

Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, August 20

Kateryna Stepanenko, Grace Mappes, and Frederick W. Kagan
August 20, 9:30 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.

Russian occupation officials in Crimea reported another drone attack on the Russian Black Sea Fleet Headquarters in Sevastopol on August 20. Russian-appointed Governor of Sevastopol Mikhail Razvozhaev claimed that Russian forces were unable to shoot down a drone, resulting in the drone hitting the roof of the Black Sea Fleet headquarters.¹ Razvozhaev then retracted his initial statement and claimed that a fleet air defense post shot down the drone, which landed on the roof and caught fire.² Social media footage showed a loud explosion and a cloud of smoke around the headquarters, and the drone likely detonated rather than being shot down. Some OSINT accounts have identified the drone as a commercially-available “Skyeye 5000mm Pro UAV.”³ Ukrainian officials did not claim responsibility for the attack as of the time of this publication. ISW has previously reported that Crimean occupation officials have obliquely accused Ukraine of orchestrating a drone attack on the headquarters on July 31 during Russia’s Navy Day.⁴

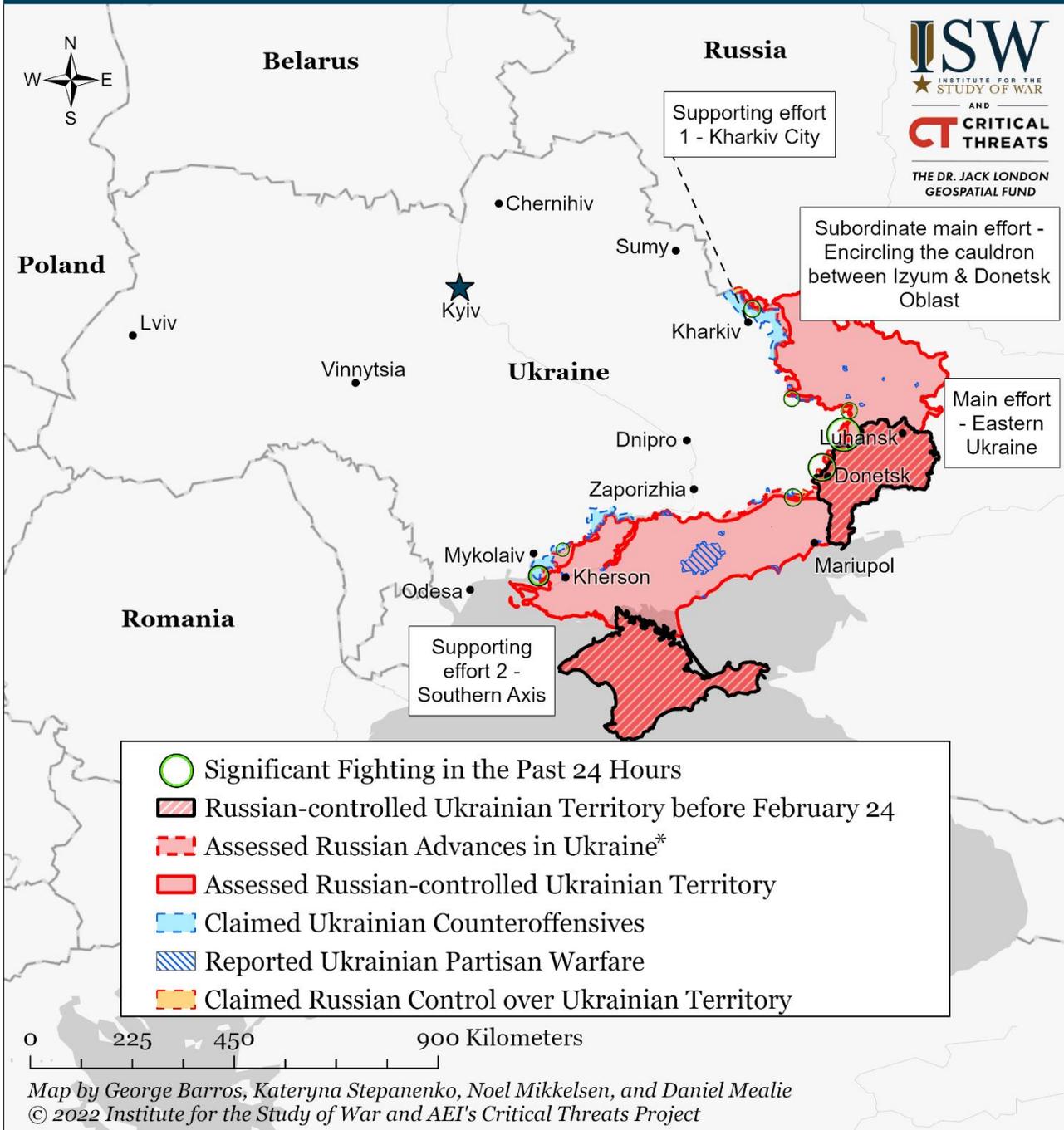
Russian occupation officials in Crimea are likely considering strengthening security on the peninsula following the attacks on Russian military infrastructure, and such measures may draw Russian security forces away from the front lines. Razvozhaev stated that all security services in Sevastopol are operating in “high alert” mode and controlling all entrances to the city.⁵ Razvozhaev claimed that Sevastopol residents are asking the occupation administration to increase patrols in the city and establish new checkpoints, returning the peninsula to a security posture such as it had after Russia initially seized it in 2014. ISW has previously assessed that Russian forces have been using all types of security forces, including Rosgvardia, as combat forces and will likely need to divert some of these forces from the front lines and from occupation security duties elsewhere to defend occupied Crimea.⁶ Russia’s continued failures to stop attacks against occupied Crimea may also spark public discontent within Russian society. One Russian milblogger criticized Russian forces for not using more electronic warfare (EW) equipment following the first drone attack on July 31.⁷ Social media footage already shows many Russians waiting in traffic jams to leave Crimea and go to Russia, which may indicate growing public concern for the effectiveness of Russian security measures.⁸

Key Takeaways

- **Russian occupation officials in Crimea reported another drone attack on the Russian Black Sea Fleet Headquarters in Sevastopol and are likely considering strengthening security on the peninsula.**
- **Russian forces conducted unsuccessful assaults across the Eastern Axis.**
- **Russian forces attempted limited, failed assaults north of Kharkiv City.**
- **Russian forces failed to advance after several assaults northwest of Kherson City and east of Mykolaiv City.**
- **Ukrainian forces continued to strike Russian ammunition depots and positions in Kherson and Zaporizhia Oblasts.**
- **Russian and proxy forces are continuing mobilization efforts, including forced mobilization in occupied territories and advertising campaigns.**

- **Russian occupation authorities continued coercive measures to force civilian cooperation with the occupation administrations.**
- **Conditions in occupied territories continued to deteriorate, indicating ineffective governance.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of August 20, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



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

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.

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

Main Effort—Eastern Ukraine

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 continued to launch unsuccessful assaults southwest of Izyum on August 20. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attempted to advance to Novo Dmytrivka, Virnopillya, and Kurulka, approximately 25 km southwest of Izyum.⁹ Geolocated footage showed Ukrainian forces striking Russian military equipment approximately 12 km northeast of Novo Dmytrivka on an unspecified date.¹⁰ Russian forces also continued to shell Asiivka, Husarivka, Chepil, and Protopopivka northwest of Izyum and launched an airstrike on Zalyman on the Kharkiv City-Izyum line.¹¹

Russian forces attempted several unsuccessful ground assaults on Siversk from the southeast on August 20. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces launched unsuccessful offensive operations from Spirne to Ivano-Daryivka and from Mykolaivka to Vyimka, all southeast of Siversk.¹² Russian forces also launched an airstrike on Ivano-Daryivka and shelled settlements around Siversk.¹³ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces fired artillery near Pryshyb and Rozolivka, on the western bank of Siverskyi Donets River and just south of Sviatohirsk.¹⁴ ISW previously reported that Russian milbloggers recessed Russian territorial control from Pryshyb on their maps.¹⁵

Russian forces continued to focus on advancing northeast and south of Bakhmut on August 20 but did not make territorial gains in the area. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces unsuccessfully attacked Bakhmut, Soledar, and Bakhmutske (northeast of Bakhmut).¹⁶ Russian forces reportedly failed to advance to Zaytseve and Kodema, approximately 9 and 13 kilometers southeast of Bakhmut, respectively.¹⁷ Russian forces also conducted unsuccessful attacks in the direction of Horlivka-Mayorsk, about 21 km due southwest of Bakhmut.¹⁸ The Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) Militia claimed that the DNR “Kalmious” Brigade is supporting Russian forces advancing north of Horlivka with artillery fire but did not make any territorial claims.¹⁹ The DNR Militia also claimed that the DNR’s 3rd Brigade seized Ukrainian positions around Zaytseve, but ISW cannot independently

verify the DNR's claims.²⁰ The UK Defense Ministry noted that Russian forces have approached the outskirts of Bakhmut but have not broken into Bakhmut's defensive areas.²¹

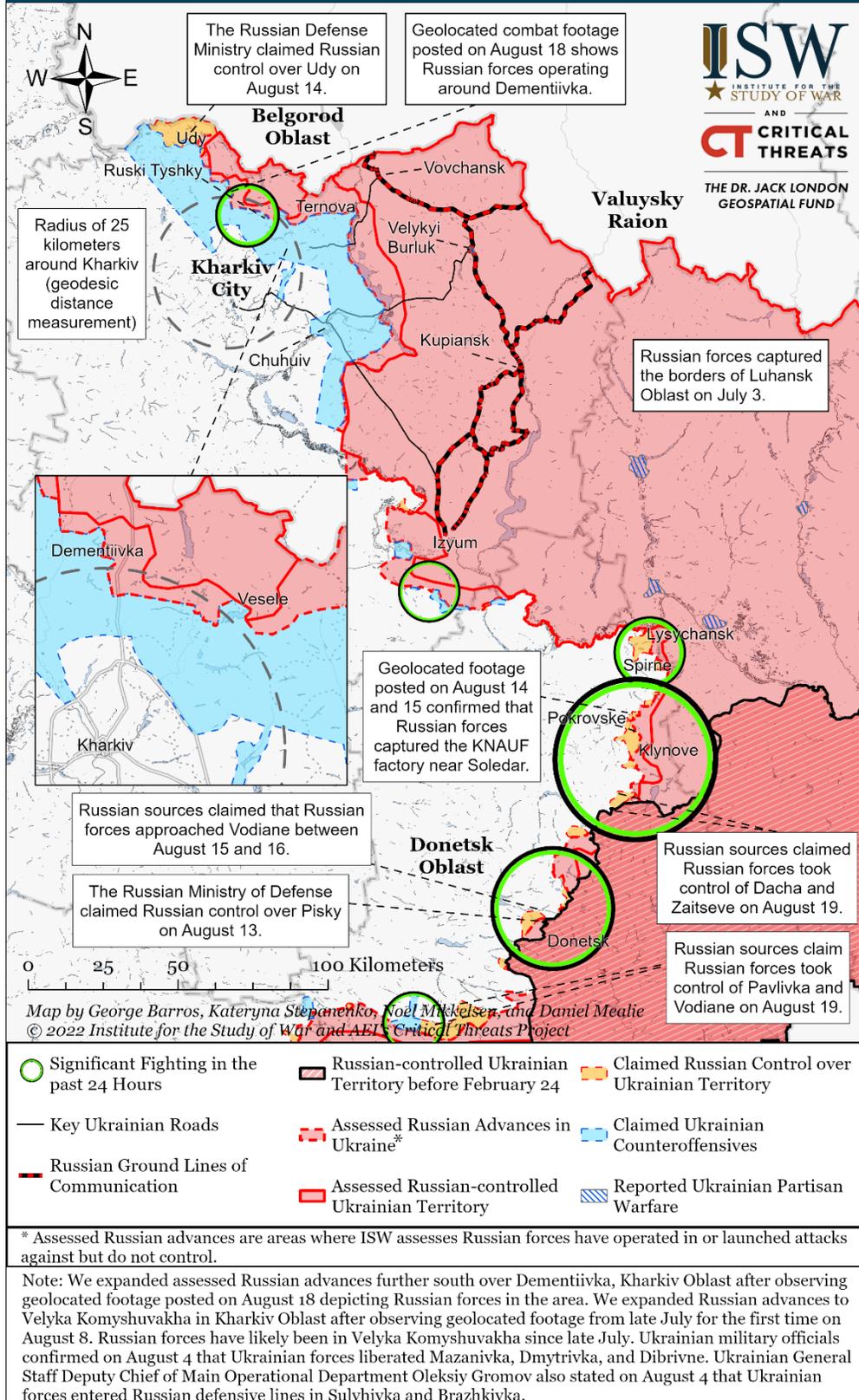
Russian forces conducted unsuccessful attacks northwest and west of Donetsk City on August 20. The Ukrainian General Staff stated that Russian forces launched unsuccessful assaults on Opytne, Pisky, and Pervomaiske, all northwest of Donetsk City.²² Deputy Commander of the DNR's 1st Army Corps Eduard Basurin claimed that Russian forces are fighting for Krasnohorivka and Tonenke, 19 km west and 18 km northwest of Donetsk City, respectively.²³ Geolocated footage also showed Ukrainian forces striking an advancing Russian unit in the southern part of Mariinka, about 22 km west of Donetsk City.²⁴ Geolocated footage also showed that Russian forces are attempting to advance to Mariinka from its northeastern outskirts.²⁵

Russian forces continued fighting near the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast administrative border on August 20. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces carried out failed assaults on Zolota Nyva, about 20 km east of the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast administrative border but were unsuccessful and withdrew.²⁶

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 attempted limited ground assaults north of Kharkiv City on August 20, all of which failed. Official Ukrainian sources reported that Russian forces attempted assaults northeast of Kharkiv City near Borshchova but failed and retreated.²⁷ The Derhachi City Council reported that Russian forces also conducted a failed assault on Pytomnyk, north of Kharkiv City.²⁸ Geolocated footage published on August 18 shows Russian forces operating around Dementiivka, indicating that Russian forces have only made marginal territorial gains toward Dementiivka north of Kharkiv City despite prolonged efforts to seize the settlement.²⁹ The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces conducted airstrikes near Ruski Tyshky north of Kharkiv City and Zolochiv northwest of Kharkiv City.³⁰ Ukrainian Kharkiv Oblast Administration Head Oleg Synegebov reported that Russian forces conducted missile strikes on Kharkiv City and throughout Kharkiv Oblast overnight on August 19-20, damaging critical infrastructure.³¹ Russian forces continued shelling Kharkiv City and surrounding settlements.³²

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of August 20, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



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

Russian forces launched several assaults northwest of Kherson City and east of Mykolaiv City on August 20. Ukrainian military officials reported that a Russian platoon unsuccessfully attempted to advance to Tavriiske, about 38 km northwest of Kherson City.³³ Two Russian amphibious assault detachments also failed to advance to Partyzanske, approximately 44 km east of Mykolaiv City along the T1508 highway that goes to the Russian strongpoint in Snihurivka.³⁴ Geolocated footage also showed a small Ukrainian detachment raid an unspecified building in northern Snihurivka on an unspecified date, which could indicate that Russian positions shifted south within the settlement.³⁵ Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces launched an Iskander missile at Voznesensk (about 81 km northwest of Mykolaiv City) hitting a residential building and continued striking Mykolaiv City with S-300 missiles.³⁶

Russian occupation authorities again accused Ukraine of shelling the Zaporizhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP), while Russian forces continued to shell settlements in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast across the Dnipro River. Russian-backed Zaporizhia Oblast Military-Civilian Administration Head Vladimir Rogov claimed that Ukrainian forces shelled in the vicinity of one of the administrative buildings at ZNPP using Western-provided military equipment on August 20.³⁷ ISW cannot independently verify if shelling occurred on August 20. Editor and correspondent for *NPR Science* Geoff Brumfiel concluded that available satellite imagery from August 19 will not suffice to make assessments of whether or not shelling occurred without footage from the ground.³⁸ Russian occupation authorities have control of the narrative given that they have access to the occupied ZNPP and have notably failed to present clear evidence to support their claims. Ukrainian local officials reported that Russian forces continued to fire Grad multiple launch rocket system (MLRS) rockets at Marhanets and tube artillery at Nikopol.³⁹ Ukrainian forces also shot down four Russian Kalibr cruise missiles over Dnipropetrovsk Oblast.⁴⁰

Ukrainian forces continued to strike Russian ammunition depots and positions in Kherson and Zaporizhia oblasts. Advisor to the Kherson Oblast Administration Serhiy Khlan reported explosions in Chornobaivka (about 7 km northwest of Kherson City), and social media footage showed three distinct smoke columns reportedly at the Chornobaivka airfield.⁴¹ Khlan also reported that there were two Ukrainian strikes on unspecified targets near Nova Kakhovka and Beryslav on August 19.⁴² The Ukrainian Southern Operational Command reported that Ukrainian aviation launched 11 airstrikes on Russian positions along the line of contact in Kherson Oblast.⁴³ Geolocated footage showed Ukrainian artillery striking Russian military equipment in northwestern Kherson Oblast.⁴⁴ Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov stated that Ukrainian forces struck a Russian military base in Melitopol, noting that Russian forces did not intercept the missile because the main part of the Russian air-defense units has redeployed from Melitopol to Kherson Oblast.⁴⁵ Fedorov added that Russian forces fired a missile at Melitopol from the southern direction as a response to Ukrainian strikes against Russian military objects, although there is no evidence to support this assertion.⁴⁶ Kremlin-sponsored media claimed that Russian air-defense systems activated overnight and accused Ukrainian forces of striking civilian infrastructure.⁴⁷ Social media footage shows reported explosions in Melitopol, but the point of impact is unclear from the footage.⁴⁸

Russian forces remain unable to restore a bridge crossing over the Dnipro River in Kherson Oblast. A Russian military correspondent showed the severe damage to the Kakhovka Bridge that Ukrainian strikes have caused and claimed that Russians used the bridge as an alternative route for “humanitarian help” after Ukrainian strikes against the Antonivsky Bridge.⁴⁹ The military correspondent claimed that the bridge is repairable and partially operational, but Khlan stated that Russian repair efforts have been failing in recent days.⁵⁰

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kherson and Mykolaiv as of August 20, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



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

Russian proxy republics in Donbas are continuing covert mobilization efforts but are struggling to generate sufficient manpower to create combat-ready units. Ukraine's Resistance Center reported that Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) authorities are actively tracking down eligible men for military service, including by exchanging food for information on the whereabouts of eligible men and searching for eligible men near schools and kindergartens.⁵¹ Ukrainian Luhansk Oblast Administration Head Serhiy Haidai claimed that LNR authorities are even mobilizing men with chronic illnesses due to a shortage of eligible men.⁵² Ukraine's Resistance Center reported that the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) and LNR are sending mobilized men to the front lines without adequate ammunition and equipment and called on civilians to flee territories under occupation or under risk of occupation to avoid mobilization.⁵³ Deputy Military Commissar of LNR Alexei Kurchenko denied reports of forced mobilization and claimed that LNR is recruiting volunteers for contract service.⁵⁴

Russian and occupation authorities continue relentless advertising campaigns to recruit for contract volunteer military service. The Yekaterinburg military selection center reportedly placed advertisements at bus stops for four-to-twelve-month military contracts with 200,000-ruble (\$3,361) monthly salaries.⁵⁵ A local Yekaterinburg outlet also reported on August 18 that a billboard advertising for "Orkestr W" appeared in the city and that the listed phone number is connected to Wagner Group.⁵⁶ The Ukrainian Mariupol City Administration posted screenshots on August 20 of text messages to Mariupol residents advertising Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) military contracts, reportedly offering 200,000-300,000-ruble (\$3,361-5,042) monthly salaries.⁵⁷

Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov announced the formation of a second police regiment for the protection of oil and gas facilities in the Chechen Republic.⁵⁸ Rosgvardia North Caucasian District Commander Lieutenant General Alibek Delimkhanov stated that this new police regiment will have 2,000 personnel and that over 600 candidates have already applied.⁵⁹ Kadyrov stated that Chechen authorities have reorganized both police regiments to be combat-ready.⁶⁰ Kadyrov stated that having a new, combat-ready police regiment will expand Chechen forces' ability to protect critical infrastructure in Chechnya.⁶¹

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 continued measures to coerce or force Ukrainian civilians into cooperating with occupation administrations in occupied areas. Ukraine's Resistance Center reported that Russian occupation authorities in Kherson Oblast are threatening to confiscate property from businesses that do not submit tax documents to the occupation administration.⁶² Ukraine's Resistance Center also reported that letters to these businesses threatened that occupation authorities will seize and transfer these businesses to other owners if they do not register by September 1.⁶³ Ukrainian Advisor to the Kherson Oblast Administration Serhiy Khlan stated that the Kherson Oblast occupation administration is demanding that Kherson City residents write letters explaining any delinquent rent or utility payments despite prior occupation administration assurances that it will forgive all debt.⁶⁴ Ukrainian Kherson Oblast Administration Head Yaroslav Yanushevych stated that occupation officials are threatening parents who do not send their children to Russian schools with fines starting at 148,000 rubles and property seizures.⁶⁵

Conditions in occupied territories continue to deteriorate. Khlan said on August 19 that Russian occupation authorities are restricting passage through the border between Kherson Oblast and Crimea and that weather conditions forced the closure of the Vasylivka checkpoint 45 km south of Zaporizhia City, preventing Ukrainians in occupied territories from evacuating.⁶⁶ The Ukrainian Mariupol City Administration reported on August 20 that there are constant firearm incidents in Mariupol and that shootings are becoming a new way of solving problems within the city, indicating poor governance in occupied Donetsk Oblast.⁶⁷ Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) officials announced that the Verkhnyokalmiuska Water Filtration Station in Donetsk City ceased operations overnight on August 19-20 due to low water levels and will not resume operations for at least three days, exacerbating existing struggles to provide clean water to residents of Donetsk City and the surrounding areas.⁶⁸

Kharkiv Oblast occupation authorities began passportization efforts on August 20. Kharkiv Oblast occupation head in Kupyansk Maxim Gubin reported that the first ten residents of Kupyansk received Russian passports on August 20.⁶⁹ The announcement came just one day after Kharkiv Oblast occupation head Vitaly Ganchev formally appointed former Krasnodar Mayor Andrey Alekseenko as Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Kharkiv occupation administration.⁷⁰

Ukrainian Mariupol Mayoral Advisor Petro Andryushenko reported on August 20 that unknown actors, likely Ukrainian partisans, unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate Russian collaborator and occupation Mayor Konstantin Ivashenko.⁷¹

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://t.me/razvozhaev/901>

² <https://t.me/razvozhaev/905>; <https://t.me/razvozhaev/906>

³ https://t.me/chp_sevastopol/5783; <https://twitter.com/OAlexanderDK/status/1560907055195738112>;

<https://twitter.com/OAlexanderDK/status/1560906590324129792>;

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⁴ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-july-31>

⁵ <https://t.me/razvozhaev/907>

⁶ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-6>

⁷ <https://t.me/vysokygovorit/9147>

⁸ https://twitter.com/Cyx_5/status/1560983789546995712

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<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02aB4eLa2xbE4NAJ7gTbnL1ru6b9mz64ynwcA9uNVD3MmFvkCdQXE9r5MZQJyBeHpil>; <https://t.me/syneubov/3958>;

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¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/Danspiun/status/1560722371648126978>;

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¹⁵ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-16>

16

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¹⁹ https://t.me/nm_dnr/8810

²⁰ https://t.me/nm_dnr/8809

²¹ <https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1560876620000493571>

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<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02aB4eLa2xbE4NAJ7gTbnL1ru6b9mz64ynwcA9uNVD3MmFvkCdQXE9r5MZQJyBeHpil>

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²³ <https://iz dot ru/1382191/2022-08-19/basurin-zaiavil-o-boiakh-za-naselennye-punkty-krasnogorovka-i-tonenkoe-v-dnr>

²⁴ <https://twitter.com/Arvelleg1/status/1560940868730851328;>

<https://twitter.com/PaulJawin/status/1560936966308462594;>

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²⁵ <https://twitter.com/PaulJawin/status/1560848627970498560;>

<https://twitter.com/PauliusZaleckas/status/1560969169553727488>

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²⁸ https://t.me/der_rada/2373

²⁹ [https://www.facebook.com/130TRO/videos/1198271077629225/;](https://www.facebook.com/130TRO/videos/1198271077629225/) <https://twitter.com/PaulJawin/status/1560302173719875586;>

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³⁰

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³¹ <https://t.me/synegubov/3958>

³² <https://t.me/synegubov/3958;>

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³³ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=789314002199314>

³⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=789314002199314;>

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³⁵ <https://twitter.com/blinzka/status/1561005869160087553>

³⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2312176388932637;> <https://t.me/mykolaivskaODA/2199;>

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<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2312176388932637;> <https://t.me/mykolaivskaODA/2196;>

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³⁷ <https://www dot interfax.ru/world/857542>

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<https://t.me/dnipropetrovskaODA/1614>

⁴¹ <https://twitter.com/pmakela1/status/1561025181564428290>;
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⁴² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g10DGfDDsYI>

⁴³ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=789314002199314>

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