

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, June 29, 2023

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June 29, 2023, 7:20pm ET

Click [here](#) to see ISW's interactive map of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

Click [here](#) to access ISW's archive of interactive time-lapse maps of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These maps complement the static control-of-terrain map that ISW produces daily by showing a dynamic frontline. ISW will update this time-lapse map archive monthly.

Note: The data cutoff for this product was 12pm ET on June 29. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the June 30 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

The Ukrainian General Staff stated that Ukrainian forces seized the “strategic initiative“ in the Bakhmut direction and are currently conducting a broad offensive in the area.[1] Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar similarly stated that Ukrainian forces seized the “operational initiative” in the area and reported that Ukrainian forces advanced 1,200m in the direction of Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) and 1,500m in the direction of Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut).[2] Ukrainian Commander in Chief General Valeriy Zaluzhnyi also stated that Ukrainian forces have the “strategic initiative“ in a phone conversation with Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley on June 29.[3] ISW previously assessed that Ukrainian forces had gained the initiative at every level of war across almost the entire front following the Russian capture of Bakhmut on May 21.[4] Ukrainian officials are likely now acknowledging that Ukrainian forces possess the initiative in order to signal that Ukrainian forces intend to leverage it to a greater degree.

Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations in at least two other sectors of the front and reportedly made gains on June 29. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast and on the administrative border between Zaporizhia and Donetsk oblasts.[5] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces achieved partial success along the Rivnopol-Volodyne line (up to 16km southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[6]

The Kremlin may intend to assume formal control over the Wagner Group following its armed rebellion and turn it into a state-owned enterprise, although it is not clear if the Kremlin has committed itself to such a course of action. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that Russian authorities decided to assume control over Wagner's activities abroad.[7] Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Vershinin reportedly flew to Damascus to tell Syrian President Bashar al-Assad that Wagner will no longer operate as an independent organization in Syria and that Wagner personnel reported to the Russian military base in Latakia. Russian Foreign Ministry representatives also reportedly told Central African Republic President Faustin-Archange Touadera and Malian leadership that Wagner will continue operations in their respective countries.[8] Putin claimed on June 27 that the Kremlin “fully funds” and “fully supplies” Wagner, and Russian officials may use Wagner's existing status as a state-financed and -supplied organization to complete its formal nationalization.[9] The nationalization of Wagner would likely aid in the Russian Ministry of Defense's (MoD) effort to subsume existing Wagner personnel into the regular Russian Armed Forces through contracts. The nationalization of Wagner would not likely dramatically disrupt its foreign activities, and the Kremlin may be interested in assuming *de jure* responsibility for Wagner's operations abroad to deprive the group of a remaining source of influence and independent cash flow. ISW has previously assessed that the agreement brokered by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko will very likely eliminate Wagner as the independent actor that it is in its current form but could allow elements of the organization to endure.[10] The Kremlin has not indicated that it intends to nationalize Wagner, and it is possible that Putin has yet to determine what course of action to take in subordinating the group more firmly under the Kremlin's control.

Recent satellite imagery may have detected active construction of a speculated new Wagner Group base in Asipovichy, Belarus. Mid-resolution imagery collected between June 15 and 27 shows new activity at an abandoned Belarusian military base (formerly used by the Belarusian 465th Missile Brigade) 15km northwest of Asipovichy.[11] This activity could be construction for a rumored new Wagner Group base. This site is within 15km of a large Belarusian combined arms training ground – a facility that Wagner Group personnel would need to access to service the Belarusian military in a training and advisory role that Belarusian officials have suggested Wagner will fulfill.[12] Russian opposition outlet *Verstka* previously reported on June 26 that Belarusian authorities are constructing a base for 8,000 Wagner Group fighters near Asipovichy.[13] Polish Deputy PM Jaroslaw Kaczynski stated that Poland anticipates that around 8,000 Wagner Group fighters will deploy to Belarus.[14] Further study of this area of interest with higher resolution collection

instruments may provide additional clarity on the nature of the activity in the area and the size of the force that may be based there.

Wagner Group personnel may deploy elsewhere in Belarus, however. There is nothing particularly unique or interesting about a potential Wagner Group base in Asipovichy. *Verstka's* original report indicated that the Wagner Group would have multiple camps in Belarus. Belarus hosts many training grounds and field camps that accommodated 30,000 Russian soldiers in early 2022 — many of which were on the border with Ukraine in Gomel and Brest oblasts.[15] The Wagner Group in Belarus could use some of these facilities as bases as well as or instead of the rumored base in Asipovichy.

Kremlin-affiliated businessmen may be acquiring Prigozhin's domestic media empire, likely as part of ongoing effort to destroy his reputation in Russia. Russian independent outlet *The Bell*, citing sources who cooperate with Prigozhin's companies, reported that the Russian presidential administration will likely have direct control over Prigozhin's media assets.[16] Sources noted that Russian President Vladimir Putin's "personal banker" Yuriy Kovalchuk may acquire assets of Prigozhin's "Patriot" media holding group and the *RIA FAN* news outlet for his "National Media Group." [17] *The Bell* also noted that some Russian Telegram channels claimed that president of the "Herst Shkulev Media" holding group Viktor Shkulev may purchase Prigozhin's media assets for one ruble with a commitment to retain the media editorial teams for three months and to pay salary arrears to staff. Sources expressed confidence that the Russian Presidential Administration will likely directly control Prigozhin's media assets regardless of the identity of the future owner of these companies.

Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov refused to address Army General Sergei Surovikin's whereabouts on June 29, prompting more speculations in the Russian information space. Peskov could have denied ongoing speculations about Surovikin if there were no investigation of him. Peskov's refusal suggests that Russian officials may be investigating Surovikin since Russian officials usually refuse to comment on ongoing investigations.[18] Russian news aggregator *Baza* reported that Surovikin's daughter, Veronika Surovikina, claimed that Russian authorities did not arrest Surovikin and that he continues to work.[19] Russian sources claimed that Surovikin's deputy, Colonel General Andrey Yudin, denied claims that Russian officials were holding him and Surovikin at the Lefortovo pre-trial detention center in Moscow.[20] A Russian milblogger denied Surovikin's detention but claimed that the Kremlin is continuing to investigate members of the military leadership with close ties to Prigozhin.[21] Russian opposition news outlet *Vazhnye Istorii* reported that two of their sources close to the Russian General Staff and Federal Security Service (FSB) claimed that Russian authorities questioned Surovikin and released him.[22] It would be logical for Russian officials to question Surovikin or any other military officials with ties to Prigozhin after Wagner's armed rebellion.

Western observers continue to speculate about the whereabouts of Russian Chief of the General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov following Wagner's rebellion, although his lack of public appearance is not necessarily indicative of his current official standing within the Russian military leadership. [23] Gerasimov has previously not appeared in public for long periods of time, particularly between the summer of 2022 and his reemergence in the winter of 2023 in the weeks leading up to his appointment to overall theater commander.[24] These stretches of absence prompted speculations that the Kremlin either had replaced him or intended to replace him as Chief of the General Staff.[25] The Kremlin and the Russian MoD carefully responded to these previous bouts of speculation by routinely affirming Gerasimov's role as Chief of the General Staff, although they have yet to respond to the most recent round of speculation fueled by Wagner's armed rebellion.[26] ISW recently assessed that the Kremlin will likely attempt to balance a desire to mitigate widespread disdain for MoD establishment figures like Gerasimov that fueled Wagner's rebellion with trying to disempower those who may have sympathized with the rebellion.[27] Russian speculations that Russian Airborne Forces (VDV) Commander Colonel General Mikhail Teplinsky recently assumed Gerasimov's responsibilities for Russian operations in Ukraine would be in line with this effort, although there continues to be no confirmation that such a transfer of responsibilities has occurred.[28] It is possible that Putin has yet to decide how to fully respond to Wagner's rebellion, including decisions on a potential overhaul of the Russian military's command cadre or changes in whom among the military leadership Putin favors. Until the Kremlin's response to the rebellion becomes clearer Gerasimov's public absence alone is not an indicator of his position within the Russian military leadership. ISW has previously observed that Gerasimov's involvement, or lack thereof, in public meetings with Putin indicated the likely degree of favor that Gerasimov has enjoyed with Putin during the full-scale invasion of Ukraine but not his retention or loss of his formal position.[29]

Russian sources claimed that the Kremlin replaced the head of the Kaliningrad Oblast Rosgvardia (National Guard) on June 28. Russian sources reported that Murmansk Oblast Rosgvardia Head Viktor Galiy assumed the position of the Kaliningrad Oblast Rosgvardia head.[30]

Key Takeaways

- **The Ukrainian General Staff stated that Ukrainian forces seized the “strategic initiative” in the Bakhmut direction and are currently conducting a broad offensive in the area.**
- **Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations in at least two other sectors of the front and reportedly made gains on June 29.**
- **The Kremlin may intend to assume formal control over the Wagner Group following its armed rebellion and turn it into a state-owned enterprise, although it is not clear if the Kremlin has committed itself to such a course of action.**
- **Recent satellite imagery may have detected active construction of a speculated new Wagner Group base in Asipovichy, Belarus.**
- **Kremlin-affiliated businessmen may be acquiring Prigozhin’s domestic media empire, likely as part of ongoing effort to destroy his reputation in Russia.**
- **Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov refused to address Army General Sergei Surovikin’s whereabouts on June 29, prompting more speculations in the Russian information space.**
- **Western observers continue to speculate about the whereabouts of Russian Chief of the General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov following Wagner’s rebellion, although his lack of public appearance is not necessarily indicative of his current official standing within the Russian military leadership**
- **Russian and Ukrainian forces continued limited ground attacks south of Kreminna.**
- **Ukrainian forces intensified counteroffensive operations in the Bakhmut area and reportedly made advances.**
- **Russian forces continued limited offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City front.**
- **Russian forces in early May constructed a dam on the outskirts of Tokmak in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast ahead of the Ukrainian counteroffensive.**
- **A Russian BARS (Russian Combat Reserve) affiliated source claimed that Russian forces are moving military equipment to unspecified areas on the east (left) bank of the Dnipro River.**
- **The Crimea-based Atesh partisan group stated that Russian forces are increasing their presence in Armyansk to defend key infrastructure in northern Crimea.**
- **Russian Cossack armed formations are reportedly signing contracts with the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) as part of a larger formalization effort to integrate irregular forces into MoD structures.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of June 29, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, and Mitchell Belcher - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

* 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.

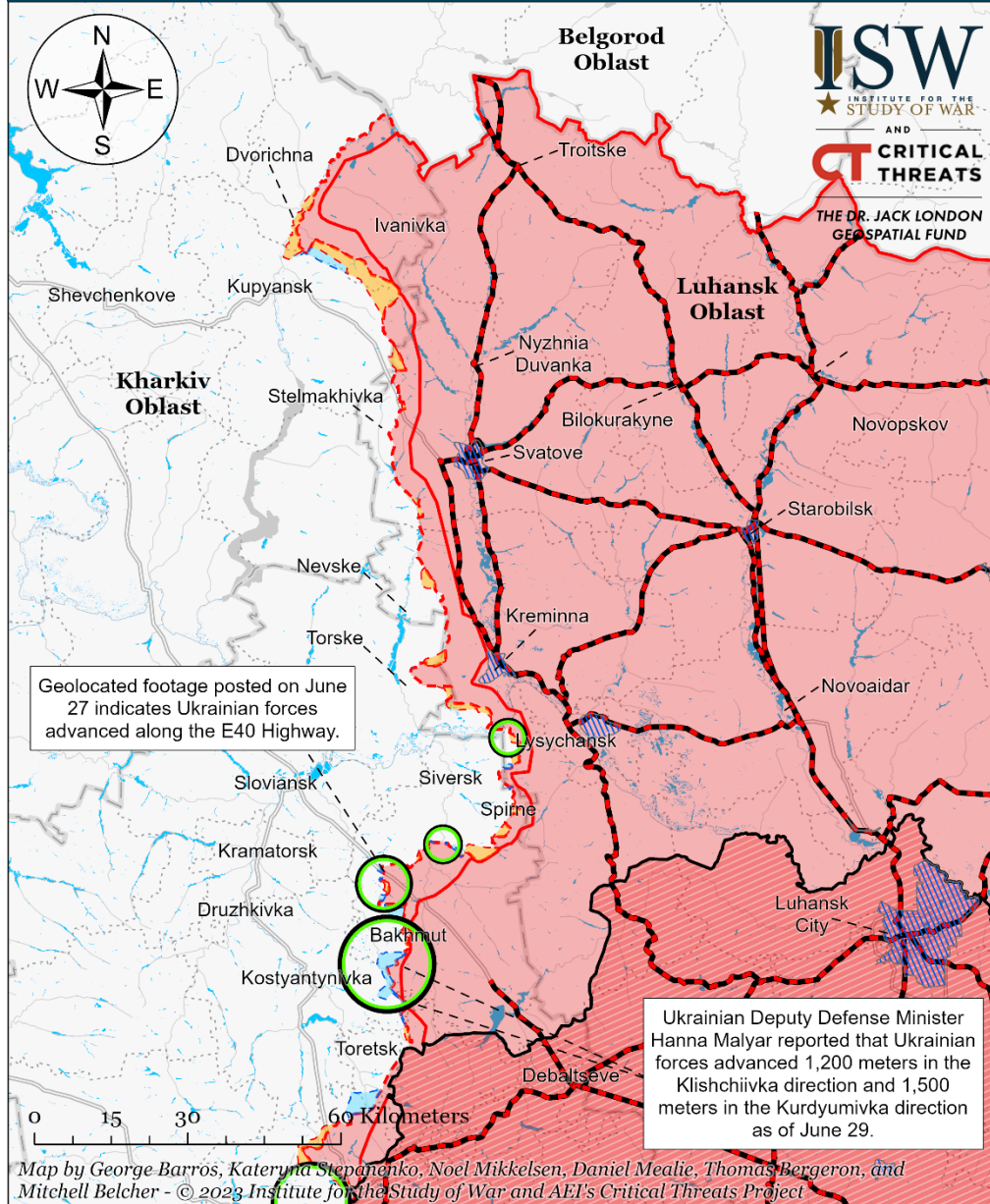
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of two subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the entirety 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 and Ukrainian forces continued limited ground attacks south of Kreminna on June 29. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Rozdolivka (32km southwest of Kreminna) and Bilohorivka (12km south of Kreminna).[31] A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed that Russian forces made unspecified gains near the Serebryanske forest area (5–10km southwest of Kreminna).[32] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that unspecified elements of the Southern Group of Forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Bilohorivka and that Russian forces stopped a Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance group near Kuzmyne (3km southwest of Kreminna).[33] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked Russian positions near Kreminna and that Russian forces stopped a Ukrainian assault near the Serebryanske forest area.[34] The milblogger also claimed that Russian special forces destroyed a Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance group near the Serebryanske forest area.[35]

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



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

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

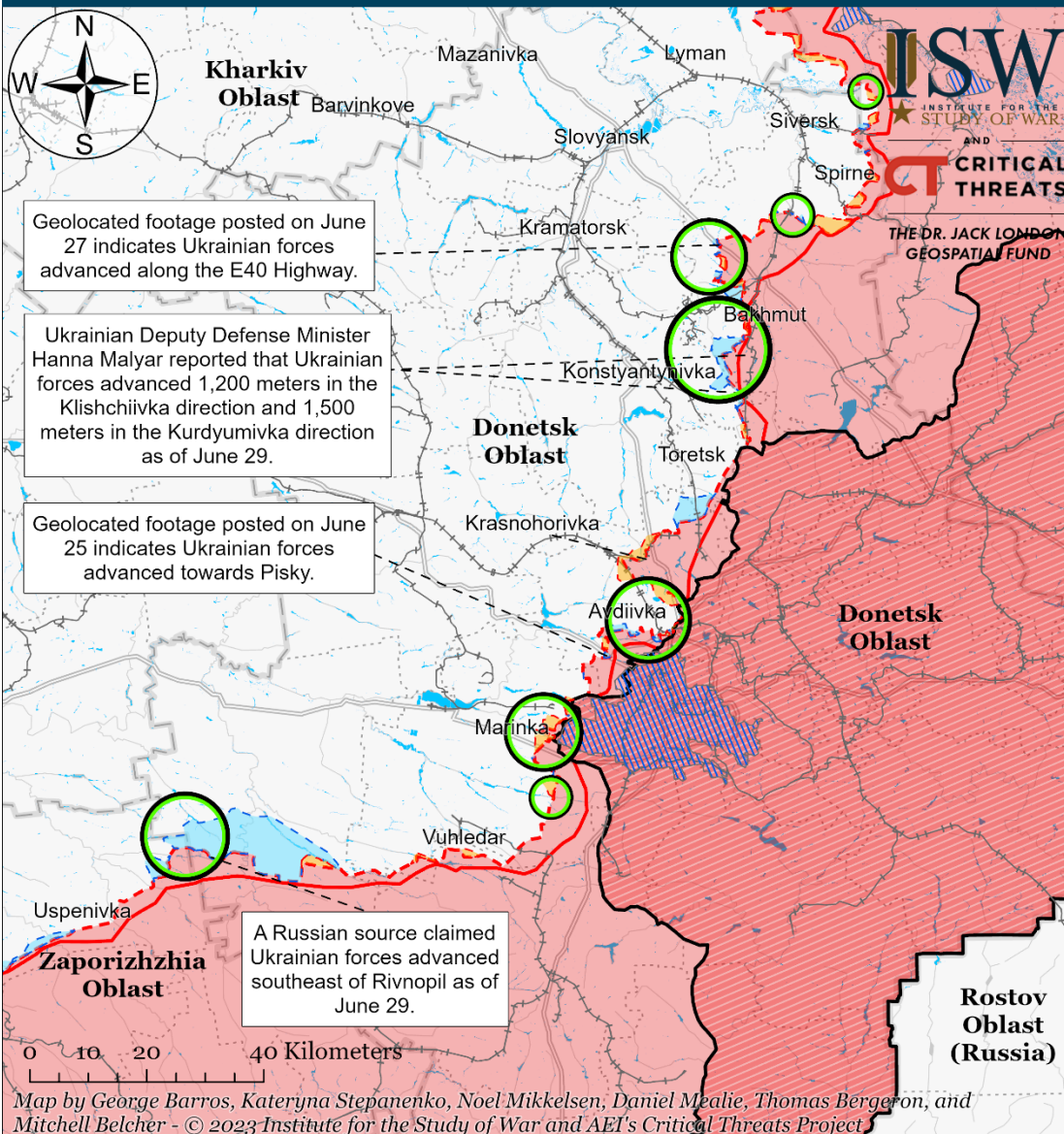
Note: Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar reported that Ukrainian forces advanced 1,200 meters in the Klishchiivka direction and 1,500 meters in the Kurdyumivka direction as of June 29. The Commander of the Ukrainian 57th Brigade Denys Yaroslavsky and a Russian source stated on June 29 that there is heavy fighting near Klishchiivka and Berkhivka. However, ISW cannot assess the exact areas of advances at this time.

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 intensified counteroffensive operations in the Bakhmut area and reportedly made advances on June 29. The Ukrainian General Staff stated that Ukrainian forces seized the “strategic initiative” in the Bakhmut direction and are currently conducting a broad offensive in the area.[36] Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar reported that Ukrainian forces advanced 1,200m in the direction of Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) and 1,500m in the direction of Kurdyumivka (13km southwest of Bakhmut).[37] Malyar added that Russian forces in the area are conducting counterattacks but have retreated in some areas after suffering losses.[38] Ukrainian Commander of the 57th Motorized Brigade Denys Yaroslavsky stated that Ukrainian forces are in the process of liberating Klishchiivka and that there is intense fighting in the area.[39] Yaroslavsky also stated that Ukrainian forces pushed Russian forces out of positions on the western outskirts of Bakhmut and that fighting is ongoing near Berkhivka (4km north of Bakhmut).[40] Yaroslavsky added that the liberation of dominant elevated positions in Berkhivka and Klishchiivka will allow Ukrainian forces to operationally encircle Russian forces in Bakhmut.[41] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced along the E-40 (Bakhmut-Sloviansk) highway near Zaliznyanske (12km north of Bakhmut) and that Russian forces repelled several Ukrainian mechanized assaults near Kurdyumivka.[42] The milblogger also claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations in the direction of Yahidne (2km north of Bakhmut) and Paraskoviivka (7km northeast of Bakhmut).[43] Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces Spokesperson Colonel Serhiy Cherevaty reported that the Russians transferred an unspecified Russian Airborne Forces (VDV) regiment from the Kreminna area to the Bakhmut direction to reinforce Russian forces in the area.[44] ISW has previously observed elements of the 237th Air Assault Regiment (76th VDV Division) and the 331st Airborne Regiment (98th VDV Division) operating in the Kreminna area, although ISW has not seen any visual confirmation of elements of either formation near Bakhmut recently.[45] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive operations near Bakhmut itself and Orikhovo-Vasylivka (11km northwest of Bakhmut), Bohdanivka (8km northwest of Bakhmut), and Bila Hora (15km southwest of Bakhmut).[46]

Russian forces continued limited offensive operations along the Avdiivka–Donetsk City front on June 29. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive actions near Avdiivka, Sieverne (6km west of Avdiivka), Marinka (27km southwest of Avdiivka), and Novomykhailivka (36km southwest of Avdiivka).[47] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also conducted unsuccessful ground attacks near Pobieda (32km southwest of Avdiivka).[48]

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

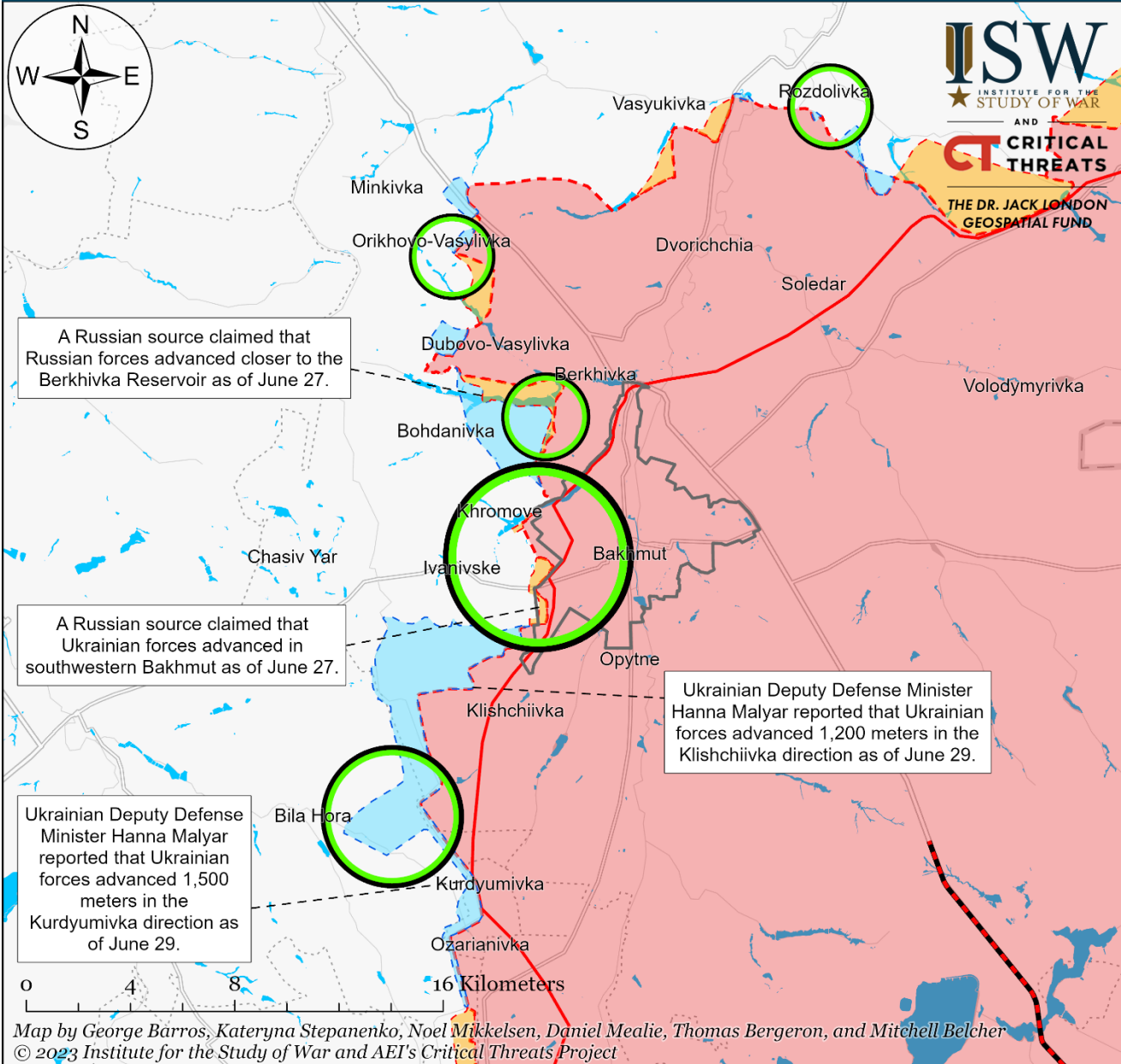


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Major Railroads
- 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: Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar reported that Ukrainian forces advanced 1,200 meters in the Klishchiivka direction, 1,500 meters in the Kurdyumivka direction, and 1,300 meters in the Berdyansk direction as of June 29. The Commander of the Ukrainian 57th Brigade Denys Yaroslavsky and a Russian source stated on June 29 that there is heavy fighting near Klishchiivka and Berkhivka. However, ISW cannot assess the exact areas of advances at this time.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of June 29, 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 reported that Ukrainian forces advanced 1,200 meters in the Klishchiivka direction and 1,500 meters in the Kurdyumivka direction as of June 29. The Commander of the Ukrainian 57th Brigade Denys Yaroslavsky and a Russian source stated on June 29 that there is heavy fighting near Klishchiivka and Berkhivka. However, ISW cannot assess the exact areas of advances at this time.

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

Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations along the administrative border between western Donetsk and eastern Zaporizhia oblast and made limited gains on June 29. Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar reported that Ukrainian forces advanced 1,300 meters in the western Donetsk–eastern Zaporizhia oblast border area and have established new positions in the Rivnopol-Volodyne (10–16km southwest of Velyka Novosilka) direction.[49] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces entrenched themselves in new positions near Pryyutne (15km southwest of Velyka Novosilka), while another milblogger claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian attack near Pryyutne.[50] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian attack near Starmaiorske (7km south of Velyka Novosilka), while a milblogger claimed that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked positions from Staromaiorske in the Rivnopol direction.[51] Footage published on June 28 purportedly shows elements of the Russian 127th Motorized Rifle Division (5th Combined Arms Army, Eastern Military District) operating near the Vremivka salient.[52]

Ukrainian forces conducted limited ground attacks in western Zaporizhia Oblast on June 29. Ukrainian Tavris Group of Forces Commander Brigadier General Oleksandr Tarnavskiy reported that Ukrainian forces continue to advance in the Tavirisk (Zaporizhia) direction.[53] Some Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces repelled Ukrainian attacks near Robotyne (12km south of Orikhiv), while other milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced on the northern outskirts of Robotyne.”[54] Footage published on June 28 and 29 purportedly shows elements of the “Sudoplatov” volunteer battalion, 429th Motorized Rifle Regiment of the 19th Motorized Rifle Division, and 70th Motorized Rifle Regiment of the 42nd Motorized Rifle Division (both of the 58th Combined Arms Army, Southern Military District) operating in the Zaporizhia direction.[55]

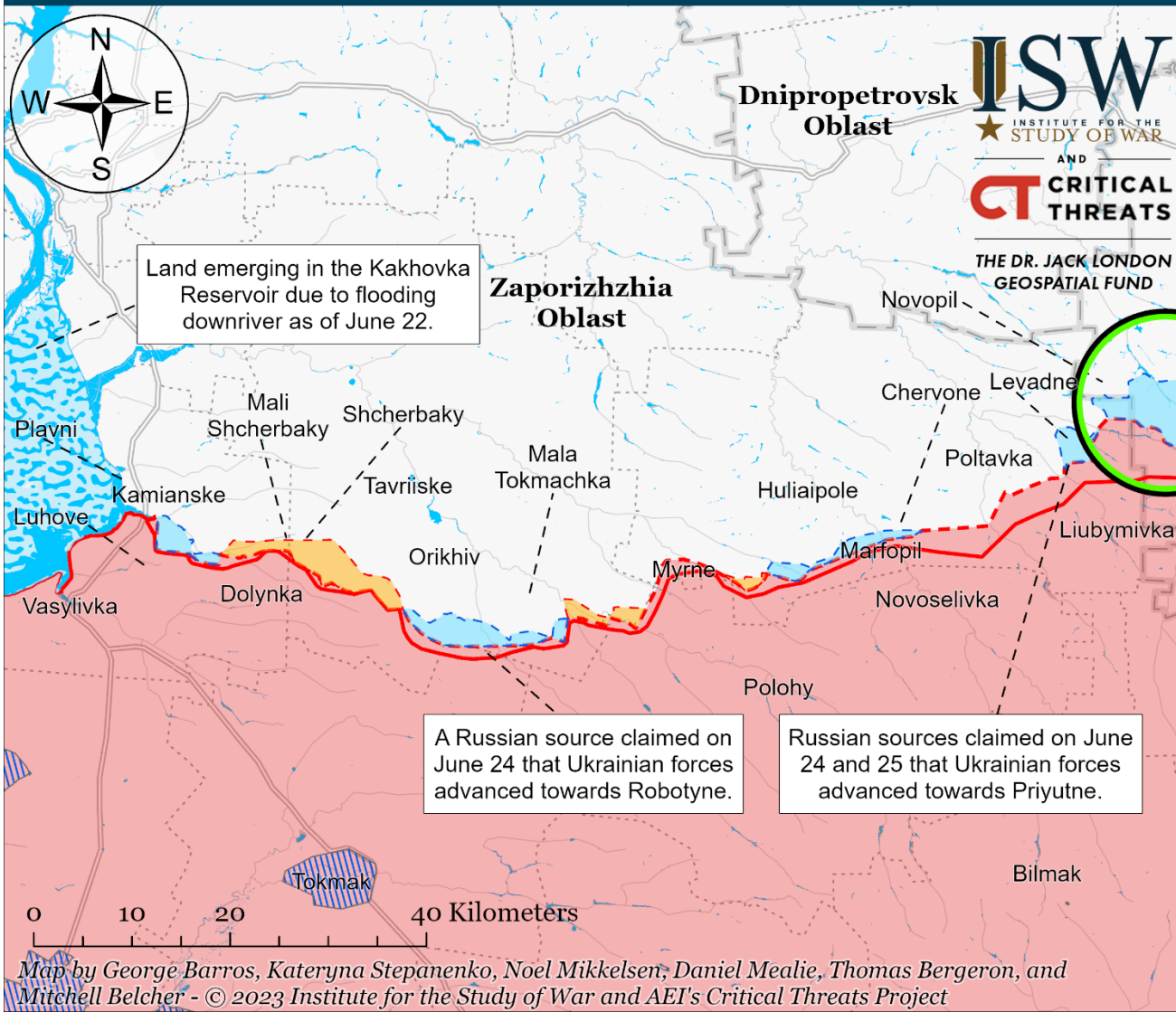
Russian forces constructed a dam on the outskirts of Tokmak in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast ahead of the Ukrainian counteroffensive. Open-source intelligence group *Bellingcat* shared satellite imagery on June 29 showing that Russian forces established a dam and moat around Tokmak (35km southwest of Orikhiv) in early May in an effort to prepare to defend the city against Ukrainian counteroffensive operations.[56]

Continued Russian endangerment of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) has forced Ukraine to change the operational regime for four reactors at the ZNPP. The Ukrainian State Nuclear Regulatory Inspectorate put reactor No. 3 into “stop for repair” mode and put reactors Nos. 4, 5 and 6 into cold shutdown.[57] The Ukrainian State Nuclear Regulatory Inspectorate reported that these conditions are optimal for security and cited an increased risk due to continued Russian occupation of the facility and decreasing water levels in the Kakhovka reservoir. ISW has previously reported on the ZNPP personnel transferring reactors from normal operations to hot, then later cold shutdowns in response to Russian forces endangering the ZNPP.[58]

A Russian BARS (Russian Combat Reserve) affiliated source claimed that Russian forces are moving military equipment to unspecified areas on the east (left) bank of the Dnipro River.[59] The Russian MoD and other Russian sources claimed that Russian forces control the entire east (left) bank of the Dnipro River near the Antonivsky Bridge and repelled all Ukrainian advances and attempts to transfer equipment to the area.[60] Other Russian sources claimed that heavy fighting is ongoing and that Ukrainian forces have established positions near the bridge.[61] Kherson Oblast Occupation Head Vladimir Saldo claimed that the volunteer Kherson “Vasily Margelov” battalion is conducting combat missions in Kherson Oblast.[62]

The Crimea-based Atesh partisan group stated that Russian forces are increasing their presence in Armyansk to defend key infrastructure in northern Crimea. Atesh stated that Russian forces are intensifying their presence in Armyansk and that a large number of Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) officers are in the area.[63] Atesh stated that Russian forces have placed the Crimean “Titan” chemical plant under a special control regime.[64] Atesh also stated that the Russian “Convoy” PMC is protecting Kherson Oblast occupation officials who visit the ongoing repair work on the Chonhar bridge.[65]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhzhia as of June 29, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

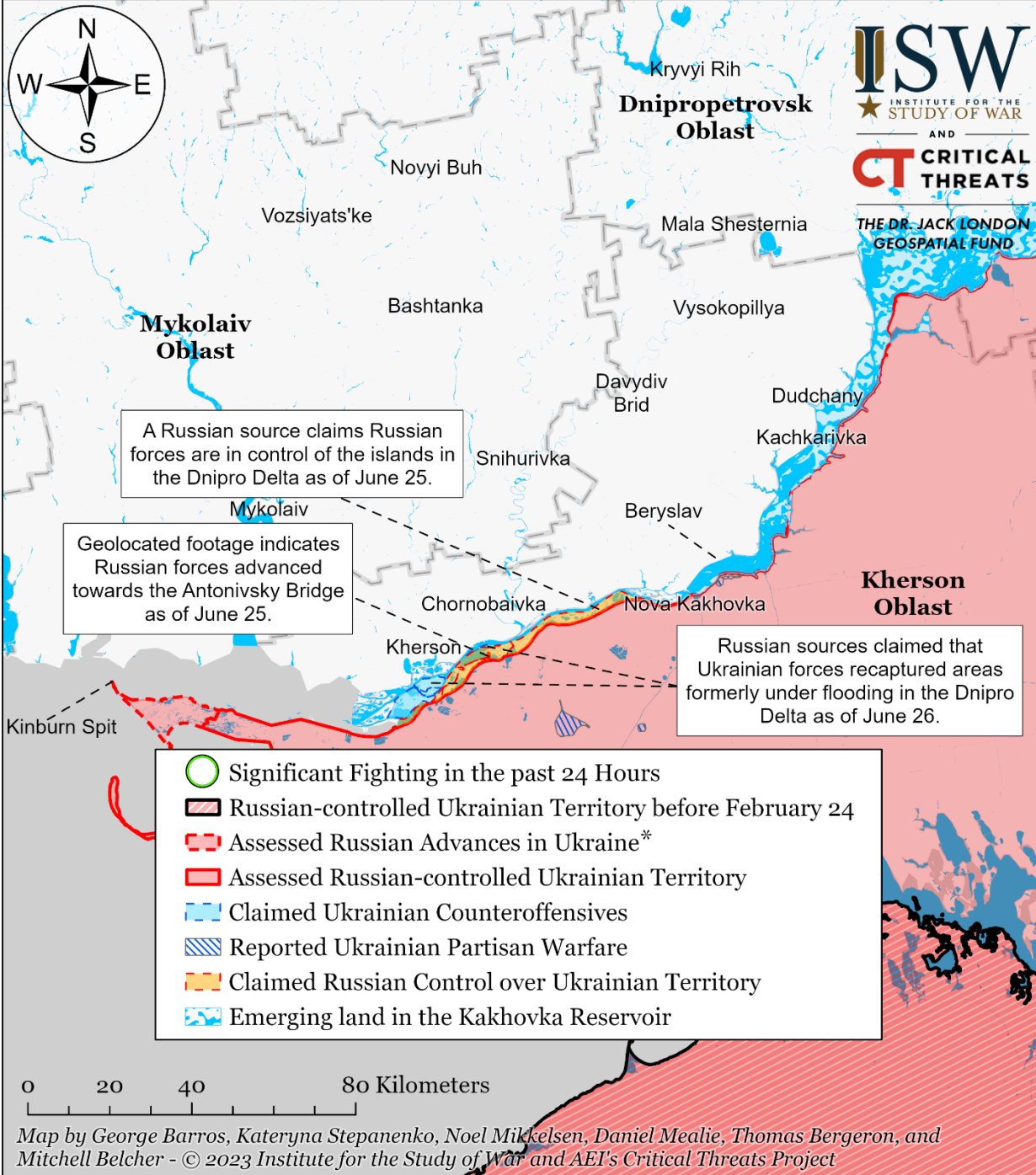


-  Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
-  Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
-  Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
-  Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
-  Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
-  Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
-  Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives

* 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 claimed on June 26 that Ukrainian forces recaptured 17 square kilometers in the past week and 130 square kilometers since the start of the counteroffensive.

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



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, and Mitchell Belcher - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

* 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)

Russian Cossack armed formations are reportedly signing contracts with the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) as part of a larger formalization effort to integrate irregular forces into MoD structures. Russian Presidential Aide Dmitry Mironov stated that Cossack volunteer formations are “consistently” signing contracts with the Russian MoD to participate in the Russian invasion of Ukraine during a meeting of the Presidium of the Council of Cossack Affairs on June 27.[66] Mironov noted that Russia needs to create legal and organizational foundations to form the Cossacks as the basis of the mobilization reserve and promote the development of Cossack volunteer formations as part of the Russian Armed Forces. Atman (head) of the All-Russian Cossack Society and State Duma Deputy Nikolai Doluda and other leaders of the Cossack communities attended the meeting to discuss support measures for Cossacks fighting in the war and their families. Atman of the “Terek” Cossack armed formation Vitaliy Kuznetsov stated on June 22 that “Terek” signed a contract with the Russian MoD and is now legally recognized as a professional armed force.[67] The Kremlin’s meeting with Cossack organizations on June 27 was likely intended to incentivize more Cossack units to sign military contracts with the Russian MoD, despite the fact that Russian President Vladimir Putin previously supported Cossack proposals to integrate Cossacks into the Russian National Guard (Rosgvardia) in 2021.[68] *Ponars Eurasia* reported that 15,500 Cossacks fought in Ukraine as of February 2023 and that there are 750,000 Cossacks listed on the state register.[69]

Families of a Russian airborne regiment that operated on the east (left) bank of the Dnipro River complained that the Russian military command committed their relatives to fierce battles in an unspecified direction following the destruction of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant (KHPP) dam on June 6.[70] Wives and mothers of the servicemen belonging to the 247th Air Assault (VDV) Regiment (7th Guards Mountain VDV Division) appealed to the Stavropol Krai Governor Vladimir Vladimirov, stating that elements of the regiment deployed to fight on an unspecified frontline without ammunition and military equipment after their positions were flooded on the east bank Kherson Oblast. Wives and mothers reported that the regiment suffered heavy casualties and that its soldiers need medical assistance. Vladimirov accused the families of lying and claimed that the situation is under control in his response to the appeal.[71]

Head of the Russian State Duma Committee Andrey Kartapolov submitted a bill that if passed, would exempt Russian special services and the Russian MoD from standard Russian public procurement regulations. Russian opposition outlet *Sota* reported that this bill would allow the Russian MoD to make unregulated purchases from a single supplier.[72]

The Russian Cabinet of Ministers approved the development strategy for the production of aerial drones through 2030 on June 28.[73] The Cabinet of Ministers defined five goals in areas of drone development including preparing drone operators, building infrastructure - such as airfields - for drones, and conducting further research in unmanned aerial drones. Putin tasked Russian officials on April 28 with developing Russia’s domestic drone industry likely as part of the Kremlin’s effort to gradually mobilize Russia’s defense industrial base.[74]

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

Ukrainian sources continue to report on societal restrictions in occupied territories. The Ukrainian Resistance Center reported that Russian occupation officials are prohibiting residents in Russian-occupied Ukraine from communicating with people living in Ukrainian-held territories and monitoring the residents’ phones for communications with people living in Ukrainian-held territory.[75] Ukrainian Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov reported that occupation authorities are further cracking down on residents after Russian occupation authorities killed two pro-Ukrainian 16-year-olds on June 24 in Berdyansk.[76] Fedorov reported that occupation authorities in Melitopol are checking teenagers’ phones for subscriptions to pro-Ukraine Telegram channels and are threatening their parents.[77]

Russian and occupation authorities continue to announce infrastructure projects aimed at further integrating occupied territories into Russia. Russian Deputy Prime Minister for Construction and Regional Development Marat Khusnullin claimed that the Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR), Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR), and Zaporizhia Oblast occupation administrations are participating in the national “Housing and Urban Environment” program, which will fund and construct 46 public space improvement projects in the three occupied regions.[78] DNR Head Denis Pushilin, LNR Head Leonid Pasechnik, and Russian Zaporizhia Oblast Head Yevgeny Balitsky claimed that participation in this program is the next step in integration with Russia.[79]

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

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.

See topline text.

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

[1] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02iVextCjq9Bx648ZcGZfMDkK5dtshqtLYgfLhJtLFZFRHpHfoYe19xU43CrBqzJQWl>

[2] <https://t.me/annamaliar/893>

[3] <https://t.me/CinCAFU/522>

[4] <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/kremlin%E2%80%99s-pyrrhic-victory-bakhmut-retrospective-battle-bakhmut>

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