### Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, December 1

Riley Bailey, Madison Williams, Yekaterina Klepanchuk, Kateryna Stepanenko, and Frederick W. Kagan December 1, 9:00 pm 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.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko continued to set informational conditions to resist Russian pressure to enter the war against Ukraine by claiming that NATO is preparing to attack Belarus. Lukashenko blamed Ukraine and NATO for a growing number of provocations near the Belarus-Ukrainian border and stated that Ukraine is trying to drag NATO forces into the war.[1] Lukashenko stated that Belarusian officials managed to deter a potential adversary from using military force against Belarus and that NATO is building up forces and intensifying combat training in neighboring countries.[2] The Belarusian Minister of Defense Viktor Khrenin stated that there is no direct preparation for war and that Belarus will only defend its territory.[3] Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) representative Vadym Skibitsky reported that there are no signs of the formation of a strike group on Belarusian territory.[4] Lukashenko and Khrenin likely made the comments to bolster what ISW has previously assessed as an ongoing information operation aimed at fixing Ukrainian forces on the border with Belarus in response to the threat of Belarus entering the war.[5] Lukashenko and Khrenin also likely focused the information operation on supposed NATO aggression and provocative activities along the Belarusian border to suggest that the Belarusian military needs to remain in Belarus to defend against potential NATO aggression, and thus set informational conditions for resisting Russian pressure to enter the war in Ukraine. ISW continues to assess that Belarusian entry into the Russian war on Ukraine is extremely unlikely.

#### **Key Takeaways**

- Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko continued to set informational conditions to resist Russian pressure to enter the war against Ukraine.
- Russian forces continued efforts to defend against Ukrainian counteroffensive operations along the Svatove-Kreminna line.
- Russian forces continued to make incremental gains around Bakhmut and to conduct offensive operations in the Avdiivka-Donetsk City area.
- Russian forces continued to conduct defensive measures and move personnel on the east bank of the Dnipro River in Kherson Oblast.
- Russian military movements in Zaporizhia Oblast may suggest that Russian forces cannot defend critical areas amidst increasing Ukrainian strikes.
- Russian forces are holding reserves in Crimea to support defensive operations in Zaporizhia Oblast and on the east bank of the Dnipro River.
- The Kremlin's financial strain continues to feed domestic unrest.
- Evidence persists regarding the continuation of partial mobilization in the face of low morale and high desertion rates amongst Russian troops.
- Wagner Group financier Yevgeniy Prigozhin continued attempts to bolster the Wagner Group's reputation.
- Russian occupation officials continued efforts to integrate occupied territories into the Russian financial and legal spheres.
- Russian forces continued to exploit Ukrainian civilians and civilian infrastructure in support
  of Russia's war effort in Ukraine.

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of December 1, 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, specifically on combat in Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn these Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict, Geneva Conventions, and humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

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

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

#### Eastern Ukraine: (Eastern Kharkiv Oblast-Western Luhansk Oblast)

Russian forces continued efforts to defend against Ukrainian counteroffensive operations and regain lost positions along the Svatove-Kreminna line on December 1. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued to repel Russian ground assaults near Novoselivske (14km northwest of Svatove) and Stelmakhivka (15km northwest of Svatove).[6] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces prevented a Ukrainian advance in the direction of Kuzemivka (13km northwest of Svatove).[7] Ukrainian General Staff Deputy Chief Oleksiy Hromov reported that Ukrainian forces anticipate that Russian forces will attempt to restart offensive operations in the Lyman direction to regain the initiative.[8] Hromov added that the Russians are building defensive lines in the Svatove and Lyman directions to prevent Ukrainian advances.[9] Former Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) ambassador to Russia, Rodion Miroshnik, claimed that Ukrainian forces are transferring elite Ukrainian brigades to the Lyman and Kupyansk directions to prevent Russian advances.[10] ISW offers no assessment of this claim.[11]

#### **Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of** December 1, 2022, 3:00 PM ET Russian sources claimed on November 29 that Russian forces captured **Belgorod** Novoselivske. Udy Oblast **THREATS** Ruski Tyshky chansk THE DR. JACK LONDON Valuysky GEOSPATIAL FUND Radius of 25 Raion kilometers Velykyi around Kharkiv Burluk (geodesic Kharkiv distance City measurement) Kupiansk Chuhuiy Geolocated combat footage published on December 1 shows Russian forces south of Bakhmutske. Starobilsk The Russian Ministry of Defense claimed on December 1 that Russian forces captured the entire settlement of Andriivka Vesele Russian sources claimed on November 27 and 28 that Russian forces captured Zelenopillia and Klishchiivka Geolocated footage from November 24 and 29 indicates that Russian forces captured eastern **Donetsk** Kurdyumivka. **Oblast** Geolocated footage posted on November 28 showed Russian forces in Ozarianivka. 100 Kilometers 25 Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Dahiel © 2022 Institute for the Study of War and ABL's Critical Threats Proje Russian-controlled Ukrainian Claimed Russian Control over Significant Fighting in the Territory before February 24 Ukrainian Territory past 24 Hours Assessed Russian Advances in \_\_\_ Key Ukrainian Roads Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives Russian Ground Lines of Reported Ukrainian Partisan Communication Assessed Russian-controlled **Ukrainian Territory**

Spokesman for the Ukrainian Eastern Forces, Colonel Serhiy Cherevaty stated on November 20 that Ukrainian forces have already liberated 12 settlements in Luhansk Oblast since the start of the eastern counteroffensive. ISW will update our maps when independent sources disclose the area of Ukrainian advances.

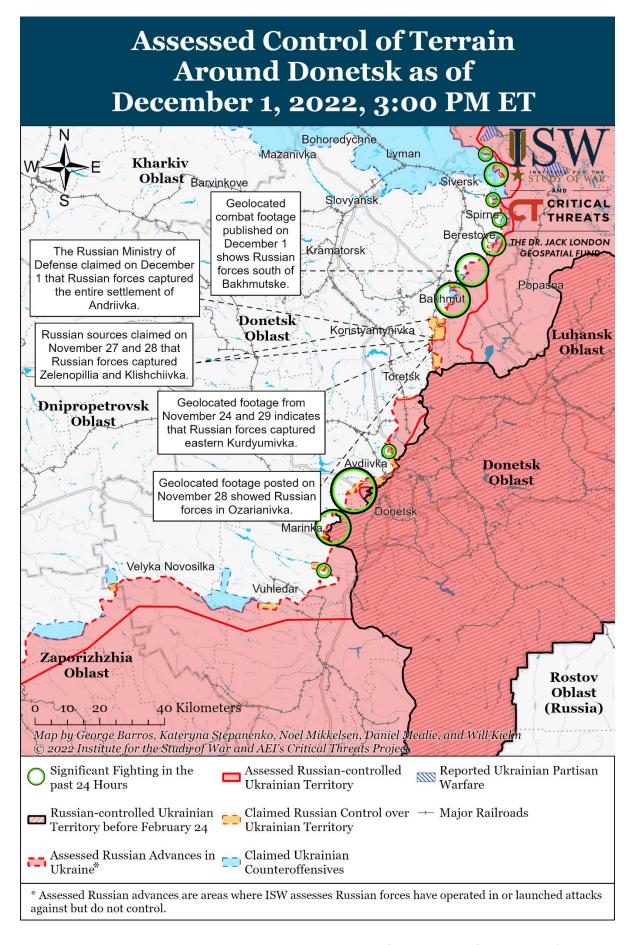
<sup>\*</sup> Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations near Kreminna on December 1. The Russian BARS-13 combat reserve Telegram channel claimed that Ukrainian forces have increased ground assaults around the Kreminna area.[12] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian attack around Kreminna in the direction of Chervonopopivka (6km northwest of Kreminna).[13] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled a Russian assault near Bilohorivka (10km south of Kreminna).[14] One Russian source reported that Ukrainian forces made significant advances southwest of Chervonopopivka and expressed concern over the possibility that Ukrainian forces may reinforce their lines in the area in order to push through Russian defenses there.[15] Another Russian source claimed that a Russian drone had detected Ukrainian forces in Zhytlivka on the R66 highway to Kreminna.[16] A Russian milblogger also claimed that Russian forces are fighting in the western part of Bilohorivka, but did not provide evidence for this claim.[17] Hromov added that Ukrainian forces also repelled Russian assaults on Dibrova, approximately 5km southwest of Kreminna.[18] Russian and Ukrainian forces continued artillery fire in this area.[19]

#### Russian Main Effort-Eastern Ukraine

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

Russian forces likely continued to make marginal advances in the Bakhmut area amidst ongoing offensive operations on December 1. Ukrainian sources reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults near Bakhmut; within 22km northeast of Bakhmut near Yakovlivka, Soledar, Bakhmutske, and Bilohorivka; and within 14km southwest of Bakhmut near Opytne, Mayorsk, and Kurdyumivka.[20] Social media sources and a Russian milblogger posted photos on December 1 showing Russian forces south of Bakhmut in Kurdyumivka and Ozarianivka.[21] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces completely control Andriivka (within 10km south of Bakhmut).[22] Geolocated footage posted on December 1 shows Ukrainian forces reportedly withdrawing from positions on the western side of the highway that runs through Opytne (within 4km south of Bakhmut).[23] A Russian milblogger published footage claiming to show Russian forces conducting offensive operations west of Kurdyumvka and claimed that Russian forces now control most of the Horlivka-Bakhmut highway.[24] Another Russian source claimed that Russian forces could now interdict all roads in the Bakhmut area tell a correspondent that their forces are outnumbered and facing serious supply issues.[26] The Ukrainian military commanders also told the *CNN* correspondent that Russian forces are committing significant forces to assaults in the Bakhmut area and are suffering heavy casualties.[27] ISW has previously assessed that the Russian effort to take Bakhmut is a high-cost effort concentrated on a city of limited operational significance.[28]



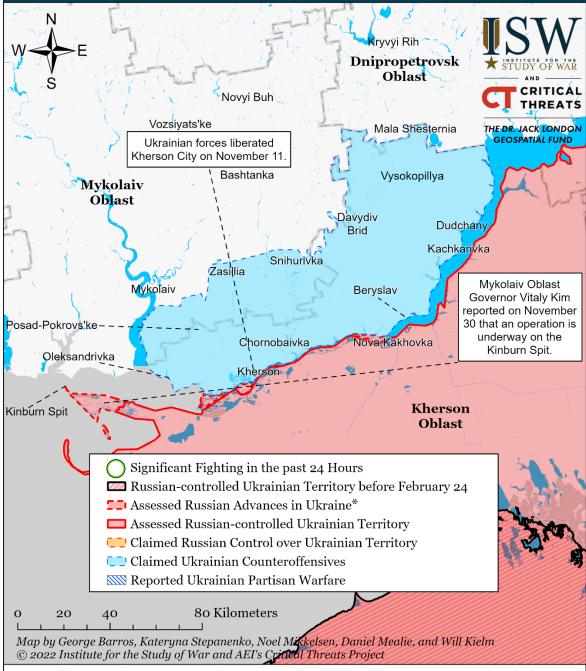
Russian forces continued to conduct offensive operations in the Avdiivka-Donetsk City area on December 1. Ukrainian sources reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults within 37km southwest of Avdiivka near Krasnohorivka, Vodyane, Pervomaiske, Marinka, Nevelske, and Novomykhailivka, and within 6km northeast of Avdiivka near Kamianka.[29] The Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) People's Militia claimed that the DNR "Sparta" and "Somalia" Battalions repelled a Ukrainian counterattack near Vodyane.[30] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces also repelled Ukrainian counterattacks near Novomykhailivka.[31] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian and Russian forces continued to fight in the western part of Marinka.[32]

Russian forces continued to conduct defensive operations in western Donetsk and eastern Zaporizhia oblasts on December 1. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces maintain defensive lines on this front.[33] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian counterattack near Volodymyrivka, Donetsk Oblast (within 43km southwest of Donetsk City).[34] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces continued routine indirect fire along the line of contact in Donetsk and eastern Zaporizhia oblasts.[35]

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

Russian forces continued to conduct defensive measures, build fortifications, and move personnel on the east bank of the Dnipro River in Kherson Oblast on December 1. Ukrainian sources reported that Russian forces on the east bank are continuing to hold defensive lines and construct fortifications.[36] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces decreased the number of personnel and equipment in Oleshky and redistributed personnel to positions along the highway between Oleshky and Hola Prystan (further away from the Dnipro River).[37] Ukraine's Southern Operational Command spokesperson Natalia Humenyuk stated that Russian forces are withdrawing equipment, weapons, and units from unspecified populated areas on the left bank of the Dnipro River.[38] Ukrainian General Staff Chief Deputy Brigadier General Oleksiy Hromov stated that the Ukrainian command expects Russian forces to maintain their positions on the east bank and conduct local offensive operations to improve those positions, however.[39] Social media sources published footage on December 1 purporting to show Russian positions on the Nova Kakhovka dam lock.[40] The contradictory reporting on Russian military positions on the east bank in relation to the Dnipro River suggests that Russian forces are currently repositioning their forces in Kherson Oblast, but it is unclear exactly how.

## Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of December 1, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



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

ISW expanded Ukrainian counteroffensives to all of right bank Kherson Oblast on November 11 based on geolocated footage of Ukrainian forces liberating Kherson City and settlements north of the Dnipro River. Russian forces partially destroyed the Kakhovka and Antonivsky bridges, which indicates that Russian forces are not intending to hold positions on the right (western) bank. ISW assesses with high confidence that Ukrainian forces will clear the remaining settlements along the western bank of the river in the coming days, although some Russian troops may have remained behind to conduct partisan operations. Russian sources indicated on November 21 that Ukrainian forces are holding positions on Karantynyy Island near Kherson City, but it is unclear if Ukrainian forces regained control over other islands along the Dnipro River.

Russian military movements in Zaporizhia Oblast may suggest that Russian forces cannot defend critical areas amidst increasing Ukrainian strikes on Russian force concentrations and logistics. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on December 1 that Russian forces withdrew or are currently withdrawing personnel from Polohy, Myhailivka, and Inzhenerne in Zaporizhia Oblast.[41] The Ukrainian General Staff also reported that Russian occupation officials in Burchak are conducting a census in preparation for future evacuation measures.[42] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces in the previous days struck Russian force concentrations in Myrne, Tokmak, Inzhenerne, Polohy, Yasne, and Kinsky Rozdory in Zaporizhia Oblast.[43] Russian forces may be withdrawing personnel from positions closer to the frontline in Zaporizhia Oblast to reduce the impact of increasing Ukrainian strikes on Russian manpower and equipment concentrations. The potential withdrawal from Polohy is particularly notable as the settlement lies at a critical road junction, and Russian forces would likely have a harder time defending Tokmak from potential Ukrainian operations without control of that junction. The withdrawal from a critical position may suggest that Russian forces cannot defend the entire frontline in Zaporizhia Oblast and are prioritizing where to concentrate forces. It is just as likely that Russian forces are reorienting their grouping in Zaporizhia Oblast and may move different personnel back into these settlements, however.

Russian forces are holding reserves in Crimea to support defensive operations in Zaporizhia Oblast and on the east bank of the Dnipro River in Kherson Oblast. Hromov stated that Russian forces are concentrating reserves in northern Crimea to reinforce troops on the east bank in Kherson Oblast and in the direction of Orikhiv in Zaporizhia Oblast. [44] Hromov stated that Dzhankoy and surrounding settlements have become the largest Russian military base in Crimea due to the amount of Russian military personnel and equipment transfers and deployments. [45] Russian forces may be holding reserves to support these sections of the front in Ukraine in the expectation that Ukrainian forces may conduct offensive operations in these areas soon.

Ukrainian officials continued to acknowledge that Ukrainian forces are conducting operations on the Kinburn Spit on December 1. Humenyuk stated that Ukrainian forces are continuing to conduct operations on the Kinburn Spit and that Ukrainian forces have not yet liberated the area. [46] ISW has previously assessed that Ukrainian forces would be better able to conduct potential operations on the left bank of the Dnipro River in Kherson Oblast from the Kinburn Spit. [47]

Russian forces continued routine missile and artillery strikes west of Hulyaipole, in western Kherson Oblast, and in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast on December 1.[48] Ukrainian sources reported that Russian forces struck Nikopol, Marhanets, and Kherson City.[49]

Note: ISW will report on activities in Kherson Oblast as part of the Southern Axis in this and subsequent updates. Ukraine's counteroffensive in right-bank Kherson Oblast has accomplished its stated objectives, so ISW will not present a Southern Ukraine counteroffensive section until Ukrainian forces resume counteroffensives in southern Ukraine.

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

The Kremlin's financial strain continues to feed domestic unrest. A Russian source shared footage that shows Oleg Mikhailov, a deputy from the Russian Communist Party, proposing to increase the payments to veterans at a government meeting in Komi Republic, to a hostile audience of his United Russia party peers.[50] This event exemplifies the growing rift between Russian nationalist parties under increasing economic strain. The *Financial Times* also reported on November 29 on the growing disenchantment of Russian businesses, reporting that unnamed owners and executives of large Russian companies stated that they believe mobilization would have been handled better if entrusted to businesses rather than the government.[51] Independent Russian media outlet *ASTRA* reported that more than 100 mobilized personnel from Moscow Oblast did not receive promised payments.[52] *ASTRA* reported that a unit stationed in Belarus related that of its 408 members, 108 did not receive any payments in October and 200 did not receive full payments.[53]

Wagner Group financier Yevgeniy Prigozhin continued attempts to bolster the Wagner Group's reputation. Western media reported on November 29 that the United States is considering designating Wagner Group as a foreign terrorist organization. [54] Prigozhin responded by claiming that Wagner does not fit the criteria of a terrorist organization, while the United States clearly does. [55] Prigozhin proceeded to tout Wagner's successes by falsely claiming that the Wagner Group defeated the Islamic State in Syria, stopped the (nonexistent) "genocide" of Russians in the Donetsk People's Republic, prevented Western-funded terrorists from staging coups in Africa, and, notably, won a trial against the United States in the District of Columbia concerning Russian interference in the 2016 elections. [56] A Wagner-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed that the Wagner Group's training facility in the Russian Federation is designed to provide an accelerated three-week training course for new members. [57] Russian sources shared video footage purportedly showing Wagner Group recruits training in Molkin, Krasnodar Krai, and in Belgorod and Kursk Oblasts, under the tutelage of experienced Wagner Group fighters. [58]

Russian sources provided more evidence for the continuation of partial mobilization. One Russian milblogger reported that Orenburg Oblast officials allocated one million rubles for a mobilization hotline from December 15, 2022, to January 31, 2023.[59] A Russian media source reported that a soldier who had a contract with the Russian MoD that expired in October was told she is required to work "until the end of mobilization."[60] Another Russian media source reported that the Russian MoD stated that it did not support a State Duma bill on December 1 that would defer any candidates and doctors of science who work in universities or research institutions.[61] Russian media also reported that workers at the Chelyabinsk sugar factory received mobilization summonses on November 28 including non-Russian nationals.[62]

The Russian military continues to contend with low morale and high rates of desertion and refusals to fight among its forces. The Ukrainian General Staff Deputy Chief Oleksiy Hromov reported that Russian forces have had to reinforce multiple regiments in Kherson Oblast with more mobilized personnel due to the high number of deserters and mobilized soldiers who refuse to fight. [63] Hromov also added that Russian security forces have reported an increased number of deserters in Luhansk Oblast – many of whom are now attempting to cross the border back into Russia and are being detained by security services in the dozens. [64] Independent Russian media outlet *ASTRA* reported that Russian forces have held around 90 of the mobilized personnel who refused to fight in Luhansk Oblast at Beryozka children's camp in the village of Makarove, Luhansk for over a month. [65] A Russian local media page in Magnitogorsk reported on November 29 that family members of Magnitogorsk mobilized personnel who refused to fight are appealing to the Prosecutor's office in an attempt to keep their family members from returning to the front. [66] The media page stated that the military leadership abandoned Magnitogorsk mobilized personnel on the front, causing them to retreat from their positions but not desert them. [67] Hromov reported that Russian forces are continuing to inflict friendly fire upon themselves and stated that a Russian artillery unit shelled a position of the 1st Army Corps on the southwestern outskirts of Tsukura, Kherson Oblast, on November 24. [68]

<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 occupation officials continued efforts to integrate occupied territories into the Russian financial and legal spheres. Zaporizhia Oblast Occupation Deputy Vladimir Rogov stated that occupation officials in Zaporizhia Oblast plan to pull Ukrainian hryvnias from circulation on January 1, 2023.[69] Rogov declared that all enterprises in Zaporizhia Oblast have until the end of 2022 to exchange their hryvnias for rubles.[70] Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Head Denis Pushilin stated that only Russian federal legislation can regulate mobilization protocols including restriction of movement within the occupied Donetsk Oblast.[71] Kherson Oblast Occupation Head Vladimir Saldo claimed that occupation authorities, by Russian President Vladimir Putin's order, are working to simplify the process for obtaining housing certificates for legal residents of occupied Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts who had sought refuge in Kherson City prior to Russian withdrawal from the city.[72]

Russian occupation authorities are continuing to face administrative problems. The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported that half of the residential buildings in the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts are without heat, partly due to a lack of personnel and water supplies.[73] The Ukrainian Resistance Center added that the mass mobilization of men in occupied areas of Donbas ignited personnel shortages.[74] Zaporizhia Oblast Occupation Head Yevheny Balitsky reported that occupation officials in the Zaporizhia Oblast are giving residents free coal, presumably in an effort to resolve the heating issue.[75]

Russian forces are reportedly continuing to exploit Ukrainian civilians and civilian infrastructure to support their war efforts throughout Ukraine. The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported that occupation officials are demanding money from Crimean teachers to sponsor the Russian war effort.[76] The Ukrainian General Staff and Ukrainian authorities reported that Russian forces continue to use civilian facilities and abandoned homes across the occupied territories, and have set up a field hospital in a school in the Zaporizhia Oblast.[77]

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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