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.

Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin seeks to obfuscate his efforts to strengthen his independent power base with an appeal to the concept of Russia’s historic unity. Prigozhin provided a vague response to a media inquiry regarding his recent visit to Kursk Oblast on Russia’s Unity Day (November 4), during which he had indirectly implied that Wagner forces are involved in upholding Russia's unity. Prigozhin stated that Russian people, businesses, government, and army need to come together to fight for Russia’s sovereignty and its great future while deflecting from the journalist’s question regarding Prigozhin’s reported meeting with Kursk businessmen about the organization of an unspecified people’s militia – outside of formal Russian military command structures. Prigozhin also noted that Russia has all the ingredients to achieve its goals including a strong president, cohesive army, and great nationhood, which he concluded with an out-of-place greeting from Wagner fighters. Prigozhin later claimed in a follow up media response that his “independence” does not contradict Russian President Vladimir Putin’s politics as some audiences have interpreted.

Prigozhin’s rather sarcastic statements have several underlying implications for his perception of his power within Russia. ISW previously reported that Kursk Oblast officials announced the construction of second and third lines of defenses in the region, and if Prigozhin’s meeting with local businessmen took place, may indicate that he is attempting to expand his influence in the region. Prigozhin’s comment on Russia’s ”cohesive army” next to Putin was likely thinly-veiled sarcasm, given that Prigozhin has repeatedly criticized the Russian Armed Forces on numerous occasions. Prigozhin also directly recognized that he is an independent entity, which as ISW previously assessed, relieves him of some obligations to the Kremlin and the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD). Putin’s dependency on Prigozhin’s forces around Bakhmut also allows Prigozhin privileges such as voicing his criticisms of the Kremlin or the Russian Armed Forces without significant ramifications. Prigozhin has also coincidentally opened his Wagner Center in St. Petersburg on Russia’s Unity Day. However, Prigozhin is notably shielding his efforts to build an independent power base and shape the conduct of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine with language focused on Russian Unity – likely both to appeal to Russian nationalists and civilians and to deflect criticism of his fairly overt efforts to build an independent power base.

Prigozhin continues to rely on ineffective convicts to staff his forces. Prigozhin declined to comment on a reporter’s question regarding ongoing recruitment drives at Krasnoyarsk Krai penal colonies, despite previously openly discussing prisoner participation in the war with Russian outlets like RiaFan. Russian opposition outlet The Insider, however, found that over 500 prisoners recruited into Wagner units have died in the past two months. The publication added that Wagner lost between 800 and 1,000
mercenaries in Ukraine, indicating convicts comprise a large proportion of Wagner’s forces in Ukraine. Ukrainian intelligence officials also previously reported that many prisoners suffering with infectious diseases infected Wagner troops, to which Prigozhin responded that he does not discriminate on the basis of illness.  

**Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian confirmed that Iran sent Russia combat drones.** Amir-Abdollahian stated on November 5 that Iran “gave a limited number of drones to Russia months before” the war in Ukraine. Amir-Abdollahian also claimed that if Ukrainian officials could prove that the Russian military has used Iranian-made drones in Ukraine then Iranian officials would “not be indifferent” to the concern - falsely and ridiculously implying that Russia has not used the drones that he admitted Iran has provided. Iran’s confirmation of the drone shipments further supports ISW’s previous assessments that Russia is sourcing Iranian-made weapons systems to address the depletion of its high-precision munitions arsenal. ISW previously assessed that Iran is likely already exploiting Russian reliance on these Iranian-made weapons systems to request Russian assistance with its nuclear program. The nuclear assistance requests and the recognition of the drone shipments are both indicators that Iranian officials may intend to more clearly establish an explicit bilateral security relationship with Russia in which they are more equal partners.

**Former Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) Security Minister and current DNR military commander Aleksandr Khodakovsky claimed on November 5 that Russian friendly fire may have caused up to 60% of total Russian losses since the end of Russian offensive operations in Mariupol in mid-May.** Even if this statistic is exaggerated, the fact that a Russian commander is publicly speculating on such a damning indicator of Russian and proxy competency indicates Russian forces’ deep challenges. Friendly fire typically accounts for a limited number of losses in war but ordinarily nowhere near 60% of total casualties, demonstrating communication and command and control coordination between Russian forces. Russian and Ukrainian sources also reported that a Russian rotation returning to its base near Pavlivka, Donetsk Oblast on November 5 drove into a ditch constructed by army subcontractors without prior discussion or warning, further demonstrating a widespread lack of cross-training and coordination between Russian troops. The frequent replacement of Russian military leaders, promotion of inexperienced soldiers, and cobbled-together Russian force composition including Russian contract soldiers, Russian mobilized soldiers, DNR and Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR) forces, and Wagner Group forces exacerbate the fragmented nature of the Russian chain of command and ineffectiveness of Russian forces and likely contributes to frequent friendly fire incidents.

**Key Takeaways**

- **Wagner Group financier Yevheniy Prigozhin seeks to obfuscate his efforts to strengthen his independent power base with an appeal to the concept of Russia’s historic unity.**
- **Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian confirmed that Iran began providing Russia drones before February 24, but strangely denied that Russian forces have used them in combat.**
- **DNR military commander Aleksandr Khodakovsky claimed that Russian friendly fire may have caused up to 60% of total Russian losses since mid-May.**
- **Ukrainian troops reportedly continued counteroffensives along the Svatove-Kreminna line.**
• Russian forces continued to set up defensive positions along the Dnipro River.
• Ukrainian forces continued to target Russian logistics and transportation in Kherson Oblast.
• Russian forces continued to attack around Bakhmut and claimed unspecified advances.
• Russian forces continued unsuccessful offensive operations in the Avdiivka-Donetsk City area and in western Donetsk.
• Continued poor conditions for mobilized soldiers catalyzed a large-scale protest in Kazan.
• Unknown actors reportedly attempted to assassinate high-profile Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Supreme Court Judge Aleksandr Nikulin.
• Russia continues to deploy personnel to staff administrative positions in occupied areas.
• Russian forces continued forced evacuations in Kherson Oblast. Over 80% of Kherson residents reportedly have evacuated.

We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because those activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We will continue to evaluate and report on the effects of these criminal activities on the Ukrainian military and population and specifically on combat in Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn these Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict, Geneva Conventions, and humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

• Ukrainian Counteroffensives—Southern and Eastern Ukraine
• Russian Main Effort—Eastern Ukraine (comprised of one subordinate and two supporting efforts);
• Russian Subordinate Main Effort—Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
• Russian Supporting Effort—Southern Axis
• Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
• Activities in Russian-occupied Areas

Ukrainian Counteroffensives (Ukrainian efforts to liberate Russian-occupied territories)

Eastern Ukraine: (Eastern Kharkiv Oblast-Western Luhansk Oblast)

Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian troops continued counteroffensive actions along the Svatove-Kreminka line on November 5. Russian sources, including the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), reported that Ukrainian troops conducted an assault in the direction of Kuzemivka, 13km northwest of Svatove. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian troops crossed the Zherebets River west of Svatove and are probing Russian positions along the Kuzemivka-Kolomyichykha line. Geolocated footage shows Ukrainian troops conducting strikes on Russian armored vehicles about 30km northwest of Svatove, indicating that Russian troops maintain positions in the Yahidne-Orlianka area. A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces are regrouping in this area after a failed assault on Yahidne. A Russian milblogger reported that Ukrainian troops continued attempted attacks towards Kreminka. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian troops
repelled a Russian attack on Bilohorivka, 10km south of Kreminna. Russian sources also claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted a HIMARS strike on Russian positions in Svatove and Kreminna and shelled Russian positions along the Svatove-Kreminna line.

**Southern Ukraine: (Kherson Oblast)**

Russian forces continued to set up defensive positions along the Dnipro River on November 5. Spokesperson for the Ukrainian Southern Forces, Nataliya Humenyuk, stated that Russian forces are building strong defensive positions on the left (eastern) bank of the Dnipro River with firing positions that they will use to target Ukrainian forces on the right (western) bank. Humenyuk added that Russian forces are still operating on the right bank. Ukraine’s Southern Operational Command noted that Russian forces are still conducting maneuvers and setting up defensive lines on the right bank, while simultaneously mining the left bank and evacuating civilians at least 15km away from the coast. The Ukrainian Resistance Center specified that Russian forces are preparing Nova Kakhovka (on the left bank) for battle by mining underground communications lines such as sewers. Ukraine’s Southern Operational Command also reiterated that Russian forces are continuing to destroy civilian watercraft and have already destroyed over 50 vessels. ISW has previously assessed that Russian forces are likely attempting to prevent Ukrainian forces from chasing them to the left bank following a fighting withdrawal.

Ukrainian and Russian sources did not report significant changes in the situation on the frontlines on November 5. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces continued to shell Ukrainian positions northwest of Kherson City, in southeastern Mykolaiv Oblast, and near the Inhulets River. Ukraine’s Southern Operational Command added that Russian forces used S-300 anti-aircraft missiles to target ground targets in Beryslav Raion. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks in the directions of Sablukivka and Sukhanove, about 40km and 34km northeast of Beryslav. Russian milbloggers and a Kherson City occupation deputy noted the lack of Ukrainian or Russian ground maneuvers. A Russian milblogger added that Russian forces are shelling Ukrainian forces along the E58 highway northwest of Kherson City, likely to disrupt Ukrainian attacks.

Ukrainian forces continued their interdiction campaign on November 5, targeting Russian logistics and transportation routes in Kherson Oblast. Ukrainian military officials reported that Ukrainian forces struck a Russian river crossing near Antonivsky Bridge, destroying a tugboat and damaging two other vessels. Ukrainian forces also reportedly struck a Russian military convoy awaiting to cross the Dnipro River in Olhivka, about 13km northwest of Nova Kakhovka. Ukrainian military officials added that Ukrainian forces shot down two Russian attack helicopters in Beryslav Raion, damaged the Russian area of manpower accumulation in Radensk, and destroyed three ammunition depots in Beryslav and Kherson raions. Local Ukrainian sources reported witnessing explosions in Kherson City, and Russian sources accused Ukrainian forces of targeting evacuees. Local residents also reported a Ukrainian strike the on the Nibulon factory in Hola Prystan, about 14km southwest of Kherson City.

**Russian Main Effort—Eastern Ukraine**

**Russian Subordinate Main Effort—Donetsk Oblast** (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)
Russian forces continued offensive operations around Bakhmut on November 5. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled assaults near Bakhmut; within a 30km radius northeast of Bakhmut near Spirne and Bakhmutskoe; and within a 20km radius south of Bakhmut near Ivanhrad, Klishchiivka, Ozarianivka, and Mayorsk. 38

The Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) head Denis Pushilin stated on November 4 that Russian forces made advances near Mayorsk and expressed hope that Russian forces would soon capture the settlement. 39 A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also conducted an assault northeast of Bakhmut near Verkhnokamianske. 40 Another Russian milblogger claimed on November 5 that Ukrainian forces must constantly rotate units south of Bakhmut in the direction of Ivanhrad and Vesela Dolyna to respond to Wagner PMC units conducting offensives in the direction of Opytne. 41 A separate Russian milblogger claimed on November 5 that Russian forces conducted an assault on Opytne cutting off a section of the E50 highway. 42 A different Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian counterattacks south of Bakhmut near Opytne and Krdiumivka. 43 The milblogger also claimed that Ukrainian forces are continuing to constrain the actions of Russian forces south of Bakhmut near Ivanhrad, Odradivka, Vesela Dolyna, and Zaitseve, and are preparing for urban battles in Bakhmut itself. 44

Russian forces continued offensives operations in the Avdiivka-Donetsk City area on November 5. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian ground assaults near Kamianka and within a 35km radius southwest of Avdiivka near Pervomaiske, Nevelske, Marinka, and Novomykhailivka. 45 A Russian milblogger claimed on November 5 that Russian forces also attempted to advance southwest of Avdiivka to Kostantiinivka. 46 Geolocated footage posted on November 5 shows that Russian forces are likely operating southwest of Avdiivka near Krasnohorivka. 47 A BARS-13 (combat army reserve) source claimed that Russian and Ukrainian positions near Avdiivka are only 30 to 40 meters apart. 48

Russia forces continued offensive operations in western Donetsk Oblast on November 5. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled a Russian assault on Pavlivka (52km southwest of Donetsk City). 49 Geolocated footage shows Ukrainian forces still control Pavlivka as of November 4. 50 A Russian milblogger claimed that Pavlivka is of great tactical importance because there is a road interchange in the settlement and the surrounding rear areas are rocky terrain that makes vehicle maneuvers more difficult. 51 The Ukrainian General Staff reported on November 5 that Russian forces continued routine indirect fire along the line of contact in Donetsk Oblast. 52

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

Russian forces continued routine air, missile, and artillery strikes west of Hulyaipole, and in Dnipropetrovsk and Mykolaiv oblasts on November 5. 53 Ukrainian sources reported that Russian forces struck Nikopol, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, and Viliansk, Zaporizhia Oblast. 54 Ukraine’s Southern Operational Command reported that Russian forces conducted drone attacks in Mykolaiv and Vinnytsia oblasts. 55 Ukraine’s Southern Operational Command reported that Ukrainian air defenses shot down six Shahed-136 drones in Mykolaiv Oblast and two in Vinnytsia Oblast. 56

**Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts** (Russian objective: Expand combat power without conducting general mobilization)
Continued poor conditions for mobilized soldiers are catalyzing general unrest and a large-scale protest at a mobilization collection point in Kazan on November 4. One social media user posted that almost 2,000 soldiers participated in the protest, though ISW cannot independently confirm the size of the crowd. A video posted by news agencies and to social media shows mobilized forces threatening violence and chanting slurs at a reported colonel after demanding that he explain the lack of provision of necessities including food, water, and heat. A Tatarstan government news agency published an article on November 5 claiming authorities had resolved the relevant issues. However, Russian authorities are highly unlikely to be able to fix such issues and halt the resulting protests shortly. Russian and Ukrainian sources provided continued reports of a lack of medical care, shelter, heating, and equipment for mobilized soldiers on November 4 and 5. ISW has reported on a series of protests due to under-provisioning for Russian mobilized soldiers.

Russian forces face additional challenges generating combat power due to pervasive official ineptitude and possible domestic sabotage efforts. One Russian milblogger accused inert mid- and high-level government officials, military leaders, and ministerial deputies of criminal sabotage of mobilization efforts due to incompetence on November 5. Video posted to Twitter on November 4 shows Russian anarchists intentionally sabotaging Russian logistics efforts by burning Russian Railways switchboards and electrical substations.

Social tensions caused by a lack of material support for, or financial commitment to, mobilized soldiers are likely pressuring Russian regional heads to increase payments to mobilized recruits and their families. Oryol Oblast Governor Andrey Klychkov and Nizhny Novgorod Oblast Governor Gleb Nikitkin announced on November 3 and November 4 that mobilized residents and their families will receive additional payments of 50,000 rubles on top of mandated federal payments. These actions align with Russian President Vladimir Putin’s November 4 promise of a one-time payment of 195,000 rubles (about $3,150) to mobilized men and new contract soldiers. New payments will also increase the already heavy burden of mobilization on regional budgets.

Russian authorities continue to explore options for dealing with mobilization evaders. One Russian news source claimed on November 3 that Russian authorities, including FSB border agents, may investigate mobilization evaders returning from abroad for “cooperation with foreigners.” The ongoing war, probable covert mobilization, and potential for a second official wave of mobilization decrease the likelihood that many Russian men who fled mobilization will choose to return, however.

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

Unknown actors reportedly conducted an assassination attempt against Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) Supreme Court Judge Aleksandr Nikulin on November 4. The DNR Ministry of Internal Affairs stated that they are working to identify suspects who attacked Nikulin in Vuhlehirsks, Russian-occupied Donetsk Oblast. Nikulin notably sentenced UK citizens Aiden Aislin and Sean Pinner and Moroccan citizen Brahim Saadoun to death in June on charges of mercenarism after the Russian capture of the Azovstal Steel Plant. It is still unclear if the attack was partisan in nature or the result of in-fighting between internal DNR factions.
Russian occupation officials continue to drive the “evacuation” and forced relocation of residents of Kherson Oblast. Head of the Ukrainian “Kherson Hub” headquarters Roman Golovnya stated on November 5 that since the beginning of the war, over 80% of Kherson City’s residents have left the city. Russian sources continue to perpetuate information operations regarding Ukrainian strikes on civilian infrastructure in Kherson Oblast to continue to manipulate evacuation efforts. Russian officials also continue efforts to deport Ukrainian children under the guise of “vacation” schemes, and Russian media reported that children from Kakhovka, Kherson Oblast, are remaining at vacation camps in Yevpatoria, Russian-occupied Crimea.

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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