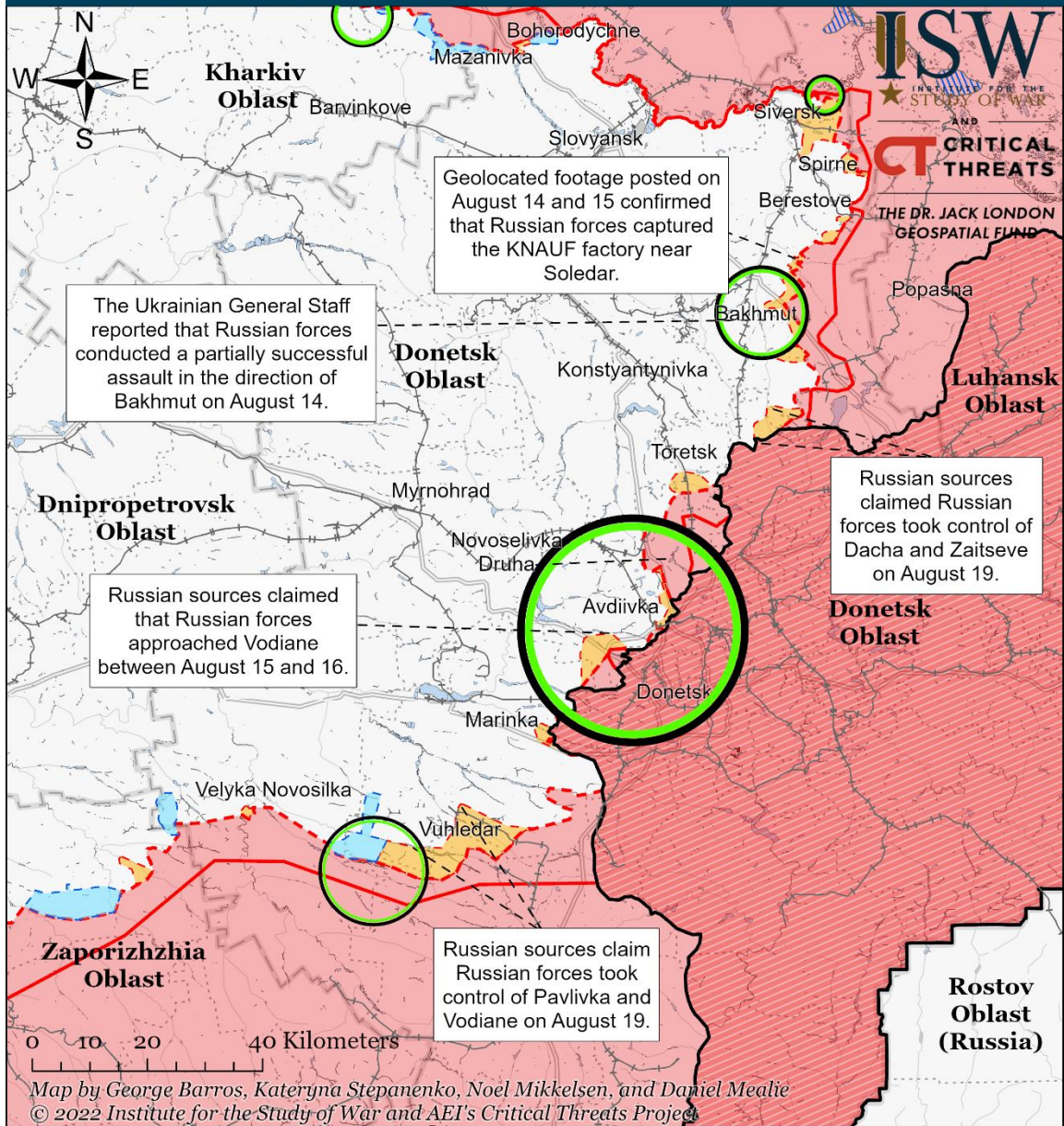
Russian forces conducted a limited ground attack northeast of Siversk on August 27. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian troops attempted to launch an offensive towards Siversk from the area of Hryhorivka, about 10km northeast of Siversk.<sup>13</sup> The UK Ministry of Defense additionally noted that Russian forces have engaged in heavy fighting around Siversk in the past week as part of intensified offensive operations in Donetsk Oblast.<sup>14</sup> Russian troops continued air and artillery strikes on Siversk and its surrounding environs.<sup>15</sup>

Russian forces continued ground attacks northeast and south of Bakhmut on August 27. The Ukrainian General Staff stated that Ukrainian troops repelled Russian assaults in Soledar, 10km northeast of Bakhmut.<sup>16</sup> Russian troops also reportedly attempted to advance from Mayorske and Zaitseve on the outskirts of Horlivka, about 20km southwest of Bakhmut.<sup>17</sup> The Ukrainian General Staff noted that “separate elements” (“Окремі підрозділи” - a term meaning elements at an echelon at or below a battalion) are active in the overall Bakhmut area, which suggests that Russian forces are operating in piecemeal sub-battalion formations around Bakhmut.<sup>18</sup> This report is consistent with previous reporting that advances towards Bakhmut are being led by elements of proxy and Wagner Group forces, as opposed to larger and more coherent battalion-level groups.<sup>19</sup>

Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks near the western outskirts of Donetsk City on August 27. The Ukrainian General staff stated that Russian troops attempted to advance on Nevelske (10km northwest of the outskirts of Donetsk City) and towards Oleksandropil (15km northwest of the outskirts of Donetsk City).<sup>20</sup> Footage taken by a Russian military correspondent indicates that Russian troops have likely advanced into the outskirts of Krasnohorivka, 8km north of Avdiivka, which indicates that Russian forces are continuing efforts to flank Avdiivka from the north.<sup>21</sup> Russian forces continued firing on Ukrainian positions along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City frontline.<sup>22</sup>

Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks southwest of Donetsk City on August 27. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian troops launched ground assaults towards Prechistivka and Pavlivka, about 40km southwest of Donetsk City in the Vuhledar area.<sup>23</sup> Russian troops continued air and artillery strikes between Donetsk City and the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border.<sup>24</sup>

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of August 27, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



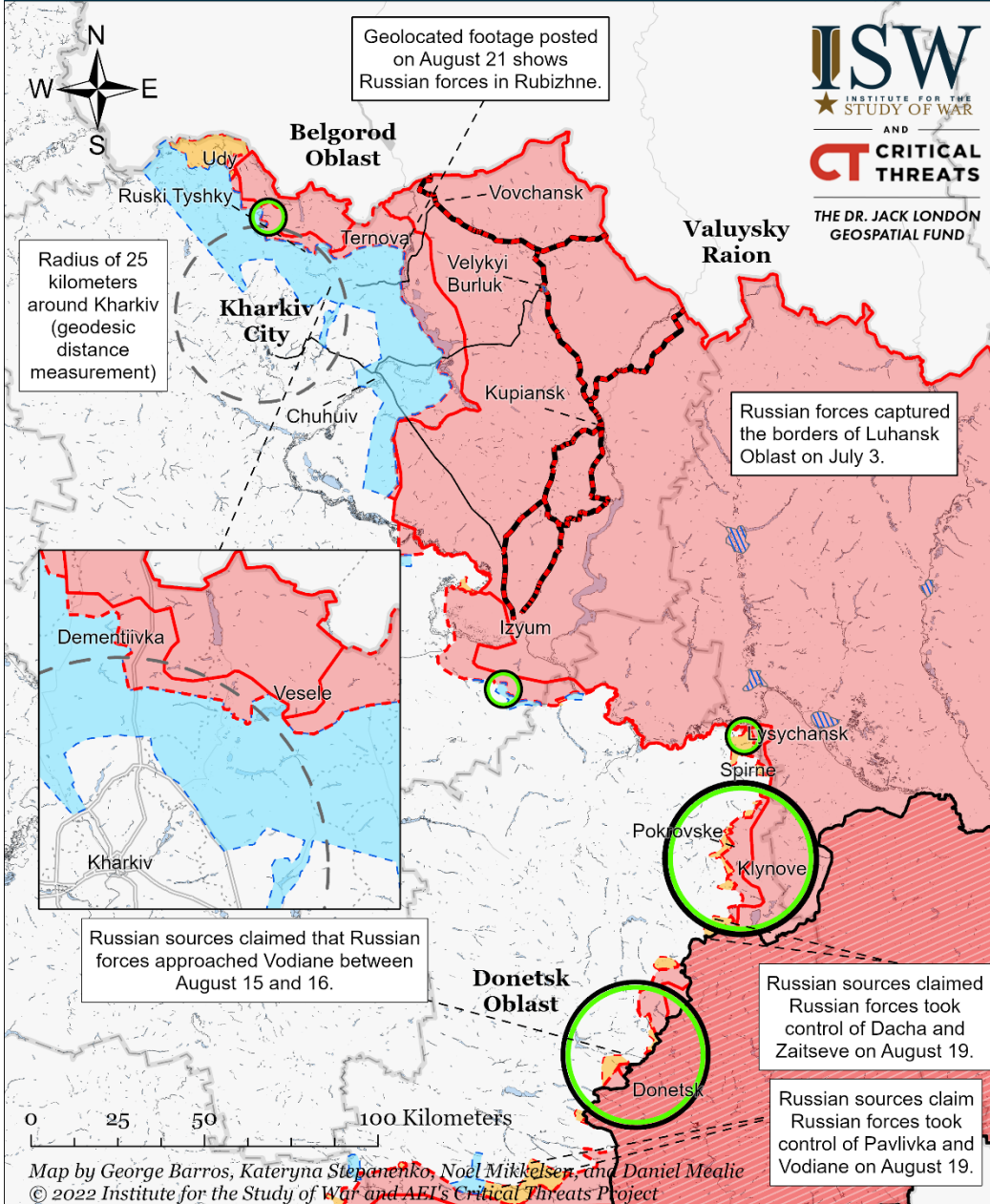
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Major Railroads
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives

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

**Supporting Effort #1—Kharkiv City (Russian objective: Defend ground lines of communication (GLOCs) to Izyum and prevent Ukrainian forces from reaching the Russian border)**

Russian forces conducted a limited ground attack north of Kharkiv City on August 27. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian troops attempted an assault in the area of Dementiivka, about 20km north of Kharkiv City.<sup>25</sup> Russian forces conducted a missile strike against the center of Kharkiv City and shelled surrounding settlements in northeastern Kharkiv Oblast.<sup>26</sup>

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of August 27, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



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Radius of 25 kilometers around Kharkiv (geodesic distance measurement)

Geolocated footage posted on August 21 shows Russian forces in Rubizhne.

Russian forces captured the borders of Luhansk Oblast on July 3.

Russian sources claimed that Russian forces approached Vodiane between August 15 and 16.

Russian sources claimed Russian forces took control of Dacha and Zaitseve on August 19.

Russian sources claim Russian forces took control of Pavlivka and Vodiane on August 19.

Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, and Daniel Mealie  
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- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Key Ukrainian Roads
- Russian Ground Lines of Communication
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

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



## **Supporting Effort #2—Southern Axis (Russian objective: Defend Kherson and Zaporizhia Oblasts against Ukrainian counterattacks)**

Ukrainian forces targeted Russian military command-and-control (C2) elements in northwestern Kherson Oblast, likely as part of the campaign to degrade Russian military capabilities on the right bank of the Dnipro River. Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported that Ukrainian forces struck C2 points of Russian battalion tactical groups (BTGs) of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 83<sup>rd</sup> Separate Airborne Brigades in Novovoznesenske (just south of Vysokopillya) and Dudchany (on the right bank of the Dnipro River 27 kilometers southwest of Osokorovka).<sup>27</sup> Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported that damage to the Antonivsky and Darivka bridges into western Kherson Oblast have made them impassable for heavy equipment.<sup>28</sup> Satellite imagery and footage of the Antonivsky and Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant dam road bridges shows significant damage that will likely make repairing them difficult.<sup>29</sup>

Russian forces attempted a limited ground assault in Kherson Oblast on August 27. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled a Russian reconnaissance-in-force attempt near Potomkyne in northwestern Kherson Oblast.<sup>30</sup> The Russian Defense Ministry claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian ground assault to cross the Inhulets bridgehead near Lozove, Kherson Oblast, but Ukrainian forces most likely control the bridgehead.<sup>31</sup> Russian forces struck Mykolaiv City with Smerch rockets and continued shelling throughout the line of contact.<sup>32</sup>

Russian and Ukrainian sources again traded accusations of shelling the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) on August 27. Ukraine state nuclear energy agency Energoatom stated that Russian forces have repeatedly shelled the ZNPP over August 26-27, resulting in numerous fire and radioactive safety risks.<sup>33</sup> The Russian Defense Ministry (MoD) claimed that Ukrainian forces shelled the ZNPP grounds near nuclear storage facilities.<sup>34</sup> The Russian MoD still has not provided photographic or video evidence of damage at the ZNPP to support its claims that Ukrainian forces are striking the ZNPP. Russian authorities should be able to provide such evidence as Russian forces currently control the ZNPP's territory.

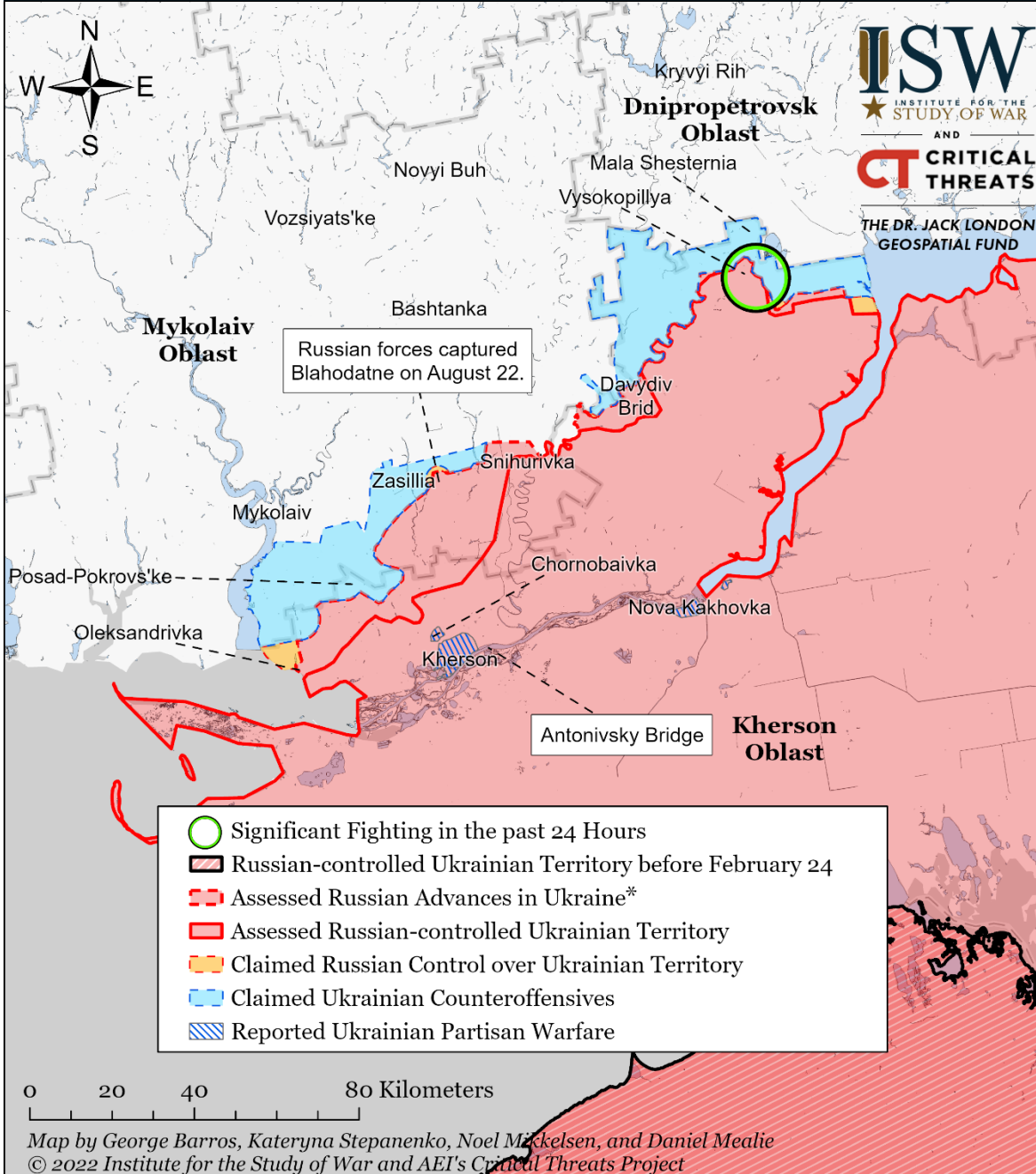
Russian authorities at the ZNPP are reportedly intimidating Ukrainian ZNPP personnel into silence about current working conditions at the plant. Pro-Kremlin Russian news outlet *RIA Novosti* reported on August 24 that Rosgvardia forces have arrested ZNPP employees for allegedly collaborating with the Ukrainian military, and that Russian authorities have arrested 26 people for claimed access control violations since Russian forces took control of the plant on March 4.<sup>35</sup> *The Telegraph* reported on August 25 that undisclosed ZNPP personnel have told *The Telegraph* that Russian authorities are arresting and torturing ZNPP personnel to prevent them from disclosing safety violations to International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors and that Russian authorities want to reduce the presence of Ukrainian personnel at the ZNPP.<sup>36</sup> *The Telegraph* also reported that Russian forces are restricting Ukrainian workers from monitoring the conditions of the ZNPP by prohibiting movement and parking military equipment in turbine halls to prevent passage through them.<sup>37</sup> Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada Commissioner for Human Rights Dmytro Lubinets stated that Ukrainian ZNPP personnel perform essential tasks in ensuring the safety of the ZNPP and that Russian detention of these personnel places the ZNPP at further risk of disaster.<sup>38</sup>

Russian forces did not conduct any confirmed ground assaults in Zaporizhia Oblast on August 27. Ukrainian Zaporizhia Oblast Head Oleksandr Starukh stated that Russian forces struck Zaporizhzhia City overnight on August 26-27 with unspecified rounds, likely rocket artillery or missiles.<sup>39</sup> Russian forces conducted rocket strikes against Nikopol, Marhanets, and Chervonohryhorivka, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast on the north bank of the Dnipro River, likely from positions around Enerhodar.<sup>40</sup> The Russian Ministry of Defense claimed that Russian forces destroyed a Ukrainian HIMARS and M777 artillery ammunition depot near Preobrazhenka, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast.<sup>41</sup> Russian forces conducted tube artillery and airstrikes on settlements cross the line of contact.<sup>42</sup>

Russia continues to transit equipment to staging areas through Crimea. Recently geolocated footage shows Russian trains transporting heavy equipment into Crimea, including engineering and sapper equipment, tanks, and armored personnel carriers.<sup>43</sup>

Satellite imagery shows Russian forces transporting an S-300 air defense system from Maysaf, Syria to Novorossiysk, Russia.<sup>44</sup> Russia may deploy the S-300 elements to Crimea. Russian forces pulling military assets from Syria for use in Ukraine indicates that Russian forces are facing challenges sustaining or improving their air defense capabilities using equipment in Russia.

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of August 27, 2022, 3:00 PM ET

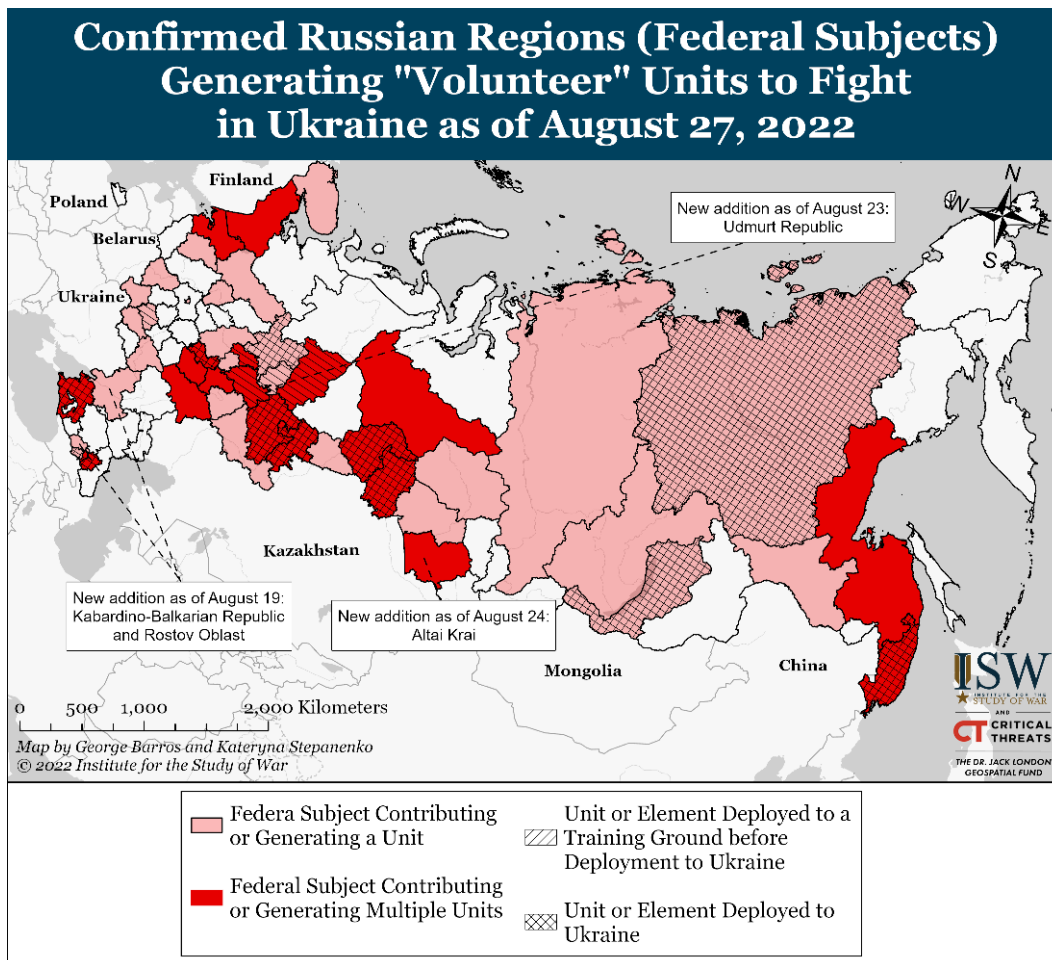


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Note: ISW reassessed Russian control of terrain around Snihurivka further south based on a geolocated footage published on August 20 that showed four Ukrainian servicemen conducting a raid in the northern part of the settlement. Kherson Oblast Administration Head Dmytro Butriy reported on August 2 that Ukrainian forces liberated an additional seven unnamed villages in Kherson Oblast. ISW will continue to monitor the situation and will update our maps when open sources name the liberated settlements.

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

Russian military leadership may be shifting to a new phase of mobilization after having exhausted recruitment efforts and sources of combat power on Russia’s geographic and socioeconomic periphery. Spokesperson for the Ukrainian Main Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Vadym Skibitsky stated on August 27 that the Moscow, Leningrad, and St. Petersburg areas are increasingly generating forces, whereas previously the onus for volunteer mobilization largely has fallen on more economically depressed and peripheral regions in eastern Russia.<sup>45</sup> The GUR similarly reported that the Kremlin has effectively exhausted mobilization potential in Tuva, Buryatia, republics of the Caucasus, and other ethnic minority enclaves that ISW has previously assessed were bearing the brunt of mobilization efforts.<sup>46</sup> The GUR noted that the Kremlin has directed the heads of Russian federal subjects (regions) in more western and well-off regions to lead regionally based recruitment campaigns and that the majority of recruits in Moscow Oblast are contracting into the 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Tank Army.<sup>47</sup> As the onus of partial mobilization shifts to more economically advantaged, densely populated, and better-educated regions of Russia, domestic opposition to recruitment efforts will likely grow. Recruitment drives in western Russia remain unlikely to generate significant increases in combat capability.



Russian federal subjects (regions) are continuing efforts to incentivize and train new recruits for service in Ukraine. Social media footage posted on August 27 indicates that the Bashkortostan's "Shaimuratov" volunteer battalion likely deployed to Ukraine between August 25-27.<sup>48</sup> The "Shaimuratov" Battalion announced it was ready to deploy to Ukraine on August 25 and received protective blessings from Russian clergy on August 26.<sup>49</sup> Norwegian outlet *The Barents Observer* reported that the northwestern Russian Republic of Karelia is now offering up to 250,000 rubles (\$4,146) per month to recruits.<sup>50</sup> A Russian milblogger reposted a recruitment ad for the "Avanguard" OMON battalion and stated that the starting salary is 75,000 to 80,000 rubles (\$1,243-\$1,327) per month.<sup>51</sup> OMON is a system of specialized police units within Rosgvardia that typically requires more specialized recruitment, so the advertisement suggests that law enforcement bodies are also struggling to recruit and are broadening their mobilization aperture. Russian outlet *News29RU* reported on August 26 that veterans established a training center for future soldiers in Arkhangelsk Oblast, which indicates that Arkhangelsk likely lacks the formal infrastructure to facilitate the training of new recruits and relies on informal sources, such as veterans' organizations, to build out combat capacity.<sup>52</sup>

**Activity in Russian-occupied Areas (Russian objective: consolidate administrative control of occupied areas; set conditions for potential annexation into the Russian Federation or some other future political arrangement of Moscow's choosing)**

Russian occupation authorities are continuing to intensify law enforcement efforts in occupied areas in the face of internal tensions and partisan threats. Russian outlet *RIA Novosti* posted pictures of Russian Spetznaz detachments, possibly from the Special Purpose Center of the Federal State Security Service (FSB), carrying out spot checks and other law enforcement tasks in occupied Kharkiv Oblast.<sup>53</sup> Russian Telegram channel *Baza* similarly claimed that police divisions of the Kherson and Zaporizhia occupation administrations are subordinate to the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, which indicates that Russian authorities lack confidence in the ability of occupation administrations to provide adequate security to Russian government assets in occupied areas.<sup>54</sup> First Deputy Head of the Russian Presidential Administration, Sergi Kiriienko, stated that Russia has additionally allocated law enforcement funds so that every school in occupied areas of Donbas, Kherson, and Zaporizhia has two armed guards on its premises by the start of the school year on September 1.<sup>55</sup> Kiriienko indicated that this initiative will be carried out in tandem with Rosgvardia, internal ministries of Russia and the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics (DNR and LNR) and selected private security companies.<sup>56</sup> Taken together, these individual data points suggest that Russian authorities are increasingly concerned with securing occupied areas.

**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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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-5>;  
<https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-23>;

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<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-july-23>;  
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<https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Russian%20Operations%20Assessments%20August%2014.pdf>;  
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<https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Russian%20Operations%20Assessments%20Aug%207%202022.pdf>;  
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<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-19>  
<sup>2</sup> [https://twitter.com/tom\\_bullock\\_/status/1563469549852172288](https://twitter.com/tom_bullock_/status/1563469549852172288);  
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<sup>3</sup> <https://te.legra.ph/Rossiya-perebrasyvaet-na-front-nedavno-sformirovannyj-3-armejskij-korpus-08-27>  
<sup>4</sup> <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-19>; <http://amurpress dot info/strategy/34550/>  
<sup>5</sup> <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-5>;  
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<https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Russian%20Operations%20Assessments%20Aug%207%202022.pdf>  
<sup>6</sup> [https://twitter.com/tom\\_bullock\\_/status/1563469689874894849](https://twitter.com/tom_bullock_/status/1563469689874894849)  
<sup>7</sup> <https://twitter.com/RALee85/status/1563616545007611905>  
<sup>8</sup>  
<https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Russian%20Offensive%20Campaign%20Assessment%2C%20August%2021.pdf>  
<sup>9</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1250265595731186>  
<sup>10</sup> <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-21>;  
<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-5>;  
<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-may-30>;  
<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-may-28>  
<sup>11</sup>  
<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02fHMWoxPRpCRxrLk9gMsaaH1tkJYRdjA91WGec2n9GsQn9sSrsY7HAuqnyDucDUI>;  
<sup>12</sup> [https://t.me/kramatorsk\\_rada/5707](https://t.me/kramatorsk_rada/5707); [https://t.me/slv\\_vca/3585](https://t.me/slv_vca/3585);  
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<sup>14</sup> <https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1563406537401389056>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWaoPWR7gT4>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02MwkKwMnfPWLSDoajzmmRUFttuUgCYszhgsQsG3TT2ug5TNZzGgeMMmeiCvaMdVyVI>;

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