Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin is being established as the face of the Russian “special military operation” in Ukraine. Prigozhin gave a recruitment speech on September 14 announcing that Russian prisoners have been participating in the war since July 1 when they were instrumental in seizing the Vuhlehirska Thermal Power Plant. A Russian milblogger noted that Prigozhin is introducing a “Stalinist” method that allows the Kremlin to avoid ordering a general mobilization that could ignite social tensions in Russian society. Milbloggers have been consistently praising Prigozhin’s success in Ukraine and some even said that he should replace the Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu, whom milbloggers and Kremlin pundits blame for the Russian defeat around Kharkiv Oblast. Russian military correspondent and milblogger Maksim Fomin (alias Vladlen Tatarsky) claimed to have spoken to Prigozhin about the situation on the Ukrainian-Russian border after the withdrawal of Russian forces in the area. The Prigozhin-Fomin meeting, if it occurred, could indicate that the Kremlin is attempting to address milbloggers’ months-long complaints that the Russian Defense Ministry did not hear their criticism highlighting the ineffectiveness of Russian higher command. Prigozhin is Putin’s close confidant, and his developing relationship with milbloggers may help retain milblogger support for the Kremlin’s war effort while scapegoating Shoigu and the Russian Defense Ministry for the defeat around Kharkiv Oblast. ISW previously assessed that the Kremlin has changed its information approach to address the demands of the Russian milbloggers and nationalists’, suggesting that Putin seeks to win back the critical milblogger community alienated by Russian failures.

Russian forces likely targeted Ukrainian hydrotechnical infrastructure in western Dnipropetrovsk Oblast on September 14 to interfere with Ukrainian operations across the Inhulets River. Ukrainian sources reported that eight Russian cruise missiles struck unspecified targets in Kryvyi Rih, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, and caused extensive flooding in areas of Kryvyi Rih. Russian sources identified the target location as the Karachun Dam, which sits along the Inhulets River on the western outskirts of Kryvyi Rih. Footage of the aftermath of the strike shows a 2.5m increase in the water level of the Inhulets River, which runs south of Kryvyi Rih and is an important geographical feature for the ongoing Ukrainian counteroffensive along the Kherson-Mykolaiv border. Russian forces likely targeted the Karachun Dam to damage Ukrainian pontoon bridges further downstream, especially in light of recent reports that Ukrainian troops are attempting to expand their bridgehead over the Inhulets River near Davydiv Brid as part of the ongoing Kherson counteroffensive.

Key Takeaways
- Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin is being established as the face of the Russian “special military operation” in Ukraine.
• Russian forces likely targeted Ukrainian hydrotechnical infrastructure in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast in order to interfere with Ukraine’s ability to operate across the Inhulets River.
• The Ukrainian counteroffensive in eastern Kharkiv Oblast continues to degrade Russian forces and threaten Russian artillery and air defenses.
• Russian and Ukrainian sources reported Ukrainian ground attacks in northern Kherson Oblast, western Kherson Oblast, and northwest of Kherson City but did not report any major gains.
• Russian forces continued ground attacks around Bakhmut and northwest and southwest of Donetsk City.
• Funding volunteer battalions is likely placing financial strain on Russian cities and oblasts.
• Russian occupation authorities shut off mobile internet in occupied Luhansk Oblast on September 14, likely to preserve Russian operational security and better control the information environment as Russian forces, occupation officials, and collaborators flee newly-liberated Kharkiv Oblast for Russian and Russian-controlled territories.
Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of September 14, 2022, 3:00 PM ET

Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, and Daniel Mealie
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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 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: (Vovchansk-Kupyansk-Izyum-Lyman Line)

The Ukrainian counteroffensive in eastern Kharkiv Oblast continues to degrade Russian forces and threaten Russian artillery and air defenses. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on September 14 that the intensity of Russian artillery attacks on Kharkiv City has decreased significantly, suggesting that Ukraine’s counteroffensive has degraded Russian forces’ ability to conduct routine artillery strikes on the center of Kharkiv City as Russian forces have been pushed eastward towards the Oskil River and north back into Russia.† Ukrainian advances in eastern Ukraine have likely forced Russian forces to pull air defenses further away from the frontlines in order to protect those systems from Ukrainian artillery fire, potentially exposing frontline Russian troops to air attacks. The Ukrainian General Staff reported on September 14 that Russian convoys carrying S-300 and Buk systems moved through Lutuhine, Luhansk Oblast in the direction of the Russian border on September 11 and 12.11

Russian sources continued to discuss limited Ukrainian ground attacks in eastern Kharkiv, northern Donetsk, and western Luhansk Oblasts. Several Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian and proxy forces are defending against Ukrainian attacks on Lyman in northern Donetsk Oblast.12 Russian sources also reported that fighting is ongoing in Bilohorivka (along the Donetsk-Luhansk Oblast border) and in nearby settlements around Siversk.13 The Ukrainian General Staff noted that Russian troops attempted to attack in Spirne (12km south of Bilohorivka), likely in an attempt to push northwards and threaten Ukrainian forces in Bilohorivka.14
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of September 14, 2022, 3:00 PM ET

The Russian Defense Ministry’s daily briefing map of September 11 confirmed the withdrawal of Russian forces operating around Kharkiv City and on the western bank of the Oskil River on September 11.

Russian sources claim that Ukrainian forces crossed the Oskil River near Borova on September 13.

Russian sources claim that Russian forces are still in Oskil Village as of September 12.

Ukrainian forces recaptured Bilohorivka, Luhans Oblast, on September 10.

Russian sources claim Russian forces took Mykolayivka on September 14.

Ukrainian forces captured Sviatohirsk on September 12.

Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours

Key Ukrainian Roads

Russian Ground Lines of Communication

Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory

Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*

Assessed Russian-controlled 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 forces won the Battle of Kharkiv Oblast on September 11. The Russian Ministry of Defense confirmed the withdrawal of Russian forces from this axis in its daily briefing map released on September 11. Ukrainian forces are likely still clearing some settlements in northern Kharkiv Oblast before announcing their full liberation.

Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noah Mikles, and Daniel Muldie © 2022 Institute for the Study of War and AITC Critical Threats Project
Southern Ukraine: (Kherson Oblast)

Ukrainian military sources maintained their operational silence on September 14. Kherson Oblast Council Head Oleksandr Samoilenko announced that Ukrainian forces have liberated Kyselivka, approximately 23km northwest of Kherson City, but Ukrainian military officials have not confirmed the liberation of the settlement at this time. ISW has not seen any visual evidence supporting Samoilenko's statement, and Russian sources denied Ukrainian local reports of advances in the area.

The Ukrainian Southern Operational Command reported that Ukrainian strikes are continuously undermining Russian efforts to repair the Kakhovka Bridge over the Dnipro River and have rendered the Darivka pontoon bridge over the Inhulets River impassable. Ukrainian forces have reportedly continued to target Russian crossings near the Antonivka area and are firing at Russian convoys. Ukrainian forces maintained their interdiction campaign, reportedly targeting Russian manpower and equipment concentration points in Hola Prystan (approximately 12km southwest of Kherson City), Dudchany, and Mylove (both on the T0403 highway). The Southern Operational Command also stated that Ukrainian forces inflicted damage on four ammunition depots in Kherson Raion.

Social media footage and statements by Russian-appointed occupation officials are corroborating the ongoing Ukrainian interdiction campaign. Geolocated footage showed the aftermath of the Ukrainian strike on the School of Higher Sportmanship, which reportedly served as an area of Russian troop concentration. Geolocated footage also showed a Ukrainian volunteer air reconnaissance unit striking a Russian storage building in Velyka Oleksandrivka, on the T2207 highway. Local residents also reported hearing the sound of explosions and six missile strikes near Kherson City. The head of the Kherson Oblast occupation administration, Vladimir Saldo, stated that Ukrainian forces struck the Antonivsky Bridge, but noted that occupation authorities are continuing to use ferry crossings in the area. The deputy head of the Kherson Oblast occupation regime, Kirill Stremousov, claimed that Ukrainian forces fired at a ferry transporting civilians across the Dnipro River near the Antonivsky Bridge. Numerous geolocated videos show that Russian forces are using ferries to transport military equipment across the Dnipro River, and Stremousov did not provide evidence supporting his claims.

Ukrainian and Russian sources identified three main areas of kinetic activity on September 14: northwest of Kherson City, around the Ukrainian bridgehead over the Inhulets River, and south of the Kherson-Dnipropetrovsk Oblast Border near Vysokopillya. Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces have adopted defensive measures near Posad-Pokrovsko (about 30km northwest of Kherson City) and are conducting probing operations by firing at Russian defenses in Blahodatne and Barvinok (just south of Posad-Pokrovsko). The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults on Novohryhorivka (29km northwest of Kherson City) and Bezimennne near the Inhulets River. The Ukrainian General Staff stated that Russian forces shelled Mala Seideminukha and Novohredevne—both settlements near the Inhulets just south of Blahodatvivka—which indicates that Ukrainian troops have advanced further west from within the Sukhyi Stavok pocket. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) also claimed that Russian forces destroyed Ukrainian military equipment in Bruskynske, along the T2207 highway that runs into Davydov Brd. A milblogger also claimed that Ukrainian forces are attacking Arkhanhelske (southwest of Vysokopillya) and Kostyrka (southeast of Vysokopillya), and a milblogger claimed that Russian forces also struck Ukrainian forces in Potomkyne (southeast of Vysokopillya).
The Russian MoD did not comment on the situation in Kherson Oblast on September 14, only claiming that Russian troops struck Ukrainian positions along the Kherson-Mykolaiv frontline.\textsuperscript{34}
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of September 14, 2022, 3:00 PM ET

Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepansenko, Noel Mickelsen, and Daniel Mealie
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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.

Note: Ukrainian officials announced on August 29 that Ukrainian forces began a counteroffensive in Kherson Oblast. An unnamed military official of an unspecified country told CNN on August 29 that Ukrainian forces liberated Pravdyne, Nova Dmyt rivka, and Tomyna Balka (northwest of Kherson City) and Arkhanhelske (along the Inhulets River). ISW will readjust the maps when more open sources confirm the liberation of these settlements. ISW extended Ukrainian counteroffensives to Sukhyi Stavok based on several claims from Russian milbloggers that Ukrainian forces liberated the settlement on August 29. Russian sources claimed that Russian forces pushed Ukrainian forces back to Sukhyi Stavok from Kostromka and Bezimenne on September 3. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces launched air strikes on Bezimenne and Kostromka on September 4, which may indicate a Ukrainian advance in the area.
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 troops continued ground attacks throughout Donetsk Oblast on September 14. Ukrainian and Russian sources reported that Russian troops, specifically Wagner Group detachments, conducted ground assaults south of Bakhmut. Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) Territorial Defense claimed that proxy troops took control of Mykhailivka and Mykhailivka Druha, both about 12km southwest of Bakhmut along the T0513 highway. Russian sources also discussed continued Russian ground assaults northeast of Bakhmut around Soledar. The Ukrainian General Staff additionally stated that Russian forces conducted limited ground attacks northwest and southwest of Donetsk City. Russian forces continued routine artillery strikes around Bakhmut, Donetsk City, and in western Donetsk Oblast.
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Donetsk as of September 14, 2022, 3:00 PM ET

**Map by George Barros, Katerina Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, and Daniel Medlie © 2022 Institute for the Study of War and AEI’s Critical Threats Project**

- **Ukrainian forces captured Svitochirsk on September 12.**
- **Ukrainian forces recaptured Bilohorivka, Luhansk Oblast, on September 10. Russian forces no longer control all of Luhansk Oblast as of September 10.**
- **Russian sources claim Russian forces took Mykolayivka on September 14.**

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**Key:***

- **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 Major Railroads**
- **Ukrainian Territory**
- **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: ISW recessed assessed Russian advances to a poultry farm in eastern Verkhnyokamyanske, Donetsk Oblast, and recessed Russian claimed control around Siversk based on geolocated footage published on September 5 that shows Russian forces targeting Ukrainian positions at the poultry farm.
Supporting Effort- Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Russian forces did not conduct any confirmed ground attacks in western Zaporizhia Oblast on September 14 and continued to fire along the line of contact.\textsuperscript{40} Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian troops are amassing along the Zaporizhia Oblast frontline and that Ukrainian troops attempted a failed offensive from Orikhiv (about 50km southeast of Zaporizhzhia City) towards Nestryanka (10km southeast of Orikhiv).\textsuperscript{41} Russian sources are seemingly concerned that Ukrainian troops may attempt to attack Vasylivka or push south on Russian-occupied Tokmak.\textsuperscript{42} Russian forces also continued routine shelling throughout Mykolaiv and Dnipropetrovsk Oblasts.\textsuperscript{43}

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

Russian military authorities continue to rely heavily on ostensibly Chechen units to generate combat power for operations in Ukraine. The Ukrainian Main Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported on September 14 that Russian leadership plans to redeploy four Chechen battalions to Ukraine, but these battalions are significantly understrength and comprised mainly of non-Chechen mercenaries from economically depressed regions of Russia.\textsuperscript{44} Social media footage circulated on pro-Russian channels showed a detachment of Chechen servicemembers arriving in an unspecified area of Ukraine.\textsuperscript{45}

Funding volunteer battalions is likely placing financial strain on Russian cities and oblasts. An opposition member of the St. Petersburg Legislative Assembly, Boris Vyshnevskiy, filed a motion on September 14 asking the city’s governor to explain which part of the city’s budget is providing funding for the city’s volunteer battalions.\textsuperscript{46} The city government rejected his motion, likely suggesting either that the St. Petersburg government does not have sufficient funding for the battalion, that funding for the battalion is coming from the Kremlin, or that the city is diverting funding from other programs in a way that would be embarrassing to admit publicly. The model of having localities pay for parts of the volunteer program was likely a Kremlin attempt both to obfuscate and to disperse the cost of the program.

Russian military leadership is likely attempting to force Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR) proxy forces evacuated from Kharkiv Oblast to relocate to frontlines in Donetsk Oblast, rather than reinforcing the new frontlines in Luhansk, their home province. Odesa military spokesperson Sergey Bratchuk resharred a Telegram post alleging that women in Luhansk attempted to protest the LNR forces’ immediate redeployment and shared a video of many uniformed personnel and civilians on the streets in an unspecified location.\textsuperscript{47} Forcing proxy forces to fight outside of their claimed oblasts will likely exacerbate morale issues and possible insubordination among proxy forces particularly if Ukrainian forces advance further into Luhansk Oblast.

Activity in Russian-occupied Areas (Russian objective: consolidate administrative control of occupied areas; set conditions for potential annexation into the Russian Federation or some other future political arrangement of Moscow’s choosing)

Russian occupation authorities shut off mobile internet in occupied Luhansk Oblast on September 14, likely to preserve Russian operational security and better control the information environment as Russian forces, occupation officials, and collaborators flee newly-liberated Kharkiv Oblast for Russian
and Russian-controlled territories. The Ukrainian head of Luhansk Oblast, Serhiy Haidai, reported on September 14 that occupation authorities ostensibly shut down the internet “to ensure defense capability and security,” but implied that occupation authorities intended the shutdown, at least in part, to hide large-scale evacuations and looting.48

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.