

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, July 9

Kateryna Stepanenko, Grace Mappes, George Barros, and Frederick W. Kagan
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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.

Russian-backed occupation authorities in Kharkiv Oblast stated that Kharkiv Oblast is an “inalienable part of Russian land,” indicating that the Kremlin likely intends to annex part or all of Kharkiv Oblast.¹ The Russian occupation government in Kharkiv Oblast unveiled a new flag for the occupation regime in Kharkiv Oblast containing the Russian imperial double-headed eagle and symbols from the 18th century Kharkiv coat of arms.² The Russian occupation government stated that the imagery in the flag is a “symbol of the historical roots of Kharkiv Oblast as an inalienable part of Russian land,” indicating that the Kremlin seeks to annex portions of Kharkiv Oblast to Russia and likely seeks to capture all of Kharkiv Oblast if it can.³ The Kharkiv Oblast occupation government’s speed in establishing a civilian administration on July 6 and introducing martial law in occupied Kharkiv Oblast on July 8 further indicates that the Kremlin is aggressively pursuing the legitimization and consolidation of the Kharkiv Oblast occupation administration’s power to support this broader territorial aim.⁴ The Kharkiv Oblast occupation government’s explicit use of Imperial Russian imagery and rhetoric pointing clearly at annexation, rather than using imagery and rhetoric supporting the establishment of a “people’s republic,” reinforces ISW’s prior assessment that the Kremlin has broader territorial aims than capturing Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts or even holding southern Ukraine.⁵

The Kremlin has likely used a leaked letter from mothers demanding the ban of journalist activity on the frontlines to promote self-censorship among pro-Russian milbloggers and war correspondents. Russian opposition outlet *Meduza* released a letter from mothers of an Astrakhan-based platoon that blamed Kremlin-sponsored *Izvestia* war correspondent Valentin Trushnin for reporting the details of Russian positions in a way that led to the deaths of their sons.⁶ *Meduza* removed the letter from its website on July 8. First Deputy of the Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) Information Minister and milblogger Daniil Bezsonov reported noticing suggestions from unspecified “faceless experts” to censor his posts regarding Russian war efforts.⁷ Bezsonov noted that Russian war correspondents received necessary accreditations from the Kremlin and follow protocol when reporting from the frontline to refrain from exposing Russian positions. Bezsonov also argued that Russian war correspondents took the initiative to keep Russians updated on the situation on the front line from the first days of the war, while Russian “big bosses” failed to launch an information campaign to counter claimed Ukrainian information warfare. Several Russian milbloggers shared Bezsonov’s remarks, with proxy serviceman Maksim Fomin stating that Russian Defense Ministry briefings are not sufficient to replace combat footage.⁸

The Kremlin faces challenges directly censoring pro-Russian milbloggers and war correspondents but will likely continue to look for opportunities to promote self-censorship. Moscow has not demonstrated the ability to compel Telegram to delete or control the content of channels, and so would likely have to threaten individual milbloggers with legal or extra-legal action to stop them from publishing on that platform. Russia could prevent war correspondents publishing in regular media outlets from writing stories or deprive them of access to the front lines. But both the milbloggers and the war correspondents are explicitly pro-war and patriotic, often ultra-nationalist, with large followings likely concentrated among Russian President Vladimir Putin’s key supporters. Threatening or suppressing them directly could backfire if Putin’s motivation in doing so is to stop them from undermining support for the war or questioning authority. Actions such as the use

of this leaked and possibly faked letter to stoke self-censorship or induce pressure from the readers of these blogs and articles toward self-censorship may be an effort to achieve the Kremlin's desired effects without the risk of having them backfire.

Key Takeaways

- **Russian forces continued to launch unsuccessful assaults northwest of Slovyansk and conducted offensive operations east of Siversk from the Lysychansk area.**
- **Russian forces continued localized attacks northwest of Kharkiv City, likely in an effort to defend Russian ground lines of communication (GLOCs) in the area.**
- **Russian forces continue to face personnel and equipment shortages, relying on old armored personnel carriers and launching new recruitment campaigns.**
- **Russian forces continued to set conditions for the annexation of Donbas, Kharkiv Oblast, and southern Ukraine.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of July 9, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, and Daniel Mealie
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* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

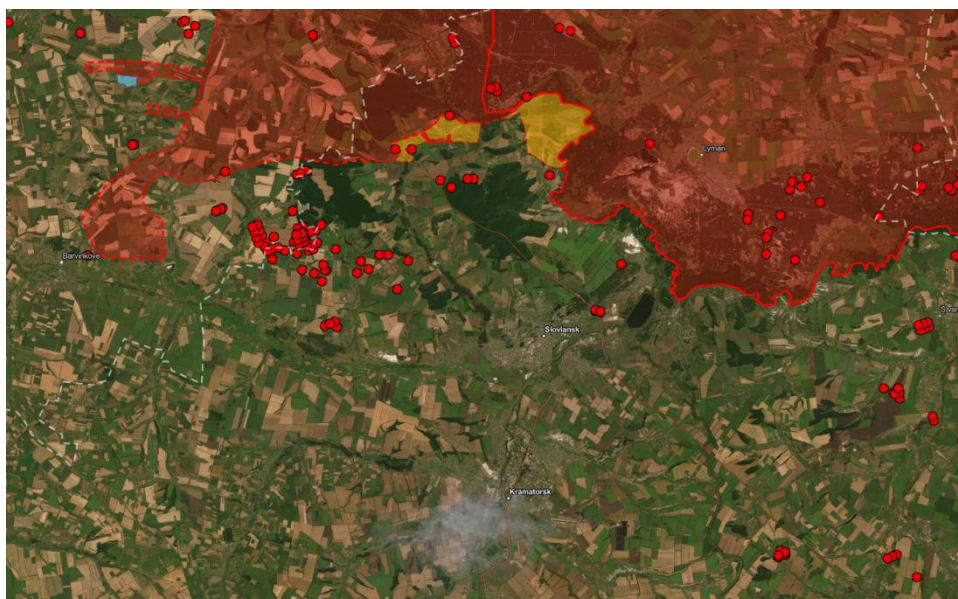
We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because those activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We will continue to evaluate and report on the effects of these criminal activities on the Ukrainian military and population and specifically on combat in Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn these Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict, Geneva Conventions, and humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

- 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 Oblast
- 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 continued unsuccessful offensive operations northwest of Slovyansk on July 9. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults in the directions of Dovhenke-Krasnopillya-Pasika-Dolyna, all situated in the vicinity of the E40 Izyum-Slovyansk highway.⁹ Russian forces are likely setting conditions to resume offensive operations toward Slovyansk by launching airstrikes on Bohorodychne and shelling Dibrovne, Adamivka, and Slovyansk.¹⁰ Kharkiv Oblast Administration Head Oleg Synegubov stated that Russian forces shelled fields in the Izyum area, and NASA’s Fire Information for Resource Management System (FIRMS) remotely sensed data showed fires on fields northwest of Slovyansk.¹¹ Russian forces reportedly remotely mined a section of a highway in Velyka Komyshuvakha and shelled Karnaukhivka, likely in an effort to suppress Ukrainian counterattacks southwest of Izyum.¹²



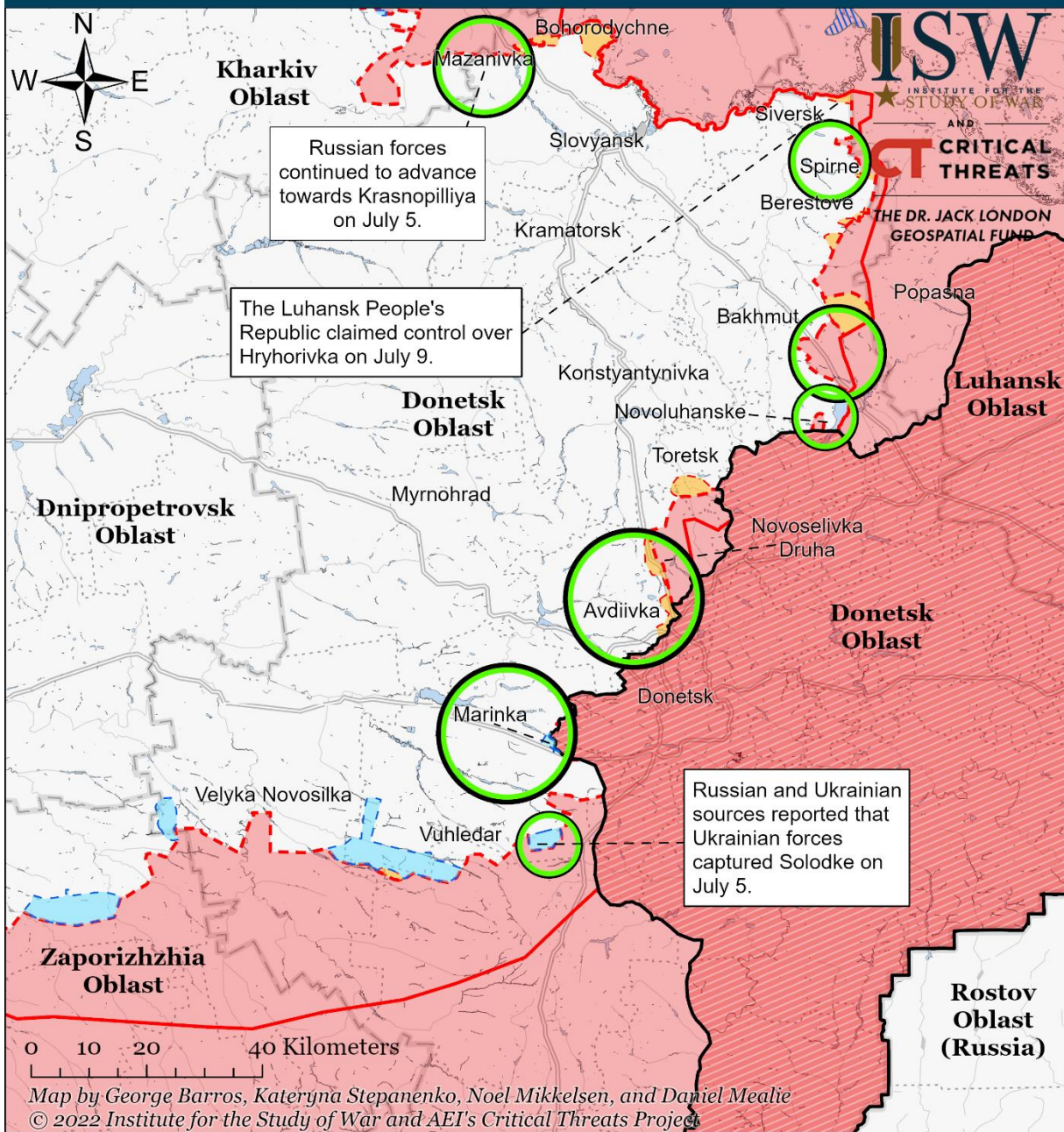
[Source: NASA’s Fire Information for Resource Management System over Slovyansk, July 9]

Russian forces continued to attack settlements west of Lysychansk in an effort to advance toward Siversk on July 9. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attempted to advance to Verknokamyanske, approximately 8 km east of Siversk.¹³ The Ukrainian General Staff also added that Russian forces launched an assault on Hryhorivka (approximately 11 km northeast of Siversk), where fighting is ongoing. Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) Deputy Interior Minister Vitaly Kiselev claimed that Russian forces captured Hryhorivka on July 9, but ISW cannot independently confirm this claim.¹⁴ Russian forces reportedly conducted an airstrike on Spirne, approximately 14 km southeast of Siversk.¹⁵

Russian forces continued launching ground assaults south of Bakhmut but did not make confirmed territorial gains. The Ukrainian General Staff noted that Ukrainian forces stopped a Russian assault on the Vuhlehirska Power Plant.¹⁶ Russian forces continued shelling Zaitseve, Berestove, and Klynove—southeast and northeast of Bakhmut.¹⁷ Kyrylenko also reported that Russian forces shelled a railway station in Chasiv Yar (approximately 13 km west of Bakhmut) and launched missile strikes at Druzhkivka along the Ukrainian ground lines of communication (GLOCs) west of Bakhmut.¹⁸ Ukrainian forces continued to strike Russian ammunition depots in Irmino and Kadiivka, approximately 50 km west of Luhansk City, reportedly with US-provided high mobility artillery rocket systems (HIMARS).¹⁹

Russian forces unsuccessfully attempted to improve their tactical positions around Avdiivka and launched a failed assault on Marinka on July 9.²⁰

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of July 9, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



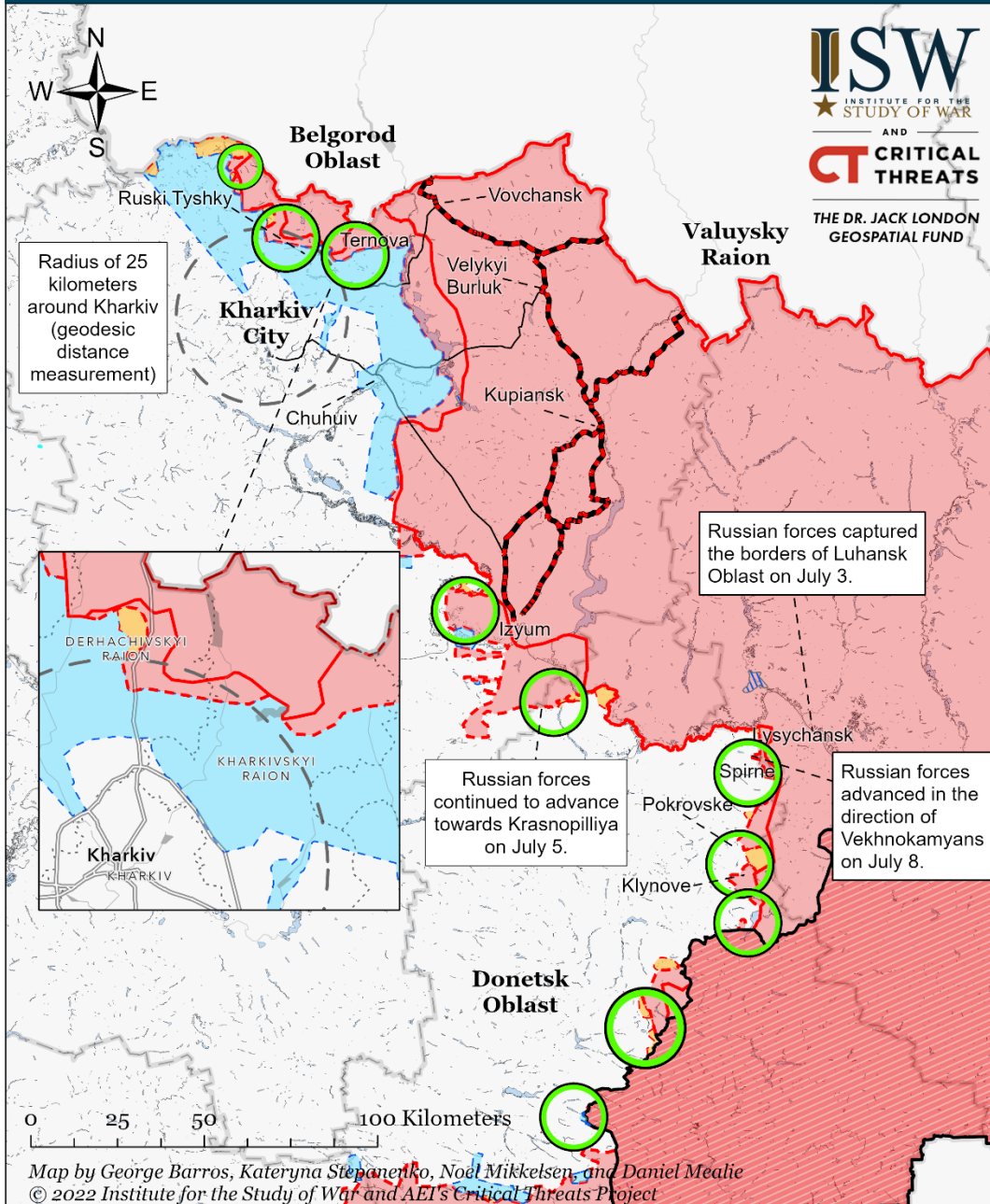
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives

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

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 made no confirmed territorial gains near Kharkiv City on July 9 but continued attempting likely spoiling attacks to disrupt Ukrainian counterattacks. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled a Russian assault in the direction of Kochubeivka and Dementiivka, which ISW assessed is intended disrupt ongoing Ukrainian counterattacks from Prudyanka north toward Russian positions in Tsupivka.²¹ The Derhachi Regional Administration reported that fighting is ongoing in Kozacha Lopan, Tsupivka, Dementiivka, and Velyki Prokhody, all situated around the Ukrainian salient approaching the Russian GLOC on the E105 highway.²² Russian forces are likely trying to prevent Ukrainian forces from disrupting Russian use of the E105 GLOC and advancing closer to the Kharkiv Oblast-Russia border. Kharkiv Oblast Administration Head Oleg Synegubov reported that Russian forces prioritized shelling agricultural fields, poultry complexes, landfills, and other open areas in Kharkiv Oblast during the day on July 9, presumably to damage Ukrainian agricultural activity.²³

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of July 9, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, and Daniel Mealie
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Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours	Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24	Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
Key Ukrainian Roads	Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*	Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
Russian Ground Lines of Communication	Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory	Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

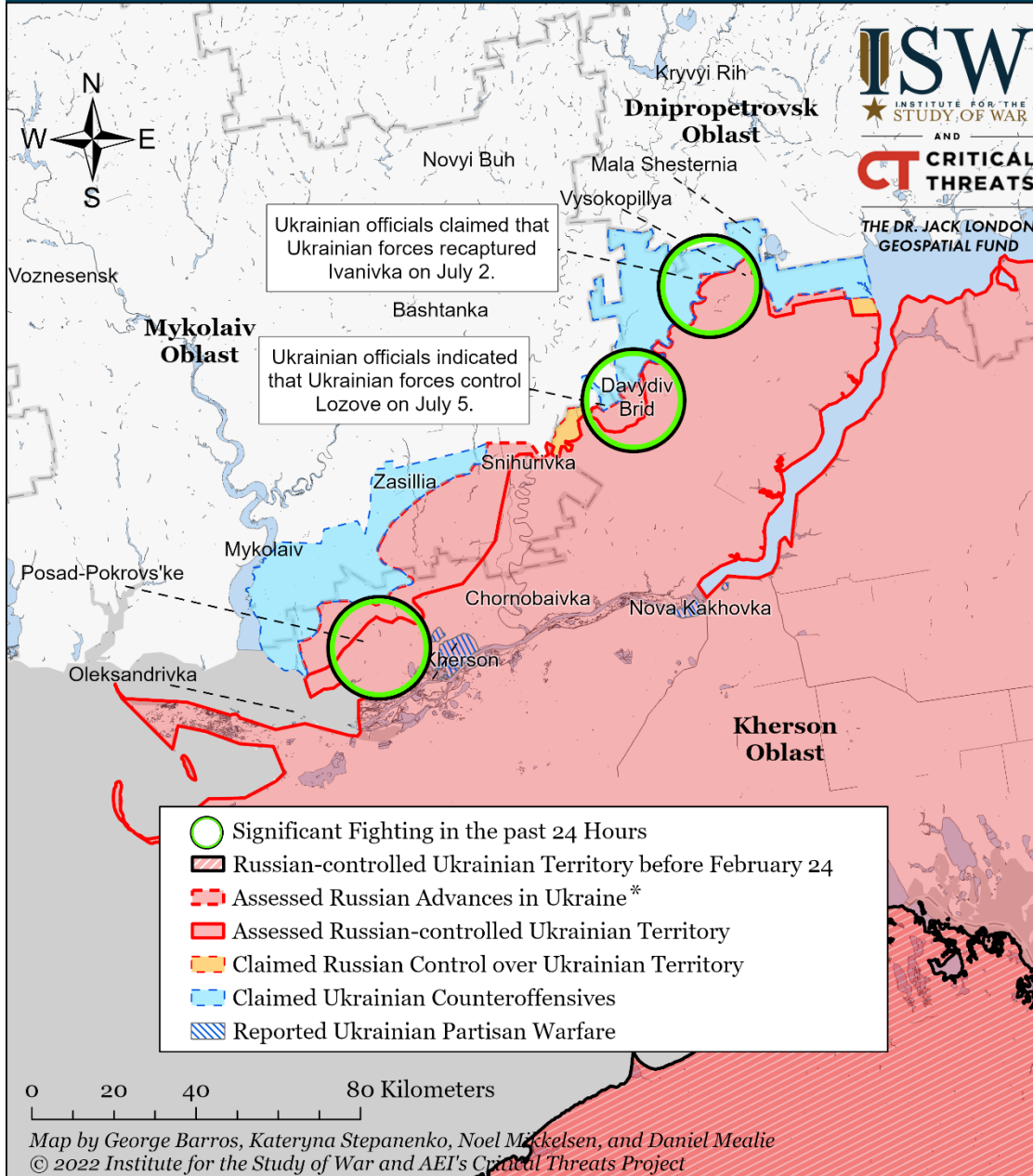
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

Russian forces conducted unsuccessful reconnaissance-in-force attempts in northwest Kherson Oblast on the Kherson-Dnipropetrovsk Oblast border on July 9. The Ukrainian Southern Operational Command reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian reconnaissance efforts in Knyzivka and Olhyne.²⁴ The Ukrainian General Staff stated that Russian forces are focusing on defending occupied positions and restraining Ukrainian advances with “available fire means,” likely implying that Russian forces are facing worsening logistics problems in the region.²⁵ Russian and Ukrainian sources published footage of Ukrainian forces reportedly striking a Russian ammunition depot at the Kherson City International Airport in Chornobaivka on July 9.²⁶ Mykolaiv Oblast Administration Head Vitaliy Kim reported that Russian forces launched six missile strikes on Mykolaiv City using S-300 air defense systems.²⁷ The Ukrainian Southern Operational Command stated that Russian forces are continuing to modify their S-300 air defense systems to strike ground targets, which if true, could also suggest that Russian forces on the Southern Axis are facing missile shortages.²⁸

Ukrainian officials are also increasingly reporting that Russian forces are targeting Ukrainian fields during the harvest season in southern Ukraine and Donbas, but ISW cannot independently verify whether the field fires resulted from deliberate attacks.²⁹ The Russian Defense Ministry denied setting Ukrainian fields on fire by amplifying a claim that footage of Russians burning grain is an old video from Stavropol Krai, Russia.³⁰

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of July 9, 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 expanded Ukrainian counteroffensives to Lozove on the left bank of the Inhulets River on July 5. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on July 6 that Ukrainian forces repelled a Russian offensive in the direction of Lozove in Kherson Oblast, indicating that Ukrainian forces still maintain a position there. Russian Telegram Channel Rybar claimed that Ukrainian forces launched unsuccessful attacks on the Snihurivka-Lozove-Bila Krynytsya line on July 4. Ukraine's Southern Operational Command stated on July 5 that Ukrainian forces repelled a Russian platoon counterattack in the Lozove area, indicating that Ukrainian forces are in Lozove. Ukrainian combat footage posted in mid-June showed Ukrainian forces shelling Russian positions near Lozove. NASA FIRMS data for July 5 shows heat anomaly concentrations south of Lozove consistent with the Ukraine's Southern Operational Command report. We will update our maps as we collect and confirm more information.

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

Russia's use of stored and obsolescent MT-LB armored personnel carriers suggests that Russia's materiel and force generation problems continue. The UK Ministry of Defense asserted that many current Russian reinforcements are "ad hoc groupings, deploying with obsolete or inappropriate equipment" as compared to better-equipped Russian first echelon units from the beginning of the war. The UK Ministry of Defense reported that an unspecified "large proportion" of the new Russian infantry units are probably deploying with MT-LB armored vehicles (which were designed in the 1950s) taken from long-term storage as their primary transport.³¹ The UK Ministry of Defense asserted that most Russian first echelon assault units at the beginning of the Russian invasion were equipped with better BMP-2 infantry fighting vehicles (introduced in the 1980s). Combat footage posted between July 5 and July 9 shows several instances of Ukrainian forces destroying Russian MT-LBs near front lines.³² The pattern of Russian forces using antiquated equipment pulled from storage is consistent with confirmed reports that Russian forces deployed a large number of old T-62 tanks to the Southern Axis in late May.³³

Chechen Leader Ramzan Kadyrov is likely attempting to recruit more Chechen fighters for the war in Ukraine. Kadyrov promoted the ongoing construction of a new residential facility for fighters of the four Chechen battalions he claims to be forming and advertised the facility's many quality amenities.³⁴ Kadyrov likely seeks to increase the attractiveness of military service benefits for fighters who join these forming battalions. Kadyrov first announced that he would form these four new battalions on June 26.³⁵

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 occupation authorities continued consolidating control over occupied territories and setting conditions for the potential annexation of additional Ukrainian territory on July 9. The Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) Health Ministry announced the launch of a tracking system that allows civilians to find patients in LNR-controlled hospitals.³⁶ LNR and Russian officials will likely use this tracking system to compel civilians to cooperate with LNR authorities. Zaporizhia Oblast Military Administration Head Oleksandr Starukh reported that Russian officials are increasing attempts to force Zaporizhia Oblast government officials, medical staff, educators, and farmers to cooperate with occupational authorities, likely to prevent further Ukrainian partisan attacks on Russian rail infrastructure in and around Melitopol, Zaporizhia Oblast.³⁷ Russian Telegram channel Rybar reported that Russian forces established an occupation administration in Severodonetsk, Luhansk Oblast, that will focus on supplying and distributing water throughout the city.³⁸ The LNR Internal Affairs Ministry announced the appointment of former Deputy Governor of Sevastopol Ivan Kusov as the LNR education minister on July 8, continuing the observed pattern of Russian forces appointing Russian officials to positions in occupied Ukraine.³⁹



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- ¹ <https://t.me/voenkorkotenok/38222>; <https://lenta dot ru/news/2022/07/08/gerbb/>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/38317>
- ² <https://t.me/voenkorkotenok/38222>; <https://lenta dot ru/news/2022/07/08/gerbb/>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/38317> ;
<https://ria.ru/20220708/gerb-1801356207.html>
- ³ <https://t.me/voenkorkotenok/38222>; <https://lenta dot ru/news/2022/07/08/gerbb/>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/38317> ;
<https://ria.ru/20220708/gerb-1801356207.html>
- ⁴ <https://t.me/stranaua/50845>; <https://tass dot ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/15136215>; <https://tass dot ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/15169763>
- ⁵ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-july-5>
- ⁶ https://twitter.com/KevinRothrock/status/1545230086605049863?s=20&t=_hUNRiVqJ36UnCVpwxBog ; <https://t.me/ibarabanch/729>
- ⁷ <https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonoV/15525>
- ⁸ <https://t.me/vladlentatarsky/14877>; <https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonoV/15525>; <https://t.me/vladlentatarsky/14877>;
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- ⁹
- <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0iFwtJd9iSkTyY9wLNLrcu89vpxZcY4JeSjCBDDTqNrUCVZbkagc5i gTEAovyxeAl>
- ¹⁰ https://t.me/pavlokyrylenko_donoda/3977; <https://t.me/faceofwar/21106>;
https://twitter.com/666_mancer/status/1545671841259429890; https://www.zsu.gov dot ua/new_page/62c92abf4909af001366f3a9
- ¹¹ <https://t.me/synegubov/3603>
- ¹²
- <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0iFwtJd9iSkTyY9wLNLrcu89vpxZcY4JeSjCBDDTqNrUCVZbkagc5i gTEAovyxeAl>; <https://t.me/rybar/35213>; https://www.zsu.gov dot ua/new_page/62c92abf4909af001366f3a9
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- ¹⁴ https://www.zsu.gov dot ua/new_page/62c92abf4909af001366f3a9; <https://t.me/sashakots/34268>; https://tass dot ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/15172241?utm_source=yxnews&utm_medium=desktop
- ¹⁵ https://www.zsu.gov dot ua/new_page/62c92abf4909af001366f3a9
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- ¹⁸ https://t.me/pavlokyrylenko_donoda/3977; https://t.me/pavlokyrylenko_donoda/3977
- ¹⁹ https://t.me/LIC_LPR/30102; https://twitter.com/666_mancer/status/1545749543920320514;
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²² https://t.me/der_rada/1901

²³ <https://t.me/synegubov/3603>

²⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=570675091330950>

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<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0iFwtJd9iSkTyY9wLNLrcu89vpxZcY4JeSjCBDDTqNrUCVZbkagc5igTEAovyxeAl>

²⁶ https://twitter.com/666_mancer/status/1545677358249697280; https://t.me/ressentiment_channel/26618;

<https://twitter.com/GirkinGirkin/status/1545651106486919169>;

<https://twitter.com/GirkinGirkin/status/1545667679469666305>;

<https://twitter.com/GirkinGirkin/status/1545759862587539457>; https://t.me/Bratchuk_Sergey/15209;

<https://t.me/voenkorkotenok/38228>; https://t.me/smotri_z/3356; <https://t.me/strelkovii/2902>

²⁷ <https://t.me/mykolaivskaODA/1724I>;

²⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=570675091330950>

²⁹ https://t.me/Bratchuk_Sergey/15217;

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<https://twitter.com/DefenceU/status/1545119396452093953>

³⁰ https://t.me/mod_russia/17539

³¹ <https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1545639125331677186>

³² <https://t.me/horevica/4629>; https://twitter.com/Blue_Sauron/status/1545668249886474241 ;

<https://twitter.com/RALee85/status/1544335572688375810> ; <https://t.me/aerorozvidka/458> ;

<https://twitter.com/UAWeapons/status/1544438189070352384>

³³ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-may-28>;

<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-may-27>;

<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-may-23>;

<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-june-1>;

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³⁴ https://t.me/RKadyrov_95/2520

³⁵ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-june-28>

³⁶ https://t.me/TRO_DPR/4503; <https://mzdnr dot ru/poisk>

³⁷ https://t.me/zoda_gov_ua/10224

³⁸ <https://t.me/rybar/35211>

³⁹ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-july-5>; <https://www.kommersant dot ru/doc/5453328>; https://t.me/miroshnik_r/7895