### Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, September 7

Karolina Hird, Grace Mappes, George Barros, Layne Philipson, and Mason Clark September 7, 9:30 pm ET

Click <u>here</u> to see ISW's interactive map of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

Ukrainian forces in southeastern Kharkiv Oblast are likely exploiting Russian force reallocation to the Southern Axis to conduct an opportunistic yet highly effective counteroffensive northwest of Izvum. Ukrainian forces likely used tactical surprise to advance at least 20km into Russian-held territory in eastern Kharkiv Oblast on September 7, recapturing approximately 400 square kilometers of ground. Russian sources claimed that Russian troops began deploying reinforcements to the area to defend against Ukrainian advances, and the Russian grouping in this area was likely understrength due to previous Russian deployments to support ongoing efforts to capture the remainder of Donetsk Oblast and support the southern axis.1 Ukraine's ongoing operations in Kherson Oblast have forced Russian forces to shift their focus to the south, enabling Ukrainian forces to launch localized but highly effective counterattacks in the Izyum area.<sup>2</sup> Russian milbloggers voiced concern that this Ukrainian counterattack seeks to cut ground lines of communication (GLOCs) to Russian rear areas in Kupyansk and Izyum, which would allow Ukrainian troops to isolate the Russian groupings in these areas and retake large swaths of territory.3 These milbloggers used largely panicked and despondent tones, acknowledged significant Ukrainian gains, and claimed that the Ukrainian counteroffensive in the south may be a distraction from the ongoing actions in Kharkiv Oblast, which they name as the main Ukrainian effort.4 The level of shock and frank discussion of Ukrainian successes by Russian milbloggers speaks to the scale of surprise achieved by Ukrainian forces, which is likely successfully demoralizing Russian forces. While it is unlikely that the southern counteroffensive and effort to attrit Russian forces in southern Ukraine is a feint for renewed operations in Kharkiv Oblast, Ukrainian forces likely took prudent advantage of a reallocation of Russian troops, equipment, and overall operational focus to launch localized counteroffensives toward critical points in Kharkiv Oblast.

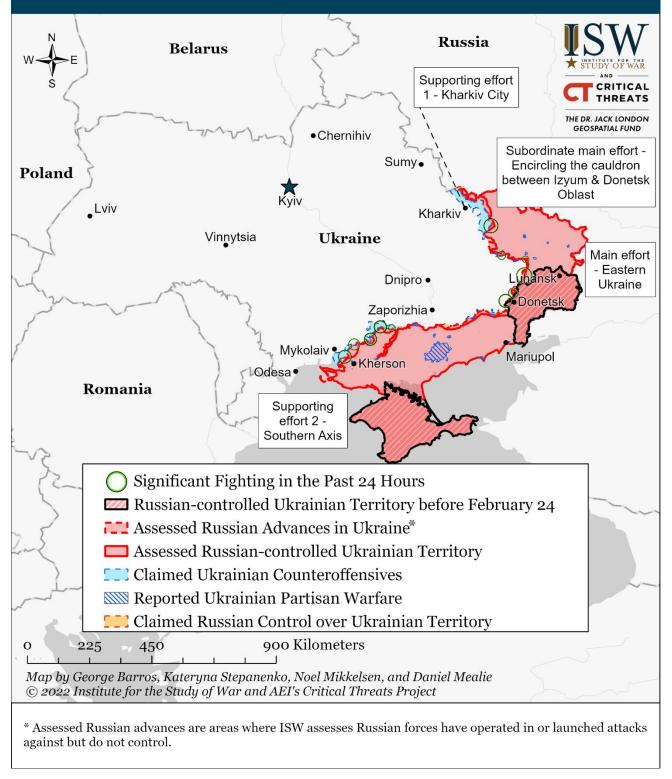
Russian President Vladimir Putin attempted to deny the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) September 6 report on the situation at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP). Putin claimed that there is no Russian military equipment on the grounds of the ZNPP other than Rosgvardia elements.<sup>5</sup> Rosgvardia elements have carried out both occupation functions and frontline combat operations during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Putin's admission that there are Rosgvardia elements on the plant's grounds further confirms that Russian forces have militarized their presence at the ZNPP despite constant Russian denials. Putin also accused the IAEA of acting under Western pressure to not directly blame Ukraine of shelling the plant. As ISW previously assessed, the IAEA report was a coded yet damning condemnation of Russian activities at the ZNPP.<sup>6</sup>

#### **Key Takeaways**

- Ukrainian forces are skillfully exploiting Russia's deployment of forces away from the Izyum-Kharkiv area to retake territory and threaten Russian GLOCs in the area, prompting demoralized responses from Russian milbloggers.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin attempted to deny the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) September 6 report on the situation at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP).
- Ukrainian forces continued strikes on Russian logistics nodes, manpower and equipment concentrations, transportation networks, and command and control points in Kherson Oblast.

- Russian and Ukrainian sources reported kinetic activity in northern Kherson Oblast and in western Kherson Oblast along the Kherson-Mykolaiv border.
- Russian forces conducted ground attacks north of Kharkiv City, northwest of Slovyansk, northeast of Siversk, south and northeast of Bakhmut, and northwest of Donetsk City.
- Ukrainian forces gained 400 square kilometers of territory northwest of Izyum on September 6-7 as part of an opportunistic and highly effective counteroffensive in southeastern Kharkiv Oblast.
- Russian occupation authorities announced November 4 as the potential date for annexation referenda in occupied areas of Ukraine.

## Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of September 7, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



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

Ukrainian officials reiterated on September 7 that Ukrainian forces are targeting Russian logistics nodes, manpower and equipment concentrations, transportation networks, and command and control points in Kherson Oblast.<sup>7</sup> Ukraine's Southern Operational Command noted that Ukrainian troops carried out over 250 fire missions between September 6 and 7.8 The Ukrainian General Staff noted that Ukrainian strikes have significantly damaged Russian fuel and ammunition stores, impacting Russian logistical capacity and undermining combat capabilities along the Southern Axis.<sup>9</sup>

Social media footage taken by residents of Kherson Oblast on September 7 provides visual evidence of the continuing Ukrainian operational-level interdiction campaign. Ukrainian forces likely targeted Russian military assets and logistics nodes in two main areas—around Kherson City and around Nova Kakhovka (55km east of Kherson City). Residents reported an explosion and posted pictures of smoke in Oleshky, about 7km southeast of Kherson City. Ukrainian sources also reported strikes in the Chornobaivka area (on the northern outskirts of Kherson City) on the night of September 6 to 7. Geolocated images posted on September 6 confirm that Ukrainian forces struck Russian positions in Hola Prystan, 10km southwest of Kherson City. Ukrainian military officials confirmed that Ukrainian troops struck a Russian bridge crossing in the Hola Prystan area and that an unspecified Russian unit lost 70 soldiers in that strike. Local reports additionally provide visual evidence of Ukrainian strikes in the Nova Kakhova area near Vesele and Kozatske, both about 3km north of Nova Kakhovka across the Dnipro River. Satellite imagery shows damage to the Nova Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant and the nearby road bridge, which appears to have fallen away almost completely. Ukrainian sources claimed that Ukrainian strikes hit a Russian equipment concentration in the Nova Kakhovka area.

Ukrainian and Russian sources reported kinetic activity along two main lines of effort in Kherson Oblast on September 7: in northern Kherson Oblast south of the Dnipropetrovsk Oblast border and in western Kherson Oblast along the Mykolaiv Oblast border. Geolocated combat footage and imagery further confirm that Ukrainian troops advanced into Vysokopillya and Novovoznesenske, both within 5km of the Kherson-Dnipropetrovsk Oblast border. Russian sources, including the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), inadvertently confirmed that Ukrainian forces are making gains in western Kherson Oblast in the Sukhyi Stavok pocket (about 65km northeast of Kherson City and along the Inhulets River). The Russian MoD claimed that Russian strikes targeted Ukrainian force concentrations in Bilohirka, Sukhyi Stavok, and Andriivka, which indicates that Ukrainian troops are holding positions south of the Inhulets River. Russian sources continued to discuss Ukrainian offensive operations around Sukhyi Stavok and the surrounding settlements of Bezimmene, Kostromka, Velyke Artakov, and Shchastlyve.

The Russian MoD and other Russian sources continued to downplay Ukrainian counteroffensive operations and emphasize claimed Ukrainian manpower and equipment losses along the Kherson Oblast frontline.<sup>20</sup> The Russian MoD stated that Ukrainian forces did not conduct any offensive operations in the Mykolaiv-Kryvyi Rih direction on September 7.<sup>21</sup> Several Russian milbloggers similarly shifted their focus to ongoing Ukrainian counteroffensive actions in Kharkiv Oblast and did not report on operations in the south in their usual granular detail. Both the Russian MoD and the Russian milblogger information space will likely reorient focus in the coming days to developments in Kharkiv Oblast, especially as many milbloggers are adopting the position that the Kherson Oblast counteroffensive is a deliberate Ukrainian distraction from operations in Kharkiv Oblast.<sup>22</sup>

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 Counteroffensives
- 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 1- Kharkiv City
- Russian Supporting Effort 2- Southern Axis
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Activities in Russian-occupied Areas

#### Russian Main Effort- Eastern Ukraine

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

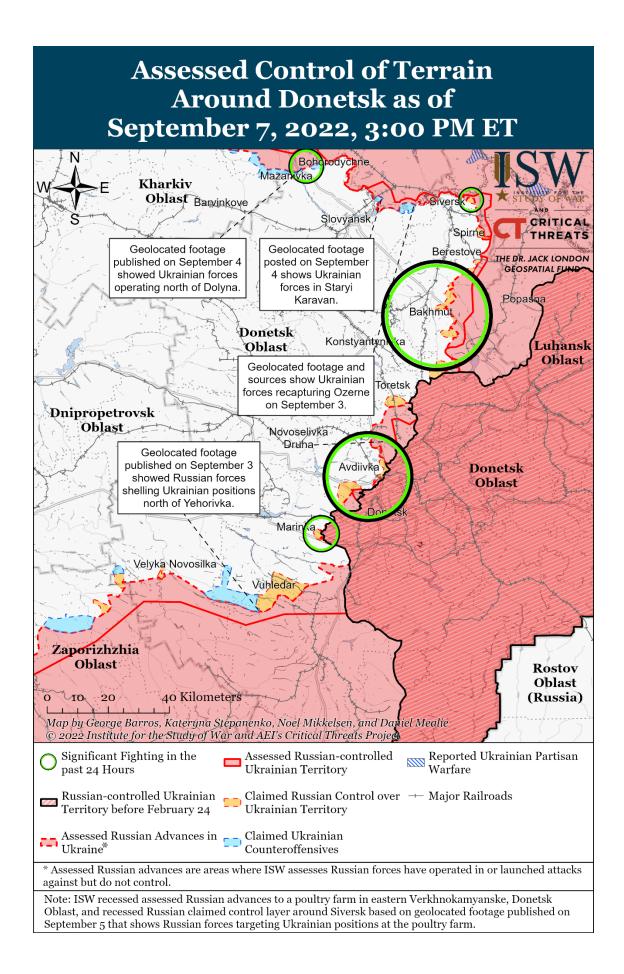
Russian forces conducted a limited ground attack northwest of Slovyansk on September 7. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian troops repelled a Russian attack in the area of Dolyna, about 18km northwest of Slovyansk along the E40 Izyum-Slovyansk highway.<sup>23</sup> Russian forces also conducted routine artillery strikes along the Izyum-Slovyansk line and on areas north and northeast of Slovyansk.<sup>24</sup>

Russian forces conducted a limited ground attack northeast of Siversk on September 7. The Ukrainian General Staff stated that Russian troops attacked near Hryhorivka, about 10km northeast of Siversk.<sup>25</sup> Russian forces continued routine artillery strikes on settlements around Siversk.<sup>26</sup>

Russian forces continued ground attacks northeast and south of Bakhmut on September 7. The Ukrainian General Staff indicated that Russian troops attempted to advance north toward Bakhmut from the outskirts of Horlivka around Zaitseve, Mayorsk, and Mykolaivka Druha—all within 20km south of Bakhmut.<sup>27</sup> The Ukrainian General Staff also reported Russian attacks near Vesela Dolyna (5km southeast of Bakhmut) and the Soledar-Bakhmutske area (10km northeast of Bakhmut).<sup>28</sup> The Russian MoD confirmed reports from September 6 that Russian troops took full control of Kodema, 13km southeast of Bakhmut, and are continuing to push northwards toward Zaitseve and the southern outskirts of Bakhmut itself.<sup>29</sup> Russian forces continued routine artillery attacks on Bakhmut and surrounding settlements.<sup>30</sup>

Russian forces conducted a limited ground attack along the northwestern outskirts of Donetsk City on September 7. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian troops attacked around Opytne, about 5km northwest of Donetsk City.<sup>31</sup> Russian sources continued to discuss claimed Russian advances from Pisky towards Pervomaiske, about 10km northwest of Donetsk City.<sup>32</sup> Geolocated combat footage indicates that Russian forces are continuing marginal, block-by-block advances within Marinka, on the southwestern outskirts of Donetsk City.<sup>33</sup> Russian troops continued routine artillery strikes along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City frontline.<sup>34</sup>

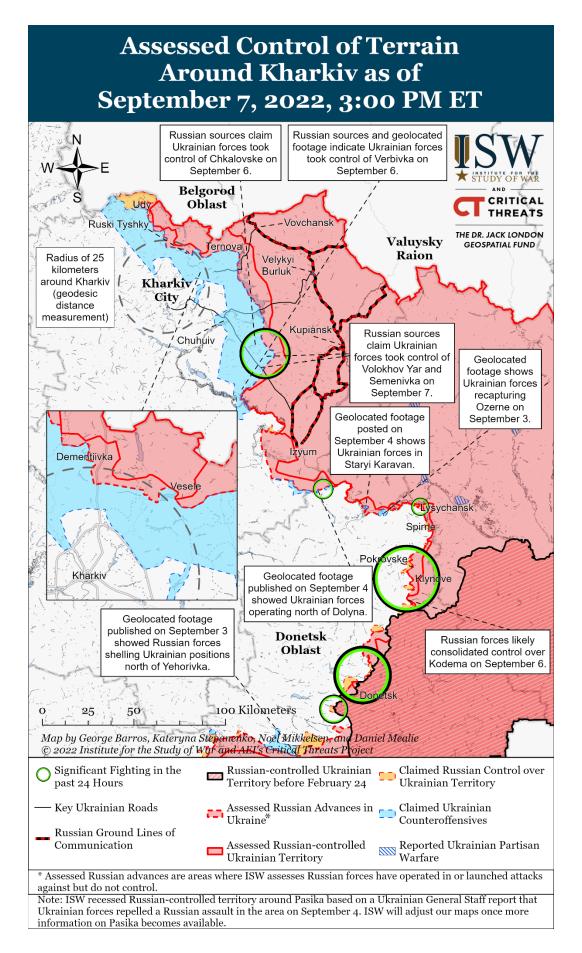
Russian forces did not conduct any cor Zaporizhia Oblast on September 7 and	nfirmed ground attac continued routine a	cks southwest of Don tillery strikes in thes	etsk City or in eastern e areas. <sup>35</sup>



## <u>Supporting Effort #1- Kharkiv City and Eastern Kharkiv Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Defend ground lines of communication (GLOCs) to Izyum and prevent Ukrainian forces from reaching the Russian border)

Ukrainian forces advanced at least 20km deep into Russian-controlled territory north of Izyum toward Kupyansk and recaptured about 400 square kilometers on September 6-7. Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced southeast along the E40 and N26 highways towards Izyum and Kupyansk, respectively. Geolocated footage shows that Ukrainian forces also advanced northeast along the T2110 highway from Balakliya, Verbivka, Yakovenkove, Volokhiv Yar (at the intersection of the T2210 and E40), and towards Shevchenkove (at the intersection of the T2210 and N26). Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces are attempting to advance on Savintsi (just north of Zalyman on the R78), which would cut Balakliya from rear GLOCs. Russian sources reported that Ukrainian forces likely aimed to take control of the network of GLOCs—including the T2210, E40, and N26 highways—to set conditions for further advances south on Izyum and east on Kupyansk. Local sources reported that Ukrainian forces struck Izyum and Kupyansk (Russian sources claimed using HIMARS), likely to prevent Russian forces from supplying and reinforcing the front lines from these cities. Russian forces targeted Ukrainian rear areas in Yavirske, Pryshyb, Andriivka, Lyman, and Zmiiv, all northwest of Balakliya on the R78.

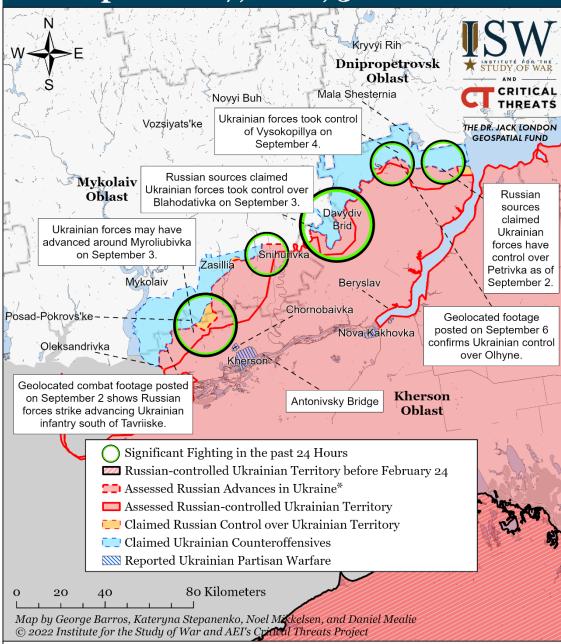
Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks north of Kharkiv City on September 7. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian ground assaults near Pytomnyk and Ruski Tyshky, both within 15km of Kharkiv City.<sup>42</sup> Russian sources claimed that Russian forces made significant unspecified advances towards Bayrak, Peremoha, and Shestakove—all on the road connecting Rubizhne to the T2104 ground line of communication (GLOC) west of the Siverskyi Donets River - but provided no evidence to support these claims.<sup>43</sup> Russian forces continued routine artillery and rocket strikes on Kharkiv City and the surrounding settlements.<sup>44</sup> Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance groups conducted unspecified operations in Bilyi Kolodyaz, Vovchansk, and Hnylytsya, all deep in the Russian rear east of the Siverskyi Donets River.<sup>45</sup>



## <u>Supporting Effort #2- Southern Axis</u> (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Russian forces did not conduct any confirmed ground attacks in western Zaporizhia Oblast on September 7 and continued routine air and artillery strikes along the line of contact in Zaporizhia Oblast.<sup>46</sup> Russian and Ukrainian sources continued to claim that the other side shelled Enerhodar and the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) throughout the day on September 7.<sup>47</sup> Enerhodar Mayor Dmytro Orlov reported that Russian shelling damaged the "Luch" substation, causing power outages throughout the city.<sup>48</sup> Russian forces continued routine missile and artillery attacks along the frontlines in Mykolaiv and Dnipropetrovsk Oblasts on September 7.<sup>49</sup>

### Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of September 7, 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.

Note: Ukrainian officials announced on August 29 that Ukrainian forces began a counteroffensive in Kherson Oblast. An unnamed military official of an unspecified country told CNN on August 29 that Ukrainian forces liberated Pravdyne, Nova Dmytrivka, and Tomyna Balka (northwest of Kherson City) and Arkhanhelske (along the Inhulets River). ISW will readjust the maps when more open sources confirm the liberation of these settlements. ISW extended Ukrainian counteroffensives to Sukhyi Stavok based on several claims from Russian milbloggers that Ukrainian forces liberated the settlement on August 29. Russian sources claimed that Russian forces pushed Ukrainian forces back to Sukhyi Stavok from Kostromka and Bezimenne on September 3. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces launched air strikes on Bezimenne and Kostromka on September 4, which may indicate a Ukrainian advance in the area.

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

Nothing significant to report.

<u>Activity in Russian-occupied Areas</u> (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 and occupation authorities announced November 4 as an ideal date for scheduling annexation referenda in occupied territories and continued setting conditions for the referenda. Russian Federation Council First Deputy Chairman Andrey Turchak announced that occupation authorities in Ukraine should "properly and symbolically" hold the annexation referenda on Russian National Unity Day on November 4.50 The Kherson Oblast occupation administration announced that the Kherson annexation referendum will occur on November 4, confirming ISW's prior assessment that occupation authorities will likely delay annexation referenda from their previously stated deadlines of mid-September.<sup>51</sup> Other occupation administrations will likely also push back their referenda to coerce increased civilian cooperation with the occupation governments. Zaporizhia Occupation Administration Council Member Vladimir Rogov announced that the Zaporizhia Oblast occupation administration will pay social benefits to Ukrainians who reside in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast even if their primary residence is in another occupied territory or in unoccupied Ukraine, indicating that the occupation administration aims to convince or coerce more civilian support for annexation referenda.<sup>52</sup> The Kharkiv Oblast occupation administration distributed the first 15 Russian passports to Vovchansk, Kharkiv Oblast, residents on September 7.53 Russian occupation authorities will likely further delay this deadline due to continued failures to impose their authority and the disruption of ongoing Ukrainian operations.

Russian and occupation authorities continued cracking down on Ukrainian partisan and collaboration activities on September 7. The Rosgvardia (Russian National Guard) press service announced that Rosgvardia forces in occupied Ukraine detained 137 Ukrainians collaborating with Ukrainian forces, SBU, and alleged nationalist organizations within an unspecified timespan.<sup>54</sup> The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces detained 40 civilians in Kupyansk, Kharkiv Oblast, in an unspecified timespan, possibly to reduce Ukrainian visibility during ongoing counteroffensive operations in the Kupyansk direction.<sup>55</sup>

Russian occupation authorities are likely preparing to hold more sham trials of Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs). The Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) General Prosecutor's Office announced on September 7 that it charged an unspecified number of Ukrainian POWs with unspecified war crimes on September 7 and will hold the trials in Donetsk City and Mariupol, Donetsk Oblast on unspecified dates.<sup>56</sup> The DNR General Prosecutor's Office noted that DNR courts previously sentenced foreign-fighter POWs to death, indicating that DNR courts will likely sentence these Ukrainian POWs to similar or the same sentences.<sup>57</sup>

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>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/40005; https://t.me/vysokygovorit/9321;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/40005; https://t.me/vysokygovorit/9324; https://t.me/vysokygovorit/9321; https://t.me/epoddubny/12181; https://t.me/vysokygovorit/9325

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> https://t.me/vysokygovorit/9326; https://t.me/vysokygovorit/9325; https://t.me/vysokygovorit/9323; https://t.me/notes\_veterans/4642; https://t.me/sashakots/35397; https://t.me/notes\_veterans/4635; https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonoV/17380; https://t.me/vysokygovorit/9324; https://t.me/readovkanews/41350; https://t.me/vysokygovorit/9319; https://t.me/epoddubny/12174; https://t.me/rybar/38348; https://t.me/vysokygovorit/9321

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> https://t.me/vrogov/4714

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-september-6

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>https://www.facebook.com/okPivden/videos/308191524855381/;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> https://t.me/hueviyherson/25517; https://t.me/Bratchuk Sergey/18217; https://twitter.com/typicaldonetsk/status/1567459162467991552

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> https://t.me/Bratchuk Sergey/18217

<sup>12</sup> https://twitter.com/neonhandrail/status/1567340641977532416

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> https://t.me/hueviyherson/25521; https://t.me/stranaua/62449; https://t.me/hueviyherson/25509

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> https://twitter.com/666 mancer/status/1567436054193491968; https://t.me/horevica/5645;https://t.me/boris rozhin/62747;

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> https://t.me/Bratchuk Sergey/18217; https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=630844555062190

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> https://t.me/mod russia/19609

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> https://t.me/strelkovii/3179; https://t.me/milinfolive/90113; https://t.me/milinfolive/90116

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> https://t.me/mod russia/19609

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> https://t.me/kommunist/9081; https://t.me/WarDonbass/78349; https://t.me/vladlentatarsky/15913; https://t.me/notes\_veterans/4603

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<sup>36</sup> https://twitter.com/GirkinGirkin/status/1567517529320431616; https://t.me/martovalieva1/611
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https://twitter.com/YWNReporter/status/1567498608873816066 1567490225277919232; https://t.me/rybar/38348;

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https://t.me/vysokygovorit/9319; https://t.me/epoddubny/12174;

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> https://twitter.com/ThomasVLinge/status/1567502104117366784:

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<sup>38</sup> https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonoV/17380; https://t.me/vysokygovorit/9324 https://t.me/vysokygovorit/9321; https://t.me/epoddubny/12181
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 $https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonoV/17379; \ https://t.me/rusich\_army/4957; \ https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonoV/17370; \ https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonoV$ 

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<sup>51</sup> https://t.me/boris\_rozhin/62784; https://t.me/boris\_rozhin/62783 ; https://t.me/readovkanews/41377; https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-26

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<sup>57</sup> https://t.me/kommunist/9100; https://t.me/southtower/6835

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https://t.me/rybar/38348; https://t.me/vysokygovorit/9321; https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/40004; https://t.me/sashakots/35397
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