Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, August 29
Kateryna Stepanenko, Grace Mappes, Angela Howard, Layne Philipson, and Frederick W. Kagan
August 29, 10:15 pm 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.

Ukrainian military officials announced the start of the Ukrainian counteroffensive in Kherson Oblast on August 29. Ukrainian officials reported that Ukrainian forces have broken through the first line of defenses in unspecified areas of Kherson Oblast and are seeking to take advantage of the disruption of Russian ground lines of communication caused by Ukrainian HIMARS strikes over many weeks. Ukrainian officials did not confirm liberating any settlements, but some Russian milbloggers and unnamed sources speaking with Western outlets stated that Ukrainian forces liberated several settlements west and northwest of Kherson City, near the Ukrainian bridgehead over the Inhulets River, and south of the Kherson-Dnipropetrovsk Oblast border. The Russian Defense Ministry (MoD), Russian proxies, and some Russian milbloggers denounced the Ukrainian announcement of the counteroffensive as “propaganda.”

Many Russian milbloggers nevertheless reported a wide variety of Ukrainian attacks along the entire line of contact, and the information space will likely become confused for a time due to panic among Russian sources. Russian outlets have also vaguely mentioned evacuations of civilians from Kherson Oblast, but then noted that occupation authorities in Kherson Oblast are calling on residents to seek shelter rather than flee. ISW will report on the Ukrainian counteroffensive in a new section below.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi announced that the IAEA mission to the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) left for the plant on August 29. Grossi specified that he is leading the mission but neither he nor the IAEA specified a timeline for the investigation.

Russian sources continue to make claims likely intended to manipulate public opinion and the IAEA investigation. Several Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces shelled Enerhodar and shared photos allegedly showing the location where Ukrainian forces struck a nuclear fuel storage site on the territory of the ZNPP on August 29. Ukrainian sources reported continued Russian shelling of Enerhodar near the ZNPP. Russian sources claimed on August 29 that Ukrainian forces fired on the Khmelnitsky Nuclear Power Plant deep in western Ukraine and far from the front lines; Ukrainian authorities denied these claims. Russian authorities also alleged that several IAEA members from the current mission will remain at ZNPP permanently, but ISW cannot confirm these reports at this time.

Satellite imagery from August 29 provided by Maxar Technologies shows Russian combat vehicles apparently sheltering under ZNPP infrastructure very close to a reactor vessel.
Key Takeaways

- Ukrainian military officials announced that Ukrainian forces began a counteroffensive operation in Kherson Oblast on August 29.
- International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi announced that the IAEA mission to the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant left for the plant.
- Russian forces conducted limited ground assaults north of Slovyansk, southeast of Siversk, south of Bakhmut, and in western Donetsk Oblast.
- Russian forces continued efforts to advance around Donetsk City.
- Russian forces did not conduct any confirmed ground attacks in northeastern Kharkiv Oblast.
- Russian forces conducted a limited ground assault in northwestern Kherson Oblast.
- Russian federal subjects continued efforts to form new battalions, attract new recruits, and coerce conscripts into signing military contracts.
- Ukrainian partisan activity continues to threaten Russian occupation authorities’ control in occupied territories.
Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of August 29, 2022, 3:00 PM ET

Significant Fighting in the Past 24 Hours
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- 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.
Ukrainian Counteroffensives (Ukrainian efforts to liberate Russian-occupied territories)

Ukrainian military officials announced that Ukrainian forces began a counteroffensive operation in Kherson Oblast on August 29 after severely disrupting Russian ground lines of communication (GLOCs) for weeks. Southern Operational Command Spokesperson Nataliya Gumenyuk stated that Ukrainian forces “began counteroffensive actions in many directions” and have broken through the first line of defense in an unspecified area. The Ukrainian operational group “Kakhovka” stated that Ukrainian forces have cut Russian GLOCs across the Dnipro River in Kherson Oblast and called the situation a “brilliant chance to return [Ukrainian] territories.” The “Kakhovka” group also reported that the Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) 109th Regiment and Russian airborne troops have left their positions in an unspecified area of Kherson Oblast, and Ukrainian wires claimed that these elements withdrew from their positions around Kherson City. The DNR 109th Regiment had previously published an appeal to Russian President Vladimir Putin in late June identifying itself as a forcibly mobilized unit, complaining that it had not been rotated away from the front line for rest, and decrying poor conditions on the frontlines. Ukrainian military officials also released a DNR document dated July 24 that ordered the redeployment of the 109th, 113th, and 125th DNR regiments to Arkhanhelske, Vysokopillya, Zolota Balka, and Davydiv Brid in northwestern Kherson Oblast. “Kakhovka” also shared footage reportedly of a Russian serviceman seeking shelter on the ground amidst heavy artillery shelling while saying that Ukrainian forces have broken the first line of defense on August 29. Ukrainian officials did not discuss the directionality of Ukrainian counteroffensives.

Ukrainian and Russian officials called for civilians to evacuate or seek shelter in western Kherson Oblast on August 28-29. Ukrainian Kherson Oblast officials called on civilians to leave Kherson Oblast to get out of the way of Ukrainian forces and directed those choosing to stay in Kherson Oblast to seek shelter away from Russian military equipment. Occupation authorities of Nova Kakhkovka, where Ukrainian forces have frequently targeted Russian military infrastructure and GLOCS, called on civilians to seek shelter due to extensive Ukrainian strikes on August 28-29. Russian sources reported that Nova Kakhova occupation authorities do not plan to issue evacuation orders. Ukrainian Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov stated that Russian forces evacuated their military hospital in Melitopol on August 29, indicating further fear of intensified Ukrainian activity even in rear occupied areas.

The Russian Defense Ministry (MoD) claimed on the evening of August 29 that the Ukrainian counteroffensive was a limited, failed effort, setting the tone for subsequent discussions of the counteroffensive in the Russian media space. The Russian MoD claimed that Ukrainian forces suffered heavy personnel and equipment losses after trying and failing to advance in three unspecified directions in Kherson Oblast. Deputy Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR) Interior Minister Vitaly Kiselyov claimed that the idea of a grand Ukrainian counteroffensive was propaganda and that Ukrainian forces only attempted a limited assault with two infantry battalions and one tank battalion, suffering heavy casualties in the attempt. Russian milbloggers largely claimed that reports of a Ukrainian counteroffensive were blown up, fake, or likely to fail, claiming that Ukrainian forces have so far lacked the ability to break through Russian defensive lines in past counterattacks and remain unable to do so in new counterattacks. These dismissive statements indicate that the Kremlin aims to maintain the façade of extensive Russian military successes in Ukraine.

Russian and Western sources claimed that Ukrainian forces liberated five settlements during the first day of the counteroffensive, but Ukrainian sources have not announced the liberation of any settlements at the time of this publication. An unnamed military official of an unspecified country told CNN that Ukrainian forces liberated Pravdyne (approximately 34km northwest of Kherson City),
Novodmytrivka, and Tomyna Balka (both about 23km due west of Kherson City). The official also stated that Ukrainian forces liberated Arkhanhelske on the eastern bank of Inhulets River and south of the Kherson-Dnipropetrovsk Oblast border. ISW cannot independently verify CNN’s report and will update its maps if and when more sources confirm the report. The Ukrainian official report about the withdrawal of the 109th regiment that operates in northwestern Kherson Oblast may suggest that Ukrainians have crossed the Inhulets River into Arkhanhelske. Several Russian milbloggers amplified a report from the Telegram-based milblogger Grey Zone (about 276,000 followers) that Ukrainian forces advanced 6km from their bridgehead over the Inhulets River and seized the Sukhyi Stavok settlement (approximately 7km west of Russian GLOCs along the T2207 highway). Ukrainian Former Head of Foreign Intelligence Service Mykola Malomuzh made similar remarks about the liberation of Sukhyi Stavok.

Ukrainian forces also continued to conduct missile strikes on Russian ammunition depots, GLOCs, and strongholds on August 28 and August 29. Beryslav Raion Military Administration Head Volodymyr Litvinov reported that Ukrainian forces struck Russian manpower and equipment concentration point at the Beryslav Machine-Building Plant, resulting in a large fire at the plant. Odesa Oblast Military Administration Spokesperson Serhiy Bratchuk also reported that Ukrainian forces struck a Russian command post near the North Crimean Canal just east of Nova Kakhovka, a Russian river crossing in Lvove (west of Nova Kakhovka along the Dnipro River), and an ammunition depot in Havrylivka (approximately 33km south of the Kherson-Dnipropetrovsk Oblast border). Ukrainian Telegram channels also published footage reportedly showing a strike on the Antonivsky Bridge and a nearby barge. Social media users published footage of reportedly Ukrainian strikes on a Russian ammunition depot in Nova Kakhovka. The Ukrainian Southern Operational Command noted that Ukrainian forces launched eight airstrikes at Russian strongholds and manpower and equipment concentration points along the line of contact on August 28.

Russian forces are continuing efforts to restore their damaged GLOCs over the Dnipro River. Satellite imagery shows that Russian forces are attempting to build a pontoon crossing near the Antonivsky Bridge, which appeared to be halfway finished as of August 27. Geolocated satellite imagery also showed that the Kakhovka Bridge is still out of service with strike holes on the critical junctures of the bridge. Satellite imagery indicated that Russian forces are continuing to move military equipment mostly north toward Kherson City via the pontoon ferry. Satellite imagery showed the movement of 100 Russian military vehicles as of August 25, with few moving south. Such transfer of equipment via ferries is inefficient and vulnerable to further Ukrainian strikes. Russian forces reportedly continue to experience difficulties maintaining other GLOCs to southern Ukraine. Mariupol Mayoral Advisor Petro Andryushchenko stated that Russian logistics efforts relying on Mariupol rail transit will likely falter in the following days due to lack of electricity, damage to station cranes, and flooding that hinders rail operation in Mariupol.

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.

- Russian Main Effort—Eastern Ukraine (comprised of one subordinate and two supporting efforts);
• Russian Subordinate Main Effort—Encirclement of Ukrainian Troops in the Cauldron between Izyum and Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts
• Russian Supporting Effort 1—Kharkiv City
• Russian Supporting Effort 2—Southern Axis
• Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
• Activities in Russian-occupied Areas

Russian Main Effort—Eastern Ukraine

Russian Subordinate Main Effort—Southern Kharkiv, Donetsk, Luhansk Oblasts
(Russian objective: Encircle Ukrainian forces in Eastern Ukraine and capture the entirety of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)

Russian forces conducted limited ground assaults north of Slovyansk on August 29. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces withdrew after attempting offensive operations toward Bohorodychne and Dolyna, 24km and 22km northwest of Slovyansk. Geolocated footage posted on August 28 shows Ukrainian forces in Dolyna, indicating that prior Russian claims of capturing Dolyna were false. Geolocated footage also shows Russian forces shelling Brazhkvivka, 16km southwest of Izyum indicating that Russian forces have pulled back from this settlement to an unknown extent. The Russian Defense Ministry (MoD) claimed that Russian forces struck Slovyansk and Raihorodok, northeast of Slovyansk on the Siverskyi Donets River. Russian forces continued shelling settlements northwest and northeast of Slovyansk.

Russian forces conducted a limited ground attack southeast of Siversk on August 29. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces retreated after trying to advance toward Ivano-Darivka, 14km southeast of Siversk. Russian forces conducted air and tube artillery strikes near Tetyanivka, across the Siverskyi Donets River from Sviatohirsk, indicating that Russian forces likely have not advanced to the west bank of the Siverskyi Donets northwest of Siversk. Russian forces continued firing on Siversk and the surrounding settlements.

Russian forces conducted limited attacks south of Bakhmut on August 29. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian forces’ attempts to advance toward Kodema and Zaitseve south of Bakhmut and east of the Bakhmut-Horlivka highway, likely to try to advance on Bakhmut from the south. The Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) claimed on August 29 that DNR and Russian forces captured Kodema, but there is no evidence that Russian forces have advanced beyond the southeastern part of the settlement. The Russian MoD claimed that Russian forces struck Bakhmut and Konstantynivka, 26km southwest of Bakhmut.

Russian forces continued efforts to advance around Donetsk City on August 29. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces tried and failed to advance towards Pervomaiske and Nevelske to the northwest of Donetsk City and Mariinka to the southwest of Donetsk City. Geolocated footage shows Russian and DNR forces advancing into Kamyanka, 11km northeast of Avdiivka. Additional geolocated footage shows that Ukrainian forces maintain positions on the northwestern outskirts of Pisky, 15km northwest of Donetsk City, and that fighting is ongoing near Pisky. Avdiivka City Military Administration Head Vitaliy Barabash stated that Russians only control one-half of Pisky as of August 29. Russian forces continued firing on Avdiivka and the surrounding settlements.

Russian forces conducted a limited ground assault in western Donetsk Oblast on August 29. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted an unsuccessful ground assault toward...
Pavlivka, 30km southwest of Mariinka.56 Russian forces continued firing on settlements along the line of contact.57
Supporting Effort #1—Kharkiv City (Russian objective: Defend ground lines of communication (GLOCs) to Izyum and prevent Ukrainian forces from reaching the Russian border)

Russian forces did not conduct any confirmed ground attacks in northeastern Kharkiv Oblast on August 29. Geolocated photos posted on August 29 show Rosgvardia Spetsnaz sweeping Udy, approximately 46km north of Kharkiv City, indicating that Russian forces have advanced within this settlement.\(^{58}\) The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces launched an airstrike near Nove, approximately 22km north of Kharkiv City, and continued conducting aerial reconnaissance along the Kharkiv City Axis.\(^{59}\) The Russian Defense Ministry claimed that Russian forces struck Oleksandrivka, southwest of Kharkiv City.\(^{60}\) Russian forces continued to shell Kharkiv City and settlements to the north and northeast.\(^{61}\)
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of August 29, 2022, 3:00 PM ET

Map by George Barros, Kateryna Shtepanenko, Natalia Mikhaleva, and Daniel Meale
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Radius of 25 kilometers around Kharkiv (geodesic distance measurement)

Geolocated footage posted on August 28 shows Russian forces in Udy.

Russian sources claimed that Russian forces approached Vodiane between August 15 and 16.

Russian sources claimed Russian forces took control of Kodema on August 29.

Russian sources claim Russian forces took control of Pavlivka and Vodiane on August 19.

Note: ISW recessed Russian assessed advances around Brakhivka based on a geolocated video published on August 29 showing Russian artillery striking the northwestern outskirts of the settlement.

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Supporting Effort #2—Southern Axis (Russian objective: Defend Kherson and Zaporizhia Oblasts against Ukrainian counterattacks)

Russian forces conducted a limited ground assault in northwestern Kherson Oblast on August 29. Ukrainian sources reported that Russian forces failed to advance from Vysokopillya to Potomkyne in northwestern Kherson Oblast, south of the Kherson-Dnipropetrovsk Oblast border. Russian forces struck Mykolaiv City and the surrounding settlements with Smerch and Uragan MLRS fire. Geolocated footage shows a Russian strike landing near the Inhuletsky bridge in Mykolaiv City over the Inhulets River. Russian forces continued shelling throughout the line of contact.

Russian forces did not conduct any ground assaults in Zaporizhia Oblast and continued to fire artillery and MLRS rockets at Dnipropetrovsk Oblast on August 29. Russian forces continued air, rocket, and tube artillery strikes on settlements throughout the line of contact in Zaporizhia Oblast. Russian forces fired on Nikopol, Marhanets, and Chervonohrihorivka, all on the opposite bank of the Dnipro River from Enerhodar. Russian forces also targeted rear areas west and south of Kryvyi Rih.

Geolocated footage and imagery showed a Russian coastal radar site, possibly an element of a nearby Russian 12th Anti-Aircraft Missile Regiment S-400 battery, on fire overnight on August 28-29. ISW previously reported that Russian air defenses activated in Cape Fiolent on August 28.
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of August 29, 2022, 3:00 PM ET

Russian forces captured Blahodatne on August 22.

Russian forces claimed that Ukrainian forces liberated Sukhyi Stavok on August 29.

Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- 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: 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 Pravdine, Nova Dmytryvka, and Tomyna Balka (northwest of Kherson City) and Arkhangelske (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.
Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts (Russian objective: Expand combat power without conducting general mobilization)

Russian federal subjects (regions) continued to report on the formation, deployment, and training of volunteer units to support the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Republic of Bashkortostan Head Radyi Khabirov announced that the “Shaimuratov” and “Dostavalov” volunteer battalions deployed to Ukraine on August 29. The Republic of Bashkortostan announced recruitment efforts for the volunteer battalions in late May. Head of North Ossetia Sergey Menyailo announced that North Ossetia will form the “Alagir” and “Nogir” volunteer battalions, in addition to the “Alania” Battalion that has been operating in Ukraine. A Russian milblogger reported that the St. Petersburg “Kronstadt,” “Neva,” and “Pavlovsk” battalions; Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) “Bootur” battalion; and 200 Cossacks in the “Don” volunteer detachment began training with volunteers that returned from fighting in Donbas on August 17.

Russian federal subjects are aggressively advertising military contract service to generate more recruits. Arkhangelsk Oblast Governor Aleksandr Tsybulskiy announced that the Arkhangelsk Center for Patriotic Education of Youth, alongside other Russian veterans’ organizations, created a 10-day preparatory course to prepare volunteers for military service. The Radio Free Europe/Free Liberty branch in northwestern Russia Sever.Realii stated that it is assumed that those who pass the training will sign contracts with the Russian Armed Forces. Local Novosibirsk outlets shared an image of an ad on the side of a bus in Novosibirsk for contract service with Wagner Group.

Russian military units are reportedly coercing conscripts concluding their mandatory service into signing military contracts. Russian outlet Ridus reported that conscripts and their relatives have been complaining to a local military recruitment center in Tver Oblast that an unspecified military unit under its jurisdiction is coercing conscripts into signing military contracts via psychological pressure. The military unit has been reportedly locking conscripts in a room without open windows or water to inflict psychological pressure and to coerce the conscripts to sign military contracts. The Tver Oblast military recruitment center denied the allegations.

Russian outlet Vedomosti reported that Rosgvardia detained two accomplices of “Right Sector” and Ukrainian forces in occupied Luhansk Oblast, further confirming ISW’s previous assessment that Russian authorities are deploying security forces to occupied Luhansk Oblast. ISW previously assessed that Russian authorities are sending more security forces to Luhansk Oblast likely in response to waning support for the war and growing unwillingness to fight among Luhansk residents.

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)

Intensifying Ukrainian partisan activity in occupied territories continues to threaten tenuous Russian political control in occupied Ukraine. Likely Ukrainian partisans in western Kherson Oblast shot and killed Russian collaborator and former Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada (parliament) deputy Oleksii Kovalov in occupied Hola Prystan (15km south of Kherson City) on August 28. Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov also reported four powerful explosions that destroyed unspecified Russian military targets in northern Melitopol on August 29. Footage taken in Mariupol overnight on August 28–29 shows several far-off flashes of light and the apparent sound of automatic fire punctuated by larger explosions, which Fedorov suggested was a Russian attempt to shoot down a single Ukrainian drone.
Mariupol, Donetsk Oblast, and Luhansk Oblast officials warned on August 29 of similarly intensifying partisan movements in occupied Mariupol, Donetsk Oblast, and Luhansk Oblast.\textsuperscript{85}

Russian occupation authorities will likely intensify measures to crack down on intensifying partisan activity amid fears of a Ukrainian counteroffensive in southern Ukraine. Advisor to the Head of Kherson Oblast Serhiy Khlan warned Ukrainians in Hola Prystan to expect larger Russian filtration efforts as part of a wider crackdown on Ukrainian partisan activities.\textsuperscript{86}

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.