

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

Kateryna Stepanenko, George Barros, Grace Mappes, and Frederick W. Kagan
July 3, 7:45 pm ET

Click [here](#) to see ISW's interactive map of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

Russian forces have likely secured the Luhansk Oblast border, although pockets of Ukrainian resistance may remain in and around Lysychansk. Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu announced that Russian forces have captured Luhansk Oblast on July 3, after seizing Lysychansk and settlements on the Luhansk Oblast administrative border.¹ The Ukrainian General Staff also announced that Ukrainian forces withdrew from Lysychansk to avoid personnel losses.² Russian forces have likely not fully cleared Lysychansk and Luhansk Oblast as of July 3, despite Shoigu's announcement. The Russian Defense Ministry stated that Russian forces are still fighting within Lysychansk to defeat encircled Ukrainian forces, but the Ukrainian withdrawal means that Russian forces will almost certainly complete their clearing operations relatively quickly.³

Russian forces will likely next advance on Siversk, though they could launch more significant attacks on Bakhmut or Slovyansk instead or at the same time. Ukrainian forces will likely continue their fighting withdrawal toward the E40 highway that runs from Slovyansk through Bakhmut toward Debaltseve. It is unclear whether they will choose to defend around Siversk at this time.

Two very senior Russian commanders are reportedly responsible for the tactical activities around Lysychansk. Commander of the Central Military District Colonel General Aleksandr Lapin and Commander of the Russian Aerospace Forces Army General Sergey Suvorikin (who also commands Russia's "southern" group of troops in Ukraine) have been responsible for securing Lysychansk and the area to the west of it respectively.⁴ The involvement of two such senior officers in the same undertaking in a small part of the front is remarkable and likely indicates the significance that Russian President Vladimir Putin has attributed to securing Lysychansk and the Luhansk Oblast border as well as his lack of confidence in more junior officers to do the job.

Ukrainian forces likely used US-provided HIMARS rocket artillery systems to strike a Russian ammunition depot at the Melitopol airfield on July 3. Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov reported that Ukrainian forces launched two strikes on one of the four Russian depots in Melitopol.⁵ Russian Telegram channel Rybar released footage of a large cloud of smoke over the city, and Russian-appointed Melitopol Governor Yevhen Balytskyi falsely claimed that Ukrainian forces aimed to strike residential buildings, but instead hit areas around the airfield.⁶

The Kremlin likely seeks to expand Russian state control over private Russian companies that support elements of Russia's military-industrial base. The Ukrainian Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported on July 3 that the Russian government's inability to pay Russian firms supporting Russia's war in Ukraine is degrading Russia's ability to repair damaged vehicles. The GUR reported that the directors of Russian military vehicle repair centers are not accepting new Russian equipment for repair because the Russian military has not paid these centers for previous work.⁷ Recently proposed Russian legislation suggests that Kremlin leadership shares GUR's assessment. Russian legislators in the Russian State Duma submitted a bill on June 30 that would empower the Kremlin to introduce "special measures in the economic sphere" enabling the Russian government to force private Russian companies to provide supplies for Russian military operations.⁸ The bill prohibits Russian businesses from refusing to fulfill Russian government procurement orders connected to Russian military operations.

Key Takeaways

- **Russian forces seized the remaining territory between Lysychansk and Luhansk Oblast's administrative borders on July 3.**
- **Russian forces launched assaults northeast of Bakhmut and north of Slovyansk but did not secure new territorial gains.**
- **Russian forces conducted extensive artillery attacks in the western part of the Southern Axis likely to disrupt Ukrainian counteroffensives.**
- **The Kremlin continued to set conditions for the potential Russian annexation of proxy republics.**
- **Ukrainian partisans reportedly derailed a Russian armored train carrying ammunition near Melitopol on July 2.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of July 3, 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.

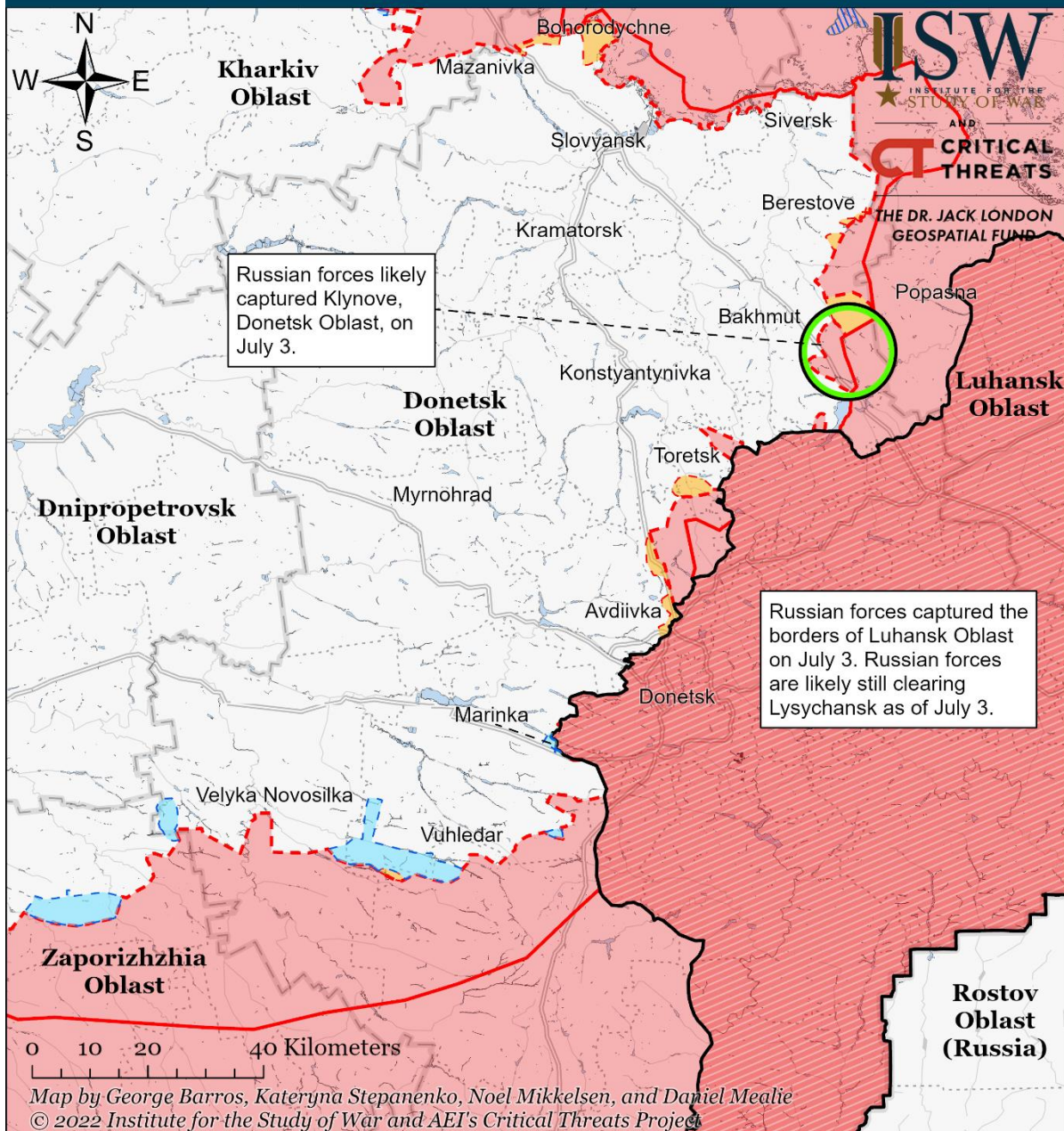
- Main Effort—Eastern Ukraine (comprised of one subordinate and three supporting efforts);
- Subordinate Main Effort—Encirclement of Ukrainian troops in the cauldron between Izyum and Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts
- Supporting Effort 1—Kharkiv City
- Supporting Effort 2—Southern Axis
- Mobilization and 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 captured Luhansk Oblast’s administrative borders on July 3 following the Ukrainian withdrawal from Lysychansk and settlements in its vicinity. Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu claimed that Russian forces seized Lysychansk, Bilohorivka, Novodruzhenk, and Maloryazantseve on July 2, capturing the remaining salient around Lysychansk along the Luhansk Oblast boundary.⁹ The Russian Defense Ministry added that Russian forces are still fighting encircled Ukrainian forces within Lysychansk as of July 3.¹⁰ The Ukrainian General Staff confirmed that Ukrainian forces deliberately withdrew from Lysychansk, citing a lack of equipment and concern over the loss of life.¹¹ Geolocated footage showed Russian forces casually walking around Bilohorivka on July 3, which further suggests that Ukrainian forces withdrew from settlements on the Luhansk Oblast border just west of Lysychansk.¹² The Ukrainian General Staff also confirmed that Russian forces captured Zolotarivka and are securing positions around Verkhokamyanka, both just south of Bilohorivka.¹³

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

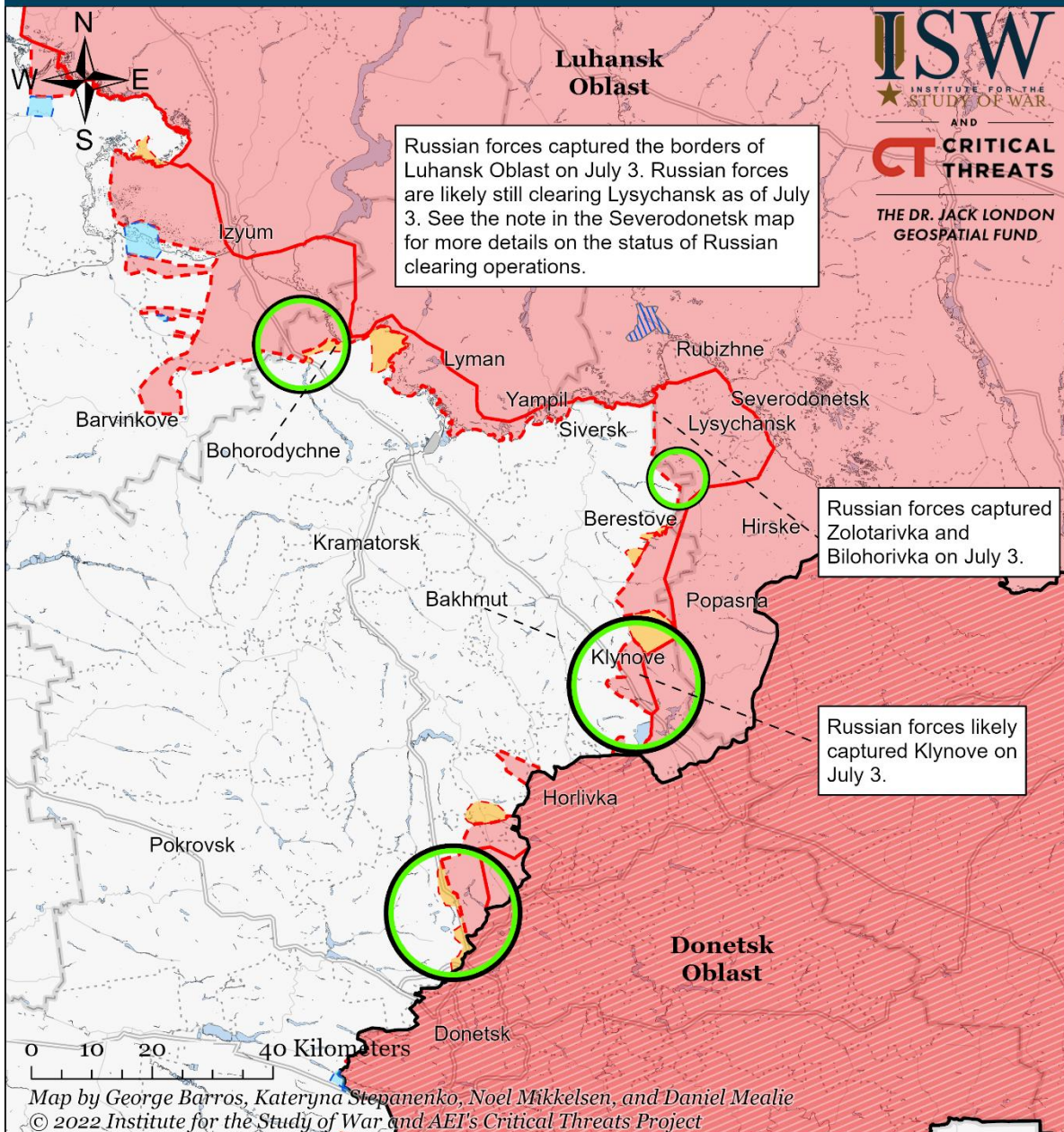


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Ukrainian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

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

Russian forces launched assaults northeast of Bakhmut in an effort to capture the remaining settlements along the Luhansk Oblast administrative borders. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces launched unsuccessful assaults from Nyrokove on Berestove, indicating that Russian forces established control over Nyrkove on the Luhansk Oblast border.¹⁴ Russian forces also reportedly conducted reconnaissance-in-force operations in the Vasylivka-Berestove direction and attempted unsuccessful offensive operations west of Mykolaivka and Vovchovarivka.¹⁵ Russian Telegram channel Rybar posted footage reportedly captured by Wagner Group units in Klynove (approximately 12km southeast of Bakhmut) that would indicate that Russian forces are attempting to secure positions along the E40 Slovyansk-Bakhmut highway, although ISW is unable to verify the footage.¹⁶

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk as of July 3, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



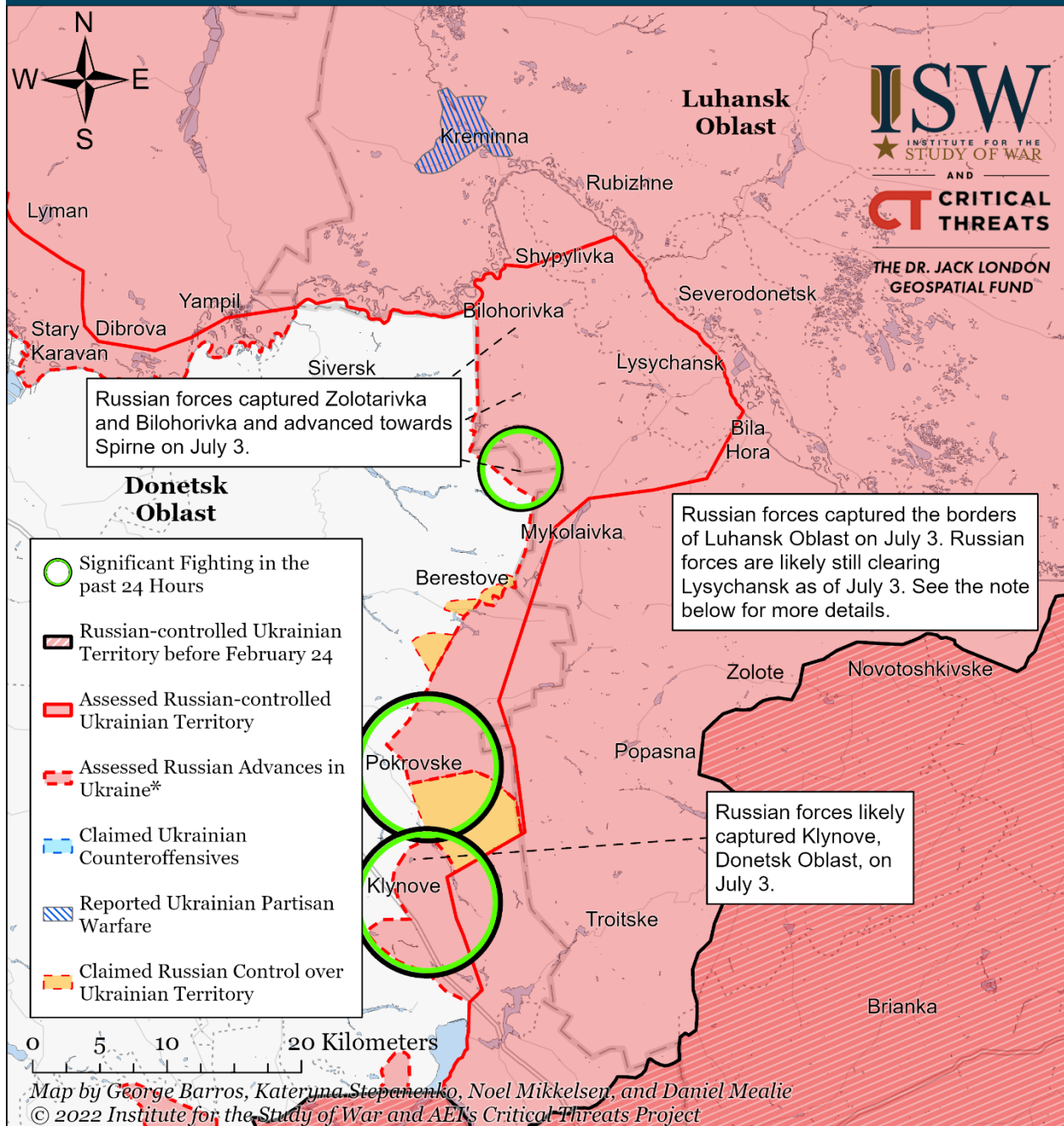
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

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

Russian forces attacked settlements north of Slovyansk but did not secure new territorial gains on July 3. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults near Mazanivka and on Dolyna from Pasivka (northeast of the E40).¹⁷ The Ukrainian General Staff noted that Russian forces are using unspecified electronic warfare systems in the areas north of Slovyansk.¹⁸ Pro-Russian military expert Boris Rozhin claimed that Russian forces are also engaged in positional battles in Velyka Komyshuvakha and Kurlka, southwest of Izyum, which would suggest that Russian forces are attempting to repel Ukrainian counterattacks in the area, although ISW is unable to verify this assertion.¹⁹ Slovyansk Mayor Vadym Lyakh and Russian sources reported that Russian forces are heavily shelling Slovyansk.²⁰

Russian forces are attempting to improve their tactical positions around Avdiivka, and are continuing to shell and launch airstrikes on Ukrainian positions in the area.²¹ Rozhin claimed that Russian forces are fighting near the N20 Avdiivka-Konstantynivka highway, and the Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces are trying to improve tactical positions around Spartak.²²

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Severodoneck as of July 3, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



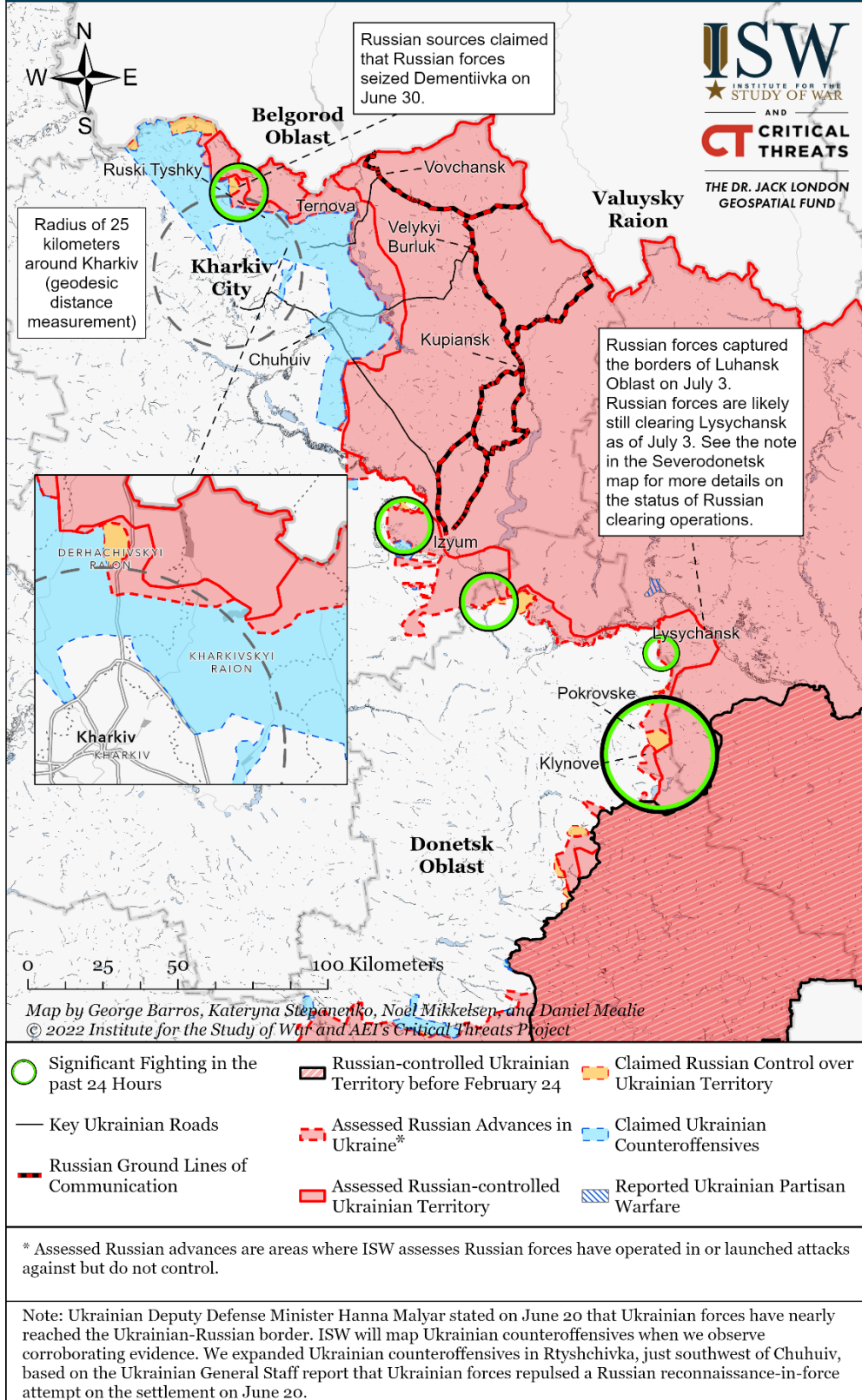
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: Russian forces captured the borders of Luhansk Oblast on July 3. Russian forces likely have not fully cleared Lysychansk as of July 3, however. The Ukrainian General Staff stated on July 3 that Russian forces in Lysychansk are concentrating their main efforts on securing positions in Lysychansk and Verkhnokamyanka. The Russian Ministry of Defense Stated on July 3 that Russian forces are still fighting within Lysychansk itself to defeat encircled Ukrainian troops. Russian milblogger Rybar claimed that Russian forces have not finished the clearing of the Lysychansk cauldron as of the evening of July 3 despite the Russian Ministry of Defense's statement of "liberating" all of Luhansk. Rybar claimed that the battles ended in Bila Hora, but there are pockets of resistance in Lysychansk. Russian milbloggers Poddubnyi and Military Chronicle stated on July 2 that Russian forces will be clearing Lysychansk for several days.

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 make any territorial gains northwest of Kharkiv City on July 3. Ukrainian sources reported that Ukrainian forces repelled a Russian attack on Prudyanka along the T2117 highway and that Russian forces northwest of Kharkiv City otherwise focused on maintaining their current positions.²³ Russian forces continued shelling civilian and military infrastructure facilities in Kharkiv City and the surrounding settlements, especially along the E105 and T2117 highways leading to Kharkiv City.²⁴

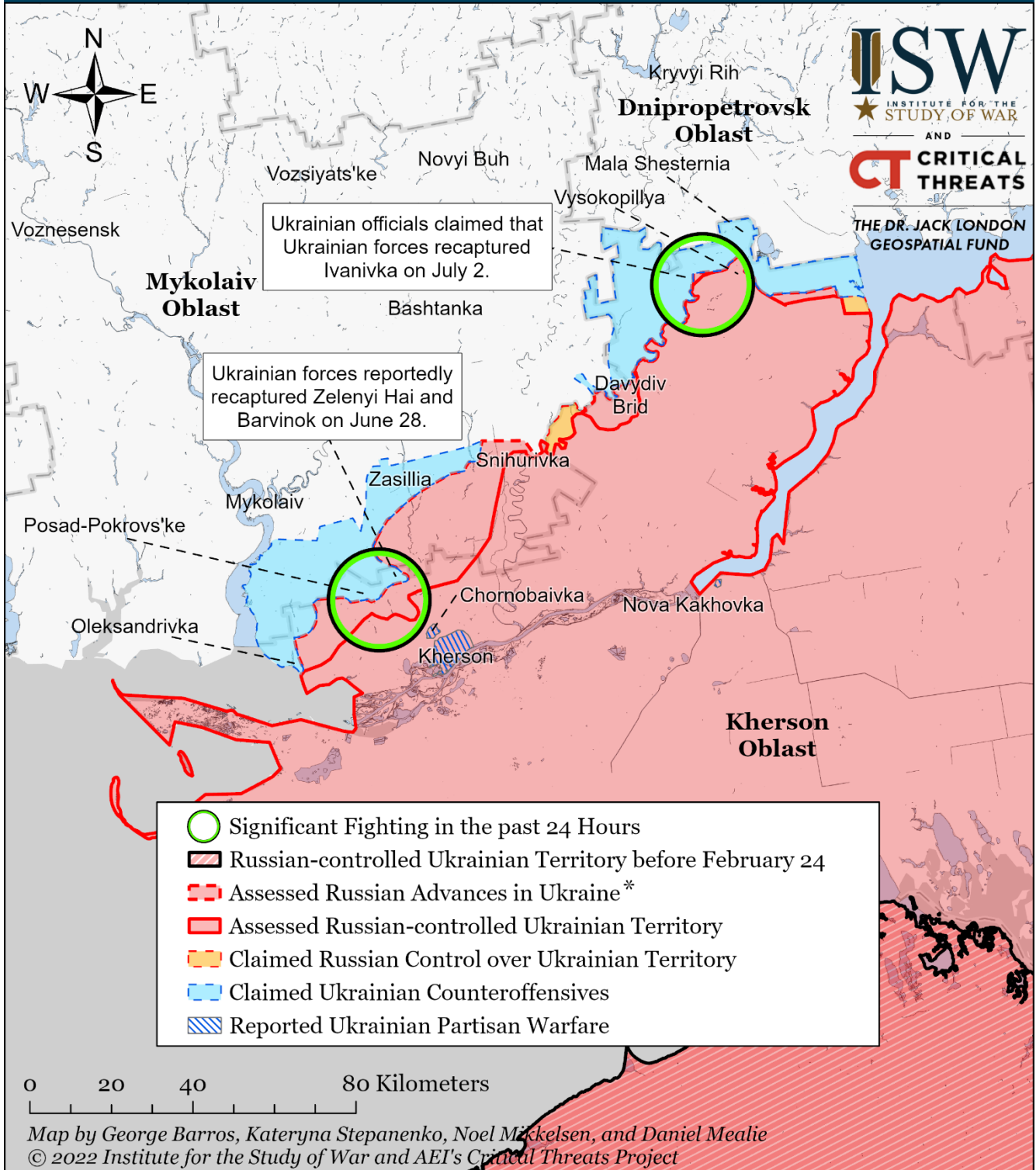
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of July 3, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



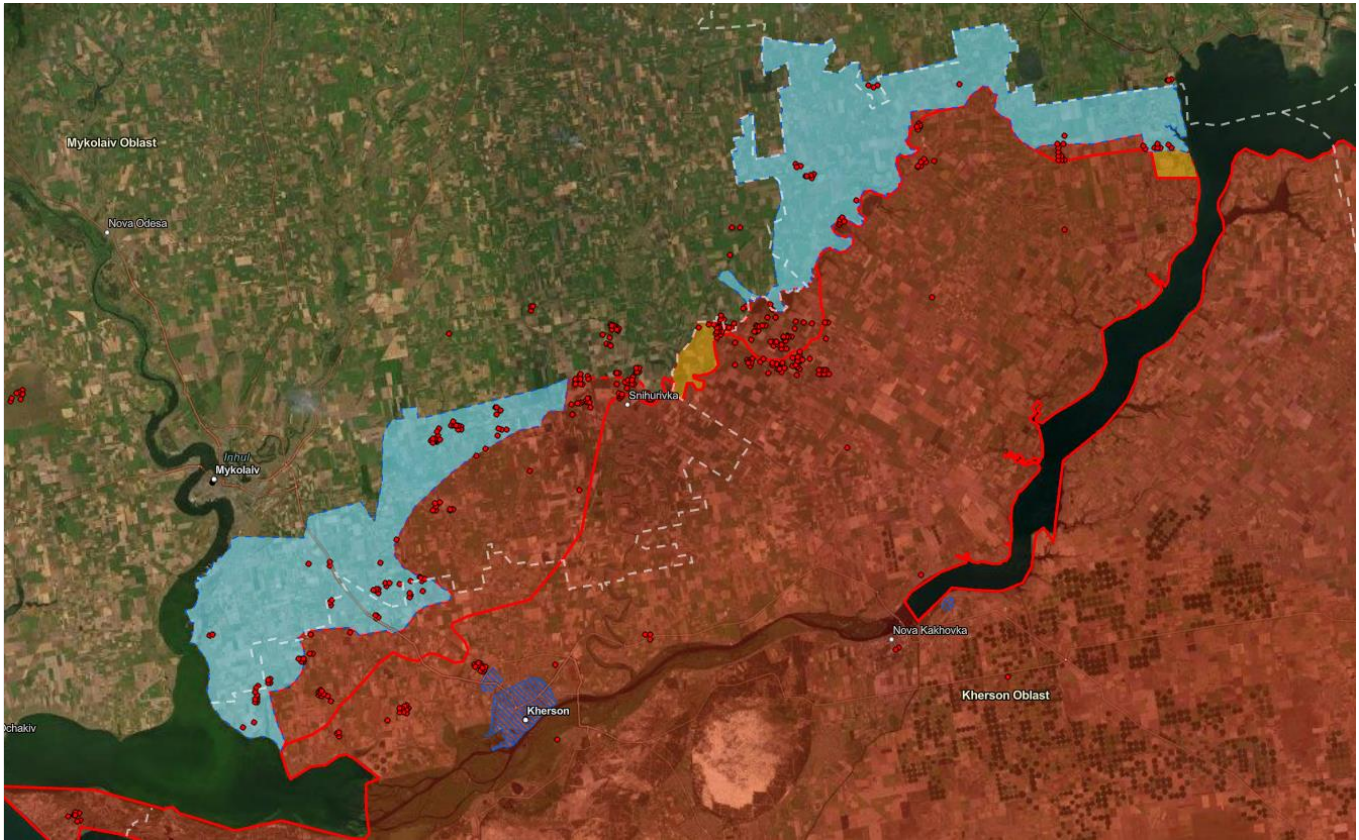
Supporting Effort #2—Southern Axis (Russian objective: Defend Kherson and Zaporizhia Oblasts against Ukrainian counterattacks)

Russian forces are continuing to take defensive measures along the Southern Axis, likely to repel Ukrainian counteroffensives. Ukraine’s General Staff reported on July 3 that Russian forces conducted “systematic” tube and rocket artillery strikes to prevent Ukrainian units' advances.²⁵ NASA’s Fire Information for Resource Management System (FIRMS) remotely sensed data showed abnormally high numbers of fires along the Mykolaiv-Kherson Oblast frontline on July 3, notably near Snihurivka, Zasillia, Kopani - Zelenyi Hai, and Tavriiske, supporting the Ukrainian General Staff’s report.²⁶ These locations are plausible bases for a possible Ukrainian counteroffensive. Ukraine’s Operational Command South reported on July 2 that Ukrainian forces repelled a Russian reconnaissance-in-force in the direction of Ivanivka in northwestern Kherson Oblast.²⁷ Odesa Oblast Military Administration Spokesperson Serhiy Bratchuk also noted that Russian forces began accumulating military equipment in downtown Kherson City and Verhniy Rogachyk (eastern Kherson Oblast).²⁸

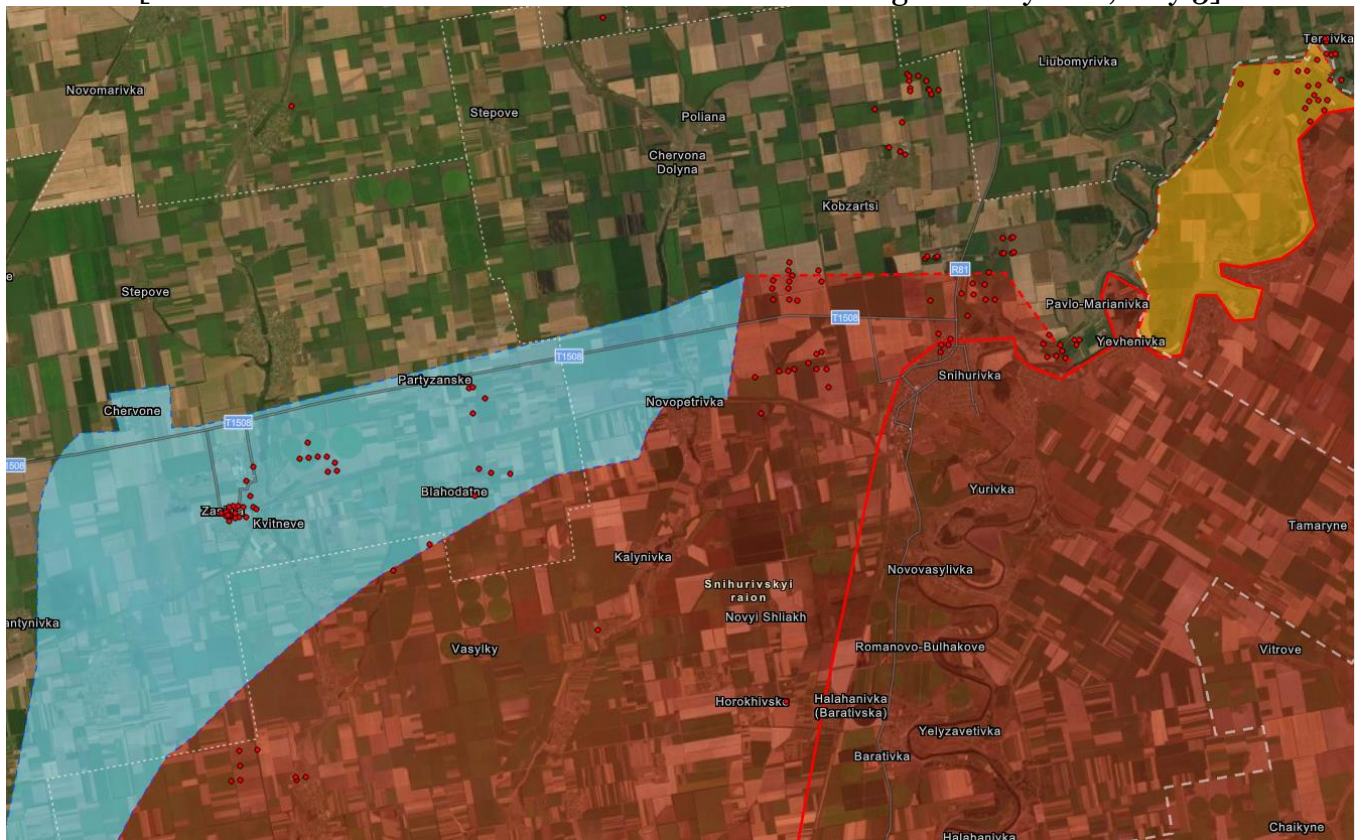
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of July 3, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



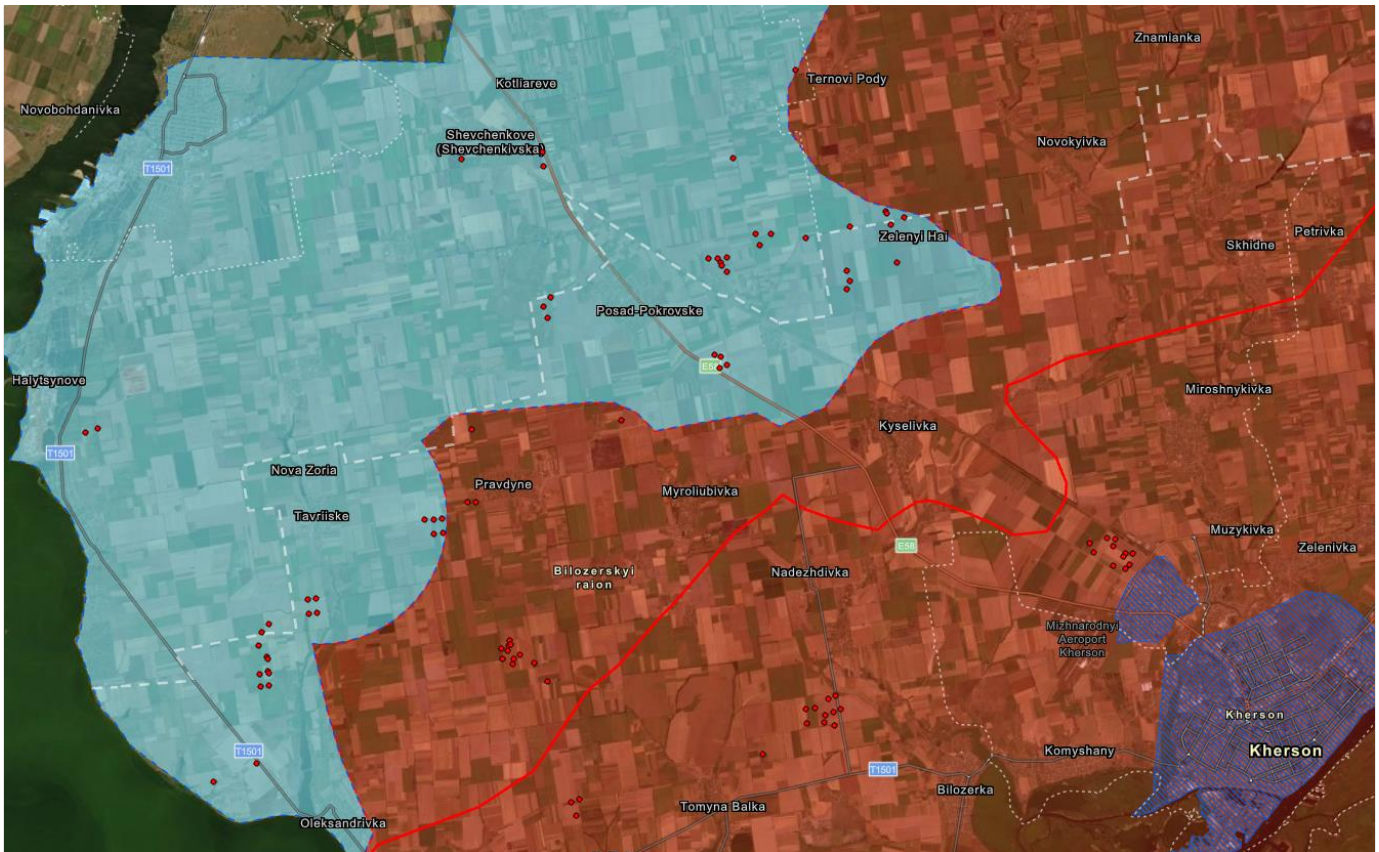
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.



[Source: NASA's Fire Information for Resource Management System, July 3]



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[Source: NASA's Fire Information for Resource Management System, July 3]

Ukrainian combat aviation is reportedly still active in Kherson Oblast as of July 2. Ukraine's Operational Command South reported that Ukrainian fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft conducted five strikes against Russian ammunition depots and force concentrations and claimed the destruction of two Russian ammunition depots in Chornobayivka and Snihurivka.²⁹ Russian forces continued conducting missile strikes against Kherson and Mykolaiv Oblasts on July 2 - 3.³⁰

Mobilization and force generation efforts (Russian objective: Expand combat power without conducting general mobilization)

Nothing significant to report.

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)

The Kremlin continued to set conditions for the potential Russian annexation of proxy republics on July 3. Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Head Denis Pushilin announced that United Russia Party Secretary of the General Council Andrey Turchak and party representatives established a legal aid center in Donetsk City.³¹ Pushilin noted that the legal aid center will provide DNR residents assistance with education, legal documents, and registration for social benefits. Pushilin and Turchak also handed out Russian passports to DNR residents.³² The Kremlin is likely attempting to integrate proxy legal and governmental structures into the Russian framework.

Ukrainian partisans reportedly derailed a Russian armored train carrying ammunition near Melitopol on July 2.³³ Kremlin-sponsored outlet *RIA Novosti* acknowledged that the train derailed around Yakymivka, but claimed that the incident was an accident.³⁴ Ukrainian partisans previously targeted Russian armored trains and locomotives in Melitopol in late April and mid-May.³⁵



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¹ https://t.me/mod_russia/17364; https://t.me/mod_russia/17359

²

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02KUS6NCfLiRTXJrfdm1sgwiTrpjrsX5VskaSavVFncFYtHRehrMuEjTsY2H5XBuaXI>

³ https://t.me/mod_russia/17359

⁴ https://t.me/mod_russia/17359; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-june-25>

⁵ https://t.me/ivan_fedorov_melitopol/229; https://t.me/ivan_fedorov_melitopol/228

⁶ https://t.me/ivan_fedorov_melitopol/229; https://t.me/ivan_fedorov_melitopol/228; <https://t.me/rybar/34808>;

<https://t.me/rybar/34788>; https://t.me/Bratchuk_Sergey/14874

⁷ <https://gur.gov.ua/content/oboronni-pidpriemstva-rosii-vidmovliaiutsia-remontuvaty-poshkodzhenu-boiovu-tekhniku-okupantiv.html>

⁸ https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/bill/155680-8#bh_histras ; <https://t.me/bazabazon/12200>

⁹ https://t.me/mod_russia/17364; https://t.me/mod_russia/17359

¹⁰ https://t.me/mod_russia/17359

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¹² <https://twitter.com/zcjbrooker/status/1543585841192337408>; <https://t.me/zvezdanews/84600>

¹³

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0GgFrwE95gHa7mMJgRjHqbkWh8e5BVsxAXEZY7PorJuc2xw7JUbm9kb7oHAJoQul>;

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¹⁶ <https://t.me/rybar/34827>

¹⁷

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02yfsNWHaKnJWYw6wcCCNr3vkGA42Y6Mp2WKaqCkRzWPjCvQPRJRWiBYmXj1vzJXGVl>;

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¹⁹ <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/38046>

²⁰ <https://t.me/spravdi/12339>; <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=797471214609414>;

<https://www.facebook.com/Vadymlyakh/posts/pfbid0hDvLcSWDkD9fHREoSakCTVPTThpQBgeNtU6sPoE8iHp6DdnvEs7to79GngBCiHe Hkl>;

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²³ <https://t.me/syngubov/3540>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02yfsNWHaKnJWYw6wccN3vkGA42Y6Mp2WKaqCkRzWPjCvqPRJRwiBYm Xj1vzJXGVI>

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²⁶ https://firms.modaps.eosdis.nasa.gov/active_fire/

²⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=569236938010880>

²⁸ https://t.me/Bratchuk_Sergey/14895

²⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=569236938010880>

³⁰ https://t.me/mod_russia/17360; <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=569236938010880>

³¹ <https://t.me/pushilindenis/2414>

³² https://t.me/turchak_andrey/308; <https://t.me/pushilindenis/2405>

³³ <https://sprotyv.mod.gov dot ua/2022/07/03/partyzany-pid-melitopolem-vidpravyly-pid-ukis-rosijskyj-bronepoyzd/>;

<https://t.me/riamelitopol/60204>; <https://www.facebook.com/100001701408811/videos/2172478259628933/RIA>

³⁴ <https://t.me/riamelitopol/60204>

³⁵ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-may-19>;

<https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Russian%20Operations%20Assessments%20April%2028.pdf>