

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, August 26

Karolina Hird, Grace Mappes, Angela Howard, George Barros, and Mason Clark
August 26, 6:45pm 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.

Russian forces did not make any claimed or assessed territorial gains in Ukraine on August 26, 2022, for the first time since August 18, 2022.¹ However, Russian forces still conducted limited and unsuccessful ground attacks on the Eastern Axis on August 26.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) stated that unspecified actors (but almost certainly Russian forces) reconnected part of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) to the Ukrainian power grid on August 26.² Ukrainian nuclear operating enterprise Energoatom stated that unspecified actors reconnected one of the power units to the ZNPP and are working to add capacity to the ZNPP's operations.³ Russian forces remain in full control of the plant, though it is unclear why they would have reconnected the power unit.

Russian occupation authorities remain unlikely to successfully conduct sham referenda to annex Ukrainian territory into the Russian Federation by early September, despite reports of advancing preparations for referenda. Spokesperson for Ukraine's Main Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Vadym Skibitsky stated on August 26 that Russian authorities have completed administrative preparations for referenda and created election headquarters, drawn up voter lists, and created election commissions, which Skibitsky stated indicates that the preparatory process for referenda is "almost complete."⁴ Russian-backed occupation authorities in Zaporizhzhia Oblast announced that they have already audited polling stations, analyzed voter lists, and selected candidates for work in voter precincts and territorial election commissions.⁵

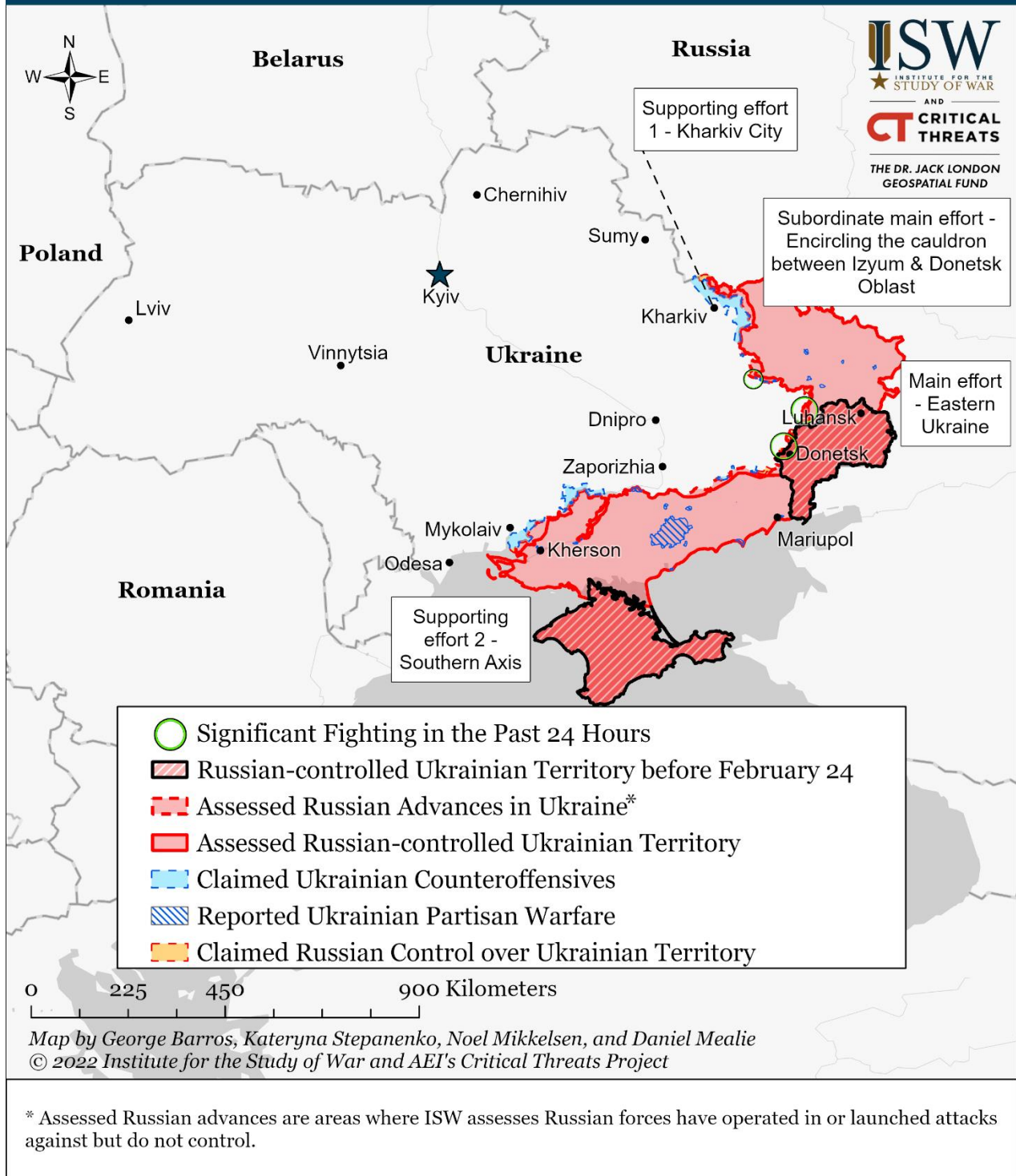
However, Russian occupation authorities are unlikely to be able to carry out referenda as they intend (with cooperation from local collaborators) by the purported September 11 deadline due to continued frictions within occupation administrations and ongoing partisan attacks. The Ukrainian advisor to the head of Kherson Oblast, Serhiy Khlan, stated on August 26 that the Kherson occupation administration is struggling to find people to head administrative units in charge of referendum preparations, likely due to a lack of willing locals and low levels of trust in Ukrainian collaborators.⁶ Khlan notably stated that Russian President Vladimir Putin may have ordered occupation administrators to avoid importing Russian administrators to fill these roles in order to make the referendum process appear like a grassroots initiative with local support.⁷ Ukrainian sources have previously reported that Ukrainian resistance and increasing partisan attacks are inhibiting preparations for the referendum.⁸ While Russian authorities could hypothetically forcibly annex Ukrainian territories on an arbitrary date, they are unlikely to do so without holding staged referenda. All observed indicators suggest that Russian authorities seek to create a veneer of local support and participation before conducting the referenda to frame them as widely supported initiatives but face ongoing setbacks that will delay any annexation effort.

Key Takeaways

- **The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) stated that elements of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) reconnected to the Ukrainian power grid on August 26.**

- **Russian occupation authorities remain unlikely to successfully conduct sham referenda to annex Ukrainian territory into the Russian Federation by early September, despite reports of advancing preparations for referenda.**
- **Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks southwest of Izyum, northeast and south of Bakhmut, and on the northwestern outskirts of Donetsk City.**
- **Ukrainian forces continued targeting Russian ground lines of communication (GLOCS) and military infrastructure in Kherson Oblast which support operations on the west bank of the Dnipro River.**
- **Russian federal subjects (regions) continued additional recruitment drives for volunteer battalions, which continue to deploy to Ukraine.**
- **Ukrainian partisans and internal division continue to pose threats to Russian control of occupied territories.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of August 26, 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 and specifically on combat in Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn these Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict, Geneva Conventions, and humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

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

Main Effort—Eastern Ukraine

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

Russian forces conducted a limited ground attack southwest of Izyum on August 26. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian troops attacked toward Karnaukhivka, 25km southwest of Izyum.⁹ ISW has previously reported that limited Russian ground attacks southwest of Izyum are likely spoiling attacks to disrupt Ukrainian forces, rather than attacks intended to take territory along an axis of advance.¹⁰ Russian forces continued artillery strikes along the Izyum-Slovyansk line near the Kharkiv-Donetsk Oblast border and additionally shelled a technical college in Slovyansk.¹¹

Russian forces did not conduct any confirmed ground attacks toward Siversk on August 26 and fired on Siversk and surrounding settlements.¹²

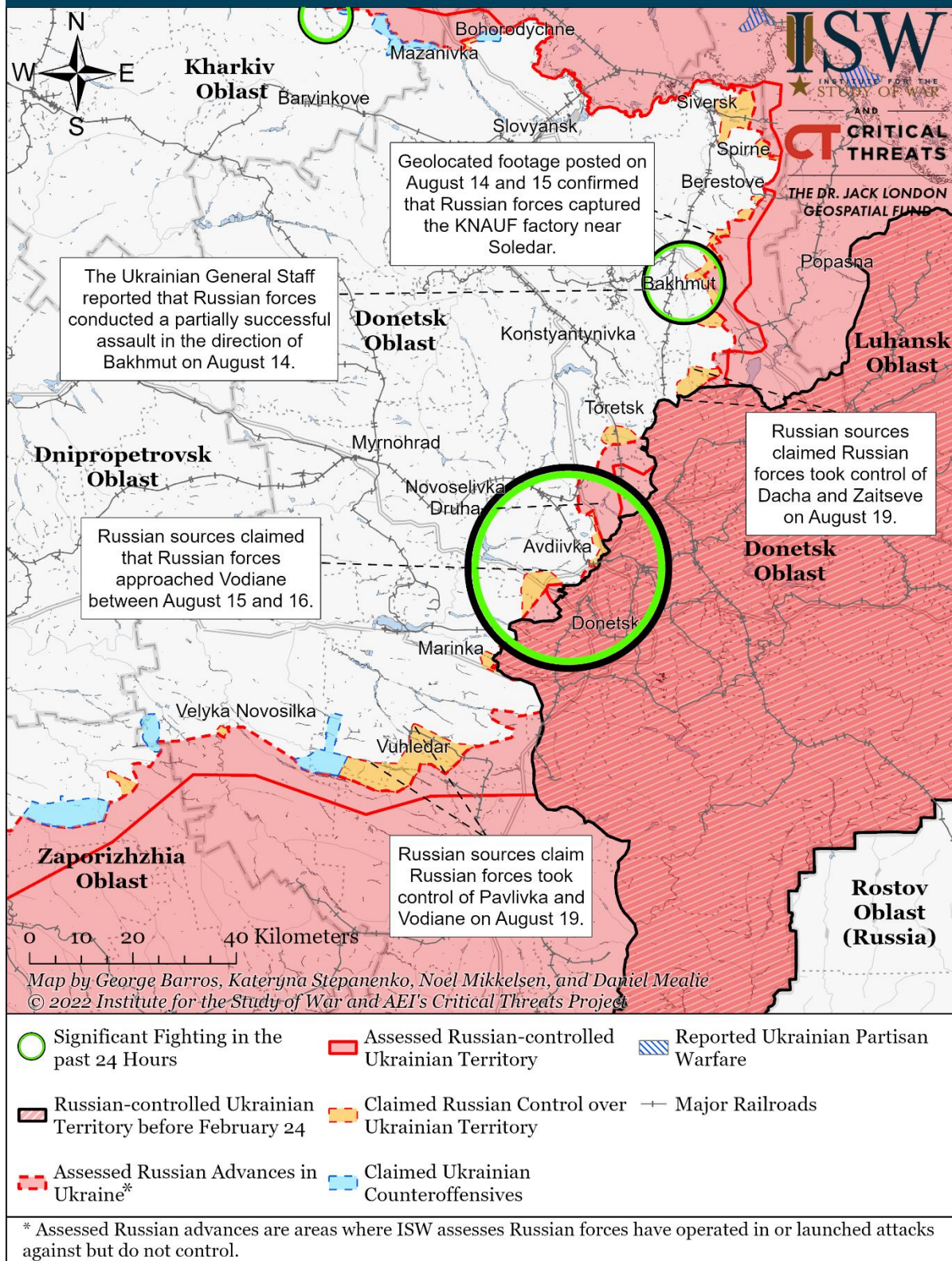
Russian forces continued ground attacks northeast and south of Bakhmut on August 26. The Ukrainian General Staff stated that Russian troops attacked near Soledar and Bakhmutsk, both within 10km northeast of Bakhmut.¹³ Russian sources claimed that Russian and proxy troops, along with Wagner Group mercenaries, are fighting in Soledar and along the eastern approaches to Bakhmut.¹⁴ The Ukrainian General Staff also reported that Russian troops attempted to advance from Kodema, about 13km southeast of Bakhmut.¹⁵

Russian forces conducted a limited ground attack on the northwestern outskirts of Donetsk City on August 26. The Ukrainian General Staff stated that Russian troops attempted to improve their tactical position and advance toward Nevelske, less than 10km from the northwestern outskirts of Donetsk City and directly adjacent to Russian-occupied Pisky.¹⁶ Russian forces also continued artillery strikes against Ukrainian positions along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City frontline.¹⁷

Russian forces did not conduct any confirmed ground attacks southwest of Donetsk City on August 26. Russian sources indicated that Russian and proxy troops are continuing to prioritize offensive operations in the Vuhledar area, about 35km southwest of Donetsk City.¹⁸ The Ukrainian General Staff

reported that Russian forces conducted air and artillery strikes southwest of Donetsk City toward the Zaporizhia-Donetsk Oblast border.¹⁹

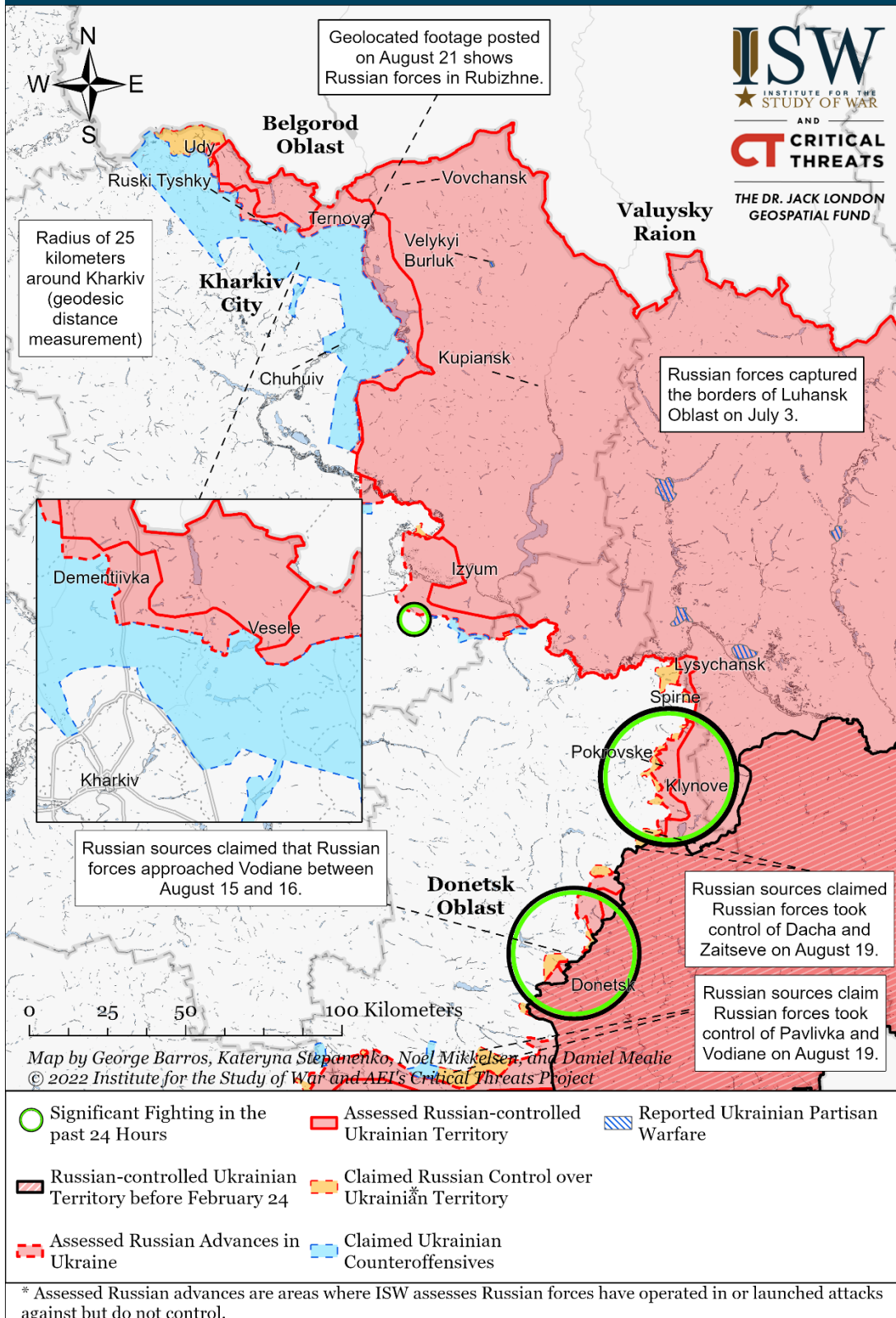
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of August 26, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



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 did not conduct any confirmed ground attacks in northeastern Kharkiv Oblast on August 26. Ukrainian and Russian sources reported that Russian troops continued offensive operations to contest positions north of Kharkiv City and conducted air and artillery strikes along the line of contact.²⁰

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of August 26, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



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

Russian forces did not conduct any confirmed ground assaults in Zaporizhia Oblast on August 26. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted airstrikes against Hulyaipole and Olhivske, roughly 20km northeast of Hulyaipole.²¹ Russian forces continued heavy shelling along the line of contact, including near Hulyaipole and Huliaipilske on the T0814 highway and Orikhiv and Mala Tokmachka on the T0815 highway.²²

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued to shell the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) on August 26. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) accused Ukrainian forces of shelling the ZNPP's oxygen-nitrogen station and an area of special building No. 1 on August 25-26.²³ Ukrainian sources separately reported that Russian forces struck Nikopol, Marhanets, and Chervonohryhorivka, all on the opposite bank of the Dnipro River from Enerhodar.²⁴

Russian forces did not conduct any confirmed ground assaults in Kherson or Mykolaiv Oblasts on August 26. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted airstrikes on unspecified infrastructure facilities near Oleksandrivka (west Kherson Oblast), Lozove (near the Ukrainian bridgehead over the Inhulets River), and Olhyne (south of Kryvyi Rih on the T2207 highway).²⁵ Ukraine's Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Vladyslav Nazarov reported that Russian forces struck the Mykolaivskiy district with S-300 anti-air systems.²⁶ Russian forces continued shelling along the line of contact.²⁷

Ukrainian forces continued to target Russian ground lines of communication (GLOCS) and military infrastructure in Kherson Oblast which support Russian operations on the right bank of the Dnipro River. Ukrainian forces again struck the Antonivsky road bridge near Kherson City on August 26, likely disrupting Russian efforts to repair the bridge.²⁸ Footage from August 25 shows Russian forces operating pontoon bridges adjacent to the road bridge. ²⁹ Satellite imagery from August 23 and August 25 shows significant damage to the Antonivsky road bridge from Ukrainian strikes.³⁰ Ukrainian forces also struck the Darivka road bridge over the Inhulets River, and Nazarov stated that the strikes rendered the bridge inoperable.³¹ Nazarov also reported that Ukrainian forces targeted Russian force concentrations, ammunition depots, and equipment stores in Kherson Oblast, including command and control elements of the Russian 98th Airborne Division in Dudchany, Kherson Oblast.³² Ukrainian forces conducted airstrikes against Russian air defense infrastructure in Novovoskresenske, northern Kherson Oblast, and Kherson City on August 25.³³

Russian forces continued to redeploy military equipment from Crimea to Russia, likely in response to ongoing Ukrainian strikes against Russian rear areas in Crimea. *Business Insider* reported on August 26 that Russian forces transferred six Su-35S fighter jets and four MiG-31BM interceptors from Crimea to mainland Russia, most likely due to the threat of Ukrainian strikes.³⁴ A Russian milblogger agreed with the *Business Insider* report and claimed that Russian forces are strengthening air defenses in Crimea to counter Ukrainian strikes as current Russian air defenses are ineffective against small Ukrainian unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).³⁵

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of August 26, 2022, 3:00 PM ET

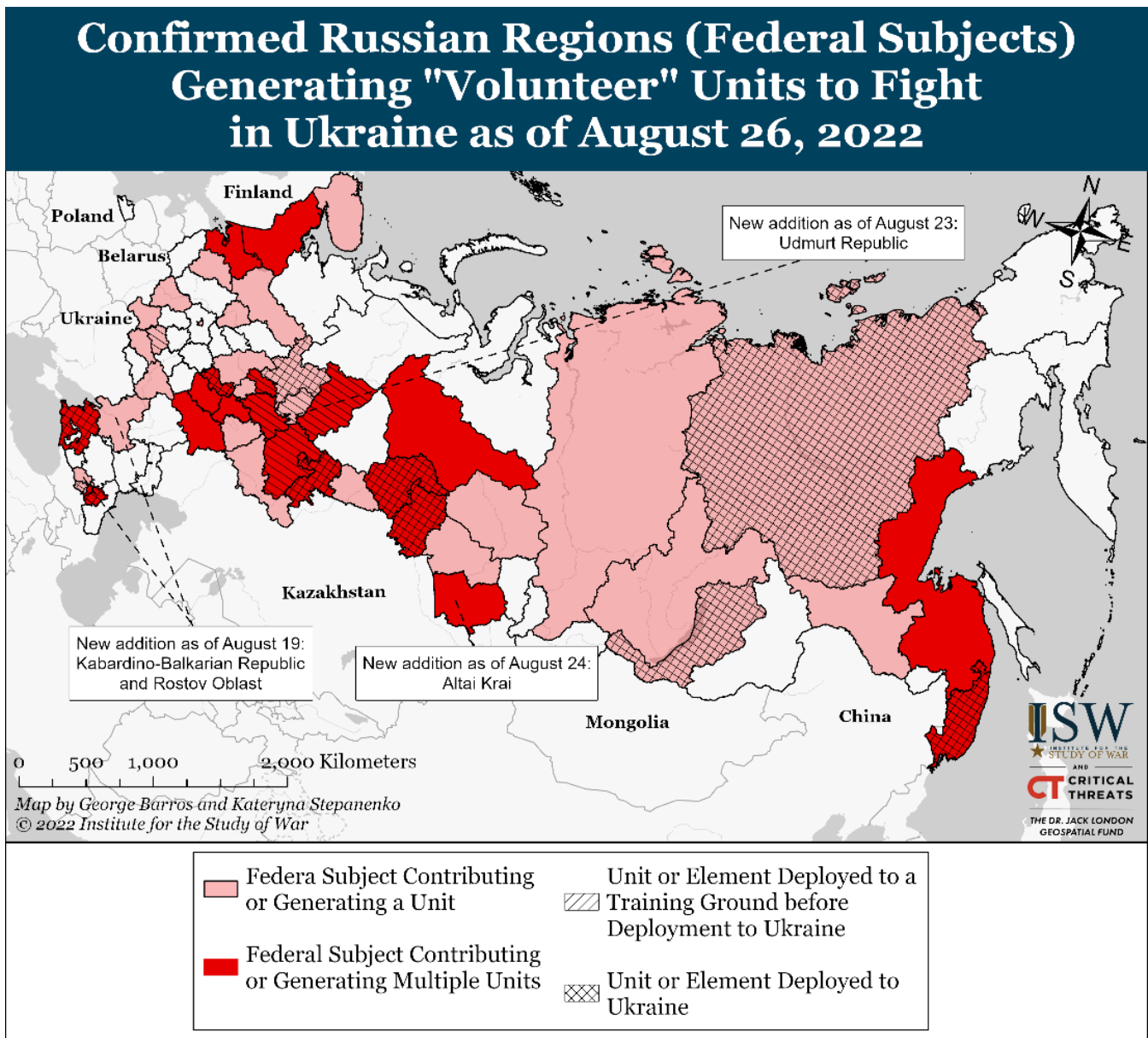


* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

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

Russian federal subjects (regions) are launching additional recruitment drives for volunteer battalions, which continue to deploy to Ukraine. Local Primorye outlet *Primorskaya Gazeta* reported on August 26 that Prymorskyi Krai’s 240-man-strong “Tigr” volunteer battalion (which is part of the Russian 155th Separate Naval infantry Brigade) participated in its first combat operation in an unspecified location in Ukraine.³⁶ ISW first reported on the “Tigr” Battalion on July 16.³⁷ Russian media also reported that Bashkortostan’s “Shaimuratov” and “Dostavalov” volunteer battalions are completing their training and will deploy to Ukraine at an unspecified date in the near future.³⁸ Local Russian media also reported that a few dozen Russian volunteers of Tyumen Oblast’s “Tobol” and “Tayga” battalions deployed to training grounds for combat training ahead of deploying to Ukraine.³⁹ Russian sources also confirmed the first combat losses among Russian prisoners who recently joined the Wagner Group.⁴⁰



Russian federal subjects continue to increase offered salaries for volunteer fighters. Nenets Autonomous Okrug Governor Yuri Bezdudny announced on August 26 that the Nenets Autonomous

Okrug tripled its one-time enlistment payment from 100,000 (\$1,642) rubles to 300,000 rubles (\$4,928) for personnel who signed service contracts with the Russian Ministry of Defense.⁴¹ Chuvash Republic Governor Oleg Nikolayev announced on August 26 that the Chuvash Republic will increase one-time payments to volunteer fighters of the “Atal” Battalion from 200,000 rubles (\$3,285) to 300,000 rubles (\$4,928).⁴²

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)

Ukrainian partisans continued to target occupation authorities and disrupt Russian preparations for annexation referenda. Russian and Ukrainian sources stated on August 26 that unidentified Ukrainian partisans conducted an improvised explosive device (IED) attack against Alexander Kolesnikov, the Deputy Police Chief of occupied Berdyansk, Zaporizhia Oblast.⁴³ Ukrainian Mayor of Melitopol Ivan Fedorov also stated that Ukrainian partisans in Melitopol, Kherson Oblast damaged a referendum headquarters in Melitopol.⁴⁴ The targeting of collaborators by partisan groups is likely impeding Russian efforts to establish stable governing systems and pursue formal referendums in occupied territories.

Internal discord is likely also contributing to the instability of occupation regimes. The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported that Russian-appointed Mayor of Mariupol Konstantin Ivashchenko left Mariupol on August 26 following an assassination attempt on August 25.⁴⁵ Ukrainian Advisor to the Mayor of Mariupol Petro Andryushchenko stated that Russian Duma Deputy Dmytro Sablin and Russian-backed former Mariupol City Council Member Petro Ivanov ordered Ivashchenko’s assassination. Andryushchenko further reported that Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) Head Denis Pushilin appointed DNR authorities to investigate the assassination attempt rather than turning the case over to Russian authorities, as per previous cases in Russian-occupied territories.⁴⁶ ISW cannot independently confirm Andryushchenko’s statements at this time. However, if proven true, a rift between Russian and DNR authorities would suggest Russia will face increasing difficulty coordinating governance and responses to Ukrainian threats in occupied territories.

Russian and proxy authorities continue efforts to facilitate the social integration of occupied areas using inconsistent applications of incentives and threats. Education systems remain a prime target. Parents who refuse to send their children to Russian schools in occupied territories face fines ranging from 40,000 to 150,000 rubles (\$663-\$2,487), the revocation of their parental rights, the confiscation of their property, and police interference, depending on their location.⁴⁷ Parents who choose to send their children to Russian schools in occupied territories may receive a one-time 10,000-ruble (\$165) payment, as ISW has previously reported.⁴⁸

The Yale School of Public Health’s Humanitarian Research Lab published a report locating at least 21 confirmed filtration facilities functioning in Donetsk Oblast alone on August 25.⁴⁹ The filtration facilities reportedly each serve one of four purposes: registration, holding, secondary interrogation, or detention of Ukrainian civilians. The Humanitarian Research Lab asserted that facility conditions include overcrowding, poor sanitation, insufficient food and water provision, denial of medical care, occasional use of electric shocks, and isolation tactics that “can constitute cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment under international humanitarian and human rights law.”⁵⁰

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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¹ <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-18>

² <https://t.me/spravdi/15999>; <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/pressreleases/update-94-iaea-director-general-statement-on-situation-in-ukraine>

³ https://t.me/energoatom_ua/9208; <https://t.me/spravdi/16028>; <https://twitter.com/RubrykaEng/status/1562879041140432897>; <https://t.me/spravdi/15999>; <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/pressreleases/update-94-iaea-director-general-statement-on-situation-in-ukraine>

⁴ <https://www.rbc-dot-ua/ukr/news/smogut-okkupanty-provesti-referendum-otvet-1661515303.html>

⁵ <https://t.me/vrogov/4410>; <https://t.me/stranaua/60073>

⁶ https://youtu.be/9u_NBCnrJ-M; <https://t.me/stranaua/56136>

⁷ https://youtu.be/9u_NBCnrJ-M

⁸ <https://sprotyv-dot-mod.gov.ua/2022/08/22/okupanty-ne-mozhut-normalno-pidgotuvatysya-do-psevdoreferendumu-na-hersonshhyni/>; <https://armyinform-dot-com.ua/2022/08/22/hersonshhyna-bojkotuye-psevdoreferendum/>; https://t.me/ivan_fedorov_melitopol/396; https://t.me/ivan_fedorov_melitopol/394

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¹⁰ <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-21>

¹¹ <https://t.me/stranaua/60002>; <https://t.me/stranaua/60080>; <https://t.me/stranaua/59980>;

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¹⁴ <https://t.me/rybar/37743>; <https://t.me/rybar/37743>; <https://t.me/milchronicles/1050>;
<https://twitter.com/RALee85/status/1562940004883902466>

¹⁵

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¹⁶

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0wP6qpKdYy7NU6tpacEBTyCsVMVcp5tW5jnKWGkxCDA76e7N69PSHkrrpCnXWiMkyl>

¹⁷ <https://t.me/milchronicles/1052>; <https://twitter.com/RALee85/status/1562900670788710405>; <https://t.me/izvestia/101447>;
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¹⁸ <https://t.me/rybar/37743>

¹⁹

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0wP6qpKdYy7NU6tpacEBTyCsVMVcp5tW5jnKWGkxCDA76e7N69PSHkrrpCnXWiMkyl>;

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²⁰ <https://t.me/synegubov/3989>; <https://t.me/rybar/37755>;
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²³ https://t.me/mod_russia/19135; https://t.me/boris_rozhin/61424; <https://t.me/stranaua/60093>;

<https://t.me/readovkanews/40796>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/40812>

²⁴ https://t.me/Yevtushenko_E/639; https://t.me/Yevtushenko_E/641 <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=5396571913760235>;

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²⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=5396571913760235>

²⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=5396571913760235>;
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²⁸ <https://twitter.com/Shtirlitz53/status/1563122861283606530>; <https://twitter.com/Shtirlitz53/status/1563125782331138048>;
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²⁹ https://t.me/smotri_media/21406; <https://twitter.com/RALee85/status/1562940965853151232>;
https://twitter.com/666_mancer/status/1563039883777949697; <https://t.me/stranaua/60034>

³⁰ <https://twitter.com/EliotHiggins/status/1563118623031705601>

³¹ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=5396571913760235>

³² <https://www.facebook.com/okPivden/videos/3350376825208377/>; <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=5396571913760235>;
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