### Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

Christina Harward, Karolina Hird, Riley Bailey, Nicole Wolkov, and Frederick W. Kagan

March 27, 2024, 5:10pm ET

Click <u>here</u> to see ISW's interactive map of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

Click <u>here</u> to see ISW's 3D control of terrain topographic map of Ukraine. Use of a computer (not a mobile device) is strongly recommended for using this data-heavy tool.

Click <u>here</u> 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 2:15pm ET on March 27. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the March 28 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU) released its 38th report on the human rights situation in Ukraine on March 26, confirming several of ISW's longstanding assessments about Russia's systematic violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in occupied territories and towards Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs).[1] The HRMMU report details activities between December 1, 2023 and February 29 2024, and includes new findings about Russia's abuse of Ukrainian POWs during this timeframe, based on interviews with 60 recently released male POWs.[2] Nearly all of the POWs that HRMMU interviewed detailed how they were tortured by Russian forces with beatings and electric shocks and threatened with execution, and over half of the interviewees experienced sexual violence. HRMMU also reported that it has evidence of Russian forces executing at least 32 POWs in 12 different incidents during the reporting period and independently verified three of the executions. ISW observed open-source evidence of several POW executions during this reporting period: the execution of three Ukrainian POWs near Robotyne, Zaporizhia Oblast on December 27, 2023; the execution of one Ukrainian POW near Klishchiivka, Donetsk Oblast on February 9, 2024; the executions of three Ukrainian POWs near Robotyne, the execution of six Ukrainian POWs near Avdiivka, Donetsk Oblast, and the executions of two Ukrainian POWs near Vesele, Donetsk Oblast on or around February 18, 2024; and the execution of nine Ukrainian POWs near Ivanivske, Donetsk Oblast, on February 25.[3] The summary execution and mistreatment of POWs is a violation of Article 3 of the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War.[4] The HRMMU report also details the forced Russification of Ukrainian populations in occupied areas, including the imposition of Russian political, legal, and administrative systems onto occupied Ukraine in violation of Russia's international legal obligations as an occupying power.[5] ISW has reported at length on the specifics of Russia's illegal occupation of Ukraine, consistent with the findings of the UN HRMMU

Russian officials are tying the US and the West to a broader set of "terrorist" attacks against Russia following the Crocus City Hall attack, likely to intensify rhetoric about

alleged Western and Ukrainian threats to generate greater domestic support for the war in Ukraine. The Russian Investigative Committee and Prosecutor General's Office stated on March 27 that they will consider an appeal from the Russian State Duma to investigate American and Western financing and organization of terrorist attacks against Russia. [7] The Russian Investigative Committee, Prosecutor General's Office, and the Duma Deputies that made the appeal did not explicitly reference the Crocus City Hall attack.[8] Kremlin officials have previously tied Ukraine and the West to the Crocus City Hall attack but have yet to make a formal accusation, and the Kremlin may refrain from issuing an official accusation as all available evidence continues to show that the Islamic State (IS) is very likely responsible for the attack.[9] Russian officials routinely describe Ukrainian military strikes against legitimate military targets in occupied Ukraine and Russia as terrorism and consistently claim that Western actors help organize these strikes.[10] The Kremlin likely aims to seize on wider Russian social fears and anger following the Crocus City Hall attack by portraying Ukraine, the US, and the West as immediate terrorist threats. The Kremlin likely hopes that perceptions of Ukrainian and Western involvement in the Crocus City Hall attack will increase domestic support for the war in Ukraine, and Russian officials will likely invoke a broader view of what they consider terrorism to further cast Ukrainians as terrorists and the West as a sponsor of terrorism.[11] The Kremlin may still formally accuse Ukraine of conducting the Crocus City Hall attack if it believes that these other informational insufficient to generate the domestic response it likely efforts

Russian authorities are increasing legal pressure against migrants in Russia following recent Russian officials' proposals for harsher, measures against migrant communities in response to the March 22 Crocus City Hall attack. BBC News Russian Service stated that there has been a significant increase in the number of cases related to violations of the rules of entry for foreign citizens into Russia following the Crocus City Hall attack.[13] BBC News Russian Service reported on March 27 that 784 such cases have been registered since the morning of March 25, as compared with 1,106 during the entire previous week. A Russian lawyer who often works with Tajik citizens reportedly told BBC News Russian Service that over 100 people waited for a Moscow district court to hear their cases on March 25 alone and that Russian authorities are especially targeting migrants from Tajikistan during searches. BBC News Russian Service reported that representatives of the Tajik diaspora in Russia are expecting Russian authorities to conduct a large wave of deportations following the Crocus City Hall attack. A Russian insider source claimed on March 27 that unspecified actors gave the Moscow Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) an "unspoken" order to "not spare" migrants and for MVD employees to use their own judgement in the field.[14] The insider source claimed that a source suggested that Russian authorities are not preparing to conduct raids on migrant communities but will apply the "strictest measures" to migrants in "controversial situations." Kremlin newswire TASS stated on March 27 that Russian police and Rosgvardia conducted a raid at the Wildberries warehouse in Elektrostal, Moscow Oblast to check the documents of migrant workers, and Russian opposition outlet Baza reported that Russian authorities detained 21 people during the raid. [15] Several Russian ultranationalist milbloggers complained that the way Russian-language schools in Tajikistan are teaching about Russia's historical imperial occupation of Tajikistan is discouraging Tajik migrants from integrating into Russian society, essentially blaming migrants for the alienation that Russian society subjects them to.[16] Select Russian officials recently called for the introduction of several antimigrant policies, which Russian authorities are unlikely to enact given Russia's reliance on migrants for its force generation and labor needs.[17] Russian authorities may continue the practice of raiding migrant workplaces and increase crackdowns at border crossings to temporarily placate emotional cries for retribution following the March 22 attack as the Kremlin continues to develop a cogent and practical response.

#### **Key Takeaways:**

- The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU) released its 38th report on the human rights situation in Ukraine on March 26, confirming several of ISW's longstanding assessments about Russia's systematic violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in occupied territories and towards Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs).
- Russian officials are tying the US and the West to a broader set of "terrorist" attacks against Russia following the Crocus City Hall attack, likely to intensify rhetoric about alleged Western and Ukrainian threats to generate greater domestic support for the war in Ukraine.
- Russian authorities are increasing legal pressure against migrants in Russia following recent Russian officials' proposals for harsher, measures against migrant communities in response to the March 22 Crocus City Hall attack.
- Russian forces recently made confirmed advances near Avdiivka and southwest of Donetsk City on March 27.
- Russian Storm-Z personnel continue to complain about their poor treatment by the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) as the MoD tries to posture efficacy in its force generation and social benefit allocation system.



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 Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)

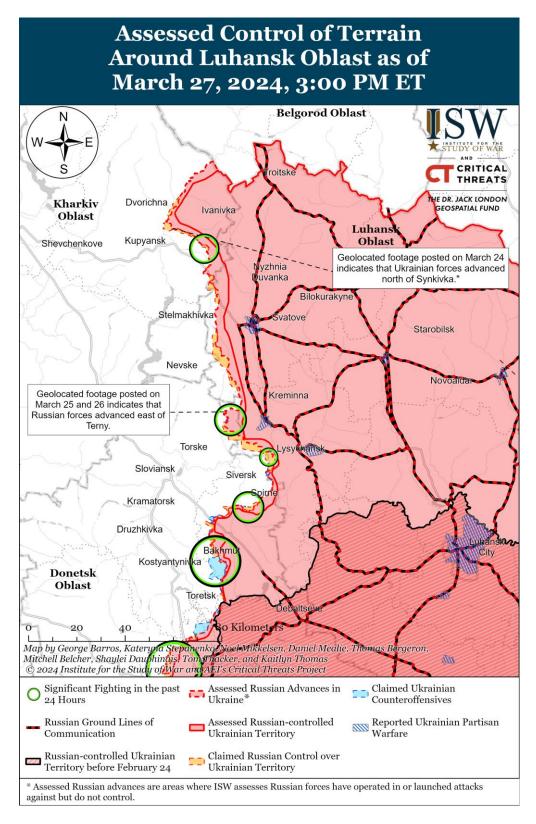
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiy Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort Southern Axis
- Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Russian Technological Adaptations
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas
- Ukrainian Defense Industrial Base Efforts
- Russian Information Operations and Narratives
- Significant Activity in Belarus

Russian	Main	<b>Effort</b>	_	Eastern	Ukraine
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## <u>Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Luhansk Oblast</u> (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

Positional engagements continued along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on March 27, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in this area. Ukrainian and Russian sources stated that positional engagements continued northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka and Lake Lyman; southeast of Kupyansk near Ivanivka; west of Kreminna near Terny and Yampolivka; and south of Kreminna near Bilohorivka.[18] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced near Terny, but ISW has not observed visual confirmation of this claim.[19] Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov stated that elements of the Chechen Akhmat Spetsnaz "Aida" detachment are operating near Bilohorivka.[20]

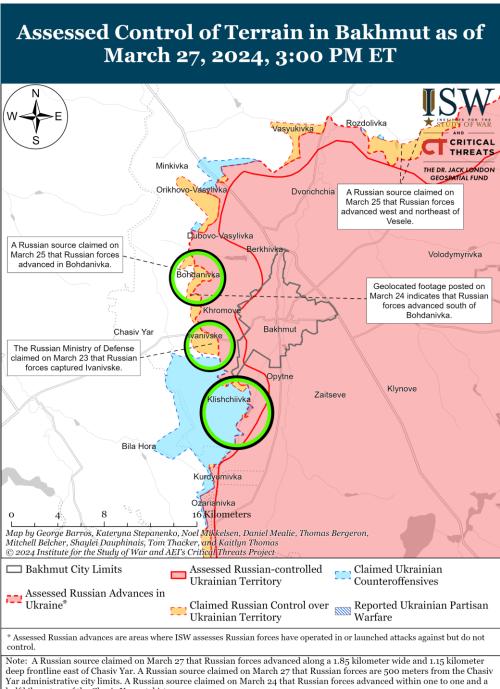
Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces struck Kharkiv City with a D-30 universal joint glide munition (UMPB), a guided glide bomb, on March 27.[21] Ukrainian officials noted that the strike was the first Russian glide bomb strike against Kharkiv City since the beginning of the full-scale invasion in 2022.[22] Ukrainian Kharkiv Oblast Military Administration Head Oleh Synehubov stated that the UMPB D-30 has a range of up to 90 kilometers and that Russian forces can launch the bomb from aircraft or ground-based Smerch multiple rocket launch systems (MLRS).[23] Russian forces struck Myrnohrad, Donetsk Oblast with three UMPB D-30SN guided glide bombs on March 10.[24]



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

Russian forces reportedly advanced west of Bakhmut, although there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in the area on March 27. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced west of

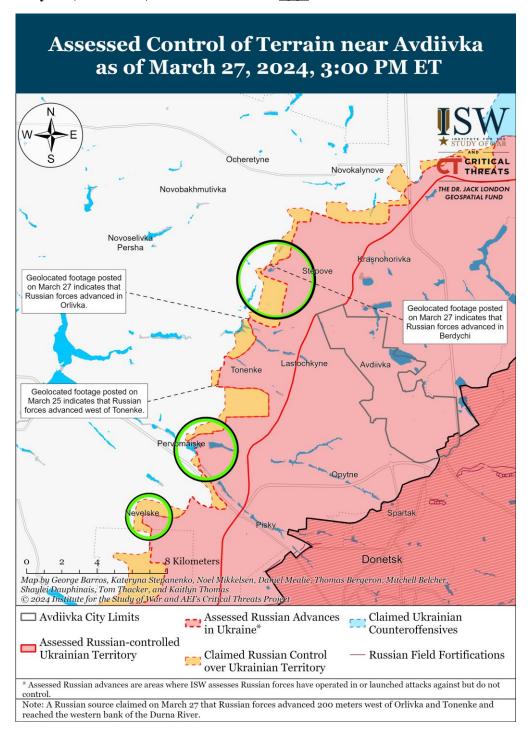
Bakhmut along a railway line and a section of the Oo5o6 (Khromove-Chasiv Yar) highway by 1.15 kilometers in depth and 1.85 kilometers in width. [25] A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the 98th Airborne (VDV) Division are advancing near Ivanivske and are within 500 meters of the city limits of Chasiv Yar (west of Bakhmut). [26] Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu credited elements of the Russian 102nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) with seizing Ivanivske on March 24, although ISW has yet to observe visual evidence confirming that Russian forces have seized Ivanivske. [27] Positional fighting continued northeast of Bakhmut near Vesele; northwest of Bakhmut near Bohdanivka; west of Bakhmut near Ivanivske; southwest of Bakhmut near Klishchiivka and Andriivka; and south of Bakhmut near Shumy and Pivdenne. [28] A Ukrainian military observer reported that Russian forces have intensified transfers of equipment and personnel along ground lines of communication (GLOCs) through Kadiivka, Pervomaisk, and Popasna (all east of Bakhmut), but did not specify the destination of these transfers. [29] Kadiivka, Pervomaisk, and Popasna all lie along the To504 Luhansk City-Bakhmut highway that runs directly from the Russian rear in occupied Luhansk Oblast into Bakhmut, however.



half kilometers of the Chasiv Yar outskirts.

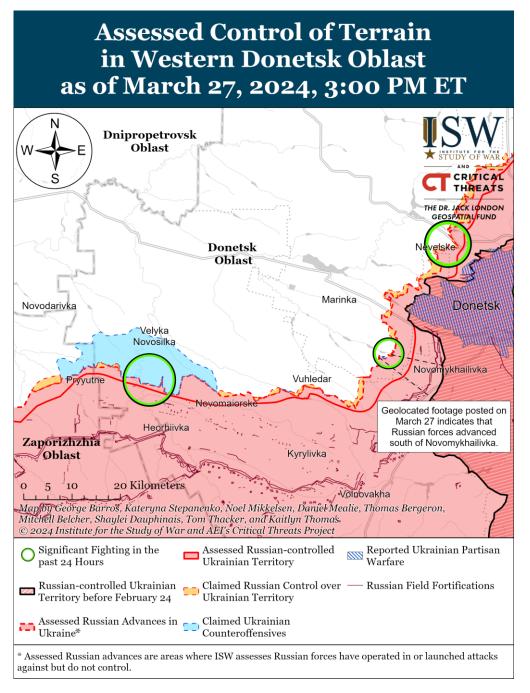
Russian forces recently advanced west of Avdiivka amid continued positional fighting in the area on March 27. Geolocated footage published on March 27 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced within Berdychi (northwest of Avdiivka) and in Orlivka (west of Avdiivka).[30] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces entered Semenivka (northwest of Avdiivka) and are attacking Ukrainian positions within the settlement but that Ukrainian forces are actively counterattacking in the area.[31] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced 200 meters west of Orlivka on the western bank of the Durna River, 200 meters west of Tonenke (west of Avdiivka), 200 meters in the direction of Umanske (west of Avdiivka), 300 meters south of Tonenke towards Pervomaiske (southwest of Avdiivka), and 100 meters south of Nevelske (southwest of Avdiivka).[32] ISW has not observed visual confirmation of these claims. Positional fighting continued northwest of Avdiivka near Berdychi and

Semenivka; west of Avdiivka near Orlivka, Tonenke, and Umanske; and southwest of Avdiivka near Vodyane, Nevelske, and Pervomaiske.[33]

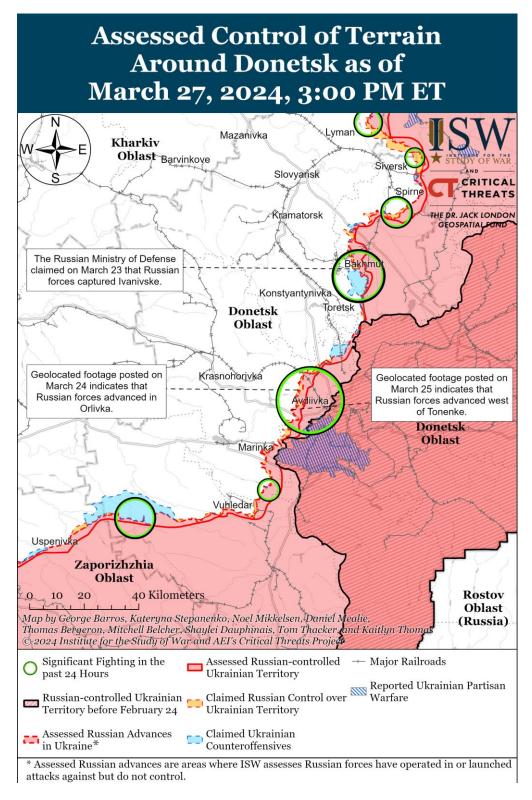


Russian forces recently advanced southwest of Donetsk City amid continued positional fighting west and southwest of Donetsk City on March 27. Geolocated footage published on March 27 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced within central Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City).[34] Positional fighting continued west of Donetsk City near Heorhiivka and Krasnohorivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Novomykhailivka and Pobieda.[35] Elements of the Russian 5th Motorized Rifle

Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] Army Corps [AC]) are reportedly operating near Krasnohorivka.[36]



Positional engagements continued south of Velyka Novosilka near Staromayorske and Urozhaine in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on March 27.[37]

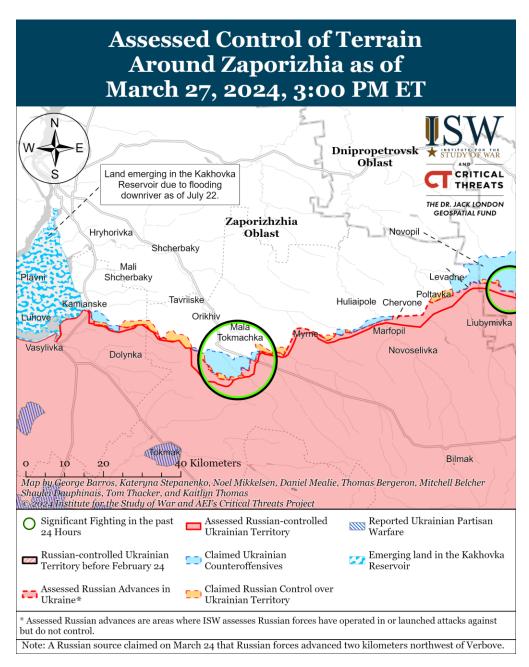


### <u>Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis</u> (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

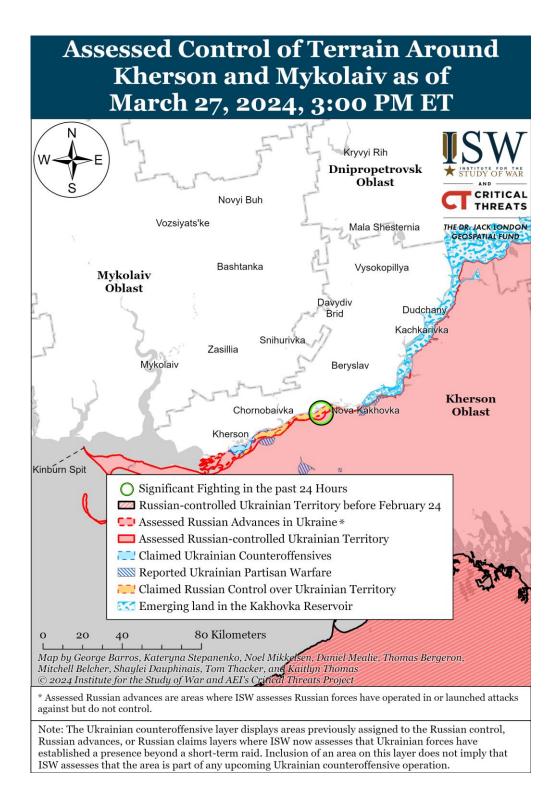
Positional engagements continued in western Zaporizhia Oblast on March 27, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Positional engagements continued near Robotyne, near Mala Tokmachka (northeast of Robotyne), northeast of Novoprokopivka (south of Robotyne), and northwest

of Verbove (east of Robotyne).[38] Elements of the Russian 71st Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) reportedly continue operating within Robotyne.[39]





Positional engagements continued in east (left) bank Kherson Oblast, including near Krynky, on March 27.[40]



### <u>Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign</u> (Russian Objective: Target Ukrainian military and civilian infrastructure in the rear and on the frontline)

Russian forces conducted a series of drone and missile strikes against Ukraine on the night of March 26 to 27 and on March 27. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched 13 Shahed-136/131 drones from Kursk Oblast and that Ukrainian forces shot down 10 drones over Kharkiv, Sumy, and Kyiv oblasts on the night of March 26 to 27.[41] Ukrainian officials reported that Russian drones struck civilian infrastructure in Izyum, Kharkiv Oblast.[42] Ukrainian Kharkiv Oblast Head Oleh

Synehubov stated that a Russian Kh-35U subsonic anti-ship cruise missile struck Kharkiv City on the morning of March 27.[43] Ukraine's Eastern Air Command reported that Ukrainian forces shot down an unspecified Russian cruise missile over Dnipropetrovsk Oblast on March 27.[44] Ukrainian officials stated that Russian forces struck an industrial enterprise in Mykolaiv City with an Iskander-M ballistic missile on the afternoon of March 27.[45]

Ukraine's Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Colonel Nataliya Humenyuk stated that Russian forces have stored "several dozen" Zircon missiles in military facilities in occupied Crimea. [46] Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Major Ilya Yevlash stated that Ukrainian air defense systems, such as Patriot and SAMP/T systems, can intercept Zircon missiles when they slow down to about 3,700 kilometers per hour on approach to a target. [47]

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

Russian Storm-Z personnel continue to complain about their poor treatment by the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) as the MoD tries to present the efficacy of its force generation and social benefit allocation system. Russian opposition outlet *Mobilization News* posted a video appeal from Storm-Z fighters from Kaluga Oblast on March 27 wherein one fighter claimed that after signing contracts with the Russian MoD, Russian command sent a Storm-Z unit of 230 people to the frontline, of whom only 38 survived combat. [48] The Storm-Z fighter complained that he has been unable to receive combat veteran status or promised payments from the Russian authorities for his service.[49] *Mobilization* News released another video on March 27 wherein relatives of killed and wounded Storm-Z fighters complain to Russian President Vladimir Putin that Russian authorities have not issued the Storm-Z fighters combat status or granted payments in the event of their death or injury in Ukraine. [50] The relatives of the Storm-Z fighters blamed the Russian MoD and Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu for the poor treatment and lack of benefits for Storm-Z fighters. The Russian MoD relies heavily on Storm-Z recruits from penal colonies to carry out costly infantry-led frontal assaults against Ukrainian positions and is very unlikely to address complaints concerning their poor treatment. The Russian MoD claimed on March 27 that it is issuing electronic combat veteran certificates and streamlining and digitizing the process for veterans to obtain payments and social benefits — but these privileges evidently do not apply evenly personnel who have signed contracts with the Russian MoD.[51] all

Russian news outlet *Vedemosti* reported that US-sanctioned Russian company Baikal Electronics is struggling to domestically package semiconductor chips to produce processors and that over half of its domestically produced processors are defective.[52] *Vedemosti* reported that Baikal Electronics began to experiment with domestically packaging chips in Russia at the end of 2021 and that outdated equipment and a lack of experienced employees caused the large amount of processor defects.

### <u>Russian Technological Adaptations</u> (Russian objective: Introduce technological innovations to optimize systems for use in Ukraine)

Russian drone developer Albatross LLC told Kremlin newswire *TASS* that Russian forces used the Albatross M5 long-range reconnaissance drones to guide aviation and artillery strikes while repelling recent pro-Ukrainian Russian raids into Belgorod Oblast.[53] Albatross LLC noted that the modernized Albatross M5 drone has a maximum range of 60-80 kilometers.

Russian state news outlet *RIA Novosti* reported that Russian T-72B3, T-72B3M, T-80BVM, and T-90M tanks operating in Ukraine use Reflex-M guided weapon systems with the Invar-M/M1 anti-tank guided missiles to strike Ukrainian and Western-made vehicles. [54]

<u>Ukrainian Defense Industrial Efforts</u> (Ukrainian objective: Develop its defense industrial base to become more self-sufficient in cooperation with US, European, and international partners)

ISW is not publishing coverage of Ukrainian defense industrial efforts today.

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

ISW is not publishing coverage of activities in Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine today.

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

Russian officials are weaponizing international responses to the Crocus City Hall attack to accuse the West of espousing Russophobic policies and to baselessly blame Ukraine of involvement in the attack. Russian Ambassador to Austria Dmitry Lyubinsky claimed on March 27 that while the Austrian government reacted to the Crocus City Hall attack, it did not use the words "terrorist attack" or condemn the attack.[55] Lyubinsky accused Austria of having "taken a very special position in its hypocrisy" and a "daze of permissiveness" towards Ukraine and reiterated the Kremlin narrative baselessly connecting Ukraine to the attack. Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova reported that Russia has received 24-hour non-stop words of support from around the globe following the attack, but immediately pivoted to accuse Ukraine of involvement in the attack and blame NATO global members monopolizing the fight against terror.[56] of

<u>Significant activity in Belarus</u> (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.

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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[16] <a href="https://t.me/rybar/58588">https://t.me/rybar/58588</a>; <a href="https://t.me/notes\_veterans/16295">https://t.me/notes\_veterans/16295</a>; <a href="https://t.me/notes\_veterans/16295">https://t.me/voenacher/63252</a>

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        https://t.me/creamy_caprice/4888;
                                            https://t.me/kultshturmovika_ukraine/1773
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                                                          https://t.me/c/1595839251/3625;
https://t.me/creamy_caprice/4889;
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        https://t.me/DnevnikDesantnika/8702
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