

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, March 15, 2023

Karolina Hird, Kateryna Stepanenko, Grace Mappes, Nicole Wolkov, Layne Philipson,
Zachary Coles, and Frederick W. Kagan
March 15, 7:30 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.

Click [here](#) to access ISW's archive of interactive time-lapse maps of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These maps complement the static control-of-terrain maps that ISW produces daily by showing a dynamic frontline. ISW will update this time-lapse map archive monthly.

The overall pace of Russian operations in Ukraine appears to have decreased compared to previous weeks. A spokesperson for the Ukrainian Joint Press Center of the Tavriisk Defense Forces, Colonel Oleksiy Dmytrashkivskiy, stated on March 15 that Russian offensive actions have decreased significantly over the last week and noted that daily Russian ground attacks have decreased from 90 to 100 attacks per day to 20 to 29 per day.¹ Dmytrashkivskiy reported that Russian forces have somewhat lost offensive potential due to significant manpower and equipment losses.² Dmytrashkivskiy's statements are consistent with ISW's general observation regarding the pace of Russian operations along the entire frontline in Ukraine. The Russian offensive operation in Luhansk Oblast is likely nearing culmination, if it has not already culminated, although Russia has committed most elements of at least three divisions to the Svatove-Kreminna line.³ Russian forces have made only minimal tactical gains along the entire Luhansk Oblast frontline over the last week, and Ukrainian forces have likely recently managed to conduct counterattacks and regain territory in Luhansk Oblast.⁴ ISW has been unable to confirm the commitment of the 2nd Motor Rifle Division (1st Guards Tank Army, Western Military District) to the offensive in Luhansk Oblast since certain unspecified elements reportedly deployed to Luhansk Oblast in January--the only large formation assessed to be operational but not yet engaged.⁵ It is unclear if the 2nd Motor Rifle Division has already deployed and has not been observed or if it is waiting to deploy to either Luhansk Oblast or other areas of the front. The commitment of two or three of the 2nd Motor Rifle Division's constituent regiments, however, is unlikely to significantly delay or reverse the culmination of the Russian offensive in Luhansk Oblast, especially considering that at least five Russian regiments have definitely been fully committed in this area, likely along with several others, but Russian forces have still been unable to make substantial gains.⁶

The overall Wagner Group offensive on Bakhmut additionally appears to be nearing culmination. Ukrainian military sources have noted a markedly decreased number of attacks in and around Bakhmut, particularly over the last few days.⁷ Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin has recently emphasized the toll that a reported lack of ammunition is having on Wagner's ability to pursue offensives on Bakhmut and stated on March 15 that due to ammunition shortages and heavy fighting, Wagner has had to expand its encirclement of Bakhmut.⁸ Prigozhin notably claimed that Wagner captured Zalizianske, a tiny rural settlement 9km northwest of Bakhmut on the east side of the E40 Bakhmut-Slovyansk highway, which indicates that Wagner forces are likely conducting opportunistic localized attacks on settlements further north of Bakhmut that are small and relatively easier to seize.⁹

Recent Wagner gains north of Bakhmut suggest that manpower, artillery, and equipment losses in fights for Bakhmut will likely constrain Wagner's ability to complete a close encirclement of Bakhmut or gain substantial territory in battles for urban areas. The capture of Zalizianske and other similarly small towns north of Bakhmut and east of the E40 highway is extremely unlikely to enhance Wagner's ability to capture Bakhmut itself or make other operationally significant gains. It therefore is likely that Wagner's offensive on Bakhmut is increasingly nearing culmination. Russian forces would likely have to commit significant reserves to prevent this culmination. They may be able to do so, as ISW has observed elements of Russian airborne regiments in and around Bakhmut that do not seem to be heavily committed to the fighting at the moment. The Russians might also commit elements of other conventional units, including possibly the 2nd Motorized Rifle Division, or units drawn from elsewhere in the theater. But it seems that the Wagner offensive itself will not be sufficient to seize Bakhmut. Russian forces are not pursuing active or successful offensive operations elsewhere in theater, and as the pace of operations slows along critical sectors of the front, Ukrainian forces likely have an increased opportunity to regain the initiative.

International journalists reportedly obtained the Kremlin's long-term strategy document for destabilizing Moldova and reintegrating it back into the Russian sphere of influence by 2030.¹⁰ *The Kyiv Independent*, *Yahoo News*, and several other international news partners released details of the Moldova report, reportedly originating from the same document as the leaked Belarus annexation strategy document.¹¹ Moldovan Prime Minister Dorin Recean reportedly saw the document and stated that it is consistent with Moldova's assessments of Russia's ongoing campaign to undermine Moldovan sovereignty.¹² ISW is unable to confirm the existence or authenticity of this document, but the document's political lines of effort are consistent with recent Russian efforts to destabilize Moldova.¹³

Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin commented on the reports about the dismissal of the Russian Commander of the Airborne (VDV) Forces Colonel General Mikhail Teplinsky (first reported on January 20) - likely revealing Teplinsky's affiliation with Wagner. Prigozhin stated on March 15 that Teplinsky is an honest and competent commander whom he had met before the war in passing and during "tragic" operations near Berestove, Donetsk Oblast.¹⁴ Prigozhin stated that one of the possible reasons behind Teplinsky's dismissal was his refusal to lie about the situation on the frontlines. Prigozhin also claimed that Teplinsky expressed his "honest opinion," which had saved many paratroopers. Prigozhin stated that he hopes that commanders like Teplinsky and former theater commander in Ukraine, Army General Sergey Surovikin, would take senior positions in the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD). Ukrainian intelligence previously linked Surovikin to Wagner, and Prigozhin's praise for Teplinsky is similar to the praise he offered Surovikin in October 2022.¹⁵ ISW previously observed Wagner-affiliated milblogger claims about Teplinsky's dismissal on January 20 attributed to a reported disagreement with the Russian General Staff.¹⁶ These claims emerged only nine days after Surovikin's dismissal from the position of theater commander and his new subordination under Chief of the Russian General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov on January 11.¹⁷ Gerasimov may have removed Teplinsky as a result of his affiliation with Wagner, if the reports about his dismissal are true.

The Russian State Duma adopted the law on punishment for "discreditation" of all participants of the "special military operation" in Ukraine on March 14 to foster self-censorship within Russian society. Individuals found guilty of discrediting participants in combat operations will receive a fine of up to five million rubles (\$65,530), up to five years of correctional or

forced labor, or up to seven years in prison.¹⁸ Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin responded to a journalist's question about the law on March 15 stating that while he initiated and supported this law, he expected that it would not protect Wagner commanders and the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) from criticism.¹⁹ Prigozhin noted that he is not worried about being accused of discrediting the Russian MoD because he "only speaks the truth" and has lawyers review all of his "carefully worded" social media posts. Prigozhin also implied that Russia cannot physically arrest 146 million Russians, further indicating that this law aims to encourage self-censorship among Russians and hinting that many Russians share his views critical of the MoD.

Continued Russian efforts to portray the war in Ukraine as existential to Russian domestic security by establishing additional air defense installations in areas that will never see hostilities is reportedly sparking internal backlash. Russian independent opposition outlet *The Insider* reported on March 14 that Russian forces are establishing additional S-400 air defense systems in residential areas and protected nature zones in Moscow, generating backlash for potentially endangering civilians and cutting down heavily forested areas for the installations.²⁰ *The Insider* reported that Kremlin-affiliated Telegram channels denied reports of the additional air defense installations.²¹ The Bryansk Oblast Duma reported on March 9 that Russian State Duma Defense Committee Head Andrey Kartapolov proposed using public utilities payments to fund the installation of air defense systems to defend against "terrorist attacks."²² The Bryansk Oblast Duma later removed this initiative from its website after the initiative garnered public attention on March 15 and blamed its publication on unspecified hackers.²³

Russian President Vladimir Putin used his March 15 meeting with the Russian Prosecutor General's Office to continue to bolster his reputation as an involved and effective wartime leader.²⁴ Putin identified several lines of the war effort for the Prosecutor General's Office to regulate and improve upon, including timely payment and social support to Russian military personnel and their families, timely payment for defense industrial base (DIB) workers, proper usage of the DIB's allocated funds, law enforcement efforts in occupied Ukraine, and measures to support and protect orphaned children. Putin praised the Prosecutor General's Office for its ongoing efforts but emphasized throughout his speech that Russia needs more weapons and protection against external threats. Putin has attempted to reinvigorate his image as a wartime leader since late 2022 by framing himself as mobilizing the Russian DIB to a robust wartime footing.²⁵ He is also working to mobilize the DIB, but publicized meetings of this type are more likely staged for imagistic purposes than effective.

Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Syrian President Bashar Assad in Moscow, Russia on March 15. NOTE: A version of this text will also appear in *The Critical Threat Project's (CTP) March 15 Iran Update.*

Russian news outlet *RIA Novosti* claimed that Kremlin Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov said that topics for discussion included Syria-Russian relations, Syrian post-war reconstruction, and Syrian-Turkish relations.²⁶ According to the Kremlin readout of the meeting, Assad thanked Putin for the Russian military's "decisive contribution" in Syria.²⁷ Putin likely used the meeting to foster relationships with international partner states such as Syria and maintain Russia's stake in Levantine affairs. Assad regime officials used the meeting to discuss issues surrounding the attempted and struggling Ankara-Damascus rapprochement with their Russian counterparts. State-affiliated Syrian media refuted recent Turkish claims that ministerial-level Iran-Syria-Russia-Turkey quadrilateral rapprochement talks

would occur in Moscow on March 15 and 16, as CTP previously reported.²⁸ The Assad regime's decision to discuss rapprochement issues with Russian officials after refusing to participate in the quadrilateral meetings may be part of a negotiating strategy intended to strengthen the Syrian position with intentional ambiguity.

Key Takeaways

- **The overall pace of Russian operations in Ukraine appears to have decreased compared to previous weeks.**
- **The overall Wagner Group offensive on Bakhmut appears to be nearing culmination.**
- **International journalists reportedly obtained the Kremlin's long-term strategy document for destabilizing and reintegrating Moldova back into the Russian sphere of influence by 2030.**
- **Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin commented on the reports about the dismissal of the Russian Commander of the Airborne Forces Mikhail Teplinsky - likely revealing Teplinsky's affiliation with Wagner.**
- **The Russian State Duma adopted the law on punishment for "discreditation" of all participants of the "special military operation" in Ukraine on March 14 to foster self-censorship in Russian society.**
- **Continued Russian efforts to portray the war in Ukraine as existential to Russian domestic security by establishing additional air defense installations in areas that will never see hostilities is reportedly sparking internal backlash.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin used his March 15 meeting with the Russian Prosecutor General's Office to continue to bolster his reputation as an involved and effective wartime leader.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Syrian President Bashar al Assad in Moscow, Russia on March 15.**
- **Russian forces did not conduct any confirmed ground attacks northwest of Svatove and conducted limited ground attacks on the Svatove-Kreminna line.**
- **Russian forces continued advancing in and around Bakhmut and conducted ground attacks along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line.**
- **A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces attempted to conduct offensive actions across the Kakhovka Reservoir in Kherson Oblast.**
- **The Kremlin reportedly tasked the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) to recruit 400,000 contract servicemen starting on April 1.**
- **Ukrainian partisans killed a Russian collaborator in an IED attack in Melitopol, Zaporizhia Oblast.**

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.

- Russian Main Effort—Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1—Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2—Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort—Southern Axis
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Activities in Russian-occupied Areas

Russian Main Effort—Eastern Ukraine

Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1—Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and continue offensive operations into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

Russian forces did not conduct any confirmed ground attacks northwest of Svatove on March 15. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that six Russian assault groups of the 6th Combined Arms Army (Western Military District) seized part of an unspecified industrial zone and unspecified Ukrainian positions in the Kupyansk direction, but ISW is unable to confirm the MoD's vague claim.²⁹

Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks along the Svatove-Kreminna line and south of Kreminna on March 15. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Bilohorivka (12km south of Kreminna) and Spirne (26km south of Kreminna).³⁰ A Russian source claimed that the Russian 144th Motorized Rifle Division (20th Guards Combined Arms Army, Western Military District) is conducting positional battles along the Ploshchanka-Zhuravka gully line northwest of Kreminna and southwest of Dibrova (5km southwest of Kreminna).³¹ Another Russian source claimed that Russian forces attacked Bilohorivka, Nevske (18km northwest of Bilohorivka), and Makiivka (23km northwest of Kreminna), and advanced towards Yampolivka (17km west of Kreminna).³² A Ukrainian source claimed that a Ukrainian tank used foggy weather to conduct a surprise indirect fire attack against Russian positions 20km away near Lysychansk.³³

Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2—Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia's proxies in Donbas)

Russian forces continued advancing in and around Bakhmut on March 15. Geolocated footage posted on March 14 shows Wagner Group forces fighting for new positions about 4km northwest of Bakhmut, indicating that Wagner has advanced northwest of Bakhmut towards the Bohdanivka-Khromove line.³⁴ Geolocated footage posted on March 15 additionally shows that Russian forces have advanced to new positions in northern Bakhmut, just east of the AZOM complex.³⁵ Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin claimed that Wagner fighters captured Zaliznianske (9km northwest of Bakhmut) and are "expanding the encirclement of Bakhmut," which was amplified by numerous milbloggers.³⁶ Russian milbloggers claimed that Wagner made additional gradual advances northwest of Bakhmut near Bohdanivka, Dubovo-Vasylivka, and Orikhovo-Vasylivka, and one milblogger suggested that these gains may allow Russian forces to open an avenue of advance towards Siversk (about 30km northeast of Bakhmut).³⁷ Russian milbloggers also claimed that Wagner fighters continue to fight in the tunnels of the AZOM complex in northern Bakhmut and have advanced across

Korsunskoho Street towards the Bakhmut Industrial College in southern Bakhmut.³⁸ Russian sources reported fighting near Ivanivske (5km west of Bakhmut) and claimed that Ukrainian forces are counterattacking in this area.³⁹ One milblogger claimed that Russian troops completely cover the Bakhmut-Khromove route with ATGM fire.⁴⁰ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian troops repelled Russian attacks northwest of Bakhmut near Orikhovo-Vasylivka (12km northwest), Yahidne (1km northwest), and Bohdanivka (6km northwest) and west of Bakhmut near Khromove (3km west).⁴¹

Russian forces continued ground attacks along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City frontline on March 15. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations in the Avdiivka area near Stepove (8km northwest of Avdiivka), Kamianka (4km northeast of Avdiivka), Severne (5km west of Avdiivka), and Novokalynove (13km northwest of Avdiivka); on the northwestern outskirts of Donetsk City near Nevelske, Pervomaiske, and Vodyane; and on the southwestern outskirts of Donetsk City near Marinka, Pobieda, and Novomykhailivka.⁴² The spokesperson for the Ukrainian Joint Press Center of the Tavriisk Defense Forces, Colonel Oleksiy Dmytrashkivskiy, stated that Russian forces conducted five attacks against Ukrainian positions on the night of March 14 to 15 in this direction.⁴³ Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces continue to attack towards Ukrainian fortifications in Avdiivka and near Nevelske and Pervomaiske and are fighting in western Marinka, where geolocated footage shows Russian forces have made marginal advances toward Lesi Ukrainky street.⁴⁴ The Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) People's Militia posted footage of the 5th Brigade of the 1st DNR Army Corps striking Ukrainian forces in Marinka.⁴⁵

Russian forces continued offensive operations in western Donetsk Oblast on March 15. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian troops conducted unsuccessful offensive actions near Vuhledar, 30km southwest of Donetsk City.⁴⁶ The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Ukrainian troops in this area conducted unsuccessful attacks on Russian forward positions in unspecified areas on March 15.⁴⁷ A Russian milblogger posted footage of mortarmen of the 5th Separate Guards Tank Brigade (36th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) firing on Ukrainian strongholds in the dacha area southeast of Vuhledar.⁴⁸ The Ukrainian Ministry of Defense posted an image on March 14 reportedly of a Russian diary found near Vuhledar that shows huge losses during Russian assaults in the area.⁴⁹ The diary details that during assaults over the course of four days, 57 of the 434 Russian soldiers sent into battles survived, which is just over a 13% survival rate.⁵⁰ A milblogger affiliated with Southern Military District (SMD) tank elements discussed footage of elements of the 155th Naval Infantry Brigade detonating a mine near Vuhledar and noted that this demonstrates that Russian forces are rushing operations and failing to employ sound mine-clearing practices.⁵¹

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

A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces attempted to conduct offensive actions across the Dnipro River in Kherson Oblast. The milblogger claimed on March 15 that Ukrainian forces attempted to conduct an amphibious assault from Nikopol, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast across the Kakhovka reservoir towards Russian positions along the east (left) bank of the reservoir in Zaporizhia Oblast.⁵²

Russian forces continue constructing defensive fortifications in southern Ukraine. Satellite imagery posted on March 14 shows an increase in Russian fortifications near Chystopillia, Zaporizhia Oblast (just north of Tokmak) between December 4, 2022, and March 9, 2023. The satellite imagery also

shows that Russian forces have increased the number of barriers and trenches along roads in Kherson Oblast leading into occupied Crimea over the past few months.⁵³ A Russian milblogger published footage on March 15 claiming to show Bashkort Regiment-built Russian fortifications along the Kakhovka Reservoir beach and claimed that Russian forces mined the beach.⁵⁴

A Russian milblogger claimed that the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) is in working order, despite recent international concern over the state of the plant.⁵⁵ The milblogger posted footage on March 14 allegedly visiting the ZNPP.⁵⁶ The milblogger claimed that Rosgvardia servicemen guard the ZNPP, Russian military chemists safely monitor radiation levels, and that there has not been a "critical situation" regarding the safe operation of the plant.⁵⁷ Russian forces continue to attempt to portray themselves as the only responsible body for operating the ZNPP despite continuing to militarize the plant.⁵⁸

Russian forces conducted routine shelling in Zaporizhia, Kherson, and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts on March 15.⁵⁹

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

The Kremlin reportedly tasked the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) to recruit 400,000 contract servicemen starting April 1.⁶⁰ Kremlin-affiliated local outlet *URA.Ru* reported that different Russian federal subjects are receiving quotas for recruitment - with Chelyabinsk and Sverdlovsk oblasts each receiving orders for 10,000 contract servicemen, for example.⁶¹ Military recruitment centers will carry out most of the preliminary work, and local governors will disseminate information regarding recruitment campaigns.⁶² Media organizations and press services of municipalities will also advertise contract military service online and make public announcements in their communities. Some local administrations are preparing to offer additional enlistment bonuses to recruits of 300,000 rubles (\$3,932). The Russian MoD did not issue a formal announcement of a contract service recruitment campaign, and Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov noted that the Kremlin is not considering launching a second mobilization wave at this time.⁶³

Russian military recruitment centers have reportedly begun advertising contract service in select regions. Civilian men in Lipetsk, Penza, and Voronezh oblasts reported receiving notices to appear in military recruitment centers to "update their military records."⁶⁴ ISW observed the distribution of similar summonses prior to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and during the summer volunteer recruitment campaign. The summonses are not mobilization or conscription notices, and Russian recruitment centers have been using these summonses to lure and coerce men into enlisting. The Kremlin's renewed volunteer recruitment campaign is unlikely to recruit the desired number of contract servicemen – just as the previous contract recruitment campaigns failed to do before the full-scale invasion and during the summer of 2022. Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu announced on December 21, 2022, that the Russian Armed Forces seeks to employ 521,000 contract servicemen by the end of 2023.⁶⁵

Renewed volunteer recruitment campaigns are also unlikely to generate combat-effective forces, as Russian forces continue to lack competent junior officers and commanders and suffer from a general lack of professionalism within the ranks. A Russian milblogger reported that many of his acquaintances serving in Ukraine were rapidly promoted to lieutenant ranks.⁶⁶ The milblogger noted that Russian sergeants should undergo accelerated six-month lieutenant courses before becoming lieutenants.⁶⁷

Another Russian milblogger expressed surprise at commanders' "managerial illiteracy" when he visited the frontlines. The milblogger noted that the Russian MoD needs to teach commanders proper management and claimed that Russian commanders are not helping with the organization of volunteer elements into one unit.⁶⁸ The milblogger suggested that the Russian Armed Forces follow US tactics and incorporate civilian contractors to teach commanders management skills. Another milblogger claimed that commanders of an unnamed military unit in southern Russia sunk two combat vehicles and killed several servicemen when training a unit how to cross water barriers.⁶⁹

Wagner Group continues to expand its recruitment campaigns to reach unusual audiences. Wagner financier Yevgeny Prigozhin responded to a journalist's question about Wagner advertising recruitment drives on adult entertainment websites and Telegram channels.⁷⁰ Prigozhin denied authorizing such ads but noted that it is a good idea to recruit forces on such websites.

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

Ukrainian partisans killed a Russian collaborator in an improvised explosive device (IED) attack on March 14. Russian and Ukrainian sources reported on March 14 and 15 that Ukrainian partisans used an IED to blow up the car of Russian collaborator Ivan Tkach in occupied Melitopol, Zaporizhia Oblast, on March 14.⁷¹ Ukrainian Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov stated on March 15 that Tkach was one of the first collaborators to provide Russian forces with transportation in Melitopol, including co-opting bus lines to transport Russian forces to the frontlines.⁷²

Russian forces and officials continue to deport Ukrainian children and other vulnerable people to Russia under the guise of rest and treatment. Deputy Ukrainian Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk stated on March 15 that Russian forces are resorting to gross deception of vulnerable people and are offering children rest and rehabilitation in Russia.⁷³ Vereshchuk stated that some Ukrainian parents give written consent for their children to travel to Russia but are later unable to retrieve their children.⁷⁴ Forced deportation of children under the guise of rest and rehabilitation schemes likely forms the backbone of a large-scale Russian campaign to depopulate areas of Ukraine that may amount to the 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 assessed.⁷⁵

Russian forces and occupation authorities continue to intensify law enforcement measures as they suffer losses in occupied territories. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on March 15 that Russian occupation authorities are intensifying law enforcement measures in individual settlements of Kherson Oblast after Ukrainian forces inflicted fire damage on the west (right) bank of the Dnipro River on March 12 and 13.⁷⁶ The Ukrainian General Staff also stated that Russian occupation authorities are conducting counter-sabotage measures in an unspecified settlement in occupied Kherson Oblast after alleging that locals had murdered a Russian soldier in the settlement.⁷⁷ Russian occupation authorities are continuing efforts to integrate occupied territories into the Russian legal and administrative systems. Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) Head Leonid Pasechnik announced on March 14 that he signed two laws to further define the administrative structure in occupied Luhansk Oblast according to Russian standards.⁷⁸ Pasechnik stated that the new laws regulate the internal structure of occupied Luhansk Oblast by establishing 11 city and 17 municipal

districts.⁷⁹ Pasechnik claimed that the laws serve as the basis for organizing public authority in cities and districts, as well as allowing local residents to receive social support and medical services.⁸⁰

Significant activity in Belarus (ISW assesses that a Russian or Belarusian attack into northern Ukraine in early 2023 is extraordinarily unlikely and has thus restructured this section of the update. It will no longer include counter-indicators for such an offensive.

ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian military activity in Belarus, but these are not indicators that Russian and Belarusian forces are preparing for an imminent attack on Ukraine from Belarus. ISW will revise this text and its assessment if it observes any unambiguous indicators that Russia or Belarus is preparing to attack northern Ukraine.

Russian forces continue to train in Belarus. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on March 15 that Russian forces train on an unspecified training ground in Belarus.⁸¹

The Belarusian Ministry of Defense (MoD) continued its March initiative to call up reservists for training as part of planned combat readiness checks. The Belarusian MoD claimed on March 15 that the military commissariat in the Oktyabrsky Raion of Minsk began calling up reservists as part of Belarusian measures to increase military readiness.⁸²

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://armyinform dot com.ua/2023/03/15/aktyvnist-nastupalnyh-dij-voroga-u-porivnyanni-z-mynulym-tyzhnem-](https://armyinform.com.ua/2023/03/15/aktyvnist-nastupalnyh-dij-voroga-u-porivnyanni-z-mynulym-tyzhnem-)

znachno-znyzylasya/

² <https://armyinform dot com.ua/2023/03/15/aktyvnist-nastupalnyh-dij-voroga-u-porivnyanni-z-mynulym-tyzhnem-znachno-znyzylasya/>

³ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-19-2023>

⁴ <https://focus dot ua/uk/voennye-novosti/554474-osvobodili-neskolko-sel-vsu-pokazali-kak-probivayutsya-k-svatovo-video>; <https://focus dot ua/voennye-novosti/554474-osvobodili-neskolko-sel-vsu-pokazali-kak-probivayutsya-k-svatovo-video>;
<https://twitter.com/EjShahid/status/1635971521914056707>;
<https://twitter.com/GloOouD/status/1635951430367322116>;
<https://twitter.com/EjShahid/status/1635965644972630016>;
<https://twitter.com/PaulJawin/status/1635935876499816448>;

⁵ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-19-2023>

⁶ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-19-2023>

⁷ <https://armyinform.com dot ua/2023/03/12/na-bahmutskom-nyapryamku-vidbuvsya-161-obstril/>;
<https://armyinform.com dot ua/2023/03/11/za-mynulu-dobu-53-boyezitknennya-ta-ponad-pivtory-sotni-artobstriliv-sergij-cherevatyj/>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02JWYwkfVD7zMgRMv6RUPCYPJd7AR3aqZJuTb8vzasRA4ArCGpeXLma1xS666RKSXX>

⁸ https://t.me/concordgroup_official/591

⁹ https://t.me/concordgroup_official/591

¹⁰ https://news.yahoo.com/exclusive-russias-secret-document-for-destabilizing-moldova-230008434.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly90LmNvLW&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAADAKiklzhZo179DFmzJXiq0TOE-UMTIljpkYAh1ys0v-KdJ1mRWX-VW6UXPvyrV_bD85JLpYq951Vt3yp6Wcr5hrvHw1udOe2Fq1D2oq5Zd86LWYzpeunbUqdtSpFbmm0BuSyUytpmI9RBIWX8ToUBAIncpk1Dk2ivEn2bqNXrY9; <https://kyivdependent dot com/investigations/leaked-document-exposes-kremlins-10-year-plan-to-undermine-moldova>; <https://epl.delfi dot ee/artikkel/120158094/me-otsime-ules-kremlis-salajase-moldova-plaani-autori-ja-helistasime-talle>; <https://www.expressen dot se/nyheter/ny-lacka-inifran-kreml-avslojar-putins-hemliga-planer-for-moldavien/>; <https://dossier dot center/mld-gas/>; <https://frontstory dot pl/moldawia-rosja-putin-plan-tajny-dokument-kreml/>; <https://www.rise dot md/articol/planul-kremlinului-pentru-moldova/>; <https://www.sueddeutsche dot de/projekte/artikel/politik/russland-moldau-strategiepapier-e302625/>; <https://www1.wdr dot de/nachrichten/guten-morgen-112.html>; <https://www.ndr dot de/nachrichten/info/Internes-Strategiepapier-Russlands-Plan-fuer-Moldau,audio1339340.html>

¹¹ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-21-2023>

¹² https://news.yahoo.com/exclusive-russias-secret-document-for-destabilizing-moldova-230008434.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly90LmNvLW&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAADAKiklzhZo179DFmzJXiq0TOE-UMTIljpkYAh1ys0v-KdJ1mRWX-VW6UXPvyrV_bD85JLpYq951Vt3yp6Wcr5hrvHw1udOe2Fq1D2oq5Zd86LWYzpeunbUqdtSpFbmm0BuSyUytpmI9RBIWX8ToUBAIncpk1Dk2ivEn2bqNXrY9

¹³ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-march-10-2023>;

<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-22-2023>;

<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-23-2023>;

<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-28-2023>;

<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-24-2023>

¹⁴ https://t.me/concordgroup_official/594

¹⁵ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-march-12-2023>

¹⁶ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-21-2023>

¹⁷ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-11-2023>

¹⁸ <https://t.me/tvrain/63817>; <http://notes.citeam.org/mobilization-mar-13-14#bilj>

¹⁹ https://t.me/concordgroup_official/592

²⁰ <https://theins dot ru/politika/259760>

²¹ <https://theins dot ru/politika/259760>

²² <https://archive.ph/OTTOU#selection-1795.95-1795.207>

²³ https://t.me/rbc_news/70276; <https://t.me/boduma32/1705>; <https://duma32.ru/events/8520/>;

<https://meduza.io/news/2023/03/15/bryanskie-deputaty-predlozhili-vklyuchit-rashody-na-pvo-v-kommunalnye-platezhi-dlya-naseleniya-posle-rossiyskogo-vtorzheniya-v-ukrainu-region-regulyarno-atakuyut-bespilotniki>

²⁴ <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70678>

²⁵ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-12-2023>;

<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-10-2023>;

<https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-december-31>;

<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-december-17>;

<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-march-14-2023>

²⁶ <https://ria.ru/20230315/siriya-1858023809.html>

²⁷ <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70680>

²⁸ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-march-13-2023>

²⁹ https://t.me/mod_russia/24826

³⁰

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02JWYwKfVD7zMgRMv6RUPCYPJd7AR3aqZJuTb8vzasRA4ArCGpeXLma1xS666RKSXl>

³¹ <https://t.me/rybar/44666>

³² <https://t.me/wargonzo/11395>

³³ https://t.me/k_2_54/62

³⁴ <https://twitter.com/klinger66/status/1635775715819024384>;

<https://twitter.com/SerDerDaniels/status/1635722648218112000>; <https://t.me/Tsaplienکو/28064>

³⁵ <https://twitter.com/klinger66/status/1636039610437443588>;

<https://twitter.com/herooftheday10/status/1636014850475188225>

³⁶ https://t.me/concordgroup_official/591; https://t.me/boris_rozhin/80489; <https://t.me/rybar/44663>;

https://t.me/smotri_z/12303; <https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonov/23280>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/54740>;

<https://t.me/readovkanews/54734>; <https://t.me/NeoficialniyBeZsonov/23273>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/54713>;

https://t.me/boris_rozhin/80480; <https://t.me/milchronicles/1669>

³⁷ <https://t.me/rybar/44663>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/54740>; <https://t.me/readovkanews/54734>;

<https://t.me/readovkanews/54713>; https://t.me/boris_rozhin/80514; <https://t.me/brussinf/5762>;

https://t.me/rlz_the_kraken/57067

³⁸ <https://t.me/rybar/44663>; <https://t.me/milchronicles/1670>; https://t.me/boris_rozhin/80514;

<https://t.me/brussinf/5762>; https://t.me/rlz_the_kraken/57067; https://t.me/rlz_the_kraken/57047

³⁹ https://t.me/boris_rozhin/80514; <https://t.me/brussinf/5762>; https://t.me/rlz_the_kraken/57067;

<https://t.me/voenkorkotenok/46087>; <https://t.me/wargonzo/11395>

⁴⁰ <https://t.me/voenkorkotenok/46112>

⁴¹

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02JWYwKfVD7zMgRMv6RUPCYPJd7AR3aqZJuTb8vzasRA4ArCGpeXLma1xS666RKSXl>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0cpjKpGaViPqCndK6MWxQPvWYFuGieviVRT19ssjqjJv7JnYMWfzUWzZuxbGVL3Yl>

⁴²

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02JWYwKfVD7zMgRMv6RUPCYPJd7AR3aqZJuTb8vzasRA4ArCGpeXLma1xS666RKSXl>

13

[eXLma1xS666RKSRL](#);

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0cpjKpGaViPqCndK6MWxQPVWYFuGieviVRT19ssjqjJv7JnYMWfzUWzZuxbGVL3YI>

⁴³ <https://armyinform dot com.ua/2023/03/15/aktyvnist-nastupalnyh-dij-voroga-u-porivnyanni-z-mynulym-tyzhnem-znachno-znyzylasya/>

⁴⁴ https://twitter.com/mon_mon_1064552/status/1635937351498371072;

<https://twitter.com/PaulJawin/status/1635930315628634112>; https://t.me/boris_rozhin/80496;

<https://t.me/tankistrossii100/1065>; <https://t.me/wargonzo/11395>; <https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/46090>

⁴⁵ https://t.me/nm_dnr/10009

⁴⁶

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02JWYwkfVD7zMgRMv6RUPCYPJd7AR3aqZJuTb8vzasRA4ArCGp eXLma1xS666RKSRL>

⁴⁷ https://t.me/mod_russia/24828; https://t.me/mod_russia/24829

⁴⁸ https://t.me/boris_rozhin/80465

⁴⁹ <https://twitter.com/DefenceU/status/1635610726734626816?s=20> ; https://twitter.com/Euan_MacDonald

⁵⁰ <https://twitter.com/DefenceU/status/1635610726734626816?s=20> ; https://twitter.com/Euan_MacDonald

⁵¹ https://t.me/grey_zone/17753 ; <https://t.me/tankistrossii100/1044>

⁵² https://t.me/Sladkov_plus/7339

⁵³ <https://twitter.com/bradyafr/status/1635725244852838400?s=20>; <https://t.co/km9lFOldbe>

⁵⁴ https://t.me/Sladkov_plus/7339; https://t.me/Sladkov_plus/7341

⁵⁵ <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/pressreleases/update-150-iaea-director-general-statement-on-situation-in-ukraine>; <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/pressreleases/update-148-iaea-director-general-statement-on-situation-in-ukraine>; <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/pressreleases/update-144-iaea-director-general-statement-on-situation-in-ukraine>; <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/pressreleases/update-149-iaea-director-general-statement-on-situation-in-ukraine>; <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/pressreleases/update-148-iaea-director-general-statement-on-situation-in-ukraine>;

⁵⁶ https://t.me/Sladkov_plus/7336

⁵⁷ https://t.me/Sladkov_plus/7336

⁵⁸ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-december-8>;

<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-25>;

<https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-6>

<https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-8>

⁵⁹

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0cpjKpGaViPqCndK6MWxQPVWYFuGieviVRT19ssjqjJv7JnYMWfzUWzZuxbGVL3YI>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02JWYwkfVD7zMgRMv6RUPCYPJd7AR3aqZJuTb8vzasRA4ArCGp eXLma1xS666RKSRL>;

<https://www.facebook.com/OperationalCommandSouth/posts/pfbid032XMeGntTqA6jf4U5vrixMkEuaeGgbC9252rPvki7fRNzKUHabfAaN4vQvkMpdwj4I>; https://t.me/Yevtushenko_E/2903;

⁶⁰ <https://vot-tak dot tv/novosti/10-03-2023-nabor-kontraktnikov-minoborony>

⁶¹ <https://www.svoboda.org/a/smi-v-rossii-nachinaetsya-novyy-nabor-kontraktnikov-tselj---400-tysyach-chelovek/32318394.html>

⁶² <https://vot-tak dot tv/novosti/10-03-2023-nabor-kontraktnikov-minoborony>

⁶³ <https://tass dot ru/obschestvo/17264595>

⁶⁴ <https://meduza dot io/news/2023/03/15/v-regionah-rossii-nachali-rassylat-povestki-dlya-utochneniya-dannyh-kreml-govorit-cto-eto-obychnaya-praktika>; <https://t.me/mobilizationnews/9998>; <https://t.me/meduzalive/80289>; <https://t.me/govvrn36/9844>; . <https://www.svoboda dot org/a/smi-v-rossii-nachinaetsya-novyy-nabor-kontraktnikov-tselj---400-tysyach-chelovek/32318394.html>

⁶⁵ <https://telega dot ph/Tezisy-vystupleniya-Ministra-oborony-Rossijskoj-Federacii-na-rasshirenom-zasedanii-Kollegii-Ministerstva-oborony-12-21>

⁶⁶ https://t.me/notes_veterans/8484

⁶⁷ https://t.me/notes_veterans/8484

⁶⁸ https://t.me/Alekhin_Telega/6534; <https://t.me/vladlentatarsky/19947>

⁶⁹ https://twitter.com/bayraktar_1love/status/1635743193638551567?s=20;

⁷⁰ https://t.me/concordgroup_official/593

⁷¹ <https://t.me/vrogov/8146>; <https://t.me/vrogov/8148>; https://t.me/ivan_fedorov_melitopol/1517;

https://t.me/ivan_fedorov_melitopol/1516

⁷² https://t.me/ivan_fedorov_melitopol/1517; https://t.me/ivan_fedorov_melitopol/1516

⁷³ <https://minre.gov dot ua/2023/03/15/dlya-deportacziyi-okupanty-zamanyuyut-ditej-iz-tot-na-terytoriyu-rf-na-vidpochynok-abo-likuvannya/>

⁷⁴ <https://minre.gov dot ua/2023/03/15/dlya-deportacziyi-okupanty-zamanyuyut-ditej-iz-tot-na-terytoriyu-rf-na-vidpochynok-abo-likuvannya/>

⁷⁵ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-november-16>;

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

<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-26>;

<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-15>

⁷⁶

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02JWYwkfVD7zMgRMv6RUPCYPJd7AR3aqZJuTb8vzasRA4ArCGpeXLma1xS666RKSXXI>

⁷⁷

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02JWYwkfVD7zMgRMv6RUPCYPJd7AR3aqZJuTb8vzasRA4ArCGpeXLma1xS666RKSXXI>

⁷⁸ https://t.me/glava_lnr_info/872

⁷⁹ https://t.me/glava_lnr_info/872

⁸⁰ https://t.me/glava_lnr_info/872

⁸¹

[https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0EExukqVrrGfWSjg6uL6JsFhKVb7oQPybZVejWUECSp3mhkonk4c16S19RE6Yz wW5VI? cft \[0\]=AZXkCXI-LKVR6lOT0hDBT61agDAIpUADumeW6NA JyORUsqxZWjRhcXkItkNOzj aQROjPEDfKxulgG-QGgb8bfsDgNn85B21MCpTThaCkHYgSreQ5Vkw1EAg1ayOpYwvZj7LtQfnfF5P2HwvGNy8fwb& tn =%2CO%2CP-R](https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0EExukqVrrGfWSjg6uL6JsFhKVb7oQPybZVejWUECSp3mhkonk4c16S19RE6Yz wW5VI? cft [0]=AZXkCXI-LKVR6lOT0hDBT61agDAIpUADumeW6NA JyORUsqxZWjRhcXkItkNOzj aQROjPEDfKxulgG-QGgb8bfsDgNn85B21MCpTThaCkHYgSreQ5Vkw1EAg1ayOpYwvZj7LtQfnfF5P2HwvGNy8fwb& tn =%2CO%2CP-R)

⁸²

<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0cpjKpGaViPqCndK6MWxQPvWYFuGieviVRT19ssiqjJv7JnYMWfzUWzZuxbG VL3YI>