

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, September 6, 2023

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September 6, 2023, 5:05pm 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 map that ISW produces daily by showing a dynamic frontline. ISW will update this time-lapse map archive monthly.

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 1pm ET on September 6. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the September 7 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in the Bakhmut and western Zaporizhia Oblast directions and have made gains in western Zaporizhia Oblast as of September 6. Geolocated footage shows that Ukrainian forces have advanced along the trench line west of Verbove (about 20km southeast of Orikhiv), and the Ukrainian General Staff stated that Ukrainian forces achieved unspecified successes in the Robotyne—Novoprokopivka direction south of Orikhiv.[1] The Ukrainian General Staff additionally reported that Ukrainian forces are continuing successful offensive operations south of Bakhmut.[2]

Ukrainian and Russian sources report the Russian defense industrial base (DIB) faces growing challenges in replacing basic supplies in addition to known challenges in rebuilding its stocks of precision weapons. Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence (GUR) Representative Andriy Yusov reported on September 6 that Russia can only produce “dozens” of Kalibr cruise missiles and smaller numbers of Iskander missiles per month, which will not enable Russia to replenish its pre-2022 stocks.[3] Yusov reported that Russia struggles to obtain modern optical equipment, electronics, chips, and circuits and that “gray imports” and smuggling cannot completely cover the Russian DIB’s needs. Russian sources additionally noted that the Russian DIB cannot produce enough rubber to replace worn tires for military equipment vital to frontline operations, and noted that increasing wear on tires will make it difficult for wheeled vehicles to move in muddy, rainy, and icy conditions.[4] The Russian sources claimed that Russian authorities claimed at an unspecified time that they would find solutions to worn tires by mid-August, but the situation has not changed as of September 5.[5] Poor quality and insufficient tires will impose increasing constraints on Russian mobility in the muddy season and winter.

Russian forces conducted a large missile and drone strike against Ukraine overnight on September 5-6. Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces launched seven Kh-101, Kh-555, and Kh-55 air-launched cruise missiles from aircraft operating out of Engels airbase in Saratov Oblast; one Iskander-M ballistic missile; and 25 Shahed 136/131 drones from the Primorsko-Akhtarsk direction.[6] Ukrainian air defenses shot down all eight missiles and 15 drones.[7] Ukrainian officials reported that the Russian strike damaged the port and agricultural infrastructure in Odesa Oblast.[8] Romanian Defense Minister Angel Tilvar stated on September 6 that several pieces of a

Russian drone fell on Romanian territory near its border with Ukraine.[9] The Romanian Ministry of Defense previously denied the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry's September 4 statement that a Russian drone fell on Romanian territory.[10]

Russian sources continue to speculate on the current role and future of dismissed Wagner-affiliated Army General Sergei Surovikin, the former commander of Russia's Aerospace Forces (VKS). Several Russian insider sources and milbloggers remarked that the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) removed Surovikin's profile from the official MoD website other than his video appeal released during the Wagner rebellion asking the group to stand down.[11] The removal of Surovikin's profile is not remarkable in itself — Russian military leadership removed Surovikin as commander of the Aerospace Forces (VKS) in August, and the absence of his profile from the MoD website could be a simple reflection of this fact.[12] Some Russian insider sources additionally claimed that State Duma Deputy and retired Colonel General Viktor Zavarzin stated that Surovikin has taken a new position in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).[13] ISW has previously observed a pattern of Russian generals who underperform in command roles in Ukraine (such as former Eastern Military District (EMD) Commander Alexander Chaiko and former Airborne Forces (VDV) Commander Andrey Serdyukov) being reassigned to external theaters and peripheral locations such as Syria as a form of punishment, while not being entirely removed from the Russian military.[14] Appointing Surovikin to a role in the CIS, which does not appear to be a military or command role, suggests that Russian military leadership is likely continuing the practice of shifting disgraced or ineffective commanders to positions not involved in the war in Ukraine.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced an additional \$175 million military assistance package for Ukraine during an unannounced visit to Kyiv on September 6. The package includes air defense equipment, artillery rounds, and anti-tank weapons.[15] Blinken stated that the United States aims to ensure that Ukraine "has what it needs" to both succeed in the current counteroffensive and to develop long term defensive capabilities.[16] Blinken called Ukrainian progress in the counteroffensive "very, very encouraging." [17]

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in the Bakhmut and western Zaporizhia Oblast directions and have made gains in western Zaporizhia Oblast as of September 6.**
- **Ukrainian and Russian sources report the Russian defense industrial base (DIB) faces growing challenges replacing basic supplies in addition to known challenges rebuilding its stocks of precision weapons.**
- **Russian forces conducted a large missile and drone strike against Ukraine overnight on September 5-6.**
- **Russian sources continue to speculate on the current role and future of dismissed Wagner-affiliated Army General Sergei Surovikin, the former commander of Russia's Aerospace Forces (VKS).**
- **US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced an additional \$175 million military assistance package for Ukraine during an unannounced visit to Kyiv on September 6.**

- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and advanced in some areas on September 6.**
- **Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations in at least two sectors of the front and advanced near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on September 6.**
- **Russian authorities continue crypto-mobilization efforts amid continued rumors of a new wave of general mobilization.**
- **Ukrainian reports indicate that Russian and occupation authorities continue attempts to increase social control in occupied Ukraine by cracking down against pro-Ukrainian materials in occupied schools.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of September 6, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because these 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 the Ukrainian 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

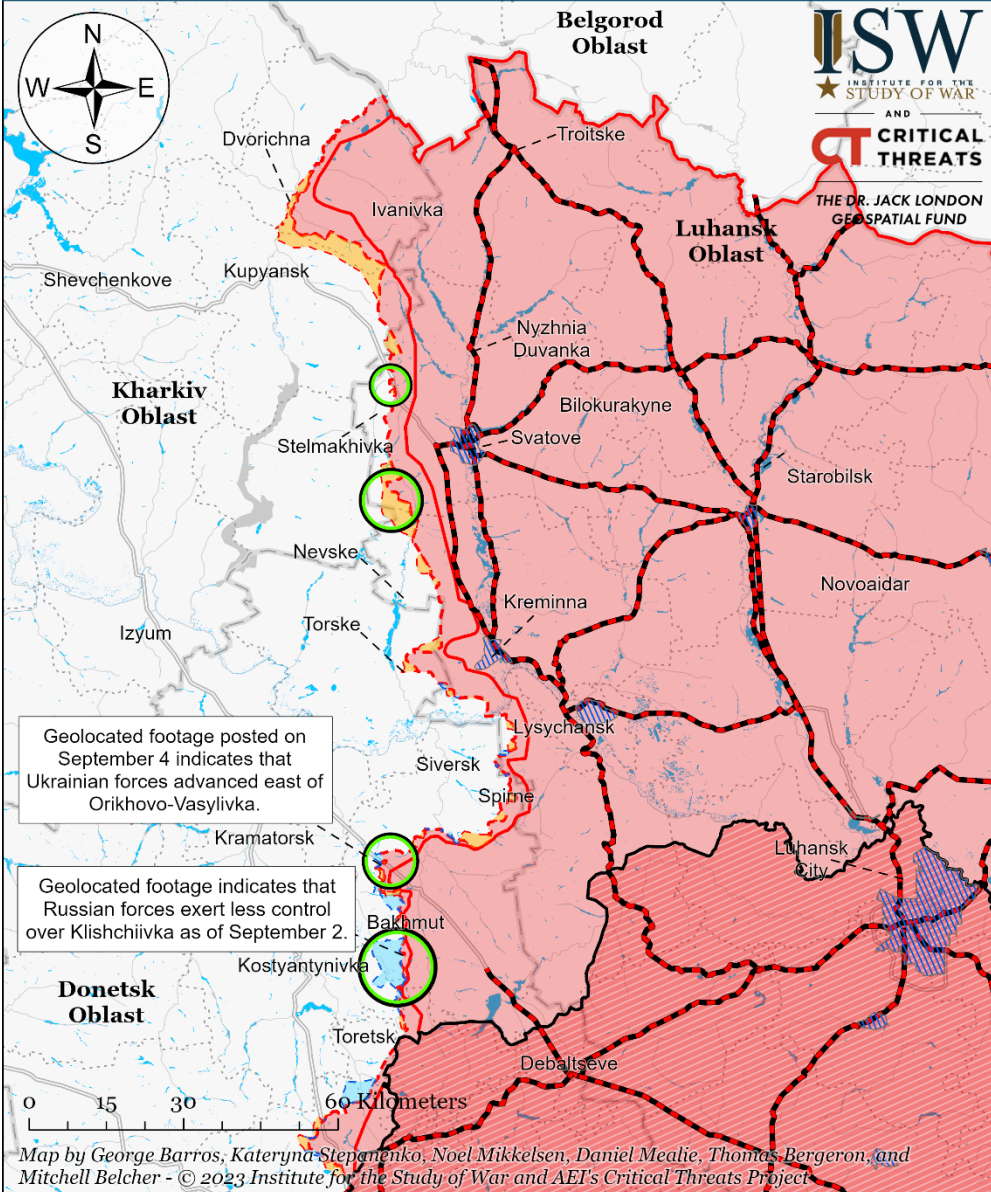
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line and reportedly advanced on September 6. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces improved their tactical positions near Novoyehorivka (15km southwest of Svatove).[18] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces made unspecified advances in an unspecified area near the Zherebets River.[19] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Novoselivske (14km northwest of Svatove) and Novoyehorivka.[20] Ukrainian Ground Forces Commander Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi stated that elements of the newly formed Russian 25th Combined Arms Army (reportedly formed under the Eastern Military District) continued replacing unspecified Russian units operating in the Lyman direction.[21] ISW previously assessed that the 25th Combined Arms Army (CAA) is likely replacing elements of the 41st CAA to enable that formation to redeploy to Zaporizhia Oblast but has not yet independently confirmed this report.[22]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line but did not advance on September 6. The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Serhiivka (12km southwest of Svatove), Dibrova (7km southwest of Kreminna), and the Serebryanske forest area (10km southwest of Kreminna).[23] A Russian milblogger claimed on September 5 that Ukrainian forces continued unsuccessful offensive operations on the Svatove-Kreminna line.[24]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of September 6, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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Geolocated footage posted on September 4 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced east of Orikhovo-Vasylivka.

Geolocated footage indicates that Russian forces exert less control over Klishchiivka as of September 2.

Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, and Mitchell Belcher - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Russian Ground Lines of Communication
- 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

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

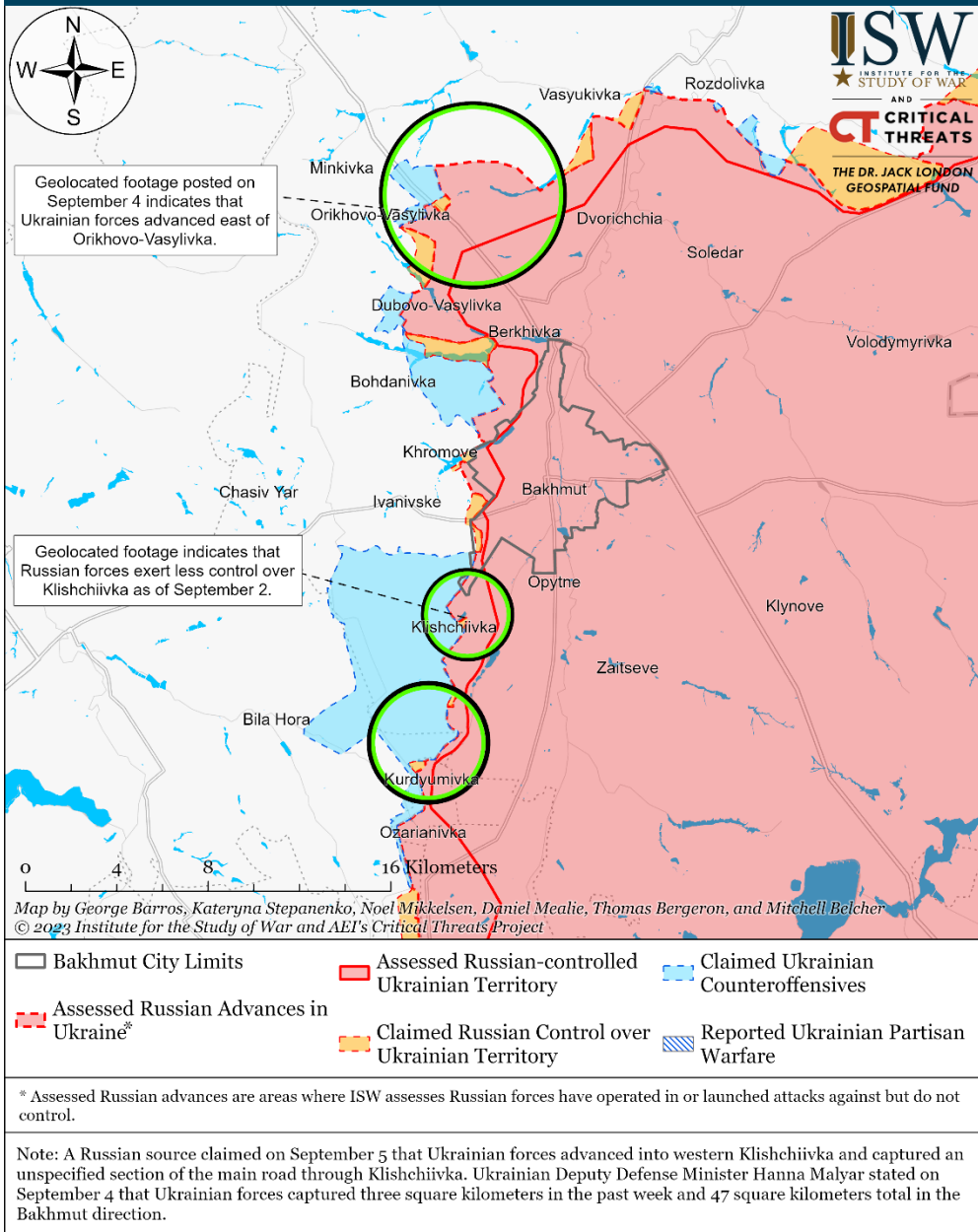
Note: A Russian source claimed on September 4 that Russian forces advanced approximately two kilometers in the Kupyansk direction.

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

Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut and reportedly advanced on September 6. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces achieved partial success in the Bakhmut direction and pushed Russian forces out of positions south of Bakhmut.[25] Ukrainian Ground Forces Commander Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi stated that Ukrainian forces are gradually retaking positions in this area.[26] A Russian milblogger claimed on September 5 and 6 that Ukrainian forces advanced in Klishchiivka (6km southwest of Bakhmut) in the past three days and that Ukrainian forces currently control half of the settlement.[27] Other Russian sources claimed on September 6 that meeting engagements and positional battles are ongoing near Klishchiivka.[28] Russian sources, including the Russian MoD, claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations near Orikhovo-Vasylivka (11km northwest of Bakhmut), Yakovlivka (14km northeast of Bakhmut), Soledar (9km northeast of Bakhmut), Klishchiivka, Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut), and Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut) and have disrupted a Russian ground lines of communications (GLOC) northwest of Klishchiivka.[29] A Russian milblogger claimed on September 5 that Ukrainian forces attacked in the direction of Soledar.[30]

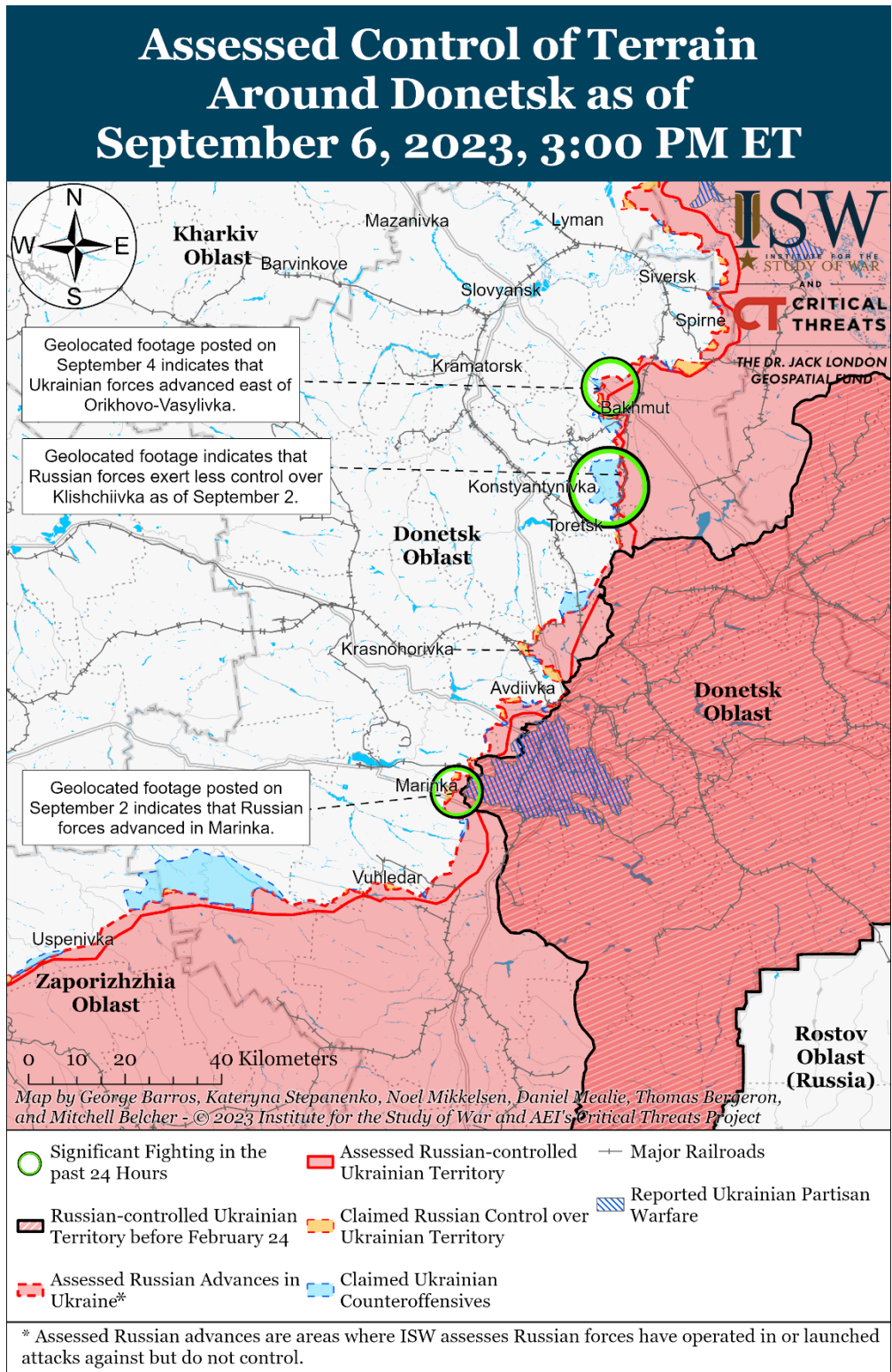
Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut and reportedly advanced on September 6. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Zaliznyanske (9km northwest of Bakhmut), Orikhovo-Vasylivka, Klishchiivka, and Bila Hora (14km southwest of Bakhmut).[31] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces regained control over some of the heights west of Klishchiivka over the past two weeks and still control eastern Klishchiivka.[32] The milblogger claimed that Russian units have partially pushed Ukrainian forces out of positions near Berkhivka (6km northwest of Bakhmut), where positional battles are ongoing.[33]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of September 6, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line and advanced on September 6. Geolocated footage published on September 6 indicates that Ukrainian forces marginally advanced east of Nevelske (14km southwest of Avdiivka).[34] The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked Nevelske and Marinka (on the western outskirts of Donetsk City).[35]

A Russian milblogger claimed on September 5 that Russian forces advanced east of Krasnohorivka (directly west of Donetsk City) along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line.[36]

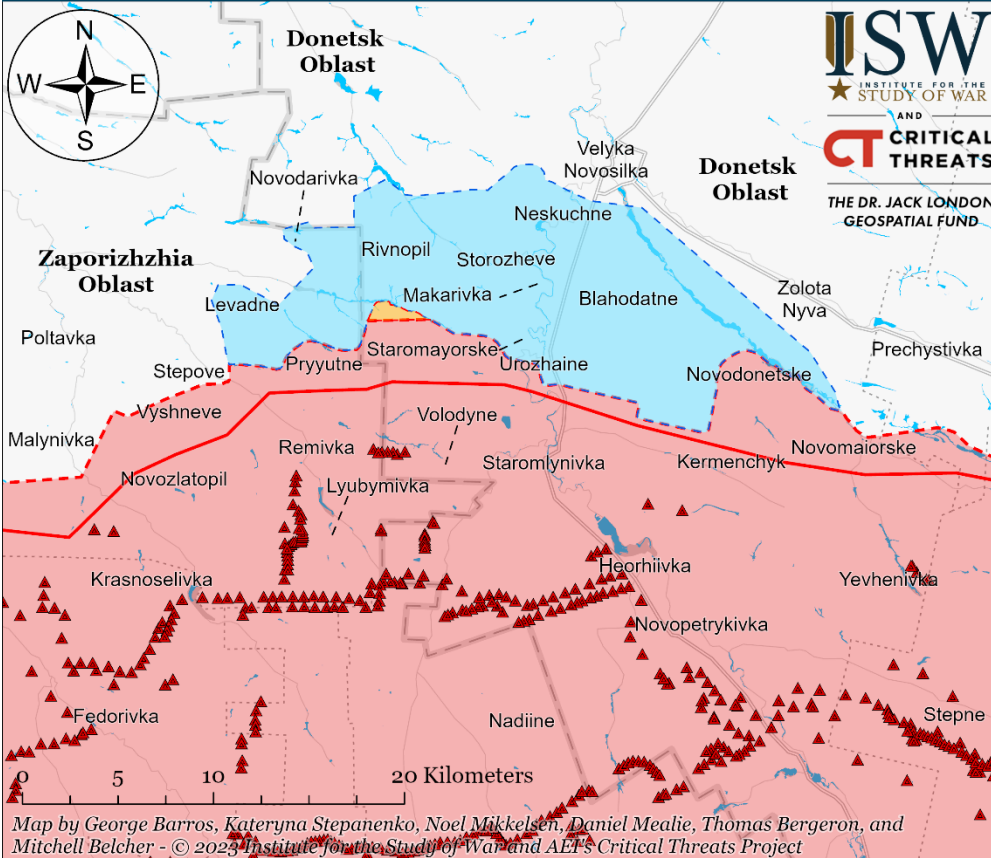


Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on September 6 and did not make any confirmed advances. Russian sources, including the Russian MoD, claimed that Ukrainian forces continued attacking the Novodonetske—Novomayorske line (about 12-18km southeast of Velyka Novosilka) overnight and into September 6.[37] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continue to suffer high losses due to reliable Russian defenses.[38]

Russian forces did not conduct any claimed or confirmed attacks in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on September 6.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of September 6, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

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

Note: A Russian source claimed on September 3 that Ukrainian forces forced Russian forces to withdraw from unspecified heights near Pryyutne, Staromlynivka, and Kermenchyk over the past week.

Ukrainian forces continued to make gains in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on September 6. Geolocated footage shows that Ukrainian forces have advanced along the trench line west of Verbove (about 20km southeast of Orikhiv).[39] Russian milbloggers claimed that heavy fighting continues along the Robotyne—Verbove line and that Ukrainian forces are trying to break through in the direction of Novoprokopivka (2km south of Robotyne).[40] Zaporizhzhia Oblast occupation head Yevgeny Balitsky claimed that Russian forces withdrew from the contested “gray zone” of Robotyne in order to secure more tactically advantageous positions on the periphery of the settlement, and several milbloggers discussed Balitsky’s report as claims that Russian forces have entirely withdrawn from

Robotyne.[41] Balitsky’s acknowledgment that Russian forces no longer hold positions in Robotyne is notable, as he is one of a group of Russian sources who have consistently claimed that Russian forces maintain control over southern Robotyne following the Ukrainian confirmation of liberating the settlement as of August 28.[42] Russian sources remarked that artillery fire has largely destroyed Robotyne, and much of what remains of the settlement is likely therefore contested.[43] UK Defense Minister Grant Shapps additionally confirmed that Russian forces destroyed a British Challenger tank near Robotyne, but noted that the Ukrainian crew survived the artillery strike.[44]



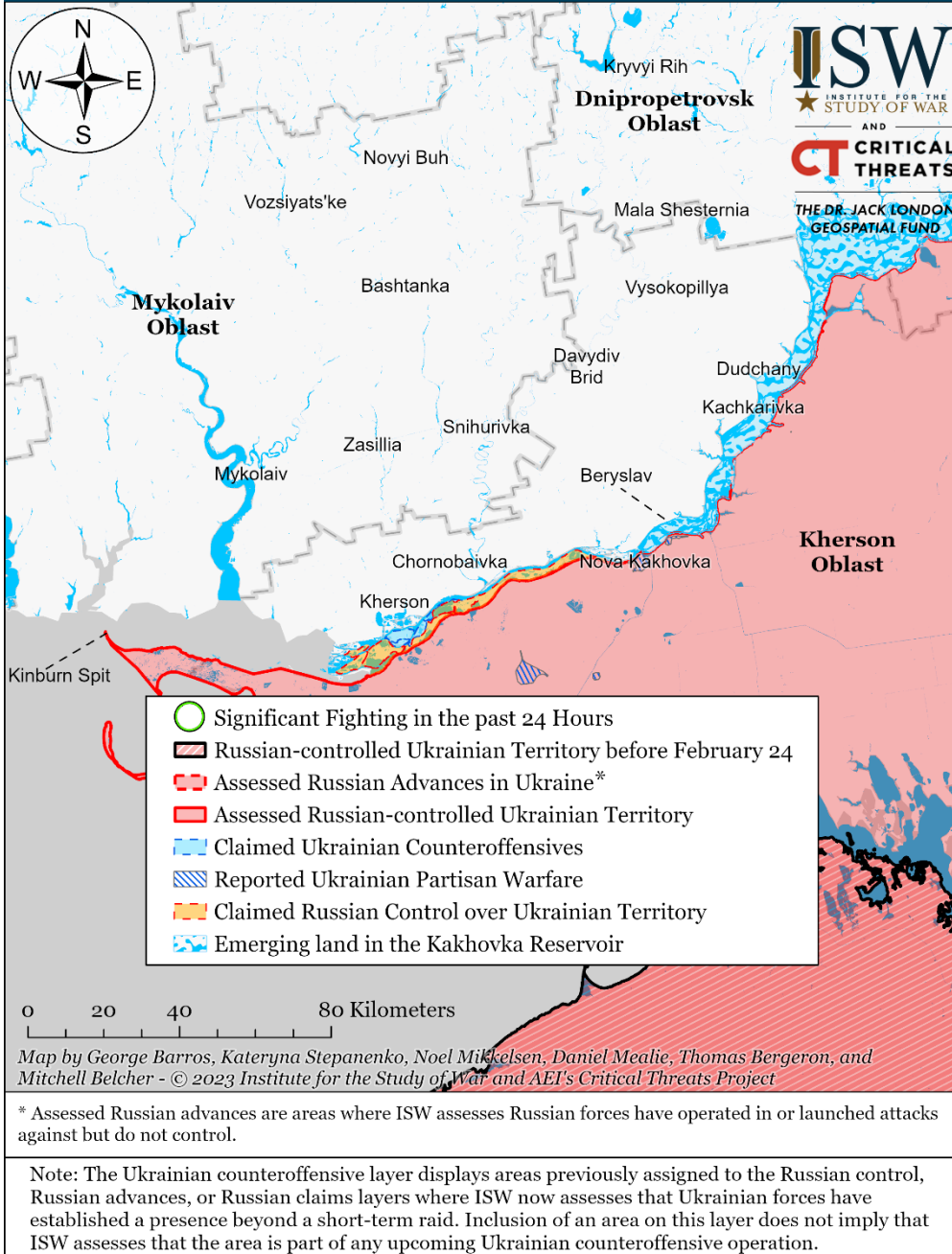
Russian forces conducted a limited and unsuccessful ground attack in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on September 6. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian troops repelled a Russian attack near Robotyne.[45]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of September 6, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces continued routine air and artillery strikes in Kherson Oblast on September 6. Ukraine's Southern Operational Command stated that Russian forces used four KAB-500 guided aerial bombs to strike Beryslav Raion.[46] A Russian milblogger posted footage reportedly of elements of the 205th Motorized Rifle Brigade (49th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) striking a Ukrainian command post in the Kherson direction.[47] Ukrainian Navy Spokesperson Captain Third Rank Dmytro Pletenchuk additionally noted that Russian forces in the Black Sea have had to change their behavior due to the increased threat of Ukrainian naval drone strikes and are increasingly hiding their vessels at ports in occupied Crimea and closer to Novorossiysk instead of the main base in Sevastopol.[48]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of September 6, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

Russian authorities continue crypto-mobilization efforts amid continued rumors of an upcoming general mobilization wave. The Russian MoD submitted draft amendments to Russian draft

regulations to the State Duma on September 6 that would allow Russian correctional institutions, penitentiary centers, and military registration and enlistment offices to register prisoners for military service without the need for prisoners to appear at military registration and enlistment offices in person.[49] Ukrainian Luhansk Oblast Head Artem Lysohor reported that Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) banks are providing their customers' personal information to Russian authorities in preparation for a new wave of mobilization.[50] Russian opposition outlet *Mobilization News* reported on September 6 that St. Petersburg residents received letters from military registration and enlistment offices claiming that the Russian government may increase the conscription term and threatening to register individuals for military service who do appear at military registration and enlistment offices.[51] Deputy Chairperson of the Russian State Duma Defense Committee Yuri Shvytkin emphasized that the State Duma is not considering increasing the conscription term from its current year, however.[52] Russian independent outlet *Mozhem Obyasnit (We Can Explain)* reported on September 6, however, that an unspecified source close to the Russian Presidential Administration claimed that the Russian government intends to conduct a second wave of mobilization in September after the Russian regional elections on September 10.[53] *Mozhem Obyasnit* also reported that the Sakha Republic, Buryatia Republic, Irkutsk Oblast, and the Jewish Autonomous Oblast governments are intensifying preparations for new mobilization by issuing more frequent calls to "clarify personal information" at military registration and enlistment offices and updating data on citizens eligible for military summonses.[54] Russian authorities may be preparing to increase crypto-mobilization efforts after the regional elections but remain unlikely to formally announce a second wave of mobilization.

The Russian government likely intends to expand its production of Shahed drones outside of the Alabuga Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in the Tatarstan Republic. Bashkortostan Republic Head Radiy Khabirov signed a decree on September 6 on the creation of the Directorate for the Development of the Unmanned Aerial Systems Industry to develop a strategy for the production of drones in Bashkortostan until 2035.[55]

Activities in Russian-occupied areas (Russian objective: Consolidate administrative control of annexed areas; forcibly integrate Ukrainian citizens into Russian sociocultural, economic, military, and governance systems)

Ukrainian reports indicate that Russian and occupation authorities continue attempts to increase social control in occupied Ukraine by cracking down against pro-Ukrainian materials in schools. The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported on September 6 that law enforcement at educational institutions in occupied Kherson Oblast are checking students' phones to allegedly prevent "extremism" and crack down on viewing pro-Ukrainian media.[56] The Ukrainian Resistance Center also reported that Russian authorities brought over 750,000 Russian history books for schools in occupied Luhansk Oblast and that Russian authorities are burning Ukrainian books.[57]

Significant activity in Belarus (Russian efforts to increase its military presence in Belarus and further integrate Belarus into Russian-favorable frameworks and Wagner Group activity in Belarus)

The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) conducted its final day of the Combat Brotherhood-2023 exercise on September 6.[58] The Belarusian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed

that over 2,500 personnel and 500 pieces of equipment participated in four exercises at training grounds in Brest, Grodno, and Minsk oblasts.[59] Russian, Belarusian, and CSTO military officials widely claimed that the exercise was successful.[60]

ISW will continue to report daily observed Russian and Belarusian military activity in Belarus as part of ongoing Kremlin efforts to increase their control over Belarus and other Russian actions in Belarus.

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.

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