

# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, August 10

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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.

**Ukrainian officials framed the August 9 attack in Crimea as the start of Ukraine's counteroffensive in the south, suggesting that the Ukrainian military expects intense fighting in August and September that could decide the outcome of the next phase of the war.** A Ukrainian official told *Politico* on August 10 that “you can say this is it” when asked about the start of Ukraine's planned counteroffensive.<sup>1</sup> Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky vaguely noted on August 10 that the war “began with Crimea and must end with Crimea - with its liberation.”<sup>2</sup>

**Russian officials remain confused about the August 9 attack on the Saki Air Base in Russian-occupied Crimea, over 225km behind Russian lines, which destroyed at least eight Russian aircraft and multiple buildings.** Satellite imagery confirmed reports from Ukraine's air force that the attack destroyed at least eight Russian aircraft, contradicting Russian claims that the explosions did not damage any aircraft and were not the result of an attack.<sup>3</sup> Russian outlets shared conflicting stories: the Russian Ministry of Defense claimed on August 9 that munitions had been detonated at a storage site at the airfield due to negligence, not an attack, and claimed that no aircraft were damaged.<sup>4</sup> Russian milblogger Rybar claimed on August 10 that the explosion was likely not caused by a missile strike and hypothesized that the explosions could be due to negligence and non-compliance with safety regulations or to a small helicopter with a bomb attacking a nearby parking lot.<sup>5</sup> Mixed stories in Russian media and among Russian milbloggers indicate that either officials within the Russian Ministry of Defense have competing theories regarding the attack and are sharing them with the media, or that the Kremlin has failed to coordinate its information operation to deny that Ukraine conducted a successful attack so far behind Russian lines. Russian forces at the airbase likely know by now what happened but may not yet understand how or from exactly where Ukrainian forces conducted the attack.

Ukrainian officials are playing up the evident Russian confusion surrounding the attack to obfuscate Ukraine's longer-range capabilities. An anonymous Ukrainian official told the *New York Times* that the attack was carried out with the help of partisans.<sup>6</sup> Another anonymous Ukrainian official told the *Washington Post* that Ukrainian special forces caused the explosion, while other Ukrainian officials implicitly referenced the attack but did not overtly take credit for it.<sup>7</sup> ISW still cannot independently assess what caused the explosions at the airfield—satellite imagery depicts multiple craters and scorch marks, but such damage could have been caused by many things--special forces, partisans, or missiles, on-site or from a distance.

Nevertheless, Ukrainian military officials took credit for two long-range missile strikes on an ammunition depot in Novooleksiivka in Henichensk district (north of Crimea) and on the battalion tactical group (BTG) command post of the 217<sup>th</sup> Guards Airborne Regiment

in the Maksyma Horkoho on the southwestern Kherson Oblast coast.<sup>8</sup> The settlements are situated 100km and 170km south of frontlines along the Kherson Oblast administrative border respectively. Ukraine's claimed attacks demonstrate longer-range missile capabilities, but do not demonstrate the range they would have needed to hit the Saki Air Base from along the front lines. Ukrainian forces have various systems that they could have used or modified to hit Russian military infrastructure in Crimea or southern Kherson Oblast.

**The Kremlin's changing plans suggest that occupying forces will likely move up the date of the annexation referenda in occupied Ukraine.** The advisor to Ukraine's Kherson Oblast Civil Military Administration, Serhiy Khlan, claimed on August 10 that occupation forces have stopped discussing September 11 as a date for Russia's sham referenda on the annexation of occupied Ukrainian territories.<sup>9</sup> ISW previously assessed September 11, the date that polling will be held in local and regional elections across the Russian Federation, to be the most likely date for annexation referenda to be held.<sup>10</sup> Khlan noted that Russian occupation forces had referred to September 11 as the date of the sham referenda, "but now the dates are again unclear." Occupation authorities have taken measures to be able to hold sham referendums at any time—ISW reported on August 3 that Russian forces would offer easily manipulated "online voting" in the Donetsk Oblast referendum and reported on August 7 that occupation forces in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast were planning door-to-door "surveys" of the local population.<sup>11</sup>

The political, military, economic, and other consequences of a prolonged Russian military occupation of southern and eastern Ukraine would be devastating to the long-term viability of the Ukrainian state.<sup>12</sup> The performative drama of annexation will not change the on-the-ground realities created by the brutal Russian occupation. Forced passportization, rubleization, "filtration," and other "integration" measures already underway in Russian-occupied areas are far more important and damaging to Ukraine than the referenda would be.<sup>13</sup>

**Ukrainian nuclear operating enterprise Energoatom Head Petro Kotin suggested that Ukrainian forces interrupt power lines leading to the Zaporizhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) should Russian forces start disconnecting the ZNPP from the Ukrainian power system.**<sup>14</sup> Kotin told Reuters on August 9 that Russian forces intend to damage all power lines to the ZNPP and connect the plant to the Russian power grid, effectively stealing the ZNPP from the Ukrainians.<sup>15</sup>

**The Embassy of Uzbekistan in Russia cautioned the Uzbek diaspora that any form of participation in the Russian invasion of Ukraine is punishable by up to 10 years in Uzbek prison, effectively denouncing Russian volunteer recruitment efforts among Central Asian immigrants.** The Embassy noted that Uzbek law prohibits all citizens from engaging in mercenary activity and warned Uzbeks to stay clear of any "provocations."<sup>16</sup> ISW has previously reported that the Chairman of the Society of Central Asian Uzbeks of Perm Krai, Jahongir Jalolov, called on Uzbek nationals living or working in Perm Krai to form a volunteer battalion in Perm Krai to support Russian forces in Ukraine.<sup>17</sup> Russian propagandist Margarita Simonyan supported Jalolov's proposal and celebrated the loyalty of the Uzbek diaspora in Russia.<sup>18</sup> The Embassy statement was likely a response to Jalolov's announcement.

**Iran reportedly began training Russian forces on Iranian UAV systems in recent weeks, demonstrating the deepening military cooperation between Iran and Russia.** A US official told *CNN* that “Russian officials conducted training in Iran as part of the agreement for UAV transfers from Iran to Russia,” citing newly declassified US intelligence.<sup>19</sup> Russia launched a satellite on Iran’s behalf on August 9, likely in exchange for the drones and other military equipment and economic collaboration.<sup>20</sup> Iran may leverage new Russo-Iranian aviation deals to transfer UAVs to Russia for use in Ukraine.<sup>21</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.**

### **Key Takeaways**

- **Russian officials remain confused about the August 9 attack on the Saki Air Base in Russian-occupied Crimea, over 225km behind Russian lines, which destroyed at least eight Russian aircraft and multiple buildings.**
- **The Kremlin’s changing plans suggest that occupying forces are most likely to move up the date of the annexation referenda in occupied Ukraine. Annexation makes it harder to imagine any negotiated settlement to the war on any terms that Ukraine or the West could accept, demonstrating that the Kremlin is fundamentally unserious about ending the war on any terms short of a Ukrainian surrender.**
- **Iran reportedly began training Russian forces on Iranian UAV systems in recent weeks, demonstrating the deepening military cooperation between Iran and Russia.**
- **Russian forces conducted ground attacks west of Izyum.**
- **Russian forces continued limited ground assaults northeast and west of Bakhmut and likely made marginal gains in these areas.**
- **Russian forces made marginal gains northwest of Donetsk City and are continuing attempts to push northwestward from current footholds on the outskirts of Donetsk City.**
- **Russian forces conducted multiple unsuccessful offensives north and northeast of Kharkiv City.**
- **Russian forces conducted an unsuccessful reconnaissance-in-force operation in northwestern Kherson Oblast.**
- **Russia’s Oryol Oblast is reportedly forming a volunteer battalion.**

*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 limited ground attacks west of Izyum on August 10. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian troops attempted ground attacks near Husarivka (33km northwest of Izyum) and Velyka Komyshevakha (21km southwest of Izyum).<sup>22</sup> Russian forces did not conduct any ground attacks northwest of Slovyansk and continued to shell settlements near the Kharkiv-Donetsk Oblast border on August 10.<sup>23</sup>

Russian forces did not conduct any ground attacks around Siversk and shelled Ukrainian positions in and around Siversk on August 10.<sup>24</sup>

Russian forces continued ground attacks around Bakhmut and made partial gains to the south and northeast of Bakhmut on August 10. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian troops attempted to push north from positions around Novoluhanske (about 18km southeast of Bakhmut) and tried to advance around Kodema (about 11km southeast of Bakhmut).<sup>25</sup> Russian sources are additionally escalating claims of territorial control south of Bakhmut. The Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) claimed that DNR troops are working to clear Hladosove, about 16km south of Bakhmut.<sup>26</sup> Russian troops also reportedly conducted ground assaults northeast of Bakhmut in Yakovlivka (about 13km northeast of Bakhmut) and made marginal advances on the territory of the Bilokamyanskyi refractory plant in Soledar (about 8km northeast of Bakhmut).<sup>27</sup> Russian forces continued air and artillery strikes around Bakhmut and will likely continue efforts to advance directly on Bakhmut from the north, east, and south.<sup>28</sup>

Russian forces continued ground attacks in order to push northwestward from the outskirts of Donetsk City on August 10. The Ukrainian General Staff noted that Russian troops attempted to push towards Avdiivka from Mineralne and Spartak, both on the northern outskirts of Donetsk City and within 5km southeast of Avdiivka.<sup>29</sup> Russian sources reported that Russian troops advanced into Krasnohorivka, about 16km north of Donetsk City.<sup>30</sup> Russian forces are additionally continuing to complete the seizure of Pisky, about 6km northwest of Donetsk City.<sup>31</sup> Russian troops will likely continue efforts to leverage recently-gained footholds northwest of Donetsk City in order to continue pushing the line of contact away from Donetsk City.

**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 multiple unsuccessful offensive operations along the Kharkiv City Axis on August 10. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attempted to advance to Petrivka, approximately 32km northeast of Kharkiv City, and in the Veterynarne-Udy direction, approximately 56km north of Kharkiv City.<sup>32</sup> The Ukrainian General Staff also reported that Russian forces focused on conducting aerial reconnaissance and improving logistical support for units in the Kharkiv City direction.<sup>33</sup> Russian forces continued shelling settlements to the north and northeast of Kharkiv City.<sup>34</sup>

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

Russian forces conducted an unsuccessful assault in northwestern Kherson Oblast on August 10. Ukrainian military officials reported that a Russian airborne assault platoon attempted a reconnaissance-in-force operation in Lozove, on the eastern bank of the Inhulets River and near the Ukrainian bridgehead.<sup>35</sup> Russian forces launched airstrikes on Andriivka, Olhine, and Novohryhorivka, all situated along the Kherson Oblast administrative border.<sup>36</sup> Russian forces have also continued artillery fire along the line of contact in Kherson Oblast.<sup>37</sup> Russian forces fired 80 Grad missiles at Nikopol and Marganets (both across the Dnipro River from Russian occupied positions in Zaporizhia Oblast), and the Nikopol City Head Yevhen Yevtushenko described the night of the shelling as "the worst night since February 24."<sup>38</sup> Russian forces continued to target Mykolaiv and Zaporizhia cities and their surrounding areas.<sup>39</sup>

Ukrainian officials confirmed destroying two Russian positions in southern Kherson Oblast, situated 100 and 170km south of the nearest frontline. Ukrainian military officials confirmed that they have struck a Russian ammunition depot in Novooleksiivka in the Henichensk district, north of the Kherson Oblast-Crimea border.<sup>40</sup> ISW has previously reported that local officials and social media users reported a large smoke cloud in Noovoleksiivka on August 9.<sup>41</sup> Ukrainian forces also struck a battalion tactical group (BTG) command post of the Russian 217th Guards Airborne Regiment in the Maksyma Horkoho village, approximately 30km west of the Crimean northwestern border.<sup>42</sup> Both settlements are located outside of the US-provided HIMARS range and may indicate that Ukrainian forces are using or have modified other weapons already in their possession to attack Russian ground lines of communication (GLOCs) on the Southern Axis.

Ukrainian forces damaged a bridge in the area of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant (HPP) in eastern Kherson Oblast. Kherson Oblast Administration Head Yaroslav Yanushkevych reported that Russian forces are unable to use the bridge.<sup>43</sup> Social media footage showed that the bridge has several holes and other signs of damage, but that some vehicles can pass through the affected area.<sup>44</sup> Ukrainian officials have previously identified the Kakhovka bridge as a key Russian GLOC in Kherson Oblast especially following the damage to the Antonovsky Bridge, east of Kherson City.<sup>45</sup> Russian forces are also continuing to undertake defensive measures to protect military equipment and GLOCs from Ukrainian strikes. Advisor to the Kherson Oblast Administration Serhiy Khlan added that Russian forces continued to hide their military equipment near the Kakhovka HPP

and the Kakhovskiy Channel.<sup>46</sup> Satellite imagery showed that Russian forces installed radar reflectors near the partially operating Darivka bridge, approximately 17km northeast of Kherson City.<sup>47</sup>

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

Russian military officials continued taking measures to compensate for personnel losses in Ukraine. The UK Ministry of Defense (MOD) reported on August 10 that Russian officials have “almost certainly” formed the 3rd Army Corps based in Mulino, Nizhny Novgorod. The UK MOD reported that Russian officials likely intend to compose the 3rd Army Corps out of newly formed volunteer battalions, confirming ISW’s August 7 assessment that the 3rd Army Corps is at least in part composed of volunteer battalions.<sup>48</sup> Oryol Oblast Governor Andrey Klychkov announced on August 10 that Oryol Oblast will form a new volunteer battalion to deploy to Donbas.<sup>49</sup> Klychkov stated that the battalion will accept anyone between the ages of 18-60 and that volunteers will receive 250,000 rubles (approximately \$4,065) when signing a three-month contract.<sup>50</sup> Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov stated that 9,000 Russian servicemen are prepared to deploy to Ukraine from Chechnya and that 10,000 reserves are “waiting in the wings.”<sup>51</sup>

Ukraine’s Center for Strategic Communications reported on August 10 that Russian forces are conducting an open advertising campaign for a reportedly newly formed military unit and sending targeted SMS text messages to recruit residents of occupied Mariupol. The report also stated that the Kremlin is doing “everything possible to avoid widespread conscription of ethnic Russians.”<sup>52</sup> The Mariupol City Council stated that Russian officials are not forming a new unit and are instead sending recruits directly to the front lines.<sup>53</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 officials are preparing for integration of soon-to-be annexed Ukrainian territories into the Russian Federation but will likely face bureaucratic disagreements and major resource constraints.

The governor of Russia’s Rostov Oblast, Vasily Golubev, said in an August 10 interview that Ukraine’s Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts should be considered part of a Donbas “macro-region” within the borders of Rostov Oblast and claimed that Rostov Oblast is considering possible areas of cooperation with the Donbas region including in trade, agriculture, industry, energy, metallurgy, and transportation.<sup>54</sup> Golubev’s claims that Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts will be folded into Rostov Oblast in some capacity suggest that Russian officials may not have decided yet how the Kremlin will integrate different parts of occupied Ukraine into Russia, since Russia’s proxies in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts expect some role in the governance of those regions. Rostov Oblast and the Russian proxy Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) clashed in May, as ISW reported, over who will control the Ukrainian city of Mariupol.<sup>55</sup> ISW had assessed on May 3 that “the Kremlin also likely needs to address internal disagreements on administrative boundaries and organization before formally annexing Ukrainian territory.” That assessment may be incorrect—a rushing Kremlin could choose to annex first and work out internal

administration later but would likely struggle to consolidate control over resistant local populations and businesses without a coherent organizational structure.

The head of the Russian proxy Luhansk People's Republic (LNR), Leonid Pasechnik, stated on August 9 that LNR authorities may choose to not rebuild the city of Popasna, where 20,000 people lived before the war, because the city is "almost completely destroyed."<sup>56</sup> Pasechnik's statement suggests that LNR leadership is already aware of the severe resource constraints that Russia and its proxies will face if they attempt to reconstruct damaged Ukrainian cities.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.politico.eu/article/ukraine-long-anticipate-southern-counteroffensive-begin-bang-crimea/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.cnn.com/europe/live-news/russia-ukraine-war-news-08-10-22/h\\_18a0e8ff80efcd540bf5ae02859f7c87;](https://www.cnn.com/europe/live-news/russia-ukraine-war-news-08-10-22/h_18a0e8ff80efcd540bf5ae02859f7c87;)

<https://twitter.com/JackDetsch/status/1557177718088892416?s=20&t=MFEclrhYzknrAjQ8lOVING>

<sup>3</sup> <https://t.me/spravdi/15075>; <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/ukraine-russian-warplanes-destroyed-crimea-blasts-88187762>;

<https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/10/world/ukraine-russia-news-war/explosions-at-a-base-in-crimea-destroyed-about-a-dozen-russian-jets-satellite-photos-indicate?smid=url-share>;

<sup>4</sup> [%C2%A0https://t.me/izvestia/99588](https://t.me/rian_ru/173909)

<sup>5</sup> <https://t.me/rybar/36954>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/10/world/ukraine-russia-news-war/explosions-at-a-base-in-crimea-destroyed-about-a-dozen-russian-jets-satellite-photos-indicate?smid=url-share>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/10/ukraine-russia-crimea-beach-blast/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://t.me/khersonskaODA/791>; <https://t.me/spravdi/15084>

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-july-19>;

<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-july-25>;

<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-july-19>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-3>;

<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-7>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/russian-annexation-occupied-ukraine-putin%E2%80%99s-unacceptable-%E2%80%9C-ramp%E2%80%9D>

<sup>13</sup> <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/05/19/russia-ukraine-war-west-military-aid/>;

<sup>14</sup> <https://t.me/stranaua/57040>; <https://t.me/stranaua/56902>; <https://www.rbc.ua/ukr/news/glava-energoatoma-petr-kotin-okkupanty-podklyuchat-1660112098.html>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraines-nuclear-chief-warns-very-high-risks-occupied-power-plant-2022-08-09/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-uzbekistan-volunteers-warning-ukraine-war/31981901.html>; [https://amp.tsargrad.tv/news/za-pomoshh-rossii-v-specoperacii-10-let-tjurmy-uzbekistan-na-kornju-obrubil-poryv-dobrovolcev\\_602115/nsk](https://amp.tsargrad.tv/news/za-pomoshh-rossii-v-specoperacii-10-let-tjurmy-uzbekistan-na-kornju-obrubil-poryv-dobrovolcev_602115/nsk); <http://www.uzembassy.ru/news/17674?language=uz>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-9>

<sup>18</sup> <https://amp.ura.news/news/1052577256>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/09/politics/russia-training-drones-iran/index.html>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-9>

<sup>21</sup> <https://twitter.com/NicholasACarl/status/1552683083739979873?s=20&t=5jtZs3LbImQg-4kzx10zQg>

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<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0d85hBZ31ttK7gmGnvKzpeFCmWpaZUafk8cvkf dDS4mUHbk5u8J5ta3DcyWLSpeRl>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02dC82K4hcep21x3xqxt7k7iAu7oQxJkasqyKD DtsuD2E5hb3Hh6Af5D3NdxzftKdl>



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<sup>26</sup> [https://t.me/nm\\_dnr/8725](https://t.me/nm_dnr/8725); <https://t.me/readovkanews/40000>

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<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0d85hBZ31ttK7gmGnvKzpeFCmWpaZUafk8cvkf dDS4mUHbk5u8J5ta3DcyWLScpeRl>;

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<sup>28</sup> <https://t.me/rybar/36973>; <https://t.me/stranaua/56952> ;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0d85hBZ31ttK7gmGnvKzpeFCmWpaZUafk8cvkf dDS4mUHbk5u8J5ta3DcyWLScpeRl>;

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<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0d85hBZ31ttK7gmGnvKzpeFCmWpaZUafk8cvkf dDS4mUHbk5u8J5ta3DcyWLScpeRl>;

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<sup>30</sup> <https://t.me/rybar/36955>

<sup>31</sup> <https://twitter.com/rollowastaken/status/1557349193525649408>; [https://t.me/mod\\_russia/18402](https://t.me/mod_russia/18402);  
<https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonoV/16499>; <https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonoV/16505>;  
<https://t.me/MOOVeche/1083>

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<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0d85hBZ31ttK7gmGnvKzpeFCmWpaZUafk8cvkf dDS4mUHbk5u8J5ta3DcyWLScpeRl>;

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