

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, October 13

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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.

Public reports of the first deaths of ill-prepared mobilized Russian troops in Ukraine have sparked renewed criticism of the Russian military command. Russian media reported that five mobilized men from Chelyabinsk have already died in combat in Ukraine just three weeks after President Vladimir Putin's declaration of partial mobilization on September 21.[1] The report led many pro-war milbloggers to claim that the number of dead and wounded among mobilized servicemen is likely higher than this due to lack of promised training, equipment, unit cohesion, and commanders, as well as repeated instances of wrongful mobilization.

Russian milbloggers claimed that Commander of the 58th Combined Arms Army of the Southern Military District (SMD), Mikhail Zusko, ordered the immediate deployment without any pre-combat training of newly mobilized servicemen of the 15th Regiment of the 27th Motor Rifle Brigade from Moscow City and Moscow Oblast to the collapsing frontline around Svatove around October 2nd and 3rd.[2] Ukrainian outlets had previously reported that the Kremlin has arrested Zusko due to combat losses, and it is unclear why an SMD commander would issue orders pertaining to a unit within the Western Military District (WMD).[3] Milbloggers noted that relatives found half of the 15th Regiment personnel wounded in a Belgorod Oblast hospital after the unit got caught in heavy artillery fire when attempting to reach the Svatove frontline. Milbloggers noted that the regiment had no orders, military command supervision, signal, or supplies, and that the other half of its personnel is still at the Svatove frontline. Another milblogger noted witnessing the coffins of mobilized men arrive in Chelyabinsk, Moscow, and Yekaterenburg, and claimed that many mobilized men are surrendering to Ukrainian forces.[4] One Russian milblogger complained on October 13 that newly mobilized men are being deployed in a haphazard way that will lead to 10,000 deaths and 40,000 injuries among them by February 2023.[5]

Russian mobilization structures are continuing to face bureaucratic challenges, which may further undermine the combat effectiveness of mobilized personnel. Milbloggers claimed that the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) did not set proper conditions to integrate and monitor the deployment of mobilized men at the frontlines.[6] Russian military units reportedly disperse mobilized men among different units without keeping proper records of their deployed locations on the frontlines, causing families to complain to military leadership. Russian military officials are also continuing to assign men with previous military experience to units that do not match their expertise. One milblogger even warned that Russian MoD's inability to properly update families of the whereabouts of their relatives will lead mothers and wives to form human rights groups that "will break Russia from within." [7]

ISW cannot independently verify milblogger claims, but the community has been proactive in highlighting the Kremlin's mobilization since the day of its declaration in hopes of improving the prospects of the Russian war in Ukraine.[8] ISW has also previously reported on a video of mobilized men from Moscow Oblast in Svatove who complained about their lack of equipment and deployment to the frontlines without proper training, which corroborates some milblogger reports.[9] The persistence of such complaints supports ISW's assessment that the mobilization campaign will not produce enough combat-ready Russian personnel to affect the course of the war in the short term. The Kremlin's rapid deployment of mobilized servicemen to the Kremenna-Svatove line may also indicate that Russian President Vladimir Putin is willing to throw away the lives of mobilized men in a desperate effort to preserve a collapsing frontline.

The Kremlin continues to struggle to message itself out of the reality of mobilization and military failures. The Kremlin continued its general pattern of temporarily appeasing the nationalist communities by conducting retaliatory missile strikes on Ukraine in an effort to deflect from persistent mobilization problems. Renewed milblogger critiques about mobilization again show how ephemeral the Kremlin's successes are at deflecting attention from them. The nationalist community resumed its calls on the Kremlin to replace senior officials and commanders and declare war, which some had anticipated would be the Kremlin's response to the Kerch Strait Bridge explosions, broken mobilization process, and loss of most of Kharkiv Oblast and Lyman.[10] The Kremlin remains trapped in a cycle of appeasing its pro-war constituencies but retaining Russian President Vladimir Putin's vision of a limited war in Ukraine that is incompatible with their demands and expectations.

Russian forces continued to launch strikes on critical Ukrainian infrastructure on October 13. Ukraine's Western Air Command noted that Russian forces launched Kalibr cruise missiles at infrastructure in western Ukraine, four of which Ukrainian troops destroyed.^[11] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian troops launched missile strikes on critical infrastructure and civilian objects in Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Mykolaiv Oblasts throughout the day on October 13.^[12] Ukrainian military sources also reported that Russian troops continued drone attacks all over Ukraine, and that Ukrainian troops shot down four drones over Vinnytsia and Cherkassy on October 12.^[13] Social media footage additionally shows explosions in Rivne, Ternopil, Lviv, Chernivitsi Oblasts following the activation of Ukrainian air defense systems.^[14]

Russian forces are likely continuing to use Iranian Shahed-136 drones to support massive strike campaigns against critical Ukrainian infrastructure due to their low efficacy in active combat situations. Ukraine's Southern Operational Command Spokesperson, Nataliya Humenyuk, claimed on October 13 that Russian forces are employing Shahed-136s primarily to strike buildings and infrastructure because the drones have limited efficacy against troop concentrations.^[15] Humenyuk cited various sources who stated that Russia has received between 300 to several thousand Shahed-136s and is using them in areas as far away as 1,000km from the launch point, which is why Shahed-136 use has been densely concentrated around southern Ukraine.^[16] Russian forces are also increasingly trying to launch the drones from the northern border area. Humenyuk's statement, and the pattern of recent Shahed-136 strikes against infrastructure in Ukrainian rear areas, supports ISW's previous assessment that Shahed-136s will not generate asymmetric effects for Russian forces because they are not being used to strike areas of critical military significance in a way that directly influences the frontline.^[17]

Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin is likely continuing efforts to distinguish himself and Wagner Group forces from more conventional Russian and proxy troops. Prigozhin emphasized in a comment to Russian outlet *RIA FAN* that Wagner Group forces singlehandedly took control of Ivanhrad, a settlement just south of Bakhmut, on October 13.^[18] However, the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Territorial Defense Force claimed that Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) and DNR joint forces took control of Ivanhrad and the nearby settlement of Opytne, apparently contradicting Prigozhin's statement that "not a single person from other units, except for employees of the Wagner Private Military Company" was in Ivanhrad at the time of its capture.^[19] Prigozhin additionally rebutted the claim that Russian forces have taken Opytne and stated that fierce fighting is ongoing on its outskirts.^[20] The disconnect between Prigozhin's and the DNR Territorial Defense's claims, as well as Prigozhin's apparent desire to have Wagner Group fighters receive sole credit for the capture of Ivanhrad, is consistent with ISW's previous observations that Prigozhin is jockeying for more prominence against the backdrop of his recent harsh critiques of the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) establishment.^[21]

Increasingly degraded morale, discipline, and combat capabilities among Russian troops in combat zones in Ukraine may be leading to temporary suspensions in offensive operations in limited areas. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that, particularly in Donetsk Oblast, certain Russian units are receiving orders from commanders to temporarily halt offensive operations due to extremely low morale, psychological conditions, high rates of desertion, and non-execution of combat orders.^[22] The General Staff statement is likely a reflection of the fact that Russian detachments are becoming increasingly degraded as they impale themselves on relatively small and insignificant settlements throughout Donetsk Oblast, especially around Bakhmut and the Donetsk City area. As these units become more degraded, they are likely reconstituted ad hoc with disparate combat elements, which leads to further demoralization and incoherence in the conduct of offensive operations. However, the apparent suspension of offensive operations in areas of Donetsk Oblast, nearly the only areas in Ukraine where Russian troops are engaged in offensive operations, will further complicate Russian efforts to take additional territory and likely further contribute to poor morale and overall attrition of combat capabilities.

Key Takeaways

- **Public reports of the first deaths of ill-prepared mobilized Russian troops in Ukraine have sparked renewed criticism of the Russian military command.**
- **Russian forces continued to launch strikes on critical Ukrainian infrastructure on October 13.**
- **Increasingly degraded morale, discipline, and combat capabilities among Russian troops in combat zones in Ukraine may be leading to temporary suspensions in offensive operations in limited areas.**

- **Ukrainian forces made gains northwest of Svatove.**
- **Russian forces are continuing defensive operations in anticipation of potential Ukrainian attacks towards Kreminna.**
- **Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that Russian troops are attempting to recapture positions in northern and northwestern Kherson Oblast.**
- **Damage to the Kerch Strait Bridge continues to impede the movement of Russian supplies and personnel to southern Ukraine.**
- **Russian forces continued ground attacks in Donetsk Oblast and claimed to make marginal advances south of Bakhmut.**
- **Russian incompetence continues to take its toll on mobilized personnel before they ever reach the front lines, likely exacerbating already-low morale.**
- **Russian officials are likely increasingly limiting freedom of movement in Russia to preserve additional mobilizable populations and prevent them from fleeing the country.**
- **Russian occupation officials called for the evacuation of civilians from occupied Kherson Oblast**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of October 13, 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.

- 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

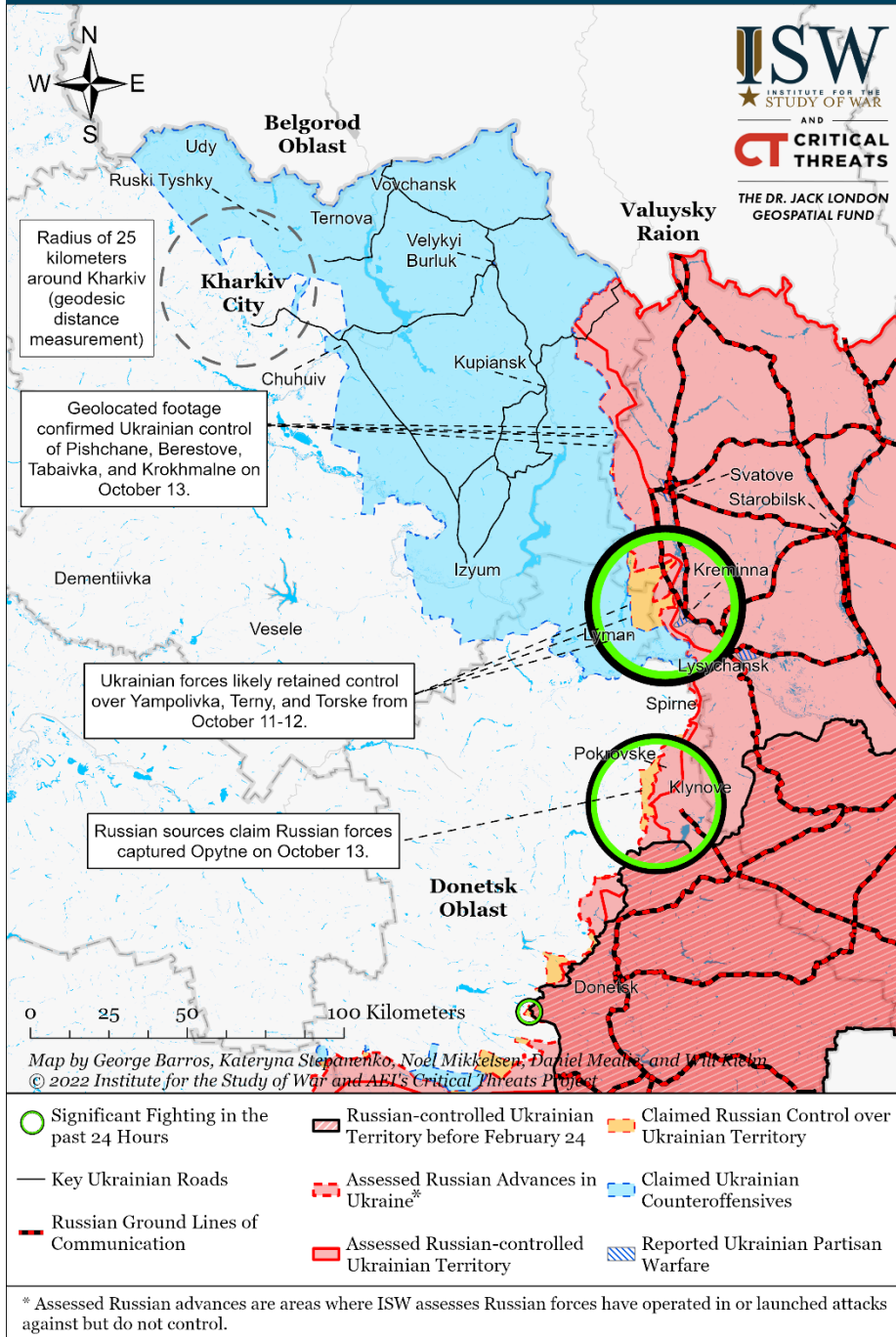
Ukrainian Counter-offensives (Ukrainian efforts to liberate Russian-occupied territories)

Eastern Ukraine: (Oskil River-Kreminna Line)

Ukrainian forces made gains in northeastern Kharkiv Oblast northwest of Svatove on October 13. Geolocated video footage posted on October 13 shows Ukrainian forces capturing Russian troops who voluntarily surrendered near the N26 highway in Krokhmalne, about 20km northwest of Svatove.[23] The footage likely indicates that Ukrainian troops have also taken control of the surrounding settlements of Pischane, Berestove, and Tabaivka.[24] Russian sources also claimed that Ukrainian troops conducted ground attacks further north of Krokhmalne and attempted to attack Orlyanka and Kotlyarivka, both within 30km northwest of Svatove.[25] Russian sources continued to claim that Ukrainian forces are consolidating positions west of Kreminna and attempting to cross the Zherebets River to prepare for attacks on the settlement.[26] ISW makes no effort to evaluate the veracity of Russian claims about future Ukrainian operations.

Russian forces continued to conduct defensive operations around Kreminna in anticipation of a potential Ukrainian attack. The chief of staff of the BARS-13 (Russian Combat Reserve of the Country) battalion in Kreminna claimed on October 13 that BARS-13 is “firmly” holding the defense of the settlement and have full control of the Svatove-Kreminna and Kreminna-Rubizhne roads.[27] The BARS-13 chief of staff additionally claimed that elements of the 20th Combined Arms Army are pushing west of Kreminna and trying to enter Terny, 15km northwest of Kreminna.[28] A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the Central and Western Military Districts are attacking westward of Kreminna towards Lyman and that forces of the 3rd Motor Rifle Division of the 20th Combined Arms Army captured a Ukrainian prisoner somewhere around Terny.[29] Geolocated imagery posted on October 12 shows Russian “dragon’s teeth” defensive lines southeast of Kreminna around Zolote, further indicating that Russian forces are focusing on entrenching themselves near the Luhansk Oblast border.[30]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of October 13, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



Southern Ukraine: (Kherson Oblast)

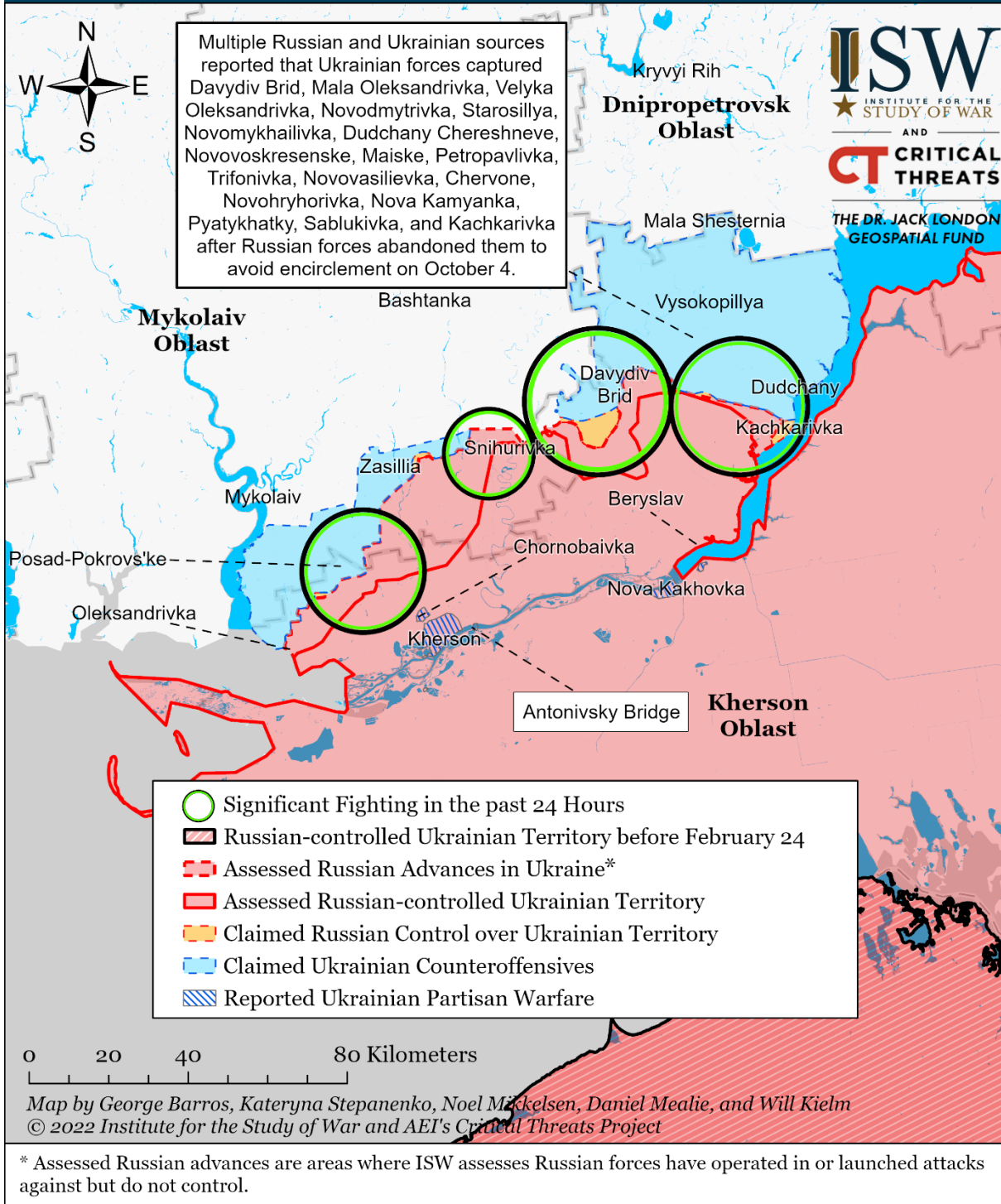
Ukrainian and Russian sources reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully continued to attack previously occupied positions in northern and northwestern Kherson Oblast on October 13. Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported that Russian forces launched an unsuccessful assault in the direction of Kostromka and Sukhyi Stavok on the eastern bank of the Inhulets River. [31] Russian sources also claimed that Russian forces conducted a reconnaissance-in-

force in the vicinity of Sukhyi Stavok and captured Ukrainian prisoners of war but did not provide photographic evidence confirming the claim.[32] Geolocated footage also showed Russian forces targeting Ukrainian armored vehicles north of Sadok, approximately 14km east of Davydiv Brid.[33] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces attempted to secure positions north of Ishchenka (approximately 8km southwest of Davydiv Brid), and that the Ukrainian 46th Airmobile Brigade carried out a sortie in the area of Borozenske and Bezvodne, both just east of Ishchenka.[34] Advisor to Kherson Oblast Military Administration Serhiy Khlan stated that Russian forces attempted to counterattack in the Ishchenka area, but Ukrainian forces repelled the attack.[35] Russian sources also noted that Russian forces continued to shell Ukrainian positions northwest of Kherson City in Pravdyne, Soldatske, and Ternovi Pody.[36]

Ukrainian forces continued their interdiction campaign on October 13. Ukraine's Southern Operational Command spokesperson, Nataliya Humenyuk, noted that Ukrainian forces are continuing to target Russian pontoon and barge crossings across the Dnipro and Inhulets rivers.[37] Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported that Ukrainian forces destroyed a command and observation post in Beryslav Raion and destroyed five ammunition warehouses in unspecified locations.[38] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces also struck a Russian manpower concentration area in Tokarivka (approximately 30km east of Kherson City), killing 150 Russian servicemen.[39] The Ukrainian General Staff added that Russian forces are repairing up to 30 damaged armored vehicles per day in Kalanchak, about 70km southeast of Kherson City.[40] Ukrainian Telegram channels reported unspecified explosions in Nova Kakhovka.[41]

The damage to the Kerch Strait Bridge likely continues to slow down deliveries of Russian supplies and personnel to southern Ukraine. *Krym Realii* published satellite imagery of over 1,000 trucks on the Russian side of the bridge waiting in a three-to-four-day line to cross the strait via the ferry. *Krym Realii* found that there are only four ferries operating with a capacity of 90 trucks and 300 people each.[42] Maxar satellite imagery also showed Russian military trucks using the ferry to cross the Kerch Strait.[43]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of October 13, 2022, 3:00 PM ET

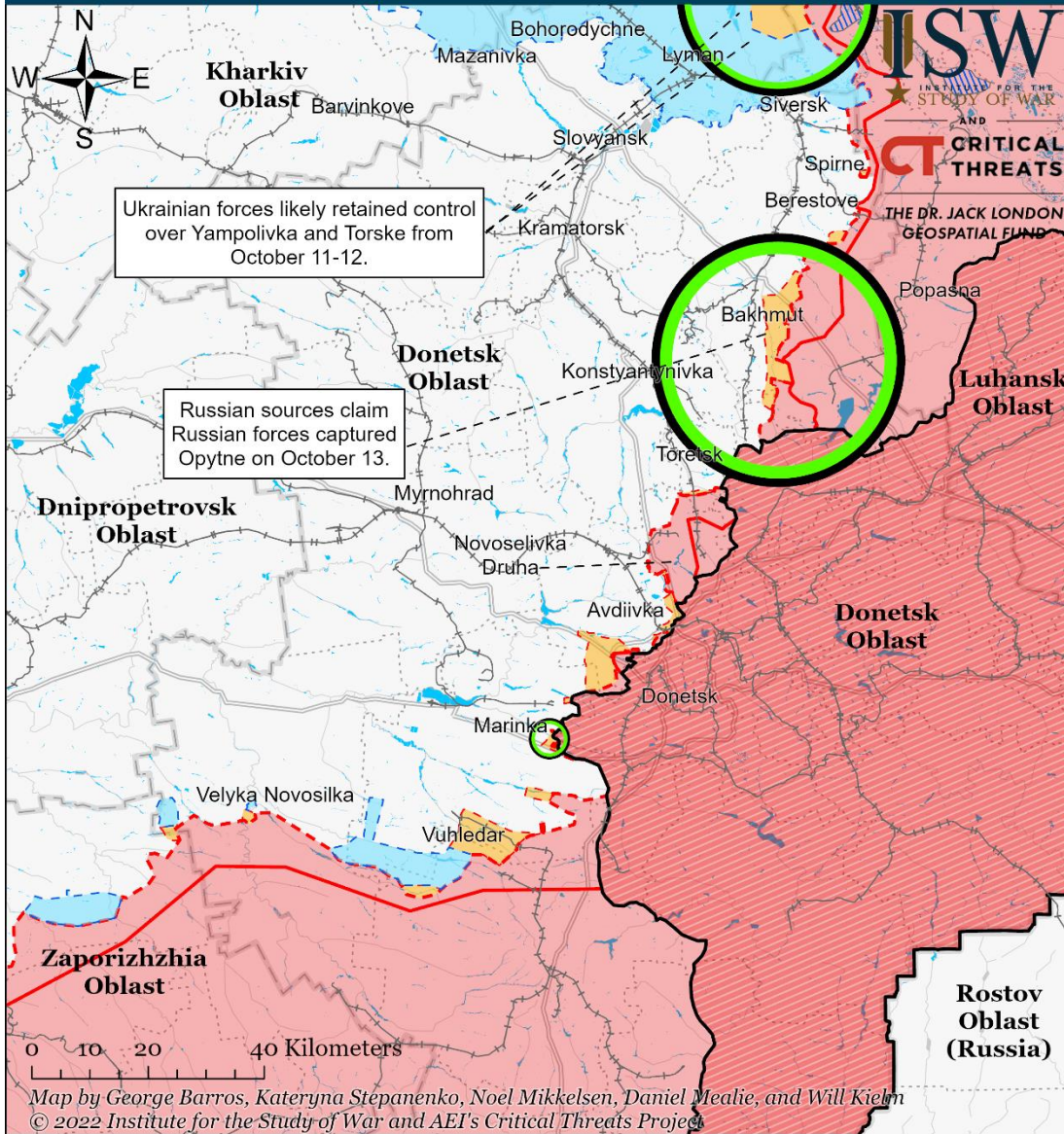


Russian Main Effort—Eastern Ukraine

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 conducted ground attacks in Donetsk Oblast and likely made incremental gains south of Bakhmut on October 13. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian troops repelled Russian attacks on settlements around Bakhmut, namely Bakhmut'ske (8km northeast of Bakhmut), Ozaryanivka (16km southwest of Bakhmut), and Ivanhrad (5km southeast of Bakhmut).[44] The Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) Territorial Defense Force claimed that DNR troops took control of Ivanhrad and Opytne (4km southeast of Bakhmut).[45] However, Wagner Group financier Evgeny Prigozhin claimed that Wagner Group forces singlehandedly took control of Ivanhrad and that Opytne remains under Ukrainian control as fighting continues on its outskirts.[46] ISW has not observed any independent confirmation of either Wagner Group or DNR forces in Ivanhrad or Opytne, and the situation south of Bakhmut is likely obfuscated by active combat and a challenging informational environment, which is likely contributing to contradicting claims over the status of control of individual settlements. The Ukrainian General Staff additionally reported that Russian troops conducted a limited ground attack in Marinka, on the southwestern outskirts of Donetsk City.[47] Russian sources claimed that DNR troops are additionally fighting along the western outskirts of Donetsk City and preparing for an offensive on Nevel'ske.[48]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of October 13, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



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

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

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

Russian forces did not conduct any confirmed ground attacks west of Hulyaipole on October 13 and continued routine artillery strikes throughout western Zaporizhia, Mykolaiv, and Dnipropetrovsk Oblasts.[49] Ukrainian sources reported that Russian troops struck Nikopol, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast with Grad MLRS systems and Mykolaiv City with S-300 anti-aircraft systems.[50] Russian forces additionally launched Shahed-136 drone strikes on Mykolaiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Odesa Oblasts.[51]

Russian nuclear operator Rosenergoatom claimed on October 13 that the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) will switch to Russian nuclear fuel when the ZNPP uses up all its available nuclear fuel reserves.[52] However, President of Ukrainian nuclear operator Energoatom Petro Kotin refuted claims that the ZNPP must be refueled soon emphasizing that there are still two years' worth of nuclear fuel at the plant, which he emphasized remains under the control of Ukrainian staff.[53]

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

Russian incompetence continues to take its toll on mobilized personnel before they even reach the front lines, likely exacerbating already-low morale. Mobilized personnel continue to complain of poor living conditions, faulty or nonexistent equipment, and insufficient training. Russian-language opposition outlet *Meduza* reported that 19 mobilized men have died before reaching the front since mobilization began on September 21 from causes including suicide, beatings, accidents, overdoses, and untreated medical emergencies.[54] A Ukrainian official circulated a video on October 13 depicting a Russian armored personnel carrier (APC) running over a newly mobilized man as he stood in formation during training.[55] One milblogger warned that there is no such thing as “partial mobilization” and that new waves of mobilization will continue throughout the war to replenish losses.[56]

Even Russian officials are increasingly admitting that some mobilized men like prisoners are not expected to return to Russia. Wagner financier Yevgeny Prigozhin, who has been involved in the Russian campaign to mobilize prisoners in exchange for pardons, told a journalist on October 13 that prisoners will either die in combat or redeem themselves and continue to fight terrorists in other countries after the war in Ukraine.[57] Prigozhin said that “many of us will not return from this war” and implied that violent prisoners would never return to Russia but had been given an opportunity to “die a hero.”

Russian officials are likely increasingly limiting freedom of movement in Russia to preserve additional mobilizable populations and prevent them from fleeing the country. Authorities in St. Petersburg banned medical professionals from traveling overseas on business trips due to unspecified security concerns.[58] Medical professionals are reportedly only allowed to leave the country on private visits to member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), a Russian-dominated successor to the Soviet Union made up of Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Some employers reportedly encouraged medical workers to sign a paper promising not to leave the country.[59] Russian officials had previously reported that about 3,000 doctors and other medical professionals could be mobilized under “partial mobilization.”[60]

Russian mobilization authorities continued to expand their aperture for the distribution of mobilization summonses while simultaneously cracking down on those who attempt to evade mobilization. Russian sources claimed that authorities are utilizing integrated databases to search for those evading mobilization notices, which include databases from police, border guards, tax authorities, and hospital and hotel registries.[61] Russian sources said that this will give traffic police the ability to detain and turn in evaders.[62] Police are also reportedly conducting mobilization raids on hotels and hostels in Moscow to deliver men to military registration and enlistment offices.[63] Residents of St. Petersburg additionally reported that citizens are receiving summonses in utility bills, and that housing authorities are compelled to help military registration and enlistment offices with the distribution summonses by any means.[64] Relatedly, heads of state-owned enterprises and private companies are reportedly competing against military registration and enlistment offices to retain their employees, from among whom military enlistment officers are trying to draw mobilizable men.[65]

Anecdotal reports suggest Russian officials may be preparing for a “second wave” of mobilization in some regions, despite official denials. Military commissariat officials reportedly told a Moscow man sometime before October 13 that he would be called up in a “second wave of mobilization after the New Year.”[66] Russian men also reportedly began receiving conscription notices before October 13 for the usual spring 2023 conscription cycle.[67] The regular semi-annual conscription cycle should not be confused with a new wave of mobilization, although conscripts may be deployed to the front lines. ISW had reported on October 11 that Russian federal subjects announced new phases of mobilization in select regions but framed them as “new mobilization tasks” rather than new waves.[68] The deputy chairman of the State Duma Defense Committee, Yuri Shvytkin, told reporters on October 11 that “this is not divided into stages. [Mobilization] is an ongoing process. Each region has its own mobilization plan, and some have already completed it.”[69] Rostov Oblast Military Commissar Igor Yegorov told reporters on October 11 that “all mobilization activities are carried out at the scheduled time and in the prescribed number.”[70]

Activity in Russian-occupied Areas (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 called for the evacuation of civilians from occupied Kherson Oblast on October 13. The Russian-appointed head of the Kherson Occupation Administration, Vladimir Saldo, asked Russian officials on October 13 to support a widescale evacuation of civilians from Kherson to occupied Crimea and neighboring Russian oblasts to “protect” Kherson civilians from missile strikes.[71] Saldo suggested that all Kherson Oblast residents who want to leave should visit other parts of Russia for “vacation and educational” purposes and stressed the importance of evacuating the right bank of the Dnipro River. Ukrainian forces have pushed Russian forces to the banks of the Dnipro River in places and have cut Russian supply lines across the river in recent weeks. Russian Deputy Prime Minister Marat Khusnullin announced on October 13 that the Russian government would “organize assistance for the departure of residents” from Kherson.[72] However, Deputy Kherson Occupation Administration Head Kirill Stremousov claimed on October 13 that Saldo’s call was not an evacuation but rather an opportunity for a “temporary stay and rest” in other regions.[73] Stremousov emphasized that “nobody is going to withdraw Russian troops from the Kherson region.”[74] Ukrainian Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Nataliya Humenyuk reported on October 13 that Russian forces are looting stores in occupied Kherson and are preparing pontoon crossings to flee from the right bank to the left bank of the Dnipro River.[75]

Russian officials may also use the evacuations from Kherson to further remove Ukrainian children from Ukrainian territory. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on October 13 that Russian officials have removed over 170 children from Kherson City since early October.[76] ISW has previously reported on Russian attempts to remove Ukrainian children from Ukrainian homes and to send them to Russia.[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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