Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, November 4

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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.

The Russian military is likely trying to use mobilized personnel to restart the Donetsk offensive but will likely still fail to achieve operationally significant gains. Commander-in-Chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces General Valerii Zaluzhnyi reported on November 4 that Russian forces have tripled the intensity of hostilities in certain sections of the front with up to 80 daily assaults.1 The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces are currently focusing those offensive operations in the direction of Bakhmut, Avdiivka, and western Donetsk Oblast.² The Ukrainian Eastern Group of troops spokesperson Serhiy Cherevatyi stated on November 4 that Russian forces are likely trying to seize Bakhmut and Soledar in Donetsk Oblast so that Russia can declare some type of success by announcing the "liberation" of the Donbas (even though those gains would not give Russia control over the entire region).3 Cherevatyi also noted the presence of mobilized men in the Bakhmut direction, an area that should not in principle see many mobilized personnel given the extensive presence in this area of Wagner Group and proxy units that should not be receiving large numbers of Russian reservists.4 ISW previously assessed that Russian forces prematurely impaled an insufficient concentration of mobilized personnel on offensive pushes near Bakhmut and Vuhledar in Donetsk Oblast on November 3.5 The apparent intensification of Russian assaults in Donetsk Oblast likely indicates that Russian forces are repeating that mistake throughout this section of the front. The increased quantity of personnel at frontline positions may allow Russian forces to achieve some gains in Donetsk Oblast, but poor training, logistics, and command will continue to prevent Russian forces from making operationally significant gains that would materially affect the course or outcome of the war.

Russian forces are setting conditions for a controlled withdrawal in northwestern Kherson Oblast, likely to avoid a disorderly rout from the right (west) bank of the Dnipro River. Russian forces will likely need to engage in a fighting withdrawal to prevent Ukrainian forces from chasing them onto the left (eastern) bank. Ukraine's Southern Operational Command corrected social media reports from November 3 regarding the destruction of civilian boats and piers along the Dnipro River.⁶ Ukraine's Southern Operational Command stated that Russian forces are purposefully destroying civilian vessels and are restricting civilian use of watercraft and access to the shore. The corrected story likely corresponds with the reports of Russian forces preparing defensive positions on the left bank and the withdrawal of certain elements and suggests that Russian forces are eliminating ways for Ukrainian forces to chase them across the river during or after a withdrawal. Local Ukrainian sources also shared geolocated footage that reportedly showed the aftermath of the recent Russian destruction of a pedestrian bridge over the Inhulets River in Snihurivka (about 60km east of Mykolaiv City), which may also indicate Russian efforts to slow Ukrainian advances amidst a Russian withdrawal.⁷

Russian President Vladimir Putin is likely setting conditions to continue covert mobilization, which suggests that partial mobilization did not generate sufficient forces for Putin's maximalist goals in Ukraine despite Putin's claims to the contrary. Putin announced on November 4 that Russian forces mobilized 318,000 men of the 300,000 authorized due to the recruitment of volunteers during the mobilization period.⁸ Putin added that Russia had already committed 49,000 men to combat missions. Putin's claims of a successful and completed mobilization are inconsistent with his November 4 decree that allows Russian officials to mobilize citizens with outstanding convictions for some serious crimes.⁹ Putin also signed decrees extending the status of servicemen to men serving in volunteer formations and outlining mobilization exemptions for citizens undergoing alternative service.¹⁰ Such decrees likely indicate that Putin is preparing to continue covert mobilization in Russia by attempting to incentivize volunteer service or setting conditions to mobilize convicts—given that he has yet to sign an order terminating mobilization as of November 4.¹¹ Provisions authorizing the mobilization of prisoners may also indicate that Putin is trying to preempt social tensions by setting conditions to mobilize convicts instead of civilian Russian men.

Russian opposition and online outlets have reported that Russian authorities and businesses are preparing for a second mobilization wave by modernizing military recruitment centers and preparing lists of eligible men. ¹² Rostov, Kursk, and Voronezh Oblast governors have also previously spoken about conducting a second wave of mobilization, and a few men reported receiving summonses for 2023. ¹³ While it is unclear if the Kremlin will double down on covert mobilization or initiate another mobilization wave, Putin's decrees are indicative of the persistent force generation challenges that have plagued the Russian military campaign.

Russia's costly force generation efforts will continue to weigh on the Russian economy and could ignite social tensions if the Kremlin does not fulfill its financial obligations to the participants of the "special military operation." Putin signed a decree granting a one-time payment of 195,000 rubles (about \$3,150) to mobilized men and individuals who had signed a contract after the declaration of partial mobilization on September 21.¹⁴ By committing to pay mobilized men and giving the status of servicemen to volunteers the Kremlin is adding another financial burden to Russia's economy.¹⁵ Russian governors are already releasing statements attempting to justify delays in compensating mobilized men and their families citing budget issues and the need to finance supplies for Russian servicemen.¹⁶ Failures to make payouts to mobilized men are already causing social tensions in Chuvash Republic, for example, where 1,800 men are demanding that the region immediately pay the promised 400 million rubles (about \$6.5 million) to the mobilized population.¹⁷

Iran is likely already exploiting Russian reliance on Iranian-made weapons systems to request Russian assistance with its nuclear program. *CNN* reported on November 4 that unspecified US intelligence officials believe that Iranian officials have been asking Russia for help in acquiring additional nuclear materials and with nuclear fuel fabrication. Nuclear fuel could allow Iran to shorten the breakout period to create a nuclear weapon depending on the kind of fuel and the kind of reactor for which it is being requested. *CNN* reported that it was unclear whether Russian officials had agreed to Iranian requests. SW has previously reported that Iranian plans to send more combat drones and possibly ballistic missile systems to Russia will likely strengthen Russia's growing reliance on Iranian-made weapons systems.

Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) representative Andriy Yusov stated on November 4 that GUR has not received information confirming that Iranian missile systems have arrived in Russia despite intelligence that confirms the contract for the transfer of those systems.²¹ Yusov also stated that another shipment of 200 Iranian-made combat drones to Russia is currently

underway.²² Ukrainian Minister of Defense Oleksii Reznikov reported on November 4 that Russian forces have almost completely used up the first set of 300 combat drones from Iran.²³ Reznikov reported that Russia currently has contracts to receive 1,500 to 2,400 more Iranian-made combat drones, assuming Iran can fill the orders.²⁴ Russia's growing reliance on these systems allows Iran to exert greater influence on Russian officials, and Iranian officials have already likely started to exploit that influence in support of its nuclear program. The Iranian requests for Russian assistance with its nuclear program may be an indicator of an intensifying Russian Iranian security partnership in which Iran and Russia are more equal partners.

Russian forces may be deploying extreme measures against deserting personnel in an attempt to respond to severe morale issues. The United Kingdom Ministry of Defense (MoD) reported on November 4 that Russian forces in Ukraine probably have started deploying "barrier troops" and "blocking units", units that threaten to shoot their own retreating personnel to compel offensives.²⁵ The UK MoD reported that Russian generals likely want their subordinate commanders to shoot deserters, including possibly authorizing personnel to shoot to kill their own deserting servicemen.²⁶ Desertion in the face of the enemy is a capital offense in many militaries, including America's.²⁷ The deployment of designated units or individuals behind friendly lines to shoot deserters is nevertheless indicative of just how low the morale, discipline, and cohesion of Russian military forces in parts of Ukraine have become.

Key Takeaways

- The Russian military is likely trying to use mobilized personnel to restart its Donetsk offensive but will likely fail to achieve operationally significant gains.
- Russian forces are setting conditions for an orderly withdrawal from the west bank of the Dnipro River to avoid a rout in Kherson Oblast.
- President Vladimir Putin is likely setting conditions to continue mobilization covertly despite claims that partial mobilization produced sufficient forces.
- Russia's costly force generation measures will likely continue to weigh on the Russian economy and generate social tensions.
- Iran is likely exploiting Russian reliance on Iranian-made weapon systems to request Russian assistance with its nuclear program.
- Russian forces may be deploying extreme measures against deserting personnel in an attempt to respond to severe morale issues.
- Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in the direction of Kreminna and Svatove.
- Russian forces continued to prepare existing and new defensive lines in Kherson Oblast.
- Russian forces continued to conduct offensive operations around Bakhmut, Avdiivka, and Donetsk City.
- Russian forces continued forced evacuation measures in Kherson Oblast.
- Russian and occupation officials continued to set measures for the forced deportation of Ukrainian children to the Russian Federation.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of November 4, 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—Southern and 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 direction of Svatove and Kreminna on November 4. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) reported that Russian artillery and aviation repelled Ukrainian forces that attempted to attack northwest of Svatove in the directions of Berestove, Kharkiv Oblast (21km northwest of Svatove) and Kuzemivka, Luhansk Oblast (14km northwest of Svatove).²⁸ Russian milbloggers reported that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian assault in the direction of Yahidne, Kharkiv Oblast (28km northwest of Svatove).²⁹ One of the milbloggers reported that Ukrainian forces managed to enter Yahidne but that Russian forces later pushed them out of the settlement.³⁰ The Russian MoD also claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian assaults northwest of Kreminna in the direction of Ploschanka (17km northwest of Kreminna) and Chervonopopivka (6km northwest of Kreminna).³¹ A Russian milblogger reported that Ukrainian reconnaissance and sabotage groups are probing Russian defensive lines northeast of Terny (17km west of Kreminna).³² ISW cannot independently verify the Russian claims about Ukrainian counteroffensives in the direction of Kreminna and Svatove on November 4.

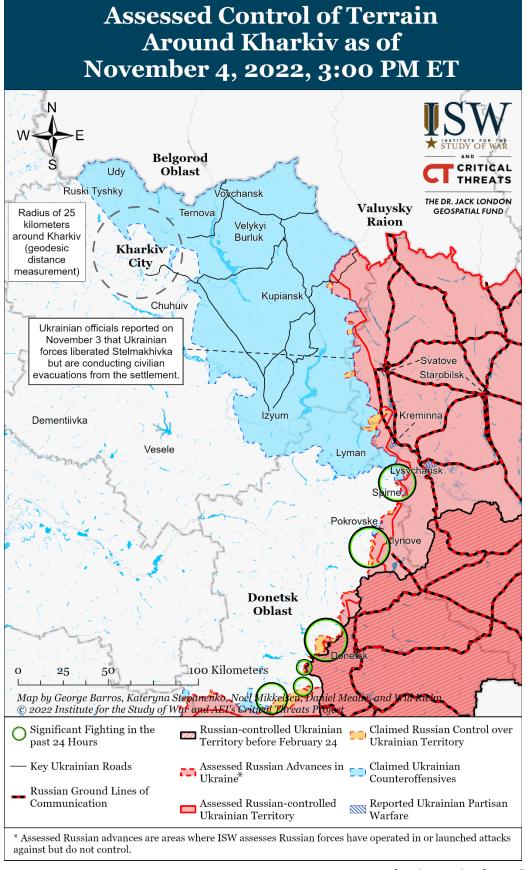
Russian forces conducted counterattacks in the Kreminna-Svatove area likely to constrain the actions of Ukrainian forces on November 4. The Ukrainian General staff reported that Russian forces shelled of Svatove near Novoyehorivka (16km southwest settlements southwest of Svatove); south of Kreminna), Verkhnokamianske (19km Kreminna near Siversk (18km southwest of of Kreminna), and Bilohorivka (12km south of Kreminna); and near Vedmezhe.33 A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also conducted assaults northwest of Kreminna near Nevske (18km west of Kreminna) and Makiivka (22km west of Kreminna).34 Economist Defense Editor Shashank Joshi claimed on November 3 that a Western official on the Luhansk front stated that there has been a reduction in Russian fighting but that developments in Svatove have the potential to assume operational-level significance.35

Southern Ukraine: (Kherson Oblast)

Russian forces continued to prepare existing and new defensive lines in Kherson Oblast on November 3 and November 4. Ukraine's Southern Operational Command stated that Russian forces are leaving some checkpoints, redistributing personnel and equipment, moving equipment, and equipping new defensive positions, which would be consistent with an ongoing Russian effort to establish fallback positions on the left (eastern) bank of the Dnipro River.³⁶ Geolocated footage also showed that Russian forces continued to install pillbox fortifications in Nova Kakhovka on the left bank.³⁷ Ukraine's Southern Operational Command added that Russian forces are also strengthening existing lines, which may indicate that the Russians are continuing to reinforce defensive positions in northern Kherson Oblast likely to coordinate a controlled withdrawal. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces still hold checkpoints outside Kherson City and have units operating along the entire frontline, with one milblogger even noting that Russian forces have no military need to withdraw from the city.³⁸

Ukrainian and Russian sources did not report significant changes to the situation on the northern and northwestern Kherson Oblast borders as of November 4. Ukraine's Southern Operational Command stated that Russian forces continued to use aviation to strike Ukrainian positions, and Russian artillery units continued to shell newly liberated settlements along the line of contact.³⁹ Ukrainian forces also published a video of a raised Ukrainian flag over Mala Seidemynukha (approximately 61km northeast of Kherson City) on November 3, but the village had likely been liberated prior to the official confirmation.⁴⁰ The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed striking Ukrainian positions and ammunition depots but did not report ground assaults from either side.⁴¹

Ukrainian forces continued to strike Russian transportation nodes and logistics points as part of their ongoing interdiction campaign. Geolocated footage showed that Russian forces are still operating ferry crossings near the barge bridge under the Antonivsky Bridge.⁴² The Ukrainian General Staff confirmed an earlier reported strike on an administrative building in Hola Prystan (about 13km southwest of Kherson City) that killed 18 Russian servicemen and wounded two Russians on November 3.⁴³ Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported that Ukrainian forces also struck two ammunition depots in Bashtanka and Snihurivka raions in Mykolaiv Oblast.⁴⁴ A Russian milblogger also reported the activation of Russian air defense systems and smoke in the area of the Kherson City shipyard but did not provide visual evidence.⁴⁵



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 to conduct offensive operations around Bakhmut on November 4. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian ground assaults northeast of Bakhmut near Verkhnokamianske (28km northeast of Bakhmut) and Spirne (25km northeast of Bakhmut).⁴⁶ Russian sources reported that Russian forces made inconsequential advances, 100 meters, against Ukrainian forces near Bakhmut between November 1 and 3.⁴⁷ Russian forces continued routine shelling in the Bakhmut area.⁴⁸

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Avdiivka and Donetsk City area on November 4. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults southwest of Avdiivka near Marinka (28km southwest of Avdiivka) and Novomykhailivka (37km southwest of Avdiivka).⁴⁹ Social media video footage posted on November 4 shows Ukrainian forces destroying a column of Russian vehicles and equipment in the vicinity of Opytne (15km northwest of Donetsk City).⁵⁰ The Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) militia posted a video on November 4 purporting to show the DNR 3rd Guards Brigade striking a Ukrainian manpower and equipment concentration in the direction of Horlivka (about 63km north of Donetsk City).⁵¹ A Russian milblogger claimed on November 4 that the 2nd Reconnaissance Company of the DNR Sparta Battalion cleared Ukrainian positions in the Avdiivka direction near the M-4 highway a few days ago.⁵² The source claimed that the Sparta Battalion, DNR Somalia Battalion, and other DNR and Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) units successfully repelled Ukrainian attacks in the area.⁵³ Another Russian milblogger claimed that the 11th DNR Regiment is encircling Avdiivka and will take the settlement.⁵⁴ Russian forces continued routine shelling in the Avdiivka area.⁵⁵

Russian forces continued offensive operations in western Donetsk Oblast on November 4. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian ground assaults southwest of Donetsk City near Pavlivka (45km southwest of Donetsk City) and Vodyane (35km southwest of Donetsk City). A Russian milblogger reported that Russian forces have not taken Pavlivka and that fighting there devolved into small positional battles. A Russian source reported that Russian forces are conducting offensive operations near Prechystivka (55km southwest of Donetsk City) to push Ukrainian forces across the Kashlahach River. Russian source also claimed that Russian forces conducted a ground assault in the direction of Marinka (24km southwest of Donetsk City) and plans to attack Pervomaiske (20km northwest of Donetsk City) and Vodyane. Russian forces continued routine shelling along the line of contact in southwest Donetsk Oblast.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of November 4, 2022, 3:00 PM ET Multiple Russian and Ukrainian sources reported that Ukrainian forces captured Kryvyi Rih Davydiv Brid, Mala Oleksandrivka, Velyka **Dnipropetrovsk** Oleksandrivka, Novodmytrivka, Starosillya, Oblast Novomykhailivka, Dudchany Chereshneve, Novovoskresenske, Maiske, Petropavlivka, Trifonivka, Novovasilievka, Chervone, **THREATS** Novohryhorivka, Nova Kamyanka, THE DR. JACK LONDON Mala Shesternia Pyatykhatky, Sablukivka, and Kachkarivka GEOSPATIAL FUND after Russian forces abandoned them to avoid encirclement on October 4. Bashtanka Vysokopillya Mykolaiv **Oblast** Geolocated footage posted on October Davydiv Dudchan 22 shows Russian forces targeting Brid Ukrainian positions in Bezimenne. Kachkarivka Zasillia Mykolaiv Beryslav Chornobaivka Posad-Pokrovs'ke Oleksandrivka Kherson Kherson Antonivsky Bridge **Oblast** Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24 Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine* Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare 80 Kilometers 20 40

Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, and Will Kielm

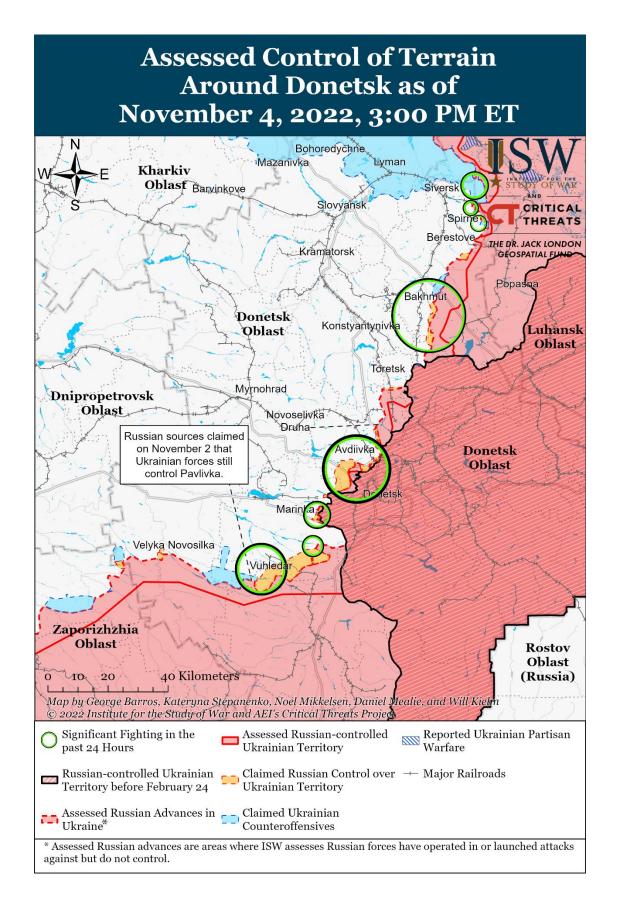
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^{*} Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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

Russian forces continued routine air, missile, and artillery strikes west of Hulyaipole, and in Dnipropetrovsk and Mykolaiv oblasts on November 4.61 Ukrainian sources reported that Russian forces struck Zaporizhzhia City, Nikopol, Mykolaiv City, and Bereznehuvate.62 Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported that Russian forces conducted eight drone attacks in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast and that Ukrainian air defenses shot them all down.63 The Ukrainian General Staff reported on November 4 that Ukrainian forces struck a Russian manpower and equipment concentration in Melitopol, Zaporizhia Oblast on November 3, wounding 50 Russian servicemen.64 The Ukrainian General Staff also reported on November 4 that Ukrainian forces destroyed a Russian S-300 anti-air system in Enerhodar, Zaporizhia Oblast on November 2.65

Russian forces likely continued to transfer personnel to Zaporizhia Oblast despite reports of poor conditions among personnel there. The Ukrainian advisor to the Mayor of Mariupol Petro Andryushchenko reported on November 4 that many Russian military personnel are arriving in Komyshuvate and Demianivka in Donetsk Oblast and that a significant number of newly mobilized personnel in the area are moving to deployments in Zaporizhia Oblast. 66 Andryushchenko reported that Russian military officials have transformed Mariupol into a military logistics hub. 67 The Ukrainian General Staff reported on November 4 that Russian military personnel in Zaporizhia Oblast have a low level of morale due to poor living conditions, poor equipment, constant delays in financial payments, and contemptuous attitudes of leadership to subordinates. 68 Russian military officials are unlikely to resolve poor conditions and morale among personnel in Zapoirzhia Oblast or elsewhere in Ukraine as they continue to prioritize the quantity of personnel deployed to Ukraine.



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

Russian officials are increasingly refusing to acknowledge deaths of mobilized men. Social media users complained that Volgograd Oblast officials are not making any public announcements to commemorate mobilized men who reportedly died on October 24 in unspecified locations.⁶⁹ Another local report noted that multiple mobilized men from Volgograd Oblast have been buried every day since October 28.⁷⁰ Russian mobilized men are also continuing to show significant morale issues, with mobilized elements of the 252nd Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment recording a video appeal in which they refused to fight and asked to return to Russia.⁷¹

Russian outlets reported that Wagner Group financier Yevgeniy Prigozhin opened the new Wagner Center in St. Petersburg.⁷²

<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 occupation officials continued forcible evacuation measures in Kherson Oblast on November 4. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed on November 4 that pontoon barges and ferries are currently transferring up to 1,200 civilian vehicles and 5,000 residents a day across the Dnipro River to the east bank in Kherson Oblast.⁷³ Kherson occupation deputy head Kirill Stremousov continued to urge residents on the west bank of the Dnipro River in Kherson Oblast to evacuate.⁷⁴ A Russian source reported that Russian officials are continuing the evacuation of the population from the right bank of the Dnipro River after previously stating that such evacuation measures had concluded.⁷⁵ A Russian milblogger claimed on November 4 that many residents left in Kherson City are without social services as social service payments can now only be received on the east bank of the Dnipro River.⁷⁶ Administration and social services in areas heavily impacted by forcible evacuation measures are likely minimal or non-existent. Russian occupation officials will likely continue to increase forcible evacuation measures as the Ukrainian southern counteroffensive progresses.

Russian and occupation officials continued to take measures supporting the deportation of Ukrainian children to the Russian Federation as of November 4. The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on November 4 that Russian and occupation officials plan to conduct medical examinations of Ukrainian children in occupied territories and intend to send Ukrainian children with assessed "illnesses" to medical camps in remote areas of the Russian Federation.⁷⁷ The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported that Russian officials likely intend to use the children to force their parents to relocate to the Russian Federation under the guise of picking up their children from "treatment."⁷⁸ It is equally likely that Russian officials intend to use this medical relocation scheme to continue ongoing measures to adopt deported Ukrainian children into Russian families. Both efforts would likely be intended to erase the Ukrainian people as a distinct ethnic group. ISW has previously assessed that forced relocations of Ukrainians to the Russian Federation and forced adoptions of deported Ukrainian children likely amount to a deliberate ethnic cleansing campaign and are apparent violations of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.⁷⁹

Russian occupation officials likely increased filtration measures and restrictions on movement in Russian-occupied territories on November 4. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on November 4 that Russian occupation officials are increasing filtration measures along the Oleshky—Nova Kakhovka highway in Kherson Oblast as well as in Pisky, Luhansk Oblast where Russian forces relocate 30 residents to an unknown location. Russian sources reported that Kherson occupation administration deputy head Kirill Stremousov announced a 24-hour curfew in Kherson City on November 4. Stremousov later claimed that there were no restrictions on civilian movement. Russian occupation officials will likely continue to increase filtration measures and restrictions on civilian movement as Ukrainian counteroffensives progress.

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/CinCAFU/302

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- ⁵ Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, November 3 | Institute for the Study of War (understandingwar.org)
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