

**Olivia Gibson, Grace Mappes, Jennie Olmsted, Christina Harward, Anna Harvey, and
Frederick W. Kagan with Nate Trotter**

August 17, 2025, 9:45 pm ET

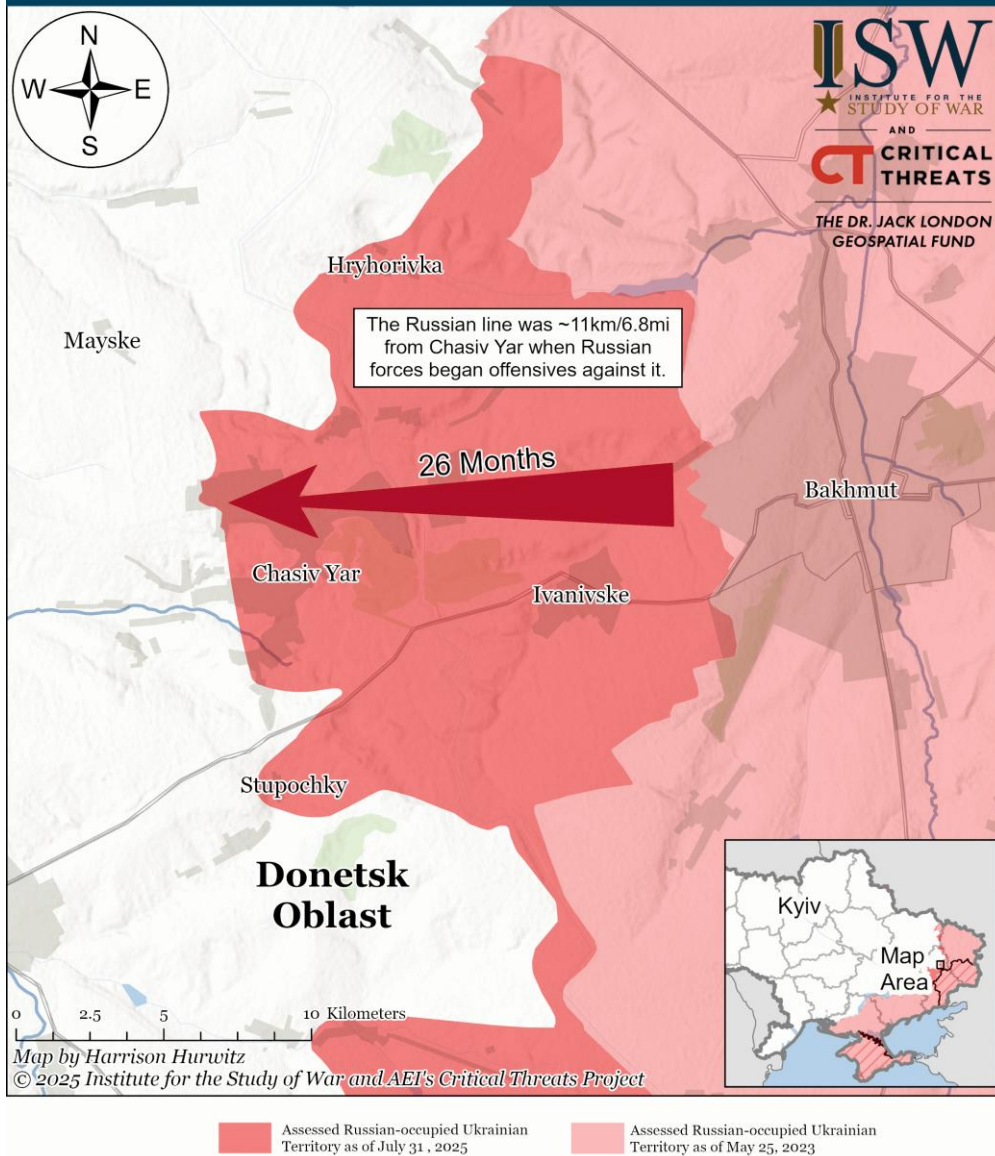
Note: The data cut-off for this product was 12:15pm ET on August 17. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the August 18 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

US officials acknowledged that Putin has yet to demonstrate a willingness to offer the concessions necessary to reach a peace agreement. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio stated in an interview with *Face the Nation* on August 17 that both Russia and Ukraine need to make concessions in order to achieve a peace agreement.[1] Rubio noted that any agreement in which only one side makes concessions would be a surrender, not a peace agreement. Rubio stated that Russian President Vladimir Putin offered "a couple" of unspecified concessions at the August 15 Alaska summit but did not offer enough concessions to reach a just peace agreement immediately. Rubio reiterated Trump's August 13 statement that the United States is not in a position to accept or reject a deal on behalf of Ukraine and that Ukraine must decide for itself what conditions it will accept for a peace deal.[2] Rubio stated that the Trump administration wants a deal that allows Ukraine to rebuild its country and to "be assured" a Russian invasion "never happens again." Rubio stated that harsher US sanctions against Russia would end the peace talks and continue the war for at least another year to year and a half. ISW continues to assess that Putin has not moderated his original war aims throughout the full-scale invasion and has offered no indication that he intends to change or compromise on these aims in any peace talks with Ukraine.[3]

Russia will be unable to seize the remainder of Donetsk Oblast rapidly through force as Russian forces have failed to do for over a decade. Russia could only rapidly seize all of Donetsk Oblast if Ukraine concedes to Putin's demand and withdraws from the remainder of the oblast. Axios reported on August 16, citing a source with direct knowledge of Trump's August 16 call with Zelensky and European leaders, that Trump stated that Putin told him that Russia could seize all of Donetsk Oblast if Putin so desired.[4] Putin's claim that Russian forces will inevitably seize all of Donetsk Oblast if the war continues is false. The Russian campaign to seize all of Donetsk Oblast has been ongoing since Russia's first invasion in 2014 and remains incomplete. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky noted on August 17 that Russia has tried and failed to seize all of Donetsk Oblast in the past 12 years of fighting in eastern Ukraine.[5] Russian forces have been bogged down in campaigns to seize multiple towns and cities in Donetsk Oblast since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, and Russian forces are still struggling to achieve the objectives of several of these campaigns today. Seizing the remainder of Donetsk Oblast will very likely take Russian forces multiple years to complete after several difficult campaigns.

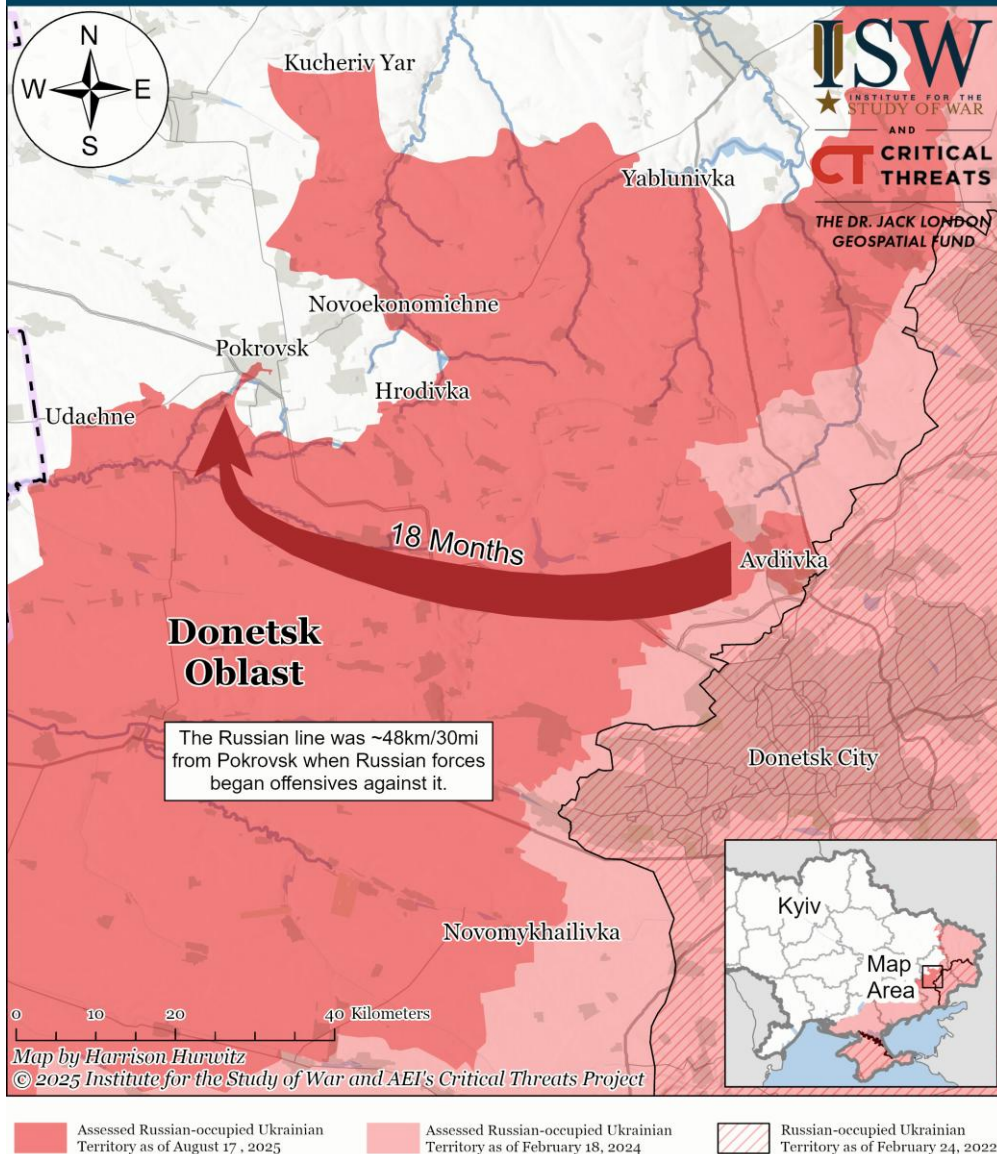
Russian forces have historically thrown themselves into costly campaigns to seize fortified or urban areas in eastern Ukraine, a reality far from Putin's claims of rapid advances. Russian forces undertook four notable campaigns in eastern Ukraine in 2024 into 2025 that illustrate how difficult it will likely be for Russian forces to seize the remainder of Donetsk Oblast through force.[6] Russian forces first began efforts to retake Kupyansk, Kharkiv Oblast in October 2023 and have conducted multiple separate campaigns aimed at seizing the town in the nearly two years since.[7] Russian forces are currently struggling to complete the encirclement or envelopment of Kupyansk from the northwest and have not yet seized the settlement despite 22 months of offensive operations. Russian forces began a dedicated effort to seize Toretsk, Donetsk Oblast in mid-June 2024.[8] Russian forces started this effort not far from the positions that Russian forces held prior to the start of the full-scale invasion in 2022. Russian forces seized Toretsk by August 1, 2025, taking 14 months to advance about 6.4 miles from the southeastern outskirts of Toretsk to the northwestern outskirts of Toretsk.[9]

Russian Forces Took Over Two Years and Two Months to Seize Almost All of Chasiv Yar



The Russian campaign for Chasiv Yar, Donetsk Oblast began in May 2023 after Russian forces seized Bakhmut (east of Chasiv Yar), and Russian forces intensified efforts to seize Chasiv Yar in April 2024.[10] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces completed the seizure of Chasiv Yar on July 31, 2025, although ISW has yet to observe evidence that Russian forces have seized the entirety of the settlement.[11] It has taken Russian forces 26 months to advance about 6.8 miles (roughly 11 kilometers) from western Bakhmut to the western edge of Chasiv Yar.

Russian Forces Have Been Trying to Seize Pokrovsk Since February 18, 2024



Russian forces began efforts to seize Pokrovsk, Donetsk Oblast in February 2024 after the seizure of Avdiivka and have dedicated multiple efforts to seizing Pokrovsk through frontal assaults, envelopment, or encirclement – all of which have thus far yet to be successful after more than 18 months.[12]

Recent Russian advances northeast of Pokrovsk do not indicate that Russia can rapidly seize fortified or urban areas. Russian forces took open areas without any significantly fortified settlements during their recent penetration northeast of Pokrovsk near Dobropillya.[13] Russian forces still have not demonstrated any capability to rapidly seize large, fortified positions, however, as the

campaigns for Kupyansk, Chasiv Yar, Toretsk, and Pokrovsk have shown.[14] Russian forces are struggling to supply and reinforce their tactical penetration near Dobropillya and defend against Ukrainian counterattacks on the flanks —suggesting that Russian forces may not be able to consolidate their positions and exploit this penetration. The Russian effort for Dobropillya is just one part of Russia's broader 18-month effort to seize Pokrovsk, moreover. Russia's efforts near Dobropillya result from the failure of Russia's initial effort to encircle Pokrovsk from the southwest and northeast, causing the Russian command to try a deeper envelopment further northeast and north.

None of these many-months-long efforts to take Kupyansk, Chasiv Yar, Toretsk, and Pokrovsk have been at the scale needed to seize all of Ukraine's fortress belt – Ukraine's highly fortified, main defensive line in Donetsk Oblast that consists of cities that are significantly larger in terms of size and population.[15] Russian efforts to seize the rest of Donetsk Oblast by force would take several years given the number of fortified urban areas Russian forces must overcome to reach the Donetsk Oblast administrative boundaries.

Russia continues to deny Ukraine's sovereignty and to demand the right to dictate Ukrainian domestic affairs. The *New York Times* (NYT), Reuters, and BBC, citing anonymous European officials, reported on August 17 that Putin asked Trump on August 15 for guarantees that Russian would become an official language again in parts or all of Ukraine and that Ukraine would end its "persecution" of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate (UOC MP).[16] The UOC MP is not an independent religious organization, but rather is the Kremlin-controlled Russian Orthodox Church's (ROC) subordinate element in Ukraine.[17] The ROC is notably an element of Russia's hybrid warfare toolkit, particularly in the Kremlin's efforts to promote Kremlin narratives and Russian nationalist ideology to sustain and expand Russia's influence in former Soviet states.[18] The ROC has also advocated for the codification of a Russian state ideology premised on the idea that Ukraine should not exist.[19] Putin's demands regarding the Russian language and the protection of the ROC's activities in Ukraine via the UOC MP deny Ukraine the right to establish its own domestic laws as a sovereign and independent state.

Putin's demands that Ukraine make Russian an official language again and allow the UOC MP to operate in Ukraine are similar to Russian demands to exert control over Ukraine's domestic affairs in the 2015 Minsk accords. The Minsk II agreement required Ukraine to amend its constitution to give more autonomy to the Russia-controlled Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republic (DNR and LNR) and expand their role in Ukraine's politics.[20]

Russian President Vladimir Putin's insistence that any peace agreement must address Russia's perceived "root causes" of the war will make it difficult to reach a peace agreement as rapidly as Trump desires given the complexity of the "root causes." Putin reiterated his ongoing demand that any peace agreement must eliminate the "root causes" of the war during the joint press conference at the Alaska summit on August 15.[21] Putin stated on August 1 that the "main thing" in the peace process is the eradication of the war's "root causes," which Putin described as issues related to Russia's security, the use of the Russian language in Ukraine, and the conditions for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate (UOC MP) – the ROC's arm in Ukraine.[22] Putin's demands to formalize Russian an official language in Ukraine and protect the ROC in Ukraine

come from Russia's demands of Ukraine the Kremlin made in the Spring 2022 Istanbul negotiations. Russia demanded in Spring 2022 during the Istanbul negotiations that Ukraine "prevent restrictions and discrimination" against the UOC MP and restore all of the church's rights.[23] Russia also demanded in Spring 2022 that Ukraine guarantee the Russian language as an official language.[24] Marco Rubio responded to a question regarding Putin's demands at the Alaska summit during an interview with Face the Nation on August 17, stating that Putin's demands to address the alleged "root causes" allude to long historical complaints that the Kremlin has repeatedly invoked.[25] Rubio stated that the United States is not going to focus on the "root causes" but rather on halting the fighting.

Russia's "root causes" extend beyond Ukraine and eliminating them would require substantial negotiations with NATO. Russian officials have defined one of the "root causes" of the war as NATO's alleged violation of commitments not to expand into eastern Europe and along Russia's borders in the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s.[26] Russia issued a broad set of ultimatums to the United States in December 2021 demanding that NATO commit to not accepting Ukraine or any other countries as new members; not deploy any military forces to states that became NATO members after May 1997; refrain from military activity in Ukraine, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia; and refrain from deploying intermediate-range missiles within range of Russian territory.[27] The 2021 ultimatums also demanded that the United States commit to upholding the ban on NATO enlargement and refrain from deploying weapons in Europe. Putin's demand that any peace agreement eliminate the "root causes" of the war in Ukraine would require a lengthy, complicated negotiation process not only with Ukraine but also with NATO and the United States. Russia's demands about the "root causes" are demands for massive NATO concessions that would jeopardize NATO's integrity and European and US security more broadly.

Putin's offer of a Russian law forbidding a future invasion of Ukraine is not credible because Russia has already twice broken previous binding international commitments to not invade and as Putin has shown that he can freely change Russian law as he desires. US Special Envoy for the Middle East Steve Witkoff stated on August 17 that Putin agreed during the Alaska summit that Russia would "legislatively enshrine" promises that Russia would not invade any other territory in Ukraine or elsewhere in Europe – likely referring to the creation of new Russian legislation or amendments to the Russian Constitution.[28] Putin has extensively disregarded and amended the Russian Constitution to support his political objectives, as evidenced by the Kremlin's manipulating of the 2020 vote for a constitutional amendment to allow Putin to run for president again in 2024 and potentially remain in power until 2036.[29] Putin's two invasions of Ukraine also broke Russia's obligations under the 1994 Budapest Memorandum to respect the independence and sovereignty of Ukraine within Ukraine's borders at the time.[30] Russia has continually violated international agreements prohibiting aggression against Ukraine, including the Minsk agreements.[31] Putin's promise to codify Russian promises against future aggression into Russian legislation or the Russian Constitution is neither credible nor a concession, and there is no evidence to suggest that Putin would abide by any such law forbidding a renewed invasion of invade Ukraine after concluding a peace agreement.

The details about Ukrainian security guarantees to which Putin may have agreed remain unclear at this time, but the Kremlin may be attempting to resurrect its demands about security guarantors from April 2022 that would have neutered such guarantees. *Axios*

stated on August 16 that sources briefed on Trump's call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and European leaders after the Trump-Putin meeting in Alaska stated that Putin said he was willing to discuss security guarantees for Ukraine and mentioned the People's Republic of China (PRC) as one of the possible guarantors.[32] Witkoff stated on August 17 that Trump and Putin came to an agreement that the United States and Europe could "effectively offer Article 5-like language" as a security guarantee for Ukraine against future renewed Russian aggression – referring to NATO's collective defense clause.[33] Putin's reported suggestion that the PRC could be a security guarantor mirrors Russia's proposed peace settlement in Istanbul in April 2022. The April 2022 proposed treaty listed the PRC, several Western states, and Russia, as the security guarantors for Ukraine.[34] Russia demanded in the proposal that guarantor states provide Ukraine with aid in the event of a future attack **only after all guarantor states had agreed to such a decision**. The PRC is a close Russian ally that has significantly helped the Russian war effort and defense industrial base (DIB), and the PRC would not be a neutral guarantor.[35] Russia's involvement in the guarantee would make it meaningless. The parameters of the security guarantees for Ukraine that Putin is reportedly willing to accept are unclear. Any future peace settlement that includes stipulations similar to the demands that Russia made in April 2022 requiring unity among guarantor states would enable the PRC (or Russia, if Russia is one of them) to veto any decisions to help Ukraine in the event of another Russian invasion.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky arrived in Brussels on August 17 to meet with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and to participate in a Coalition of the Willing teleconference.[36] The teleconference aimed to coordinate Ukraine's and Europe's positions before Zelensky's visit to the White House on August 18. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, Italian President Giorgia Meloni, Finnish President Alexander Stubb, French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, NATO General Secretary Mark Rutte, and Von der Leyen announced that they will accompany Zelensky during his meeting with Trump.[37]

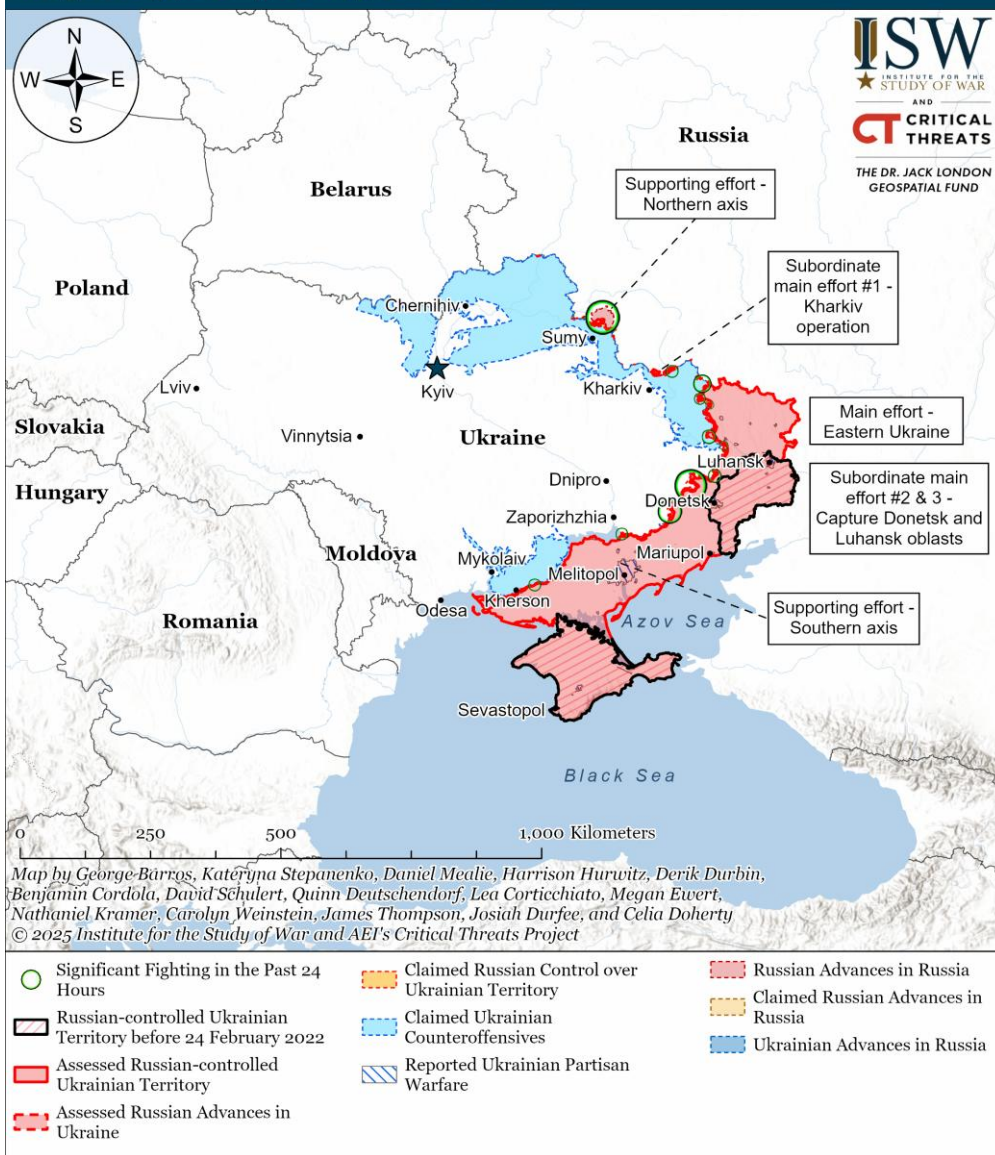
Key Takeaways:

- **US officials acknowledged that Putin has yet to demonstrate a willingness to offer the concessions necessary to reach a peace agreement.**
- **Russia will be unable to seize the remainder of Donetsk Oblast rapidly through force as Russian forces have failed to do for over a decade. Russia could only rapidly seize all of Donetsk Oblast if Ukraine concedes to Putin's demand and withdraws from the remainder of the oblast.**
- **Russian forces have historically thrown themselves into costly campaigns to seize fortified or urban areas in eastern Ukraine, a reality far from Putin's claims of rapid advances.**
- **Recent Russian advances northeast of Pokrovsk do not indicate that Russia can rapidly seize fortified or urban areas.**
- **Russia continues to deny Ukraine's sovereignty and to demand the right to dictate Ukrainian domestic affairs.**

- **Russian President Vladimir Putin's insistence that any peace agreement must address Russia's perceived "root causes" of the war will make it difficult to reach a peace agreement as rapidly as Trump desires given the complexity of the "root causes."**
- **Russia's "root causes" extend beyond Ukraine and eliminating them would require substantial negotiations with NATO.**
- **Putin's offer of a Russian law forbidding a future invasion of Ukraine is not credible because Russia has already twice broken previous binding international commitments to not invade and as Putin has shown that he can freely change Russian law as he desires.**
- **The details about Ukrainian security guarantees to which Putin may have agreed remain unclear at this time, but the Kremlin may be attempting to resurrect its demands about security guarantors from April 2022 that would have neutered such guarantees.**
- **Ukrainian forces recently advanced in northern Sumy Oblast and near Toretsk. Russian forces recently advanced near Pokrovsk.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Russo-Ukrainian War

August 17, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



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 Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

- Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation
- Russian Supporting Effort – Northern Axis

- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of three subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia's proxies in Donbas, and possibly advance into Dnipropetrovsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis
- Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign
- Significant Activity in Belarus

Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation

Limited fighting continued in unspecified areas of Kursk Oblast on August 16 and 17.[38]

A Russian milblogger reportedly affiliated with the Russian Northern Grouping of Forces claimed on August 17 that two companies of the Russian 346th Motorized Rifle Regiment (Mobilization Reserve) are operating near Tetkino (southwest of Glushkovo) and that the number of Russian soldiers in the unit who are deserting is increasing.[39]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 1427th Motorized Rifle Regiment (formed during 2022 partial reserve call up) are reportedly operating near Tetkino.[40]

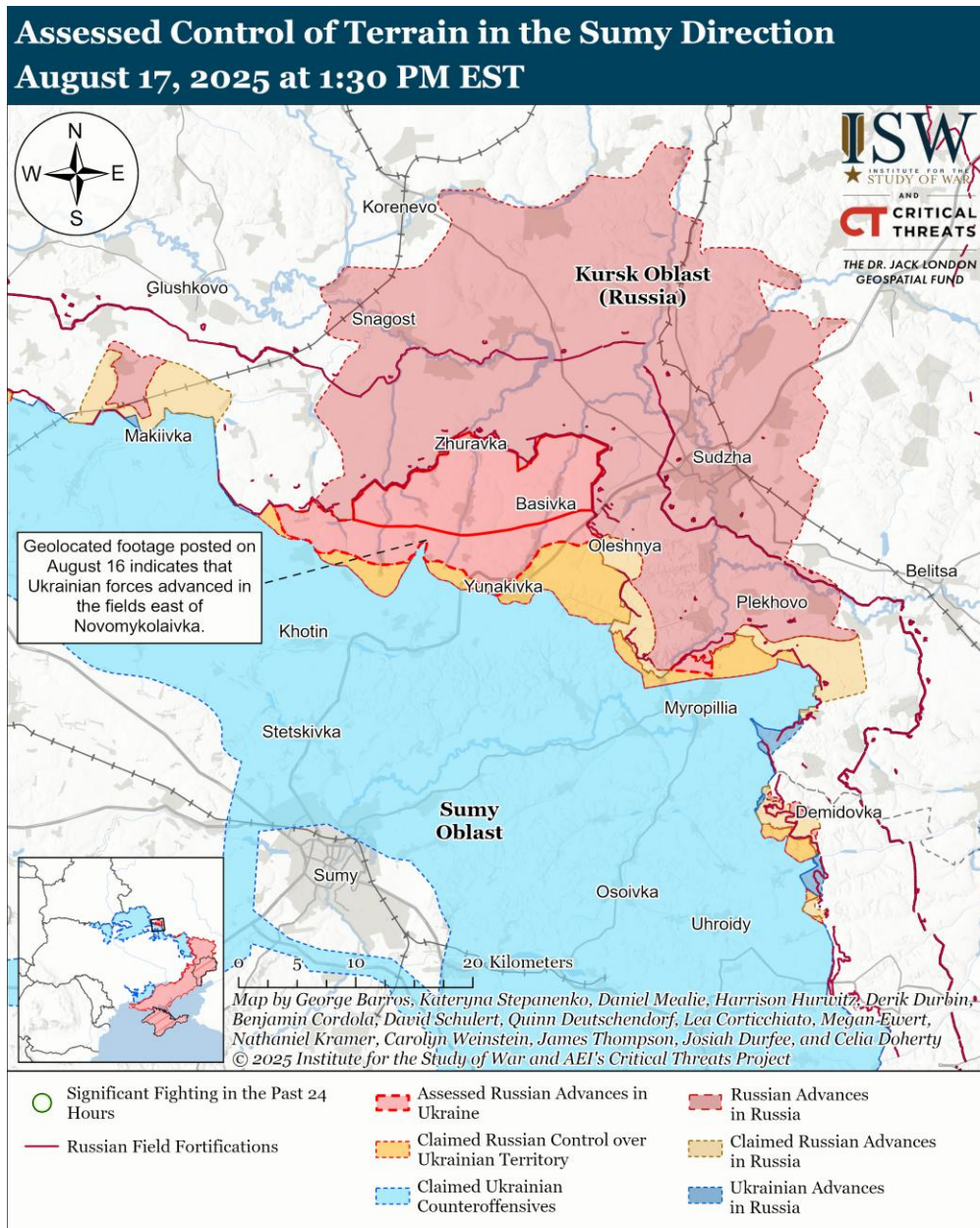
Ukrainian forces conducted a drone strike in Kursk Oblast that severely wounded the Russian Northern Group of Forces Deputy Commander. Ukraine's Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported on August 17 that Ukrainian forces struck a Russian column on an unspecified sector of the 38K-040 Rylsk-Khomutovka highway and seriously wounded Russian Northern Group of Forces Deputy Commander Lieutenant General Esedulla Abachev.[41] The GUR reported that Abachev required an arm and leg amputation after the strike. Geolocated footage published on August 17 shows at least three damaged and burned Russian transport vehicles along the highway south of Zhuryatino (just north of Rylsk).[42]

Ukrainian forces conducted a drone strike against a Russian logistics hub in Voronezh Oblast. A GUR source reported to Ukrainian broadcaster Suspilne and Ukrainian Ministry of Defense's (MoD) news agency ArmyInform that the GUR, Ukrainian State Border Guard Service, and other Ukrainian forces conducted a drone strike against the Lisky railway station, disrupting rail traffic and damaging the rail connection[43] The GUR source stated that the Lisky railway station is a critical railway hub that supplies Russian forces in occupied Ukraine and that the strike disrupted the supply of Russian ammunition and personnel. Geolocated footage published on August 16 shows a fire at the Lisky railway station in Voronezh Oblast.[44] Voronezh Oblast Governor Aleksandr Gusev claimed that Russian air defense downed at least six drones and that drone debris damaged a power line at a railway station.[45] The Russian Federal Passenger Company claimed that drone debris at the Lisky railway

station delayed 14 trains.[46] Russian opposition outlet Astra published footage on August 17 showing a drone strike and subsequent explosion near the Lisky railway station.[47]

Russian Supporting Effort – Northern Axis (Russian objective: Create defensible buffer zones in northern Ukraine along the international border and approach to within tube artillery range of Sumy City)

Ukrainian forces recently advanced in the Sumy direction.



Assessed Ukrainian advances: Geolocated footage published on August 16 indicates that Ukrainian forces recently advanced near Novomykolaivka (north of Sumy City).[48]

Unconfirmed claims: The Ukrainian General Staff reported on August 17 that Ukrainian forces advanced near Yablunivka (northeast of Sumy City).[49]

Russian forces attacked north of Sumy City near Oleksiivka, Novokostyantynivka, and Varachnye and northeast of Sumy City near Yunakivka on August 16 and 17.[50] Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Sadky (northeast of Sumy City) and Novokostyantynivka.[51]

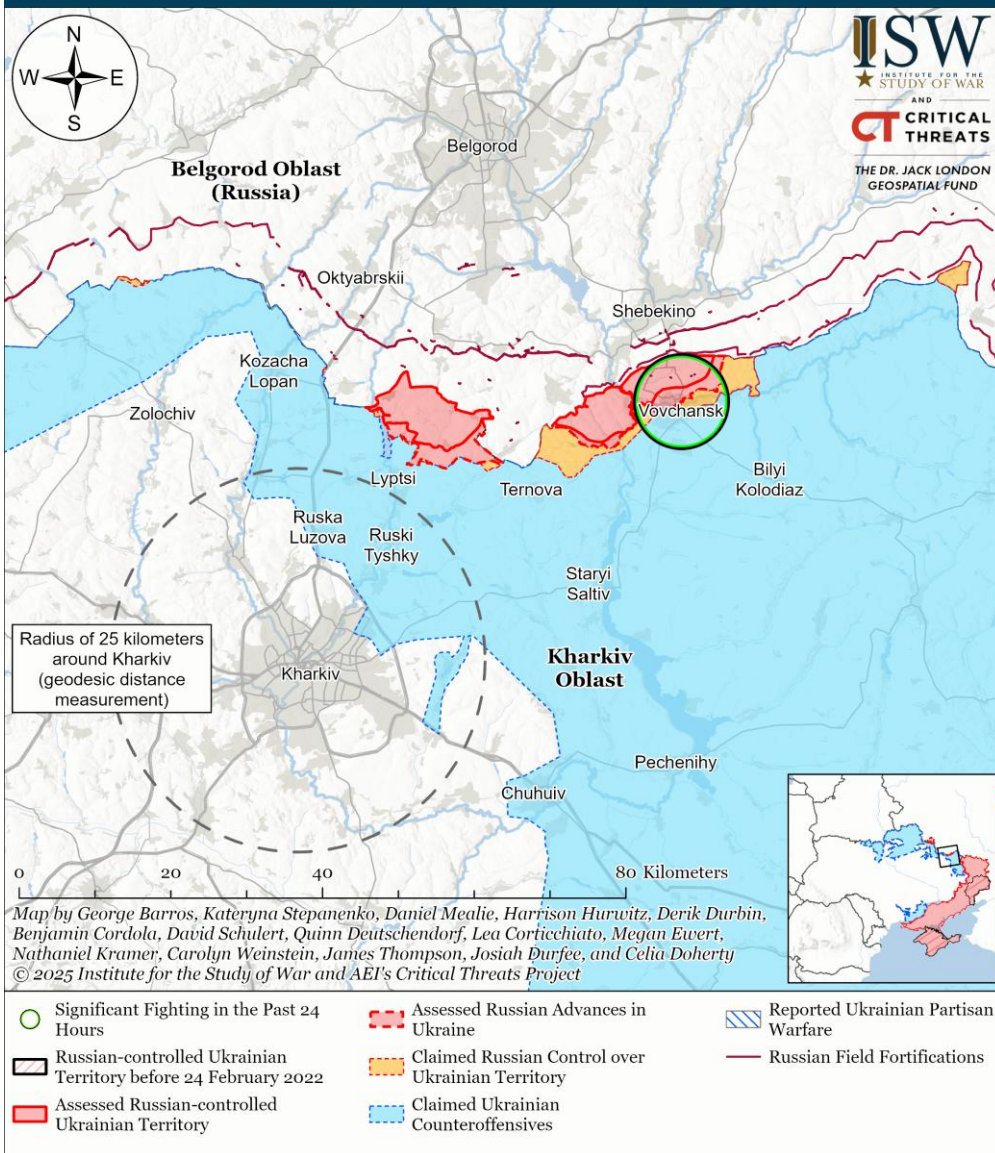
Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 83rd Separate Airborne (VDV) Brigade are reportedly operating near Sadky.[52] Elements of the 106th VDV Division, including of its 137th VDV Regiment, are reportedly operating in the Sumy direction.[53]

Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Kharkiv Oblast (Russian objective: Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City)

Russian forces continued offensive operations in northern Kharkiv Oblast on August 17 but did not make confirmed advances.

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kharkiv Direction August 17, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST

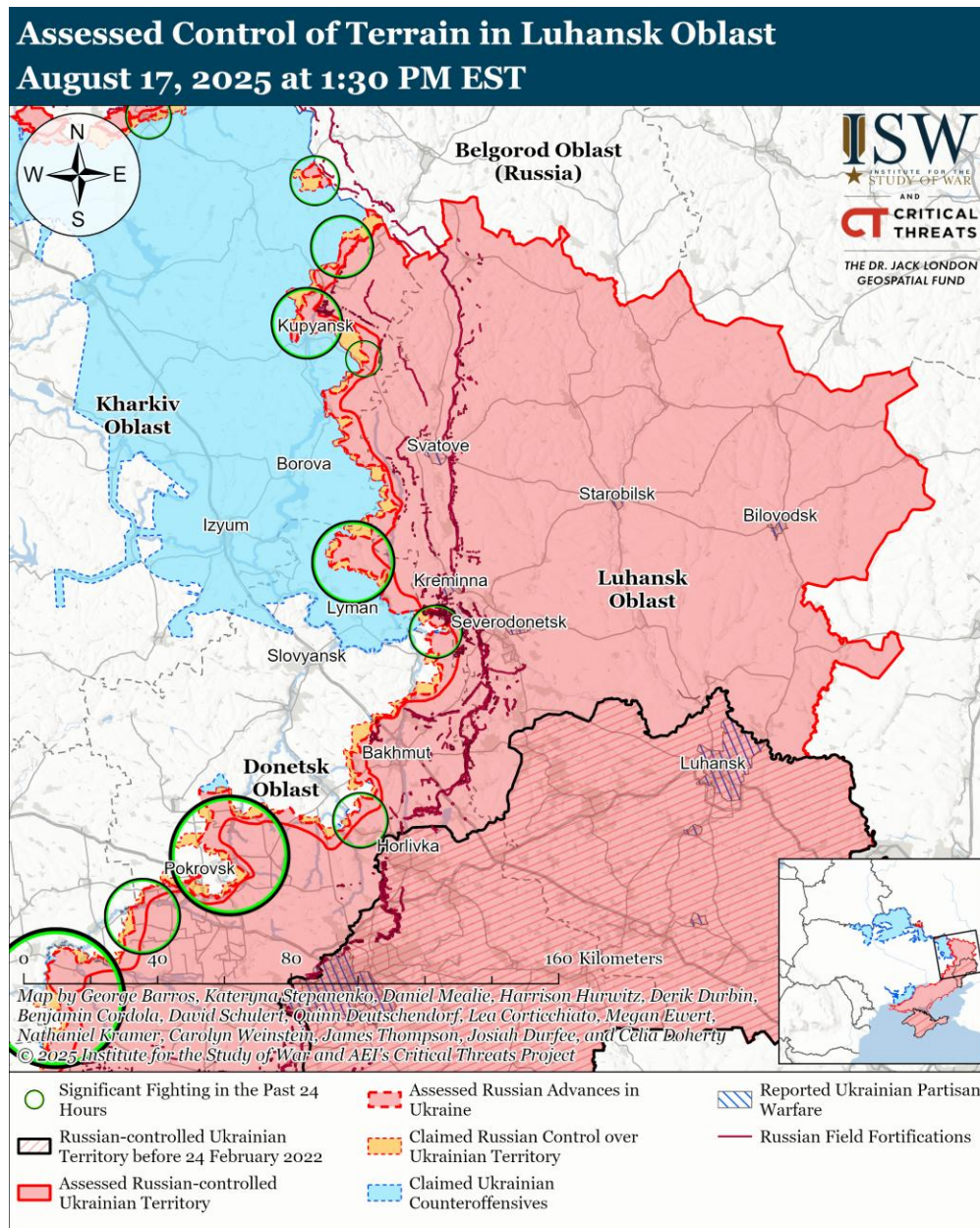


Unconfirmed claims: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced toward Tykhe and west of Synelnykove (both northeast of Kharkiv City) on August 16 and 17.[54]

Russian forces attacked northeast of Kharkiv City near Vovchansk, Vovchanski Khutory, and Synelnykove on August 16 and 17.[55] A Russian milblogger reportedly affiliated with the Russian Northern Grouping of Forces claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Vovchanski Khutory and Synelnykove.[56]

Russian forces attacked northeast of Velykyi Burluk near Ambarne on August 17 but did not advance.[57]

Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)



Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Kupyansk direction on August 17 but did not advance.

Russian forces attacked near Kupyansk itself; west of Kupyansk near Sobolivka; north of Kupyansk near Kindrashivka, Holubivka and Zapadne; northeast of Kupyansk near Krasne Pershe and Kamyanka; east of Kupyansk near Petropavlivka; and southeast of Kupyansk near Stepova Novoselivka on August 16 and 17.[58]

The head of unmanned systems of a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Kupyansk direction reported on August 17 that Russian forces have recently become more active in the area.[59] The head noted that Russian forces are attacking in small infantry groups as part of efforts to seize Kupyansk. A non-commissioned officer (NCO) in a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Kupyansk direction reported that small Russian sabotage and reconnaissance groups of three to five soldiers are trying to infiltrate Ukrainian positions in areas such as Kivsharkivka (southeast of Kupyansk).[60]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 352nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (11th Army Corps [AC], Leningrad Military District [LMD]) reportedly continue to operate near Stepova Novoselivka.[61] Drone operators of the 27th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Guards Tank Army [GTA], Moscow Military District [MMD]) reportedly continue to operate in the Kupyansk direction.[62]

Russian forces continued offensive operations southeast of Borova near Hrekivka on August 17 but did not advance.[63]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Lyman direction on August 17 but did not make any confirmed advances.

Unconfirmed claims: Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced south of Kolodyazi (north of Lyman) and Dibrova (east of Lyman).[64]

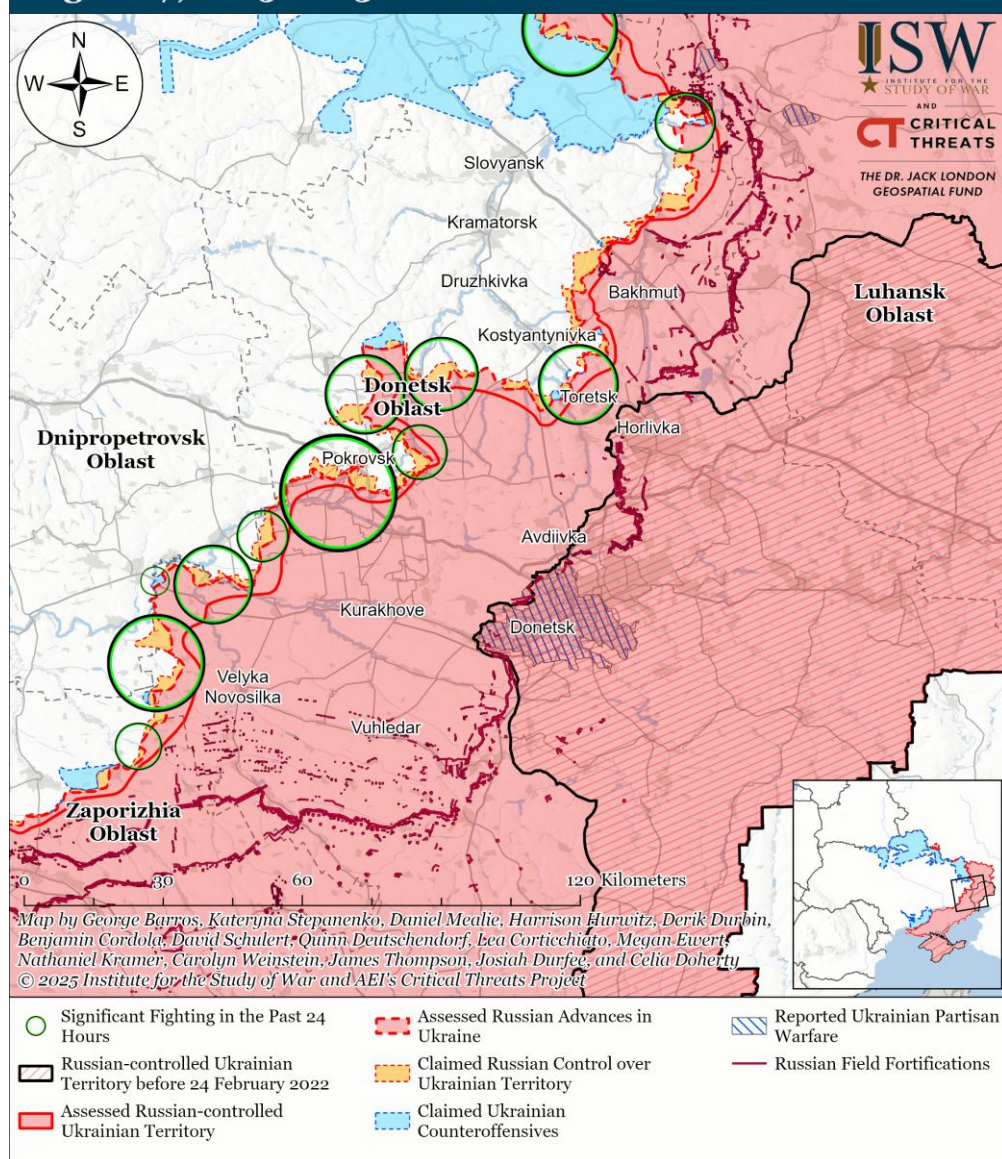
Russian forces attacked northwest of Lyman near Shandryholove and Serednie; north of Lyman near Ridkodub, Karpivka, Zelena Dolyna, and Kolodyazi and toward Stavky; northeast of Lyman near Zarichne; and southeast of Lyman in the Serebryanske forest area on August 16 and 17.[65]

A servicemember of a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Lyman direction reported on August 17 that Russian forces are attacking largely with sabotage and reconnaissance groups in an effort to reach the Ukrainian rear.[66] The servicemember noted that drone operators accompany the sabotage and reconnaissance groups. The servicemember reported that Russian forces are using light vehicles to bring supplies to frontline positions but noted that Russian servicemembers sometimes must transport supplies on foot up to 30 kilometers. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces conducted a first-person view (FPV) drone strike against a transformer substation in Lyman, disrupting power supply in southern Lyman and complicating Ukrainian logistics.[67]

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 16th Spetsnaz Brigade (Russian General Staff's Main Directorate [GRU]) are reportedly striking Ukrainian positions near Vovchii Yar (northwest of Lyman).[68]

Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia's proxies in Donbas, and possibly advance into Dnipropetrovsk Oblast)

Assessed Control of Terrain in Donetsk Oblast August 17, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Siversk direction on August 17 but did not advance.

Russian milbloggers credited elements of the Russian 7th Motorized Rifle Brigade (3rd Combined Arms Army [CAA], formerly 2nd Luhansk People's Republic Army Corps [LNR AC], Southern Military District [SMD]) with seizing Serebryanka (northeast of Siversk).[69] ISW assessed that Russian forces seized Serebryanka as of August 16.[70]

Russian forces attacked northeast of Siversk near Hryhorivka and Serebryanka and southwest of Siversk near Fedorivka on August 16 and 17.[71]

Ukrainian 11th AC Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Dmytro Zaporozhets reported that Russian forces have increased the number of assaults and artillery and air strikes in the Siversk direction and are attacking with a large number of personnel, armored vehicles, and motorcycles.[72] Zaporozhets stated that Russian forces have so far failed to achieve their Summer 2025 task of gaining a foothold on the outskirts of Siversk. Zaporozhets stated that Russian forces are accumulating troops at the Lysychansk Oil Refinery in occupied Verkhokamyanske (east of Siversk) and will likely conduct mass assaults with equipment by the end of August 2025. Zaporozhets added that it is still unclear how many pieces of equipment Russian forces have accumulated at the refinery but that Russian forces will definitely use motorcycles in future large-scale assaults.

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 85th Motorized Rifle Brigade (3rd CAA, SMD) are reportedly operating in the Soledar (Siversk) direction.[73]

Neither Ukrainian nor Russian forces reported ground activity in the Chasiv Yar direction on August 17.

Ukrainian forces recently advanced in the Toretsk direction.

Assessed Ukrainian advances: Geolocated footage published on August 16 indicates that Ukrainian forces recently marginally advanced southeast of Nelipivka (northwest of Toretsk).[74]

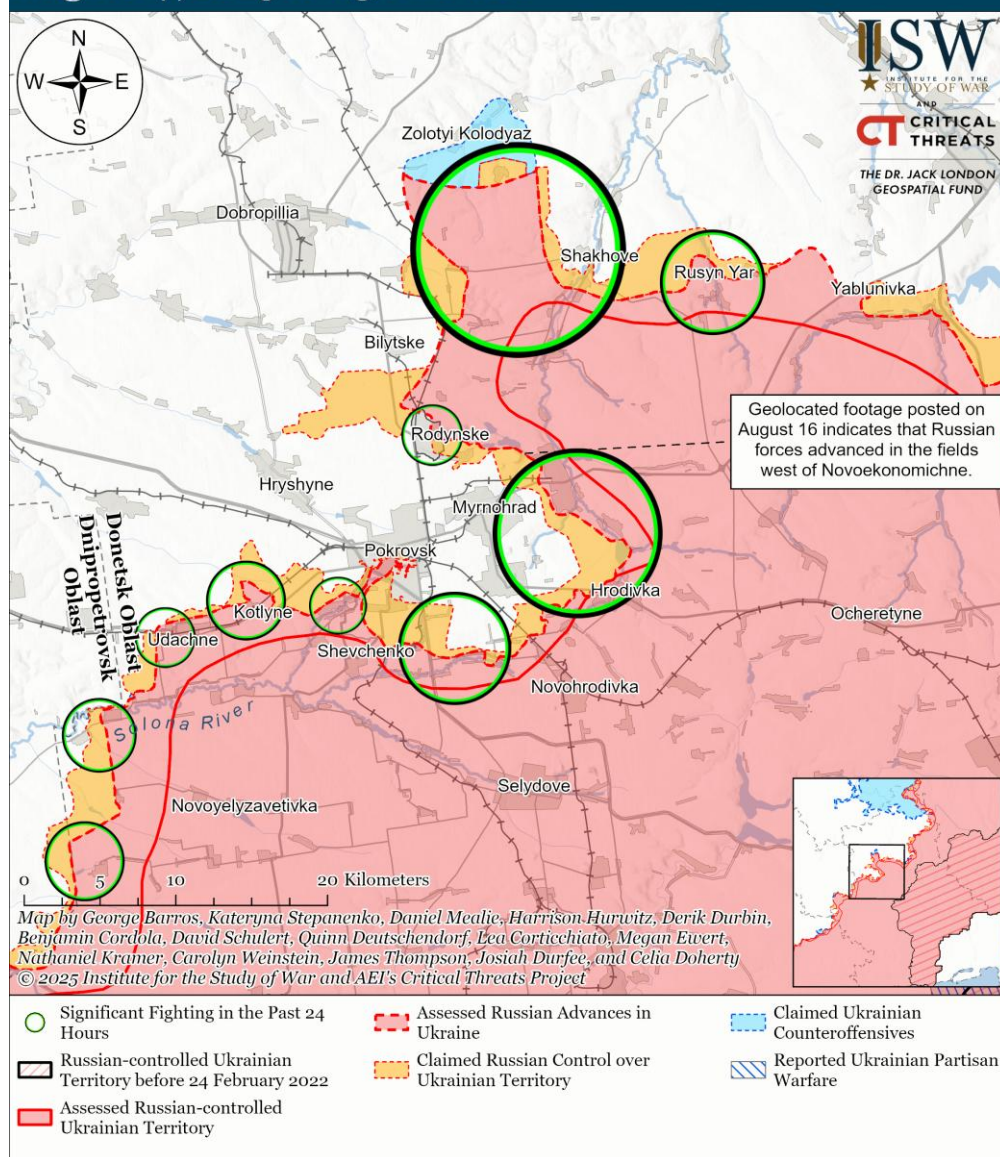
Russian forces attacked near Toretsk itself; north of Toretsk near Dyliivka and Oleksandro-Shulytne; northwest of Toretsk near Pleshchiivka, Poltavka, Kleban Byk, and Katerynivka; and west of Toretsk near Shcherbynivka on August 16 and 17.[75] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Shcherbynivka.[76]

A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces conducted a Geran-2 drone strike against Raiske (northwest of Toretsk).[77]

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 103rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA, SMD) and artillery elements of the 238th Artillery Brigade (8th CAA) are reportedly operating near Kleban Byk.[78] Elements of the 1194th Motorized Rifle Regiment (reportedly of the 7th Military Base, 49th CAA, SMD) are reportedly striking Ukrainian positions near Nelipivka.[79]

Russian forces recently advanced in the Pokrovsk direction.

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Pokrovsk Direction August 17, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on August 16 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced west of Novoekonomichne (northeast of Pokrovsk).[80]

Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces seized Kucheriv Yar (northeast of Pokrovsk and Dobropillya).[81]

Russian forces conducted offensive operations near Pokrovsk itself; northeast of Pokrovsk near Nove Shakhove, Zapovidne, Novoekonomichne, and Volodymyrivka; north of Pokrovsk near Rodynske; east of Pokrovsk near Promin and Myrnohrad; southeast of Pokrovsk near Lysivka; south of Pokrovsk near Novoukrainka and Chunyshyne; and southwest of Pokrovsk near Troyanda, Leontovychi, Zvirove, Kotlyne, and Udachne and toward Molodetske on August 16 and 17.[82]

A Ukrainian reserve officer noted that the intensity of the Russian assaults that initially infiltrated Ukrainian positions east and northeast of Dobropillya is not sustainable and that Russian force quality, attrition, fatigue, and increased operational tempo will limit how long Russian forces can maintain their current pace in the area.[83] A non-commissioned officer (NCO) of a drone platoon operating in the Pokrovsk direction stated that Russian forces are intensifying their use of modified fiber optic drones that can wait in standby mode "for a long time" for Ukrainian equipment targets to appear.[84] The NCO stated that Russian forces have modified drones to extend the amount of time they can stay in the air, allowing Russian forces to conduct reconnaissance longer.[85]

Ukrainian Donetsk Oblast Police stated that Russian forces conducted a Geran-2 drone strike against Svyatohorivka (just west of Dobropillya), killing two civilians.[86] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces conducted Geran-2 and glide bomb strikes against Bilozerske (north of Dobropillya).[87]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 114th Motorized Rifle Brigade (51st CAA, formerly 1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] AC, SMD) and drone operators of the 16th Spetsnaz Brigade (Russian General Staff's Main Directorate [GRU]) are reportedly operating in the Pokrovsk direction.[88] Drone operators of the 80th Sparta Reconnaissance Battalion (51st CAA) are reportedly operating near Myrnohrad.[89]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Novopavlivka direction on August 17 but did not advance.

Russian forces continued ground attacks toward Novopavlivka itself; northeast of Novopavlivka near Muravka; southeast of Novopavlivka near Horikhove; south of Novopavlivka toward Filya; and southwest of Novopavlivka near Tovste and Novokhatske on August 16 and 17.[90]

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 69th Separate Cover Brigade (35th CAA, Eastern Military District [EMD]) and 57th Motorized Rifle Brigade (5th CAA, EMD) are reportedly operating near Zaporizhzhia (south of Novopavlivka).[91]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Velykomykhailivka direction on August 17 but did not advance.

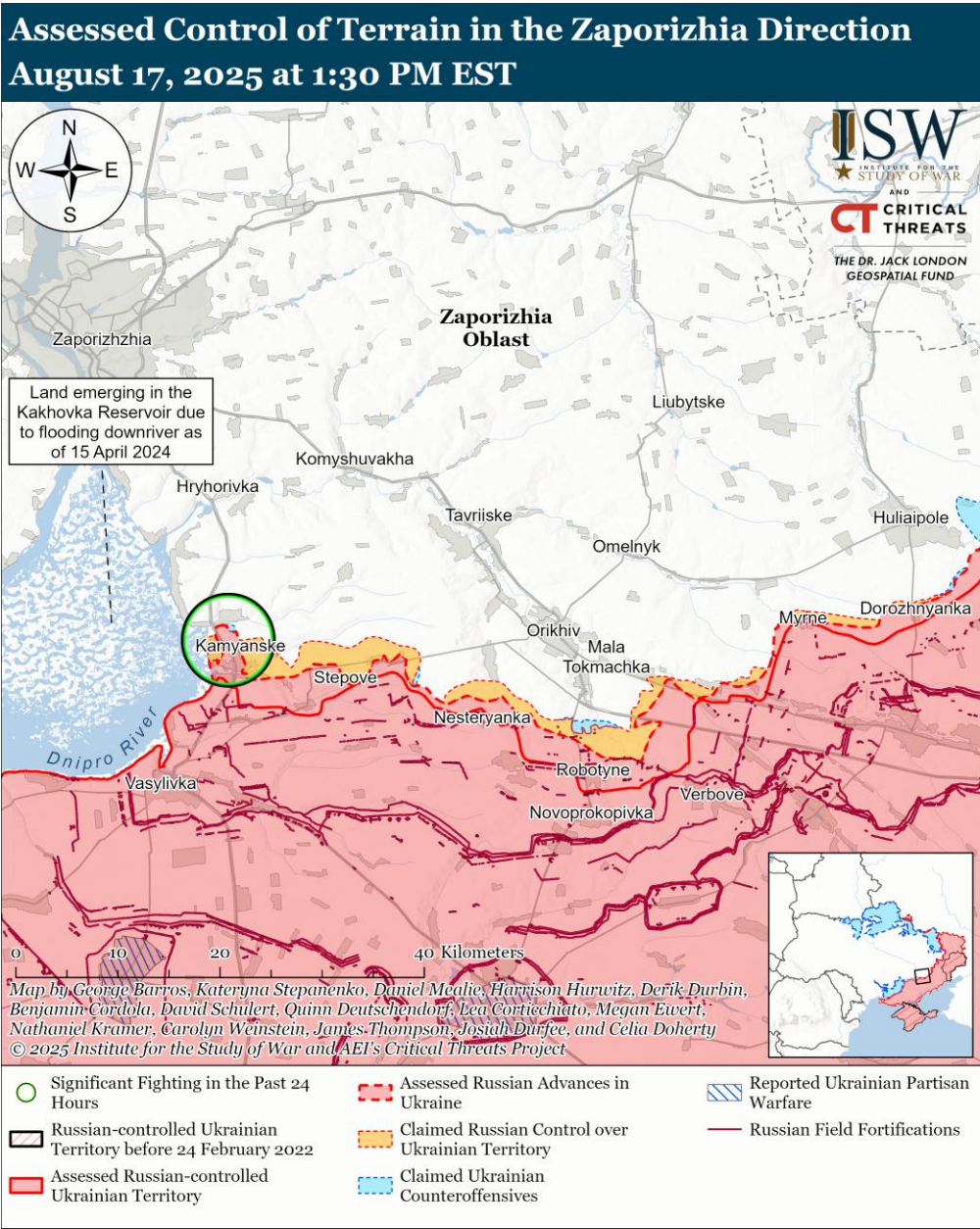
Russian forces continued ground attacks northeast of Velykomykhailivka near Piddubne; east of Velykomykhailivka near Myrne and Voskresenka; and southeast of Velykomykhailivka near Shevchenko, Ternove, Novomykolaivka, and Maliivka on August 16 and 17.[92]

A Russian milblogger claimed that Sichneve (east of Velykomykhailivka) is a contested "gray zone." [93]

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 394th Motorized Rifle Regiment (127th Motorized Rifle Division, 5th CAA, EMD) are reportedly striking Ukrainian forces near Komyshevukha (southeast of Velykomykhailivka).[94] Drone operators of the Russian 305th Artillery Brigade (5th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Eastern Military District [EMD]) are reportedly striking Ukrainian positions near Sosnivka (southeast of Velykomykhailivka).[95]

Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions, secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes, and advance within tube artillery

range of Zaporizhzhia City)



Russian forces continued offensive operations in eastern Zaporizhzhia Oblast on August 17 but did not advance.

Russian forces attacked northeast of Hulyaipole near Olhivske and Temyrivka on August 16 and 17.[96]

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 305th Artillery Brigade (5th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Eastern Military District [EMD]) are reportedly striking Ukrainian positions near Poltavka (east of Hulyaipole) and Novohryhorivka (northeast of Hulyaipole).[97]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast on August 17 but did not make confirmed advances.

Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced in Mala Tokmachka (southeast of Orikhiv) and Stepnohirsk (west of Orikhiv).[98]

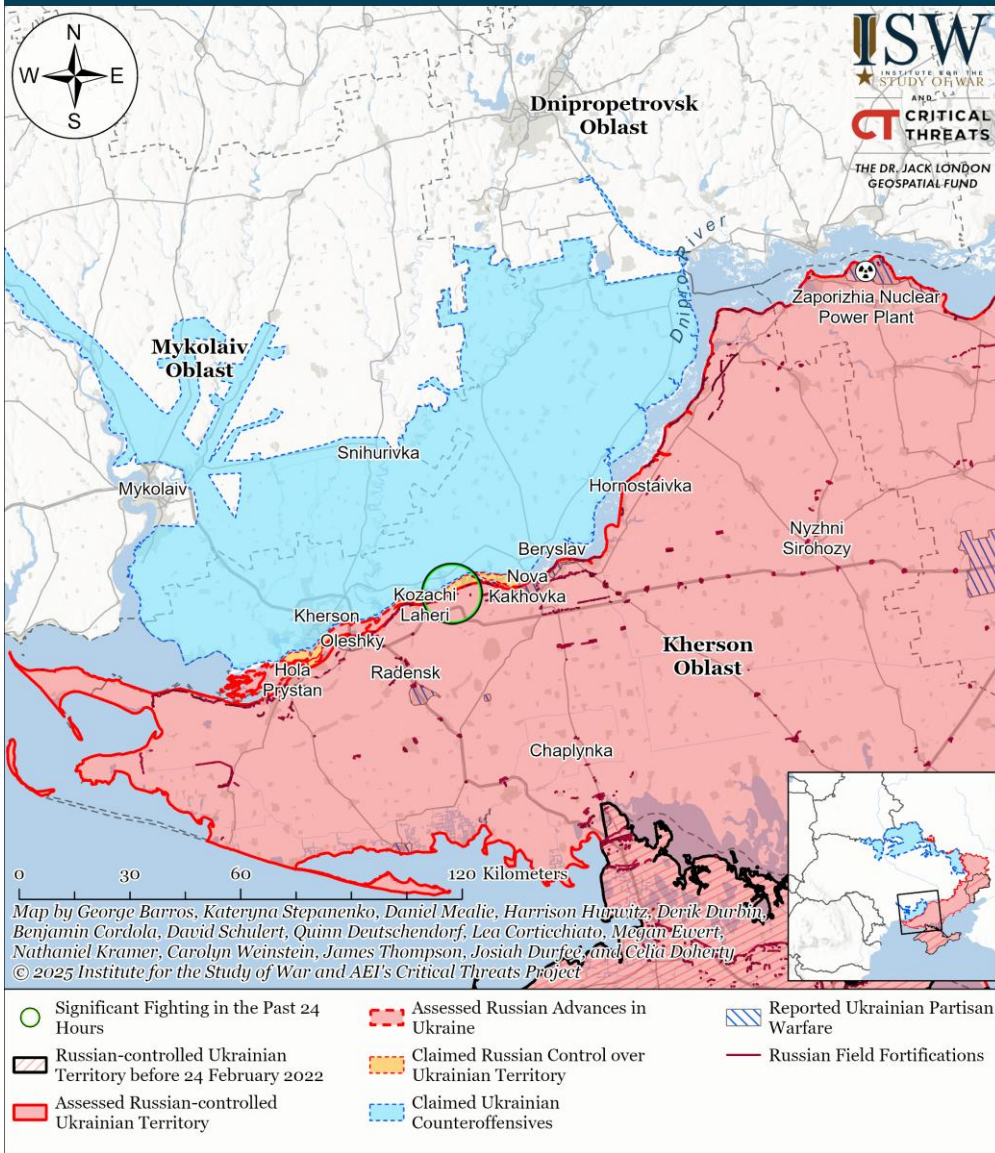
Russian forces attacked southeast of Orikhiv near Mala Tokmachka, south of Orikhiv toward Novodanylivka, southwest of Orikhiv near Nesteryanka, and west of Orikhiv near Plavni and Stepnohirsk on August 16 and 17.[99] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked in Stepnohirsk and Plavni and near Kamyanske (west of Orikhiv) and Mala Tokmachka.[100]

Ukraine's Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported that the GUR destroyed a Russian ammunition depot near the Korvatskyi passage in occupied Melitopol on August 16, killing at least six Russian naval infantrymen and a Chechen Vostok-Akhmat Battalion drone crew.[101]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 247th Airborne (VDV) Regiment (7th VDV Division) are reportedly operating near Stepnohirsk, and elements of the Russian 108th VDV Regiment (7th VDV Division) and the BARS-1 Detachment (Russian Combat Army Reserve) are reportedly operating in the Zaporizhia direction.[102]

Russian forces continued limited attacks in the Kherson direction on August 16 and 17 but did not advance.[103]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kherson Direction August 17, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign (Russian Objective: Target Ukrainian military and civilian infrastructure in the rear and on the frontline)

Russian forces conducted a series of missile and drone strikes against Ukraine on the night of August 16 to 17. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched one Iskander-M ballistic missile and 60 Shahed-type and decoy drones from the directions of Kursk and Bryansk cities; Millerovo, Rostov Oblast; Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai; and Shatalovo, Smolensk Oblast.[104] The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Ukrainian forces downed 40 drones over northern and eastern Ukraine and that 20 drones and the missile struck 12 locations in the frontline areas of Kharkiv,

Donetsk, and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts. The spokesperson for a Ukrainian border guard unit reported on August 17 that Russian Shahed drones struck Chernihiv Oblast.[105]

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

Nothing significant to report.

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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