Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, August 13, 2023

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August 13, 2023, 3:20pm 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 cutoff for this product was 12:00pm ET on August 13. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the August 13 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment. Ukrainian forces conducted counteroffensive operations on at least two sectors of the front on August 13 and reportedly advanced in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast area and in western Zaporizhia Oblast. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations in the Berdyansk (western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast area) and Melitopol (western Zaporizhia Oblast) directions and achieved partial success near Robotyne (western Zaporizhia Oblast, 13km south of Orikhiv).[1] Several Russian sources claimed on August 12 that Russian forces withdrew from Urozhaine (in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast area), although many Russian sources refuted those claims on August 13 and claimed instead that Russian forces still occupy the southern part of Urozhaine, that fighting is ongoing, and that areas of Urozhaine are contested.[2] ISW has not observed confirmation that Russian forces have completely withdrawn from Urozhaine and Russian forces likely currently maintain positions in at least the southern part of the settlement.

The Russian information space is seizing on Ukrainian gains in Urozhaine (in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area) to highlight poor Russian morale and command challenges in the area. A Russian milblogger complained on August 12 that the Russian 37th Separate Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade (36th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) failed to dedicate tank units to support its infantry in Urozhaine and prematurely withdrew from Urozhaine on August 10, claiming they lacked reinforcements when in reality the unit's personnel were drunk in the rear areas.[3] The milblogger complained that the entire 36th Combined Arms Army (CAA) is unwilling to defend the settlement while the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) "Kaskad" Operational Tactical Combat Formation and the 40th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) defend Urozhaine.[4] These complaints generated a multitude of responses in the Russian information space, including attempts to deescalate tensions between the implicated Russian formations, doubling down on complaints against the 37th Brigade and 36th CAA, and accusing the initial milblogger who reported a Russian withdrawal from Urozhaine of attempting to inflate the reputation of other defending units at the expense of the 36th CAA's reputation.[5] One milblogger blamed the current situation on the front on the Russian military command's removal of Major General Ivan Popov as commander of the 58th CAA in early July 2023.[6] The milbloggers notably targeted their complaints at the personnel of these units rather than the unit or theater commanders. suggesting that Popov's removal and other rumored command purges may have removed mid-level

Russian military commanders as a readily available scapegoat for Russian military failures.[7] Alexander Khodakovsky, commander of the "Vostok" battalion defending near Urozhaine, referenced Russian Airborne Forces (VDV) Commander Colonel General Mikhail Teplinsky as saying that Russia cannot win in defense, and Khodakovsky complained that Russia expended its resources too early in the war and now needs to pause to accumulate resources for a new operation, indicating recognition that the Russian elastic defense in this area has its limitations.[8] Teplinsky is reportedly responsible for planning the Russian defense of the Velyka Novosilka area.[9]

A Russian warship forcibly stopped and searched a civilian cargo ship en route to the Izmail port in Odesa Oblast, likely as part of a Kremlin effort to curtail maritime traffic to Ukrainian ports without committing naval assets to fully enforce a blockade. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) stated that the Russian *Vasily Bykov* patrol ship forcibly stopped and searched a dry cargo ship sailing under the flag of Palau after it did not respond to the *Vasily Bykov's* demand for inspection.[10] The Russian MoD stated that the Russian forces conducted small arms warning fire near the civilian ship before a Ka-29 helicopter landed on the vessel with a group of Russian personnel.[11] The Russian MoD claimed that the Russian personnel conducted an inspection and then allowed the civilian vessel to continue along its route to the Izmail port.[12]

The Russian MoD announced on July 19 that it would consider all ships en route to Ukrainian ports as potential military cargo carriers and the flag countries of such vessels as "involved in the Ukrainian conflict on the side of the Kyiv regime."[13] Russian forces did not stop three civilian ships which openly advertised their destination as Ukraine over their ships' automatic identification system (AIS) on July 30.[14] The reports of the three civilian ships sailing to Ukraine unhindered suggested that Russian forces may be unable or unwilling to forcibly stop and search neutral vessels, and Russian forces likely conducted their first forced inspection to reimpose the threat of escalation against civilian vessels en route to Ukraine.[15] Russian forces also likely conducted the forced stop and inspection to undermine confidence in temporary trading corridors through the Black Sea to Ukrainian ports, which Ukrainian officials announced on August 10.[16] The Russian naval posturing in the Black Sea is likely intentionally ambiguous and seeks to create a chilling effect on civilian maritime traffic to Ukraine without requiring Russian forces to commit Black Sea Fleet assets to the enforcement of a naval blockade.[17] The Russian military is likely less willing to commit the Black Sea Fleet to such a blockade than it was in July following notable Ukrainian strikes on Russian naval targets in the Black Sea and the Novorossiysk naval base in Krasnodar Krai in early August.[18]

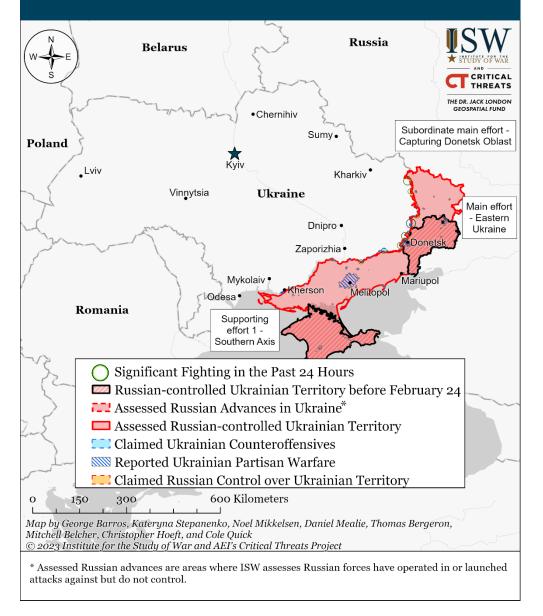
Key Takeaways:

- Ukrainian forces conducted counteroffensive operations on at least two sectors of the front on August 13 and reportedly advanced in the western Donetsk-eastern Zaporizhia Oblast area and in western Zaporizhia Oblast.
- ISW has not observed confirmation that Russian forces have completely withdrawn from Urozhaine and Russian forces likely currently maintain positions in at least the southern part of the settlement.
- The Russian information space is seizing on Ukrainian gains in Urozhaine (in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area) to highlight poor Russian morale and command challenges in the area.
- A Russian warship forcibly stopped and searched a civilian cargo ship en route to the Izmail port in Odesa Oblast, likely as part of a Kremlin effort to curtail

maritime traffic to Ukrainian ports without committing naval assets to fully enforce a blockade.

- Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove line and attempted to regain lost positions near Bakhmut, in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast, and reportedly advanced in some areas.
- Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove line, near Kreminna, near Bakhmut, in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast, and reportedly advanced in several areas.
- The Wagner Group is likely downsizing and reconfiguring to adapt to financial pressure following the June 24 Wagner rebellion.
- Ukrainian partisans claimed to have attacked a Russian military base in occupied Mariupol on August 13.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of August 13, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because these activities are wellcovered 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.

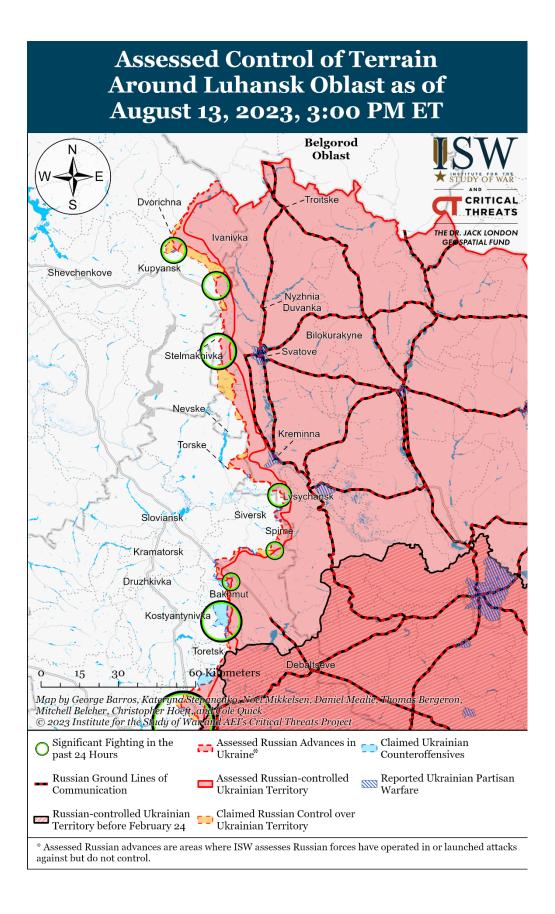
- Russian Main Effort Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 Capture the entirety of 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)

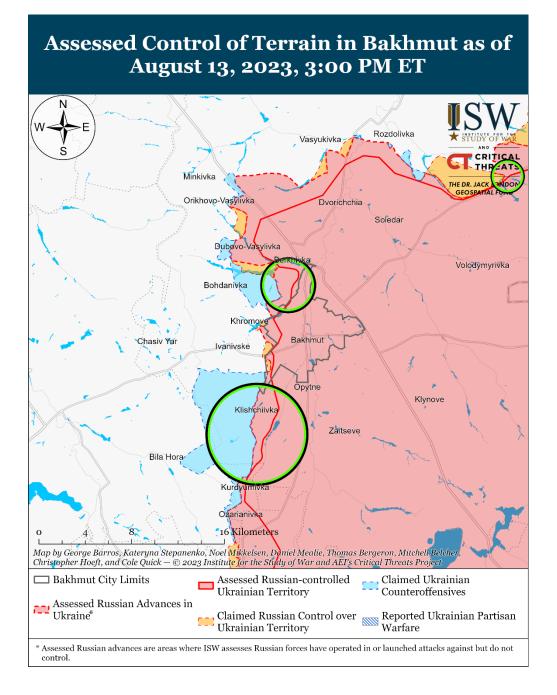
Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove line on August 13 and reportedly advanced. Russian Western Grouping of Forces Spokesperson Sergey Zybinsky claimed that assault groups of the 6th Combined Arms Army (Western Military District) advanced near Vilshana (15km northeast of Kupyansk).[19] Former Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) Interior Minister Vitaly Kiselyov claimed that Russian forces are advancing in unspecified areas on the left (east) bank of the Oskil River and are no more than five kilometers from the outskirts of Kupyansk in some unspecified areas.[20] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are slowly advancing in the Kupyansk direction but would require reinforcements to break through Ukrainian defenses, which Russian command does not have available to commit to the Kupyansk direction.[21] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful ground attacks northeast of Synkivka (9km northeast of Kupyansk), north of Kyslivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk), and southeast of Andriivka (15km west of Svatove).[22] A milblogger claimed that Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Ivanivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk).[23]

The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks along the Kupyansk-Svatove line and near Kreminna on August 13. The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Synkivka, the Mankivka tract (roughly 15km east of Kupyansk), Novoselivske (15km north of Svatove), Novoyehorivka (14km southwest of Svatove), and in the Serebryanske forest area south of Kreminna.[24]



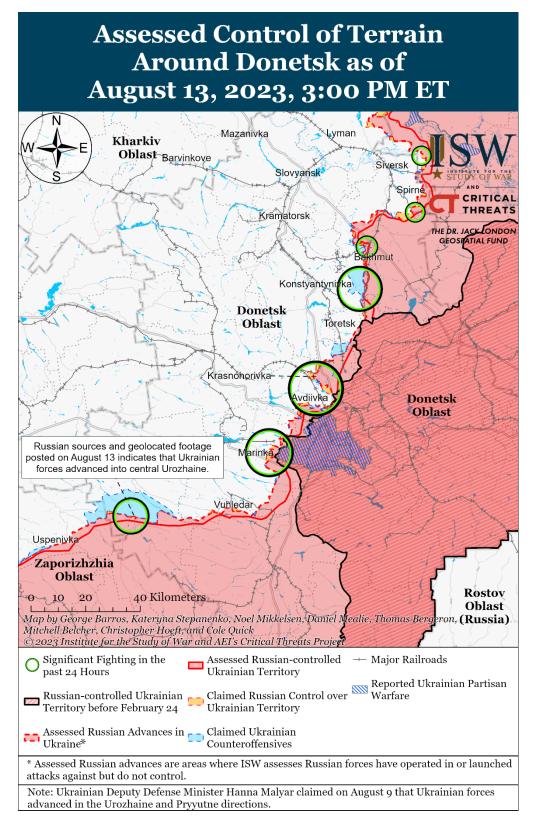
Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian Objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia's proxies in Donbas)

Ukrainian forces continued limited offensive operations in the Bakhmut area but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances on August 13. Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked Russian positions north and west of Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut).[25] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces heavily shelled Russian positions at the Kurdyumivka-Ozaryanivka line (13-15km southwest of Bakhmut) but did not conduct a ground attack.[26]



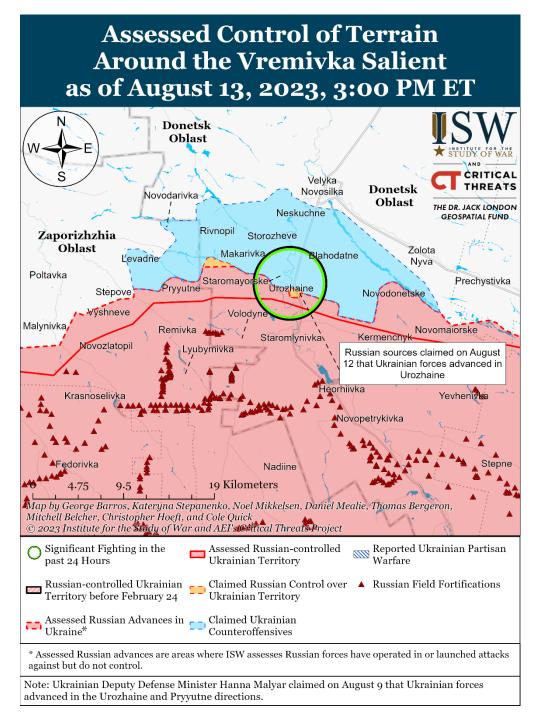
Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Bakhmut area and reportedly advanced on August 13. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russia's 83rd Airborne (VDV) Brigade recaptured parts of southern Klishchiivka during a counterattack, but that Ukrainian forces still hold southwestern Klishchiivka.[27] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations west of Yahidne (2km north of Bakhmut), near Klishchiivka, south of Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut), and near Bila Hora (12km southwest of Bakhmut).[28] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also counterattacked near Berkhivka and Kurdyumivka.[29] Another Russian milblogger posted footage of the Russian 102nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th Guards Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) firing on Ukrainian positions near Klishchiivka.[30]

Russian forces continued limited offensive operations on the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line but did not advance on August 13. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks near Avdiivka and Marinka (27km southwest of Avdiivka).[31] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces control roughly 30 percent of Marinka and that Chechen Akhmat special forces elements reinforced Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) forces in the area.[32] The milblogger complained that it is pointless for Russian forces to continue attacking Ukrainian positions in the Avdiivka direction due to the strength of Ukrainian defenses and counterbattery combat in the area.

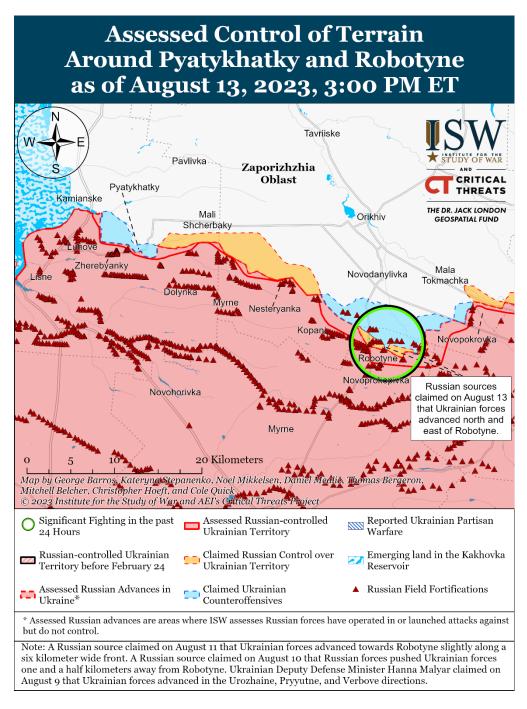


Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on August 13 and advanced south of Velyka Novosilka. Russian milbloggers widely claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked Urozhaine (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) and captured Russian positions in the northern part of the settlement, but Russian forces likely retain some positions in southern Urozhaine.[33] Several Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces withdrew from Urozhaine on August 12, but the preponderance of milbloggers refuted those claims on August 13 and claimed that Russian forces maintain positions in southern Urozhaine while the rest of the settlement is a contested grey zone, and the August 12 reports were likely incorrect or referred to limited withdrawals by individual units, rather than Russian forces as a whole.[34] Geolocated footage posted on August 13 confirms that some Russian troops left the village and shows Russian infantry retreating from Urozhaine towards Zavitzne Bazhannya (less than 3km south of Urozhaine).[35] A Russian milblogger also reported that Ukrainian troops attacked Pryyutne (16km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[36]



Russian forces reportedly conducted unsuccessful attempts to restore lost positions in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on August 13. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian troops conducted unsuccessful attacks west of Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) and near Urozhaine.[37] A Russian milblogger also claimed that Russian forces counterattacked from positions near Urozhaine.[38] Russian sources indicated that elements of the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) "Kaskad" operational-tactical formation, "Vostok" battalion, 40th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet), and 37th Motorized Rifle Brigade (36th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) are fighting in the area.[39]



Russian sources reported that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast on August 13. Russian sources claimed that two Ukrainian assault groups totaling between 40 to 60 personnel launched an attack on Russian positions near Robotyne (13km south of Orikhiv).[40] One milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces captured some positions 3km east and northwest of Robotyne, and other Russian sources reported that heavy fighting is ongoing east of Robotyne.[41] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces ultimately repelled the attack and inflicted high personnel and equipment losses on Ukrainian troops.[42]



Russian forces reportedly conducted unsuccessful attempts to restore lost positions in western Zaporizhia Oblast on August 13. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attempts to restore lost positions east of Robotyne.[43] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces pushed Ukrainian forces from the eastern outskirts of Robotyne on August 12.[44]



Russian milbloggers continued to discuss Ukrainian activity on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast on August 13. One milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces maintain a presence west of Kozachi Laheri and attacked Russian forces near the settlement, but that Russian forces repelled the attack.[45] Russian sources additionally claimed that heavy fighting is ongoing on the east bank near the Antonivsky Bridge, where Russian Spetsnaz elements are working to clear the dacha area of Ukrainian troops.[46]

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

The Wagner Group is likely downsizing and reconfiguring to adapt to financial pressure following the June 24 Wagner rebellion. The United Kingdom Ministry of Defense (UK MoD) reported on August 12 that the Kremlin may no longer fund the Wagner Group, causing Wagner to downsize and save on salary expenses.[47] The UK MoD reported that Belarusian authorities may be funding Wagner but that this would likely strain limited Belarusian resources.[48] A Russian insider source speculated on August 9 that Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko refused to finance Wagner after learning that Russia would not be paying for Wagner as he initially expected.[49]

Russian forces have recruited foreign citizens in Russian prisons to fight in Ukraine. The Tajik Minister of Internal Affairs Ramazon Rakhimzoda reported on August 11 that about 100 Tajik citizens from Russian prisons went to fight in Ukraine.[50] Rakhimzoda stated that Russian officials do not provide Tajik authorities with information on how many of their citizens are fighting in Ukraine.[51] Rakhimzoda did not report who recruited the convicts, and a Russian insider source speculated that the Tajik citizens signed contracts with Wagner.[52]

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

Ukrainian partisans claimed to have attacked a Russian military base in occupied Mariupol on August 13. A Ukrainian partisan group in Mariupol claimed that it set fire to a Russian military base in occupied Mariupol, injuring at least 12 personnel and destroying three vehicles.[53]

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).

Nothing significant to report.

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. [1] https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02dQLm1q35XSPhKgUfyamhS6hfkNkzZ Y6gsRRHvxsdpUNwca1EuEGLZMpDgRx57fJ7l

[2] https://t.me/rybar/50673; https://t.me/rusich_army/10361; https://t.me/voin_dv/4374; https://t.me/rybar/50667; https://t.me/vrogov/11596; https://t.me/boris_rozhin/94748;

https://t.me/RVvoenkor/51208; https://t.me/boris_rozhin/94741;

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[3] https://t.me/milinfolive/104972

[4] https://t.me/milinfolive/104972

[5] https://t.me/garmaev_alexander/4946 ; https://twitter.com/666_mancer/status/1690598112698482689 ;

[7] https://www.iswresearch.org/2023/02/russian-offensive-campaignassessment_11.html; https://www.iswresearch.org/2022/10/russian-offensive-campaignassessment_2.html; https://www.iswresearch.org/2023/04/russian-offensive-campaignassessment_24.html; https://www.iswresearch.org/2023/01/russian-offensive-campaignassessment_10.html; https://www.iswresearch.org/2022/10/russian-offensive-campaignassessment_3.html; https://www.iswresearch.org/2022/10/russian-offensive-campaignassessment_3.html; https://www.iswresearch.org/2022/10/russian-offensive-campaignassessment_3.html; https://www.iswresearch.org/2022/10/russian-offensive-campaignassessment_3.html; https://www.iswresearch.org/2022/10/russian-offensive-campaignassessment_3.html; https://www.iswresearch.org/2022/10/russian-offensive-campaign-

[8] https://t.me/aleksandr_skif/2842

[9] https://www.iswresearch.org/2023/06/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment_7.html

[10] https://t.me/mod_russia/29215

[11] https://t.me/mod_russia/29215

[12] https://t.me/mod_russia/29215

[13] https://isw.pub/UkrWar072023 ; https://t.me/mod_russia/28459

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[16] https://www.facebook.com/100064727737034/posts/pfbid02D9pg8jFFhQuMhPTfHCm7Ma114
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[17] https://isw.pub/UkrWar072823

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[19] https://t.me/mod_russia/29220

[20] https://t.me/kommunist/18138

[21] https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/49795

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[23] https://t.me/wargonzo/14346

[24] https://t.me/mod_russia/29216; https://t.me/mod_russia/29220; https://t.me/mod_russia/29210; 9211

[25] https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/49795 ; https://t.me/mod_russia/29216 ; https://t.me/RVvoenkor/51207

[26] https://t.me/rybar/50681

[27] https://t.me/RVvoenkor/51207; https://t.me/RVvoenkor/51196; https://t.me/dva_majors/23458

[28] https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02dQLm1q35XSPhKgUfyamhS6hfkNkz ZY6gsRRHvxsdpUNwca1EuEGLZMpDgRx57fJ7l; https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/ pfbid029vJybgvd3TURejvSpxrWMRbvJpCZza6PeXYy6oc3nVqx1Uj2AwgpD3fg5xHF7y75l; https://armyinform.com dot ua/2023/08/13/na-bahmutskomu-napryamku-syly-oboronyprodovzhuyut-utrymuvaty-inicziatyvu-j-tysnuty-voroga-sergij-cherevatyj/

[29] https://t.me/wargonzo/14346

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[32] https://t.me/voenkorKotenok/49795

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[34] https://t.me/rusich_army/10358; https://t.me/batalyon15/2590; https://t.me/rybar/50667 ; https://t.me/voin_dv/4374; https://t.me/vrogov/11596; https://twitter.com/GirkinGirkin/status/1690 499007397728256 ; https://t.me/romanov_92/41207; https://t.me/romanov_92/41206; https://twi tter.com/GirkinGirkin/status/1690501354580496384; https://t.me/milinfolive/104972; https://t.me/horis_rozhin/94732; https://t.me/Mestb_Dobroj_Voli/7551; https://t.me/milinfolive/104990; https://t.me/RVvoenkor/51208

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[41] https://t.me/rybar/50679; https://t.me/rybar/50662; https://t.me/batalyon15/2590https://t.m e/RVvoenkor/51179

[42] https://t.me/dva_majors/23437 ; https://t.me/dva_majors/23438; https://t.me/batalyon15/25 90; https://t.me/RVvoenkor/51199; https://t.me/BalitskyEV/1526

[43] https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid029vJybgvd3TURejvSpxrWMRbvJpCZz a6PeXYy6oc3nVqx1Uj2AwgpD3fg5xHF7y75l

[44] https://t.me/rybar/50679

[45] https://t.me/rybar/50677

[46] https://t.me/vysokygovorit/12494; https://t.me/vysokygovorit/12495; https://t.me/rybar/5067 7

[47] https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1690598778909458433

[48] https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1690598778909458433

[49] https://t.me/vchkogpu/40631; https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-9-2023

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[51] https://www.asiaplustj dot info/ru/news/tajikistan/security/20230811/glava-mvd-tadzhikistana-ozvuchil-primernoe-chislo-tadzhikskih-zaklyuchennih-otpravlennih-iz-rossiiskih-tyurem-na-voinu

[52] https://t.me/rusbrief/144998

[53] https://t.me/andriyshTime/12557; https://t.me/andriyshTime/12558 ; https://t.me/mrplSprotyv/23953