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August 20, 2025, 7pm ET

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 1 pm ET on August 20, 2025. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the August 21, 2025, Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

The Kremlin is demanding that Russia have a veto over any Western security guarantees for Ukraine in an effort to undermine ongoing US, European, and Ukrainian efforts to establish conditions for lasting peace in Ukraine. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stated on August 20 that any serious discussions on Western security guarantees for Ukraine without Russian input are a “road to nowhere” and that Russia “cannot agree” that now-proposed “collective security issues” can be resolved without Russia, effectively demanding a Russian veto over Western security guarantees for Ukraine.[1] Lavrov also threatened that Russia will take “firm and harsh” action to ensure that Russia’s “legitimate interests” are a part of any postwar security arrangement for Ukraine.

The Kremlin is likely trying to inject its demands into the ongoing US, European, and Ukrainian joint effort to create a security structure that will serve as a safeguard against a future Russian re-invasion in the event of a peace settlement.[2] Granting Russia veto power over Western security guarantees would enable the Kremlin to dictate conditions that will weaken Ukraine’s ability to resist another Russian invasion by preventing Ukraine from forming binding bilateral or multilateral security agreements such as are now being discussed, increasing and modernizing its military, and receiving support from Ukraine’s partners. Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova recently said that Russia could not tolerate the presence of troops from NATO member states in Ukraine as part of any security guarantees.[3]

European leaders recently released a joint statement reaffirming that no peace agreement should place limitations on Ukraine’s armed forces or on its cooperation with third countries nor can Russia have veto power over Ukraine’s pathway to joining the European Union (EU) or NATO.[4] European Commission Vice President Kaja Kallas stated on August 19 that Russian President Vladimir Putin cannot be trusted to honor any promises or commitments to permanently cease military activity against Ukraine and that any security guarantees must be robust and credible to deter the Russian military command does not re-group and launch a future invasion of Ukraine.

The Kremlin appears to be demanding that any security guarantees be based on those proposed in the Istanbul 2022 framework, which would grant Russia and its allies the right to veto Western military assistance to Ukraine and leave Ukraine helpless in the face of future Russian threats. Lavrov stated on August 20 that Russia is in favor of collective security guarantees that are “truly reliable” and that a good example of such guarantees was evident in

the 2022 Istanbul Ukraine-Russia negotiations, which would have permanently prohibited Ukraine from joining NATO, imposed limitations on the Ukrainian military, and banned Ukraine from receiving Western military assistance without any imposing restrictions on the size or capability of Russian forces.[5] The security guarantees proposed in the draft 2022 Istanbul Protocol treated Russia as a neutral security “guarantor state” of Ukraine along with the other permanent members of the UN Security Council, failing to identify Russia as a belligerent in the war. The outlined security guarantees would give China and Russia veto power over any action the guarantors could take in response to a renewed Russian attack by granting the UN Security Council the authority to take “measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.”[6] Such "security guarantees" would allow the Kremlin and its allies to dictate the means and tools that Ukraine could use to defend itself against Russia and restrict the ability of other guarantor states to come to Ukraine's assistance.

The Kremlin is continuing to indicate that Russian President Vladimir Putin is unwilling to have an immediate bilateral meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on the timeline proposed by US President Donald Trump. Lavrov stated on August 20 that Putin confirmed his readiness to continue direct negotiations with Ukraine in the Istanbul format.[7] Russian and Ukrainian delegations have engaged in three rounds of bilateral talks in Istanbul since February 2025, which have resulted in nine prisoners of war (POW) exchanges, but little more.[8] Lavrov claimed that Putin would consider raising the level of the delegation heads after working groups had been established but added that a summit between Putin and Zelensky would need thorough preparations that could take time. Several US officials have stated that Putin promised Trump that he would meet with Zelensky following the multilateral summit between the United States, Ukraine, and European leaders on August 18.[9] Trump stated on August 18 that Zelensky and Putin need to meet urgently and that waiting too long before having a leader-level bilateral meeting would result in thousands of deaths.[10] Lavrov may have attempted to portray the Kremlin's proposal of continued negotiations within the Istanbul framework and working groups as fulfilling Putin's reported promise to Trump to hold a bilateral meeting with Zelensky. Continued negotiations within the Istanbul framework are a far cry from a head of state-level bilateral meeting, however, and Lavrov's statement is likely part of the Kremlin's continued efforts to protract peace negotiations and deflect blame for delays onto Ukraine and the West.

The Russian economy continues to face budget deficits as a result of increased defense spending and detrimental effects of Western sanctions and secondary tariffs. Reuters reported on August 20 that the Russian government is preparing to increase taxes and reduce its spending as it attempts to maintain its defense expenditure amid economic cooling.[11] Russian Finance Ministry data indicated that the Kremlin ran a budget deficit of 4.9 trillion rubles (roughly \$61 billion) from January to August of 2025, exceeding the target for the entire year by a quarter.[12] Russian Federation Council Committee on Budget and Financial Markets Chairperson Anatoly Artamonov claimed in late July 2025 that Russia needed to “urgently start fiscal consolidation” amidst increasingly pessimistic economic indicators and a decline in oil and gas revenues.[13] Reuters reported that Russia spends over 17 trillion rubles (roughly \$211 billion) or 41 percent of its federal budget on its defense and national security. A Russian government source stated that Russia's defense spending likely constitutes more than the stated eight percent of Russian GDP and assessed that defense spending is unlikely to decrease in 2026 or in an event of a ceasefire.[14] Reuters reported that the Russian government is increasingly pulling funds away from the healthcare and education sectors, and

Russian officials are pushing for Russia to reallocate funds from non-defense budgetary items to the defense sector. Reuters reported that Russia has relatively a low debt-to-GDP ratio of around 20 percent; however, this metric is much less consequential as Russia is a rentier state which uses oil and gas revenues and Russia's sovereign wealth fund to fund its war in Ukraine. The sovereign wealth fund is a state-owned investment fund that Russia pulls money from to avoid incurring debt, but Putin is steadily depleting the fund's liquid reserves to fund its war in Ukraine.[15]

Russia is jeopardizing its economic stability and the livelihoods of Russian civilians to increasingly feed its defense industrial base (DIB) and sustain the war effort in Ukraine. Russia faces a growing list of costs from the war, including providing compensation for servicemembers and their families, expanding its DIB, and sponsoring recruitment drives for its war in Ukraine.[16] Russian officials have repeatedly attempted to convince the Russian population that the Russian federal budget prioritizes civilian and social expenditures while continuing to allocate greater sums of the budget to defense spending.[17] The Russian government also must face the future costs of compensating veterans and their families by providing them with financial, medical, and psychological support from the government over the coming decades.

Secondary tariffs are likely forcing Russia to sell oil below market price, which could be decreasing the incoming flow of foreign funds into the Russian economy and depleting Russia's primary source of wealth. Bloomberg reported on August 20 that India's state-owned oil refineries purchased an increased amount of Russian oil from August 18 to 19, and Russian deputy trade representative in India Yevgeny Griva told Bloomberg on August 20 that Russia expects India to continue buying Russian oil because of a five percent discount.[18] Bloomberg reported that Russia deepened its discount from one dollar in July 2025 to \$2.50 a barrel to Dated Brent, likely to incentivize Indian refineries to purchase Russian oil amidst secondary tariffs.[19] Bloomberg reported that Chinese oil refiners stepped up purchases of Russian flagship oil as some Indian companies pulled back purchases of Russian oil in August amidst US threats of tariffs.[20] Bloomberg reported that China received shipments of 75,000 barrels per day from the Urals, a marked increase from the year-to-date average of 40,000 barrels per day. Secondary tariffs may cost Russia additional foreign funds if Russia is unable to successfully convince tariffed countries to buy more oil from Russia that would compensate the difference between the discount and market price. ISW continues to assess that secondary sanctions will likely further impact the Russian economy by undercutting Russian oil revenues which are essential for the Kremlin's financing of its war against Ukraine.[21]

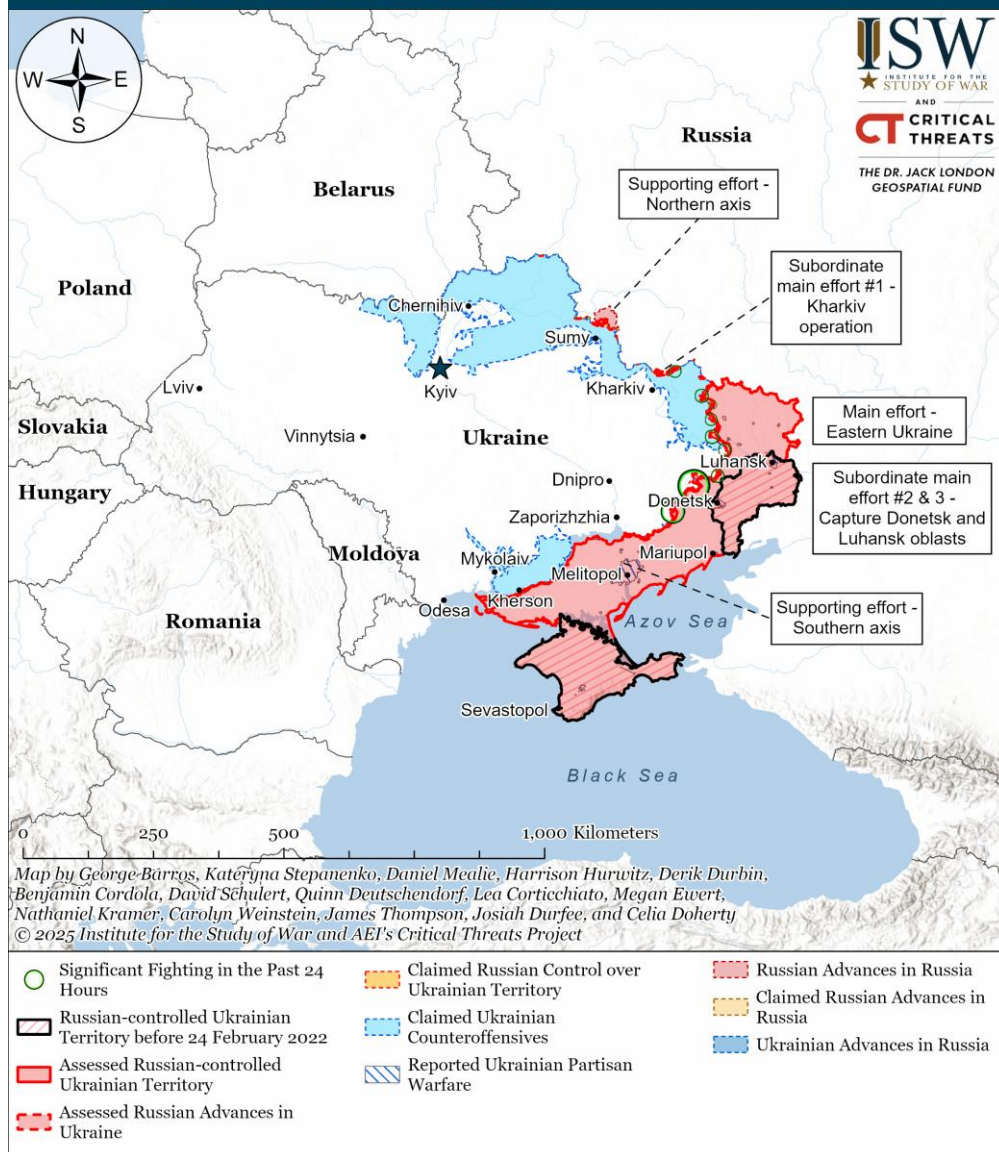
The Kremlin is reportedly considering replacing Russian Investigative Committee (Sledkom) Chairman Alexander Bastrykin, likely as part of the Kremlin's efforts to form a new and younger elite. Moscow-based business newspaper *Vedomosti* reported on August 20 that the Kremlin is considering Bastrykin for the vacant position of Chairman of the Russian Supreme Court.[22] Unspecified sources close to the Russian Presidential Administration, Supreme Court, and judicial community told *Vedomosti* that Bastrykin's replacement presents an opportunity to "introduce new blood" to Sledkom, given that Bastrykin has headed Sledkom since 2011 and is approaching the age of 72. The Kremlin allowed Bastrykin to remain in office past the age of 70 in September 2024.[23] The Kremlin's replacement of Bastrykin is in line with Putin's recent practice of reshuffling older members of his inner circle to other roles rather than retiring or firing them, as demonstrated by the appointment of former Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev to oversee the Russian

shipbuilding industry in May 2025.[24] Putin has been recently promoting younger officials who have significant involvement with the Russian war effort such as former Tula Oblast Governor Alexei Dyumin, who became the youngest ever member of the Russian Security Council in September 2024.[25] The promotion of younger officials connected to the war effort is consistent with Putin's February 2024 announcement that he is forming a new elite out of veterans and committed supporters of the war effort.[26]

Key Takeaways:

- **The Kremlin is demanding that Russia have a veto over any Western security guarantees for Ukraine in an effort to undermine ongoing US, European, and Ukrainian efforts to establish conditions for lasting peace in Ukraine.**
- **The Kremlin appears to be demanding that any security guarantees be based on those proposed in the Istanbul 2022 framework, which would grant Russia and its allies the right to veto Western military assistance to Ukraine and leave Ukraine helpless in the face of future Russian threats.**
- **The Kremlin is continuing to indicate that Russian President Vladimir Putin is unwilling to have an immediate bilateral meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on the timeline proposed by US President Donald Trump.**
- **The Russian economy continues to face budget deficits as a result of increased defense spending and detrimental effects of Western sanctions and secondary tariffs.**
- **Secondary tariffs are likely forcing Russia to sell oil below market price, which could be decreasing the incoming flow of foreign funds into the Russian economy and depleting Russia's primary source of wealth.**
- **The Kremlin is reportedly considering replacing Russian Investigative Committee (Sledkom) Chairman Alexander Bastrykin, likely as part of the Kremlin's efforts to form a new and younger elite.**
- **Ukrainian forces advanced near Pokrovsk. Russian forces advanced in northern Sumy Oblast and near Lyman, Toretsk, and Velykomykhailivka.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Russo-Ukrainian War August 20, 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

Fighting continued in unspecified areas of Kursk Oblast on August 19 and 20.[27]

A Russian milblogger claimed that fighting is ongoing in the direction of Novyi Put (southwest of Glushkovo).[28]

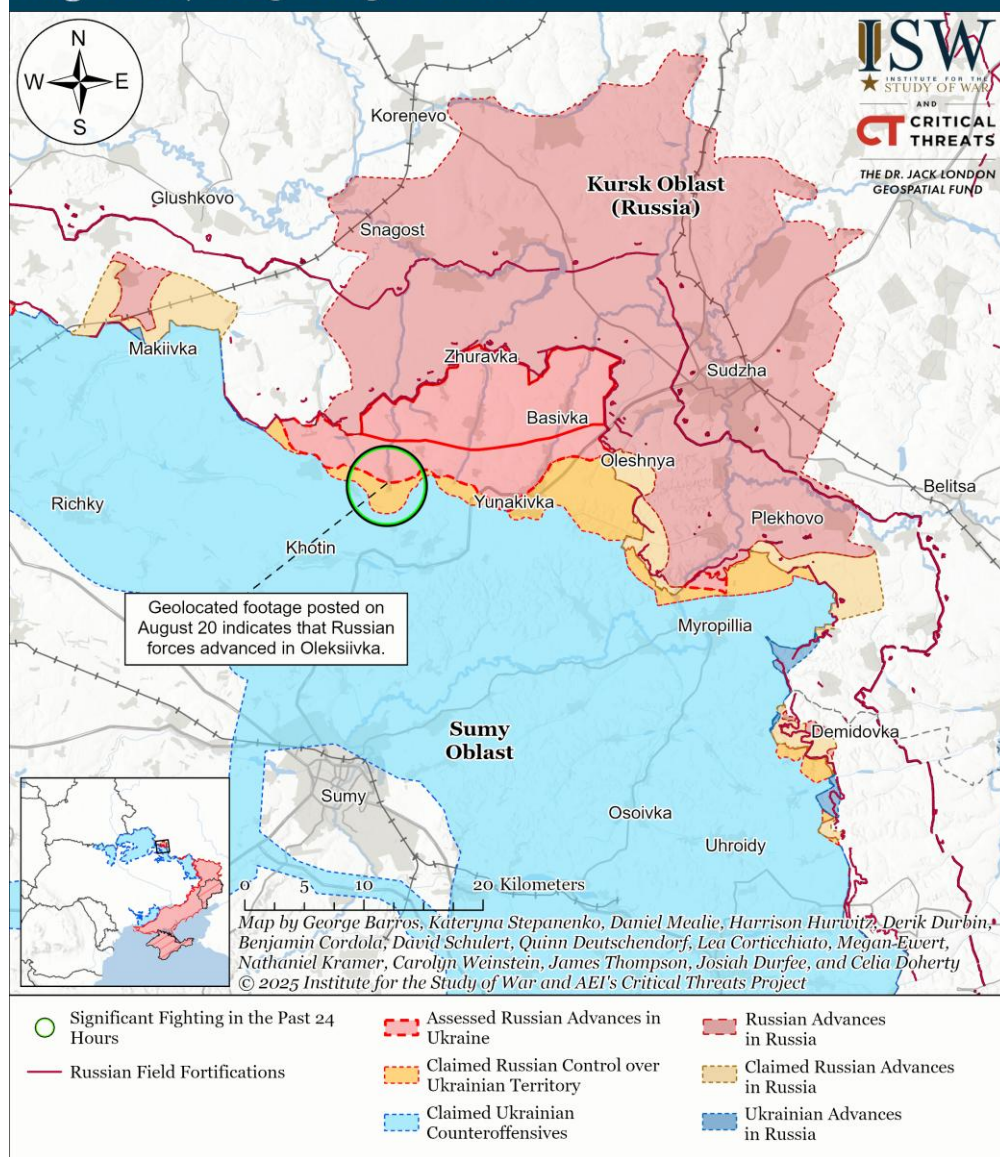
Sources in the Ukrainian military told The New Voice of Ukraine (NV) that Ukrainian forces struck the Russian BARS Kursk Unmanned Systems Battalion base in Oboyansky Raion, Kursk Oblast, where Russian forces stationed drones overnight on August 19 to 20.[29] Social media sources geolocated footage of the strikes on August 20.[30]

The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) claimed on August 20 that the FSB detained three Ukrainian servicemen conducting a sabotage and reconnaissance operation in an unspecified area of Bryansk Oblast’s international border area.[31]

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)

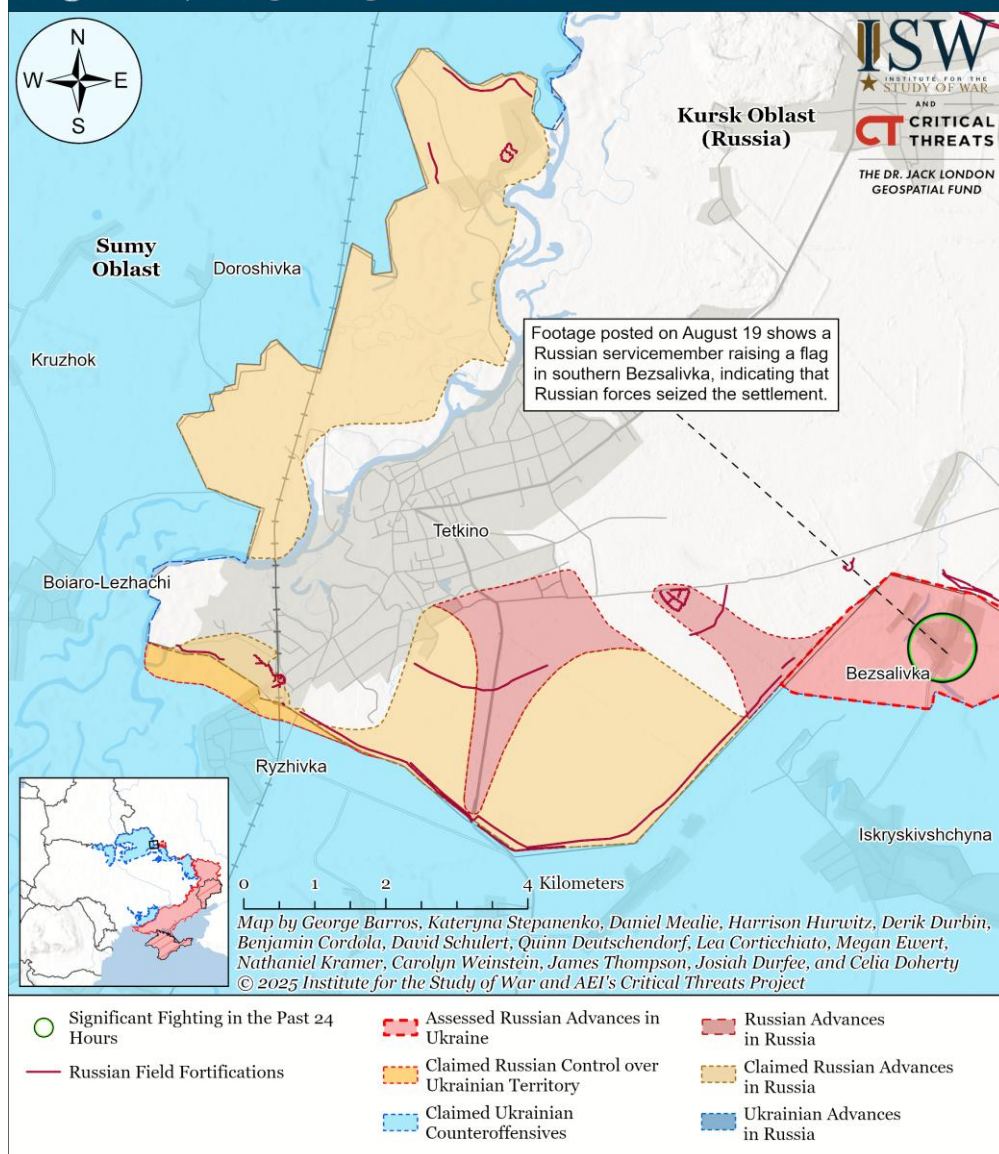
Russian forces recently advanced in the Sumy direction.

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Sumy Direction August 20, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on August 19 and 20 indicates that Russian forces advanced seized Bezsalivka (northwest of Sumy City) and into central Oleksiivka (north of Sumy City).[32]

Assessed Control of Terrain near Tetkino August 20, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced southeast of Andriivka (north of Sumy City) and west of Varachyne (northeast of Sumy City).[33]

Russian forces attacked northwest of Sumy City near Ryzhivka and Bezsalivka; north of Sumy City near Kindrativka; and northeast of Sumy City near Yunakivka on August 19 and 20.[34] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Kindrativka and northeast of Sumy City near Varachyne and Sadky.[35]

Ukrainian Center for Countering Disinformation Head Lieutenant Andriy Kovalenko stated on August 20 that Russian milbloggers are mentioning Sumy Oblast less frequently because Russian forces in Sumy Oblast are suffering losses and gradually retreating in several areas of the oblast.[36] A Ukrainian

reserve officer noted that Russian President Vladimir Putin's June 2025 plan to create a buffer zone in Sumy Oblast failed since Russian forces only maintain two small pockets in the oblast.[37]

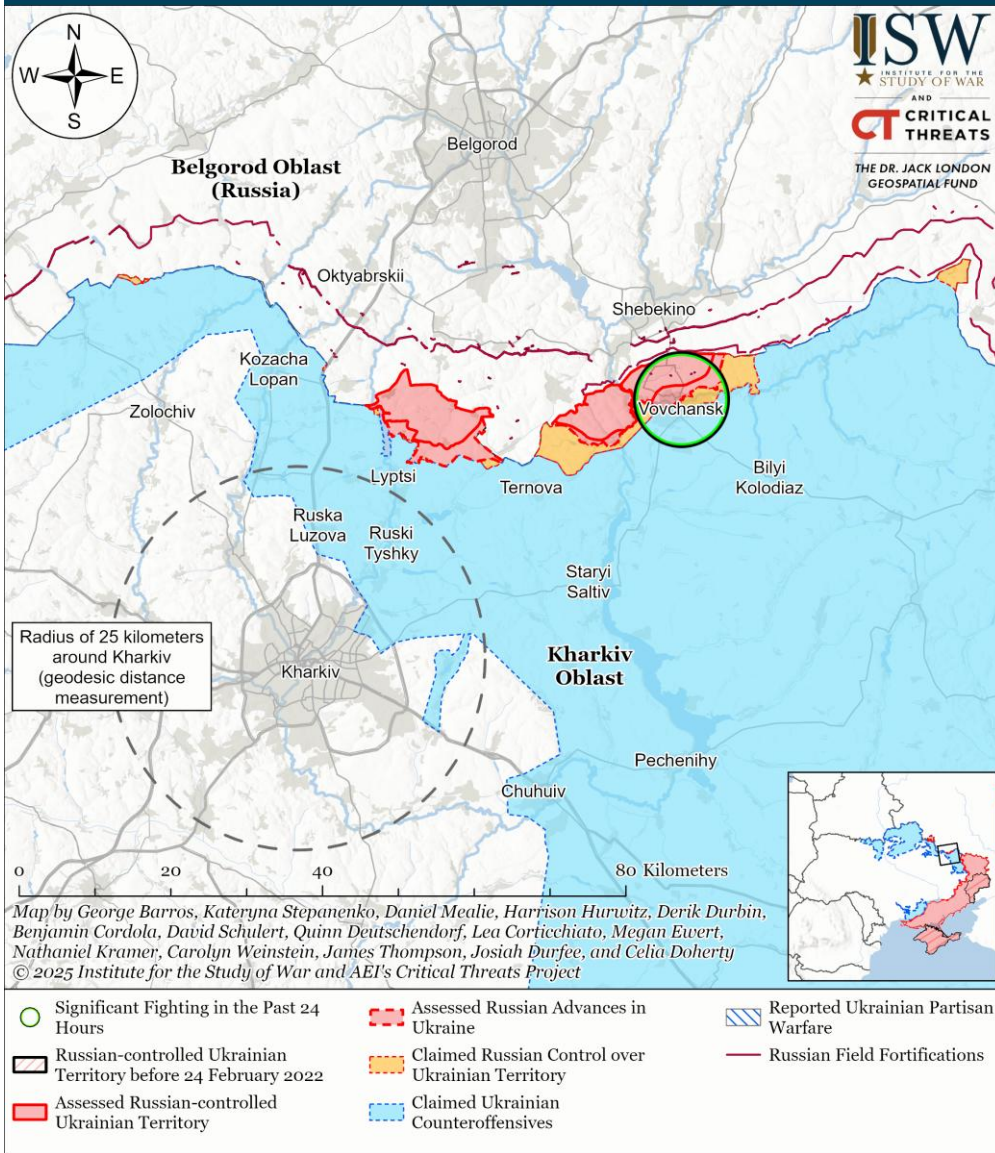
Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 40th Naval Infantry Brigade (Pacific Fleet) are reportedly operating near Kindrativka.[38] Elements of the 1434th Akhmat-Chechnya Regiment, including an attached Storm V company of the 22nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (72nd Motorized Rifle Division, 44th Army Corps [AC], Leningrad Military District [LMD]), and the 83rd Separate Airborne (VDV) Brigade are reportedly operating near Varachyne.[39]

<u>Russian</u>	<u>Main</u>	<u>Effort</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>Eastern</u>	<u>Ukraine</u>
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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 20 but did not make confirmed advances.

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kharkiv Direction August 20, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST

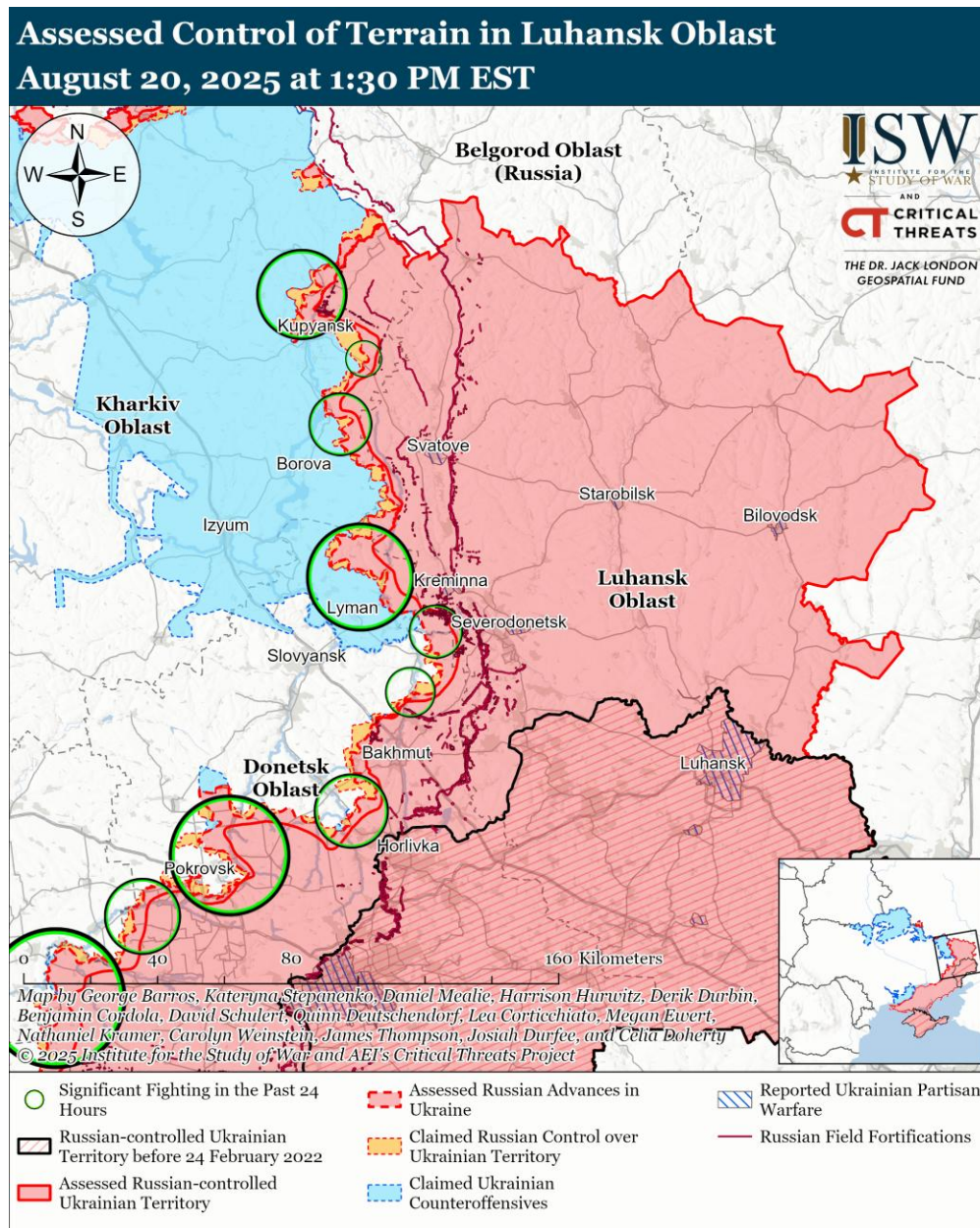


Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced near Tykhe (northeast of Kharkiv City).[40]

Russian forces attacked northeast of Kharkiv City near Vovchansk, Synelnykove, and on the south (left) bank of the Vovcha River on August 19 and 20.[41] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Synelnykove.[42]

Russian forces attacked northeast of Velykyi Burluk near Ambarne and southeast of Velykyi Burluk toward Katerynivka on August 19 and 20 but did not advance..[43]

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 conducted offensive operations in the Kupyansk direction on August 20 but did not make confirmed advances.

Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced in northeastern and northern Kupyansk.[44]

Russian forces attacked near Kupyansk itself; west of Kupyansk near Sobolivka; northwest of Kupyansk near Myrove; north of Kupyansk near Kindrashivka; northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka, Fyholivka,

and Kamyanka; and southeast of Kupyansk near Stepova Novoselivka on August 19 and 20.[45] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that Ukrainian forces are counterattacking within Kupyansk itself.[46] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces are counterattacking near Synkivka and Petropavlivka (east of Kupyansk).[47]

The Kharkiv Oblast Prosecutor's Office reported on August 19 that a Russian drone struck an ambulance in Kupyansk, in violation of international law.[48]

Order of Battle: Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 1st Guards Tank Army [GTA] (Moscow Military District [MMD]) and infantry, likely of the 68th Motorized Rifle Division (6th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Leningrad Military District [LMD]) are operating in the Kupyansk direction.[49] Elements of the 352nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (11th Army Corps [AC], LMD) are reportedly operating near Stepova Novoselivka.[50] Drone operators of the 27th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st GTA, MMD) and the Udaya Drone Group (reportedly of the 68th MRD) are reportedly striking Ukrainian positions near Kupyansk and in the Kupyansk direction, respectively.[51]

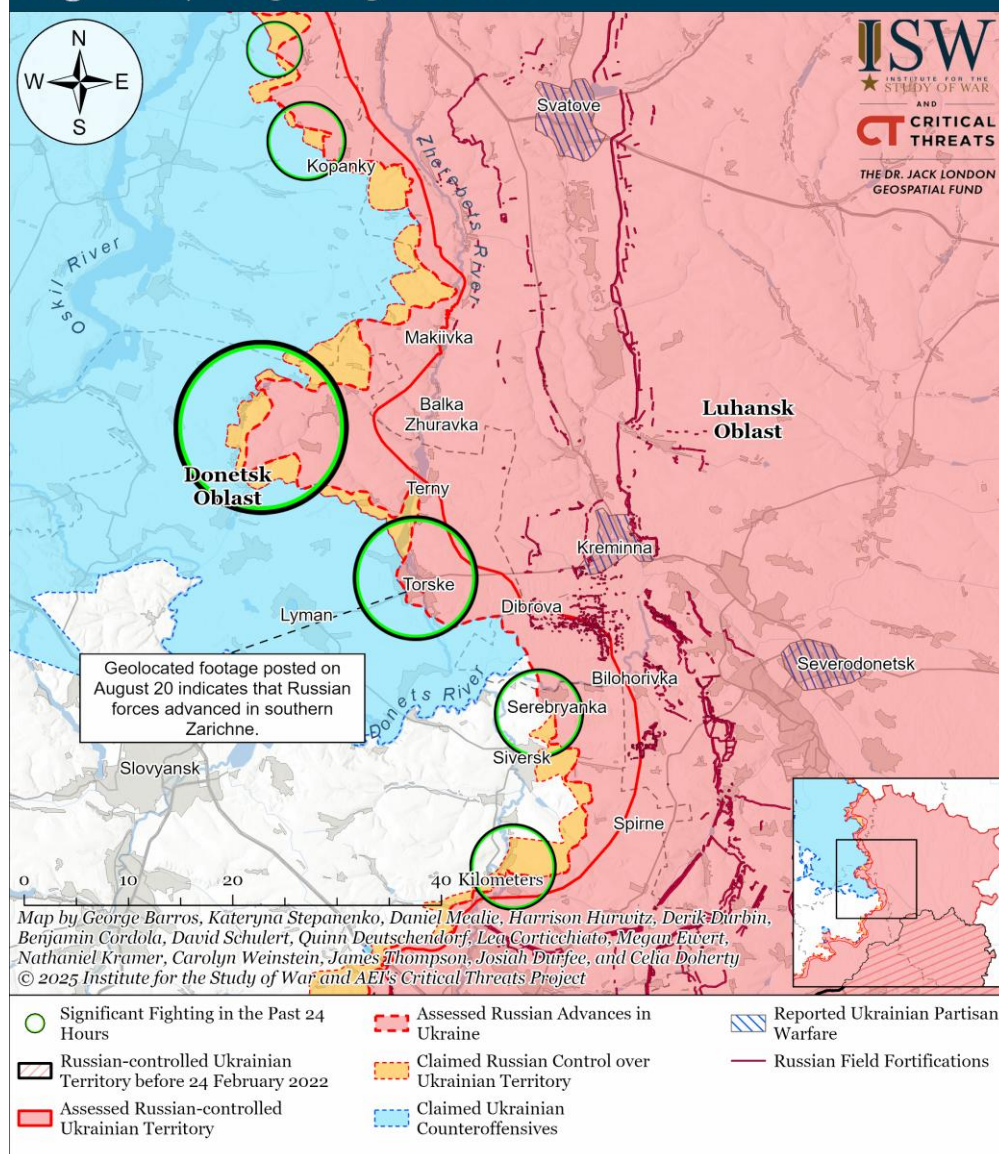
Russian forces conducted offensive operations in the Borova direction on August 20 but did not advance.

Russian forces attacked northeast of Borova near Zahryzove and southeast of Borova toward Olhivka and near Hlushchenkove on August 19 and 20.[52]

Order of Battle: Mashovets stated that elements of the Russian 1st GTA (MMD) are operating near Zahryzove.[53]

Russian forces recently advanced in the Lyman direction.

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Svatove-Kreminna Direction August 20, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on August 20 indicates that Russian forces advanced within southern Zarichne (east of Lyman).[54]

Russian forces attacked northwest of Lyman near Shandryholove and Serednie; north of Lyman near Karpivka, Zelena Dolyna, and Ridkodub; northeast of Lyman near Kolodyazi and Myrne; east of Lyman near Torske and Zarichne; and southeast of Lyman toward Yampil and in the Serebryanske forest area on August 19 and 20.[55]

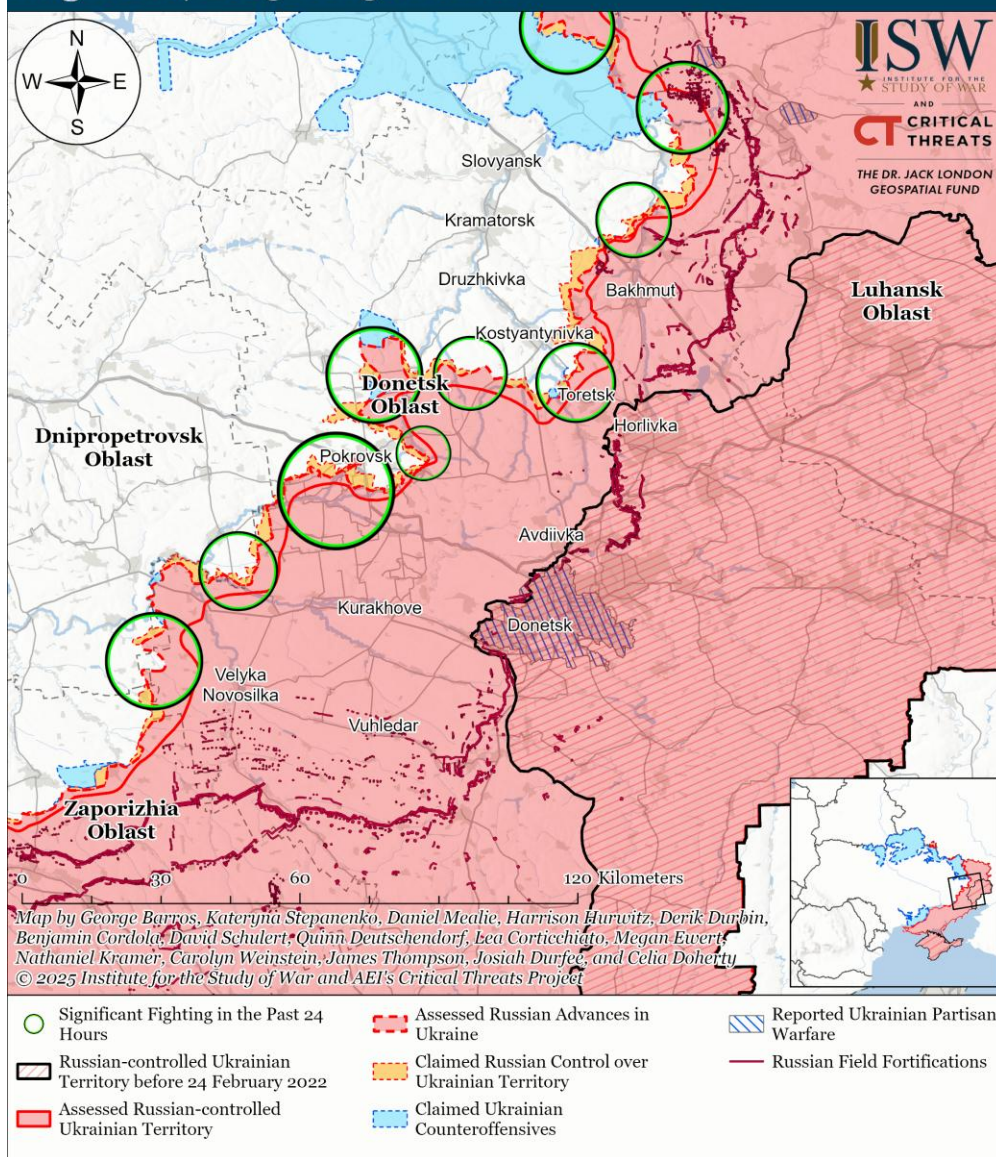
A non-commissioned officer (NCO) of a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Lyman direction reported that Russian forces in this direction launch small infantry group assaults against Ukrainian positions at all times of the day, attacking from multiple directions simultaneously and constantly bringing up reserves to prolong assaults, sending as many as 10 successive small infantry groups per assault

wave.[56] The NCO reported that Russian forces are supported by drone operators using Mavic, Lancet, and first-person view (FPV) drones, and occasionally leverage motorcycles for these assaults. The NCO noted that terrain features in this direction, including the Chorny Zherebets River, prevent Russian forces from leveraging armored vehicles. The NCO also stated that the Russian military command is deploying drone operators as close as possible to the line of contact in this direction in order to strike at Ukrainian firing points and logistical routes in the rear and that fighting is attritional in Lyman direction.[57]

Order of Battle: Mashovets reported that elements of the Russian 144th Motorized Rifle Division (20th CAA, MMD), and the 1st and 15th motorized rifle regiments (both of the 2nd Guards Motorized Rifle Division, 1st GTA, MMD) are operating toward the west (right) bank of the Oskil River and Drobysheve (northwest of Lyman).[58] Mashovets stated that elements of the 2nd Guards Motorized Rifle Division (1st GTA, MMD) are operating south of Karpivka. Mashovets stated that elements of the 144th Motorized Rifle Division (20th CAA, MMD) are operating near Ridkodub and that elements of the 3rd Motorized Rifle Division (20th CAA, MMD) are operating near Hrekivka (north of Lyman). Drone elements of the BARS-16 Kuban Detachment are reportedly striking Ukrainian positions west of Novoselivka (northwest of Lyman).[59]

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 20, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Siversk direction on August 20 but did not make confirmed advances.

Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced northeast of Siversk and south of Novoselivka (east of Siversk).[60]

Russian forces attacked north of Siversk near Serebryanka and in the Kremynskyi forest area, northeast of Siversk near Hryhorivka, east of Siversk near Verkhnokamyanske and Novoselivka, southeast of Siversk near Vyimka, south of Siversk near Pereizne, and southwest of Siversk near Fedorivka on August 19 and 20.[61] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Serebryanka.[62]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 123rd Motorized Rifle Brigade (3rd Combined Arms Army [CAA], formerly 2nd Luhansk People's Republic Army Corps [LNR AC], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating near Vyimka.[63]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Chasiv Yar direction on August 20 but did not make confirmed advances.

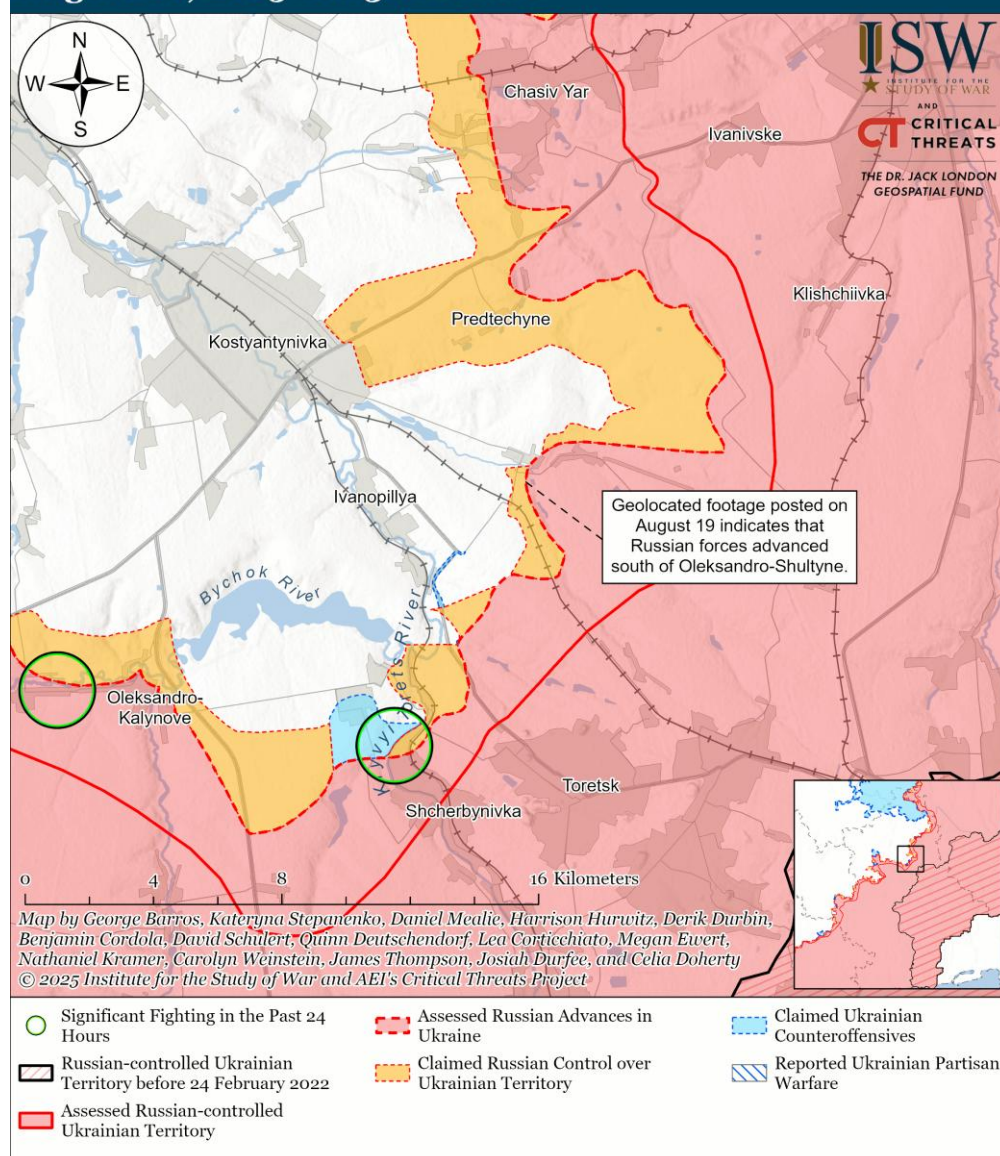
Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced to the eastern outskirts of Kostyantynivka (southwest of Chasiv Yar).[64]

Russian forces attacked south of Chasiv Yar near Stupochky and Predtechyne and southwest of Chasiv Yar near Kostyantynivka on August 20.[65]

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 77th Motorized Rifle Regiment (reportedly of the 7th Military Base, 49th CAA, SMD) are reportedly striking Ukrainian positions in the Kostyantynivka (Chasiv Yar) direction.[66] Sniper elements and drone operators of the 98th Airborne (VDV) Division are reportedly operating and striking Ukrainian positions in the Kostyantynivka direction and near Chasiv Yar, respectively.[67] Elements of the 299th VDV Regiment (98th VDV Division) are reportedly operating near Chasiv Yar.[68] Drone operators of the 8th CAA (Southern Military District [SMD]), including its 439th Rocket Artillery Brigade and 238th Artillery Brigade, are reportedly coordinating Lancet drone strikes against Ukrainian positions near Kostyantynivka.[69]

Russian forces recently advanced in the Toretsk direction.

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kostyantynivka Direction August 20, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



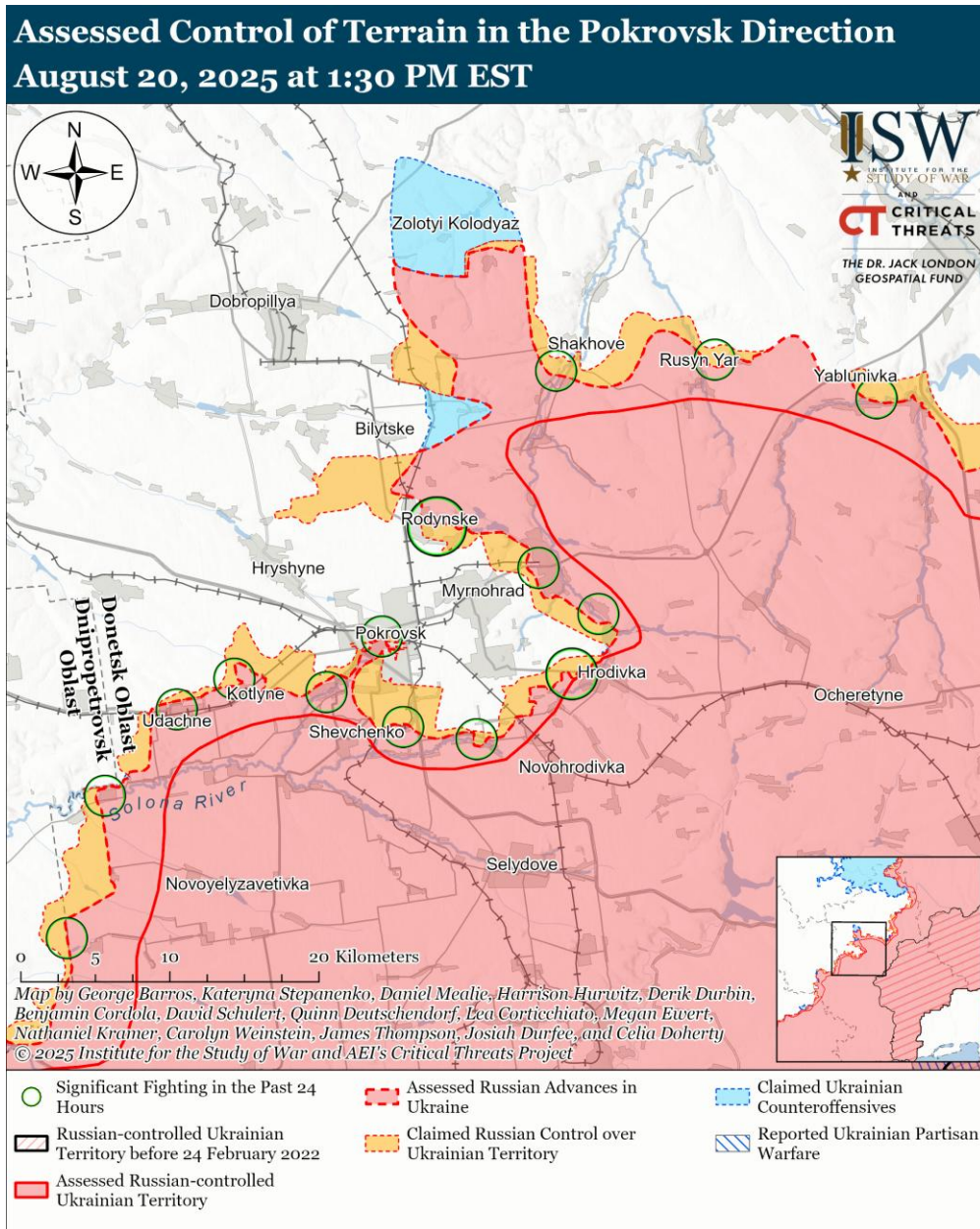
Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on August 19 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced south of Oleksandro-Shulytne (north of Toretsk).[70]

Russian forces attacked near Toretsk itself; north of Toretsk near Oleksandro-Shulytne, Dyliivka, and Bila Hora; west of Toretsk near Shcherbivka; and northwest of Toretsk near Kleban Byk, Katerynivka, Pleshchiivka, Yablunivka, Rusyn Yar, and Poltavka and toward Stepanivka on August 19 and 20.[71] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Shcherbivka.[72]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 4th Motorized Rifle Brigade (3rd CAA, formerly 2nd LNR AC, SMD) are reportedly operating near Oleksandro-Shulytne.[73] Elements of the 103rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA, SMD) are reportedly operating near Kleban

Byk.[74]

Ukrainian forces recently advanced in the Pokrovsk direction.



Assessed Ukrainian advances: Geolocated footage published on August 20 indicates that Ukrainian forces retook Petrivka (north of Pokrovsk).[75] ISW did not previously extend assessed advances or claims over Petrivka and does not assess that Ukrainian forces retook Petrivka in the last 24 hours, given that Ukrainian military sources reported that Ukrainian forces retook the settlement on August 15.[76]

Unconfirmed claims: The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces seized Pankivka (northeast of Pokrovsk).[77] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced north of Poltavka and northeast of Poltavka within Volodymyrivka, east of Shakhove, toward Sofiivka, and north of Kucheriv Yar.[78]

Russian forces attacked near Pokrovsk itself; north of Pokrovsk near Rodynske and Krasnyi Lyman; northeast of Pokrovsk near Shakhove, Zapovidne, Novoekonomichne, Fedorivka, Mayak, Sofiivka, Zoloty Kolodyaz, Vesele, Kucheriv Yar, Zatyshok, and Volodymyrivka and toward Myrnohrad; east of Pokrovsk near Promin, Hrodivka, and Myrolyubivka; southeast of Pokrovsk near Lysivka; south of Pokrovsk near Novoukrainka and Chunyshyne; and southwest of Pokrovsk near Zvirove, Kotlyne, and Udachne on August 19 and 20.[79] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked in the Russian penetration northeast of Dobropillya, including north of Pokrovsk near Rubizhne and northeast of Pokrovsk near Zoloty Kolodyaz and Zapovidne.[80]

Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets reported on August 20 that Ukrainian forces are counterattacking along the entire perimeter of the Dobropillya penetration.[81] Mashovets stated that Ukrainian forces are counterattacking Russian positions at the base of the penetration in order to cut off the salient along the Nykanorivka-Mayak line but that Russian forces still hold several positions along the railroad west of Sukhetske. Mashovets stated that Ukrainian forces broke through to Mayak and are fighting in the settlement.

Mashovets reported that elements of the Russian 51st CAA (formerly 1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] AC, SMD) are operating in the Dobropillya penetration appear to be reinforced by up to one and a half battalions-worth of reserve units but that command will need time to regroup manpower and materiel before any units can press north of Pokrovsk and Myrnohrad.[82] Mashovets stated that the Russian 41st CAA and 2nd CAA (both of the Central Military District [CMD]) are accumulating personnel and materiel near Pokrovsk in anticipation of future attempts by the 51st CAA to break through toward the northern outskirts of Pokrovsk and sever the ground lines of communication (GLOCs) to Dobropillya, though this breakthrough is delayed due to Ukrainian counterattacks.[83] Mashovets reported that the Russian 114th and 132nd motorized rifle brigades (both of the 51st CAA) are operating northeast of Pokrovsk between Shakhove and Nove Shakhove and attacking toward Kucheriv Yar in order to advance to the remaining Russian assault units within the settlement but cannot break through.[84] Mashovets stated that the 1st Motorized Rifle Battalion (77th Motorized Rifle Regiment, reportedly of the 7th Military Base, 49th CAA, SMD) and the 39th Motorized Rifle Brigade (68th AC, Eastern Military District [EMD]) are attacking Ukrainian positions east of Nykanorivka and seized a windbreak north of Zatyshok (all northeast of Pokrovsk). Mashovets reported that elements of the Russian 137th Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st CAA) and the 72nd Spetsnaz Battalion (reportedly of the 3rd AC) are attacking toward Hrodivka and Myrnohrad and advanced one kilometer toward Promin (all east of Pokrovsk).[85] Mashovets stated that elements of the 15th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd CAA, CMD) are operating near Udachne but have not advanced and that the 1437th Motorized Rifle Regiment (formed during 2022 partial reserve call up) are still operating in Zvirove.

Russian milbloggers claimed on August 20 that the Dobropillya penetration remains a fluid part of the frontline and that neither Ukrainian nor Russian forces are able to seize the initiative.[86] One milblogger claimed that Russian forces maintain positions in Zoloty Kolodyaz despite Ukrainian

counterattacks and that Russian forces are consolidating positions in Rodynske.[87] Another milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces allegedly cleared Zoloty Kolodyaz and Kucheriv Yar but did not affirm those reports.[88]

An intelligence officer of a Ukrainian special forces unit operating in the Pokrovsk direction reported on August 20 that Russian forces are using anti-drone thermal imaging cloaks and transporting electronic warfare (EW) systems to forward infantry positions to counteract Ukrainian drone activity.[89] The intelligence officer reported that Russian forces often attempt to transport EW systems to the line of contact on motorcycles and scooters due to Ukrainian drone activity impeding Russian forces' access to GLOCs.

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 56th Separate Spetsnaz Battalion (51st CAA, formerly 1st DNR AC, SMD) are reportedly striking Ukrainian positions in the Pokrovsk direction.[90] Drone operators of the Rubikon Center for Advanced Unmanned Technologies are reportedly striking Ukrainian positions near Myrnohrad.[91] Electronic warfare elements of the 27th Motorized Rifle Division (2nd CAA, CMD) are reportedly operating in the Pokrovsk direction.[92]

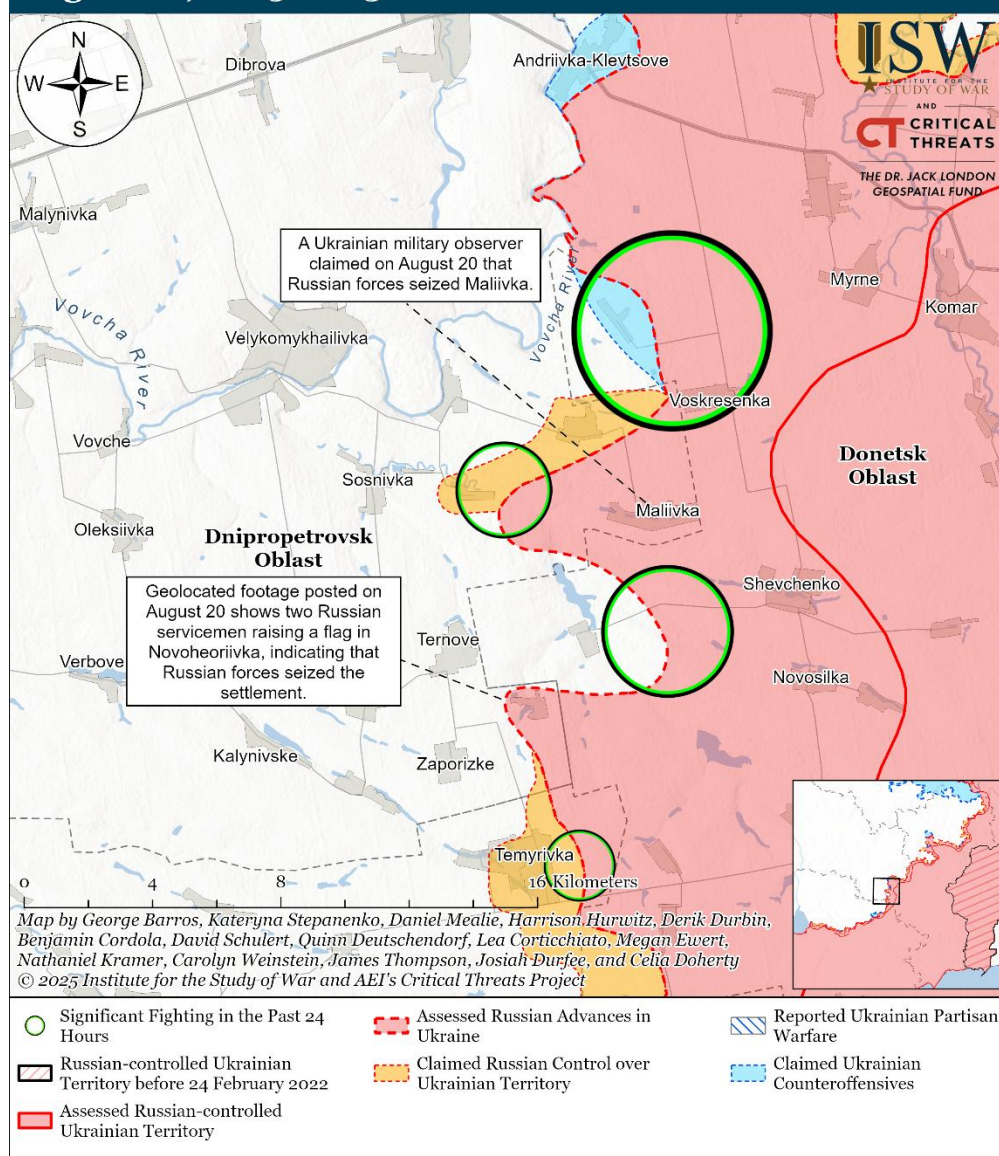
Russian forces conducted offensive operations in the Novopavlivka direction on August 20 but did not advance.

Russian forces attacked toward Novopavlivka itself; northeast of Novopavlivka near Novomykolaivka; southeast of Novopavlivka near Horikhove and Novoukrainka; south of Novopavlivka near Zirka, Hrushivka, and Dachne and toward Filiya; and southwest of Novopavlivka near Hrushivske and Tovste on August 19 and 20.[93]

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 11th Air Force and Air Defense Army (Russian Aerospace Forces [VKS] and EMD) are reportedly coordinating airstrikes against Ukrainian positions near Ivanivka (southwest of Novopavlivka).[94] Drone operators of the 656th Motorized Rifle Regiment and the 657th Anti-Tank Artillery Battalion (both of the 29th CAA, EMD) are reportedly striking Ukrainian positions near Filiya.[95] Drone operators of the Rubikon Center for Advanced Unmanned Technologies are reportedly striking Ukrainian forces near Novopavlivka.[96] Elements of the 74th Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st CAA, CMD) are reportedly operating in the Dnipropetrovsk Oblast (Novopavlivka) direction.[97]

Russian forces recently advanced in the Velykomykhailivka direction.

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Velykomykhailivka Direction August 20, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on August 20 shows elements of the Russian 57th Motorized Rifle Brigade (5th CAA, EMD) raising a flag in northern Novoheorhiivka, indicating that Russian forces recently seized Novoheorhiivka (southeast of Velykomykhailivka).[98] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) credited elements of the Russian 57th Motorized Rifle Brigade with the seizure of Novoheorhiivka.[99] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated on August 20 that Russian forces seized Maliivka and advanced east of Vorone (both southeast of Velykomykhailivka).[100]

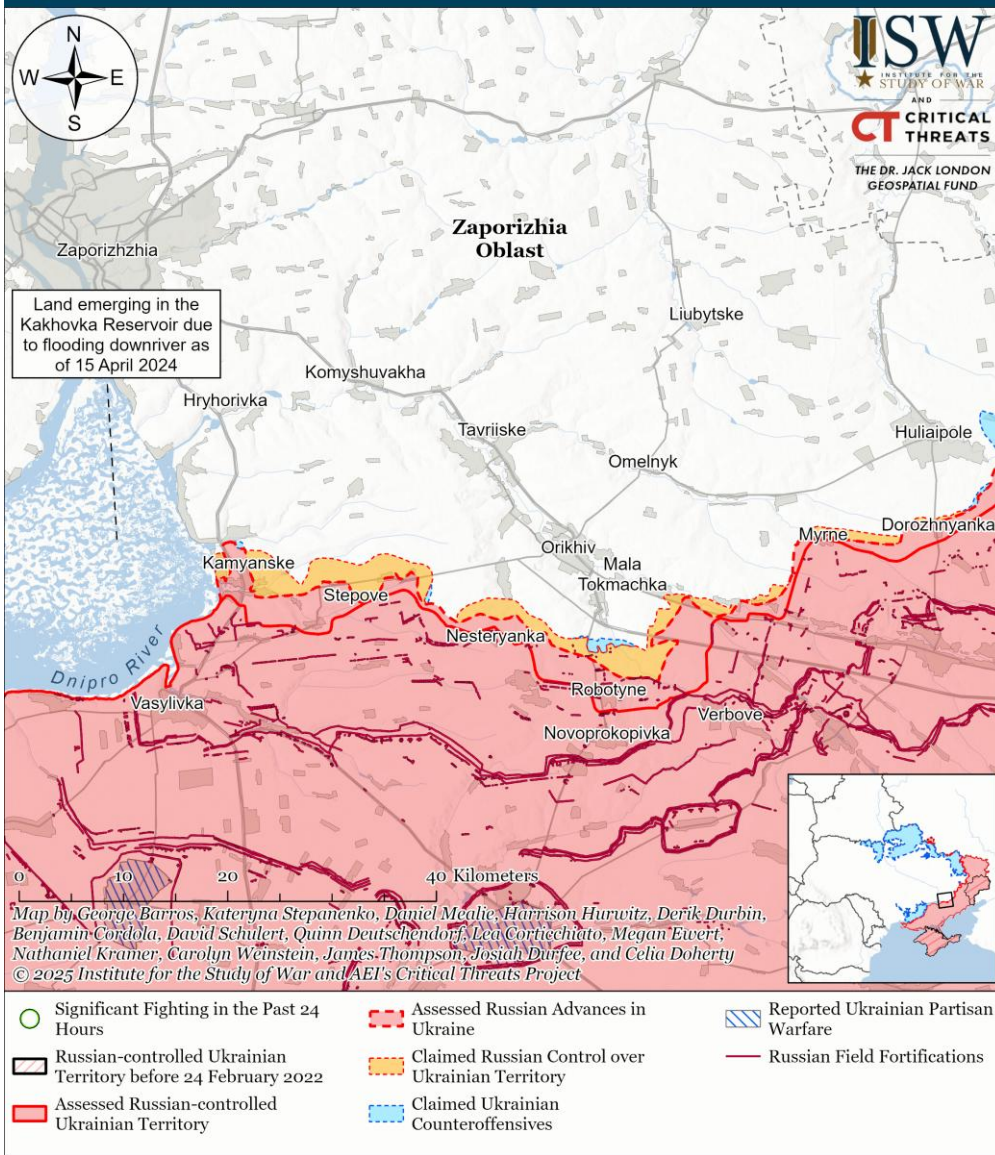
Unconfirmed claims: Mashovets stated on August 20 that elements of the 37th Motorized Rifle Brigade (36th CAA, EMD) and the 336th Naval Infantry Brigade (Baltic Fleet) advanced toward Voskresenka (east of Velykomykhailivka) and Sichneve (southeast of Velykomykhailivka).[101] Mashovets added

that elements of the Russian 127th Motorized Rifle Division (5th CAA, EMD) and 69th Separate Cover Brigade (35th CAA) advanced up to 2 kilometers southeast of Velykomykhailivka between Zaporizke (southeast of Velykomykhailivka) and Novoserhiivka referring to Novomykolaivka or Novoheorhiivka) from the Temyrivka-Vilne Pole line. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces seized Vorone and advanced toward Komyshuvakha (southeast of Velykomykhailivka).[102]

Russian forces attacked northeast of Velykomykhailivka near Zelenyi Hai; east of Velykomykhailivka near Voskresenka and Oleksandrohrad; and southeast of Velykomykhailivka near Shevchenko, Zaporizke, Sichneve, and Vorone and toward Komyshuvakha.[103]

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)

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Zaporizhia Direction August 20, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Russian forces continued offensive operations in eastern Zaporizhia Oblast on August 20 but did not make confirmed advances.

Unconfirmed claims: Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets reported on August 20 that Russian forces advanced along both sides of the O-080619 Velyka Novosilka – Hulyaipole road and in the Novopil – Novoivanivka direction (all northeast of Hulyaipole).[104] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces seized and advanced north and south of Temyrivka and toward Novomykolaivka (both northeast of Hulyaipole).[105]

Russian forces attacked northeast of Hulyaipole near Temyrivka, Obratne, and Zelene Pole and toward Novohryhorivka on August 19 and 20.[106]

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 1198th Motorized Rifle Regiment (reportedly of the 35th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Eastern Military District [EMD]) are reportedly striking Ukrainian positions near Hulyaipole.[107] Drone operators of the 60th Motorized Rifle Brigade (5th CAA, EMD) are reportedly operating in Zaporizhia Oblast and artillery elements of the Russian 7th Airborne (VDV) Division are reportedly operating in the Zaporizhia direction.[108]

Russian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhia Oblast on August 20 but did not make confirmed advances.

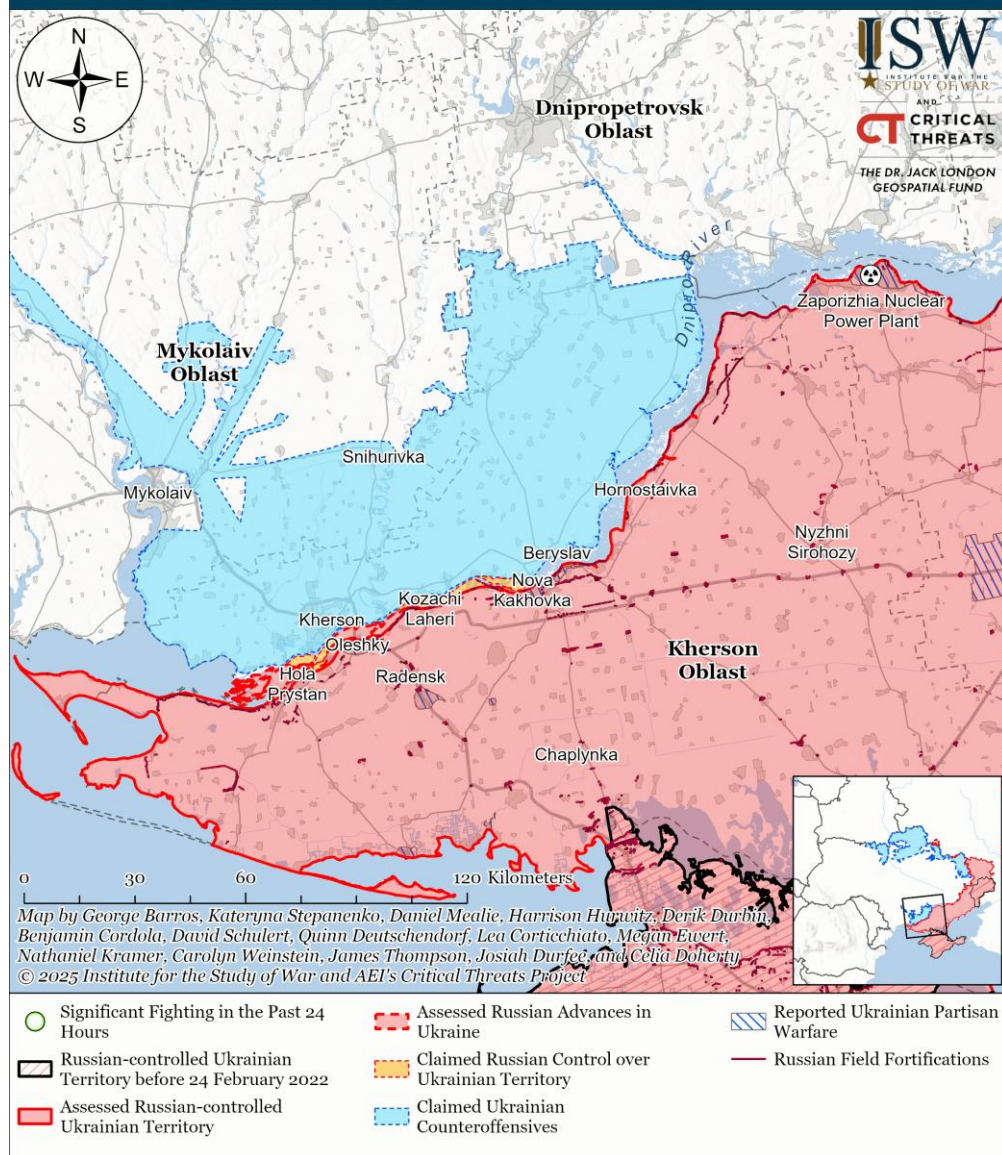
Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced near Plavni (southwest of Orikhiv) and south of Stepnohirsk (west of Orikhiv).[109]

Russian forces attacked southeast of Orikhiv near Mala Tokmachka; southwest of Orikhiv near Nesteryanka; west of Orikhiv near Plavni, Stepnohirsk, and Shcherbaky; and northwest of Orikhiv toward Prymorske on August 19 and 20.[110]

Geolocated footage published on August 20 shows Ukrainian forces striking a Russian command post in Myrne (southwest of Orikhiv) and Ukrainian drones striking a Russian S-300V air defense system north of Oleksiivka (southeast of Orikhiv).[111]

Russian forces continued limited attacks in the Kherson direction on August 20 but did not advance.[112]

Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kherson Direction August 20, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian Rubikon Center for Advanced Unmanned Technologies and elements of the Naval Detachment of the 88th Hispaniola Volunteer Brigade (Russian Volunteer Corps) are reportedly striking Ukrainian forces near the coast of occupied Crimea.[113]

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 19 to 20. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched two Iskander-M ballistic missiles from occupied Crimea and 93 Shahed-type and decoy drones from the directions of Bryansk and Millerovo cities; Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai; Shatalovo, Smolensk Oblast; and occupied Cape Chauda, Crimea.[114] The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Ukrainian forces downed 62 drones

and one Iskander-M ballistic missile and that one missile and 31 drones struck 20 locations in Ukraine. Ukrainian officials reported that Russian drones and missile damaged civilian and energy infrastructure in Dnipropetrovsk, Chernihiv, Kharkiv, Odesa, and Sumy oblasts.[115] Sumy Oblast Prosecutor's Office reported that Russian forces struck a residential area in Okhtyrka, Sumy Oblast, injuring 18 civilians.[116] Izmail Raion Administration reported that Russian forces struck port infrastructure and caused a fire at a fuel and energy infrastructure facility in Izmail, Odesa Oblast.[117]

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

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian met with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko in Minsk on August 20 to discuss opportunities to expand bilateral relations.[118] Pezeshkian stated that Iran and Belarus share common interests and that both countries seek to combat US and European efforts to "push unilateralism" in the regional and international affairs.[119] Pezeshkian emphasized that Iran and Belarus can cooperate to mitigate the effects of international sanctions.[120] Iranian and Belarusian officials signed 12 memorandums of understanding (MoU) focused on increasing bilateral trade, military-tech cooperation, and mutual investment during Pezeshkian's visit.[121] Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs Abbas Araghchi stated on August 20 that Iran plans to sign a comprehensive strategic partnership with Belarus.[122] Iran and Belarus have increased defense and security cooperation in recent years.[123] Iran showcased military equipment at a Belarusian military exhibit in May 2025.[124] Iran has reportedly worked to establish a drone factory in Belarus since May 2023 to support the Russian invasion of Ukraine.[125]

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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