

# Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, September 15, 2023

Christina Harward, Riley Bailey, Angelica Evans, Grace Mappes, and Mason Clark  
September 15, 2023, 6:20pm 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 cut-off for this product was 1:00pm ET on September 15. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the September 16 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.**

**Ukrainian forces liberated Andriivka in the Bakhmut area on September 14 and continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on September 15.** The Ukrainian General Staff and other Ukrainian officials reported that Ukrainian forces liberated Andriivka on September 14 and achieved unspecified partial success near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) on September 15.[1] The Ukrainian 3rd Separate Assault Brigade reported that its personnel liberated Andriivka and “completely destroyed” the Russian 72nd Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (3rd Army Corps) after encircling the settlement.[2] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast and are inflicting significant losses on Russian manpower and equipment near Verbove (18km southeast of Orikhiv).[3]

**Russian State Duma Deputy and former Deputy Commander of the Southern Military District (SMD) Lieutenant General Andrei Gurulev complained about lying within the Russian military and highlighted the effectiveness of Ukrainian air defenses against Russian helicopters.** Gurulev published a Telegram message on September 15 largely reiterating known Russian challenges, though with several notable points. Gurulev complained that the culture of lying in the Russian military is the main issue preventing a Russian victory in Ukraine and claimed that false reports are leading to poor decision-making at many levels within the Russian military.[4] Gurulev also stated that Ukrainian air defenses at the front are effective against Russian helicopters and are preventing Russian helicopters from using previously highly effective anti-tank missiles, and he reiterated common complaints about Ukraine's ability to conduct drone strikes on Russian rear areas and insufficient Russian counterbattery capabilities.[5] Gurulev is notable for having previously leaked the audio message of former Commander of the 58th Combined Arms Army (SMD) Major General Ivan Popov's grievances over the lack of support for Russian forces on July 12, and Gurulev's likely senior ties with the SMD lend weight to his complaints.[6]

**Ukrainian forces conducted naval drone strikes on Russian ships in the Black Sea on September 14.**[7] Ukrainian Strategic Command reported that Ukrainian forces caused unspecified damage to two Russian “Vasily Bykov” Project 22160-class patrol ships in the southwestern Black Sea on September 14.[8] The Russian MoD claimed that Russian Black Sea Fleet forces destroyed two Ukrainian naval drones in this area.[9] Ukrainian newspaper *Ukrainskaya Pravda* reported that sources in the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) stated that a Ukrainian naval drone significantly damaged a Russian Bora-class corvette near the entrance to Sevastopol Bay on September 14 but the Russian MoD claimed that Russian Black Sea Fleet forces destroyed a Ukrainian naval drone and repelled the attack.[10] A Russian source claimed that the corvette was not visibly damaged.[11]

**Russian forces conducted another series of Shahed-131/-136 drone strikes targeting Ukrainian rear areas on September 15.** Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces launched 17 drones from Krasnodar Krai in the direction of Khmelnytskyi Oblast and that Ukrainian air defenses shot down all 17 drones.[12] Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Yuriy Ihnat stated that the Russian strike targeted Ukrainian aircraft.[13]

**Russian State Duma Defense Committee Chairman Andrei Kartapolov explicitly stated that mobilized personnel will only demobilize at the end of Russia's “special military operation.”**[14] Kartapolov added that Russian mobilized personnel will not receive rotations, but that they are entitled to leave every six months.[15] Kartapolov's explicit commentary is likely meant to dissuade Russian legislators from considering a proposed amendment that would establish terms for demobilizing personnel mobilized in autumn 2022.[16] The Kremlin continues to resist formally rescinding the partial mobilization decree in order to legally justify the continued service of mobilized personnel for an indefinite period of time.[17]

**Russian President Vladimir Putin and Belarusian President Aleksander Lukashenko reiterated standing claims about negotiations and perceived grievances against the West during a meeting in Sochi on**

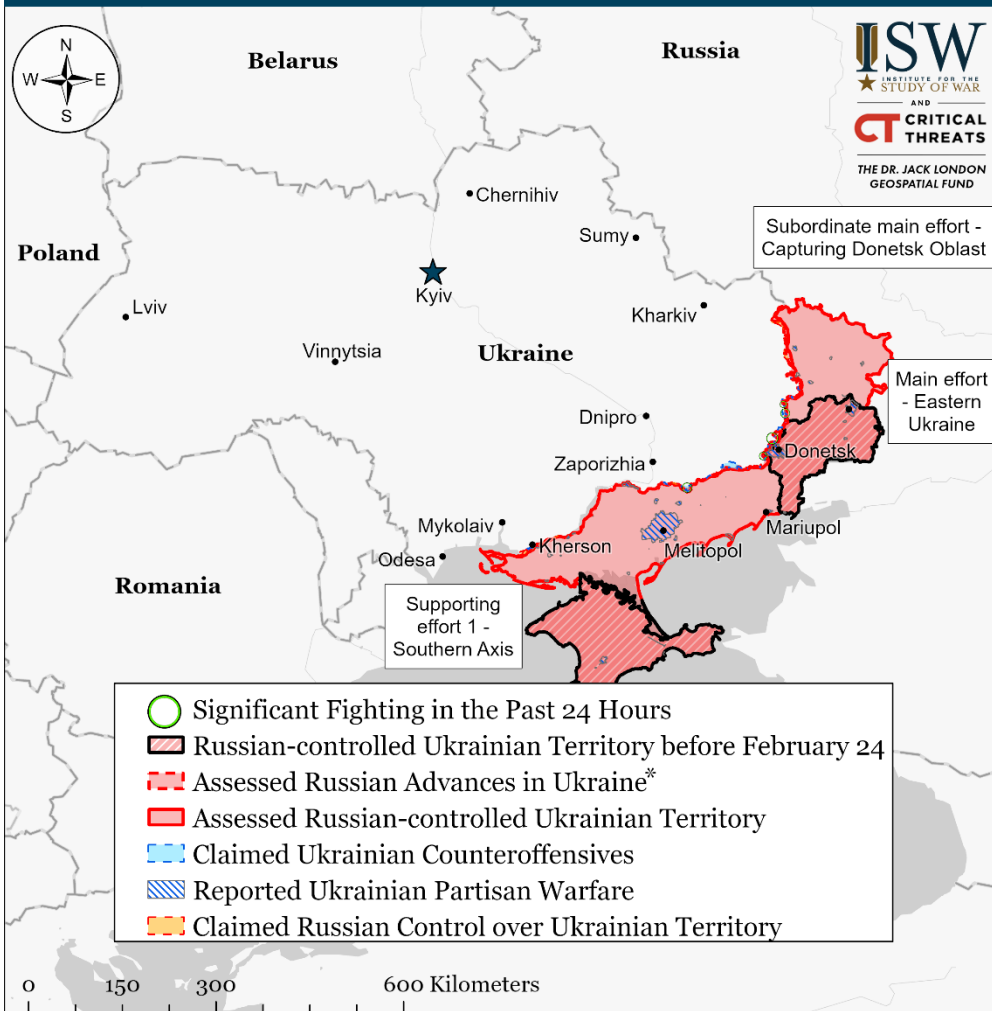
**September 15.** Putin and Lukashenko reportedly also discussed economic issues, Kim Jong Un's visit to Russia, and Russian force generation efforts.[18] Putin and Lukashenko reiterated boilerplate rhetoric accusing the West of manipulating Ukraine. Putin claimed that 300,000 people have signed military service contracts with the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) - presumably within the past six to seven months, updating a figure given by Putin on September 12.[19]

**The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) continues efforts to assume control over the Wagner Group's operations in North Africa and may have assigned former commander of the Aerospace Forces (VKS) Sergei Surovikin to this task.** Russian sources posted pictures of Army General Sergei Surovikin, the previously dismissed Wagner-affiliated former VKS commander, in Algeria on September 15.[20] Russian state news outlet *Kommersant* reported that a source close to Surovikin stated that the trip may be connected to Surovikin's possible appointment to oversee unspecified operations in Africa.[21] Russian milbloggers claimed that Surovikin's new formal position as Head of the Coordination Committee on Air Defense Issues under the Council of Defense Ministers of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is purely nominal and speculated that Surovikin may take over Wagner assets and operations in the region.[22] Surovikin may be involved in Russian efforts to subsume Wagner operations due to his affiliation with Wagner and his command experience, although it is unclear if the Russian MoD intends for Surovikin to assume direct command of these efforts. Russian Deputy Defense Minister Colonel-General Yunus-Bek Yevkurov and elements of the Main Directorate (GRU) of the General Staff have also been reportedly heavily involved in efforts to subsume Wagner's operations in the Middle East and Africa.[23] *The Wall Street Journal* reported that Russian officials, including Yevkurov, met with Khalifa Haftar, commander of the Tobruk-based Libyan National Army, in recent weeks to request access to ports in Benghazi or Tobruk for Russian warships.[24] Yevkurov reportedly visited Libya several times in the past months to replace "private military companies" (PMCs) with Russian MoD-controlled formations.[25] The Kremlin may be attempting to revive a longstanding campaign to secure access to a Mediterranean port in Libya in parallel with the effort to subsume Wagner's operations in Libya.

#### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Ukrainian forces liberated Andriivka in the Bakhmut area on September 14 and continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in western Zaporizhia Oblast on September 15.**
- **Russian State Duma Deputy and former Deputy Commander of the Southern Military District (SMD) Lieutenant General Andrei Gurulev complained about lying within the Russian military and highlighted the effectiveness of Ukrainian air defenses against Russian helicopters.**
- **Ukrainian forces conducted naval drone strikes on Russian ships in the Black Sea on September 14.**
- **Russian forces conducted another series of Shahed-131/-136 drone strikes targeting Ukrainian rear areas on September 15.**
- **Russian State Duma Defense Committee Chairman Andrei Kartapolov explicitly stated that mobilized personnel will only demobilize at the end of Russia's "special military operation."**
- **The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) continues efforts to assume control over the Wagner Group's operations in North Africa and may have assigned former commander of the Aerospace Forces (VKS) Sergei Surovikin to this task.**
- **Russian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line, near Bakhmut, along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City line, and in western Zaporizhia Oblast and advanced in some areas on September 15.**
- **Russian occupation authorities continue efforts to strengthen ground lines of communication (GLOCs) connecting occupied southern Ukraine to Russia and occupied Crimea.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of September 15, 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
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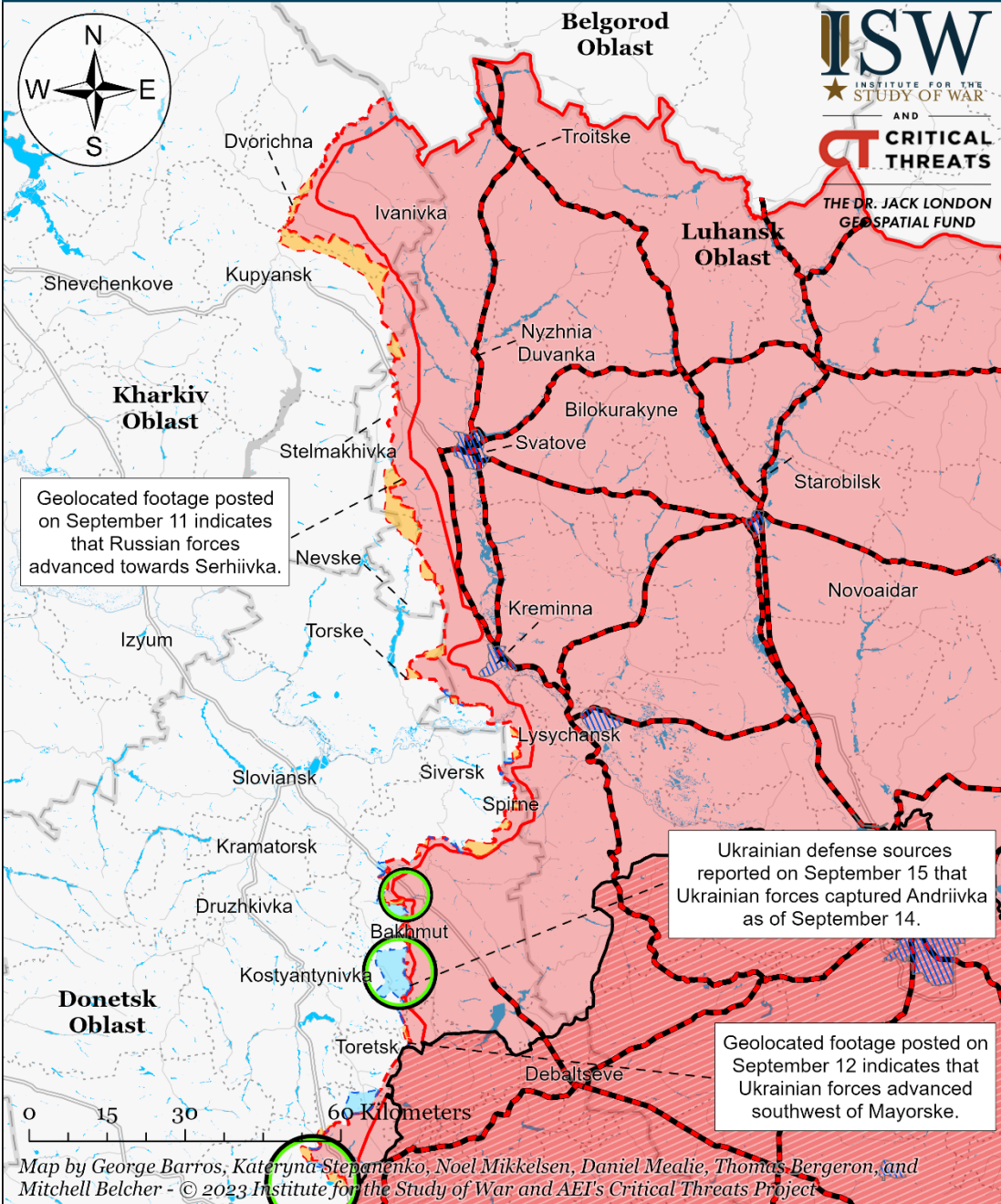
### **Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine**

#### **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 conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line and advanced on September 15. Geolocated footage published on September 15 indicates that Russian forces advanced west of Raihorodka (12km west of Svatove).[26] A Russian news aggregator claimed on September 14 that Russian forces advanced near Novoyehorivka (15km southwest of Svatove).[27] A Russian milblogger claimed on September 15 that elements of the Russian 138th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (6th Combined Arms Army, Western Military District) crossed the Oskil River near Novomylnsk (20km northeast of Kupyansk) along a front almost four kilometers wide and entered Ukrainian rear areas near Dvorichna (17km northeast of Kupyansk), but another Russian milblogger denied this claim and stated that the situation in this area has not changed significantly.[28] Russian sources claimed on September 14 and 15 that Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Masyutivka (13km northeast of Kupyansk), Synkivka (8km northeast of Kupyansk), Petropavlivka (7km east of Kupyansk), Berestove (20km northwest of Svatove), the Serebryanske forest area (10km southwest of Kreminna), and Bilohorivka (12km south of Kreminna).[29] The Ukrainian General Staff and Ukrainian Eastern Group of Forces spokesperson Ilya Yevlash reported that Russian forces did not conduct offensive operations in the Kupyansk or Lyman direction on September 14 and 15.[30] Yevlash stated that elements of the Russian 25th Combined Arms Army (CAA) (reportedly under the Eastern Military District) are operating in the Kupyansk direction.[31] ISW has previously assessed that the newly formed 25th CAA is likely low quality or understrength.[32] A Russian source claimed on September 14 that elements of the Russian 123rd Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People's Republic Army Corps) are operating near Siversk (18km southwest of Kreminna).[33]

Russian military officials claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted offensive operations along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line on September 15 but did not advance. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Russian Center Grouping of Forces Spokesperson Alexander Savchuyk claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully attacked near Torske (15km west of Kreminna).[34]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of September 15, 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
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare

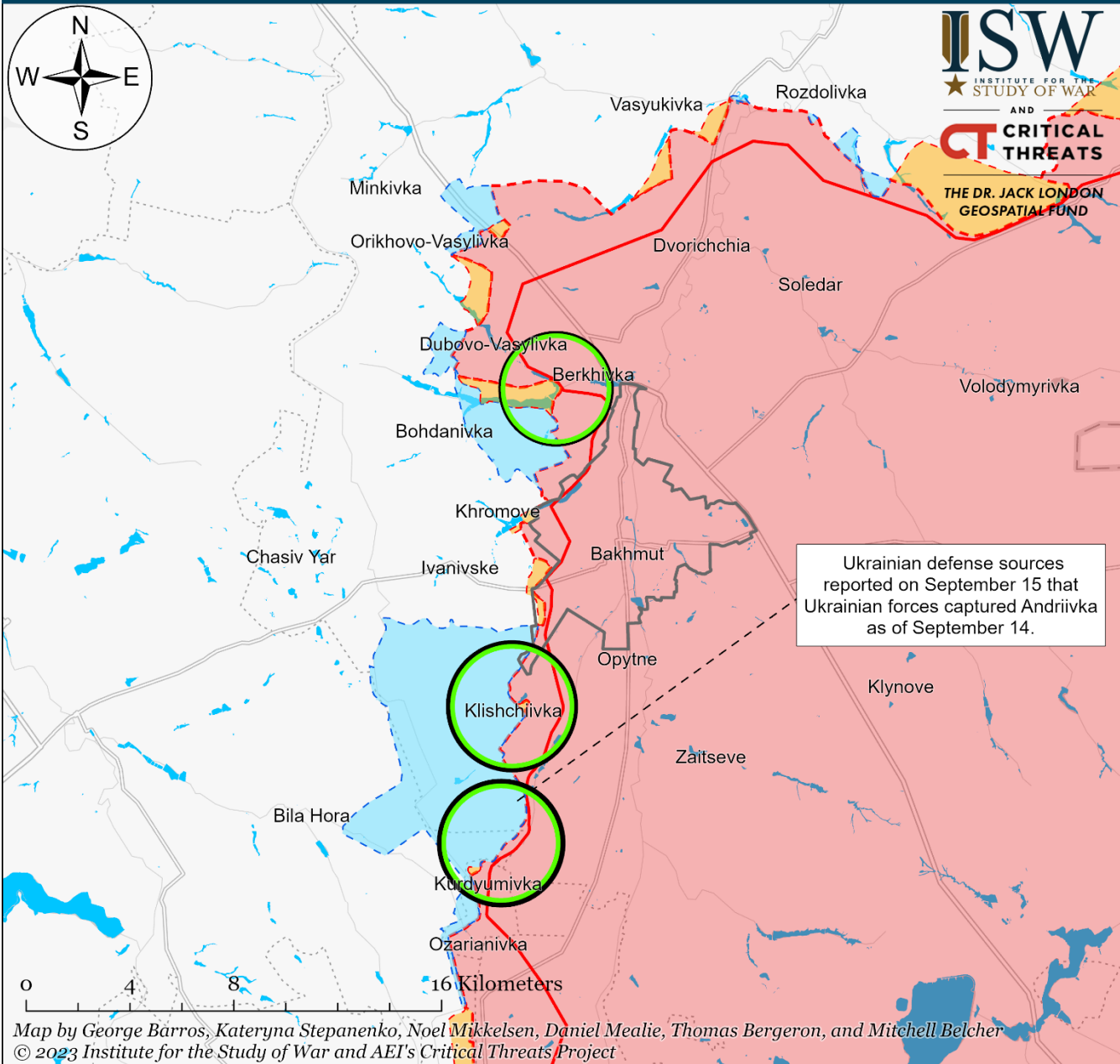
\* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

**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 liberated Andriivka (10km southwest of Bakhmut) and made further gains in the Bakhmut area on September 15. The Ukrainian General Staff and other Ukrainian officials reported that Ukrainian forces liberated Andriivka on September 14 and achieved unspecified partial success near Klishchiivka (7km southwest of Bakhmut) on September 15.[35] The Ukrainian 3rd Separate Assault Brigade reported that its personnel liberated Andriivka and “completely destroyed” the Russian 72nd Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (3rd Army Corps) after encircling the settlement.[36] Elements of the 72nd Brigade previously suffered heavy losses during localized Ukrainian counterattacks in the Bakhmut area in May 2023 and are likely thoroughly degraded.[37] The Ukrainian 3rd Assault Brigade stated that the liberation of Andriivka presents opportunities for a breakthrough on Bakhmut’s southern flank and that fighting is ongoing in the area.[38] Many Russian sources either denied that Ukrainian forces liberated the settlement or argued that the complete destruction of the settlement during fighting makes the Ukrainian control over the settlement tactically insignificant.[39] One Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces currently control heights east of Andriivka.[40] Other select Russian milbloggers acknowledged that Russian forces’ tactical situation south of Bakhmut is deteriorating and expressed concern that Ukrainian forces may be able to threaten the Russian grouping in Bakhmut.[41] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces pushed Russian forces out of Klishchiivka and are trying to gain a foothold in the settlement, although other Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces control the settlement.[42] One milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces unsuccessfully tried to enter Bakhmut itself from the southwest.[43] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian assault near Mayorske (21km south of Bakhmut).[44]

Russian forces counterattacked around Bakhmut but did not make any confirmed gains on September 15. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces continued unsuccessful attempts to break through Ukrainian defenses near Bohdanivka (7km northwest of Bakhmut) and tried to restore lost positions near Yahidne (2km north of Bakhmut).[45] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces counterattacked near Andriivka and recaptured several unspecified lost positions.[46]

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Bakhmut as of September 15, 2023, 3:00 PM ET



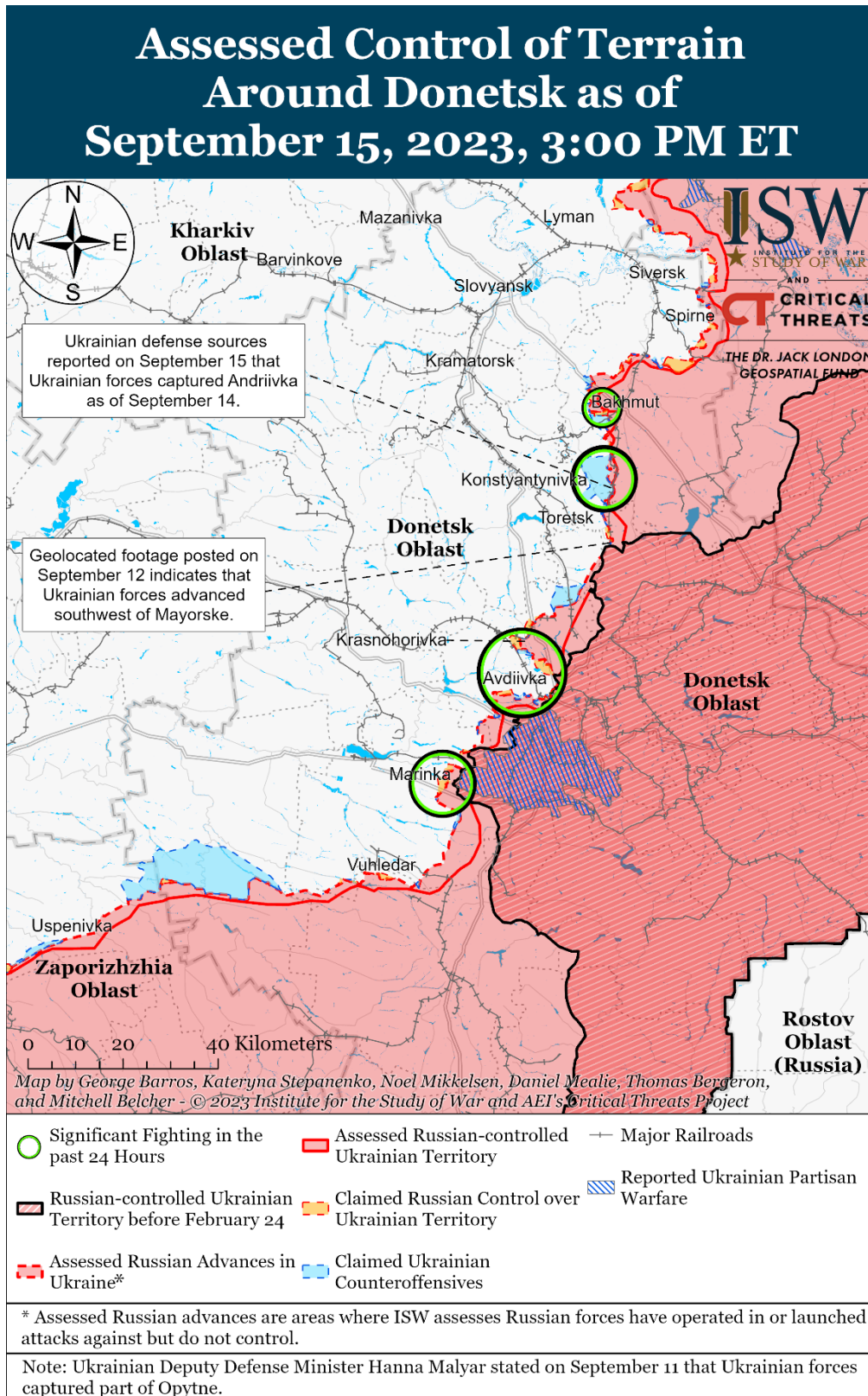
Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, and Mitchell Belcher  
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- Bakhmut City Limits
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine\*
- Claimed Russian Control 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: Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar stated on September 11 that Ukrainian forces captured two square kilometers in the Bakhmut direction.

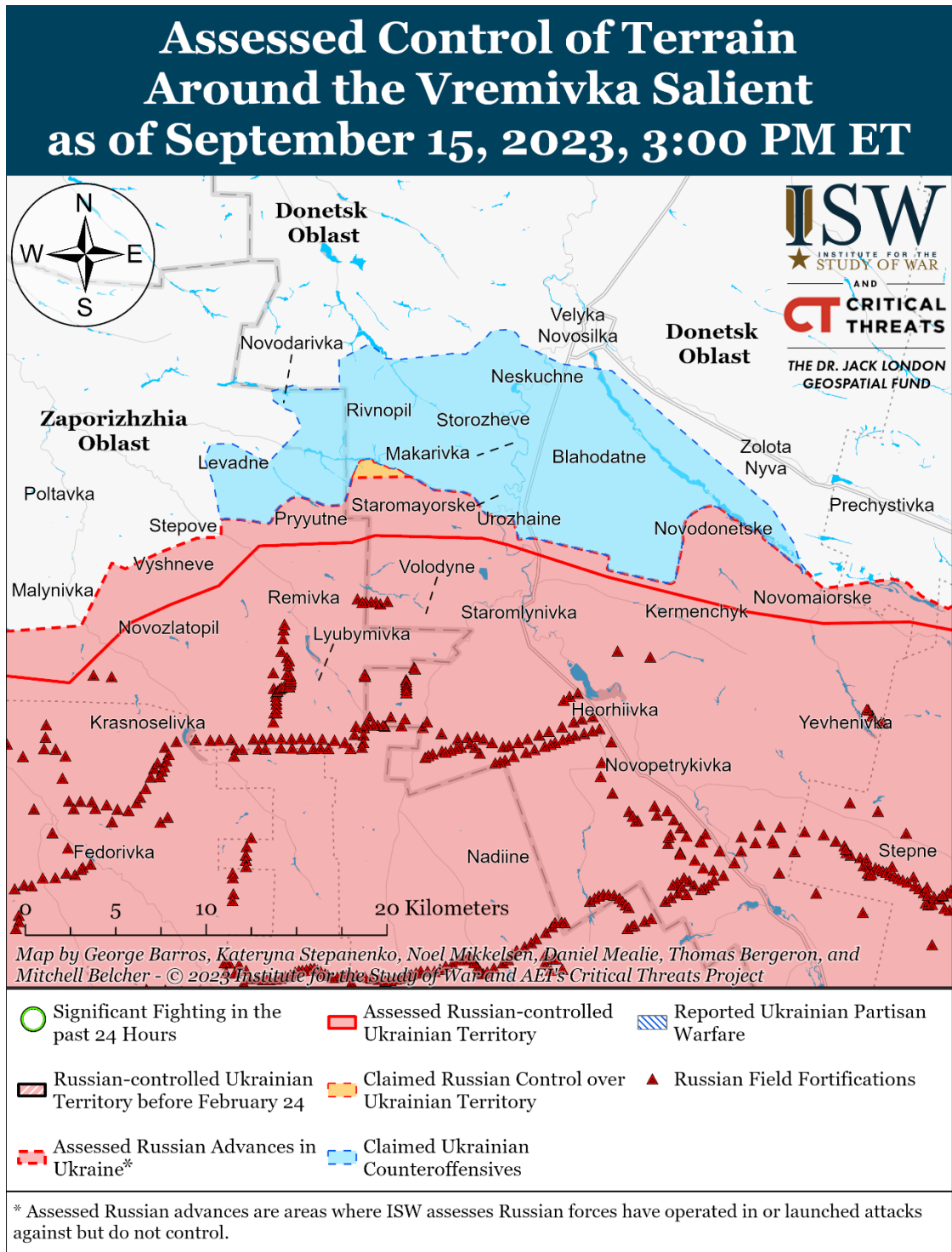
Russian forces continued limited offensive operations along the Avdiivka-Donetsk City front on September 15 but did not make any confirmed gains. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted unsuccessful offensive actions near Lastochkyne (5km northwest of Avdiivka), Avdiivka, and Marinka (27km southwest of Avdiivka).[47] A Russian milblogger claimed that fighting is ongoing north of Opytne (4km south of Avdiivka) and Nevelske (14km southwest of Avdiivka) and near Krasnohorivka (22km southwest of Avdiivka).[48] The milblogger claimed that Russian forces continue offensive operations north and south of Marinka but have not achieved any significant progress.[49]





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

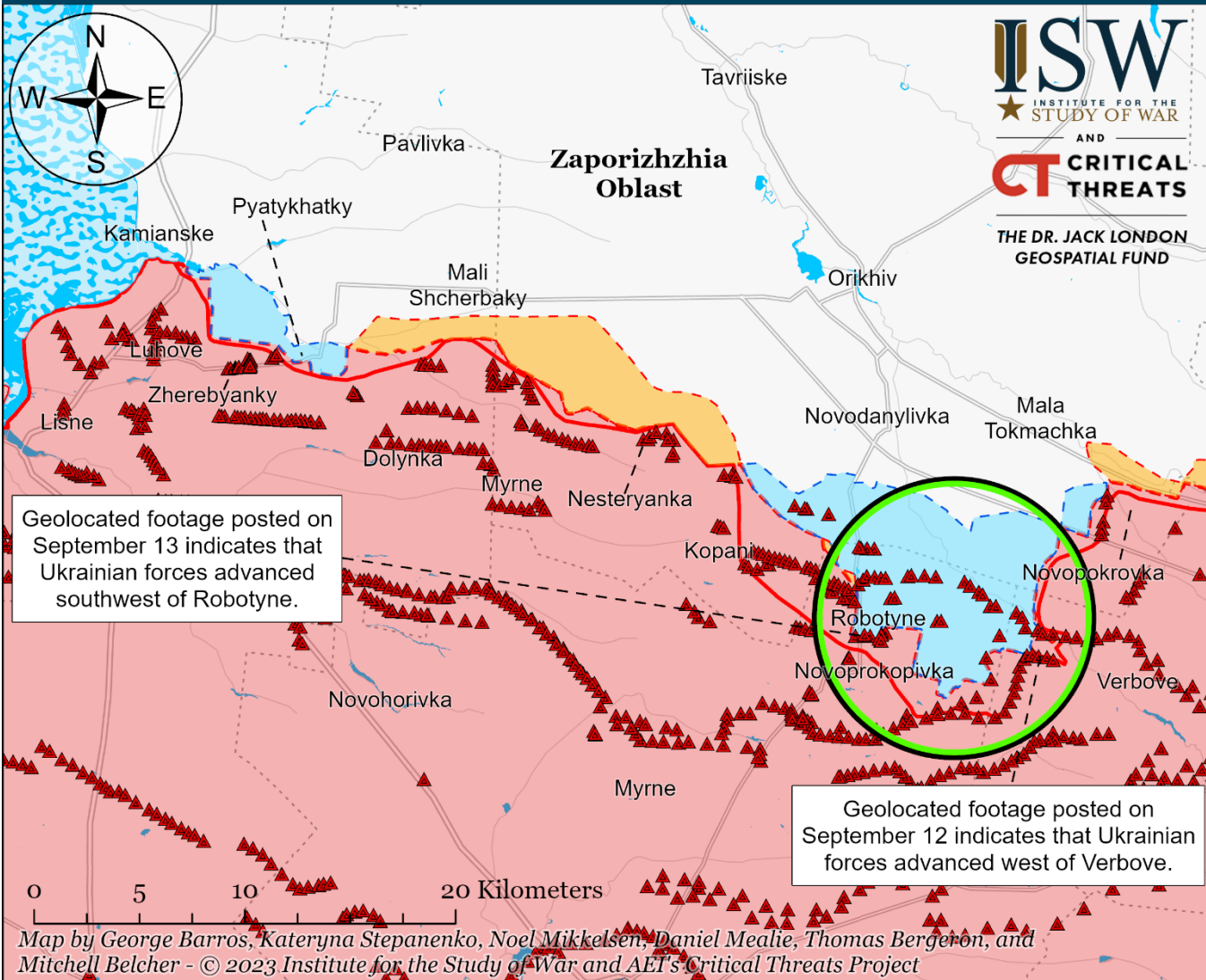
Ukrainian forces continued assaults in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area on September 15 but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued to conduct assaults in the Shakhtarske direction in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area.[50] Russian sources, including the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD), claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks near Pryyutne (15km southwest of Velyka Novosilka), Staromayorske (9km south of Velyka Novosilka), Urozhaine (9km south of Velyka Novosilka), Novomayorske (18km southeast of Velyka Novosilka), and Novodonetske (12km southeast of Velyka Novosilka).[51] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces have decreased the intensity of their attacks near Novomayorske.[52]



Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast on September 15 but did not make any claimed or confirmed advances. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations in the Melitopol (western Zaporizhia Oblast) direction and are inflicting significant losses on Russian manpower and equipment near Verbove (18km southeast of Orikhiv).[53] Russian sources, including the Russian MoD, claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted unsuccessful assaults near Robotyne (12km south of Orikhiv) and Verbove.[54] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces still control Verbove and that Ukrainian forces are not close to the settlement.[55] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces do not control Robotyne and retreated from the outskirts of the settlement to nearby forest areas.[56] The milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces also attacked near Novoprokopivka (18km southeast of Orikhiv).[57] A Ukrainian sapper operating in the Zaporizhia direction stated that Russian forces have so densely mined areas it can take up to a day to clear a 50-square-meter plot of land in this direction.[58]

Russian forces reportedly continued ground attacks in western Zaporizhia Oblast on September 12 but did not make any confirmed advances. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces attacked from Luhivske (18km southeast of Orikhiv) in an effort to flank Ukrainian forces.[59] Russian milbloggers amplified footage claiming to show elements of the Russian 247th Guards VDV Regiment (7th VDV Division) operating near Verbove.[60] Another Russian milblogger amplified footage claiming to show elements of the Russian “Osman” Spetsnaz force operating in the Orikhiv direction.[61]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Pyatykhatky and Robotyne as of September 15, 2023, 3:00 PM ET

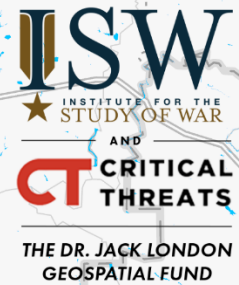
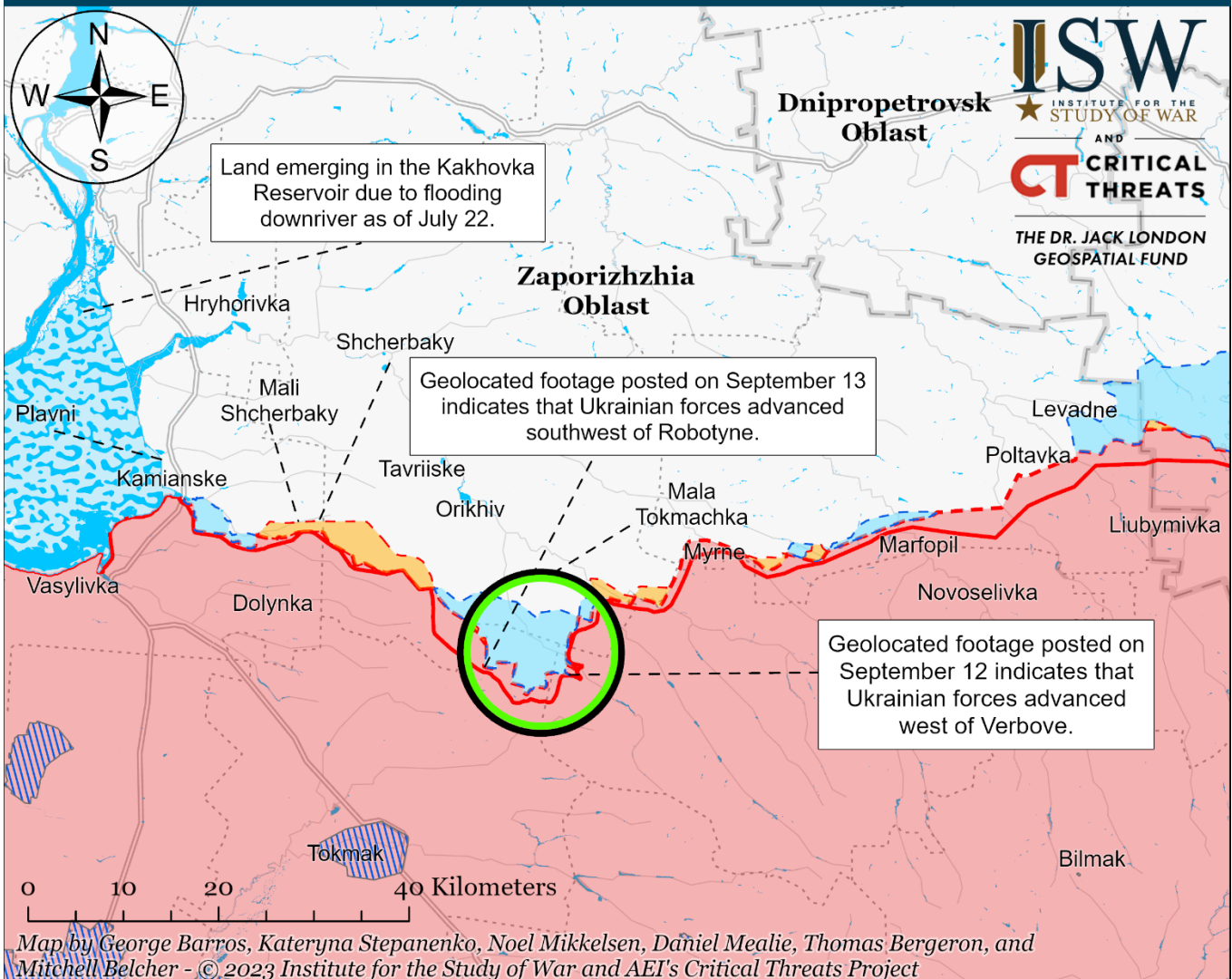


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
- Assessed Russian 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: Ukrainian Tavriisk Group of Forces Spokesperson Oleksandr Shtupun reported on September 12 that Ukrainian forces advanced 300 to 500 meters south and southeast of Robotyne. Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar stated on September 11 that Ukrainian forces advanced 4.8 square kilometers over the past week and captured a total of 256.5 square kilometers since the start of the counteroffensive in the Tavriisk direction.

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of September 15, 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

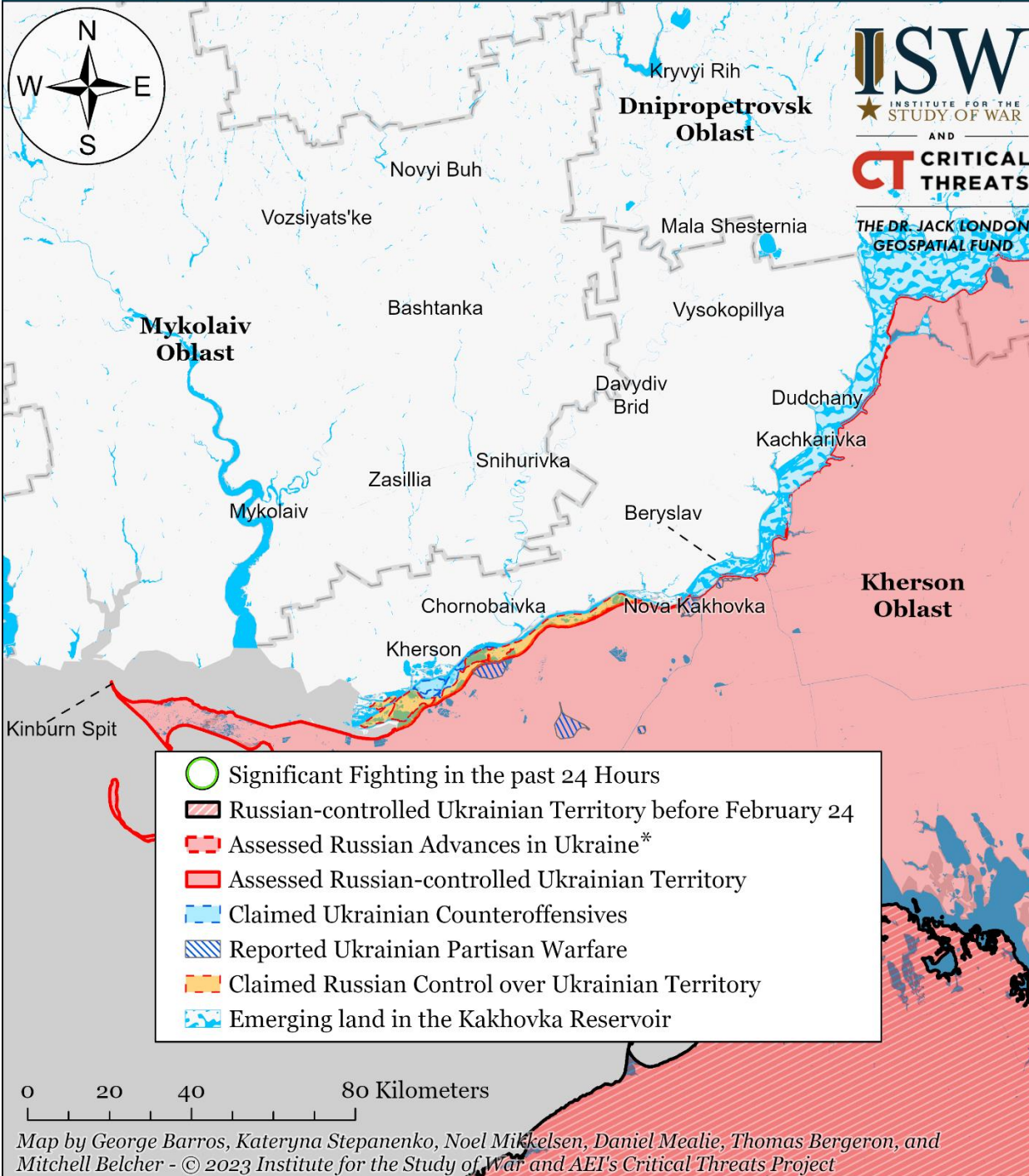
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Russian milbloggers continued to express concern about limited Ukrainian crossings of the Dnipro River in Kherson Oblast on September 14 and 15. Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces intensified their activity on unspecified Dnipro River delta islands near the Antonivsky Bridge in order to consolidate positions for a future attack on the east (left) bank of Kherson Oblast.[62] Russian forces likely do not possess the manpower necessary to defend against a significant Ukrainian attack in this sector of the front, given that Russian command transferred several elements from Kherson Oblast to Zaporizhia Oblast.[63] One Russian milblogger acknowledged that Russian forces lack the capabilities to conduct their own significant river crossing operations in the area, particularly due to a lack of shells for artillery preparations.[64]

Ukrainian and Western military sources offered more details about recent high-profile Ukrainian strikes on Russian military assets near Sevastopol and Yevpatoria in occupied Crimea. Ukrainian Air Force Commander Lieutenant General Mykola Oleschuk confirmed on September 15 that Ukrainian forces struck the Russian *Minsk* Ropucha class landing ship and the *Rostov-on-Don* Kilo class submarine in Sevastopol with Storm Shadow and SCALP (the French variant of the Storm Shadow) cruise missiles on September 13.[65] The United Kingdom Ministry of Defense (UK MoD) assessed that Ukrainian strikes against the *Minsk* functionally destroyed the vessel and strikes against the *Rostov-on-Don* inflicted catastrophic damage that will likely take years and several hundred million dollars to repair.[66] The UK MoD assessed that it will take Russian forces several months to remove the wreckage from the dry docks in Sevastopol, rendering them unusable for the time being and presenting a significant challenge to the maintenance of the Black Sea Fleet.[67] The Ukrainian Navy also confirmed reports that that Ukrainian Naval Forces destroyed a Russian S-400 “Triumf” air defense system on September 14, presumably near Yevpatoria.[68]

# Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of September 15, 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 Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu visited multiple defense industrial base (DIB) enterprises on September 15 likely as part of the gradual mobilization of Russia's DIB. Shoigu visited the "Zvezda" defense plant in Bolshoy Kamen, Primorsky Krai and "demanded" that the plant utilize its maximum production capacity to repair and modernize Russian Pacific Fleet submarines.[69] Shoigu also visited the "Progress" aircraft plant where he received a briefing on efforts to modernize the Ka-52M combat helicopter and ordered plant management to improve the Ka-52M's combat capabilities and pilot security.[70] Shoigu also held a meeting with Russian Pacific Fleet officials in Primorsky Krai and claimed that Russia has commissioned two new Pacific Fleet vessels thus far in 2023 and will commission 12 additional vessels by the end of the year.[71]

Ukrainian intelligence reported that North Korea has already provided artillery shells to Russia. Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Head Kyrylo Budanov stated on September 14 that North Korea began providing munitions, including 122mm and 152mm artillery ammunition, rockets for Grad MLRS, and tank rounds, for the past "month and a half." [72] Budanov stated that the Kremlin seeks millions of rounds from North Korea.

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

Russian occupation authorities continue efforts to strengthen ground lines of communication (GLOCs) connecting occupied southern Ukraine to Russia and occupied Crimea. Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Head Denis Pushilin claimed on September 14 that Russian authorities have repaired and constructed over 100 kilometers of road connecting Mariupol and other coastline areas to Donetsk City and Russian areas. Pushilin claimed that authorities also restored four bridges in and near Mariupol.[73] Zaporizhia Oblast occupation head Yevgeny Balitsky claimed on September 15 that occupation authorities restored 30 kilometers of road between occupied Berdyansk and Prymorsk in southern Zarpozhia Oblast.[74]

Russian occupation authorities continue deporting Ukrainian children to Russia. The Kherson Oblast occupation administration stated on September 14 that the administration signed an agreement to send 20 children to the "Okean" children's camp in Primorsky Krai for an unspecified period of time.[75]

Russian occupation authorities in Crimea are reportedly conducting extensive crackdowns against pro-Ukrainian sentiments. Russian opposition outlet *Verstka* reported on September 15 that Crimean occupation authorities have prosecuted 198 cases of alleged defamation of the Russian military in 2022 and 179 cases so far in 2023, the third highest prosecution rates for this law in all of Russia and occupied territories.[76] *Verstka* reported that Crimean occupation authorities prosecute people under this law for listening to or singing Ukrainian music, making private comments criticizing the war, or for wearing traditional Ukrainian dress.[77] *Verstka* reported that Crimean occupation authorities established various channels for residents of occupied Crimea to report violations of this law to authorities and reported on multiple cases of residents informing on their coworkers, neighbors, and friends to law enforcement.[78]

## **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)**

See topline text.

**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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[1] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbidORNWTWgBZpbthtoXNCm2b6GjgJ8nSoghXcZU8zbB9xGMxt3Vgui4VmvHAnaqkV6kTl> ; <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbidOsaPL1Cq3wL3kg9w8GeAJvQh4a2nT6ffYmvEpq1chakAH9bXeT29Y6G7Y21YEogSrl> ; <https://t.me/militarymediacenter/3156> ; <https://t.me/annamaliar/1071>

[2] <https://t.me/ab3army/3148>

[3] <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbidoRNWTWgBZpbthtoXNCm2b6GjgJ8nSoghXcZU8zbB9xGMxt3Vgui4VmvHAnaqkV6kTl> ;  
<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbidosaPL1Cq3wL3kg9w8GeAJvQh4a2nT6ffYmVepq1chakAH9bXeT29Y6G7Y21YEogSrl>

[4] <https://t.me/agurulev/3756>

[5] <https://t.me/agurulev/3756> ; <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-29-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-20-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-17-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-september-5-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-september-10-2023> ; <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-21-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-july-13-2023>

[6] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar071523>

[7] <https://t.me/AFUStratCom/19996>

[8] <https://t.me/AFUStratCom/19996>

[9] [https://t.me/mod\\_russia/30494](https://t.me/mod_russia/30494) ; [https://t.me/mod\\_russia/30496](https://t.me/mod_russia/30496)

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