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August 16, 2025, 9 pm ET

**Note: The data cut-off for this product was 12 pm ET on August 16. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the August 17 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.**

**Various US officials indicated that Russian President Vladimir Putin may be willing to compromise on some war termination demands, but Putin's own statements and Russian official statements contradict these claims.** US President Donald Trump stated on August 16 that his meeting with Putin and subsequent call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and European and NATO leaders were productive.[1] Trump stated following that "all" determined that the best way to end Russia's war in Ukraine is to begin direct negotiations for a peace agreement, rather than a ceasefire agreement. Trump announced that he will meet with Zelensky at the White House on August 18 and that he and Zelensky may schedule a subsequent meeting with Putin if the August 18 meeting goes well. Trump did not specify whether the subsequent meeting with Putin will be bilateral or trilateral, though Trump told Fox News following the Alaska summit on August 15 that both Putin and Zelensky want Trump to attend a leader-level meeting.[2] Axios correspondent Barak Ravid reported on August 16, citing an unspecified source who was on Trump's call with Zelensky and European leaders, that Trump stated that Putin expressed interest in a comprehensive settlement to end the war rather than a ceasefire and stated that "a quick peace agreement is better than a ceasefire." [3] *Bloomberg* reported, citing sources familiar with the matter, that Trump stated on this call that Putin wants Ukraine to cede all of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts but noted that it is up to Ukraine to decide what to do with its territory.[4] The sources told *Bloomberg* that Putin proposed to effectively freeze the front line in Zaporizhia and Kherson oblasts. The sources reported that Trump expressed the United States' readiness to contribute to security guarantees for Ukraine so long as the guarantees do not involve NATO, and that Trump suggested that Putin would accept this. Axios reported, citing a source with direct knowledge of Trump's phone call, that Trump informed Zelensky and the European leaders that Putin claimed that Russian forces were making significant battlefield progress and that Putin could seize all of Donetsk Oblast.[5] The source told Axios that US Special Envoy for the Middle East Steve Witkoff briefed Zelensky and NATO leaders during the call on how Putin views territorial issues and what Putin is willing to give in return. The source reported that Witkoff informed the leaders that Putin is willing to end the war and commit to abstaining from seizing more Ukrainian territory and not to attack Ukraine or other countries in a new war.

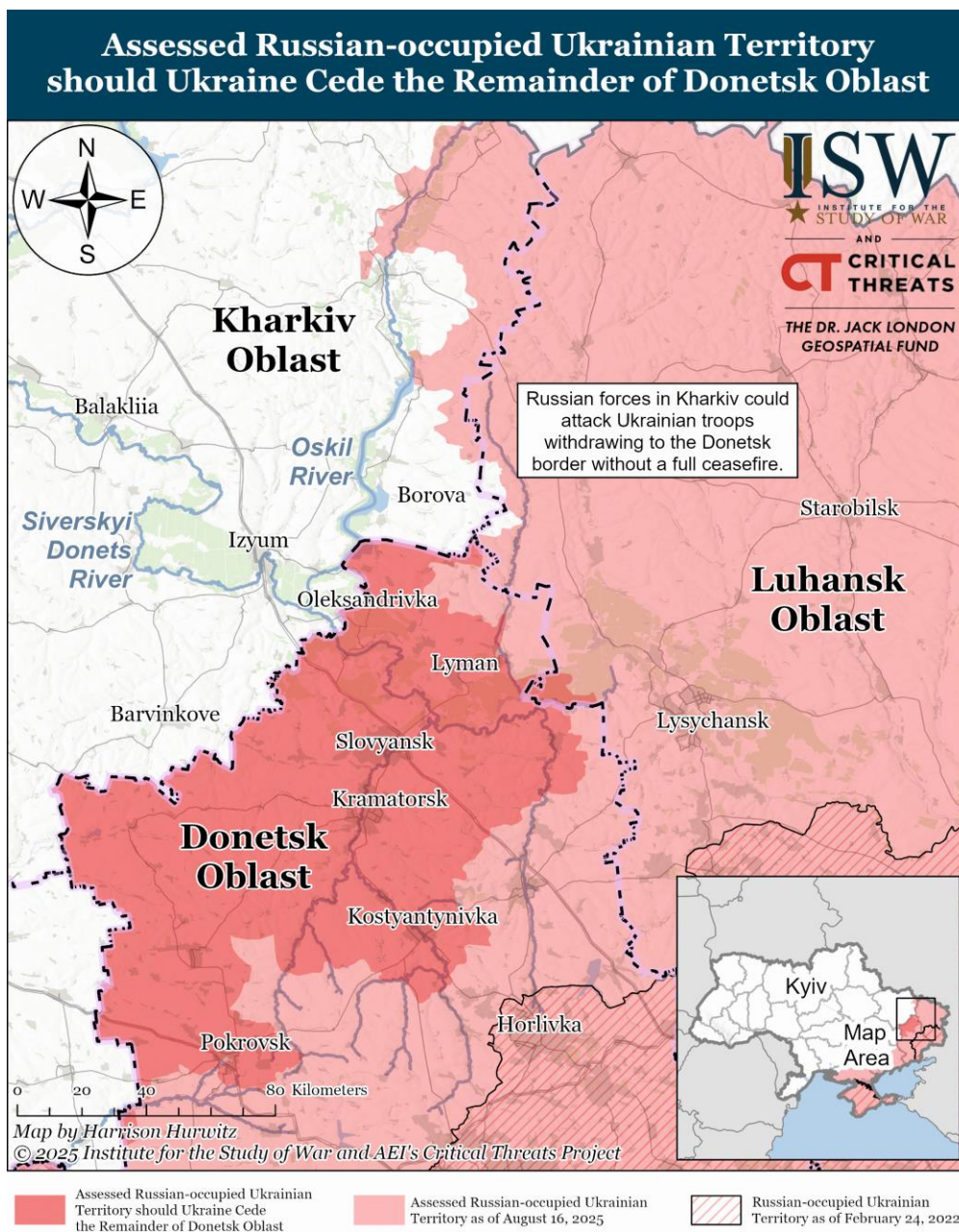
**It is unclear what Putin offered in his meeting with Trump beyond reiterating his demand for Donetsk Oblast and offering a limited ceasefire with no known timeframe in Zaporizhia and Kherson oblasts.** Russian Presidential Aide Yuri Ushakov stated on August 16, after the Alaska Summit, that he did not know when Trump and Putin would meet again and that the subject of a trilateral meeting between Putin, Trump, and Zelensky has not been discussed.[6] Ravid

reported that a source briefed on Trump's talks with Putin stated that Putin proposed to freeze the frontline in Zaporizhia and Kherson oblasts in exchange for Ukraine's withdrawal from Donetsk Oblast and that the US delegation perceived that Putin is open to negotiations regarding Sumy and Kharkiv oblasts.[7] Ravid reported that Putin requested that the United States recognize "these four oblasts" (presumably Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts, although the reporting is not clear) and occupied Crimea as Russian. The *Financial Times* (FT) reported, citing four sources with direct knowledge of the talks, that Putin demanded that Ukrainian forces withdraw from all of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts as a precondition for ending Russia's war in Ukraine.[8] Three of the sources told FT that Putin offered to freeze the frontline in Kherson and Zaporizhia oblasts and not to launch new attacks to seize additional territory (it is not clear if he meant in those two oblasts or elsewhere), in exchange for Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. Senior Russian officials and most sources speaking to Western media did not indicate that Putin mentioned Sumy or Kharkiv oblasts, which is notable because Russian forces are also conducting offensive operations in these regions. *Newsmax* White House correspondent Mike Carter reported on August 15, citing unspecified sources, that Putin dropped his objections to teaching the Ukrainian language in Ukraine and NATO states providing security guarantees to Ukraine that would enable NATO states to defend Ukraine if Russia violates any agreement.[9] Carter reported that the unspecified sources stated that Russia and Ukraine still need to work out the definition and implementation of a ceasefire.

**Putin's demand for all of Donetsk Oblast is the most clear and consistent demand coming out of the Alaska Summit.** Putin may have also offered a limited ceasefire in southern Ukraine in exchange for Donetsk Oblast, but other details of Putin's offer to Trump remain unclear. Putin has established territorial demands over the remainder of Donetsk Oblast, which are typically the subject of war termination negotiations, as preconditions for any possible future ceasefire in Ukraine. A former senior Kremlin official suggested to FT that Putin is prepared to compromise on other issues, including territory, if Putin is satisfied that an agreement addresses the "root causes" of the war.[10] The Kremlin has repeatedly defined root causes as NATO's eastward expansion and Ukraine's alleged discrimination against Russian-speakers and has repeatedly invoked this phrase as shorthand for Ukraine's full capitulation to Russia and the resumption of Russian control over Ukraine.[11] Putin's demand that any agreement address these "root causes" is not a compromise from his original war aims, and reports that Putin "compromised" on issues such as Ukraine's ability to teach its own language in its own country are designed to obfuscate Putin's actual unwillingness to compromise.

**Ukrainian forces would not be able to conduct a safe and orderly withdrawal from unoccupied Donetsk Oblast in accordance with Putin's demand without a full ceasefire across the entire theater, however.** A Ukrainian withdrawal from the remainder of Donetsk Oblast – which ISW continues to assess would be a major strategic military and political concession – without a full ceasefire that extends to long-range strikes and all frontline activity would pose major risks to both withdrawing Ukrainian forces and Ukrainian forces in rear areas in Kharkiv Oblast. Putin notably has not offered a ceasefire under which Ukrainian forces would be able to safely withdraw across the Donetsk Oblast border and defend rear areas against renewed Russian aggression on the flanks. The Donetsk Oblast administrative boundary is far from Ukraine's main defensive line in Donetsk Oblast known as the "fortress belt," and even if Putin implemented a ceasefire long enough for Ukrainian forces to withdraw from Donetsk Oblast, renewed Russian ground assaults and fires both from advancing forces in Donetsk Oblast and forces on the flank in Kharkiv Oblast would threaten Ukrainian forces

along the frontline and in rear areas.[12] A Ukrainian withdrawal would likely result in large force concentrations along major Ukrainian thoroughfares and defensive structures that Russian aviation, drones, and artillery would likely target upon the expiration of a ceasefire. These strikes would degrade Ukrainian forces' combat capabilities, including Ukraine's ability to defend against renewed Russian efforts to advance into Kharkiv Oblast from Donetsk Oblast or along the right flank in Kharkiv Oblast. Russian forces operating in Donetsk Oblast would also likely pursue withdrawing Ukrainian forces along routes of egress, threatening to rout the withdrawing Ukrainian forces and degrade their ability to establish new defensive positions in Kharkiv Oblast. Russian forces in Donetsk Oblast would likely also receive fire support from Russian forces already operating in neighboring Kharkiv Oblast, which would further threaten the rear of the withdrawing Ukrainian forces. These Russian strikes would also make it untenable for Ukrainian forces to maintain their positions on the east (left) bank of the Oskil River and set conditions for Russian forces to push further into Kharkiv Oblast from Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. A partial ceasefire that does not extend to Russian military activity in Kharkiv and Luhansk oblasts would therefore be insufficient for assuring the safe withdrawal of Ukrainian forces from the remainder of Donetsk Oblast.



**ISW continues to assess that a potential Ukrainian withdrawal from Donetsk Oblast would degrade Ukraine's defensive capabilities and defense industrial base (DIB) and put hundreds of thousands more Ukrainian civilians under Russian occupation. Ukraine would require robust international security guarantees and the immediate deployment of an international peacekeeping contingent to deter future Russian aggression. ISW continues to assess that surrendering currently unoccupied areas of Donetsk Oblast to Russia would position Russian forces extremely well to renew their aggression against Ukraine on much more favorable terms, having avoided a long and bloody struggle for this territory and given Russia the opportunity to build up manpower and weapons stocks.[13] ISW previously noted that allowing Russia to occupy the remainder of Donetsk Oblast would concede Ukraine's fortress belt to Russian forces, and**

this fortress belt also includes significant DIB infrastructure. Russian forces have notably been unable to advance to or envelop the fortress belt since Fall 2022. The Russian military command would almost certainly work to rapidly establish lasting positions throughout the fortress belt and utilize the fortress belt's DIB for military production if Ukrainian forces withdraw from their positions in Donetsk Oblast. ISW also previously noted that the Donetsk Oblast border area is naturally poorly suited to act as a robust defensive line due to its few settlements, open fields, and natural obstacles such as the Oskil and Siverskyi Donets rivers.[14] A Ukrainian withdrawal across the Donetsk Oblast border would therefore also require the deployment of a robust international peacekeeping force and large-scale investment in infrastructure compatible with a large-scale, long-term ceasefire monitoring mission to prevent future Russian aggression. The absence of a full ceasefire on the frontline and regarding long-range strikes would likely preclude the deployment of this international force, however.

**Seizing the remainder of Donetsk Oblast would likely be a difficult and years-long effort for Russian forces rather than a quick effort as Putin likely aims to portray, as Russian forces remain unable to secure operationally significant advances or advance faster than foot pace.** Putin has remained committed to slow, grinding advances on the battlefield through attritional infantry assaults – constraining the maximum possible rate of Russian advance to footpace.[15] Ukrainian drone strikes have significantly complicated the Russian military command's ability to tactically employ heavy equipment, as Russia has not figured out how to adequately protect armored vehicles and tanks from Ukrainian drones.[16] Russian forces have therefore been unable to restore mechanized maneuver to the battlefield to create and exploit breakthroughs and achieve operationally-significant advances.[17] The Russian military command has implemented an operational pattern that leverages creeping partial envelopments of frontline towns and settlements before beginning street-by-street frontal assaults to force Ukrainian withdrawals. Russian forces have proven unable to make significant advances in Ukraine by conducting frontal assaults.[18] The Russian military command has failed to operationalize its envelopment tactic against a significant Ukrainian defensive line and will likely be unable to leverage this tactic to seize the fortress belt cities that form the backbone of the Ukrainian forces' defense rapidly – such an operation three and a half years into the war would likely be a multi-year effort with significant Russian personnel and material losses.[19] Russian forces have also recently leaned on infiltration tactics to make tactically-significant advances, but have thus far struggled to exploit these infiltrations and consolidate positions in their paths of advance at scale.[20] **Russian forces currently have no means of rapidly enveloping, penetrating, or otherwise seizing Ukraine's fortress belt or the remainder of unoccupied Donetsk Oblast, which Putin has demanded as a precondition for a ceasefire with no comparable Russian concessions.**

**Putin's reported rejection of a full ceasefire in Ukraine and the ongoing Russian offensives in Kharkiv and Sumy oblasts indicate that Putin intends to continue his war in Ukraine while negotiations are ongoing – a point that Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev welcomed.** Medvedev stated on his Russian- and English-language Telegram channels on August 16 that the Trump-Putin meeting "demonstrated that negotiations are possible without preconditions" while Russia continues its war in Ukraine.[21] The Kremlin appears to have successfully narrowed discussions of the war in Ukraine to the fate of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhia oblasts – the four oblasts that Russia illegally annexed in September 2022.[22] Russian forces continue offensive efforts to advance into northern Sumy Oblast and northern

and eastern Kharkiv Oblast, however. Putin's reported demands largely do not address the fate of these oblasts or the Russian military efforts within them. Russian forces would presumably continue their offensive efforts in these areas while negotiations are ongoing. Putin is attempting to obfuscate his unwillingness to commit to a comprehensive ceasefire by repackaging one of his war aims as a prerequisite to negotiations for a permanent peace. Putin likely aims to both stave off further US sanctions that could hinder Russia's ability to finance its war effort and to extract further US, Ukrainian, and European concessions through the ongoing negotiation process.

**The Kremlin reportedly instructed Russian media outlets to present the Alaska summit as a meeting between two superpowers and to prepare Russian society for the possibility of a protracted war in Ukraine.** Russian opposition outlet Meduza reported on August 16 that the Kremlin disseminated an instruction manual to pro-government and state-run media outlets in Russia after the summit to report that "no deal [on Ukraine] was reached at the summit — and that no deal could have been reached." [23] Meduza reported that the Kremlin instructed media outlets to claim that Trump and Putin did not discuss "Ukrainian and European demands for an unconditional ceasefire," that Trump urged Zelensky to make a deal with Putin, and that Trump greeted Putin on the tarmac as a gesture of goodwill. Meduza reported that the Kremlin instructed media outlets to describe the meeting as "historic" because "Putin restored Russia's status as a great superpower" and to describe Trump and Putin as "equals." Meduza quoted the manual as claiming that "the revival of Russia's power and authority is the result of recent years," likely referring to Russia's aggression in Ukraine, long-term military reorganization efforts, and strengthened ties with states including Iran, North Korea, and the People's Republic of China (PRC) since February 2022. [24] Meduza reported that the Kremlin issued a separate instruction manual before the summit stating that media outlets should emphasize that Putin spoke with Trump about "Kyiv's unwillingness to negotiate," that Russia is ready for any scenario in the talks, and that it is Putin — rather than Trump — who sets the agenda for US-Russian relations. [25] Meduza reported that the pre-summit manual instructed reporters to emphasize that the United States and Russia have many avenues for "mutual understanding" and that bilateral cooperation would not be limited to the "Ukrainian issue." A media strategist working with the Russian Presidential Administration's political team told Meduza that the Russian government aimed to prepare the Russian public for the possibility that the summit would fail to pause fighting and emphasize that Putin is setting the terms — cohering with ISW's long-held assessment that the Kremlin is not setting informational conditions for Russians to accept an end to the war that does not amount to a Russian victory on Putin's terms.

**Russian officials continue rhetorical campaigns designed to undermine Ukraine's sovereignty and peace negotiations and to legitimize Russia's war in Ukraine.** Russian State Duma Deputy Alexei Zhuravlev claimed in an interview with Russian outlet News dot ru on August 16 that Trump and Putin communicated as political equals and that the summit was a major event in global diplomacy. [26] Zhuravlev also claimed that the United States understands the "root causes" of the war in Ukraine — a term Russian officials use as shorthand to reiterate Putin's pre-war demands of Ukrainian neutrality and regime change. [27] Zhuravlev claimed in another interview to Russian outlet Gazeta dot ru that the war in Ukraine can only end if the United States "confirm[s] Russia's security guarantees" and added that Ukraine and the EU should not be involved in the peace process. [28] Russian officials have frequently claimed that Ukrainian and European leadership are prolonging the war in Ukraine and are not interested in peace negotiations in an effort to undermine Ukraine's

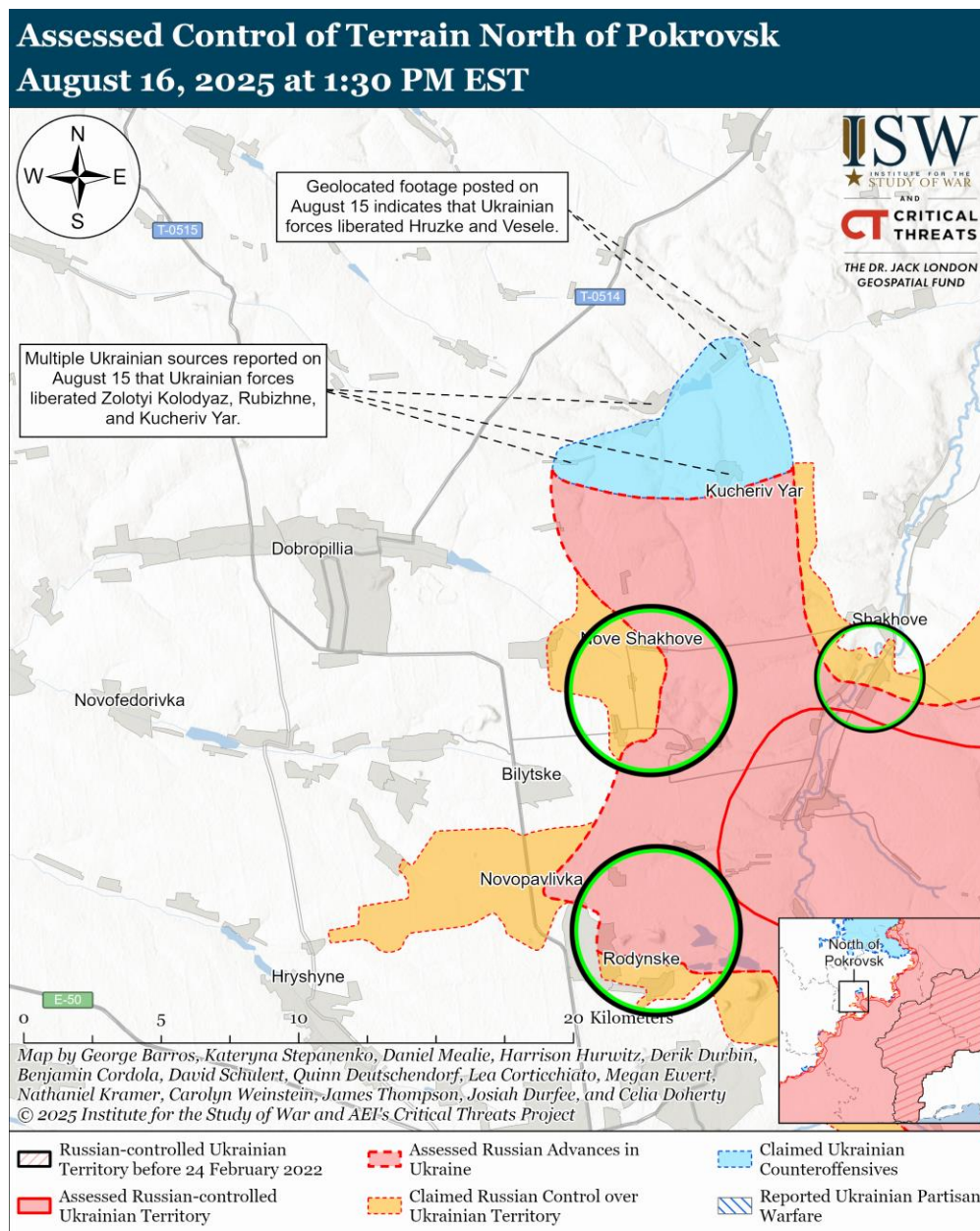


sovereignty, deny Kyiv a role in the peace process, and divide Ukraine from its allies.[29] Russian Federation Council Committee on Constitutional Legislation and State Building Chairperson Andrei Klishas claimed that the meeting between Trump and Putin confirmed Russia's desire for a long-term and just peace and that Russia will achieve this goal either through military or diplomatic means.[30] Klishas also reiterated a long-standing Russian claim that there can be no unconditional ceasefire in Ukraine.[31] This rhetoric reinforces to a domestic Russian audience that it must not expect Putin to compromise on his long-held, public demands to achieve his full objectives in Ukraine.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who was part of the Russian delegation in Alaska, arrived in Anchorage on August 15 wearing a USSR sweatshirt in a staged media stunt.[32] Lavrov likely sought to present Russia as the inheritor of the Soviet Union and simultaneously equate Russia and the United States as comparable superpowers, in line with the reported Kremlin command to Russian media to report that Putin restored Russia to its great power status, a status that Putin and other Russian officials have long complained was lost when the Soviet Union collapsed.[33] Russian officials have claimed that the Soviet Union never legally dissolved and that the Soviet Union therefore still exists, with Russia as the legal inheritor of its power, territory, and treaties — setting informational conditions to exert control over former Soviet Union states.[34] ISW continues to assess that Russia very likely maintains territorial ambitions beyond occupied Crimea and the other four Ukrainian oblasts it has illegally annexed.[35] Lavrov also likely sought to present the war in Ukraine as a matter that falls within Russia's sphere of influence in which other states should not interfere, similar to Russian Presidential Advisor Anton Kobryakov's claim in May 2025 that the Soviet Union still legally exists and that the war in Ukraine is therefore an "internal process." [36] Putin also stated during the joint press conference with Trump on August 15 that Russia and Ukraine share the "same roots" and that Russia considers Ukraine to be a "brotherly" nation, a long-standing Kremlin narrative with roots in Putin's July 2021 essay on the "Historic Unity of Russians and Ukrainians" that also seeks to present the war in Ukraine as an internal affair.[37]

**Ukrainian forces likely cleared several settlements within the Russian penetration northeast of Dobropillya.** Geolocated footage published on August 15 shows Ukrainian forces clearing Russian positions and taking Russian prisoners of war (POWs) northeast of Dobropillya within Vesele and Hruzke (northeast of Dobropillya).[38] The Ukrainian General Staff confirmed the 1st Azov Army Corps (AC) August 15 report that Ukrainian forces cleared six settlements northeast of Dobropillya, including Hruzke, Rubizhne, Novovodyane, Petrivka, Vesele, and Zoloty Kolodyaz in operations from August 12 to 15.[39] The Ukrainian General Staff and 1st Azov AC stated that Ukrainian forces killed 271 Russian personnel, wounded 101, and took 13 POWs, and that Ukrainian forces destroyed one Russian tank, two armored vehicles, and 37 motorcycles and other vehicles in these operations. Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces only advanced in unfortified areas northeast of Dobropillya and that Russian forces are strengthening their positions in the northern section of the penetration.[40] One Russian milblogger denied Ukrainian claims that Ukrainian forces advanced in the salient but conceded that Ukrainian forces entered Vesele and Zoloty Kolodyaz.[41] The milblogger also claimed that Russian forces are holding their positions near Zoloty Kolodyaz.[42] Another Russian milblogger complained that the Russian penetration is not sustainable because it is too narrow and vulnerable to Ukrainian interdiction efforts and assaults that threaten Russian forces' ability to sustain the penetration.[43] The milblogger claimed that Russian forces are unable to cut the T-0514 Dobropillya-Kramatorsk highway because the base of the penetration is too narrow for its

depth, and that Russian forces need to widen the penetration's flanks before fighting toward the highway. The footage of Ukrainian forces recapturing settlements northeast of Dobropillya and the lack of reporting suggesting that Russian forces are reinforcing and resupplying the penetration enough to exploit the penetration indicates that Ukrainian forces have likely retaken these settlements, as multiple Ukrainian sources have now reported.[44] This footage and these reports also suggest that Russian forces very likely do not have stable and enduring positions within the penetration and likely do not control the area between Russian positions east and northeast of Dobropillya and the base of the penetration southeast of Dobropillya.

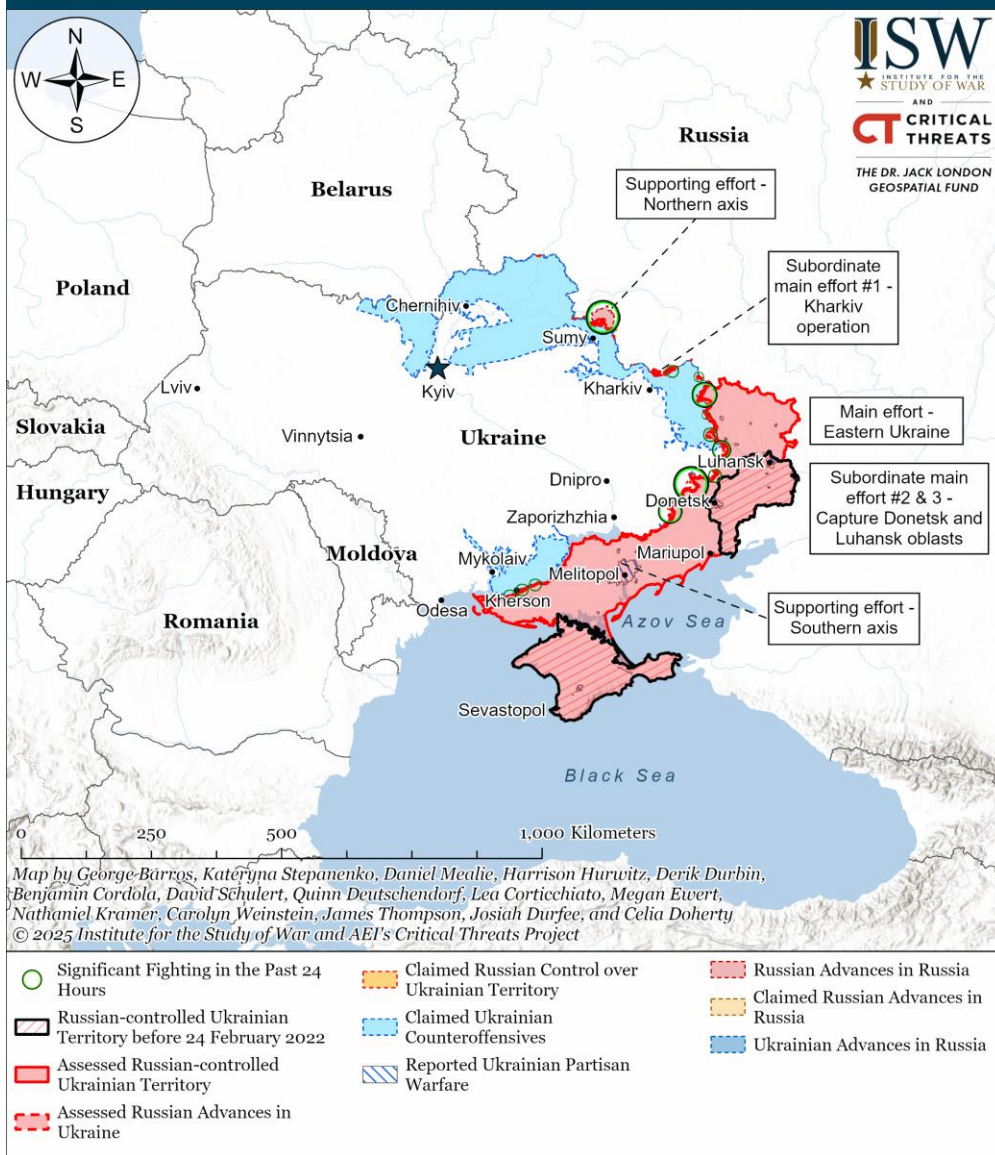


## Key Takeaways:



- Various US officials indicated that Russian President Vladimir Putin may be willing to compromise on some war termination demands, but Putin's own statements and Russian official statements contradict these claims.
- It is unclear what Putin offered in his meeting with Trump beyond reiterating his demand for Donetsk Oblast and offering a limited ceasefire with no known timeframe in Zaporizhia and Kherson oblasts.
- Putin's demand for all of Donetsk Oblast is the most clear and consistent demand coming out of the Alaska Summit.
- Ukrainian forces would not be able to conduct a safe and orderly withdrawal from unoccupied Donetsk Oblast in accordance with Putin's demand without a full ceasefire across the entire theater, however
- ISW continues to assess that a potential Ukrainian withdrawal from Donetsk Oblast would degrade Ukraine's defensive capabilities and defense industrial base (DIB) and put hundreds of thousands more Ukrainian civilians under Russian occupation. Ukraine would require robust international security guarantees and the immediate deployment of an international peacekeeping contingent to deter future Russian aggression.
- Seizing the remainder of Donetsk Oblast would likely be a difficult and years-long effort for Russian forces rather than a quick effort as Putin likely aims to portray, as Russian forces remain unable to secure operationally significant advances or advance faster than foot pace.
- Putin's reported rejection of a full ceasefire in Ukraine and the ongoing Russian offensives in Kharkiv and Sumy oblasts indicate that Putin intends to continue his war in Ukraine while negotiations are ongoing — a point that Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev welcomed.
- The Kremlin reportedly instructed Russian media outlets to present the Alaska summit as a meeting between two superpowers and to prepare Russian society for the possibility of a protracted war in Ukraine.
- Russian officials continue rhetorical campaigns designed to undermine Ukraine's sovereignty and peace negotiations and to legitimize Russia's war in Ukraine.
- Ukrainian forces likely cleared several settlements within the Russian penetration northeast of Dobropillya.
- Ukrainian forces advanced near Pokrovsk and Velykomykhailivka. Russian forces advanced near Siversk.

## Assessed Control of Terrain in the Russo-Ukrainian War August 16, 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 Kursk Oblast on August 16.[45]**

Russian forces continued ground attacks in unspecified areas of Kursk Oblast.[46] A Russian milblogger reportedly affiliated with the Russian Northern Grouping of Forces claimed that Ukrainian forces attacked toward Tetkino (southwest of Glushkovo) and crossed the Seim River.[47]

**Ukrainian forces likely struck a Russian defense industrial base (DIB) enterprise in Stavropol Krai overnight on August 15 to 16.** The Nevinnomyssk, Stavropol Krai Mayor Mikhail Minenkov claimed that Ukrainian forces conducted a drone strike against the city's industrial zone overnight on August 15 to 16.[48] Russian opposition outlet *Astra* reported, citing locals, that there were at least nine explosions and a fire near the Azot chemical plant in Nevinnomyssk.[49] *Astra* noted that the August 15 to 16 strike marks the third strike against the Azot Chemical Plant thus far in Summer 2025. *Astra* reported that the Azot chemical plant is Russia's largest producer of nitrogen fertilizers and ammonia and is located roughly 650 kilometers from Ukrainian-controlled territory.[50]

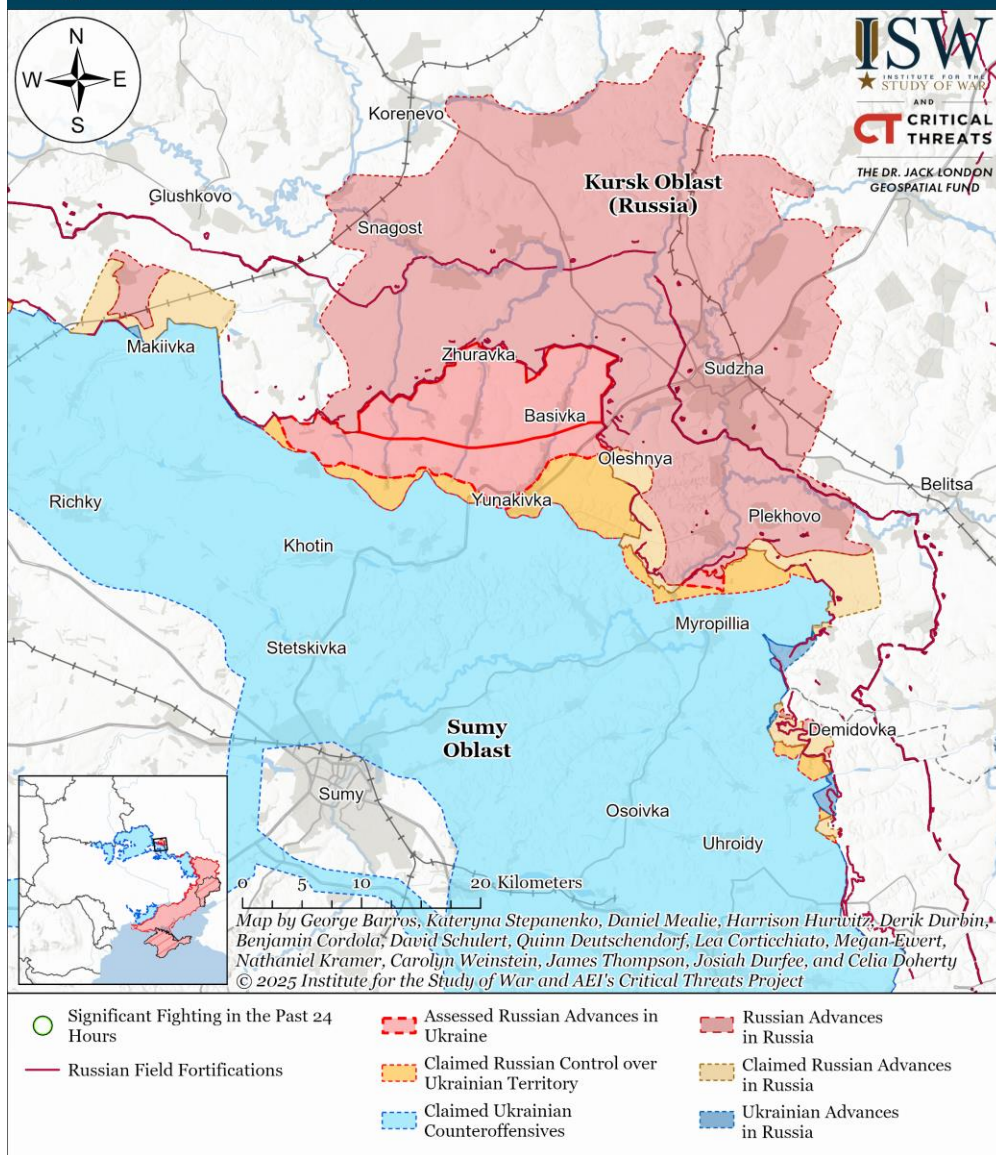
**Russian Supporting Effort – Northern Axis (Russian objective: Create defensible buffer zones in northern Ukraine along the international border and approach to within tube artillery range of Sumy City)**

**Russian forces continued offensive operations in northern Sumy Oblast on August 16 but did not advance.**

Russian forces attacked north of Sumy City near Novokostyantynivka and Varachnye and northeast of Sumy City near Yunakivka on August 15 and 16.[51] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Novokostyantynivka, Oleksiivka (north of Sumy City), and Sadky (northeast of Sumy City).[52]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 51st Airborne (VDV) Regiment (106th VDV Division) reportedly continue to operate near Sadky.[53]

## Assessed Control of Terrain in the Sumy Direction August 16, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



### 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)

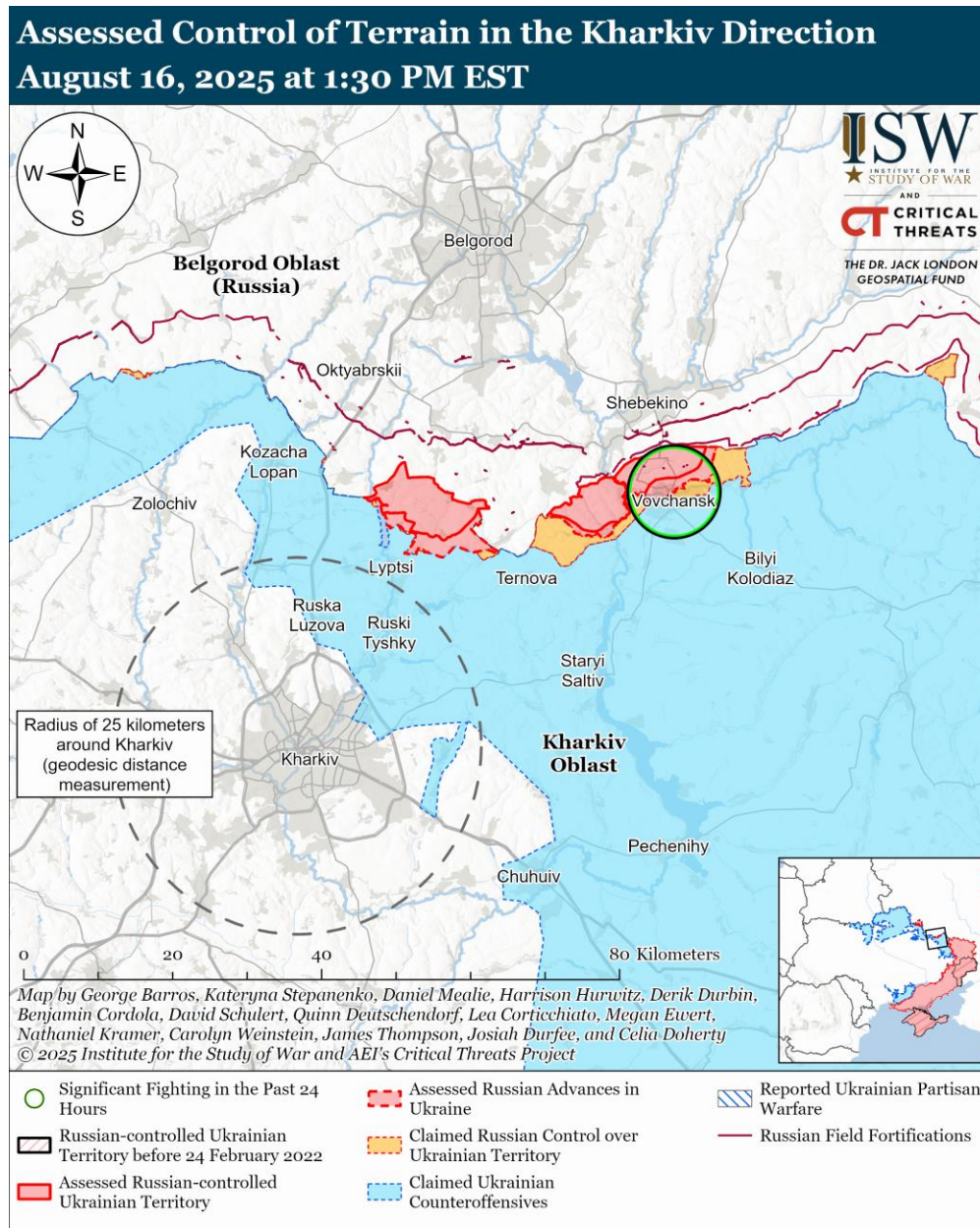
**Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Kharkiv direction on August 16 but did not make confirmed advances.**

Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed on August 15 that Russian forces advanced to the south (left) bank of the Vovcha River in central Vovchansk (northeast of Kharkiv City).[54]



Russian forces attacked northeast of Kharkiv City near Vovchansk and Synelnykove on August 15 and 16.[55] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked on the south (left) bank of the Vovcha River and near Synelnykove.[56]

The spokesperson of a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Kharkiv direction reported on August 16 that Russian forces are attacking blindly in small infantry groups with drones to guide their routes of advance and are leveraging motorcycles and foliage and motorcycles to advance more quickly.[57]



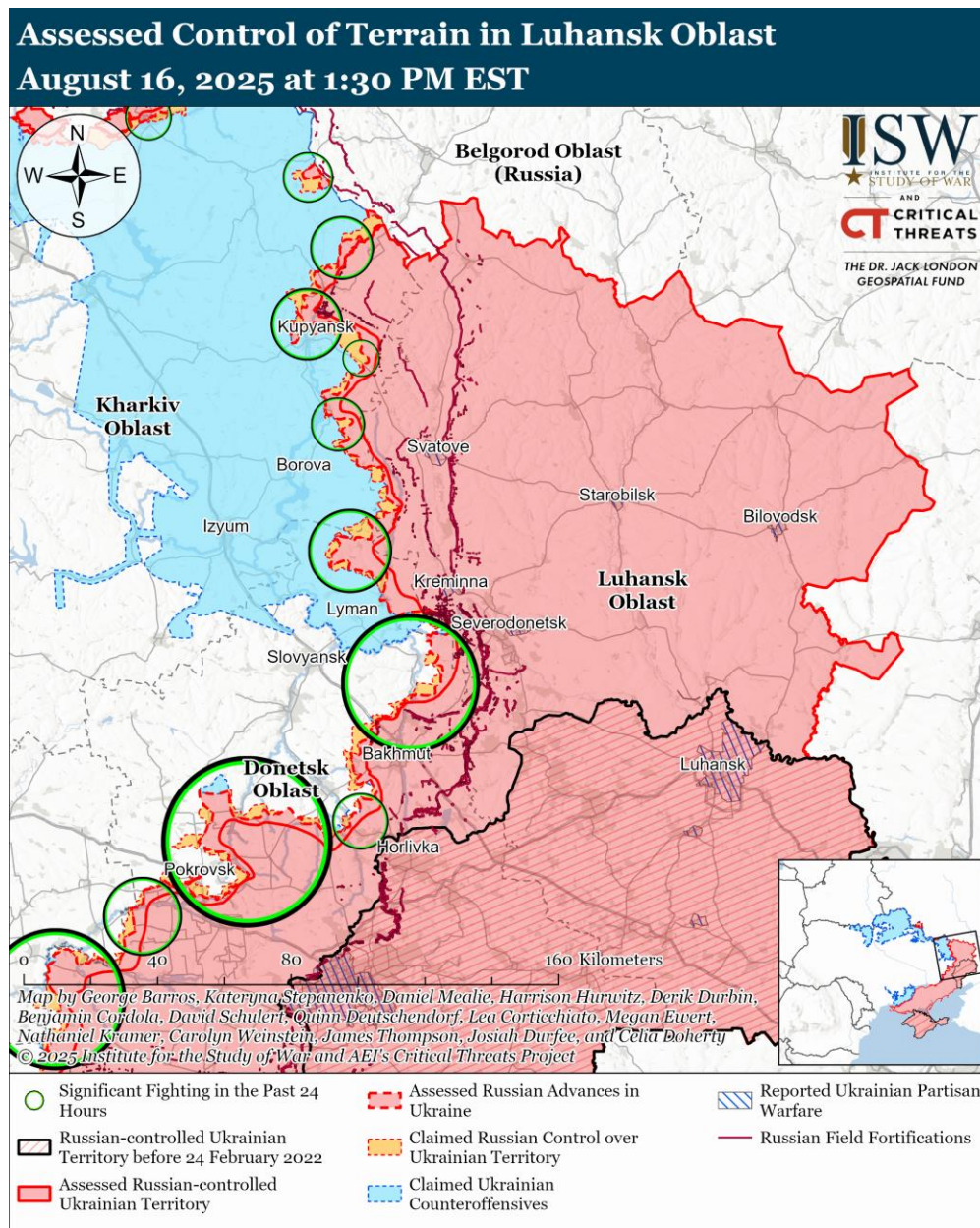
**Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Velykyi Burluk direction on August 16 but did not advance.**

Russian forces attacked northeast of Velykyi Burluk near Milove and Khatnie on August 15 and 16.[58]



The Ukrainian Dnipro Grouping of Forces reported that Russian forces increased their guided glide bomb strikes to support assaults in the Milove and Khatnie directions.[59] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces also struck Ambarne (northeast of Velykyi Burluk) with unguided glide bombs.[60]

## **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 16 but did not make confirmed advances.**

Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced into Petropavlivka (east of Kupyansk).[61]

Geolocated footage published on August 16 indicates that Russian forces recently conducted a roughly platoon-sized mechanized assault southwest of Lyman Pershyi (northeast of Kupyansk).[62]

Russian forces attacked near Kupyansk itself; northwest of Kupyansk near Kindrashivka; north of Kupyansk near Holubivka and Zapadne and toward Kolodyazne; northeast of Kupyansk near Kamyanka; east of Kupyansk near Petropavlivka; southeast of Kupyansk near Stepova Novoselivka; and west of Kupyansk near Solobivka on August 15 and 16.[63] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Petropavlivka.[64]

The commander of a Ukrainian regiment operating in the Kupyansk direction reported that Russian forces are wearing civilian clothes to disguise themselves as locals to infiltrate Ukrainian battle formations in the Kupyansk direction.[65] Combatants dressing as civilians to support efforts intending to injure, kill, or capture an adversary is classified as perfidy and is illegal under international law.[66] The Ukrainian commander reported that Russian forces have maintained the intensity of their attacks and are trying to interdict Ukrainian logistics in the Kupyansk direction.

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 68th Motorized Rifle Division (6th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Leningrad Military District [LMD]) are reportedly striking Ukrainian positions with Groza Leska fiber-optic first-person view (FPV) drones near Kupyansk.[67]

**Russian forces continued offensive operations** northeast of Borova near Nova Kruhlyakivka and Zahryzove **on August 15 and 16, but did not advance.**[68]

**Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Lyman direction on August 16 but did not make confirmed advances.**

Unconfirmed claims: The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces seized Kolodyazi (northeast of Lyman).[69] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced in central Ridkodub (north of Lyman).[70]

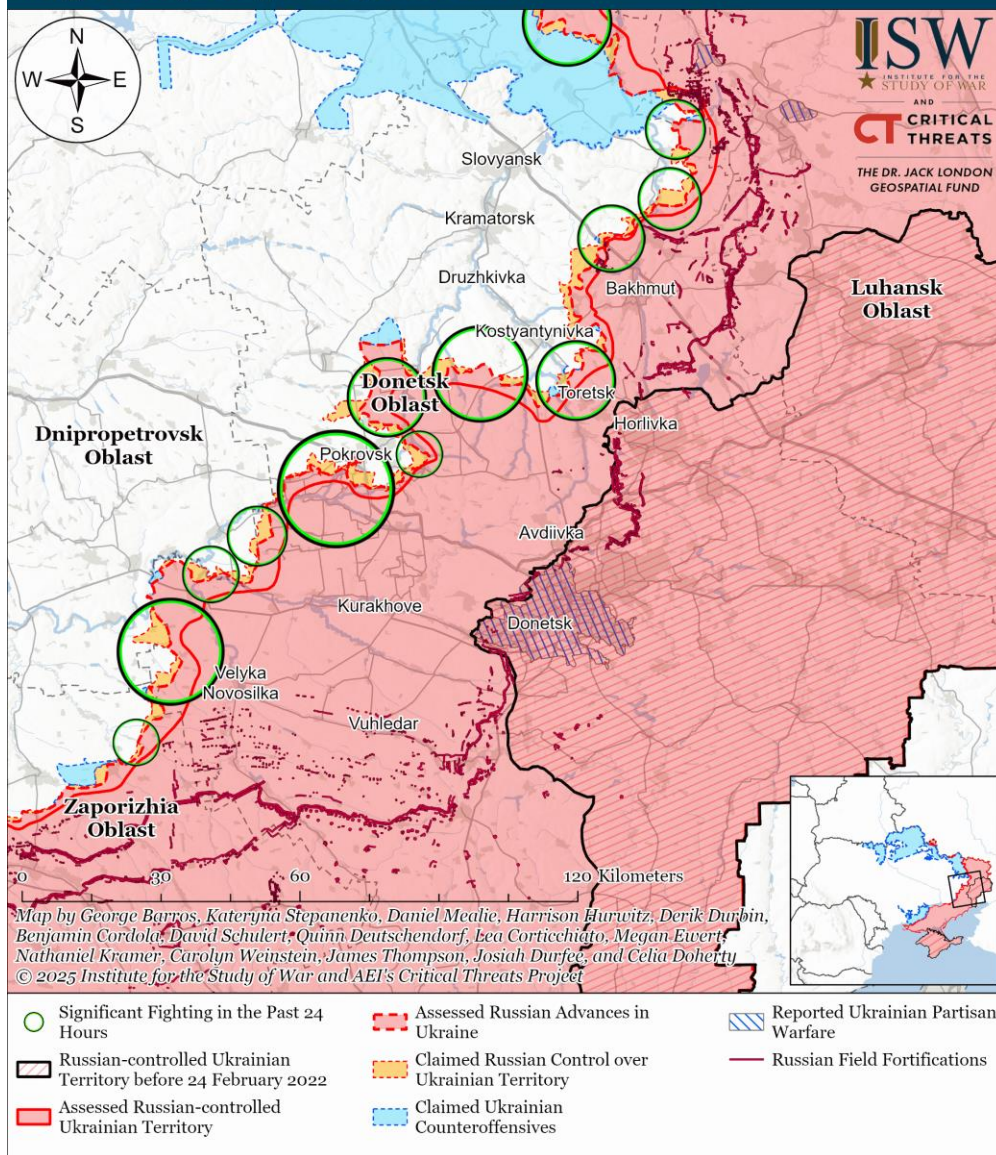
Russian forces attacked northwest of Lyman near Serednie, Shandryholove, and Karpivka; north of Lyman near Ridkodub and Zelena Dolyna; northeast of Lyman near Kolodyazi and Yampolivka; and southeast of Lyman toward Yampil and in the Serebrianske forest area on August 15 and 16.[71]

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 144th Motorized Rifle Division (20th CAA, Moscow Military District [MMD]) are reportedly operating in the Lyman direction.[72]

**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 16, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



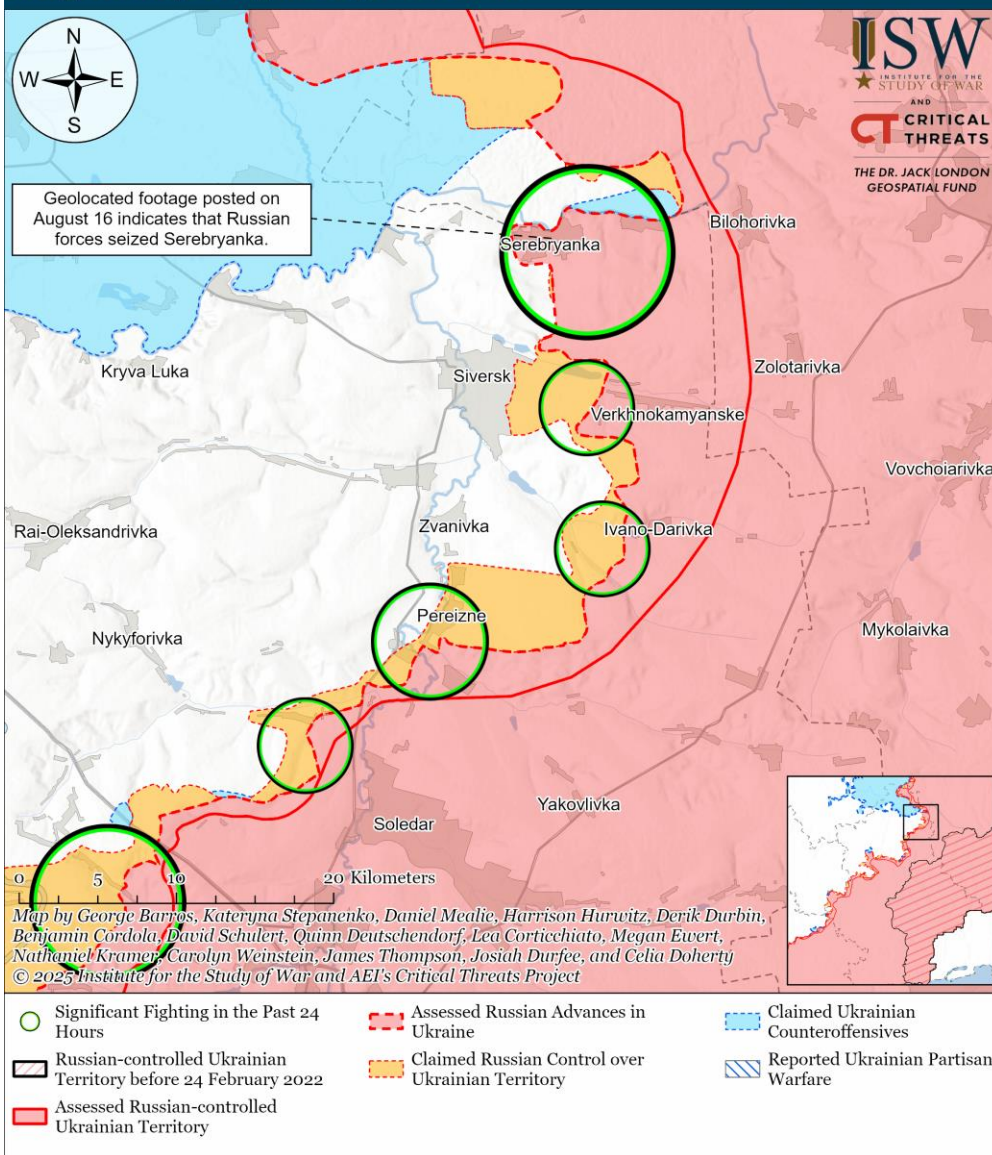
### Russian forces recently advanced in the Siversk direction.

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on August 16 indicates that Russian forces recently seized Serebryanka (north of Siversk).[73]

Russian forces attacked toward Siversk itself, north of Siversk near Serebryanka, northeast of Siversk near Hryhorivka, southeast of Siversk near Vyimka, south of Siversk near Pereizne, and southwest of Siversk near Fedorivka on August 15 and 16.[74]

The commander of a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Siversk direction stated that recent rainfall has complicated Russian forces' attempts to field infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs).[75]

## Assessed Control of Terrain in the Siversk Direction August 16, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



**Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Chasiv Yar direction on August 16 but did not advance.**

Russian forces attacked northeast of Chasiv Yar near Orikhovo-Vasylivka and toward Bondarne on August 15 and 16.[76]

Ukrainian Kostyantynivka Military Administration Head Serhiy Horbunov stated on August 15 that Russian forces conducted two first-person view (FPV) drone strikes against civilian infrastructure in Kostyantynivka, killing one Ukrainian civilian.[77]

**Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Toretsk direction but did not advance.**

Russian forces attacked near Toretsk itself; north of Toretsk near Dyliivka and Oleksandro-Shulytne, and northwest of Toretsk near Pleshchiivka, Yablunivka, Kleban Byk, Rusyn Yar, Poltavka, and Katerynivka, and toward Stepanivka on August 15 and 16.[78] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Shcherbynivka (west of Toretsk).[79]

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the 103rd Motorized Rifle Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) and the 439th Rocket Artillery Brigade (8th CAA) are reportedly coordinating artillery strikes of elements of the 238th Artillery Brigade (8th CAA) against Ukrainian positions near Kleban Byk.[80]

### **Ukrainian forces recently advanced in the Pokrovsk direction.**

*See topline text for reports of activity east and northeast of Dobropillya.*

Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced toward Rodynske (northeast of Pokrovsk) and are attacking on the north and northeast outskirts of the settlement.[81] Another Russian milblogger refuted claims that Russian forces are attacking in Rodynske, claiming that Russian forces hold positions in the north and northeastern outskirts but that Ukrainian forces maintain positions within the settlement.[82]

Russian forces attacked near Pokrovsk itself; north of Pokrovsk near Rodynske and Sukhetske; northeast of Pokrovsk near Volodymyrivka, Fedorivka, Novoekonomichne, Nove Shakhove, Zapovidne, and Zatyshok; east of Pokrovsk near Promin and Myrolyubivka; southeast of Pokrovsk near Lysivka; south of Pokrovsk near Chunyshyne; and southwest of Pokrovsk near Zvirove, Troyanda, Leontovychi, Kotlyne, and Udachne on August 15 and 16.[83]

The spokesperson of a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Pokrovsk direction reported that Russian forces continue to constantly attack in small infantry fire teams of one to two personnel and are attempting to camouflage themselves with greenery and anti-drone thermal imaging cloaks.[84] The spokesperson added that Russian forces are attempting to use motorcycles to bypass Ukrainian positions. The commander of a Ukrainian drone crew operating in the Pokrovsk direction assessed that Russian forces continue to fear the heavy losses necessary for an operation against Pokrovsk itself and are attempting to encircle Pokrovsk and Dobropillya (north of Pokrovsk) instead.[85]

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian AirNomads Group reportedly continue to operate in the Pokrovsk direction.[86]

### **Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Novopavlivka direction on August 16 but did not advance.**

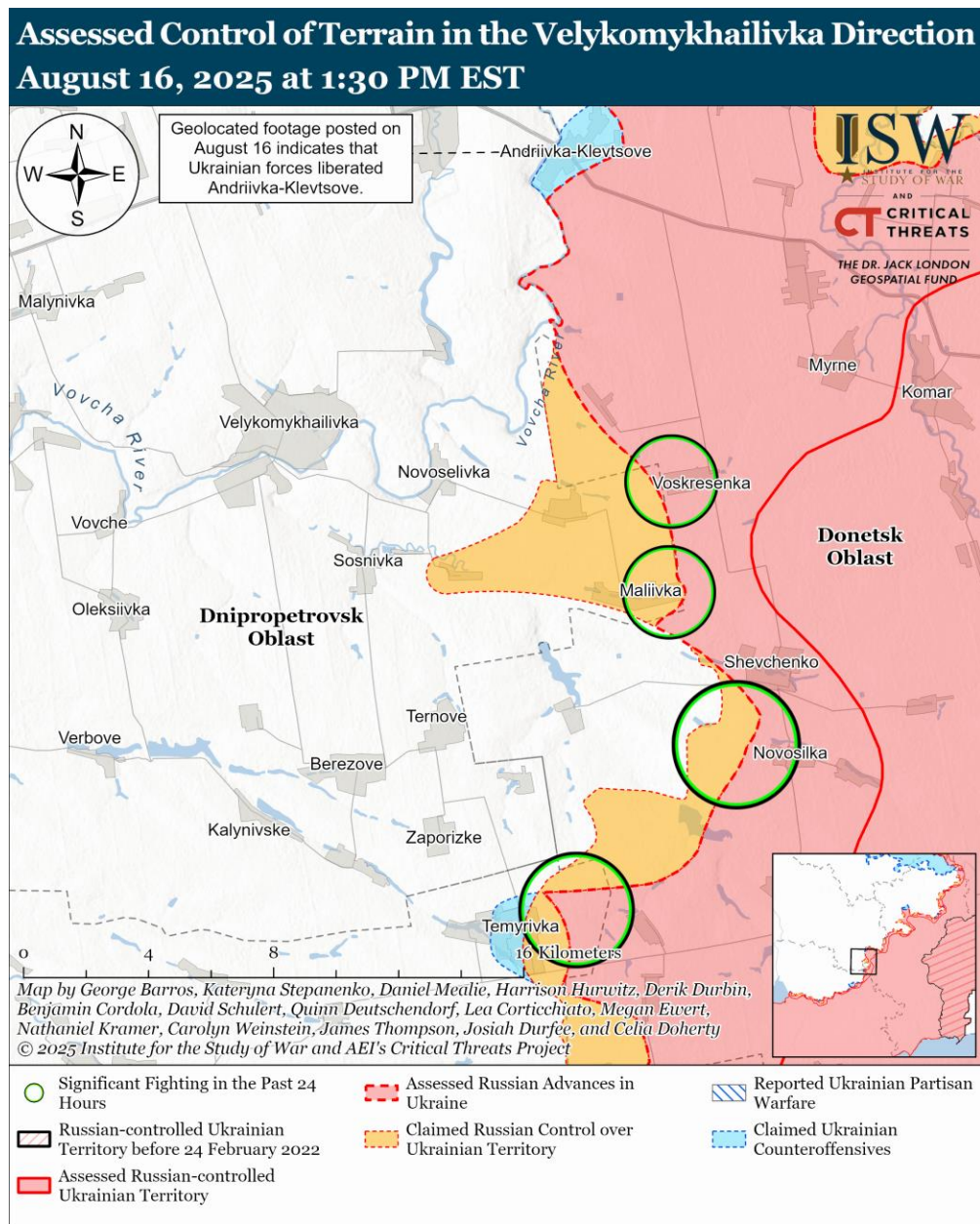
Russian forces attacked northeast of Novopavlivka near Muravka; southeast of Novopavlivka near Dachne, Novoukrainka, and Horikhove; south of Novopavlivka toward Filiya; and southwest of Novopavlivka near Novokhatske and Tovste on August 15 and 16.[87]

A servicemember of a Ukrainian unmanned systems battalion operating in the Novopavlivka direction stated that Ukrainian drone strikes, mines, and anti-tank ditches are denying Russian forces the ability to advance closer than five kilometers from the frontline in this direction.[88] The servicemember



stated that Russian forces continue to conduct small infantry assaults of two to four personnel to several areas to attack Ukrainian positions from multiple sides.

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 74th Motorized Rifle Brigade (41st CAA, Central Military District [CMD]) reportedly continue to operate in the Dnipropetrovsk Oblast (Novopavlivka) direction.[89]



**Ukrainian forces recently advanced in the Velykomykhailivka direction.**

Assessed Ukrainian advances: Geolocated footage published on August 16 indicates that Ukrainian forces recently recaptured Andriivka-Klevtsove (northeast of Velykomykhailivka).[90]

Russian forces attacked east of Velykomykhailivka near Voskresenka, Oleksandrohrad, and Myrne; and southeast of Velykomykhailivka near Vilne Pole, Vorone, and Maliivka, and toward Zaporizhske, Komyshevukha, and Novoheorhiivka on August 15 and 16.[91]

Ukraine's Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) stated on August 16 that the Russian military command is sending small infantry groups of two personnel to bypass Ukrainian positions, enter a given settlement, and film themselves raising a Russian flag in order to falsely claim seizures of settlements and create the false perception of Russian advances.[92] The GUR reported that Russian forces recently filmed themselves near Andriivka-Klevtsove for this purpose, but that Ukrainian forces control the settlement.

Order of Battle: Artillery and drone elements of the Russian 5th Tank Brigade (36th CAA, Eastern Military District [EMD]) reportedly participated in the August 15 claimed seizure of Vorone.[93] Elements of the Russian 36th Motorized Rifle Brigade (29th CAA, EMD) reportedly continue to operate near Oleksandrohrad.[94] Elements of the 11th Air Force and Air Defense Army (Russian Aerospace Forces [VKS] and EMD) reportedly continue unguided glide bomb strikes against Ukrainian positions in Novoselivka (east 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 16 but did not advance.**

Russian forces attacked northeast of Hulyaipole near Zelene Pole and toward Olhivske on August 15 and 16.[96]

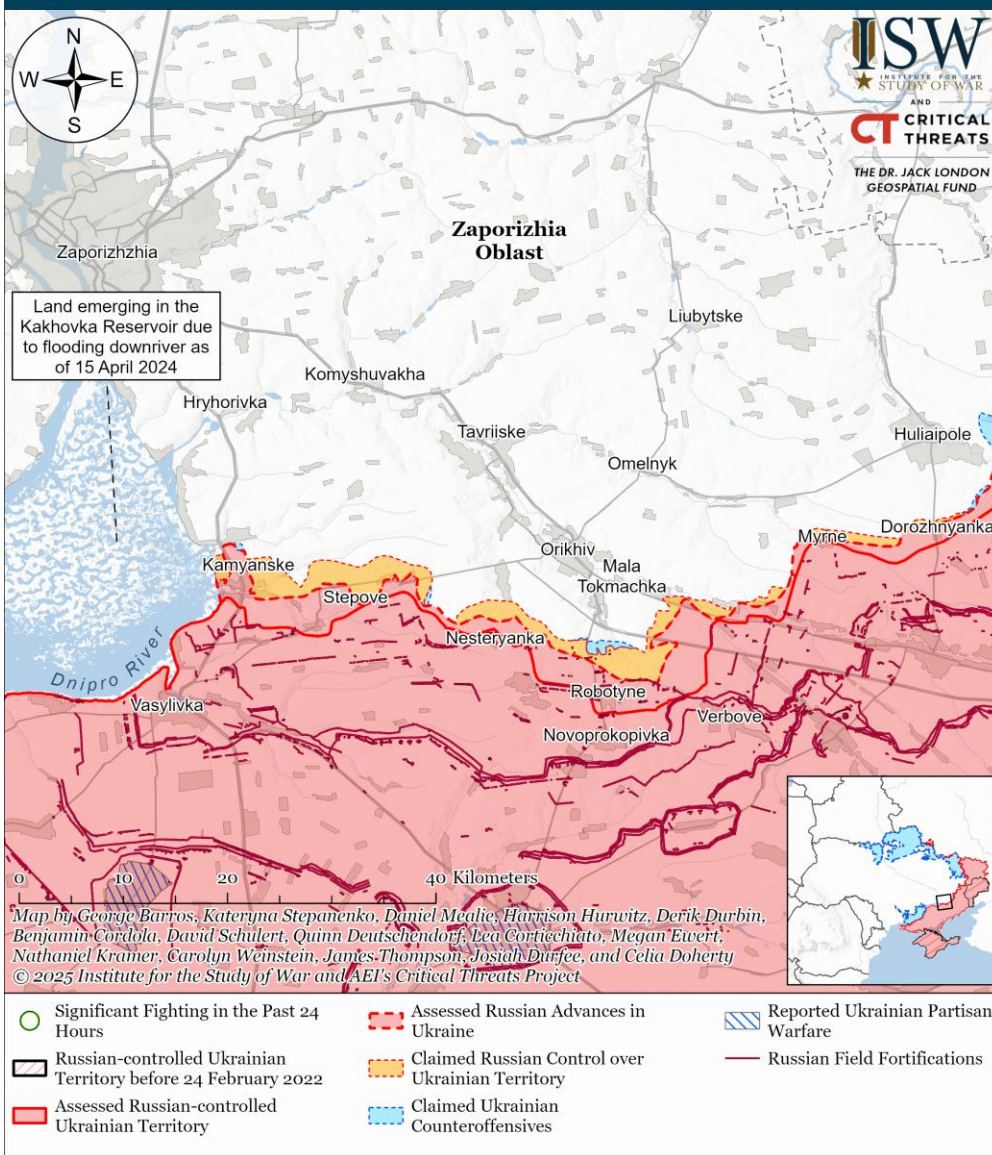
Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 69th Separate Cover Brigade (35th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Eastern Military District [EMD]) are reportedly operating in the Zaporizhzhia direction.[97]

**Russian forces continued offensive operations in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast on August 16 but did not advance.**

Russian forces attacked southeast of Orikhiv near Mala Tokmachka, south of Orikhiv near Novodanylivka, southwest of Orikhiv near Nesteryanka, west of Orikhiv near Plavni and Stepanivsk, and northwest of Orikhiv toward Prymorske on August 16.[98]

Order of Battle: Artillery elements of the Russian 4th Military Base (58th CAA, Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly striking Ukrainian positions near Orikhiv.[99]

## Assessed Control of Terrain in the Zaporizhia Direction August 16, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



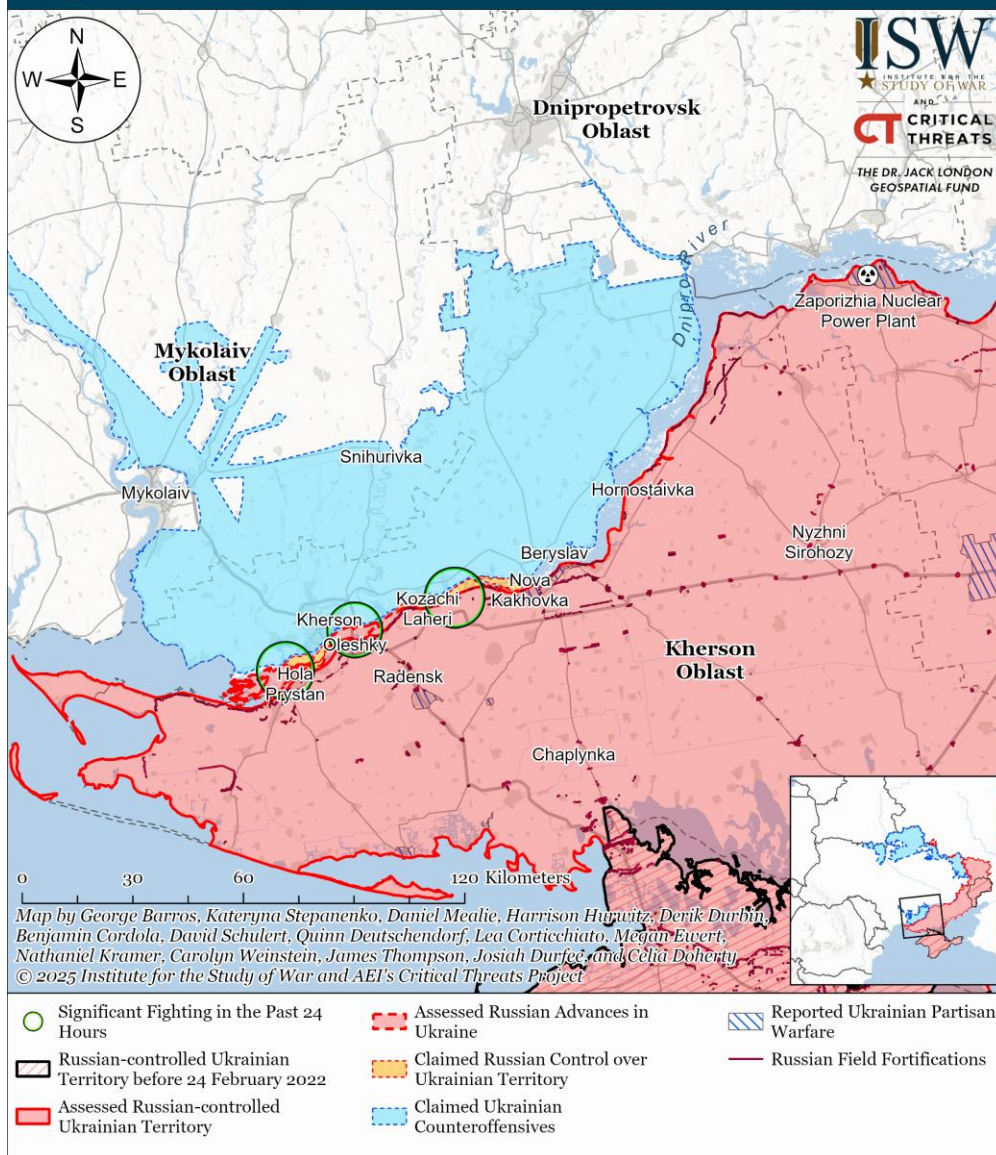
**Russian forces continued limited attacks in the Kherson direction on August 16 but did not advance.**

Russian forces attacked in the Kherson direction, including east of Kherson City near the Antonivsky road and rail bridges and southwest of Kherson City near Bilohrudyi Island on August 15 and 16.[100]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 61st Naval Infantry Brigade (Northern Fleet) are reportedly operating on the Dniro River islands.[101]



## Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kherson Direction August 16, 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 15 to 16. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched one Iskander-M ballistic missile and 85 Shahed and decoy drones from the directions of Kursk and Oryol cities; Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai; Shatalovo, Smolensk Oblast; and occupied Hvardiiske, Crimea.[102] The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Ukrainian forces downed 61 drones over northern and eastern Ukraine. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian strikes primarily targeted frontline areas in Sumy, Donetsk, Chernihiv, and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts. Ukrainian officials reported that Russian forces damaged civilian infrastructure in Kharkiv and Sumy oblasts.[103]

The US Special Inspector General Quarterly Operation Atlantic Resolve report from April 1 to June 30 indicated that a US Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) report confirmed that the increase in Russian use of ballistic missiles with enhanced maneuverability has undermined the effectiveness of the Patriot air defense system in Ukraine.[104] The report stated that Ukraine is struggling to consistently down Russian ballistic missiles due to Russian tactical technological improvements, including enhanced guidance and maneuverability systems, that allow missiles to fly irregular flight paths and adjust paths in-flight rather than only flying along typical ballistic trajectories. Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Colonel Yuriy Ihnat reported in late May 2025 that Russian adaptations to its ballistic weapons were complicating Ukraine's efforts to intercept these ballistic missiles[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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[101] [https://t.me/mod\\_russia/55621](https://t.me/mod_russia/55621)

[102] <https://t.me/kpszs/40478>

[103] <https://t.me/synergubov/16537> ; <https://armyinform.com.ua/2025/08/16/vorog-obstrilyav-harkivsku-oblast-poshkodzhenozhytlovi-budynky/>; <https://armyinform.com.ua/2025/08/15/udar-po-czentru-sum-vorog-atakuvav-misto-bezpilotnykom-na-miscziviluchannya-pozhezha/>; [https://t.me/sumy\\_mva/547](https://t.me/sumy_mva/547)

[104] <https://www.twz.com/land/ukraines-patriots-now-struggling-with-enhanced-russian-ballistic-missiles> ; [https://www.stateoig.gov/uploads/report/report\\_pdf\\_file/oar\\_q3\\_fy25\\_final\\_508.pdf](https://www.stateoig.gov/uploads/report/report_pdf_file/oar_q3_fy25_final_508.pdf)

[105] <https://kyivindependent.com/the-missile-no-longer-flies-straight-ukraine-says-russia-improved-its-ballistic-missiles/>