

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, August 29, 2023

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August 29, 2023, 8:45pm 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 2:30pm ET on August 29. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the August 30 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian forces advanced near Bakhmut in Donesk Oblast and Robotyne in western Zaporizhia Oblast on August 29. Geolocated footage published on August 29 indicates that Ukrainian forces advanced south of Bakhmut and about five kilometers southeast of Robotyne.[1] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations in the Bakhmut and Melitopol (western Zaporizhia Oblast) directions.[2] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Oleksandr Shtupun reported on August 28 that Ukrainian forces continued to secure positions in Robotyne and are demining the area.[3] Shtupun reported that Ukrainian forces could bring more troops to the Robotyne area and would have greater opportunities for maneuver.[4] Shtupun noted that Robotyne is near the highway to Tokmak, an important Russian ground line of communication (GLOC).[5] A Russian milblogger suggested that Russian forces are continuing to commit a significant number of reserves, Airborne (VDV) elements, and TOS-1 thermobaric artillery systems to the area – likely indicating that Russian forces are worried about the vulnerability of their positions in Robotyne.[6] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces intend to deplete Ukrainian offensive potential by fixing Ukrainian forces in engagements in the settlement of Robotyne.[7]

Russian sources continued to express concerns over Russian vulnerabilities in eastern and western Zaporizhia Oblast. One Russian milblogger claimed that the situation near Verbove (18km southwest of Orikhiv) is “very dangerous.”[8] Russian “Vostok” Battalion commander Alexander Khodakovsky, reportedly defending the eastern Donetsk-western Zaporizhia Oblast border area, claimed that Russian forces in his sector are stretched in a long arc along the frontline, are having difficulties transferring reserves, and lack resources.[9] Khodakovsky claimed that Ukrainian efforts to cut off Russian transport routes would further complicate the situation.[10] Khodakovsky has previously highlighted concerns about the Russian defense in the eastern Donetsk-western Zaporizhia Oblast border area, specifically relating to poor Russian counterbattery capabilities, heavy Russian losses, exhausted Russian forces, and a lack of reserves.[11] The “Vostok” Battalion claimed that Ukrainian forces disrupted their logistics on August 28 by striking their rear area with drones.[12] The “Vostok” Battalion noted that Ukrainian shelling has wounded several of its personnel and that Russian electronic warfare (EW) systems are failing to down Ukrainian aircraft

and drones.[13] Khodakovsky's and the "Vostok" Battalion's complaints are likely those of tactical commanders focused on their own local issues on a sector of the front that is of lower priority to Russian theater commanders who are focusing efforts in western Zaporizhia. These concerns could well be valid, but senior Russian commanders could have contingencies in place should the situation here deteriorate that they have not troubled to communicate to Khodakovsky and his colleagues. Such tensions between de-prioritized tactical commanders and higher commanders are not uncommon in war.

Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin and reported Wagner logistics and security head Valery Chekalov were buried on August 29 in St. Petersburg in separate cemeteries, likely to prevent the creation of a single pilgrimage site that would establish the deceased Wagner members as martyrs. Prigozhin's and Chekalov's funerals were held at the Porokhovskoye and Severnoye Cemeteries, respectively.[14] The funerals were closed to the public, and Russian police and National Guard (Rosgvardia) units secured the areas.[15] The Kremlin's likely efforts to separate the Wagner burial sites to prevent their martyrdom in the public eye may prove ineffective as the official Telegram channel of Prigozhin's press service, which had been inactive since June 26, publicly confirmed Prigozhin's burial site on August 29 and called on anyone "wishing to say goodbye" to visit.[16] Wagner-affiliated sources did not comment on the future of the Wagner private military company, likely indicating a hesitancy within the organization to appoint a successor given the Kremlin's and the Russian Ministry of Defense's (MoD) efforts to destroy the Wagner Group since the rebellion and the challenges any successor loyal to the Kremlin would likely face in securing his position within Wagner.[17]

Russian milbloggers accused the Russian MoD for the fifth consecutive day of attempting to conceal concerns over the mistreatment of a Southern Military District (SMD) brigade operating in occupied Kherson Oblast.[18] Russian milbloggers have continued to criticize the Russian MoD for mistreating elements of the 205th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (49th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District). The milbloggers also accused the Russian MoD of reportedly staging a response video in which five men claiming to be serving in the 205th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade called on milbloggers to refrain from discussing the brigade's alleged lack of artillery support and supplies in the Dnipro River delta area.[19] One milblogger noted the Russian military command began punishing servicemen of the 205th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade for speaking out about these problems and added that state-affiliated milbloggers and propagandists are discrediting that concerns of a unit that is operating on a dangerous coastal frontline on the east (left) bank Dnipro River.[20] Milbloggers also claimed that these problems began after the Russian military command appointed a former Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) 100th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade commander with the alias "Skif" to command the 205th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade.[21] Milbloggers claimed that "Skif" had previously "destroyed" the 100th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade while receiving state honors.[22] **The Russian MoD notably has yet to silence these complaints, which may indicate that the Russian military command is unsure it can effectively do so at this time.**

These milblogger persistent complaints are likely an attempt to spark command changes that may favor Russian Airborne Forces Commander Colonel General Mikhail Teplinsky, who reportedly oversees Russian forces in southern Ukraine. Russian milbloggers claimed that the Russian military command needs to immediately change its leadership if

Russia wants to win the war and claimed that Ukrainian forces pose a threat to the allegedly mistreated 205th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade.[23] Ukrainian small-scale raids, however, do not pose a significant threat to the Russian grouping of forces in occupied Kherson Oblast – and milblogger concern is more likely aimed at discrediting unwanted commanders such as “Skif,” who was likely appointed by the Russian Chief of General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov or “Dnepr” Group of Forces (Kherson Oblast) Commander Colonel General Oleg Makarevich. Some of these milbloggers have previously complained about Gerasimov, Makarevich, and Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu for failing to respond to Ukrainian threats in occupied Kherson Oblast, not providing boats to Russian forces, or blaming them for other military failures.[24] Some of these milbloggers had specifically attacked Makarevich, whom the Russian military command previously appointed to replace Teplinsky in January 2023 before Russian President Vladimir Putin reinstated Teplinsky in March–April 2023.[25] Some of these milbloggers also have a history of publicly praising Teplinsky and opposing Gerasimov’s or Shoigu’s efforts to remove Teplinsky from his position after the Wagner Group’s rebellion on June 24.[26] Teplinsky had been previously loosely affiliated with Wagner financier Yevgeny Prigozhin and had repeatedly been insubordinate to Gerasimov and Shoigu.[27] Teplinsky may have lost some authority since the rebellion or may be attempting to prevent Gerasimov and Shoigu from undermining his authority. These complaints may also be a part of an ongoing campaign to discredit Makarevich that existed prior to the rebellion and highlight that factional divisions within the Russian military command have continued past the rebellion.

The Russian MoD may be reverting to the more limited coverage of the war in Ukraine while attempting to censor complaints along the frontline and reports of Ukrainian advances. The Russian MoD recently changed its daily reporting style to reduce the daily amount of information it reports on the war.[28] The Russian MoD previously issued a daily situational report that differed from the individual situational reports from the press services of each Russian grouping of forces.[29] The press services of each Russian grouping of forces issued text directly copied from the overall daily situational report instead of their own original reports on August 29, however.[30] The Russian MoD has consistently attempted to institute an information policy that would provide limited information about the frontlines throughout the war.[31] The Russian MoD’s change in reporting, if this trend continues, may reflect its wider efforts to censor Russian reporting on the war and unify its own narrative.

The US State Department announced a new military aid package for Ukraine on August 29. The \$250 million package includes AIM-9 Sidewinder air-to-air missiles, mine clearing equipment, HIMARS rockets, and Javelin anti-armor systems.[32]

The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported that the Kremlin is currently focused on promoting five main information operations against Ukraine, all of which ISW has observed. The GUR reported on August 29 that the Russian Presidential Administration held a meeting on August 25 to approve the specific narratives that Russian media should promote in the information space.[33] The Russian narratives include claims that Ukraine is conducting mass mobilization regardless of age, gender, or health; claims that Ukraine’s Western partners are disappointed in Ukraine’s prospects for victory; claims that the Ukrainian counteroffensive is failing; claims that the Ukrainian government is completely corrupt and is not fighting corruption and; claims that Russian authorities provide good living standards and conditions in occupied Ukraine.[34] Russian First Deputy Presidential Chief of Staff Sergey Kiriienko and

Russian media representatives reportedly attended the meeting. ISW has observed all five false narratives in the Russian information space.[35]

Key Takeaways:

- **Ukrainian forces advanced near Bakhmut in Donesk Oblast and Robotyne in western Zaporizhia Oblast on August 29.**
- **Russian sources continued to express concerns over Russian vulnerabilities in eastern and western Zaporizhia Oblast.**
- **Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin and reported Wagner logistics and security head Valery Chekalov were buried on August 29 in St. Petersburg in separate cemeteries, likely to prevent the creation of a single pilgrimage site that would establish the deceased Wagner members as martyrs.**
- **Russian milbloggers accused the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) for the fifth consecutive day of attempting to conceal concerns over the mistreatment of a Southern Military District (SMD) brigade operating in occupied Kherson Oblast.**
- **These milblogger persistent complaints are likely an attempt to spark command changes that may favor Russian Airborne Forces Commander Colonel General Mikhail Teplinsky, who reportedly oversees Russian forces in southern Ukraine.**
- **The Russian MoD may be reverting to more limited coverage of the war in Ukraine while attempting to censor complaints along the frontline and reports of Ukrainian advances.**
- **The United States State Department announced a new military aid package for Ukraine on August 29.**
- **The Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported that the Kremlin is currently focused on promoting five main information operations against Ukraine, all of which ISW has observed.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, and in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast administrative border area but did not make confirmed advances.**
- **The UK Ministry of Defense (MoD) reported on August 29 that the Russian MoD is still unlikely to meet its targets for volunteer recruitment, despite offering incentives such as high salaries and additional social benefits.**
- **Ukrainian sources reported that occupation authorities continue to forcibly deport Ukrainian children from occupied Ukraine to Russia.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of August 29, 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

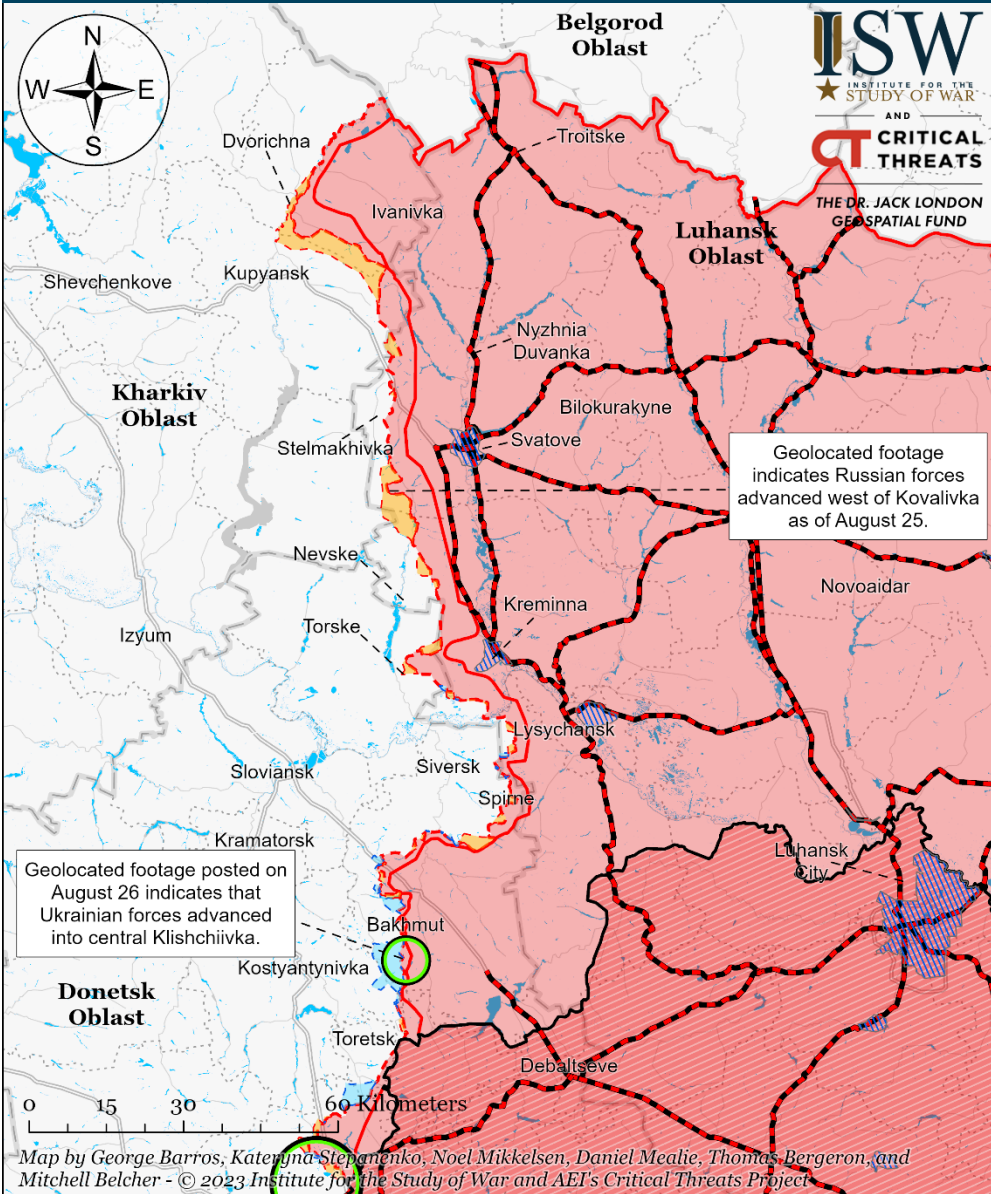
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

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 August 29. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations in the Kupyansk and Lyman (west of Kreminna) directions, particularly near Novoyehorivka (15km southwest of Svatove) and Bilohorivka (12km south of Kreminna).[36] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces advanced near Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk), Petropavlivka (7km east of Kupyansk), Stepova Novoselivka (18km southeast of Kupyansk), Kyslivka (20km southeast of Kupyansk), and Kotlyarivka (22km southeast of Kupyansk).[37] A Russian news aggregator claimed that Russian forces captured a position near Synkivka.[38] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are advancing up to one kilometer per day along the Kupyansk-Svatove line, but ISW has not observed visual evidence confirming this claim.[39] Another Russian milblogger claimed on August 28 that the frontline has not changed significantly in the Kupyansk sector, that Russian forces are conducting positional offensive operations in the area, and that Russian forces have not captured Synkivka.[40]

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line but did not advance on August 29. The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Synkivka, Stelmakhivka (15km northwest of Svatove), Kreminna, Dibrova (7km southwest of Kreminna), and Yampolivka (17km west of Kreminna).[41] Russian sources claimed on August 28 and 29 that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully counterattacked near Novoyehorivka, Yampolivka, Torske (15km west of Kreminna), and in the Serebryanske forest (10km southwest of Kreminna).[42]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of August 29, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



- 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

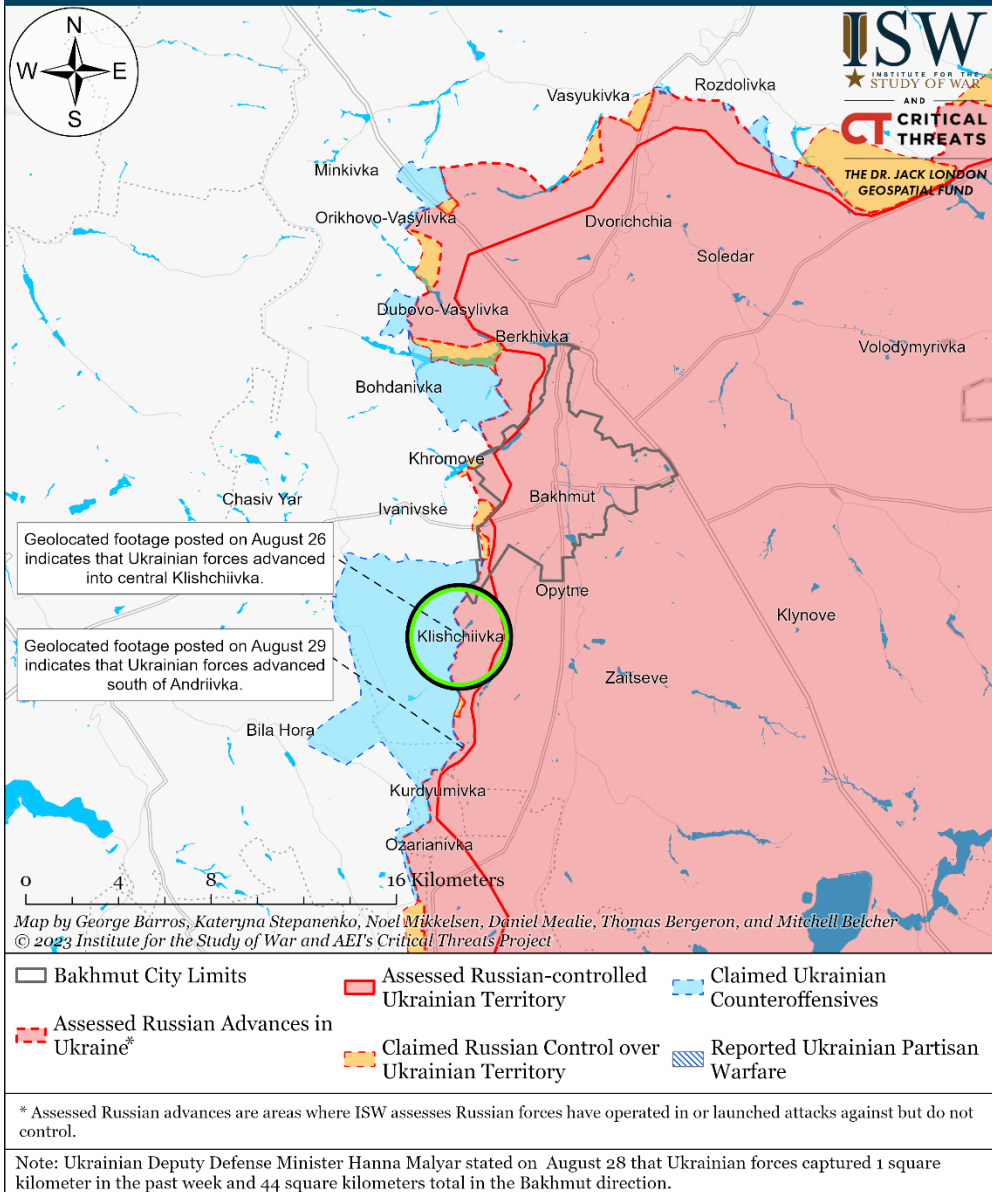
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

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 on August 29 and advanced. Geolocated footage published on August 29 shows that Ukrainian forces have advanced south of Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut).[43] Ukrainian Ground Forces Commander Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi reported that Ukrainian forces are advancing in unspecified areas in the Bakhmut direction.[44] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continue to conduct offensive operations south of Bakhmut.[45] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continue to attack near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut).[46] A Russian milblogger claimed that fighting is ongoing west of the Klishchiivka-Andriivka-Kurdyumivka line (7-13km southwest of Bakhmut).[47]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Bakhmut on August 29 but did not make any confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Bohdanivka (8km northwest of Bakhmut) and Ozaryanivka (14km southwest of Bakhmut).[48] A Russian milblogger claimed that Chechen “Akhmat” Spetsnaz units and 4th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People's Republic [LNR] Army Corps) units advanced to the heights near Klishchiivka.[49] Several Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces counterattacked near Klishchiivka and Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut).[50] Footage published on August 29 purportedly shows artillery units of the 106th Guards Airborne (VDV) Division operating north of Soledar (11km northeast of Bakhmut), the 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade (14th Army Corps, Northern Fleet) operating near Bakhmut, and the “Viking” Spetsnaz detachment operating near Klishchiivka.[51]

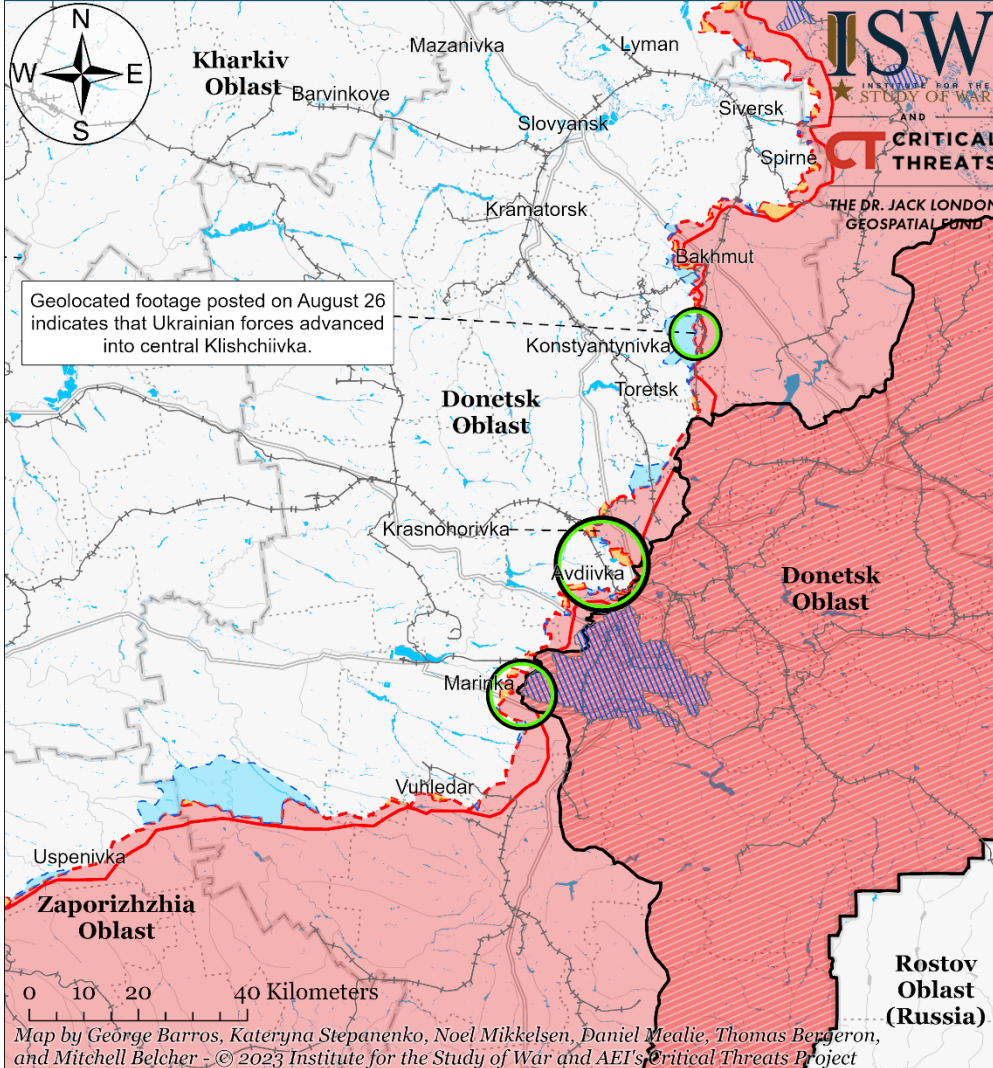
Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of August 29, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on August 29 but did not make confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Avdiivka and Marinka (on the southwestern outskirts of Donetsk City).[52] A former Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) official claimed that LNR and DNR forces continue to advance on the western outskirts of Marinka and only have 400 meters left to capture.[53] ISW has not observed visual evidence of these claimed Russian advances, however.

The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted an unsuccessful attack along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line on August 29. The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian assault near Nevelske (13km southwest of Avdiivka)[54]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of August 29, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

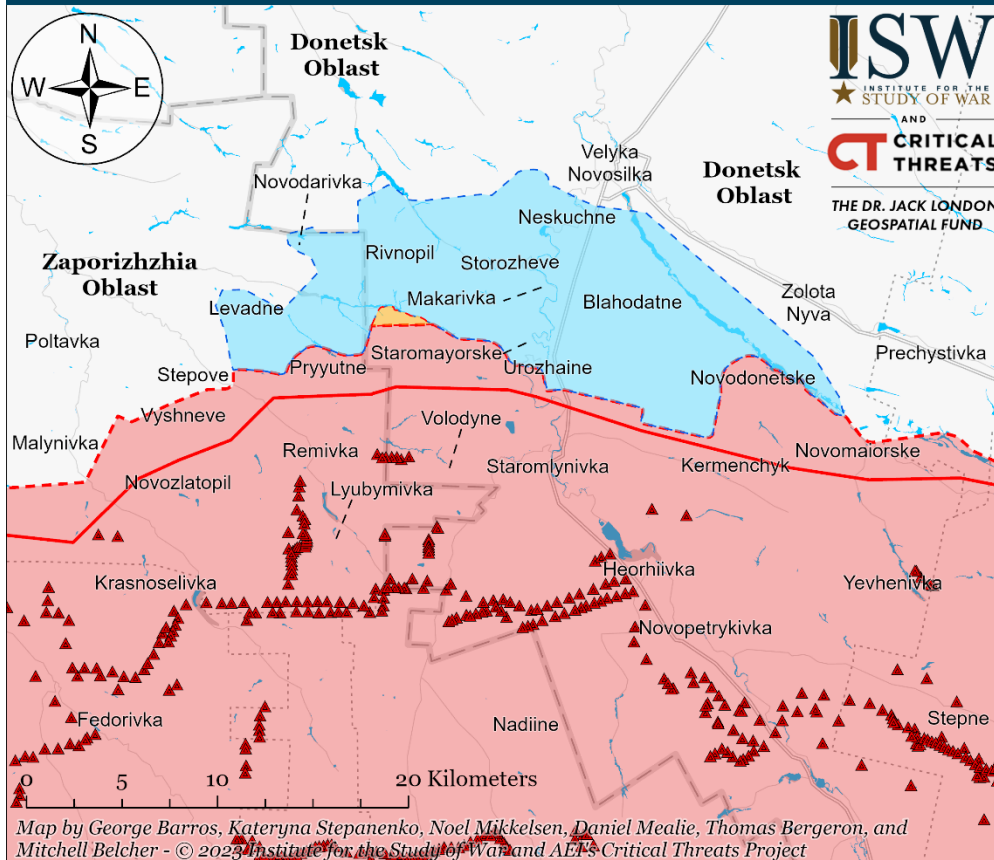
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: A Russian source claimed on August 29 that Russian forces have only 400 meters left until they capture Mariinka.

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

Russian and Ukrainian forces continued positional battles on the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast administrative border, with neither side making new territorial gains in the area on August 29. Zaporizhia Oblast occupation official Vladimir Rogov claimed that positional battles are ongoing south of Velyka Novosilka, and a Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces did not advance towards Zavitne Bazhannya (11km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[55] Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Head Denis Pushilin claimed that Russian forces are repelling Ukrainian attempts to gain a foothold on the Staromayorske-Urozhaine line - 8km southeast and 8km south of Velyka Novosilka, respectively.[56] Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Oleksandr Shtupun reported that Russian forces intensified airstrikes on Staromayorske in an effort to reduce Ukrainian offensive potential.[57] The Russian "Vostok" Battalion - which had previously lost its positions in Urozhaine due to lack of reinforcements - claimed that Ukrainian forces intensively shelled the unit's positions around Novodonetske (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka), resulting in casualties.[58] Geolocated footage showed elements of the Russian 30th Artillery Brigade (36th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) shelling Ukrainian forces north of Novodonetske.[59]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of August 29, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- 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.

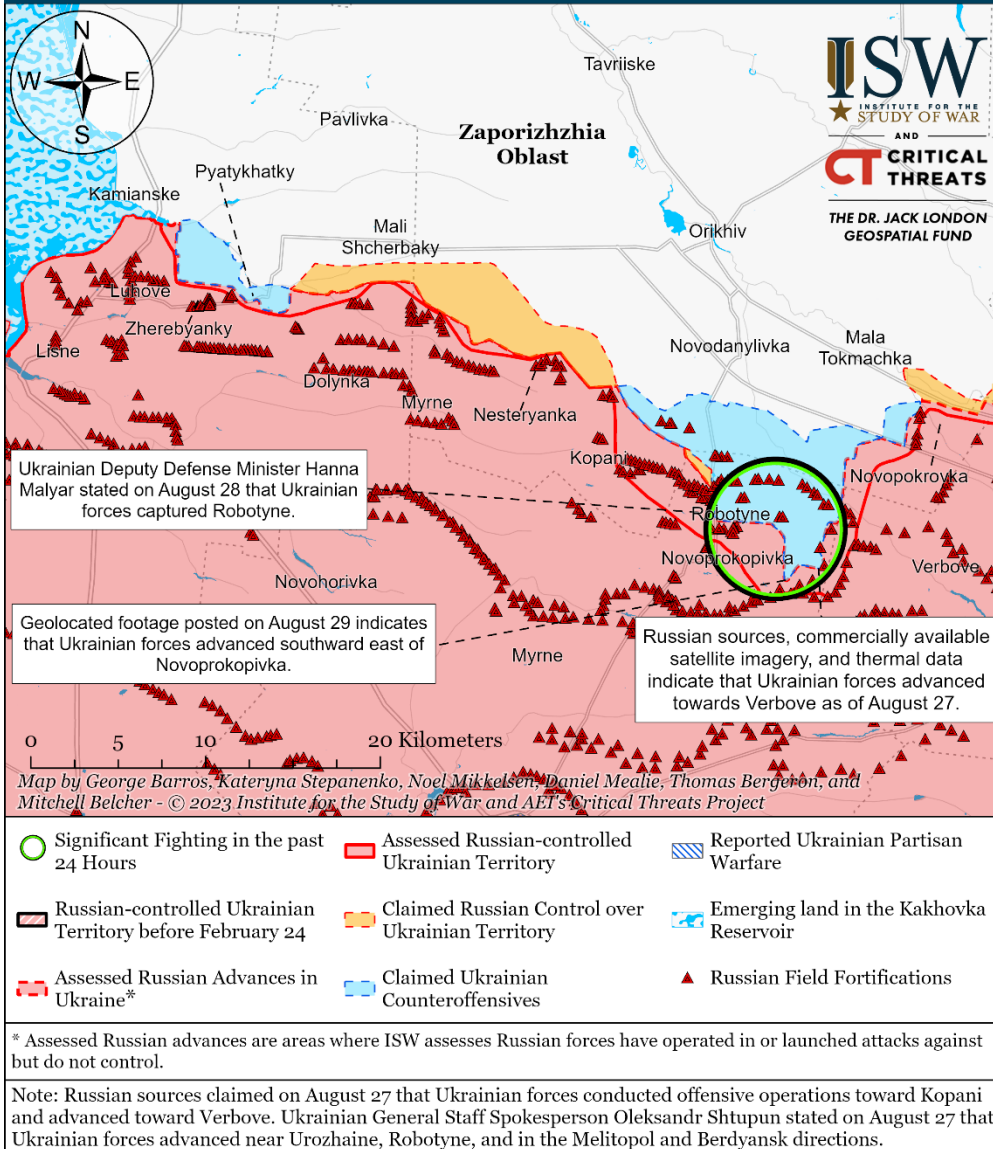
Note: Ukrainian General Staff Spokesperson Oleksandr Shtupun stated on August 27 that Ukrainian forces advanced near Urozhaine, Robotyne, and in the Melitopol and Berdyansk directions.

Ukrainian forces continued to advance east of Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv) in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on August 29, while continuing to secure positions in Robotyne. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces achieved unspecified successes in the direction of Novodanylivka (4km southeast of Orikhiv) and Verbove (16km southeast of Orikhiv).[60] Shtupun added that Ukrainian forces made some unspecified advances southeast of Robotyne, and geolocated footage published on August 29 showed that Ukrainian forces made advances about five kilometers southeast of Robotyne.[61] Shtupun added that Ukrainian forces are continuing to secure positions and are undertaking stabilization measures in Robotyne. His comments were likely an effort to

contextualize Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar’s statement on August 28 that Ukrainian forces have liberated Robotyne.[62] Russian sources claimed that fierce fighting is still ongoing on Robotyne’s southern outskirts.[63] North Ossetian “Storm Ossetia” and “Alania” volunteer battalion claimed that the intensity of fighting declined in Robotyne and that the central part of the settlement is still contested as of August 29.[64] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian sources, including the Russian MoD, claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks on Verbove.[65] One Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the Russian 7th Guards Air Assault (VDV) Division are repelling Ukrainian attacks east of Robotyne (closer to Verbove).[66]

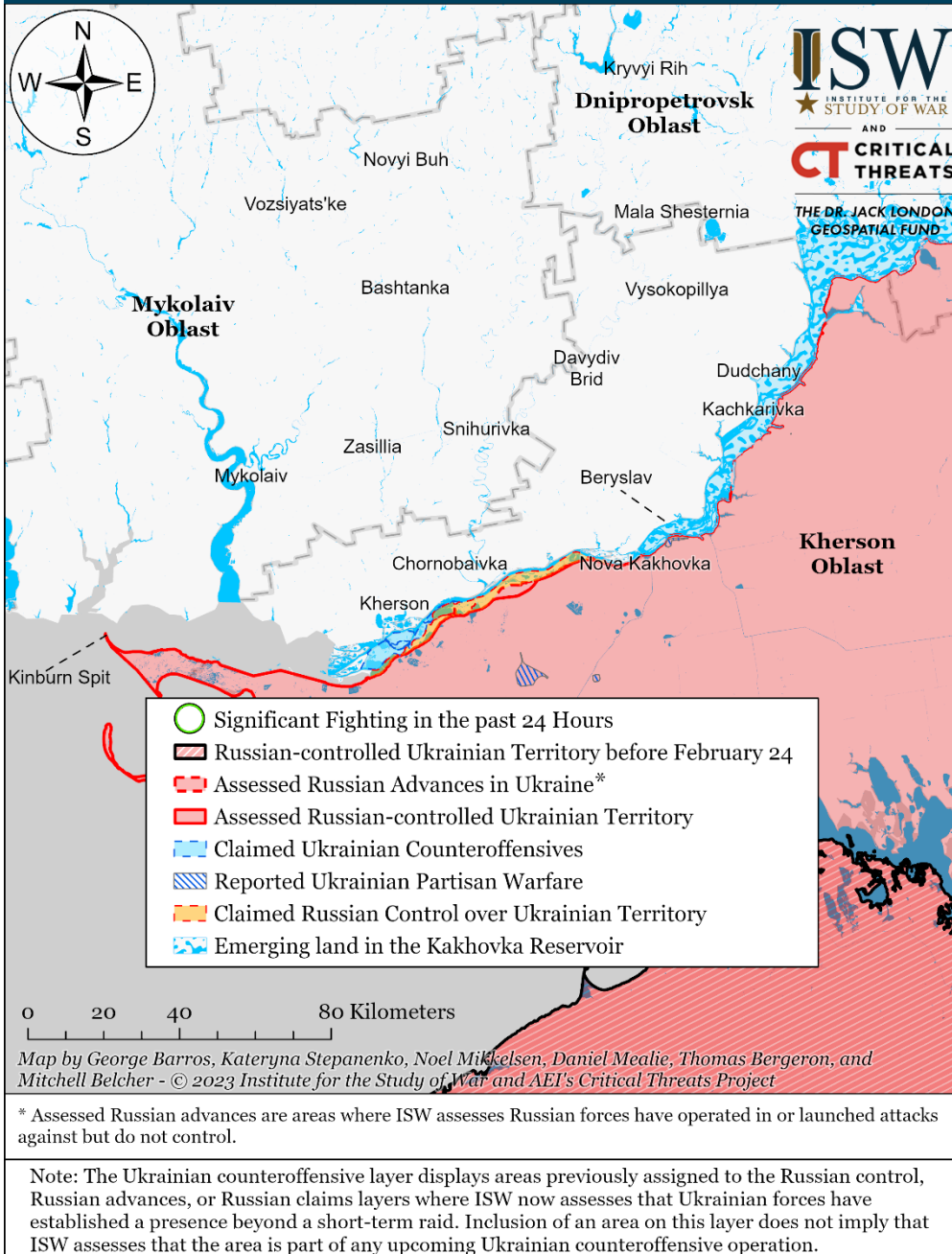
A Russian source claimed on August 29 that Russian forces improved their positions near Verbove because of a successful counterattack. Rogov claimed that Russian forces counterattacked and pushed Ukrainian forces away from Verbove and seized new unspecified positions.[67]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of August 29, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Ukrainian forces continued small scale raids across the Dnipro River in Kherson Oblast on August 29. Geolocated footage published on August 29 showed Ukrainian servicemen raising a Ukrainian flag near the Antonivsky Bridge on the east (left) bank of the Dnipro River.[68] A member of the Ukrainian Kherson Oblast Council, Serhiy Khlan, stated that this video of Ukrainian forces on the east (left) bank of the Dnipro River was symbolic.[69] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance group near Kozulyskyi Island (22km southwest of Kherson City).[70]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of August 29, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

The UK Ministry of Defense (MoD) reported on August 29 that the Russian MoD is still unlikely to meet its targets for volunteer recruitment, despite offering incentives such as high salaries and additional social benefits.[71] The UK MoD reported that the Russian MoD paid lieutenants 81,200 rubles (\$851) per month in February 2022 and currently pays junior Russian servicemen over 200,000 rubles (\$2,096) per month.[72] ISW reported on August 3 that the Kremlin is attempting to establish favorable conditions to attract additional volunteers to service in the Russian military.[73]

Russian authorities continue efforts to coerce migrants living in Russia to fight in the war in Ukraine in exchange for Russian citizenship. Perm Oblast's Kirovsky Raion Administration Head Mikhail Borisov announced on August 27 that Russian authorities conducted a joint raid in Kirovsky Raion, during which Russian authorities checked migrants' citizenship documents, trade permits, employment contracts, and military registration status.[74] Borisov stated that Russian authorities issued summonses to the military registration and enlistment office to migrants who were not yet registered with the Russian MoD.[75] A prominent Russian milblogger amplified photos on August 28 of Russian authorities registering foreigners who have recently received Russian citizenship in Perm, likely during the joint raid that Borisov announced.[76] Russian opposition news outlet *Mobilization News* reported on August 29 that Russian police in Chelyabinsk Oblast detained and distributed military summonses to migrants from Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries.[77] A Russian milblogger amplified the narrative that migrants from Central Asian countries and the Caucasus, specifically, Tajik, Uzbek, and Kyrgyz migrants, need to "earn" a Russian passport through military service.[78]

Ukrainian official sources reported that Russian authorities are planning a new wave of mobilization in occupied Crimea. The Ukrainian Presidential Representative in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea reported on August 28 that Russian authorities plan to mobilize up to 30,000 servicemen and conscript up to 10,000 servicemen in occupied Crimea.[79] The report stated that occupation police officers or Russian National Guard (Rosgvardia) personnel will hand out summonses and that Crimean occupation authorities are opening additional mobilization centers in preparation for the new wave of mobilization.[80] Ukrainian military expert Vladyslav Seleznyov stated that occupation authorities will likely announce mobilization after the local elections on September 10, similar to how Russian authorities did not announce "partial mobilization" last fall until after the regional elections.[81]

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 sources reported that occupation authorities continue to forcibly deport Ukrainian children from occupied Ukraine to Russia. The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported that Russian occupation officials sent children from Yasynuvata, occupied Donetsk Oblast to Chelyabinsk Oblast due to in-person education being "impossible" for an unspecified reason and because occupation authorities refused to allow remote schooling.[82]

A Russian opposition source reported that the United Russia party is pushing local collaborators, veterans, and Kremlin officials to participate in regional elections in the occupied territories. Russian opposition news outlet *Vazhnie Istorii* reported on August 28 that only 55 percent of United Russia's candidates for regional elections in Zaporizhia and Kherson oblasts are local residents, compared to 89 percent of the Communist Party's candidates and 85 percent of A Just Russia's

candidates.[83] *Vazhnie Istorii* reported that several Kremlin employees, State Duma deputies, and veterans of the war in Ukraine are running as United Russia candidates in the regional elections in occupied Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts.[84] *Vazhnie Istorii* discovered that several United Russia candidates listed Kherson City, which Ukrainian forces liberated in November 2022, as their place of residence.[85]

UNICEF reported that continued attacks on Ukrainian schools and low enrollment of Ukrainian refugee children in host country schools are detrimental to the education of many of Ukraine's 6.7 million children. UNICEF reported on August 29 that Ukrainian children are experiencing widespread learning loss as a result of a fourth year of education disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine.[86] UNICEF reported that constant attacks on Ukrainian schools leave children feeling distressed and have caused many children to fall behind in their school curriculum.[87] UNICEF reported that only one third of children living in Ukraine attend school fully in-person.[88] UNICEF reported that more than half of Ukrainian children who are refugees in seven unspecified countries are not enrolled in school due to language barriers, difficulty accessing schools, and previously overstretched national education systems.[89]

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)

A Ukrainian military official stated that Russian forces may use upcoming Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) military exercises to increase Russia's military presence in Belarus. Ukrainian Joint Forces Commander Lieutenant General Serhiy Nayevo reported on August 29 that Russian forces currently do not have ground forces in Belarus but may use the upcoming CSTO "Echelon," "Poisk," and "Vzaimodeystviye" exercises to increase Russia's military presence in Belarus.[90] The CSTO announced that the "Echelon," "Poisk," and "Vzaimodeystviye" exercises will be a part of the joint operational-strategic "Combat Brotherhood-2023" exercise occurring from September 1 to 6.[91]

A Belarusian opposition figure claimed that the Belarusian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) has issued Wagner Group personnel Belarusian passports. Belarusian opposition leader Pavel Latushko claimed in an interview with the *Polish Press Agency* published on August 29 that the Belarusian MVD has issued Wagner personnel new passports under different names for a month possibly in preparation for sabotage activities.[92] Wagner personnel are unlikely to attempt to conduct sabotage activities against countries bordering Belarus as ISW has observed reports of Wagner personnel leaving Belarus and has assessed that Wagner is weakened following Prigozhin's assassination.[93]

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://t.me/ab3army/3079> ; <https://twitter.com/Bodbe6/status/1696556509335806060?s=20> ; https://twitter.com/I_LikeMcdonalds/status/1696559748114534808?s=20 ; <https://twitter.com/moklasen/status/1696603556810264651?s=20> ; <https://twitter.com/moklasen/status/1696603559599407325?s=20> ; <https://t.me/BOBRMORF/219>

[2] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02J2uXgA9hrkL4F7NAwu2F6KMtTBsyPPViFgrA5QQHDJEanXDhX5hN2Ur82MngKcYBl>

[3] <https://armyinform.com dot ua/2023/08/28/za-ostanni-try-doby-na-tavrijskomu-napryamku-bulo-znyshhen0-22-artsystemy-j-minomety-shhe-15-bulo-poshkodzhen0/>

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