

## Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, July 27, 2023

Karolina Hird, Riley Bailey, Grace Mappes, Angelica Evans, Christina Harward, and Frederick W. Kagan  
July 27, 2023, 7:30pm 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 1pm ET on July 27. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the July 28 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations on at least three sectors of the front on July 27 and made gains in some areas, although Ukrainian forces appear not to have continued significant mechanized assaults south of Orikhiv in western Zaporizhia Oblast. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky posted footage on July 27 showing that Ukrainian forces liberated Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) in western Donetsk Oblast following heavy fighting in the area.[1] Geolocated footage published on July 26 indicates that Ukrainian forces also made marginal advances north of Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut).[2] Geolocated footage published on July 26 suggests that Ukrainian forces made additional advances east of Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv) during offensive operations on July 26.[3] Ukrainian Director of the Department of Application Planning at the Main Command of the National Guard Mykola Urshalovych stated on July 27 that Ukrainian forces achieved tactical victories in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhia Oblast) direction.[4] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces continued assaults at a lower tempo and with far less manpower near Robotyne on July 27 after Ukrainian forces launched an intense mechanized frontal assault that broke through Russian defensive positions northeast of the settlement on July 26.[5] Geolocated footage published on July 27 suggests that Ukrainian forces may be operating in areas well forward of where ISW assesses Ukrainian advances to be as a result of ISW's intentionally conservative assessments about control of terrain (*covered in more detail in Southern Axis text*).[6]

**The Kremlin and the wider Russian information space are intensifying efforts to portray the Ukrainian counteroffensive as a failed effort.** Russian President Vladimir Putin stated to a reporter on July 27 that in recent days Russian forces destroyed 39 armored vehicles out of 50 that Ukrainian forces committed to intensified assaults in the Zaporizhia direction.[7] Putin claimed that Russian forces also killed 60 percent of the Ukrainian personnel that conducted these assaults as well as 40 percent of Ukrainian combat aviation pilots in the area.[8] Putin has previously claimed that Russian forces have destroyed an implausible amount of Ukrainian equipment during Ukrainian counteroffensive operations, although his figures concerning Ukrainian assaults in recent days indicate an inflection in his exaggeration of likely Ukrainian losses.[9] Russian milbloggers similarly claimed that Russian forces destroyed dozens of Ukrainian armored vehicles and celebrated the alleged losses as proof that the Ukrainian counteroffensive is stalling.[10] The Kremlin's and the Russian information space's framing of the Ukrainian counteroffensive notably violates a reported Kremlin manual instructing Russian media not to downplay the potential for successful Ukrainian counteroffensive operations.[11] The intensifying portrayal of the Ukrainian counteroffensive as a failed effort suggests that the Kremlin's policy on the coverage of the war is to bolster efforts to promote itself as an effective manager of the war effort.

**A US official expressed caution about assessing that the July 26 uptick in Ukrainian counteroffensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast is part of the Ukrainian main effort, tempering July 26 statements to the contrary.**[12] *The Washington Post* cited an unspecified US official as saying that Ukrainian counteroffensive operations in the Zaporizhia direction may be shaping operations for a later counteroffensive effort, but that US officials do not assess that these operations are part of Ukraine's main effort.[13] *CNN* cited two US officials as saying that Ukrainian forces have deployed the "main bulk" of their reserve forces to southern Ukraine to capitalize on recent Ukrainian gains.[14] UK Minister for the State of the Armed Forces James Heappey stated that Ukrainian forces are being "appropriately cautious" and are meeting current expectations.[15]

**Russian President Vladimir Putin used the Russia–Africa Economic and Humanitarian Forum in St. Petersburg on July 27 to continue efforts to posture Russia as a more attractive ally to African partner states than the collective West.** Putin met with several African leaders at the forum, including Ugandan President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of Zimbabwe Emmerson Dambuzo Mnangagwa, President of the Republic of Burundi Evariste Ndayishimiye, President of Mozambique Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, and President of Comoros Azali Assoumani.[16] During his speech at the plenary session of the forum, Putin emphasized the importance of expanding Russian–African cooperation and Russia's investment in the development of African nations, notably accusing Ukraine and

the West of interfering with Russia's supply of grain and fertilizers to the African continent and claiming that Russia will provide between 25 and 50 thousand tons of grain free of charge to Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe, Mali, Somali, Central African Republic, and Eritrea over the coming months.[17] Putin announced that Russia is helping to develop over 30 energy infrastructure projects in 16 African states and called for an expansion of cultural and social integration between Russia and the African continent, stating that Russia plans to open branches of Russian universities in Africa and increase enrollment of African students in Russian educational institutions.[18]

Beyond the typical diplomatic platitudes and promises of continued cooperation and development, Putin's rhetoric during the Russia-Africa forum does not represent a major inflection in the Kremlin's policy toward the African continent. Putin previously signed an article published on July 24 to posture Russia's commitment to African development and mitigate damage done to Russia's position in Africa and his personal reputation with African leaders.[19] Putin's and the Russian government's reputations likely suffered due to a number of recent factors: Russia's recent withdrawal from the Black Sea Grain Initiative and strikes on Ukrainian port infrastructure (both of which were critical for grain exports to various African countries) and his inability to attend the upcoming BRICS summit because of the International Criminal Court's (ICC) arrest warrant against him.

**Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin was also present in St. Petersburg on July 27 and took the opportunity to informally meet with an unknown number of African leaders, suggesting that the Wagner Group intends to remain a significant player in Africa.** Russian milbloggers amplified photos of Prigozhin shaking hands with a Central African Republic official and the "director of Afrique media." [20] A Russian insider source claimed that Prigozhin held private, informal meetings with representatives of an unknown number of African governments in a hotel close to the Russia-Africa Economic and Humanitarian Forum but did not attend the summit itself.[21] Prigozhin's continued efforts to meet with and message to African leaders are likely part of Wagner's efforts to maintain its profitable military and mining contracts in Africa. An unnamed Wagner commander who recently returned from CAR claimed on July 26 that Wagner is working on increasing its operations in Africa to fund its presence in Belarus.[22] **Prigozhin additionally used the backdrop of the Russia-Africa summit to position Wagner as a viable anti-Western partner for post-coup Niger.** Wagner-affiliated Telegram channels began circulating an audio recording reportedly of Prigozhin on July 27 wherein Prigozhin praised the Nigerien military's removal of Nigerien President Mohamed Bazoum and lauded it as an act of "gaining independence," while accusing Western nations of deliberately destabilizing the situation in Africa and supporting terrorist organizations.[23] Prigozhin suggested that a "thousand fighters" from Wagner would be able to restore order, presumably in post-coup Niger.[24] Several Russian milbloggers responded to Prigozhin's purported audio recording and suggested that Niger will need "help" from Wagner similar to what Mali needed following its coup in May 2021.[25] Prigozhin is posturing Wagner as a viable security partner for Niger, which is largely consistent with ISW's and the Critical Threats Project's (CTP) previous assessment that Wagner is likely to maintain and even expand its presence in the African continent following its July 24 armed rebellion.[26]

**The Kremlin reportedly distributed a manual to Russian state media on framing the anniversary of the Baptism of Rus on July 28, likely as part of continued information operations and propaganda narratives to advance Russian military objectives.** Russian opposition news outlet *Meduza* reported on July 27 that it obtained the manual but did not publish the manual itself, which reportedly directs Russian state media to frame the Baptism of Rus as "a key turning point in Russian history" and "the point of formation of statehood." [27] The manual reportedly emphasized that a "common faith" allowed the "East Slavic tribes" to unify as "one people." [28] The manual reportedly instructs state media to paint Russian President Vladimir Putin as the one who "brought the mission of defending the Orthodox faith back to Russia" and reportedly labels the Ukrainian government an "apostate regime" and a "satanic regime" that is trying to "destroy" Orthodoxy in Ukraine and "the spiritual ties of the fraternal peoples." [29] These Kremlin-dictated religion-based narratives come as Russia is itself committing systematic religious repressions and persecutions throughout Ukraine, including against Orthodox Christians, in an effort to destroy Ukrainian cultural and national identity.[30] The Kremlin reportedly issued a similar manual to state media in May aimed at controlling the narratives about a potential upcoming Ukrainian counteroffensive, and the distribution of these manuals demonstrates the Kremlin's use of various information operations to spread propaganda messages and discredit Ukraine in the international arena.[31]

**Russia conducted another strike on Ukrainian port infrastructure in Odesa Oblast and rear areas of Ukraine overnight on July 26–27.** Ukrainian military sources reported that Russian forces launched two Kalibr cruise missiles that damaged port infrastructure in Odesa City.[32] Ukrainian military sources also reported that Russian forces launched eight Shahed drones and that Ukrainian air defenses shot down all eight.[33]

**US President Joe Biden has reportedly ordered the US government in recent days to share evidence of Russian war crimes in Ukraine with the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Hague.** [34] This will be the first time the US will share evidence with the ICC as part of a criminal investigation into a country that is not a part of the ICC.[35]

## **Key Takeaways:**

- **Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations on at least three sectors of the front on July 27 and made gains in some areas, although Ukrainian forces appear not to have continued significant mechanized assaults south of Orikhiv in western Zaporizhia Oblast.**
- **A US official expressed caution about assessing that the July 26 uptick in Ukrainian counteroffensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast is part of the Ukrainian main effort, tempering July 26 statements to the contrary.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin used the Russia–Africa Economic and Humanitarian Forum in St. Petersburg on July 27 to continue efforts to posture Russia as a more attractive ally to African partner states than the collective West.**
- **Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin was also present in St. Petersburg on July 27 and took the opportunity to informally meet with an unknown number of African leaders, suggesting that the Wagner Group intends to remain a significant player in Africa.**
- **Prigozhin additionally used the backdrop of the Russia-Africa summit to position Wagner as a viable anti-Western partner for post-coup Niger.**
- **The Kremlin reportedly distributed a manual to Russian state media on framing the anniversary of the Baptism of Rus on July 28, likely as part of continued information operations and propaganda narratives to advance Russian military objectives.**
- **Russia conducted another strike on Ukrainian port infrastructure in Odesa Oblast and rear areas of Ukraine overnight on July 26–27.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, in Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, and in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on July 27 and did not make any confirmed advances.**
- **Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations on at least three sectors of the front on July 27 and have advanced south of Bakhmut, in the ZaporizhiaDonetsk Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast.**
- **The Russian State Duma approved measures on July 27 aimed at clarifying confusion surrounding the recently updated laws regarding conscripts and reservists.**
- **Russian authorities are discriminating against Ukrainian refugees in Belgorod Oblast, Russia.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of July 27, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, Christopher Hoeft, and Cole Quick  
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\* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

***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**

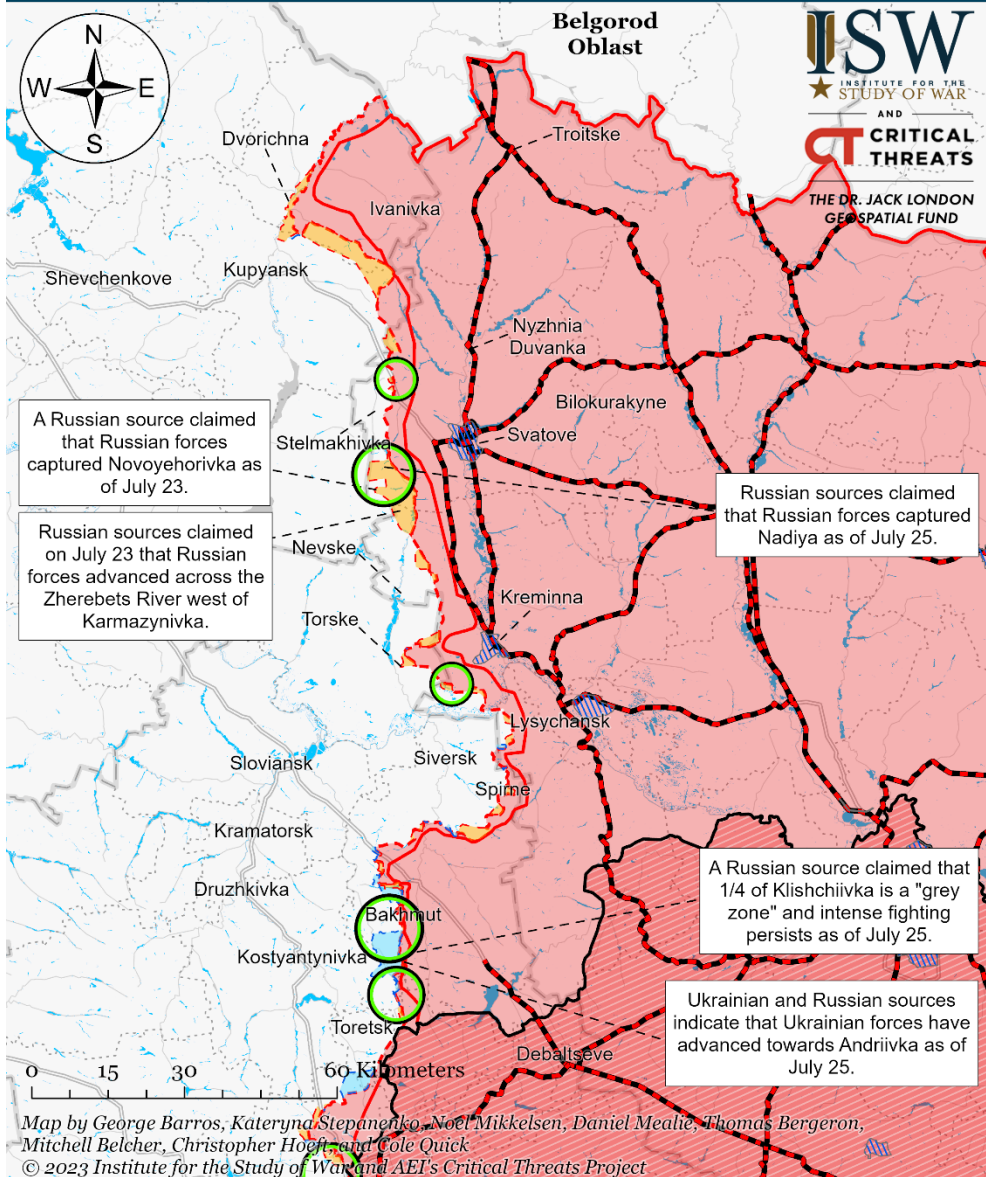
#### **Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)**

Russian forces continued offensive operations west of Svatove and made claimed gains on July 27. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian troops conducted unsuccessful offensive actions near Nadiya (14km southwest of Svatove) and south of Novoselivske (16km northwest of Svatove).[36] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that elements of the 7th Motorized Rifle Regiment (11th Army Corps, Baltic Fleet) captured unspecified advantageous positions west of Kuzemivka (13km northwest of Svatove).[37] The Russian MoD also claimed that elements of the Russian Central Grouping of Forces advanced 12km along the front and penetrated 3km deep into Ukrainian defensive lines near Serhiivka (12km southwest of Svatove).[38] One Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces continue to advance west of Svatove towards the Oskil River at a pace of 1km a day.[39] ISW has not yet observed visual confirmation to suggest that Russian forces are advancing at a pace near 1km a day on the Svatove sector. ISW has not observed visual confirmation of recent Russian claims of extensive advances southwest of Svatove, and the Russian MoD may be exaggerating claims of advances to draw attention away from Ukrainian counteroffensives elsewhere along the front.[40]

Russian forces continued offensive operations west of Kreminna and made claimed gains on July 27. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked in the area south of Dibrova (5km southwest of Kreminna).[41] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian troops also continued fighting in the Serebryanske forest area southwest of Kreminna and broke through Ukrainian defensive lines in an unspecified part of the forest area.[42]

The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted an unsuccessful limited attack west of Kreminna on July 27.[43]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of July 27, 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.

Note: The Russian Ministry of Defense stated on July 27 that the Russian Center Grouping of Forces advanced 12 kilometers in the Lyman direction and three kilometers near Serhiivka. A Russian source claimed on July 27 Russian forces advanced more than one kilometer per day in the Svatove direction. Russian sources claimed on July 26 that Russian forces advanced along a eight kilometer deep and seven kilometer wide front on the Svatove-Kreminna line. A Russian source claimed on July 25 that Russian forces expanded their control near Novoyehorivka. Russian sources claimed on July 23 and July 24 that Russian forces captured elevated positions on the right (west) bank of the Zherebets River and established a three and a half kilometer deep and five to seven kilometer wide bridgehead.

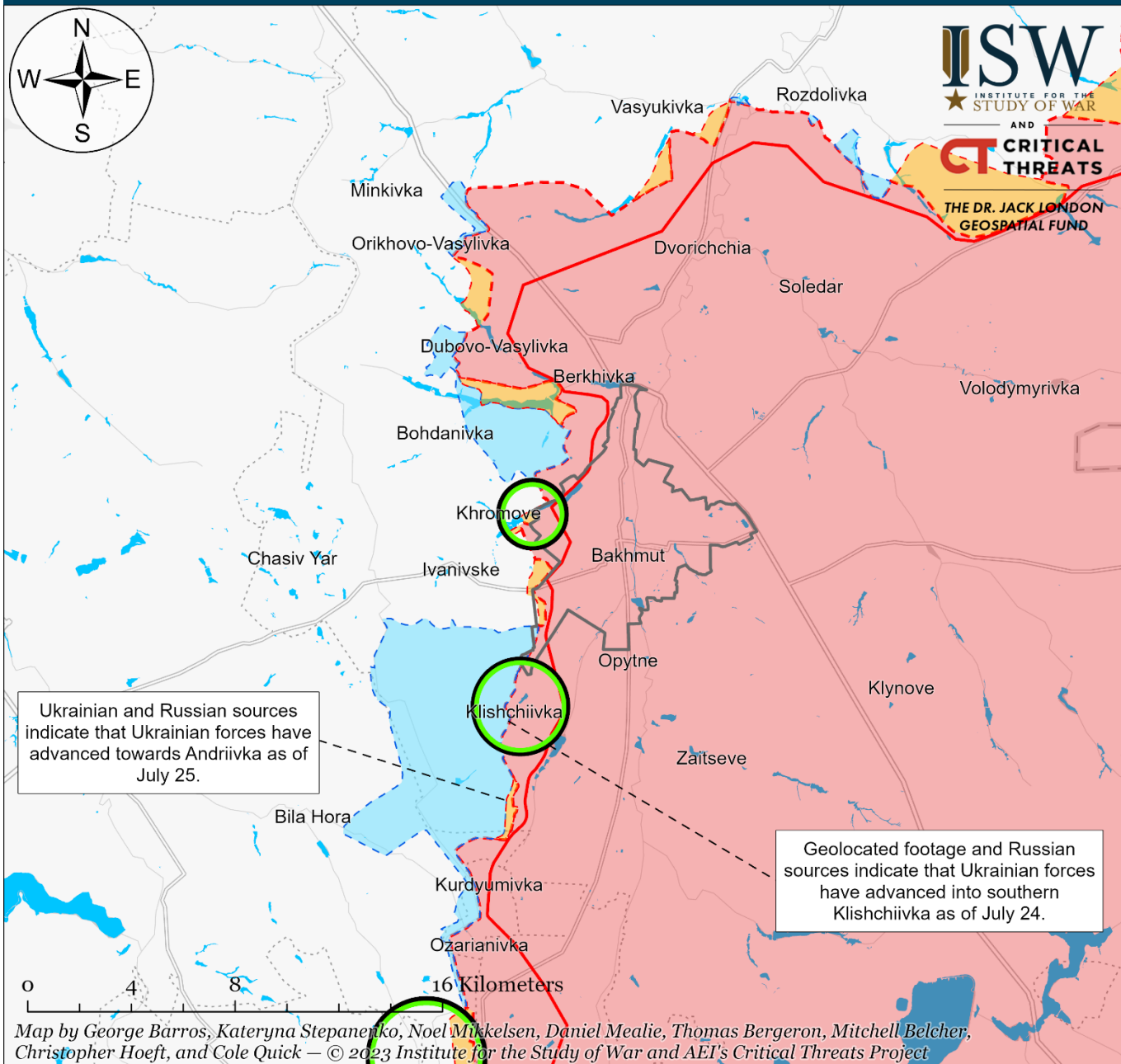


**Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian Objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)**

Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations in the Bakhmut area on July 27 and have made recent marginal advances in the area. Geolocated footage published on July 26 indicates that Ukrainian forces made marginal advances north of Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut).[44] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations north and south of Bakhmut.[45] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted assaults near Zaliznyanske (12km north of Bakhmut), Berkhivka (4km north of Bakhmut), Klishchiivka, Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut), and Pivnichne (20km southwest of Bakhmut).[46] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces completely control Klishchiivka as of the morning of July 27 and that Ukrainian forces failed to hold positions in the settlement.[47] Some Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces maintain a presence in the southern part of Klishchiivka and continue attempts to liberate the settlement.[48] ISW has observed recent geolocated footage indicating that Ukrainian forces have recently made tactically significant gains south of Klishchiivka and maintain a presence in the southwestern part of the settlement.[49]

Russian forces counterattacked around Bakhmut on July 27 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults north of Khromove (immediately west of Bakhmut), north and south of Klishchiivka, and east of Druzhba (19km southwest of Bakhmut).[50] Russian sources claimed that Russian forces also counterattacked near Orikhovo-Vasylivka (11km northwest of Bakhmut) and Kurdyumivka (12km southwest of Bakhmut).[51]

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of July 27, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



- |                                       |                                                  |                                     |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Bakhmut City Limits                   | Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory  | Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives |
| Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine* | Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory | 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.

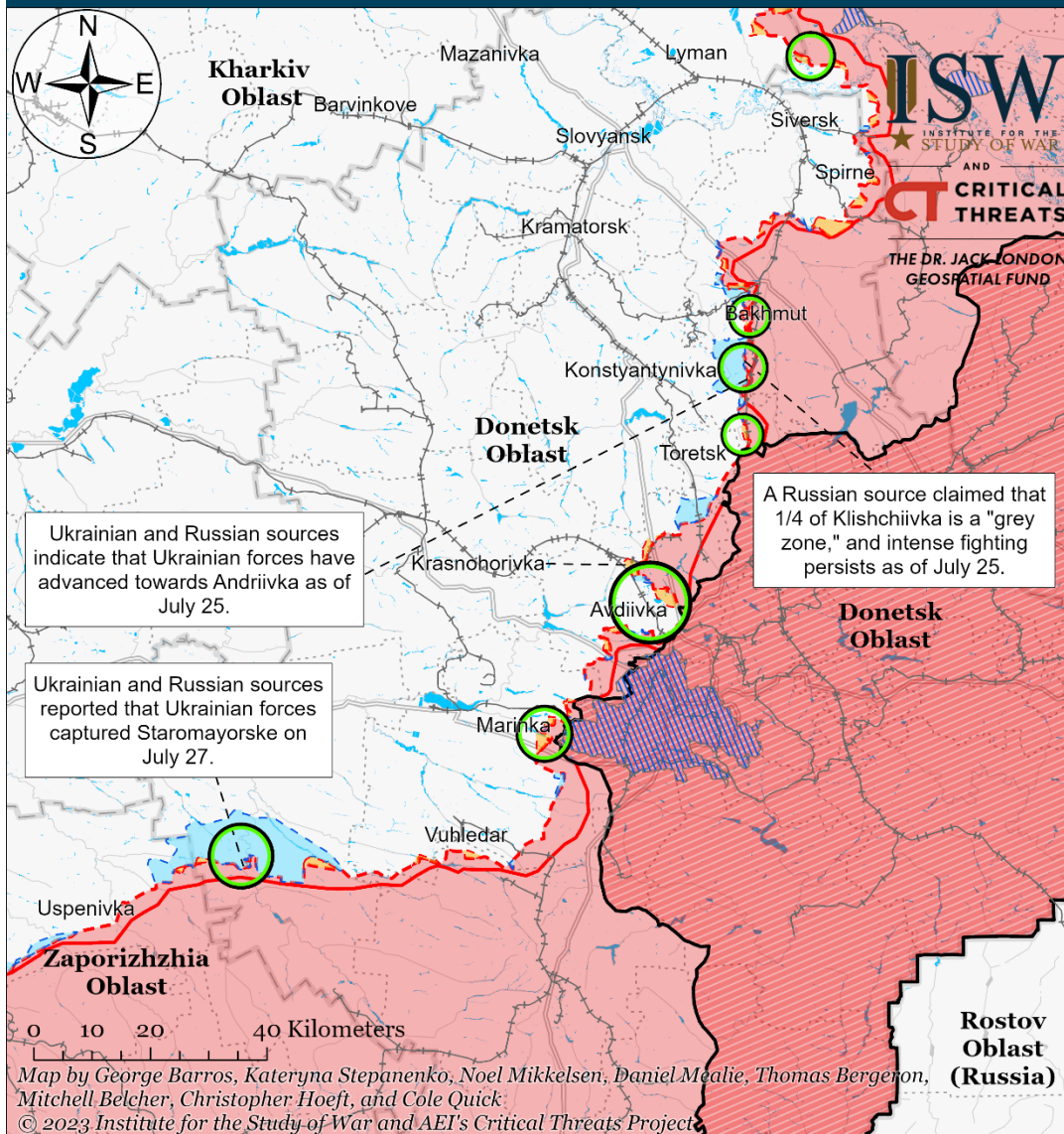
Note: Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar stated that Ukrainian forces recaptured four square kilometers over the last week and a total of 35 square kilometers in the Bakhmut direction as of July 24.



Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted limited ground attacks along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City front on July 27 without advancing. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian elements of the Southern Grouping of Forces repelled Ukrainian assaults near Avdiivka and Marinka (27km southwest of Avdiivka).[52] Russian milbloggers amplified footage on July 27 purporting to show elements of the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) 110th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Army Corps) repelling a Ukrainian assault near Nevelske (13km southwest of Avdiivka).[53]

Russian forces continued ground attacks along the Avdiivka–Donetsk City front on July 27 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Avdiivka and Marinka.[54] Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar stated on July 26 that Russian forces continue attempts to encircle Avdiivka and that fighting in the Avdiivka area is as intense as combat engagements in the Bakhmut direction.[55] A Russian milblogger claimed that elements of the DNR “Pyatnashka” International Brigade can now fully interdict remaining Ukrainian ground lines of communication (GLOC) in the Avdiivka area.[56] Russian milbloggers routinely claimed in the winter and spring of 2023 that Russian forces had fire control over Ukrainian GLOCs around Bakhmut long before they likely did, and there are no indications that Russian forces are interdicting all Ukrainian GLOCs in the Avdiivka area.[57]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of July 27, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

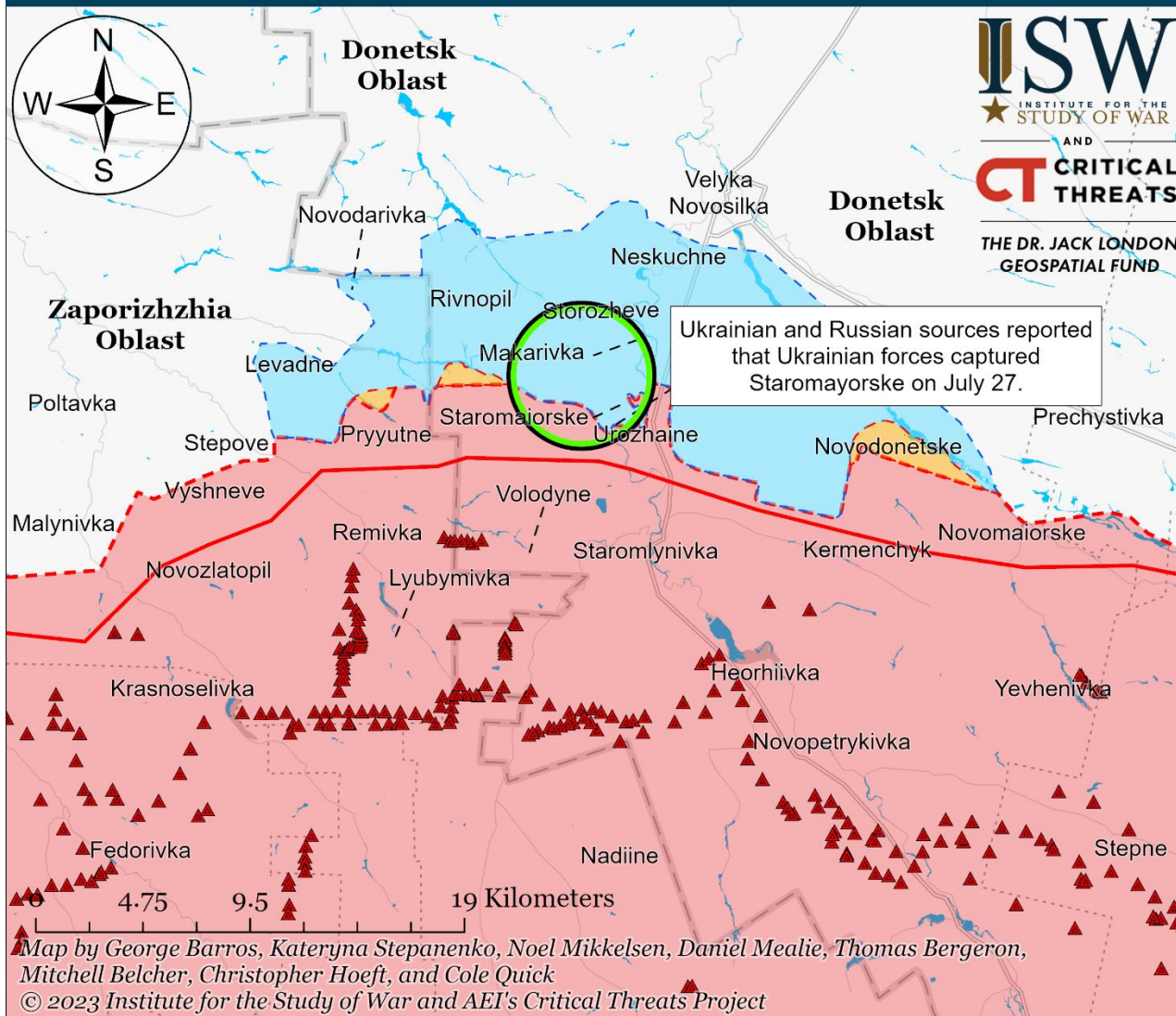
Note: The Russian Ministry of Defense stated on July 27 that the Russian Center Grouping of Forces advanced 12 kilometers in the Lyman direction. Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar stated that Ukrainian forces liberated 12.7 square kilometers over the last week and a total of 192.1 square kilometers in the Melitopol and Berdyansk directions as of July 24. Ukrainian Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov stated on July 24 that Ukrainian forces advanced 350 meters to 1.4 kilometers in the Berdyansk direction.

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

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations along the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border and advanced on July 27. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky posted footage on July 27 showing that Ukrainian forces liberated Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka) following heavy fighting in the area.[58] The Ukrainian General Staff also acknowledged unspecified Ukrainian advances near Staromayorske earlier on July 27.[59] Russian milbloggers claimed overnight on July 26 and on the morning of July 27 that Ukrainian forces retained positions on the northern outskirts of Staromayorske and continued pushing into the village itself from the north and northwest.[60] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian ground attack near Urozhaine (9km south of Velyka Novosilka).[61] Some Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful ground attacks near Pryyutne (15km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) on July 26 and Novodonetske (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka) on July 27.[62] Some Russian sources, including the commander of the “Vostok” battalion defending in the area, Alexander Khodakovsky, expressed continued concern about Russia’s ability to hold Urozhaine.[63]

Russian forces conducted limited offensive operations in the Donetsk–Zaporizhia Oblast border area and did not advance on July 27. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful ground attacks to recapture lost positions near Staromayorske.[64]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around the Vremivka Salient as of July 27, 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.

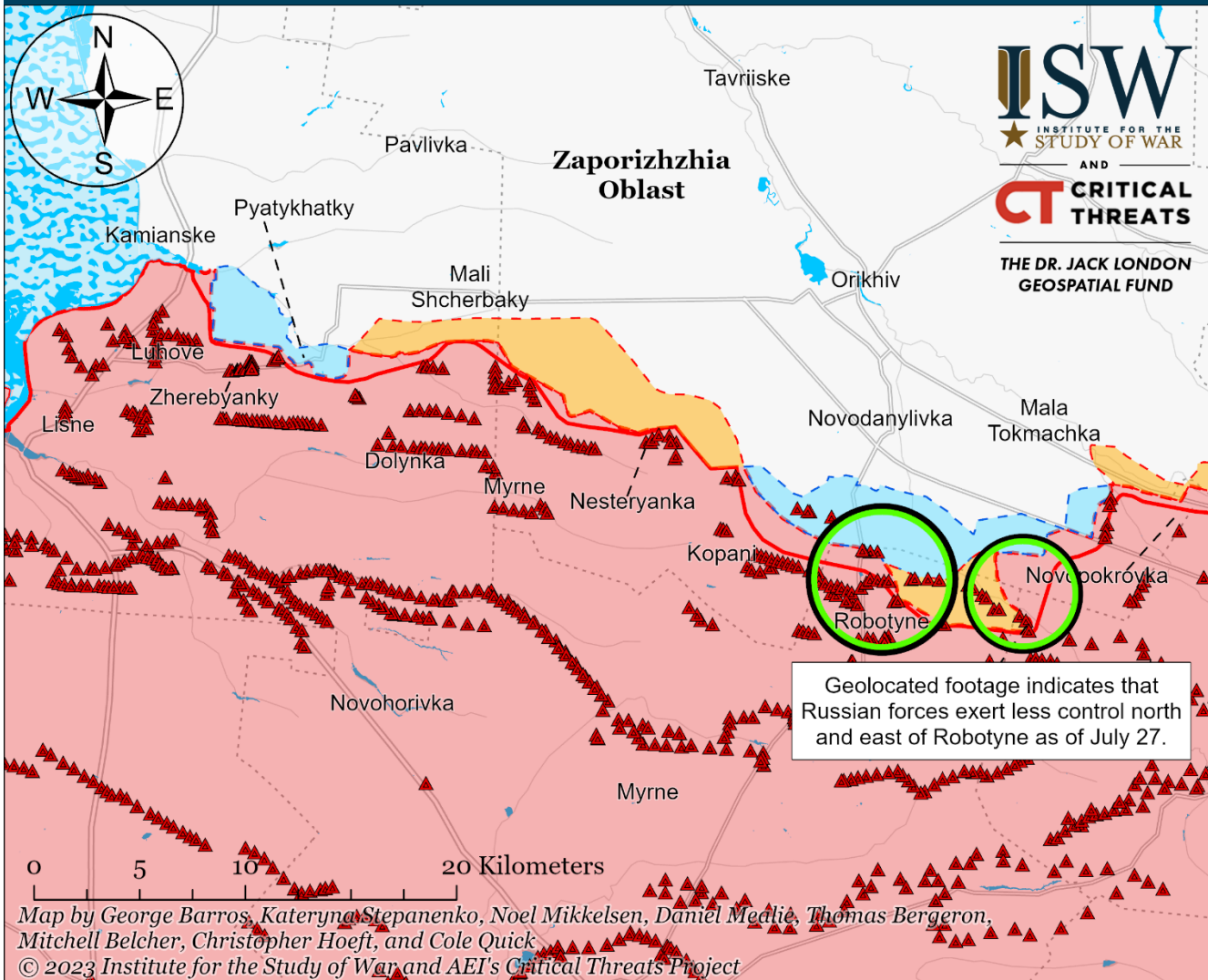
Note: Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar stated that Ukrainian forces liberated 12.7 square kilometers over the last week and a total of 192.1 square kilometers in the Melitopol and Berdyansk directions as of July 24. Ukrainian Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov stated on July 24 that Ukrainian forces advanced 350 meters to 1.4 kilometers in the Berdyansk direction.

Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast on July 27 on a smaller scale than their July 26 operations and likely advanced in the area. Geolocated footage published on July 26 suggests that Ukrainian forces made additional advances east of Robotyne (10km south of Orikhiv) during offensive operations on July 26.[65] The Ukrainian National Guard Main Command Department of Application Planning's Acting Director Mykola Urshalovych stated that Ukrainian forces made unspecified significant advances in the Melitopol direction on July 27.[66] The Russian MoD and some prominent Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces of up to three battalion tactical groups (BTGs) conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Robotyne overnight on July 26 and did not attack further in the morning.[67] Other Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces continued multiple waves of ground attacks overnight on July 26 and during the day on July 27, sustaining heavy equipment and personnel losses.[68] Some milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced towards Robotyne while others claimed that Russian forces repelled all the attacks.[69] One Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced to within 800-1,000 meters of Robotyne overnight before Russian forces stopped the Ukrainian advance.[70] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces also attacked Zherybyanky (26km southwest of Orikhiv) overnight.[71]

Ukrainian forces have likely advanced further in western Zaporzhia Oblast than ISW has been able to visually confirm so far. Geolocated footage published on July 27 shows that a single Ukrainian armored vehicle reached Russian anti-tank positions northwest of Verbove (17km southeast of Orikhiv), roughly 3.5 kilometers beyond ISW's currently assessed frontline.[72] It is unclear why a lone Ukrainian armored vehicle approached Russian defensive positions without additional forces in support. The fact that this lone Ukrainian vehicle advanced so far towards Russian defensive lines apparently without suffering Russian fire suggests that Ukrainian forces may have made advances in the surrounding area southeast of Orikhiv of which ISW has not yet observed visual confirmation.



# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of July 27, 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 | Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir |
| Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*                     | Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives              | Russian Field Fortifications            |

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

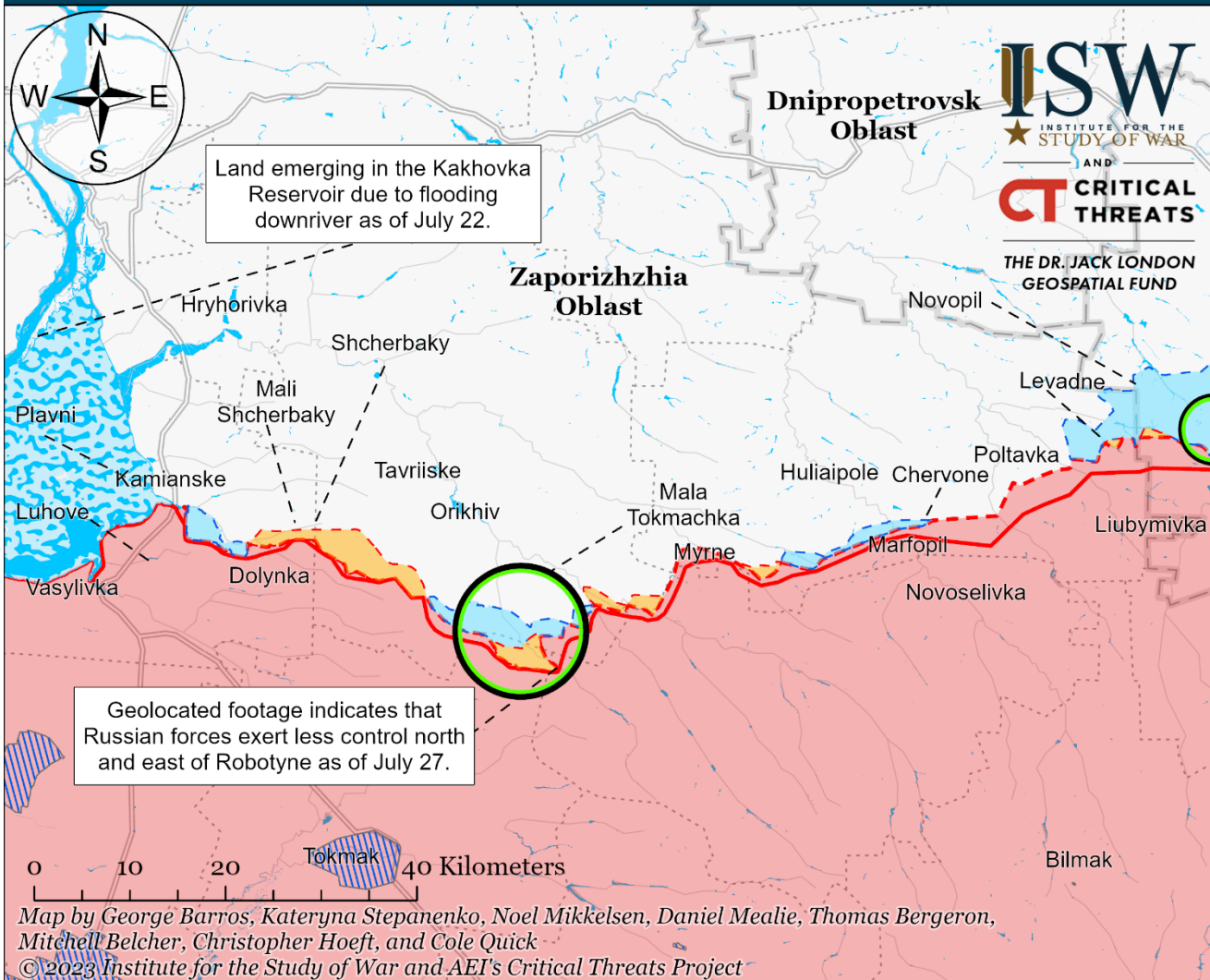
Note: A Russian source claimed on July 26 that Ukrainian forces advanced to within 800 to 1000 meters from Robotyne. Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar stated that Ukrainian forces liberated 12.7 square kilometers over the last week and a total of 192.1 square kilometers in the Melitopol and Berdyansk directions as of July 24. A Russian source claimed on July 24 that Ukrainian forces advanced 1.7 kilometers to the northeastern outskirts of Robotyne.



Russian and occupation authorities continue to struggle with flowing logistics into occupied southern Ukraine through Crimea. The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) announced on July 27 that it is suspending civilian entry to the Arabat Spit as of 2000 local time on July 31 for an indeterminate period of time to “localize security issues.”[73] The FSB stated that only emergency responders and defense workers can enter the Arabat Spit under the order. Russian and occupation authorities may be attempting to limit civilian entry to the Arabat Spit to allow for broader efforts to restore the road connecting the spit to occupied Kherson Oblast and Crimea as a reliable ground line of communication (GLOC) to support Russian forces in southern Ukraine. Russian occupation authorities temporarily suspended civilian traffic across the Kerch Strait Bridge from Kerch, occupied Ukraine to Russia overnight on July 26–27, the latest in a wave of suspensions that may indicate continued trouble with security or traffic across the bridge as Russian authorities work to restore it.[74]

Russian authorities continue efforts to posture militarily in the Black Sea to possibly set conditions for a blockade or some lesser maritime interdiction campaign against Ukraine.[75] The FSB claimed on July 27 that it arrested a Russian sailor for allegedly working with Ukrainian intelligence to conduct a “terrorist attack” on an unspecified Russian vessel carrying high-precision missiles.[76] The FSB claimed that it identified explosives on another unspecified vessel headed from Turkey towards Rostov-on-Don on July 26.[77] Russian authorities are likely attempting to portray Ukraine as willing to use sabotage and civilian cargo ships to attack Russian naval and other military assets.

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of July 27, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

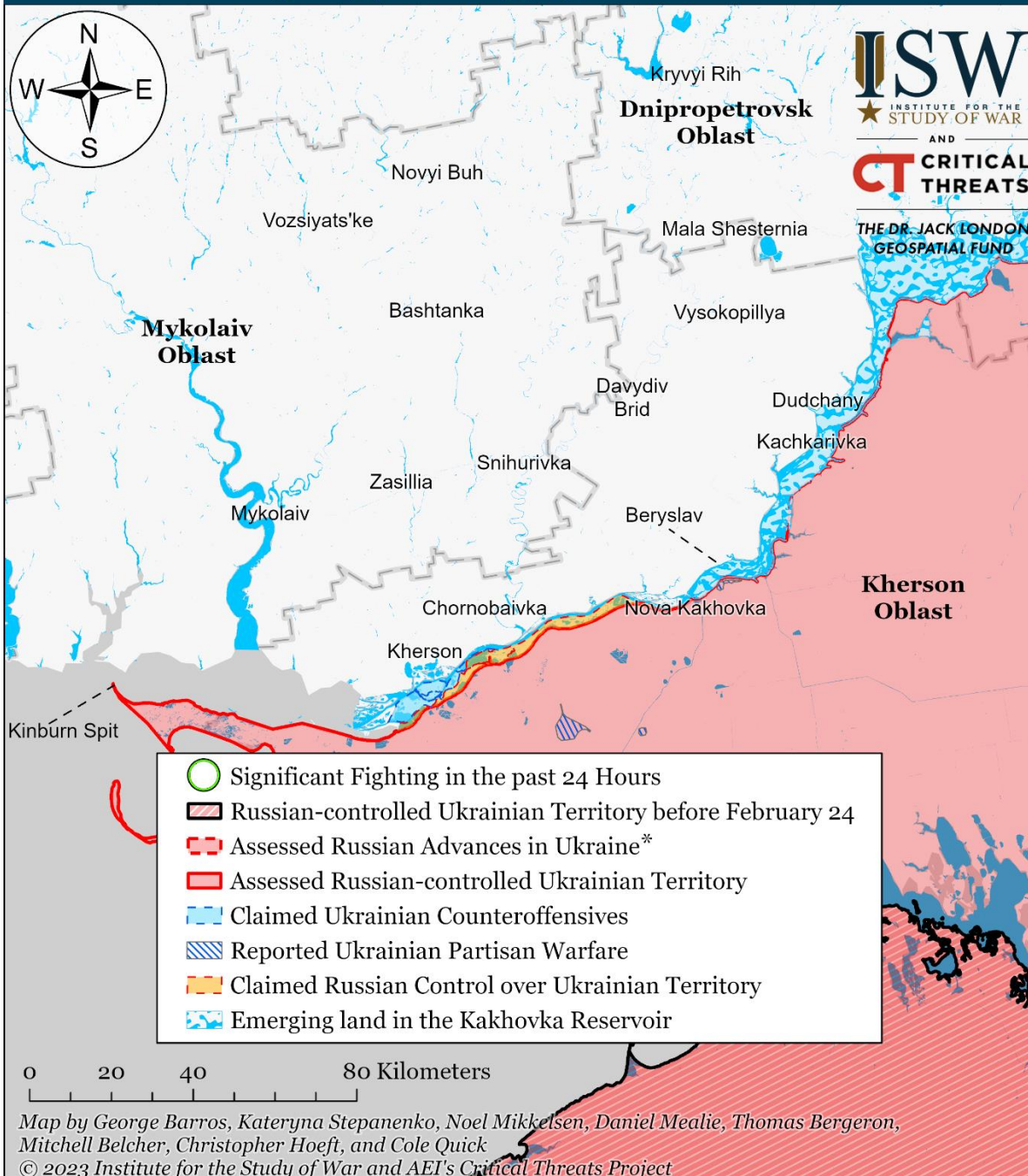


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives

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

Note: A Russian source claimed on July 26 that Ukrainian forces advanced to within 800 to 1000 meters from Robotyne. Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar stated that Ukrainian forces liberated 12.7 square kilometers over the last week and a total of 192.1 square kilometers in the Melitopol and Berdyansk directions as of July 24. Ukrainian Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov stated on July 24 that Ukrainian forces advanced 350 meters to 1.4 kilometers in the Berdyansk direction. A Russian source claimed on July 24 that Ukrainian forces advanced 1.7 kilometers to the northeastern outskirts of Robotyne.

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of July 27, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



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

Note: The Ukrainian counteroffensive layer displays areas previously assigned to the Russian control, Russian advances, or Russian claims layers where ISW now assesses that Ukrainian forces have established a presence beyond a short-term raid. Inclusion of an area on this layer does not imply that ISW assesses that the area is part of any upcoming Ukrainian counteroffensive operation.

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

The Russian State Duma approved measures on July 27 aimed at clarifying confusion surrounding recently updated laws regarding conscription and mobilization. The Duma approved a new form that will be used for mobilization summonses and will be distinct from the conscription summons form.[78] This change is likely aimed at distinguishing between conscription and mobilization efforts, especially given recent speculation in the Russian information space that legal changes related to Russian military force generation efforts suggest that the Kremlin will launch a second wave of mobilization in the fall of 2023.[79]

The leadership of the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) will restrict the movement of Russian State Duma deputies in Ukraine. Russian sources claimed that the Russian MoD is prohibiting Duma deputies from visiting military units actively fighting on the front in Ukraine without permission from Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu or Russian Chief of the General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov.

Russian forces are possibly using ammunition made in Myanmar on the battlefield in Ukraine. Photographs published on July 26 suggest that Russian forces in Ukraine may be using 120 mm mortar rounds made in Myanmar and are purportedly attempting to remove evidence of the rounds' origin before use.[80]

### **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)**

Russian authorities are discriminating against Ukrainian refugees in Belgorod Oblast, Russia. Russian opposition media outlet *Verstka* reported that thousands of Ukrainian citizens are currently in Belgorod Oblast, Russia.[81] *Verstka* found that Ukrainian refugees in Belgorod Oblast face discrimination when trying to apply for social benefits and housing, but those who receive Russian passports do not encounter such difficulties.[82]

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

The Wagner Group has begun training Belarus' internal troops. Belarusian Deputy Commander of the Internal Troops Sergei Grebennikov announced on July 25 that Wagner fighters and Belarusian internal troops began joint training.[83] Belarusian Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs and Commander of the Internal Troops Major General Nikolai Karpenkov announced in a video on July 26 that Wagner has access to artillery and ammunition for training purposes.[84] A Wagner-affiliated Russian milblogger claimed on July 27 that Karpenkov stated that Wagner instructors are training Belarusian internal troops in small group combat exercises similar to the conditions in Ukraine as well as in drone and artillery use, mine clearing and laying, engineering reconnaissance, electronic intelligence and warfare, and communication between units.[85] The milblogger also claimed that Wagner personnel are conducting leadership training for Belarusian commanders.[86] An unnamed, masked fighter, presumably a Wagner trainer, stated in the video that Belarus' troops are "very adequately" trained in basic skills and that Wagner trainers will share "specific experience" with the Belarusians.[87] Any references to Wagner's prior experience in Ukraine and the superb basic training of Belarusian troops are likely part of a messaging campaign and are intended to justify Wagner's presence in Belarus and deflect any suggestions that the Belarusian military is incapable of training its troops without assistance. Karpenkov also claimed that he met with Wagner financier Yevgeny Prigozhin in Belarus following Wagner's armed rebellion on June 24.[88] Wagner still currently does not pose a significant threat to Ukraine or NATO.

The Belarusian Ministry of Defense (MoD) reported on July 27 that the Belarusian 6th Separate Guards Mechanized Brigade servicemen trained on preparation and fire control in a defensive battle.[89] The Belarusian MoD reported that the Belarusian 6th Separate Guards Mechanized Brigade also trained practical skills such as organization, combat operations, and close interaction between combined arms units.[90]

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

**Note: ISW does not receive any classified material from any source, uses only publicly available information, and draws extensively on Russian, Ukrainian, and Western reporting and social media as well as commercially available satellite imagery and other geospatial data as the basis for these reports. References to all sources used are provided in the endnotes of each update.**

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