Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, November 16

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November 16, 6:45pm 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.

Russian sources and proxy officials are flagrantly touting the forced adoption of Ukrainian children into Russian families. Prominent Russian milbloggers began circulating a multi-part documentary series on November 9 featuring several Ukrainian children from Donbas after being adopted into Russian families. The documentary series claims that Russian officials have evacuated over 150,000 children from Donbas in 2022 alone. It is unclear exactly how Russian sources are calculating this figure, and Ukrainian officials previously estimated this number to be 6,000 to 8,000. Head of the Chechen Republic Ramzan Kadyrov additionally stated he is working with Russian Federation Commissioner for Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova to bring "difficult teenagers" from various Russian regions and occupied Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts to Chechnya to engage in "preventative work" and "military-patriotic education." Lvova-Belova has continually advocated for deportations and adoptions of Ukrainian children and herself adopted a child from Mariupol. Forced adoption programs and the deportation of children under the guise of vacation and rehabilitation schemes likely form the backbone of a massive Russian depopulation campaign that may amount to a violation of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and constitute a wider ethnic cleansing effort, as ISW has previously reported.

Ukrainian sources continued to clarify the damage caused by the massive November 15 Russian missile strike across Ukraine. The Ukrainian General Staff stated on November 16 that Russian forces launched over 90 Kh-101 and Kalibr cruise missiles and 11 drones over the course of November 15 and targeted critical infrastructure in a number of oblasts. Ukrainian Air Force Command reported that Ukrainian air defense and ground forces shot down 75 missiles and 10 Shahed-136 drones. US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin noted on November 16 that the US-provided National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System (NASAMS) had a 100% success rate in intercepting Russian missiles. As ISW previously reported, Russian forces likely used a substantial portion of their high-precision weapon systems in the November 15 attack.

The Russian information space largely followed the official Kremlin framing of the missile strike on Polish territory as a Western provocation. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) stated on November 16 that Ukrainian and other foreign officials' statements about Russian missiles in connection with the strike on Polish territory constitute a "deliberate provocation with the aim of escalating the situation." Russian Deputy Chairman of the Security Council Dmitry Medvedev accused the West of moving closer to world war by waging a hybrid attack against Russia following the strike on Polish territory. Russian milbloggers widely accused Western and Ukrainian officials of trying to falsely blame Russia for the strike in order to justify increased support to Ukraine and further escalation in Eastern Europe. Some Russian sources also asserted that Ukrainian and Western officials were trying to use the incident to either pressure Russia to end its coordinated missile campaign against Ukrainian critical infrastructure or to justify sending "better" air defenses to Ukraine. The Russian milbloggers' support of the Kremlin framing of the strike as a Western

provocation is to be expected of a Russian information space that widely views the conflict in Ukraine as a Western operation aimed at degrading Russia as a regional and global power.

Wagner financer Yevgeny Prigozhin is continuing to establish himself as a central figure in the pro-war ultranationalist community, likely in pursuit of ambitious political goals.

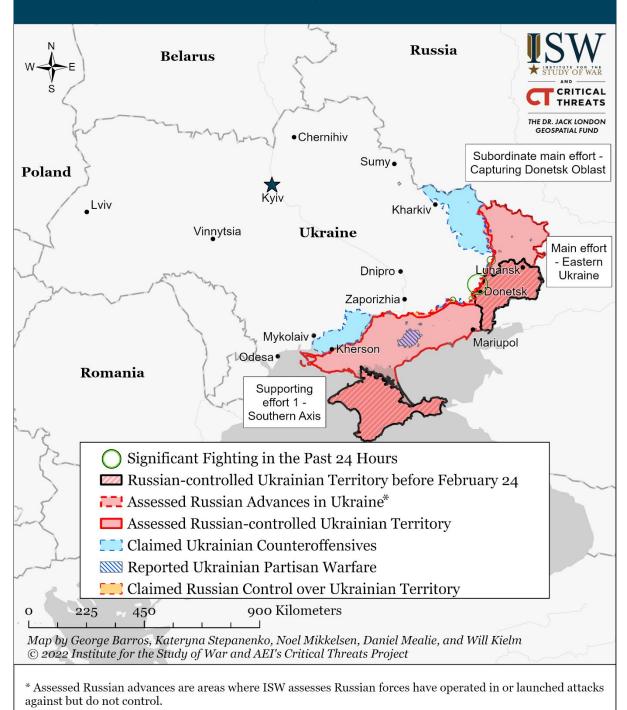
Russian opposition media outlet *Meduza* reported on November 16 that two sources close to the Kremlin stated that Prigozhin is thinking about creating a "conservative movement" that may become a political party. 15 Meduza's sources reported that Prigozhin has established an information campaign of constant anti-elite rhetoric modeled after jailed opposition figure Alexei Navalny's social media campaign against Russian corruption, but to a very different effect.¹⁶ Meduza's sources reported that Prigozhin intends to simultaneously use the anti-elite social media campaign to cast himself as a populist figure while currying favor with Russian President Vladimir Putin by intimidating elites that may be viewed as insufficiently loyal to Putin.¹⁷ ISW has previously reported that Prigozhin is attempting to appeal to a constituency in Russia that is both interested in Russia's claimed national superiority and Soviet brutalist strength and opposed to Russian elite corruption.¹⁸ Prigozhin has previously denied that he is attempting to cast himself as a politician or that he intends to create a political party or movement.¹⁹ ISW has previously reported that Prigozhin is also pursuing the creation of parallel military structures to advance his influence in the ultranationalist pro-war community.²⁰ Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) representative Andriy Chernyak reported on November 15 that Prigozhin initially began constructing parallel military structures to suppress potential uprisings in Russia but capitalized upon the Kremlin's need for more capable forces in Russia's offensive campaign in Ukraine.²¹ ISW has previously assessed that Prigozhin's personal army serves his own personal political goals first and the Russian war effort in Ukraine second.²² Prigozhin will likely continue efforts to establish parallel military structures and form an anti-elite campaign to cement himself as the central figure of an ultranationalist pro-war political movement in Russia.

Key Takeaways

- Russian sources and proxy officials are flagrantly touting the forced adoption of Ukrainian children into Russian families.
- Ukrainian sources continued to clarify the damage caused by the massive November 15 Russian missile strike across Ukraine.
- The Russian information space largely followed the official Kremlin framing of the missile strike on Polish territory as a Western provocation.
- Wagner Group financer Yevgeny Prigozhin is continuing to establish himself as a central figure in the pro-war ultranationalist community likely in pursuit of ambitious political goals.
- Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in the directions of Svatove and Kreminna.
- Russian forces continued ground attacks near Bakhmut and Avdiivka, and in western Donetsk Oblast.
- Ukrainian forces continued targeting Russian forces and logistics nodes in southern Ukraine.
- Multiple reports indicate that the morale and psychological state of Russian forces in the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts are exceedingly low.

•	Russian officials continued their efforts to replace proxy officials in occupied territories with Russian officials, forcibly relocate residents, and integrate occupied areas with Russia.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of November 16, 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.

- Ukrainian Counteroffensives—Eastern Ukraine
- 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—Southern Axis
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Activities in Russian-occupied Areas

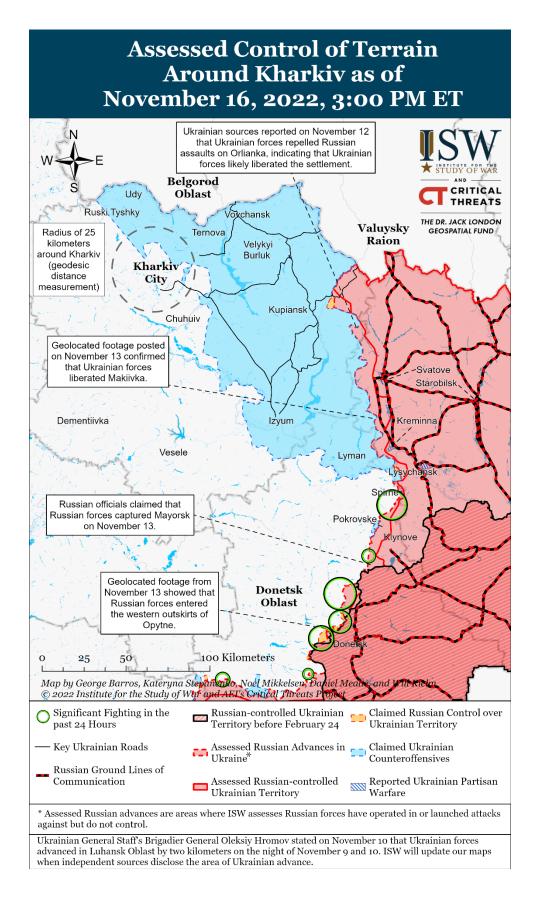
<u>Ukrainian Counteroffensives</u> (Ukrainian efforts to liberate Russian-occupied territories)

Eastern Ukraine: (Eastern Kharkiv Oblast-Western Luhansk Oblast)

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in the directions of Svatove and Kreminna on November 16. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian airstrikes prevented Ukrainian forces from conducting assaults within 20km northwest of Svatove near Berestove and Kolisnyvka in Kharkiv Oblast and Novoselivske, Luhansk Oblast.²³ Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations 14km northwest of Svatove near Kuzemivka, with one milblogger claiming that Ukrainian forces attempted to cut off a section of the road and railway in the area.²⁴ A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are conducting reconnaissance-in-force operations along the Pischane-Stelmakhivka line northwest of Svatove.²⁵ The Russian MoD also claimed that Russian artillery units repelled Ukrainian assaults towards Russian positions near Kolomyichykha, Luhansk Oblast (10km west of Svatove).²⁶ Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces are continuing attempts to cut off a part of the Svatove-Kreminna highway and that Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance groups are operating within 6km northwest of Kreminna near Chervonopopivka.²⁷ A Russian milblogger also claimed that fighting is ongoing within 12km south of Kreminna in Bilohorivka.²⁸ A BARS-13 (Russian Combat Reserve) source cited a Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) People's Militia officer who claimed that Ukrainian forces launched an offensive along the entire line from Popasna, Luhansk Oblast to Kharkiv Oblast and are accumulating tank groups near the line of contact.²⁹ A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are accumulating along the Orlianka-Zatishne-Svatove line northwest of Svatove in preparation for a future large offensive, although ISW offers no assessment about claims regarding future Ukrainian operations.30

Ukrainian forces continued to target Russian military concentrations and logistics in Luhansk Oblast on November 16. Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces struck Mirne, Perevalsk, and Zimohiria with HIMARS rockets on November 16.³¹ Geolocated footage posted on November 16 shows Ukrainian forces purportedly striking Russian positions in Bilourakyne north of Starobilsk.³² The Ukrainian

General Staff reported that a November 15 Ukrainian strike on Russian concentrations near Denezhnykove (between Starobilsk and Luhansk City) killed and wounded at least 50 Russian military personnel.³³

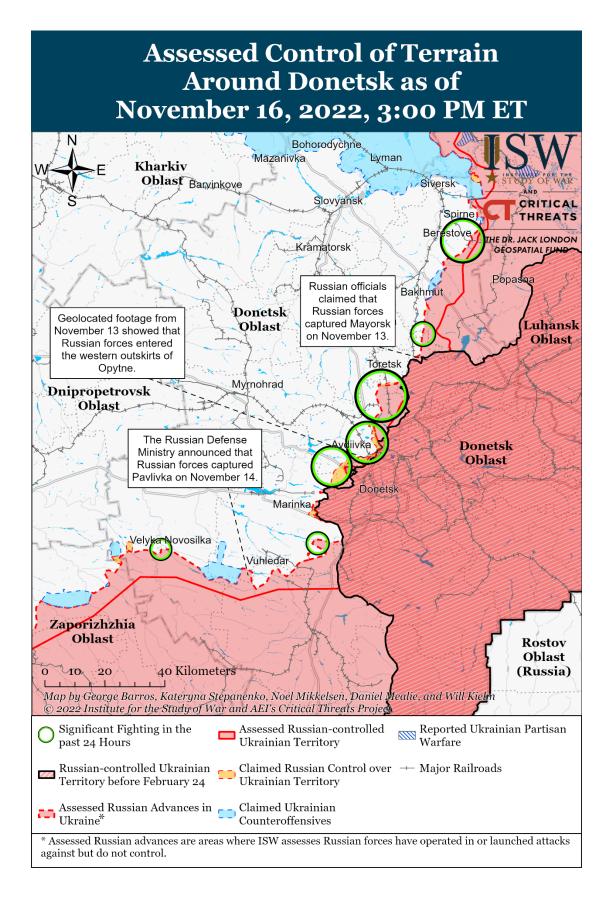


Russian Main Effort-Eastern Ukraine

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

Russian forces continued ground assaults near Bakhmut and Avdiivka on November 16. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian ground attacks northeast of Bakhmut near Bilohorivka and Vesele, and south of Bakhmut near Kurdiumivka.³⁴ A Russian source posted footage of Wagner Group forces attacking fortified Ukrainian positions on the southeastern outskirts of Bakhmut.³⁵ The Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) People's Militia posted footage of LNR aviation striking Ukrainian positions northeast of Bakhmut near Soledar and northeast of Soledar near Spirne. 36 The Ukrainian General Staff reported that half of the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) 1st Horlivka Battalion were dead or wounded following the battle for Mayorsk (south of Bakhmut) and suffered low morale, prompting DNR leadership to disband the unit.³⁷ Russian sources notably claimed that Russian troops took control of Mayorsk on November 13, and the Ukrainian General Staff statement suggests that the cost of doing so was steep, which is consistent with ISW's assessment that Russian forces will continue costly operations for small and operationally insignificant settlements.³⁸ The Ukrainian General Staff also reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults near Avdiivka, north of Avdiivka near Novokalynove, west of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske, and south of Avdiivka near Vodyane.³⁹ Russian sources claimed that Russian forces made marginal gains toward Nevelske, Vodyane, and Pervomaiske.⁴⁰ The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian counterattacks near Kurdyumivka, near Avdiivka, west of Avdiivka near Hryhorivka, and in western Donetsk Oblast near Staromykhailivka.⁴¹

Russian forces conducted limited ground assaults in western Donetsk Oblast on November 16. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled a Russian ground assault near Vremivka and Novomykhailivka in western Donetsk Oblast.⁴² The Russian MoD claimed that Russian artillery fire repelled a Ukrainian ground assault toward Stepne (21km east of Vuhledar).⁴³ A Russian source claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted a HIMARS strike against Volnovakha at the intersection of the N20 and T0509, 18km behind the front line and southeast of Vuhledar.⁴⁴



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

Note: ISW will report on activities in Kherson Oblast as part of the Southern Axis in this and subsequent updates. Ukraine's counteroffensive in right-bank Kherson Oblast has accomplished its stated objectives, so ISW will not present a Southern Ukraine counteroffensive section until Ukrainian forces resume counteroffensives in southern Ukraine.

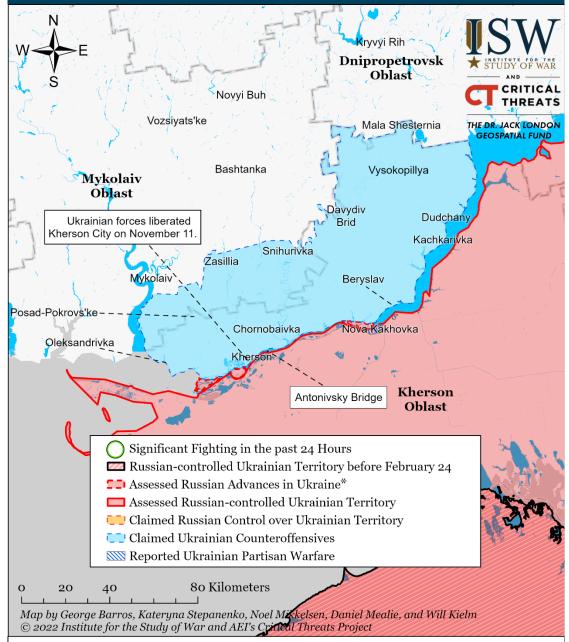
Russian forces continued to fortify and regroup on the left bank of Dnipro River on November 16. Ukraine's Operational Command South reported that Russian forces continued to equip fortifications and defensive positions and conducted defensive operations along the left bank of the Dnipro River. Ukrainian and Russian sources reported that Russian forces shelled Dudchany, Kachkarivka, and Prydniprovskyi, Kherson Oblast, and Illinka, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast—all on the right bank of the Dnipro River. 46

Ukrainian forces continued targeting Russian forces and logistics nodes in the rear areas of Zaporizhia Oblast and Kherson Oblast. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on November 16 that Ukrainian forces struck Russian positions near Skadovsk (at the R57 and T2213 highway intersection), Novomykolaivka (on the R57 highway), and Nova Mayachka (near the T2210 highway) on November 15.⁴⁷ Ukraine's Operational Command South stated that Ukrainian forces conducted over 50 artillery strikes against Russian positions on the left bank of the Dnipro River on November 15, destroying two Russian ammunition depots in Nova Kakhovka and Oleshky, injuring 17 personnel, and damaging 15 armored vehicles.⁴⁸ The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed on November 16 that Russian forces intercepted HIMARS rounds near Kalanchak (near E97 the highway) and Novomykolaivka.⁴⁹ A Russian source claimed that residents reported explosions in Kalanchak and Chaplynka (on the T2202 highway).⁵⁰ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian strikes rendered a rail bridge unusable in Chernihivka, Zaporizhia Oblast.⁵¹ Odesa Military Administration Spokesperson Serhiy Bratchuk stated that Ukrainian forces struck a Russian military warehouse in Tokmak, and an image posted on November 16 shows a fire supposedly in Tokmak overnight.⁵²

Russian forces continued routine fire west of Hulyaipole and in Mykolaiv and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts on November 16. The Ukrainian Zaporizhia Oblast Military Administration reported that Russian forces struck Zaporizhia City with three S-300 air defense missiles.⁵³ Ukrainian officials stated that Russian forces shelled Nikopol, Marhanets, and Chervonohryhorivka in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast.⁵⁴ Russian sources claimed that Russian drones flew over Kryvyi Rih overnight but that there were no reports of strikes or damage.⁵⁵ Russian sources expressed continued concern about a possible Ukrainian counteroffensive in the Hulyaipole-Orikhiv area.⁵⁶ Zaporizhia Oblast occupation official Vladimir Rogov claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian attempt to break through Russian lines towards Vasylivka, Zaporizhia Oblast, but ISW has not observed indications of a major battle in this area and is unable to confirm the veracity of Rogov's claim.⁵⁷

Geolocated imagery posted on November 15-16 shows that Russian forces are building secondary defensive lines along a canal near Armyansk, Crimea.⁵⁸ As ISW has previously reported, construction of defensive fortifications on secondary lines of defense is standard military procedure and is not an indicator that Russian forces expect to defend Crimea from a Ukrainian offensive in the near future.⁵⁹

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of November 16, 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.

ISW expanded Ukrainian counteroffensives to all of right bank Kherson Oblast on November 11 based on geolocated footage of Ukrainian forces liberating Kherson City and settlements north of the Dnipro River. Russian forces partially destroyed the Kakhovka and Antonivsky bridges, which indicates that Russian forces are not intending to hold positions on the right (western) bank. ISW assesses with high confidence that Ukrainian forces will clear the remaining settlements along the western bank of the river in the coming days, although some Russian troops may have remained behind to conduct partisan operations. ISW is not ready to reassess control of the various islands near the west bank of the river.

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

Multiple reports indicate that the morale and psychological state of Russian forces in the Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts are exceedingly low. Significant losses on the battlefield, mobilization to the front lines without proper training, and poor supplies have led to cases of desertion. The independent Russian media outlet *ASTRA* reported that Russian authorities are holding about 300 Russian mobilized men in a basement in Zaitseve, Luhansk Oblast, for refusing to return to the front lines. ⁶⁰ *ASTRA* reported it has identified at least seven such holding locations in the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts for Russian citizens. Lipetsk Oblast Governor Igor Artamonov reported that relatives of mobilized personnel specifically appealed to him about poor conditions near Svatove, Luhansk Oblast. ⁶¹ Artamonov stated that mobilized personnel reached the front lines without training or proper equipment and experienced severe losses.

Russian occupation authorities continued mobilization efforts in the Ukrainian temporarily occupied territories. The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported that Russia is preparing for the mobilization of Russian passport holders in the southern occupied territories after being unable to find volunteers and stated that Russian occupation authorities mobilized 70% of the communal workers in Makiivka and Donetsk City in the Donetsk Oblast.⁶² The Luhansk Oblast Military Administration reported that Russian occupation authorities are conducting a door-to-door mobilization effort in Kadiivka and are extorting Luhansk residents who want to avoid mobilization at the same time.⁶³

Russia continues to face cases of social backlash due to partial mobilization. A Russian source reported that mobilized personnel from the Patriot Center near Moscow expressed discontent about poor preparations for the front lines.⁶⁴ Multiple sources reported the mobilization of men with health problems and relayed that authorities are not responding to their complaints, claiming that the Russian army does not owe anyone anything.⁶⁵ Russian sources reported that a court rejected the claim of a Saint Petersburg citizen, drafted not according to his military specialty, and shared that wives of mobilized men from Krasnodar Krai appealed to the local administration for help with food and equipment on the front lines.⁶⁶

At the same time, the Russian military is reportedly concentrating on expanding training capabilities under the direction of experienced instructors with combat experience. The Russian MoD shared videos of training sessions for men mobilized in Leningrad, Sakhalin, Khabarovsk, and in training centers of the Southern Military District.⁶⁷ The Russian MoD reported that more than 400 mobilized paratroopers from the Ulyanovsk region departed for the rear areas of the front line, joining a group of mobilized men reportedly sent out from Omsk on November 15.⁶⁸ The Russian MoD stated that mobilized servicemembers from the Saratov region received a full monetary allowance and reportedly promised mobilized servicemembers bonuses of up to 300,000 rubles for the destruction of Ukrainian equipment.⁶⁹

<u>Activity in Russian-occupied Areas</u> (Russian objective: consolidate administrative control of occupied and annexed areas; forcibly integrate Ukrainian civilians into Russian sociocultural, economic, military, and governance systems)

Russian officials continued their efforts to replace proxy officials in occupied territories with Russian officials on November 16. Multiple Russian media outlets reported that Russian officials detained Kherson Oblast occupation deputy head Ekaterina Gubareva, who previously served as a Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) foreign minister and later a DNR parliament member, for unspecified economic crimes. To As ISW has previously reported, Russia has been importing Russian civil servants and bureaucrats to fill roles in occupation administrations, partially due to a lack of reliable collaborators and partially to streamline the administrative frameworks of occupied areas with the Russian Federation. The Russian officials similarly replaced the proxy head of Mariupol with a Russian government official on November 5, and Gubareva's alleged detention is likely an attempt to set conditions to fill her position with an imported Russian official.

Russian occupation officials continued to forcibly relocate residents and control civilian movement in occupied territories on November 16. The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported that Russian occupation authorities in Markivka, Luhansk Oblast forced at least 40 residents onto a bus and deported them to an unknown location under the guise of evacuation.⁷³ Ukrainian Mayor of Enerhodar, Zaporizhia Oblast, Dmytro Orlov also reported that Russian occupation authorities constantly hold Enerhodar residents captive and noted that at least 70 residents are in Russian captivity as of November 15.⁷⁴ Russian occupation officials will likely continue forced evacuation and detention measures of Ukrainian residents in occupied territories for the foreseeable future, partially as part of a wider depopulation scheme⁷⁵

Russian occupation officials continued efforts to integrate occupied areas of Ukraine into Russian administrative and economic frameworks on November 16. A Russian news source reported that Russian officials have started giving out certificates for purchasing houses in Crimea to residents of occupied Kherson Oblast even if they do not have Russian passports. This is likely an attempt to coerce evacuated Kherson residents to relocate to Russian-occupied Crimea. A Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) official also reported that Irkutsk Oblast officials are sponsoring restoration projects in Holubivka, Luhansk Oblast. Ukrainian Luhansk State Administration reported on November 16 that Russian banks in Luhansk are offering residents a special deal on loans if they show a Russian passport, likely in an attempt to incentive Ukrainian residents to obtain Russian passports.

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.

¹ https://t.me/sashakots/37079; https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/42776

² https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/42776; https://t.me/sashakots/37079

³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LkEVETK5kAc; https://www.slovoidilo.ua/amp/2022/10/20/novyna/bezpeka/oprozpovily-skilky-ukrayinskyx-ditej-prymusovo-deportuvaly-rf

⁴ https://t.me/RKadyrov 95/3104

⁵ <u>https://isw.pub/UkrWar102622</u>; https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-november-12

⁶ https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-26; https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-15; https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-15; https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-15; https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-15; https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-23

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- ⁹ https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/nasams-air-defense-system-have-100-success-rate-ukraine-pentagon-chief-2022-11-16/; https://twitter.com/KyivIndependent/status/1592938603772284929
- $^{10}\ https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-november-15$
- 11 https://t.me/mod russia/21790
- ¹² https://twitter.com/MedvedevRussiaE/status/1592775491274313728
- ¹³ https://t.me/readovkanews/47011; https://t.me/sashakots/37174; https://t.me/epoddubny/13669; https://t.me/rybar/41207; https://t.me/milinfolive/93454
- ¹⁴ https://t.me/rybar/41196; https://t.me/readovkanews/47011
- ¹⁵ https://meduza.io/feature/2022/11/15/zhirinovskiy-na-maksimalkah
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- ¹⁸ https://isw.pub/UKrWar111422
- ¹⁹ https://t.me/concordgroup_official/37
- ²⁰ https://isw.pub/UkrWar110722
- ²¹ https://gur dot gov.ua/content/armii-pryhozhyna-ta-kadyrova-stvoriuvaly-dlia-prydushennia-potentsiinykh-povstan-v-rosii.html
- ²² https://isw.pub/UkrWar110722
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36 https://t.me/millnr/9735; https://t.me/millnr/9738

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⁴¹ https://t.me/mod_russia/21791

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